

# Harry Hunter and Sydney Hadley

Wild Times on a Tropical Coast

Also

## 'Dougal's Story

by

Ian Thomas Whyte

Second Edition

Aboriginal people are respectfully advised that this book contains references to individuals who are now deceased.

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## Introductions

*"Harry Hunter walked down to his store, revolver on his hip as always, whip and knife in hand. He took out a large burlap sack and a length of rope, locked the door again, and went on down to the beach."*

*"Just above the edge of the sea, a rowing boat lay on the sand. Nearby a group of Aboriginal children was playing, one of them a big boy, almost full grown. Harry Hunter told that boy, 'Row this boat'."*

*"Soon after they set off, he said, 'This boat is too light. Pull across to the island and bring some rocks'. The boy did so, lowering them in carefully, so they wouldn't go through the bottom, then rowed out to the deep water, where sharks pass down King Sound when the tide runs full"*

*"Out there, Harry Hunter put his revolver to the boy's head, killed him, put the body and rocks in the sack which he tied with the rope and dropped over the stern."*

*"Taking the oars, he rowed back to the mainland shore, pulled the boat up on the beach and walked away."*

Jack Hunter. 1

More than fifty thousand years ago, the ancestors of the Australian Aboriginies began to move southwards out of Asia. Though sea levels were much lower during the last Ice Age and continents more extensive, there was never a continuous land route to the south. Whatever their starting points, the migrants must have made several prolonged voyages before they reached Australia. 2

Probably moving along the coast and up the river valleys initially, they lived by hunting wild animals, fishing and gathering the natural plant foods their new homeland offered, for nowhere on Earth was agriculture yet practised.

Eventually they spread out over the whole enormous country, dividing it into hundreds of territories where they developed indigenous languages, rich religious traditions, comprehensive social systems and remarkable art.

With the passing of the last Ice Age, sea levels rose dramatically, submerging vast tracts of low country and turning high ground into islands. Though Australia became remote from mainland Asia, some immigration from the islands continued, as proven by the introduction of a breed of dog, the dingo, about four thousand years ago. 3

Much more recently, fishermen from those islands used seasonal winds to voyage annually to north Australian waters where they collected and processed the edible sea-slug known as beche-de-mer or trepang. They clearly influenced Aboriginal culture in some places but there was conflict too; if they attempted to settle permanently, they were not successful. 4

Dutch seamen landed on that coast in A.D. 1606 and on the western seaboard ten years later, perhaps the first Europeans to do so. The charts they developed in subsequent decades led the English pirate ship *Cygnets* to the north-west shores of 'New Holland' in January 1688. 5

While the vessel underwent nine weeks of repairs and maintenance in the vicinity of the bay which now bears its name, crewman William Dampier recorded the first detailed observations of the land and its inhabitants.

As commanding officer of the naval vessel *Roebuck*, he returned eleven years later, his landfall a thousand miles [1600 km] further south. Coasting northwards, he and his men periodically went ashore to search for water and explore.

During their last foray, Dampier's attempt to capture an Aboriginal man resulted in a skirmish during which one of them was shot and a crewman injured, causing him to withdraw, 'very sorry for what had happened.'

Now seriously short of fresh water, Dampier set sail for the island of Timor to the north, then ranged east to New Guinea before making his way home. His report on New Holland and its unique fauna and flora was so discouraging economically that the British made no further explorations in the region for seven decades. 6

Later, his visits were commemorated in the naming of Cygnet and Roebuck bays, the Dampier Land peninsula between them, the Buccaneer and Dampier archipelagos, the port of Dampier and in native flora.

James Cook's arrival in 1770 at a more fertile, better-watered coast far to the east was followed in turn by the establishment of a British colony there, the discovery that it belonged to the same great landmass as New Holland and the adoption of the name Australia for the whole. Perceived territorial competition from the French revived British interest in the western region, resulting in the foundation of the Colony of Western Australia in 1829.

Eight times larger than the British Isles, the interior of its near-million square miles [2.5 million sq. km] almost entirely unknown, the new colony dwarfed the tiny European settlements in its south-west corner. For years, the colonists remained there as they struggled to establish themselves. About the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century however, a small but determined movement northwards began, inspired by explorers' reports of pearls, fertile land and the possibility of gold. <sup>7</sup>

There was no feeling among these adventurers that they were invading Aboriginal land. As they saw it, natural resources were there for the taking and Aboriginal people were to be pushed aside or exploited. Laws intended to protect the latter were difficult to enforce at great distance and widely ignored.

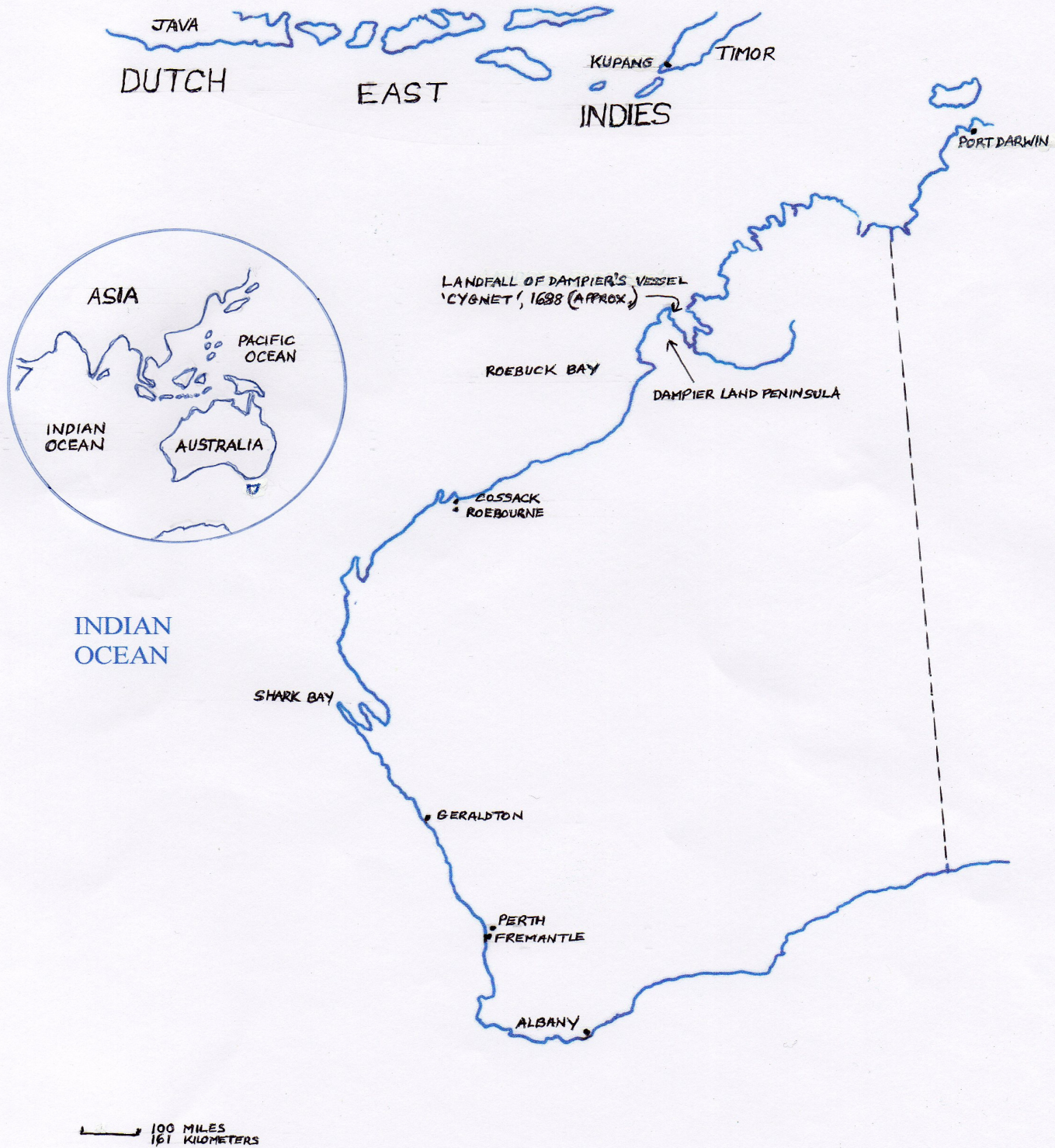
And so almost two centuries passed between Dampier's visit to the tropical peninsula which now bears his name and the arrival of white men who began to make a lasting impact on that area. Under the influence of the newcomers, some of whom were initially more piratical and less compassionate than their buccaneering forebear, the lives of local Aboriginal people began to change as they had not changed from time immemorial.

Born at Cygnet Bay soon after these changes began, and destined to live through wild times, 'Dougal' was a direct descendant of people William Dampier met in 1688; they call themselves the Bardi. His contemporary Jack Hunter was one of Harry's many children by Bardi women. Their memories of the men who dominated their world, Harry Hunter and Sydney Hadley, recorded in 1972, are the origin of this book.



Sketch Map of  
The Colony of Western Australia

Circa 1877



## Chapter One

### All that Glitters

*"Before Harry Hunter left England, his grandfather said, 'I can see by your face, boy, that you'll never come back. Take this book. It's The Law. Then wherever you go, no-one can tell you wrong.'"*

*"He jumped into a big boat and his countrymen brought him to Western Australia. At Cossack he worked for some white men - work, work, work - until he'd made enough money to get a boat of his own and come here [Dampier Land] for divers."*

*"Cossack was an important place in those days but too many 'willy-willies' blew it out and finished it. It was too dear for a town."*

'Dougall' and Jack Hunter. 1

Harry Hunter's 'big boat' may have been the 629 ton sailing ship *Daylight*, owned by Wilson & Co., captained by G.W. Bush, which departed Gravesend near London on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 1877.

The previous day, the passengers had signed 'Agreements to remain three years in the Colony from the date of landing, or refund the price of their Passage Money from England'. Among them was one Henry Hunter, aged 21. 2

After a voyage lasting almost three months, *Daylight* arrived at her destination, then one of the least known parts of the vast British Empire, on the 10<sup>th</sup> August. A contemporary local newspaper report confirmed that, 'Henry Hunter, aged 21, laborer', was among the immigrants she carried. 3

For the great majority of the thousand miles [1600 km] between the southern port of Fremantle, where Hunter may have landed, and Cossack on the north-west coast of the colony, there was no road or even a track. Unless *Daylight* also made that trip, Hunter would have used one of the small sailing vessels which conveyed people and goods back and forth, in preference to a very slow overland trek.

Depending on winds and tides, these voyages took up to thirty days northwards and longer returning south. Some were never completed. As no telegraph-line reached that far north in 1877, the boats also carried communications, so news and mail from the south of the colony took the same time to reach Cossack and vice-versa.

From its beginnings on the bank of a tidal creek in the early 1860s, the settlement had grown to consist of several dozen buildings and shanties which served as a port for the district, including the little administrative centre of Roebourne subsequently established about nine miles [14 km] inland.

Officially named after the British warship which carried colonial Governor Sir Frederick Weld there in 1871, Cossack was still the frontier, the most northerly coastal settlement of any significance in Western Australia six years later, and a major pearling base.

When the pearling fleet laid up thereabouts between April and September of each year, the creeks and foreshore were crowded with sailing vessels - brigs, schooners, luggers and cutters - ranging in size from over a hundred tons each to less than one ton, while the un-surfaced streets thronged with their multi-national crews, among whom the Europeans were the ruling minority.

Though most 'Malays' from the vast archipelago north of Australia were temporarily absent in 1877, Cossack remained one of the most cosmopolitan ports in the world. 4

Booted and spurred riders from the pastoral stations inland congregated with the pearlers at two corrugated iron and wooden shanties, each surrounded by a deep verandah, known as the White Horse and Weld Hotels, or at the main store, to exchange news, gamble and drink prodigiously. After a successful pearling season, champagne would be ordered by the case, ale by the barrel.



Behind the buildings, patrons engaged in sporting contests with their fists, or settled disagreements the same way. One fight reportedly continued on and off for three days, with no clear winner at the end, and no recollection of the reason by either participant.

During the lay-up season, vessels were scuttled in the creek, only the tops of their masts remaining above water, to force their infestations of cockroaches and rats up and overboard. Insects which clung to the mast-heads were knocked into the water by Aboriginal boys, where they fed the fish which congregated around the submerged boats. A stick of dynamite judiciously dropped among the fish then provided plentiful human sustenance.

Other vessels, high and dry on the beaches, were shored upright for repairs, or hauled over onto their sides [careened] for hull cleaning, maintenance and re-coppering.

There was no bank at Cossack in those days, so little British currency circulated. Being almost as close to the ports of the Dutch East Indies [now mostly Indonesia] as to the colonial capital of Perth and its port of Fremantle, guilders were accepted as two shilling pieces and coins of many other nations were allotted an arbitrary local value.

Many transactions, however, were conducted by means of promissory notes known as 'shin plasters'. Purposely made of flimsy paper, they often wore out before they could be redeemed, to the profit of the storekeepers and others who had issued them.

For eight months of the year, daytime temperatures often reached 100 F [38 C] in the shade, sometimes climbing twenty degrees higher, the summers also marked by humidity, flies, mosquitoes, gales and squalls [known locally as '*cock-eye bobs*']. Worst of all were the winds then officially referred to as hurricanes ['*blows*' or '*willy-willies*'], whose power and monsoon rains devastated everything in their path.

Even before Harry Hunter arrived, Cossack had been decimated several times in its short life. So bad was the damage in March '72, when pearling boats were battered to pieces, sunk at their moorings or swept far inland up the creeks and nearby Roebourne was almost levelled to the ground, that further settlement of the district was set back for years. 1875 and '76 were good years for the pearlers though, and so for their port.

Against the raging winds of tropical summer almost every roof in Cossack and Roebourne was tied down by ships' cables, every window heavily shuttered, almost every building adjoined by a big iron tank to collect the rainwater which fell predominately in the same season and to provide emergency shelter. 5

At Cossack, Harry Hunter readily found work. Decades later, his son Jack saw a stone-walled building there which an old man told him had been constructed by Harry, no doubt using sandstone dug from the sea front. 6

In March and December '78, '*willy-willies*' struck again, wrecking, sinking or dismasting several vessels locally, with some loss of life. Nothing daunted, Harry Hunter had become a pearler and 'blackbirder' by the following year. 7

Pearl shell was the bread and butter of the industry north of Shark Bay, its iridescent mother-of-pearl lining being much in demand internationally for the manufacture of buttons, studs, inlays, card cases and many other decorative items. Sheffield cutlers alone used about a hundred tons [101.6 tonnes] of mother-of-pearl annually, mainly for knife handles. For that reason, the white pearling boat masters usually referred to their work as 'shelling', while dignifying themselves with the title of 'pearlers'.

Pearls occasionally found within the oysters were regarded as a potentially lucrative bonus, those of significant size being rare, and examples having both size and quality much rarer. Spherical pearls of perfect lustre weighing more than twenty-five grains were extremely scarce and correspondingly valuable.

Usually the value of shell obtained by the fleet annually was several times that of the pearls, though many of the latter were sold covertly for unrecorded sums. Nevertheless, the possibility of finding pearls of great value in these tropical seas attracted adventurers from far and wide.

In 1879, most pearl oysters were brought up from the sea bed by young male Aboriginal swimming divers, except at relatively shallow Shark Bay, where dredging was practised. By that date, the colonial government at distant Perth had prohibited the use of Aboriginal women and girls

as divers or crew and would not permit them on the boats at all, thereby depriving the pearlers of their *de facto* wives.

The law also restricted swimming diving to the summer months when the water was relatively warm. Yet by doing so, the government compelled the fleet and all its personnel to risk the '*cock-eye bobs*', '*blows*' and '*willy-willies*' which frequented the same season.

When the schooners and luggers reached likely fishing areas, they launched their dinghies, each of which carried one white man and six to eight divers. While the former sculled the dinghies into the wind, the divers went into the water feet first, turning below the surface to swim downwards.

Sometimes numerous dives were needed to find a single oyster or 'pair of shells', as the pearlers called them, among the seaweed, coral, sand or mud. On the very best 'ground' however, a diver might bring up five pairs at once, two in each hand and another under an arm. One schooner's thirty-seven divers averaged more than sixty-two pairs each in a single day. <sup>8</sup>

Sculling the dinghies all day under the tropical sun was no easy job. But the divers' lot was far worse. Even in summer, endless breath-holding dives, sometimes eight or nine fathoms deep [48-54ft / 15-17m], left them shivering continuously in the wind during the rare, very brief rest periods they were permitted.

Below, they risked sharks, other marine predators, being swept onto sharp coral outcrops by the strong tides, becoming entangled in forests of rope-like weed and being held down by clams. Even slight mishaps, or misjudgements as to depth and elapsed time, left them unable to reach the surface. From the Dampier Land peninsula northwards, crocodiles were a sometimes lethal hazard inshore.

By the end of the working day, which at this time was up to twelve hours long, at least six days a week, the dinghies had often drifted miles from their anchored mother ships. It was the divers who rowed back, whatever the state of the sea, where those deemed to have brought up insufficient shell were given a range of punishments.

*"[They] were sent up the mast into the rigging. Often they fell asleep there and died on the deck below. Others fell into the sea."*

Jack Hunter.

Aboriginal divers were never paid. Apart from minimal clothing and a blanket, they were usually supplied only with flour or damper [unleavened bread], water and some tobacco. Rarely, they were given tea and sugar. If they wanted other food, they had to catch it themselves, if and when they could.

On this regimen, their health deteriorated, leaving them particularly susceptible to diseases carried by white and Asian crewmen, to which they had no natural immunity. Many were also subjected to gratuitous cruelty, violence, even murder. The life expectancy of Aboriginal divers was low.

Unsurprisingly, they did not knowingly volunteer for the work, so obtaining sufficient divers was a problem faced annually by the pearling masters, who responded with a forcible recruitment system known as 'blackbirding'.

Mounted parties of well-armed white men, sometimes accompanied by Aboriginal trackers from areas already subjugated, would launch expeditions during the months when they could not fish, to round up young men, youths and boys who they marched and shipped to the nearest Justice of the Peace or other European official. <sup>9</sup>

There, the prisoners were required to place their marks on contracts of employments known as 'Native Agreements', which they could not read. The official witness would then sign an attached schedule specifying, among other things, that the Aboriginal person,

'was a perfectly free and voluntary agent in the matter, and not acting under any sort of fear, coercion, or constraint [and that he] thoroughly understood and assented to the terms and nature of the said agreement.' <sup>10</sup>

Justices in that region commonly owned or financed pearling boats and activities. They routinely 'signed on' crews for their fellows, who did the same for them. Farquhar McRae J.P. 'signed' captives for his brother John [Jack], including children aged from five to nine.

By 1879, 'blackbirders' were having to range further and further from Cossack to find their prey. Hunter and his cronies sailed four hundred miles [644 km] or more to the north-east, where the Dampier Land peninsula and the Lacepede Islands off its west coast offered a hunting ground and a convenient place to detain captives respectively.

Better still, on the islands he found a resident official who was prepared to witness the signing of 'Native Agreements'. Hunter landed at least one human cargo there that year and Richard Wynne, Officer in Charge, Lacepede Islands, did the necessary. <sup>11</sup>

Afterwards, the captives were shipped south to Cossack where those surplus to the requirements of Hunter and his colleagues could be sold to other pearlers at about £5 each. With the shelling season which followed, it was a lucrative trade:

'The profits are so enormous that the fines imposed on offenders...are of...little avail in checking the offences.'

M. S. Smith  
Superintendent of Police  
16<sup>th</sup> July 1880

Offenders were rarely caught. In August 1880, decades after the British prohibited the slave trade throughout their empire, the Acting Attorney General of Western Australia reviewed the evidence and reported to the Governor,

'It is notorious that, for a long time past, white men have gone in parties, armed, on horseback, into the interior, and brought to the coast natives who have never seen the sea; when they have got to the coast they have been induced to sign contracts of servitude to white men, who have employed them in diving for pearl shell, have fed and clothed them insufficiently [and] have by compelling excessive diving caused death. In short a system of slavery of the natives has been organised, carried on, and I believe now exists - they are also subjects of sale.'

Writing to the Colonial Office in London a few months later, current Governor Sir William C.F. Robinson was only slightly more circumspect when he remarked that the treatment of 'natives' employed in the pearl shell fishery was 'little short of slavery.' <sup>12</sup>

Nor could the pearlers have argued with this assessment, because their own name for their off-season activities, 'blackbirding', was an old slave-trading term.

Inevitably, Aboriginal men sometimes tried to defend themselves and their land against the white invaders, not least during the 'blackbirding' expeditions. Having quickly learned the consequences of confronting firearm-wielding, horse-mounted white men in daylight, they sometimes tried to strike back in the night. In turn, the 'blackbirders' learned to extinguish camp fires in the evenings, move well away to sleep, take turns as watchmen and keep guard dogs.

Except those like Harry Hunter, who preferred to set traps.





Sketch Map of  
The Dampier Land peninsula and King Sound

in the time of Hunter and Hadley  
 showing the traditional lands of Aboriginal peoples

The sites of Broome and Derby were officially selected in 1883

50 KM / 31 MILES

## Chapter Two

### The Crew of the *Rover*

*"If you see a group of little fires at night, that's Aboriginal people. White men make one big fire. All right, when Harry Hunter went 'blackbirding', he would cook his food in the evening, then make a dummy in his bedroll, using swag, grass, anything he could find, before leaving it near his fire."*

*"Keeping low, he'd slide away into the bush, maybe thirty or thirty-five yards [about 30 m], turn around to face his camp, lie down with his rifle in his hands and sleep."*

*"The Old Man slept lightly. The bush isn't always quiet at night. Animals that hide from the heat of the day come out, leaves and grasses whisper, night birds sometimes call, the scrub creaks as the night cools. He got used to that. It didn't wake him."*

*"Sometimes though, there would be another sound, not loud but different from the rest. Then he'd open his eyes and look towards his fire. Through his bedroll would be seven or eight feet [2 m +] of spear."*

*"Slowly, slowly, Harry Hunter would raise his rifle, pull the butt into his shoulder, release the safety-catch and aim towards his camp. Carefully, he would ease the hammer back so there would be no click and then he waited, not moving a muscle, not making a sound."*

*"The seconds seemed like minutes, the minutes like hours, but sooner or later a tall thin figure would step out of the darkness into the firelight and stand looking down at the bedroll."*

*"Harry Hunter adjusted the aim of his rifle onto that figure and pulled the trigger."*

Jack Hunter. 1

From the tiny, brand-new settlement of Derby at the southern end of King Sound, some six hundred coastal miles [nearly 1000 km] north-east of Cossack, Constables Lemon and Buckley, with Native Assistant 'Charlie', set off in the police trap [horse-drawn, two-wheeled carriage] on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1883, to patrol across the Dampier Land peninsula to Beagle Bay. 2

Their instructions were to collect any mail etc. that might have been landed there and to investigate 'native hunting' by pearlers. If force or coercion was being used, they could intervene. If not, they could say and do nothing because the law permitted Aboriginal males to work for pearlers if they freely chose to do so.

Three days into their journey they came across Liangnoora, known as 'Lumpy' to the whites, who told them he had been chained up last year by Alfred Mayall and other white men before being compelled to work as a diver. In fact, he and the current police Native Assistant 'Charlie' had been abducted together. The latter corroborated his story.

Next morning, Liangnoora and another local Aboriginal man were sent southwards to see if 'blackbirding' was going on in that direction. If so, they were to report to the police party on its return from Beagle Bay.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, the patrol met Sydney Hadley and C.W. Paterson of Cossack and an Aboriginal man, all mounted, who said they were looking for potential divers. While camped later that morning, an old Aboriginal man told them he had recently seen Hunter, Bryan, Wilson and two other white men marching a great many chained captives to Beagle Bay, from where they were shipped to the Lacepede Islands.

Given a police chain, the old man demonstrated the way the prisoners had been shackled by putting part of it round his own neck and part around Constable Buckley's neck.

That afternoon, Harry Hunter and Charles Doust of Cossack and one Aboriginal man came riding from the direction of Beagle Bay. Admitting they too were looking for divers, they were free to go on their way because they had no prisoners with them.

The police reached an abandoned house at the bay that evening, where they found a white man named Charles Clifford. Except for the schooners *Water Lily* and *Kate* which were anchored some miles off, most of the boats had left the bay a day or two earlier, Clifford told them, including



the *Swan* which had been carrying a mail bag and other goods. She might now be anchored further south, or have gone to the Lacepedes, he supposed.

Constable Lemon immediately sent a local Aboriginal man known as 'Bobby' down the coast with a note in the hope of intercepting her.

Clifford added that Hunter, Hadley and himself, of the cutter *Rover*, had brought six horses overland from Roebourne, near Cossack. William Bryan and David Thomas of the *Kate*, together with Alfred Mayall and E. Wilson of *Water Lily* had brought ten horses, while C.W. Paterson and Charles Doust of the *Swan* had brought six horses, all for the purpose of procuring Aboriginal males to use as divers. The abandoned house at Beagle Bay was their temporary base. <sup>3</sup>

Lemon already knew most of them. For example, he had arrested Hadley for drunkenness and disorderly conduct at the White Horse Hotel, Cossack, in December '79. The miscreant had fled but gave himself up two hours later and was bailed to appear at the local Police Court the following morning.

There, Hadley's age was erroneously recorded as twenty-three [he was twenty-one] and his occupation as laborer. Having admitted the charge and having no previous convictions known to the local police, he was cautioned and discharged.

Hadley attacked 'Mulligan' at Cossack's Aboriginal camp in November 1880, leading to charges for violent assault and for being drunk and riotous. Two weeks later, Constable Lemon served summonses on Hadley for taking or allowing two Aboriginal women on the 38 ton pearling cutter *Tribune* and on Henry Brett for plying the women with alcohol, which was the recognised payment for prostitution. Found guilty, both men chose to pay fines rather than serve periods of hard labour in detention.

Just after that Christmas, the reprobate left Cossack as a crewman on the schooner *Ione*, which was bound for the Fortescue River. A few weeks earlier, the police had released from the vessel fifteen 'blackbirded' Aboriginal prisoners. <sup>4</sup>

During his conversation with Clifford, Lemon remarked on the low salary of the current governmental official in charge of the Lacepede Islands, [James] Kelly, to which Clifford replied, 'Oh, he gets some good presents from the pearlers.'

The day after this conversation, Lemon patrolled with Constable Buckley along the south side of Beagle Bay as far as Bullabulliman creek and back without seeing any boats. 'Bobby' returned that evening, saying that the *Swan* had gone to the Lacepede Islands.

Before starting back towards Derby the following afternoon, the policemen heard from local Aboriginal people about compatriots who had been taken in chains from various places on the peninsula to the Lacepedes, and that the 'blackbirders' had lost two horses to poisonous vegetation east of Beagle Bay.

Forty-five miles [72 km] into their return journey, they were camped at a dwindling pool of fresh water in Fraser Creek when a group of riders approached from the opposite direction. Walking just in front of their horses' heads was Liangnoora, who immediately came across to the police trap. Highly agitated, he said the riders had spotted him that morning, rounded him up, and were driving him out of his 'country' [birthplace/home area] against his will to make him go diving again.

Alfred Mayall said he didn't know he was doing any harm. Neither, apparently, did David Thomas or James McAtee. Admitting he had no 'Native Agreement' with Liangnoora, Mayall said he thought William Bryan had. Constable Lemon told him he had no right to force the man from his 'country', but made no arrests.

Liangnoora repeatedly denied having made any agreement with Bryan. Nor would he go diving any more because of the way the whites treated him. He had said as much last year to [Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries] Captain Walcott, who had replied, 'All right, he could stop in his 'country' if he wished to.' Lemon kept him with the police party.

The following morning, miles further on, an old Aboriginal man told them that two days earlier, white men had taken young Carramongarra against his will to be a diver.

Only an hour and a half later, the patrol came upon Harry Hunter, Sydney Hadley, C.W. Paterson and Charles Doust encamped. With them was Carramongarra, but because he did not

approach the police party with a complaint and seemed content, nothing was said or done. Two Aboriginal men assisting the 'blackbirders' arrived saying there were no young men about.

Five days after Lemon's party returned to Derby on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, Police Lance Corporal Payne wrote a report for the local Government Resident on the kidnapping of 'natives' by pearlers from Cossack, which included information obtained from Tabernabal [Native Assistant 'Charlie'] and Liangnoora.

The year before last [1881], Tabernabal had been caught near the Yeeda River by Hunter, Bryan, Wilson, and Mayall, chained by the neck with several other Aboriginal captives, marched some 93 miles [150 km] to Beagle Bay, shipped first to the Lacepede Islands and then down to Cossack to be 'signed'. That year, while 'Pennian' was in the water, he was beaten with a rope by Harry Hunter and drowned.

While on the Dampier Land peninsula the following year, Tabernabal was caught again by the same men, chained up with Liangnoora and taken by the same route to Cossack. A great number of Aboriginal males had been incarcerated on the Lacepedes both years. Liangnoora, now at Derby police camp, corroborated Tabernabal's statement, adding that he himself had been caught by Alfred Mayall last year.

Both men said they didn't like pearling because the whites treated them so badly. They got nothing to eat but damper, nothing to drink except water. When the pearling vessels stopped at islands, they were allowed to catch and eat turtles. <sup>5</sup>

Though not explicitly stated in Corporal Payne's report, the legal requirement that Aboriginal recruits signed 'Native Agreements' with pearlers, even with the endorsement of official witnesses, was clearly useless as a means of protection. Often it was not practised at all.

Certainly, neither the name of Liangnoora/'Lumpy' or anyone else from the Yeeda River area appears on the list of Aboriginal men signed to Harry Hunter on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1881, for the next pearl shelling season. Nor did his name or alias appear on the list of divers signed to any pearler in April 1882 for the '82/'83 season. Carramongarra's name is not on the 1883 Register of Native Agreements at all. <sup>6</sup>

The authorities clearly knew nothing whatever about many Aboriginal divers. These were the victims most easily disposed of if they failed to bring up enough shell, refused to work, or resisted in any way.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> September '83, the 'blackbirding' expedition to the Dampier Land peninsula was over for another year. While some of the white men shipped their captives down to Cossack, others returned overland with the horses.

That evening, Sydney Hadley and Charles Doust with ten horses arrived at a coastal pearling camp near Roebuck Bay where they found Police Sergeant Patrick Troy, among others. Remarking they had been as far as Swan Point at the apex of the peninsula for divers, they were careful to tell Troy that no force had been necessary because their recruits were a 'bully lot of fellows and went with us willingly'. <sup>7</sup>

Two and a half weeks later, Hunter and Hadley had 17 Aboriginal males from Swan Point and 3 from Beagle Bay signed to them under Native Agreements which would expire at the end of the following April.

Delayed by unseasonable cold at the start of the season, which would have caused incapacitating 'rheumatic fever' in the divers, it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> November that they began the new shelling season in their cutter *Rover*. Using 21 boys and young men from Swan Point, which was part of the traditional territory or 'country' of the Bardi people, they began work west of Cossack. <sup>8</sup>

Charles Clifford may have been with them on the *Rover* that November, but by the following January he was far to the south, at Perth Supreme Court, on trial for the murder or manslaughter of an Aboriginal man known as 'Thackabiddy'.



The previous May, a pastoralist named Gooch in the Gascoyne district south of Cossack, who had a history of shooting Aboriginal people, ordered one of his employees to arrest 'Thackabiddy' for alleged cattle theft, during which the latter was shot in the neck.

One end of a chain was then padlocked around the casualty's neck, the other end being attached to a horse ridden by Clifford for the purpose of walking 'Thackabiddy' to the town of Carnarvon at the mouth of the Gascoyne River. Clifford, who had left 'blackbirded' Aboriginal people, including small children, on Barrow Island in 1880, may have been the man who shot 'Thackabiddy'.

Some days into the journey, a struggle apparently took place between the two men during which Clifford shot his prisoner again, this time in the ankle, then dragged him behind his horse on his stomach, back or scrambling on hands and knees for an indeterminate distance. At the end of that day's journey, 'Thackabiddy' was tied tightly to a tree, without food, water or heat and died during the night.

An all-white coroner's jury at Carnarvon decided that no-one should be held responsible for the death because 'Thackabiddy's' wounds had been inflicted in self defence and exposure was a contributory factor.

The verdict was relayed south to the authorities at Perth, who instructed the magistrate at Carnarvon to investigate the matter further. In due course, a charge was brought against Clifford. Pending trial, he was released and made his way north to Beagle Bay as part of the crew of the *Rover*.

Evidence produced at Perth Supreme Court was broadly the same as that given at the Carnarvon hearing, though some details appear to have differed. The jury was asked whether anything Clifford had done had caused or even hastened 'Thackabiddy's' death.

Clifford, they decided, was not guilty.

In those days, juries would not convict a white man or woman for a serious offence against an Aboriginal person, especially if the death penalty might result, no matter what the evidence. The juries, like the judiciary, were of course invariably white. 9

The return of unseasonable cold weather compelled Hunter and Hadley to finish that shelling season on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1884, more than a month early. Even so, four of their divers were suffering badly from 'rheumatic fever' and one, a boy called 'Dugong', had died.

Although they had avoided the *willy-willy* which wrought havoc among the vessels at Roebuck Bay and elsewhere in January, and survived or avoided two others which struck in February and March, the resulting discolouration of the sea made diving unsuccessful for some of those months.

Combined with the late start and early end of their season, it is not surprising that they landed only 4¾ tons [4826 kg] of shell. Their take of pearls went unrecorded. 10

Hadley reported the death of 'Dugong' when he brought the *Rover* back to Cossack on the 8<sup>th</sup> April. Later that night, he illegally plied an Aboriginal woman with alcohol, for which he was summoned to appear at the local Police Court a few days later.

Police enquiries into the death concluded that Hadley himself caused 'Dugong's' death by beating him while his head was in the water, and that both Harry Hunter and Charles Clifford had beaten various Aboriginal crew members.

The court fined Hadley for using 'obscene and profane language in the hearing of the public' on the day he returned to Cossack and for supplying liquor to the Aboriginal woman, then held an enquiry into Hadley's treatment of his crew before Government Resident E.H. Laurence. 11

The Resident subsequently reported to the Colonial Secretary at distant Perth,

The [death] on board the *Rover*, described as a fit, was somewhat suspicious, as the other natives stated deceased was beaten in the water, and so killed. The Inspector [of Pearl Shell Fisheries] and I, however, took their statements formally, and elicited the fact that deceased struck his head against the dingey [*sic*] and then became helpless. I believe the native was beaten, but it would be impossible

to prove the cause of death, and we did not see our way to any further proceedings. <sup>12</sup>

A week after the enquiry, Sydney Hadley was back in Cossack Police Court, this time with Harry Hunter. Blair E. Mayne, the present Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries, charged them jointly with employing a crew member already under contract elsewhere. Found guilty, they were fined £3 plus costs. Mayne failed to prove another charge, of using a physically unfit diver.

Constable Holmes then brought three separate cases against Hadley alone for hitting, otherwise ill-treating and beating with a rope, three members of his crew. Found guilty each time, Hadley was fined £1 plus costs per case.

Constable Bruce now told the court that four nights earlier at Cossack, Hadley had used a bottle to hit an Aboriginal woman and punched her in the face. Found guilty on this charge too, Hadley was sentenced to 14 days Hard Labour. The victim was the same woman he had plied with drink earlier in the month.

Charles Clifford was brought to book on the 29<sup>th</sup> April. Three charges of beating and ill-treating Aboriginal crew members resulted in fines totalling £7.10. 0., plus costs. Surprisingly, prosecution of Harry Hunter on similar charges does not seem to have followed, despite the police report that he was equally culpable.

The cutter *Rover* left Cossack on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May, bound for Swan Point, taking thirty Aboriginal people back to their 'country', as required by law after the end of the shelling season. Sydney Hadley, the master, was accompanied by four other Europeans, but not Hunter or Clifford. <sup>13</sup>

That year, the authorities at Perth sacked their current official on the Lacepede Islands, J.W.S. 'Shiner' Kelly, for accepting bribes to allow the incarceration of Aboriginal people there. <sup>14</sup>

In the meantime, the perennial victims had found a rare opportunity to strike back. When the *Swan* left Beagle Bay on the 1<sup>st</sup> September '83, the day before Constable Lemon's patrol got there, her master and owner Isaac Doust planned to take water to the captives on the nearby Lacepedes, then sail around the north of the Dampier Land peninsula and down King Sound to land mail and goods at Derby.

Charles Doust, Isaac's brother, notified Police Sergeant Troy later in the month that the vessel had failed even to reach the islands, perhaps because of 'a strong blow' on the night she left Beagle Bay. He thought his brother was accompanied by two Aboriginal crewmen, both from the Cossack area.

Several more weeks passed before news arrived from Port Darwin, on the far north coast of Australia: the *Swan* had put in there on October 18<sup>th</sup>, after the bad weather had carried away her rudder post and driven her northwards. On the way, the crew had twice tried to land on the coast, only to be chased off by Aboriginal men.

More time passed with no sign of the *Swan*, prompting rumours at Cossack that Isaac Doust had spirited his vessel away to prevent it falling into the hands of his creditors. The following year however, as pearlers began to return to their port, some brought news from the north.

John Henry Foxworthy, master of *Annie Taylor* at that time, reported to Cossack police that about the end of January the schooner *Kate* had picked up at Beagle Bay three of the *Swan's* Aboriginal crew, who told a highly unlikely story about how they got there. The good condition of the three also belied their tale of an epic overland trek after abandoning the *Swan* on a remote northern reef.

Late in April, R. McRae of the *Expert* reported to the police that a pearler named Tagg had found a dinghy marked *Swan* floating in King Sound. The dinghy had contained some shot and a bloodstained rowlock. McRae had been given a gun associated with the dinghy and hearsay information about the fate of the *Swan* and her master.

Knowing that some of the *Swan's* Aboriginal crew had already returned to Cossack, the police arrested 'Tommy' on suspicion of the murder of Isaac Doust the same evening.

Three days later, W. Robinson returned from King Sound with the dinghy itself on board his *Louisa*. He reported that the little boat had contained a distinct footprint in blood on the after

thwart, and supplied more hearsay information, some of which apparently came from McRae's informants.

Early in May, George Tagg brought his cutter *Yule* back to Cossack, where he confirmed that he had found the dinghy awash on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, while sailing towards Point Cunningham in King Sound. He had noted a stain on one of the thwarts 'like a foot track in blood' and had removed a dark-stained, galvanised iron rowlock, which he now handed to the police.

Previously, he too had come across Aboriginal members of the *Swan's* crew at Beagle Bay. Under questioning, one of them, 'Charley Harper', told him the improbable story about how they got there, this time adding that the *Swan's* dinghy had broken up soon after the vessel left Port Darwin - many hundreds of nautical miles from where Tagg found the intact boat afterwards.

In June, Inspector Mayne in the Pearl Shell Fishery Revenue schooner *Eloise* arrived at Cossack carrying an Aboriginal man charged with the murder of Isaac Doust, together with a witness and an interpreter. That November, Captain Beaver of the schooner *Black Hawk* discovered the wreck of the *Swan* on reefs off the far north of the colony, or so Beaver claimed during a conversation with Peter Erickson at Darwin.

Erickson reported the matter to Derby police in February '85, the same month Mayne brought another suspect to Cossack. Nevertheless, the crew of the *Swan* were all were set free the same year, the evidence against them being insufficient for a trial.

Isaac Doust was never seen again. <sup>15</sup>

Time had also run out for his brother, and for the *Rover*. No longer in the hands of Hunter and Hadley in January '85, the cutter was sailed by its current crew of Holmes, Charles Doust and Yo Sing from Derby to the steamship *Victoria* which was anchored a few miles north, near Point Torment. Holmes spent the rest of the hot day and evening aboard the steamer, apparently seeking work for his vessel as a lighter.

A violent *cock-eye* [squall/gale] struck both vessels at midnight, capsizing the *Rover* and wrecking her dinghy which was tied to the steamer. With the return of daylight, the top of the cutter's mast could be seen at low tide. In the following weeks the wreck broke up, some of it coming ashore at Point Torment. The bodies of the crewmen who had remained aboard were never found. <sup>16</sup>

So died the second of the two Doust brothers, probably unmourned by Aboriginal people.

## Chapter Three

### Spears and Bullets

*"Before I was born, our people held an important ceremony at Cygnet Bay and wanted to have the feast which should follow. But they were short of tucker. So some decided to kill pearlers who had anchored their lugger offshore and were painting an upturned dinghy on the beach."*

*"The white man was speared, the Chinaman got away, dropped flour and other tucker in a dinghy which he set adrift, then set sail."*

*"Soon, police from Derby rode up here, collecting on the way two Nyul-Nyul people called 'Freddy' and 'Bobby' as guides. They went to Boolgin first, shot one Bardi man dead and fired at Nimeringur, who was in the creek. Hit in the leg, he jumped up without a mark on him and ran to high country. Nimeringur was a djungagur [white men call 'em 'witchdoctors'] who had four wives."*

*"At Swan Point, the police found Gaigatagur's camp. Shot in the neck, he went for his spear and was killed by a bullet in the back. His boy was spared."*

*"When those who had killed the white man heard the firing, they 'went bush' to Malumb" [from where Bardi people traditionally paddled their catamarans to the islands in King Sound, to visit relatives or escape the mainland].*

*"My father and other family were camped at Gulan on Cygnet Bay with Nobul, his family and a big mob of people. They heard the police coming by the crack of a whip. All of them hid except two women and some children. My auntie was one of those women. She was a bit silly, always talking, saying anything, so she was warned to keep quiet. As the police passed my father's hiding place in the long grass, the whip-crack came again."*

*"Our men have all gone away', the other women told them, but the police waited, calling out in a friendly way. After a while, some men came out, several wearing white men's clothing. Shooting started, our men ran but some died, some were injured. The police rode on southwards towards Willie Point. Before returning to Gulan, they shot dead two more Bardi men."*

*"Boarding a lugger, the police sailed eastwards into King Sound, anchored at a small island and went ashore in a dinghy. All of our people hid safely in the mangroves except two youngsters who ran up to the point and swam for another island. Young men are a bit silly, I think. Can't help themselves. Following in the boat, a policeman shot Djanangbunur in the head. He was 'Knife's' brother. The other escaped, returning later with the tide...[and so on]".*

'Dougal'. 1

Towards the end of April 1885, the first missionary to reach the Dampier Land peninsula pitched camp above the shore of 'Swan Bay', the name given by pearlers at that time to the northern entrance to Cygnet Bay.

An elderly Scotsman who had spent some years in Queensland and Victoria before moving to Western Australia, Father Duncan McNab was hoping to establish a mission south of his present location.

After he engaged a Bardi man known to the whites as 'Knife', as an interpreter and associate, he was visited every day by groups of Bardi people. Pleased by his plans, they agreed to catch and cure fish, cultivate vegetables and allow their children to attend school if they were provided with flour. With a few exceptions, all the men had been employed by pearlers or still were.

McNab obtained a good stock of flour from the pearling boats, which Bardi people helped themselves to when he was absent from his camp, leaving sufficient for the time McNab and 'Knife' remained at Swan Bay. Nor had they taken any previously, when the missionary had little.

Because 'Knife' wanted to obtain an Agreement to work for McNab before going to the prospective mission site, without which he could be 'blackbirded', the two left for Derby by boat on the afternoon of Tuesday, the 26<sup>th</sup> May. <sup>2</sup>

It was some three days later, on or about the afternoon of Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> May, that Captain James Middleton Rickinson, Charles 'Chan' Shenton and their Chinese cook went ashore from the schooner *Pearl* to paint a dinghy and get fresh water in the area McNab and 'Knife' had just left.

The cook was in a boat to which Bardi people were bringing water, with Rickinson and Shenton on either side, when the Captain was speared without warning and called out he was wounded.

The unarmed Shenton ran to his side, took his revolver and began firing, though not before Rickinson was speared again. One of the attackers was apparently hit, the rest fled up a hill with Shenton in pursuit, firing ineffectually.

At the top, Shenton paused before racing back towards the boat, probably for more ammunition. Spears killed him at the water's edge.

Still in the boat, the cook avoided one flying spear but a second pierced the left side of his chest as he ducked, glanced off the bone and protruded below his armpit. Grasping a paddle with his other hand, he struck hard one of two Bardi men who grabbed the gunwales of the boat in an attempt to drag it up the beach and when they let go, began to paddle back towards the schooner.

Being able to use his right arm only, and at the mercy of wind and tide, that half mile [805 m] reportedly took him three hours. Once there, he gathered up all the firearms, then somehow set off again, still with the spear through the side of his chest.

Luckily, he soon came across one of the pearling boats of John Wood and Zachariah Erickson, whose own arrival the previous year had been greeted with a flight of spears from Bardi catamarans. Wood sailed down King Sound to report the incident at Derby while Erickson took the cook back to the *Pearl*, which they found ransacked. A few shots deterred Bardi men from approaching again in a dinghy and catamarans.

Five or six hours after he was speared, the cook was relieved of his burden and began an eventually successful recovery. <sup>3</sup>

Rickinson and Shenton's bodies, one of their boats and a revolver with five chambers empty and one loaded, were found near the scene of the attack by Peter Erickson, Zachariah's brother, on the 1<sup>st</sup> June, the same day John Wood reached Derby.

There, the Government Resident asked Wood to take charge of the *Pearl* and its luggers and continue pearling on behalf of their remaining owners, Findlay and Baynes of Sydney, until other arrangements could be made. The Resident also told recently-married Police Sergeant Patrick Troy that he could incur any necessary expense to capture the killers.

Accompanied by Native Assistant 'Tommy', Troy set off on the 4<sup>th</sup> June in the police trap loaded with supplies. At Yeeda cattle station he sent a message to Constables Sherry and McAtee, who were patrolling the adjacent Fitzroy River valley, to come to Yeeda at once. Thinking his party would still be too small, he hired pearler-'blackbirder' Alfred Mayall as a Special Constable at the rate of twelve shillings a day plus ten shillings a week for Mayall's horse.

Five men and eight horses started the long trek to the north of the Dampier Land peninsula at 8 am on the 6<sup>th</sup> June. Four days later they had reached Mayall's house at Beagle Bay where another McAtee, James, was employed. Between twenty and thirty Aboriginal people were there, some of them used as divers during the summer.

One of Mayall's sheep was killed and salted down before the police party continued northwards. That afternoon, Troy engaged as a guide a local Nyul-Nyul man known as 'Bobby'.

At Carnon they came upon a wooden house, stockyard and well belonging to William Bryan, who was absent. Three Aboriginal people approached, saying that they had heard of the killings, that many men were responsible, several of whom were divers on the pearling vessels *Water Lily* and *Kate*.

Troy noted that their story differed from that of the Chinese cook on only one point: the cook thought Shenton had managed to shoot one of the assailants before succumbing, whereas these informants said he had missed them all. Because his own Native Assistant 'Tommy' was now very

ill with whooping cough, an infection currently rife in the Derby area, the sergeant engaged one of them, a man called by the whites 'Freddy'. 4

At Carnon, Sergeant Troy seems to have made a serious mistake. He apparently failed to enquire where the divers from *Water Lily* and *Kate* were now, the latest season for vessels using swimming divers having ended on the 30<sup>th</sup> April. Had he done so, he would probably have learned that most of them were back in their home area of Cape Borda, not far from his present position.

Hunter and Hadley, owners of *Water Lily* from the previous year, had 'recruited' 25 Aboriginal youths and young men from Cape Borda for that season. An epidemic of measles which raged among the divers on many boats had delayed them, but once under way, they experienced generally fine weather west of Cossack, uninterrupted by the three *willy-willies* which struck the coast north-east of the port. Almost certainly, they spent much of the time in company with [William] Bryan & Co.'s *Kate*, commanded by C.W. Paterson, which carried 27 divers from Beagle Bay and Cape Borda.

By the end of the season both vessels had done well, the former having raised 9½ tons of pearl shell and a stated £160-worth of pearls, the latter 7½ tons and a stated £50-worth of pearls. Their owners had probably followed the longstanding convention of greatly understating their take of pearls. One diver on *Water Lily* had died of influenza. 5

By white man's law, both vessels were required to land their divers back in their home areas afterwards, and by Bardi law those men would have attended the major Aboriginal ceremony which took place at Cygnet Bay just before Rickinson and Shenton came ashore from their schooner *Pearl* to paint a dinghy and obtain fresh water.

Before leaving Carnon early on the 12<sup>th</sup> June, Troy told his men that their job was to arrest the killers if possible, but to use their firearms if the latter were escaping or their own lives were in danger. Then, instead of turning westward towards Cape Borda, he continued to lead them north.

At Lombadina Creek, deep inside Bardi territory, they found another unoccupied house which Troy thought belonged to Hadley and Paterson.

Following the coast to 'Chile' creek, they came upon a deserted Aboriginal campsite, whose residents were just visible on reefs some two miles away. 'Bobby' and 'Freddy' examined the tracks around the camp, announced they knew who had made them and that none were the men being sought.

The police party rode on to Cape Leveque where they camped at a Bardi well. From now on, they took turns to keep watch from 8 pm to 5 am every night.

Being almost at the top of the Dampier Land peninsula, they crossed to its east coast next morning. Fresh tracks led them to another typically-shallow Bardi 'well'. Despite digging it out to a depth of six feet [1.83 m], they could only obtain about 3 gallons [13.64 litres] for each of their horses, which had been plodding through heavy coastal sand in considerable heat for much of the previous 24 hours without any water at all.

The pearling boats in Swan Bay were now in sight. By 6 pm on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, Troy's men had arrived at the scene of the killings where they fired a rifle to alert the pearlers, who replied similarly. John Wood came ashore from the schooner *Pearl*, notified Troy about the discovery of the bodies, boat and revolver at the beginning of the month, and told him the location of a Bardi camp seen from offshore.

Constable McAtee and the Nyul-Nyul guides were left at the police camp in the morning while Troy, Sherry, Mayall and a Port Darwin Aboriginal man lent by Wood rode towards Swan Point, looking for the place. Finding it abandoned, they followed footprints in the sand to a point of land jutting out into King Sound, from which they saw Aboriginal people landing from two catamarans on an island opposite. The mainland point was Malumb.

Being unable to follow, the police party continued towards Swan Point, finding in another deserted camp two white shirts, one marked J.M.R., a small saucepan, an empty flour bag as well as a tweed coat and trousers. Before returning to their own camp, they came across four Bardi women who would say nothing about the whereabouts of their men.

Strong easterly winds prevented a visit to the islands next morning, so Troy, McAtee, Mayall and one of the Nyul-Nyul guides rode south along the coast towards Cunningham Point. That area was invariably referred to as Cygnet Bay in later years, a name Troy never used in his journal.

In several Bardi camps, they found a Crimean shirt, pyjama jacket, eight cotton handkerchiefs, a piece of red turkey twill, a knife and a blanket, all of which the sergeant assumed to have been looted from the *Pearl*. But the only Aboriginal people seen by the police before they returned to their own camp that evening were four women, the extensive coastal mangrove thickets and rocky cliffs providing easily-reached cover.

Early on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> June, Troy went aboard *Pearl* to write to the Government Resident at Derby and obtain more supplies. Back ashore, his intention to take the whole police party southwards was delayed by the approach of the cutter *Eagle*, which might have been bringing instructions.

Having ascertained she did not, the group got under way. Only six miles on, they were obliged to camp early because Alfred Mayall became ill; Native Assistant 'Tommy' was still with them despite his chronic whooping cough.

Resuming their progress along the coast next day, they saw Bardi people fishing on reefs and tracked them on foot when they fled. Ten or twelve women and some children were discovered, persuaded to come out of hiding among the rocks, then nine men came out of a nearby thicket.

Having been told by guides 'Bobby' and 'Freddy' that several of the killers were present, Troy later claimed that his men attempted to chain them, at which they made for the thicket again, one throwing an object which struck the sergeant harmlessly on the chest.

Troy ordered his party to open fire, two Bardi men fell dead, the arm of another was broken, the rest escaped. In their camp the police discovered a bucket, blanket and knife which might have come from the *Pearl*. This was probably the incident which involved 'Dougal's' father and aunt.

Moving southwards, the police found a Bardi well which failed to provide enough water for their horses so they rode a further three miles before camping without water. Not until the afternoon of the following day could they water their animals sufficiently, by which time they had arrested three Aboriginal men who their guides said were involved in the killings.

They started back towards their base at Swan Bay early next morning. Three Bardi men armed with spears and karlis [boomerangs], who were apparently following their southward tracks, fled at the sight of them returning, reaching thickets before the galloping police could overtake them.

Troy found one man in a bush, called upon him to throw down his weapons and come up, then shot him dead when he drew a karli and seemed about to throw it. A second man was arrested, the third escaped.

Few Bardi people could understand or speak more than a little pidgin English at this time, as evidenced by Father McNab's need for an interpreter.

With four chained prisoners, the police party reached their base that evening, the sergeant going aboard *Pearl* immediately to write short reports to the Superintendent of Police at faraway Perth and the Government Resident at Derby. A boat left the bay in the early hours of the following morning carrying the letters and stricken Native Assistant 'Tommy'. The rest of Troy's party and its horses had the day off.

When he came ashore on the 21<sup>st</sup> June to see the Aboriginal men in police custody, the *Pearl's* Chinese cook could identify only Carbouse, called 'MacKay' by the whites, who he said had carried water down to Rickinson and Shenton's boat but took no part in their deaths.

Retaining Carbouse/'Mackay', Troy released the other three prisoners before leading his men northwards towards Swan Point. About noon, they saw five Aboriginal people, all but one of whom escaped into mangrove thickets. The exception was arrested. Plenty of water was obtained after the Bardi well at Neeba was dug out.

Only a quarter of a mile [0.4 km] from Swan Point they came upon the camp of a lone Bardi man who, according to Troy, sprang to his feet and attempted to throw a spear at Mayall. The latter



shot him dead. A handkerchief which Troy thought had come from the *Pearl* was found at the scene. This victim was probably Gaigatagur.

Retracing their steps about a mile, the police camped overnight at Cardaman, then moved westward to the coast on the other side of Swan Point. Some tracks led into a mangrove thicket from which a Bardi man watched them with impunity because they could not approach him on their horses.

After stopping for food at Boolgin 'well', Constable Sherry was left with the horses while Troy and the others entered the thickets on foot. In the middle, they found Bardi people camped but the density of the jungle prevented any arrests. A desert knife, a packet of fish hooks, a pyjama jacket, two fishing lines, a tomahawk and four handkerchiefs were noted there.

That night was spent at Boolgin, after which they returned to the eastern side of the peninsula, where Malumb well provided plenty of water after being dug out. In the afternoon, Troy and Mayall rode up to the point so that the Bardi people who had already crossed to the islands would see them and be deterred from returning before they could be visited *in situ*.

Back at their base opposite the pearling boats next morning, Troy went aboard *Pearl* where he arranged to borrow a lugger, dinghy and crew from John Wood, who also agreed to help one of the constables look after the horses while the rest of the police party was away, and to store all their saddlery aboard the schooner.

The Bardi man arrested three days earlier was released because the Chinaman could not identify him as one of the killers. Now only Carhouse, alias 'MacKay', remained in custody.

At 10 am on the 25<sup>th</sup> June, Troy's group transferred from *Pearl* to the lugger *Uno*. Three hours later they landed on an island where they surprised a group of Aboriginal people. Noting that the rugged terrain and numerous small islets nearby offered plenty of cover to the retreating Bardi, Troy ordered his men to open fire, resulting in one outright death. Possibly that casualty was Djanangbunur, whose brother 'Knife' was safe with Father McNab. The rest escaped.

Next morning *Uno* sailed for another small island on which Aboriginal people had been seen. A search revealed no-one however, so the lugger continued eastward to Sunday Island. Ashore, the police found numerous footprints, several recent camps and plentiful water supplies but no inhabitants in terrain so rugged that Troy could hardly walk back to the shore because of blisters.

Moored in a narrow channel in the island's south coast, *Uno* was hailed that evening from adjacent cliffs by Aboriginal people wanting to know who the crew were and where they came from. After replying they were strangers from Port Darwin, they were invited ashore but declined because of the lateness of the hour.

Their inquisitors said they would return in the morning and did so. Three of them came down to the beach, so Troy sent a dinghy for them after being told by Carhouse/'MacKay' that they were among the men the police wanted. But when they were close, a crewman on *Uno* put his head above a hatch, was recognised, the three leapt out of the dinghy and the police opened fire, killing two.

Troy now decided to return to Derby, believing that the ruggedness of Sunday Island would prevent captures and that the punishment his party had already meted out was sufficient. By noon they were back at the *Pearl* where they obtained enough rations for their journey and early next morning, the 28<sup>th</sup> June, they went ashore, saddled up and began the long trek south.

The following day Troy discharged the two Nyul-Nyul men 'Bobby' and 'Freddy', giving them half a pound [0.23 kg] of much-prized tobacco each for their help. Not until the 1<sup>st</sup> July, when the party was well south of Bardi territory, was Carhouse/'MacKay' given his freedom. Derby was reached on the 5<sup>th</sup>, Constable McAtee having been left at Yeeda Station almost blind from 'sore eyes', a common malady in the region which had also affected Troy a few days earlier. 6

Troy, his constables and Special Constable Alfred Mayall, who received £19. 8. 0. for his services, were now in a tenuous legal position. No-one had been arrested for killing Rickinson and Shenton or for attempting to kill their cook, yet seven Aboriginal men had been shot dead, according to Troy himself. 7

The *Pearl's* cook had not patrolled with the police party, perhaps because he was still recovering from his wound, and so had not identified any of the men shot by them. Nor did he

identify any of the prisoners brought before him except the innocent Carbouse/‘MacKay’, thereby repudiating some of the hearsay identifications made by the two Nyul-Nyul guides.

Carbouse had identified the two men shot in the water at Sunday Island but there was no credible evidence at all against the other five killed by Troy’s party.

Furthermore, the police had collectively fired at close range into retreating groups of Aboriginal men on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June. Apart from the three killed outright on those occasions, many others must have been hit, some of whom would probably have died of their wounds subsequently.

In effect, Troy’s party had killed and injured numerous Bardi and Djawi people over a wide area in retaliation for the deaths of Rickinson and Shenton. Troy admitted as much himself when he wrote in his journal that he thought, ‘they had received a sufficiently severe lesson for their crime’.

The matter was considered at remote Perth for months until the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1885, when M.S. Smith, Superintendent of Police, sent to Derby a copy of the following minute written by the present Governor of the Colony of Western Australia, Sir Frederick Napier Broome:

I approve of the conduct of the police on this occasion. I think they carried out a difficult duty in a manner deserving of approbation. So inform all concerned. 8

Before returning the Superintendent’s communication for filing, Troy added,

It is very gratifying to learn that myself and all concerned have been exhonored [*sic*] from blame in this matter. 9

Several of Rickinson and Shenton’s killers probably escaped the police reprisals by returning to Cape Borda soon afterwards. Even so, they didn’t escape the repercussions.

Before the white invasion of Australia, the violent death of a single individual during inter-Aboriginal conflicts in the north-west of the country usually resulted in the immediate cessation of hostilities and deep grieving by the deceased’s people. Though vengeance or reparations may have been sought later, the mass slaughter commonplace in European warfare was unthinkable.

The deaths and injuries to so many men and youths over so wide an area in 1885 profoundly shocked the Bardi and Djawi peoples and it had a permanent result. Despite continuing abuse by pearlers and others, all concerted armed resistance against them ceased in this particular area. It continued sporadically east of King Sound, which region the whites had named the Kimberley, but not here.

Until that became clear however, none of the pearlers ‘recruited’ divers from Cape Borda.

## Chapter Four

### Hunter Moves In

*"Harry Hunter built a homestead at Lumard, made a station there, brought many cattle and sheep. Other white men lived there too and several Kupangers [from the island of Timor, in the Dutch East Indies]. At that time, Harry Hunter had a single Kupanger 'wife'."*

*"He rode around the Aboriginal camps, bringing people to Lumard, some from a very long way. He talked to men first but if they didn't want to work for him, he whipped them, made them cry out with that long, long whip. Nobody stood with that man. All were frightened. He had a revolver, a big one."*

'Dougal'. 1

Though he seems to have retained his house at Cossack for several more years, Harry Hunter moved his base to the Dampier Land peninsula in the second half of 1885, travelling there with fellow pearler 'Frenchy' D'Antoine, the former on horseback, the latter sailing a lugger. They would rendezvous at convenient bays at night. 2

Officially, Montague Sydney Hadley and Henry Hunter jointly took up a pastoral lease of 100,000 acres [40,470 hectares] covering the northern end of the peninsula on the 1<sup>st</sup> July, the homestead being that seen near Lombadina creek by the police party nineteen days earlier, when it was ascribed to Hadley and Paterson by Sergeant Troy. 3

The Bardi people, whose traditional territory or 'country' included the lease, called the homestead area Lumard. It lay behind a wide, shallow bay with a narrow entrance formed by Lombadina Point and a rocky ledge extending from Chili Head.

At low water the bay mostly dries out, providing a place for Hunter, Hadley, D'Antoine and others to beach their pearling vessels. Some five hundred miles [800 km] north-east of Cossack, this area was much less frequented by *blows* or *willy-willies*.

Hunter and Hadley named their sheep and cattle station Lombadina, a Bardi name for the wider area beyond the homestead site. Though there was limited grazing land at Lumard, Boolgin and a few other places, most of the lease was sandy, covered largely with scrubby woodland interspersed with bigger trees and tall sparse grasses. Mangrove thickets lay along some of the coast and most of the tidal creeks and marshes.

There was no permanent freshwater course and, as Troy's party found, many of the shallow traditional 'wells' scooped out by Bardi people were incapable of supplying the considerable requirements of introduced livestock in the dry season, even after being further excavated.

This land was far less suitable for pastoral purposes than the hinterland behind Cossack, or the more recently colonised southern Kimberley district east of Derby. Nevertheless, Hunter ran as many sheep, cattle and other stock on the property as he thought it would support.

Needing crewmen and divers, shell cleaners and packers, as well as pastoral hands, he rounded up Aboriginal men who had previously worked for him together with any others he chose and marched them to Lumard. As before, they had no choice and now were left with no illusions about the consequences of serious resistance.

He brought their families too, having a firm interest in their wives and daughters, despite the presence of his Kupanger 'wife'; his first acknowledged child, Eugene, was born at Lumard the following year.

Excerpts from the Derby Police Station Rough Occurrence Book, 1885 [verbatim]:

Saturday November 21<sup>st</sup>

P.C. Rogers Left the Station with horse & trap at 12.15 am and conveyed Sargt Troy, P.C. Butler, .... Scott, and Nat. asst Lumpy, Stores And Arms to the landing to embark in Father Mc Nabs boat to

go to Point Cunningham to search for Father Mc Nab who is reported missing

24<sup>th</sup> 11. 85.

Sergt Troy Returned to Station at 4 pm accompanied by Father McNab. Sergt. Troy reports that he arrived at Disaster Bay at 2 pm on the 21<sup>st</sup> inst and at once went ashore with S.P.C. Butler and native assistant Lumpy. About 1 mile inland found a spring at which Father McNab had been camped. Saw his horse tracks going from here towards Goodenough Bay. An old native informed us that Father McNab had gone up the peninsula. Returned to the boat at 5 pm, but found her neaped and was obliged to wait until 10 pm before we could get under way. Arrived at Goodenough Bay at 6.30 the next morning and visited Father McNab's camp. Met 5 or 6 natives here who informed us that Father McNab had gone to Harry Hunter's camp on the West side of the Peninsula to get Flour. Despatched a native with a note to inform him that we were out searching for him.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst Father McNab accompanied by H. Hunter and the native that was sent to him with the note returned. Father McNab stated that his predicament was owing entirely to the disobedience of the man Scott who did not wait at Disaster Bay as instructed but went on to Derby. In making his way to Hunters he suffered severely from hunger and lost one of his horses. He resolved to abandon for the present his idea of forming a settlement. As he was too much Exhausted to travel overland to Derby with his horses I sent native assistant Lumpy to assist Hunter to take them, and having collected Father McNab's things got under way to return to Derby at 2 pm.

Harry Hunter reached Derby on the 27<sup>th</sup> and left for home three days later. 4

Meanwhile, Hadley continued pearling in *Water Lily*, starting the '85-'86 season with 31 young Bardi men, officially recorded as being from Swan Point but almost certainly from a much wider area. With the rest of the fleet, he first tried several banks which had been closed to pearlers for five years in the hope they would be re-colonised by pearl oysters.

Having had no luck there, he sailed westward along the coast to Exmouth Gulf, where he remained for the rest of the season in unbroken fine weather, during which he lost one diver by drowning and another to influenza. In common with the other pearlers in the Gulf, he was fined for overworking his men, though they dived for only 85 days out of the 150 allowed by law. By the end of April 1886, his crew had raised 11¼ tons of shell and a stated £300-worth of pearls. 5

Gold found in the southern Kimberley prompted a rush from all over Australia, New Zealand and beyond to an area several hundred miles east of Derby in those years. Gold fever inspired some desperate attempt to reach the diggings, one of which was recorded by Derby police [verbatim]:

Friday February 5<sup>th</sup> 1886

Thomas Boer reports that he belonged to the English barque *Setlight* which he left at Browse Island on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December in company with 2 men - one named Weaver second mate and another name unknown both belonging to the Norwegian Brigantine *Sinorogs*. These vessels were loading guano at Browse Island and on completion of the loading Capt J.M. Jorgenson supplied the mate and seaman with a boat and supplies in lieu of their wages and Thomas Boer got provisions and supplies from his Capt. and permission to leave his ship on condition of forfeiting his wages.

We made the mainland the third day after leaving Browse Island and being caught in a heavy squall our mast carried away. Then for 11 days we worked our way along the coast after having temporarily rigged the broken mast. We turned back before the end of 11 days one night 3 days before Christmas we were washed ashore. We built a tent on shore and saw some natives fishing. Later in the day one of the natives brought us a note from Harry Hunter and we went back to his place with one of the natives. - I remained 4 weeks Hunters Station and then he brought me over to the pearlers at Cygnet Bay. The mate Weaver and the seaman had come to Cygnet Bay before me guided by a native. A schooner called at Cygnet Bay for water and took Weaver away to Fremantle. -

According to a newspaper article published about five weeks later, Dutchman Boer had been cook of the *Satellite*, whereas Sam Weaver and J. McKarn had crewed *Sinorages*. The former reported that Harry Hunter had repaired their boat, then taken it for a short trip after turtle [a favourite Bardi food] but there was some doubt at Derby about their right to have the craft.

Having reached the port, it seems they heard discouraging reports coming in from the diggings because instead of setting off inland, they asked for assistance to return to Sydney as shipwrecked sailors. If so, Boer at least wasn't successful; Cossack police recorded his presence there in May and in the following year. 6

So many would-be prospectors arrived aboard steamers at the anchorage off Derby that John Wood, now free of his responsibilities to the *Pearl* and its luggers, detached the schooner *Anne* from the small pearling fleet he operated with Zachariah Erickson and used her to ferry men, horses and equipment across the tidal mud flats to the town, which proved to be highly profitable for a few months. 7

As the next pearling season approached, Hunter and Hadley got up to their old tricks. Derby police recorded [verbatim]:

Wednesday August the 25<sup>th</sup> 1886

P.C. Rogers. Brought to Station at 8 pm ab. native Marlie [Alias] Pompey - a Diver aged 20 years. Arrested on Warrant Issued at "Derby" Dated the 25<sup>th</sup> day of August to be examined as Witness on an information against "Henry Hunter" Charging him with illegally detaining Ab native Marlie [alias] on board the boat Water Lilly - property nil.

Thursday August 26<sup>th</sup>

P.C. Powell Reports serving summons on Alfred Vincent for discharging a fowling piece in the town site of Derby Returnable on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> inst

Friday August the 27<sup>th</sup>

Police Court Henry Hunter Free. pearler. Charged by Alfred Vincent With taking an Ab. native named Marlie [or] pompey who was there and then under an unexpired agreement for Twelve Months to Alfred Vincent. Fined £30-0-0 & Costs £1-9-

Police Court P.C. Powell Charged Alfred Vincent Free For that on the 24<sup>th</sup> Inst he did Wantonly Discharge - a Fowling piece to the Danger of the public. Cautioned -

Monday August the 30<sup>th</sup> 1886

Police Court Sydney Hadley & Henry Hunter both Free Charged by Sergt McKenna For that on the 25<sup>th</sup> Instant at Derby they did .... & ....

Keep and Detain Ab native Marlie [alias] pompey against his will on the Jetty at Derby by physical Constraint Contrary to the 37 Vict No 11 Sect 10. Each fined £1 & Costs. 8

Few pearlers seem to have joined the gold-rush, which was over by the end of the year. In fact, there was a 'pearling rush' about the same time, when many more boats arrived from Port Darwin and eastern Australia, despite the well-publicised dangers of the north-west coast.

One of those dangers struck hard the following year. John A. Reddell, master of the schooner *Ethel*, from Sydney via Thursday Island at the north-east tip of Australia, arrived at Cossack on the morning of Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April with the first report. Cossack police kept their chief at faraway Perth informed as news reached them [verbatim]:

Report of occurrences from 27<sup>th</sup> April 1887

Telegram 2.30 pm From Sergt Payne to Commissioner of Police  
Schooner Ethel from Sydney Capt Reddell arrived this morning  
Reports Experience heavy hurricane lasting twelve hours off Roebuck Bay lost two Ships Boats & large quantity deck cargo has also with him three Luggers Six Men in each for Pearling grounds parted Company during gale off Roebuck Bay Considers all are lost Thinks all Ninety Mile Beach Pearling Fleet must be lost

28<sup>th</sup> April 1887

Telegram 4 pm Sergt Payne to Commissioner of Police Perth  
Australind arrived this morning from Derby & Pearling Grounds reports hurricane of Roebuck Bay Friday last Forty Luggers about Five hundred men missing. Schooner Maphis Deck Swept bulwarks washed away. Harriet lost both anchors picked up by Australind & towed into Lagrange Bay. John S. Lane both masts gone decks completely Cleaned. Florence Supposed lost off Cape Bossut. Dawn, Expert, Water Lilly all missing Telephone completely dismasted got here under Jury masts. Sree pas Sair dismasted towed here by Australind. one hand from Lugger Carrie picked up reports Lugger & Eight men lost. Annie Taylor dragged her anchor ten miles off shore then Slipped & run her until She Shipped a Sea Sweeping her decks the Natives being frightened burst open her hatches & filled her with water She is saved. Capt Mayne's boat dismasted & gone to Lagrange Bay. great distress for want of provisions Colonel Angelo being absent would be glad to know if Steamer Australind Could be Chartered to return & Search for missing Vessels & convey provisions am informed Capt England is willing to do all he can.

Telegram 7 pm From Sergt Payne to Commissioner of Police Perth.  
Further information re Hurricane - Schooner Myra dismasted but Safe. Jessie Safe. Amy Safe. Water Lilly Since Seen by Amy safe Harriet lost all her boats. Amy gone in Search of Dawn which when last seen was on her beam ends. Mate of Dairymaid picked up. Lugger he was on lost. Telephone picked up 2 hands in water from Lugger Ranger which is lost. Sree Pas Sair picked up 2 hands from one of Browns luggers. Schooner Pearl Safe. Gipsy Seen going to Sea. Dairymaid, Venture, Osprey, Lord Loftus missing. Great Anxiety felt here as to whether Govt. will Send Australind in Search of Lost Boats & men - I am Starting eastward party of Police Saturday Morning with instructions to Keep good look out for any men or bodies that may have reached Shore.

*S.S. Australind* left for the stricken area at 5am on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April, a week after the tragedy, followed by Reddell's *Ethel* and several other sailing vessels, but the steamer returned four days later without any of the missing boats or men. In the meantime, *S.S. Otway* had passed through the area from the north and brought several pearlers to Cossack with more information [verbatim]:

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Telegram Sergeant Payne to Commissioner of Police

Further report re intelligence late hurricane Herald. Annie. Venture.

Harriett. Mavis. Lady Dennison. Expert. Water Lilly. Annie Taylor.

Pearl. Harriett. Jessie. Dawn. Yule. Julia all safe but Some received

great injuries Myra. Missing Florence. Dairymaid. Lord Loftus.

Gipsy. Osprey. Supposed lost. Twenty one Luggers & Two hundred

& Forty men totally lost. Capt Mayne left for Cossack last Sunday

Week not yet arrived Dickey was Supposed lost but Since Seen all

Safe.-

Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries Blair E. Mayne J.P. brought the Revenue schooner *Eloise* to Cossack two days later. The final police report estimated more vessels and fewer lives had been lost but numbers of both were never conclusively established. Many years later, after Indian Ocean hurricanes were formally renamed, a survivor of this disaster remembered,

'Only one big boat sank right at her anchor. She was named "The Dairy Maid" and she was owned and sailed by a Captain French who had previously claimed that Australians did not know what a real cyclone was like - if they had been through what he had been through in some parts of the world, then they would know. I told him previously that if he stopped in the North-West long enough he would probably alter his tone. Poor Captain French! Little did he know when the experience did come his way, it was to be his last on this earth.'

Part of *Dairymaid* eventually washed up on a beach and the sunken wrecks of other vessels including *Osprey* were later found but there was no trace of most of the missing vessels or the majority of their crews. *Faith* and *Charity*, launched in New South Wales three months earlier, left Port Darwin on the last leg of their maiden voyages to the north-western pearling grounds a few days before the storm struck and vanished.

Captain Clark of Sydney, master of *Mavis* ['Maphis'], probably regretted moving his pearling operations to the region: he lost five vessels. Captain Reddell found he had underestimated his loss at three vessels. He lost four. Other pearling masters lost several apiece in 'The Great Blow of '87'.

Perhaps the luckiest survivor was the youngest. Annie Elizabeth Hilliard, born at sea on her parents' schooner *Annie Taylor* sixteen days earlier, was the younger of two children aboard when the storm struck. After the vessel had dragged her anchor backwards for ten miles [16 km] and the crew had slipped [disconnected] her anchor chain, the hurricane-force wind drove the vessel another eighty miles [129 km] westward through huge waves, torrential rain, spray and debris. After the eye of the storm passed over, the wind rose again to full strength from the other direction, crashing the schooner back almost to her anchorage.

No doubt it was Annie's extreme youth which gave rise to the legend, fostered even by later generations of her own family, that she had been born among the towering seas of 'The Great Blow' itself. Her father Henry brought *Annie Taylor* back to Cossack more than three weeks later, with his wife Martha and both children aboard, after landing his Aboriginal divers back at their home areas.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> May, almost a month after the 'blow', *Water Lily* arrived with Sydney Hadley at the helm. No doubt after many repairs, the vessel left for the eastward in June, with both Hadley and Hunter aboard. 9

So great were the profits to be made from pearling in those years that newcomers kept arriving. Neither the Kimberley gold-rush or the catastrophe of the following year prevented the estimated revenue from the pearl shell fishery on that coast reaching new heights of £115,000 in 1886 and £125,000 in '87. 10

As the number of boats increased, the use of Aboriginal swimming divers began to decline, and with it the practice of 'blackbirding'. More and more pearlers preferred to employ 'Malays' and other Asians who they equipped with 'diving dress', comprising globular helmet, full-length canvas suit and weighted boots. Air and life lines connected these divers to the boats above which, because of their air pumps and related equipment, became known as 'apparatus vessels'.

The change offered several benefits. These divers could work in deeper water and therefore much further out to sea. They could stay on the bottom for prolonged periods without the need for frequent ascents, shell being sent up in nets or baskets, and they were less troubled by sharks.

Though they had to be paid, the cost was slight and fewer were needed. They dived from luggers rather than smaller open boats, each of which typically carried only one such diver and five other crew members. Each fleet of luggers was tended by a 'mother' schooner.

Best of all, such divers could work in cold water, allowing shelling to continue through the ideal, cyclone-free months of May to October, when the law or the temperature prevented the use of swimming divers. Consequently, pearlers now had the choice of continuing to work all the year round or to lay up their vessels during the dangerous summer.

In the next few years, owners of 'apparatus vessels' increasingly chose the latter option, laying up from December to April at Cygnet Bay in King Sound or in the creeks west of Cossack, while a few preferred Broome in Roebuck Bay. Even so, luggers not being repaired still went out for short working trips in sheltered waters, if the weather was favourable.

In April 1886, the fleet had 'employed' 528 young Aboriginal men. That year, the Government Resident at Roebourne, Colonel E.F. Angelo, named in a report three white men who,

'publicly advertised themselves to procure and put niggers aboard at five pounds a head for anybody or shoot them for the Government at half a crown a piece.'

By late '88, only Bryan and Hilliard's *Annie Taylor* and Hadley and Hunter's *Ivy* still used Aboriginal swimming divers, who totalled 94. Though still unpaid, they were now usually lured into signing on, rather than forced, by offers of better food, tobacco, some alcohol and other desirable 'white-man-goods'.

Aboriginal people had developed a powerful desire for these things, but found them increasingly hard to obtain as their employment in the pearling industry declined. 'Malays', Manilamen and other Asian crewmen, who were now in the great majority, told them how they could do so.

During the summer months, when most of the apparatus vessels laid up in the creeks and bays along the coast, they offered them in exchange for access to Aboriginal women and children.

Traditionally, Aboriginal people apparently regarded sex as a commodity which could be traded for other desirables. Having spent thousands of years in near-total isolation from the rest of the world, they had little knowledge of the then-incurable disease which could be transmitted nor, according to some Europeans, even knowledge of the biological process of procreation. And so they commonly made the exchange. 11

Back at Cossack, Hadley got into a brawl with a big West Indian named Henry Wilson, who had a reputation as a bully when drunk, which was often. Beginning at one of the hotels, where Hadley too drank heavily, the fight continued as far as the slaughterhouse behind Long Hill.

Both were summoned to appear before the magistrate at the old Courthouse. Hadley entered first, leaning on a crutch, his face covered with plasters. The magistrate remarked that he seemed to have been well punished already and let him go with a caution. Outside, the crutch and the plasters were dispensed with.

Wilson appeared unhurt, made no attempt to dissemble and paid for his straightforwardness with a fine as well as a caution.

Unlike Hadley, whose earnings were supplemented by remittances from England and who had no family to support, Wilson probably didn't have private income to help maintain his wife and at least one child. Working as a lumper, he unloaded pearling boats and provided other labour at the port, but only when needed for particular jobs.

So he also dynamited fish, a common practice when substantial quantities were needed to feed the fleet or the town, and much quicker than other fishing methods on a coast which teemed with marine life.

While doing so, he blew off his hand. Hooks were routinely used by lumpers, as they were by stevedores and dockers everywhere, so he had one fitted directly to his stump and resumed his casual job at the port. He had no choice.

Still needing to supplement that income, he also continued to dynamite fish. In Cossack creek a few years later, he blew off his other hand. A second hook was fitted and Wilson went on with his work and his life. 12

## Chapter Five

### The Drink, the Drink

Report At 5.30 pm Earnest Cade reports at Station having come from Messrs Hunter & Hadleys Sheep Station at Lumbardina and that about six weeks while out Shepherding an Abo native named Ned and himself quarrelled about the possession of Some horses, the native being the Stronger got the better of him and he was obliged to draw his revolver which he presented not with the intention of firing, but of frightening the native, it however accidentally went off wounding the Native in the Shoulder

Though Aboriginal people no longer put up concerted resistance to the pearlers or the few white settlers on the Dampier Land peninsula, the police continued to monitor the situation. They had recorded in March '86 that Harry Hunter said 'the natives were very quiet' in the vicinity of his station and that two schooner captains told them the Aboriginal people at Cygnet Bay were, 'very numerous but friendly and quiet'. Even so, there were still occasional incidents, like that reported above by one of Hunter's employees on the last day of September '88.

The following March, the land lease which included Lombadina was transferred to John Bateman and John James Broomhall, who traded as Bateman and Broomhall. The enterprise had failed commercially. Harry Hunter moved further south on the peninsula to a site near Pender Bay, taking his Aboriginal community and some of the livestock with him. <sup>1</sup>

There were problems for Hunter and Hadley offshore too. Their *Ivy* was blown out of the water by a *willy-willy* in February '89; so too was *Annie Taylor*, losing her foremast in the process. While using *Herald* late that year, the vessel was wrecked without loss of life on the Horseshoe Reef near Cape Thouin, east of Cossack. A subsequent official inquiry concluded:

'...there is no case for any further investigation but at the same time the Court considers that the master deserves severe reprimand for the very lax manner in which the duties of the ship *Herald* were carried out & further order that the said Master Sydney Hadley pay all the costs of the Inquiry.'

Nevertheless Hadley, who continued shelling using *Maud*, *Water Lily* or *Kate*, as available, was luckier or more competent than the master of an unknown large vessel, a whole side of which was seen floating about 15 miles offshore during that season. Harry Hunter was at the helm of *Water Lily* when Hadley skippered the other vessels. <sup>2</sup>

In 1890, when a young Bardi woman gave birth to his second acknowledged child Lawrence, Harry Hunter was visited at his current homestead by Perth-based Roman Catholic Bishop Matthew Gibney, who had worked long and tirelessly to awaken the European colonists to their Christian responsibilities towards Aboriginal people.

Having encouraged Father Duncan McNab's enterprise, Gibney was now leading French Trappist monks on an expedition to select a site for a more substantial and lasting mission.

The Bishop's party found Hunter kind, hospitable and generous with provisions. Gibney noted that he employed sixty Aboriginal people, and that all those he saw looked well, seemed content and voiced no complaints. Meeting some away from Hunter's base, the bishop found them,

'good fellows, ready to do any service we wanted and wanting anything we offered. [They] caught a number of fish for us. They think every white man who comes along is a blackguard. 'Give me

barka [tobacco], bring you woman', is often their observation after the formal introduction.'

Further south on the peninsula, Bishop Gibney selected land near Beagle Bay, in the 'country' of the Nyul-Nyul people, as the site of the new mission, which the Trappists began to establish the same year. <sup>3</sup>

During the 1890-91 swimming diving season, Hadley and Hunter used *Water Lily* and *Jessie* respectively to obtain 16 tons of shell and a declared £500-worth of pearls from Exmouth Gulf, despite six desertions. Having returned to Cossack in April, Hadley was charged by the police with creating a disturbance in a public place by fighting with labourer George Fitzmorris, for which he was fined forty shillings plus costs, or 28 days Hard Labour. He paid up. His adversary was merely cautioned and charged costs.

Early the following month, current Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries Thomas W. Smith found the Aboriginal crews of both vessels to be in good health and without complaints. Nevertheless, he decided that *Water Lily* would not get a licence for the following season unless her condition was improved. Next day, Hadley left Cossack in the vessel, taking 44 Aboriginal divers back to their 'country'. <sup>4</sup>

Less than two weeks later, an advertisement appeared in the southern press offering for sale by tender, Hunter and Hadley's 'Lombada' Station, with 700 sheep, 50 head of cattle, 4 horses, substantial dwelling, together with shearing shed, yards, wool press and other plant.

The land was said to comprise ten thousand acres of well-watered country. In fact, the lease comprised ten times as much land, the majority of which was semi-arid even in years of average rainfall. Currently, a drought gripped much of the north-west of the colony.

Also offered were the pearling schooners *Water Lily* and *Jessie*, with their equipment, including five dinghies. Hadley brought *Water Lily* back to Cossack in July, Harry Hunter and 7 Aboriginal men being the crew.

That was the month missing Chinese fisherman 'See Kim' was found on Delambre Island. He'd been marooned there for nine weeks, his dinghy having broken up. Lacking fresh water for the last five weeks, he survived by drinking the blood of turtles. <sup>5</sup>

Probably drunk, Hadley entered the See Sing Company Store at the port on the 5<sup>th</sup> August, asked to be shown some blankets and, when refused credit, rushed behind the counter to assault the Chinese salesman, with inevitable consequences. Having long experience of magistrates' courts, he rose to the occasion.

Much amusement was caused in court by Mr. Hadley, in a weak voice, asking the magistrate if he could sit down, as he felt faint from the injuries he had received by bricks and broken bottles from the blood-thirsty celestial, who, instead of appearing as a plaintiff, should have been in the dock. The defendant appeared before the court plastered with bandages; and it was a pity the doctor was not present, for the demise of the wounded man seemed imminent. Mr. Hadley, in his defence, said he was brutally assaulted by the plaintiff and others without any cause whatever. Mr. Cowan disagreed with him and fined him £1. The latest bulletin is that the invalid is progressing as well as can be expected.

*Nor'-West Times*, 15 August 1891.

Hadley, who gave his address as 'Swan Point' at the apex of the distant Dampier Land peninsula, despite also having a local home, formally but unsuccessfully charged his victim with assault.

The following day, three policemen brought him to Cossack Police Station, charged with being drunk and incapable, detained him overnight and freed him on bail next morning. In court, he was let off with a caution. <sup>6</sup>

The next month he was suspected of removing a barometer and water cask from *Water Lily* while she lay on the beach at Cossack, the vessel now apparently owned by trading company J. & W. Bateman. The items may have been Hadley's personal property.

Then local resident A.S. Watts reported to the police that his wife, mother-in-law and sister-in-law were frightened because Hadley had walked through their house twice, talking foolishly. He was unfit to be at large, in Watts' opinion.

After consulting Government Resident [and Magistrate] W.D. Cowan, the police took Hadley into custody overnight, charged with wandering about town apparently of unsound mind, before escorting him to Roebourne.

He was soon back at Cossack Police Station, complaining that during his four-day absence, a pair of blankets, a pair of English lace-up boots and a razor had been stolen from his Cossack house.

The loss of long-time crew member and probable relative A. Hadley, known as Russell, the previous year, followed by the offer for sale of Lombadina Station and with it the end of his business partnership with Harry Hunter, may have contributed to his state of mind. 7

Cossack was at its peak about this time. Back in '82, the Union Bank of Australia had opened branches there and at nearby Roebourne, normalising financial transactions. Two years later, a new regular steamship service began, connecting ports along the west coast of the colony with Batavia [now Jakarta, capital of Indonesia] and Singapore, greatly improving the transmission of people, goods and communications.

By '86 a telegraph line from Perth had extended the thousand coastal miles [1600 km] to Cossack and Roebourne, enabling two-way communications which had once taken weeks or months to be completed in hours. The port also benefited from the opening up of pastoral areas further north, the expansion of the pearling industry and the Kimberley gold-rush.

Then came the incident at Mallina, some eighty miles [129 km] inland, in the blazing heat of Christmas Eve, 1887. When he heard about it, Government Resident Angelo became so excited that his cable to Perth read only, 'Jimmy Withnell picked up a stone to shy at a crow.'

From the relatively cool south, the Colonial Secretary replied, 'Did he really? What happened to the crow?'

The crow flew unharmed, for the stone had yellow spots on it. So did other nearby stones and rocks. The Mallina gold-rush was about to begin. Would-be prospectors began pouring off every vessel that called at Cossack. Soon bursting at the seams, the little port did a roaring trade.

Some of the newcomers had to sleep on the roof of the White Horse Hotel, others on the beach; the Weld Hotel and Mrs. Pead's boarding house couldn't cope with the demand either. A.S. Thompson's family soon opened another boarding house. At the stores and the brothels, business was booming.

A gold-field was officially proclaimed on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1888 as prospectors pushed ever deeper into the vast outback, subsequently making new discoveries at Nullagine, Marble Bar and elsewhere. Soon thousands of men were at work in summer temperatures that often exceeded 120 F [49 C] in the shade. For most, the only shade came with nightfall.

Japanese madams, each with a few girls carrying tents on their backs, walked inland and toured the camps. Periodically, steamships brought more girls to Cossack. Some prospectors kept Aboriginal women and girls. Other white men lived by abducting young Aboriginal women and compelling them to work as prostitutes.

During '89 and '90, this region produced two-thirds of the gold exported from the entire colony and continued to make a contribution long afterwards. Copper, tin and other ores were discovered.

Ninety-seven pearling vessels worked out of the Cossack area in 1891, when a new record revenue from the pearl shell fishery was achieved, though international demand for shell declined for some years thereafter. 8

Nearly a year after Lombadina Station was advertised for sale, the lease was transferred to Bishop Gibney, who now sought to establish a second mission on the Dampier Land peninsula, this time in the 'country' of the Bardi people. The long drought was now over.

Trappist recruit Brother Xavier Daly [formerly policeman John Cornelius Daly] from Beagle Bay Mission found Harry Hunter co-operative during the transfer of the animals. Yet the fact that he had taken away most of the Aboriginal people, who were the main reason for the bishop's purchase, was as disappointing as the grazing potential of the land itself. Nor did the sheep and horses number more than half the advertised figures.

Bishop Gibney retained the lease which included Lombadina for less than one year. He did not pay the rent due on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1893, thereby forfeiting the lease, which remained unsold for years afterwards. He appears to have got little more from his purchase than some livestock and *Jessie* in poor condition. <sup>9</sup>

For the '92-'93 season Hadley used *Florence*. Missing, feared lost, after a fierce *blow* or *willy-willy* at Exmouth Gulf, he brought her back to port late in March, his Aboriginal divers and European crewman Harvey apparently all present and correct, and left to continue the season two days later, but this time not as master.

On the same day in April that old adversary Henry Wilson lost his second hand, Cossack police charged Hadley with being drunk and incapable, detained him overnight, then released him on bail so he could make his own way to court, where patient Mr. Cowan fined him five shillings. <sup>10</sup>

Derby police recorded Hadley's arrival later that year in a small lugger which he allowed to sink near the jetty and made no attempt to raise for several days. He'd left two Chinese beche-de-mer fishermen on Sunday Island with supplies for about a fortnight and a small dinghy. After contemplating a rescue using their own boat, the police accepted an offer from Henry Hilliard to do so. Though Hadley followed in Paul Conde's lugger with the same intention, it was Hilliard who claimed the £5 reward.

Just before that Christmas, Water Police Constable John Pritchard Jones, unsuccessfully tried to arrest Hadley at the Port Hotel, the Point, Derby. Even with the assistance of another constable, he could not handcuff Hadley, who broke away and fled. Resident Magistrate Dr. Ernest Black heard the case substantially before the end of the year, then adjourned it until the 3<sup>rd</sup> January '94, when the accused was cautioned for having used abusive & threatening language towards Jones.

Having been found guilty also of assaulting the constable, he was fined £2 or in default one month's imprisonment with hard labour; he chose the fine. The third charge brought against him, of breaking and escaping out of legal custody, was adjourned for a further week, when he was remanded overnight, then bound over in the sum of £50 to appear for judgement when called upon. <sup>11</sup>

Hadley's troubles at Derby ensured he was far removed from the cyclone of January '94, which caused havoc further south. The cutter *Maud* was pounded to pieces against a goods shed at Cossack, 112 ton *Sree Pas-Sair* was blown onto the top of nearby Vampire Island, then off again, *Sylvia* and *Verona* were stranded there, *Iolanthe* was destroyed, *Derby* foundered on the port's beach, *Eban* was left bottom up at the mouth of the creek, *Dawn* and *Emerald* were both dismasted.

The lighter *Cossack* was blown up the beach, across the main street to the back road in a mass of flood-borne wreckage. On the way it struck the corner verandah post of A.S. Thompson's house, the floor boards of which were under water despite being built on 4 ft [1.22 m] piles, drowning some milking goats sheltering underneath. The building which housed the school, community hall and church was demolished.

*Diamond*, loaded with cargo for Condon, was left so far up one of the creeks beyond Cossack that a canal had to be dug through the mangroves to extract her. Other vessels were swept into the marsh beyond the two bridges on the road to Roebourne, accompanied by the bridges themselves.

Along the coast at Flying Foam Passage, where eight luggers were driven ashore, Captain Zachariah Erickson, his wife Minnie, daughter Pearl, Hayward the Mate, most of the crew, several visitors and two survivors from a just-wrecked vessel, were all drowned when the schooner *Anne* capsized and sank.

Found on a nearby shore, Erickson's body was brought to Cossack a week later. While *Anne* was being salvaged the following month, Mrs. Erickson's body was brought to the port, having been

recovered from the ship's cabin. Two bodies in the hold and two skulls in the cabin were also discovered.

Erickson's brother Peter returned to their native Denmark the following year. <sup>12</sup>

Though the pearling industry was now temporarily flagging, business was still booming inland. Cossack acted as a trans-shipment centre for smaller places which had sprung up along the coast. Large trading vessels which could not put in to Bulla Bulla, Condon, Maud's Landing or Port Hedland off-loaded at Cossack, where cargos were transferred to smaller vessels for onward delivery.

Hadley seems to have briefly tried trans-shipment work late in '91 and by the middle of the decade was involved in the trade exclusively. In '96 he was using *Diamond*, his cargo that August including two prisoners. He also seems to have 'turned over a new leaf', because his last conviction at either Cossack or Derby for any sort of offence was over three years previously.

He was back in Cossack Court House in March '97, but not on criminal charges. At a meeting of the local Licensing Board, he was issued with a permit to carry 22 tons of cargo and 20 passengers in *Diamond* to and from steamers anchored off Cossack, suggesting that he was now probably the owner of the vessel. And although he frequented the port, it seems he had a home along the coast at Condon by that September. <sup>13</sup>

While retaining his base near Pender Bay, Harry Hunter had a house at the Point, Derby between early '92 and late '95, but often worked as a teamster for Lennard River and other sheep and cattle stations in the vast Kimberley region to the east, with the exception of early 1893 when he was shelling west of Cossack in *Governor Weld* using 22 Aboriginal divers, almost certainly Bardi people.

When in Derby, he was arrested on several occasions. In court, he generally admitted his drunkenness or disorderly conduct and paid fines rather than accept the alternative periods of custodial hard labour. A wife is also mentioned in police records [verbatim]:

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 1892

Travellers Mr & Mrs Hunter & daughter left town to Yabagoody Creek with riding horses...

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 1894

P.C. Chilcott. Left station at 4 pm on duty to the Point to make enquiries about a man named Harry Hunter who was under the influence of drink with a broken arm. Mrs Hunter informs me that her husband & she had a quarrel he had beaten her & Kick her & went to throw a beer bottle at a girl named Maudie Ross & when near the door way he fell & injured his arm W.P.C. Jones went to the house & found all quiet & Mrs Hunter would not take any proceedings against her husband The arm of the man was bandage up by Sidney Hedley at Derby afterwards went back to the Point very quietly

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1895

P.C. Vaughan Left Station at 8 am on Duty to Goody Goody to bring in Maud Hunter...Returned at 12 noon. Distance 12 miles...Brought to Station at 12 noon Maud Hunter Charged on Warrant with having no lawful visible means of Support.

Travellers Mr & Mrs Hunter from Lennard River

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1895

Police Court Before Dr. Wright R.M. & H. Field J.P....Maud Annie Ross @ Maud Hunter charged on Warrant with insufficient lawful



means of Support was Sentenced to Two Months Imp Lockup Derby  
pending arrangements for Sending Her to Reformatory

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 1895

Memo By the S.S. *Cloncurry* Eliza Jane Hunter a well known  
character & Prostitute left Derby for Fremantle

'Mrs Hunter' departed five days after Harry was sent to jail for one month with hard labour. It seems that he had broken open a case of ale he was transporting, smashed the tops off some of the bottles and after drinking the contents, threw them into a reservoir well a few miles east of the town. He did so in front of witnesses including a fellow employee at Lennard River Station, who reported him to the police and subsequently took his job. Jailed for larceny, Hunter was also fined for despoiling the well and charged court costs.

Maud Annie Ross, known in Derby as Maud Hunter because of her association with the family, was not in fact Harry Hunter's daughter. She was born in Bowen, Queensland. Because she also spent time with Aboriginal people, the Derby authorities had sent her south to Rottne Industrial School near Fremantle that August.

So ended the Hunter family of Derby, and Harry's work on the cattle and sheep stations eastward. 14

Between January and June '96 he was sometimes on Hill or Lumungen Stations in the south of the Dampier Land peninsula, occasionally with Mr Banks, the manager. But he didn't stay long. 15

*"Looking for a better place for himself, he sailed away in a small cutter, following the coast northwards again. At Chili creek near Lombadina he anchored, went ashore, looked around, then sailed on past Cape Leveque and Swan Point at the top of the peninsula, before turning southwards into King Sound. He made for Gulan on Cygnet Bay, looking for that white man Hilliard and his missus."*

*"Using three big nets, Hilliard caught and smoked fish. He had a big boil-tank too, for boiling little shells to get pearls. He had a good business there, good! Hilliard came from Dutch. Harry Hunter went to Cygnet Bay for company after things didn't work out for him..."*

'Dougal'. 16

British-born Henry Francis Hilliard, now based in the Dutch East Indies [today mostly Indonesia], had been pearling on the north-west coast of Australia since about 1880, when he was a crewman, perhaps Mate, on the 28 ton schooner *Kate*. Early the following year he was Master [captain] of the same vessel.

He became part owner of *Kate* and other pearling vessels, at least one of which he seems to have owned outright. Between '83 and '86 he held a substantial pastoral lease on the Dampier Land peninsula in partnership with William Bryan, with whom he also had pearling interests, as well as a land-holding elsewhere.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1886 he was married to 22-year-old Martha Batley in the parlour of the Weld Hotel, Cossack, by Church of England Rector C.E. Groser, having obtained a special license from the Governor of the Colony. The following April, he successfully brought his family and crew through the 'Great Blow of '87'.

With other pearlers, his vessel was laid up at Cygnet Bay in January 1893, when Father MacNab's former assistant 'Knife' and fellow Bardi man 'Johnny' took and damaged one of his boats. Brought before Resident Magistrate Dr Earnest Black at Derby that April, the culprits were discharged. Late the same year, he rescued the last of two beche-de-mer fishermen left on Sunday Island by Hadley.

But Hilliard's colour-blindness prevented him from obtaining the certificate essential under British law to captain vessels for other owners. That was probably why he sought employment as a

water policeman at Derby early in 1894, only to be told there were no vacancies, and why he became resident in the Dutch East Indies.

Also in '94, he wrecked a lugger and lost its entire cargo, though no lives, while trying to enter Roebuck Bay during a pitch-dark July night. 17

*"Harry Hunter stopped with the Hilliards for a year, I think, then shifted further along Cygnet Bay to Unjurmurr. I know, I went there later. As before, he rode all over, bringing back Aboriginal people who belonged to him. They belonged to him because the men had worked for him in the past, some as swimming divers, so he brought them to Unjurmurr."*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Six

### One Summer

*"My mother 'picked me up' [gave birth to me] at Gulan on Cygnet Bay. In those days, there was a big pool of rain water there, plenty of running water and 'bush tucker' such as possums, lizards and sugar-bag [honey and pollen-rich wild bees' nests]. Now, too many cattle have drunk the water."*

*"As we say, Gulan is my 'country' and it was my father's 'country' too. His name was Gundu, though the white men called him 'Tony'. As a senior Bardi man, he had three wives, one of whom was my mother Ulman, a Bardi from Swan Point whom the whites called 'Minnie'."*

*"My parents named me Djoulgar, a traditional name among our people. I had no brothers or sisters."*

*"There were plenty of Bardi people at Gulan then. We children wrestled, danced and sang and as we got older, we learned how to find all kinds of 'bush tucker', catch fish and crabs and make things. My daddy taught me to make karlis [boomerangs] and spears, little ones at first, and how to use them."*

*"The first time I remembered passing by Harry Hunter's house at Unjurmurr, further along Cygnet Bay, I was thinking about that white man when a cockatoo said 'Hello!' He made me start! I was already walking then."*

*""Frenchy' D'Antoine's house was on the other side of the creek, the stony side. Harry Hunter's, with his people, was this side. 'Frenchy' brought the little schooner Willie to Unjurmurr. They might have been there two or three years. I remember a little bit of that time. I was very small then."*

'Dougal'. 1

Traditionally, the Bardi people did not number the passing years, having no need to do so. Neither did they count their own years. Raised before the first mission school came to his district, 'Dougal' could not say which 'white-man-year' he had been born in, though he believed it was within a year of Jack Hunter's birth. If so, 1893/4 is indicated. 2

Nor is it clear when Harry Hunter first based himself at Unjurmurr but he was certainly there in January 1897, during the annual lay-up of the pearling fleet that used diving apparatus.

In the great heat and humidity of tropical summer, Captain Frank Biddles and his 'wife' were living aboard *Alto*, as was the vessel's mate, James Walton. Biddles' other major vessel, *Fanny Thornton* and thirteen of his luggers lay nearby, four more of which were being overhauled at Broome.

Captain and Mrs. Barter and their two children were on the schooner *Dawn*, with four luggers in attendance, while Captain Hemsworth was looking after *Ethel* and nine luggers for the absent Captain John A. Reddell, as well as four luggers of his own.

Robison and Norman's eight luggers were being managed from their schooner *Mist* by Captain Lee; Hugh Davis Norman, who took up pearling in King Sound just after the 'Great Blow of '87', was now based at Broome.

Ashore, carpenters worked in sheds owned by each of the principals except Hemsworth. 3

Some four miles [6.4 km] from the main lay-up site, a creek enters Cygnet Bay at the place Bardi people named Unjurmurr. Harry Hunter kept his vessels there then, though he still had a homestead and livestock at Pender Bay on the other side of the peninsula.

He also kept his harem at Unjurmurr, nightly sharing his blanketed floor with five or six women, most of them Bardi. Because it had long been the custom in Bardi society for senior men to have two or more wives while young men went without, Hunter's arrangement was not entirely out of keeping with local practice, its greater size reflecting his long-established autocratic rule over the native people of the region.

Admittedly his women were already tribally married or promised to Bardi men. Yet it was also the custom for local Aboriginal men to offer their wives in exchange for desired goods, albeit temporarily, as Catholic Bishop Matthew Gibney had discovered. Hunter routinely supplied all 'his people', including the Bardi husbands of his women, with some of those goods year round.

But there is no doubt that fear also played a part in the situation. Hunter's earlier ruthlessness as a 'blackbirder' had not been forgotten. His subsequent methods of gathering Aboriginal people to his various camps were little better.

Most of all, it was his frequently-demonstrated revolver which intimidated them. And at every opportunity he associated himself with the police, whose appearances reminded everyone of the wholesale consequences of serious resistance.

Fortunately, Hunter liked children. Following Eugene and Lawrence, Robin was born about 1891, Christopher ['Christy'], Jessie and Jack all in '93 or '94 and Nellie a year or two later, most to different Bardi mothers. Many more 'wives' and children were to follow.

Archie Watson, a crewman or passenger aboard Hunter & Hadley's *Rover* in May '84, fathered a girl about that time, probably while he was staying at Lumard. Bardi mother and child remained under Hunter's supervision, the daughter becoming one of Hunter's 'wives' when she reached her middle teens.

'Frenchy' D'Antoine fathered a child about '92 but refused to acknowledge him. The boy's mother, who had previously been one of Hunter's women, deserted him in infancy, so Hunter arranged a surrogate and raised the child as his own. For years he was known as Tommy Hunter or 'one of the Hunter boys', only assuming his true surname when Harry Hunter arranged his 'bush-marriage' to Nellie long afterwards.

About '95, 'Frenchy' fathered another boy and rejected him too. Ginger's mother remained loyal, eventually taking him, with an older sibling, to her Aboriginal husband's home on Sunday Island. 4

Alone among the master pearlers at Cygnet Bay, Harry Hunter was still using Aboriginal swimming divers early in '97, most of them young Bardi or Djawi men, who were legally allowed to dive only during these summer months when the law deemed the water warm enough. Consequently, Hunter could not safely lay up his cutter *Florence*; she and her crew had to risk the *cock-eye bobs* [squalls/gales] and even the *blows* or *willy-willies* [cyclones] which frequented the same season.

Commanded by 'Frenchy' D'Antoine, with Arthur Hay as Mate and twenty-three divers, *Florence* was currently shelling at the Lacepede Islands, her captain no doubt relying on the relative sanctuary of Beagle Bay in the nearby peninsula coastline if storms came up. Meanwhile, at Unjurmurr, Hunter and Mate J. Clarke were preparing *Willie* for a voyage of a different kind with another thirty Aboriginal crewmen.

During the summertime lay-ups of most of the pearlers, the steamships which now regularly plied between the west coast of Australia and Asian ports would anchor in Cygnet Bay for a few hours to decant and collect passengers, goods and mail.

So it was that Police Constable G.H. Phillips disembarked from *S.S. Saladin* early on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> January, in the hope of preventing a repetition of the serious interracial trouble which had broken out among the pearling crews on the 26<sup>th</sup> December. One man had been killed.

He didn't like what he saw: three hundred 'coloured' men, Hunter's Aboriginal employees, thirty more Aboriginal people camped ashore and fourteen white men.

The majority were 'Malays' from the vast archipelago between Australia and mainland Asia, together with Manilamen [from the Philippine Islands], Chinese, Japanese, South Sea islanders and individuals of many other nationalities, having a multitude of different religions, cultures and allegiances, all crowded together in the steaming summer heat with little to do. At this time, the Japanese were gradually taking over as 'apparatus divers', the best paid job, to the resentment of those being displaced.

Recording seven schooners [in fact, there were six] and thirty-eight luggers at the bay, Phillips promptly wrote to his immediate superior at Derby, Police Corporal Pearson, asking for an

additional constable, on the grounds that he alone could not be expected to control so large a crowd in the event of trouble.

Frank Biddles gave him accommodation on *Fanny Thornton*, commanded at that time by W. Barnes, offered him an assistant whenever required and allowed him the use of a boat crewed by two Aboriginal men.

A few days later, Harry Hunter sent word to Phillips that some of his crewmen had absconded. The constable went to Unjurmurr the same morning, for his duties included the enforcement of 'Native Agreements' and other contracts of employment, visited local Bardi camps, then stayed on schooner *Willie* overnight.

In the morning, Hunter provided horses on which the two made a long, circuitous trip along the coast, then inland. At several Bardi camps along the way, Phillips ordered four men to return within three days.

Having camped the next night at Chile Creek near the west coast of the peninsula, the white men rode on, finding more of the absentees who explained they had left to attend a tribal fight. They too were ordered to return. All subsequently did so.

*Florence* returned to Unjurmurr. After visiting her on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> January, before she sailed on another shelling voyage, Phillips was notified by Captain Lee that a Manilaman named Nickolas was refusing orders.

Aboard *Mist*, Nickolas was obstinate and appeared ill, but his compatriots helpfully told the policeman that he did not intend to work in the hope of being discharged from the vessel. Phillips put him in irons. There he remained, in good health, for twenty-three days until he expressed willingness to take up his duties again.

*Dawn*, complete with the Barter family, was deliberately sailed onto the beach at high tide on the 1<sup>st</sup> February so she would strand there for hull cleaning and repair. Biddles' newly overhauled lugger *Lily* arrived from Broome the same day.

Early that month, the Japanese sail-maker on *Mist* reported to his captain the theft of two cheques, a gold coin and a gold ring. He'd kept them in his locked box, the key to which he'd left in his bunk. During the next four days, Phillips made enquiries aboard the other schooners and interviewed the complainant and fellow crewmen, without result. Captain Lee did not wish *Mist* to be searched.

*Florence* was back at Unjurmurr again. Phillips camped there overnight on *Willie*, returning to the main lay-up area the next morning with the cutter's mate, Arthur Hay, with whom he walked to Pearl Passage, visiting several Bardi camps on the way. The constable was at Unjurmurr again within a week, when Harry Hunter filled in and signed a stock return form for him.

One of Biddles' luggers, *Queenslander*, brought in her Japanese diver Ecardo on the 11<sup>th</sup>. He'd made a suicide attempt with a small pocket knife, inflicting a slight wound in his abdomen. Phillips explained to him that suicide was not common in Australia, unlike Japan, and put him in irons aboard *Alto*.

Five evenings later, *S.S. Cerebus* dropped anchor in the bay on her way to Broome. The policeman went aboard, as he did whenever steamers called, and was approached by two Japanese divers who asked permission to take Ecardo to see a doctor. Phillips agreed.

Captain Barter reported that Onebin, called 'Tommy' by the whites, had walked out of his job with the intention of continuing to walk right across the peninsula to Beagle Bay. He was one of the few Aboriginal people still employed on the 'apparatus vessels' as deck crew, shell cleaners and packers, etc.

Phillips crossed to Unjurmurr, learned that Onebin had passed that way, so despatched two other Aboriginal men to retrieve him. Within 48 hours, Onebin was back with his employer.

Having received word from Corporal Pearson that a sitting of the Supreme Court would take place at Derby on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March to hear the case against the alleged Cygnet Bay killer, Phillips had to notify half a dozen witnesses. Captains Biddles and Lee, and *Ethel's* carpenter James Taylor presented no problems but the principal witness, Pedro Dolis, was missing and said to be in Broome.

With no steamer expected in the next few days and none of the vessels at the bay due to sail for Derby, the constable had no choice but to go there himself and telegraph Broome, so he chartered *South Australian* from Biddles.

Butting down King Sound into strong head winds and a rough sea, the lugger was within two miles [3.2 km] of Derby jetty when the powerful tide turned, carrying the vessel back seven miles [11.3 km], where she anchored. Not until 3 pm on the third day after leaving Cygnet Bay was she alongside the jetty. With the wind and sea behind her, she returned to the bay in twenty-seven hours.

Though the large schooners usually remained in Cygnet Bay throughout the summer lay-up, some of the luggers went out for short working trips in sheltered waters if the weather didn't seem too threatening, usually returning at week-ends. Over the next three days however, barometer readings declined so much that by the 26<sup>th</sup> February every vessel was confined within the relatively safe bay. This time, the danger passed.

*S.S. Albany* arrived at 1 pm on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, bearing M.S. Warton, Resident Magistrate at Broome and Police Sub-Inspector Ord, both of whom briefly went ashore with Phillips to view the place where the alleged murder had taken place during the violence of the 26<sup>th</sup> December. Late in the afternoon, *Albany* steamed away, carrying the officials and all the witnesses to Derby.

There, a jury found Maximo Medallion, a Manilaman, guilty of the manslaughter of a Malay named Hossein at Cygnet Bay, for which a sentence of ten years' penal servitude was imposed. The witnesses returned to the bay by the lugger *Sea Walker*.

*Florence* was now back at Unjurmurr being repaired, having apparently met with some accident. Camped nearby at a waterhole were prospectors Bates and Simpson, who were looking for gold and other minerals for a Broome syndicate. Bates came over to stay on *Fanny Thornton* while waiting for the next steamer.

Between his regular daily patrols of the beaches and visits to the schooners, Phillips spent a day aboard *South Australian* with other luggers working beyond Pearl Passage in the mouth of King Sound. Having stripped that area of its shell several times in preceding years, the pearlers had little success. Only at neap [minimum] tides can 'apparatus' divers work there, the spring tides being so strong they cannot stand up in the current. 5

Word reached Cygnet Bay by the middle of March that Constable Phillips was to be withdrawn, prompting Frank Biddles to sit down and draft a petition requesting that he be allowed to stay until the lay-up ended early in May, and that a constable be stationed at the bay again when the next lay-up began in December.

Biddles pointed out that disturbances among the 'nearly 300 aliens of mixed nationalities and creeds' generally took place at week-ends and holidays when they were ashore and beyond the control of the handful of pearling masters.

Retaining his petition until later in the month to obtain the additional signatures of Captains Henry Lee, John A. Reddell and Robert Barter, Biddles then forwarded it to Sub-Inspector Ord at Derby, whose recommendation of acceptance to the Commissioner of Police at far-away Perth had a favourable result. 6

The pearling masters were much less responsible in some of their dealings with Bardi people however. Needing substantial quantities of food for their multitude of Asian employees, many of whom were signed on at Dutch colonial ports such as Kupang on the island of Timor under Articles of Employment which specified fish in their rations,

*"Old Biddle [Frank Biddles] always gave our people dynamite to 'shoot' fish. Goodergai, who the white men called 'Jimmy', got a stick from him and took it up to the Point where he saw a big mob of fish on the bottom. He lit the fuse, held the stick until the fish came together, then threw with the fuse already gone."*

*"The explosion blew off his hand and half his forearm. His head was alright, though maybe he got a bit of the power [concussion]. We called him 'Dynamite Jimmy' after that."*

*"Later, a man the whites called 'Charlie' asked the same boss for a stick, saying he would*

*get fish for his Malay crews and everyone. Looked around too long, fuse gone, hand gone."*

'Dougal'. 7

Never having had timepieces, the Bardi of the 1890s had no knowledge of the thirty second, or other brief intervals, in which fuses burned down. Nor did they know about the unreliability of some fuses. And some of the pearling masters did not take the trouble to teach them.

At a Bardi camp near Unjurmurr, Phillips was given information on the 15<sup>th</sup> March about the whereabouts of Brongna, known as 'Johnny', who was wanted by the police for allegedly killing an Aboriginal woman at Derby two years previously. Harry Hunter provided horses the next day and rode with the constable to 'Mardina' water-hole.

The Bardi family camps there were in a line on high sand-hills with dense thickets behind them into which individuals could easily escape. Most families also kept dogs so it was impossible to surprise more than the first few camps.

Approaching in the early evening, the white men kept watch from a distance overnight, then closed in at first light. A woman known as 'Louie' who had absconded from employment in Derby escaped as they did so. Brongna was not among the forty people who remained.

Phillips had to content himself with shooting six of their dogs, a routine action of police patrols which was deeply resented by the animals' owners.

Continuing along the coast, Phillips and Hunter camped near Aboriginal people at 'Meligut' water hole, journeyed on at 6 am, eventually reaching Cunningham Point where they were told that Brongna had left two days earlier, heading for a place some sixty miles [97 km] south.

Not having police horses, Phillips could go no further. Before turning back, he was obliged to shoot four of his informants' dogs. On the return journey, the white men found 'Mardina' completely abandoned.

*Fanny Thornton* was beached on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March for hull cleaning and repairs. Two days later, Captain John A. Reddell disembarked from *S.S. Albany*, having spent part of the lay-up at Sydney.

Inevitably, some of the pearlers paid a heavy price for sending their luggers out for short working trips before the end of the dangerous summer. During the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> March, Captain Hemsworth's 11 ton lugger *Peter* was blown onto a reef in King Sound. Unable to get her off the next day, the crew removed her diving pump.

Hemsworth and his men went out to her again on the 27<sup>th</sup>, this time accompanied by Constable Phillips, but now a high sea was running and *Peter* became a total wreck. At less than four years old, she was one of the newest boats in the pearling fleet and had been owned by Hemsworth for only a few months.

Even so, the next day Robison and Norman's eight luggers left the bay for the Lacepede Islands under the command of company clerk W.H. Hymus, with Captain Lee planning to follow in the schooner *Mist* after the completion of repairs. Only six days later Lee received news that one of the eight, *Orion*, had capsized in a *cock-eye* near the islands and sunk. The crew were safe.

Frank Biddles must have been anxious for some of his own luggers which had been working for several weeks near the eastern shore of King Sound, some seventy miles [113 km] away. Though it offered good shelter from tropical storms, that area was notorious for fierce tidal currents, rips and whirlpools among the scores of islands and reefs, and for the very deep water in which so many 'apparatus divers' had fatally contracted 'the bends' that one bay became known as 'The Graveyard'. All returned early the following month.

Constable Phillips' first job on the 28<sup>th</sup> March was to visit Hunter's camp at Unjurmurr. On the following day he was there again and was given information which he recorded as a special report for his superior at Derby police station. Verbatim:

Cygnets Bay.

Corporal Pearson

H. Hunter made me the following report wishing me to send it to you:

Ab. Nat. Prince alias Mondolgol who has been a considerable time in my employ had absconded & become very troublesome, also threatening my life. Knowing that this native was implicated in Ricardson's & Shenton's murders & coming across him while looking up some of my boys who were away on leave of absence, I brought him in & put him in irons on 27<sup>th</sup> inst: On 28<sup>th</sup> inst: I left Sch. 'Willie' with said native still in irons intending to take him across to P.C. Phillips. Knowing some of these natives were wanted. While en route across, a breeze freshened up & I took irons off native in order that he could help me work the boat & I did not consider it safe to leave them on with such a breeze blowing: while standing out Prince suddenly jumped overboard & swam away to windward with the tide: I endeavoured to pick him up but he kept diving & avoiding me, & as the breeze was blowing fresh being single handed I could do nothing. Thinking the native certain to reach the shore I returned Knowing it useless to attempt more. I make this report as natives inform me they have seen nothing of Prince since on my making enquiries as to his whereabouts.

G.H. Phillips P.C.

This report was later autographed by Corporal Pearson, then passed to Sub-Inspector Ord, who appended, 'this man will very likely turn up again', before forwarding it to the Commissioner of Police.

At 8 pm on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> March, Constable Phillips received a letter from Captain Biddles complaining that three 'natives' would not return to their duties. Two hours later he went ashore, made his way to a Bardi encampment about two miles away, arrested 'Corny' and 'Mackie' and took them back to *Fanny Thornton*, where he left them in irons. Two days later, he surprised the same camp at daybreak; 'Leggy' was soon sharing his compatriots' fate.

Early in April, Biddles reported that Thomas Navarro had refused duty and gone ashore. The policeman retrieved him. After two days and nights in irons aboard the schooner, which had now been re-launched, Navarro decided to work again and was released.

Captain Hemsworth left the bay with his remaining three luggers for the *Lacepedes* on the 7<sup>th</sup> of that month, taking with him Captain Lee who wanted to find his *Orion*; sometimes it was possible to raise and repair sunken craft. At Lee's request, Phillips took up residence on schooner *Mist* during his absence.

Captain Reddell summoned the constable to *Ethel* at 7 am on the 9<sup>th</sup> April to witness the discharges of three crewmen. As the new pearling season for 'apparatus diving' vessels was now beginning in earnest, presumably these men had proven unsatisfactory or had declined to sign on with Reddell again.

Having heard that fugitive Brongna might be at 'Meligut', Harry Hunter notified Phillips, who reached Unjurmurr at 10 pm on the 16<sup>th</sup>, took a boat to a spot four miles from his destination, walked there overnight and rushed the camp at 5 am. But if Brongna had been among the sixty or so Bardi residents, he had already left.

Next morning *S.S. Australind* anchored off the bay for three hours on her way to Derby. The policeman went aboard as usual, where he again met Bates and Simpson who now intended to prospect on the islands in King Sound. Three weeks later he came across them on Sunday Island, where they told him they had been unsuccessful and were returning to Broome.

Now the pearling masters were making their final preparations before putting to sea for the new season. Some only needed more crew. The problem was solved on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> by the arrival of *S.S. Sultan* bringing a substantial number of men from Singapore.



When a policeman was stationed at the bay, it wasn't necessary for the pearlers to take recruits right down to Cossack to be signed on, or even to the nearer, newer ports of Derby or Broome. The officer had the authority to do it then and there, which is what Phillips did that afternoon for Captains Biddles and Reddell.

The following morning he did the same for Captain Lee, who put to sea in *Mist* within twenty-four hours to join his luggers already working around the Lacepedes. Deprived of his accommodation, Phillips now had to camp ashore temporarily.

Biddles left with his *Alto* and *Fanny Thornton* on the 24<sup>th</sup>, also bound for the Lacepedes. Reddell set off in *Ethel* three days later to join them. Only the schooner *Dawn* remained at the main lay-up area now, still undergoing lengthy repairs, with Captain Barter and family in residence and the policeman also living aboard.

Unable to transfer their shell to a 'mother' schooner at sea and obtain supplies from her, thereby enabling them to remain on the pearling grounds for weeks or months at a time, Barter's luggers came into the bay with their catch on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May and sailed again for the Lacepedes two days later.

Across the bay at Unjurmurr, Harry Hunter was still preparing the little schooner *Willie*. Phillips went there on the first two days of the month. Hunter brought horses to him on the 5<sup>th</sup> with the request that the constable accompany him in a search for some of his Bardi crew, who were on leave.

The two rode northwards along the coast by Pearl Passage, visited a homestead at or near Swan Point, then turned westward towards Cape Leveque. At several camps along the way, the constable told men 'belonging to' Hunter to return to *Willie*, which they did.

Three days later Hunter and Phillips took a whale-boat to the Roe Islands in the mouth of King Sound, picked up four of Hunter's men, camped there and returned to Cygnet Bay via Sunday Island the next day.

With the lay-up sites now empty except for the schooners of Barter and Hunter, there was little further work for Phillips to do. For the same reason, the steamships were due to stop calling at Cygnet Bay after the 10<sup>th</sup> May, so the officer left that day for Broome on *S.S. Australind*. 8

Nine days later, a mounted police patrol from that town led by Constable Percy, looking for Brongna, reached Harry Hunter's place where they rested their horses for two days before riding on. At Cygnet Bay they saw the body of Cockagin lodged in a tree. On lowering it to the ground, Percy found it to be well preserved, the skin dry and unbroken. Told by Bardi people that it was their custom to dispose of their dead in that way, Percy replaced Cockagin in his tree. 9

In the meantime, Hunter and his crew had put to sea in *Willie*, sailed out of King Sound, then followed the coast of the Kimberley region to the north-east, fishing not for pearl shell but for the large caterpillar-like creature known as beche-de-mer or trepang, which was greatly esteemed in China.

On these annual voyages, Hunter would call at Montgomery Reef. At high water, the two sandy Montgomery Islands and their rocky islets look unpromising, but as the tide falls, more and more of the surrounding reef is exposed until some 115 square miles [298 sq km] lie revealed when the sea level is 36 ft [10.97 m] lower.

Here, for ages past, local Aboriginal people had hunted dugong, turtle, many kinds of fish and shellfish and exploited most of the other resources of the largest reef on the Kimberley coast. On the two main islands, where yams and fresh water were available, they constructed drystone-walled accommodation.

They ignored beche-de-mer however, leaving it to the 'Malay' islanders who had used prevailing trade winds to regularly visit this coast for several generations. Now Hunter and other whites were harvesting that crop too.

At Montgomery Reef, Hunter's crew bartered food for one of the *barrawarra* or dug-out canoes used by the locals and later made them on the Dampier Land peninsula; craft of that type may have been a 'Malay' introduction originally. Then *Willie* sailed on for the north coast of the Kimberley region and of the colony.

Hunter brought his ship home nearly three months later:

Broome, 4<sup>th</sup> August.

Pearling continues slack, shell being very scarce. The schooner Willie arrived a few days ago from Vansittart Bay where she has been engaged in a beche-de-mer expedition. Mr. Hunter, the owner, is well pleased with his trip, and has a good cargo of fish for shipment.

*Western Mail* [Perth], 6<sup>th</sup> August 1897.

Brongna stayed ahead of white man's justice for another year. His luck and skill ran out at 5.30 am on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1898, when Constable John zum Felde and Native Assistants 'Billy' and 'Charlie' rushed an Aboriginal encampment in the south-east corner of the Dampier Land peninsula. Chained and shackled, he was delivered to Derby police station six days later. <sup>10</sup>

As for 'Prince', the Bardi man who allegedly jumped from Harry Hunter's boat in King Sound, Sub-Inspector Ord was mistaken; he did not turn up. 'Prince' was never seen again. Aboriginal men did not speak to Harry Hunter as he had done and get away with it, especially when there was a bonus to be had:

*"Sometimes a man disappeared. Then Harry Hunter took the wives and the big girls for himself."*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Seven

### Hadley Repents

*"Hadley stayed a little while at Maralginun, the other side of Malumb [near Swan Point]. When I went that way with my parents, I saw that house used by him and 'Frenchy' D'Antoine."*

*"Our old people told me he got a silly head there, mad-silly. He made them put him through one of our initiation ceremonies which at that time included circumcision and cutting underneath [sub-incision]. He didn't go through our other initiation ceremony. This was before he became a missionary."*

*"Afterwards he sailed to Forrest River with two Djawi-speaking brothers from Sunday Island [who white men] called 'Jumbo' and 'Paddy', found the missionary there and talked-talked for a while. Then he brought the brothers back, looked all around this district, looked at the anchorage and the creek at Sunday Island, went ashore, found a site which he marked out with stones and sticks, built a house and shifted there from Maralginun."*

*"In those days, all the islands in King Sound, right across to 'The Graveyard' on the eastern shore, belonged to the Djawi people. On the Kimberley mainland beyond, the Aboriginal people spoke another language."*

*"Hadley sailed round the islands, bringing the people and their children to Sunday Island. From High Island, he brought the 'Wigan' mob. From Long Island, he got 'Lion', 'Coomeran' and their families. From Mermaid Island, the 'Alec' mob [and so on]."*

*"Before school, he filled the children with porridge. Old people got tucker and the workers too. The rest didn't get much, just a bag of wheat, like flour. His Japanee [sic] cooky-man Shigeno sometimes made bread for everyone."*

*"A white man called Omerod arrived to do the school-teaching."*

'Dougal'. 1

About 1898, Sydney Hadley landed a trans-shipment cargo at its destination and disappeared. When months passed without news of him, it was assumed at Cossack that he had been lost at sea, a common occurrence in those days. 2

In fact, he had sailed some five hundred miles [800 km] north-east to the apex of the Dampier Land peninsula, where he and other pearler-blackbirders used to capture Aboriginal youths for diving, and which he once leased in partnership with Harry Hunter.

There, while staying at the place Bardi people call Maralginun, he persuaded the elders to initiate him into their religion and culture. Though not approving of the idea, they nevertheless did it properly by putting him through the first of the two major initiation ceremonies that every male had to pass through to attain Bardi manhood at that time.

The prolonged ritual included circumcision and also sub-incision, the longitudinal cutting open of the urethra on the underside of the penis, formerly performed with a blade of chipped stone and now with bottle-glass. Occasionally, initiates died following sub-incision when the flow of blood could not be staunched, even by the *djungagurs* ['witch-doctors'].

None of the survivors ever forgot the pain. Asked to describe his own experience more than sixty years after the event, 'Dougal' screwed up his face so tightly that his brows and cheeks almost met, lowered his head and slowly shook it back and forth.

Opening his eyes long minutes later he gasped, but still could not speak. When he did so, he clearly could not find adequate words in English. Finally, he condemned sub-incision as a wicked, wicked practise which his people had abandoned later.

Hadley's initiation seems to have been a cathartic experience at which he rejected his former way of life including his gross exploitation and treatment of Aboriginal people, and made a commitment to them. For him, it was as much a rite of passage as it was for the young Bardi initiates, albeit of a different sort. According to one report, he was allotted three future Bardi wives.

Leaving 'Frenchy' to occupy Maralginun homestead in his absence, Hadley returned to Cossack where he stayed at A.S. Thompson's boarding house. He told the Thompsons, or allowed them to believe, he had been found in a bad state by Aboriginal people who had looked after him.

His hosts apparently knew nothing of the location, Hadley's longstanding connection with the Dampier Land peninsula, or his initiation. He had become religious though, and refused to have his hair cut, which hung below his shoulders, until he had atoned for his past. He soon found the opportunity. <sup>3</sup>

In 1897, the colonial government created a reserve of 100,000 acres [40,470 hectares] around the Forrest River in the far north-east of Western Australia and authorised the Church of England to establish a mission to the Aboriginal people there. Having had missionary experience in Queensland, Harold Hale, son of a former Anglican Bishop of Perth, was chosen to lead the enterprise. <sup>4</sup>

The Aboriginal population of the new reserve had little reason to welcome white men. Thirteen years earlier, the Stockdale expedition had landed on their coast, trekked inland and soon made it clear they had not come to make friends. Even to watch them from a distance was to invite rifle fire.

One expedition member rode his horse into an Aboriginal camp, was struck on the shoulder by a stick, so fired his shotgun into the chest of a man, then into a group of women and children before departing. Later, the same individual shot an old man who stepped into his path as he rode towards a group of playing children.

Other shootings followed before the whites withdrew from the area. As they moved away to the east, Harry Stockdale was compelled to leave two of his companions behind to await a rescue party. Unsurprisingly, neither was seen again.

Two years later, the Victorian Pastoral Company arrived with two thousand sheep. Camping first at nearby Gundah River, the newcomers soon found some sheep speared and their horses deprived of manes and tails, probably for the manufacture of Aboriginal hair belts.

After a few months, the Company moved to Dadaway lagoon where they built a stone-walled homestead beside great fat boab trees. Mrs. E.W. Wilkes gave birth there to the first white child to be born in the district but it failed to survive. A mighty boab with a cross carved upon it became the infant's headstone.

Pleasantly situated though the homestead was for its occupants, Dadaway had long been a meeting-place, ritual centre, food and water resource of the local people, who were now deprived of these things. Their resistance continued until the whites gave up a year or two later, drove their sheep around Cambridge Gulf to the tiny, recently-established settlement of Wyndham on the opposite shore, where the animals were sold.

The names of Stockdale's party and the pastoralists, as well as the cross, survived for decades on the great trees of Dadaway. <sup>5</sup>

While the Forrest River people were left to themselves for the next ten years, they would have heard of the intrusion of white cattle-men into other parts of their region, the resistance of their compatriots and the retaliation of the whites.

At Behn River, for example, Constable Collins was fatally wounded while trying to make an arrest for alleged cattle-spearing, so his colleagues shot, 'twenty-three natives...before they could be driven off', according to the subsequent police report. As the death of a single Aboriginal combatant in the north-west of Australia usually ended hostilities at once, this explanation for the violent death of twenty-three is probably erroneous. Such a loss of able-bodied men must have been catastrophic for the thinly spread indigenous population. <sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the omens for Hale's mission were not propitious. Wyndham police recorded that he, 'Omered [*sic*] Gethercoth [*sic*] & Lennox' left in a sailing boat for Forrest River on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1897. Having been expected back within four days, some apprehension was felt by Resident Magistrate Fred. Pearse at their non-appearance, so a police party which included the local doctor and an Aboriginal tracker set sail at 9 am on the 30<sup>th</sup> for Wilkes Landing on the river.

They returned the same evening, having met the missionaries on their belated way to Wyndham, where the latter reported finding 'splendid country' around the Forrest River but no

people. After more than a week at the port, the four missionaries were supplied with an Aboriginal prisoner from the local jail and left for the mission again. The prisoner decamped with their dinghy before the end of July, possibly because he feared being in alien Aboriginal territory.

In the second week of September, Hale and Lennox took another Aboriginal prisoner to the mission. Wyndham police spent several days there late in the month, finding all well, and a constable accompanied by one Geo. Evans took two more Aboriginal prisoners to the missionaries the following February, where Hale reported that both the previous prisoners had absconded.

However, although the police recorded the missionaries' intervening and subsequent visits to Wyndham, often adding that all was well or quiet at the mission, they did not record any contact between Hale's party and the Forrest River people at all.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> April, Lennox and 'Gartercole' arrived at Wyndham. Because there is no record of 'Gartercole' [perhaps Gathercole] leaving again for the mission or any further mention of him in the Wyndham Police Occurrence Books for the rest of the year, it seems likely that he left the mission altogether that month.

Probably brought to the port by Omerod, Hale reported on the 16<sup>th</sup> May that he had been speared in the left arm the previous day and that Aboriginal people had taken away the mission cutter and were knocking it to pieces. He asked for police protection for Lennox, now left by himself at Forrest River, and for the cutter, which he feared would be completely destroyed. The doctor confirmed that Hale's wound was serious.

Within hours, Sergeant Abram Evans had brought three volunteers before Resident Magistrate Pearse, where they were sworn in as special constables, reported by telegram to the Commissioner of Police at faraway Perth, then with Native Assistants 'Charlie' and 'Billie', set sail for the mission accompanied by Omerod. Six days later, the police party returned with nine Aboriginal prisoners, names unknown, all charged with possession of parts of the mission cutter. Three were also charged with spearing Harold Hale.

Using a prisoner from Wyndham Gaol as interpreter, the first Police Court hearing against the now-named detainees had to be adjourned because Harold Hale was still in hospital. When the case went ahead on May 28<sup>th</sup>, the five men found guilty of the first charge were sentenced to six months Hard Labour each, the rest acquitted.

On the charge of spearing Hale, one was acquitted and the two found guilty received fifteen strokes of the cat-o'-nine-tails each and a further two years Hard Labour.

At 3 am the next morning, Constable McGinley and Native Assistant 'Charlie' left Wyndham for Forrest River, taking the four acquitted men back and to visit Omerod and Lennox at the mission, as requested by Harold Hale. McGinley subsequently reported all was quiet there.

In the Wyndham Police Station Occurrence Book, there is no further mention of Harold Hale at all, suggesting that he did not return to the mission. The police made several trips across Cambridge Gulf to the mission in June and July, on one occasion accompanied by Resident Magistrate Pearse, finding all quiet there each time. Of the two remaining missionaries, only Lennox came to the town in the same period and only once. He did so 'in a small boat', the mission cutter having not been recovered.

This was the situation when Sydney Hadley and the two Djawi brothers from Sunday Island arrived at Forrest River in the cutter *Dove* towards the end of July 1898, more than a year after the mission began.

Leaving Hadley there, Omerod and Lennox with three 'native assistants' sailed *Dove* to Wyndham on the 14<sup>th</sup> August, reported that a number of friendly Aboriginal people were now camped at the mission, and returned three days later.

Having seen and heard nothing further of them for almost a month, a police patrol visited, finding that the mission had been attacked on 17<sup>th</sup> August during which Hadley had been speared in the shoulder, though not seriously. Two or three days later, while Omerod, Hadley and the native assistants were down at the river landing repairing *Dove*, Lennox was clubbed at the mission building while cooking dinner. One of the assistants found him outside unconscious on the ground, though he was unconscious on his bed by the time the others got back.

Omerod suspected that the two local Aboriginal boys they had recently employed were responsible, but asked the police not to punish them or make the incident public.

Lennox was well enough to make a one-day visit to Wyndham with Omerod and two of the Forrest River people on 15-16<sup>th</sup> September. A number of the Aboriginal people were camped close to the mission house and came for food every day, they reported. When the police went there near the end of the month however, they were told that the local people had broken *Dove's* mast, cut her mainstay and made her unseaworthy. Six were still camped at the mission, among them one very old, infirm, blind man, two old women, and a little boy.

Early in October, Omerod and Lennox came to the town in a small boat and reported that all the Forrest River people had left the mission. Lennox had decided to leave too; he was among the passengers aboard *S.S. Albany* when she left Wyndham on the 7<sup>th</sup> October for remote Fremantle via intermediate ports.

The following month, it seems that Wyndham resident James Kirkland temporarily joined Omerod and Hadley at the mission; he had previously visited in April and was one of the volunteer special constables who had gone there with the police party in May. With Omerod, Hadley and two 'native assistants', he returned to the town early in December, when Omerod took the opportunity to conduct a well-attended church service in Wyndham Court House.

With the exception of the 9<sup>th</sup> December, when Omerod and Hadley reported 'all correct', there is no further entry about the mission or its staff in the Wyndham Police Station Occurrence Book until that dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 1899 [verbatim]:

Messrs Omerod & Hadley & two Nat Assts arrived in Cutter *Dove* from the Forrest River Mission Station bringing the balance of their belongings which are to be sold on Tuesday next the 24<sup>th</sup> Inst The Mission Station having been Abandoned.

At the public auction, fairly good prices were said to have been raised, except for the cutter *Dove* which was bought by Daniel C. Sack, proprietor of the Wyndham Hotel, for only £19-10-0. Three days later Omerod, Hadley and two Aboriginal boys whose names the police recorded as 'Sambo' and 'Punch', left the town on board *S.S. Albany* for the south. <sup>7</sup>

A contemporary newspaper article reported that Omerod arrived at Fremantle on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February, describing him as one of the last two members of the Forrest River Mission to the Aboriginies. Hadley, the paper said, had disembarked at Broome. <sup>8</sup>

The latter returned the boys to their Sunday Island home, then went ahead with a plan he had evidently been considering for some time. Having been a pearler, blackbirder and landholder around the Dampier Land peninsula for years, he knew that Aboriginal women and children were in far greater need of protection in that area, where rapacious pearling crews were common, than they were at Forrest River, where there were none.

Yet because the Bardi and Djawi no longer put up concerted armed resistance, had grown accustomed to the presence of whites and Asians, and knew of the Catholic mission at Beagle Bay, there was a much greater probability that a mission in their district would be accepted and successful. Omerod had expressed an interest in helping him when told of the plan. <sup>9</sup>

A good boat was essential. If he considered vessels for sale at Broome, Derby and Cossack, he didn't find what he was looking for, so went much further south to Shark Bay, where boats were generally smaller. There he bought a five ton cutter.

Known as *Elsie* throughout his long ownership of her, and perhaps at purchase, this little boat did sterling service in difficult and often dangerous waters for many years. Coincidentally or not, Elsie was also the family name of Hadley's only sister Elizabeth, who was a little girl when he left England in the 1870s.

On his way back, Hadley gave a lift to a Mr. Thompson as far as Broome, then examined various sites on the peninsula and the islands of King Sound before deciding that Sunday Island, largest of the latter, was the most suitable. <sup>10</sup>

About this time, Hadley heard that Harry Hunter had applied for pastoral leases of the north Dampier Land peninsula and Sunday Island amounting to about half the acreage the pair had jointly leased from 1885 to '89.

When writing to Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep at Perth, requesting official sanction for a mission on the island, Hadley enclosed a supportive autograph letter from the Sunday Island brothers, mentioned Omerod and their common experience at Forrest River, asked for a resumption of his former lease on the island and expressed the hope that running costs could be met by the collection of beche-de-mer.

Pleased he hadn't been asked for financial support, Prinsep made the island a reserve, granting tenure to Hadley and Omerod 'at the will' of the Aboriginies Department, providing satisfactory quarterly reports were received. Before Omerod left Perth for the north, he probably met the Chief Protector and his family; the Department certainly presented him with twenty-five blankets for the new mission.

A furious Hunter now bearded Hadley, saying that the latter should have come straight to him for the lease, as he would have given it at once, being in agreement with Hadley's desire to help Aboriginal people. Hunter did not pay the rent on either of his new pastoral leases in May 1899, thereby forfeiting both tenancies, suggesting he had had specific plans for Sunday Island which had been foiled by Hadley. <sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, the latter had marked out a plot at the side of a fertile, well-watered Sunday Island valley high above King Sound, where Djawi families had lived from time immemorial, built a stone-walled house, moved from Maralginun on the peninsula bringing some Bardi people with him, sailed *Elsie* round the easterly islands gathering more families, summoned Omerod, then written on the first page of a book,

Sunday I. Mission. Founded July 1<sup>st</sup> 1899. Undenominational. <sup>12</sup>

Some years later, a visiting official unwittingly identified some of Hadley's reasons for selecting this particular site for a mission to protect Aboriginal women and children from rapacious pearling crews:

'...I suppose it is one of the most difficult places to get to on the face of the Earth. One has to cross Escape Pass[age] notorious for whirlpools and dangers of its tides. The landing place could not be found in a year without a guide. It is only to be made about two hours of each tide. On landing a precipice two hundred feet high must be climbed - goods are hauled up with a rope...the place reminds one of the Smugglers Retreat of melodrama.' <sup>13</sup>

Being one of the best known and most colourful individuals on the north-west coast of Australia, Hadley's changed life and apparently reformed character were the subject of speculation for years to come. Not content with the fact that he had become openly religious, some thought that he must have 'seen God' in a literal sense, as a vision or apparition.

Others imagined the Grim Reaper had caused the change, Hadley supposedly having found himself at death's door after a shipwreck or other catastrophe, despite the lack of evidence of any such incident. Nor did the new man ever make such claims himself.

The true explanation may have been more complex and extended. Montague Sydney Hadley was born at Brunswick Square, Littleworth, Gloucester, in the west of England on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1858, third son of Joseph Leonard Hadley, a corn merchant who co-founded Gloucester's City Flour Mills, and Elizabeth Lukey Hadley. His grandfathers were Samuel Hadley, a timber merchant and miller who employed 25 men and 2 servants in 1851, and Edward Bretherton, a cheese factor.

Baptised and brought up as a Wesleyan Methodist like all his family, the boy moved with his parents to London about 1860, where his father and uncle Jonah established J & J Hadley, City Flour Mills, 1 & 2 Upper Thames Street. His father also became one of the trustees of a Wesleyan chapel and was no doubt an influential figure in local Christian life. Christian ideals were probably instilled in Montague Sydney from his earliest years.

So too was the strongly hierarchical class structure of mid-Victorian England, into which he had been born at an elevated level. To people of his class, the great majority of the population constituted 'the lower orders'.

On the other hand, as third son of an affluent, successful mercantile family, he had no prospects of eventually filling his father's commercial shoes and little chance of achieving the same economic level himself.

In due course, the boy was sent away to school at Clevedon College, Northampton, in the English Midlands. From midsummer 1873, he spent a year aboard *HMS Worcester* moored in the River Thames, the ship having been loaned by the Royal Navy to the Marine Society for training nautical apprentices, mostly for the merchant marine. Although the Admiralty allowed the ship's name to retain its HMS title, the vessel held only honorary Royal Naval Reserve status; it did not fly the White Ensign and the trainees were not R.N. personnel.

There, Hadley's academic ability was rated very good throughout, finally earning him an honourable mention for some of his work, whereas the Commander found his conduct to be troublesome at first, though improved later. The boy was a messmate of Heihachiro Togo, a young Japanese destined to become one of the world's great Admirals.

Sydney Hadley left England about 1876 and by the following year was on the north-west coast of Australia. Supported by payments from home, he was a 'remittance man'.<sup>14</sup>

From England, north-west Australia was extremely remote in 1877. Up to three months of travelling were necessary to reach it. Once there, Hadley was effectively exiled from his family and country, and from the values, standards, class structure and economic level of his upbringing. When he wrote home, he would have been lucky to receive a reply within six months.

Unsurprisingly, there is some later evidence that he suffered periodically from depression, though it was never incapacitating. Provided with some money but little else, and finding himself in hard-drinking, hard-living company, it is also unsurprising that he too turned to drink.<sup>15</sup>

At that time, even educated colonists had little knowledge of traditional Aboriginal life, culture and religion. Seeing people lacking almost every material asset they themselves aspired to - houses, money, agriculture, domesticated animals other than dogs, pottery, metals, written language, clothes - they commonly and mistakenly assumed an equivalent poverty of mind.

As invading settlers, many colonists probably tried to salve their consciences by regarding the displaced indigenous people as 'savages' who scarcely merited consideration. Even churchmen saw them as needing salvation from barbarity as well as sin. To the young, often drunken Hadley, they probably seemed below the lowest social level he had previously conceived of.

A slow change in him seems to have begun in the 1880s, no doubt encouraged by the chastising hand of the law. Most of his convictions for ill-treating other races, if not all, occurred before the middle of that decade.

By the beginning of the '90s, he had clearly chosen to work with Aboriginal people rather than Asians, because his vessels were in a very small minority which still used Aboriginal swimming divers, despite the fact that such divers limited shelling to inshore or relatively shallow waters and to the dangerous summer months. Nor were they cheaper than the 'apparatus' divers, partly because of their much greater numbers.

All of them were now from the Dampier Land peninsula, where they were almost certainly persuaded to sign on by offers of desired goods, rather than forced, and where Hadley knew their families and chose to maintain a home. Long years in their company may well have bred understanding, respect, sympathy and shame for his earlier treatment of them. During the '90s too, colonists generally began to adopt a more humanitarian approach to Aboriginal people.<sup>16</sup>

Hadley was also maturing. When he became forty in 1898, he had spent more than half his life in the colony and must surely have come to terms with his situation. If alcohol had helped to assuage his earlier pain, it could certainly not offer him a happy future. From later years, there is an allegation which, if true, suggests that he may have suffered occasionally from mental problems more severe than depression, possibly caused or exacerbated by his decades of heavy drinking.<sup>17</sup>

And so instead of undergoing a sudden change of character, he had probably long been approaching the moment when, at Maralginun near Swan Point, he simultaneously punished himself, identified with Aboriginal people and committed himself to them by persuading the elders



of the Bardi people to initiate him into their culture and religion, which included the excruciatingly painful, potentially life-threatening rite of sub-incision.

When Harry Hunter, with 'Frenchy' D'Antoine present, refused to let a red-painted Hadley board his vessel at Cygnet Bay until he had washed off the ochre that covered him, he remonstrated with someone wearing the bright symbol of newly-attained Bardi manhood, who had rejected his misspent past, given up alcohol, made a profound and bloody commitment to Aboriginal people, and was prepared to take up again the Christian values of his childhood. <sup>18</sup>

## Chapter Eight

### Time and Tide

*"When Mr. Hadley started his mission on Sunday Island, I was already at Harry Hunter's. My Daddy and Mother went there to work for tucker, tobacco and some clothes. He was a 'cheeky' [aggressive, dangerous] fellow, but a good boss, that England-man."*

*"Tall, good-looking, blue-eyed, Harry Hunter wore a white shirt, long khaki trousers, lace-up boots and the revolver. Sometimes he took the shirt off while he worked. He had good muscles, no fat, no chest hair, no pictures [tattoos] or scars. Hadley became round."*

*"He'd wear legging boots, right up, when he went walkabout-horse, taking with him a long whip for whip-cracking people, his rifle, as well as the revolver. For a voyage to town he was all white, white shirt, white silk trousers, white silk coat, white boots. We hardly recognised him. Under the coat was the revolver. He never let that go."*

*"Harry Hunter didn't smoke cigarettes or a pipe. No, never. Once in a while he got a cigar; he would smoke that. He hardly ever drank either. Sometimes he got a bottle but I don't know how long he kept it. Hadley pipe-smoked all the time."*

*"When Harry Hunter heard my 'bush' [Bardi] name, Djoulgar, he named me 'Dougal'. Most white men gave us names to suit themselves."*

*"Once, when I was little, he beat me. He told me to take kerosene in a beer bottle to the carpentry shop. I said, 'no'. Later, when he was working in the shop, he told me to work. I told him, 'no'."*

*"'Come here', he said, getting a stick down from the lot he kept up top. He caught me by the hand and gave me plenty! He didn't play! Sometimes he broke sticks over us! We children had no clothes then, not even girls. We wore a rag."*

*"He gave me work carrying things along his jetty to his boats, but not as crew. I worked with Jack and Christy Hunter and his other sons. He treated me the same as them and I ate at the same table. He was a good boss if I was good."*

'Dougal', with contributions by Jack Hunter.

Some of Hunter's older employees also had problems in 1899, though not at the hands of their good boss. A short, slight white man in his late twenties known as 'Sharks Bay Ned' apparently tried to walk from Broome to Hunter's current homestead near Swan Point, which had become known as 'Sharks Bay'.

That unguided journey of some 135 miles [217 km] through wild, tropical country with little surface water nearly killed him. When he was long overdue, Broome police contacted their colleagues at Derby who despatched Constable T.A. MacKellar and Native Assistant 'Charlie' with four horses on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June to look for him.

But it was a trek of at least a week to reach Swan Point at the apex of the Dampier Land peninsula, with no certainty of picking up Ned's tracks. Fortunately, Bardi people had already found him and helped him to reach Hunter's place by the end of May.

As the police neared their destination on the 12<sup>th</sup> June, they overtook Bardi people assisting another European to Hunter's base. Like his predecessor, A. Read or Reid was in a bad state and almost certainly owed his life to his rescuers.

By that time, Hunter's schooner *Willie*, captained by 'Frenchy' D'Antoine, with Arthur Hay as mate, had put to sea on a beche-de-mer fishing voyage to Admiralty Gulf on the north coast of Western Australia, a revived 'Sharks' Bay Ned' among the crew. <sup>1</sup>

While the schooner was away, Harry Hunter set about converting a whale-boat for pearl shelling. He had decided to follow the example of Frank Biddles, John A. Reddell and most of the other pearling masters by using a single diver encased in helmeted 'diving dress', at least on one of his vessels.

A modified whale-boat would be big enough to support one such diver but still too small for numerous swimming divers. And it could fish at the Graveyard and other places on the east coast of King Sound, where the water was too deep for swimming divers and dangerously deep even for 'dressed' divers, as the area's name testifies.

*"He made it bigger, put in a two-handled [air-] pump, pipes, helmets and all sorts for proper divers. Boats [cobbled together for pearling] like that were called cockroaches."*

*"He already had a Manilaman to be bosun and diver. That white man Hart [Arthur Hay] would pull up the diver. He was the tender - that's the proper name in pearling."*

*[After the return of the schooner] "Harry Hunter sent them out during the dry season work-time, Hart in charge, Manilaman, and Bardi men Sampi, Fida, 'Albert' and 'Peter'. At Swan Point they anchored overnight to wait for the tide to turn in their favour."*

*"'Albert', who was a proper djungagur-man ['witchdoctor'] felt danger, great danger, so he told his countryman Fida they must leave the boat at once. 'All right boy', Hart replied, when asked if they could sleep on the beach that night. 'Send a dinghy for us in the morning', they said."*

*"As 'Peter' rowed them ashore, they told him of the danger he was in, urging him to return the cockroach's dinghy, then swim back to the beach and escape with them. But once he was aboard the cockroach again, 'Peter' stayed there, singing [ritually] because of his fear. 'Albert' and Fida left for their own country at Willie Point."*

*"When Hart found them gone the next morning, he sailed to Malumb, on the way to Cygnet Bay, where he got three young Bardi men, Dibbi, Cockruss and 'Bismark'. Now he was ready to cross King Sound to the Graveyard coast, where pearl shell was to be found at depth."*

*"But he got caught half-way. The tide's strong there, very strong sometimes and so fast that long rips appear. Next, whirlpools open around the islands. Only if there's a good wind can a sailing boat steer clear of danger."*

*"Hart didn't savvy that. He set off in a light breeze which died altogether. 'Can we get through?' he shouted to the crew, above the roaring water. 'No', they told him, 'She's finished now'."*

*"When the Manilaman heard that, he pulled out his knife, leaned his head back and cut his own throat. Hart drew his revolver, put it here, and blew a big hole in his own head. The Bardi men jumped in the water."*

*"A whirlpool grabbed the boat, pulled her right down, then let her go, throwing her out of the water, high, high. When she fell back, the whirlpool caught her again, pulled her to the bottom where she smashed."*

*"Water bubbled and jumped all around. Dibbi and 'Peter' were carried by the tide-race far down King Sound. It's like a main road there, the tide sweeps straight through. When it turned, it carried them back, but by then they'd swum across the flow and washed up on an island sand-beach."*

*"'Peter' lay on his face. Couldn't move. Dibbi got a piece of driftwood, rubbed-rubbed the end on a stone, making a point. On the reef, he speared a fish and brought it back. A dingo was with 'Peter', a tame one, belonging to people. It led Dibbi to fresh water, showed him the place. After that, the people arrived."*

*"Cockruss and 'Bismark' were beaten and beaten by the water to the other side [of Sunday Straits]. They got ashore there and came back later. Those four were all right. They lived on."*

*'Dougal'. 2*

Remembering these events seventy-two years later, it is understandable that 'Dougal' pronounced Hay's name as 'Hart' and supposed that the Manilaman was the vessel's diver, as many of them were in the 1890s, rather than Hay himself. On the other hand, he was probably reliable about the rest of the story because he knew all the survivors for years afterwards.

Hunter's report on the tragedy appears to have been written before the last living crewman made his way back. In the attached crew list, he followed the usual white man practise of substituting English nicknames or 'aliases' for Aboriginal names; his Davey was Dibbi, Charley was

Cockruss and Stumpy was Sampi. 'Bismark' and 'Peter' had become known by those names even among their own people. Verbatim, except for Hunter's alterations:

Schooner Willie  
Swan point  
Oct 20<sup>th</sup> /1899

To The Inspector of Police  
Derby

Dear Sir /

On The Evening of Wednesday Oct 18<sup>th</sup> inst - Mr S. Hadley Arrived at my camp, in company With two of my native Servants - Who report the Foundering of The Lugger Gutter-Snipe, in Sunday Straights, With the loss of nearly all hands.

The Lugger belongs to myself, and Was in Charge of a White Diver, named Arthur Hay of London - Who had With him a manilliuman for tender & mate named John Mathews, With a native Crew of five men from Cygnet Bay Whose names are herewith inclosed.

The Lugger left the Willie at Swan point On Oct 7<sup>th</sup> last With a months Stores on board, And Was to go to Cygnet Bay to look for the Schooner Kate for the purpose of getting Some medicene and picking up two more native crew has he only had three natives With him When he left.

if he Did not get What he Wanted from the Kate, he Was to have gorn on to Derby -

From thence he Was to have gorn to the Graveyard to Work - the natives State that he left Cygnet Bay About Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> and Went to point Cunningham & anchored for the night - in the morning they Started to Cross the Sound for Long Island - but could not get across and came back to point Cunningham and anchored again - next morning they Started Again for Long Island, And as there Was Very littel Wind they Drifted through Sunday Straits - it then fell calm, and the tide Was takeing them towards Some Very heavy tide rips, they got out the Oars & tryed to pull her from the rips, but could Do no good, they then tryed to put the hatches on - but could not get the Wheels of the pump off in time, And She Drifted into the rips, the Seas breaking aboard in all Directions And filling her up, She then Went Down head first in Very Deep Water.

The Survivors State that all the Native Crew came up to the Surface, but the White man & manilliuman Went Down With the Lugger And One native crew Went Down Again after haveing come to the Surface And Was Seen no more - the Other four native crew got hold of Some Spars that came up And Drifted out to Sea With the tide - When the tide Came back two of the crew got ashore, on which, I think must be mermaid Island. the Other two Drifted through Sunday Straits Again, & up towards point Cunningham - When the tide turned again they Drifted back towards Sunday Island, but before they could reach the Island, one of them let go his hold & Went Down, & the Other althrough he tryed to help him could do nothing - but managed to hold on & got ashore on Sunday Island Some time through the night - thus as far as I can make out there are four lives lost Out of a company of Seven -

I am Asking mr Hadley to take two of the Survivors up to Derby With him, as he is leaving for Derby about Saturday next - they Will Enable you to make any Enquiries you may Wish to make - hoping this Will reach you Safely.

I Am Sir  
yours Faithfully  
H. Hunter

#### List of native Crew

Davey alias		
Charley ..	Survivors	
Stumpy		Cygnat Bay Natives
Bismark alias	Lost	
peter ..		

---

Arthur Hay Diver of London in Charge [Lost]  
John Mathews tender of Maniliu [Lost]  
Both the Diver and tender Where Able Seamen  
natives Where Signed before Mr Warton &  
mr Male

H. Hunter 3

Sub-Inspector Brophy of Derby cabled the Commissioner of Police at Perth on Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup> October with slightly different details, presumably after interviewing the two survivors Sydney Hadley took to Derby. According to Brophy, two Aboriginal crewmen got ashore on Sunday Island after fifteen hours in the water and everyone else drowned. He did not think there was any possibility of recovering bodies.

Three days later Brophy forwarded Hunter's letter with a covering note which remarked, 'Mr. Hunter is a large Employer of native labour and has a big plant Engaged in the pearl & Beche-De-mer fishing and the loss of the boat will Come Heavy on him as I understand She was not insured.' 4

Harry Hunter sailed *Florence* to Derby for the official Court of Inquiry, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> November. Current Resident Magistrate Dr. C.M. Deane, acting in his role as Sub-Collector of Customs, and Henry Field J.P. accepted Hunter's hearsay evidence on the names and numbers of the dead, apparently without calling the survivors, and found that no further enquiry was necessary. 5

The loss of *Gutter-Snipe* was not the only pearling tragedy of 1899. From his brigantine *Anthons* lying off Broome late in September, Captain Frank Biddles wrote to Derby police saying he intended laying up his fleet with its hundred and seventy employees of mixed nationalities at Cygnat Bay between December and April.

Noting that Captain Reddell would probably also be there with over seventy crewmen, as well as other pearling masters, Biddles asked for a constable to be stationed at the bay for the same period, who he would assist with the loan of a boat and in other ways.

Sub-Inspector Brophy forwarded the letter to the Commissioner of Police at Perth recommending refusal on the grounds that pearlery laying-up elsewhere would also want a constable if Cygnat Bay had one. Instead, a policeman and a tracker [Native Assistant] should visit occasionally, he suggested. The Commissioner concurred. 6

Nevertheless, Biddles went ahead with his lay-up plans, which included obtaining a lease on two acres of foreshore in the north of the bay, near the wreck of the schooner *Venture* which had been beached nine years earlier after running onto a local reef. There, Biddles built a carpenters' shed for the repair and maintenance of his fleet. 7

He was wrong about Reddell though. Patrolling north of Broome early in November, Constable John zum Felde received a message from Sergeant Charles H. Watson to search the west coast of the Dampier Land peninsula as far as Beagle Bay for wreckage; Reddell's brigantine *Ethel* was missing.

For the next six days zum Felde did so, covering many miles on foot while his Native Assistant 'Bobby' took their horses around the creeks to rendezvous points. At Beagle Bay he despatched four Aboriginal people to search the coast northwards as far as Cape Borda, and another two with a letter to Harry Hunter at Swan Point, alerting him to the situation and requesting enquiries among the Bardi people along the coast of King Sound.

While searching the coast again as he returned towards Broome, zum Felde met 'H. Weben a Malay' [probably Henry Weebyn or Werbyn, a well-known pearler] who had come to the mainland for fresh water and firewood from the Lacepede Islands where he was shelling. There was no sign of recent wreckage or bodies on the west side of the islands, 'Weben' assured him, adding that he would bring bodies to Broome if he found any. 8

About the 19<sup>th</sup> October, *Ethel* had left her anchorage off Broome, supposedly for the pearling grounds to the south-west where Reddell's luggers were working. Yet soon afterwards, Frank Biddles saw her unaccountably sail north-west. The crew of the schooner *Nellie* also reported having seen *Ethel* northwards bound. Suspicions of mutiny having been aroused, Broome police contacted Perth, from where cables were sent to various Dutch colonial ports north of Australia, among others.

The reality was worse. Captain Reddell, his nineteen-year-old son Leslie Harcourt Reddell [known as Jack] and ship's mate and carpenter Jim A. Taylor had been stabbed and hacked to death by some of the crew who threw their weighted bodies into the sea. During the next week or so, 'Jimmy', the sole Aboriginal crewman was shot dead, then Ando, a Japanese, was killed with a tomahawk. They too were consigned to the deep.

When the Tanimbar Islands, east of Timor, were sighted, the mutineers and surviving crew took to the ship's boats as *Ethel* was scuttled. Once ashore, Chinese cook Pooh Ah Ming found an opportunity to slip away, the authorities were alerted, the mutineers eventually arrested and extradited back to Western Australia.

After a five day trial at Perth, four Manilamen and a Dyak from Borneo were all found guilty of the murder of Captain Reddell and sentenced to death, the other four charges of murder then being abandoned.

At Fremantle jail, in the cool dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1900, ringleaders Pedro de la Cruz and Peter Perez met Mr. Burrows, the hangman. 9

## Chapter Nine

### A Pearling Mission

*"One spring Hadley went pearling, worked away the whole season. He didn't do that again. Besides, a missionary shouldn't work full time."*

'Dougal'.

By early December 1899, Sydney Hadley had erected a second substantial building on Sunday Island, this one having thick stone walls and an iron roof to accommodate all the mission's stores.

As the first warm rain of tropical summer began, he was digging and lining a well in the large kitchen garden he was establishing. Striking water only some two feet [61 cms] below the surface, his well assumed the form of a tank.

Next, he planned to fence off the garden with some of the galvanised wire recently shipped to him on *S.S. Albany*, so that he could accept some of the many goats he had been offered. A sizeable flock would provide meat and milk continuously. To generate income, he had shipped away at least one consignment of beche-de-mer and had another ready to go.

Schoolmaster Omerod was instructing three classes a day, of young men, boys and girls, was pleased with their progress and intended teaching them hymn-singing.

But only twelve miles [19 km] to the south-west, pearling vessels were returning to Cygnet Bay for their annual lay-up. Anticipating that many island men would be drawn there by the inducements the pearlers had to offer, Hadley hoped he could at least keep their women safe at the mission. He probably hadn't yet heard that a constable would not be stationed at the bay that summer.

With a letter to Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep at Perth, the missionary sent a map of Sunday Island on which he had delineated in red a fifty acre [20.2 hectares] site that included his buildings and garden. Would the CPA reserve this area for the mission?

The first month of the new century brought an epidemic of influenza to the island which laid low almost the entire Bardi and Djawi population, the men being more severely affected than the women. Hadley, who remained healthy, could not use his labour force to generate more income for the mission.

With some help, he completed the garden fence, started the goat flock, plastered the outside of the new stone-walled store with lime mortar and began the construction of another building, this one intended as a school and accommodation unit. Though vulnerable to snakes, his flock of hens was thriving and laying daily.

Omerod did not escape the epidemic, then fell victim to an eye infection. When recovered, he found his attempts to photograph the mission and its residents undermined by his inability to develop the pictures.

Apart from a couple of short thunderstorms, the summer had provided heat and humidity but little rain by the end of January 1900. That changed early in February when *Elsie* was blown out of King Sound onto the shore of Disaster Bay while *en route* for Derby.

An eight mile [13 km] walk took Hadley and his two-man crew to the local Catholic mission, an outstation of Beagle Bay Mission, where they got shelter. Ten days of hard work were needed to refloat the cutter, whose relatively undamaged state suggests she must have landed on mud or sand.

Rain fell heavily for the next two months, as it usually did after a serious summertime 'blow', flooding Hadley's garden so completely that a drainage system was needed to take the water off. White ants [termites] had in any case destroyed most of the seeds.

The latest building was completed by April, despite the fact that the Sunday Islanders had lost interest in working for the mission. At first, Hadley attributed their changed attitude to the after-effects of illness but when that was no longer credible, he decided that the soon-to-be-disbanded pearling camps across the water were to blame.

Consolation lay in the fact that the school children and most of their mothers had remained safely on the island. During the Easter school holiday, Omerod and *Elsie* took the boys to the Lacepede Islands to find turtle and sea-bird eggs.

On their way back, they called at Beagle Bay Mission where two large buildings had been blown down and the banana plantation severely damaged during the February *willy-willy* followed, some two weeks later, by a fire which destroyed another building together with all the medicine, books and clothing stored there.

Even so, the Trappists charitably imparted many tips on tropical horticulture gleaned from their ten years' local experience, together with banana, fig, pawpaw [papaya], guava, sweet potato and bean plants or seeds, most of which were soon thriving on Sunday Island.

But many of the young men who returned to the island from Cygnet Bay after the departure of the pearlers had contracted a 'very loathsome skin irruption that discharges', apparently from cast-off clothing obtained from the crews.

Hadley and Omerod prescribed frequent washings and the application of a solution of carbolic acid. The captain of the *Anthons* [probably Frank Biddles, at that time] recommended the same treatment, saying the problem was common among the employees he obtained from the island of Timor.

With less justification, Hadley also blamed the pearling crews for his failure to make spiritual progress with the islanders. His concerns about the various difficulties created by the crews led him to ask Henry Prinsep for authority to be vested in himself or Omerod to deal with them.

Replying to Hadley's last two letters together, the Chief Protector wrote that there was no need to reserve ground for the use of the mission as the whole of Sunday Island had been set aside for that purpose. He ignored the request for special authority however, believing, according to an inter-departmental memo, that it might worsen the situation.

Having been approached by the British Museum for Aboriginal stone implement heads in various stages of manufacture, with the tools used in making them, and photos of the construction processes, Prinsep asked Hadley to oblige. The latter was unable to do so, having seen only one stone axe head, which he had already disposed of.

The Bardi and Djawi had been in regular contact with whites and Asians for at least twenty years, during which they had quickly exploited the potential of introductions such as bottle glass, various ceramics and metals, adapted them to their own purposes and substituted them for traditional raw materials whenever they proved superior. And they now routinely used European tools and implements, when available.

Sunday Island Mission had been in existence for less than a year when, in May 1900, Hadley first experienced financial problems. As the nights became cooler, he was unable to supply everyone with a blanket and his latest building could not be completed due to lack of funds. Because it would cost him nothing, he planned to erect the stone walls of a new house for the missionaries and finish both buildings when money came to hand for bought-in necessities.

Beche-de-mer had been almost fished out around the local islands, depriving the mission of its planned means of support. On the other hand, Hadley found the attitude of the islanders much improved and believed the young men would be willing to go on a pearling voyage instead.

Because he would be using swimming divers, the law prevented Hadley from following to sea the pearlers who had recently left Cygnet Bay in their 'apparatus vessels' equipped with helmeted suits for their divers. Instead, he would have to wait until late in the year, then fish through the next storm and cyclone-prone summer, when the majority of pearling vessels would be safely laid-up again.



It is a measure how much the Sunday Islanders now trusted and appreciated Hadley that many of them were prepared to engage in this risky activity during the most dangerous time of the year, probably far from their 'country'.

However, even a successful voyage would provide little income until the following year. By June his financial difficulties compelled Hadley to write to the Aboriginies' Friends' Association at remote Adelaide, South Australia, offering to put his mission in their hands.

Notifying Prinsep of this move, he asked whether the government would be prepared to help the mission in any way, as an alternative. While sympathising, the Chief Protector said he would await discussions with the Association before giving his views.

Having obtained all the requisites needed to complete the two latest buildings, plus six months' stores for the mission and his crew, almost certainly by means of loans, Hadley chartered the small schooner *Una* and left the island on the 13<sup>th</sup> September for Derby to sign agreements with his seventeen crewmen as required by law.

He returned briefly on his way out of King Sound, leaving finally on the 20<sup>th</sup> with sixteen islanders, whom he described to Omerod as the most splendid lot of shellers he had ever sailed with. Discussions with the Aboriginies' Friends' Association were shelved while he was away.

In his absence, Omerod was to finish the current buildings and if possible start another for the women and girls. Omerod had recently been replaced as schoolteacher by new missionary recruit Stephen Ketchler, who now also became responsible for the kitchen garden.

Being in charge of the mission during Hadley's absence, it was Omerod who next wrote to Prinsep with a required quarterly report, this one dated the 7<sup>th</sup> December. He was progressing slowly with the building work, had received a few pounds in donations from friends in Victoria, and the banana plants had become a flourishing plantation in a thriving kitchen garden.

Only thirteen or fourteen children were regularly attending Ketchler's classes because few adult islanders were now being fed at the mission, compelling them to forage elsewhere on the islands with their offspring. If Omerod's latest photographic efforts were successful, he would send Prinsep a picture of the mission. Finally, he slipped in a request for financial support for two blind islanders who could not fend for themselves.

Ten days later, Hadley wrote to Prinsep from the tiny port of Onslow, south-west of Cossack, reporting that his crew were well and had already raised enough shell to cover the expenses of the whole voyage, so whatever was obtained in the remaining four months would go to support the mission.

Well aware of the threat from sharks and other marine hazards, his islanders asked for a blessing every time they went out to dive from their small boats. They worked the schooner, dived by themselves and entered fully into the spirit of supporting their mission despite being paid no wages.

As a result of their success, Hadley lost interest in the Aboriginies' Friends' Association, though his need to secure long-term support for the mission remained. To that end, he asked the Chief Protector if the government would help him maintain aged and decrepit islanders.

To make the mission self-sufficient in meat and provide readily saleable salt beef, he arranged with pastoralist-pearler George Streeter to buy cattle at £3.10.0 each when he called at Broome on his way home. Forrest and Emanuel's station on the Fitzroy River was to supply a young bull.

Working the reefs, shoals and bays back to the north-east, *Una* had reached Hadley's old stamping-ground of Cossack by the middle of January 1901, by which time his men had raised, cleaned, packed and shipped away three and a half tons [3556 kg] of pearl shell. <sup>1</sup>

Cossack was now in decline, partly because of its particular vulnerability to *willy-willies*, and partly because other ports had developed along the coast to service the mineral and pastoral enterprises inland. Many pearlers now preferred Broome on Roebuck Bay as a base.

Numbers of longstanding Cossack residents had decamped, including A.S. Thompson's family, who left for Fremantle the previous year. To the rest, Hadley's reappearance as the master of a pearling vessel carrying Aboriginal swimming divers must have seemed superficially like old times. <sup>2</sup>

The reality was so different as to be scarcely believable. No longer was he a hard-drinking, occasional brawler and law breaker who exploited and victimised other races.

Though still very much a character, the new Hadley was as changed as a man could be, a teetotal missionary working with a volunteer crew to support an enterprise devoted to Aboriginal people.

At Cossack, Hadley received a reassuring letter from Omerod and wrote to Prinsep asking for a bale of blankets to be sent to Broome, his next port of call, to supplement Hadley's own supply so that all the islanders would be provided for when the hot summer nights gave way to cooler conditions.

At the end of her long voyage in March or April 1901, *Una* anchored in Roebuck Bay, where Broome had become the rip-roaring, multicultural, chief pearling port on the north-west coast of Australia. Brothels co-existed with other businesses on every street, and drinking, gambling and fighting was the order of every day and night. Few crewmen went back to sea from Broome with any money at all. <sup>3</sup>

By landing a total of five and a half tons [5588 kg] of shell, Hadley's abstemious men had every reason to be proud of themselves for they had secured their mission financially for the current year. His claim that 'no pearls to speak of' had been found in that quantity of shell is questionable.

No doubt some of the revenue was used to liquidate the debts he probably incurred in starting the mission, in providing for it while he was away and in financing the pearling voyage, debts tacitly acknowledged in a May letter to Prinsep.

At Broome, Hadley bought four cows in calf, four heifers and a young bull. Apparently obliged to give up *Una* at the port, he had to leave the animals there too until he could arrange their shipment to Sunday Island because *Elsie* was too small for the job.

Back at the mission, he found everything in good order. Despite a drought, which was a consequence of the cyclone-free summer he and his crew had enjoyed, the garden had produced a large supply of sweet potatoes, melons and beans. Nor had the banana trees suffered too much; they were just beginning to fruit.

There was more good news. Chief Protector Prinsep had agreed to pay six pence a day towards the maintenance of each old or incapacitated person wholly supported by the mission, this being the first public money offered, so Hadley submitted a list of two men and four women which included the two blind people mentioned by Omerod. These six, and another ten old people were also given a blanket each from the bale collected at Broome. <sup>4</sup>

And yet, even as the sunny, calm, cloudless days of the middle year took over, a storm of a different kind began to gather over Sunday Island.

## Chapter Ten

### Boolgin Days

*"Near Cunningham Point with another white man, Harry Hunter caught an Aboriginal man. First camp they made after leaving the Point, the captive seemed to be ill, though he sat up in the morning to watch them. Lifted across a horse, he began to slip off, so they decided to leave him."*

*"As the white men were riding away, he sat up again to watch them over the long grass, not realising that Harry Hunter was watching him out of the corner of his eye. Harry Hunter untied his bull whip, shook out the coils, turned back, rounded the man up and drove him non-stop to Boolgin [about 31 miles/50 km from Cunningham Point] without any water, in that heat."*

Jack Hunter.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1900, during the same storm that blew Sydney Hadley's *Elsie* out of the water further down King Sound, there were numerous casualties at usually-sheltered Cygnet Bay, where vessels lost their masts, rails, rudders, anchors and chains. Two of Robison & Norman's went missing.

The ex-Forrest River Mission cutter *Dove* was broken up, its current owner T. McGee thoughtlessly leaving firearms and ammunition in his camp at Skeleton Point when he departed for Broome.

Of those blown ashore, Frank Biddles' *Ada* [or *Eda*] was successfully re-floated but Harry Hunter's 30 ton schooner *Willie* dragged her anchors while being driven onto rocks and was totally wrecked, her master 'Frenchy' D'Antoine lucky to escape with his life. She had returned to the bay only the previous day. You can see her bones there now at low tide. <sup>1</sup>

Built at Fremantle twenty-one years earlier, she had apparently spent her whole working life on the hazardous north-west coast of Australia, where she twice survived cyclones in 1887. Sailed by Hunter and D'Antoine at least since '97, her loss was reported to the authorities by the former, whose address was recorded as Cygnet Bay. <sup>2</sup>

In the space of four months, Hunter had lost *Gutter-Snipe* and *Willie*, both uninsured and probably uninsurable at an affordable rate. The latter alone was reportedly valued at £250, a significant sum in those days. He was left only with *Florence*.

The timing could hardly have been worse. From a nadir about 1895, the value of pearl shell began to rise again, then soared at the end of the decade. Suddenly everyone wanted to get into pearling, driving up the price of suitable vessels and even cockroaches.

Boat-builders at distant Fremantle soon had more orders than they could fulfil. Carpenters, and those who thought they were carpenters, piled into the trade.

Unable to afford a recently-built schooner to replace *Willie*, Hunter bought the larger but already aged *Media*. To replace *Gutter-Snipe* and maintain his pearl-shelling and beche-de-mer fishing operations at their previous level, he had to build vessels himself. <sup>3</sup>

Moreover, he could exploit the present demand for boats by building them for others. And by staying ashore as a resident boat-builder, he could continue to enjoy his many Bardi 'wives' every night.

He had already moved to a new, more suitable location between Cape Leveque and Swan Point, where a sand bar on the coast hides the entrance to a beautiful creek. Mostly dry at low tide, but otherwise full of multicoloured tropical fish, its mangrove-lined sandy bed up to three hundred yards [274 m] wide, it meanders inland about one-and-a-half miles [2 km] to flat-topped sand hills, where Bardi people had camped from time immemorial. They called the creek *Ondon* and the place *Boolgin*.

Beside a great banyan tree below the sand hill camps, Hunter built a homestead, carpentry shop and forge, sank a well and began a vegetable garden. He named it 'Cape Leveque Station' at first.

Boat-building in those days was very labour intensive, especially in the absence of a supply of already prepared wood, or even a steam-engine-driven mechanical saw.

To obtain planks, Hunter had to find suitable trees in the bush, often miles from Boolgin, fell and strip them, transport them home, allow the wood to dry thoroughly out of reach of the ubiquitous white ants [termites], secure a trunk horizontally above a pit or vertically in a frame, then repeatedly saw it lengthways using a hand saw, every individual tooth of which had to be carefully sharpened with a file at frequent intervals.

To obtain the numerous curved portions of hull frames known as crooks, he had to find branches or small trees of appropriate size and curvature, cut them down, carry them back and dry them before preparation could begin.

Having brought the forty or so Bardi and other Aboriginal people he had gathered at his previous homestead near Swan Point, 'Dougal' and his parents among them, and more from Unjurmurr, Harry Hunter found he still needed more labour.

Because he did not have employment agreements with the new recruits, he could not ask a constable to round them up for him, so he used the recruiting sergeants which had served him well for over twenty years, the lash, the chains and the dire threat of his ever-present, frequently-demonstrated revolver.

Apparently self-taught as a boat-builder, he now constructed his first complete vessel, a big cutter which he generously named *Black Boy* after the men and youths who compulsorily helped. <sup>4</sup>

In a letter to Broome police late that year, Hunter reported the violent death of a Bardi man at Cygnet Bay. Traditional Aboriginal law and order was continuing to deteriorate, largely as a result of the profound changes wrought by Harry Hunter and other incomers. Hunter's letter continued [verbatim]:

There has also been a lot more "trouble,, among the native, On account, of Some "Beagle Bay,, natives Stealing Woman from up this Way | About Six Day ago a little 'Boy,, About two years of age Was brought to me in a State of "Colapse,, he had been Struck On the head With a "Kylie,, And the Skull Was Fractured, the Father had taken a peece of the "Skull,, About the Size of a Sixpence,, Out from his head, and his "Brain,, had been "Injured,, and Was trickleing Out of the hole,

I Did the best I could for the 'boy, And Strange to Say he his Still alive, I have him under my Care, And I think he Will recover. this Was the result of two men fighting, About a Woman that had been Stolen by One of the men that Was fighting, I Will render the police Any Assistance they may "require,, to Obtain any further unformation, or to arrest any of the "Natives,, Should my Services be of any use, And Should the police ask me for assistance - <sup>5</sup>

Much later, Harry's son Jack remembered that the boy had been brought slowly down the sand hill, supported by women, his brain coming out. Harry pointed to it, asking the women in pidgin English if they had touched it. They had not. He took a basin of warm water, carefully put the boy's head in, washed off the sand and dirt into which the child had fallen, then gently wobbled the head until the brain moved back into the skull. The women had brought the piece of missing skull, so Harry washed and replaced it, before sewing up the child's head.

Harry Hunter, who had not always been gentle with Aboriginal people, could not be faulted this time. Some seventy years later, an old man known as 'Dinga Pedro' died at Beagle Bay Mission. He'd been a pensioner for some time. 'Dinga Pedro' had been that boy. <sup>6</sup>

*"A long time before Cape Leveque lighthouse was built, a big steamship wrecked near Garding [Swan Island, off Swan Point] while on her way between Broome and Derby. She buggered-up half-way. After Derby, that steamer wanted to go to Wyndham, Darwin and on, but no*

good, she was finished. Captain Talboys left her there, on the Karrakatta Rocks that were named after her."

"And that bay on the mainland also named after her, that's where a big mob of white men from the steamer set up camp. They got there in the steamer's whaleboats and launches."

"Two big schooners with yards on their topmasts were laid up in Cygnet Bay. Mr Old Biddle from Queensland was the boss there. He sailed *Alto* up the coast, picked up those people including some ladies and took them to Broome, where he sent word to the Queen and government in England. They sent back to Harry Hunter, giving him work on the steamer."

"All right, from Black Boy, Harry Hunter's white-man-diver Scotty dived down inside the wreck and pushed cases up half-way, then his Bardi men swam down and brought them up to the cutter. If something was too heavy, they left it inside."

"I was a big boy then. I knew what was going on and could remember."

'Dougal'.

In the second half of March 1901, the annual lay-up of pearling vessels at Cygnet Bay was coming to an end. The oppressive heat and humidity of tropical summer was declining, and with it the danger of *blows/willy-willies*.

Captain Frank Biddles arrived from Derby on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month to oversee final preparations of his topsail schooner *Alto*, brigantine *Anthons* and fleet of luggers. Five days later, seventeen luggers put to sea to begin the new pearl shell fishing season.

At 2.00 am on the 26<sup>th</sup> March, *S.S. Karrakatta*, 1271.47 reg. tons, most modern and luxurious of the four steamships which then regularly plied between Fremantle and Singapore via the isolated ports of the Australian west coast, left Broome on her way north.

Passing between the Lacepede islands and the west coast of the Dampier Land peninsula, she rounded Cape Leveque about 6.00 pm the same day, then anchored off Boolgin, waiting for the tide to turn in her favour. Not even a powerful steamship could safely pass Swan Point into King Sound against the locally-intense oncoming tide.

Some three hours later, the tide turned, swinging the vessel. At 9.30 pm, her anchor was weighed and she proceeded at half-speed on a course that would take her past Swan Point and its island. The visibility across the calm moonlit sea was so good that islands up to twelve miles away were clearly visible. Just after 9.45 pm, her course was altered slightly towards the north. About five minutes later, she struck rocks.

The first impact was hard, the second very hard, stopping the vessel dead. Finding the ship remained fast after he had stopped the engines, Captain Harry Talboys ordered soundings to be taken within the ship. When Chief Officer Edward Hillman reported seven feet [2.13 m] of water in No. 1 hold and five feet [1.52 m] in No. 2, Talboys ordered both anchors to be let go, the pumps to be manned and the boats to be provisioned and prepared for launching.

When the ship struck, Chief Engineer David Wyles went straight to the engine-room where he found that the boilers had been displaced and were leaking water and steam, so he ordered their fires to be drawn and the fires of the donkey engines, which powered the pumps, to be lit. He also notified Talboys that water was rising below the engine-room.

Using lead-lines, Talboys and Hillman sounded the depth of sea around the ship, the former finding three and a half fathoms [21ft / 6.4 m] abreast of the foremast and up to six fathoms [36 ft / 10.97 m] aft. Within No. 2 hold, the water was nine feet deep [2.74 m] at 10 pm. *Karrakatta* was sinking, bow first.

Captain Talboys transferred the men at the pumps to assist in putting the boats out, ordered all hands and passengers to be ready to abandon ship, then went down to the engine-room, where he saw the stoke hole plates submerged. At 10.15 pm the fires of the donkey engines were quenched. As there was nothing more his firemen could do, Chief Engineer Wyles sent them to assist in the general evacuation.

At 10.45 pm, the tide turned, swinging the ship violently and causing her to list heavily to port, which flooded the cattle deck and shifted her cargo of timber. The anchor cables started to run out before being checked. Only her anchors now prevented *S.S. Karrakatta* being torn off the rocks by the fast-running tide and sinking completely.

Talboys ordered everyone into the boats, which he kept at the ship's side because of the strength of the tidal flow. At 11.00 pm, the sea broke into the after part of the vessel, sending water rushing up the ventilators onto the deck above. As *Karrakatta's* stern submerged, she returned to an even keel.

At midnight, two boats cast off, carrying engine-room firemen, second-class passengers and others, their crews having instructions where to land. Fires on Swan Point Island an hour later showed they had reached safety. By 3.00 am on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, only the bridge and mast of *Karrakatta* remained above water, her decks now being swept by a tidal current so strong that Captain Talboys ordered the other boats, full of people, mails and provisions, to cast off, and left with them.

All fifty-nine passengers and eighty crew got ashore safely. At daybreak, Talboys sent men southwards towards Cygnet Bay, just as Captain Frank Biddles put to sea from that bay in his topsail schooner *Alto*, heading north towards Swan Point and its island, on his way out of King Sound.

Talboys saw *Alto* approaching at 8.00 am, returned to the wreck and signalled the schooner as it rounded Swan Point Island, over which Biddles had already seen the *Karrakatta's* masts. The schooner hove to, Talboys went aboard, then Biddles sailed his vessel slowly round the wreck twice while a crewman sounded the depth of water, which confirmed that the steamer was aground on a raised area of sea-bed previously unknown to either captain.

Talboys and Biddles then boarded the wreck, where the latter took bearings similar to his colleague's, which established the position of the wreck and the rocks it was impaled on. Afterwards, some one hundred and nineteen survivors were ferried to *Alto*, which set sail for Broome.

Captain Talboys, his senior officers and some other crewmen transferred to a bay on the mainland south of Swan Point, where they were regularly visited by Bardi people during the days that followed. This was the bay where Harry Hunter had had a homestead and kitchen garden before moving to Boolgin.

Part of the area known as *Baringbar* by the Bardi people from time immemorial, it was named Karrakatta Bay thereafter by the whites, who also subsequently named nearby Talboys Point and Talboys Island. 7

From the top of the sand-hills at Boolgin, the *Karrakatta* could clearly be seen about three miles [5 km] away. Harry Hunter sent one of his Bardi employees to the police camp at Cygnet Bay with a letter saying a steamer was aground off Swan Point.

Constable John Zum Felde did not receive it until 6.00 pm however, too late to start a three or four hour ride to the Point. There by 11.30 am on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, the officer and his Native Assistant 'Bobby' could see the wreck, but no people.

An hour later, a whaleboat arrived carrying Captain Talboys, Chief Officer Hillman, Second Officer Gilbert Simpson, Chief Engineer Wyles, Customs Officer H. McLarty and four Asian men. Talboys explained what had happened, adding that his party was camping on the mainland with plenty of provisions. There was no shortage of fresh water nearby. Harry Hunter's *Black Boy* arrived at 3.00 pm with salvage from the steamer.

Next day, Customs Officer McLarty and the constable were taken by Hunter out to the wreck, from which they retrieved thirty cases of liquor before returning to the camp at 5 pm. Only at low water could salvage operations take place because of the fierce tides that swept and largely submerged the wreck at other times.

Constable Zum Felde was obliged to return to Cygnet Bay on the 30<sup>th</sup> March, where Biddles' brigantine *Anthons* and some luggers remained but he made a day-trip to Swan Point on the last day of the month in a whaleboat with *Anthons'* J. Walker. Talboys and McLarty reported all was well.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April, when his summertime duties in the district ended, Zum Felde rode once more to Swan Point, camped there for the night, and having been assured by Talboys and McLarty that his assistance was no longer needed, he spent the evening with Harry Hunter at Boolgin before beginning his long ride south to Broome early on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. 8

By the 7<sup>th</sup> April, Harry Hunter had landed a large quantity of salvage at Talboy's camp, which now boasted extensive, sun-defying awnings also recovered from the ship. That day, Water Police Constable H.R. Ellice disembarked from the schooner *SPS* [formerly *Sree Pas Sair*] which had brought him from Broome.

Apart from Talboys and Customs officer McLarty, he noted that nine members of the *Karrakatta's* crew were present at the substantial camp, including a cook and two saloon 'boys', that a considerable amount of salvage lay on the shore nearby and that salvage work conducted by Harry Hunter in *Black Boy* was continuing. The lugger *Fram* of O. Gunderson was lying in the bay.

At low water, Ellice was taken out to see the wreck. Well-known pearler and Master Mariner Thomas Hughes Owen of *SPS* sailed his vessel there too. Having been asked by Talboys to verify the position of *Karrakatta*, Owen went aboard with him, where both took bearings of permanent landmarks on the surrounding mainland and islands, then compared the results.

They matched, establishing again that the wreck lay in an area where no danger was shown on the chart. Owen also sailed his vessel around the steamer, taking careful soundings of the water depth, just as Frank Biddles had done, and additionally sent down a diver who reported that the damage was right under the wreck where it could not be rectified. The *Karrakatta* was fatally impaled on the rocks which have borne her name ever since.

The following morning, Constable Ellice served summonses on Talboys and the three officers who remained with him, returnable at Broome Police Court on the 10<sup>th</sup> April, for a Marine Court of Inquiry.

Shortly afterwards, *S.S. Australind* from Singapore anchored off Swan Point, enabling Ellice to send a telegram to Police Corporal Fred. R. Fox at Broome, with information and a request for instructions. Talboys and McLarty left for Derby at 10 pm in the *Australind* and three hours later *SPS* set sail for Broome.

With Frank Biddles' brigantine *Anthons* in tow, the steamer returned from Derby and anchored in the bay at 3.45 pm on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. She picked up all the salvage from the *Karrakatta*, the remaining crew, WPC Ellice and, with the wreck now abandoned to the underwriters, left for Broome at 11 am next morning. 9

*S.S. Karrakatta* had been purpose-built to the highest standards by J. Scott & Co. of Kinghorn, Fife, Scotland, less than four years earlier. Her owners, the West Australian Steam Navigation Co., had sent Captain Talboys to the U.K. in 1896 to supervise the fitting-out of the ship and to bring her to Australia.

She may not have been fully insured for her £50,000 - £60,000 value at the time of the loss, though her cargo probably was covered at £10,000. One of the passengers, a pearl buyer, was said to have lost valuables worth more than £1,000. 10

At the Preliminary Court of Inquiry convened at Broome on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1901 before Sub-Collector of Customs [and Resident Magistrate] Michael S. Warton and George Alfred Bourne, J.P., Harry Talboys' defence rested on the fact that the bearings taken by himself, Captains Biddles and Owen, all placed the wreck about half a mile [0.8 km] from Swan Point where the water depth was marked on the navigational charts of the time as being ten fathoms [60 feet / 18.3 m]. *Karrakatta's* maximum draught [depth] when she left her last port was 16 feet 3 inches / 4.95 m.

His evidence was supported by his own officers as well as Biddles and Owen. Consequently, the court concluded,

WE FIND that the steamship "Karrakatta"[of Fremantle, O/No. 102,212], was lost by striking upon an uncharted and unknown reef near Swan Point.

WE FIND that no blame attaches to the Master or Officers of the said ship.

WE AGREE that there is no case for an Investigation, and therefore all proceedings in the matter shall cease and determine under the provisions of 28 Vict., No. 2, 40 Vict., No. 4, and 50 Vict., No. 6.

[Sgd.] M.S. Warton,  
Sub-Collector of Customs, &c., &c.

[Sgd.] Geo. A. Bourn  
Justice of the Peace, Broome.

RIDER:-- We congratulate the master, Harry Talboys, the Chief Mate, E. Hillman, the Chief Engineer, D.D. Wyles, and the other officers on their successful efforts to save the lives of all on board, in a situation of difficulty and danger. We also commend the good conduct of the crew and passengers.

[Sgd.] M.S. Warton  
Sub-Collector of Customs,

[Sgd.] Geo. A. Bourn [*sic*]  
Justice of the Peace. 11

In the meantime, Harry Hunter had the wreck to himself. Every day, at low tide, his white diver Scotty, wearing a helmeted diving suit, descended into the flooded hull as far as his air- and life-lines would allow, to manhandle boxes and cases up to a depth that Hunter's Bardi workers could dive to without breathing apparatus.

Lighter items had already been flushed out by the powerful tides; pillows had floated across the mouth of King Sound and now graced many island beaches.

In three trips, *Black Boy* ferried cases to Hunter's jetty, where more workers took them ashore and lined them up. Most contained tinned food. A good big whaleboat - possibly a ship's lifeboat - left at Karrakatta Bay, was soon at Boolgin.

The wreck was being relentlessly tugged one way, then the other, with every reversal of the strong tidal flow. Only the rock on which she was impaled and the anchors kept her in position but as her hull plating loosened, their grip progressively weakened.

Hunter redoubled his efforts, stripping her of all the doors, windows and other fittings which could be reached, before turning his attention to the decks. Bearing in mind his problems in obtaining planks, those high quality teak decks must have seemed like a gift from the gods.

He removed every plank that was accessible before the vessel was torn off the rocks and sank completely in deep water some two weeks after stranding. She took to the bottom her substantial cargo of jarrah, a first-class native Australian hardwood, which was to have been used to complete an extensive jetty at Derby.

Though an ideal wood for boat-building, those baulks of timber were too big to have been retrieved by Hunter's divers from the intact hull. But once they had freed themselves from the sunken, broken wreck and floated up, he probably did land and use some of them.

Normally, Harry Hunter paid his Aboriginal workers and their families with food, chiefly white flour or damper [unleavened bread] made from it by his 'wives', also tobacco and some clothing. But he wasn't over-generous and didn't usually supply tea or sugar, which they had developed a taste for.

Periodically he killed a nanny-goat, ensured a fair division of the meat among the families, and sent a boat to the Lacepede Islands for turtle, a favourite traditional food of the Bardi people. Though he didn't celebrate Christmas himself, he was generous then. Every adult got extra flour, tea, sugar and sometimes even an alcoholic drink. He made them happy at Christmas.

Now too he was generous with tins from the wreck, the contents of which caused the Bardi to marvel anew at the undreamed-of flavours of 'white man's tucker'. At the following Christmas, he distributed more.



Having stored the majority of cases and attended to his livestock at Pender Bay - he was there when Thomas Puertollano, a stalwart lay worker at the missions further south, arrived in need of food and a horse - he set to work on the whaleboat.

No doubt using some of his newly acquired wood, he created another cutter, which gave years of service. 'Frenchy' D'Antoine was often captain. This may have been the boat he named *Yellow Boy*, after the 'Malays' who helped construct it. <sup>12</sup>

By that time, Harry Hunter had decided to dispense with his white divers, having found them unsatisfactory. Frank Biddles too found white divers less amenable to discipline than their Asian counterparts. <sup>13</sup>

So when three of Hunter's men came to the end of their terms of employment, he took them to Broome, where he told them,

*"Boys, we must shave before we go ashore. We'll take turns with the razor like this.' Shaving one side of his face, he left the other side and passed the razor to the first diver, who did the same before passing the razor on."*

*"When it came back to Harry Hunter, he finished the other side of his face and as soon as he was clean-shaven, he strolled over to the side of the vessel and dropped the razor into the sea."*

*"'Sorry boys,' he said, 'my hand slipped.' He knew they didn't have a razor between them. So the three white divers went ashore with half their faces heavily bearded. Everybody laughed."*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Eleven

### East of King Sound

*"When the rainy season was over, Harry Hunter sent his big schooner Media eastward, across the mouth of King Sound and up the Kimberley coast to fish for beche-de-mer. The crew were mixed, mainland Bardi and Sunday Islanders - he picked good men because the Aboriginal people where they were going were wild people at that time."*

*"Beche-de-mering is hard, hard work. They're animals, without legs or fins, which crawl or plant themselves on the bottom of the sea. The black kind are longer, thinner and fetch the best prices. You have to go up towards Admiralty Gulf and Vansittart Bay to find them. There's plenty of white ones around here now."*

*"You pull them up, take them ashore, boil them in tanks over mangrove or driftwood fires, put a stick through each, dry them in the sun, then smoke them over another fire inside a hut. They start out that long [60 cms] and end up that long [10 cms]. Chinamen want them for tucker."*

*"After a while, the men got tired of working and working. A big mob ran away, [having decided] to go home overland. Two pairs of brothers walked as far as Kuri Bay, where they got catamarans, one old, one new, and paddled off down the coast. Wild times! On the way, they met a local Aboriginal man, also on a catamaran, who asked where they were from."*

*"Two from Ungalianne, Newniun tribe and two from Garanus', they told him. White men call those places Long Island and Breadfruit Island, both in King Sound."*

*"The big stranger shouted for more of his people to surround them, then told the brothers from Long Island, Weegin and 'Ross', 'You go, we've no quarrel with you.' He told the other pair, who were young boys, 'Wait, we've got to fight!' There was a score to be settled."*

*"Both boys had glass [-pointed] spears and karlis but they were heavily outnumbered by the local men, whose country we call 'Lurie'. One boy was hit with a spear, then the other. Both were taken ashore dead."*

*"Weegin and 'Ross' made it back to Long Island, waited for more of the runaways, then they all crossed King Sound to the Dampier Land peninsula and walked up to the north, drawn by the smoke from the cooking fires of the pearling fleet, which was laid up in the bays and creeks by that time. Some came to Boolgin - it was Boolgin men that told me this."*

*"Meanwhile, the schooner Media was on her way home. She anchored at Hall Point, where one of the crew, 'Didi' from Garanus Island, was told that his two brothers had been killed. He savvied that language. 'All right, I won't be long, I'll get you fellows later,' he said."*

*"Media sailed on, anchoring again in Yampi Sound [still east of King Sound] where some local people were swimming. 'Didi' went ashore in a dinghy, gave the young man and girls some tucker, saying, 'Come to my 'country' and we'll give you reege [pearl shell head ornaments] and karlis.' He took the young man to kill him."*

*"At last the schooner sailed back across the mouth of King Sound, past Swan Point, then up the creek to Boolgin. Harry Hunter sent the crew away, so they took their guest to Budii Bay, near Malumb, where Bardi people from all over the north of the peninsula and Sunday Island had gathered [for a major ritual]. I was there, I met him. Pearling luggers were laid up there."*

*"When 'Didi', whose 'bush' [Aboriginal] name was Banbanbar, arrived three days later, he threw a spear so that it stood up in the sand as a sign that something was wrong. Having attracted everyone's attention, he told them of the killing of his brothers by countrymen of their guest. Someone picked up the spear."*

*"Old fella 'Grandi' went for the visitor, missed, then chased him. A big mob took up the pursuit, karlis struck him about the body - they told us children to go for a swim with a big girl a long way off."*

*"'Didi' couldn't spear him because he ran about calling for help from his own people. Told they had arrived, he was lured within range of someone with a hidden glass [-pointed] spear, which hit him. More followed, but he was already dead."*

*"Several men carried the body to a catamaran. I saw it, the tide was coming in. 'Gogos', a young man who belonged to Malumb, took the body out to a strong tide stream and threw it away."*

*"Later, an old man was on Boolgin bank, singing [ritually] to attract a turtle for himself. He sang for a turtle and got a dead man instead."*

*"Old Djinerib got the body, swollen up, without marks, and was so frightened that he didn't tell anyone for a long time."*

'Dougall'.

In those days, the very long, rugged coastline north-east of King Sound, bordering the region called Kimberley by the whites, was still largely the preserve of the various Aboriginal peoples who had inhabited it for untold centuries. Except for the formal exchange of women, goods or ritual, each people vigorously defended its territory against unwarranted intrusions by its neighbours or strangers, as Asian fishermen, pearlers, the Forrest River missionaries, and would-be white settlers had discovered to their cost.

Consequently, boat owners and captains were placing their crews in some danger when they landed there to obtain fresh water or set up beche-de-mer processing stations. The main group of deserters from *Media* during this voyage probably relied on their number and speed of transit through each territory to avoid attack as they hurried homeward overland.

The inhabitants of the mainland immediately east of King Sound had been at odds with the Djawi islanders for a long time. Physically bigger and more numerous than the Djawi, they had driven the latter from all the islands near their shore.

Even islanders living nearly half-way across the Sound had survived only by some intermarriage with their adversaries before Hadley brought them to the safety of his mission. Such relationships had saved the lives of Weegin and 'Ross'. <sup>1</sup>

From the 1880s, the mainlanders over there had themselves been under pressure from white pastoralists pressing into their territory from the south. Prolonged, sporadic resistance had led to a pitched battle with firearm-wielding, horse-mounted whites at Oobagooma, near the Robinson River, in January 1895, which left twenty-seven Aboriginal men dead. To the sparse indigenous population, such a loss was as profoundly shocking as it was huge. Three more Aboriginal men from that area were sentenced to death but not hung the following year. <sup>2</sup>

Though some of the survivors later obtained work at Oobagooma and Meda cattle stations, their reputation for wildness stayed with them, deterring further pastoral tenancies beyond. In truth, they had simply been trying to defend their homeland from alien invaders in the only way they could and their wildness was chiefly confined to their most militant, bitterly-resentful young men. <sup>3</sup>

Even their altercations with the Djawi islanders were probably exacerbated by the long-standing Djawi habit of raiding their shores for mangrove poles with which to construct catamarans, the picturesque, hilly islands of King Sound generally being treeless.

## Chapter Twelve

### Silver Rings

Less than three months after returning to Sunday Island from his pearling trip, Sydney Hadley's assistants Omerod and Ketchler both left him. <sup>1</sup>

At the time of the rift in July 1901, a masonry house intended for two married couples was half finished and late rains, combined with Ketchler's expertise, had brought the kitchen garden to unprecedented fruition. But Hadley now had to shoulder the work of his former assistants, as well as his own, helped by some of the islanders and by his young Japanese employee Yoskio Shigeno, who did the cooking.

Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep at faraway Perth was astonished to hear the news, expressed doubts that Hadley would be able to run the mission properly on his own and telegraphed Broome police, asking them to find Omerod and Ketchler if thereabouts and obtain their side of the story. Only a day later he received a long letter from Omerod giving that information.

Omerod explained that he joined Hadley at Sunday Island with the primary desire to take the Gospel to the islanders and not from 'merely philanthropic motives', thinking that Hadley had the same intention. Instead, he came to believe the latter intended to make a home for himself, 'where he can spend the rest of his days amongst a people he prefers to any other at the same time teaching them a Christianity which is purely his own'. He also accused Hadley of favouritism towards some of the islanders.

These differences, Omerod claimed, caused Ketchler and himself to leave, taking with them the organ donated by his mother and friends, for he acknowledged Hadley to be the head of the mission. Omerod admitted crying like a child as he did so and doubted that Hadley could run it by himself or get any 'real Christian man to work with him'.

He and Ketchler were now running a school for Asian children in Broome and conducting Sunday services for the whites, though he felt his future work lay with the Aboriginies, whose representatives in the town he described as utterly demoralised. He concluded his letter by asking for governmental assistance to run a separate school for 'half-castes' and native children.

Prinsep responded by telegraphing Hadley, saying he was not satisfied the mission could be carried on properly by him alone and unless Omerod was in charge he would recommend its closure. He also 'wired' Omerod saying he had always considered him joint head of the mission, told him the gist of his wire to Hadley, then asked if Omerod and Ketchler would be willing to run the mission by themselves.

Before that wire reached him, Omerod had cause to write to Prinsep again. He and Ketchler had each received letters from Yoskio Shigeno, written from Derby, saying that after Hadley had taken them to Broome, he gave silver rings to two island girls, exchanged promises of marriage with them, then sent Shigeno to Derby for cargo and mail. The cook suspected that Hadley would consummate the relationships during his absence.

Omerod added that the girls in question were the two oldest schoolgirls, aged about seventeen and fifteen, neither of whom had yet married Aboriginal men. Claiming some responsibility for the success and material fabric of the mission, he suggested he should replace Hadley there and believed he could raise the income necessary. He enclosed a supportive letter from Ketchler, which included a favourable reference to Shigeno.

Now the fat was really in the fire. Henry Prinsep consulted the Crown Solicitor, who recommended termination of Hadley's tenure of Sunday Island, so a wire and then a letter to that effect were sent. Prinsep also wrote to the Resident Magistrate at Derby about the situation, with a request for information on further developments.

In the meantime, Omerod had received Prinsep's wire at Broome and replied that he would return to the mission if he was not responsible for compensation for the mission buildings and Hadley was removed. Ketchler was undecided but could be replaced.

Hadley now replied to Prinsep with two preliminary telegrams and a long, very aggrieved, rambling letter in which he repeatedly made the valid point that the Chief Protector had laid no charge against him. His conscience was clear of any wrongdoing and no-one could 'charge me with an impure word or thought or action while I have been here.'

Referring to the islanders as his brothers and sisters who had grown up with him for over eighteen years, he claimed to have spent more than £500 of his personal money on the mission, including patrimony left by his late father in his mother's hands and forwarded by her to aid his current work. Additionally he had contributed some £400 earned from pearling and trepang [beche-de-mer] fishing with the islanders.

For over two years he had struggled to support the enterprise, often away in small boats or working from islands elsewhere, while Omerod and Ketchler had been living in a comfortable house with an 'only too plentiful table', dispensing the fruits of his earnings to the people.

After describing several petty incidents which had resulted in the accusations of favouritism against him and disputes over theology, he railed against the injustice of being dismissed from the mission without explanation, after all he had done for the islanders. Any charges should be laid against him before all the people of Sunday Island. With God's help he could run the mission single-handed.

The following month he wrote to Prinsep again, having finally heard from Omerod that he stood accused of taking two girls as wives, though he still did not know that this idea originated with Shigeno. The police had been to the island enquiring into the matter, apparently without finding any evidence.

Hadley was incensed. He wanted Omerod to return and make his utterly false and cowardly charges before the whole community, where their complete fiction could be proven immediately, or send a full retraction. If Prinsep still wanted Hadley to leave altogether, the islanders would refuse to be handed over like a flock of sheep to individuals who had traduced their women and himself, and would all go with him and settle elsewhere.

Prinsep should make a full investigation of the charges against Hadley and the two women. In the meantime, Hadley would remain at the mission. He wrote to Omerod in similar terms, adding the threat of legal action for good measure.

Clearly moved when he received the first of these letters, Prinsep replied by telegram saying he had no wish to treat Hadley unjustly and presumed the missionary would have no objection to an official enquiry if his 'partners' made specific charges, but his main concern was that Hadley could hardly run the mission properly on his own.

The following day, Omerod arrived in person at Prinsep's office in Perth, saying he had not charged Hadley with immorality, only with favouritism, had passed on Shigeno's information and suspicions, and did not believe Hadley could run the mission by himself. In support of the last point, he copied out part of a letter which he said Hadley had written to him on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 1899, before Omerod had joined the mission.

'My dear friend I feel that I shall never be able to manage by myself,  
as I feel down in the mouth at times [etc.]'

Prinsep now reviewed the matter carefully. No evidence existed that Hadley had taken advantage of the two girls, Omerod's other charges were petty and he was equally at fault himself if Hadley was to be believed. While still not agreeable to Hadley running the mission alone, the Chief Protector clearly had no valid grounds for cancelling his tenure of the island.

Having received two letters on the subject from the current Resident Magistrate at Derby, G. Harward Brown, one of which contained the comment, 'We must bear in mind that the natives almost worship [Hadley]', Prinsep replied that Omerod had modified his charges considerably, which made a full enquiry unnecessary. He now insisted only that Hadley obtained one or more fellow missionaries, preferably with 'right-thinking wives', because of the number of women and girls on the island.

To Hadley he wrote in similar terms, adding that he was not about to take any steps against his occupation of the island at present but would not regard the quarterly reports from the mission

as satisfactory until the specified assistants were obtained. The mission's tenure of the island 'at will' of the Aboriginies Department had depended from the outset on these reports being satisfactory to the Chief Protector. Both letters were sent to the Resident Magistrate at Derby, with a request to forward Hadley's.

In truth, Omerod had not reduced his original charges. He, and then Prinsep, had given too much credence to Shigeno's unfounded suspicions, only to hear subsequently that the police could find no evidence to support those suspicions. Hadley's letters too had made a favourable impression on the Chief Protector.

Hadley rejected Prinsep's insistence on a married assistant, saying he could not afford to pay a salary or increase his expenses at all, adding that the idea he needed such because 'of the number of young girls here, I pass by as beneath my notice, & not worthy for me to speak of or the Department to suggest.'

He reported that the schoolchildren were making progress at reading and writing but due to a temporary shortage of flour and rice, he had been compelled to start the Christmas holiday early in December. When not at school, the children were fed by their parents. And he reported a tragedy:

About three weeks ago today three natives named Lion, Ross & Teddy, all young men about 22 to 25 years of age went away swimming after turtle & got carried away by the tide into Sunday Straits, & only one of them returned viz Lion, & he says that he saw the other two drown in a tide rip from exhaustion. Lion was away about 26 hours & he was much exhausted when he got back. We did not know of it till his return, as they were camped on the other side of the island.

'Ross' had not lived long after he deserted from the beche-de-mer fishing voyage of Harry Hunter's *Media* and paddled back home.

All the pearling luggers had returned to Cygnet Bay to lay up for the summer, though not their commanding schooners as yet. Fearing that many island men would go over to the pearlers' camps, Hadley prayed that God would keep the women and children safe at home. Two families had moved into a recently completed building at the mission; when the rains began, the missionary wanted them to fence in and establish their own gardens opposite.

Early in January 1902, a man named Evans visited the Aboriginies Department at Perth. Finding Prinsep absent, he left a note saying that a Miss Moore had asked him to pass on the information that Dr. Black of the Central Board of Health had known Hadley well some years previously and could tell Prinsep about his character. The note ended, 'I suppose you heard Omerod went down with typhoid fever shortly after his return to Broome.' After reading it, Prinsep recorded on file,

I know a good deal about Mr. Hadley's life past and present.

Even so, he probably did contact Dr. Black, because in the middle of the month he sent a telegram to Derby police, asking for a confidential report on Hadley's drinking habits at the port.

When the report came back six weeks later, Prinsep found it very satisfactory. Hadley, who rarely used to be sober, did not drink at all. Police Corporal Feely vouched for his sobriety, having seen him during every visit made by the missionary for eighteen months.

With much of the pearling fleet laid up again in Cygnet Bay, *S.S. Bullara*, which had replaced the *Karrakatta*, anchored off the bay for a few hours during each of her regular coastal voyages. Being unable to leave Sunday Island unattended for long, Sydney Hadley took one such opportunity early in February to forward another report to Prinsep.

Fierce north-easterly *cock-eyes* [gales] had compelled him to moor his cutter *Elsie* with three anchors, even in the Pool, her customary anchorage in the lee of the island. So much rain had fallen that the schoolhouse and other buildings were nearly flooded out, so he had boarded up the front of the missionaries' house verandah to make a dry place for his female pupils to sleep in and put the boys in the store.

Twenty children now regularly attended his school, three having been lost to the pearling camps across the water; he admitted being hampered as their teacher by not being fluent in Bardi and Djawi. Two cases of the skin disease contracted last year from the 'Malays' had reappeared on the island. During the rains he had continued to develop the kitchen garden. Nothing had been heard from Omerod or Ketchler.

This letter crossed with one from Prinsep, in which the Chief Protector was much more conciliatory. He would hold no enquiry into the recent controversy, his department being concerned only that there were no grounds for the accusations. Hadley's correspondence led him 'to believe that you still are moved by a right spirit in your dealings with [the islanders]'.

Nevertheless, Prinsep continued, because Hadley was a tenant of the government and his mission was encouraged by the Aboriginies Department, it was essential that he had someone associated with him in his 'good work' to deflect accusations of impropriety or scandal which might be levelled against him and the Department.

Adding he hoped to hear that Hadley would concur with his wishes, he said he would be sorry if the mission closed, expressed regret over the drowning tragedy, gratification at the success of the school and concluded by hoping the pearlers would 'not interfere with the good work which has been done'. There was no mention of multiple assistants being necessary, or any 'right thinking wives' or of Hadley's quarterly reports still being unsatisfactory.

The missionary did not receive this letter for nearly three months, having stayed at the mission while the pearling fleet was laid up at Cygnet Bay. By the end of April 1902, the schooners and luggers had put to sea for another season's work, leaving Hadley free to accede to the pleadings of his schoolchildren to be taken on holiday to the Roe Islands, a few miles north of Sunday Island, which were rich in wild fruit, yams, dugong and turtle.

Having left the children there, no doubt accompanied by some parents, he sailed right down King Sound to Derby for his mail and stores. There he found Prinsep's letter and a bale of blankets for the old people. He warmly accepted both, promised the Chief Protector in his reply that he would try to get someone to assist him and intended to visit Broome in mid-June with that aim in mind.

Before elaborating on the circumstances which led to the founding of the mission and the eventual fracas with Omerod and Ketchler, he pointed out to Prinsep that if he had not left the Forrest River Mission with the intention of settling in his present district and trying to help Aboriginal people thereabouts, Omerod would never have thought of the place or asked if he could come and assist. Previously, neither Omerod or anyone else 'cared a straw' about the local people:

'...if I had not come here no one would, & not a soul in the colony would have cared if every woman in the district had been debauched into Hell by the pearling labour, or have put out a hand to save them, & do you think that if I sinned with them that I could have any power to stay the pearling labour, from so doing or to raise my voice against it.'

Owing to expenditure of capital, he now received only a very small pittance from home, which he thought came from Gloucester property held in trust by his mother. When added to his earnings around the islands, the total amounted to £120-£130 a year. Consequently he could not possibly pay a salary to an assistant, despite denying himself everything but tobacco, on which he spent four shillings [£0.20] a month, and the minimum necessities of life. He even went barefoot on the islands.

After remarking that he was still building cottages for married couples, Hadley asked if Prinsep knew anyone who would be willing to come and join him and concluded by expressing his

determination to inculcate Christianity in his charges so that eventually the men would protect their own women.

So the crisis passed. It would be easy to criticise Prinsep for taking Omerod's side and for believing Shigeno's suspicions before hearing Hadley's side of the case. Yet his first reaction was understandable because he undoubtedly knew about Hadley's long record of criminal convictions, some for ill-treating Aboriginal people of both sexes, even before talking to Dr. Black.

Prinsep would also have been aware that those convictions were probably only the tip of the iceberg, bearing in mind the widespread serious abuse of Aboriginal people in the early pearling industry, far beyond the reach of the law, and the great difficulty of obtaining convictions against Europeans on the Nor'-West coast in those days.

Hadley's motives in starting Sunday Island Mission must have seemed highly suspect to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies. The participation of the blameless Omerod almost from the outset must have done much to recommend the enterprise to Prinsep. Moreover, he had met Omerod. He knew Hadley chiefly by his notoriety.

Prinsep was also handicapped by his great distance from the mission. Perth was more than two thousand four hundred coastal kilometres from Sunday Island. And despite his grand title and the vast area for which he was responsible, the Chief Protector was one of only two permanent staff members of the Aboriginies Department. Though his powers were also circumscribed by political factors during his time in office, Henry Prinsep did all he could to protect his charges.

To do so, he had to rely on the co-operation of regional officials of other governmental departments whom he could not command. Even the Resident Magistrate and police post at Derby were some hundred and thirteen kilometres from the island, a distance which might take several days to cover in a sailing vessel, if the weather permitted any voyage at all.

Shigeno left the mission in the first half of 1902, about the time the controversy was resolved, because his term of employment had expired. If Hadley guessed at his involvement, he did not sack him early.

The cook told the truth in saying that his master gave silver rings to two girls, though the rest of his information was erroneous and his suspicions unfounded. What Shigeno did not know, and neither did Omerod, Ketchler or the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, was that the recipients were two of the three future wives allotted to Hadley by the elders of the Bardi people at the time of Hadley's initiation.

The latter had moved them, with their families, to Sunday Island where he could protect them from the pearling crews. On becoming a missionary, he had accepted their reassignment to other future husbands and knew those men might not protect them from the pearlers when they were older. He did not break his self-imposed celibacy.

Hadley's request for help with finding an assistant had hardly reached Prinsep in May 1902 when one W.H. Bird, who had been working in the Western Australian gold-fields, walked into the Aboriginies Department at Perth, apparently seeking just such an opportunity. The Chief Protector told him about Sunday Island and asked him to think the matter over. While doing so, Bird mentioned it to a friend, William Levelle, who also expressed interest to Prinsep but wanted a salary.

In the meantime, a Mr. Jones of Derby, whose wife had just taken their three children home to north Wales for schooling, had been assisting Hadley at the mission for about three weeks and had offered to return for a while after disposing of some property.

On his scheduled trip to Broome late in June, Hadley met again a Swede named Thompson whom he had brought to that port from Shark Bay three years earlier in his newly-purchased cutter *Elsie*. Now aged about sixty, Thompson too volunteered and was soon on his way to the mission.

Notifying Prinsep of these arrangements, Hadley reported that he was about to start another school term while continuing to build thatched frame houses for the islanders, was trying to help one couple stricken with venereal disease contracted from the pearling crews, and that several more little girls had come to the island from Cygnet Bay since the seasonal departure of the pearlers.



Following details of relief payments and blankets, he asked for tobacco seeds from the Agricultural Department, by which he hoped to cut the mission's tobacco bill by £40 a year eventually.

Thompson soon proved invaluable by taking over all the boat work, which in the dangerous waters at the mouth of King Sound requires a high level of skill. No doubt he relied greatly on *Elsie's* experienced Aboriginal crew. Hadley was then able to devote more time to the school and Sunday school, where the sexes had to be taught separately to respect the conventions of the Bardi and Djawi peoples.

A young married couple installed in the small thatched house formerly occupied by Shigeno was baking bread and cooking meals for the islanders wholly supported by the mission. Hadley lamented the steep rises in the prices of flour and rice, by £4 and £7 per ton respectively, caused by tariffs levied after the Federation of Australia the year before.

These were two of the staple foodstuffs he had to buy in. On the other hand, the kitchen garden was supplying plenty of vegetables except pumpkins, so he extended it and planted more banana saplings.

By this time, the Chief Protector's letters were more kindly and sympathetic, which encouraged the missionary. Mr Jones left the island in October, because Hadley mistakenly expected W.H. Bird to have joined him by that time, while the industrious Mr. Thompson assumed responsibility for the stores. By fishing and processing half a ton [508 kg] of trepang [beche-de-mer], the islanders made a significant contribution to the budget.

Responding to the concerns expressed by Prinsep earlier, Hadley wanted the latest Resident Magistrate at Derby, Dr. William Harvey to inspect the mission. Apparently keen to do so, Harvey offered to bring his medical bag with him, but could not absent himself from his governmental, legal and medical responsibilities at the port. At his request, Hadley asked the Chief Protector to do what he could in the matter.

Despite his belief that the police disliked having to sail through the powerful tide rips on the way, the missionary's hope that they would visit Sunday Island occasionally was likewise disappointed by their inability to give him dates when an officer could be collected from the mainland.

W.H. Bird had volunteered for the mission in letters to both Hadley and Prinsep at the end of June. Hadley's first reply failed to reach him so it was not until the end of October that he heard from the missionary, who asked for a meeting in Broome a month later. Bird began the voyage north from Fremantle on *S.S. Bullara* in the middle of November.

By early December, he was teaching the boys' class at the mission, where his charges proved very intelligent and attentive. He found the islanders a happy people and wisely decided to learn their language as soon as possible.

Because the summer rains had not yet begun, both mission wells had been deepened. Even so, while the dry heat continued, Bird could do little with his other responsibility, the kitchen garden, except to start growing the tobacco.

Having obtained two yearling heifers while he was in Broome, Hadley brought them to the island in a lugger owned by Harry Hunter, who also promised the missionary a young bull from the Derby area. Thompson was still at the mission, now responsible for the cooking, the stores and the eight old and infirm people on relief.

Reviewing the past year, Hadley noted there had been frequent minor ailments among the islanders. Though two old women had died, apparently of natural causes, three healthy children had been born, two girls and a boy, all pure-blooded. Compared to the decimation of Aboriginal people elsewhere in Australia and sadly declining numbers even in the adjacent Kimberley region, this was good news.

Apart from the missionaries, the island population stood at seventy-six. All the adults had been provided with new clothes, the women's dresses having been made by the schoolgirls. Completion of another house for the married couples had been delayed until he could afford more iron.

So far, he had been unable to convert any of his charges into 'true believers'. One benefit of doing so, Hadley thought, was that Bardi and Djawi men would then guard their women in the same way that Europeans do.

His failure in this respect was brought home to him forcibly in September 1902 when his worst fears for his silver ring girls were realised. Now married, they had been taken by their husbands to the mainland as the first pearling luggers arrived at Cygnet Bay for the summer lay up.

He heard that they were 'being brought under the influence of the coloured labour', then that the usual transaction had taken place. Plied with the alcohol and tobacco they craved, their husbands allowed the girls to be taken onto the vessels where the crews had intercourse with them. 2

## Chapter Thirteen

### Boolgin Nights

*"Old man 'Nobul' had two wives, sisters, young women. Harry Hunter wanted one. The two fellas fought at night, wrestling. 'Nobul' hit Harry Hunter's head with a karli [boomerang]; the boss tangled 'Nobul's legs and knocked him down. People watched them. I wasn't there because I was little."*

*"Harry Hunter caught his wrist and grabbed his balls, making him cry out for his sons. Before, 'Nobul' had been married to another woman and had two grown sons. Harry Hunter squeezed him harder, growling, 'No sing out!' but he sang out more."*

*"A good way off, his sons heard him, came to help and asked the boss, 'Let him go, he's an old man, he won't fight any more'. Harry Hunter was a younger man at that time. 'Nobul' took his wives away to his own 'country' [birthplace] of Gulan on Cygnet Bay."*

*"Bardi people never did that when they fought! Never! That's bad, too dangerous, too painful! Harry Hunter used any kind of trick."*

*"When I lived at Boolgin, he had plenty of 'wives', up to seven at a time. Before, he had more. Most [Aboriginal] men quietly let them go. Only 'Nobul' fought to keep his wife because, like Harry Hunter himself, he was a 'cheeky' [aggressive, dangerous] fella who stood up for himself."*

*"'Nobul' came back to Boolgin later. Old, sick, past fighting, he worked there until he died. Another Bardi man inherited his wives [as was the traditional custom]. Harry Hunter didn't want her then because by that time she'd had [a part-Asian child]. Harry Hunter didn't have a white lady at Boolgin, he'd got enough black women."*

*"Sometimes, when he saw Aboriginal women, old or young, he got his penis out and waved it playfully. He only laughed, but often they ran away, annoyed."*

'Dougal'.

Obtaining wives by successfully fighting their current husbands was an established, if not traditionally common, Bardi custom. Hunter probably knew that when he fought 'Nobul'.

Now in his mid-forties, his undiminished appetite for Aboriginal women resulted in the birth of another daughter in 1902. He called her Amy, though she was later usually known by her Bardi name of Goodji. More children were to follow, at a slower rate than formerly. <sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that the population at Boolgin was about the same as that on Sunday Island, Hunter would not allow a school there, saying it would only make the children silly. As 'Dougal' put it later, he and all the other youngsters of Boolgin were 'wild nothing'.

Hunter taught his own to write their names but otherwise left them illiterate. Vocationally, he was more responsible. Eugene and Lawrence were sent to Beagle Bay Mission where they were trained as a saddler and blacksmith respectively. Lawrence also received a range of other useful training there, becoming in time one of the most versatile and capable members of the mission staff.

As they became old enough, Hunter trained Robin, Tommy, Christie and Jack as boat builders and carpenters. He made scale models of boats for them, which could be sectioned so that internal measurements could be taken, plans made and timber cut accordingly.

He also trained these four to sail the hazardous north-west coast of Australia, gathering pearl shell and beche-de-mer, selecting, felling and transporting timber, finding and removing suitable crucks from trees, and collecting anything else that might be useful or saleable. Robin was given a share in a pastoral lease. Jack worked with his father for years, mainly in the boat shed.

Though he ensured they would survive in that distant region of the white man's world, he ignored their Aboriginal heritage entirely, despite the fact that their mothers and all the other relatives they knew were Bardi, apart from himself.

Because of their maternity, his sons were eligible to undergo the lengthy sequence of traditional initiation rituals that boys had to pass through to become Bardi men. At that time, this prolonged transition, which had become known in English as, 'Going through the Law', was

considered profoundly important. Without it, no male could eventually take his place in traditional culture, religion and society.

But the Bardi elders were too frightened to ask Hunter's permission, so none of his sons were initiated. Marooned on the margins of traditional culture, they were adults before they were permitted even to attend ceremonies as guests.

'Dougal', who went through the full course of those rituals, believed Harry Hunter would have allowed his sons to be initiated, if he had been asked. His opinion was based on the fact that Hunter himself was circumcised, as all Boolgin had observed, and circumcision was performed on initiates during one of the rites. <sup>2</sup>

Hunter continued to rule by intimidation:

*"He would often draw his revolver, take aim, raise the gun, point it again and let go! BOOM! He was a 'cheeky', 'cheeky' fellow and when he looked at us like that, we got fear badly. He frightened Aboriginal people and Malays very much when he looked at us like that."*  
*"One reason he carried a big revolver was that he stole his wives."*

'Dougal'.

He also continued to associate himself with the police. He would find Bardi witnesses for them, act as interpreter, feed and water them and their horses. Occasionally he provided a boat to take them to the islands.

Despite his own predilection for local women, he was incensed by the pearling crews' use of them and Aboriginal boys, and he must have feared that the then-incurable disease being spread among them would reach him. Patrolling constables greatly reduced this trade.

And by assisting the police, he identified himself with them, knowing that the Bardi and Djawi still felt deeply the wholesale police reprisals for the deaths of Rickinson and Shenton years before.

Even so, like some medieval European monarch, he was also good to those who accepted his rule, as the child 'Dougal' had found. Many other Bardi people continued to be regularly fed by him with desired 'white man's tucker' and he often took them to the Lacepede Islands to catch turtles, a favourite traditional food.

He never relaxed his defence of them against the predatory pearling crews and they chose to bring little 'Dinga Pedro' to him instead of taking the child to their own *djalngagurs* ['witchdoctors']. Though many Aboriginal people had been forcibly marched to Boolgin, few wanted to leave, and not only because they feared the consequences. Even 'Nobul' and his family returned.

Hunter's brawl with 'Nobul' was one of many fights that earned him a widespread and lasting reputation, in addition to his long-established competency with firearms and whip. He gained respect too for never using his ever-present revolver during these contests.

'Peter', for example, was one of several young, vigorous Bardi men who politely asked to try their strength and skill against him.

*"'Come on!' said Harry Hunter. Blocking an incoming blow, he struck with his left fist, sending 'Peter' reeling over there to fall down. Getting up, 'Peter' attacked again, Hunter blocked him, gave him the left again and 'Peter' collapsed. Knockout! White man trick!"*

'Dougal'.

When he was long passed his prime, Hunter kept a pair of hardwood sticks behind his door to use as extensions of his fists if he was attacked with a club. <sup>3</sup>

Decades later, and apparently well to the south, a priest with linguistic interests recorded the term '*Madamadyed*' ['the fighter's place'] for the creek at Boolgin and wondered why it had that name. He should have consulted an official map, for by that time an European name had been given to the place: Hunter Creek. <sup>4</sup>

While 'Frenchy' D'Antoine and his other captains sailed *Media*, *Florence*, *Black Boy* and *Yellow Boy* after pearl shell and beche-de-mer, or went to Kupang on the island of Timor for 'Malay' crews, Harry Hunter used more of the wood he had salvaged from *S.S. Karrakatta* to begin building another vessel at Boolgin. Having restored the size of his small fleet while the international demand for shell was strong, he was now building vessels for sale.

His apparent success enabled him to lease from the State in July 1902 ninety-five thousand acres [38,446 hectares] of bush land stretching eastwards from Pender Bay, at an annual rental of £47.10. 0. Despite having used this land pastorally for years, it seems he had not leased it directly from the State hitherto.

An Aboriginal man he called 'Old Mac' was sent from Boolgin to look after his well and flock of goats at Pender Bay. Three months later, Hunter obtained a lease of two thousand, eight hundred acres [1133 hectares] elsewhere.

The following year, international demand for pearl shell soared, creating a boom in the industry and with it a new high water mark in the demand for suitable boats. In response, one hundred and three vessels were built and registered in the State, most of them for pearling, as well as many more unregistered craft.

Hunter's output, which included *White Boy* about that time, fell into the latter category. He was probably the most northerly pearling boat builder in Western Australia. In May 1903, he felt able to lease a further fifty thousand acres [20,235 hectares] of bush land at an annual rent of £25.10. 0, the tenure backdated to start from April. <sup>5</sup>

*"Harry Hunter didn't stop for holidays, birthdays, nothing. He worked and worked, only thought about work and women."*

'Dougal'.

Late in 1903, Harry Hunter was persuaded by Broome shipping agents to carry goods for Beagle Bay Mission, which was now being run by the Pallottine Order. Because his vessel was already laden with his own cargo and he was not planning to call at the bay, he was reluctant to do so, but finally said he would go first to Boolgin, then send the items for the mission back to Beagle Bay in his little cutter.

The shipping agents loaded more goods than Hunter had agreed to take, including a consignment of chaff containing rats. Even so, Hunter sent on all the goods his little boat could carry, but a quantity of the chaff got wet while being landed through heavy surf and apparently did not reach the mission.

So on the 10<sup>th</sup> October he wrote a letter at Boolgin, which he styled 'Leveque Station, Cape Leveque', to Beagle Bay Mission, explaining the circumstances and hoping they remained on a friendly footing. At the bottom of the letter, below Hunter's signature, is an un-attributed opinion that the mission had no claim against him in law because the cargo had been put aboard his vessel 'against his will and without his consent'. <sup>6</sup>

As it seems unlikely that a lawyer would have offered advice in that way and failed to sign his name, the opinion may have been added by Hunter himself, or someone else on his behalf, after consulting the legal tome his grandfather gave him before he left England many years before. Certainly he still owned the book and used it subsequently.

As Eugene and Lawrence were training, working and living at the mission years later and Hunter considered sending some of his daughters there as late as 1908, this incident does not seem to have created a lasting rift in relations. <sup>7</sup>

There is another reason why Hunter did not want a claim from Beagle Bay Mission. Despite the fact that he worked hard and had taken up another substantial tenancy of pastoral land as recently as May, he was in financial difficulties. His big schooner *Media* had been abandoned in Boolgin creek by 1904, having come to the end of her working life, and he no longer had *Florence*. The latter may have been the vessel of which 'Dougal' recalled,

*A cock-eye bob wrecked her on the Lacepedes, where the crew made a pile of dry driftwood, then watched an empty sea for a week before a sail appeared on the horizon. When they lit their fire, the schooner from Cygnet Bay saw the signal, tacked out there, took them off and returned them all safe to Boolgin.*

Nor had he paid some of his European staff, his 'Malay' crews or his suppliers for a considerable time.

Early in 1904, Streeter & Co. of Broome, merchants and pearlers, obtained a judgement against him in the Supreme Court of Western Australia for £421, on execution of which the Sheriff could obtain only £330. Acting on the advice of his solicitor, Walter Clarke Hall of Broome, Harry Hunter called a meeting of his creditors on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

A week later he was sued before Broome Justices by one of his employees, carpenter William Johns, for non-payment of wages amounting to £32.2.0. Found guilty under the Masters and Servants Acts, he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment 'failing payment or distress'. Thanks to Clarke Hall and his representative at Perth, the Supreme Court issued a Restraining Order the following day, preventing further legal action against Hunter until after a meeting of his creditors, who turned out to be numerous.

Following several such meetings, legal proceedings against Harry Hunter under the Bankruptcy Act Amendment Act 1898 ground slowly and relentlessly forward. His assets were said to include one lugger [unnamed] valued at £300 and one cutter, named as *Daisy Start*, which was said to be lying on a beach, apparently without value.

The lugger realised only £200, perhaps because of the fall in the value of pearl shell by the middle of that year, while the cutter, described in one document as a wreck, sold for £5 to an unnamed 'Purchaser away from Broome'. His stock of timber sold for £40, keels £5 and his pastoral leases raised £300, two of the latter being transferred to Archie Male of Broome early in November.

Arrangements were made to send his 'Malay' crews back to Timor and to pay them there. At least one employee was returned to Singapore, with the wages he was due.

Finally estimated at between £600 and £650, Hunter's total assets amounted to little more than one-third of his debts. He was allowed to retain clothing, some furniture and other personal effects not exceeding £20 in value. <sup>8</sup>

There can be little doubt that Harry Hunter's long-standing addiction to nights with his multiple 'wives' had a lot to do with his decision to give up pearling personally in favour of the life of a resident boat-builder.

Because that work offered relatively low returns, he had to pay other men, inevitably less committed to his interests and less experienced in some cases, to crew his boats. *Gutter-Snipe*, *Willie* and *Florence* were all lost while commanded by others.

Maintaining the large Aboriginal community which included the families of his women must also have been expensive.

Nevertheless he remained incorrigible. He continued to live at Boolgin with his all his current 'wives' and even retained his cutter; named in his bankruptcy papers as *Daisy Start*, it was probably *Yellow Boy*.

Police records show that the boat was 'unfit for use' at the end of September, when Constable P.H. Nelson sought Hunter's help with his enquiries into a violent death at Cygnet Bay. Hunter apparently had sufficient money to be planning a visit to Perth then.

In mid-December, he was at the Lacepede Islands in the boat. In early January 1905 and in the third week of March the cutter was again unusable. Towards the end of March however, Constable McGrath was taken to and from Sunday Island in it. <sup>9</sup>

There is a record of fifty thousand acres [20,235 hectares] of pastoral land at Cape Borda being leased to 'Jenkins and Hunter' late in 1904, the tenancy backdated to start from the 1<sup>st</sup> July. As bankruptcy proceedings against him were still in progress at that date, the 'Hunter' may have been nominally one of his sons, perhaps Robin. <sup>10</sup>

Despite the apparent loss of his entire stock of wood and keels during his bankruptcy, he also continued building, refitting and repairing boats for others, including Sydney Hadley. About 1905 he began his most ambitious boat building project, a 40 ton schooner.

That year, his long-standing domestic arrangements suddenly became illegal when the State of Western Australia introduced an Aboriginies Act which, among other things, forbade cohabitation between white men and Aboriginal women. In 1906, the Crown Law Department ruled that such cohabitation had to be continuous. <sup>11</sup>

No doubt Hunter heard of the new law when visiting Broome or Derby but if so it had no apparent effect on him. Hot working days continued to be followed by hot nights with six or seven women on the blanketed floor of his homestead.

Perhaps he was relying on his remote location more than one hundred and thirty miles [210 km] north of Broome to deter an overland expedition to catch him. Any official-looking schooner appearing offshore was reported to him at once by the Bardi people camped on the sand hills at Boolgin. If a patrolling constable was thereabouts and not 'in the know', the harem did not convene. <sup>12</sup>

Yet Harry Hunter's fame or notoriety in this respect had long since spread far and wide. It could only have been a matter of time before the authorities felt compelled to act.

## Chapter Fourteen

### What the Pearler Saw

*"One morning about Christmas-time, Old Biddle's [former] clerk Goldstein went ashore in a dinghy at Cygnet Bay. The beach was covered in black women and brown Asian men, all naked, tangled together, drunk. Couldn't move. Big mob."*

*"Goldstein sailed for Broome, told the government, sent word to the King. They sent back,*

*'NO MORE DRINK FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE!'*

*"That wasn't long after Old Biddle went away for good. I was a boy then. When this Queen gave us the right to drink [1971], I was still here, an old man [laughter]. All that time, no drink! [more laughter]."*

'Dougal'.

Back in 1902, Captain Frank Biddles had retired from active participation in pearling at the age of fifty-one, though he retained a stake in a small pearling firm based at Broome and in a few other boats. In fact, he may not have returned personally to lay up his vessels at Cygnet Bay after taking most of the survivors from the wreck of the *Karrakatta* to Broome the previous year. Captain Robert Barter and other long-established pearling masters also retired about that time.

Biddles, whose business acumen was in no way compromised by his own drink problem, sold most of his fleet in the next year or two at the high prices then obtaining, investing the proceeds in pastoral and other property holdings. His former clerk Nathan Goldstein, in partnership with a Melbourne jeweller and an Adelaide gem merchant, bought *Alto* and various luggers, other vessels going to Stanley Pigott and the newcomers crowding into pearling. A launch named *Rita* remained unsold for some time.

Richard Gaskin, who had also worked for Biddles and formed a partnership with him in a small company, became an independent pearler, as did Alex Simbalan, Blackmore and others. Harry Talboys, captain of the late *S.S. Karrakatta*, returned as a pearler, later sharing a schooner for a while with Biddles' younger brother Hugh, who was known to the Bardi as 'Young Biddle'.

All these laid up their boats at Cygnet Bay each summer, along with the experienced Manilamen Filomeno Rodriguez and Gonzales, where the latter earned a reputation for finding shell in places overlooked by others, such as Malumb Passage. <sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that 'Asiatic aliens' were not allowed licences to own pearling vessels, many luggers now had entirely Asian crews because some European owners were covertly making such arrangements. At lay-up time, such crews knew no restraint.

Inter-racial violence among them often erupted in the steamy heat and relative idleness of summer, especially in the absence of the police. One altercation among men gathering firewood at Cunningham Point left two 'Malays' dead. Thirty-two year old Manilaman Severo Roco was tried and sentenced at Broome, then shipped south to the milder climate of Fremantle jail.

Despite a heartfelt letter from Father Nicholas Emo, Catholic Parish Priest at Broome, to Bishop Gibney at Perth, requesting an appeal to the Supreme Court on the grounds that Roco had no legal representation and did not speak in his own defence at the Broome trial, he was hung at dawn on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1903. <sup>2</sup>

The new pearling masters showed no more responsibility towards Bardi people than their predecessors had.

*"Gaskin gave 'Tommy' and his wife a stick of dynamite, which they took to Malumb, where mullet were shoaling. Fearing the danger, 'Tommy' didn't light the fuse until he was above the fish,*



*but then they darted apart. As he called to his wife, 'Where are they?' the explosion blew his hand off."*

'Dougal'.

Some pearlers made a useful profit during the summer lay-up by selling goods to their crews, knowing that the alcohol and tobacco, if not the opium, would be used to obtain Aboriginal women and boys.

Hadley wrote to the current Resident Magistrate at Derby, Dr. William Harvey, about the situation early in 1903: Most of the pearling boats at Cygnet Bay were commanded, as well as crewed, by Asians who were entering Aboriginal camps, plying the men with alcohol and tobacco, then taking the women and boys onto their boats and into their tents in open defiance of the law.

Some of the children had been at school on Sunday Island. Disease was being spread widely. Mr. Hunter had already reported the matter to the police without result. Were the authorities going to do anything about it? <sup>3</sup>

Harvey passed the complaint to Sub-Inspector Duncan, who replied that a constable had been stationed at Beagle and Cygnet Bays and was 'doing good work'. Duncan wrongly supposed that this was forcing the pearlers onto Sunday Island, whereas the trouble was at Cygnet Bay which was scarcely being policed at all, because a single constable could not oversee the many pearling camps and scores of vessels on both sides of the Dampier Land peninsula.

And while the officer made lengthy overland trips to Broome or Derby with prisoners, there was no supervision at all on either coast. Some constables made such trips as often as possible because they could charge expenses for feeding prisoners *en route* far in excess of the true cost and keep the difference. The more trips, the more profit. They could also charge expenses for the Native Assistants or Aboriginal trackers they employed unpaid. One policeman later shown to have done both about this time was Constable No. 452 J.P. Napier.

Duncan offered to provide a constable if Hadley would take him around the luggers in his cutter, but the missionary could not sail back and forth to Derby at the height of the cyclone season. Harvey thought a steam launch was necessary. <sup>4</sup>

Not for the first time, Hadley complained to Chief Protector of Aborigines Henry Prinsep that he had no authority to deal with the matter himself. The problem was bound up with the mission's finances, because only by making the place attractive to the islanders could Hadley hope to compete with the free seasonal inducements on offer at Cygnet Bay.

However, due to the tariff imposed after the recent Federation of Australia, the price of rice and sugar had risen 90% and 40% respectively in two years, while drought in the wheat-growing regions of the nation had forced up the price of flour 50%.

Having discovered that the Aborigines Department was paying nine pence per day for each person on relief in other districts, compared with only six pence apiece for the eight recipients on Sunday Island, Hadley asked for the same amount and pointed out that he received no assistance at all for the sixteen schoolchildren he was feeding, clothing and educating.

Well watered now by heavy, late summer rains, the mission valley above King Sound was looking beautiful, its kitchen garden providing a constant supply of bananas and melons. By making the school curriculum more varied, W.H. Bird had been rewarded by more interest and better results from the children.

He in turn rewarded the boys' class by taking them to the Lacepede Islands at the end of March for two weeks. On the way back, they brought a part-Aboriginal boy to be raised and educated at the mission. <sup>5</sup>

Constable Napier visited Sunday Island on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March, finding the islanders well fed, well clothed, contented and healthy, and heard of their high regard for Hadley. After examining the mission buildings, kitchen garden and land beyond, he observed lessons in school. Subsequently he wrote a favourable report which eventually reached the Chief Protector at Perth.

Before leaving, Napier chained up the men who had effectively prostituted their wives - Hadley's 'silver ring' girls - at Cygnet Bay the previous October and noted the names of the pearling vessels and crews involved in the illegalities over there. But although Hadley and Bird believed his

belated appearance had had a beneficial effect, the local pearling fleet put to sea soon afterwards to begin the next pearling season, largely unpunished. 6

Even before receiving Napier's report, Prinsep's letters to Hadley became more supportive. One assured him,

Rely upon my doing all I can to encourage you and help you to success, & that should I see a chance of getting substantial aid for you I will not fail to secure it - Mr. Donald McLeod, a good settler at Minilya in the Gascoyne District who is also moved by humane feelings towards the natives is agitating the question of granting aid to ventures such as yours.

Replying to W.H. Bird separately, Prinsep said he had told a Mr. Campbell of the Geological Department, who was also very interested in Aboriginal people and their welfare, about Sunday Island and had asked him to do what he could for the mission on a forthcoming trip to England. 7

The death of an infant in May and the reappearance of the skin disease contracted annually at Cygnet Bay led Hadley to consult Dr. Wace, who had replaced William Harvey as Resident Magistrate and District Medical Officer at Derby in February 1903. Wace recommended a list of medicines which the missionary asked Prinsep to provide. Three months' supply for twelve people was sent north on *S.S. Charon* in August, though Hadley succeeded in eradicating nearly all existing ailments before it arrived. 8

By the middle of the year, the several varieties of tobacco being cultivated had reached four to seven feet [1.2-2.1 m] in height. Bird's attempts at curing the leaf were proving less successful however. With ten island men, he sailed *Elsie* eastwards across King Sound to the Graveyard coast, where the great depth of water prevented them from obtaining more than a few shells. Bird later wrote to Prinsep about the fine pastoral country beyond, which he said was untenanted because the indigenous people there were very treacherous and cannibalistic.

About that time, the Colonial Secretary, head of the State's Civil Service, passed through the region. Hadley was disappointed at not meeting him as they had been friends years before, so he wrote to him requesting 'some little financial support' for the mission. After the great man returned to Perth, Prinsep approached him too:

...I...suggest that Mr. Hadley's perseverance for the welfare of the Aboriginies - & the unsparing way in which he has spent all his time & I believe all his means so far in that good work - merits the approbation of & assistance from this Department -

No doubt when he first propounded his scheme & obtained a tenancy at will on Sunday Island - he was quite prepared to carry out his plans without assistance - but he has now done so much - & it is so desirable that he should continue in his civilising work that I should be glad to hear that the Minister approves of an annual grant being made to him - say £100 per annum - payable half yearly - but still dependent, as his lease also is, on the satisfaction of the Department, that the Mission is being carried on in a proper & progressive manner. The grant to be exclusive of any sum needed for relief of destitute & crippled natives on, or sent to, his island - & for the cost of blankets distributed through him by the Department. 9

When Hadley arrived at Derby in *Elsie* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October, he received notification from the Chief Protector that their appeals had resulted in the award of an annual grant of £100, the first quarterly payment being available immediately.

He was ecstatic, for the money relieved him of some of the continuous struggle to make ends meet. Yet typically he also saw at once that the new income would allow an extension of his work, even though the increased expenses involved would leave him with as much of a financial burden as before. He posted letters of thanks to both officials from the port. <sup>10</sup>

Probably in need of repairs, pearling luggers began arriving back at Cygnet Bay late in September 1903. Hadley extracted a promise from Sub-Inspector Duncan at Derby that a constable would be stationed at the bay as soon as he was notified it was necessary, and expressed the hope that the crews could be controlled when they went ashore to obtain firewood and fresh water.

But now the young men at the mission went back on a promise to go on a pearling voyage with Hadley that summer. Because shell was currently realising high prices, this was a blow. They agreed to continue looking for shell around the local islands and reefs, but only a few hundredweights [51 kg each, approx.] had been found in the previous two months, due no doubt to earlier over-exploitation.

The missionary consulted Prinsep about the future of one of his twenty-one schoolchildren, a part-Aboriginal girl of about nine or ten, who had been abandoned by her father. A Mrs. Roderique of Broome, who was soon moving with her family to Perth, had offered to adopt and educate the child. And he asked if the Agricultural Department would send a variety of fruit trees in the relative cool of next May, fearing that the intervening hot weather would kill them in transit. <sup>11</sup>

By December, Cygnet Bay was again full of pearling vessels, many of them laid up in trenches dug into the beaches to keep them upright and prevent the hull timbers drying out. Crewmen were habitually carrying firearms ashore, supposedly to defend themselves against the Bardi people but in fact to intimidate the latter and each other.

Firing went on all day long in the bush. Pedro Rodriguez, one of Stanley Pigott's men, was shot while stepping out of a boat. Several of the pearling masters made urgent requests for a police presence, quite independently of Hadley's request. While reporting some of these details to Prinsep, the missionary made a number of suggestions for improvements in the law governing the employment of Aboriginal people, including complete prohibition of employment by aliens.

When the policeman arrived, he got a very bad reception, according to Derby Resident Magistrate Dr. Richard Wace. Nevertheless, Constable S. Jenkins and Native Assistant 'Thumb' proved indefatigable.

On one of several patrols, during which he was often assisted by Harry Hunter, Jenkins searched the mainland for Bardi witnesses, chained them up, hunted among the many vessels and pearling camps for the 'Malays' and Manilamen who had plied them with drink, then sailed for Derby in Gaskin's lugger *Flora*. Next day, his prisoners paid dearly in court.

Constable Jenkins was back at Derby with more prisoners and witnesses less than three weeks later, having borrowed *Black Boy* from Hunter and obtained Hadley as captain. Magistrate Wace elicited the information from the defendants that they had given alcohol to Aboriginal men to obtain their women, fined three £20 each plus costs or three months' imprisonment, and discharged a fourth. *Black Boy* left for Cygnet Bay the same afternoon, carrying the policeman, Hadley, the witnesses and the freed man. Being unable to pay, those convicted later went to Broome jail.

Sub-Inspector Duncan was so pleased that when sending the police file to Perth, he recommended that Jenkins' services be recorded. Both Commissioner of Police Frederick A. Hare and Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep, who also saw the file, commended Jenkins. Hadley afterwards expressed his appreciation.

Yet as Wace remarked later, while constables brought prisoners to trial, Cygnet Bay was left completely unsupervised. The current system of policing the lay up there was inadequate. <sup>12</sup>

In December, W.H. Bird had sent Prinsep details of his pupils' progress, including samples of handwriting and signatures. After reporting the adult islanders' recent success at catching turtles, he added that he planned to leave the mission about the following March for up to a year to support his parents but hoped to return. <sup>13</sup>

Three weeks later, just after the beginning of 1904, Hadley too notified the Chief Protector that he needed a substantial leave of absence. Remarking that he had been in the tropical north-west of Australia since 1877 and that his health had been poor recently, he said he needed a break of at least twelve months.

He seems to have anticipated leaving in January 1905, by which time Bird had promised to return, so he enlisted Prinsep's help in finding a volunteer to work under Bird until his own return. Even Omerod would be acceptable, he said, expressing sincere Christian forgiveness over their bitter rift. <sup>14</sup>

Prinsep lent this letter to a reporter from the *West Australian* newspaper late in March. Among the resulting applicants was the well-known writer Daisy Bates, who had assisted for a short time at Beagle Bay Mission and was to devote much of the rest of her life to Aboriginal people. She would gladly go up and manage Sunday Island Mission, she said, apparently not seeing herself as an assistant to W.H. Bird. <sup>15</sup>

Having decided by May that Frederick and Lucy Bradburn were the most suitable volunteers, Hadley asked to be put in touch, only to hear from Prinsep later that month that two children and a mother-in-law were to accompany the couple. The family could start north aboard *S.S. Sultan* early in June with material for erecting a house if Hadley would provide thirty-six pounds for their passage.

From Derby, where he received this information, the missionary telegraphed Prinsep asking him to put off the Bradburns, with whom he had made no arrangements at all or even corresponded. Again he asked to be put in touch with them. But June passed and then July without a word. <sup>16</sup>

By that time, the sweltering summer had declined into the cooler, less humid, clear winter months. With the change, Hadley's health improved markedly. He continued to extend his banana plantation, his cows were calving and he was able to make butter. He didn't take a break the following year or for many years to come.

In the meantime, *Elsie* had been showing the effects of almost six years' continuous use as a transport and fishing vessel. She needed extensive repairs, new copper sheathing to protect her wooden hull from marine borers and a new suit of sails. Her dinghy was probably beyond help.

While she was being put to rights, almost certainly by Harry Hunter at Boolgin, the missionary chartered from Broome the lugger *Prince* for two months. With the help of ten young men from Sunday Island, he sailed back and forth between Derby and the Robinson River, transporting building material at the rate of £5 per ton for a new police station on the river, police personnel, stores for Oobagooma cattle station and probably cargoes for the copper mines which were being started in the hills beyond. Being twice the size of *Elsie*, the lugger was ideal for the purpose.

Between trips, he found time to bring Dr. Richard Wace to the mission for a three-day inspection. Planned for months, the visit had been delayed by the appearance of typhoid at Derby.

After all expenses, the cargo work generated £166 at a time when the value of pearl shell had fallen. Trepang [beche-de-mer] was fetching good prices at Singapore but after years of over-exploitation in King Sound, Hadley hadn't gathered it for some time in the hope that it would recover.

He returned *Prince* early in July, recovering *Elsie* a few days later at a cost of £46. 6. 6, plus a further £13 for a new dinghy. The net addition to mission funds was particularly welcome at this time because the missionary had discovered that the wood in his mission buildings, stockyards and fence posts only withstood the relentless attack of white ants [termites] for about three years before collapsing. A new building to house the school and church was necessary, especially as he anticipated more pupils. <sup>17</sup>

Wace wrote to Prinsep advising against the addition of a white woman to the mission staff. He felt the place was already run so successfully that such an introduction would be drastic, adding,

Moreover it is no place for a lady. It is not uncommon to see a boy plastered with blood from head to heels, the subject of tribal rites - men & women are but for loin cloths unclad often.

His attached report began,

Regarding Mr. Hadley's mission I cannot speak too highly. It has been the aim of the mission to educate the Aborigines without abolishing tribal customs rites & ceremonies - To inculcate some religious training and to teach the younger children to read and write as well. I have not seen before such intelligent natives...It is a matter of considerable difficulty managing under these conditions to carry on the work & yet not break down tribal restrictions. Example gratia at Church on Sundays the two sexes sit back to back. The men on one side facing the wall & the women & uninitiated boys on the other facing the other wall. Mr Hadley has however I think succeeded well.

If work had to be done, Wace continued, volunteers invariably presented themselves as they were always paid [in kind]. Otherwise, the men were free to hunt, fish and travel as they always had, the islands and sea being rich in natural foods. Wace remarked on their fine physiques and legendary reputation as divers and swimmers.

The women kept the buildings supplied with water and attended to the garden, for which they were fed, as were the schoolchildren. No able-bodied adults were fed unless they worked. Clothing was provided, its use being encouraged but not insisted upon, in the hope of gradual voluntary acceptance.

As a consequence of these enlightened policies, the islanders were living more traditional lives than Aboriginal people on any mainland cattle or sheep station Wace had seen, yet they were also beginning to make spontaneous changes: Two young women had refused marriage with men they had been promised to, and were being allowed to do so.

Wace noted the cleanliness of the buildings and traditional encampment and the success of the garden. His one strongly-expressed criticism was not of Sunday Island, but of the situation across the water at Cygnet Bay. Stationing a single constable there during the pearlers' lay up was inadequate, he insisted, because most of the officer's time was spent in bringing prisoners down to Derby for trial, not at the bay where he was needed. 18

A few months later, smallpox struck at Broome, which the authorities declared an Infected Port. With the pearlers due to begin arriving back at Cygnet Bay, Hadley lost no time in bringing Wace back to the mission where he spent seven or eight days vaccinating seventy-nine islanders and examining others. All survived.

The missionary asked Prinsep to extend the reserve from Sunday Island to all the islands between the north Dampier Land peninsula and Sunday Straits. Wace supported him, sending the Chief Protector a map on which he had sketched the proposed new boundary, within which the 'Chowi' [Djawi] language was spoken. Not included was the greater spread of islands eastward, where many mission residents had lived before being gathered in by Hadley, and which they still visited.

By this time, Hadley and Bradburn had been in touch at last, the latter having moved to Collie, south of Perth. The problem of Bradburn's extended family remained insurmountable however, so the missionary next turned for help to Mr. Burrige, minister at Fremantle of the Wesleyans, the denomination in which Hadley had been christened and brought up back in England. 19

Hadley was in Derby on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1904, where he was formally plied with more than sixty questions by Dr. Walter Edmund Roth. They also had at least one off the record conversation during which Roth strongly recommended the erection of dormitories on Sunday Island so that the children could be separated from the influences of the camp. Pressure of work prevented Roth from accepting an invitation to visit the mission.

Years of criticism by some sections of the white public and press had led the State government to establish a *Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives*. In the interests of impartiality, Dr. Roth, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Queensland, a distinguished ethnologist who was also a surgeon, was appointed Royal Commissioner.

After interviewing many witnesses and obtaining much confidential information, chiefly in the north and north-west of the giant State, Roth revealed widespread, appalling treatment of Aboriginal people, not only by the usual suspects, but also by policemen, the courts, the prison service and other branches of the State government itself.

Some of this behaviour was so grossly criminal and morally reprehensible as to make the depredations of the pearling crews seem relatively innocent. The law governing Aboriginal people and the powers of the Aboriginies Department were both shown to be seriously inadequate.

Publication of 'The Roth Report' at the end of January 1905 caused prolonged uproar in Western Australia and reverberations in the other Australian States. When it reached London, the Secretary of State for the Colonies found its revelations 'deplorable', while a Member of Parliament was reminded of 'cruelties committed in the Dark Ages'.

In the Report's one hundred and twenty-one pages, few Europeans were singled out for praise. One exception was the Catholic Parish Priest of Broome, Father Nicholas Emo, 'who for ten years past has devoted himself entirely to the benefit of the natives; a more unselfish man it would be rare to meet.'

'Another fine example of a man who is sacrificing self on behalf of others', said the Royal Commissioner, was Sydney Hadley. 20

During 1904, three children were born and two adults died on Sunday Island, one of the latter tragically young, while the Aboriginal population continued to decline elsewhere. Under the direction of Hadley and Bird, the islanders earned some £300 for the mission. Finding he could sell as much garden produce as he could carry to Cygnet Bay, the missionary planted two dozen coconut trees obtained from Singapore around the island, and fig trees too.

By the New Year, the replacement school/chapel building was nearly finished, though still lacking furniture. Construction had been slow because only small amounts of timber at a time could be shipped from Derby on *Elsie's* deck, the lengths being too long to stow below. And the expense had been great.

Four new pupils were expected, making twenty-seven in all, so Hadley decided to ask the Colonial Secretary for an allowance to pay his schoolmaster a salary. W.H. Bird was still an unpaid volunteer, despite his need to generate income for his parents. Fearing he could not be retained much longer under the present arrangement, the missionary enlisted Prinsep's support for his application.

Both in writing, when he pointed out that other missions were paid much more than Sunday Island, and during an interview, the Chief Protector did so. Nevertheless, only an extra £50 a year was forthcoming.

Prinsep told Hadley that he would like to see his mission become the nucleus for the whole district. The mission at Disaster Bay, further down King Sound, closed that year, leaving Beagle Bay Mission on the western side of the Dampier Land peninsula as the only other in the region. Hadley concurred but pointed out he would need more help to do so. 21

During the pearlers' lay up 1904-5, Constable J.A. McGrath tirelessly patrolled from his base at Cygnet Bay to keep Bardi people away from the luggers and shore camps. Finding seven male Sunday Islanders hiding among the rocks before Christmas, he ordered them back to their home without delay. Four women from Boolgin were escorted two miles [3.2 km] in that direction after he had shot their dogs, as he was required to do by current legislation.

In the hope of maintaining contact with the crews, some Bardi people tried to elude him by returning to the bay after dark and leaving again before first light. McGrath surprised one such group, sending most of them fleeing into the bush.

He was often at Boolgin, where newly-bankrupted Harry Hunter gave him information and advice, questioned suspects for him, provided trackers and patrolled with him on Christmas Day,

among other occasions. Early in January, he approached Hunter to borrow the cutter which was still at Boolgin. Finding it was currently unusable, he borrowed a whaleboat from a pearler and set off for the islands with Hunter and three of the latter's Bardi men, looking for 'Baldheaded Charley', whose flying spear had almost decapitated a youth.

By this time, the pearling crews had realised they could be prosecuted only for supplying drink to Aboriginal people, not for having sex with them, so they supplied flour, rice, sugar, clothing and other items instead. And it worked. All McGrath could do was to drive Bardi people away from the lay up sites and warn them not to return.

McGrath and Hunter were on Sunday Island on the 8<sup>th</sup> February and the constable was there again towards the beginning and end of March. After he had returned to Derby early in April, Hunter sent an appreciative letter to his superior, praising McGrath's diligence and success. Hadley too remarked in a letter to Prinsep that the constable had prevented the pearling crews from interfering with his charges.

That summer brought the usual great heat without the usual rain. Hadley sold a beast to the pearlery at Cygnet Bay but had little fruit and vegetables to offer. By April, the kitchen garden and banana plantation, which already occupied about half the ten acres suitable for cultivation within the little mission valley, was suffering badly.

Prinsep sent cotton seeds which sprouted in less than five days when nurtured in boxes. A Mr. Panton of Melbourne sent others, causing Hadley to reflect that he would have to find land elsewhere if the cotton thrived. 22

The protection given to the residents of the island and the mission-supported police patrols of Cygnet Bay inevitably caused much ill-feeling among the pearling crews, whose most desired entertainment in the steamy heat of idle summer was debauchery. Hadley was also falsely accused of sheltering Aboriginal people from far and wide, thereby supposedly depriving the pearlery of unpaid labour.

About the middle of 1905, after the local fleet had put to sea for another season's work and Constable McGrath had returned to Derby, two luggers anchored on the far side of Sunday Island and their crews came ashore. Because Hadley was away at the time, the islanders informed W.H. Bird, who went across and insisted the intruders leave.

The new school/religious service building was now in use, boasting an organ supplied by Nicholson & Son of Perth, which Hadley paid for personally because mission funds were inadequate. With an enlarged school role and more pupils anticipated shortly, the system of teaching the sexes at different times was abandoned in favour of separating them with a curtain right down the centre of the room so they could be taught simultaneously, while still respecting traditional custom.

Apart from school-teaching, for which he was now receiving £70 per annum, W.H. Bird had turned Prinsep's four cotton seeds into twenty-one healthy plants, each about four feet [1.22 m] high, which were blossoming well despite the drought. He was also trying to utilise two indigenous plants, the first as fodder, the second, a very fine rattan, as material from which the children made verandah screens.

Being adapted to the heat and periodic droughts of north-west Australia, both plants were of interest to Mr. Chaplin of the Agricultural Department at Perth. A screen was sent south for commercial evaluation.

With *Elsie's* crew, Hadley spent much time obtaining a modest amount of pearl shell and trepang [beche-de-mer] within the cutter's limited fishing range. A larger vessel would allow them to voyage further and provide useful and remunerative work for more islanders. 'Frenchy' D'Antoine, no longer employed by Harry Hunter and now apparently working on the island as a volunteer, was to captain the new boat.

At Broome, Hadley failed to find a suitable vessel for sale, so he chartered the 38 ton schooner *Minnie*. On the 24<sup>th</sup> July, she left Sunday Island carrying Bird, who had been at the mission for over two years without a break, and fifteen island men for a beche-de-mer [trepang] fishing voyage up the Kimberley coast to the north-east.

From abandoned buildings near the mouth of the Prince Regent River, they removed a quantity of galvanised iron which would be useful on Sunday Island. On the other hand, they had little success in finding trepang in the month they were away, which Bird attributed to a lack of effort on the part of the crew.

During their absence, the two mission wells ran dry in the continuing drought, compelling Hadley to sink another and line the sides with stone. Two cotton bushes, seventeen guava trees and two 'citrus' trees had been eaten down by his friends, the white ants [termites], yet the remaining cotton bushes now had at least a hundred ripening pods each. A sample of the cotton was forwarded to Mr. Chaplin.

Safely out of the ants' reach, wooden *Elsie* was fitted with new decks and a larger cabin, probably by Harry Hunter.

Negotiations with the Wesleyans at Fremantle had continued. Mr. Burrridge offered two young married men as assistants, provided the mission amalgamated fully with his church, which Hadley was unwilling to do. Having recognised his worth for some time, Chief Protector Prinsep urged Hadley to retain control. The Wesleyans then decided they would not assist in any way.

Mr Harries, a minister at Broome, thought he could find young Christian men who would help on the island for £50 a year plus board and lodging. It was probably Harries who put Hadley in touch with the south-western diocese of the Church of England, with which he next went into prolonged negotiations for financial as well as human assistance.

A few days after Bird returned in *Minnie*, Hadley embarked with fifteen different island men and sailed for Long Island in Vansittart Bay on the north Kimberley coast. Certainly larger than the similarly-named rugged island in King Sound, he planned to evaluate it for cotton cultivation, then fish for pearl shell and trepang on the way home. <sup>23</sup>

While Hadley was still away, W.H. Bird wrote to the police on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1905 about orgies at Karrakatta Bay, naming two divers and two Aboriginal women. Constable W.H.L. Walter, based at Beagle Bay early in December, rode north to investigate. His subsequent report noted that, 'Mr. H. Hunter Boolgin lent me all the assistance possible to collect information and lent me his cutter and crew to go to Sunday Island.' <sup>24</sup>

That year, the 1905 Aboriginies Act carried into law much of the previous year's Bill, many sections of which had also been supported by Royal Commissioner Roth. Other recommendations made by Roth were not incorporated. The new legislation, which remained the basis of Aboriginal administration in Western Australia for decades, included prohibition of the supply of alcohol by anyone to Aboriginal people. <sup>25</sup>

The orgy at Cygnet Bay described by 'Dougal' appears to have been one of the most blatant of many similar incidents, which did indeed lead to the consequences he mentioned. Nor was he wrong about the involvement of the King. Edward VII signed the new legislation into law, if not solely on information supplied by Nathan Goldstein.



## Chapter Fifteen

### Pearler's Revenge

*"When Malays came ashore in the night, wanting our women, Harry Hunter charged out of his house with lashing whip, sending them running away along the coast, bullets flying over their heads. Malays, Manilamen, white men, Harry Hunter chased them all. He wouldn't let them near us. Good boss!"*

'Dougal'.

Charles James of *Dora* and many other pearlers also found to their cost that he would report them to the police for these and any other offences against the Bardi people. James took four Bardi youths including 'Rob Roy' and Jibbogie from Cygnet Bay in August 1905, kept them working east of King Sound until the end of the year, then landed them near Swan Point without food or clothing. None had been signed on as crew, as required by law. <sup>1</sup>

Alexander McLachlan and his diver Choolon of *Una* were reported for giving alcohol to Bardi men 'Ernest' and 'Kangaroo' off Boolgin on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October '05, probably in an attempt to obtain their women. <sup>2</sup>

The following February, Hunter found a rifle-toting 'coloured' man in the Bardi camp at Boolgin. When ordered away, the man said he would go when it suited him. Constable John J. Ryan at Cygnet Bay, whose duties included keeping the pearling crews away from Bardi people, later identified the intruder as 'Tony', a crewman on a lugger owned by Gustav A. Ulbrich, and is not likely to have been pleased. <sup>3</sup>

Ryan was at Boolgin a few weeks later, when he obtained a statement from Bardi woman Waabut about being taken aboard a Goldstein-owned lugger by a diver named Catalina 'for immoral purposes' towards the end of the previous year. Doubtless this information too came from Hunter. <sup>4</sup>

About the 18<sup>th</sup> March, a pearler struck back. Robert S. Kirby of Broome came ashore from a lugger anchored off Boolgin, saying he wanted to look at some country he had an interest in. Harry Hunter later claimed to have spoken to him civilly, advised him to check on the availability of water before bringing livestock, and told him he had a lease of ten acres on which he had lived for twenty years. Hunter added that he was currently building a schooner of forty tons and would probably leave once she was launched.

When Kirby replied that he would clear Hunter out of the country and the 'damned natives' too and would see that the police did not patrol any of the land he leased, Hunter refused to continue the conversation.

Next morning Kirby came ashore again, this time accompanied by Alexander McLachlan. Announcing they had 'taken up the country', they gave Hunter a month's notice to leave. He asked them to put in writing anything they had to say about the land, which they refused to do and became abusive, threatening to throw him and his schooner into the creek and prevent him from employing Aboriginal people.

While on his way to work, Hunter was told by one of the latter that Kirby had gone to Cygnet Bay for the policeman and that McLachlan was in the Bardi camp at Boolgin, making a nuisance of himself.

Hunter returned to find McLachlan chasing two protesting women near the well, the pursuit ending abruptly with McLachlan's departure over the sand-hills on Hunter's approach. Later, the same women complained that McLachlan was again molesting them in their camp. Once more, Hunter's approach caused the troublemaker to withdraw.

At Cygnet Bay, to which he had been guided by Jibbogie ['Tommy'], Kirby failed to find the constable, so he left a note with the police Native Assistant which announced that he and McLachlan were about to stock the land, had given Hunter notice to leave, and wanted the officer to give Hunter notice too. <sup>5</sup>

If Hunter failed to go, the note continued, McLachlan and Kirby would consider him a nuisance with no visible means of support. A postscript added categorically, 'we hold the lease to this country.'

Kirby returned from the bay about 4 pm and passed Hunter's homestead on his way to the Bardi camp, which some of the residents left to complain to Hunter. The latter asked Kirby not to molest them as he held work agreements with most of them and other had been left in his care by the police. Kirby threatened to break Hunter's jaw and burst his guts in, but eventually went to his boat.

On the following day too, Kirby and McLachlan came ashore, this time occupying Hunter's carpentry shop in his absence. When they became threatening and abusive on being told to leave, and refused to do so, he sent for the constable, then left for Cygnet Bay in person with a convalescent police horse he had been looking after.

He reached the police camp at sundown and was back at Boolgin with Constable Ryan about 11 pm where William Street and one Critch, apparently visitors or employees, confirmed that Kirby and McLachlan had threatened violence to Hunter and his property.

Ryan also heard that the malefactors had returned to their vessel with 'Ernest' and Jibbogie, where the four remained overnight, despite the fact that 'Ernest' was a witness in a forthcoming trial of McLachlan and his diver Choolon.

When Kirby came ashore at 7 am, Ryan 'read him the Riot Act', saying that his note was worthless and would not be acted upon, cautioned him against violence to Hunter and interference with police witnesses. Ryan also went out to Kirby's vessel before returning to Cygnet Bay that afternoon.

Soon afterwards, Kirby and McLachlan sailed for Broome, where the former handed Police Acting Sub-Inspector J. McCarthy a four page letter of complaints and allegations against Ryan and Hunter. He alleged that Ryan had grossly insulted him, sworn at him using obscene language and had threatened to 'put him inside'.

Aboriginal people were frightened of the police and Hunter, his letter continued, and a police horse had been kept at Boolgin and ridden by Hunter. Furthermore, Constable Ryan had chained by the neck Bardi woman Munda and slept with her.

Also, Hunter once had an Aboriginal woman who ran away with a boy named 'French'. Hunter pursued them, took 'French' to Deep Water Point [in King Sound], shot him, put his body in a bag weighted with stones, which he then sank offshore. The woman was currently on Sunday Island with Sydney Hadley.

Questioned by Sub-Inspector McCarthy, Kirby admitted he was not the leaseholder of land at Boolgin and Cygnet Bay, having only applied for a lease thereabouts. Nevertheless, McCarthy put the allegations to Ryan, who wrote a two and a half page denial of all of them shortly after he returned to Derby from Cygnet Bay.

When forwarding the papers to the Commissioner of Police at Perth, McCarthy added the note, 'Mr. R. Kirby does not bear a good character.' 6

Kirby wasn't finished yet however. An undated letter from him reached Henry Prinsep, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, at Perth on the 1<sup>st</sup> May, saying he was negotiating with the Lands Department for a lease of country which included Cape Leveque, Swan Point and Cygnet Bay. He also repeated most of his allegations against Ryan and Hunter, stressed the supposed fear which local Aboriginal people felt for the two and added that Hunter kept a harem of Aboriginal women which included three of his own daughters.

Prinsep acknowledged the letter two weeks later, then passed it to the Commissioner of Police for investigation. Before the end of May, he in turn asked Acting Sub-Inspector McCarthy at Derby to look into the matter, but not until Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October did Corporal Cunningham and Native Assistant 'Tommy' leave the town with four horses to begin enquiries in the north of the Dampier Land peninsula.

Reaching Boolgin one week later, they set up camp. Soon afterwards, at a major gathering of Bardi people some six miles [9.6 km] away, Cunningham found the hundred or so men, women and children well clothed, apparently healthy and contented. They were friendly, showed no fear of

the police, and his enquiries at successive family camps about Hunter and the police drew only favourable responses. Ryan's work in keeping their women out of the hands of the pearling boat crews was widely appreciated.

'Tommy otherwise Gibagee' [Jibbogee] gave Cunningham a statement in which he said he had shown Kirby where the police camp was at Cygnet Bay but denied being the source of any of Kirby's allegations. Kirby had told him that the country belonged to himself and that he intended to drive Hunter out.

On a previous occasion, Jibbogee added, Constable Ryan had arrived at the Bardi camp at Malgin [Woody Point] saying that the residents would have to come to Cygnet Bay police camp. When asked why, Ryan had replied that too many white fellows and Malays were at Malgin, so the Bardi group, which included Munda, agreed to the move.

On the first night they camped at Skeleton Point and reached the police camp the next day. Probably seeking a safer place for his charges than the pearler-frequented bay, Ryan asked if they would like to stay at Harry Hunter's place until the pearling boats went away, to which they readily consented because Boolgin had long been one of the principal camping grounds of their people.

At no time during the trip had Ryan chained Munda or any other person. The Bardi kept together at nights, Ryan sleeping separately in his tent. He was a good fellow, said Jibbogee, and denied having told Kirby otherwise - Kirby had told plenty of lies.

Mr Hunter was a good-fellow-boss who treated people all right. He had been in the Bardi country for a long time and hadn't killed someone. Kirby had lied about that too, Jibbogee concluded.

Munda's statement corroborated her countryman's description of the walk from Malgin to Boolgin, adding that her man Wahba had been another member of the group and had remained with her throughout. Ryan was a good fellow who wouldn't let local women go to the Malay boats. Kirby had lied. Harry Hunter also met with Munda's approval, hadn't killed one of her people, none of whom had been known as 'French' anyway.

Wahba ['Ernest'] agreed with Jibbogee and Munda in every respect. He too said Kirby had lied.

Cunningham took a fourth statement from a Bardi man who had not been on the trip from Malgin but could be expected to know about local circumstances and events. 'Snider' said that Harry Hunter had lived in the district for about twenty years, hadn't killed one of his people, nobody had been called 'French' and that a white fellow had told that lie.

'Snider' referred to 'Prince', the Bardi man who allegedly leapt from Harry Hunter's boat into King Sound nine years earlier. 'Prince' hadn't been seen again, so might have drowned, 'Snider' thought, adding that the police already knew that.

Back at Boolgin, Cunningham rested his horses for a day, then patrolled with Harry Hunter to Cygnet Bay, where they called on Father Nicholas Emo who had recently set up Skeleton Point Mission. The policeman took a statement from him and talked to several of the twenty or so old or diseased people being cared for by the priest before returning to Boolgin.

At Derby Police Station on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, Corporal Cunningham wrote a report on his investigation which repudiated all of Kirby's allegations, including the accusation of incest.

He recorded Hunter as being the father of Jessy aged 13, Nellie aged 11 and Ivy aged 4, all by different Aboriginal mothers. Each child remained with her own mother who moved from place to place with other Bardi people. None of the children lived at Hunter's homestead.

And he concluded that the harem did not exist either.

Acting Sub-Inspector McCarthy sent the results of the enquiry and the statements to the Commissioner of Police the next day, with the remark that Kirby's allegations appeared to be groundless. Almost seven years earlier, he noted, Kirby had been convicted at Derby of maliciously burning a quantity of blankets and clothes belonging to Aboriginal people at Liveringa Station [east of Derby] and was ordered to pay a total of £9-5-6 in fine, damages and costs.

The Commissioner forwarded the file to the Chief Protector on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 1907. 7

If Kirby and McLachlan were ever genuinely interested in leasing the land, they either lost interest or were prevented from doing so by the authorities. But they had taught Harry Hunter a valuable lesson. For the majority of the twenty-two years he had lived at various places around the north of the peninsula, he had had no legal right of occupancy.

Since his bankruptcy in 1904, he had held no lease on Boolgin and therefore would have been vulnerable to a civil legal action to remove him from his home and commercial base if Kirby and McLachlan or anyone else had tenanted the district. He realised this as soon as the above episode began, because two applications from him for leases were received by the Lands Department at distant Perth on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1906.

The first was for Boolgin, the second for a 'garden' apparently at the site of his previous homestead south of Swan Point. Both applications were officially registered on the 24<sup>th</sup> April and granted the following year. He retained the first for the rest of his life but allowed the second to lapse in 1908. <sup>8</sup>

As for Kirby's allegation that Hunter shot an Aboriginal boy and sank the body in the depths of King Sound, the denials four Bardi people gave to Corporal Cunningham contrast with the account given by old Bardi men to Jack Hunter, Harry's favourite son, who had a Bardi mother and grew up at Boolgin.

The old men said the event happened before Jack was born [1894/5] and therefore prior to the death of 'Prince' in 1897, with which it might otherwise have been confused. The story can be found at the beginning of this book.

## Chapter Sixteen

### 'Frank'

*"'Frank' got cranky, silly in the head. Everyday he went around 'growling' people, swore badly at them, said anything. He was all right before, but one summer he lost his pipe during a ceremony. All night he looked for it, searched everywhere, couldn't find it."*

*"That's when he started swearing. Djungagurs ['witchdoctors'] made people go like that. Djanboo, 'Hackimo', 'Ludnid' and 'Old Dickie' were the djungagur-men of that time. Once they made him cranky, they wouldn't stop."*

*"On Sunday Island, 'Frank' saw an old man asleep, lifted a rock and brought it down on his head. Well, that was that. The old fellow was finished straight away. 'Frank' went off into the bush a little way."*

*"Morning-time, people saw a dead man. There was nothing they could do. 'Frank' came back and told them everything."*

*"Hadley took him to Cygnet Bay, gave him to 'Bludger' the policeman, who chained him by the neck, waist and wrists before taking him to Derby."*

'Dougal'.

On the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1907, a Sunday Islander told Hadley that Yonga, [alias 'Sore-Leg Charlie'] had been speared in the night. At the Aboriginal camp, the missionary found the body with a spear apparently through the heart, the face bruised, a blood-stained stone and another spear nearby. No sign of a struggle was evident. Removed about half a mile from the camp on Hadley's instructions, the corpse was placed in a tree by the islanders, as was their mortuary custom.

'Bludger', formally known as Police Constable Bertram Henry Fletcher No. 550, arrived from Cygnet Bay the following day. On examining the body in situ, he found a spear wound in the side and a lot of congealed blood on the face, decided not to remove the remains to Derby because of decomposition in the heat of tropical summer and made the usual enquiries at the camp.

Cautioned and charged with murder, Mundera ['Frank'] said that he had killed Yonga with his spear because he wanted to, but that Murquin had struck Yonga in the face with the stone. Others however stated that Murquin had not been involved, having been camped with them.

Hadley apparently took the policeman, his prisoner and several islanders to Derby by boat. On the way, 'Frank' added that he had 'fooled himself' in doing the deed.

Yonga had been one of six or seven visiting Aboriginal people from the mainland east of King Sound, commonly known as the 'Graveyard' coast after the name of a bay where many pearl divers were buried. The missionary had known him for fifteen or sixteen years and was well aware of the age-old hostility between Yonga's people and the Djawi islanders he had gathered together at his mission. For some time Hadley and his assistant W.H. Bird had been working to overcome that animosity.

Unarmed, Bird had landed on the 'Graveyard' coast at Christmas 1904 and gone to see the locals. Instead of killing and eating him, as their fearsome reputation suggested, they brought some of their fresh water down to *Elsie* and filled her tank. In return, Bird invited them to visit Sunday Island.

When the risk of tropical storms had declined later that summer, six of them paddled their way across. Though Hadley and Bird warmly welcomed them, their appearance at the mission must have been problematic for the Djawi residents especially. Nevertheless, prolonged visits by people from the east coast of the Sound continued.

When Yonga's death was first discovered, a furious row broke out between his countrymen and some of the Sunday Islanders, resulting in the former leaving for their homeland at once, which entailed a voyage of some 70 miles [113 km] on frail catamarans at the beginning of the cyclone season.

While 'Frank' languished at Derby awaiting trial, Hadley too sailed across King Sound to the east coast later that December, accompanied by Constable Fletcher, to evaluate the Kammargoorh valley for agricultural purposes. He was now using 14 ton *Rita*, having sold his long-serving, smaller cutter *Elsie* to Adcock Bros. of Derby the previous year.

Smoke rose from camp-fires in the surrounding hills while they were there but, perhaps unsurprisingly, none of the inhabitants came down to meet them. Yet unless he obtained the permission of the local people, or their acquiescence at least, he could not farm that land.

Back at his mission, Hadley slaughtered a bullock and provided all his charges with meat and flour for Christmas. There the adults remained for several months because the formidable Constable Fletcher patrolled Cygnet Bay during the lay-up of the pearling vessels.

Hadley was now officially a Protector of Aboriginies, his long-time wish for some legal authority having been granted by Henry Prinsep before the Chief Protector retired that month. So it was the new Acting Chief Protector of Aboriginies C.F. Gale who read Hadley's next quarterly report dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1908, enthusiastically describing the vast fertile acreage he and Fletcher had seen in and around the Kammargoorh valley.

Pointing out that pearl shell and trepang [beche-de-mer] were about finished in his own area, and that although he had obtained a contract to carry freight from Derby to the Robinson River, he was unlikely to get much work due to the failure of the copper mines thereabouts, the missionary pressed Gale to grant him the land.

Mundera, alias 'Frank', was tried for the Wilful Murder of Yonga, 'otherwise called Charlie', at the Criminal Court of Special Sessions held at Derby before Dr. Arthur R. Adams, Commissioner and current Resident Magistrate, and a jury of twelve on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 1908.

Hadley's testimony included use of the word *boy* in reference to Aboriginal men, as was common among white people at that time. His replies to questions, as recorded verbatim by the clerk, included:

the accused has been in my employ since 1886. he has always been particularly quiet of late years the last two he has been living by himself & talking to himself and suffering from Lumbago all the time...The boy has not been himself for the last two years. he has refused to speak English & he can speak it very well he has been very inoffensive.

Minaway and her husband Idjura ['Wigan'] - Djawi people who had been brought to Sunday Island from High Island in King Sound by Hadley in 1899 - testified about the immediate aftermath of the death. Constable Fletcher's evidence included the opinion that 'Frank' was of unsound mind and had deteriorated since being brought to Derby. Police Corporal Cunningham, stationed at Derby, testified [as recorded]:

the accused came under my charge on the 13<sup>th</sup> Dec last at times he becomes very erratic throwing his food away. he came at the warder & myself like a wild dog when I had him out. on one occasion he tried to strangle himself with the chain.

Finally, Dr. Adams himself took the stand in his capacity of District Medical Officer at Derby [verbatim]:

I have Visited the Goal since the 7<sup>th</sup> Feby. last about two or three times a week. I frequently examined the accused & consider he is of unsound mind he has been reported as having refused any nourishment. I reported the matter to head quarters about the difficult

matter to deal with such patients I would not attach any importance to any Statement he would make at the present time

As the charge against 'Frank' was one of Wilful Murder, it is not surprising that he was found Not Guilty. <sup>1</sup>

Released, then re-arrested and returned to Police Court the following morning, 'Frank' was charged with 'being a person found wandering at large & supposed unsound mind.' He was Remanded in Custody, prior to a medical certificate being issued. <sup>2</sup>

The authorities at Derby agreed with the Sunday Islanders on 'Frank's' mental state, if not on the cause thereof. He was never seen again by his compatriots.

That summer's temperatures were still very high when James Isdell, Travelling Inspector of the Aboriginies Department, reached Beagle Bay Mission during his tour of the north-west of the huge State. Continuing up the peninsula, where the parched *pindan* or bush-land had received only six inches [15 cm] of rain for the year, Isdell had to stop several times to rest his heat-exhausted horses. Not a breath of wind relieved their suffering. He himself had to endure innumerable flesh-penetrating grass seeds in the dense scrub.

North of Pender Bay, he was able to camp for two days, until Constable Fletcher arrived to guide him onward via the few remaining 'soaks' of fresh water. By Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> April, they had reached Thomas Puertollano's station at Lombadina.

A Manilaman and staunch Roman Catholic, Puertollano had been a stalwart lay assistant at Beagle Bay and Disaster Bay Missions for years. At the former, he met his wife Agnes, daughter of an Aboriginal mother and the Irish pearler-blackbirder William Bryan, one of Hunter and Hadley's associates in the 1880s. Agnes was partly reared, educated and trained at Beagle Bay, where the Puertollanos' daughter was now schooling.

When Disaster Bay Mission closed in 1905, its Trappist founder, Father Jean Janny and the Puertollano family moved to Lombadina on the opposite coast of the peninsula. Not long afterwards, the priest left for Europe while his erstwhile assistants applied for a 25,000 acre [10,117 hectares] pastoral lease around their present location.

The lease was approved the same year. On it, the industrious Puertollanos built their homestead, established a fine market garden, raised cattle and goats, and made a living by selling meat, fruit and vegetables to pearling boat crews.

Isdell noted that their hundred head of cattle included some of the best fat bullocks in the whole State. At that time, Puertollano employed a single Manilaman in his market garden and sought the Travelling Inspector's permission to employ an Aboriginal couple to tend his goats and stay with Agnes during his absences. Isdell told him to apply to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies at Perth, adding that he too would write on the subject.

Early the following morning, Isdell and Fletcher rode eastwards along the very rough, sometimes stony, sometimes marshy track to the police post at Cygnet Bay, where Isdell set up camp. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, he inspected Father Nicholas's mission, now situated close to the police camp.

Father Nicholas's establishment had grown. The Travelling Inspector counted a total of one hundred and twenty-eight residents including seven mixed-race boys and girls. Noting that two cases of suspected leprosy had previously been reported there - a diagnosis not medically confirmed that year - Isdell decided to send an old man with severe facial disfigurement to Derby when the mission lugger *San Salvador* next visited the port.

At 6.30 am the next morning, he set off for Sunday Island accompanied by Constable Fletcher, having hired a whale-boat and four man crew from Father Nicholas. Lack of wind and a contrary tide forced them to spend four hours on an intermediate island, so it was not until 3 pm that they completed the trip.

W.H. Bird, who had returned the previous month from a two-year absence to take up his old jobs of schoolmaster and agriculturalist, greeted the visitors. *Rita* was sighted the same evening, bringing Hadley back from Derby, although the missionary was unable to land until the following morning.

Isdell counted one hundred and nineteen Aboriginal people at the mission, of whom thirty-two were in school. In the afternoon, he boarded *Rita* for a trip to the Graveyard coast across King Sound, to view the land Hadley wanted to obtain. Unable to sail south of the island because the tide was against them, they anchored north of it for the night, setting off again at 4 am.

The crossing took most of the day, including a potentially dangerous period when the wind died away in the afternoon. Eventually they passed through a narrow, cliff-lined gorge into a basin so deep they had to moor close inshore for the night.

Taking advantage of an incoming tide early in the morning, they rowed a whale-boat some three miles up Kammargoorh creek between crocodile-infested mangroves, landed on a high bank, then walked up the well-watered valley, rich in grasses and vegetation of all kinds including fine trees. Exposed banks of the creek revealed the soil to be deep, rich loam.

W.H. Bird, who was with them, said the place couldn't be bettered for tropical agriculture, especially coffee, cotton and fruit. Constable Fletcher had also previously extolled the virtue of this valley to Isdell, having visited it with Hadley and while on patrol.

Returning to *Rita*, a westerly wind and strong, adverse tide prevented direct progress towards Sunday Island, so they coasted north through another gorge into a beautiful 'inland sea', as the inspector called it, enclosed by high hills of sparkling white rock. Passing between two hundred foot [61 m] white quartzite cliffs, they entered another 'inland sea', this one being the Graveyard itself.

Wind and tide compelled them to continue north the next morning through yet another gorge into a spectacular bay which was unnamed and unmarked on the chart, according to Isdell. When clear of all inlets, Hadley began a series of long tacks into the westerly wind while his guest reflected that nowhere else on the long coast of Western Australia was such beautiful, grand scenery to be found. Because of the head wind and overnight calms, it was not until the late afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> April that Isdell stepped ashore at Cygnet Bay. 3

He did so with considerable misgivings about Sunday Island Mission, for his diary and subsequent reports to the Acting Chief Protector contain strong criticism:

The landing place at Sunday Island is about the worst you could imagine, it is at the foot of some steep granite rocks over which you have to climb...Notwithstanding the number of able bodied natives at the mission, not the slightest attempt has been made to make a decent landing or roadway to the homestead...

He noted the buildings, eleven head of cattle, hundred or so goats and thought the garden fine but,

I cannot approve of Sunday Island Mission, in so far as being of any ultimate benefit to the younger generations, as they are not taught any trades or knowledge to help them in the future, except a few of them as sailors. Reading and writing are taught, but that knowledge will not fill their stomachs nor put clothes on their backs, nor is it a recommendation that finds favour with employers.

Hadley's policy of raising the age at which girls could marry from twelve or thirteen to about eighteen or nineteen did not meet with his approval. Specifically, he disapproved of the missionary's refusal to allow a part-Aboriginal girl in the younger age group to marry one of Harry Hunter's part-Aboriginal sons in a year or two. Nor was that all. Most Sunday Islanders, Isdell believed,

do nothing. There is not even a decent cook amongst them. For the number of years Mr. Hadley has had these natives under his care, they seem to have learned very little of use to them...morally they are not a bit better than the bush natives; it is only the food, clothes, and not



having to work for it that keeps them on Sunday Island...I strongly advised Mr. Hadley to remove his mission to some more suitable place on the East side of King Sound, where he can secure a lease of some pastoral lands.

Isdell also reported to the Acting Chief Protector that during one of Hadley's absences, the crews of Captain Shaw's pearling luggers had camped on Sunday Island with the local women. Possibly the aspersion he cast on the morals of the islanders derived from this allegation. <sup>4</sup>

Hadley didn't learn about that part of Isdell's report until he visited Derby at the end of May, when it caused 'warm words' between himself and the Travelling Inspector. Isdell told him that the information had come from Constable Fletcher and W.H. Bird, but the latter vehemently denied it in a letter to Perth, as did Hadley.

On the contrary, when pearlers landed on the far side of Sunday Island some three years earlier, islanders notified Bird at once, so he was able to go there and see off the intruders. Bird had reported this incident to Chief Protector Prinsep soon afterwards and reminded Prinsep's successor of it now.

Hadley also pointed out to the Acting Chief Protector that his schoolboys looked after the cattle, did the milking, laboured in the garden under Bird's direction and all were trained as seamen when they became strong enough. The girls made all their own dresses. Both made door screens out of shells, for which several new orders had just been received.

He could have added that both men and women had combed the reefs and shores at low tide for pearl shells and beche-de-mer [trepang], and prepared the latter for sale. The young men had transported cargoes to the Robinson River and many islanders had helped to construct the mission buildings. Isdell was wrong to say they learned nothing and did little work outside the classroom.

As for the difficulties of landing on the island and accessing the mission, both were considerable assets in protecting local women and children from the pearling crews.

Despite the fact that Isdell had spent only one day on Sunday Island, many of his comments were published in the Annual Report by the Chief Protector of Aboriginies for 1907-08. In response, Hadley wrote a three-page letter 'correcting certain statements that are misleading'.

The missionary wanted his letter published but was advised that an undesirable newspaper controversy would probably be the only result, and that he should publish it under his own name if he felt sufficiently strongly. <sup>5</sup>

Happily, visits to Sunday Island Mission by Aboriginal people from the easterly, 'Graveyard' coast of King Sound resumed later in 1908. It seems they accepted that 'Frank's tragic act was motivated by his mental condition, not the hostility that had existed between the two peoples for ages past. Perhaps Hadley and Bird had found some way to reassure them.

Sadly, when a party of them paddled back from the mission to their own coast in December 1908, they were overtaken by a cyclone which broke up their catamarans and caused several fatalities. <sup>6</sup>

## Chapter Seventeen

### Winds of Change

*"Harry Hunter took plenty of poison bait up the hill to the Bardi camp at Boolgin. They had too many dogs."*

*"Annis 'growled' him, swore at him, so he drew his revolver. Just then, Constable Fletcher rode up with another white man."*

*"'All right', Harry Hunter said, 'Come on, this man 'growled' me!'"*

*"The three white men grabbed Annis, chained and handcuffed him, took him down the hill and chained him to a tree by the homestead where they gave him a big hiding. Half killed him! The policeman rode away."*

*"In the morning, still chained to the tree, Annis was unrecognisable. You couldn't tell who it was. Harry Hunter let him go then. Annis still 'growled' him, saying, 'We'll kill you on the road sometime!'"*

*"'All right', Harry Hunter said casually, 'I'll see you on the road'."*

Jack Hunter.

On Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> April, two days after James Isdell landed at Cygnet Bay from Sydney Hadley's *Rita*, he and Constable Fletcher, both officially Protectors of Aboriginies, rode over to Boolgin.

In his official records, Isdell noted that he stayed the night, that Harry Hunter held a 'homestead lease' of fifty acres [20 hectares] and had a shipbuilding yard at the mouth of Boolgin Creek.

Next morning, the Travelling Inspector counted one hundred and three Aboriginal men, women and children at Boolgin. Though none were named in his subsequent report, 'Dougal' and his parents would have been among them.

Of the seven mixed-race boys and girls, Hunter freely claimed three sons and three daughters. His boys, all in their teens, repaired and built boats with him. Currently they were constructing a forty-ton schooner.

The eldest lad, Robin, also had a share in a pastoral lease at Pender Bay and was in charge of Hunter's cutter or his small lugger during shelling and beche-de-mer voyages. Hunter was also raising and training a fourth mixed-race boy at Boolgin, whose parents Isdell reported to be dead.

Two more mixed-race sons were grown up and living at Beagle Bay Mission, one said to be a first-class saddler, the other a blacksmith. Isdell had previously met one of these two, finding him notably intelligent and multi-skilled.

After showing the Inspector employment agreements made with Aboriginal men twenty-nine years earlier, Hunter introduced him to two of those men and their families, which now extended to four and three generations respectively. Several other families at Boolgin had three and two generations of offspring. All looked contented and well. Isdell later reported to the Chief Protector,

The secret of Mr Hunter's success in keeping these natives so well together and rearing family after family is simply because he would never allow anyone white or coloured near them, nor would he allow any grog to be given to them in their camp. The appearance of these natives and their numerous offspring speaks for the jealous care taken of them.

Mr Hunter is one of the oldest pioneers on the coast and is not loved by the many coloured men nor yet by the white men working along this northern coast for the above reasons...Mr Hunter has always assisted the police to prevent coloured men having intercourse with native women, and has been the direct means of several large pearling

boat owners being heavily fined for giving natives liquor, he consequently is not the best of friends with most of the pearlers. The coloured men hate the sight of him, and they have reason to, for if he gets the slightest chance of having them punished for crimes against the natives he does not miss it...he sends his cutter across to the Lacepedes once a month for supplies of [turtles] for his natives. I was pleased to see so many natives bound together by family ties under one master for so many years, and although he feeds and clothes many old indigent natives, he has never requested nor would he expect any assistance from the government.

All of which applied equally to Sydney Hadley, except for the minimal financial assistance Hadley was getting from the State government. Additionally, Hadley provided a school, schoolteacher and practical training of various kinds for all the young people in his care, not just some. The Travelling Inspector's unreasonable preference for Hunter's establishment gave rise to suspicion in official quarters before the year was out.

Isdell's inspection of Boolgin was made doubly necessary by some information he had been given a day or two earlier: Father Nicholas Emo intended to close his mission at the end of the following month.

With modest support from the Aboriginies Department, Father Nicholas had started his enterprise at Cygnet Bay less than two years earlier, but although he owned the lugger *San Salvador*, he seemingly chose not to compete with Hadley and Hunter for pearl-shell, beche-de-mer or the carriage of freight.

He and Hadley discussed jointly working the land east of King Sound, if the government made it available. With Harry Hunter he applied in December 1907 for a pastoral lease of fifty thousand acres [20,234 hectares] at Cape Borda, which probably included the northern side of Pender Bay, a lease held until earlier that year in the names of Hunter and Jenkins.

But a month later Father Nicholas ran out of money. Having between fifty and one hundred Aboriginal people, many of them ill, asking for rations, he sought a grant of some £200 from the Chief Protector of Aboriginies in January 1908. Nothing was forthcoming at that time, though he was told the matter would be considered in due course.

Harry Hunter sent him two sacks of flour by boat, 'Dougal' among the crew. Nevertheless, early in March his joint application with Hunter for the pastoral lease was cancelled.

When Isdell arrived, the priest sought permission to put an Asian man in control of the Bardi and other Aboriginal people at his mission, which was refused. On several previous occasions, Harry Hunter had remonstrated with him on the same matter.

Within days, Father Nicholas told Isdell he was going to help the Benedictines start a new mission in the far north of the State and would close Cygnet Bay mission altogether at the end of May. The Inspector arranged with Father Bischoff at Beagle Bay to take eleven children and a few old people, then approached Harry Hunter about the other forty or so old people who refused to go to Beagle Bay or Sunday Island.

Hunter agreed they could come to Boolgin but wouldn't accept payment per head, saying the public might think he was charging for some of his own people. Instead he wanted supplies of food and blankets to be sent to him, which he would then distribute, ensuring that no-one else benefited.

Isdell thought it would be best to send bulk supplies directly from Fremantle every three months, to save costs. Steamers from the south regularly anchored off Boolgin to await favourable tides before entering King Sound, at which times they off-loaded goods for Hunter.

Notifying the Chief Protector of these matters in a letter written at Cygnet Bay on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, Isdell recommended Hunter, saying that the Aboriginal people of the district would far rather be with him than at either of the local missions and that he, 'has a job to keep them away from his place'.

Two tons of flour, five hundred pounds of rice, twenty pounds of tobacco, fifty blankets and clothing were soon on their way to Hunter.

Isdell also forwarded and recommended a written request from Harry Hunter that his sons and adopted son be exempted from legislation that would have curtailed their rights because of their mixed race. Part of Hunter's letter reads [verbatim]:

I hold that it is the Duty of Every intelegent man to raise if possible  
These people in the Social Scale, and not condem them to the level of  
the Blacks, and the Word Halfcaste should be altered to the Words, an  
Australian, For Australians they are pure & Simple.

Six certificates of exemption were issued for Hunter's sons and adopted son on the 29<sup>th</sup> June. Later the same year however, after information from other sources reached the Aboriginies Department at Perth, Hunter's application for certificates of exemption for two of his daughters and a young woman he claimed to have brought up, was questioned. <sup>1</sup>

Having returned to his camp at Cygnet Bay police post, Isdell experienced unusually great heat and humidity, accompanied by clouds of flies and mosquitoes at a time when the summer should have been declining. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> April, the anticipated storm began with heavy rain followed by a terrific gale from the east, with squalls and more rain. Isdell's tent and fly-sheet were soon in pieces.

Still the wind rose as it backed to the north, unleashing a full *blow* or *willy-willy* on the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup> and all through the next day. Not until the wind backed to the west in the early hours of the 28<sup>th</sup> did conditions begin to moderate at Cygnet Bay.

But this was only the edge of the cyclone. Some two hundred miles [322 km] further south, along the exposed coastline known as the Eighty Mile Beach, where the pearling fleet had congregated in the belief that the dangerous summer was over, the *willy-willy* was much, much worse.

Overwhelmed by hurricane-force wind, rain and giant seas, *Phyllis* took three of her crew to the bottom, leaving skipper Bernard Bardwell to swim for his life for thirteen hours. Frank Biddles' younger brother Hugh - known to the Bardi as 'Young Biddle' - struggled ashore eleven hours after *Isabella* went down, only to learn that he had lost two more vessels and several crewmen.

Robison and Norman lost five vessels. Bodies and wrecks were left strewn along the shore for dozens of miles. Many more of each were never seen again. Estimates of the death toll ranged from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, and of boats lost, about forty. <sup>2</sup>

For surviving pearlers who chose to fish off Cape Leveque, the following months of 1908 proved highly lucrative, as had the previous season. One schooner and its luggers arrived at the end of August, the crews having been promised generous bonuses because of the difficult and sometimes dangerous local diving conditions.

Whereas pearlers fishing some areas raised hundreds or even thousands of shells without finding a single pearl, at Cape Leveque every oyster contained a small or medium sized pearl, or 'baroque' [irregularly-shaped pearl]. After three months work, this schooner had nearly eight tons [8128 kg] of shell in its hold and £10,000 worth of pearls and baroque in its cabin.

Stopping work on December 7<sup>th</sup> because of the impending next cyclone season, this little fleet headed south towards Broome, only to be overtaken by the second major *willy-willy* of the year. Under close-reefed sails, the luggers fled before the rising storm into shallow Baldwin Creek, leaving the deep-draughted schooner to face the music at sea.

While she successfully did so, a trunk belonging to one of the divers spilled open in the hold, revealing another £1,200-worth of pearls and baroque secreted among his belongings. <sup>3</sup>

In three months, one master pearler and his men had made more money from a reef on Hunter's doorstep than the latter had ever made, or ever would make, from all the vessels he built and repaired, all the pastoral tenancies he ever held, and his salvage work on *S.S. Karrakatta* combined.

Harry Hunter had obviously failed to exploit this nearby treasure trove for many years, even when faced with bankruptcy. He could have paid his creditors twenty times over with a few months' work on that reef. Yet he had given up employing even the single 'full dress' diver who would have been necessary, parts of the reef being too deep for his Bardi men to swim down to, even at low tide.

Mostly though, it was his continuing chosen life-style of resident harem-master which had cost him a fortune. It gave him another problem too. While pearling vessels fished the locality, their crews often came ashore at night for Bardi women and children. As ever, Hunter wielded whip and revolver to send them fleeing back whence they came, but he could have had few undisturbed nights with his 'wives' at this time.

Earlier that year, he had written to the Acting Chief Protector, requesting official authority and two horses so that he could keep Aboriginal people and 'coloured men' apart. The police, he remarked, did not patrol the district in 'winter', despite the presence of pearling vessels. His request was not granted. 4

## Chapter Eighteen

### The Writing on the Wall

I was lately informed by some of my own Mission natives who had just returned from his place, & such information being confirmed by 4 of his own natives; that he has continually sleeping with him on one bed on the floor some 6 or 7 young women & girls these girls abiding with him by night & by day in open fornication

I have several times spoken with him on the subject, but he takes no notice. I mentioned the matter to Mr Esdel on his visit to our mission, but he told me he did not want to hear anything, but would visit Mr Hunter & investigate matters for himself. I subsequently visited Hunter & he told me that he had laid the whole of his life naked before Mr Esdel showing him his children & mothers and stating what women he kept in the house with him... 1

Written by Sydney Hadley aboard his cutter *Rita* at Derby, in confirmation of verbal information given previously, this report was forwarded by current Resident Magistrate Dr. Arthur R. Adams, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies at Perth early in September 1908.

Remarking that Father Nicholas had told him much the same thing, Adams insisted in his furious covering letter that James Isdell had no power to grant exemptions to the law and that his condonation of Hunter's offences, 'can only be explained by the dominating influence of "vested interests", most reprehensible in a public servant.'

For good measure, Adams also forwarded the opinion of the Sergeant of Police at Derby, that Hunter is not 'a fit and proper person to act as distributor of rations for the district.' 2

As a Protector of Aboriginies, Hadley visited Hunter again soon afterwards to enquire further into this matter and into the distribution of supplies now being sent by the Aboriginies Department to Boolgin for the additional people who had recently taken up residence there. 3

He told Harry Hunter about the information he had given Dr. Adams. Hunter promptly wrote to the Chief Protector [verbatim]:

Boolgin Homestead  
Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 08

To The Chief protector Aboriginies  
perth

Dear Sir

I am Writeing to bring under your notice A Statement made to me by mr Hadley of Sunday Island, I also inclose a copy of What mr Hadley Says is the Grist of a report that he Was Called upon to make by "Dr Adams of Derby,"

I read through What mr Hadley had Writen, And then I ask mr Hadley if mr Isdell had given an adverse report Re Sunday Island. He Said he had, And that he had a row With mr Isdell in Derby, then I Said you have made this report in a Vindictive Spirit With a View to blacken my name and through me to blacken the Character of mr Isdell, I Said Did mr Fletcher report anything about your place? He Said yes he has, And I Wrote to Fletcher About it, I Said What Did mr Fletcher Say? He Said mr Fletcher Wrote and Said that he Would Substantiate Everything that he had Said, Mr Hadley then Said he Would Amend the report that he had made to Dr Adams.

I Said mr Hadley I do not Know What is Wrong With you, But you Seem to be Doing your best to Alienate your best friends, He Said I Know I am, I must alienate them, They Will Crucify me like they crucified Jesus Christ.

He Said I had a row With mr Brooks When he Was on the Island, "Referring to the Revd. Archdeacon Brooks of Broome", He Said mr Brooks took one of the little Girls on his Knee, And as he Did So I saw a black Vapour issueing from his mouth and Enter the mouth of the little Girl then pass Down her neck and into her bowels, And Out of her navel And into the navel of mr Brooks.

I then jumped up and told mr Brooks that he Was Spiritually Defileing the Girl, And Rabing her of her Soul, I Said What Did mr Brooks Say Oh, He Said he Was highly indignant, I Should think he Would be.

mr Hadley then Said What do you think of this? The Other Day One of the girls came to me and Said that She had a pain in her Stomach, I looked at her, And as I looked her bosom Opened and I Saw the Word "Omered", referring to mr Omerei Who Was on the Island With him,, I then took her inside the house, And Striped her naked, And laid her on the table, and got Same Embrocation, And began to rub it into her navel, And as I Did So I breathed into her nostrils, and prayed her Soul to God, And as I prayed her bosoms Opened, and her bowels opened, And She began to Spend through her navel into my hand, It Went up my arm, in through my temple, through my brain, Down my Spine into my testicles, And my bowels Opened, and my breast opened to her bosom, and I Walked through her history.. I then Said is the girl alright? Oh yes he Said She is alright now.

I Do not Wish to Say anything that Would cause a Scandal, "Re mr Hadley", So Will take Shelter under the Old proverb, Which Says you can sometimes say a lot by Simply Saying nothing. There is no good purpose Served by Washing Dirty linen under the Eyes of the public.

I must take a Charitable View of mr Hadley Conduct for I Know mr Hadley is not, And has not been for Some Considerable time, Responsible for his Actions.

mr Hadley is now under the Impression that mr Bird is Entering is body under his left Armpit, And is teasing away at his Soul.

And mr Hadley last Words to me just before leaveing Where, I Am tired of life, and Would Welcom Death But I do not like the Idea of takeing my Own life. If there is any truth in the rumour that mr Hadley has again taken to Drink, than it is Only the beginning of the End.

I Would respectfully Suggest that an inquiry be made into the State of mr Hadley health at an Early Date, For I Should not be Surprised to hear that mr Hadley has taken his own life, or the life of Someone Else.

mr Hadley has already Killed a goat that he got from Father Nicholas, under the impression that it Was opposing him in pryer.

now I will Deal With What mr Hadley States is the grist of his report..

1<sup>st</sup> Cahabiting With the Women, the Same Old Chestnut, And the Halfcaste Children put forth as a proof, I am not an angle I Will admit I am a man past the meridian of life, And the follies of youth are things of the past, I am not now Cahabiting With the Women.

2<sup>nd</sup> Remarks Re mr Isdell,, A Simple Conversation the Sence of Which has been Wilfully misconstrued, To the Detriment of mr Isdell.

3<sup>rd</sup> Re Women About the house,, They are about the house in the Same Sence as they are about mr Hadley own house, there Camps are Within a few yards of the house, And they have the Cooking to do for the Children, and the garden to attend to.

4<sup>th</sup> Re the purity of the Women on the Island,, Simply, Hypocritical Cant, on the part of mr Hadley, mr Hadley has Only himself to thank for the Existing State of thing on the Island. The Want of firmness on the part of mr Hadley in Dealing With the natives is at the bottom of the trouble, mr Hadley is away from the Island half the time, and When he is there the natives Simply go Where they like, and do Just What they like.

mr Isdell Was at my place in company With the constable for two Days, And after Due inquiry and interviewing all the Women and children also the men, I think mr Isdell Was Satisfied that I Was a fit and proper person to be Entrusted With the Care of the natives. mr Isdell has done a lot of good Work along the Coast and has got himself disliked accordingly by the few.

As regards the position between Dr Adams And mr Isdell, It appears to me to be thus,, Dr Adams has taken up the position of an Autocrat, "I am the man," mr Isdell has not reported himself to me, And is acting Without Consulting me, therefore I Will not countenance anything that mr Isdell has Done, and mr Hadley has taken Sides With Dr Adams. I Hear that you Will be Visiting the District Shortly, please call at my place, Without notice, at any time night or day, and hold What inquiry you may think fit, I Don't think I can Say more than this.

I may here State that mr Hadley also told me that Father Nicholas, Had been Discussing the Subject With Dr Adams, To my Disadvantage. Assuming this to be the truth, I can only Say that I am affraid that anything that Father Nicholas may have Said, Has been Said in a malicious Spirit And must be treated accordingly.

Father Nicholas is a native protector and has been my neighbour for about two years, And During that Time he Does not appear to have found Anything to Complain of as regards my Conduct. I have remonstrated With Father Nicholas on Several occasions as to the manner he Was Conducting his Establishment, re the coloured men, And When mr Isdell Came upon the Seen, and refused to accede to Father Nicholas request, and put the natives under the control of a Coloured man, Father Nicholas Was Very much Annoyed And Disapointed, And I think you Will find this is Where the malice comes in.

Now I Will Conclude by Saying a few Words in my Own behalf and in behalf of the natives, please note the fact that I have been liveing With these natives on terms of Friendship for the past thirty years, and During that time, I have Succeeded in Keeping the natives together as a Body, and have Kept my home Clean, and have Kept the natives that have been under my Care Clean, And free from intercourse With the Scum of Creation, And as a result the grand Children of men Still under my care, are growing up under my care under healthy Conditions of life, And I may Say that the Day that my traducers Succeed in alienateing the natives from my Care is the Day that the



natives loose one of the best, one of the truest and firmest Friends they Ever had.

I am Sir  
your Humble correspondent  
Henry Hunter

Add H. Hunter  
Cape Leveque  
Via Derby

"The Gist of mr Hadley Report"

Sir

As you have called for report re Hunter This is all I Know.  
He is the father of Several Halfcast Children by Various mothers.  
According to the Statement of my natives also continually Confermed  
By his Own Servants, He Cohabits With the Women and has 5 or 6  
Continually at his house.  
I Visited him subsequently to mr Isdell and he told me that he had laid  
his life naked before him told him What Children he had and What  
Women he kept at the place, mr Isdell Said it Was all right and Would  
use his influence to allow him to retain his Children and bring them  
up, And Would appoint him Distributer of rations for that District.  
Now in the face of my teaching the Girls at Our mission the necessity  
of the purity of the Women to Save there tribe, All my Work becoms  
futile When the life is lived Evil on the mainland here. 4

Harry Hunter told two notable lies in this letter. Firstly he denied cohabiting with the women and secondly claimed to have lived for thirty years on terms of friendship with Aboriginal people.

His assertion that Hadley had accused Archdeacon Brooks of robbing a child of her soul could have been checked by Chief Protector Gale, and perhaps was, but not Hadley's alleged reasons for doing so, unless those reasons were known to Brooks.

Hunter provided no evidence at all to support the rest of his allegations against Hadley, and his dishonesty on two matters concerning himself inevitably undermines the reliability of the rest of his information. He also had obvious reasons for trying to undermine both Hadley and Father Nicholas.

Even so, Hunter's letter seems to have stayed the hand of the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, for no action was taken against him that year. Hadley referred the matter to Gale again in July 1909, so the latter wired James Isdell at Fitzroy Crossing in the southern Kimberley region the following month, requesting a full investigation and report. Isdell wired back, 'if found true what will I do with natives no other place for them'.

The Chief Protector replied that he should do nothing other than report, efforts to get the law amended to deal with cases of this sort being under way. By October however, Isdell's responsibilities elsewhere had prevented his return to Boolgin. 5

Nevertheless, the writing was now on the wall for Harry Hunter.

## Chapter Nineteen

### One Arm Point

*"The Government sent a steamer, not a proper steamer but a man-of-war, to look around here, survey round this country. Fantome always anchored near Swan Point. Sailors came in launches into all the creeks. They gave us tinned meat, big square biscuits, tobacco, all kinds of things. Good fellas. We gave them karlis. Some Sunday Islanders worked for them."*

*"When the sailors came to the point at Malumb, they saw 'Dynamite Charlie' and 'Dynamite Tommy', two men with one arm each. Well, that's why they called it One Arm Point."*

'Dougal'.

*HMS Fantome* first came to Swan Point in the middle of May 1909, captained by hydrographic specialist Commander F.C.C. Pasco, great-grandson of the man who hoisted Nelson's famous signal on *HMS Victory* before the Battle of Trafalgar.

While conducting a marine survey, Pasco and some of his crew stayed on Sunday Island, the officers as Hadley's guests in the mission house, the men camped outside in tents. All were West of England men, as the missionary was himself, bringing, as Hadley put it in a letter, 'a breath of the Old Country' to his tropical island.

They were welcome too because W.H. Bird, Hadley's most successful assistant to date, had finally left the mission at the beginning of the month, after two periods there totalling four years and two months.

The naval men behaved well towards the islanders and, as 'Dougal' testified, towards the mainland Bardi too. Wisely, Pasco asked Hadley to recommend twenty young island men to help his crew as pilots and boatmen in the powerful tide races among the multitude of islands, reefs and shoals thereabouts.

Among the first Bardi or Djawi people ever to earn cash, each was paid a shilling a day plus full rations, except for the leading man who earned one-third more. Though they had to purchase their own uniforms and tobacco, the cost was negligible at naval, duty-free prices.

The missionary sold the ship's company a bullock every fortnight until he ran out of animals, obtaining four pence a pound for the meat, and no doubt fresh fruit and vegetables too. 1

Across most of the mouth of King Sound, Pasco's surveyors identified, measured and accurately established the positions of hazards, some well known to mariners from bitter experience: the Tide Rip Islands, Rip Rock, Whirl Islet, Escape Passage, Hell's Gates, Alarm Shoal, Karrakatta Rock. As yet, the survey did not extend to the Graveyard, Whirlpool Pass and Rip Reef.

Between the myriad islands, reefs and rocks they tabulated the tides, finding...'the tide rips are very violent...the tides are conflicting...the set of the tide causes the most dangerous overfalls...through which the tidal streams boil with great velocity...over which the tide rips furiously...heavy races and overfalls...the tide rushes with great velocity and retaining the form of rivers...'

At speeds of up to ten knots [nautical miles per hour] in many places, the tides were much faster than most commercial sailing vessels in a good wind. Even modern *HMS Fantome*, powered by triple-expansion steam engines of 1400 HP [1044 KW] driving twin propellers, could manage just over thirteen knots at best.

Yet the Djawi islanders and their mainland neighbours had paddled their wooden catamarans and swum after turtles in these waters for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years, braving not only the power of the sea, but also its dangerous denizens.

Europeans had already applied their own names to many of the islands and mainland features, most of which Pasco adopted for the official marine charts which would result from his survey. He added a Hadley Pass, Hadley Rock and, at the missionary's request, retained the Djawi name Poolnging for one of the islands.

Hadley's name had been officially enshrined once before. In 1906 the botanist W.V. Fitzgerald had visited Sunday Island, found an indigenous species of tree previously unknown to science, and given it the Latin name *Terminalia hadleyana*.

Boolgin appeared briefly in Pasco's report, the creek there being labelled Hunter Creek rather than Ondon, the Bardi name. He also named an island after himself and a stretch of water as Fantome Passage. Nor did he forget his officers and ratings. His first lieutenant merited both a Hancock Island and a Hancock Reef, while Gibson, Scott, Hazel, Whipp, Dean and others had islands named after them. 2

Lieutenant Hancock concluded his survey of the Sunday Island group on the 17<sup>th</sup> September, so a 27 ft whaler was sent to assist in bringing his camp back to the ship the following day. That evening Hancock anchored the steam cutter he was using, with the whaler tied astern, in The Pool, a secure anchorage on the west side of Sunday Island habitually used by Hadley to safely moor *Elsie* and latterly *Rita*.

An Able Seaman and a Stoker First Class were detailed to sleep aboard the cutter. About nine pm they noticed the cutter had dragged her anchor somewhat, so they got up steam, shortened the rope to the whaler, moved both craft to the centre of The Pool, re-anchored, and extended the rope holding the whaler.

By one am, the whaler was missing. Tidal conditions suggested she might have drifted south down King Sound until the tide turned and brought her northwards again. Hancock used the cutter to search the shores of the Sunday Island group, the Roe Islands and the mainland coast south of Swan Point for the rest of the day and all morning on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

Pasco weighed anchor in *Fantome* and spent a week in Sunday Strait with look-outs posted, hoping the whaler was drifting back and forth with the tides in the mouth of the Sound, while informing the pearling vessels he encountered. All to no avail. 3

In the spring tides which then prevailed, the notorious rips and whirlpools of King Sound were at their worst. The whaler, an open craft, is unlikely to have avoided them for long. Violent contact with the many reefs and rocks in the area would also have been terminal.

There is also the possibility the craft was stolen. A 27 ft whaler, built, maintained and equipped to naval standards, was ideal for conversion to a pearling or beche-de-mer fishing vessel. Harry Hunter had converted at least two whalers in the previous twelve years, one of which became his ill-fated *Gutter-Snipe*.

When the survey came to an end in mid-November, *Fantome's* local recruits would have been rich by their standards, if the fruits of their labours had not been distributed to a wide range of relatives and other people, in keeping with traditional Aboriginal law. Pasco, who had been promoted to the rank of Captain on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, valued their services so highly that he told Hadley he would re-employ them the following year, and did.

Under other commanding officers, the ship was in the region annually until 1914, often visiting Broome to refill her coal bunkers. In 1915, she was refitted, re-commissioned as *HMAS Fantome* and spent the rest of the Great War patrolling Asian waters and the Pacific. 4

## Chapter Twenty

### Mad

*"'Mad Jack', a white-man-boss, sailed up here from Broome. He took 'Ambrose', a Bardi man, as crew, crossed King Sound to the Graveyard shore, got through Whirlpool Pass and anchored."*

*"No sooner had he called the local Aboriginal people to work for him, than he got mad with them, growling them straight away, swearing at them, mad, not quiet. Some of them knew what white-man-swearing meant because they'd worked on cattle or sheep stations to the south."*

*"By the next day, they'd heard enough. Sending their women and children away to look for yams in the bush, they took up their bamboo spears tipped with stone or bottle-glass points. There's a big 'garden' of bamboo over there."*

*"When 'Mad Jack' was long overdue, the government [officials] at Broome wired every way: Find him. 'Bludger', that big fella policeman, heavy, rode north from Derby with 'Karna' - that's a white man name - and Djinelybara, who both belonged to the Graveyard country. 'Karna' was head police boy [Native Assistant]. His mother came from Long Island in King Sound."*

*"'Bludger' camped, sending his police boys out to find 'Mad Jack's' boat, which they did, right up a long creek, right up into a plain. 'Bludger' rode back to Derby, told the government there. They wired Broome, Perth, everywhere."*

*"Harry Hunter was given the work of getting that boat, so he sent [his employee] Jack Young in his cutter, which was small enough to go anywhere. But 'Mad Jack's' boat had gone. Some white men from Oobagooma Station had taken it."*

*"Jack Young sailed along that coast, up the Robinson River, walked to Oobagooma homestead with his crewman, told them that Harry Hunter had sent him. The boat was his. Harry Hunter fixed up that lugger, made sails for it, used it for cargo work. We went to the Lacepede Islands and beachcombing in that boat."*

*"'Bludger' rode out from Derby again. 'Karna' was too clever for the men who killed 'Mad Jack'. One got shot. The rest were taken to Derby, then down to Fremantle jail. Only one of them ever came back. When he got proper old, all right, the government let him go."*

'Dougal'.

Back in 1889, one Paul Conde lived behind the hill near Cossack. On returning from a trip to Boudary in the cutter *Maude* that December, he found his monkey missing. So too was a pillow, two pillow cases, a razor, a rifle and a pyjama coat.

Armed with a search warrant, the police took him out to the barque *Chiselhurst*, which had sailed for London that morning but had returned to her mooring due to lack of wind. Soon the police boat was back at Cossack with a monkey, a pillow and case, a razor and ship's cook W. Marshall, who had recently been staying at Conde's place.

The rifle was recovered from boot-maker Murray, an ex-prisoner, who had bought it from Marshall for five shillings. Next day in court, where the total value of the stolen goods was said to be under £5, Marshall was sentenced to 6 months Hard Labour.

Paul Conde also complained to Cossack police in October 1891 that his small sporting breech-loading rifle had been stolen from the billiards room of the Weld Hotel. Later the same month Conde left the port as a crewman on *Water Lily* bound for Balla Balla, which serviced mines in the hinterland.

There's also a note in the Cossack police records that Paul Conde left for Balla Balla again early in January '92, this time in the cutter *Margaret* which was carrying stores for the miners.

He was at Derby in November 1893. Hearing that Chinaman Ah Hoy was marooned on Sunday Island, he sailed to the rescue with Sydney Hadley, only to find that Henry Hilliard had done the job.

Early in March '97, Conde was trekking northwards overland from Condon with three horses, two of them probably carrying packs, heading for Broome and that's where he was seven years later, being listed in a 1904 Electoral Roll as, 'Conde, Paul, Broome, carpenter'. Later, a traveller reported that he had met at Broome,

'Mad Jack, known to fame as the skeleton hunter of the Nor'-West'.

Paul 'Mad Jack' Conde disappeared on the east coast of King Sound in 1905 or '06. Though his empty boat was found by the Native Assistants of Police Constable Bernard H. Fletcher No. 550 ['Bludger' to the Bardi], it seems no-one was arrested, much less convicted. Perhaps the lack of a body, any witnesses, an exact scene of crime or even an accurate date made the task impossible. <sup>1</sup>

'Mad Jack's' abuse of the Aboriginal people over there, and the response of some of them, contrasts markedly with the approach made a little earlier by the Sunday Island missionaries and its favourable result.

Several years passed. Then in 1909 Frederick Massen sailed the lugger *Lily* down the east coast of the Sound, past whirlpools and terrible tide-races, to Derby where he reported that he and his colleague John Pritchard Jones had been in Yampi Sound, just beyond the Graveyard and Whirlpool Pass, that January.

Believing they had established a good working relationship with some of the local Aboriginal men, who had helped them get shell in return for food and tobacco, Jones went ashore in *Lily's* metal dinghy with several of them on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the month, leaving one on board with Massen.

While cooking supper, Massen was attacked from behind with a tomahawk, wounded, and in the ensuing struggle, pushed his assailant overboard. When the latter tried to climb back, Massen shot him. Weighing anchor, he cruised around for three days without seeing Jones again, then made for Derby, where his colleague, a former Water Policeman, had lived for about eighteen years.

Despite chartering Sydney Hadley's cutter for two weeks, a police party lead by Corporal Brodie and probably including Massen, found only a part of the shirt Jones had been wearing on the day of his disappearance. Constable Fletcher continued the work, during which he stayed for two days with pearl-ers at the Graveyard, one of whom later told the press that Fletcher was,

'the first white man who has ever succeeded in reaching there overland'.

After a period of leave, then time in Broome hospital suffering from malaria, Fletcher was back on the case. A breakthrough in the investigation occurred at the end of September. Aboriginal people from Yampi Sound arrived at Meda cattle station, east of Derby, where one of them talked too much. As a result, the constable detained a woman belonging to the man said to have killed Jones.

His attempts to start for Yampi Sound again in the first half of October were delayed by the inadequate number and poor condition of the police horses available, after one had been burnt to death and another condemned. He progressed only twenty-five miles [40 km] with the eight remaining animals before one became ill, compelling him to camp.

By the 14<sup>th</sup>, he had only reached Oobagooma. After months of dry heat, the landscape had been ravaged by bush fires, leaving little grazing. Water, too, was scarce at the end of the dry season. Fletcher noted cattle in bad condition, some bogged in the drying water-holes. His remaining horses now began to fail.

That evening, Native Assistant 'Monday' arrived from Derby with two more horses. Ten days later, after resting the others, Fletcher, his Native Assistants and female prisoner began to walk north through the rugged, burnt country, leading their horses loaded with gear and supplies. Even

so, they still did not have enough animals to carry all they needed for a long investigation, much less to ride. They returned to Oobagooma by the middle of the following month, their horses too poor to go on.

In the meantime, Hadley had notified Derby police that the suspects had been seen in a dinghy on the Graveyard coast and frequently boarded pearling boats thereabouts. He volunteered to fetch Fletcher from Oobagooma and did. Two days later the missionary and the constable set sail in *Rita* again, bound for Yampi Sound. They were back at the port on the 8<sup>th</sup> December with four Aboriginal people, two prisoners charged with the murder of Jones and two witnesses, together with human remains and *Lily's* iron dinghy.

An Inquest began the same day. By the time it had concluded the following afternoon, it had decided that the remains were those of Jones, that he had been 'killed by natives' and that two of the Aboriginal people brought in should be committed for trial on charges of murder. Sentences were also handed down for unlawful possession of the dinghy.

With the investigation far from complete, but Hadley unable to continue, he and Fletcher sailed for Cygnet Bay so that the constable could seek assistance from Harry Hunter. The latter landed at Derby on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, offering to provide a lugger, master and crew at the rate of 25 shillings a day. Hunter and Fletcher left for Yampi Sound on Boxing Day.

In the next two months, the constable arrested five more Aboriginal men. One of the prisoners put up a struggle on the vessel during which he and Fletcher fell overboard and were carried away by the powerful tide. Landing on an island, the policeman retained his prisoner until the boat caught up with them.

Accompanied by Jack Young, Harry Hunter arrived at Derby on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1910, claiming forty-seven days' hire of his vessel and crew. He also reported that the police party and prisoners had disembarked from his *Cupid* six days earlier, hoping to capture two more suspects and would be walking the fifty miles [80km] to Oobagooma, then using horses to reach the port.

And so they did. In the great heat and humidity of tropical summer, the rivers now running high and all the lower ground boggy from monsoon rains, amid swarms of flies by day and mosquitoes at night, Constable Fletcher, Native Assistants 'Burny' and 'Monday', with five male accused, four female witnesses and a lad aged about 16, finally arrived at Derby on the 13<sup>th</sup> February.

These suspects too were committed for trial. Before that event, which took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> April at Broome, one of the prisoners died of 'consumption' [perhaps pulmonary tuberculosis]. The remaining six were found guilty of the wilful murder of John Pritchard Jones and sentenced to death. In fact, no Aboriginal people were legally executed in Western Australia after 1900; these sentences were later commuted to imprisonment.

Both the jury and the specially commissioned judge, Mr. George Tuthill Wood, commended Constable Fletcher for his exemplary courage and endurance. 2

In the north of the Dampier Land peninsula, the Bardi people knew nothing of John Pritchard Jones and Frederick Massen, who had not come to the western side of King Sound. When they heard of the shooting of a 'Graveyard man', they seem to have assumed that it had occurred in the course of a police search for Mad Jack and their own 'Ambrose'.

Most of them also seem to have been satisfied that the shooting, together with the six death sentences, were adequate recompense or revenge for the loss of 'Ambrose'. By this time, they were accustomed to the fact that white man's criminal law had largely supplanted the equivalent part of their own traditional law and in many respects was more effective.

But here too, not everyone was ready to accept the new ways, especially not those individuals whose traditional authority and status was being progressively eroded in the process, the Bardi *djungagurs* ['witchdoctors' or shamans].

So it was that about 1910, after the young 'Dougal' had undergone his first traditional initiation ritual, which heralded a period of compulsory abstinence from sea-food, he

*"Walked to Foul Point [about 47 miles / 75 km] with my uncles and young Boolgin fellas, my friends, during the rain-time after Christmas. I was a big boy then, the best at finding 'sugar-*

*bags' [honey- and pollen-rich wild bees' nests] and confident I could find any other kind of bush tucker. We stayed there three nights for a coba-coba [corroboree] called Djilbiringin which had come up from Derby way."*

*"At the same time, a young man of the Graveyard people east of King Sound paddled his catamaran towards the islands to get his relatives. Instead, a whirlpool got him, came up underneath, then a 'cock eye' [gale] blew him across to our side of the Sound."*

*"When the coba-coba was over, we started home for Boolgin, Willie Point and the other Bardi camps. On the way, someone found Aboriginal footprints he didn't recognise on a beach, knew they must belong to a man from the other side, so the Willie Point people went out searching. One of them was a djungagur called by white men 'Old Mad', a bad man, cheeky [aggressive, dangerous], bossed everybody."*

*"They caught up with the youth at Nuruwan [Milligan creek], where he was looking for oysters. He couldn't help it, he was hungry. 'Come here', 'Old Mad' snarled, then questioned him about 'Ambrose', the Bardi man who'd crewed 'Mad Jack's' lugger."*

*"'I was a little boy then', the youth answered, 'my mother took me away to look for yams. When we got back, I cried when I saw the two bodies. Our men hid the boat after taking the blankets and sails.'"*

*"Most of the Willie Point people said, 'Let the boy go.' But 'Old Mad' threw off his white-man-clothes, fixed the boy with his eye, closed his mouth tight, tight, then attacked him with karlis and spears, helped by others. Afterwards, the rest hit the corpse with digging sticks. Mungurong, 'Ambrose's' brother, was there."*

*"'Gregory' cut the boy open, took out his kidney fat and smeared it on himself! Father Mac-a-Nab had baptised the Willie Point people years before, yet 'Gregory' did that! And 'Gregory' was the father of 'Bertha', who later on married Martin Sibosado in church! He was the father of Christian people, yet he did that!"*

*"He soon regretted it though, because 'Old Wigan', who came from High Island in King Sound and called that dead youth 'brother' [because they were considered to be related under traditional Aboriginal law] attacked 'Gregory', supported by young, strong Boolgin fellas who were 'Wigan's' 'countrymen'. He gave 'Gregory' a big cut in the leg but didn't kill him."*

*"As for 'Mad Jack', his body was never found. Perhaps they ate him up. They were that kind of people over there. 'Mad Jack' got that name because he did silly things. Drink made him wrong-headed, got him killed in Whirlpool Pass." 3*

*'Dougal'.*

## Chapter Twenty-One

### Nemesis

*"Harry Hunter sent Jack Young down to Derby for the Christmas cargo, six or seven tons of it. Jackie Hunter and I asked to go too. Coming back, we anchored in Karrakatta Bay for a while, waiting for the tide to turn."*

*"That captain was a silly fellow. He tried to sail right up the creek at Boolgin, even though the tide had already gone down, leaving water only in the main channel."*

*"'Slack the sheets', he ordered, 'Slack the sheets, put the rudder that way.'"*

*"Then a whistling wind came up behind. I wanted to help that white man, but no, I was only a Bardi boy. When the tide came in again, driven by that wind, the anchor couldn't hold the boat."*

*"They put Jackie and me ashore in the dark to run all along the sand-beach to Boolgin homestead for help, while the wind drove a big sea up the creek, banging, banging the boat on a dry bank."*

*"We brought Harry Hunter and a big mob of people in the night but by that time it was too late to save the boat. No hope. It was finished. They could only rescue some cases and flour."*

*"Harry Hunter got wild, growled and swore at that captain. Jack Young stopped quiet. He was frightened."*

*'Dougal'.*

Hunter's lugger *Cupid*, which was probably the ex-'Mad Jack' boat, met its end soon after its service in the hunt for the killers of John Pritchard Jones. The following entry appears in the Derby Police Station Occurrence Book, dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 1910:

P.C. Fletcher Reports the Lugger *Cupid* owned by H. Hunter is lying on the beach at Boolgin a total wreck unable to land owing to bad weather but from subsequent inquiries ascertained that no lives were lost. 1

The previous Christmas, pearlers had given up using Cygnet Bay as a major summertime lay-up site in favour of Broome. That fact, together with 'Dougal's' new status in Bardi traditional culture, allowed him to make another foray away from his parents and childhood home at Boolgin. With his long-time boyhood friend 'Frank', he visited a recent settler in the district.

*"Harry O'Grady's first station on Cygnet Bay was at Midalon [Milligan]. Three other white men helped him, his brothers Jack and Brett, and Jim the captain. They gave our people plenty of tucker for firewood work. Harry O'Grady had a contract to take the wood to Broome and Derby. When he'd got enough, he gave me other work which I'd learned from my boss, Harry Hunter."*

*"'Paint the bottom of the boat', he told me. I finished one side before the tide came in. Next day, when the tide was out and the wood had dried, I did the other side. Nobody helped me. Other boys only stirred the paint."*

*"Like most schooners at that time, it hadn't got an engine. When it was empty, the Manilaman-cook used to walk on his knees along a wire inside it, walk along, then back, like a circus act. He told us boys to try, but no good. Once, I tried. I knelt down on the wire, and although I couldn't walk, I stayed on even when he shook it."*



*"'Sebastian', an Aboriginal man, was cook for the workers. Every week he got a sack from which he gave out flour so people could make damper [unleavened bread]. One supper-time, when it got dark, he took the flour that was left and a bag of sugar, and ran away with 'Lucy'."*

*"She'd already got his belongings together. They ran to Cunningham Point, then all the way to Derby. Our people were that frightened in those days. When everyone got up in the morning, wanting breakfast, the cook and the flour were gone."*

*"Jack O'Grady cut his foot with a tommyhawk. Someone gave me a tin, teapot and plate, saying, 'that man is sick, take him tucker'. But when I got to the beach, I saw he had one of our women there. I told him what I thought of him in my heart. Next day, I went back to Boolgin. I went home."*

'Dougal'.

Henry James O'Grady was a Western Australian, unlike the Englishmen Harry Hunter and Sydney Hadley. Born at Fremantle in 1870, son and nephew of Master Mariners, he went to sea at the age of 14 with his father, notwithstanding the loss of an older brother in a cyclone three years earlier. Owner of the 38 ton schooner *Minnie* when he took up a pastoral lease of almost sixty thousand acres [24,282 hectares] on the eastern side of the peninsula in 1909, backing onto the lease held by Thomas Puertollano, his first enterprise was to harvest the mangrove-lined shore and lightly forested hinterland to supply Broome, Derby and no doubt the pearling fleet. <sup>2</sup>

Back at Boolgin, 'Dougal' resumed traditional fishing and foraging, so far as his current status in Bardi culture would allow, and he still continued to eat occasionally at Harry Hunter's table with the latter's children. Yet he had a complaint in common with other growing youngsters.

*"Harry Hunter didn't give us enough. His workers got a bag of flour for dinner and when that was finished he gave them another. Also jam and tea. Everyone else got only one pannikin of flour for a whole family, without tea."*

*"So when Harry O'Grady came back to Midalon after a while for more firewood, I went back there at the same time as two other Bardi people, a man from One Arm Point who had no white-man-boss, and old 'Tommy Tart', who belonged to Midalon but had been over to Sunday Island to get a woman."*

'Dougal'.

After another period at Cygnet Bay, young 'Dougal' returned to Boolgin again. He wasn't ready to forsake his childhood home altogether, where Harry Hunter still regularly obtained turtles from the Lacepede Islands for all 'his people', still ensured a fair distribution of meat every time he killed a goat, still protected the women and children from marauding pearling crews. Hunter was appreciated in other ways too.

*"Night-time at Pender Bay Point. One man got so wild with another that he threw a tank-karli [iron boomerang made from a white man's derelict water tank]. 'Josy', whose Aboriginal or 'bush' name was Warb, was a big man, big-bodied, strong. When he threw that karli, the other man was finished straight away. His head split."*

*"Afraid of the policeman [who would surely hear of the incident], afraid for his own life, 'Josy' walked all the way to Boolgin, where he told his old boss everything."*

*"Harry Hunter said, 'Stay here in the camp. When I go to Derby, I'll take you with me.'"*

*"Down there, Harry Hunter took him to [the authorities], told them this and that. 'All right', they said, 'he's in the clear'. Harry Hunter brought 'Josy' back to Boolgin a free man."*

*"Good boss!"*

'Dougal'.

While at Boolgin, 'Dougal' underwent the *Ululung* ceremony, the second of the two major Bardi initiation rituals that every boy had to pass through at that time. One night there was a commotion at the homestead.

*"'You there, Harry Hunter?' Constable Johnston demanded."*

*"'Yes!' He was inside with his women, seven altogether."*

*"'Open your door!'"*

*"'Take it easy while I change my clothes!'"*

*"'The boss is here, the Inspector. We've come for you!'"*

*"Two policemen and four 'police boys' [Native Assistants] surrounded Boolgin Homestead in the middle of the night. They'd set their watches so as to meet there at that hour. They hadn't drawn their guns."*

*"The Bishop had come most of the way too. He made a camp in the bush, where he stayed, praying, while the police went on to Boolgin. Harry Hunter wasn't a Catholic man but they were afraid of him, afraid he'd start shooting. Everyone knew he always wore a revolver and was a 'cheeky' man, afraid of no-one. Those police were picked for their good hearts so they wouldn't run away."*

*"'Let 'em come out', Johnston ordered. One woman ran out, right through their legs, ran up to our camp on the sand hills to tell us what was happening. Six more stayed inside."*

*"When it got light, a boat appeared from behind Cape Leveque. Schooner Dickie, Captain Charlie Morris. More men came ashore, I didn't know them, from Beagle Bay maybe. One was another Inspector who asked us where we belonged, wrote answers in a big book. Heavy, that one! Both Inspectors saw plenty of children there, but Harry Hunter didn't put us to school, saying it would make us silly."*

*"Afterwards, Dickie went back to Broome. Harry Hunter had to go to Derby court. Father Nicholas was at Cygnet Bay just then [intending to restart his mission there], so he took Harry Hunter to Derby. The police took his 'wives' as witnesses. He was only away a short time, came straight back and told us he was finished."*

*"'I've got trouble,' he said, 'Go bush, you people.'"*

*"Everyone went to Lombadina, where the Bishop and some Brothers were standing by, ready for us. We had to go there for tucker. Some turned around and went to Sunday Island."*

*'Dougal'. 3*

The man with the big book was Chief Protector of Aboriginies C.F. Gale. Because of the reports about Harry Hunter which had been reaching his Department for several years, he had decided to investigate Boolgin in person during a tour of the north-west of the State.

To that end, he arranged with Inspector Sellenger that the latter would lead a police party overland, so as to reach Boolgin at night, before the vessel carrying Gale appeared offshore. After all, Harry Hunter had written inviting him to pay a visit, 'without notice, at any time day or night, and hold what inquiry you may think fit'.

The Very Rev. Father Josef Bischofs P.S.M., Superior of Beagle Bay Mission in 1910, who was popularly known as 'The Bishop', had been alerted. With some of his fellow Pallottine missionaries and the agreement of Thomas Puertollano, he had set up a temporary feeding camp at Lombadina, ready for the Aboriginal people displaced from Boolgin.

Having begun at 3 am, the police raid on Hunter's homestead and its aftermath went much as 'Dougal' reported. The court case, which was held behind closed doors at the request of Inspector Sellenger, took place at Derby on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July 1910. Harry Hunter pleaded guilty to the charge of cohabiting with certain 'native' women - three of whom had been brought from Boolgin as witnesses - was fined £50, plus costs, with the alternative of six months' Hard Labour.

His permits to employ Aboriginal people were also cancelled, probably by the Chief Protector. For good measure, Gale refused Hunter's request to be allowed to marry one of the women.

Six days after the court case, the *Dickie* sailed from Derby, bound for Cygnet Bay, Sunday Island and eventually Wyndham in the far north-east of the giant State. Aboard were CPA Gale, Inspector Sellenger, Constable Johnston, Father Bischofs, Harry Hunter and the three female witnesses. Not all of the passengers may have wished for each others' company. 4

Having landed at Cygnet Bay, Constable Johnston and Father Bischofs began to arrange the removal of the stores previously sent to Harry Hunter at Boolgin for indigent Aboriginal people.

The plan was to move them to Lombadina, where the temporary feeding camp was to be replaced by a permanent mission. Because of the difficulties of obtaining labour, for which Johnston blamed Hunter, the work took more than a week, finally being completed by stalwart Thomas Puertollano and his bullock team. 5

Because he 'only thought about women and work', Hunter's heavy fine was less problematic than the loss of his 'wives' and his workforce.

For decades, most of his crews and shore workers who raised, cleaned and packed shell, fished and processed beche-de-mer, helped to build boats, cultivated his kitchen garden, fed his children and himself, maintained his home, did his washing and most of the other manual work at his various bases, had been Bardi and other Aboriginal people. Now he was officially deprived of them all, by day as well as by night.

About this time, Hunter launched his schooner *Euralia*, after four or five years of construction. At 40 tons, she was the largest vessel he had built. Like all his other boats, she had no engine or mechanically-powered equipment, having been designed with eight strong sailors/cargo handlers in mind, as well as a captain. Now she had only the latter.

Replacing all these workers with paid Asian labour was not an option Hunter could have considered. Having previously passed up the fortune in shell and pearls which had lain for years around nearby Cape Leveque, he was now in jeopardy of losing his livelihood altogether.

Possibly thinking that the authorities might try to deprive him of his daughters too, he instructed Tommy D'Antoine to take Nellie and say that the two were married, if the police asked. So Tommy and Nellie were 'bush-married' at Boolgin that month. 6

Near the end of August, the following article appeared in the *Sunday Times*, a newspaper published in distant Perth, but with State-wide distribution. Verbatim:

#### Piebald Australia

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#### A White Man Turned Black

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Some two or three weeks ago an expedition of police went out and captured a pearler, or alleged pearler, who had been carrying on a sort of Mormonmenage with native Hebes in the Derby district. The contemner of the white Australia policy was lugged into Derby and charged before the Resident Magistrate, who fined him £50 or in default six months' imprisonment.

\* \* \* \* \*

Brother Barker of the Hedland "Advocate", who has no love for the desecrator of the aboriginal hearth and home, has some sarcastic remarks in a recent issue about the affair:-

"This marvellous capture," he says "will go a long way with southern residents to restore their fading confidence in the Chief Protector. This is not considered a smart piece of work in the Nor'-West, as every resident from Wyndham to Onslow knew that for over 20 years past the old man fined has been living with the blacks. He has gone through their strange initiation ceremony, and is recognised as head of his tribe, whom he has protected and kept clean. He has reared a family of half-castes, who work his boat. He has built homes for his tribe, and has them cultivating vegetables and fruit. He'll die with his tribe and be buried by them.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Smart capture, eh? It would add more to the glamor with which it is sought to surround the Chief Protector if he followed up clues and brought to justice the 'men' among the squatters, teamsters, police, prospectors, etc., who, like that ancient lothario [David], have cast their lascivious eyes on the well-built, nude forms of many a nigger's wife, and have hammered to death, or [in some cases] shot the niggers in order to defile their wives. These are facts as well-known in the Nor'-west as the statements made here regarding the old 'naturalised nigger' fined £50. It should be understood that the defendant in this case was not a pearler in the proper sense of the word." 7

The central section of this article apparently confuses Harry Hunter with Sydney Hadley, for it was the latter who was initiated by the Bardi and built homes for Aboriginal people, not the former. The information given in the last part of the article was correct, as the 'Roth Royal Commission' had shown five years earlier, while the racist language used to describe Aboriginal people was common among the whites throughout the State at that time.

*"When I left Boolgin [after the police raid] I went to work for the Manilaman Thomas Puertollano at Lombadina. 'Albert', 'Spider' - whose Aboriginal or 'bush' name was Imil - and other Bardi people from Willie Point worked for him by that time."*

*"While I was there, Father Theodore Traub came to make the new mission nearby at Djarla [on the coast], but he went to the wrong place. We dug a well, lined it with stone, built a house and our people moved there from Thomas's station. But soon a big storm, big willy-willy came and finished it completely. Nothing left. All gone. Father Traub got punishment from God for making that mission in the wrong place."*

*"Then came the lugger San Salvador, bringing Father Nicholas back from Drysdale River Mission [in the far north of the State]. He anchored in Chilli Creek at Lombadina. Two of our boys who'd been helping him at Drysdale came ashore for their initiations. I was on holiday then, so with those two, I ran across to Gulan on Cygnet Bay for a big meeting. Everybody was there."*

'Dougal'.

The cyclone struck on the 19th November, much earlier in the season and further north than usual. Harry Talboy's pearling fleet was caught near the Lacepede Islands. While his schooner containing three tons [3048 kg] of shell and six months' supplies was being pounded to pieces on the mainland coast where its near-naked survivors were sand-blasted almost to death, five of his luggers went to the bottom.

Robison and Norman lost six vessels. Many smaller pearlers were ruined. Much of Broome, by now the world's principal pearling port, was razed to the ground. So were the homesteads and other buildings of many inland cattle stations. 8

Though temporarily absent from his new mission, Father Traub did not escape the wrath of the heavens. With other Pallottine missionaries and an Aboriginal crew, he was aboard their lugger *Pius*, returning from Broome with supplies, when the *willy-willy* struck at sunset, just as they turned into Beagle Bay.

Sails shredded, mast and rudder snapped, the wreck of the *Pius* wallowed helplessly for the whole night before being thrown onto a reef at dawn, where missionaries and crew escaped with their lives before she broke up. Five months later, Constable Johnston found her dinghy miles down the coast. 9

Unsurprisingly, Father Traub, who was born at Bann, Germany, in 1883, ordained in 1908 and arrived at Beagle Bay the following March, returned to his homeland about a year after the shipwreck, reportedly close to a nervous breakdown. 10

Father Nicholas Emo's *San Salvador* was also damaged by the storm. A Roman Catholic, though not a member of the Pallottine Order, his immense experience, unparalleled reputation, long friendship with the Bardi people and with Thomas Puertollano's family, led him to agree with the

now over-stretched Beagle Bay missionaries and the Chief Protector that he should take over at Lombadina, instead of re-starting his former mission across the peninsula at Cygnet Bay as he had planned. He did so formally on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1911. <sup>11</sup>

*"Thomas built Father Nicholas a little church by a tree [well inland, near Chilli Creek]. It was a little one, just for the priest, the people sat outside. Father's little room was alongside the church."*

*"He wasn't a 'cheeky' man, he was a good man. He liked children, lots of children, put them to school, taught them himself. He brought clothes for us, gave us plenty of tucker. Our people came to him from all over, Disaster Bay, Willie Point, One Arm Point."*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

### Hunter Hunted

*"Harry Hunter had to go to court again, this time at Broome. Might be he went to jail. But they couldn't keep him long because he was a big boss, the boss of Boolgin."*

'Dougal'.

During late 1910 and into the following year, a lighthouse was under construction on Cape Leveque. Having obtained official permission to employ Bardi men as labourers, project manager Mr Kaiser or Keyser asked Harry Hunter to supervise their work.

That included unloading *Queenie Alice* and other vessels bringing materials and supplies, providing the captains obtained Constable Johnston's permission to employ the workers. Harry Hunter had found a way around the legal prohibition on himself as employer.

Johnston was not pleased. At Boolgin, he found six Aboriginal women and two men on the 27<sup>th</sup> December and a much larger group of women and children accompanied by only one man on the 8<sup>th</sup> February. When told he had no right to have them there, Hunter is said to have replied,

'I have every right. I'm their life-long friend and protector.'

Johnston apparently took the last group to Lombadina, where some of the children attended Father Nicholas's school. Several weeks later, the group left at the behest of Harry Hunter, and after walking to various places, ended up at Boolgin again. Once more, Johnston took them away.

In the meantime, Bardi men 'Peter', 'Frenchy' and 'Jacky' came to their old boss, saying they had run away from their current master, Harry O'Grady, who had gone to Broome to have them locked up. O'Grady had been charged with assaulting an Aboriginal man the previous year. To sort the matter out with the authorities, Hunter took them to the port and while there, used 'Peter' to unload cargo for two days.

Johnston now had grounds to bring more criminal charges against Harry Hunter. With his Native Assistants 'Billy' and 'Georgie', he set out to gather witnesses. Finding Boolgin devoid of Aboriginal people on the 19<sup>th</sup> April, they rode westwards along the beach, where they met Hunter and Bardi boys 'Daylight' and 'Mochy' who had just come ashore from Hunter's schooner, which was anchored off Cape Leveque.

Continuing towards the Cape along a tram line laid to facilitate the building work there, the police party came upon five Aboriginal men and three of Hunter's sons putting up a fence. Johnston arrested and double-handcuffed Bibiac, a Bardi man also known as 'Harry'.

When Hunter asked why, he was abused and told not to interfere, so asked the constable to see Mr Kaiser at the construction site. The latter reminded Johnston that he held a permit to employ Aboriginal people and had asked Hunter to supervise them.

Afterwards, Kaiser told Hunter that the policeman held a warrant for the arrest of Bibiac, adding in a kind manner that he would much rather not say why. Bibiac was taken to Boolgin where he was chained by the neck to a tree near Hunter's well.

The same afternoon Johnston and Native Assistant 'Georgie' returned towards Cape Leveque, waited until a boat came ashore from Hunter's schooner, then arrested one of the six Aboriginal men who were unloading the larger vessel. 'Frenchy' was taken to Boolgin where he shared Bibiac's neck-chain and tree. Both men had to sleep on the ground without coverings.

Next day Constable Johnston rode back to Cape Leveque again, looking for 'Daylight and his woman', whom he apparently assumed were both adults. Bardi women and children fled into the bush without food, water or blankets, apparently in fear of being raped by the 'police boys',

causing their menfolk to stop work on the lighthouse site. Native Assistant 'Billy' himself led Johnston to a group of about twenty-five women hiding in the sand-hills on the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Though Hunter understood that the police were gathering witnesses for another case against himself, he offered to get the individuals wanted, and to see that all of them went to Broome with Johnston, providing the constable agreed not to chain any of them. The constable refused.

'Billy' took Bibiac and 'Frenchy' from their Boolgin tree to Lombadina the following morning, while Johnston continued to search for 'Daylight' near Cape Leveque, served two Defendant Summonses on Hunter to attend the next Police Court in Broome, interviewed Kaiser once more, then with his other Native Assistant rode away to Lombadina, where he served a Witness Summons on Father Nicholas Emo.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, the police party with its still-chained witnesses crossed the peninsula to Harry O'Grady's Madana Station near Cygnet Bay, where Bibiac and 'Frenchy' shared another tree. O'Grady had by this time moved his homestead northwards from Milligan to Gulan and named his station after the Bardi word for King Sound.

One of the Native Assistants left for Broome with three police horses while Johnston took into custody a Bardi woman and her little girl. During the two days he spent at Madana, the policeman learned that 'Daylight' was a child, no doubt the same boy he had met at Cape Leveque on the 19<sup>th</sup>, who was camped with his mother on the other side of the local creek.

He sent 'Frying Pan' for them, then took all three into custody. He might also have learned that the mother was Bibiac's wife.

Johnston's party, some still in chains, boarded Harry O'Grady's whaleboat at 8 am on the 26<sup>th</sup> April. Five hours later, they arrived at Tyri Island where O'Grady and a large number of Bardi people were loading his schooner with trochus shell. The constable made more arrests and the following day set sail in *Minnie* for Broome, with six adults and four children, all witnesses in the next cases against Harry Hunter.

Resident Magistrate G.T. Wood and J.C. Fenton J.P. heard those cases on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1911. The defendant pleaded Not Guilty to the first, in which he was accused of 'Enticing Ab. Native', because he had allegedly persuaded Aboriginal people, mainly women and children, to leave Lombadina Mission after Constable Johnston had taken them there.

Having observed that 'Gypsy', 'Ding' and 'Plum' were about four years old and that 'Mary' was about two, the prosecution withdrew the charge because the children were plainly too young to understand enticement, so the case was dismissed.

Hunter pled 'Guilty with extenuating circumstances' to the next charge, 'Employing natives without a permit' and was fined £3. 5. 6. He was also required to pay the costs of transporting thirteen people from, and back to, the north of the peninsula, together with their subsistence for fourteen days, plus fees, amounting to an additional £21.14. 6. <sup>1</sup>

Despite these facts, *The Sunday Times* newspaper of Perth reported ten days later,

"Nothing's a warning", as the man said when he saw the thief hanging for having stolen a sheep, at the same time quietly skipping with a carcase of mutton. Only a little while ago Henry Hunter was prosecuted for cohabiting with coories, and was let off with a fine of £50. As he is an opulent as well as lecherous rascal he paid up, but the price does not appear to be too big to prevent him from renewing his scandalous conduct. The other day he reappeared in the Broome Police Court charged with enticing coories under 16 from an Aboriginal Mission Station. On one charge he was dismissed, but on another he was found guilty and fined £25! Presumably if he keeps on repeating these outrages the penalty will be reduced in converse ratio until it reaches the vanishing point, when it will be libellous to refer to the lascivious laches of this white animal. <sup>2</sup>

When this article was published, a letter from Hunter to the newspaper was already in the post. Describing Constable Johnston's treatment of Bardi witnesses, it was published as an article in the next edition of *The Sunday Times* under the headings,

## Brutal Treatment of Natives

The Frank Confessions of a White Man - Who Has Become an Aboriginal  
Thirty Years in Exile

## Charges Against the Police

Native Witnesses Chained by the Neck for Seven Days - Native Women  
Outraged - By Black Police Boys 3

The adverse publicity generated by this article seems to have prompted the Chief Protector of Aboriginies to offer *The Sunday Times* an interview, the results of which were published on the 28<sup>th</sup> May, the third consecutive issue which featured articles about or by Harry Hunter.

According to the newspaper, it was already known that Hunter helped himself to stores sent to him for distribution to elderly Aboriginal people, when further reports about him caused CPA Gale to arrange with Inspector Sellenger for the raid on Boolgin the previous year. Inside the homestead were six naked Aboriginal women and Hunter. Blankets sent by the government for distribution were supposedly being used as carpets, from which the newspaper concluded that, 'the natives neither got blankets nor stores'.

In anticipation of an official visit, Hunter had reportedly stationed Bardi people on the sand hills above his home to warn him of approaching vessels. As none was in sight the previous evening, he spent the night with his women, all of whom were due to leave for the bush the next day.

According to this press report, the ensuing court case at Derby had to be heard behind closed doors because the evidence was disgusting. Aboriginal women had given birth to his children, after which he gave the mothers away to 'the natives', having finished with them. He was not ashamed of having had at least six sons by different mothers. Proven in court to be 'a sexual maniac', he was fined £50.

At some point he was said to have told Gale, 'when you are in Rome you must do as the Romans do', but also sought the Chief Protector's permission to marry one of his women, the only mixed-race girl. Gale was apparently agreeable in principle, thinking that the Bishop at Beagle Bay could officiate, but the girl reportedly expressed great aversion for Hunter, so permission was denied. Subsequently, the article continued, he was fined another £30 at Broome for a similar offence. 4

Early that June, Hunter found himself in more trouble. He had apparently persuaded Father Nicholas Emo to write a note permitting Mr Kaiser to employ six 'natives' to crew Hunter's schooner during a voyage to Broome and back, to bring goods and materials for the lighthouse construction. As a Protector of Aboriginies, Father Nicholas had the authority to issue such permits.

While at sea, *Euralia* struck an uncharted rock, destroying much of the cargo for Leveque. Having beached and repaired her, Hunter had to return to Broome for more supplies, so he took the opportunity to replace one of his crew members with his mixed-race 'wife'. Having anchored off the port, he took the young woman to the Registrar, hoping to legitimate his marriage, only to find the official would not do so.

Perhaps the Registrar also contacted the police, because Constable W.J. White boarded *Euralia* at 3.30 pm on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, where he found one Aboriginal man and the woman. The latter told him she was going to marry Hunter. Back on the jetty, White met Hunter, saw his permit, but failed to understand that it had been granted to Kaiser rather than Hunter.

Sub- Inspector Houlahan forwarded White's report to the Commissioner of Police at Perth, with supplementary information, the next day. He then cabled the Chief Protector, also at Perth,



informing him that Hunter was at Broome, trying to marry the same woman the CPA had denied him last year and had five Aboriginal crewmen on his schooner, thanks to Father Nicholas's permit.

Mr. Gale responded immediately with telegrams to Resident Magistrate Wood and Houlahan. In the first, he requested cancellation of any permit held by Hunter and that Father Nicholas be told not to issue any other to him under any circumstances. In the second, he advised Houlahan of these moves and instructed him to return Hunter's crew to their homes.

At 8.40 pm the same evening, Police Corporal Stewart boarded *Euralia*, where the five crewmen were loading cargo. He asked Hunter for his permit, made a copy of it, then took the woman ashore to the Roman Catholic convent, where he left her in the care of the Sisters.

On the following morning Harry Hunter was charged at the Police Court with permitting a female 'half-caste' to be upon his boat without the authority in writing of a Protector of Aboriginies. Giving evidence, he admitted having six 'wives', five of whom were Aboriginal, plus the mixed-race woman. He was fined £10. 1. 0. or six months hard labour if he defaulted.

His crew were subsequently removed from *Euralia*, leaving half the cargo for Leveque on board and the rest on the beach. The authorities were now in a quandary, because they were responsible for returning the crew to their homes and because the government party erecting the lighthouse in the same area was waiting for its supplies.

Resident Magistrate Wood solved the dilemma, after a discussion with an official of the Public Works Department, by issuing a permit to Broome carpenter and contractor Thomas Game to work the crew of the schooner as she sailed back to the north.

In sending another report to the Commissioner of Police, Houlahan said he appreciated that Harry Hunter would take command of his vessel from Game as soon as it left Broome, yet there was no quicker method of getting the supplies to Cape Leveque. He forwarded Father Nicholas's hand-written permit and remarked that Hunter's intended wife would be sent to Beagle Bay Mission shortly.

Hunter's sworn evidence that he had six 'wives' should be sufficient to deny him a permit to marry her, Houlahan believed, adding,

she may be his own flesh and blood, we have only his word that she is not, & he is so depraved that one cannot rely on him.

In fact, Hunter had written to an official at Perth about her two and a half years earlier, saying that he had brought her up although she was not a daughter. He gave a surname and age which suggests she was fathered by one of his contemporaries in the 1880s.

A file on Harry Hunter reached the top of the State Civil Service before the end of June. Having read it, the Colonial Secretary instructed the Under Secretary to issue 'very definite instructions' to Protectors of Aboriginies in the relevant district not to permit Hunter to employ Aboriginal people and asked that the local police officer keep a strict watch over him. Chief Protector Gale passed these comments on to Father Nicholas and Constable Johnston. 5

Johnston did not disappoint his superiors. As he and Native Assistant 'Billy' rode up to Boolgin on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June, they saw an Aboriginal woman tending a kettle on a fire outside the fence around Hunter's homestead. She moved away as soon as she saw them.

When asked if he had a permit allowing the woman to be there, Hunter referred the policeman to Mr. Kaiser, who had placed his Aboriginal employees under Hunter's control. Johnston found twenty men, women and children camped nearby.

Having discussed the matter with Kaiser, he decided that the Bardi people must move to the lighthouse. With Kaiser's clerk, Mr. Robinson, he returned to Boolgin the following evening and insisted that Hunter ordered the three mile [4.8 km] move immediately.

At Broome Police Court, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, Henry Hunter entered a plea of Not Guilty to the charge that he had permitted a female Aboriginal, 'to be on premises in your occupation without authority in writing from a Protector of Aboriginies [etc.]'. Thomas Game and Alexander McDonald, both visitors at Boolgin when the police arrived, appeared for the prosecution and the defence respectively.

Though all the witnesses agreed that the fireplace in question was outside the fence around the homestead, the court accepted the prosecution case that it was nevertheless Hunter's. Fined £10. 1. 0. plus various fees, he launched an Appeal a week later which was dismissed the following month. 6

By this time, Harry Hunter had read *The Sunday Times* article of 28<sup>th</sup> May about himself. The newspaper declined to print his response in full, citing lack of space, but did publish selected, edited parts of it on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, in a substantial article headed,

## Life in The Nor'-West

### The Complaint of Harry Hunter

A White Man - Who Prefers the Society of Niggers - To that  
Of His Own People

Hunter denied having been caught with his women during the night raid on Boolgin the previous year. On the contrary, he claimed he had expected a visit from the authorities, during which he intended to offer to change his life-style:

Had Mr. Gale consulted me and said, 'Mr. Hunter, we cannot allow you to continue the mode of life you have been living, but having the welfare of the natives in view, and taking into consideration the fact that of your having spent a lifetime with them, we would like to know if you are prepared to amend your mode of life,' I should have said, 'Yes, Mr. Gale, I will amend my mode of life by marrying the half-caste woman, and will promise not to allow my other women folk to sleep under the same roof with me. Withdraw this ration business - I do not want it. The food supply in this peninsula is the same to-day as it was 50 years ago, and the able natives can earn all the flour and tobacco that they want for themselves and their parents. Grant me a general permit, and give me the power to protect the natives, and I will promise that you will have no cause to find fault with my mode of life in the future.'

Instead, he claimed, Inspector Sellenger and Chief Protector Gale came to make a scapegoat of him and seize 'the Boolgin natives to restock a decaying mission station'.

He flatly denied having helped himself to Government stores, pointing out that for thirty years he had lived among Aboriginal people without seeking government assistance of any sort. His recent role as a distributor originated with Travelling Inspector of Aboriginies James Isdell, in lieu of the financial arrangement Isdell had wanted him to accept. When Mr. Gale had entered his house, Hunter had produced invoices proving that some of the stores were his own property.

The accusation that he had not distributed government blankets was 'a foul lie'. He had received a bale of one hundred in 1910, out of which he had distributed eighty-five, and had sent more to Harry O'Grady for elderly people who might be thereabouts.

The balance had been laid on an old sail in his house as a bed for his women and himself - about ten were removed from the building by Constable Johnston after the raid. No blankets had been sent to him the previous year.

Nor had naked women been found in his house, he added. All wore loincloths and some of the blankets covered their legs. As for the accusation that he gave away the mothers of his children because he had finished with them, that was 'another foul lie'.

Many years later, 'Dougal' readily corroborated the last point: the woman who had escaped through the police cordon around Hunter's homestead had given birth to one of his daughters seven

or eight years earlier, and like all the others except the mixed-race girl, was already married to a Bardi man under Aboriginal law.

As regards his children, Hunter added,

My sons are Australians pure and simple [the Australian Natives' Association should be proud], and I have done my duty to my children. Inspector Sellenger remarked that the manner in which I had brought up my children reflected credit on me, and if it reflects credit on me for the manner in which I have brought up my children surely it reflects credit on me for the manner in which I have brought up the natives, who have grown up side by side with my own sons.

Nor had he stationed anyone on the sand hills to warn him of approaching vessels, as the newspaper claimed. Bardi people had been camping there before he was born and would still be there if the authorities had not ordered them away.

'Dougal' confirmed the last two points also, with the qualification that in practice people routinely went down to the homestead to announce the appearance of vessels offshore, not least so that Hunter could defend their women and children from the pearling crews.

The court case at Derby had been heard behind closed doors at the request of Inspector Sellenger owing to the nature of the cross-examination, Hunter continued. He had not been proven 'a sexual maniac'.

He went on to correct the newspaper's scurrilous report about the court cases on the 4<sup>th</sup> May and remarked that other men in the district had been convicted of cohabitation without losing their licences to employ Aboriginal people or 'the society of native women'.

After describing the events which lead to his conviction in June, he ended by forecasting the early demise of the now-widely dispersed people who had been driven from their traditional land at Boolgin.

Having allowed Hunter to make these points, the newspaper concluded,

We must say that Hunter is a curious compound. He has apparently struck trouble by the bushel, but he could hardly have expected anything else when he decided to throw off all the trammels of civilisation, to disregard the laws of both God and man, and to assist in the retrograde movement of the white race by herding with aboriginies, a course of action which cannot be justified - at all events to the extent to which the authorities allege that Hunter carried it out - under any conceivable circumstances. 7

His losses in fines, court fees and defence costs were substantial for the time, but for a man whose entire adult life had centred on women and work, as 'Dougal' testified, the removal of his 'wives' and his work-force was much worse. He remained defiantly unwilling to accept the loss of either.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

### The Koombana 'Blow'

*"A strong south-easterly came out of a clear sky in the morning, so strong it carried the bobstay away. We anchored in a bay south of the lighthouse. Late in the afternoon, big swells came rolling in."*

*"'Heave up', the Old Man said. He knew there was something coming behind. We let down the big anchor and all the chain. 'Get the dinghy on deck, upside down, put boards over it and the tarpaulin on top.'"*

*"By 10 o'clock it was blowing so hard one anchor chain broke on the windlass, then the other anchor stock broke! Rain, rain, rain! Couldn't see nothing! Oh jingo! And we were drifting out to sea!"*

*"Next morning, the sea was breaking over us, dinghy floating on deck, land out of sight, couldn't see it! When the wind backed to the north, we saw Chimney Rock by Pender Bay. Hauled up the jib, just a little bit, two feet [61 cm], so it wouldn't blow to shreds, trying to get way on the boat so we could steer clear."*

*"Sometimes when we came up high on waves, we saw another boat, a lugger. Mostly we were hidden. We kept a careful lookout when we could. I told the Old Man, 'We're going straight for Chimney Rock!' He watched, then told us, 'Yes.'"*

*"He sat us all down - Nellie was there too - put lifebuoys on us, gave instructions. 'You're young', he said, 'Maybe you can swim, get ashore. I'm too old so I'm staying here. I'm finished.' He went down to his cabin and lay on his bunk, leaving us all crying for him."*

*"We had to save the ship! Tommy was on the wheel. The rest of us got the staysail up and when she went up on a swell, it held! With the ship under way, Tommy could steer a course. We cleared the rock!"*

*"'All right', the Old Man said when we called him up. Under foresails we ran into the mouth of Beagle Bay, ran her onto a bank. It was low tide then. We got the spare anchor out, tied it to the roots of a mangrove tree and lit a fire for tucker. We didn't know what was to come that night."*

*"Big swells came rolling in, battering, battering us! At high tide, we lifted off. Next day we surged up the creek in Beagle Bay, ran her onto another bank because we had no anchors at all now."*

*"That lugger we saw got smashed on Sandy Point, all lives lost. Further south, luggers wrecked all along the Eighty Mile Beach...Euralia came through all right, he built her good, our Old Man. Afterwards, we sailed back up the coast to Pender Bay, gave the station their stores."*

Jack Hunter.

Probably wanting to get as far as possible before the tropical summer day became seriously hot, Harry Hunter left Boolgin on foot about 6 am on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1912 to visit Father Nicholas at Lombadina and Henry Hilliard 1½ miles beyond.

Having reached the edge of the Bardi camp at Lombadina late that morning, he stood under a large, shady tree and called and beckoned to a young woman to bring him water. Using a billy-can, she did so, accompanied by another girl. Having drunk, Hunter said to the first,

*"You go this way, I go that way, and we will meet in the bush."*

There, Harry Hunter had intercourse with her before going on to Father Nicholas' mission at noon. Some two hours later, he went to see Henry Hilliard.

Next morning, Bardi man 'Ernest' administered 'a hiding' to his step-daughter, having heard what she had done with Hunter the previous day. As Hunter returned from Hilliard's, 'Ernest'

accused him of 'humbugging' the girl, threatened him with the police and, according to one witness, tried to hit him.

Though Hunter denied the accusation, he went to Father Nicholas's, wrote a note asking Henry Hilliard to give his employee 'Ernest' a bag of flour, then sent the latter off with it. 'Ernest' came back instead with another note asking the missionary to provide the flour, which he did. <sup>1</sup>

Early the following month, a telegram from Harry Hunter reached the Chief Protector of Aboriginies at Perth, requesting permission to employ eight 'natives' on his schooner. Four days later, the C.P.A. notified the Resident Magistrate at Broome,

Henry Hunter applying for permit to employ natives as crew for schooner *Oralyes* Stop No permit is to be granted to any person if Hunter personally has anything to do with the employment of any native worked under such permit. <sup>2</sup>

Now Hunter was left with only one option if he wanted to use *Euralia*, the name of which had been wrongly transcribed in telegrams between Broome and Perth, to generate badly needed income. He had to use his available sons as crew.

Robin was then twenty, Christy, Jack and Tommy D'Antoine between sixteen and nineteen. All capable and experienced sailors, they were nevertheless too few and mostly too young to manually load and unload many tons of cargo and ballast, though they could make lighter deliveries.

The risk that was also involved during the summer months was brought home to him only a week later when they were caught near Cape Leveque lighthouse by the edge of the incoming cyclone. With *Euralia* left stranded on the sandbank inside Beagle Bay, Hunter had to get permission from Constable Johnston to employ temporarily local Aboriginal men to unload the vessel so he could float her off on the next high tide, then reload her.

It was another four days before they could deliver cargo to Mr. Bell of Pender Bay Station and sail for Boolgin. Yet as Jack Hunter testified, things were worse along the Eighty Mile Beach. <sup>3</sup>

Further south still, the steamships *Koombana* and *Bullara* were both due to leave Port Hedland on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> March. Though the two captains briefly discussed the weather, T.M. Allen of *Koombana* remarking that, 'it looked a bit dirty', the weather forecast gave no indication of serious conditions to come, so neither man spoke of delaying departure.

*S.S. Koombana* sailed at 1030 hrs in a fresh wind, bound north-eastwards for Broome. Captain Upjohn of the *Bullara* and his chief officer watched her departure, noting her propeller was well submerged. Another observer, however, later reported seeing the propeller beating out of the water, which suggested the ship carried insufficient ballast at that time.

Upjohn took his vessel to sea soon afterwards and followed the *Koombana's* course for a while. Meeting a strong gale and rain that evening, he continued out to sea even though he was bound for the south, probably hoping to put sea-room between his ship and the coastal reefs and shoals.

Soon Upjohn and his crew were fighting for their lives. With her bow to the ever-increasing wind and waves, engines at full power and both anchors down in a forlorn attempt to check her backward progress, *S.S. Bullara* was engulfed in a full tropical cyclone shortly after midnight.

Three days after leaving Port Hedland, she appeared off Cossack, flying signals of distress, her funnel and some of her other superstructure missing. The trip should have taken ten hours. A lighter full of passengers going out to her went down with all hands, not far from the barque *Concordia* which had been blown ashore.

Caught at anchor while loading ore, the sailing ship *Crown of England*, 1847 gross tons, had broken into three pieces when driven against Depuch Island. Captain Olsen survived to bury six of his crew; two others were not seen again.

Hurricane-force winds had blasted nine inches of rain onto the land, causing the worst floods and wash-aways for years. Telephone lines were down for scores of miles. Cable messages between Port Hedland and Perth had to be routed via Banjoowangie in remote Java.

Of the 3668 ton *S.S. Koombana* and her one hundred and fifty passengers and crew, there was no sign. Purpose-built for trade in the tropics only four years earlier, she was fitted with the latest equipment, navigational aids and creature comforts.

Because communications along the enormous coastline had been badly disrupted, it was thought at first she might have put into a port somewhere, or be lying disabled at sea. Her radio silence in cyclonic conditions was to be expected, and for longer if her transmitting equipment had been damaged.

Experienced mariners believed she could live in any wind and sea, so even when the track of the cyclone had been plotted and it was realised that the vessel's course would have taken her towards it, hope still remained.

Numerous steamers, schooners and luggers, including the *Bullara*, searched islands, shoals and reefs in thousands of square miles of ocean.

Then Captain Mills of *S.S. Minderoo* picked up a smoking-room settee and part of a cabin drawer seventy miles [113 km] west of Bedout Island, followed by the bottom board of a boat bearing an identifying badge fifteen miles [24 km] away. Unable to avoid the inevitable conclusion, he abandoned his one thousand five hundred mile [2413 km] search.

The *Gorgon* had already brought a state room door into Port Hedland. A few days later, the *Bullara* returned to Cossack with one of the *Koombana's* boats and other wreckage found twenty miles [32 km] north of Bedout. Further north, the steamer *Una* came across the mast of a ship's boat, amongst other things.

Amid public and press speculation, some of it scandalous, a full Marine Court of Inquiry was opened at Fremantle late in April. Some two weeks later, it decided,

The stability and seaworthiness of the steamship *Koombana* was unassailable and the competency and carefulness of Captain Allen was beyond question. The fate of the vessel is beyond human knowledge and remains a mystery of the sea.

Less than a month after the cyclone which became known as *The Koombana 'blow'*, a much larger ship sank in a calm, iceberg-filled sea on the other side of the world. Despite terrible loss of life, there were many survivors from *Titanic*, the wreck of which was discovered years later.

Not one person survived the loss of the *Koombana*. Not a single body was recovered and the wreck has still not been found. 4

Waiting at Broome for the ship that never arrived, was Constable B.H. Fletcher. He had apparently been assigned to meet one of the passengers due to disembark there, a Mr Main, and escort him to a site further north where another mission was to be started. It was two years since he had brought to trial the killers of John Pritchard Jones at Broome.

Seemingly unarmed and not in uniform, Constable Fletcher intervened when five Asians attacked a European. He knocked down two before being fatally stabbed and died the following day in Broome hospital. Aged 36, he left a wife and daughter. Jessie Fletcher never remarried. 5

## Chapter Twenty-Four

### Home is the Hunter

In the meantime, Constable Johnston had been informed about Harry Hunter's behaviour at Lombadina in February.

At Broome Police Court, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1912, Hunter, who described his occupation as 'cargo carrier', pleaded Not Guilty to the charge that he had entered a native camp without lawful excuse, an offence under the Aborigines Act 1905. Giving evidence, he said that in walking from Boolgin to Lombadina, he followed a route he had used for the previous 33 years, except that he passed around the east side of the camp to avoid going through the middle of it.

Certainly he had asked for and received water from two women there, but denied that anything else had taken place with one of them. Admitting that 'Ernest' had been provided with a bag of flour at his behest, Hunter said it was due for work done on the lighthouse fence the year before, which he had supervised. 'Ernest' had been unable to collect it from Boolgin because of the police prohibition on Aboriginal people going there or to the lighthouse. 'Ernest' had not accused him of 'humberging' his step-daughter.

The Bench preferred the testimony of five Aboriginal witnesses and Constable Johnston, noted Hunter's four previous convictions in the past two years, found him guilty and sentenced him to two months' imprisonment with hard labour. Notice of Appeal was given at once, so Hunter was released on bail of £30, with one surety in the same amount. <sup>1</sup>

He remained incorrigible. Preparations for the Appeal were still under way in November, when he was charged again, this time with 'Enticing Aboriginal natives' from Beagle Bay Mission, where several of his 'wives' and children had been deposited by the authorities.

Broome Police Court heard that on one recent occasion, Christy Hunter had visited the Aboriginal camp there after dark, telling the 'wives' that his father would give them tobacco and other things outside the stockyard fence. Two of them had accepted the offer, after which each was led in turn into the bush where Hunter 'had connection' with them on blankets spread on the ground.

One of these two, the mixed-race girl he had tried to marry officially at Broome the year before, also testified that she had met him on the cart road near the mission about three moons previously, having seen his tracks nearby. On other occasions, Father Droste had told her Hunter wanted to see her and Father Thomas had told another girl to tell her Hunter wanted to marry her. She wanted to marry him too.

Sadly, she revealed that since being sent to Beagle Bay Mission, she had been anything but safe. 'Teddy', 'Alain', 'Joe', 'Billy' and an unnamed Manilaman had all 'caught' her at the Aboriginal camp or nearby. Plainly, she had been far safer with Harry Hunter.

A second 'wife' confirmed the details of the recent meeting with Hunter, adding that she had had a similar meeting with him earlier that night. She too had been claimed by him as a 'wife' since she was a girl, had had two children by him, one of which was still a baby. No Aboriginal man had interfered with her when she was with Hunter. Since then 'Kangaroo', a Bardi crewman on Father Nicholas's *San Salvador*, had become her *de facto* spouse because she didn't want her allotted Aboriginal husband, 'Little Harry'.

A third 'wife', who had remained in the camp when the other two went to Hunter, testified that she had accepted a similar offer from him at the mission on a previous occasion.

Father Thomas Bachmair, current Superior of Beagle Bay Mission, said he had warned Hunter that he would not take any responsibility if the latter came to see his children. He had brought one of the women to the mission last July at the request of the police and was aware Hunter wanted to marry her.

Under cross-examination, Constable Johnston admitted that Father Bischofs had asked her if she wanted to marry Hunter in his presence, but said he could not remember her reply. He had warned Hunter last year about taking Aboriginal people away from the mission.

Harry Hunter testified that the mixed-race woman had been left in his care as an infant by her father. When she attained womanhood twelve years ago, her mother had given her to him, since when she had lived with him as his wife. About two years ago, she had been taken from him by the police. More recently he had brought her to Broome to marry her formally, as she wanted, only to be prosecuted and deprived of her again. The Chief Protector had no right to stop him meeting, courting and marrying her. He had brought the matter to the attention of higher authorities without success.

Hunter added that the other 'wife' who had testified was fully Aboriginal, had been his by tribal custom for about nineteen years, during which one of their two children had died. He periodically went to the mission to see his wives and children, believing they should have the tobacco, fruit and milk he brought, as well as the loving care of a father. No evidence had been produced that they had left the mission area with him. He concluded by complaining of police persecution.

Unmoved, Resident Magistrate Wood imprisoned him for three months with hard labour. Verbal Notice of Appeal was lodged immediately but is not likely to have been successful. 2

Unsurprisingly, Hunter's financial crisis deepened. By early 1913, *Euralia* had been legally seized by the Broome firm of Streeter and Male, then sold to pearling fleet owner Captain Gregory. One of the two Gregory brothers was the port's Harbour Master, Marine Surveyor and Inspector of Shipping.

Having begun legal action against Streeter and Male for wages due to his crew, Robin, Christy and Jack, Harry Hunter spent some of the surplus proceeds from the sale on an elderly lugger, which he filled with food and other supplies before returning to Boolgin. 3

That April, he sent wood carvings made by one of his sons and his son-in-law [Tommy D'Antoine, now 'bush-married' to Nellie] to the Colonial Secretary at Perth, requesting evaluation of the hardwood used and drawing attention to

'the capabilities of these Halfcaste lads as tradesmen, the result of my training.' 4

With the outbreak of the First World War, British and other European pearl shell markets closed. Faced with the possible extinction of a lucrative industry, the local government gave assistance. Shell was shipped to Sydney via Fremantle, right across the Pacific Ocean to San Francisco or Vancouver and finally taken by train to New York, where the market remained open. The price obtained was lower but the industry and the wider economy of north-west Australia survived. 5

Harry Hunter and 'Frenchy' D'Antoine visited a German settler to tell him he was a dead man if his country won the war. 6

The 8<sup>th</sup> March 1915 brought a loss that was still lamented by elderly Bardi people more than half a century later.

*"People told me - I was at Gulan - that Father Droste rode up from Beagle Bay, arrived at Lombadina near sundown and went straight to the little mission house by the big tree."*

*"Well, during the night, Father Nicholas died. He cared for us better than any of the priests who followed him, gave us plenty of flour, damper, clothes, anything. People helped themselves. At Christmas he gave us a big cake, khaki clothes - double clothes! - and blankets."*

'Dougal'.

In his four years at Lombadina, the jovial little Spanish priest had succeeded where several previous attempts to establish a mission in the area had failed and, with the help of Thomas Puertollano throughout and several nuns from about 1913, he established it so firmly that it lasted for most of the century.



Whatever one may think of his wish to Christianize a people who already had their own religion, his genuine respect and affection for them, his material, medical and educational care of them and his bravery in physically interposing his small self between their combatants, were all instrumental in helping them to survive as a people during the immensely difficult times they were going through.

During those same years, he was often at sea in *San Salvador*, or sent the vessel captained by others, to meet the needs of Beagle Bay Mission, his own establishment, and the mission which he had previously helped to found at Drysdale River in the far north of the State.

Great cries of anguish rose from the family camps on the sand hills at Lombadina when news of his death reached them. No less saddened were many other Aboriginal, Asian and white people who had known him in the twenty years he had spent on that coast.

*"With his sons, all of whom he'd trained as carpenters, Harry Hunter built one last lugger. Good boat that one, for shelling, going to town with cargoes, anything. He called her Leveque."*

*"Little by little, Bardi people went back to Boolgin, to help him and his boys. His wives came for tucker, but not to stay in the homestead. Only his children lived with him then."*

'Dougal'

Hunter was surreptitiously employing some Bardi people again, without applying for a permit to do so. The police were no longer watching him closely, and no longer excluding Bardi people from their traditional territory at Cape Leveque, Boolgin and Swan Point.

During these years Hunter sent Christy and Jack out in the boat alternately, looking for shell, beche-de-mer, suitable timber trees and anything else that might be saleable. Often Christy returned empty-handed whereas Jack always brought back trochus shell or similar. <sup>7</sup>

However, according to his friend 'Dougal',

*"Jack got silly in the head by working too much."*

Early in 1916, the Hunters were returning to Boolgin on a 'Commonwealth lugger' when the vessel started to sink. Tommy, clear in the water, called to Robin on the awash deck, that he couldn't see his father. Robin couldn't see him either, so he dived into the sinking hull, found him lying on his bunk, dragged him to an air pocket in the corner of the cabin, then out of the vessel. For the second time in four years, Harry had apparently resigned himself to his fate.

A following boat took them back to Broome the same day, the sinking having occurred about 8 am on the morning of departure. Harry spent about a fortnight in hospital before going home. <sup>8</sup>

The next year, members of the North-West Scientific and Exploration Expedition were sailing up the west coast of the peninsula in the chartered schooner *Culwalla*, hoping to meet another vessel which would carry their mail south, when one was sighted. Expedition leader E.J. Stuart recorded in his diary that evening, the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1917,

The boat ...turned out to belong to Harry Hunter, of Burgon [*sic*], trader in timber, boatbuilder, etc. He has a halfcaste crew aboard - four sons all about the same age. From this the reader can judge what kind of a man he is, although well educated, and very willing to take our mail.

When *Culwalla* anchored off Lombadina the following morning, Stuart, who had evidently been reassured by the master of his vessel, noted,

Harry Hunter, a well-known man, anchored close ahead and we went off to his schooner and gave him mails to post at Broome.

While Hunter sailed south, the Expedition continued northwards, rounded Swan Point at the apex of the peninsula, then dropped anchor in Karrakatta Bay, which was alive with fish. In a whale-boat, Stuart and the skipper made an excursion along the mainland coast, marvelling at the 'tons' of tropical fish of many species they encountered. Stuart shot some of the finest, to the delight of now-elderly Bardi man 'Snider'.

At Tyri [Jackson] island, the well-travelled Stuart thought the red granite background and green mangrove trees around 'Frenchy' D'Antoine's camp, 'one of the most beautiful and wonderful sights I have seen.'

The 'big fat Frenchman' was standing on his moored lugger, surrounded by Bardi boys bottling flour, while families were distributed across the beach behind. So excited was 'Frenchy' by the unexpected appearance of his very rare white visitors that he could hardly bring a whisky glass to his lips, but did all he could to assist them.

Before leaving for Sunday Island, Stuart asked two Aboriginal people for skeletons of their dead. Interpreting their horror as 'superstitious fear', he proceeded to use increasing amounts of tobacco as a bribe until a mortuary site was pointed out to him. 9

Later that year, Harry Hunter's sons Jack and Christy visited Thomas Puertollano at Chilli Creek Station, Lombadina, seeking permission to court his daughters Philomena and Mary. According to the young men, Puertollano told them that he did not know what to say, the girls being with the Sisters at the nearby mission.

The Father in charge there apparently treated the suitors as trespassers, even reprimanding some of his schoolboys, who had probably known the Hunters all their lives, for inviting them into their accommodation.

Back at Boolgin, Harry decided to take up his pen in a formal attempt to allay any unwarranted suspicions that may have arisen [verbatim]:

Boolgin Station  
Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1917

mr Thomas puertollano  
Chili creek Station

Dear Sir

I Am Writing to ascertain your Views "re an Alliance",  
Between my two son's and your two Daughter's,  
"Jack" Desires to Court your Daughter "philomena" With a  
View to marriage,,  
"Christy" Desires to Court "Maria" also With a View to  
marriage,,

I may Say that these two young fellows are "Able  
tradesmen", And Can Earn their four or five pound per Week  
anywhere,, They have a good home, And have property of their Own.

They are respectable Clean living hard Working Lad's,  
And it is my Desire to see them Comfortably Settled down, They can  
provide a good home for their Wives and Keep them in comfort.

I understand from the "Chief protector" that in future "Halfcaste Girl's Will not be allowed to marry Aboriginal's", And that it is the Desire of the Department that Halfcaste Should marry Halfcaste. Kindly let me Know as soon as possible in What light you View this matter, as my Son's Desire to make formal Applications to the Chief protector, And their Application Will be made in Accordance With your answer,

If your Answer is of a favourable nature then possibly a marriage Could be arranged to take place Say About Christmas,, And the young fellows Could make their Applications for the necessary permit to marry, If your Answer is a negative, than the Lad's Will have to make Application to court Girls at the "Beagle Bay Mission" With a View to marriage.

The yound fellows Want Wives And it is my Duty to See that they are comfortably Settled Down, And I think you Will Acknowledge that it is also your Duty to See your Daughters Settled Down.

Awaiting your reply  
I Am Sir  
yours Faithfully  
Henry Hunter  
Father of the Lad's in question 10

Thomas Puertollano replied the following day with a single-page, beautifully written letter saying that Philomena and Mary were already engaged to others, and wishing Hunter's sons success elsewhere.

Hunter then wrote to the Chief Protector, enclosing a copy of his own letter to Puertollano and the latter's reply. He also sent applications written by himself and signed by Christy and Jack, seeking permission for the young men to visit Beagle Bay Mission with the aim of finding wives there. Permission was granted but the two were unsuccessful at that time.

*"After the big fight when England men beat the Germans [the First World War], 'flu came. A white man told us the wind brought it from all the bodies left by the shooting and bombing. Here, men and women died, sometimes two or three in a day."*

*"An Aboriginal woman brought it to Boolgin, gave it to the daughter of Bibiac, whose white-man-name was 'Harry', before going on to Gulan. When Bibiac's daughter died, he took up his spears and walked to Gulan where he saw that woman lying on the ground. After the other people there had gone fishing, he stabbed her dead."*

*"Harry Hunter took Bibiac to Broome, told [the authorities] everything, spoke up for him, cleared him and brought him back to Boolgin free of trouble. Harry Hunter was a fine boss."*

'Dougal'. 11

Following his near-drowning and hospitalisation in 1916, Hunter had been able to resume work for a year or two before becoming ill again. On the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1919, he could not take his medicine unaided, so Jack raised and supported his head by kneeling behind him. Bubbles poured out of his nose and mouth, which Jack interpreted as 'the seawater coming out of him', then lay quietly. Looking at his face, Jack realised he was dead.

*"He'd said, 'Bury me up the hill when I go'."*

Jack Hunter.

Jack brought the people from the lighthouse. 'Old Scot', a Scots lugger-man, sailed his boat to Boolgin that morning. A service was read by the lighthouse keeper, among whose party may have been Jack Young, who once worked for Harry and married his daughter Jessie. Young had worked at the lighthouse intermittently at least since 1917, finally being paid off one day after the funeral. Tommy D'Antoine was later officially recorded as having been the undertaker, Jack and Christy Hunter the witnesses.

Afterwards, Harry's 'Book of the Law' which his grandfather had given him before he left England forty-two years earlier, was given to 'Frenchy'. Constable Watson and Harry O'Grady J.P. came to Boolgin, went through Harry's papers and removed them all. His family, now mostly in their twenties, were told nothing.

'Old Bardwell', Hunter's agent at Broome, notified the District Registrar of the death the following February. Hunter's age was recorded as having been sixty-three, cause of death, 'Natural causes Supposed heart disease', duration of illness as two years. However, it was Harry O'Grady, rather than a doctor, who provided the last two details.

None of the children received any money. They had the use of the house and the vegetable garden, the boat and all the practical training and experience he'd given them, but they could not read English or write more than their names.

Harry Hunter had left instructions that the lease of Boolgin was to be transferred to Jack, which the Curator of Intestate Estates at remote Perth acted upon. The amended lease document was passed to Bardwell, who gave it to Robin Hunter for onward transmission. Instead, Robin kept it and for some fifteen years presented himself as the new master of Boolgin. Only in the mid-1930s, when Robin decided to move to Broome, did Jack learn of his inheritance.

In the course of time, the sand hills at Boolgin drifted, exposing Harry's bones. Jack, long married by then, collected them and reburied them in the grave of his own small son Lawrence. 12

More than fifty years after Harry Hunter's death, 'Dougal' and other old people who had known him were still in awe of that 'cheeky' man.

Well aware of his 'blackbirder' past, his forcible marching of Aboriginal people to his camps and his prowess with revolver, whip and fists, they also remembered the food he provided for decades, his relentless defence of their women and children against the pearling crews, and that he never failed them when they were in trouble with 'white man's law'.

They didn't hold his womanising against him because in those days senior Bardi men customarily had several wives, and because their women would traditionally trade favours for desired goods.

'Dougal' never forgot that he often ate the same food from the same table as Hunter's sons when he was a child, or that his boss had taught him many kinds of useful work, or that he had taken the trouble to teach a somewhat undersized Bardi boy how to defend himself, Harry Hunter style. He concluded,

*"Harry Hunter didn't follow white man's law, didn't savvy Christmas, birthdays, [Roman Catholic] feast days, nothing. He went his own, own, way. But if we were good, he was a good boss!"*

## Chapter Twenty-Five

### Sailor Home from the Sea

*"His mother called him back to England. Mr. Hadley was an England-man, like Harry Hunter. I was a big boy then, already a man...."*

'Dougal'.

Back in September 1908, then-Acting Chief Protector of Aboriginies C.F. Gale notified Hadley that a deputation from the Australian Aboriginies Mission Society led by a Mr. Telfer had approached the Colonial Secretary and himself about extending their work from the other States to Western Australia. In particular, Telfer wanted to know if Hadley would consider amalgamating his work with theirs.

Gale was encouraging because his Minister thought there was little hope of Sunday Island becoming self-supporting, whereas the mainland offered plenty of country suitable for cultivation. Steps had therefore been taken to create a large temporary reserve for the use of Aboriginal people out of which a suitable site could be chosen. He did not give the location of the reserve. <sup>1</sup>

Hadley, aboard *Rita* at Derby, replied that he would co-operate fully with Telfer but wanted to keep Sunday Island too, citing the opportunities for shelling and beche-de-mer [trepang] fishing and his latest plan to market the sponges which grew in profusion on all the local reefs. Certain turtle products might also be saleable.

He intended to send sponges to the Agent General at Perth and to his brother-in-law Mr. Mitchell in London, the latter being in control of the Eastern interests of an international trading company headed by Sir Marcus Samuel. Samples of turtle products would be sent to Perth.

To leave Sunday Island altogether would not only deprive his mission of these resources but also, he believed,

throw some 40 children bodily into the arms of the Asiatics, which I  
feel sure that if I was to do so there would be no forgiveness from  
God for me in the next world, & no peace or happiness in this world. <sup>2</sup>

Hadley's plan to obtain turtles at the Lacepede Islands was foiled the following January by the police, who used *Rita* to search for the killers of John Pritchard Jones on the east ['Graveyard'] coast of King Sound. On recovering his boat, the missionary went first to Derby, where the captain of *S.S. Bullara* told him there was a wreck on Adele Island, some sixty miles [100 km] north of the Sound.

Taking ten islanders to Adele with him, Hadley found Henry Hilliard and crew repairing their leaking vessel, having dug a well and taken the opportunity to plant coconuts all over the island. Hilliard, who was then based in the Dutch East Indies [now Indonesia] asked his old friend to check on the progress of the new plantation from time to time. During their five day stay, the Sunday Islanders obtained sixteen turtles, some of which were the hawksbill species, commercially valuable for their tortoiseshell. <sup>3</sup>

Telford and his colleague E.V. Radford left Fremantle on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1910 by steamer on the first stage of their journey north. Disembarking at Carnarvon, they used bicycles for the great majority of their meandering two thousand mile [3218 km], often road-less route.

Undaunted by weeks of wading through floods, miles of thirty to forty foot [up to 12.2 m] sand hills, days of strong head winds, long rough waterless stretches or mosquito marshes, they

took every opportunity to spread their message. Asked whether he knew anything about Christ, one old Aboriginal man replied,

*"That's what my boss say when he swear."*

One night they awoke to the sight of Halley's Comet filling the tropical sky almost from horizon to horizon, its brilliance beyond description. To them, the heavens had declared the glory of God and assured them they would reach their destination of Derby, which they did on the 17<sup>th</sup> June. There they met Hadley who, according to an account published decades later by Telfer, proposed they should take over Sunday Island Mission.

Hadley's contemporary version of the discussions was different: Telfer wanted to open a branch mission on the east side of King Sound, supported by tropical agriculture, to work in conjunction with Sunday Island Mission, but Hadley had been unable to make a definite commitment until the government assented to his longstanding request for a block of land in that vicinity.

Hadley took Radford to the island and he was still there when Chief Protector Gale and Inspector Sellenger landed from *Dickie* at the beginning of August, following Harry Hunter's conviction at Derby. Before the two officials sailed away, Hadley promised to send them a box of shells each, then took his other visitor back to the town.

Telfer, who had been exploring on the mainland north and east of Derby, and Radford held services and classes there until they embarked on steamship bound for Perth, still horrified by what they had heard of Harry Hunter. Knowing nothing of the protection and support Hunter had also given to Aboriginal people for decades, they considered his £50 fine far too lenient.

The State government did not allot Hadley the land he wanted but he remained in contact with the Australian Aboriginies Mission Society. During March 1912, the month of the cyclone which became known as *The Koombana Blow*, A.A.M. members Horace Smith and Miss C. McQueen were married at Adelaide, South Australia, by the Reverends W.L. Morton and E. Bungay, then set out on the two thousand nine hundred mile [4666 km] journey around the coast to Sunday Island. They were working there before the end of April. <sup>4</sup>

In a quarterly report to CPA Gale eleven months later, Hadley remarked that Ginger's father ['Frenchy' D'Antoine] had never given anything towards his son's support saying, 'Let the government look after him'. The youth had now been apprenticed to blacksmith Blythe of Derby for four years, the missionary contributing £5 a year for clothing.

Adding that his rubber plantation now boasted some seventy trees up to eight or nine feet [about 2.6 m] high, Hadley remarked that although he received fair returns from trochus shelling, he didn't make anything out of it to speak of because of the terrible wear and tear on whaleboats, sails and oars, which he blamed on the carelessness of his crews.

Consequently he asked for a grant of £50 towards his expenses in making a year-end trip to the Cerea rubber plantations in Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], where he had planter friends who had sent him seeds and would now show him how to manage and tap his trees.

The grant was approved, half coming from the Aboriginies and Fisheries Department and half from the Agriculture Department, in return for a full report from Hadley. Six months later the missionary wrote,

Since my application to your Department I have received a very urgent message from my Mother, calling me to come home so that she may see me & I her before she dies. She is now over 80 years of age, & it is 37 years since I have seen her, and I feel it is my duty to go to her & see her once more, also I feel I really need the rest. I am completely run down...

I find that passages from Broome to Singapore, & from Singapore to Colombo, will very nearly, & with the return fairs [*sic*] consume the whole of the £50. 0. 0. Grant that the Departments have

arranged...would the Departments kindly agree to increase the Grant advanced to £80. 0. 0. as it would give me freer scope to gain information. I propose to spend January and February in Kandy & the Cerea rubber districts and leave for London at the end of February, and return here again about this time next year.

Despite the government's refusal to increase the grant, Hadley left Broome aboard the *S.S. Paroo* on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1913. So began his first break since he founded his mission in 1899. In a letter to the Chief Protector written on the eve of his departure, Hadley described how the mission would be run in his absence and urged that someone such as 'Mr. H. O'Grady at Cygnet Bay' be made a Protector of Aboriginies in his place. <sup>5</sup>

With twenty months' experience of the mission behind them, Mr. and Mrs. Smith were now in charge of Sunday Island. They had already tried to translate the Lord's Prayer into the Bardi language and had trained two of the older island girls as teachers of a kindergarten which was held under a large, shady, hillside tree.

Now they tried further innovations. Two of the brightest young men taught other pupils successfully, so big boys took classes of smaller children, the teachers themselves becoming more interested in lessons as a result. <sup>6</sup>

At the end of January 1914, Hadley forwarded to Perth a one-page 'condensed' report on rubber cultivation from Kandy, then sailed for Europe, over which the clouds of war were gathering. While in Paris and London he enquired about markets for trochus shell and turtle meat.

Long before he returned to Sunday Island about March 1915 via the U.S.A., those markets had collapsed due to the international conflict, forcing major economies on the mission. Only staple foods and other absolute essentials could be purchased thereafter.

He told one Broome resident that he wouldn't remove his new beard until he had paid off debts accumulated during his pearling days. Whether those debts were all financial isn't clear. As he returned with at least one expensive purchase and settled all his liabilities, he probably obtained money in England, most likely from family sources. He remained attached to his beard though.

But he no longer wished to stay. Within days of his return, he offered his mission to the Australian Aboriginies Mission for £1000, a fraction of the money he had spent on it. The AAM called a special meeting of their Council to begin consideration of the offer and talk to Mr. and Mrs. Smith about their three years on the island.

Two months later they rejected it, apparently because theirs was a 'faith mission', without either capital or debt, entirely dependent on voluntary contributions. Possibly the effects of the ongoing war also influenced their decision.

Hadley meanwhile had put his recently acquired knowledge of rubber cultivation into practise with unhappy results. There was no latex in his trees, thanks to his friends the white ants [termites]. By the end of 1915 he had had some success in controlling the latter, while also seeking a crop not to their taste. Liberian coffee was considered next. <sup>7</sup>

In May 1916 he was visited by the distinguished physician and ethnologist Herbert Basedow of Adelaide, a leading member of the Aboriginies' Friends' Association, which Hadley had approached unsuccessfully for financial support in 1900.

Basedow noted that children on the island often walked hand in hand, or with an arm around another's neck and saw them rush to console a toddler distressed by separation from its mother. He observed too that while Hadley's long encouragement but not insistence on the wearing of clothes had been generally successful, the traditional state of affairs occasionally made a reappearance.

Some of the women were washing clothing by laying it on the grass, soaping and rinsing it. One woman decided to include the items she was wearing, then lay naked nearby while her clothes dried in the tropical sun.

During the visit, Hadley distributed more clothing from the mission store. The hapless missionary gave a garment coveted by old Dekabi to another woman and received a sound telling-off, despite offering more appropriate but less colourful apparel in recompense.

Having been presented with karlis [boomerangs], stone-bladed knives, bark food dishes, pearl shell ornaments, other traditional items, sea shells and curious for exchange, Basedow watched two teams of lively girls engaged in a throwing contest and dealt with a few medical problems before departing in *Rita* for Derby. 8

Twelve months later, E.J. Stuart's North-West Scientific and Exploration Syndicate expedition arrived in the chartered schooner *Culwalla*, following their meetings with Harry Hunter and 'Frenchy' D'Antoine.

The visitors arranged to film the mission buildings and enterprises, including the packing of trochus shell which Hadley could not sell because of the continuing Great War, and a specially-staged coba-coba [corroboree] which the islanders obligingly performed in daylight instead of the usual fire-lit darkness.

Spear and karli-throwing demonstrations followed. Among the Aboriginal onlookers was an old man tenderly caring for a small, part-Asian child. The pair had lost their wife and mother to a crocodile.

Hadley, who informed Stuart that he averaged less than one white visitor a year, fed them and entertained them with a gramophone which had cost him \$700 in America, the finest Stuart had heard in Australia. Nevertheless, Stuart confided to his diary,

Mr. Hadley is a very nice man, but seems to me to be half demented, too old, also, I think, he is failing in health very fast. He explained that he had been eighteen years on the island, and I should say that is enough to kill a lion...Mr. Hadley, who has been very kind to us, had dinner aboard.

Hadley's kindnesses included the loan of four island boys who, as Stuart's party went on to explore and film right around the north [Kimberley] coast of Western Australia and back, proved adept at boat handling, spearing fish and dugongs and finding shells. Having caught a turtle in the water, one boy made it tow him about the surface by keeping its head tipped up, an age-old game among the Bardi and Djawi.

When *Culwalla* returned the boys to Sunday Island four months later, they were presented with a 50 lb [23 kg] bag of flour, tobacco, pipes, clothing and the harpoons with which they had kept the vessel's galley supplied with fish, a bonanza at a time when Hadley could not support them due to the privations caused by the war. The missionary had even been compelled to send back Aboriginal people from the Graveyard coast on the east side of King Sound. 9

Later in 1917, the Australian Aboriginies Mission sent Hadley an assistant who was to prove his longest-serving and one of his best, Miss Annie Lock. Two years on, with the war over and conditions improving, both Hadley and Miss Lock wrote to the AAM offering Sunday Island to them.

While recognising that it would be a pity if the mission closed when Hadley retired - he was already sixty years old - the AAM Council felt their status as a 'faith mission' still prevented a take-over. Correspondence continued however. That year, the world-wide influenza epidemic killed eight islanders: three old women, four old men and a young man.

By 1921, the AAM was showing more interest. Apparently responding to enquiries from them, Hadley replied in January 1922,

as regards the reasons of the mission being on the island it is because the most of the natives belong to this and the surrounding islands and the mainland is overrun with coloured crews from the Pearling luggers who debauch every woman they can find.

Government subsidies having been reorganised some five years earlier, he explained the current situation in the same letter:



the government allows us £5 per head per annum for all indigents and all children that have lost their parents. They are now paying us for 36 persons in all and the lists and the treatment are examined quarterly by the Police patrol. They also allow us blankets and clothing for these persons. 10

Hadley was also helping to support well over a hundred other islanders. About this time Miss Lock complained to the police that 'Frenchy' D'Antoine was living with black women at Boolgin. Constable J. McClay rode there from his base at Beagle Bay, finding Robin and Jack Hunter and their wives, who informed him that Tommy and Ginger D'Antoine also lived there, but not their father. Both of the younger D'Antoinés had married into the Hunter family.

McClay also learned that Harry Hunter had employed Aboriginal people without a permit prior to his death in 1919, and that Robin and Jack had subsequently done the same. The policeman cautioned them before riding on to Karrakatta Bay, where 'Frenchy' was managing a market garden for Harry O'Grady, assisted by three Aboriginal couples. This was the garden once fostered by Harry Hunter when he had a homestead there many years earlier.

Before returning to his base, McClay interviewed Hadley who informed him that a mission girl aged about twenty was pregnant by Tommy D'Antoine, the latter having repaired boats and done other carpentry on Sunday Island several times in the recent past. When the child was born, the missionary favoured suing Tommy for its maintenance.

Hadley had written to 'Frenchy' warning him about the conduct of his family on the island. 'Frenchy' replied that as he was wrongly blamed for debauching the islanders, he intended doing so at every future opportunity.

When questioned by McClay, 'Frenchy' denied having interfered with Hadley's charges or having threatened to do so, even though the policeman had seen his reply. McClay cautioned him, adding that his sons had no right on the island because it was a reserve. Later a charge was brought against Tommy D'Antoine. 11

The Australian Aboriginies Mission Society took over Sunday Island Mission from Sydney Hadley on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1922, fourteen years after they first made contact with him.

He received £270 for the cutters *Meta* and *Lotty*, all the smaller boats including a new eleven foot dinghy, all their sails and equipment, twenty-five head of cattle, twenty-eight goats, all the chickens together with all the household, school, dormitory, dining-room, kitchen and bakehouse furniture and equipment.

The buildings and other items were included in the sale without charge. Not included was the long-serving cutter *Rita*, which Miss Lock had previously bought from Hadley but generously allowed the mission to continue using.

Hadley and Miss Lock stayed on into the following year, helping Mr. and Mrs. Jago of the AAM to settle in. About April, Miss Lock, two island girls, Mr. Jago and numerous island men left for a month's shelling in *Rita*.

At Liderup, where they met with wind and rain, the men caught a large dugong which they insisted on cutting up, delaying the vessel's departure for Bedford Island. Unable to sail into a safe anchorage there until the tide came in, the vessel was hit by a squall and big sea while in a vulnerable position, causing the anchor to drag.

Through drenching surf, the crew rowed Miss Lock and the girls ashore to safety. Once the storm had passed, the men returned to *Rita* while a big sea was still running. When they weighed anchor, she was carried over a large rock, holed and badly damaged.

Jago returned to Sunday Island for assistance in one of the smaller boats while *Rita's* crew tried to repair her between tides without much success. By the time Hadley arrived, she was beyond help. The crew swam ashore with a bag of flour under each arm and the sails were recovered before she sank, leaving her owner with a loss of some £200 plus personal effects.

Miss Lock left Sunday Island Mission in July 1923 after nearly six years' service. Hadley, who had been suffering from rheumatism and neuritis in both knees for two years, stayed on until that December, almost a year after the AAM's take-over, before departing too. <sup>12</sup>

Rumour had it that he left Australia as a Lord, having inherited a title from an elder brother. In truth, he had no aristocratic connections at all, his father and both grandfathers having been successful merchants. <sup>13</sup>

Another myth was that he travelled abroad frequently during his time as a missionary, whereas he did so only once, when he combined mission business in Ceylon [Sri Lanka], London and Paris with family responsibilities and a well-earned rest in a temperate climate. <sup>14</sup>

An ignorant few even supposed he became wealthy as a missionary. On the contrary, Royal Commissioner W.E. Roth's opinion of him in 1905 as a 'fine example of a man sacrificing self on behalf of others' was followed by the comment of the Chief Protector in the Annual Report of the Aboriginies Department, 1908, 'all of [his income] he spends on the Mission; he neither looks for nor reaps any benefits or remuneration from his labours...'. <sup>15</sup>

There can be little doubt that the AAM would have taken over the mission in 1915 when he wanted to leave, if he had given it to them. He plainly could not afford to do so. Even the most cursory reading of the surviving records of his establishment reveals a continuous struggle for economic survival almost from the outset.

Some said Hadley had been a senior naval officer at one time. According to one resident of Derby, he had 'sufficient naval honours to gain him access to the King.' In fact, the boyhood year he spent as a trainee on the ex-naval vessel *HMS Worcester* moored in the River Thames was the nearest he came to any navy. He became an expert mariner in small sailing vessels but he had no 'naval honours' whatever. <sup>16</sup>

Today, it is difficult to know whether he deliberately fostered any of the legends which grew up around him during his forty-six years on that wild coast. In one case there is reason to think that he might have done so. His death certificate, issued long afterwards on the other side of the world, bears the wholly erroneous information, 'Retired Captain, Royal Navy.' <sup>17</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1930, Hadley was admitted to the Charterhouse, London, having been nominated as a Brother by one of the Governors, Sir Henry Seymour King.

Founded as a monastery in 1371 to commemorate the thousands of victims of the Black Death [bubonic plague] buried in Charterhouse Square, the institution was savagely suppressed in 1538 by King Henry VIII, then converted successively to Tudor and Elizabethan mansions. Queen Elizabeth I spent the earliest days of her reign there. King James VI of Scotland, proclaimed also King James I of England at the Charterhouse, did likewise.

In 1611, it was bought by Thomas Sutton, perhaps the richest commoner in England, who left it wealthily endowed as a charitable institution in the hands of sixteen of the most powerful men in the land, chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Since then, every King and Queen of England, together with many eminent contemporaries, have served as Governors of the Charterhouse, which supports a school and up to eighty male almsmen [pensioners], known as Brothers. In 1872, the school was moved to Godalming, Surrey, to give it room to expand.

At the beginning of the Second World War, when Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Lang, G.C.V.O., D.D., was Chairman of Governors, it was decided to use the Brothers for fire-watching, which worked well until the very heavy air raid during the night of 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> May 1941, when a single incendiary bomb in the roof of Chapel Cloister escaped detection long enough to start a virulent fire.

No-one died, and many irreplaceable artefacts were removed ahead of the flames, but by the time the latter were finally extinguished, much of historic Charterhouse had been reduced to ashes.

The Brothers were evacuated to Godalming where, on the 26<sup>th</sup> December of that year, Montague Sydney Hadley died, aged 83 years and 1 month. <sup>18</sup>

Hadley's foundation of a remote island mission, twenty-three and a half year support and defence of local people, intelligent policy of allowing their culture to change at its own pace, while unsupported by any religious order, missionary society or charity for the great majority of that time, probably remains unique.

Nearly half a century after he left Australia, Aboriginal people who had known him on Sunday Island remembered him with affection and respect.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

### 'Dougal'

*"Captain Francis ['Frenchy' D'Antoine] began working for Harry O'Grady. He was a white man, French, who'd worked for Harry Hunter previously. I went as crew to Broome and back."*

*"With German mate Hans and another white man called Louis, we sailed to Brue Reef, north of Swan Point. Spent six months there gathering trochus shells, 'drywater', when the tide was out. Big reef."*

*"We landed them at Bedford Island. When they were dead, we washed the shells out, packed them in flour sacks, then took one big cargo to Derby at Christmas-time, when the steamer was due. Sometimes we went fishing for Chinamen-tucker, beche-de-mer, two months at a time."*

*"There were many fights at Gulan and Lombadina. Women made trouble over flour and other tucker, everyone took sides, then they fought with karlis [boomerangs], clubs and spears. Fought like that every day."*

*"Once, a man came to fight me. I asked my uncle if I could borrow some karlis. 'Anytime', he said. As I came out with six, I saw that man had thrown one already. Luckily it flew too high overhead."*

*"'All right, you throw that now?' I shouted. Running to him, I grabbed him by the throat and hit him. Down he went! I jumped on him, high on his chest so he couldn't get me with a leg, hit him left and right, left and right, then grabbed those two [testicles]! That finished him!"*

*"Harry Hunter taught me how to fight. 'Left and right', he told me, 'Left and right, then those two.' He was a good fella, very 'cheeky'."*

'Dougal'.

Having left Boolgin after the police raid in 1910, 'Dougal' spent a second period at Lombadina before once again crossing the peninsula to work for Harry O'Grady, whose Madana Station near Cygnet Bay was in the area the Bardi called Gulan, 'Dougal's' birthplace or 'country'. And this time he settled there. Already known to O'Grady as a good worker, he became a regular crewman on the schooner *Minnie*.

The inter-Aboriginal fights at Lombadina and Gulan reflected the increased disruption of traditional society wrought by the powerful white and Asian incomers.

For more than a generation, pearlers and settlers had landed on their coasts and helped themselves to natural and human resources. Alien livestock grazed the bushland in competition with the native fauna, yet the Bardi were forbidden to spear the former, even though the incomers freely shot kangaroos, wallabies and anything else they chose, to reduce grazing competition, for meat and for sport. Aboriginal hunting techniques were also greatly hampered by the death of most of their dogs at the hands of the police.

Windmill-driven water pumps, needed to supply the huge requirements of the settlers and their thirsty cattle, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys and dogs had lowered the water-table, rendering many of the shallow Bardi 'soaks' unusable for much of the year.

No longer could most people live for long at the numerous places around their territory where they were born, or live exclusively by traditional 'hunting and gathering', or maintain unaltered the culture that went with that way of life. Many of them no longer wanted to do so, especially the younger people.

Alcohol, tobacco, flour, tea, sugar, jam and various other introduced goods had long been powerful attractions which, after the pearlers forsook Cygnet Bay as a major lay-up site in 1909 and the exodus from Boolgin the following year, served to concentrate Bardi and Djawi people mainly at Harry O'Grady's station, at Father Nicholas Emo's Lombadina Mission and on Sunday Island.

These influences, together with the imposition of white man's laws and religion, inevitably placed great strain on the indigenous culture which had developed during centuries of almost complete isolation, resulting in all manner of disputes.

*"Looking for more trochus shell, we sailed to Cockatoo Island on the other side of the mouth of King Sound. When we left after sunset, the wind began whistling in the rigging, blowing harder and harder through the night and the morning, driving us further and further north across the ocean."*

*"Passing Browse Island, we saw a wreck on the reef, an old ship from the time the first white men came. Saw her name on a board, but I forget it now. Big ship."*

'Dougal'.

O'Grady invested the proceeds from his shelling in sheep fencing, wells and windmills on his pastoral lease. By 1913, when he was employing most of the working-age adults at the northern end of the Dampier Land peninsula, he also tried to market the ebony wood growing there.

Perhaps responding to the recommendation made by Sydney Hadley at the close of that year, the State government made O'Grady a Justice of the Peace and therefore also a Protector of Aborigines in July 1914, shortly after he lost both of the brothers who had worked for him. <sup>1</sup>

Suffering from a wasting disease, perhaps pulmonary tuberculosis, Brett had been taken to Broome hospital, where he died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, aged 46. He was buried in the town cemetery the same day.

Less than two months later, 32 year old Jack skippered a lugger carrying Constable Thomas E. Rae and others north-eastwards up the Kimberley coast to the relatively new Port George IV Mission. Soon after going ashore, he wrote a farewell message to his family on a piece of board before shooting himself. Presbyterian minister Louis Edwards buried him near the mission house. <sup>2</sup>

*"I found her at Sunday Island. She came from Boolgin, but had been taken to the island when young because her stepfather lived there. She went to school there. As a boy, I sailed to Sunday Island with Harry Hunter. That's when I met her again."*

*"'Florrie's' 'bush' [Aboriginal] name was Bangaragur. While still a child, she'd been promised as a future wife to an islander. He died before the marriage took place, so her stepfather promised her to me."*

*"Some Sunday Islanders, including the Djawi man 'Angis' and old man Roub who was noted for his coba-cobas [corroborees] wouldn't accept the new arrangement because they were 'countrymen' of the man she'd been promised to first. So when 'Florrie' reached a marriageable age, they tried to take her by the wrist and lead her away."*

*"Her uncles and other family defended her, took up their spears and karlis, pushed the others back, making it clear there would be serious trouble if they persisted."*

'Dougal'.

In the meantime, 'Dougal' passed through several further stages of traditional initiation until the day arrived when he was painted with red ochre at Gulan, as a sign that he had achieved full Bardi manhood. Among the responsibilities and privileges that his new status conferred was the right to take his promised wife.

*"'Florrie' and I were first 'bush married' on a little island near Sunday Island, then church married by Mr. Hadley, who gave us a silver ring and some money. After a week, we went to Harry O'Grady's place at Gulan on Cygnet Bay where I'd worked for years."*

*"Not long after I married, an Aboriginal man known as 'Snap' took away my mother. Two wives weren't enough for him, he had to have three. At that time, my parents also worked for Harry"*

*O'Grady. They worked at the station while I crewed his schooner. My daddy told me what had happened when I came ashore."*

*"Harry O'Grady wrote a letter to Mr. Watson, the policeman down at Carnot Bay and we set off with it. The first night we had a sleep at Pender Bay, then on to Beagle Bay where I left my daddy while I kept walking. Pausing for dinner at a windmill, I reached Carnot Bay before the second sundown. That was a long walk [about 65 miles/105 km] but I was like that in those days."*

*"Mr. Watson said, 'All right, I'll look around this way'. Next morning I started back with an old uncle following me. To give him a chance, I took it easy."*

*"On the way, we met Mr. Watson and his police boys, 'Wyndham Charlie' and 'Cassimo', a Beagle Bay man, having dinner at another windmill. They were riding to Beagle Bay where a lot of Aboriginal people camped."*

*"Leaving that old uncle at Beagle Bay, which we'd reached before sundown, my daddy and I started for home, stopping at Pender Bay to sleep. After the death of Mr. Bell [in 1917, from snakebite] another man had taken over the station there. We got back to Gulan in the dark because my daddy was slow."*

*"The following week, Mr. Watson found my mother at Broome, where 'Snap's' boss, Captain Nown lived. Mr. Watson brought her as far as Beagle Bay on the mission truck, where he handed her over to my daddy's friends, saying they must watch her until they got her back to Gulan."*

*"So a big mob of aunties and others set off with her, sleeping the first night at Pender Bay, then at Lombadina where they were joined by some of her relatives from Swan Point, then on to Gulan. Slow women, you know."*

*"So we got her back quietly, without a fight. 'Don't you fight her either', I told my daddy, 'or she'll run away again'."*

*"Six months or a year later, that 'flu came [the world-wide epidemic of so-called Spanish influenza, circa 1919]. Men and women sickened and died all around, sometimes several in a day. My own daddy was one of them."*

*"A month passed, then that man 'Snap' came again for my mother. He had a chance to keep her now, so he took her away to Lombadina. This time I did nothing about it because my daddy was dead. She was free to go if she wanted to."*

*'Dougal'.*

Eventually, 'Dougal' became the skipper of one of O'Grady's boats:

*"Ashore by myself on the east side of King Sound, I saw two stone pinnacles, high, high. On one, a hand and forearm had been cut into the rock. Realising I was on sacred ground, I left at once."*

*"Back on the boat, 'Old Lion' told me that a 'god' of the Gulamen people had travelled about before finally turning into those pinnacles. At the time I was there, the Gulamen were just like savages."*

On voyages over there, 'Old Lion' was often taken along because he could speak the language of the feared 'Graveyard' coast people, being related to them. Originally from Long Island in King Sound, he had come to Sunday Island on Hadley's *Elsie* back in 1899. Two years later, he was the sole survivor of three men who swam after turtles in Sunday Straights. Now he worked at Madana Station.

'Dougal' and 'Florrie's' first child was born at Gulan about 1918 or 19. Without consulting anyone, Harry O'Grady named her 'Eva'. Another child followed in due course but failed to survive. Next was Nancy and about 1924 Jack arrived.

*"I was away, working on the boat, when Father Siarra rode over to Gulan from Lombadina Mission. Seeing my girl and boy, as well as two half-caste children, he said, 'Have these children been baptised? Who do they belong to?'"*

*"Back at Lombadina, he collected oil and other things he needed, returned to Gulan and baptised 'Eva' with the name Philomena and Jack as John. Those two half-caste girls belonged to Harry O'Grady himself. Father Siarra baptised them Nancy and Isell."* <sup>3</sup>

'Dougal'.

Harry O'Grady clearly believed in getting full value for money from his Bardi employees, except that he didn't pay them any money. The fact that he was a Justice of the Peace, Protector of Aboriginies and devout Roman Catholic didn't prevent him from helping himself to their wives while the men were working elsewhere on his boats. O'Grady had fathered Nancy with 'Florrie'.

Harry O'Grady's enterprises inevitably suffered during the First World War, and after it too as synthetic materials began to replace shell in some manufactured products. In September 1923, he spent six days working as Assistant Keeper at Cape Leveque lighthouse, earning sixteen shillings and seven pence a day. When the output of the light was greatly increased the following year, he provided Bardi people as labourers who worked, as usual, only for food. <sup>4</sup>

*"[The white men] brought new glasses, many glasses in great cases. I helped. Each day, they wouldn't give us tucker until we finished work."*

'Dougal'.

As the 1920s wore on, O'Grady's plight became worse. Though he'd worked hard to improve the land he leased, it was unsuitable for sheep and only marginal for cattle. Like Hunter and Hadley before him, it seems he had no prior training or experience of agricultural matters, so when the market for shell began to decline, he was in trouble. He began to clutch at straws.

*"He sent me out in the boat with poison bait for dingoes, me, 'Jack' Bandangnur, 'Aruba' and 'Muggee'. He had no tucker to give us, he was broke. At Cunningham Point where we anchored, Captain Malgrove was looking for sandalwood; we got a bag of rice from him."*

*"After sleeping there in the boat, we cut across King Sound, past Long Island, right to the eastern mainland coast in one day. Big boat, built at Harrow Island, Malay-way."*

*"Inside a bay, we went ashore on a little island, hoping to find turtle eggs. Straight away, we found three holes and picked out eggs for supper. That was afternoon. We stayed there overnight, going ashore on the mainland next morning to cut karlis."*

*"On a plain, we found a place with plenty of the right trees. Everyone cut three or four, shaped them, made them light, under a clear sky. A cloud came along until it was over us, then stopped."*

*"Thunder rolled and the grass went up in flames and smoke. We fled with one karli each, leaving the rest behind, being frightened of the Graveyard people of that country. One of us said, 'A man made that fire!'"*

*"I let the others run in front because I didn't think so. We reached the shore, launched our dinghy, rowed back to the boat, tied up and flopped down on the deck exhausted. We'd run a long way out of fear."*

*"'Jack' Bandangnur - he was a 'cheeky' fellow! - wanted to return, to look for the tracks of the culprit. 'Take it easy', I said, 'we've got to think about this'. We sat down for a little while. That's when I said, 'Somebody told me lightning can make bush fires. We heard thunder and lightning always comes with that.'"*

*"Back at the burned place, we walked all around, looking for tracks. Nothing. No-one else had been there."*

*"Now we had to put out the dingo bait. When the tide came in, we shifted the lugger right up the creek, anchored there. Ashore, we saw something, a dinghy. Sunday Island men, we thought."*

*"Looking closer, I saw it was a new dinghy with a steel rope inside. That's from Oobagooma Station on this side of the Sound, I thought, not Sunday Island. Putting my hand above the remains of a camp-fire nearby, I said, 'Last night's.' Two men's tracks were around it."*

*"Much further on, we came to an area of many springs. I knew that place. But when I tasted them, all of them were salt. A very high tide after Christmas had spoiled them. Leaving three or four feeds there - no dingo tracks showed because the ground was stone - we turned back."*

*"Halfway, we met those two fellas on high ground, frightening both parties. They thought we were 'police boys'. We thought they looked bad, couldn't make them out because of their full moustaches. Then Muggee recognised them, he was a Sunday Islander, knew them from there."*

*"'Have you got water and food?' we asked. 'No-no, all the springs are salt.' Having seen the smoke from that bush fire over the horizon, they'd come that way, thinking it had been made by some of their people. The fish they'd cooked on the camp-fire was all they'd had. That's why they looked bad."*

*"'Old Charlie' and 'Karna' were Graveyard men. By that date, we were supposedly all friends. The government had supposedly made us all brothers, so we took them to our boat. 'Jack' went in front, then 'Ruba', then those two in the middle, with me and Muggee behind. 'Old Charlie' said, 'I've lost some tobacco because of a hole in my pocket. If you find any, it's mine.'"*

*"On the way, I saw a stick of tobacco and showed it when we got to their camp. 'No, you keep it', he said. 'Thank you', I replied. After they got their swag down from the top of a tree where they'd hidden it, we took them on board. First we gave them water. 'Karna' didn't eat, left his supper, he'd got too hungry."*

*"He wanted to talk though, telling us about a major cult among Aboriginal people to the south. He sang one of the rituals for us, opened his swag and gave us two sticks of tobacco each. 'Don't give any to women', he warned. 'Women can't even touch [things belonging to the cult].'"*

*"We stayed in the creek overnight. 'Karna' asked where we came from. 'Gulan', I told him, before going off to check the baits. No dingoes."*

*"Back at the lugger, we put both dinghies on top, then took 'Old Charlie' and 'Karna' northwards up the Graveyard coast, right up to the hot-water-place, where we anchored, filling the boat's tank from a good spring of fresh water that's always hot."*

*"They gave us four sticks of tobacco each when we off-loaded their dinghy. They were looking for their relatives and wanting bargai beads, which are made from pearl or trochus shell. 'Karna' had to pay the people at Meda Station [south of Oobagooma] with those beads so he could take the cult to Sunday Island."*

*"We met them again later when we returned to the hot-water-place. They'd found their folks near to Cockatoo Island. I saw the way 'Karna' looked at a pearl shell of mine that was lying on the deck. We call 'em 'goan', they say 'djugalee'. 'You want that?' I asked. 'Yes!' he said, pressing the two halves against his stomach. Before sailing home, we also gave them half a bag of rice." 5*

*"We reached Gulan in one day, right across King Sound. 'Most of the springs were salt,' I told Harry O'Grady, 'so no dingoes.' He'd been hoping to get Government bounty for their skins. Previously, that boss had plenty of work. Now he had none."*

*'Dougal'.*

Years later, after Sunday Island Mission had been disastrously moved to the mainland east of King Sound, then back again, 'Karna' brought the cult to the island. 'Dougal' and 'Stumpy' [Sampi], among other Bardi men, were invited two at a time to witness the full rituals. All agreed with their compatriots resident on the island that the cult should be rejected. It wasn't for their people. In fact, they were terrified of many of its practices.

*"After I'd moved my family to Lombadina [about 1927], Harry O'Grady called me back, me, 'Ruba and Muggee. He sent the three of us to the Graveyard coast again, for sandalwood this time. We got a ton. On the way back we called at Sunday Island where they told us, 'Your boss is cranky.'"*

*"It seems that while we were away, Harry O'Grady had gone to see Mr. Collier, the missionary on Sunday Island at that time, and those two, with a crew of islanders, had sailed the mission lugger up the Kimberley coast to Port George IV Mission. On the way, Harry O'Grady had threatened the crew. He wanted to shoot them."*



*"Alex Simbalan, a white man who'd been at the other mission, came back to Sunday Island with Mr. Collier and Harry O'Grady, who made more trouble with the crew. At the island, Mr. Collier asked Alex Simbalan to take Harry O'Grady home."*

*"So before 'Ruba, Muggee and I left Sunday Island, Mr. Collier warned us, 'You've got to look out at Gulan. Be careful.' He also took our sandalwood. When the tide was right, we set off."*

*"I sailed the boat right into the creek, anchored, put out stern lines, moored it quick. We didn't see them coming until we got out onto the plain. Simbalan aimed a rifle at us. Harry O'Grady had a double-barrelled shotgun and two knives but didn't raise the gun. I went straight to the boss, 'Ruba and Muggee keeping behind me, saying I'd moored the boat, everything done. He went to the boat, I went to the house."*

*"Returning, he told us, 'Go to Lombadina quick, no more Bardi people at Gulan, finished a long time.' We went the same day. All along the track, 'Ruba and Muggee kept looking behind them and all around, so I sent them ahead of me. I wasn't frightened."*

*"Alex Simbalan went back to Port George IV. Harry O'Grady kept his cook 'William' at Gulan but couldn't rest, walking about, this way and that. Two weeks later, he walked near to Lombadina, thought about himself, put his revolver in his mouth and fired."*

*"Lombadina boys found him. Father Benedict sent a donkey cart, brought him in still alive, kept him there until Bishop Raible came up from Broome in a truck to take him to hospital. The doctors down there changed often, each one cleverer than the last. One was Dr. Raynes. They fixed him up, took the lead out of his mouth, gave him work at the hospital when he was better."*

*"He came back to Gulan on the Boolgin lugger, to take his boat to Broome. He gave 'William' and me a small bag of flour, half a bag of sugar and a mattress each."*

*"Next, another white man arrived, a beachcomber called Maira, who took some Lombadina men for beche-de-mer fishing. I didn't go. When he returned, our men left him, he had nothing, no food, no blankets, he didn't even have a blanket for himself. He came to Father Benedict, who said to me, 'You'd better take him to Broome.'"*

*"On the way, he gave me only rice. We anchored half-way to get some sleep. That was the time of the south-easterlies [tropical winter]. I was cold, cold. When I asked him for a blanket he said, 'Tomorrow I'll look for you.'"*

*"At Broome, we anchored right inside the creek. Next morning I went to his house. Captain Horn's house was here, his house here. He said, 'Come inside quick.' He was wearing women's clothes. His wife wasn't there, he said she was at Derby. He was poor, he hadn't got clothes, so he wore his wife's. I felt shame for him. A white man should have clothes."*

*"At the hospital, Harry O'Grady said he felt good, the doctors had made him better, their medicine was good. They'd given him plenty of second-hand clothes too, so he gave me some, including a hat, stockings and boots."*

*"He'd got a house at Broome. That Saturday he said, 'You stay in my house, mind it while I go to work at the hospital. You can have a big room.' I slept on a spring bed!"*

*"I came back to Lombadina on the Boolgin lugger - 'Frank' was captain - with plenty of clothes and food from that boss. Didn't see the other white man again, didn't like him, good for nothing."*

*"That time, Robin Hunter was boss at Boolgin. Those boys didn't make boats then. They cut timber, took it to Streeter's who built luggers at Broome and they carried mail for Cape Leveque lighthouse."*

*'Dougal'.*

Harry O'Grady could not pay the rent on his land in the first half of 1927, resulting in the cancellation of his lease, which had been due for renewal the following year.

Some of the events which led to his permanent departure from Cygnet Bay in 1928 were investigated by the authorities. Inspector Ernest C. Mitchell found that a row had occurred on the Sunday Island Mission boat between Harry O'Grady and Aboriginal males 'Peter', 'Aleck', 'Luke', 'Punch' and 'Pinjarrah', after which O'Grady implied to Mr. Collier, also aboard, that he would dispose of 'Peter', 'who knew so much.'

As a result, it was decided that 'Peter' should not return on the boat, so he was detained by Presbyterian missionary Mr. Beard at Port George IV. Even so, on the voyage back, the two white men armed themselves, frightening 'Aleck', 'Luke' and 'Punch' into swimming ashore at Hidden Island, where they were left marooned.

Eventually they were rescued from another, quite distant island by a pearler named Davis, 'an educated man'. In the meantime, 'Peter' ran away from Port George IV Mission, causing concern for his safety because he was at large in traditionally hostile territory.

Subsequent reports by the Inspector stated that Harry O'Grady was responsible for the trouble, that he had attempted suicide by shooting and that 'Peter' had allegedly been murdered. To help him investigate these matters, Inspector Mitchell engaged Christy Hunter as interpreter, paying him £2. 10. 0. up to October 14<sup>th</sup>. By the 23<sup>rd</sup> of that month however, 'Peter' had returned to Sunday Island.

For Harry O'Grady, nineteen years of work had come to nothing. 6

'Dougal's' next child, 'Martin' had been born about 1926, a year or two before the family moved to Lombadina without Nancy. After instruction that probably lasted about twelve months, 'Dougal' and 'Florrie' were baptised into the Roman Catholic Church on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1928 by the German Pallottine missionary Father Benedikt Pusken [Benedict Puesken] who conferred on them the names Joseph Dugal and Mary Florence Dugal.

Though long used to the high-handed, white-man-habit of conferring names on Aboriginal people, 'Dougal' never accepted that the name 'Joseph' should precede the English name that Harry Hunter had given him some three decades earlier and it was not used at Lombadina by anyone except the missionaries.

Nevertheless it passed, with what had now become a family surname, from the mission Baptismal Register into the civil records of the State. Being unable to read English, which was not his first or usual language and which he had not been formally taught, he probably never knew that this surname had acquired a spelling Harry Hunter would not have used.

Early in 1929, Barbara Magdalen was born and died, whereas Madelaine thrived after being added to the family in November of the same year. More children followed. 7

In the meantime Philomena, as 'Dougal' preferred to call her, was growing up. In accordance with traditional Bardi law, 'Dougal' had promised her to a Sunday Island man when she reached marriageable age. As that time approached however, 'Dougal' and 'Florrie' decided that the prospective husband was not suitable for their daughter, chiefly because of his advanced years.

And whereas in former times girls had little or no say in such matters, the changes wrought in Aboriginal society by the white and Asian incomers had resulted in more freedom of choice by the early 1930s. Philomena made her choice emphatically clear by running away twice with 'Monty', the much-younger brother of the man she had been destined for. Brought back to Lombadina twice by her father, she absconded once more to live with 'Monty' on Sunday Island.

Current Chief Protector of Aborigines A.O. Neville at distant Perth got to hear about the matter and contacted the District Magistrate at Broome who decided that her marriage should be delayed until she was older, then made with one of several interested Lombadina residents rather than 'Monty'.

Knowing nothing of this decision as yet, and being deeply concerned about the impropriety of the situation under both Bardi law and Roman Catholicism, 'Dougal' visited Sunday Island where he asked the missionary to marry the couple. Later, the missionary claimed that 'Dougal' had assured him Eva/Philomena was sixteen years old.

Before long, 'Monty' became ill. At Derby hospital he was found to be suffering from leprosy, a disease introduced into Australia by Asian labour imported by the whites. Fearing the local lepers' compound and worse yet, the leprosarium at faraway Darwin from which no-one returned, 'Monty' promptly decamped with his wife to live on the run at Boolgin, Swan Point and nearby places.

Too ill to maintain that way of life for long, he turned up again at Derby hospital with Philomena, who was now pregnant and possibly also leprous. Having realised there that his life

was ebbing away, 'Monty' became desperate to end his days on his island home, among the people of his own 'country'.

Knowing he would not be allowed to return on the mission lugger, he set out from Derby, with his now-unwilling wife, to walk around the southern end of King Sound, then right up the Dampier Land peninsula to One Arm Point, where they could get a catamaran to Sunday Island.

By the time they reached Mount Clarkson, with the whole of the peninsula still before them, they could scarcely walk at all. Nor could they eat the food offered by Coobia, an Aboriginal man they met there, though they took water.

All the next day they deteriorated and through the night that followed Philomena cried out continuously. Before first light, her foetus was stillborn and with the dawn her own life slipped away. During that afternoon, Coobia dug a hole in which he buried them together. As the sun went down, Monty died too, and was interred beside his wife and child.

'Dougal' never forgave himself for the part he played in the death of his first-born, aged about fourteen. 8

Several years after her loss,

*"While Father Augustine was at Lombadina [in the 1930s], 'Snap' took my mother up the coast to Namugan, where she got sick. There was no white-man-doctor in the district, the nearest was far away at Broome. That's where I was, as captain of the Lombadina Mission boat, getting cargo."*

*"Sailing back home in a whistling wind, we made good time, quickly passing Willie Creek and Barred Creek, but I began to feel badly for my mother. The further north we got, the worse I felt for her. Soon I was crying all the time."*

*"After we passed Carnot Bay, we turned into Beagle Bay, anchoring right inside the creek before sundown. Although that mission had its own boat, with an all-Aboriginal crew like ours - no white man on either boat then - we were carrying some cargo for them. I took a letter to the Father there."*

*"'Laddie' and 'Benedict', Bardi men like me, were living there because neither mission had much tucker at that time. 'How long would it take me to walk to Lombadina?' I asked them. 'One day', they said."*

*"When I heard the second fowl singing out [before dawn], I ran away. Never mind about the boat, I only thought about my mother. At breakfast time I came to a windmill, made a fire, just to warm me, and lay down for a spell. I'd had no supper and no breakfast, not having found anything to eat on the way. Next thing I knew, it was afternoon!"*

*"The sun was half-way down when I got to the windmill at Thomas Well. Then I followed the cart track. That was a dark night! At last I got to Lombadina Mission garden, where I woke the two women who guarded it. When the fruit and vegetables ripened, women camped there to prevent theft."*

*"Those two gave me bread, sweet potato, water melon and tea because of my trouble and as the morning light began to come up, I went to the camps on the sand hills. All the families camped there in those days."*

*"My wife told me, 'You're mother's at Namugan, she sick, you'd better go quick, I'll come with you.' 'No', I said, 'You mind Madelaine and Marie, I'll go on my own.' Jack and Martin were big boys already."*

*"At last I got to her. Stuff was coming out of her nose and mouth, her appendix had burst. I told her, 'Mumma, Mumma, I felt for you far away, I've been coming to you ever since, I left the boat, telling the crew, 'You take it to Lombadina'."*

*"I stayed with her through that night, morning came, afternoon. She died then, but not before I baptised her with the name of Philomena."*

*"Next morning, I ran to Boolgin, where Jackie Hunter was in charge now. 'Quick', I told him, 'Make a cross for her'. We got back to her in the middle day, dug a hole with baler shells and buried her about four o'clock. We both slept close to her that night."*

*"For the next year, I stayed out in the bush. As long as my wife and children were safe at Lombadina, I stayed out there, thinking about my mother, not caring about anything else much. Sometimes I came across other Bardi people who gave me food."*

*"Eventually, I came back. I turned up for work, telling the Father-boss I'd stayed out there because of my mother. He told me a good one!! But he also said, 'You should have come to see me, and for tucker and tobacco. You shouldn't have stayed out there so long'."*

*"That was Father Augustine [Spangenburg]. He helped people, though he was a 'cheeky' fella too who gave hidings to plenty of men at Lombadina. He was one of the young priests and brothers who arrived after the [First World] war. He was our boss, he mustn't fight, that's the law."*

*"Ever since then, when I'm going to [Cape Leveque] lighthouse, I go early because I've got to stop by her grave. Between four o'clock in the afternoon and sundown, I go on. On the way back, I sleep by her overnight."*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

### Djungagur

*"When I was a little boy at Boolgin, Harry Hunter gave dynamite to some of our men. Lighting the fuse, they threw the stick into a deep hole in the bed of the creek where fish were known to lurk. Nothing happened. They waited, and still nothing happened, so they decided the fuse must have gone out. Naida, the father of my childhood friend 'Frank', dived in to recover the stick."*

*"While he was underwater, the dynamite exploded, throwing his body out clear of the surface in a shower of fish. He floated until the others got him out, examined him and found he'd taken the full force of the blast. He was dead."*

*"Someone ran to the Aboriginal camp on the sand hills, returning with a severe-looking, grey-haired man of medium height. To Harry Hunter, 'Mangee' was a crewman on one of his luggers. To us, he was a djungagur of the Nyul-Nyul people, our southern neighbours."*

*"'Mangee' knelt down beside the corpse and began to chant. After a while, he extended his arms, put his hands together like a tube, lowered them to the dead man's mouth and drew the smoke of the explosion out of the body. People saw it stream away behind his hands."*

*"Chanting continuously, 'Mangee' worked carefully all over the corpse, withdrawing a piece of fuse here, powder there, some copper wire elsewhere. Slowly but surely, the tubed hands extracted every remnant of the blast."*

*"Someone said, 'Look, that finger moved!' No-one else noticed any change. Then a man pointed, 'See, see the foot!' but the others saw no movement there. Ignoring the watchers, the 'doctor-man' worked and chanted as the sun moved across the sky."*

*"'Look at the lips!' someone shouted, for the lips were trembling. 'The chest, the chest!' a man cried and the people roared when the chest rose as the mouth gasped for air."*

*"Only then, when Naida had got life, did 'Mangee' fall silent, rise slowly to his feet and turn away."*

*"In those days, few young people died - the 'doctor-men' stopped them. Nowadays, plenty young people die."*

'Dougal'.

Traditional cultures all over the world typically included individuals whose roles were to enforce the law, guard sacred places and objects, supervise ritual, cure the sick, make rain, deal with the spirit world and generally maintain the order and conventions of the society concerned.

Early white pearlers and settlers in north-western Australia commonly referred to them as 'witch-doctors' or 'medicine men', in ignorance of their much wider functions. As the Bardi and other Aboriginal peoples began to pick up English, they adopted the term 'doctor' for such individuals because it had some limited accuracy.

The Bardi name, *djungagur*, means literally, 'power in own power'. Though Aboriginal culture and society was greatly affected by the white-led invasion, the *djungagurs* were still much respected and feared by 'Dougal's' contemporaries.

Having already described Nimeringur's defiance of police bullets in 1885, the life-saving premonition of 'Albert' in 1899, the fate of Sunday Islander 'Frank' early in the new century and the vengeance of 'Old Mad' a few years later, 'Dougal' and other senior Bardi men recalled more of their kind.

The following incidents date from about 1880 to the 1940s, the first few pre-dating 'Dougal's' birth.

*"A pearling lugger was fishing the bays east of Cossack. One of its swimming divers was Nurdaingbur - the whites called him 'Felix' - who came from Beagle Bay. He became ill, died and was buried above the shore of the nearest bay."*

*"The lugger continued working its way along the coast for the next three days, when the crew, who had all taken part in the burial, saw a figure coming towards them along a beach. They recognised him by his walk and they were terrified."*

*"'Anguangbijoy?' [literally, 'What man are you?'] they cried in the Nyul-Nyul language"*

*"'Nurdaingbur-nai', he replied, 'It's me'."*

*"He was exactly the same as he had been before and wore the same clothes. He told them the position of the sun [the time] when they had left after burying him and said he had slept for three nights."*

'George' Warb. 1

'Felix's' survival of both this particular incident and his compulsory career as a swimming diver was fortunate also for Catholic Bishop Matthew Gibney and several Trappist monks who chose the site for Beagle Bay Mission in 1890. The indigenous people of that area, the Nyul-Nyul, had inevitably formed a low opinion of white men and had no reason to think this lot were any different.

After the Bishop returned to Perth, it was 'Felix' who got to know the Trappists and decided otherwise. He may have had a proprietary interest in their enterprise because the first buildings were erected on his birthplace or 'country', using local timber.

Because of his prestige as a *djungagur*, 'Felix's' approval brought his compatriots to the fledgling mission and his flying spear brought kangaroo, emu and other game with which to feed them while they helped the newcomers.

He taught French-speaking Father Alphonse Tachon the local language, permitting not only everyday communication, school-teaching and instruction in Christianity, but also a closer identification of missionaries and people. Like their northerly neighbours, the Bardi, the Nyul-Nyul believed that one who spoke their language was almost one of them.

Father Alphonse quickly learned too that this remarkable man was also the 'master sourcerer' of the district, so it is not surprising that seven years passed before 'Felix' was baptised, nor that he was never persuaded to forsake the more ancient religion and culture of his forebears. Far into his old age, 'Felix' was widely respected by Aboriginal people for his traditional *coba-cobas* [corroborees].

When the Bishop returned in 1900, accompanied by Mrs. Daisy Bates, to help mission staff establish legal right under white man's law to the land they occupied, 'Felix' was their guide. 2

Like other missions, this one did much to protect Aboriginal people from the worst excesses of the pearlers and other incomers, but its various teachings also served to undermine the indigenous way of life. Change was inevitable in the wake of the white invasion, but here, as in many other places, that change eventually proved too much.

By the centenary of Beagle Bay Mission in 1990, the Nyul-Nyul were extinct as a people.

*"[During the 1880s] the whites captured two Bardi men at Point Cunningham, named them 'Sydney' and 'Joe', and forced them to work as swimming divers."*

*"One evening after supper, when the pearling boat was anchored well offshore to deter escape attempts, the whites began drinking in the cabin, as usual. That's when those two got empty meat and fruit tins, put them on their feet and walked across the water to freedom."*

'Dougal'.

When Harry Hunter lived at Lumard, homestead of his Lombadina Station circa 1884-91, two young *djungagurs* went fishing at the time of the neap or lowest tides. From a cliff-top, they saw a great shape far out on the ocean.

Deciding it must be a 'willfish' [whale], they made *galur*, a 'rope of light', which they sent out across the water to loop around the creature's neck and tail. One *djungagur* began to pull the catch in and when it was close, the other made two great waves that lifted it over the rocky shore and landed it on the cliff-top grass.

Afterwards, many people went to see the catch, including Harry Hunter. 'Dougal' saw the bones later and 'George' Warb heard of the incident. In the Bardi language of that time, the word *galur* also meant lightning. <sup>3</sup>

*"Chinereek had three wives when he was old, which was quite common in those days. During the last night of an important ceremony held to initiate his son, whom white men called 'Frying Pan', Chinereek sang continuously."*

*"The other men became angry, 'Dynamite Tommy' furiously reminding his brother that everyone had to sing together and only at the appropriate times. Ignoring them all, Chinereek sang on until sunrise."*

*"One moon later, he lay down on his back with his arms in the air. His wives kept bringing him food but he didn't get up and eventually died. People said the djungagurs had punished him to death."*

*"'Dynamite Tommy' took away one of his wives then, as he had to. [Acting prematurely] 'George' Warb's uncle old Eejai had taken away another as soon as Chinereek lay down. Old Djadbur took the third."*

*"And nobody disrupted a ceremony again for a long time."*

'Dougal'.

Under traditional Bardi law, protection and support of widows and their children automatically devolved upon other men. They were never left destitute.

Old Djadbur's birthplace or 'country' was Koolyimanbur where, later on, white men landed from the sea to build Cape Leveque lighthouse. He was 'a very funny man with a big mouth and loud speech, a proper Bardi man'.

Once, he went fishing further south with one of his wives. On the way back, he made a detour to show her a place in the bush that women were expressly forbidden to visit, or even to know much about. And then they went home.

But they had been seen. Overlooking the sacred site, shaded by the scrub, *djungagurs* Nunganjinuru ['Babbie'] and Djarnca [who had no white-man-name] had watched the transgression in purse-lipped silence.

Next day, Djadbur was chopping wood in camp. Like all his fellows, he knew every kind of wood in the Bardi landscape, the uses each could be put to, how they cut, split and burned. There was nothing about them that was remotely useful to his people that he did not know.

That morning he was chopping wood for a cooking fire using a 'tommyhawk', a white man's steel-headed hatchet, which he had used many times before. Djadbur swung it methodically, smoothly, repeatedly. Every time without fail the blade struck a log perfectly, split it cleanly and buried its edge lightly in the chopping block.

Except for the last time, when the arc of his swing tightened suddenly, the axe head missed both log and chopping block completely, and buried itself in Djadbur's own knee. When the agony began to ease long afterwards, old Djadbur found he was crippled. He walked with a straight leg, in pain, until the day he died.

And no-one went anywhere they shouldn't for a very long time. <sup>4</sup>

*"When I was young, I went to Milligan on Cygnet Bay to work for Harry O'Grady a second time, accompanied by old 'Tommy Tart' and another man."*

*"Next morning, three of our youths with fishing lines and spears crossed to Nilimb Island, just offshore, followed by 'Tommy Tart' who carried a walking stick to get oysters. I didn't go with them because I was then [at the initiatory stage of] Barlell, when I was not allowed to eat seafood. Instead, I took a 'tommyhawk' and walked around the Point, looking for 'sugar-bag' [honey- and pollen-rich wild bees' nests, often high in a tree]."*

*"When 'Tommy Tart' attended ceremonies, he talked roughly, badly, made all kinds of fun. You can't do that. You must have respect, behave properly, use your head. So a djungagur man made him silly, cranky."*

*"Because that was 'Tommy's' own 'country', he knew of a place on Nilimb where there was good drinking water, rainwater which could be reached through a narrow opening in the rocks. Not having a billycan or pannikin, he knelt down and pushed his way in. A round man anyway, big-bellied, he drank so much that he became struck. No matter how he tried, he couldn't get free."*

*"So he sang out for those boys. Being on the reef, it was a while before they heard him. Eventually they found a backside in the rocks, for 'Tommy' had no trousers, only a shirt and loin-cloth."*

*"They asked how he was stuck but he was cranky, so they tugged him this way and that until they could drag him out and take him home. Those boys were 'Jack' Bandangnur, who later became 'Benson's' father, 'Billy', and 'Mowar', who got sore and died from too much humbug."*

*"Afterwards, 'Tommy Tart' went to live on Sunday Island. Mr. Hadley gave him rations. Long time later, he died there."*

'Dougal'.

The eldest of 'Larry's' three wives had died by the time he took the younger pair, who were sisters, to see their mother at Pender Bay. The mother had married 'Paddy', a relative of 'George' Warb. At that time, Pender Bay was not part of Bardi territory; it belonged to the Nyul-Nyul people.

'Larry' died there unexpectedly. As was the custom at that time, his body was placed in a tree, where the viscera rotted out in the tropical heat. When the remains were dry, the *djungagur* Djanboo, who lived at Nilingnyi, to the east, took the body down, wrapped it in the layered bark of the paperbark tree and carried it on his back all the way to Cygnet Bay [18 or 19 miles / 30 km].

Returning to Pender Bay, he led 'Budjun', the elder of the bereaved sisters, to Nilingnyi where, in the fullness of time, she had a son. Djanboo already had many children thereabouts. Nunganjinuru ['Babbie'] took away the younger sister, whose resulting child was given the white-man-name 'Ambrose'.

Djanboo's long, malodorous trek with the still-weighty body may have been motivated by several considerations, one of which was certainly this: In those days, an unexpected death was commonly attributed to the action of a *djungagur* and when someone died outwith their own territory, the culprit was usually deemed to belong thereabouts. An alien *djungagur*, it was said, might even eat a victim's corpse 'meat and bone'.

With no body to mourn, no mortuary rights to continue, grief and anger among 'Larry's' 'countrymen' might have turned to thoughts of vengeance. And who was more likely to be the target of such feelings than the man who benefited most from the death?

So before clever Djanboo led 'Budjun' away to Nilingyi, he carried 'Larry' home to Cygnet Bay, thereby showing respect for the deceased, his relatives and the Bardi law. Consequently, though some suspected Djanboo, no glass-tipped spears were raised against him, no rituals worked to cause his doom. 5

'Knife', the Bardi man who in the 1880s had assisted the first missionary on the Dampier Land peninsula, Father Duncan McNab, and whose brother was shot dead by the police about the same time, was much later employed by Harry O'Grady as workers' cook. He had been born at Gulan on Cygnet Bay a generation or so before 'Dougal' and so was 'countryman-uncle' to the latter.

Long past his formidable prime by the 1920s, but still a big, powerful man, 'Knife' heard that 'Dougal' and others were due to take a dinghy to Jalan island in search of trochus shell, so he said to his 'countryman',

*"I've become no-good-weak. Take me with you so I can get some dead man's meat, to make me stronger."*

Leaving the others on the island beach, 'Knife' led 'Dougal' to a secret place inland, where a desiccated corpse lay shrouded in paperbark. 'Knife' had put it there himself long before.



*"He got out a leg bone on which the flesh had dried like string, pulled some of the meat off, ate it, then wrapped up the bone again."*

*"Well, that's what djungagurs do! I ran back to the dinghy, thinking he might eat me next! When I told the other fellas, we all agreed that it's wrong to eat your own 'countryman'!"*

*"As we took that old man to Tiree [island], he told us that Father Mac-a-Nab hadn't baptised him and that he didn't like missionaries because he'd rather keep his five wives."*

'Dougal'.

After Father Augustine came to Lombadina, he sought to improve the irrigation of the large mission garden so that crops could better survive the annual dry season, when for months at a time scarcely a cloud is to be seen from horizon to horizon. And as Sydney Hadley had discovered earlier on Sunday Island, in some years the rains failed to materialise even in the wet season.

Now however, the mission workforce declined that particular job because one of their elders said he would make rain a few days hence. Common sense, like the consistently high readings of his barometer, told the priest otherwise.

The impasse continued until the day in question, when rain fell heavily for several hours.

*"Once, while walking in the bush, I went the wrong way. I came to a tree with wood chips around its base, which frightened me badly [because sacred objects were made from that species of tree during ceremonies, rendering the area absolutely off-limits at all other times]."*

*"Places like that have the power to take the soul out of a man or woman. A 'doctor-man' might be able to get it back. Sometimes a 'doctor' can tell if someone has been to such a place when he finds them ill."*

*"Getting back to Lombadina feeling heavy and hot, I went straight to a djungagur, my uncle, 'Old Sampi'. He lay me down, got my stomach with both hands and dragged out three or four [of the sacred objects]. As he pulled out each one, I felt pain but also got lighter and cooler."*

*"Though I didn't see them, he told me of them and I heard the noise as they flew away [the same noise they make when used ceremonially]. Everyone heard them go, even the people camped on the sand hills."*

*"'Old Sampi' did that."*

'Dougal'.

Told by his superiors to carry Christianity to the 'wild' people of the Great Sandy Desert, Father Alphonse Bleischwitz asked several Bardi and Nyul-Nyul people to accompany him.

Not long after they had found water, sunk a well and established a camp, the priest learned that the desert people were to hold a ceremony not far away. Because the prevailing policy of the Pallottine missionaries was to suppress Aboriginal religion while replacing it with their own, Father Alphonse rode to the site and fearlessly confiscated the sacred objects being displayed.

A generation earlier, he would have paid with his life for such an act but now, even at that very remote location, people knew what the consequences of spearing a white man would be. As he left however, the star-spangled desert sky darkened, lightning flashed down all over the area, firing the tinder-dry scrub, as thunder rolled and crashed.

Many years later, the priest acknowledged the timing of the rare desert storm, the fact that his horse had reared and bolted, throwing him and his load into the sand, but apparently accorded the incident no more significance than that.

Both the desert people and contingent from Dampier Land interpreted the event very differently however: Local 'doctors' had 'steadied' the behaviour of the priest without seriously harming him. As evidence, they pointed to the fact that Father Alphonse never again repeated his actions of that night, despite the continuation of the rituals.

Some two decades later, Pallottine policy changed. No further attempts were made to suppress Aboriginal religion, which may be the oldest on Earth. 6

*Djungagurs* were able to manifest themselves in the dreams of others, both to punish offences committed during waking life, such as those of Chinereek and Djadbur, and to further their own interests.

During dreaming, 'Dougal's' contemporaries believed, the body remained in place while the spirit detached and went its own way as an observer or participant in the dream. Now the spirit was vulnerable to chastisement, attack, even death at the hands of the *djungagur*, who would usually point in the direction it was to flee before starting a pursuit.

'Dougal' suffered this way following an important initiation ritual he went through in his youth, during which candidates were required to eat a certain substance. If he had refused to do so or vomited afterwards, he would have been removed from the proceedings immediately, chased out of his home camp and been forever barred from becoming a fully initiated Bardi man.

The timeless religion and culture he had been born into would have been permanently closed to him and the shame he had brought on his family might have caused one of them to sicken or die, an outcome which would have been popularly attributed to *djungagur* vengeance.

In the event, 'Dougal' made only a slight sound, but wasn't sick, so the ritual continued normally and ended successfully. That night however, he had a dream so vividly frightening that it remained with him for the rest of his life.

He was pursued by a murderous *djungagur* with eyes of brightest fire, two more of the same in the back of its head, and a tongue which hung to mid-chest, also of the brightest fire. 'Dougal' ran for his life. He ran through the bush and the marshes, across the sand-hills, along the beaches, over the headlands - running, stumbling and leaping for the whole tropical night.

By morning however, the *djungagur* had still not caught him and he awoke exhausted, trembling, but still alive. His shock and horror were so great that he confided in his friend 'Frank', son of Naida, with whom he had grown up at Boolgin. And 'Frank' betrayed him to the men of the camp, including those who had conducted the ceremony.

More than six decades later, 'Dougal' reflected that he must be a better man than they were because he had outlived them all.

*Djungagurs* did not have to wait for dreaming to begin. By sending a shooting star into the sleep of a victim, they could start a dream and cause the spirit to leave the body at once.

During a subsequent pursuit that was intended to cause death, the *djungagur* might carry blade-shaped sacred objects in both hands, but would finally throw a *djalgur* stone into the fleeing spirit's lower back. He might then cut up the corpse with the 'blades' and drink its blood - in waking life, under strictly regulated circumstances, *djungagurs* were said to relish human blood.

Whether or not the last option was chosen, the victim awoke feeling ill, was unable to rise and eventually died, sometimes only two or three days later. Another *djungagur* however, in his role of medical practitioner, was believed to have some chance of saving him.

Sometimes a *djungagur* would send surrogates into the dreams of an intended victim. 'Dougal' had such an experience soon after his marriage to 'Florrie', who was still wanted by several senior Sunday Islanders. He had returned with her to Harry O'Grady's station on Cygnet Bay, where he worked, when one night,

*"I dreamed I was at Boolgin, walking along the creek, repeatedly thrusting my spear into the sand. A dingo came out on the bank close by, a big, long dog. Another followed, then another and another. Soon there were six and plenty more behind."*

*"I fled down the creek to a little bit of salt water with a big mob following, so I put my spear between my legs and flew up on it! That galerin was a good one; it looked after me by flying me to the top of a mangrove tree!"*

*"Down below, the dingoes raced by, so many I couldn't count them. Looking for me, they ran onwards to One Arm Point and right over to Sunday Island but couldn't find me. I stayed where I was, waiting, waiting, until I saw the tail of the last one disappear. Well, all right, I slept then."*

*"A djungagur man made those dogs because he wanted my wife. If they'd caught me, they'd have killed my soul. In the morning, I'd have woken feeling ill, become worse and soon died."*

Djungagur men kill people that way too. [In waking life] we say a big dog might be a djungagur man."

*"When I dreamed of danger, I often found myself at Boolgin, because I grew up there, so that country would always help me."*

'Dougal'.

The obvious Freudian interpretation of this dream differs considerably from 'Dougal's' traditional Bardi explanation.

Unique to *djungagurs*, the deadly *djalgur* stone made a bang like a gun when thrown. When they heard that in waking life, Bardi people of 'Dougal's' generation would say, 'someone has killed themselves.'

*Djungagurs* were said to have three 'skins', or a compartment in their lower abdomens in which they secreted *djalgur* and other tools of their trade such as pointed sticks or bones called *gurundud*, which grew considerably after extraction before being thrown with unerring accuracy.

Glassy *djanalung* were also kept there. Either domed, or elongated with points at both ends formed by four flat planes, they were used to miniaturise and enclose a poisonous snake or other dangerous object so that it could be safely carried within the *djungagur's* body. Later, the snake could be released to its full size, when the sight of it, or its track, would cause people to stampede or bring about some other desired result.

Also exclusive to *djungagurs* and housed internally were small 'spirits' known as *gillan*:

*"Once, a doctor-man sent gillan right down the track to the well at Beagle Bay where the policeman camped [about 50 miles / 80 km]. Making a big noise, they returned to a tree-top. People gathered round, asking them questions. Children too, they could ask."*

*"The doctor was over in the camp. After a while, he came across to the tree, stood there, and the gillan flew down to him. Everyone heard three smacks as they went into his chest."*

'Dougal'.

When 'Annis' was severely beaten by Harry Hunter and others in 1908, it was not the first time he had crossed his boss. Two years earlier, 'Annis' and Jibbogee ['Tommy'] told troublemakers Robert Kirby and Alexander McLachlan that Hunter had killed an Aboriginal man and dumped his body in King Sound.

Or so Kirby claimed when he passed the information to the authorities. During the resulting police investigation, Jibbogee denied having been Kirby's source. 'Annis' wasn't interviewed, having apparently made himself scarce. Many years later,

*"During the season when the south-easterlies blow [tropical winter], people gathered at Gulan for the woolly red fruit of the Jungong trees. At that time of the year, dugongs ['sea cows'] come into Cygnet Bay, so 'Jack' Bandangnur and 'Annis' went out in 'Jack's' dinghy, telling old Bookshull, old 'Monty-one-side-eye', old 'Jacky' and some old women, 'Go up to the Point. We'll land dugongs there for you'."*

*"'Jack' Bandangnur was a good man in those days, young and strong, but he and 'Annis' kept missing with the harpoon. When they came back that night, they still hadn't got one. That's when 'Jack' said to me, 'You come tomorrow'."*

*"After breakfast, he called me and the three of us went out. He put me in the bow with the harpoon. Not long after we left the shore we saw a dugong feeding in the shallows, a big pregnant female."*

*"When we were close, I threw as she surfaced for air, aiming for her heart through her back. She didn't go far, rolling herself round and round in the harpoon's rope. As soon as we landed her at the Point, three of the old men started to cut her up."*

*"Looking for more, we found a big mob in the deeper water further out. But now 'Annis' took the harpoon. That was wrong. In Bardi law, a man kills three or four before another man has a go. He stopped me getting more than one, but got none himself. Missed every time."*

*"White men have a saying, 'A lucky man and a good shot'. We say the same. Well that was me and I could find bush fruit and 'sugar bags' just as quickly."*

*'Dougal'.*

In the early 1930s, when 'Dougal' and his family were living at Lombadina Mission,

*"We were camping in the sandhills. My wife slept in the middle with Madelaine and Marie, who were little then, on either side. Close by, I built a wind-break out of iron and wood on top of the sandhill. That's where I slept."*

*"One evening, I got a bad feeling in my right leg, a sure sign someone was trying to kill me. As soon as I fell asleep, lying on my back, the djungagur man came at once. He didn't wait. Travelling underground, he surfaced between my family and me."*

*"Getting out a gurundud stick which they have for killing, he stuck it as hard as he could into my leg. Well, I jumped up like a football, high as a house, laughing as I came down. Surprised, he went away underground as I woke up."*

*"What made you laugh?" my wife asked."*

*"Nothing. I dreamed something funny'."*

*"When djungagurs appear in a dream, often you can't recognise them because they've taken on a devilish appearance. But that time I saw who it was. Young 'Annis'."*

*'Dougal'.*

*"Same trouble in another month's time. Now 'Annis' had two helpers, 'Louis' and 'Sebastian', old djungagurs with reputations for killing people. And they were after my wife as well as me."*

*"As soon as I saw a shooting star fall in my dream, I got up, looked around and saw those three clearly. They pointed the way for us to run - they had to give us a start. That's called 'Running 'em up'."*

*"Immediately my wife and I went to Cunningham Point, then straight on to Foul Point. There, I left her on the top to wait for me while I ran to a big cement house in the salt water [of King Sound] where I saw a big mob of white bones belonging to dead people. I don't know who told me to go there."*

*"Running back, I saw the djungagurs waiting at Cunningham Point. When they pointed again, my wife and I flew to a beach on Long Island. Those three landed on the high ground above soon afterwards. We were in a guilty place. That's why they had brought us to that side of the Sound [which belonged to the feared 'Graveyard' people]. We were in mortal danger. I thought that was my last day."*

*"We've no hope', I told my wife. 'See those three up there? They're 'running us up'. Can you see our 'country'? She looked and told me, 'No!' It was too far across the Sound. 'Well, we're in danger now', I said."*

*"Then I told her, 'Follow me!' We walked into the salt water. It was on both sides of us and above, yet we walked dry, on the bottom of King Sound, all the way back, coming out of a dry bank at Milligan [in Cygnet Bay, next to Gulan, 'Dougal's' birthplace or 'country']."*

*"On Long Island, those three looked for us. Nobody there! They didn't know where we'd gone."*

*"Well, that's how it was all my life. Something always helped me. We walked a dry road through that salt-water tunnel, coming out here. Everything was O.K. 'Annis' and company missed again."*

*'Dougal'.*

Later still, after Robin Hunter had finally left Boolgin in the hands of its rightful lessee, his younger half-brother Jack, and moved to Broome,

*"Robin's daughter had made boy-friend-girl-friend with Basil Albert. Robin didn't like that at all because Basil ran about all over the place! It made Robin wild to think of Basil with his daughter! So Robin told 'Annis', who was also in Broome then, 'Kill him!'"*

*"Well, Basil and 'Michael' were walking by Streeter's store when 'Michael' said, 'There's 'Annis!'" Basil looked around, saying, 'There's no-one there.' But 'Michael' could see him, with a glass [-pointed] spear aimed to throw at Basil!"*

*"Next day, Basil and 'Michael' were out and about when 'Michael' said, 'There's 'Annis!'" Again, Basil looked around, saying, 'There's no-one there'. But 'Michael' could see him, just as before. It was the same the next day and the next."*

*"Then everyone sat down to play cards. 'Annis' won, and won, and won again! When he'd won all the money, he went for his dinner! Basil and 'Michael' followed him. When he'd finished, he came out, so they called to him, 'Wamba [man], come here, come quick!'"*

*"'Annis' replied, 'No, no, I've just had my dinner.'"*

*"'Come here', they said, 'Come on'. Well, he came a little way."*

*"'Give us money!' they told him, 'Come on, give!'"*

*"'By and by', he answered, 'By and by. I haven't got the money.'"*

*"'Michael' slashed his throat then with a big knife, threw the knife into the foreshore mud and ran straight to the police station where he told them, 'I've killed a man!' They came along in a truck but they couldn't do anything for 'Annis'. He was finished."*

*"They sent 'Michael' to Perth but he didn't hang. After a long, long, time he came back. I saw him at the [St. John of God] Sisters' Jubilee in Broome a few months ago."*

*"Well, that's djungagurs. They go along, but in the end it all comes back to them. They get as good as they've given. That's why 'Annis' got killed. 'Louis' and 'Sebastian' died about the same time. Bad men all three. Plenty djungagurs tried to kill me when I was younger, including the Sampi mob. 'George' Warb too, he tried to kill me in the past, but not now."*

*"A white man saw this straight black line under my thumb nail. He said, 'See that line you've got? That means long life!'"*

*'Dougal'.*

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

### Spirits, Little People and Dangerous Places

*"One time, Harry O'Grady sent us out for hawk's-bill turtles. They're the ones that have tortoise-shell. There was a big mob near Gulan, plenty all the time, some little ones, some as big as green turtles. If you catch hold of them the wrong way, they open their sharp mouths and try to bite you!"*

*"I took old 'Margee' with me in one dinghy; he was a Sunday Islander. 'Annis', his father 'Jacky' and old 'Morndee' were in another boat. 'Jack' Bandangnur and his son 'Benson' had the third dinghy. Each boat had an English harpoon with a big barb, made by the Hunter boys at Boolgin."*

*"Though we'd hunted green turtles many times, that was the first time we'd tried hawk's-bills. It wasn't easy. They were wilder, more wary than the greens. When they heard something, they went straight down. The big ones would blow once when they came up for air, then their heavy bodies took them down fast. We learned to go easy, approach quietly."*

*"On the bottom, a big one was looking for his tucker. As he surfaced, I hurled my harpoon through his head, killing him! Good shot! 'What shall we do with it?' I asked 'Margee' as we lifted it into the boat. 'Let's take it ashore, cut it up,' he said. 'One is enough.'"*

*"We were all camped at Gulan Point [Skeleton Point], my wife, children Philomena and Jack, my grandmother, mother, mother-in-law, old 'Margee' and others. I made the cooking fire next to my wife and children."*

*"The meat was good. Male and female hawk's-bills have the same amount of fat, so they're both sweet to eat. Male green turtles have less fat than the females, which is why they aren't such good eating."*

*"My wife's brother, whom the white men call 'Jacob', worked on a pearling boat further around Cygnet Bay. Seeing the smoke, he brought his own wife, a Sunday Islander, and camped near 'Margee', just the other side of my mother-in-law's camp, because he was entitled to a share of the meat, being uncle to my children. It was a good job he arrived because that night a nari or 'devil-devil' was attracted by the smell of the cooking."*

*"Philomena and Jack were asleep after supper when I got a feeling something was approaching me, something dangerous. He opened his left eye a little, just to show himself, shut it, then opened his right. I had a good spear, plenty of karlis and 'tank' [iron or steel] karlis but I decided to give him a chance so I called my wife, sang out for her quietly."*

*"'Come here', I told her, 'Get the children, grab them tight, don't run'. We walked to 'Jacob's' camp, only to find the nari had got their first! He flew! Big and sand-coloured, he had a boy with him too."*

*"'Jacob' and his wife got up. Both were djungagurs. Using his left hand, which is especially powerful in people of their calling, 'Jacob' pointed a long way off, commanding the 'devil-devil', 'You go!' then he and his wife set off in pursuit."*

*"That was a pitch-dark night but the djungagurs went straight through it. Both brought out pointed sticks, let them grow and flung them - we all heard the impacts and the cries of the nari. 'Jacob' wrestled him too, sent him packing. Maybe they crippled or killed him because we had no more trouble at that time."*

*"Gulan [Skeleton] Point has always attracted naris. It's known for them."*

*"'Jacob' and his wife stayed in the camp after that. Sometimes a child got a fish bone stuck in its throat. Those 'doctors' didn't try to take it out through the mouth, they removed it through the side of the neck, leaving not a mark."*

*"And I got better at hunting hawk's-bills. They're a tricky lot, so I got tricky too. When they came up to float and blow, I approached quietly, not trying to spear them. But when they tipped down to dive, then I threw. The harpoon went in their behinds, came out at their necks."*

*"Their fronts were too hard and I couldn't spear their backs which are double-layered and much harder than green turtles'. That's where the tortoise-shell is. Combs, bangles, rings and other things are made from it. Nice colour, all sorts of colours."*

*"A big one went down too quick, his weight took him away fast. We repositioned the dinghy and waited. He had a hole on the bottom where he stayed put. Long wait. He had to come up for air in the end though. I got him in the neck."*

*"Or I would knock-knock on the dinghy to make them dive to the bottom where they walked about every way because I wouldn't let them come up. When they had to, I was ready. Every day I got two. As long as I had another man with me I could lift them into the dinghy."*

*"Saturday came. I went home to the boss with a big sack full of tortoise-shell and got rations. 'Jack' Bandagnur had been working a little creek on the Milligan side [south side of Skeleton Point]. Those other two boats wanted to beat mine but they only brought in a small sack. They only got five or six hawk's-bills because they're so hard to kill. I got more. I had a good hand, good eye and good luck."*

'Dougal'.

A *nari* once decided to construct a cave at Leering Point, the north-western corner of Sunday Island. As she attacked the rock with her digging-stick, her grunts and blows were heard by a man on his way there to do some fishing. The nearer he got, the louder the bangs. Knowing such noise couldn't be caused by his own people, he returned to camp very frightened.

Next morning, all the adults armed themselves, the men with spears and karlis, the women with *norla* [clubs] and *milgin* [digging-sticks], then set off north-west. By that time the *nari* had dug out a sizeable cave and was still working, bang! bang! bang!

Spreading out, the people surrounded the cave with two circles, men in front, women behind. Engrossed in her work, the *nari* didn't see them until the people shouted at her. Then she ran out, only to find there was no escape. 'Wow! Wow! Wow!' the people roared each time she ran at them. 'Wow! Wow! Wow!'

Rushing back into her cave, the *nari* hurled her digging-stick up through the roof, right up to the sky and followed it, never more to return. The people climbed on top of that rock to see the hole she went through. You can see her cave and funnel at Leering Point today.

Peter Angus and Mudjun/'Moojo'. 1

On another occasion too, the Sunday Islanders had to join forces to defeat a marauding *nari*. After an extensive chase, it was brought to bay on a prominent rock, where it met its end in a hail of stones. Some of those missiles still remain on top of that rock. 2

*Naris* are spirits of the dead. For the first half of 'Dougal's' lifetime, his people were very afraid of the spirits of the newly deceased, because they were thought to be invariably hostile to the living. After a death, families would move their camps close together for two nights while a *djungagur* kept watch over them.

Because every adult death resulted in a *nari* - the word was used for the corpse as well as the spirit - they were potentially common, yet few gave trouble if the proper sequence of traditional mortuary practices was carried out so that the spirit could travel away to *Luman*, the place of the dead beyond the western sea horizon. Sometimes however, they frequented a particular place such as Gulan [Skeleton] Point, or were said to inhabit a particular area indefinitely.

Capable of super-human activities and commonly associated with very loud noise, *naris* nevertheless retained a degree of physical existence and feeling which left them vulnerable to retaliation and control, especially by *djungagurs*.

Their malevolent reputation was sometimes put to good use by mortals, as when children were prevented from wandering into areas which were hazardous for other reasons by being told a *nari* lived there. Children too sometimes enjoyed frightening each other by featuring a *nari* in their games.

When William Dampier and company landed on the Bardi coast in January 1688, they were probably mistaken for *naris* at first, their pale faces and hands being reminiscent of the bleached skin colour assumed by Aboriginal corpses exposed on traditional mortuary tree platforms under the tropical sun.

The visitors' clothing, extraordinary artefacts including noisy firearms and their enormous ship *Cygnets* topped with clouds of sail, must all have seemed other-worldly to people who had none of these things. Having been isolated in Australia from time out of mind, Aboriginal people had no knowledge then of white-skinned human beings or other continents.

Mistaking *karlis* [boomerangs] for wooden swords, presumably because he didn't see them thrown, Dampier later reported in his book *A New Voyage Round the World*,

These people speak somewhat thro' the Throat; but we could not understand one word that they said...At our first coming, before we were acquainted with them, or they with us, a Company of them who liv'd on the Main, came just against our Ship, and standing on a pretty high Bank, threatned us with their Swords and Lances, by shaking them at us; at last the Captain ordered the Drum to be beaten, which was done of a sudden with much vigour, purposely to scare the poor Creatures. They hearing the noise, ran away as fast as they could drive, and when they ran away in haste, they would cry "Gurry, Gurry," speaking deep in the Throat.

'Gurry', when spoken 'deep in the Throat' or 'somewhat thro' the Throat', is similar to the word that Hadley's schoolmaster W.H. Bird heard among Djawi-speakers on nearby Sunday Island between 1902 and '09, which he spelled 'ngyrie' in an article he subsequently co-authored.

In their text, the authors said the word referred to spirits of the dead, adding that islanders are very much afraid of them. In a vocabulary attached to the article, Bird listed the same word as having the various meanings, 'body [dead], devil, evil spirit, ghost, spirit.' <sup>3</sup>

And this was surely the same word that 'Dougal' pronounced as *nari* many years later on the adjacent mainland where the Bardi language was spoken. It certainly had the same meanings.

Very few European vessels are known to have visited that coast between Dampier's time and the arrival of the survey brig *HMS Beagle* in January 1838.

Finding Bardi men troubling while they were ashore seeking fresh water, and not wanting to hurt them in a possible confrontation, the naval men withdrew to their ship, waited until after dark, then launched a spectacularly fiery Congreve rocket over the land.

After several shifts of anchorage, during which they named 'King's Sound', some of the crew went ashore at

A point, fronting a small islet, almost joined to it at low water...We named this Skeleton Point from our finding here the remains of a native, placed in a semi-recumbent position under a wide spreading gum tree, enveloped, or more properly, shrouded, in the bark of the papyrus. All the bones were closely packed together, the larger being placed outside, and the general mass surmounted by the head, resting on its base, the fleshless, eyeless skull [*sic*] 'grinning horribly' over the right side. Some of the natives arrived shortly after we had discovered this curious specimen of their mode of sepulture...they made no offer of remonstrance at the removal of the mortal remains of their dead brother...under the superintendence of Mr. Bynoe the removal was effected, and that skeleton itself, presented by that officer to Captain Grey, was by him bestowed upon the Royal College of Surgeons, in whose museum it is now to be found.



Having visited the Fremantle area earlier that year, the *Beagle's* officers knew that Aboriginal people in the south of the colony thought white people were spirits of their own dead. Consequently, Ship's Surgeon Mr. Bynoe and his colleagues suspected the same might be true in their present locality, and might explain why there had been no opposition to the removal of the bones. 4

Of the *naris* which 'Dougal' said frequented Gulan [Skeleton] Point, one group can be positively identified as crewmen from *HMS Beagle*.

But if white men were understandably mistaken for *naris* during rare and usually brief visits to this area in the early centuries of European contact, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Aboriginal pearl shell divers had realised that the whites were living people. Even so, that implied deceased whites could become *naris* too, especially if they had reason to resent the living.

In April 1884, Cossack police received various information about the missing Isaac Doust and his vessel *Swan*. According to one heresay account, after his Aboriginal crew had killed him, they had hamstrung his corpse or even removed the limbs altogether. If there was any truth at all in these unconfirmed details, such acts were not gratuitous barbarism. They were almost certainly performed to handicap or prevent the *nari* of Isaac Doust from following and wreaking vengeance on those who had ended his life.

'Dougal's' only personal encounter with a *nari*, which occurred at Skeleton Point about 1926, certainly did not involve a white man and boy. Nor was the cave and funnel on Sunday Island dug by a white woman. Almost half a century after his own experience, he and his contemporaries were sure that the majority of *naris* were indeed spirits of the dead.

By that time, *naris* were rarely seen and not feared as much as they had been, but elderly Bardi people would still say the name of a deceased person only in a whisper, and preferred not to do so at all.

When 'Dougal' was young, another well-known spirit was the *nabugan*. Invariably female, always good-looking, with hair which hung right down their backs, *nabugans* associated with men who sometimes retained them indefinitely as unseen lovers, despite having mortal wives. Mostly however, *nabugans* appeared to youths in the years following puberty, which is when 'Dougal' had his only encounter. W.H. Bird recorded the Djawi-dialect word *boogana* as meaning boy.

*"Harry O'Grady set off for Derby with his schooner and cutter during the summer rain-time. At first he was on the cutter which was captained by 'Frank' with 'Monty' and me as crew. I was young then, not yet married."*

*"After we anchored at Cunningham Point, the rain became heavy, so Harry O'Grady transferred to the schooner, which we lost sight of after a big cock-eye [gale/squall] blew up. When we could continue, we sailed to Foul Point where we ran the boat onto the mud because we'd lost our anchor."*

*"That night, the other two slept behind the cabin while I slept forward, long and heavily. I dreamed a nabugan came walking, with a good-sized daughter who kept behind her. Something circled my waist, thick as a branch, trying to pull me into the bush to make me 'marry'. That nabugan had sent galur [the same word is used for lightning] out of her body to get me."*

*"When I sang out for those two men to help me, they grabbed the galur, pulled it off me and kept pulling it back until it returned to the woman. I woke up to find 'Frank' and 'Monty' there. 'A nabugan', I told them. Those two were proper 'doctor-men'."*

*"Afterwards, I could still feel where that rope had gone around me."*

'Dougal'.

Another female spirit was the *goarr*, who lived in the sea. Lighter-coloured and not so attractive as *nabugans*, they wore only a leaf. They would catch male swimmers, follow them ashore and have sex with them unseen by anyone else. A man could have mortal wives and *goarr* indefinitely, telling no-one about the latter. If told to leave however, they would do so. 5

The island of Jalan [Tallon on official maps] between the Dampier Land peninsula and Sunday Island boasted a white ghost found nowhere else. *Lye-ud* occupied a cave near the southern shore.

Following an overnight ceremony which included circumcision, the young initiate slept during the afternoon in the Aboriginal camp at the opposite end of the island. While everyone else was away fishing, *Lye-ud* removed the youth to his cave, placed him in a large wooden cradle, *imbugon*, then went fishing himself.

An all day enterprise for humans, *Lye-ud* was back in minutes with a good catch, giving his prisoner little chance to escape. Next day, *Lye-ud*'s fishing took little longer and was just as successful. Even so, he cut a circle of flesh from the boy's cheek, announcing, 'Arlie' ['my meat or fish'].

The boy fled home on the third day, alerted his people, who arranged themselves defensively, boy and other children in the centre, women around them, and the men including several *djungagurs* on the outside.

Back in his cave, enraged *Lye-ud* smashed the cradle but it reformed. The same thing happened when he broke it again. Singing out, 'Where's that boy?' he stormed along the island to the Aboriginal camp. Met by a flight of spears, he was killed and put on a fire. Afterwards the people noticed he had tiny white bones like a little fish.

Another time, two young girls were caught by *Lye-ud*. Taken as wives to the same cave, they too found their captor could complete a day's fishing so quickly they had no chance to escape.

*Lye-ud* liked to lie in the cave while the girls searched his hair for *morl* [lice] with short sticks. Quickly becoming sick and tired of their new life, the girls sharpened one of the sticks, put it into his ear and clubbed it through his head with a rock. *Lye-ud* leapt up and as he ran away, all the fish and turtles he had ever eaten came out of his behind. 6

*Kurrada-Kurrada* and *Leeraway* apparently did not frequent the Dampier Land peninsula. On Sunday Island however, they were feared by adults and children respectively.

An encounter with the first was fatal within a few days, the victim having had some of his entrails extracted, eaten, and his body resealed, while being told of his imminent death. The second frightened youngsters, to the amusement of their elders, being a man or woman dressed in an elaborate grass disguise. 7

Unlike the last three beings, the 'little people of the bush' lived all over the north of Western Australia in 'Dougal's' younger days. He called them *Gureedid*.

*"Gureedid and his dog went hunting for lizards and foraging. Billal, a full-sized Bardi man and his dog came across them while doing the same. The dogs fought over a lizard."*

*"'Boy', shouted Billal, 'Stop the fight.'"*

*"Gureedid waited quietly."*

*"'Boy!' roared Billal, 'Can't you hear me?'"*

*"'You call me boy?' Gureedid replied in the Nyul-Nyul language, showing himself to be circumcised and therefore a man."*

*"During the fight with sticks which followed, big Billal was cut so many times he died of his injuries. The short fella hadn't a mark on him. Billal's dog went home, barked, led people back to the corpse, around which they saw the tracks of Gureedid."*

*"Billal's wives were informed, his body placed in a tree, then the people called their relatives, gathered paperbark and went looking for the culprit."*

*"Gureedid was hard to find. At last however, the people surrounded his home with the paperbark, which they lit. Some of his vigorous young people escaped through the flames, in which Gureedid and his old folk died."*

*"A large depression at Burungulan marks that site today."*

'Dougal'.

For 'Dougal' and his contemporaries, dreaming was not just an inconsequential subjective experience. Dreams were the province of the *rai*, the figures that are seen in them, the most common of all 'spirits'. *Rai* were rarely malicious. People who had died previously might appear in dreams, but not as *naris*. More often the *rai* were informative or otherwise helpful, as when future children appeared to men not yet married. 8

'Dougal's' brother-in-law, whom the white men called 'Albert', was told about his own spiritual antecedents and other important matters by *rai*. When they also warned him about some of his behaviour as a *djungagur*, he mended his ways at once.

A celebrated habit of the *rai* was their selection of a person to whom they would teach an *Ingud*, a ritual *coba-coba* [corroboree] supplied exclusively by them. Readily remembered by the recipient on waking, the *coba-coba* would then be taught to others so that it could be performed before the whole community.

*Inguds* deemed to have special significance were taken far afield, to be danced before other Aboriginal peoples. Considerable prestige accrued to individuals, usually *djungagurs*, favoured by the *rai* in this way more than once.

'Dougal' had several dreams during his lifetime which were significant in terms of the culture and 'world-view' of his people, but he took good care never to produce an *Ingud*. In the account which follows, and in others, it may be significant that *Garding* - Swan Point Island - is the northerly extremity of Bardi territory. With its adjacent reefs, sandbanks and seascape, it had many associations with the beginning of the traditional Bardi world.

*"I dreamed we were on a lugger anchored near Cape Leveque. Boats always anchored there. Good place."*

*"That night we saw a shooting star. Roub [Audobee's former husband], 'Jack' Bandangnur and others all watched it crossing the sky. Then they couldn't see it any more."*

*"But I could still see it. I stood on Cape Leveque to watch. As that light descended towards Garding, a little man there, short, went along and caught it! I stood quietly, watching closely."*

*"He carried the light in his hands to a woman, a little one like him, his mother, put the star in her mouth and she swallowed it down. There was no danger, not even to me. It was good, it helped me. Those little people aren't Aboriginies. They live there on Garding."*

*"Well, nobody else got dreams like that! I didn't tell a *djungagur* man because he would have got wild from jealousy!"*

'Dougal'.

Before white men brought their boats and dinghies, the Bardi and Djawi had only catamarans, narrow rafts of slender logs, pegged together with wooden dowels and sometimes double-layered. They were quite unsuitable for turtle-hunting.

Instead, after holding rituals on *Garding* at the beginning of tropical summer to bring mating pairs of green turtles back to the coast, small groups of men would carefully assess tides and weather, then wind ground-creeping stems of the *balalagur* plant around their heads and waists and rub its leaves on their bodies to deter sharks before swimming after their quarry.

One or two men would try to grab a turtle's shell from behind while others would close its eyes and stun it with a stone. The animal was then tipped up slightly so it would stay on the surface and steered towards the nearest convenient shore, to which it would swim slowly. Though sometimes successful, it was always a risky business. Fierce tides, whirlpools and sharks weren't the only problems. 9

*"Between Swan Point on the mainland and Garding, there's a 'hole' in the sea bed. When caught by swimmers, turtles try to dive into it. If they succeed, men sometimes don't come up again."*

*"My daddy's uncle, Peerapeeragudjun, didn't come out of there. His brother took over his family [as he was required to do by Bardi law]. One of the daughters eventually married a man from Foul Point, the other a Pender Bay man."*

*"We call that place Yeeerawur [literally, grave-hole or -chasm]. The old folk told me that many people from the beginning of the world live in it. One of them kept Peerapeeragudjun there as company, as a fellow 'countryman', not for trouble. Goarr live there too; they can leave to follow swimmers."*

*"Once, I had a dream about that place. From Swan Point, I saw a pipe sticking up from Yeeerawur, half-way. Being high tide, I was afraid to go into the water because of sharks. I got hold of that pipe - it was iron - and tried to pull it this way and that, without success. Then it lifted me right up, put me on shore and went back into Yeeerawur! It was like a windmill pipe, metal-coloured."*

*"Just to the west of Garding, near the rocks where the S.S. Karrakatta was wrecked, is the sandbank Urrundun. Everybody knew about it before, knew that when you swim after turtles, you mustn't stand up on Urrundun. Big crabs live there, long-legged saltwater crabs, not like the mangrove crabs which live around the mainland coast. We call 'em djaring-guru."*

*"If the tide carries a swimmer to that place, he must stay lying down, move only gently, slowly. Never mind those crabs, never mind where they grab him with their claws. He must stay calm, move slow and wait for the tide to come in and lift him up. If he stands up on Urrundun, he's finished, he's dead, because he'll sink like a stone. Urrundun is quicksand."*

*"When I lived at Boolgin [within sight of Urrundun] I dreamed of that place. I was on the beach, standing there, watching it. I don't know why, my heart told me to."*

*"Dinghies came out of it, green, one, two, three, ran about the sea, then went back into it quick, quick. No-one was in them."*

*"Another time, I dreamt the same thing. I wanted very badly to get inside those dinghies but my heart wouldn't let me. Well, that place must be very powerful. Still dreaming, I looked around for some sign of it. On the end of Boolgin reef, I found an 'A', which told me it was from olden time."*

'Dougal'.

Years later, after he had married,

*"I dreamed a whale flew into the air from Urrundun sandbank, followed me back to my camp where it circled overhead, huge, all black, menacing."*

*"Running away, I jumped into a boat, came to a tiny island with a single tree, the whale following overhead. Against the tree, wood had been prepared for a fire, which I lit and at that moment woke up."*

*"That dream told me a djungagur had put a curse on me, probably to get my wife. We moved camp immediately."*

'Dougal'.

Bad experiences elsewhere also led to the places concerned being treated with great care or avoided altogether, sensible precautions for people who traditionally lacked the means to establish causation accurately in every instance:

*"Swimming after turtles, a man went over Garillel on Lombadina reef, became swollen and eventually died. It's a big red rock, bad, evil-looking, as if it's for punishing people. I could see it's dangerous, just looking at it from a boat. 'Dust' enters the swimmers body, which swells and kills itself."*

*"Another dangerous place is Idalburra at Foul Point. It's shaped like a sting-ray but much bigger. A Madarabur [Goodenough Bay] man went there to make rain. He made rain all right, and a full willy-willy too, which blew the shallows out of King Sound, leaving a line of turtles and dugongs high on the sand beach, all dead!"*

'Dougal'.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

### A Father Calls

*"A big mob of us were standing on the beach at Boolgin, having come from Cape Leveque. I felt sure a 'cock-eye-bob' [gale, squall] was coming across the sea towards us, though I can't say how I knew."*

*"'Lie down quick!' I told the others, 'Lie down here, don't move!'"*

*"Well, that 'bob' roared ashore, growing stronger and stronger, spinning wildly, tearing everything up. 'Say down!' I shouted, 'Stay down!' but the wind was too strong."*

*"It carried a woman right up high. Watching from the ground, I couldn't help her, she was far too high. Then it took up a man, right up and away. Couldn't help him either."*

*"That woman was Robin Xavier's mumma, the man was my 'countryman' from Gulan, 'Rob Roy'. He was a big man but he's up there. That's when I woke up."*

*"Afterwards, my dream came true. White men called it a cyclone, big noise, big power to lift sticks or anything else. Good job my family had a house [at Lombadina, sheltered by the sand hills]. I dreamed it first."*

*"Before, there were 'cock-eye-bobs' on the sea which played around Cape Leveque in summer, bringing cloud and rain. We call 'em uluwar in the Bard language. Winds like that on land we call ungul-ungul. But I'd never experienced anything like the wind that came after my dream! 'No', the old people told me, 'we haven't either.'"*

'Dougal'.

Normally, Indian Ocean cyclones reserved their full fury for the coast further south. The storms that destroyed Father Traub's mission near Lombadina in 1910 and nearly wrecked the Hunters' schooner *Euralia* two years later were both peripheral to cyclones well down the coast.

In the last week of March 1935, the eye of the wind came directly to the Dampier Land peninsula, causing the worst destruction in living memory. Lombadina church, which 'Dougal' had helped to build under the direction of a Pallottine brother, was decapitated, the extensive kitchen garden where he also worked, annihilated. Of the few trees left standing, not one had a leaf.

By this date, an unsurfaced vehicle track had been cut through the *pindan* [bush] from Broome to Beagle Bay Mission. After clearing fallen trees and scrub for some 68 miles [110 km], the town's Catholic parish priest and his helpers abandoned their vehicle to walk the last ten miles or so, only to find a settlement in ruins, wreckage everywhere, its nearly new lugger at the bottom of the sea, like much of the Broome pearling fleet. <sup>1</sup>

White men had earlier commonly used the term 'hurricane' for winds like this. Only recently had 'Dougal' and his compatriots heard the word 'cyclone' being used of the strongest rotating tropical storms of the Indian Ocean. This too supported his belief that he had dream-predicted the first cyclone on his part of the coast.

Repairs at Lombadina were followed by the construction of more new buildings. He assisted with

*"...the timber convent and Father's house. Many men helped to build Lombadina but it was hard work with that brother, so after three or four weeks, they went away."*

'Dougal'.

Despite the current prohibition on Bardi religion at Lombadina Mission, he ensured his sons were initiated covertly, as did others. They listened to the admonishments of successive missionaries who ran the settlement but declined to abandon their own traditions, believing the latter could co-exist with Christianity.

'Dougal's' sincere parallel acceptance of Roman Catholicism resulted in a trip to Beagle Bay Mission, where he and his family were confirmed in that faith by Bishop Raible.

The Bardi also declined to abandon their traditions in favour of the Aboriginal cult which 'Karna' had introduced to them at Sunday Island. In this case, no co-existence was allowed. Though widely practised by Aboriginal people to the south, the Bardi rejected it entirely, deploring many of its practises.

Especially feared was 'pointing the bone', a ritual which was believed to be potentially lethal at any distance. Made the victim of a 'boning' by someone who wanted his wife, 'Dougal' himself needed treatment at Broome hospital for the only time in his life.

Anthropologists Helmut Petri [later Professor at Cologne University] and D.C. Fox noted this independent stance when they visited the Lombadina area in November and December 1938, during which they chiefly consulted 'Dougal'. <sup>2</sup>

Largely unaffected by the Second World War, 'Dougal' and his son Martin worked in Lombadina's kitchen garden, their community's principal source of fruit and vegetables, while others tended the livestock. Seafood remained a valuable supplement. Bardi people who lived at Cape Leveque assisted the small Royal Australian Air Force unit based there and about a dozen Sunday Islanders crewed boats for the RAAF. <sup>3</sup>

At Boolgin, Jack Hunter's substantial family didn't escape so lightly. To prevent pearling luggers falling into Japanese hands during a possible invasion, the government bought some and ordered the majority to be destroyed. Jack burned his in Hunter creek at Boolgin.

Deprived of their means of livelihood, the family had to move to Broome. When they returned after the war, their house, the homestead built by Harry, had vanished. Traced to Sunday Island, it was not returned, so Jack and his family followed it there. <sup>4</sup>

'Dougal' and another contemporary, Malngan, son of the *djungagur* Nunganjinuru ['Babbie'], helped the researches of the priest-anthropologist Father Ernest Worms in the early 1950s. Towards the end of 1960, Catholic Bishop Jobst ended the longstanding Pallottine mission policy of suppressing Aboriginal religion, a decision in which Father Worms played a major part. <sup>5</sup>

The Bardi at Lombadina were free again to practise their own traditional beliefs without hindrance, as their compatriots on Sunday Island had done all along, thanks to the wisdom of Sydney Hadley and the acquiescence of his missionary successors.

Around that time, Father Werner Kriener took charge of Lombadina. When Sunday Island Mission closed, most of the islanders were taken to Derby, but Father Kriener brought a number of pensioners to Lombadina, where homes were built for them. Like many of his predecessors, Kriener was both a dedicated missionary and a colourful character:

*"'Mugagee' got wild with him, 'growl-growl', so Father shot the ground with a little pistol he carried. She shut up quick. He used to shoot the ground to make 'em listen."*

'Dougal'.

During May 1965, the author Mary Durack, who had grown up in the north of Western Australia and knew many Aboriginal people well, visited Lombadina where she consulted 'Dougal', 'George' Warb and 'Benedict' Daylight.

Able to help her unreservedly about local history, they were embarrassed to be asked also about Bardi beliefs, which they were not at liberty to divulge to any woman. To avoid refusals, they provided appropriately modified answers. Some of their information was subsequently used in her best-selling book *The Rock and the Sand* [1969]. <sup>6</sup>

'Dougal's' wife Florrie died a month or so later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> June. Aged about 67, she was buried the same day in Lombadina Mission cemetery by Father Kriener. A subsequent Coronial Inquiry failed to establish the cause of death, which had not been expected.

The marriage had been a happy one, despite Harry O'Grady's use of her, the loss of three babies and the tragedy of Eva Philomena. The single occasion on which she had put a foot wrong was soon corrected.

While 'Dougal' was in Broome, she ran away with a young man. He recovered her after a fight with her seducer, administered 'a hiding', and all was well again. Remembering her always as a good woman, he was sure they would meet again 'up top'. 7

By this time, the influence of the whites and Asians over several generations had brought about commensurate changes in the Bardi view and understanding of the world.

Partly because traditional mortuary rites had been superseded by burials conducted by Christians, *naris* had not been seen for years. Consequently, after a death, families no longer moved their camps close together, nor did a *djungagur* watch over them while they slept. Even so, names of the dead were still mentioned only in a whisper, if at all.

Men had long given up swimming after turtles in favour of hunting them from dinghies, so *goarr* had ceased following them home. *Nabugans* no longer appeared to teenage boys or stayed with them through their adult lives.

*Lye-uds* hadn't given trouble on Jalan island for decades. Nor were the little people of the bush, the *Gureedid*, so widely distributed. In fact, they couldn't be found anywhere.

Likewise, although 'Dougal' ascribed the 'slackness' he felt on some days in his old age to attempts by *djungagurs* to kill him in the past, no such attempt had been made for a long time. Local *djungagurs* no longer revealed themselves to be such, and weren't thought to have the powers they once did.

Only white-man-doctors were believed to be able to save a patient by this time and white-man's-law had superseded many aspects of traditional law, making the *djungagurs'* role of enforcement largely redundant.

One of the few remaining ways of identifying a *djungagur* was the production of coba-cobas by a person who had been taught them in dreams. It was believed that white-men-doctors could identify a former *djungagur* if, during an autopsy, pencil-sized, pointed *gurundud* bones were found within an abdominal cavity.

Nor could boys grow up to be *djungagurs* any longer. Modern food was a hindrance, as was the school at Lombadina, where children were taught to be too clever to listen to their elders. Mixing with girls from an early age and especially sex before fully-initiated manhood were further problems. Use of alcohol and the weakening of the traditional law would leave a potential candidate with nothing.

No such deterioration was believed to have taken place among Aboriginal people to the south however. The cult some of them practised, the same one rejected by the Bardi, was believed to confer on their 'doctors' all the powers of yesteryear and more. 8

'Dougal's' younger son Martin became ill in 1971. Having failed to find anything wrong with him, the nurse at Lombadina referred him to Broome where he was hospitalised for a time before being returned home still unwell.

With other senior Bardi men, 'George' Warb assured him that no-one locally had done anything to harm him. Out of his hearing however, 'George' admitted it was possible that a far-away 'doctor' might have 'pointed' [the bone] at him.

Soon after sunrise on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1972, songs of mourning at Martin's home caused 'George' and Father Alphonse Bleischwitz to hurry there. Martin had woken, drunk his tea and died, aged 46. Police collected his body the same evening for an autopsy at Broome.

Two days later, he was buried at Lombadina amid scenes of distress, leaving a widow and five children. Cause of death, the coroner later decided, was coronary thrombosis due to atheroma. 9

Old 'Dougal' had now outlived nearly all his contemporaries, his wife, most of his children and at least one grandchild. He was saddened too, like old people everywhere, that his younger compatriots were interested only in the present and the future, not in the memories of an old man, even though the latter included some of the history of their own families, their people and their homeland.

So he readily agreed to the request, made nearly a month later by the retired pioneering missionary Father Francis Heugel, to tape-record details of the life of 'Joseph Dugal', the name by which he was known in official mission records. The priest invited Ian Whyte, a visitor from England whom 'Dougal' had been prevented from meeting for over a month by the assertive 'George' Warb, to be present at the recordings.

Beginning on the morning of Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May, the interview was blighted at first by the difficulties Father Francis had with his tape recorder and by his fear of using too much tape. Both problems often caused him to break into 'Dougal's' accounts, thereby disrupting the thread of the old man's memory.

That afternoon, the three reconvened in the mission office, where the tape recorder proved more amenable and the interruptions fewer. During the two-hour conversation, Father Francis supplemented 'Dougal's' information with dates and other details from Lombadina Mission records.

The interview resumed on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May and continued through the next day, when the trio were joined by 'George' Warb, who interrupted the older and more retiring 'Dougal' to impose his own opinions. Father Francis too sometimes broke into the longer descriptions with, 'Excuse me, that's enough!'

Thereafter, 'Dougal' talked to Ian Whyte exclusively almost every day for more than two months, many of his memories becoming contributions to this book. 10

*"When I die, I'll go straight to heaven, straight there. Once I dreamed of heaven. A priest took me up the church tower, right up to the bell. Could have been Father John [Herold]. Looked like him. From there, we went up to heaven."*

*"There were plenty of doors all along, all shut. Holding onto my left arm, he opened one door of heaven to show me. A big mob of cars, big mob, were driving from the right to the left, non-stop. The ground was smooth as concrete, smooth and clean, all clean. I liked it. It was very good."*

*"All the time Father held my arm tightly. He took me up there just to show me, then brought me back again. Could be all those cars were going somewhere good, another part of heaven."*

*"Another time I dreamed everyone from Lombadina, Sunday Island, Cygnet Bay and all around were camped together at Gulan ['Dougal's' birthplace or 'country' on Cygnet Bay]. A noise above attracted our attention to a car driving in the sky, driving down to us."*

*"I ducked as it passed over, put out my arms and flew after it. When it went up, I did too. When it went to the side, I followed. When it went down to the ground, I fell down. Well, could be that was the Holy Ghost."*

*"Once, a Father took me to the top of a hill to show me Hell. We walked up a path of laid-down timber, always on timber. From the top, we looked down at a big mob of people walking about, arms up. Bad noise there. Bad, bad smell."*

*"Not liking it, I turned to run but Father held my left arm tightly, just as before. He wanted me to see the dirt, smell that smell. I was frightened, then I woke up."*

'Dougal'.

Born into a Stone Age culture, only a few years after the first two white men settled in his district, he had lived through many changes by his old age. Even then, cars were rarely seen at Lombadina and much admired by him. He had no knowledge of the problems caused by motor traffic in the far-away big cities, none of which he ever visited.

Similarly, to one whose chair had always been the sand, which he would carefully rake all around him with his fingers after sitting down, a smooth, clean surface like concrete seemed ideal.

When he could no longer be cared for at Lombadina, he was transferred to Numbala Nunga Nursing Home at Derby where, on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1975, a Father came again for 'Old Dougal', and this time did not bring him back.



Recording details for his Death Certificate, Dr. A.M. Mendis estimated his age to have been 85 years, an outstanding age for an Aboriginal man of his generation.

Ten days later, he was buried in the Catholic portion of Lombadina Mission cemetery, in the heartland of his people. <sup>11</sup>

## Chapter Thirty

### Epilogue

'Dougal's' life-long friend, the twice-married Jack Hunter, survived him by less than two years. He died at the One Arm Point settlement on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 1976 and was buried at Boolgin the following day, beside the grave now shared by his father Harry Hunter and his own young son Lawrence. <sup>1</sup>

Around that time, a small boy fell off a wharf at Darwin and dropped 20 ft [6.1m] into the harbour, where crocodiles are sometimes seen.

While younger adults stood and stared, an 80 year old woman, who had not swum for two decades, leapt fully-clothed into the water and dragged her grandson to safety.

But what was that to Nellie D'Antoine, nee Hunter, who more than sixty years before had sailed an engineless wooden schooner with her father, brothers and husband through the edge of the cyclone which became known as the *Koombana* 'blow'? <sup>2</sup>

## References and Notes

### General

'Dougal', other elders of the Bardi people, and Jack Hunter, were generous in giving permission for all the information obtained from them that has been used in this book. At their specific request however, the sacred beliefs of the Bardi people, as they were in 'Dougal's lifetime and earlier, have not been described. By agreement, brief references have been made to the already well-known existence of initiation ceremonies and related practices in the context of Sydney Hadley's and 'Dougal's life stories, but not to the rest of the comprehensive, sacred 'world view' of which they were part.

The names of the Aboriginal women who became the mothers of Harry Hunter's and 'Frenchy' D'Antoine's children have also been omitted, because none were free to refuse those roles, and in deference to their descendants.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most Europeans would not use Aboriginal personal names. Instead, they conferred names of their own choice on Aboriginal people, some of which were Anglicised versions of the Aboriginal name. 'Dougal' was named in this way by Harry Hunter. In this book, all such nicknames or aliases are identified by quotation marks.

'Dougal's' first language was always Bardi, the mother tongue of his people for ages past. He picked up words and phrases in English over the years, usually in various forms of pidgin, from people of many nationalities but he was not formally taught the language and spoke it as pidgin, if at all. Consequently, it has been necessary to 'translate' his reminiscences into a readable form for this book, while carefully preserving his meaning.

Jack Hunter learned everyday spoken English from his father and Bardi from his mother and all the other relatives he knew. He too received no formal European education. After Harry's death, Jack spoke Bardi far more often than English. As a result, it has been necessary to lightly edit his contributions to this book.

Like all indigenous Australian languages, Bardi was traditionally an oral language only. No written form was necessary in traditional life. Where the author has written Bardi words in the text, he has spelled them in the way that he heard 'Dougal' pronounce them. For example, in speaking of the islanders of King Sound and their language or dialect, 'Dougal' said 'Djawi'. W.H. Bird, who worked on Sunday Island in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, heard that name slightly differently and so wrote 'Chowie'. Others have written the same word as 'Djau'i', 'Jawi' or 'Jaawi'. This is inevitable until a standardised spelling becomes established.

Traditionally, the Bardi people did not number the passing years, or count their own years as individuals. Having had no European schooling, 'Dougal' and Jack Hunter could not provide dates for any of the events described in this book, with a single exception. And like elderly people of all ethnic groups, they did not recall their memories chronologically. As a result, the dates given in the text or references have been obtained from other sources, leaving a small minority of events which have defied precise dating.

Each reference number in the text relates to an entry in the References and Notes section, which identifies the sources of most of the information given since the beginning of that chapter, or since the preceding reference number. This avoids littering the text with excessive reference numbers.

After the years of research for this book, the State Records Office of Western Australia introduced a new identification system for the records it holds. Most references in this book relate to the old

system. The author understands that the old references can be easily identified under the new system.

Abbreviations used in the References and Notes section:

SROWA	State Records Office of Western Australia.
W.A.	Western Australia.

## Introductions

- 1 Jack Hunter was told this story in his childhood by old Bardi people, many of whom were his relatives. Jack told the author that his father had killed many men, adding laughingly, 'He didn't play with them!'
- 2 Human remains and stone implements found at Lake Mungo, New South Wales, are currently dated between forty and fifty thousand years old. *New Scientist* 22 February 2003 quoting *Nature* Vol. 421 page 837 and *New Scientist* 27 October 2007 page 39.  
Being in the south-east of Australia, these finds are unlikely to date from the earliest human occupation of the country.  
Mulvaney, D.J. and Kamminga, J., *Prehistory of Australia*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London, 1999, pages 103-112.
- 3 Mulvaney, D.J. and Kamminga, J., op. cit., pages 258-260.  
See also *New Scientist* 7 August 2004 page 16 quoting *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* DOI: 10.1073/pnas.0401814101.
- 4 Mulvaney, D.J. and Kamminga, J., op. cit., pages 261, 407-419.
- 5 Ibid., pages 422-423.  
Battye, J.S., *The History of the North West of Australia*. V.K. Jones & Co., Perth, W.A., 1915. Facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, W.A., 1985, pages 2-6.
- 6 William Dampier wrote of his visits to the coast of New Holland in *A New Voyage Round the World*, James Knapton, London, 1697 and *A Voyage to New Holland: The English Voyage of Discovery to the South Seas in 1699*, James Knapton, London, 1703.
- 7 Battye, J.S., op. cit., pages 7-8, 10, 13-26, 63-4, 113.  
Hasluck, P., *Black Australians*, Melbourne University Press, 1942, pages 18-19, 177.

## Chapter One.

- 1 Harry Hunter to 'Dougal' and Jack Hunter.
- 2 *Lloyd's Register of Ships*, various editions, 1858-88.  
SROWA, Acc 633, Passenger Lists 1876 + 1877, Negative. [On microfilm].
- 3 *West Australian Times* newspaper, 10 August 1877, page 3.
- 4 After making landfall at Fremantle, British ships sometimes sailed north up the Australian west coast on their way to Asian ports. *Daylight* did so in 1869. See *Early Days* [Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society] 1982 pages 55 & 104.  
Before Cossack was officially named as such in 1871, it had been known as Tien Tsin or Port Walcott [the latter also being the name of the bay in which it lay]. Old hands continued to use those names after the official christening.  
*Western Australia: Report by the Government Resident at Roebourne on the Pearl Shell Fisheries of the North-West Coast*, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1880. Papers presented to the Legislative Council, 1880, Paper A16, page 469. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth, W.A.
- 5 Battye, J.S., op. cit., pages 17, 26-7, 32-4, 41, 81-2, 205.  
SROWA, AN5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Books 1-19, for most years from 22 Oct. 1879 to 15 Dec. 1915. [On microfilms].  
De La Rue, Kathy, *Pearl Shell and Pastures*, Cossack Project Committee, 1979, Index.  
Taunton, Henry, *Wanderings in Western Australia and the Malay East*, Edward Arnold, London, 1903, pages 146-55, 213.  
Owen, W. Lambden, *Cossack Gold*. Facsimile edition, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, W.A., 1984, Index.  
Today, Indian Ocean hurricanes are usually referred to formally as cyclones.

6 Jack Hunter.

7 Isdell, James, Travelling Inspector, Aboriginies Department, 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.

Henderson, Graeme and Kandy-Jane, *Unfinished Voyages - Western Australian Shipwrecks 1851-1880*, University of Western Australia Press, 1988, pages 230-1, 253-5.

8 The crew of the schooner *Dawn* achieved this at Roebuck Bay in 1882. Streeter, Edwin W., *Pearls and Pearlring Life*, George Bell & Sons, London, 1886, pages 120, 152.

9 SROWA, PRO Series: CO 18/194, Part 2, multiple entries. See especially letters dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1880 and 6<sup>th</sup> July 1880 from the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries, Pemberton Walcott, to the Colonial Secretary.

Jack Hunter's description of the punishment sometimes inflicted on Aboriginal divers was given to him by survivors of his father's crews

10 *The Statutes of Western Australia: The Pearl Shell Fishery Regulation Act, 1873*. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth, W.A., ref. 346.941.

11 SROWA, PRO Series: CO 18/194, Part 2, multiple entries.

Isdell, James, op. cit.

Cossack police recorded the cutter *Barringarra*, R.Reay, master, with 'H.Hunter' among the crew, leaving the port for the eastward at 11am on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1880. The 1879-80 pearl shelling season having finished, Reay and Hunter were probably returning the 18 'natives' also on board to their home area, as required by law. These may have been among the victims 'blackbirded' for the last season and signed on by Richard Wynne at the Lacepede Islands the previous year. The same vessel was certainly at Beagle Bay, opposite the Lacepedes, in September 1879, at the beginning of that season. SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 1, 31 Oct. 1879, 22 Jun.1980.

12 SROWA, PRO Series CO 18/194, Part 2, pages 321, 426, 483.

M.S. Smith, Superintendent of Police, popularly known as Captain Smith, was the senior police officer in the Colony of Western Australia in July 1880. Later, his official title was changed to Commissioner of Police, which was retained by his successors. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Circular Orders 5.8.1871 - 21.6.1897 and AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 4, 18 & 19 Apr. 1887.

## Chapter Two

1 As told to Jack Hunter by his father, Harry, and by survivors of his father's Aboriginal crews, some of whom were Jack's other relatives. When Harry was attacked similarly by men he had previously 'blackbirded', he fired over their heads, so as not to lose divers.

2 The previous day, pearler Henry Taunton and others, heard near Cossack a series of explosions which they could not account for. A year later, Taunton discovered that he had heard the eruptions of Krakatoa, off the western tip of Java, some 900 miles [1440 km] away. Taunton, Henry, op. cit., pages 142, 245-6.

3 Journal of Constable A. Lemon. SROWA, AN 5/6, Police Department, Acc 129, 83/856 [1545/75], Item C, Correspondence.

4 SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 1, 10 & 11 Dec. 1879, 17-19 Nov., 22 Nov., 30 Nov., 1 Dec., 27 Dec. 1880.

SROWA, AN17/Roebourne, Clerk of Courts - Roebourne, Acc 913, Letterbooks, Minute Books, Item 49, Diary of W. Donovan, sub-collector, 7. 8. 1879 - 6. 7. 1895. Entry for 8 Dec. 1880.

The case against Hadley for the attack on 'Mulligan' took place at Roebourne, there being no magistrate at Cossack at that time. The record of the result does not seem to have survived.

In his reminiscences about Cossack in the 1890s, W.A. Thompson said that 'Mulligan' was the alias or nickname of the 'king' of the local Aboriginal people. Thompson, W.A., *Reminiscences of*, page 5 [typescript]. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth, W.A., ref. 867 A/1.

It seems likely that Hadley committed other offences between December 1880 and August 1883. As he is not mentioned in the Cossack Police Occurrence Book during 1881, he may not have returned to the port that year. The C.P.O.B. covering the period 1 January 1882 to 18 February 1884 has apparently not survived.

5 Journal of Constable Lemon, op. cit. The same ref. also contains the Report of Police Lance Corporal Payne.

Harry Hunter and his associates on the cutter *Cygnat* made two voyages between the Lacepede Islands and Cossack in February 1881, ferrying twenty-eight Aboriginal males to the port at the

height of that pearl shelling season. In April he was charged with enticing Aboriginal woman Chunganbiddy, alias 'Bessie', away from her employer, the long-established 'blackbirder' T.W. Mountain. Chunganbiddy [whose name the police sometimes recorded as Chuganbiddy] was often involved in drink-related incidents in the Cossack area, alcohol being the usual payment for prostitution. On the 24<sup>th</sup> July, Hunter and 6 other Europeans left Cossack for the north-east in *Willie*, this probably being the start of the 'blackbirding' expedition about which Tabernal [Native Assistant 'Charlie'] complained to Police Lance Corporal Payne two years later. SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 1, 17 Feb., 20 Feb., 28 Feb., 21 Apr., 26 Apr., 24 Jul. 1881.

- 6 SROWA, Acc 527, CSO, 1444/77, Inward Correspondence, 1881, Register of Native Agreements, and 1481/66, Inward Correspondence, 1882, Register of Native Agreements. Liangnoora may have been alive two years later. The Cossack Police Occurrence Book entry for Monday 23 November 1885 records that an Aboriginal man whose name was rendered as Liangnora, albeit with the alias of 'Cockie', was landed at Cossack from *S.S. Otway*, which had just arrived from further north. Two days later he was escorted to Roebourne by police under sentence of six weeks' imprisonment. However, aliases or nicknames were often replaced, confused and duplicated by whites.
- 7 SROWA, AN 5/6, Police Department, Acc 129, 83/856 [1545/75], Item D.
- 8 SROWA, Acc 527, CSO, 1409/84, Inward Correspondence.  
*Western Australia: Votes and Proceedings of the Parliament*, 1884, page 555, and Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Season 1883-4. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Perth, W.A.
- 9 Hunt, S.J., *Spinifex and Hessian*. University of Western Australia Press, 1986, pages 13, 24-5, 34-5. Hasluck, Paul, op. cit., pages 145-6, 222 [note 51].  
Biskup, P., *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*. University of Queensland Press, 1973, pages 31-2, 286.
- 10 *Western Australia: [etc.]*, Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Season 1883-4, op. cit.  
Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, *Unfinished Voyages - Western Australian Shipwrecks 1881-1900*. University of Western Australia Press, 1995, pages 57-63.
- 11 SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 8-10 Apr., 12 Apr., 14-15 Apr. 1884.
- 12 *Western Australia: [etc.]* 1884, Minute by the Government Resident, Roebourne. Op. cit.  
When this matter came before current Governor of the Colony, Sir F. Napier Broome, he added to the papers, 'I regret that the suspicions in the case of the native belonging to the "Rover," who is stated to have died in a fit, could not be cleared up, as they are very grave.' [Same ref.]
- 13 SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 17-19 Apr., 21-22 Apr., 24 Apr., 29 Apr., 17 May 1884.
- 14 Hunt, S.J., op. cit., pages 25, 36.  
Information from Dr Cathie Clement, OAM, MPFA.
- 15 SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 27 Apr., 30 Apr., 9-10 May, 17 Jun. 1884, 20 Feb., 24 Feb. 1885.  
Isaac Doust had been a crewman on George Tagg's cutter *Yule* three years earlier. Ibid., Occurrence Book 1, 4 May 1881.  
SROWA, AN 5/6, Police, Acc 129, 856/1883.  
SROWA, WAS 76, Police, Cons 129, 448/1884 and 618/1885.  
Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 58-62.  
As late as 1888 Derby police charged Aboriginal man Courmil ['Bobby'] with the murder of Isaac Doust and sent him to Roebourne. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 3, Occurrence Book, 9 Jul., 17 Jul., 27 Jul., 4 Aug. 1888.  
According to the Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the year 1890, a W. Robinson committed suicide on 24 October of that year. Current I.P.S.F., T.W. Smith held an inquest at Broome.
- 16 Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., page 68.  
The Cossack Police Occurrence Book entries for 8, 11 and 12 November 1884 all give the name of the Chinese crewman on the cutter *Rover* as Sing Yan or Sin Yan, not Yo Sing.

### Chapter Three

- 1 'Dougal' heard this from his father, and no doubt from others too, many years after the event.
- 2 Letter from Father Duncan McNab at Derby to 'My Dear Father' [perhaps Father Matthew Gibney] 27 June 1885. Archives of the Archdiocese of Perth.  
'Knife' was not named by McNab. He was identified by 'Dougal'. Day of the week McNab and 'Knife' departed Swan Bay was given by McNab, but not the date, which was fixed by reference to date given for the deaths of Rickinson and Shenton by *West Australian* newspaper of 8 July 1885. The fact that Father McNab had camped safely at Swan Bay for a month prior to the attack on the crew of the *Pearl* suggests that the attack was motivated by much more than just a shortage of 'tucker'. The invasion of Bardi territory and the atrocious treatment meted out by the pearlers are likely to have been significant factors.
- 3 *West Australian*, as above. This account does not give the name of the *Pearl's* remarkable Chinese cook. Neither does Sgt. Troy's journal.
- 4 Wood, K.M., *A Pioneer Pearler: Reminiscences of John Wood*. The Western Australian Historical Society Journal & Proceedings, Vol. II, Part XI, pages 40-46.  
Journal of Sergeant P. Troy, 4 June 1885 - 5 July 1885. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 6, Occurrence Book [includes Police Journals 1885].
- 5 *Western Australia*: [etc.], Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Season 1884-85. Op. cit.  
Hunter and Hadley were probably not in the district when Rickinson and Shenton were speared, or during the police reprisals. Entries in the Cossack Police Occurrence Books suggest that both were in that area throughout.  
Hadley spelled the name of his vessel *Water Lily*. Cossack police used various different spellings in their records. There was also a passenger vessel at Cossack at that time with a similar name. SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 14 May 1885; Occurrence Book 3, 14-16 Jun., 27 Jul. 1885, 15 May 1886. The latter has a note in Hadley's handwriting attached to police entries for that date.
- 6 Journal of Sergeant P. Troy. Op. cit.
- 7 Sgt. Troy, Derby, to Superintendent of Police, Perth, 18 Jul. 1885. SROWA, AN 5/6, Police Department, Acc 129, 1161/85, and Journal of Sergeant P. Troy, as above.
- 8 Superintendent of Police, Perth, to Sgt. Troy, Derby, 3 Dec. 1885. SROWA, AN 5/6, Police Department, Acc 129, 1158/85.
- 9 Sgt. Troy, Derby, to Superintendent of Police, Perth, 22 Dec. 1885. Ref. as last.

### Chapter Four

- 1 'Dougal', yet unborn, was told this later.  
The Bardi place-name Lumard was later recorded as Lomat on some maps, for example, Australia 1:250,000 SE 51-2 Edition 1, Series R 502.  
People from the island of Timor, north of Australia, were known as Kupangers after the island's main port, Kupang or Koepang.
- 2 Jack Hunter.  
Hunter was a crewman on *Water Lily* during the 1884-5 season. He was in Cossack on the 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> June '85 when he brought a charge of assault and use of threatening language against labourer James Harris who was already on a police charge of drunkenness and who subsequently served 31 days Hard Labour. Hunter was not a crewman the following season. Consequently, it seems he took up residence on the pastoral lease in the second half of 1885. SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 23 Oct., 1 Nov. 1884, 3 Apr. 1885; Occurrence Book 3, 15-16 Jun. 1885; Occurrence Book 4, 9 Sep. 1887.  
Harry Hunter was certainly resident on the lease by late November 1885. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 24 Nov., 27 Nov. & 30 Nov. 1885.  
*Western Australia*: [etc.], Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Season 1884-5. Op. cit.
- 3 Clement, Cathie, *Kimberley District Pastoral Leasing Directory, 1881-1900*. National Heritage, Mt. Lawley, W.A., 1993, entries for leases 5/41 and 71/150 and map 12.

'Dougal' and Jack Hunter. Approximate year of Eugene Hunter's birth established from letter, Henry Hunter, Boolgin Station, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 19 April 1908, SROWA, AN 1/4, Native Affairs Department, Acc 653, 851/1923.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 21 Nov., 24 Nov., 27 Nov., 30 Nov. 1885.

*Western Australia*: [etc.], Report of the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries, for the Season 1885-86. Op. cit.

SROWA, AN/5 Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 5 Feb. 1886 [where there is a note beside the entry, 'This Report should be under the 6<sup>th</sup> not 5<sup>th</sup>'].

SROWA, AN/5 Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 3, 22 May 1886; Occurrence Book 4, 10 Apr., 18 Apr., 10-11 Jun. 1887.

*Western Mail* newspaper, Perth, W.A., 13 March 1886, article entitled 'Our Derby Letter'.

This year, Derby police recorded Cape Leveque or, 'the vicinity of Beagle Bay', as the location of Hunter's station, probably because Bardi place-names Lumard/Lomat and Lombadina did not yet appear on police maps. Cape Leveque and Beagle Bay are north and south of Lumard respectively.

Schooner *Anne* left Derby for Cygnet Bay on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May 1886. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 24 May 1886.

Wood, K.M., op. cit., pages 44-5.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 25-27 Aug., 30 Aug. 1886.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 4, 27 Apr. to 30 May 1887 [numerous entries].

Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 88-95 makes no reference to the entries in the Cossack Police Occurrence Book, but adds some details from other sources.

Coppin, Christopher W. & Baker, H.W., *A North-West Tragedy*, Early Days, Vol. 3 [9], page 39.

Register of Birth 863/87, Annie Elizabeth Hilliard, born 6 April 1887, at sea on board schooner *Annie Taylor*. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Perth, W.A.

Hill, Ernestine, *The Great Australian Loneliness*, ETT Imprint, page 38.

Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., page 41.

Hasluck, Paul, op. cit., pages 31, 217.

Hunt, S. J., op. cit., pages 24, 35, 111-115, 148.

*Western Australia*: [etc.], Reports of the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries, for the Seasons 1885-86 and 1887-88. Op. cit.

Half a crown was a coin, valued at two shillings and six pence, or one-eighth of a British pound [pound sterling].

*Western Australia*: [etc.], Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Report, 1905 ['The Roth Report']. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Q 305.89915 WES.

Thompson, W.A. Op. cit.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 8, 10 Apr. 1893.

## Chapter Five

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 1, Occurrence Book, 12 Mar. 1886; Item 3, Occurrence Book, 30 Sept. 1888.

Clement, Cathie, op. cit., entries for leases 5/41 and 71/150.

It is possible that the transfer of the land lease to Bateman and Broomhall involved a mortgage arrangement but unlikely because Hunter abandoned the Lombadina Station buildings for a new homestead near Pender Bay.

*Western Australia*: [etc.], Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Year 1890. Op. cit.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 5, 15 Oct. 1889 to 29 May 1890 [numerous entries].

Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 135-9, 150-1.

Lawrence named as Harry Hunter's second surviving son by Jack Hunter, 15 June 1972. His year of birth derived from Henry Hunter's letter to Chief Protector of Aboriginies dated 19 April 1908. Ref: as note 4.

*Sunday Times* newspaper, Perth, W.A., 27 November 1927 - 11 December 1927.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 6, 19 Dec., 25 Dec. 1890, 12 Apr., 15-18 Apr., 1 May, 8 May 1891.



*Western Australia*: [etc.], Report by the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the Season 1891.

Op. cit.

*Inquirer* newspaper, Fremantle, W.A., 20 May 1891.

Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 44-5, 82-3, 239.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 6, 31 May, 5-6 Jul., 25 Jul. 1891.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 6, 6-18 Aug. 1891.

*Nor'-West Times* newspaper, Roebourne, W.A., 15 August 1891.

Hadley's homestead near Swan Point was situated at Maralginun [traditional Bardi place-name].

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 6, 13 Sept., 24 Sept. 1891; Occurrence Book 7, 24-25 Sept., 29 Sept. 1891.

The name Russel [*sic*] Hadley or R. Hadley, in association with Sydney Hadley, is recorded many times in the Cossack Police Station Occurrence Books from 23 Oct. 1884 to 23 May 1890. A note written in Sydney Hadley's own handwriting mentioning A. Hadley is attached to the C.P.S.O.B. entry for 15 May 1886; this probably refers to the same person. There is no mention of A., R. or Russell Hadley, in the C.P.S.O.B. in 1891 or '92.

Streeter, Edwin W., op. cit., pages 162-3.

Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 10-11, 106.

Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 41, 46-8, 50, 110-12, 209, 211.

Hunt, S.J., op. cit., pages 32-3, 37, 96-120, 126, 128, 139-40, 148, 150-1.

Owen, W. Lambden, op. cit., pages VII, 67-8.

Clement, Cathie, op. cit.

'Dougal', from information given by his elders.

Report from Bishop Gibney, Perth, to The Secretary, Aboriginies Protection Board, Perth, published in *Western Mail* newspaper, 22 October 1892.

Durack, Mary, *The Rock and the Sand*, Constable, 1969, pages 131, 303, quoting letter from Brother Xavier Daly, Lombadina Station, to Bishop Gibney, Perth, 2 February 1892.

SROWA, CSO, Cons 752, 398/1893 and AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 7, 9 Dec., 12 Dec. 1892; Occurrence Book 8, 24 Mar., 26 Mar., 5 Apr., 10-11 Apr. 1893.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 11, Occurrence Book, 7-8 Nov., 10 Nov., 17 Nov., 27 Dec. 1893, 3 Jan., 10-11 Jan. 1894. AN 17/Derby, Derby Court of Petty Sessions, Acc 738, Item 32, Minute Book, 27 Dec. 1893.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 8, 10-24 Jan., 29-30 Jan., 15 Mar., 25-26 Mar. 1894; Occurrence Book 9, 31 Oct. 1894.

Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 222-5.

Streeter, Edwin W., op. cit., page 168.

Erickson, Rica [compiler], *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, pre 1829-1888*. Vol. II, pages 987-8.

The schooner *Anne* was successfully raised and continued to sail the west coast of Australia. See Cossack Police Station Occurrence Books 25 Mar., 17 Oct. 1894, also 7 & 12 Oct., 26 Nov. and 2 Dec. 1895. The fact that the vessel had been used as a lighter at Derby during the Kimberley gold rush of 1886 suggests that she had an unusually shallow draught, which may have been a contributory factor in her capsizing of '94. Pearlmen commonly used vessels not originally built for that purpose. There is also a suggestion that she may have been 'over-masted' - see Cairns & Henderson 1995 pages 223-4.

Thompson, W.A. Op. cit.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 7, 29 Oct.-21 Dec. 1891 [numerous entries]; Occurrence Book 10, 13 Aug. 1896, 9 Mar. 1897, 30 Sep. 1897.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 10, Occurrence Book, 29-30 May, 5 Jun., 17 Oct. 1892, 6 Feb. 1893; Item 11, Occurrence Book, 7 Apr., 30 Jul., 23 Sep., 11 Oct. 1893, 14 Feb., 16 Feb., 26 Feb., 19 Apr., 25 Apr., 18 May 1894; Item 12, Occurrence Book, 20 Apr., 22-23 Apr., 30 May, 3 Jun., 3-5 Jul., 9 Jul., 14 Jul., 12-13 Aug., 15-16 Aug., 31 Aug., 2 Sep., 9-10 Sep., 17 Sep., 19-20 Sep., 22 Sep., 25 Sep., 5 Nov. 1895; Item 34, Telegrams Book, 10 Nov. 1894. AN 17/Derby, Acc 738, Item 32, Derby Court of Petty Sessions, Minute Book, 22 Sep., 13 Oct. 1893, 26 Feb., 22 Sep. 1894.

Sidney Hedley was a married man with children who was the auctioneer at Derby in the first half of the 1890s.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 8, 27 Feb., 1 Mar.,

22 Mar., 24 Mar., 2 Apr., 4 Apr. 1893. This Occurrence Book also records the arrival at Cossack of the cutter *Governor Weld* on 24 Dec. 1893 but does not name the crew. According to the Register of British Ships, Fremantle, W.A., the cutter *Governor Weld* [Official Number 61097] was wrecked on the Casuarina Reef near Lagrange Bay, on the night of the 7 Feb. 1894, master and crew not stated. Cairns, Lynne & Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 225-6.

Constable G.H. Phillips, Journals, 25-29 Jan. 1896 and 29 May-11 Jun. 1896. Also Constable Brice, Journal, 5-10 Jun. 1896. SROWA, AN5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 610/96, 1611/96, 1954/96, 1955/96.

'Dougal' received this information from his elders.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 1, 12 Nov. 1880, 14 Feb. 1881.

Clement, Cathie, op. cit., leases 5/40, 5/46, etc.

Certificate of Marriage, Henry Francis Hilliard and Martha Batley, 4 November 1886. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Perth, W.A.

SROWA, AN5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 11, Occurrence Book, 15 Apr., 7-8 Nov., 17 Nov. 1893; Item 22, Letterbook, 2.2.94, page 137.

Cairns and Henderson, op. cit., pages 42, 115, 228.

## Chapter Six

'Dougal', from his parents, from Bardi tradition, and from his own memory.

Bardi people of 'Dougal's' generation adopted the English phrase 'pick up' to signify birth, rather than the kind of traditional beliefs held elsewhere in north-west Australia.

Death Certificate, Dugal, Joseph, Registration No. 24/75, West Kimberley Registry District of Western Australia.

'Dougal's' belief that he was born within a year of Jack Hunter came from Christy [Christopher], another local son of Harry Hunter. Christy said that their three Bardi mothers had all given birth within a year. In his old age however, he looked older than Jack, though that might have been partly due to debility. Near the end of his life a medical estimation indicated a birth around 1890.

Police Constable G.H. Phillips, Cygnet Bay, correspondence with Corporal Pearson, Derby and report from Pearson to Commissioner of Police, Perth, 6 Jan.-1 Feb. 1897. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 537/1897.

'Dougal', Jack Hunter and other Bardi elders. Harry Hunter's children Jessie and Jack were born to the same Bardi mother.

Letters, H. Hunter, Boolgin Station, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 19 April 1908, and to the Hon. Frank Wilson, Perth, 23 April and 23 November 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 35/1909 and AN 1/4, Native Affairs Department, Acc 653, 851/1923.

Letter, Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 7 October 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 2, 17 May 1884.

SROWA, Clerk of Courts - Broome, WAS 558, Evidence Books [etc.], Acc 1352/15 page 27.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 13, Occurrence Book, 27-28 Dec. 1896, 4 Jan., 25 Jan., 3-4 Feb., 12 Feb., 21-22 Feb., 2 Mar. 1897.

Police Constable G.H. Phillips, Journal, 9 January 1897 - 6 March 1897. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 1624/1897.

Bligh, A.C.V., *The Golden Quest*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, W.A., 1984, page 206.

According to 'Dougal', Hunter's cutter *Florence* eventually foundered at the Lacepede Islands, from where the crew were rescued without loss of life.

Petition letter from Frank Biddles to Sub-Inspector Ord, Derby, 15 March 1897. SROWA, AN 5/1, Acc 1623/1897 [with 4260/1899].

Bardi people called Frank Biddles 'Old Biddle' to distinguish him from his younger brother Hugh, who was known to them as 'Young Biddle'.

Police Constable G.H. Phillips, Journal, 7 March 1897 - 18 May 1897. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 1624/1897, 2085/1897, 2086/1897.

It is not clear whether the homestead at or near Swan Point visited by Harry Hunter and Constable Phillips on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1897 belonged to Hunter, or was the homestead built by Sydney Hadley at [Bardi place-name] Maralginun.

Police Constables Brice and Percy, Journal, 5 May 1897 - 22 May 1897. SROWA, AN 5/1, Acc 430, 2633/1897.

Police Constable No. 330 John zum Felde, Journal, 9 - 15 September 1898. SROWA, AN 5/1 Acc 430, 4772/1898.

When Bronga was brought to trial at Derby on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 1898, charged with Wilful Murder, he was discharged. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 14, Occurrence Book.

## Chapter Seven

'Dougal' usually equated the language or dialect of Aboriginal individuals with the people ['tribe'] and territory to which they belonged. His reference to a Japanese person as a 'Japanee', is identical with references in the Cossack Police Occurrence Books of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Thompson, W.A., *Reminiscences of*, op. cit., page 2.

'Dougal' and Thompson, W.A., op. cit.

The information that Hadley was allocated three Aboriginal wives as a result of his initiation was given in a thesis entitled *Culture Contact on Sunday Island* submitted by Edward Gordon Gibson to the University of Sydney about 1950. In a 1951 adaption of his thesis, page 40, Gibson stated that unnamed Aboriginal people told him as much.

Hasluck, Paul, op. cit., page 114.

Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 48-9.

Battye, J.S., op. cit., page 76.

Green, Neville, *The Oombulgurri Story*, Focus Education Services, Cottesloe, W.A., 1998, pages 11-12.

Hasluck, Paul, op. cit., page 188.

SROWA, AN 5/Wyndham, Wyndham Police Station, Acc 741, Items 3 & 4, Occurrence Books, 24 Jun. 1897 - 27 Jan. 1899 [numerous entries].

Wyndham Police records do not mention 'Hedley' until 4 August 1898, when he sailed from the mission to the town with 'native assistant Sambo' in the cutter *Dove*. They also show that he was present when the mission was abandoned in January 1899. In 1904, Hadley told the 'Roth Royal Commission' that he had spent six months at Forrester River Mission. See *Western Australia*: [etc.], Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives: Report. Op. cit. Clearly, he was not one of the original missionaries there.

A vessel named *Dove* had been used as a pearling vessel during the 1892 apparatus diving season. See *Western Australia*: [etc.], Report of the Inspector of Pearl Shell Fisheries for the year 1892. Being about the same size as the cutter which arrived six years later at Forrester River, it was almost certainly the same vessel.

*Kalgoorlie Miner*, [newspaper], Kalgoorlie, W.A., 16 February 1899.

'Dougal'.

Letter, Sydney Hadley, Derby, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 3 May 1902. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 8/1902.

'Dougal'.

SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 11, 23 May, 29 May 1899.

Letters, Sydney Hadley to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 29 Jun. 1902. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 8/1902.

Letter, Sydney Hadley to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 3 May 1902, op. cit.

Clement, Cathie, *Kimberley District Pastoral Leasing Directory, 1881-1900*. National Heritage, Mt. Lawley, W.A., 1993, entries for leases 71/400 and 71/401 and map 12.

*Western Australia*: [etc.], Aboriginies Department: Report for Financial Year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 1899, page 4. Op. cit.

Letter, Sydney Hadley to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 6 May 1901. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 10/1901.

Letter, Thomas Omerod to Mr. Prinsep, 9 Aug. 1901. Ref. as last.

Hadley's founding date and non-denominational description of Sunday Island Mission were reported in Gibson, E.G., 1951, page 41. Op. cit.

Derby police recorded that S. Hadley in cutter *Elsie* arrived from Broome at 6 am on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1899 and that the vessel left for Sunday Island on 1<sup>st</sup> July at 8 am. Unless Hadley was assisted by

exceptionally favourable winds and tides, he was unlikely to have reached the island on that day, suggesting that his founding date for the mission, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1899, must have been selected before or afterwards. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book.

By taking some Bardi people from the peninsula to live indefinitely on Sunday Island, Hadley promoted a partial invasion of traditional Djawi territory, in effect. By also gathering Djawi people from outlying islands, he protected them from attacks by Aboriginal people from further east and exploitation by the pearling crews but also worsened the confrontation with the Bardi immigrants. He certainly worked hard and long to achieve peaceful co-existence between the Bardi and Djawi on Sunday Island but this too created problems because the children of inter-marriages were traditionally raised as Bardi, so the Djawi inevitably faced eventual extinction as a distinct people.

13 From a report by Resident Magistrate and Medical Officer at Derby, Dr. W. R. Cortis, undated, probably 1906-7. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.

14 Entry of Birth, Montague Sydney Hadley, and Entry of Marriage, Joseph Leonard Hadley and Elizabeth Lukey Bretherton, General Register Office, England.

Records at County Record Office, Gloucester, England, including Gloucester Methodist Circuit Baptism Register, D2969 1/1/1.

Campbell, William D., and Bird, W.H., *An Account of the Aborigines of Sunday Island, King Sound, Western Australia*. Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society, Western Australia, Vol. 1, 1914-15, page 62.

Jackson, David Clements, AM, DSC, *One Ship, One Company. The Story of HMS Worcester, 1650-1950*. 1996, page 49.

Records of the Marine Society, London.

Letters, Sydney Hadley to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 3 May 1902 and 4 Jan. 1904. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 8/1902 and 14/1904.

London Metropolitan Archives, A/SGS/018.

15 Memo written by Thomas Omerod at the Aboriginies Department, Perth, 23 Oct. 1901. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 10/1901.

16 Hasluck, Paul, op. cit., page 166-7.

17 Letter, H. Hunter, Boolgin Homestead, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 14 Sep. 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.

18 Jack Hunter.

## Chapter Eight

1 Journal of T.A. MacKellar, Police Constable No. 448, 3 June to 23 June 1899. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 2849/1899.

Police Constable Percy was at Harry Hunter's station 12-15 April 1899, where he was given advice and a letter from Frank Biddles. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 26, Report Book and Journal, Journal of P.C. Percy No. 235.

2 'Cockroach' boats were named after the despised insects which overran all pearling craft. The innumerable nooks and crannies within wooden vessels, the tissue remaining on the shells and other scraps, together with the tropical climate provided an ideal habitat for them. With reference to the fact that 'Dougal' remembered Arthur Hay's surname as Hart, it should be noted that on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1899, Derby police recorded S.S. *Karrakatta* leaving for Fremantle via intermediate ports with a passenger whose name appears to have been A. Hart. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book.

3 Letter, H. Hunter, Schooner *Willie*, Swan Point, to Inspector of Police, Derby, 20 October 1899. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 4255/1899.

The Master of the schooner *Kate* at this time was Henry Hilliard. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book, 2 Nov., 4 Nov. 1899.

4 Telegram and letter, M.H. Brophy, Sub-Inspector of Police, Derby, to Commissioner of Police, Perth, 23 and 26 October 1899. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 4255/1899.

5 SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book, 20-22 Nov. 1899.

*West Australian* newspaper, 19 December 1899.

6 Correspondence between those identified, 28 September to 30 November 1899. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 4260/1899.

Lease of Land, Application no. 231/152, Plan 10A, made by Frank Biddles, Pearler, Broome, 14 November 1899, Approved 23 April 1900. SROWA, WAS 2280, DOLA, Cons. 5000, Item 1209, Application for Special Lease, Section 151-2, 121-300.

It was apparently customary for Special Land Lease applicants to go ahead with their plans at or before the date of their application, if there was no other applicant or existing lessee.

*Inquirer* newspaper 3 December 1890, page 3.

Journal of John zum Felde, Police Constable no. 330, 31 October - 19 November 1899. SROWA, AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 851/1900 and AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 26, Report Book and Journal, [same officer and dates].

*West Australian* newspaper 13 June and 18 June 1900.

Ferguson, Richard, *Pearls of the Past*, self-published, Applecross, W.A., 2001, page 68.

Purdue, Brian, *Legal Executions in Western Australia*, Foundation Press, Victoria Park, W.A., 1993, pages 42-3.

Although Purdue names Burrows as the hangman in this case, a Fremantle-based official executioner ['Common Hangman'] named Burrell was at work late the previous year, according to the contemporary records of Derby Police. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book, 15 Oct., 21-22 Oct. 1899.

## Chapter Nine

Letters between Sydney Hadley, Thomas Omerod and the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, together with some bureaucratic communications, 11 December 1899 - 17 January 1901. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 5/1900 and 10/1901.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book, 18 Feb., 20 Feb. 1900: Item 27, Report Book and Journal, Journal of P.C. John Zum Felde No. 330, 22 Feb. 1900.

Thompson, W.A. Op. cit.

Letters, Sydney Hadley at Cossack, 17 January 1901 and at Sunday Island, 6 May 1901, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth. Ref: as note 1, 10/1901.

Bligh, A.C.V., op. cit., pages 151-3.

Hunt, S. J., op. cit., pages 121, 126-8.

Letter, Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 6 May 1901. Ref: as note 1, item 10/1901.

## Chapter Ten

'Dougal' and Jack Hunter.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 15, Occurrence Book, 17-19 Feb. 1900; Item 27, Report Book and Journal, Journal of P.C. John Zum Felde, 28 Feb.-4 Mar. 1900.

Sledge, Scott, *Wreck Inspection North Coast [WINC] Expedition, 1978*. Report of Maritime Archaeology Department, Western Australian Museum, page 103, quoting HMC Register 170/1.

Cairns, Lynne and Henderson, Graeme, op. cit., pages 88, 325.

Though 'Dougal' pronounced the name of this vessel as *Media* some seventy-two years later, it is possible that her name was *Medea* or something similar. Her remains now lie in Hunter Creek [Bardi name, *Ondon*] at Boolgin, where Harry Hunter abandoned her at the end of her working life. She was apparently not the ex-Royal Naval survey schooner, ex-Pearl Shell Fisheries Revenue schooner *Meda*.

'Dougal' and Jack Hunter.

Harry Hunter was resident at 'Cape Leveque Station' by February 1900. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 27, Report Book and Journal, Journal of P.C. John Zum Felde, 12 Feb., 28 Feb. 1900.

SROWA, WAS 76, formerly AN 5/1, Police Department, Acc 430, 1842/1902.

Jack Hunter.

SROWA, AN 5/Kimberley, Police Department, Acc 241/7, West Kimberley Report Book and Journals, Journal of P.C. John Zum Felde from 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. to 14 Apr. 1901.

'Minutes of a Preliminary Court of Inquiry, Held at Port Broome on Thursday, The 11<sup>th</sup> Day Of April, 1901, Before Michael Scales Warton, Esqre., Sub-Collector of Customs, And George Alfred Bourne, Esqre., A Justice Of The Peace, [etc.]' SROWA, WAA 11, Harbour and Light Department, WAS 2357, AN 16/5, Acc 1066, 81/16, Wrecks and Casualties off West Australian Coast, pages 107-119.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 16, Occurrence Book, 21 Mar., 1 Apr., 8 Apr. 1901.

Battye, J.S., op. cit. pages 139, 148.

'Dougal'.

Journal of P.C. John Zum Felde [ref. as note 7].

Sledge, Scott, op. cit., page 148.

*Inquirer* newspaper, 5 April 1901, and other newspapers published at Perth, April 1901.

SROWA, AN 5/Kimberley, Police Department, Acc 241/7, West Kimberley Report Book and Journals, Journal of H.R. Ellice, WPC no. 127, 4 Apr.-11 Apr. 1901.

Battye, J.S., op. cit., page 148.

Sledge, Scott, op. cit., quoting HMC Register 5/3 and HMC Wrecks and Casualties, pages 19-20.

*Inquirer* newspaper, op. cit., 5 April 1901.

'Minutes of a Preliminary Court Of Inquiry [etc.]', op. cit., page 11, 'Findings Of The Court'.

'Dougal'.

Sledge, Scott, op. cit., Appendix A, page 4, comment of Robin Hunter to Scott Sledge, Broome, 11 July 1978.

It is difficult to see why Captain Talboys left one of the *Karrakatta's* whaleboats or lifeboats at Karrakatta Bay unless it was to compensate Harry Hunter for his salvage work.

*Kalgoorlie Miner* newspaper, 17 May 1916, quoting Captain Frank Biddles.

## Chapter Eleven

'Dougal'. See also Campbell, William D., and Bird, W.H., op. cit., pages 55-6.

It has not been possible to date this particular voyage of the schooner *Media* precisely. According to 'Dougal', Harry Hunter bought this vessel after the wreck of his smaller schooner *Willie* [7 February 1900] and the mixed mainland Bardi and Sunday Islander crew included 'Ross'. In a letter to Sir [probably Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep] dated 9 December 1901, Sydney Hadley reported the drowning of a two young Sunday Island men about three weeks earlier. He named one of them as 'Ross'. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 10/1901.

Assuming these details are correct and that the same 'Ross' was involved, the voyage of the *Media* described in this chapter must have taken place in the years 1900 or 1901, probably in the months of May to October. On the other hand, some details of the death of an Aboriginal man at Cygnet Bay in August 1904 investigated by the police are reminiscent of 'Dougal's' story.

Biskup, P., op. cit., pages 22, 285, quoting Police Department file 3548/1897.

Purdue, Brian, op. cit., page 71.

W.H. Bird mentioned the reputation of these people in a letter dated 29 June 1903 to the Chief Protector. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 28/1903.

See also Campbell & Bird, op. cit.

## Chapter Twelve

'Dougal'.

Correspondence, telegrams and governmental memos in 1901 and 1902 between those named, plus letter from Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 2 January 1903. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 10/1901, 8/1902, 28/1903.

## Chapter Thirteen

'Dougal'.

SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 350/1906, containing Police Department file 2566/06, Report by Corporal No. 102 L.H. Cunningham.

The above report erroneously records the name of one of Hunter's daughters as 'Ivy'. Her father named her Amy.

'Dougal' and Jack Hunter. Both were emphatic that none of Harry Hunter's sons were initiated.

SROWA, An 1/2, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Acc 255, 437/1908, James Isdell, Travelling Inspector of Aboriginies, Diary, page 40.

SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Dept., Acc 652, 19/1909, Boolgin native affairs file.

'Dougal' and Jack Hunter.

Worms, Father Ernest, S.A.C., *Aboriginal Place Names in Kimberley, Western Australia*, Oceania, Volume XIV, 1944, page 289.

Father Worms traced the term *Madamadyed* to the speech of the Nyul-Nyul and Nimanbor peoples [both now extinct] who occupied parts of the Dampier Land peninsula south of Bardi territory. The traditional Bardi name for the creek at Boolgin was *Ondon*.

'Dougal'.

SROWA, Department of Land Administration [DOLA], Lease Register, Clause 98 under Land Act 1898, pages 75 & 87.

Letter dated April 1903 from Sydney Hadley to 'Sir' [probably Chief Protector of Aboriginies Henry Prinsep]. SROWA, AN 1 / 2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 28/1903.

Battye 1915, op. cit: 49.

Dickson, R., *They Kept This State Afloat*, Hesperion Press, Carlisle, W.A., 1998, page 111, referencing Register of British Ships, Australian Archives.

An edited version of much of this letter is printed in Nailon, Brigida, CSB, *Emo and San Salvador*, Brigidine Sisters, Echuca, Victoria, Australia, 2005, Book One, page 277. Short excerpts from it are to be found in Durack, Mary, *The Rock and the Sand*, Constable, London, 1969, pages 132, 303.

Letter dated 19 April 1908 from H. Hunter, Boolgin Station, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth. SROWA, WAS 2029 [previously AN 1/4], Department of Aboriginies and Fisheries, Cons. 653, Files - Department of the North West [1], 851/1923.

Derby police noted the arrival and departure of *Florence* early in February 1902 but the vessel is not mentioned in the records of Hunter's bankruptcy two years later or as being in his hands at any subsequent time, so it is likely that she was wrecked [or possibly sold] between those dates.

SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 16, Occurrence Book, 4-6 Feb. 1902.

SROWA, WAS 166, Supreme Court of Western Australia, Cons. 3561, Files - Bankruptcy Act 1898, 29/1904, Hunter.

SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 4197/1904, 779/05, 1448/05, 1773/05.

SROWA, DOLA, op. cit., page 98.

The 'Jenkins' referred to in this lease may have been Police Constable No. 724 Jenkins, who was on duty at Cygnet Bay early in 1904 and who was helped on many occasions by Harry Hunter.

Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 65, 145.

'Dougal', Jack Hunter and other Bardi elders.

## Chapter Fourteen

'Dougal'.

Battye, J.A., op. cit., pages 136-9, 148, 159.

Dickson, Rod, op. cit., pages 206, 216-7.

*Kalgoorlie Miner* newspaper, 17 May 1916.

Nailon, Brigida, CSB, *Emo and San Salvador*, Brigidine Sisters, Echuca, Victoria, Australia, Book One, page 276.

Purdue, Brian, *Legal Executions in Western Australia*, Foundation Press, Victoria Park, W.A., 1993, page 44, where he is referred to as 'Rocca [Rokka] Sebaro'.

Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to the Resident Magistrate, Derby, 26 January 1903. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 28/1903.

Sub-Inspector Duncan, District Police Office, Derby, to Resident Magistrate, Derby, 30 January 1903. Ref. as Note 3.

William Harvey, Resident Magistrate, Derby, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 31 January 1903. Ref. as Note 3.

Evidence of Edward George Thurkle, Clerk of Courts, Derby, to Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, 24 November 1904. J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History, Q 305.89915 WES.

Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 5 March 1903 and W.H. Bird, Sunday Island, to same, 10 April 1903. Refs. as Note 3.

Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Sir, 19 April [1903]. Refs. as Note 3.

Report of Constable Napier, No. 452, to Officer in Charge, Police Department, West Kimberley District, Derby Station, 15 July 1903. Refs. as note 3.

Evidence of Sydney Hadley to Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Derby, 17 November 1904, answers to questions 1833-4. Op. cit.

Henry Prinsep, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, to Sydney Hadley and separately to W.H. Bird, both Sunday Island, 16 May 1903. Ref. as Note 3.

- 8 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 2 July [1903] and 1 October 1903; Sydney Hadley, Derby to Sir, 5 July 1903. Ref. as Note 3.  
Internal memos, Aboriginies Department, Perth, 18-20 August 1903. Ref. as Note 3.
- 9 W.H. Bird, Sunday Island, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 29 June 1903. Ref. as Note 3.  
Sydney Hadley, Derby, to unidentified governmental recipient [probably Colonial Secretary], 5 July 1903 and Henry Prinsep, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, to same, 25 August 1903.  
SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 1078/11.
- 10 Sydney Hadley, Derby, to Colonial Secretary, 3 October 1903. Ref. as last.  
Sydney Hadley, Derby, to Sir, 3 October 1903. Ref. as Note 3.
- 11 Sydney Hadley, Derby, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 October 1903. Ref. as Note 3.
- 12 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 13 December 1903. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 14/1904.  
Evidence of Richard Henry Wace, Resident Magistrate and District Medical Officer, Derby, 25 November 1904 and John Byrne, Sergeant of Police, Broome, 5 October 1904, both to Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives. Op. cit.  
SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 17, Occurrence Book, 17 Jan., 14-16 Feb., 3-4 Mar., 27 Mar., 10 Apr. 1904.  
Journal of S. Jenkins, Police Constable No. 724, 16 February - 3 March 1904. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 1363/04.
- 13 W.H. Bird, Sunday Island, to Mr. Prinsep, 14 December 1903. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 14/1904.
- 14 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Sir, 4 January 1904. Ref. as last.
- 15 Internal memos, Aboriginies Department, Perth, February and March 1904, and letter from Frederick and Lucy Bradburn, East Perth, to Mr. Prinsep, Perth, 28 March 1904. Ref. as Note 13.
- 16 Letter and telegrams to and from the Aboriginies Department, and internal memos, May 1904. Ref. as Note 13.
- 17 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, 2 April and 19 July 1904, and Broome, 5 July 1904, all to Chief Protector of Aboriginies. Ref. as Note 13.  
SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 17, Occurrence Book, 13 May 1904; Item 28, Report Book and Journal, Journal of Acting Sub Inspector J. McCarthy, 13-17 May 1904.
- 18 Richard H. Wace, Resident Magistrate, Derby, to H. Prinsep, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 14 June 1904. Ref. as Note 13.  
This report, and Hadley's subsequent half-yearly report and accounts contained in his letter of 19 July 1904, were all scheduled as Appendices to the Annual Report of the Aboriginies Department, 1903-04.
- 19 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, 1 October 1904, 17 October 1904 and Richard H. Wace, Resident Magistrate, Derby, 1 November 1904, all to Chief Protector of Aboriginies. Ref. as Note 13.  
Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 2 January 1905. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 43/1905.
- 20 Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives, Report, page 30, op. cit.  
Biskup, Peter, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, University of Queensland Press, 1973, pages 55-63, 99, 289.
- 21 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 19 July 1904. Ref. as Note 13.  
Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to same, 2 January 1905 and to Colonial Secretary, 3 January 1905; Sydney Hadley, Derby, to Sir, 8 March and 14 April 1905; Memos between various State governmental departments, January-March 1905. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 43/1905.
- 22 Journal of Constable No. 742 McGrath, 6 December 1904 - 15 April 1905. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 799/05, 1452/05, 1453/05, 1773/05.  
SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 17, Occurrence Book, 6 Dec. 1904, 13 Jan., 7 Mar., 14 Mar., 18 Mar., 15 Apr. 1905.  
Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island Mission, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 3 April 1905, and report by W.H. Bird, Sunday Island, 20 June 1905, entitled Cotton Cultivation [title later elaborated, probably at Aboriginies Department]. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 43/1905.
- 23 W.H. Bird, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 22 June 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.  
Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 July and 30 September 1905. SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 43/1905.



The abandoned buildings near the Prince Regent River from which W.H. Bird & crew removed galvanised iron may have been part of the pastoral station started in the early 1890s by Captain Joseph Bradshaw and Aeneas Gunn.

- 24 Journal of Constable No. 757, W.H.L. Walter, December 1905. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 531 & 671/1906.  
25 Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 64-7.

### Chapter Fifteen

- 1 Journal of Police Constable no. 838 John Ryan, 26 January 1906. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 1840/06.  
2 Report by Police Constable no. 757 W.H.L. Walter, 20 December 1905. SROWA, ibid., 531/1906.  
3 Journal of Police Constable no. 838 John Ryan, 18 February 1906. SROWA, ibid., 1791/06.  
4 Journal of Police Constable no. 838 John Ryan, 12 March 1906. SROWA, ibid., 2183/06.  
5 Letter from Robert S. Kirby, Broome, to the Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, undated, received at the Aboriginies Department 1 May 1906.  
Statement in the form of a letter from Henry Hunter to Corporal Cunningham, undated.  
Statement of 'Tommy otherwise Gibagee' to Police Corporal Cunningham, October 1906.  
All in SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 350/1906.  
6 Journal of Police Constable John Ryan, Cygnet Bay, 4 March to 22 March 1906. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 2183/06.  
File, Const. Ryan 838: Robert Kirby's complaint against. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 2410/06.  
A man named Critch was listed in Hunter's bankruptcy documents of 1904 as being owed £65. Of this sum, £55 was described as 'wages', so it would seem he was employed by Hunter, almost certainly at Boolgin. He probably received the money as it was listed as a 'Preferential Claim'. A man of that name was an itinerant boat builder in the region at that time. Critch may also have captained one of Hunter's vessels.  
7 SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 350/1906.  
Police Corporal Cunningham was mistaken in reporting that one of Harry Hunter's daughters was called Ivy. Hunter named her Amy, though she became better known by her Bardi name Goodji.  
8 SROWA, WAS 2256, DOLA, Cons 5870, Item 69, Page 58 [Lease Register], Clause 152, 387-1804, Application nos. 844, 845.

### Chapter Sixteen

- 1 SROWA, AN 17/Derby, Derby Court of General Sessions, Acc 738, Item 33, Minute Book, 19 March 1908.  
Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island Mission, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 3 April 1905, SROWA, AN 1/2, Aboriginies Department, Acc 255, 43A/1905.  
Bird, W.H., *Anthropos*, X, 1915, page 180.  
W.H. Bird reported in his *Anthropos* article that when Aboriginal men from east of King Sound made their first visit to Sunday Island [March/April 1905], the islanders, who at that time often wore only a pearl-shell or bunch of leaves, were scornful of their visitors' complete nakedness and considered themselves much superior on that account.  
Letters, Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 January and 1 April 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.  
Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 67-8, 289.  
Gibson 1951:46, op. cit., quoting the *Government Gazette*, 1 November 1907.  
2 SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 19, Occurrence Book, 18-21 March 1908.  
3 Isdell, James, Diary, 30 March 1908 - 14 April 1908. SROWA, AN 1/2, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Acc 255, 491/1908.  
Hadley's correspondence, as Note 1.  
Thomas Puertollano's lease application was made with the help of Father Nicholas Emo and described Thomas as a drover. The application was lodged on 24 August 1905 and approved on 15 December 1905. A later survey showed that the area was 23,000 acres rather than the 25,000 acres applied for. SROWA, WAS 2280, Department of Lands and Surveys, Cons. 5000, Applications for Leases and Licences, Item 1187, and WAS 1311, Cons 5869, Registers - Leases [Regulations], Item 12, Cl. 71/1-405 [cont. by 121-2254/98].

Pratt, Rosemary and Millington, Dr John, A.M., Editors, *The Torres Diaries 1901-1914* Artlook Books, Perth, W.A., 1987, page 73 and footnote [unpaged].

Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 114, 293.

- 4 Isdell, James, Diary [as above], Reports and letter 25 April, 27 April and 19 June 1908. SROWA, AN 1/2, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Acc 255, 409B/1908, 491/1908, 506A/1908 and AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.
- 5 Letters from Sydney Hadley to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 January, 1 April and 29 May 1908 and from Hadley and W.H. Bird, both dated 22 June 1908, also letter from Hadley dated 31 August 1909. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909 and 1308/1909, file, Aboriginies Report 07-8.
- 6 Excerpt from half-yearly report and statement written by Sydney Hadley, probably to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, undated but probably referring to the last half of 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909, page 39.

## Chapter Seventeen

- 1 Isdell, James, diary and letters from Cygnet Bay to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 17 and 26 April 1908. SROWA, AN 1/2, Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Acc 255, 437 & 491/1908 and AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.  
Isdell's official diary records that he rode to Boolgin on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April. He gave the date as Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> in a letter to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies dated 26<sup>th</sup> April.  
Letter from Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 January 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.  
On 3 December 1907, the Department of Lands and Surveys recorded the receipt of Kimberley Pastoral Lease application 802/98 lodged by Nicholas Maria Emo and Henry Hunter. Application cancelled 9 March 1908. DOLA, Lease Register, Clause 98 under Land Act 1898, pages 98 & 122.  
Letters from Henry Hunter, Boolgin, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 19 April and 14 September 1908. SROWA, AN 1/4, Native Affairs Department, Acc 653, 851/1923 and AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.
- 2 Isdell, James, Diary, op. cit.  
Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 134, 152.  
Bartlett, Norman, *The Pearl Seekers*, Andrew Melrose, London, 1954, page 21.  
Ferguson, Richard, *Pearls of the Past*, self-published, 2001, pages 67, 106.
- 3 Howe, H.V., article entitled *The Snide Trade*, published in *The Countryman*, 19 October 1961, page 11.  
Pratt, R. and Millington, Dr J., op. cit., page 183.  
Some details of the *willy-willy* of December 1908, as recorded by the police, are to be found in SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 35, Telegrams Book, 9-14 December 1908. The ex-Biddles schooner *Alto* was totally wrecked in this storm, as were many other vessels including the catamarans of Aboriginal people paddling home from Sunday Island Mission to their own 'country' east of King Sound.
- 4 Letter from Henry Hunter, Boolgin Homestead, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 6 June 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.

## Chapter Eighteen

- 1 Report by Sydney Hadley to resident Magistrate Arthur R. Adams, Derby, 3 September 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 19/1909.
- 2 Letter attached to file from Arthur R. Adams, Derby, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 8 September 1908. Ref. as last.
- 3 Letters from Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, July and 12 August 1909. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.
- 4 Letter from Henry Hunter, Boolgin Homestead, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 14 September 1908. Ref. as Note 1.
- 5 Telegrams between the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth and James Isdell, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, etc., August-October 1909. Ref. as Note 1.

## Chapter Nineteen

- 1 Letters and reports from Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island Mission, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, July, 12 August, 4 October 1909 and 1 January 1910. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 653, 133/1909.  
Ingleton, Geoffrey C., *Charting a Continent*. Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1944, page 98.
- 2 *Amendments to Sailing Directions, Australia Directory, Vol. III*, Fourth Edition, 1905, made by Captain Pasco, received United Kingdom Hydrographic Office 17 June 1910, for the area of King Sound.  
Lecky, H.S., *The King's Ships*, Muirhead, London, 1914, pages 75-6.  
Bastock, John, *Ships on the Australia Station*, Child, French's Forest, New South Wales, 1988, pages 144-5.  
Kenneally, Kevin F., Edinger, Daphne C., and Willing, Tim, *Broome and Beyond: Plants and People of the Dampier Peninsula, Kimberley, Western Australia*, Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth, 1996, page 88.
- 3 Letter from Captain F.C.C. Pasco, *HMS Fantome* at Broome, to The Hydrographer, The Admiralty, London, 7 October 1909. The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, Taunton, Somerset, ref. IL 1909 Pasco.
- 4 List of Surveys, Dampier Land / King Sound area, up to 1930. The U.K. Hydrographic Office. Also references as Note 1.

## Chapter Twenty

- 1 SROWA, AN 5/Cossack, Cossack Police Station, Acc 366, Occurrence Book 5, 16-17 Dec. 1889; Occurrence Book 7, 10 Oct., 31 Oct. 1891, 8 Jan. 1892.  
SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 11, Occurrence Book, 10 Nov., 17 Nov. 1893; Item 25, Report Book and Journals, 2 Mar. 1897.  
*Western Australia*, Legislative Assembly. Electoral Roll. Kimberley Electoral District. 1904. J.S. Battye Library, Perth, W.A.  
The precise year of 'Mad Jack's disappearance is uncertain. John J. Ryan, Police Constable 838, wrote on 19 July 1907, 'Long Charley is the native who is supposed to have murdered Paul Conde @ Mad Jack some two years ago...' The following day, L.H. Cunningham, Police Corporal 102, added, 'A prospector named Paul Conde was reported murdered by natives in that locality two years ago. Conde has not since been heard of.' SROWA, WAS 76, Police, Cons 430, 4170/1907.  
However, an article in the *Western Mail* [Perth], 26 January 1907, page 43, written by 'O.H.', seems to imply that the author met someone known as Mad Jack the previous month. A letter written from Derby and published in the same newspaper on 3 February 1909 refers to the murder of Mad Jack, 'about two years ago'. An article by B.E. Bardwell published on 1 May 1909, also in the *Western Mail*, contains the passage, 'Mad Jack [Paul Konde], who was killed by natives a little over three years ago...and his boat was found some months later.'  
The following are translations of entries made in his diary by Father Nicholas Emo, who was at Cygnet Bay late in 1906. The 'Thomas' referred to was Thomas Puertollano, who from 1905 had officially leased a substantial area of bush land west of Cygnet Bay. Father Nicholas' 'black Christian from Disaster Bay' may have been 'Ambrose'. Unfortunately, not all the dates in Father Nicholas's diaries are accurate, so these dates too may not be precisely correct.  

31 October 1906  
The widowed Jenny Yolk signed with Thomas's wife for employment.  
11 December 1906  
Mr Adcock's cutter from Derby arrived from the GraveYard, in search of Mad Jack's boat. He had killed the natives in Collier Bay, as well as my black Christian from Disaster Bay, whose wife, the widow Jenny, had signed with Agnes, Thomas's wife. The Derby Magistrate arrived.  
Nailon, Brigida, CSB, *Emo and San Salvador*, Book Two, 2005, page 54.
- 2 Journals of B.H. Fletcher, Police Constable No. 550, 4 August - 1 October and 9 October - 23 October 1909. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 5062/1909 and 5506/1909. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Items 19 & 20, Occurrence Books, 22 Jan. 1909 - 14 Apr. 1910; Item 35, Telegrams Book, 2 Feb. 1909 - 5 Apr. 1910.

Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 1 April 1909 and 1 January 1910. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.

*Western Mail* newspaper, 6 February 1909, page 15 and 1 May 1909 page 45.

*Sunday Times* newspaper, 24 April 1910, Second Section, page 1.

Purdue, Brian, op. cit., page 42. See also page 73, section titled, 'Sentenced To Death But Not Hanged', where the six names given at the date 4.4.1910 are the men found guilty of the murder of Jones.

Derby police recorded that Mr Thurkle J.P. submitted accounts from Hunter, Hadley and Young for the assistance they had provided to the police. SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 24, Letterbook, 24 Mar., 29 Mar. 1910.

Harry Hunter's employee Jack Young was born in Holland about 1867 and resident in the north-west of Australia from about 1892. The District Registrar at Derby married him to Hunter's eldest acknowledged daughter Jessie about 1912. He worked for Sydney Hadley on Sunday Island in 1907 and at other times, and occasionally at Cape Leveque lighthouse between 1917 and 1919. He died at Port George IV Mission circa 1923.

SROWA, WAS 2029, Department of Aboriginies and Fisheries, Cons 653, Files - Department of the North-West [1], 851/1923.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006, records of Cape Leveque Lighthouse, Staff, Temporary, 1917-19.

- 3 Young 'Dougal' and his contemporary Balachee had undergone *Angui*, the major Bardi 'man-making' ceremony which involved the initiation of pubescent boys, after which they had been taken a few miles south for *Lorebeg*, a week-long period of instruction while they recovered from circumcision. Now they had attained the initiatory stage of *Barlell*, during which they were prohibited from eating seafood, one of the traditional staples of their people.

In anticipation, they had been trained for years in the arts of hunting and foraging for food in the bush. They were also free to continue eating the relatively recent nutritional addition, 'white man's tucker', and like their elders, actually preferred it to most traditional fare.

Aboriginal thought, as it had been in the centuries before the white invasion, considered that kidney and other internal organ fat conferred power, strength and vitality on the wearer. In the tropical north-west of Australia, new-born babies were rubbed with animal fat rather than washed.

See Elkin, A.P., *The Australian Aboriginies*, various editions 1938-1979, page 309 and Love, J.R.B., *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today*, Blackie & Son, 1936, page 113.

## Chapter Twenty-One

- 1 SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 20, Occurrence Book, 6 Mar. 1910; Item 35, Telegrams Book, 7 Mar. 1910.

- 2 Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 126-8.

Harry O'Grady's leases: SROWA, WAS 1311, Lands and Surveys Department, Cons 5869, Registers - Leases [Regulations], Item 12, Cl 71/1-405.

O'Grady's early associate at Cygnet Bay, referred to by 'Dougal' as 'Jim the captain', may have had the surname Vincent. Journals of Const. J.T. Johnston No. 902 for May & June 1910, SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 3151/10 & 3531/10.

Hadley reported to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies in a letter & report dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1910 that all the pearlers left King Sound at Christmas 1909. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Dept., Acc 652, 892/1910.

- 3 The master or captain of the *Dickie* at the time of the police/CPA raid on Harry Hunter in July 1910 may have been Charles Morrissey, who lived at Beagle Bay, rather than 'Charlie Morris'. The vessel returned to Broome, but not until long after the court case against Hunter at Derby.

Although Father Nicholas Emo in his *San Salvador* made several voyages between the far north of the State and the Dampier Land area in 1909 and 1910, there is no record in the Derby Police Station Occurrence Book of him bringing Harry Hunter to the port for the latter's trial in July 1910.

- 4 SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 20, Occurrence Book, 24-25 Jul., 29 Jul., 31 Jul. 1910; Item 35, Telegrams Book, 25 Jul. 1910.

*The Sunday Times* newspaper, Perth, W.A., 28 May and 10 September 1911.

Sub-Inspector Houlahan to Commissioner of Police, 8 June 1911. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries, Acc 652, 672/1911.

Report of Constable Johnston, Broome, re. removal of rations from H. Hunter's Boolgin to Lombadina Station, 1-8 August 1910. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries, Acc 652, 921/1910.

SROWA, WAS 2029, Department of Aboriginies and Fisheries, Cons 653, Files - Department of the North West [1], 851/1923.

Tommy D'Antoine and Nellie Hunter lived together for many years, had children, and were officially married by special licence at Broome Court House on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1927.

*The Sunday Times* newspaper, Perth, W.A., 28 August 1910.

Hebe, 'youthful beauty', daughter of Zeus and Hera, was cup-bearer of the gods in Greek mythology.

Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 134, 147, 149.

*Pearling in Western Australia 1850-1979*. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Perth, 1979, pages 10, 14.

Zucker, Margaret, *From Patrons to Partners*. University of Notre Dame Australia Press, Fremantle, W.A., 1994, page 59, quoting Walter, Georg, *Australia*. Lahn Verlag, Limburg, Germany, 1982, page 178.

Journal of Constable Johnston No. 902 for April 1911, entry for 4 April. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 2830/11.

Information provided by Pallottine Father Kelvin J. Kenny SAC, May-August 2002.

Emo, Father Nicholas Maria, Lombadina Aboriginal Mission. Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1911. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 1244/1911.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

Journals of Constable Johnston No. 902, June 1910, 23 December - 31 December 1910 and 19 April - 27 April 1911. SROWA, AN 5/2, Police Department, Acc 430, 3531/10, 1172/11 and 2830/11.

Broome Police Court Records, 4 May 1911. SROWA, WAA 307, Clerk of Courts - Broome, WAS 558, Evidence Books - Court of Petty Sessions, Acc 1352/10, Evidence Book, Police Court [Petty Sessions] 30/12/1910 - 1/6/1911.

*The Sunday Times* newspaper, Perth, 14 May 1911.

Communication from Henry Hunter to *The Sunday Times*, published 21 May 1911.

*The Sunday Times*, 28 May 1911.

Telegrams and other correspondence between those named. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 672/1911.

*The Sunday Times*, 10 September 1911.

Broome Police Court, 3 August 1911, P.C. Johnston [Protector of Aboriginies] v. Henry Hunter, Defendant. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 672/1911.

'Dougal'.

*The Sunday Times*, 10 September 1911.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

SROWA, WAS 558, Clerk of Courts - Broome, Evidence Books - Court of Petty Sessions, Acc 1352/14, 19.4.1912 to 28.9.1912 [Case 245/12].

Telegrams between the parties named. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 469/1912.

SROWA, WAS 76, Cons 430, General Files [2], 2621/1912, 21 & 25 March 1912.

*Broome Chronicle* newspaper, various issues, 1908-1912.

Sledge, S., op. cit., pages 87-8, 90, 92-3, 104.

Because *S.S. Yongala*, sister ship to *S.S. Koombana*, sank off the east coast of Australia in a cyclone one year earlier, the design of both may have been inadequate.

Two Manilamen were convicted at Broome in June 1912 of the wilful murder of Constable Fletcher and sentenced to death. The sentences were later commuted to imprisonment.

Under the name of Constable Bertram H Fletcher, the National Police Memorial Honour Roll at Canberra bears the following inscription:

Stabbed after going to the assistance of a young Englishman who had become involved in a fight with five men, after they insulted his female companion.

Information provided by Graeme Sisson of Western Australia Police Historical Society Inc. from records held by W.A. Police, W.A. Police Historical Society, Western Australia Police Gazette, National Library of Australia [Trove newspapers on line] and the National Police Memorial.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

- 1 SROWA, WAS 558, Clerk of Courts - Broome, Evidence Books - Court of Petty Sessions,  
Acc 1352/14, 19.4.1912 to 28.9.1912 [Case 245/12].
- 2 SROWA, WAS 558, Clerk of Courts - Broome, Evidence Books - Court of Petty Sessions,  
Acc 1352/15, 3.10.1912 to 17.2.1913 [Case 446/12].  
It has not so far been possible to find any contemporaneous official record which shows whether or  
not Hunter's Appeals were successful or, therefore, whether he went to prison or not.  
In 1911-12, the police apparently considered trying to compel Hunter to support children of his who  
were now living on Sunday Island but decided not to proceed because he had no means to pay.  
Nailon, 2005, Bk. Two, page 193.
- 3 'Dougal'.  
Gale, C.F., Chief Protector of Aboriginies, to Solicitor General, 19 March 1913. SROWA, AN 1/3,  
Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 462/1913.  
Robin Hunter to *Broome News* newspaper, 1978.  
Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., pages 152-3.
- 4 Henry Hunter, Boolgin Station, to Colonial Secretary, Perth, 26 April 1913. SROWA, AN 1/3,  
Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 1500/1913.
- 5 Battye, Jas. S., page 132. Op. cit.  
*The Stateships Story 1912-1977*. Western Australian State Shipping Service, page 40.  
*Pearling in Western Australia 1850-1979*. Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife, Perth, 1979, page 10.  
Gibson, E. G., page 59. Op. cit.
- 6 Jack Hunter.
- 7 Lombadina Mission records.  
Jack Hunter.  
Report by Constable J. McClay, 15 March 1922. SROWA, AN 1/4, Native Affairs, Acc 653,  
1094/22.
- 8 Jack Hunter.  
*Nor'-West Echo* newspaper, Broome, 10 February 1916.
- 9 The North West Scientific and Exploration Syndicate Ltd., copy of Mr. E.J. Stuart's diary, 1917.  
J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History.  
Stuart, E.J., J.P., *A Land of Opportunities*, John Lane The Bodley Head, London, 1923.  
Though published in his name, the book was not written by Stuart himself. It differs, sometimes  
markedly, from the entries in Stuart's diary for the same dates.
- 10 Henry Hunter, Boolgin Station, to Mr. Thomas Puertollano, Chili Creek Station, 1 October 1917.  
SROWA, AN 1/4, Aboriginies Department, Acc 653, 132/17.
- 11 The influenza pandemic of 1918-19, which became known as 'Spanish 'Flu', killed more people than  
the First World War which preceded it. India probably suffered more fatalities than any other  
country. In Britain, some 228,000 people died. The problem continued into 1920 in the north-west  
of Australia.
- 12 Jack Hunter.  
Death Certificate, Henry Hunter, Boolgin Station, Cape Leveque, 8 November 1919. Registrar  
General, Perth, W.A.  
Australian Maritime Safety Authority, op. cit.  
SROWA, WAS 2256, DOLA, Cons 5870, item 69, page 58, Lease Register, Clause 152, 387-1804.  
In 1978, Robin Hunter separately told the *Broome News* newspaper and members of the Wreck  
Inspection North Coast [W.I.N.C.] expedition that he was 108 or 109 years old. In fact, he was 86.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

1 C.F. Gale, Acting Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, to Mr. S. Hadley, Sunday Island Mission,  
7 September 1908. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department, Acc 652, 133/1909.

2 Sydney Hadley, [aboard] 'Schooner *Rita*', Derby, 27 October 1908 to the Chief Protector of  
Aboriginies. Ref. as last.  
Hadley's brother-in-law, William Foot Mitchell [later, Sir William] was associated with the  
Samuel brothers from 1883. In 1902 he became a director of the Shell Transport and Trading  
Company, founded by Marcus Samuel [later, Sir Marcus, then first Viscount Bearsted].

3 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island Mission, 1 April 1909, to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies.  
Ref. as Note 1.

4 Telfer, E.J., *Amongst Australian Aboriginies*. Private publication, 1939, pages 113-130.  
SROWA, AN 5/Derby, Derby Police Station, Acc 738, Item 20, Occurrence Book, May to Oct.  
1910 [numerous entries].

5 Correspondence as detailed in the text. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries Department,  
Acc 652, 873/13.

6 Gibson, E.G., *Culture Contact on Sunday Island*, MA Thesis to the University of Sydney, 1951,  
pages 51, 59-60.

7 Sydney Hadley to the Chief Protector of Aboriginies, 30 January 1914 and 25 May 1915, and  
Report on the Sunday Island Rubber Tree Plantation. Ref. as Note 5.  
Gibson, E.G., pages 49, 51-2, 58. Op. cit.

8 Basedow, H., *Narrative of an Expedition of Exploration in North-Western Australia*. Transactions  
of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australia Branch, Vol. XVIII, 1916-17,  
pages 213-16.

9 Stuart, E.J., Diary, 12-14 May 1917 and 15-17 September 1917. Op. cit.  
Stuart, E.J., J.P., 1923, pages 3, 16-24, 31, 133, 139. Op. cit.  
Gibson, E.G., page 59, quoting 'Government Report for 1919'. Op. cit.

10 Gibson, E.G., pages 45, 49, 52, 59-62. Op. cit.

11 Report by Constable J. McClay, Beagle Bay, 15 March 1922. SROWA, AN 1/4, Native Affairs,  
Acc 653, 1094/22.

12 Gibson, E.G., pages 62, 64-5. Op. cit.  
D. Kirkwood, Assistant Registrar, Charterhouse, London, October and November 2000.  
The information that Hadley suffered from knee problems comes from an entry in a  
Charterhouse register, which states he had been so afflicted for nine years. Although not dated, the  
details are likely to have been recorded when Hadley was admitted to Charterhouse in June 1930.

13 Durack, Mary, *The Rock and the Sand*, Constable, London, 1969, pages 219, 314.  
Marriage and Census records, Hadley Family. Op. cit.

14 Gibson, E.G., page 41. Op. cit.  
Bain, M.A., *Full Fathom Five*, Artlook Books, Perth, W.A., 1982, page 191.

15 Biskup, Peter, page 131, quoting Annual Report of the Aboriginies Department, 1908, page 18.  
Op. cit.  
Opinion of Locki Bin Sali, who grew up on Sunday Island and had a high opinion of Hadley, but no  
idea of the cost of running a remote island mission which supported so many people.  
Robinson, Michael V., page 149, quoting 'Hon. Minister for the North-West to the Premier in  
Cabinet, 16/1/1918; B.L., Acc 893.' Op. cit.

16 Gibson, E.G., page 38. Op. cit.

17 Death Certificate, Montague Sydney Hadley, General Register Office, England, DXZ 643201.

18 London Metropolitan Archives, Acc/1876/G/02/18.  
Information provided by D. Kirkwood, Assistant Registrar, Charterhouse, London, in 2000.  
Death Certificate, as ref. 17.  
By some accounts, the eight-month long campaign of intense German air raids on London which  
became known as 'the Blitz' ended on the night of 10-11 May 1941. If so, historic Charterhouse was  
fire-bombed on the final night.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

- 1 Sydney Hadley, Sunday Island, to Chief Protector of Aboriginies, Perth, 30 September 1913 and  
Sydney Hadley, Broome, to same, 16 December 1913. SROWA, AN 1/3, Aboriginies and Fisheries  
Department, Acc 652, 872/13.
- 2 Erickson, Rica, op. cit., Vol. III, pages 2362-4.  
Death Certificate, Thomas Richard O'Grady. Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the State  
of Western Australia.  
Coate, Yvonne & Kevin, *More Lonely Graves of Western Australia*, Hesperian Press, Perth, W.A.,  
2000, page 296, quoting *North West Echo*, 11 July 1914.
- 3 Father Siarra was a missionary of the Italian Salesian Order, which ran Lombadina Mission for a  
few years in the 1920s until the German Pallottine Order took over again in the latter part of that  
decade.
- 4 Australian Maritime Safety Authority, records of Cape Leveque Lighthouse, Staff, Temporary,  
1917-27. Op. cit.
- 5 'Karna' pressed the halves of the much-desired pearl shell against his stomach because that area,  
rather than the heart, was traditionally regarded as the seat of the emotions by Aboriginal people.
- 6 *Government Gazette*, 9 December 1927, page 2651.  
Notes, telegrams and reports by Inspector Ernest C. Mitchell, September - October 1928. SROWA,  
AN 1/7, Native Welfare Department, Acc 993, 399/1928.  
Battye, Jas. S., op. cit., page 107.  
Harry O'Grady retired to Perth and died in 1937. Erickson, Rica, op. cit., page 2362.
- 7 'Dougal', family death certificates and information from Lombadina Mission records.
- 8 'Dougal' and 'Coobia'. In official documentation, 'Dougal's' eldest child was apparently referred to as  
'Eva' [Harry O'Grady's name for her] or 'Eva Philomena', which added her Catholic baptismal name.  
Gibson, E.G., op. cit., pages 68-9.  
Biskup, Peter, op. cit., pages 69-70, 115, 167, 181-2, 293 [note 57].

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

- 1 'Nurdaingbur' was 'George' Warb's pronunciation of 'Felix's' Aboriginal [Nyul-Nyul] name.
- 2 Letters sent by Father Alphonse Tachon, Beagle Bay, to Bishop Gibney, Perth, 1891. Archives of  
the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth.  
Bates, Daisy, *The Passing of the Aboriginies*, John Murray, London, 1938, page 16.  
Nailon, Sr. Brigida and Heugel, Fr. Francis, *This is Your Place: Beagle Bay Mission 1890-1990*,  
Beagle Bay Community and Magabala Books, Broome, 1990, pages v-vi, xii-1, 6-8, 12-14, 17, 42-3.
- 3 'Dougal' and 'George' Warb.
- 4 'Dougal'.
- 5 'Dougal'. The 'Ambrose' mentioned in this story is not the same as the Bardi man killed with Paul  
'Mad Jack' Conde about 1905.
- 6 Manyan ['Jimmy'], a Bardi man who was there, and Father Alphonse Bleischwitz, both to the author.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

- 1 Mudjun ['Moojo'] and his sister Djira were children of Dibi ['Davey'] who survived the sinking of  
Harry Hunter's boat *Gutter-Snipe* in 1899.  
Peter Angus became one of the most eminent Bardi people of his generation. He was the son of the  
Sunday Islander 'Angis'.
- 2 Bird, W.H., *Ethnographic notes about the Buccaneer Islanders, North Western Australia*.  
*Anthropos* VI, 1911, page 178.
- 3 Campbell, William D. and Bird, W.H., *An Account of the Aborigines of Sunday Island, King Sound,*  
*Kimberley, Western Australia*. Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society, Western Australia,  
Vol. 1, 1914-15, pages 55-82. This paper derived from a visit to the island by Campbell in 1908 and  
Bird's school-teaching and other work on the island 1902-05 and 1908-09.
- 4 Stokes, J. Lort, *Discoveries in Australia* [etc.], T. and W. Boone, London, 1846, Vol. 1, pages  
94-99, 115-16.



In 1942, incendiary bombs hit The Royal College of Surgeons of England, destroying more than half its collection. Cranial remains, which had been stored separately from the post-cranial, were especially badly affected. After the Second World War, the 'Cygnets Bay skeleton', which is that of a young male, was transferred to the Natural History Museum, London, where it remains to this day. It now consists of only 35 individual bones, without a skull. The museum has no record of a skull having been received from the RCSE. Information supplied by Dr Norman MacLeod, Keeper of Palaeontology, The Natural History Museum, London, January 1905.

'Dougal' and Peter Angus.

Peter Angus.

Campbell, William D., and Bird, W.H., op. cit., page 60.

'Dougal', 'George' Warb and Peter Angus.

'Dougal' and Peter Angus.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

Bartlett, Norman, *The Pearl Seekers*, Andrew Melrose, London, 1954, pages 247-9.

Dickson, Rod., op. cit., pages 50, 277.

Durack, Mary, op. cit., pages 226, 315, quoting the *Catholic Record*.

Love, J.R.B., *Stone Age Bushmen of Today*, Blackie & Son, London, 1936, page 112.

Berndt, R.M., [Editor], *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 1970, article entitled 'Stability and Change [etc.]' by Helmut Petri and Gisela Petri-Odermann, pages 272-6.

Verbal information given by Professor Petri to author, La Grange Mission, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1972.

'Dougal' and Peter Angus.

See also *Western Mail* newspaper, 30 May 1946, pages 12-13.

Jack Hunter.

'Dougal'.

Berndt, R.M., *ibid.*, page 253.

'Dougal' and 'George' Warb.

Durack, Mary, op. cit., pages 76-7, 297.

'Dougal'.

Ministry of Justice, Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in the State of Western Australia, Perth, W.A. Deaths in the Broome Registry District of Western Australia, Registration Number 8/65, Dugal, Mary Florrie, Date of Death 19<sup>th</sup> June 1965.

'Dougal' and 'George' Warb.

The author.

Op. cit. Deaths in the Broome Registry District of Western Australia, Registration Number 12/72, Dugal, Martin, Date of Death 7<sup>th</sup> April 1972.

The author.

Op. cit. Deaths in the West Kimberley Registry District of Western Australia, Registration Number 24/75, Dugal, Joseph, Date of Death 10<sup>th</sup> April 1975.

## Chapter Thirty

Op. cit. Deaths in the West Kimberley Registry District of Western Australia, Registration Number 8/77, Hunter, Jack, Date of Death 4<sup>th</sup> December 1976.

Jack Hunter's age at death is erroneously given as 76 years on his Death Certificate. According to his father's correspondence, Jack was born 1894/5, and so was 81 or 82 at his death in December 1976.

Press cutting provided by Broome Historical Society, entitled *Granny In Dive Off Wharf*.

Newspaper and date not identified. Approximate year estimated by author from Mrs. Nellie D'Antoine's stated age at time of incident.

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189,196. See also Bardi, Djawi, Nyul-Nyul people etc.
- Aboriginies Act 1905 82,131
- Aboriginies, Chief Protectors of 51,59-61,74-77,85-88,90,92,94,95,98-103,105,106,109,118-120,124,125,129,132,  
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