

A Piece of String

Stories of the Nungarin District



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“A life without stories would be no life at all. And stories bound us, did they not, one to another, the living to the dead, people to animals, people to the land?”

In The Company of Cheerful Ladies
by Alexander McCall Smith

Foreword

I consider it a great honour to be asked to contribute the foreword to this splendid publication. It is a book that fills a void in our community history: a concise collection of family activities through good times and bad, in the first century of settlement in the Nungarin District.

Our first century has taken us from the horse and cart days to supercharged luxury cars, from fabric and timber aeroplanes to the giant airliners that encompass the Earth today. The modest land-line telephone has gone to world-wide satellite communications, to the computer age and mind-boggling electronic discoveries. Our fledgling century has been marred by two catastrophic world wars. Wars that accelerated all sorts of technological change, but took tragic toll on our pioneers and their sons. We of Nungarin need no more reminders of the tragedies and horrors of war.

With great skill, Maxine has taken us from the privations and hardships of our pioneers to the present day battlers and their vastly changed circumstances. Articles and contributions have been used to intersperse her own inimitable observations. The research and collection of information was painstakingly done by the author over a period of forty years. The resilience of locals is always evident, there are humorous stories tempered by some tragedy, and tales of bad times.

‘A Piece of String’ is a triumph of determination and dedication by the author, its contents are skilfully organised in easy to follow chapters, with many well-chosen photos, mainly from contributors. Congratulations Maxine for the time, effort and research you have put in, to culminate in the presentation of this great book. I have no doubt that this has been made more pleasurable because of the support and encouragement you have received from your husband Barry.

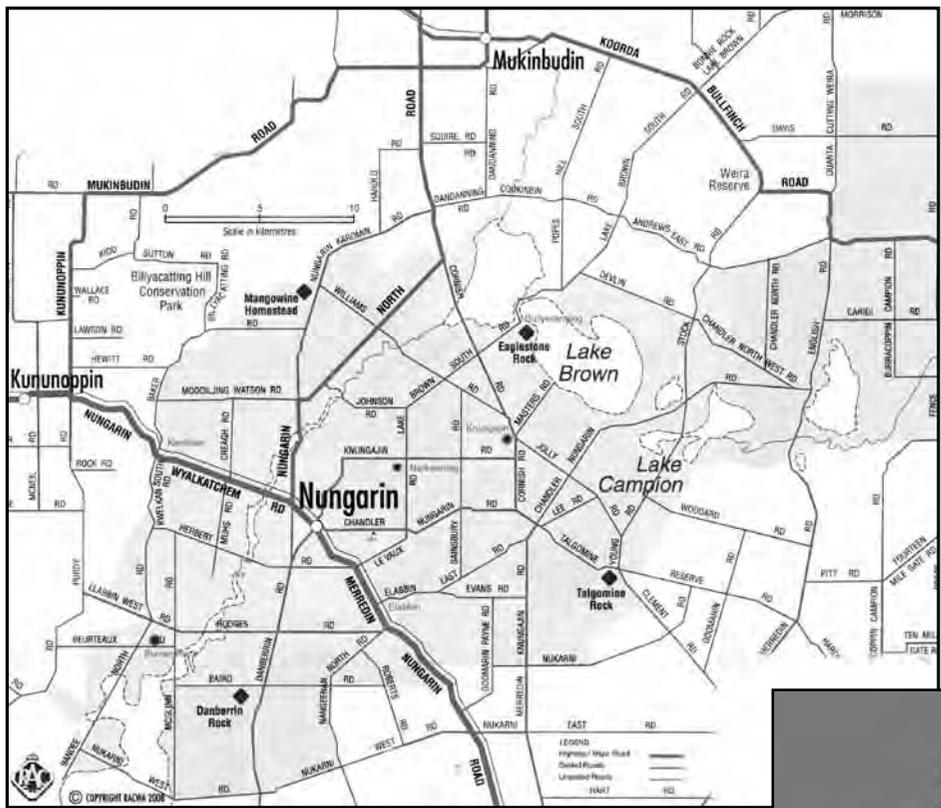
‘A Piece of String’ is a must for past and present residents. It is a true record of our first hundred years and makes easy reading. Having read the book I am left wondering where Nungarin will be in the next hundred years. Will Nungarin disappear or prosper, and who will compile the stories and changes of the future? If the Nungarin of our future follows in the footsteps of the pioneers of our past, we have much to look forward to.

Bob Herbert
Nungarin
October 2010



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Shire of Nungarin - Western Australia

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Our agricultural pioneers possessed incredible optimism and determination. Many left their families, comfortable homes and secure employment to pursue a dream. They settled on isolated uncleared bush blocks without experience of farming methods, without reliable water supplies, without proper roads, and in many cases without any means of transport; and they made their homes in tents and rough bush shacks.

Men, women and children toiled side by side to establish their farming properties. Lacking material wealth and any form of luxury, they willingly shared what little they did have with each other. From this developing sense of community emerged remarkable stories: great acts of generosity, great humour but also tales of desperation and heartbreak.

As I heard some of these stories, I became aware that as each generation passes away, their stories and our heritage are being lost forever. Following this realisation came a desperation to preserve as much information about Nungarin's past as I could, before it was too late. *A Piece of String* is the culmination of more than forty years of collecting and hoarding, during which time I compiled the Nungarin Biographic Index that now contains several thousand entries.

I am indebted to the many people who have generously shared their stories with me, and who have helped with supplying photographs, verifying dates and checking details. There will undoubtedly be mistakes. The best of our memories are not infallible, but I have endeavoured to make sure that what I have written is as accurate as possible. I apologise for any errors, and hope that there is no offence taken, for none is meant.

Where possible I have included stories in the voice of the contributor, so you will find lots of quotes. I think this helps to add authenticity and vibrancy to the book.

The chapters are generally arranged thematically, so that interest is concentrated on the subject under discussion. Sometimes you will find certain people and incidents will pop up in several different places, but hopefully you will not find that overly repetitious or confusing.

During the last eighteen months I have had reason to be extremely grateful to many people who have encouraged me and helped in a myriad of ways, but there are a few that deserve a special mention: My husband and partner, Barry, who has been

my mainstay; Kerry Dayman and my daughter Susan Riley who have both been generous and painstaking in proof-reading the script and fitting that task into their already incredibly busy lives; and my grandson Matt who has encouraged me to write in my own particular style (so if there is criticism, I can blame him!). Special thanks are also due to Bob Herbert and Jenny de Lacy who have both enthusiastically and diligently researched photographs, names and information – particularly for the chapter on Nungarin sport.

Finally, I would like to thank the Shire of Nungarin for their endorsement of the concept and for agreeing to underwrite the book.

It is impossible to capture entire lifetimes, but this history tells the sort of stories that are often shared over a cup of tea or a can of beer. It is not a complete history, but then, just how long is a piece of string ...

Maxine Cornish

In The Beginning

Aborigines and Explorers

The first Europeans to traverse the Nungarin area were Surveyor General Captain John Septimus Roe and his party, who set out from York in early October 1836 to locate a rumoured source of inland water. In his application to Governor Stirling, Roe alluded to previous communication with Aborigines who had knowledge of the inland areas:

The various rumours which have obtained circulation on the credit of general reports from the Eastern Natives in this Colony, leaving no doubt as to the existence of a considerable inland water within two or three hundred miles of our located districts, and a personal knowledge of such an important fact being likely to prove extremely beneficial to the general interests of this country, I have the honour to draw the attention of His Excellency the Governor to the subject, in furtherance of the views and wishes verbally communicated to His Excellency some time since, and to suggest the expediency of despatching an expedition into the interior about the 1st of October next, for the purpose of fixing a real value to these interesting reports, and of examining the nature of the intermediate country.

To conduct such an expedition I beg to offer my best services, and will forward a list of requisites on an early day should they be accepted.

The Hon. G.F. Moore, Advocate General, has handsomely volunteered to accompany me, and from his general knowledge of the leading features of the case, his acquaintance with the native language, and his spirit of adventure, I have [an earnest expectation] of receiving essential service.

Roe's journey took place only seven years after the foundation of the Colony, so his report gives us the first written information we have about local Aboriginal people.

His journals don't refer to any direct communication, but only give evidence of the presence of Aborigines in the area.

On Sunday 23rd October, at nearby Goomarin Hill, Roe made the following observations:

Halted at two small wells near the south side of the rock, where, by deepening out, we soon obtained an abundance of water for our purposes ... While dinner was preparing, ascended hill 'F' [Goomarin] and was exceedingly gratified with the prospect of an extensive grassy country to the eastward and north, amongst which, granite was a prominent feature, and became conspicuous in many detached masses of greater elevation than the lands around them. The most remarkable were a considerable double elevation [Knungajin] ... distant 6½ miles ... and a granite hill 'I' [Mt Moore, or as it is more usually known, Talgomine] distant 3 or 4 miles. These were the most remarkable hills we had encountered since leaving the vicinity of York.

On the summit [of hill 'F'] we found two old spears of the natives, without barbs, 10 feet in length. White cockatoos numerous, pigeons, parrots and small birds. During the day an increased number of kangaroo rats, bandicoots, and a burrowing animal which makes a large hole. Several of the large circular nests have also been met with but nothing further has transpired to throw light on their nature or use.¹

The next day Roe and his party proceeded towards Knungajin, and by mid-morning came across another of the mysterious nests that had been noted the day before:

In 4 miles came on a circular nest on the ground, heaped up differently from the others – which had all been hollowed in the middle. On searching, the contents – 6 fine eggs about the size of the Black Swan's – were found about 30 inches below the surface leaving great reason for supposing it to be the nest of the bird called the 'gnow' by the natives – resembling native turkey. Having secured them as our prize, and intending to profit by all similar occasions, we resumed our course gratified at having been beforehand with the natives on this occasion, and solved the problem.²

On Monday evening the men dined on the eggs: the first meal prepared by Europeans in the Nungarin district, but hardly setting any standards for epicurean fare:

It is but justice to the 'gnow' – or whatever bird it was whose nest we robbed today of 6 eggs, to say that their contents when blown out of the shells (which were very thin indeed for their size) and fried, proved most excellent, although the hatching process had commenced in some, and was considerably advanced in others.³

About fifty years later, in *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Dick Greaves and his party recorded a similar experience with eggs taken from a Mallee hen's nest:

We saw, on looking round, a great round looking mound, and thinking there might be water about we were agreeably surprised to find it was a Nower bird's nest. I will here describe for the information of the reader what a Nower bird's nest is like. The bird itself is in size not quite as large as a goose of a slate colour; having selected a suitable spot, a commencement is made with the nest, both birds helping to make it by scratching away the ground in the centre, and removing any sticks or leaves and depositing them in the outer rim, gradually rising same as the formation proceeds. These nests have been found, incredulous as it may seem, eight or ten feet in diameter and rising on the outer rim to a height of five or six feet. When the nest is completed, the hen bird lays an egg each day. I cannot say for how long, but each egg as laid is placed side by side to the one nearest it, and all are deposited on the side about the centre or midway between the edge of the rim and the bottom of the nest. These birds do not sit, but simply lay the eggs which by the way have a comparatively thin shell and are hatched by the rays of the sun. As an instance of the wonderful vitality of the young chicken, I have seen an egg chipped on the side showing the bird was ready for hatching, and when the shell has been picked off the bird runs off as lively as if it were a week or more old, instead of a few minutes. As there were plenty of eggs in the nest, and they were good eating when fresh, we took a few of them and boiled them for tea, and they were a great treat ...

Payne was a confectionary cook of no mean ability, and he suggested to make an omelette with some, but as the eggs were in various stages of hatching this was no easy task, so whilst I cracked them and pulled the half hatched chicks out of some, he kept whipping them up in a billy-can till he considered he had enough for his purpose, he then cooked an omelette, of which he asked me to have some. It looked very tempting, but as I knew what was in it, or rather what had been in the shells, I did not have any, neither did he, I presume for the same reason, but Mr Anstey had not seen

*the omelette made, and he ate it greedily and complimented Payne on his cooking, saying it was the best omelette he had ever tasted, and would have eaten more had there been any.*⁴

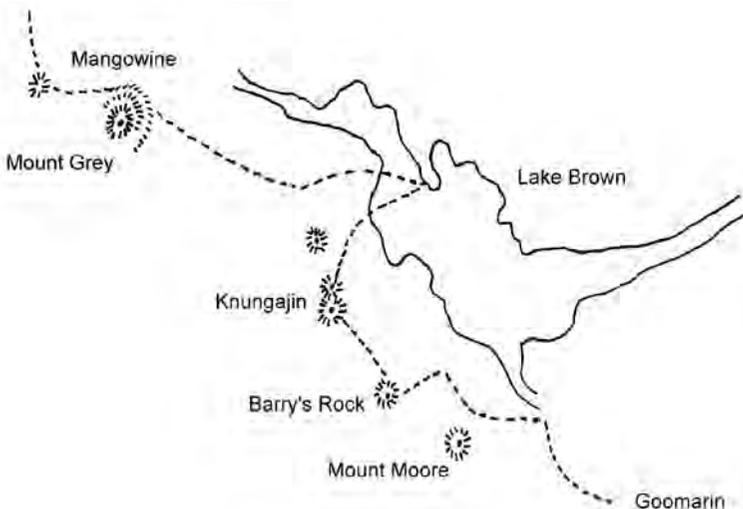
On Monday night, 24th October, Roe and his party camped at Knungajin, and Roe's diary noted:

Feet marks of emu have been met with in our route as well as numerous traces of natives and a few huts, some of the former very recent. They had evidently seen us on hill "g" [Knungajin] and blazed up three fires to the northward after we had ascended the summit.

*Having no trees to mark the number of our bivouac on, the cairn of stones on top of the hill, and the conspicuous character of the hills, answered the same purpose.*⁵

The following morning his field notes record finding a good spring at the north-east corner of Knungajin rock (which Roe designated hills 'g' and 'h') that had been "deepened out to a well by the natives".

On Tuesday morning the party proceeded to Lake Brown where Roe noted traces of "emu, dogs and some natives"⁶ along the eastern edge of the shore. From Eaglestone, Roe's party travelled west to Mount Grey, and about a mile to the north-west camped at the site of "an old native well close to a granite rock"⁷ (Mangowine Spring).



Guide to route taken by Surveyor General Roe in 1836

Roe noted that the gnamma holes and native wells they came across throughout their journey had been covered by rocks and branches to prevent evaporation and contamination. This evidence of Aboriginal water management highlights the vital importance of water to support any form of existence in this naturally dry district.

There are numerous gnamma holes of various sizes scattered throughout the Nungarin district, including those at Mangowine, Karomin and Knungajin. There are several gnamma holes at Narkeening with the main one having an estimated capacity of 450 gallons. The hole itself is irregularly shaped with many concave compartments leading back under the rock and clearly shows the chip and burn marks made during excavation and enhancement. While gnamma holes occur naturally, some were enlarged by a process of lighting a fire to heat the rock, and if it was available, water was used to cool the stone quickly, which caused the rock to crack and flake and made it easier to chip away.⁸



The Narkeening gnamma hole - Barry Cornish standing with Ben Riley inside



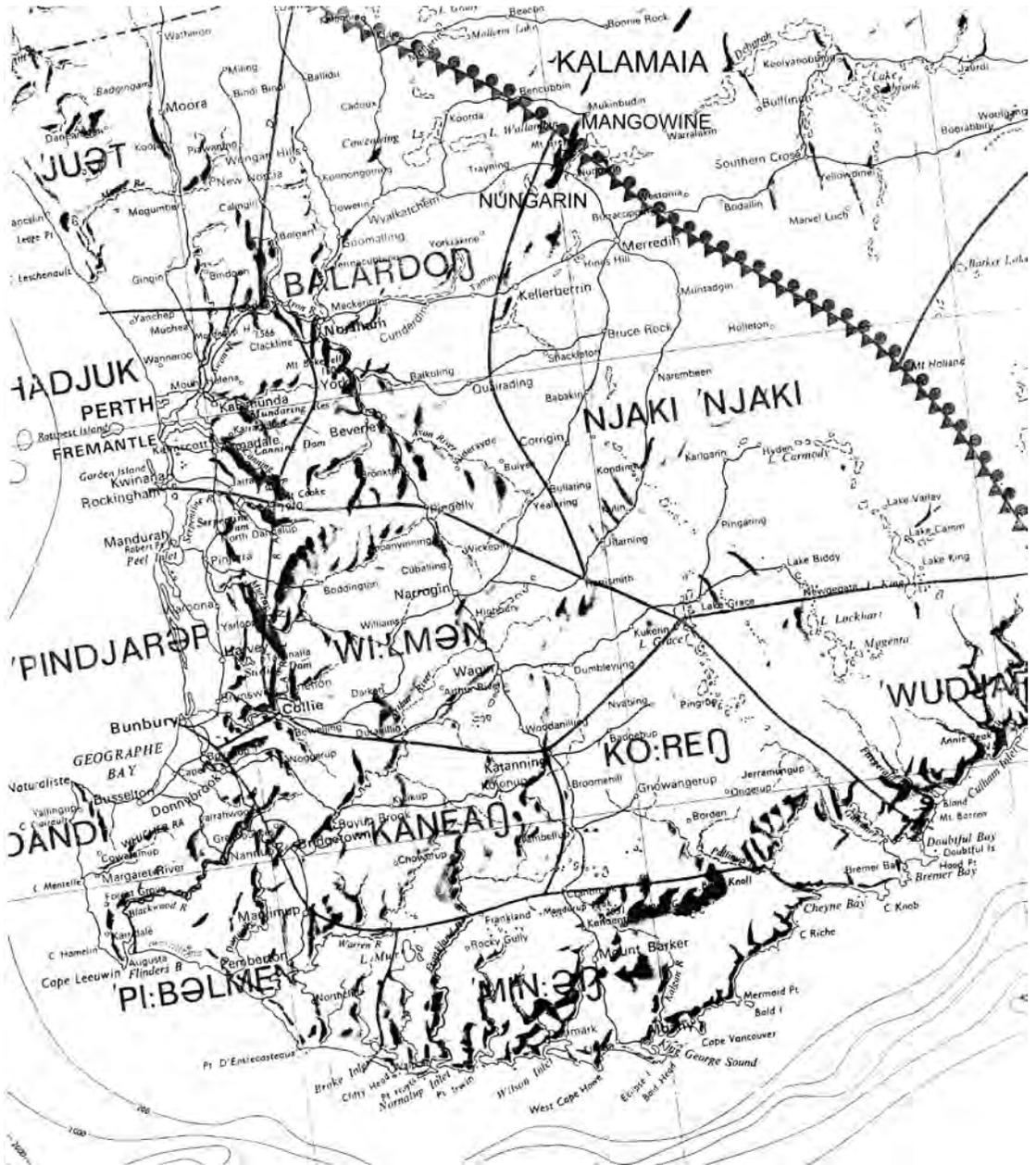
The Karomin gnamma hole

Note the rock cover used to protect the water against evaporation and contamination

There were about thirteen different Nyungar tribes in the south-west part of Western Australia, and the Nungarin Shire seemed to be in a tribal transitional area with Aborigines in the north belonging to the Natingero group of the Kalamaia⁹ people, while those in the south belonged to the Njakinjaki people.

The Kalamaia incorporated the Jawan in the north-east and the Natingero group around Mangowine, which practised circumcision and subincision as part of their initiation rites. They also decorated their bodies with ornamental scarring, or cicatrisation. Thomas Adams described the Natingero people as being naked, polygamous, and occasionally cannibalistic.¹⁰ The Kalamaia territory extended from Kalannie in the west to Boorabbin in the east and then north to Youanmi and Lake Barlee; covering a huge area of 88,000 square kilometres.

The Njaki Njaki¹¹ tribe occupied the region to the south of Mangowine extending down through Kellerberrin to Lake Grace and east to Newdegate and Lake Hope; an area of over 31,000 square kilometres. They did not seem to be too popular with any of their neighbours as the Kalamaia tribe referred to them as “Mudila”, a derogatory term because they didn’t practise the rites of circumcision;¹² and the southern tribes thought they were a naked mob with an unintelligible language, not like their groups which spoke “properly”.¹³



*Aboriginal Tribal Boundaries in Western Australia at Time of European Settlement
Norman Tindale, University of California Press, 1974*

In his memoirs, Ted Fitzgerald recorded his memories of the local Njaki Njaki people:

About every two months about fifty natives would go walk-about from Mangowine and Nungarin to Kellerberrin to hold a corroboree. They only wore loin cloths and carried big long spears made from the long running roots of the wattle trees growing around the big granite rocks. They made them straight by holding the roots in a fire. They also had boomerangs made from the jam trees and nulla-nullas made from the needlewood tree. They resembled a baseball bat in size ... the women carried piccaninnies on their backs. They had boys and girls also ... we also found grinding stones used by the natives. A Mr Fisher found stone axes and other native artefacts at an old soak watering place on his farm north of Hines Hill. In the early days when my father was cutting the timber down, big hollow salmon gums had small square holes cut in the side of the trees on one side going right to the top of the hollow. They must have been done a few years as the squares were starting to grow over again. It was said in earlier years the natives got possums from the trees.¹⁴

In *Aboriginal Cultures*,¹⁵ I.M. Crawford explains that in order to climb trees to catch possums, Aborigines used a kodj axe to cut toe holds in the trunks, and then used the pointed end of the handle to help them get a better grip. This would confirm Ted Fitzgerald's speculation about the "small square holes" that his father found on their property south of Nungarin.

Thomas Adams mentioned the "kodja" in his record of some of the tools that the Kalamaia people around Mangowine and Barbalin used. He also mentioned the nets they made to catch game and which were also used by the women to carry babies and food. Other tools were a long thin shield called a "kurrato", a "kundee" or throwing stick, a "wonna" or digging stick, a "kylie" which was like a boomerang and carved from a branch with a suitable curve, and a "wommer" or message stick. Flat stones were also used to pound roots, and being more durable than the wooden implements, many examples have been found throughout the Nungarin district. Stones were also used to delineate sacred and ceremonial areas, and often a noise was made by a "jilby" or bullroarer to warn the women to keep away.¹⁶

There are different stories about Aboriginal burial customs in the Nungarin area. In *Around the Rock*, Olga Joukovsky-Vaisvila says that the Kalamaia Aborigines buried their dead after burning the nails off the thumbs and big toes to prevent them digging their way out of the grave. Many early settlers stated that Nyungars would not settle around Nungarin because it was an ancient burial ground, and there are stories of an Aboriginal woman being buried in the township opposite the Anglican Church in First Avenue. Moreen Wills, wife of Senior Constable George Wills who was stationed in

Nungarin in the seventies, wrote that while living in the Police quarters in Nungarin, they understood that there was an Aboriginal burial site in the area. However, Mrs Ellen Dawe who came to the district in 1913 said she remembered seeing the remains of burial platforms in the trees in the south-west of town. This was confirmed by Edward Andrews who also remembered the brush ledges in the bush area where the Museum is now. Perhaps the different practices can be explained by Nungarin being in that transitional area between the Kalamaia and the Njakinjaki cultural groups.

Arthur Corunna once told Lurline Whyte (née Adams, granddaughter of Charles and Jane Adams of Mangowine), that he knew of several Nyungars buried near Knungajin. He gave their names as: Frank and Hazel Paddy who were the son and daughter of Paddy Paddy (also known as King Paddy), and also Esau and Joe George. In approximately 1958, while working land bordering Knungajin Rock, human remains were unearthed. A skull and femur were found wrapped in hessian, but police investigations indicated that they were not of Aboriginal origin.

Apart from the few explorers passing through the Nungarin area, and the occasional shepherd or sandalwooder, the first extended contact that the Aborigines had with Europeans would have been when the Adams family made their home at Mangowine in the mid 1870s. Only a few years earlier, Edward Clarkson had been killed by Aborigines at Dalbercutting Spring, less than fifty miles from Mangowine, but Jane and Charles Adams seemed to have maintained a comfortable relationship with the Nyungar people in their area. Charles had a huge pastoral lease and relied on Aboriginal shepherds and stockmen. Aborigines also helped in the garden and orchard, and Jane had several Aboriginal girls who helped in the house. In *On the Line*, Jocelyn Maddock states that the 1901 report of the Aborigines Department recorded four Aborigines at Mangowine: 2 male (diseased or crippled) and two females.¹⁷

In an interview with the *Nungarin Standard* in 1934, Jane recalled a time when they ran out of water at Mangowine and had to walk ten miles to Yarragin. Charles was often away and Jane had no choice but to take the children with her, and would never have managed without the help of an Aboriginal lad. Between them they carried the younger children, and the water.

There was also the time when one of Jane's Aboriginal house girls became seriously ill and Jane set off to take her by horse and cart to Northam for treatment. Sadly, the woman died at Jurakine before they could reach help. Her five-month old baby was raised at Mangowine and stayed on to become a nursemaid to a growing number of Adams grandchildren.

The happy relationship between the Adams family and the local Nyungar people is further demonstrated by this report made by Dick Greaves when he and his party called through looking for gold in 1887:

We travelled on, and when we arrived at Adams's they evidently expected us, as Mr and Mrs Adams and the children came out to meet us, and when we reached the house, we found eleven blacks, mostly naked, lined up, looking very surprised, no doubt wondering what kind of show this was coming towards them.

After attending to the horses, in which the children seemed delighted to assist, chattering all the time, and though I stopped and listened, I could hardly understand a word they said; in fact, I thought they were talking the native language, so strange did it sound. Arriving at the house, I felt curious to know what the children said, so I asked Mrs Adams whether it was the native language. She laughingly said, "Oh no; it is a language of their own, part black and part white." Most black, I thought.¹⁸

Greaves and his party stayed at Mangowine overnight, and on persuasion, declared the next day a holiday. All "sorts of games" were indulged in and Greaves mentioned that during the afternoon they played a game of cricket "in which the women took part, as did also the blacks":

... we gave up the game and sought shelter among the trees, whilst the blacks had a game amongst themselves. When they were tired of it they showed us how to throw spears and boomerang.¹⁹

During the early years of settlement, there were incidents of Aborigines breaking into the isolated huts of shepherds and helping themselves to foodstuffs and items of clothing. As a consequence there were complaints by some of the pastoralists and fears of reprisals. On 4th July 1877, after particular complaints from Mr B. Clarkson, the Governor Sir William Robinson approved the appointment of Thomas Adams as a Special Constable. Thomas was the father of Charles Adams and had a hut at Barbalin, six miles north of Mangowine. He was required to visit all settlers and stations at least once a month, to investigate any complaints against natives²⁰, and to protect them from being maltreated by white men. He was also expected to forward monthly reports of his activities, and to state the number of days he had been employed on Police duty²¹.

Thomas Adams had the assistance of a young Aboriginal lad who acted as a tracker, and the fact of one of their tribe working with the police evidently attracted resentment from other members of the tribe. One day, as the boy was walking along the creek to collect their horses, he was set upon. Thomas heard a frightened yell and when he rushed to the boy he found him lying dead with a spear through his chest.²²

Being an assistant to the Police Constable certainly had its disadvantages as evidenced by this extract from the Police Gazette:

Mahan, ab. Nat., stout, age 26, 5 ft 6 in. high, round visage, second toe of left foot off, escaped from Special Constable Thomas Adams, on 21st ult., about 115 miles from Newcastle, and 5 miles beyond the Mangowine Station, while on escort to Newcastle, taking with him native chain, pair handcuffs and padlock; [- and almost as an afterthought] Native Assistant has also gone with this prisoner, both being fastened together.²³

Another incident that related to Thomas's police duties was recounted by Bruce Leake in *Pastoral Pioneers of the Eastern Wheatbelt*, which was published in the Countryman in 1950:

A blackfellow named Bendyke had been causing a lot of trouble and Messrs. Adams and Lukin set out on his trail. They tracked him for three days and at last found him in a thicket with his gin and piccaninny. Bendyke bolted before they could lay hands on him so, thinking that he would try to help his gin to escape; they tied her up and waited. Bendyke was cunning however, and having found the white men's horses he undid their hobbles, with the result that they at once headed for home. When day came there was no sign of the horses and Messrs. Lukin and Adams were forced to let the woman go and walk back about 40 miles to their stations.²⁴

In the absence of first-hand accounts from Aboriginal people with a long-term association with the land in the Nungarin district, it is impossible to gain a real appreciation of how the local Nyungar tribal group managed their existence. The few items of physical evidence remaining in the area are examples of rock paintings and stone-laying, but probably the most important for later development have been the gnamma holes. Surveyor Roe may have been unsuccessful in his search for the rumoured "inland water", but he was able to identify native wells and gnamma holes that became the nucleus of settlement when pastoralists moved out from the more secure areas around Toodyay and Goomalling.

Surveyor Roe's 1836 report stated that he found the country unfavourable for pasturage, and his companion on that trip, Advocate General George Fletcher Moore, confirmed the impression of a dry and uninviting land by stating: "There had evidently been a season of unusual drought in the interior as large tracts of ground turned up dry and dusty under the horses' feet". Had Roe's exploration taken place in late winter or early spring, instead of October, the report may have been a little more positive, but it was to be almost thirty years before another serious attempt was made to assess the possibilities of settlement.

In 1860, Edward and Andrew Dempster accompanied by William Chitty and two Nyungar guides set out from the Avon area in search of new grazing land. They reached as far as Danberrin Hill before they ran short of provisions and decided to return home.²⁵

Between 1864 and 1866, Charles Cooke Hunt made four exploratory journeys through the eastern districts with the main purpose of assessing the country, clearing a track and establishing a chain of wells and watering places. His schedule was extremely arduous with the first journey in March 1864, the second between July and October the same year, the third from January to October 1865, with the final trip between July and October 1866. It was on Hunt's very first trip in March-April 1864 that he explored and mapped the Nungarin area. Included in the party was Cowitch, the Native Assistant at York Police Station, who was a respected local aborigine known for his intelligence, courage and endurance,²⁶ and who would have been invaluable in liaising with the local aboriginal people and locating precious water supplies.

Hunt's diary records that on this first trip the party camped at Goomarin on April 8th 1864,²⁷ noting the presence of a native well that was disappointingly dry. From Goomarin they made an early start and headed north-west through grass, forest and thicket to "Nurngwdine" (Knungajin). They spent an afternoon searching for water and feed for the horses before deciding to head due west to "Noongoorin Rock" (Nungarin) where they camped on the Saturday night. The next day, Sunday 10th April 1864, was spent as a day of rest at Nungarin Rock where the expedition found good feed for the horses, and plenty of water in depressions in the rock.

Sunday 10th: Commenced with fine weather and light wind. The party halting this day in good feed for the horses, water on the rock, but the native well uncertain in the dry season.

Hunt's reference to "Noongoorin Rock" (marked on the map as 'Noongorin') is the first written record of the place that was to give its name to the town of Nungarin, and to the local government district.²⁸ Sadly, the meaning of the name was never recorded, and the spelling is only an approximation of the sound as it was spoken by the local Nyungar people. It was obviously difficult to capture the pronunciation correctly as evidenced by the variations in the way place names were recorded in the early days. Hunt recorded Knungajin Rock as "Nurngdwine", King listed it as "Knungagen Hills", and it has been written "Nunkagin", "Knunkagin" and at least half a dozen other different ways, usually with the bracketed appellation, 'The Twins'. How the word ever acquired the silent initial 'K' is a mystery, perhaps it was originally pronounced with a hard 'g' or 'k' at the beginning of the word. Some place names have had several changes over time. Danberrin had been written Danbering (Hunt) and Danbrin (King), while Wooroolocking became Burrancobbing, but was then changed to Burran Rock because of possible confusion with nearby Burracoppin. Some name changes were simply a matter of changes of spelling; Quelcan became Kwelkan while nearby Newcarnie became Nukarni.

Because of extremely dry conditions, "having to cut through dense thickets and forests"²⁹, and his ill health, Hunt felt that he didn't fully acquit his brief. His health would not have been helped by the gruelling conditions, especially the lack of potable water. His 1866 diary records:

Water in native well, likewise three drowned emus, which we took out before we could make use of the water for cooking purposes, or to water the horses – they not liking the flavour of it, as well as ourselves - but no other being obtainable for many miles, we were forced to make use of it.³⁰

A few years later Dick Greaves and his party also gave a stomach-churning report of their desperate search for suitable drinking water:

Going a little further on we found a clay hole, which we saw at a glance had water in; we found it had something else in also, as we saw some dead carcasses which proved to be kangaroos that had come to drink; slipped down the side, and been drowned in it, being unable to get up again, the sides being too steep. This was no uncommon occurrence in these parts, as the water holes are so few and far between. We had a good hunt round, trying to find something sweeter than this, but with no success, and we were compelled to use the water, and in cases like ours, must either drink it or die

of thirst. We were all very thirsty, as our stock in the tank was exhausted at mid-day the day previously, so we got a billy full, poured it into the flour bag, a calico one that we used for putting our cooked meat in, drained it through this and strained the putrid slimy sludge, I can call it nothing else, through our teeth ...³¹

However, in spite of his limitations, the work that Hunt did in establishing tracks and wells through to Lake Lefroy, made it possible for settlement to extend beyond the Avon Valley, and is all the more remarkable when you consider that he was in such poor health at the time. He died at Geraldton at the comparatively young age of 35, only two years after his last trip in 1866. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1865, he wrote:

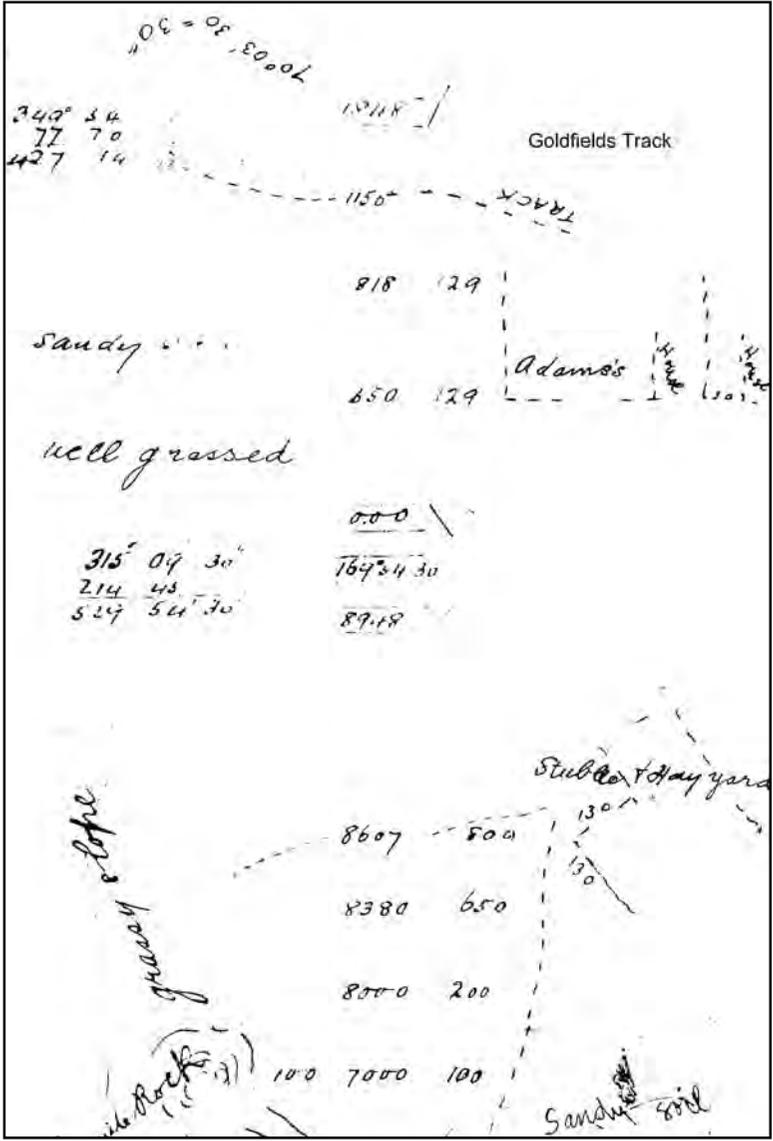
...the great requisite – water – I have been able to secure for three hundred miles east-northerly of York. In places a very good supply, in others more limited, though sufficient for most travelling purposes, in ordinary seasons.³²

As the sandalwood trade had developed from about 1845, occasional incursions had been made into the district to collect the valuable timber that was plentiful here. As the price of sandalwood rose, more men were attracted to the industry, and during the 1870s roaming sandalwood cutters travelled extensively throughout the outback districts and were responsible for developing a network of tracks.³³ It is still possible to identify the remains of some of the early sandalwooder tracks around the Nungarin area.³⁴ (By 1917, Messrs Martin Clamp, George Maddock and Henry Adams were sending weekly consignments of sandalwood from Nungarin.)³⁵

In March 1889, after the opening of the goldfields, Yilgarn mining surveyor Henry Sandford King mapped the Nungarin area, and was able to complete Hunt's work in establishing a chain of wells that are designated on maps by an HK prefix. Some of the numbered sites within the Nungarin district are:

HK65	Mount Grey	HK77	Barbalin
HK66	Knungajin Rock	HK78	Nungarin Wells
HK67	Mount Moore (Talgomine)	HK79	Nungarin Rock
HK69	Cootaning Tank	HK80	Warraling Hill (East of Elabbin)
HK71	Mangowine Spring	HK81	Danberrin
HK72	Avon Location 14178 (SE of Mt Grey)	HK113	Quelcan Well

King's map of Adams's station is particularly interesting because it shows the location of the Goldfields track that ran right alongside the homestead. It also depicts two "houses" adjacent to each other, which correspond to the two main buildings at Mangowine. Since Charles didn't apply for a wayside inn licence until several months later in May 1889, it lends weight to the argument that the building was not purpose built as an inn.



Henry Sandford King's map of Mangowine 1889

Increased demands for more wells and waterholes forced the Toodyay Road Board to seek grants from the Colonial Secretary, and in 1879 Charles Adams was authorised to sink new wells along the Yarragin Road.³⁶ No doubt he had gleaned useful stone cutting and laying experience from his father; and we know that he employed ticket-of-leave men as labourers for the contract. In May 1879, William Sykes, the subject of Alexandra Hasluck's *Unwilling Emigrants*, received a letter addressed to him as "Well-sinker in care of Mr C. Adams".³⁷ Now, with more reliable water, the way was open to take advantage of the wide tract of pastoral land to the east of Perth.

In 1892 James Mitchell, the Manager of the Northam Branch of the Western Australian Bank accompanied William Leeder out to his Dandanning run, calling at Mangowine on the way and noting several flourishing plots of wheat. Mitchell was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1905, and became Minister for Agriculture in 1909. His recollection of the crops he had seen several years earlier convinced him that an agricultural industry could be established in the area, and would be the ideal solution to the State's need for economic development.

As the first farmers arrived to settle on their blocks in the Nungarin area, they enjoyed a companionable relationship with the local Nyungar people.

Winifred Wilkes recalled:

I remember with affection the family groups of Aborigines on walk-about who called in for water or for a few additions to their own diet, and a chat. One man came alone, stood at the main door of the wattle and daub kitchen and on Mother's appearance asked for "Meat. Meat." It was an unusual request. Our dark friends were expert hunters ... I watched as Mother offered the visitor a raw rabbit on a plate ... Her enquirer made a gesture of dissent. "No, meat", he said ... the refusal was more emphatic. Defeated she said simply, "show me". Relieved our new friend went straight to the water tank at the end of the hessian bedrooms, put his hand on its side and after turning to Mother, bent and filled his container. He needed water and thought it was called 'meat'.

Born hunters, the Aborigines would surely despise the pathetic results of white men's efforts and must have had many laughing corroborees at their expense.³⁸

A delightful story related by Marie “Aunty Jim” Farrell, was her memory of a corroboree which was held on Nungarin Rock sometime around 1915. Everyone in the district was invited to attend, and people came from everywhere, old folk and young, parents and children, and with mothers pushing prams across the rock. The Aborigines put on a wonderful show, the highlight of which was their imitation of a local entertainment group which often did a star turn of singing negro spirituals dressed as minstrels complete with blackened faces.

NYUNGAR WORDS

Frank Dawe came to Nungarin in 1910, and took up land at Burran Rock under the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme. He had previously worked as a clerk in the Lands Department in Perth where, from time to time, his work brought him into contact with Daisy Bates, the renowned friend of the Aboriginal people. Mrs Bates provided Frank with a list of words relating to the area between Southern Cross, Mount Jackson and Kellerberrin. In her letter she explains that the native accent is generally on the first syllable.

Beerungoo	Mr Dawe's Class Division (there are only two divisions in the Southern Cross district)
Weerawoon	species of sandalwood
Joombarra	species of quandong or sandalwood
Wilyoweroo	wattle tree
Joodamulla	scrub
Karran	scrub
My-aree	foliage
Durdong	green
Yallinjee	north-east
Kyalee	north-west
Weeloo	west
Wammoo	camp
Wammoo-dindee	going to camp
Wammoo-barna	camping place or ground where camp is pitched
Jinga-wammoo	white man's camp
Koo-riring	rainbow
Booree	rock
Barna	ground
Booree-barna	stony or rocky ground
Bwyee-boola	many rocks or stones
Katta-butting	little hills
Katta-goombar	big hills
Katta-morda	high mountains
Maiee	vegetable food
Joogooloo	waterhole
Jabbi-geekup	fresh water
Jabbi-kolo	running water
Yandawan	south wind
Ky-aloooloo	people
Kyalee	people
Bebina	a little bird
Gooya-gooya	fly (any species)
Koondee	native club
Weelarra	plenty
Yellar	friend, friendly
Yoong-o-jarree	far away

Endnotes

- ¹ *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N. – copied from Capt Roe’s original field notes (registered as Field Books 4 and 5) by Lands Department Staff in 1976.
- ² *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N.
- ³ *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N.
- ⁴ Dick Greaves, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Hesperian Press, Perth 1981, p20.
- ⁵ *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N.
- ⁶ *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N.
- ⁷ *1836 Explorations Eastward of York*, Journal of Surveyor-General Captain J.S. Roe, R.N.
- ⁸ Barbara Sewell, *Goomalling, A Backward Glance*. Goomalling Shire Council 1998.
- ⁹ Kalamaia, alternative names: Kalamaya, Jungaa, Jungal, Yungar, Youngar, Youngal, Takalako (Njakinjaki term), Njindango, Natingero, Jawan (name for the northwestern hordes), Jaburu (means north), Yabro (poor spelling of Januru). Sometimes spelled Gelamai.
- ¹⁰ Thomas George Adams, *Early Days of Nungarin District*, typescript.
- ¹¹ Njakinjaki, alternative names: Nyaki-Nyaki, Nyagi-Nyagi Nyungar, Njagi (valid alternative), Njagiman (of Njungar), Kokar (means east), Karkar, Kikkar.
- ¹² While a guide was explaining to a group of tourists that Mangowine was situated in the transitional area between the circumcising and non-circumcising Aboriginal tribes, an interested older lady enquired innocently, “So this is the cut-off point then?”
- ¹³ Goldsworthy and Graham in Curr, *The Australian Race* 1886; Tindale, 1940.
- ¹⁴ Ted Fitzgerald, *Sir James Mitchell’s Civil Servant Land Settlement Scheme 1909*, typescript.
- ¹⁵ IM Crawford, *Aboriginal Cultures*, in *A New History of Western Australia*, edited by CT Stannage. University of Western Australia Press 1981.
- ¹⁶ Information from *Around the Rock*, Olga Joukovsky-Vaisvila, and *On the Line*, Jocelyn Maddock.
- ¹⁷ Jocelyn Maddock, *On the Line*, ISBN 0-9588657-1-X, p26.
- ¹⁸ Dick Greaves, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Hesperian Press, 1981, p16.
- ¹⁹ Dick Greaves, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Hesperian Press, 1981, p17.
- ²⁰ The term “native” did not carry any derogatory meaning.
- ²¹ Newcastle Police Records.
- ²² Thomas George Adams, *Early Days of Nungarin District*, typescript.
- ²³ *Police Gazette* No. 20, Wednesday 15th May 1878.
- ²⁴ Bruce E. Leake, *Pastoral Pioneers of the Eastern Wheatbelt*, Published in the *Countryman*, 24th August 1950, p4.
- ²⁵ Information Lesley Brooker (from the Perth Gazette).
- ²⁶ *CC Hunt’s 1864 Expedition*, edited by Kim Epton, Hesperian Press 1995.
- ²⁷ In *Around the Rock*, Joukovsky-Vaisvila incorrectly gives the year as 1865.
- ²⁸ Hunt’s first mention of Nungarin is spelled ‘Noongorin’ and in the second instance appears to read ‘Noongarin’, although Hunt’s handwriting is not easy to decipher.
- ²⁹ *Perth Gazette and West Australian Times*, 1 September 1865, p3.
- ³⁰ *CC Hunt – Exploration Diaries*, Volume 6.
- ³¹ Dick Greaves, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Hesperian Press, 1981, p22.
- ³² *Perth Gazette and West Australian Times*, 1 September 1865, p3.
- ³³ Crowley, FK *A Short History of Western Australia*, Macmillan 1967, p26.
- ³⁴ Information from BN Cornish, 1998.
- ³⁵ *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, 26 October 1917.
- ³⁶ Rica Erickson, *Jane Adams of Mangowine*, The National Trust of Australia (W.A.) 1974, p6.
- ³⁷ Alexandra Hasluck, *Unwilling Emigrants*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press 1959, p120.
- ³⁸ Winifred Wilkes, *Pine Grove Farm: Our Heritage*, ISBN 0-646-38735-9.

The Adams Family

Pioneers and Pastoralists

Jane Adams was the first woman to settle in the Nungarin area. She came to Mangowine in the mid-1870s as a young 24 year-old with her husband, Charles, and two daughters, Elizabeth and Mary Annie. It is hard for us now to imagine how these women coped with the isolation and privations of those early days.

Jane's parents, Charles and Mary Glass, had arrived in Fremantle from Scotland at the beginning of 1849, and later that year Charles began employment at 'Glen Avon' in Toodyay, where Jane was born¹. Charles Glass took over the Stirling Arms

Hotel in Guildford in 1852, and in 1857 he purchased a farm at Wongamine (between Toodyay and Goomalling) where Jane and her older sister, Janet, and brothers, Alex and Charles, grew up². The girls received a very broad education that included all aspects of housekeeping as well as instruction in keeping accounts and ledgers, which was to prove most useful to Jane as she managed Mangowine in later years.



Jane and Charles Adams with Edwin

The Wongamine farm attracted many callers as shepherds pushed eastwards looking for new pastoral lands. Two of these men were Charles Adams and James Ward. Charles married Jane at the Wicklow Hills School at Toodyay on 6th November 1868³, and early the next year James married Jane's sister Janet. A few months later the four of them set out by bullock dray to begin pastoral

pioneering at Yarragin. At that time their nearest neighbour, George Slater, was about 80 miles away at Goomalling. The long journey by bone-shaking dray over rough and deeply rutted bush tracks must have seemed a daunting prospect to the young brides, and that arduous trek needed to be repeated several times a year when the family returned to Toodyay to replenish their stores, and to be near experienced medical care for the birth of their children.

As was usual in those days, Jane and Charles had a large family, with babies coming every couple of years. It was in 1872, when they had returned to Toodyay for the birth of their third child, that their eldest son, Edwin, wandered off and was tragically drowned⁴.

*...Charles Adams reported in the morning of the 30th ultimo that his child Edwin Adams aged 2½ years was found drowned in a well in the evening of the 29th ultimo about 5 p.m., by a man named Henry Twine. This child was at home at 4 p.m. Adams's house is about 50 or 60 yards from H. Twine's. The child was in the habit of going there, and must have gone too close to the well and fell in. This had been reported to the Resident Magistrate and has gone this day to C. Adams to hold an inquest taking the native assistant with him to show the way.*⁵

Perhaps it was due to the trauma of losing their son, but the couple faced further heartbreak when the new baby, David, was born and died shortly afterwards.

In 1873 Charles, in partnership with Joseph Lloyd, was successful in applying for grazing leases in the Nungarin area. In *On the Line, a History of the Shire of Mukinbudin*, Jocelyn Maddock details the extent of the area involved in the lease:

...in 1873 Adams in partnership with J.M. Lloyd of Toodyay leased a large amount of area throughout what is the present shire of Mukinbudin. Having been one of the first in the area, there since 1867, Adams was in the position to have located the good feed and watering places while shepherding his sheep. All the lease applications are based on the presence of 'springs' which are designated by their native names and almost invariably located near a hill or granite outcrop. Adams' and Lloyd's 1873 leases included areas around Babalin, Bilocubing, Doodarning, Yinarning (four miles south of Bilocubing), Kalkalling, Willgoyne, Talkooting and Wattoning⁶ - some 16,000 acres were involved

here and the annual rental was one pound (£1) for 2,000 acres. They also held leases for another 4,000 acres around Nunkegin and Talgomine and J. Cook's 7,000 acres around Yarragin passed to them at this time also.

J.M. Lloyd, an established Toodyay farmer, would have provided the financial input of the partnership such as paying the lease money while Adams would have provided the labour.⁷

With the new leaseholds, Charles and Jane moved to Mangowine from Yarragin with their two young daughters, Elizabeth Jane (then aged about 4) and baby Mary Annie (twelve months). The couple were to go on to have twelve children, the last eight born after they had moved to Mangowine. Janet Amy was born in 1876, Alice (Catherine Anne) in '78, Minnie May in '80, Charles Edwin in '82, Henry David in '85, Kitty May in '87, Thomas George in '89 and John in '91.

In 1874 Herbert Lee Steere (a grandson of John Septimus Roe) took out a pastoral lease around Noongarin Rock. He only stayed on the property for a few years, and passed the lease on to William Leeder, who transferred it to Con McCorry in about 1900. In 1876 James Morrell obtained the leasehold of land at Danberring Hill (13 kms south of the Nungarin townsite). James was the brother-in-law of William Leeder, and would have taken up the lease at about the same time that William took over Noongarin Rock. While it was no doubt comforting to have other pastoralists with leases in the district; unlike the Adamses these men did not make their homes in the area, and ran their leases with managers and itinerant shepherds.

Right: *Shepherds chimney at Quelcan
Believed to have been built by
Charles Adams*



Charles Adams's father, Thomas, was a smith and stone cutter who had worked with Peter Briehart building Buckland house near Northam, and also the Police Station, Lock-up and Quarters at Lynton (Port Gregory). His expertise and advice would have been invaluable during the construction of the homestead at Mangowine. The walls of the house were made of local stone and mud brick. The roof was thatched with reeds laid across gimlet pole rafters, and the floors were paved with large flat stones taken from nearby Mount Grey.



Mangowine Homestead (c1930s)

After the move to Mangowine, Jane was even further isolated but proved herself to be incredibly capable and determined. In long dry seasons the supply of water was unreliable, and during the summer months many trips had to be made over the ten miles back to their previous home at Yarragin to collect water. On one occasion Jane and an aboriginal boy carried the two young children on their backs and walked all the way to Yarragin and back with their precious load of water, and another time when Jane was unable to travel, she was forced to send two of the girls with a washtub to carry the water home.⁸ Even so, she was able to establish a garden to provide fresh fruit and vegetables and some of the fig trees she planted still flourish today. The

young Adams children enjoyed the luscious sweet figs, but quickly decided to avoid the fruit from one particular tree when they discovered that one of the workmen regularly emptied his bladder under it⁹. With childish curiosity, they used to hide in the bushes to observe his calls of nature, and wait in amazement for the moment when the poor fellow's huge hernia was exposed.

Another of the workmen at Mangowine that managed to cause a bit of a fluster was old Jack Docherty. Docherty was reputed to be an ex-convict who had been sentenced to transportation for striking an officer during the Indian Mutiny. It seems that Docherty developed the habit of always losing his trousers – they seemed to go missing even when he slept in them! Jane was at the end of her tether, and the stock of trousers in the storeroom was almost depleted, so one night they decided to keep watch to try and uncover the mystery. They didn't have long to wait. Old Docherty was a sleepwalker. He got up from his bed, proceeded to the well known as 'white well', and dropped his trousers in. Elizabeth fished them all out and hung them on the fence to dry. She then informed Docherty that she had discovered the culprit. He was so mad with himself that he nearly shot the trousers!

Charles and Jane had to be self-reliant as they only travelled back to Toodyay for supplies every 6 months or so. As the home-maker, Jane was not only responsible for feeding her growing family, but also for providing even the smallest necessities of life. In later years, neighbour Ted Williams recalled that when shearing at Mangowine one season he was offered breakfast and remarked on the quite exceptional flavour of the bacon. Jane explained that she smoked the hams and bacon by hanging the meat in the chimney and burning a smouldering cowpat underneath. Ted quite lost his taste for bacon after that.¹⁰

As pastoralists began to move into the region there were reported cases of conflict between the settlers and the aborigines, mostly arising from differences in culture and worldview, and the Governor approved the appointment of Thomas Adams as a Special Constable to keep the peace:

His Excellency the Governor having approved, on the recommendation of Mr B.D. Clarkson, of your being appointed Special Constable in your district. I have to request that you will inform me on what date you could be at the Newcastle Court House to be sworn in by the Resident Magistrate.

I have also to request that you will inform me what remuneration you would consider sufficient for the duties you will have to perform ... It is proposed to give you a certain fixed sum for each day you are on police duty – this sum to cover all expenses of horse, forage etc. You will be furnished with the following articles: 1 Colts revolver, 50 rounds ammunition, 2 prs handcuffs, 2 native chains. I attach a copy of the instructions you would receive for your guidance.

Instructions for Special Constable

- 1. To visit settlers and stations at least once in each month*
- 2. On receiving any complaints against natives to proceed to make enquiries and if necessary to arrest such natives and bring them before the resident Magistrate at Newcastle, warning witnesses to attend*
- 3. To be careful not to arrest without securing sufficient evidence to convict*
- 4. To protect natives from being maltreated by white men*
- 5. To enquire carefully into any such instances of maltreatment that he may hear of and to report the same to the Superintendent of Police, and the inspector of Police at Newcastle*
- 6. To communicate with the Police at Newcastle if you want any police assistance*
- 7. To forward to the Superintendent of Police on the first day of each month a report shewing the number of days he had been employed on police duty, and the nature of the duty.*

Although the Special Constable is empowered to arrest marauding natives, still should there be a Justice of the Peace in his immediate neighbourhood it would be advisable for him to apply to the Justice of Peace for warrants. At the same time he must exercise his discretion in making an immediate arrest where delay might enable the guilty parties to escape.

*SD M. W.S. Smith
Supt of Police
10.5.77¹¹*

Thomas Adams was appointed as a Special Constable on 4th July 1877 and lived in a small hut at nearby Barbalin. His remuneration was set at ten shillings for each day in which actual duty was performed. Thomas served in that capacity until 1882 when

he was succeeded by his son, Charles. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1881, the Superintendent of Police noted that, "As to the desirability of keeping a Special Constable at Mangowine I can only judge from results. Prior to his appointment there were constant complaints from that neighbourhood of depredation committed by natives and of want of police protection. Since his appointment I have not had a single complaint".¹²

After Charles was appointed, Jane was often at home alone with the children for weeks at a time while Charles was away on police duties. Even before then, Charles must have spent quite a lot of time away from home. By 1879 Charles had leases totalling more than 160,000 acres¹³. As well as visiting the out-stations and tending the sheep over the huge pastoral lease, he is recorded as having accepted a contract with the Toodyay Road Board to sink several wells between Goomalling and Nungarin. In Alexandra Hasluck's book, *Unwilling Emigrants*, there is a copy of a letter written to William Sykes dated 14 May 1879 and addressed to "Well Sinkers in care of Mr C. Adams".

As if she didn't already have enough to do, in 1887 Jane undertook the maintenance of official rainfall records at Mangowine, and kept the regime of daily registrations right up until the very day of her death forty-seven years later. Grandchildren have fond memories of being involved in the morning ritual of reading and recording every precious drop.

With no school anywhere near, and with the pressing need for education for the growing family, a governess was employed in 1885 to teach the older children. Just to make it all worthwhile, the Adams brood was augmented by the arrival of the Glass cousins, Alex and Alfred, who came from "Rosendale Farm" near Jennacubbine to attend the school at Mangowine. One of the workmen's huts was taken over for the purpose, but pay and conditions were not conducive to retaining a governess and ultimately it became the responsibility of the older girls to teach the younger ones.

Isolated though it may have been, Mangowine was soon to be caught up in the fever of the gold rush. In 1887 Jane's mother, Mary Glass, and brother, Alexander, were cleaning out a well on their property at nearby Moujakine and, as they hauled up the bucket, Mrs Glass discovered a nugget of gold in the mud. Mr and Mrs Glass hurried off to Perth to claim the government reward, but typical of the times, although it was Mrs Glass who made the discovery it was her husband who claimed the £100!¹⁴



Alex Glass

The discovery of gold brought a flood of hopeful prospectors through the district. In July 1887 Alex Glass joined Richard Greaves, Bernard Colreavy and others at Mangowine, and the meeting is recorded in Richard Greaves' book, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*:

Trainin¹⁵ for lunch. Mujakine (Glass' farm) by evening. Stayed some time – Alexander and parents having found nugget on property (16 miles from Adams' place) ... (2 days later) ... arrived Mangowine.

When we arrived at Adams. They evidently expected us, as Mr & Mrs Adams and the children came out to meet us ... The Adams', like all the rest, showed us every kindness, doing everything they could think of to make us at home.

In the evening Colreavy and his mates, Hugh Frazer and two others of his party joined us. Alex Glass, Mrs Adams' brother, also came in. Mr Adams, his wife and children, and our three selves making the largest party of whites ever gathered there, including a young lady whose name, I think, is Miss Spencer, who had arrived a few days previously under engagement to teach the young Adams. This young lady, as also one of Colreavy's mates, were good musicians, and an accordion was hunted up, that had not been used for some time, but had been carefully preserved. Dancing, singing etc. was kept up with spirit, and the "wee sma' hours" were on us before we were aware of it, so thoroughly were we enjoying ourselves. When the party broke up, we were all tired, and slept soundly till late in the morning.¹⁶

With prospecting teams beginning to move through the largely unexplored district, officials were concerned for the safety of travellers and Sergeant Joseph Farley at Newcastle (Toodyay) Police Station, wrote to the Commissioner of Police to suggest that Charles Adams could provide directions and essential information:

I respectfully venture to suggest to the Commissioner of Police, in view of the probable outcome of the gold discoveries of Mr Anstey, and impetus thereby given to miners and others who may be attracted to the scene of operation: whether it would not be advisable that minute and reliable information should be obtained for their guidance:

- 1. Of the most direct or most frequented route to the field*
- 2. The settlers, and distances of their homesteads from each other – their ability or otherwise to meet any immediate demand for rations*
- 3. The distances apart of the various wells and water holes, their reliability and distinguishing features.*

District Constable Adams should be able to supply this information.¹⁷

District Constable Adams was duly instructed to report with the information required, particularly noting that any personal knowledge of the road or country between Northam and Mangowine, and between York and Mangowine should also be included in the report.¹⁸ A map was published in the *Western Mail* in 1887 that promoted a route to the goldfields passing through Mangowine. Charles was moved to write to the *West Australian Newspaper* in December of that year, refuting a promotion of the route from York to the goldfields, explaining that a 55-mile section of road near Doodlakine traversed very rough country with no permanent water.¹⁹ In early 1888 when Colreavy and Huggins arrived back from the diggings with a ton of gold bearing stone, “Charles Adams of Mangowine” was quoted as one who was familiar with the area where the reef was located and who recommended that the best route to the area was via “Mr. Adam’s place, Mangowine.”²⁰ Not long afterwards Charles advertised that he was able to supply hay and chaff for horses, and flour and other rations to travellers going to the Yilgarn.²¹

Jane’s isolation was relieved but life became even more hectic for her. Kitty was just a baby, and there were seven other children at home. As well as her usual family duties, Jane baked dozens of loaves of bread each day, and provided meals and lodging to the men passing through. With hundreds of prospectors making their way to the goldfields, Charles applied for a Wayside-House License for Mangowine:

To the worshipful the Justices of the Peace acting in and for the District of Toodyay, in Western Australia. I, Charles Adams, married, Farmer and Grazier, now residing at Mangowine in the District of Toodyay, do hereby give notice that it is my intention to apply at the next Licensing

Meeting, to be holden for this district, for a Wayside House License, for the sale of fermented and Spirituous Liquors, in the house and appurtenances thereunto belonging, situated at Mangowine, in Toodyay district, containing two sitting-rooms, and two bedrooms, independent of those used by my family; the house to be named under the sign of the "Pioneers Inn" and which I intend to keep as an Inn or Public House. I have never held a licence before. Given under my hand this 14th day of May 1889. Chas F. Adams.²²

The excitement of the goldfields attracted a rich diversity of fortune seekers and adventurers, and the population boomed. In 1891, the Church of England Bishop of Perth requested the Reverend Edward Spittlehouse Clairs to visit the Yilgarn, presumably to support the clergy there and to assess pastoral need. The party left Northam on Tuesday 15th September 1891, and called at Slater's homestead at Goomalling, and on past Pingeperring (Benjaberring), Wyalkatchem, Corrolloging (Korrelocking) and on to Mangowine where they stayed overnight. In a report to the *West Australian* newspaper in October of that year, Clairs gave a report on his journey through the Nungarin district:

The following morning I took a bird's-eye view of our surroundings, and now, on comparing it with the country we have passed through, especially between Northam and Mangowine, 110 miles, I am more strongly inclined to the view that much more might and can be done with the land. True, there are patches of soil of which one cannot boast, but there is more good land than bad; all might be utilised to the profit of the State. ... Four miles from Trayning is Moujakine. About a mile from the foot of the "conical" rock is the homestead of Mr. Charles Glass, around which we saw land under crop. This settler was, I believe, the originator of the search for gold Eastward ... Another 6 miles and then comes Yarragin. Here nestling at the foot of the mountainous range is the pretty home of Mr A. Butterly, whom we found engaged in shearing, which occupation he left to join his wife in giving us a welcome on our way. Here again we saw the results of enterprise not only by the quantity of land under crop, but also the culture of fruit and flowers.

We wended our way along the foot of the range ... then turning to the right passing over a small belt of auriferous country, through the open clearing we espied in the moonlight the home of Mr. C. Adams, who came out to

welcome us and take charge of our horses. From Mr. and Mrs Adams I gained much pleasing information of their 22 years residence in almost isolation. These are the class of people whom we, as a rising nation, should show our high appreciation by making them a grant of 300 or 400 acres of land instead of tying them down by cast iron land laws.



Mary Annie Adams

The Adams children had free rein of acres of surrounding bushland and became avid observers of nature. Mary Annie in particular was encouraged to collect specimens for the renowned botanist, Baron Von Mueller, and was honoured by having *Boronia adamsiana* named after her.

The extension of the East-West Railway through Merredin in 1893 diverted the gold-rush traffic, and although there were not crowds of would-be prospectors needing to be catered for, there was a new opportunity to provide fresh vegetables and provisions for the railway crews at the railhead at Merredin. The pace of life at Mangowine probably only changed from frantic to hectic.

Only a few short years later, while camped with a Mr Bateman en route to Mount Jackson on business, Charles suddenly died of a heart attack.²³ His body was returned to Mangowine for burial. Jane was only 46 years of age, with 9 children at home, the youngest only 4 years of age. Jane's resourcefulness and stoicism never seemed to fail, and she dealt with this latest blow in the way she faced the many tragedies in her life. Just rolled up her sleeves and got on with it.

In 1895, 19 year-old Amy accepted a position as governess-companion with the Butterlys at Woolgangie, half-way between Yellowdine and Kalgoorlie. The family were well known to the Adamases as they had previously been neighbours at Wongamine near Toodyay and Yarragin. With disease rife in the goldfields, Amy fell ill with typhoid fever in January 1896, and was taken through to Northam Hospital.



Amy Adams

Her cousin George Glass caught the train from Northam back to Merredin and borrowed a horse to ride out to Mangowine with the news. Jane rushed to Northam to be with her, but Amy died before she got there. Jane contracted the disease herself, and gradually recovered to return to Mangowine to take up the threads of her life again.

In 1897, Jane gained the contract for fortnightly delivery of mail from Kellerberrin through the district. The mail tender was valued at £135 per year, and Jane's son, Charles Jnr, who was only 15 years old at the time, did the deliveries. The journey took a week to complete and no doubt both mother and son appreciated the fact that young Charles was able to stay with relatives en route. Grandfather Charles Glass was at

Moujakine, older sister Lizzie Moran was at Yarragin, and Aunt & Uncle (Janet & James) Ward were at Dandanning.

All the children were accomplished riders, and the boys were renowned horse-breakers and daring buck-jumpers. Kitty and her husband were known to perform some pretty hair-raising displays of trick riding and jumping, all with their 3 year-old son, mounted on the same horse with them! The annual weeklong race meeting became the social event of the year with visitors coming from an area stretching from Southern Cross to Northam and Toodyay to take part in races, contests, picnics and dances.

It used to be a fine thing to attend the meetings of the old country race clubs. For from anything up to thirty or more miles away, eleven o'clock in the morning would see converging to the more or less cleared paddock of the old Mangowine, or the Mumberkine-Jurakine or Culham race club's improvised race track, buggies and pairs, buckboards, spring carts, village carts (those funny old two-wheelers with basket-ware bodies) and sulkies, and sweat-foamed, champing two-year-olds that the younger generation rode to the spot.

After watering the horses, nosebags would be brought out and soon the coughing animals would be blowing the dust out of their nostrils beneath the shady jam or morrel trees. Then the congregation of farmers would settle their families down under more shady trees and the menfolk would leave the women and the kids to fix up the luncheon, bring the watermelons out of the traps and serve the ham and chicken, whilst the Lords of creation "jist had a bit of a look round."

Instinct assisted the "bit of a look round" for under a big York gum over near the "straight" there was a big wool wagon, and in the foreground of it, under a stretched tarpaulin, were tables on trestles and it was seen at once that "the publican's booth" was starting to work up enthusiasm for the great annual event.²⁴

In the winter of 1901 a man who used to ride from Goomalling to Mangowine for the races every year, arrived to find the place deserted and the races postponed. Jane



had gone to Perth as a guest at the reception for the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York who were on their way home from the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne. He had to wait for two weeks for the races to begin.²⁵

In 1910, the *Eastern Recorder* newspaper gave a report on the annual Mangowine Races:

The races at Mangowine, under the auspices of the Mangowine Turf Club, were brought off on Friday when 200 people gathered ... the

stakes amounted to 200 pounds. Some of the races were the Kununoppin Overlander, Mangowine Handicap, Ladies Bracelet, Second Class Hack. Horses; lady Brown, Mischief, Don Q, Comrade, Topsy, Mowan.²⁶

The young folk all took responsibility for the various jobs around the station, helping out with stock-work, milking cows, gardening and household duties. It was while rounding up stock in 1905 that the youngest of Jane's children met with a fatal accident. John was racing down the side of Mount Grey when his horse stumbled and fell on him. He died a few days later, just short of his 14th birthday.

When War was declared in 1914, both Charles and Tom enlisted. Sadly, Charles did not return. He was killed in action in 1917. Jane had now lost four of her precious sons, as well as daughter Janet Amy and endured the pain of losing her husband at such a young age (even though his obituary described him at 48 years of age as "an old man"!). This heroic woman was no stranger to heartbreak. A precious grand-daughter

had died in 1911, and is buried beside Charles at Mangowine, and two of her daughters were widowed at an early age. Jane also endured the loss of young Annie Rowles, wife of one of their workmen who lived nearby. Annie was only 18 years of age with a young daughter and when she became ill Jane did all she could to nurse her, and must have been exhausted and grief-stricken when she died. Jane faced adversity with great resilience and determination and is remembered as a grand and generous lady with a bright and happy disposition.



John Adams

The ensuing years saw the gradual development of agriculture in the district and the introduction of the Civil Servants Re-Settlement Scheme in 1909. Once again Mangowine was the hub of

activity as Jane was called upon to supply meat, vegetables, fruit, milk and eggs to the new settlers, as well as copious amounts of support, encouragement and advice. The depth of her generosity was demonstrated by the gift of a horse and buggy that she gave as a wedding present to neighbours Fred and Alice Williams on the occasion of their wedding in 1913.

The opening of the Barbalin Water Scheme (also known as the North Eastern Districts Water scheme) on October 26th 1929, heralded a new era for the district, with the advent of a reliable supply of water. A block of land owned by Jane at Barbalin was resumed for the scheme, and Jane was the guest of honour that night at a special function held in Nungarin to celebrate the official opening. In November Henrietta Burns wrote to the paper expressing her opinion on the amount of compensation offered for the Barbalin land:

I was present at the social tendered at Nungarin on October 26th to the Ministerial Party who visited this district for the purpose of opening up the Barbalin water scheme.

During the evening nearly every speaker referred in glowing terms to the hardships and privations endured by the early day pioneers of this district, which of course was only just and fitting. Many people who visited the scene at Barbalin dam that day however, were unaware of the fact that 100 acres of land on which the dam is situated was selected by the oldest pioneers of the district a Mrs J. Adams, some 40 years ago at a cost of 10/- per acre, and has been freehold for 20 years or so. The major portion of this land was cleared over 30 years ago, at a cost of £3/10/- per acre, as well as being fenced while a well was sunk.

This was the only permanent water supply in the district, and at one season or another since 1911, practically every settler for miles around has had to depend on this well for their supply of water. This land was then resumed by the Government at the end of 1928, and during the present year the Department responsible made Mrs Adams an offer of £100 as compensation.

As Mrs Adams has paid a lot more than £100 in rent and taxes, not reckoning anything for improvements or other losses, through resumption of the property – it makes one wonder, if the Department was sincere in this offer – or was it a joke!²⁷

As inadequate as the reparation offer may have been, family legend has it that Jane was never paid the compensation promised anyway, but she continued to maintain her affection for the Nungarin district. Only a few months before her death in 1934, Jane was interviewed on the occasion of the commencement of publication of the *Nungarin Standard* newspaper:

I am quite pleased to hear that Nungarin is to have a real newspaper of its own, and as its oldest living resident I am delighted to wish the new paper, and its management, the greatest success possible. We old residents feel very proud in the thought that our district has advanced so much as to warrant such an important step, despite the hard and anxious times we have been through of late years. Little did we think in the distant past that such a thing would come about, and had we been told in those days that it would, we would have been amused. Writing of those old days, I can well remember arriving at Yarragin, which is about five miles north of Kununoppin, with my husband, the late C.F. Adams, in the year 1866. We were then quite a young couple, having not long been married. We travelled out from Toodyay to our new home on a bullock dray, the nearest railway then being at Guildford, near Perth, and our nearest neighbour was Mr. Leake, of Kellerberrin. We were rearing sheep at that time, and depended upon them for a living. In 1874 – 8 years later – we removed to, and settled at, Mangowine in the Nungarin district, and I still live in the old home. In this I reared 11 children, the eldest of whom was accidentally drowned when 3 years old. You can imagine our many hardships in those times, and I clearly recall that on one occasion the water supply at Mangowine gave out, and with a nigger boy I had to walk 10 miles to Yarragin, carrying two of the children on our backs, for water. Having several outstations my husband was often away from home for length periods, during which I was left on my own and unprotected. The natives were very troublesome in robbing the shepherds' camps, so much so, that the authorities appointed my husband a special constable to deal with them. My husband died in 1895. I could go on telling you quite a lot more about those early days when a newspaper was unthought of, especially in this district, but I must leave it for perhaps some other occasion. I again most heartily wish the new "Nungarin Standard" long life and prosperity.²⁸

Jane died on 9th November 1934, aged 83 years, and is buried in the Nungarin Cemetery. She was so loved and appreciated that after her death the people of the Nungarin district contributed to a fund to erect wrought iron memorial gates at the Nungarin Hall. The gates were dedicated by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir James Mitchell, in 1936. Sir James knew the Adams family well. While attached to the West Australian Bank, he had visited the Nungarin area as early as 1892, and called at Mangowine on several occasions. During his speech of dedication he paid tribute to the assistance that Jane had given to other settlers and said he hoped that the gates would serve as

a reminder of the duty that people of the district owed to their neighbours. Following later renovations at the hall; the gates were moved to their present position at the Nungarin Cemetery. The date of Jane's birth shown on the plaque alongside the memorial gates at the cemetery is given as 1848, and was based on the age cited on her death certificate. This age was given by one of her sons and is now considered to be incorrect. Jane's parents, Charles and Mary Glass, were married at Lockloy, Aldearn, Scotland on 22nd September 1848. They set sail for the Swan River Colony soon after, arriving in Fremantle on board the *Ameer* on 11th February 1849. Their first child, Janet (known as Jess) was born on June 28th 1849, only a few months after their arrival, and her birth certificate states that the



Jane Adams

family were resident at the 'Bush Inn' at Newcastle (Toodyay) at that time. In 1849, Charles Glass began employment at 'Glen Avon' with Frederick Slade, the resident Magistrate at Toodyay, and remained on that property until 1851. A family bible in the possession of the Glass family records Jane's birth as 22nd February 1851, which would make her 83 years of age when she died. There is a family belief that Jane was

born at 'Glen Avon' and the date of birth in the family bible seems to confirm this.



Jane Adams not long before her death wearing a tea towel over her head to protect her from the sun

Over more than sixty years, Jane Adams had seen the district grow from a few isolated shepherds grazing flocks east of Toodyay, to the establishment of a town and thriving agricultural Road Board with a reliable water scheme, and bulk handling facilities at the railhead in Nungarin. She endured loneliness and hardship with stoicism and good humour. Jane is fittingly remembered as one of our most remarkable pioneers, and on Thursday 6th March 2003, she was inducted into the Western Australian Agricultural Hall of Fame.

The Extended Family

After Jane's death, her youngest surviving son, Thomas, returned to Mangowine with his family, and the Adams saga continued. Tom and his wife, Florence, had eleven children and Mangowine remained the centre of lots of fun and youthful hijinks. Joyce, Eddy, Laurence (Charles), Elva, Darrell, Sylvia (Yvonne), Clyde, Lurline, Neville, Kelvin and Errol all shared wonderful memories of carefree years.

Tom was an excellent horseman and his children inherited his love of horses, although with their daredevil escapades it's a wonder that they all survived.

On one occasion, Kelvin was on horseback, chasing an emu along the fence when suddenly the emu ducked down right in front of them and the horse tumbled over it, propelling Kelvin in a graceful somersault over the top of the horse to land not so gracefully on top of the emu. Kelvin says, "I hurt myself a bit".²⁹ He seemed to have had a rough time with the creatures featured on our coat of arms, as on another occasion he was chasing a kangaroo and had a loaded gun with him; the horse tripped in a rabbit hole and the gun went off. It was lucky that he didn't shoot either himself



Tom and Florence Adams

or the horse. Kelvin also remembers their horse, ‘Snowy’ falling over on the way to school one morning. The kids were thrown out of the cart and all had bits and pieces of skin removed in various places. They had to pick themselves up, take the horse home, and then walk back to school, bruises and all.

Elva recalled another ill-fated trip to school. Apparently Charlie thought that the horse, old ‘Nugget’, wasn’t going quickly enough, so he took the cushion off the seat and threw it at him. Nugget got a fright and took off like a rocket, throwing Elva off the back of the cart on to the road. The poor little thing was crying, “I’ve broken my arm, I’ve broken my arm”, but Charlie had little sympathy and called back, “Get back in the cart or we’ll be late for school”. In any event, Elva hadn’t broken her arm, but on another occasion Clyde had. The kids used to catch a horse in the paddock and have a great time riding bareback. One evening it was Clyde’s turn to ride, but when his turn was finished he wouldn’t get off, so Lurline gave the horse a good whack on the rump which made the horse jump and Clyde fell off. His arm was broken near the elbow, and since Tom and Florence were away, the older kids were in charge. Clyde was put to bed in agony and next morning they loaded him up in the cart and took him to Mr and Mrs Williams on the neighbouring farm, from where he was taken to hospital in Kununoppin, and from there he had to be transferred to Perth. They all seemed to be sympathetic after the event as Elva said, “poor Clyde had a terrible time with it.”³⁰

Elva says that Neville, Kelvin and Errol were always up to mischief, and found it great fun to either throw something to frighten the horses, or jump out from behind bushes to scare them; with the optimistic intention that the horse would shy and throw the unfortunate rider off. It usually did.



Elva ready to ride to town, two siblings in the background, obviously intent on mischief

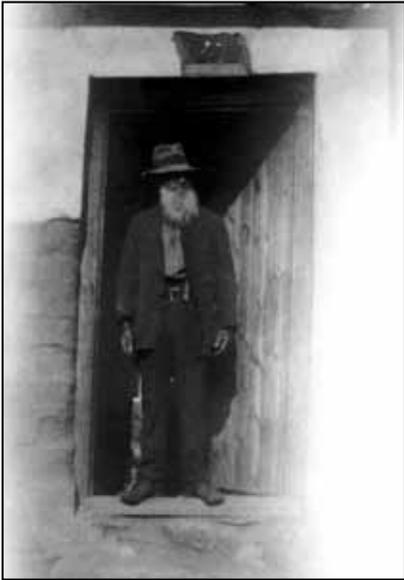
One day they were up on the rocks and had an old pram with them. Kelvin got in it and the others pushed it down the big rock. He rocketed down, and hit a bump and flew about six feet in the air before he landed in some bushes at the bottom. Another time Errol was in the pram and the other two tied him to the back of a horse. The horse took off, dragging Errol and the pram behind. He was lucky not to have been hurt.³¹

Elva remembered her Aunt Elizabeth³² making bread at Mangowine. She made the yeast with potatoes, and when she had mixed the dough she set it to rise overnight alongside the warmth of the fire. The dough used to rise and flow over the side of the bowl, and Elizabeth would take this excess and make ‘puftaloons’ by cooking lumps of the dough in the frying pan. The kids loved them.

Neville recalls his Aunty Elizabeth’s (Aunt “Little Bits”) habit of adding an ‘H’ to all words that started with a vowel. One particular thing she used to say quite often was, “These damn flies, they’re hin your hears, they’re hup your nose, they’re hunder ya glasses, they’re heverywhere.” Neville often used to respond under his breath, “Yes Aunty, and it’s a wonder they’re not hup your harse”.³³



Off to town - Aunt Elizabeth Moran with Frank White and one of the Adams children
Photo courtesy of Elva Hasluck



Frank White at Mangowine

Frank White was an old bloke who lived at Mangowine for as long as I could remember. He was approximately 75 or 80 when I was born. He supposedly came from the Victorian Goldfields to the Kalgoorlie Goldfields in the 1890s. I think he came to Mangowine when several of the old timers were there pulling sandalwood for export. I remember he had a very long white beard and looked like a cross between an old Santa Claus and a gnome. He used to go to Nungarin with my Aunty Elizabeth on the horse and sulky every so often to get stores – usually on pension days. Whilst in Nungarin he'd get on the whisky and he'd argue all the way home with my Aunty.

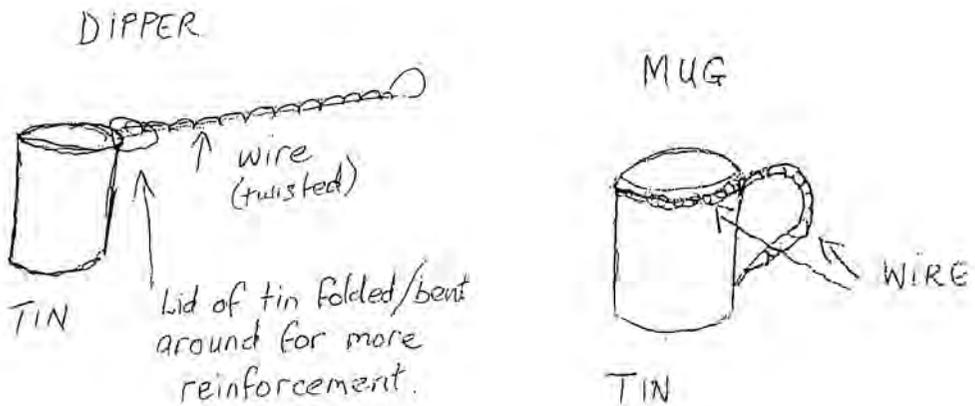
There were often tales of him going to sleep and falling out of the sulky. He was always good to me. He had an old tobacco tin on the window-sill and I used to go there and ask if he had any lollies for me, and I'd shake the tin and he always had two boiled lollies in there for me. He also made me a little wooden wheelbarrow to play with. When he died in about 1941, he must have been about ninety years old.³⁴

Frank used to sit alongside the fire on a seat made from an old kerosene box. He used to sit there and chew tobacco and spit it out on to the stone floor of the fireplace. He had a special cup and saucer which was left on the kitchen table, with a pot of brewed tea on the hob so that he could stop by and take a swig as often as he pleased.

As from the early days, water remained an important consideration at Mangowine. The cement lined well, or tank, at the side of the house was used for the household, and buckets would be lowered on a rope to collect the water. The old washhouse was on the side of the house and had a copper built in to boil the clothes. Sometimes kerosene tins over the open fire were used to heat water for warm baths which were taken in big tin tubs.

All water for household use at Mangowine had to be carted from the well by hand and brought up in two four-gallon buckets (mainly old kerosene tins). Most of the time they were attached to a yoke, which was a piece of

sapling about five feet long with a wire or piece of light chain hanging off each end. The yoke was placed across a man's shoulders – he would stoop down and hook up the buckets of water, and then stand lifting the buckets about six inches off the ground, allowing easy transportation back to the house which was about fifty yards away. If that well was dry we had to cart water from another well which could be about 250 yards away. We had several wells and also a cement lined tank near the house which collected run-off from the roof. After carting the water it was usually placed on a table on the back verandah and was put in kettles and dishes as needed, using a 'dipper'. Dippers were made by using an empty meat or fruit tin and attaching a wire handle to it. A similar process was used to make mugs, but they had a shorter handle.³⁵



Neville's diagrams for a useful dipper and mug

There was no electricity and kerosene lamps and candles had to be used for lighting, and Coolgardie safes to keep food cool. The lack of material comforts didn't impinge on the lifestyle of the young folk who found innovative ways of having fun and keeping cool in the summer:

There was a well down in the paddock which was a sort of soak as it always had water in it. It was lined with stone and was a big round well. We used to climb down and get cool, as the water was very cold. One day we got such a fright when we saw a big snake in a crevice in the stones. We were very scared but managed to climb out and were very wary about going down again.³⁶

There were enough of the Adamases to constitute a party without having visitors, but things always stepped up a notch when extras arrived. Yvonne recalled the great times they had when their Luckman cousins visited from Welbungin. The family all got together and played darts, or cricket, or races of some sort or the other. The young ones enjoyed playing with cousin Toby, who was a cripple and the kids loved to whirl him around in his wheelchair. Neville recalled a particular occasion when Toby wasn't appreciated quite as well as he may have been:

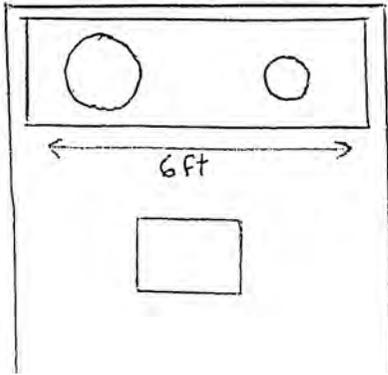
In 1941, Toby Luckman (our cousin) had his 23rd birthday at Mangowine (Toby was a cripple from birth and not able to talk properly). The cake was set up in the centre of the dining room with twenty-three candles on it. When Toby got to blow them out he sprayed a shower of spit all over the cake – putting me right off having any. I was only five years old at the time, but I can remember this incident quite clearly. I made a fuss about not having any of this cake, so my father gave me a hiding.³⁷

While having visitors was always looked forward to (as long as they didn't spit), Christmastime was a special occasion, and the whole family were involved in the extensive preparations. Part of the annual 'spring clean' was the whitewashing of the walls, especially in the kitchen:

White clay was collected from the 'white well', which was a couple of hundred yards south-south-west of the house. The well was over forty feet deep and approximately four feet square, with the walls lined very neatly with bush timber. It was the only well in the area that went down into white lime and clay material [pure kaolin]. This was heaped up around the outside top of the well where it had been dug out. We used to be sent there to scoop this clay up into a tin and to bring it back to the house to be mixed with water and painted as a white-wash on the walls (especially the kitchen) – usually as a spruce up before Christmas. That was one of the few wells of that type in the whole district.

Every year my father would get us kids to have a general clean-up about a week before Christmas so that all would be nice and tidy for when visitors came on Christmas Day. We would have to drag a wheat bag behind us, picking up jam tins and other bits and pieces found lying around the paddock.

I remember one year Dad gave me the job of cleaning and disinfecting the outhouse loo. Our loo was pretty big and spacious. It was placed as usual in those times, right down the back yard. It was made of mud bricks with a pit underneath. The seat was about six-feet long, made of wood with two holes in it – one at each end – one small and one bigger hole for use according to the size of your bum - or if two people wanted to use the toilet at once. In the middle of the toilet shed was an old wooden box, with torn newspapers in it which we used for toilet paper.



Neville's sketch of their family loo floor plan

Getting back to that Christmas I was given the job of cleaning the loo – I was told to put powdered lime down the loo to deodorise it and break down any bacteria. There were always lots of big blowflies hanging around out there. The really large variety. Christmas Day finally arrived and we had all our rellies sitting around the dinner table – about twenty-five in total for Christmas that year, including the Luckmans again. I noticed what I thought were bees buzzing around us while we were enjoying our Christmas lunch. I thought they were bees because they looked like they had pollen on their legs. Then I realised they weren't bees at all, they were those wretched blowflies with their legs covered in that white powdered lime I had put down the loo, so I went and told Dad, who told me to keep quite about it or he would give me a clip on the ear.

Notwithstanding the flies, Christmas was always an occasion that everyone looked forward to. All the family gathered, the house was spruced up and decorated with a Christmas tree and streamers, and visitors were welcomed with open arms. Scots neighbours, Bill Riddell and Jim Pirie, always joined the Mangowine celebrations, and reciprocated by inviting the Adams family to join them on New Years Day. Bill always made a huge plum pudding, and maintained that it had to be made with suet in accordance with the traditional recipe. Although strictly in the Mukinbudin district, Bill insisted on registering his car in Nungarin as he refused to drive a vehicle with a 'Muk' number plate.

Clyde was the seventh child of the family, and while he treasured his carefree early years at Mangowine, his career eventually took him half-way around the world. Clyde trained as an accountant, but he had a gift and a great love of language. He was adept at cryptic crosswords, could write backwards as easily as he could write forwards, wrote poetry and excelled at any sort of word games, and spoke fluent German. In 1944 Clyde won a James and Rose Coombe Scholarship, and after entering the Public Service he worked his way through the ranks of the Department of Industrial Development, eventually representing that Department in Great Britain. After his return to Perth he held the position of Under-Treasurer for a period of six years, later moving to Darwin and serving as Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation.³⁸ Clyde's career and life choices led him far afield, but his heart remained in Mangowine, and he visited often. He passed away in 2005, and is buried in the Nungarin cemetery.

Charles and Jane Adams came to an isolated and undeveloped region with not a skerrick of support within a couple of hundred miles. Their children and grandchildren grew up at Mangowine and played their part in the establishment of the Nungarin community.

In 1964, a descendant of the pioneering Adams family vested the family home at Mangowine into the hands of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.). A group of local people under the leadership of Mrs Heather Dayman laboured for years to realise their vision of restoring and refurbishing the building. Restoration work began in July 1970, and after a lengthy and painstaking rebuilding program, it was officially opened to the public in 1973.³⁹

Endnotes

- 1 Glass family bible.
- 2 Rica Erickson, *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, University of Western Australia Press, 1988.
- 3 Registrar General.
- 4 Newcastle Police Records.
- 5 Newcastle Police Records.
- 6 The author explained that the spellings of all place names were as in the original lease applications.
- 7 Jocelyn Maddock, *On the Line, A History of the Shire of Mukinbudin*, 1987, ISBN 0 9588657, p30.
- 8 *Nungarin Standard* newspaper, 10 May 1934.
- 9 Information Adams family. Frank White, or 'Old Frank' as he was universally known lived in the store room above the cellar. He was born in 1830 and died in 1943. In an interview with Rica Erickson, Tom Adams recalled that Frank came to Mangowine to help build the homestead, and stayed on to become 'part of the family'.
- 10 Personal Interview, Ted Williams.
- 11 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Records.
- 12 AR (Don) Pashley, *Policing our State*, Acc 430 Item 1347.
- 13 Jocelyn Maddock, *On the Line, A History of the Shire of Mukinbudin*, 1987, ISBN 0 9588657, p33.
- 14 *West Australian*, 27 June 1913.
- 15 Reference to nearby town of Trayning
- 16 RT Greaves, *The Golden West and How it was Discovered*, Hesperian Press 1981.
- 17 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Records.
- 18 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Records, November 1887.
- 19 *West Australian* newspaper, December 1887.
- 20 *West Australian* newspaper, 29 February 1888.
- 21 *West Australian* newspaper, 1 February 1888 and 14 August 1889.
- 22 *West Australian* newspaper, 30 May 1889.
- 23 *Western Mail* 14 May 1895, page 13.
- 24 *Sunday Times*, 9 July 1933.
- 25 Information from Miss May Knowles, personal letter dated 29 November 1991.
- 26 *Eastern Recorder*, Wednesday 30 November 1910.
- 27 Newspaper report, included in *Henrietta*, by Patricia J. Howe, Fineline Print
- 28 *Nungarin Standard*, 10 May 1934.
- 29 Kelvin Adams, notes.
- 30 Elva Hasluck, notes.
- 31 Elva Hasluck, notes.
- 32 Elizabeth Moran, eldest daughter of Charles and Jane Adams.
- 33 Neville Adams, notes.
- 34 Neville Adams, notes.
- 35 Neville Adams, notes.
- 36 Elva Hasluck, notes.
- 37 Neville Adams, notes.
- 38 *West Australian*, Clyde Adams obituary, 2005.
- 39 Joukovsky-Vaisvila, Olga. 'Around the Rock – A History of Nungarin Western Australia', Nungarin Shire Council 1978, p71

As Certain as the Sunrise

Agricultural Development 1909 -1914

Following the excitement of the gold rush years, men who had come to seek their fortune on the goldfields were looking for alternative employment, and it had become apparent that Western Australia needed a primary industry to support its increased population. In his role as a Manager of the Western Australia Bank, James Mitchell had visited the Mangowine and Dandanning areas in 1892 and had noted a small number of good crops on the pastoral runs. In 1905 he was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and appointed Minister for Agriculture in 1909. Mr Mitchell was now in a position of influence and with those pastoral leases due to expire at the end of 1907, and his memory of good crops in the Nungarin district, the time was right to encourage the development of agriculture as a solution to all these problems.

The land was surveyed, lithographs prepared and the State Government set about an extensive advertising campaign, although they could have been accused of ‘gilding the lily’ somewhat! An advertisement in *The Australasian* in December 1909 boasted:

*Droughts unknown - Seasons as certain as the sunrise ... Land available for selection suitable for all branches of agriculture, according to districts, in rainfall belts ranging from 50 to 10 inches per annum. ...
... State Agricultural Bank Most Liberal in the World.¹*

Men from the over-staffed Civil Service were encouraged to apply for blocks of land, and such was the response and confusion that questions were raised in parliament. Mr Angwin, Member for East Fremantle, asked for a return showing statistics pertaining to the number of men applying for land:

It had been reported that a rush of civil servants for the land under the civil service land settlement scheme had taken place owing to the

*dissatisfaction which existed at that time throughout the service. Since then the Public Service Commissioner had pointed out that only a small number had applied for the land, that in fact the applications were not equal to the number of blocks thrown open for settlement. On the other hand it had been stated that so many civil servants were anxious to get away from their employment in the service of the state and go on the land that the government had found it impossible to spare them all. It was because of these conflicting statements he was moving for the return.*²

The return listed the names of 73 officers who had been granted land and who had taken up their blocks; 27 who had applied, been granted land, but afterwards withdrew, and a further 34 officers who had applied for land but were not selected. Some of the civil servant family names that will be familiar and still have descendents in the Nungarin area are: Baker, Creagh, Dawe, Herbert, Waterhouse and Watson.³ The Premier had noted the difficulties of obtaining exact information, and he was not far short of the mark because of the 27 noted to have withdrawn their applications, at least half a dozen are names that do actually feature in the records of the early days of settlement in the Nungarin area.

Most officers had worked as draftsmen and clerks and came from positions in various government departments including Lands and Surveys, Agriculture and Industries, Education, Mines, Crown Law, Public Works, Railways and Treasury. While their past employment may not have equipped them for a life on the land, they embarked on this new venture with much optimism and determination, but little capital or experience.

Most agricultural pioneers came from Perth, usually by rail to either Nangeenan, Kellerberrin or Merredin, and from there were transported to their selected blocks. One of the men who took on the job of meeting new settlers and transporting them and their possessions to their properties was J.V. Tolerton, previously a bore foreman with the Lands and Surveys Department. Tolerton had established a store and agency at Kellerberrin and possessed a four-wheeled buckboard drawn by two horses that he used to transport the prospective settlers. Interestingly, Tolerton's name appears on the list submitted to parliament as having withdrawn an application for an allocation of land. Perhaps he had been in a position to appreciate the hardships that lay ahead for the new arrivals, and thought better of the challenge.



Arrival of the first consignment of goods at the Dawe camp at Burran Rock 15th January 1910

The activity in the new settlement was reported in the *Eastern Recorder* in October 1909:

It is satisfactory to be able to state that with the new arrangements made by the Lands Department, by which J.V. Tolerton acts as transport officer, assisting Mr G.H. Chown, who is in charge, much better facilities have been provided for getting new settlers out to the settlement. The settlement is at Wooroolocking, about 40 miles eastward of Kellerberrin. The track is a fairly good one at this time of year, but requires some good horses to take out decent loads.

During the week six families have arrived at Kellerberrin to make their future homes in the district. They comprise Messrs Dugdale, Knowles, Ford, Hitchings, Pope and O'Grady. They were met on arrival by Mr Tolerton, who attended to the transport arrangements. The Minister for Lands is to be commended for having appointed Mr Tolerton, who is an ex-civil servant, to undertake the transport work. Mr Chown, although an able officer, had too much to do. He was trying to do two men's work, and he broke down under the strain. Now everything is running smoothly, and let us hope that the complaints and grumbings of recent arrivals will be things of the past. The scheme is absolutely a new one. It has never been attempted before, on the same lines as this, and it was inevitable that there would be congestion in the transport service, but it is unlikely to occur again.⁴

While initial reports were optimistic, a further article in the same newspaper only a week later, foreshadowed the difficulty that would be faced by settlers in relation to the extreme shortage of water in the district:

*The initial difficulties of transport have been overcome, and everything connected with the scheme is working smoothly. But – that little “but” – there is trouble looming ahead, and that is in connection with the water supply. It is true there are some wells near the settlement, but they are privately owned, and the water is so precious that the owners will not sell it. There are some public dams but the chances of filling them at this time of the year are very remote. The only practical way to overcome the difficulty is for the government to boldly face the situation and lay down, say, a 4 inch main to the settlement, connecting it to the Goldfields Water Supply Service. In addition to providing a permanent supply of water to the settlement, it would also give employment to the large number of men who are out of work in Perth.*⁵

*Another batch of retired civil servants arrived from Perth last week and were transported with their belongings to the Wooroolocking⁶ settlement. The names of families who went out are: Messrs Fitzpatrick and son, Liddell, Victor; Fitzgerald, Paramor, Grundy, Sawtell and Jones. We learn from Mr J.V. Tolerton, the transport officer, that all the loading has gone out to the settlement, and at the time of writing, teams are waiting to load up the goods belonging to those who are expected today.*⁷



*Government teams and drays delivering water to the Dawe camp 1910.
Caption reads, “A pretty stiff charge is made”*

Mr Walter Hodges, a former clerk in the Railways Department, left a record of his experiences in *Early Days of Nungarin South*:

The Government made a grant of £100 to purchase food, tools and one horse and they were given free transport to their blocks, which covered an area from Nungarin South to Nookanning [Nokaning], about 15 miles. The nearest siding was Nangeenan, Hines Hill being isolated from Nungarin by impassable lakes. There were no roads apart from sandalwood teams' tracks. South of Nungarin in the 1909-10 years, teams from Nangeenan used to take four days to one week to transport goods to a block.

The men were transported to their blocks by a surveyor in a buckboard about May 1909. They were then on their farms to be. No tents or huts were on the blocks and teams with material did not arrive in most cases, for a week or more. All the married men left their wives and families in the city, to follow later, when tents or huts could be erected and the men were more settled.⁸

Edward Fitzgerald had served with Kitchener during the Boer War, and after coming to Western Australia he retired from the army and was employed as a warder at Fremantle Prison. He was granted one thousand acres of land under the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme and arrived to take up his block in November, 1909.⁹ Memories of the family's arrival are recorded by Edward's son, Ted.

[Edward Fitzgerald] was granted a 1,000 acre green timber and scrub block at Neening. It was approximately 16 miles north of Hines Hill, on the Hines Hill – Nungarin Road, which was only a cart track.

At Neening, the government blasted a dam at the foot of Neening Rock. It was approximately 1 chain square, 12 feet deep. The Government made 1,000 gallon tanks at the dam and put 1 tank on each block with a couple of hundred gallons of water in them. That was the only water except a well and a couple of soaks. I can remember the day well when we set off to go to our block. It was a hot, sunny day in November, Melbourne Cup Day, 1909. We came up by train to Kellerberrin. A Mr Tollerton had a pair of horses and a buckboard. He lived in Kellerberrin and had a contract with the Government to take settlers to their blocks.

We set sail for the block. My mother had a parasol, as it was so hot. The first night we got as far as Carol's soak, about 10 miles on the Hines Hill – Nungarin track. We camped at the soak for the night. We only had a few belongings with us ... we continued on to our block from Carol's Soak next day – a further 6 miles, to where the tank was just off the track on the block. Mr Tollerton dumped our few belongings and Dad and Mum erected the tent and made some bunks out of chaff bags, fork sticks and poles. That was to be our beds for a few weeks till a wagon fetched out our gear. We had very little food and Mum had to make dampers with baking powder and flour in a camp oven. The camp oven was cast iron with a lid and a handle on each side. A hole had to be dug in the ground to put the oven in. It had hot coals in the bottom of the hole and the lid was covered with hot coals to cook the damper.

The dingoes howled all night around the tent. The little dog, Judy, barking all night. Kangaroos hopping all around the place. Emus would come and look as they are very inquisitive, also wild turkeys. When the wagon came out, it brought a ton of crated galvanised iron and a few rolls of hessian and white wash had to be made up, to build a humpy. Gimlet timber was used to make a building, 2 rooms with hip roof, 2 rooms slanting roof, kitchen and bathroom and a verandah. On the east side the walls were made of hessian done with white wash, only dirt floors. We had no way to keep things cool, only a damp flannel around a basin to keep butter from melting. Later when the humpy was built we got the Coolgardie safe to keep things cool. We had to have all tin food, or a bit of kangaroo, emu leg and sometimes wild turkey. We had no horse and cart for a long time. The dad had to do a day's work to get a loan of one to go to Hines Hill to get supplies ... I can remember my Dad carrying a bag of sugar out from Nangeenan on his back – a distance of 19 miles.¹⁰

Many of the prospective farmers arrived without any form of transport whatsoever. When Carlo Vanzetti took up his block in 1910, he used to walk to Hines Hill to catch the train to visit his family in Perth, and recalled that dingoes often followed him as he made his way along the track. Carlo was the son of an Italian judge, who migrated to Australia with his brother, Eugenio, in 1897. Having a good education and excellent English, Carlo found employment in the Crown Law Department, and later qualified to apply for land under the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme.¹¹

The Hoare family was one that seemed to have been better equipped than most, possessing a horse and dray. In her biography, *Go on the Land Young Man*, Daphne tells the story of her family's arrival:

The decision having been made to go on the land, Grandpa James Hoare bought a horse named Daisy from a man in Kalamunda who was interested in farming. Two older sisters, Ada and Clara gathered together all the necessities for the men in their new life. Into a dray, a slightly oblong conveyance with two large steel rimmed wheels, were stacked a 100-gallon tank in which were packed all food stuffs. Stacked around it were the meagre necessities for survival. A tent for their first shelter, blankets, heavy iron saucepans, cutlery, billies for boiling water, enamel plates and mugs. Lanterns, kerosene, matches, axes, saws, mattocks, picks, shovels, hammers, nails, nuts, bolts, and a hand drill. Bag needle and string. Not forgetting medicinal needs, towels and clothing. Water in water bags.

Chaff would be carried for Daisy and the bags when empty would later be used to make sapling beds, with a frame each end and the sides of thin trunks of trees pushed through the bags forming a base to sleep on. Two bags would need to be joined for sufficient length. Food was flour, rice and sago, salt, tea, jam, molasses, tinned dried milk and root vegetables. Some bread and meat bought along the way. A camp oven was a must for any pioneer having to cook meat, stews and damper on an open fire. These heavy iron containers with recessed lids and moulded handle for lifting the whole measured 20 inches across and 5 inches deep. Into this oven nestled in the hot coals with coals and earth covering all, went scrub turkey, mallee fowls, kangaroo portions, twenty-eight parrots and ducks.

The men could not afford to travel by train and transport the horse and dray as well ... Dad and Uncle Bert wended their way and it took them two weeks to reach their property.

Alfred Ernest Dugdale was formerly a lithographer in Great Britain, who later gained employment as a printer with the Treasury Department at the Government Printing works in Perth. Alfred took up property under the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme, arriving in Nungarin in the middle of October 1909. In 1862, Alfred had married Mary Mackintosh, the granddaughter of James Drummond the Government Naturalist who was renowned for his collection of Western Australian botanical

specimens. Their son, John Norman (Jack) inherited James Drummond's pen, the one he had used to record more than 48,000 Western Australian native species.

Bob Bagot took up land in the Danberrin area in 1910. According to a lyrical account in the *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, he had previously occupied a "prominent position in the Civil Service, but the gospel 'Go on the Land Young Man' lured him from routine office work to the more seductive occupation of a tiller of the soil and other sidelines of farming life."

On being placed on their blocks, the settlers quickly erected temporary shelters and began clearing the land in order for the properties to be brought into production as soon as possible. Home comforts were a secondary consideration, and humpies and crude shelters were constructed of bush timber and whatever else was conveniently to hand. Often their first homes offered nothing but notional protection from the elements. Walter Hodges recalled visiting Sid Herbert and finding him sitting up in bed with an umbrella to keep the rain off.



Ron Creagh Snr at his first camp north of Nungarin

David Jones and his brother, Evan, travelled to the Nungarin district on horseback, intent on inspecting a block that David was interested in acquiring. They came to the ruins of an old shepherd's chimney and a well, and decided to camp overnight. Being just on dusk, the men made camp, boiled the billy and then settled down for the night. Next morning they found to their horror, the putrid carcasses of two dead emus floating in the well. In spite of his stomach-churning experience, David applied for his chosen block and was granted the location in October 1910.



David Jones's Camp west of Nungarin

The government had sent unemployed men to begin ringbarking trees as early as 1903, but much clearing remained to be done and to help with establishment, progress payments of between twelve and twenty shillings per acre were made for clearing the land. Once a month an inspector from the Agricultural Bank would arrive to assess the amount of loan payable to the settler for the purchase of necessary equipment such as machinery and horses.

With the majority of settlers having faced redundancy from the civil service, there was not the capital to invest in grandiose housing, so even when they were able to turn their hands to more permanent accommodation, it was still fairly spartan by contemporary standards. However humble it may have been, it was home; and in August 1910, Frank Dawe proudly sent his fiancée, Ellen Whittaker, a picture of the home he intended bringing her to. The postcard was entitled: 'Our new home on the land at Nangeenan' - (the new settlement had not yet acquired the status of its own name). On the reverse of the card he wrote:

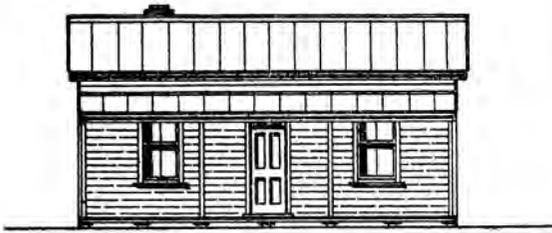
Dear Nell,

The other side shows a photo of our 'mansion' out in the 'back blocks'. Observe the chimney built out of mud bricks. It's not quite finished as we ran out of bricks and haven't made any since. Will have to make some more soon and carry it up a bit higher. The white box at the right hand side is the rain-gauge. Stan is to be seen thro' the long window. The others, including the dogs are outside. We are nice and comfy inside. When are you coming up to have a look at us. Love from all to all, yours, Frank.

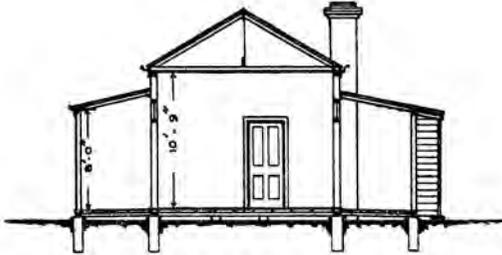


The Dawe home - August 1910

The lack of experience faced by the first settlers was somewhat overcome by information contained in *The Settlers Handy Pamphlet*¹⁴, issued by the direction of T.H. Bath, Minister for Lands. The booklet is over 200 pages and contains “*general information useful to new and old settlers*” and it would be hard to find a subject that was not covered. There is a caution about over-clearing “*The attention of settlers is called to the fact that by ring-barking and clearing the whole of the timber from their holdings in the early stage of operations they are committing an error from which it will take them years to recover*”, sample contracts for clearers, advice on animal husbandry, directions for building haystacks, instructions on fencing and dam building, designs for gates and silos, and even the plans for 3 different styles of cottage complete with a list of materials needed for each, right down to the size and quantity of nails needed and including such finer details as: “*Paint, three 7 lb tins*”, “*putty, 2 lbs*” and “*turps, 1 bottle*”.

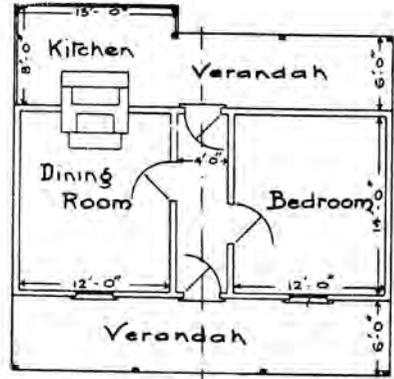


ELEVATION



SECTION

Govt Litho

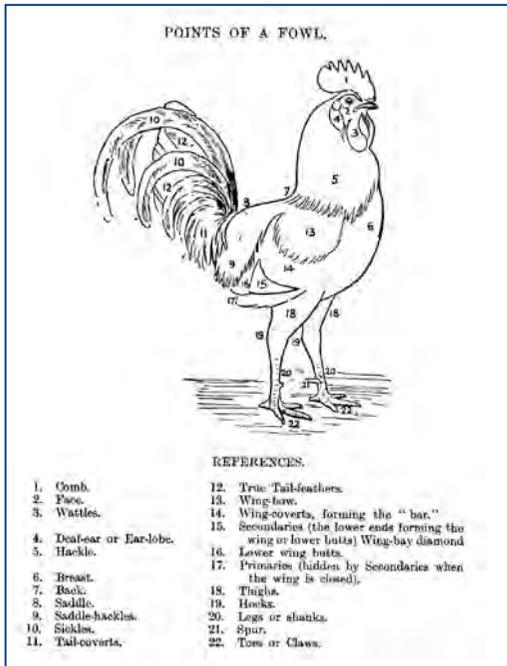


PLAN

No. 1 Cottage.

W.A., P.W.D.

Plans for a one bedroom cottage from “The Settlers’ Handy Pamphlet”



Some of the information seems a little less useful such as “the weight of a crowd of men closely packed is 84 lbs per superficial foot”; an image that rather delights the imagination. Men unacquainted with stock could turn to the back of the book where they could find diagrams detailing the various parts of farm animals such as a horse, cow, sheep or fowl.

If you had ever wondered where to find the “Sickles” of a fowl – now you know!

Some trees had previously been ringbarked, but in order for the land to be fully cleared ready for cropping, men laboured with hand axes and horse-drawn metal rollers



Frank Dawe clearing land at Burran Rock south of Nungarin

to fell the timber which was then burnt. The rollers were manufactured from iron steam boilers taken from steam engines and with an axle put through the centre and connected with a wooden framework that was hitched to the team of horses.

There was something about pioneer farming that inspired an “*On Our Selection*” type of humour, and local newspapers often carried apocryphal stories about life on the land:

At a civil service settlement down Korrelocking way there is a clerk from the Works Department who is a champion at ring barking. The moment he spots on a tree on his block he starts ringing it like a Trojan. An old cockie visited the civil service clerk last week and remarked, “You’re death on ringing”. The young settler felt flattered and said, “Oh yes, I take all the trees as they come along”. The old cockie took another pull at his pipe, and then remarked, “If I was you I wouldn’t ring the dead ‘uns. It’s a waste of time”.¹⁶



Frank McGlinn clearing land for Mr E.F. Dayman (10 horsepower!)



Burning off during clearing at Burran Rock 1910

As an eight year old child, May Knowles remembered staying with the neighbouring Dawe family, and being taken around at night to help the men turn in the ends of the clearing fires. She was delighted to be treated to potatoes baked in the coals, and to be shown the tents where the men slept. It all seemed so adventurous and exciting to a child who did not have to manage the primitive living conditions.¹⁷

As well as being primitive, conditions were generally hazardous, and deaths and fatal accidents were not uncommon. In November 1910 a man named Patrick Cobney, aged about 47, was found in a deplorable condition in the bush near Kodj-Kodjin. He had been in the area ring barking and got lost. With lack of water he was thirsty and disoriented, and became delirious. He cut his right arm above the elbow to suck the blood. He then tried to cut his throat. When found maggots were working along the bone of his arm.¹⁸

By March 1910, The *Eastern Recorder* reported 66,000 acres of land open for selection at Knungajen (sic), 60,000 acres at Lake Brown and 57,000 acres at Mangowine. By August a total of 5,000,000 acres of land had been surveyed.¹⁹

The first crops in 1910 were grown for hay or chaff, as there was no rail transport. Annie Wynne wrote that in 1910 their family had managed to clear and seed 35 acres. The season was “fairly good” and they managed to cut some crop for hay for horse feed, kept some wheat for seed and were able to sell 77 bags of grain. In September, an article in the *Eastern Recorder* reported on a successful season:

The crops in this district are looking tip-top, the season so far having been a most favourable one. Some of the new settlers have as much as 120 acres under crop, and expect with a good rain at the end of the month, to strip very heavily.

We are all looking forward to the promised visit of the Minister for Lands, who it is understood, will be accompanied by Professor Lowrie, whose advice just now would be greatly appreciated ... Fencing and clearing is going a-pace, and the whole aspect of the country is being changed.²⁰

Henry and Annie Wynne had selected a thousand-acre Crown Grant of land south of Nungarin in 1909. Annie was a tiny dot of a woman, only four feet five inches tall, but what she lacked in stature she made up for in resourcefulness and optimism. In a report for her granddaughter in 1990, she reminisced on the challenges that faced our early settlers:

Your Grandpa had gone up a month before us and came out to meet us. I could not see the house but could see through the trees a glimmer of hurricane lamps, through hessian ... Da and Harry were too busy to finish the home, but managed 2 bedrooms, one each end of the house, with a nice large dining room in the centre, but that room was like a clay pond. We walked across boards to get to the bedrooms. They had tried to set a clay floor, but no time to finish it before we arrived. Our floors were clay and we covered them with lino as soon as they were dry so our furniture was packed out in the yard and covered with iron. A few days later there was a thunderstorm which blew the iron off and rain poured down on everything. The men were away at a farmer's place learning about a new binder this farmer had bought and was going to hire it out to any settlers who required it. The girls and myself were a sorry sight chasing that iron and we got a good laugh out of it.

A camp oven of bread had been cooking out in the yard with hot ashes underneath and on the lid. The fire blew away but the bread was lovely, and

cooked! Da was very pleased too for he made the bread. He cooked it in a large camp oven and it always raised the lid of the oven before it finished. The girls and I were not good for a start, but made good bread later.

Da soon finished the floor and I was eager to get the lino down. Too eager I think, for in less than one week white ants had bored right through in many places (just small pin holes) so up came the lino in three rooms and Da painted the underneath with hot tar, also the floor and put thick layers of paper underneath and we were never troubled again. We had to put up with strong smell of tar but that died out in time.

I cooked in two kerosene tins stood on bricks; one for the kettle and the other for cooking. I also used the camp oven, but as most of our meat came out of a tin, I did not have joints to cook.

After relating all this misery Diana, I must tell you we made the most of it and had happy times too, and always lived with the hope of better things to come.²¹

One of the better things that the early settlers hoped and waited for was a reliable water supply. Without a permanent inland river system, the interior of the state is traditionally dry, and years earlier Charles Adams, Con McCorry and Surveyor King had built a series of stone wells throughout the area to ensure a supply of water for stock running on the pastoral leases. The first blocks taken up for agriculture in the Nungarin district were those carefully chosen to have access to water from natural dams, rock wells, or soaks and so the most concentrated settlements were clustered around Burran Rock, Danberrin and Neening. Even when the dams actually had water in them, they were often polluted by cattle and horses and the Agricultural Department was lobbied to fence the dams and provide pumps and some form of roofing to prevent evaporation.²² Daphne Goulding describes the water supply at Burran Rock:

All farmers for many miles around came to the well on the south side of Burran Rock which is a huge granite outcrop. This well built by Con McCorry is 8 feet deep and formed with rocks set so well there isn't any material used for binding. It was the only good water supply for miles around, the nearest being Neening Dam south east from here. Further down the slight slope from this well is a soak which has never dried up. The horses and stock drank there.

Later, after two drought years, 1911 and 1914, the government sank a 60 foot well on the land south east of the rock, because the first well was depleted. A windlass and 5 gallon bucket was used to draw up this water which was white with minerals.²³

Annie Wynne had vivid memories of that mineralised water also, and her envy of a neighbour's stratagem to manage her laundry:

[We drew the] water from the well by windlass 100 feet to the top, 4 feet by 4 feet across and a heavy steel drum for a bucket. It was not good water; we could not use it for washing. We tried it in every way, but no good. The clothes would be thick with salt worse than seawater. We think it was highly mineralised.

One of our neighbours took her washing into Baandee siding and took rugs etc, camped in the railway house and came home the next day, very happy with her quilts and a months washing all finished. Had a cup of tea at our place and went on her way.²⁴

It wasn't always what came out of a well that caused a problem however; sometimes it was what inadvertently went in. Harry Williams recounts the story of the day his mother fell victim to a "loaded" well. The well was originally constructed by the government, and even though it was later privately purchased, it was extensively used by all surrounding farmers and was the only source of water in the area when Harry's father, Fred, took up land at Mangowine, north of Nungarin.

When Dad and Mum were first married they were running short of water and were going to cart some from this well. It was a very hot day and Mum said she was thirsty. Dad had a tin mug and gave her a drink out of the first bucket full. On top of the well there was a double handle windlass and on the windlass there were two ropes with two buckets. One bucket would be down while the other bucket would be up ready to empty. Mum asked Dad if he wanted a drink. He said he would have one on the next bucket. When the next bucket came up there was a dead magpie in it. Mum took one look at it and promptly vomited. She never forgot that.

In later years Mum bought the land that the government well was on. When we had a dry year and water was short Dad decided to put a windmill on it.

First we plumbed the depth at 70 feet and hung the pipe from the top. We put a pump-jack driven by the Fordson with two AL harvester belts joined together because we could not get the tractor very close. The pump ran for about 10 hours when it started to pump air. On looking down the well we could see that something was across the corners. They sent me down in a bucket to put a rope on it to get it up. It was an old windlass. As soon as Dad saw it he remembered how it came to be there. Everybody close by used to get water from the well. Mr George Hocking was getting water one day and when he went to reach for the full bucket to swing it to the side his hand slipped off the windlass handle. It started to spin. He went to grab it but it hit him on the nose and broke it. The windlass shook itself off its stays and fell down the well ... we pumped all the water out and cleaned out the rubbish until it was dry. It was 120 feet deep with a 20 feet horizontal shaft at the bottom.

There is a white well in paddock number 6 on Wrexham farm. It is 80 feet deep. The water was a bit brackish. Dad only used it when he was short of water. It was all right for sheep but he used to mix it 50/50 with fresh water for working horses. Water was getting short one time, the dams were just about empty and he decided to use the water from this well. Unfortunately he found that a cow had fallen down the well and he had a hard job finding someone to help clean it out. One brave fellow said he would if, on top of what Dad was offering, he would supply a bottle of whisky. So the deal was struck. The chap drank a fair bit of the whisky before he went down. When Dad pulled the first bucket up he promptly lost all his last meal. He reckoned the smell was terrible and he was worried how this guy could stand it. He hadn't been down very long before he signalled to come up. When he came up he got stuck into the rest of the whisky. He then told Dad the price had gone up to two bottles of whisky. The job was finally finished but a couple of days later it rained and I don't think the well was used after that.²⁵

Cleaning and enlarging wells was a constant occupation as farmers battled to keep up with the demands for potable water, and sometimes the process is only humorous after a suitable passage of time, as attested by this story from Harry Williams:

Two miners came by the farm looking for work. Dad thought it was an opportunity to sink a well on a site that a diviner had picked out for him.

The two agreed to dig it, but hit rock a few feet from the surface. They dug through 30 feet of rock. Dad said that after a while they were really putting in a big charge. One day he went to see how they were going. Just as he drove up one guy yelled at Dad to back further away. The other guy came out of the well and they ran like hell past Dad who was still in the truck. There was an almighty bang. Even though he had backed up a fair way from the well he got peppered with rocks. The holes dug for the charge were all done by hand. The walls were so straight and smooth that you would think a machine had done it. There was water there, but only about 80 gallons a day. It was as fresh as rainwater.²⁶

With the importance of carting water for stock and for domestic use, and the number of farmers queued up at dams and wells, it was inevitable that mishaps and accidents would have occurred at fairly regular intervals. Ernie Caporn had settled at Neening in 1909, and was backing his wagon up to the Neening dam to load up with water when the horses slipped and the wagon, the horses and Ernie all ended up in the dam. Not a happy result for Ernie or indeed for the other farmers who would have been lined up waiting their turn to load their tanks.²⁷

The long distances between farms, wells and railway sidings meant that farmers learnt to be resourceful in managing their trips to deliver grain and load water. Annie Wynne said that when they were carting grain to Baandee siding, the men would leave early in the morning and camp overnight where there was water for the horses at the standpipe a few miles from the siding. They would then unload the grain and load back up with water for the slow trip back to the farm. Meanwhile the women at home were busy preparing food for the next 2-day turn-around.

The townsite of Nungarin had been declared on 28th October 1910²⁸ and in August 1911 the railway was completed through the new town. Ironically, the season was almost a drought with only 116.33 mm of rain during the growing period: The Wynne family reaped only 5 bags of shrivelled wheat. However, even with the prospect of a disastrous season, and the annoyance caused by the railway gangers carting large quantities of precious water from the Government dam on the reserve, settlers were prepared to do their best to commemorate this important occasion.



The Opening of the Railway Line through Nungarin August 28th 1911

Walter Hodges says it was “a day of rejoicing for all settlers”²⁹. The Premier, Mr F. Wilson, and the official party arrived on the train at 2.30 p.m. and were fêted at an afternoon tea. The day continued with horse racing, sports, a camp tea and sing-song at night and the whole community came together to celebrate³⁰.



However, if the settlers were expecting an elite service, they may have been disappointed. A report in the *Eastern Recorder* puts a rather more pedestrian view of the wonders of train travel on the new line:

Travellers on the new Dowerin-Merredin line have an interesting experience. Before the line was completed, travellers on the government portion had to travel in open trucks exposed to dust and smoke and soot and rain, and work their passage by collecting wood for the engine en route. Those on the contractor's end had all the above disadvantages in addition to paying a fare. With the present advanced stage, difficulties still exist. The train stops at Korrelocking for the night and a place for passengers to lay their heads is not yet made. The ladies are allowed to sleep (if possible) in the carriage while the men spend the night around the campfire or in a spare horse box.³¹

A correspondent to the Merredin Mercury complained of the slowness of travel on the loop line via Dowerin. Even though the maximum speed of the train was not to exceed fifteen miles per hour, the trip between Northam and Merredin took from 10.50 a.m. until 1.50 a.m. the next day, which calculated at about nine and a half miles per hour. It was claimed that a black sow wandering along with her litter kept pace with the train for about a mile.³² Even the journey between Merredin and Nungarin took three hours.³³ There were suggestions that the acronym 'W.A.G.R.' stood for 'Walk And Go Rapidly'.

As slow as the journey was, there were even occasions when the train stopped completely and the whole entourage, staff and passengers alike, alighted to indulge in an impromptu shoot if kangaroos or bush turkeys were sighted along the line; and on one occasion the train stopped on the hill near 'Red Forest' so that everyone could get off the train and pick mushrooms.



The arrival of the first train in Nungarin August 28th 1911

The opening of the railway made it possible to import water from Merredin by train, however the cost of six shillings per thousand gallons was prohibitive for most struggling farmers. Settlers had been in the habit of meeting regularly at the wells at Burrin Rock and Danberrin, and as they waited their turn, they discussed matters that were of concern to them all. The shortage of water was always the main topic of conversation and with a united voice they began to lobby for an extension of the Goldfields Water Scheme from the Hines Hill Pumping Station. Eventually their voice was heard.

After the election of the new Labor Government at the end of 1911, Premier John Scadden announced that the first thing that had been decided by the Government, in view of the dry season which had unfortunately been experienced, was to form a Water Supply Department. The *Eastern Recorder* newspaper announced "... the next project to be north of Baandee, Hines Hill and Nangeenan – it is hoped that the Department will be able to put this in hand forthwith, as otherwise the settlers will have little chance of remaining on their holdings."³⁴

The project went ahead as promised. Camels were used to transport the pipes on jinkers as the rough condition of the roads and the scarcity of water made the use of horses impractical. A large forked salmon gum fitted with a steel share was used to dig the trench for the pipes that were about 5 or 6 inches in diameter. One end of the pipe was tapered and the pipes were hammered together to make a seal. Ted Fitzgerald remembers a man with a horse and sulky whose sole job was to patrol the pipe and repair the frequent leaks.³⁵

Water was laid on to the area south of Nungarin, and in his memoirs Walter Hodges commented, "The day water came through the pipes all settlers were sure it was the best assistance they could have."³⁶ However the jubilation was short lived, and it wasn't long before settlers were faced with the harsh realities of paying for this much-anticipated 'assistance'. Initially, settlers were to be charged a fixed fee of £5 for each holding, plus an annual rate of 4d per acre for all land within 1.5 miles of a water pipe. But in February the following year more than one hundred people attended an emergency meeting to protest against the Government proposal to increase the cost of water by 200% to 8d per thousand gallons.

There were some landholders who weren't near a water pipe and still had to cart water, and it was suggested that nominated custodians could arrange to have a public standpipe at a "convenient distance" from their homestead that would allow a member

of the family to man the pipe and collect the fee. Custodians were authorised to charge an extra 2d per thousand gallons, but would be required to lodge a deposit as security for the money that they would have to hold from time to time. However, there was difficulty in getting settlers willing to collect the fees and take charge of the standpipes. The extra tuppence didn't seem to be an effective inducement, whether the standpipe was located at a "convenient distance" or not.³⁷

The Talgomin Progress Association applied to enlarge the dam on the Talgomin reserve, but they were refused because the Water Supply Department was planning an extension to the Goldfields Water Scheme. The Progress Association had recorded their opposition to an extension of the scheme because of the "attendant perpetual payments".³⁸

In December 1912, water carting was creating serious problems. Water levels were low and the pumps were not being maintained. There were also other hazards associated with the delivery of water, and it is doubtful that Mrs Fitzgerald would have seen the funny side of her predicament at the time. She was carting water from the standpipe and had a 200-gallon tank on the back of a horse-drawn cart. To clean the tank properly she had to drop in through the manhole at the top. Unfortunately, once in she couldn't get out again and had to wait for someone going past to rescue her.³⁹

During 1912, various parties were active in boring for water around the district.



*Government water boring party at Burrancobbing Rock – March 1912
Photo taken by Frank Dawe – [Courtesy Bob and Lurlyne Hinge]*

Mr Harry Shone was reported to have had success with locating "first class water, with three bores on fresh water in as many weeks, and nicely spaced. One successful bore was only one mile from the Nungarin station".⁴⁰

The party put in some days boring at Burrancobbing and got on to what seems a good supply. Depth of bore 50 feet and there is at present over 30 feet of water. A well is to be sunk very soon. Hope supply turns out as good as it promises.⁴¹

In a few short years, settlers on scattered properties around the Danberrin, Burran Rock and Neening areas had begun to develop a sense of community. With the declaration of the townsite, and the opening of the rail line, they saw the focus of settlement shift further to the north where businesses had started to spring up alongside the railway. On June 24th 1911, *The Eastern Recorder* stated "...settlement is developing all along the line ... Kununoppin and Nungarin will soon be fair-sized settlements, and it is rumoured that four other stores will later compete with the one now at the latter place." Tom Bolton⁴² was the first storekeeper in Nungarin. He built a rough building of corrugated iron and bush timber with hessian walls, adjacent to the railway station on the north side of the main Merredin-Goomalling road. This building was probably only temporary as according to Marie (Aunty Jim) Farrell, Bolton built a "more substantial" building which was the first store in the main street at Lot 12 Railway Avenue.

At the end of 1912, the *Merredin Mercury* reported that Bolton's had sold thirty Sunshine harvesters, and all were doing good work in the district. The same issue reported land sales at 'Kuningagen' (Knungajin), Lake Brown and Talgomine.⁴³



*Bolton's "more substantial" store in Nungarin - 1912
Note the advertisement for Sunshine Harvesters in front of the building*

Mr Barbary was the foreman of the gang laying the railway track, and he and his wife started a tearoom and boarding house at Lot 17 Railway Avenue, to cater for the railway workers.⁴⁴

Information in the Australian Archives records that the first postal agency in Nungarin was in

Bolton and Rae's store which opened on 28th August 1911 (the same day the railway to Nungarin was opened), but was taken over by E.H. White in September of the same year. In October 1912, E.H. White advertised in the *Merredin Mercury* that the store had completed their first business year at Nungarin.⁴⁵ The business letterhead advertised the sale of general merchandise and groceries, ironmongery, saddlery, drapery, boots and shoes, chaff, bran, oats, pollard, oil cake, wire netting and fencing wire, and noted that they acted as agents for Norwich Union Fire Insurance Company, as well as being buyers for all farm produce and acting as the post office agency.



Harvesting with horse-drawn Sunshine harvester



Business transacted at the post office is an effective indicator of just how quickly the township was growing. The initial remuneration offered to White for operating the post office was £20 per year, and this was increased the following year to £40.15.0. A letter written to the authorities in January 1912 claimed that his duties had increased due to his having to meet the trains at inconvenient times (there were 6 train services each week, 3 at 5.00 a.m. and 3 after 11.00 p.m.) and he received an extra payment of £6 per week for meeting the trains. The basic pay rate was increased again on 18th June 1912 to cover expenses related to the connection of the telephone service.⁴⁶



Horse-drawn harvesting. Notice the horse on the inside fitted with a nosebag to stop it eating the crop



Harvesting on the Herbert property - [Photo courtesy of Bob Herbert]



25 horsepower I.H.C. Titan Tractor at Dawe property "Koroloo" Nungarin Ready for trial with load of wheat 19th December 1912

[Photo taken by Frank Dawe, property of Cornish family]

Government advertising was still attracting new settlers to the district. The Johnson family and their four boys arrived in Nungarin on 10th June 1913.

It was a cold frosty winter's morning; Frank the eldest was five weeks short of his eighth birthday, and Cyril was only five and a half years, and rather bewildered with all the travelling from Johannesburg, South Africa in the past week or more. When the train which had brought us here had left, we were in complete darkness with no light of any sort. We sat or lay on the wooden benches of the waiting room on the railway siding until daybreak, and when life became apparent at Mr Tom Thick's store just across the road (the only building in Nungarin at that time), Dad went over and met Mr Thick, bought some food for our breakfast and made arrangements for us to be transported to our block, about 8 miles north of Nungarin. Mr Thick called his son Tommy, of nine or ten years, and told him to put the horse in the cart and take us and our belongings out to our block. "I'm not going to take a mob of bloody pommies", says Tommy, but we soon put him right on that score and so we got on our way through the strong Australian bush, passing a few cleared paddocks of growing crops and a building here and there by the way. We arrived at our block in due course and when Dad saw what we had come to he wanted to turn around and go straight back home again. Mum said, "No, we have come a long way at considerable

expense to get here, and we will stop and make a go of it.” The selection that had been bought on ‘someone else’s’ advice, comprised 640 acres of bush land with 20 acres cleared and a ‘house’ thereon. The house was just a shack about ten feet square, made by standing saplings side by side – held together with wire, the lot covered with a pile of brown scrub to keep out most of the sun. A tent was pitched inside the enclosure to keep out most of the wind and rain.

We were told that the Philpotts, our next door neighbours, had left word that we were to use their house (he had moved back to Perth) until a reasonable dwelling could be built. This we did and lived there for several months until our own place was made habitable. This was made of straight saplings cut in the surrounding bush, covered with hessian inside and outside, and roofed with sawn timbers and covered with corrugated iron, complete with guttering and water tank. Very primitive indeed, and the furniture likewise. Much of it constructed from rough bush timber and wooden packing cases.⁴⁷

In *Pine Grove Farm*, Winifred Wilkes describes the home that her parents, Samuel and Phyllis Stephens, made at Burran Rock in 1913:

The tent bed-sitting room had a door made of saplings and kerosene case boards at one end and next to it the open fire place ingeniously built from flat iron and bush timber with a rough mantel shelf to hold the striking clock and perhaps an ornament or two. Phyllis had dyed hessian sage green, edged with a patterned wide braid for the door curtain. On the big brass and white iron bed she hung white spotted muslin backed with pink sateen at each end and covered the bed with a heavy white cotton Marcella quilt and their luxurious possum skin rug ... also in the little room were a couch, Sam’s big armchair with its turned arms, legs and top and black imitation leather seat, back and arm rests. There was the beautiful cedar chest of drawers topped by a small mirror swinging on its stand. The family organ had pride of place, bearing hymn books, a tall kerosene lamp with its gleaming glass chimney and the bible given to them as a wedding gift by their minister.

Phyllis learned to cope with the bough shed kitchen and unaccustomed wood stove ... A ‘Coolgardie safe’ kept food reasonably cool. This was a

metal framed hessian covered safe on legs with a metal tray top and bottom. The upper tray was filled with water. Strips of flannel lay in the water and hung over and down the sides keeping all the hessian damp. As the lower tray filled, the water dripped through a little spout into a bucket below, to be returned to the top tray and so on ...

All the laundry washing was done out on the bench Sam had made, and hung on a line stretched up with a long sapling pole forked at the top ... flat irons were heated on the stove. The Potts iron had a detachable wooden handle and required vigorous rubbing with a cloth to make sure there were no smuts to streak the articles being ironed ...

All the water for the homestead had to be carted with the faithful Bess pulling the dray, into which Sam manoeuvred a big square 400 gallon tank, up to the soak well at Burrin Rock. There was also a deep well dug with timber sides and a windlass with rope and bucket.⁴⁸

The development of agriculture and associated commercial activity throughout the district provided fertile ground for journalists, and the newly established *Merredin Mercury* carried this spurious tale to explain the proliferation of machinery agencies in the Nungarin area:

According to an agricultural implement agent travelling the Nungarin district just at present, this country is the best in the Commonwealth for selling machinery. Asked the reason, he said the majority of settlers were so careless in not housing their machines. They leave them out in the open during the winter months, and then when harvest time came round they wanted another. He mentioned a case, though I give it with some reserve, where a settler was taking off a crop. Suddenly the harvester struck something and the driver could not get the machine to move. The boss came along to make some enquiries, and after clearing round the obstruction he came upon the cause of the trouble. "Well to be sure" he exclaimed, "if that isn't my old reaper and binder which I've missed since last season." It seems that the reaper and binder had been left in the paddock, and the winter rains had made the ground so soft that it sunk out of sight, so when the agent came round he bought another to replace it.⁴⁹

That year the district received almost 262 mms of rain during the growing season,

so probably inspired such a jocular and confident outlook. Good business had been reported by R & T Bolton in the 1912 cropping season⁵⁰, and even as late as August that year, settlers were optimistic of a good harvest:

*The crops are looking splendid. What can be done on the land by an energetic man is amply demonstrated by Mr Thick who, although only on his land two and a half years, has 800 acres of crop which is a picture, and several hundreds being cleared by contractors. A rabbit-proof fence encloses this farm, which is sub-divided by 6 wire fences. Mr Thick has also experimented with peas, and a few acres in front of the homestead is proof of what can be done in that way, as it is one of the best crops the writer has seen. Mr Thick has invested in a 45 horsepower petrol engine and a chaff-cutter capable of cutting 5 tons per hour. Besides chaff cutting, the engine will be used for ploughing, scrub rolling etc.*⁵¹

However, in December the *Merredin Mercury* reported, “The crops are not yielding up to expectation in nearly every case. There is no doubt that the effects of the 1911 drought extended too far into this season; also the long dry spell in August has had a detrimental effect on the yield”,⁵² and a few weeks later “Settlers are prepared to continue their struggle, but the total failure of 1911 and next-door to failure of the present season (5 bushel average) has placed settlers in a serious financial position ... In many cases fine looking heads are found to contain little beyond cocky chaff”.⁵³

In spite of the disappointing season, settlers remained optimistic. A report in the local newspaper read:

*Mr E.H. White is building large premises for his agencies and has appointed Mr R.J.G. Reid of Pingelly manager. The same people have just completed livery and bait stables here. Progression! Verily thy name is Nungarin. When one glances along Railway Avenue and sees imposing edifices and large signboards, and a general stir and bustle, it is hard to realize that only a few months ago there was nothing but a mass of trees, bushes and tangled undergrowth, with only the kangaroos for its inhabitants.*⁵⁴

A couple of weeks later another correspondent described White’s store as a “fine large lofty building, built in iron and wood”, and added:

*Mr White has a store which would do credit to old established towns like Northam or York. It is years ahead of the times, but as the proprietor remarked "I have great faith in the place and the district, and what is the use of making additions every two or three years."*⁵⁵



Gordon White's Store c1917

Marie Farrell remembered that White's store would often be used as a meeting place or hall. When the Progress Association was first formed, meetings were held at the store and sometimes dances were also held there with the stock being pushed aside to make sufficient room.

The same article in the *Merredin Mercury* described several other businesses and personages in Nungarin:

*...it was about dinner time so I tried the boarding house kept by the maiden lady. It was a long iron building, not very high, but about the warmest room I ever attempted a meal in. There was a clean cloth on the table and plenty to eat. A thermometer on the wall attracted my attention, and curiosity prompted me to see how the mercury stood. It was a trifle over 117 degrees. I casually remarked to the proprietress on the absence of flies. "Oh," she said, "you never find flies here when it's over 116. The heat kills them. But if you are here in the morning when it's only about 110, my word you'll find plenty."
... I was introduced to the genial secretary of the Nungarin Athletic League, Mr R.J.G. Reid ... locally known as 'alphabetical' Reid*

... at a guess, I should think he would turn the scale at 13 stone. Mr Reid is a machinery agent, and the world seems to be treating him very well, judging by his jovial appearance and well-filled vest.⁵⁶

Following the dry and discouraging previous seasons, there was reasonable rainfall in 1913. Cyril Johnson recalled their neighbour harvesting a “quite nice” crop of wheat, and stacking the grain in bags in the corner of the paddock, ready to transport into Nungarin siding. A farming family about 4 miles away ran a herd of free-range pigs, which did just that – ranged very freely. The pigs discovered the wheat and set to with gusto. Cyril’s mother, Rose, tried to chase them away, but it was like swatting flies, they just kept coming back. Mrs Johnson had been a member of the rifle club in Johannesburg, and prided herself on being excellent shot. Feeling that drastic action was called for she grabbed the rifle and took aim at a “nice little porker”, just as the old boar poked his nose around the corner of the stack. The shot got him right between the eyes⁵⁷.

Notwithstanding the various difficulties that farmers had to contend with, the Nungarin township continued to develop. With water ‘on tap’ to the properties in the southern districts, as well as the completion of the rail link through Merredin; settlers were just beginning to put down their roots when they were devastated with two disastrous blows. Crops were wiped out by the 1914 drought, and the world was plunged into war.

On the 4th of August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany and the outgoing Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Joseph Cook, pledged allegiance to the ‘old country’. He promised to place Australian vessels under control of the Admiralty, and offered an expeditionary force of 20,000 men. “Our duty is clear”, he said, “to gird up our loins and remember that we are Britons”. Only a few weeks later, Andrew Fisher was voted in as Australia’s new Prime Minister and won great support with his pledge to stand beside Britain “to the last man and the last shilling”. Before the war was finally over, twenty-four of Nungarin’s young men had given their lives to honour his pledge.

Endnotes

- 1 *The Australasian*, 25 December 1909
- 2 Hansard, 19 October 1910.
- 3 Hansard, 19 October 1910.
- 4 *Eastern Recorder*, 27 October 1909, p. 4.
- 5 *Eastern Recorder*, 3 November 1909 p. 4
- 6 Wooroolocking – an early name for the Burran Rock area.
- 7 *Eastern Recorder*, 3 November 1909 p. 4
- 8 WS Hodges, *Early Days of Nungarin South*, typescript.
- 9 *Eastern Recorder*, 3 November 1909.
- 10 Ted Fitzgerald, *Sir James Mitchell's Civil Servant Land Settlement Scheme 1909*, typescript.
- 11 Letter from Evelyn McMullen (nee Vanzetti), Nungarin Biographical Record.
- 12 Daphne Goulding, *Go on the Land Young Man*, ISBN 0 646 24695 X, p9.
- 13 *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, 30 November 1917.
- 14 *The Settlers Handy Pamphlet*, Dpt of Lands and Surveys, September, 1914.
- 15 *The Settlers Handy Pamphlet*, Dpt of Lands and Surveys, September, 1914.
- 16 *Merredin Mercury*, 14 August 1912, p2
- 17 May Knowles, personal letter dated 29 November 1991. Maxine Cornish collection.
- 18 *Eastern Recorder*, 10 November 1909.
- 19 *Eastern Recorder*, 10 September 1910.
- 20 *Eastern Recorder*, 14 September 1910.
- 21 Diana Wynne, Interview with Annie Wynne, typescript.
- 22 *Eastern Recorder*, 14 September 1910.
- 23 Daphne Goulding, *Go on the Land Young Man*, ISBN 0646 24695 X, p10.
- 24 Diana Wynne, Interview with Annie Wynne, typescript.
- 25 Harry Williams, typescript.
- 26 Harry Williams, typescript.
- 27 Information from Colin Caughey.
- 28 Government Gazette page 3327.
- 29 WS Hodges, *Early Days of Nungarin South*, typescript.
- 30 WS Hodges, *Early Days of Nungarin South*, typescript.
- 31 *Eastern Recorder*, 26 August 1911.
- 32 *Merredin Mercury*, 14 August 1912, p2.
- 33 *Merredin Mercury*, 18 December 1912, p3.
- 34 *Eastern Recorder*, 28 October 1911.
- 35 Ted Fitzgerald, *Sir James Mitchell's Civil Servant Land Settlement Scheme 1909*, typescript.
- 36 WS Hodges, *Early Days of Nungarin South*, typescript.
- 37 *Merredin Mercury*, 18 December, 1912, p3.
- 38 *Merredin Mercury*, 18 September 1912, p4.
- 39 Ted Fitzgerald, *Sir James Mitchell's Civil Servant Land Settlement Scheme 1909*, typescript.
- 40 *Merredin Mercury*, 13 November 1912, and 4 December 1912.
- 41 Postcard, by courtesy of Bob and Lurlyne Hinge.
- 42 Tom married Rene, the sister of Gus and Sid Herbert who were pioneer farmers.
- 43 *Merredin Mercury*, 25 December 1912.

- 44 Maxine Cornish, Interview with Marie Farrell 14.11.1989. Barbary stayed on in Nungarin and was later joined by his brother, Joseph. The business was later taken over by Marie Christensen (later Marie Kelly).
- 45 *Merredin Mercury*, 23 October 1912, p2.
- 46 Australian Archives, Series K1/1, Item 281/12.
- 47 Cyril Johnson recollections, typescript. Maxine Cornish collection.
- 48 Winifred Wilkes, *Pine Grove Farm: Our Heritage*, ISBN 0-646-38735-9.
- 49 *Merredin Mercury*, 14 August 1912, p2.
- 50 *Merredin Mercury*, 25 December 1912.
- 51 *Merredin Mercury*, 21 August 1912, p3.
- 52 *Merredin Mercury*, 18 December 1912, p2.
- 53 *Merredin Mercury*, 1 January 1913, p2.
- 54 *Merredin Mercury*, 4 September 1912.
- 55 *Merredin Mercury*, 25 December 1912, p3
- 56 *Merredin Mercury*, 25 December 1912, p3
- 57 Cyril Johnson Recollections, typescript, Maxine Cornish collection.

Battling On

1914 - 1945

The seasons following the First World War were good, and the war had increased demand for wool, wheat and chaff – in fact whatever could be produced found a ready market. New farmers were no strangers to hard, back-breaking work, but had confidence that they were working to secure an independent future for themselves and their families.

After the first few hard years of establishment, the tents and temporary shelters on recently cleared blocks began to give way to slightly more comfortable homes. After 1912 when the Merredin Road Board adopted the Second Schedule of the Roads Act (which strangely enough included policies on housing construction), building regulations were formalised. Rules were introduced which precluded the use of canvas, calico and other flammable materials and applications were required for permits to build, along with a licence from a surveyor.¹ With the benefit of a few successful seasons, better housing and reliable access to water and rail, a sense of permanence began to develop.



Above: the Dawe home at "Koroloo" Burran Rock 1912

From the very early days, settlers supported each other by getting together to discuss common difficulties, share ideas and to relax socially. Before the Soldiers' Memorial Hall was built at Burran Rock many dances and parties were held at "Toxteth", the Dugdale home, which was built in late 1915. The Dugdales would roll up the floor coverings



Andrews Home at Lake Brown c1912

in their large dining room and their daughter Euphemia played the piano to provide dance music. Anxieties and exhaustion were put aside and a good time was had by all. In his *Short History of Western Australia*, Dr F.K. Crowley summarised the development of our state's agricultural enterprise and the way that settlers supported and encouraged each other:

On his arrival, a new-chum farmer found only survey pegs in the scrub to mark out the boundaries of his holding. He had to decide when to plough, how much fertiliser to use, and what varieties of seed wheat to plant. He had to decide whether it might also be profitable to plant oats and run a few sheep for meat, wool and to help fallowing. He had usually to put up his own home, and living conditions for farmers with young families were difficult. Children could only be educated with difficulty, whilst medical attention and any sort of social life were hard to obtain, except in one of the small townships lying beside a new railway siding. Still, there was a spirit of mutual aid amongst the settlers, and it was not too long before the worst features of their isolated life in the bush had been overcome.²

That "spirit of mutual aid" and the determination and enthusiasm displayed by the early settlers saw the development of a Nungarin community. Early accounts tell of frequent meetings at dams and water holes, and regular picnic meetings with races, sports and dances. No doubt Con McCorry, who had taken up an extensive 300,000 acre grazing lease in the Nungarin district in 1900, was gratified to find himself in the midst of a burgeoning township.



Cornish home at "Belmore" Knungajin 1929



A.C. "Con" McCorry

Alma Constantine "Con" McCorry was named after the Battle of Alma during which his father, Richard, was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal.³ Richard McCorry had arrived in Fremantle in July 1866 as an enrolled pensioner guard on the convict ship *Belgravia*. After arrival, Richard performed militia duty in the colony and, following his role in the hunt for the bushranger 'Moondyne Joe', was granted a 10-acre pensioner block north of Mount Ommamney near Northam. As the family became established in the Northam district, one of Con's older sisters and her husband purchased the Shamrock Hotel, and later Con himself acquired an interest in the business and also became a shareholder and Director of the Avon Brewing Company.

Con also held a 3,000 acre conditional purchase block bordering Noongarin Rock, and between 1900 and 1910 when the family moved to Nungarin, he had invested £9,000 in improvements, built a home, barn, stables and sheds, and established ten wells, eight dams and one hundred miles of fencing.⁴ With the proposal for a railway line through the district, Con realised the potential commercial prospects and set about building a substantial stone hotel adjacent to the proposed route. The building cost £4,000 and consisted of twenty rooms, with the walls designed to carry a second storey if it should ever prove necessary.⁵ Unfortunately the town developed south of the railway line, and the hotel was isolated from the settlement.

Over the years there has been much speculation about the presumed alteration to the route of the railway line. Indeed there was considerable debate at the time and various proposals had been put forward including a suggestion from Surveyor Marmaduke Terry that the line should run east from Dowerin to Mangowine and then south to Hines Hill to join the Kalgoorlie line. However, the final route was eventually decided on 10th November 1909,⁶ with the line running through the Nungarin area and terminating at Merredin. Some minor variations were made as a result of further detailed examination of the local terrain, but once the route was decided, the sites of the sidings were able to be selected. In order to prevent speculators taking up the more valuable land adjacent to the line, a seven-mile buffer zone had been set at the end of 1909, but this would not have affected McCorry who already had title to his land. The actual site of the town may have had the greater influence, because if it had

been situated on the north of the line, the hotel would have been right in the centre of the development.

Never the less, Con had confidence that he could attract development to the north side of the line, and had several half-acre freehold blocks surveyed adjacent to the hotel. However, with the establishment of the railway siding and the gazettal of the town, the south side proved to be the most convenient for business, and Con's dreams were never realised. McCorry's Nungarin Hotel opened on New Years Day 1913, and functioned in its remote location until June 1929 when the Kalgoorlie Brewing and Ice Company built the present two-storey hotel in Railway Avenue.



Building McCorry's Hotel. The builder in charge of construction was Bill Barrie who also built the church of St Paul at Jennapullen near Northam.



McCorry's Blacksmith's Shop

Con's enthusiasm for the new township appears to have overcome any disappointment he may have had as a result of the railway realignment, and he set about building a store and a blacksmith's shop adjacent to the hotel. At that time the road north from Nungarin passed close to the east side of the hotel, and the store and blacksmith's shop faced that road. In August 1912, Con applied to the Merredin Road Board to have the old winding road to the north closed, and for it to be replaced with a straighter and more direct route. In proposing the plan, he consented to resumption of part of his land for the new road.

In February 1913, a meeting at McCorry's Hotel was convened to form the Nungarin Race Club. The club was registered under the rules of the Western Australian Turf Club, and Con McCorry was given a vote of thanks for making land available for the purpose. Con was also the driving force behind a move to establish an Agricultural Society that would allow settlers to showcase their newfound skills in all spheres of primary production, and at the same time to provide an opportunity to socialise and celebrate.

1914 was the first year that Nungarin was listed separately in the Western Australian Postal Directories, having previously been included with Nangeenan and Merredin.

In that year eighty-eight farmers were listed along with almost a dozen commercial enterprises. The business names included Chas Beer (commercial agent), R & T Bolton (machinery agents), R.L.J. Chalmers (commercial agent), Miss M. Christensen (boarding house proprietor), E. Coulson (machinery agent), Cox Bros (contractors), A.C. McCorry (Nungarin hotelier and station owner), R.J.G. Reid (machinery agent), Thomas & Thick (grocers & butchers), E. White (grocer & livery stables), as well as the Reverend A.G. Sleep (Congregational Minister).

The Nungarin Agricultural Society was formed in 1917, with the first show being held in September of that year on cleared ground adjacent to McCorry's Hotel on the north side of the railway line:

... a small band of residents met at the instance of Mr A.C. (Con.) McCorry, and decided to form an Agricultural Society. Quite a busy time by voluntary workers followed in preparing the ground and stock stalls in readiness for the first show on September 29th, 1917. The first show, under the presidency of Mr "Con." McCorry, and Secretaryship of the late Mr A.E. Andrews, was held on ground alongside the old Hotel Nungarin, and proved quite an event in the district, no less than 172 entries being made in the horse classes. Other stock sections were also fairly well represented, and quite a good display was made in farm and dairy produce, cooking and needlework.⁷

An advertisement in the Nungarin-Trayning Mail on 7th September outlined a full program that included the agricultural show with trotting races, a picnic and children's sports, with a grand concert and a ball at night, as well as a fancy dress ball for the children. In addition to all that activity, there was also the catering to consider. Mr Mick Farrell offered a 60 lb pig and a turkey if the Red Cross ladies would agree to undertake the catering. It says volumes for the stamina of the local population that they could even consider all that work and effort on the one day. However our pioneers were hardy folk with exacting standards, and a few weeks later an article appeared in the same newspaper, explaining that because of such a large assemblage, the children were not treated as hospitably as they could have been. Shortly afterwards another fancy dress ball was held at which the committee made amends for any shortcomings there may have been earlier and each child received a prize and a gift of fruit and lollies.⁸

It is interesting to note that the show committee decided that the colours for the show stewards should be blue and white. This is perhaps the first record of our town colours being used.⁹

Two hundred ball tickets were printed for the Grand Show Ball, which was held in the Farmers Co-op hall. Marie 'Aunty Jim' Farrell explained that the store was often used for meetings and dances. The goods and shelves were all moved aside to make sufficient room.

The Nungarin Agricultural Show quickly outgrew its location adjacent to McCorry's Hotel and moved to an area in the newly surveyed townsite. The early events certainly demonstrated the enthusiasm and talents of the Nungarin settlers, but were also touched by a certain primitive boisterousness. On one occasion the expected supply of liquor for McCorry's Hotel had not arrived from the Shamrock Hotel in Northam¹⁰ and a brew was concocted from whatever was at hand. The effects of the cocktail were swift and dramatic. Emile 'Cobber' Beurteaux was only about 5 years old at the time but had very clear memories of men staggering out of the hotel only to collapse before they had even crossed the road. Men were lying comatose, children were crying and wives were in a panic; but apart from momentary mayhem apparently there was not any lasting damage.

The old hotel managed to assume a reputation for being a fairly rough and tumble establishment. Older residents remembered one of the outhouses becoming known as the 'dead house' and being the theatre for some heavy drinking and resultant shenanigans. In Kel Watkins book, *Send 'er Down Hughie*, it is reported that there were always brawls going on there and suggests assaults, rapes and even murder.

Con's interests were not always strictly confined to the Nungarin district. Leslie Lee remembered an occasion sometime around 1919 when Trayning held a sports meeting, and as they had no liquor licence, Con took a covered railway wagon full of supplies and sold the whole lot within a couple of days. Apart from his hotel interests Con also advertised his services as an auctioneer, and stock, station and general commission agent. In 1921 he nominated as the Country Party candidate for the Avon Electorate in the Legislative Assembly, and between 1927 and 1932 he served as a member of the Nungarin Road Board.

The McCorry family maintained a strong Catholic faith and church services were regularly celebrated at the hotel. Members of the McCorry family were all quite musical and formed part of the local entertainment group known as the 'Nungarin Dandies'.



The Nungarin Dandies

Back Row: Alf Edmonson, Emil Sorenson, Syd Benson, Warren Waterhouse, Gladys Andrews (later Mrs Syd Benson), Walter Hodges, Connie Andrews (later Mrs Warren Waterhouse), Ernest McCorry, Jack McCorry, George Fimister, Connie McCorry (later Mrs Clem Keitel)

Centre Row: Muriel Creagh (later Mrs Gus Herbert), Aimee Beurteaux, Molly Wright, Molly McCorry, Christina Hodges (Mrs Walter Hodges), Lilly Veasey (later Mrs Fred Wynne), (young lad unknown), Letitia Edmonson (Mrs Alf Edmonson)

Front Row: Peg Hodges (later Mrs Emile Beurteaux), Bill Hodges, Janet Edmonson.

Community support for the Nungarin Agricultural Show continued and it soon developed into one of the largest and most successful agricultural shows outside of the metropolitan area.

It is hardly necessary to remind our readers that the nineteenth annual show under the auspices of the Nungarin-Eastern Districts Agricultural Society, will take place at Nungarin on Saturday next, September 29th, and favoured with fine weather, it has every appearance of being a mammoth success in every way. General entries which almost exceed the record established at the centenary show, have been received, one of the most pleasing features

of these being the record number of sheep entered. All sections in the Exhibition Hall will be very keenly contested, and the interior of the building promises to be a most pleasing sight indeed after the judges have carried out their duties. The ring events, as usual, will be an outstanding feature of the show, and they include two trotting races for which owners have entered freely, and several cycling events that have attracted competitors from various parts of the north-eastern wheatbelt. Numerous sideshows have booked space on the ground, and the customary publican's booth will be in operation. Catalogues (or programmes) will be on sale at the gate for a nominal sum, and luncheon and afternoon tea will be available to the general public. Members and their vehicles will be admitted free at the gate entrance on production of their tickets, and non-members will be charged 2/- each, and 1/- for vehicles. The usual show ball will take place in the Road Board hall in the evening, the music for which will be supplied by Eagle's Wyalkatchem orchestra.¹¹



Opening of the Burran Rock Soldiers' Memorial Hall

The town continued to grow. Businesses were established, community and sporting groups were formed and schools were opened. As the settlement expanded, there was increasing dissatisfaction about the condition and maintenance of roads and facilities in the district and in 1921, it was decided to redistribute the boundaries of the Merredin Road Board and Nungarin elected to be in charge of its own affairs. The

first meeting of the Nungarin Road Board was held on 19th August 1921.

The newly elected Road Board covered 2000 square miles and governance included upgrading roads and dams, securing facilities such as a permanent post office and policing, and monitoring vermin control, especially dingoes and rabbits. In just over sixty years, a couple of dozen rabbits introduced in Victoria for hunting had increased to plague proportions throughout Australia. It was the fastest spread ever recorded of any mammal anywhere in the world. As early as February 1910 two full grown rabbits were caught near Kellerberrin,¹² and Peter Hodges recorded seeing his first rabbit in the district as early as 1912. This first sighting was at a well on Bob Bagot's farm just one chain south of the Hodges property.¹³

By 1918 the situation was sufficiently serious for a Rabbit Conference to be called in Perth:

Mr Harry Griffiths apologised for the unavoidable absence of a Nungarin settler Mr E. S. Beurteaux. From a paper however, Mr Griffiths indicated this gentleman's case as one that was typical of many others. His holding was practically surrounded with holdings and government reserves that were not being utilised for farming. This statement in itself would indicate his difficulties in dealing with the pest. This year Mr Beurteaux had put in a crop and one section of 350 acres returned nil. In one of the back paddocks he had seeded 100 acres and more than half of this land had been eaten by rabbits. Other crops had been devastated and Inspector Parker had visited the farm and described it as devastating and was making a report to his superiors. This farm was second to none in the district and was in every way promising until the rabbits took charge. He had long fought them, but being surrounded by unoccupied holdings and reserves he considered it impossible to continue unless the Government took definite action, which would justify a renewal of confidence.¹⁴

During the twenties, the Road Board minutes contained regular references to the ongoing battle to control rabbits, foxes, dingoes and other vermin. There were even complaints that rabbit burrows were making the roads unsafe. The Road Board purchased a calcium cyanide fumigator and employed men to fumigate burrows on reserves and vacant lots. The fumigator and rabbit poison¹⁵ was also made available for the use of settlers. Even as late as 1933 there was an entry in the Nungarin road Board Minutes that "the rabbits are getting worse every year".

A bounty was paid to encourage settlers to trap various declared birds and animals, but sometimes it was too great a temptation for folk in straitened circumstances, and in the Road Board minutes in 1925 there is a notation to the effect that if it was suspected that particular dingo scalps weren't authentic, a statutory declaration could be required. Kel Watkins tells the story that when they were quite young, he and his sister Jean were only just prevented from chopping the beaks off the family turkeys, thinking they looked sufficiently like emu beaks to be worth two bob each! ¹⁶

Like most wheatbelt pioneers, the Wynne family at North Baandee slept outside on the verandah during the heat of summer. When they were only about 10 or 11 years old, Les and Bert Wynne used to sleep with their rifles alongside them so that they could shoot the marauding twenty-eight parrots as soon as the sun rose, and they could do so without the inconvenience of having to get out of bed. ¹⁷

Old Frank White at Mangowine trapped many hundreds of parrots in his own unique way:

*A box or piece of square wood covered with mesh tilted on an angle with a prop to which was attached a long string. At sunrise or in the late evenings Frank would patiently wait, munching on his bacca (his thoughts who knows where) waiting for the parrots to come after the food he had sprinkled under the cage. Many a visitor to Mangowine have seen parrot heads strung up through wire waiting to be taken to the Shire (then called Nungarin Roads Board) who in those days paid tuppence for the beaks as parrots were then declared vermin.*¹⁸

The numbers of dingoes were rapidly increasing and seriously affecting sheep flocks in the district. The Road Board decided to advertise for a dingo trapper at a remuneration of £3 per week, with £2 each to be paid for scalps. The trapper was required to obtain a signed certificate from the nearest settler to the scene of destruction of each wild dog, certifying that it was a genuine wild dog. During 1929 bounties were paid on more than 170 dingo scalps and in June 1928 H.J. Dayman was paid £1.10.6 for 366 parrot scalps (this works out at one penny per scalp, so old Frank White got a bargain for his beaks). At that time the bounty on rabbits was also one penny per head.¹⁹

The poisons used to control vermin were certainly potent, and accidents were bound to happen. In the mid-twenties, one of the Maidment boys died while poisoning

rabbits on their property on the south side of Knungajin Rock. His mother was so distraught that when the property was sold to H.J. Dayman in 1928, she retained the block that was the scene of the tragedy. Years later that block was sold to neighbour George Williams which explains why just one paddock is across the road from the rest of the old “White Lakes” property.²⁰

There is a rather unfortunate, and hopefully unconnected, juxtaposition in the Road Board cashbook in January 1929, when a payment was made to F. H. Faulding for cyanide, immediately followed by an entry for the purchase of a wreath.

Daphne Goulding explained that a natural rock dam on their property at Burran Rock, had attracted a plague of rabbits desperate for water:

One night we could hear a noise on the rocks of many little hooves, so we thought the sheep had got into that paddock. When we went out to check, we were amazed to see this large expanse of rock nearby literally “crawling” with hundreds of rabbits wanting to get to the water.²¹

Dick Roddy also remembers the rabbit pests competing for precious food and water:

In the hot weather they would emerge in droves for a drink at the horse trough around sundown. We accounted for hundreds by bailing out the trough and placing tins of water laced with cyanide in the vicinity. Around this time Ted Fitzgerald who had a block at the foot of Neening Hill netted a small dam on the property and caught 1300 in a single night. The Road Board employed a man who drove a poison cart which dispensed a mixture of bran, pollard and molasses with a deadly phosphorous poison mixed in. The poison cart dug a shallow furrow and the mechanism dropped a bait every few yards. I don't know how effective this was, for I cannot recall seeing multitudes of dead rabbits along its route. Dad referred to the operator as the “Rabbit Stiffener”.²²

Leslie Lee at nearby Trayning had similar misgivings about the efficacy of the attempted eradication methods:

The local authority laid down that a certain amount of Poison bait trails be laid weekly. I think that this was one mile per thousand acres. This was laid down by a poison cart. This was a two wheel flat topped cart drawn by one

horse, with iron wheels with a cog on one wheel from which a chain drove an apparatus mounted alongside the driver, who sat on one of those stamped out seats so familiar to all our farm machinery those days. This was of steel or cast iron, with slots so that rain did not accumulate and was shaped to fit the driver's posterior, but it was usually someone else's posterior, as they never fitted mine comfortably. The apparatus for distributing the baits consisted of a cylindrical container of I suppose a couple of gallons capacity, about 18 inches high and a foot across with no top. Inside this was a large screw or worm which, when the cast was in action, brought the contents down to the bottom and forced it through a small aperture where, upon emergence, a chopper cut it into adjustable lengths.

These lengths then fell down a tube, similar to a drill or combine, where it was dropped in a furrow made by a disc or tyne attached to the cart. The poison – a phosphorous compound – was mixed with bran and pollard ...

But the poisoning was not very effective, and the next ploy was to fumigate the burrows. The first method was to put carbon bi-sulphide liquid on four inch squares of old sacking, push them down the burrows and fill them in ... But the rabbits still thrived. Then the idea was to have lighted charcoal, the gas of which was driven down the burrow by a hand driven fan with the attendant filling in. This was later improved by attaching a tube to the exhaust of a car, truck or tractor and pumping the exhaust gases into the burrow. This was at least easier, but we still had rabbits.

The next idea was to rip up the burrows with a large single tyne ripper, which worked quite well except in uncleared land such as windbreaks, etc.

While rabbits don't require much water, they do require some and if the farm dams were fenced in and most were not, a hole would be made in the fence leading to a netting cage and this caught a few. The other method was to put tins of water outside the fence for a few nights and when the bunnies got used to the local pub, to put a dose of strychnine or cyanide in the water. This would sometimes result in hauls of 500 to 1,000, but was not a regular system – but it did get the drinking population and they never got far from the bar before keeling over.

Most farmers by now would have fenced their properties with strong rabbit netting, but owing to the rabbits' unsportsmanlike habit of burrowing under the fence, this was not wholly effective.²³

Writing in the Nungarin-Trayning Mail, 'Fair Dinkum' (with tongue no doubt firmly in cheek) suggested:

Another simple and effective but more laborious method is to grasp the rabbit firmly with the left hand and place its head on a block and strike it quickly and deliberately with another block – the charming feature of this method is the ridiculously small cost of the plant required – you are also sure of your rabbit, and a dead rabbit is a good rabbit.²⁴

Harry Williams has also recorded his memories of rabbit plagues:

There was a small dam in the bush up in the sand plain. It was very nearly dry. As it was hot and the rabbits were so bad, Dad built a fence around the dam. He made tunnels out of rabbit netting so the rabbits could get in and not out. Charlie and I took our horse, Silvermane, and the sulky down early next morning. We couldn't believe our eyes. We had never seen so many rabbits together. They were on top of each other, in the water, some had drowned, others were swimming and more were climbing on the backs of others to get over the fence. There were too many for us to handle so we galloped Silvermane all the way home. They thought we were telling a real tall story and it took quite a bit to convince them that everyone was needed to kill them. If I remember correctly it took us until dinnertime. We had a truck load and the pigs got sick of eating them.

The rabbits were very bad and it seemed we were always fumigating, trapping and using any way we could to cut down the numbers. I remember going ferreting on a Sunday. Bill Green and his family were there with Ted, Don Ayton and their ferrets. We went up along the creek at Joe Jolly's place. There were rabbit holes all along the creek and we didn't have enough nets to put over all the holes. For a start we used sticks to try and hit them as they came out of the holes, but that was not very successful. Bill Green came up with the idea of using copper telephone wire that was left after the telephone lines had been put through. He put slip knots on one end and tied the other end to a peg in the ground. The rabbits came out at such a great rate of knots and did a somersault when they came to the end of the wire.

The ferrets had to have muzzles on so they could not catch the rabbits down the hole. When the ferrets did this they would go to sleep down the hole

and you couldn't get them out. Sometimes they did get the muzzle off and would not come out when you blew the whistle. This happened with one ferret this particular Sunday and in the finish we had to leave it there and go home. It was fairly late; Charlie and I were about to go to bed. Mum, Dad and the Greens were playing cards. There was a scratching noise at the door and when we opened it, in came the ferret. It had walked nearly 2 miles, as the crow flies, which would have been quite a feat for an animal with such tiny legs.²⁵

Apparently those ferrets were none too fussy about what animals they stalked, and caused a bit of a fuss when they got into Williams's chookyard:

Early one morning Mum heard her chooks carrying on a bit and went out to investigate. There was one of the ferrets stalking a hen and Ted and Don betting on the outcome. The ferret was following the hen by smell for they are practically blind in the sunlight. The hen kept sidestepping. It was not a matter if the ferret would catch the hen, but how long it would take. Mum went out and took to Ted and Don with a broom. They had to rescue the ferret from her too. She was really upset!²⁶

While rabbits were certainly vermin and cost farmers a fortune as they competed for water and ate acres of precious crop, they did have some redeeming features. Ted Fitzgerald managed to actually make some money out of the pests:

I fenced the dams in; and water holes, and got a contract to supply some butchers in Perth with them at one shilling and sixpence per pair. I would rail them from Hines Hill twice a week on the Kalgoorlie Express. I used chaff bags with a mallee stick to hang them on: twelve pairs to a bag. The Kalgoorlie Express would go through Hines Hill, three in the morning. They would hang the bags up on hooks in the Guards Van. The rabbits had to be killed and gutted with the skins left on. Cooled off before bagging and then taken sixteen miles on the T Model Ford to Hines Hill. I was getting twenty-seven pounds per week, which was good money in those days. I netted the dam and got thirteen hundred rabbits in one night and for a further two or three weeks I would get 100 or 200 a night until they cut out.²⁷

The sale of rabbit skins brought in a few extra pounds, their fur was used to produce felt for the iconic Akubra and during desperate times they were a valuable source of meat. It seems that not much of the rabbit was wasted:

We would put rabbit skins and fresh mushrooms onto the goods train heading for Perth. The rabbit skins were turned inside out and dried on inverted 'U' shaped fencing wire frames. They were packed in piles of a dozen and tied together with string. In winter the skins would take over a week to dry out, but in summer only a few days. Mum would make rabbit stew with the rabbit meat. We had fun catching rabbits. My brothers would dig them out while I put my hands down a hole to catch them. If I let them escape I would get my ears boxed from my brothers. We used to get threepence or sixpence for each rabbit skin.²⁸

Dick Roddy reckons he was about eleven or twelve years old before he realised there was any other sort of meat in the world. But, try as you might, it is hard to imagine any positive attributes of wild dogs, foxes or dingoes, unless it was the sheer exhilaration of spotlighting.

Tex (Fitzgerald), Charlie (Williams) and I (Harry Williams) decided to go fox hunting. Tex had his dog and gun, and I had Charlie on the pillion of my bike with the spotlight. I also had a holster by the front forks that held my rifle. My dog rode on the petrol tank. We spotted a fox in Murray's and let the dogs go. Charlie kept the spot on the fox. Tex rode right up behind the fox and the dogs. The fox turned and the next thing we saw was Tex running over his dog. Tex flew through the air and landed in a big cloud of dust. The way he was thrown through the air we thought he must have been hurt badly ... On inspection Tex had done a bit of damage to his shoulder where he hit the ground. We thought we'd better go home and try and fix him up. We sneaked into the bathroom. Mum had been against us going shooting on the motorbikes. We were busy trying to get the double-gees out and clean up the wound when she "smelt a rat" and came in to see what was the matter. We got a real roasting.²⁹

There seemed to be no end to the vermin and pests that blighted the lives of early settlers. Annie Wynne wrote to her granddaughter mentioning problems with rabbits, snakes, mice and the ever-present flies. In 1914 a plague of mice chewed holes all through the hessian walls of their house – they took 20 mice at a time from the traps.

There is a school of thought that traps are the perfect place to find mice, because there are places that are far, far worse:

Each afternoon when arriving home from Mangowine School, we would make ourselves something to eat, usually a piece of bread and dripping. One time we had bread and dripping topped off with tomato sauce. Each day that week there was a terrific stink in the kitchen that seemed to get worse as the week went on. We didn't know where the smell was coming from. Around about Thursday when the sauce bottle was only about a quarter full, I looked down the neck of the bottle and I saw a dead mouse, which was almost decomposed and falling apart ... when I tipped the sauce out onto the ground outside the kitchen door we were all vomiting at once. It was probably another twenty years before I ever ate tomato sauce again. God it was tough! These days you'd be counselled for something like that.³⁰

Plagues of mice are one thing, but Snakes of course are a different thing altogether. You don't have to have a plague of snakes – just one is enough to cause sufficient excitement.

Teddy Pick seemed to always get into trouble. Mum told me about the time he was staying with us and he was down the hay shed helping Dad. Suddenly Dad heard him yelling. Teddy had stumbled on a snake and he was running on the spot. The snake was trying to get him. Dad reckoned that Teddy's legs were going so fast that they were a blur. He grabbed Teddy up and ran home with him, where Mum searched all over but could not find a mark on him. Dad always said that Teddy must have been too quick for the snake.

During harvest I often went with Dad to cart in the seconds. One time there was a lot of mice about. Dad always said if there were mice about there could be snakes. I was on the truck and Dad was on the ground. We were nearly to the last few bags when Dad gave a bit of a yell. He dropped his pants and ripped off his shirt. All the time dancing around the truck. It worked out he felt something go up his leg and thought it was a snake. By the time he got his pants off, it had got under his shirt ... he was standing in the paddock in his long johns ... the mouse was still running!

When I was in my teens Ted, Don and I were carting hay. Don was pitching. Ted was stacking and I was driving the horses. Ted and Don were always competing against each other. Don was trying to snow Ted under with hay and Ted would make out he was having no trouble keeping up. Don tossed a sheaf up and yelled, "Snake coming up". Ted thought he was joking but



Stack Building on the Dawe Property at Burrans Rock

after a few seconds realised that there was a snake in the sheaf. Don was laughing like hell, but he soon changed his tune when Ted pitched the snake back at him.³¹

It is important to be able to think quickly in a crisis as Ernie Masters discovered

when he was called to flush out a snake that had taken up a position in their backyard dunny on the farm at Knungajin. Snatching up a nearby can of petrol he tossed it over the recalcitrant reptile, following the douche with a hastily lit match. His stratagem worked. It certainly got rid of the snake, and it didn't take that long to build a new outhouse.

Rural life certainly presented many challenges. Edward Ford was a permanent clerk at Parliament house when he decided to take advantage of the Civil Servants Land Settlement Scheme. He was allotted a block immediately west of Danberrin Rock and took up his land in mid-October 1909.³² The next year when his eldest son Edward Robert, 'Teddie', was only just ten years old he was left to put the crop in on his own when his father was taken ill.³³ Our pioneers and their families were desperate and determined to succeed.



Stack Building with the Wynne Girls

Perhaps it was a combination of the architectural styles of the early days, the shortage of water and the lack of fire-fighting equipment (or something else entirely!), but during a ten-year period from 1922, there was a series of devastating fires in the Nungarin township:

January 26th – Disastrous Fire at Nungarin – Two stores and a house were gutted, resulting in serious loss and damage. What must be classed as one of the most dangerous fires in a country district known to the history of Western Australia occurred at Nungarin on Tuesday evening, when the large store of Messrs Thomas and Thick, and the commodious premises and Managers residence of the Nungarin Co-op were burnt to the ground, damage being done to the extent of £10,000.

The news filtered through to Merredin on Wednesday morning and a Mercury reporter motored to Nungarin, where he found where once two fine stores were situated, nothing but cinders and charred remains are left.

The fire of unknown origin started at about 9 pm in the Thomas and Thick store and evidently obtained a secure hold before being noticed. The flames had with incredible speed devoured the first store, consumed Mr Harper's residence and finally gutted the Co-op's premises.

The Co-op will carry on a temporary business in the Nungarin Hall while Messrs Thomas and Thick will utilise make-shift premises for the time being. The Post Office will be situated in the Railway Station shed.³⁴

Eighteen months later there was another fire:

July 4th – Blaze at Nungarin – Between nine and ten o'clock on Monday evening the residents of Nungarin were presented with some excitement in the shape of a fire when the premises of Mr H.D. Thomas were destroyed including all stock. The books have fortunately been saved. The auditors were at the time busy on the books and they were not on the premises, and the firm's accountant had the other books at his private residence making out the monthly statements.

The Manager of the firm, Mr Tom Thick, last Saturday defeated Mr Herbert in the disputed Road Board elections.

Further particulars: On Monday last Mr Thomas Thick the Manager, with

an auditor who had been going through the stock, left the store and went into the formers residence almost adjoining to continue work with the accounts. An hour or so afterwards about 9.15 pm a cry of "fire" was raised and Mr Thick on running into the store found the ceiling on fire and the lower part filled with smoke. People gathered and removed by hand all the furniture. The damage altogether is estimated between six and seven thousand pounds and is said to be mainly, but not entirely, carried by insurance. The origin of the fire is attributed to the fusing of wires belonging to the electric light.³⁵

The year following the arrival of the Courtney family in 1929, there was a house fire opposite the Anglican Rectory in First Avenue and the Reverend Guy Courtney's daughter, Auriel, remembered watching the flames:

At the age of six and a half I sat on the front verandah of the Rectory at Nungarin and watched the house opposite burn down ... My mother and father rushed across the road to do what they could. The wooden house burned well and great orange flames flared against the night sky and there was a hiss and crack as the windows were melted by the heat. With the occupants safe and very little water with which to tackle the blaze, efforts were directed to saving the trees around the house which were less easily replaced than the house itself. My recollection is that the owner was a Mr Sirr, the local barber.³⁶

Co-incidentally, it was only a few years later that another Rector's daughter remembered watching a different fire from the same front verandah. This time it was the Reilly's home on the corner of First Avenue and Mitchell Terrace. Flo Little recalled: "I remember a house on the other side of the church which went on fire and there was great anxiety to ensure that the church was not endangered".³⁷

In spite of the mysterious conflagrations, the Nungarin district saw much progress: one of the most important being the completion of the North-Eastern Districts Water Scheme. The hardships and restrictions of water shortage in the northern districts were addressed when the new scheme was opened on October 26th, 1929. A block of land at Barbalin, which was owned by Jane Adams of Mangowine, had been resumed for the scheme. Three reservoirs were built; one at Barbalin holding 32 million gallons, one at Waddouring holding 23 million gallons, and one at Knungajin holding 9 million gallons of water. Catchment walls were constructed around the granite rocks to catch water run-off and channel it into huge dams. The water was pumped up



Bob Field and team working on the construction of Barbalin Dam

to the tanks on top of each of the rocks, from where water gravitated through pipes that served three railway centres, seven small towns, and 332 farms. The miracle of water flowing at the turn of a tap was beyond the wildest of dreams. The State Premier, the Hon. Phillip Collier, opened the scheme at Barbalin during the afternoon, and Jane Adams was guest of honour at a special dinner

held in Nungarin that night.^{38, 39}

During the nineteen-twenties and with increasing development and mechanisation, more families were attracted to the wheatbelt. A local correspondent waxed lyrical about agricultural prospects in the district (but not about the roads!):

Situated along the South side of Lake Brown, in the vicinity of Knungajin and Talgomine Rocks is one of the finest stretches of country in the sunny West ... Each year this area has become more closely settled and is a striking illustration of the Soldier Settlement Scheme methods as compared with the old system of dumming and holding big areas.

Each of the two rocks and the rugged South shore of Lake Brown, must, in the very near future, become the rendezvous of pleasure seekers and picnickers, as they are all ideal pleasure resorts, and with better roads will be most accessible to such centres as Merredin, Nungarin, Newcarrie and Kununoppin.

The district became practically deserted during the war, and most of the settlers who did not join up took up the vacant blocks nearer the railway, and the deserted holdings became the home of the rabbit, grasshopper, cut worm and dingoes ...

Now that we have become a live wheat producing community, we are sadly puzzled. Owing to our isolation from the railway we want to know how we are going to get our wheat to market. The Nungarin Road Board until recently have apparently forgotten that we had any claim to the judicious expenditure of a fair proportion of rates and taxes. A movement was afoot last year to request the Industries Assistance Board to refrain from paying the rates of Soldier Settlers, until some guarantee was given by the Road Board, as letters and even petitions to the certain necessary improvements, did not even receive the courtesy of a reply. We haven't given up, we will try again.

The Roddy family moved from Kenwick to take up land north-west of Nokaning (20 kms from Nungarin) in November 1928, and even though they did not have the same problems as the earlier pioneers, life still had its privations:

Apart from a small 2-bedroom, galvanised iron roofed house with a dining room, kitchen, bathroom and a covered porch at the rear, there was little else. Scheme water was available from a 5-inch main some 10 yards to the front gate, and a 10,000-gallon tank collected rainwater run-off from the tin roof. Laundry facilities consisted of a large copper resting on iron bars on two hobs outside in the back yard, plus assorted tubs, a washboard etc which we probably took with us. Machinery included a 10-disc Sundercut plough, a four or five furrow mouldboard plough, a 30-tyne cultivator, a similar seed-drill, and a 10-foot-cut Shearer harvester – known far and wide as “The Horse Killer”. The plant in general was described by the agent as “old but workable” – a bank euphemism for “clapped out”. So there we were on the edge of nowhere, and ready to start a new life.⁴⁰

As the farm became established and we had begun to grow wheat and assembled a reasonable stock of sheep, pigs, poultry and other edibles, to our great joy we no longer had to rely on just about living on rabbits ... we killed a wether every Friday night, and during the hotter weather shared the meat with a neighbour as the only system of keeping anything fresh for a time was by Coolgardie safe ... It was a sight to behold when Dad cut down the previous night's sheep carcass ... all this accompanied by the fourteen cats we had at the time – all eagerly waiting for any scraps which fell their way ... We had a fair supply of piglets which supplemented the

meat requirements ... There was also a good flock of chooks and turkeys so I guess we didn't do too badly.

On rare occasions we would kill one of the larger pigs – a baconer – and Dad would set about producing bacon and ham. One half of the beast we would eat fresh, while Dad would immerse the other half in a brine solution which was contained in the lower half of a very large wine cask holding over 100 gallons of brine. Each week he would remove the half-side from the brine and rub coarse salt into the flesh and rind. After several weeks of this treatment the meat was ready to be hung in the smokehouse, but we didn't have one. This lack of the proper facility was overcome by the application of "bottled smoke", a pungent liquid rubbed into the carcass ... the leg would be eaten as ham, while the mid-section and forequarter produced beautiful bacon. I tell you, a couple of rashers of this for breakfast – cut about a quarter of an inch thick – with 2 or 3 eggs and toast, and one was ready to plough the top paddock and gave one the feeling that it would not be necessary to mess around with the horse-team!

There was a flourmill in Merredin, so it was relatively easy to take a few bags of wheat to the mill and exchange it for flour. Mum used to bake our own bread – six big loaves at a time, and a brew of yeast was always ready for the next batch ... One of the more unusual producers of a supplement to our meagre rations was a "Vinegar Plant" ... it closely resembled a cross between some varieties of seaweed and a lamb's fry, but produced very good vinegar after regularly being fed with brown sugar and water.⁴¹

Harry Williams shared his memories of helping to kill and dress a pig, a process fraught with excitement:

Several times a year Dad killed a pig and we all had a hand in scraping the bristles off it. It was fairly easy if you could get the water at just the right temperature. Dad had a method to test the water. By placing some blood from the pig into the water he could tell whether the water was too cold or too hot, just by what the blood did.

One day he killed this fairly big baconer. I think he must have cut its throat as the pig dropped immediately. He hardly moved. We put him into a wheelbarrow and carted him under the tree where the sheep were killed.

Dad had an old tin bath for scalding pigs. It was one of those with the ends riveted and soldered in. Mum had the copper boiling and we carried buckets of boiling water over to put in the bath. When dad had got the water to the temperature he wanted they lifted the pig out of the barrow and dropped him into the bath. The pig suddenly came to life (momentarily) and kicked the ends out of the bath. We lost all the water. We had to reboil the water in the copper and tried to scald the pig in half a forty-four gallon drum which was not very easy. It wasn't a very good scald. Dad even tried to take the bristles off with his cut-throat razor. He said the one that ate the most pork ate the most bristles.

Les Wynne remembered the hard, unrelenting work involved in pioneer farming, and how, even as a young lad, he was very much aware of the hardships and sacrifice and the underlying fear of losing their home and livelihood:

Times were very hard and even as a small child I was very conscious of our precarious foothold on the property and of the pain of the poverty we had to endure. Anxiety was ever present. Dad didn't have a tractor until some time during the war, so it was horse teams to haul the machinery. He was a good horseman – could ride a horse and drive a team and kept his horses and harness in excellent condition. When younger he and mates rode horses through the bush chasing kangaroos and felling them with a stirrup whilst in full gallop. But horses were limited in value. Much of the best crop had to be cut for hay to feed them when they were working, and when they weren't. Much of the hay had to be cut for chaff and bran, oat grain and other additives included in their food if they were to be of real use. There was always the danger of sore shoulders, feet and legs, and stomach aches as well. Some horses were dangerous to handle and woe betide the farmer who became careless when attending to them.

Dad arose before light in the working season to feed and brush down the horses and partly harness them – winkers and collars. As children we used to hear him scraping the ash out of the kitchen stove, lighting it up, and then smell the bacon and eggs cooking. Then the working man would come from milking the cow and we could hear him turning the hand separator to get the cream from the milk. The bread which was kneaded the night before, was in tins on the hob around the stove, and would go into the oven when it had risen and the stove was hot. Green lucerne was cut and chopped finely to be

added to a wet mash of crushed grain, bran, pollard and other additives for the fowls, which were fed before taking the horses to the plough. The horses were worked until midday, when they were taken out of their harness, fed, rubbed down and rested. They were then reharnessed and put back into the plough for the second shift. Teams varied according to the load to pull. Dad nearly always had eight to ten horses, as I remember. Around sundown the horses would be taken out and released, when they galloped hell bent for the stables where they first drank and then went into their own stalls for food and for the harness to be removed. The sweat and dust was washed off and they were thoroughly rubbed down, particular attention being given to the neck and shoulders, legs and hooves. Each horse's food was ready in a four-gallon bucket. All this had to be done, the cow milked again, milk separated, fowls locked up to be safe from the foxes, and buckets refilled for the horse – all before coming in for dinner at night. When the horses were on heavy work they had to be given a second feed late at night.

The best that could be said of those “good old days” was that if you worked hard enough and didn't break your back, then you “ate well”.⁴²

Bob Hinge remembered the parrot pies his mother used to make. He reckons the ratio of bones to meat was disproportionate and they spent more time picking out the bones than eating. The family called them ‘Aggravation Pies’.

Eating well and keeping food fresh was a problem as there was no refrigeration, and it didn't take too long for meat to go rotten on a warm day. The ‘Coolgardie safe’, which worked on the principal of cooling from evaporation, was relied on to keep food cool, but even that had a battle during the sweltering summer weather. Housewives learnt to wipe a joint with a cloth soaked in vinegar if the meat was looking a bit “green”. You couldn't afford to be squeamish. Bert Wynne remembered his mother hanging the meat in a chaff bag with hoops sewn inside to form a cage to keep the flies from making contact through the hessian. Hung somewhere to catch a breeze - usually on a shaded verandah – the meat would keep for no more than a week, then it would have to be cooked and the family would eat cold meat and potatoes for a while. Charlie Elkins, who lived a reclusive life in the bush on Phil Cornish's property near Knungajin, used to bury a whole side of mutton and maintained that it kept quite well for several weeks in the coolness of the earth. If by some strange chance Charlie got a dose of what he called “pot-o-main” poisoning⁴³, he had a sure fire cure: drink half a bottle of whisky straight off, and thereafter drink half of what remained in the bottle

each successive day until the last mouthful. It certainly worked for Charlie who lived to the ripe old age of 102.

Neville Adams recounted an experience that illustrates just how hardened some folk became with trying to cope with the difficult conditions:

Once when I went with my older brother, Charlie, in the horse and cart to Barbalin when I was only about six and we had dinner at Mr George Clamp's house. His wife, Minnie, gave us a small amount of tinned meat each ('Camp pie' I think it was), which must have been sitting on the table for a while after being opened because we both noticed there were small maggots on it. I wasn't game to say anything, but Charlie spoke up and said, "Mrs Clamp, this meat's got maggots on it." To which she answered, "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought I'd brushed them all off!"⁴⁴

Fred Williams used to hang any meat he had in the tent away from the ants. One day he came home to find a dingo trying to get it. He grabbed the rifle, a single shot 23 sporting rifle, and by the time he had a shot at it, it was about 200 yards away. He dropped it with one shot.

Many families relied on kangaroo meat, which usually smelled and tasted strongly of the bush that was their main source of sustenance. Hunting for kangaroo meat was a usual weekend pastime, and many farmers used dogs to help run the animals down. Bert Wynne recalled a story about a kangaroo hunt that didn't quite go as expected:

Dad had gone off with the neighbours hunting, and had rounded up a roo which ran off with the dog in hot pursuit. The roo ran to a tree in Grandad's front yard and bailed up against a large salmon gum. To my uncle he said, "Come on Harry, we'll have this one". They grabbed a stick each and there they were, savage dog, very savage roo and Harry on one side and Grandad on the other. Harry stepped in and swung his stick at the roo, but the roo ducked and Grandad didn't. Harry flattened his father and then there was a sticky situation with the roo, savage still, and the dog wondering what it should do, and Harry wondering how he was going to get his father out from under the roo, and what he would say when he woke up. They all survived I believe.⁴⁵

As a result of generally better seasons during the twenties, the Agricultural Bank was inspired to extend loans to farmers for clearing, fencing and new machinery. With confidence born of hard work, experience and a generous bank, more farmers

began to embrace mechanisation and Hart Parr and Fordson tractors began to appear, although the Dawe family at Burran Rock had owned a 25 horsepower International Titan D tractor as early as 1912. There were some folk like Harry Williams who couldn't wait to see the faithful old horse teams pensioned off:

Next year Dad and Ted decided it was time I drove the team. This team of horses was made of light draft horses and they were very speedy. The first couple of laps in the morning I had to wrap the reins around my hands, brace my feet on a shaft that was supposed to have a steering wheel on it and pull like hell to stop them from breaking into a trot. One morning it was a bit cool and I was having trouble with the sample. I had reins wrapped around one hand and one foot up on the bar and trying to adjust the machine. The offside wheel hit a big stump and the main swing broke in half. The horses went forward into a trot and then a gallop. I was pulled over the front and dragged. I had a horse in the centre called Lanky. At one time he had a feed of wheat and got foundered. He was always a bit stiff and couldn't gallop. He was put in the centre to try and hold the other horse back. He was the one that saved the day. His winkers came off and the chains and swings caught him in the hind legs. He sat on the swings. The rest of the team dragged him for a while but eventually stopped. The team went through the crop for about five or seven hundred yards. From that time on I vowed that the first opportunity I would get a tractor. At least I could stop the bloody thing.

The next excitement was when my left-hand rein broke coming down the last side towards the dump of wheat. When the sun was almost setting the horses would be in a go-slow mode until they turned the last corner heading towards the dump. Then they would go like hell hoping to knock off. When the rein broke I could not hold them and they started to trot. I thought the AL [harvester] was going to fly to bits. As it was I blew all the wheat out the back. When they came to the dump of bags they just pulled in as though I was driving them. They stopped at the right place.⁴⁶

The Roddy boys probably caused their father to feel slightly less enchanted about the joys of being in the saddle:

During the drought in about 1940, twin brother Jim and I used to move the sheep to paddocks where there was enough picking to keep them alive. This was a daily chore which we had to do on alternate days. On the way

home, to relieve the boredom, we trained the saddle-horse to walk a couple of furlongs, trot a couple, canter a couple and then break into a gallop for a couple more. Dad decided one day that he would do the sheep moving, unaware of the training we had given the mare. On his return that evening, having been caught unawares by the sudden change of gait, he fixed us with a threatening glare and demanded; "What have you two young buggers been doing to that horse?" We found something to do in the back paddock.⁴⁷

For some folk, the transition from horses to tractors took some getting used to. Kelvin Adams remembered when their neighbour, Mr Hocking, bought his first tractor and got caught in a clay patch. "He tried to change gear, but the tractor kept reversing. He was calling out, 'whoa boy! Whoa!' Completely forgetting he wasn't driving his horses"⁴⁸.

Salesmen were always on the lookout for extra business, and when Mr Putland ('Old Putt' as he was known), brought a tractor salesman out to see Monty Sainsbury at Knungajin with a view to a profitable sale, he got more than he bargained for. Monty was an inveterate talker, and very proud of his old Munktell tractor, so launched into a spiel on the virtues of his wonderful machine: it had 3 gears, and operated at a top speed of 3 mph etc etc. After quite some time the men left Monty to his eulogy and returned to Nungarin. Putt enquired of the salesman, "How did you go?" The salesman replied, "I'm not sure whether I've sold a tractor or bought one!"⁴⁹

Working with horses may have been physically demanding, but there was always the opportunity for a bit of fun if conditions and personalities permitted:

The wagon that we carted with in those days was classed as a 200 bag wagon. For carting hay Dad had made extensions on the sides and a frame front and back. When it was fully loaded it looked like a small haystack. It was pulled by four horses in double pairs. I never saw the wagon being loaded with wheat, but Dad said they had the horse specially trained. He had a chain fastened to his collar with the other end fastened to a pivoting pole. A cradle was on one end of the pole to hold the bag of wheat. The horse would walk forward as far as a mark on the ground and stop. The stacker would take the bag off then call to the horse which would back-up ready for the next bag. Dad said that after a time the horse used to work without being told.

Tex Fitzgerald and I were carting hay. I usually stacked the hay on the horse-mobile and built the haystack. Tex decided he could load the horse-mobile as well as I could. Now there was an unwritten law that whoever stacked the hay had to sit on top all the way back to the hay yard. Tex had done a fair job with the hay and I reckoned that I was not going to hear the end of it if he got back without dropping any off. At the last bend I was getting pretty desperate. The horses were just trotting along so I speeded them up a bit and took the corner a bit sharp. I lost half the load and Tex with it. When Dad saw the mess he was not very pleased. Tex blamed me and I thought if Tex had stacked properly it should have stayed there.⁵⁰

However fractious horses can be, it is an ill wind that blows nobody some good, and the Dobra brothers had resourcefully managed to work out a way to “up-cycle” some equine by-product. At a time when most farmers had an abundance of horse manure on their properties, the Dobras came up to Nungarin each summer and collected anywhere between 50 and 80 tons of manure for use in their market garden at Spearwood. On one particular occasion they had loaded up several railway wagons and filled out the consignment note to be left at the unattended siding. A local wag took the opportunity to alter the cards and re-consign the whole lot to Michelides, tobacco merchants and cigarette manufacturers in Perth.⁵¹

Gradually the hard work and sacrifices made by Nungarin’s pioneer farmers were beginning to pay off. Increasingly large areas were being cropped and wheat prices were good. Slowly but surely, it seemed that a town and a community was emerging. The Nungarin Hall had been built in 1918, and with the creation of the Nungarin Road Board, the little weatherboard office was constructed in 1922. 1923 saw the first policeman stationed in Nungarin, and the post office became “official”.

The *Western Mail* featured a full-page report on the success of development in the Nungarin township:

In view of the comparatively recent growth of the town, its present status is highly creditable. The first feature to strike the attention of the visitor is the new hotel, the construction of which cost about £12,000 and equipment, furnishing and other expenditure amounted to some £4,000. Whatever he apparent prospects for the district, the outlay of such a large sum in the town represents stability. In the last two years other buildings have been erected at a total cost of at least £3,670. Of earlier construction is the

public hall, a commodious and well designed building which with equipment cost £2,300. The greater sports ground and show ground of 91 ½ acres is a revelation in the products of self-help. A couple of months ago the site was scrub. Now the whole has been cleared, graded and laid out with permanent improvements which are substantial. There are many pens for every class of stock, including stables for dozens of horses, a thoroughly equipped refreshment room of large dimensions, other buildings for race meetings and agricultural show purposes, a double fenced racing track, and provision for football and cricket as well as four tennis courts. The improvements are estimated to be worth £1,250 – an amazing achievement for such a community in so brief a period. The voluntary work by the women has been so extensive, however, to be beyond estimation.⁵²

The future looked bright, but Australia and the world were soon to be plunged into a depression that would suffocate and defeat thousands of battlers and businesses.

The supply of wheat on the world market was beginning to outstrip demand, and the price started to spiral downwards. The amount paid for grain dropped so far that it was hardly worth harvesting: from five shillings a bushel in 1929 it finally reached rock bottom at 2/2 per bushel in January 1931, and did not cover the costs of production. At first the Government felt the answer lay in expanding production, and a “Grow More Wheat” campaign was promoted. Unfortunately settlers had invested everything in establishing their properties and had no reserves. They were crippled with the costs involved in increasing the acreage of crop, as well as the burden of servicing existing debt. For the nation it was a disaster: for farmers battling in a wheat industry still trying to find its feet it was a catastrophe.

A letter which appeared in the *Primary Producer* newspaper in June 1930 expresses the general sentiments of the state’s beleaguered farmers:

Regarding the Federal Government’s slogan ‘Grow More Wheat’, I am of the opinion that they should have included ‘and grow more debt!’ It must appear obvious that the wheat growing community is in a parlous plight. They must be aware also that the amount of their proposed guarantee is Below The Cost Of Production, and owing to the system of abnormally high production, it is utterly impossible for the wheat growers to lower that cost.⁵³

Survival strategies were diverse. Some factions became involved in pressure groups to try and obtain a fair price for grain, some directed their efforts to reducing production costs, some lobbied Government for supportive legislation, some were driven to increase returns by underhand means, and some had no option other than to walk off their farms without any return for their years of hard work.

In times of crisis, there always seem to be men who will come forward to motivate and to lead. John Mulqueeny, who farmed at Lake Brown, was one not accustomed to blindly accepting difficulties without a fight, and not a person overly intimidated by authority. He was an educated man, and an eloquent and charismatic speaker with intelligent and benign features that inspired confidence. He had a well-deserved reputation for community involvement; having served as the Lake Brown representative on the Nungarin Road Board from 1927 until 1932 at which time he was elected as an inaugural member of the newly formed Mukinbudin Road Board. His early activities included support for the North-Eastern Districts Water Scheme and the extension of the railway line from Lake Brown to Bullfinch. He served as a Justice of the Peace, and was President of the Lake Brown Progress Association, President of the Mukinbudin Agricultural Society, President of the Northern Districts Cricket Association and an active supporter of the football club. He had been a keen footballer, and played competitively right into his 40s.

Mulqueeny had enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in Perth on the 10th May 1915, and his service record seems to indicate a character that was not constrained by rules and regulations, but also one that could be courageous and determined when necessary. Only 3 months after enlistment he must have had second thoughts and promptly deserted. He surrendered two years later, and at the following court martial he was awarded detention with the offer of a waiver if he accepted immediate embarkation. He was sent to the 22nd Battalion and deserted again on the 25th June 1917, re-appearing a few days later when he was admitted sick to the 8th Australian General Hospital. A couple of weeks afterwards he went absent without leave until 17th August. On 30th October he finally embarked for England with the 51st Infantry Battalion. In England he was hospitalised for 3 weeks with a dislocated shoulder, eventually leaving for France on 1st April. He had hardly been in France any time at all when he was found absent from parade on 16th April and sentenced to seven days "Field Punishment No. 2" (heavy labour).

It was probably Mulqueeny's very first day back in the field when he was part of a group that wiped out several German machine gun posts during the Allied attacks on Villers Bretonneux. Lieutenant Sadlier was awarded the Victoria Cross, and Sergeant

Stokes the Distinguished Conduct Medal for their part in that same skirmish.⁵⁴ The next day, on 25th April, Mulqueeny was wounded with shrapnel to his right arm and right knee and evacuated to England. After recuperation he was sent back to France on 6th September and rejoined his unit. When operations ceased he returned to England, and arrived back at Fremantle on 1st June 1919.⁵⁵

After the War, Mulqueeny took up land at Lake Brown under the Soldier Settlement Scheme. He was a great supporter of the RSL and held office in the Eastern Districts Returned and Services League. He attended the State RSL Conference in Perth in October 1930 where he claimed that the Soldier Settlement Scheme was a failure with only 2566 of the original 5688 veterans remaining on their blocks: less than half the initial number. He was critical of men being allocated land in marginal rainfall areas, and without adequate soil testing and support. With the onset of the depression, these men had been encouraged by the Government to “grow more wheat”, and had been promised subsidies which had not been forthcoming.

Mulqueeny was also a member of the Australian Labor Party, and in the March 1930 elections he unsuccessfully contested the seat of Mt Marshall as the Labor Party candidate.⁵⁶

When the Government refused to pass the proposed Federal Wheat Marketing Bill, which would have guaranteed a wheat price of four shillings per bushel, desperate farmers came together in an urgent call for action. Meetings were held throughout the central wheatbelt, with one marathon meeting at Merredin lasting for about 13 hours. John Mulqueeny was at the forefront of factions critical of the inaction of the Primary Producers' Association (PPA), and called for the formation of a Wheatgrowers' Union.⁵⁷ The new organisation was officially formed on 14th November 1930, with John Mulqueeny as the inaugural President.



John Mulqueeny
[Picture courtesy Battye Library⁵⁸]

A massive meeting was held in Northam in April 1931, at which members debated the options of amalgamating the Primary Producer's Association of WA (PPA) and the Wheatgrowers Union (WGU).

Approximately 600 growers from all over the state attended, and discussion became fairly animated (or as the *Primary Producer* reported: “disorder occasionally occurred”). At one stage John Mulqueeny addressed the meeting as reported in the *Primary Producer*:

...Farmers had to consider means of reducing costs, and it would be impossible to get any help from the present PPA because it was composed of men with conflicting interests, who considered their own interests before those of the farmers (applause!) It was necessary to get away from these men, whose commercial and financial interests induced them to exploit the farmers, although some of them grew wheat as a hobby. (laughter) It was also necessary to eliminate the thousands of men who got money from the industry although they produced no wheat.⁵⁹

The Deputy Premier, Mr Latham, Minister for Lands and Leader of the Country Party braved the meeting, and did nothing to assuage the mood of the frustrated farmers:

Here was a rare opportunity for Mr Latham in any or all of his capacities in which he serves, to have made a statesmanlike utterance, to have soared above any common bitterness and to have transcended into the realms of the grandeur of the public platform, to have, in short, lifted that unique gathering out of itself. Instead, he ascended the stage and commenced a tirade in the vituperative style which will not be accepted by any self-respecting person. Mr Latham throughout his appalling outburst attacked members of the WGU in what can only be described as the most palpable bad taste. His stressing of even the most obvious, that, “if you had still been getting 4/- a bushel for your wheat, you would not be here”, was said with such bitterness that his audience showed resentment by uproar. It is gratifying to know that this tolerant audience did not retort with – “and, if you were not getting your thousand a year as a minister you would not be here either!”

We are accustomed to the bad temper of Mr WG Burgess of the PPA Executive and making allowances for that gentleman’s inherent failing, but Mr Latham was meant for better things. His invariable tendency to run amok, however, disqualifies him as one who can be accepted as an intermediary in the existing situation. In future the PPA would be well advised to, leave Mr Latham at home.⁶⁰

Obviously reported by a WGU sympathiser!

Letter to the Editor of the *Primary Producer* newspaper December 1930

I. M. Harrassed writes: For the following reasons I am unable to send you the cheque you asked for. I have been held up, held down, sandbagged, sat upon, flattened out and squeezed by the Income Tax, Super Tax, the Tobacco Tax, the Beer Tax, the Spirits Tax and by every other society organisation and club that the inventive mind of men can think of, to extract what I may or may not have in my possession from the Red Cross, the Black Cross, the Double Cross and every hospital in Town and Country.

The Government has governed my business till I don't know who owns it. I am inspected, suspected, examined and re-examined, informed, required and commanded, so that I don't know who I am, or whether I am here at all.

All I know is that I am supposed to be an inexhaustible supply of money for every need, desire, or hope of this human race. Because I will not go out and beg, borrow or steal money to give away, I am cursed, discussed, boycotted, talked to, talked about, lied to, lied about, held up, hung up, robbed and damned near ruined.

The only reason I am clinging to life at all is to see what the hell is going to happen next.

Signed – ‘Your Average Farmer’

Mulqueeny travelled to Melbourne in March 1931 and founded the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation, which gave the organisation nationwide influence and credibility. He advocated withholding wheat until a guaranteed price was obtained, but at first farmers were too conservative for such radical action and it wasn't until a meeting held at Kununoppin in 1932 (once again with Mulqueeny in the chair) that members voted 117 to 14 in favour of a wheat embargo. Even then there was not universal support. A meeting at Trayning a few weeks later acknowledged that the decision to strike should be up to the individual, and voted to resume wheat deliveries. Immediately a contingent of the more radical members sprang into action and 150 pickets came from throughout the district to stop grain being unloaded from farmers' trucks. There were some farmers who needed the money so desperately that they couldn't support the strike, and others equally desperate who just couldn't sit back and do nothing. Feelings ran high and bags of wheat were slashed at several sidings. At Nukarni several hundred wheat bags were slashed as they were stacked

waiting to be carted, and as a result, Police had to be stationed at some railway sidings as a precautionary measure.

... at Nukarni they emptied the bags of wheat out of the railway trucks on to the ground. One farmer had a big G.M.C. truck and they let all the tyres down because he would not stop carting wheat to the siding. Also about three farms in the Nokaning area had big dumps of harvested wheat, and some person or persons one night went and slashed all the bags of wheat down the sides with a sharp instrument and let all the wheat run on the ground because they did not stop carting.⁶¹

About 12.15 am on Tuesday morning two car loads of men arrived along the back road – the cars travelling without headlights. Upon arrival at the Siding the men immediately rushed up to one of the loaded trucks and commenced throwing the bags to the ground. Immediately the Police made their appearance and the men ran in all directions, but Constable Chedzey was successful in securing three who gave their name and addresses. A fourth man next morning admitted being present.

Thirty-four bags were thrown off, eleven which burst. Although ten pickets were present on Tuesday morning, carting proceeded without incident.

As we go to press we obtained information from a reliable source to the effect that some time last night Maughan Brothers of Nukarni had 400 bags of wheat slashed open in their paddocks. Mr George Smith, in the same district also had between 400-500 bags slashed in the paddock. Sergeant Smith immediately proceeded to the outrage and is making investigations.

Dec 22nd. At the Merredin Police Court yesterday before Messrs WF Telfer and CN Spargo JPs, the following cases were dealt with. James S. Priestley (Jun), Arthur W. Johnson, Leslie A. Dolton and Joseph Smith were charged with trespassing on railway property at Nukarni on Tuesday 13th December. The defendants pleaded guilty. The bench decided that as the accused had pleaded guilty and some had travelled long distances to deal with the case, a fine of £2 and 9/- costs in default 7 days imprisonment was inflicted in each case.⁶²

In Nungarin a farmer south of the town was involved in some hot-headed action, and according to a local source, he “skipped the country one step ahead of the police”.⁶³ In

spite of a few passionate incidents, there was not total support: the strike movement collapsed and was eventually called off on December 15th. However settlers were becoming increasingly desperate, and the proposal was never completely dismissed. In July 1933 a “Hold Up” Committee was formed and the Nungarin Wheatgrowers’ Union were asked to vote on whether, if it were the policy of the Union to conduct a hold up of wheat from October 1st, would they support it. Twenty-two members indicated that they would.

Over the next few years, various strategies were discussed at Nungarin Wheatgrower meetings: That farmers would only grow sufficient wheat for their own use; that unless three shillings per bushel was guaranteed, no wheat at all would be grown in the 1934/5 season; that “when all information was to hand, a system of organising will be put in hand and other necessary action taken” – which all sounded rather threatening, but most growers were by their very nature a conservative bunch, and more inclined to debate and reason rather than to take radical action. In May 1934 the Branch unanimously carried the motion that they were not in favour of a wheat hold-up as it was not practicable in Nungarin, or at any other siding where bulk handling was established, and again in August they decided that a wheat hold up was unlikely as the State Government was presenting a Bill to Parliament that would be “favourable to farmers generally”. If only it had been.⁶⁴

Farmers facing ruin had to reduce costs if they were to have any chance of trading out of debt. Growers and grain merchants were well aware of the inefficiencies involved in the handling of bagged grain. In his history of Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited, Cyril Ayris explained:

In 1930-31 there was a record 1.5 million tonne crop yet the remaining stalwart growers received less income than ten years earlier when the crop was a quarter of the size. Those who had received an advance from private buyers discovered to their horror that the advance was more than their wheat was worth and they had to pay back the difference.

Figures showed that one-quarter of the total return from the crop left the country in the cost of buying bags. Worse still, handling and distribution costs had increased 300 per cent in two years.

In 1931 the Farmers’ Debts Adjustment Act was introduced which allowed bankrupt farmers to continue working their properties, albeit under the supervision of their creditors.

The situation was as complicated as it was chaotic. Adding to the woes was the grain handling system that was labour intensive and expensive.

Jute bags had to be filled by hand in the paddock then carefully sewn closed with needle and twine. The bag was then manually hoisted into a wagon for transport to the nearest siding where it was unloaded and weighed before being stacked ready for out-loading on to railway wagons.

The bag of wheat was railed to Fremantle's North Wharf where it was again stacked and weighed before being lumped on to a ship for stacking in the hold. The only mechanical assistance in the entire process might have been the derricks and winches used to lift the slings of 11 bags from the wharf to the ship.

Bag elevators, conveyors and chutes were being slowly introduced but it remained a time-and-motion nightmare. It still took up to 10 days to load 96,000 bags (8000 tonnes) and all the time, the cost was being exacerbated by bags being attacked by mice and rats or just wearing out.⁶⁵

As the major wheat buyer, Wesfarmers investigated the problems associated with storage and management, and in the 1931-32 season, initiated a scheme for the bulk handling of grain. Five experimental horizontal storage bins were established in the Wyalkatchem area; at Benjaberring, Korrelocking, Nembudding, Yelbeni and Trayning⁶⁶. Bulk handling facilities were established at Nungarin a few months later in time for the 1933 harvest.

Even with the introduction of bulk handling, there were still problems. The construction program was massive and specialist gangs were engaged throughout the wheatbelt:

CBH men worked in small gangs, each responsible for a stage of construction. 'Concrete' gangs of about ten men cleared the scrub in readiness for excavation then collected aggregate from local gravel pits for screening and loading with shovels. 'Cutting-out gangs' unloaded building materials and cut timber. They were followed by 'erection gangs' which built the pre-curved corrugated iron walls. When the walls were up 'floor gangs' took over the final job of laying the floor, elevator tracks and bitumen.⁶⁷

The floors of the supplementary storage bins at Mukinbudin were not completely sealed with bitumen, and summer rains flooded the bulkheads and spoiled the grain.⁶⁸ The smell of the fermenting grain was sickening, and has been cited as the reason the bulkheads are usually referred to as 'pig pens'. Through the Wheatgrowers' Union (W.G.U.), John Mulqueeny called for more efficient construction methods for grain storage and protested that the resultant dockage for damaged grain was unfair to growers. The W.G.U also lobbied Government to express dissatisfaction with the proposal to grant a monopoly to operate the bulk-handling scheme, and called for more grower control of the whole bulk-handling system.

Nevertheless, the 1935 Royal Commission on Bulk Handling found that the new system produced a saving of two and a half pence per bushel. H.J. Shadbolt claimed a saving of two pence per bushel as well as other indirect benefits which included having his paddocks cleared more quickly which made feed available earlier for stock, and getting the harvest in before the parrots and rabbits took more than their share.⁶⁹ Bulk handling was here to stay.

With the New Fordson Tractor, under average Australian conditions
You can plough 12 acres per day against an 8-horse team's 5 acres
You can harrow 88 acres per day against the 8-horse team's 40 acres
You can scarify 28 acres per day against the 8-horse team's 14 acres per day
You can harvest 15 acres per day against the 8-horse team's 10 acres per day
- and at much lower costs.

Work for which you would formerly need the help of one or two men,
you can do yourself with a Fordson,
with no time lost for feeding and care of teams.

You can work the Fordson all day – and all night too if necessary.

The Standard Fordson Tractor cost - £220/-/-

(Advertisement⁷⁰)

The Depression caused farmers to analyse every item of expenditure. The cost of machinery parts, repairs and fuel was prohibitive, even if commodities were available. In 1931 the Royal Commission findings indicated a difference of 28/9 per acre of cropped area using mechanisation, compared with 21/9 using horse-drawn equipment. As a result, many farmers turned off their tractors and harnessed up the horse teams again. The Nungarin Road Board installed hitching posts in town.⁷¹

The truck went well until the depression when the inability to afford petrol brought its own problems, so we took out the motor and mounted it as a stationary engine for chaffcutting, gristing etc. We took off the cab, which gave us more floor space, put in a pole to take a pair of horses to pull it and voila! We were in business again. With rubber tyres, roller bearings etc., two horses could pull a load of thirty bags with ease and even trot with it if time pressed.⁷²

In desperation born of want, there were some men who saw a creative way of supplementing their meagre income. One method tried in Nungarin during the Depression was ‘re-cycling’. It was well known that at least one farmer delivered his bagged grain during the day, and returned at night to retrieve it so that he could deliver it again the following day. Frank Williams recalled one occasion when the whole system was fine-tuned in order to avoid the tiresome trip back to the farm; with the grain being stored overnight at the back of Bill Green’s garage. The plan looked like coming undone when ‘Dooley’ Beard the policeman pulled up at the garage. Thinking quickly, Bill moved with despatch to lean on the car door and proceeded to chat animatedly for over an hour, which achieved the dual purpose of preventing ‘Dooley’ from getting out, and at the same time allowing opportunity for the grain to be moved out of harms way.⁷³

Another popular method was to augment the grain with a variety of materials such as old machinery parts and sand, or to complement the weight by a generous application of water. There was also a thriving illicit grain trade. Faced with trying to provide basic sustenance for their families, many farmers resorted to using some of the grain due to their creditors to feed a few pigs that were kept quietly in a secluded corner of the property. The animals could then be sold for cash – an extremely rare commodity at that time.

Under the Farmers’ Debts Adjustment Act, indebted farmers were allocated a small payment for living expenses, and the local bank manager had to keep a stringent check on all spending. Leslie Lee tells of a case where a farmer’s wife was called to account for an unexplained amount of five shillings. She was reluctant to disclose the reason for the expenditure, but when the Bank Manager insisted on an explanation she blurted out, “if you must know, I bought a pair of bloomers for 4/11”, and lifting up her dress said “and here they are”!⁷⁴

The impact of the depression was devastating. When farmers couldn't meet their payments, machinery was repossessed and properties sold. In *Pine Grove Farm*, Winifred Wilkes recalls her parents' heartbreak:

I was at home when the Farm Inspector came. He walked in with a couple of ledgers under his arm. There was for a time a murmur of voices – grave, quiet. I heard Mother ask: "Could we stay on as caretakers?" That could not be. They must leave. They were too much in debt. The very liberal financial help given at the beginning had too many setbacks. Their visitor did not stay for the usual cup of tea.⁷⁵

Nungarin Road Board statistics revealed that practically one fifth of the total properties in the district had been abandoned. It was a very grim time during which the suicide rate in Western Australia rose by 50% to more than one hundred cases each year during the 1930-31 period.⁷⁶

It is quite amazing that the community was able to function at all, but it did. People joined together to support each other and help those in greater need than themselves. A body fostering monetary reform was established in Nungarin as well as a branch of the Abolition of Poverty League. Local Government continued to manage despite a severe reduction in income from rates. The Nungarin Road Board Minutes contain numerous references to arrangements made for men to undertake clearing and road works in order to settle their arrears, and in some cases the Board was successful in having some outstanding rates quashed altogether.

Emille ('Cobber') Beurteaux recorded his experience of what was involved in 'roadworks' when he and a couple of other local boys accepted a Road Board contract in 1928:

Back when I was fourteen years of age, Jack Hodges eighteen & Bill Hodges sixteen, we had a contract with the Nungarin Road Board carting gravel for Danberrin Road from Hodges Road north to the culvert. The gravel was loaded from the pit opposite Jack Hodges farm gate on Hodges Road on the north side. We loaded the gravel on to three drays using picks & shovels. It was then unloaded by shovels and raked. The work was really hard but we did a chain per day and after we finished we were paid 30 pound each which was a princely sum in those days. I recall Jack Hodges bought himself a motorbike with his payment.⁷⁷

The Nungarin sub-branch of the RSL approached the Road Board with a request to give local men preference when employment was available, and they also suggested that an approach be made for surplus military clothing to be distributed to those in need. The Wheatgrowers' Union supported Toc-H in funding a camp for wheatbelt boys and donated more than £26 towards the establishment of a maternity wing at the Kununoppin Hospital. The Country Women's Association supported local wives and mothers by providing support and practical help. Workshops were held in which women learnt how to make warm quilts using raw wool and flour bags, and Nungarin members contributed to the compilation of the famous CWA Cookery Book which gave recipes for nourishing and economical meals as well as a chapter with handy household hints. CWA also established a local library, and organised concerts and social functions, all of which provided a valuable community service and helped to lift the spirits of the whole district. People continued to enjoy sport, and as Leslie Lee commented:

Because everyone was economically depressed, don't think that we all sat around looking miserable. We still played golf and tennis, had parties and generally enjoyed ourselves in all things that didn't cost money. A lost ball at golf was a tragedy and was not declared lost without a most vigorous search. Indeed, one player who saw his ball disappear down a rabbit burrow returned the next day with a spade and dug it out.⁷⁸

May 17th 1934 – Rabbit Factory in Merredin

The National Egg Company (an Eastern States Co.) has started business in Merredin in conjunction with Mr A Hobbs in trapping and preparing rabbits for export. Three lorries are employed and they visit the trappers daily, to Yelbeni in the north and Corrigin in the south. The rabbits are plentiful at this time of the year, but as the summer approaches their numbers will increase and it will be necessary to establish a branch in Corrigin.

The Merredin branch is under the management of Mr EJ Bowyer, from South Australia, who reports that during the first weeks of operation over 3,000 rabbits were sent to Perth. When the rabbits are brought in they are immediately placed in the freezing chambers at Mr Hobbs Ice Works, then forwarded to Perth where they are graded prior to transport to England. During May 8,282 rabbits were exported.⁷⁹

Nancy Diss (daughter of James and Alice Lee) recorded her memories of life on the family farm at Talgomine during the nineteen thirties:

It must be known that for quite a few years all we had for transport was the horse and cart. I can vouch for the long slow journey it was to Nungarin. It took all day really; by the time you fed, watered and rested 'Don', the horse, before the long trip home.

I always did whatever I could to help with things on the farm, as we couldn't afford help. We all worked together and kept things afloat until just before I was married. It was then that things started to improve for everyone, including farmers. It was at this time that a tractor, refrigerator and washing machine appeared on the scene – oh what heaven! To me they're still the most important things in anyone's life.

There are several things that happened on the farm that deserve a mention.

One year on December 1st we had the most violent storm, which blew the roof off our house and filled the dam that was reasonably close to the house. Mum was really upset because she'd promised to look after our cousin's two children while she had another baby. She said, "Whatever will we do with those little boys and the dam so full?" But like all farming folk, she wasn't stumped for long. "I know what I'll do" she said "We'll leave their shoes off and they won't be able to walk through the double-gees to the dam". Yes, it worked, and in due course another son arrived.

I can also still see my mother meticulously ironing her beautiful tablecloths with flat irons and the perspiration dripping off her chin ... another thing that I remember was when we had a lady from Perth staying with us. We were having afternoon tea when Mum suddenly asked, "Where's John?" - Her two-year-old pride and joy. I was six at the time and we kids ran outside to look, but Mum made straight for the well which had recently been filled in but still had plenty of visible water. She could see the water swirling about and immediately thought John had fallen in. She collapsed at the edge. Then Margaret yelled out that he had been found, but it took some time to convince Mum that John was really safe.

Then there was the time very many years ago (1922 to be exact) that Mum and Dad had to drive the horse and cart to Kununoppin and bring two new horses back to the farm. They set off early with Margaret (just ten months old) lying on a mattress on the floor of the cart. The long trip to Kunno ensued and by the time they were ready to come home the sun was getting low, but they pushed on until Dad began to nod off. Every time he nodded his hat fell to the ground, and he had to get out and retrieve it. After this happened about half a dozen times, Mum was in hysterics, and when they at last got to Nungarin, she persuaded Dad to stay at the hotel for the night, which they did. In those days it was Con McCorry's Hotel on the other side of the line.

This one never ceases to bring tears to my eyes. It was Christmas Eve and a very cold one at that. Dad had gone to Nungarin to do the shopping needed for Christmas. He arrived home at dusk feeling very cold, and as he reached for his one and only bottle of beer for Christmas – he dropped it and it smashed to pieces. I'll never forget the look on his face, which could be quite expressive at times. As a kid I thought that was the ultimate in bad luck.

These few anecdotes that come to mind let you know how hard things were in those days. Everything was a challenge and you really had to be young and fit to cope.⁸⁰

Throughout the troubled years, John Mulqueeny had been a great catalyst for action and certainly had a passion for the plight of embattled farmers, especially in the Lake Brown area, and invested an incredible amount of time and energy in fighting for a fair deal for the man on the land. However he suffered from Diabetes Millitus, and was not in good health. He was admitted to hospital at Kununoppin with diabetic complications and died of toxæmia on 22nd August 1935. He is buried in the Catholic section of the Nungarin cemetery. The Nungarin Wheatgrowers' Union sent their condolences to the Lake Brown Branch and suggested that the John Mulqueeny Benefit Fund be formed. His obituary paid tribute to "a prominent citizen":

It would be almost impossible to enumerate the various public movements in which the deceased was associated, but it can be said that he was an enthusiastic worker for, and helper in, the advancement of his district ...A forceful speaker; he was a natural leader in his district, and in due

course found further scope for the use of his talents in a wider field. As President of the Lake Brown sub-Branch of the R.S.L., Mr Mulqueeny attended the annual conferences of that organisation for many years, and was always prominent when matters concerning soldier settlement were under discussion. Upon the formation of the Wheatgrowers' Union of W.A., he was chosen as the foundation president, and he represented this state at the first meeting of all Australian Wheatgrowers' organisations which was held in Canberra in 1932. He continued as a member of the State Executive of the W.G.U. until he died ... There are few men in this state who have given greater service to the farming community than the deceased gentleman, and he will be sadly missed by a very wide circle of friends and admirers.⁸¹

As if farmers didn't have enough to contend with at the time, the long, drawn-out summer of 1932 saw plagues of emus forging south into the agricultural areas in search of food and water. It was estimated that as many as twenty thousand emus had moved down along the rabbit-proof fence. Through sheer force of numbers they had pushed through the fence and were destroying crops and also left great holes in the fence that allowed rabbits to enter as well.



Emu cull at Mangowine – Norm Bates and Ernie Luckman



Emu shoot at Knungajin - Phil Cornish & Jim Stanton

The farmers to the north of the district were mainly returned soldiers, so it was probably natural that they should think of a military solution to their predicament. A deputation of ex-soldiers met with the Minister for Defence, Sir George Pearce, asking that they be allowed the use of a couple of machine guns to get rid of the pests. An article in the *Western Mail* on 19th October of that year reported:

Thousands of emus are doing so much damage to wheat crops east of the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence that settlers of the Champion district, in a deputation to the State Ministry, asked for the loan of a machine-gun to rid the district of them.

The Minister for Defence (Senator Sir George Pearce) said today that he would accede to the request if the State Ministry accepted the responsibility for costs, with the proviso that the gun be manned by militiamen.⁸²

The situation received quite a bit of publicity, and various reporters including a Fox Movietone cinematographer were despatched to cover the story. And it was quite a story! Major G.P.W. Meredith of the Seventh Heavy Battery of the Royal

Australian Artillery was given command of the operation, and left Perth on the 2nd of November with two Lewis Automatic Machine Guns, two soldiers and 10,000 rounds of ammunition. At Campion the group was augmented by a contingent of about a hundred men from throughout the district, including several from Nungarin.

Unfortunately, untimely rain caused the emus to scatter into small groups so they didn't make an easy target. At first the emus were out of range, and quickly scattered into the bush as soon as shots were fired. A second round was not much more successful with only about a dozen birds being killed. However it was enough to raise concerns with the RSPCA who were placated with an assurance that no wounded birds were left to suffer. The Naturalists' Club of Victoria were made of sterner stuff, and protested at the use of machine guns, suggesting it would be more humane to drive the birds into compounds and then clobber them to death, or behead them.

The next plan was to establish an ambush at a local dam and shoot the birds when they came in to water. The gunners got themselves all set up, the emus moved into point blank range, and then one of the guns jammed. Dammit. A few emus were killed and the rest quickly scattered. The campaign moved further south, but once again, with only limited success. Major Meredith hit on the idea of mounting one of the guns on to the back of a truck. It might have been a good idea but the terrain was so rough that the gunner wasn't able to get a firm sight on the quarry. After six days, and varying reports of between 50 and 500 birds being destroyed, the Army withdrew and Major Meredith noted in his official report that his men had suffered no casualties.⁸³

One of the more fantastic aspects of the first campaign was Yanoning farmer Charlie Mann's suggestion that ran something along the lines of fashioning a mobile scarecrow. He proposed that they capture an emu and then dress it in shirt and trousers. The idea was that when released the newly outfitted emu would run off to join the rest of the flock, which would be alarmed by the sight of the apparition and race away, thus ridding the district of the whole mob. Apparently the scheme did have limited success, but only until the startled bird managed to divest himself of his costume. It says something of the determination of the men that they managed to corral the emu and actually get the trousers on it in the first place.⁸⁴

Even after such imaginative attempts to get rid of the pests, the emu attacks on the crops continued. Farmers lobbied the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, who lent his support to a renewal of military action provided that someone guaranteed payment

of the cost of ammunition. A Walgoolan farmer, D.J. O’Leary, agreed to accept the responsibility, and the army returned on 13th November. The second deployment lasted for almost four weeks and claimed 986 kills using 9860 rounds of ammunition – a neat average of exactly ten rounds per bird, although Major Meredith claimed that a further 2,500 birds would have died as a result of their injuries (but hopefully not suffering and causing an upset with the RSPCA).

There was an unfortunate postscript to the story when Mr O’Leary received an account for £24, which he felt exceeded the cost of the ammunition that was used. When he objected, the bank generously offered to accept a crop lien in place of cash. O’Leary countered by presenting an account for £924 to cover feeding and transporting “His Majesty’s Troops”, for damage to his transport equipment during conveyance of the troops to the front line, and the balance for the loss of wheat “destroyed by the enemy” due to the delay of commencement of operations. The bank capitulated.⁸⁵

A couple of years later, the wheatbelt was facing pests of a different, much smaller, but equally devastating nature. In early 1936, Gus Herbert and Len Hutchison volunteered to co-operate with an Agricultural Department field inspection to check on the number of locust egg tubes in the area. In July they reported on the seriousness of the menace, stating that they found more than sufficient egg deposits to wipe out all the crops in the district, and calling for supplies of molasses, bran and poison to be made available immediately the hoppers hatched. They also noted that there was a problem with locusts breeding on abandoned farms where the ground remained undisturbed, but when concern was conveyed to the Agricultural Bank, they replied that it was not their responsibility. A rapid response informed the bank that as it had control of the abandoned farms, it was most certainly their business to control any pests, and suggested that leases be granted for free, or at a very small rental in order that the ground could be worked and cropped. As usual, there was not much sympathy or co-operation from the Bank, but the Nungarin Road Board responded by setting up a poison depot and organising a trial of a flame thrower, which must have proved effective because a couple of months later the Wheatgrowers’ Union wrote to the Road Board to compliment them on the work they had done in eradicating grasshoppers.⁸⁶

The Veasey family took up land in the Danberrin area in 1912. Grandson Bert Wynne says they arrived with “high hopes and all their wares” but found that establishing a farm from virgin bush was “a hard slog”. William (‘Dad’) Veasey’s first wife died suddenly in 1920, and ten years later he married Frances Wood. However, the

economic collapse of 1929, the devastations of the rabbit plague and a few dry years had taken a huge toll and when William died in August 1932, there was little left of the fortune he is said to have brought with him to Australia. His son, Alf, was a wonderfully kind and happy man but rather prone to accident. He had entered a farming partnership with Jack Radford, and on one occasion he fell into a dip while dipping sheep and another time he fell into an inspection pit in a garage. In the 1930s a newspaper article reported yet another accident:

While harvesting at Lake Brown on Christmas Eve Mr Alf Veasey met with a serious accident necessitating his admission to the Kununoppin Hospital. The comb of the harvester choked and Mr Veasey was clearing it when his horses took fright and bolted, catching him in the comb. Mr Sam Cooper took him to the hospital by car, when it was found that Mr Veasey had broken his collar bone in two places. It was also necessary to insert 21 stitches in wounds in various parts of his body.

Mr Veasey, is working in partnership with Mr Jack Radford, both being good farmers. Great sympathy is felt throughout Lake Brown district for the injured man, who is generally popular.

Alf returned to England on holiday but when the Second World War broke out he was forced to remain there until the war was over. Given his propensity for misadventure, his family were more than surprised to hear that throughout the War he served in a bomb disposal squad. Alf married his father's widow and they lived happily until Frances died in 1950.⁸⁷

Although the general effects of the depression were beginning to ease by the end of the decade, the last few seasons in the Nungarin District were very dry. Each of the four years between 1935 and 1938 only averaged eight inches of rain, and as a result economic recovery was very much slower. It is supremely ironic that the factor that was mostly to be credited with eventually relieving the effects of the Depression was the beginning of the Second World War. Once again there was an assured demand for wheat and wool, but at unbelievable personal cost.

In *A Fine Country to Starve in*, Professor Bolton describes the impact of the Depression on the rural community:

As Western Australia moved too rapidly into an unpredictable future, however, the older people among them looked back nostalgically to a past that was simpler. Those who remembered the Depression were given to asserting that, although those had been hard times, there was more sharing and generosity and companionship than nowadays ... For most of them the Depression ranked with the Second World War as the major landmark of their lives, a time of crisis when they had behaved well. If they were uncertain about their ability to stand the pressures of prosperity, they knew that they could survive penury without harm to their sense of community and their self-respect.⁸⁸

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- 33 Information Miss May Knowles.
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Battling On

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Building Community

Local Government, Services, Community Groups and Businesses

The first farmers arrived in the Nungarin District with a dream to establish a new life on the land. They may have come as individuals, but the early settlers quickly realised that in order to survive, they needed to help and support each other. From the very first days of settlement a sense of community was established: information and equipment were shared. As settlers congregated at the soaks and gnamma holes to collect water, they exchanged experiences and ideas and within a few short months the informal gatherings had developed into the beginnings of local progress associations.



*Settlers meeting at Neening Tank for the purpose of forming a progress association –
Picture taken by Frank Dawe 19th June 1910*



1	Ted Fitzgerald	10	Emile Beurteaux	19	Derby McKenna
2	Stan Dawe	11	Gilbert Hodges	20	Joe Knowles
3	Ted Ford	12	Bill Dugdale	21	A. (Micky) Burrows
4	Dring O'Grady	13	Alex Clarke	22	Sid Benson
5	S.J. Dawe	14	A.E. Dugdale	23	Hector McKinnon
6	Stewart Baird	15	Walter Hodges	24	Les Burrows
7	Carlo Vanzetti	16	Ray Fitzpatrick	25	Steve Smith
8	Sid Herbert	17	Bob Bagot	26	Dave Benson
9	John R. Baird	18	Gerald O'Grady	27	Vince Fitzpatrick

While James Mitchell opined, “It should be remembered that in this state we have been compelled to settle and develop our land by the aid of men with limited means, and still more limited experience”, they were also men with a determination to succeed.

The various Progress Associations lobbied for improved conditions for the new settlement; building of better roads in place of the perilous tracks, reliable access to water, and establishment of a much-needed rail service. The groups also offered a lifeline to many isolated families. Neighbour helped neighbour, and a sense of community was forged as people met together for picnics and sporting activities. The *Eastern Recorder* reported a picnic held at Neening in September 1910:

The first picnic in connection with the North Nangeenan Progress Association was held at Neening Rock on the 4th inst and despite the unfavourable

weather proved a great success. There were about 80 present, including a large number of children, and various sports were indulged in; a greasy pig competition caused much amusement. A distribution of toys among the children brought an end to a most enjoyable function, and hopes were expressed that the next one would take place soon. The committee are to be congratulated for their efforts.

The roads are in a dreadful state again after the last rains, and it is quite time that a Road Board was formed for this district, as Kellerberrin is too far away to be expected to do too much for us.

The Government tanks about here are full, but require fencing and equipping badly, as stock pollute the water. As many of the settlers will have to cart their supplies from them during the summer, this is a matter which the Agricultural Department should attend to at once.¹

Only two weeks later, the settlers celebrated their first annual picnic at Burrans Rock (at first called ‘Woorolocking’– spelled with a proliferation of ‘Os’ in various places and referring to a general area between Kununoppin and Kodj-Kodjin):

The first annual picnic of the Civil Servants Settlement was held at Woorolocking on Saturday last, 17th inst, in ideal weather. From early morning the different families began to arrive and when dinner-time came no less than 170 hungry individuals sat down to do full justice to the excellent repast provided, and I may say that if the settlers make as good farmers as the women-folk cooks, the Hon. Jas Mitchell has nothing to fear as to the success of the settlement.

It is a beautiful spot for a picnic, and at this time of year looks lovely, so no wonder the young people were loath to go home, and when it was decided to have a dance on the green in the moonlight it seemed all that was needed to make Saturday a red-letter day in the annals of that settlement.²

The buoyant mood continued into the beginning of 1911 when the Department of Agriculture reported enthusiastically about progress in the district:

It is gratifying to note that the success of this settlement is assured. Seventy-three of the settlers selected are at the present time on their blocks, and with

*very few exceptions they have made remarkable progress in clearing and developing their farms ... all the settlers are satisfied with their prospects, and should this season prove a successful one (as there is every prospect of it doing) a number of them will be well on the road to prosperity. Whilst the department has done everything it could do to assist the men, there has been no coddling, each man having to meet his liabilities to the department as he obtained advances from the bank. There is of course a fair amount owing to merchants for implements, and in some cases, stores, but in no instance does the liability exceed the assets.*³

Unfortunately the Department of Agriculture was a little wide of the mark when they forecast “a successful season” for 1911, as only 164.34 mms of rain were recorded for the year, with 116.33 mms falling during the growing season; and it was to be some time before the new settlers “were well on the road” to any sort of prosperity at all.

The area that was to become Nungarin, formed part of the Toodyay Road Board district until 1895, Goomalling until 1908, and Kellerberrin until 1911. As settlement developed further eastwards it became obvious that local government boundaries needed to be adjusted once again and on 30th June 1911, the Government Gazette advertised the creation of the Merredin Road District incorporating the Nungarin section of the Kellerberrin Road District. Elections were held in August and Joseph Knowles of Danberrin was elected to represent the Nungarin district. He lost no time in presenting the case for the new settlers and at the first meeting of the new road board he moved that they request the government to provide water facilities for all agricultural areas.⁴ However, in the *History of the Merredin District*, F.A Law reported, “The enthusiasm of Joseph Knowles soon ran out. He attended only two meetings and his seat was declared vacant by reason of his non-attendance at three successive meetings”.⁵ Joseph’s daughter, May Knowles, explained the reason behind her father’s supposed ‘loss of enthusiasm’:

*Father had no vehicles or form of conveyance, not even a horse. He had to walk about ten miles to a neighbour at Nukarni from where he travelled by dray to Merredin. He had to sleep behind a haystack, attend the meeting, and then reverse the process to return home. When the meetings were shifted to Nangeenan and then Hines hill he had an even longer walk – an impossible task.*⁶

Joseph Knowles certainly had a heart for the district, but channeled his energies into causes closer to home, playing his part in local progress associations, and the Farmers and Settlers Association. His place on the Merredin Road Board was taken by Thomas Duff, owner of Duff's Merredin Hotel (who was elected as the National Party Representative to the Legislative Assembly in September 1918). Apart from Joseph Knowles, it appears that the only other Nungarin men to serve on the Merredin Board were A.H. Rowan (1912-1913), R.G. Bagot (1919) and W. Hodges (1919-1920).

Condition of local roads seemed to be a constant complaint, and during the ten years that Nungarin was under the jurisdiction of Merredin, many letters of concern were published in the local papers:

Some considerable time ago £200 was granted to the [Merredin] Board towards maintenance of roads leading into Nungarin – but as to where that money has been expended is an unknown question here. At any rate, no-one can deny that the roads around here are disgraceful. One always hears of the lake on the north side of the township as being absolutely the worst bog hole in the district. Surely the Merredin Road Board will see that justice is meted out to us now; although we have waited long and patiently for them to do something.⁷

Perhaps it was the long distances that precluded men from the Nungarin district from nominating to the Merredin Board, but even when elected, they did not serve for very long. Nungarin folk became increasingly disgruntled, and a letter published in July 1917, hinted at the difficulties faced by local representatives:

It is generally recognized here that if we are to continue under the Merredin Road Board, or at any rate, so long as we are under the jurisdiction of that astute body, that we must endeavour to secure a live representative to advocate our many requirements from amongst the local settlers. The position is not very much sought after these days, as it carries more kicks than ha'pence.⁸

At last it seemed that a letter to the Chairman of the Merredin Board, from past board member Archie Rowan, may finally have been the catalyst for action, because shortly after this communication a resolution was passed that tenders be called for forming and gravelling the road in question:

Wahroonga Nungarin

Dear Sir,

Please find cheque for £9.15s.3d being amount of rates standing in my name. I suppose we can expect to get something done to the roads in our district now that you are collecting rates, and I would like to see that £100, secured by me when I was on the Board, for the 20 chains lake road near Mr Waterhouse's holding (Nungarin), devoted to the purpose for which it was granted. Would you be good enough to inform me what you intend to do in the matter, because in its present condition it is a standing disgrace to any road board, and in the event of an unfavourable answer, we intend to go beyond the Board to get this bit of road put right,

Yours etc.,

A. Hamilton Rowan⁹

If it was expected that the Nungarin ratepayers would be placated by immediate action from the Board, everyone concerned was in for a disappointment, as during the next few months, public complaints flew thick and fast, becoming more and more vitriolic:

A live person may talk to the members of the Merredin Road Board till his eyes stick out (and then not get anything done in the shape of road making) ... [Regarding a proposal to pay a travelling allowance to members, apart from the usual 3%] ... we have never seen or heard of any member ever coming to Nungarin. God knows the cocky has enough to put up with in these times without allowing travelling expenses to the Merredin Board ... I will undertake to meet them at the Siding with my old buckboard wagon and dump them into the lake and let them swim out."¹⁰

J.R. Baird followed with a more restrained letter on behalf of the Danberrin Branch of the Farmers and Settlers Association:

Some time ago a letter was sent from the Danberrin Branch of the Farmers and Settlers Association, asking that a member of the Board should visit us and inspect two portions of roads that were specially mentioned. To this request the Board turned a deaf ear and have not even had the courage to reply. The roads mentioned can beat the famous quagmire at Mr Waterhouse's, north of Nungarin, and one extends for a distance of one mile and a half. The mail contractor has given notice that he will be unable to deliver mail to Burran Rock unless the track improves, as it is almost impossible to get through, even with a sulky.

We only asked for a visit to view the condition of affairs, and I regret very much that it should require publicity of your columns to secure recognition.”¹¹

At that time F.A. Hawkins was the Merredin Board member responsible for safeguarding the interests of the ward south of Nungarin, while C. Hardingham was responsible for the northern areas. On 24th August, the *Merredin Mercury* reported that Mr Hawkins had visited Nungarin the previous week, and had been shown around by Mr Baird. He was satisfied that the roads were “an absolute disgrace”. At the next meeting of the Board, Mr Hardingham moved and Mr Hawkins seconded, “that an engineer from the Public Works Department be invited to inspect Lake Road near Mr Waterhouse’s property ... and other dangerous roads, and on his arrival the Secretary accompany him on a tour of inspection”.¹²

Waterhouse’s Lake: A wrong righted. At the meeting of the Merredin Road Board on Saturday last, it was resolved, on the motion of Mr Hardingham, seconded by Mr Harling, that tenders be called for work in connection with the notorious Waterhouse Lake, Nungarin, in accordance with the recommendation of Mr Engineer Young, who recently visited this eyesore in company with the Road Board Engineer.

The people of Nungarin, as well as the travelling public, will hail this determination with something akin to delight, for as each winter comes along this spot is a veritable quagmire, and a source of extreme danger.¹³

Shortly afterwards tenders were called for the supply of four draught horses, equipment and driver to work a road-forming machine, “the owner to supply feed etc”,¹⁴ so there was some hope that there would be action at last. There was, however, lingering doubt and desperation in other quarters:

There are persistent rumours that the Merredin Road Board had abandoned intention of doing the road near Mr Waterhouse’s. If the Board don’t go on with the work we will have to approach the Minister for Works ... in some cases horses have been bogged almost up to their eyes ... How long O Lord! How long!¹⁵

How long indeed!



Joe and Florence Jolly

Some weeks ago the Merredin Road Board announced that the lake near Mr Waterhouse's farm, and which is used largely by north Nungarin settlers, would be put into a proper condition for the traffic that must very shortly take place, but we find that this Board's promise is of the pie crust order. The settlers here are determined to have justice meted out to them, and do not intend to allow this somnolent Board to continue in its present unjust treatment to the ratepayers here.¹⁶

Nungarin concerns were vindicated a few weeks later when Henry Adams had an accident attributed to the poor condition of the roads:

One of the wheels on his sulky dropped suddenly into one of the many holes that the Nungarin roads are famous for, with the result that he was violently thrown to the roadway. He left for Merredin to seek medical attention at the hands of Dr Richards, and the latest advices to hand state that our genial friend and squire of Mangowine is rapidly recovering.¹⁷

In May 1917, the grievances against the Merredin Road Board were so numerous that the Nungarin Farmers and Settlers Association first raised the possibility of establishing a road board of their own. Regular complaints continued until four years later when the decision to form a separate road board district was finally decided and the Government Gazette announced the declaration of the Nungarin Road District on 24th March 1921. Ward boundaries were established, an electoral roll was prepared and elections



Nungarin Road Board office – erected 1922

were held on 6th August the same year. The first meeting of the Nungarin Road Board took place in the local hall on Friday 19th August with Mr J. Jolly (Chairman), and members W. Hodges, C. Vanzetti, A. Andrews, T. Adams, G. Maddock and E. Reilly.

The new road board covered an area of over a quarter of a million acres and extended seventy-five miles north of Nungarin, and eastwards as far as the rabbit proof fence. While the area covered by the board was huge, the administrative office was miniscule by comparison, measuring only twenty feet by fourteen feet, and erected at a cost of £196.

With affairs being dealt with locally, the new board lost no time in upgrading roads and dams, planting trees and dealing with vermin. An extract from the Government Gazette showed that during the financial year ending June 1925, the Board spent £938.13.3 on road construction and £230.0.0 on maintenance. In deference to the long distances that members had to travel, the board agreed to pay the cost of meals and accommodation if members had to stay in Nungarin overnight in order to attend meetings.

In due course a new Adams road grader was purchased, which was towed behind a Chev 4 truck. Jim Andrews operated the grader, and a young fellow was employed to drive



the truck. Jim explained that the throttle on the steering column had been set to the optimum speed, and warned the driver not to adjust it. As is often the case, the driver thought he knew best and gave the lever a flick and gunned the motor. The truck surged forward and Jim and the grader went

Trotting at the Nungarin Greater Sports Ground

flying into orbit and ended up tangled in the bush on the other side of the road.¹⁸

In a sign of the times, speed limit signs were ordered from the RAC in 1926, and the first petrol bowsers were installed in 1927 at Putland and Williams's business in Railway Avenue and also in front of the Nungarin Farmers' Co-op, followed by one at Waterhouse's the following year. The footpaths in the main street were curbed in 1929, and it was also deemed necessary to install a "silent policeman" (speed bump) on the corner between the hall and the hotel. The bump must have been overly

effective as only a couple of weeks later gravel had to be “placed around the silent policeman to give it a lowered effect.”¹⁹

Work conditions in 1928 seem somewhat draconian by today’s standards. In July the Board moved that workmen be granted six days clear annual leave after twelve months service, with New Years Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Labour Day and Anzac Day to be regarded as paid holidays. The following month it was further decreed that “men working on the Board truck to be informed that if it is their wish to return to Nungarin at week-ends, before any job is finished, they will be required to supply their own transport, and at all times must camp on the job if same is situated more than five miles from the centre.”²⁰

At the October meeting in 1929, the plans and specifications were approved for a house to be erected on Lot 51 for F.B. Mason the Road Board Secretary, and during that year the Greater Sports Ground was established, renovations to the hall were completed and a piano purchased, the townsite of Campion was gazetted, and the North Eastern Districts Water Scheme was completed. However, by the next year the effects of the Depression were being felt throughout the district. There was “a large number of abandoned holdings”²¹ and many deferments of rates. The RSL made a deputation to the Board requesting that they register as an employment bureau so that local men could be employed instead of bringing men from the city, and they were also asked to give preference to returned men when allocating work.

There was an unfortunate accident in early 1931 when Thomas Adams ran into a tree that had fallen across the road north of Nungarin. He felt that the Road Board ought to take responsibility and claimed £7.10.0 for damage to his motor vehicle. Perhaps naturally, the Board denied responsibility. Mr Adams then claimed £80 through the WA Employers Association, but the Nungarin Board stood firm. On 10th August Mr Adams attended the Board meeting and was invited to state his case:

Mr Adams, in outlining incidents and causes which resulted in an accident on Nungarin North Road south of Mukinbudin, informed the Board that although he was travelling without lights, and on the wrong side of the road on the night of the accident, he was not responsible for the accident, and the Board should have made arrangements for the removal of the tree.

The Secretary informed Mr Adams that the Board was not aware of the fact that the tree was on the road, and could not therefore be expected to remove



Mr Tom Adams's car and the fallen tree on Nungarin North Road

a tree of which it had no knowledge. Mr Adams informed the Board that several users of the road on the night in question would be prepared to state that the tree was almost completely over the formation of the road. To a question by the Secretary, Mr Adams stated that these vehicles were travelling in front of him, and to a further question as to the reason that these vehicles never hit the tree, Mr Adams admitted that the drivers had lights and were able to see the tree in time to avoid an accident.

Much discussion took place. Mr Adams was informed that the Board had no intention of paying any compensation claimed by Mr Adams to be due to him in connection with the accident, as the Board did not consider itself liable in any way. Mr Adams retired.²²

The Board members were not completely hard hearted as they did agree to grant free use of the hall for the T.G. Adams Benefit Fund function.

Mr Adams wasn't the only one complaining about the condition of the roads. In what seems a perfect case of déjà vu, the settlers on properties to the north of Nungarin were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the condition of roads and water supplies in their area. The district around Lake Brown had been settled by returned soldiers after the First World War, and the early twenties were difficult years as they struggled to establish and develop their properties. At the end of 1921, the Nungarin Road Board had adopted the ward rating system, which meant that only funds raised within each ward were available to be allocated. This policy had immediate ramifications in these struggling areas. Roads in the extensive northern area were little more than rough tracks, and as settlers found themselves unable to pay rates, the Board had no funds to allocate for any road works.

As early as the annual ratepayers meeting in April 1925, J. Mulqueeny and T. Pain (both returned soldiers settled in the Lake Brown area) had proposed a motion of no confidence in the Nungarin Road Board. The following year, settlers in the Lake Brown-Mukinbudin area first brought up the suggestion of a separate road board for the northern region, with the administrative centre in Lake Brown.

By 1927, representation on the Road Board had increased to eleven: two members from each of the Nungarin, Danberrin, Mangowine and Lake Brown wards, and three from Wattoning. The balance of power shifted after the 1932 elections when Mr J. Ferguson of Dandanning defeated the sitting member, Mr F. Williams of Mangowine. This change gave the Mukinbudin faction six votes as opposed to five for Nungarin. With the change came the realisation that now Mukinbudin virtually had control of the Board, and new possibilities presented themselves. Agitation now became focused on maintaining a single local government body centred in Mukinbudin.

At a meeting of the Nungarin Road Board on 11th July 1932, Mr H. Hansen moved, Mr E.B. White seconded, that the administration centre of the Board be moved from Nungarin to Mukinbudin. There were immediate amendments from the Nungarin members, but ultimately the Mukinbudin faction won the vote with Messrs Mulqueeny, White, Hansen, Calder, Conway and Ferguson defeating the five Nungarin representatives; Hodges, Jolly, Hoare, Horn and McCorry.²³

Nungarin District Road Board
Road Districts Act 1919
(Section 143)
Ratepayers Meeting

Notice is hereby given that a General Meeting of Ratepayers will be held on WEDNESDAY JULY 27, 1932, at 8.00 pm in the Road Board Hall, Nungarin. Business: To discuss the proposed removal of the Administration Centre of the Nungarin Road Board from Nungarin to Mukinbudin.

Dated the 16th day of July, 1932
W.S. Hodges
Chairman

Mukinbudin immediately pressed home their advantage by moving that an application be made to the Lands Department for two blocks in the Mukinbudin townsite, and that a committee of three be elected to investigate the financing of new offices there. The next few months saw dramatic action as Board members and ratepayers promoted various views. There were public meetings throughout the district. There were Road Board resignations, retractions, walkouts and delegations. Some parties favoured one single local government body, with the centre variously proposed to be sited in Nungarin, Mukinbudin or Lake Brown. Some preferred two separate boards, but still contested whether the northern seat of administration should be Lake Brown or Mukinbudin. Bonnie Rock ratepayers were concerned about how a separation

would affect any later claim they may have to form their own district. Local feelings ran high, and there were rumours about a proposal to ‘highjack’ the Nungarin Road Board office. Mr E. Coulson unsuccessfully tendered for the removal of the office and sheds from Nungarin to Mukinbudin,²⁴ and this was evidently the final straw for a group of aggrieved Nungarin settlers who quickly responded by mounting an armed guard to prevent the little building being shifted.

Ultimately it was decided to separate the district, and on 1st September 1933, the Government Gazette advertised that portions of the Nungarin Road District would be severed and reconstituted as the Mukinbudin Road District. Boundary negotiations continued for several years, and there was a certain amount of confusion as to just where the borders were placed. At the end of 1933 Mr James Hughes wrote to the Board asking that all his land be included in the Nungarin District - Mr Hughes was advised that his land was already in the Nungarin District. In 1938, after refusing to license his vehicles in Mukinbudin as a protest, Mr M.J. Pink succeeded in having Avon Locations 14086 and 21462 transferred back to Nungarin. In 1940 a small portion of land at Mangowine was also returned to the Nungarin District.

With matters settled, it was full steam ahead with plans for the construction of the new Nungarin Road Board office in Railway Avenue. The building was completed in 1936 at a total cost of £750, which included the furniture and fittings. The front door opened into a reception area with the Road Board Secretary’s office situated to the left, and the Board chambers to the right. The architecture featured the stripped classical, or moderne, style that was typical of the period, but because of concerns about structural stability, the original top-piece and flagpole were removed some years later. The new building functioned as the administrative centre of the district until the present Shire Council Office and Library was constructed in 1968.

After the opening of the new Shire Council office, the old building was offered to the Country Women’s Association (CWA) on a peppercorn lease and dedicated to the memory of Alice Williams in recognition of her untiring efforts to improve living conditions for country women, their children, and their families. In December 1998 the building was classified by the National Trust as an example of the Art Deco style of architecture.



The Alice Williams Memorial Building 1998 - Photo courtesy of Mrs Jenny de Lacy

Alice Williams was one of a group of ladies who had the honour of forming the first branch of the Country Women's Association in Western Australia.

The CWA had been established in New South Wales and Queensland in 1922, with an aim of supporting rural women. Through the auspices of Lady Forster, wife of the Governor General of Australia, the National Council of Women (NCW) promoted the CWA in Western Australia, and a Provisional Committee was formed. Henrietta Burns from Nungarin was one of the ladies who became enthused by the aims and objectives of the Association, and she was supported by Mrs Creagh who had come into contact with CWA during a recent visit to the Eastern States, and thought it would be a help to women in the wheatbelt. The ladies contacted the provisional Committee and invited them to come to Nungarin. The invitation was taken up in June 1924, when Mrs Harwood and Mrs Trouchet from NCW travelled throughout the state with a government-sponsored exhibition of Western Australian products displayed in a series of railway carriages. As well as promoting WA goods, they took the opportunity of handing out pamphlets promoting CWA.

Marie ‘Aunty Jim’ Farrell remembered the exhibition generating great excitement:

*In 1924 a special train travelled through the country promoting ‘Buy WA Goods’. Our teacher Miss Rogers took all the classes down to visit the display - it was very exciting, as we saw so many things for the first time.*²⁵

Another of the people who attended the exhibition in Nungarin was Mr Fred Williams, a member of the local road board, who was so impressed that he rang his wife, Alice, and suggested that she bring the children from the Mangowine School to see the display. With a cheerful enthusiasm that would appal the authorities of today, Alice got their workman to pile some bags of chaff on to the back of their truck to serve as seats for the children, and in company with the young teacher (neither of whom had a licence) she drove them into town.²⁶

The ladies from throughout the district were excited about the potential for CWA to make a difference in the country areas. The organisation promised support and companionship at a time when many women were isolated and struggling to raise their families while helping to develop farming properties. Conditions were harsh: roads and transport were unreliable, and facilities for education and medical assistance were not readily available. Thirty women met in the local hall and decided to form a branch of CWA, and the first meeting was held on Monday 7th July 1924. The inaugural President was Mrs Rose Francis, with Mrs Henrietta Burns and Mrs Gladys Benson as Vice-Presidents, Mrs Rose Johnson as secretary and Mrs Molly Nichols as Treasurer. Fifty local women joined the organisation during the first twelve months.

Nungarin Branch of CWA was formed on 7th July 1924

President	Mrs R. Francis
Vice-Presidents	Mrs Burns and Mrs Benson
Secretary	Mrs J.H. Johnson

In addition the following ladies joined in the first year

Mesdames	Andrews	Edmonsens	H.G. Payne
	Baird	J. Hall	Reilly
	Bairstow	Harper	Richards
	Benson	G.H. Herbert	Rorison
	Beurteaux	S.P. Herbert	Sasche

	Bodey	Hodges	Thick
	Bradley	J. Jolly	Turpin
	Burns	Le Vaux	Wadsworth
	Coulson	McKinnon	Warner
	Creagh	Matthews	F. Williams
	Devereux	Miller	Vanzetti
	Dugdale	Murray	
And Misses	Andrews	Francis	Jolly
	Burns	George	Newall
	Dugdale	Hall	Warner

Concern for countrywomen and their families was not restricted to local issues. In the first year, a letter of protest was written to the Education Department regarding the reduction of the school driving allowance from sixpence to fourpence a day, and the branch also discussed the Jury Act Amendment Bill then before parliament, with all present deciding unanimously in favour of women being eligible to serve on juries. At the very first CWA State Conference in 1925, the Nungarin Branch submitted the following motions which would have been considered rather controversial in those days:

That this conference urges upon their parliamentary representatives the need for legislation to entitle illegitimate children to bear the name of their father.

That married mothers be made equal guardians of their children.

That in the case of married couples settling or already settled on the land, some arrangements be made whereby the wife will be entitled to some portion of the property or income.

That the Commissioner of Railways be asked to reduce the high freight on eggs and poultry, and also the high charges imposed in station cloak rooms.

That the Association urges the Government to introduce a measure similar to the Queensland Fruit Marketing Act as soon as possible.²⁷

The commitment of Nungarin's founding ladies, the interests they pursued, and the causes they embraced, certainly denies any attempts to limit CWA to simply a 'tea

and scones' organisation. Their intellect and their determination were formidable, and they made a difference. At the end of 1924 the press reported "C.W.A. is now recognised as such a mighty and useful force in the district and so many calls for help have been made upon it".²⁸

CWA alternately lobbied, harassed and worked with local government to improve conditions for regional women and their families. At the instigation of CWA, a fence was erected around the cemetery, public toilets were built adjacent to the old road board office in Mitchell Terrace and the Road Board supplied 74 trees that were planted to beautify the town:

On Saturday August 1st the local branch of the CWA in co-operation with the Road Board arranged for an Arbour Day. Mr Jolly, the Chairman of the Board, in planting the first tree, expressed his delight at the inauguration of such a day, and hoped that this initial effort to make the township more pleasing to the eye would be the forerunner of many such efforts. Seventy-four trees were planted during the afternoon, to the memory of soldiers killed in the war and to commemorate the names of the pioneers of the district.

*The trees were planted on the east side of the main road with two half-moon curves in front of the siding. With the permission of the Railway Dpt., it is intended to make a tying-up place for horses. After the ceremony, afternoon tea was provided by the ladies at the hall. In the evening a sale of work and dance was held under the auspices of the CWA which proved very satisfactory.*²⁹

The welfare of children has always been a prime concern for CWA, and achievements range from the formation of infant health clinics, support for local families in need, seaside holidays for country children, rural holidays for disadvantaged boys from the city, and the annual Christmas tree celebrations. In the 1950s Nungarin boasted a crosswalk that connected the Co-op with the carpark on the opposite side of the road and CWA approached the local police officer to ask him to arrange special instruction to show the schoolchildren how to use it safely. The crosswalk was later removed by order of the Main Roads Department.

Nungarin Branch has always given great support to nearby Kununoppin Hospital, raising funds for building extensions and improvements, essential equipment,

bedclothes and necessities for patients. During the Depression, Nungarin CWA ladies made layettes for local mothers in desperate circumstances.

For a period of thirty years from 1931, CWA provided a community library and has always been active in promoting many forms of art and craft. Being ever resourceful, pioneer women had to make the best of what little they had. They refined the art of recycling and embraced such diverse crafts as making quilts from raw (and sometimes 'dead' wool), dishcloths by knitting the string that had arrived around parcels, children's slippers from old felt hats, door mats from old motor tubes, and they filled pillows with feathers from home-killed poultry. They also learnt how to make artificial flowers from discarded stockings and hats from plastic shopping bags.



CWA All Nations Fair April 1933. Nungarin Hall looking towards the north (note the internal stairs to the bio-box and the premiership football pennant)

During the Second World War, the Nungarin Branch was part of an official group that assisted the war effort by making camouflage nets. The Ordnance Department supplied twine and instructions, and members set to work. Four hundred and twenty four nets were completed throughout Western Australia. In the period after the war, people in the United Kingdom were short of food and clothing, and Nungarin members participated in a plan to send food parcels to Great Britain. In due course, a letter of thanks was received which highlighted just how desperate (and grateful) some families were:

At our December meeting of Women's Institute, Headington, Oxford, the members were given tickets which entitled them to something from the gift parcel from Australia. I was fortunate to get a tin of braised steak, it was delicious. By putting some pastry over it, we were able to make it do for two days. It was very welcome, as our meat ration usually only lasts for the week-end. My husband and grown-up son, John, join with me in thanking you very much indeed for the splendid gift.³⁰

The *CWA Cookery Book and Household Hints* was first sold at the 1936 State Conference at 2/6 per copy (or 5/- cloth bound) and has since become a household name. Mrs Bodey from Nungarin contributed hints on how to make candles from mutton fat, and flypaper from linseed oil and resin, as well as recipes for braising rabbit (which were more than plentiful at the time), and for making a ginger sponge.³¹

Several Nungarin women have served CWA at state level. Henrietta Burns has the honour of being elected the first State President – a position that she relinquished in favour of Mrs M. Craven-Griffiths, in appreciation of the work done by her in establishing CWA in WA. Mrs Burns then assumed the role of state Vice-President, while Mrs Ann Marie Francis, the President of the Nungarin Branch, was elected to the executive committee. Alice Williams was elected State President in 1944, and was awarded the M.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 1965, in recognition of her service to the Country Women's Association over many years, at local, national and international level.



CWA Divisional Meeting at Nungarin c1937

While Alice Williams was duly decorated for her service to CWA, the honour could have been eclipsed when one of her children was almost declared the organisation's first honorary member. In 1929, Alice attended State Conference at Government House accompanied by the newest six-week old Williams addition. When the Chairman noticed the baby in its cot, she commented on the unusual sight and suggested the young visitor be made an honorary member. Mrs Williams, who had left a son and six daughters at home, explained that she would have been delighted to accept, but the child happened to be a boy. Harry is still teased about how he narrowly escaped being declared a life member of CWA.

From the very beginning the CWA ladies were anxious to establish a rest room. Families often had to travel long distances in uncomfortable and dusty conditions, and members needed somewhere to freshen up and feed their children, and to rest while they waited for their husbands to complete necessary business. Over the years they met at various halls, or in temporary accommodation in a private residence in Railway Avenue, but it wasn't until 1951 that their dream was finally realised and the CWA had a building that they could call their own.

The rest room project was one that showed great determination and ingenuity (even if future events proved it to be somewhat misguided). In 1948 a house was purchased from Westonia and dismantled and carted to the site opposite the present post office. Keith Creagh remembers being co-opted along with Percy Jolly and Harold Creagh to drive the three trucks loaded with materials back to Nungarin. Bricks were used from the old Co-op house and many weekends were employed in scraping off the old mortar. Other materials were gathered from various sources, including a quantity of cement that had gone hard in the bags. Under instruction, Keith Creagh and Ted Williams put the hardened cement into a grister to pulverise it for re-use – which may have gone some way to explain why the building only lasted fifteen years or so. In 1965 an Inspector from the Public Health Department examined the building and advised against attempts to repair the deterioration as he felt it would be too costly. The building was demolished in June 1966, and a garden seat and plaque were installed to mark the site.



*The opening of the CWA Rest Room c1951
(note the wheat bin in the background)*

In 1963, Nungarin CWA won the inaugural Clarice Ruddick Award for the best community effort throughout the state for that year. The local branch undertook to organise a Homecraft Exhibition to take the place of the Agricultural Show after the Nungarin Agricultural Society went into recess in 1961. The first exhibition was held in 1962, and the following year it became a community event with the involvement of the Shire Council and support from several other local organisations. In 1963 there were well over 700 entries from 81 exhibitors, and the exhibition remained an important annual event for many years.³²



*Nungarin-Kununoppin CWA Choir
From Left; Patricia M. Williams, Eileen Timewell (partially obscured), Pat (G.M.) Williams, Joan Jolly, Jill Herbert, Lou Jolly, Thelma Kahl, Dot Brown, Jean Herbert, Clarice Brown, Heather Herbert, Norma Norrish, Hazel Ovens.*

The Nungarin CWA choir was formed in 1964, and the group enjoyed singing at various district events, and competed in several regional competitions. Under the baton of Patricia (Mrs F.D.) Williams, and with Jean Tiller at the piano, the combined Nungarin-Kununoppin Choir competed in the Golden Jubilee Festival in July 1974.

Some of the women who were more prominent in the development of CWA were also involved in other wheatgrower organisations. Henrietta Burns and Rose Johnson were founders of the Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association (W.S.P.P.A.) in Western Australia, having formed the first branch in Nungarin in November 1925.³³

A meeting of ladies was held at Nungarin on Thursday October 29th in order to discuss the formation of a women's branch of the Primary Producers Association. It was decided by those present that a branch be formed, the meetings to be held monthly and a programme of lectures and debates to be drawn up. The object of the branch is to arouse the interest of country women in political subjects by such means, in order that they may use the vote intelligently.

The following officers were elected: President Mrs H. Burns, Vice President Mrs Jolly, Secretary Mrs Johnson.

The first meeting will be held on November 19th 1925.³⁴

At various times, both Henrietta Burns and Rose Johnson occupied the position of President of the Women's Section, while Rose Johnson was credited with making a valuable contribution to country women's welfare in the preparation of a case for submission at an enquiry into the costs of living in country areas.³⁵

Henrietta Burns was an indefatigable worker for the community generally, but especially for the rights of women. In a letter to the Editor of the *Primary Producer* newspaper in August 1924, she raised an argument in defence of women in the nursing profession:

Practically the first profession open to women in modern times was nursing, and the small pay, long hours, unceasing labour have remained as little changed as those of its kindred profession – motherhood ...

Demands [on a nurse's] sympathy, her patience, her time, and on her physical strength are so exacting that there is simply no time or place for

woman, but only for her work. There is not a minute in the whole 24 hours when she can sit down, and deliberate on a re-organisation of the system – on ways of eliminating work in order that she may have some leisure for reading and recreation.

The very nature and condition of her calling have precluded her from demanding great recognition of her value and this has given the community the opportunity, which it has unfailingly and unremittingly embraced, to exploit her services and ignore its own obligations ... teachers are certainly better paid than nurses – but why? Because there are men in the teaching profession ... Now, if men could be persuaded to take up nursing as a profession – though God help the patients if they did – there would be an instant tendency to put the profession on a business footing, instead of a sentimental footing.³⁶

Ann-Marie Francis and several other ladies were also members of the Nungarin Wheatgrowers' Union. It is interesting to note that in the minutes of the Wheatgrowers' Union, although women are always listed separately in the attendance register, they apparently participated fully in meetings:

[As part of a proposal to support the Nungarin CWA in organising a social function in aid of the Kununoppin Hospital Appeal in 1934] Mrs Francis moved that the sum of £1:1:0 be donated from Branch funds to start the subscription list and that the list be circulated around the district. Seconded Mr W. Bodey. Carried.

And again in July 1935:

The serious position of the district in regard to fodder supplies was discussed and Mrs Francis moved that it be impressed on the government the seriousness of the position and to request that steps be taken immediately to reserve within the wheatbelt, fodder for this district, and that the price of chaff be fixed immediately at a maximum of £5 per ton. Seconded Mr B.W. Reading. Carried.³⁷

Nungarin women were no shrinking violets. Clearly, female members were treated on an equal footing to the men, and Mrs Francis continued to play an active part; proposing motions relating to the conditions for grazing leases and vermin control on

abandoned farms as well as challenging the scale of probate and death duties payable on encumbered farm properties.

From the time that pioneer families first arrived on the land, men and women both worked together to improve conditions and establish a community. After the first few years of agricultural development, the early Progress Associations began evolving into Farmers and Settlers Associations which maintained a seventeen-point platform which included freehold tenure of land, construction of railways, bulk handling of grain, agricultural education and women's hospitals. As the district started to 'put down roots', these organisations gave way to Primary Producer Associations, and the Nungarin Branch was formed in April 1921. Con McCorry and Mr W. Waterhouse convened the initial public meeting. Thomas Burns was elected Chairman with Con McCorry Vice-Chairman, and A.E. Andrews Secretary:

In view of the scattered nature of the district, a committee of twelve was appointed in order that the different localities might be represented. They consisted of: W. Waterhouse, H. Goode, J.M. Hall, C. Vanzetti, S.J. Benson, G. Fimister, W.H.C. Coumbe, A.H. Rowan, M. Farrell, E. Coulson, H.G. Payne and H.H. Waterhouse.

On the proposal of Mr Burns, seconded Mr McCorry, it was agreed that the wives of the married committee men be also members of the committee.³⁸

The next meeting was held only three weeks later and not surprisingly, the attendance register includes Henrietta Burns and Ann-Marie Francis. It would have been a brave committee that denied them membership! While this group of Nungarin ladies had a passion for a fair deal for the men and women on the land, and fought hard to improve conditions throughout the wheatbelt, and indeed, the whole state of Western Australia, it seems that the press was more interested in reporting what the women were wearing:

August 3rd 1933. Opening of Parliament. Seen at the recent opening of parliament were Mr and Mrs J.H. Johnson of Nungarin. Mrs Johnson is the State president of the W.S.P.P.A. [Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association] and was attired in a smartly fitting raglan sleeved frock of blue woollen material, long moleskin coat and hat to match.

Mrs Bagot, late of Nungarin, who is Vice-President of the National Council of Women and is on the Executive of the Women's Section, also took tea in the President's room. Among the guests of Mr Latham and his party were Mrs H. Burns, late of Nungarin, now of Darlington, who is now on the Political Executive of the E.S.P.P.A. and is also Vice-President of that organisation. Mrs Burns wore a frock of lavender morocain with black silk coat and cape lined with white, and hat to match. Among the gentlemen were Mr E. Crook of Nukarni and Mr Randolph of Merredin.³⁹



Toc H training day in Merredin (Eastern Wheatbelt District). Pictured are Phil Cornish and Norm Dawe in the light suits in the back row, and Fred Hinge seated in the left of the front row.



Toc H picnic at Knungajin mid-1940s

L to R standing: First two men unknown, Sylvia Hutchison, Mary Dayman, Harold Creagh (at the back), Tom and Hazel Bennett, Thelma Masters' father, unknown gentleman, Brenda Lee, Philip and Phyllis Cornish with Barry, Kevin and Russell, Thelma Masters, Muriel and Jim West with Judy and Alan.

Nobody cared what the men were wearing.

Throughout the years, Nungarin has been well served by a variety of service organisations. One of the early groups was Toc H which was born in Ypres, France, during the First World War. After the War, groups sprang up all over the world, and Nungarin, Merredin and Nukarni were amongst the many groups in Australia. Nungarin Toc H started in May 1931 and flourished during the thirties, giving invaluable help to many people in need; collecting firewood, doing odd jobs, emergency repairs and the like. The club eventually disbanded in 1959.

During the years of the Depression, group members organised seaside holidays for children of the district, and also held excellent concerts which were sufficiently popular to be repeated in nearby towns.

In the mid-1930s, the Nungarin Standard carried a report of a farewell for Congregational Minister, the Reverend W.J. Cole, who was the Toc H Padre in the district:

During the remainder of the evening, singing and music was indulged in, and several good solos were given by good singers, Mr Jack Dugdale, Mr Phil Cornish and Mr Gordon Young being the main ones. Phil Cornish, well known for his singing ability, rendered a very good comic song, "Little Rotten Egg." Mr Tom Richardson then obliged by a very appropriate comic recitation, "Bed." Plenty of applause greeted this item, but the chaps were uncontrollable, and their sides ached with laughter when Trevor Dawe, a juvenile member of the Group, came on the scene with a very humorous sketch, "Mary had a little lamb," in which a school mistress is trying to teach a class of tiny pupils this well known nursery rhyme. Music by two mandolins, a mouth organ and an accordion, and a talk by the Padre, filled the evening.⁴⁰

The same Trevor Dawe who was such a wit with his Toc H sketch, was earlier a keen member of the Nungarin 132nd Scout Group.



*Trevor Dawe leading the Nungarin Scouts
The picture would have been taken either late 1929, or early 1930*

Over several decades there was strong adult leadership for the Scouts, Cubs, and later the Guides and Brownies, which were all administered by the one local committee. By the early fifties the group identified the need for a hall of their own, and a building fund was inaugurated. At first the intention was to contribute to extensions to the district hall, but later discussions with the Nungarin RSL resulted in a decision to build a separate hall that would be shared by both bodies.

The next couple of years saw various alternative building proposals, accompanied by active fundraising. In the 1954 season Mr M. Coumbe dedicated 150 acres of crop for the building fund, while Mr Hodges arranged for a further 100 acres to be planted south of the town. The scouts sponsored film nights, organised an annual Mardi Gras, and also ran the drinks stall at the Agricultural Show. Brownies started in July 1954, and the Girl Guides in April 1955, and all joined in with the Scouts to try to raise the necessary funds for the new hall.

The Dampier Herald reported the success of the 1955 Mardi Gras:

Visitors from near and far converged on Nungarin last Saturday, all eager to participate in the colourful spectacle of the 1955 Mardi Gras, which has been hailed as the most outstanding entertainment in the wheatbelt for many years. Brilliantly illuminated, Railway Avenue was a seething mass of people, with those in fancy dress lending a touch of the bizarre to an already animated carnival scene. Much interest was focussed on the Beauty Quest, possibly the main attraction of an evening abounding in numerous entertainments. The winner was announced as Miss Jean Creagh, a well-known and popular young lady of Nungarin.

... As a result of her win, Miss Creagh was invited to take part in a parade at Foy's Perth later this month. As winner of the Quest itself, she will spend a fortnight's holiday at the Scarborough Hotel with all expenses paid, and will receive a holiday wardrobe valued at approximately £50 ...

The section of Railway Avenue which was closed off for the occasion was severely taxed to accommodate the 1,000 adults and many children who gathered to take part in the colourful atmosphere of the Mardi Gras – all eager to be associated with such an outstanding presentation of a never-to-be-forgotten carnival.⁴¹

The program included entertainment by the Fremantle Ladies Highland Pipe Band, a Grand Parade of fancy costumes (Kathy Tiller won a prize as ‘Pierrette’), decorated floats (including “the ‘Nungarin Bathing Belles’ showing their figures to advantage even though their legs were mostly knobs and muscles”), decorated bicycles (won by Barry Cornish with Rhonda Herbert runner-up), a men’s ballet, food stalls and various sideshows including coconut shies, fortune telling and a picture booth with Max Coumbe operating his projector.

The 1955 Mardi Gras made a profit of £350, which considerably boosted the memorial Hall building fund.

In 1956 the Masonic Lodge suggested combining their efforts and their funds in building a hall that could be used by all three parties. As a result of a meeting with the Nungarin Road Board, members were offered a fifty year lease of a block of land south-east of the existing hall in the main street, with the option of renewing the lease for a further fifty years. A draft constitution was drawn up by Mr Collins, a solicitor in Merredin, with the new body to be known as the ‘Nungarin Buildings Incorporated’⁴².

In the meanwhile, all was not running entirely smoothly with the boys. The minutes for a meeting held on 23rd November 1954, records “Mrs Donovan reported that she was managing fairly well with the cubs, but thinks a certain amount of male discipline may straighten the boys up a little”⁴³. Perhaps the same little ratbags had graduated to the Scouts because two years later in September 1956 the scoutmaster resigned saying “he had trouble controlling the boys and feels he has been wasting his time”⁴⁴. At about the same time there was a report that the Scout’s flagpole had gone missing.

However, the powers that be persisted in their efforts to instil discipline and good manners to the next generation, and also to provide a suitable venue for the use of all parties. On 4th September 1957, the new Nungarin Memorial Hall was opened at Lot 168 Railway Avenue by His Excellency the Governor, Lieutenant General Sir Charles Gairdner KCMG, KCVO, CB, CBE.

The *Dampier Herald* reported:

As the skies cleared whilst the actual ceremony was in progress, the blue and scarlet dress uniforms of the military forces present, brought a splash of colour to an unforgettable scene.

His Excellency was escorted into Nungarin with an Army escort and thence to the Officers' Mess at 5 Base Ordnance Depot, where he was entertained to lunch with other invited guests. During the meal, the Western Command Band played selected music ... at 2.30 pm he was tendered a Civic reception by the Nungarin Road Board and was formally welcomed by the Chairman, Mr H.H. Waterhouse, who presented members and ex-members of the Board and their wives.

At 3.30 pm His Excellency arrived at the Nungarin War Memorial Building and inspected the guard of honour ... after an address of welcome by Mr J. Baker, President of the Central Committee responsible for the erection of the building, the Western Command Band played the Royal Salute ... Mr Baker then introduced His Excellency who commended the fine spirit of the three organisations concerned in erecting such a fine building as a tribute to the war dead of the district. He then declared the building officially opened.

The official party and the public then moved inside the building where "Lest We Forget" was sung, with Mrs E. Herbert presiding at the organ.

His Excellency inspected the guard of honour formed up on either side of the hall near the Roll of Honour; the guard comprising members of the Girl Guides, Brownies, Boy Scouts and Cubs.⁴⁵

There was no shortage of pomp and ceremony. After a program of speeches, the Honour Roll was unveiled, followed by a short service which included two minutes silence, the laying of commemorative wreaths, and several hymns. The official party then retired to the hall to be fêted to afternoon tea before His Excellency retired to his private railway carriage to prepare for the dedication of the Masonic Temple Lodge that evening.

It was a memorable day for people of the Nungarin district, not only because of the events taking place, but also because of the honour bestowed on them in having the personal representative in W.A. of Her Majesty, The Queen, to officiate at each ceremony connected with the opening of the War Memorial Building, which will long stand as a monument to the brave men who lost their lives in two major world catastrophes, and also as recognition of their deeds by a grateful community.⁴⁶



*The Great Nungarin Chariot Race
From Left: Bill Richardson, Bernard Redding
and Jack Hodges. The race was part of a Scout
Jamboree, which also featured a fire-breathing dragon
'Itchynosis' as well as general sports and races.*

Following the opening of the new hall, the Masonic Lodge gifted their old hall for the joint use of the Junior Farmers and the Scouts. The large ex-army timber and asbestos hall (measuring 81' x 20') was eventually jinkered from vehicle Park on the other side of the railway line, to a new site on the show ground.

In 1958, the Scout Group changed its name to the First Nungarin Scout Group. By 1961 there was a problem with attracting suitable leaders, and with competition from the Nungarin Swimming Pool which was a great attraction

during the summer months, the Scout Group eventually made the decision to close in March 1965.⁴⁷

The Nungarin Masonic Lodge, No. 256 W.A.C., held its first meeting at Kununoppin in December 1948 with twenty-two foundation members:

Hedley Powell Jolly	Ronald Frank Creagh
Frederick Arthur Williams	Richard Henry Jolly
Gustavus Hermann Herbert	John Mimify George Hall
Stanley Bliss Harper	Edgar Frank Dayman
Sidney Thomas Jolly	James Stewart Anderson
Walter Edward Williams	Derek Thomas Langley
Clement Jagger	Ernest Silvester
Herbert Henry Victor Barrett	Emille Melville Beurteaux
Clarence James Bullen	Charles William Trevor Brown
Hedley Frank Jolly	Jack Leipold Tiller
Malcolm Sidney Herbert	Colin James Cairns

The Nungarin Lodge operated for almost fifty years, and finally disbanded in 1993 due to a lack of membership.⁴⁸



*The Mickey Mimers: 'Donald Where's Your Troosers?'
Ron Creagh at the mike with Don Pink (left), John Field on
banjo & Rodney Field (right)*

The Junior Farmers organisation started in WA in 1935, and has since been a marvellous training ground for youth in rural and regional areas. The Nungarin Junior Farmers started on 4th July 1949, with an inaugural membership of twenty. Only a few weeks later, in August, the Nungarin group held a debate on the stabilisation of the wheat price, and throughout the next few decades continued

to encourage young people to take an interest in all spheres of agriculture, and to explore modern farming techniques and technologies. Competitions and field days equipped members to be confident speakers and leaders, while Achievement Days brought together young folk from all over the state and provided memorable educational, cultural and social opportunities. The 1960 North Eastern Districts Achievement Day was held in Nungarin, which attracted hundreds of young people from throughout regional Western Australia.

During the early sixties, the Nungarin Junior Farmers developed an entertainment group called the 'Mickey Mimers'. The group was extremely popular and appeared at numerous functions in Nungarin and throughout the district.

In 1962, the Junior Farmers held their annual parents' night, and organised a full evening of entertainment:

Club members provided an excellent show in which no effort had been spared to give an entertainment to be long remembered.

The 'Mickey Mimers' have perfected the art of mime to a high degree. Among the 'masters' were Peter Ellis, Ron Creagh, Howard Milne and Billy Jolly, with the remainder of the boys and Trish Tiller, who took part in one mime, 'Alvin's Harmonica'. Master of Ceremonies was Don Pink. Ron Creagh, president of the Nungarin club, welcomed everyone to the show.

A skit entitled, 'It's in the Bag', featured Johnny Field, Barry Cornish, Frances Field and Clarice Creagh ...

Public speaking was a humorous debate between two rival corners of the town on 'the evils of drink'...

Mr Ron Coombe, who is extension officer on headquarters staff said culture activities had not long been introduced into J.F. clubs' activities and Nungarin was the first club who had the courage to put on a show to the public ... and he would surely put in a good report on his return to Perth.

The concluding item was Christmas carols in which the audience took part. The audience were the guests of the club for supper.⁴⁹

The Junior Farmer movement offered a variety of opportunities for young farmers to gain experience and education in their chosen field, and in 1968, Ron Creagh won the P & O *Canberra* Award and was selected to represent Western Australia in a six-month tour of England. Ron had held most offices during his nine years of membership of the Nungarin Club, including two terms as president, and several years earlier he had represented his home state during a five-week tour of the eastern states.

Ron has a well-deserved reputation as a practical joker, but should have known better than to try to pull the legs of the Irish. While in the United Kingdom, Ron extolled the virtues of our locally produced 'Kangaroo butter', and the burgeoning kangaroo dairy industry. As a consequence he received an invitation to speak to the Greenmount Agricultural College in Muckamore, County Antrim:



*Ron Creagh inspecting Hereford cattle at Great Park Farm, Abingdon
(Photo courtesy of Ron Creagh)*



GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

Telephone: Antrim 21176

Railway Station, Antrim

All communications should be
addressed to the principal,
Mr. M. Boyd, B.Agr.

GREENMOUNT

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

MUCKAMORE, Co. ANTRIM

26/6/68.

Ref.

Your Ref.

Dear Mr Creagh,

I was very interested to hear from Miss Torrens about the latest developments in milk production in Australia, involving the domestication of your native kangaroo.

As Head of the Dairying Dept. at the college I would be very pleased if you could spare the time to come along and talk to some of our staff. I know your time in Northern Ireland is limited but we would not like to miss the opportunity of meeting one of the pioneers of this most exciting development in milk production.

I have taken the liberty of contacting Mr Morrow who is the Agricultural Correspondent of the News Letter. He is also very keen to meet you and will be contacting you in due course.

If you feel you cannot spare the time to come to the college do not hesitate to phone me and I can arrange for Mr Morrow and myself to be at the Airport when you are leaving.

Yours faithfully,

G.M. Kennedy
G. M. Kennedy

In 1973 the Junior Farmer organisation changed its name to 'Rural Youth', which it was felt reflected the broader perspective that had developed with only a small percentage of activities specific to agriculture.

Graham Bailey shared his recollections of his time with the Nungarin Rural Youth:

I travelled to Nungarin from Nukarni once I got my drivers licence in 1972. I quickly made friends with Buster Jolly and Murray Dayman through my friendship with Jim Hinge who lived at Elabbin, and soon got involved with Rural Youth.

My first memory of Nungarin Junior Farmers (as it was then) was of a variety skit night being held at the now demolished Merredin Town Hall. I'm not sure of all the actors, but Julie Herbert was barmaid, and Bruce and Chris Herbert and myself were supposed to be drunks (- or drinkers!). In the scene we were playing darts whilst all the action was going on at the bar. There was a serious moment going on at the bar when all of a sudden the audience burst into laughter. Apparently Bruce was having a throw at the dartboard and missed by about four feet. The audience thought this was all part of the show. I can't work out why, but we weren't allowed back on stage for the second part of the skit!

I don't just join an organisation to watch, I get involved, so I soon got involved with the State Achievement weekend (SAW) which was to be held at Kwolyin (a pub, church and wheat bin halfway between Bruce Rock and Quairading). I was voted onto the committee and was in charge of entertainment. Friday night I organised a wine and cheese night (don't know why as I don't drink wine), and Saturday night I organised the dance. 'Travis', the band from Cunderdin, was a huge hit. We had a marquee, and generator for power (which went well until it ran out of fuel), but that was fixed and the standard was set for future SAWs.

Sunday was drama on the rock, but I must have relaxed a bit by then as I only remember getting a lift back to the campsite in the back of Ian Snell's XP Falcon.

Being on the committee for SAW Kwolyn was a stepping stone to join the State Executive of Rural Youth, and the following year I was duly elected, and held the position for the next six years. I also held every position in the Nungarin branch except president.

In 1979, Nungarin hosted the State Achievement weekend for Eastern Districts. I was elected Chairman, and John Flockhart was elected Deputy. There was a good committee, including quite a few from Nungarin.

Support from Nungarin people and businesses was great, and Merredin businesses helped also. Everyone chipped in and helped in one way or another. Promoting the event outside Rural Youth was our next task. We went on radio stations and in newspapers wherever we could. Nungarin was already a high profile club with members attending most events that happened around the state. There is a whole chapter that could be written about the journeys in the back of Mal Clement's truck, but what happened in the truck should stay in the truck!

I was awarded the 'Outstanding Member' award for the state that year (1979), and the following year presented with a 'Highly Recommended' award. I am very proud of those achievements, and believe that I even made it into Hansard, the official record of what is said in State Parliament. Jim Brown MLA, relayed the story to me. Apparently the relevant Minister stated in Parliament that the Government should continue funding the Rural Youth organisation, and that he had been invited to attend SAW at Narrogin, but had to decline. Jim immediately stood up and alerted his learned colleague that the SAW was in fact to be held in Nungarin, not Narrogin, and that he was a friend of the family of the Chairman, Graham Bailey, who is affectionately known as 'Bails', and was pleased to announce that Hendy Cowan and himself would be attending the opening ceremony in their official capacities.

The Miss Rural Youth Ball was being held at the Claremont Showgrounds in March 1980, and it was announced that the inaugural 'Mr Rural Youth' would also be held at the same time. What an opportunity to promote Nungarin SAW. A mob of us went off to Perth in our Sunday best (usually reserved for mate's weddings and funerals). When all the contestants were called up on to the stage for the judging there were about seventy, and I'll admit I'm no pin up, and thought I would have no hope dressed up in a suit like all the rest. We had adopted the cartoon of the galah from the Ettamogah Pub as our symbol for SAW, so I decided to get dressed up as the galah – complete with hobnail boots. Well, if you have 69 handsome blokes all toffed up in suits, and one galah, who would you pick? Correct. Me.

I don't recall getting any certificate as such, but there were plenty of flashbulbs that night, so someone must have a photo, and I managed to get in a really good plug for Nungarin SAW. To the best of my knowledge, that

was the first and last Mr Rural Youth, so I guess that makes me the reigning and longest standing Mr Rural Youth in Western Australia, if not the world.⁵¹

As the Nungarin community developed, many groups were formed to bring together people with similar interests. Apart from the more mainstream organisations, there were many other groups which blossomed for a time and eventually faded away. Among them were the Association for the Abolition of Poverty, the Monetary Reform Group, Girls Brigade, Mothers Union, Red Cross, YMCA, The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (Buff's Lodge), the Pigeon Racing Group, the Water Polo Club and the Lake Campion Aquatic Club.

With the establishment of the townsite, various commercial enterprises and government services were instituted. The very first government service in the district would have been in 1877 when Thomas Adams was appointed as a Special Police Constable in the Mangowine area. The position passed to his son Charles in 1882, and his was the last police presence in the area until the Nungarin Police Station was commissioned on 23rd September 1923.

Nungarin Police Station

Commissioned 23rd September 1923

Decommissioned 13th February 1976

Some of the Previous Serving Officers

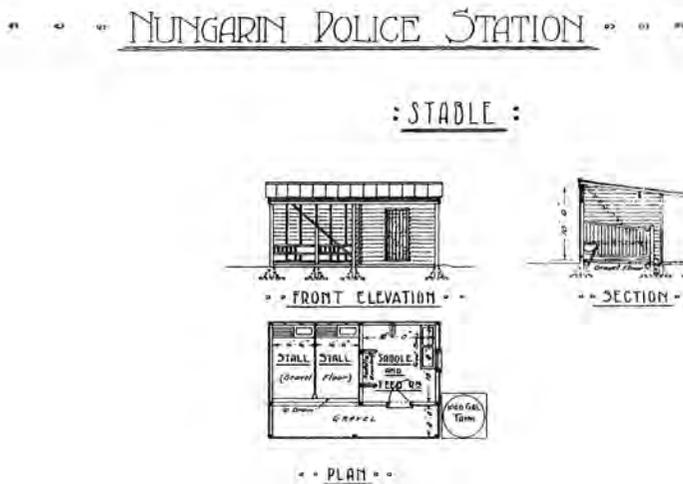
Date	Name	Regimental Number
20.09.1923	J. Mathews	1292
17.12.1926	J. Gravestock	1373
04.04.1940	A.E. Beard	1543
17.10.1946	I. Hollings	1690
30.09.1952	R.K. Lee	2033
21.01.1956	H.M. Stewart	2271
08.12.1961	J. Bishop	2434
25.04.1963	G. Black	2441
04.09.1967	N.R. Dawson	2588
07.11.1972	G.R. Wills	3213
31.01.1974	C.E. Peterson	3386



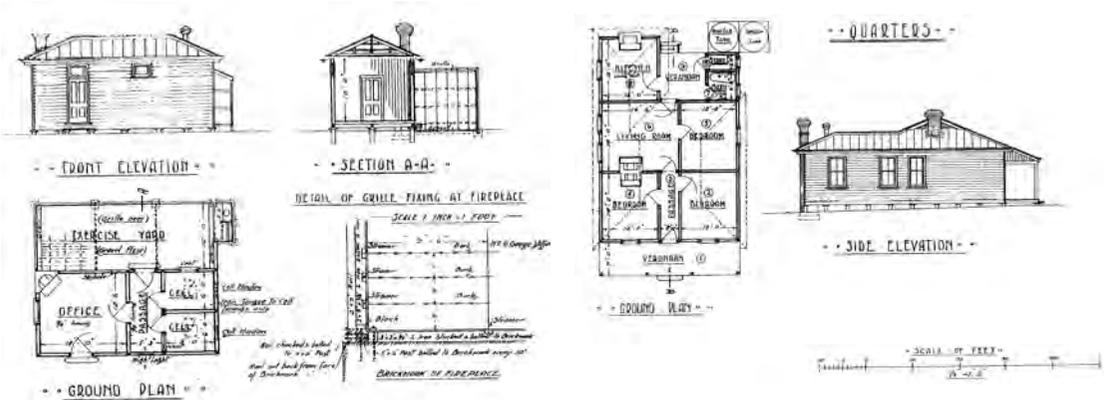
Reg Carr with Bob Gilchrist outside Nungarin Police Station

Apart from the official list there were others that are remembered as having served in Nungarin including Bill Andrews, Les Menhennett, Bob Gilchrist and Reg Carr. Reginald Carl Carr was stationed in Nungarin between February 1947 and October 1952, part of that time serving with Bob Gilchrist.

The station was completed in September 1923 and comprised the station house, the station, cells, and stables with stalls for two horses.



Cells:



Although not ever stationed in Nungarin, local boy Les Ayton had a distinguished career in the Western Australian Police Force. He joined the Police Service in 1966, and rose through the ranks to be promoted as Deputy Police Commissioner in 1994. Les was noted for his fairness as well as for his determined and uncompromising character. He retired from the Force in February 1996.

Policing in the Nungarin area has not been without its exciting moments, and some stories appear in more detail in the chapter on “Rogues and Rascals”.

In July 1928, just twelve months before the notorious murders that took place along the Rabbit-proof fence, John Thomas William Smith (alias Snowy Rowles), and his accomplice, Thomas Watson Wilson, broke into the Nungarin Co-op and stole some food and clothing, as well as a suitcase (no doubt to stash the booty in). Constable Gravestock noticed that there had been a couple of strangers in town earlier, and the miscreants were later traced to the Dalwallinu district and captured. Rowles escaped from prison and made his way to the Murchison where he eventually met Arthur Upfield and began to plot ‘the perfect murder’ (which turned out not to be so perfect after all), and he was convicted and hanged in June 1931.

A further frisson of excitement was caused by the arrest and conviction of Len “Shark Arm” Jackson, another murderer with connections to Nungarin. Coincidentally, although it was several weeks prior to Reg Carr being posted to the Nungarin Police Station, he was involved in Jackson’s capture, and his evidence was given at the subsequent trial.

During the Second World War, Nungarin’s population was boosted by thousands of army personnel as well as civil aliens and prisoners of war, and the local police had their work cut out for them.

On 4th March 1943, George Ziebold, Harry Dovine and Joe Piuselli, on behalf of the Camp Committee, wrote to the Attorney General, Dr Evatt, to complain about perceived injustice in the way the civil aliens were treated by the local police:

On behalf of the workers attached to the Allied Works Council (Alien Section) employed at Nungarin W.A. we wish to enter an emphatic protest against the ruling of the local police, that we must leave the town by nine p.m. unless we have special permission from our camp foreman.

We consider this most unjust as what recreation is available is centred in the town.

We also feel that it is provocative and illogical if applied for security reasons. And further we feel that such regulation is detrimental to the good conduct of the camp.⁵¹

In April, Constable A.E. Beard wrote in reply to Inspector Maloney to express his frustration and defend himself against the accusations:

Shortly after I resumed duty on 22/12/42 the Italians refused to work with Albanians which resulted in the Albanians being transferred to Mundaring. Then a German named Husler refused to work with the Italians; he was brought to the Police Station by Mr Green and Mr J. Johnston. I had a talk with him and found he had very set ideas re working at all. To avoid trouble in the camp and works I applied to have him interned; this did not eventuate.

The Aliens Section then went smoothly for some weeks when complaints began to come in re the aliens using bad language on their way back to camp late at night and urinating along the road in the daytime. I patrolled the road regularly and this complaint ceased for the time.

An Aborigine who was camped on the east side of the town about 1 mile from the aliens' camp, which is on the west side of the town, made a complaint that the aliens were coming to his camp and annoying his wife who was visibly pregnant.

I kept a watch for offenders, and on the 16/2/43 at 12.15 a.m. I arrested Ivo Bassolo for being on the native's camp without lawful excuse. He was fined £5 and costs. To stop this complaint I had to order the Aborigine to leave the town. This abo., Edgar Wilkes, is a good class of native, and earning sufficient to maintain his wife and three children from work with farmers and odd jobs about the town. He is now camped at Kununoppin.

A number of the aliens attend the dances and people objected to them dancing with their wives and daughters. I told them I had no power to stop them from coming to the dances, and advised them to tell the women to refuse them dances. Some of the older aliens would be showing signs of liquor, and on one occasion made themselves objectionable to the women, and I removed them from the hall.

At the finish of the dances some of the aliens would not stand up when 'God Save the King' was played, probably not knowing they should. I would get them up to avoid a brawl; it would require very little excuse to start one especially at the dance hall.

To obtain a travel permit aliens have to produce their leave ticket from the P.W.D., that is during working hours; this went smoothly for a time, then if I was away from the Station they left without a permit. Some of them returned without reporting to the A.R.O. at the town they visited, although it was written on the 'Remarks' column of the permit, and no amount of talking to them made any difference.

Eventually I informed Mr Green that I would not accept the responsibility of issuing permits unless the conditions were complied with, and they obtained a permit prior to leaving; the only alternative then to obtain permits was to get permission from the National Service.

At the same time I acquainted Mr Green of the complaints received, and he suggested that the aliens be back in camp after the hotel closed at 9 p.m., and if any of them required to be out later for dances or pictures, they should notify the Foreman, J. Johnston, and he would know who was about. He gave Mr Johnston the instruction in my office.

Mr Green impressed on the aliens the necessity of obtaining permits to leave the district and complying with the conditions; since then all has been well.

One evening at the hotel two of the aliens commenced to fight and fell out of the door onto the footpath. I happened to be there and separated them. At the time Mr Green, proprietor of the hotel and a returned soldier from the last two wars, rushed out and, seeing I had the situation in hand, stopped; if he had started on the aliens there would have been a brawl, and every alien in the hotel would have been attacked; fortunately I was there and the trouble avoided.

Another occasion Hulser and Doring, two Germans, objected to leaving the hotel at 9 p.m. They stated their watch was 5 minutes to 9 p.m. I told them the hotel was closed by the hotel clock which was checked by the wireless time, and they would have to leave. After speaking together in German, they left without trouble.

As regards the attached complaint that the Police refuse to allow the aliens in the town after 9 p.m. without permission of the Foreman, is not correct. I have not at any time given them any instruction to that effect, or spoken to them when in the office to get permits.

Mr Green made the suggestion, and instructed J. Johnston, the Foreman, to carry it out. It apparently has had little effect on them, as I have noticed that they still attend the dances and pictures in numbers, and one of them who has a motor utility does a lot of driving about.

The aliens get permits when required for leave to go to Kununoppin to visit sick comrades in hospital, week-end leave to Merredin, and any other occasion except during working hours when they have to produce a leave pass to be absent from work.

In my opinion the aliens here have been very fairly treated, and they have no cause for complaint. They get everything they want, and they have a good time. I made arrangements for one of them, who is a pianist of high order, to be allowed to use the hotel piano; he avails himself of the offer.

Generally the treatment of the aliens does not differ from the other workers.⁵²

Certainly it seems, a policeman's lot was not a happy one.

As with the police service, the postal service also had its genesis with the Adams family at Mangowine. Early police constables delivered mail to the isolated stations as they did their rounds through the district – so Thomas Adams (from 1877) and his son Charles (from 1882) acted as postal agents during that time. In 1897, Jane Adams was awarded the contract for delivering mail throughout the district. Jane's son, Charles Jnr, who was only 15 years old at the time, did the fortnightly deliveries. The mail run went from Kellerberrin, Moujakine, Yarragin, Mangowine, Wattoning and Dandanning, and took a week to complete.

Winifred Wilkes recalled a time in the mid-twenties when her father, Sam Stephens, delivered the mail:

Once in the 'off season' Father had been the mail contractor. He made a deal box with partitions for mail and papers, fitting it in the front of the sulky. One day he took me with him. It was very cold in the early morning and we had to 'dress up warm'. We each had a sacking-wrapped heated stone for our feet, and rugs to wrap around us. There was a wagga⁵³ over the back of the seat and one for our knees ...

We picked up mail to post on our way to Nungarin. We had to stop at the stores for farmers as well as go to the Post Office. After lunch with the sulky well loaded and packed we set off on the home delivery run. Sometimes we saw the settlers, or we put the mail in their letter boxes.⁵⁴

Olga Norman delivered mail in the Burran Rock area. At first she used a horse and sulky, but later had a Rugby car which was fitted with wheel-chains to enable her to negotiate the roads during wet weather. Olga (née Turpin) came to Nungarin with her mother and step-father when they took up land in 1911. In March 1917 Olga married Reginald Norman in the Burran Rock Congregational Mission hall, and the couple moved to a farming property bordering Burran Rock. They shifted into Nungarin in 1927/8 when the ravages of rabbits made it impossible to carry on farming, and Olga ran a boarding house in Railway Avenue. Olga was also a member of CWA, and played the piano for church services as well as for the silent movies.⁵⁵

Matthew Mackie was another person who undertook mail deliveries; doing the run from Nungarin to Mukinbudin. Matthew came to Nungarin when he was contracted to do the woodwork on McCorry's Hotel. He stayed to settle in Nungarin and also worked on the first weatherboard church building for the Church of England as well as the extensions for Mrs Farrell's dining rooms in 1917⁵⁶. He lived at Lot 4 Railway Avenue between Stewart Baird's house and Miss Andrews' haberdashery and fancy goods shop, and often acted as an undertaker in the early days. Matthew had a black horse called 'Jerry' and a masher cart that he used to do the mail run. Aunty Jim Farrell said that he was a kind man, and that the girls would sometimes borrow his horse and cart to go to tennis on a Sunday.

During the 1920s, Tom Williams worked for Putlands General Store. At that time Putlands gained the contract for mail delivery to the Lake Brown area, and Tom Williams drove their truck on the mail run, delivering grocery orders at the same time. Vehicles and drivers seemed to be made of tough stuff in those days as Tom's family recall him telling the story of how he tipped the truck over on the way to Lake Brown.



*Tom Williams at the Wheel of Putlands truck (1920s)
Photo courtesy of Margaret Clifton (née Williams)*

A man came along with a horse and cart and managed to tip the truck back on its wheels. Truck and driver continued undaunted on their merry way.

The first Nungarin Post Office was opened on 28th August 1911, at the same time that the railway line was opened. The post office operated from Bolton and Rae's

store at Lot 12 Railway Avenue. When Mr E.H. White took over Bolton's store a few month's later, he complained that he was not allowed sufficient remuneration to compensate for being obliged to meet the train six times a week outside of office hours. His annual allowance was subsequently increased from £20 to £26.⁵⁷

From the Divisional Inspector Re Allowance Postmaster's remuneration - dated 12th June 1912:

Referring to the memorandum of the 27th ultimo, from Central Office, quoting the following excerpt from a communication received from Mr E.H. White, Allowance Postmaster, Nungarin, viz:-

"I have now been the Allowance P.M. here for the last six months at £20 per annum. Shortly after coming here the Divisional Inspector, Northam, promised me an extra six pounds a year for meeting six trains weekly after office hours and after shop hours, viz: 3 times a week at 5 a.m. and 3 times a week at 11 p.m."

The Nungarin Post Office was opened on the 28th August last by Messrs Bolton and Rae, concurrently with the establishment of mail facilities by the use of the railway line which was taken over by the State Government on the same date. The action towards extending facilities to Nungarin was taken some time previous and there being no railway timetable available the estimated business for payment at scale rates did not include attendances outside office hours.

Shortly afterwards Mr White purchased Messrs Bolton and Rae's storekeeping business and agreed to conduct the postal business for the existing rate of remuneration, viz: £20. As reported on 12th March last "Mr White called at this office in November and complained of the remuneration allowed for the work. As it was then shown that he had to meet the trains at unreasonable hours viz:- 5 a.m. and 11 p.m., six times weekly, he was informed that £6 per annum would be allowed therefore as from 1st January."⁵⁸

Shortly after the telephone was connected on 18th June 1912, Mr White's allowance was increased again to £40.15.0, with scale rates introduced for telephone and telegraphic business.

Postal business was still being conducted as part of the store when fire destroyed the building owned by Thomas and Thick in February 1922. The postal business was temporarily moved and the telephone apparatus was quickly connected to the railway shed to minimise disruption. At the end of 1922, £100 was paid for land for the construction of a separate post office, and in 1924 the tender to construct the post office was won by Mr O.C. Haines of Newcarnie (Nukarni) with a quote for £1,467⁵⁹. The building was completed on 6th January the following year at a total cost of £2,284.

The Nungarin Post Office floor plan shows the original layout with a counter running across the width of the building to separate public space from the mailroom. In later years the north-west side of the building was partitioned to create a separate office which was at one time occupied by the Agricultural Protection Board. At that time the counter was swung around to form a smaller mail room on the south-eastern side of the building.⁶⁰

The telephone was connected to residences north of Nungarin in 1925. Telephone Offices were established in private homes in the area: Robert Hull's home at 'Strathmore', and also the homes of Messrs McGregor at 'Glenroyd' and Goode at 'Mangowine'. Telephone Office keepers manned the lines from 10.00 am to noon, 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm, and from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturdays. The keepers of each exchange had to sign an agreement that they were willing to provide the necessary accommodation free of charge and to conduct the telegraph and telephone duties at the "departmental scale rates of payment". The scale rates were set at 2d for each telegram despatched, with an extra 1d if the telegram was put in an envelope. In addition they received 40 per cent of revenue derived from outward trunk calls, but only ¼ d per network call. Where more than one subscriber's line was connected

there was a payment of ten shillings for an exclusive service, or 6/8 for a party line. The minimum payment for attendance and operating was £2 per annum, so more of a community service than anything else.⁶¹

The manual exchange at Knungajin was located at Ernie Masters' place and if a call needed to be made 'after hours'; the best you could hope for was for Ernie to take a message, or if he was in an indulgent mood, he might place his handset in such a way that a semi-private conversation was possible. The local exchange system was still in place in the Knungajin area until the early sixties.

The delights and frustrations of the party line system are legendary. Marion Dunstall recalls the time that a particular farmer expressed his frustration at a neighbour who was well known to listen in to private telephone conversations. While making a call he suspected that she was eavesdropping, and with some irritation he snapped, "Get off the bloody phone", to which came the prompt reply, "I'm not on the phone!"⁶²

In 1927, Nungarin was repeating telegrams and switches for trunk line calls for Mukinbudin, Welbungin, Lake Brown, Mangowine, Dandanning, North Nungarin and Burran Rock. As Nungarin worked morse with Perth and other stations, all telegrams repeated were worked by telephone and by morse. At that time Nungarin warranted a staff comprising a postmaster and a postal clerk. Over four thousand telegrams were transmitted during the financial year, and three thousand received.

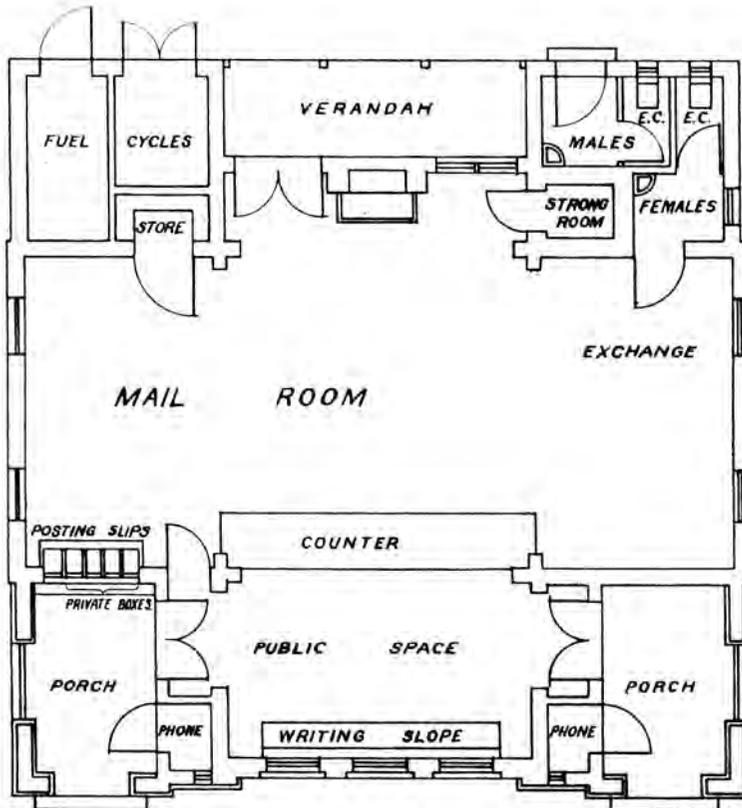
By 1932, there were twenty subscriber telephone lines, one public telephone and four trunk lines connected to the exchange, which was open 66 hours a week Monday to Saturday. The traffic was such that it was necessary to employ two part-time junior telephonists. It may be surprising to know just how exacting the physical requirements were for junior telephonists. In 1944 Miss Evelyn Waterhouse applied for the position but was initially rejected because of insufficiency in her arm length measurements. She was notified that her "arm measurements fall short of the required standard". Apparently the desired length was "six feet from the ground to the fingertips while standing erect with the left arm extended perpendicular to its fullest extent". Unfortunately her vital statistics were lacking to the tune of one inch. However the adverse medical report was later amended, she was re-measured, and re-instated.⁶³

At any rate, the old manual exchange was replaced by an automatic service in September 1951. The initial capacity was ninety lines, but with the capability of building up to a

200 line capacity to meet future development. At the same time a public telephone fitted with a multi-coin attachment was provided so that trunk calls could be originated and telegrams sent at all hours. At the end of 1960 two new circuits were provided between Nungarin and Mukinbudin, with one of these extending to Merredin. This provision was promised to improve the grade of service between all the exchanges concerned.



Robert Thomas, Nungarin Postmaster 1914



COMMONWEALTH  OF AUSTRALIA

POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

OUR REFERENCE

GENERAL POST OFFICE, PERTH, W.A.
TELEGRAMS: TELEPHONE

25th January, 1963.

Dear Subscriber,

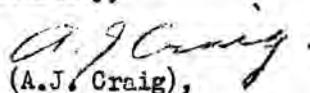
I am pleased to let you know that the installation of the automatic exchange at Knungajin is nearing completion. The changeover will be made on the 19th February, 1963, and your number on the new exchange will be Knungajin 545.

I enclose for your use a leaflet which gives simple instructions on how to use your new automatic telephone and in addition a small interim directory showing the codes which should be dialled to obtain other exchanges and services. May I suggest that you place them by your telephone so that all users of your service might become familiar with the main points before making calls.

You can assist us in the operation of the new exchange if you would please order all your calls by prefixing your request with your exchange name and number. For example, when calling Merredin, say "Knungajin 545 calling. Merredin 800, please."

An officer of this Branch will be in the district on the day of the change and will contact you to ensure that everything is satisfactory. He will be happy to assist you if you have any difficulties with the new system.

Yours faithfully,



(A.J. Craig),
Superintendent,

Telephone Service Branch.

Investigations by the Public Relations Officer for the P.W.D. in 1953 revealed that some early files containing historical information relating to regional post offices

were not able to be located. However it is possible to ascertain the name of some officers who served at Nungarin in the early days:

Date	Name	Position
1.1.1922 – 7.7.1923	R.S. Goudy	Allowance Post Master
? – 2.11.1925	P.J. Taylor	Post Master (retired)
19.11.1925 – 28.3.1926	C.J. Ryan	Post Master
1.7.1927 – 8.10.1928	J.H. Noonan	Post Master Grade 2
? – 12.12.1927	W.E. Marrett	Telegraph Messenger
? – 12.12.1927	W.A.J. Coulson	Telegraph Messenger
? – 12.6.1930	P Johnstone	Postal Clerk
1.7.1933 -	F.J. Craggs	Post Master
? – 9.1.1936	G.H. Henning	Postal Clerk
? – 11.6.1936	E.J. Kitcher	Postal Clerk
28.7.1936 – 18.8.1936	G.C. Slater	Postal Clerk
? – 15.2.1937	R.E. Allen	Postal Clerk
? – 8.6.1937	K.G. Martin	Postal Clerk
? – 1.7.1940	K.F. Cadd	Postal Clerk
? – 10.5.1944	D.J. Foley	Telephonist
23.5.1944 - ?	E.M. Waterhouse	Telephonist
? – 11.12.1946	R.A. Smith	Postal Clerk (4 th Division)
? – 9.3.1951	T.E. Brazier	Postal Clerk (3 rd Division)

The government service which had the most impact on the developing district was the railway. The first train arrived in Nungarin on 28th August 1911, although the first station master wasn't appointed until 1st July 1943. The early railway buildings were rudimentary sheds, and improved amenities were a constant quest throughout the twenties and thirties.



Early Railway Buildings - Nungarin Siding

In 1912, Cora Morgan's grandmother, Mary Glass, took her to Nungarin by train to visit the Adams family at Mangowine. Mrs Glass was the mother of Jane Adams, and the record of the journey is a great illustration of the difficulties of travel and communication in the early days:

In 1912 my grandmother (Mary Glass – née Cameron) took me by train from Jennacubbine to Mangowine. The railway line was newly opened through there. She had sent word to Jane Adams that we would arrive on the Monday night (3 trains a week). So Mother started to drive us in the sulky to catch the train. But unfortunately the horse fell over throwing Mother out, and Grannie landed in the bottom of the sulky. I was O.K. so I rushed to get the horse up so it would do no further damage – then saw to Mother and Grannie. We turned around and went home to see if anyone had any after-effects. Everything O.K. so we started off on the Wed – the next train. We left Jennacubbine at 9 a.m. and after the railway crew had stopped the train at every siding and sat down and had a talk with everyone, we arrived at Nungarin – a hundred and twenty mile trip – at midnight. Fifteen hours! No one to meet us, as they did not know we were coming. We got off the train in pitch dark but could see a campfire some distance away and men sitting around on logs drinking tea (no beer in those days). So we walked over; and the men looked up in amazement. They said, “Are you Mrs Glass – Mrs Adams’ mother? Because Tom Adams came to meet you on Monday night. Anyway have a mug of tea.” It was good tea too. We had been there about half an hour when we could hear a pair of horses trotting towards the siding. One of the men said, “That sounds like Tom Adams.” And it was. Tom said, “As you didn’t come on Monday we thought you might come Wed. Of course being no telephones in those days we could not let them know. So that was how I came to spend a week at Mangowine, and play for a dance in the lovely hall attached to the house.”⁶⁴

The Nungarin Station building was probably erected at the same time that the stationmaster was appointed in 1943. The station was a typical country weatherboard structure with a tiled roof that was later replaced with corrugated iron. The station was closed on 30th June 1973 and Westrail sold the building to the Western Australian Light Railway Preservation Association in August 1987. The building was relocated to Mussell Pool at Whiteman Park in February 1989, and all that remains at the site is the crane (believed to be original), and the cement footings for the old overhead water tank.

Rodney Schloithe was the last stationmaster to be appointed to Nungarin.

W.A.G.R. Station Masters at Nungarin⁶⁵

Name	Appointed	Departed
F.J. Tully	1 st July 1943	July 1946
J.E. Gilbert	July 1946	February 1948
R.A. Gillam	February 1948	March 1948
G.H.K. Martin	March 1948	December 1948
S.J. Pope	December 1948	February 1951
M.J. David	February 1951	May 1951
M.C. Joyce	May 1951	February 1956
T.S. Cook	February 1956	October 1957
R.L. Pascoe	October 1957	January 1960
T.K. Manning	January 1960	December 1963
L.G. Stevens	December 1963	December 1964
N. Skouroglou	December 1964	August 1966
R.T. Burrell	August 1966	January 1968
I.G. Holberton	January 1968	March 1970
R.F. Schloithe	March 1970	30 th June 1973

Mick Joyce was appointed Station Master at Nungarin in 1951, and he and his wife and two small daughters rented rooms at McCorry's Old Hotel. Mick's cousin, Eileen Joyce, was a world acclaimed pianist.⁶⁶ Eileen was born in Zeehan in 1912, and moved to Kununoppin with her family when she was only two years old. She began music lessons after the family shifted to Boulder some years later. She had an incredible career, playing with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and becoming one of the BBC's most regular broadcasting artists. She actually memorised more than fifty piano concertos and performed in concerts all over the world. In 1971 she was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Music from Cambridge University.⁶⁷

The first provision of electricity to the community of Nungarin was in 1936 when William Green offered



The Nungarin Station just before its removal to Whiteman Park

to supply lighting to the new Road Board offices in Railway Avenue, as well as to four street lights in the town. The power was generated by means of a small kerosene engine that supplied 220 volts of D.C. (direct current). The kerosene engine was later coupled with a small diesel engine. By 1942, Mr Green had installed two larger engines, which were also used to operate an ice works.⁶⁸ Ice was a much sought after commodity until refrigerators became more widely available.



In March 1947, the business was sold to Maurie McLernon who had completed an engineering apprenticeship with the W.A. Government Railways. Mr McLernon was asked to supply power to the newly established Army Camp, but with uncertainty as to just how long the Army would stay in Nungarin, he could not justify the expense in extending his operation, and the Army decided to build its own powerhouse.

Nungarin power was produced locally until 1952⁶⁹ when a high-tension line was established from Merredin to serve the Nungarin township and the Army base, as well as various farms en route. Electricity was delivered in the form of 250 volts A.C. (alternating current), which was stepped down from 22,000 volts A.C. Several years later the State Electricity Commission (S.E.C.) connected the state's independent power stations to the main electricity grid,⁷⁰ and in 1959 fluorescent street lights were installed in the town.⁷¹

The first commercial enterprise in Nungarin was the rough shed built by Tom Bolton alongside the newly constructed railway line in 1911. This was soon replaced by a more substantial store in the precincts of the present township. When Bolton took up farming at nearby Kwelkan, the store was taken over by E.H. White. Other enterprises quickly followed, including tearooms and a boarding house that had been built by Mr Barbary to cater for the men working on the construction of the railway track. Machinery agencies, clearing contractors, butchers: all became established to cater for the needs of the growing community. The Merredin Mercury reported "Progression! Verily thy name is Nungarin"⁷².

The Tiller boys certainly had an uncertain standard of service to uphold:

Alec took phone orders from around the town, promptly made them up, jumped on his bike and did immediate delivery. Although a lean man, Alec wobbled everywhere when he walked, and his head rocked from side to side. He was always in a hurry. To see him on his bike was something never to be forgotten –with a parcel of meat under one arm, the bike lurched from side to side with every violent thrust of the pedals. On reaching his destination there seemed to be little reduction in speed, he merely flopped the bike on its side with a not so gentle crack, stepped straight over the handlebars and on with the delivery. All done in a great hurry as there may be a customer in the shop.

Alec was a most un-athletic fellow, but on one occasion he excelled. Bill Muhs was irate at being served with some meat that he considered tough and inedible. Bill was a very big man with an intimidating appearance at the best of times. He grabbed the meat chopper, lunged at Alec while yelling his intent to drape him across the chopping block and decapitate him. Alec managed to avoid the grasp, raced out the back door and cleared the six-foot picket fence with plenty to spare ...

Alec had yet another claim to fame and that was that he was the worst rifle shot in the district. In those days most farmers had a small dairy herd and surplus cream was often sent off to Perth to help with the Depression finances. Slaughtering beasts was often done on the farm, and the animal shot and dressed on the spot. Alec purchased a steer from a Mr Murray who farmed near Kwelkan and set out to slaughter it on the farm. He took careful aim and fired, but the beast remained surprisingly upright. To the farmer's (and Alec's) consternation, the prize milking cow some distance beyond the steer suddenly took up a horizontal position.⁷⁴

Disturbingly enough, the Murrays' experience was not an isolated case:

Alec Parker ... was a notoriously bad shot. There was a story going around that he went out to one farm and shot the farmer's best milking cow instead of the bullock. Well Dad was not going to take any chances and tied the bullock up very short to a tree. When Alec got there Dad offered to shoot the beast but Alec wouldn't hear of it. Dad made sure

that Charlie and I were well out of the way because Alec waved the gun all around ... The beast was pulling back hard and the rope was only a few feet away, he hit the rope around the tree and it started to pull apart. Dad grabbed the gun off Alec and shot the bull just as the rope broke.⁷⁵

Tillers' slaughter yards were in the vicinity of the Recreation and Community Centre, and when the army became established in town, Jack and George arranged to take the scraps from the army kitchen to feed to the pigs. Unfortunately the swill contained contaminated bacon scraps and the pigs contracted swine flu. The entire stock had to be burned. The slaughter yards were eventually moved to a site south on Danberrin Road, and the army took over the town block.⁷⁶

Harry Radcliffe's house was on the next block. Harry farmed in the Knungajin area (north-east of Nungarin), and shifted in to town after he returned from WWII. He worked for the Road Board for many years, first as a grader driver, and later as foreman. Harry bequeathed his house and land to the Shire of Nungarin. The block was later cleared and is now the site of Radcliffe Park.

The first building visible at the extreme south-eastern end of the street in the picture of Railway Avenue is Reilly Brothers Garage (No. 7 Railway Avenue). The business was later taken over by William Green for his powerhouse and ice works. Frank Williams served his apprenticeship with Bill Green and got paid £1 per week. He boarded at the back of Len Jackson's 'Bright Spot' café, and paid his entire wages to Len in board. In return for his board money he had all his food supplied and a room in which he was invited to put his own bed. The term 'room' is probably used fairly loosely as there was no door, just a sheet of corrugated iron which he could prop up in the doorway if he felt he needed the privacy. To earn some spending money, Frank took on the responsibility of turning the big powerhouse motor off each night,



*Miss Andrews Store in Railway Avenue
(Photo courtesy of Jenny de Lacy)*



W.C. Green's Garage c 1936

and starting the small auxiliary motor. For this he received two shillings per week. All this in order to save the exhausting ten-mile trip backwards and forwards to the farm each day.

Frank remembered an amusing incident

while he was working at Green's. A farmer from Lake Brown asked Bill if he could fix his Lanz Tractor which had broken down. On inspection, the tractor was found to have a large gaping hole in the front of the radiator. Bill enquired re the cause of the hole, only to be informed, "The bloody thing wouldn't start, so I shot it!" Good thing it wasn't a horse.⁷⁷

The business then passed on to Maurie MacLernon in 1947. Maurie was a great lateral thinker, and often came up with innovative solutions to problems. He drove an 'Island-cab Chev 4' truck for his work during the week, and on weekends he jacked up the rear axle and used the wheel to generate power for the picture shows in the town hall. Another of his 'labour-saving' inventions was his shut-down switch for the power generator. In order to save the tedious trip over to the garage to turn off the engines at night, he modified a common alarm clock so that the unwinding alarm drew in a wire and shut off the fuel to the injectors. Problem solved.⁷⁸ After Mr MacLernon closed the business, the building lay idle for quite a few years and was eventually demolished and the new public toilets were later erected on the site.

Adjacent to the garage was Coulson's house and shed. Ernie Coulson was a photographer and carpenter from about 1912. He took the official photograph of the Nungarin Premiership football team in 1928, and used the old style camera with a black fabric hood that went over his head and shoulders. In 1936 the new Road Board office was erected on the site.

The first tennis courts in Nungarin were on the block next door to Coulsons. When the tennis courts moved to the new sports ground, Waterhouse's Hardware business was established on the site in 1928. The business was started by Warren and Connie

Waterhouse, and operated for 75 years, eventually involving three generations of the Waterhouse family. Over the years there were various changes and additions to the structure. At first a small room was added at the rear of the premises for an engine for power, and for charging wireless batteries. The next improvement was in 1938 when a large store shed was built at the back. In 1943 an extension was built to the store shed to cater for the storage of charcoal for gas producers, which were purchased from Bill Woodbridge. The following year the shed was further extended to house a Lister diesel engine to run an air-compressor and battery-charging unit. After WWII, the former AWAS amenities hut was purchased and re-erected at the back of the block. The construction of the new and latest shop was quite an innovation. Building began on 6th August 1951, and the new structure grew up around the existing shop. Business was carried on as usual until it became necessary to remove the old roof, and trade then moved to the shed at the back until construction was completed. Bert Waterhouse remembered the trying conditions as temperatures in the shed reached up to 120° Fahrenheit. The new building opened on the Tuesday after Easter in 1952. In September 1993, the old truck shed that had been erected in 1948 was dismantled to make way for the new gas shed. The doors of W.S. Waterhouse and Sons closed for the last time on 13th September 2003, bringing to an end the longest serving business dynasty in Nungarin.

The Bank and manager's residence was on the corner of Railway Avenue and Mitchell Terrace. The Bank of New South Wales, and the Rural & Industries Bank (later BankWest) have all operated from this site. The present building was constructed by the R & I Bank in 1960, and is now occupied by Total Concept Cabinetmaking (Nick & Rachel Malaspina).

The next building marked in the picture is the Nungarin Farmers Co-op, which took over from E.H. (Gordon) White in the early 1920s. White took over Bolton's store at the end of 1911, and built new premises the following year. In December 1912,



The first Waterhouse Business in Railway Avenue Nungarin



Nungarin Farmer's Co-op (mid-20s)
(Photo courtesy of Margaret Clifton née Williams)

the *Merredin Mercury* newspaper reported the new agency as “a fine large lofty building, built in iron and wood”⁷⁹. Gordon White’s store was burnt down in the 1922 fire.

The Co-op building is set back from the corner, and the Dalton brothers had a blacksmith’s shop at the back of the block

facing Mitchell Terrace. In 1910 Robert and William Dalton took up two small blocks adjacent to each other on the Chandler-Nungarin Road east of Nungarin, but erected a bush timber and hessian residence on the town block.

At the right hand side of the picture are marked tea-rooms, butchers, billiard room, the old post office building (lot 14), a small office building, and a tiny structure at the north-western end which could be the public telephone box. Over the course of years the complex of shops on lots 12, 13 and 14 housed a variety of businesses including Len Jackson’s ‘Bright Spot Café’, Sandy Williams’s ‘Junk and Disorderly’, grocery store (Putlands, Cairns and then Coopers), Thick & Thomas’s store, tea-rooms, Goldsborough Mort

agency, E.H. Baird butcher, Dalgety’s, Kayelene Beauty Salon, T. Thick butcher, Bank of New South Wales, Wigmores, H.V. McKay Machinery and Sirr’s barbers.



Putlands Store mid-1920s
(Photo courtesy of Margaret Clifton née Williams)

On the north-west side of the post office at 17 Railway

Avenue was the site of Barbary's home and tea-rooms. Later it became a boarding house run by Miss Marie Christensen (later Mrs 'Aunty' Kelly). On the corner is a residence built by Harper and Hall, and believed to be the oldest existing house in Nungarin. Several families have lived there including the Harpers (bakers) and Coopers (storekeepers).



*Aunty Kelly's Boarding House
(Photo Courtesy of Jenny de Lacy)*

Harpers Bakery was situated on the west side of Waterhouse Terrace. It operated from 1957 to 1962 and had an oven capacity of 300 loaves. Harpers also took over the school bus run in 1949.

The new Nungarin Hotel on the corner of Railway Avenue and Danberrin Road was built by the Kalgoorlie Brewing and Ice Company at a cost of £12,000. The first licensee was Mr G.R. Mewburn who took over in mid-June 1929. According to reports of the time, it was very elaborately furnished by Boans Limited, at a cost of £2,000. The Country and Towns feature in the *Western Mail* on 10th October 1929, puts the total cost of equipment and furnishings at about £4,000.

Nungarin's development has been mainly based on agriculture with cropping and sheep being the principal focus. However, pig breeding and cattle have also been important adjuncts, with a small but significant foray into the dairy industry. In August 1917, the *Nungarin-Trayning Mail* reported that Mr W.H. Coumbe was the first local settler to send cream to "the metropolis"⁸⁰, and during the 1940s, Clarice and Cecily Herbert



Harper's Bakery with the school bus shed on the left of the picture



*Cecily Herbert (later Cecily Clement) with one of the dairy cows
(Photo courtesy of Bob & Jean Herbert)*

ran a local dairy which served the town and the Army camp.

At Oakover II we had a milking machine. A local farmer had one he'd bought years before and had quite a herd as an alternative cash flow to wheat and sheep. Gus[□] organised all this for us – installed

the engine etc. We even had electric lights of a sort. Tiny little globes about 9 watts and if the engine stopped so did the light. Still it was better than pitch black.

A young man in the army made a milk cart for us with a recess at the back where we stood to hold the reins. From another friend from Rifle Shooting from Waroona, Gus purchased Lady, a black mare, for the milk round ... By this time we were milking 20 to 30 milkers. Cec and I loved the cows: mainly Jerseys ... We delivered milk to construction camps at first, then to the Army messes as soldiers arrived.

Lady, our milk carthorse was black with a splash of white down her nose. She was aptly named, as she was a lady through and through. There was not a nasty streak in her at all. As we delivered milk down the lane she fed quietly there but always ready to be off again. We in turn were careful of her and dodged the hard gravel roads from the township to the Army messes as much as possible; in some instances we made tracks through the bush to dodge the roads.

One of the nicest things that happened to us when delivering milk was the company at weekends of local young ones. Tricia, Jenny, Kathy, Nell, Lorraine and Joan often hopped on for a ride then would walk back home when we began the Army deliveries. We did enjoy them.⁸²

While agriculture is the major industry and mainstay of the Nungarin Shire, the mineral deposits in the lake system in the north of the district have attracted a great deal of interest and activity over the years. Mr J. Chandler of Campion inadvertently discovered Australia's only alunite deposits in 1924. Intending to whitewash some of the out-buildings on his farm, he collected a quantity of powdery lime-like material from the dry lake bed which adjoined his property. The preparatory burning of the 'lime' produced surprising results, and Mr Chandler decided to submit a sample of the material from Lake Campion for analysis in April 1924. The government mineralogist reported that the sample revealed an alunite content of 50%, and a potassium oxide content of 7.5%. Later, exploration chemists identified the presence of 22 separate chemicals in the lake clay.

Alunite is essentially a basic aluminium potassium sulphate. It is insoluble in water, but when roasted at about 600° it is converted to alumina and potassium sulphate. The sulphate can be leached out with water to provide potash fertiliser and the residue of alumina can be treated as a source of aluminium.⁸³

In 1934, examination by Western Mining Corporation revealed that varying quantities of alunite were present throughout the string of clay pans that formed Lake Campion and Lake Brown. Estimates indicated 10,000,000 cubic yards in Lake Campion and a further 2,600,000 cubic yards in adjacent lakes. These deposits averaged a depth of twelve feet consisting of 63% alunite, and represented the most extensive alunite deposits in the world.

The Western Australian Mines Department sampled to a depth of one metre, and estimated that an area of 120 ha contained approximately 2 million tonnes of alunite which could be a potential source of 250,000 tonnes of potassium sulphate and 500,000 tonnes of alumina. Several interested parties investigated methods of mining the mineral wealth of the area, but it wasn't until World War Two that the deposits really gained significance.

In September 1939, the then Director of the Department of Industrial Development, Mr N. Fernie, advised the Minister of an anticipated shortage of potash fertiliser for Western Australian farmers. In the previous season the state had imported 10,000 tonnes of potash from France, Germany and Palestine, but after the outbreak of war, it was obvious that supplies would become critical. In 1941, a private syndicate (Martin Bros Potash Alumina Development Syndicate) was joined by the State Government in investigating the possibility of mining the alunite. A research team was formed

and the State Alunite Industry was established under the general direction of the Department of Industrial Development.

Construction of the plant began in early 1942, but difficulties associated with the supply of manpower and materials delayed the completion until late 1943. The Chandler townsite was gazetted on 19th February, 1943.

Production of potash began in February 1944 with a recorded sale of 110 tonnes to Cuming Smith Fertiliser Company. Sales continued until March 1950 during which time 182,629.60 tons of raw material were treated to produce 9073.05 tons of potash with a market value of £215,669.72.

Drag lines were used to gather the alunite clay, which was then transported by truck to a hammer mill where it was crushed, and then roasted (or calcined) in a rotary kiln that reached temperatures of 800°c. The furnace was heated by five gas producers that consumed between 45 and 50 tons of firewood each day. Timber was cut and carted on contract from Crown lands and private property within a forty-mile radius of Chandler and by 1946, 40,000 tons of firewood had been consumed.

About three hundred government employees were living at Chandler by the end of the War. At one time the settlement had about 57 houses, as well as a dozen huts for single men, and facilities such as canteen, hall, library (run by the Nungarin Branch of Toc H), butcher, gallon licence, powerhouse, post office and school. The industry was also able to take advantage of some of the army surplus sales at Nungarin, and purchased a couple of large buildings previously used for stores. Some houses were also transported from Youanmi after the goldmining there had closed down.

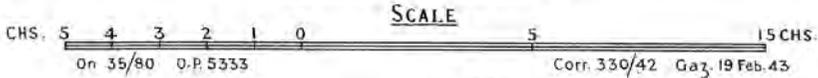
After the War, when imported potash once more became available, and at much cheaper rates than the local product, the State Alunite Industry at Chandler was closed down. At the same time there happened to be a shortage of plasterboard for the burgeoning building industry, and due to the presence of large quantities of gypsum (the raw material of plaster of paris), it was decided to convert the works at Chandler for the production of plaster. Australian Plaster Industries (A.P.I.) commenced operations in 1949.

The credit squeeze in 1959 caused a drop in the demand for housing, and as a consequence A.P.I. ceased operations at Chandler and the whole townsite was put up for tender. Later, it was realised that the alumina tailings that were stockpiled

CHANDLER

TOWNSITE

AVON DIST.

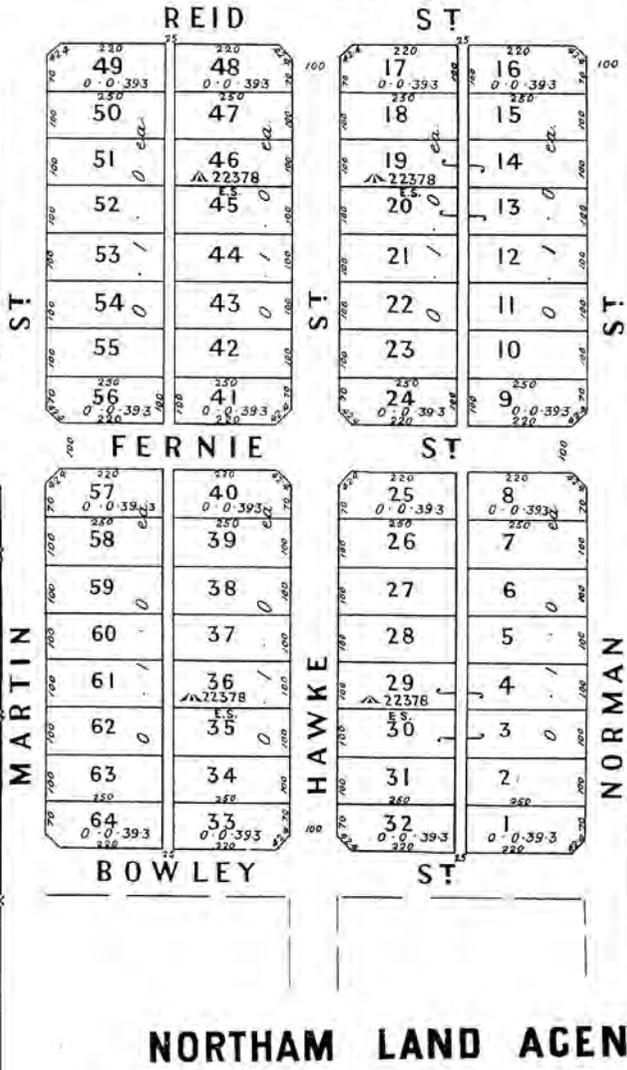


A.J.D. 1.3.43

UNIMPROVED VALUATIONS
 REVISION OF VALUATIONS 1947/68
 F.O. 10 382 MINUTE BOOK
 DATED 11/7/67

NUNGAIRN SHIRE COUNCIL

PRESIDENT
A. J. ...
 SHIRE CLERK



NORTHAM LAND AGENCY

at the old minesite were a useful absorbent, and in 1975 Chandler Clay obtained a licence to treat the alumina tailings for sale as 'Kitty Litter'. Five people were employed at the new factory, and between thirty and forty tonnes of material were carted out each week until the stockpile was exhausted in 1988.

Today virtually nothing remains. Gypsum is mined by Brady's at nearby Lake Brown, but they cart the raw material to Perth by road for processing.



Remnants of the mining operations at Chandler

Names of some of the staff associated with the Chandler plant

Management	M.L. (Matt) Fitzgerald
Accountant	Mr R.C. Hogg
Engineering	Norm Dix, Alan Hunt, Ron Buchan, Ted Fisher
Laboratory	Frank Feakes, Bill Stacey, Dr Wienert, Cec Pearce, R. Brennan
Plant	Frank Matthews, Bill Steele
Office & Stores	Reg Hogg, Harold Digby, Frank Darcy, Merv Gillett, Bill Beckwith, Heather King, Reg Langfield, Tom Ward, Bernie Wilco, Barbara Lampard, Hazel Letch
Post Office	Dorothy Green, Alma Collins
School	Dick Samek, Tom Ley

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- 9 *Merredin Mercury*, 27 July 1917.
- 10 *Merredin Mercury*, 3 August 1917.
- 11 *Merredin Mercury*, 10 August 1917.
- 12 *Merredin Mercury*, 24 August 1917.
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- 37 Minutes of the Nungarin Branch of the Wheatgrowers' Union June 1933 to December 1937.
- 38 Newspaper article 21 April 1921, from *Henrietta* by Patricia J. Howe, Fineline Print, p66.
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- 42 Scout Group Minutes, 26 June 1956.
- 43 Scout Group Minutes, 23 November 1954.
- 44 Scout Group Minutes, 25 September 1956.
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- 47 Scout Group Minutes, March 1965.
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For Health's Sake

Medical Care

During the early years of settlement of the Nungarin district, qualified medical care was non-existent. Accidents and sickness had to be managed in the best way possible. Minor complaints could be treated with home remedies but sometimes the situation was sufficiently serious to necessitate an urgent dash to the nearest doctors and hospitals at places as far away as Northam or Toodyay.

The first settlers in the area, the Adams family at Mangowine endured many medical emergencies and heartbreaks. It must have taken a great deal of courage and endurance for pioneer women like Jane Adams to raise their families in such a remote area. On one occasion a young aboriginal house girl became very ill and Jane set out to take her to Northam; however, she did not survive the journey and died before they reached Jurakine.¹ As they raced against time to reach medical attention, that long trip must have seemed unending - bouncing over rough bush tracks in an uncomfortable cart.

There was another emergency dash when Charles and Jane's daughter, nineteen year-old Amy Adams became ill. Amy had accepted a position as governess/companion to the Butterly family at Woolgangie, halfway between Yellowdine and Southern Cross, and contracted typhoid fever during the epidemic that was raging throughout the Eastern Goldfields at that time. She was rushed through to Northam, but died on 28th January 1896. Imagine that dreadful, urgent journey of 300 kilometres in the middle of a wheatbelt summer.

In 1910 little Constance Payne, the eighteen-month-old granddaughter of Charles and Jane, died of burns and is buried at Mangowine. Isolated as they were, our pioneers relied on contemporary recommended treatments, which involved remedies that are not accepted in the light of modern medical knowledge:

Surface burns and scalds were treated with either treacle, methylated spirits, castor oil, tea or tea leaves, turkey fat and eucalyptus, powdered starch, or wheaten flour which was used to stop fluid escaping from the burnt tissues. Sometimes the white of an egg was applied, or the yolk mixed with a small amount of glycerine ... Mrs Beeton favoured the use of soap followed by oil and flour ... Severe burns usually resulted in death from shock and dehydration.²

Aches and pains were soothed with home made liniments consisting of camphor, olive oil, vinegar and methylated spirits or turpentine. Infections were treated with poultices made from bread or soap and sugar (which according to Daphne Goulding “was dynamite once it started acting”)³, and whatever couldn’t be healed in that manner was treated with a liberal dose of castor oil. Small wonder that *The Practical Guide to Health*⁴ cautioned: “At all times be gentle but firm, especially in giving necessary treatment that the patient may not like”, and another gem from the same publication: “always sleep in a cool room with the windows open. Sleeping in a tent or on a screened porch is even better”. The latter advice would not have been difficult to adopt given the rather basic homes and shelters erected by our pioneers.

In her biography, *Go On The Land Young Man*, Daphne Goulding tells of an accident that occurred at their home at Burrans Rock in the mid-1920s:

Dad was carrying a heavy iron saucepan of boiling water to the dairy for washing the separator and milk cans but Gwen, being so quick and sudden in her movements, darted in his way and was splashed. Needless to say she screamed for hours.

Mum wrapped her up in a sheet and cotton wool. We did not know about wet cloths in those days and when you are 16 miles from a doctor in Kununoppin, without a phone, it is no joke.⁵

You have to admire the fortitude and determination of our early settlers. Leslie Lee remembered his father walking the 80 miles return trip to Kellerberrin to collect urgent medication. It was 1909 and the family had no means of transport except “shank’s pony”.⁶ Whether they were farmers or businessmen, their decision to carve out a new life so far from all amenities and medical assistance had stressful and often devastating consequences.

Arnold Stone had been a draftsman in the Lands Department, and came to the Nungarin district in 1910 as part of the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme. They were allocated a block some 12 miles north of Nangeenan, and were camped in a tent in the middle of winter while they finished building their home. When Mrs Stone went into labour at the beginning of June, Arnold raced to get help from their nearest neighbour who lived 4 miles away. Sadly, their child was born prematurely and only lived 2 days.⁷ At about the same time Mrs Adelaide Farmer of Kodj-Kodjin died of obstetric complications. Dr Webster was too far away at Kellerberrin, and even though he had set out for the settlement, he wasn't able to arrive in time to save her. The settlers lobbied James Mitchell and asked him to speak to his colleagues in the Ministry and stress the importance of obtaining a doctor for the district.⁸

Pioneer women usually had to face the rigours of childbirth alone. It was the exception rather than the rule for expectant mothers to be attended by a qualified person and the number of outback women and babies that died during childbirth was appalling. Local women with midwifery experience often attended their neighbours, and later they were equipped with special medical kits supplied by the government. Mrs Elizabeth Moran (née Adams), Mrs Mary Glass, Mrs Francis and Mrs Wolstenholme are just some of the ladies that have been recorded as having assisted expectant mothers in those early days.

Alice Wolstenholme came to Nungarin to visit her parents after her father was appointed to the Nungarin Congregational Mission. She was soon courted by young farmer, Fred Williams, and they were married in June 1913. Alice's mother had been issued with a government medical kit and assisted many local women in childbirth. In her memoirs, Alice recounts:

[My mother] had a government medicine chest, and many the babies she brought into the world. In fact, I had hardly been here a week when a man came riding for dear life. A woman was in labour in Kununoppin. Mother made me go with her and we had a real fight to save the mother and baby. I stayed there as she needed experienced nursing. We had no hospitals, and only a few doctors who were over ninety miles away.⁹

Alice and Fred were eventually to have ten children, but in 1922 with five children under seven years of age, Alice became pregnant with twins.

I had twins...but as they were premature and we were so far from medical assistance there were complications and I lost one baby at three weeks and the other little girl was a cripple until she died at nineteen years.¹⁰

Letitia Edmonson was the district midwife and nurse in the Nungarin area from 1913 to 1925. Letitia (née Pick) was trained at the Parish of Nottingham Infirmary, later gaining experience at the Stoke-on-Trent Union Hospital from where she received a glowing reference:

Miss Pick possesses a sound knowledge of her work. She is careful, painstaking and obliging and kind to the patients under her charge.¹¹

Letitia and her husband, Alfred, came out from England in 1912. Alfred was a blacksmith by trade, but grasping the opportunity to farm in the newly developing agricultural area, he invested his considerable capital in land at Kodj-Kodjin. The season was a complete drought, and conditions harsh. It took two full days to cart what wheat there was to the siding on the main eastern line. Alfred lost all his capital and decided to return to his trade and started a blacksmithing business in Nungarin. He also accepted the role of undertaker, and officiated at several funerals, including that of their own stillborn daughter, Grace, in April 1922.¹²

The Edmonson family lived at 56 First Avenue, on the corner with Danberrin Road. Both Alfred and Letitia were members of the local vaudeville group, the Nungarin Dandies, which raised funds for local projects and charities, and Letitia was a founding member of the Nungarin Country Women's Association. Even while being actively involved in community affairs for just over a decade, and raising her own family, Letitia assisted in the delivery of more than fifty babies throughout the district.

According to information recorded in Letitia's casebook, the responsibility of a midwife sometimes occupied a considerable number of days. Not all babies were considerate enough to arrive on the day they were expected and some entries noted; "midwife arrived July 26th, Baby born August 8th", and "midwife arrived July 15th, Baby arrived July 29th". Interestingly enough, in the majority of cases there is a final note on the condition of the child "Doing well, naturally fed".¹³

In January 1920, Letitia opened a nursing home in Merredin from where she saw women from further east, but as the Lake Brown district developed, she moved her centre of operations back to Nungarin and continued nursing women from an area encompassed by Hines Hill, Kununoppin, Nukarni (then Newcarnie) and Lake Brown.

In July 1925, Letitia nursed her last case in Nungarin, and the family moved to Calingiri where Alfred opened a business as blacksmith and farrier and Letitia continued working as a midwife.

The first qualified medical doctor in the Nungarin area was Doctor Samuel Finkelstein, “Dr Finkie”, who was invited to Trayning in 1923. His first consulting room was in the local grocer’s house, with a second-hand couch and a couple of upturned kerosene boxes to hold medical supplies. Any patients requiring hospital treatment had to be transferred to Merredin, Wyalkatchem or Kellerberrin, with Dr Finkelstein providing the transport. However, in the end, the Trayning Hospital Committee was not able to fulfil its promise of support, and the State Medical Department appointed him as medical officer for the district with an annual salary of one hundred pounds a year.¹⁴

The Silver Chain had built a small nursing home at nearby Kununoppin, and with the support of the then Premier, Sir James Mitchell, the Kununoppin Hospital Committee was able to convert the nursing home into the first hospital, and Dr Finkelstein moved to Kununoppin. The hospital accommodation was very limited and consisted of one two-bed ward for men, one for women, one other room for the matron and a kitchen as well as a couple of outbuildings. Any overflow of patients was housed on the verandahs, which were enclosed with a three-foot jarrah dado, and canvas blinds.¹⁵

Recruitment of competent staff presented a major problem. The first matron was elderly and had very poor eyesight, and her replacement was not much of an improvement. She was also elderly and not fully qualified, only having served as a chambermaid in a goldfields hospital. Dr Finkelstein was horrified to note that during a minor operation at which she was assisting, she dropped the forceps and proceeded to give them a quick wipe on her grubby apron. However it was noted that in spite of her lack of nursing skills she was sympathetic and “devoted to the people in her care”.¹⁶ Devotion to the patients by some of the nursing staff may have sometimes been a little too enthusiastic. In *On the Line*, Jocelyn Maddock relates:

A patient of the time, occupying one of the three beds in the verandah men’s ward, told of his being settled down for the night by the nurse who then walked off and hopped into the third bed with the patient, who presumably was well on the way to recovery!¹⁷

Hospital equipment was rather rudimentary: until the installation of pressure petrol lights in 1928 the hospital relied on the light from hurricane lamps, lighting in the

operating theatre was provided by twenty 6 volt batteries, and fractures had to be set without assistance as X-ray equipment was not installed until September 1938.¹⁸ Infections had to be managed without the aid of penicillin or antibiotics.

Nungarin school headmaster, Jim West, claimed the first use of penicillin in the district was not until May 1948:

A week before the May holidays I developed a septic right shin where I had been hit by a mallee root. I tried to cook it in a kerosene tin with a primus, no luck, so to Kellerberrin Hospital ... Dr McMahon was worried. I was well on the way to lose my leg. On the second day he mixed a white powder beside the bed and injected huge quantities into my thigh. Within hours there was an improvement. This was the first use of penicillin. Lucky me.¹⁹

Although Alexander Fleming first observed the antibacterial properties of penicillin in 1928, it was not until 1943 that clinical trials were performed and sufficient quantities were produced to treat wounded soldiers during WWII. A patent was not granted for the mass production of penicillin until May 25th 1948, so Jim was fortunate indeed.

Even though Dr Finkelstein did not have the advantage of practising with modern medicines and equipment, he was a skilled and conscientious doctor, with a genuine concern and affection for his patients. While based at Kununoppin, Dr Finkelstein initiated a system of conducting consultations at the neighbouring towns of Mukinbudin, Nungarin and Bencubbin on three days of the week. He visited Nungarin each Thursday and set up his practice on the verandah of Waterhouse's home at Lot 49 First Avenue. When he returned to Kununoppin each evening he dispensed the prescribed medications that were delivered next day either by Police Officers, or by Industries Assistance Inspectors.²⁰

During the 1930s conditions were harsh for settlers and professionals alike. In "A Fine Country to Starve In", Professor Bolton explains:

Storekeepers, tradesmen and country doctors tended to come at the tail of the queue when pay-outs were made under the Farmers Debts' Adjustment Act. Many country doctors lived from hand to mouth like their patients. Their back yards were full of sacks of wheat, and often the only payments ever received came in the form of sheep or poultry for killing.²¹

The system of ‘Payment in Kind’ was certainly familiar to Dr Finkelstein as his daughter explains in his memoirs:

A large number of farmers in the district were displaced civil servants. They were willing workers, but inexperienced, and their lives were a real struggle. These were the depression years, and life was extremely hard. One woman patient told Dad that she was reduced to making underclothes from flour and bacon bags.

It was a hand to mouth existence, and married people received twelve pounds a month, on which to feed and clothe themselves – little wonder that medical bills received a very low priority.

Many farmers paid “in kind”, with farm produce, and dad recounts the story of the farmer’s wife, who presented him with a beautifully decorated cream sponge. He placed it very carefully on the back seat of the car, and when the vehicle passed over a particularly rough section of the road, the cake flew up, and finished on his head.”²²

Dr “Finkie” was considered a fast and daring driver, and his cars were well known in the district with other motorists moving well out of his way when they saw him coming. One of his cars was nicknamed the “Red Terror”, and another the “Green Bullet”, which succinctly described both the vehicle and the driver. However, his car was considered a great blessing to many of his patients as it served as an ambulance and general conveyance when no other means of transport was available.

After a late night visit on one occasion, he could not manage to start the car at all. The farmer lent him a horse, but could not provide a proper saddle, and after riding home bareback, my mother reported that he was so sore that he ate his meals from the mantelshelf for a week ...

On another occasion, he took my mother, with two of her friends, when he went to his Bencubbin clinic. They went visiting, and driving home after dark on a winter evening, the road was slippery after rain, and the car kept sliding from one side to the other. The wheels would not grip, and the car lights of those days were not powerful – it was a real job to keep the car on the road. One of the ladies was a devout Catholic, and hearing her “Hail Marys” from the back seat was less than an encouraging sound...

Finally everyone had to get out and push over the worst spots, and they arrived home thankful, but exhausted.²³

So the good doctor provided the ambulance and general transport service, pharmaceutical and dispensary service, dental treatment, and with no nearby veterinarian, he was sometimes also called upon to treat valuable farm animals:

A number of times, Dad had horses as patients. A valuable trotter had been kicked in the rump by a draught horse. The laceration was a deep one, and needed deep, strong sutures to close the wound. The owner was so grateful, that completely unasked, he presented Dad with a cheque for ten guineas, on the spot. Imagine my father's surprise, when the fee for human patients was seven and sixpence, and often unpaid! He wondered whether he was in the wrong profession!

Another horse – a fine mare – had received a nasty cut, by swinging harness, when hitched to a machine. This developed into a large callus which prevented the animal from working. Dad treated the callus by cauterising it with a soldering iron for a number of weeks until the condition cleared. The farmer was delighted, for not only was the poor horse cured, but he was also saved the expense of buying another horse.²⁴

Another story, loosely connected to animals, which is recounted in Dr Finkelstein's memoirs, describes a local shooting accident;

A farmer was out at dusk, shooting kangaroos. He heard a noise at the edge of his property, and saw a dark form in the distance. He fired at what he thought was an animal, to find that he had "potted" a neighbour who had been bending over setting rabbit traps.

He was overcome with horror and remorse, and rushed the neighbour home, plied him with whisky, and imbibed a few glasses himself. Then he called the doctor who took a moment to discover which man was the patient, for both were rather tipsy by this time.

As Dad examined the patient, and proceeded to pick the buckshot from his bottom, the culprit was swearing him to secrecy, for he feared that he would be the laughing stock of the town. While the doctor continued to

remove the shot from the patient, the victim sang happily, as though he was at a party, and the perpetrator was wringing his hands, apologising, and making excuses for himself. Dad, ever the professional, kept silent about the incident, but the town's grapevine had been busy, and the following day the whole district had heard the tale, with suitable embellishments.²⁵

Farming can be a hazardous profession, and another accident that Dr Finkelstein attended involved a prominent Nungarin farmer, Gus Herbert, and is recorded by Clarice Brown (née Herbert) in her book, "Clay's Saga":

We always had Jersey cows and a bull. The bull usually roamed with the cows. One Sunday afternoon when only Mum, Cec and I were home, the bull managed to get into the house enclosure, then the garden. He was in one of his nasty moods and had Mum, Cec and I bailed up in the house for several hours ... this decided Dad and he decided on what was then a new development in bull husbandry – dehorning. Uncle Sid and our workman helped Dad, but Dad actually performed the horrible deed – with a saw I think. It must have been shocking for the bull and resulted in him goring Dad not long afterwards. As he had no horns he crushed his head onto Dad's defenseless chest ... Dad called for help and a local young man, George Farrell, who was working for us at the time came to his aid. The bull was in a frenzy by now and George was at a loss how to handle things. The nearest implement didn't look too promising so he started up the truck and drove it straight at the bull and over Dad's body.²⁶

Without some quick thinking and expert driving, what damage the bull had not managed to inflict could easily have been taken care of by being run over by the truck! Gus was always grateful to George for his presence of mind, and quite distressed to later find that the bull had been destroyed. He never blamed the animal and recalled that while he was lying under the truck the bull had even leant down and licked his hand. The story is taken up in Dr Finkelstein's memoirs:

...[Gus] was thrown hastily on to the truck and rushed into Nungarin. Dad hurried to the town, and found a number of people standing about, assuming that Gus was dead. He had multiple injuries, including several broken ribs, and numerous cuts. As he was thrown on to the truck a crowbar had gone through his belt, and he was lying on it – he was too far gone to notice, and was unconscious for some considerable time. How he

survived was considered a miracle, and it took him many weeks to mend in the hospital. Dad told him that after such a bashing he could not hope to play golf again, but a few months later he was out on the course again. The accident had not improved his game, but it had certainly not broken his spirit!²⁷

Gus's daughter, Clarice, recorded her memories of another accident that resulted in a few days spent at Kununoppin Hospital:

So, away we galloped across the paddock to the rock and then home again. Then disaster. The saddle began to slip, I tried to get my feet out of the stirrup strap but one wouldn't come. The strap had twisted. I hung on for dear life to Pony's mane but the saddle kept going round and down. Jean was pounding along behind me and Pony of course had taken fright and bolted.

Poor Pony, no doubt I was screaming and Jean was trying to get her to stop. Down I went and dragged along. I remember the hooves so close to my head then my head hit something and I knew no more till I came to, being carried home by Jean's brother, Bob.

Pony had headed for home, for the stable, but came to a closed gate. Jean was terrified she would attempt to jump it but luckily she didn't. She pulled up and stood there trembling, and my captive foot just released itself. Jean rode for help and as I told you, Bob carried me home.

I remember how upset he was, so I guess I looked a sorry mess.

They laid me on a bed in the girls' room and I waited there until they were able to get the Mackay boys and their truck from gypsum carting at Elabbin.

I was put on the back on a mattress and taken home to my Mum and Dad then on to Kununoppin Hospital. Mainly I drifted in and out of consciousness and was a bit distressed at the gritty gypsum on the truck. Don't remember the trip to Kununoppin at all but do remember being stitched up by Dr Finkelstein. I'm sure he scraped my chin with a piece of sandpaper but I really didn't feel the stitches.

One leg was badly scraped all down the shin with a couple of deep gouges each end. I don't know how that happened. Otherwise I had skin off my head and arms but no broken bones at all. I slept at the hospital, on the verandah of the old hospital. There were only wards for adults. All the children and quite a lot of the male patients slept on the verandah. I was around the corner right outside the nurses' quarters. They had a wireless and it was on full bore until midnight each night.

One night when I had trouble sleeping I complained to the night nurse as she did her rounds by hurricane lantern. I copped a nice old ticking off. "You can't expect the nurses, who work so hard etc. etc., not to have a bit of social life." I had news for her! If they worked so hard how come they weren't ready for bed by nine at the latest, like most farmers.²⁸

Accidents and emergencies form the very nature of medical care, and doctors never quite know what to expect when they are called out to attend a case – and sometimes the diagnosis is just as much a surprise to the patient as it is to the doctor:

One Friday night he was called out to a farm about 8 miles out of town. The farmer had married late, and neither he nor his wife was in the first flush of youth. All he was told was that she had very severe abdominal pain. She had been busy all day, chasing cows out of the crop, and cleaning the house with great vigour. She met Dad at the door and said that she thought she had piles. He no sooner put his hand gently on her abdomen ... than he discovered that she was in an advanced stage of labour. She was amazed and said, "That is impossible. I am forty-five years of age, and the specialist in Perth told me that I was unable to have children!" In the meantime, her husband was rushing up and down the passage in a near state of panic saying, "Doctor what are we to do? We are totally unprepared. We have no baby clothes – nothing at all for a baby!" Dad told him to pull himself together and to put some things together immediately, or the baby would be born at home. This galvanised him into action and they raced off to the hospital where soon after she was delivered of a beautiful baby girl. Later when someone asked the mother what she would have done if the doctor had not arrived in time "I would not have worried" she replied, "George always delivers his own cows".²⁹

"Finkie" was much loved throughout the district. His dedication, care and attention became legendary: when he felt that circumstances were sufficiently serious he often

spent the night at patients' homes, sometimes sleeping on the verandah. However, in 1938, concern for his children's education, and the pressure of such a heavy workload saw him move to the city where he practised until ill health forced his retirement in June of 1984.³⁰ One of his patients recorded the following colourful description of the popular doctor:

He is only a little codger. A fiery fellow, he swears like a trooper and has no time for malingerers, but when you are sick, he is magic. I wouldn't go to anyone else.

Even though having a doctor close at hand, tragedies still sometimes happened. In April 1946 Lillian Thick passed away leaving seven children, the youngest only six months old. Lillian was the first wife of Thomas Thick, the local storekeeper, and the family lived in Railway Avenue where the information bay is now situated next to the Post Office building. The baby, Norman, died only four months after his mother and they are buried together in the front row of the Nungarin Cemetery.³¹ Norman's death certificate cites the cause of death as "convulsions associated with teething".³²

A succession of doctors followed Dr Finkelstein, most of them serving at Kununoppin only a year or two, and it wasn't until the appointment of Dr John Radunovich in May 1958 that the district finally acquired its longest serving and much loved general practitioner. When first appointed, "Dr John" as he is fondly known, considered that his appointment would only last a year or two, but the lure of country life convinced him to stay and he served over 50 years in Kununoppin and the surrounding districts, a practice that covers approximately 18,000 square kilometres.

Dr Radunovich's ethos was to treat each person as an individual, rather than as a symptom, and this led to some important initiatives. During his tenure in Kununoppin he had a major influence in the development of rural medicine including the inauguration of a scheme to bring specialists from Perth on a monthly basis, and in the provision of regular visits by female doctors. He was the first doctor in the region to move aboriginal patients into the ward rather than house them on the verandah of the hospital, and he encouraged the establishment of Ninghan Lodge, a high quality permanent care facility attached to the hospital.

In 1958 there was only one ambulance in the district and if an emergency arose, Dr John was often called upon to act as ambulance driver. Many times he had to bundle his children in the front with him, while his wife Marie rode in the back



Dr John Radunovich, MBBS, OAM

to care for the patient. In the year 2009, there are now ambulance units stationed at Trayning, Kununoppin, Nungarin, Mukinbudin, Bencubbin and Beacon, with a lighted all-weather air-strip at Kununoppin, and a strong team of volunteer ambulance officers.³³

Dr John's passion for rural medicine led to his involvement in the Country Medical Foundation and in the setting up of the Medical Scholarship for medical students. He has been recognised for his service to medicine by numerous awards. He received the Order of Australia Medal in June 1986 after 25 years of medical and community service; and in June 2004 he was presented with the prestigious Australian Medical Association of W.A. Hippocratic Award for Outstanding Services to Medicine

that is given for demonstration of a tireless dedication to the service of others in the winner's chosen field without seeking recognition for their efforts. In 2007 he was inducted into the Royal Agricultural Society of W.A. Hall of Fame.³⁴

Passionate as he may have been about country practice, Dr John was not quite so enamoured with bureaucracy. During an address to the Country Medical Foundation in the 1990s he commented:

When I set up in practice at Kununoppin in 1958, the hospital was administered by a teenage girl working three days per week, the bed average was 20 and if I had a problem, the Medical Department would solve it. Today, the bed average is 14.5, a number that includes 10 residents in the permanent care facility, Ninghan Lodge, the hospital administration requires 3.6 full time employees and if ever I have a problem, the Medical Department has almost certainly caused it.³⁵

When Dr Radunovich first arrived in the district, obstetrics was a large part of his rural practice, but due partly to the high costs of indemnity insurance, although mainly due to the shortage of qualified midwives, an obstetric service is no longer available.³⁶



*Dr John Radunovich and Staff at Kununoppin Hospital
(Photograph by Lew Couper)*

History has now turned full circle and expectant mums now have to travel to the city to deliver their babies. Today, at least they don't have to travel by horse and cart, and the roads are slightly improved.

Dr John's interests extended beyond the hospital to many other community and sporting activities. Over the years he was involved in the school P & C and the local Boy Scout movement, and is still a keen golfer. In earlier days he played football for Kununoppin Trayning and also provided a free medical service for injured players. However when the football club started paying their players, Dr John pragmatically decided that commercial players should have a commercial medical service.³⁷

During his tenure in Kununoppin, Dr John treated as many as five generations of the same family, held something like three-quarters of a million consultations and delivered approximately 2000 babies. In an interview with the *West Australian* newspaper, Dr John told of the unmitigated delight there was in knowing every one of his patients and their families, and in seeing the children and grandchildren of babies he had delivered grow up and prosper.

Since Dr Samuel Finkelstein began practice in 1923, this region has been blessed by several dedicated family doctors – something of a rarity in rural Western Australia. After more than half a century of service to the region, Dr John Radunovich finally retired in October 2009. A dedication to Dr Radunovich which appeared in the Nungarin Newslink in May 2003 may be taken as a tribute to him and all who went before:

*His dedication and expertise to the field of Country Medicine and General Surgery has provided our region with a level of medical support and continuity unsurpassed for almost half a century. You are well respected, admired and loved by all your clients and staff alike. We are honoured, privileged and delighted to have worked beside you, been brought into the world by you, and constantly and efficiently healed and cured by you.*³⁸

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Slings and Arrows

Accidents and Tough Times

The years between the two great wars were perhaps some of the toughest times the district has ever seen. Families struggling to establish farming properties battled for their very existence during the devastating years of the great depression. Resourceful women fed their families on such dishes as pigeon pie, rabbit casserole and kangaroo stew, and it was not unusual for them to sit down to a green vegetable of wild thistles. Many farmers were unable to carry on and were forced to abandon their properties; a few found the hardships too much to bear and took their own lives, and there were some who drowned in hopelessness and lost their minds. The history of the Lake Brown area is peppered by reports of men who walked off into the bush and simply disappeared.

In October 1928, *The Dampier Herald* reported the tragic story of Ali Tshi, an Albanian lad who was involved in clearing land south of Lake Brown. He had only been in Western Australia a few months, and became ill with severe abdominal pain. Unable to make himself understood, and obviously desperate and frightened, he grabbed a rifle and shot himself in the stomach. His remains are interred in the Catholic section of the Nungarin cemetery¹. Only a few weeks later *The Dampier Herald* reported the case of an English clearer working for J. Mulqueeny at Lake Brown who went insane.² Later that same year the coroner was called to investigate the death of 47 year-old Frederick Mann who perished in the bush near Lake Brown sometime between September 1929 and February 1930.³

The death of little Constance Payne at Mangowine in 1911 was possibly the first accidental death recorded in Nungarin. Constance was the granddaughter of Charles and Jane Adams, and was only eighteen months old when she suffered severe and fatal burns and is buried at Mangowine alongside her grandfather. The present Nungarin cemetery wasn't established until 1915, and people that had died before that time had

been interred in lone graves at Mangowine (Charles Adams and Constance Payne) and at Nungarin Rock (Elizabeth McCorry), and there are some recorded but unidentified graves in the Lake Brown area and at Knungajin. The first unofficial cemetery in Nungarin was established south of the town, adjacent to the old recreation ground. The soil subsequently proved to be unsuitable, and a new cemetery was surveyed and declared at the present site on July 2nd 1915.

When the new cemetery was opened, the remains of Frederick Taylor, who died in January 1914, were exhumed and reburied at the present site. Frederick was killed when his sulky rolled over near Knungajin while he was on his way home from McCorry's Hotel. This is likely to have been Nungarin's first traffic accident.

Throughout the years, traffic accidents have continued to cause shock and suffering. In 1931 Lance Hoare suffered fatal injuries in a trucking accident. He was driving a new Chev truck and pulled up behind a wagon at the wheat bin. He went to the front of the truck in an attempt to re-start it using the crank handle, not realising that the vehicle was still in gear. As the engine fired up the truck lurched forward crushing Lance against the wagon. He suffered massive head injuries and died several days later. He was only 28 years old and married with two little children. He is buried in the Nungarin cemetery.

A tragedy that shook the whole community was the death of Alfred George "Bulla" Ayton who was accidentally killed just before Christmas in 1933. He was on the back of Brown's Chevrolet 6 truck when they went around a corner and some drums of fuel rolled and started to fall. Bulla tried to save them but lost his balance and was thrown over. He was a popular lad, only 26 years old, athletic and fun-loving. He had been acting as Secretary of the Nungarin Road Board since the resignation of F.B. Mason, and had just been notified that he had been selected from among 56 applicants to occupy the position of Secretary of the newly formed Mukinbudin Road Board. Phyllis Cornish clearly remembered the grief and shock at the hockey dance that Saturday night as people tried to come to terms with the tragic news⁴ and the Nungarin Primary School was closed early on the following Monday so that students and pupils could attend the funeral.⁵

As a young man, Knungajin farmer Philip Cornish proved to be rather accident prone. In 1933 he suffered a gunshot wound that shattered his thigh. The wound refused to heal and his temperature soared. The doctor advised that they would have to amputate to save his life, but at the last moment the nursing sister in charge decided to probe

the wound and managed to extract a piece of cloth from his trouser leg that had been carried in by the bullet. Phil recovered with only a slight limp, and the nursing sister became a dear family friend. A couple of years later he once again came close to losing his life. One evening just before Christmas he was riding his motor bike out to the Dawe farm south of Nungarin for a Toc-H meeting to arrange a summer holiday camp for country boys. His bike wasn't running smoothly and he bent down to make an adjustment. In that split second he ran into the back of an unlit truck that was parked on the side of the road. People living nearby heard the bike motor roaring, and ran to find Philip unconscious and pinned underneath. The local policeman raced him through to Kununoppin Hospital where he was found to have concussion and serious internal injuries, as well as fractures to his left arm, his ribs, and the base of his skull. He underwent an emergency operation to remove his shattered spleen and was not expected to live. Dr Philip Orton was a young doctor, only newly qualified, but he did an amazing job and fellow Toc-H members rallied to donate blood for transfusions. Phil's father chartered a two-seater Gypsy Moth plane from the eastern states and flew to be by his side. Once again Philip confounded medical opinion and survived to farm his property at Knungajin and live a long and fruitful life, dying in 1995 at the age of 85.⁶

Another motor-bike accident with a more tragic outcome concerned Cyril Burns who grew up in Nungarin in the 1920s. In November 1937, he was riding near Babakin in the company of a mate when his bike hit a stump and he lost control and crashed into a tree. His friend who had been riding ahead turned back to find him. He was taken to Corrigin Hospital, but died a few hours later.⁷

While we find any accidental deaths difficult to accept, it is the accidents involving children that move us the most. Little Constance Payne who died of burns at Mangowine in 1911; and then Lilian Hocking who died in 1920⁸. Lilian was only 7 ½ years old and staying with neighbours, Mr and Mrs Fred Williams, while her mother was away having a baby. She was gored by a bull and died of internal injuries.⁹

In 1927, the Le Vaux family suffered a terrible tragedy when Claude Le Vaux's three year-old son, George Norman, was accidentally incinerated when the vehicle he was in caught fire. A letter written from Claude's granddaughter tells the awful story:

Claude had the little boy in his care. He took him in the car to a field where he was planning to work with hay ... on the way he met a man who

A Piece of String

took a ride on the running board of the car. The boy was in the back seat. This man was smoking. When they reached their destination the man went with Claude to do the work and the boy was left in the car. Some time later the two men looked over and the car was engulfed in flames. The boy was burnt black. He was taken home, still alive and died some hours later.¹⁰

Claude was the son of George Le Vaux who managed the famous W.A. law firm, Parker & Parker, for many years. Claude farmed at “Rocklea” north of Nungarin on Johnson Road (Avon Location 14160), while his brother, Horace, farmed at nearby “Rosedale” (Avon Location 14167). George was a frequent visitor to Nungarin and the family name is perpetuated in Le Vaux Road, a few kilometres east of town.

In 1921, Claude had announced his engagement to Mabel Belcher, a relative of Fred and Alice Williams, and who was working for Mrs Williams at the time. Although Claude was 32 years old, his father seemed to think that he and his brother, Horace, were still rather impressionable:

Dear Mabel,

I was very pleased indeed to learn that you had made a match with Claude and I sincerely hope that your marriage to him may bring you both happiness. Both myself and Mrs Le Vaux will welcome you as a daughter and I hope your influence on Claude will be conducive not only to his good but also for the good of his brother.

I learn you propose to get married in February and I hope to be able to be present. I will be in Nungarin in about two weeks when I will of course see you personally.

In the meantime with best wishes for your future happiness

Yours sincerely

G. Wilton Le Vaux¹¹

Only a couple of years after little George’s death, neighbours Harry and Christina Townsend lost their young daughter in a vehicle accident on the farm:¹²

A terrible motor accident occurred at Nungarin last Thursday when little Irene May Townsend aged 8 years and 9 months was run over by a motor truck driven by Arthur Cummings at a farm close to Nungarin. The child’s mother was being conveyed to the hospital on the back of the truck, and as the truck approached a gate, the girl in her anxiety to open it, jumped

Slings and Arrows

off the moving vehicle and slipped under one of the rear wheels. The gate, as it happened was open and Cummings therefore drove on, not realising the little girl had jumped off. Mr Andrews (acting coroner) has been appointed to investigate the matter.¹³

During a visit to Nungarin in 2003, Grandson John Townsend said that after the accident Harry went to the place where his first-born daughter was killed and was so distraught that he took to the ground with an axe. Irene's body was initially interred in the Nungarin cemetery, but in 1975 her remains were exhumed and re-interred in the family plot in Fremantle.¹⁴

Apart from the Nungarin cemetery, there are three lone graves identified at two sites in the Nungarin district. At Mangowine Charles Adams and his granddaughter, Constance Payne, are buried in a narrow strip of land opposite the homestead, and Elizabeth McCorry is buried not far from their home at the foot of Nungarin Rock¹⁵.

Mrs McCorry and her husband were early settlers in the district while it was a station and not surveyed for selection. The duties of motherhood debarred her from taking an active part in public affairs, but she was never-the-less a ready supporter of things helpful to the district.

She was only in her 48th year and leaves a family of twelve children to mourn their loss and her care. The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon and was largely attended, the body being borne to the grave dug in a spot of the deceased lady's own choice – not far from her late residence.¹⁶

Later in 1929 little Valda Binney died in an accident at Knungajin. Valda's father, Athol, was a caretaker for the Agricultural Bank and living at what later became George Williams's property at the junction of Cornish Road and the Knungajin-Narkeening Road. Athol was building a bush verandah on the house when one of the beams fell down and crushed her. She was not quite four years old.¹⁷

Freda Williams, daughter of Fred and Alice, contracted meningitis when she was just 3 years old, and never fully recovered. Water seems to have a fatal attraction for children, and in 1934 when Freda was only nine years old she wandered off, and although she could swim, she was found drowned in the farm dam.

Early in 1947, the Jolly family lost their two year-old daughter, Norma Rae, when she was accidentally run over by a car on her parents' farm.

Those early days on the land were so difficult – such hard work and with often heartbreaking results, that one wonders how a family could cope with the overwhelming tragedy of losing a child. It says much for the tenacity of our pioneers that they persevered and formed the basis of community. For many, a sense of humour in the face of adversity was all that carried them through. Albeit that the sense of humour was sometimes rather macabre, as demonstrated by this letter written by Bert Wynne to the Chief Executive Officer at Trayning:

Dear Sir,

Re: Henry Edward Wynne's arm

We have been writing the history of the Wynnes of North Baandee and we understand from old stories that Harry Wynne was a passenger in a Morris truck which overturned on the Bencubbin Mukinbudin Road in 1924. Harry's right arm was sadly mutilated and was later amputated at the Kununoppin Hospital. However, although the usual way in those times was to dispose of bits under the copper it was discovered there by my father, Fred, and it had to be buried. This cost my grandfather eighty pounds and since he spent so much money doing this it must be registered in your cemetery registry.

I would be grateful if you could search the registry for an entry which could shed some light on the subject.

Thanking you for any trouble

Yours faithfully

HA (Bert) Wynne¹⁸

(p.s. the Trayning Shire were unable to assist with locating the lost arm)

Some folk seemed to carry imperturbability a little too far. In reminiscing about early days at Mangowine, Joyce Jones (granddaughter of Charles and Jane Adams) relates this story:

My old Aunty Elizabeth Moran used to drive into Nungarin once a fortnight to get her stores. Old Frank White an old chap who had been at Mangowine for many years, who did odd jobs used to go with her. Old Frank loved to get down to the hotel and have a few drinks and poor old

Slings and Arrows

Aunty had a hard time getting him into the sulky to go home. My young brothers and sisters used to walk up the road to meet them when they were getting close to home but used to hide in the bush at the side of the road to listen to Aunty Elizabeth still telling him off.

I remember before we went to Mangowine old Frank didn't come up for his breakfast, which was very unusual. He was always up early. Anyway Aunty went and did all her odd jobs; feeding her chooks, ducks and turkeys before she went down to Frank's room to see how he was. Feeling a bit off colour but was OK. My father asked Aunty why she hadn't gone to see how he was straight away and she replied, "Well I thought he may be dead and I would do all my jobs first before all the fuss began"! ¹⁹

Endnotes

- 1 Shire of Nungarin Interment Records and Nungarin Cemetery Heritage Walk, brochure.
- 2 Jocelyn Maddock, *On the Line*, Shire of Mukinbudin, 1987.
- 3 Shire of Nungarin Interment Records.
- 4 Maxine Cornish, *Nungarin Biographical Index*, unpublished.
- 5 Nungarin Primary School Journal 1922-1946.
- 6 Nungarin Primary School Journal 1922-1946.
- 7 Patricia J Howe, *Newcarnie-Nukarni*, p358.
- 8 Maxine Cornish, *Nungarin Biographical Index*, unpublished.
- 9 Death certificate Lilian Margaret Hocking, 23 May 1920.
- 10 Personal letter from Janice Panton, 26 Sept 1996.
- 11 Copy of letter in author's possession, 24 Nov 1921.
- 12 *WA Newspaper*, 29 Jan 1929, p7.
- 13 Patricia J Howe, *Newcarnie-Nukarni*, p222.
- 14 Shire of Nungarin interment records.
- 15 Elizabeth McCorry died of acute gastritis, 7th May 1923.
- 16 Patricia J. Howe, *Henrietta*, ISBN 978-0-646-49419-7, p81.
- 17 Maxine Cornish, *Nungarin Biographical Index*, unpublished.
- 18 Copy of letter in author's possession, 1 July 2004.
- 19 Copy of letter in author's possession, 8 July 1996.

Keeping The Faith

Ministers and the Church

The very roots of the Christian Church in Nungarin could not have been more ecumenical. Early church services were communal affairs held under shady trees and bough sheds and pioneer settlers told of missionaries of various denominations travelling around the district, sometimes by foot, on horseback, by horse and buggy, or even by pushbike. Marie (Aunty Jim) Farrell remembered the Church of England minister driving out from Merredin in a horse and sulky, and a Salvation Army lady that rode from Merredin to Nungarin and as far as Bencubbin on a pushbike.

The first recorded church services in the district were conducted at Mangowine by the Reverend Edward Spittlehouse Clairs during a visit to the Yilgarn in the spring of 1891. Clairs arrived from the United Kingdom on board the *Helena Mena* on 16th September 1887, and several years afterwards was installed as the first rector of Busselton. Bishop Riley later described him as “a good worker but abrupt and quarrelsome”.¹ These qualities were not apparent in his report of the Yilgarn journey that was published in the *West Australian* newspaper:

How We Spent Sixteen Days in the Bush

Having been requested by the Lord Bishop of the Diocese to pay a visit to Yilgarn as soon as I conveniently could, I was more than gratified when Mr Geo. Throssell, M.L.A., asked me to form one of a party to make a pilgrimage to what will very shortly be the El Dorado of the colony, if not the empire. Having made arrangements for my parish work to be continued in my absence, I was able to hold myself in readiness for our departure. On Tuesday, Sept. 15th, Messrs Throssell, Stewart (Newcastle), R. O. Law (Perth) and myself started from Northam, for the first time in our lives on a goldfields track ...

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We wended our way along the foot of the range ... then turning to the right passing over a small belt of auriferous country, through the open clearing we espied in the moonlight the home of Mr. C. Adams, who came out to welcome us and take charge of our horses. From Mr. and Mrs Adams I gained much pleasing information of their 22 years residence in almost isolation ... A goodly number of teamsters and others being present, I held divine service. This is the first time that the ministrations of religion have been given at Mangowine.²

On the return journey the following week, the party once again called in at Mangowine and the Adams family were treated to their second local church service in two decades!

Annie Wynne recalls the first church services which were held in Burran Rock in about 1910:

Our first arrival was a Congregational clergyman on a pushbike, his water bag 'bone dry' hung on the frame, and a small case which contained a cornet ... he played this for the hymns. The settlers came to our place for many miles and brought the usual hurricane lanterns and hung them around in the trees...some brought their families on a wagon, others on carts and sulkies and some on horseback ... This man came for years and was a great favourite.³

This clergyman may have been Norman Hicks, the missionary that was referred to in F.A. Law's *History of Merredin*:

They were great days. Give them back to me with all their difficulties and I will still be your humble missionary. In those days I had seventeen preaching places demanding regular attention. I have ridden the old push bike out as far as Mukinbudin through Nungarin, to conduct services and hold baptism in private houses. The circuit in those days stretched from Hines Hill to Yellowdine, and included Bullfinch and Marvel Loch. I travelled on the mixed train from Merredin to Carrabin then walked out to Westonia; conducted the church service, then walked back to Carrabin, boarded the express and landed at Southern Cross at four o'clock on a winter's morning.⁴

Another early minister was Alfred Reginald Sleep. Alfred was born into a zealous Congregational family in Plymouth, England, and gave his first sermon at the age of 16. In July 1913, under the auspices of the Colonial Missionary Society of London, he came to Australia with his brother, Harold, and was sent as a home missionary to the Nungarin district. A small weatherboard hall had been erected for the Congregational Mission a few months earlier and was opened on 19th January by the Reverend R.G. Potts.⁵ Alfred was equipped with some hymn books and a horse (which at first he didn't even know how to ride) and sent out to do the Lord's work. He was only in the district a short time but enthusiastically spread the gospel message and earned a reputation as a preacher of promise before leaving for the Eastern States.

In 1916 Alfred enlisted in the 10th Battalion Australian Imperial Force and was posted to the Western Front. After numerous lengthy periods in hospital, the medical authorities concluded that he was "permanently unfit for general service"⁶ and he was transferred to AIF Administrative Headquarters, London, where he worked in the War Chest (hospitality section). According to the records, his amiable and tactful disposition made him a great favourite among the men, which was surprising considering the discomfort he was experiencing at the time. He had suffered from chronic gastritis for several years prior to enlistment and any solid food whatever brought on severe vomiting attacks. He existed on a diet of milk and beef tea and it speaks volumes for the man's optimism that he considered that he could survive in the battlefield on army rations. He was eventually repatriated to Australia in 1918.

After the war Alfred returned to Australia where he married his first wife. He served the Methodist Church in Merredin in 1926-27 and when church officials had difficulty in raising money for his stipend he transferred to Perth and began work as a private detective. In 1930 he divorced his first wife and married a former parishioner who had reputedly been moved to tears by his sermons! Interestingly enough, his old stomach complaint seemed to have healed because he is reputed to have grown quite portly in later years and to have developed a taste for good food and wine. His work as a detective also flourished and he became something of a public figure. In the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Ron Davidson writes:

*Alfred R. Sleep - with his trusty torch - was built into a Perth identity. The Mirror, which specialized in reporting divorce cases beneath punned headings, promoted stories about his amiable and tactful raids on hotel rooms and motor cars, his investigations in parks and at beaches, and his subsequent efforts at marriage counselling. The stories became more frequent with the arrival of American servicemen who caused considerable domestic disruption during World War II.*⁷

Also arriving in Australia from Great Britain in 1913 was Church of England evangelist Edward Wolstenholme, who had developed chest trouble and had been advised by his Harley Street specialist to move to a warmer climate. After his arrival in Perth he was disappointed to find that the Church of England did not have a position available for him at the time. Hearing of his situation and reputation, the Congregational Mission contacted him with an offer to fill a vacancy that existed in Nungarin for an evangelist; an offer that he eagerly accepted. While posted to Nungarin, Edward built a home on the corner of the Goomalling and Nungarin North roads and ministered to people from a large area encompassing the Nukarni, Trayning and Bencubbin districts. A few years later the Bishop of Kalgoorlie offered him a position in Boulder and in September 1915 he returned to ministering in the Church of England.⁸ He was ordained as a deacon in September 1915, and priested in March of the following year.⁹

Even though he only served a comparatively short time in Nungarin, Edward left a legacy to the district through his daughter Alice who came to the area to visit her parents and stayed to marry a local farmer. In her memoirs, Alice tells the story:

Well, it was really amusing as my parents had never seen the outback before, but they went to Nungarin.

At this time I was with Mrs Drabble. They had started a tea shop with cold meats, and as I had always been mad on shops I begged them to let me help out when one of the girls had to have an appendix operation. One morning a gentleman, a Mr Watson, came into the shop and asked me to cut one pound of nice ham as he was going up country a long way. I was always a chatterbox so I asked him where he was going, and he told me Nungarin.

“Will you put me in your bag?” I asked him “As my parents are in Nungarin”.

“Is he a farmer?” he asked.

“No, he is a minister,” I replied.

“You don’t mean the Reverend Wolstenholme do you?”

“Yes,” I answered.

From then on Mr Watson used to call in and tell me the news. Once he told me my mother was sick. I used to go yachting and belonged to the club, so I told them all I was off to the country to nurse my mother. They teased

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me and laughed, and said that I would end up marrying a cocky farmer. I laughed too as I visualised men with bowyangs ...

One of the Caporn boys took me to the train in Perth, and we left at 7.00 a.m. A young man, Fred (Williams), and his neighbour were at the station.

“By jove! That’s the girl I’d like to marry!” he said ...

When we got to Midland we used to have to change trains, so Fred thought he would come and help me with my luggage ...

Fred came along and jumped into the carriage and said

“Can I ride in here with you?”

“It’s a public conveyance!” I retorted.

It was a very hot day so I asked him if he would get one of the peaches from the basket, and peel it for me as I did not like the feel of the skin. He pulled his knife from his pocket and as I’d noticed that he was smoking a pipe, I gave a grimace wondering if the knife was clean. He noticed my expression and said,

“It’s quite clean, so don’t worry.”

He peeled the peach and broke it in half and threw the stone out of the window, then offered the fruit to me.

“Would you like to share half of it with me?” I asked.

“Yes thank you,” he replied, and it’s not the only half I’d like to share with you. “I’d like to share your future life.”

I really laughed and said, “Is that a proposal? If it is, and not a joke, I would consider you were a very fast worker.”¹⁰

He was a fast worker, and it was a proposal. Alice and Fred were married in Nungarin in July 1913 and went on to have ten children, descendents of whom are still a part of the Nungarin community almost a hundred years later.

The district was often attended by visiting clergy, and by all accounts their presentations were warmly received. In October 1917, the Reverend Sydney Herbert Cox visited Nungarin from Trinity Congregational Church in the city. On the Thursday evening he delivered a lecture on ‘America and Americans’, and illustrated his talk with ‘lantern views’. Sixty people packed into the Dugdale home at Burran Rock for an evening of ‘interest, humour and instruction’. The exercise was repeated the next evening at

White's local Co-op hall, and on the following Sunday divine Service was held at both centres where crowded houses were treated to a 2-hour address.¹¹

The settlers at Burrans Rock decided that they needed a special place for worship, having previously been meeting in each other's homes. The proposed township of Burrans Rock had been surveyed earlier, and the church had been allocated land to the west of the sports ground. Fund raising activities were organised and eventually work on the church started on 11th August 1916.

Twenty farmers erected the frame of tree trunks, the weatherboard walls and corrugated iron roof. Two doors of wood panelling were put in front and back walls. A black malthoid floor and window openings completed the small neat structure. Calico took the place of glass until windows could be bought.

A pedal organ was installed. It had a high ornate top and mirror ... the church opened on Sunday 10th September 1916.¹²



Above: The opening of the Burrans Rock church 1916

The pioneering McCorry family were members of the Catholic Church, and were great supporters of their faith.

The first time that Nungarin was visited by a priest – the indefatigable Father Ubach, O.S.S. – was in 1915. At that time all that the town could

boast of was a small shed which served as a railway station, and an odd house here and there.

Mass was said alternatively at Mr McCorry's hotel and Mr Kinsella's at Burrans Rock School. The McCorry family alone made up 12 members of the congregation.

One of the incidents worth recording is that of the three O'Donnell brothers of Elabbin who used to walk once a month either the 25 miles to Burrans Rock or the 10 miles to Nungarin to attend Mass, and it was due to their

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great faith that they never missed when it was at all possible for them to come. The only time they missed was after heavy rains, when the swollen streams were impassable.

Numerically the Catholics of Nungarin have never been strong but the lack of numbers has been made up by their sterling qualities.

One of the early pioneers who came in 1909 is Mr E. Fitzgerald, who is still farming the same land. The names of the other pioneers about 1914 were: - McCorry, Johnson, O'Connors, Mrs Johnson (the mother of Cyril Johnson and the State President of the Primary Producers' Association – Women's Section – for three years), Dwyer Bros., Quinlan, Peter Lyons, Ray Fitzgerald, and then in 1917, the Caseys.¹³

The original Church of England weatherboard church of St Thomas the Apostle, was erected in 1924 by Mr Matthew Mackie. Mr Mackie lived in Railway Avenue Nungarin and would have been quite elderly at the time. He died in December of the following year and was remembered by Marie (Aunty Jim) Farrell as a kindly man who often loaned his horse and masher cart to the young folk to travel to weekend tennis matches. The jarrah church furniture was made by Mr Plant in Merredin, and designed by the Rev. H.R. Hobbs, Rector of Merredin.¹⁴ Those pews are still in use today and say more for the sturdy nature of construction than the rector's design capabilities. Perhaps he wanted to make sure that parishioners were sufficiently uncomfortable to guarantee they remained awake and attentive during services.

Only five years after the opening of the church, when Leila Warner and Angus Stewart were married in October 1929, the weatherboard building was on such a lean that the bride's father, Fred Warner, assisted by Bill and Harry Muhs, pulled the



Above: First Anglican church of St Thomas mid 1920s

structure upright and anchored it to a couple of trucks. The old church staggered on until 1951 when it was eventually condemned because of structural decay.

During the early years Nungarin had been administered as part of the Merredin Parish and it wasn't until 1929 that we had our first resident minister when the Reverend Lionel Guy Courtney was appointed Priest-in-Charge of the Mission District of Nungarin on 13th September. At that time the mission district included Burran Rock, Karloning, Campion, Mukinbudin, Lake Brown, Yanoning, Wokalbin, Bonnie Rock, Geelakin, Trayning, Kununoppin, Yelbeni, Kodj-Kodjin, Nukarni and Cranleigh as well as Nungarin. A huge area.

Guy Courtney arrived in Nungarin with his wife and two small children and they made their home in the Rectory at Lot 70 First Avenue. His daughter, Auriel, was only five years old when the family arrived in Nungarin and even many years later had clear memories of those early days:

The journey from England took six weeks by sea, and we drove our new car up from Perth with pride. The trip took, I think, two days, camping overnight in a tent on the way. We later made this journey several times, driving through bush-fires smouldering on either side of the road and pausing to picnic in a patch of pink everlastings. Our main luggage came up by rail in slower time. My father cut up packing cases that had held our possessions and made my mother a dressing table and a kitchen table. He painted them blue. They stood proudly with their feet in empty food tins filled with water to prevent ants crawling up the legs ...

At the age of six and a half I sat on the front verandah of the Rectory at Nungarin and watched the house opposite burn down. My small brother, Hugh, aged three, sat beside me and I had strict instructions to keep him there. My mother and father rushed across the road to do what they could. The wooden house burned well and great orange flames flared against the night sky and there was a hiss and crack as the windows were melted by the heat. With the occupants safe and very little water with which to tackle the blaze, efforts were directed to saving the trees around the house which were less easily replaced than the house itself. My recollection is that the owner was a Mr Sirr, the local barber, who had quite a large family ... and apparently had two houses.

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My mother had to rush back to comfort Hugh who was terrified by this dangerous scene, although I do not remember being at all frightened myself.¹⁵

Both Guy, and his wife Irene, were well educated and came from relatively comfortable backgrounds. Guy was a doctor's son and an Oxford M.A. His father, Dr Guy Budd Courtney, donated the font that is still in use in the Anglican Church in Nungarin.

Conditions in the West Australian outback were very different to what they were used to, but they both made a genuine effort to contribute to the community. Guy had a great concern for the newly settled areas where people couldn't get to church because of the distances involved and in at least one location he established a small bush church (a bough shed or scrubby lean-to located at Cunderin for the Yanoning Rock community) and held services there regularly.

Bishop Elsey, the Bishop of Kalgoorlie wrote an account of a visit he paid to the Nungarin district in 1931:

At the end of the month I had a long week-end with the Rev. L.G. Courtney, Rector of Nungarin, in the Perth Diocese. By arrangement he ministers to the congregation at Geelakin just over the border of the Kalgoorlie Diocese, in the Southern Cross district, and this was the excuse for his invitation to me. He kept me fully occupied, for in addition to the Nungarin Agricultural Show on the Saturday, and visits to the Provisional Group of Toc H at Trayning, and the very live Group at Nungarin, I preached at Services at Nungarin, Yanoning Rock, Geelakin and Trayning, celebrated at Nungarin and Kununoppin, and gave lessons to our children in the State Schools at Nungarin, Cranleigh, Geelakin and Wokalbin. Yanoning Rock is a delightful spot in the heart of the bush without a house in sight, but it has become the meeting-place of the settlers in the district because right under the huge outcrop of granite rock is a flat cleared space in the bush which is ideal for cricket and tennis. When we arrived on the Sunday afternoon, games of both cricket and tennis were in progress, but they were immediately abandoned and a congregation of 62 assembled in the shade of a brush shed for Evensong. During the service a kerosene bucket full of water had been boiling on a fire, the smoke of which blew through the brush wall of the shed and kept the flies away. Afterwards the ladies provided tea for the company before we set out for a thirty mile drive for a

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*second Evensong in the tiny school at Geelakin. There the congregation of 37 quite filled the room, but full choral Evensong was beautifully rendered and the Service was a very happy ending to a full day.*¹⁶



Above: First Church Service in the new bough shed at Yanoning, 23rd March 1930

Photo courtesy of Mrs Auriel James (née Courtney)

The roads throughout the district at that time were often simply tracks created by the vehicles that needed to get somewhere. The tracks turned to mud whenever it rained and the resulting ruts and ridges were later baked hard by the sun, making negotiating the bush tracks and salt lakes a perilous undertaking at any time. Auriel recalled an occasion when her father became stranded while doing his church visits:

*One day my father, out doing the rounds of his far-flung parish, got bogged down in a salt lake. Knowing nobody else was likely to come along, he walked 40 miles all through the night as he thought my mother might get worried.*¹⁷

Auriel also remembered drinking from a water bag hanging on the back verandah, and the chronic shortage of water for the household:

*When we first arrived the house had only recently been built, and the water tank was empty as we had had no rain. We had to fetch water from a standpipe at the station.*¹⁸

Early settlement in the Nungarin area was of necessity situated near available wells and water holes. As the town developed, water was brought in by train from Merredin or Dowerin and cost 6 shillings for every thousand gallons. As a result of deputations made to Government by the Progress Association, the Goldfields Water Scheme was extended to Nungarin in 1916.¹⁹

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Mr Walter Hodges recorded in his memoirs “The day the water came through the pipes all settlers were sure it was the best assistance they could have”²⁰. Properties to the north of Nungarin had to wait until the North-Eastern Districts Water Scheme was completed in October 1929. The scheme involved the construction of rock catchments at Barbalin, Waddouring and Knungajin and incorporated a system of pumps and gravity feed to supply water to 545,000 acres of farmland.²¹



*Above: Reverend Lionel Guy Courtney in the Nungarin Parish
Photo courtesy of Mrs Auriel James (nee Courtney)*

By 1927 there were over forty children on the roll at the Nungarin School, which necessitated a new two-roomed school building being constructed at the end of 1928. However Guy and Irene had misgivings about the standard of education available as Auriel recalls:

I spent only a couple of terms at the local school. My parents discovered to their horror I was picking up an Australian accent. From then I was taught (by correspondence) and the move to Perth was connected with the availability of education there.²²

The perceived inadequacy of available education in Nungarin wasn't the family's only difficulty. Guy's wife, Irene, wrote home to her mother in the summer of 1929:

The official temperature today is 106 degrees in the shade...I am sitting on the verandah being really eaten by flies but the house is unbearably hot – I feel that a special seat must be reserved for me in heaven after I baked scones (and myself) for the family today. I got into a bath this afternoon soon after turning on the cold tap and leant back, but sat up again as the porcelain was too hot to lean against...But really, this heat is unimaginable if you've never felt it – even the cane chair that I'm sitting on honestly feels as if it has been heated in an oven...excuse scrawl, my pen

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*keeps slipping through my sweaty fingers, said she plainly in Australian.
Much love from us all, your melting daughter, Irene.²³*

The original weatherboard church was extremely hot in the summer and in an effort to make the building more comfortable, Guy replaced the clear glass of some of the windows with yellow tinted glass. Auriel recalled that as there were no vases in the church, her mother resourcefully cut the tops off some beer bottles to make some; albeit with misgivings as to whether the use of beer bottles was altogether appropriate.

Guy Courtney's contribution to the church and the wider community was quite varied. He was also instrumental in laying out the first golf course in Nungarin, which was situated around a dam on the north side of the railway line between the town and McCorry's Old Hotel.

The Courtney family left Nungarin at the end of 1931, and Guy was inducted as Rector of South Perth on 1st January 1932. They returned to England in February 1935.²⁴

Auriel retained an interest in Nungarin and in later correspondence still clearly remembered the shortage of water, the backyard toilet and the unsealed roads. She particularly cherished a certificate that she was awarded at the 14th Annual Nungarin Show in 1930, when she gained second place for her plasticine modelling. Auriel obviously inherited her parents' ethic of service to the community as on November 9th, 1999, she was awarded the M.B.E. at Buckingham Palace for her work with charity.



George and Louise Little

The next minister appointed to Nungarin by the Church of England was the Reverend George James Little who was inducted on 17th January 1932²⁵. George was a man of many talents and one of the most mysterious people you could ever imagine. Throughout his multifarious career he re-invented himself at least half a dozen times.

George was born in Wiltshire in 1902, and later worked as a telegraphist in the Navy where he met his future wife, Louise. They were married in Liverpool in January 1922, and their only child, Florence May (Flo), was born in April 1923. The family immigrated to Australia in 1925, initially settling in South Australia for a short period before moving to Western Australia where George studied theology and served as a lay reader in Zanthus and Koorda. He was ordained into the Church of England ministry as a Deacon in December 1930, and priested the following year and given his first posting to Nungarin²⁶.

George was a talented artist, working in oils, and during his time in Nungarin, a keen member of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, which he would have found most convenient with the Buffalo Lodge situated not far from the Rectory.

Strangely, one of his daughter Flo's memories of her time in Nungarin was, like that of Auriel Courtney only a few years before, of watching a house fire (this time Reilly's house which was situated at the corner of First Avenue and Mitchell Terrace on the site of the present church²⁷):

I remember a house on the other side of the church which went on fire and there was great anxiety to ensure that the church was not endangered ... We had a very nice garden at the front of the rectory and a huge yard at the back with the 'dunny' at the far end ... I was happy in Nungarin, apart from the increasing strife between my parents.²⁸

The strife that Flo alluded to indicated a serious rift in George and Louise's relationship. During their time in Nungarin, the family had made the acquaintance of a young local lass, Dorothy Vanzetti, and when George was transferred to Wiluna in October 1933, she followed and boarded with the family there.

During the following summer Louise and Flo took an extended Christmas holiday with friends at South Perth. On 15th January, 1934, *The West Australian* newspaper had carried an article stating that due to a shortage of funds in the Wiluna Parish, the Rev George Little had begun work on the mines during the week in order to augment his income. It may have been that Louise's decision to travel to Perth was influenced by the uncertainties of the financial situation as well as by tension in their marital relationship. Louise and Flo were still in South Perth in early 1934 when George sent a letter to say that he and Dorothy were leaving for the Eastern States together.

Louise and Flo never returned to Wiluna. The Bishop at the time intervened and they were given paid passage back to England.

Towards the end of 1934 George and Dorothy were established in Melbourne where George ran a photography shop in Little Collins Street. A son, Peter, was born on November 1st of that year, and photographs taken several years later show a seemingly happy family group. However that relationship too was doomed to fail and in 1939 George left Dorothy and Peter behind and moved to Sydney.

In Sydney, George's next venture was the production of a magazine, but this enterprise was abruptly terminated at the outbreak of World War II; and he began employment with the Road Transport authority where he implemented and operated their accounting system. At about this time he wrote to Flo for the first time, telling her that he had changed his name to George Simpson-Lyttle. From then on he maintained an intermittent correspondence with his daughter right up until the time of his death in 1973, but never gave any details of his life or personal circumstances.

In 1944, George married Sylvia Durst and their son, Keith, was born in 1945. However it was not until 1949 that George wrote to Flo indicating that a divorce from Louise was being sought. He asked that his whereabouts not be revealed, stating that he believed that a divorce could be more easily achieved if he was thought to have simply disappeared.²⁹

The scope of George's life certainly had plenty of variety. After the war, he moved into the acting profession and made several stage, radio and film appearances. The most notable of these was the major role of Douglas McMann in Charles Chauvel's 1955 production of *Jedda*, which is historic for being the first colour feature film made in Australia, the first to star indigenous Australians, the first to use magnetic sound recording equipment and the first to go to the Cannes Film Festival. Perhaps also the first to star an ex-Church of England clergyman! George also appeared as Captain Asa MacDougall opposite Robert Newton in *The Adventures of Long John Silver* and performed in J.C. Williamson's stage production of *The Lawsons*.³⁰

George and Sylvia had separated in 1954, and George took up residence in Mosman with Nancy Blackshaw. Nancy changed her name by deed poll to Nancy Simpson-Lyttle, and some five years later the couple moved to Wyoming on the central coast of New South Wales where they lived until George's death almost twenty years later.

Photography had been a life-long passion with George, and a newspaper memorial notice pays tribute to his abilities and his contribution to the industry:

A man who was known to a very wide selection of the photographic trade, George Simpson-Lyttle, passed away on July 7th. George was active in the trade intermittently from 1938 until only recently. His early beginnings were in a small photo shop in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. Moving to Sydney, he built up a life of many interests and activities, and worked in several camera shops, most recently the Milverson-Walton's group. He was perhaps best remembered for his work in the Photographic Merchants' Association, which he served as secretary for several years, at an important period when the trade was beginning to grow up after lifting of import restrictions. His contribution was always a positive one. He had a sound knowledge of photography as well as trade matters.

Few people in the trade would be aware of the scope of George's life. He was interested in the theatre and appeared on stage and film. One of his first Sydney performances at the Independent Theatre had him listed in the program as a "former policeman" – which he probably was. He did broadcasting and film work, appearing in Charles Chauvel's last picture, "Jedda". He had a very sound knowledge of classical music, and in recent years during his retirement in Gosford was able to enjoy his extensive library of records, and with his wife, his other hobby of gardening. He made a valuable contribution to the photographic trade.³¹

After George's death, Nancy and her stepson, Keith, contacted Flo and she discovered for the first time that she had a half-brother. The new extended family were able to get to know each other and to enjoy a mutual association. Sadly, Dorothy's son, Peter, had died earlier in 1973 and they had not been aware of his existence. However contact has been made with the respective families, which has brought warm friendship and a welcome closure to them all.

George Little was the second of only two Anglican ministers to live in Nungarin. In 1932 when the Reverend James (Jim) Paice was appointed to what was then known as the Church of England Parish of Bencubbin-Nungarin, he was resident in Bencubbin.



The Reverend James Paice

From very early days the Congregational Church enjoyed a strong following in Nungarin with the Creagh and Herbert families giving great leadership and support. As the agricultural industry developed, various clergymen had been appointed to minister in the growing area, but it was still very much seen as a ‘mission field’. This was never more clearly demonstrated than by a comment made by a member of their home church in Woollahra (New South Wales) when it was discovered that Joe and Jeannie Atkinson had accepted a posting to the Kununoppin-Nungarin Congregational Mission in 1947: “Weren’t the Atkinsons brave going to live among all those blacks”.³²

They probably were extremely brave, but not for the reasons so plainly expressed. When they arrived at what was to be their home in Kununoppin, they found the manse to be a dilapidated corrugated iron building, sheets of plasterboard tossed out into the yard, no sink in the kitchen – just a leaking tap protruding from the wall with a bucket underneath to catch the drips, bricks falling away from beside the wood stove in the kitchen and a rusted out water tank lying upside down amongst the weeds in the neglected back yard. Joe wrote to the Congregational Union explaining the delights of bath night at the manse:

There is no light in the bathroom, there are clear glass windows, the chip heater doesn’t work and the bath leaks.

Perhaps with tongue only slightly in cheek he added:

Just imagine me in that little room in that tin bath with my heel in the hole to stop the escape of water, with a candle in my hand to see what I was doing and breathing on the windows so that the neighbours couldn’t see what I was doing.³³

At that particular time there was no Anglican Minister in the area, and no Roman Catholic priest, so the Reverend Joe Atkinson, or “Uncle Joe” as he became affectionately known, covered all the various sidings and towns taking services in Nukarni, Nungarin, Kununoppin, Mukinbudin, Trayning and Bencubbin. The stipend he was offered was £5 per week paid monthly and the use of a house and car.

At one of the first services, only two ladies turned up and Joe was at first uncertain of how much ceremony and formality was needed with such a small congregation. However, he drew wisdom from the story of a minister who found only one young lad at a service and gamely did what he had to do and proceeded with the full liturgy. When speaking to the young man afterwards he mentioned that his job was to “feed the sheep”. The young fellow replied, “When I go out to feed the sheep – if there’s only one around I just give it a bucketful, I don’t tip the whole cartload out!”

When Joe first arrived in the parish he was unlicensed and had no experience at driving. He drove to the police station at Trayning to apply for his licence, and after approaching the station cautiously, was met by the incumbent. After a convivial chat he was tossed a piece of paper; advised “you want to get out of that second gear as soon as you can, you know”, and asked for “ten bob”. The deal was done.

The mission car was a 1929 Chevrolet Tourer, with no side curtains, and Joe and the Tourer experienced many adventures negotiating the tracks and roads throughout the district. The unsealed roads were extremely hazardous, and sometimes almost impossible to traverse. Joe recalls:

I was driving for the second time in my life...the road was broken up with ruts about fifteen inches deep. I wondered how my wheels got into them and out again. We bumped and we jumped from high spot to high spot, and were tossed about like a pea in a whistle. Soon the road went down a decline into a creek bed which was washed entirely clean of sand or clay and we were now jumping from rock to rock! ... Now I sighted a place where someone had climbed out with a vehicle, and I went for it as fast as I could to make sure of getting up that steep grade. We got up all right – and shot out onto the road to Mukinbudin like a jack rabbit!³⁴

After one evening service at Nungarin, Joe mentioned to Mr Harold Creagh about the dreadful condition of the road between Nukarni and Nungarin. Harold’s advice was that when the road was rough like that, the thing to do was to add a bit more speed as that ironed out the corrugations. On the trip home the car started to bounce around over the corrugations, so Joe did as was advised and turned on a bit more speed. The car still kept bouncing around, so Joe stepped on the accelerator even further, and again more speed was added. By this time the car “wanted to climb trees” so Joe stopped to investigate and found that the rear tyre was flat, and not only flat, but absolutely shredded. Joe and Jeannie faced a 4-mile hike through the darkness to

Tamarua where they were put up for the night and their car fitted with a replacement tyre next morning.³⁵

There has always been great co-operation between the various Christian churches in Nungarin and Joe was one of those ministers who saw no barrier in denominational differences. Joe and Jeannie were great friends with the Catholic priest, and as the Catholic folk didn't have any music at their services, together they came up with the idea that the Congregational folk would sing for the Catholic Festival of Christ the King. The choir practised several favourite hymns and even went so far as to learn to sing two hymns in Latin for the Benediction. It was a truly ecumenical affair. The Congregational organ was moved to the Catholic church and the organist and the choir produced all the music. The Bishop from New Norcia and the Sisters from the convent at Trayning were present for the service, and afterwards everyone joined together for a meal at the hall.

On another occasion, following a suggestion from Kununoppin's Dr Samuels, the Congregational Church formed a youth club (the Kununoppin Younger Set) with the basic rules of "no politics, no booze, no religion". The group decided to produce an end of year concert that was a huge success and netted a profit of ninety pounds. Unfortunately the local policeman (apparently an authority on all things legal and governmental) informed them that as the concert had not been run for a charity, they were liable to pay 33% entertainment tax. Joe called an emergency meeting and it was very quickly decided that the local churches would be appropriate charities. The Anglican Church were given one third to assist with the cost of installing a ceiling in the church, the Catholics received one third to go towards the construction of a new building, and the Congregational Church received their third to go towards the stipend. Problem solved.

Fifth Sunday picnics were other occasions when the Churches worked together. Christians of all persuasions, including members of Nungarin's Toc H group, met at various venues throughout the district - first at Knungajin, and in turn at Yarragin, Barbalin, Marshall Rock, Eaglestone and as far north as Beacon. Upwards of one hundred people came together for these picnic services that remained a part of district life for over a decade.

The Reverend Clem Hawke was guest speaker at one of these picnic services, and after mentioning how much he would have liked to have been present to watch his son Bob playing cricket in Perth next day, was driven to Merredin in order to catch the overnight train to the city. The treacherous road conditions had the potential of

turning even the most straightforward endeavour into a journey of high drama. On the way home from Merredin that night, Joe got the car caught in a drift of sand and turned it completely upside down. With assistance from some nearby Nukarni folk, the vehicle was righted and continued on its way somewhat reduced in stature, but still mobile.³⁶

Ministers of the day were hardy folk, and not easily deterred from their mission. Throughout the years they have shared the vicissitudes of pioneering life in the wheatbelt and enriched the community with their various talents and abilities. Some of the Congregational ministers who served in the district were Glyde Pearce, Eddie King, Howard Dosser, Jim Lewis and Messrs Cole and Weiland. Frank Pitcher was remembered as “the best driver”³⁷ among the clergy in the late 40s, although he apparently wasn’t particularly gifted in being able to communicate with the children at the Nungarin School. They preferred lessons with the Catholic priest!³⁸

On 21st November 1954, the new Catholic church of St Teresa was opened:

Under a burning sun and amidst a large gathering of parishioners and visitors, estimated at a hundred, the Lord Abbot of New Norcia, Dr. Gregory Gomez, O.S.B., blessed and opened the new church ... The Lord Abbot was assisted by Fathers Placid and William O.S.B.

The building complete with a sacristy at the back of it, is of cement brick, with a coloured tile roof. Inside it is plainly furnished with an altar and New Zealand karri seats. Designed in simple but pleasing lines, the structure is an ornament to the town and will prove, no doubt, a boon to the Catholics who, over the last twenty years, have been attending Mass in the local hall. It cost £2,000. For parishioners of less courage than the sixteen Catholic adults of Nungarin, this may have seemed too large a sum for a building covering 800 sq. ft., yet the cost would have been much bigger but for the close co-operation between priest and parishioners. The fascinating story of the Nungarin Church is repeated at the same time at Wialki, Kununoppin and Mukinbudin, three places within the parish. All these three towns are building their own churches, which will be blessed and opened one after the other closely following the opening of Nungarin.³⁹

The McCorry family donated the organ for the new church as well as a statue of the Madonna, while the crucifix and the candlesticks were dedicated to the memory of Mrs Rose Johnson.



*Rev Stanley and Mrs
Louisa Clague*

A couple of years later, on 12th April, 1958, the Congregational church opened their new building on the same site as the original church on the west end of town. The presiding minister at the time was Pastor J. Lewis.

The Reverend Stanley Clague, Congregational Minister, and his wife Louisa were resident in Nungarin during the 1960s. They were a cheerful English couple and travelled everywhere together. Unlikely as it seemed, for he was not exactly young and was perhaps bordering on portly, Stanley was a keen proponent of jujitsu and taught this form of self-defence to many of the young men of the district.

Anglican priest, the Reverend Harry Sumpton, who came to the district in 1954, was perhaps our longest serving minister, resident in nearby Trayning but serving Nungarin for over a decade. He was a humble man, and self-sacrificing, not calling for any improvements or maintenance on the rectory, and voluntarily receiving a greatly reduced stipend so that the Parish commitments to Mission could be fulfilled. Jenny de Lacy (née Tiller) remembers school friends referring to the various ministers in Nungarin at the time as ‘Glue’ (Mr Clague), ‘Plastic’ (Fr Placid) and ‘Sump Oil’ (Mr Sumpton). Harry Sumpton was followed by Father Noel Townsend who contributed through his service to the Parish and also vicariously through the talents of his wife, Trish, who was very musical and blessed with a delightful voice. She starred as Nellie Forbush in the very successful local production of *South Pacific*.

The Reverend Ken Drayton was a very popular minister and encouraged many men by working alongside them during the seasonal work of seeding and harvest. He maintained that he demonstrated the gospel through his interaction with farmers at the wheat bins each year. At a time when the Congregational Church was without a minister, Ken offered his services and the Christian community enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship and sharing. Each week the combined congregation alternated between the Anglican and Congregational churches, with Ken officiating at both.

Len Firth came to the Anglican parish as a young married man in 1977, and caused some consternation by rolling up to the Kununoppin Hospital on his motor bike – resplendent in full riding gear and sporting a formidable bushy beard! When questioned as to which particular patient he wished to visit, he had to explain that

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he was the new Anglican Minister ‘doing the rounds’! Len played football for the Nungarin Panthers, proudly wearing the number 13 guernsey (“Why should the devil own any number”), and made numerous friends through his participation in the community. After he left the parish, Len and his family spent many years in the mission field, going firstly to Groote Eylandt and then to Hong Kong, after which he became involved in missionary training at St Andrew’s Hall in Melbourne.

At about that time, the Anglican and Catholic Churches shared an organist. Dot Brown played the organ for both services and you could always tell where Dot was because her faithful dog, ‘Chocko’, could be found keeping watch at the door of either church building.

This spirit of co-operation was continued a few years later when the Anglican Church was between priests and the Congregational Minister led the services. In March 1988, during the tenure of Rick Williams, the Nungarin Congregational church eventually closed. Both congregations combined and a special service was held in the Anglican church to recognise the amalgamation. The Congregational Sunday school building that had been erected in 1966 was gifted to the Anglican community and jinkered to its present site alongside St Thomas’s church.

Over the span of almost a century, Nungarin has enjoyed a friendly and co-operative relationship between all Christian denominations and the community has benefitted (and been entertained!) by the contribution of a rich diversity of ministers.

Anglican Ministers who have served the Nungarin district:

1924	Frank Mervyn Oliver (lived in Wyalkatchem until the rectory was built in Trayning in 1926, and started to take services at Burran Rock from that time. Nungarin still officially part of the Merredin Parish)
1928	Alfred Burton (Locum while Oliver was on leave 1928-29)
1929	Lionel Guy Courtney (first minister to be resident in Nungarin)
1931	George John Little (resident in Nungarin)
1932	James Paice (Mt. Marshall-Koorda)
1937	Alexander Francis John Blain (Bencubbin-Nungarin)
1940	Peter Vere Hodge (lived at Trayning)
1943	Warwick Shaw Bastian (lived at Kununoppin)
1946	Edmund Hyde Arblaster (lived at Trayning)
1948	John Francis Alban Dobson
1948	Harold Stuart Napper
1949	Frank Walter Pitcher
1953	Charles Dene Gillman
1954	Henry Thomas James Sumpton
1965	Noel Maxwell Townsend
1969	Kenneth John Drayton
1974	Robert John Greenhalgh
1977	Leonard Peter Firth (lived at Trayning, then new rectory built at Mukinbudin)
1982	Steven Brian Russell
1985	David George Atkinson
1990	David Bambach
1993	Peter Stanley
2005	Paul Vincent Cannon

Endnotes

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- 27 Personal conversation with M.Farrell, 1990.
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- 30 http://aso.gov.au/people/George_Simpson-Lyttle.
- 31 Newspaper memorial by James H.Coleman.
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- 33 Joe Atkinson, *They Call Him "Uncle Joe"*, Optima Press ISBN 0 646 22000 4, p.101.
- 34 Joe Atkinson, *They Call Him "Uncle Joe"*, Optima Press ISBN 0 646 22000 4, p.92.
- 35 Joe Atkinson, *They Call Him "Uncle Joe"*, Optima Press ISBN 0 646 22000 4, p.97.
- 36 Joe Atkinson, *They Call Him "Uncle Joe"*, Optima Press ISBN 0 646 22000 4, p.122.
- 37 Personal letter from Jim West.
- 38 Nungarin School Record book.
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Bush School and Hire Learning

History of the Nungarin Schools

The very first settlers in country districts in Western Australia organised education for their children in the way they did everything else – they did it themselves. Charles and Jane Adams taught their children at home, with the occasional assistance from a governess when they could engage one. In 1885 Alex and Alfred Glass (children of Jane’s brother Charles Glass) came from Jennacubbine near Northam to be taught with the Adams children at Mangowine, because a governess had been employed there then. Two years later when Dick Greaves and Jack Henderson called at Mangowine in their search for gold, they mentioned meeting a new governess:

Mr Adams, his wife and children, and our three selves making the largest party of whites ever gathered together there, including a young lady whose name, I think, is Miss Spencer, who had arrived a few days previously, under an engagement to teach the young Adams. This young lady, as also one of Colreavy’s mates, were good musicians ...¹

It was not until the opening of the Burrans Rock School on 11th September 1912, that the Nungarin district could boast its first experience of formal education.

Burrans Rock School

The first Burrans Rock school was situated on Reserve 19972, just half a mile south-west of the large granite rock outcrop. The Education Department provided a standard portable school and the first teacher appointed was Mrs Anne Casey. Mrs Casey came from the Kwelkan area and, with her three children, lived in a rough bough shed near the school during the week, returning to the farm at Kwelkan on weekends. The three Casey children; Eileen, Maureen and Dennis, would have nicely augmented the number of students necessary to keep the school open. At that time the Education

Bush School and Hire Learning

Department authorised the establishment of 'Provisional' schools where an average attendance of ten children could be guaranteed. The Department supplied books and school furniture, and allowed an annual grant of £4/10/- per head of average attendance. Parents had to undertake to supply accommodation, and to make up the teacher's salary to £60 per year.²



Burran Rock School 1912

At that time, half of all Government schools in Western Australia were one-teacher schools. The pupils at this first Burran Rock school were: the three Caseys, Harry, Lillian and Bonnie Brown, Clarence, Ethel, George and Dora Croxford, Louis and Aimee Beurteaux, May Knowles, Joseph Rutter, Valentina Dugdale, Willie Wayne, Kenneth Crane and Stella and Vera Stephens.

After Mrs Casey became ill, she was replaced by Miss Toll³ who, accompanied by her small niece, boarded firstly with the Dugdale family, and later with the Knowles family:

She was a very proper lady and a very good teacher ... she brought a lot of her own things including a piano which was kept at the school. ... Later she came to live with us [and on] the first holiday she went to Perth and when she came back she had a buggy ... with a lovely hood, and a rug for old Tim [the horse], and a rug for people sitting in the buggy. I remember the crop was up – it was 1915 and a good year. There was no track, so we had to drive through the crop. Tim would stop to have a little feed ... I would have to get out, take my shoes and socks off, and lead Tim while I told him what I thought of him.⁴

After Miss Toll returned to New South Wales, a new teacher was appointed to take her place. Joe Knowles had returned from Perth on the train (a trip that often took more than twenty hours), and on arrival at Nungarin at five o'clock in the morning, was told that a young lass was asking how she could contact the Knowles family with whom she would be staying. Without any consultation with the surprised host and hostess, the Education Department had advised Miss Delia McNamara that she would be boarding with them. Because there was no-one at the siding to meet them, Joe suggested leaving their luggage and walking the seven or eight miles to their farm at Burran Rock. By the time they arrived, a physically and emotionally exhausted Delia fell into Mrs Knowles's arms and immediately burst into tears. It was some time before Catherine Knowles was able to get to the bottom of the mystery of why her husband had arrived home from Perth with a previously unknown young lady in such a distressed state.

Delia McNamara was only sixteen years of age, and was one of many 'unclassified' teachers, whose only requirement was to pass an entrance exam that was slightly above primary school level, and then satisfy an inspector that they had the ability to teach a small number of children. The isolation that these young teachers faced, and the often unsatisfactory accommodation arrangements, are challenge enough without the struggle to teach a group of mixed-age children in buildings which were freezing cold in winter and boiling hot in summer, and seemed to offer an open invitation to all sorts of reptiles and other vermin. Delia had put her age up in order to obtain the teaching position at Burran Rock, and was only a few months older than May Knowles who would have been one of the 'senior' pupils.

At that time there were eleven pupils at the school, and during play-time the children needed even numbers to play 'Red Rover all Over', so Delia was co-opted to make up the twelfth player. Unfortunately they were playing "just one more game", when the school inspector arrived. Poor Delia didn't return after the August school holidays, and was replaced by Maud Holland who boarded with the Dawe family. Maud had completed a six-week course at Teacher's College, and was most conscientious in following all Education Department regulations. Each morning, classes were preceded by five minutes 'drill', and Maud lined up her eleven pupils and solemnly instructed them, "Harms bend – harms up – harms down". After drill, the small group were marched into school and stood to attention while they all sang the National Anthem accompanied by Maud on the violin. Unfortunately Maud was tone deaf, and not an accomplished musician, and the violin was quite out of tune (May Knowles added "and never mind her voice")⁵. But the young teacher was earnest and dedicated, and she did her best under the most trying circumstances.

The school toilets at that time operated on the pan system, and it was necessary to find someone locally who would be prepared to take on the responsibility of emptying and cleaning the pans. Jack Dugdale had been doing the job but when he became smitten with the previous teacher, young Delia McNamara, he didn't think his image would be enhanced by being associated with such an onerous duty. When a willing replacement worker was not able to be found, May Knowles "armed herself with a pick and shovel", and took on the job herself. When "M. Knowles" was noted in the records it was assumed that it referred to a 'Mr Knowles'. No further questions were asked, and a few years later, the money was most useful in helping to put May through university.⁶

Dick Roddy recalled the time that he and his twin brother, Jim, had undertaken the sanitary contract for their school. They were paid the princely sum of £2 per quarter, by way of a cheque which the boys presented to Bluey Cairns at Putlands store in Nungarin.

The cheque had been made out to 'James Roddy', and young Jim endorsed it 'Jim Roddy'. Bluey fixed James with a beady eye and made the following famous pronouncement, "Come here! Now look – if a cheque has 'Blue-arsed bottle-fly' on the front – you sign 'Blue-arsed bottle-fly' on the back! Get it?" The wisdom of this advice has stayed with me over seven decades!⁷

School sanitary arrangements provided plenty of opportunity for skylarking by small boys, often to the outrage of the more sensitive members of the community:

A Disgraceful Proceeding

Dear Sir,

While travelling along the railway line, about a mile on your side of the Baandee station, on 7th February [1913], I saw an incident at the school thereabouts which has rankled in my mind since, and perhaps I should have written to you about it before. I observed three small boys going across the yard, one carrying a shovel, and they made for the eastern of two closets which stand in the school ground, while the one with the shovel proceeded to what looked like a sand pit outside the school fence. At the time there were three young girls in the closet, and when this happened they proceeded to the western closet, the door of which was broken off, and lay flat on the ground in front of the closet. One of the boys then ran across, picked up the door and held it in its place (thus preventing the girls from getting out) while the other boys, after some delay, took the pan from

this closet also. The lad at the door then released the girls, and they made for the eastern closet again, but at the time both pans were outside the fence near the sand pit. I saw the girls and one of the boys talking together outside this closet, and by this time I was out of sight.

Is this manner of disposing of the sanitary question usual at the state schools? If so, surely it is not the best the Education Department can do in the matter. I think such a state of affairs is scandalous and totally unfair to the children of the district who attend school. To put it mildly, it does not tend to develop the modesty of the rising generation.

Perhaps the influence of your valuable paper could be brought to bear on the matter,

Yours etc.,

'A Disgusted Witness' Nungarin.⁸

A requirement for the establishment of every school was the completion of a contract with the Department of Public Health who needed to be satisfied that the applicant was able to arrange for the “performance of the sanitary service as often as may be required and at a reasonable cost”. The reasonable cost was for many years rated at one shilling per pan per month.⁹ Rolls of toilet paper were an unheard of commodity, and apparently “the time-honoured use of school pads was observed”.¹⁰

Schools opened in various locations throughout the district, and were closed and then opened again over the years as student numbers fluctuated. In 1917 when some of the families in the Burran Rock area had to walk off their farms, student numbers dropped below ten and the school was closed and the building shifted to Yerapin. In 1924, there was once again a sufficient number of students in the area to warrant a school which was opened in the Burran Rock Congregational Mission building. The small timber church had been built by Joseph Knowles in 1913 as a community gift, and was sited about 140 metres east of the old school site. The building had an iron roof, and a hard-baked earth floor covered with ‘Malthoid’, which was laid down in strips and sealed. There was a window in each of the east and west sides, and two doors placed to the south and north. Daphne Goulding (née Hoare) remembered, “The little church probably couldn’t seat more than twenty-four people. It was built of tree trunks forming the uprights and cross-beams. Rough sawn timber was used for the walls and the single pitch roof was covered with corrugated iron sheets.”¹¹ It was to this little school that Madge O’Neill was appointed in 1924.

Bush School and Hire Learning

Madge O'Neill arrived at Nungarin by train in the early hours of a cold July morning, and nobody to meet her. The Postmaster met the train about 5 am to collect the mail. She asked him for advice so he took her in to the Post Office to sit beside the fire, giving her a cup of tea. A letter had been sent to the Stephens family where she was to board on their farm, but they didn't receive it till later.

Miss O'Neill's appointment paper from the Education Department stated that there was a coach at Nungarin which would take her out to Burran Rock. There never ever has been such a service. Imagine the feelings of a young woman who knew only city life.

The conditions at this church were only too primitive ... there wasn't much room to demonstrate a lesson. The pews were all stacked against a wall. When the church services were held once a month¹², the desks were stacked up outside by the children ... all signs of being a schoolroom had to be out of sight.

Often in the summer, lessons were held out the back in a large bough shed, the children sharing a kerosene case in pairs, and working on another case bottoms up. There was a water tank, but without a lid, so when a dead parrot was found in it, that was it. From then on the children brought their own water each day.

The supply of materials for teaching was very restricted, and nothing could be wasted. The girls had supplies of needles and cottons for hand sewing, and for embroidery. Nothing was supplied for the boys so they made things from squares of coloured paper, or did drawing or painting. Perhaps the Department considered that they would be farming and wouldn't need any other skills. The girls learnt various seam stitching, hemmed handkerchiefs, made jug covers of net with looped edging threaded with beads for weight, made handkerchief sachets, dolls' clothes ... and made little cloth bags which were popular for the boys' marbles.

Before school and at lunchtime, the children played skippy or hopscotch, and the boys played marbles as winter was approaching. A favourite game was 'Police and Robbers', ducking in and out among the native shrubs which grew thickly. There was P.T. (Physical Training), 'Drop the Hanky' and 'Red Rover all Over'.¹³

Madge O'Neill and Mrs Amy Hoare organised a Fancy Dress Ball for the children. The children were taught to march in formation, and to dance, and the floor was polished to perfection by dint of shaved candle wax and a few hours invested by the children pulling each other around the floor on wheat bags. Trunks of costumes had been sent up from Perth, and a wonderful evening was enjoyed by students and parents alike.

In 1926 a standard school building was transported in, and re-erected on a site 2 kms further west on a corner of Mr Hoare's property. This building had one door which opened onto a small porch, with windows along two opposite sides. Miss O'Neill left at the end of 1926, to be followed in turn by Miss Alice Turner, Mr Oscar Mayrhofer, Mr R.L. (Len) Leggo, Miss Edith Chipper and Miss Beatrice Hanbury.

As was usual in those days with a number of classes in one room all doing different work, it wasn't easy for the teacher or the pupils. Everyone had to work quietly, and when the younger ones had reading lessons they were often taken outside. In the new Burran Rock School, seating was on long forms without backs, and the desks were full length, seating five pupils at each.

All basic subjects were taught – but the older children mainly worked from a small text book, under the guidance of the teacher. One part of learning to write was the use of copybooks; each line of beautiful script had to be copied on the line underneath ... the fingers had to hold the pen correctly and the nibs were dipped into inkwells that were set in holes in the desk.¹⁴

Children either walked to school, or travelled by horse or sulky. The older children looked after the horses, unharnessing them and tethering them to shady trees. At lunchtime they were watered, and fed chaff in a 'nosebag' which was held on by a strap pulled over the head of the horse. After school the whole harnessing procedure had to be gone through again before the trip home. Pupils were sent home if the temperature reached 105 degrees Fahrenheit, or if stormy or dusty weather was looming.

During the mid-thirties, numbers declined as the effects of the Depression were felt throughout the agricultural areas, and the little Burran Rock school closed for the last time in 1934. Edmonson Brothers were awarded the contract to shift the school building to Nungarin¹⁵ where it was used for emergency housing during WWII, and later became Aunty Jim Farrell's home in Second Avenue.

Nungarin School

The first Nungarin school was opened in 1913.¹⁶ The Congregational Mission Hall had been completed on the western outskirts of the Nungarin township early in 1913, and the Church offered the weatherboard building for use as a school.

The Controlling Committee of the Congregational Mission Hall have in a very generous spirit offered the use of the hall to the Education Department for school purposes free of charge. The number of juveniles within the radius accessible likely to take advantage of the opportunity is limited, but a petition for the opening of a school is being sent to parents in the district for signature, and it is confidently anticipated there will be unanimity amongst them, and as a result, the Education Department will permit of a school being opened in the hall. A local lady of high attainments, and fully qualified in every way, is available to take charge, and it would be a matter for deep regret if, under such favourable circumstances, the opportunities offered were not availed of by the educational authorities.¹⁷

The offer was persuasive and the educational authorities agreed to the proposal to open a school in the Congregational Mission Hall. Furniture and stock were sent up from the Wyalkatchem School,¹⁸ and in June the Education Department opened the Nungarin School in the church hall, with Miss Muriel Creagh as the teacher.

At least Miss Creagh had the advantage of being able to live in salubrious surroundings in the family home at Tamarua. Many early teachers had to live in unpleasant conditions with little or no privacy. Pioneer settlers were only just able to make a living on their developing farms, and couldn't afford to invest in comforts of any kind, and were certainly not able to extend any sort of luxury to a guest. Some lady teachers had to assist with the housework and to share a bedroom with the girls of the family, and in several instances, even being expected to share a bed! There was one report in the *Teachers' Journal* of the time, that a young female teacher was accommodated in a floorless room with three walls of hessian, and the fourth consisting of a stack of bags of super. As seeding progressed, the wall gradually disappeared!¹⁹

The privations of those early days affected teachers and pupils alike. Several of the pioneer settlers recalled the hazards of straying animals. Kruger's Red Poll bull was well known to get out and rampage about the district. George Farrell said, "It was mad ... it's a wonder it didn't kill someone. It was always getting out – getting

into the schoolyard with kids there and everything.”²⁰ Another animal that had the children terrified was Mrs Devereux’s big black billy goat. It used to chase everyone:

One amusing incident I remember concerned Mrs Devereux’s billy goat. It used to chase all the kids and we were terrified of him. One day he turned up at school and poked his head through one of the windows. I can still remember the fuss. Mrs Devereux was a tough old lady. She had a daughter, Mabel, who was blind in one eye. Wallace Coulson teased her the way that boys do, and next morning when he saw Mrs Devereux coming with a look of business – he scuttled up the nearest tree. Mrs Devereux stood under the tree and shouted “Go and get the axe from Mr Farrell and I’ll chop the tree down!”²¹

History does not record whether the tree (or Wally) survived unscathed, or whether the experience inspired the young tyke to be more sensitive in future.

The Nungarin School was conducted from the church hall until August 1918 when a new pavilion style school building was erected on the corner of Danberrin Road and Second Avenue. The building measured twenty feet square and cost £300. Marie Farrell noted the general excitement at the prospect:

It was great news when we learned in 1918, that we were to have a new pavilion school, built where the present school is now. It had sliding canvas windows on three sides, which was very handy to see who was going in and out of town along Danberrin Road.²²

Marie (‘Jimmie’) Farrell was among the first students of the Nungarin School, and was probably too young to attend school, but her elder sister Doreen (‘Bonnie’) was going and Jimmie’s attendance helped keep the average attendance figures up. On a few occasions she fell asleep and one of the big boys, either Mick Thick or Ron Creagh, would carry her home.²³

Thomas (‘Mick’) Thick may have been a knight in shining armour as far as Marie Farrell was concerned, but he and Eddie McCorry occupy most of the first page in the Nungarin School Punishment Book issued by the Education Department. The preface to the Punishment Book outlines very strict guidelines regarding corporal punishment:



Nungarin School 1913

Back Row: Les Andrews, Thelma Carlson, Edna Coulson, Lucy Dalton, Eddie McCorry, Miss Muriel Creagh (Teacher)

Second Row: Bonnie Farrell, Mabel Devereux, Lucia Vanzetti, Wally Coulson, Dorothy Brown, Eileen McCorry

Third Row: Stan Coulson, Marie Farrell, Bella McCorry, Fred McCorry

Fourth Row: Bill Vanzetti, Ron Creagh, Reg Devereux

Front: Mick Thick

Regulations re Corporal Punishment

1. Corporal punishment is not to be regarded as a proper aid to teaching.
2. It must not be inflicted for failure or inability to learn, for trivial breaches of school discipline, or for neglect to prepare home lessons.
3. All cases of Corporal Punishment are to be recorded in the Punishment Book at the time the punishment is inflicted.
(Note – this applies to every punishment, even if only one stroke of cane.)
4. Corporal punishment may only be employed for offences against morality, for gross impertinence, or for wilful and persistent disobedience. It should not, as a rule, be inflicted in public.
5. Corporal Punishment may be inflicted by the principal teacher only, or by an assistant teacher under the direction and on the responsibility of the principal teacher.

6. In the absence of the principal teacher the senior assistant is empowered to enforce obedience.
7. Monitors are in no case allowed to resort to Corporal Punishment.
8. The ‘boxing’ of children’s ears is strictly forbidden, as is also the Corporal Punishment of girls twelve years of age and over.

Most infringements noted in the early Nungarin records were listed under the general term “disobedience”, and were punished with between four and eight cuts of the cane. It is salutary to read though the list of offences and the punishments that were dealt out. A little girl received four cuts with the cane for “talking and laughing”, and an eight-year old boy got four of the best for “repeatedly chewing gum”. However, the caning of a group of children for being late for school on several occasions during 1915, was questioned by the school Inspector.

Muriel Creagh was one of those young girls who had only received a short training course to equip them for teaching, and felt the need for more formal qualifications. On 27th July 1917, the *Nungarin-Trayning Mail* carried a report on a social evening which had been held for Miss Creagh who was leaving the district to attend Teachers Training College at Claremont. Muriel was presented with a cheque to assist with her expenses, and her father, Mr R.B. Creagh, responded on her behalf. A few weeks later there was a further article in the same newspaper which stated that a Miss Kruse re-opened the local school at Nungarin on 28th August 1917. Muriel’s training course must have been for six months because the School Punishment book was signed by “C.M. Creagh” from 29th July 1914 right through to the end of June 1917, and then there was a gap until February 1918 when Muriel signed again until 1922. Thereafter the book was signed by M.E. Rogers from 1923 until 1924, no entries for 1925 (perhaps the kids were all little angels for that twelve months, or perhaps Miss Rogers just got sick of entering the transgressions), H.M. Routledge signed during 1926, E.L. Johns and R.P. Evans during 1927, Alex P. Roberts from November 1927, then L.W. Harvey in 1929, H.W. Heseltine in 1931, and from then on most of the pages were simply initialled “H.T.” (Head Teacher).

Most of the offences noted in the punishment book were typical childhood misdemeanours, but it is interesting to compare some of the penalties. Cheating usually earned only one stroke of the cane, while writing with crayon on the walls of the lavatory was deemed to be twice as bad and earned two strokes. Talking in the classroom attracted three strokes, but disobedience only one. The juxtaposition of some entries is almost as good as a short story. One young boy received four strokes on the hand for shooting a ging in the classroom, while on the same occasion another

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boy got equal treatment for continually calling out “shoot!” In the fifties there seemed to have been a conspiracy to upset the bus driver, and the Headmaster was convinced that the parents of the boys concerned were at the bottom of it. His remarks in the punishment book leave no doubt as to where he thought the blame lay.

Poor Eddie McCorry was frequently caned for being late for school, and to add insult to injury his teacher and the source of his misery, Miss Mary Rogers, went and married his elder brother, Dick, so Eddie was stuck with her!

While some children were punished for truancy, Thora ‘Bobby’ Cairns (née Farrell) reported that she attended the Nungarin School for seven years without missing a single day. She explained that her record was not due to exceptionally good health, or to unusual keenness for learning, but because at that time (Bobby was born in February 1920) the teachers were boarders at the Farrell’s place.



Nungarin School 1925

Back Row: Cyril Burns, George Farrell, Basil Burns, Tony Vanzetti, Gladys Coulson, Madge Coumbe, Marjorie Edmonson, Inez Coumbe.

Second Row: Les Devereux, Stan Coulson, Bill Dickinson, Ernie Coulson, Les Thick

Front Row: Jenny Edmonson, Lucy Orchard, Gwen Coulson, Dot Vanzetti, Joyce Coumbe

Sitting: Doug Vanzetti, Max Coumbe

One of the prevailing problems in small schools during the early years was the shortage of equipment and supplies. The furniture was standard issue and usually consisted of the bare essentials: A teacher's table and chair, one cupboard and one blackboard. The early desks were simply long tables with benches that could accommodate about five children at each. The benches had no backs, which made for uncomfortable seating.²⁴ Bert Wynne recalled, "the desks weren't very stable, and if somebody fidgeted in the writing lesson, there was trouble".²⁵

Another common complaint right up until the late twenties was the poor condition of the roads. During the winter months, the School Journal regularly carried reports of absences from school because students weren't able to negotiate the roads, and on several occasions families either didn't have a sulky, or it was damaged and the children had no way of getting to school. On just one occasion in 1926, fifteen children were away because the roads were "in a bad state".

The Agriculture Department often worked with Wheatbelt schools to trial various types of seed wheat, and in 1925, the Merredin State Farm sent samples of *Nabawa* (for April sowing), *Gluyas Early* (May sowing) and *Merredin Early* (May or June sowing) to the Nungarin School. The wheat was treated with copper carbonate, and the School Journal noted that the *Nabawa* wheat was sown with 7 lbs of superphosphate. Unfortunately, the result of the trials was not recorded.

George Farrell remembered when the teacher, Edith Johns,²⁶ caught him and a couple of the other boys smoking some of the cane that had been supplied for school craft. The boys soon discovered quite another use for cane after that. By 1927, forty children were on the roll, and Miss Johns, applied for a monitor to assist. The large class size had been causing difficulties, and there was a report of unsatisfactory standards in most classes. The Department must have been sympathetic since Miss Potts was appointed as monitor the following week (early April). Miss Potts was quickly thrown in at the deep end, because not long afterwards the Head Teacher was transferred and she was left in charge for a month until a relief teacher was appointed. R.P. Evans was teacher-in-charge for two weeks until the end of September when Alex Roberts arrived to finish the year. With four different teachers in almost as many months, I don't suppose the "unsatisfactory" standard of education would have been much improved.²⁷ Whatever the circumstances, it obviously didn't deter Miss Potts from her ambition to teach as she left for Teachers' College at the beginning of 1928. T. Stewart assumed control of the school on 28th March that same year.

As the years moved on the number of pupils had increased, and by 1928 the enrolment had reached forty-nine, and student numbers didn't fall much below forty for the next twenty years. To cope with demand, a new two-roomed school was erected on the present site. The new building was completed at a cost of £900, and the Head Teacher, Angus Stewart, took charge on 3rd December 1928. The following year a schoolhouse was built alongside at a cost of £680, and was home to a succession of head teachers over the next sixty years until 1987 when a new brick schoolhouse was built in First Avenue.

Angus Stewart didn't have much time to luxuriate in his new surroundings as he relinquished control of the school on 10th May 1929, and L.W. (Leo) Harvey took the position until the end of 1930.

On Thursday last an Arbor Tea was given to the school pupils by the Parents and Citizens' Association and the school library was officially opened by Mrs Coumbe, Vice-President of the Association.

The proceedings commenced at 1.30 pm, when a group photograph was taken of the children. The children then proceeded to plant the trees under the direction of Mr Harvey (head-master). There were thirteen trees planted this year, and it is the intention of Mr Harvey to plant more each year until the whole of the school grounds are taken with trees of both artistic and intrinsic worth ...

After tea Mrs Coumbe formally opened the school library, after which the children lined up to choose their books, and the library became an established institution of the school. The sum of five pounds has been expended on the books at present in the library, and Mr Harvey has, with this small sum, procured a wide range of literary works, covering tales for infants, such as 'Alice in Wonderland'; tales of adventure by Herbert Strang, Marryat and Swift. 'Good Wives', by Louisa Alcott [Louisa M. Alcott], which is probably one of the best books for girls ever written is also included in the library, as well as a simplified version of Vervante's [Miguel de Cervantes] 'Don Quixote'. In short, the books that form the nucleus of what it is to be hoped will one day be an extensive library, are a selection of the finest literary works, so simplified as to be interesting and intelligible to school children, and at the same time they are books that can, and probably will be read with equal interest by the parents.²⁸

A Piece of String



Nungarin School 1933

Back Row: John Coumbe, Reg Bairstow, Hedley Daniels, Ted Andrews, Frank Coumbe, Bob Hinge, Jean Hinge, Pat Vanzetti, Rita Green, Elinore Hall, Barbara Hall, Hazel Norman, Betty Coulson.

Middle Row: Mal Herbert, Doug Vanzetti, Les Green, Mervyn Bairstow, Frank Mofflin, Thore Farrell, Evelyn Vanzetti, Inez Coumbe, Roma Norman, Nell Hinge, Lorna Coulson.

Front Row: Bob Herbert, Peter Hubeck, Ken Coulson, Tommy Coumbe, Doris Bairstow, Corinna Vanzetti, Winnie Ball, Ilma Green, Cecily Herbert, Evelyn Waterhouse, Nellie Daniels, Clarice Herbert, Blanche Coumbe, Daniel twins (Peggy and Betty).

Leo Harvey didn't have time to pursue his plans for further tree plantings at the Nungarin School as he was transferred at the end of 1930, and H.W. Heseltine took over the position of Head Teacher on 2nd February 1931. Henry Heseltine was only in charge for twelve months when Morris Marshall was appointed in 1932.

Some of the students who suffered under Mr Marshall claimed that while they got a good education, he ruled the school with a rod of iron, and they were all terrified of him.

One of the subjects given prominence in the curriculum for country schools was Nature Study, because it encouraged exercises in observation, deduction and experiment. School gardens were regarded as an integral part of the subject, and gardening became a popular project at the Nungarin School. In 1933, during Morris Marshall's time as Head Teacher, the school entered the vegetable section in the Nungarin Show for the first time, and Red and Blue factions combined their resources to win first prize for their beetroot, and second for green peas.

Like Eddie McCorry before her, Evelyn Vanzetti felt she was unfairly treated because of a close family connection with her teacher. Evelyn's brother, Reginald Carlo ('Bill'), was courting Daisy Doig, and the girls thought perhaps Daisy didn't want it to appear that she was favouring Bill's sisters, and as a consequence they felt that she gave them a particularly hard time. The Vanzetti children had to walk about one and a half miles to school. They thought it seemed more like five miles, and used to look forward to rainy days as that entitled them to drive to school with the horse and sulky.²⁹

Ilma Sutton (née Green) wrote of the happy memories she had of Nungarin School, and was obviously a good student as she gained a secondary school scholarship to Perth Modern School. Her teachers at Nungarin School were Miss Wanless, Miss Morrow, Mr Marshall (1932-1937) and Mr Neville.

One thing I remember most vividly – I was entranced by the beautiful 'soprano' voice of Wilton 'Ding' Herbert.

One amusing incident that stands out in my memory was a 'Joke and Riddle Day' in about 1934 (our teacher was also a Sunday School teacher). A boy called Terry Taylor had his turn: "There is a tree standing in Northam and it hasn't grown at all in twenty years. What kind of tree is it?" He had already told all our class this very risqué joke, and he was expecting one of us to make a fool of ourselves and tell the answer. No-one was that stupid. The teacher said, "No-one seems to know the answer." Terry was in hysterics and said, "They all know the answer". The teacher said, "They seem to have forgotten – you'd better tell us what it is." He answered, "An oak tree".³⁰ We all laughed out loud at this and Terry was sent back to his seat. The joke and riddle session was terminated – the teacher knew she'd been 'had'.

I think the annual 'Fancy Dress Ball' was probably the best organised in any school – then or now. Mr Marshall took the whole school down to the hall once a week and taught us how to waltz, to do the Canadian Barn Dance, the Veleta and the Lancers. He taught us a quite complicated 'Grand Parade' which was the high moment of the night. One night Alice and Joan Williams went as two lubras and were called Billie and Jackie for evermore. Frank Andrews went as a Capstan Cigarette. His Dad gave him a cigarette to put in his mouth for the parade, and he proceeded to eat it. He just made it to the end before he was violently ill.

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I can't go past these nights without mentioning Sainsbury's Band – a very gifted family.

Sports Day was also a very big day. Schools from all around competed and the smaller schools such as West Nungarin and Burrin Rock had a handicap. Cups were presented for the best Senior Boy and Girl, and for the best Junior Boy and Girl. I can't remember who won all of these, but I do remember how proud we were the year Les won his. Lorraine, although she went to West Nungarin, won everything she went in, and I have the feeling that West Nungarin won the shield that year.³¹

The peppercorn tree at the front gate, the fig tree, the school garden - the kids that travelled miles with their horse and sulkies. The Bairstows travelled seven miles each way. The Norris boys drove their truck into the stand-pipe each morning, filling up the water-tank after school and driving back to Elabbin along the firebreak. I think Bob was only about 9 years old then, and John about seven.



*Sainsbury's Band in the Nungarin Hall
Monty Sainsbury on drums, Ernie Coulson on saxophone, Lionel Sainsbury on piano and
Eddie Matz on violin*

Bush School and Hire Learning



Interschool Sports 1935 – Nungarin scooped the pool!

Les Green is at the back right (holding his trophy for Senior Champion Boy), next to him is the Senior Champion Girl Evelyn Vanzetti, Rhonda Stephens is in the centre with the shield, Carina Vanzetti is on the left holding the cup for Junior Champion Girl and Bob Herbert on the extreme right with the Junior Boy Champion trophy.



In the 1935 Interschool Sports photo, Carina Vanzetti is shown proudly holding the trophy for the Champion Girl under 12 years of age. She won the trophy again in 1936 and 1937, and then moved on to Champion Girl over the age of 12, which she won in 1938 and 1939, ultimately accumulating Interschool Championships in five consecutive years. The whole Vanzetti family excelled at sport, with Douglas winning Senior Champion boy and Pat Junior Champion girl in 1933, and Evelyn winning Senior Champion girl in 1935.



*Twenty-first Anniversary at Nungarin School
Nungarin's first teacher, Mrs C.M. Herbert (née Creagh), and helpers, planting a commemorative tree*

The great excitement of 1935 was the first school broadcast on Friday 24th May. The School Journal recorded, “Owing to the generosity of Mr W. Green it was possible to listen to a broadcast program for school children, the reception was perfect.” Following that inaugural success, there were subsequent occasions when the wonders of radio were indulged in at the school: On February 14th 1936, at 11.00 am, the memorial service for King George V was broadcast from 6NA; and in May 1937, students ‘attended’ the Coronation broadcast service of King George VI.

Dick Roddy marvelled at the advent of “wireless” into his world:

One of the first radios in our vicinity was owned by the McKenna family about a mile to our north. By today's standards it was a monster, measuring about four feet across the front, about a foot and a half high and a similar depth. It had a horn speaker, a series of coils which were changed to accommodate the various frequencies, and seemed to have two states – off – and an ear-piercing loudness when a station was found. However, once tuned in it not only received the few local stations, but had an excellent short wave reception. During the 1934 series of Test matches in England, the McKenna family closely followed the BBC broadcast of each match and two of the school-age children, Shirley and Neville, would memorise the previous night's scores, ready to be waylaid by Dad at our front gate on their way to school, where they would give him practically a ball-by-ball description of the previous day's play. They would outline the batting



Nungarin School

Back Row: Ron Herbert, Hedley Daniels, Bill Andrews, Ted Andrews, Frank Coumbe, Nell Daniels, Jean Hinge, Pat Vanzetti, Kath Andrews, Rita Green, Elinore Hall, Barbara Hall, Hazel Norman, Betty Coulson.

Second Row: Les Green, Doug Vanzetti, Bob Hinge, Mervyn Bairstow, Wilton Herbert, Frank Mofflin, John Coumbe, Peter Hodges, Reg Bairstow, Thora Farrell, Evelyn Vanzetti, Inez Coumbe, Iris Andrews, Nell Hinge, Lorna Coulson.

In Front of Second Row: Dan Hall, Bob Herbert, Peter Hubeck, Ken Coulson.

Front Row: Tom Coumbe, Keith Creagh, Ron Coulson, Bert Waterhouse, Winnie Ball, Doris Bairstow, Ilma Green, Peggy Daniels, Joan Creswell, Carina Vanzetti, Clarice Herbert, Betty Daniels, Evelyn Waterhouse, Cecily Herbert, Winnie Bairstow, Norma Green, Beryl Ivey.

exploits of Bradman, Woodfull, Brown, Ponsford and McCabe, and the bowling figures of Farnes, Hammond, Verity, Leyland and Geary, and if one of them had forgotten some detail, the other would invariably fill in the gaps. But back to the radio. On one occasion when we were with Dad in the 'top paddock', and the wind was in the right direction, we could hear the broadcast of a WAFL game on the ABC from about half a mile away. Good volume.³²

For students of inter-generational tendencies, there would be an interesting study with one particular family that had a record of taking things that did not belong to them. Over a period of several years, a couple of brothers featured quite often in the School Punishment book for “stealing from another child”, “stealing five shillings from an attaché case in the school corridor”, “for being concerned in the theft of money and lying about same”. Not long afterwards, when the new headmaster, Thomas Neville arrived at the beginning of 1938, he discovered that a chest of drawers and the school garden hose had gone missing during the summer school holidays. The hose was

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discovered at the home of the family concerned, and the father made a statement that “he had no intention of stealing the hose” (just looking after it for safe-keeping perhaps). There was no further mention of the chest of drawers.



Interschool Sports 1939 – Nungarin won the Shield

In the front row with their championship trophies: Carina Vanzetti Senior Girl, Bob Herbert Senior Boy, Cecily Herbert Junior Girl

Thomas Neville was only at the school for two years, but gave the children a wonderful introduction to music. No doubt the acquisition of a *Polyphone* radio was a great help in that regard. The P & C also purchased a new “still picture projector”. Louis Young said Mr Neville was different from many teachers of his time because he did not condone the use of the cane, and he always supported the less fortunate children in the school. Cecily Clement (née Herbert) remembered him as “a wonderful man, kind and considerate”, which made a nice contrast to his successor, Stanley Vincent, who arrived in 1940. His pupils remembered him as a man with a most violent temper, “he threw desks, ink, books, seats out the windows into the garden, amongst his other antics. In time we became mostly immune to the dramas and thought it all a bit of a joke”. The students certainly got first hand experience of the variances of human nature.

Mostly my time at Nungarin School was happy. Lunch hour was our time and being a small school we all played together – all of us out of towners or farm kids I suppose. Several families came by horse and sulky, and the horses had to be attended to by the children. There was a great race at the start of the year to get to the horse yard early and so get the best shady trees for their horses.

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Once claimed a spot was for keeps. A few, like us, walked – or rode bikes in later years. So we farm kids gobbled our lunch and out to play. Rounders was a great favourite and the game could go on for days. As the town kids came back from lunch they joined sides in turn. We had a comradeship which has endured through the years, which I suppose is true of all small country schools. I count myself privileged to have attended Nungarin School and know my experiences there, good and bad, have been a wonderful guide through life. Probably the bad years taught me that all things pass eventually. You learnt to just hang on.

Sports Days were a highlight, and how we trained for them. In my early years we had a wonderful man, Mr Dickenson, who always came to our days, local and inter-school, to start the races. He sat on a box with an empty kerosene tin in one hand and a stick of some sort in the other. I can tell you it made a far better starting bang than any starting gun I have heard later. He was later to commit suicide and caused us all a great deal of distress. We never understood the reason or even heard it. Children did not hear those things then, and we were pretty immune to violence of any sort – we were fairly naïve and innocent. How things have changed.

The bush between the toilets and the police station was wonderful, lots of thick scrub and large mallee trees. I wept when that was destroyed – every single twig went.³³

Clarice Herbert (née Herbert) also remembered the fun of games played with the other children during recess and lunch times. She says that their lunches were usually sandwiches with cold mutton, jam or cheese; and were always gobbled down in a hurry to allow more play time. On one hot day she had gulped down her lunch just a bit too quickly, and was ignominiously losing it all under a wattle tree when one of the younger boys, Johnny Norris, strolled past with a sympathetic “Heave it up sister!”³⁴

Stanley Vincent was an English World War One veteran, which may go some way to explaining his rather short fuse. Louis Young recalled that while he did not have much of a sense of humour, he was firm but fair in his approach to discipline, and the cane was re-installed as punishment. Mr Vincent also had fairly serious complaints about the educational standards at the school. Among his concerns were that Class VI were unable to write the alphabet from memory and did not know which letter came next, Class III did not know the Australian states when pointed out, and Class III/IV did not recognise Australia on a map of the world. However, as the world was engulfed

in war, I don't suppose it was long before all the students became more aware of where Australia was, and its place on the world stage. The school became involved in defence activity when the Education Department granted permission for the RSL to use the building for signalling instruction, a War Savings Certificate scheme was initiated by the Head Teacher, and the children organised their own Junior Red Cross Circle.³⁵

Children were encouraged to save money to purchase 'War Bonds' and 'War Savings Certificates'. Each week, you put in a shilling, or whatever you could afford until you had enough for a ten shilling certificate, or a £1 Bond. When you cashed them after the War, you were paid the money back with interest.³⁶

Marion Dunstall (née Young) remembered the Junior Red Cross tuck shops that were held to raise money for the war effort:

The mothers of pupils provided the food for sale. Cakes – little cakes, chocolate cakes, cream cakes, pastries, sandwiches, home made sweets and toffee apples – red apples pierced with a piece of dowel for a holder, and plunged into red-hot toffee. This dried to a glossy lacquer finish.

Our principal at the time kept bees in the grove of wattles that extended from the Danberrin Road entrance almost to the tin shed. He cut blocks of honeycomb that was sold for one penny a piece. Between the honeycomb and the toffee apples we could sup on these sweet offerings as long as our constitution would allow ... Another fund-raising method at this time was the formation of a 'penny chain' along the main street. Our senior girls put in a magnificent effort making felt toys – no shortage of felt with rabbits multiplying by the minute! The girls made elephants, kangaroos, ducks and quite large balls made from interlocking pieces of coloured felt. These were stuffed with scoured fleece wool.

I wonder how many of our former students still have their Junior Red Cross badges?³⁷

As always, the students were alert to opportunities to distract teachers when lessons became tedious:

Some days in class when lessons were boring with Mr Vincent, the lads would shout, "Sir, the bees are swarming!" and 'Vinnie' would dash outside to see if it

were so. He kept several hives under the pepper trees at the front of the school, and on odd occasions they would swarm. This would give us an hour or so's respite while he dashed around with the garden hose trying to make the bees believe it was raining so that the swarm would settle and he could transfer it to a new hive. Actually we learnt a lot about bees at the time and he showed us how to use a smoker and rob hives and extract honey. Some boys became quite adept at this, but I always remained safely at the back of the onlookers.³⁸

Years later, during the seventies, the boys (especially Neil Bennett, Lance Clement & Co) found that they could always use the same method to distract Clarry Roberts by working the conversation around to the subject of cricket. Quite a few minutes could then be expended in discussion of various highlights of the game, and the virtues of particular players. Clarry was an absolute cricket fanatic, and during test matches, the whole class would move into the library in order to follow the game.

Apart from apiary, Stanley Vincent was also a talented musician and played flute and piano very well, so made a great contribution to musical education at the school. Mrs Vincent taught sewing to the girls, which would have been most helpful at the time because the School Journal noted that Miss D. Hitch had twice failed the needlework examination.

Mrs Vincent was a very pleasant lady but she always said how impoverished they were on £250 a year. At that time you could buy a house in Cottesloe for £400, so they were probably much better off than the farmers recovering from the drought. They sold their car because they said they could not afford it but this may have been because with petrol rationing they couldn't use it. I only ever saw him drive the car once anyway. It was a huge, black, hearse-like vehicle, and had the word "Fiat" on the back. This intrigued the schoolboys because we had never heard of such a name for a car.

The Fall of Singapore in February 1942 brought great changes to our school. There was the changed way of life due to the war and the building of the Base Ordnance Depot which brought about a large increase in numbers. In the State generally, many teachers left to go to the War and those remaining were moved around to cover the gaps. Many small schools closed, either because of reduced numbers, or the teachers were needed elsewhere. The Vincents moved to Capel where they stayed for many years.³⁹

Following the departure of Stanley Vincent, Hector Macainsh was appointed as Head Teacher, and had to cope with a variety of difficulties. As construction on the army camp proceeded, the children of construction workers and supervisors were enrolled at the school. Perhaps it was due to this influx of students from all over the state, but 1943 brought several separate waves of sickness and disease. First there was a scarlet fever scare, then chicken pox, followed by influenza and early the next year a couple of instances of scabies.⁴⁰

Apart from the children of the construction workers, there was a group that had been evacuated from the city because of fears of bombing by the enemy, and also students from some of the smaller schools that had been closed either due to a fall in numbers, or because of unavailability of teachers. The arrival of different groups of children from a variety of backgrounds and experience upset the peaceful equilibrium of the school for quite some time.

Being so close to the developing army depot, the school was often affected by activities there. In February 1943 the School Journal noted that “the T.W.D. Inspector agrees that school fences need immediate attention to keep drunken men out of the school grounds”. Louis Young gave his impressions from a young boy’s point of view:

At the Army Camp there was always something new happening and gossip among students recounted the ‘goings-on’ between the soldiers and the A.W.A.S. (Women’s Army Service) of whom there were about eighty in camp. The parade ground of one section of the military was next to the school ground and parades were held at 7.30 am each day. Sometimes it was only roll-call, other times a formal parade with weapons for an hour or so. On some occasions we got to school before ‘Mr Mac’ had a chance to remove the condoms and empty grog bottles from the militia’s activities the night before.⁴¹

With so many children at the school, apparently there was some difficulty in hearing the school bell above the playground noise. The replacement ‘bell’ was a 60 cm track drive sprocket from a General Grant tank. It was painted blue and suspended from one of the rafters on the verandah. Louis Young commented that “when struck with gusto by a twelve-year old boy armed with a hammer, it could be heard all over town”.

Louis Young also remembered the boys at school being intrigued by a mysterious local “Sight”:

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Old Jim Andrews was a Cockney who would have a go at anything – concreting, building, mechanics, road-making – with varying degrees of success. After school he and his boys, ‘Young Jim’ and Frank, would go to the ‘Sight’. The rest of the kids were never asked to join them, nor would they tell us what or where ‘The Sight’ was, so it remained an intriguing mystery. One day some of the newly arrived ‘smart’ boys were larking about their prowess at bike-riding. Not to be outdone, Young Jim said, “I can carry a full 60 lb dunny-pan on the handlebars of my bike flat out down hill and not spill a drop! Bet you can’t do that!” There was stunned silence.

And so we discovered that the mysterious ‘Sight’ was in fact the ‘Sanitary Site’.

Old Jim was employed by the Road Board to go down the back alleys at night and change the pans in the toilets. The boys used to earn their pocket money by helping him empty, clean and put fresh tar on the pans before re-use. Even the effluent from the hotel bars, toilets and bathrooms went into a tank. It was then pumped out and trucked to the ‘Site’. After the War, they cut down an old Scout car and put a 400-gallon tank on the back to do this job. The yardman, one Lepriolo Pachellio, had driving ability commensurate with his knowledge of English, which was extremely limited. To make things worse, the old four-wheel drive system caused the front wheels to go like a Noddy car, and all steering was lost. On several occasions locals were transfixed by the sight of Lepriolo bearing down upon them, shouting incomprehensively and waving both arms as he tried desperately to pump the brakes to bring the monster to a halt without splashing too much effluent on all and sundry!⁴²

Hector Macainsh was not a well man. He came to Nungarin with some family problems, and also had to contend with his own declining health. Although battling cancer, he continued to teach right up to the end, eventually dying in January 1948. His successor was Jim West who arrived with his wife, Muriel, and two children in the month before. Jim had an immediate introduction to community support in Nungarin when he arrived to find a group of Toc H men conducting a busy bee to construct tennis courts for the school. Jim remembered the Army base being a bit “run down” when he arrived in Nungarin, but says it “grew enormously when it became the base for the Malaysian campaign”. At that time almost half of the children at the school were from families associated with the Army camp.

A Piece of String

With the advent of the school bus service, several of the smaller schools were closed and the children bussed to Nungarin School. There were two bus services; one run by Frank Mofflin with his new International bus, and the other run by 'Pop' Dorizzi who was awarded the Mangowine-Nungarin contract that began on 11th February 1946.⁴³ Even with school bus transport, not all students were saved lengthy daily journeys to school. Robin Creagh and his brothers had to ride their bikes four miles to the Mukinbudin Road to meet the school bus.⁴⁴

In 1948 the school was connected to the town power supply. Maurice McLernon got the contract to erect the poles and wiring, but evidently Jim West got a bit impatient with progress. Having been an electronics technician in the Navy, he set to and finished the installation of switches and globes and the school and schoolhouse were soon able to enjoy light and power.

When the Displaced Persons arrived in 1948, there were lots of Europeans (Poles, and people from the Baltic States - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) with little or no English, and so Jim West commenced English classes for them at the school every evening.

By 1949 the school was bursting at the seams, and the original Road Board Office (then used by Toc H as their headquarters) was brought into service as an extra classroom. The following year an extra classroom was added to the school to cope with the increased number of students. In 1952 the power supply was connected to the Merredin grid when a high-tension line came through to the Army Base and the current changed from 220 DC to 240 AC, which was a "wonderful improvement". The public Works Supervisor authorised a new kitchen sink for the schoolhouse, but to the Wests' chagrin, they were given a wooden topped model while the police station-house got a stainless steel one.⁴⁵

Bush School and Hire Learning



Nungarin School 1950

Back Row: Keith Lyons, Les Hodges, Terry Langley, Tim Birkett, Bernard Jolly, Barry Cornish, Winston Norris, Kelvin Novell, Ross Edgley, Barry Carroll, Don Barrett, Bruce Watson, Ron Jeakes, George Lyons.

Front Row: Clarice Creagh, Carol Phipps, Trish Tiller, Shirley Jolly, Anne Jolly, Elaine Novell, Jillian Vanzetti, Margaret Wilkinson, Joan Green, Ruth Hinkley, Jean Young.

In the 1950s, when Barry Cornish was about ten years old, he had such a busy enterprise going that it is a wonder that he had any time for school at all. His first commercial venture was to sell the vegetables that he was growing in the school garden. He was able to offer his customers silverbeet, carrots, peas, cauliflowers, cabbages, lettuce, spring onions or whatever else was in season. He did his rounds as soon he arrived at school on the bus, and took orders from his Grandma Dawe, Mrs Radcliffe, Mrs Waterhouse, Mrs MacLernon, Mrs Bennett, Mrs Pink and Miss Andrews. Later, following on from the success of his vegie business, he added dressed rabbits to his repertoire. As soon as he got off the bus in the afternoon he would check his traps and re-set them. He would then take the rabbits home and skin and clean them and put them in a bucket of salted water overnight. Next morning the rabbits were drained and wrapped in waxed paper and newspaper and popped in his school bag. As soon as he got to school in the morning he could deliver his rabbit orders and also let his customers know what vegies were available. He did try tanning a couple of the rabbit skins, but found it was too much trouble.

There was an art to setting the rabbit traps. It was necessary to stand on the trap to anchor it while you pushed the halves down to set the trap – all the while being careful not to set it off and catch your fingers. The trap was then very carefully placed in a specially formed hollow deep in the entry to the burrow. A square of newspaper was placed over the trap and sand sprinkled lightly over to camouflage it. The placement

of the trap was integral to its success. It had to be far enough down the burrow to stop the rabbits jumping over it, and Barry seemed to think it was important to try and place the traps out of the sun – he explained it was for the rabbit’s comfort and his convenience! Each trap was anchored by a short length of chain that was attached to a spike that had to be hammered into the ground to keep the trap secure. If foxes were around they were capable of taking off with the rabbit and the trap.

Barry picked up a few useful tips from old Charlie Elkins who lived in a camp on the Cornish property. Charlie had a fairly labour intensive method that he advocated to catch rabbits. He used to block up all the exit holes in the warren using old bags and newspapers, just leaving one opening to work from. Using a long stick to ascertain the direction of the burrow, he would proceed to follow the tunnel and dig the whole warren out. He reckoned he got the complete colony that way. Charlie was a very patient man – and very economical with his words. Barry often spent the day with him and picked up some useful and practical hints such as: spit on your hands and rub soap on to prevent blisters forming when working on the shovel or crowbar. He also taught him how to sharpen an axe, and how to cut fence posts. Barry never, ever saw him lose his temper.⁴⁶

When Max Coumbe was President of the Nungarin P & C, they were busily occupied in planning the school bus route for the forthcoming year. Tim Crogan (an ardent Roman Catholic) had stopped at the hotel for a couple of quick drinks, and arrived at the meeting with a bit of a ‘glow’. Max was eager to get to the point, and asked, “How many kids will you have on the bus next year Tim?” Tim looked a bit befuddled, and so Max followed up with, “Just approximately will do Tim.”⁴⁷

At the beginning of 1955, Mr Sands from Northam offered to supply fresh bottled milk three days a week, but for some reason it was deemed that “the present system of Carnation Milk was satisfactory”⁴⁸. Perhaps refrigeration was the problem because in 1958 deliveries of pasteurised milk from Masters Dairy commenced, and on 10th October, “a successful school bazaar raised funds for a new refrigerator” when Merredin power was connected to the S.E.C. grid. On 31st July 1961 milk was delivered in cartons, and the School Journal recorded “a greatly increased number of children now wish to participate”. Kevin Waycott cherished fond memories of drinking the fresh milk through chocolate and strawberry flavoured straws.

Nungarin School Policy 1962

- The first aim of this school will be to develop right conduct in the pupils. Knowledge, training and experience will be the basis of this aim.
- It will be our desire to develop a happy family atmosphere with the teachers.
- The tone of the school should obviate worry and overstrain, and the senior pupils should be led to see how much they can do to lay the foundations of their future happiness by the avoidance of worry and fear complexes.
- The children will be taught to see that if they do the thing they fear, the death of fear is certain; and they will learn that procrastination and other ways of escape can never furnish a satisfactory solution of life's problems.
- The children will learn or will be trained in habits of courtesy and in the need for showing kindness and consideration to others.
- The children are to be encouraged to give their best at all times.
- All children to have a firm grasp of the fundamentals of a sound education.
- To develop a spirit of affection between the local community and the school.
- To develop a high standard of professional etiquette in our relations with teachers from neighbouring towns.
- To maintain and carry out further beautification of the school grounds
 - the introduction of flower gardens, vegetables and experimental plots
 - planting of shrubs for ornamental purposes
- To introduce more equipment to the school so that such can be effectively employed in both group and individual work.
- To make the utmost effort to improve spelling, reading and written expression. The latter will be treated from the basic sentence form.

(this last sentence written in different ink as if it were an afterthought)

Edward Miller's arrival in 1966 heralded a busy twelve months of activity and improvements at the school. The school oval was cleaned and levelled, numerous busy bees were held to tidy the grounds, clean sheds, prune shrubs, tend garden, repair verandah – the list goes on. New desks and chairs arrived in May and electrical contractors completely rewired the school and replaced all the incandescent globes with fluorescent tubes. During the winter the Head Master decided to travel with the bus driver to organise a new bus route and turn-around. Unfortunately, while checking out the new route, the headmaster's car became bogged, so the bus was compelled to use the old turn-around until the gravel had compacted. In September architects visited the school to prepare plans to convert the three existing classrooms into two, and add a third room to the north-east of the building.

A Piece of String

Over almost one hundred years, there have been many teachers and assistants that have contributed to the life of the Nungarin School, and past students will have their own memories of their experiences with members of staff. It would be almost impossible to compile the names of them all, however a list of Head Teachers is as follows:

Name	Arrived	Departed	Position
C.Muriel Creagh	1913	July 1917	Teacher in Charge
Miss Kruse	August 1917	End 1917	Teacher in Charge
C.Muriel Creagh	Beginning 1918	End 1922	Teacher in Charge
Mary Rogers	Beginning 1923	25.2.1925	Teacher in Charge
J. George	25.2.1925	July 1925	Teacher in Charge
Mary Rogers	30.7.1925	30.4.1926	Teacher in Charge
Hilda Routledge	17.5.1926	End 1926	Teacher in Charge
Edith Johns	February 1927	5.8.1927	Teacher in Charge
Miss Potts	5.8.1927	8.9.1927	Monitor in Charge
R.P. Evans	8. 9.1927	30.9.1927	Teacher in Charge
Alex S. Roberts	3.10.1927	Beginning 1928	Teacher in Charge
T. Stewart	28.3.1928	December 1928	Teacher in Charge
Angus Stewart	Beginning 1929	10.5.1929	Head Teacher
Leo Harvey	Mid 1929	End 1930	Head Teacher
Henry Heseltine	2.2.1931	End 1931	Head Teacher
Morris Marshall	Beginning 1932	End 1937	Head Teacher
Thomas Neville	Beginning 1938	End 1939	Head Teacher
Stanley Vincent	Start 1940	End 1942	Head Teacher
Hector Macainsh	Start 1943	End 1947	Head Teacher
Jim West	Start 1948	End 1952	Head Teacher
Richard Trunfull	1953	End 1953	Head Teacher
Francis Tanner	1954	End 1955	Head Teacher
Mr Banks	Beginning 1956	27 July 1956	Relieving Head Master
Maurice Minchin	30.7.1956	End 1958	Head Master
Bernard Hackett	Beginning 1959	End 1961	Head Master
Alan Butcher	Beginning 1962	End 1962	Head Master
Mr E. Read	Beginning 1963	10.3.1963	Relieving Head Master
Alan Butcher	11.3.1963	End 1965	Head Master
Edward Miller	Beginning 1966	End 1967	Head Master
Leonard Walker	1968	End 1968	Head Master
Clarence Roberts	1969	End 1979	Head Master
Phillip Woodhouse	1980	End 1982	Head Master
John Bates	1983	End 1985	Head Master

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John Mason	1986	End 1987	Head Master
Phil Harvey	1988	End 1988	Head Master
Bruce Roper	1989	End 1989	Head Master
Peter Glendinning	1990	End 1992	Head Master
Brett Lewis	1993	July 1994	Head Master
Jenny Doust	July 1994	End 1994	Head Mistress
Peter Watkins	1995	July 1996	Head Master
Geoff Simmonds	Third Term 1996	End 3 rd term	Head Master
Peter Watkins	4 th Term 1996	End 4 th term	Head Master
Graeme Weaver	1997	End 1999	Head Master
David Watkins	2000	End 2004	Head Master
Aaron Chaplin	2005	End 2007	Head Master
Geraldine Lamond	2008	End 2008	Head Mistress
John Vassallo	2009	Current 2010	Head Master

Mangowine School

The Mangowine Progress Association were so keen to get a school established in the area that, at the beginning of 1913, they built a bough shed to serve the purpose, and Alexander Hood was appointed “Head Teacher on probation”. Alec was only eighteen years old and had just completed a six-month training course at Claremont Teachers College. His position at the Mangowine School was his first placement. Not surprisingly, the bough shed school quickly proved to be unsuitable and the school was closed in May.

Alec enrolled for active service in November 1914 and fought at Gallipoli. In July 1916, he was mortally wounded at Pozieres in France and his military record states that he “lay out for two days, was brought in and died at the dressing station”. More Australians died at Pozieres than in any other battlefield and Alec’s Company suffered 467 casualties, including all four Company Commanders.⁴⁹

After the closure of Alec Hood’s bough shed school there was much debate about the most central site for a replacement school. There appears to have been a couple of school buildings at Mangowine, and the details are a bit confusing. In *Around the Rock*, Olga Joukovsky-Vaisvila states that an assisted school was opened on Mr Joe Jolly’s property in 1914, although the ‘assisted school’ category was not gazetted until 1916 to cater for isolated country communities.⁵⁰ With an assisted school, the minimum average attendance requirement was reduced to eight; and while the

Education Department provided books, furniture and equipment, the onus was on parents to supply a building and a teacher, subject to a minimum qualification of a Junior Certificate.

Around the Rock states, that in January 1916 Mr F Williams gave some land for a school, and a portable school building from Trayning was erected at Mangowine. Howard Milne, in his thesis *The History of Nungarin*, describes a school building that was erected on the south-east corner of Avon Location 14084 (property of F. Williams, situated on the corner of Williams Road and Nungarin North Road), and which by 1916 was already suffering from the depredations of ‘white ants’. The building Howard Milne described measured sixteen feet by thirteen and a half feet, and was nine feet high. It had a gable roof, hessian walls, two windows and a fireplace (but no floorboards). The materials were sent up from Perth and a busy bee was held to put it all together, and that school was finally opened in September 1914.⁵¹

Whatever or wherever the school was, in 1914 Mrs Rose Johnson was appointed as the teacher in charge. She had been educated at Edinburgh University of St. Andrews where she had been awarded ‘Lady of Literary Arts’ (L.L.A.), and later had taken up a position as Headmistress of Sheffield Girls School, so was eminently qualified.⁵² Rose and her husband, John Henry (‘Harry’), and their four boys had settled on a farming property in Nungarin the year before, and no doubt they had been anxious for a local school to be established.

Furniture for the school was accessed from North Dorakine school near Wickepin, but within a couple of years termites had attacked the building and the furniture so severely that a second school building from Warding was transported to Mangowine to take its place. As populations fluctuated, it was customary for school buildings to be moved from place to place, and the stability of the fabric probably suffered in the process. In any event, the building did not seem to be too stable because Milne notes that “dust storms took toll of many window panes, tanks and toilets and at one stage children brought their own water to school”.⁵³

In 1922 a portable school was moved from Trayning to the new site, as the number of students on the roll had increased to 23.

Joyce Jones (née Adams) attended Mangowine School during the late 1920s, and remembers quite a few of the teachers: Mr Beau-Leany,⁵⁴ Mr (Bulla) Ayton, Mr Shimmings, Mr Burns, Mr Gardham and Mr Jack Clune. Others known to have taught at Mangowine afterwards are Mr Marshall, Kath Ryan, Patricia Froome (later

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Patricia Williams) and June Young.

In 1934 there was a Mangowine School reunion, which attracted a great number of ex-students and staff.



Mangowine School Reunion 1934

Back Row: Unknown, Ray Jolly, Arthur Jolly, unknown, Bulla Ayton, Ted Williams.

Second Row: Mrs Rose Johnson, unknown, Joan Williams, Frank Jolly, Myra Jolly, Billie Williams, Harold Jolly, Mr Marshall.

Third Row: Elva Adams, Doreen Hocking, Gwen Jolly, Rene Williams, Dulcie Hocking, Joyce Adams, Mavis Jolly, Colin Jolly.

Front Row: Percy Jolly, ? Jolly, ? Hocking, Des Williams, Darrell Adams, John Bradley, Charlie Adams, Harry Williams, Charlie Williams.



For many years the sheer numbers of the Adams, Jolly and Williams families could have sustained a school on their own, and the adventures experienced on the daily commute to school and back could fill a book. Harry Williams recounts stories that encapsulate the sense of freedom and fun they all seemed to have shared, as well as their complete disregard for potential danger:

One of the earliest memories I have is of Eddy Adams taking their horse to higher ground. During a heavy rain he was up to his knees in water and floating the feed bin which was half a forty-four gallon drum in front of him.

One morning I was running late for school. We had to milk the cows, separate, and feed the calves with the separated milk. Sometimes the cows had not come home so we had to get them in. This, at times, made me late for school ... well, this particular morning Adamses were running late too. There was probably about six or seven in the sulky. I heard the bell ringing and they must have too because they were urging the horse faster; when up went a big cloud of dust. When it settled the sulky was on its side and they were scattered all over the road. Some had to be taken to our place to be patched up. What had happened was one of the shafts had broken tipping the sulky over.⁵⁵

Country kids had to be able to handle horses from an early age, and most of the young ones seemed utterly fearless, in spite of some fairly hair-raising experiences.

Charlie Adams was bringing a message from his father to give to Dad. He was riding a horse that used to be able to get the bit between its teeth and then

you could not control it. This day we were trying to get a big mob of sheep through a gate into the home yard. After quite a bit of trouble we had just got them started through the gate when Charlie turned up at a full gallop. He couldn't stop the horse and went straight through the mob scattering them in all directions, knocking some over. He managed to turn the horse into the house fence which was six feet high. The horse slid to an abrupt stop. The saddle's belly band broke and Charlie ended perched on the horse's neck. He couldn't stop himself laughing. We found out later that whenever the horse got out of control they used to turn it into a fence. Sometimes the horse couldn't stop and would go straight through the fence.⁵⁶

Of course, with the distance that some of the children had to travel to school, there was plenty of potential for fun and games on the way, and plenty of time to think. Neville Adams outlines some lateral thinking with regard to time-keeping and measurement:

When going to school at Mangowine, we used to have to travel about six kilometres. We would make the journey either on a horse and cart or by foot. The school itself only had one room to it. In those we had no fridge, no ice chest, no TV, no radio (wireless, as they used to call it) and no clock. So the only way we could tell what time it was, was by 'shadow sticks'. We had about four of these sticks placed at various intervals along the way to school. These worked by how high the sun was in the sky. If the sun was low, the shadow would extend further past the stick, if the sun was high the shadow would be shorter. Therefore telling us, that if there was a longer shadow we were early, or a shorter shadow, we were late. Although this would vary from summer to winter – it was quite accurate on a day to day basis.

This theory made me think of measuring the height of trees. To measure the height of a tree or power pole or anything else that is high off the ground, and without climbing up or cutting anything down – you must drive a peg into the ground and set it at a particular height (say for instance 6 ft). Then measure its shadow, and say for instance the shadow of the peg is 3 ft, this means the tree or pole alongside the peg must have the same sized shadow in proportion. (i.e. 6 ft peg, 3 ft shadow, so 15 ft shadow, 30 ft tree). Whatever the shadow is to the peg, whether it be double or treble or whatever, the tree or pole must be the same in comparison.⁵⁷

Among the advantages and disadvantages of going to a country school was the likelihood of having the schoolteacher living with your family.

A teacher was staying with us and getting ready for the school sports. He was sitting at the table taking the lead out of the bullets and filling them with wadding. He would use these as a starter gun. Mum kept hovering around trying to clean up her kitchen table. I was sitting by the fire keeping warm after a shower. When he finally finished, Mum scooped up all the rubbish and threw it in the fire. The next thing – BOOM – ash and dust flew around the room. What a mess! The casing hit me in the head, knocking me off the chair onto the floor. They thought I was dead. I still have the scar as proof.

One particular lady teacher took a liking to Ted, and after a dance in town she made sure she sat next to him in the front seat. Ted always smoked and rolled his own. As they were going along she mentioned that she could smell feathers burning. Ted looked down to see his pants smouldering. There was an almighty roar and Ted leapt up hitting his head on the top of the car as he tried to put out his pants.

The teacher used to stay at our place because it was only about a quarter of a mile from the school, and would walk home for lunch each day. Quite a few things happened during that hour. When it was cold and miserable the teacher let us have lunch in the school by the potbelly stove. One dinnertime we were sitting on a long desk against the wall and everybody was trying to get as close to the stove as possible. It was very cold and the ones at the end furthest away started to push along. Those nearest the stove were trying to hold their place. Vonnie [Yvonne Adams] was in the middle. Being the smallest, she popped out and went through the asbestos wall. We spent the rest of the time thinking up a story to tell the teacher.

One day the older boys must have been a bit upset at something the teacher had made them do so they decided to get their own back on him. While he was away at lunch they dug a hole just where he always climbed through the fence. They took some broom-bush off the shed to cover the hole, then some paper and covered it with dirt (like setting a rabbit trap). We were kicking the football around when he came along, but for once he climbed through the fence at a different spot. One of the boys kicked the ball right over the hole and called to the teacher to mark it. Just as he went into the air to mark the ball one foot

*went into the hole and he came down hard. Looking back now he could easily have broken something.*⁵⁸

Joyce Jones (née Adams) remembers a story that may or may not be related to Harry Williams's narrative:

*A very painful thing happened to Mr Shimmings. One day returning from Mr Fred Williams's home after lunch-time he was carrying some books and papers in his hands and jumped over a low fence near the bush shed, tripped, fell and broke his arm. Well, being school children all we thought about was the half holiday we got, while poor Mr Shimmings was taken to Kununoppin to have his arm set.*⁵⁹

The most interesting and enjoyable part of the school day was during recess and lunch time when sport and games could be indulged in, and pity help anyone (like poor Yvonne Adams), who got in the way:

We used to play hockey, the sticks that we used were cut from trees, you had to find a branch that had a sharp bend for the head, there was no limit to size and there did not seem to be too many rules. There were some real rippers. Charlie Adams had a real beauty. It had a curl at the bottom. The ball would fit into it and he could send it into the air like a rocket. Everybody got out of the way when he went to hit the ball. One particular day Yvonne Adams did not see him get the ball and was hit in the head. She was knocked out. The teacher took the ball and locked it away for a week. We all blamed Yvonne for getting in the way.

At times there was a battle of the sexes. I don't know what started it but it grew into a battle royal. If I remember correctly the girls had the edge on the boys. It went from throwing clods out of the garden to rocks that had been around the garden for borders. The front line used dustbin lids as shields and at one stage the boys were driven into the toilet.

Towards the end of lunch hour Ernie Hocking, who had been home for lunch, did not have any idea what had been going on. As he walked around the tank that was on the corner of the school, one of the girls threw a rock (I think it was Elva Adams) and hit Ernie on the head. The rock bounced off and put a hole in the tank. It did a fair bit of damage to Ernie, but we were more concerned

A Piece of String

about the hole in the tank. Rainwater was precious and we had to try and block the hole before the teacher got back from lunch.

One lunchtime a poor unsuspecting racehorse goanna strayed into the schoolyard. We gave chase and it found a hole to go down. Unfortunately for the goanna, the hole was a bit small and Darrel [Adams] being the fastest runner was right there. He grabbed it by the tail and pulled it out, which took some doing. When it did come out it tried to claw him so he had to swing it around to keep it away. Talk about having a tiger by the tail! After a time with us all standing around giving him moral support, Darrel was starting to get dizzy and yelled he was going to let go. We misjudged how far he could throw it. It ended up right amongst us. I can tell you it was one peeved goanna. It attached itself to Yvonne's dress and she took off yelling blue murder, with everyone in hot pursuit. We weren't in the hunt to catch her. Before long her dress ripped and the goanna took off across the paddock.

There was a sort of club at school and you weren't classed as one of the bigger boys until you could get up between the ceiling and the roof of the school. We all looked for the day when we could do it. You had to work your way up between the tank and the school building, then you had to reach out and grab a rafter. The roof was built with an overhang. When you grabbed it you had to swing yourself across onto the ceiling. The ceiling was not flat – it went up at the same angle with the roof as I remember it. Once up there you could read all the graffiti that boys had wrote before. Now the school was at Mangowine for nearly thirty years and I think that this had been going on for a long time. I only wish I could remember what was written. I suppose by today's standards it was probably tame. I know I had my eyes opened and I probably learnt a lot from those writings. The people who bought the school must have had a good laugh.⁶⁰

One teacher, Mr Gardham, always smoked a pipe – even in the shower. Ted used to say that when he got under the shower he turned his pipe upside down to stop it getting wet.⁶¹

The same pipe-smoking Mr Gardham encouraged the children to cultivate a school garden, but he reckoned without sibling interference:

Mr Gardham had us all growing vegetables and I remember picking the middle

out of a nice lettuce my brother Eddy was growing in his garden. Eddy was so upset, he told Mr Gardham. I was given a big lecture and kept after school.⁶²

Yvonne Adams: Sir, I smelt a fox on the way to school today.

Teacher: Really, it hasn't arrived here yet!

Teachers in charge of bush schools must have been hardy folk with nerves of steel to cope with the trying conditions and the boisterous antics thought up by their pupils.

On a Friday afternoon the teacher would read part of a book to us. This particular day it was very hot with hardly a breeze. To try and get cooler he sat on the window-sill leaning out. He was holding the cord that was used to open the top part of the window in one hand and the book in the other. Well, the cord broke and he disappeared. It was quite a drop, the window was fairly high and the school was built up on high stumps. There was a garden along the side with stones placed around it for a border. It is a wonder he was not badly hurt. Anyway he gave us the afternoon off.

There were older boys that were nearly as big as the teacher and at times they stretched the teacher's patience to the limit. One day at lunch-time a snake was foolish enough to come into the school yard and promptly got killed. The bigger boys decided to play a joke on the teacher. There were several steps going into the schoolhouse so they propped the snake with its head on a forked stick just above the second step. They put a rake handy to the steps so the teacher could get it easily. Well, it all worked like a charm. The teacher saw the snake just as he was about to put his foot on the first step. Looking around for something to hit it with, he took hold of the rake, swung to hit the snake and promptly broke the handle. The snake fell off the stick and the teacher could see it was a put up job. We all got into trouble because we would not say who had done it, although the teacher had a fair idea.

We had a plague of grasshoppers. Pat Froome was our teacher at the time and she hated them getting into the classroom. Gill Williams and I used to fill our pockets with them and let them go a few at a time. Pat used to get all of us to hunt them down and take them outside. She thought it a bit strange with so many coming in and one day she caught us letting them go. We got extra work

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for our rouble. We were a bit peeved, so we came up with the idea of filling some empty jars with hoppers and blocking them up against some drainage holes that were in the floor. We put the jars under while Pat went back to our place for lunch. That afternoon when the hoppers started to get through the holes, Pat made Gill and I come out and empty out our pockets. Of course they were empty, and she never did find out how the hoppers got in.

In March 1943, during Pat Froome's tenure, the school was temporarily closed because student numbers had dwindled. It opened again in February 1944, but closed permanently at the end of that year. Students from the Mangowine area caught the new school bus service and travelled to Nungarin School.



Young folk from Mangowine on Williams's truck

West Nungarin School

There was a set process that rural communities had to follow in order to have a school established in their area. Once the necessity for a school was discerned, the community had to elect a spokesperson to fill in the forms and negotiate with the Education Department on their behalf. The official form, known as an 'M2', required information on the proposed site, availability of land, accessibility of a suitable building, capability of the community to pay any necessary rent, availability and cost of suitable accommodation for the teacher, arrangements for the provision of a sanitary system, and most vital of all, the number of children aged between six years and fourteen who would be living within the prescribed radius of three miles from the proposed school.

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The type of school that could be established depended on the expected reliability of attendance. If sufficient future student numbers could be assured, the Education Department supplied a 'classified' school and accepted the entire responsibility for the provision of staff and a permanent building. If the required minimum could not be guaranteed, the only type of school that could be offered was a 'provisional school' (later called an 'assisted' school), whereby the community had to secure an approved teacher and provide a suitable building.⁶³

In West Nungarin, Frank Dawe took on the responsibility of liaising with the Department:

In the early days my father battled tirelessly to have a school established in our area. He spent many hours corresponding with the Education Department and after very many months and piles of correspondence, West Nungarin School was opened in 1921 and my brother, Norman, and I were enrolled with sixteen or eighteen other pupils.

The tiny weatherboard building had an iron roof, and a window on each of the south and north sides, with the only door leading to a narrow verandah. There was an open fireplace which was well used in the winter. In winter, teachers would allow us to toast our sandwiches on the coals. Summertime was very trying.⁶⁴

Land was excised from Avon Location 11125 belonging to Frank Dawe and a standard portable school room was erected in the north-west corner of the block. A 'Standard Portable School' was a timber-framed building measuring 18 ft x 14 ft, with weatherboard exterior and a corrugated iron roof. The schools were on wooden stumps and had a high pitched roof, a metal fireplace, two long sash windows (set high enough in the wall to prevent students from looking out and becoming distracted), a 6 ft verandah, and pan-type toilets located a good distance away from the building. Specifications for school buildings were exacting. Minimum standards required that there should be eleven square feet of floor space for each child, and as well as the windows being located high in the wall, it was also decreed that they should be on the left side of the building⁶⁵, presumably so that the main source of light should favour students who used their right hands.

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The Opening of the West Nungarin School 1921

Three men at Back: Mr A.E. Brown, (unknown), Mr W. Hodges.

Back Row: Mr H.G. Payne, S.J. Dawe, Mrs Eileen Herbert, Mrs Benson, (unknown man at back), Mrs Elizabeth Dawe, Mrs Olive Payne, (unknown lady), Mrs Trixie Middleton and child, Mrs Christina Hodges, Miss Phyllis Hargreaves, (unknown lady and child), Mrs Ellen Dawe, (unknown lady at back), Mrs A.E. Brown, Miss Val Dugdale, Miss Winifred Field, Miss Muriel Creagh with child, Boys Seated: Gordon Young, Trevor Dawe, Norman Dawe, Stan Payne, Jim Young, Mac Hargreave, Les Middleton, Jack Hodges, Reg Payne.

Front Row: Charlie Young? (boy with dog), Eric Payne, Jean Hargreave, Harry Payne with his sister Dorothy, Freda Hodges with big sister Margaret ('Peggy'), Renee Brown, Phyllis Dawe, Freda Young, Bill Hodges.

The first schoolteacher was Miss Winifred Field who boarded with the Dawe family:

Our first teacher was Miss Winifred Field – I think fresh from Teachers' Training College. We all thought she was lovely! Our first real teacher. She boarded with Mum and Dad so Norman and I, Reg, Dot, Stan Eric (and later Harry) Payne all started on the task of learning.

Several teachers boarded with us over the years, so their transport was similar to ours. It must have been difficult for my Mum to keep things nice for the teacher, and to look after three young ones and often a working man to help Dad. There were no aids with housework and the house was made from galvanised

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iron sheets over bush timber, with hessian lining and an earth floor covered with a black material called 'rubberoid'. After a while the flooring developed all sorts of lumps and bumps. Those galvanised iron houses were unbelievably hot in summer, and dust was always a curse. There was no running water, only water that ran off the roof and was collected in a tank. Our homes were cold in winter, but weatherproof and many happy evenings were spent in front of the open fire with lovely glowing mallee roots.

The school was approximately two miles from our home (on a portion of Dad's land) and we walked to and from daily, except when we had rain and then Dad would come for us in the spring cart. I can see him now, standing in the cart in real rain, his black oilskin coat and old felt hat dripping wet. There were waterproof coats and sheets for us, and off we'd go for home where my Mum would have hot cocoa and a pile of freshly cooked 'Johnny cakes'. Our 'Johnnys' were scones fried in a small amount of butter and eaten with jam, honey or golden syrup. We thought they were yummy.

My brother Trev's later enrolment was rather unusual. Our Dad was fencing near the school, and Trev (born September 1918), in 'farm togs', was with him. At playtime Trev joined the other children and as it was near holiday and break-up time, the teacher asked him if he'd like to stay. He certainly would – and did! Later Mum asked here he'd been and he said, "I been to school, and I'm going again tomorrow." So his schooldays began.⁶⁶

Howard Milne recorded that rabbits caused quite a problem at the school.

A warren had formed under the building, and the playground was honeycombed with burrows. When summer came and water became scarce the rabbits died off in dozens, either in their burrows or other inaccessible places. Disinfectant was liberally spread beneath the school but with little effect. To solve the problem the floorboards had to be removed, the warren eradicated and chicken wire, buried to a depth of six inches, had to be placed round the school.⁶⁷

Following Winifred Field, the next teacher was Henrietta Shiner (1924-26), and then Teresa Goodridge, who later took holy orders and became a Catholic nun known as Sister Roberta. Florence Fitzpatrick served during 1929, and Lora McNamara in 1930, followed by Elizabeth ('Betty') Sparks in 1931-32.

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Betty Sparks I remember well. She once caned the whole school's pupils because no-one would own up to the rubbish left on the school verandah. The culprit ended up being a 'little bird' which had enjoyed the lunch scraps out of the rubbish bin.

Charlie Muhs had a huge kangaroo which often visited the class room. One day it came in and reared up on its huge tail and scared all the children. Betty Sparks took off and locked herself in the girls' toilet.

Charlie was a very big, solid lad ... one day he certainly rubbed Betty Sparks up the wrong way and 'sparks did fly'. Charlie was called out to the front of the class, hand out for the cuts. As Miss Sparks raised the cane and brought it down, Charlie lifted his boot – the cane flew into several pieces. Very embarrassing – Betty Sparks once again dashed from the classroom and took sanctuary in the girls' toilet. Poor Miss Sparks.

There was always great excitement amongst the children when Miss Betty Sparks' 'Romeo', a Mr Wally Bodey, rode his horse from their farm to pay her a visit. He always tied his horse at the gate. Miss Sparks would always be much more tolerable after his visit. Says a lot for love.

During the 1930s, I can't remember exactly what year, but while at the West Nungarin School my brother, Alfred, and another young lad named Bobby Baird of Nungarin both got diphtheria. They had to be taken to the Northam District Hospital ... It was terrible windy weather and heavy rain. It was a very worrying time, but they both fully recovered.⁶⁸

Keith and Robin Creagh would be driven three miles to the railway line from where they were picked up by Joyce and Phyllis Dayman in their horse and sulky and taken the remaining two and a half miles to the school. Children living further than walking distance of the school usually came by horse and sulky which provided wonderful opportunities for races and other hi-jinks. Keith Creagh remembers Thelma and Alf Murray who often threw their sister Grace off the back of the buggy for the sheer fun of it! Sometimes the younger children were allowed to finish school earlier than the older pupils, and would retire to harness the horses for the trip home, thereby lending plenty of scope for mischief, and sometimes older students arrived at the horse yard to find horse and sulky on opposite sides of the fence.

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West Nungarin School c1930

Back Row: Freda Hodges, Trevor Dawe, Malcolm Herbert, Harry Payne, Charlie Muhs.

Middle Row: Ron Herbert, Joyce Haig, Lorraine Philbey, Peter Hodges, Ruth Herbert, Thelma Murray.

Front Row: Alan Herbert, Grace Murray, Alf Murray, Lois Payne, Ron Dayman.

As the years passed, people moved away – children grew to leaving age and at one stage ten pupils were left and attendance for the year had to be 100% or the school would close. That little school remained until the end of 1936. I attended to eighth standard – the last couple of years on teacher supervised correspondence lessons as, if I remember correctly, sixth standard was the limit for the teaching staff.⁶⁹

Gordon Armstrong was the last teacher appointed to West Nungarin School. Gordon was only eighteen years old when he arrived. His mother came with him and they lived in First Avenue in Nungarin, and Gordon used to ride his pushbike out to West Nungarin to school each day. Keith Creagh remembers him having his own methods of discipline. When the students made a mistake in their spelling or tables, he would send them out into the bush to bring back a switch to be thumped with.

The West Nungarin School was closed in December 1936, and the building was transported to Knungajin. Keith Creagh then drove a horse and sulky to the Nungarin School. His sulky was made from the back section of a Chev 4 car, and the shafts from an old sulky. It had a pair of rubber 'Essex' tyres and when all painted up, Keith thought it was "the best sulky in the district".

Knungajin School

As the farms around Knungajin recovered from the Depression, the area began to develop again, and by 1937 there was the need for a local school. Mr George Williams donated five acres of land from Avon Location 14199 on the corner of Cornish Road and Knungajin East Road, and a school building was transported from West Nungarin. The first teacher appointed was Miss Eileen Craig, the daughter of the Nungarin Postmaster.

My later father, Frank Craig, was Postmaster from 1934 until 1946. My parents and two sisters lived in the Anglican rectory, as then there was no Post Office residence and no resident rector. In 1937 I went to the Knungajin School as the first teacher ... I left there in August 1939 to get married. For some of my time at Knungajin I lived with the Stantons – Ken [Stanton] being then a six-year old pupil.⁷⁰

The children were a joy – I loved every one of them. None had been to a school before except Frank Williams, who, I think had been to Scotch College. They were so natural in as much as if anyone knocked on the door they all came to the door with me. If a vehicle drove past they all stood to see who it was. I made curtains for the windows – I guess they didn't appreciate that. In those days what is now Phys. Ed. Was 'Drill'. When I introduced that they were surprised because the drill they knew was a piece of farm machinery. The women they knew were addressed by Christian names or 'Mrs', so I had to tell them to call me 'Miss Craig', not 'Mrs Craig'. I remember one little boy saying, "You call a person 'Miss' when she is a lady". I felt flattered.⁷¹

In his thesis, *A History of Nungarin*, Howard Milne commented on the dilapidated state of the Knungajin school building:

The children must have suffered as there were holes in the floorboards, gaps in the walls, desks were in dire need of repair, toilets were in an unsatisfactory

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Knungajin School – 1937

*Back Row: Mary Dayman, Ernie Woods, Ron Dayman
Front Row: Megan Williams, Ken Stanton, Elaine Flood,
Miss Eileen Craig, John Flood, Bill Woodbridge, Nellie
Woodbridge, Frank Williams, Malcolm (Mick) Dayman.*

state, windows were missing and the door would not lock.⁷²

Eileen Kinsella (née Craig) explained:

I was the only applicant for Knungajin. The holes in the walls and the floor must have come later. One weekend someone forced the door with the school axe and stole our first-aid box – hence the door that never locked properly.

Regarding the desks – they were far from modern and there was one we did not need. I wrote to the Department and asked if I could rail it somewhere. The answer was, “Store it”. So it stayed outside and my thoughts were that some day someone might find some iron buried there.⁷³

Mary Dayman remembers how they practised their running for the interschool sports by sprinting along the road, how they grew a vegetable garden during the winter, and how they made soup on the open fire. She also recalls how they learnt to dance with a gramophone set up on the school verandah, and how they enjoyed nature study walks in the bush around Knungajin Rock.

At that time, Con Flood was in charge of the water supply installation at Knungajin, and when the Stantons left the district, the school teacher boarded with the Flood family. After Eileen Craig left to get married in August 1939,



Knungajin School at Interschool Sports Nungarin 1938

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Kathleen Powers took over to finish the year. Pat Froome was appointed to the school in January 1940 and served two years, finishing in December 1941 when the school closed because of lack of numbers. It reopened temporarily in July 1942, with Doris Lloyd in charge, but closed permanently in October 1943.

The school building was later purchased by Mr George Williams for use as a shearing shed.

Other Schools

There have been at least a dozen different schools operating in the Nungarin district at various times, but most were only of a temporary nature. Some schools such as Narkeening (at the corner of le Vaux Road and Knungajin Road), and Neening were only open for twelve months. At the end of 1943, there were ten children in the Neening area who were of school age and who had to travel a considerable distance to school every day. Correspondence between the Education Department and settlers in the Neening area began in November 1943 and Mr R.C. Fitzpatrick offered two acres of land in the south-east corner of his property at Avon Location 11101. At first it was proposed to move the Knungajin school building to the site, however on inspection it was found to be in poor condition and not suitable. The next plan was to utilise an abandoned three-bedroom house that was only about half a mile away and belonged to the Agricultural Bank. Unfortunately, a Mr Roper was leasing the land and running cattle on it – the parents were afraid to allow their children on the property because of a large bull that was a part of the herd. In the end a school building from Bungulla was moved by the parents to the proposed site, and the Neening school finally opened on 25th October 1944 with Miss Vivienne Ralphs as teacher. It was an assisted school, which meant that the parents were responsible for supplying both the building and suitable staff. As was usual, with a fluctuating population at that time, attendance could not be sustained and 1945 opened with just five students on the roll (Margaret and Leon Beurteaux, Thelma and Laurie Pink, and Beryl Norris). Vivienne Ralphs resigned on 24th August 1945: the school building was sold to R.C. Fitzpatrick, and the land reverted to him.

The school at Talgomine (1940, with Miss Jean Shaw) was also short-lived, and was never actually considered to be an official school. Champion School had an interesting beginning when the school building was inadvertently placed on the incorrect site (Lot 51 on Reserve 21885, instead of Lot 52). It was reclassified from an Assisted School to a Government School in July 1939, with Miss Seaton as the temporary teacher.

During the heyday of mining operations at Chandler, there were as many as 38 children on the school roll, but as the mining activities closed down, the student numbers dropped accordingly, until the school died along with the Chandler township in September 1953.

The Wokalbin School was open for less than five years in total, and served families in the Lake Brown area north-east of Nungarin. During the early nineteen twenties, there was active soldier settlement development in the area, and by 1925 the increased population resulted in the need for a local school. During the formal application process, the following families were listed, along with the number of children in each: Dixon (1 child), Hanstead (4), Hughes (5), Karrigan (2), Lenfoot (2), H. Scadden (2) and J. Scadden (1).⁷⁴ Having fulfilled the criteria for the number of children necessary to open a school, the question of a school building was satisfied when a disused school room was relocated from Calingiri. Miss W. Weston was appointed as teacher and the school opened near the Wokalbin Dam on 3rd August 1927, under its original title 'Government School Lake Brown'⁷⁵ (by December 1928, it was being referred to as the Wokalbin Government School). Because of difficulty organizing appropriate accommodation for the teacher, the school was closed for eighteen months between April 1928 and the beginning of 1930.

Eunice Bedwell was appointed as the teacher when the school reopened on 3rd February 1930, and she immediately reported to the Education Department on the poor condition of the school building that had suffered from neglect during the time it had been vacant. Eunice wrote an account of her experiences at Wokalbin and an unexpected visit from the Governor (1930):

When the winter rains came, overnight the schoolyard became a quagmire of heavy red mud which was tramped inside on the children's feet in liberal quantities. Following a wet night, I lit the pot-belly stove in the corner of the room. From a wire attached to the window and a hook on the blackboard, I hung wet socks and coats and arranged shoes to dry out, carefully avoiding the pool of water where the rain had beaten in through chinks in the wall.

This was the day on which the Governor, His Excellency Sir William Campion, had chosen to visit the siding some ten miles distant which bore his name. I wonder what he thought as he beheld the two nondescript buildings, a small general store and an even smaller agent's building with the usual sheds at the back.

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The Governor was met by the President of the local RSL and regaled with a sumptuous lunch at one of the farms. Those farm ladies were marvellous cooks and on most farm holdings eggs and cream were in abundant supply. This was followed by a guided tour of the district, where the newly cultivated fields showed touches of early green crops on the rich red soil.

I had just rung the bell and shepherded my lovely, scruffy kids back into the school room when I beheld two cars pulling up at the gate. I'd had no warning of the impending visit so these VIPs arrived unheralded and unsung and I watched in horror as they gingerly picked their way through that rough, muddy terrain to our door and thence into that scene of steaming socks, coats and smelly shoes in glorious disarray. Almost benumbed by my surrounding chaos, I hastily collected my few remaining wits as my guests were introduced and I offered the only chair to Lady Campion, which she graciously declined.

The lovely address prepared and delivered by His Excellency went completely over the children's heads as it was their first encounter with the 'Oxford accent'. He finished by asking me if the children could sing the National Anthem for him. Replying in the affirmative I signalled my flock who rose to their muddy bare feet. I struck the tuning fork a resounding blow on the table, and we sang down the scale to ensure we'd all start at the right pitch. His Excellency interrupted to say, "But that isn't the National Anthem!" In the simple terms I used to instruct my pupils I explained the purpose of this exercise. "What a good idea!" he exclaimed with a beaming smile, apparently quite impressed with what he must have assumed to be my own original idea.

The kids really could sing nicely and I was pleased with the gusto with which they rendered that ponderous tune. Sir William then asked the children to put up their hands if they'd like an extra holiday. Absolutely dumbfounded by their lack of response he asked why they were so reluctant to have an extra day off from school. Their replies shattered any belief that it was the teacher's popularity which made them so averse to partaking of this treat.

"We've got to pick roots!"

"We've got to pick stones!"

"We've got to do the ironing!"

"I've got to mind my brothers!" were some of the enlightening responses.

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Taking pity on the poor man I said, “Your Excellency, I too work hard here in these luxurious conditions, and I would certainly appreciate a holiday!” Grateful for having extricated him from his predicament he told me to take a holiday anytime I liked. Actually, we spent it at school and had a picnic and nature study ramble in the nearby bush.

With more rain threatening, the vice-regal party departed, but as indelibly etched in my memory as when it all happened nearly sixty years ago is the picture of Lady Champion delicately extricating her heels from that sticky quagmire, and the sight of that awful red mud adorning the cuffs of His Excellency’s strides.⁷⁶

Dwindling student numbers forced the school to close again in September 1932, but after assurances that the minimum required attendance could be maintained, it re-opened in time for the school year at the beginning of 1933, with Miss Mona Hornsby as the teacher in charge.

On 27th April 1934 the teacher at the time, Mr Norman Seymour, was transferred and the school was finally closed. A few months later, the stock and furniture were moved to the newly opened school at Lake Brown.

She went out from school with the uncomfortable sense of being a square peg, which fitted into none of the round holes of her world; the wisdom she had got, the experience she was richer by, had, in the process of equipping her for life, merely seemed to disclose her unfitness. She could not then know that, even for the squarest peg, the right hole may ultimately be found; seeming unfitness prove to be only another aspect of a peculiar and special fitness.

Henry Handel Richardson, *The Getting of Wisdom*, 1910.

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The Games We Play

Sport in Nungarin

Throughout Nungarin's history, sport has probably been one of the most important factors in building community. As families settled in their new district, they began to form bonds as they met together at wells and waterholes, but it was not until they came together as members of sporting teams that they began to identify as a proud and united group under the banner of 'Nungarin'.

As early as 1912, the Nungarin Athletic Club were planning their first sports meeting, a "Sheffield Handicap of £5"¹ being one of the main events on the program. Enquiries were to be directed to the Secretary, R.J.G. Reid. The Nungarin Race Club was formed in 1913, under the rules of the Western Australian Turf Club and Con McCorry made land available for the races. Later a trotting track was established at the Greater Sports Ground, south of the present shire hall. Over the years a small but enthusiastic group maintained an interest in training and racing trotters, with regular events being held at the annual agricultural show. The 1918 Boxing Day Sports in Nungarin featured three open trotting events on the program.



Trotting in Nungarin
(Photo courtesy of Muriel Waterhouse)

The Games We Play

The early progress associations fostered team spirit and one of the first things that the Talgomine Progress Association did was to erect a bough shed for meetings, and for a shelter during cricket matches. Dot Hodges (née Hinge) remembered folk playing cricket at Danberrin, they would “get together and play a game and make a picnic day of it ... they used to go to different homes at night time for a sing-song around a piano, mainly at Jack Dugdale’s or Hodge’s place.”² Dot was a beautiful ballroom dancer and a keen sportswoman. She excelled at lawn bowls, and won many championships over the years as well as playing the game at state level.



The Hinge Family

From Left: Fred Hinge in uniform, Bill, Dot, Nell, Jean, Bob and Alice

Bowls

The first rinks for lawn bowls in Nungarin were constructed by the Army in 1949-50 as part of the base ordnance depot facilities. The initiative came from Warrant Officer Hurst who, in discussion with others, decided that the cement-hard ground needed to be ‘softened up’ to provide a suitable base for the greens. Bob Herbert was co-opted to condition the ground by driving round and round with a Sun-General plough towed behind a Field Marshall tractor.

A Piece of String



Herbert's Field Marshall tractor in less happy times!

Office bearers for the newly formed club were all military personnel, with civilian members (male and female!) listed as "Associates". Games were played on Wednesday and Sunday evenings with one rink reserved for the ladies. The club was affiliated with the West Australian Bowling Association

in 1952, and the following year the club entered the Eastern Districts Pennant Competition.

Following the withdrawal of the Army in 1961, Major Meadows handed over all assets of the Bowling Club to the Nungarin Club committee. The first annual meeting of the Nungarin Bowling Club was held on July 17th 1961, with the following office bearers being elected: Mr L. Hoare (President), Mr R.L. Herbert (Vice-President), Mr J.L. Hodges (Secretary), Mr B. Hackett (Treasurer) and Mr S.B. Harper (Captain). In 1962 the club purchased the land and buildings from the Department of the Interior for £1114.12.6 and the Club was granted a liquor licence.



*Nungarin Bowling Club 1981
(The old 5BOD Sergeants' Mess)*

The Games We Play

From 1975, the men have played in the North Eastern League, while the women have always been affiliated with the Eastern League. Between 1976 and 1982, the Women's Team won the pennant competition six years in a row.

The local ladies bowling pennant team was once again successful in winning the Eastern Districts Ladies Bowling League Pennants and the R and I Bank Rose Bowl award for the sixth consecutive year.

The final pennant game was played in town on Saint Patrick's Day, between the local team and Civic Maroon. In this final, Nungarin recorded a convincing victory with the final scores being – E. Herbert (Nungarin) defeated F. Pool (Civic) 31 to 6 and V. Dayman (Nungarin) defeated H. Richardson (Civic) 27 to 12.

A buffet tea was held at the clubhouse in the evening when the shire president, shire clerk and councillors and their wives along with the R and I Bank Manager, Mr Brideson and his wife and other members of the club were guests to help the ladies celebrate their well deserved victory.

Then last Thursday a Nungarin team won the Eastern Districts Champion of Champion Triples event at Southern Cross. This was the first occasion that a Nungarin team has won the event from all other Eastern Districts representative clubs. The Nungarin team comprised – J. Haigh, V. Dayman and P. Cornish.³



Pennant Winners 1981

From Left: Joan Gray, Lou Jolly, Vi Dayman, Doreen Beurteaux (Skipper), Elinore Herbert, Lurlyne Hinge, Jill Herbert, Jean Tiller. (Photo courtesy Bob and Lurlyne Hinge)

A Piece of String



*Nungarin Men's Champion Fours 1971
Bill Haigh, Les Hodges, Bob Hinge, Mick
Dayman
(Photo courtesy Bob and Lurlyne Hinge)*

Nungarin Bowling Club
Life Members

Mrs M. de Lacy
Mr M. Pink
Mr R.F. Creagh
Mrs R. Dayman
Mr J.L. Hodges
Mr J.S. Jolly
Mr L. Hoare
Mrs D. Hodges
Mrs V. Dayman
Mr L. Cruickshank
Mr A.P. Herbert
Mrs Jill Herbert
Mrs D. Beurteaux



Nungarin Bowling Club 1985

(Photo courtesy of Bob and Lurlyne Hinge)

*Back Row: Mick Dayman, Harry Williams, Bob Jolly, Philip Cornish, Les Cruickshank, Leon
Beurteaux, Tom O'Connell, Sandy Carnduff, Johnny Taylor, Dave Gray, Denis Mildwaters, Alan
Herbert, Dick Slade, Bert Waterhouse, John Lee.*

*Front Row: Shirley Williams, Betty Roberts, Vi Dayman, Eileen O'Connell, Lurlyne Hinge, Lou
Jolly, Phyllis Cornish, Doreen Beurteaux, Jill Herbert, Jean Herbert, May Barge, Arie Blake*

Cricket

“The hill is occupied by thousands of barrackers ... who are sure they understand cricket better than the umpires.” (Seymour Hicks, *Hullo Australians*, 1925)

The Nungarin Cricket Club was formed in 1913, but informal matches had been played at almost every gathering or picnic organised by the various local progress associations since agricultural development had begun three years earlier.



Early Cricket Team

Back Row: ? Jeffrey, Mal Austin, Ronald Creagh

Middle Row: Wally Bodey and ? Jeffrey on right

Third Row: Frank Bodey on left and Neil Anderson in centre

Front Row: Cyril Johnson

Nungarin locals took their game seriously, and attracted many talented players, winning the A.J. Martin Premiership in 1933.



The Nungarin Eleven c1940s

Captain Neil Anderson kneeling on the right, Tom Brown kneeling in the front next to him, Phil Cornish kneeling on left, with Mark Anderson standing next to him.

Our Village Team (written in the late Forties)
(with apologies to W.C. Donaldson)

Except at lunch I cannot say with truth that we are stayers;
Yet though on village grounds we play we're far from common players.
Jim Hubeck blocks with careful eye, we dub him 'Old Stonewall',
Joe Jolly hammers hard and high, but his catches often fall.
Sheer terror strikes our enemies, when comes the teacher's knock,
Whereas his slow deliveries would suit the veriest crock.
The butcher prides himself on chops, his leg cuts are a joke.
But when he lambs the slow long hops there's beef behind his strokes.
The baker seldom bakes his bread; he cannot catch: he butters.
Ted Williams mows each ball to leg and trundles daisy cutters.
Bill Sainsbury's cut is well renowned; young Mervyn's drives are rare;
He'll cart you from the ground, or go home with a pair.
The village constable is stout, yet tries short runs to win,
They say he runs more people out, than ever he runs in.
Then Alan Herbert, every match, bowls piffle doomed to slaughter,
But still is thought a splendid catch by many a farmer's daughter.
Bert Waterhouse winds up the side, but fails to time his pulls,
By now he must be well supplied with pairs of spectacles.
Our Bobbie's fair, he says 'Not out' or 'out', just as he thinks;

And gives the benefit of the doubt to all who stand him drinks.
No beatings, (beatings are the rule) can make our pride diminish;
Last week we downed the blind boys school after a glorious finish.

Bob Herbert recorded his memories of a game between the local eleven and the Army side:

It was a balmy Saturday afternoon and the local derby was in progress on the old Nungarin oval. The Nungarin cricketers versus the Army in the North Eastern Districts Association limited overs competition. It was always a dour battle, with much local pride at stake. Nungarin were batting first but were in dire trouble. Almost half the overs gone, ten wickets still intact, but only nine runs on the board. The Army quicks were really quick, accurate and getting lots of lift off the coir matting wicket. The locals were battling to keep them out and run-scoring seemed impossible. The Army boys could smell victory at this early stage. Suddenly the stillness was shattered by the urgent clanging of the local Anglican church bell. This was the signal that somewhere in the district there was a fire.

The Nungarin batsmen left the field with unbelievable speed, filled with the desire to help their mates in the brigade in their time of need. The Army boys, confident with an early stranglehold on the game, sauntered slowly from the field with a faint premonition that the locals may somehow turn the fire to their advantage. By the time they reached the boundary the whole Nungarin team had gone. These boys clearly put their civic duties way in front of their sport.

The word around was that Stan Harper's haystack was on fire. Stan had a small paddock on the corner of First Avenue and Waterhouse Terrace. It contained a round yard for horse-breaking, a haystack, and a chaffcutter. The hay was specially grown and cured to chaff up for Stan's prize trotters. The whole town was turning out. This was going to be a dull Saturday afternoon turning into one of excitement watching the local brigade in action. No need to call in the Army 'Firies' – the locals could handle it on their own. Rightly or wrongly, the Dewar kids across the road got the blame, how else could a haystack catch fire? The Dewar kids were nowhere to be seen.

A Piece of String

Meanwhile down at the Shire depot (situated in Mitchell Terrace where the original Road Board office stands), some three hundred metres from the fire, things weren't going so good. The old Shire Austin had been converted into a fire truck, complete with a big steel water tank, pumps, motors, hoses etc, and it really looked the part. But it wouldn't start!

The self-starter growled, but the battery was losing its sting. The Shire engineer, with a thoughtful look on his face, suddenly came forward. The fuel gauge hadn't worked for a long time, so he very methodically dipped the fuel tank, then quietly announced to anyone who cared to listen, "the bloody tank's empty." Decisions had to be made: no time to fuel up and find another battery, so another truck was quickly hooked onto the front of the old Austin and towed to the fire. There was much cheering and jeering from the assembled multitude as the truck arrived. By this time the Chief Fire Control Officer had arrived on the scene, took charge of the situation, and with much arm waving, had the mighty Austin towed into what he considered the most strategic position to fight the fire.

While all this was going on, the Army cricketers were searching for the Nungarin boys with a view to resuming the game, as there didn't appear to be too much they could do to help. By now the fire was burning merrily and the fire truck seemed to be the only weapon on the scene. But the Nungarin cricketers always seemed to be on the other side of the fire, and very busy. They worried that the fire may spread and they wouldn't risk leaving at such a crucial time.

Meanwhile back at the fire truck, the hose had been run out and the hose-man stood facing the fire. A 'firie' set about starting the Wisconsin that drove the water pump – but after many pulls on the starting rope, the Wisconsin failed to fire up. Again, it was the Shire engineer who moved forward with that thoughtful look on his face and proceeded to demonstrate his expertise. He bent over the little motor and calmly removed the fuel cap and proceeded to dip the tank. He slowly straightened up and again announced to anyone who cared to listen, "the bloody tank's empty." This was greeted with more jeers, cheers and merriment from the townsfolk. After all, this was better than spending Saturday afternoon listening to some boring wireless program or mowing the lawn.

The Chief Fire Control Officer came to the fore again and despatched a runner with much haste to the depot to scrounge a small container of petrol. This was done and the fuel tank replenished. The fire seemed to be on the wane by this time, and events took a sudden turn for the better when, after a couple of pulls on the rope the mighty Wisconsin burst into life. A cheer went up, the hose-man braced himself against the expected surge of water. He aimed the nozzle at the fire – but nothing happened. He slowly tipped the nozzle upwards and stared questioningly into its little black orifice, then slowly looked askance at the engineer. The engineer stared back, puzzled, then with a sudden thought he rushed to the side of the Austin and turned the taps this way and that. He looked at the hose-man and shook his head. Suddenly the engineer was smitten by yet another inspiration and clambered onto the tray of the Austin. He climbed atop its mighty water tank, sat astride as he unscrewed its massive steel lid and lifted it open. He plunged his head inside the tank, and waited, and waited for his eyes to become adjusted to the gloom of its great black innards.

The crowd shuffled uneasily; indeed some were drifting away – they all knew the answer. The Dewar kids had snuck back unnoticed and peered, through the legs of the crowd watching, at the now smouldering haystack. The engineer slowly lifted his head, sat upright, seemed to stare into space in total disbelief and in a voice that was scarcely audible, said to anyone who cared to listen, “the bloody tank’s empty.” Except for a few desultory catcalls, complete silence reigned. The Chief Fire Control officer moved in again to assert his authority. As the haystack was by now just a smouldering ruin, and all danger of the fire spreading had passed, he ordered the ‘firies’ to pack up their gear and tow the Austin back to the Shire yard. The townsfolk drifted away, heading for their homes somewhat disillusioned by the afternoon’s events, and their confidence in the local brigade somewhat shattered.

The two cricket teams finally got together and decided that there was insufficient time left to complete the match. The game would have to be abandoned and the points shared. The local cricketers headed for the pub, happy that they had escaped what appeared to be certain defeat, but by 9 o’clock the mood had changed. The boys decided that the fire had robbed them of victory. Had the match continued they would have extricated themselves from that difficult position and knocked the Army boys over cheaply. As for the Army team - they retired to their various messes, saddened by the thought

A Piece of String

that the opposition had cunningly slipped through their fingers when they felt they had the game won. The beer didn't taste too good. They realised that the result of a cricket match isn't known until the last ball is bowled. The problem is – it's often difficult to know when the last ball has been bowled!

The Bennett family have always been passionate about their sport, and Nola remembered an occasion when events became even more passionate than usual:

Thirty odd years ago, Nungarin were playing a home game of cricket against a team from the Merredin Association. Mal Bennett had just returned from Country Week where he had made a few runs. When Mal walked to the crease he was hoping his good fortune would continue. After facing a few balls he was plumb LBW. The umpire, who was Mal's father Ted, had no hesitation in raising his finger. As Mal stormed off he passed Ted and snapped, "Did you leave your bloody white stick at home." Ted just laughed and replied, "No, and if you check the score book it's not in Braille either."

Ted enjoyed many sports, excelling at cricket, football and golf. In his younger days he played Country Week cricket and one year took fifteen wickets on one day. As a young lad he was in Piawaning where his Uncle had a farm, and approached the Piawaning Cricket Club to ask whether he could play:

They said, "Sure, front up Sunday – we are travelling to Mogumber." Ted said there was no community bus, they each sat on a kerosene box on the back of a truck and travelled the forty miles to Mogumber. On arrival, Mogumber only had nine players and the Piawaning Captain said, "No worries, we'll give you a young bloke and play ten aside." Ted wasn't very happy about the arrangements, and was asked by the Mogumber Captain if he could bowl and was given the ball. He took six wickets for one run. Piawaning never offered him to the opposition side again.⁴

Football

"And the game was so terrific that ere half the time was gone

A spectator's leg was broken – just from looking on."

(A.B. Paterson, *The Geebung Polo Club*, The Man From Snowy River, 1895)

Of all sports, Australian Rules Football has probably attracted the largest following in Nungarin over the years, and along with cricket, was very popular in the early

The Games We Play

years. The Merredin Mercury recorded a football game played between teams from the north and south of the district in the winter of 1912.



Early football – the two goalpost variety!

In the early days, soccer was occasionally played, but was quickly surpassed by the more popular Australian Rules football. Daphne Goulding (née Hoare) reported that her father thought to encourage football and cleared some land and erected goalposts at Burran Rock – unfortunately he only erected two posts! He was soon informed of his shortcomings. Daphne also recalled early sports grounds in the Nungarin township:

In 1919 grounds were set aside for a permanent location which included all land beyond the rear of the hall. This became the area for the football field, cricket grounds, and much later further south a hockey field. A soccer ground used to be across the main road south, the Danberrin Road.⁵

Dave (D.O.) Haines, remembered playing football in Nungarin in the 1920s, and staying to go to the dances after the game:

[We] used to ride horseback to Nungarin on Saturday mornings, then go on to Trayning, Kunno or Burran Rock per sulky driven by George Moffet. If there was a dance Saturday night at Nungarin we would pull the stops off our boots and go to the dances, getting home to Nukarni early hours of the morning.

The boot sprigs that Dave talks about were three or four small pieces of leather stacked up and nailed on to the sole of the boot. The sprig-less boots weren't quite dancing pumps, but they obviously served the purpose.



Nungarin Football Team – Premiers 1928

Back Row: R. Biggs (Selection Committee), H.P. Jolly (President), G. Quilty, A. Thick, H. Townsend (Coach), G. Brown (Vice Capt.), C. Keitel, W. Tomkinson, S. Jolly, N. Anderson, A.G. Silsbury, A. Ayton, A.E. Broderick (Selection Committee).

Middle Row: W. Kelly, H. Brown, M. Austin (Captain), F. Harris, R.C. Vanzetti, F. Bodey.

Front Row: W.S. Waterhouse, E. Goode, W. Bodey, J. O’Sullivan, L. Andrews, R. Creagh.

George Farrell was born in 1914, so like many aspiring sportsmen of that era, he was probably robbed of his best years when his sporting activities were interrupted by the onset of the Second World War:

Nevertheless, he was probably the best pound for pound home team footballer to grace a Nungarin oval. Standing fully five foot six in his boots, and weighing little more than nine stone, he was a remarkable and talented athlete. He was always a follower and had unlimited capacity to run the whole game out. His uncanny ability to read the play to perfection was a great asset; he would leave a scrimmage with the ball and seemed to have all the time in the world to execute his dandy little 3-5-metre drop kick, which rarely missed its mark. His timing and judgement were never more evident than when he bobbed up in the middle of a pack to take a perfectly executed mark while others floundered around him. He would chastise a fellow player who messed up his pass with, “I gave you the ball, what did you do with it?” All said with a smile and a chuckle. A different story if he was taken out or mistreated by an opponent: he would dance up to the aggressor with two bony fists at the ready with, “what do you think you are doing, who do you think you are?” This message would be interspersed with a few well-chosen adjectives and maybe one or two unflattering words of description of the fellow, who would always back off with such a diminutive and very angry opponent.

The Games We Play

But what a remarkable career George had, starting as a teenager with the Nungarin Club and winning the club Fairest and Best in 1932, aged 18. He played what was probably his ultimate game in a Lake Grace Grand Final in 1951, and was judged Fairest and Best player, aged 37.



Times were tough and the game was rough! Some of the guernseys are a bit ragged – and Eric Goode (front row third from the left) is missing the best part of a sleeve, to the left of Eric is George Farrell.

Unfortunately George had a lot of his football memorabilia stolen, but well remembers travelling to other towns with the whole team on the back of a truck, which was the mode of travel in those days. Also, his father Michael ('Old Mick' as he was known, even by his grandchildren) travelling out and about picking up players in his spring cart to come to football practice. I had the good fortune to play in a winning Grand Final against Kununoppin at Mukinbudin in 1946. Our Captain-Coach was the local cop, Les Menhennett, an ex-league ruckman, who managed to make it to most bounce-downs and throw-ins to tap the ball into the eager hands of George Farrell, who always played his part to perfection. This combination contributed in no small way to our win.

In those early post-war years a Nungarin team could comprise of six Jollys, four Browns, three Herberts, and two Coumbes. Some of those families are still represented in Nungarin today. Other regular players were Frank Mofflin, Stan Harper, John Newport, Bert Waterhouse, Ted Williams, Jack Kirby, Dick Langley, Tich Fitzpatrick, Bill Schofield, Bob Davies, Dick Cooper and no doubt a few others I've inadvertently missed. Nungarin won premierships in 1928, 1935, 1946, 1950, 1952 and 1982.⁶



*George Farrell - Fairest and Best 1932
Trophy donated by
H. Manix MLA*

A Piece of String



1948 Football Team

*Back Row: Peter Jennings, Bob Jolly, Ron Herbert, John Coumbe, Ted Williams, Jack Kirby, Joe Jolly, Max Coumbe, Syd Jolly, Dick Langley, Frank Jolly, Frank Mofflin
Front Row: Jack Brown, Tich Fitzpatrick, Bob Herbert, Alan Herbert, Dick Jolly, Harry Brown, George Farrell, Bert Waterhouse.*

Harold Croxford remembered inadvertently being selected 'Best on the Ground' for Nungarin:

My family had a wheat farm in South Kununoppin and I attended the Kununoppin School from 1921 to 1924. In 1925 my sister and I started at the new Burran Rock School to make up the number.

My older brother and I played football for Kununoppin and one day when we went to Nungarin to play, the Nungarin school boys team was short of players and asked Kununoppin if they had any spare players, and that is how I and another boy, Reg Sewell from Burran Rock school, played for Nungarin and we won by two or three goals. Reg and I were best on the ground for Nungarin.⁷



1950 Premiershship Team

*Back: FA Williams, Jack (Percy) Jolly, Frank Jolly, Frank Mofflin, Syd Jolly, Dick Langley (Captain), Joe Jolly, Tex Fitzgerald, Bill Schofield, F Lambert, Jim Barnes (timekeeper)
Front Rows: Dick Jolly, Bruce Brown, Dick Cooper, Mal Brown, John Newport, Dick Harper, Mick Dayman, Charlie Williams, Bob Jolly,*

The Games We Play

Following Nungarin's 1952 premiership win in the Wheatbelt League, the Bullfinch Football Club issued a challenge to Nungarin to play them on their home ground. Quite a few of the original side were unavailable, but they scraped up a team and proceeded to Bullfinch in a convoy led by Stan Harper. Dick Cooper remembered the occasion:

Their ground was shocking. Mostly gravel, lots of rocks and stones – even an emu egg which Bill Schofield broke on a rock. It stunk like hell. The umpire was unforgettable. He was about 2 foot 6 inches tall, wore glasses as thick as Coke bottles, and didn't know the rules except to award free kicks to the home team. We didn't do too well up until half-time and took some drastic action in the second half. We eventually won the game, and didn't get home until three o'clock the next morning.⁸



The 1952 Bullfinch Challenge Team

Back Row: Unknown, Stan Harper, Joe Jolly, Bob Jolly, Bill Schofield, Dick Cooper, George Radcliffe, Dick Jolly,

Front Row: Mick Beard, Tex Fitzgerald, unknown, Bernard Jolly, Harry Brown, Bruce Brown

Owing to a loss of population due to a succession of dry seasons, the football club went into recess in the early sixties and reformed six years later in 1967, after which the oval was grassed and maintained with water from the newly established town dam.



Nungarin Panthers – CWFL Premiers 1982

Back Row: E. Pustkuchen, P. Herbert, G. Crogan, C. Dayman, K. Crogan, J. Jolly, R. Clement, J. Coupar

Middle Row: E. Bennett (First Aid), G. Hutcheson, G. Hinge, G. Dayman, A. Harrison, G. Keitel, T. Waterhouse, N. Bennett, J. Brideson (Runner)

Front Row: M. Shepherd, P. Dayman, L. Pitt (Captain), R. Giles (Coach), G. Coumbe (President), S. Watson, R. Jackson, P. Woodhouse (Secretary). (Absent D. Taylor, F. Kazimierczak)

Golf

Over the years there have actually been golf courses in four different locations in Nungarin. The first course consisted of only six holes and was laid out by the Reverend Lionel Guy Courtney during his tenure in Nungarin between 1929 and 1931. By July 1931, there were twenty members playing on these first links.⁹ The course, which was later extended to nine and then to eighteen holes, was situated north of the railway line in the railway water reserve, in the area later taken over by the Army for Vehicle Park. The clubhouse was on Knungajin Road on the south-east corner of the block, but with road changes and truncations, the actual site is difficult to identify. When the Army commandeered the land during the war, the links were moved across to the eastern side of Knungajin Road, where only a nine-hole course was established. At that time the Army also created their own nine-hole course inside

the restricted area where the army storehouses were situated (on resumed land owned by Herberts). The army course was very exposed and fell into disuse about 1946 after which the military enthusiasts played on the local links.

Bob Herbert recalled that during spring, the land around the original golf club was a sea of white everlastings, which made it a nightmare to find a lost ball. Players tried using coloured balls, and they tried dragging the fairways to clear the plants, but the everlastings popped up again the following season. Bob also remembered the railway dam that was near the number two fairway and was a great attraction for the young people during the summer. The dam didn't claim many balls, but the drain that ran into it from across the fairway did. The kids quickly found out that they could wade barefoot through the drain and locate lost golf balls with their feet: there was no mention of money changing hands but Bob said, "we prized golf balls just to belt around, or maybe to make heroes of ourselves with our golfing parents." ¹⁰

When the 'replacement' nine-hole course was found to be unsuitable for expansion, Mr Gus Herbert offered the Golf Club the use of Avon Location 14226, which was an uncleared block with a considerable number of rocky patches that made it more suitable for golf than agriculture. In due course 92 hectares were excised from the block to create Reserve 22680 designated for the purpose of golf links.

The first clubhouse was constructed from parts of a pre-fab donated by the Army, and since that time there have been various replacements and improvements. The Army also 'had a hand in the golf club toilets' (as it were). When the storehouse firewalls at the ordnance depot were built, they were meant to have thick solid brick walls. On one particular wall, a few corners were cut, and instead of the wall being solid, it consisted of a cavity wall filled with unused bricks which the golf club were able to salvage for use in building the new toilet block. The bricklayer was a Mr Snowball who had been contracted to build the new bakehouse for Stan Harper, and stayed in Nungarin to complete the work for the golf club.

In order to be able to serve alcohol (which was then prohibited on the government reserve), members erected a 'bar', on the boundary between the reserve and Avon Location 14228, on land which was owned by Jack Tiller.

The first recorded President of the club was A.S. Putland in 1933, at which time C. Flood was the Captain and M.L. Austin the Club Champion. Bill Sainsbury won the title of Club Champion sixteen times between 1938 and 1967. He was tutored by

Jim Taylor, and quickly showed a natural aptitude, playing remarkable games when he was only a teenager. Larry Herbert has only just beaten Bill's record, having won club championships seventeen times.

Bob Herbert recalled a few memorable golfing moments:

A record score was established by Jimmy Sommers, an accountant at Putlands store. He was credited with 26 hits in one little bush: what he lacked in ability he made up for in enthusiasm and determination! In those early days the majority of golfers had never seen a golf stick before, and all were raw beginners in a game that is difficult to adjust to in later years. The Creagh brothers, Ronald (Pa) and Luscombe (Uncle) tackled the game when both were well into their sixties. They constructed a short course on their farm at 'Tamarua', and set about practising until they became sufficiently proficient to gain a handicap that they could play to. They both became competitive and gained a lot of enjoyment from the game.¹¹

When the Nungarin Golf Club was formed in 1930, although not so young at the time, Mr [R.B.] Creagh took up this game with remarkable success as a number of trophies he won will testify. He was patron of the club and always showed a keen interest in club activities.¹²

All golfers abound with stories: the best stories of course are about the misfortunes of others. Some I can easily recall. One day I drew to play with George, a young enthusiast and a raw beginner, and under normal circumstances a very cheerful fellow. On the right-hand side of number seven fairway, up near the green, was a tall and lush quongdong (later to fall victim to fire bugs). George's slice went straight into the top of this quongdong and the ball stayed there. We finally found where it had lodged and decided it was unplayable. But we reckoned without George's determination. After consideration, George decided to have a go at it. With the stick edge-on, he took one almighty slash, great shreds of quongdong leaves rained down, but no ball. In the next few seconds it looked like a machine gun had been let loose. A great gap appeared in the foliage and finally the wretched ball dribbled down to mother earth. I quickly moved a safe distance away, kept my mouth shut and a straight face, and waited for George to tell me what score to put on the card.

The Games We Play

On another occasion, R.E. and I drew George and his partner, Brett, to play in the club foursomes. The competition was Canadian Foursomes in which players take alternate hits. Brett was a super serious player, so there was no room for any careless play ... Brett's drive on number eleven (a par five hole) goes way round the corner, a perfect drive. George then has to play Brett's drive. He selects his three wood – one good shot will take him on to the green. He takes a preferred lie, has a couple of practice swings and takes his stance. It is obvious to us that he is feeling a little pressure – he takes his backswing and suddenly bursts out, "I've got a funny feeling I'm going to miss this!" He does ... The amount he missed by could be gauged by the look on Brett's face. R.E. and I refused to comment, it just wouldn't have been prudent. Poor George had nowhere to hide. The moral is, when on your backswing, keep your mouth shut and your eyes open.

One wet winter I drew Colin in a stroke round. We hit off one. There had been water running across the fairway and about halfway down on the left side under some miserable ti-trees where the running water had left a little cliff face. Colin's ball was right in the ditch against the muddy face. I ventured to say that the ball appeared unplayable. Colin seemed to agree, but suddenly he was down under the ti-tree and preparing to play. His first almighty swipe drove the ball further into the mud. More shots followed and turned into rapid fire. Suddenly Colin threw down the stick, bent down, grabbed the ball and threw it with all the power he could muster towards the green. His expression was very serious and suggested to me that any smile or comment could be dangerous. I moved away quickly. The score would be best worked out a little later on.

No golfing story would be complete without recounting an escapade played out with cousin Alan in our very, very early golfing days. It was a Sunday afternoon and we were both ten or eleven years old. We often got together on weekends, usually at his place, 'Nooka'. This particular Sunday, everyone was out and we had the place to ourselves. We had a couple of old golf balls and were belting them about the place until suddenly they were gone. Lost. Alan headed for the house to find some more and returned with a brand new one belonging to his mother. We agreed we must be very careful to clean it up when we had finished, and Alan would put it back where he found it. Golf balls were a valuable commodity. We hit it around for a while until inexplicably, it became wedged in a very small fork of a very high morrell tree.

A Piece of String



Edgar and Renira Dayman off to Golf 1949

We hurled stones and sticks, but to no avail. The tree was far too high for us. There was only one way to get it down – a unanimous decision. Alan went back to the house and returned with his brother Mal's Savage .22 rifle and some ammo. After all, it wouldn't do for Aunty Eileen to arrive home and find a brand new golf ball missing! It took a few practice shots for us to get a result and suddenly the ball was on the ground. Our glee turned to total dismay. The ball had developed mumps! The projectile had hit the ball, gone under the skin of the ball, and moved part of the way around before finally coming to rest. The ball was distorted

and as tight as a drum. The afternoon was getting on, and I had suddenly lost a bit of interest in golf, so I headed for home leaving Alan to his problem!¹³

Renira Dayman won the Nungarin Ladies Golf Championship in 1949, following Amy Devereux who won in 1947 and 1948. The annual championship is now known as the R.G. Dayman Memorial Trophy. Jean Herbert holds the record for winning the most consecutive ladies golf championships in Nungarin, having held the title for nineteen years between 1959 and 1977. Jenny de Lacy has won the championship on twenty occasions since that time, but her winning streak was broken by Rhonda Herbert who had three wins in 1991, 1993 and 1994. In the forty-two years between 1959 and 2000, the trophy has been only held by one of these three ladies.



Jean Herbert, Nungarin Ladies' Champion 1959-1977

The Games We Play

Hole in One

Mrs D. Brady 10.4.1956
Mr J. Matthews 27.4.1957
Mr W. Sainsbury 5.7.1959
Mr E. Luckman 7.8.1963
Mr R. Palm 8.8.1971
Mr L. Herbert 23.7.1972
Mr R. Watkins 24.8.1974
Mrs S.A. Watson 25.9.1985
Mrs C. Slade 13.7.1987
Mr L.W. Cruickshank 27.9.1987
Mrs J.P. Cornish 17.9.1989
Mr L.R. Herbert 16.4.1994
Mr M. Squire 22.5.1994
Mrs R.J. Herbert 12.6.2005
Mr A. Turner 31.7.2005

Hockey

The Nungarin ladies formed one of the very first hockey teams in the district. Two local school teachers, Daisy Doig and Betty Sparks were keen players, and Gwen Matthews had previously played the game in England, so they encouraged some of the local girls to form a team. Phyllis Dawe had fond memories of her participation during the 1930s:

My hockey experience began when I was about sixteen years of age when Jill Herbert's mother, Mrs Gwen Matthews, invited me to attend a practice day. This I did, and during the process put my leg in the wrong place and collected a hit on the shin, which resulted in a cut and a painful spot. This, ironically, from the stick of a very dismayed Mrs Matthews! However, this did not dampen my enthusiasm and hockey was a very important part of my life for the next nine years until my marriage in 1941.

I travelled per horse and sulky from my Dad's farm into Nungarin, a distance of about seven miles, and when playing away, would unharness my pony, 'Lady', and tie her in a horse stall on the old show grounds (south of where the hall is now).



Nungarin Ladies Hockey Team 1933

L to R: Gwen Coulson, Peg Hodges, Dot Vanzetti, Edna Gordon, Rene Williams, Betty Sparks, Daisy Doig, Freda Hodges, Phyllis Dawe, Jimmie Farrell, Iris Goode

For these matches we travelled on Mr Fred Williams's truck, made comfortable with a canvas cover and rugs over the top of wheat bags for seating. They were happy journeys to towns such as Nukarni, Merredin, Burracoppin, Kununoppin and Trayning. When we arrived back in Nungarin after the

game, I would re-harness 'Lady' – often in semi-darkness – and head for home. Those roads were atrocious – deep ruts, holes, water-logged and slippery. My Dad used to say, "Let the horse have its head, she knows the way better than you do!" With the care of 'Lady' – and the angels – I always made it home safely.

Our uniforms were white knee-length frocks with 'sailor' collars and two blue bands on the skirt. The fabric was solid cotton, and we wore white stockings! These soon gave way to white 'bobby-sox' or tennis socks with white strapped or laced sandshoes. After many bruises, some players opted for the protection of shin pads.

Sticks were very different to those used today – they had a much longer curved head. Most playing grounds in those days were dirt – rolled hard, sanded, scraped and marked before each game. Husbands, fathers, brothers and boy friends were so supportive. Play was hard and fast, and many a knee went home minus a layer of skin.

Country week was an experience not to be forgotten. 'Dampier' team uniform was grey headcloth, quite solid material, made in a belted pinafore style, with a pleated skirt and two red bands around the hem, and worn with

The Games We Play

a long-sleeved white shirt, a red tie and red beret. Country week, being in July, was often wet, and drying those uniforms overnight was not a joke!

Our club had the support of many families, especially Mr and Mrs Fred Williams who were always there, whenever or whatever help was needed.¹⁴



Association Premiers 1934

*Back Row: Betty Sparks, Rene Williams, Iris Andrews, Gladys Coulson, Gwen Matthews, Freda Hodges, Phyllis Dawe
Middle Row: Iris Goode, Joan Jolly, Daphne Hoare, Dorothy Payne
Front Row: Lorraine Philby, Billie Williams*

Harry Williams recalled his sisters' efforts to raise the necessary money to allow them to go to Country Week:

The girls, Rene, Joan and Billie, were going to Country Week hockey. To obtain money to help with covering expenses they went and plucked wool off dead sheep. They became a bit sick of doing this so Billie suggested they put the whole sheep in the bags. They soon had a few bags full. When the buyer came round he lifted up the bags to weigh them and said "These are very heavy, what is in



*1937 Dampier Country Week team in those dreaded uniforms
Daphne Hoare second from left in front row, Joan Williams
extreme right. Billie Williams back row extreme right*



Nungarin Ladies Hockey 1944

Back Row: Cecily Herbert, Ilma Green, Thora Cairns, Lois Payne, Joy Eddy, Norma Green, Valda Beard (partly obscured), Jean Hinge, Joan Jolly

Front Row: Marie Jennings, Dawn Philby, Ethel Waterhouse (in goalie pads), Audrey Herbert, Gloria Beard, Clarice Herbert

Photo courtesy Jean Herbert

them?” Despite Rene and Joan kicking her, Billie replied “Oh! We put the bones and everything in”. The buyer smiled and said ““You will have your little joke”, and paid them.¹⁵

Men’s hockey didn’t start in Nungarin until about a decade after the ladies’ hockey began. Harry Williams, who became an accomplished and enthusiastic player for the Nungarin men’s team, shared some of his memories:

There were a few of us that followed the girls’ hockey.

We used to have a hit around before they started playing and during half time. One day when we went to Yorkrakine some of the boys there came out and joined us. We got talking and decided to have a game after the women’s game while they had afternoon tea. We managed to get enough guys to form two teams. We really enjoyed ourselves and arranged to have a full game next time we came there.

When we went to Trayning, Kununoppin and Mukinbudin the men liked the idea and did the same. Next year when the women held their Annual General meeting we arranged to discuss forming a hockey association. We had our meeting in my Dad’s car (47 Ford V8) I had borrowed to take the women delegates to their meeting. There was Colin Herbert and myself from Nungarin, Don Cooper and Bob Lee from Trayning and Fred Diver from Yorkrakine. Don was voted in as President and I was Secretary. We decided to field a team when we met each other and try to talk Mukinbudin, Bencubbin and Kununoppin to form a team each as well. We were to play scratch matches for the first year. If things turned out okay we would form an association. This we did and the Dampier Association ran for 40 years. There were some changes along the way. The army camp formed their own team and joined.

The Games We Play

Wyalkatchem came in with a men and women's team for a while. Koorda came in when Kununoppin dropped out. Merredin joined in with a men and women's team, also Merredin High School formed a boys' team for a while.



One time at Bencubbin we beat Merredin in the semi finals with only 8 players. Ian Creagh had to play although he had been injured on Saturday at football. He made the 8th player and as we ran out onto the field the captain of the Merredin team said, "It's a pity you haven't got a full team so we can have

a decent game." That really got us going. They didn't know how to keep track of us because we ran all over the field. One of our guys hit a goal and the Merredin captain yelled out to the player he should have been watching him. He yelled back, "How the hell can I watch him when he is all over the field and you tell us to stay in our own position". By the time we finished the game Merredin was fighting amongst themselves. We had a great time.

Nungarin Ladies Hockey 1948

Back Row: Verna Friend, Jean Hinge (Herbert), Mary Dayman (Fitzpatrick), Shirley Dayman (Williams), Beryl Norris (Dayman), Bobby Farrell (Cairns), Muriel Pink (Waterhouse), Mrs Alice Williams

Front Row: Cecily Herbert (Clement), Clarice Herbert (Brown), Evelyn Waterhouse (Waters), Ethel Waterhouse (Dwight), Alma Crane (Fernihough)

Photo courtesy Jean Herbert

I was goalie for the Dampier team and played a few games against the state side. Most years they came up to our association and the towns took it in turns to host them. This particular time we were playing at Mukinbudin. The right-winger was passed the ball; he was right up the field and came flying in with only me to beat. He really had me on toast. I came out to meet him and I was laughing at my predicament. He shot for goals and put it over the top. When his teammates had a go at him for missing an easy goal, he said that when he came in to shoot he couldn't understand why the goalie was laughing at him and it put him off.

Once I was in an association team playing the NSW country team. This team had played all over the state and never had a goal scored against them by a WA country team. This was their last game before going home. I was playing

A Piece of String

on the left inner when we had a short corner. Because Bob Lee stopped the ball and Peter Lee came up from full back to hit the ball, I was pushed across to right inner. Bob stopped the ball and as Peter hit it one of the opposing forwards got his stick to it at the same time and it shot across the circle in the air. Someone took a swing at it and missed. I hit it with a reverse stick. The goals had been packed with players and all I could see was legs and sticks. It went in about knee high. I was not too popular with the opposing team. So probably my only claim to hockey fame is that I shot the only goal against the NSW country team in country WA.

When I finally gave up I couldn't watch a game for years. It frustrated me not to be on the field. The team did ask me to come back and play one more time at a carnival in Merredin. They picked a team from the old Dampier side. I was 60 at the time. Shirl didn't want me to play as I had not done any training for ages. I played for Dampier in the first game. Then a team that was playing after us asked me to play as their goalie hadn't turned up. I was going to play until he arrived. The ball was coming into the circle with a forward chasing it and I put an extra spurt on to get to the ball first and I felt a muscle rip in my leg. I stood in goals until the other goalie arrived, because I couldn't run. I was limping off the field when a little boy of about 6 or 7 said, "I know what you didn't do. You didn't do your stretching exercises before you started playing."¹⁶

The social side of hockey was a lot of fun in the 1970s, with the Hockey Club New Years Eve cabarets drawing huge crowds. The hall was packed, and the floor shows were an absolute highlight. On one occasion the men performed an authentic French Can-Can – authentic to the extent that when Murray Brown performed the splits, so did his knickers, and the high kicks afterwards raised a few eyebrows. Another year the men performed the 'Dance of the Little Swans' from Swan Lake. Their routine was choreographed by a professional ballet teacher, and brought the house down.



Nungarin Men's Hockey Team 1975
Back Row: Tom O'Connell, Kevin Crogan, Charlie Brown, Fred Williams, Barry Cornish, Dennis Hobson, Trevor Dayman, Colin Waterhouse
Front Row: Kevin Cornish, Russell Cornish, Harry Williams, Milton Humble, Gary Humble, Ian Creagh

The Games We Play

For many years, it was an annual tradition for the State Hockey team to travel to Nungarin to play against a combined Dampier side so that they could get experience at playing on a hard ground similar to that often faced in interstate competition. On one particular visit the Merredin Mercury reported:



It was a hockey weekend in Nungarin commencing on Saturday evening with a dance to welcome the 28 visitors from Perth. Representatives of the

various clubs in Dampier Association were present. Play started at 10.30 am Sunday morning when 'The Rest' easily defeated Dampier B Team. The exhibition match State V The Rest resulted in a win for State 4 goals to 1. The State defeated Dampier A by 16 to 4 ... Before leaving to return to Perth the visitors were entertained to high tea in the Nungarin Hall. Among the speakers were Don Couper, President of the Association, and Eric Eastman, an umpire ... During the proceedings Barry Cornish of the Nungarin Club spoke of his club's intention to bestow on Bill Haigh life membership, and Eric Eastman presented the badge to him on behalf of the club.

*Dance of the Little Swans
Barry Cornish, Kevin Cornish, Russell Cornish,
Fred Williams*

Rifle Club

The Nungarin Rifle Club has always been one of the strongest in the Central Wheatbelt Districts Rifle Association which extends from Corrigin to Bencubbin, and Wyalkatchem to Noongar. Over the years Nungarin has featured strongly in all club team events within the Association. At the annual Queen's Prize Shoot (State Championships) individual members have recorded many wins, they include:

- 2 Queen's Prize Winners (Mal Herbert 1961, and Bob Herbert 1970)
- 3 Duke of Edinburgh Aggregate Winners (R.F. Herbert 1960, M. Herbert 1967, A.P. Herbert 1984)
- 2 Grand Aggregate Winners (Mal Herbert 1961, R.F. Herbert 1970)
- 1 State Champion of Club Champions Winner (Ian Copeland)

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Two members have competed with the Australian Rifle Team (Mal Herbert in Bisley and Bob Herbert in New Zealand), and Mal Herbert toured England with the Australian Rifle team in 1969. On about forty separate occasions, four members of the Nungarin Rifle Club have been selected to compete as part of the State Team, and in the 1960s, the Nungarin team of Bob Herbert, Mal Herbert, Merv Waterhouse and Alan Herbert further distinguished themselves and the club when they won the ‘Swan Brewery’ four man club event. The Swan Brewery Cup was open to teams of four from the Navy, Army, Air Force and from Western Australian Rifle Clubs, so Nungarin was up against some fairly stiff opposition.



*The Victorious Nungarin Rifle Team in the ‘Swan Brewery’ Cup c1967
From Left: Bob Herbert, Mal Herbert, Merv Waterhouse, Alan Herbert*

The first recorded public meeting of the Nungarin Rifle Club was held in the Nungarin Agricultural Hall on October 10th 1925. The requisite thirty members of the club were sworn in, and the following office bearers elected: Tom Burns (Captain), E.J. Reilly (Secretary), Mr T. Williams (Treasurer) with committee members A. Andrews, H. Goode, F. Hocking and G. Fimister.

Quite a lot had obviously been achieved prior to the meeting because Reserve 18967 (on the west side of Nungarin Rock) had already been officially gazetted for the purpose of a rifle range two months earlier on 14th August. A.C. (‘Con’) McCorry

had previously indicated that he was willing to give up part of his property adjacent to Nungarin Rock for the purpose of establishing the range. This block is on the north-western corner of Avon Location 14169, and is immediately to the south of the Rifle Range Reserve, and connects with it. It is a triangular piece of land that was separated from the rest of the block when the Knungajin Road was diverted across the corner. The agreement with Con McCorry was never formalised, and although the Rifle Club had enjoyed the use of the land for many years; when Tom Roberts purchased the rest of the property he effectively took over ownership of the Rifle Club. The Rifle Club finally confirmed their tenure by purchasing the land from Mr Roberts for approximately \$1,000 and it was then vested in the Nungarin Shire Council.

The Nungarin Rifle Range was officially opened on 24th April 1926 by Mr Lindsay, and Mrs J.H. (Rose) Johnson, who was an experienced markswoman during her time in South Africa, was given the honour of firing the first shot.

The harsh realities of World War Two caused the club to re-assess its role in the community and the following motions were passed: “That £30 be withdrawn from the savings account and invested as a free war loan to the Commonwealth Government for the duration of the War”, and “That Rifle Club activities in future be confined to training men of military age in rifle shooting, and a notice with reference to the above be erected in front of the Road Board Office.”¹⁷ Accordingly, the club went in to recess during the war years when the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) had the use of all premises including ranges, rifles and other equipment. Shooting and signalling was open to all civilians between the age of twenty and sixty-five, and members of the club assisted with drill and rifle exercises.

An undated newspaper cutting fixed into the Nungarin School Journal (1922-1946) reported that the Rifle Club had erected a small-bore range on the Greater Sports Ground that was fired over for the first time on August 14th 1940. This range would have been only 25-50 metres and established to cater for VDC training. The .303 rifles were fitted with Morris tubes which enabled them to use the more economical low velocity .22 ammunition.

The rifle club reformed in 1946 after the war, and up until recent times, the club continued to be covered and governed by the Defence Department (Western Command). Following a suggestion by Mal Clement, the Nungarin range was fitted with lights, and was probably one of the first in Australia to be equipped for night

A Piece of String

shooting. Over the years various buildings have been acquired. Immediately after the War, the Army donated a small demountable shed, and the club also acquired a timber framed building which measured 30' x 18'. In 1980, a more substantial brick building (the G.H. Herbert Pavilion) was constructed, which incorporated a magazine and ablutions.

The Nungarin range faces in a northerly direction with the longest distance 800 yards. From the target area the range slope is upwards all the way to the 800-yard mound. It is a picturesque setting during winter, but presents a challenge to riflemen as sighting is difficult because of the northerly aspect, and winds in the valley can be rather variable. The original pit was blasted out of granite, and large enough to accommodate two target frames. After the War this was extended to four frames, but in recent years two of the frames have fallen into disuse.¹⁸



Bob Herbert sighting up at the Nungarin Rifle Range

Tennis

Tennis was a popular pastime, and many families constructed their own tennis courts on the farm using the soil from ants' nests tamped down and rolled to make a hard smooth surface. The Creagh family built their own court at the beginning of 1914. By 1927 there were four community courts in Nungarin, and later during the Army occupation, more courts were constructed adjacent to the O'Meara Club. When the army camp closed down, the Nungarin Shire negotiated to purchase the courts and flood lights were erected for night games.

The Games We Play



*Hazel Bennett, Cecily Clement
and Jean Tiller*

In the late sixties, after the town dam was built, grass courts were erected as part of the new sporting complex.

Last Sunday saw the official opening of the 1954-55 season ... the courts which were in really excellent condition, presented an animated scene as forty-four players strived for the honours of the day. Some excellent and interesting tennis was witnessed, and the enthusiasm of the players augurs well for a successful season.

The ladies trophy was won by Mrs Mofflin with a total of nineteen games, closely followed by Misses Bradley and Annison, and Mrs Fitzgerald all of whom won sixteen games. The men's trophy was even more closely contested as Dick Harper, Jack Tiller and Alan Jennings tied with twenty games each, necessitating a play-off. This was eventually won by Dick Harper, with J. Tiller as runner-up. Congratulations are extended to both winners, and also to those other players who pressed the winners so closely.

During afternoon tea adjournment, the Patron, Mr W. Waterhouse, officially opened the courts. In doing so, he extended a welcome to all players and expressed the hope that all those present would continue to be active players throughout the coming season.¹⁹



Nungarin Tennis Club – Early Eighties

Other Sports

Badminton, basketball and netball have attracted a faithful following in the community, and as well as the mainstream sports there have been other groups that have emerged at various times. The water polo club flourished for a short period, as did the pigeon racing club. The Darts Club was active during the late fifties, and the swimming club was also popular at one time; while a range of water sports enjoy intermittent popularity when seasons permit. It is always amazing to see how quickly ski-boats and surfcats emerge from farm sheds when good rains fill nearby Lake Campion. Graham Bailey recorded his memories of a fund-raiser for the football club in 1989:

The Lake Brown ski lake doesn't fill very often, so when it does every man and his dog gets into it. 1989 was a particularly wet year so it was decided at a Nungarin Footy club committee meeting that the club should do something to raise some funds as the bank balance was not a pretty sight. 'Muggins' suggested a 'Bathtub Derby'...

When the day came there was a line up of cars and utes with baths on the back and it was all happening. A huge crowd had come out for the day and many were heard to say that they didn't even know the lake was even here, let alone better than Baandee (that is – when there's water actually in it!)

Baths were put in the water and tested for buoyancy, eskies and chairs dutifully lined the bank and the events started. Skull-duggery was the order of the day and a few baths were sunk, but all-in-all, an absolutely fabulous day was had by all.²⁰



Sailing on the Nungarin Pool (the last resort when the lake is dry)

Photo courtesy of Barry Cornish

The lake system (which incorporates Lake Brown, Lake Campion and Lake Chandler) covers a huge area but, even in flood, the water is never very deep so the evaporation rate is rapid and as a consequence the opportunity for water-skiing and boating is limited. Nevertheless it is fun while it lasts.

Endnotes

- 1 *Merredin Mercury*, 25 December 1912, p2.
- 2 Letter from Dot Hodges (née Hinge).
- 3 *Wheatbelt Mercury*, Thursday 25 March 1982, p30.
- 4 Notes from Nola Bennett, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 5 Daphne Goulding, *Go on the Land Young Man*, published privately, p16.
- 6 Notes written by Bob Herbert.
- 7 Letter from Harold Croxford, nd.
- 8 Interview with Dick Cooper by Jenny de Lacy, Jun 2010.
- 9 Howard Milne, *The History of Nungarin*, Optional Thesis 1967, p79.
- 10 Notes from Bob Herbert.
- 11 Notes from Bob Herbert.
- 12 Newspaper cutting, 1959.
- 13 Notes from Bob Herbert.
- 14 Report from Phyllis Cornish, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 15 Harry Williams memoirs, typescript.
- 16 Harry Williams memoirs, typescript.
- 17 Nungarin Rifle Club minutes.
- 18 Information supplied by Mr Bob Herbert.
- 19 *Dampier Herald*, 21 October 1954.
- 20 Notes from Graham Bailey, 2010.

Rogues, Rascals and the Law

Law Enforcement in the Nungarin District

The first instance of law enforcement in the Nungarin area was when Thomas Adams was appointed as a Special Constable on 4th July 1877. His instructions were to visit all the pastoral stations in the region once a month, to report any complaints to the Resident Magistrate at Newcastle (now known as Toodyay) and to protect both white men and aborigines.

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul wrote, “For I would not have known what sin was except for the law”¹, and I guess this fairly well sums up the Aborigines’ point of view with regard to the great majority of complaints against them. For the most part, trouble was caused by the Aboriginal people helping themselves to sheep belonging to the pastoralists, and to other items of food and clothing, which would have been in accord with their tribal ideas of ownership and community.

There were instances of murder recorded but Europeans did not always understand the complexities of Aboriginal justice. An example was in the case of the murder of Madline Joe (alias Joe Meadine) whose body was found in the bush near Yarragin on 9th December 1885. A charge was brought against Moker (an Aborigine with the alias Harry) but evidence at the trial suggested it was a tribal killing and the jury was unable to reach a verdict. In the end Moker was found not guilty.²

A more clear-cut case of right and wrong was the charge against George Sinclair for allowing his sheep to graze on crown land at Namalcatching without license or authority. Here was a European knowingly taking unlawful advantage of government property. He was fined £5 and costs.

There will always be some people who take a rather independent view of the law, and when Thomas Adams remonstrated with James Ward for sending his Aboriginal

workman, Dicky Wanbanner, out in the bush with a gun, Ward replied that he would continue to do so, and didn't much care whether it was contrary to orders or not.³

And sometimes it was the law enforcement agents themselves that caused trouble. In a letter written from Mangowine in January 1889, Charles Adams reported:

I have to report for the information of the Commissioner of Police that on 23rd inst, when I visited Golden Valley I found P.C. Grant at Green's public house laying in one of his rooms in a drunken state, and from information which I received from Mr. Green, P.C. Grant had been there from 19th inst and Mr. Green could not get him to leave. I received written orders from the warden on the evening of the 23rd for P.C. Grant to start to Southern Cross at once, but he was not in a fit state to go.⁴

In the early days, Nungarin had its very own outlaws! In 1913 'Big Jack' Morgan and 'Ginger' Hamilton appeared in the Nungarin Police Court charged with carrying out a series of robberies throughout the area. They had terrorized the women in the district and farmers had threatened to shoot them on sight. Even though they seemed to have the names and reputations befitting bushrangers, they could not have been particularly bloodthirsty because when they were eventually apprehended by a policeman on patrol they caused no further trouble and went in quietly. Both were convicted and sent to Fremantle prison.⁵

In 1922 a double tragedy was reported to have taken place just east of Talgomine. A well-known and popular farmer by the name of Andrew Podesta had been shot and killed by Archibald Samuel French, a clearer and previously convicted criminal. Podesta was a returned soldier who had emigrated from Lancashire and settled in the district with his 19-year-old daughter. French had apparently done some clearing for Podesta and accused him of not paying money due to him on the contract. When French called at the farm to collect the money, Podesta was in the paddock working on his cultivator and after a brief quarrel, French shot him from a distance of about twenty feet. French then went up to the house where Podesta's daughter was alone and told her what he had done. By the time that the police arrived at the scene they found that French had taken poison and he died shortly afterwards.⁶

The outcomes of some deaths were not so well defined. One reported death in 1927 concerned a local farmer who was crushed when a hay wagon rolled over him. There was some suspicion that foul play may have been a factor, but as pigs had mutilated

the body, there was not sufficient evidence to pursue the matter. The widow managed to assuage her grief and receive comfort in the arms of an understanding neighbour.

More decisive was the case of John Thomas Wilson Smith, later known as Stanley or 'Snowy' Rowles. Smith was a wayward youth and had appeared in the Perth Children's court on at least three occasions, eventually being sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment for theft. He was released from Fremantle Prison on 2nd February 1928, aged 22. After his release, his parents arranged a job for him on a farm at Cunderdin, but he became bored with the routine and quit. He had cultivated a friendship with Thomas Watson Wilson who was in possession of a wool cheque for £900 and proved to be a rather impressionable character and easy prey for the convincing and charismatic Smith. Under Smith's influence, the two men committed a string of burglaries throughout the wheatbelt:

His next wild escapade began in Nungarin, a small Wheatbelt town north of Merredin. On the night of 9th July 1928 the front door of the Nungarin Co-operative store had been forced, and a suitcase, food, and clothing had been stolen. Constable Gravestock of Nungarin noticed that two strangers who had been in the area had disappeared, but his investigation petered out due to lack of leads.

Four days later, Snowy, in company with Thomas Watson Wilson broke into the general store at Dalwallinu. Police later found their abandoned car, and most of the goods stolen from the Nungarin and Dalwallinu stores. The two were discovered hiding in the bush and slapped in the lock-up behind the police station.

The following night, the pair made a daring break from gaol. Wilson quickly tired and gave himself up, but Snowy escaped. Wilson was tried in August 1928, and sentenced to 12 month's hard labour. Snowy adopted the alias of Stanley Rowles, and headed for the Murchison district where he found work as a station hand.⁷

While working as a boundary rider on the Rabbit-Proof fence, Rowles met Arthur Upfield who had already written three novels and was planning his next. As the men sat around the campfire at night, Upfield outlined the plot of his new novel, *The Sands of Windee*, in which he wanted to write about the perfect murder, but needed a way of completely disposing of the body. Another colleague, George Ritchie, suggested a

means whereby the victim's body would be burned, remaining bone fragments filtered from the ashes and then dissolved in acid. Any residual solids would then need to be ground to dust and scattered to the wind.

In late 1929 two men, James Ryan and George Lloyd, that had been seen in the company of Rowles, disappeared and Rowles later turned up in Ryan's car claiming that Ryan had sold it to him. A few months later Rowles met Louis Carron, and like the other two men, Carron too disappeared. Suspicions were aroused and in early 1931 police troopers located a remote camp alongside the rabbit-proof fence and discovered an old campfire with some charred human remains that were identified by dental records as belonging to Carron. Detectives were able to connect Rowles with Carron, Ryan and Lloyd, and they also became aware of the fact that Rowles knew of Upfield's 'perfect' murder plot. Years later Upfield wrote that he could find no excuse for not liking Rowles and said, "His appearance at a bush camp at once vanquished depression". Unfortunately in at least three cases, his presence also vanquished life. There was little doubt that Rowles was responsible for the murders of Louis Carron, James Ryan and George Lloyd. He was tried for the murder of Louis Carron, and the jury returned a guilty verdict in only two hours. Rowles was hanged for murder on 13th June 1931.⁸

Even more notorious was the case of Len 'Shark-arm' Jackson. In 1943, Leonard Charles Jackson came to Nungarin as a cook with the Allied Works Council during construction of the army base. Jackson had come to Nungarin from the north-west where he had had several brushes with the law for looting and safe breaking. After the completion of the military building program, Len opened 'The Bright Spot' hamburger café in Railway Avenue alongside the present Nungarin General Store. An advertisement in *The Dampier Herald* and *Nungarin Standard* at the time claimed "Service, Hospitality and Attention our Motto"⁹. The service may have been something to boast about but the building itself was rather rudimentary – in actual fact not a separate building at all, but rather a roofed space between the adjacent buildings.

Len was a strong, muscular man of average height¹⁰ and locals still remember how he could easily toss loaded cool drink crates up on to the top of storeroom shelving. One-time Nungarin resident Keith Creagh remembers him dealing "rough justice" to a couple of soldiers from the camp who tried to avoid paying for their meals. He grabbed the two of them and smashed their heads against the brick wall – definitely not a man to trifle with!

Len himself claimed an infamous past. As a young man, Knungajin farmer Frank Williams served an apprenticeship with W.C. Green at the Nungarin powerhouse, and

had rented a room at the rear of Jackson's premises. In Frank's opinion, Len "would steal the milk out of your tea", and he also recalls Len's claims to be responsible for the mysterious 'Shark Arm Murder'¹¹.

The 'Shark Arm' story has more twists and turns in the plot than television crime fiction, and began on the other side of Australia in 1935 when Charlie and Bert Hobson, operators of the Coogee Aquarium, caught a two-metre shark in Sydney Harbour. They intended to put the shark on display at the aquarium, but as they went to haul it in, it was swallowed by a huge tiger shark that had become entangled in their net.

This larger shark was almost four metres long and was a prize exhibit that attracted scores of visitors eager to see what was possibly the first live tiger shark ever to be put on display to the public. Unfortunately the public were to be initially disappointed. A week later, as many took advantage of the Anzac Day holiday to visit the aquarium, the shark proved to be quiet and moody and sulked about at the deep end of the pool. Many people left disillusioned. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity as the shark began thrashing about in the pool and amidst the frenzied commotion it suddenly vomited up a human arm.

The arm had been hacked off at the shoulder, and had a piece of thick manila rope tied around the wrist. The arm also bore a distinctive tattoo of two boxers shaping up to each other. Medical examinations revealed that the limb had not been bitten off by the shark, but had been hacked roughly from the body in an operation that did not appear to have been done as part of a surgical procedure. The tattoo and a delicate fingerprinting operation enabled the arm to be positively identified as belonging to a small-time criminal and ex-boxer by the name of Jim Smith.

The last time that Smith had been seen was in the company of his long-time friend, Patrick Brady. Smith and Brady had spent the afternoon drinking at the Hotel Cecil and had then gone out to a cottage that had been rented by Brady on the shore of Gunnamatta Bay. In a further twist, Brady later testified that Smith had left the cottage in the company of two waterfront identities, Albert Stannard and John Patrick Strong.

The owner of the cottage later gave evidence that after Brady had moved out he was disgruntled to find that a tin trunk and a mattress had been replaced, and also surprised to find that the interior walls of the cottage had all been scrubbed clean.

Police investigations identified Brady as their main murder suspect. Confirmation came from a cab driver who informed them that on the morning following Smith's disappearance, Brady had appeared dishevelled and anxious and had booked him for a fare into town. He had asked to be taken to the home of well-known Sydney boat-builder, Reginald Holmes.

Smith was an ex-employee of Holmes. At that time, Sydney was the centre of very active smuggling operations whereby smugglers would use fast boats to pick up narcotics and contraband that they had arranged to be thrown overboard from passing ships. In 1933, Holmes had purchased *Pathfinder*, a powerful seagoing yacht for which he had paid £11,000 sterling. He had insured the vessel for more than that amount, and employed Smith as skipper. Surprisingly enough (!), in April 1934, *Pathfinder* foundered just north of Sydney. Smith was the only person on board and had been able to swim to safety. Unfortunately for Holmes, the insurance company became suspicious of the circumstances and refused to pay out. Consequently, Holmes refused to pay Smith and there was conjecture that Smith was later blackmailing him.

Smith's murder was now directly linked to both Brady and Holmes. Under interrogation, Holmes informed police that Brady had told him that he had had a row with Smith and dumped his body in a trunk off Port Hacking. All the evidence was purely circumstantial – police had no body and their two main suspects were refusing to co-operate – they needed either confirmation or a confession. They decided to charge Brady and allowed Holmes to go free providing he gave evidence against Brady at the inquest.

In a startling turn of events, Holmes attempted to kill himself. After imbibing a significant quantity of brandy, Holmes went out in to the harbour in one of his fastest speedboats, drew out a pistol, and shot himself. He must have had a particularly thick skull because the nickel-jacketed bullet bounced off a bony part of his head, rendering him only momentarily unconscious. Stunned, he fell into the water, but as he fell he became entangled in a rope. The chill of the water revived him and he was able to use the rope to clamber back on to the boat, only to lead water police on a merry chase around the harbour for the next four hours. He was eventually picked up just outside Sydney Heads and after prolonged questioning, eventually made a statement directly implicating Brady in Smith's murder.

However, only a few hours before the coronial inquest into Smith's death, Holmes's body was found slumped in his car in a deserted alley at Dawes Point at the southern

end of the harbour bridge. He had three gunshot wounds to the chest. With Holmes's death, the case against Brady collapsed and he was released due to insufficient evidence for a conviction.¹²

Several other suspects involved in the Sydney underworld were charged with the crime, but due to a lack of evidence, no convictions were ever made. In claiming responsibility for the murder, Len Jackson told Frank Williams that he would never "swing" for the crime, and showed Frank a small knife that he had secreted in the hollowed out sole of his shoe.

Rumours around Nungarin at the time suggested that Jackson was involved in the black market and had hidden stolen ex-army tyres and engine parts under the rough cement floor at the rear of the café. Indeed, he drove a Fleetmaster car that was the same model as the army staff car, and had no trouble procuring spare parts for it. A young lad employed by Jackson in Nungarin, told of being held over a boiling copper and threatened with retribution if he dared to reveal information about Jackson's activities.

While Jackson was in Nungarin he brought with him a lady going by the name of Stella Farnsworth (also known variously as Ella, or Sadie Farnsworth) and introduced her as his wife. Jack Tiller, who owned the butcher's shop in Nungarin at the time remembered Jackson as a "real bad egg", and in his memoirs mentioned that at one time Len had attempted to settle his meat bill by offering Mrs Farnsworth's engagement ring as payment.¹³ Not long afterwards Jackson left Nungarin for Kalgoorlie and established a café there.

Mrs Farnsworth was connected with prostitution in Kalgoorlie, and had a variety of other business interests in the metropolitan area, including a taxi and hire car service and a string of butcher shops. She often used to take boxes of chocolates to the policemen on points duty in Perth, presumably for allowing her taxis through intersections with a minimum of waiting. Mrs Farnsworth was a wealthy woman who often carried as much as five hundred pounds in cash, which was considered a huge amount of money in the 1940s.

On Tuesday 17th December 1946, it was reported that a woman's body had been found floating in the Swan River near Coffey Point¹⁴. The body had deep lacerations to the scalp and had been weighted down with a 22 kg cement paving block. The weight of the concrete had kept the body submerged until putrefying gases had brought it to the surface. The cement block was fixed to the body with two separate pieces of 4-strand

clothesline wire. One piece was around the slab, and the other wound tightly around the body and twitched back through the wire around the slab. Bizarrely, it was at first thought that the woman had committed suicide by wiring herself to the concrete slab and walking off the end of the jetty. Because the police realised that a woman with a 22 kg block of cement fixed to her back could not have swum very far, it was thought that suction from the propellers of the River Steamer Emerald had moved the body 50 yards into the river where it was discovered. The head wounds were also attributed to the action of the propellers.

The *West Australian* newspaper carried a detailed description of the woman:

The body appeared to have been of a fairly elderly woman. The hair was grey at the scalp with reddish ends suggesting it may have been dyed. She was dressed in a black and white striped blouse, black skirt and one fawn sockette on her left foot. Inside the sockette was a bunion shield and both feet bore evidence that she had received treatment for bunions. She was wearing a metal necklace which was set with two glass stones and fitted with a clip fastener. She appeared to be about 5'7".¹⁵

By the next day the body had been identified as that belonging to Stella Ivy (Sadie) Farnsworth, aged 53¹⁶, and the possibility that the woman had been the victim of foul play was being considered.¹⁷ An autopsy quickly established that the woman had died from extensive multiple head wounds before her body was immersed, and the cause of death was upgraded to murder.¹⁸

Reg Carr was a police officer who served in Nungarin between February 1947 and October 1952, and became well known and respected in the Merredin-Nungarin district. Reg had a phenomenal memory for places, people and events and eventually rose to the rank of Senior Assistant Commissioner of the W.A. Police Force¹⁹. On 6th December 1946, only a few weeks prior to Reg being posted to Nungarin, he had met Len Jackson near the Perth Town Hall, accompanied by a woman answering the description of Mrs Farnsworth, and whom Len had introduced as his wife. Reg had knowledge of Jackson from his time in Derby, and knew that he had been in trouble for theft and safe breaking in Broome and Derby. From his time up north, he also knew that Mrs Farnsworth was not Jackson's legal wife at all.²⁰

The Police very quickly suspected Jackson of involvement in Mrs Farnsworth's death, and a warrant was put out for his arrest. During research into the history of the brothels that existed in Roe Street between the late 1800s and 1958, it was revealed

just how the police got their timely information. Not long after news of the discovery of Mrs Farnsworth's body appeared in the newspaper headlines, Jackson had visited Roe Street and had aroused the girls' suspicions with some of his comments. They got him drunk and he confessed to having killed her.²¹ There was an unwritten code in the prostitution industry that the girls 'looked after their own', and they quickly passed on the information to their contacts in the Police Force.

Reg Carr was on points duty in Perth when he noticed a dark 1939 V8 Ford sedan, Tivoli hire car number 144, going through the intersection and saw Len Jackson at the wheel²². Reg recognised both Jackson and the car and immediately notified police headquarters. In order for Police to apprehend him quickly, he was at first held in regard to perjury associated with a recent break and entering charge made against him in Kalgoorlie.

Once in Police custody, Jackson claimed not to recognise a picture of Mrs Farnsworth, saying, "It's ridiculous, I don't even know the woman".²³ However Reg Carr had seen the pair together in Barrack Street just before lunch on Wednesday 11th December. The evidence seemed conclusive and more than fifty witnesses were brought forward to testify that Jackson was implicated in Mrs Farnsworth's death. Bloodstains were found in the car that Jackson had been driving, but he explained this away by saying that he had seen Mrs Farnsworth and her partner Robert Hobson (the couple were living at the Alexandra Hostel under the names of Mr and Mrs King) arguing, and that during the struggle Mrs Farnsworth had fallen and injured her head. Jackson said he had offered to lend Hobson the car to take Mrs Farnsworth to hospital.

George Boyce, a Kalgoorlie railway worker, gave evidence that when he arrived at the Globe Hotel in Wellington Street on 11th December, he shared a room with Jackson who had booked in the week before. In the wardrobe he discovered a wet suit that belonged to Jackson. The next day Jackson took the suit to Horden's to be cleaned, saying that it had got wet in the rain. Information from the Perth Bureau of Meteorology shows that the 11th December 1946 was a cool day with a brisk south-westerly breeze. There was slight continuous rain between 6.00 a.m. and 9.00 am with a total of 2.5 mm falling for the day.

When Reg Carr saw Jackson on Thursday 12th December, he was on his own, and Reg noticed that he had a bandaged hand. When asked in court how he had injured his hand, he said that he had attempted to crank start a car which had backfired and hurt his wrist.

Evidence produced in court during the trial established that Jackson and Mrs Farnsworth had developed some sort of relationship. Earlier in 1946 the pair had discussed becoming partners in the Broken Hill Hotel, and Jackson and a woman answering Mrs Farnsworth's description had responded to an advertisement that announced a house for sale in Second Avenue, Mount Lawley.

Hobson testified that when he left for work on 11th December, Mrs Farnsworth was reading in bed, healthy and happy, but when he arrived back in the afternoon she had gone. The next morning he received a telegram that read, "Staying with good friends Fremantle. Best Luck. See you soon, Stella." Five days later he received a second telegram saying, "Got good position lady driver companion Geraldton district. Leaving today. Regards Stella."²⁴ Jackson had been busy trying to allay suspicion for Stella's disappearance, and for his own movements. Tom Adams from Mangowine had seen him in Perth on the 12th of December, and Jackson had tried to get him to provide an alibi for the previous evening.

It was also put forward in court that the wire fastened around Mrs Farnsworth's body was twisted in such a way that it appeared to have been done by a left-handed person. When Jackson was asked whether he was left handed, he thought the questions related to the handwriting on the telegrams sent to Hobson, and he replied that he used his left hand for everything except writing.

Large amounts of money had suddenly appeared in Jackson's bank account and he had also been trying to sell a wristwatch and some rings that were believed to have belonged to Mrs Farnsworth. Jackson was found guilty of wilfully murdering Stella Farnsworth and was sentenced to be executed in Fremantle Gaol on 21st February 1947.

Just three days before he was due to be hanged, Jackson committed suicide in the condemned cell. He was somehow able to obtain a razor blade and a sharpened table knife that he used to cut through his neck artery until he bled to death under the cover of his blanket, and the supposedly watchful eye of the prison guard. As he foretold to Frank Williams several years before, he had no intention of hanging.

Whether or not Len Jackson was responsible for the Shark Arm murders will probably never be known for sure, but he had claimed that dubious distinction, and in having been found guilty of killing Stella Farnsworth, he proved that he was eminently capable of having done so.

Endnotes

- 1 Romans 7:7, NIV Bible.
- 2 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Book, also Neville Green and Susan Moon, *Far from Home* UWA 1997.
- 3 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Book.
- 4 Newcastle Police Station Occurrence Book.
- 5 FA Law, *The History of the Merredin District*, Service Printing, p167.
- 6 Patricia Howe, *Newcarnie-Nukarni*, pp114,115.
- 7 Terry Walker, *Murder on the Rabbit Proof Fence*, Hesperian Press ISBN 0-85905-189-7.
- 8 Terry Walker, *Murder on the Rabbit Proof Fence*. Hesperian Press ISBN 0-85905-189-7.
- 9 *Dampier Herald and Nungarin Standard*, 31 August 1945.
- 10 In *With Malice Aforethought (1982 ISBN 0 86778 010)*, Jack Coulter states that Jackson was solidly built and weighed 16 stone (101 kg). For many years Jack Coulter was one of the nation's leading crime reporters.
- 11 Personal interview with Frank Williams.
- 12 Alex Castles, *The Shark Arm Murders*, Wakefield Press, 1995, and transcript of ABC Interview with Professor Alex Castles and Mandy Pearson 29 April 2002.
- 13 JL Tiller memoirs, typescript.
- 14 Coffee Point is just north of the Canning Bridge.
- 15 *West Australian*, Tuesday 17th December 1946.
- 16 In *Living Today*, 25 August 1977, it cites "...her age was given by the West Australian as 53 until it was discovered she was in fact 65".
- 17 *West Australian* newspaper, 18 December 1946.
- 18 *West Australian* newspaper, 19 December 1946.
- 19 *West Australian* newspaper Obituary 2005.
- 20 Personal interview with Reg Carr 2 January 1999.
- 21 Information from Sheryl Milentis, researching 'The Madams of Roe Street'.
- 22 Personal interview with Reg Carr 2 January 1999.
- 23 *Living Today*, August 1977, p33.
- 24 *Living Today*, August 1977, p34.

The Battlers, the Dreamers and the Ratbags

Nungarin Men

A Miscellany of Memories

The Hinkley family were rather remarkable for their efforts in boosting the Nungarin population ‘above and beyond the call of duty’. Among their large family, Cecil and his wife, Margaret, boasted not one or two, but three sets of twins. Cecil Ray Hinkley was employed at the Army camp, and was listed on one of the school enrolment forms as a ‘civil servant’. Another set of local twins was the Bodey brothers, Frank and Walter (Wally). At one time Mrs Bodey was expected home on the train and the two young boys decided to meet her at the station. Bodeys had a big Moon car, and the young lads were so young that it took both of them to drive – one steered while the other operated the foot controls. Young Gavin Cornish had worked out his own technique to do both at once. The Cornish truck was seen careering across the paddock with no-one apparently at the wheel, until Kevin noticed a little head bobbing up occasionally to get his bearings. Gavin’s early fascination with vehicles was well known, as anyone who followed hockey could attest. After one particular game, quite a few of the players and supporters returned to their vehicles to find that all had been divested of their column-mounted flicker levers. Gavin had apparently decided to conduct a personal survey on the strength and durability of automotive parts and had gone from car to car and given the levers a good old wrench. Most appeared to have been below standard.

Rosco McGlashin is another person who has nurtured a passion for anything with wheels (and speed!). When Rosco was only twelve years old he was inspired by Donald Campbell¹, and made up his mind to build a car that would go even faster than the *Bluebird*. It was helpful that he looked much older than his tender years, so he quit school, adjusted his age upwards for convenience, and drove his Ford from Claremont to Nungarin. Even at twelve, he had been driving for several years and had bought his own car for £40 with money that he had earned by collecting bottles.² He boarded at the Nungarin pub, and obtained work helping to replace the roof on the wheat bin, which earned him a good wage to start funding his ambition.³

In 1994, Rosco became the fastest man in Australia when he set a record of 956 km/h at Lake Gairdner in South Australia, and in 1998 he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to motorsport, and for setting the Australian Land Speed record. In 2001 he was entered into the Australian Roll of Honour by the Governor Sir Michael Jeffery, as ‘The Fastest Aussie on Earth’.

However, Rosco is not content being the fastest man in Australia, and is now preparing to challenge the World Land Speed Record. He and his team are building *Aussie Invader 5R*, which will run on four rocket motors producing 62,000 pounds of thrust (about 200,000 horsepower). The car will be capable of going from zero to one thousand miles an hour in a mind-boggling nineteen seconds! Rosco’s latest challenge has three objectives; to set a new Australian Land Speed record, go through the sound barrier and set a World Land Speed Record, and to achieve 1609 km/h. That speed equates to travelling from Nungarin to Perth in about ten minutes.

An interesting man who had tenuous links with both Nungarin and motor racing is Dr Rik Hagen. Rik was a popular agricultural consultant in the Nungarin area sometime around the 70s. He decided on a rather abrupt career change and left the consultancy business to train in medicine. After specialising in various areas, he became a rural GP with a practice in Harvey. From there he was recruited to help with Rally Australia, and then toured the world with the international Toyota Castrol Team.

David Jones had no such ambition for speed, and either walked or rode everywhere for years, until his knees started to protest. He bought a Morris 3 ton truck and asked Alan Dayman to teach him to drive. Apparently the first lesson was so hair raising that Alan resorted to placing a wooden block under the accelerator pedal to limit the speed. David didn’t believe in using the brakes, so the brake pads never wore out. He would always take his foot off the accelerator about two kilometres from his ultimate destination, so if he was heading for the post office, he started slowing down as soon as he got to the cemetery.

Perhaps Davy’s maxim of ‘slow and steady’ was carried a bit too far when he contracted Jack Donnalon to build a dam for him. Jack was equipped with just three tools; a shovel, a pick and a wheelbarrow. The dam took two years to complete.⁴

Morrie Pink went for endurance rather than speed. In 1935 Morrie tackled the long haul over the Nullabor, to holiday with family in South Australia. The journey itself may not immediately seem to be memorable, except for the fact that Morrie undertook

the trip on a motorbike, and with his wife and daughter tucked neatly in the sidecar. The roads were atrocious and Norma, who nursed young Muriel all the way, was traumatised by the journey and refused to make the return trip on the bike. Morrie had to book them all on a boat and bring them home by sea. Subsequent trips were made in the family truck, pitching a tent and camping by the side of the road each night.



Morrie Pink's Motorbike

Whenever the subject of some of Nungarin's memorable characters comes up, Jack Kiss's name is usually mentioned. During the late 30s, Jack camped just north of the railway line in the bush between the Knungajin-Narkeening Road and the Nungarin-Chandler Road. He had a cart made from two 4-gallon buckets mounted on a couple of old bike wheels, which he used to cart home the swill collected from the Nungarin Hotel. The swill was ostensibly for his pigs, but locals were firmly convinced that he cooked it up and ate it himself. Jack was a short man, rather grubby, and with a long scraggly white beard. One day, he managed to fluster Moreen Craig (the postmaster's daughter) when he went into the post office to collect his mail. He leant across the counter and demanded, "Kiss please". Surprisingly, Jack was a brilliant billiard player, and there was a belief that he was Australian champion at one time.

There was another occasion when a homophonic surname elicited momentary consternation and confusion. A few years ago, Les Hoare's daughter, Daphne, introduced herself to Bev Hodges at the Shire office by saying, "My name is Daphne Goulding, I used to be a Hoare."

Even though times were tough, the social life in Nungarin in the early days was hectic and marvellous. Alfred Dugdale was a lithographer in Great Britain, but when he arrived in Western Australia he found work as a Jackaroo with Donald Mackintosh at Mount Churchill Station near Carnarvon. He then married Mackintosh's sister, Mary Isabella, who was the granddaughter of James Drummond, Western Australia's first botanist. The couple moved to Perth where Alfred was employed in the Government Printing Works. Later the family took up land in the Nungarin district under the Civil Servants' Land Settlement Scheme. When the first settlers arrived, most headed

A Piece of String

north from Nangeenan, and came to a settlement area which at that time didn't even have a name. A postcard sent to Mrs Dugdale in May 1910 was addressed to:

*Mrs A.E. Dugdale
c/- Mr Chown
Civil Service Settlement
Nangeenan
E. Railway
W.A.*

The Dugdale home, 'Toxteth', was built at Burran Rock, and was the scene of many a dance and social function before the Burran Rock Memorial Hall was built in 1921. Their daughter, Euphemia, played the organ at the Burran Rock church, and for the local dances, and when the church finally closed, the organ was given to her.

May 12th 1914. A brilliant assemblage gathered at the homestead 'Toxteth Farm' Burran Rock on the night of the 15th inst., when at the invitation of Mr & Mrs Alfred E. Dugdale, a large number of friends attended to pay homage to their eldest daughter, Miss Effie Dugdale on the occasion of her attaining her 21st birthday. Mr Walter Hodges once again acted as M.C. Many happy speeches were made and songs ably rendered. The evening was rounded off with a splendid supper and the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save the King'.⁵

When Norm and Lil Bodey were expecting their first child, they borrowed a baby's cot from Effie (née Euphemia Dugdale) and Arthur Murray.

Frank and Norman [Bodey] turned up at our place in their huge truck, very much under the influence of alcohol: they could hardly stand up. They parked this truck in between a large tree and our front garden fence. My father, Arthur, loaded the cot on the back of the truck and the Bodey boys were about to leave. First there was an argument as to who would drive. Frank won, and now at the wheel, says, "I'm going forward". Norm says, "No, go backwards". Either way would be disaster for the tree or the fence. Father ordered Frank out, hopped in himself and saved everything by driving the truck out onto the road. Frank, now back at the wheel, away they went. They were about to turn into their paddock when we heard this almighty bang. Father and three of us kids ran to the scene. The cot was

*lying on the road and Frank was saying in his very slurred voice, "I saw three posts and I thought if I headed for the middle one I'd be right."*⁶

Bill Riddell came from Scotland on what can only be described as a whim. As a lad his mother sent him down to the shops to buy her a packet of cigarettes. On the way he had a chance meeting with Jim Pirie, and the pair decided to immigrate to Australia. The two men took up land in the north of the district, and when Bill returned to Great Britain about forty years later, he met up with his aged mother, whose first words were, "Where are my fags?"

Another laconic Scot whose comings and goings were rather precipitant was Frank Whyte. Frank was very economical with his words, but what he did say was always worth hearing. His good mate, John Jack, recounted his memories of Frank:

For seven years Frank was working in various locations around Western Australia before I first met him in mid-May 1964. My father told me that he was getting a new man in for seeding and so arrived Frank Webster Whyte ... When Frank first came to the farm he stayed working for eighteen months and one day, and not once in this time did he leave beyond the farm gate. Then he left for a change of scenery. However he arrived back a few weeks later to carry on where he left off ... My father said, "You're back Frank". Frank simply replied, "Yes". He then had a bite to eat and got on with the job in hand.

Frank came and went in this fashion for eleven years. On that first occasion Frank returned rather sooner than expected, but at other times he would return later than expected. On one particular occasion, during seeding, Frank told me that he had to go to Koorda. Seeing an opportunity, I asked Frank if he would be able to pick up some points for the cultivator bar. "No trouble", he said and wandered off. He was gone for some time; in fact we had finished seeding when he eventually returned in late July. He said, "I can't stay, but here are the points".

Some may have wondered at the comings and goings over those eleven years, but we never did. As far as we were concerned the gate to the property and the door to our house was permanently open to Frank.⁷

Freemen of Nungarin

One way of recognising people who have made an outstanding contribution to the community is by granting the freedom of the municipality. Only four people have been awarded the honour of being declared Freemen of the Nungarin Shire. Marie ‘Aunty Jim’ Farrell was the first in 1979, with the others being Philip Cornish in 1985, Bert Waterhouse in 1993 and Dr John Radunovich in 2008.

Philip Cornish came to Nungarin in 1928 to take up farming at Knungajin with his sister and brother-in-law, Mollie and Jim Stanton. He married Phyllis Dawe in 1941, and was elected as the Champion representative on the Nungarin Road Board in 1945. He retired from the Board in 1960.

Some of the achievements while he was on the council was the establishment of a school bus run through the eastern wards, the inauguration of a bush fire brigade in the district, the development of the local swimming pool in conjunction with the Army, the purchase of the Road Board’s first high lift grader in 1948, and the formation of a plant reserve fund.

In the mid 40s, Mr Cornish was nominated as a representative to the Mt Marshall Regional Development Council, a position which he held for more than forty years.

In 1963, Mr Cornish became an inaugural member of the Country Regional Council, and has been declared a life member.

He has also been connected with the Rural Water Council since 1953 ... He has also been widely involved in different sporting clubs in the Nungarin district. For some time he has been patron of the badminton and hockey clubs, and is currently vice-president of the bowling club.⁸

Bert Waterhouse was a principal of the Waterhouse family hardware business, which operated in Nungarin for a record seventy-five years. Bert was a member of the Nungarin Road Board from 1959 to 1960, and of the Shire council from 1961 to 1971, serving as President from 1962 to 1964. Bert was a Justice of the Peace, and had many sporting interests including cricket, football, hockey, tennis, badminton, bowls and golf. He won a golf club championship, and was treasurer of the club for over twenty years, being awarded a life membership for his years of dedication.

Both Bert and Muriel were keen and accomplished ballroom dancers and you could always be assured of a slick floor when they got busy with the Weeties.

Dr John Radunovich served the Nungarin community for over fifty years, beginning his practice at Kununoppin in May 1958. During his tenure, Dr John treated as many as five generations of the same family, and in an interview with the *West Australian* newspaper, he told of the unmitigated delight he found in knowing every one of his patients and their families, and in seeing the children and grandchildren of babies he had delivered, grow up and prosper.

In 2008, the people of Nungarin had the opportunity to show their appreciation and to honour Dr John for his dedication to the community when the Nungarin Shire Council hosted a civic reception on Thursday 24th July and presented him with a gift and the Freedom of the Town.

Tom Bennett:

Nungarin Road Board Secretary 1938-1941 and 1946-1954

At his initial interview for the position of Nungarin Road Board Secretary, Tom had been anxious to impress, so he frequently and deferentially addressed the members of the interview panel by using their correct titles; “Mr Williams” and “Mr Hodges”. It wasn’t until later that he discovered that he had their names the wrong way around, but he got the job anyway.

The secretary’s house was only able to boast four electric light bulbs, one for each of the interior rooms, so whenever they needed to visit the backyard toilet, they had to remove one of the globes from the inside and put it in the socket on the back verandah. In spite of the limited number of light globes, the electricity account seemed to be inexplicably high. Then Tom noticed that every time the back screen door slammed, the power meter lurched forward!

Not long after Tom was appointed as Road Board Secretary, Sir James Mitchell (at that time Lieutenant Governor of Western Australia) arrived in Nungarin for an official visit. When he arrived, not a soul was present except Tom. While Tom was highly embarrassed, Sir James wasn’t in the least perturbed. The Road Board Members arrived in dribs and drabs throughout the day, while Sir James got out his shotgun and happily filled in the time by shooting a few parrots.

Tom remembered quite a few local identities who lent colour to the Nungarin community. He remembered Les Hoare as a trim little man who always favoured long words. On one occasion when Les was checking a column of figures, he said to Tom in exasperation, “Well, I’ve looked and looked at these columns, and I can’t get an affinity of figures”. Tom laughingly responded, “What you mean is, they don’t add up”.

The rough patch at the railway crossing at the east end of town must have been there for a long, long time. Tom remembers Mrs Furphy ripping into town in their T-Model Ford. As she hit the railway crossing, all the car doors would fly open. It did it every time. Mrs Furphy was a rather smartly dressed woman who had a maid, and often wore a fox fur. It obviously didn’t impress one young fellow who asked his mother, “Is that lady coming today, you know the one who always wears a dead dingo around her neck?”⁹

Tom’s situation as Road Board Secretary was sorely tried the day he had to remonstrate with ‘Tiger’ Lyons. Tiger owned an ex-Army 4WD power wagon which he used for the dual purpose as a tractor, and also as a vehicle to drive into town for his stores. Unfortunately, the wagon was fitted with left-hand drive. Tom informed him that the vehicle had to be converted to right-hand drive to comply with Australian legislation. Tiger bent to the task and changed the steering wheel and the accelerator over, but found that the adaptation of the brake and the clutch pedal presented too great a challenge. His solution to the problem was to install a home-grown conversion – one of his kids had to be installed in the vehicle to operate the brake and clutch whenever they went to town.¹⁰

Charlie Orchard was another person that Tom remembered. Charlie was taken prisoner of war by the Japanese during the Second World War, and was badly beaten for stealing out of the compound to get food for the men who were weak and ill. After the war he frequently got drunk, especially with the McCorry boys who had a camp in the bush (known locally as ‘the den of iniquity’). On one occasion Phil Cornish arrived to pick up Charlie to help with a job on the farm. Charlie had had an altercation with Mick McCorry, and was quite agitated, so Phil had a great deal of trouble in getting him safely tucked into the dicky seat of the little Pontiac car. At long last they got under-way, when suddenly the focus of Charlie’s grievance shifted to Bill Green. “Stop the car”, he yelled, “I’m going back to kill Bill Green”. The only way that Phil could distract him was by singing with great animation, “A Shanty in Old Shanty Town”. Apparently they made quite a spectacle as they careered along with Charlie shouting blue murder and Phil singing at the top of his voice.

Tom says that quite a few people had wanted to kill Bill Green at one time or another. Bill was a likeable, affable, talkative rogue. He would happily lend you money, and then borrow it back the next day. At one time he owned the powerhouse and garage and used to sell Tom his cars. Tom had a penchant for good cars and used to change them frequently.

Tom had a real passion for cars and motorbikes, having restored twelve vintage motorcycles and five cars after his retirement. In 1994, at the age of 84, Tom bought his dream machine, a new Harley-Davidson Road King with sidecar. At that time his shed in Kellerberrin held a gorgeous bright yellow Morgan, a rare 1922 Fiat Tourer and a 1922 Buick. Unfortunately he had to give up his motorbike licence a few years later, but contented himself with flitting around in his BMW Z3 convertible (bright red of course!). Even at the age of 92, he was still buzzing around in it with his good mate, 76 year-old Bob Young. Tom and Bob had been mates for more than fifty years, having met when they worked together at Nungarin.

During WWII, between 1941 and 1946, Tom took leave from his position at the Road Board and joined the Air Force as a transport pilot and instructor. A highlight of his war service was being the skipper of the first DC3 Dakota flown into Tokyo to prepare the RAAF base there after peace was declared.

During his time with local government in Nungarin, Tom introduced the innovative Contributory Bitumen Scheme, and also designed a loading implement nicknamed 'the chinaman' because of its conical shape, and a sandspreader. Both of these were designed by Tom and manufactured by Mathers at Kellerberrin. Tom said he should have taken out a patent because the Main Roads Department made and used many of them.¹¹

Tom's wife Hazel was a gentle and talented lady who had a great love of gardening. She particularly loved geraniums, and had actually developed a few new varieties. The couple did not have any children of their own, but as Tom said, they loved everyone else's. Hazel passed away at almost 95 years of age, and Tom died in 2003 at the age of 93.

Peter Boekelaar: An Innocent Abroad

Peter Boekelaar came to Nungarin from Holland in May 1950. He stayed for six months and worked for Fred Williams and Phil Cornish. This is his story:

A Piece of String

In the years after the war I got an inkling to migrate and the mother of my girl friend (who is now my wife of 46 years) was a member of the Country Women's Association in Holland, and one day I read in their journal an article by Mrs Williams, the then President of the C.W.A. I wrote to Mrs Williams and asked her about work in the country and promptly I received an invitation to come to their farm in the wheat and sheep belt in W.A. So consequently I resigned my permanent postal career. I booked myself on the first charter flight of the K.L.M. to travel to Sydney. I arrived on Anzac Day 1950. Again I booked a plane for Perth (Ansett ANA), and then I took the train, arriving in a very small township called Nungarin. Ted Williams drove me to the farm where I met the lady of the house and their sons Harry and Charlie. Those guys played hockey and they asked me if I was interested to come and play in their team ... so I bought my blue jersey and black pants and off we went. I travelled with the girls and other guys in a small school bus to Kununoppin, Yelbeni, Trayning and Mukinbudin. A brand new life this was for me.

One day I was approached by a sturdy bloke who spoke fluent Dutch. Now that is something you don't expect to find, isn't it? The guy told me his name, Ken Borsboom. Before I go further with this anecdote I have to tell you the whole connection of my story. In the old country where I was a postal clerk, once a week a lady used to mail a parcel of newspapers for her husband who migrated to a certain place in Australia. So every week she came; I weighed the parcel and after she paid I put on the stamps and off went the parcel. When the bulky bloke announced himself as Ken Borsboom, all of a sudden my memory started to work overtime, and I continued with telling Ken that he came from a certain town in Holland and that I knew his wife very well ... Ken was rather shocked to hear all the details but we were convinced that such an occasion is actually a billion to one possibility.

One day a spark flew out of a locomotive chimney and landed in Jack Tiller's holding paddock. I was doing some repair work on the fence with an old bushman called Jack Craigy. Seeing the flames growing bigger and bigger we proceeded to alert the fire brigade and soon the place was overrun with volunteers. Then the fire truck arrived. For some unknown reason the engine was U.S. (or as the Germans would say "kaput"). The commander of the brigade gave me an order to go a.s.a.p. to tell them in the Road Board office that the "bloody truck is bugged". I did as I was ordered to do.

I knocked on the door and when a lady opened I uttered the four words I have just mentioned. I can still see the expression on the lady's face. If that lady is still alive, by this my sincere apologies. I was then a greenhorn, not knowing the meaning of the Aussie lingo (they don't teach those words in Dutch high schools).

For a short time I had the opportunity of working for a person for whom I still have the great admiration, Philip Cornish, and not to forget dear Phyllis. These two gave me valuable advice for our start of life in a new country ... One day Philip asked me if I wanted to come to the Toc H club meeting which I enjoyed doing. But there was a request; Phil asked me if I could give a little talk about something that would be of interest for the blokes in Nungarin.

I arrived at the point where there is a similarity in problems; however, negative contra positive. Holland had too much water, Australia not enough water. Since the 14th century my ancestors had reclaimed land and had been successful, but the solution for this continent was to create an inland sea. I told them how this reclamation took place by building dykes. Now at this point there was this young guy, the more I used the word dyke, the more the guy laughed, and when I said "In Holland hundreds of people live near or on dykes", the whole audience bursted loose in laughing. So the laughing clown told me that dyke in Aussie is a 'dunny in the backyard'. I always want the last word, and I ended the lecture with, "In Holland we have not got dunnies – we have deep sewerage".¹²

Daniel Victor Bryant

Danny was a despatch rider in France during WWI, and afterwards he migrated to Western Australia and worked at various places around the wheatbelt before buying a farming property east of Nungarin. During WWII he enlisted in the C.M.F. Garrison Battalion and served as a guard, returning to his farm after the War.

Danny was a keen fisherman and made an annual pilgrimage to Kalbarri. He was also an excellent rifle shot and a real character. As he got older, Danny sold his farm to Barry and Kevin Cornish, and as Kevin and Joy lived not far from Danny's camp, they kept an eye on him. They had an arrangement to check that he was ok each morning, and agreed that he would give them a call on the 2-way radio when he woke up.

The calls got earlier and earlier, and even though Kevin and Joy were early risers, when the calls started at about half-past four in the morning they thought that they should say something to him. Danny explained that he didn't look at the clock, but watched until the sun threw a shadow over a certain spot on the wall. As the sun rose earlier, so did Danny.

Marion Young recalled that he had a different alarm system in earlier days. He used to wait in bed until one of his chooks came in and laid an egg on top of the unlit stove. He would then get up, light the fire, and cook the egg for his breakfast. At least he knew the egg was fresh.

Danny didn't have much of a reputation as a cook. Doris Stockdale (step-daughter of Harry Radcliffe) recalls the time he had agreed to look after the Stockdale kids:

I would have been about seven years old and my mother was very sick for a few weeks and he was looking after me and Roy George. He would always cook rice for breakfast and he was no cook, it tasted horrible. I would go and hide in the harvester bin. He and my two brothers would go looking for me – they never found me.

Being an inveterate prankster, Danny probably expected to receive as good as he gave, and he did. Doris remembers the terrible tricks they played on him:

I remember Danny Bryant so well. He would sometimes work on our farm ... Sometimes on Saturday he would ride a pushbike into the Nungarin Hotel and would come home after dark. We would open the main gate and put a piece of barbed wire across it. He would get cut. I don't remember him ever hitting us. He would sleep on the verandah and we would put sugar and flour in his bed. He never had sheets on his bed. A blanket on the mattress and a blanket on the top of him, the rest was wheat bags on the bed sewn together for warmth. We also had the same wheat bags on our beds for extra warmth.¹³

Danny also had a bit of a Robin Hood side to his character, although he didn't make any distinction between rich and poor. Danny's friends and acquaintances often found that various useful tools and bits and pieces disappeared from their workshops when he did, and at other times he arrived for a visit and made generous presentations of similar desirable small items. Eventually everyone realised that Danny had a kind

of 're-distribution' process happening, and many people wondered just how long it would be before they got their own stuff back.

Arthur 'Marble' Corunna

Arthur Corunna, or 'Marble' as he was known, was reared on 'Corunna Downs' station, and sent to the 'Swan Native and Half Caste Mission' in Fremantle when he was about eight years old.¹⁴ A few years later, following a savage beating by one of the mission workers, he and a couple of mates ran away, and hitched a ride on the train to Kellerberrin from where they struck out through Hines Hill, finding refuge with a family who gave them some work helping with a fencing contract. It was while he was engaged with the fencing that Arthur met Con McCorry who was looking for a couple of boys to help on his station:

One day, a man came by. He was a good-looking man with a big moustache. He came in a sulky, all dressed up. At first, when I saw him coming, I thought he was a policeman, and I nearly ran away. He pulled up at the house and said to the contractor, "I'm after a boy who can ride. I hear you've got two boys, can they ride? There's jobs going if they can."

"I can ride", I said. I prayed that the horse wouldn't throw me as soon as I jumped on ... I clung on to the reins and mane and prayed with all my heart I wouldn't fall off. For twenty-five miles, I bumped up and down, barely hanging in the saddle ... We went through forest country, they were clearing for a new settlement, then one more hill, then Nungarin. The sun had set by then. It was tea-time. That was my first start in life.¹⁵

Arthur worked for McCorry for the next three years, being paid five shillings a year and his keep. He mustered cattle all over the district, and appeared to be quite happy there saying, "McQuarie [McCorry] was a good man, he never growled at me."¹⁶

After Con McCorry was sold up, Arthur found work doing various jobs around Nungarin. He worked for Hancock and O'Loughlin who both had blocks just west of Nungarin (now owned by the Creagh and the Herbert families), as well as doing odd jobs for Micky Farrell and Fred Williams. In 1920 he undertook full-time work with David Jones, and the two men soon entered into a share-farming agreement. The pair enjoyed a successful partnership and by 1921, Arthur was able to purchase his own property in the Mukinbudin district, and moved there after his marriage in 1929.¹⁷

It seems that Arthur was also a fair cook, as in the list of prize-winners in the 1923 Nungarin Agricultural Show, Arthur Corunna is listed as taking out the second prize for the Best Cake made by a Bachelor. He was beaten by Gordon Creagh.

The Creagh Brothers: An adventure into Farming (1910-1926)

Excerpts and comments from the Tamarua Diaries, by Keith Creagh

Robert Luscombe (RL) Creagh and Ronald Buzacott (RB) Creagh¹⁸ were sons of the Reverend Stephen Mark Creagh and his wife, a missionary couple, and were born on the Island of Mare, one of the Loyalty Islands in New Caledonia in the Pacific.

By the beginning of the twentieth century both RL and RB Creagh were civil servants with the Western Australian Government. RL was a clerk in the Public Works Department and RB was a draftsman in the Lands Department. RB had three daughters and three sons (Gladys Helen, Clarice Muriel, Eileen Audrey, Harold Stephen, Gordon Avery and Ronald Frank), but RL never married (his fiancée had died tragically in a drowning accident in Queensland).

In the early 1900s, when the Government was encouraging civil servants to take up agricultural land in the district, the brothers applied for and were granted four blocks of land in the Nungarin district, totalling just over three and a half thousand acres.

In about November they went to have a look at their land and get an idea of what equipment they would require. Under the scheme each block was supplied with a thousand-gallon tank – these were very handy and were very good quality tanks. They then returned to Perth to purchase the necessary equipment; axes, mattocks, etc, cooking utensils and other camping necessities.

Eventually, all was ready for them to leave and ‘go farming’. I am not sure about their journey, but I do know that people used to take the train to Nangeenan, and then a carrier would transport them to their land, so I presume this could have been the case in this instance.

The Creagh brothers arrived in Nungarin on 29th April 1910; they called their farm ‘Tamarua’ which meant ‘brothers’ in the native language of Mare. They set up camp and commenced clearing their land. In the first year they cleared fifty acres with the axe, and burnt and prepared the ground for a crop.

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As time went by, more clearing was done and more crop was planted. I am unable to find any mention of the purchase of horses and wagons or a cart, but these would be needed to transport their hay and grain.

The first camp was on flat ground about a quarter of a mile in from the road boundary. In 1912 it was decided to build a more permanent dwelling. RB having been a draftsman, had a flair for architecture, and he designed the new home to be constructed of mud brick. The bricks (measuring 18 inches long by 9 inches wide and 9 inches thick) were made on site from the soil nearby at the back of the house. A builder, named Slater, from Kellerberrin was engaged to do the building.

The building itself consisted of a sitting (lounge) room 36 feet by 18 feet with two large bedrooms on each side. The kitchen area was a temporary lean-to, which was to make do until further funds were available to complete the house. This was eventually done twelve years later. It is interesting to note that the cost was £60 for materials and £60 for labour. Twelve years later the price had doubled. When the home was completed it had four bedrooms, a large sitting room, a dining room, pantry, kitchen, with a two-metre verandah all round. Later the back verandah was enclosed to make a bathroom and laundry.



The Creagh Family at Tamarua

Gus Herbert extreme left, then Muriel and Grandma Clarice Creagh. Standing at back Harold, Gordon and Uncle Luscombe, Sid Herbert Extreme right with Pa Creagh next to him. Ron Creagh on the bike in front

A Piece of String

1914 was a drought year, so there was a shortage of stock feed and water, therefore all soaks and water holes were cleaned out ready to catch any rain which might come. The 10th April 1914 was Good Friday, so they took a holiday and worked on a new tennis court.

The drought broke in January 1915 and was apparently quite a wet year. On several days the ground was too sticky for drilling. By 16th August 1,969 points were recorded. October 4th RL took the sulky to Mr Kahl, the blacksmith and wheelwright at Kununoppin, for repairs. The sulky was retrieved two days later at a cost of 35 shillings for two new axles. Meanwhile RB went to Perth to the Show, and while there, purchased some hayforks etc. Hay cutting was in full swing and some visitors came for a holiday and to help with stooking hay.

In early 1917 water was short and had to be carted from Kwelkan dam. It appears the harvest must have been reasonably uneventful and was finished by mid-February. About mid-March the season broke and ploughing, cultivating and drilling seems to have gone along without many hold-ups.

The first Nungarin Show was held on 29th September. Prizes - four firsts and four seconds. A horse (Winnie) got a stake in a hoof, and despite the efforts of A. Nicholls and S.P. Herbert working all afternoon and all night, she died.

The 1917 harvest was going well into February, there having been rain during harvest. In May the first flock of sheep from Elder-Shenton & Co arrived (18 ewes and 18 wethers). Rabbits were becoming a problem, so a poison cart was bought.

Eileen's marriage to Sidney P. Herbert took place on 19th June 1918.

On 18th July, Harold went into camp (WWI). He did his training at Blackboy Hill and in October his unit boarded the 'Boona', the last troop ship to leave Western Australia. While the 'Boona' was sailing across the Indian Ocean, the war ended, and the ship needed more coal to make the return journey to Australia. Entry to Durban Harbour was not allowed because of the risk of disease, so small boats came out with coal. Unfortunately, the crew of the coal boats were sick with Beubonic Influenza, and some of the

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troops got the flu. However they set sail and arrived back in Gage Roads in early December, but were unable to disembark because of the plague on board. The most severe cases were taken off to Woodman Point Quarantine Station, and the rest of the crew were all eventually discharged early in the New Year.

In the days before radio, news didn't travel very fast, but even so; Peace was celebrated in Nungarin with a special thanksgiving service on November 17th.

The early part of 1919 was very dry, so water carting was a constant job until the opening rains came in mid-April. Harold turned twenty-one on 6th May, and in August RB gave his block at Kwelkan to Harold under the Soldier Settlement Scheme.

In November everyone was busy hay-carting with two wagons; five loads the first day, ten loads the next and nine the next. Harvesting seems to have been quite normal and wheat carting was finished by 27th January.

1920, Harold and Gordon started a new dam on February 4th and finished on 11th. On July 9th RB went to Perth on business for Veasey's house – his architectural knowledge was in demand on many occasions. Rainfall for this year was only 531 points. 605 acres were planted, and when harvesting and wheat carting finished on 26th January, 785 bags had been carted, a yield of 4 bushels per acre.

1921 started with dam sinking with horses and a scoop. The ground was very hard and required blasting. Water carting was a fairly constant occupation, but if there wasn't enough rain and no water in the dams there was no alternative. The season broke in May. There were 436 pts of rain recorded for the month.

25th May, Gladys married Arthur N. Birks.

After the rabbits we were faced with another menace, dingoes were killing the lambs. Contract clearers were engaged at a rate of 30/- per acre. We finished drilling on 6th July. The 1921-22 harvest totalled 1028 bags.

A Piece of String



The Creagh sisters: Gladys (at the back), Clarice Muriel (left) and Eileen.

Photo courtesy of Bob Herbert

The 1922 rainfall was quite good and 638 acres were planted. In August ten pigs were sold to G.H. Herbert at 35/- each. In September a Sunrise plough was bought for £66/10/-. Clearing contractors were engaged to clear 180 acres. The Nungarin Show was held on 30th September with ten first prizes and five seconds being brought home. We bought a new Sunshine harvester and started harvest on 15th November. Harvest was finished by February 1st and wheat carting by 5th.

19th January 1923, Muriel's marriage to Gus Herbert. 19 points of rain fell as Gus and Muriel drove to Oakover. The three Creagh daughters were all married at Tamarua.

We started drilling on April 9th 1923, and continued through to 6th July, seeding about 600 acres. There was quite a lot of rain which slowed down the program somewhat. By now

all the hay had been used and one ton was bought from S.P. Herbert for £5. In addition about four tons of chaff were bought from Northam. October was busy with shearing, hay cutting, and carting over 80 tons of hay. There was rain during harvest, but by 4th January 600 bags of wheat had been carted, and we finished harvest by 15th. No record is made of the total yield, but it was a good season with 1380 points of rain for the year.

During 1924, the diaries contained numerous mentions of consignments of sheepskins to Wesfarmers. In March, seed wheat was purchased from the Merredin State farm. By 19th June, the area in crop was 800 acres, and the rain was fairly regular. In September some pigs were sent to Fogget Jones. During the month 103 sheep, 2 rams, 57 lambs were shorn. October was busy with hay cutting and fallow, and cultivating with a 'Linke-Noake' (I never saw one, so I have to take this as being so). November was occupied with hay carting and then the start of harvest. A contract bag sewer came from Perth and would sew about 300 bags a day. As usual harvest went on into January of the following year, and finished on 10th January with a total of 3663 bags, or 10989 bushels. The last of Harold's wheat was carted,

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which totalled 2593 bags, which with the 3663 from Tamarua, brought a grand total of 6256 bags. Harold's wheat was carted to Kwelkan, and most of the Tamarua wheat went to Nungarin.

In January 1925, the 'Wizard' light was installed. The Wizard consisted of a fuel tank that held Benzene. The tank was built to withstand pressure, and had air pumped into it to force fuel vapour through a very thin copper tube to two or three lamps suspended from the ceiling. The lamp had a mantle which had to be heated in order to ignite the fuel vapour. There was one lamp in each of the kitchen, the dining room, and the sitting room, and they gave a very good light. The cost was £43/6/6.

On 6th March 1925 there were 70 points of rain. Much time was spent making bricks and carting timber for the new garage. We also carted super, and burnt stubble as well as preparing for the cropping program. On 11th April, work proceeded on the garage. It was built of mud brick with a corrugated galvanised iron roof and was approximately 25 feet long and 12 feet wide.

21st April – Inspector Harlow called and stayed overnight. Drilling was in full swing. Seeding continued through May into June, finishing on 18th. The garage was finished and on 1st July, Reilly¹⁹ and Harold brought up the new car, a 4 cylinder Chevrolet tourer.

During July, time was spent digging a trench for rabbit netting. At first this was done using a mattock, but later a single-furrow plough was used (by August the whole boundary had been rabbit-netted). On 9th July the fight continued with the delivery of 10 lbs of calcium cyanide and a 'Buzacott Blower' for fumigating the rabbits.

On 20th July 40 bags of wheat were delivered to Wesfarmers at Nungarin at 5/2 (actually five shillings and twopence farthing) per bushel.

On 5th August we started digging holes for the telephone posts and all the posts were up by the 26th. The telephone was connected in September.

September was spent fencing, fumigating and chopping suckers. There were 56 points of rain on 10th. We started shearing on 14th, and finished on 23rd,

A Piece of String

except for the show sheep. The Nungarin Show was on the 26th September and we received prizes for sheep, hay, grain and wool.

Hay cutting began on 1st October, and finished on the 17th. We cut about 80 tons of hay, and used 27 balls of twine. On the 26th, we took five pigs to Nungarin, and they sold at an average of £4/1/-. We started harvesting wheat on the 16th. All hands were on deck carting timber for Harold's house. The harvest continued, interspersed with rain and thunderstorms, right through to the end of the year. Harvest was completed on 9th January. Carting the grain with the wagon and dray, we finished on 14th. The temperature was 110° Fahrenheit (in the shade!). Wheat was sold to Watson Bros, Vanzetti and Coumbe.

18th February, Harold's marriage to Aimee Barclay.

On March 9th, we purchased two new Sundercut ploughs from H.V. McKay. We got 100 points of rain on 10th, and another 20 points on 11th, so busy harrowing, cultivating, and carting super. The new Case tractor arrived from Kwelkan on the 15th. We also received 25 cases of 'Cross' power kerosene and one case of petrol (each case held two four-gallon tins). By 20th, the tractor expert still not arrived, but he eventually turned up on 22nd. Payments on the tractor: first £225, second £256/10/-, and the third £270/9/-, plus insurance £8/11/-.

On April 1st, the clearers finished 170 acres at 15/- per acre. On 6th, 8 tons of super and 6 cases of kerosene were obtained for Harold's block No. 9. On 23rd, we drilled wheat in No. 8 with the Suntyne and tractor, using 48 lb of seed and 80 lb of super. We did twenty-six acres in seven hours. The paddocks were still pretty rough causing numerous machinery breakdowns.

Seeding with new tractor and Suntyne combine – did 26 acres in 7 hours.

In seven days, 205 acres were seeded.

We placed on order a ten-foot Sunshine Harvester (W.A. model). Payment is in three instalments of £72 each February (1927-28-29) plus ten percent interest.

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We had rain on June 1st 1926 so started ploughing, cultivating and drilling the next day. We finished seeding a total of 910 acres by 6th June. Later in the month we were occupied with sheep work and marking and tailing lambs (30 ewes, 22 wethers, total sheep 254). Sheepskins were consigned to Wesfarmers and 2 bags of wheat to Royal Agricultural Society (must have been a competition). The ground was very boggy and we were unable to plough. On 26th, Ron took 15 horses to G.H. Herbert's to transfer to Bastion's at Lake Brown for agistment at 1/- per week per head.

On July 1st, a contract was let to erect 70 chains of fencing posts for £10/10/-. On July 7th 1926, the expert arrived to overhaul the tractor. On 18th, we erected the telephone line to 'Warralea' (previously called Harold's).

The Creagh family were faithful members of the Congregational Church. But this has not always been so. Annie Creagh, daughter of the Reverend Stephen Creagh, explained how Stephen and his siblings (as well as ongoing generations) were lost to the worshipping community of the Anglican Church:

The Creaghs were members of the Anglican Church, but like many people of the present day, the family were represented by the children at the services. The mother was too much occupied with the cares of a large family, and I am afraid the father was rather lax in his religious duties. The boy's behaviour could not have been exemplary as one Sunday a lady sitting in the next pew was so exasperated by their whispering and inattention that she leaned across and boxed Stephen's ears! Their father, who seems to have been of rather an irascible temperament, exacted an apology from the lady and forbade his children to enter the church again. They afterwards attended the Congregational Church, which was nearer and more convenient for their mother.²⁰

The Dawe Family of Burrans Rock

The Dawe family took up land at Burrans Rock under the Civil Servants Settlement Scheme in 1909. Samuel was a Justice of the Peace, and a one-time member of the Perth Road Board.

Frank and his brother Stan (who were affectionately known locally as "Front Dawe" and "Side Dawe") were keen sailors, and it must have been quite a wrench for them to move to the Nungarin district and to be so far from the ocean. In January 1909,



Samuel and Elizabeth Dawe with their family; Frank (left), Olive (later Mrs Harry Payne), Archie (seated), and Stan (right).

Stan was a member of the crew of the 14 ft dinghy, *Elma*, that won the Australian Dinghy Championship on Sydney Harbour. The race was competed in a 63-knot gale, and of a fleet of 23, only six boats completed the course. The *Elma* was the first yacht from Western Australia to win an Australian championship in the Eastern States, and it was to be forty years before another W.A. yacht won a similar national title. Stan enlisted in the 10th Light

Horse Regiment during World War One and fought in Egypt for three years. On his return he married Evaline Maria Randell, the granddaughter of Hon. George Randell, Colonial Secretary during Lord Forrest's term of office.

Frank was a talented photographer and took many photos during the establishment of the Nungarin district. He was an artistic man; a member of the Nungarin Minstrels, well known for his excellent calligraphy, and for many years was secretary of the Nungarin Agricultural Society, and also the Nungarin branch of the Wheat and Woolgrower's Union. Frank was an excellent book-keeper and during World War Two, he took on the role of Assistant Nungarin Road Board Secretary while Tom Bennett was on active service with the Air Force. Frank and Ellen sold their farm in 1942, and purchased a dwelling at 56 First Avenue. They had three children; Norman (who died on the Thai-Burma Railway as a prisoner of the Japanese during WWII), daughter Phyllis who married Philip Cornish of Knungajin, and a son Trevor.

Samuel and Elizabeth's youngest son, Archie, was a bachelor and while on holiday at Bassendean in 1928, he got snagged in the river and drowned. Sadly, a few months after he died, his crops were placed second in the district cropping competition.

Olive Dawe married Harry Payne and their descendants still live at nearby Nukarni.

Gus Herbert

The Herbert family were among the pioneers of the Nungarin district, with Sidney Herbert taking up land in the Danberrin area in 1910. Bob Herbert recalled the circumstances that brought his father, Gustavus Herman ('Gus') to Nungarin after World War One:

Gus Herbert was born in South Australia in 1881. The family relocated to W.A. where Gus finished his schooling and took his first job at the Subiaco Post Office as a telegram boy. He was then only twelve or thirteen years old. He progressed in telegraphy which, in those days, was so important in national and international communications.

In the late nineties Gus was transferred to the goldfields where he became Post Master in various mining towns such as Broad Arrow, Bonny Vale, Mt. Malcolm, and finally Nullagine. In about 1907 he left his post office employment to take up a position on Balfour Downs station as a working partner to the station owner, Alf Crofton.

Gus loved the life, and in later life had many tales to tell of Aboriginal stockmen and mustering adventures. The War intervened and Gus enlisted in the Army on 21st July 1916. He served in France in the 2nd Division Signals Company where despatch riding and general communications made up his activities. At the cessation of hostilities he returned to W.A. and was finally discharged with the rank of Sergeant on 12th March 1919.

In 1910 Gus's younger brother, Syd, had taken up land in Nungarin. His enthusiasm for farming had rubbed off on Gus who, on being discharged, decided a change of lifestyle was his best move. He returned to Balfour Downs and rounded up his share of the horses to begin an epic journey to Nungarin with the assistance of an Aboriginal stockman named Tommy.

Gus never spoke about his journey, as droving trips were so commonplace in those days, and no doubt pretty boring. But horses were a valuable commodity in the wheatbelt areas, so the droving trip would have eventually proved really worthwhile.

I can only surmise as to the route Gus may have taken, leaving in the winter of 1919 about early July, heading for the Canning Stock Route and entering it at about No.21 Well. The journey would then have been to Wiluna, Paynes Find to Bencubbin and finally to Nungarin. As the crow flies a distance of about 1500 kms after about 150 kms to the start of the Stock Route. The actual droving distance would have been considerably longer. His arrival in Nungarin is well documented in the following article written by the late 'Cobber' Beurteaux:

*"I recall as a boy being in school in Nungarin and hearing whips cracking and horses moving by. We pulled back the canvas slides and hung out the windows to watch. The place seemed to be full of horses. They were being driven along by a huge black man on a beautiful big horse. There was another where the police station used to be and we could hear his whip cracking from the school. There appeared to be hundreds of horses. On going home from school I could follow their tracks which led into "Nooka". In the paddock to the south of the homestead there they all were, truly magnificent horses. It turned out to be Gus Herbert's project. I think they must have timed their droving trip to coincide with the seasons and left Balfour Downs Station near Port Hedland during the wet and timed their passage through the drier areas for winter when there was plenty of green feed and water. It was a great feat as there were only three men and with all those horses the trip must have taken a long time to complete. For months they broke them in using the circular yard built in past the house. The big black man rode them to a standstill - a couple a day. After they were quietened they were then broken to the plough in the paddock to the north of the house. Those were boom days and a lot of money was made as the horses cost them nothing and were sold for approximately £20 per head. They were north-west horses and would have first had to be rounded up. They would have had to carry all their provisions plus extra horses. The route they must have taken would probably have taken them down the Canning Stock Route and in through Bencubbin and down between Kununoppin and Mukinbudin. I will certainly always remember the day they arrived in Nungarin."*²¹

*Gus bought a partly cleared block immediately west of the town, which had been owned by a Mr Hancock, and this was to become the family home. Tommy never stayed long in Nungarin after the horse-breaking project was completed. Gus told me Tommy became increasingly uneasy living in a strange tribal area and finally, after a brief farewell, headed off with two horses on the return trip to Balfour Downs.*²²



*From Left: Bob, Gus, Clarice, Muriel and Cecily Herbert
Photo courtesy of Bob Herbert*

Walter Edward “Teddy” Pick

Teddy Pick was well known for his musical ability, and frequently amazed people by coaxing a tune out of an ordinary wood saw. Ted founded the very popular Krakajax band and played the banjo mandolin, the drums, xylophone, and of course the musical saw. Ted had a wonderful sense of humour, and told the most entertaining stories of early days in the district.

I came out from England with Mum and Dad in 1922 in a ship called the Ormond, and then came by train to Nungarin. We got picked up by Williamses and got taken out to their homestead at Mangowine and we stayed there for a while and then I think Dad came into the store in Nungarin for a period – in one of the stores there – owned by Tom Thick. I remember one time there when Mum had her eye on a dress in the shop, and Tom Thick said to Mum, “Oh go on, take it home”, and she said, “Oh no, Dad couldn’t afford it”. Tom said, “Don’t worry about that, go on, take it home.” Well she wouldn’t take it anyway. After that the store went

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up in smoke and he said to Mum, " Well I told you take that bloody dress home didn't I!"

I used to get around with Mick and Fat Thick, that is Tom Thick's two sons, and I used to get into quite a bit of bother sometimes with these two lads – not serious bother – anyway, I remember one Halloween period of time there used to be posts in the parking area, and rings where you used to tie your sulkies to, and these two boys got the end of some kerosene cases and cut the end out of them and nailed them onto the top of the post, and they put a candle on the base of it and hollowed out a watermelon or a pumpkin and chopped the eyes and nose and mouth out and they went to Mum, and Mum supplied them with bed sheets and they wrapped them around the pole, and it looked quite effective. They frightened a few people.

Another incident that I remember happening, I was told about it. It was the Bodey brothers – twin brothers – anyway their mother was coming home from Perth in the train. Anyway these two twins decide to come and pick mum up in the car – and they were only knee high to a grasshopper – and it was a great big car – a big Moon –and one stood up on the seat steering it and the other was down on the floor working the pedals and what-not – you know – it caused quite a stir, this big car coming in with just a kid standing up on the seat.

And there was another episode in Nungarin when Louie Burns – Louie put on a ball in the Nungarin Hall, and she had it all decorated up – incidentally this Louie Burns I'm talking about was later Mrs Crook – married Ernie Crook – anyway she was pretty friendly with Mum, anyway she came in and she was telling Mum all about the ball and she was telling Mum that a couple of kids broke into the hall and pinched some balloons, you know, and these kids just happened to be Mick and Fat Thick and myself. Mick and Fat, they thought they would get some of these balloons and the windows were too high so they said, "We'll go and get Picky – you know he's nice and short and small, and we'll pick him up and put him through the window." When I heard Louie telling Mum all about this I took off. Took off into the bush. She was going to get the police and everything!

There was another instance when a little chap called Tich Ashendene - Tich was a little short man – shorter than I was - Tich was a handy man

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around the place and he used to go from the store over to the station and pick up the veges, which used to come up in a big chaff bag, and Tich used to pick these veges up and put 'em on his back and walk them over to the shop. People reckon all they could see was a pair of legs. That was Tichy carrying a bag of veges and walking along.

Another instance I must mention was this Fat Thick, Fat was only a lad you know, he was only – I suppose he was only 15 or 16 at the most, but if you ran out of meat in the butcher's shop, he would tear off down to the slaughter yards and catch a sheep and kill it and dress it and have it back in the shop in record time... He would beat anyone at doing it. And he was only a kid. Pretty good.²³

The Watson Tape

Excerpts from a tape made by Janice Watson, during an interview with Hilda Watson and George Farrell.

I was thinking about our old bathroom, bloody old tin bath and no hot water unless you put a kerosene tin on in the back yard. Two lady schoolteachers were there, and a whole lot of lumpers. We used to have a big tin tub and we used to put the water on the garden afterwards. Things were hard then - girls in first, boys in last.

I came home from school one day and wandered into the kitchen and said, "Hey! Your house is on fire" – the bloody thing was burning up! The place was burning - just a hessian house. Tom Thick burnt something every couple of years, he burned the co-op, they saved that, he burnt the co-op house, every couple of years he had a fire – he said he couldn't get insurance any more.

Every Sunday morning we used to go to our place and ride horses, to see who was the best buck-jump rider. Tich Ashendene used to play the drums, he would be bashing them around until all hours. He made a one-string fiddle out of a cigar box. He was a good horseman too. He got quite a few and broke them in for George Clamp in Mukinbudin.

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One time we wanted to go to a dance at Nukarni, and the car wouldn't go because the vibrators [the coil] had had it. Dick Kruger lent us his vibrators. Turns out he wanted to go through to Merredin so he took the vibrators back. We came out of the dance and the car wouldn't start. No vibrators. We had to walk all the way home.

We always got bogged near the cemetery. To go to Nukarni we often drove along the railway line because the road was so rough. Jim Green had a motorbike and he was sick of having to push it through the mud. One day he had the shrewd idea he'd ride along the railway line, but he didn't know that the day before they had taken out some of the sleepers – so he was going along flat out and somersaulted into this ruddy great hole. One day he tried to ride the motorbike into the hotel - there's still the smash on the door where the bike wouldn't fit. Gee! It's a wonder he didn't get killed though.

Remember that Red Poll bull that Kruger had? Oh it was mad. Many a time Aunty Kelly had to climb up on the rails. She would be milking the cow and down would come the bull. The bull used to follow the fence around, now this night old Jim Green was walking home from Nungarin and he got up to the top end where it was not so wide across the paddock, and he's listening and couldn't hear anything, and he got about half way across the paddock when he hears it coming. Jim runs and runs and he only just got over the fence in time and skinned all his nose. Jim was that wild he went home and he was going to shoot it, but old Davy wouldn't let him. When they went to load him in the truck to send him to Perth there were great warnings all over the railway trucks. It's a wonder it didn't kill someone. It was always breaking out – getting into the schoolyard with kids there and everything.

Davy Jones would be the last bloke I'd think would ever drive a truck or a car, but when he bought a truck he got them to put a block under the accelerator so that he could only go a certain speed. When he was down the old place before he bought Red Forest, every Saturday morning he would drive around the boundary in case a rabbit or something landed there. There wasn't a rabbit on his place. He was a marvellous rifle shot. He used to wear dungarees. Sunday morning he used to get out with bar soap and spend hours washing the things. Very clean he was. He got an invitation to go into the opening of the Nungarin swimming pool, and bought himself a

new pair of dungarees. He took them up all odd and Alan Dayman said he couldn't wear them, he said, "Who's going to stop me - I'm only going to the officer's mess, good enough for me, good enough for them".

We used to have parties, Warner's place, Coumbe's place, everywhere they used to have parties. Lil Francis, Jolly's, Fred Williams. Mrs Francis used to have picnic days – she would get a crowd there and the menfolk would cart and pitch hay and all that. We used to go out to Karomin Rock on Sundays, and Knungajin. We would play cricket. We would go out to the lakes and have a swim. On New Year's Day we would always go out to Knungajin.

Jim Green, and Fred and Norm Watson were coming back from the old hotel to Nungarin in a little Rugby car and hit this donkey – that was the same night there was a circus on the reserve between the old place and the railway yard. Tom Thick used to buy these old Hupmobile cars and this chap, we used to call him 'Dingo' – he was supposed to take a Ford load over to the old pub, but he took this Hupmobile car instead. He gets half-way and this circus is on and he pulled up to have a look and forgot all about the stuff in the car and when he got back it was all gone. Talk about laugh. All of us kids had a great time that night.²⁴

Jim West: Nungarin Schoolmaster

On our arrival at the school house [December 1947] we found men working in what we presumed were our school grounds. They proved to be members of Nungarin Toc H constructing tennis courts for the school. As I had been in Perth Toc H 1932-1937, I was among friends and enjoyed Toc H for the rest of our stay, family included. This led to a life-long friendship with Cornishes, Bennetts, Creaghs, Dawes, Masters.

Margaret Brown arrived as my assistant teacher, who unfortunately had to board at the very ordinary hotel, however



Jim West in Naval uniform

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the young policeman, postmaster and station master all lived there. I succeeded a much older, more experienced head teacher, Hector McAinsh who had been suffering with cancer for some time, but continued to teach, eventually dying in January 1948. We moved into a shocking house and a disorganised school, but the basics were still sound.

We soon had the house nice with new furniture and floor coverings for this was our first home. We had no power. Electricity was generated by Maurice McLernon at his garage, but did not extend beyond the town block and we were outside that, so [we managed with] Aladdin lamps and candles and an ice chest. The green grocer, Norm McDougall, an ex-navy stoker, had an ice plant and he gave me ice provided I pulled my own from the brine, a task almost beyond me. Of course we had pan toilets and were soon very friendly with Mr and Mrs Jim Andrews who lived opposite – he was the sanitary and rubbish contractor. He was an ex-British Territorial and marched even with a full pan on his shoulder. Jim was probably one of the finest and most interesting men I have met in my life.

One thing we did have was an excellent water supply as a ten-inch main from the Goldfields Water Supply at Merredin passed our door to the Army Base Ordnance Depot, necessary for fire fighting. The water meter was defective - reading, we eventually found, only one-eighth of the actual consumption. Our lawns and gardens were beautiful.

Next door, to the south, was the Army Ordnance Depot, a bit run down when we arrived but soon grew enormously when it became the base for the Malaysian Campaign. The children from the Army camp comprised half of my school. Most other children were from farms.

The farm children arrived in two buses; Frank Mofflin with an International bus, did the northern circuit; Pop Dorizzi, over seventy, did the south. He was a real old gentleman, reputed to have been the State's first school-bus driver at Toodyay. We had no nonsense on school buses in those days.

We had hardly settled down when an Army Jeep came hurtling through the school fence, not far from where our two kids [Alan and Judith] were playing, so we met the Army as the Captain came up to apologise. A week later, a Jeep overturned down the road and the driver (Sgt. Barstow), was killed. We started to complain of speeding past the school between the camp and the vehicle park on the north side of the railway line.

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On the first weekend I was invited across the road to fill a vacancy in the cricket team and made 42 not out, including three sixes, and took a hat-trick; the last three wickets all brilliant catches. I am afraid I never again did so well, but it did wonders for my reputation with the town kids, especially the Harpers.

I had built a powerful dual-wave battery radio with my old HMV wind-up portable gramophone as record player, and was able to reproduce marvellous music through the twelve-inch speaker.

Well, Frank Mofflin's new bus gave him hell and in March 1948, broke down completely and was towed to Perth where it spent a month. Frank was allowed to collect the kids with his truck provided it was covered and had seats (which the Army provided), provided that a teacher always rode on the back. So, I went out on the truck every morning and afternoon in overalls – the dust was awful. Muriel had my shower, clothes and toast ready at 8.45 am and school commenced at 9. How could I survive? Toc H to the rescue. They volunteered to do the morning run: Tom Bennett, George Cummings (R & I Bank, and Frank's father-in-law) [Bob Herbert suggests this should be George Jennings], and Bert and Merv Waterhouse.

A week before the May holidays I developed a septic right shin where I had been hit by a mallee root ... so off to the Kellerberrin Hospital. I was well on the way to losing my leg. On the second day the doctor mixed a white powder beside the bed and injected huge quantities into my thigh. Within hours there was an improvement. This was the first use of penicillin. Lucky me.

In second term 1948, Maurice McLernon received the go-ahead to connect us to the town power; but it took him ages to find a couple of poles. One weekend he got going and got most of the ceiling wiring done. Having been an electronics technician in the Navy, I finished the job; switches, lights etc and we soon had light and power. The Public Works Supervisor gave us a built-in wooden-topped sink in the kitchen. The policeman got stainless steel!

By 1949 the Army camp was bursting at the seams. A Major was appointed and Displaced Persons were coming. More kids. Bruce Harper, Stan's son, was appointed a monitor. Stan had purchased Pop Dorizzi's school bus. More kids came from the Army and a third teacher was sent.

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We had to use the little Toc H room (the original Nungarin Road Board Office) as a classroom. The Displaced Persons arrived, mostly from the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia), but also some Poles, Czechs and Hungarians. So we commenced evening English classes every night. The Poles were a problem being illiterate even in Polish. However we had a few graduates in medicine, economics and engineering.

Margaret Brown was pregnant and had to resign, replaced by Betty Browne.

The new Commanding Officer, Major Tom Boyce, became a great friend and ate at our place every Tuesday night. He and his wife, Daphne, and two daughters were our friends until Tom and Daphne died in the late 80s.

1950 opened with three full-time teachers, Winnie Sampson, Brian Driscoll and myself. This was a brilliant staff and we had a good year in a very active town and Army camp. One day two builders arrived and, setting up camp in the school shed, proceeded to build a third school room.

1951, due to special promotion, I stayed at Nungarin and was very much involved, now being on the Kununoppin Hospital Board, RSL Secretary, and Secretary for the Nungarin Agricultural Society - therefore, the main organiser of the annual show. Frank Dawe, who preceded me, left fantastic records. All I had to do was follow them.

Well, something had to give. Muriel was pregnant. Teacher Brian Driscoll, a brilliant teacher and artist, left to call square dancing, and Win Sampson had chronic conjunctivitis and had to go to Perth. After a brief time with John Carew-Hopkins [indecipherable], we got Maurice Boyd who soon settled in.

In October, our son Robert Gordon arrived, and we took delivery of a Vauxhall sedan, a truly beautiful car. This Christmas vacation, now with three kids, we hired a caravan. Win Sampson applied for and was appointed to Christmas Island School. In her place came Dorothy Ryan.

1952, the staff was Maurice Boyd, Dot Ryan and myself and the school was just about perfect. Alan started school and Judith used to wander in also.

I should mention two students who were of tremendous assistance to me. Beryl Norris [later Beryl Dayman] and Heather Field [Heather Dayman]. Jim Creagh was a great lad. The Herbert girls, Clarice [Clarice Brown] and Cecily [Cecily Clement] delivered milk to our house. The SEC took over the power and we were converted from 220 DC to 240 AC, a wonderful improvement. We now had 24-hour power and were able to indulge in an electric refrigerator.

We had attended the Congregational Church but whenever we could we attended the Kodj-Kodjin Presbyterian Church, north of Kellerberrin. Muriel enjoyed CWA. We had visitors all the time. The visiting child clinic nurses (Helen Birks and Connie Munyard) always stayed overnight with us. Mrs Samuel, the doctor's wife, always accompanied Dr Samuel when he visited the town, and played tennis with Muriel. We remained their friends and visited them until they died. Frank Pitcher, the Rector, lunched with us when visiting the school. He was a friend of my father at the North Perth Soccer Club.

The end of 1952 came. It looked like a sixth year in Nungarin. We had a party going in our house with Creaghs, Cornishes, Bennetts etc. At 9.00 pm the phone rang. It was my boss ringing to congratulate me on a special promotion to Cunderdin. In the kitchen Muriel and I conferred. We won't spoil the party. We quietly left Nungarin with the minimum of fuss.

Ted Williams:

'Memories of Shearing in the Thirties'

The first lot of sheep my father had was a few old ewes. We had very few fences in those days so it was my job as a young boy to mind the sheep from straying. I had a dog but I did more running than he did. At night I had to yard them as the dingoes were so bad. When the time came for shearing Dad employed an old blade shearer called Kennedy, and I was to be his rouseabout. We got up very early, had a cuppa, and then did about an hour's shearing before breakfast. We didn't bother about clocks but worked by the sun. Kennedy gave me some old blades and in between skirting and rolling the fleeces I'd take the bellies off for him. When I was about fourteen or fifteen I shored all Dad's sheep and as I was only doing about 25 sheep a day, it took me over a month to do the whole flock.

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Mr Davey Jones had a chap working for him called Jim Green who was a blade shearer. As Davey had a large flock of sheep a few of us got together to help him. 'Basher' Green was the fastest shearer; he could do about 90 a day while we were battling to do 80. Davey was a bachelor but a good cook. He would give us all a bottle of beer, then place large roasts of various meats on the table with a bowl of vegetables and say, "Help yourselves boys". Dick and Barney Jolly and I enjoyed working for Davey.

Barney always had an eye out for the easiest sheep. While sharpening his blades he'd look over the pen for the cleanest ones. He'd even stroll right through the pen to find the best ones. We always made a joke of it saying, "There are some good ones out in the yard Barney." After finishing the shed we would help clean up and roll the bales on the wagon.

We moved on to Norm Watson's place where we shored Fred and Norm's sheep and there our first job was to put our beer in a wheat bag and lower it down the well. Norm's shed was a very large one with plenty of room to move about in. In the blade days of shearing the only sound was the click of the shears, so we could talk to one another and keep up with the news and gossip. At times we were visited by wool buyers. Some of them were a nuisance; trying to pick pieces out of the wool while we were shearing. One such fellow annoyed me one day so I 'accidentally' cut the leg off his pants. He did not have a very good sense of humour and stamped out of the shed. Ernie Coulson said he could hear the laughter in Nungarin. Ernie sometimes brought his saxophone out to the shed and played while we worked. There was never a dull moment with yarn telling and jokes played on one another.

Norm was at this time courting Hilda and she sometimes came out to watch the shearing. One day Norm said, "I'll show you the correct way to throw a fleece Hilda." Because Norm was rather short he kept a box at the end of the wool table to stand on. He gathered up a large fleece and jumped on the box, but the box collapsed and the fleece went up in the air and came down on top of Norm. Hilda helped Norm up and said, "If that is the way it should be done, I'd hate to see it when you make a mess of it."

Norm and Fred thought they would try breeding fat lambs so bought some Shropshires; a short nuggetty type of sheep. Barney, having an eye for an

easy shearing sheep, was the first to grab one. He took about two snips off the belly and the sheep decided it had had enough and took off out of the shed with Barney in hot pursuit. About an hour later Barney came back and announced he'd shorn the b#! We all said, "Where are the fleece and wool?" Barney said there was wool all over the paddock and the sheep was probably in Kununoppin by then.*

After work we'd enjoy the cold beer from the well.

Tom Adams asked me to go to Mangowine and shear his few sheep. After the fun and games of the Watson shed it was a bit dull with just Tom and me in the large stable which was used as a shearing shed. I remember the sheep were a bit rough to shear as they had been run in the bush. The wool was full of sticks and needle-bush which made it very hard on my hands and wrists, and made the shears blunt.

I stayed at Mangowine homestead overnight. Mrs Adams and Mrs Moran baked their own bread and grew their own vegetables using the waste water from the bathroom. They also cured their own bacon. We had bacon and eggs for breakfast every morning. I asked Mrs Adams how they cured the bacon. With Mrs Moran two words behind her, she told me they hung it up the chimney and burnt cow dung under it. The next morning I told Mrs Adams I didn't feel too good and would just have toast for breakfast. The old lady kindly wrapped up a large piece of bacon to take home to Mum. It was some time later that I told her how it was cured.

Endnotes

- 1 Donald Campbell visited Australia with his Bluebird turbine powered land speed car (Aussie Invader website <http://www.aussieinvader.com>)
- 2 Conversation with Rosco McGlashin, 2010.
- 3 *Sunday Times*, 12 December 1999, Sunday feature p3.
- 4 Excerpts from David Jones's Diary, typescript by Heather Dayman, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 5 Newspaper extract from *Newcarnie-Nukarni*, by Patricia J. Howe, p23.
- 6 Letter from Thelma Nunan, 28 March 1995, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 7 Eulogy for Frank Whyte, delivered by John Jack, January 2003.
- 8 *Wheatblet Mercury*, 12 June 1985, p3.
- 9 Information from Marion Dunstall. Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 10 Story from Frank Williams.
- 11 Interview with Tom Bennett at Kellerberrin 31 Dec 1995.
- 12 Letter from Peter Boekelaar, 25 Jan 1996.
- 13 Life Story of Doris Brittain, née Stockdale, typescript, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 14 Jocelyn Maddock, *On the Line*, Shire of Mukinbudin 1987, p96.
- 15 Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Press 1987, p190.
- 16 Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Press 1987, p192.
- 17 Excerpts from David Jones's Diary, typescript by Heather Dayman, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 18 Luscombe was their paternal grandmother's surname, and Buzacott their mother's maiden name. RL was known as Luscombe, or later on, Uncle Lus. RB was later known as Pa.
- 19 Reilly Brothers, proprietors of garage at 7 Railway Avenue, Nungarin.
- 20 The Creagh Records, by Annie C. Creagh, typescript.
- 21 E.M. 'Cobber' Beurteaux, *Droving from Balfour Downs*, typescript.
- 22 Recollections by Robert Frank Herbert.
- 23 Transcript of tape made by Teddy Pick, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 24 Transcript of tape made by Janice Watson, Nungarin Biographic Index.

Remarkable Women

Women of the Nungarin District

They left the vine-wreathed cottage and the mansion on the hill,
 The houses in the busy streets where life is never still,
 The pleasures of the city, and the friends they cherished best:
 For love they faced the wilderness -- the Women of the West.

The roar, and rush, and fever of the city died away,
 And the old-time joys and faces -- they were gone for many a day;
 In their place the lurching coach-wheel, or the creaking bullock chains,
 O'er the everlasting sameness of the never-ending plains.

In the slab-built, zinc-roofed homestead of some lately taken run,
 In the tent beside the bankment of a railway just begun,
 In the huts on new selections, in the camps of man's unrest,
 On the frontiers of the Nation, live the Women of the West.

The red sun robs their beauty, and, in weariness and pain,
 The slow years steal the nameless grace that never comes again;
 And there are hours men cannot soothe, and words men cannot say --
 The nearest woman's face may be a hundred miles away.

The wide bush holds the secrets of their longing and desires,
 When the white stars in reverence light their holy altar fires,
 And silence, like the touch of God, sinks deep into the breast --
 Perchance He hears and understands the Women of the West.

For them no trumpet sounds the call, no poet plies his arts --
 They only hear the beating of their gallant, loving hearts.
 But they have sung with silent lives the song all songs above --
 The holiness of sacrifice, the dignity of love.

Well have we held our father's creed. No call has passed us by.
We faced and fought the wilderness, we sent our sons to die.
And we have hearts to do and dare, and yet, o'er all the rest,
The hearts that made the Nation were the Women of the West.

The Women of the West, by George Essex Evans

Aunty Jim's Story

Marie ('Aunty Jim') Farrell - First Freeman of the Municipality of Nungarin

Aunty Jim's story has been compiled from her notes, many of which were jotted down on the back of calendars in her shop.

I was born in Bendigo Victoria on September 15th 1910. The same year I sailed on the SS Katoomba with my parents Michael and Thore, and my sister Doreen (Bonnie). We came by boat from the eastern states, and then by train to Merredin from where we travelled out with our horses and wagon to settle in Nungarin. Dad even brought his team of beautiful Clydesdale horses with him. A young sixteen-year-old boy by the name of Bill Bradley came with us to look after our horses on the boat. He had intended to return but decided to stay in Western Australia, where he eventually married and settled down.

We stayed with very good neighbours the Waterhouse family until our home made of bush timber, white-washed hessian, and iron roof was finished. The floors were dirt and as I was at the crawling age, Mum made long legged trousers for me. Hence the name of 'Jimmy' which was given to me by one of the men helping Dad clear the block and it has stuck – having 'Aunty' added to it many years later and that has stuck too.

One luxury that most of the early houses had was a 'dairy', which was a large hole dug in the ground, just like a room with steps leading down, and a scrub roof placed on top for coolness. All our supplies were kept there. Later luxuries were the water coolers with tin frame and hessian sides, and a tray on top to hold water. Pieces of flannel rested in the tray and hung down over the sides. These coolers were very effective. Butter coolers were made of plaster-of-paris, and were shaped like a large saucer with a domed cover. The plaster was kept damp and this did a good job of keeping the butter cool.

Remarkable Women

Settlers had to be fairly self-sufficient and we kept our own cow, chooks etc., and grew our own vegetables. Our stores were purchased from Hines Hill or Merredin. Wheat was taken into Merredin to be milled, and we brought home not only flour, but also the bran that was a by-product of the milling process. We got our water from the well at McCorry's near the rock. There was also a degree of bartering of goods and services. Davey Jones took up his block at about the same time, and as he procured employment on the east-west railway construction, Dad looked after his property for him. The district enjoyed a very friendly atmosphere. Sunday afternoons were often spent visiting neighbours – Waterhouses, Davey Jones, and O'Loughlins. We always spent Good Friday with the Coumbe family and about once a month we drove out to Joe Jolly's, stopping at Williams's on the way.

Once, when George was sick, we had to call for Dr Allan from Merredin. He came in a horse and sulky and the journey took all day.

I remember the railway being built through Nungarin. Camels carted all the rails and everything that was needed. At that time a Mr Barbary was working as a foreman on the railway construction project, and he and his wife started a boarding house for the railway workers. It was situated in Railway Avenue not far from the post office. My mother's sister, Marie Christensen (after whom I was named) came to Nungarin for a visit and eventually stayed to take over Barbary's boarding house. Tragically, her husband was killed in a railway accident and 'Aunty Kelly', as she was affectionately known, was left to care for the children (Violet and William) on her own.

When my older sister, 'Bonnie', was old enough to start school, our family moved into town and took up residence at Aunty Kelly's. George Moffitt built on an extra three rooms to accommodate the influx. Dad stayed on the farm, and came into town on the weekend.

My first school was held in the original Congregational Mission church building until the first school was built in 1918. I first went to school with Bonnie. I was too young to be officially recorded as a student, and because of my age I tired easily and often fell asleep in school. Mick Thick, or Ron Creagh, or one of the bigger boys would carry me home. Miss Creagh (who later became Mrs Gus Herbert) was our first teacher and used to drive to

A Piece of String

school from her parents' farm in a horse drawn sulky. 'Belly' the horse was a great favourite with the children.

It was great news when we learned in 1918, that we were to have a new pavilion school, built where the present school is now. It had sliding canvas windows on three sides, which was very handy to see who was going in and out of town along Danberrin Road. As the years moved on the number of pupils increased and in 1928 a two-roomed school was built. The schoolhouse was built in 1929 at a cost of £900. It was later demolished when a new brick schoolhouse was built in 1987.

One amusing incident I remember concerned Mrs Devereux's billy goat. It used to chase all the kids and we were terrified of him. One day he turned up at school and poked his head through one of the windows. I can still remember the fuss. Mrs Devereux was a tough old lady. She had a daughter, Mabel, who was blind in one eye. Wallace Coulson teased her the way that boys do, and next morning when he saw Mrs Devereux coming with a look of business – he scuttled up the nearest tree. Mrs Devereux stood under the tree and shouted "Go and get the axe from Mr Farrell and I'll chop the tree down!"

During my school days, in 1924, a train promoting 'Buy WA Goods' arrived at the station and stayed two days. The display was open to the public and the school children were taken by the teacher to really enjoy something. There were things on that train that we had never seen in the country. I still have memories of that outing, and still remember when buying. I have often wondered why over the years it never happened again.

It was during this visit that the two ladies in charge met some of the local ladies with the result that a CWA branch was later formed in Nungarin. It was the first branch in Western Australia.

School games were so different in those days, and changed according to the seasons. We played hop scotch, marbles, skipping, rounders, red rover, nuts in May, sheep- sheep come home, oranges and lemons and 'kick the tin' which was not very popular with the mothers as it kicked the toes out of our shoes. Later I boarded at the presentation Convent in Goomalling and enjoyed many friends and happy days. School is where life-long friendships begin and school-day memories last forever.

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Many of the teachers married locals:

*Clarice Creagh married Gus Herbert
Mary Rogers married Dick McCorry
Henrietta Shiner married Syd Middleton
Margaret Browne married Jack Brown (lost an 'e' when she married)
Edith Chipper married Harry Brown
Angus Stewart married Leila Warner
Pat Froome married Ted Williams
Mary Howard married Alan Jennings (Shire Clerk)
Dot Ryan married Tex Fitzgerald
Pat Wood married Frank Williams
Daisy Doig married Bill Vanzetti*

I have very happy memories of my childhood days. The district seemed to be one big happy family. People cared for, helped, trusted and enjoyed being friends and spending time together.

Mr White's store in the main street would often be used as a meeting place, or hall. Sometimes dances were held there, with what little stock there was being pushed aside to make room. When the Progress Association was formed meetings were held there or at McCorry's until the Nungarin Hall was built. A shed at McCorry's was used for dances also.

Show Day every year was really something, and displays of schoolwork produced great competition for the honour of receiving prize cards. There were displays from Infants' plasticine models right up to map drawing, pencil and colour crayon drawing, handicrafts, woodwork and sewing. There were also displays of cooking, preserves and so forth. The first show was held over near McCorry's Hotel in 1917, and almost everyone had to have a new dress and hat for such a special day. Horses were brought in from Merredin, Mukinbudin and from as far away as Wyalkatchem.

In the early days people who lived at what is now Mukinbudin, and further north, had to come to Nungarin for their supplies, or to catch the train. A mailman (Matthew Mackie) was employed to take mail, papers, and any small parcels to Roseholme Station north of Mukinbudin once a week.

A Piece of String

Out one day and back the next. I often went as far as Joe Jolly's farm and stayed overnight.

Mr Bates and Mr Luckman each had a team of donkeys that were used to haul loads of sandalwood, and later wheat, from north of Mukinbudin. There was always great excitement when word got through that the donkey teams would be arriving. All the children had their special donkeys and were allowed to look after them while the team was in town. But when the mums heard that the donkeys were coming, no washing was left on the line and any few plants and small trees were well protected.



Above: Mangowine Donkey teams

Farmers were just looking forward to getting ahead when 1913 turned out to be a drought, and worse to come with 1914, then war was declared and so many of the local men joined up. The only news we could get was when the trains arrived. Everyone did all they could do to help the war effort. Red Cross was formed and much knitting, sewing and fund-raising took place. The first news we had that the war was over was when the steam train came in and about half a mile from town it began to blow its whistle – ‘Cock-a-doodle-do’ – that always meant good news.

Later we had a big celebration day to welcome the men home, but there were a lot that didn't come back. Their names are on the Honour Board in the RSL Hall.

As a teenager we had lots of fun and good times. We played plenty of sport – football, cricket, hockey and tennis- many people had their own tennis courts. I think Nungarin was one of the first hockey teams in this area. Gwen Matthews who arrived here from England and married John, was a

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very good player, as were two school teachers, Betty Sparks and Daisy Doig. They really got us started. We mainly travelled by truck as a group (until cars became available) and it was fun all together. We used to go as far as Burracoppin and later to Trayning and Kununoppin and we had sing-songs all the way. Our uniforms were white frocks with sailor collars and blue bands on the skirt, and white stockings. You can just imagine it on a wet muddy day. Kununoppin had a very slippery ground and I can remember one day; the goalies were the only ones that had not fallen over. We had no trophies – we only played for the love of the game and a pennant.



Nungarin Ladies Hockey Team 1934

Back Row: Betty Sparks, Rene Williams, Iris Andrews, Gladys Coulson, Gwen Matthews, Freda Hodges, Phyllis Dawe

Middle Row: Iris Goode, Joan Jolly, Daphne Hoare, Dorothy Payne

Front Row: Lorraine Philby, Billie Williams

We used to drive out to Mangowine for the Nungarin School boys to play against the Mangowine School boys for a game of football in a paddock on Goode's farm opposite the school. Then there was tea at the school with a social evening and dancing to follow.

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Mr Johnson always sang 'Little Brown Jug'. The outing meant an all night stay, as we had to cross the lake to get home.

We had dances every Saturday night and the different towns tried hard to arrange it so that we could all patronise each other's dance and be sure of a good crowd. I feel sad for the young ones of today, they are missing out on the type of Saturday night fun we had; all those lovely old dances; square dances, waltzes, three step, barn dance, jazz, Maxina – then came the Palais Glide, Boomps-a-daisy, Charleston and numerous fun dances. My favourites will always remain the circular waltz and the modern waltz. The girls all very pretty, frocks either long or short, whatever the fashion, and the boys in suits and ties. If the night was very hot the MC would announce that the gents could remove their coats.

There were quite a few balls, which were special, and it took weeks to decorate the halls. Most of us organising the balls wore old-time frocks with hoops underneath and hired wigs, while those of us with long hair had it curled in ringlets. We used to make flower sprays and buttonholes for the men and sell them at the door for sixpence each. Adult fancy dress balls were fun with costumes to be made and fitted. It made many happy evenings. The sets did square dances, Lancers, Alberts etc and made quite a good display. Music was good and Purdy's Band from Kununoppin was very popular. For one year Nungarin had a very good band – Hugh Danby's Band. Hugh was a saxophone player and later taught Ernie Coulson and Bill Sainsbury and they had a junior orchestra. Hugh had a slight speech impediment, it was said he was a Lord, and when he went back to England he had treatment from the same specialist as King George VI.

We also had lots of picnics when I was young. The Boxing Day Sports at Burran Rock attracted everyone from near and far. People came in horse-drawn vehicles and there were sports all day with lunch and tea, and then there was dancing at night. Depending on the weather, people often waited until daylight to go home. On New Years Day there was always a big picnic day at Knungajin Rock, a really beautiful spot with lots of lovely weeping wattles, rock ferns and wildflowers. In the afternoon some folk climbed to the top of the rock to the cairn that was erected there by Surveyor General John Septimus Roe in 1836, and sometimes we would squeeze through some rocks to explore the caves on the second rock. Unfortunately the area was

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never the same after the catchment dam and retaining wall were built, but the water was needed for the farms.

At the age of seventeen I did my first days of work behind the counter of Mrs Connie Waterhouse's shop. She managed her father's, Mr Andrews, drapery, fancy goods and dressmaking store. She was expecting their first baby and I was asked to help until Connie could take over again. I was still there when the next baby arrived, which was Bert, the grandson of the neighbours who were so kind to us when we first arrived in Nungarin.

Friday night shopping was a night of get-together. People drove in from all around Nungarin to collect their fresh fruit and vegie orders and the newspapers that were due on the steam train that was supposed to arrive at 9 o'clock. Sometimes it was midnight but everyone waited and the shop staff also stayed on duty until it arrived, and all the customers were satisfied. Friends passed the time catching up with news and gossip.

I was well into my teens then, and life was really good. Things had progressed and we had our first car, a Moon. Farming was in full swing.

I later started a little tea-rooms in the small shop in the hotel building in the late 1930s. Can you imagine it – a three-course meal for 2/6! I guess I didn't make much money, but I had a lot of fun. Drinks were kept in an ice chest with ice made and delivered by Mr Putland. Ice cream came from Perth in a can packed in a canvas container or wooden cask with ice and coarse salt. It didn't always arrive in good condition, but we got by. I had four tables and twelve chairs made at Bensky's in Perth and sold fruit, vegetables, magazines, lollies and ice-creams. Plaistowes had a beautiful range of children's sweets – 6 or 8 a penny, all displayed in the one box.

Nancy Diss (née Lee) recalls the following story:

Of course the corner-stone of Nungarin is, without a doubt, Miss Marie Farrell. An absolute born shop-keeper. A little incident I remember concerning her happened over forty years ago. Mum [Alice Lee] was in

Nungarin with my eldest child, Eileen, who was about three years old at the time, and she wanted some lollies. Mum took her into Miss Farrell and asked her what she wanted. She said, "Jelly beans, but I don't want the black ones." So, you've guessed it, Miss Farrell painstakingly took out all the black ones.

I know Miss Farrell is a freeman of the Town and no-one deserves it more than she does. I think she is Nungarin.

Mr Tiller bought the butcher shop that adjoined my shop. He bought the shop for his sons and I often looked after the butcher shop when the boys went out to get their meat supplies. We all helped one another and had lots of fun doing so. The only thing at that time was a shortage of money. I would sew frocks for the girls while they looked after the shop.

I remember the silent pictures that we all looked forward to. Mr Delevale (?) brought the first pictures to Nungarin. Paddy Baker, who was well known and loved all over the state, started as a boy of fifteen with Mr Delevale, and later took over the business. Cold nights, hard uncomfortable forms – we went along with our rugs and hot water bottles etc, and enjoyed every minute of it.

I also remember the 'swaggies'. It was their lifestyle. The same ones came year after year. We got to know so many of them it was like old friends turning up. The Depression was a very sad time, so many coming because it was hard to get work and it wasn't easy for a lot of these men to have to ask for food. Mother never refused anyone although things were hard for us too. The same old chimney sweep came, and we were always pleased to see him. We used wood stoves all the time and he had a contract to do post offices, schools etc, but he always did ours as well.

I had an interest in all sports and got my first taste of cricket when Don Bradman and Bill O'Reilly were playing in England. Jack Charlton (a mechanic who worked at Reilly's Garage) had the first radio in town, and he would bring it down home and a crowd would arrive. The mallee root fire would be kept going and cards would be played. We played cards as the reception was 'on and off', but still very exciting when we could actually

hear the game. I loved the test matches, Sheffield Shield matches and follow them all. I have also followed the football since I was a little girl and have had a favourite city team, Subiaco, and love it when the Eagles are playing.

World War Two brought lots of sadness and altered so many of our lives. I got the feeling I wanted to help too, so decided as the men in our family were Navy and Army, to balance things out, I applied for the WAAF and was accepted. While I was waiting for my call up I was asked to go to Dowerin to help a Mrs Patterson who had a drapery store, so I was behind the counter once again for a short while.

My call up came in the early 40s. It was a real experience for me. I travelled to South Australia by troop train, to Victor Harbour for Rookies, then to Mallala at the pilots' training station. I enjoyed the work at Mullala, and the friendship was really great. I had never flown until I went there, and was lucky enough to be one of two girls detailed to fly in a party of eight Avro Ansons being brought back to Boulder. I was told later that they were coming back for the scrap heap, or for spare parts, but the trip was enjoyable with several stops, one of them at Ceduna. My posting from Mallala was to Melbourne RAAF Headquarters in St Kilda Road in Toorak. I believe the building was the first Government House residence. By this time I was a Sergeant and I stayed there until the war was over, and I was one of the mad mob to celebrate in Melbourne.

After the war there was much to do to go back to a normal life. On my return to Nungarin I was to start life once again behind the counter, working for my sister 'Bobbie' and her husband 'Blue' Cairns. Blue was an ex-prisoner of war of the Japanese and he and Bobbie had taken over Mr Putland's grocery store in Railway Avenue. The work then was much harder than it is today – almost everything had to be weighed up in advance; sugar, flour, rice etc in one to twelve pound bags. Potatoes, onions, bran, pollard had to be packed, kerosene, vinegar, methylated spirits and oils all had to be bottled; nothing packed as it is today.

A few years later the shop next door came up for sale so I once again started my own business. In 1961, I decided to move back to the shop near the hotel where I stayed until my retirement in 1999. Later it was just a 'hobby shop',



a friendly meeting place for friends and customers. People leaving messages and parcels. Sometimes it reminds me of the 'Man in Grey' at Melbourne Station – people calling in to ask directions, then telling me their grandfather used to live here. Lots of people I still serve, I first served

over fifty years ago.

In June 1979, I received the biggest surprise and the greatest honour one could receive. At the WA Dinner, Mr Hendy Cowan presented me with a certificate that named me as a 'Freeman' of the town. That this was the very first ever awarded in Nungarin, and given to a woman! I feel very humbled and honoured.

The following verse was written by Maxine Cornish in 1990 for Aunty Jim's 80th birthday celebrations at the Nungarin Hall:

Everyone needs an Aunty Jim. We're blessed, we've got one.
An Aunty Jim sort of person is someone who is always there,
Someone who believes in us and has time to listen.
An Aunty Jim loves children and dispenses lollies and love in equal profusion.
An Aunty Jim would never say anything if she saw you take two comics and pay for one. She would just wait and pray, and talk to you about being honest.
An Aunty Jim never rushes you when you can't decide between a 'ripe raspberry' or a 'mint leaf'. She understands the anguish of making such a delicious decision.
An Aunty Jim would never let you pay for a comic that you had just read in her shop. She just delights in your anticipation as you choose a replacement.
An Aunty Jim would never let you wait outside in the dark all alone,
Because in Aunty Jim's shop there is always room, and in her heart, every child has a place.

Aunty Jim, every child that has passed this way has been touched by your love, and Nungarin is a better place because you have been a part of it. Every child of today, and of all your yesterdays, says 'Thankyou'.

Edna Bagot

Mrs Edna Bagot was a very smart and attractive lady who maintained a strong interest in the political advancement of women. She was one of the founders of the Karrakatta Club in 1894, and came to the Nungarin district with her husband in 1910. Both Mrs Bagot and her husband were active in the local Anglican Church, and she was also the church organist. She became involved in many other local committees, becoming a member of the Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association (WSPPA), and serving as President for three years.

Mrs Bagot was passionate about women's involvement in politics, and took every opportunity to encourage women to take an intelligent interest in affairs of government:

Let us not be content with just holding periodical meetings and just keeping our Branches alive. Let us realise the value of the personal touch with those in whom we come into contact, and thus generally build up our organisation. Most women have a constitutional indifference to politics, and it is therefore more likely that members of our Women's Section, P.P.A. will succeed better by friendly and personal discussion with women, thus quickening the political interest of so many women voters. The responsibility of future achievements, as those in the past, rests largely upon the enthusiasm, the sincerity and the quiet work of individual women.

I recently read in an Eastern States paper the following: Far reaching proposals are being considered by our



*Edna Bagot
(Photo courtesy of Gary & Helen
Courke)*

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Federal Government which will be put before the people by a referendum in the course of a few months. For the proper understanding and answering of these questions which are of vital importance to Australia, a great deal of education will be necessary, they must be studied to be understood, and before we can help or guide others we must be well informed ourselves. This is something the members of our Women's Section P.P.A. can do. Let us study the questions vital to ourselves and then help others to understand them. But above all let us have faith in our own aims. In this way we can help to make our State prosperous and successful, and if last year was one of disappointment to the primary producers of this State, let this one begin with hope.

*(Mrs R.G.) Edna Bagot
President Metropolitan Branch Women's Section P.P.A.¹*

The Bagots left the district at the end of 1928, but Mrs Bagot retained her interest in the WSPPA, becoming a member of the Executive Council and also the President of the National Council of Women. At the time that she held the office of Vice-President of the Metropolitan Branch of the WSPPA, she was invited to present a paper on the encouragement of community thought, focusing on the role of women. Her address was broadcast on Perth Radio 6WF, and stressed the importance of women exercising their franchise with intelligence:

The same privileges and the same responsibilities are given now to men and women alike, and both should qualify themselves to carry out their duties towards their country and their fellow-men in the most intelligent and efficient manner possible, and that cannot be done without thought and study.

Anyone neglecting his or her political education cannot be said to be a well-educated person. When we consider that every girl, when she reaches the age of 21, can and must exercise her vote, and that her vote counts for as much as that far-seeing person in the land, the necessity for education in these matters becomes at once apparent. The prosperity and success of the country depends on good laws being made and it is most important that every elector should have some knowledge of the principles and objectives of those who aspire to be law-makers, and who seek their votes, and it is especially important that the young people should realise their responsibility in this regard and that they should seek to understand which men are best fitted to represent them in Parliament. They should receive their education early;

*so that when the time comes they may not only be able to vote intelligently themselves but help others to do the same. Women and girls should learn to feel they are responsible for putting the power to legislate into the hands of those who will work for the good of the whole and not a section of the people, those who will endeavour to make Australia a place well worth living in and who will uphold the honour of the British Empire, of which Australia is an integral part.*²

Mrs Bagot continued her interest in all kinds of community and political affairs, and in March 1936, after the death of her husband, Edna Bagot was made a Justice of the Peace.

Henrietta Burns 1873 - 1941

Henrietta and her two young daughters arrived in Western Australia from Lancashire, England, in 1912 and settled in the Narrogin area. Having had previous nursing experience she began nursing there, and later opened her own hospital in Wickopin. While in that district she met Tom Burns and in 1920 the couple moved to take up land just west of Nungarin on the block that had been owned by Fred Philbey, and before that, O'Loughlin.

Henrietta had a keen interest in everything that affected the quality of life of rural families, and her driving ambition was to empower women to assume a role equal to men in all social and political affairs. She was one of a group of women who formed the first branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA) in Western Australia in 1924, and was also the prime mover in the formation of the Women's Section of the Primary Producer's Association (WSPPA) in 1925, being elected Foundation President.

A newspaper article at the time portrays a woman of diverse talents:

Mrs Burns is an ardent worker in all good causes, clever with her fingers and progressive in all her ways. She helps where and when she can and never hesitates to pass on the knowledge she so industriously strives to gain as she goes her cheery way through life. When there is a good turn to be done to anyone needing a lift up after misfortune, she is well to the fore, and manages at all times to secure the hearty co-operation of her fellow women. Initiative is her strong point and when country shows are on, Mrs Burns

*comes well to the front with her exhibits. Not only that, she encourages others to compete and take the same keen interest in country development as she does herself. Large hearted and large minded, she is a settler of the right type.*³

As well as executive positions in the CWA and the WSPPA, Henrietta was also active in the Women's Section of the Country Party, Women's Justice Association, Juvenile Delinquency Movement and the Housewives Association. She was a committee member of the Bush Nursing Scheme, Women's Service Guild, Housekeepers Association, Soldiers Welcome Home Committee, and Family Planning Clinics at Royal Perth Hospital and at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. She also assisted in the formation of the Joybells Holiday Scheme for country Children, and took part in the work associated for each holiday. As if all these interest weren't sufficiently diverse, during 1924 she also taught millinery classes after school.⁴

The Burns family left Nungarin in 1926, spending some time with Henrietta's daughter Louie Crook and her family at Nukarni before moving to Perth.

Henrietta also had an interest in ladies fashion, and in the mid-1930s operated a dress design business with her son, Cyril. Customers could send their measurements and particulars and an exclusive pattern would be cut. If the customer desired, material could be purchased and the garment made up for them.

Henrietta Burns and Son, Darlington.

Talks given on colours and health

Millinery and confidence

Dress and good temper

Maternity needs in dress.

Self measurement forms sent on application.

State age and colour – eyes, hair, complexion

– and any personal particulars desired.

All the exclusive dress houses now recognise the importance of studying and catering for the woman who is not slender. Henrietta Burns and Son have made a special study of the effect colour has on nerves and health, as well as style and cut of dress. After visiting some of the leading dress salons

in London and Paris, where no woman is allowed to remain ugly, we are placing at your disposal information gathered in the most exclusive dress centres of the world.

It is not the woman who dresses in the latest whim of fashion who is best dressed – she may attract passing attention. It is the woman who dresses to bring out her individuality and personality, enhances her smile, and proves to the world she has a soul, who is best dressed. That, ladies, is our ambition, to make women as God intended them to be, a pleasing, happy, beautiful companion to man.

Every woman has a right to dress well, and every woman has the right to receive the family's compliments of being the best-dressed woman of their acquaintance. To do this it is not necessary to be extravagantly dressed, or even expensively clothed.

Mrs Henrietta Burns has made a special study of colour and line. The magnetic power of colour is recognised by all nerve specialists and the right colour and the right line is necessary to be happy and comfortable. A dress which ought to be a poem in colour is spoiled by a wrong style being chosen for the wearer. Until a year or two ago women of larger figure and elderly never received the consideration they receive today.

Henrietta Burns and Son are willing to give their assistance to those who care to avail themselves of it.

Henrietta passed away on 17th August 1941, and her obituary in the *Primary Producer* eulogised:

The world is a poorer place for the passing of such people as Mrs Burns. Her kindly and generous nature, her ready sympathy for all less fortunate



*Henrietta and Tom Burns
(Photo courtesy of Patricia Howe)*

than herself, and her great desire to be of service to her fellow men and women, expressed through her work for the Primary Producers' Association, and various welfare organisations to which she has given her support, must remain an inspiration to all who knew her ... Mrs Burns had a full understanding of the problems and difficulties associated with life on the land, and was a staunch fighter for the interests of country people.⁵

Phyllis Cornish 11.10.1915 – 19.1.2005

Phyllis was the daughter of Burran Rock Pioneers, Frank and Ellen ('Nell') Dawe. She spent all her life in Nungarin, and never wanted to be anywhere else. In her later years, she was the quintessential grandmother, and really looked the part with her lovely smile, her soft white hair, her apron and her loaded lolly jar.

Phyllis was one of three children, and the only daughter in the family. Stories of their childhood in Nungarin are filled with lots of fun and activity with cricket, tennis, hockey, socials and dances. On weekends they travelled around the district to football, tennis or hockey and bounced along in a spring cart with mattresses and blankets on the floor for sleep on the way home. They didn't have much in the way of material possessions, but then, neither did anyone else.

As she grew older, Phyllis became a member of the Younger Set of the Country Women's Association, and later joined CWA where she enjoyed the participation and fellowship. In 1985 she was awarded the Forty Year Service Plaque, followed by a Certificate of Merit in 1994. She was very artistic and enjoyed cake decorating, painting and writing. She produced exquisite embroidery and fancy work, which led her to teach sewing to the pupils at the school for many years.



Phyllis Cornish née Dawe

Phyllis appreciated the advantage of having brothers when Norman and Trevor brought home their friends – particularly when she met handsome young Philip Cornish who was farming at Knungajin, north-east of Nungarin. It was love at first sight, and they were married at the Congregational church in Nungarin at the beginning of 1941. Together, the 'Two Phils' as they were known, formed a fiercely parochial team and supported everything to do with their home town.

Throughout her life, Phyllis had a great affinity with animals, to the extent that she adopted a family of sleepy lizards. The

lizards would eat out of her hand, and she often bought tomatoes and strawberries especially for them, because “they liked them best of all”. The mothers brought their babies back to meet her each year, and often followed her up the steps and into the house if they thought they could get something special to eat for their trouble.

Part of Phyllis’s charm was her gregarious nature and her utter fearlessness. Perhaps it was due to growing up with two brothers, but she really was game for anything. On a driving holiday to the Eastern States with friends, the party decided on a whim to go up on a ski-lift. Phyllis was dressed in her usual frock and heels, with just a light cardigan for warmth. Undeterred, she queued up with all the bright young things in their ski gear and hopped on. Half-way up she undid her safety harness so that she could lean out and get a better angle with her movie camera (as you would!) and at the top she stepped off daintily (perhaps the heels gave her better traction) but had to quickly step over the sprawled body of a young fellow who fell off the lift in front of her.

Phyllis and Philip were patrons of the Nungarin Hockey Club, and preparations for the game included packing thermos flasks of tea, boxes of biscuits, sandwiches or cake, and inevitably, a bag or two of lollies that were dispensed liberally to anyone who stopped by for a chat during the match. On one occasion, Phyllis was highly amused to hear a couple of little fellows talking outside the vehicle, “This is the car where you get the lollies”.

Phyllis was a good shot with the rifle, and managed to train the birds not to sit in the tree near her house. They got shot if they did. Every apron that she owned had to be customised with a good-sized ‘ammo pocket’ and she had been known to scare the wits out of quite a few people when they caught her unawares. Even in later years when her mobility was curtailed,



Phyllis Cornish – ‘Got the Varmint!’

she found the ‘gopher’ made a jolly good shooting wagon. A picture of Phyllis shooting from her gopher was a finalist in the ABC Snapshots Australia project, and received comments from people from all over the world.

Evaline Dawe 1881 – 23.8.1972

Eva Dawe was born Evaline Maria Randell, the granddaughter of the Honourable George Randell who was one of the leading and most respected statesmen, politicians and merchants in Western Australia in the late nineteenth century.

George was Chairman of the Municipal Council in 1874, and member of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council for over thirty years. He was a member of the Central Board of Education, Trustee of University Endowment, and held every possible office in the Congregational Church for nearly sixty years. George’s contribution to the state was commemorated in 1979, by a brass pavement plaque in Perth for the year 1884.

Eva and her siblings inherited their grandfather’s prodigious abilities, and displayed impressive artistic talent. Eva was a gifted musician who staged an operetta at Trinity Church when she was only sixteen years of age. At that time she was organist and choir mistress at Johnston Memorial Congregational Church in Fremantle. She was also reputed to be the first woman to play the organ at St Georges Cathedral during a recital in 1907.



Eva Dawe at the organ at Johnston Memorial Church, Fremantle

Eva married Stanley Donaldson Dawe in 1920. Stan had taken up land in Nungarin in 1910 under the Civil Servants’ Land Settlement Scheme, and enlisted as a member of the 10th Light Horse during the First World War. After their marriage, Eva joined the Dawe family on their properties south of Nungarin, and contributed to the Nungarin community with her musical abilities, both as a music teacher and in the production of several musical and operatic productions.

She was also a member of the Nungarin Branch of the Country Women's Association.

Rose Matilda Johnson 19.3.1870 – January 1940

Rose Johnson was educated at the Edinburgh University of St Andrews where she was awarded a Lady of Literary Arts (L.L.A.). She chose teaching as her profession, and was appointed headmistress of Sheffield Girls School. She married John Henry ('Harry') Johnson in 1900, and they immigrated to South Africa, moving to Western Australia with their four young sons in the winter of 1913.

The Johnson's block was about eight miles north of Nungarin, and was purchased 'sight unseen', so it was a huge shock when they arrived on their selection to find a small, dilapidated shack surrounded by 600 acres of virgin bush. Their first instincts were to turn around and go straight back where they came from, but Rose was determined to stay and 'make a go of it', and they certainly did.

Rose was an intelligent and educated woman, and she found several women of like mind in the Nungarin district. She was associated with Henrietta Burns in the formation of the Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association (WSPPA), serving as State Vice-President in 1926, and State President between 1928 and 1934. In 1929 she gave evidence on behalf of rural women before the Commonwealth Royal Commission into the Rural Industry. In recognition of her work for the Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association, she was awarded the first honorary life membership. She was also a member of the Country Women's Association serving as the Foundation Secretary of the Nungarin C.W.A., and President in 1926 and 1927.

In an interview in 1928, Rose explained that since women were entitled to vote, they also were entitled to have a say in the country's organisations:

We have got to see our aims and ambitions concentrated, and, if only country women realised the vast importance of unity ... and when women realise their tremendous power by means of the vote, there is no doubt every country woman will eventually become a member of the WSPPA.⁶

The early years of settlement were uncertain times, and schools opened and closed as the population fluctuated. At the time the Johnsons arrived, the Mangowine area was 'between schools', but Rose offered her services as soon as a school could be built. No doubt she found a slight difference between the local institution at Mangowine and



Rose Johnson

her previous educational employment at Sheffield Girls School.

Rose had been a member of the rifle club in Johannesburg, so was an experienced markswoman with a good eye. Notwithstanding her abilities, Rose did experience an awkward moment when she mistakenly shot a neighbour's prize boar. For quite some time, the family had been annoyed by a mob of 'free range' pigs that had been ranging a little too freely. When the pigs got into some bags of grain that were stored in a corner of the Johnson's paddock, Rose took direct action and aimed a shot

at an offending young porker. Unfortunately, the neighbour's boar poked his nose around the corner at just the wrong moment and collected a shot right between the eyes. In spite of that embarrassing incident, Rose was given the honour of firing the first shot when the Nungarin Rifle range was opened in 1925.

When Rose passed away in 1940, a newspaper tribute noted that she was "a staunch supporter of the Co-operative movement and of all efforts for the betterment of men, women and children of the country areas and those in the interests of education."⁷

Alice Williams MBE

Alice Williams was born in Wales and came to Australia in 1913. Soon after, she travelled by train to visit her parents in Nungarin where her father, Edward Wolstenholme was working as a missionary for the Congregational church. Her short visit turned out to be rather more permanent than she expected, as on that first trip she met her future husband, Fred Williams, who farmed at Mangowine, and they became the first couple to be married in the original weatherboard Congregational church.

Mrs Williams was a foundation member of the Nungarin Branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA), and became one of its hardest workers and longest serving members. She was Branch President for ten years, and also served as Vice-President and Secretary, as well as several years as Divisional President before being elected as State President in 1944. Alice held that position for the statutory three years, and then served a further three years as State International Officer.

Alice was very involved in the CWA Eastern Division's 'Happy Holiday Scheme', and acted as the cook for more than thirty years. It is rather sobering to read how thrilled she was to undergo what almost seems to be 'annual torture'. The Williams' truck

Remarkable Women

was loaded up with beds and bedding, a copper, an old stove, food, a bag of wheat to grist for porridge, a gramophone, and an ice-cream churn along with other general paraphernalia. On a typical day she would have been involved in the preparation of six pans of porridge, cooking 14 lbs of sausages, 25 lbs of potatoes, 15 lbs of beans, 8 large cabbages, followed by bread and jam, sweets and fruit. She said she was “looking forward to feeding all those children”.⁸

Alice’s son, Harry recalled his experiences of those CWA holiday camps:

For many years our holidays were going away with my parents to the CWA Holiday Camp for country children. We took a truck with a canvas cover, loaded it with half the kitchen and bedding from the house. Charlie and I would sleep in the truck the night before we left. Sometimes we didn’t wake up until we were well on the way. We stopped for a picnic the other side of Northam. We would run along the Goldfields pipeline and play tag. The tag was when we knocked the other off the pipeline.

The first camp we went to was at Rockingham. The next few years we used the Hydrodome at South Beach and finally we went to a church hall opposite Mills and Wares biscuit factory in South Fremantle. Mum did the cooking, the other ladies were Mrs Gallagher, Mrs Foxton, Mrs Ball, Mrs Gibney and Mrs Purdy. I used to help Mrs Purdy. She did a lot of the outside work. We became good friends and talked a lot while working. We plucked and cleaned chooks, chopped the wood, and kept the copper boiling for washing.⁹

Alice had held almost every key position in CWA and was granted Life Membership of the Association. In June 1965 she was awarded the M.B.E. in the Queen’s Birthday Honours in recognition of her services to the Country Women’s Association over many years.

Alice was a faithful member of the Nungarin Anglican Church, and played the organ for services at St Thomas’s church.

She was hard working and resourceful, and not easily deterred from achieving what she set out to do. When she was a young bride, and expecting her first child, she had difficulty in obtaining appropriate maternity clothes. Deciding to sew her own, she was faced with the lack of a suitable dress pattern. She enlisted husband Fred’s assistance, glued some sheets of newspaper together, and then laid down and got

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Alice Williams MBE

him to draw around her outline. What a shame that we don't have a picture of the finished gown.

Alice also developed her own unique method of instilling discipline:

The pepper trees seemed to be our second home. Charlie and I spent a lot of time either up them or under them. If we got into trouble about something and Mum called us to be punished, the safest place was up the biggest pepper tree. One day in our rush to get into the tree one of us dropped our shanghai. When we would not come down she tried out her skills with the shanghai and pelted us with gravel stones until we came down.¹⁰

Nungarin Women

During the early years of development, Nungarin was blessed with the leadership of a most remarkable band of women. Women of intellect, ability and resolve as well as a determination to improve conditions for country people.

Given the atrociously high mortality rate for mothers and new babies, obstetric care was a priority in rural areas, and many country women were issued with medical kits and assisted neighbours in their confinement. Letitia Edmonson served as the district midwife between 1913 and 1925, and assisted in the delivery of many babies in the Nungarin area. Adequate maternity care long remained a matter of concern for the Country Women's Association, and through representation on the Kununoppin Hospital Board, CWA members continue to strive for improved health care for women and families.

Nungarin women were founders of the Women's Section of the Primary Producers Association in Western Australia (WSPPA), and the Country Women's Association, but apart from women like Henrietta Burns and Rose Johnson, there were many others who became involved in the community and helped to make immense contributions to improve the way of life in rural areas. Women such as Mrs Wynne Bodey, who came to Nungarin in 1924 when she and her husband took up land at South

Kwelkan. Wynne was an artistic lady who enjoyed oil painting, embroidery and sewing. She was an inaugural member of the Country Women's Association and at various times held the positions of Vice President and President of the local Branch. Wynne contributed something like eight recipes to the famous CWA cookbook. The cookbook was compiled during the depression years and it is instructional to see just how resourceful country women could be. Wynne submitted details on how to make candles from mutton fat and beeswax, a recipe for braised rabbit (of course!), a recipe for "Apple and Nut Salad" (none of this 'Waldorf' nonsense), as well as for a ginger sponge and other delights. It is interesting to note that some of her recipes were submitted with the address given as Nungarin, and in some others as Kwelkan. Wynne also met the train at Kwelkan siding and did the mail sorting for quite a number of years.

Christina Hodges holds the record for having served just over sixteen consecutive years as an office bearer in CWA. She served 8 years as president, 2 years as vice-president, 5 ½ years as secretary, and 1 year as treasurer. Christina was a member of the Nungarin Dandies vaudeville group and active in several other community organisations, as were many other women who worked quietly behind the scenes. Mrs Coumbe and Mrs Creagh are both mentioned as having attended committee meetings of the WSPPA in Perth, while Mrs Creagh acted as District Secretary for the Congregational Church. It would not have been an easy position to hold, as there seems to have been several serious differences of opinion between the Burran Rock congregation and the Pastor serving the area at the time. An entry in the church minutes for 23rd October 1920 reads:

Arising out of a general discussion relative to Mission matters, it was resolved that the Secretary write to the Union Secretary requesting the appointment of a permanent District Secretary and that same be a male. It was felt that a lady District Secretary was not in the best interests of the district for advancement.



Isobel Beurteaux and Christina Hodges

On the face of it, the resolution would appear to be overly chauvinistic, but subsequent events indicate that the dissatisfaction was most likely with the minister's actions and not with the "lady secretary" – perhaps it was felt that a firm masculine hand was needed at the tiller. The following month it was reported that the Rev. C.M. Hilton had intercepted the letter. The committee's disapproval was evident. "The matter was fully discussed", and the following motion was passed unanimously:

That the Committee endorses the prompt action of their secretary in forwarding the motion through the District Secretary (Mrs Creagh) re appointment of a permanent District Secretary, and regrets the delay of the communication through an error of the Rev. C.M. Hilton in delaying the postage".¹¹

Mrs Creagh was also an inaugural member of the Nungarin CWA, as was Annie Maria Francis (known as 'Ri') who was elected as the Foundation President. Ri came from Labatouche in Gippsland, Victoria where she was acquainted with the McCorry family. She came to Western Australia with her two sisters, Sarah and Susan, and all three worked at the Palace Hotel. Ri moved to Nungarin to assist Con McCorry, and in February 1929 actually held the licence for McCorry's hotel.

World War I hero, Colonel Thomas John Todd, died of injuries sustained during the war, and left Annie Maria his estate that included the property 'Mali Brae' (Avon Location 13073) on the corner of Karomin Road and Moodiljing Road, which he had taken up in 1911. Annie Maria (Ri) must have left Nungarin for a short time in 1928, as a newspaper report in February of that year gave details of a social evening to bid her farewell:

Mrs R. Francis of Mangowine, was tendered a social on the 4th Inst. prior to her departure from the district. In the course of a eulogistic speech Mr Fimister referred to Mrs Francis as the most up to date farmer in the North East district. He stated that some 15 years ago Mrs Francis obtained £14,000 to buy her farm, which was virgin land, spoke volumes for Mrs Francis and her management and business ability. She will be sadly missed in the district.¹²

Ri, (although born Annie Maria McDonald, and at one stage known as Annie Maria Pippen), later married A.M. McGowan who owned the block adjacent to Mali Brae. She must have been quite a character, and in his diary, Jim Baker recorded his view of an encounter with her:

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I got a lift home with Mrs Magowan¹³ (late Francis) of whom Gus Herbert once said, “Gentlemen, the lady has balls!” She is as inconsistent in her opinions as I am. She loves to be able always to take the other side. “They” (the cockies) says she scornfully, giving the old gelding a flick (for the truck is on blocks for the duration) “they make me laugh. They’ve got no time! They’re overworked! They’re bled by the banks, and so on. Method is what they lack. My motto is ‘Do it now’! Method, Mr Baker, method! Now why do they blame the banks for their extravagance. This rotten credit system is responsible for their troubles. Never buy a thing until you’ve got the money to pay for it. That’s what I say, and that’s what I do. Now Mr Baker, I know you think. I’ve read your articles. What is your opinion?” My opinion was still born. She was off on another tack. “I once heard a group of businessmen discussing the farmers. They accused them of being lazy, unbusinesslike, incompetent, shiftless and so on. So after listening to a lot of this I said to them, ‘Gentlemen, has any one of you yoked up a team, put them into a wagon, loaded that wagon with 5 tons of wheat and started off on a 2 day journey to the railhead. Got off the load somewhere along the track and sat down in the blistering heat to a meal of bread and cheese and a gulp of water? Have you ever waited by a soak for the water to make, filled your tank, arrived home after midnight, watered your stock and been up and about before dawn ready to start ploughing? Have you ever...’” and so on. We agreed famously and I never said a word!

Annie Maria’s grandson, Clive Francis, was one of the men responsible for breeding and naming ‘Nungarin’ clover.

The release approval was signed by Agriculture Minister Dick Old and presented to Shire President Ron Herbert during a civic reception in Nungarin on 26th February



*The men responsible for the development of Nungarin clover
26 February 1977*

Dr John Gladstones, Dr Clive Francis and Dr Bryan Quinlivan



Agriculture Minister Dick Old presents the certificate to Nungarin Shire President Ron Herbert, and a new strain of clover takes the name of the town. A rare honour.

1977.

May Knowles arrived in the Nungarin area in 1909 as an 8 year old, with her parents, Joseph and Catherine, who took up land at Burran Rock under the Civil Servants Settlement Scheme. May left Nungarin to continue her education, training as a teacher and eventually serving sixteen years at Northam High School and ten years as Principal Mistress at Perth Modern School. Part of May never left Nungarin. She always had an affection for the area, and often visited as part of her interests in CWA and also the National Trust. She joined the National Trust in 1963, and served in many executive positions and was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours

List in 1979 when she was awarded the British Empire Medal for her years of service to the Trust. One of the local projects in which she took a particular interest was in seeing the Baandee CWA rest room moved from its old position where it was in danger of collapse due to intermittent flooding, to its present site at Mangowine. The first purpose built CWA rest room now resting in Nungarin, which formed the first branch of CWA in Western Australia.

Remarkable Women



May Knowles (centre) examining her copy of the Register of the National Estate¹⁴

Endnotes

- 1 Newspaper article (scrapbook), nd.
- 2 Handwritten copy of speech, courtesy of Gary & Helen Coumbe.
- 3 Newspaper article, *Henrietta*, Patricia J. Howe, ISBN 978-0-646-49419-7
- 4 Nungarin School Journal 1922-1946.
- 5 *Primary Producer* article, nd.
- 6 Newspaper article, *Henrietta*, Patricia J. Howe, ISBN 978-0-646-49419-7, p194.
- 7 Newspaper article, *Henrietta*, Patricia J. Howe, ISBN 978-0-646-49419-7
- 8 *For Country Women*, Maxine Cornish, published locally.
- 9 Harry Williams Memoirs.
- 10 Harry Williams Memoirs.
- 11 Burran Rock Church minutes 1916 – 1920.
- 12 Newspaper article, *Henrietta*, Patricia J. Howe, ISBN 978-0-646-49419-7, p194.
- 13 Spelled ‘McGowan’. A.M. McGowan took up Avon Location 15481 in 1914.
- 14 *Trust News*, National Trust of Australia (W.A.) October 1982.

Man's Best Friend

Farm Dogs and Other Animals

Dogs have always been an integral part of farm life. Some were working dogs, some were family pets, but most had very individual personalities. In early photos of Nungarin, there is almost always a dog to be seen lurking about.

Apart from anything else, dogs are great companions during long lonely shifts on the tractor – and they don't usually argue or answer back, although there are some notable exceptions. Whoever said "Dogs are a man's best friend", obviously hadn't met Bozo. Harry Williams came off second best on quite a few occasions:

We were building a machinery shed across the road from our sheds and I was going between there and the workshop getting tools. Rather than walk I would ride the motorbike – one time the dogs decided to race out to greet me and Mark's pup, Bozo, went straight under the front wheel. That was the start of the saga. Every time I started up the bike he would dive in and grab the wheel. I tried to stop him but he just got worse as he got older ... I never seemed to come out best with any of these skirmishes. The first one was when I had my arm in a sling from having done my shoulder in. I was driving sheep along the road on the bike with one hand. I heard a car coming up behind me, so I was turning the bike around to see who it was. Bozo saw his opportunity and grabbed hold of the front wheel. He gave it an almighty shake which upended me off the bike. Shirl and Eileen were in the car. I got no sympathy from them because Shirl reckoned I was mad for trying to ride with one hand and



Rex the Dawe wonder dog

A Piece of String

both of them reckoned I took a kick at Bozo. That's why I fell off. I may have kicked at him to try and stop him from grabbing the tyre, but he did pull the wheel around and I'm sticking to that story.

The second time I got into trouble was on Christmas day. I had to go out to get some wethers in to inject the teasers for AI [Artificial Insemination] and it fell on that day. Bozo did his usual trick of getting hold of the front just as I started the bike. This time he really got a good hold of the front wheel and was shaking it for all his worth. I had had enough of him and without much thought I revved the bike up and dropped the clutch. The bike came straight up and over. Lucky it went one way and I went the other and the dog went like hell to hide under the chairs on the verandah. I skinned my arm and when I came in from getting the sheep I had blood all over me.

The third time was when I was trying to get a mob of young ewes through a gate opposite the house. They just would not go and kept breaking away. Bozo was getting real excited and Tom came from the house to give me a hand. I stalled the motorbike and went to start it and Bozo did his usual trick. Instead of grabbing the front wheel he went for the back wheel but mistook my leg for the tyre. I had long pants on and although it hurt like hell, I didn't have time to look at the damage as the sheep were getting away. After we got the sheep through the gate I rolled up my pants. I couldn't believe that he could have done so much damage with one grab at my leg. Shirl and Eileen made me go to the doctor. He gave me a shot and covered it up. He said if it had been any bigger I would have had to have a skin graft. Bozo won all rounds.¹



*Cartoon by Brett Connelly
(reproduced by permission of Harry Williams)*

Quinlans at Elabbin had a marvellously intelligent dog called 'Kelly'. One day when Peter Hodges was visiting the Quinlans with his father, he was amazed when Kelly came down to the shed and howled to let the men know that morning tea was ready. What was even

more incredible was that Kelly regularly drove the horse and loaded wagon down to Elabbin siding. The system was that Mick would load the wagon with bags of wheat, and Kelly would drive their horse, Noble, to Elabbin siding where Paddy Quinlan worked. Paddy would unload the wagon and Kelly would take the outfit back to the farm to be loaded again. Frank Williams verified the story, and said that Kelly would often take himself off to round up the sheep and put them in the yard overnight and guard them to keep them safe from predators such as dingoes.

There is no doubt that dogs are smart, and many operate with some sort of 'sixth sense'. Danny Bryant had a faithful old black and white border collie called Sue, and when he went away on one of his regular fishing trips to Kalbarri he would leave Sue with the Cornishes at Knungajin. Danny's fishing trips were always of indeterminate length, lasting anywhere from four to six weeks and no-one knew exactly when he would be back, but Sue did. Just a day or so before Danny arrived home, Sue would take up a position at the head of the track and be waiting to welcome him.

When Su Cornish was working on the family farm prior to leaving for Muresk, she took the old Landrover to check a flock of sheep for pinkeye. As she approached a mob she left the Landrover creeping along in first gear while she stopped and disabled any affected animals with sheep cuffs so that they could be picked up and treated afterwards. She then sprinted to catch up with the Landrover and proceed quietly to the next mob. Having caught one particularly obstinate old ewe, she found that she had run out of cuffs and bits of rope to tie the animal up with. Undeterred she whipped off her t-shirt and tied its feet together with that. By the time she made her way back to pick up the tethered animals she was reduced to her underwear, only to discover that the ewe with the t-shirt had partially worked itself free and was racing off across the paddock. By that stage Su had the Landrover going in one direction, and the sheep with her top going in the other, and then looked up to see a helpful uncle coming full-tilt across the paddock to assist. She took a long while to live that down.

Kevin Cornish had a sweet and sensitive female dog (it doesn't seem right to call her a 'bitch') named Mitzi. Mitzi was not a girl to be trifled with, and on one occasion when she was helping Kevin's brother, Barry, to move some sheep, things got a bit heated and Barry swore at her. With a withering look at him she turned around and walked home. No amount of shouting and cursing could induce her to come back. Of course not, she was a female.

Perhaps you can excuse Barry's lack of good manners because sheep are well known to try the patience of a saint, and Dick Roddy had serious concerns about their native intelligence anyway:

On the evolutionary scale of animal brain power, I rate cows as only a couple of notches above the stupidest of all animals – sheep. Sheep can invent ways of killing themselves unlike any other animal I can think of. I have seen them, in an endeavour to get the coolest water flowing into the trough via the ball valve, to stick their stupid heads under the protective cover over the delivery system and quietly drown themselves, or if this fails, to stand on their hind legs to eat leaves off a tree only to find that their front foot is caught in a fork, and it's good night nurse. My worst nightmares invariably have some involvement with sheep.²

Harry Williams would probably agree with Dick Roddy's assessment, especially with regard to the obstructive nature of cattle:

We had a short horn bull that Dad wanted to catch. I don't know why, maybe it was for the butcher because he was starting to get a bit dangerous. There seemed to be a lot of people involved. It was probably on a Sunday when the Greens were out. We were trying to get it into the horse stables. It must have smelt a rat because it veered off every time it was close. We chased it for what seemed like hours with the truck, on horseback, with the dogs and on foot. The bull was nearly all in when he took to the dam and swam through it coming out fresh to start all over again. We cornered him near the stable gate but instead of going in the gate he went over the hay-yard fence. In those days of cutting hay for chaff the hay was taken down in benches for easy access. The bull clambered up these benches until he reached the roof. He went straight over the other side and fell on his head. These haystacks were pretty high and it was quite a fall. Everyone thought he had broken his neck. No one had the presence of mind to put a rope on him. He was only knocked out and after a minute or so he got up, shook himself and chased the nearest person. I cannot remember what happened to him, but as a kid I thought it was a good Sunday's entertainment.

Joe Jolly asked Dad if he could come to his place and doctor some of the bull calves. Being a weekend, Ted, my eldest brother, and Don Ayton came with Dad and me to help. When Dad saw the so-called calves he was not

amused. They were half grown and wild. At first Ted and Don watched the Jolly boys try to separate the calves from the rest of cattle. They were sitting on the railing fence. One of the bulls really went berserk and tried to jump the fence between Ted and Don. Ted went over backwards and fell on the ground, but Don had his feet under the next rail and ended up hanging over the rail backwards. How he didn't break something I wouldn't know. Dad used a long stick with the rope looped over the end to rope the bulls. Don held onto the rope, but the bull was too strong for him and dragged him round the yard and through some cow dung. He was not amused for he had ridden down from the goldfields on the motorbike and didn't bring a lot of clothes with him. For me it was another good day's entertainment.³

Danny Bryant had been plagued with Rosie Johnson's cattle straying and getting into his crop. After repeated warnings he lost patience and shot the cow. Unfortunately he erred in judgement by then cutting a slab of steak from its rump. Rosie took him to court and the judge said that protecting his crop was one thing but availing himself of the meat was another, and he was found guilty of the charge.

In the mid 40s, Phil Cornish had his own cattle troubles when a young Jersey bull got his head stuck inside the top of a square hundred-gallon water tank:

The first we knew of the drama was when he bellowed in fright and the subsequent noise drove him berserk. He tried to get free by tossing his head up and down and turning around in circles, banging into all sorts of obstacles – trees, fences etc. I tried to get near enough on the horse to tether him with a rope, but when we got close the bull tossed his head and gave a mighty bellow. The horse, usually a quiet old chap, took fright, and so did I. The bull ploughed through quite a few fences and ended up in a hundred-acre paddock. Eventually the bull quietened down and I tried to get close enough to get a rope around his legs. It was no longer any use taking the horse, so I let him go and crept up on foot. The hapless bull was pretty exhausted by this time and I was able to tie his legs and immobilise him while I went home for the truck.

I then had the problem of how to get the tank off his head. By some kind of miracle one horn managed to work free, and with the aid of more rope I was able to pull the tank off. The poor bull had had enough, and just sauntered rather uncertainly away. We had both had enough of that sort of excitement.⁴

A Piece of String

Horses were indispensable in the early days of farming. Apart from the old reliable working horses, there was a lot of fun to be had with a decent mount. Harry Williams recorded his experiences with learning to ride and breaking in his first horse:

Charlie and I learnt to ride on Silvermane. She was a fairly docile horse ... When you tried to ride Silvermane you had to work really hard to get her to go anywhere. However, as soon as you turned for home she used to gallop flat out ... we used to watch Charlie galloping down from Mangowine and head straight for the dam. He used to jump off before getting to the dam. Still holding onto the saddle he would run alongside for a bit and then let go. Dad used to reckon he must have felt himself falling and jumped before he fell off, but it was not until recently I found out why he did it ... Apparently, every time he rode Silvermane from Adams's she galloped all the way, and this made her thirsty. He could never stop her going into the dam for a drink. The only trouble was she would go right into the water, sometimes over her neck. Charlie would get soaked, so he jumped off before he got to the dam.

[Mrs Purdy] told me she had some unbroken horses on her farm at Kununoppin. She said if I'd like one I could come and choose it for myself ... I talked Dad into taking me to Kunno. We took the Chev truck with the frame. I picked a small chestnut. We had a hell of a time setting her on the truck. She just lay down on the ramp. However we eventually got her home.

Dad gave me some tips on getting her used to the saddle and bridle – mouthing her. I had a fair idea because I had watched Dad and Ted breaking in the working horses.

The time arrived when I was to ride Wanda. To my surprise she let me get into the saddle and walk her. However every time I made her trot she threw me. I kept hold of the reins and she pulled me along the ground at full gallop. Each time she straightened up her back she kicked me in the guts. She finally stopped and I climbed on her again thinking that I may have taken her by surprise. She promptly threw me again. After a few times I gave up and walked her home.

As I got to the horse yard Dad was waiting for me. He was trying hard not

to laugh. He told me I would have to put a crupper on the saddle. I didn't know what a crupper was. He explained it went around the horse's tail and held the saddle down. The saddle was actually slapping her back. Dad told me to ask Mr Joe Jolly for a loan of his saddle which had one on. I had done most of my riding bareback. I borrowed the saddle and all went well. She never got over having a buck when she was fresh or when someone new rode her and made her canter. It was always good for a laugh.

Mr Hocking, the man who had the farm across the road from us used to breed trotters. His chestnut stallion was a really nice looking horse. This horse used to get out from time to time and put on a great performance, dodging three of them trying to put him back in his paddock. He had a ball and when he was good and ready he just walked quietly back himself.

I asked Mr Hocking about getting my horse Wanda mated to the stallion. His reply was "Not bloody likely. That mongrel of yours might kick him and break his leg". The next time Wanda came on heat I put her out in the paddock nearest to the stallion. The stallion jumped two fences to get to her. When I reckoned he'd been there long enough I put Wanda back in the stables and rang Mr Hocking to come and get his bloody horse out of our paddock.

Unfortunately Wanda died before having her foal, so I lost both.⁵

Teddy Pick had a close shave with one of Williams's horses:

I remember Teddy putting the collars on the horses. As you walked around them to get to the other side you always patted them to let them know where you were. One horse you never walked behind. This time Teddy forgot. Teddy was only small and he used to carry a box to stand on so that he could reach the strap to buckle up. I don't know what he did but I saw the horse let fly with both legs as he walked behind it. Teddy actually flew through the air. When I ran over to him all he kept saying was "Don't tell Uncle Fred". Dad had warned him about the horse. How he didn't break anything I will never know.⁶

After one of the Cornish horses died, the body was being removed in the bucket of the front-end loader just as a visitor came in the front gate. She innocently asked,

“Do you always move the horse like that?” The ingenuous reply, “No, only when it’s dead”.

Horses may only have one life, but it is easy to believe the old adage that a cat has nine. Phyllis Cornish adopted a couple of wild cats (goodness knows why), and one of them, Ginger Meggs, became a particular favourite. Poor old Ginge disappeared and the family thought he had used up his ninth life. However, almost two years later he turned up at the door and immediately demanded to be let in and given back his old privileges (of which there were many). He looked quite fit and healthy, so must have found a good home somewhere. Several years later Phyllis went on a week’s holiday and returned to find that Ginge had disappeared once more. This time everyone thought the worst and that he had finally gone to cat heaven. Nearly twelve months later, he turned up again, this time looking skinny and travel worn, and quickly downed six saucers of milk. He took no time to reinstate himself to his former position in the household.

Of course, there are ways of getting rid of cats, as Dick Roddy can testify:

At one stage we had fourteen of the blighters, and second sister, Kath, found a unique method of thinning out their ranks. Jim and I were chasing Kath through the house, intent on inflicting some long-forgotten atrocity upon her. To escape our most unwelcome attentions, she jumped off the back step of the dining-room, unaware that the whole feline population was gathered, either eating some hand-out from the kitchen, or looking for something to eat. Anyway, she landed plumb in the middle of the assembly, and then there were thirteen! We let it be known far and wide that if anyone had cats surplus to requirements, just call Kath and she would take care of things.⁷

Harry Williams remembers a galah that managed to cause some havoc:

Grandfather Wolstenholme was given a young galah. It became a very good talker. While they were away they left the bird with friends. When they took the bird back they found it had added to its vocabulary a string of swear words. It proved to be rather an embarrassment seeing Grandfather was a minister. He gave the galah to Mum and Dad and it proved to be quite a character. Once someone came to the house looking for Mum and Dad, but they were out. When he called out the bird imitating Mum’s voice called out “Come in”, but he couldn’t find anyone inside. He never realised

the voice was coming from the galah until he caught up with Dad later and realised what had happened.

The galah used to go out with Mum sewing bags and all the wild galahs seeing him on the bags of wheat would come down and land by him. But when he said "Hello", they would all take off squawking. One thing he hated was anybody yelling into one of the 200-gallon water tanks. The girls used to do this to really get him going, and he took a big bite out of my sister Rene's leg one day.⁸

Dick Roddy also recalls the incredible ability of galahs to mimic the human voice:

At the time we had a very quiet milking cow named Beauty, which Mum would call to the back gate and milk on the spot without a bail or anything to restrain her. At the call of "Beauty", she would appear and stand looking through the fence for attention. Well, the cockies took up on this, and could imitate Mum's voice, so that the poor old cow spent a lot of fruitless time gazing into the back yard and probably wondering in her bovine way "what the hell is going on".

We rescued a magpie from under a tree at Nokaning siding and she developed into a very cute pet, and of course was spoilt rotten. On the farm immediately to our north was a nice old bloke, "Old Harry", who used to occasionally appear on horseback and come down for a yarn, or a cuppa, or any excuse that came to mind. On becoming aware of his approach, Maggie would fly about a quarter of a mile up the road, and dive-bomb Harry until he dismounted at the front gate. Once settled in the deck-chair on the side verandah, the pesky bird would sit on the back of a chair in a most demure fashion, and make it look as if she and Harry were the best of mates. But things changed once Harry put his foot in the stirrup. That bird would begin the dive-bombing routine and continue until the old chap was half-way home. Sadly she followed Dad on a trip to Nungarin in the horse and cart, and was last seen about six or seven miles up the track, keeping pace with Dad by flying along the fence-line. She either met up with a friendly mob of magpies, or fell foul of a hostile bunch, but we never saw her again.

A Piece of String

Speaking of a hostile bunch ... we had our share of hostile critters over the years, the most memorable occasion being the night a snake came inside the house. In bright moonlight, Mum saw one of the cats pawing at something on the verandah, and woke Dad with the news that there was a snake on the way in. Dad grabbed the 'snake killer', a pole about eight or nine feet in length, which was kept at the ready at the front of the house. With the pole and the hurricane lamp he came into our bedroom where the serpent had made its way, put the lamp down and took an almighty swish at the intruder. The stroke with the snake pole had no effect on the snake, but it did knock the hurricane lamp over, extinguishing it and prompting Dad to make his famous utterance, "A bloody man in a bloody room with a bloody snake, and no bloody light!" At this juncture our Fox Terrier, who up until this time had been resting between our feet under the rugs, decided it was time to join in, and with loud yelping and snarling it was all we could do to restrain him from joining in the fray. Dad managed to extricate the lamp, relight it, place it in a position which lessened the potential for further damage, and with a couple of well placed blows, despatch the reptile. Worth's Circus could not have provided better entertainment!⁹

Endnotes

- 1 Harry Williams, *Two Beers and a Story*, Typescript.
- 2 Communication with Dick Roddy.
- 3 Harry Williams, *Two Beers and a Story*, Typescript.
- 4 Communication with Philip Cornish.
- 5 Harry Williams, *Two Beers and a Story*, Typescript.
- 6 Harry Williams, *Two Beers and a Story*, Typescript.
- 7 Communication with Dick Roddy.
- 8 Harry Williams, *Two Beers and a Story*, Typescript.
- 9 Communication with Dick Roddy.

We Will Remember Them

Local Involvement in Two World Wars

Throughout Australia, we regularly gather at war memorials and cenotaphs to honour the sacrifice made by so many of our young men on the battlefields. Of the many who enlisted during armed conflict in various theatres of war, thirty-three of Nungarin's sons never returned¹. It is good to remember that they are more than names on a board somewhere: they were a special part of our community and their families and friends watched anxiously for news that they were safe, and would soon be home.

For some young men, it would have been the first time they had been far away from home, and in the early days of the First World War it all seemed like a great adventure. Frank McGinniss was one young man who felt the constraints and hard work of pioneer farming, and saw enlistment in the armed forces as a challenge and an escape. On his way to enrol he met his best mate, Fred Wynne, on the North Baandee Road and they blazed a tree with an axe to mark the spot where they last saw each other². Frank's letter home from Egypt to his mate at the end of 1915 tells of the excitement and anticipation the troops felt as they waited eagerly for action:

Dear Fred,

I am sending you a few views of Alexandria and thought to make a letter of it also. I have wrote to you, and Harry and Maud several times now and I suppose you are just about getting them now, as it is about 3 weeks since I got here. It is pretty rotten to think I have to wait another month before I get any letters from the good old West.

We all think the West is a rotten place, but if you have any sense don't ever leave it. Don't come to the War whatever you do. It is the worse job ever I took on and as long as I live I will never enlist again. It would be alright if they would let us go and fight, but this drill and no food to eat...! We get sweet

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potatoes here. I would give one pound for a good feed of potatoes now, and if a man is here for 6 months he will die with miner's complaint as the dust is awful.

All day long you are eating dust, and they drill with full packs from 5.00 a.m. till 5.00 p.m. with very little time off. The inoculation and other things and doses of this and that thing have you as sore as a boil. Of course I don't get any drill as I am still butchering and wish I could get out of it. I only do about 3 hours a day and I am getting as lazy as a cut dog. They are trying to keep me here for 5 months. The other butcher has had 6 months here, and he is going away next week, so they might catch me. You can't open your mouth or you are put in for a few days in the guard tent. I will give them and their meat a rough time if they do stop me. I told Captain Dawkins I came here to fight, and he told me I came here to do as I was told.

There are thousands of troops here now. There is supposed to be some trouble on the Suez Canal with the Turks, and a lot of our boys are going, and some gone, down to have a fly. I will be missing if I get a chance to get with them.

I heard today the Y.M.C.A. building at Blackboy was burnt down. They were just finishing it when I left. I am sorry if it is true.

The 32nd Battalion are supposed to be here today, and the 11th of 11th Battalion tomorrow. There are a lot of Tommies here, but the Australians won't have anything to do with them as they are wasters. The Australian boys took some trenches and put the Tommies in to them to hold, and when they came back there were Turks in the trenches instead of Tommies, and the Australians took it again, and the Tommies lost it a second time.

When the Tommies charge, the Turks come in to meet them, but when the West Australians charge, the Jack Turks run like hell and won't look around. I was talking to one of my old pals just back from the front, and he said "Take the Australians away from them and the Turks would be in Egypt inside a week", and I quite believe it! The Tommies I have seen here are all boots and hat (no man at all). It is the fun of the world to see them on guard. Our boys walk right through the lines and call them all the Pommie B...s they can think of because they don't do their duty. It would be just the same if we were Turks or Germans coming through their lines.

A Piece of String

We went to the Pyramids yesterday, and I had a ride on a camel. My cobber and I got on a long legged camel, and I had a cane stick as a whip. You can guess what a nice steady trip the camel had. We left the nigger about a mile behind and gave the moke a few long oats to go on with. The owner wanted another 5 piastres, but he got a bang instead to go on with.

I am going to the zoo tomorrow, if it is not too hot. It gets pretty hot here in the day, but gets very cold at night. It is winter here now, and it is 10 years since they have had any rain. They get water from the Nile and grow some lovely crops of maize and cotton and sugar cane and oranges. The oranges are as green as grass when they are ripe. To look at you would think they were green, but they are very nice, and about the only thing you can eat and enjoy. Everything else is sweet. The butter is made from camel's milk, and they eat camels.

I wish I was home just to get a feed of the old cow's butter and some potatoes at "Louisville" Farm .

It was pretty rough over our way, but I wouldn't care if I was doing some fighting, but here doing nothing is rotten. Tell Harry not to enlist on any account. They mess you about how they like, and do as they like with you. You would be surprised how they mess you up and pay a month behind, and put on guard duty as soon as we got here. We came here at 6.00 p.m. and was called out at midnight to do guard duty for 48 hours without tucker of any sort. And you can't drink the water till it is boiled. We haven't got all our things yet, and might have to go at a moment's notice to some other camp.

I sent Maud a parcel last week and hope she got it O.K. I will get some small coins (Melliums they call them). There are 10 to a penny. I will put them in the letters. It is funny with money. If you give them a pound they will give you 100 piastres change and you have a pocket of money, and nothing in it. Tobacco and cigarettes are from sixpence to 1/6 for tobacco.

Well Fred, it is getting late now. So will leave this for some other time. Good night.

Well Cobber, I am at this scribble again. I am expecting Vince Fitzg- to land tonight. The 6th of 28th are landing here tonight and I think Vince will be with

We Will Remember Them

them. I hope so anyhow as I want a steady cobber to go to Cairo with. I missed him the night before I left – I was in Perth and he came up to camp to see me. I was sorry to miss him. He left a note and I forgot to answer it – well really I didn't have time.

I am tired of Cairo and Heliopolis, and wish I could get to the front. The 4th reinforcements of 28th Battalion are going this week, so we might get away soon now. There are supposed to be about ten thousand troops in the water now, so we will have to shift out of this soon to make room for those. There are some thousands of horses and donkeys and mules here in this camp, and some lovely horses too. The donkeys don't belong to the military, but to the Egyptians. They work them around the camp carting.

I would like to get to England for a trip after this is over – If I have any luck to get through it. My cobber has been to the front and got hurt with a fall of earth, and they got him a job in the Post Office at Alexandria, so he is all right. He has been here 11 months now and can talk Egyptian & Arabic as well as any one. I know a few words of both. It is easy to pick up. All the boys know a bit of it. There are some funny sayings. If they want a horse or donkey to stop they say "fess" and all the boys sing this out when they are driving along the street, and the horses stop dead.

Well Fred, when you come to think of this place it is the worst living place ever seen or heard of. The niggers are all starving and if you throw away a biscuit or anything they will fall over one another and fight like mad, and if you give a woman a cigarette or biscuit, the men will hit them and kick and take it from them. They will steal anything they see, and you can get them to steal anything for you for a few pence. One of our boys gave 5 shillings for a donkey, and rode it home and let it go, and the blacks got it again. So now when he goes to Cairo, he gets the donkey and rides it home to camp and lets it go again and it goes home again.

24th November

Well Cobber, I am going to give you some more news. We all got the order this morning that if we heard 3 shots fired, or 3 rockets in the night, we had to stand to our arms as they are expecting trouble in Heliopolis and Cairo. I wish to God it will come as I am dying for a fly at those black devils. There has been a lot of Light Horse and Infantry gone between here and Alexandria,

A Piece of String

as the Arabs and Blacks of all kinds are causing trouble, and the Turks are fighting not 20 miles from Suez. So we will soon be in the thick of it. The boys are all dying for some fight, and they give the Arabs and Egyptians a hot time. All the soldiers here carry a stick of some kind, and the black devils get it hot. They are cunning and try and bounce money off some of the new-comers, but if the old hands see them, they get hell. They carry nuts and cakes on their heads, and the soldiers tip them upside-down. They are making pounds and pounds out of the boys in many ways. The blacks all work in with one another, and put the price up on things.

The 4th of the 28th are off today, so we won't be too long. I hope to be in the thick of it by the time you get this scribble. If they are going to have a go at us here in Cairo it will be pity help them! There will be dead meat lying about all over Cairo!

The Egyptian Army is not much good. What I have seen of them, they would be a "cake walk" for a few of us boys. I think Greece will fight with Germany, and if they do, that will cause trouble in Egypt as there are a lot of Greeks here. There are French women and Belgians here also. As sure as they start – Cairo will get burnt to the ground.

They have a lot of trouble in stopping some of the boys from burning the town down now. There has been several places set fire to now, but stopped after four places were burnt. Some of the Military Police shot a soldier, and one got burnt to death in the fire. I can tell you we are among a wild lot now!

Well Cobber, I am going to chance to get this home to you. I will register it, and if you get it, it will be O.K. I have wrote to you all a few times now, and hope you get same. You ought to be receiving some now as it is going on for a month now since I wrote first. I sent Maud a parcel so look out for it. It will be the last mail or parcel I can send if trouble starts here, and when we get to the front we are only allowed to write a post-card. I will have to sneak a letter away now and again.

Well Fred, I must close now and try to get this posted somehow. I heard this morning that the Post Office won't take any more letters or parcels from the soldiers.

We Will Remember Them

Excuse this scribble as it is awkward to write on.

Best luck to all. Kindest regards to all, don't forget to write.

Wishing you all Merry Xmas and Happy New Year

Frank McG³

In March 1916 Frank's company was sent to France, and in a letter home to his mother he wrote, "we are in the firing line at last", and a few days later "a shell got pretty close to me this morning, but done no harm. I was very lucky indeed". At the end of June he was not quite so lucky and was wounded by a bullet to the hand. His letter home explained "I was in the Germans' first line of trenches when I got hit, and stayed with the rest of the boys until next day"⁴. He was repatriated to England for treatment and furlough before being sent back to France on 30th October. Less than a week later he was killed during the murderous battle of the Somme at Flers. His mother saw Frank's name listed as "Missing in Action" in the *West Australian* newspaper on December 21st 1916. Despite numerous letters to the military authorities, she received no confirmation until a letter from France dated 10th March 1917 that read:

Dear Lady

I had the sad task of burying the owner of this pocketbook after he had laid out in "No Man's Land" for some days.

His pay book etc were handed in to authorities and as requested inside the cover I send this on to you, presumably his mother.

My sympathy is yours poor lady and the least I can do is send this on to you.

*Please accept the sympathy of another soldier
2675 Cpl GB King C. Comp 4 Battn A.I.F.*

*At some later date censorship will allow me
perhaps to write and let you know in what
locality your loved one lays*

I am

Yours in sympathy

Geo B King⁵



Frank Wenvoe Wynne McGinniss

In such a small community, each loss was felt so keenly; each lad was somebody's son, brother or best mate. The three Gilbert boys, two McGregor

brothers, Charles Adams, Alexander Hood; all were deeply mourned, and families and communities grieved anew as details of the misery, confusion and horror of the battlefield became known.

Communications were difficult and in a letter home to his sister at Mangowine in February 1917, Charles Adams (10th Battalion AIF) wrote explaining some of the confusion:

Mother thought I was seriously hurt by the way she wrote but at present I am OK. I only got a bit of a scratch since joining the battalion and it is not worth mentioning. There was three others in the battalion [with the] same name and one of them same initial as me and he got wounded pretty bad.⁶

His personal service records bear testimony to the confusion. There is a casualty form in the name of Charles Joseph John Adams, regimental number 2780, and a medical slip for Charles Ayles regimental number 2780, as well as a letter from the Public Trust Office requesting a death certificate for Charles Edwin Adams who was killed in action in France during the 1914-18 war. Many years later, information from the Central Army records office stated that “no record is held of a Charles Edwin Adams having served with the Australian Imperial Force, 1914-18 war. A record is held of 2780, Private Charles Adams, killed in action in Belgium 8th October 1917”. Adding further to the mystery, the Central Records Office states that Charles (2780) was born in Perth and was aged 30 years and 8 months old when he enlisted. His enlistment certificate is dated 4th June 1915, but his birth registration cites record number 23586 (Toodyay) Charles Edwin Adams, 4th October 1882, which would have made him 32 years and 4 months old at the time. Even official contact with his mother and next of kin was difficult, being addressed initially to Mrs Jane Adams Northam Western Australia, and later to Mrs J Adams Mangourin via Nungarin W.A.⁷

In writing home in early 1917, Charles said:

We have been having a pretty cold time the last month or two but by the time you get this it will be starting to get warm again so I think we will be able to pull through now as we have got used to it and our blood is a bit thicker than when we first came over here ... for the last week or two it has been all frost and the ground is covered in snow ... it is a lot better than the mud and slush, but very cold.⁸

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Later in the year in a letter to his mother from “somewhere in France” Charles wrote:

I don't think it will last much longer, it is over two years now since I left South Australia and just about 3 since I left the West...the time seems [to] pass very quick, I hope you all have a good season although I suppose if the rabbits are so bad they will destroy most of it. It is a jolly shame that as soon as there is a good season they get so bad. Well dear mother there is no news and I want to finish this to get it censored before we move, so I will remain with love and best wishes to all, your loving son, Charley.⁹

Only a few short months later, Jane received news that Charles had been killed in action during the third battle of Ypres. The battle, known as the Battle of Passchendaele, took place on reclaimed marshland near the village of Passchendaele. The terrain was swampy even without rain and after the unusually cold and wet summer of 1917, tanks were bogged down in mud, and soldiers often drowned in it.¹⁰ Charles was one of many tens of thousands who died. His name is recorded on panel 17 on the Menin Gate memorial which bears the names of all those men who were lost without trace during those few horrific weeks.

Alexander Hood had completed a 6-month teacher-training course at Claremont Teachers College, and his first posting was as “Head Teacher on Probation” in a bough shed at Mangowine. When World War One broke out, he joined the 28th Battalion Australian Imperial Forces, and fought at Gallipoli and Alexandria before moving on to France where he was mortally wounded at Pozieres. The battle at Pozieres was a tragedy. The British lost 19,240 dead and 35,493 wounded on the first day. In late May Alec Hood wrote home of the deaths of several friends from Perth, he also told of his promotion to the rank of Corporal and assured his family “we must win before long”¹¹. By the end of July there had been continuous bombardment for 3 days and the



Charles Adams

thunder of artillery could be heard across the channel in Kent. In the final offensive the 28th Battalion had 467 casualties, dead or wounded, including all four company commanders¹². One officer and 256 men were posted missing, including Alec Hood. The records state that he lay out for two whole days before being brought in to the dressing station where he later died.

In November 1917, news was received that yet another Mangowine settler, James Lay, had been killed in France:

Quite a gloom was cast over the residents of Mangowine when the news came through that Private James Lay, a settler of this district, was killed in action in France on the 4th November. Private Lay took up land in this district about five years ago, and no other settlers showed such courage as he did, and the manly fearless manner in which he faced every proposition, gained the admiration of all who met him ... He was drafted into the 4th Reinforcement of the 44th Battalion, and when volunteers were called for miners he was one of the first to step forward, and when later on volunteers were called – this time to join the Pioneers, who take the most dangerous part in the war – he again stepped forward.¹³

Often the authorities had to deal with the anger that grieving families expressed as they tried to come to terms with news of their son's death on foreign soil. One young local lad was reputed to have run away to enlist as a 17 year old, and not satisfied with being returned home, put his age up and tried again with more success. He was only 5'2" tall, so perhaps it was stretching things a bit to expect the authorities to accept his asserted age of 22. However he was dispatched to France where he was wounded in action and died in German hands at Cagnecourt. For many years his parents continued a stream of complaints to military personnel; they felt that the cause of death given by the Red Cross (wounded in action) was more honourable and more acceptable than that recorded by the Army (died while a prisoner in German hands), that the death certificate was printed on "most common" paper, and they further suggested that cheap return tickets be made available for families to visit war graves¹⁴.

World War I hero, Colonel Thomas John Todd was injured in battle twice and is buried in the British Military Cemetery at Cairo. Todd had purchased land just north of Nungarin in 1911. His property was at the corner of Karomin Road and Moodiljing Road (later known as "Mali Brae").

Todd was born in New Zealand, and represented that country in rugby, association football, and cricket (“a great cricketer of the dashing order”¹⁵). When the Boer War broke out he accompanied the NZ Mounted Infantry to South Africa. He was mentioned in dispatches several times and awarded the DSO in 1900. His civil occupation was as an accountant and builder, and he came to Western Australia in 1904 to join his brothers who had a contracting business in Midland, and owned brickworks there. He served on the Midland Council and his unremitting work, which included the establishment of the abattoirs, was recognised when Todd Park and Todd Street were named after him¹⁶.



Above: Colonel Thomas John Todd

Todd enlisted to fight with the Australian forces during the Great War. He was promoted to the rank of Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel), and was present at the landing at Gallipoli. At the second Battle of Gaza, he received a serious wound to his left eye which caused a great deal of suffering (the complete nickel-coated bullet was eventually removed through the roof of his mouth), but did not stop him leading his men to Beersheba and on into Jerusalem. He was a very popular leader, and well respected by his men. He was again mentioned in dispatches and awarded a bar to his DSO, and later made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George¹⁷.

The severity of his injuries continued to plague him, but with reckless disregard for his physical well-being he discharged himself from hospital and took the most direct means of joining his regiment in Damascus, which just happened to be by finding himself a place in a Handley Page bomber. A notice in the Nungarin-Trayning Mail on Tuesday 17th July 1917 carried the following information:

*The many friends of Colonel Todd D.S.O., will be pleased to hear that he has resumed duty in Egypt after being severely wounded. The Colonel is well known in the district and it is gratifying to know that several of the Light Horse from here are fighting under his able command.*¹⁸

Todd's war injuries eventually weakened him and he died in Egypt in January 1919 while awaiting medical treatment. The esteem and honour with which he was held by his contemporaries is demonstrated by this extract from the *Swan Express*:

The death of Col. Todd DSO, CMG, came to scores of people in this district with a sense of keen personal loss ... no man in this district enjoyed such an abundance of popularity ... he had fought throughout the greatest campaigns in history. He had seen the British arms triumphant in all theatres of war, and without doffing his martial harness; he surrendered his life with the consciousness that he had played his part in the great struggle against the menace of Prussian domination.¹⁹

It seems that Todd not only doffed his martial harness, but also eluded a marital harness as well, a fact which he explained was due to advice from Lord Kitchener who, on addressing the Australian Officers in South Africa, warned them that war with Germany was inevitable and advised them to keep free of domestic responsibilities. Todd remained unmarried, but left his estate (comprising the Nungarin property and all his personal effects including a guitar and a set of bagpipes!) to Annie Maria Pippen. Annie Maria was one of three sisters who came from Labatouche in Victoria where they had known Con McCorry. It is believed that the three sisters came to Nungarin to assist McCorry at the hotel, and at one time Annie Marie even held the licence for McCorry's Nungarin Hotel. Annie Maria became Mrs Francis, an inaugural member and foundation President of the Nungarin Country Women's Association, and organiser and Vice-President of Eastern Division of CWA.

The 10th Light Horse memorial in King's Park, Western Australia, is erected to perpetuate Todd's memory as well as memories of the Officers and non-commissioned Officers and Troopers of the 10th Light Horse Regiment who fell in the Great War of 1914-1918²⁰.

Another World War I hero with connections to Nungarin was Military Cross winner Jim Stanton. At Bullecourt during an attack on the Hindenburg Line, Jim took charge after the Company Commander had been killed. He continually rallied his men and took charge of bombing parties. When the bombs ran out he busily organised a bayonet attack. He was about to leave the trench when he was knocked unconscious under fire, but recovered and took charge again. His citation reads:

His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to confer the Military

We Will Remember Them

*Cross on the under mentioned officer, in recognition of his gallantry and devotion to duty in the field ... He set a splendid example of courage and initiative.*²¹

No doubt this same courage and initiative was sorely tried when he took up a Returned Soldier block at Knungajin after the war. The depression of the thirties was the final straw for his struggling farming endeavours and the property was eventually taken over by his brother-in-law, Philip Cornish.

Joseph Spillman who farmed at nearby Baandee was an older man who also distinguished himself with his determination and courage in the face of the enemy. Joseph was 36 years old at the outbreak of war, and enlisted in the 10th Light Horse Regiment. He was wounded twice, and in 1919 he was part of a picket scouting ahead of the main group when he came upon a group of twenty Turks on the Jenin Road. Single-handedly, he charged the party in the darkness and captured them all. He was promoted to Lance-Corporal and awarded the Military Medal for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty in the field²². His medals and citation are part of a tribute to the 10th Light Horse on display in the Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum.

There were only 15 Military Medals for bravery awarded in WWI to enlisted men of the 10th Light Horse Regiment. The Regiment captured the northern Palestinian town of Jenin on the night of the 20th September 1918, and in doing so also captured 8,107 German and Turkish troops. On the 21st September the Divisional Commander Major-General Hodgson visited the regiment in its outpost lines and on being saluted by the Commanding Officer he exclaimed “Well done Tenth! I suppose never before in the history of the world has such a number of prisoners been taken by so small a force as one regiment”.²³

Names of 81 men who enlisted from the Nungarin District during the First World War

As published in the *Nungarin – Trayning Mail*, July 1917

L. Burrowes	R.N. Norman	J. Ferguson
A.W. Benson	C.S. Browne	J. McGraw*
E.E. Sabberton*	J.O. Meehan	A. Marr
A.E. Clarke	W. Payne	S. Johnson
T.J. Todd*	J. Moran	G.S. Warburton
R.W. McCorry	J. Lay*	W. Crompton

A Piece of String

E.C. McCorry	H. Oakes	F.A. Sims
T. Adams	H. Rush	F.G. Sims
C. Adams*	F. Bolton	W. Devitt
W.V. Fitzpatrick*	S.D. Dawe	H. Dalglish*
R.C. Fitzpatrick	W.E. Dugdale	A.G. Murray
L. O'Donnell	F.E. Calver	G. White*
T.T. O'Donnell	H.O. Brown*	J. Mayberry
G. Fimister	C. Titchener	O. Phillpot*
F.A. McGregor*	W. Cowan	H. Holmes*
A. McGregor	A. Hall	F. Ball
R.E. McGregor*	L.F. Hall	T. Maull
T. Wright*	C. Gilbert*	B. Dixon
A.C. Andrews	A. Gilbert*	G. Davies
H.E. Andrews	W. Gilbert*	M. Woods
T. McCulloch	W.G. Barratt	E. Burgan
T. Stanger	D. Stewart	P. Duggan
E Treeby	J. McConnell	F. Miles
F. Treeby*	H. Johnson	H. Fulcher
R. Treeby	F. Hall	J.H. Devonshire
R.S. Hall*	V. Yates	A. Allsop
J.S. Baird	W.A. Shadbolt*	H. Coombes

Plus 13 others that enlisted from North Baandee:

H. Adair	A. Leathart	B. Reddrop*
N. Burton	H. Mableson	B. Talbot*
T. Brady	W. Murray	M. Tickle
W. Bainbridge	Reg. Murray	
W. Giles	E. Ryan	

And 17 other men who are listed on the Nungarin Memorial Honour Boards:

A. Allsop	H.S.L. Creagh	J.D. O'Toole
G. Anderson	J. Ferguson	V. Patterson
W.G. Barratt	G.J. Hodges	E. Payne
D.M. Benson	S. Johnstone	H.H. Waterhouse
T. Bolton	H.R. Longman	J.L. Wright
W. Cowan	J. Moran	

* Denotes those men that died during the war

A sobering list, especially when the same issue of the paper carried an advertisement that read, “Call to Arms. Australia wants men to replace the fallen. 25 recruits a day are required for men aged between 18 and 45. Minimum height 5’2”, Chest 33 inches”.²⁴

Following the disastrous battles in France, the British Army Council urgently demanded more reinforcements from Australia, and in October 1916 the Government initiated a national referendum on conscription. In spite of the Anglican Synod in Melbourne declaring that “God was on the side of the Allies” and that conscription was a moral necessity, the people of Australia returned a resounding ‘No’ vote.²⁵ As enlistments continued to fall and the war situation deteriorated, Prime Minister W.M. Hughes called a second referendum at the end of the following year. Once again he addressed the nation:

Are you for Australia or against her? Will you stand with those who are resolved that, come what may, we will not desert our boys at the Front? Or will you stand with the real leaders of the campaign against the Government’s proposals to send reinforcements to the boys at the Front – the men who are playing Germany’s game in our midst, Sinn Feiners, members of the I.W.W., syndicalists, men of the type responsible for the strike which paralysed Australia’s industries, men responsible for the rebellion in Ireland, the kind of men who today, are in power in Russia, and are offering Germany a separate peace?

*The Government has put before you a proposal, moderate and equitable, seeking a clearly defined power which it pledges itself not to exceed. That proposal will ensure the Australians at the Front the reinforcements and the rest which they so badly need. If you turn down the Government’s proposals you not only prove yourself unworthy of freedom, but literally condemn to death the men who are fighting for YOU. That is the responsibility which rests upon you. You cannot shirk. On December 20th you must vote “Yes”.*²⁶

The Anti-conscriptionists felt that a ‘Yes’ vote would mean the death of thousands more young Australians and launched a passionate campaign:

The Blood Vote

“Why is your face so white mother?
Why do you choke for breath?”

“O I have dreamt in the night my son
that I doomed a man to death”

Why do you hide your hand mother?
And crouch above it in dread?”

“It beareth a dreadful brand, my son
with the dead man’s blood ‘tis red”.

“I hear his widow cry in the night
I hear his children weep,
And always within my sight, O God!
The dead man’s blood doth leap

“They put the dagger into my grasp,
it seemed but a pencil then,
I did not know it was a fiend, a gasp,
For the priceless blood of men.

“They gave me the ballot paper,
the grim death-warrant of doom,
and I smugly sentenced the man to death
in that dreadful little room.

“I put it inside the Box of Blood
nor thought of the man I’d slain,
Till at midnight came like a whelming flood
God’s word – and the Brand of Cain.

“O little son, O my little son!
Pray God for your Mother’s soul,
That the scarlet stain may be white again
In God’s great Judgment Roll.”²⁷

Once again there was a strong ‘No’ vote (1,181,747 against 1,015,159) which, rather than declaring Australia’s opposition to the War itself, reflected opposition to the compulsory nature of conscription. Whatever the stance on conscription, the whole

of Australia rejoiced when the Armistice was signed on 11th November 1918.

Only a few short years after “The War to End all Wars”, the world was once again plunged into battle, and once again young men and women rallied to the cause. Norm Dawe worked on the family farm at West Nungarin. During World War II, he enlisted with the 2/3 Machine Gun Battalion, and after serving in Syria, was part of a small composite brigade that was diverted to Java to halt the advance of the Japanese who were trying to cut off Batavia. In the *West Australian* of Friday 14th September 1945, Brigadier A.S. Blackburn (VC) described the AIF’s heroic fight:

We were attacked continuously for 72 hours by a whole Japanese division, fully equipped, which was trying to smash through to cut off the railway to the interior. The Japanese general, and also the head of the intelligence service, subsequently admitted to me that they suffered more than 500 dead, apart from other casualties, in trying to break through our lines... On March 8, General ter Poorten (Dutch Forces) found that further resistance against the Japanese in Java was useless and surrendered. I took my brigade up into the mountains at the back of Bandeong when I heard that surrender was imminent, in the hope that the brigade might manage to make its way through the jungle to the other coast and there be taken off by naval ships or transports to Australia ... I then found that all communication with Australia was cut off ... our medical supplies were inadequate for the wet season ... in jungle country there was no shelter for the men. I therefore surrendered on March 12.

Norm was taken prisoner by the Japanese and along with many thousands of POWs he was forced to work under the appalling conditions on the Thai-Burma Railway. He contracted amoebic dysentery and was one of almost three thousand Australians who died during construction of what was called the “Death Railway”.²⁸ His death is recorded in Weary Dunlop’s war diaries.²⁹

During the course of the War, his parents received several postcards signed by Norm and reporting that he was “well and working for wages” but it was later discovered that they had been written years



Norman Dawe

A Piece of String

earlier and posted even up to 2 years after he had died. They also received dozens of letters from all over Australia from people who regularly listened to Radio Tokyo on the short wave radio, and relayed messages from prisoners to their anxious families at home. Dick Roddy was one who regularly listened to Japanese shortwave stations JEI and JLG and passed on information to any families that he could trace. It is so touching to read the letters that were sent to Frank and Nell Dawe – parents and families reaching out in support of each other, and each desperate for news of their loved ones and eagerly passing on Norm’s message:

*Dear Mother: Just a couple of lines to say I am safe and well, so do not worry, I am doing alright, and hope you at home and all my friends are well and happy. So keep on smiling until we are all together again.
Heaps of love, Norm.³⁰*

However the joy of receiving such welcome messages was tempered by advice from the W.A. L of C Records Office that cautioned:

The information is conveyed to you but in view of the nature of its receipt and that it emanates from an enemy source, it should be accepted with the reservation that even if the letter is partly authentic, parts of it may have been added or taken away to suit the purpose of the Japanese propagandists.³¹

The caution was not misplaced as his parents were later notified that Norm had died on June 28th 1943, 6 months before the messages were broadcast.

After the war, Frank and Nell Dawe received notes from several who had been imprisoned with Norm, including this letter from Reg “Tiger” Payne:

Dear Mr & Mrs Dawe,

I don't know really how to begin this letter but perhaps I should first of all say how extremely sorry I am that I haven't contacted you before this. But I haven't really had much time to myself since I arrived back and the few times that I did attempt to come and see you when you were staying at the Swan Hotel the Army authorities decided that on those particular occasions they needed me also so I was unable to reach you.

However Trevor managed to get a message to me last week and he has been up here to see me and we had quite a long talk together.

We Will Remember Them

As you perhaps know Norm and I were very attached to one another for a long period and to my great sorrow I was with him right through his illness. It hurts me very much to have to talk about him but I can understand and sympathise with you both in your wish to know a little about how he died. I have told Trevor all I know and I am sure he will pass it on to you. Norm was a very sick boy for some weeks before his end but his courage was marvellous and he would not give in. Being so close to him as a pal and a workmate I realised this and pleaded with him to go on sick parade but with his usual big-hearted manner he would not, in case some one sicker than he was, would have to go out to work in his place. You will realise no doubt that at that period we were going through our worst period of P.O.W. life and were actually literally worked to a standstill and could not possibly get a rest unless you were an absolute hospital case. So poor old Norm carried on until he could go no further and collapsed on the job. He was admitted to hospital and two days later I was admitted myself with diphtheria. I was put in the same tent with Norm and for a fortnight I was forced to lay there and watch him fighting his wonderful battle to live but with no drugs to treat him the doctors could do very little for him. But Norm's courage, fortitude and cheerfulness amazed them and amongst the many brave and magnificent attempts to pull through which we witnessed during that hellish time your son Norman's is recognised by the whole battalion as one of the most gallant and gamest of all. Further than that I can add no more except to say that Norm died just as he had always lived, a 100% man.

I offer you both my deepest sympathy in your loss and feel that I have something in common with you in as much as while you lost a very dear son I lost the truest and staunchest mate I have ever known.

Trevor and I are keeping in touch with each other and he is going to let me know if at any time you are in Perth as I would very much like to meet you both. So for the present I will say goodbye, and remain

Yours very sincerely,

Reg Payne.³²

Norm Dawe is buried in The Kanchanburi War Cemetery in Thailand, along with Merton ('Mick') McGinniss (from Nukarni) whose older brother Frank was killed during the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

In spite of the columns and columns of war casualties listed in the daily papers, many of Australia's sons were so determined to play their part that they employed various ingenious tactics in an attempt to thwart the enlistment criteria. Some tried

putting their ages up (or down, depending on the circumstances), Mick McCorry even went so far as to change his name from Victor after having been initially rejected on medical grounds. Mal Herbert and Stan Payne were two mates that were turned away when they first tried to enlist because they were farmers and therefore categorised as “essential services”. Undeterred, they tried a second time, but on the next occasion listed their occupation as “truck drivers, presently unemployed”. Their ingenuity succeeded where the facts hadn’t.

Both lads eventually returned home safely and for their families the anxiety was replaced by blessed relief. In her book, *Clay’s Saga*, Clarice Brown (née Herbert) reports:

Mal Herbert was not heard of after Singapore fell, then we heard he was on Timor resisting the Japs. What a relief for us all but we young ones didn’t realise what a hazardous life he led. Up and down mountains through jungles carrying a Bren gun. When eventually his unit was evacuated he came home on leave. He was so quiet and muscly. His thighs were like tree trunks.³³

The European war ended on 7th May, 1945, and three and a half months later, early on Wednesday morning, 15th August 1945, Australian Prime Minister Joseph Chifley announced the Japanese surrender with the words “Fellow citizens, the war is over.”

Nungarin Men who died during WWI

C Adams	R.S. Hull	B. Reddrop
H.O. Brown	P.Kearnes	E.E. Sabberton
H. Dalglish	J. Lay	W.A. Shadbolt
W.V. Fitzpatrick	H.R. Longman	B. Talbot
A. Gilbert	J. McGraw	T.J. Todd
C. Gilbert	F.A. McGregor	F. Treeby
R. Gilbert	R.E. McGregor	G. White
H. Holmes	O. Phillpot	T. Wright
F. Mc Ginniss	J. Crane	

Nungarin Men who died during WWII

K. Cadd	N. Dawe	C.J. Sawyer
K. Coulson	F. English	D. Vanzetti
	D. Hall	

Endnotes

- 1 Honour Boards Nungarin Memorial Hall.
- 2 Bert Wynne, typescript.
- 3 Letter written on 'Souvenir of Alexandria' letter postcard (Cairo Post Card Trust)
in possession of Nungarin Heritage Machinery & Army Museum.
- 4 Meryl Watson, typescript, 2009.
- 5 National Archives of Australia #1944379.
- 6 Copy of letter in possession Mangowine Homestead (National Trust W.A.).
- 7 National Archives of Australia (Charles Adams).
- 8 Copy of letter in possession Mangowine Homestead (National Trust of W.A.).
- 9 Copy of letter in possession Mangowine Homestead (National Trust of W.A.).
- 10 <http://www.chemistrydaily.com/chemisry/passcehendaee>.
- 11 Letters of Alec Hood to his family, copied in type by Pam Ledsham.
- 12 Neville Browning, *The Blue and White Battalion*, Advance Press.
- 13 Nungarin-Trayning Mail, 21st December.
- 14 National Archives of Australia.
- 15 *Swan Express*, 31 January 1919.
- 16 XLH Historical Collection.
- 17 National Archives of Australia.
- 18 *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, 17th July 1917.
- 19 *Swan Express*, 31 January 1919.
- 20 10 Aust Light Horse(AIF) Souvenir Scrap Book (1944).
- 21 National Archives of Australia.
- 22 *Commonwealth Gazette* 119, 17 Oct.1919.
- 23 *Commonwealth Gazette* 119, 17 Oct.1919.
- 24 *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, July 1917.
- 25 Australia's Yesterdays, Reader's Digest Services Pty Ltd 1974, p307.
- 26 *Nungarin-Trayning Mail*, 7th December 1917.
- 27 Australia's Yesterdays, Reader's Digest Services Pty Ltd 1974, p307.
- 28 E.E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*, Penguin Books Australia Ltd,
Victoria, 1990. ISBN 0 14 012861 1
- 29 E.E. Dunlop, *The War Diaries of Weary Dunlop*, Penguin Books Australia Ltd,
Victoria, 1990. ISBN 0 14 012861 1, p. 289.
- 30 Correspondence Cornish Family Collection.
- 31 Correspondence Cornish Family Collection.
- 32 Correspondence Cornish Family Collection.
- 33 Clarice Brown, *Clay's Saga*, privately published.

On the Home Front

The men and women who kept the home fires burning

For some, the eagerness to contribute to the war effort saw them serve in a variety of ways. Jim Baker trained with the local Volunteer Defence Corps before enlisting in the 29th Garrison Battalion Home Forces and eventually being accepted for transfer to service overseas. In mid 1942, during his home service, Jim was posted as part of a contingent to guard one of the fuel dumps which were strategically located throughout rural areas of Western Australia. A vital defence requirement was for 200,000 drums to be placed, and because all available steel was needed for conversion into tanks and guns, the Minister for Supply and Development, Senator McBride, had called for urgent return of all empty drums for the purpose.

Strategically important though his task was, Jim Baker was impatient to “do more useful work elsewhere”¹ and his diaries give us insight into the boredom and frustration he felt.

Wednesday August 12th 1942

Arthur Rance, an old Kununoppin identity fondly known as ‘Mintus’, carried us out in his ancient Morris to our new job, a petrol dump between Wyalkatchem and Benjabbering. The old guard (A.I.F. men) were glad to see us, because, although they admitted it was a good place, they wanted to get into the next draft which they heard was now being made up.

The camp is in country, which, though not considered first class wheat land, is typical of much of the wheatbelt. Gimlet, white gum, salmon mallee, tea-tree, tamar and tussock all jumbled up. Steel drums, scattered in groups throughout the timber, contain the petrol which we are here to protect. The bulk of the paddock in which the shelter patch stands appears to have been rolled within the last two or three years, although that which has been cultivated is now a mass of wild turnip. The old

log roller is still lying among the scrub near a temporary horse yard consisted of a little cleared space fenced off with a single strand of barb. Many of the dead, sap rung trees are still standing gaunt grey skeletons against the blue sky. Here and there a small clump of timber or solitary tree breaks the expanse of clearing. Some of the clearing is not yet picked up, though burned off.

After the old guard had left, we cleaned up the camp (it needed it) and arranged our gear, mounting guard from 1200 hrs. I took the first shift...

Thursday – Saturday August 13-15th

The days (and nights) are slipping by unnoticed and unnoticeable. We do not mount a formal guard, but George, Ernie and I do a 3 hour shift each, standing by with rifle loaded and equipment on, and making a tour of the dumps now and then. Each day one man goes into Wyalkatchem (per boot unless he scores a lift) for what stores are necessary, mainly meat and bread...

Monday August 24th.

These days are just one long loaf. Apart from the few simple camp duties, we have nothing to do but read. The literature comprises Pix, Western magazines, Australian Journals, Tarka, Ballantyne's World of Ice, and a couple of love stories. Save for Tarka and Ballantyne, all tripe. I have Moby Dick and Locksley's Walter Scott, both a bit heavy and long-winded to overcome the state of mental and physical ennui engendered by our torpid existence. I cannot even arouse sufficient energy to walk the countryside ... this evening found us seated around the campfire smoking incessantly and talking intermittently. Last war the others were in the thick of things; between the ridges and gullies of Gallipoli, the fields of France and Flanders, the mud of the Somme, the streets of London, are their ever-present memories. Mine are only of sitting around campfires at Mosman or Crawley or Swanbourne, singing "Australia Will be There" or "Keep the Home Fires Burning" with the lusty ardour of youth and the satisfying certainty that we would win. I could do with both the ardour and the certainty now. Them was the days, when we scouts collected books and papers for the troops, washed dishes at the Soldier's Institute, made sand-bags, and marched home o' nights to the music of bugle and drum, or our own young voices. It is necessary to be young to thoroughly enjoy a war.²

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During breaks from guard duty, the men filled their days by hunting rabbits and dreaming. Jim reminisced about his work on the farm, and of the challenges and excitement of training with the local Volunteer Defence Corps.

Tuesday September 1st 1942

I recall our smashing and victorious attack on embattled Merredin when the Nungarin contingent... captured the Post Office, and generally played merry hell. I think of Andy MacPherson with his poker face, driving a load of charcoal along the main road, telling his tale of fitting a gas producer ...and saying nothing about Phil Cornish and Ernie Masters concealed beneath the load; being halted, questioned and passed along – a Trojan Horse on pneumatics!

I think of our crowd capturing Nokaning Siding and waiting there while the Merredin reinforcements, unaware of the fate of their garrison, rolled up, one truck at a time, each to be captured in turn. I remember our abortive flanking move from the north-east through Talgomine and Goomarin, of our scouts, long Harry Payne and short George McKay reconnoitring the crossroads, and of Reg Gant's hesitant leadership which ordered our attack too late.

I remember too the "light refreshments" which we didn't get, and the bleak ride home on the back of an erratic old Chev, while the sou'wester and the rain made us cold and miserable. We were being trained for guerrilla warfare then, they told us. Now here I am, wandering about the bush with a .32 sporting rifle and nothing more dangerous than a jersey bull for a thousand miles.³

Men from the Nungarin-Kununoppin area formed Number 5 Platoon Volunteer Defence Corps which was part of "B" Company 15th Battalion No 3 Group with Headquarters in Merredin (No 4 Platoon) and which also incorporated Mukinbudin (No 6 Platoon)⁴. The commanding officer of the Battalion was Lieutenant Colonel James Morison-Scott D.S.O. Colonel Scott migrated to Western Australia after WWI and took up farming at Kellerberrin. His Second in Command was Captain F.A. Law who worked in Merredin as Road Board Secretary and Engineer. Both men had been awarded the Croix de Guerre during the First World War, and were enthusiastic to assist in training the men in armed warfare.

On the Home Front

Sergeant Philip Cornish who served with 5 Platoon at Nungarin also recorded his recollections of the famous 'Trojan Horse' exercise.

As part of ongoing training, the various platoons of the battalion were invited to try and breach the security of Merredin and infiltrate the town. Lance Corporal Ern Masters owned a Ford truck which he had bought and which still retained its original Rockingham plates. Ern and I started thinking up an idea to use the truck and try to get a load of charcoal through to Merredin in answer to their challenge. We both had gas producer units on our trucks and tractors, and made our own charcoal, so had a justifiable reason for our venture.

We put a stock frame on the truck in which to load the bags of charcoal. Inside the frame was a small piano case which we thought would hold four men and their weapons. We then stacked the bags taking particular care until we came to the top of the piano case. We planned to stack three layers of bags over the box once we were safely installed.

Other men in the section were then advised of the proposed exercise in the hope of getting volunteers and a driver. The aim of the exercise was to get the load of charcoal through to Merredin and report to Major Dick Law without the enemy stopping us.

A Scotsman, Andy McPherson, offered to drive and two brothers, Fred and Norm Watson volunteered to join Ern and me in the box hidden under the charcoal. We accepted their offer but there was still a lot to try out before all was in order. They were adamant that they wanted to be in it so practise runs were arranged.

Air circulation in the box was improved, and we made sure that three layers of bags could be pushed up with rifle butts if for any reason there had to be an emergency exit. An electric light with its own switch was installed and we checked that there was sufficient room for the four of us and our weapons. We decided on our story and instructed our driver, Andy, that if we were stopped to say that he was going through to Hewitt Bros. (gas producer manufacturers in Bates St. Merredin) to pick up a gas producer unit for Ernie Masters' Hart Parr tractor and that the charcoal was part payment for the same. Andy's other instructions were to proceed to the post office in Bates Street.

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Eventually the day arrived ... We took up our allotted positions, and with good wishes from Lieutenant Len Hutchison and other platoon members we started on our way via Nukarni where we expected to be challenged ... Andy soon gave us warning that there was an "enemy" section ahead, and that he would be stopping. We switched off the light and listened to Andy tell his story. There seemed to be someone climbing over the load and lifting bags, but they obviously believed Andy's story as they only shifted two layers of bags here and there. One man was heard to suggest that they should put a burst of machine gun fire through the load. Thankfully this was not done and we were permitted to proceed and eventually arrived outside Hewitt's. After parking the truck in Hewitt's yard we were glad to get out of our hideaway. The four of us, in uniform, walked to the Merredin Post Office and knocked on the small side window and asked the telephonist to record the time and sign her name on the paper we handed to her. We then proceeded to the Town Hall where we contacted Merredin's Major Dick Law who was astounded as he was of the opinion that no-one could possibly get through the Merredin defences. All said it was a day to remember.⁵

'Invasions' of neighbouring towns was a popular VDC exercise and Don Couper of Trayning recalls the ingenious and successful invasion of Wyalkatchem when Private P. Mulcahy disguised himself with ladies clothes and wig and wheeled a pram loaded with flour bombs past all checkpoints and proceeded to 'bomb' all the main buildings in Wyalkatchem!⁶

Dick Roddy, whose family farmed 14 miles south of Nungarin, has clear memories of his time with the V.D.C.

In about 1942, a few of we lads from Nokaning put our ages up and signed with the VDC. We began as a rifle platoon, armed with .310 calibre cadet rifles, and later with ancient .303s, then later after amalgamating with the Merredin platoon, were armed with 3-inch Stokes Mortar. In probably 1943 our fearless leaders arranged a tour through the monstrous Base Ordnance Depot at Nungarin. This was truly an eye-opener. The army had the facilities and expertise to actually build a tank, but at this time their efforts were directed to the overhaul of Bren Gun carriers and General Grant tanks. These latter vehicles were pretty temperamental, being powered by aircraft radial engines. Under normal conditions the

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diesel engines with which they would normally be fitted had been diverted to powering landing craft. We were invited to take a ride in one of these monsters, and that was an eye-opener too. After coaxing the engine to life, the driver took us alongside the railway line where a lot of earth had been removed to make the rail bed. Fortunately the interior of the turret and much of the inside of the tank had a protective layer of foam rubber which tended to lessen the impact of one's head when the driver bored through 4 and 5 feet deep depressions in our "joy" ride.

Sadly, these radial engines performed best at altitudes around 10,000 feet where the outside temperature was around a couple of degrees, and not in a confined space in a tank and where the outside temperature was around 100. After about 20 minutes, probably through fuel vaporisation, the damn thing stalled. We de-tanked while the driver attempted to fire her up again – thus providing what to we young devils was a most humorous episode.

As part of our platoon we had a diminutive Sergeant, who at the age of 30-ish, we know-it-all 18 year olds regarded as not a bad bloke, but rapidly approaching senility. Anyway, while the driver was attempting to coax the tank back to life, Ernie decided to have a squint up the big fish-tail exhaust – why I shall never know. While he was peering up the exhaust, the fuel fumes in the system suddenly ignited, and there was a flash of flame, a great cloud of black soot and little else to indicate that the engine was about to fire. Ernie withdrew hurriedly, minus his eyebrows, and a face which would have made Al Jolson jealous. Once we had established that he was likely to survive, we could not contain our mirth and for a while "good order and military discipline" was on very shaky ground.⁷

Members of the VDC spent countless hours drilling, rifle shooting, bayonet practice and signalling. At one stage it was decided that the Nungarin platoon should have a signals unit, and two men were selected for the task. Cyril Johnson was one chosen for signals training and was fortunate in that a neighbour, Hampton Grode, had been a postmaster and was skilled at reading and sending out messages in Morse code. He also happened to be in charge of the local Mangowine telephone exchange and so the two men spent many hours practising. Hampton Grode would lay the telephone hand piece on the table close to the Morse code transmitter key and tap away passages

from the newspaper, or from the book that he happened to be reading at the time. At his end, Cyril would hold the receiver close to his ear and write down as much as he could of the transmission.

Cyril remembers many weekend field exercises – some more successful than others!

Headquarters were set up at a road junction west of Burran Rock, Nungarin Platoon being ordered to set up a checkpoint approximately a mile to the west. We had barely settled in when a light aeroplane appeared and circled overhead. Not knowing if it were friendly or hostile, all ranks were ordered to stay under cover, which was done to such effect that the occupants of the plane returned to H.Q. and reported their inability to pass on fresh orders to our platoon commander because they could not find us!

These orders had then to be dispatched by road, but before they could be acted upon, a light enemy tank burst in among us inflicting chaos and casualties (the tank was a utility fitted with hessian sides, with pipes sticking out here and there for guns). Someone lobbed a grenade down the hatch and that was that.⁸

With the benefit of hindsight a great deal of the VDC weekend exercises now seem to be jolly “Boys’ Own” adventures, but at the time they were undertaken very seriously. Cyril Johnson recalled the plans to be put in place in the event of a Japanese invasion.

During the period just prior to the Battle of the Coral Sea ... a ballot was taken among members of the Nungarin Platoon, to decide who were to go and meet the Japs, and who were to keep the home fires burning. I was one of those allocated to go. We were given detailed instructions as to how to equip ourselves, and be ready to drop everything at a moment’s notice ... Wife Bess and I talked it over, collected and packed the bare essentials ready for instant departure. We also decided on a course of action for Bess to adopt should the Japs come through our area. That pack stayed in readiness for months. Rather harrowing times.⁹



Nungarin Volunteer Defence Corps

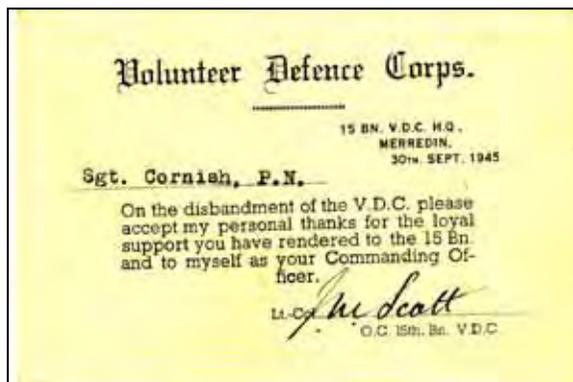
Back Row: Dick Jolly, Jim Lee, Fred Watson, Syd Jolly, Jack Hodges, George Young, William Woodbridge

Middle Row: Eddie Dayman, Ernie Masters, Phil Cornish, Len Hutchison, H.H. (Bill) Waterhouse, Harold Creagh, Cyril Johnson

Front Row: Bill Crane, Fred Philbey, Norm Watson, Denham (Dinnie) Young, W.S. (Wog) Waterhouse.

With the threat of invasion looming, local folk were rostered to maintain watch of the skies and a plane-spotting hut was set aside in the recreation grounds. In an aid to aircraft recognition, a booklet was issued which showed the silhouettes of various planes with side, wing and tail profiles. In his memoirs, Leslie Lee¹⁰ explains:

Another patriotic effort, also under the aegis of the Department of Defence, was the Volunteer Aircraft Observation Corps. Radar was in its infancy and most aircraft spotting had to be with the eyes God gave us augmented on occasion by binoculars ... headquarters and the walls were festooned with official posters of all the different aircraft that might conceivably be seen ... the drill was that in the event of hearing planes, we would report the direction by phone and, if possible, if it came in sight, to identify it.¹¹



Phyllis Miles remembered packing up and taking her young children with her for one day each week, recording the planes that flew over, noting which direction they came from and where they were heading and phoning the information through to headquarters. She was usually on her own during the day, but the night shift generally had 2 or 3 people on duty.¹²

Phyllis came to Nungarin with their three children in 1942 as her husband worked on the pilot boat, *Lady Forest* at Fremantle and was concerned that the harbour would be an obvious target for the enemy. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour there was a growing fear of enemy invasion. The V.D.C. requested all farmers to notify what accommodation they were able to provide in the event of civil evacuation, and many local families opened their homes to friends and relatives who evacuated their children to safety away from the coast and the city.

Members of the Nungarin Country Women's Association volunteered to bring some of the boys from Swan Boys Orphanage to the country for Christmas and supported the war effort in numerous other ways. They obtained materials from the Ordnance Department and took it home to make camouflage nets, organised functions to raise money for the Red Cross and sent knitted articles and food parcels to local men who had enlisted.¹³

Wartime shortages saw the introduction of rationing of various commodities. At the beginning of the war the build-up of armaments and military vehicles created an urgent demand for rubber and patriotic locals collected and contributed railway truckloads of used tyres. Imagine their chagrin when only a short time later they found they were unable to obtain adequate replacements. Petrol rationing was introduced in October 1940, with private cars being allowed only sufficient fuel to drive 16 miles per week. In 1942 it was not permissible for a car to be driven to Perth except in cases of dire emergency and application had to be made to the local police and accompanied by a doctor's certificate. Police Officers were under orders to report the number of cars passing through the district and report to the Inspector of the Liquid Fuel Board. These restrictions saw many drivers converting to charcoal which was cheap but

dirty and unpleasant. Gas producers allowed an average range of 100 miles before refuelling, and were variously mounted on vehicles, installed in the boot, or in some cases on trailers. Another, less popular, substitute fuel was household gas which was carried in a large balloon-shaped container mounted on the roof of the car.

One commonly used device on the older cars was to 'water down' the fuel with power kerosene for more mileage. Some more expert mechanics would adapt their carburettors to run on almost pure kerosene after the car was heated on petrol, but as of course kero was as scarce as petrol, this was soon classed as illegal. The difficult part of running on kero was that the smell of burnt fuel was strong and distinctive and it didn't require that an inspector had to be super sleuth to detect the 'crime'. Some of the smart boys could wangle fuel from friends in the army but when the army woke up to this and coloured the petrol and added a special smell, it became much more difficult. One prominent Merredin businessman did three months 'inside' for using such fuel which discouraged the trade somewhat ...

... The alternative was running on charcoal gas and many motorists did just that. The gas producer was a clumsy looking grate and cylinder attachment fitted to the car, truck or tractor. The cylinder usually held about a wheat bag of charcoal which was burnt on the grate underneath. The charcoal only fell onto the grate a little at a time. This burning of the charcoal, with the assistance of a drip of water, generated the gas which was sucked into the carburettor and fed the motor. This was quite an efficient unit, which, while not generating as much power or kick as petrol, gave less engine wear. The vehicle had to be started on petrol and when everything was going right, switched onto gas. Some units were very effective – according to the owners – but not all were. Of course, there were quite a proportion that were home made, but probably not as many as there would be today when every farmer's son is a welder.

I fitted a gas producer to the 15 30 tractor and although it got the crop in, it took a bit longer and was a very messy business. I don't think that any job on the farm ever got one into such a filthy condition, not even harvesting smutty wheat. The hopper had to be emptied every night to remove slag and refilled several times a day and every time the charcoal was handled, it raised a black dust which had to be sieved out.

A Piece of String

I can only remember working it for one year so I suppose kero got easier to get. At the start, as did most farmers, I burnt the heaps of mallee roots that were a feature of every home but although it entailed a lot of work the charcoal was soon used up and I had to cart in more roots for the house. After that it was necessary to buy more charcoal, about 3/- a bag I think. Most city petrol stations sold bags of charcoal in gas's heyday.¹⁴



*1932 Case tractor fitted with a Hewitt gas producer (Jack McCorry and Clarice Herbert)
Photo courtesy of Bob Herbert*

Three months after the introduction of petrol rationing it was reported that the saving had been only 10%, which was about one third of that which had been expected.¹⁵ A bean-counting miscalculation - some things never change.

Ernie Masters had a Chev 4 which was fitted with a gas producer, and annoyed with the post-war price of petrol, declared that he wasn't going to take the gas producer off until the price of petrol reduced to the more acceptable level of 1/6 per gallon. In a fit of pique he cornered just a little too sharply and side-swiped a strainer post which knocked the gas producer clear off the Chev.¹⁶

Clothes and footwear were rationed in June 1942, and someone should have seen the folly of appointing a Scottish born man as Minister for War Organisation and Industry. Among his directives was the prohibition of patterns on socks, and women were advised to substitute leg paint for stockings. Ever resourceful, women used all manner of substances including gravy browning and Condy's crystals (potassium permanganate which when dissolved in water formed a purple solution that stained the skin various shades of brown – often leaving a dirty 'tide-mark'), and carried

the directive one step further and took to painting a line up the back of their legs to simulate a stocking seam. There was even a handy gadget invented to assist in getting the seam-line mark dead centre. It was some time after the war that silk stockings became available again. In 1946, Mr L.S. Gough, the General Manager for Prestige, announced that they had only been able to obtain a limited supply of silk because Japanese supplies were 90% below the pre-war level. He optimistically suggested that stockings would be a possibility the following year.

Other female undergarments were targeted also. Because of the wartime shortage of elastic, it was recommended that buttoned panties were to be substituted for bloomers. To be fair, the 'Dedman Suit' for men (named in his honour) was also introduced and was restricted to a single-breasted suit with no frivolous buttons on the sleeve of the jacket, and cuff-less trousers with legs no wider than nineteen inches. Originally the suit was not allowed to include a waistcoat, but the powers-that-be gave way under pressure and six months later provision was made for the inclusion of this important item of sartorial splendour. In October 1942, gentlemen were advised that "in the national interest" shirt tails were to be shortened by 3 to 5 inches, and pockets were no longer to be allowed on shirts and pyjamas.¹⁷

The rationing of tea was introduced in July 1942 and restricted to 8 ounces per person each 5 weeks. Newspapers came to the fore and suggested tasteful substitutions such as tea-tree, red clover blossom or lucerne. Sugar was rationed the following month with every man, woman and child limited (!) to one pound per week. An important difference was that sugar coupons, unlike tea, could be accumulated to allow for bulk purchases. Even patients in hospital were called upon to surrender the appropriate coupons.

The supply of rubber was frozen during the war, with the result that no golf or tennis balls were able to be made. Old golf balls were recovered and painted, and some tennis clubs closed for the duration.

If a new golf ball was required – some hardy folk still played occasionally – it was necessary to present two old ones, and were they old! The depression had instilled in us the virtues of repainting golf balls and the rare new ball was an occasion of envied admiration. Tennis balls were the same and only discarded when thoroughly bald.¹⁸

A Piece of String

While the duration of the war caused sacrifice and changes in nearly every feature of civilian life, the aftermath brought new challenges to a damaged nation. With great sadness, families and friends began to discover the fate of loved ones who had been killed or been incarcerated in prisoner of war camps. Our country set about the painful task of rebuilding, and volunteer groups such as the CWA and the RSL continued to give service to those that had endured immeasurable loss and suffering.

*Let us rebuild a world so torn and broken
That only God can guide us in the task,
And by His grace, from evil dreams awoken
Find happiness we could not dare to ask.¹⁹*

Endnotes

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- 2 EJ Baker, Personal Diary, January 1944.
- 3 EJ Baker, Personal Diary, January 1944.
- 4 Paul de Pierres, *Wheatbelt Warriors*, ISBN 0646127403.
- 5 PN Cornish, personal memoirs, typescript.
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- 7 Dick Roddy, personal letter, 2009.
- 8 Cyril Johnson, personal letter, undated.
- 9 Cyril Johnson, personal letter, undated.
- 10 Leslie Lee came to the district under the Civil Service Re-Settlement scheme and took up land in the Trayning area.
- 11 Leslie Lee, *Random Recollections*, private publication.
- 12 Phyllis Miles, personal letter, 1995.
- 13 Maxine Cornish, *For Country Women*, 1994.
- 14 Leslie Lee, *Random Recollections*, private publication.
- 15 Patricia J Howe, *Newcarnie-Nukarni*, p388.
- 16 Story from Frank Williams.
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- 19 J Ward Walters, 3rd August 1945 (printed in the *Advertiser*, 11th August 1945).

The Defence of the Nation

The Impact of the Army in Nungarin During WWII

Because of fears of a Japanese invasion of Western Australia during the Second World War, it was decided to move three of the Australian Army's ten divisions to this state. As a consequence of this build-up, there was a need for considerable support facilities, including ordnance depots. These needed to be on established and reliable road and rail routes, with good water supply and telephone communications, and far enough inland to be out of the range of carrier-borne enemy aircraft. Nungarin was strategically placed with alternative road and rail access either through Northam-Merredin, or the Goomalling line, or via a third route through the Narrogin-Merredin line. Having fulfilled all the other prerequisites, Nungarin was selected as being the most suitable site for an ordnance and stores depot.

Nungarin was developed as part of a supply line for fuel and munitions which stretched from Wyalkatchem through Nungarin, Merredin and down as far as Ardath. There were fuel dumps spaced approximately fifty miles apart all along the line, with bomb storage at Nokaning, and the 2nd Field Hospital as well as Air Force Ordnance and the Radio Listening Station at Merredin.

Jim Baker (Private E.J. Baker W51546) was part of the 29th Garrison Battalion Home Forces and was stationed at Wyalkatchem to guard the military fuel dumps there. He noted the interest and increased activity in his diary:

Tuesday 15th September 1942: In Nungarin waiting for the down train. Two important looking staff cars, full of brass hats, dominated the main street. Gossip hath it that there is some construction job to be done here, but gossip is, as yet, ignorant of its nature.

Wednesday 7th October: George's¹ wife has written him that the Nungarin job is a £250,000 affair. What a break for the home town.²

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In September 1942, the Army acquired 1720 acres (697 hectares) of land, which included some lots within the townsite, as well as parts of adjoining agricultural land. A block of farming land was resumed from C. Vanzetti (369.5 acres), and another from G.H. Herbert (729 acres).³ Clarice Brown (née Herbert) explained that the war was to make an impact on Nungarin in a way that no-one ever dreamed:

An official letter came in the mail – our farm was to be taken over. We would receive some compensation but had to vacate by a certain date ... Our parents were stunned, Cec and I were secretly thrilled, it all sounded quite exciting. But it wasn't.

Gangs of men moved in around the township ... Tons and tons of gravel went roaring past our house forming roads all over our paddocks and one of Vanzetti's, which we also were using. Big store rooms, workshops and huts were being constructed all through our precious timber between us and town, and in our paddocks.⁴

Even decades later, Evelyn McMullen (née Vanzetti) mourned the loss of their home:

Why the Army had to knock it down I don't know. It had French doors opening onto wide verandahs – two sides had lattice and creeping Dorothy Perkins roses. My Dad was a great gardener – we had fruit trees, flowers, lawns, vegetables and life was very good.⁵

It must have been a confusing and worrying time with the locals wondering just what was going on. With war-time security; rumour and conjecture were rife.

Friday 16th October: Home leave for five days ... travelled up by steam train, meeting Gus Herbert on it. Gus has had his farm impressed by the military for purposes which are at present conjectural. The price has now risen to £500,000, but it is certain that a four mile rail spur is to be put in and that a number of huts are to be built. Gus thinks it is intended to be an ordnance workshop; there are also rumours that an aerodrome is to be constructed.⁶

Construction of the major depot buildings began on 1st October 1942 and continued until as late as 1946. Even as building on the camp progressed, there was still uncertainty about what the ultimate purpose of the project was:

A Piece of String

Sunday 31st January: returned to camp yesterday ... Nungarin is a very busy place these days. Most of the cockies near town are carting building materials or are otherwise engaged on the job (whatever it is).⁷



Nungarin Township in October 1942

An Army Truck and Personnel are visible in the centre of the picture

The Nungarin Base was initially known as No.7 Australian Advanced Ordnance Depot (7 AAOD), and was divided into five sections: Equipment and Ordnance Depot; Workshops; a camp for stores staff; and a camp for Australian Women's Army Service personnel as well as 136 acres set aside as Vehicle Park.

The equipment and ordnance storage consisted of three parts: one dealt with vehicles and their spare parts and accessories; one with clothing and general stores; and the other with technical stores which included small arms and artillery, searchlights, radios and associated equipment.⁸

The Nungarin depot was said to be the third largest Army camp in Western Australia⁹ and approximately 1200 service personnel were stationed in Nungarin at one time. The facility incorporated the Army Vehicle Workshop, as well as a multitude of other workshops, shelters, offices, stores, medical facilities, a powerhouse, and post office, as well as administration blocks and a vehicle park; all built and equipped at a cost of more than ten million pounds. A total of twelve large storehouses were erected with a floor space of 500,000 square feet, and taking up an area of 615 acres.¹⁰

An Indication of the range of facilities and ordnance at the Nungarin depot:

Storehouses: Armaments, guns and parts, tyres, fuel, oil, paint, clothing, sundries

Workshops: Tanks (engine and hull), motor transport, vehicle parts, carpentry, armoury (repairs, testing, proofing range), engineering, etc.

Power house, Pump house and tank, Sewerage tanks, Hospital, Ambulance, First Aid, Fire Station, Post Office, Telephone Exchange (100-line telephone switchboard)¹¹, Butcher shop, Ice works, Cook house, Canteen, Officers' Mess, Sergeants' Mess, Mess (other ranks), O'Meara Club (Canteen, Club and Shop), Hall and Outdoor Picture Theatre, Tennis Courts, Bowling Green, Sports Oval, C.O. Quarters, Married Quarters, Single Men's Quarters, Living Quarters (Officers, Sergeants & O.R. 5BOD), AWAS Camp (8 sleeping huts, canteen and recreation building), Workshop Camp (28 sleeping huts), Orderly Room and Offices, Parade Ground, Laundry.

Vehicle Park was located on the north side of the railway line, in an area now bounded by Co-operative Bulk Handling facilities and McCorry Road. All the vehicle park stock came from the South African campaign, and was transported by rail as far as Burracoppin where a wash-away necessitated the stock being off-loaded and driven to Nungarin in huge convoys.

After the 10th Light Horse broke up, when the militia was disbanded in 1943, all the tanks, bren-gun carriers and other equipment were sent to Nungarin by flat-top wagons. The vehicles were driven off and then parked in open paddocks, and the tools put into store. It took three months to move all the equipment. When the second Armoured Division returned from North Africa, half of its equipment went to Nungarin while the other half went to Dubbo in New South Wales. When the wagons carrying the tanks arrived, they were shunted into the workshops and their loads lifted from the wagons by the gantry cranes. Nungarin was an ideal location for an Ordnance Depot, since it had easy access to rail routes, to the north, south, east and west.¹²

Construction on the camp was carried out by the Public Works Department (PWD) for the Allied Works Council. Construction contracts were also awarded to A.T. Brine (storehouses 4, 5, 6, 8 & 10, as well as 37 tank shelters in the vehicle park area) and to H.A. Wilmot & Co. (the tank spares building, storehouses 1, 2, 3, 7 and 9 and 30 black corrugated-iron clad equipment shelters in the area close to the Nungarin cemetery).¹³ Labour was in short supply during the war years, and a team

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of men from the Alien Labour Corps were sent to Nungarin to work on construction. The workforce was augmented by members of the Civil Construction Corps, and by local labour, with Les Wynne being just one of the young men who worked wheeling barrows of concrete while waiting for enlistment.



*Surveying Stores Sites Nungarin October 1942
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*



*Tank Engine Shop Site 12th October 1942
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*

construction. Over the bearers were laid joists that were two feet by eighteen inches. All the reinforcement was tied into the joists and the slabs were poured as a reinforced concrete raft fourteen inches thick.

It's a continuous pour. On No.5 Workshop we had three mixers going all at once and you have a truck going all the time carting the metal and the sand and we had special guys with experience ... we'd see them place the concrete ingredients in under a calculated weight system ... the concrete those guys made would be the equal of any that was ... I guarantee that in the whole of a three yard mix, they wouldn't be more than a shovelful out.¹⁶

Labour wasn't the only commodity in short supply. Ted Johnson was one of the men who worked on construction of the camp, and he said that because of the urgency of the project, the timber used in building the trusses for the workshops was absolutely green. He stated that the trucks were waiting at the mills to load up the timber as soon as it was cut.¹⁴ Corrugated asbestos for roofing was also in short supply and in December 1942 it was reported that 26 unroofed huts were suffering in the weather because James Hardie was giving priority to supplying A1 projects. Apparently the equipment shelters were only rated A2 priority.¹⁵

The cement floors for the workshops were quite unique. The base bearers had a depth of three feet and a width of two feet, and set for a clay

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The floors were poured in one continuous run, and once the job was started the teams doing the concreting worked day and night until that particular job was finished. The other unique aspect of the workshops' construction was the ring-lock system for joining the laminated timbers:

The Ring Lock system used a ring of iron or steel about an inch and a half long by maybe three inches¹⁷ in diameter ... we used to clamp three pieces of timber together, drill a hole through ... put a pilot rod in the bolt hole then use an outside cutter to cut a groove around ... You'd knock the ring into that. If it was an inch and a half ring, it'd go in three quarters into that one and three quarters into the other one ... then you'd knock the two timbers together and do the other side the same, and do the bolt up ... You put two rings in every joint, that's just the system.

When we did the hangars at Busselton, they were ninety foot span. That's the first time the Ring Lock system was ever used in Western Australia. ... you didn't use heavy timbers for it – it defeated the object ... they were all made out of six by twos and eight by twos and laminated.¹⁸

Construction of the five huge storehouses, to the west of the camp in the paddock owned by Herberts, was slower than expected because reinforcing rods were being built into the dividing fire walls. The fact that the walls remain standing is testimony to the construction methods employed.¹⁹ It is also believed that cement mortar was used as there have been several attempts to demolish the walls and salvage the bricks, but even an effort at using explosives was abortive.



No.8 Storehouse – Indications of the fire-proof walls are just visible on the roofline

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There were also railway spur lines running throughout the camp and connecting all the storehouses, the equipment section and vehicle park; with a double track to the Tank Hull workshop which had sufficient room to accommodate ten rail trucks.²⁰ The sidings at the Depot, and all the rail work were executed by the W.A.G.R. (the full title on the official letterhead reads:



*Foundations and partially erected columns, No.1 Workshop
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*

Western Australian Government Railways, Tramways, Ferries, and Electricity Supply) and leased to the military at the statutory fee of £10 per annum for the right of access to the main line, plus an additional fee for maintenance.²¹

John Dickerson was one of the concrete mixer operators and repairmen during the construction of the depot, and also recalled unloading complete train loads of bricks, commonly known among the men as ‘death adders’.²² Early in the War, John gained work as a truck driver with the Main Roads Department. He was only 16 ½ years old at the time, and couldn’t drive a truck, though he did have quite a lot of tractor driving experience:

*The interview with the Irish foreman was “Can you grease a wheelbarrow?”
Yes. “Have you a driver’s licence?” Yes (which I never had), so he said,
“start on Monday.”*

Next day I rode my bike down to Trayning, went into Mr Paterson, the local constable, for a driver’s licence. He asked how old I was. Seventeen. “Date of birth?” 1.12.1925. Realising I was not seventeen, he said, looking out the window, “Where is the vehicle I’m to test you in?” When I explained I never owned one but had a job truck driving on the Main Roads, he just thought for a moment and said, “Well, if you’re good enough for that you are good enough for a licence”. So that is how it worked out – John with a driver’s licence, a truck to start work on and couldn’t drive. About 6 am on the Monday morning, I woke the mechanic, Pat Henderson, out of bed and said, “Pat, how do I

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drive a truck?” He said, “Which truck?” I said, “Don’t know but I’ve got a job driving one”, so he selected a Diamond T which he thought I’d be on and away we went. An hour later, Taffy came out and said I could take all the men to their respective jobs.

I was shaking so much I took off with a bit of a jerk – got a lot of abuse from the blokes on the back but eventually got through all five gears fairly well, dropped them all off, then went on to cart gravel till pick up time, by which I had mastered the old Diamond T.²³

On 23rd November 1942, fifty men from the Alien Labour Corps were employed by the Allied Works Council and arrived in Nungarin to assist with construction. The men were civil aliens from various European countries with which Australia was at war, such as Germany, Italy and Albania. They were men who were considered to possess useful skills and who were assessed as presenting a low security risk.

The authorities must not have had any great concerns about security, because the Aliens Camp was in the bush and had no fences or guards, so the men could pretty well do what they liked. At the end of 1942, the number of Aliens working at the camp was increased,²⁴ with men from the Civil Construction Corps augmenting the numbers to 100. Members of the Civil Construction Corps were men who were too old to enlist, with at least sixty of those sent to Nungarin required to have carpentry experience.

Cecily Clement (née Herbert) and her sister, Clarice, delivered milk to the Aliens Camp for a while. Cecily remembers one of the men; powerfully built with a mass of matted black curly hair, black beard and black penetrating eyes who assured the girls’ father that they would be safe: “Meester Herbert – do not worry about anything bad happening to your girls. I have told the men if they lay one hand on them I will personally keel him”.²⁵

There seems to have been very few complaints about the conduct of the Aliens, but human nature being what it is, there were some men who objected to working. Guisepe Della-Flora had polished his avoidance routine to almost an art form. He was examined by Dr Samuel Finkelstein on several occasions, and the doctor had formed the opinion that he was a trouble maker:

I examined him first on 22/12/42. To come to the examination room he had to ascend about 6 steps. He did so using legs and arms, it was actually



*Crane Bay Columns No.1 Workshop
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*

a crawling up. He complained of pains in his back. On examination nothing abnormal was detected. On palpation of the sacral and lumbar regions he professes to have severe pains. It is obvious that he exaggerates.

I examined him again in my surgery on 14/1/43. On the slightest touch of his back he moans and wriggles. When his attention is distracted even pressure is apparently not felt as painful.

On 2/2/43 he was examined again. He stated that his pains were getting worse and worse every day. Even a very slight touch to his back makes him wriggle and wince. When asked to bend forward he does so supporting himself on a table and chair. I pointed out to him that I believed him to suffer from pains but that it seems to be incredible that his pains were so severe as he pretends. As he was using abusive language after this, and did not leave the room at my request, I left the room.

In my opinion he may be suffering from some pain due to rheumatism but he is grossly exaggerating and malingering.²⁶

The official report states that Della-Flora persisted in his refusal to work until he was advised that not only his pay, but also his family's allotment would be stopped. "When he was so advised he made a show of working, but has at no time done anything like a reasonable amount".²⁷ In July 1943, the award rate of pay for Alien Corps personnel was £4.16.0.

By December 1943, most of the Aliens had been transferred to the Forests Department at Mundaring, and a few to the brick works at Byford, leaving only thirteen at the Nungarin depot. Because it was necessary to maintain separate camp and mess and all the attendant clerical work for such a small body of men, it was

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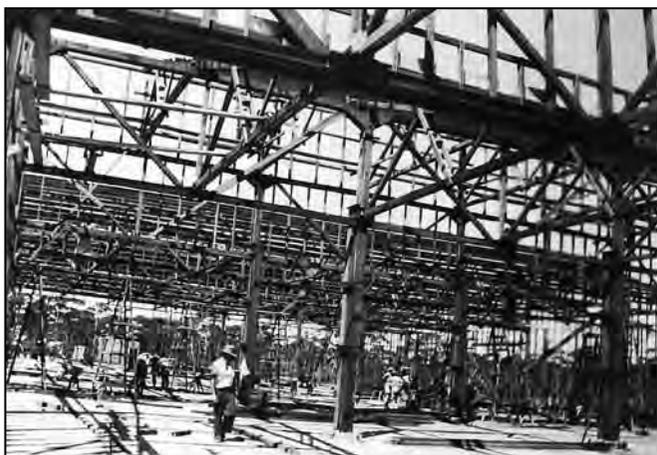
considered uneconomic to retain them at the camp and their place was taken by members of the Civil Construction Corps (CCC).

Bill Haigh said that when his detachment (Australian Electrical Mechanical Engineers) arrived at the camp in April 1943, the men's cookhouse and mess halls weren't complete, so for the first few days the men had to eat in the sergeants' mess hall, which hadn't had the roof put on at that stage. The picture of the first mess parade (on opposite page) seems to indicate that there were a few other things missing along with the roof. But work was in progress, as you can see by the wood saw on one of the planks the men are sitting on.

Bill also lamented the fact that when his detachment arrived at the camp, there was no hot water in the shower block. A little native ingenuity soon put that right. The men commandeered a couple of empty cyanide drums that had contained small parts for the power house engines, riveted the open ends together and cut an opening along the side. Hey Presto! A commodious bath that they filled with water from a portable copper. The fact that their improvised ablution facility was right alongside the road apparently did not faze them.²⁸

There were a few hiccups during the construction of the camp. At one stage there was an accident when the builders were erecting the trusses in the No.5 workshop and the whole lot fell down. New trusses had to be made at the Citron Street workshops in West Perth, so it was a costly exercise, but no-one was hurt. The next drama was in June 1943 when a wild storm caused severe damage to the Tank Hull workshop.

Meanwhile, the build-up of the camp continued. Sixty-four members of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) arrived in Nungarin on 21st September 1943. One of the girls wrote, "I'll never forget arriving at Nungarin. There were huts stuck out in the middle of the bush and that was all".²⁹ Winifred 'Wibby' Kidd (née Booth) also recalled her uninviting introduction to the Nungarin



*No.1 Workshop 12th March 1943
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*

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*First Mess Parade at Nungarin 27th April 1943
(Picture taken by Lt. Col. H.B. Jarvis)*

camp, “Wet clay everywhere, bare huts, no lighting, but plenty of straw in our palliasses”.³⁰

Joan Godfrey (née Graham) arrived in Nungarin with the first group of AWAS girls. She remembers travelling by troop train, and then by truck to their camp, arriving in the dark of night. Conditions at the camp were fairly rough at that stage with no electricity, no refrigeration and no hot water. Joan still recalls those first few meals of boiled

mutton and cabbage – first of all eaten hot, and then cold for the next few days.

On the first night, the girls were shown to their sleeping quarters by the light of hurricane lanterns:

Our beds were folding iron ones piled so high with the straw in our palliasses that it was almost impossible to climb on top of them (think that was the men’s idea of a joke – they’d had the job of filling them). Next morning we had to pick our way through clay and puddles to get anywhere so you can imagine the state of our army shoes. The latrines came as a shock to us all. We did have private cubicles but the seats were over one long trench catering for about eight or so sitters at a time – if you looked down before you sat it was rather scary. What if you were to fall in?



Surveying Storm Damage to Tank Hull Shop 16 June 1943

A Piece of String

With time things improved and overall we were quite comfortable, though by present standards we'd probably have felt ourselves hard done by. By and large I think most of us thought it was great fun.

We were always supplied with plenty of entertainment (except for closed camp on Monday nights), by both the camp and the local people, and I think a good rapport developed between us all ...

I'll always remember the time I spent in sick bay (then a tin shed standing by itself). I was the only occupant for a week. I had a very high temperature and only wanted to sleep – I certainly couldn't face the cold mutton and cabbage ... After a week another girl came in and the next day we were transferred to the Army Hospital at Northam. She had measles, my spots didn't come out until later.

The ambulance driver who took us to Northam did so by using the back roads as she claimed it would be quicker. What she didn't allow for was the dust. The ambulance was an Army truck covered with canvas and with two benches for the patients to lie on. With the back rolled up to give us air, the dust just swirled in till we were covered in the stuff. By the time we arrived in Northam the only visible human part of us to be seen was our eyes. We had to be dunked in baths before they could even examine us.³¹

Eileen Tucker (née Reilly) recorded her memories in 'We Answered the Call', a history of the AWAS in Western Australia:

Each month more personnel arrived until by September 1944, there were three hundred and thirteen bodies in eleven sleeping huts.

PT classes commenced at 0600 hours in summer months. There was also a hockey field and tennis courts available with picnics in the nearby bush a popular pastime on days off ... When the camp hospital was finally completed, two Army Nursing Sisters were put in charge and with the posting of Miss Jo Fox as YWCA representative, the officers mess numbered five and there were six NCOs in their mess. Rations were good and there was plenty of fresh milk from the nearby farms ...

When the Japanese raided Darwin on 7 September 1943, orders came through so thick and fast that the girls worked forty-eight hours non-stop,

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packing orders, driving fork lifts and moving the trucks ... the kitchen staff supplied the girls with hot food and drinks for the whole of the forty-eight hours. A most wonderful team effort and everyone knew that at last they were taking part in that extremely important War Effort for which they had enlisted

... Badminton was a popular indoor sport. Miss Fox (YWCA) was kept busy organising recreational activities. A regular hairdresser called at the camp which certainly did much to boost the morale of the girls. They were issued with trousers and jackets for warmth at work which made the winter months easier to cope with ...

There were mushrooms aplenty in the nearby farm paddocks which were gathered – after obtaining permission from the farmer – by the girls. At night, suppers would be mushrooms on toast cooked before the embers of the open fire ... In summer the farmers gave permission to the troops to swim in certain dams. Often the farmer's wife would bring down morning or afternoon tea to the girls. Dances, concerts and picture shows were popular diversions of entertainment. Betty sang with the band and participated in the Concert Party which travelled to the nearby towns of Trayning, Wyalkatchem and Merredin. These proved popular with the local people and they played to packed houses.



Joan Graham (AWAS), Philip Cornish, Phyllis nursing Kevin, Barry, with George Roberts (extreme right) at Knungajin – Early 1944.

Each day girls from Workshops were picked up and transported in the back of a three-ton truck to and from work where there were scout cars and tanks awaiting repair. This day, a repaired tank was ready for a test drive and after obtaining permission the girls climbed into the tank and the officer drove off. Driving through the bush he hit a tree and mowed it down. When the turret was opened to let the girls out, a swarm of bees entered.

A Piece of String

What a racket! All trying to climb out at once – squeals and screams could be heard for miles.

Members attended compulsory church services. At first they were held in the AWAS lines but later on were combined with the men. With the ground so muddy in winter, gravel paths were put down so that the long march to the church parade was much easier on the feet and shoes.

Leave was granted every six months and members were driven into Merredin to wait in the YWCA room for the Kalgoorlie Express to arrive at the station in the early hours of the morning to transport them to Perth or to stations in between. Sometimes they were able to catch the Wyalkatchem train at Nungarin and travel to Merredin by rail ...

Community living was not for everyone. Sharing the bedroom with twenty-six others; trying to shower when others were queuing for their turn. And the toilets – seats over deep holes but each was enclosed and a door for privacy. The hygiene squad was responsible for the cleanliness of this area. The only fence that members can recall, was the barb wire fence at the rear of the dunnies.³²



Joan Kerr with the truck she drove from Bushmead in 1943

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Driver Joan Kerr (extreme right) and AWAS girls from the office

A Piece of String



Australian Womens Army Service (AWAS)

Photograph taken at 26 AWAS Barracks, 7AOD Bushmead W.A. August 1943

Prior to departure of the Advance Party for Nungarin in September 1943

Back Row: Shirley White, Eileen Watson, Olive Armstrong, Thelma Mitchell, Barbara Cochrane, Jerry Phillips, Win Booth, Billy Foyle.

4th Row: Winnie Rinaldi, Elsie Cooke, Ena McFadden, (unknown), Hilary Eaton, Betty Dalrymple, Jean Herbert, Ettie Willet, Rhoda McNabo.

3rd Row: Gem Mitchell, Marge Bourne, Joy Raynor, Doris Robin, Lorna Angove, Joan Steere, Heather Guy, Joy Day, Nellie Wilkinson, Lois Crafter.

2nd Row: Joy Meharry, Dell Thomas, Grace Jennings, Amy Jackson, Shirley Fry, Phoebe Ash, Pat Riseberry, Margaret Beer, Peggy Hood, Joy Dunlop.

Front Row: Rita MacCarthy, Eileen Doyle, Mickey Gower, Tess Brennan, O.C. Captain Marion Brown, Corporal Lucy Glover, Betty Foster, Rosie Beer, Alice Janezecz, Mary Bickford.

Lynda Robertson (née Lynch) served with AWAS in Nungarin for eighteen months, issuing 25-pounder gun parts and searchlight components. She remembered riding a bike around the camp to collect and deliver requisites. Lynda was only eighteen

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when she enlisted, and a self-confessed ‘sports fanatic’. She played tennis, hockey (was approached to try out for the state hockey team), softball and swimming. At a swimming competition held at Crawley, the Nungarin AWAS team won every event, which was a remarkable feat considering the difficult conditions under which the girls had to train. Swimming practice had been in farm dams, and the team had to compete in borrowed swimsuits - “black with NGN taped on”. When the victorious team arrived back in Nungarin late that night, the whole camp was ablaze with light as they waited to welcome the girls home.³³ Lynda donated her AWAS hat and army tags to the Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum where they are on permanent display.

After the attack on Darwin in September 1943, the threat of invasion was very strong and there were stringent security precautions. House lights all had to be screened and cars had to have their headlights masked so as not to offer any assistance to enemy navigation. The Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) assisted with digging trenches, and was involved in constant training and drills, which often included training with regular troops at the Nungarin Base Ordnance Depot. The VDC consisted mainly of returned men from the 1914-18 War, as well as men that had been manpowered in civilian jobs. The names of almost fifty Nungarin men are listed in Paul de Pierres’ book, *Wheatbelt Warriors*, which relates the story of the 15th (WA) Battalion of the Volunteer Defence Corps.

When the Army was training on the General Grant tanks, they often found it necessary to undertake ‘manoeuvres’ around the district. Phyllis Cornish got a fright one morning when she looked out the kitchen window to see a General Grant tank screaming up their front track. The shock only lasted long enough for her to get a batch of scones in the oven for her early morning visitors.

In Western Australia over three thousand Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) were employed on farms during the final years of the conflict. Control centres were staffed by military personnel, and located throughout regional areas, utilising disused or vacant



The General Grant tank “Atrocious” at Belmore Farm Knungajin



Army Hockey Team - Nungarin 1944

premises. Nungarin was established as a control centre in April 1944, but the centre was moved to Kununoppin the following August. The men were hired out to farmers at a rate of one pound per week, and the Watson family was one of those who were able to take advantage of the availability of a much needed extra hand on the farm. Fred and Betty formed a close relationship

with several of the men who worked for them; particularly Rossi Vincenzo. Rossi maintained correspondence with the family after he returned to Europe after the war:

Dear Mr Watson,

I write to you few lines were first think I want say tenks you very much for every think you been done for me. I in camp feel good but in farm is the best – here food is good and I found plendy friends and Tony give me a hair cut. We wish to go in Italy soon possible, any one think I sorry not given good care your brother. I close may writing, a kiss Alan and Bruce you faithful

Rossi Vincenzo

Remember Tony and Scarola. Wen you read this letter tray understand.³⁴

The gateway to what was then the Watson property on the west side of the Nungarin North Road, and the garage alongside the homestead at Nungarin Rock are monuments to the work of the Italian POWs. They also built a small mud-brick shed on Doug Waters' property at Walcancobbing.

Clarice Brown (née Herbert) remembered an Italian POW that worked on their family farm:

Dad needed help so when Italian Prisoners of war were made available as farm workers Dad applied for one. So Orfeo Bocci came to us. A strong



Mud brick shed built at Walcancobbing by Italian Prisoners of War

young man and a good worker but with very different ideas. He came from Florence and had a more Slavic look than we expected. He had high cheekbones, blue eyes and short stubby dark hair. While in prison camp he taught himself a lot of English by reading comics and associating words to pictures. Dad helped him a lot and meal times became English lessons for Orfeo. Cec and I weren't very impressed with him. He really believed too much bathing weakened him.³⁵

Harry Williams remembered an encounter with an emu and an Italian POW that worked for his brother Ted:

Luigi was a big strapping fellow and a real good worker. One day they were coming to our place when they came across a big emu. Luigi had never seen one before. As the emu tried to get through the fence Luigi jumped out and tried to throw it to the ground. The emu threw him to the ground but not before Luigi had pulled a handful of feathers out. The emu got through the fence but was so mixed up he turned and came back through the fence. Luigi had another go at him. It's a wonder the emu didn't do him some damage.³⁶

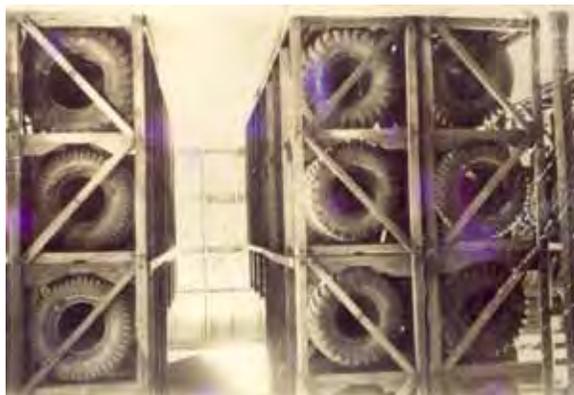
Immediately after the cessation of hostilities in 1945, applications for discharge commenced, and many persons awaiting release were posted to the Nungarin depot. As the discharges were effected, the depot lost many of its best personnel, and it was felt that the efficiency of the depot began to decline.³⁷

With many men still stationed at the Depot, it was inevitable that there would be accidents. Sadly, a couple of them resulted in fatalities. In August 1945, a group of eight soldiers decided to celebrate the end of the War in the Pacific. The form of the celebration was ill advised and began with the theft of a 10-gallon keg of beer from the army canteen, followed by the misappropriation of a 3-ton Ford truck. With two men in the cab and the rest on the back, the party travelled to Kununoppin where they celebrated for a couple of hours before making the return trip to Nungarin. On the way home they were travelling on the wrong side of the road and encountered a drift of sand across the road near 'Red Forest'. The driver veered over to the left side of the road and through a patch of water and then back to the right before hitting a tree and rolling over. The passengers on the back were thrown out and Private Edward Morris was killed. The driver, Lieutenant Corporal Steve Allen, died sometime later. In the statements made by the surviving men, they all attested that the driver was "reasonably sober".³⁸

Jim West had been transferred to Nungarin as Headmaster at the primary school at the beginning of 1948, and on several occasions had cause to complain about speeding by army drivers as they whizzed past the school. The Wests had only been in Nungarin a short time when an army vehicle hurtled through the school fence not far from where the children were playing. Not long afterwards, in August, John Barstow was killed when he rolled his jeep over while racing a motorbike along Danberrin Road.

On 19th February, 1946, No.1 Store was demolished by fire. A newspaper report of the time estimated that approximately £200,000 worth of army stores and equipment had been lost in one of the most costly conflagrations to occur in the state. The shed had been used for the storage of tyres, engines, lighting plants, artillery pieces and generators, and had been equipped with a crane that operated on girders running the full length of the workshop. The intense heat of the fire softened the girders and completely wrecked the crane. There was adequate manpower to deal with the blaze, but the stream of water drawn from the 8-inch water main had little pressure and the big chemical extinguishers had little effect. In a few minutes the blaze was so intense that it was impossible to approach within fire-fighting distance. Fortunately it was a calm night, because when the fire spread to a nearby petrol, oil and lubricant store, the flames were able to be brought under control.

Detective Sergeant G. Winning of the Criminal Investigations Branch at Northam assisted the military authorities with their investigations, and a Court of Inquiry was later held into the circumstances surrounding the incident. There had been rumours circulating that the fire had been deliberately lit to cover up discrepancies in the stock due to a flourishing black market in the district. Ted Johnson had worked on construction at the army base, and reported that he had seen one of the Ford motors stored under the 'Lend-Lease' system exchanged in a 'new motors for old' kind of arrangement:



Tyres Storage at the Nungarin Depot

I was sitting in the No.1 workshop eating my lunch – Mum used to make it for me; I never went down to the mess hut. I saw this truck drive up and it had a Ford motor on the back of it, and I saw a new Ford motor come out through the back window, you know – of the administration part where the crane is, I saw the new Ford motor come out there and [the crane] pick up the old one and take it back, and the truck drove away ... that sort of thing went on.³⁹

John Dickerson said that he was talking to a farmer one day, who mentioned that he'd scored a cheap set of tyres for his truck. It wasn't until he got them home that he noticed they had D↑D stamped on them.⁴⁰ The local community were also convinced that Len Jackson ran a lucrative black market operation, and buried quite a lot of stolen goods under the cement floor of his café in Railway Avenue. As Jackson had previous criminal convictions, and was later convicted of murder, it wasn't too difficult to believe.

During its existence, the army camp at Nungarin had several different names. At first it was known as No.7 Australian Advanced Ordnance Dept (7AAOD), and after the end of the war the camp was amalgamated with several different depots and renamed No.9 Base Ordnance Depot (9BOD). In July 1948, depots throughout the Commonwealth were renumbered, and 9BOD was finally re-designated 5BOD.⁴¹

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In April 1948 the Army requested that 154 vehicles be transported from the Ordnance Depot at Nungarin to Fremantle for transport to the Eastern States on the SS Fitzroy. Since military requests no longer had priority, they had to wait until the superphosphate traffic had eased and Wirth's Circus tour had finished.⁴²

So there you have it. The Army's days of glory were over and it was relegated to third place behind superphosphate and the circus.

During the 1946 Christmas break; records, furniture and fittings had been transferred from Nungarin to a centralised control office at Midland, and during the next few years there was considerable activity at the Nungarin camp with the disposal of surplus and redundant stock and the reorganisation of remaining stores. Also, after the introduction of the National Service Training Scheme, all intakes were clothed and equipped from the Midland and Nungarin depots.⁴³

Even as staffing levels were reduced, post-war development continued at the base for the next decade. The plan was to consolidate all activities into as small an area as possible to facilitate control and economise manpower and equipment. There was also a policy to improve accommodation and recreational facilities to provide better living conditions for the remaining men and their families. A full size bowling green was established in 1949, and equipped with lights for night games. The green was constructed by unit labour, and was available for both army and civilian use. A golf course was established, and there were also two fully-lit tennis courts and a large recreation hall fitted out for 35 mm cinemascope screenings. In 1952, the men's sleeping huts were completely lined and cubicled, and twenty pre-fabricated 'Riley Newsum' houses were erected as married quarters.

The improved accommodation would have been sorely appreciated. The overflow from the Army camp was housed in every available dwelling in the Nungarin area, and McCorry's had divided the old hotel into a couple of different apartments which were let out to Army families. Bill Schofield and his family occupied rooms adjacent to Barry and Marilyn Price. Bill was in Army Ordnance while Barry worked at the power station. On one occasion while Barry's wife was away, Bill woke to hear loud noises and shouting coming from the Price's quarters. When he rushed out to investigate he found Barry roughly ushering Fred McCorry's cow out through the back gate, accompanied by much swearing and cursing. Barry had woken from a deep sleep with the distinct impression that his wife was fervently kissing him.

Unfortunately it wasn't his wife, but Fred's cow that had found its way into the building and was giving him a thorough licking. In spite of the nocturnal excitement, Bill's wife, Eileen, wrote: "Nungarin was a nice place to live".⁴⁴

A canteen known as the O'Meara Club was built to provide a venue for recreation for the enlisted men, and the opening was reported in the local newspaper:

The buildings and surrounding grounds of the newly erected 'O'Meara' Soldier's Club at 5 BOD, Nungarin presented a most colourful and attractive spectacle at the official opening by the head of Western Command, Major-General Dyke, on November 2nd ... The attractive L-shaped Club building with its white painted walls and striped blinds made a perfect background for the green lawns on which were laid out coloured chairs and tables ... Major-General Dyke said it was the custom to name the various clubs after Victoria Cross winners, and this particular one had been named 'The O'Meara Soldiers Club' to commemorate Pte Martin O'Meara, V.C.

The General went on to say that Army personnel and their relatives needed amenities and the Club had been provided for just this purpose. It would be available to all personnel up to the rank of W.O. Civilians could be admitted by invitation.

Finance for the building was made available entirely from the Army Canteen Services Board funds and would be maintained by them alone ...

The building consists of a large lounge and bar for the men, and a smaller one for the ladies. These rooms are painted in delightful pastel tonings and the furniture is of gleaming chrome with leather upholstered chairs and chrome tables. The floors throughout are tiled. A large storeroom and modern shop, with large showcases built into the sloping counters. Shelves are well stocked with goods of every description, and a large deep-freeze refrigerator has been installed. A piano has been provided and a billiard room will later contain tables which are awaiting a baize covering.

In February 1957, a new Sergeant's Mess was constructed alongside the Bowling Green by the 22nd Construction Squadron Royal Australian Engineers:



A long and eagerly awaited moment was the opening by the Commanding Officer 5BOD, Lt Col. E.E. Demler, in the presence of a small gathering of members and official guests, of the new Sergeant's Mess at the Detachment at Nungarin, on the evening of Friday, 22nd February ... The catering department excelled itself in the provision of supper which

was attractively set out in the dining room around a centre-piece of a mock sucking pig.⁴⁵

Standard Army mess hall fare really.

In October 1955, the Vehicle Park area of approximately 85 acres was sold to the Western Australian State Government for £100, and all the buildings, fences and gates were sold to M.S. Herbert for £1,100 on condition of removal. In June of that year there were only 74 personnel attached to the Nungarin camp, of which 31 were involved with administration. However, even with the scaling down of the Nungarin operation, in 1958 there were still plans to build an airstrip suitable for light aircraft within the depot area.

As early as 1949, there had been requests for the construction of a swimming pool as part of the military depot. However, because the permanency of the



The Nunga Garden – Outdoor Picture Theatre

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base was uncertain, the request was refused. In 1956, after protracted negotiations, agreement was reached with the Nungarin Road Board to finance the original excavation, and a loan of £7,000 was acquired from the Army Amenities Fund. Farmers and other members of the Nungarin community volunteered their services for the excavation work, and a local committee was formed to raise money for the loan repayments which amounted to £700 per year. Funds were forthcoming from the proceeds of a Mardi Gras, cropping programs during the 1956-57 and 58 seasons, Regimental Trust Funds and from admittance charges.

The pool was modelled on Olympic standard, and of half Olympic size, and completed in time for the 1958 summer season. The pool was opened on 15th December 1958 by the General Officer Commanding Western Command, Major-General J.W. Harrison CBE. The proceedings included an exhibition swim by Mr Ron Day, the State 100 and 200 yard champion, as well as a diving exhibition (which included a demonstration of “novelty diving”) by Mr John Charles, the State Diving Champion. The official proceedings included selected musical items from the Western Command Band, and an afternoon tea catered for by the 5BOD Ladies Auxiliary and the Nungarin CWA. The project was hailed as “a marked example of Army/Civilian co-operation.”⁴⁶



The newly completed swimming pool with the O'Meara Club in the background

Following the reorganisation of the Australian Military Forces in July 1960, and in accordance with Army Headquarters memo B259-48-147 dated 8th November 1960; the decision was made to close down the Nungarin Base Ordnance Depot. The closure of the Nungarin base involved one of the largest post-war disposal sales in Australia, and the transfer of approximately 700 tons of various stores to Eastern States depots. In addition, about 500 tons of stores were sent to the Midland depot. From August 1961, a caretaking staff remained at Nungarin until all the buildings were taken over by the Department of the Interior in January 1962.

The disposal sale was in the form of a public auction conducted by Gregson's Auctioneers, and held over a period of four days from 27th to 30th of July 1960. The official catalogue stated that "all items contained in this catalogue will, wherever practicable, be offered in quantities to suit the requirements of purchasers." While it is not certain exactly what requirements the particular purchasers may have had, it is hard to imagine what they would have done with 6,000 toothbrushes, 3,578 palliasses cases, 1,870 fly swats, or 36,862 identity discs. The canny buyer could have snapped up 3,016 cotton handkerchiefs, or 5,000 new (happily) field dressings. 148 pudding bowls were listed alongside 5,252 pistol pouches, and several "incomplete" mobile radar units (which sold for £450 each). The catalogue listed 1557 different lots, and farmers and members of the general public were able to buy engines, lathes, generators, clothing, footwear, tools and a myriad of spare parts. During the clearance, a number of General Grant tanks were purchased and used to clear land, and some were stripped and the starting motors used as lighting plants.



The Restored General Grant Tank

At the time little value was placed on the General Grant tanks, and many years later Mr Bill Hewitt (Chairman of the Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum) scrounged parts from all over Western Australia in order to restore one of the tanks to its original condition. The restoration was meticulous, and when complete, the tank was considered to be one of the best examples of its kind in Australasia.

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When the Depot was closed in 1960, the Road Board purchased the swimming pool, the filtration equipment and other infrastructure as well as 14.5 acres of surrounding land. Funds for the purchase were raised by cropping 180 acres of surrounding farmland.⁴⁷



The final army disposal sale at 5 BOD

The final social wind-up was held at the O'Meara Club in July 1961, and the Nungarin Shire Council purchased the building for £1,000 and converted it into shire staff housing. It has since been sold to a private owner. The Nungarin Bowling Club paid £1,100 for Lots 148-150, which comprised the greens and the adjacent Sergeants' Mess. Five of the 'Riley Newsum' house and land packages were sold at auction to local buyers for £800 each. The local Nungarin Co-op purchased two, and the Congregational church, G. Field, and M. Coumbe bought one each. The Herbert family re-acquired most of their farmland, which now included the remnants of the five storehouses.

The Shire also purchased the Motor Transport Workshop (formerly designated as the Army Vehicle Workshop, or the No.11 Storehouse) for use as a Plant Depot. Council later granted the local museum the use of half of the workshop, and gave an undertaking that the remainder of the building would also be made available to the Museum when Council was able to construct a new depot for its own purposes. The workshop is one of the few remaining large volume, timber framed, World War Two buildings remaining in Western Australia, and has significant historical value. Its use as a military and civil museum ensures that its heritage value is protected and preserved. On 8th October 1994, the Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum was officially opened by the Governor Major General Michael Jeffery AO MC. On 13th October 1999, the former Army Vehicle Workshop was entered on the Register of Heritage Places on a permanent basis.⁴⁸



*Governor Major General Michael Jeffery with Shire President Barry Cornish
The Official Opening of the Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum
8th October 1994*

The Last Retreat from Nungarin

World War II has come to an end in Nungarin

Seventeen years after fighting stopped, the huge Army camp at Nungarin, third biggest in WA, which cost more than £10,000,000 to build and equip during the latter war years, is being demolished. The camp has been sold – lock, stock and cookhouses – to civilian salvage contractors. Lately the contractors have demolished several hundred houses, barracks, stores, ordnance sheds and recreation halls. The buildings have been torn down or carted bodily away on trailers, leaving empty acres of concrete foundations among the salmon gum scrub which has long since crept back among the streets of the ghost-camp ... In those halcyon (for the little wheat town of Nungarin) days the pub was packed to the doors with troops, with hundreds more out on the pavement trying to beat the fierce summer heat. The scale on which things were done at the Nungarin camp, built as a colossal ordnance depot, is shown by the foundations of one huge building which still cover 120 feet by 300 feet in the bush.

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It was built housing an enormous gantry – costing £25,000 on its own –capable of lifting a tank and running it the length of the whole building in a sling.

Local story is that it lifted one tank. Then the war ended and it was never used again.



Army buildings loaded and ready for removal - 1961

The War had come to an end in Nungarin, but those seventeen years of Army presence had a lasting influence on the community. The immediate benefit to the town was the boost to the local economy. General stores, butcher, baker, dairy, and especially the hotel; all enjoyed an unprecedented increase in business. Many of the uniformed men had families that also moved to the district. There was not a vacant house for miles, and McCorry's Hotel had been divided into units for long-term accommodation. There was also the opportunity for employment for local people, especially during the construction phase, and there were many others such as Mrs Devereux who obtained work as a cook at the P.O.W. camp.

There was no doubt that the presence of the military provided a welcome diversion during the hard, dark days of the War; and both the army and the local community were involved in providing music and entertainment. Dancing was very popular, and the Army were quick to contribute to the social life of the town by offering to replace the flooring in the local hall, which was in a fairly poor condition. Alf Smith was one of the carpenters who worked on the project.

Louis Young recalled the way in which the Army supported the community with their contribution to the children's Christmas celebrations:

Due to the war, toys were not readily available; but a feature of school life eagerly anticipated was the Christmas party. Throughout the year the soldiers used to make gifts for every child in the school. They used the wide range of machinery available in the ordnance workshops to make them, and with the aid of Father Christmas, distributed them at a Saturday afternoon party in the school grounds. The drinks and food were also provided by the Army, probably as a mark of appreciation for the help given to soldiers by the townspeople.⁴⁹

The Army involvement in the sporting life of the district was enormous, not only for the material benefit with the provision of a wide range of facilities, but also for the variety, the vibrancy and the competition. The Nungarin swimming pool would probably be the most widely appreciated, especially by the younger folk.

While some of the benefits of Army presence were transitory, the lasting legacy is the history; and the part that those seventeen years have played in the shaping of our heritage. The friendships and associations, and the memories are all part of who we are today. Nungarin's participation in the defence of the nation has ensured that it will always have a place in the annals of Australian history.

Endnotes

- 1 George Adlam - at that time living at Trayning.
- 2 Baker Diaries 1942-1943, typescript.
- 3 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p6.
- 4 C.J. Brown, *Clay's Saga*, published privately.
- 5 Letter from Evelyn McMullen, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 6 Baker Diaries 1942-1943, typescript.
- 7 Baker Diaries 1942-1943, typescript.
- 8 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 9 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, p11.
- 10 Military Brochure containing Maps, Plans, Photographs and Data of 5 Base Ordnance Depot.
- 11 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p8.
- 12 WAGR Troop Trains, p29.
- 13 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p7.
- 14 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 15 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p7.
- 16 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 17 The rings were 3 inches in diameter and three quarters of an inch in length.
- 18 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 19 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p7.
- 20 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p7.
- 21 Correspondence from Deputy Commissioner for Railways to the Director of Department of the Interior, 21 Sept 1943, Ref 13428/42.
- 22 Letter from John Dickerson, 12 May 1995, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 23 *Signpost Journal*, John Dickerson's Story, Autumn 1995, p13.
- 24 There are the names of at least 82 civil aliens listed in the Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 25 Letter from Cecily Clement, 3 June 1996, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 26 Australian Archives, Series K1192/1, Item 60, correspondence from A. Samuel (M.D.), 2.2.1943.
- 27 Australian Archives, Series K1192/1, Item 60, correspondence 17.2.1943.
- 28 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Heritage Machinery and Army Museum, David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 29 Eileen Tucker (née Reilly), *We Answered the Call*, ISBN 0-646-03039-6, p58.
- 30 Letter from Neville Kidd, 2 February 2010.
- 31 Letter from Joan Godfrey, Nungarin Biographic Index, 27 Feb 1996.
- 32 Eileen Tucker (née Reilly), *We Answered the Call*, ISBN 0-646-03039-6, pp60,61.
- 33 Letter from Lynda Robertson, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 34 Letter from Rossi Vincenzo to Mr F.Watson 29 May 1946.
- 35 C.J. Brown, *Clay's Saga*, p45, published privately.
- 36 Harry Williams Memoirs, typescript.

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- 37 Records, 5 Base Ordnance Depot, Western Command.
- 38 Dpt of Veteran Affairs File, Private E.L. Morris.
- 39 Conservation Plan, Nungarin Machinery and Army Museum by David Kelsall, June 1995, Appendix 9.2.
- 40 Letter from John Dickerson, 25 June 1995, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 41 Military Brochure containing Maps, Plans, Photographs and Data of 5 Base Ordnance Depot.
- 42 Transport of Military Supplies (WAGR), p71.
- 43 Records, 5 Base Ordnance Depot, Western Command.
- 44 Letter from Eileen Schofield, Nungarin Biographic Index.
- 45 *Dampier Herald & Nungarin Standard*, 7 March 1957.
- 46 Official Program for opening of the 5BOD Nungarin Swimming Pool.
- 47 Heritage Council Assessment, P15267 Army Base Ordnance Depot, p10.
- 48 Army Vehicle Workshop located at Lot 1 on Diagram 28489, being the whole of the land comprised in Certificate of Title Volume 1279 Folio 627.
- 49 Letter from Louis Young, 29 July 1996. Nungarin Biographic Index.

Community Sheep Dips

The Scab Act of 1891 required stock owners to inspect their sheep regularly for indications of scab (psoroptic mange, a skin disease caused by mites) and to treat any infestations by compulsory dipping. Even as early as 1878, Thomas Adams was appointed as honorary scab inspector for the district, and combined stock inspections with his regular police patrols. Penalties for neglecting to keep sheep flocks scab-free were very strict. Inspectors were empowered to not only take possession of the infected sheep, but also to seize any tanks, implements, fuel, lime, sulphur and anything else he needed in order to treat them. Infected sheep could be ordered to be destroyed, and the costs charged against the owner. Later, sheep were also required to be dipped for lice and ked.

Under the Marginal Area Reconstruction Scheme of 1938, Government funds were made available for the construction of community sheep dips at strategic locations throughout the district. At that time, C.P. Murray was seconded from the Department of Agriculture, as sheep adviser to Agricultural Bank clients, and the design for the dips is attributed to him. In the Nungarin Shire there are four Community sheep dips, situated at Mangowine, Danberrin, Knungajin and Talgomine.

The initial use of the Mangowine Sheep Dip site was as a water catchment¹. Settlers to the north of Nungarin were experiencing severe water shortages, and were eventually successful in gaining approval for a dam to be sunk at a watering place convenient for settlers travelling between Nungarin, Dandanning, Merredin and Lake Brown. The original quote was for a 2500 cubic yard dam with standpipe, pump and trough at an estimated cost of £450. Local teamster, Mickey Bates, successfully tendered for the job, and began excavation in June 1917. Progress was hampered due to the presence of salt, and construction halted at seven feet. The final capacity was only 1500 cubic yards, and the dam was never very successful.

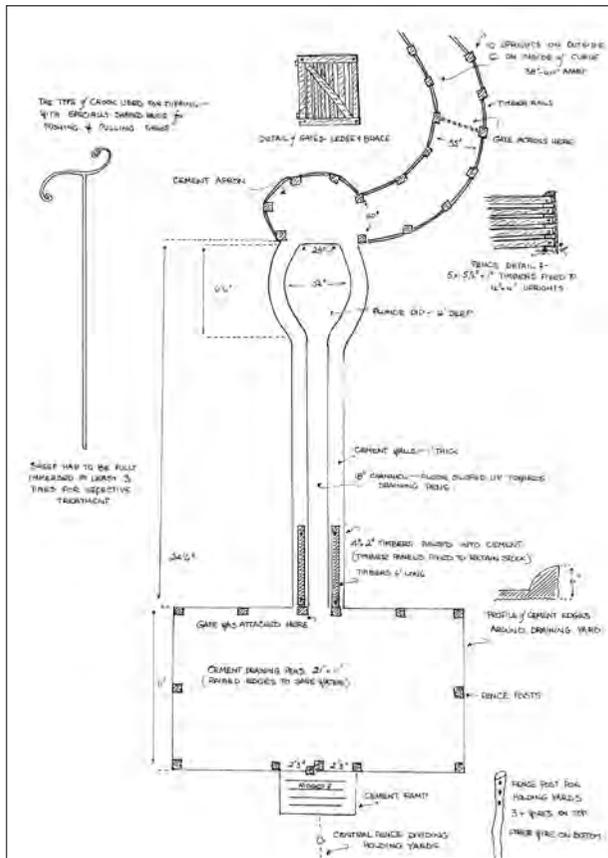
On 21st August 1918, 39 acres were excised as water reserve number 17016, in order to protect the water catchment area.

A letter from the Secretary of the Nungarin Road Board on 11th September 1923, stated that the dam was not holding water, and that the area was a harbour for rabbits. A further letter in 1928 requested that the reserve be cancelled and the land made available to the surrounding landholder (Mrs R.M. Johnson)². The point was made that the travelling public would not need the use of the dam because of the imminent connection to the

Knungajin and Barbalin Water Catchment Schemes.

There is no reference to the construction or operation of the Mangowine sheep dip in the Department of Land Administration files. All of the dips are built to the same basic design, although the dip at Mangowine appears to be the earliest, with the actual dip a roughly rounded shape, and the other three more rectangular.

The Danberrin dip is located on the water reserve (No. 16632), which was originally part of a larger reserve (No. 11224)³. The block was re-surveyed by Brown and Watts in 1909, and approval given for a 1200 cubic yard dam to be excavated at a cost of £280. Subsequently the tank site was separated into three blocks: a gravel quarry (Reserve No. 19246) and Avon Locations 26602 and 9342.



The Mangowine Community Sheep Dip (from Nungarin Municipal Heritage Inventory, drawn by Maxine Cornish)

On 22nd May 1945, the purpose of the water reserve number 16632 at Danberrin was altered to that of a sheep dip. Several weeks later on 25th June, the Secretary of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia wrote to the

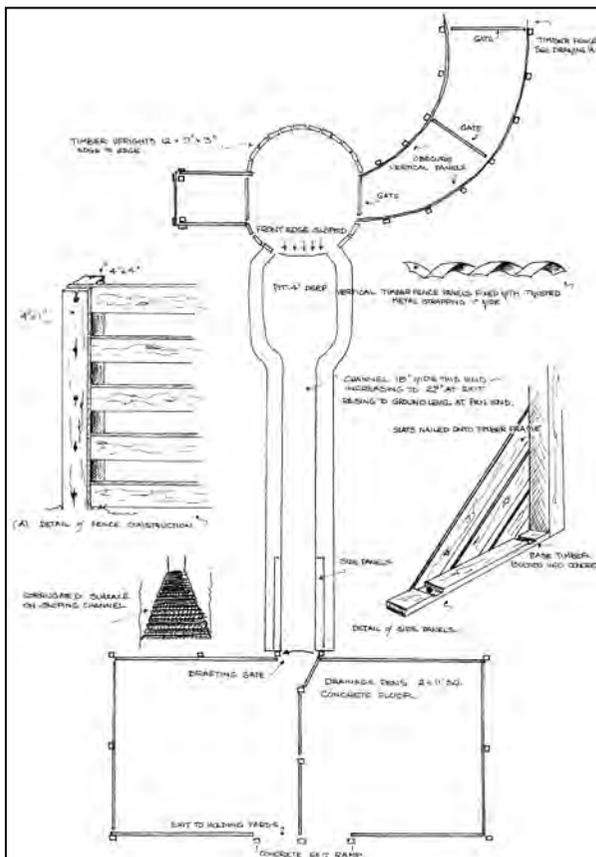
Community Sheep Dips

Department of Lands and Surveys, advising then that they had approved the construction of a community sheep dip at Danberrin. The letter also advised the Department that the Nungarin Road Board would undertake the construction and maintenance of the dip, and the Government Gazette October 12th, 1945, advised that the reserve and dip were placed under the control of the Nungarin Road Board. By 1969, the dip was no longer in use.

The community dip at Knungajin was constructed between 1946 and 1947, on land excised from Avon Location 14193, then



Mangowine Community Sheep Dip



owned by Harold James Dayman⁴. The holding and drafting yards were initially constructed from post and wire, but later replaced with timber from the long-drop toilets at the Nungarin Army Camp. The Knungajin dip differs from the others within the shire because it is constructed on the crest of a rise, which allows the pit to be drained instead of having to be pumped out after use. A 3 3/4 inch plug seals the drain, and is removed using a long metal rod with a hooked end.

*Danberrin Community Sheep Dip
(from Nungarin Municipal Heritage Inventory, drawn by Maxine Cornish)*

A Piece of String



Official gazettal of the Talgomine dip was not advertised until 5th December 1952, although the Nungarin Road Board applied for the release of land for construction of the dip in 1947⁵. Five acres of land for the sheep dip was excised from Avon Location 14221, at that time owned by James Lee. The block was surveyed by I.M. Gordon on 14th July 1947, at a cost of £7, and was recorded in his field book number 17.

Talgomine Community Sheep Dip



Knungajin Sheep Dip

Ern Masters on left, Philip Cornish (centre), Thelma Masters dipping the sheep, and her father, Mr Simons, on the right.

Note the drums of 'Harts Immunol Sheep Dip' on the right, and the cunning sight screen draped across the head of the dip to prevent the sheep catching a glimpse of what they were in for.

Community Sheep Dips

Endnotes

- 1 Mangowine Sheep Dip, Reserve 20043 Avon Location 25378. Later listed as a gravel quarry. DOLA File 01692-1918-01R0, Government Gazette 1.3.1929, p655, Survey diagram 54268.
- 2 There is a whimsical note on the Lands Dpt files, under the heading of 'historical sheep dip' – "for dipping historical sheep?"
- 3 Danberrin Sheep Dip, Reserve 16632 Avon Location 9341, Survey plan 1127, Government Gazette 16.2.1917, p290, 12.10.1945, pp 979, 969.
- 4 Knungajin Sheep Dip, no Reserve number, excised from Avon Location 14193, LTO diagram number 17761.
- 5 Talgomine Sheep Dip, Reserve number 23654 Avon Location 27165, Government Gazette 5.12.1952, pp2869, 2862.

Record of Service to the Nungarin Road Board & Shire

Road Board Secretaries

R.G. Bagot	1921 - 1925
R. Rushton	1925 - 1928
F.B. Mason	1928 - 1933
T.C. Brown	1933 - 1938
T.R. Bennett	1938 - 1941
F.E. Eddy	1941 - 1946
T.R. Bennett	1946 - 1954
J.C. Tozer	1954 - 1956
M.F. Hatton	1956 - 1958
F.W. Timothy	1958 - 1960
K.J. Tilbrook	1960 - 1960

Shire Clerks

K.J. Tilbrook	1961 - 1974
M.N. Brown	1974 - 1980
P.R. Bradbrook	1980 - 1983
I.A. Harrower	1983 - 1988
P.J. Varis	1988 - 1992
L.J. Tilbrook	1992 - 1993
F.B. Ludovico	1993 - 1996

Chief Executive Officers

F.B. Ludovico	1996 - 1997
C.M. Brown	1997 - 2001
W.M. Fensome	2001 -

Road Board Chairmen

J. Jolly	1921 - 23, 1923 - 32
W. Hodges	1923
E. White	1932
J. Jolly	1933 - 1944
F.A. Williams	1944 - 1946
H.L.T. Hoare	1946 - 1947
L. Hutchison	1947 - 1949
H.H. Waterhouse	1949 - 1953
L. Hutchison	1953 - 1957
H.H. Waterhouse	1957 - 1958
R.H. Jolly	1958 - 1960
R.L. Herbert	1960 - 1961

Appendix 2

Shire Presidents

R.L. Herbert	1961 - 1962
H.S. Waterhouse	1962 - 1964
R.L. Herbert	1964 - 1970
R.H. Jolly	1970 - 1973
R.L. Herbert	1973 - 1980
R.R. Creagh	1980 - 1989
B.N. Cornish	1989 - 1995
I.D. Hodges	1995 - 1998
R.E. O'Connell	1998 -

Members of the Road Board

W. Hodges	1921-26, 1929-40	A. Nugent	1927-30, 1933-35
C. Vanzetti	1921 - 1921	E. Hewitt	1927 - 1931
E.J. Reilly	1921 - 1923	N. Maddock	1927 - 1929
T.G. Adams	1921 - 1921	H.L.T.Hoare	1928 - 1951
H.E. Andrews	1921 - 1927	T. Conway	1930 - 1931
G.W. Maddock	1921 - 1923	R. Horn	1931-32, 1935-37
J. Jolly	1921 - 1944	H. Hansen	1931 - 1932
F.A. Williams	1922-31, 1935-54	T. Ferguson	1932 - 1932
T. Thick	1922 - 1924	E. Calder	1932 - 1932
G. Herbert	1923-23, 1925-27	M. Quinlan	1933 - 1935
A. Rowan	1923 - 1923	L. Hutchison	1937 - 1958
W. Bairstow	1923 - 1924	H.H. Waterhouse	1940 - 1958
G. Williams	1924 - 1926	H.L. Johnson	1944 - 1945
B. Davies	1925 - 1927	P.N. Cornish	1945 - 1960
C. Brown	1927 - 1927	R.L. Herbert	1951 - 1960
E. White	1927 - 1932	R.H. Jolly	1954 -1960
R. Bagot	1927 - 1928	R.J. Dayman	1958 -1960
A. McCorry	1927 - 1932	H.S. Waterhouse	1958 -1960
J. Devonshire	1927 - 1930	J.R. Lee	1960 -1960
J. Mulqueeny	1927 - 1930		

Members of Council

R.L. Herbert	1961 -1980	N.D. Davis	1985 -1988
R.H. Jolly	1961 -1974	C.R. Waterhosue	1985 -1992
R.J. Dayman	1961 -1966	S.D.L. Murray	1988 -2001
H.S. Waterhosue	1961 -1971	G.G. Dayman	1989 -1991
J.R. Lee	1961 -1964	I.D. Hodges	1989 -1998
W.F. English	1964 -1973	N.N. Bennett	1991-92,1998-2002
W.F. Durack	1966 -1969	G.L. Herbert	1992 -1994
F.D. Williams	1969 -1989	T.F. Lang	1993 -
H.J. Muhs	1970 -1971	D.J. Mildwaters	1994 -1998
R.R. Creagh	1971 -1989	R.E. O'Connell	1994 -
L.L. Jolly	1971 -1985	P.J. Jolly	1998 -2005
W.G. Hodges	1971 -1975	J.W. Shadbolt	2001 -
R.D. English	1973 -2007	J. de Lacy	2002 - 2005
F.H. Williams	1974 -1994	P.R. Herbert	2005 -
B.W. Sainsbury	1974 -1985	G.C. Coumbe	2005 -
B.N. Cornish	1980 -	N.D. Davis	2007 -

Settler Database

Location Number	Settler	Date	Comments
13415	Ablett B.	1912	
13792	Adams Jane Swain		Pioneer
3341	Adams Jane Swain		
3343	Adams Jane Swain		
3340	Adams Jane Swain		
14973	Ahern T.M.	1914	
15497	Amies A & S	1912	
22211	Anderson J.L.	1922	
15495	Anderson N.C	1927	
14322	Andrews A.	1911	
22527	Andrews A.C.	1911	
22547	Andrews A.E.	1911	
22118	Annakin R.G.	1920	
19539	Arkell P.J.	1914	
11116	Bagot R.G.	1910	Civil Servant
11117	Bagot Robert George	1910	
23220	Bagot Robert George	1922	
22373	Baird J.R.	1910	
11089	Baird J.S.	1909	
14192	Bairstow W.D. & C	1920	
23351	Baker W.	1910	
11074	Baker W.F.	1910	Civil Servant
14080	Baldwin M.J.	1917	
26030	Ball F.W.	1913	
14659	Bancroft C.E.	1911	
11931	Bancroft H	1909	
14228	Barlow D.	1922	
11144	Barratt W.G.	1909	
16760	Bastion V.C.		
14182	Bean C.W.	1910	
14961	Bean W.C.	1910	
22453	Beer J.	1910	
14035	Beer W.	1911	
20256	Bell A.E.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
11123	Benson D.M.	1910	Civil Servant
17949	Benson S.J.	1911	
11091	Beurteaux E.M./ Jr	1938	
11091	Beurteaux E.S.	1910	Civil Servant
21374	Biggers E.C.	1920	

Appendix 3

20252	Biggs R	1921	
14973	Bodey W.M.	1924	
14082	Bonham W.	1910	
14229	Bowron C.	1912	
21024	Bradshaw H.	1911	
11101	Briant R.	1925	
11151	Brown A.E.	1909	Civil Servant
11156	Brown C.M.	1910	
22566	Brown C.O.	1910	
11155	Brown CM Jnr	1929	
15500	Brown J.	1910	
21088	Brown T	1919	
26662	Burges L.	1911	
11121	Burrowes A.	1909	Civil Servant
11120	Burrowes Archibald J.		
14228	Burrowes L.	1912	
11092	Calver F.	1920	
22139	Cant G.	1920	
11075	Caporn E.H.	1909	Civil Servant
18125	Caporn W.T.	1912	
14225	Carlson G.	1921	
14086	Carr J.	1921	
16786	Carrington J.D.	1910	
15175	Carrington W.E.	1910	
14973	Casey D	1911	
11075	Caughey F.C.	1930	
14974	Chalmers J.	1920	
11934	Chambers W.	1909	
26144	Christie W.B.	1913	
11107	Clarke Alexander Elijah	1910	Civil Servant
22464	Clarke Alexander Elijah	1921	
15370	Clarke W.	1926	
14159	Collins W.J.	1910	
11900	Conning S & W	1921	
804 etc	Corser E		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
24863	Coumbe A.E.	1926	
	Coumbe W.H.		NR (vermin netting 1925)
14159	Coumbe W.H.C.	1912	
14974	Cowan W.	1911	
14967	Creagh Bros	1930	
14972	Creagh H.S.L.	1910	
	Creagh R.B.	1910	Civil Servant
14967	Creagh R.L.	1910	Civil Servant
11150	Croxford	1909	
11382	Croxford C.	1920	
19361	Cuneen J.J.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
19362	Cuneen J.J.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
	Curtis (late)		NR 1925
14078	Cuthbert T	1912	
26291	Dalton R.T.	1910	
26290	Dalton W.L.	1910	
14190	Dalton William L. & Robert T.		
23163	Daniels J.	1910	
20252	Davies R.	1927	
18840	Davies T	1909	
21394	Dawe A.F.H.	1910	
15500	Dawe A.F.H.	1914	

A Piece of String

15500	Dawe E.	1930	
11126	Dawe F.J.W.	1910	Civil Servant
11125	Dawe F.J.W.	1910	
11128	Dawe S.D.	1910	Civil Servant
11129	Dawe S.D.	1910	
14974	Dayman E.F.	1924	
14193	Dayman H.J.	1928	
26877	Delaney C.	1919	
23174	Devereux D.G.	1910	
21416	Devonshire J.H.	1910	
14187	Devonshire Joseph H.	1910	
17884	Dingwall A.	1929	
23187	Diss S.W.	1922	
11092	Dixon G.	1929	
21424	Dixon W.	1920	
21664	Dobson W.	1920	
14676	Doherty E.	1910	
11935	Doherty H.	1909	
22247	Dossetor D.V.	1924	
23110	Duff J.A.	1926	
11130	Dugdale A.E.	1909	Civil Servant
11131	Dugdale A.E.	1909	
21380	Dugdale W.E. & J.N.	1914	
21014	Dumsday E.H.	1910	
20010	Eddy		
26504	Eddy F.E.	1909	Civil Servant
14013	Edlington A.	1914	
26548	Edmondson A.	1913	
11090	Egbert E.	1920	
11109	Ellis W.	1910	
15987	English J.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
24542	English J.	1923	
14181	Facius L.	1928	
11382	Fardell E. & R.	1930	
14966	Farmer A.	1910	
25588	Farrell M.	1911	
21393	Ferguson J.	1920	
26017	Fice G.	1909	
11123	Fimister C.	1920	
15552	Finlay E.	1911	
14047	Fitzgerald	1909	
21625	Fitzpatrick R.C.	1910	Civil Servant
19000	Ford E.J.	1909	Civil Servant
21351	Ford W.F.	1910	
14169	Furphy H.I.	1928	
22472	Gilbert M.A.	1910	
23166	Gilchrist	1914	
14078	Goode H.	1917	
14035	Grimwood T.	1911	
15981	Guy J.C.	1921	
14076	Haines A.N.	1910	
17462	Hall A.S.	1910	
14168	Hall J.M.	1922	
17463	Hall J.M.G.	1910	
21682	Hallam W.	1920	
14233	Hancock F.	1910	
22419	Hancock H.F.L.	1911	
14181	Hardwick R.	1920	

Appendix 3

23381	Hargeave R.L.	1910	Civil Servant
24515	Hart S.	1914	
11085	Hatton L.	1923	
11087	Hatton Leonard	1933	
9339	Henry D.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
9337	Henry D.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
11127	Herbert G.H.	1914	
11113	Herbert Sydney P.		Civil Servant
11113	Herbert Sydney P.		
11112	Herbert Sydney Pembroke	1910	
13224	Hewitt H.V.	1909	
22345	Higgins A. & F.	1910	
14163	Hinkley V.G.	1928	
9387	Hitchins H.	1909	Civil Servant
23334	Hoare H.H.	1910	
22333	Hoare H.J.L.	1910	
14175	Hocking F.	1920	
22247	Hodges F.G.	1921	
11114	Hodges Gilbert John	1910	Civil Servant
11115	Hodges Gilbert John		
11115	Hodges Gilbert John		
11114	Hodges W.S.	1924	
14970	Hope A.A.	1910	
24636	Hope A.T.	1911	
14968	Horgan J.	1910	
22398	Horn R.S.	1921	
13017	Hughes A.F.	1923	
13224	Hughes J.	1909	
14173	Hull E.M.	1911	
25695	Hull R.	1910	
22139	Hutchison L. & M.	1925	
	James G.A.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
23333	Jenks T.	1922	
14176	Johnson J.H.	1914	
16749	Johnson L.	1910	
22081	Johnson O.J.	1920	
16939	Johnson R.M.	1919	
24430	Jolly A.S.	1925	
14079	Jolly F.	1919	
14079	Jolly H.P.	1925	
14083	Jolly J.	1913	
14080	Jolly S.T.	1935	
14965	Jones D.	1910	
15201	Jose H.S.	1919	
14677	Kearns W.C.C.	1910	
20264	Kelly		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
23163	Kidd J.	1914	
11936	King A.T.	1909	
11932	Kinsella	1909	
11132	Knowles J.	1909	Civil Servant
14164	Kroenert P.	1910	
21344	Lane J.A.	1917	
15194	Last W.	1926	
15560	Lawson D.	1926	
15560	Lawson T. & J.	1911	
14080	Lay J.	1912	
19535	Lay J.	1913	
14160	Le Vaux C.W.	1910	

A Piece of String

14167	Le Vaux G. & H.	1910	
21296	Le Vaux H.J.	1910	
26017	Leake C.	1927	
18435	Lee G.W.	1911	
22532	Lees A.	1910	Civil Servant
26076	Lees T.W.	1910	
14176	Leslie W.	1911	
14163	Lewis J.	1910	
24639	Lewis W.	1910	
22350	Linfoot M.	1921	
24509	Longman H.R.	1917	
15201	Lucas W.N.	1912	
11107	Lyons J.	1921	
14191	Machado George		
13970	Mackel F.	1920	
14163	Maidment D.& T. & G.	1923	
26178	Maidment D.L.	1912	
14164	Maidment G.	1914	
14193	Maidment I.	1911	
14193	Maidment Trevor		
14228	Mann A.E.	1914	
14164	Mann F.	1924	
11121	Mann H.W.	1914	
11110	Matthews J.E.	1924	
22477	Mayberry W.J.	1912	
21407	Mayer Albert Samuel	1920	
11085	McAridell J.	1911	
3497	McCorry A.C.	1900	
14799	McCorry E.C. & R.W.	1920	
14299	McCulloch		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
14163	McDonnell F.M.	1928	
23317	McGinniss B.	1912	
24596	McGinniss F.	1914	
26504	McGinniss J.L.	1911	
15481	McGowan A.M.	1914	
14080	McGregor A.J.	1921	
22553	McJannett J.B.M.	1910	
21431	McKenna C.D.	1909	Civil Servant
9342	McKenna E.	1919	
14303	McKenzie F.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
14297	McKenzie F.M.	1921	
26178	McKeown S.	1910	
22474	McKinnon H.J.	1912	
26267	McLennan D.	1917	
11092	McLennan I.	1929	
22211	McMahon J.	1921	
22328	Milligan J.C.	1920	
14114	Moran Mrs		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
21344	Morgan J.	1910	
14297	Morrison J.	1910	
15200	Moses R.G.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
26218	Mulqueeny J.	1920	
16031	Murphy H.O.	1913	
26265	Murray M.M.	1920	
22474	Nicholls C.	1910	Civil Servant
18840	Nicholls J.R.	1910	
24639	Nink C.	1913	
23202	Norman H.C.	1910	

Appendix 3

17884	Norman R.	1914	
11116	Norris A.J.	1928	
20258	O'Donnell		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
14086	O'Donoghue J.	1921	
11118	O'Grady H.O.	1909	Civil Servant
14158	O'Hara J.	1910	
10881	O'Hara M.A.	1908	
14234	O'Loughlin E.	1910	
20003	Orchard W.E.L.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
23317	Paramor H.	1909	Civil Servant
14175	Parkes J.	1910	
14325	Patterson J.	1926	
21092	Payne H.G.	1910	
14159	Peisley H. & J.	1910	
14234	Philbey F.G.	1926	
21432	Pickington W.	1913	
Lot 54	Pigeon		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
14086	Pink M.J.E.	1930	
17919	Pirie J.	1911	
11108	Pitchford C.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
22477	Porter H.	1910	
23110	Prater J.	1921	
22398	Prendergast A.	1920	
21089	Prendergast J.	1919	
14208	Prendergast		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
11109	Quailey T.F.	1921	
14042	Ralps W.J.L.	1921	
14181	Reilly E.	1920	
24431	Reitze V.B.	1925	
14973	Reynolds J.	1910	Civil Servant
14080	Richardson G.C.	1921	
21088	Richardson T.	1923	
17920	Riddell W.	1911	
14325	Robbins W & J	1910	
22877	Roberts A.	1922	
11092	Roberts T.	1938	
11074	Roddy P.C.	1933	
11132	Rorison W.	1922	
23191	Rowan A.H.	1910	
15552	Sachse H.F.	1921	
26662	Sermon R.	1914	
26662	Sermon R.	1914	
9289	Shotter E. & H.	1925	
14086	Shotter E. & H.	1929	
24596	Smedley F.	1910	Civil Servant
14225	Smith B.	1910	Civil Servant
14013	Smith J.A.	1912	
9289	Smith R.	1919	
14086	Smith R.C.	1910	
14078	Smythe W.T.	1910	
22284	Spicer R.W.	1910	
21403	Stagg W.N.	1910	
14165	Statton E.	1910	
22350	Steele P.	1920	
14079	Stephens A.	1910	
22364	Stockdale W.	1920	
22877	Stone D.M.	1928	
14183	Stone W.	1910	Civil Servant

A Piece of String

14322	Stratford F. & S.	1928	
26159	Stratford H.G.	1920	
15498	Stridworthy F.H.	1910	
24218	Sutton P.J.	1924	
13970	Taylor G.P.	1922	
14165	Taylor J.	1927	
11900	Theilton W.	1910	
24588	Thick T.	1910	
14206	Thick Thomas & Lily		
14204	Thick Thomas & Lily		
23345	Thomas A.C.	1910	
23346	Thomas G.R.	1910	
9342	Thomas H.	1920	
22877	Thorbjornsen H.A.	1927	
11936	Tibbs J.A.	1909	
13073	Todd T.J.	1911	
16694	Treeby A.J.	1910	
15498	Treeby E.	1910	
14202	Treeby E.R.	1910	
16697	Treeby F.W.	1910	
16695	Treeby G.A.	1910	
13073	Turner B.	1909	
22417	Turpin E.	1911	
14232	Vanzetti C.	1910	Civil Servant
14231	Vanzetti Carlo		
11118	Veasey W.	1912	
14051	Vernon G.J.	1910	
22472	Wadsworth C.	1913	
22473	Wadsworth E.C.	1913	
15980	Walker J.F.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
21432	Waller A.	1920	
14030	Warburton G.S.	1913	
14968	Warner F.L.	1921	
19455	WATE & A Pty Ltd	1928	
14961	Waterhouse W.	1910	Civil Servant
14182	Watson J. & S	1919	
11107	Watson N.S.	1938	
17884	Wayne W.	1909	
14013	Wearder D.	1910	
15990	White F.		NR/Abandoned pre 1924
22391	Whittington G.	1910	Civil Servant
20252	Wigmore H.J..& Co	1928	
22532	Wilkes T.A.	1911	
14084	Williams F.A.	1910	
14103	Williams F.A.		NR area amended pre-1925
14104	Williams S.M.		NR area amended pre-1925
21358	Woodward F.W.	1911	
21355	Woodward L.W.	1913	
21357	Woodward R.H.	1913	
14012	Woodward W.N.	1913	
14165	Wright H.	1910	
11111	Wright J.T.	1910	
11110	Wright T.	1913	
26877	Young G.T.	1923	
15498	Young W.	1921	
14028		1920	

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