

Wanted you would  
send me up some  
more paper please -  
I forgot it

C/- Mrs. W. F. Brook,

Adria Downs,  
Birdsville,  
Via Marree.

My Dear Janie,

Well here I am and I will now tell you all about my trip from the time I left the Flat.

It was a most comfortable carriage from the Flat to Terowie - and as you might imagine George had a pile of eats from sandwiches and cake to apples chocolates and ~~other sweets~~ and other sweets. (forgive the mistakes but no rubber here and Dorothy's little Australian terrier is scratching at my leg wanting me to come and play with her).

At Terowie things were not so good - for a while my heart failed me as the carriage's only claim to being a "first class" was the announcement scrawled on the side in chalk, but which made no difference to the world in general as to my horror a whole lot of what at first looked like regular cut-throats took possession - and I silently offered a prayer of thankfulness for the presence of George - however on better acquaintance they proved to be Italian ~~en~~ internees on their way to Alice Springs in charge of the Allied Works Council - Really you might have been travelling in the very heart of Italy as they just jabbered jabbered all at once in Italian and read Italian newspapers - that George and I felt we were the foreigners. Two of them came and settled in our particular compartment and I was not a bit pleased as on the surface they didn't look too clean and their luggage was just luggage - bran bags and battered suitcases tied up with bindertwine. After a bit however our two proved themselves to be quite decent - one of them asking my permission first before he lit a cigarette which came as rather a surprise from what looked such a ruffian. On better acquaintance they proved quite decent chaps and we soon declared a private peace treaty between Italy and Australia and shared our food with them as they were pretty hungry having been expecting to get food at Terowie and not getting it. They were terribly grateful for the food and most diffident about taking it from us - They kept us well amused - especially when one of them confided to me on coming back from a chatter with his mates that they "put up the wind" - meaning of course that they put the wind up - they had heard that there were mosquitoes and all sorts of other horrible things at the Alice and were not looking forward to it. We tried to reassure him without being too sure ourselves, that Alice Springs was a lovely place - however he didn't look too impressed at its prospects - but on the whole they were a most cheerful crowd and accepted their lot most philosophically - there was a war on and they had to put up with it for the time being. This particular chappie was also telling me a tale about the "rush gold" at Tennant's Creek (getting himself mixed up I suppose for the gold rush). He has a wife and two children in the West and proudly produced their photograph for us to see and really he is quite entitled to be proud of them - his wife is an Australian

I should think by the look of her - and a very nice refined type of girl she looked and two of the dearest little children, beautifully dressed all three - little boy and little girl - and it seemed hard to believe that they belonged to him but perhaps he saw the look of wonder on my face and apologised for his clothes but said that he had sent all his good things home to the West as the internment camp was not the best place for looking after them and that they were subject to inspection every so often and were tossed about just here and there so he decided that it was best to have nothing worth worrying about.

Another of his companions was a jeweller and watchmaker from Ingham in Queensland and quite a refined chap - could speak very little English but could play the piano-accordion - and when we asked for music he was very pleased to produce it and sat down and gave us music for miles.

It was a most entertaining trip to Quorn - and my man of the nice family in the West presented me with an internment camp penny as a souvenir - they came from the Loveday camp.

At Quorn where we arrived at 6.15 we shook hands all round and parted good friends with Italy - and then had to cool our heels on the Station until quarter to nine before the train consented to get going again - what they do is beyond me but a silly little engine ran up and down a line puffing and snorting and fussing about doing nothing as far as I could see all this time. The local policeman cheerfully said they always behaved like this in Quorn and you might get away that night or the next night in Quorn - nobody ever knew what to expect.

Well we did get going at 8.15 as I said before and from then on it was not so good - awful carriages - my Italian of the piano accordion and another one I did not know were travelling companions amongst a lot of other people - fairly well filled carriage - those face opposite things - the train rattled and banged along at about 5 miles p.h. and if it gathered any speed at all it sort of stepped on its own heels and the carriage shuddered and rocked and jarred - when it stopped it always took about a half an hour to get going again - and twice we just sat down for fully three quarters of an hour and waited for another train - Sleep was impossible - not much room for one thing - and when my neck and shoulders were not aching my hip was and most of the time they all ached at once - Sometimes from sheer exhaustion I was on the border of sleep when someone would open the doors and walk through the carriage - the doors make the most awful noise every time they are opened and people seemed to roam the train all night - Everyone had settled in at last and put out the light and thought at last it would be peaceful when the next thing the door is thrown back and a voice comes striding in roaring "Where's the bloody guard?" Next thing when all was quiet again the b..... guard himself turns up - and so on - so really the morning was quite welcome - and I was glad to have something to look at even though the country was not terribly inspiring at this spot - miles and miles and miles of gibber plains changing sometimes to sand plains, no vegetation of any kind - Eventually however at about 9.30 or 10 a.m. Marree loomed in the distance and I very wearily collected my things and clambered out. On the station to meet me was Mr. O'Donohue and then later came along Mrs. O'D. they live just opposite the station - Mrs. O'D. took me home, lit a fire to warm me

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got me a cup of tea and-toast, then led me to the bathroom - then made up a lovely clean bed for me and made me turn in - it was like a spot of heaven and I had about an hour's sleep there - then hot lunch and ready for the road. *The Karamunda*

George was waiting to see me off on the mail - The mail is a Diesel truck, Leyland truck - about 5 ton - but was carrying about 6½ ton load and then some - A Mrs. Staples and her daughter were passengers with me for about 100 miles and we all piled into the cabin of the truck, me clinging to my basket and bag but had to part up with my small suitcase and a huge box of flowers which George had brought along in an attempt to deliver them to Birdsville - and by the way they made the trip and history too as its the first time in history that fresh flowers ever arrived in Birdsville from Adelaide. They were daffodils, hyacinths - lavender and stocks.

To continue - the mailman himself is a huge fellow and I wish you could see his hat - your hat Frank is a Bond Street model compared with it, covered in ~~dist and dirt~~ and grease and with a huge bite out of one side - he says he had it earmarked so that he would not lose it!! He just wears a khaki shirt and no coat - and the hugest pair of greenhide boots I've ever seen. Well that's the mail man and I would give him a reference any day for patience perserverance good humour and ability to drive - As a matter of fact you probably know him Frank - he knows you and Walter just by sight - name of Tom Crewes and hails from Watervale I think, says he thinks his father has shod your horses sometime, but later he was employed by H.E. Ding at Manoorra and he used to play tennis at the Flat a lot and knows all the local people.

Well we set off from Marree at about 1.30, convoying the Mungarranie Station truck on board of which was Mr. and Mrs. Jim Oldfield, owners of Mungarranie - all their purchases at Marree - plus their two children and the dog - all piled up at the back. We hadn't been on the way long when we came across the Mungarranie horses in charge of a black stockman and another horseman couldn't see whether he was black or white - but there was a number of horses and quite a lot of them pack horses, poor old things laden to the ground nearly with all sorts of things.

There is no road between Marree and Birdsville - just a track here and there, sometimes only faint wheelmarks and sometimes not even that - Our first homestead on the way was a date palm plantation - and really you might have been in the East anywhere - miles and miles of sand and just a little iron block of buildings and many date palms - and what I thought was hundreds of bits of white paper tied on the trees proved to be white cockatoos - however nobody home there so we were on our way. Next place we came to was Lake Harry Station but nobody home there either - they had all been in to a dance and turnout in Marree the night before and had not yet arrived home - the Oldfields were returning from that too - 120 miles is just nothing to go to a dance and do a bit of shopping!!

Towards evening we stopped at *Dalkaninna* Station - the Bells, handed over their mail, had a yarn - were invited in as is the custom - people are wonderful out here - everyone on the mail is invited in for

a meal - but we couldn't stop and were on our way -

The Mungarrannie Truck had been disgorging its load from time to time and we had to stop and pick things up for them - this was the first of its troubles - By about 8.30 the M.M. (mailman) decided we would pull up and boil the billy so this we did in the bed of the Cooper River - dry as a bone - hasn't been down for 23 years they were saying - when last it came down it washed Mungarrannie Station away - when in flood its 40 miles wide. At present it is just miles of trees most of them dead - I couldn't help thinking of the firewood shortage in town with these thousands of dead trees standing there in the moonlight - Well the MM. just chopped down a tree and lit a fire and got the billy boiling - and as the Mungarrannie truck had not yet turned up he was a bit disquieted so we all piled back again and back on our tracks we had to go to meet Mr. Oldfield coming towards us with a torch - they had broken the front axle! This meant towing them - they fixed up a tow rope and we arrived and had a pretty good tea around the camp fire. *- we forced this truck 70 miles in all - with the tow rope breaking all the way*

All piled back again and off again with Mulka the next port of call - 100 miles from Marree, where Mrs. Staples and her daughter were getting off. We arrived at Mulka about 11 p.m. and all went in for a cup of tea - A Mr. and Mrs. Aiston - a former policeman and anthropologist - and the most interesting little spot you could imagine - a huge fire going in what might be called his den - the fire was not built in a stove or anything like that but in a huge hanging basket. This den is just chock a block full of guns and weapons of every description - the walls just lined with them! He has a complete set of all the weapons of the Arunta tribe and I believe it is the only complete set known - and he has been offered £400 for it - it was just too much to take in all at once around midnight when you were very tired - but most interesting for all that. Handcuffs - spears, bullets of every kind and description and suits of mail armour that dated way back sometime or other. I was sorry not to have the time or opportunity to learn more about them but Mr. Aiston is pretty old and not in very good health and anyway he was entertaining the men in what they call the store and we women just sat round the fire and talked. About midnight we set sail again - this time for Mungarrannie and minus the Staples.

I forgot to mention all the trouble we had encountered in the stretch from the Cooper to Mulka - the tow rope broke and broke again until it had all been used up - sometimes we only went a few hundred yards and bang she went - and as the trucks up here do not boast horns or any unnecessary etceteras like that the driver's only signal when the rope broke was that the Mungarrannie truck switched on its lights - this meant considerable watching for the extra light and it came on all too often believe me. Fortunately Tom Crewes takes life very calmly and just got up and fixed it up again and again - and really there was nothing else to do anyway - He intended to leave the Mungarrannie truck at Mulka, about 28 miles from Mungarrannie, but on arrival decided to fix a new tow rope of a bar of steel and some chains and they worked on this and securely fixed it this time so they thought.

But as you might imagine its no bitumen road on the Birdsville-Birdsville track and some of the bumps and sandhills and creeks you go up and over would surprise you and they were not so good when you were towing a truck behind and invariably broke the tow. The tow rope broke more than twenty times on the trip so you can imagine the going was pretty slow - and we had the worst before us  $\frac{2}{3}$  the Corrawillannie Sandhill - which is always a nightmare to every traveller - you have to get across it if you want to get to Birdsville and for an overladen truck plus a tow of another laden truck to get up and over it seemed almost impossible. However nothing is impossible to the MM. and he just tacked the sandhill in his usual style - they have iron plates thrown here and there on the hill (plates about 6 ft. long and wide enough to take the tyre) to enable the tyres to get a grip - well we just laboured and puffed and struggled on this sandhill for an hour before we got more than about 3 yds. - Just a case of arranging the plates and then getting in and driving the truck just the length of the plate, getting out again and dragging the plates up another few feet - not to mention digging her out from time to time when she ~~was~~ just that much too far over the plate - Really Tom Crewes, (otherwise the MM.) deserved a medal for patience and grit - he just fought and struggled with the sand and the plates and the truck and only occasionally called it a blasted cow, but did it in such a kindly fashion that I am sure the truck didn't mind and we didn't

either and anyway we weren't supposed to be listening. At about ~~8.30~~ 1.30 a.m. we crawled inch by inch off the sandhill holding our breaths, and set off for Mungarrannie - in between the various breaks of the tow rope our truck broke a front spring about 6 miles from Mungarrannie which meant absolutely limping along now and we had yet another bad ~~street~~ stretch of sand to go through plus a bore swamp and we crawled through that stretch of sand half inch by half inch all holding our breaths but we got out of it by sheer will power and we arrived at Mungarrannie at 4 a.m. a very tired crowd. The MM. was almost exhausted struggling with tow ropes and other disabilities and almost lifting the truck over the sand and also the fact that he had been at the dance till about 2 or 3 p.m. the morning before didn't help him any. However Mrs. Oldfield insisted on our staying the rest of the night there and she made me up a bed and I tumbled into it at 4.30 a.m. cross eyed and dizzy with weariness. Didn't know a thing until 8.15 next morning when Mrs. Oldfield woke me with a plate of toast and a cup of tea.

Mungarrannie Station is an interesting spot - When the original station building was washed away this was rebuilt on higher ground - George Crombie, you have heard me speak of him, used to live here and he was living here with his people when they were washed away  $\frac{2}{3}$  the river came down in the night unknown to them and it was not until the children cried out in the night that they were getting wet that their mother knew anything of it - she put her hand out to get the matches and put her hand into water!! They just had time to scramble out of the house to safety but their furniture and belongings plus the house were all washed down the river and some of the furniture was recovered not much use 30 miles down river.

George's mother and father and brother are now buried on Mungarrannie and you can see their graves from the homestead.

The house at it now stands is an attractive station home - very solid stone walls - square built and whitewashed - with closed in verandah all round the house - and every room has a door opening on to the verandah so that in the hot weather a wonderful draught can go right through the house - the verandahs are very wide and cool and have colored blinds - Some of it is yet to be fly-wired in when it can be obtained - and the flooring is of burnt lime slabs -

There are a number of other buildings attaching to the homestead - one an old stone and well built building which used to be a hall of some sort and which is now their store - these people are all more or less self contained town on their own  $\frac{3}{4}$  no shops here so they keep their own supplies on hand and to go into the store you would think you were in Dentons - everything arranged on shelves like a shop and kept in their own compartments - huge rolls of leather for repairing shoes and stores of every conceivable kind.

Then there is another building of two well built stone rooms and this is being freshly lime washed and done out for Mr. Oldfield's mother who is coming to live there in a sort of little self contained flat with her companion. She is a dear old lady and at present is living at Mira Mitta which we will come to later with just her companion and its too far away and too lonely and she should be very independent and very cosy in her little abode on Mungarrannie.

Then some distance further away are the blacks quarters plus their dogs - a couple of gins do the housework and one of them had the dearest little baby  $4\frac{1}{2}$  months ~~old~~ old. He was so black and shiny that he was like an advertisement for somebody's boot polish and the merriest little fellow you ever saw  $\frac{3}{8}$  as big as a white baby of about 9 months and laughed very heartily if you spoke to him. He also had a dear little sister 4 a pretty little kiddy.

Well after breakfast here the MM. mended the spring - he seems to mend everything that breaks - and we then had morning tea after I had had a tour around with Mrs. Oldfield - They have a lovely vegetable garden here all grown by artesian bore water - they do what they call "air" the water. It would not grow anything if used straight from the bore but they put it out in huge containers for a few days and then it will grow anything.

All around the country you will see this bore water being ~~xxxxxx~~aired - they have what they call "bore swamps" - the water is just pumped or got to the surface by some means of which I am not sure and allowed to run along in a stream - and really you would think they were natural creeks to look at them.

The weather when I arrived at Marree was cloudy and grey to my disappointment but although everyone was complaining of the cold I didn't feel it as it was warm compared with F.F..

The weather at Mungarrannie was bright sunshine and quite hot and it was lovely indeed to wander around in it  $\frac{3}{8}$  and here I shed my coat and packed it and my warm scarf - and we set sail at about 12 noon with me just in my brown suit.

Mira Mitta was the next place on the road - about 28 miles from Mungarrannie - and in between was all sorts of country - miles and miles of ironstone pebbles or gibbers as they call them  $\frac{2}{3}$  sandhills - etc. but the whole 320 miles from Marree to Birdsville is very bare on the whole - very very few trees on the whole stretch - and very little rise in the country - occasional ranges of sandhills being the only change from dead level ground - and you go for miles and miles and as far as you can see all around you to the horizon there is not a rise or a hill - just flat country and in most cases gibbers covering it in millions.

We arrived at Mira Mitta at about 12.30 or a little later and went in to have a cup of tea with Mrs. Dunn (Mr. Oldfield's mother). She was there with her companion and Mr. Dunn a man of about 60, her son - husband. They have a very small galvanized iron house, inside very comfortable and as neat as a pin, and attached to it a lovely vegetable garden, with the loveliest cabbages and all other veges you can think of grown from the hot bore - This is where I first met up with the hot bores - These bores are most intriguing - the water gushes up out of the earth just about 2 points below boiling - and it comes in a huge stream about a foot in-diameter circumference. They are fortunate because they have free and for nothing a perfect hot water system on the premises that never goes wrong and never goes cool - they make tea from it, use it for washing and bathing etc. Just imagine the convenience!! For the garden of course they cool it.

At about 1.15 we set off on our long trek to Birdsville with Mira Mitta our last port of call and indeed the last sign of habitation for 200 miles.

From there to Birdsville the MM. and I were the only humans on the face of the earth it seemed  $\frac{2}{3}$  - we saw neither man beast nor bird nor bull ant on this stretch for the rest of the trip until about 18 miles from here when we saw about 6 head of cattle!!

The country was most interesting as it changed from time to time so completely - mile upon mile the track stretched as far as you could see ahead through absolutely flat country as far as you could see around and apparently waste land just covered in gibbers - with never even a blade of grass to be seen - and of course no bird life ehre at all as not a tree do you see for mile upon mile.

Later we came suddenly upon a lovely stretch of country which is called Kidman's Swamp - like a little oasis in the desert - green grass trees bushes and wild flowers just coming - it was lovely getting along through here in the sunset with the perfume of the flowers coming up to meet us. Here the MM. expected to meet up with a mob of cattle going to Clifton Downs and we intended to have tea with them at sunset - but



didn't see a sign of them so went on - We kept going until about 8 p.m. when the MM. decided we would eat - so out we piled and he grabbed his axe and went off and chopped down a dead tree - came back and made a fire - and boiled the billy - and turned on the wireless. Really this little spot is hard to describe - it was a lovely spot - almost in the middle of Australia I suppose one might say - out on this vast plane with no sign of human life since midday when we left Mira Mitta - the camp fire burning brightly and the billy boiling - the wireless singing Holy Night - the loveliest of songs - and the loveliest warm and starry night you could imagine - the MM. and I sat around the fire on the rug and shared our tucker boxes together and yarned for an hour or so about FF. and the people there and so on - after which we climbed aboard once again to do a few more miles but he said he would not go on more than for about an hour as it had come over the ~~pedals~~ pedal wireless that morning that they had had rain north and he didn't know what to expect as we ~~can~~ had cane grass swamps to negotiate and as he said they would "bog a duck" it wasn't wise to tackle them in the dark - he was also pretty done out ~~by~~ this time after his all night drive the night before and I wasn't keen on him going to sleep over the wheel and as I was going to sleep sitting beside him I couldn't blame him if he did  $\frac{2}{3}$  so I endorsed his idea that we should strike camp at about 9.30, turn in and have a good night's rest and set ~~safe~~ ~~safe~~ once again at daybreak.

Which we did - the old truck rattled and bumped over a few more miles, and believe me there are plenty of bumps on the 320 miles - you develop some sort of technique after a while and instead of coming down good and hard on the end of your spine as you do at first you kind of anticipate the bump and develop a shock absorber of some sort.

At about 9.30 we pulled up and he dragged out our respective swags - made mine up for me in the road in front of the truck and told me I could have the headlight on all night if I wished - and his own at the back of the truck - However I didn't want the headlight on all night - It was a perfect night as I said before - we stopped in a belt of trees - the very very few trees on the road - and we crawled into our swags and the MM. soon to sleep by the sounds that came from the other end of the truck - but alas for me tired and all as I was still couldn't sleep  $\frac{2}{3}$  I always wanted to sleep under the stars and really a better night couldn't have been arranged - but you just don't know how hard that road was, and also I began to wonder what would happen if a dingo came along and bit me and then gave a few moments quiet thought to lizards and other insects - then getting properly into my stride began to wonder what I would do if the MM. suddenly died in the night and I was left out there all alone - You can't imagine the stillness of the bush - not a stir of a leaf - just an occasional sleepy twitter of a bird - but not a sound of any kind until the silence nearly overwhelmed me - and although the night was really warm I began to feel horribly cold - no hot water bag - and my feet grew colder and colder and I tossed and turned and then the dew began to fall and then things got properly cold and my cough tuned up and altogether I began to revise my ideas about sleeping under the stars - it would have been all right if I could sleep - about 5.30 in the morning couldn't stand it any longer so got up and rearranged my bed and rolled myself up beautifully in my rug and snuggled in and thought now I will get to sleep and have a rest until about 8 a.m. - when blow me down but just before 6 a.m. a huge voice



roard out "Miss Wade" and I wearily replied "Present" - to be informed that we would get going - so get going we did - The MM. produced a bottle of wine that our host Mr. Oldfield had given him and invited me to have a little to keep body and soul together until breakfast time so I had it and off we set. It was wonderful going through the bush in the early morning before the sun was up - heavy mists everywhere - and gradually as we went on the sun began to come up and the mists lifted - We were now into sandhill country and miles and miles of sandhill ranges were on either side of us - in one place we had to go along 14 miles one side of the range to then cut up and go right up and over one of them getting almost on to the top but the bus couldn't quite make it so had to gently and slowly go all the way down again and make another run for it and then up and over and down the other side to go along 14 miles the other side of the range.

We camped for breakfast - Sunday morning this was - about 9 a.m. in the midst of the sandhills - at Cartwheel gap or some such place - and I am enclosing you a little ~~w-a~~ wildflower that I picked from the sandhills at this spot - they were growing all over the hills here - The mm. sallied forth once again with his axe and cut himself another tree  $\frac{3}{4}$  lit the fire and boiled the billy - then (the bush is a wonderful place) dug a hole in the sand - threw a camp sheet across it and poured water into it and ~~low~~ low and behold there you have the bathroom with all modern conveniences - so down on our knees we went and had our morning wash, did our hair and generally tidied up then sat down and had breakfast in the most gorgeous and hot sunshine.

Up and on again to face the road again still on the South Australian side of the border -

Finally around midday we approached the border - having just about here met up with the first cattle and indeed living thing of any kind at all since leaving Mira Mitta the previous midday - These cattle -  $\frac{2}{3}$  only a few of them were on Pandi Pandi - you will remember Janie that this used to be where Mrs. Crabb, Mrs. Marchant's sister - used to live.

Just previous to that some distance back we came to the Clifton Downs Hills Station mail box - out in the desert you find a couple of boxes and a post and into these the MM. puts the various goods and chattels for the Station - bag of veges and cases of this and that and in due case the black station hand will ride over and pick them up. Clifton Hills belongs to G. & E. A. Brooks - and they hold the hugest tract of country you can imagine - we met up with it about midday on Saturday and were still on it at midday the next day -

I forgot to mention that between Mira Mitta and Kidman's Swamp we came to the Mount Gason Hot Bore - gushing forth there in the wilderness with never a soul to use it - the old Mount Gason homestead standing across the road deserted - this belongs to G. & E. A. Brooks but as it was not in the right spot they abandoned it and transferred to Clifton Hills - but here the Manager and his wife live in a tin shanty, nothing more so I'm told and the poor men who work on the station are not even given that convenience but their diggings are under a coolibah tree!! And the Brooks are worth considerable money - Dorothy was saying that if the Station was on the Queensland side of the border they would

*they would*  
 be compelled to give their men decent habitation.

About 8 p.m. on Saturday night we passed Goyder's Lagoon Hot Bore - the hottest and deepest bore in Australia - this is owned by Clifton Hills and in the dark we could see steam gushing up fully 20 feet in the air from the bore stream.

Well to get back to the trip - about midday we came upon the Border and I was all sitting up and interested to see that this border looked like off paper - on the map its just a black line as you know and in reality its not more much - just a broken down wire netting fence that you just don't both<sup>er</sup> about but just run straight over in the truck -

Well in Queensland at last - and with seven miles to go - and here we began to strike the boggy country again - they had had about 50 points of rain within a day or two before and it meant we had to go very slowly and many times go back along our track and start again to get out of the bog - however slowly and surely we got along the track and saw Birdsville in the distance - what a thrill to see the end of the road and the place I've been looking to for so many years! We rolled in about 1 p.m. with everyone bobbing out to see the mail truck which was due the night before.

Dorothy was there of course waiting for me in front of her little home and it was good to arrive.

The people up here just live by the mail - drovers don't set off until the mail arrives - and if its days late they still don't go until the mail arrives - everything revolves around it.

What I forgot to mention was the pedal wireless - the most wonderful institution in the whole bush and makes life possible for these people who live hundreds of miles from anybody.

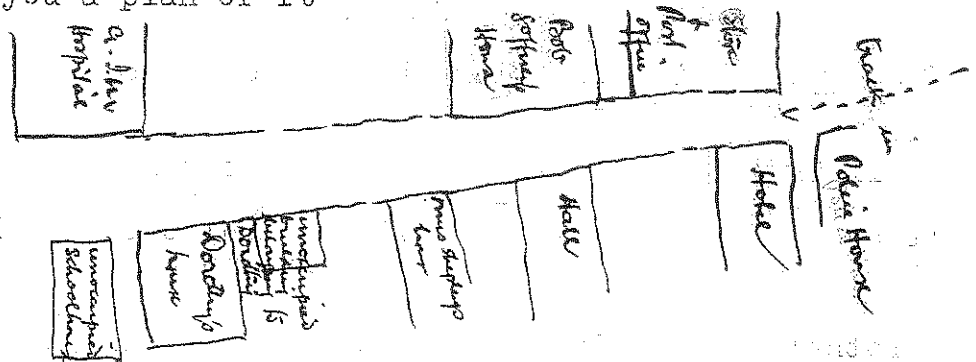
About 9 a.m. on Mungarannie I made its first acquaintance and it was thrilling to hear it - you hear a terrific whirring and then the various call signs coming over and hear the various people calling each other - and telling all the news - You can imagine how surprised I was as I went along the track from place to place to find that everybody knew that I was on the air as everyone reports all the news from station to station - imagine how funny it was to arrive at a station where you have never met people before and have them say to you - they are enquiring for you from Birdsville and want to know how you are getting along - then a little later the news is passed on to Birdsville that they have seen me and that I am all right etc.

At Mungarannie I heard Mr. Aiston telling the world that I had left Mulka at midnight the night before looking very tired and Mrs. Oldfield replying that I had had a good night's sleep there and was then quite fit etc. etc. Its a real thrill and everybody knows what is happening happening all along the track and a check is kept on the mail as it passes the various stations.

This is a wonderful country all right - where else would the postman arrive at 1.45 a.m. and be gladly hailed - as happened on our trip - after coming off Corawilannie sandhill we arrived at OOrawilannie Station at 1.45 with the mail and Mr.Scobie was waiting for us - they always wait up for it if it means all night.

I was thankful indeed to come to rest at Dorothy's -

Birdsville is quite a nice little spot - first of all you come upon the police man's house, then the Hotel, then the Store and P.O. Bob Gaffney's and the Hospital with Dorothy's house right opposite the Hospital - Will draw you a plan of it



The Hospital is a nice building of iron with red roof - haven't called there yet - in fact have done no calling as yet - haven't even been up to see Mrs.Gaffney at the Hotel because Sunday after having my lunch I slept until late in the afternoon, then had tea and went to bed fairly early - Monday Mrs.Gaffney sent up a message to me and Dorothy also insisted that I must stay in bed all day and really it was not hard to do - and I thoroughly enjoyed the rest - Had a hot bath just before tea and got back into bed and today didn't get up until about 11 a.m.

Mrs.Gaffney came up to see me late yesterday afternoon - she is always very busy until the mail gets off again -

Believe it or not - the day I arrived was beautiful hot sunshine - yesterday cloudy all day, not a speck of sunshine and raining on and off all day - and last night  $\frac{3}{4}$  and today one out of the box - since very early this morning right up till now which is after 6 p.m. it has not stopped raining steadily and hard all day - the first set in rain they have had since 18- 1926!! Badly needed indeed and it has now given them another few months' water supply - they get the town water supply from the river - it runs into a sort of creek and then supplied to the town from there - well the creek had only about another month's supply until this rain which is now about 120 points and it will now probably give them a supply until December - and our backyard - you should see it - to quote the MM. it would "bog a duck". Dorothy's elastic sided riding boots are the only things it is safe to venture beyond the back door in and they have been changing feet all day.

Dorothy at this moment is baking bread.

She has a dear little home - very comfortable and attractive - and I am now typing this by the light of a hurricane lamp in the living room - the living room is a large room with huge glass windows all down one side - wired on the outside for flies the glass is long panes set in slots like venetian blinds and can be turned to close it or turned again and open to the fresh air. A grand idea - this is a most attractive room with bright cushions writing desk and plenty of books about.

All the rooms open out on to a verandah - wide and all fly-wired in - my room is a dear - small with one door on to the verandah and then on to the bathroom - a window on to the fly wired back verandah and another door on to the kitchen - lovely to lie in bed yesterday and carry on a conversation with Dorothy working in the kitchen.

The outside is all being limewashed at present in a pale grey and looks very attractive -

Bill is away at present out on the cattle run mustering - he will be back just before the races - he goes away for about 5 weeks at a time and doesn't hear or see a sign of a living soul but his black stockman until he gets back - no news - and Dorothy has no news of him for all those weeks.

Dorothy's sister in law Mrs. Bob Gaffney has just come in to tell us that its just come over the wireless that there is no news of the mail - it left here yesterday conveying Father Dunn the Catholic Priest in his truck and no word has yet been heard of them anyway - anywhere at all - they think they might be stuck in the lagoon as there have been 2 inches of rain at Clif - Clifton Hills and Mungarannie Mungarannie - and they are now about to set off on horses to look for them. They have provisions on board but will not be able to light a fire to make tea as everything is too wet. Strangely enough the MM. was telling me on the trip up how when first he started driving this mail they were marooned for a whole week and couldn't move for the rain - couldn't light a fire because everything was soaked and ran out of provisions and had to live a whole week on raw potatoes -- Anything can happen in this country and I am just thinking how lucky I am that I just got here in time or I might have been spending a week out there somewhere not being able to get through for the rain.

Have just remembered though that I have left my thermos on the truck I suppose thats the last I will ever see of it or at any rate whole and in one piece. - *Since turned up - m.m. put it out at Hoke for one*

Had a visit from a real live drover this morning - he came up to look me over Dorothy says - just paid a social call  $\frac{1}{2}$  complete in leggings and all the trappings of the road - not bad altogether -

The whole place is just buzzing with plans for the races and the dances and terrific work is on foot - so many visitors are due to arrive and have to be billeted here there and everywhere and have to be fed and provided for.

Dorothy and I were going up to spend the evening with Mrs Gaffney tonight but have had to declare the trip off although its only about a stone's throw, but its so wet and muddy underfoot we would surely get bogged en route.

Dorothy's little Australian terrier is such a dear and could be my own little Patsy over again - she spent yesterday in bed with me and is a great pal of mine - loves her cup of tea with us and bobs up for her share of everything.

The crows here are the only songbirds and they mostly sound as if they had a pain in their tummies. They spend most of their time sitting on the fence at the backdoor quarking away  $\frac{3}{4}$  especially early in the morning you are not awakened to the tuneful song of a magpie but the raucous squawks of these crows. There are apparently no magpies here  $\frac{3}{8}$  didn't see one in the 320 miles of travel.

The dingoes also come right up to the backdoor and steal the fowls - have taken all the fowls except two -

Sunday night last we had a visitor to tea - Father Dunn the Catholic Priest doing his yearly rounds and he had tea with Dorothy - nice man and interesting to talk to and of course was a ~~big~~ real Irishman and we had a great talk of Ireland and I was very interested to find that he knew Jastle Hackett!!

The news is just coming over and they are playing Australia Fair and Dorothy's little dog is crying like a baby - she is so funny she always cries when they play this - no other music affects her in the least.

Wednesday -

Got up a little earlier today - the weather has improved slightly and is not raining but no sign of the sun yet - heavily overcast with black clouds and a cold wind blowing - 130 points of rain.

There is still no news of the mail and Father Dunn - they evidently didn't get very far as Clifton Hills is the first outpost from here and although you only pass their letter box word came over this morning that so far they have not reached there.

9 o'clock in the morning the news runs round the town like the newspaper being delivered as the pedal wireless comes over then and a check up is made on everybody.

You should see the mud here - I thought we had mud at F.F. but here its ankle deep as soon as you step off the back door mat and its impossible to go without putting on big boots.

Dorothy's sister-in-law who lives across the road has just come in with the news that the races most probably will be postponed for a week at least - too wet for people to get through with their horses.

I am absolutely ashamed at the way I have typed this letter - ~~xxx~~ this little typewriter is so different from what I am used to that I make an awful lot of errors and also talking and dividing my attention one way and another has not helped - however I am sure its easier to read than my writing and I could never have written such a long letter - hope you will

have time to read it all - if it becomes too long winded just light the fire with it.

I am disappointed at my effort as all the way up in the truck I was arranging an account in my head step by step as we went along to give you a perfect description of it all as it is really so interesting - but by the time I got to the job I have got it a bit mixed up and have given you a lot of it out of order.

I will leave this letter open until mail time and record events as they happen up till then - that is if you will have time to read it but as they only come once a fortnight perhaps you will have time to finish this one before the next one arrives.

Really wish I had brought more things with me - think I would have been better advised to have put everything in my tin trunk after all - as if this weather keeps up will need a costume -

Still its usually possible to make do somehow -

Dorothy's brother Bob is District Clerk here and I am going to help him with his typing - may prove quite useful in the town before I'm through.

Well will leave this now and try and write another account of my trip to send on to George and one for Gert - am afraid the spelling of the names is a bit out of order but thats the way they sound anyhow.

We are about 70 miles from the Simpson Desert -

Have just seen the Windorah mail arrive - Queensland mail which arrives once a week comprising a man on horseback and two packhorses - real wild west touch

Sunday 15/8/43

Am just finishing this off by the light of a carbide light - awful things, but am having to finish off my mail today as this next week is to be full to the brim with work as the races are not going to be postponed after all and everything is in full swing getting ready for them. I just wish you could see things down at the hotel humming - they expect over 70 guests there and blacks and whites are rushing around with brooms and mops, washing and sweeping and hammering and banging as Mrs. Gaffney is always a stickler for having everything in perfect order - I was most amused yesterday morning to see a man on top of what they call the "hall" here with a carpet broom sweeping the roof!! and a couple of blacks buzzing around on the ground with buckets and mops etc.

I have made a dress for Mrs. Gaffney this week and have another to make for her before the races - besides which Dorothy and I now have floors to polish and all sorts of jobs to do as the black gin she intended to have cannot be spared from the Hotel now - the blacks are as busy as the whites at present.

The festivities start about next Friday night with a dance, dance on

Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights -

sports on Sunday and races on Monday and Tuesday - after that, for me, the hospital most probably - for a good sleep.

Really is there anywhere on this earth that there is plenty of time? I thought in the bush we would have ever so much of it and lo here we are scrambling for our lives. Still we all heave a sigh and say - after the races....

Have just discovered that my Bank account has not been transferred as Dorothy tells me there is no Agency for the State Savings Bank here so must write Frank by this mail to draw some money from Adelaide and send me a cheque.

The blacks up here are most entertaining - Jimmy is now the King - Pussy the previous monarch grew tired of life and crawled into the fire having first buried his worldly wealth amounting to about £2.10.0. The blacks are now all most interested to find where this treasure lies. Jimmy automatically became King and came up to tell the local policeman so, as the policeman is his protector - Mr. Carolyn, the policeman, thought he would please Jimmy so presented him with a chain with a metal disc on it which says "Queen Sally" but Jimmy thinks it says King Jimmy so he proudly wears it and everybody is happy. Jimmy came up and chopped our wood for us this morning.

I was surprised to find the blacks have a very strict moral code just the same as the whites - a young girl was about to have a baby and was unmarried - and there were most disturbed about it - so arrangements were hurriedly made to marry her before the baby arrived and Tommy an eligible young man who works out at Durrie was duly informed over the pedal wireless that he was married to Melba and please to send some money along for the baby - Tommy was quite happy about the arrangement and duly complied with the request and is now very proud and happy over his small son which unhappily proved to be white on arrival. The old grandmother was very upset about it and said to Sister Gordon at the hospital where the baby was born - "What you bin do with it - keep it?" - Sister says she knows all too well what would have been its fate if it had been born at the camp - they don't like babies turning up the wrong color - However they are very fond of it now and proud of it but it has no likeness to an abo. but the features and color of a white child. One of the men here was teasing Tommy and said "I hear you are married Tommy" to which Tommy ~~white~~ quite happily said he was - and the other man said and have a baby too - my word you bin quick fella Tommy - and Tommy quite good naturedly said "Oh well, good luck to Ginger" - who is the stockman who is credited with being the baby's father.

I saw the small George, the baby, up at the hotel and he is a dear little chap and they are vefy proud of him now.

We have been having lovely sunshiny days here now - only hope it holds for the races. Very nearly sent down for my blue suit as it has been so cold - am still sleeping in thick pyjamas and hot water bags.



~~Wally K... not... better~~ Better not write any more or you will never read it all - am looking forward to mail day - next Sunday if we are lucky. S.A. has disappeared completely from off the map as we do not get newspapers up here and only get Victorian or other Interstate Stations on the air.

I hope Walter still is well - give him my love - I am writing to him tonight too if I can.

Hope you all are well - Fond love, *Jimmy*

S. Must just tell you Jimmy is the local rainmaker here and Bill has a standing contract with him to fill the water hole  $\frac{2}{3}$  if R Jimmy makes enough rain to half fill it he gets 1/s. and if he fills it right up 2/- - as we have just had 130 points Jimmy is anxiously awaiting Bill's return for his 2/s. - He also presented Bill with a stone to make a bit of resin for himself on his Bygombo block where he is mustering - but as Bill forgot to take his stone with him it just served him right that they

didn't get more than a few points out on Bygombo - Only hope they keep old Jimmy pretty busy sweeping and mopping and chopping wood this next week so that he wont have any time to go making any more rain as if he does I'm sunk - no clothes to wear to the races.