

With my brother Donald , his wife Beverley and 3 month old son Michael, we spent New Year 1960 at Macumba Station, north of Oodnadatta with our relatives ,the Kempe family.On January the 2nd, we left to travel back to Mount Barry Station where Donald worked.

As I was being sent as Head Teacher to open a school in Coober Pedy I had decided to spend the holidays with Donald at Mount Barry which is 100 kms north of Coober Pedy and a 100 from Oodnadatta.

Once in Oodnadatta , and because of the baby, it was too hot to go further, and the afternoon was spent at the Macumba 'shack' which did have a large evaporative cooler mounted on the roof. Too hot to even think of the pub or do anything, we waited for dusk before leaving.Donald had the job of driving the Macumba tractor, a Fordson with a front-end loader attachment while I took off in an old Morris 4 x4 truck , with Beverley and baby in the Landrover . Depending on road conditions the 60 miles can take from one to two hours. Donald , making good use of the loader loaded the truck with sand at Hookey's Hole,and so it was not a fast trip, especially for him at about 15kms an hour.

We did all manage the trip ok.. Michael did well but other children and people in outback areas died of heatstroke or perished during the two week heatwave that followed. The official temperature reading taken at the Oodnadatta aerodrome was 126 degrees Farenheit , which is near 51 Centigrade, still a record. Five aborigines , driving the little used track between Coober Pedy and William Creek, perished when they broke down and tried to walk for help. Never did make the papers? Dick Nunn from Anna Creek Station found and buried the bodies. At the station we remember birds literally falling dead out of the air.A pond formed by the concrete border

around a small lawn, in front of the house, and filled with bore water saw an emu sitting with an eagle together with crows, budgerigars and other small birds. When out on the run moving cattle, we counted 26 dead kangaroos under one patch of shade near a bore where they would have had water. Sheep on next door station Evelyn Downs survived, possibly because of the insulation effect of wool.

At the finish of those holidays I rode my 500 Norton across to Coober Pedy to start the school. No road then, follow the creeks over to Mount Clarence then to Mabel Creek where you met the Stuart Highway about 40 kms north of the town.