

# A Museum in Finke

## An Aputula Heritage Project

Megg Kelham

**Careful! This report contains photos and names of people who have died.**



National Library of Australia

nlia pic-vr4269263-v



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## Acknowledgements

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I also want to thank the staff of the NAA in Darwin and Adelaide, NTAS in Darwin and Alice Springs and the Alice Springs Town Library for assistance. Thanks also to all those people who shared their Finke stories with me (see the list at the end of this report). Special thanks go to Margaret Bain and Harold Matasia for recording their memories and to Julie Anderson for her interest and invaluable practical support.

I had planned to present a talk about my research to Finke residents. The talk was, however, cancelled due to sorry business and there were insufficient funds for another visit. So I decided to write this report in Plain English and to deliver it digitally in the hope this will make it easier to read and pass around and so help a museum in Finke become a reality.

The views in this report are the author's. The Aputula Social Club Inc and the people of Finke, past and present may not agree with them.

You can share your thoughts with the author by emailing [meggkel@yahoo.com](mailto:meggkel@yahoo.com) and putting 'Finke History' in the subject box. I would love to hear from you.

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- o Northern Territory Archives Service NTAS NTRS 2991Millgate, Geoff/Millgate Moira Colour slides depicting people and places in Darwin and Central Australia 1951-1971\_item 32\_ Finke P/S [police station] 1955 [view of Finke police station with rainbow in background]
- o National Library of Australia Francesca Ronson Briscoe (wife of John Briscoe) washing clothes at Finke, Northern Territory 1976 [picture] PIC/11529/5 LOC nla.pic-vn4269263
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- Gartrell, Marjorie. Saturday 3 April 1954. Saga of our "mounties" The Sydney Morning Herald, 9.
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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

AIATSIS = Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Studies

A.I.M. = Australian Inland Mission, now Frontier services.

C.L.C. = Central Land Council

FRPA = Finke River Progress Association

MAGNT = Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

NAA = National Archives of Australia

NTAS = Northern Territory Archives Service

RFDS = Royal Flying Doctor Service

SMH = Sydney Morning Herald

## **Image references are like this:**

- o [National Archives of Australia A1200 L14759 Finke Station 1952](#)

## **Report Summary**

A Museum at Finke is a great project which has the capacity to become a – sustainable income generating tourism venture.

A museum in Finke can tell unique stories about a unique place to tourists and locals, Anangu and Arrernte, interstate and international visitors and locals. A museum in Finke could help the local economy grow and create community pride. A museum in Finke will help keep community memories alive.

Finke's history is important to European, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians. The old buildings from the railway days and from the days when the Aputula Housing Company sold its houses to other Aboriginal communities remind everyone of this shared history. A museum will help value the ruins. If people value the ruins because they can tell stories about them they are more likely to look after them.

A museum in Finke will enable the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who currently live in Finke to tell stories about themselves and it will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people to tell stories about Europeans and their history! And that would make a museum in Finke very very special.

A museum at Finke is a long held community dream.

## **Summary of Report Recommendations**

The museum should commence work on:

- Creating street signage/ a pod-walk focussed on heritage buildings in Finke
- Creating an Ellis Bankin Exhibition for the Finke Desert race
- Creating police house exhibitions about:
  - the last camel patrols,
  - Finke's trackers
  - and the discomforts of living in the police house
- Commencing negotiations with other museums and archives about working with Finke Museum as collection storage\development partners.

This work could be done on a voluntary basis, as school projects or with the financial support of government grants. There are many possibilities.



## Introduction

In 2009 I was asked by Peter Roper, on behalf of the Aputula Social Club Inc, to help establish a museum in the old policeman's house at Finke.

Peter said the museum was to tell the history of the Finke district from pre-European times to the present. It was to tell stories about major events like the building of the Overland Telegraph Line and the arrival of the railway.

The museum would sell local history books, souvenirs, art and craft. It would be part of a bigger heritage project which included tourist accommodation in the old fettlers' cottages.

The Aputula Heritage Project would provide income and employment for Finke residents.



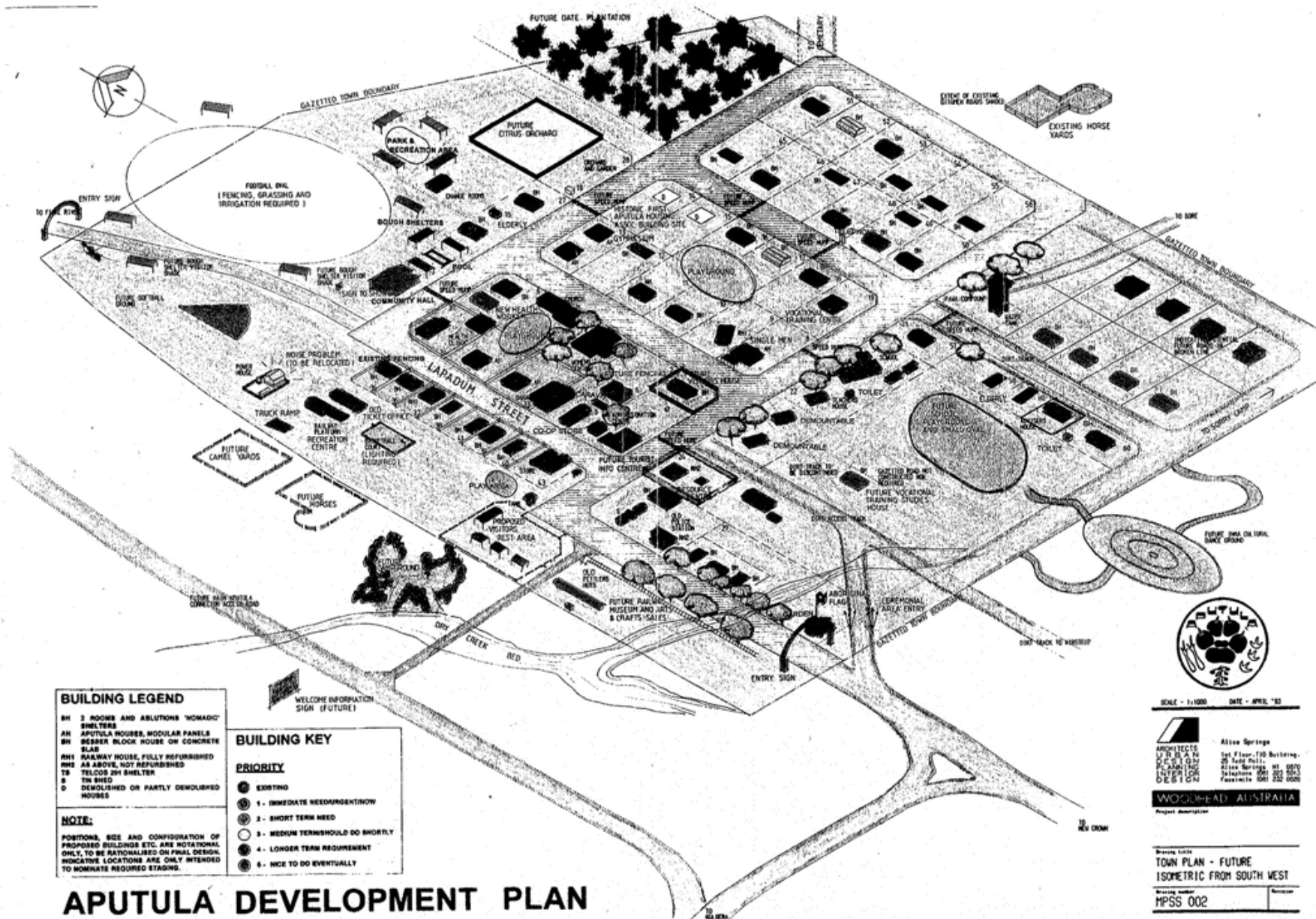
Australian War Memorial Pic No 003376 1940-10-12. CENTRAL AUSTRALIA - FINKE RIVER POLICE STATION AND RESIDENCE



Fettlers Quarters Finke in the 1940s. NAA D1334 F13

The idea of a museum in Finke is not new, though its location and focus has changed a little over time. A 1993 Aputula Development Plan identifies the old fettlers' cottages as a 'future railway museum' with 'arts and crafts sales'. Dr Jocelyn Davies, has written that Finke residents also wanted beds for tourists at this time.

Tourist accommodation and a museum at Finke is a long held community dream.



**BUILDING LEGEND**

BH 2 ROOMS AND ABUTMENTS 'WOMADIC' SHELTERS  
 BH APUTULA HOUSES, MODULAR PANELS  
 BH BESSER BLOCK HOUSE ON CONCRETE SLAB  
 BH1 RAILWAY HOUSE, FULLY REFURBISHED  
 BH2 AS ABOVE, NOT REFURBISHED  
 TS TELCOO SH SHELTER  
 S TR SHED  
 D DEMOLISHED OR PARTLY DEMOLISHED HOUSES

**NOTE:**  
 POSITIONS, SIZE AND CONFIGURATION OF PROPOSED BUILDINGS ETC. ARE NOTATIONAL ONLY. TO BE RATIONALISED ON FINAL DESIGN. INDICATIVE LOCATIONS ARE ONLY INTENDED TO NOMINATE REQUIRED STAGING.

**BUILDING KEY**

**PRIORITY**

● EXISTING  
 1. IMMEDIATE NEED/URGENT NOW  
 2. SHORT TERM NEED  
 3. MEDIUM TERM/SHOULD DO SHORTLY  
 4. LONGER TERM REQUIREMENT  
 5. NICE TO DO EVENTUALLY

# APUTULA DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SCALE - 1:1000 DATE - APRIL '83

ARCHITECTS  
 U B E L A N  
 25 Sand Hill,  
 Alice Springs NT 0870  
 Telephone 081 252 0053  
 Facsimile 081 252 0000

**WOOLHEAD AUSTRALIA**  
 Project Description

Brassie Lint  
 TOWN PLAN - FUTURE  
 ISOMETRIC FROM SOUTH WEST

Drawing Number  
 MPSS 002



## Background

### Museums: What are they? Who are they for? What do they do?

Museums house things - objects, clothes, paper, photographs, preserved plants and animals, documents, films, sound recordings etc. These things – the museum's collection – have something in common. They are used to tell stories.

#### For example:

The museum in the Mbantua Gallery in Alice Springs collects Aboriginal art from the community of Utopia. It uses this art to teach people who are not from Utopia about the Aboriginal art and culture of that place.

The Museum of Central Australia in Alice Springs collects rocks, fossils, dead animals and plants. It uses these things to tell a science story about the centre's natural environment.

Adelaide House, in the middle of the Alice Springs mall, collects objects owned by the Rev John Flynn, the man who started the Royal Flying Doctor Service, whose face is on the \$20 note. The Adelaide House museum uses these objects to tell people about Flynn's life and the building the museum is in.



Residents of Alice Springs and people from other parts of the Northern Territory, Australia and overseas visit these museums usually when they are on holiday.



The uniting church, the same church Margaret Bain worked for runs Adelaide House. This photo shows Adelaide House when it was first built in 1926 before anyone lived at Finke.

Photo: McClelland Collection Adelaide House



## Getting a collection

Museums get things by *buying* them, and/or *finding* things no one owns or *borrowing*, *buying* or *making copies* of things in other collections. Most museums acquire their collection as *gifts* from interested others.

People who give things to museums expect the museum to look after them properly – to make sure their photographs/objects do not get lost, broken, stolen or rot. People who make donations to museums have often owned these things for a very long time, sometimes for generations. They want their gifts to be enjoyed by the whole community.

Some things museums collect – like paper documents, original photographs, audio recordings and clothes need lots of special care. They need to be stored in places that don't get too hot or too cold or too dirty. It costs a lot of money to look after these things properly. Other things – like those made out of metal, and *copies* of paper documents and photos are easier to look after. They still however, need proper care.

It is important to think about what the museum will collect (the collection policy) and where it will store its collection before it starts collecting. A museum should only collect as many things as it knows it can look after properly. It is better to collect a few objects that are well looked after than to collect a lot of objects that are looked after badly.

Things which have an ownership history (called “provenance”), are rare, were owned by someone very famous or are very beautiful are more important than common things or things whose ownership history is unknown. The value of an object or a collection is called its “significance”.

The things a museum collects determine the stories a museum tells.

Good museums tell lots of different stories. Good museums have more things in storage than on display. This way they can change their displays regularly. This encourages visitors to come back again and again.

## Using a collection to tell stories

Working out what stories to tell and how to tell them in entertaining, informative and truthful ways is one of the hardest and most exciting jobs in a museum.

Museums do not just rely on words to tell their stories. They can use pictures, sounds, art, object and document displays, films, songs and even musical and theatrical performances. The best museums use a mix of these things to tell their stories.

Good museums tell stories in ways which encourage visitors to think and talk about their visit for a long time afterwards. This talk brings new people to visit the museum and encourages those who have already visited to return.

Good stories are ones which help people learn more about the world they live in. Good stories surprise people and make them laugh and cry. They answer old questions and encourage people to ask new ones. Good stories remind people of stories they already know. They spark people's memories of the past and help people remember these things in the future.

It is important to know that people who visit museums expect the stories museums tell to be true<sup>1</sup>.

For more information about museums and how they work go to: "Discovering Local History through Museums in Central Australia" at:

[http://www.centralaustralianatourism.com/uploads/File/Object\\_Based\\_Learning\\_Book.pdf](http://www.centralaustralianatourism.com/uploads/File/Object_Based_Learning_Book.pdf)

## **A Museum in Finke – the start of a collection**

When I started this project the Finke museum had no things – no collection. So I began my work by looking for the remains - the photos, objects, documents and recorded memories – of Finke's past.

I looked in books and on the internet, in other museums, libraries and archives. I talked to people who live or used to live in Finke and to people who visited Finke regularly. And when I was in Finke I looked at what could be found on the ground. I did not have time to look everywhere or look closely at everything but I did have time to get a good idea of what things could be used to start a museum collection and of some of the really good stories the museum could tell.

As I looked I made notes and copies of some of the more interesting things I found. I also recorded two long conversations (oral histories interviews) with people whose lives are important to the history of Finke. These are the beginning of a Finke museum collection.

At the moment Finke museum has nowhere safe to put the things I have collected. There is no furniture in the old police house, there is no one employed to look after or collect museum things. I gave lots of the things I found to Peter Roper; other things are still in my house. I will also give copies of the two oral history interviews I did to the Ara Irititja Archive (AIA). They will type the

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that everyone will agree with the truths museums tell or that museums will always get the truth right. This is the subject of much debate. Doing as much as possible to tell the truth is, however, an important part of the reputation museums need to maintain in order to create a sustainable industry. [Pers Com Sue Harlow, Regional Museums Support Officer, MAGNT 2003-4]

interviews and give copies back to the people who did them to make sure everything in the interviews is O.K.

It would be good if all the things I collected were housed in the one place. The Aputula Social Club needs to decide where that place should be. Some suggestions can be found in the section of this report called "Collection Partnerships".

The historical data I collected while I was looking for things has been put into a time-line which can be found at the end of this report.

## **What I found and where.**

I began by looking in government archives. I started here because I wanted to know about the history of the buildings which will become the Finke museum and these buildings were built by the government. As I looked I also learnt a lot about the history of Finke.

## **Police stories in the government archives**

Government documents about Finke are located in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) – in offices in Darwin, Canberra and Adelaide - and in the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) in Alice Springs and Darwin.

Many of the documents in the NAA's collection had not been read since they were created so I had to get the documents "opened" before I could read them. As part of this project all Finke documents have now been opened, though some are marked "open with exception". This means that people are not allowed to look at some things. This is because they contain information which may embarrass people who are still alive. You can look at some of these documents in the NAA's offices in Darwin or you can go on-line to [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au).

The documents in the NAA's collection are full of very useful information (see the time line) about the history of Finke. With few exceptions, however, they are not very nice to look at and so are not very good for putting in a museum display.

## **The last camel police in the Territory**

The exceptions are a small collection of very beautiful black and white photographs taken in 1949, just after WW11. These pictures show Finke's policeman, tracker and their camels getting ready to travel through what the photographer called "the largest police patrol in the world". The photo captions also say that Finke was the last police station in the Northern Territory to use camels.



NAA A1200, L11634 The NAA caption reads: Constable Ron Brown, officer in charge of the Finke Police Station, Northern Territory, with his son on a camel and an Aboriginal tracker. Date 1949.

One of the things a museum in Finke may want to is give the tracker his name.

At the Finke Police Station in the NT a camel team is being packed and prepared for an annual patrol. 1949

Photo number: NAA A1200, L11631



Constable Ron Brown, officer in charge of the Finke Police Station, in Australia's NT, has the largest police patrol in the world.

NAA A1200, L11638

Another thing a museum in Finke could do is reverse these. Copies in other collections suggest that NAA has put them on the web back to front! To, kindly, correct other people's work is also part of what museums do.





Stories about Australia's mounted camel police travelling through vast areas of desert visiting the small groups of people who live there have been told by many different people, in magazines, books and films, in the last 150 years.

The fact that the camel police story has been repeated so often is a sign that it is a good story. Stories which contain the idea of something being the "biggest", "first" or "last" are also much loved by audiences around the world.

## Saga Of Our "Mounties"

By MARJORIE GARTRELL

*In the east a narrow rim of grey spreads slowly, night lightens imperceptibly—pica-ninny daylight.*

IN a clump of bamboos and young swamp gums, a trooper wakens the two men curled near him.

With soft prods of his rifle butt and the quiet commands, "Come on, Cheerful . . . Get moving, Jimmy," to his black-trackers, the trooper stirs himself wearily.

The trio advance cautiously, their eyes filtering the gloom for alien shadows, their ears ready for the low cry of a bird that will not come from—a bird. With mud oozing about their knees they cross the shallow swamp and enter their camp unchallenged.

During the night the Warrawagee men had rushed the camp in an abortive attempt to rescue captive kinsfolk.

Warriors all, they had dogged the patrol for days, swearing to eat the kidney fat of the trooper and his trackers.

The trooper notes, without comment, his spear-peppered mosquito net, rigged as decoy the previous sunset, and sets about preparing breakfast for the patrol and its unwilling guests, his still warm rifle close beside him.

A thousand-mile patrol this, and a hard one. It had begun three months ago with the "mulga wire" whispering the death of a crocodile shooter. Quiet, insistent whispers blaming the Warrawagee tribe.

Two troopers and five trackers had been the original party. Urgent events elsewhere had reduced it and Williams's small patrol had gone on alone, matching its wit and skill against the cunning of tribesmen who knew their tribal lands intimately.

When the country became too rugged for horses the patrol left them behind and proceeded on foot, knowing that in the jungle

men coming and proceeding on foot, knowing that in the jungle pressing about them unseen eyes watched, and that news of the "piece" was passed on to the fugitives, as smoke on the ridges indicated.

Undeterred, Williams forged ahead, tracking, feinting, anticipating with forced night marches until he had flushed the quarry.

Then—a stealthy dawn invasion of a hostile camp a hundred strong, the arrest of the murderers and the securing of unwilling witnesses. After that the trail back, where eternal vigilance was the price of their lives.

SUCH incidents are thickly scattered through official records of our Northern Territory Mounted Police.

Established in the 70s to protect construction gangs from wild aborigines, the original force of seven men was kept busy tracing native murderers, cattle spearkers and settling tribal fights.

Population grew with mining and cattle industries. So did the force and its duties. Police camps were stationed on the many goldfields and other key points.

As the only Government representative in his district, the trooper became registrar of everything from miners' licences to marriage licences, in addition to being policeman and friendly counsellor of residents and travellers, black or white.

Of the 19 police districts in the sparsely settled Territory, nine are mechanised, the vehicles being equipped with two-way radio. Aeroplanes are sometimes used.

Cars speed up and otherwise facilitate police work, but the

rough nature of the country limits their use to certain areas, so the trooper still rides the versatile horse.

Finke, with 77,000 square miles, is the largest police district. It is south of Alice Springs, and encompasses mostly dry

trict. It is south of Alice Springs, and encompasses mostly dry, semi-desert country which has been the death of many a good horse and its rider. Here the force maintains its only camel patrol.

WHEN a trooper sets out on patrol he will be weeks or months on the trail, as his district averages 15,000 square miles.

The self-sufficiency of his plant requires careful planning, and in his packs will be food, spare clothing, medical supplies, shoe-



A black tracker.

ing outfit, rifle, ammunition and numerous other things, including mail for far-flung settlers.

His companions will be one or more black-trackers and a horse-boy to look after pack animals and spare mounts.

Where he patrols no roads go. The primitive land itself is more formidable than the average wrongdoer.

In addition to his ordinary police training, the trooper must have the bushman's qualities of being able to live off the land, and find his way about lonely, trackless, often waterless country.

Formerly, the trooper rode about 4,000 miles a year. To-day amenities such as wireless transceivers, with which every police

This story was published in the Sydney Morning Herald Saturday on 3 April 1954, on page 9

Other stories I have seen or heard about but have been able to find the exact references for include:

'The Last Camel Patrol' – a photocopy is the Stuart Town Gaol in Alice Springs.

"Citation" 1965 – also in the Stuart Town Gaol museum display.

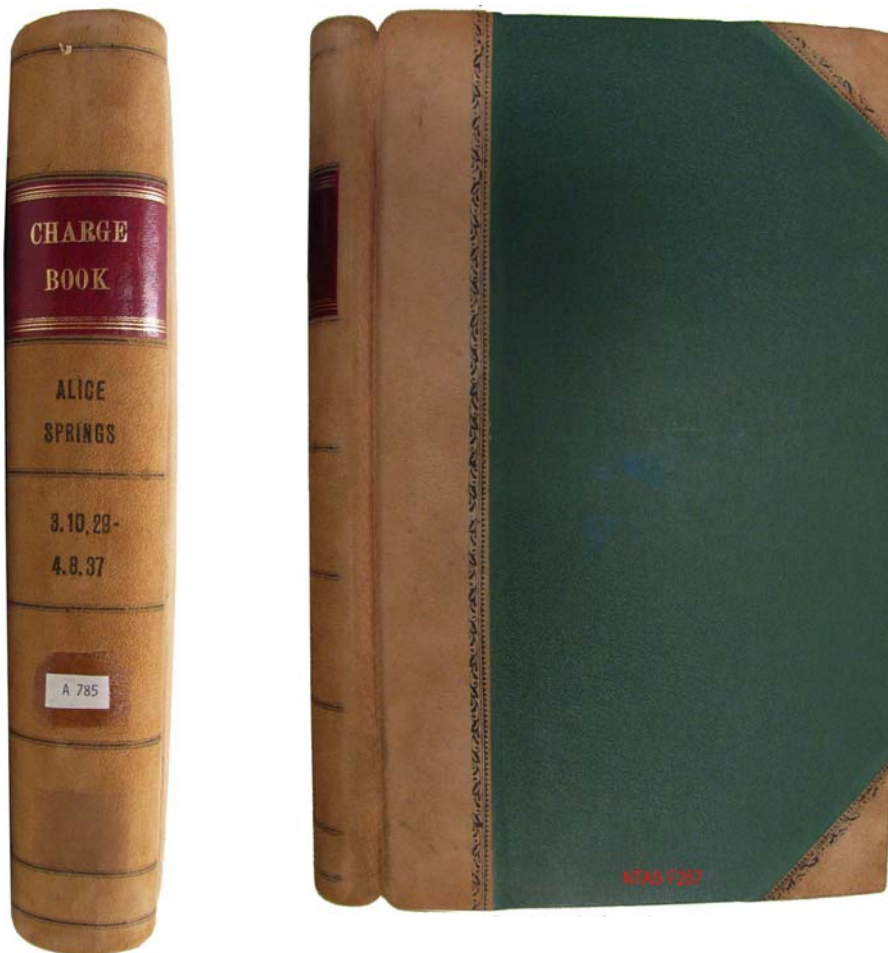
Walkabout Magazine in the 1950s

Australian Geographic 2010 – go to [www.http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/editors-chat-the-end-of-camel-patrols.htm](http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/journal/editors-chat-the-end-of-camel-patrols.htm)



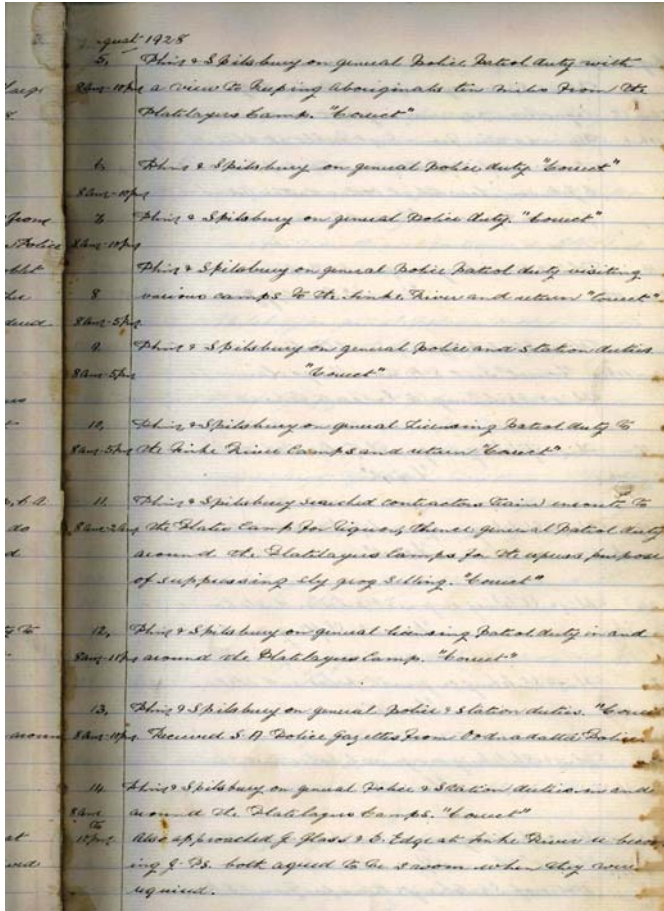
People also love to hear stories from the mouths of those who lived them and, for the story of Finke's camel police, this is actually possible. NTAS has three sound recordings of Finke's camel police talking about their work. These policemen also talk about what it was like to live in Finke in the old days. One of these recordings is of Ron Brown, the policeman in the NAA photos above. In this interview Ron talks glowingly about the skills of police trackers and the important contribution they made to Territory policing especially when searching for people lost in the bush. In another interview Tony Kelly talks for a long time about the very last camel patrol which left Finke in 1953.

As well as the sound recordings, NTAS has the canvas map Ron Brown used on his patrols and some of the photographs he took while he was living at Finke. NTAS also has the beautiful leather bound police books which all Finke's police, including Ron Brown, wrote in every day as part of their work. Handwriting, like footprints, is not only lovely to look at but often tells us something about the person who did the writing; it is a marker of their character. This mix of sound, image and lovely-to-look-at information are the perfect building blocks for creating a richly textured museum display.



Photos: The big leather books that the Northern Territory Police wrote in until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Northern Territory Archives Service, Police Station Alice Springs, Charge Books, Vol 1 F257.



This is half a page from the police journal which was kept when the railway line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs was built.

Two policemen were stationed on the line. They wrote in this journal every day.

The journal tells us that the main things they did were to make sure that no illegal grog was taken into the railway worker's camps and keep the "natives" away from the workers.

Image: Northern Territory Archives Service: Police Station, Alice Springs, F256, Police Journal, 1938-1974, digital image of a page in the journal, 1928-1929

Although NTAS does not allow any of these items to go outside their offices, they will make copies (like the one above) on request. These copies can then be used to create a display. The display could be in the grounds of the police block and/or on the internet. Or some things could be put in a display in the grounds and other things in a display on the internet. Neither of these displays would need people to look after them. Both displays would encourage travellers to spend time on the police block. The more time visitors spend in a place the more likely they are to spend money. They may buy drinks and food at the local shop or buy beads and paintings from local artists they meet in the street. All the money visitors spend helps the economy of Finke grow.

Putting something on the internet which people can see before they leave their homes to start travelling could be the thing that helps them to decide to visit Finke rather than Kulgera or some of other place.

For one example of museum displays on the internet go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOUtkuyEVIU>

## Murder

The handwritten police journals in NTAS are also a rich source of other stories, some silly and some deadly serious, about the work at the Finke police station.

One story, as reported by a Sydney newspaper in 1950, involved the discovery of a "sugar bag containing a human leg" at Rumbalara railway siding north of Finke. Ron Brown was sent to investigate amidst claims that a "tribe of aboriginal cannibals" had "once lived in the area". The leg turned out to have belonged to a camel! [

Murder was on the agenda on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1957 when Finke police were instructed to look for a missing car and its occupants. The occupants, relations of well known Centralian pastoralist and author Bryan Bowman, were eventually found dead in what became known as the Sundown murders. This was the 1950s equivalent of the Falconio incident which took place near Barrow Creek a few years ago. Finke police and trackers played an important part in the lengthy murder investigation which was reported in newspapers around the country. After some good detective work the murderer was eventually caught and hung in Adelaide Gaol, now a museum.

There is sufficient material – photos, journal accounts, newspaper articles, books - for the story of the Sundown murders and the role Finke police and trackers played in the investigation to be a self contained museum exhibition.

As the popularity of Friday night crime on the ABC TV shows, murder is a topic people are always interested in. Adelaide Gaol Museum and Finke museum could create a joint exhibition. A partnership like this could help Finke people learn about museum work, as well as increasing access to government grants. It would also encourage people who saw the exhibition in Adelaide to visit Finke. The Sundown murder story is also good for attracting those older travellers – the kind who travel the back roads of Australia - who remember the Sundown murders because they were alive when they took place. Museums help keep community memories alive. Old people love remembering things.

### **The Leg In The Sugar Bag Mystery**

DARWIN, Wednesday.—  
This is the story of The Leg  
in the Sugar Bag.

**CHAPTER 1.**—An A.B.C. news bulletin reports that miners working near Rumbalara railway siding, some miles north of Finke, found the sugar bag containing a human leg.

**CHAPTER 2.**—Newspapers headline the news, adding grimly that a tribe of aboriginal cannibals once lived in the area.

**CHAPTER 3.**—Off to investigate go Northern Territory police. So does Finke River Constable Ron Brown, who heard the A.B.C. report.

**CHAPTER 4.**—The mystery is solved. Constable Brown returns to his station. No murder

Sydney Morning Herald Thursday  
14 September 1950, page 3

To see an on-line exhibition about the Sundown murders go to:

<http://www.inthelineofduty.com.au/timeline.asp?iID=1038>

To see a photo of the police and trackers working to solve the case go to:

<http://www.newsphotos.com.au/ImageDetail.asp?RefNum=22485779>



### Lost in the desert

Many of the stories in the police journals are about people getting lost. For example, the journals tell the very sad story about how the police and trackers were too late to save the life of an old man called Larry Doolan when he got lost in the bush. Bill McKinnon, the policeman who looked for Larry took photos of his dogs. These photos, matched up with the sections of the police journal, would make a good small museum display. This story may distress people. A museum in Finke would need to decide if it wanted to tell this story or not.

Museum workers need to take care when reading the police journals. Some of the language in the journals is now considered offensive to Aboriginal people; the journals also name people who get into trouble with the law and names people who have died. Museum workers would need to talk to lots of people in Finke to make sure that it was OK to use these stories before putting them in a museum display.

One of the happier lost people stories in the Finke police journal is about a German tourist who, in the 1950s, gets so lost he thinks he will die. When the Finke tracker finds him he is so happy he goes straight to Alice Springs where he gets so drunk he is put in gaol. Ron Brown the policeman who helped find him meets him again in gaol! This story is also told in two oral history interviews, the perfect combination of items from which to create an on-site or on-line museum display. This is a story which would especially appeal to tourists from Germany. Everyone loves to hear stories about fellow countrymen when they are a long way from home! There may well be other stories of lost foreigners in the police journals which could be used in a Finke museum.

### Police, crime and jail trails

The German tourist is only one of many people in the Finke police journals who also end up in jail in Alice Springs gaol. Both of these old jails – the little one next to the court house in Parson's street, and the big one below Billy Goat hill – are now museums. Working together with these museums to create joint museum displays and tourist trail activities from these stories would benefit all three museums. Telling stories like this in the places – the jails and the police station - where they happened makes them even more powerful.

Stuart Town Gaol circa 1917. Otto Schirn Collection from the Strehlow Research Centre



Older tourists who travel in their own cars on Australia's back roads and who are the main group of people who currently visit Finke in the tourist season, are now looking for "clustered" entertainment. That means they want to spend more time in the one area doing a variety of different things. This is because petrol has been getting more expensive and many older people lost a lot of money in the recent global financial crisis. The more time they spend in one area the smaller their travel costs. Australians, who also form the greater percentage of these self drive tourists love visiting jails, perhaps Australia started out as a gaol. Creating a trail of jail and Finke police station stories in central Australia is likely to interest lots of the people.

As stated previously, however, the museum would have to be careful that it did not embarrass people who are still alive. If it did NTAS would stop the museum from using its collection in museum displays.

There are however so many stories in the police journals that finding ones that do not cause embarrassment should be no problem.

#### **Rations, corroborees and other police work**

The first policemen at Finke did more than just solve murders, look for lost people and enforce the law. They also inspected stock, registered births, marriages and deaths, looked after mines, protected birds, collected government taxes and generally "flew the flag" as Ron Brown called it, for the work of government. In Finke, the policeman's wives also ran the post office.



There is a very small but very beautiful collection of photographs which illustrates some of this other police work. These are photos of some of the old Aboriginal people painted up

for a corroboree. The people danced when Charlotte Waters police station was closed and again when Bill McKinnon, the photographer, left Finke. In his oral history interview Bill described Charlotte Waters as "one of the happiest stations I had" and these "old blacks" as people whose company he really enjoyed<sup>2</sup>. These

Constable Ron Brown about to leave Finke Police Station for his annual camel patrol of the NT, 20.1.1949, here shown in sand dune country, typical of his beat. A NT Policeman is Warden of Mines, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Collector of Public Monies, Inspector of Stock and Protector of Aborigines. NAA A1200, L11635

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<sup>2</sup> Northern Territory Archives Service NTAS NTRS 226 TS 789. McKinnon, Bill Transcript Oral History Interview Side a  
Tape 1 Page 8

photographs and Bill's memories are great materials for a very small but beautiful exhibition. Someone might also know, from looking at the photos, what songs accompanied this dance. It would wonderful if the songs could be sung again, recorded and included in the display. This small display could be put inside the police house at Finke or on the internet.

Tourist surveys and the increasing growth of the Aboriginal art industry show that visitors to central Australia want to learn about traditional Aboriginal culture. The Finke museum would, however, have to decide whether it was OK to put photos of deceased Aboriginal people "painted up" on display.

### **Looks good! Not good to live in! The story of life *inside* the police house**

As well as the stories about police work, I also found some wonderful recordings of Finke police describing what it was like to live in what one Sydney journalist described as the "surprisingly neat policeman's bungalow residence, painted green and white"<sup>3</sup>. Though the house looked nice from the outside, it was, according to several police, horrible to live in.

Bill McKinnon the first policeman to live in the house complained that it had "no comforts at all"! Unlike the "top quality brick buildings" at Charlotte Waters where he had previously lived, the police house at Finke was made of hot "galvanized iron" with a "lino" floor which was so "hot on a hot summer's day that you couldn't walk on them barefooted"<sup>4</sup>.



Finke police station and outbuildings, 1939; Trackers camp in background.

Northern Territory Archives Service  
Photographic proof sheets, 1979-1985,  
William McKinnon. NTRS 234CP484/1

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<sup>3</sup> Gunner, Sydney Morning Herald, 9th August 1941

<sup>4</sup> NTAS NTRS 1987 TS 789 side A tape 1 page 8 & 9

Tony Kelly, who lived in the house fifteen years after Bill, describes how even the spiders, who haunted the house in plague proportions, died from heat exhaustion during the summer. In winter, the pot belly stove which was in his office turned the room into a “furnace” at the same time as it left the rest of the house freezing cold!“ Top class accommodation” he says to the interviewer, “not”!<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, Ron Brown, who lived in the house just before Tony Kelly, thought differently. Comparing the house to police accommodation at Harts Range where he had also lived, Ron described Finke as “a comfortable home set in a very large garden, lawns, fruit tree ... it was most pleasant”.<sup>6</sup> The difference in opinion may be because Ron was lucky enough to live in the house during a wet season and before the start of Finke’s water crisis (see below) when it was easy to grow fantastic flowers and vegetables in Finke’s sandy soils.

Laurie Kennedy, on the other hand, who lived in the same house twenty years later and during the time when water supply problems plagued the community, described it as a nightmare of ‘discomfort’. The only way the Kennedy’s could get hot water was by the wood stove. This made the house impossibly hot in summer and failed to heat the house properly in winter. The Kennedy’s clothes were washed in an old copper with a fire underneath it years after city women had electric washing machines. It was hot work in Finke’s hot summers. Laurie Kennedy goes on to describe how the house had no air-conditioning, the fridge ran on kerosene and there was no protection from desert dust. He remembers how during one particularly dry period a dust storm blew fine red dirt all through the family’s belongings while the front garden looked like a sand dune<sup>7</sup>. Documents in the NAA show that the police paid rent for the privilege of both living in the house and using its “old fashioned” equipment. NAA F1 75/2197

The story of the government house which looks nice from the outside but is a nightmare to live in is another great place based museum story because it allows visitors to laugh at government incompetence something, rightly or wrongly, many people like to do.

This story also suggests that, though Europeans by shocked by the look of the wurlies the Finke’s Aboriginal residents were living in, they were in actual fact, probably much cooler than the flash looking houses the government had built for the Europeans. The shade underneath the big railway water tank where many of the people who lived on the sand dune gathered during the hottest part of the day undoubtedly was.

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<sup>5</sup> Northern Territory Archives Service NTRS 1942, CD 422 Kelly, Tony Oral History Interview see Disc 1 track 2

<sup>6</sup> Brown and Studdy-Clift 1990)

<sup>7</sup> Northern Territory Archives Service NTAS CD 423)

*But hey ... what's new?*

Architects say that this is usually the case, that people who have lived in an environment for a very long time design more comfortable houses than newcomers. It is a point of view which is not generally known and so would make a great topic for a museum exhibition. It would teach visitors something new and it's a story which might make non-Aboriginal people look at the world and at the way Aboriginal people live in new ways.



Aboriginal Camp  
near Finke. Shows  
two wiltjas.  
Caroline Hamilton,  
1967  
Northern Territory  
Library Service

The idea that Aboriginal housing at Finke was actually better than European designed houses also emerges from the way Antony McPhee tells the story of how his father worked with Finke residents in the 1970s to design the Aputula space frame house. Antony says that though many outsiders criticized the space frame house because they didn't like how it looked, it was much more appropriate to Aboriginal lifestyles than the more "whitefella" looking houses the government later built<sup>8</sup>.

Telling the story of the poorly designed police house alongside the story of the Aputula space frame house and the establishment of the Aputula housing company in the 1970s would also create a link between the history of the "European" township of Finke and the modern "Aboriginal" township of "Aputula".

Telling this story in the museum and then directing people to look at the remains of the Aputula Housing Company's buildings in Finke will also encourage people to walk around the town creating more opportunities to meet local artists and buy food, drink and ice-creams at the local shop.

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<sup>8</sup> McPhee, Antony. Nov-Dec 2007



Surveys of tourists say that they want to meet and talk with Aboriginal Australians. Creating links between displays inside a Finke museum and other areas of Finke Township would be the perfect opportunity to enable this to happen. Studies around the world though, also show that if locals do not want to interact with tourists conflict results.

In fact Deidre McNiel, wife of John McNiel who helped create the Aputula Housing Project, told me a very funny story about a time when this happened in Finke itself. According to Deirdre everyone in Finke got sick and tired of train tourists taking photos of Aboriginal people. So one day the publican collected every camera in the community and then gave them out to as many Aboriginal residents as he could find. When the train came in the passengers were greeted by a long row of Aboriginal people taking photos of them! While this action didn't stop the train tourists from taking photos the next time the train was in, it made everyone in Finke laugh and feel better about themselves. It stopped a fight between tourists and locals.

The community needs to talk about how everyone feels about people walking around their town, taking photos, looking in yards and asking questions. It's what tourists do. The community also needs to think about what it will do if visitors are rude to locals and if locals are rude to tourists. Tourists rely a lot on what other tourists tell them about whether or not to visit a place. This is particularly true of the kinds of tourists most likely to visit Finke – the self-drive grey nomads. Good stories encourage visits. Bad stories destroy them. In the process they may also destroy different group's opinions of each other. Tourism can create good will and bad between different groups of people. It needs to be treated with respect.

### **The police story in objects and family collections**

As explained above, the best museum displays use as many different varieties of things from the past to tell stories. Government archives do not usually collect objects. So I had to look in other places to see if there were any objects which a museum in Finke could collect.

I began by talking to Pat Studdy-Clift who wrote "Bush Justice" a book about Ron Brown's life at Finke. Through Pat I talked to Ron Brown's daughter who current residents of Finke may remember as a very small child.

Ron's daughter was very excited about the idea of a museum at Finke. Annabelle, as she is called, still has her father's photograph albums. These include many photographs of Finke as well as photographs he took when he visited Ernabella mission. Annabelle was very happy for the museum to use copies of her father's photos in its work. Obtaining scanned copies of these photos should be one of the first things museum workers do.



Ron Brown – Finke  
Policeman from the  
family's collection.

Annabelle also told me that her brother has a number of objects associated with her father's police work. I did not talk to the brother about what he has or whether or not he would be willing to donate these objects to a museum in Finke because the museum must have a safe place to store anything it collects *before* it starts collecting them. The museum would have to be very very certain that it could look after these precious family objects properly. For some ideas about how this could be done please see the section of this report headed "Collection Partnerships".

To have Ron's objects on display in the place where they were used, accompanied by the photographs and sound recordings of when he used them would make the Finke museum very very special.

I also heard about several other policemen who lived in the police house who are still alive who may well have objects associated with their lives in Finke which they would be willing to give to a Finke museum. These people should be contacted when there is a really safe place to store these precious family objects.

Contacting these people would also provide a great opportunity to do some more oral history recordings about their memories of life in the police house and would also enable the museum to record the memories of their wives whose voices are not represented in the NTAS collection.

Police wives did a lot of unpaid work around the police station such as distributing rations while their husbands were away on patrol and nursing sick people in small communities, like Finke, where there were no nurses or doctors. Other voices missing from the NTAS collection which it would be good for the museum to record would be the voices of the children who lived in the police house and the Aboriginal women who worked in the house as cleaners. The voices of police trackers and their families are also missing from the record.

Collecting new recordings, photos, and objects and using them in museum displays is an important part of museum work.



Another photo from the Brown family collection. This photo is old and fading and the colour is a bit odd! Part of the work museums do is to fix up old photos on the computer so that they look as good as new!

### **The police story in film**

The ABC has made two films about police work in Finke. One was filmed in the 1970s, the other, which involved the same policeman – Laurie Kennedy - was filmed at the beginning of this century. These films could be put on TV screens in the police house for visitors to look at.

Copies of the films can be bought from the ABC. The museum would also, however, have to pay the ABC money to put the films on public display. This can be very expensive.

The museum could try asking the ABC to waive these fees or try to apply for government grants to pay the display fees. The museum would, however, have to think about whether spending the money in this way would take too much money away from other activities – like paying museum workers, collection storage costs, doing research or creating more than one display.

The stories described above, of which there are many, all relate to the history of the buildings on the police block, the people who lived there and the work they did. A museum located in the old police house at Finke could decide just to tell police stories. If it did this it would only collect those things – documents, photos, objects – which had something to do with police life and work. Telling only police stories may limit the kinds of people wanting to visit the museum to only those people who are interested in police work.

So, since there is no other museum in the area, a museum in Finke could also decide to tell the story of the development of the whole town. Telling town stories will increase the numbers and kinds of people wanting to visit the museum and create more interest amongst locals. The more interest in the museum in Finke the more likely the whole community is to ensure that the museum and its collection are looked after properly.

## Town stories – what makes Finke special?

Museums which tell stories about a particular place, like the National Museum of Australia or a museum in Finke can create community pride.

These museums create pride by telling stories about why their place is special, about why it is like no other place on this earth.

So what makes Finke special?

Kim Doohan, one of the anthropologists who worked on the Finke land claim in the 1970s wrote that ‘the creation of an Aboriginal community’ Finke “out of a former European township is unique in the Aboriginal experience”.<sup>9</sup>

I disagree. The fact that Finke was once a European town and is now Aboriginal is unusual but not “unique”. Aboriginal towns like Wiluna<sup>10</sup> in Western Australia, Marree and Oodnadatta in South Australia, to name but three were also once European.

So what makes Finke different from these towns? What makes Finke like no other place in Australia?

I would argue that Finke is unique because unlike Wiluna which sprang into existence with the discovery of gold, or Marree and Oodnadatta which became thriving centres because they were located at the end of the railway line, Finke was nurtured into existence by the will of its inhabitants – both European and Aboriginal – often against the express wishes of government and in the absence of any obvious natural resources including that most essential sustainer of life, an easily accessible water supply.

Finke began its life eighty five years ago, not as a ‘service centre’ on the railway line between Oodnadatta and Alice Springs, as popular histories of Finke state, but as a very small working men’s camp, a bit like a remote road maintenance gang, except that the fettlers, as the railway workers were called, lived in

Why is it important for a city to have a city museum?

People live in their memories. Cities do too.

A city has to be one of a kind, not like any other, and this should permeate the city fabric ... It is very important to explain a little about what went before to the people who live there. To develop awareness and a sense of belonging.

Nazan Olcer Director, Mardin City Museum  
a museum in a very remote region of Turkey  
from Karahan, Julide and Kacmaz, Mehmet ‘Cities Live in their  
Memories’ Skyline –October 2009

<sup>9</sup> Doohan, Kim 1992. One family, different country: the development and persistence of an Aboriginal community at Finke, Northern Territory. University of Sydney: Oceania Monograph p2

<sup>10</sup> Howie-Willis, Ian. 1994. *Wiluna* in *The encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, edited by D. Horton: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Aboriginal Studies Press.



concrete buildings not tents. These men lived at Finke without family. Exactly who they were, where they came from and how long particular individuals stayed at Finke Siding is not known. It seems unlikely though, that any of them would have made Finke a permanent home.



These photos belonged to Joe Davis, one of the people who helped build the railway. They were taken sometime between 1927-1929.

Next to this photo he wrote:

*1929- Strong Selected men who worked hard.*

The railway was built by horse and hand. NTRS 573\_item\_57

Next to this photo Joe wrote:

*"Water Carriers – Abminga – Fink".*

It looks like these women were helping to build the railway but we don't know for sure! Part of the work of a museum in Finke would be to ask around to see if anyone knows who these women are and what they were doing.

NTAS NTRS 573\_item49



Section of the Base Camp at Rumbalara

NTAS NTRS 573\_item36

The nearest police and postal services to the working men's camp at Finke were at Charlotte Waters. The district's cattle trucking yards and railway station were at Rumbalara. Finke's only regular European visitors were a small handful of station owners who loaded goods on and off the train. Car travellers were rare. The road to Alice went via Kulgera.



Another Joe Davis photo he wrote: "The Ghan leaving Rumbalara Railway station late 1928"  
NTAS NTRS 573\_item 41

Aboriginal people, on the other hand, started visiting Finke siding from the moment it was built. Professor Elkin, a famous anthropologist from Sydney, saw 50 Aboriginal people from the Musgrave Ranges camping at Finke in 1930. According to Elkin, they were getting their water and food from the fettlers. What they gave the fettlers in return is not documented though there were many possibilities for trade including dingo scalps, aboriginal artefacts and metal knives. Kim Doohan, the anthropologist from the 1970s wasn't sure who these first Aboriginal residents of Finke were nor did she know how long they stayed.

The first major change to the character of the working men's camp took place nearly a decade after the railway was built when the police station at Charlotte Waters was closed down and the policeman, trackers, their families and the station's "aged and infirm" Aborigines moved to Finke. The change prompted 32 of Finke district's European residents to petition the government for postal services. This was only the first of many successful resident requests for services. A rumour that the railway station at Rumbalara might be moved to Finke however, was quickly squashed!"



I'm not entirely sure whether these men are fettlers or other residents of Finke district because the photo caption only says "Portrait of four men, Finke, Northern Territory, 1939". But the photograph, is part of a collection of photographs in the National Library of Australia taken by a man called Clarence Bernhardt who loved taking photos of railways and their workers. He also took the photograph of the men boxing. The boxing photo is labelled "Finke railway camp, Northern Territory, 1939 which is why I think all these men are fettlers. We don't, at the moment, know any of their names.







Finke Siding 1939 Hutchesson Collection courtesy Graham Ride GRS1850. Bill McKinnon called Finke a “wayside camp” – see photo caption in NTRS 234 at CP500/3

**The 1938 post office petition** is a simple, interesting and I think very beautiful document – not beautiful like the Yolgnu Bark petitions which are works of art, but beautiful because it reeks of “character”. The typed request, written in the official language of petitions, is followed by three handwritten columns which record the names, addresses and occupations of the Finke district’s small European population. The torn edges and ink splat on the page the fettlers have signed show how much it was handled as the signatures were collected. The dates show that the petition was written after the McKinnon’s had moved into their new house at Finke.

This list is a ‘who’s who’ of the local community which speaks loudly of the enormous social changes which have taken place in European women’s lives in the sixty years since it was written. It also speaks in a powerfully quiet way about the hardships of desert life and it may also say something about who could read and write well and who couldn’t at this time. The petition is a bit like an animal track – it doesn’t speak for itself, it needs to be read. This is what makes it a perfect item for a museum display.

The change in European women’s lives is found in the fact that all the women in the petition, whether they are married to a pastoralist, missionary or policeman, are described as doing “home duties”. They work at home, unpaid, something very few married European women do now. Indeed there were laws in Australia at the time which made it illegal for married women to work in some jobs.



24 JAN 1939  
C. 65  
Finke Siding, N.T.  
11th. November, 1938.

The Postmaster,  
Alice Springs.

Dear Sir,

We, the undersigned residents of Finke Siding and district, hereby request that a non-official post office be opened at the Police Station, Finke Siding.

We all do our rail business at Finke Siding. Our only postal facility is afforded for a 20 minute period once a fortnight while the "pay" train is at the Siding. The provision of such facilities as money orders, Commonwealth Savings Bank, postal notes etc. would be very much appreciated.

Mrs. McKinnon, the Telephone Office keeper at Finke Siding has been interviewed and she is prepared to accept the appointment of Postmistress.

Yours faithfully,

Name	Address	Occupation
William McKinnon	Finke Siding	Constable
DM. McKinnon	"	Home Duties
A. M. Layton	"	Home Duties
H. G. Biscoe	Finke Siding	Pumper & Examiner
"	"	"
Herbert J. Hitt	St. Lavanagh Str.	Home Duties
Mr. Hitt	St. Lavanagh Station	Grazier
Mr. Hitt	St. Lavanagh Str.	Contractor
Mrs. Hitt	St. Lavanagh Str.	Home Duties
R. Hughes	Ernabella	Businessman
P. A. Taylor	x Ernabella	Presbyterian Missionary
G. W. Evans	x Fennore	Grazier
J. B. Young	Ernabella	Stockman
J. G. Young	Ernabella	Home duties
P. Taylor	Ernabella	Home Duties
T. Harold Brown	Shirley Hall	Grazier
D. Brown	"	Home Duties
D. Fuller	Kulgera	Well Sinker
A. Hamill	Kulgera	Motor Driver
H. J. Cuthard	Kulgera	Home Duties
Prof. L. L. L. L.	Kulgera	Pastor
S. H. Stanes	Edwards Station	Pastor
S. J. Stanes	Edwards Station	Pastor

Curiously it seems that the government had always planned to put a part time post office at Finke. The petition suggests that the residents of the district didn't know this. NAA D961 C1960/90

Name	Address	Occupation
Stanley	Erldunda Station	Home duties
Arnold	Finke	cook.
D. W. W. W.	Finke	Fettler
L. Blatchford	Finke	Fettler
R. O. O. O.	Finke	Fettler
B. H. Kluck.	Finke	Fettler
R. V. Evans	Finke	Linesman
H. R. Wells	Finke	Br.
C. M. M. Wood	Finke	Fettler
J. W. Arnold	Finke	Fettler

Page 2, 1938 Post Office Petition. This is just a photo of the document. A museum would put a scan and/or facsimile of the document on display. Not the real thing! NAA D961 C1960/90



The challenges of desert life can be seen if you know that four of the signatures on the petition belong to the people who established Ernabella mission one year earlier. The mission was founded when there was a huge drought in the Peterman Ranges which killed many Western Desert peoples. It seems likely that many more people would have died if the mission hadn't been there.

Two of the other signatures on the petition belong to the Browns of Shirley Well, a young couple trying to make a living from cattle in one of the hardest and driest pieces of land in the country. A few years after they wrote their names on this piece of paper the Browns were killed when the roof of their house collapsed on top of them. Their young child was saved by an Aboriginal woman who ran all the way to Ernabella mission with him in her arms. This is a very sad but very powerful story about the bonds which exist in times of tragedy between people of very different cultures. The European versions of the story I have read do not give the name of the Aboriginal woman or say how long it took her to get to Ernabella or what she and the child ate along the way or even if there was enough food and water for them at this time of big drought. People in Ernabella or Finke may be able to fill in the details. This story could be told alongside the signatures on the petition. It's a story for station owners, people from the mission and tourists. It's the kind of story which could help create a sense of community between everyone. Telling it in the museum will help keep the story alive.



The Brown Family of Shirley Well, carting water with a camel and their house. Photos courtesy of the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame, Alice Springs



One final comment on the petition, can you see the wobble in the handwriting of the ninth signature down? I think that this person – a Mr Hughes who is a bushman at Ernabella - cannot write very well. I wonder where he came from and why he didn't write very well. Maybe he never went to school. In fact, I could make up all sorts of stories about the people whose names are on the petition, stories based how they write their names. I could even check my theory against the reality by asking current Finke residents who remember these old people or who have stories about them if my ideas are true. The signatures are a starting point for telling local stories. Like tracks, they tell us something about the people who made them.

Finally, the 1938 post office petition also shows how small the population of the Finke District was at the time the police station was moved to Finke siding. No wonder the government had to be reminded to provide the siding with services!

### **Aboriginal migration to Finke Siding**

Police documents also show that the drought in the Peterman Ranges, mentioned above, increased the Aboriginal population of Finke siding at this time.

Bill McKinnon wrote away for extra rations because some of the “aged and infirm” from a big new Aboriginal camp at Horseshoe Bend - “for years broke up”- moved to the new ration depot at Finke. Bill also says that Aboriginal people moved to the siding when a “Mr and Mrs Stott left Maryvale”<sup>11</sup>. I'm not sure what this means – people living in Finke might know. Did the Stott's sell out to some one who was not friendly to Aboriginal people? Or did they abandon Maryvale station altogether, perhaps because of the drought? New Crown station was, government documents show, closing down at this time<sup>12</sup>. Finding out the answers to questions like this, filling in the gaps in local history, is also part of what museum's do.

Aboriginal visitors to Finke also increased as people from Ernabella made regular visits to pick up supplies from the train. Finke was becoming a district hub.

### **A world at war**

A year after the post office petition the “world” went to war, sparking even more activity at the Siding as the number of trains on the line increased from 3 to 56 a week. The central Australian railway was the main transport route for thousands of soldiers from the southern states going to war in the Pacific. More trains meant more fettlers and better communications. It was in this period that the siding got its first repeater station operator. How the aboriginal population of Finke

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<sup>11</sup> Rowse, Tim. 1998 *White flour, white power: from rations to citizenship in central Australia* Cambridge University Press p52

<sup>12</sup> [NAA D961 [C1960/90](#)]

interacted with the passing traffic is not known but would make a great topic for future research and a museum display. As the growing tourist trade to Gallipoli in Turkey shows, Australians love war stories. More research needs to be done on this story including interviewing any Aboriginal people who visited or were living at the siding during the war years.

Sometime during the war, though the records do not make it clear exactly when, the siding got its first privately owned business - a shop run by a Bob and Jenny Gregory who owned 5 milking cows and who delivered goods to local stations and Ernabella Mission. After the war the mission, with a population of 300 people in 1949, was the Gregory's largest customer and the place which kept the Gregory's in business<sup>13</sup>. The stations and fettlers do not seem to be big enough to support private enterprise on their own. For this reason I would call Ernabella, not Finke siding, the real capital of the Southern Arrernte lands.

### **A pub and a race course ... what else does an outback town need?**

Two years after the war finished the Gregory's sold their business to Ted Colson<sup>14</sup>, that 'grand Territorian' who became famous for being the first European to cross the Simpson Desert. The Finke hotel, also owned by Colson, was opened in January 1947. Colson's brother ran a boring business and a Frank Quinn carted things around the district. Each of these businesses had Aboriginal employees.

The arrival of the Colson's in Finke also prompted a growth in other facilities. According to Ron Brown, it was Colson who pushed for the creation of town's race track which was built with volunteer labour after Brown and the siding's Aboriginal residents created Finke's first airstrip.



The wood being carted away from the airstrip. According to Ron Brown, everyone helped. Photo thanks to the Brown family.

<sup>13</sup> Northern Territory Archives Service NTAS TS 58. Gregory, Bob and Jenny Oral History Interview Contents Listing.

<sup>14</sup> NTAS TS 58.



Ron organized the airstrip's construction after hearing the sad story of how two children living at Charlotte Waters had died from diphtheria because their policeman father couldn't get them to a doctor in time. The airstrip at Finke linked the small community to emergency medical aid in the form of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Finke Siding was on its way to becoming a town.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

**RECEIVED PRESS TELEGRAM.**

No. **F1452**

OFFICE DATE STAMP.

By **[Signature]**

The first line of this Telegram contains the following particulars, in the order named:—

OFFICE OF ORIGIN.	No. WORDS.	CHARGE.	TIME LODGED.	REMARKS.
ALICE SPRINGS	122	OS	3 25PM	

SENIOR INSPECTOR  
ADELAIDE

CONSTABLE KENNETT CW BROUGHT HIS DAUGHTER HERE FEW DAYS AGO  
FOR URGENT ABDOMINAL TREATMENT AND WHILST AWAITING DEVELOPMENTS HIS BABY  
GIRL DEVELOPED WHAT MAY PROVE BE CONTAGIOUS THROAT COMPLAINT STOP  
THURSDAY NIGHT DR REILLY KENNETT PEACE RUSHED CW TO BRING  
BABY AND MOTHER HERE STOP WHEN ABOUT 75 MILES FROM  
HERE REGRET SAY BABY PASSED AWAY BURIED HERE THIS MORNING  
STOP MR V PEACE WAS LEFT CW AS CARETAKER STOP  
IT NOW THOUGHT DESIRABLE BRING REST FAMILY HERE FOR MEDICAL  
OBSERVATION STOP AS PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE LOCAL SCHOOL CLOSED STOP HEALTH  
LOCAL PEOPLE NORMAL STOP PLEASE APPROVE CLOSING CW OFFICE FOR  
ONE WEEK AS FROM THIS EVENING STOP UNLIKELY ANY INCONVENIENCE  
BE CAUSED BECAUSE VERY FEW TRAVELLERS THAT ROAD

PM.  
3 38P AL

POST  
TELEPHONED  
To **F1452**  
Time **3 38P**  
By **[Signature]**

INSPECTION BRANCH  
17 FEB 1936  
ADELAIDE

Government communications about the death of policeman Kennett's children from: National Archives of Australia NAA D960 B1837/2963. "Charlotte Waters - telephone office from 10/9/1930 closed 21/8/1938 - Finke opened in lieu ...."

The government, however, was still reluctant to provide services. When it was asked to build trucking yards at Finke in 1947, the Secretary of the Interior, refused on the grounds that though Finke might be more "socially ... congenial" than Rumbalara because it had a policeman and a pub, the rest of the community still only consisted of a "railway fettling gang". He went on to add that if the pastoralists wanted trucking yards at Finke they should, as citizens who paid no taxes, pay for at least some of the costs of construction themselves. A few years later Finke got trucking yards, though I'm not sure who actually paid<sup>15</sup>!

By 1949 there was enough economic activity in Finke for the European population to form 'The Finke River Progress Association' an organization which spent the next sixteen years lobbying government for town services. The FRPA demanded everything from public toilets and a community hall, to electricity, and a place to bury the dead. Arguably their biggest achievement was getting the government to subsidise the cost of the town's water supply.

<sup>15</sup> See NAA F1 1948/96

## Water Wars

In 1954, at the same time as it built four family sized homes in Finke for its railway and repeater station employees, the government also changed the trains which ran on the central Australian line from steam, which used a lot of water, to diesel, which uses hardly any. This led railways to reduce the working hours of the “pumper” – the man in charge of the machines which brought Finke’s water to town from a bore several kilometres away. Four months after the first diesel engine was used on the Ghan line, at the beginning of summer, the pump broke down leaving the town without a water supply.



Photo: Northern Territory Archives Service: Millgate, Geoff and Millgate Moira, NTRS 2991, Colour slides depicting people and places in Darwin and Central Australia, 1951-1971, item 35, Finke, 1954, [view of police station and township [showing the new government house being built]]

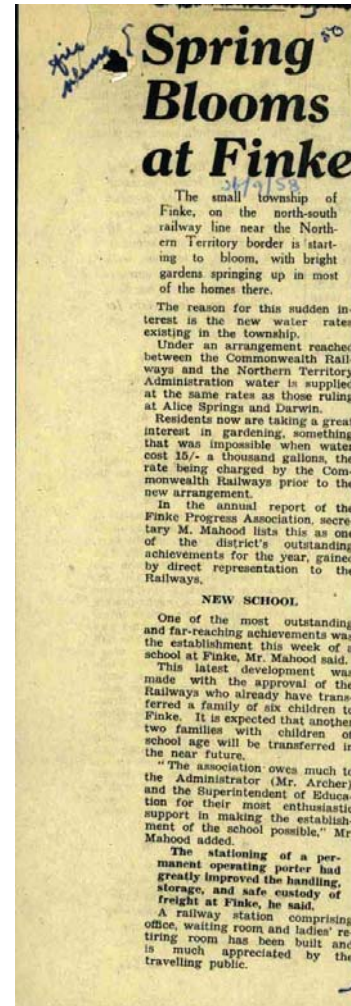
The European residents put themselves on water restrictions, the policemen sent urgent telegrams for help and finally the railways sent water from Alice by train as different government departments argued about who would supply the Finke’s non-railway residents with water and at what cost. When Commonwealth rail, the water suppliers, began charging everyone the real costs of supply, the FRPA went into lobbying action demanding that the Northern Territory administration subsidise their water costs. They were not happy about paying more for their water than the residents of other Territory towns.

The water crisis was not just about money. Every new addition to the population put added pressure on an unreliable water supply. In January 1958, for example, the FRPA noted that an “influx” of Aboriginal people at Finke “was making the water position more acute”. The fact that Finke water was expensive certainly didn’t help the situation. A little later in the year the FRPA finally won the price, if not the supply war. The 1960s school journal is full of complaints about lack of

water as a result of the pump continuing to break down. Drought, which devastated the region from 1957/8-1965 didn't help.

The Finke water story is another very good story for the museum because it relates to things people are worrying about now – like “climate change” and human use of natural resources. Environment groups and PAWA argue that paying for the real costs of town services, like water, would make people more careful of what they use which would be better for the environment. Like Finke's 1950s residents though, contemporary water users may not agree.

Un-labelled newspaper article from - National Archives of Australia NAA A452, 1957/740. Finke Water Supply - General - Northern Territory



## The NT government grows and so does Finke

Oddly, the government declared Finke a legal town slap bang in the middle of the water crisis. The change from railway siding to town also marked a change in the role of Finke's police. Whereas a few years earlier Ron Brown had done nearly all the government jobs, like stock inspector and looking after the aged and infirm, these jobs were now divided up into different government departments. The police were left to just enforce the law.

In Finke it was the new stock inspector's wife who, in the name of the FRPA and with the aid of some friends in Alice and a few tricks, finally persuaded the government to start Finke's school. Marie Mahood, the stock inspector's wife who wrote about her territory life in books, opened the school's doors in the same year the town got subsidised water rates *and*, finally, its own railway station.



## **and Finke becomes the capital of the largest district in the Territory**

Two years later the FRPA declared Finke the capital of the largest district in the Northern Territory! They used this fact to persuade the government to fund celebrations of the arrival of the first European in central Australia. Everyone living in the Finke District was given a public holiday while Finke held a town parade with 5 cars and 5 bicycles. The FRPA planted 20 trees and a held special race meeting. When the celebrations were over the FRPA complained that no one from the government had attended their events a sign, perhaps, that the government really didn't take Finke the town seriously?

## **Drought, patrols, a decline in station work and train trade**

The 1960s saw the Aboriginal population of Finke rise as drought and government patrols moved nomads off traditional hunting grounds and changes in the pastoral industry meant less work on stations. The people in Finke lived in wurlies, hunted rabbits when they could be found, collected and sold tektites and made money from the sale of artefacts to the growing number of train tourists. The enthusiasm for the train tourist trade can be seen in the following two passages from the Finke school journal. The school's 1961 teacher complained that when she had first arrived in the school the children "were completely stagnant. Their only interest was 'Ghan' when they would all rush down to meet it". Five years later another teacher got the 'go-ahead' to sell 'native artefacts to tourists' which the children made at school with the 'willing' help of 'native men' a sign perhaps, that free trade with Ghan passengers was much more fun than school education.

Europeans involved in this exchange also remember it with fondness. Ian Towns tells the story of one of Finke's Torres Strait Islanders who made money by betting with tourists over a game of quoits. He would start by pretending he couldn't play quoits at all and end by beating the guest soundly. Paddy Greenfield, a cook on the old Ghan, remembers exchanging food for artefacts with a man called "Johnny-Me-Nothing". Paddy says that Finke was one of the few places in Australia, and certainly the only place on the train line, where Aborigines and Europeans could freely interact with each other. It is what made the train stop in Finke so special.



Finke Railway Station  
1977 Northern Territory  
Government  
Photographer, Northern  
Territory Library pho  
017/0086

(c) Northern Territory Library

hdl:10070/5386

Interactions between Finke residents and Ghan passengers increased whenever the Ghan was stranded because the Finke was in flood, adding more money to the community's coffers. For example, in April 1968, the teacher wrote:

As a result of the Ghan being stranded here the school has received quite a few visitors in the last two days. Last night I showed a feature film and some shorts for the benefit of the Ghan passengers. There was a large attendance and the school will benefit by a good sum of money.

Ironically it was the floods which regularly destroyed the track at Finke almost from the moment the railway line was built, which finally led to the railways decision to move the line west and the departure of the town's European population.

While relations between Ghan passengers and the local population in Finke were generally positive, relations between Aborigines, fettlers and station workers got worse as the 1960s progressed and fights were fuelled by grog. Police attempts to mediate these disputes sometimes made things worse. It was in an attempt to resolve this conflict that Toby Ginger invited Margaret Bain, a missionary from Ernabella, to live in Finke. Margaret's move occurred at the same time as the Commonwealth government started to release funds to create Aboriginal employment and improve Aboriginal housing all of which lead to the formation of the Aputula Council and the Aputula Housing Company.



Aboriginal youths playing tennis outside Aputula Construction Co. Pty. Ltd. office. Aputula Construction Company is enterprise of local Aputula Aboriginal community. Northern Territory Government Photographer, Northern Territory Library PH0107/0085

### **The pub with no beer**

The council came up with a unique solution to the grog problem; they would buy the Finke pub, restrict grog sales and eventually run it dry. Johnny Briscoe, the town's first Aboriginal Health Worker became the publican and with the support of a commonwealth government grant, the Aputula council bought the pub, ran it dry and gave away its grog license. In 1980, in a speech delivered to the Sydney University Medical Society, Briscoe proudly declared that Finke was "distinguished by the fact that it has the only Aboriginal owned pub" in Australia.

## The clinic and the bike race, Johnny Briscoe at work

Briscoe also became one of the first Aboriginal Health Workers to run his own clinic without European staff. His skills earned him the respect of injured motor cyclists participating in one of the earliest Finke races<sup>16</sup>. This story would be an excellent special museum display which could be held when the Finke motorbike race is on.



As well as being a publican and health worker, Johnny Briscoe was also a photographer. He took this photo of Neville Goodwin, Reggie Goodwin and Don Kenny (from left to right) at Finke, in 1975. Great material for a museum display!

National Library of Australia  
nla.pic-vn4269169

The story of **the Aputula Housing Company** raises another unique aspect of Finke's history and this is the important role sea-faring Torres Strait Islanders have played in its economy. Amongst the core workers in the Aputula Housing Company were Harold Matasia, Mango and Gibson who came to Finke after Harold had settled in Southern Arrente country with his wife Agnes. Most stories about the Aputula Housing Company call it an Aboriginal company. Torres Strait Islanders are, though, a completely different people with a very different language, culture and history from Aboriginal Australians. Up until WW11 they were not allowed to travel to mainland Australia. After the war, however, many Islanders like Harold, left to get work in the cane fields of Queensland. From there many Islanders obtained jobs in the railways and in construction camps in remote parts of Australia, especially in the west. Most Torres Strait Islanders living on the mainland live near the coast. Though I don't know for sure, I suspect that Islanders living in the middle of the desert, almost as far from the ocean as it is possible to be, are rare. The story of how these sea farers came to live in the desert attracts interest because, on the face of it, it seems strange. At the heart of this story is love and the desire of two young people to create a family. This is a universal story – one everyone no matter where they come from can relate to.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Griffiths, Max *The Hungry Heart* Kangaroo Press 1992

## **Why we stayed**

As all current residents of Finke know, the Aboriginal community refused Government pressure to move to Kulgera with the railway. Like Finke's Europeans residents, they demanded that the government do what they want rather than the other way round. Why they did so is also a question that many visitors to Finke will want to know. It is especially interesting because most of the current residents of Finke are migrants from the Western desert who acknowledge that they are living on Southern Arrernte soil and Finke has, unlike Ernabella, never been an Aboriginal camping place even in pre-European times, because of the lack of water.

Explaining why Finke's residents refused to move would be another really good topic for a museum display.

## **"Finke is a town not a community ..."**

When I was in Finke, Harold Matasia and Julie Anderson both told me several times and with much pride that Finke is "a town" not "a community". When I asked what this meant, Harold replied that no one needed to get a permit to visit, that anyone was free to walk around the town at their leisure. I suspect that Julie meant something more, but I was not quite sure and I wanted to clarify because I was worried that Aboriginal people from "communities" who heard this statement might be offended. It sounds a bit like Finke is better than a community. Trying to explain exactly what this means is another interesting topic for a museum exhibition.

## **The town story in the Ara Irititja Archive (AIA)**

The town story, as told above, is much more difficult to tell in a museum display than the police stories told at the beginning of this report. This doesn't mean it shouldn't be told. It just means that more time needs to be spent on it to make sure it is told well.

One of the easiest ways to tell the Finke town story would be to put the AIA computer in the Finke museum. Peter Roper and Harold Matasia both told me that this is what the Aputula Council wants to do. This is not, however, as easy as it sounds because the AIA collection, like some of the documents in the NAA, is not open to the general public.

The AIA has been created for Anangu –Pitjantjara, Yunkantjara and Luritja people – only. It contains photos of many Aboriginal communities not just Finke. And it contains photos which have been borrowed from many different people/institutions around the country. AIA has permission to show these photos



to anangu and to non-anangu when anangu are present. It does not have permission to show them to the general public.

In order to put the AIA in the Finke museum, someone has to ask all the other Aboriginal communities and all the people and institutions who own all the photos for their permission to put the archive in the museum. This is an enormous amount of work.

Although there is a public version of AIA it contains hardly any photos of Finke. You can see this if you look at the public copy of the AIA archive which is in the Alice Springs library and compare it to the one in Finke.

The AIA is happy to let a museum in Finke use individual photographs from the AolA collection but not if the museum sells a book called "Bush Justice" written by Ron Brown, the policeman who lived in Finke just after the war. John Dalwitz who is the main person responsible for AIA says that this book is deeply offensive to Pitjantjajara men and as such he will not have anything to do with anyone who sells it. This includes providing copies of AIA photographs.

Peter Roper has the book on a list of local books he thinks the museum should sell. Peter argues that since the book is for sale in Alice Springs there is no reason why it should not also be sold in Finke.

The Aputula Social Club Inc will have to decide who is right.

### **Finke as the capital of a region ... district stories**

As the only museum in the area and the only one likely to exist in the foreseeable future and as the historic inheritor of Charlotte Waters' police and postal services it would also be appropriate for a museum in Finke to tell stories about the history of the district in which it is located. Indeed, the history of the town is very linked to the history of the district. Without the pastoralists or the Aboriginal people who came in from the desert during big droughts, Finke the town would not exist. Telling stories about the district is also relevant to Finke's police history because, until the police station at Kulgera was established, the police station at Finke was in charge of the whole district, including areas on the top half of South Australia.

Finke district stories which could be told in the museum include the construction of the Overland Telegraph Station and the building of the railway, and while I would not exclude them, I would note that both these stories are told in other museums like the Alice Springs Telegraph Station and Railway Museums in South Australia, and so would not be unique to a museum in Finke. They are also stories which are quite well known.

## **Erlikilyika – the forgotten Southern Arrernte sculpture, explorer, interpreter**

A much less well known story and one which combines Aboriginal and European relationships with the OTL, is the story of Erlikilyika the Aboriginal artist known to Europeans as Jim Kite. Erlikilyika was born at the Charlotte Waters telegraph station at about the time the first Europeans arrived in central Australia. Erlikilyika worked at the telegraph station as a young boy before joining Francis Gillen and Baldwin Spencer on the first anthropological survey of the centre's Aboriginal people. Erlikilyika was the group's guide and interpreter.

Erlikilyika also carved things from white soapstone including local animals and pipe stems. He sold his carvings to those people who passed by the telegraph station including Tillie Johannsen who owned Deep Well Station. He also gave Tillie some of the white soapstone. She used the soapstone to carve her family dog and a flower vase. The carvings Tillie bought and the ones she made herself are in the Old Timer's Traeger Museum in Alice Springs.



A horse's hoof pipe stem and stick rat, carvings by Erlikilyika in the Old Timer's Traeger Museum in Alice Springs. To hear a podcast about the carvings in the Old Timer's Museum in Alice Springs go to: [http://www.centralaustralianarttourism.com/Information/Education\\_Guide/Touring\\_Regions/Old\\_Timers\\_Traeger\\_Museum/](http://www.centralaustralianarttourism.com/Information/Education_Guide/Touring_Regions/Old_Timers_Traeger_Museum/)

For more information about Erlikilyika go to: <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10146b.htm>

Once Erlikilyika travelled to Adelaide where his art was put on display and the newspapers wrote about how interesting it was that a traditional Aboriginal man from the bush was doing European art. The exhibition was a great success. The newspapers reported, however, that Jim preferred the quiet of Charlotte Waters to the noise and business of Adelaide. All this took place a long time before Albert Namatjira became the most famous European style Aboriginal painter in the country. While Albert's story is well known to most Australians, Jim's has been forgotten. A museum in Finke could remind people. This is one of the important things museum's do. They help keep community and national memories alive by telling forgotten stories.

The biggest collection of Erlikilyika carvings are in the Museum of South Australia. Photographs and other items related to his work with Gillen and Spencer are in Museum Victoria. For more info go to:

<http://spencerandgillen.org/project>

Erlikilyika's story is another story which links a museum in Finke to big Australian museums. This could mean working together to create a joint exhibition/s and making real and virtual story trails for visitors to follow. The more people who know about Finke, the more people who will visit, the more visitors, the more exhibitions etc, it's a circle that can, with time, create its own growth.

### **Station stories**

There are also local station stories which could be told. Mary Flynn, who spent a long time living at Santa Theresa and has done a lot of work collecting oral history interviews from Arrernte people is looking for a place to share her story about the Sommerfield family who started New Crown station. Mary was very excited when I told her about the museum in Finke. She thought it would be the perfect place to hold an exhibition/display about her family using old family photographs and documents she has found in the archives. Mary may not be the only person with links to Finke district with a story to tell.

### **Famous lost people**

There are also several more famous lost people stories which involved Finke police or took place in the area the Finke police patrolled.

One involves the sad story of Mr Ellis Bankin, a Victorian school teacher who spent several holidays exploring central Australia on motor bike and then using his 'discoveries' in his classroom. His last exploration ended in tragedy when he got lost on a poorly formed back road. This story was reported widely in Australian newspapers. It would be another excellent story for a special exhibition at the time of the Finke Desert Race. John Dallwitz who works on the Ara Iritija Archive has recordings of Pitjantjara people's accounts of how the teacher died which are very different the police accounts. Providing new information and different views about an old mystery is another tried and true story telling technique known to interest people.

The very famous story of Lasseter's lost gold would also be an appropriate district story for the museum to tell.

Each of the lost stories could be told individually as separate exhibitions or in one exhibition featuring people lost in the desert.

## **Stories with international links ....the Spanish flu epidemic of 1919**

A museum in Finke could also tell the story of what has happened to Southern Arrernte people since the arrival of Europeans in Australia. A major part of this story includes the impact of the great Spanish Flu epidemic which spread across the world in 1918-1919 killing millions of people. It did great damage to the Southern Arrernte when it was brought home by soldiers returning from WW1. CLC has a recorded interview with an old Southern Arrernte woman who remembers this time. Using a copy of this recording in a Finke museum display would be a very powerful way of connecting with foreign visitors who are familiar with the impact this epidemic had on their own communities but may not have realized how far the epidemic travelled and what a catastrophic effect it had on the lives of Southern Arrernte people.

### **Where to from here?**

### **Who is this museum for?**

Decisions about what the Finke museum should collect, where it should store its collection and what stories it should tell are all linked to the most fundamental question of all which is: who are stories in this museum for? Are they for locals? Or are they just for tourists? Or are the museum's stories for both?

The answer to this question will determine the kinds of things the museum collects and what stories it tells.

### **How many stories should the museum tell?**

As you can see there are sufficient materials for a museum in Finke to tell just one story, that of the police who lived in the policeman's house or to tell many different stories in many different exhibitions.

Creating many different museum displays that are shown for a short period of time rather than a single display which stays up for years is more likely to encourage locals to visit the museum. It will also create more opportunities for work in the local community and more opportunities for everyone in Finke to relate to the museum. Multiple exhibitions encourage visitors to make return visits increasing opportunities for local businesses to make money.

Repeat visits also provide the museum with the opportunity to create exhibition related souvenirs – like postcards, magnets and small picture books for each display. These can be sold in the museum's shop long after a particular display has been folded up and put away. In turn, sales from these souvenirs will enable the museum to be less dependent on government funds and government rules for its existence.



Some of these small exhibitions, especially the ones which relate to events reported in interstate papers, could also be toured to other museums around the country providing positive publicity, more future visitors to Finke and the opportunity for funding and training partnerships.

This may sound like a big plan, but it is also a plan which can be put into practice in small steps over a long time.

It is also a plan which could allow the museum to use professionals to create some exhibitions, volunteers to create others and involve the school in researching and displaying local history stories that interest them. For example, I found a story in a Sydney newspaper about how, in 1950, a group of Sydney school boys visited Finke. Maybe Finke school could contact the Sydney school, which still exists, to see if they have any projects or other information about the students from that school who visited Finke in the 1950s. If those students are

still alive maybe they would like to make a return visit to Finke. The return visit could be filmed or photographed and made into a museum display and/or broadcast on youtube or sold to a Television company. The sky is the limit! Or better still, maybe Finke students could visit this school in Sydney and investigate how city European kids live!

The more exhibitions a museum in Finke is willing to create, the more economically sustainable a museum in Finke will become.

## **Young Explorers Go Inland**

Some Sydney schoolboys will soon be following in the tracks of early explorers through the vast tracts of Central Australia.

civilisation, various movie and still cameras, and scientific gadgets.

THESE lads are students from Knox Grammar School, Wahroonga.

There will be 21 of them in one big party.

They will travel across the desolate sand and spinifex country which was first entered by white men such as Giles and Stuart.

But they will find the going much easier than did the pioneers of last century. This will be a well-equipped exploration trip, with none of the dangers of old.

The school's science master, Mr. T. W. Erskine, will be leader. He will be assisted by the headmaster, Dr. W. Bryden, and another master, Mr. V. Francis. An old boy of Knox, Dr. Geoffrey Latham, will be medical officer.

The distinguished Australian explorer, C. P. Mountford, will accompany the expedition.

The boys have been months preparing for this wonderful adventure, which is unique among the schools of New South Wales.

They will return home in September, having spent a most exciting school holiday.

The cost for each boy will be about £50.

### **THOUSANDS OF MILES**

The party will leave Sydney by plane to Adelaide and then by train to the Finke River in Central Australia. All their camping gear and living necessities will be packed on "blitz buggies," which will take the boys far westward to Ayers Rock and Mount Olga. They will come back through Alice Springs.

They will cover thousands of miles in a few weeks.

Their gear is to include two-way radio to keep in touch with civilisation, various movie and

The Sunday Herald (Sydney)  
Sunday 30 July 1950, page 1

## **Tourism and long term sustainability of a museum at Finke**

There is no doubt that there are sufficient people living and travelling the back roads of the Eyre basin to make a museum in Finke economically viable. The operators of Old Andado Station and Mt Dare welcome the idea of a museum in Finke. Mt Dare currently gets 60,000 visitors a year. Recent reports suggest that the Lake Eyre Basin, of which Finke is a part, gets 2 million visitors a year.<sup>17</sup> The 4WD tourist market of which these visitors are a part is currently the fastest growing part of the central Australian tourism industry<sup>18</sup>. Finke's location near Geographic centre of Australia is also a prime location for attracting tourists. Many of the people who currently travel to the Geographic centre from the highway would go on to Finke if there was something for them to do.

A museum in Finke could also create partnerships with other Aboriginal tourism businesses operating on the newly sign posted Binns Track – such as Oak Valley, on the old stock route between Finke and Ooramina, or Black Tank.

Finke's location at the end of the Finke Desert race and near Old Andado Station also provides the museum with opportunities to create event based exhibitions, ones that coincide with the Finke Desert Race and Molly's Bash. The Heritage branch of the NT Government who funded this scoping report, have already expressed their interest in funding an exhibition focussed on the Ellis Bankin story (see famous lost people) as a heritage event at the bike race.

Support for Indigenous Tourism is also available from Central Australian Tourism. The person to contact is

Katelijine Lenaerts  
Industry Development Officer  
Indigenous Tourism  
Destination Development, Tourism NT  
Telephone: 08 8951 8507  
Email: [katelijine.lenaerts@nt.gov.au](mailto:katelijine.lenaerts@nt.gov.au)

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<sup>17</sup> see conference report Alice Springs News 16/9/10

<sup>18</sup> Pers comm. Jaye Schwarzrock Industry Development Officer, Destination Development, Central Australian Tourism

## Collection partnerships/collaborations

Finke museum could also form partnerships with other museums and archives as a way of learning how to store objects and documents and/or by asking these bigger organizations to store objects/documents/photos on Finke's behalf. This would help a museum in Finke know that its collection was safe, increase the amount of space the museum could use for displays and reduce its on-going operational costs enabling it to be more economically sustainable.

As part of this project I talked to three other organisations about whether or not they would be happy to work with a museum in Finke in this way. They all said they would be interested in doing this. Each of them has different rules about how a partnership would work. The museum would have to talk to each of them to decide who to work with and how.

*The Northern Territory Archives Service or NTAS* which is run by the Northern Territory Government is happy to collect any oral history interviews about Territory history. They are particularly interested in documenting the history of Aboriginal communities as this is something which is currently missing from their collection.<sup>19</sup> They are also happy to train people in how to do proper oral history interviews and lend people the recording equipment to do them.

NTAS used to transcribe (write up) the interviews and give copies of the written interview to the person who asked the questions (the interviewer) and the person who answered them (the interviewee). This made it easy to edit interviews for display and to make sure no one was embarrassed by what they had said. NTAS have not done this for a while. I am not sure if or when they will start again.

In the past NTAS also let people use copies of their audio for free. Now however, they charge people \$15 for 10 minutes of audio and do not generally provide recordings of whole interviews. This makes it difficult to use the audio in museum displays and podcasts.

NTAS may also be willing to store paper documents and photographs on behalf of the museum though this has not been specifically discussed with them. NTAS does not collect objects. NTAS likes to be the only organization holding copies of original photographs and documents donated to them. NTAS would also require Finke museum to ask their permission to re-use these items in public displays and would charge Finke museum for digital copies. NTAS currently charges \$11 for a digital image plus extra costs for putting it on CD.

Anything donated to NTAS could be read or listened to in their 'reading rooms' in Alice Springs and Darwin and because NTAS is a public archives anyone interested in the history of Finke could access these documents in this way. This general public access would be good for Finke because the more people who are

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<sup>19</sup> Pers. Comm. Matthew Stephen, Manager Oral History Unit.

interested in Finke's history and want to read and write about it the more interest will be created in a Finke museum.

NTAS would be a good place to store things if the main purpose of the collection was for research. However, NTAS is not such a good place to store things if the main purpose of the collection is to create a bank of objects, pictures and sounds which can be used in museum displays.

It may be possible to negotiate a better agreement with NTAS.

For more information go to: <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/ntas/collection/index.html>

*Ara Irititja*, the Anangu Archive is happy to store things for the Finke Museum. Their storage spaces are part of the South Australian Museum. They would not charge to provide digital copies of items used in museum displays at a later date, and do not have a problem if copies of audio, documents and photographs are donated to other organizations as well.

Like NTAS, Ara Irititja transcribes oral history interviews and provides copies of these to the interviewee, the interviewer and the museum. Unlike NTAS, however, this archive is not open to the general public. Non-anangu researchers would have to ask Ara Irititja for permission to use the materials and would have to pay to do so. This may deter non-Anangu from writing about Finke. The more people who research Finke the better known the museum would become and this would be better for the whole heritage project. Contact:

#### The Ara Irititja Project

Ara Irititja  
Pitjantjatjara Council Inc.  
PO Box 1234  
Marleston SA 5033 Australia

Phone: 61 8 8226 4873  
Fax: 61 8 8226 4878

Website: [www.irititja.com](http://www.irititja.com)

*The Museum of Central Australia* in Alice Springs is also interested in storing things for the Finke Museum. They do not have a policy about storage and costs yet. The person to talk to about this is Michelle Smith, curator of Territory History: phone 8951 1103.

A partnership with either the museum of central Australia or the South Australian Museum through Ara Irititja would not only reduce the operational costs of a museum at Finke it would also increase the museum's ability to access museum specific funding for the production of displays. For example, Finke is currently



unable to apply for Northern Territory regional museums funding because it does not have either a collection's policy or disaster plans to look after its collection. In a partnership arrangement, however, the Finke museum would be able to use the policy and disaster plans of the host museum to fulfil this funding eligibility requirement.

Other organizations, like the National Library of Australia and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies – AIATSIS - may also be interested in storing items for Finke. They should be contacted to discuss their terms and conditions.

Forming partnerships with other organizations to assist Finke museum in looking after a collection is highly recommended as a means of reducing the museum's operational costs, increasing the profile of the Finke project, ensuring the on-going safety of a Finke museum collection and enabling the museum to concentrate on telling stories.

A museum in Finke may also want to join Museums Australia a network of Australian Museums, Libraries and Archives. Go to:  
[www.museumsaustralia.org.au](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au)

### **Sources of funding for research, development of museum site and exhibitions including research, signage production and installation**

There are many sources of funding for a museum in Finke, especially if the museum chooses to tell multiple stories and so use it to create employment in the community.

#### **Traditional museum funding includes:**

*Northern Territory Heritage Grants* – such as the one which funded this project. They fund building based exhibitions. They could fund the police stories on the police block. They also heritage events such as special exhibitions to be held at the Finke Desert Race, or to coincide with Molly's Bash.

*MAGNT* – Regional Museums Grants – as described above also fund museum displays. These displays do not have to be building based. Go to:  
[http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/regional/pdf/rmgsp\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/museums/regional/pdf/rmgsp_guidelines.pdf)

#### **Art**

Public art could be used in the development of museum displays about the last of the camel police and the role of black trackers in police work. Sculptures of a camel/s could be created for the grounds of the police block. Public art is a great way of attracting visitors into a museum. Public sculpture funding is available from:

[http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/arts/artsnt/grants/program/public\\_art\\_small\\_medium\\_and\\_large.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/arts/artsnt/grants/program/public_art_small_medium_and_large.html)

*The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* offer money for research projects in Indigenous communities. Funding could be obtained from them to do the research required for new displays. Go to:  
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/corporate/about.html>

AIATSIS  
GPO Box 553  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Australia  
Telephone: 02 6246 1111 (International +61 2 6246 1111)  
Facsimile: 02 6261 4285 (International +61 2 6261 4285)

*The Northern Territory Archives Service* provides funding to pay for the costs of research – such as those associated with visiting archival collections in Darwin, Alice Springs and Canberra. These grants do not however pay for wages. Go to:  
<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/ntas/grants/index.html>

*Visions Australia* fund travelling exhibitions. This funding could be used to develop the national exhibitions described above. Panels could be installed in the museum permanently after the national tour, which would also serve to promote Finke, has finished Go to:  
[http://www.arts.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/80316/visions-touring-application-220709.pdf](http://www.arts.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/80316/visions-touring-application-220709.pdf)

*The Aboriginal Benefits Account* offers substantial funds for the development of economic enterprises in Aboriginal communities go to:

[http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/funding/Pages/aba\\_default.aspx](http://www.facs.gov.au/sa/indigenous/funding/Pages/aba_default.aspx)

Ph: (08) 8936 6366 or Email: [Aboriginals Benefit Account\(mailto:aba@fahcsia.gov.au\)](mailto:Aboriginals.Benefit.Account@mailto:aba@fahcsia.gov.au) ([aba@fahcsia.gov.au](mailto:aba@fahcsia.gov.au))

The Community Business Advisor in Finke may also consider funding this project. Community Business Advisor's in other Aboriginal Communities have funded museums.

Funding will be needed to purchase copies of images, films and audio for use in displays, writing display text, graphic design and production of images, audio and documents in hard copy or web based form, installation and communications between curators, graphic designers and the community, exhibition opening publicity and catering, project administration, publication exhibition postcards, monographs etc and a small amount for exhibition focussed research.

## **Suggested Stages of Museum Development**

In order to gauge the level of community and tourist interest in a Finke museum and identify benefits and correct problems which may come from this project it is suggested that a museum be developed in stages starting with on-line exhibitions which travellers can download before they visit Finke. This should be complimented by traditional signage which allows visitors to spend time in Finke looking at its historic sites without the needing to be looked after by anyone.

### **Stage One - A museum without walls – a Finke heritage pod-walk**

A heritage trail consists of signs placed outside important historic sites in towns which people can walk around and read for themselves. A podwalk is a sound recording which people download from the computer and listen to on MP3 players or mobile phones as they walk around the sights. The podwalk and the heritage trail could take people to the same places. They could give people different information about the sight they are looking at.

Podwalks and heritage trails get people out of their cars, walking around town, talking to people and willing to buy things – just as Ghan passengers used to do. Unlike Ghan passengers, however, pod-walkers will not all arrive and leave at the same time.

There are many sites in Finke which could be part of a pod walk. These include:

- The Fettle's cottages
- The remains of the "Old People's Home built by the Aputula Housing Company, now a shade structure
- The Policeman's block – with tracker's hut, gaol etc
- The First school – tin shed
- The remaining railway house built in the 1950s
- Colson's Store
- The sand-dune at eastern end of town near railway water tank
- Railway water tank near pub
- Hotel – now shire offices

Funding for this project could be obtained from the MacDonald Shire since street signage is part of their core business. The pod version could be put on the Shire's web. Central Australian Tourism are happy to put tourist activities on their website too.

Funding would be needed to write text, obtain photos of these places when they were in use, find funny quotes from people who used/lived in them to put on the signs, obtain permission to publish the photos, design trail markers, make and print trail signage; purchase relevant oral history audio/and or conduct interviews with relevant people like one of the school's first students, write and record audio

narrative, edit new and archival audio, record and add sound effects and publish on the web.

For examples of podcast audio go to:

[http://www.centralaustralianatourism.com/Information/Education\\_Guide/Touring\\_Regions/Old\\_Timers\\_Traeger\\_Museum/](http://www.centralaustralianatourism.com/Information/Education_Guide/Touring_Regions/Old_Timers_Traeger_Museum/)

Note that some audio which could be used in the pod-walk has already been given to Peter Roper. You can ask Peter if you want to listen to it. Be careful because some of the people talked about on the audio are dead. It would be really good if family members could listen to the audio to make sure that the stories which are told do not offend or embarrass anyone.

### **Stage 2 – Lost in the Desert – the Ellis Bankin story**

Create an exhibition using newspaper articles, maps, audio from the AIA collection and items from the Charlotte Water's police journal to create an exhibition around the Ellis Bankin story as described above. The exhibition should be opened and held at the same time as the Finke Desert Race. As stated above, Heritage is enthusiastic about this exhibition. Though some research still needs to be done, the story is known to be a good one and an appropriate variety of interesting materials for use in a museum display are known to exist even if they have yet to be sourced. This is also an exhibition which has the capacity to engage both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal audiences and that's a great way to start a museum in Finke. It could also be a great partnership between Finke school and the school Ellis Bankin taught at in Victoria.

### **Stage 3 – The police story**

#### **The Last Camel Patrol**

This display should be created in the outside areas of the police block. Tourist could be asked to make a donation in a secure metal donation box or by visiting council offices or the shop. Or it could simply be offered as a free exhibition whose purpose is to encourage tourists to spend time in Finke and maybe purchase art from locals independently.

Display should include: commissioned sculptures of camels based on historic information which has been found about Finke's camels, their brands etc in the National Archives, Brown photos, selected quotes from Finke Police Journals, copies of newspaper articles about the last patrol and written text as well as edited extracts from oral history interviews as identified in the report above. Audio could be published on the web for podcast or available via mobile phone.

Funding needed for signage production and design, image purchase, audio editing and text writing. Research already done.



## The Trackers Story

Like the camel story, this story is best told in the outside space on the police block. It could use art works – sculptures of the dogs the station's two longest serving trackers, Mick and Brownie Doolan were famous for owning, and signage which invites visitors to read tracks and then tells them how to do so using metal sheets that turn like the pages in books accompanied by written extracts from the oral history interviews which explain and praise the tracker's work – as identified above – which could also be produced as podcasts, accompanied by traditional signage of text, photos and newspaper reports detailing specific cases the trackers worked on.

## And the house ... Looks good! But would you really want to live in it?

The story of the police house – told through a mixture of traditional signage and audio which is broadcast through an old bakelite radio inside the house. Display should use copies of all documents photos found so that no-one has to be watched while they look at the display. A key could be obtained from the shire office and returned which is when a donation to view the exhibit is charged.

This display will not take up much space leaving the museum with enough space to create an office and for artists to hang work when they are ready to sit with it for sales.

Funding needed for signage production and design, image and audio purchase, audio editing and text writing and some additional research and interviews.

Assuming the response to these initial self guided activities is positive from town residents and tourists, other exhibitions should then be developed as outlined in the main body of this report.

## Recommendations

1. The MacDonnell Shire, the current administrators of Finke/Aputula should be approached immediately for funding to find photographs, write the text, design and install signage for the town heritage walk described above.

The manager of the shire's operations in Finke has stated that the Shire has funding for the development of street signage and that a project such as this would be consistent with the council's administrative functions.

A copy of this report should be given to the Finke Shire Manager and relevant members of the board to build support for this project.

2. Formal, recorded oral history interviews should be conducted as a matter of urgency with four people whose stories are pivotal to the development of high quality display materials for the police house story and the story of "the growing up of Finke" into Aputula. These people are: Eileen and Laurie Kennedy who lived in the police house in the 1970s; Toby Ginger who was pivotal, with Margaret Bain, in 'growing up' Aputula and Agnes Matasia whose relationship with Harold was the impetus for the arrival of Gibson and Mango in Finke, core workers in the housing company.

These interviews could be recorded using equipment provided by NTAS who would also teach people how to do a proper oral history. This could be a good project for kids in the high school or Ara Irititja could also be asked to do these interviews on behalf of Finke. Or the Aputula Council could find a government grant to pay for a professional oral historian to do the interviews on their behalf.

In order to make this happen it is recommended that copies of this report with this section hi-lighted are sent to Ara Irititja and NTAS.

3. It is recommended that funding is obtained from either a Northern Territory Heritage Grants or Northern Territory Regional Museums Grant in April 2011 to undertake the development of the police block stories as outlined above.

To this end it is recommended that copies of this report be sent to the relevant officers in the NT governments departments of Heritage and Museums.

In order to get broad based government and community support for both the short and long term goals of this project and develop an understanding of its importance to both Finke and the broader community, it is also recommended that this report should be sent to:

- Finke School – where it could be used as an Educational Resource

- DEET – for placement on Teacher intranet as an educational resource and professional development historic introduction to Finke for new teachers
- Politicians including: ministers for the Arts, locality, tourism, police, etc and the relevant members of the opposition
- Relevant officers in the MacDonnell Shire
- The Community Business Manager
- Central Lands Council
- Matthew Stephen – Manager Oral History Unit, Northern Territory Archives Service
- Regional Museums Support Officer – Michelle Smith, Executive Officer Museum and Art Gallery NT
- John Dallwitz – Ara Irititja Archive
- AIATSIS
- Police Museum Darwin and other museums as identified in this report with whom exhibition partnerships could be formed.
- The organiser's of Molly's Bash
- Finke Bike race organizers
- People who contributed conversations to this project including: Annabelle Brown, Pat Studdy-Clift, Margaret Bain, Jocelyn Davies – CSIRO
- Mt Dare Station
- Tourism Central Australia – attention to Indigenous Tourism Project Officers
- Indigenous Jobs Fund NT; Indigenous Jobs Fund – Commonwealth

This report should also be attached to any future grant applications for this project.

## **Conclusion**

A Museum at Finke is a great project which has the capacity to become a – sustainable income generating tourism venture.

A museum in Finke can tell unique stories about a unique place to tourists and locals, Anangu and Arrernte, interstate and international visitors and locals. A museum in Finke could help the local economy grow and create community pride. A museum in Finke will help keep community memories alive.

Finke's history is important to European, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians. The old buildings from the railway days and from the days when the Aputula Housing Company sold its houses to other Aboriginal communities remind everyone of this shared history. A museum will help value the ruins. If people value the ruins because they can tell stories about them they are more likely to look after them.

A museum in Finke will enable the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who currently live in Finke to tell stories about themselves and it will enable Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Island people to tell stories about Europeans and their history!  
And that would make a museum in Finke very very special.

The ideas in this report can be put in place slowly over a long time. This will give everyone involved – local Finke Residents and Tourists – a chance to get to know each other and find out what the good and what the hard things about tourism are and to make changes as the tourists and locals and the museum grow together.

The stories identified in this report link Finke to bigger more established museums in other parts of the country who could collaborate with Finke on individual displays.

The first museum displays could be put together by local volunteers or as part of school projects or they could be created by museum professionals funded by government grants. There is lots of government money around.

This Finke museum plan is a big one. It's been written for the long rather than the short term. It's a big plan but it's a very possible plan because it can be put into action little steps at a time.

A museum in Finke is a long term community dream. It is my hope that this report will help make it finally happen.



## Appendix

### Finke – Aputula: A District Timeline

*Please note that this time line is not, by itself, a history of Finke. It is a collection of historical data presented in chronological order. It shows the sequence of things but leaves the links between events unexplored. This time-line is the bones on which Finke histories can be written and a yardstick against which individual and community memory can be measured.*

*This time-line has been compiled from a variety of sources including government documents, photographs, published text and memory. It is the product of comprehensive, though still incomplete, research. As such it remains a work in progress. If you use any of the data in this time line please, do the right thing and acknowledge the source. If you find any errors please let the author know.*

<b>Pre-Settlement History – Australia A Glimpse</b>	
<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>
65,000 years ago	Evidence of occupation of parts of Arnhem Land by Aboriginal peoples. [Ghan Brochure]
15,000 - 30,000 years?	Finke located at 'an interface between Arrernte and Western Desert Aboriginal Cultures' [Davies pA12 quoting Doohan] on 'neutral Aboriginal ground not 'owned by anyone' [Molly Clarke pers comm].
10,000 years ago	Aboriginal people well established throughout coastal and mainland Australia and Tasmania. [Ghan Brochure]
5,000 years ago	The dingo arrives in Australia [Ghan Brochure]
3,000 Years ago	Humans occupy the south west Lake Eyre Basin for the first time.(Paterson Jul2003)

<b>Pre- Settlement History Finke Pastoralism and the Overland Telegraph Line come to Centralia.</b>	
1830s	Tindale, an anthropologist, suggests that an epidemic of smallpox introduced by the Malays, reaches central Australia decades before the first Europeans arrive by foot. [Doohan p18]
1860	The first official European presence in central Australia is John McDouall Stuart who crosses the '26 <sup>th</sup> parallel of latitude – the SA-NT

	border – on 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 1860, reaching a major watercourse he calls the Finke River on the 4 <sup>th</sup> April. <sup>20</sup> [See Doohan, p11; and <a href="http://www.jms.thealice.com.au/images/stories/stuartsmap1860.pdf">http://www.jms.thealice.com.au/images/stories/stuartsmap1860.pdf</a> ]
1862	John McDouall Stuart's 6 <sup>th</sup> Expedition passes just west of the present town of Finke aborting an Aboriginal attack at Marchant Springs [Doohan p12]
1866	Pastoralists had reached the MacDonnell Ranges north of Finke and all major waterholes in Centralia had been stocked. [Doohan p11 ]
1871	Overland Telegraph Station built at Charlotte Waters. This was one of twelve repeater stations on the OT line, the others being at Port Augusta, the Peake, Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs, Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Powell Creek, Daly Waters, Katherine and Yam Creek .[McLaren p157]. The repeater stations were spaced at intervals of 250 kilometres. Mulvaney et al p4  During the construction of the Telegraph line 'an armed conflict between telegraph construction workers and a party of twenty to thirty Lower Southern Arrernte people resulted in the wounding of one Aborigine and one European. According to Kim Doohan 'Aboriginal attacks on European settlements were certainly anticipated' as evidenced by the fortress like design of the first post offices. See Doohan p12 citing Bradshaw
1873	A police station is located at Charlotte Waters. [7R.P.A.N.T; McLaren p209]. Despite its fortress like appearance Aboriginal Attacks at this telegraph station are itself are unknown. [McKinnon NTAS OH see also Mulvaney et al ]
1874	Macumba Pastoral Lease taken up. Stocked a year later. [Doohan p11].  23 <sup>rd</sup> February Aboriginal people attack Barrow Creek Telegraph Station. Francis Gillen (?) is one of a number of men relaying messages between the dying postal worker and his wife down south'. This was the only violence to be experienced at Telegraph stations along the line. Mulvaney Letters p8  Francis Gillen was the postmaster at Alice Springs who wrote a book with Baldwin Spencer about the nomadic tribes of Central Australia which made the Arrernte people the most famous nomads in the world. [Kimber, talk 2010]
1875	Dalhousie Pastoral Lease taken up. Stocked a year later. H. Scott applies for 2,023 square miles of pastoral land near Charlotte Waters [Doohan p11 ]

<sup>20</sup> Note that the history book located in Finke school compiled by Susan Moore states that the first Europeans appeared in Southern Arrernte Land as early as 1844. I am not sure how southern Arrernte lands are defined by the author or to which explorations she is referring but in relation to the settlement of Finke this seems extremely unlikely. Though Stuart started his Northern explorations in 1844, all sources agree that he did not reach central Australia until 1859-1860. Celebrations of the Centenary of Stuart's explorations in 1960 as held by the Finke Progress Association [NAA F1 1959/2877] which resulted in the granting of a public holiday for the Finke District on 6<sup>th</sup> June [Pugh] would seem to corroborate this version of events.

	<p>This year was the culmination of several wet years along the OT Line culminating in a bumper crop in 1875. [p7 Mulvaney Letters]</p> <p>Francis Gillen spends 12 years at Charlotte Waters Telegraph Station sometime between 1875 and 1899 forming enduring friendships with the Aboriginal people who are camped there. P8 Mulvaney Letters.</p>
1877	Marree becomes the railhead for the extension of the railway line from Port Augusta. Doohan p10
1880	Area around present day Finke taken up as a pastoral lease by W. Willoby in 1880 who secured 1,000 acres around Charlotte Waters. [Kimber]
1885	<p>(Jan-Mar) Chewings makes an exploratory journey up the Finke River – arriving Charlotte Waters in February. It was a wet year. [Chewings].</p> <p>A ration depot is established at Charlotte Waters by the South Australian Protector of Aborigines sometime in 1885 [Doohan p12] or 1886 (Rowse 1998 ) Crown Point Pastoral Lease taken up [Doohan p11]</p>
1886	Several more pastoral leases created near Charlotte Waters and a homestead built at Idracowra Waters [Doohan p11,].
1888	Telegraph Reserve of 35 square miles created at Charlotte Waters. [McLaren]
1890	Global economic depression affects pastoralists in the Australian outback [Doohan]
1891	<p>Baldwin Spencer, anthropologist, estimates 180 Aboriginal people are living at Charlotte Waters. [Doohan p17-18]</p> <p>Oodnadatta becomes the rail head for the North South Railway line replacing Marree. Doohan p 10</p> <p>The Earl of Kintore and Professor Stirling of the South Australian Museum travel along the OTL by buggy. Stirling was looking for postal workers to help in collecting things for the museum Postal workers like Gillen and Patrick Byrne at Charlotte Waters collected fauna and other specimens for city intellectuals. Assisting in this was a source of trade for Aboriginal people along the OTL line. Mulvaney Letters p8-10</p>
1894	<p>Drought in ‘the southern part of the centre between Charlotte Waters and Oodnadatta ...’ [Doohan p46, citing Gillen and Spencer]</p> <p>Horn scientific expedition.</p> <p>In 1894 Baldwin Spencer visits Crown Point homestead home to Mrs Alec Ross. He describes the homestead as being ‘green, the verandah overgrown with creepers, was cool and restful; we had fresh vegetables from a garden watered by a well close by the river, and the change from the dust and flies of the camp to the comfort and refinement of the little station home was more than welcome’ [Powell p121]</p>

1900s	Migration of Western desert people's into Southern Arrernte lands begins. The greatest migration takes place between 1900 and 1940 [Doohan p20]
1901	Gillen and Spencer undertake a transcontinental journey staying at Charlotte Waters where Gillen, who had previously spent 12 years at the station contemplated 'the surroundings of this place with its total absence of any sort of attractive scenery or social life within I marvel how I could have spent 12 years here happily. Yet I did, years free from care of any sort and of absolute content.' Mulvaney Letters p8
1910	South Australia passes an Aboriginal Protection Act which, in the name of protecting a 'dying race', introduces 'rigid regulations' controlling the private lives of Aboriginal people and their relationships with Europeans. These regulations will control mixed race sexual relations, marriage, custody of children and access to land. The Commonwealth, when it takes over the administration of the Northern Territory in 2011 adopts and adapts this legislation [See Powell p161]
1914	Rev John Flynn reports that there are 4 European men, 1 woman and 5 children living at Charlotte Waters Telegraph station while there are three European men, two women and a child at Mt Dare and four men, two women and three children at New Crown Point station. Stores are located at Bloods Creek and Crown Point. There is a hotel at Horseshoe Bend and a single European policeman (no family) at Alice Well. Oodnadatta has a European population of 100, Alice Springs 30 consisting of 18 men, five women and seven children. [Flynn, Superintendent's Report 1914.]
1915	Drought in central Australia. Constable Stott of Alice Springs states that 'The pastoral country from the MacDonnell ranges to Oodnadatta is in deplorable condition with scarcely a vestige of feed, and hundreds of stock dying around Alice Springs and Simpson Gaps, Finke River, Horseshoe and Old Crown are in still worse condition. ... From Ryan's Well north the season was good and it got good winter rains'. [The Advertiser 23 November 1915]
1917	Andado Station starts (Rowse p52)
1919-1920	<p>Ted Strehlow states that "Spanish Influenza" wiped out the bulk of the aging, chronically undernourished population in the Southern and Central Aranda areas' of Centralia killing Aboriginal people 'like flies' too many 'to bury proper way' [Doohan p18]</p> <p>Mr Stott the policeman in Alice Springs wrote in his journal:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tuesday July 22nd 1919</p> <p>Police Horses at Alice Springs Police Horse Tully + Little left for Arltunga. Sent</p>



	<p>collect wire Police Darwin "Four adult Europeans two my children number aboriginals sick symptoms influenza temperature average hundred three and four desire Doctor prescribe no death stop twenty one aboriginals died Oodnadatta influenza stop ...'</p> <p>Police Station, Alice Springs, NTAS F255 1917-1925</p> <p>50 million people world wide are killed in this epidemic which lasts from 1918-1920. It was spread around the world by soldiers returning from World War 1. [New Scientist 2009]</p>
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<b>Finke Railway Siding – 1927-1937</b>	
1926 - 1929	<p>Survey and construction of the railway line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. The first sod in rail construction is turned at Oodnadatta on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1927 [NAA D1334 F13].</p> <p>Fettlers cottages, accommodation for the men who maintain the track appear to have been built during the construction phase as evidenced by a photo taken circa 1930 [NAA B3114 Photograph 142 Volume 4] and the name C. White May 1929 which appears to have been written in wet concrete on the floor of the cottages themselves [with thanks to Peter Roper for pointing this out to me].</p> <p>Railway construction takes place during a huge drought which sees a number of stations, including New Crown, close down. [Doohan p22].</p> <p>The Administrator of the Territory of Central Australia passes laws prohibiting Aboriginal people from being within five miles of the railway line between the Northern Territory Border and Alice Springs. The purpose of the law is to prevent Aboriginal women from mixing with the hundreds of men who built the railway line and to discourage nomads from becoming dependent on European foods. [NAA A1 1930 232]</p> <p>A police presence is established in the platelayers camp to ensure no sly grog enters the construction camp and to 'warn away the natives'. [NTAS F256] This law is repealed in 1930 [NAA A1 1930/232].</p> <p>Ted Colson who later owns the Finke hotel and store is one of those employed on the railway extension work. [Horne]</p> <p>Mt Cavenagh Spastoral lease taken up. [Rowse p52]</p>
1928	<p>Messrs Smith and Undertown (sic) of Finke River Railway Crossing are granted 'a license for a slaughter-house' [Northern Territory Times Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> 1928].</p> <p>Kulgera Pastoral Lease taken up. [Rowse p52]</p>
August 1929	<p>The first passenger train carrying '3 vans of fruit, one of mail, 64 first class passengers and 60 second class passengers' leaves Adelaide</p>

	for Alice Springs [Adelaide Advertiser Monday August 5 <sup>th</sup> 1929] passing through Finke railway siding.
1930	<p>Correspondence in early 1930 between the Department of the Interior and Commonwealth railways regarding the supply of water to the proposed police station at Finke includes an allocation of '100 gals a day' for aged and infirm natives [NAA B300 <a href="#">7226</a>]. In a letter dated 11th July 1930, Commonwealth rail is informed that plans to construct a police station at Finke have been abandoned, no reasons are given. [NAA B300 <a href="#">7226</a>] Although it is not explicitly stated in government records, it seems likely that the change in government plans was a result of general cost cutting in government expenditure which took place in the early years of the Great Depression.</p> <p>Charlotte Waters Telegraph Reserve is handed over to the police department on the understanding that telephone and postal services will be maintained. MC Cameron and trackers Willie and Ted are stationed here. Cameron transferred from Alice Well which was closed for business. [McLaren p829-830, NAA A1 1930/8028 page 8]</p> <p>Elkin, an anthropologist, travels through Finke Railway siding where he counts 'at least 50 natives' from the Musgrave Ranges. [Doohan p18] who are 'depending in the main for their food supply and water on railway fettlers' [Doohan p47].</p> <p>Bill McKinnon, who worked as policeman at Charlotte Waters on and off from 1932, described it as 'one of the happiest stations I had. There were mostly old blacks there and you could enjoy their company ... they gave us a special corroboree when we were leaving the Finke ... and again when we left Charlotte Waters'. NTAS TS789 Side A Tape 1 page 8; McKinnon</p> <p>Kulgera supplies petrol to passing motorists in 4 gallon tins. [Wells]</p>
1931	<p>Skipper Partridge, patrol padre for the A.I.M., undertakes his first patrols by motor car, driving from Oodnadatta to the Northern Territory via Kulgera, Erldunda and Henbury establishing a 'new route' for travellers. This route 'remained in use for the next 20 years. The track via the Finke and Depot sand hills gradually reverted to its natural state'. [Wells p63]</p> <p>Ted Colson leases Blood Creek Station at Abminga where he runs sheep, tends the government bore and runs a store.[Home]</p>
1932	Bill McKinnon relieving policeman at Charlotte Waters till 1935. [NTAS, McKinnon TP 813, TS 789]
1933	Ernabella Homestead built as part of a pastoral lease [Horton Vol 1 p344].

	<p>The station runs sheep.</p> <p>The Stock Broker's Association of South Austria complains about watering charges at Finke. see catalogue title NAA A659 1942/1/7622. The cost of getting water to Finke Siding was to be an ongoing issue for many years.</p>
1936	<p>January 1936 – Ellis Bankin a Victorian school teacher who was exploring central Australia by motorbike is found dead near Mt Connor. The story of is reported nationwide. Comparisons are made with the search for Lasseter. See eg The Argus 8/7/1938; SMH 15/2/1936; The Argus 29/1/1936; The Argus 15/2/1936</p> <p>6th March – Railway bridge over the Finke River partially washed away in centralian floods. SMH 17 passengers spend 4 days stranded at Finke Siding eating food destined for Alice Springs. 'The fettler's camp north (sic) of the Finke River are billeting greatly augmented staffs (sic), and are right down to a minimum of flour. They have been without meat for some days'.</p> <p>May 1936 – Ted Colson and Eringa Peter cross the Simpson Desert with five camels. It was an exceptionally wet year and the desert, according to Colson, was 'one vast field of herbage, grass and shrubs'. [Horne] Colson was the first European to make a complete crossing of the Simpson desert. [samemory]</p>
Nov 1936	<p>Government recommends that Charlotte Waters police station be moved to Finke Railway Siding – because main road south from Alice Springs no longer passes by Charlotte Waters as it once did; Charlotte Waters requires carted water; station is 17 miles from nearest station stop, expenditure to repair Charlotte Waters buildings not warranted. [McLaren p830, NAA D960 B1837/2963]</p>
1937	<p>Ernabella mission established on the site of an important waterhole and camping place for Yunkantjatjara People. [Horton Vol 1 p344]. Western Desert people now regularly visit Finke on supply runs. [Doohan, p56]</p>

<b>From Railway Siding to Service Centre: 1937 – 1949</b> <b>The Lobbying Begins</b>	
1937-38	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> Mar – Telegrams from Post Masters office states that 'FINKE OFFICE WOULD SERVE APPROX 20 ADULTS (GANG 8 PUMPER 2 POLICE 2 COULTHARD 2 KITTO 2 STANES 3 FRASER 1) LAST 9 PERSONS AT PRESENT CALL FINKE FOR ALL LOADING STOP' [NAA D960 B1837/2963]</p> <p>Telegraph station buildings deteriorating and condemned. Building of Finke police station commences. [McLaren p830]</p>
1938	<p>Police station, post and telegraph/telephone services are closed at</p>

	<p>Charlotte Waters on 20<sup>th</sup> August. A new police station is opened at Finke on 21<sup>st</sup> August. [see telegram in CA 1173/1 as cited by McLaren p813]. Due to a lack of room in the new police quarters, the postal services cannot be transferred in their entirety. It is therefore recommended that telephone services be maintained by employing the policeman's wife [[NAA D960 B1837/2963/, McLaren p831]. The Finke posting is for a married officer.</p> <p>The policeman undertaking the transfer is Bill McKinnon [see also McKinnon TP 813, TS 789 NTAS] who later observes that the newly constructed police quarters at Finke are no where near as spacious or cool as the quarters he has just left at Charlotte Waters. [NTAS TS 789]. According to McLaren, one of the reasons the police station moved was so police could board the train as it crossed the border. [McLaren p813 or 831 citing CRS F77 38/592]</p> <p>The ration station for aged and infirm Aboriginals moves with the police station and marks the moment when, Kim Doohan thinks, Aboriginal people first 'sit down' at Finke [Doohan p40 see also year 1930 in timeline above].</p> <p>The commonwealth railway station is, at this time, located at Rumbalara not Finke and ... 'the Railways Department advises' that it has 'no intention at the present time of placing a Stationmaster at Finke' [NAA D960 B1837/2963]</p> <p>November 1938 – residents of Finke Siding and district petition for a non official post office to be created at Finke when the police station moves. 32 people sign the petition. The petition wasn't needed because the government had always wanted to put postal services at Finke. The petition suggests that the government hadn't told the people. [NAA D961 <a href="#">C1960/90</a>]</p>
1939	<p>Cecil Madigan Crosses the Simpson Desert. 'Crossing the Dead Heart' his book about his expedition is published in 1946.</p> <p>1939-1942 – "The outbreak of the Second World War and hostilities in the Pacific result in massive increase in traffic on the Old Ghan Railway. Trains increase from just three per week to 56 trains". [Ghan Brochure]</p> <p>Government telegram negotiating the working hours of the non-official post office at Finke with post-mistress Mrs Grace Briscoe notes that 'travellers' are unlikely as 'no roads pass through Finke'. [NAA D961 <a href="#">C1960/90</a>]</p> <p>Constable McKinnon requests the urgent need for more rations stating that:</p> <p>"Since [last year], a big camp has been established at Horseshoe Bend</p>



	<p>for years broke up and several aged Aboriginals came to Finke: since Mr and Mrs Stott left Maryvale, another lot arrived from there, while several have arrived from the Petermann Ranges where they state many died during recent months owing to drought and famine. [Rowse p 52 citing NTRS F68 A7, McKinnon to Protector Alice Springs]</p> <p>October - Ron Brown joins the NT police force and is posted to the Top End of the Northern Territory [Brown 1990 + OH].</p> <p>The Standard 17/10/39 carries the story of G.L. Terry who was working at Finke on the central Australian railway and who, on hearing about the outbreak of War in Europe 'jumped the rattler' to Alice Springs and then rode on Motor Trucks and lorries to Darwin in order to join the Australian army. [Cited in Donovan p137]</p> <p>Clive William Graham relieves Bill McKinnon for 3-4 months. His wife, who was a Hayes before she married, described the other people in Finke at the time as: the pumper and his wife and their two boys; over the railway line there was a gang of fettlers and they were all good types of people ... It wasn't lonely in any way because the train would come down ... and you'd always meet the train ... 'you don't expect any excitement in those places anyway' [NTRS 3164 BWF_325].</p>
1940	<p>McKinnon noted as being at 'Finke River Police Station' [McLaren p942]</p> <p>June 1940 The Argus, a Melbourne newspaper reports that three fettlers from Finke railway siding have offered to contribute 10/- a fortnight from their pay packets to Australia's war effort. Their names are: Messrs J.L. Blatchford, C.M.M. Wood and J.W.Jarrett. They heard the plea for money on the radio.</p> <p>Ernabella school opens. Horton Vol 1 p344].</p>
1941	<p>Finke police station temporarily closed due to shortage of staff. [McLaren]</p> <p>Post Master General's department constructs building to store emergency repeater station equipment. It had own electricity which also supplied the police station. It was constructed next door to the police station and enabled the police to get electric light. [NAA D960 B1837/2963]</p> <p>October 1941 Bill McKinnon, the policeman, transfers to Darwin [Wilson]. He is replaced by Jack Kennett who in 1936, when he was at Charlotte Waters, lost two children to diphtheria, [NAA D960 B1837/2963] It is this tragedy which motivates Ron Brown, some years later, to create an emergency airstrip at Finke linking the community to the Royal Flying Doctor Service [Brown, 1990 pp58-61]</p> <p>Sydney Morning Herald 9 August reporting on a journey through central</p>

	Australia, in a list headed 'Some curiosities' describes 'A nomadic tribe of aborigines shifting camp near another desert railway "town" Finke. Close to the station a surprisingly neat policeman's bungalow residence, painted green and white. The policeman absent searching for an aboriginal witness who had 'gone bush'.
1942	Repeater Station built at Finke. The station did not include a residence because it was hoped that it would be unattended. This however, did not happen. Some time between 1942 and 1953 someone is employed to run the station. In 1953 the PMG writing to Commonwealth rail comments that 'owing to the conditions under which the senior technician is required to live at Finke, considerable difficulty has always been experienced in filling that position'. [NAA B300 9350]
1943	Brownie Doolan is 23 years old and employed as a stockman at Andado Station.[Mackett]
1944	Joe Mutch – Policeman at Finke [NTAS OH TS 469]
1945	Ron Brown posted to Finke Police Station [NTAS OH TS 469]  Post Office now has a permanent employee, Fred Ashton. [Brown, 1990, p61]
	Bob and Jenny Gregory have a store at Finke. They cart goods to Ernabella and to stations in the area. They had 5 jersey cows while they were at Finke which they milked. Their 18 month old daughter, Christine, gets lost one day [NTAS OH TS 58 Bob and Jenny Gregory.] becoming one of many 'lost people' stories to populate Finke records.  There was also a 'big mob people camped' in and around Finke Siding ... in the Goyder Creek, Finke River and sand hills east of town ...according to a senior Aboriginal person interviewed by Kim Doohan. [Doohan p56]
1946	Bruce Evans – South Australian policeman spends time at Finke. He is later posted to Oodnadatta and is one of the investigating officers in the Sundown murders. [SAPHS, Brown ]
1947	Feb - Hotel at Finke completed in January and opened for trade. [McLaren p 917 citing F77 10/47]. The Gregory's later sell Finke store to Ted Colsen owner of the hotel. [NTAS OH TS 58]  Government is asked to build trucking yards at Finke. They are, at the time of the request located at Rumbalara. The Secretary of the Interior in a letter refusing to undertake the construction states: 'Socially Finke may be more congenial than Rumbalara. The Police Officer for the district is located there. There is also a store and recently an hotel has

	<p>been provided; but otherwise the community is comprised of railway fettling gang.... In the event of it being decided that there is sufficient justification .... to the commissioner's mind the Northern Territory Pastoralists, who would derive the greatest benefit there from and who by special dispensation are relieved of the payment of income tax, should be requested to meet a proportion if not all of the expenditure so involved'. [NAA F1 1948/96 or NAA F1 <a href="#">1973/3005</a>]</p>
	<p>"Up until the Second World War, the Qld government prevent Islanders from going to live on the mainland" (Beckett 1994) In 1947 the first small group of Torres Strait Islanders were officially permitted to travel to the mainland to work although they received under-award wages. Other Islanders followed, working as fishermen, cane cutters, railway fettlers and agricultural labourers throughout country Queensland.(Shnukal 2001.)</p> <p>"By the 1960s, they [TI's] were free to seek work and settle anywhere" TI labour "was in demand in the mining construction camps of the interior". "Until recently most Australians did not know that the Islanders were a distinct people and the federal government classified them with Aboriginal people, but they now have a voice in national affairs" (Beckett 1994)</p>
	<p>Stuart Highway re-aligned. Kulgera becomes the major stopover for vehicle traffic between Adelaide and Alice Springs. [PHK]</p>
1948	<p>Measles epidemic at Ernabella Mission which killed 'at least a quarter of the Aboriginal population, and many hundreds more in the surrounding area' [Kerin, R p31, Doohan p19] In Finke Mona Brown, the policeman's wife, nurses the Aboriginal children. Two old people but no children die. [Brown 1990 p68.]</p> <p>RFDS airstrip built by Finke Community. Race track is built after this. [NTAS OH TS 469]</p> <p>Pastoralist Conference held at Finke or at least proposed to be held at Finke [catalogue listing NAA F1 1948/166]</p>

## The Finke River Progress Association –The Making of A District Capital

1949	<p>Notwithstanding the government's initial refusal to build trucking yards at Fink Siding (see 1947), trucking yards are in fact built here, and it would appear the yards at Rumbalara are now abandoned. [[NAA F1 1948/96 compare Brown who states the yards wee built in 1952 p2]</p> <p>Finke River Progress Association established. From now until 1965 it lobbies government for toilet facilities, a public hall, a cemetery and</p>
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<p>electricity at Finke township. [NAA F1 <a href="#">1973/3005</a>]</p> <p>Native Patrol Officer states there are 31 people – 3 x Arrernte and 28 x Luritka people – living in an Aboriginal Camp located about ‘a quarter mile from the town’ of Finke [Doohan p40] The patrol officers also notes that ‘there are only two half castes’ at Finke Siding, both are young girls, one 15 and one 16 years old. They are living in the aboriginal camp. He is concerned that one of them ‘could be a source of trouble to Constable Brown while there is a possibility of undesirable whites at Finke’ [mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/penhall.html citing CRS F315/0 Item 1949/388].</p> <p>Under heading Finke Siding ‘a ration depot operates at the Police Station, but apart from a few regulars it is mainly a floating population .... It is unfortunate that the ration depot is at Finke Siding. This encourages the natives to remain at the Siding, and to hang around when trains come through. This will in time create the same problem as the East West Line. At the moment I am not prepared to recommend any Station in the vicinity of the Finke as an alternative ration depot. The natives are very well cared for under Constable Ron Brown’s control. [NAA F315 49/388]</p> <p><i>Aboriginal employment within the town of Finke:</i> A Mr Frank Quinn at Finke Railway Siding has a business as a ‘Carrier and Contractor’ and employs one native on wages of 1 pound a week, plus food, clothing for himself, wife and son. [NAA F315 49/388] Quinn had originally gone to Finke as a well sinker for Bert Kitto and others and then runs a transportation business with an international truck. Brown p151</p> <p>Mr F. J. Colson – boring contractor pays one ‘boy’ 2 pounds a week plus food but not clothing. . [NAA F315 49/388]</p> <p>Mr E.A. Colson storekeeper ‘has one boy working for him who resides in main camp about quarter mile from siding. He receives 3 pounds a week in cash and has to provide rations for himself and family’. [NAA F315 49/388]</p> <p>“Two trackers are employed at the police station. One female is employed by the local Constable’s wife. Mrs M. Brown, paid 10/- per week and kept. . [NAA F315 49/388]</p> <p>Rumbalara Ochre Mines employs between two and four Aboriginal people. [NAA F315 1949/388]</p> <p>Under heading Railway Sidings - Deep Well Rodinga Rumbalara – ‘In no instance were natives encountered in the vicinity of these sidings. The gangs are well aware that natives are prohibited from frequenting these areas. Constable Brown stated that he has very little trouble in</p>
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	<p>this respect, and is quite satisfied with the numbers of the gangs.</p> <p>Natives do come in from neighbouring Stations on Saturdays and Mondays to see the train and they normally return to the Station with the Station vehicle. Abminga siding (S.A.) This is out of my Territory, but only one native was noticed in the vicinity, and she originated from Oodnadatta. [NAA F315 1949/388]</p> <p>Patrol also visit Ernabella mission – where there are about 300 natives in the camp, living in bush wurlies [NAA F315 1949/388].</p> <p>October 1949 – approval given for installation of telephone bell on telephone at Finke police station NAA F1 51/467</p>
1950s	<p>Western Desert/Arrernte people now permanently occupy areas around Finke township. [Doohan p56]</p> <p>Brown says the European population is about 30 p177</p> <p>Note that this is a period of dramatic change in the small community of Finke – police duties less than previously because jobs they used to do eg welfare work, now divided up amongst various government departments (Penberthy July September 2010)</p>
1950	<p>27<sup>th</sup> February Ted Colson dies in a car accident. He is buried in Adelaide. There is a memorial cairn in his honour in Birdsville. A manuscript and correspondence by him are held in the Museum of South Australia. [Horne]</p> <p>The Aputula pub was licensed to a Frank Lawrence Briscoe [McLaren]</p> <p>The story of 'The Leg in the Sugar Bag Mystery' is reported in eastern newspapers with claims that the leg, found by miners at Rumbalara, maybe be evidence that 'a tribe of aboriginal cannibals once lived in the area'. The leg turns out to have belonged to a camel. Ron Brown is the investigating officer. [SMH 14/9/1950]</p>
1951	<p>Ron Brown leaves Finke and the Territory. 4<sup>th</sup> November, a newly married Tony Kelly posted to Finke [NTRS 3164 BWF_82].</p> <p>Kelly describes how the passenger train now stops at Finke. Spud Murphy is the repeater station operator. Frank Quinn is living in a caravan doing a weekly mail run and someone called Harry Woods is living in an open shed. Kelly has a herd of 300 goats which provide police staff and families with meat and milk. Stores came regularly from Port Augusta on the train.</p>
1952	<p>Ernabella Church opened. [Horton Vol 1 p344].</p>

1953-1954	<p>21/4/53 Ron Brown retires from the Northern Territory Police force on medical grounds. [McLaren p1234] Note that he probably stopped work some time earlier. Police usually took all their entitlements – remaining sick, holiday and other leave – before completing official retirement papers. (Gleaned from several police oral histories).</p> <p>Finke police station (amongst others) declared a police prison – with aim of allowing prisoners to be held here for short periods avoiding the costs and time involved in taking them to Darwin or Alice Springs Gaol. By 1955 this system was deemed unsatisfactory because of complications arising from the issue of who was to provide meals and/or discipline/ hard labour tasks for the prisoners so it was decided to return to the system of sending people to gaol proper. All police prisons revoked April 1956 except Tennant Creek. [McLaren p1244-45 ]</p> <p>Finke is the last police station in the Territory (Australia?) to keep and use camels for police patrols. The last patrol was made by Constable Tony Kelly in 1953. [STG; NTRS 3164 BWF_82_45_1_of_2]. The Finke trackers involved in this patrol attended a big corroboree at Horseshoe bend before returning to Finke. [NTRS 3164 BWF_82_45_1_of_2]</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> April 1954 SMH – reports that ‘The only camel patrol left in the Northern Territory is in the Finke police district of 77,000 square miles, the largest in the Territory’.</p> <p>26/3/1954 A.J. Millgate occupies Finke River Police Station. Rental of the house is given as ‘free’ but the refrigerator is charged at 5 pounds p.a. and furniture at 12 pounds per annum. NAA F1 51/467</p>
1954	<p>1954 – Tony Kelly leaves Finke [NTRS 3164 BWF_82_45_1_of_2]</p> <p>24<sup>th</sup> June - First diesel locomotives used on the Ghan line [Ghan Brochure]</p> <p>November 1954 – Constable Millgate writes to request the installation of a septic system at the Finke Police Station observing that the ‘new Town plan’ shows that the current toilet is the path of the new main road and that this road will also destroy a ‘major portion of the back yard of the police station, wiping out as well all the citrus trees and fig trees now established on the grounds.’ P59 NAA F1 51/467</p> <p>Work begins on construction of four government residences at Finke, three railway houses and one residence for the technician at the repeater station. [NAA B300 9350]</p> <p>6th December – pumping plant at Finke breaks down and townspeople go on ‘unofficially enforced’ ‘voluntary’ ‘water restrictions’ [NAA F1 55-321]</p>
1955	<p>A water supply crisis at Finke follows the introduction of diesel locomotives on the Ghan line. A list of who the railway supplies water</p>

	<p>for includes: the towns residents and 'water for aboriginals camp – drifting population from 10-40' and 'water for drifting stock – mostly aborigines horses, dogs' [NAA F1 55-321]</p> <p>Correspondence signed by Constable Millgate dated Feb 1955 indicates that there are 'four newly completed houses in the town area' and the community has a hall. The water crisis appears to continue until 1958. [F1 55-321]</p> <p>According to McLaren Constable A.J. Millgate is posted to Finke River Police Station in March [McLaren p1279], however the above correspondence is signed by Millgate indicating that he was in Finke before March. Millgate is given a land rover in which to do his work.</p> <p>Kulgera Store Built [PHK]</p> <p>Town of Finke formally proclaimed on 18.8.1955, with town lands made available by auction on 9.30 am 25/10/55. [See map at <a href="http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/historicMapImf.jsp">http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/historicMapImf.jsp</a>, File S292]</p> <p>The arrival of diesel engines also sees the appointment of a station master at Finke and the construction of a railway Molly Clark things the station came from Alice Springs. The first station master is a Trevor Ward who is also a musician. His presence greatly enhances social activity. The European community holds several dances in Finke as a result of his presence. [pers comm. Molly Clark]</p> <p>Const Millgate leaves Finke – 30/5/55 on sick leave. Const B Courts – single man - transferred to Finke 31/5/55 – was previously stationed in Alice Springs.- Constable Millgate returns to Finke 25/7/55 and leaves again on 15/9/55 to be replaced by Const Taylor NAA F1 51/467 p56</p>
1956	<p>A lock is put on the railway water tank which Doohan ascribes to a lessening in the 'tolerance of the fettlers' [Doohan p46 + p63]. This takes place in the context of the 'water crisis' following the introduction of diesel engines on the Ghan line and the railways decision to reduce the hours of the pumper because the railways are now using substantially less water. [NAA F1 55-321]</p> <p>Construction of a Stock Inspector's House at Finke commences. Building appears to be completed in 1957. NAA A452 1956/1418</p>
	<p>Second measles epidemic in Ernabella and Finke region [Kerin, R p32]</p>
1957	<p>The Commonwealth railways own four residences, one of which is rented to the stock inspector, a large building used as a railway workers mess and accommodation for single railway employees. The town is described as having a 'static population' of 22 with a maximum</p>

	<p>of 12 railway workers, of whom 3 are married and a nomadic natives camp with a population varying from five to thirty. Of the non railway employees, other water consumers are hotel, store, P.M.G., stock inspectors and the police station. Page 44, page 42 Aboriginal people are thought to be drawing their water from the police station. NAA A452, 1957/740</p> <p>Finke River Progress Association actively lobbies government for equitable water rates and some control over the town's water supply which has been looked after by Commonwealth railways who are charging cost rates for the service. NAA A452, 1957/740</p>
.	<p>Horace Simpson Collection, state library of south Australia non-digitised photo PRG 1144/2/16</p> <p><i>Finke Siding 839 miles. A watering station in the steam days. A store, hotel, police station, school and a few fettlers' houses make up the small township. Now an Aboriginal depot. And I could add a railway station in the diesel days.</i></p>
Dec 1957	<p>1<sup>st</sup> December - Constable Conmee's wife and personal effects arrive in Finke (FPSDJ)</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> December – Finke police instructed to look for a missing car and its occupants. (FPSDJ) The occupants, relations of well known Centralian pastoralist and author Bryan Bowman, <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sundown_Murders">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sundown_Murders</a> are found murdered, the 1950s equivalent of the Falconio incident near Barrow Creek in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finke police and trackers lead the investigation which is reported nationally. The murderer is eventually found and hung in Adelaide Gaol [Killmier] which is now a tourist attraction.</p> <p>Mr Hamilton is the postmaster at Finke. (FPSDJ)</p> <p>First proposal to erect a police station at Kulgera because of its location on the road south. Its 100 miles west of Finke. [McLaren p1357]</p> <p>Sometime in either 1957 [Rowse p141 or 1958 Kimber, Spencer Hill Landcare Talk 2010] the devastating drought which lasts till 1965 begins.</p>
1958	<p>January – Finke River Progress Association steps up its lobbying to have the inter departmental government dispute about the town's water supply and costs resolved in part because it is noted that there has been an 'influx of aborigines making water position more acute' as a well as a major break down in the pumping equipment. NAA A452, 1957/740 page 27</p> <p>May 1958 Sceptic tank has been installed at Finke Police Station NAA F1</p>



	<p>51/467 p124</p> <p>22<sup>nd</sup> September – Finke school opened its doors for the first time with 7 pupils. [Pugh, PYmedia] Mrs Joe Mahood, Territorian author, is the teacher. [Moore]</p> <p>Government correspondence sometime between 1958-1965 about the ‘aged and infirm depot’ states that there are 10 local aborigines, and 20-25 aged and infirm aborigines living at Finke. There is some discussion about moving non local aborigines back to their communities though this may not have actually happened. [NAA F1 1971/1624]</p> <p>Government correspondence notes that the tracker at Finke is living in the native camp an ‘arrangement’ which ‘has proved very inconvenient in emergencies’ and so it is proposed to erect tracker accommodation on the police block. NAA F1 51/467</p> <p>Newspaper report 26/9/58 quoting from the annual report of the Finke River Progress association states that gardening has commenced in Finke because the dispute about water costs which took place between Commonwealth railways and the Territory Administration following the introduction of diesel trains has finally been solved. Finke residents are now getting water at the same rates as other Australian citizens. This was as a result of direct representations to the railways being made by the progress association. The same article notes that the school was established because the railways have transferred a family with six children to the town and notes that a porter is now stationed at Finke and a railway station ‘comprising office, waiting room and ladies retiring room’ has just been built. NAA A452, 1957/740</p>
1959	<p>Constable J Conmee is the policeman at Finke. Mr W Hamilton is at Finke Hotel [NAA F1 1959/2877].</p> <p>Constable D.L. Honeysett transferred from Finke NAA F1 1975/2197</p> <p>November 1959 – government advised to ‘right off’ the five camels which were once used as patrol animals by the police. Camel patrols are now ‘outmoded’ and the camels are no longer held at Finke but are ranging freely. Their location is unknown. NAA F1 59/3352</p>
1960	<p>Mrs Janette Smith replaces Mrs Joe Mahood as teacher at the school. [Moore]. Mrs Smith lives in the AIM house and obtains permission to enrol natives in the school. [Pugh]</p> <p>Aerials put on Traeger pedal set in Finke Police station [NTRS 3164_BWF_181].</p> <p>Mrs Kathleen Mary Rowe replaces Mrs D.I. Hamilton as postmaster at</p>

	<p>the non-official post office at Finke [NAA D961C1960/90]</p> <p>Local economic collapse in the Torres Strait compels many TI men to emigrate to the mainland. (Shnukal 2001.)</p>
1960	<p>4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> June - Finke District, described in correspondence as 'the largest districted in the Northern Territory', holds three days celebrations to mark the centenary of the arrival of the first European in central Australia.</p> <p>Finke District is granted its own public holiday on the 6<sup>th</sup> June as part of these celebrations which include the planting of 20 trees 'along the main street', and a parade with 5 bicycles and 5 cars and a special race meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Molly Clark is the Chairman (sic) of the committee established for these celebrations which take place throughout the Northern Territory between April and June. [Pugh, NAA F1 1959/2877]</p>
1961	<p>Brian Smith is the teacher at the Finke school. [Moore]</p>
	<p>Feb - Kulgera Police Station opened.</p> <p>Margaret Bain starts visiting Finke on a monthly basis, with the Ernabella Mission truck. [Bain OH]</p> <p>November 1961 – discussions commence about the provision of quarters for the police tracker and his dependents which up to this time have not been provided. NAA F1 75/2197 Approval for this given in 11/12/58 but no action taken till now. The numbers of trackers at Finke have been reduced from 2 to 1 in 12/1/62..</p> <p>A patrol officer called Hunter writes a paper in 1961 which describes Finke Railway Siding as one of the outstandingly large Aboriginal camps in Central Australia. The other camps are at Napperby, MacDonald Downs and Utopia, Maryvale and Angas Downs. [Rowse p142-143]</p>
1962	<p>Quenton Hornhart is the teacher at the Finke school till 1964. [Moore]</p> <p>The Finke Oil Company applies for a permit to search for oil. NAA A452 1962/4184</p>
1963	<p>School moves from tin shed which also doubled as the town's community hall to the purpose built school. [Moore] On its first day it has an enrolment of ten students [Pugh]</p>
1964	<p>Jan - Discussions commence about replacing Finke police station with a 'modern building' NAA F1 75/2197</p> <p>A drought, described as being "in its seventh devastating year" "had made [Aboriginal] employees all over the region redundant but ....</p>

	affiliation to home country made them practically immovable” [Rowse p 141] when it came to seeking employment.
1965	<p>Bob Bourke and Mrs Eileen Lambert are the teachers at the Finke school. Not known when they leave. [Moore]</p> <p>Pastoral stations in the north of South Australia stop acting as government ration stations [Doohan p25]</p>
1967	Laurie Kennedy, policeman, posted to Finke. Replaces a Charlie Taylor. [NTAS OH and NAA F1 75/2197 rental receipts and 'hire of departmental furniture'].

<b>From Finke to Aputula</b>	
1968	<p>Margaret Bain from Ernabella is asked by Toby Ginger to move to Finke to work with the Aboriginal community. [Bain OH]. According to Doohan, this marks beginning of European departure from the town [Doohan p7]</p> <p>Aputula Council established [Bain, quoted in Davies pA8] consisting of Senior men representative of most Aboriginal families in Finke and holding traditional authority. They wear badges and hats with red head bands. [Bain OH] They make their first request for government assistance to improve living conditions [NAA A2354 69/897].</p> <p>Eileen Kennedy, Laurie's wife, teaches at Finke school leaving at the end of 1969. She is also the welfare officer at Finke. [Moore, Pugh].</p>
1969	<p>In November learnt that the Finke Store is to close down. [Bain letters December 1969]</p> <p>With Margaret Bain, Aputula Council start a business catching and selling camels. [Bain OH, Letters December 1969]</p> <p>Mr Turner becomes teacher at Finke school till 1970. [Moore] The new teachers are non-drinkers. [Bain letters 4/3/69]</p> <p>The Ghan – which arrives in Finke on Sunday is an air-conditioned express train. The 'water train' is neither. [Bain letters 14/2/69]. March 31 – Finke Race weekend. The CWA hold a stall. There is lots of drinking and Margaret Bain sleeps at the Aboriginal camp, at the request of non-drinkers, in an effort to prevent drinkers from entering. [Bain letters 31/3/69]</p> <p>Mar 1969 – Aputula Council catch camels with a view to selling them as a business enterprise [Bain letters] and obtain leases on land in Finke for the purpose of building homes. The conditions of the lease require that \$3,000 worth of improvements are made to each block. The council obtains government funding to do this. [Bain letters]</p>

	<p>Fred Smith – fettler family living in Finke. Frank Quinn lets his lease on land in Finke lapse [Bain Letters]</p> <p>Police house had linoleum floors – due for repair 1969. Request also for ‘fogging’ machine to ‘combat plague of spiders’ in police house see pp 101 NAA F1 75/2197 Also discussions about ‘necessity of constructing a second cell at Finke police station due to number of cases in past two years and need to utilise cells for males and females. Number of cases was 19.</p> <p>Aug 1969 – discussion about police transferring to stock inspector’s house at Finke.</p> <p>Federal government introduces housing associations to the NT. Other states follow (Howie-Willis 1994) .</p>
1970	<p>NAA F133 76/77 Part 1 – <i>Pub Licence in name of T Colson – me – ain’t he dead?</i></p> <p>The licensed Finke store closes down. [Bain] A caravan store run by the local post master, Mr Reeves, opens selling mainly foodstuffs NAA F133 1976/77 Part 1]</p> <p>Senior Aputula men, with the help of \$500 in donations, establish the Aputula Community store, which, they run with the help of Margaret Bain. [Bain 1992 p 153] The store is located at the Old Trackers quarters at the Police Station. [NAA F133 1976/77 Part 1]</p> <p>Aputula Social Club is incorporated with the main aim being to be able to get money from the government for local projects. The first grant received is for \$5,000. (August) [Bain 1992 p160-161]</p> <p>Applications are made for the establishment of ‘house pre-fabricating industry’ and pottery industry using clay from nearby ochre mines. These industries are needed because ‘changing conditions in the cattle industry’ are demanding the creation of ‘alternative employment’ in order that the Aboriginal people can stay living at Finke. One of the arguments for a pre-fabrication model for housing is ‘in the event of there being necessity to move when the railway line is moved, only the concrete base of any building would be lost, but much would have been learned and taken with them to any new site’. [letter dated Dec 1970, Margaret Bain - NAA A2354 69/897] Leases for land within the town boundaries are also obtained. [NAA A2354 69/897]</p> <p>Rations for the aged and infirm still available from Finke Police station. [Doohan p26 citing Bain]</p> <p>A visiting welfare officer from Alice Springs describes the water situation in Finke as ‘most unsatisfactory. Aborigines are still obtaining</p>

	<p>their water from a fire hydrant opposite the school. As the majority of Finke residents are old pensioners it does not seem right that they should have to carry water an average of 200 yards to their camp.' NAA F133 1976/77 Part 1]</p> <p>Ernabella Church and school transferred to government control [Horton Vol 1 p344].</p> <p>Johnny Briscoe moves to Finke where he works for the railways and then the Aputula Housing Company. . [Devansen and Briscoe p3]</p>
1971	<p>January – the Aputula community run store closes its doors. [Bain 1992 p155]</p> <p>'A Big Country' ABC TV shows a documentary about the 'Law at Finke' starring Laurie Kennedy, his wife and others. [Finke school journal]</p> <p>Funds are received from the Commonwealth government for the establishment of the Aputula Construction Company' to build houses for those people who have been living in wurlies on the sand dune of the edge of town. [Bain]</p> <p>Preliminary survey work for a new standard gauge railway link from Tarcoola to Alice Springs begins. [Boynthon p104-105]</p> <p>Sometime in between 1967-1978 the Primary school is run by NT rather than the SA Gov [S. Moore] Teachers were still being recruited to Territory schools by the South Australian education department in 1971. Towards the end of this year the Northern Territory Welfare Department starts recruiting teachers. Recruitment by a Northern Territory Education Department takes place with self government in 1978 [pers comm. Julie Heller, a teacher recruited to Alice Springs from South Australia in 1971]</p>
1972	<p>Laurie Kennedy, policeman, leaves Finke to go to Papunya in June. He describes the culture shock he experienced when he moved from the 'law abiding community of Finke' with a population of about 200 Aboriginals to Papunya with a population of 2,000 and lots of trouble caused by grog. Kennedy also describes doing first aid in the community during his time there suggesting that the AIM have not yet started their clinic. NTAS CD 423</p> <p>Mrs Ruth Sims school teacher at Finke NAA F133 76/77 Part 1</p> <p>Nov 72 - Roger Braham policeman at Finke – housing inspection document. NAA F1 75/2197</p> <p>July 1972 Constable Symons at Kulgera. Aboriginal population Kulgera</p>



	<p>is 7. Police Tracker is paid \$160 a fortnight. A gardener and yards man are paid \$10 and \$20 a week plus food from store supplies. One aboriginal woman is selling artefacts to tourists as an independent enterprise, 'cutting off the tourists before they reach the store. Consequently the Store sells very few artefacts, although they are stocked. NAA F133 76/77 Part 1</p> <p>Finke aboriginal population totals 68. Aputula Housing company is employing 4 adult men who at the time of Welfare visit are not receiving wages because there is no supervision. NAA F133 76/77 Part 1</p> <p>The police tracker at Finke receives \$160 per fortnight in wages. A gardener at the school receives \$112 per fortnight. Three aboriginal women are employed in town – one helps in the social club store getting \$20 per fortnight, a cleaner at the Police Station gets \$5 per week and a cleaner of the Welfare Van gets \$10 per week. NAA F133 76/77 Part 1</p> <p>Mr McTavish – a United Church representative from Ernabella mission is at Finke and is supplying the Aboriginal camp with wood and attends to camp hygiene. NAA F133 76/77 Part 1</p>
1973	<p>Aputula Construction/Housing Company has built 6 houses in Aputula.</p> <p>A factory to build the component parts for housing in other Aboriginal communities is now started. [Bain 1992 p163]</p>
1974 or later	<p>Pukatja Community Inc formed at Ernabella and administration transferred from church to local council. [Horton Vol 1 p344].</p>
	<p>18<sup>th</sup> Oct – 'The Tarcoola – Alice Springs Railway Act is passed by the Federal Government to enable a new all weather standard gauge line to be built northwards from Tarcoola. Consequently, the fate of the Old Ghan Railway to Alice Springs is sealed.' [Ghan Brochure]</p> <p>Aputula housing company asks government to have electricity connected to houses. [NAA E460 <a href="#">1974/1400</a>]</p> <p>Circa 1974 A.I.M. establishes a medical clinic at Finke as a result of a request by Margaret Bain to Harry Griffiths because the RFDS is not able to respond to every emergency. [Griffiths p167 compare though school journal entry for 1960.]</p>
1975	<p>Community acquires license for the Aputula Hotel. [Davies pA9 quoting Bain]</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> April 1975 construction begins on new standard gauge rail link from Tarcoola to Alice Springs [Boynthon p104-105] because the narrow</p>

	<p>gauge line which passes through Finke is 'unable to cope with increasing traffic demands and was frequently breached by flooding and washaway damage". [Boynthon p104-105]</p> <p>May 3 - Bottrell, Leigh 'Blacks will buy the only pub in town' Daily Telegraph May 3 1975 and Blacks aide to buy Hotel Age, May 2 [AIATSIS Catalogue]</p> <p>June – The first Finke Motor Cycle Race starts. Alice Springs News 2010</p> <p>Commonwealth Inquiry into police behaviour at Finke following from a drunken brawl between railway workers and Aborigines in which Aborigines are 'bashed' by the police. The Aboriginal population of Finke is estimated as between 120-140 people, growing to between 200-250 people on weekend. Discussion on Aputula buying the pub in order to control sale of flagons wines takes place. [NAA F133 1975/23C, ATS 67 1975];[ Maloney, Justin <i>NT Police create racial tension at Finke</i> Black news Service 1975]</p>
1976	<p>Correspondence between government departments in April notes that, after canvassing various government departments 'the town of Finke is seen as having five major roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A railway centre ...</li> <li>A centre for an Aboriginal community</li> <li>A social and service centre for nearby pastoral properties</li> <li>A route town accommodating visitors</li> <li>Operation of the repeater station"</li> </ol> <p>The relocation of the railway line and associated cattle trucking yards will end the town's roles in a. and c. The anticipated construction of a 'co-axial cable link' will end e. 'The possibility of sustainable or even reasonable tourist attraction also appears remote'. The only economic future for the town appears to be 'the Aputula Company but it appears this Aboriginal employment will be looking for other work when the home building is completed.</p> <p>The problem caused by changing patterns of communication is not unique to Finke and people naturally become uncertain and apprehensive about their future. A further problem is the question of the level and standard of services that should be provided for those who remain. Clearly there is a need to come to a decision and advise the inhabitants of the future intent as soon as possible.</p> <p>As a prelude to interdepartmental discussions I would be grateful if you would advise as to your department's views particularly if you see an alternative means of economic support to enable the community to continue living at Finke and any other views or information that may</p>

	assist in solving the problem.“ NAA F133 76/77 Part 2’
1977	<p>Ian Towns from regional Victoria employed as Community worker at Finke, later becomes the licensee of the Finke pub. Pop consists of fettlers, aboriginal people, publican, policeman etc 180 people. [Ian Towns NTAS OH Interview Int No 2005-37]</p> <p>Correspondence dated 28/1/77 by Department of Aboriginal Affairs in WA regarding ‘their strong support for purchase of strategically located hotels by Aboriginal organisations in this State’ seeks information about ‘the Aboriginal owned hotel in Finke’. [NAA F133 <a href="#">1977/88</a>]</p> <p>McLaren p1580- cites government document for 1977-1978 stating that Finke police station needed replacing.</p> <p>Johnny Briscoe becomes a health worker at Finke. He is chosen by the Aboriginal Council and works with the sisters of the A.I.M. [Devansen and Briscoe p3] Briscoe is described by Harry Griffiths, head of the A.I.M./Frontier Services, as ‘illiterate’ but with a fantastic visual memory. Nursing staff are slowly reduced from 2 to 1 to enable Johnny to take over. In addition to his health duties Johnny does basic dental care using a dental chair donated from N.S.W. Everyone is amazed at the speed with which he learns. [Griffiths 1967].</p> <p>In government correspondence pertaining to Finke Hotel it is noted that: ‘Finke is an open town, i.e. not on a reserve even though it is a substantially Aboriginal township. As such it is able to trade with people outside the township and in fact they now contribute a substantial portion of the Hotel’s income. [Letter dated 8/277 RIMG0200 Finke Hotel 1977 F133 <a href="#">1977/88</a>]</p> <p>Finke airstrip is upgraded or a Finke gets a new airfield, which is not clear from a series of photographs of men grading red earth labelled Finke aerodrome in the National Archives. [NAA E1315 FINKE]</p>
1978	<p>John McNiel leaves Finke [PSJ]</p> <p>Robin and Pam Laidlaw are the teachers at Finke school [Moore].</p>
1979	<p>A.I.M. which has staffed the clinic in Finke leaves at the request of the Aboriginal elders [Griffiths p 167ff] Finke Johnny Briscoe opens new hospital. [Devansen and Briscoe p3]</p>

<b>The End of the Railway –Why We Stayed</b>	
1980	9 <sup>th</sup> October 1980 – First standard gauge train rolled into Alice [Boynthon p104-105].
	<p>24<sup>th</sup> November 1980 the last narrow gauge train departs from Maree [Boynthon p104-105] December – last Ghan runs on the North West line. [Ghan Brochure]</p> <p>Train line relocated west of Finke. Most of the European community moves to Kulgera.</p> <p>The police station at Finke is now staffed by a Police Aid and a Police Tracker, but no Police Officer. [Matasia, OH; PY media]</p> <p>Dr Dayalan Devanesen and Johnny Briscoe present the Lambie-Dew oration for The Sydney University Medical Society. Johnny says Finke has a population of about 130. Johnny states that the town started in 1966, that all the people in Aputula live in houses built by their own housing company and that Finke ‘has the only Aboriginal owned pub’. [Devansen and Briscoe p3]</p>
1981	January – Railway line closed entirely between Maree and Alice Springs. [Ghan Brochure]
	Voluntary liquidation of the Aputula Construction Company. All creditors are paid in full. [Bain 1992 p 164]
1983	<p>Kim Doohan, anthropologist and author of ‘One Family, Different Country’ and co-author of the Land Rights claim documents visits Finke for the first time noting that ‘the presence and influence of ... ‘white advisors’, was steadily decreasing ... In 1983 there were two school teachers, a book keeper; a mechanic and his family; an adult educator and family, a nursing sister; and a community advisor and his family.</p> <p>Three years later, only the mechanic, school teachers and community advisor remained ... In early 1988, the mechanic and his family left the community; his contract was not renewed because the community council felt that there was enough local expertise to maintain the power-house and garage, with occasional inspections of the former by contractors from Alice Springs.’ [Doohan p1]</p>
	11 November – application for Finke land claim made. [FLC]
1984	Homelands movement taken up at Finke [Doohan p21]
1985	Kim Doohan returns to Finke as part of a North Australia Research Unit (NARU) Project p8
1988	Finke/Aputula has a European population of 4 and an Aboriginal population of between 180-210. [Doohan p 6]

	April 8 Aputula Community Store new building opened by Charlie Perkins [PYmedia]
1989	Aputula-Finke Land Claim Granted [Doohan pers comm.] Mt Dare Station obtains liquor licence. [Davies pers comm.]
1990	Community relinquished license for Finke Hotel – community now 'dry'. [Davies p A9] No alcohol may be brought into the town [Davies again]
1991	End of October Arrernte, Luritja, Pitjantjara and Yunkunyatjatjara traditional landowners gathered at the town of Finke to receive title to five small areas of land. The areas of land were all former stock routes.
1992	Doohan writes that 'a new wave of [European] discovery is taking place on school and public holidays, as tourists in four-wheel drives rummage through the remains' of 'stations and sidings along the abandoned railway line'. P2
Circa 1993	Finke has a population of approx 200 people, 95% of whom are Aboriginal. Services include a health clinic, church, arts and craft centre, primary school, store, mechanical workshop, BRACS, police aide post and lock-up, orchard, football field and an all weather airstrip. There are only a few telephones in town. Television and radio is satellite transmitted.  Rev J Downing describes Finke as 'the most together community of any in the Northern Territory and northern South Australia in that the Council is sure of its business and runs its business' [Davies pA10-11]
1995 - 2004	Phillip Russell teaches at Finke [Moore]
1998	Aputula has a population of 250 people, 92% of whom are Aboriginal. It has 1 primary school and an Aboriginal controlled health clinic. [Peart and Szoeke]
1995-1997	Anthea Frossinakis teacher at Finke school. [Moore]
1997-1998	The Community of Apatula (formerly known as Finke) wins the Northern Territory's Tidiest Town Award two years in a row. [NT Chronicle 1998]

<b>The MacDonnell Shire – A New Era/Chapter?</b>	
2008	Aputula Housing Association Incorporated – the incorporated local government body which had been delivering core local government services is dissolved. Finke becomes part of The MacDonnell Shire. [http://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/]Aputula has a population of 250 people, has a school, health clinic and general store. [http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-77208]



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## **Oral History Interviews (OH) = recorded conversation about the past**

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### **Northern Territory Archives Service**

Brown, Ron Agnew TS 469 Oral History Interview Transcript

Chandler, Murray, Oral History Interview Number 2005-28, also private collection Megg Kelham

Coulthard Bill Transcript TS 182 Oral History Interview

Easton, Keith Oral History Interview 2005-31 also private collection Megg Kelham

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Greenfield, Patrick (Paddy) Oral Interview Number 2006-04. NTRS 226, also Megg Kelham

Gregory, Bob and Jenny TS 58 Transcript Oral History Interview

Hawkins, Alan contents summary, Oral History Interview NTRS 226, TS 1088,

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Kelly, Tony contents summary and Oral History Interview CD 422,

Kennedy, Laurie CD 423

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McKinnon, Bill TP 813 and TS 789

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Strange, John Oral History Interview No: 2005-34 also private collection Megg Kelham

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## **Web Sites – accessed February and March 2010**

Aboriginal Genealogy Resources – accessed 28/4/10  
<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/pmackett/penhall1.html> [Mackett]

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Aputula Community History Project  
<http://communityfinke.wikispaces.com/Finke+History>

Aputula Housing Association Limited - Archived Website - <http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-77208>

A Resource Assessment Towards a Conservation Strategy for the Finke Bioregion

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/wildlife/nature/pdf/finke/app4.pdf>

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MacDonnell Shire Website <http://www.macdonnell.nt.gov.au/>

Molly's Bash <http://www.oldandado.com/history.html>

Mt Dare Hotel <http://www.mtdare.com.au>

Northern Territory Government, Northern Territory Land Information System (NTLIS) Town of Finke 2400 (Public Plan) 1950 at  
[http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/sites/historic\\_map\\_index/displayLargeMap.jsp?mapId=00776](http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/sites/historic_map_index/displayLargeMap.jsp?mapId=00776)

PYmedia website at <http://www.waru.org/organisations/pymedia/>

South Australian Memory – Crossing the Simpson  
<http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=219#e845> [samemory]

Territory Government, Police History Kulgera [PHK]  
<http://www.nt.gov.au/pfes/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=52&m=22&sm=48&cru mb=33>

**Conversations** (Personal Communications = pers com) - unrecorded conversations with people who have had something to do with Finke. These are listed in alphabetical order according to first name.

Annabelle Kristevic

Carol Leith – one of a handful of women contestants in the first Finke Motor Bike Race

Deirdre McNiel

Emily Churchill

Evelyn Churchill

Gerard Waterford

Harold Matasia

Homer Coderre –

Jill and Alan Braithwaite

Jocelyn Davies

John Dallwitz

Julia Burke

Julie Anderson

Kim Doohan

Linda Rive

Margaret Bain

Melissa – Mt Dare Station

Mary Flynn

Molly Clark

Paddy Greenfield

Pat Jackson

Pat Studdy-Clift

Peter and Jane Roper -

Robin Gregory

Shirley Downing

Stuart Traynor

Suzanne Bryce – IAD worker 1970s

4WD Grey Nomads attending 'Molly's Bash' at Old Andado Station, Mother's Day 2010



## **Institutional Catalogue Searches**

Alice Springs Collection, Neville Shute Library, Alice Springs

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

Museum Victoria (MV)

National Archives of Australia (NAA)

Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS)

State Library of New South Wales (SLNSW)

State Library of South Australia (SLSA)

State Records Office of South Australia (SRSA)

National Library of Australia (NLA)