

RECORDS TERRITORY

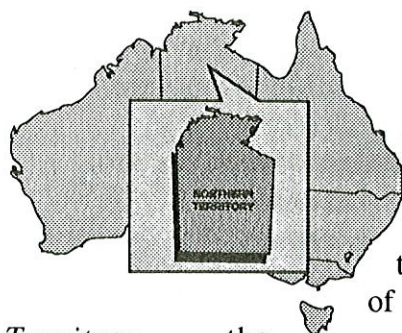
NORTHERN TERRITORY ARCHIVES SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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1996 - ARCHIVES AT THE CENTRE



As we
reported in
the last issue
of *Records*

Territory, the
Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) is
coming to the Territory in 1996 when the
annual national conference is being held at
Alice Springs.

The conference and annual general meeting,
which is being co-ordinated by Greg
Coleman and staff of NTAS on behalf of the
ASA, is being held at the Plaza Hotel, 23-25
May 1996.

The aim of the conference is to focus on
many of the practical issues involving the
archives business such as privatisation of
government records, the development of
electronic media, the increased use of
archives brought about by Native Title and
Aboriginal inquiries, and the development of
standards. A great social program is also
anticipated.

Please contact NTAS if you would like to be
placed on the mailing list for further
information about the conference.

ARCHIVES IN A NEW DEPARTMENT

In late June, the Chief Minister announced an
administrative restructuring of the NT Public
Service.

As part of this arrangement, the NT Archives
Service said farewell to the Conservation
Commission and was transferred to the
Department of Transport and Works where it
now resides under the umbrella of NT
Computing and Communications (NCOM).

With NCOM, it is now anticipated that the
Archives will be able to focus more on the
technology requirements of archives and
records management and, as part of the
Business Services Group of the Department,
give appropriate consideration to future
business approaches in providing its services.

Greg Coleman
Principal Archivist.

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EDITORIAL



September is proving to be a busy month for our staff. Linda is going to the Records Management Convention in Melbourne and Francis to the Oral History Conference in Tasmania. Greg and Maureen will be off on holidays and two replacements will occur when Abi goes to work at Australian Archives and I take twelve months leave.

Although we are isolated from our colleagues 'down south', conferences and visits away do help us to experience and talk with our colleagues about the issues facing archives and records management.

Archives in electronic format, common practice methodology for managing archives, out sourcing storage requirements are topical issues for us.

On a more practical note (pardon the pun) Lyn Johnson, an archives student with the Edith Cowan University, WA, spent a week with Linda as part of her practicum. This ended in dinner at the Darwin Sailing Club at (almost on) Mindil Beach.

Lyn tells us she will be back in October for two more weeks of her placement.

Our column on preservation comes from Francis Good, Archivist (Oral Records). Looking more like a broadcaster's studio than the usual Oral History Unit, the NTAS Oral History Unit is able to replicate the spoken word in sound wave patterns onto a VDU. This technique is used by Francis to edit and manipulate voice prints and sound for demonstration purposes and use in workshops and seminars.

We are happy to be able to participate this year in the Writer's Picnic at Humpty Doo. This will be my last task for the NTAS until my return in twelve months time.

Read more about the Writer's Picnic on page 8.

Diane Foster

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STAFF NOTES

Change is inevitable and so it is with our staff.

Sadly, we say, "see you around" to Abi as her transfer to us has come to an end.

Abi is transferring to the Australian Archives, NT Regional Office, so we are not entirely losing her since there is a good relationship with staff at Australian Archives. Especially since they are temporarily holding our archives!

Jenni Wright, Abi's predecessor has been on maternity leave, but will not be returning to NTAS. Jenni and her family are leaving Darwin for the cooler climate of Canberra.

We wish Jenni and her family 'all the best' in Canberra.

Greg has the task of finding a permanent replacement for the position of Archivist (Information Services).

My position as Archivist (Records Policy) will be filled temporarily. I will be going to Canada on a one year tenure.

Unfortunately, for me anyway, my absence precludes me from participating in the ASA conference in Alice Springs next May. An event I will be very sorry to miss, given that NTAS is hosting the Conference.

Diane Foster

DISPOSAL SCHEDULES



FINANCIAL

MANAGEMENT RECORDS

Training seminars for the *General Disposal Schedule Financial Management Records* were held in Darwin and Regional Centres, namely Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. Note the name change of the Schedule to that published in the previous issue of *Records Territory*.

The Schedule has been welcomed by agencies who now have the opportunity to 'sort out' the precious space in storage areas.

The title and sections within the Schedule are in keeping with the *Financial Management Act*. The common sections of Policy; Accounting Framework; Accountable Officers; Budget Management and Funds Management facilitate use and control of accounting and financial records.

The *Schedule* is referred to in Part 6, Section 2 of the *Treasurer's Direction's* within the *Financial Management Act* (1995).

Although the *Financial Management Schedule* does not include Salaries and Wages, disposal action for these is found in our *General Disposal Schedule for Human Resource Management Records*.

Please advise us if you have not received a copy and would like one.

Diane Foster
Archivist (Records Policy)

AMENDMENT — GENERAL DISPOSAL SCHEDULE: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT RECORDS

Sections: 2.1; 2.2; 5.1; 5.2; 5.3

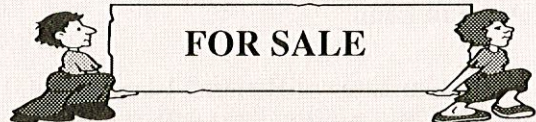
Now reads "TEMPORARY Destroy 2 years after completion of audit".

Amend to: "TEMPORARY Destroy 2 years after completion of 'relevant to business' annual audit.

Some agencies had been stockpiling records in the belief they needed to be retained for individual agency audits.

The NT Treasury and NT Auditor-General's Office have advised that the, "signing of the audit report on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements (for general government activities), and the audit reports on specific Government Business Divisions, does identify that the audit for that year has been completed".

Our amendment to the Schedule (as indicated above) should clarify the particular Status and Disposal Action.



The Records Management Association of Australia (RMAA) NT Branch, has purchased copies of the definitive text, *Keeping Archives*, 2nd edition.

This text is widely used throughout Australia and overseas. It's instructive, easy to understand text is a must for anyone venturing into the realms of archives.

It is the kind of publication students of Records Management and Archives will find themselves reaching for time and time again to help understand the world of archives.

Copies are available for purchase from NTAS, phone 995961. Cost is \$28 (members of the RMAA and Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). \$40 for non members.

NORTHERN TERRITORY



HISTORY AWARDS

The NT History Awards for 1995 were announced by the Hon. Mike Reed, Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, on 18 August 1995. The Awards program this year attracted 27 applications from which 13 Awards were selected. The History Awards program is administered by the NT Archives Service, and the allocation for the Awards was \$31,000.

We congratulate the following recipients of the 1995 NT History Awards:

Roberta Buchanan of Berry Springs; \$1,600 to assist with a biography of pioneer bushman, Nat Buchanan.

Arch Grant of Sydney; \$700 to assist with a history of early Methodist Missions in Arnhem Land.

Anne Gardiner of Bathurst Island; \$3,500 to assist with a history of the 'Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Sisters' in the Northern Territory.

Stephen Harris of Darwin; \$1,300 to assist with the story of Nell Harris, an Oenpelli teacher in the 1930's.

Philip Costigan of Port Keats; \$2,300 to assist with a history of the Port Keats area prior to White settlement.

Jose Petrick of Alice Springs; \$400 to assist with research for the second edition of her book about Alice Springs Street and Place Names.

Roderick Home of Melbourne; \$4,000 for interpretative and transcription work on the historic letters between Maurice Holtze and Ferdinand Von Mueller, 1878-1891, about Top-End plants.

David Smith of Nhulunbuy; \$500 to assist with a history of the Elcho Island Naphtha Petroleum Company.

Paul Hills of Alice Springs; \$3,000 to assist with a history of Geology in Central Australia.

John Morris of Ballarat; \$3,000 to assist with a history of contact between the Tiwi people and representatives of outside cultures until 1918.

Helen Wilson of Darwin, \$3,100 for research and compilation of transcripts of interstate collections of historic letters from the Northern Territory.

Pauline Ross of Alice Springs; \$2,650 for oral history work with Mona Byrnes about the women of her pioneering Centralian family, the Johannsens.

Tom Lewis of Darwin; \$4,950 to research the story of the submarine 1-124 which was sunk outside Darwin Harbour in 1942.

We wish to thank the NT History Awards Committee members (Pearl Ogden, David Carment and Michael Loos) and the NT Heritage Advisory Council for their deliberations over this year's Awards.

Greg Coleman / Executive Officer
NT History Awards

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Some of the projects recently or currently underway are as follows:

- Catholic Sacramental Theology and Wadeye Ritual / Sister Robyn Reynolds.
- Land, Grazing and Pastoral Leases in Central Australia / Mandy Paul of Central Land Council.
- Removal of part-Aboriginal children to institutions (for Katherine Aboriginal Legal Aid Service) / Ros Fraser.

- PhD research about Shell Mounds in the early settlement of Port Darwin / P Burns.
- PhD research into the history of Barunga / Claire Smith
- Research on Fannie Bay Gaol Museum before 1911 / Sandra Yee.

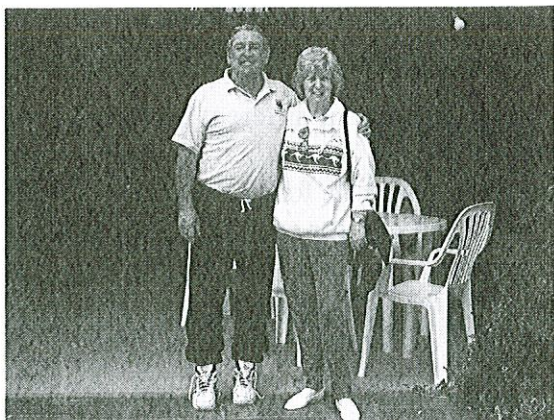
Abimbola (Abi) Adeyoyibi
Archivist (Information Services)

SOME RECENT BUSINESS WITH TED EGAN

Arrangement were recently made with Ted Egan in Alice Springs to transfer his papers relating to the Caledon Bay and Woodah Island killings of 1932-33.

Ted received a History Award a few years ago to help him with his research about these infamous and controversial events involving early conflicts between police and Aborigines in the Gulf country. Ted is quite passionate about the subject and has committed a lot of his time over several years to unearthing the facts.

The manuscript, titled Makarrta (which means the principal peace-making ceremony of the Yolngu people in north-east Arnhem Land), is to be published soon by Melbourne University Press under the title *Justice All Their Own* and is due for release in April, 1996.



Ted Egan and Nerys Evans at "Sinka Tinny Downs", August 1995

SOME RECENT BUSINESS WITH ELLA STACK AND TOM LAWLER

During July, Greg Coleman, the Principal Archivist, attended the annual general meeting and national conference of the Australian Society of Archivists and the six-monthly meeting of the Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives in Canberra.

While in the region, Greg took the opportunity to visit Ella Stack and Tom Lawler who are now 'semi' retired on a farming property at Moruya near Batemans Bay on the south coast of NSW. Memories of Ella's days as medical practitioner, first Lord Mayor of Darwin and senior public servant in the Territory were rekindled as they rummaged through several cartons of papers in the wintery garage. Many of these papers are now being transferred to the NTAS.

Tom Lawler was no insignificant Territorian either, due to his prominent involvement in agriculture, lands administration and politics. Arrangements were also made to interview both Ella and Tom for the oral history program.

The pair certainly have not forgotten the Territory. The Territory flag is always hoisted on the hill overlooking the Princes Highway whenever a Territorian comes to visit.



Ella Stack and Tom Lawler at their property at Moruya, NSW.

PRESERVATION ISSUES



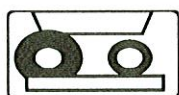
ORAL HISTORY RECORDS

Preserving oral history interview records involves

the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) in two kinds of archive — sound recordings and transcript. The audio tape is preserved as a machine readable record and the transcripts, as paper copies (nowadays on acid-free stock for longevity). Since 1986 these have begun life as electronic records — PC-based word-processor files which are also preserved. Furthermore, the many elements of the oral history collection have been captured as electronic records in a PC data base, which contains over 40 fields for each interview and yields both management data and a catalogue for researchers.

Electronic records of permanent value require appropriate back-up and preservation strategies. So, the oral history operation at the Archives has developed a set of protocols to preserve all the material that is regarded as archives in the various formats. Some of the ways in which these oral history records are handled may be of interest to readers involved in enterprises with similar material.

TAPES



Most of our interviews are on cassette and some are on open-reel tapes — both being analog recordings, although we now often use digital audio tape (DAT) instead. Both digital and analog use very similar media and require similar controlled storage conditions. The main difference is the recording technology. Analog preserves a varying pattern of electrical potential on the tape and DAT preserves computer-style binary information about the audio characteristics of many thousands of samples taken of the

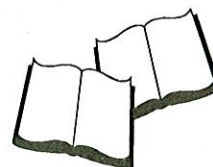
sound source — anything up to 48,000 samples per second.

Decipherable speech can still be retrieved from deteriorating analog tape, although such a situation is obviously better avoided. DAT in contrast, despite its remarkable production properties, data corruption can be far more critical. The sound can be partly or substantially irrecoverable if relatively small amounts of recorded data become unreadable.

All NTAS original tapes, whether analog or digital, are copied in analog, onto high quality tape stock. Copies are also being made of other tapes collected before this protocol began. Either a quality cassette recorder or a studio-grade open-reel recorder is used for this. Both the master and the copy are regarded as archival records and given the best storage regimes our resources can provide.

Although analog and digital last well, both are at risk over time from temperature, humidity and magnetic factors. We still hope for a permanent storage medium to be invented for audio records. Magnetic tape can also suffer from 'print-through' of signals from earlier and later layers of the tape wound around its reel and so requires regular winding.

TRANSCRIPTS



Transcripts present different problems. For each interview there are several word-processor files. One for summary and content listings and one for each of the tapes in an interview. A strict file-naming protocol preserves the interviewee's name. File name extensions differentiate contents/summary or interview transcript by tape number. As well, most transcripts typed before computers arrived have since had summaries and content listings compiled by wordprocessor.

From the beginning of computer use at the NTAS in 1986, all these computer files have been preserved as archives in addition to the paper records. The only practical solution at first was to use diskettes. Whilst there have been no disasters, it became apparent that 5¼" disks were too unreliable to be regarded as archival media. The 3½" disks have fared better, but any disk is at risk, so we began to make second copies as security against damage and corruption to disks. The second copies are stored in a different building to the master disks. At first, the security copies were compressed to save time in transferring to floppies. This is dangerous because when recalling data, any glitches on the disk can multiply errors occurring during decompression.

Eventually, the amount of data involved (a guesstimate of about 10 million words to date) made use of back-up computer data tapes necessary. Several groups of files will be retained permanently. One group will be transcript files; another will be the content/summaries, which are used by text retrieval software (ISYS) as a tool for researchers. As well, a copy of the software which is needed to read wordprocessor files will also have to be archived. But, as an additional surety these files are now also being saved in ASCII text format which can be read without wordprocessing software. For added security we will store second copies of each of these groups in a different location. Although data volume seems large, physical dimensions of the storage media are not.

Separate to the text files, the data base, which generates catalogue and other listings, is currently stored on hard disk for ongoing reference and printing. This is also subject to regular tape back-up — again, in two copies.

PRESERVATION MEDIA



Whilst streaming tape devices do the job for bulky *computer* data now, they are strictly an interim solution in the search for permanency.

Many other methods can be considered.

Magneto-optical disks, CD-ROM, even separate hard disks and other ideas are often proposed, although none of these has yet been considered a permanent medium. For *audio* tapes, the future may see affordable mass-storage systems for archival purposes, but my non-expert view at present is that we are still waiting for a really satisfactory solution to the problems of *really* long-term preservation for all kinds of electronic records, not just the few discussed here.

Widely different operational needs can often be overlooked by those proposing solutions. They are usually driven from medium-term storage and duplication perspectives too, rather than considerations of permanent preservation in the traditional archival sense. And finally, a real problem for future generations will be that electronic records archived earlier will be unreadable unless someone has thought to archive both the software *and hardware* needed to make sense of either data or analog audio signals. Proliferation of machines and software needed to read electronic records is a potential nightmare for archivists, whether for oral records or otherwise.

Francis Good
Oral History Unit

WRITERS' PICNIC

Since 1990 the Palmerston and Rural Resource Centre has conducted a Writer's Picnic at Fred's Pass Reserve, Humpty Doo.

The theme is *Keeping History Alive* and is targeted to Year Five school children living in Palmerston and rural areas.

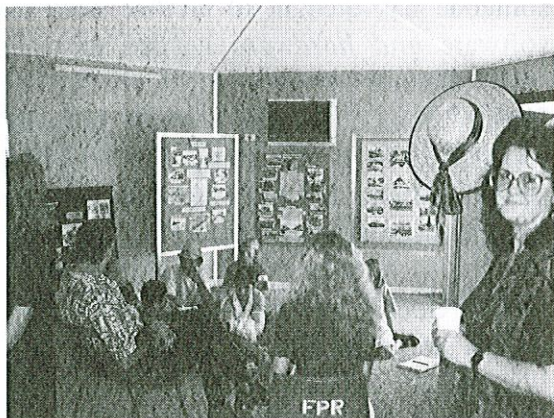
The event is a 'hands on' learning experience for students studying Northern Territory History. Organizations such as the NTAS and Australian Archives etc., come together with the students, exhibit and discuss examples from their holdings and explain their role in "Keeping History Alive".

Others demonstrate crafts and talk about their recollections of life in Darwin from days gone by.

The organizers report that, "the outcomes for the children are firstly, the realisation that history is made by real people, like themselves....living in and being part of a community".

Secondly, the day provides the students with a real purpose for writing and retelling the stories heard. Back in the classroom, the children recount and write about the information collected on the day.

Abi and I will be taking material to Humpty Doo. A pictorial collection, mounted as a travelling exhibition, previously prepared by Jenni, will be the mainstay of our section. Selected archives will be on hand to discuss with the children.



Jenni Wright with her NTAS display at the 1993 Writers' Picnic, Fred's Pass

RECENT ACCESSIONS

GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS:

Department of Health and Community Services. Pictorial history of the Northern Territory Dental Service, 1946-1986 / compiled by Howard Truran.

Department of Transport and Works. Supreme Court Building construction files (State Square Project), 1988-1992

NT Open College. General correspondence files, administration files, promotional material, 1975-1994

Women's Advisory Committee. Primary research documents for history of the first decade of the WAC, 1993-1994

NON-GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS :

Cyclone Tracy 20th Anniversary Committee. Events files, general correspondence and publications, 1974-1995

Bob and Vicki Darken. Photographic collection, 1939-ca 1950. Mainly family photos - growing up in Darwin.

Joan Dean. Photographic copyprints and negatives of the Dean's family at Harts Range and Hatches Creek, ca 1946-1969.

Bill Feeney. Personal diary of Frank and Harriett Firth, 1920-21

Jean Harris. Photographic copyprints and negatives of Drysdale family and Darwin, ca 1930s

Brother John Pye. Photographs of Bathurst Island and Residents, 1919-1994

TELEPHONE & FAX NUMBERS

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