

CAMELS TO THE RELIEF OF MILPARINKA IN 1882



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MEMOIRS OF EUSTON CORYNDON KING

“Camels to the relief of Milparinka in 1882”

Euston King was the sixteen year old messenger in the story.

During the early days of the Mt Browne Gold Fields, provisions were sent mainly from Wilcannia and the store keepers “store keepers were mainly branches of Wilcannian Firms, Crainsie, Bowden and Woodfall, W.C. Palmer and Co. C.F. H. Henzinroeder operated in Milparinka and Gus Hickey, Bacon and Co and W.C. Palmer and Later W.S Downie held sway at the Granite etc” were mainly branches of Wilcannia firms who operated also in The Granite, afterwards called Tibooburra by the then Minister for Mines Mr. W.H.J.Slee who was in charge of the diggings as Warden prior to 1882. At all times, it was quite an undertaking to deep the supplies up to the 12,000 people on the field and horse teams used to be employed, taking various times to do the trip, according to the state of the roads and the condition of the teams and sometimes, the character of the loading, for when beer was included it often used to be delayed until there was no more fresh water to bull it and the clay pan water so much in demand was too thick and creamy to mix well with it. The main delay, however, was caused through the long stages between the watering places and the shortage of fodder for the teams, along the 200 mile route.

There came at last, a time when the supplies were reported to be so low in the various stores that flour, tea, sugar and vinegar had to be rationed to make them last as long as possible for the roads were becoming more and more in a serious state and with no rain falling, a very serious drought was on, and as the usual watering places were fast becoming dry and farther apart, even the coaches had difficulty in getting through and at last had to be given up.

This was the introduction that Mr. Charles McArthur King, the newly appointed Police Magistrate and Warden had when he arrived at Milparinka in the mid summer of 1882, some time in January. He was immediately faced with a very serious responsibility and problem. He at once acquainted the Sydney Government as to the state of affairs, but as the mails were threatened to stop running and Government Departments then, as now took a lot of correspondence to come to a decision and rise to an occasion, no reply had been received After a few mails had been, shall I say wasted, and nothing definite done, the mails ceased to be carried and Me King was not aware that his suggestion to get the South Australian Government to come to the rescue by sending camels loaded with the bare necessities of life from Port Augusta, had reached Sydney. Camels were the only means of transport over the long dry stages that cut the goldfields off in every direction and as even these had to be educated to go without water for a few days, it all took time and one can imagine the feelings of the inhabitants when it was announced that the last bag of flour had been opened and no word of relief was to hand.

It was then that Mr. King started a messenger to go into South Australia to the nearest accessible Telegraph Line with urgent request for relief. The messenger was well horsed by Mr. Harry Crozier who had come in from his station, Fort Grey on the N.S.W.

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S.A. boundary sixty miles away with promises of relays of horses at Fort Grey and other outback stations. It involved a rather strenuous and risky journey, but so many people were depending on it that it was willingly undertaken by a young lad of sixteen, a light weight, and he was accorded a very hearty send off at about 5 o'clock in the evening to

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ride 60 miles in the cool of the night by himself,. Imagine his feelings and the feelings also experienced, when on giving his horse a drink at Sturt's Depot Glen Waterhole of early historic fame, his horse gave a snort and a bound and went almost mad, for the smell of camels coming round the bend of a hill reminded him of the terror caused on his own home run by the sight of one of Burke and Wills' derelict camels that used to wander about on Fort Grey Station, causing no end of fun amongst the horses. As soon as the horse could be pacified, the rider also got a start, for there in full view were 30 heavily laden pack camels slowly and sedately swinging in towards the water, having come a long distance without a drink. A few words from the Afghan in charge, little 'Targ' Mahomed was enough and the message was taken back to Milparinka that the camels would be there in the early morning. No whip not spur was required to urge "Fireman" back to Milparinka, for whether by the importance of the news he carried, or the panic caused by the camels' unsavoury odour, he did not even stop for the only gate for miles around to be opened for him.

There was some excitement and demonstration in Milparinka that night; it would almost compare with the Mafeking night in Broken Hill, years afterwards in which the messenger took a very active part.

Hence, the famine scare was ended and never since has there been any shortage in that part, but until the drought broke, Mr. King commandeered sufficient numbers of camels with a reliable Afghan driver or rider to convey the mails to and from Wilcannia, about 200 miles, under the charge of Jack Tarragon, the little coach driver who was marooned at Milparinka on the last coach to stagger through. He also organized the sick, suffering from fever, dysentery and scurvy to be taken to the Wilcannia Hospital by ten or twelve camels yoked up in a German Wagon, harnessed like horses with the collar put on upside down. It was a novel sight, but quite common sense. Another similar team accompanied this, and had for passengers, a consignment of prisoners to serve their sentences in Wilcannia Gaol for various offences, principally horse stealing. It took this caravan over a week to get there.

At that time, a wag sent a picture to the Sydney Mail, supposedly depicting this event and it has been twice since reproduced and I suppose people really thought it a true picture and representation, but to those who know, it was intended as a joke. It represented two fine high stepping camels going at top gear harnessed with a big Cobb and Co. Thorough brace Coach, with police in charge of the prisoners and an Afghan riding pillion. It was not long after this that Mr. Hogarth, manager of Momba Station used to drive a pair of camels in his buggy into Wilcannia. Since that time camels have just about cut the horse and bullock teams out in the West Darling country and now the Motor Truck was about to cut them all out. The writer has since been all through that country in motor cars. It is always interesting to recognize old land marks and compare the differences of transport with that of the old coaching days and the days of four in hand teams and bullock drays. One has at least one great consolation when departing from those rough times to the up to date motor express, and that is that fact that one gets over the bad heavy roads without in any way causing any cruelty or discomfort to man's old friend the companion the good horse.

How proud we used to be of our horses and their performances. Can anyone ever have the same feeling for his machine.....I doubt

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“Dust Storms of the West Darling”

One very annoying feature especially to the housewives of the West Darling district, particularly Wilcannia, Menindee and Broken Hill is the periodical dust storms. It is hard in deed to describe one, giving it the full measure of awesome magnificence. It has been often attempted, but generally fails to impress one with the feeling that is experienced when actually seen. Photos and good ones at that, have been taken which go a long way towards demonstrating the phenomena, but they all lack the volume of colour blended so inspiringly. I cannot hope to succeed where others have failed and can only describe them as they have appeared to me.

To experience one, it is necessary to have a hot, dry summer, with a still, burning hot day up to anything over 110 degrees in the shade. On such a day, all eyes are cast on the horizon for the sign of a cloud or change, and at about 1.30 pm, a dark cloud will appear on the south western horizon and this will take some two or three hours to gradually approach. Then growing larger and fanning out all the time, increasing in volume and still without a breath of air stirring, it approaches slowly but surely. A great wall of solid darkness with the sun shining on it, a bright red colouring is seen, twirling and furling like red smoke from the furnace stokes. As the sun becomes covered, the colours change from red to dark purple to orange, blue and black, sometimes in well defined columns or in blended masses like fleeces of wool. Then on she comes silently and majestically obliterating everything as it slowly reaches it. Then it overtakes one and seems to smother or suffocate one with the fires of red powdery dust and darkness reigns supreme. This stillness might last for five or then minutes and then the wind strikes as if from behind this mass of dust and develops into a raging hurricane of various force, often so strong that roofs of houses give way and hoarding is demolished and blown into smithereens, but at other times the force is not nearly as great. Strange as it may seem there is little or no noise heard until after the first of the moving mass has well enveloped one and the noise comes with the wind. (*It goes on the idea that the noise of the storm cannot penetrate the first mass of dust that seems to be forced ahead of the wind) This state of darkness might last for from 30 to 50 minutes or 3 or 4 hours or even longer in some cases. People in their houses have to light the gas or lamps and keep the doors and windows shut to try to keep the dust out, but it is so fine that it is almost impossible to do so. Anyone unfortunate enough to be out in the open have just to do the best they can to see it out and to try to get support. In the sand hill country, one must keep in an upright position if possible or keep moving for fear of being buried alive. One such storm was experienced in Broken Hill one Saturday afternoon when I was playing cricket with the Proprietary Mine Club versus, I think, Walter Tulley's team on the hospital reserve cricket pitch. Our team was fielding and our captain Peter Fulbrook, was bowling; while the storm which we were anxiously watching was slowly approaching we were speculating as to whether we could get our opponents out before the storm enveloped us. On it came, until the hospital buildings were swallowed in it and then slowly, very slowly, onto the ground Peter finished his over just as the first of the dust hid the man at long leg from view. That was when we rushed for shelter, leaving the wickets in last, but the matting got shifted up against a neighbour's fence and was retrieved, partly buried in sand. When the wind arrived, we were making our way towards the Tydvil Hotel for shelter and the wind helped us along. When we neared the place, we thought the hotel was on fire, for the electric light was playing on the cloud of

dust so vividly. Host Alex Berkholtz could be seen in his white shirt sleeves, dimly in the haze, trying to attend to his customers who were washing the dust down.

On one occasion, my wife and I were caught in a tremendous storm of this kind at a place called Blantyre on Curryawinnia Station in 1910, on our way home to our newly taken up homestead lease at Dromomi. We saw it coming and decided to pull up at Blantyre, a deserted boundary rider's hut on the Talyawalka creek and weather the storm out under its shelter. It started at about 1.30pm and darkness and a hurricane lashed all that afternoon and night, abating only towards daylight for a short while and continued on with extra force until nearly noon. We had another man with us who was driving one of our traps and we had six horses to attend to. We tied each to a strong fence with their haunches to the wind and gave them a nosebag of chaff before the storm broke over us. After that, it was just out of the question trying to do anything with them, they just put their backs up against the wind and stuck it out.

On pulling up at this place, we noticed a high heap of sand at the back of the hut, but very little wood to boil the Billy and had to carry a supply in from the creek in the morning, with the daylight, we discovered a heap of wood and other things, such as old axes, knives, hooks, horse shoes etc. exposed that had been gradually buried by storms for years before, and on passing the sheep yards close handy, we had a job to distinguish them. They were literally buried and only parts of the stub fences could be seen. This, though, is nothing new, for miles of fences on the sandy country of the West Darling have been completely buried and lost and one can easily drive a team over them and not know they had been there, except for the uniform straight reach of a low sand ridge.

The main cause of these fences becoming buried is that after a good season, when the roly-poly bush has dried off and is blown by the wind up against the fences, they collect there and form a big brown hedge to be blown away across the plane again in a queer looking moving line. When the wind changes to the opposite direction, they are eventually caught again by the fence and when a dust storm accompanies the wind, they form a foundation for a new sand hill with the old fence as a base line.

Houses have also been known to be buried in this way and it is queer sometimes to see nothing but the top of a roof showing. Around the inland lakes, the sand hills shift so much in the wind storms and in such peculiar shapes in such a very short time that a sand hill will become established twenty feet or more high. On one occasion, the five horse coach from Menindee to Broken Hill, swinging along on the hard dry pans at nine miles an hour at night was suddenly brought to a stand still. The three leaders of the team were seen scrambling up in the air; they had run into an almost perpendicular wall of sand about fifteen feet high stretching right across the road and this had not been there on the trip twelve hours before.

After one continuous series of storms on the banks of Menindee Lake, some hundreds of human skeletons had been uncovered by the wind, this was an old burial ground of the blacks. Some of the skeletons were in a good state of preservation, while most of them were hardly recognizable. Nearly all of them were in a huddled up position, showing the style of burial. Some few of those that were intact were lying straight out along the ground.

A considerable number of skeletons were unearthed by the men when building the Menindee Boiling Down and Meat Preserving Coy's works at the Five Mile and nearly all, if not all the skulls had large round bullet holes in the forehead, sometimes two, showing that the old time round muzzle loaded bullet used sixty or seventy years ago

had been employed in the slaughter. Most of these had been taken away as curios by those interested in that sort of thing, when Broken Hillites visited the River and Lakes for weekend outings and sport before the Railway was built through there.

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The scarcity of Water

One of the greatest drawbacks, if not the worst, on the Mount Browne Goldfield was scarcity of water. With a drought and heat wave (the thermometer in a fair shade registered 125 degrees one day in February, 1882 and over 110 degrees every day for a full fortnight) water for domestic purposes was becoming very scarce. All the water holes had dried long since and only at some few places was a soakage to be found at up to twenty feet in the shed of some of the creeks and when the soakage's existed, the miners pitched their camps in patient waiting for rain. As many of them had horses, it was not uncommon to see wash dirt being packed to the water for treatment, until a petition would go in to the Warden to reserve these soaks for the domestic use alone. Water used to be carted regularly around and sold at various prices. The Warden at Tibooburra, (Granite) on one occasion had to pay as much as 5/- per bucket to water his horses and extra charge was sometimes made for those who put water in their whiskey. Many schemes to conserve water were suggested and thought out by the Government and a lot of time was wasted in the thinking. Wells were put down to over 200 feet with very few successes at Milparinka. McBryde's well on Mount Poole station four miles up the Evelyn Creek was a great source of relief as the water was quite fit for domestic use. The Chinamen who had scoured sufficient ground from the Warden had formed a garden only one mile from the town, which they maintained successfully. They grew and supplied vegetables to the diggers at a very reasonable price from the water they found in a soakage, which was sufficient to supply the town with water for drinking at a fair rate, also.

While this drought was on, heavy rains fell away to the north in Queensland and the storm clouds and lightening which could be seen for a couple of weeks were very tantalizing to those who were so short of this necessity. It transpired that the Bulloo River was in flood and came down over its wide shallow clay pan bed to within twenty five miles of The Granite. An exodus to there was made by all who could get away and quite a little canvas town sprang up at the "Mingary" or "25 mile water hole". This flood water was the saviour of thousands of head of stock, principally cattle and horses, though some mobs of sheep were also taken there.

History records a very serious time. The drovers of one mob of sheep from Coonulpie Downs were so famished for a drink that some who went on to find water and return with supplies, got bushed at night and nearly perished themselves. Those who were left with the sheep became delirious and were only rescued in the nick of time. Mr. Donald Scott who was in charge made a valiant attempt to save his men and was found in the last gasps; his health forever after was sadly affected.

It was a cruel summer when Haley's Comet used to illuminate the western sky in the evening and afterwards make a very early break o'day in the mornings. As time went on, the squatters sank wells and got water at various depths to 400 feet and the country

became more settled and stocked. The Government put down large 30,000 yard tanks that were able, when filled, to see a dry season through. It was not until about 1886 that the first water was obtained by boring on Salisbury Downs in the district Mr. H.W.J. Slee, the Inspector fro Mines advocated the diamond drill, but not until 1886 or 7 was it put to work under a Mr. Carmichael to sink a bore every fifteen miles apart between Milparinka and the Paroo River at Wanaaring with a view to opening up a stock route and connection with the head of the railway at Bourke. Several bores had been put down and proved successful, many flowing between Bourke and Wanaaring.

A Government well was put down at Milparinka on the same creek as the Channing and water only fit for stock was obtained. This had such a vile stench that it tied with the notorious Gidgee on a wet night, or before rain. Those who have lived in the Gidgee country are familiar with the perfume.

The government spent considerable money to no purpose by sinking tanks and building dams in the creeks, but the loose nature of the country caused these to be silted up level with the surface the first time a good rain came to fill them This experience has shown the folly of damning creeks. Many over shot dams were ??????? , but in time the best of these proved almost useless, Stephen's Creek dam at Broken Hill to wit. It is now a well know fact that since the country has been stocked, all the old and nearly, if not all, the permanent water holes are today either silted right up, or only hold a very little surface water.

Milparinka township was formed on its present site for the reason that at the time of the first rush to Mt. Browne, the waterhole there was considered almost permanent and was, I understand, twenty feet deep, but by 1887, it would hold only eighteen or twenty inches of water. Those that have remained permanent to the present are those in the gorges of the ranges where bands of rocks cause the water to swill out and scour away the silt; Sturt's depot Glen for instance. These holes were never quite dry during the drought and heat wave, but being heavily stocked, there was not much water left in them. One particular hole called Currawoolpa which means Devil's hole or abode was thought by the blacks to have no bottom and the big fellow Debil Debil lived in it. They were very scared to go near it.

One of the main supplies of water in those days was Cobham Lake, thirty three miles south of Milparinka. It was, I Understand, considered almost permanent. However, it went dry in 1882 and horse races were held on the floor of the lake until it was again filled by the summer rains of 1884, when twelve inches fell in four days in January. It did not rain again until November. The lake is filled principally by the Evelyn Creek which runs through Depot Glen and past Milparinka.

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Old Identities and Events of the Early Barrier

Early in 1882, I was appointed Warden's Clerk at Milparinka, and had a long and tedious journey with Father from Deniliquin by Cobb and Co Coach with such drivers as George Bowden and Jack Tarragon. Episodes of this journey during which the horses were "knocked up" were the driver taking the blinkers off and finally letting a horse go to die or find his way to the mail change; the coach eventually getting through, with sometimes only two horses out of five. Old Bill Hammond of Hammond and Kidman coming to light with a pair of wonderful horses to sell, then bigger horses to take us up to Milparinka from Wilcannia. Old W.L. Sampson was Cobb and Co agent. The summer weather was very hot and dry.

W.H.J. Slee, Inspector for Mines, author of "The Miner's Handbook" was temporarily in charge at the diggings. A.L. Dawson and Grant Bloomfield were in the Commonwealth Bank. Jack McIndoe was in the hotel. John Saunders 1st class constable was in charge of police and afterwards came to be eligible for Commissioner of Police. Old George Hill was in "Anti-Christ's" store and was a middy in the vessel that took the last of the Norfolk Island convicts to Port Arthur; his account of which was interesting.

Horse thieving was rife, and there were many interesting cases, particularly that of young Merrit who stole G.B. Scott's buggy pony, Cossack, and after doing a term for that was treated well by McGregory manager of Cobham Lake station and stole his fancy hack in return. Sgt. Sinclair let him slip through his fingers at Coomulpie Downs's station. The Shanty Keeper also was

The flour famine of 1882 occurred when there were about 12,000 people on the field. One bag of flour was left when the camels arrived from Port Augusta. The camels were used to take prisoners and the sick from the local hospital to Wilcannia. There were fears of the escort being stuck up by a well equipped party camped at 2 mile water hole. Constable Saunders took the gold by pack horse accompanied by a black tracker through Yantara and Yancannia to Wilcannia.

The first Warden's court on the Barrier was held at Jack Stocklee's shop, a mail change at Thackaringa. Paddy Green of _____ and Garot the jeweler from Wilcannia were the disputants. Father and I left Milparinka for the scene of the dispute with three horses in a buggy traveling via Cobham Lake, Wannaminta _____, Fowler's Gap, Corona and Mundi Mundi. John O'Connell was constable in charge at Mt Gipps. There was a champagne picnic on the mine, and a dry trip home, doing a perish one night in Cobham sand hills, and arriving at Cobham Station for breakfast. Casey was in charge at Cobham and his storekeeper was Elliot. Casey afterwards cut his throat. Consignment on the big _____ at Wannaminta waterhole when a big mob of cattle sent there for water stampeded and got bogged, ruining the water. Arthur Sheppard and I think Peter Minchin was with the cattle.

On the Goldfields, dry times necessitated the invention of the Dry Blowing machine which did not prove too great a success. The principal mode of procedure was for the digger to first pulverize the wash dirt as fine as possible, then subject it to the action of the wind, if there was any. By pouring it from one dish held high over the head, or lower down according to the force of the wind into another smaller dish on the ground,

allowing the wind to blow the dust away and leave its heavier parts behind, nuggets of gold and stones etc. Then more pulverizing and the repeat operation 'til the lot was diminished to a very small quantity and this was finished off by the operator blowing the dust away from the specks of gold, sometimes so small that they could only be picked off the dish by wetting the tips of the fingers and pressing on the speck. The larger pieces were picked out easily and the nuggets were collected on the first occasion when

they made their appearance. An experienced dry blower could spot a nugget the first time it hit the dish. Some thousand of ounces were won by this crude but effective method. Although a lot of gold was lost at the time, it was afterwards recovered when rain came and the cradle was used.

Wash dirt: The field was noted for the number of heaps of wash dirt that were stacked all sized from three or four tons to a few barrow loads and registered in the name of the owner, who by value of his Miner's Right and a fee of 1/- received a registration form in the shape of any old piece of paper bearing the following wording "This is to certify that this heap of wash dirt is registered in the name of John Evans Miner's Right No 503 dated 1st July, 1833" signed by the Mining Registrar. This was sufficient title and held good both legally and morally, for it was an unknown crime for any heap to be stolen as long as the board, or even the peg that held the notice was left standing and visible.

Pudding Machines: These were allocated and dams made to catch the first storm water that happened to fall, but as often happened that months elapsed without a drop of rain and as long as nine months went by without rain, water reserves diminished. This happened after a very heavy flood rain in 1883, when twelve inches were registered in a few days and the dams were nearly all washed away or silted up to the extent of uselessness. Such were the disappointments experienced by this wonderfully patient and hopeful Miner or Digger as was their "monica" before the brave old boys of Gallipoli and Flanders adopted it.

At the Granite, at Bullocky Gully on the Granite now called Tibooburra, it was the custom of some diggers to plough the surface to a depth of about nine inches and scoop the earth up in heaps and leave it registered for perhaps twelve months or more, then cast it to the Pudding Machine and get 1 qwt (hundred weight) to the load upwards averaging perhaps about three qwts and this would be stacked away in pickle bottles and planted until such time as an escort was going or that it could be safely deposited in the bank. Sometimes, however it was taken off the field and no one knew how or when.

Nuggets were occasionally found on the surface among the roots of the salt bush or lying on the flat granite rocks that cropped up in any old part of the Tibooburra portion of the field. At Mt. Browne, it was a common thing to see men, women and children out specking in the gully's that ran down from the slate ranges. Many a nice nugget - up to 2oz . from a few qwts. - were picked up on the surface. Twelve and eighteen oz. nuggets had been driven over by the traveling general public. Tales of extraordinary luck could be told of this field as of any other.

Deep Lead. Deep sinking was not a feature of Mt. Browne. 150 to 180 I think was about the lowest level at which payable gold was discovered.

Quartz Reefs: At Waratah Creek which runs through a long low range of slate, there were five distinct reefs of quartz visible running parallel with each other up and down through the hills and valleys. These were worked by Companies formed in Adelaide and though they paid well at first, they all pinched out at no great depth and were all abandoned.

Walter Tully was one of the Mine Managers for a Company, but as nothing came of it, he went to Silverton, then Broken Hill and opened, I think, the first shop there, which has grown to a very considerable importance and has been in existence ever since. Walter Tully was a good old sport. I remember he had an old white horse that he won a jumping race with at the Granite. The same horse fell with me at Milparinka the following year in a jumping run won by Wannaminta Joe in Adventurer.

The Squatters of that time who were taking up and stocking the country were of a very genial and hospitable lot and although the diggers had a few little grievances over the water trouble, they were as a rule given every consideration and it was very uncommon to hear of any mutton or beef stolen or stock molested and during the time when fever and scurvy were raging in 1882, many an unfortunate digger was given succor and relief by them. More especially, shall I mention the Kennedy's of Wannaminta; their name will ever be remembered by many, if not all.

This class of the community had pretty rough old times, what with isolation, droughts, heat, sickness and many other hardships, but they lived it out and made the most of it and always wore a smile. But how did dame fortune treat them and how did they succeed? The fingers of one hand would be more than enough to count those of the old pioneers who came out winners off this pastoral . The successful gambling in Broken Hill certainly put many of them on their feet, but the pastoral pursuits let them all down. Such things as rabbit plagues, slumps in wool, high interest rates, Bank failures and fate rewarded them ill for their hard, tiring, rough life and wonderful patience and hope. When one considers what they had to put up with and endure. Many is the woeful story of thirst and exposure that was endured by many that has never been put in history but happened nevertheless, to be treated as something not worth bothering about.

Skeletons in the Bush: It was no new occurrence or uncommon thing to hear of these, as all through that space of country west of the Darling, land was only then in the initial stage of being opened up and improved. Permanent watering holes were so few before many wells were in existence and bores were unheard of. Many a miner disgusted with his luck on the field went west to make a site again and got lost, or perished for want of water, leaving his bones to bleach and be discovered in very out of the way places, or perhaps be covered by drifting sand and never found. How many men were found in the last stages of thirst, unconscious or raving, to be cared for and resuscitated and the matter forgotten, except by the victim:

Tragedies: the man found hanging in a tree a Milparinka who had gone up thither evidently to cut a limb off and slipped to be caught by the leg in a fork and, hanging head downwards, died an agonizing death, his dog on the ground continually barking, attracted attention. This poor faithful animal so the report goes, was shot as he would not allow anyone to go near his dead master. How could they??, one asks. A man camped under a tree one night on Olive Downs and his fire caught the tree alight and it burned and fell down on him and he was found and buried unidentified. He must

have suffered agony in his attempts to get away from this burning tree that fell on him, without killing him outright.

Another man who for twenty eight days was marooned on an island in the Bulloo River with scarcely any food, no matches, and found alive by one of Syd Kidman's blackfellows in a terrible state. He had found one duck's nest and captured a fish. He could see drovers going past miles away on land but could not attract their attention.

Fatal Mishaps: Carrie Hassel at Olive Downs in 1885, I think, attended to a pump down a well, when a piece of timber fell on him and tore all the flesh off his leg. He signaled to be pulled up and was just caught by his companion before he fainted. Aid was sent for, but he died before it reached him.

The first marriage at Tibooburra of a prospector at Gretna Green and a young girl, who was cooking shortly after the wedding when her clothing caught alight and she was burned before he could reach her.

The engine driver who fell into a heap of ashes in a faint at Yandama and had his arms and legs roasted, also his chest charred and lived for eleven days afterwards, under the care of Miller the Milparinka chemist.

A near tragedy occurred when an overseer went to give his horse a drink out of a 400 gal. tank and had to get inside it to fill a bucket, as the water was too low to come through the tap. His horse, smelling the water, put his head into the tank and could not get it out, nor could Billy help him, this on a hot day and the air in the tank was becoming unbearable. He thought of cutting his horse's head off, but had no knife and was in a state of collapse, when luck came in the shape of another man, also coming for a drink. He was able to tilt the tank so the horse could withdraw his head. I have not permission to mention Billy's name; he was a great friend of mine.

Returning home from Thackaringa after the Warden's Court Case, Father and I had an experience that I shall not forget. We had left Wannaminta Station with all sorts of luncheon prepared by Mrs. Kennedy and a good sized water bag, driving three horses in a buggy that was overloaded with samples of galena and lead ore from the claim to show and distribute to those interested at Mt. Browne. After a hot day and a drive of 25 miles or more, during which we did not spare the water bag, fully believing that the Wannaminta water hole on the boundary of Cobham Lake Station, now called Oduna Park would have plenty of water, we received a shock. On our way down, we had a young man named Elliot with us to direct us to the waterhole; he was also to report what water there was as the Cobham cattle were on the verge of perishing and had to be shifted. This was a fortnight previously and there was then any amount of water.

However, in the meantime, a tragedy happened. The cattle from Cobham smelt the water when a mile and half from it and stampeded, and I think over a thousand of them rushed the water and got bogged and filled up the hole, one on top of another and so died where they fell in and stirred the water to slime. The men were helpless and just had to leave them. By the time we got there, the water was slime, blood and cattle juice. The horses would not drink it, even when we made a place for them to go in. This meant making for Cobham Lake Station. I think another twenty five miles with horses just about done for lack of water, the heat and heavy pulling in places. Ourselves disappointed, our water bag dry, a hot wind blowing and dark night approaching with only the faintest of tracks to follow and where sand was loose, no track at all.

Consequently we got off the right road and were following an old trace, that showed occasionally in the dim light of the stars until the direction satisfied my father who was an excellent bush man, that we were wrong. That meant finding the right road. We

unyoked our horses, but daren't let them go, fearing they would wander for want of water. Father told me to light a big fire, as there were plenty of low bushes and he went off to search for the road, which he discovered some couple of miles to the west. He was able to direct his steps back as I had a good fire to beacon him back to the trap. It

was getting on towards daylight, so we waited and then set off to get to Cobham Lake, twelve or fifteen miles, for breakfast. There, we found that they were in a bad way for water themselves as the Lake had become so impregnated with lime and salt that nothing could drink it. Even our famished horses would not touch it, so we asked Mr. Casey to let us have a bucket each for them, out of his supply, a bullock dray of two 400 gallon tanks brought in eight miles from a tank which a channel storm had filled. He stoutly refused, but the Chinaman cook came to our rescue and gave the poor brutes a drink, while Mr. Casey was unfolding his tale of woe about the cattle episode. Then with a pair of horses lent by Mr. W. Broughton, who was camped on this tank where the water was and a black boy to bring our tired horses after us, we did our last 33 miles in top gear. In passing, I may mention that the samples of lead ore we had in the buggy were nearly all jettisoned when we got into difficulties in the heavy sand hills at night. Years later, I had the occasion to laugh at and burst the bubble of a discovery of silver lead ore in Cobham sand hills, at the time when everybody was mad over a bogus silver discovery at the Pack Saddle in I think, about 1885 or 1886.

The Pack Saddle Swindle In 1885, a certain big burly Scotsman named Graham reported to the Milparinka Warden's Office that he had discovered a very rich silver lode at the Pack Saddle, a hill between Bancannia Lake and Cobham Lake and showed the result of some assays he had made in the presence of several station people who were very interested and dispatched him to take up mineral leases. There was great excitement over this and everybody on the stations around who could dig up 10 pound put it into Graham's hand to take up a lease, leaving it to him to pick the best for them. They went just mad about it. Graham was a wonder and knew what he was about, they all said. He took stone and assayed it in little retorts in front of them and always, there was a nice little lot of stones in the bottom of the retort, according to the size of the stones and the amount of coin he slipped in unbeknown. Things went with a whiz and four in hand teams used to bring Graham to Milparinka to do the business. Money flowed in and the Colonial Treasurer in Sydney collected quite a large amount for the consolidated revenue fund, until on an occasion when Graham was entrusted with a very considerable amount of cash, the property of the wife of one of the local squatters, to take up more leases, instead of doing this, he decamped. After becoming the owner of a couple of decent sorts of horses and a revolver which proved to be of no use – thanks be – he made for Queensland in pretence of buying cattle for Power Rutherford J.C. of Melbourne and took the name of Rutherford. However he could not stand the champagne he was drinking and boasted to those he met and at Thargomindah in Queensland, ran foul of the local police and made a hurried exit. In the meantime, the law at Milparinka had been put into action, a warrant taken out for his arrest, and a constable sent after him in the company of the man whose wife had confided her money to Graham. Following the tracks from Thargomindah and in hot pursuit, they came upon him. He had left his horses in Thargomindah. and done a flit on foot, following a mob of cattle, sometimes with his boots tied on the wrong way about and often going in front of the cattle to blot our his tracks. One day, he was surprised by the police, a

black tracker and the squatter. He had been asleep under a tree and when accosted, he jumped up and presented his revolver that would not go off. Then he ran away still trying to fire back over his shoulder. The police called on him to stop and fired over his head, or intended to, but the action of the horse, or luck, brought his aim down and he

shot him in the back of the head and so ended the Packsaddle Bubble. The Colonial Treasurer rebated the deposits.

The Prospectors of Mount Browne: During 1881 Mount Poole Station, (then known as Depot Glen from the fact that Captain Sturt the explorer had camped there and made it his Depot during the drought that over took him and marooned him in 1845) had been acquired by McCracken and McBryde, both of Melbourne from the original holders Singer and Champs, who I understand, first worked up this area. McBryde, the managing partner, had a staff of men improving the country and built a rather nice house of four or five rooms and a wide verandah. He also built a stone hotel at Milparinka water hole on the track to the Bulloo River from Wilcannia, to accommodate the many travelers who were on the move at that time going to and from South West Queensland which was then being taken up and improved. A rather stout thickset Scotsman was employed in the carpentering work at the Glen and as he was very fond of his national refreshment, McIndoe's Hotel used to accommodate him pretty often and the yarn goes that their boss, Mc Bryde, censured him and threatened to sack him. Scotty retorted that if he did, he would report the discovery of gold in The Glen. Scotty stayed on for long after that.

A man named Flemming had for a wife and aboriginal. He was contracting at the Glen and his wife know all that country well. On seeing the gold that Scotty was supposed to have found in the glen, she told her husband "Mine been show you plenty like that over there" pointing to Mt. Browne, a long low range of slate hills, covered with low Mulga and Nelia bush and on the strength of this, a prospecting party consisting of Jack Flemming, Nicholas Flynn, Mr. Evans and another whose name I forget followed the lubra's lead and discovered gold in payable quantities. Little Evans who had a very staunch pony, rode in hot haste to Wilcannia to report this discovery and after some considerable time, he and his mates received part of the reward from the government for making the discovery. Several other parties were on the verge of discovering gold in the district, but his party was the first to report. A rush took place, small at first, then other parts of the field were prospected and reports of payable gold came from Good Friday in the Warratta Range and The Granite and Easter Monday further south in The Granite country. A few stores soon opened at Milparinka waterhole and a township sprung up there as one did at the Granite – afterwards called Tibooburra by Mr. Snee the Inspector of Mines who succeeded Mr. J.C. Thompson, the first Warden in charge of the field. Discoveries came fast after the first rush to Mr. Browne and by 1882 there were 12,000 people on the field, but want of water, both for domestic purposes and washing the dirt drove many away during the next few years and at the present time, I am informed, there are a very few odd fossickers on the field. Those who remained behind in the early 80's won a very considerable amount of gold and escorts to Wilcannia in charge of the Mounted Police were not uncommon each handling thousands of ozs.

The reefs discovered early in 1881, though they were well the whole five different mines all pinched out at a shallow depth, the Elizabeth holding out the longest. – this caused a good deal of attention. Five distinct reefs were the pioneer, Phoenix, Rosemount, Warratta and Elizabeth

