

## The Barrow Point People Visit the South

During the 1920s the Barrow Point people made two trips south to the Cooktown area, staying for extended periods at the McIvor River and at the Cape Bedford reserve. The first trip, in about 1923, was to leave Roger Hart at the Cape Bedford Mission. Roger's countrymen also wanted to visit relatives, both distant and close, living in the south. Unbeknownst to the Barrow Point people themselves, there were behind-the-scenes machinations between the government and the missionary at Cape Bedford that would soon bring the Barrow Point people south again.

### THE PROBLEM OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES

Missionary Schwarz had been attempting for many years to persuade the government to allocate more coastal land to the Cape Bedford Mission north of its original boundaries. His concern was the economic survival of the mission, which had repeatedly failed to produce enough income and food to maintain its small but growing permanent population. Another of Schwarz's arguments to the government for extending the mission was to accommodate remnant tribes to the north and west.

As early as 1919, Schwarz had threatened to resign if the government failed to gazette more coastal lands in the area of Murdoch Point to serve as exclusive fishing grounds for mission boats.<sup>1</sup> Schwarz ultimately stayed on at Cape Bedford, although the government took no action on his request. By 1923—the year that Roger Hart was brought to the mission by his Barrow Point relatives—Schwarz had reiterated his desire to extend mission holdings. In a letter to the chief protector of Aborigines dated 17 December 1923, Schwarz

applied for fishing rights along the foreshore up to Murdoch Point, with the idea of setting up a station on the mouth of the Starke River, with some land for cultivation. The idea . . . [was] that Aborigines from further north might be interested in settling there under the auspices of the Mission.<sup>2</sup>

The mission had already established a small farming outstation at Wayarego on the McIvor River. More farming and fishing sites at Starcke would dramatically increase the mission's ability to employ the labor of Aboriginal adults to produce food and income for the community as a

whole. New land would also provide a suitably separated location for the tribes from the north that Schwarz hoped to bring under mission control.<sup>3</sup>

By this time, several Barrow Point adults had settled near Cape Bedford. In addition to old man Wathi (Billy Salt or *Alman.ge:r*), who had earlier run away from Barrow Point with Roger Hart's mother and had arrived in the Cooktown area, Jackie Red Point, Instone's former boatman, was periodically working around Cooktown. Also in the area were **Wanhthawantha** (known in English as Tommy Cook), Barney Warner, and another man called **Jujurr**,<sup>4</sup> who stayed at Bridge Creek on the mission reserve or in other seasonal camps on the McIvor and Endeavour rivers. All three had been young men at Barrow Point when Roger Hart was a child.

#### A FRIGHT

Mission people were supposed to avoid contact with those from outside the mission, both Europeans and Aborigines. Sometimes young men from Cape Bedford took advantage of the isolation of mission outstations to sneak across the mission boundary. One day two boys, Peter Gibson and Hans Cobus, set out to visit their relatives on the McIvor River. They were heading for the station at Elderslie. What they were after was tobacco.

Suddenly they got a fright. Someone sang out to them, from right up close.

"Hey, where are you two going?"

It was old man Jackie Red Point. He had been sitting by a big mango tree when he saw them coming. He ducked down to hide in the tall grass until he could make out who they were. When they came close he called out to them. They hadn't seen him, but they knew him when he showed himself. They were afraid he might report them for crossing the mission boundary.

Old man Jackie was on his way back from a trip to Barrow Point. He settled down around the mission after that. But he never said anything about those two boys to the missionary.

Another Barrow Point man who stayed at Cape Bedford was the former tracker and jailkeeper, Billy **Galbay**, or Long Billy McGreen, who set up his own camps near Bridge Creek and at **Ngandalin** on the north side of the McIvor River. Later Long Billy established a small camp at a mission site called Elim, and his wife Lizzie brought her kinswoman, Roger Hart's mother, to live there for a time. Billy McGreen was also known as Billy

Wardsman, since he had worked for the Cooktown police as a caretaker at the venereal disease camp and lockup at Cooktown.<sup>5</sup> The chief protector's suggestion to Rev. Schwarz that the former native trooper be sent to Barrow Point to help lure his countrymen down to Cape Bedford was the beginning of the end for Roger Hart's people.<sup>6</sup>

Toward the middle of 1925 the office of the chief protector of Aborigines began to investigate complaints against Europeans in the Cooktown hinterlands accused of abusing their positions as distributors of government relief for Aborigines. One of these was the telegraph line-man at the Musgrave Station, who was "no doubt the worst of a bad lot because not alone will he bully and sweat [the local Aborigines] but he will also satisfy his lustful passions on them where possible."<sup>7</sup>

The other complaint was against Alan Instone, the leaseholder at Barrow Point. The Laura protector had written:

There is an aboriginal in Palm Island . . . who informed me that Mr Instone told him to work for a man named Wallace in the Laura district for a few shillings a week, out of which he the boy stated he used to purchase tobacco from Mr Instone.<sup>8</sup>

The issue was whether Instone, whose settlement was a kind of unofficial supply depot for Barrow Point, was exchanging the free government relief, mostly blankets and tobacco intended for indigent Aborigines, for unpaid labor. The question was also raised whether Instone was supplying his neighbors with Aborigines for illegal employment.

The practice of creating protectors such as Instone at Barrow Point . . . has a bad effect on aboriginals and makes the local protector's duties more difficult. As you are aware the natives, not unlike ourselves, are possessed of a certain amount of gratitude, and those that give them anything, especially tobacco or blankets, are looked upon by them as bigfellow boss. The latter in order to be good with his neighbour instructs the natives to work for them, and pays them for the services with tobacco etc. supplied for use of destitute aboriginals.<sup>9</sup>

Chief Protector Bleakley sought advice from Sgt. Guilfoyle, the Cooktown protector, clarifying the official situation as follows:

Mr Allen Instone holds no appointment as a protector but by arrangement with one of your predecessors acted as a distributor

of blankets and such relief, the reason given being that dumping large supplies of blankets, calico, tobacco etc., on the beach for the native campers only resulted in waste.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the chief protector did not want tribal Aborigines brought closer to settled areas.

While recognizing the likelihood of unofficial distributors of relief abusing the trust it would not be wise to do anything to encourage the natives to hang around the towns. If in your view the depot at Mr Instone's place at Ninian Bay is not satisfactory, could not the Barrow Point people come to McIvor River outstation of Cape Bedford [mission] for their blankets etc.?<sup>11</sup>

Protector Bleakley also initiated inquiries at Palm Island into Instone's alleged misdeeds, asking the superintendent there to interview Instone's accuser, both about the illegal employment practices and about Instone's other activities.<sup>12</sup>

Sgt. Guilfoyle sent the following somewhat cryptic report on his investigations.

The man Instone has a motor launch and he resides at Barrow Point. I understand he keeps a small herd of stock there but he does not make a living out of the stock. He probably has plenty money or other ways of making money, as some of the movements of the motor launches between Cooktown, Cairns and Thursday Island are suspicious and when people who are not members of the police force or superintendents of missions or aboriginal settlements are made protectors of aboriginals, and supplied with blankets, tobacco, tomahawks etc. for distributing to aboriginals, the aboriginals are encouraged to hang around these person's homes and are worked without being paid anything for their labour, as some people in remote parts seldom sign on an aboriginal and they often use [Aborigines] to cut undergrowth along telegraph lines and remove flood rubbish in the wet season, and persons who sign on aboriginals complain of other people who do not.<sup>13</sup>

Immediately after receiving this report, Chief Protector Bleakley proposed to Rev. Schwarz at Cape Bedford that future "indigent relief" for the Barrow Point Aborigines be channeled through the mission and dis-

tributed at the Cape Bedford outstation on the McIvor River.<sup>14</sup> He confided in Schwarz his opinion that Instone was up to no good.

The belief is that these men use the goods as trade for native labour for their own benefit, improperly presume on the appearance of official authority which such distribution gives them, by using the natives to oblige friends . . . there is apparently suspicion as to what use Mr Instone puts his launch to, probably opium traffic.<sup>15</sup>

He also asked Schwarz for his suggestions about what could be done to put the Barrow Point people and their northern neighbors under stricter supervision, cataloging the vices—opium, prostitution, and venereal disease—to which they were exposed in their homeland.

When Instone was informed that henceforth the yearly issue of blankets and food relief for the Barrow Point people would not be sent to him but was instead to be distributed by the Cape Bedford Mission,<sup>16</sup> he wrote to the chief protector defending his treatment of the "70 odd" Cape Melville and Barrow Point natives to whom he had been distributing government rations. He had also been "attending those were sick and giving them medicine provided by myself . . . I may say here I have strictly adhered to the honorable understanding of such distribution, and on no occasion asked the boys to do anything for me in return."<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, Instone made it clear that if he was to be denied the opportunity to distribute government supplies to the Aborigines on his property, he would rather be rid of them.

McIvor is about 100 miles from Cape Melville so that the aboriginals of this country will have to walk 200 miles for their blankets etc. Most of the old people [for] whom I take it the blankets are particularly intended being quite incapable of making this journey. I have taken a considerable amount of interest in these tribes and have done what I could to help them, and with your permission will continue to do so. But if McIvor or Cape Bedford Mission is to be the center for distribution in future I would suggest that the Cape Melville and Barrow Point aboriginals be removed and settled onto one or the other of these places where possibly in time they would become self supporting.<sup>18</sup>

Rev. Schwarz and the chief protector had already begun to try to work out a plan for removing the Barrow Point and Cape Melville people

from their unsupervised lives in the north and onto the mission. Replying to Bleakley's earlier question how such a removal might be effected, Schwarz described how he understood the Barrow Point people to live.<sup>19</sup>

He first noted that there should be no difficulties about their traveling down the coast to the mission.

I understand that the Aborigines in question are all 'salt-water-blacks', and that therefore they have canoes and know how to use them. If they WISHED to come whatever is there to prevent them to come by easy stages along the coast, up and down which they, no doubt, have traveled many times before?<sup>20</sup>

He was positive about prospects for bringing them to Cape Bedford, since good relations had already been established between the Barrow Point people and others at the mission. If the Barrow Point people wanted (or could be made to want) to come they would have lots of friends and relations at Cape Bedford.

Many of them have paid us occasional visits, stayed for a while and went back again. There are, for instance, two half cast boys in school here, one from Cape Melville,<sup>21</sup> the other from Barrow Point<sup>22</sup> who were visited only the other day by their brothers.<sup>23</sup> There is one Barrow Point family<sup>24</sup> at Bridge Creek (King Jacko is well known to all of them having been for many years on a cattle station up there<sup>25</sup>), another couple<sup>26</sup> was at the McIvor until the other day . . . Long Billy—the wardsman in Cooktown's old gaol, mentioned in your letter—asked my permission some time ago to settle down in Elim and has been very busy putting up a substantial house, proving thereby that he does not intend to go back to Barrow Point in a hurry. This will show you that the Barrow Point people are not altogether strangers at Cape Bedford. Long Billy has been here before working in Elim, in fact one of his boys<sup>27</sup> you saw in Cooktown was born in Elim. At present there is another woman—a relation of his wife,<sup>28</sup> I think—with that family. This woman<sup>29</sup> came from Barrow Point too, the half cast school-boy mentioned above is her son and she has another little half cast boy<sup>30</sup> . . . with her now. So should the people from up there make up their mind to come over this way they would find quite a number of acquaintances and relations here to meet them.<sup>31</sup>

Schwarz was careful to let the chief protector know what an impossible economic burden it would be for the mission to encourage the

people to take up residence at Cape Bedford without giving them the means to make a living. He emphasized that the "greatest difficulty" would be "what provisions could be made" for their survival if they were to undertake a "migration."

As far as native food-supplies are concerned I have no doubt, that they are better off where they are now, for from an Aboriginal's point of view this reserve, or at least nine tenths of it, represents the poorest hunting ground imaginable and from an agricultural point of view it is very little better.<sup>32</sup>

Ever ready to launch new schemes to improve the precarious finances of the settlement at Cape Bedford, Schwarz thus set the stage for asking the government to provide the mission with a fishing boat on which the Barrow Point and Cape Melville people, many of whom had considerable experience working on Japanese luggers, might be recruited to work. He linked the plan with the desire to get these people permanently away from their customary haunts where they were, he thought, doomed to continual exploitation, not to mention reinfection with venereal disease. He also renewed his request for widening the mission boundaries to include areas farther to the north where he proposed to settle his new charges.

Curing them [of venereal disease] in Cooktown and sending them back to the same life seems to be of little use. To be able to look after these people has been and still is one of the reasons why I would like to establish an outstation at Point Lookout or Cape Flattery.<sup>33</sup>

Schwarz wrote to the mission director, Dr. Theile, to describe these negotiations with the chief protector. So long as no financial burden on the mission board was incurred, he wrote,

I AM in favour of this immigration-scheme, because these people 'are our neighbours and need our help.' Further, they together with the Bridge Creek people (altogether some 150 souls) would possibly allow the Board of Foreign Missions to consider it worth while to send a young energetic Missionary for Wayarego, where they all could be drawn together.<sup>34</sup>

The mission administrators saw an opportunity to acquire more government support as well as control over a larger population of Aborig-

ines. On the other hand, they were concerned that they might be burdened with the care of significantly larger numbers of Aboriginal adults with neither resources nor manpower to deal with them. Thus, they proceeded cautiously, applying for the new fishing boat without explicitly committing themselves to taking on the Barrow Point and Cape Melville people. They located a European ship captain who could supervise a mission fishing operation. Theile wrote to the chief protector requesting money in advance to buy a fishing boat as follows:

Once we can firmly establish the fishing industry on our Reserve I feel confident that the Cape Melville and the Barrow Point natives could be drawn onto the Reserve and their help in the industry itself would be of no little value, seeing they are coastal natives with much experience with regard to fishing.<sup>35</sup>

The mission's suggestions met with initial approval from Chief Protector Bleakley, who thought the government might be able to aid in the purchase of a fishing boat as it had already done for groups of Thursday Islanders. He had a further suggestion for Schwarz:

It could also be directed that the men who signed on the outside fishing fleets have the major portion of their wages paid to their tribal accounts at the Protector's office and only drawn upon as ordered by you, instead of . . . being spent on trade articles and sent back with them when they are returned to their camps.<sup>36</sup>

The missionaries agreed to convert Cape Bedford into the ration depot for the northern coast only after being assured that this meant a new allocation for potentially increased costs. After a visit to Cape Bedford in July 1926, Theile reported to his mission board that government aid had been increased to £700 per annum, which included

an extra sum for the purpose of providing food for aboriginals along the coast to the north, and who come to Cape Bedford for food and clothing. It grants an annual supply of blankets to all natives, and as our boys and girls take care of theirs, and do not all need new ones every year, they are supplied with some other goods in place.<sup>37</sup>

Schwarz next dispatched Barney Warner, Jackie Red Point, and Long Billy McGreen back to Barrow Point to try to persuade the people there to come down to Cape Bedford to live permanently on new reserve

lands. These three men were unable to convince their countrymen that life on the mission was preferable to staying at Barrow Point, whatever the predations of settler and fisherman. They therefore merely left word with King Nicholas that he should bring his people down to Cape Bedford for their yearly rations. Under explicit instructions from the missionary, Barney also managed to pick up Roger Hart's half-brother Jimmy—probably from **Guraaban**, where Roger's mother was then camped with the little half-caste boy—and to carry him back to the mission school.<sup>38</sup>

### The Second Trip South

The Barrow Point people returned to Cape Bedford as a group in early 1926.<sup>1</sup> The official reason for the visit was to pick up blankets and other rations under the new distribution arrangements. They also came to reclaim the bones of their countryman Nelson, who had died and been temporarily interred at the mouth of the McIvor River. But Roger's people were unwittingly being moved by forces that were to prove too strong for them. (See Pl. 7.)

Rev. Schwarz submitted to the chief protector of Aborigines the following list of the entire remaining population of Barrow Point.

Arrived at C[ape] B[edford] 5/2/26 for Relief-Provisions:  
 King Nicholas, Rosie (his wife), Leah, their daughter (left at Barrow Point in Mr Instone's care)  
 Charlie (ex-trooper),<sup>2</sup> Florrie (his wife), little boy (their child) Jumbo,<sup>3</sup> Linda (his wife)  
 Charlie old man (his wife at present at North Shore with Wardsman's family, 1 HC child)<sup>4</sup>  
 Dick Hall, Minnie (his wife)  
 Billy,<sup>5</sup> Nellie (Barrow Point people at present in camp at Wallace's McIvor)  
 Wardsman Billy, Lizzie, 3 children

Old people said to be still at Barrow Point not inclined (?) to come here:



Nicholas,<sup>6</sup> Johnny,<sup>7</sup> Billy, Tommy, Harry, Tommy, Maggie, Lantern,<sup>8</sup> Kitty, Lena, Bridged

Boatboys remaining Barrow Point, ready to go on fishing boats: Albert,<sup>9</sup> Toby,<sup>10</sup> Tommy, George, Billy, Barney

This list does not include any of those in Mr Instone's permanent employ, otherwise it appears to be a complete list of all Barrow Point people.<sup>11</sup>

Schwarz's remarks about the Barrow Point people who appeared at Cape Bedford on this occasion are worth quoting in full.

King Nicholas of Barrow Point arrived here some time ago with some of his followers for the Barrow Point relief goods. Not counting Billy Wardsman, the 2 women and 4 children he has with him, there were only 13 of them, 7 boys who had only been returned by a Jap boat a short time ago did not come down as they were waiting to be taken on board again by a boat, so their king informed me.

There also are 6 or 7 old people somewhere about Barrow Point besides those in permanent employ of Mr Instone. Of those who were here some say that they are working for Mr Instone but are not under agreement only working on permit. They seemed however satisfied about the arrangement and informed me that they always got plenty tobacco and clothes too. The latter no doubt are facts and I should think that there should be plenty tobacco available at Barrow Point for some time to come if their annual supply is to be like the amount given to them last year.

The natives from Cape Melville have not yet come. King Nicholas and ex trooper Charlie one of Instone's stockmen informed me that they were afraid to come at present. Accidentally or otherwise they had set fire to a portion of Mr Instone's run and were threatened with all sorts of punishments worst of all being sent to Cape Bedford where all such punishments were to be measured out to them. However King Nicholas promised to come down here with those people as soon as Mr Instone will let them pass through his run.

I tried to give these people who came for relief goods to understand that it was not your idea that there should be sent a deputation down here occasionally to get fresh supplies, but that those needing relief rations should come and settle down some-

where within an easy reach of Cape Bedford so that they could get their rations regularly whilst those in employ of any of the little squatters along the coast up there signed on or on permit should get their clothes and tobacco from their employers. They seemed to quite understand this too.

It was rather amusing to note how well they knew what to say and what not to say. They seemed to take it for granted that I would ask them certain questions and as I did not do it they gave the information or answers without the questions being put to them, so that they will be able on their return to report they have said what they were supposed to say.

I said in a former letter that I did not expect any assistance whatever from Mr Instone or his neighbours concerning the migration of the aboriginals in their neighbourhood. I am quite sure of that now. However the supply of tobacco etc. will give out someday at Barrow Point and if the aboriginals know that such supplies are available for them at Cape Bedford they will come. Any other way of forcing them I would not be in favor of.<sup>12</sup>

On this visit to Cape Bedford the Barrow Point people, along with some of their relatives who were already living in the vicinity of the mission, set up a long-term camp in sand dunes west of the central mission station, not far from the existing "heathen" camps on mission territory, where Aboriginal adults were allowed to live in return for work. There they remained until around Christmas of that year when they left abruptly.

#### THE DEATH OF YAALUGURR

A large group of people from Barrow Point had come down to Cape Bedford to pick up some blankets and other government-supplied rations from the missionary. They were camped in the sandhills to the west of the mission station. They didn't stay on the south side of the cape, because there was another large camp of people there. These were the Bridge Creek people,<sup>13</sup> who lived within the mission boundary most of the time. These two groups didn't want to mix up with one another, and they kept their camps well apart.

Old lady Yaalugurr was a widow. Her husband, Barney,<sup>14</sup> had died some time before. He was from Yuuru, right at Cape Flattery, so that he and old Charlie Digarra were relations of the Barrow Point people—my "uncles." Barney's wife was kin by marriage to all the people from far-

ther west, Barrow Point and Cape Melville. She had gone to stay at the Barrow Point camp for a while.

One day she said, "I think I'll go and visit William."<sup>15</sup> William lived in the other camp with the Bridge Creek mob.

"No," they said to her. "Don't go, stay here. We have plenty of food here. Stay with us."

"No. I'm going."

"Well, all right. Go on, then."

It was late in the afternoon, but they couldn't stop her from leaving. She went to the other camp.

Then something happened. The people she went to visit were making tea, and they must have mixed something up with it. It was nighttime. They gave it to her. It might have been old man Bullfrog—perhaps she had sworn at him or something.

She died that very night. It was Christmas time. Who knows why they did it? Perhaps they were paying her back for something that happened years before.

The people there in the west, all that Barrow Point lot, started crying when they heard the news. "That old lady who left us earlier—she has died." They all wept for her.

Then they said, "*Wa!* They might blame us for this. We had better run away." They decided they would have to leave the place. They were getting frightened of the other tribe. They blamed the Bridge Creek people for that death, you see, and they were too suspicious to remain there, far from their own country.

"*Ama uwu yindu, adanhu.* These people have different language. We'd better leave."

They went east to the mission, and they asked the missionary for their blankets and clothes. Then they left Cape Bedford and never came back again.

Schwarz tried to convince King Nicholas to keep his people on the mission territory rather than to return to their own land where they were, in Schwarz's view, prey to evil influences from both land and sea. Apparently agreeing, the Barrow Point people headed north to the McIvor River, still within the mission boundary. Once they reached the McIvor they collected the bones of Nelson, who had been temporarily interred after his death at the mouth of the river.



Plate 1. Fog and the giant dingo's head

Plate 2. The people of Pinnacle swallowed by the earth

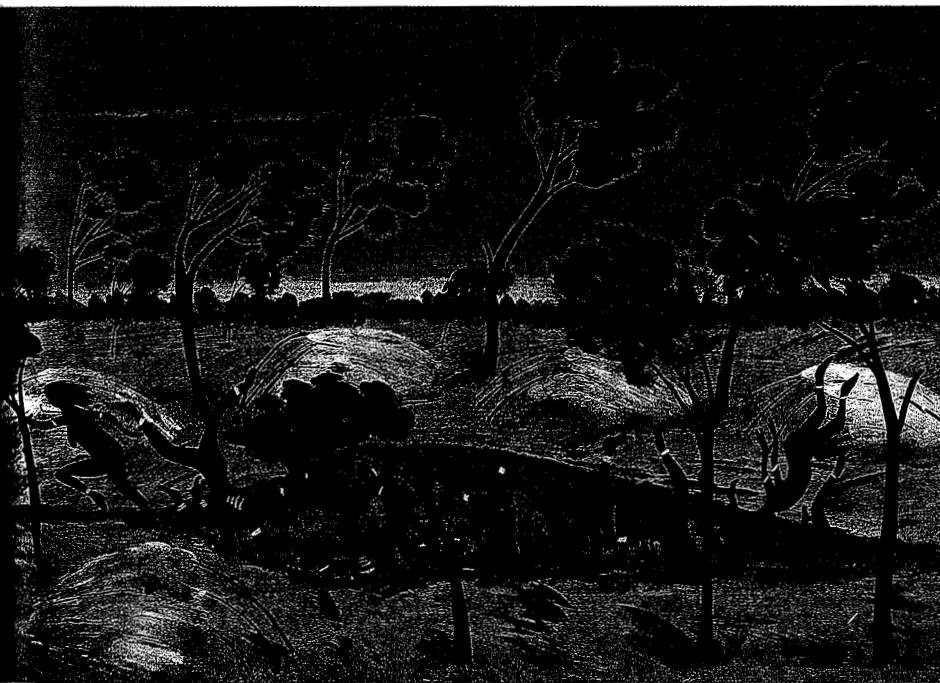




Plate 15. Fog visits his daughters

Plate 16. In a cave at Cape Bowen



## Point Lookout

### THE DEATH OF NELSON

Nelson was the brother of Wathi, old man Billy Salt, who ran off with my mother. Nelson was still living at Barrow Point, but he got sick. So Mr. Instone called Barney Warner and told him to take the sick man to the hospital. Barney took both him and his wife east to Cooktown and left him with the doctors.

Well, I guess he didn't know how to talk English, old Nelson. He stayed at the hospital only a little while. His wife was looking after him in town. But he made up his mind to run away from that place. So he left the hospital and headed north, finally getting back to the McIvor River.

When he left Cooktown he wasn't cured. He was still sick. He camped at the river mouth for a few weeks. Then he died.

Barney Warner was back west at Barrow Point by this time. He had just left Nelson off in Cooktown and then gone home with the boat. After a while, the news came that the man had died.

Well, about six months after they heard about it, they decided to set out again, to get more blankets and other rations from the missionary at Cape Bedford. Nelson's widow mixed up with them again, when they got to the McIvor. Before they went back to Barrow Point, they dug up the dead man's bones and carried them back west. He was a person from the Wuuri area, so they must have put his bones in a cave somewhere on that tribal land, perhaps high up on a hill.

## Point Lookout

In early 1927 authorities were scandalized by the abuse of Aboriginal women at various fishing camps along the northern coast. Sgt. Guilfoyle had detected a new series of outrages.

The beche-de-mer and shell fishing boats under Japanese masters are still troublesome on the Bloomfield River, also at Cape Melville and Barrow Point, I understand that these masters encourage their crews to go inland to handy camps and make the king or boss of the camp supply women to the Japanese . . . I un-



derstand [a certain fishing company] have a caretaker . . . residing at Flinders Island near Port Stewart and they keep the wives of all their aboriginal crews on the island. I am not aware if this Company has Flinders Island leased or how they hold it but am of the opinion that the female aboriginals detained on this island should be visited now and again by some responsible person not under the control of any of the beche-de-mer or pearl shell fishing companies.<sup>1</sup>

Sgt. Guilfoyle now bought a small sailboat. Former Native Trooper Billy McGreen, with Jackie Red Point as his mate, was to use the boat on police errands that arose from the protector's preoccupations. He described the case of a young girl whom he had dispatched Long Billy to rescue.

In January last it was reported to me . . . that an Aboriginal named Jackson stole a young female aboriginal and took her from her father, an old boy named Harry Cootes, to Noble Island where he would then trade her with the Japanese boat crews. In consequence of this complaint I arranged with Long Billy ex native Wardsman at old jail here to take Jack's sailing boat, also Jack,<sup>2</sup> and another boy named George to accompany him and proceed to Noble or Flinders Island and arrest the boy Jackson also bring the little gin back to Cooktown with them and I would then return her to her parents per Billy overland.<sup>3</sup>

The girl eventually turned up at Barrow Point. Instone reported a visit from Billy McGreen in February 1927.

Long Billy came up to see me today regarding the aboriginal child Gladys who was taken away from her family at the McIvor by a boy named Jackson, brought to Barrow Point. He then handed her over to her uncle, a boy named Tommy who is working here for Mr R. Gordon.<sup>4</sup> Tommy will be going to the McIvor in the course of the next few weeks and will take her back with him to her parents . . . She is at present at the house here being well looked after.<sup>5</sup>

In 1927, Missionary Schwarz had acquired his own fishing boat. He had established a bêche-de-mer curing operation at Elim, under the supervision of a Jamaican expert. He had also induced a number of adults,

including several Barrow Point people, to begin dugong hunting at a new outstation, called **Wawu Ngalan**, at Point Lookout near the northernmost boundary of the mission reserve.

Though skeptical, the missionary was relying on King Nicholas to keep the Barrow Point people at the new camp. Schwarz repeatedly sent "Long" Billy, along with his offsider Jackie Red Point, to scour the coastal camps at Cape Bowen, Barrow Point, Cape Melville, and Flinders Island. They were to try to convince any people they found to return with them to Point Lookout. Inducing the Barrow Point and Cape Melville people to exchange camp life and work on the boats for dugong hunting on the mission was not easy.

Billy (Wardsman) and Jackie Redpoint who were sent up north to collect these people scattered along the coast and at the mercy of Japs and others went to Flinders Island too and tried to get the abos from there too to come with them to the camp now formed at Pt Lookout.<sup>6</sup>

A month later Schwarz had more information about the people at Flinders Island.

They appear to be chiefly women and apparently some influence stronger than Billy's prevented them from being successful there. Billy says that they told him that they would all come down when their boys would be paid off at Christmastime.<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, in May 1927, Schwarz was able to report that there were more than forty people living at Point Lookout, eating well from their dugong operation. He was still hopeful for more, especially able-bodied working men.<sup>8</sup>

By the end of that month Schwarz was still more optimistic about his new colony of Barrow Point dugong fishermen.

Billy, King Nicholas, and King Charlie from Cape Melville seem to work together now. Billy and Nicholas were here the other day . . . They informed me that all Barrow Point and Starcke natives were in their camp at Point Lookout, and Billy said that he had sent a boy, Dick Hall, across to the McIvor to get the few Starcke or Barrow Point people who were camped there. He thought that they would be at the Pt. Lookout camp before he would get back up there.<sup>9</sup>

Sgt. Guilfoyle thought that the process of bringing the remnants of the northern Aboriginal camps to the mission would be made easier if Long Billy were given some sort of official status, as he apparently found himself in conflict with the current kings.

I . . . also informed Billy that it was reported that King Nicholas and King Harry were not behaving as kings should do, that they were encouraging their tribes to hang about the coast for the purpose of trading aboriginal women with Japanese and other boat crews. I instructed him to inform all the aboriginals that he was made king of the tribes along the coast and that he was boss of all the tribes and he was to bring them back with him to Cooktown in his boat if they did not go inland, that King Nicholas and King Harry would be sent away if they did not obey Billy's instruction, informing the aboriginals that Cooktown and Laura police would have to go out if Billy came back and reported that the Aboriginals still remained along the coast . . . I have promised that I would write to the chief protector when Billy and Jack were on their departure and apply for Billy to be appointed king of some tribe, either Cape Melville or Barrow Point. If he Billy was able to use influence over the tribes and make them do what he told them to do. I would now respectfully suggest that Billy should be appointed as a king over one of the tribes along the coast, he would be of great assistance both in reporting how the aboriginals were behaving themselves also reporting venereal disease cases and conveying patients to Cooktown in his boat with his mate Jack for medical treatment.<sup>10</sup>

Chief Protector Bleakley duly appointed Long Billy "native policeman of the Point Lookout station" in order to give him "authority to control the natives of the coastal camps in the vicinity."<sup>11</sup>

Plans were also laid to mount a surprise raid on the camps at Noble Island and Flinders Island, to catch the fishermen there in violation of the employment laws that further prohibited "harbouring" Aboriginal women for immoral purposes. Guilfoyle thought that "Long" Billy's new status would help, and that

the police should make one trip to Flinders Island and return all the aboriginal females who are detained there onto the mainland. These people would then always obey Billy when he found them away from their proper place and instructed them to return.<sup>12</sup>

Rev. Schwarz at Cape Bedford was more dubious about the efficacy of the government's proposal.

The appointment of Billy as "Native policeman" for Pt. Lookout and its surroundings will prove of some value provided the present kings in that vicinity are deprived of their authority and their plates, the signs of such authority, otherwise Billy will be unable to do anything with these people.<sup>13</sup>

### Escape from Wawu Ngalan

Despite all the official maneuvering, the plan to resettle the Barrow Point people fell suddenly to pieces. One night in August 1927, having rigged their dugout canoes with sails made from new government-issue blankets, King Nicholas and nearly the entire Barrow Point mob escaped back to their homeland.

The people used to stop at Wawu Ngalan, in the year 1927. They lived there for a while. But then they got tired of staying there. I don't know what happened, but they made up their minds.

"I think we'd better get away from here."

Toby and Banjo Gordon were living with them at that time. Toby was still a kid in those days. Old man Long Billy McGreen had been saying he wanted to get those two boys and put them in school at Cape Bedford. Well, their relatives didn't like that idea. They made up their minds.

"Come on, let's go back west [to Barrow Point]."

Their parents, you see—it wasn't that they were tired of the place there at Point Lookout. But there was some trouble about those children. I think King Nicholas's daughter Leah was among them, too. Maybe also Nicholas Wallace and some other boys.

Well, they didn't leave during the day. They waited for the sun to set in the west. There was no moonlight that night. They didn't want to be seen, because the missionary might have sent his boat *Spray* after them. It used to anchor up there.

So they quietly rigged up their blanket sails, late at night around ten

o'clock when all the boat crew was asleep. They set sail then, out to the north and then making west back toward their homeland. I heard that by daybreak they had already sailed as far as the Starcke River. They camped there, but just for one day, and then they set out again, perhaps sailing as far as Cape Bowen. They would have stopped for just one or two nights there and then off again, right back to Instone's old place at Barrow Point. I don't know if Instone was still there at that time, in 1927.

That's the story that Toby Gordon himself told me. Once they got back home, all the old men set out to work again. Some went to Hart's place for stock work, those who knew how to ride horses. They camped around Barrow Point again. Later the stockmen from Starcke picked Toby and his brother Banjo up, and they went to work themselves.

Schwarz's report of these events was characteristically terse.

Billy the new policeman arrived here two or three days ago to get his uniforms which your department provided for him. He informs me that King Nicholas had taken most of the people Billy had gathered at Pt Lookout away to Barrow Point again. There, according to Billy, the police from Laura met them and supplied them with blankets, tomahawks, etc. and told them to remain about there. That of course is Billy's version. If correct I cannot say. The Barrow Point people however had received their supplies of blankets a short while previous to this here at Cape Bedford. This I know.<sup>1</sup>

Roger Hart believes that after the comparative freedom of the northern coasts, the migratory Aborigines from Barrow Point found it hard to accept the controlling hand of Missionary Schwarz. They were also uncomfortable so far from their own country, too close to potentially hostile and dangerous strangers.

## The Missioner's Revenge

Schwarz's enthusiasm about bringing tribal remnants from the north to the Cape Bedford reserve now turned to scorn against the kings of these tribes, to outrage at the thought that they would continue to live a marginalized and immoral existence, prey to unscrupulous settlers and fishermen, and to disappointment that he would get from the government neither additional funds nor his fishing boat to support the new congregation. In January 1927, Schwarz had submitted his annual report for 1926 to Chief Protector Bleakley. Remarking that the Barrow Point people "do come for their rations and tobacco" but could not be induced to stay under his supervision, he had bitter words about King Nicholas.

King Nicholas has his way of making a living—supplying boat crews with women—a much more convenient one than settling down and doing some work. I have suggested to the Protector in Cooktown that it would be to the advantage of taking his plate from him [and] tak[ing] him to a place where he would have to earn his living.<sup>1</sup>

Of King Harry from Cape Melville Schwarz's opinion was no better.

King Harry appears to be the same type of man as King Nicholas and I really believe that they only have been raised to the exalted position they are holding on account of proving pliable tools in the hands of unscrupulous employers of aboriginal men and women. If these two kings were deprived of their authority and removed and two more suitable men put in their places [their tribal people] might be persuaded to come and live on this reserve, otherwise I am afraid that they will never do so unless some force is used and that I would not recommend to be applied . . . Supplying them with food and tobacco is something but it would be far better for them to be removed from where they are now and where all control and supervision is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Now that he felt personally betrayed by these men, Schwarz was even more withering.

I also know both Nicholas and Charlie<sup>3</sup> the kings of Barrow Point and Melville respectively and if you look at some of my corre-

spondence concerning these people you will note that several times I expressed the opinion that nothing could be done with these two tribes as long as these two rogues were left in authority over them . . . These two kings will never give up their dealings with Japs and others along the coast and Billy's influence even as "policeman" will be insufficient to counteract the bad influence of these two kings in question, supported as they are by the few little squatters and representatives of owners of fishing boats along this coast.<sup>4</sup>

Schwarz's displeasure could have drastic and permanent consequences for Aborigines. Fifteen years earlier Schwarz had lodged an un-specific complaint against King Johnny, **Ngamu Binga**, from the McIvor River. This king was afterward sent from Cape Bedford to Cooktown and deported to Cherbourg by Sgt. Bodman, then the Cooktown protector.<sup>5</sup>

Once again, Schwarz's complaint about Nicholas and Harry prompted action. Chief Protector Bleakley had already suggested to Guilfoyle that the Barrow Point and Cape Melville kings ought to be removed.<sup>6</sup> Now hearing that the protector at Laura, D. W. McConnell, had aided Nicholas after his flight from the mission, he fired off a stern reprimand.

For some time the Superintendent of Cape Bedford Mission with the cooperation of the protector in Cooktown has been endeavouring to induce the natives of the coastal camps at Cape Melville and Barrow Point to emigrate to the mission reserve and quite a number of them have taken up camp at Pt. Lookout on the mission territory where they were being looked after by an aboriginal named Billy, at one time wardsman of the VD compound at the old Cooktown jail who had recently been appointed a policeman for this purpose. These camps have for the last year or two received their annual blanket and clothing supplies through the mission as an inducement to migrate as wanted and had always previously received such supplies through the Cooktown protector. Billy has now returned to the head mission station and reported that the old king Nicholas had taken these people away again to Barrow Point where they were met by the Laura police, supplied with blankets and tomahawks etc., and told to remain about there. These people had only shortly before received their supplies at Cape Bedford and the old King Nicholas and Charlie were well aware of it. I should be glad to know if this is correct and if so the reasons for the action as if so it had seri-

ously undone the work of the mission and this department during the last three or four years in its efforts to draw these tribes away from the surroundings where they have for years been abused and exploited by the Japanese pearling vessels and others the evil effects of which there has been ample proof in the numbers brought to Cooktown and treated in the jail hospital for venereal disease. I should be glad of early report."<sup>7</sup>

In his own defense McConnell gave his perspective on the plan to move the Barrow Point and Cape Melville tribes south to the Cape Bedford Mission, which had never enjoyed much popularity with local settlers.

The first intimation I had of the Cape Melville and Barrow Point Aborigines being removed to Point Lookout was about six months ago when R. Gordon, present owner of Abbey Peak Barrow Point, whilst at Laura asked me for what reason were the blacks being removed from their native homes, Barrow Point and Cape Melville, to Point Lookout. I informed Mr. Gordon that I was not aware that any aboriginals were being removed from Barrow Point or Cape Melville. Gordon then informed me that a few months previous an Aboriginal named Long Billy of Cooktown came to Cape Melville and Barrow Point and bullied most of the aboriginals from those places to accompany him to Point Lookout. King Nicholas and a small tribe of aboriginals from Barrow Point refused to accompany Billy and remained at Barrow Point. A tribe of aboriginals also remained at Cape Melville. Later a man named Mr Instone previous owner of Abbey Peak Barrow Point asked me questions similar to Gordon and stated that it was a crying shame that these aboriginals were driven from their native homes and their hunting grounds and not even brought to the mission station and fed but were left at Point Lookout to practically starve.<sup>8</sup>

McConnell denied having intentionally obstructed the removal plan, of which he claimed to have been left in ignorance.

The matter of Billy reporting to the head mission station that King Nicholas of Barrow Point had taken these aboriginals to Barrow Point where they were met by the Laura police and provided with blankets, tomahawks, and told to remain about there is a fabrication. On the evening of the 18/7/27 I arrived at Barrow



Point for purposes of executing a removal order on Aboriginal Dolly and her two children. I there saw King Nicholas, a middle aged aboriginal and who appears to be fairly intelligent. When questioned Nicholas informed me that there was only a small camp of Aboriginals at Barrow Point and stated that Long Billy had taken a tribe of Aboriginals from Cape Melville and Barrow Point to Pt. Lookout where they were then camped. Nicholas informed me that the Aboriginals then at Barrow Point had not received clothing or tobacco goods. I instructed Nicholas to bring all the aboriginals to my camp on the following morning where I supplied them with blankets and tobacco goods etc. . . . King Nicholas informed me that the small tribe of Aboriginals there were afraid that Long Billy would come up and want to take them to Pt Lookout and that the aboriginals did not want to go. I informed Nicholas that I had heard nothing about the aboriginals having to go to Pt Lookout and that if he wished he could remain and hunt about Barrow Point.<sup>9</sup>

Now Schwarz's recommendations about King Nicholas required immediate action. It fell to the Laura policeman to carry out the "removal" order. The story survives in the eyewitness account of old Yagay as he described the events, and as Roger Hart later reconstructed them.

#### THE REMOVAL OF KING NICHOLAS

After the Barrow Point people sailed away from Point Lookout with their blanket sails, somebody went east to Cape Bedford and told Missionary Schwarz about it.

"All those **Yiithuu** people have escaped again," they said.

"Those two kings told me lies," said Schwarz.

Then he turned around and sent a message to town, to the policeman.

"You should grab those kings and have them removed," he said.

That was Schwarz's idea—to have them sent away.

The policeman got the complaint from Schwarz, and he sent a message west to Instone.

"Tell King Nicholas to go down to Laura. Tell him to go for his supplies, blankets, and tommy hawks." He was telling lies himself.

From the camp at Barrow Point one could reach the Laura police station by traveling straight south. I think Instone knew what it was all about, but the policeman told him not to make Nicholas suspicious.

He just said, "Well, King Nicholas. I think you'd better go to Laura and get your stuff there. Go on south and pick up your clothes, your blankets, your trousers, your fishline, your axe heads."

King Nicholas believed what he was told.

He went back to the camp, and he told Yagay. "The policeman has sent for me down in Laura. I'm supposed to pick up supplies, blankets, and clothes. You come along to keep me company."

So they made a start the next day, heading down toward Wakooka Station, on the old road to the south. That was Nicholas and his wife Rosie with their daughter Leah, along with Yagay and his wife Obibini—she was my grannie.<sup>10</sup> They went right through Jones's Gap, on the east side of Wakooka, and then they headed farther south from there.

But there were bad signs. First Nicholas's wife Rosie took sick. Her breasts got swollen and sore with an infection. She got a kind of a lump. She had her little daughter, Leah, with her. So they had to camp out for several days until she started to feel better.

Yagay said to Nicholas, "Gaw, let's go back! This is bad."

"No," said Nicholas, "we'll keep going."

They treated Rosie's sore breast by washing it in hot water. Then they set out again.

They went farther and farther south. Then old King Nicholas himself stepped on a Death Adder. It bit him on the foot. (See Pl. 8.)

Yagay cut the bite and sucked out the poison. He knew how to treat snake bite. They made camp there and stayed for a short time.

Yagay was frightened by now. "Let's go back," he said again. Something was trying to stop them.

Nicholas wouldn't listen to him. "No, just let my foot get better. Then we'll keep going."

King Nicholas lay down, and he recovered from the snake bite after a few days. So they set out again. Farther south they went, and still farther south.

Then another Death Adder bit King Nicholas! It bit him on the other foot this time.

Again, old Yagay cut the wound and treated it. But he was really frightened now. He said, "Gaw! This is no good. We *must* go back."

"No," said Nicholas, "we can't go back. We have to go and meet that policeman."

Yagay was having premonitions: this trip was going badly, and it would turn out badly. Perhaps the policeman was planning to lock them up. It seemed like bad luck to him, you see. Something was wrong.

"Let's go back! Come on."

"No," said Nicholas. "Let's keep going." He wouldn't listen to Yagay.

Well, they camped out halfway, for a few more days, and then they set out again. I think they passed through Battle Camp. Then they went west, through the old Laura Station. Finally they came to Laura itself. They made their camp, and the next day they went to find the policeman.

"Hello, Nicholas, so you've finally come," said the policeman. "Oh well, you come along, follow me."

Then he turned to Yagay.

"Alright, Douglas," the policeman said, "You go out back there and chop some wood for me."

He took Nicholas back to the station house, and he put him into the lockup.

Yagay went out and chopped a big load of wood for the policeman. He chopped and chopped. He waited. He was beginning to get worried again.

Someone brought him dinner. He ate it and took his plate back and kept on waiting. He had already finished chopping all the firewood. He wasn't game to ask the policeman about Nicholas, see?

But finally he decided to confront the policeman. He went up to the house.

"Where is he?" he asked. "Where's Nicholas?"

"Well, Douglas," said the policeman. "You had better go on home now. Take his missus and his baby with you." He told him to clear out and to take King Nicholas's wife back north to Barrow Point.

"But where's Nicholas?"

"No, he's going to go down to Palm Island, now." The policeman just told him straight out. "You take his wife and go back. I'm sending him away."

Otherwise, Yagay would have hung around there waiting.

So Nicholas was locked up. Yagay and Rosie began to weep for him.

The policeman could have sent Rosie to Palm Island along with King Nicholas, but instead he made Yagay take her back to the camp at Barrow Point. Later when they shifted the whole Barrow Point mob up to Lockhart, she went along. She mixed up with her own people again back at Lockhart. That was her home country, anyway. She died at Lockhart.

Old King Nicholas never had any more children at Palm Island. He lived alone until he died.

King Harry's demise required no government intervention. He never made it back to his own country at Cape Melville after the escape from

Point Lookout. Instead he took sick and died either in the camp at Iipwulin or at the creek Uwuru to the west of Instone's settlement. No tradition records whether simple disease or some slow-acting witchcraft from Cape Bedford prevented him from having a last view of his homeland. Later his relatives came down to Barrow Point to pick up his bones, which were said to have been buried on Flinders Island.

## Exile

Once they returned to Barrow Point, Yagay and the rest of King Nicholas's people had little time to grieve over his removal. With the two kings out of the way, the government implemented a more drastic solution to the "problem" of the Barrow Point tribes.

First, with Schwarz's cooperation and chided by his disgust at what he perceived as government inaction, the protectors planned a series of further inspection raids up the northern coasts.<sup>1</sup> Throughout 1927 and 1928, however, one pretext or another forced cancellation of such trips. The weather was too rough; the necessary provisions could not be paid for; or Protector Guilfoyle thought that the targeted fishing boats would simply escape when they saw the police coming.<sup>2</sup>

For his part, Missionary Schwarz had now given up the idea of ever having the main body of Barrow Point people put officially under his care. By 1928 he had shifted the "heathen" adult populations on the mission reserve to an outstation on the Mclvor River, where one small group of northern people lived in a camp headed by Long Billy McGreen.<sup>3</sup> Schwarz describes with no little irony the failed attempts to bring the rest of the northern tribes to the mission.

We have not made any further attempts to get the rest of the Barrow Point people and those from Cape Melville and Flinders Island to settle down on this reserve, as it seems quite clear to us that they are meant to remain where they are for the convenience of owners and Japanese crews of fishing boats, and the three or four cattle stations along the coast.<sup>4</sup>

His prognosis for the Barrow Point people is bleak.

The hope of ever having anything done for them seems to have been shattered again and they are left to Japs and others to make use of them in any way they like.<sup>5</sup>

Roger Hart believes that Schwarz's anger over failing to incorporate the Cape Melville and Barrow Point people into an expanded mission prompted him to suggest further action. "He was a mighty vengeful man. He got wild with them and wrote the department a letter, and that was it."

Mr. Bleakley had visited Iipwulin at Ninian Bay sometime in the early 1920s. Bleakley had arrived with the old *Melbidir*—a ship familiar to North Queensland Aborigines in these days—with a crew of islanders on their way north. People had already spotted and identified the boat as it approached. "Boss, boss," they shouted. Anchoring just off the shore from Instone's place, the protector had disembarked to distribute blankets and clay pipes. Roger Hart, still a little boy, had observed him pegging out what he supposed was going to be a mission station, just to the east of Instone's settlement.

In 1928 the office of the chief protector of Aborigines arranged officially for all recruiting of Aboriginal boatmen "in the east coast between Lockhart River and Cape Bedford done in future only through the two missions,"<sup>6</sup> and Bleakley visited Barrow Point again. This time he had a very different purpose: he came to send the surviving Barrow Point people into exile.

Roger heard the story from Wathi, the man who had originally abducted his mother from Barrow Point. The government boat *Melbidir* again called in at Barrow Point. Troopers rounded up everyone they could find in the camps at Iipwulin—men, women, and children. All were trundled onto the ship. Once the camp was cleaned out, the humpies were burned. Then the *Melbidir* steamed up the coast, stopping to raze other camps all the way to Flinders Island. Finally the boat left everyone off at the old Waterhole Mission on the Lockhart River.<sup>7</sup> (See Pl. 9.)

#### ESCAPE FROM LOCKHART

The Barrow Point people found themselves in strange and dangerous circumstances at the Waterhole Mission. They disliked the unfamiliar conditions of their exile, and they feared witchcraft from their new neighbors. Roger Hart describes them as "really bad friends, the Barrow Point lot and the Lockhart mob." Relations between the groups when they were living at a distance were already hostile. With the Barrow Point people in their midst, the witches of Lockhart were reputed to be busy. People began to die. Toby Gordon's mother was one of the first.

Finally, a few men decided to escape. "They couldn't stop there for too long, otherwise they would have all been finished off." Albert Rootsey, Diiguul, Yagay, and Johnson, together with their families, fled on foot back to their own country. Banjo Gordon, who had made his own way to Lockhart to look for his mother, also ran away with them. Later Toby Gordon, who had married a Lockhart woman, began to fear the jealousy of his new in-laws. Feeling homesick himself, he took his wife and headed back south to Laura.

#### THE WHITE SETTLERS DEPART

Two and a half years after filing a report about his precarious economic state, in September 1926, Instone sold Abbey Peak to Messrs. Jimmy Stewart and Bob Gordon, who had been working the Starcke property since 1915 and were about the only successful graziers left in the area.<sup>8</sup> Maurice Hart, too, was considering selling out. In 1932 he transferred the lease on Wakooka to his former enemy, Stewart, who, together with the Thompson brothers, went on in the following half dozen years to consolidate holdings at Howick, Wakooka, and Barrow Point, as well as Starcke to the south and various properties on the McIvor River.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, the Barrow Point lands became just one more tract in a pastoral empire that gradually swallowed up all the land from the Starcke River north to Cape Melville, traditional domain of Aborigines from dozens of clan groups, speaking half a dozen distinct languages. It was an area whose cattle could only be worked by teams of self-sufficient stockmen,<sup>10</sup> ordinarily recruited—sometimes by force—from the bands of Aborigines scattered throughout the territory.

Sutton (1993) reports that Toby Gordon was living with his family at Waliil, "just south of Barrow Point" in about 1929, when "he was taken to work for Bob Gordon and Billy Rootsey on Starcke Station." Toby told Roger that both he and his older brother Banjo went to work at Starcke when Toby was about nine years old.

Both boys had learned to ride and to muster cattle at Maurice Hart's property, in the years after Roger Hart was taken to Cape Bedford. They had returned with the tribe to their own country after escaping from the mission fishing operation at Point Lookout.

The older people used to hide the children whenever stockmen from the stations would come around an Aboriginal camp. They were always afraid that the stockmen would take older boys off to work, since they thought that riding horses was just plain dangerous work. When one of

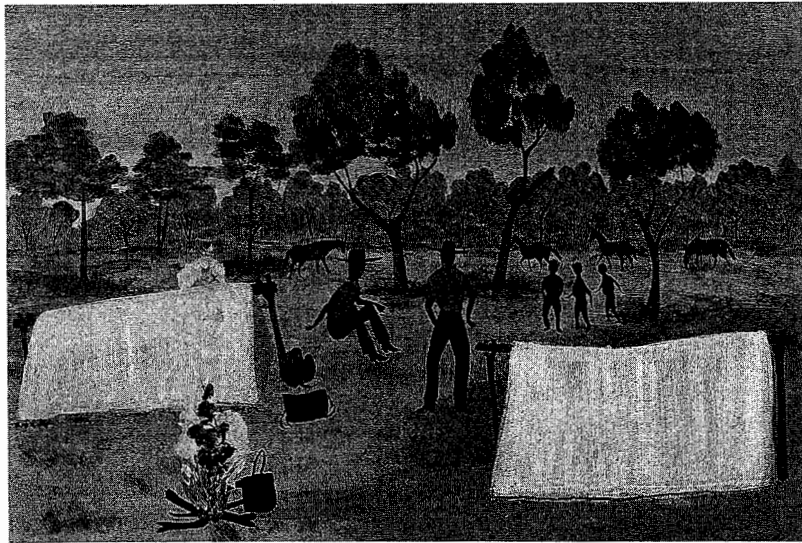


Figure 14. Stockmen in the camps

the stockmen from Starcke, a white man named Billy Wallace, came for a visit while the people were camped on the beach south of Barrow Point, they told Toby and his brother to hide. But the brothers said to each other, "Why should we hide. We like riding horses!" When they showed themselves, they were straight away thrown on top of a pack horse and taken to Roy O'Shea, the overseer at Starcke, who put them to work.

The two boys were taken to the Manbara Station on the Starcke holdings, to start a new life as adolescent cattle workers. They thus missed the visit of the *Melbidir* and the subsequent razing of the Barrow Point camp at Ninian Bay. When he heard that his people had been taken from Barrow Point, Toby began to wonder what had happened to his mother. He ran away from his stock job and traveled on foot to Cape Melville where he jumped on a boat and went in search of his Barrow Point relatives at Lockhart. He found his mother still alive, and thereafter settled down to work<sup>11</sup> and to marry at Lockhart.

A similar story about children dragooned into stock work can be reconstructed from police removal records almost a decade later. Roger Hart, Tulo Gordon, and I visited the late Bendie Jack in Melbourne in 1984. Bendie had moved south as a successful boxer after World War II.

He told us about working as a stockman at Starcke when he was a very young boy. His parents—Guugu Yimithirr-speaking people<sup>12</sup>—were still living nomadically when the boy was picked up by stockmen and taken away to the cattle station. Bendie was ultimately "rescued" by police and brought to the Cape Bedford Mission, where his three older brothers had already been placed in school.<sup>13</sup>

### Roger Hart at the Cape Bedford Mission

It was about 1923 when Roger Hart was left locked in the Cape Bedford hospital building, his arms and legs tied with sisal hemp. Tulo Gordon was a small child, not yet living in the mission dormitory but still with his parents, who cared for the mission's herd of goats. It was at the hospital that Tulo first encountered the little boy from Barrow Point: locked up and "singin' out and cryin' and kickin' the wall." Roger in turn tried to poke out Tulo's peering eye by jabbing a stick through the slat sides of his makeshift prison.

After staying for a while with Tulo and his family, Roger finally was moved to the dormitory and began school. He recalls a time of solitude and confusion. There was no one for him to speak his language with, and he was ignorant of the routines of mission life.

"They took me north to the dormitory. They had a cat there, you see. The boys used to talk to me, but I couldn't understand them. So I said, 'Oh, it's no use playing with them.' Well, I got the pussycat, and I used to play around with the pussycat. That was my friend, then."

The other boys dubbed him by the only word they had picked up from his language.

"They didn't know my language, but some of them used to sing out to me, '*Arrwala! Arrwala!*' That means 'Come!' They were naming me '*arrwala*,' too. That's the only language they knew.

"We used to go west to get damper for our meal. Mrs. Schwarz would give out the food. Each one got a single piece of damper. She would cut one damper into eight pieces. Well, I got my share and was walking along eating it. Some of those other boys were coming behind me. When they called out '*arrwala!*' I went back again—I thought they would give me another piece, you see."



Gradually Roger adapted to mission life, although he and his countryman and new schoolmate Bob Flinders often talked about running away.

I used to go around with Bob, you know, and he became a really good friend. He was a little bit bigger than me. We used to go out fishing, and he still knew a little bit of my language.

By and by I settled down on the mission. Sometimes I would get to thinking. I would ask him, "Thawuunh, let's you and me run away."

"Where to?"

"Back home. It's a very hungry country around here. Let's run away and get a good feed of dugong!"

"No," he would say. "Better stay here."

I used to pester him about it every night. I wanted to go. But he would say, "No, stay here." So I stopped asking him about it.

Then a few months afterwards, he started asking the same thing. "Come on! I think we'd better go, eh?"

"How are we going to go?"

"Never mind, we'll just run away."

"No, no, I'm settled down here now. I think we'd better stay." By this time, I was the one who didn't want to leave.

"Come on," he would say. "What about that dugong we were going to eat?"

"No, let's stay."

But if Banjo and Toby had come with me to the mission, we would have left straight away! Finish!

A couple of years later, when members of the Barrow Point tribe returned to Cape Bedford to receive their government rations and supplies from the missionary, Roger did not try to follow them when they left again.

"I didn't come near them because I was frightened. I knew them but I didn't want to mix up, you see. My mother was there, too, at that time. But those Barrow Point people—that was the last time I seen them, and no more."

Although Roger Hart knew that his mother was on mission territory, he was too fearful of the displeasure of Missionary Schwarz to visit her. He was only eight or nine years old at the time.

They told me my mother was staying in Elim. I was making up my mind to go down and see her, but the other boys told me, "Don't go! Watch out for Schwarz!" We were all frightened of him.

One evening we were coming back from work. Two women were

there waiting for the missionary. One was Lizzie McGreen, Yuuniji, the mother of young Billy McGreen. The other was my mother. We could hear them talking there to the south, waiting for the missionary.

She called out to me, "Come here!" There was a big lot of us boys walking along.

The others said to me, "Don't go over there! Schwarz will give you a good hiding."

"Why?"

"The Missionary will punish you. Don't go."

Well I was, you know, lagging behind. I wanted to go over and see my mother. She kept calling me. But the others said, "Come on!" So off I went. I didn't see her after all.

Afterwards, all those old people from Elim were shifted over to Alligator Creek.<sup>1</sup> Billy McGreen shifted there, too. Well, I made up my mind. "I'm going to go, too!" One Saturday morning I sneaked away, early in the morning. I met my mother then, at Alligator Creek.

At this time, Roger's mother was still caring for her newborn child, Jimmy Hart. The two brothers came together several years afterwards when Schwarz had the younger boy retrieved and brought to the mission. Later Roger's mother went to Cooktown, where she was employed for a period as a washerwoman by an Anglican clergyman, before returning to her own country in the north.

Roger Hart finished school at Cape Bedford, earning yet another nickname along the way.

#### MURDERER

Each group of schoolboys used to go out fishing together on the weekends. Sometimes we would go down to the beach or sometimes up to the wharf. Once we all went climbing up the hills on the north side of Cape Bedford, where we could climb down to the rocks by the water.

I was walking up toward the front, and there were several other boys behind me. Suddenly my foot slipped, and I kicked up a big rock from the path. It went hurtling down behind me and hit Jellico<sup>2</sup> on the side of the head just above his ear. He fell down, blood spurting from the cut. We had to carry him back to the dormitory.

They started calling me "Murderer" then, although I didn't learn until later what the word meant.

During the next few years, only isolated individuals from Barrow Point passed through Cape Bedford—men like Barney Warner, Long Billy

McGreen, and Jacky Red Point. Roger had now left tribal life in his homeland far behind. He had joined a small, select group of part Aboriginal children in the Cape Bedford community singled out for special treatment by the missionary. After leaving school, Roger Hart went to work on the mission boats, and he later moved to the new mission outstation at Spring Hill.

Roger Hart married Maudie (née Bowen, the daughter of Cape Bedford ship captain George Bowen) in a ceremony at Spring Hill performed by Missionary Schwarz on 2 June 1940. Roger remembers that he wore a green shirt and khaki trousers. It was already wartime.

Soon afterward he heard from Norman Arrimi, a notorious Aboriginal "outlaw" constantly on the run from government authorities, that his mother had come to Flaggy on the Endeavour River and that she had sent word for him to go see her. Previously she had been living near Lakefield in the north where she had had another child.<sup>3</sup> Roger was unable to visit her before the Cape Bedford people were shifted away to Woorabinda during the war. He never saw her again. She died three years before Roger and the rest of the Cape Bedford community returned to the Cooktown area.

### Wartime

The Barrow Point people who fled from Lockhart and returned to their own country were the final remnants of the Gambiilmugu-warra people. A few of their compatriots had remained at Lockhart, and another few—like Long Billy Wardsman and Barney Warner—had stayed at Cape Bedford when the rest of the group had run away from Point Lookout.

When the escapees from Lockhart returned to Barrow Point, they found their own country empty—but not completely. One man had evaded deportation. He was Ngamu Wuthurru, the legendary bearded witch. While the others were in exile at Lockhart he had stayed in virtual isolation at Barrow Point.

#### TRACKING DOWN OLD MAN NIGHT

My old **ngathi**, Ngamu Wuthurru, had managed to sneak away when the rest of the Barrow Point people were picked up and taken to Lock-

hart. He never left Barrow Point. He had been living all by himself, for I don't know how many months. (See Pl. 10.)

When the rest of them ran away from Lockhart, they came back to Barrow Point and started looking for him. They wandered all around. They might find his old campfire, just the ashes. But he would have moved on. So they kept looking. Then they would find another old fire, more recent than the first. They were getting nearer and nearer, you see?

Then they found another of his camping places. "Ah, he made this fire just yesterday. And here are his footprints." They followed his tracks in the sand. Finally they saw him, lying down. It was the afternoon. "There he is, lying over there."

He saw them coming. He must have had some suspicions that they were tracking him. He just waited for them to approach.

"Ah, so it's you. You have come back, then."

"We've come back. The country is no good there to the west. Too many witches, killing our countrymen. We were frightened, so we ran away."

That's how they found him again.

By the 1930s, authorities were no longer speaking of Barrow Point or Cape Melville "tribes." The official Cape Bedford report to the protector of Aborigines for 1932 describes a desire to bring to the mission outstation isolated people from a wide area.

Effort is being made to collect the remnant of the scattered camp people of Stewart River, Cape Melville and Barrow Point into the McIvor River because of their abused and desolate position.<sup>1</sup>

Little appeared to come of these efforts, and the "scattered camp people" continued to wander between beach camps, rural European properties, and mines, in search of a living.

The isolated contacts that Roger and other mission residents had with his people suggest that the Barrow Point survivors preferred to stick together as a group, although they clearly traveled far and wide and joined periodically with those from other groups who remained in the bush.

#### A BARROW POINT HUNTING PARTY

In 1937, Roger Hart was in the crew of the mission boat *Pearl Queen*, which sailed the waters north of Cape Bedford—fishing, collecting trochus shell, and hunting for dugong, which the mission was now converting into commercial oil.

They had set out north from Cape Bedford and camped for the night at Cape Flattery. The next morning they made for the rich dugong grounds at the mouth of the Starcke River. A few boys from the crew took a dinghy up the river.

Suddenly they caught sight of some women, running into the bush. They continued up river and tied their boat to a tree. They sat down to wait.

Soon, up from the south appeared old man Wathi, Billy Salt. He had been hiding in the bush, listening to them talk. They were speaking in Guugu Yimithirr.

Old Wathi sang out, "Gaw! Who is there?"

"It's us!" they replied.

The old man approached. "So, it's you all!" He knew them as mission boys.

He went back into the bush to the south then and called to his companions. "Why did you run away? These people are our countrymen."

The women came back. They had been afraid that the newcomers were men from Thursday Island.

The brothers Albert and Diiguul appeared in a dugout canoe, carrying two tortoises they had harpooned. They came up on the bank near the mission crew and began to butcher the meat.

All agreed to meet near the landing at the mouth of the river, where the mission boat was tied up. The rest of the boat crew was camped there, and the Barrow Point people came down river to see them. Old man Yagay appeared, in another canoe, joining the rest of the group. They camped together for a few days, sharing the turtle meat.

Finally, the Barrow Point people went up river again, intending to head for the mining camp at Manbara where some of their group—old man Johnson and his wife Mary Ann—had remained while the others were out hunting. They were camped at the place they now call New Hill yard. They left their spears behind for a later hunting trip, hiding them in the mangroves.

The mission boys waited for them to leave. Then they started to hunt for the spears. They stole all they could find before re-embarking for Cape Bedford.

Some fifteen years later, when Roger Hart again met Yagay after the war, the older man asked him: "Who stole all those spears?"

"I told him who it was. I didn't steal any spears myself—they had already given me plenty of good **wurrbuy** spears, with grass tree at one end and the heart of black palm at the other. You could use those spears for hunting wallaby and also for spearing people. The Barrow Point

people had good fighting spears with barbs, too. They also made good wommeras, but two different kinds. Old Ngamu Wuthurru, from **Tha-gaalmungu-warra** used a thin little spear thrower. The Barrow Point wommeras were wide and flat, scraped smooth and light weight."

The few Barrow Point people who had avoided missions or penal settlements continued to live in very small groups and to eke out a living on or near their own homeland during the late 1930s. Only a few adults were left by this time, and virtually all the children had been taken either to work on stations or to be educated at missions. The Cape Bedford boat crews had other sporadic contacts with Barrow Point individuals, and occasionally one of the northern people would pass through the camps at Bridge Creek, McIvor, or Spring Hill where non-Christian adults were permitted to live within the boundaries of the Cape Bedford reserve.

In May 1942 the German missionary at Cape Bedford was arrested by the military authorities and placed in an internment camp as a potentially dangerous alien. Nearly the entire Aboriginal population of the mission was transported south, most to the Woorabinda settlement inland from Rockhampton, and some of the older people to Palm Island. Although the official pretext for their evacuation was fear of a Japanese invasion of the north, only Aborigines from the Cape Bedford mission community were deported. Aborigines in the Cooktown area living outside the sphere of influence of the Bavarian missionary were left to fend for themselves during the war.

Those Cape Bedford people who survived the cold climate and unfamiliar diseases of Woorabinda lived out the war in the south. When Roger Hart returned to the Cooktown area, in the early 1950s, he met again the very last of his countrymen and learned how they had spent the war years.

Old man Wathi had been living at the Bridge Creek camp, on the mission reserve, since about 1936. When the soldiers came to round up the mission people for the trip south, they arrived at the main settlement of Christian families at Spring Hill. But those nonmissionized adults living in more isolated bush camps on mission territory—as well as a few people who were out hunting when the soldiers arrived<sup>2</sup>—were not detected by the military police, and most of them remained in the north during the war. In the Cooktown area, one of the principal Aboriginal camps just before and during the war was at Flaggy, upstream on the Left Branch of the Endeavour River, and this is where Wathi and several Barrow Point companions took refuge.

The same small nucleus of people who had returned to Barrow Point from Lockhart—Albert, Diiguul, old man Yagay—remained isolated at **Guraaban**, Brown's Peak. They had established a more or less permanent camp in the area, which they left only for seasonal hunting.

When the war began, the Barrow Point people began to see warplanes flying overhead, on their way to New Guinea. The unusual activity frightened them. Even more frightening was their own dwindling number. Diiguul had already died, at Guraaban. As Yagay put it later to Roger Hart: "All the **bama** were dying. If the last one were to die, who would bury him? That's why we left the country **bama-mul** [without any owners]." Finally they too moved south to Flaggy to join other Aboriginal relatives. After the war, all the people living in such scattered fringe camps were gathered together in a new Aboriginal reserve in Cooktown. When the Cape Bedford people returned to the Cooktown area, that is where they found their surviving relatives. Roger Hart met Yagay again and began to relearn the stories of his own people.

"Oh, he was there hours and hours telling me the stories. I was really interested, too. He would speak to me in my own language, but I had forgotten some of it. He kept on talking to me, and gradually I got it back. Banjo knew those stories, too, but sometimes he would muddle them up. But old Yagay had them straight."

One by one the survivors from the original Barrow Point camps died, some—like Johnson and Yagay—living in destitution in the Cooktown reserve. Albert died at Boiling Springs, a property near the modern Hopevale, where he spent time during the war. Jackie Red Point died in Cooktown just before the war, leaving no descendants. Old Billy McGreen, by then a long-time resident at Cape Bedford, had already died in 1937, the reputed victim of witchcraft after a long life as a police tracker. Ngamū Wuthurru died at Barrow Point during the war and was buried in his own tribal land at *Thagaalmungu*. Roger's Aboriginal father had died some time before at Bathhurst Head.<sup>3</sup> He was thus one of the last people to die in that area before the remaining Barrow Point people fled south to Flaggy. Barney Warner, who had become part of the Cape Bedford community and been baptized a Lutheran at Woorabinda during the war, died at the newly reconstructed Hopevale Mission.

Roger Hart's childhood playmates also succumbed. Banjo died and was buried at Hopevale. King Nicholas's daughter Leah died in the Cairns hospital after a long illness in Cooktown.<sup>4</sup> Charlie Monaghan, who had visited the new Hopevale after the war, died on Palm Island in the 1950s. Toby Gordon died in Mossman in about 1979.

Roger Hart has made an effort to keep track of his countrymen and their descendants scattered all over Queensland, some at Lockhart, where they died or forgot about their homeland, others—like King Nicholas—banished to penal settlements in the south. "There must have been children but they don't know where they come from." Many people from Roger's tribal country were sent south and lost without a trace. During the war at Cherbourg he met a man called Arthur Sundown, who claimed his father had come from Barrow Point but who had lost the language. Others, raised to very different lives on reserves and missions, "took no interest" in their Barrow Point origins or traded them for new identities

"I think the only bama left, I think, is me."