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## Pest Control

One of the most menacing pests on these properties was the rabbit. In good years they were in plague proportion and stripped the country bare of all vegetation. They had a few ways to control them.

1. The landowners purchased "poison carts". A horse drawn cart which made a furrow and laid phosphorus-impregnated pollard (known as SAP) at intervals of one, two or three feet, depending on the degree of infestation. This was a very dangerous task, as phosphorus is highly flammable and can burn skin very badly. It was mixed by hand with a stick. The Stirrat boys can remember a calf getting into the poison shed, where the phosphorus was stored, and coming out with no ears. It was then called "No Ears".
2. Rabbits were trapped for eating.
3. Rabbits were shot and sold, in lean years this task kept many a landowners head above water.

Around 1937 trucks started to visit the properties and picked up all the paired rabbits (rabbits were shot and gutted, then two were linked together by their back legs and hung over Mallee sticks across the back of the "shootin' bus" to set). They were taken back to "chillers" in Wentworth the same day. (Chillers are huge freezing rooms with rows and rows of racks to hang the rabbits on).

Around 1957 some of the property owners obtained their own chillers and these men then became the buyers for the bigger buyers in Mildura, the shooters bringing their bounty into these chillers. Some of them made a lot of money out of this practice.

Foxes were also a pest. They would kill newborn lambs and, if hungry enough the mothers as well, the chooks and ducks and any other small animal that moved. The gun controlled these animals. They were shot for their pelts. These were pegged out on a board to dry, then sold to the skin buyer in Mildura.

Goats were not in plague proportions in the early days, but some of the sheep drovers caught small mobs and sold them in Mildura. Later on, as the population grew, a lot of the landowners trapped them in yards, or around tanks, and sold them to the abattoirs or the goat buyer in Mildura. They are still a pest today.

### Weed Control

Weeds were not much of a problem out on these properties. The only real one was the Bathurst Burr. In the wet years, 1956, 1960 & 1973, the burrs were chipped out by hand using, a shovel. The rabbits, goats and sheep took care of the rest.

### Fencing

When the properties were split up in 1922, there were old wire netting and 4 wire fences separating boundaries and paddocks. These were all gradually replaced, by hand, over the next many years.

Roger Stirrat recalls " I fenced a lot of Zanci and I was paid-

1 pound/100 to cut the post. (Pine tree logs)

1 pound/100 to cart the post.

1 pound/100 to dig the hole with a crowbar and shovel and stand the post up in it.

1 pound/100 to drill 5 holes in the post with a brace and bit.

Then if I ran the wire I would get 30/- per 1 mile. Good money in those days". They used 12-gauge plain wire (very tough stuff). All this hard work to achieve about 1 mile per month.

To get a straight line for a fence, they would put a post where it was to start, then go to where it was to finish and light a fire, then go back to the start and put in another post and from then on it was all by eye sight level. Roy Stirrat was quoted as saying, "You never looked back, always straight ahead".

Fencing larger paddocks into smaller ones allowed them to run more stock and manage the spelling of paddocks more efficiently.

### Tank Sinking

In the 1920's, the collection of water was one of the most important tasks the landowner had to do.

A horse-drawn buckscraper scoop sank Tim's tank in 1920. This tank was always referred to as the "house tank".

Later on, more modern equipment arrived. In the 40's and 50's an International Crawler was put to use. This pulled two Gaston Scoops. One man per scoop operated these. They would stand on a small platform on the scoop and use hand levers to control the amount of soil dragged out and the tipping out of the soil to form the bank.

This job could take up to 4 weeks to complete, depending on the weather. The men would set up camp at the site and work from dawn to dusk.

Then a Fordson P6 tractor was purchased. This pulled a Gaston Scoop converted to automatic that was hydraulically controlled from the tractor.

### Mustering

Sometimes they were away for days at a time and the whole property was mustered about 3 times a year. In the 20's, 30's and 40's, horses and pushbikes were used. Horses were less tiresome to ride, but in the thick Mallee scrub you had to watch your head, as the horse would go under a branch but forget he had you on his back. With a pushbike, you had to have real good leg muscles because the walls were a bit of an obstacle to get over. I think it was more walking than riding. The "mob" and the tanks were checked regularly with the old T-Model Truck.

In 1951 they purchased a motorbike. Much easier, although the Mallee scrub was still a challenge to get sheep out of.

Now days the motorbike is stilled used as well as 4 wheel drive vehicles.

### Land Management

The practice of "spelling paddocks" was all done by the naked eye. If there was enough feed in a paddock for the sheep, then the mob would be put in there, when the paddock they were in, was bare.

If it was a good year (meaning heaps of rain) the graziers would usually purchase more sheep, then as it dried out, they would have to start selling (usually at a cheaper price than when they bought them).

These landowners had to really gamble on their stock, knowing when to sell and when to buy.

### Dipping

In the early years dipping was not a necessity as there was no lice on the property. In 1948 they bought a mob of sheep from Hilston, in the southeast of NSW, and with them came the first case of lice. This was the start of "dipping". It was usually done as the sheep were shorn.

First came the hand held gun with a motorised pump attached. The chemical was just poured down the sheep's back. Then came the "plunge dip". This was a bricked trench in the ground, which was filled with water, and the chemical mixed in. The sheep would then be herded into this trench, which after swimming through, would be saturated in the mixture.

Then came the "shower dip". This consisted of a large corrugated like tank. Across the top of this tank were rotating steel pipes, with lots of small sprays on them. The pesticide was pumped through this rotating shower. The sheep were herded into the tank and sprayed until saturated.

Now days the lice are controlled either orally or through the skin. This is done with a hand held nozzle and backpack and one application down the back is sufficient.

## Shearing

When the Vigers arrived in 1922, they only had a little old shearing shed to work in. There was a Super Diesel Motor that ran the overhead gear for the two narrow comb hand pieces.

Later they purchased a Ronaldson & Tippett Petrol Motor.

In 1947 they built the new woolshed, where it stands today, using part of the original Mungo Woolshed Wool Room. They used the old Mungo Oregon beams for the support of the overhead gear.

They then bought a diesel powered Ronaldson & Tippett.

Shearing time was by far the busiest time for the grazier. Weeks of preparation beforehand, moving sheep closer to the shed, cleaning out the shed and shearers huts and making sure all the mechanical gear worked. The wool clip was their main source of income and had to be done perfectly. As the sheep were shorn, they were put through the dip. After the shearing was completed they spent weeks of cleaning up. Droving the sheep back to their paddocks, cleaning up the shed and organising the wool for transportation to the market. Very long days for the owner and his workers, on the move before the shearers were out of bed and still out there after they were back in bed.

The Mungo shed worked the same, but it had always been a huge shed. They could "shed" more sheep overnight and have more in the yards.

### Communications

In 1922 Roy Vigar would leave Zanci, in his unregistered T-Model Ford 1 ton truck, just on dusk and get into Mildura at dawn. He would drive to a mates place and park the truck in the backyard, then go to the grocers and have his order home delivered, then leave Mildura at dusk and be home the next morning. He did this about twice a year and never got caught.

They could have small things brought out by the mailman. Mr. Scott came from Balranald once a week in a horse and buggy and later on a Mrs. Garner, in her Baby Austin 7, brought the mail out once a week from Pomona (near Wentworth).

A Party line telephone connected Mungo, Joulni, Zanci and Leaghur, but only Leaghur could ring Mildura, so all communication had to go through there. All the stations had their own ring code, so you were only supposed to pick up the phone if it was for your place.

Around 1950 the phone line to Mildura was erected. Two wires strung between pine posts. The Stirrat boys helped build this line. A lot of times you couldn't ring out, as the line was "down", caused by dust on the wire or a severe storm would blow them down.

The roads were never impassible, as they didn't go to town when they thought they couldn't get through, and they didn't go to town often enough. Later on, as the more modern car became available, some people thought they could go anytime, only to find themselves bogged, either in mud or sand. They thought they could go faster too only to find hitting a kangaroo, cow or sheep put a big dent in you car.

### Domestic Duties

In 1924 Bill and Ida (Marmie) Stirrat sailed aboard the paddleboat Ruby, from Renmark to Wentworth, then by horse and buggy, with a sleepover under the stars, to the outback of Zanci Station. The oldest daughter Venda was 9 years old, with younger siblings Jean, Roger, Don and Nona. This major move was due to Bill having TB and being told to shift to a drier climate. So they chose to go and live with Ida's brother in the very dry N.S.W. outback.

On arrival at the property they had to erect tents to sleep in as there was only a kitchen, made out of kerosene tins and corrugated iron, with an old wood stove to cook on. The tents had bag floors that were swept with a straw broom once a day. The kitchen had a wooden floor, which was scrubbed on hand and knees, once a day.

Meat was killed on the property and all raw ingredients were bought, from Wentworth, then Mildura twice a year, in large bags and stored in a loft in the woolshed. Vegetables were grown only in the good years when there was plenty of water. They milked cows and had scolded or separated cream, which was made into butter and sold. Venda recalls having to take butter to Garnpang Station, 15 mile away, on horseback. This little trip would take her and one of her siblings all day.

Soap was made only occasionally, as the caustic soda ended up down Roger and Nona's throats.

Marmie (Ida - mother) was a real lady and the table had to be set with a table cloth and cloth napkins, even when it was blowing a dust storm or 140°F in the shade. This practice would have made for a lot of washing.

Wash day was Monday and was done by hand in old kero tins, over a fire to heat the water, with a washboard for scrubbing. Later on they used a "copper" (a huge copper bowl sat in a frame with a fire underneath it). Then came the "plunger washer", another tub with a plunger that you pushed down, by hand, to squash the clothes and get all the dirt out. The next invention was the first design of the "wringer". This machine washed the clothes with an automatic agitator, but you put the clothes into the wringer and wound a handle to wring the water out of it. The next one the wringer was automatic as well. After the clothes were dried on the line, a piece of wire held up by posts, everything was starched the ironed.

The first iron had a lift up lid, into which you poured hot coals. Then they graduated to the more modern iron, which was sat on the stove to heat, and repeatedly put back on after use.

Everything was cooked and every meal was a hot one. The women worked very hard in and around the home, mainly to look after their menfolk. The cleanliness of these outback homes is a credit to these women, and still is today.

## Refrigeration

There were no fridges or iceboxes in the 20's so, when a sheep was killed, they would have one fresh feed of meat then the rest would be "brined". This meant boiling the meat in brine until it was cooked. It was cooked in cleaned kero tins and would stay in these, and stored in a cool place, until it was needed. This was the only way to preserve the meat. Butter was stored in the ground in stoneware type containers.

Then came the Coolgardie Safe. This was a lead like box with holes in the sides. A dish of water sat on top of the safe, and from this dish flannelette like pieces of cloth hung over the sides of the safe, and as the water seeped down the cloth the air blew through the holes thus cooling the safe. You just had to remember to keep the dish full.

Then in the 30's came the Coolgardie Charcoal Safe. This was similar to the old one except, it had double wall on the side and these were filled with charcoal. It had a tank sitting on top with taps along the sides. These were turned on to just a trickle and as the water wet the charcoal, the breeze blowing through the holes cooled it down.

Around about 1936 the Kero/Gas fridge was purchased. This fridge was cooled by gas but had to have the kero as a fuel to move the gas around. It was much more modern as it was able to be inside, didn't need the breeze.

### Illnesses & Remedies

The kids were very rearly sick, how I don't know because the boys never wore any shoes.

Every day they had to take Sulphur and Treacle - this kept you healthy, and Castor Oil - well you know what that did.

For colds - 1 teaspoon sugar and 2 drops of eucalyptus.

For toothache - tip a bit of Brandy on the tooth or some essence of lemon.

For boils - sugar and soap poltus.

To stop bleeding - apply some Fryers Balm.

When Don Stirrat was cutting logs for the horse yards, a piece of wood flew off the saw and struck him in the eye. Instead of rushing him into the hospital when it happened, they waited for the next day. No rush. He did loose the sight in that eye.

### Socialising

They did a fair bit of this in the "olden" days. When the kids at Zanci were young, they used to play tennis on the white clay pans near the house.

When Venda and Albert bought Mungo, they erected a proper tennis court, and this court was played on every Sunday, with people coming from all over the district. The when Jean and Alex bought Joulni, they had a tennis court too, so they alternated Sundays. The ladies would bring a plate for lunch and everyone would enjoy a picnic lunch.

Cricket was also played on Sundays, but only in the season. There was actually Cricket Clubs, these were Garnpang, with whom the Zanci mob played, Marma, Prungle and Joulni.

They enjoyed the Lethero (a property on the Darling River owed by Albert's parents) Picnic every New Year's Day. Here they ran all sorts of foot races and the men had a shooting competition. At night music and a dance in the hall entertained them.

For one day in 1937 and 1938, they held the Mungo Horse Races. It was actually run on a flat at Joulni. This was a grand occasion, with everyone dressing up and having a little flutter on the horses. After the races it was back to the Mungo Woolshed for a dance.

The reasons for dances at the Mungo Woolshed ranged from 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays to anniversaries and the Woolshed centenary to a charity fundraiser for Marilyn Scadding as Country Queen. The centenary of the Woolshed was held in 1972 and people came from everywhere. They dressed in period costume and a prize was given for the best-dressed couple. Music was supplied

*and everyone had a great time. It still gets talked about today.*

### Education

*Correspondence was the only form of education for these kids being so far from any sort of school. The Stirrat children's lessons came from Sydney via the mail and their mother taught this to them. When they got older and in secondary level they were sent away to school, usually staying with relatives in South Australia. Roger, the second eldest son did not receive any formal education.*

*Albert and Venda's children, Val and Barbara, had a governess to teach them until they were about 10. She was a live-in tutor. After this Albert and his brother Alex bought a house in town and the children were educated at a public school. Barbara found this very hard to adjust to, as she was not used to having lots of children around her. When Val was in his senior years, he went to Scott's College in Adelaide for two years. Barbara went Queens Girls Grammar School in Ballarat for two years.*

*When Val and Valerie had their children, Peter, Janeen, Mark and Melinda (twins), Valerie taught their schooling until Peter was 8 years old. They then bought a property at Gol Gol North (near Buronga NSW) and the children were then educated through the public system.*

# MUNGO RACES

When we heard of Mungo Races  
 Well we thought we'd like to go  
 That is Rose and Ev. and Danny Boy, Hazel, myself and Joe  
 So we packed our beds and sallied forth  
 To see our outback friends  
 We took the trail up New South Wales  
 The trail that never ends.

We didn't know where Mungo was  
 Except perhaps that we  
 Knew Mungo lay some half a day  
 From Les's place Turlee  
 But we didn't know where Turlee was  
 Perhaps t'was near Garmpang  
 And then there was Arumpo, Top Hut and old Pan Ban  
 You take the lot and mix 'em up  
 Add Byrnes place in too  
 And Oh! of course Burtundy  
 A real old Irish Stew.

With hopeful hearts the car we start  
 Oh ignorance is bliss!  
 We travel on for half a day  
 And then the track we miss  
 We travel on and on and on  
 And on and on and on.

But we don't find Mungo Races  
 And our breakfasts long since gone  
 And we don't think trees are pretty  
 And we loathe the sight of dams  
 And our minds keep playing, teasing  
 Round the thought of meats and hams  
 And the driver is quite worried  
 And our faces wear false grins  
 And Hazel's opened all the gates  
 As penance for her sins.

At last a feeble cry is heard  
 (I think it came from Rose)  
 "Oh! there's the horses over there  
 I really don't suppose  
 They're there for Mungo Race?"  
 "No you're seeing things" said we  
 "Do you think they'd hold the races  
 Where there's not a blooming tree".

Then as we try to reach the spot  
 The driver struck a drain  
 And Danny yelled out "Woman"  
 (I doubt if he was sane)  
 He yelled out "Woman! Stone the Crows  
 What the blazes are you at"  
 But its just his funny little way  
 He's Irish and all that.

And so at length we reach the course  
 (The Races are half done)  
 But we settle down to see the rest  
 And enjoy them every one  
 The riders are all station hands  
 The horses station bred  
 And the yelling in that clay pan  
 turned the Walls of China red.

When the Races are all over  
 We make ready for the Ball  
 And return to the Mungo Woolshed  
 More politely termed "the hall"  
 And some danced away till daylight  
 While underneath the stars  
 We spread our camping outfit  
 On the ground near squatters cars.

But 'ere the morning fairly dawned  
 We must be on our way  
 So we wakened the Great Barry  
 From his humble bed of hay  
 Such precious things are packed in straw  
 A sheer delight to see  
 Did Barry look a precious thing  
 Oh Boy you're telling me!

So we journeyed on to Turlee  
 Where our friends are all in bed  
 And we really could'nt blame them  
 To call curses on our head  
 But in true Australian fashion  
 They led us all within  
 And set such a meal before us  
 That it really was a sin  
 The way some people gorged themselves  
 On the good things that were there  
 And left a pile of dirty dishes  
 I say it was'nt fair.

If to meet with people such as these  
 Means getting off the track  
 I'd lose my way just every day  
 For the fun of going back.

Composer: A. Treacy.



\* ABOVE: HARRY RICHARDSON'S  
 HORSE - WINNER OF  
 THE MUNGO CUP.

\* PERCY ON MONA RICHARDSON'S  
 HORSE 'PUZZLE' - WINNER  
 OF THE MUNGO BRACELET.



Albert Barnes third from left

## ALBERT

Gnarled, bent hands  
Like twisted Mallee gum  
Tell of a hard life.

Capable hands  
With a tenacious grasp  
Which defies their age.

Fingers talk with quick jabs  
Like sharp-witted sheep dogs  
Tapping round the flock.

Albert's hands, Mungo hands  
Resilient and tough  
Like the saltbush and  
everlastings.

NEW YORK

## MUNGO HEAT

FIRST KINDLED, THE FIRE GLOWS  
WITH A SOFT LIGHT.  
IT SEEMS TO MESMERIZE HIM.  
HE STOKES THE BLAZE,  
BUT GRADUALLY WORKING UP TO A FRENZY.

BY NOON RED DUST  
GLOWS LIKE COALS.  
NEAR DISTANCE SHIMMERS  
IN A MYSTERIOUS HAZE.

NOW THE FIRE IS UNCONTROLLABLE.  
THERE IS NO ESCAPE.  
SEARING, DRY HEAT PENETRATES, PARCHES,  
BLEACHING BONES,  
CRACKING THE EARTH,  
TURNING VEGETATION TO BROWN DUST.

THE HEAT LENDS THE LANDSCAPE  
A FIERCE BEAUTY,  
TURNING HARSH CONTOURS INTO  
A MOLTEN MASS OF RED AND GOLD.

FOR HOURS HE GLORIES IN HIS DEED,  
SLOWLY THEN, AS IF WITH REGRET,  
HE DOUSES THE FLAME.  
THEN BROODS: REMEMBERING HOW  
MAN AND BEAST,  
PLANT AND TREE, CRINGED.

IN THE COOL OF THE NIGHT  
HIS LUST FOR POWER WAKES AGAIN  
AND AT THE NEW DAWN

HE REKINDLES THE FLAME