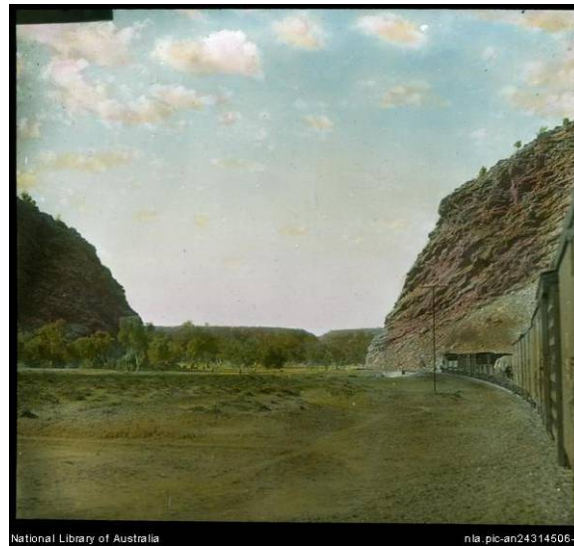


# Following in Flynn's Footsteps



These photos of Alice Springs which were taken by Flynn in 1926 and 1934 show the rapid economic growth which came to Alice Springs after the railway came to town.



Part 2: Flynn's Alice by Megg Kelham.

John Flynn visited Alice Springs for the first time in the summer of 1913. He travelled by camel from the railhead at Oodnadatta in the company of a Dutchman called Texas, who was reputed to have fled to Central Australia after his wife was murdered following gun running activities in New Mexico.

Texas spent most of the journey with his nose 'lost in a book', leaving Flynn to experience the journey in relative solitude.

I remember a remark made by my companion which appealed to me because I was born [sic] tired. It was by far our longest day. The calves were sulking, the dog was suffering from the intense heat, the old cow-camels sulked most effectively in sympathy with their calves and broke nose lines more times than could be numbered. Texas was too true a bushman to break or even injure their heads, but I also fear he must have felt fit to break all Ten Commandments at one stroke. We had started before eight in the morning and, with a short break at noon, had gone on all through the afternoon. Pup sweltered under a splendid canopy of shade which his master had built for him on top of one of the packs, and we sweltered under our hats.

About sundown we 'sat down' the camels, boiled the quart-pots, and had our evening meal. Then Texas thoughtfully rolled a cigarette, while I lit a pipe, and in most artistic manner posed myself in recline on the soft red sand, without intruding on one clump of Spinifex. The temperature had already fallen to a delightful coolness, and the stars began to whisper of content.

At last I spoke.

"I reckon this is the best part of the day. I think the best time is when you've had your tea, when all your work for the day is done, and you lie back luxuriously and enjoy a quiet smoke."

Texas replied. "Do you? I don't. I reckon the best time is when you've had your tea, and you've still got a few more miles to go and finish your day's stage, and you light your pipe and have a nice quiet smoke – and you don't go on.

We studied problems in silence for quarter of an hour, then threw tucker bags into packbags again, called on the camels to go forward and travelled on till after midnight.

Flynn, The Inlander, 1913.



### Work of Superintendent Sep 1912 to Sep 1914

#### 1913 VISIT TO SOUTH AND CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Jan 22 Started for Adelaide

23 Hearty meeting of four Churches combined re East-West Railway movement

26 Sunday at Port Augusta. Preached twice.

29 Started for Beltana. Oodnadatta and Alice Springs, on general tour of inspection re Central Australia. Good reception among residents. Reports since published in Inlander. Returned to Adelaide on March 22nd.

Mar 23 – Sunday Preached at Goodwood and Woodville

26 Returned to Melbourne: began preparing for lecturing tour over eastern States.

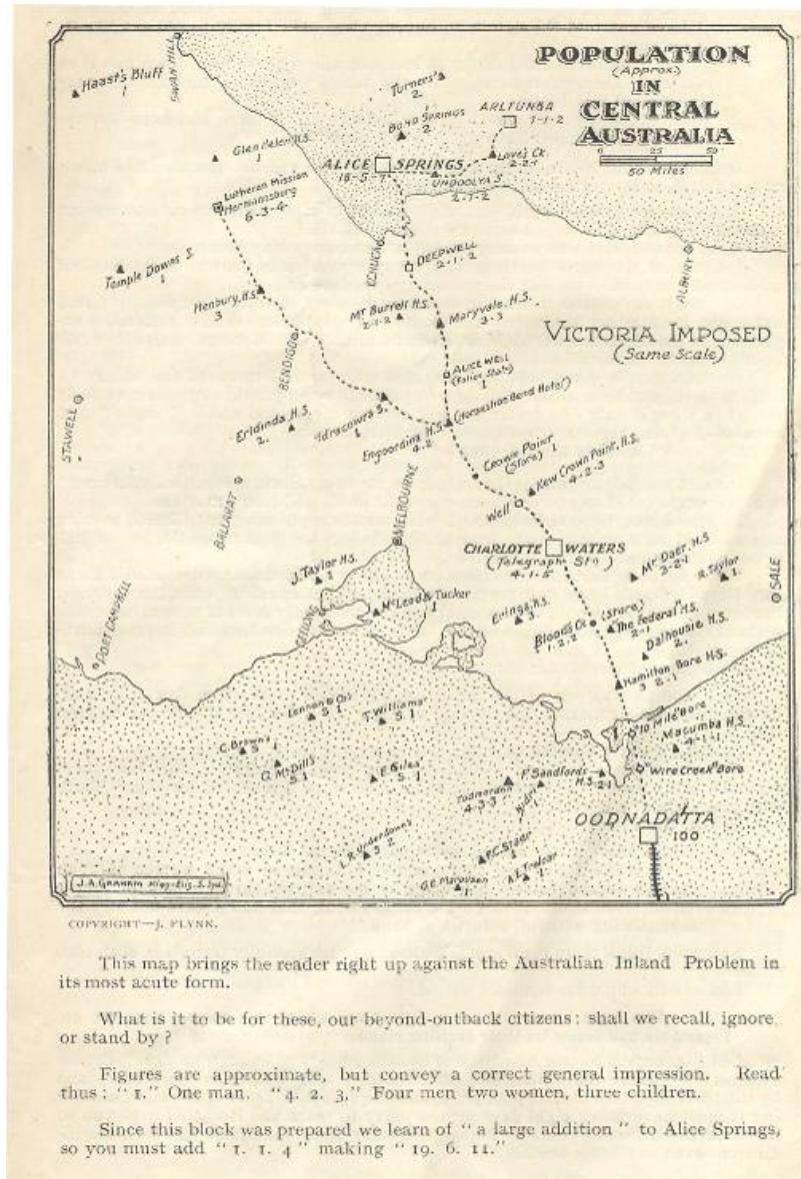
Extract from 'appendix to Flynn's 1914 Superintendent's Report to the Board of the A.I.M.



Alice Springs, or Stuart as it was then officially called, had been founded 25 years earlier by the Government of South Australia, as a service centre for an ill-fated 'ruby' rush.

The 'rubies' turned out to be garnets, a fact Flynn uncharacteristically appears not to have unearthed during his first visit.

Alice Springs survived when gold was found at nearby Arltunga. With an adult European population of less than 18 in 1913, Alice could, Flynn thought, only be described as an 'approach' to a township and not 'as a township altogether'. [Flynn 1912]



Following in Flynn's Footsteps Part 2: Flynn's Alice © Megg Kelham 2010

Seventy miles east gold is found. There Arltunga has had its rise and decline ... The mortality among the miners has been rather severe owing to the awkward nature of the country and crude methods of mining. What the ultimate worth of these fields is must be left to the future to decide ...

The enterprise of mining men is sublime. Would that some of them would turn churchwards, and bring their to-the-utmost methods with them.

Small rubies are found in abundance in these parts, but somehow they are not valued highly. Perhaps that is because they are Australian. Sentimental associations seem to matter with precious stones ...

Seventy miles west of Alice Springs is Hermannsburg ... a mission station for the blacks founded over 20 years ago ... After years of work some good results have been attained, but isolation and loss of time in travel have been much against continuity of policy and fuller success. Worse still, there is no local market ... thus profitable ventures are confined to cattle-raising, in which it is impossible to find employment for all ...

Pastoralists are very few, though they have big holdings according to southern ideas ...

Flynn, John The Inlander Vol 1 No1 1913



Flynn, like many of his contemporaries, thought that British claims to ownership of the Australian continent could only be legitimately substantiated through occupation by settlement. As his commentary to this map shows, he regarded the slowness of inland settlement as a problem which needed to be solved. Flynn's maps often compared the size of his inland parish to Victoria, his home state. Map from Flynn's 1914 Superintendent's Report



Despite Alice's smallness, Flynn was impressed by the hospitality of a government officer, most probably sergeant Stott, with whom he spent 'a good part of the first evening ... on a very comfortable lounge chair, with a very good cigar, and in sound of a pianola, which gave us very good music both old and new'. [Flynn, 1913 p12]

'Alice Springs' prepares one for something pleasant, and pleasant that part of the world is to an Inlander. Those folk who expect babbling brooks at springs, murmuring streams at rivers, snow-clad heights in ranges, and English meadows in Australia, will never altogether approve of Alice Springs and Macdonnell (sic) Ranges. Well they can stay away...

We would prefer to have MacDonnell Ranges many times as high, but as that is out of the question at this late date, we must make the most of them as they are ... very bold in outline ..

The Gaps in these ranges are peculiar. Every few miles you find one, a great cleavage from top to base of the range where the creek comes through...

Extracts from Flynn, John The Inlander Vol 1 No1 1913 pp10-16

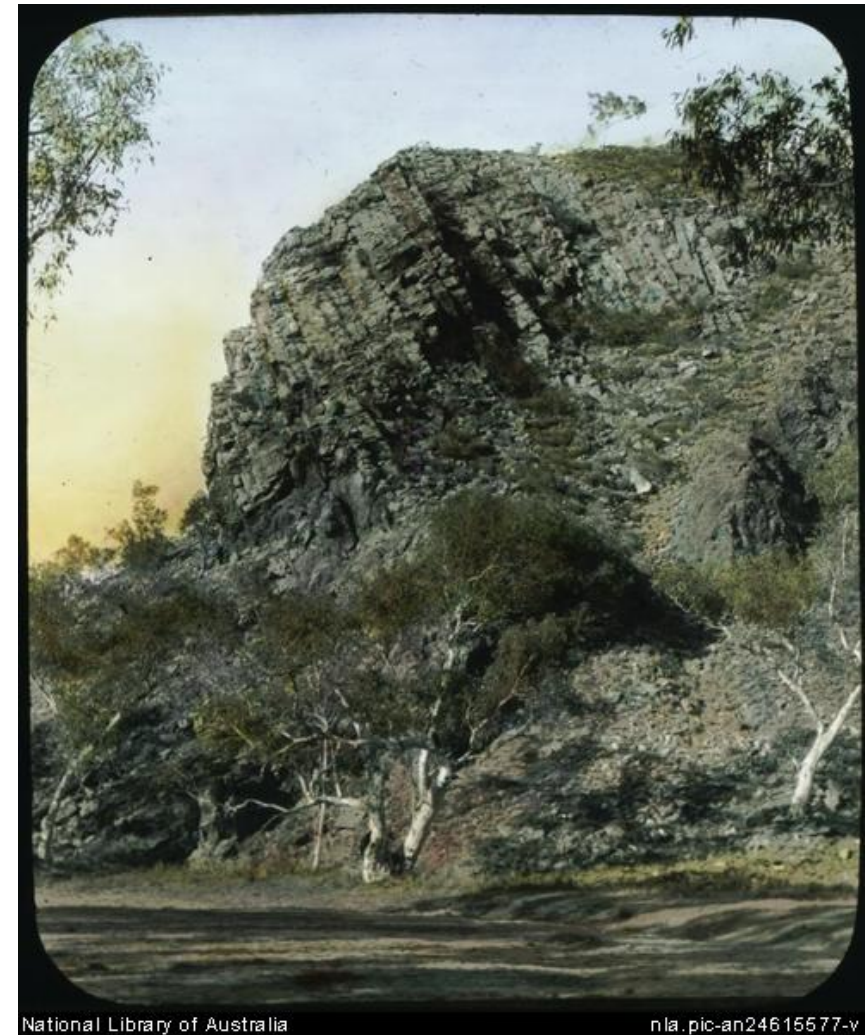
We must not hope for too much for this country with a rainfall under eleven inches ... Neither must we sneer at this land because it compares so unfavourably with the coastal fringe ...

Flynn, John The Inlander Vol 1 No1 1913

Flynn's slightly quixotic first impressions of Alice's beauty betray his upbringing in greener, more southern climes.

The longer Flynn travelled Inland, the less unambiguously appreciative of her charms he became.

Seen in the early morning, or at eventide, the panorama of the MacDonnell Ranges... is glorious.  
Flynn, The Inlander September 1927



Temple Bar— ten miles south west of Alice Springs. Flynn could see its beauty long before many other European Australians. Compare, for instance, Jean Finlayson's description on page 9 of this book. John Flynn, magic lantern slide, NLA 24615577



Flynn's visit took place when Australians, most of whom had neither time or money for travel, were engaged in fervent national debate about the Inland's economic potential.

For some, Australia's interior was a 'dead heart', a barren wasteland recently described by one American journalist as '2 million square miles of Mars-like terrain encompassing most of Australia's interior beyond the coastal cities.' [Benesch, Peter 'The Flying Australian Altruist' Investors Business Daily Dec 26, 2008]

For others, the vast acres of sparsely inhabited land could be transformed – through the miracle of irrigation - into a thriving food bowl capable of supporting between one and five hundred million people.

Griffith Taylor, the pioneering Australian geographer who challenged this engineering dream by calling Australia's Inland a 'desert' incurred the wrath of outraged Australian nationalism and took a job overseas.



One of Flynn's Quart pots, an essential part of inland travel. Collection Adelaide House.

It must be remembered, however, that the extent to which a country is to be 'occupied' depends on its capacity. There is much confusion of thought on this subject, for it is generally discussed away from facts. Perhaps the time for Australia to be judged is not yet arrived; for, by the standards used to condemn us, which of the other nations shall stand?

Flynn, John The Inlander, New Series, No. 1 September 1924 p 21

What a wonderful place is Central Australia. "Finest pastoral country in Australia! says one. "Desert' says another.

I would rather let somebody else speak, for utterance is certain to cause trouble with somebody somewhere. What a pity one could not always lurch along in silence on top of a patient camel, with a good book, a full waterbag, no hearers and no critics.

Here, however is a doctrine to which very many will agree, or have already agreed. Central Australia is the core of a big whole and it needs to be bored through; bored through with a railway. Then we can begin to talk about 'Our Country'. Now we ought really to say "Our Scraps of Country".

The Inlander: A Quarterly Magazine dealing with National Interests from the Outbacker's Point of View 1913



## DESERT AND DESTINY

Following in Flynn's Footsteps Part 2: Flynn's Alice © Megg Kelham 2010

*For the purpose of this article, 'Desert' is to be interpreted as 'A large expanse of country in which one can do almost anything except lose one's self in a crowd.'*

In spite of variation in detail, impartial students seem to agree that a large portion of Australia must be sparsely occupied by human beings. There will be pastoralists, and mining communities; also, in picked sections, colonies of farmers engaged in raising special crops; but not continuously intense settlement. The portion in question extends from somewhere north of Geraldton, to the neighbourhood of Broome, eastward to somewhere about Boulia and Bourke.

On this area, for most of the year, the sun smites hard; rain comes at irregular intervals, and individual falls are generally either too scanty or too copious for satisfactory agriculture of ordinary character. Many people become either angry or mournful when these facts are pointed out to them. Is there cause for alarm or for lasting regret? ...

Our "Desert" dominates Australia in a physical way, as surely as the furnace dominates a hothouse. Do men call the furnace bad names because mosses and orchids fail to thrive within its maw? Is it possible that our "Desert" exerts influences far more subtle than the above? And is it probable that, in days to come these deeper influences will operate in far greater degree?

We believe so. There is something vaster and finer than millions of tons of wheat, or shiploads of wool and cotton, however necessary and valuable these may be; something overlooked by those restless folk who never hear of wide open spaces of earth without itching to pour in more millions of human beings, until every mile of its area vibrates with the roar of traffic; viz., distinctive character in the Spirit of Man.

It goes without saying that we Australians believe that we possess a distinctive character, and impartial observers in other countries bear witness that this belief is amply justified. What is it? Surely it is INDIVIDUALITY. ...

There are many who fear, and not without cause, that even now thousands of our Australians-born are failing to acquire outstanding qualities which marked their predecessors – sturdy individuality, allied to a wonderful faculty for comradeship of the spontaneous order, i.e. based on the mere fact of having been thrown together by circumstance, rather than on having been properly 'introduced'. ...

For over a generation, ever so many of our people have been turning their backs on Australia, huddling themselves in capital cities on the edge, with their faces and ears set to catch the models of frocks and cars and songs and sentiments of every country but their own.

Cont'd.....

Flynn entered the debate in the pages of *The Inlander*, where he took a characteristically idiosyncratic position.

Flynn, the lover of technology, hoped experts would find solutions to the limitations of the Inland's natural gifts.

Flynn, the lover of 'FACTS', defended Taylor's efforts to scientifically evaluate the Inland's natural resources and accepted his findings.

Flynn, the nationalist, argued that the Australian desert should be cherished as the birthplace of the globally unique 'Aussie Spirit'.

There is much to be said for a generation which diverts its attention to customs and performances of other lands, provided it eventually gets back to its own bit of earth to build still better, instead of lingering on and on in paltry limitations.

But can strong individuality be nurtured in a generation of strap hangers? Can the virtue of mutual helpfulness be kept where kerb-stones breed parasites? The city man who is to do anything MUST acquire strongly the habit of eluding his neighbour, even though that habit should constitute a danger to his soul.

Truly, in areas where every corner is fast filling to saturation point, the tendencies of life are inexorable. What shall it profit a Nation if it gain hundreds of millions of people – and take to the game of Catch-as-catch-can?

Wherefore, it seems, the Master Architect has provided vast oceans and 'desserts', and arctic region, in order that the human salt of nations might never lose their saviour. ...

Out of such 'deserted' regions emerge those who provide the greater part of inspiration for mankind. Take a tally of your favourite writers; of the speakers whose words linger longest in your memory. Where did they find their faculties?

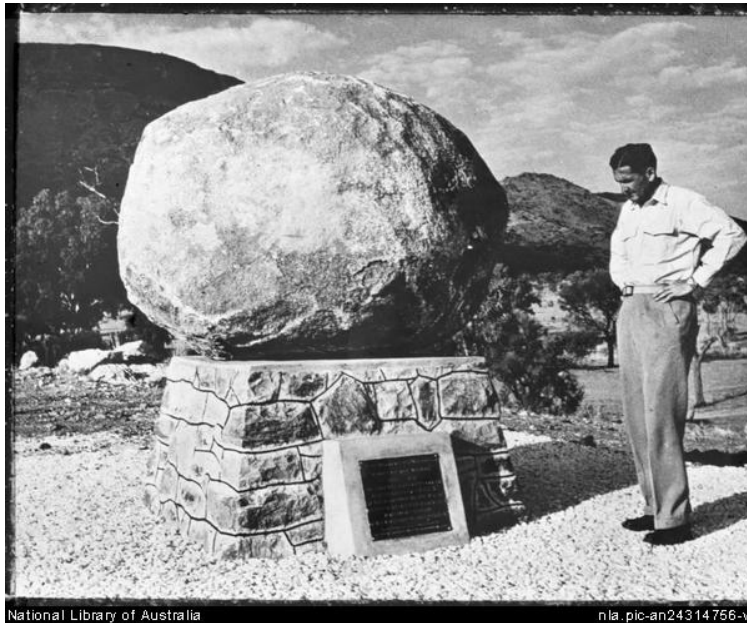
Flynn, *The Inlander*, 1924



Through the lens of Flynn's nationalism, Alice's location in 'the very middle of the middle of our continent' [Flynn, 1915], 'surely the climax of Inland' [Flynn 1920], was far more important than the smallness of its population, aridity of its soils or lack of economic prospects.

In Flynn's mind, Alice Springs was 'the Centre of our National Home' [Flynn 1927], the flagship of his Inland work.

Though Alice severely tested the practicality of Flynn's dreams, his love for her never changed. Flynn chose Alice, the town where the 'absurd' can be found, as his final resting place.



Fred McKay, who succeeded Flynn as head of the A.I.M. at Flynn's Grave circa 1955. photo NLA pic 24314756



This hand painted magic lantern slide of Simpson's Gap appears to have been painted by someone who has never been to central Australia. The rocks are grey, rather than red. Indeed, until you have been to red soil country, its hard to believe that it really exists. NLA pic an 24230060



Flynn's first challenge in establishing professional medical facilities in Alice Springs was convincing his supporters that the costs associated with placing a nurse in a 'town' with such a small population were justified.

His second was finding a nurse willing to work in isolation.



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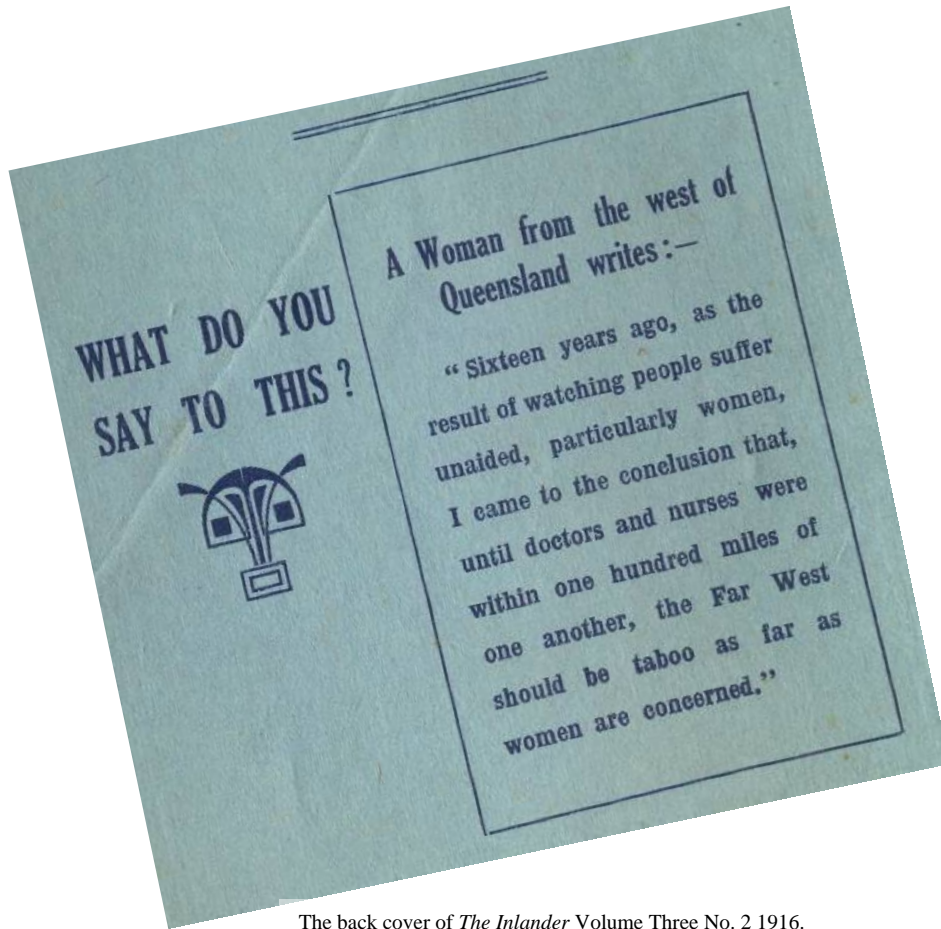
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Those on the look out for the "absurd" may find it at Alice Springs. On the face of it the position is somewhat strange. We give a photo here of the 'Town Picnic' in that very remote outpost, a picnic held many years ago to be sure, but the population of the township is made up to-day of a very similar group.

A nurse for so few!

But why not? We are apt to be erratic in our obedience to convention, and it has been the custom to demand a big human "turnover" for a nurse. Surely this demand is rather artificial.

In the first place we could quote quite a number of instances of women who devote their whole time and attention, practically, to the care of a little group consisting of not more than one man and thirteen children. Some are rather fully occupied caring for a group of only three or four, and even that with the assistance of a maid. So much for the domestic question – the eternal question of providing food and raiment. Flynn, John The Inlander Volume 3 Third Quarter 1915 p123- 126





'Two years and two months' after a nurse's salary was approved by his Board, Jean Finlayson, who was working for the A.I.M. in Oodnadatta, finally agreed to go north.

Travelling by horse and buggy in the winter of 1915, Jean arrived to an Alice locked down in drought.

Though an early letter published in *The Inlander* spoke of her delight in both the landscape and hospitality of the townsfolk, unpublished correspondence and Finlayson's description of her experiences published 10 years later tell a different story.

'Nurse Finlayson Tells of the Road to Alice Springs'

It was a delightful drive over 12 miles of flat country as we approached Alice Springs, and these hills are grand to look at. I am only anxious now to get on top of them.

Mr and Mrs Stott with whom I am now staying – along with Mrs Standley the teacher, who has been here over a year – are exceedingly kind, and we are most comfortable and happy.

Alice Springs is much in need of rain, everything being dry and dead for miles around. Still by industry and care Mr Stott has a good supply of vegetables, also milk and cream (goats).

Mrs Standley has done wonders with the school children, and the Bungalow for the half castes is a great institution. Mrs Stott has dusky assistants to help in the house.

These are early days to speak of our own work, but my hopes are high and everybody is most kind and friendly'.

The Inlander Volume 3 Third Quarter 1915 p123- 126

This is the day on which we are to arrive in Alice Springs; we have been on the road for nine days. We are full of expectation.

The "gap" in the range..... is certainly beautiful .... as are the hills ... to the North. About two miles further on there lies the little settlement of Alice Springs.

This time ... is not favourable for a first sight of this place as the country is in the midst of a drought with all the ugliness and discomfort that a drought can bring – dust flies and dying stock.

I had been told much about the beauty of this place and felt a keen disappointment..... Nor was I ever to see those Ranges and country at their best as the drought lasted till after my departure eleven months later ....

What met my eye on passing through the beautiful gap was a dirty sandy flat .... a well and trough for watering stock; a native's camp with a few stray natives about and their starving dogs .... The little white settlement [is] made up of seven houses including two private houses, two stores, a hotel, policeman's houses, Chinese and Afghan's houses; also two corrugated iron sheds for the half caste children.

Our buggy .... At last drew up to the house where I was to board for five months.

During these months I tried to understand the needs of the people, both black and white. I had seen a little of life in the country in Victoria but this is not Victorian bush, but an entirely new Australia – quite different from anything I had known. And although I had been on the fringe of it at Oodnadatta ... I was yet to experience what it means to be utterly alone, without any means of escape from an isolated position – isolated in every sense.

Men went North and South with camels but it was eight months ... before the next horses and buggy passed over that drought stricken country.

I had come here for a definite purpose – ... to live here for one year ... in order to discover the conditions and needs, from the point of a view of a nurse. And at the end of the year to report as to the usefulness of putting a nursing home here similar to the Hostel at Oodnadatta.

Something obviously was needed to make things more safe for these brave men and women who had settled in distant parts ... but just how much could be done by a nurse unaided was the question: and could her own nerves stand the strain of the isolation and lack of proper food?

Extract from Finlayson, Jean Life and Journeying in Central Australia – 1925 - Melbourne – Arbuckle Waddell printers ppp41-43



In my many lonely wonderings I visited the local burial place where I found evidence of the many who had passed by that way and fallen .... I waylaid native women and tried to know them better.

Sometimes they were sad, but more often they responded with a gay laugh. They are childlike and cheerful. They are lifted up or cast down according to the measure of their food supply ...

My most frequent walk took me to the telegraph station to a class of white children on Sundays and to post letters and send wires on other days ... this walk takes one along a track skirting the creek bed and passing over small stony rises all the way. At one part it passes through the midst of the natives' camp ...

To one not accustomed to the place and people it gave, at first, an eerie feeling to meet on some lonely spot, and hidden from view till one was close upon them, a company of natives, scantily clad and having their hands full of spears. But in time one grows accustomed to such sights and when passing give them a friendly nod ...

Sitting on a boulder on the hillside one evening in the month of February, and watching daylight fade, I noticed that the natives already had their fires burning for although the days were hot, the evenings were sharp ...

I see both camps quite clearly, the little humpies, the groups of frisking, laughing men, women and children and the dogs foraging around.

As dusk sets in I see from each home come those who have been employed during the day, bearing with them any scraps of food which would otherwise go into the waste bucket ...

As they wend their way to the camp they call happily to each other and talk at a distance by signs. They are on familiar ground, and understand each other. They also have a subtle way of knowing all that is going on in the white people's world, either for good or ill.

As I sat alone an old woman came out of her course to speak to me. On she came, carrying a jam tin of flour and the head of a goat. Leaping with bare feet from one rock to another, ignoring the pathway, at last she stood before me and said, "Good-day." I replied: "good-day, Triff, you look happy sit down." Down she curled on the stone beside me. She obviously had something on her mind and I kept silent. Presently she put her hand gently on my shoulder and said: "poor Nussa all alone: that no good."

This simple old native touched on part of the problem of a nurse in the Centre – "one fella all alone, no good."

Extract from Finlayson, Jean Life and Journeying in Central Australia – 1925 - Melbourne – Arbuckle Waddell printers



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Cemetery- Alice Springs Telegraph Station, circa 1900 courtesy  
State Library South Australia



National Library of Australia

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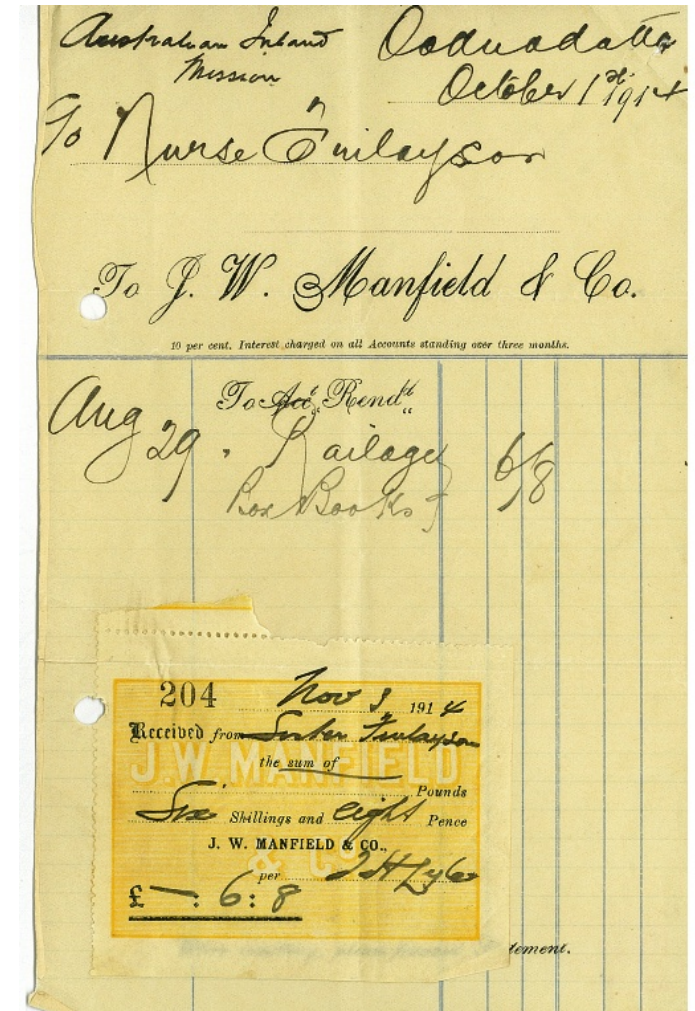
Aboriginal Houses Alice Springs circa 1912 Flynn magic lantern  
transparency published in a 1913 edition of *The Inlander* devoted to the  
Aboriginal issue. Photo nla 24296063.



A shortage of accommodation which afflicted Alice Springs then, as it does now, forced Jean to spend her first five months living with Mr Stott, the 'uncrowned King of Central Australia'. In addition to being the head policeman, Sergeant Stott was the mining warden, keeper of the gaol, head of the lands department, stock inspector, Protector of Aborigines, marriage registrar, clerk and bailiff of the local court, tax collector, electoral officer and etc. In an Alice Springs now administered by the Commonwealth of Australia, Stott was responsible for every aspect of government, except for the post and telegraph.



Mr Stott's House, on the corner of Parsons and Hartley Street no longer exists. The Stuart Town Gaol can, however, still be found by those who look hard enough. Photograph circa 1917 by Otto Tschirn, courtesy of the Strehlow Research Centre, Larapinta Drive, Alice Springs



This docket addressed to Nurse Finlayson shows her taking delivery of a box of books. Distributing books free of charge was one of the many services offered by the A.I.M. to the residents of Inland Australia. NLA\_MS5574\_Box 167\_Folder 2\_8



Alice Springs  
July 2nd 1914

*Thankyou so much for your word of welcome and encouragement. I came just at the right time too as there was friction here about the coloured and European children being taught together in school. I had instructions from the Administrator to do so.*

*However, to stop all unpleasantness I give them two hours every afternoon of my own time. The white children receive tuition six days a week from 9 to 1. Do send along a nurse as soon as possible. We would have each other and do lots and lots of things. I am truly interested in your Inlander – thanks for any numbers you may have .... Dear M Flynn, send along a word of cheer for me*

*Yours truly, Ida Standley*

**Jean spent the second half of her eleven month sojourn in Alice Springs living in a small wattle and daub shack, which leaked when it rained and collected dust when it didn't.**

**A much anticipated friendship with Mrs Ida Standley, the town's first school teacher, did not eventuate while Jean's attempts to practice her profession were the subject of constant interference from the two men who had, until her arrival, acted as the town's doctors.**



Myrtle Cottage was typical of housing in the town at the time of Flynn's first visit.

Excerpts from a letter from Jean Finlayson, to the Sec A.I.M. Committee - - Alice Springs 1916

*... The post master and Policeman who have been in the bush for so many years and who are provided by the government with a large stack of drugs, lotions, dressings, books etc – and are in touch with the government doctor in Darwin, have been in the habit of acting as 'doctor' for so long that they cannot help interfering with the work of a nurse. And it would do a deal of good if there were a man here to look to them when they interfere.*

*(of course, working like this, a nurse is not employed in the ordinary way. If she were, I should have no difficulty in dealing with interference)...*

*The majority of bush people fancy that they know all that is to be known about nursing ...*

*... Of course, we have only just commenced and people are a bit afraid and will take time to get out of their old ways. Post masters and Policemen do not live forever in one place and I have some idea that these will, before long be removed – so a nurse maybe encouraged to hold on.*

*I should like to see a married medical missionary here, but if not, then certainly a nurse.*

*(I suppose, when the N.T. has some sort of decent administration more people will settle here.)*

*However, whoever the A.I.M. sends to Alice Springs they must have a house to live in – this is indispensable.*

*What I should think an ideal place is just a few(5) rooms with wide passages and wide verandahs all around; wire doors and windows and the whole as dustproof as possible. .... I understand in this vast country it is the most difficult thing to obtain a few feet of ground to build a house upon ...*

*“When he got to the hill difficulty he found that the road went to the right and one to the left but the narrow way led right up the hill”*

*It is a hard climb alone but every obstruction cleared from the track helps to clear the way for those following after.*

NLA\_MS5574 Box 252 Folder

3



When news came that her mother was ill in Melbourne and there was enough rain to enable horses to travel between Alice and Oodnadatta, Jean left town.

It would be eleven years before Flynn was able to find another nurse willing to work in the Centre. By then he had decided to send his nurses Inland in twos.



Presbyterian Church  
22 Dec 1916

Dear Mr Walkington

‘We understand that Nurse Finlayson was indebted to you for various little kindnesses during her stay at Alice Springs, also that you charged no rent for the building during her stay. We trust that that little matter of the iron was fixed up satisfactorily although we have not heard about it recently’

..... we have not been able to secure another nurse just yet, but we hope that when the unsettlement of war is over, that we may take up again our plans for the centre ....

NLA – AIM-Frontier Service Box 252 Folder 1

## JOTTINGS

Nurse Finlayson has left Alice Springs. She was to have stayed till the end of her year – a month later, but the method by which a woman arrives definitely at the date of her departure from Alice Springs district is a little bit complex:

1. She decides when she would like to leave.
2. She ascertains when some other woman wants to leave.
3. She and the other woman consult with their menfolk and work out a problem in which the factors are themselves, the “condition” of horses, the state of natural herbage along the track, and possibly one or two lesser considerations.

In Miss Finlayson’s case the solution was to leave about June 30<sup>th</sup>. She hoped, by ‘pressing on steadily’ to reach Melbourne by July 20. We have not yet secured a successor.

Flynn, John *The Inlander* 1916

28/10/1918

Mr Alec Ross  
Wauchope  
Barrow Creek

Dear Mr Ross

.... We are glad to hear that the men are thinking favourably of our idea of a Nursing Home at Alice Springs. That is an old fad of mine, but since Miss Finlayson left we have not been able ever to find a nurse for one thing; and on the other hand we feel that a nurse will not have a chance to do the best work until there is a building of our own there. Further we are now persuaded that in all cases we must arrange for a mate to go with each nurse. ...

..... We would be in a position to call for volunteers as soon as the war is over, when we hope to have a batch of nurses available who are now at the war

Yours faithfully, JF

NLA – AIM-Frontier Service Box 252 Folder 1



Flynn's plans for a purpose-built hospital in Australia's heart – an 'architectural 'tour de force' ... that would incorporate the lessons of the past and be a model for the future' [McPheat, 1977, p 121] were also hampered by the lack of accommodation, shortage of local labour, absence of accessible building materials, expensive transport costs and lack of funds, which continue to characterise life in remote Australia.

The project was also opposed by a couple of local pastoralists, who believed that access to professional medical treatment would rob Inlanders of their natural resourcefulness by encouraging dependence on experts.



Camels carted building materials for Adelaide Hostel from the rail head at Oodnadatta. In the devastating drought of 1926 not even camels could get through forcing Flynn to pick up many of the building materials in his own car.

National Library of Australia

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## A BUILDING EXPERIMENT.

There has been an undertone of special enthusiasm among us over the building of a Nursing Home at Alice Springs. For one thing, that spot is what Dan Crawford would describe as "The Middle of the Middle of Australia"—surely the climax of "Inland": then we have been talking of some action there since 1912: lastly, there is an experiment on.

What are the chief physical trials of women and invalids in the Inland? We would say that they are, according to season, heat, dust, flies, and light.

The last is not thought of as savagely as the other three; nevertheless of late some serious charges have been brought against it. It was in Queensland that we first heard a specially hard thing against the light: a brave little woman who had come from Scotland was describing her sensations after some years in that State, and this was the remark that set us thinking:—"When I wake in the morning and look out into the bright sunshine I feel terribly depressed."

But why? Had we pressed her for an answer, no doubt we would have had to be satisfied with "Because." The other day a native-born nurse, who has served six years in furthest-north Australia, remarked that in her opinion the *glare* did more harm to people than the heat. This just points to instinctive recognition of what has been seriously contended by scientists for some time, that in tropical areas the actinic rays of light—same ones that perform miracles on photographic plates in exposures of one-thousandth of a second—are so very powerful that they penetrate the white woman's delicate skin, and cause her nerves to deteriorate. Her dusky sister is protected by a skin that is really an effective "colour-screen." Men suffer in the same way until they can develop a healthy tan, but as they normally enjoy a plentiful reserve of nerve there is little need to worry about them.

Our conviction is that there is much in the theory, so we have bracketed light with the usual three wicked enemies of the woman on our frontiers. Not that she worries necessarily, for mostly she laughs them aside as part of the game of life: but some enemies are active even while they cause us no worry whatever.

Flynn, John The Inlander Vol 6 No 1, 1920 p48



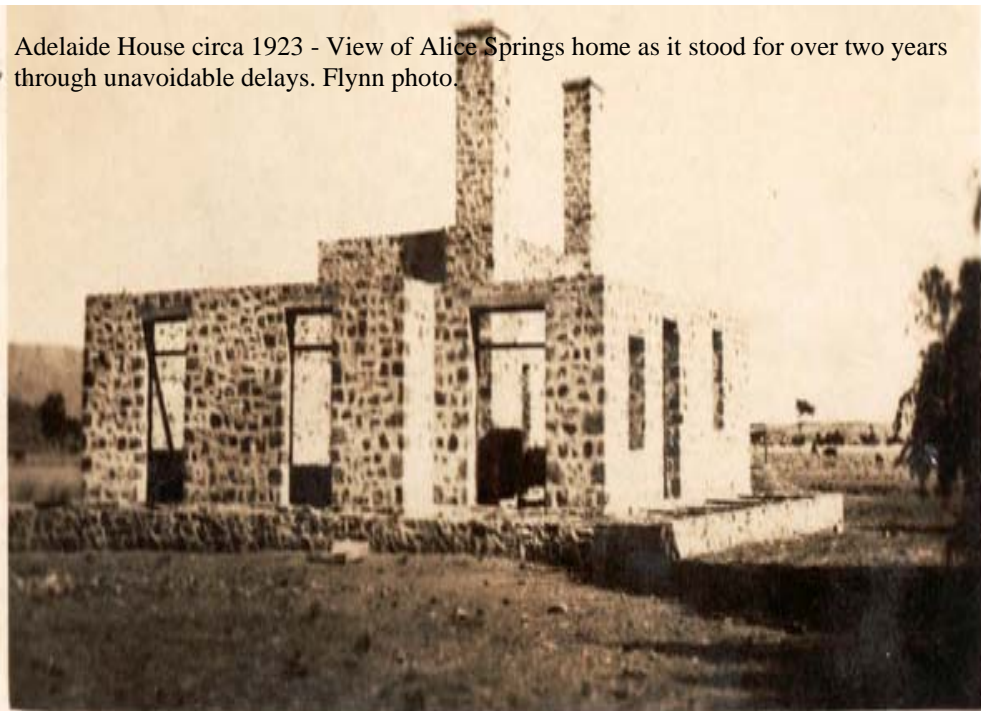
It took seven years for the A.I.M. to acquire the land and funds necessary to commence work on Flynn's dream hospital.

The builder was 'old Jack Williams', a 70 year old stone mason who had begun his working career as a smuggler on the Isle of Wight. Jack had built Alice's only other large stone building - the Stuart Town Gaol. The thick stone walls of both buildings – made to last for centuries - were hand hewn from local stone, with 'old Jack' doing most of the work on Flynn's hostel himself.

When funds - raised from local donations and an Adelaide fete - ran out in 1923, work stopped once more.

The building stood unfinished for so long locals started calling it 'Flynn's Folly'.

Adelaide House circa 1923 - View of Alice Springs home as it stood for over two years through unavoidable delays. Flynn photo.

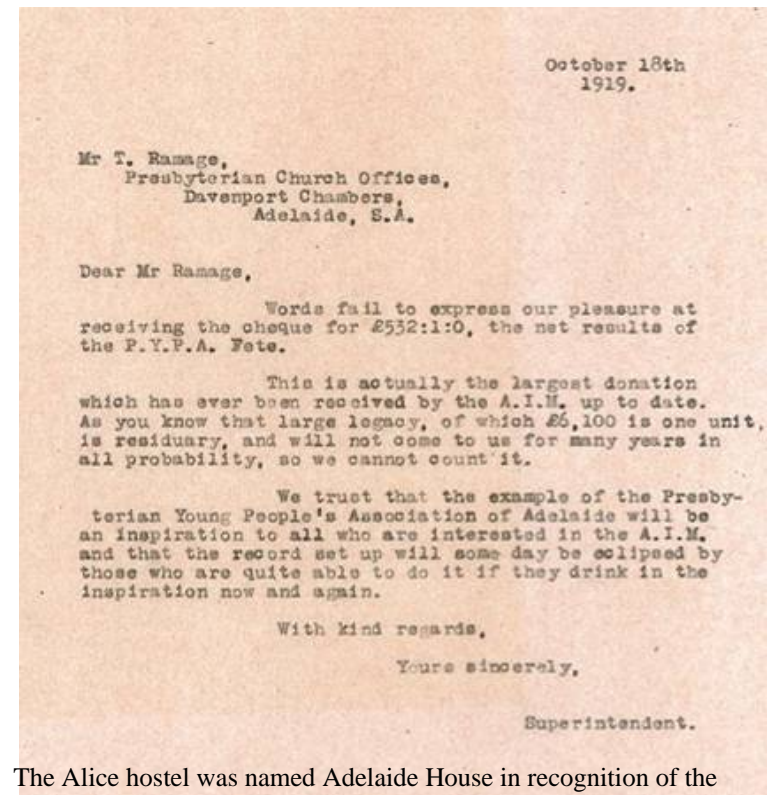


12<sup>th</sup> June 1924

Dear Mr Adamson

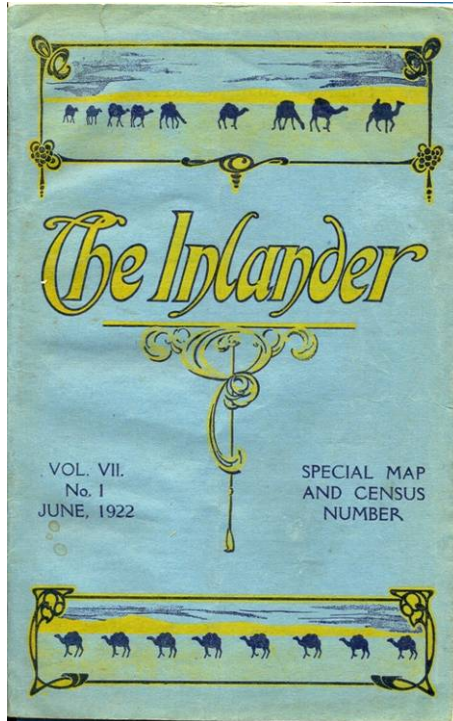
Many thanks for your letter ..... We really expected that something would be done long ere this in the way of a definite start on the completion of the building. So many things have intervened of an early start being made. .... Mr Flynn has been engaged for the last few months on the new issue of "The Inlander" and has practically let everything else rip for the time being ....

NLA – AIM-Frontier Service Box 252 Folder 4



The Alice hostel was named Adelaide House in recognition of the huge contribution funds raised in Adelaide made towards the hostel's building costs. NLA\_MS5574 Box 147 Folder





Plans to finish the hospital were put on hold as Flynn attended to the other demands of his A.I.M. superintendency.

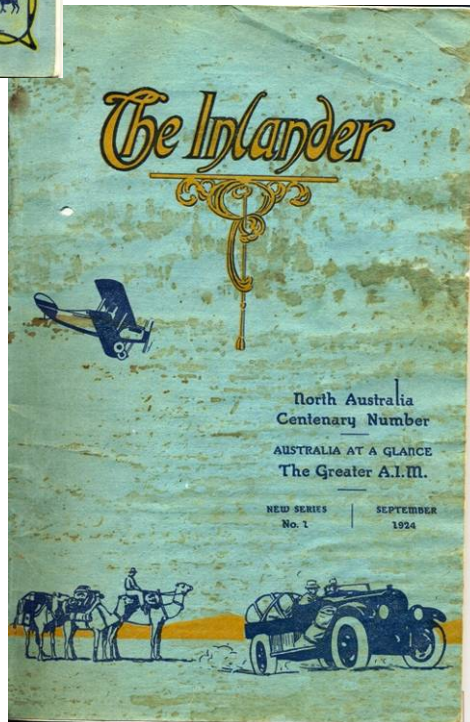
*The Inlander*, which Flynn intended to publish every three months, had appeared with less and less frequency over the years. This was partly because Flynn spent so much time 'living on the wallaby' - visiting every part of his huge parish - that he had no time to prepare it for print and partly because his passion for mapping his dreams and putting his ideas into visual form was time-consuming work.

Flynn's map showing inland hospitals and plans for an aerial medical service, was created and published in *The Inlander* in 1924 several years before the enabling technology had been invented. The map was also sold as coloured poster to raise funds for the technical experiments needed to make Flynn's dream work. Collection Adelaide House

The front covers of *The Inlander* illustrate the breadth and speed of the transport revolution which came to Inland Australia in the early 1920s. Collection Adelaide House.



Flynn's petrol can. Old Timer's Traeger Museum, South Stuart Highway, Alice Springs.

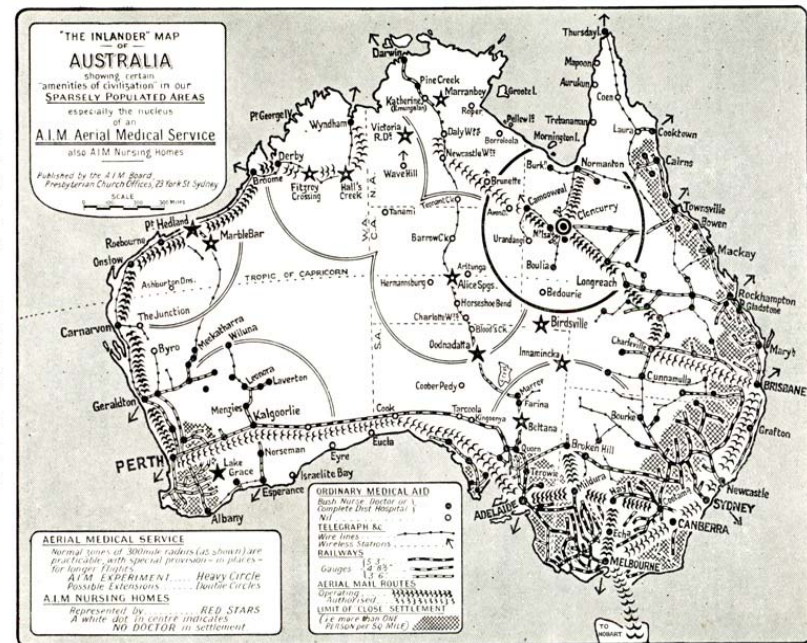


**NOTE:**

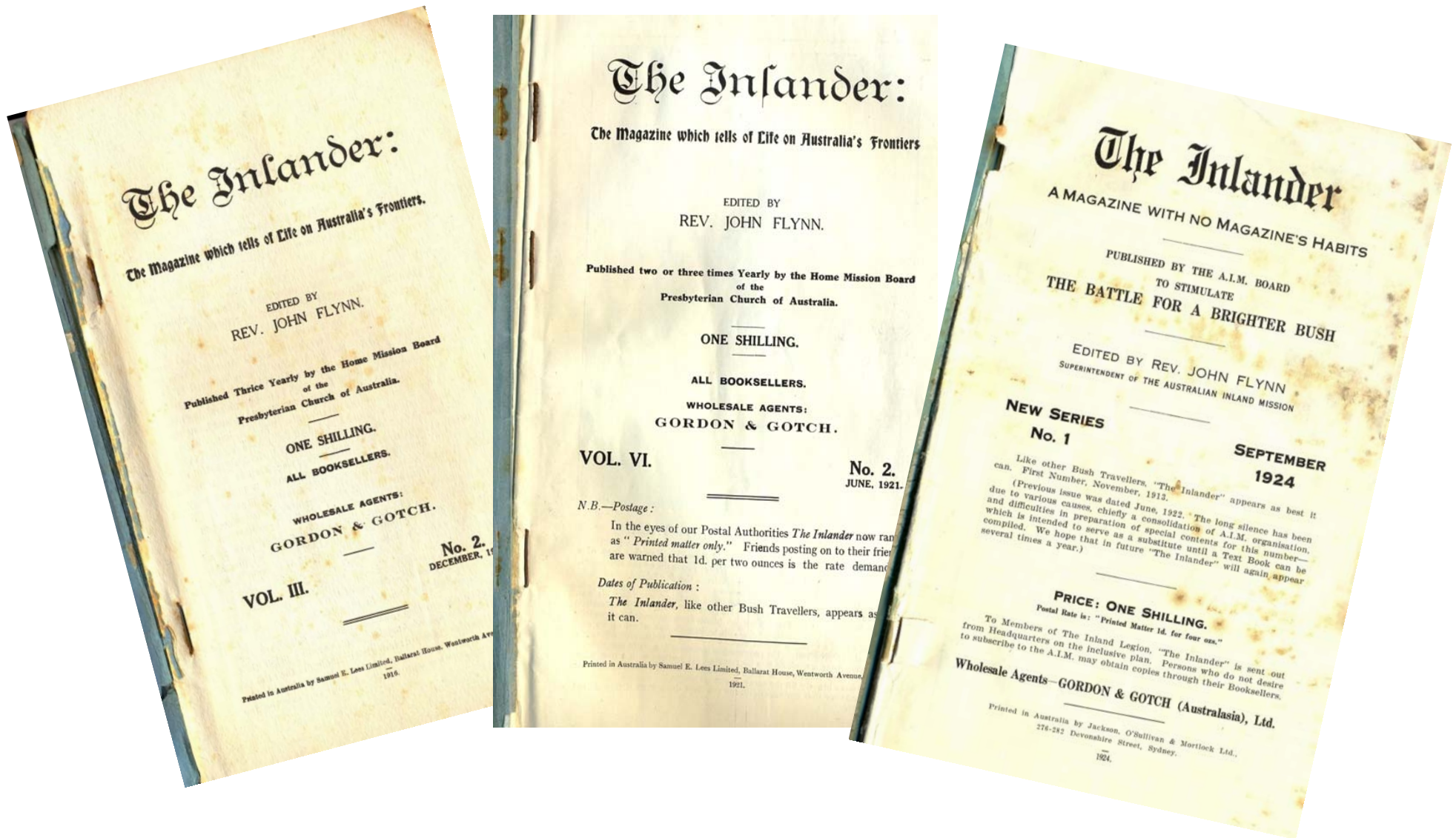
Fitzroy Crossing and Innamincka Nursing Homes are not yet completed, but contracts have been arranged.

All interested in the A.I.M. are urged to secure a copy of this map, in larger size 10 in x 7½ in., in colours, and to hang it on their wall for reference.

Blocks and Map, A. A. Lawson Ltd.







The front pages of successive Inlanders – which begin with definite publication dates and end with the statement that the Inlander ‘like other Bush Travellers appears as best it can’ - attest to the difficulties Flynn faced in meeting his own publication deadlines. Editions of The Inlander, when they did appear, were often sold out. Collection Adelaide House and the Old Timers Traeger Museum.



Then there was the mountain of correspondence resulting from Flynn's pioneering radio work – letters to government departments in several Australian states seeking legal permission to conduct his wireless experiments; letters to wireless enthusiasts exchanging problems and seeking solutions; letters to individuals and organisations seeking funds; letters to interested parishioners; reports to his Board, etc. The task was so huge Flynn himself 'wondered how I could write another line for 'The Inlander' and 'every mail was a dread'. [Flynn, Superintendent's Report 1/2/26]

ms 3288/2/259  
 Not 2<sup>nd</sup> 1925

M. Great Inland Mission  
 Alice Springs.

D<sup>r</sup> H. H. Kauper, Adelaide:  
 100 Watt telephone transmitter.

Panel 14x22 3/8"	£	1	15 0
Baseboard for set			7 6
100 Variable Condenser	1	10 0	
36 metre Inductance	1	0 0	
Blocks for Amplifier Plate		10 0	
Blocks for Amplifier Grid		10 0	
9 Terminals @ 6" each		4 6	
2 Phone Jacks @ 3"		6 0	
Socket for Amplifier Valve		5 0	
Phillips Z 2 Valve	1	15 0	
1000 Volt 1000 Volt condenser		12 0	
Voltmeter	1	8 0	
Milliammeter for modulator		10 0	
Trunk Condenser (2 plate) for 36"		1 0	
Plug for microphone		3 0	
Wood Pulley for testing set		13 0	
Leather Belt " "		16 0	
Work for Packing box		7 6	
Labour: Assembly, testing, Packing.		8 0 0	
	£		20 13 6

Flynn was also facing mounting pressure from some of the A.I.M.'s city-based Board members.

Concerned about the spiralling costs of Flynn's wireless and building experiments, some of the board thought he should abandon the flying doctor dream and return to the traditional duties of Christian ministry.

In October 1925, Flynn escaped to Alice.

An order form showing the cost and number of items needed for Flynn's radio experiments at a time when they were failing miserably and many wireless enthusiasts were of the opinion that what Flynn wanted to achieve i.e. small cost effective wireless communications was impossible! NLA MS3288\_Box 4

ms 3288/2/259

In case anyone should inquire about us, I give you our call signs.

S A. B. fairly powerful station in Alice Springs Home, to broadcast on ~~750~~ 175 metres at 7 and 10 p.m. daily as far as possible. not likely to be heard far at 7, however. That's too early for distance

S A. C. Small set carried in car, about 33 and 50 metres mostly

S A. D. Hermannsburg }  
 S A. E. Arltunga } Small spark  
 S A. F. moving around } sets on about  
 different points } 85 metres, each  
 a little different

Do as not to capture  
 It looks as if the experiment is going to succeed this time, and open up the way for much experiment.  
 The Home is rapidly approaching completion, and I hope to get away before the end of this month.

Give the good money to get away.  
 Give me the money to get away.  
 Give me the money to get away.  
 Give me the money to get away.

Flynn's own optimism about the eventual success of his radio work shines through in this letter to his father written in 1926 from Alice Springs. The home referred to is Adelaide House. Alice Springs radio stations still have call signs beginning with the letter 8. NLA MS3288 Box 2

Though the town had grown little since Flynn's first visit twelve years earlier Flynn's way of getting there had undergone revolutionary change.

In 1925 Flynn travelled by car – a Dodge utility specially fitted with extra springs to enable it to survive the dirt tracks, which constituted the Inland's 'roads'.

In country entirely lacking in petrol stations, let alone car mechanics, Flynn taught himself 'basic' car maintenance by taking the Dodge apart and then re-building it, bolt by bolt, before leaving Adelaide.



George Towns, a wireless expert from WW1, with aerials and other items loaded on Flynn's car, ca. 1925

National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an24283760-v



Skipper Partridge's tool box, Old Timer's Traeger Museum - which also contains a replica of Flynn's famous car.

*Oodnadatta*  
COPY *a/c*

WALLIS FOGARTY LTD.,  
OODNADATTA, S.A.

COPY OF STATEMENTS TOTALLING £69/15/9d. paid by  
Mr. Flynn April to August, 1926 and refunded to his bank A/c  
6/9/26.

28th April.	1 Con.Rod £1/17/6d. 1 piston £1/12/6d. 1 Gudgeon Pin 2/6d. 3 M.Valve Centres 3/-	23 15 6
29th "	4 Hack Saw Blades 2/4d.	2 4
		3 17 10
5th May	3 C/s Benzine £4/19/- . 2 Gl.A.Oil 19/- 10 lbs.Grease 15/-, 5 lb. grease 7/6d. 1 Fr.Fingers 8/6d. 1 Case Petrol £1/13/- 1 Seal 1/- 1 Seal outfit 5/6d.	5 18 . 1 2 6 2 1 6 6 6
		29 8 6
21st June	3 Benzine £4/19/- 1 Gl.A.Oil 10/-, Meth.Spts.2/- 2 Hose joints 7/-, 2 valves 11/- 4 Valve centres 3/- 1 Bulb 3/- 1 Cover 28/10/	5 11 . 18 . 8 16 .
		£15 5 .
7th June	Tyre 2 Drums petrol at A.S.	4 9 8 5 . .
		29 9 8
17th June	3 Cases Petrol	27/10/ -
10th July	6 C/s Petrol £9/18/- 2 Gal.A.Oil £1/-/- 1 Gl.C.Oil Garage 1/c	10 18 . 15 . 2 10 9
		14 3 9
2nd July	2 Drums Petrol £5/-/- 2 cases Petrol £5/-/-	210/ -/ -

As this list of petrol and car parts shows, early motor transport in the centre of Australia required a degree of self sufficiency and mechanical knowledge city motorists have never been required to have. Original document in NLA MS5574\_Box167\_Folder1\_7





As it had been in 1915, the Alice Flynn lived in was gripped by drought. Unlike Nurse Finlayson, however, Flynn relished the isolation drought brought. It was a welcome respite from the 'strain of recent years' and gave him the opportunity to experience first-hand the challenges of outback living.

Reporting to the Board on yet more building delays and costly half -successful radio experiments, Flynn wrote:

*"I am feeling more and more that the time has come when as many of the 'Board as possible should see the Inland for themselves. To face strange conditions and difficulties into which I will not enter here, and personal touch is desirable. Can all dream of at least one trip Inland? My car is big and there are others."*

[Superintendent's Report 1/2/26]

76/3477

FOR PRESS.

Alice has been received by the Minister for Home and Territories (Senator Pearce) that an exceptionally dry spell has been experienced between Oodnadatta and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, and that, consequently, the track between those places is not practicable for motor traffic.

Senator Pearce considers that this information should be made available, in order that any motorists contemplating a trip from Oodnadatta to Darwin or to other places in the Territory north of Oodnadatta may know the difficulties which will require to be overcome.

In the opinion of the Minister, motorists should not undertake any trip in the Territory north of Oodnadatta until the present conditions improve.

*578*  
*Given to press. This 9.3.26*  
*For Board*  
*For info*  
*1/2/26*  
*See [unclear] 12/5/26*  
*[unclear]*  
*3074*

National Archives of Australia A1, 1926/3477

Police Station Alice Springs  
 23rd February 1926

J G McLaren C.M.G.  
 Secretary  
 Home & Territories Department  
 Melbourne

Dear Sir

I have the honor most respectfully, to regret having to report, that we are experiencing severest drought ever known throughout District. Not a vestige of feed for hundreds of miles. surface waters are drying up, well supplies are getting low, the position is getting worse from day to day. Heavy losses amongst stock have already been sustained, and are still continuing, unless rain within a week or two, mortality amongst stock will be appalling. Station holders are finding it difficult to get killers with condition, for their private consumption, Horses too low to work, some Stations are doing their boundary riding with Camels

Drought stricken area practically extends from Orroroo S-Australia to Barrow Creek over 1000 miles also extending East & West to the Queensland & Western Australia borders. From Barrow Creek North to Newcastle-Waters, there has been a few heavy rain storms, sufficient to make grass and water, to give temporary relief to Stock holders. Camel Carriers are complaining of dry state of track between Oodnadatta & Alice Springs, Unless rain at an early date Transit of supplies will have to be done by Motor Lorries. Freight charge on Stores from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs £30 per ton "Per Motor"

The whole Country is in a deplorable condition, during my 42 years in the N T have never seen Country so bad

Until Rain, Trust no Tourists will undertake Journey from South to Darwin, fear their verdict would be detrimental to the N T. Prevailing weather Registering from 105 to 112 in the Shade, Hot Winds, dust storms night and day, to say the least present conditions deplorable

Submitted for the information of the Minister.  
 Yours faithfully  
 5.3.26  
 [Signature] Sergt

*Secretary In order to deter motorists from undertaking the tour under present conditions I think we should have a carefully worded statement based on this record to the press. S.P.P. - 8/3/26*

National Archives of Australia A1, 1926/3477



MS 3288

Superintendent's Report, 1/2/26

The building operations at Alice Springs are proving even heavier than anticipated. The Home is really a very big place, of which a recent passer-by remarked enthusiastically, "What a fine pub it would make!" The special features for coziness and comfort entail endless detail, but already all who enter seem confident that it will be a delightful retreat.

McLeod Brothers could not do more than they are doing. They set out to put in some extra time originally, in order to balance the time that Mr. Geo Lewis, our general "officer" gives to camp cooking, but they have long since lost their watches or something, for they toil early and late, with a short sleep during the worst of the day, frequently keeping right on through Saturday afternoons and holidays. They are deeply interested in the work for its own sake, both having spent long periods in on stations nearer Oodnadatta, following relatives who came into this country when it was first opened up.

At the moment of writing, the roof is complete, also the outer ~~wall~~ wall of sun storey and balcony. We are just about to start on the basement floor, to carry the stairs. Have made arrangements to obtain a supply of lime at an early date, and hope by next month to know more of the solution of plastering difficulties, which are the next worry.

Meantime, following on the decision of the Melbourne meeting, Mr. Chapman and I have arranged for the supply of "Alkalin" Batteries, and the Motor engine and generator, with other fittings to complete the electric lighting system. These should all come to hand next month --- Batteries had to be brought from London, ~~and~~ none of the type we require being in stock here.

For myself I may say that the isolation here has been a great benefit. The strain of recent years had brought me to the stage where I wondered how I could ever write another line for the "Inlander", and every mail was a dread. Although there is no end of work here, it is all in line with old hobbies, and it seems to bring back a certain freshness to one. Since Mr. Towns left, I have been giving a considerable time to wireless during the evenings, mainly to get my ear into Morse so that I may be of some practical use in event of any future experiments. In reception of Broadcast programmes, static has interfered fatally almost continuously, but odd intervals seem to indicate much promise. Before leaving, Mr. Towns built up a special type of Receiver for our Secretary, Mr. Adanson, who supplied the parts. Ordinary types proved inadequate here. That set has given some wonderfully good results in passes between static. Another type which I bought to try out here is also giving some fine matches, so it seems as if there will be "Fine Business" here when static dies down after Easter.

Flynn spent his time in Alice writing letters, holding less -than -well attended Church services, trying to listen to the radio and assisting the builders finish the hospital. Though the builders worked overtime through a long hot summer and mild winter, the size of the building and the intricacies of Flynn's innovative cooling system created more delays and expenses.

Messrs Walter Fogarty & Co  
 Please pay Aboriginal Jack  
 Wage <sup>12/-</sup> ~~12/-~~ ending Oct 22/26  
 R.M. Peol

Handwritten invoice for labourer working on the Alice Hostel, now known as Adelaide House. MS5574 Box 252 Folder 5

While on the subject of congregations, I may add that there has been no general rush to get in to Church at Alice Springs. I have held service every evening when in town, which is always, save for the trips to Oodnadatta, but the average attendance would be hardly 10. Service is held in the schoolroom; an inadequate "temporary" affair pressed into service from the quarters at the Police station over ten years ago) and I have tried to cheer up the gathering by lighting up with electric ~~wires~~ lamps on extension wires from the car --- fitted up each evening afresh. The piano housed in the schoolroom called for repeated attention, but is now in rather fair order. A few weeks ago I was rather surprised with by a request for choir practices, and these have been maintained since through the very hottest weather, attendance being, if anything, a fraction more than church --- owing to the fact that an attempt at community singing ~~attempts~~ always follows. I should mention the special service on Xmas Sunday, incorporated with the local festivities, and held on the dancing-floor, a tarpaulin pegged out under the trees to which the piano had been transported. I had invited to folk at the Telegraph Station, two miles north of the township to come down in my car --- keeping in line with the festival folk who sent up for them daily --- and, with some outside visitors, we had over twenty. While all is in small scale, we can only hope that the tiny present will prove a good one!

The hard work involved in Flynn's efforts to end the isolation of the Outback is evident in his honest and detailed Superintendent's Report dated 1/2/26 NLA MS3288\_Box7\_Folder\_7



Finally, on June 24th 1926, Adelaide House was opened with formal flag-flying ceremony even though it still wasn't finished.

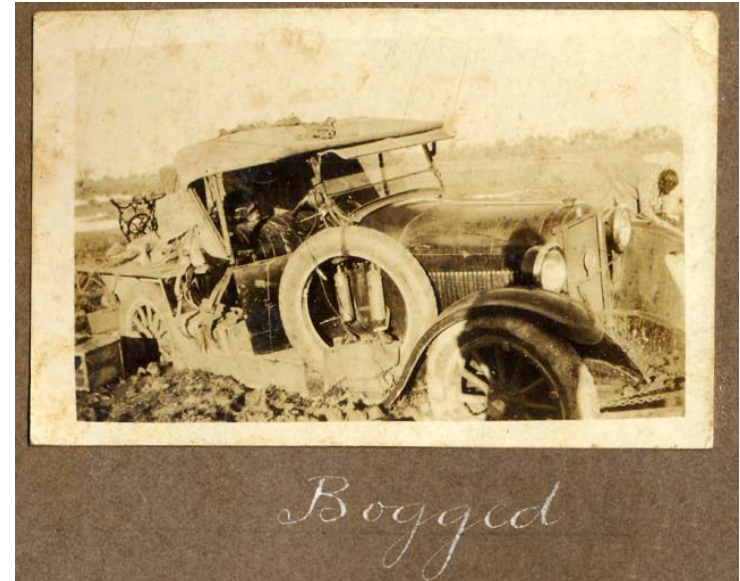
Twenty seven church dignitaries and A.I.M. supporters drove to Alice, almost doubling the town's European population and straining its capacity to feed them.

Ironically, the hospital's first patient was Flynn himself, who was treated for a hand injury acquired digging his way out of a bog.

While the much-wanted rain created havoc for the centre's motorists it failed to break the drought.

Unfortunately, falls of rain are erratic as to season, and sudden flooding storms in wrong months sometimes leave the country worse off than rain-gauge records would indicate.

Flynn, The Inlander, 1927



Pages from the photograph album of Nell Small, one of the first two nurses to live and work in Adelaide House.

Arrival of Party at Alice Springs

for opening of Hostel June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1926

So at last in 1926, "The Adelaide House" – hoped and worked for since 1913 – became a reality, all gauged in and furnished, which is quietly being enriched by Sisters Small and Pope. Messrs Wilkinson and Adamson serve as Secretary and Treasurer, and residents are taking keen interest in developing a real haven for those who come in weak from illness and that subtle depression sometimes joined thereto – which we may call 'bush shock'. Our idea was a spot, in the very heart of the bush, where all might come at times to forget that they are in the bush. Our very love for the bush demands more retreats of this kind, which silently breathe their benediction.

Flynn, The Inlander: A Voice from the Uttermost Frontier of Settlement in Australia: Published by the A.I.M. Board to Stimulate THE BATTLE FOR A BRIGHTER BUSH Number 19 October 1927 p41



With the hospital still not finished, Flynn confessed to being exhausted by the 'long drawn out agony of the job'. Reluctantly he concluded that purpose built architecture was inappropriate to Inland conditions. Though 'tradesmen seem to have a horror of 'ready out boxes' he wrote, pre-fabricated building probably was the best solution to the Inland's infrastructure problems.

The opening of Adelaide House did, however, bring with it a change in Flynn's Inland fortunes. The car convoy attending the opening carried the news that Flynn's childhood friend, the wealthy Victorian industrialist H.V. McKay had died bequeathing Flynn sufficient funds to continue his wireless experiments.

Flynn made a 'quick dash' to Melbourne to convince his Board that he should be allowed to continue his practical Inland work.

Barber arrived on the last car, and told me that the most understanding friend of my dearest dreams was dead. My heart stood still; but, almost in the same breath, he spoke of your father's beneficence and of his verbal instructions to the Trustees, who were awaiting my return. Within a day or two of my arrival in Melbourne £2,000 had been offered toward an Aerial Medical service experiment and everyone was too busy looking forward to ever look back!

You will understand how my heart stood still, for 'you know something of the years throughout which you father, with me, studied obstacles in our path, and waited impatiently for the day when the battle might wisely be joined'

Flynn letter cited in McPheat p124

MS 3288/

FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1926

**MR. H. V. MCKAY'S GIFT**

**Help For the Man Outback**

**BIG MAN'S IDEALS**

The magnificent trust deed made by the late Mr. Hugh V. McKay shortly before his death is expected to provide £10,000 a year towards the assistance of those organisations whose object is to improve the conditions of life in inland Australia.

According to the provisions of the deed, a committee consisting of Mr. George Swinburne (chairman), Mr. Samuel McKay and Mr. Henry Shaw of Ballarat, will allocate the income available at their discretion, and the distribution will be made in terms of such allocation.

The trust deed gives the committee the very widest discretion in making an allocation of income, but Mr McKay before his death indicated to the committee the charitable purposes to which in his view the income of the fund should be applied.

MS 3288

Super's Report. (4)

Just as things seemed to be coming on better than ever before, influenza worked up the truck from Godnaatta, where it was very bad for the time. It affected both Bert and Angus McLeod, and all the blacks --- two whom we had cracking stones, etc., and the three from Herrmansburg; simultaneously the native driver deserted his team, ending assistance with the waggon, and the leading spirit in our working bee left the district. I was fortunate enough to escape, not even getting a cold till the day after our visitors had gone south. Since I left to come down with our visitors, I hear that Bert McLeod has been very ill again (Please let nothing of this item get into print; he is anxious always to keep his home folk from worrying)

It is quite evident to me that these brothers are feeling the strain of the job, in which they have worked overtime throughout. It is unfortunate that the third carpenter originally engaged with --- rather just before McLeods left Adelaide--- withdrew at the last moment. They themselves seemed confident, even then, of completing the job long before this; but no one's ~~experience~~ experience has proved of any value in anticipating anything here.

To me the whole business has become wearying beyond words, for one never knows where the next catch is! I hope it may prove an education over a very wide field; incidentally, after so many years mostly in the atmosphere of cities --- at least geographical --- it has been good to be looking at things at the bush end for a long period without interruption.

It must be left till later to estimate the value of the ~~max~~ result which is even yet unattained, one comfort being that all and sundry seem to agree that the A.I.M. crew is completing a good work which transcends anything else of the kind in their experience.

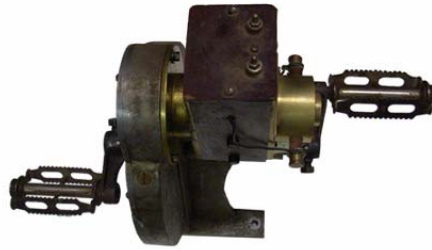
Amid it all, I have been trying to see some way out of a repetition of the long-drawn-out agony of the job, for it would be difficult to hold ordinary tradesmen to work in the isolation for such a period, and I do not think the McLeods would be keen on another experience of the sort. And I myself, ~~much~~ not anyone else, could not carry on as superintendent with the drag of one centre such as this. I am inclined to think that there is no satisfactory way out, for undertakings in building beyond the normal area, except with a picked foreman working without any local supervision. This man would need at least two skilled assistants, and a motor truck --- we would have been held up countless times without my car. Although tradesmen seem to have a horror of "ready out homes", something might be done along this line to reduce work at the bush end, and simultaneously lessen freight.

When I left Alice Springs on June 30th, plastering, ceilings, and floors remained to be put in living room, kitchen, one bedroom; also two bathrooms and washhouse to be closed in under verandah roof, besides the verandah floor and sundries.

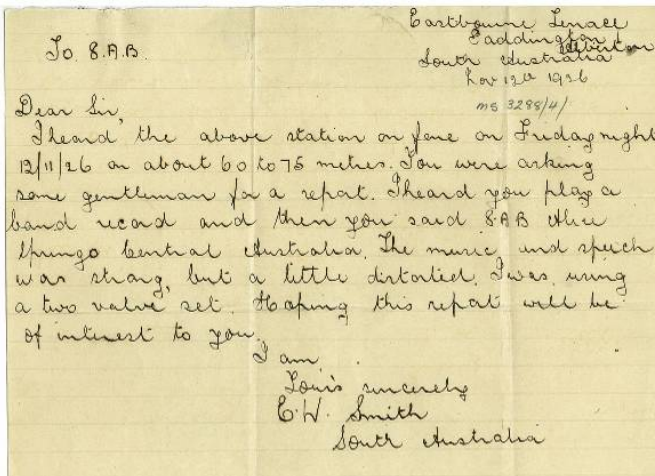
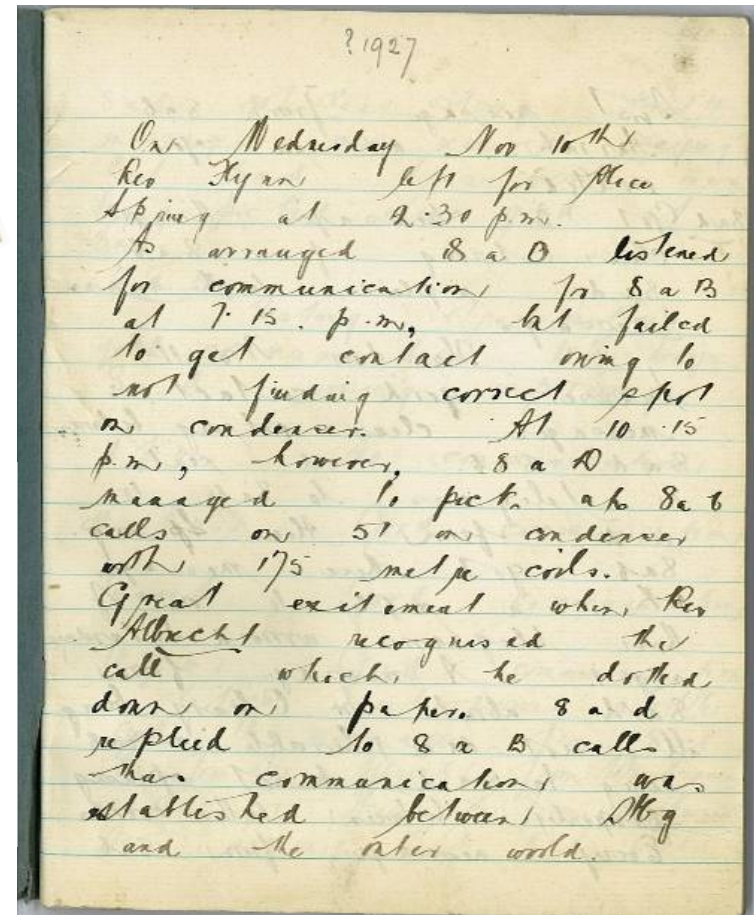




Flynn returned to Alice with Alf Traeger, the young south Australian radio enthusiast of German-Lutheran descent who invented the radio transceiver which revolutionised outback communications in the 1930s.



The 'Silence of the 'Dumb Inland' was in Flynn's words, finally broken in November 1926 making possible 'the swift succour to the sick, the breaking of monotony, the stimulus to [Inland] commerce' that Flynn had long dreamt of. [Pastor Albrecht from Hermannsburg Mission, paraphrasing Flynn. cited in McPheat p1271.



This journal entry records the moment when the mission at Hermannsburg made its first wireless contact with 'the outer world'. It would be several more months before Traeger created the small, individually operated and affordable pedal powered machines which made an aerial medical service possible. NLA- [MS3288 Box 4]

Wireless enthusiasts across the country helped Flynn and Traeger with their radio experiments. MS3288 Box 4\_Folder9

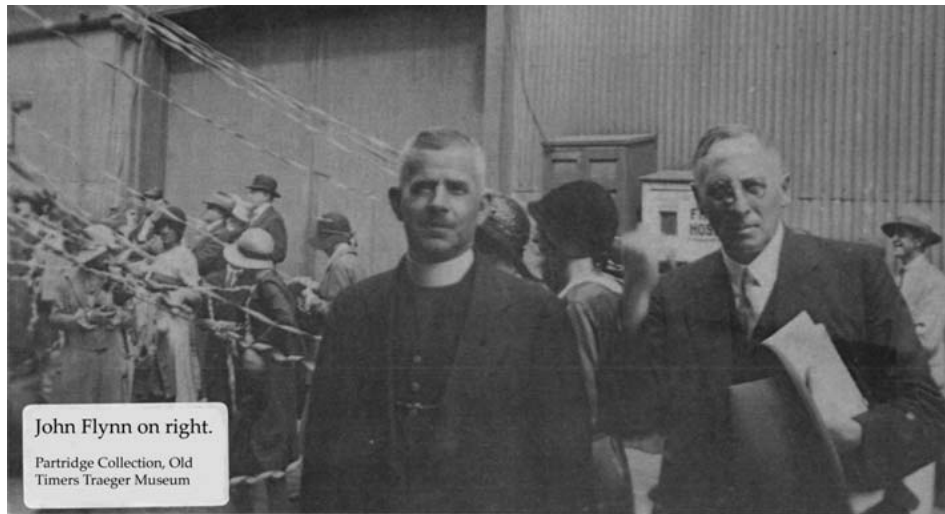


A work weary Flynn was sent on the first holiday he had taken since visiting Darwin in 1912. He went to the Holy Lands.

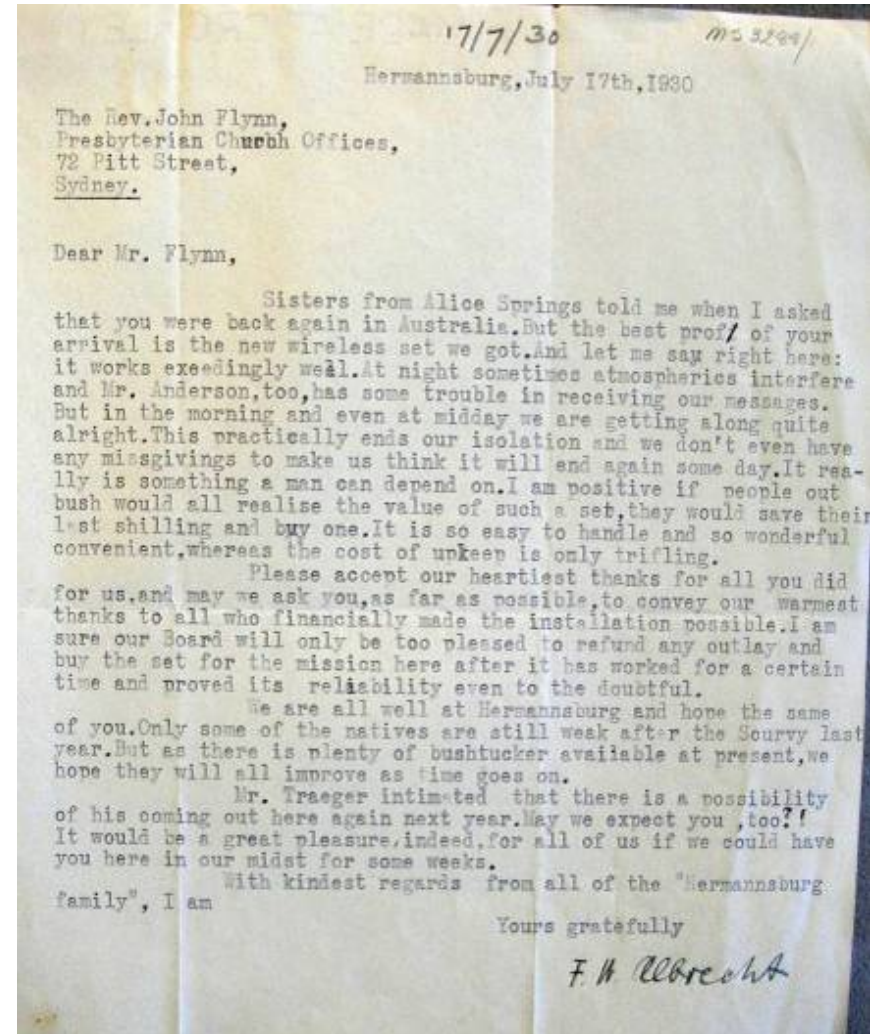
With work always at the forefront of his mind, he also attended the world's first aerial ambulance conference in Paris.



The screwdriver Flynn used to repair broken sewing machines on station visits. In the city Flynn oiled the squeaky prams he passed in the street. Collection Adelaide House



With passenger planes yet to be invented, Flynn travelled to Jerusalem by ship. Characteristically he continued working until the very last moment nearly missing his passage and nearly taking the keys to his office with him. They were thrown from aboard the moving ship just after she left the shore! The streamers in the background of this pre-departure photo show how close the ship was to leaving before Flynn went aboard.



The importance of the pedal radio in breaking the isolation of outback residents is clearly evident in this letter from the Hermannsburg Aboriginal mission. The letter also reveals the affection local Lutherans working for Aboriginal centralians held for Flynn whose parishioners were European station owners. NLA MS3288



In Alice Springs, Flynn's hospital, with its two unmarried nurses, became the centre of the town's social life, apparent proof of Flynn's belief that more women in the outback would sweeten the whole of outback life.



Flynn's miniature tool kit always travelled with him. Flynn had a passion for fixing small things. Collection Adelaide House.



Nell Small and Ina Pope – Alice Springs first hospital nurses on Alice Hostel opening day June 1926. After a dramatic journey to central Australia both women married local men spending decades of their lives living in the Territory. For more information view 'A Souvenir of my Trip Inland' a multi media installation based on the diary and photograph album of Nell Small on display at Adelaide House. Photo and caption from Nell Small's photo album.

Alice Springs, Sunday 3/7/27

... Alice Springs is situated in mountains ... very different from the flat interior one always pictures Australia to have ... a very beautiful spot.

The hostel is the main building, and is really most imposing. Some locals suggest the building is much too good; but Alice Springs must have a future as capital of Central Australia. Already Government residences are being built on plans similar to the hostel' so soon the local inhabitants will be quite ashamed of their own shanties, and a general rebuilding may result ...

The soil all round is very fertile, and given a rainfall the country would be most prosperous ... Alice Springs oranges are the finest I have tasted.

When the railway comes through everyone predicts a future for Alice Springs as a wool-producing country ...

The hostel is the centre of the town and the general meeting-place for all... Funnily enough ... the two men in the district who were most opposed to the hostel ... were the first patients, and now are most loyal and enthusiastic supporters ...

Alice Springs Hostel is a model of what the A.I.M. can do. Two fine wards, electric light, sewerage ... As I sit on the open verandah, looking towards the Gap, I feel I am almost in a different world to yours. A tame emu is walking about outside. Blacks are playing in their camp and a string of camels is coming along the road with goods from Oodnadatta.

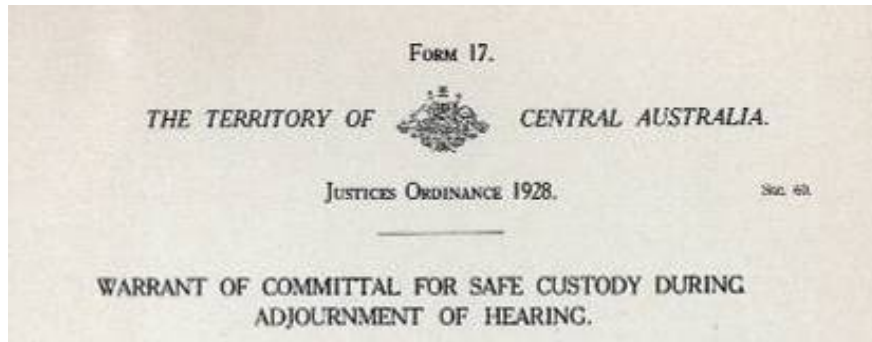
Extract from *Diary Letters of George Simpson: Australian Inland Mission Patrol June, July August 1927* (Ford + Sons, Carlton) p20-21



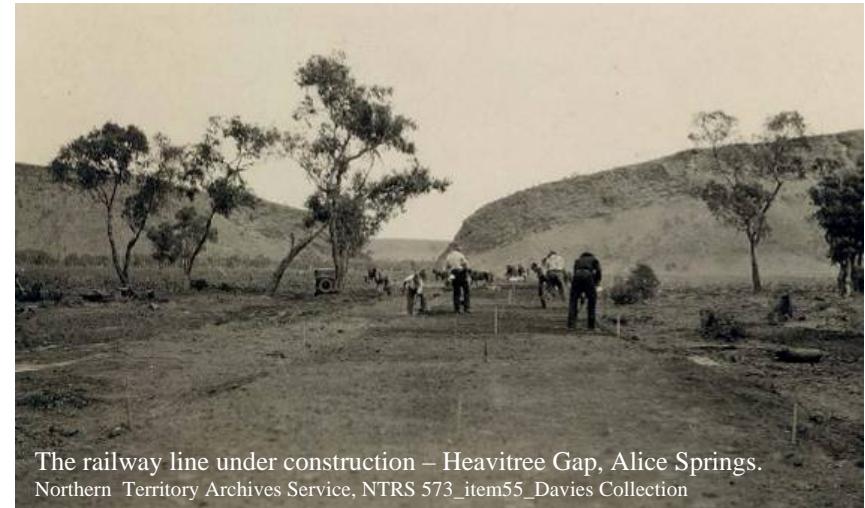
The Alice hostel's dominance of the town's landscape didn't last long.

In 1928 Alice Springs was declared the capital of a new Australian territory descriptively named Central Australia. The move sparked a miniature building boom in government accommodation at a time when the settlement had a European population of just 40.

Eighteen months later, after decades of talk, the much anticipated railway finally came to town.



Government letterhead and a few buildings in Parsons Street are all that remain of the short lived Territory of Central Australian. In 1931 a cash strapped Canberra re-united central Australia with the tropical north and Alice lost its status as one of the nation's capitals. Court letterhead from Northern Territory Archives Service Police Station Alice Springs F84



The railway line under construction – Heavitree Gap, Alice Springs.  
Northern Territory Archives Service, NTRS 573\_item55\_Davies Collection

## Central Australia

This year after long use merely as a popular term “Central Australia” has been elevated to official recognition; it now denotes a section of what was formerly the ‘Northern Territory,’ comprising all of the old territory lying south of the 20<sup>th</sup> parallel. That portion left to north is now officially known as ‘North Australia’...

The change is welcome and useful. But one cannot help regretting our national timidity on the sea of terms, “Australia,” “Northern Australia,” “Central Australia,” “South Australia,” “Western Australia,” all now on the map; why not be consistent and substitute for Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania the respective titles of “North-East Australia,” Eastern Australia,” “South-East Australia” and “Little Australia”!!!

... It is fitting that, at the very moment of Central Australia's birth as a separate entity, attention of the public generally throughout the Commonwealth should be turning thereto in quite a new way. During the last two years the number of visitors has run into hundreds. With the railway, a regular tourist traffic will develop.

Flynn, The Inlander: A Voice from the Uttermost Frontier of Settlement in Australia: Published by the A.I.M. Board to Stimulate THE BATTLE FOR A BRIGHTER BUSH Number 19 October 1927

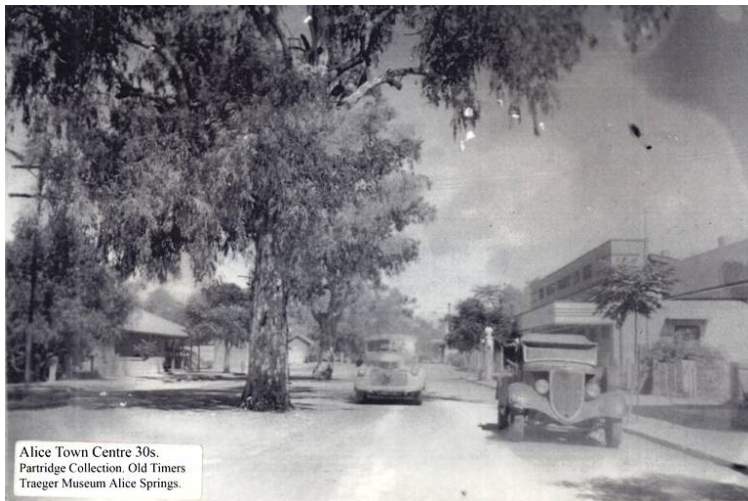


The railway created boom times for local pastoralists who could transport cattle to southern markets in less time and in better condition than had been previously possible.

The railway also made possible the depression gold rush which created the town of Tennant Creek in the 1930s, adding further fuel to Alice's economic growth.

And finally, the railway provided the bones of a new, if still barely profitable industry, tourism.

By the end of the decade Alice's population had increased twenty two fold.



At the end of this decade of extraordinary growth Alice Springs finally got its own Flying Doctor base when Flynn persuaded Adelaide Miethke, that funds raised for a remote South Australian base would be better spent in Alice Springs. The service was run by Eddie Connellan who also established the centre's first airline. For more information visit the Aviation Museum at the Araluen Cultural Precinct on Larapinta Drive.

COMMONWEALTH RAILWAYS

# BIG GAME

Hunting Parties to Unknown Arnhem Land, North Australia  
WINTER, 1931

A "once in a lifetime" opportunity to join a selected conducted party of Sportsmen. All inclusive price covering overland rail and motor car transport, camping equipment, meals, horses, rifles, &c.

From ADELAIDE .. £127      From MELBOURNE .. £135  
From SYDNEY .. £143

*A professional buffalo hunter who lives in the North has been engaged as director*

First party leaves Adelaide <sup>18</sup>th June, 1931      Second party leaves Adelaide <sup>13</sup>th August, 1931  
TO ALICE SPRINGS BY RAIL THENCE BY MOTOR CAR

THE GATEWAY TO THE ISLAND.  
Train passing through Heavetree Gap (McDonnell Ranges) 2 miles south of Alice Springs, nearly 1,000 miles from Adelaide.

<p>A Morning Scene. Note the well-appointed camp equipment.</p>	<p>North meets South. The powerful cars are in charge of experienced drivers accustomed to bush work.</p>



Kevan Weaver, son of Tennant's richest blind miner, holds some of the booty which lead an Australian prime minister to call Tennant Creek the greatest goldfield in the Commonwealth. Photo from 'Freedom, Fortitude and Flies' a social history exhibition at the Battery Hill Mining Centre Tennant Creek.

An early commonwealth rail poster selling central Australia as a tourist destination. Most of the first tourists were anthropologists and scientists eager to study the centre's Aboriginal population. Amongst these was the 'infamous' Olive Pink who came to town on a free rail employee's ticket in 1930. For more information visit the Olive Pink Botanic Gardens.



Alice Springs  
Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1928

Dear Mr Flynn,

Just a line to let you know that I am still alive, yes, not knocked out by the ... drought yet... I heard you had been ill and was very sorry, but the whole things amounts to this Mr Flynn, too much work ... you would not know the place now, with all the Government buildings going up ... but I won't consider they are in the same class as the hospital ... they are regular hot houses. They were built without any foundations and are only about four inches off the ground. If it were to rain here, they will have all their floors under water. Can't understand the Government building places like those ... things at Hostel are OK, only one patient, young Price with a broken leg. Yours truly, Bill.

Bill was Bill Littlejohn, the local policeman, who married Nell Small, one of Adelaide house's first nurses. For more information on the government buildings referred to in this letter visit The Residency, Parsons Street, Alice Springs or go to [www.nt.gov.au/nreta/heritage/visit/residency/history.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/heritage/visit/residency/history.html) NLA MS3288 Box 1 Folder 2

Following in Flynn's Footsteps Part 2: Flynn's Alice © Megg Kelham 2010

Alice's population boom did not benefit everyone.

Some Europeans missed the quiet of pre-railway times whilst the centre's original inhabitants, who had 'according to numbers' always 'far exceeded' the white population were for the first time, outnumbered by the newcomers and subject to laws restricting their access to the town's growing centre.

REGISTER of all PERSONS BROUGHT to the COMMON GAOL at				HEAVITREE GAP, in the NORTHERN TERRITORY of SOUTH-AUSTRALIA.										
When brought to Gaol.	Name	Offence	By what Court Committed.	Date of Admission.	Age	Height in In.	Weight in Lbs.	Complexion	Hair	Eyes	Arrested in State.	From Where.	Date of Discharge.	Remarks.
25-6-1926	Ready	Prohibited Area	Phillips 1 Month	25-6-26	33	5	160	Red	Blue	Blue			1-7-26	
25-6-1926	Roy	Prohibited Area	" 1 Month	25-6-26	23	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue			1-7-26	
25-6-1926	Price	Prohibited Area	" 1 Month	25-6-26	24	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				
9-7-26			Phillips 2 Months	25-6-26	26	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				
11-7-26			Phillips 1 Month	11-7-26	18	4	110	Red	Blue	Blue				
12-7-26			" 28 days	6-7-26	28	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				
17-7-26			" 28 days	17-7-26	23	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				
22-7-26			" 28 days	22-7-26	25	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				
23-7-26			" 28 days	23-7-26	21	4	140	Red	Blue	Blue				

[Extract from Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. 86, dated 16th August, 1928.]

**CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.**

IN pursuance of the powers conferred upon me by section eleven of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-1927*, I, John Charles Cawood, Government Resident for Central Australia, do hereby declare that area of land within a radius of 5 miles from the proposed line of railway from the northern boundary of the State of South Australia to Alice Springs, to be a prohibited area.

J. C. CAWOOD, Government Resident.  
Alice Springs, 23rd July, 1928.

By Authority: H. J. GREEN, Government Printer, Canberra.

**THE TERRITORY OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.**

BY virtue of the provisions of the *Northern Australia Act 1926*, and in pursuance of section eleven of the *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-1927*, I, Victor George Carrington, Government Resident for the Territory of Central Australia, hereby declare that the area of land within a radius of 5 miles from the then proposed line of railway from the northern boundary of the State of South Australia to Alice Springs, declared by notification dated the 23rd day of July, 1928, to be a prohibited area, shall cease to be a prohibited area.

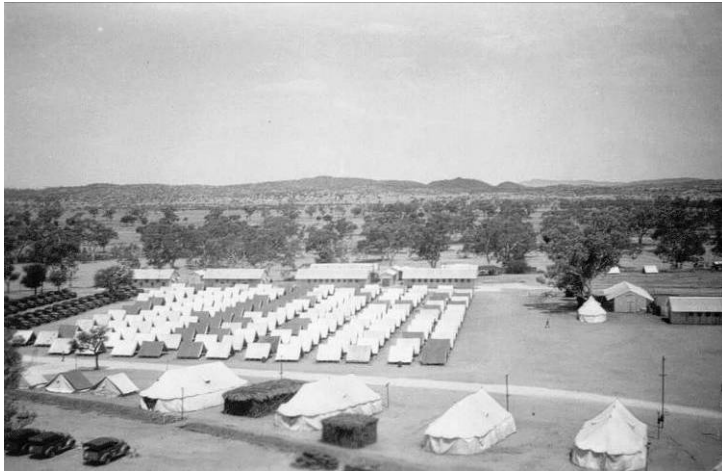
And I further declare that portion of the Territory of Central Australia within a radius of 2 miles from the office of the Government Resident at Alice Springs to be a prohibited area for aboriginals.

V. G. CARRINGTON, Government Resident.  
Alice Springs, 2nd January, 1930.

The first prohibition laws were temporarily passed to prevent relationships between Aboriginal women and the 600 or so single men who built the railway line across the desert. Document extract from National Archives of Australia A1, 1930/232

The prohibition laws were continued after railway construction was completed to prevent local nomads from using the town centre as a 'closet'. National Archives of Australia, A1, 1930, 232. The register of the town's gaol shows that prohibited area laws were enforced with increasing severity as the decade progressed. Northern Territory Archives Service F110

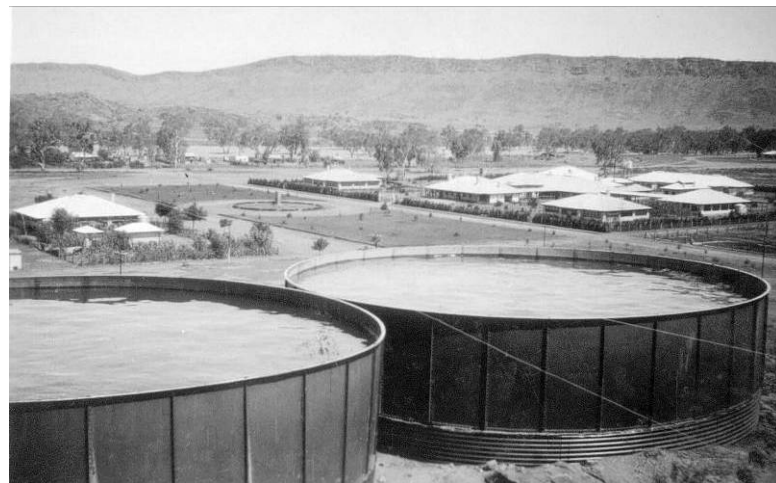




Army tents in Alice Springs during the War Years as viewed from Anzac Hill. For a more detailed history of this time visit the War Museum at the Alice Springs RSL, Schwarz Crescent or [www.clements.com.au](http://www.clements.com.au). Clements Collection, Adelaide House

Alice's prosperity ended with the bombing of Darwin in 1942 and the evacuation of the town's civilian population who were replaced by thousands of southern soldiers on their way to war in the Pacific. The soldiers were, however, a boon to the local pastoralists who supplied the army with meat.

When the war was over, many of those whose eyes had been opened to Centralia's beauty by their war forced inland travels, returned to make Alice their home. Alice experienced boom years once more.



Army constructed water tanks, which can still be seen on the hills around Alice, provided the infrastructure for a post war population boom. Thousands of soldiers were stationed in the town at any one time. Photo Clements Collection, Adelaide House

Denovan Street  
Bendigo  
15/7/42.

Dear Olive,

As you will see by the above address, I am at Ray's place. Gold mining was stopped at Tennant Creek, although I believe one mine, a large company with its own crushing plant was still going strong ...

We went to Alice Springs. Jim was thinking about prospecting for Wolfram but the conditions offering were not tempting enough and we had decided to return to Victoria when an order was posted up ordering all civilians not doing essential war work to be ready for evacuation. We were doing nothing so got away in the first batch ...

With greetings from all here,

Yours the ant,  
Francie

from 'Freedom, Fortitude and Flies: Daily Life on Tennant's Goldfields' a social history exhibition at The Battery Hill Mining Centre, Tennant Creek. The Havard Collection.



About 40 mixed descent children, who lived at 'The Bungalow' were also evacuated to Adelaide after Darwin was bombed. Their house mother was Mrs McCoy nee Ina Pope, one of the first nurses at Adelaide house. This photo was taken sometime in 1942 during their evacuation by train to Adelaide. NTAS Conservation Commission Collection.



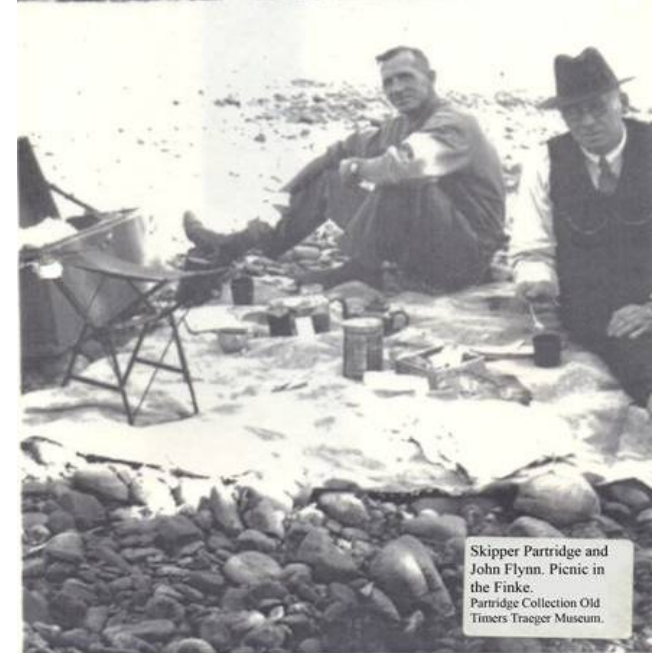
Flynn spent the 1930s 'on the wallaby' establishing A.I.M. hospitals and flying doctor bases in as many remote Australian towns as funds would allow.

When war came Flynn exchanged his three piece suit for army khaki and sent his patrol padres to minister to soldiers serving overseas. His own inland travels didn't stop.

In Alice Springs Adelaide House was turned into accommodation for army nurses while in the bush, Flynn's pedal radios became the eyes and ears of allied defence as station owners watched the skies for enemy planes and conscientiously censored their personal conversations to ensure no mention of allied troop movements were ever made.



Rev Fred McKay's WW1 medals, Fred McKay Museum, St Philips College, Schwarz Cresc, Alice Springs. Flynn's attitude to WW1 appears to be a marked change from his attitude to WW1 when he mourned every padre and nurse who left for the European front.



Skipper Partridge and John Flynn. Picnic in the Finke. Partridge Collection Old Timers Traeger Museum.

Friends and acquaintances of Flynn marvelled at his habit of wearing a three piece suit no matter where he found himself.

22/3/43 MS 3288/6

**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
**PERMIT OF ENTRY.**

Permission is hereby granted to the undermentioned applicant for entry to the Northern Territory of Australia and that part of the State of Western Australia to which the National Security (Emergency Control) Regulations have been applied.

Name. *Rev John Flynn*  
 No. of Civilian Identity Card. *N7 1780 28517.*  
 Occupation. *Superintendent, Royal Guelphic Mission.*  
 Residential Address. *40 Assembly Hall, St James St Sydney.*  
 Signature of Applicant. *J Flynn*

The abovenamed applicant is hereby authorised to enter on *22* day of *April* 1943 and remain in the said area until the *8* day of *April* 1943 or until the date of cancellation of this permit, whichever be the sooner. This permit must be produced upon demand by any member of His Majesty's Military or Air Forces.

Dated this *22* day of *April* 1943

(Signature of officer authorised to issue permit)  
 (Rank)  
 (Appointment)

*Col NSW Rofc area*

5792-42+

Civilians like Flynn could not enter the Northern Territory from 1942 until the end of the war without first obtaining a military permit, like the one above. Soldiers were posted at Heavitree Gap in Alice to monitor all civilian movements. No permit meant no entry to the town. NLA MS3288 Box12





When peace arrived, 64 year old Flynn returned to working on those of his 1912 inland dreams still not completed. Foremost amongst these were an aged care facility for old bushies and support for home education.

Flynn was alive to see the first Old Timers cottage built in an appropriately beautiful bush setting on the outskirts of Alice Springs.

Unfortunately he died before the 'School of the Air' opened its now world famous doors.

Flynn was buried at the foot of Mt Gillen in the heart of his beloved Inland.

*Brisbane Telegraph*  
**Flynn ... man of vision**  
 "FLYNN of the Inland" is assured of long and grateful remembrance in all the lonely places of Australia's outback. The Australian Inland Mission, which made its aim to provide nursing homes that would serve the remotest settlements, was largely the conception of this Presbyterian bush parson. Later Flynn had the inspiration of a "flying doctor service."  
 He had more than ideas. He had the energy and tenacity to work for their realisation. Flynn's life was an example of what Christian faith can inspire a man to do for his fellow men.


*"Brisbane Telegraph"*  
 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1951.



JACK STARKE, 80, is a pioneer who refuses all offers of help and does his own cooking. To preserve traditional independence, every man can live like a hermit in the settlement if he wants to.

**A DREAM COMES TRUE**  
 Old-timers of the Northern Territory spend last days as Flynn of the Inland planned

*The Sunday Sun 6th May 1951*  
**Founder of Flying Doctor dies**



**DR. JOHN FLYNN**

DR. JOHN FLYNN, 70, founder of the Flying Doctor Service and Australian Inland Mission, died in Royal Prince Alfred Hospital yesterday.

Dr. Flynn had been in hospital a month. His wife was so shocked by the news of her husband's death that she had to go to bed.

Dr. Flynn won world fame as "Flynn of the Inland."

He founded the Australian Inland Mission in 1912, and started the Flying Doctor Service in 1928.

**Wanted adventure**  
 He also originated radio contact between outback homesteads and the Flying Medical Service.

Dr. Flynn first studied to be a schoolteacher and worked in the Victorian Education Department from 1898 until 1902.

The ministry, he felt, was not adventurous enough.

From 1939 to 1942 Dr. Flynn was Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

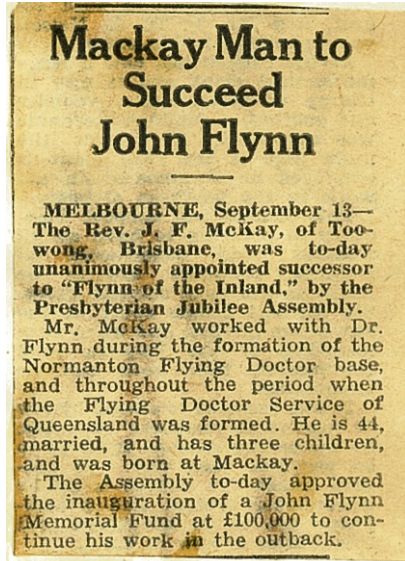
It was announced last year that Dr. Flynn would retire in September of this year.

Newspaper clippings from the AIM scrapbook, NLA MS3288 Box 19

One of Old Timer's first residents from an unknown newspaper article. For more Old Timer's yarns visit the Old Timer's Traeger Museum or download some of the "Listen to Our Yarns" podcasts on this web site.

Newspaper source unknown.





Rev John Flynn was succeeded by the Rev Fred McKay as head of the Australian Inland Mission. For more information about how John Flynn persuaded Fred McKay that the sands of Birdsville were as beautiful as the sand of Queensland beaches visit the Fred McKay Education Centre, St Philips College, Alice Springs.

*This is the second of three books which explore the life and work of the Rev John Flynn created by Megg Kelham for the Collaborative Museums Education Project funded by the Regional Museums Grants Support Programme, Museum and Art Gallery NT. Copies of the other two books and educational activities for learners of all ages will be coming soon to: <http://www.centralaustralian tourism.com> A very short video introducing Flynn's work and the attractions on the trail can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOUtKuyEVIU>*

Digital images of documents and objects are reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Australia (NLA), the National Archives of Australia (NAA), the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS), Frontier Services (the new A.I.M.), Grace Reid, Helen Simpson, Bernie Hoffman and individual museums on The Flynn Trail, a heritage trail located in Alice Springs.

It is our sincere hope that this booklet will encourage you to visit the attractions on The Flynn Trail. These attractions are:

- The Old Timers Traeger Museum
- Adelaide House
- The John Flynn Memorial Church
- Flynn's Grave
- The Fred McKay Museum, St Philips College
- The Royal Flying Doctor Service
- The School of the Air.



Miniature wood plane, one of Flynn's tools – Collection Adelaide House.

#### Further Reading:

Hudson, Harry Flynn's Flying Doctors 1956  
Griffiths, Max The Silent Heart Flynn of the Inland Kangaroo Press 1993  
Linn, Robert Shifting Sands to Solid Rock: Ninety Years of Frontier Services Frontier Services 2002  
McAndrew, Harry The Inland Saga: a Sketch of the Australian Inland Mission through 60 years  
McKay, J Fred 'Flynn, John' in Carment, David, Maynard, Robyn and Powell, Alan Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography Vol One: to 1945 NTU Press 1990  
McKenzie, Maisie Outback Achiever Fred McKay Successor to Flynn of the Inland Boolarong Press 1990  
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McPheat, W. Scott Flynn: Vision of the Inland 1977 Griffin Press, Sydney  
Rudolph, Ivan John Flynn Of Flying Doctors and Frontiers Faith Dove: An imprint of Harper Collins Publishers 1996

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Megg Kelham BA(Hons), Dip Ed, PHA(NT) is a freelance professional historian based in Alice Springs NT For more information about professional historians visit [www.historians.org.au](http://www.historians.org.au)

