



National Trust of Australia

Northern Territory

e Newsletter

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We invite ideas and encourage the sharing of interesting stories relevant to the Northern Territories rich heritage. The most significant and motivating pieces will feature in this publication and across our various social media channels.

We welcome suggestions to help us improve and strengthen our local eNews.

Please submit your stories at:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/contribute-to-our-e-news>

or email

admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au



A welcoming elf at the gate of O'Keefe House in Katherine

In this edition of e News, we have reports from most branches, as well as an article on Ted MacFarlane, the Windmill Man of the Barkly Tableland, by Eddie Webber. There are also lots of great photos. I have had some fun with some of the photos – it is Christmas time after all: the time to be merry, to be light-hearted, and enjoy life. This newsletter is a celebration of all the beautiful and interesting things happening at our branches. Without our dedicated branch volunteers, the stories in this article wouldn't be possible.

Presidents Report

The NT Council has held two meetings since the recent 2025 elections with a full council, and three Executive meetings, so with running and supporting the Secretariat, members are kept busy with many events and issues that need addressing. I would like to acknowledge and publicly thank **Eddie Webber** the immediate past president, for staying on Council, putting together the Annual Report and Audit with **Suraksha**, now submitted and continuing with the management of the NT Trust properties, organising / liaising with insurance brokers, contractors, grant specifications, stepping in to install signs, pruning trees, repairing damage from vandals etc.

Secondly to **Wayne Green**, our Treasurer who has also stayed on for another term, liaising with our bank, bookkeeper and auditor etc to ensure we meet compliance and assisting with the annual report. All these roles consume a lot of time, so I am always grateful to all our councilors for their support and assistance.

We have many visitors and interesting calls asking about not only NT Trust properties, but also wanting various items identified. For example, people who have lived and worked in the Pine Creek region who want to share their stories and artefacts that they want to donate to the Trust to protect for the future as they have provedance to that particular region, as well as families that grew up at the remote Newcastle Waters Station in the early 50's donating family photos. We recently had one young lady who wanted to see Mines House where her mother Alison Bateman spent the first few weeks of her life in the fifties, with her parents - she was delivered by Dr Mounsey.

I have had the opportunity to view a number of the Trust properties over the past few months and am always appreciative of the time and passion of you ! our "NT Trust Volunteers" – in particular, **Chiara** at the **Repeater Museum Pine Creek** - keeping the doors open, the Museum clean and always making new labels etc. Always a welcoming face, happy to have a chat and learn something new. We now have **Michael** at the **Pine Creek Railway Heritage Precinct**, opening the station. We are always grateful for the help from the Local Pine Creek Council crew keeping the Pine Creek properties' lawns mowed and yards tidy.

Borroloola: it is truly great to have a caretaker like **Joan** who is keeping the museum tidy despite the dust and winds – welcoming visitors to the Old Police Station Museum, and Ted always busy maintaining the grounds. despite the heat.



Katherine:

*Local branch members **Merriel Lawrie** and **Bess Hart** have been busy cooking up a storm, whilst **Katrina** & **Carolyn** are behind the scenes seeking funding from the KTC for O'Keefe House for the 2025 Christmas lights events and the 100th Anniversary.*

It is always a pleasure to see the latest achievements – local NT FNAR Train Buff **Chris Renehan** has been busy decorating the old train at the old Katherine station – repainting its numbers and installing a light on the front of the train. A makeover/repair is underway for the Katherine railway station for the 100 th anniversary next year. Local branch chair **Stephanie Hill** lobbied and got a major donation from the Katherine Club for the railway station repairs.

Much has been happening behind the scenes to keep the NT Trust Secretariat turning over, as we still don't have a paid director and are not in a financial position to employ a person for this role. The secretariat role is split between the President (Janet), Admin/ Finance officer (Suraksha), Admin Support person (Janet), Treasurer (Wayne), Grant (Property Coordinator), Heritage Rep (Eddie), and our tech communications/ Newsletter person /Library (Ron) assisted by Julie. Noting that this will be the fourth year Council members have been bearing the load to keep the NT Trust on an even keel. (If you can offer some of your time to assist in any way always most appreciated.) Having more people working in Audit house shares the workload, just talking to visitors and answering the phone and setting up for events etc.

We are currently in the process of employing **Max Hoang** to cover Suraksha, our amazing ever-patient administrator, whilst she is on maternal leave for approximately 6 months from January through to June.

The NT Trust is up for its 2026 Asbestos review draft, with cost approx. \$16,000. This will be a cost that the NT Trust will have to cover, as well as the cost for back-up staff \$30,000. We don't pay rates but we do have to pay rubbish removal – whether the service is used or not (as is the case with remote properties) is over \$900 per year! The biannual assessment of NT Trust properties – for



Annual Insurance review costs \$15,000. We have been advised that the cost of garden maintenance for the MPHP has increased by over 600 %, so we are in the process of negotiating with contractors and looking at other options, noting that tree lopping etc is an extra cost that the Trust has to bear, and that without the ongoing assistance of volunteers.

A special thanks to amazing **Anna Harris** for picking up a never-ending pile of palm fronds, pruning shrubs and keeping on top of weeds and water leaks, and keeping a careful eye on all the MPHP properties each day. Without her assistance the costs would be even more.

We face another Cyclone season. To date we survived Cyclone Fina with very minor damage to the gardens of MPHP

and can only hope all our properties will survive with no major damage such as electrical damage from lightning strikes or damage to trees and gardens this wet season, as neither are covered by grants.

At this point in time, due to secretariat members being successful in getting grants we have been able to cover a lot of projects over the past 12 months including building repairs for Pine Creek, both properties: Heritage Grants. Burnett House: (CBF and Heritage Grants) undertaking major renovations and stabilisation. CBF minor grant for signage across the NT. CBF minor grant for electrical upgrade to Audit house and amenities block. NT Museums for signage interpretation. Tenant Creek repairs: Heritage Grant.

Members are in the process of finalising acquittals for 2025 and getting quotes for maintenance projects for 2026. Please liaise with Eddie if you have a project brief or a project you would like to address and not sure where to start. We also are appreciative of the other voluntary work Eddie undertakes - repairing and maintaining many of our remote properties, replacing broken windows, broken floorboards, removing dead trees, cutting back bougainvillea, building retaining walls etc. I also acknowledge the work and time **Ron Ninnis** has put in trying to help sort out the various technology issues which are gradually getting resolved!

We also appreciate the work of our latest volunteer **Ian Anderson** who has been working around Audit house replacing broken flywire, and fixing louvre fittings – all of these jobs are time consuming and fiddly. So it is great to have them done and the place looking smart and tidy. One gift that Audit house was very happy to have back was Nan Giese's day bed, from the Dibbs family who rescued and saved it when it was un- ceremonially thrown out. It has now been repainted and has a new mattress donated by Anna, and is looking happy to be home!

If you feel you have skills that you can bring to the table, please step up and share, as many hands make the tasks a lot easier.

We are nearly at the end of the year. The Annual Report and Audit have now been completed, signed and forwarded to the Heritage Branch and the Heritage Minister so that it can be presented to Parliament as per our legislation requirements. We have been advised that there will be no increase in our NT Gov Heritage operational grant so our buffer will have to cover any unforeseen extra expenses of CPI increases. i.e. cost of utilities etc, which have all noticeably increased. Thanks again to Wayne, Suraksha and Eddie for your work on the Audit and Annual Report.

Our Patron the **Honourable His Honour Professor Hugh Heggie's** AM PSM, term as Administrator is at an end, and we thank His Honour and partner **Ms Ruth Jones** for their patronage over the years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge all the work undertaken by our ever-patient NT Trust Administrator **Suraksha Tripathi**. We wish her all the best as she prepares to start her Parental Leave. (Hopefully we can cover all bases whilst she is away.)

A very special "Thank you" to all our NT Trust volunteers and members for all of your support and time, wishing you all a very happy, healthy and safe festive season and looking forward to working with you in 2026!

I would also like to acknowledge the donations from the Grace @ Que Noy family for their many kind, interesting donations to both Audit House, O'Keefe house and Pine Creek Repeater museum, as many conversations are started when visitors look and recall.

Kindest regards **Janet Leather**



Nan Geise's day bed has come home to Audit House.

Australian Heritage Festival Theme for 2026 is: "Change - *How has history changed us - and how are we changing history?* History is not fixed in the past; it is a living force, constantly evolving, shaping our present and guiding our future. This year's theme invites you to explore the stories that have influenced our communities, consider how each generation reinterprets Australia's diverse heritage - breathing new life into places, objects, and traditions of the past - and imagine where it can take us next."

Tennant Creek Branch

The Tennant Creek Branch conducted its Annual General Meeting on the 7 July 2025.

The branch has been promoting Tennant Creek National Trust Branch at the Community Markets every fortnight and selling 50's lucky numbers tickets. It's a small income but helps the bottom

line. New displays have been added.

We had a visit from the **High Commissioner of Fiji** (Ajay Bhai Amrit) and his staff in September. Comments left in our visitors' book included:

- Thank you for showing me this impressive display of local history.
- Thanks to all the members for your generous help to research our father's history and activities in Tennant Creek during the 1930 and beyond.
- Your efforts to preserve this fascinating and important history is greatly appreciated.
- Great work, great host.
- Fantastic displays, thank you Karl for your knowledge.
- Videos very informative, great work.

A Big Thank You to Our Volunteers!

A big thank you to Pennie Cowin for organising the advert in Tennant Creek Today newspaper, at no cost to National Trust. Also, a thank you to **Roddy Calvert** for reporting Tennant Creek National Trust events on ABC radio. Our volunteers are to be commended for their efforts in maintaining the advertised opening hours and giving our visitors an enjoyable experience.

Karl Herzog



Fiji High Commissioners visit: Karl, Ajay (High Commissioner), Sid



Christmas Anzac



Tuxworth Fullwood house in the snow

Alice Springs (McDouall Stuart Branch) (Hartley Street School Museum and Old Stuart Town Gaol.)

The year that was, has been one that has been very much up and down during this period for our beloved Heritage in the Alice. I guess you could say there has been good news and bad news.

First I think we shall get to the bad news, on Easter Friday this year, youth once again unfortunately broke into the Hartley Street School Museum and the Tangentyre Office who rent from the Alice Springs Town Council.

The damage was close to heartbreaking. The wonderful help and work from the Alice Springs Town Council was so appreciated by both the Committee and Tangentyre Design.

Unfortunately the damage that was done in the School I am still working through documents etc in the office and Library and the visitors sheets I have always kept in order a complete puzzle and mess.

This break in could not have come at a worse time as it was a day before our Heritage week and also two events that were held at the Hartley Street School Museum that week.

On a good note, this really brought forward the fuel the Alice Springs Town Council and Committee needed to get a move on with the alarm system that is now in place at the Hartley Street School Museum.

To all the good news now, during the year we had six school visits which I took the first five classes and **Marg Lawrence** a wonderful Volunteer on Wednesday's and a teacher of 50 years service and experience, took the last class of the year. Marg Lawrence is also happy to take the classes in the new year ahead.

One of the most wonderful events happened from when the Steiner School came in on the 26th May, in which we were able to invite a special guest speaker who was a grand parent of one of the children attending. Not only went to Hartley Street School but knew the assembly hall well, and was able to take us all back to the day's of his memories of the very Hall.

In all the classes I have taken since taking over from **Loraine Braham** in 2020, this moment been the most memorable.

The ex student's name who did the presentation was **Gordon Sweeney**.

Also during the year in March, we had the local Law Students who I took for a tour of the Stuart Town Goal which was very much appreciated.

Also Tangentyre Design have booked and used our wonderful Museum space for 5 of their town group functions which they love and donate payment.

Maintenance, all fire and safety requirements have been up dated in the last month, and finally a brand new fire alarm system was put into place, which has already stopped another bad break in, just weeks after being put in place.

Other than that, two more roof panels had to be replaced earlier in the year.

Volunteer wise, including myself we currently have about 9 volunteers to help keep the Hartley Street School Museum open. I will be looking at trying to get more volunteers in 2026. I am also working on getting a few new, young people to join the committee as there is still only the four of us after the AGM that was held on the 19th October 2026.

Committee 2025 - 2026

Bill Low (Chairperson)

Joel Crawford (Deputy Chairperson)

Ian Mann (Treasurer)

Brenda Shields (Committee)

At our AGM, the new Mayor, **Asta Hill** spoke about the future of Heritage in the future of Alice Springs. There is talk of potentially in the future the National Trust taking over from the Alice Springs Town Council in regards to the Hartley Street School Museum.

In all despite all our visitor records in bad shape from the break and enters of the school, the Hartley Street School Museum and Old Stuart Town Gaol really picked up in tourist and visitor numbers this year.

In all, it was another big year for the Hartley Street School Museum and Stuart Town Gaol.

Joel Crawford



Hartley Street School Museum at Christmas

The following picture was taken at the AGM.

*Front row: **Brenda Shield, Jose Petrick, Karl Herzog, Bill Low, Loraine Braham.***

*Middle row: **Jane Bannister, Margaret Marsh, Warwick Marsh, Jill Brew, Sue O'Callaghan, Helen Davidson, Max O'Callaghan.***

*Back row: **Eleanor Diflo, Kevin Diflo, Wendy Mann, Ian Mann.***





The above photo is of McDouall Stuart Branch members and volunteers enjoying Christmas lunch at Uncle's Tavern on Sunday 7th December as a reward to the volunteers who keep Hartley St School open during tourist months.

Ian Mann, Wendy Mann, Loraine Braham, Jane Bannister, Peter Bannister, Margaret Lawrence, Bill Low, Neil Woolcott, Alan Smith.

Discussions over lunch ranged around how to get more volunteers to replace departing older volunteers. A potential method suggested is to reduce membership fees for volunteers by following the UK system where each attendance reduces the fee by say 5%. Thus attending more than 20 weeks per year would provide free membership. Putting information into the local Newspaper, any of several web sites and on the National Trust (NT) website, may help find new members/volunteers. Also mentioned was contacting the Senior Citizens Association in Alice which had over 70 members turn up for lunch, some of whom might be looking for something to do.

Gulf Branch (Boroloola)

The end of another season draws nigh and while visitation was slightly down, however entry fees were not. Agreements with Outback Bus Tours are working well and paying dividends. They have even booked for not only 2026 but also 2027! The weather has been absolutely brutal for the last couple of months with little relief from the sweltering high 30s to 40s temperatures.

The Nackeroos Panel depicting the operations of the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU) companies A and C in the Gulf region 1942 to 1945 during World War II has been completed and installed in the Borrooloola Museum along with a number of smaller items from that era,

commencing a display which will grow with time. This has been a long-term project following on from the “little Eva” project some years ago. Little Eva was a B24 liberator bomber which crashed in the Gulf in 1942. (Of the ten crew members three survived and seven perished.) The panel was unveiled by long term advocate Annette Bradford in November. This project was completed through the Regional Museums Grant, and we thank MAGNT and the NTG for their generosity.

A number of artifacts relating to the history of the area have recently been donated to the museum including a WW11 bomb rack used as a drum-stand for many years complete with a 1925 Vacuum Oil Company, 44 gallon petrol drum, a 1000 kg set of scales used for weighing bagged ore samples, and an ore bucket predating Mount Isa Mines interest in the MRM project.

Sales of book three continue well and has prompted quite considerable favourable discussion in the region, with some never-seen-before images coming to light.

On behalf of the Gulf Branch, I want to thank both Joan our caretaker and Ted our grounds person who keep the Old Borroloola Police Station open, building and grounds tidy, do the banking and a friendly face to tell visitors about the history and people of the Gulf Region.

Best wishes all Gulf Branch Members wherever you are in your travels a Happy and Safe Festive Season.

Eddie Webber – Gulf Branch Chair

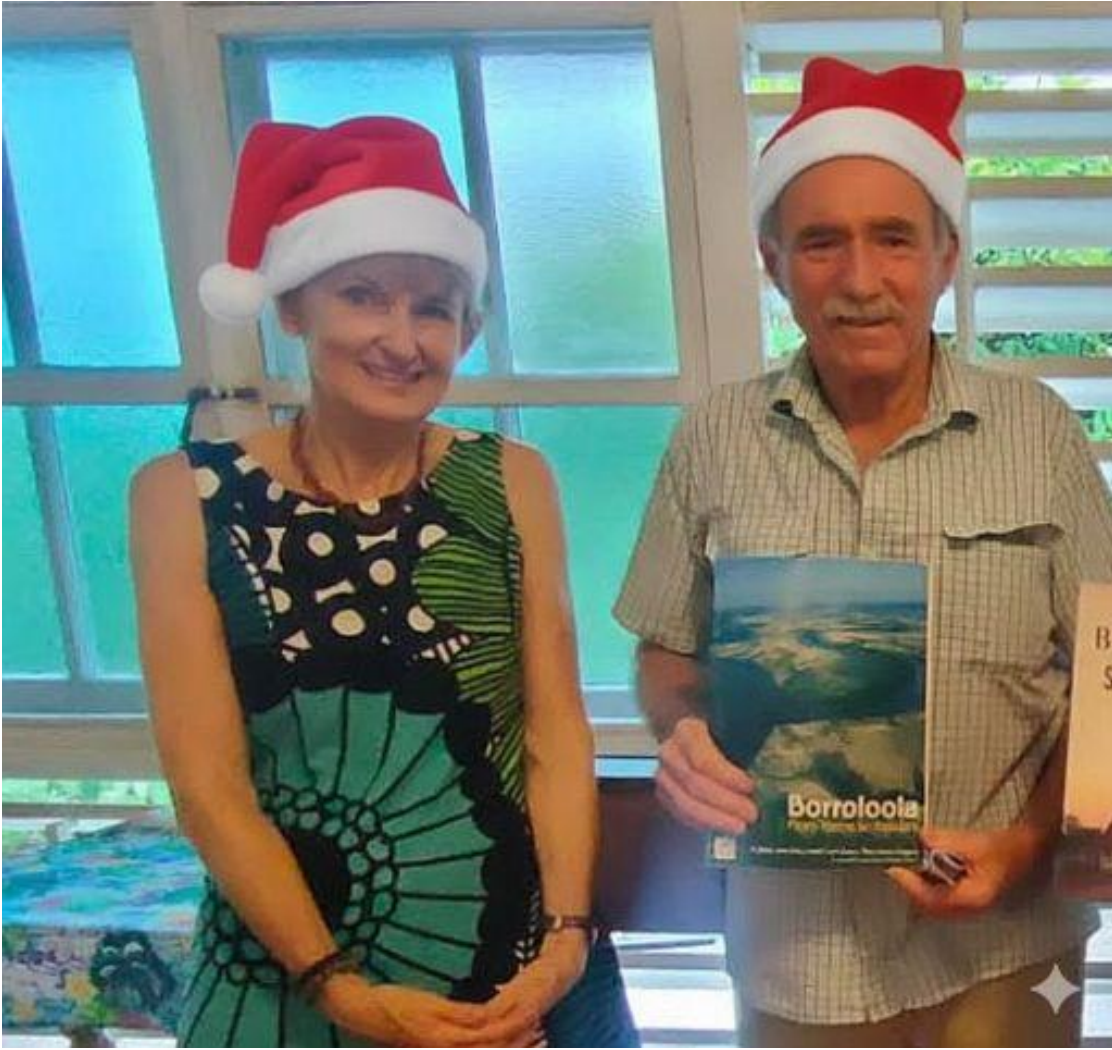




*Santa visits the Old
Police Station at
Borroloola*



*Santa relaxes with
some volunteer
gnomes at the Pine
Creek Telegraph
Repeater Station after
just erecting a new
sign*



*Janet and
Eddie at
their Book
Launch*



Santa at the Roadmasters House

Darwin Branch

Those of you who came to the AGM would have found out what a difficult year we have had, with resignations, breakdowns and restoration work. However, we have turned a corner, and 2026 looks brighter than ever.

We welcome two new committee members, Vivienne Chellow and Aminda Mengin. Both ladies join us with good ideas and great enthusiasm. Once again, we are without a Chairperson and Secretary, but we weathered 2025, so no reason that we can't carry on in 2026 in an even more constructive way.

Great news is that the restoration to the concrete cancer on the west side of Burnett House has been completed and it looks just like the day the house was built in 1938. We are so pleased with the effort that the builders put into it, with painting, new external stair treads and reputting the windows, along with other smaller repairs.

We have been bandying suggestions for fund raisers in 2026, and have come up with some innovative ideas. More on that later when we have a calendar of events compiled, which we will send out to members.

Our Christmas party was held on Friday 5th December with about 30 people attending. It was a chance for us to thank our volunteers and catch up with people in a relaxed atmosphere.

We will be re-opening Burnett House to the public on the 2nd of March, and will hold a working bee before then. A notice will be sent out prior and we hope that you can spare a couple of hours to help out on the day.

Our thanks to all our volunteers and members for your invaluable support. We hope that you all have a happy and safe Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in 2026.

Cheers and best wishes from the Darwin Team

Julie, Ros, Maxina, Bronwyn, Jacinta, Vivienne and Aminda



Volunteer: Julie Mastin



Volunteer Ros Scot



*Volunteer:
Jacinta
Chartres*



*Volunteer:
Wendy
PortLouis*



Admin: Suraksha



Seniors morning tea at Burnett House



Christmas Party: Christmas cakes kindly donated by Anne Davis

Katherine Branch

O'Keeffe House (National Trust NT) would like to thank the NT Government's Community Benefit Fund for supporting the restoration work to O'Keeffe House completed by John Forrest over the last couple of months. This much needed work has saved O'Keeffe House from further deterioration and required major roofing and beam replacement. Without the support of the NT Government we would not have been able to complete these much needed works. The finishing touch of painting was completed by Wright Coat thanks to the local support of The Katherine Country Club. We really appreciate the NT Government and the local support, while we had these works completed. We can now continue to promote the amazing history Katherine has to offer.



Santa arrives in Katherine in a vintage car

Christmas decorations inside O'Keefe House



VENUE HIRE 2026

Myilly Point Heritage Precinct :

**For your end of year Function at either
Audit House, Burnett House or Stahl Block
Get in early for 2026 !**



Some National Trust NT properties can be hired for functions and other activities such as workshops and meetings. If you would like to know more, please contact Suraksha at Audit House office on 08 8981 2848 or email admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au and we will put you in contact with the appropriate branch.

In Darwin, the location and ambience of Myilly Point Heritage Precinct, you can hire Audit House and grounds, or the grounds of Burnett House, Stahl Block has also drawn many events over the years. The MPHP has held art and photography exhibitions, talks, seminars, music and theatre events, weddings, birthday parties, baby showers, bridal showers and Darwin Festival events. So don't forget to book your next function.

Katherine Locals can contact the Katherine Branch to book O' Keefe House for their local events – please contact the Branch direct on 0420807491

Don't be disappointed - book your functions for 2026!

The current venue hire brochure for Myilly Point Heritage Precinct is found at:
admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/venues-nt/>

Opening Times for NT Trust Properties: for 2026

Note there is a \$ 5 entry fee for all NT Trust properties to help cover the expense of maintaining these iconic NT properties, such as: insurance, maintenance and utilities costs. This charge is only for non - National Trust members. There is no charge for children under 16.

Please Contact NT National Trust / admin: admin@ntnationaltrust.org.au if you need more information.

Audit House is Open Monday to Friday 9am to 2 pm.

Please make sure your membership is updated for visiting Trust properties, not just in Australia but overseas. A great Christmas gift.

Note: Days and Times can change pending volunteers' availability.

New Volunteers: *If you would like to become a Trust volunteer or know a friend who would like to become involved looking after one of our “iconic properties” across the Territory, please contact either the office or your local Branch as New Volunteers are always most welcome and appreciated. It could be House Sitting, Gardening, building Maintenance, helping develop new displays or renovating old displays, or recording history in your local area.*

Alice Springs (McDouall Stuart Branch): Chair: Bill Low 0417870868, **or** Contact Joel 0432826185 for tours.

Hartley Street School: Closed till February

Stuart town Gaol: Closed from December to February 2026

Audit House: Monday to Friday 9am to 2pm - open to the public. Closed over Christmas break 20th December – 12th January 2026

Darwin Branch: Burnett House – Closed December - February re-opens 2nd March

Gulf Branch / Borroloola: Locals Ted on 0484589510, or Joan on 00405628

Old Borroloola Police Station: Open all year round – Ted 0484589510

Jones Store New Castle Waters Station – Open all year-round pending road conditions NT Trust Secretariat

Katherine Branch: Contact number Merriel 0429807491 O’Keefe House: Closed for Wet Season till April 2026

Katherine Railway Heritage Precinct. – closed until 2026 urgently need new volunteers.

Pine Creek Repeater Building/ library: Pine Creek Museum and Library will be **CLOSED from Monday 22nd December 2025 till Friday 16th January 2026.**

Pine Creek Railway Heritage Precinct: Open all week – see notice board – new Caretaker Michael Wishart

Tennant Creek Branch: Contact Karl Herzog 0417834447 or Wayne Green 0448896216

Tuxworth Fullwood House: Closed November to March 2026

HERITAGE LINKS

NT Heritage Register list <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/nt-heritage-register/>

NT Heritage Register search <http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/heritageregister/>

Library & Archives NT including photographs and newspapers <https://lant.nt.gov.au/>

Genealogical Society of the NT <https://lant.nt.gov.au/>

PLan : the planning action network <https://gsnt.org.au/>

Pine Creek Miners park and Geo Trail

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9958bd78ef624deeb1531781cc4438a4>

NT Police Museum and Historical Society INC. <https://www.ntpmhs.com.au/>

NT Modern architecture <https://ntmodern.org/>

WINDMILL MAN OF THE BARKLY



Windmill and Tank Elsey Station Gulf Stock route 2009 (E Webber).

MONTAGU EDWARD (TED) MACFARLANE 1910- 1986. Windmill Man of the Barkly Tableland.

The Barkly Tableland some 75,000 square kilometres, is situated in the northeast corner of the Northern Territory. It is noted for its grassy black soil plains and straight flat endless horizons. The main land system in the region is black soil Mitchell grass country which covers most of the tablelands or downs country. It is fairly flat and continuous containing islands of desert and bluebush swamp. The coastal strip to the north of the Barkly is a separate land unit of sandstone escarpments dissected by rivers flowing into the Gulf of Carpentaria (the Gulf District).

The Barkly Tablelands and Gulf District contain the pastoral properties of Avon Downs, Alroy , Creswell Downs, Mittiebah, Brunette Downs, Alexandria, McArthur River, Mallapunyah Springs, Banka Banka, Anthony Lagoon, Robinson River, Rockhampton Downs, Balbarini, Kiana, Carpentaria Downs, Bing Bong, Wollgorang, Calvert Hills, Benmara and Bauhinia Downs. The first recorded visit to the area by a European was in December 1861, when William Landsborough searching for members of the lost Bourke and Wills expedition ventured into the region.

Landsborough was duly impressed with the potential of the area, and he glowingly described it as some of the finest pastoral country he had ever seen, His reports created great interest in the in the area, particularly for those seeking pastoral lands. Landsborough named this the Barkly Tableland after the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly.

By the 1880s there was a great expansion of the pastoral industry into northern Australia from Queensland. The initial squatters in the 1860s had by this time failed for a number of reasons including the lack of water.

Drought is a time of crisis, for the land, people and animals. It is a critical testing time for sustainability of land management systems and will often determine whether the enterprise will survive and if the productivity of the land on which it depends will be maintained. The individual landholder suffers a marked loss of income and this in turn affects the viability and social wellbeing of the community. A lengthy drought will eventually lead to a reduction in the number of landowners in a region. The Federation drought from 1895 to 1903 was one of the worst in Australia's history, if measured by the enormous stock losses it caused. It ended squatter dominated pastoralism in the south Eastern states of Queensland and New South Wales, as bank foreclosures and resumption of leases led to the partition of large stations for more intensive settlement and agricultural use. The Northern Territory suffered drought like the rest of the country.

Australia is a dry continent, and pastoralists soon learned that surface waters could not be relied upon. There were few permanent waterholes in the interior of the NT and it was not until reserves of underground water were tapped that the cattle industry had any prospects of gaining a permanent place in the Territory's economy.

The first bores (Artesian) in Australia were sunk near Bourke in western NSW in 1878, Winton QLD in 1882 with the first Government bore at Barcaldine QLD in 1887 and the initial bore in the NT at Alexandria in 1893. Sir Simon Fraser, later senator Sir Simon Fraser and grandfather of Prime Minister Malcom Fraser 1977, in his *"The True Story of Artesian Water Supply in Australia"* around 1910 associates the term Artesian to Province in France, Artois where mound springs bring water to the surface.

Government drilled bores also opened up the stock routes in the NT, probably the most noted being the Murrniji, linking VRD in the west to other stock routes in the centre and the eastern states through Newcastle Waters. By 1920 Syd Peacock had completed work on No 6 bore east of Newcastle Waters. It took a further four years for Peacock to sink and equip the 13 bores on the Murrniji.



Windmill and Turkey Nest 2011 (E Webber)

A number of bores are free flowing while the majority require pumping. Absolute reliance can not be placed on windmills and therefore engines were used at times to pump water to the surface. Steam engines were initially used and operated by a pumper who lived onsite. His task being to maintain the water supply including cutting firewood.

With the increase in bores, the task of erecting and maintaining windmills across the Barkly Tablelands became a considerable part of development and management of the large herds in the region. Water was the key to sustainability and the life blood of the industry.

One of the many men who erected and maintained the windmills was Ted Macfarlane. Ted born in Winborne Dorset in 1910 left England as a lad in 1926 sailing to New Zealand to work on the land as a jackeroo. Six years later he had itchy feet and sailed for Australia, arriving in Sydney in 1932 with five shillings in his pocket. This was in the middle of the great depression where millions suffered through sudden job losses with many of the working-class facing starvation and eviction. Sydney was swarming with the unemployed. Ted could see no point in hanging around Sydney and went to the railway station and bought a map of the country areas, knowing it would be impossible to find employment in town, and he much preferred the country in any case.

Ted boarded a train and as luck would have it, was befriended by a seasoned unemployed traveller who showed Ted the ropes in the arts of hobo life, like jumping the rattler (hitching undetected or unauthorised rides on trains).

It was a time of great deprivation across the country and where the next feed was coming from was anybody's guess.

Ted like many, tramped the country on traveller's rations. Unemployment benefit payments were not obtainable but the unemployed could get a ration ticket for a week's supply of food with the stipulation to keep moving. You could not use the same card twice in a row in the same town. This was administered and enforced sometimes quite zealously by the local Police officer.

With thousands on the road, no job big or small was knocked back. Ted and his mate took everything on offer and in the process learned to do almost anything. Ted lived like this for around a decade doing anything to survive from shooting rabbits in order to feed striking shearers to repairing windmills. This was a trade he became quite proficient in and which his talents were in considerable demand.

By 1942, he was 'working his way across Queensland checking windmills. At one stop near the NT border, the station manager asked Ted if he would have a look and repair the windmills at Lake Nash on the Territory side of the border. He was initially hired to repair windmills for four months and during this period he was offered the job as an engineer to erect as well as maintain windmills, and ended staying for nine years.

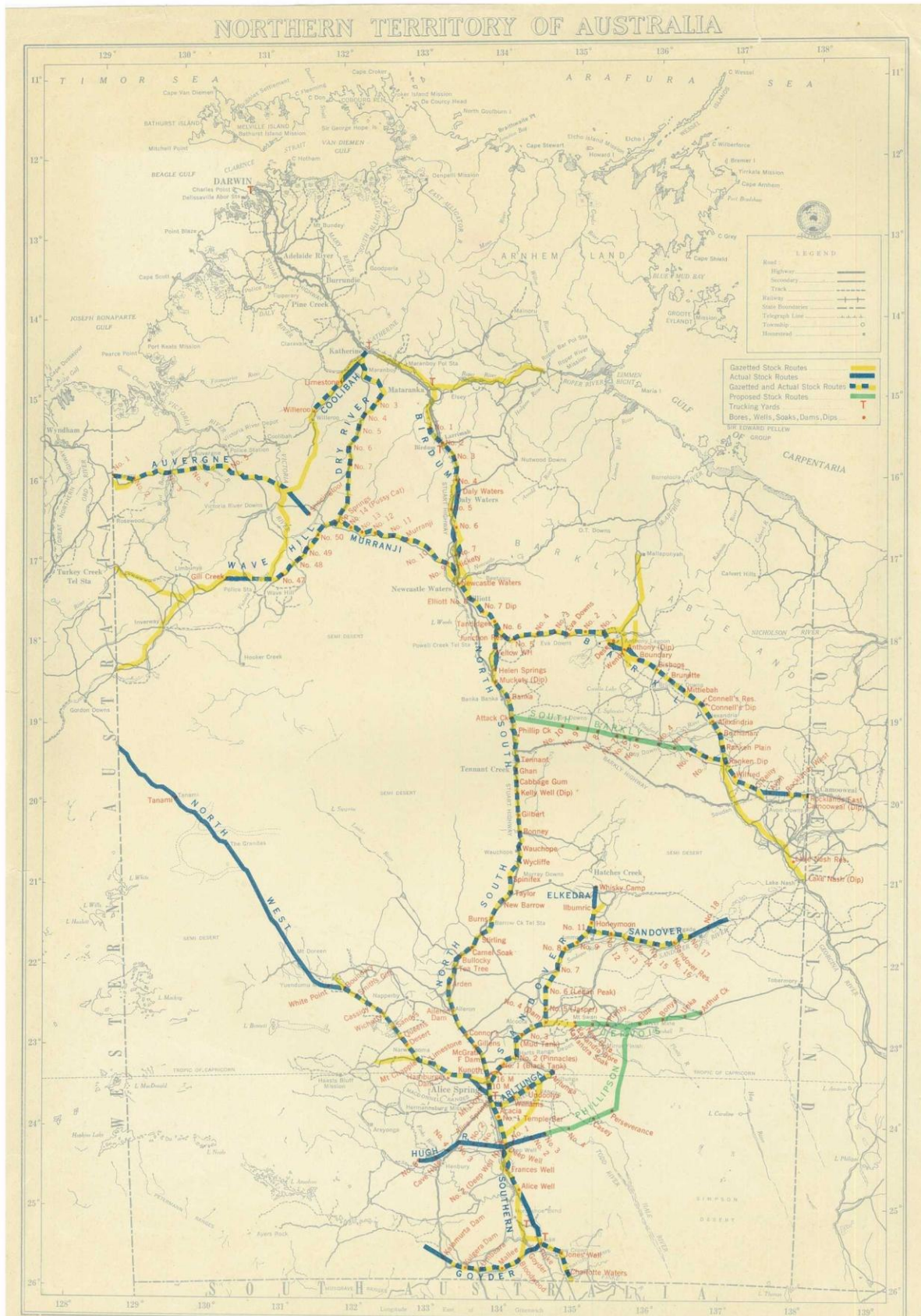
This was nine years of hard work which brought him into contact with many people who would become lifetime friends. The Territory was a closed area during the Second World War and anyone leaving or entering had to be checked and identified. With this condition in place, Ted had to report to a police officer who was responsible for the Lake Nash area. Initially this was Constable Frank Sheridan who at that time was nearing retirement. Sheridan was one of the many constables including Tas Fitzer, Gordon Stott, Jack Mahoney, Lou Devine, Denny Smythe and Bill Taylor of Anthony Lagoon who all became part of Ted's circle of friends. Records indicate that Ted was married at this time.

In 1949, the Aboriginal workers - almost the entire workforce at Lake Nash - went on strike for wages as at the time they were paid in flour and treacle. The station owned by the Queensland Pastoral Company was reported as having made a profit of thirty-eight thousand pounds in 1948 from their Lake Nash property. The action was supported by the Northern Territory Police and in particular Constable Jack Mahoney, with the outcome being that the Aboriginal workers were paid a wage albeit it minimal.

The Police performed many tasks including stock inspectors, protectors of Aboriginal people as well as a myriad of other tasks. At interview with Barbara James in 1979 Ted expressed great respect for the integrity and dedication of the Police force members he came in contact with. He also had a great respect for the Aboriginal workers and invariably was accompanied by two workers to assist with the sometimes month-long bore runs.

During the war, parts were difficult to source, so Ted made whatever part was required to keep the windmills turning. He had an emergency pass to obtain gas for his oxygen/acetylene welding kit when required. With scant resources at his disposal, he became a self-taught blacksmith,

wheelwright, and even dentist. He saved several people's lives over the years with a flying doctor's medical pastoral kit, a little medical knowledge and a lot of common sense.



NT Stock Routes and Bores.

While at Lake Nash, the management wanted six new windmills installed and while this was a job generally undertaken by an engineer, there was none available, necessitating Ted to take on the task. This sealed his fate as a windmill erector and for the next twenty years, Ted was non-stop travelling up to 10,000 kms per year erecting and repairing windmills throughout the Barkly Tablelands.

Ted was the only windmill man available in the region, and as it was not always possible for him to meet rigid deadlines, and he soon became known as *three-week Ted*.

“Anytime I got on the radio to organise a particular job I’d get a half dozen station owners on immediately afterwards reminding me I’d promised to be at their places in three weeks too.”

“If I’d been a businessman, I probably could have made a fortune, but I didn’t even charge for mileage.”

“But I have no regrets. I loved my work. When you drive away from something you’ve built, you get a great sense of accomplishment.”

‘Life’s been interesting, and I’ve met hundreds of fascinating people and made many long and good friends.’

“I’m happy I’ve lived the life I have and I’m very happy where I am now living out my retirement surrounded by my family.”

His family at this time were two horses Johnnie and Peggie and several goannas which lived in his massive vegetable garden.

Ted maintained and cleared the airstrip at nearby Mallapunyah Station of termite mounds and sucker regrowth and would bring across to the local children ice-cream flavoured with jelly crystals on mail plane days. Mail planes were a weekly service for mail and freight delivery to regional centres and remote stations across the Territory and were a welcome interlude into the weekly routine and or a social event for others

Ted had retired to Top Springs McArthur River on a fifteen-acre block (Macfarlane Downs) on the old Gulf Stock Route. (*not to be confused with Top Springs Armstrong River VRD*).

He spent ten years gaining title from the Lands Branch, and then was only successful after he had gone to the top - this being Paul Hasluck, the Minister for the Northern Territory in the Federal Liberal Government.

Ted had pre-dug his own grave as he wanted to be sure that he was buried at Top Springs. His is one of a number of graves at Top Springs on Mallapunyah Station.

E. Webber 2023.

Further Reading

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