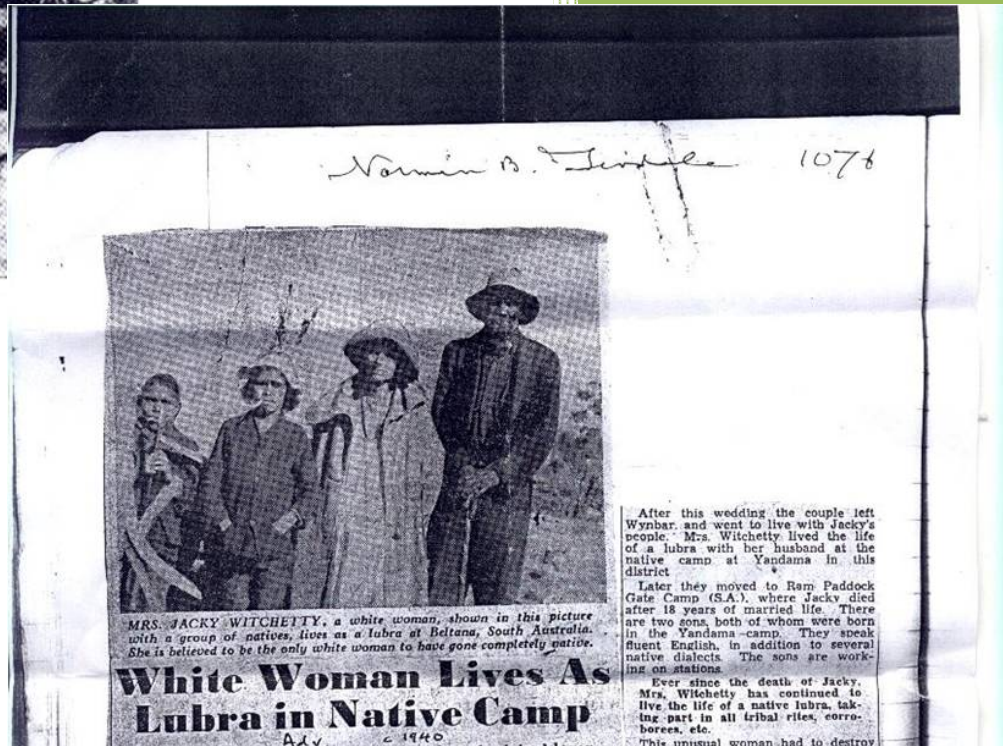




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Thesis Title:

White Lives in a Black Community: The lives of Jim Page and Rebecca Forbes in the Adnyamathanha community

Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology,

Flinders University Adelaide, South Australia

Student Name: Rev Tracy Louise Spencer

B.Sc (Psychology) University of Melbourne, 1989

B.Ed (Counselling) LaTrobe University, 1991

B. Theology Flinders University, 1996

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Life Writing Chapter Seven

Adnyamathanha Country

Tilcha creek, 1926

Facing backwards in the wagon, Becky watches the sand-hills recede inch by inch in their wake, until the ridges become a solid ocean of sand behind them. It was as if their fragile wheel tracks had never been, and their past was closing its eyes on them.

Jack sees his wife's face. 'It's a good place to come,' he says.

Becky nods, but does not shift her gaze.

'*Yarta vandatha*,' he says. 'I'll tell you the land.'¹ As the cart rocks its way west, the two small boys sometimes sit in the rocking cart, sometimes lie with their dark heads on their mother's lap, sometimes walk beside the cart with their tall kangaroo dogs or dart off into the sandy scrub after lizards or birds: but all the time listening to their father introduce them to the country.

'That one!' Jack points enthusiastically, catching the boys' attention. 'See the little bird? Willy Wagtail. We call him *Indhidindhidi* here. And that little turkey in that bush? That's *Walha*. I'm going to catch him for tea in my nets. But that little black bird made that other one sick: used a bone.'² That's true, too. Old Uncle Fred, he boned that white man was hanging around his camp that time, back over there. Put it in the water and he drank it and got sick.'³ Jack looks meaningfully at Becky, who is watching as well as listening now. 'But that one here: you say his name?'

'Indi-din-did-ee!' sing the boys, giggling at each other.

'You're better than me,' grimaces Becky, trying to get her tongue around it. 'Indi, indi, di?'

Then they all laugh at her.

‘He’s the messenger bird, don’t you forget. He come dancing ‘round, singing out at you, he’s got a message. Sometimes good news. Sometimes it means something’s wrong somewhere, with someone.’ The small black bird with its elegant tailfeathers and full white bib flits off with a final chirrup.

They camp at Moolawatana, under the tall and shady river gums and snap off small acacias to use for a brush shelter.⁴ There are some familiar faces in the *arngu*—the cluster of brush *widlya* that makes up the camp— but many are strangers to Becky.

‘This is Mrs Rebecca Forbes,’ says Jack, a small smile twitching his moustache. Women gather around to pat her and touch her hand.

‘*Nangga, udnyu artu?*’ (Hello, how are you, white woman?)

‘*Nangga,*’ ventures Rebecca in return.

‘*Nangga, Mrs Forbes,*’ sign the men who are standing back a little.

As Rebecca smiles at them, she sees their glance shift to Jack, and they grin at him.

‘*Nangga* means, “How are you?”’ Jack says casually, bending near her ear, ‘And you’re still the white lady, but *udnyu artu* here.’ Rebecca lets out her breath, and says nothing. Jack rests his hand on her shoulder. ‘You say, “*Wandu.*” That means, “Good, thanks.”’⁵

Pichi Richi Campsite, near Quorn, 1998

Denise Champion was an Adnyamathanha church worker, a gracious and smiling cultural consultant who taught countless well meaning whitefellas Adnyamathanha stories and greetings, and not a little theology. We sat in a circle, and she was asking each participant in turn to greet her as we had just been taught. It was my turn next.

‘*Nangga, Tracy-nha,*’ she offered, and waited. It was such a small thing, that request to speak to someone in their own language, in their own country. I only had one word to reply. But I felt acutely embarrassed, anyway. I hadn’t been much chop at high school French, but it was more than that. In this universe of language, I was an absolute beginner, my ignorance exposed. There was no way around it: I had to plunge into the unknown country of another language, another way of knowing the world.

‘*Wandu? Denise-nha?*’ I ventured. ‘*Nangga?*’

‘*Wandu, Tracy-nha.* Good,’ she said, genuinely pleased for me. It wasn’t so hard after all, was it?

Moolawatana, 1926

Soon, the stiffness passes and the chat begins.

‘Your old man, he’s *Arruru*, north wind, warm wind. So you *Mathari*,’ the women tell her, and they assemble an array of moiety relatives for her. ‘Now this one, she younger than you but she cousin to your *marni*—your old man—otherway, so *atuna* - wife - like you, so you call her ...’

Rebecca’s head spins, trying to catch hold of flowing syllables and faces and genealogies all at once and ending up only with a feeling of warmth toward or distance from the various ones being pointed out to her.⁶

‘*Mathari*, that’s the south wind people. That must be right, *inni*? You from that cold place, England!’

So she tells them about snow and the cold with much arming waving and miming when their station English and her own Cockney won’t bridge the gap, and they laugh at the thought and at her.

From there, the Forbes family join the well-trodden stock route coming down from the Strezlecki desert from the north, with salt lakes glittering white to the east and ranges to the west glowing red in the rising sun. They cross countless gravelled creeks draining from the hills and lined with fat bellied river red gums – *wida*, Jack teaches his boys to say, as they pick at the *wityari* beneath the bark. At a larger creek, Jack pulls up the horse and gazes up the twisted dry bed until it disappears into the folds of the hills. He begins to speak softly, sounding words carefully as they come, remembered, to him:

‘*Wadu ngaarlaakanha wabma yanaanggu* (Long ago there came a big snake)
Mityiwa Akurra. (His name was Akurra)...’⁷

Rebecca listens to the soft consonants and rhythm of Jack’s voice. When the story is finished, Jack sweeps his arm towards the hills.

‘All water in there, from that big snake. True.’ Rebecca and the boys turn unbelieving faces to him. Jack laughs. ‘I’ll tell you about those *Valnaapa*, then’ says Jack, ‘the two mates, *Arruru* and *Mathari*. They killed an emu back up there and carried it along in the hills ...’ Rebecca’s attention drifts away with the jilt of the cart, although the boys eyes grow wide.

‘...They’ll be looking at you tonight, *Vulka Varlka*’ Jack concludes his story, ‘and when you made men, they’ll make sure you marry right way.’⁸ See, those *Valnaapa* are *yuras*, people from this country, but they come like us, from Wangkumara country, Wadigali country, Bilarlapa mob.⁹ Maybe they even see England from up there in the sky, eh?’ But Rebecca is not listening, only wondering where they might camp tonight.

They turn in the gate at Wooltana station and, after stopping at the yards to ask after work, find the *yuras* camp to the northeast and build themselves a *widlya* there of slender tree limbs covered with grey blankets, not far from the Johnsons and Coulthards.¹⁰



Wooltana Station, 1917.
On left, standing: Richard and Andy Coulthard, Maurice Johnson, Tim Coulthard, Mabel St
en, Bertha and Ivy Coulthard, Martha Pearce.
Seated in front are Rachael Johnson and Kitty Coulthard (wife of Dick) holding baby Jack.
Seated at the back is Julia Pearce (mother of Martha).

Wooltana Station 1917 Photo by Tracy Spencer from Iga Warta Cultural Centre Display 2008

At night they share the fire's warmth, hearing news and practising verses of songs. When the white *wityari* grubs are sizzling on the coals, the old 'Uncle' tells an animated story to her boys with much pointing to the *wida* and the moon beyond.¹¹ Jack laughs.

Wityari, Rebecca hears, and thinks of other names: *Witchetty Jack. Mrs Witchetty. That's not me, I married Mr Jack Forbes, and that's the name he wanted good as anybody else's*, Rebecca thinks, watching her boys suck the warm stuff from the grub, and licking their fingers. Just then, the old man cries out and points to where rocks jut out from the hill, catching the moonlight.

'*Mindaapanha!*' (Look!)

The group around the fire are very still, eyes shifting between the hillside and the old Uncle. He leans over silently and takes some more sticks and lays them on the fire. The flames leap high, bathing them with a warm light.

‘You safe around the campfire. Maybe he’s moving around, heading down south now. You smell him? We sleep at this fire tonight, he not catch anybody. He not too wily, eh?’ and he taps his temple with his finger.

Rebecca leans close to Jack and whispers ‘What is it?’

‘*Yamuti*,’ he says, so low she can hardly hear. ‘Like a, like a big, ah, teddy bear, you know? Four feet. Big, stiff neck. He’ll take *yuras* and eat them, if he catches them. Watch those boys tonight.’¹²

That isn’t difficult. After the fire is built up and the blankets arranged, young Jack and Ray lie so hard against their mother, she doesn’t sleep all night.

While Jack is working, Rebecca spends her days chasing after a mob of little kids – *yakartis!* she learns to call to them--while their mothers are working at the big house. When the women bring back salted meat, wrapped in newspaper, Rebecca eagerly lays out the crumpled type. It takes a moment for her eyes to focus on the dark squiggles and shapes. She has no way of knowing what day it is and whether this is old news, but she takes a sharp breath as she reads.

‘You read to us Mrs Forbes? Go on, we hear,’ says an auntie, watching.

Laying the paper flat on the dust and pointing to a black and white picture showing a white woman with dark hair, Rebecca begins:

‘Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon smiles a little nervously as she leaves her parent’s home in Bruton Street. Her dress, the subject of great speculation, is revealed as she heads off for Westminster Abbey and her waiting Duke.’¹³

Rebecca sits back on the heels of her shoes. ‘That’s where I used to live. She’s marrying the Prince, the Duke of York. That’s Bertie, the young King and Queen’s second son ...’ The Royal family genealogy tumbles out of her, and her growing audience watches, fascinated.

‘They give us them blankets, every Empire Day,’ a cousin-sister volunteers. To Rebecca’s blank face she adds, ‘Those blankets on your *widlya*, they’re from the King.’

They trade stories after that: women, and men too, bring her letters, or more newsprint, and ask her to read it to them. In return they tell her their stories.

‘See them ranges? *Urdu* and *Mandya* did that. It was all flat once. You know the big red kangaroo? Well he and that little *Mandya*, euro fella—’

‘What’s that?’ she asks, trying to follow.

‘*Man-dya*, he’s the little dark kangaroo likes to be up in the hills. You’ll see him in there,’ and the woman points with her chin to the dense hills behind them. ‘*Urdu* and *Mandya* were friends, but *Urdu* didn’t share the good *mai*—tucker—he found ...’¹⁴

The woman goes on telling the story. Rebecca searches for something resembling a kangaroo shape, but the rugged hills refuse to resolve themselves into any pattern at all. From a distance, the hills had appeared comforting, conjuring images of lush vegetation and running streams. Up close, they reared with raw strength and were ancient and eerie as old bones.

‘How, how do you get over those hills?’ Rebecca asks.

‘You can’t get over, Mrs Forbes. You got to go in ‘em. Follow the creeks, unless they’re flooding, but there’s always tracks. Why’d you want to go over them for? You come on the other side and it’s just like this, you know. Flat all the way to Mundy, the other salt lake. No, in the hills, that’s best. That’s why we’re *Adnya Mathanha*—Hill People—*inni*? Short and squat like *Mundy*. Some of us anyway!’ and she laughs at herself, only a little taller than Rebecca, but generously wide as well.



Mr and Mrs Forbes, Wooltana Station? 1920s Margaret Brown Collection.

When Jack sees the clouds thin in the warming air, he trades their horse for two donkeys and fashions a double harness onto the cart. ‘Too rough for horses in there,’¹⁵ he says, nodding towards the hills.

‘See you then,’ the other families call out, seeing the cart with its sea chest, blankets and other belongings loaded and ready to go. Rebecca sits on top of the load, and waves. ‘You’re going in, Mrs Forbes!’ she hears, as they pull away at the short choppy pace of their unimpressed donkeys.

Italowie Gorge, 2000

You climbed up from the dun coloured plain then –dip! – you were down into a red gorge and picking your way around rough cut stones and gravel. I drove slowly for me, but there was still plenty of jolting. The chalky gravel bit and growled at the all terrain tyres of the Uniting Church Troupe Carrier, and the way through Balcanoona was rough and windy. At *Ithala Awi*, the sides of the Gorge were nearly close enough to touch, and the creek bed snaked and writhed against its walls. The earth jutted to the sky, or fell to the ground, full of the latent energy of whatever blow rent them like this. In some places the cuts were fresher, sharper, where pick and dynamite had forced a path for wagon loads of baled wool pulled by the Adnyamathanha’s donkey teams. I always pulled up where the track ran across the wide river bed, and searched the far river bank for two date palms. There, in a tiny cave part way up the gorge face, was a basin of water in the rock, fed by the secret drips of water travelling through rock. I showed my young children how to cup their hands and draw out a mouthful of the coolest, clearest water I knew.

Balcanoona Station, 1926

The donkeys pull hard but stolidly up the long slope leading out of the gorge.

‘You’ll see where we are at the top of this rise,’ Jack promises.

It is a rare crisp morning, a break in the heat, the breeze a constant thrill of coolness over their skins.

‘I don’t mind a little bit of cold every now and then,’ Rebecca says, to no one in particular.

‘You’ll get more than a little bit in a few months,’ Jack replies, halting the donkeys at the top of the hill. ‘Look at that. *Adata Madapa*. Frost Valley, they call it. Those two women who went looking for their husbands, they came here looking for tucker, but they said “That valley is as dry as a bone.” That’s them, those two little hills, *Tyakatya Wirnga*, sitting there starving. That big hill next to them, that’s *Wayanha*. Mt McKinlay. They found water there, but it’s high up, hard to find. Those women were hungry and singing a lullaby to their two children, singing like this:

Wayanha yanarunga

Vakuvaku wirmirimanda

Wayanha yanarunga

*Vakuvaku wirmirimanda...*¹⁶

‘Please stop!’ Rebecca suddenly shrills.

Jack’s song suspends, mid-note.

A heavy breath rushes from her, and words tumble behind. ‘I can’t do it. I can’t catch the words. I just can’t say them. I try in my head and I can’t get it right.’ She is upset, and about so much more than the words of a song. She turns to look back along their path, watching the dust they have made.

Jack watches her for a moment, absently stroking the donkey where he stands at the head of the team. Then he is still.

‘*Atuna. Udnyu atuna.* You have to. You don’t have to speak *yura ngawarla*, but you have to know it. Our boys got to speak it. This will be their people. You can hum this song to them! You speak white way, and people understand you. They speak their way, and you understand them. You got to live here, OK?’

Rebecca doesn’t say anything.

He continues, softer, the boys quiet and waiting now too. ‘Mrs Forbes, you stick with me here, eh?’ She hears the note in his voice, and turns to meet her sons’ gaze.

‘Where else could I go?’ she asks herself, but Jack hears her anyway.

‘Oh, lots of places a white woman can go. Get the train, go to Adelaide, anywhere. But stick with me: it’s a good place. We get to Mt Serle next couple of days, nice shady creek, make a camp, get some flour sugar tea. Settle down. Even get some newspapers at the station maybe. You’ll see,’ and he gave her a wide grin, ‘you can do it. You be OK. You’ll feel better soon.’

After that, Jack takes them off the main track and down into the valley, unhooking the donkeys and letting them wander for pickings. Jack carries Raymond on his shoulders, and John runs and jumps over the rocks. Jack shows them how to read the tracks of euros, wallabies, sheep and rabbits on the sand and in the droppings. Creamy gum trunks throw patches of shade over the many-coloured rocks that have been smoothed by forgotten floods. It isn’t easy walking, and the soles of Rebecca’s shoes slip on the polished surfaces. Then, up ahead, she sees the perfect picture of gum trees lying amongst the rocks in the late morning sun.

Chun-chunk! the picture ripples as Jack's stone turns lazily on its way to the depths of the pool. 'It's just us here, here for a swim. Old Fred's cousins,' he calls out. He hands the boys a stone each and nods to Rebecca to get one, too. 'Throw it in, just to say hello. Nothing scary here, it's just the right way.'

Chunk, chunk, chunk. Yah! Splshh! Rebecca's husband and sons are whooping in the water, and she already has her shoes off and placed neatly beside each other on a large flat rock. She wades into the water while her skirts billow around her, until her boys pull her over. She floats on her back, watching the clouds burn off in the hot, blue sky, feeling the dust and sweat slough off her skin and clothes. She does feel better.

They lunch on juicy white *wityaris* and fat *alda* roasted on a small fire and washed down with billy tea, while their clothes dry where they are spread out on rocks or over low bushes.

'Why don't we just stay here for a little while?' she asks Jack.

'It's nice, eh? Good now with water in it. Must have been rain a little while back. But no, we can't stay right here. See?' and he points to the tracks on the sand. 'Sheep come in here to drink at evening. Those station men get angry if you scare the sheep away from their water. Maybe shoot at you. Some of them don't like you camping around their stations. That's why we'll go to Mt Serle, get some work there, some rations, camp with that big mob. They got a nice creek, too ...' His voice trails off as he watches a willy wagtail fussing at the waters edge. 'Maybe better get going, then,' he says with a small frown, and Rebecca reluctantly gathers up the clothes.

They camped instead at *Nguthunanga Mai Ambatanha*, a strange pink-and-yellow mound rising suddenly from the ash-coloured ground. 'Call it Damper Hill, eh?' Jack called over his

shoulder. ‘Got to dig a soak here, that’s all it’s got,’ he says, getting to work in a narrow creek. He talks, as he digs, and the boys scratch handfuls of sand from the hole with him. ‘This is a woman’s place, a good story I’ll tell these *yakartis* tonight. ‘Bout them kids went off in the bush, and split up and get lost, *inni?* Not you, eh?’ Jack chides his sons, ‘And that spirit *Ngami*, their mother, she still camps here, and you see her fire glowing at first light.’¹⁷

Later, when their fire casts dancing shadows on the flanks of the little hill, he tells the story. ‘...That *Ngami* looking for her children, and the little bell bird sings out for her to follow.’ Jack glances at Rebecca and sees her relaxed, watching him. He continues. ‘So she sings and makes steps up that other hill, and climbs up to have a look for them kids.’ She sees Jack’s thin chest push forward as he takes a breath.

‘Wayanha yanarunga

Vakuvaku winmirimanda.’

Rebecca’s eyes flick from the flames to his face, and then back again.

‘Wayanha yanarunga ...’

‘Vakuvaku ...’ joins Rebecca, loud enough to hear her voice above his, above the rustle of breeze in the wattles, and the crackling of twigs breaking in the fire.

‘... win-miri-manda,’ adds Jack, smiling. ‘She found that boy asleep under the shadow of *Wayanha*. Like these ones, *inni?*’ he finishes, softly.¹⁸

‘Mmm,’ says Rebecca, as the night seeps into her pores the way the waterhole had.

Rebecca thinks she was still dreaming when she wakes to surreal strips of fire and gold racing along the opposite hillside. They don’t glow, these hills, they shine, and she can’t keep her eyes off them. By the time they have packed up camp, and the sun has started climbing the sky, the tones are subdued a little, but Rebecca is alert now to watch for miracles in this

country. And when Jack points to a hill and starts telling a story about an eagle, Rebecca turns and looks and finally sees the shape, as if it has been there forever.

Artoowarrapana Mountain, 2001

I've had *Wildu* the eagle pointed out to me many times, where he rests on top of *Artoowarrapana*, looking over the Mt Serle homestead, nursing his pride and planning how to teach his two cheeky nephews respect.

Edward John Eyre named the mountain Mt Serle, and it was from its pinnacle that his 'worst forebodings' were 'realised'¹⁹: he could see salt lakes north, east and west, and concluded that he was captured in a net of boggy salt mud he called the Torrens Horseshoe.²⁰ He was wrong of course, on all counts, a trap for white people who can see only what their eyes tell them, and who fill in the gaps with their fears or desires. Mt Serle had been a foil for white men ever since. Surveyed by Goyder in 1850, and taken up as a run not long afterwards, a police station was added after Aboriginal men murdered a white hut keeper for whipping Aboriginal women and children away from a waterhole he wanted for his sheep.²¹ The legendary Inbuthina (Pompey) and his supporters carried out guerrilla warfare against the shepherds on Mt Serle, threatening to 'drive all white men out of the North country.'²²

Despite this, the story Cliff's father Clem Coulthard told Adele Pring from the Education Department of the first meeting between police and *yuras* near Mt Serle unfolds like a communion:

'The first white man took up flour. He was a policeman. He used to take it from Beltana to Mt Serle: used to take it on the packhorse. He mixed up the food for them. It was beautiful and they say they wouldn't take it from him until he started eating it.

He used to get bark off the gum trees (as a plate) and he'd eat it first. He passed it on and some of them would pick it up and smell it and have a good look at it then the next one would take a taste of it and it tasted alright. He wasn't taking a fit so it must have been

alright and not poison so we all had a go. We were all into it then. So every time they see the white man coming on the packhorse they will stand and wait for him.²³

In popular imagination, Mt Serle was that ‘great token of the Far North’, although it was all but abandoned in the 1860s drought.²⁴ *Yuras* were left alone again, with bush tucker and waterholes depleted: starving, emaciated, barely surviving.

The rain returned and the white men with it. This time they brought rations as well, and every week, the old, infirm, and women with children lined up with calico bags and empty jam tins for flour-sugar-tea and a bit of tobacco. Whichever colonial decreed these should be staple foods, and worth a man’s labour? As drought closed in again in the 1890s, *yuras* clustered around the ration depot, until it was also abandoned and left only for a camel depot. The unfortunate manager faced ‘bold and threatening’ *yuras* demanding one pound pay per week with double rations as their terms of employment, and complained to the police at Beltana when he offered less.²⁵ And so Johnsons, Wiltons, Demells, and Coulthards won their contracts hauling carts with their donkey teams, along the rough hill passes to the railhead at Beltana. Other *yura* families cobbled goats together, eight at a time, and collected firewood for sale on stations or at the small rail towns. When an opportunity opened up, Adnyamathanha were there, shaking it for what it was worth.



Photograph from Iga Warta Display

But no amount of determination would stem the flow of introduced disease. Despite the epidemic of measles making the pages of *The Register* in Adelaide, cries for proper medical supplies were met only with a kind of colonial sympathy: the venerable member for Flinders declared to the Parliament ‘It would be better to send out a trooper and shoot those aborigines than allow them to perish by lingering disease.’²⁶

Instead, anthropologists arrived to photograph ‘the dying race’.



'King Bobby' Mt Searle, PAC 1907 Courtesy Clifford Coulthard

Cliff allowed me to copy a photograph taken in 1907 of 'King Bob' posed for the camera at Mt Serle, painted up and one foot lunging forward, every inch a warrior.

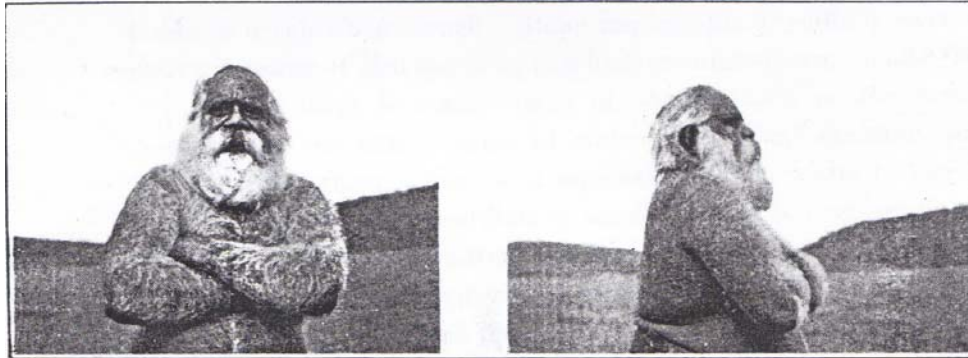


Fig. 18. Wanjulda, an old man of the Wailpi tribe.

*Image from Herbert M. Hale and Norman B. Tindale "Observations on Aborigines of the Flinders Ranges, and Records of Rock Carvings and Paintings." **Records of the South Australian Museum 1** (1925): 45-60.*

In 1925, he is heavier, and hairier, with his arms crossed as he faces Norman Tindale's camera, grinning at the man who has learnt to call him 'Wanjulda', as he takes note of Mt Serle Bob's stories of the 'early days'.²⁷ Bob saw them all come – Smiler Greenwood to restart Mt Serle station yet again; the Snells stubbornly holding on across the creek at Angepena Station, and the newcomers, Ron and Jackie Whyte with their partner Norman Coles, running their rams along the boundary on Burr Well Station. Bob had seen the past: some said Bob could see the future, and watches still.

Mt Serle, 1926

After dinnertime, Jack lets the deeper wheel ruts wander off to the west, while he turns the donkeys to follow lighter tracks that amble north towards the large hill and beside a creek bed. Ahead and sitting on the banks of the creek, two men and two women hail them to a halt, waving arms and a blackened quartpot. Rebecca can see they are boiling up white cotton material in tubs on fires.

'Nangga!'

‘*Nangga!*’ Jack jumps down from the cart, and the boys clamber down, too. ‘You want a cuppa?’ Jack asks.

‘It’s old Jack!’ one of the women exclaims, holding him by his shoulders and staring into his face.

Jack half turns back to the cart, pointing with his chin. ‘This is Mrs Forbes, Rebecca Forbes, my *atuna*,’ says Jack, proudly. Rebecca finds herself being helped down and enveloped in a soft hug.

‘Ah, good *mitji*, eh? I’m Annie Ryan, and this here’s old Sydney. And them’s George and Kitty Elliott. But you know your old mob, eh, Jacky?’²⁸ Annie has a broad open face, shining where the sun catches beads of perspiration on the dark skin. Rebecca feels so small, pressed by the weight of sagging breasts, the firm hold of her ample belly, and the warm smell of a woman at work.

‘*Nyangga*, poor old thing,’ Kitty Elliot is saying to Jack. ‘Your old mother’s sister, *ngarlaami*,²⁹ she passed away, at *Minerawuta*, you know Ram Paddock Gate just over that way a little bit?’ Her lower lip pointed the way, towards the west. ‘Sorry camp now down this way,’ and she tipped her head north down the wide creek, ‘but we got to finish this work for them *udnyus* at Angepena. Be there directly, then. They’ll be singing out for you too. And here,’ Kitty bends to tear a strip of cloth from the bundle on the ground, and holds it out to Rebecca, ‘Better cover up your head with that, *inni?*’ Rebecca takes it, uncertainly, and nods her reply, before mounting the cart again.

When they reach the camp, Rebecca has secured her scarf, and is quick to notice a group of women sitting on the ground, their forehead, hair and cheeks covered with a mat of white pipe clay.³⁰ Another group sits to the side and wails: gut-wrenching and eerie cadences that rise and fall and then sweep to a wail once more.³¹

A small hail of sticks hits Jack's legs.³² Rebecca stands still, holding her sons, and doesn't make a sound. Jack ignores the sticks and his hands sign to the women.

'*Nyanga*, old Auntie,' he says, 'We saw *Indhidindhindhi* at *Nipapanha Awi Urtu*, couple of days ago.³³ We come on then. Don't be angry at me, Aunties.'

The old ladies take up their crying chant once more, and Jack comes back to the wagon.

'The old lady that passed on, she was my auntie, and she was *Arruru*, like me. They threw the sticks because I wasn't here when she died, but it's all right now. You keep that scarf on for a little bit.'

During the next few days Jack disappears morning and afternoon to the east – *Minerawuta*, he tells her - where the dead woman's body is buried. Rebecca, intending to be busy setting up their new camp, is surprised to see signs of others breaking camp. She hears talk of moving camp, and that others have already built their huts at *Minerawuta*. When she inquires about collecting rations, Annie and the other women scoff.

'You might be lucky,' one of them says, 'but that old "Smiler" not smiling at any of us these days. Says we keep him awake at night, too much singing, and he won't give rations, not even to some of the old people. Says you've got to work for them. And then if the men work for him, he won't pay them enough to buy any tucker anyway. It's no good. Not proper work, no food, and he won't even let our donkeys and goats near the waterholes. Says they scare off his sheep, and they do too.'³⁴ Those donkeys don't muck about when they want water. And he threatens to shoot our dogs, says they kill stock. It's not the dogs want to kill his stock, eh? Bet you like a bit of mutton now and then!' Everyone is nodding, grinning. But she continues with a doleful expression.

‘So we got to leave here. Got to leave our little *yakartis* and our people buried down there from that terrible time, last drought. My little one would be a man by now.’³⁵

‘This place has always been big camp for us, but now we got to go. Only place we can go around here is *Minerawuta*. We got our well there, and Mr Whyte he’s still new. He’s all right, they reckon. It’s his Ram Paddock, see: Ram Paddock Gate. It’ll be a big camp, I’m telling you, Mrs Forbes.’

Rebecca feels like crying, although she will not. This place they have travelled to, is already no-place: it is dismantling, an activity of anger and yearning when all she wanted, at last, was a home where Jack said they’d find one: amongst kin. But there are no rations, no work, no waterholes to camp by. Only a well under the eye of Mr Whyte. For a moment, she sees her poverty, how a Mr Whyte might see this white lady: thrown onto the grace of the land itself, along with relatives whose very speech is strange to her.

Except that he won’t see me like that, she promises herself. She would not be seen in pity. Ngami, Atuna, Mathari, udnyu artu, Mrs Forbes. That’s how they’ll know me.

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Life Writing Chapter Eight

Ram Paddock Gate

Adelaide, 2006

‘Ron (Whyte) could tell you a lot about Aborigines in the early days’³⁶ says ‘Smiler’ Greenwood to whoever will hear his oral history boxed and catalogued in the storeroom of the Library of South Australia. Ron held his rams in the same paddock as the grove of *Minera* bushes which marked a traditional campsite for Adnyamathanha *yuras*. Located where the boundary fences of Mt Serle, Angepena and his own Burr Well met, the paddock was accessed by the east-west track between Copley rail siding and Wooltana station which pass through it. A gate across the track signalled the place, and its intention. Ram Paddock Gate.

Beltana, 2005

Keith Nicholls told me a lot, too, over cups of strong black tea, while his sooty kettle hissed on his wood fired oven, ever ready for the next cup. He had retired from pastoral life on nearby Warraweena station, and lived in the building John Flynn designed as a nursing clinic at Beltana. When he was a boy, he travelled the track to Ram Paddock Gate with his father, Lance, who, along with being a one-armed, one-eyed, well-sinking publican, was also the mailman on the eastern run.

I remember Dad had the mail service out to the east side and a couple of times they [Aboriginal people at Ram Paddock Gate camp] held up the truck, the car, [saying] ‘Oh yes, we want some grog. You got some!’ Yes, anyway they were used [to it]. There were a few that used to supply them but my old man wasn’t one of them... They held up the truck you see, when it passed through it. He used to have to go through Ram Paddock Gate where their old camp was, and they were all waiting at the gate. Because in those days they had to get out and open the gate.³⁷

‘So there was a gate across the track?’ I asked, trying to visualize the scene.

‘Oh yes, these ramps and grids are only a modern come-up’, he answered, firmly.

Minerawuta, 2001

There are no ramps, grids or gates to mark the places along the variously graded and gravelled Nepabunna road; nothing, that is, until you drive out there with three old ladies from Copley, my friends and mentors, Rosie, Rita and Lorna.³⁸

‘You’re going to *Minerawuta*?’ Rita asked, squinting at me through the brown mesh door of her pale blue house.

‘Yes, this morning maybe, if that’s OK.’ I was saying the word carefully in my head, as I had heard it, *Min-er-oot-u*. I tried not to visualise its written form on the cover of Betty Ross’ small book *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia* she produced in 1981 and which I had packed in my car. I had to hear the sounds, not read them.

‘I’m ready, but you seen those others? I think they going to the hospital this morning,’ offered Rita. By afternoon, the trip and commentary had commenced, pointing out where the best *uti* trees were found bearing bright red fruit in the Spring; stopping to see the remains of a deep well where Granny Dolly was born; and complaining about each other all the way. Then to the left, under a tree, was the grey upright wooden pole marking the men’s *Wimila*, and we pulled up and they stiffly manoeuvred out of the car and began a slow fanning out across the ground, searching the earth.

Lorna, her white hair in a soft coil at the nape of her neck, stooped and picked something up. It was a small bright-blue marble, and she rolled it between her fingers. ‘*Nyanga: yackartis* playing round here.’³⁹

‘This’, said Rita, showing an L-shaped piece of metal, ‘was a scraper for the fire, scraping out from the stove.’ She demonstrated what she meant, standing there on the open space while a breeze pressed her floral dress against her sturdy legs, and she mimed raking out coals through the narrow opening of a wood stove.

Lorna picked up a rusted shallow circular pan from the jumble of flat slate and wire. ‘They used to make their fire in, and a larger size for a bigger fire.’

There were the remains of some twenty huts built of stone and mud and wooden uprights, in little more than an area of one hundred square meters.⁴⁰ They had more recently been marked with numbered pegs, and a map to identify their occupants. Beyond the camp fringes were several *mulkara* grounds, where ceremony was held. Further away from the camp again were the gravesites: *Mathari* to the south-east, and *Arruru* to the north-east. Closer were the Children’s Graves.⁴¹ In tight, thick groves, here and there about the flat, are stands of grey-trunked bullock bush, where in summer red *minera* berries grew amongst the bushy foliage that was now perfectly grazed to head height. Once branches hung low enough to offer fruit to small children swarming the groves. *Minerawuta*, place of the *minera* bushes.⁴² I was still rolling the word around inside my mouth, silently rehearsing its vowels. It sang through my mind, to the rhythm of the Artoowarapana Band’s lyrics:

Minerawuta I heard about you
The Adnyamathanha home you used to be
With *mineras* growing there on the ridge and in the creeks
With mallee gum and mulga trees

Ram paddock is your English name now
But you’re still *Minerawuta* to me
I feel so good when I pass by you
‘Cos you’re home sweet home to me...⁴³

Just then, Rita called out and held up several small flat tobacco tin lids. ‘My grandmother and grandfather used to smoke, not cigarettes but plug tobacco and put it in a pipe. I used to say, ‘Hey, how come both of you smoking? Grandmother, woman don’t smoke!’ ‘Yes woman do smoke!’ she’d say.’ Rita grinned like a conspirator, and the four of us women laughed to think of her old grandmother, Rachel Johnson, who ‘grewed her up’ in Nepabunna, Bourke, and Tibooburra, while her parents worked on stations.⁴⁴

Yuras were moving, camping, working, traveling all through this country, then, and calling *Minerawuta*, ‘home’. Some said there were four thousand of them.⁴⁵ The Heritage Unit estimated, ‘In the course of a decade at least one hundred Adnyamathanha lived here and accommodated visiting relatives.’⁴⁶ But in Betty Ross’s book, the family names she had sketched beside each pile of rubble that marks a hut on her map, included ancestors of just about every Adnyamathanha person I knew.

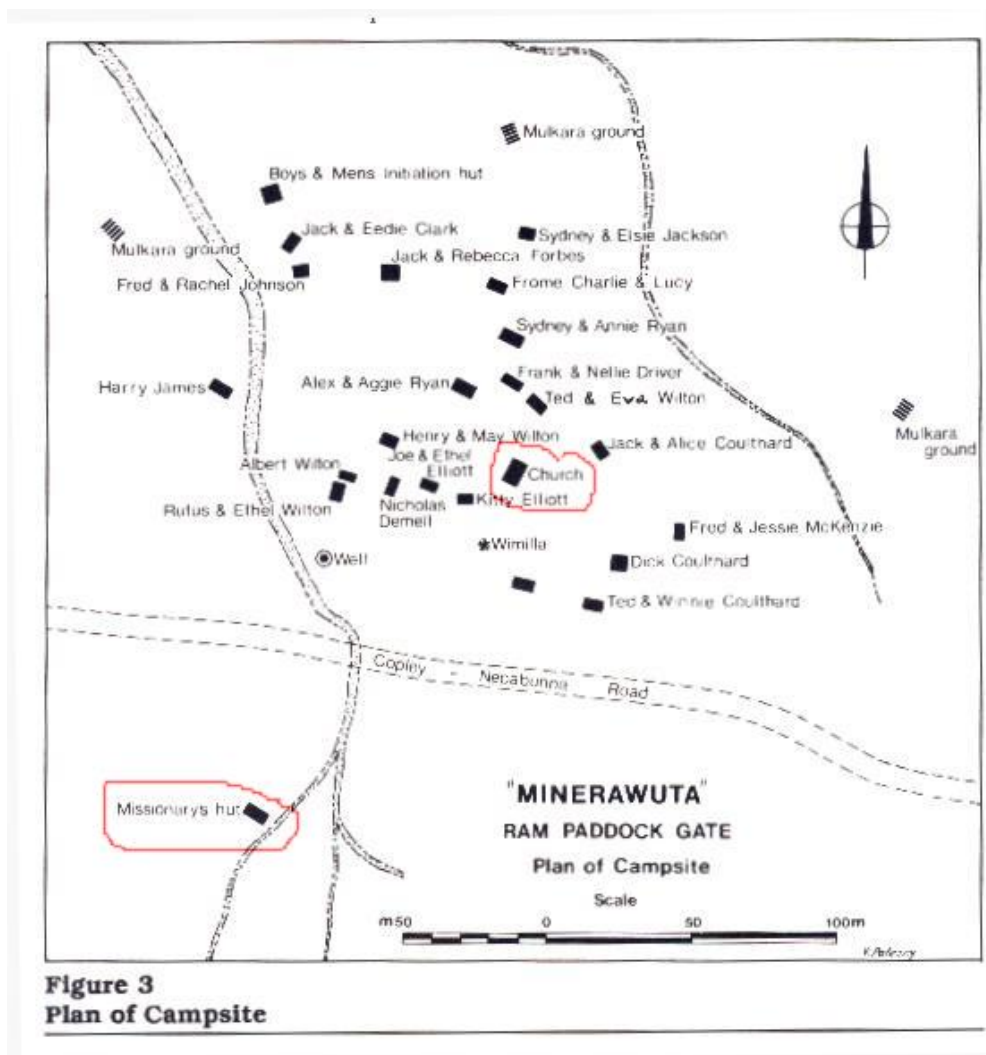


Figure 3
Plan of Campsite

Ross, Betty. *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. Adelaide: Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Planning, South Australian Government, 1981.

Adelaide, 2003

Bill Snell told me about Minerawuta, too.

‘Oh I think they had probably about a hundred, hundred and fifty, if that many, not sure; they wouldn’t have had a great congregation there.’⁴⁷ Bill was the last son of the Snell family who had lived on Angepena station. In retirement he lived in a quiet house in Adelaide, where he still had jars of ‘Devil’s Dice’ – shiny black cubes of rock – collected from

Angepena years before, amongst his cluttered memorabilia of the north. As always, I was trying to picture the past, trying to see it in order to think I could know it.

‘What were the houses made of?’ I asked.

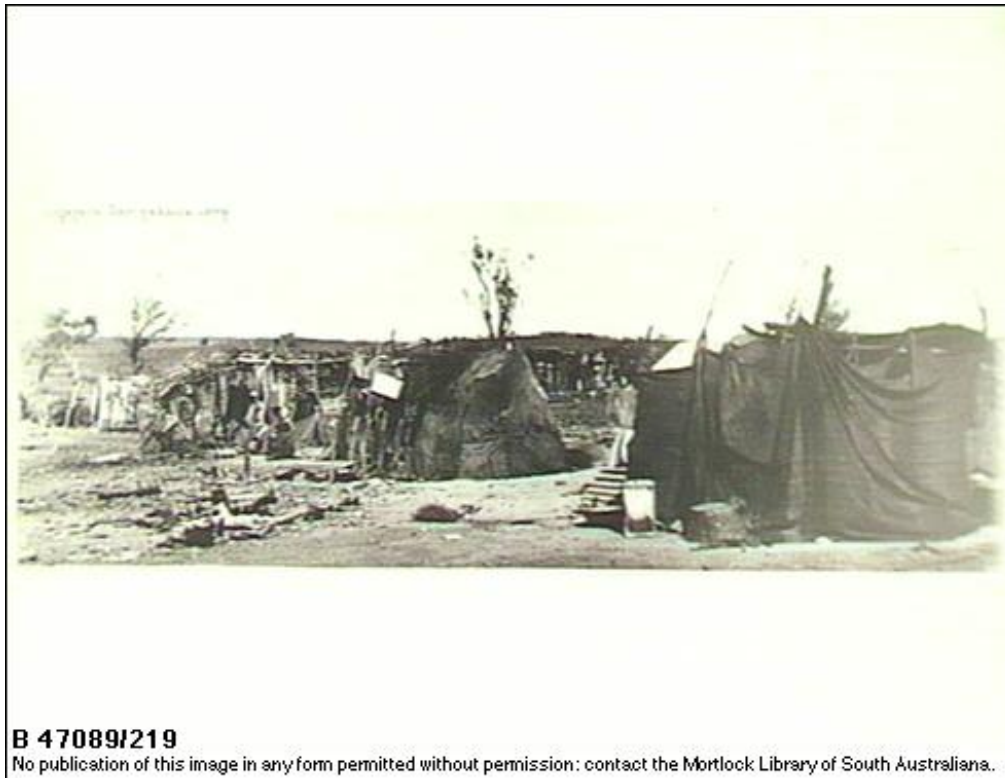
‘Oh mainly wurlies, you know, made out of brush and that sort of thing.’

‘Did they use canvas at all?’

‘Oh probably used a bit of old canvas or anything they could get. They lived very primitive style those days.’

‘Would people, were they wearing clothes in those days?’ I asked, wondering what ‘primitive’ meant.

‘Oh yeah, they were wearing clothes, but mainly clothes that had been sent up to them by the various charities. Or some of the station people gave them clothes or pipes. They used to love getting a pipe: the old girls – ladies - used to love smoking a pipe as well as the men! Ha ha... Plug tobacco, comes in cake, a hard cake and you’d have to pare it off with a pocketknife then grind it up in your hand, in the palm of your hand, then put it in the pipe... I never smoked it but it was pretty powerful.’ I smiled, imagining old Rachel and her pipe.



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*Ram Paddock Gate near Angepena, Flinders 1930 Walpole collection courtesy Mortlock Library of South
Australiana*



Batteries at Ram Paddock Gate, 1830s
Ram Paddock Gate, c.1830, after arrival of missionary J. Page (second from left back row).
Arthur Coultard (all men centre back), Bill Stubbs (third left back), Ted Coultard (fourth left back), Jack
Coultard (fourth from right back, white beard, hat), Alec Ryan (third right back), Joe Elton (right end back),
George Charlie (centre middle row seated, white beard, hat), Albert Wilson (centre middle, white beard, hat),
Johnny Ryan (fourth right middle row seated), Nicholas Derrill (right end middle row seated)

Photograph courtesy of Iga Warta Display 2002

Minerawuta, 2001

The shadows lengthened, and I knew the ladies would be eager to leave before the spirits were walking about. It was still hot, and I cursed myself for forgetting to pack cups, and so we shared the water bottle between us, unsure whether to wipe between each drinker or not.



Rosie Brady, Lorna Demell, and Rita Coulthard at Minerawuta 2001 Photograph by Tracy Spencer.

As we lowered back into my car, my eyes were drawn along the line of wooden poles extending from the huts, joined by rough gutters, leading to the mounded ground of what marked this place out. A well, and the whispering reason we, the camp and the rams had come here in the first place.

We hadn't gone far when Rosie asked me to stop, and began to get out of the car. The others made no move, so I went with her to the small twiggy shrub, leaning dangerously to one side on the embankment.

‘This tree here is where my brother Harold was born,’ she told me.

I looked at it more closely, and noticed the tiny pink flowers of an emu bush festooning the scanty feathery foliage.



Rosie at Harold's tree. Photograph courtesy of Tracy Spencer

‘Harold, he got (sickness),’ she continued, ‘and they say we got to pray for him, but he said, ‘God is with me. God will keep me strong’, and he was alright. I got a brother and sister buried at that cemetery.’ Rosie turned her head as if to look back towards the Children’s Graves at the foot of the range, but instead buried her chin into her shoulder, and looked at the ground. I was reminded of the large square area back there, marked out with stones on the ground and a netting fence, protecting the place where babies and children are buried, *Mathari* and *Arruru* together. Rosie lifted her head, and took in the sweep of the country about her, a small figure in red, her tiny dark bright eyes seeing and not seeing the place. ‘We only little babies here,’ she said, ‘but Gertie took us here and told us about it, that’s how we know. Gertie’s the oldest living.’ I took a photograph of Rosie in front of her brother’s tree,

green rasping weeds at her feet, greying hills behind, and her shadow stretching away to the east.

Adelaide 2003

Beside his pile of Devils Dice on the table between us, Bill Snell slid across a photograph of himself as a young man. He was standing with his arms crossed, leaning against a small tin shed. His shirt collar was open, and he was smiling good humouredly at the camera. Two young women stand on either side of him: both wearing stockings under their skirts and dark cardigans over their buttoned shirts. ‘That’s Gracie Coulthard’, he says, ‘and Gertie, at Angepena.’

Nepabunna, 2001

I visited Gertie in the close dull walls of her old home at Nepabunna, clasping the photograph Daisy had given me of her grandparents standing with their sons, outside a leafy hut.

‘So where’s that camp?’ I asked, ‘I thought it was either Ram Paddock Gate or Mt Serle, I’m not sure which one.’ Gertie peered at it for some time.

‘They wouldn’t be at Mt Serle, no... They might have only had a couple of nights down there [Mt Serle] when everybody was really ready to go to Ram Paddock Gate. Mrs. Forbes looks good here. This must be in Ram Paddock Gate.’⁴⁸

Minerawuta, March 1926

Rebecca and Jack work steadily, gathering slates from the shallow creek and laying them on one another as low walls between the mulga posts marking the corners of their hut. Fred and Rachel Johnson are busy setting camp beside them, while Lucy and Frome Charlie are settled on the other side, still in mourning for Charlie’s sister, Polly, whose grave they had adorned

with a smart wooden railing, behind the traditional head break.⁴⁹ The steady movements of camp are disturbed by an eddy of small children running into Fred's camp, and Rebecca makes out little Pearl Wilton among them, just Raymond's age, bursting with a message. Rachel sits them down with mugs of sugary tea, but Fred has left his work and is walking towards his neighbours. He looks directly at Rebecca.

'Mrs Forbes, I'm gonna need you help on this one. Got to get that baby. You got some things to bring?'⁵⁰

Rebecca opens her mouth, shuts it again, and begins stuffing a bag with a billy, some clean cotton cloth, and bandages. Her mind races, remembering the strong bodies of the midwives at Yandama, supporting the woman, and their quiet chatter as they waited for the baby, and even when they had tended her own births, manhandling her into a squat in the creek. Snatches of the fast narrations of young Alice Trafford, describing rows of robed women on thin cots, legs akimbo for the harried doctor, come to her as she searches out scissors, and some poultice. Fred is already striding away towards Henry and May Wilton's camp, where Henry stands still, except for his inquiring hands.

'*Udnyu artu* coming too,' Fred says, mid stride, and turns towards the crook in the twisting creek, where Becky sees a number of women variously arranged in the shade of stunted river gum bending over the dry and sandy bed.⁵¹ Now she makes out May crouching on the ground, and several women supporting her. Fred kneels before her, placing his hands on the bulge of her belly, covered with the coarse white shift the women wore under their blouses. He speaks something to the attending women, and they help May straighten up.

‘Mrs Forbes’, Fred says, quietly so she comes closer, ‘Put your hands here’, and he shows her how to massage the belly.⁵² ‘Those little muri, those spirit babies, they hang on like this.’ He shows his hands like claws.

‘This one’, volunteers a woman a few years younger than Rebecca, ‘this one still up this way, like us, and got to let go and turn the other way. Then she can come out.’⁵³

Becky looks around. ‘There’s no table, nothing to lie on’ she remarks, to herself as much as to those watching her closely now.⁵⁴ She can tell she has said the wrong thing at once, as the older women sitting cross-legged by the fire, begin poking twigs at it, shaking their heads.⁵⁵

‘Jean?’ Fred addresses the woman who had spoken earlier.⁵⁶

She shrugs. ‘She been lying back on me so long now, and it’s not turning. Maybe.’

‘You think lay her right down?’ Fred asks Rebecca, although there is an edge to the question that sounds like an accusation. Rebecca nods, and bites her lip.

‘And something under her hips, to tilt the baby back up,’ she says to Jean, who is settling May down. May’s eyes are closed, and her breath rasps. Fred’s chin tilts to the old women, still in the shadows, making small movements with their hands.

‘Need that *andupi* over here,’ Fred says to them, as he points to a wallaby skin rug and juts his lips towards May.⁵⁷ ‘And get that fire up, get some *vartiwaka* ash ready.’

‘What’s that?’ asks Becky, now busy rolling the heel of her hands around May’s abdomen which spreads like a rising damper over her torso. She works carefully, moving from the base of May’s ribs to her hips, and then again.⁵⁸ May’s thick wavy hair spreads like a halo around her face, and her mouth is set against the pain. Her legs shift jerkily, trying to ease the pain in her back. Jean, kneeling on the other side of May and rubbing her legs, answers:

‘Plumbush: you know those little trees? Mix the ash up and put it on sores, or bleeding. Need some ready if this baby hangs on.’

‘Do you use hot cloths as well, for their back, and their belly?’ Rebecca asks, forgetful of herself as she focusses on the shape of the baby beneath May’s supple flesh.

‘Some in that *yardlu* there’, Jean replies, pointing to a wooden bowl by the fire.

‘Could you?’ Becky gestures for Jean to take over massaging May’s stomach. She notices that Fred has seated himself a distance further down the creek, where he is singing softly, barely drawing breath, while his fingers make patterns in the dirt that raise tiny wisps of dust in their wake. She swallows her moment of panic, and concentrates on rummaging in her bag. She takes out pieces of material, folds them, and lays them in the warm water. Patting the excess water from them, she moves back to May. Just then, May opens her eyes and her breath comes out in sobs.

‘Help her up now’ directs Jean ‘and put those on her back, here, here.’ They pull May up so she holds herself up on her hands and knees, her forehead pushing into the soft *andupi*. Pulling her shift towards her head, Rebecca puts the warm cloths across the small of May’s glistening back, and across her straining shoulders as well. In time the pain subsides and May sinks onto her side on the ground again. Jean begins massaging again. Her eyes narrow, then her mouth relaxes into a smile, and she moves May until she could feel the whole abdomen carefully.

‘He’s let go, you know. That *muri* his head’s down here now. He’s ready to come.’ Jean grins at Rebecca. ‘Walk about May. Not long now.’

The other women at the fire, placing the thin leafy branches across the small flames, look up too. ‘*Warndu*, Mrs Forbes,’ they say. ‘Good.’⁵⁹

Rebecca cuts the umbilical cord, and elderly hands take the baby to its soft bed of *vartiwaka* ash, while others fan smoke around May to ensure three years before she will fall

pregnant again.⁶⁰ Jean takes the *unabi* that has slid easily into Rebecca's hands, and wraps it in bark, ready for its burial later on.

One of the women takes a damp cloth and fixes it to the end of a stick, clambers out of the creek and waves it in wide arcs towards the settlement, to let everyone know the baby has arrived.⁶¹

'What name, Mrs Forbes?'

'Florrie', she says, thinking of her own sister, and suddenly surprised at herself.⁶²

'First one for *Minerawuta! Warndu!*' The elderly women crow, and smile at Rebecca.⁶³

Ray and John are first up in the mornings, swarming the hills with the other children on their frozen bare feet, listening for the thin squeal of rabbits caught in their traps, for them to proudly bring home, teeth chattering through their grins, and their thin bodies licked by the icy winds of morning. Rebecca frowns even as she smiles for them and takes the catch. When she was Jack's age, she had proudly worn shining black shoes and a button up coat to attend school classes each morning. Here she can do little better than run up thick cotton shirts for the boys on one of the sewing machines in camp.⁶⁴ Rebecca is surprised at herself, being bothered after more than ten years away from such thoughts. But she is bothered; bothered too by the almost daily traffic along the road that stops at the gate, greeted by a cluster of men and swarm of children, wheedling or threatening before allowing the traveller passage. And then the spoils brought back to camp: food stuffs, or rough plonk, tobacco, old clothes, and even gossip. Sometimes the men – and it always seems to be men – leave their wagons or cars and walk down into the camp itself, looking for workers for this job or that. They know her Jack is good for station work.

Rebecca is sitting at her box table, when the sacking entrance to their hut is pulled back and a rough voice grinds, 'I'm looking for Witchetty.'⁶⁵ Rebecca stands to face a man in a hat, and she sees his confusion turn into a smirk. Panic rises in her chest, but she does not let him see it. Raymond, standing beside her, looks carefully at this strange visitor, his lips parted. She steps forward.

'That'll be Mr Forbes', she says, speaking evenly, in accents borrowed from her post in Islington so long ago. The man looks like he doesn't know whether to laugh or swear, so instead he tips his hat back and wipes the sweating skin under its band with the back of his hand. Rebecca notices it leaves a smear across his forehead, before the hat is again pulled low over his eyes.

'Yeah. Is he in?'

'Just a moment,' and she twitches the curtain from his grasp to let it fall. There are feelings in her chest she can only barely restrain from escaping in great gasps. Jack looks at her from the cot at the rear of the hut, and lays his hand on her shoulder as he stands up.

'I'll see what he wants,' he says, and leaves her sunken on their bed, his tall figure filling the door frame as he stoops slightly on his way out of the hut. Jack of course takes the job, and rides away swaying on the back of the cart with the man, to mark a line of wire and netting across the country to sort the sheep from the dogs.

Rebecca can only guess how the story is told on homestead verandahs and around long shearers' tables:

'I asked for Witchetty, right, and she says, she says, "That'll be Mr. Forbes." Forbes! Christ! No white man ever called him Mr Forbes in his life!'⁶⁶

Adelaide, 2001

Eileen Lewis remembers 1926. She was the thirteen year old daughter of the publican at the Leigh Creek Hotel at Copley, some thirty miles west of *Minerawuta*, and she remembers when pale Rebecca Forbes and her two brown sons stayed in the first bedroom on the ground floor north side of the Pub, next to the pantry. She remembers Mrs Forbes wearing an old-fashioned floor-length dress, and barely coming out of her room, just watching the town from her window beneath the wide dark verandah. Eileen remembers the drip of the meat coolers, the disappointed softness of wilted vegetables, and the way her cup nearly scraped the bottom of the underground water tank when she climbed down for a drink. 'It didn't rain much then,' she told me. But not even she knew why Mrs Forbes was there: maybe for goods, maybe to catch the train, maybe...?

Later, as the young wife of Merton Lewis the mailman, Eileen remembers the tiny hot tin Copley post office where she worked, and the wilted and melted and boxed goods delivered by the Marree Mixed train were sorted and packed for the next leg of their journey, east on the rough dirt tracks. If the pub was the heart of the community, the post office was its tongue, where explanations were made if not known.

Eileen and her daughter Margaret filled me in:

A lot of the white men had a lot to do with Aboriginal women, but on the quiet sort of thing, that nobody was supposed to know about. I mean there was a lot of children born to Aboriginal women that were fathered by white men, but as to marry them, they didn't do that then. But a white woman and an Aboriginal man; that was totally different. Maybe they wouldn't say a lot, as in saying, but they were sort of a bit shunned; wouldn't have mixed with them properly... And she did really live their life so I suppose they got to accept her. That was true, because she lived in the camp sort of thing, as they lived. That was her intention I think when she came to Australia. Somebody said it was her intention to marry an Aboriginal and live their life.⁶⁷

Nobody else remembers Mrs Forbes leaving the Adnyamathanha camps ever, for anything.

Copley, 1926

But Mrs Forbes is in the Leighs Creek Hotel, and she has her boys, and she is painfully avoiding the people around her. What does she imagine she sees, looking out the ground floor window of her room, over the wide hard track in front of the pub, beyond the white gates barring the drunken wanderer from the line, to the dark smooth steel tracks running away to north and south? What does she imagine might happen, hearing the thud and rattle of the approaching train, knowing it is only a ticket from the neat white window under the verandah of the rectangular building opposite that stands between her and elsewhere? Does she notice the rag tag group of children draining in a trickle on the other side of the tracks to pool about the squat stone frame of the school house in the mornings; and noticing, does she imagine her sons could be amongst them? Or does she wait for a certain face, and a particular name, to propel her out of her room, or better yet, to come asking for her? Is it the eager and curious personage of the travelling pastor that detains her, with promises, or hopes, or something like sympathy?

During 1926, a covered wagon drawn by four aged donkeys makes its way up the center of Australia, visiting Aboriginal missions on the way. A scripture passage printed in large lettering on the canvas hood reads 'Behold, I come quickly.' Beneath it is the family of Pastor Ernie Kramer, a Swiss-German Lutheran engaged as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and also supported by the Aborigines Friends Society.⁶⁸ Who would have thought he would make such an impression through the decades ahead?

...Our mothers knew the church. They used to have a church in Mt Serle long time ago. They knew it through Mr. Kramer...I don't know where he come from, but Mum and them they used to tell us, 'we used to really know the church'. Mr. Kramer used to come [and] have church with them around the campfire.⁶⁹

By October that year, Kramer delivers a report of his passage through the Flinders to the South Australian Government's Advisory Council of Aborigines, who decide to forward a

copy to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr Francis Garnett.⁷⁰ He in turn reports on the ‘Mt Serle natives’ to those he sees fit, describing that ‘there were more than 100 natives and a white woman in the camp out somewhere east of Copley.’⁷¹

Whatever Mrs Forbes business in Copley, and however reticent she is to make herself known, they have all seen Mrs Forbes now. Not only in the small town whose eyes miss nothing: her presence is felt all the way to Adelaide, inscribed under government letterhead, and no doubt figuring in gossip in the panelled corridors after meetings.

Adelaide 1928

Mr AE Gerard, of Gerard Industries, and President of the Australian Aborigines Mission, hears about ‘the white woman’ and the ‘Mt Serle natives’, and arranges for missionary Sachse en route to Oodnadatta, to stop by and verify the report.

He advised that the natives pleaded for a missionary. A number of them had contacted a mission one time or another. The white woman, who was living as a native, made special appeal for her children’s sake. Mr Sachse also reported that the natives were mainly camped on “Burr Well Station,” about 30 miles east of Copley, and that they had seven motor vehicles, some in working order, and that the natives, mostly half-castes, were reported to be good workers; but alas! That they were able to obtain kegs of intoxicating liquor and bring same back to camp.⁷²

Mr Gerard’s compassion is piqued, and he will later write, with no sense of the irony of his plea:

The good money they earned made them the prey of the Devil in our white people; and this was the only part of our civilisation that took any interest in them—the white people of a civilisation who were without any sense of responsibility to the natives to whom we owe so much. These were the only ones that showed any interest. You never gave them a thought, did you? This all showed the great need there was for a mission, which Mr Sachse felt would be difficult to establish.⁷³

As the machinery of mission begins to turn, Rebecca is long since returned to *Minerawuta* with her sons, with the chance conversation tucked away in the folds of memory where hopes and visions can sleep quietly. The camp she shares with her family, her people, the leaseholders and their rams, is now also shared with zealous missionary dreams and dry

southern bureaucrats' pragmatic plans. Rebecca waits in the only home she has, but with an eye ever watching for the dust kicking up along the track to the West.

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Life Writing Chapter Nine

Jim

Druid Vale Station, Flinders Ranges, 2002

It seemed missionaries were making tracks all over the country, mile by slow mile on push bike, foot, camel and dray. Clearing a space on the door that served as my desk top in the closed in back verandah of our old homestead at Druid Vale Station, I studied a map of the various routes intrepid Australian Aborigines missionaries took in their endeavours to reach ‘untouched Aborigines.’

‘What was it that persuaded that band of dedicated Christian Endeavourers to evangelise people at La Perouse? What was it that drove the intrepid E.J. Telfer to push his cycle those many thousands of kilometres in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia to reach the people with the Gospel? ... What was it that compelled Will and Iris Wade and their fellow missionaries to brave the unmapped territory of central Australia by camel train to reach the scattered groups of people for Christ? ... It was most surely the vision, for ‘where there is no vision, the people perish’. They, and all who followed them, had the vision of what God could do in the hearts and lives of the Aboriginal people across Australia.’⁷⁴

James Page was one of these, and I turned the pages of this United Aborigines Mission history in anticipation of seeing the man for the first time. There he was: barely discernible in an over-exposed photograph, almost smiling, slim, a hand on his hip and the other pointing to something off camera. The crease of a small frown makes a shadow on the bridge of his nose, and a small reflection catches the plain glass of his spectacles.



Reproduced from 'Challenging the Almighty', UAM, 1994 p24

First known as the Australian Aborigines Mission and later the United Aborigines Mission, the organisation attracted an assortment of mostly young and single men and women who offered themselves for missionary work. The non-denominational collection of business men, spinsters and fundamentalist Christians self consciously knew themselves to be amongst the few white Australians who cared about the plight of Aboriginal people.⁷⁵ It was true that some had already been turned down for the more glamorous mission fields of China or India, on the frontiers of Empire; for others, their vision encompassed only the inland horizons of their island home.

Jim came relatively well prepared for the task. I found his name embossed on the Honour Board of Reverend Barnett's Missionary and Bible College, Sydney in 1927, its early years of operation when everything from the milking cow to the buildings themselves depended on faith alone, as there was no money. Reverend Benson C. Barnett – 'The Chief' to his students – still used the Bible signed by his mentor, Hudson Taylor, founder of the Chinese Inland Mission.⁷⁶ Taylor was thought eccentric when he donned Chinese national costume and shaved his hair to one long pigtail. The Chief continued the tradition, exhorting his missionaries to identify with their congregations, or as others saw it, to 'go native.'⁷⁷ 'Only by living with people do we learn to know them,' The Chief said, as his students ate at his table and slept in rooms down the hall from his own.⁷⁸

By November 1927, Jim had been 'recommended' for a probationary appointment with the Australian Aborigines Mission, to be stationed at Oodnadatta in the far north of South Australia. He kept his official address, however, a couple of houses down the street from The Chief's 'Ooma', at 35 Badminton Rd—possibly the first Women's Department cottage, as far as I could tell. Perhaps there was a trusted friend there to sort and forward his mail on to his remote posting.⁷⁹

March 1928, Oodnadatta

*Dear Miss Morris,*⁸⁰

Thank you for the post. Your news seems worlds away from mine, which both saddens, and excites me, as you can guess. Where you live on a hill with water in view, I am living on dry sand and gibber pebbles that lay as flat as the surface of Port Jackson and with not a promontory in sight.

'Prove me now herewith!': This is the theme of the AAM's year, and the reports of Bro. Wade's trips through the Western Ranges fire my blood. They say there are 'hosts of untouched Aborigines'—'black diamonds', Bro. Williams calls them—'virgin soil' in which to sow the seed. Bro. Williams is at this time anxious to receive permission to travel that way again—he is too eager to wait for Bro. Wade to return from his furlough and wedding to

Miss Harris. Bro. Williams has in fact headed west by himself, on the strength of the permit he and Bro. Wade were granted to enter the Reserve earlier this year. I do not know if he goes on the AAM's work: he says he has written to the South Australian Advisory Council of Aborigines suggesting he be commissioned to sink wells, so a permanent station might be established in the Musgrave Ranges for the natives.⁸¹ He is quite the figure of adventure with his sleeves rolled back and his camels grumbling, and he speaks – plain speaker that he is – of the great need he witnessed for medical care, and his desire to follow Bro. Wade's crusade for the people of the central reserve. He is so eager to put himself among the people in simple friendship and service, he says.

Although I long to go with him, I will stay at my post looking for children to teach under the tin shelter we have here for a school. Besides, I have not yet applied for a permit to enter those foreign lands. Oodnadatta is foreign enough for me: I am sure my family back Home could not imagine it, with not a shred of green, barely a building as they know them in London, just a scatter of sheds and hovels thrown upon a plain. No: for now I shall do the Lord's bidding here, and wait for further news of Bro. Williams explorations.

I have not written much of my own duties here, but trust you have read my first article in the Australian Aborigines Advocate, printed in February? I have added some cuttings to this post just in case. You will have recognised The Chief's influence of course – 'the Word of God, as it is!' – and thence the work proceeding from it, and finally a prayer diary: prayers granted and prayers made. I find it is a good plan for my days, reminding me that His glorious presence travels with me wherever I go.

I have endeavoured to use some of our teaching practices to convey the Gospel – a large pictorial Bible helps to illustrate simple stories I convey in the little phrases of native language I know, and the scant phrases of English they know – often the phrases you would wish they didn't know, too! They seem to respond like children to the simple stories and actions I show them, using the round red pebbles everywhere on the ground here as illustrations for them. They clap and smile and grab hold of the pebbles and make their own marks in the dust with them, so I presume something of the message is getting through. It is so hard to really know, and then they are gone on their endless travelling and I don't know if I shall see them again. Pray that each seed may find water along the way!

Some seem to stay here: I have encouraged a local girl, Kitty, to 'compose' her own article, to show the miracle that the Sisters have wrought teaching the Gospel with little but love and kindness and faith to overcome darkness of mind and soul. Of course, it is taking some time to help Kitty find the words, and then I write them down for her, although she cannot read but trusts I have taken what she speaks and will send it to the Sisters for her. It would be quite something to have Aborigines themselves writing in The Advocate, don't you think? Surely it glorifies the Lord of all Nations!

It is quite touching to see Kitty's distress, as she genuinely misses her Sisters, and says over and over, in her way, that she hopes they return to grow old with her. I had not expected such strong emotions towards us, and I am careful to send her into the arms of her own family when she becomes upset, and make a point of speaking with her only where they are

nearby, which is not always convenient for my ink and paper. Other times she comes to the schoolhouse. I am mindful of The Chief's advice, but the men do not seem concerned. When I meet with them, beyond the town's rubbish heap where they make their tiny fires of an evening and erect all manner of shelter with tin, drums, canvas and wire, they ask me to show them more in my book.⁸² Some nights they keep me up talking so late I have slept where I have lain, although most nights I retire, wash the dust off, and have Quiet Time in my tent before sleep.

You must not think I am writing to you from the dust and rubbish! I keep my tent neat as my room always was and have some women who take my shirts and things and scrub them white at a waterhole not far from here. I did not expect this, but Bro. Wade assured me it was expected.

My candle is burning low, so I must leave off. Please convey my greeting to Mr Stirling, if he has not already left the Chief for service along the East-West railway line. I should like to compare notes with him! I hope this finds you well, my dear Miss Morris, and be content to know that your letters and dear service to me warm my heart even on these dark frontiers.

Yours in Christ

Jas. Page.⁸³

Jim writes carefully, in the sloping hand bequeathed by a fine education. Each letter slowly formed, an inflected curve, an inclined line, a precise crossing of the 't' and unsmudged points left by the nib that carried neither too much nor too little ink. He blots, deliberately: the production of the words in exquisite tension with the enthusiasm barely contained within them.

The letter finished, the visions of his desire dried upon the page, he allows himself a moment in the night to conjure the face of his reader where the candle glow throws dim shadows on the canvas of his tent. He closes his eyes, lets out a low breath, and feels the day's tension ease as he shifts his head on his neck and drops his shoulders. It is not as if the night is quiet: camels moan where they are pegged nearby, chants rise from a smoking fire and, by the railway men's corrugated sheds, awkward yells stab the night. But in his tent, deliciously alone, Jim allows his visions to slide into prayer that stills his body and lets his

mind recede to its place of certainty and cool, miles away from the constantly sweating skin of his body.

His is somewhere aware that others pray for him, imagining a trying time as the lone missionary while Will and Iris are half a continent away to be married. When he sleeps, he sleeps easily, his Bible still open at the underlined verses of Psalm 96: ‘Declare His Glory among the heathen’.

For all the moments of peace Jim pens to Miss Morris, it is a trying time.

Jim passes through culture shock with a thin-lipped smile, diligent duties and private emasculation. His days are led to the harsh tune of the shunting yards. Jim watches the shunters work: the loco sets the carriage rolling towards where the man waits, holding a rough iron hook. Close enough—nearly too close—and with sudden flexion flip! the hook falls into its notch, the shunter whips his fingers out of the way and, for a moment, the jarring of metal on metal might give way and inexorably wedge the man’s body between the carriages. But it doesn’t: the hook holds, the stock reels a little, then settles still on the rails. The shunter flips the second bar over the hook and threads through the lock pin.⁸⁴ The shunter moves to the other end of the carriage and it all begins again. He builds the train, piece by piece.

Jim is not sure he is building anything. He sweats doing the women’s work Will left to him, tending their handful of young children who cry for their mothers while they hang on his angular, awkward arms. He tries to cuddle them, struggling against his fear of insect

infestations and skin diseases and trying not to breathe the acrid smell of grease, firesmoke and sweated urine through his nose. But the children stiffen and edge away, not so practised at hiding their disgust at the sharp stench of whitefella sweat slippery on raw scrubbed skin. Success in his classroom is no more than having all the children seated at the one time: they learn that whitefellas like them sitting down and still and quiet, but little else.

Kitty's enthusiasm to make a letter is a relief, and Jim is grateful to her. But he feels it, nevertheless: a fearful thrill in his gut and his loins when the 'virgin soil' of this 'black pearl' seemed to grasp hold of the love of Jesus. Her eyes are earnest as she confesses how Jesus' blood cleansed her from sin, from 'all them bad things', as she said with her head low but stealing glances beneath her lashes in the direction of the fettlers' cottages.

'You say in my writing to Miss Baker, you say this: Jesus been make my heart clean.' Kitty looks at Jim, sitting beside her on a crate at the makeshift table Iris left in the tin schoolhouse. At least it is darker in the shade there, safe from the glaring sky, even if stifling and close. He begins to write her words in his flowing hand, stopping at the end of the sentence, looking up at her, waiting for more.

'He clean your heart too, with His precious blood.' The stabbing feeling spreads across his chest and his breathing is tight. He feels a tiny sting in the corner of his eyes, and blinks, looking down at the paper.

'Tell them too, God our Father make me hold words, he been teach me, he make me clean, make me happy all the time.' Jim writes, and knows Kitty is smiling. Smiling for him.

That night in the soft whiteness of his tent, Jim copies out Kitty's letter, again sitting on his box before the small rough writing table that fits beside his low stretcher bed under the

sloping canvas sides of his tent. He reads Kitty's letter back, under his breath, and sees what she has said. With uncharacteristic blemish, he hastily writes in capital 'H': '*He been teach me, He make me clean, make me happy all the time.*'⁸⁵

'It's God, must be she's grateful to God,' he thinks, through his quickening breathing.

April and May pass before Bill and Iris Wade return to Oodnadatta with rosy excitement in each other and in their planned 'honeymoon' expedition into the Musgrave Ranges to the west, on which Jim at last is to join them...

June 1928, Granite Downs Station 100 miles west of Oodnadatta

'We have learned that a mail goes in to-morrow, so we are all seated by the fire writing while the smoke blinds our eyes',⁸⁶ says Iris, perching on her camp stool and reading her report aloud.

Will, who is barely literate, is not writing, as Iris has penned, but is singing, probably to himself.⁸⁷ Jim, it is true, has a pen in hand and paper balanced on his knees, and his head is bowed and he is silent. But he is not writing, either. It is the end of June, and he is with Will and Iris scarcely 150 miles west of Oodnadatta, and they have been there at Granite Downs Station for three weeks.⁸⁸

Jim steals a glance at Iris, noticing the licking flames reflecting in her round wire spectacles. There is a crease of a frown between her brows as she re-reads her earlier report.

‘Poor old Kitty had a cry when we left,’ reads Iris, aloud, narrowing her eyes in Jim’s direction. ‘I have been kept busy sorting and bagging dried fruits, repacking goods for our journey, washing and sorting out old clothes left over from the last trip. It takes some grace to be patient when cooking bread in a camp oven when everything is wet and the wind blowing.’⁸⁹ She purses her lips and looks at Jim until he returns her gaze.

Will is still singing, eyes shut. He doesn’t sing well, but with an enthusiasm that is beyond melody: ‘Wide wide is the ocean, deep as the deep blue sea. High, high as the mountains is my Saviour’s Love for me!’⁹⁰ ‘Hallelujah!’ he exclaims as he flings his arms into the air. Iris can’t help but smile and lay down her work, forgetting to edit out that unkind comment she had written in a moment of pique: ‘Mr Page is getting quite broken in to bush life, though he does not take kindly to a hard bed.’⁹¹ She leads Will over to the alcove of boxes piled high and covered with a canvas, that serves for their honeymoon suite. Jim gets up and, by the time Iris turns to say goodnight, his stool is empty.

In the milky starlight, Jim is walking nowhere in particular, each way being much the same: flat and stony. He is thinking. He needs more time to write his report, because he feels he understands none of it. Their Sunday processions around the station camps—lugging an organ, picture books, stools and the medical chest with them on a string of complaining camels—he wants to dismiss as useless, but cannot.



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..DATE late 1920's
..PLACE Musgrave Ranges, northern SA
..SUBJECT ? Mr Wade and Jim Paige, UAM missionaries
..CAPNO u.a.m.2bw
..DEPOSITR Thomas, Faith
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The organ, and Iris playing it, are simply frightening, but the Aboriginal audience seem entertained by Will's repertoire, joining in with hearty 'Halabulah's'.⁹² The large picture books illustrating stories of Jesus, Hell and Heaven, are a curio, but he has no idea what they might mean across the language barrier. The few words he has picked up at Oodnadatta do not serve with these folk, and they have no reason to want to learn English. So when his turn

comes, he struggles to preach in mute mime. Iris prays God Himself will translate. And Will, who had little time for learning, just beams and opened his arms wide to embrace any who came close, calling out his one phrase which he said—or at least he hoped— meant: ‘Welcome friend’ however much a stranger he is in their country.⁹³ They come to him, holding up children with running sores, elderly women with broken arms, the blind, the lame, the hungry. Neither Will, Iris nor Jim know more than first aid, but they clean wounds, apply salves, set bandages and most of all, pray. Will’s favourite quote and only teaching he gives his probationer, is:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
“Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown”.
And he replied “Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.”⁹⁴

Druid Vale Station, 2003

Minnie Louise Haskin’s famous poem ‘The Desert’ was read at the Queen Mother’s funeral, as it had been read by her husband on the eve of World War II. I imagined Jim repeating the saying to himself, standing alone in the cooling night, beyond the campfire light. I have his report, reflecting that ‘This shatters the mirage of romance, and we are face to face with the actual.’ Then his report becomes a string of Christian acclamations: wrestling against ‘principalities and powers’, where only the ‘Precious Blood of Christ’ can cleanse these poor souls; where the enemy roars at the message of the ‘Cross of Christ’ and the ‘Lion of Judah’ roars back, pleading the ‘Victory of Calvary.’⁹⁵ Jim’s dark night is full of noisy and fearful battle. I wish for him that Will Wade had been a man of letters, and that he might have recited the rest of the poem:

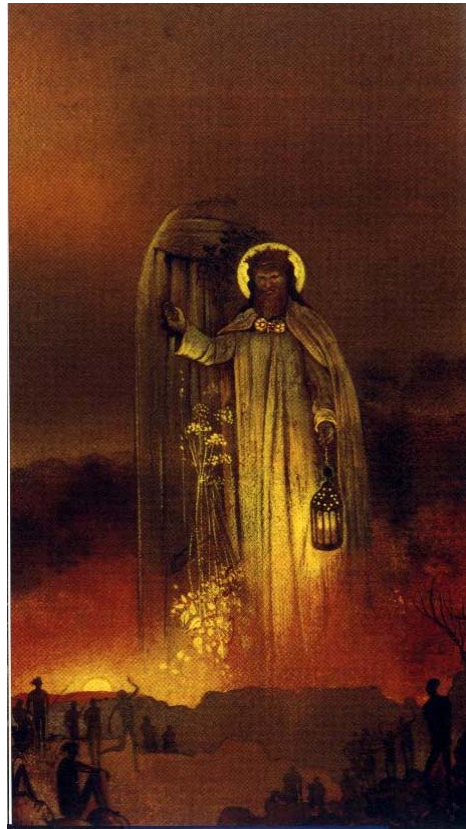
So I went forth and finding the Hand of God

Trod gladly into the night
He led me towards the hills
And the breaking of day in the lone east.

So heart be still!
What need our human life to know
If God hath comprehension?

In all the dizzy strife of things
Both high and low,
God hideth his intention.⁹⁶

RM Williams, another of Will's apprentices, later claimed that Thyrza Davey's painting 'The door the light' 'illustrates Wade's mission' showing a vision of kindness appearing in the dark night of the Australian outback.⁹⁷



Did Jim see such a vision in his dark night, or did others watch him in the flickering shadows of firelight, and wonder?

Coniston Station, 1928

Jim, Will, and Iris are hidden from the world for the next four months.⁹⁸ The roar of rifle fire echoes through Australian history: to the north of them, Mounted Constable William George Murray and his party massacre at least thirty-one, maybe fifty-two, seventy or two hundred Indigenous people, including women and children, up and down the Lander River in the vicinity of Coniston Station, in a battle that shocks the nation. The Federal Enquiry hears justifications, hears of natives so hungry they murdered Fred Brooks for his stores, hears that Fred had more than flour under his lock and key.⁹⁹ Another UAM missionary, Annie Lock, stationed further north at Barrow Creek, is called as a witness in the investigation and says that white men had ‘stolen native girls and hunted natives away from waterholes’, although she would not name names.

The massacre provokes a flurry of concern regarding white men and aboriginal women.¹⁰⁰ Bro. Reg Williams, another of the missionary colleagues, has his permit to enter the Central Reserves cancelled by the South Australian Advisory Council of Aborigines, who minute: ‘in view of the temptations presented by native women in the reserves that Mr R Williams as a young single man be not permitted to enter them ...’¹⁰¹ Annie Lock, not surprisingly, comes in for more overt criticism. The Board vilifies her as an ‘unattached Missionar[y] wandering from place to place, having no previous knowledge of the blacks and their customs and preaching the doctrine of the equality of man’,¹⁰² and the Lutheran missionary from Hermansberg tells the Enquiry ‘Miss Lock had told him she would be happy to marry a black’.¹⁰³ Newspapers across the country take up the sensation: photographed beside an

Aboriginal man, the headlines next to Annie read ‘Happy to Marry a Black’, and so ensues a national debate about the rights and wrongs of ‘women living alone among the natives’.

There is less reportage of what Annie actually meant, despite it being the likely crux of the whole matter, and of critical import to Annie’s feminist and humanitarian friends:

‘If I were compelled to marry, there are some black men in this wilderness from among whom I would rather make my choice of a husband, than among a few of the white men who disgrace the cities in which they live, and who, occasionally penetrating the solitudes in which the aboriginal makes his home, degrade the children of nature so that even Nature blushes for them.’¹⁰⁴

In private, she writes to Mary Montgomery Bennet.

" What I said was that I do not know how any one [sic.] could marry a black. It is as much as I can stand to put up with the smell of them, especially up here where there is very little water to wash with, and they rub their bodies with iguana fat." ¹⁰⁵

That a Federal Enquiry takes place is testament to humanitarian concern of the era: that it finds ‘that in all cases the shootings were justified as self-defence and that settlers and police had given no provocation’ is evidence of the depth of official racism of the time.¹⁰⁶

Jim’s little band know nothing of this. Two white men and a white woman ‘wandering from place to place’ strangely ‘had not seen a native during six weeks travelling, but though the enemy roared, the Lord was with us, and He faileth never.’¹⁰⁷ Finally they meet some doggers, who take their mail, so that the December edition of the Messenger carries their reports alongside information about the Federal Enquiry.¹⁰⁸ When they reach Andado Station, Iris telegraphs headquarters: ‘Arrived Safely; All well. God has blessed us. Best wishes all.’¹⁰⁹

Ram Paddock Gate, 1928

The mail that comes with the ration truck is passed to Becky to read out. She searches the thick Missionary journal for word of their intentions towards the 'Mt Serle natives'. But the back pages hold her attention with a long article about Annie Lock. The others watching her waited for a time, and then become impatient. 'Say anything about us? When we getting our missionary?'

'No, not yet. Nothing about us,' she says. *But something about me*, she thinks, and is glad Jack cannot read.

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Life Writing Chapter Ten

Jim and the UAM

South Australian Government Archives, Adelaide, 2003

I love the archives. In the muted room, I peered into boxes where papers lay coyly folded and rubbing together. There was a seduction in written archives which so easily spread themselves open before me in black, white and sepia, promising to tell me that ‘this is how it was’. Later, when stories lay slick and quiet in plastic sleeves in my lever arch files, beside transcripts of gossip that knew them better than they knew themselves, I clasped the bulky folders to my chest and whispered ‘In this is the Word of God.’ Somewhere.

There was the very letter that Vivian Turner wrote to the Chief Protector of Aborigines on December 1st 1928, just after finalising the local distribution of the Christmas edition of the *Australian Aborigines Advocate*. I imagined the stylish spinster pushing her round wire-rimmed glasses high on her nose, writing to Mr A. F. (Francis) Garnett, Protector of Aborigines,

‘to draw your attention to the natives camping on the South-East portion of the Burr Well Station, near Copley, leased by Messes Coles and Whyte. The natives own several donkey teams for their work of wool-carting, and we understand that they and their animals are rather a burden on the station-owners, as there is no special reserve for them.’¹¹⁰

She has appended a hand drawn map showing an odd rectangle bedded between Mr Snell’s lease on Angepena, Mr Greenwood’s on Mt Searle (the spelling like the land was unsettled at this time), Mr Waterhouse on Maynards Well, and of course Messrs Coles and Whyte on

what would be left of Burr Well station. Across the wobbly foot of the rectangle runs the meandering and insubstantial dotted line which is the road from Copley to Mt Serle.¹¹¹ That's where her boss, Mr A.E. Gerard, President of the Australian Aboriginal Mission, wants an Aboriginal reserve declared.

There are Minutes from the Advisory Council of Aborigines only days later showing the letter was read as the first item of business by the Chairman, Reverend Sexton, who undertakes to seek 'a full report' from the Protector of Aborigines, oh, and better map.¹¹²

There is Francis Garnett's reply, that the matter has been considered, and, by implication, dismissed.¹¹³ But there is also Rev Sexton's exchange with the Surveyor-General himself, including a detailed map, and his report to the Council whose response is minuted: who 'unanimously recommend that an endeavour be made to secure as a Reserve for them the site marked red on the attached map.'¹¹⁴ Then there is Garnett's dutiful Minute to the Commissioner for Crown Lands, making the argument asked of him and recommending the portion suggested be obtained, and proclaimed a Reserve. He adds that the Australian Aborigines Mission intends to open a school there, as well.¹¹⁵

Then there is a flurry of office memos and corridor conversations.

'What would the cost of improvements on the proposed reserve cost the Government?'

'Six pounds, sir.'

'And what of the well the 'natives' depend upon?'

'Sunk by miners on a mineral Lease in 1892, Sir. 'One hundred foot deep, Sir, with a splendid supply of fresh water.'

‘Ah, so it could supply the “natives” donkey teams?’

‘Sir, ‘when this country was sketched in 1921 this well was not then in existence.’¹¹⁶

‘The implication being?’

‘Can’t see how the “natives” can claim that well, Sir, being a “burden” on the station owners and all. Stock need watering, Sir.’

‘But it’s not on Coles and Whyte’s lease, is it? Have we heard from Waterhouse yet?’

‘No Sir. Sorry Sir. Nothing in the post yet, Sir.’

Monarto, 2005

I was sitting again with the photo of the Copley ladies at Minerawuta, with the row of tall, leaning posts marching their way from the humpies to the yawning mouth of the old well. I remembered the trip again, fingers pointing to wells, springs, soaks I couldn’t see, and arriving so dry we didn’t care we had no cups but drank from the same bottle to quench our thirst. ‘In the Inland, water is life’, said Rev John Flynn, and so it is.¹¹⁷

I had been told that the tall posts at Minerawuta once supported long hollowed logs which conveyed water from the timber framed well to the tin and stone cottages. ‘They used to have a good [well]’¹¹⁸, Gertie told me, and there is a picture too of Gertie driving a small water cart along a rocky gutter which itself could never deliver water to a sedentary community. The now slumped and powdered well was what had drawn a community to itself, when all other campsites were being closed to Adnyamathanha.

Elsie Jackson told me she spoke for all Adnyamathanha telling me ‘That well is dug by the Aboriginal people.’ I would not dare to doubt her. Cliff recalls tales of the brotherhood of well sinking – both his grandfathers, Ted Coulthard and Walter Coulthard, along with Rufus

Wilton, and the missionary, Jim Page – and surmises they would have worked on the well at Minerawuta, the top man, pulling up the buckets of mullock, or maybe the man in the pit, digging with a shovel until dark moisture in the rock bled into a cool wet pool glinting when the sun sent shafts of light to meet it at midday. They knew about wells. Adnyamathanha had dug them all over the rocky Flinders.

Adelaide, 1929

The Deputy Surveyor of Lands recommends to the Secretary of Lands that it is doubtful the portion of lease can be resumed under the Pastoral Act. They will have to write to the Lessees asking if they will be prepared to voluntarily surrender their land for a reserve.¹¹⁹ It takes a further month for him to do so, receiving a reply by return mail from Dalgety Co. Ltd., on behalf of their clients Waterhouse and Martin, advising Mr D N Martin is overseas for the next few months, and ‘we shall be glad, therefore, if you will let the matter remain in abeyance until his return.’¹²⁰ It seems all parties were glad, for the time being. By April 1929 they obviously had other things on their minds.

Melbourne, March 1929

Jim is proceeding through the ranks of probationer to missionary during an amalgamation between the Australian Aborigines Mission and the Gospel Mission to the Australian Aborigines. Easter saw a new Constitution framing the new entity known as the United Aborigines Mission (UAM). A self-conscious ‘Faith Mission’, its staff would depend ‘for the

supply of every need [by] God who has called to the labour, and not on any human organisation.’¹²¹ Corporate behaviour and personal faith was not, however, left to God, but codified in a nine-point doctrinal statement in the Constitution to which Jim presumably assented. ‘Man’s’ ‘moral depravity and his need for regeneration’ and the ‘Eternal Punishment of the Lost’ were not matters to leave to the vagaries of the Lord.¹²²



The United Aborigines Messenger, or 'The Messenger' Frontispiece 1929-

Grote St, Adelaide, May 1929

Jim Page stands in the rear vestry of the Church of Christ, quiet, head bowed, as the preacher prays intently at the patterned carpet between them. Jim hears the organist warming up for the first hymn, and shuts from his mind the bright sunlight of Grote Street outside the church's door. He too concentrates on the pattern of the carpet and the heavy promise he is to make to become inducted a fully accredited Missionary of the UAM. Visions of Will Wade's expansive hymn singing and Iris Wade's pursed lips and crossed knees come to him: missionaries. Before doubt clenches his stomach, another image tumbles in, of desert oaks and rocky outcrops, long-limbed men shining in morning light, women folded to the sandy ground with children curled between their angular knees. Hobbling smelly camels with hides rough and soft at the same time. Washing the slurry of sweat and dust from his face with the sweet water of a spring that leaks unbidden from the rocks. A warm certainty sinks into his guts, and he mouths what he knows it to be: 'Ye have chosen me,' he whispers, unheard, as the preacher maintains his monologue to the *fleur de lis* print. Then the prayer ends, and the preacher's head lifts up. The organist's hands fly in triumph as the service begins.

It is not a large congregation, but Jim is grateful to each one of them.¹²³ Grateful to, to his friend from Rev Barnett's College, a Mr Stirling, who breathily enthuses about the degradations along the East-West line and the demonish interventions of anthropology among what could be Christian 'natives' as he preaches to the converted. It seems Mrs Daisy Bates has not taken kindly to young Mr Stirling and his zeal for the Gospel along her stretch of the track.

Another song and then the new President of the amalgamated missions, Mr A.E. Gerard, gives his deputation address. Jim has heard it before, but is arrested by the sheer power, height and manner of delivery none-the-less. But today is special. Whether it had been Jim or a blue-arsed fly, Gerard would have held as a prize this first of the UAM missionaries. He reads a lengthy list of greetings from around the country, which further underscores the reach and scope of the UAM. At last he announces the next hymn. As the congregation tries valiantly to fill the cavernous space with angelic choirs, Gerard stands next to Jim, alternately bellowing out the phrases and whispering confidential asides.

‘You’ll be the first missionary inducted into the UAM you know! A dyed-in-the-wool UAM man. You stand for a mighty thing, son. A mighty work God is doing in this land.’

And then: ‘You tell them about opening up the North-west. Thousands of lives to be saved there. Thousands.’

As Jim prepares to launch into the last verse, Gerard whispers: ‘You’re a UAM man. U. A. M. We’re united, all of us. United. For the Aborigine.’ Gerard rests his large hand on Jim’s shoulder. Jim holds himself tall, holding in the breath he has taken for the song. His feet stand square on the soft carpet and his shoulders inch back a little. He closes his hymnbook and sings from memory, looking straight ahead.

When the singers have resumed their seats, Jim stands at the central lectern. He tells them everything. How his mother’s prayers led to his conversion, of his stumbling early attempts to live up to his Saviour’s name, of how he feels the call to the Lord’s Service in Oodnadatta and the interior. He relives every moment of his camel trek as he describes it and barely

draws breath accounting for the customs and superstitions of the ‘natives’ he has met. The oratory climaxes with a passionate appeal for the soul of the Australian Native, living in darkness, in great need of Christ. He pauses, letting the sweep of his gaze dwell a moment on each uplifted face. In a quiet voice, barely containing his passion, he delivers a quotation from his very own interview printed in *The Advertiser* newspaper the previous week.

“‘As Australians,” he sa[ys], “We have a national responsibility towards them, which we cannot legitimately disregard.””¹²⁴

Time suspends for a moment, tipping into Eternity, and then the tall steadying form of Pastor Wiltshire is beside him, settling his spirits like oil poured on water.

‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,’ Wiltshire intones, authoritatively, into the still room. ‘It is God alone who chooses His messengers. And it is the weak vessel of God’s church that sets such messengers apart to perform the task God appoints to them.’ The Induction charge rumbles on, until Jim becomes aware of the preachers hand outstretched towards him, takes the right hand of fellowship, and shakes it, and the next and the next as one by one ministers and missionaries file forward to embrace him in their company. He is one of them now. This time, when they sing the lilting verses of the final hymn, he does not even open his hymnal, but instead closes his eyes, and sings by heart the words John Wesley loved.

‘Take my life and let it be
consecrated Lord to thee

Take my moment and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be

Swift and beautiful for thee

Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King

Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from thee

Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite would I withhold

Take my intellect and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine;
It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart it is thine own;
It shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store.

Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.¹²⁵

While taking a cup of tea afterwards in the church hall, Gerard approaches Jim and launches into business.

‘Now, this Deputation work. Itinerating, eh, but not on camels this time! Not so smelly, that’ll be a relief for you.’

Jim can’t smile at the joke: his mouth is full of scone and he is trying to prevent his teacup spilling after the hearty clap on the shoulder Gerard has delivered.

Gerard does not seem to notice. 'I've got a number of jobs of work for you. Requires a man who can travel, footloose and all that. A fellow in the field, eyes and ears for us stuck back in Adelaide. Yes, we've sorely needed this before now. A lot to do, you know, a lot.'

Jim has regained some composure. 'But I will be returning to Oodnadatta before long, won't I? We're keen to get this next expedition under way, Sir.'

'Ah, of course. Yes. Oodnadatta will be your base, yes, technically.' Gerard breaks off to take a long draught of his coffee. Jim sees the President's eyes avert and wonders if his position at Oodnadatta has been compromised by Mrs Wade's complaints at having to 'manage the four men at Oodnadatta' while Mrs Sachse was indisposed recently.¹²⁶ Before Jim can say something, Gerard has hurriedly taken up his theme again.

'Of course you'll remain nominally appointed to Oodnadatta. But for the time being, the need is covered there. Mr Hayman can complete preparations with Mr Wade for the next camel trip. No point wasting your stories and talent over camel boys and saddlebags,' Gerard says, grinning and holding Jim's eye. 'In the terms of the new Constitution, it is a matter of great 'urgency' that the need of our sable brethren reach as many ears as possible, and you are the man of experience and passion to deliver just such a diplomatic mission.'¹²⁷ Gerard claps Jim on the shoulder again. 'I'll let Mr Wiltshire know you might need some provisions to start you off. But after that, it's all prayer, m'boy!'

Gerard sails away through the knots of conversation, while Jim frowns at the tea sloshing in his saucer. Two days later the second edition of *The United Aborigines Messenger* bears the news of Jim's commencement of a series of deputation meetings throughout South Australia, particularly the country district.¹²⁸



*Mission Conference in SA 1927-8. **Standing, 1 to r,** Rev G Brown, Mr H Smart, Miss V. Jones, Mr Will Wade, Mr A E Gerard, Mr LePage, Mrs Matthews, Mr N. Anquetel; **Seated, 1 to r,** Miss Elsie Tyler, Miss Violet Turner, Mr Wright, Pastor J Wiltshire, Miss Ruby Hyde (and little child), Mrs V Anquetel.*

Mission, United Aborigines. *Challenging the Almighty: 100 Years of Trusing God in the Work of the United Aborigines Mission.* Box Hill: United Aborigines Mission, 1994. P35

June 1929, Country Districts, South Australia

Jim is not one to brood when there is a task at hand. He is energetic, even intense, in the way he applies himself to the task of deputation. He writes articles to reach the Adelaide papers to coincide with his lecture tour; he prepares articles for *The Messenger* to precede him into the country areas. He feels alive and his eyes sparkle as he blinks behind his glasses, even though they are tired with the strain of composing his script. He breathes in, his chest expanding, and leans back on his chair in the neat bright room this evening's hosts have offered him. He is glad to have time to write before tea. He knows he has a nice turn of phrase. He could have

been a journalist, collecting tales across the country to file with *The Bulletin* or *The Sun* *Sunday Guardian* back in Sydney.

Pen poised, he writes *'I am a messenger'*, but pauses. *No, more than that*, and he scratches the words out in haste to capture the image that has leapt to his mind. Sweating back and muscled arms holding two train carriages together as if by sheer will, with one trailer rolling like a small mountain towards the man in the middle. At the right moment, with a thud and grating the shunter would flip the hook of one carriage into the notch of the other and flip! again another loop of metal smartly across to hold the arrangement fast before the crushing weight pinned him between them. The final casual snick of the blunt pin through the metal joint, coupling the carriages together for the long haul. *'Coupling,'* that was the word he wanted. That's what he was up to. Forcing a vast continent of need to be hooked securely into the lives of those who could care. And he, with his pen, was the man standing ready to link them, before they collided, or rolled away from each other forever. *'Coupling'*: he likes that. He writes quickly, evading the next memory that wants to come, of a man caught between two carriages that had rolled too fast for him to slam the hook down before the buffers screeched with the impact. The shrieking metal seemed to go on eternally, like two continents grinding against each other, until they fell apart and the shuddering subsided and men ran from everywhere to the space between the stock to see what had happened. No: Jim sends the memory away. Flip, flip and through, he repeats. Neat and strong and safe. In the adrenalin of inspiration, his missive steams its way across the page, the first of what will become a regular procession of need after need threading its way from the remotest corners of the continent to the depot of Christian hearts.

Message from Mr Page.

Dear Prayer Partners,-

Couplings are insignificant things when lying by the rail track, yet what an important role they play when in their proper place. By the Grace of God I want this article to be a coupling to link you onto a great need that your prayer support may be assured, that your share in this responsibility may be revealed.

Quorn stands as a gateway to the north and to the west, and every missionary passing through from the eastern States must pass through Quorn. It has been my greatest joy and privilege to spend a few days at the Colebrook Children's Home. It was both an inspiration and a revelation to be in that Home and to see the evident results of the sisters' labours of love to win these souls for the Master. The matron's motto, "Every child for Jesus," seems already realised.

Truly Jesus Christ is a living bright reality to many of these little ones. I was present at their C. E. meeting, and each one gave their response. Mona, aged three years, quite unasked stands up and sings, "Hallelujah to the Lamb who died on Mount Calvary." Truly out of the mouths of babes hast Thou perfected Praise. Matron Hyde then responded for baby Stephen. (Tales concerning the baby are prohibited; only good ones leak out of the Home.)

It is beautiful to see these children in the happy lot made happy only by the constraining love of Christ, which radiates through the sisters to them.

The needs of that Home are many and varied; it is totally inadequate for its present requirements. Go into the kitchen, and you will realise that the sister needs much kitchen grace. The range has only a limited range, and ends where it ought to begin. Pots should be near the fire, but many are out in the cold.

Bath accommodation is another serious problem, and accomplished with much difficulty. However, the trial of faith which worketh patience might be good for the sisters, but I'm sure they have reached the stage for graduation out of the trials of bath night.

The house itself is held up by the Grace of God (which cannot fail, we know!). However, the ants are still busy, and the great need is at least new sleeping accommodation for staff and children.

Link yourself onto this coupling by prayer that the needs of this Home may be met to the Glory of God. Many little lives are growing up without the sanctifying influence of such a home to mould their adolescent years. In native camp, outback towns, on Godless stations they roam. Where? Think for a moment of maybe your own tender child growing up without kind, tender parental restraint.

It's not somebody else's responsibility, it's ours as a solemn charge from the Saviour to care for and feed these little lambs. What wilt Thou have me to do?

It has been the choice of God to entrust me with the deputation work throughout S.A. I'm but a channel or a coupling to link souls onto the needs of the dark people of

Australia. Prayer is needed that the Holy Spirit may arouse practical interest, which will be maintained by prayer for these dear souls.

My recent visit to Adelaide has already been blessed of God; the results are in His hands. To all who are praying for the success of this work I return thanks in the Name of the Master. I have been welcomed in the country districts, and those who have the needs placed before them have magnificently responded.

For every opportunity that has been given we praise God, and we commend this deputation work to your prayer. Brethren, pray for us.¹²⁹

Jim prints his name, JAS. PAGE, at the end of the page, and folds it into an envelope. It will not need redrafting. As he is packing his things away, he hears a knock on the door of the bedroom. A soft voice follows.

‘Mr Page? Mother asked if you would like to take tea with us now.’

He is smiling as he opens the door and makes a mock bow to the sweet girl who stands, pigeon toed, before him. She is wearing a starched smock that does not quite hide the womanly shape she has recently grown into.

‘I’d be delighted,’ Jim says, and offers his arm as if they were to dine on the Titanic itself. She links hers into his and will only relinquish it when she catches her mother’s small frown as they enter the front room.

July 1929, Adelaide

Alfred Gerard has tired of waiting on the Protector. On new UAM letterhead he writes:

We have visited the spot on several occasions. There are about 150 natives located there, and unfortunately there is an English immigrant living in the camp, and she has, I think, three half caste children. However there are some 40 to 50 children of school going age who are not receiving any benefits. These natives are camped on leased ground, there being no reserve for them anywhere. Our Society has offered to take an interest in the Aborigines in this locality, having an oversight of their moral life and giving the children some education, but the Lease holders of the ground on which they camp know that means making it their perpetual camp, and they do not desire that. We can, as a Mission, occupy

the adjoining leased property, but our experience, which covers 30 years of Australian Mission work, proves to us that that is useless, the missionaries and teacher must live at the camp.¹³⁰

Frank Garnett's reply is brief. The matter is under consideration, but no decision can be reached until the proprietor returns from England.

Some months later, Violet Turner raises the matter again, and again tries her hand at map making showing where she believes a fence should be erected around 'the natives' existing camp and the 'well which the natives sunk for themselves before the land was leased.'¹³¹

By now, the owners of Burr well Station are home, and reply within the week. No. The owners will not consider excising any part of the lease: it would cripple production on a small station, and the lands required contains 'our best waters.' But yes. They would be prepared to sell the whole property 'walk-in walk-out' to the Government for the purpose, for the sum of £15,000, a tidy sum for the 'going concern' in the midst of drought.¹³² Neither God nor the Government are forthcoming with the funds, and nothing more is said.

Rev Sexton tries his hand again the following year, when the issue is raised at the newly formed Aborigines Advisory Council. Seeing an opportunity, the Council advises the Chief Protector, to secure land for a reserve whenever the present lease of the Maynard Pastoral Company might expires.¹³³ But the UAM has not waited. Mr J. Page is already a guest of the Maynard Pastoral Co. and the UAM is busily corresponding with the Director of Education about establishing a school there.¹³⁴

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¹ South Australian Department of Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students.*, Aboriginal Studies 8-12 (Education Department of South Australia, 1992). P57

² South Australia Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988). P18

³ Andrew Coulthard and Bernhard Schebeck, 'Atynyamatana Story: Boning a White Man,' (1967).

⁴ Peggy Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges* (Netley SA: Wakefield Press, 1985). P36,37; EL Walpole, *The Hamilton at Moolawantana*, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

⁵ South Australian Department of Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students.*, Aboriginal Studies 8-12 (Education Department of South Australia, 1992). P57 A Note on Language: The written form of the language is still being documented (Education Dept of SA, p56). At present, several systems of orthography exist for the Adnyamathanha language. This text uses quotes and words from several of these texts, and in each case uses the orthography of the particular source referenced.

⁶ B Schebeck, 'The Adnyamathanha Personal Pronoun and the 'Wailpi Kinship System.'" *Pacific Linguistics Series A* 36 (1973). ; Luise A Hercus and Isobel M White, 'Perception of Kinship Structure Reflected in the Adnyamathanha Pronouns,' *Pacific Linguistics Series A* 36 (1973). The work of these linguists on aspects of 'Adnyamathanha' language demonstrates the 'intricate' nature of the system: ... 'this intricate pronominal structure consists of ten series of pronouns. Which series is used depends both on the kin relationship of the speaker to the referents, and the relation of the referents to each other.' (Hercus and White p49). Further, Schebeck (p23, 24) discusses the relationship of the term 'Adnyamathanha' used as a collective term by the people today, with other group names such as 'Wailpi', used by anthropologists on the basis of earlier research. Between earlier anthropological collection of language, and Schebecks research, changes and merging of pre-contact groupings has lead to both loss and integration of language. Rebecca Forbes arrived in the Flinders Ranges during a time of great change and flux in culture and presumably language, and the negotiation of this process amongst native speakers would have added to the complexity of Rebecca's encounter with languages of this region, perhaps leading her to say, as reported by Hill: 'Although my two sons speak mostly the aboriginal languages, I have never learned them – there are too many.' (E Hill, *The Great Australian Loneliness: A Classic Journey around and across Australia* (Potts Point: Imprint, 1940). P272 *Italics* mine)

⁷ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. P6

⁸ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p93-95

⁹ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p86

¹⁰ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students.* p168 A photograph from Wooltana station 1917 describes the people in the picture as 'The Coulthard and Johnson families in front of their camp shelter.'

¹¹ Clifford Coulthard and Desmond Coulthard Christine Davis, Heritage Team, *The Flinders Ranges: An Aboriginal View*, Reprinted with amendments. ed. (Adelaide: Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Planning, 1986). P17

¹² Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p131

¹³ Jacques Legrand, *Chronicle of the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Ross (Penguin, 1990). P305

¹⁴ Pauline Coulthard, *Story of Urdlu and Mandya*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Kanyaka Ruins, nr Hawker: 2003), vol.; Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. P35-39

¹⁵ (Gordon Arthur) Smiler Greenwood, *Tape Recording*, (Mortlock JB Somerville Oral History collection: State Library of South Australia, 1964), vol. 'Smiler' recalls that in the 1920's, horses coming with the droving plants would be 'shot' when they reached Wooltana, as the country was too rough for them further south. Donkey and camel teams pulling carts, buggies, wagons and 'bun carts' (stripped down cars) were more common forms of transport.

¹⁶ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p114

¹⁷ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p110

¹⁸ Josie Coulthard, *Story from Walk to Damper Hill*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Flinders Ranges: 2002), vol.

¹⁹ Hans Mincham, *The Story of the Flinders Ranges* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1964). P36

²⁰ Alisa Bunbury, *Arid Arcadia: Art of the Flinders Ranges*, ed. Jan Hylton and Penelope Curtin (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2002). P34

²¹ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*. p139-140

²² Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges*. p23 citing SA Archives GRG/5/2/593/172

²³ Clem Coulthard, 'Interview with Adele Pring, Dete 16/10/85,' (1985).

²⁴ William RH Jessop, *Flindersland and Sturtland; or the inside and Outside of Australia* (London: Richard Bentley, New Burlington St publisher in ordinary to her majesty, 1862). P199

²⁵ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*. p154; Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges*. p39.40

²⁶ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*. P156 ; Dr Shanahan and MC Birt, 'Grg52/1/1903', State Records of South Australia, Adelaide.

²⁷ Tindale, 'Observations on Aborigines of the Flinders Ranges, and Records of Rock Carvings and Paintings.' p47; Gertie Johnson, *Conversation with Gertie Johnson 010802*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2002), vol. Gertie identified the man named 'Wanjulda' in Figure 18 of Hale and Tindale as her Grandfather, Mt Serle Bob.

²⁸ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*. P143

P45 Shows a photograph with caption: 'Sydney Ryan, wife Annie and Frome Charlie taken at Ram Paddock Gate about 1928.' The genealogy itself does not mention Annie as wife to Sydney, although it does mention that Sydney's wife Mary died at Mt Serle some time before 1930. Sydney was a *Mathari* man (pvii), so Annie as a wife would presumably be *Arruru*.

²⁹ Guy Tunstill, ed., *Adnyamathanha Years R-10: A Teaching Framework for Revival and Second Language Learning in Years R to 10* (Hindmarsh South Australia: DECS Publishing, 2004). P117. *Ngarlaami* is 'aunt (mother's elder sister)

³⁰ Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges*.p22

³¹ R Ellis, 'The Funeral Practices and Beliefs of the Adjanmathanha,' *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* 13.6 (1975). P4 describes that white lime is applied to members of the moiety not of the same moiety as the dead person. Those of the same moiety blacken their faces, and the women of that moiety conduct the funeral wailing.

³² Ellis, 'The Funeral Practices and Beliefs of the Adjanmathanha.' P6

³³ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. p176 Name of Nepabunna waterhole.

³⁴ Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges*.p46

³⁵ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*.p156 Quotes an extract from The Register, 1902, commenting on an epidemic of measles amongst 'blacks' at Mt Serle, where 15 people had died in four months.

³⁶ (Gordon Arthur) Smiler Greenwood, *Tape Recording*, (Mortlock JB Somerville Oral History collection: State Library of South Australia, 1964), vol.

³⁷ Keith Nicholls, *Transcript of Interview with Keith Nicholls 151001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Beltana: 2001), vol.

³⁸ Rosie Brady Rita Coulthard, Lorna Demell, *Conversation with Rita, Rosie and Lorna 191001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Ram Paddock Gate: 2001), vol.

³⁹ Yakarties = children

⁴⁰ Betty Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. (Adelaide: Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Planning, South Australian Government, 1981). P8

⁴¹ Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. p21,22

⁴² Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. p7

⁴³ Buck McKenzie Terrence Coulthard, 'Minerawuta', *Adnyamathanha Way*, ed. Artoowarapana Band (Port Augusta: Radio 5UMA 89.1 FM UMA Video Production), vol., ed. Recorded by Wilson Main.

⁴⁴ Rita Coulthard, *Conversation with Rita, Rosie and Lorna 191001*, vol.

⁴⁵ Elsie Jackson, *Transcript of Interview 10801 (Second Edit Parts Removed 0303)*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2001), vol.

⁴⁶ Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. P7

⁴⁷ Bill Snell, *Transcript of Interview with Bill Snell 130303*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Adelaide: 2003), vol.

⁴⁸ Gertie Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 17701*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.

⁴⁹ Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. P22 gives a description of Polly's grave.

⁵⁰ Irene Mohammed, *Conversation with Irene Mohammed*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2003), vol. Irene recalled 'My grandfather, Fred Johnson was a witchdoctor. He'd go and say he'd chased away the little people (or teddy bears) away.' Evelyn Coulthard, *Conversation with Evelyn Coulthard*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2002), vol. 'The witchdoctor would help any babies that were difficult coming, and Mrs Forbes too.'

⁵¹ Gertie Johnson, *Conversation with Gertie Johnson 010802*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2002), vol. Gertie added in May 2005 that Florries birth would have taken place in the creek at Minerawuta, not in the hut. There is a shady part of the creek relatively near to the settlement which is suggested as a location.

⁵² CP Mountford and Alison Harvey, 'Women of the Adnjamatana Tribe of the Northern Flinders Ranges, South Australia,' *Oceania* XII.2 (Dec 1941). Despite the prohibition on mens involvement with birth, Harvey notes that P158 'The medicine man, *wunji*, may, however, attend a woman to massage her during the early stages of labour, but no man may witness the actual birth of the child.'

⁵³ Harvey, 'Women of the Adnjamatana Tribe of the Northern Flinders Ranges, South Australia.' p158 'The *muri*, in the legend of conception, is said to cling to the womb by its fingernails; massage of the abdomen will cause it to loosen this hold and turn head downward in readiness to be born.'

⁵⁴ Clara Brady, *Transcript of Interview with Clara Brady 171002*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Quorn: 2002), vol. ‘...she said she used to put them on the table and she said she’d even get them to stand up holding onto the table and sort of force birth.’

⁵⁵ P; Lake Grimshaw, M; McGrath, A; Quartly, M., *Creating a Nation: 1788-1990* (Ringwood: McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1994). Pp7-9 The first recorded Aboriginal birth assisted by white women occurred in 1791 at Sydney Cove. Grimshaw et al in recounting this event, describe the British guests initiated some practises, like immediately cutting the umbilical cord and insisting on washing the child directly after the birth, to which the Aboriginal midwives objected, but were over ruled.

⁵⁶ Irene Mohammed, *Conversation with Irene Mohammed 230503*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2003), vol. ‘All the nannies would be there – women, and some older girls. My cousin was there because she’d growed up with her grandmother. And Auntie Jean, because she’d always be there too with Mrs. Forbes. Sharpy’s mum. I guess they’d have a basin for warm water – used to use the basin for everything, bath in, wash in.’

⁵⁷ Dorothy Tunbridge, *Artefacts of the Flinders Ranges* (Port Augusta: Pipa Wangka, 1985). P12

⁵⁸ Harvey, *Women of the Adnjamatana Tribe of the Northern Flinders Ranges, South Australia.* P157

⁵⁹ Christine Davis, *The Flinders Ranges: An Aboriginal View.* P18

⁶⁰ Harvey, *Women of the Adnjamatana Tribe of the Northern Flinders Ranges, South Australia,* P157

⁶¹ Mohammed, *Conversation with Irene Mohammed 230503*, vol. When the baby had come they’d wave out a white cloth or nappy on a stick and you’d know you could go home now.

⁶² Rebecca’s younger sister was named Flora, and had migrated to Victoria, although there is no evidence that either Rebecca or Flora were aware of each other’s whereabouts.

⁶³ Joyce Forbes, *Interview with Joyce Forbes*, ed. Graham McLean and Adele Pring (Quorn: Education Department of South Australia, 1990), vol. ‘My mother-in-law came from Wales. The first baby born in Ram Paddock was Flory Bowman, she was a nurse. Pearl’s sister.’

Christine Davis, and McKenzie, Pearl, *Adnyamathanha Genealogy* (Government Printer South Australia: Aboriginal Heritage Branch. South Australian Department of Environment and Planning., 1985). P130 gives Florrie Wilton’s date of birth as March 1926.

⁶⁴ Harrie Green, *Mr Green Tells How Jesus Never Fails' Based on Recordings of Harrie Green's Reminiscences, (Unpublished Manuscript)*, ed. Chris Jones (United Aborigines Ministries, 2003). P23

⁶⁵ Keith Nicholls, *Conversation with Keith Nicholls 20701*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Beltana: 2001), vol. ‘One time, some men from the station were going looking for Jack Witchetty, to do some work. He was a good fencer, station work, you know. They went up to their camp and asked for “Witchetty”. “That’ll be Mr. Forbes” she said to them! No white man ever called him ‘Mr. Forbes’ in his life!’

⁶⁶ Keith Nicholls, *Conversation with Keith Nicholls 20701*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Beltana: 2001), vol. ‘One time, some men from the station were going looking for Jack Witchetty, to do some work. He was a good fencer, station work, you know. They went up to their camp and asked for “Witchetty”. “That’ll be Mr. Forbes” she said to them! No white man ever called him ‘Mr. Forbes’ in his life!’

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- ⁶⁷ Eileen Lewis, *Transcript of an Interview 020901*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Adelaide: 2001), vol.
- ⁶⁸ Harry Griffiths, *An Australian Adventure* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1975). P139
- ⁶⁹ Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 17701*, vol.
- ⁷⁰ Advisory Council of Aborigines, 'Advisory Council of Aborigines Minute Book', State Records of South Australia GRG 52/12, Adelaide.
- ⁷¹ AE Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King, 1944). P20
- ⁷² Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. p20
- ⁷³ Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. p20
- ⁷⁴ United Aborigines Mission, *Challenging the Almighty: 100 Years of Trusing God in the Work of the United Aborigines Mission* (Box Hill: United Aborigines Mission, 1994). P1,2
- ⁷⁵ Mission, *Challenging the Almighty: 100 Years of Trusing God in the Work of the United Aborigines Mission*. P3,4
- ⁷⁶ UCA in NSW Archivist Daryl Lightfoot, *Conversation with Daryl Lightfoot*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Sydney: 2001), vol.
- ⁷⁷ Conway, *Conversation with Graeme Conway 131101*, vol.
- ⁷⁸ Barnett, *The Story of the Missionary and Bible College, Sydney: Extracts from the Yearly Reports of the Past Twenty Years, Giving the Story of God's Faithfulness in Regard to It*. Under Heading '1922. Calibre Needed'
- ⁷⁹ Supplementary Electoral Records, Division of Parkes 1928 p36 SubDivision of Enfield no. 11155
- ⁸⁰ The following correspondence to Elizabeth Morris is purely speculative, based on her sharing the same student years as Jim Page, and his electoral roll address at 35 Badminton Rd Croydon during 1928, while he was based at Oodnadatta with the AAM.
- ⁸¹ JH Sexton (Secretary), 'Advisory Council of Aborigines Minute Book', State Records of South Australia GRG 52/12 p12, Adelaide. March 5th 1928
- ⁸² Charles Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1972). p113
- ⁸³ Letter contents based on articles in Australian Aborigines Mission, *The Australian Aborigines' Advocate* 19- - 1929. Feb and March 1928; and Barnett, *The Story of the Missionary and Bible College, Sydney: Extracts from the Yearly Reports of the Past Twenty Years, Giving the Story of God's Faithfulness in Regard to It*. ; RM Williams, *A Song in the Desert* (Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1998). P189

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- ⁸⁴ Ian Buckley, *Conversation with Ian Buckley, Rail Safety Manager, Ghan Preservation Society*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Alice Springs: 2006), vol.
- ⁸⁵ Australian Aborigines Mission, United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. March 31 1928 p8 Kitty's letter reads in part: 'Jesus been make my heart clean. He clean your heart too, with his precious blood, God our Father make me hold words. He been teach me, He make me clean, make me happy all the time.'
- ⁸⁶ Australian Aborigines Mission. Sept 1st 1928 p22
- ⁸⁷ Williams, *A Song in the Desert*. P54
- ⁸⁸ Australian Aborigines Mission. 1 August 1928 p13
- ⁸⁹ Australian Aborigines Mission. August 1 1928 p12,13
- ⁹⁰ Williams, *A Song in the Desert*. P32
- ⁹¹ Australian Aborigines Mission. Aug 1 1928 p12,13
- ⁹² Williams, *A Song in the Desert*. P146
- ⁹³ Williams, *A Song in the Desert*. p133
- ⁹⁴ Williams, *A Song in the Desert*. P33; This is a quote from a poem called 'The Gate of the Year' published by Minnie Louise Haskins in *The Desert*, 1908, which later rose to fame when King George V quoted it in his Christmas broadcast of 1939 as England plunged into WW2. His mother The Queen Mother introduced him to the poem: his wife, The Queen Mother had it read at her funeral in 2003.
- ⁹⁵ Australian Aborigines Mission. Jan 1st 1929 p51,52
- ⁹⁶ Minnie Louise Haskins, *The Desert* (Private, 1908).
- ⁹⁷ Williams, RM. *A Song in the Desert*. Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1998 p56,57
- ⁹⁸ Australian Aborigines Mission. Dec 1st 1928 p43
- ⁹⁹ 'Ghosts of Our Troubled Past Laid to Rest.,' *The Age* 22 September 2003.
- ¹⁰⁰ O'Brien, "to Infuse an Universal Terror': A Reappraisal of the Coniston Killings.' p62 - 68
- ¹⁰¹ (Secretary), 'Advisory Council of Aborigines Minute Book'. October 1st 1928
- ¹⁰² O'Brien, "to Infuse an Universal Terror': A Reappraisal of the Coniston Killings.' p72, 75
- ¹⁰³ Turner, *The Good Fella Missus*. P46
- ¹⁰⁴ Turner, *The Good Fella Missus*. P47

¹⁰⁵ Annie Lock, 'Letter to Mary Montgonery Bennett, August 1929', South Australian State Records, SA GRG 52/32 August 1929 AL-MMBennett, Adelaide.

¹⁰⁶ O'Brien, 'to Infuse an Universal Terror': A Reappraisal of the Coniston Killings.' p72

¹⁰⁷ Australian Aborigines Mission. Jan 1st 1929 p50,51

¹⁰⁸ Australian Aborigines Mission. Dec 1 1928 p43

¹⁰⁹ Australian Aborigines Mission. Dec 1st 1928 p43

¹¹⁰ Various correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council', State Records of South Australia GRG 52/1/1936 Boxes 42-43-44, Adelaide. Dec 1 1928

¹¹¹ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'.P145

¹¹² correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P144

¹¹³ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'.

¹¹⁴ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P142

¹¹⁵ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P141

¹¹⁶ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P145a

¹¹⁷ Scott McPheat, *John Flynn: Apostle to the Inland* (London;Hodder and Stoughton) 1963

¹¹⁸ Gertie Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.

¹¹⁹ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P139

¹²⁰ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P137

¹²¹ United Aborigines Mission, 'Constitution of the United Aborigines' Mission', United Aborigines Mission Archive collection. P14

¹²² Mission, 'Constitution of the United Aborigines' Mission'. Article 31 P8

¹²³ This account of Jim Page's Induction Service is based on the report in United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. July 1 1929 p7

¹²⁴ 'North-West Natives: A Healthy, Lovable People: Missionary's 1,700-Mile Trip,' *The Advertiser* 18th May 1929 1929.

¹²⁵ Frances Ridley Havergal, 'Take My Life 520,' *The Australian Hymn Book*, vol. 1977 (Blackburn: Collins, 1836-79).

¹²⁶ Australian Aborigines Mission, *The Australian Aborigines' Advocate* 19- -1929. Mar 1st 1929 p70

¹²⁷ Mission, 'Constitution of the United Aborigines' Mission'. P12 Section 38 a) describes the circumstances a missionary may be asked to leave their 'permanent sphere' or station of work

¹²⁸ United Aborigines Mission. June 1 1929 p10

¹²⁹ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1929 p7,8

¹³⁰ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P134

¹³¹ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P131

¹³² Chief Protector of Aborigines, 'Correspondence', Correspondence Files, Aborigines Department, State Archives South Australia GRG 52 p122, Adelaide. P127, 128

¹³³ (Secretary), 'Advisory Council of Aborigines Minute Book'. March 3rd 1930

¹³⁴ UAM Mission Secretary, 'Correspondence to the Director of Education July 16th 1930', UAM Archives, Melbourne.