

## NRAO ONLINE 55

### Charles Duguid, Champion of Aboriginal Rights and the Womera Rocket Range Project 1946-1947, Pawsey's Relative<sup>1</sup>

Initial discussions between the Australian and British government occurred in London in the months after WWII ended concerning a possible missile range in Australia. The fact that the UK had been the victim of guided missile attacks in late 1944 to March 1945 via V2 rockets launched by the Germans towards London led to a realisation that accelerated research in the field of guided missiles was required. The underpopulated centre of Australia was an obvious choice for a testing site. After earlier secret discussion between the UK and Australian governments, hints of the plans occurred in the Australian press in October 1945 after William Coulson from the Department of Supply of Australia had visited London to discuss unofficial approaches by the UK representatives to build the test range in Australia. On 1 November 1945, John Dedman, the Australian Minister of Defence, announced that the UK would be sending a team to Australia to discuss the long-distance weapons range. The team of high-level military personnel arrived in Australia in April 1946. The leader was Lieutenant General John Evatts, a senior army officer who had been in the UK Military for three decades. Although not a scientist or engineer, he was the Senior Military Advisor to the Ministry of Supply in the UK. After seven weeks of visiting factories, universities and laboratories in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, he returned to the UK. The UK committee met many Australian counterparts from the three branches of the Military. The report was finished and given to the UK government on 21 May 1946.

The proposed rocket range is shown in Fig. 1 with substantial overlap with the Central Aboriginal Reserves. The area consisted of a 320 km wide strip with a length of 1850 km from South Australia to Eighty Mile beach in Western Australia. The total area was about 600,000

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<sup>1</sup> Source material is (1) the comprehensive book (about 370,000 words) by Peter Morton of 1989 (digital release in October 2017); (2) the PhD thesis of Sitarani Kerin from the Australian National University History Program in 2004, *'Doctor Do-Good'? Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Politics, 1930s to 1970s* (online at the ANU website <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/9235> ). Kerin published this book in 2011, Australia Scholarly Publishing (now out of print) with a slightly different title, *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement 1930s-1970s*. The main text of this NRAO ONLINE summary r includes a description of Pawsey's disagreement with the AASW opposition to the rocket range project as well as the response of ASIO to Pawsey's statements. Reference to this text occurs in NRAO ONLINE 36.

square km. (The range could be extended in the NW direction over the Indian Ocean to a total of 3200 km, steering clear of Java in Indonesia). Morton summarised the report (page 16):

The mission's key recommendation was that the two governments should agree to establish a Range along the chosen stretch of inland Australia. For the immediate future, the planning for its establishment should start at once. British officers with executive powers should go to Australia to form a nucleus of staff there. The Australians should set up a suitable organisation, and a British team should be briefed on what was required and then sent out to work within it.

By mid-1946, details of the Evatts's report appeared in the Australian press on 20 July; the claim was made that the choice of land in the states of South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory was "an extensive area free from human habitation". On 22 July 1946 the *Adelaide Advertiser* published a description of the area in the centre and northwest of Australia with an area claimed to be six times the size of the British Isles<sup>2</sup> with about 2000 people in the Aboriginal reserves (see Fig. 1). The Australian Cabinet under the leadership of Chifley approved the project on 19 November 1946; the British prime minister welcomed the Australian proposal and accepted the conditions on 13 December 1946. A cost-sharing plan was adopted with an initial down payment from the UK of £ 50,000. The two Labor governments had only negotiated for about a year, putting together an enormous joint venture that was to last three decades. "It was a bold step, typical perhaps of the heady days of the closing stages of World War II and its immediate aftermath." (Morton, 1989, page 18).

Morton has pointed out (page 70):

[E]ven the most partisan [opponent of the project] found it hard to argue that there was not much likelihood of anyone's being hurt by an unarmed rocket. On the generally accepted figures, each inhabitant of the region had an average of about 400 square kilometres of desert to himself. It must have seemed improbable—and especially so, perhaps, to the visiting Englishmen—that anyone was going to object to a range cutting diagonally across this barren and uninviting territory.

But the Australian and UK government had not considered the opposition that Dr Charles Duguid was to mount in the coming year. This doctor, the husband of Pawsey's first cousin Phyllis Lade Duguid, was to become the most formidable opponent of the rocket range in

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, the correct ratio is only a factor of about 2.5.

Australia.<sup>3</sup> He was an Adelaide surgeon and well-known supporter of Aboriginal rights. Duguid (born in Scotland in 1884) had emigrated to Australia shortly before WWI, having become a surgeon in Glasgow. After settling in Adelaide in 1914, he became a doctor in the Australian Army serving in Egypt and Palestine. In the 1930s, he made long journeys by camel as he travelled in South Australia between the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges investigating the lives of the Aboriginal Australians. In 1937, he was the leader in the formation of the Ernabella Mission<sup>4</sup> to the Pitjantjatjara tribe in the Musgrave Ranges (See Fig 2). Morton has emphasised that Duguid did not adopt the traditional role in his contacts with the inhabitants of northern South Australia (Morton, 1989, page 70):

His idea of what the purpose of a mission should be was not the traditional one: he thought it should act as a “buffer-station” to cushion the cultural shock as stone-age tribesmen came into contact with the twentieth century, and missionaries certainly should not interfere with the pattern of tribal life except when invited to do so.

Duguid became a skilled opponent as the “chief polemicist for his cause.” He was a master of rhetorical questions: “What curse is on a civilisation, that while the anguish of millions is still on our hearts, it should already be trying to devise a method of wiping out white nations?” (Morton, page 71). By July 1946, Duguid had been searching for details of the location of the test range for more than three months. When he read a London newspaper, he realised that the test range would threaten the Ernabella Mission and also the outstations of Hermannsburg and Haast Bluff (Fig. 1) as the rocket range included a transferal crossing of a substantial portion of the Central Aboriginal Reserves.

Kerin (ANU PhD thesis, 2004, p. 59) has provided a stirring summary of Charles Duguid’s opposition to the rocket range in 1946:

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<sup>3</sup> See Fig. 3 for an image taken by Pawsey of his cousin and Duguid, taken at the end of the 1947-1948 trip that Pawsey and his wife had undertaken, also Chapter 17.

<sup>4</sup> Kerin has provided a fascinating, detailed account of the foundation of this famous mission in 1937. Kerin [thesis page iii] “[The mission] is widely regarded as one of the least oppressive and most culturally sensitive missions ever established in Australia.” Kerin continued (page 23): “The persuasiveness of Duguid’s autobiographical account of Ernabella’s establishment is such, it seems, that few historians have sought to look beyond it to explain Ernabella’s success.... [Duguid’s activities] enabled the myth of [his] ‘visionary’ establishment of Ernabella to develop.” The modified story of the late 1930s solidified with the publication of Duguid’s autobiography *Doctor and the Aborigines* of 1972; however, the retelling of the story had begun in the late 1930s. In the new version of events, Duguid changed the timing of various events as well as some of the motivational impulses. The success of the enterprise over many decades has always been recognised. Duguid died in 1986 aged 102 (born 1884). Phyllis Lade Pawsey (1904-1993), also a strong advocate of Aboriginal rights, married Duguid in 1930.

Duguid had two main objections to the rocket range: its route through the Central Aborigines Reserve and the threat it posed to the cause of world peace. For the sake of the latter, Duguid was opposed to the testing of rockets anywhere in Australia or elsewhere in the world ... Asked in 1947 if he knew of anywhere that rockets could be tested without risk to Aborigines or whites, Duguid replied that “there [was] no place in the whole wide world where these tests [could] be conducted without risk to all humanity.” [Duguid, May 1947]

His personal view, unchanged throughout the year-long controversy [1946-1947], was that there was little hope for all humanity if Aborigines suffered as a result of the rocket tests. Thus, his rallying cry, “Hands off the Aboriginal Reserve”. [Adelaide *Advertiser*, letter to editor 22 August 1946]

Duguid continued his public opposition later in 1946 and into 1947. Kerin, page 60<sup>5</sup>:

Duguid suspected, and indeed alleged, that government had chosen the reserve in spite of “the fact that the whole life of a maximum number of Aborigines [would] be completely upset”. However, the official answer was disarmingly simple. The route through the reserve was “both the best available in Australia and most suitable for the project”. In the eyes of government, the media and the majority of white Australians, the Central Aborigines Reserve was [perfectly suitable]--dry, desolate and largely devoid of people.

“I am not prepared to see [the Aboriginal Australians] sacrificed.” For nearly a decade, Ernabella mission had served as “a carefully planned first contact” for the “tribal” Aborigines of the Central Aborigines Reserve, “protecting [them] from a too sudden introduction” to modern civilisation. That government would knowingly “wreck the whole scheme” by firing rockets into the reserve, and by allowing military personnel, scientists and other observers to enter the reserve, struck Duguid as “madness”; it could not be condoned.

Duguid stressed that the main issue for the protection of the aboriginal Australians in 1946-1947 was to concentrate on a single, decisive issue. He had already written in 1938: “The Future of the Aborigines of Australia depends on land.”

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<sup>5</sup> From Kerin (PhD thesis, page 60) with a combination of letters to the editor in Adelaide and London, a letter to the Prime Minister JB Chifley and a publication in 1947 in Melbourne by Duguid (*The Rocket Range Aborigines and War* by The Rocket Range Protest Committee)

[The land had to be] their father's country, for all the principal features of it are related to their life and well-being. The tribal organisation is bound up in their territory, which must remain theirs, and only theirs, if they are to live as tribal natives.<sup>6</sup>

Duguid continued his warnings through-out 1946. Kerin (PhD thesis, page 84) has provided a summary of the conflicts of 1946:

The rocket range controversy focussed unprecedented public attention on the welfare and future prospects of the Aborigines of the Central Aborigines Reserve. While a desire to protect Aborigines from harm was evident on both sides of the debate, opinion varied as to the impact the range would have on them, whether and how their interests could be safeguarded, and what their interests actually were. No-one could deny that the Aborigines would be effected in some way by the rocket range. However, the measure of that effect-be it negative or positive, destructive or constructive-was largely determined by how the reserve's inhabitants were perceived. Duguid perceived and portrayed them as "fully tribal" Aborigines. In his view, all talk on the part of politicians and others that their interests could be safeguarded was "utter nonsense".

Duguid continued his stream of letters to the editor of the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 28 October 1946<sup>7</sup>:

The invasion of their territory in the way planned by the British and Australian Governments means their end. In place of the fine upstanding Myall native<sup>8</sup> of the mountain ranges, within a few years will be a half-caste race, and for this all those supporting the rocket firing range must bear the responsibility.

A sombre note was struck by Duguid on an ABC broadcast from Adelaide in 1947 (Kerin, PhD thesis, p.64):

The native people, where not being exploited, are not dying out ... But if White Australia is going to banish the natives from a reserve when gold is found there ... and if the white

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<sup>6</sup> Kerin (PhD thesis, page 61) and Duguid, "The Future of The Aborigines of Australia", Presbyterian Board of Mission, Melbourne 1941, p 9

<sup>7</sup> Between August and November 1946, Kerin (PhD thesis, page 84) has pointed out that the *Adelaide Advertiser* printed more than 30 letters and editorials on the rocket range controversy. Newspapers in Sydney and Melbourne contained similar contributions.

<sup>8</sup> Referring to Myall Creek massacre near Gwydir River, in the central New South Wales district of Namoi, involving the killing of up to 30 unarmed indigenous Australians by ten Europeans and one African on 10 June 1838.

man is going to be allowed to run bullocks on every blade of grass left in the Interior, the day of highly intelligent native tribes will fast close in to the night of their extinction.

Also, during August 1946, Duguid joined forces with a civic group in Adelaide, Common Cause, a group working on social issues within Australia. Not surprising, given the sphere of anti-communism in this era, there were accusations that Common Cause was affiliated with the Communist Party of Australia. Morton (1989, page 72) reported “that Duguid had communist leanings was absurdly false. There was no sympathy between Common Cause and the Communists”. At the protest meeting in early August, Duguid was the principal speaker. During this period, Duguid also was able to obtain wide spread support from groups like the Australian Government Workers’ Association, the AASW (Australian Association of Scientific Workers, see Chapter 33) and various church groups.

But there were also prominent supporters in the community for the test range. Groups In favour of assimilation of Aboriginal Australians suggested that the test range would provide employment for the local inhabitants. Editorials in the Adelaide *Advertiser* strongly supported the test range since it would play a major role in the defence of the British Commonwealth in the soon to develop cold war with the Soviet Union.

By 22 November 1946, the announcement of the go-ahead for the project was made by John Dedman in the House of Representatives in Canberra after an exchange of messages between the UK and Australian Prime Ministers. The Australian government also attempted to quieten the speculation and uninformed discussions about the nature of the project. After outlining the nature of the test range [Morton page 74]: “[Dedman] expected there to be little effect on the Aboriginal population: ‘Reports that huge areas in Central Australia will be blasted by explosives are highly coloured figments of the imagination.’”

To the credit of the Chifley government in Canberra, Dedman realised it was necessary to give Duguid a chance to put his views to the government. The Guided Projectiles Committee invited Duguid and a colleague to a meeting on 1 February 1947. This was to be held at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. The meeting began the previous day with a classified discussion of the details of the project, attended by the official members of the committee and not by Duguid and a colleague, Dr Donald Thomson, an anthropologist who shared Duguid’s views. These two joined the meeting the next day. The summary of the first day’s deliberations was given before Duguid and Thomson were called into the meeting:

Contact with white people is increasing the detribalisation of the natives including the controlled detribalisation brought about by the Missions. An important point is that it

should be controlled, and not uncontrolled, contact. A serious aspect is that there is a continuous drift of the natives to South Australia. [Kerin, PhD thesis, page 87]

As Duguid and Thomson joined the committee, Kerin (PhD thesis, page 88-89) has provided a summary of the strong objections of the new participants:

On entering the Committee room, Duguid made his objections clear. If the rocket range was definitely going through the reserve, he knew “of no welfare matters at all which [would] save the poor blacks. I know of none”, he declared. While Duguid conceded that airstrips rather than roads for the recovery of missiles and transportation of personnel “minimise[d] things considerably”, and was pleased, though sceptical, to learn that Aboriginal labour would not be used, he was adamant that no measures would “keep the Aborigines away [from] ... the settlements”. Although informed by [Major General Beavis, Chair of the Committee] that “settlements” was the wrong term, and that “at most” there would be three “observation posts” staffed by no more than 25 people, Duguid was unrelenting. In his opinion, “the size of the settlements ... [did] not make a great deal of difference to interference with Aboriginal life”, for “whether small or big ... it [would] be quite impossible” to keep the Aborigines away. But “why is it necessary to keep them away?” another Committee member asked, to which Duguid replied:

Because I do not want their mode of life interfered with. It is inevitable that some outside contacts will be made, but they should be made by anthropologists and enlightened missionaries who are prepared to observe their customs and mode of life generally, and approach them as definite entities.

Thomson also stressed the point that nothing could protect the Aboriginal Australians from contact with the white rocket range personnel. In the end, the Committee had taken note of the views of Duguid and Thomson but it concluded:

[Kerin, PhD, page 89] After hearing Duguid and Thomson’s views, the Committee agreed that “neither of these gentlemen had advanced any reason which precluded the making of satisfactory arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of the Aborigines in the proposed range area”. More pointedly, Elkin<sup>9</sup> remarked that “neither of these

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<sup>9</sup> Morton and Kerin have described in detail the conflict between Duguid and the main academic advisor A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. He was a co-opted member of the Australian Guided Projectile Committee at the Victoria Barracks on both days 31 January and 1 February 1947. Elkin effectively became an advisor of Dedman. Elkin was characterised as an “assimilationist who had little time for the notion of reserves as sanctuaries.” (Morton page 74). Kerin (PhD thesis, page 84):

gentlemen suggested any ways in which the Committee might fulfil its purpose, namely to safeguard the Aborigines while carrying out the project, their attitude being a negative one". [Thus as expected the committee accepted the recommendation to go ahead with the test range.]

The Australian Guided Projectiles Committee report, tabled in the House of Representatives on 6 March 1947, reflected Elkin's influence. Accordingly the Committee recommended that patrol officers be appointed to provide for the welfare of Aborigines "both within and without the Central Reserve", thereby ensuring that any interference occasioned by the rocket range was "controlled and not uncontrolled". The issue of control was especially important in relation to the "planned detribalisation of the Aborigine". Under the heading "Aims of the Aborigine Protection Authorities", it was explained that [Kerin, PhD thesis, p 90]:

It is now accepted that the detribalisation of the Aborigine is inevitable [perhaps accelerated by a generation], and that it is the aim of the Government authorities responsible for the protection of the Aborigine, in conjunction with missionary authorities, to control such detribalisation in the best interests of the Aborigine.

After the Committee report was released in early March 1947, Duguid gave an address at the Melbourne Town Hall in which he condemned the rocket range as a "final token of Australia's disregard of her minority race". [Kerin, p 91]:

Shot and poisoned as they were in the earlier days, neglected and despised more lately, must our Aborigines now be finally sacrificed and hurried to extinction by the sudden contact with the mad demands of twentieth century militarism?

Let us be frank and admit that we are forcing a clash between human beings. Not only may a few individual Aborigines meet their death in one way or another-and secrecy will prevent us ever knowing-but the whole fabric of life of 1500, or more, of our tribal Aborigines is to be sacrificed in this preparation for another war.<sup>10</sup>

In mid-1947, Dedman promoted the viewpoint of the Australian government concerning the necessity of the rocket range. He dealt pragmatically with the pacifists by pointing out that

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"The supporters of the project, including A.P. Elkin, argued that the 'tribal life' Duguid was so solicitous of preserving no longer existed, or at least not to the extent that Duguid claimed."

<sup>10</sup> From Duguid, *The Rocket Range, Aborigines and War*, 1947.



guided missiles were a weapon of the future. At the end of WWII, the Germans had developed the V2 guided missile, a deadly weapon for which there were no effective countermeasures. In a future war, guided missiles would be much more powerful. [He did not point out the fact that they would certainly be modified to carry nuclear weapons.] There was also the participation in British Commonwealth defence against the Soviet threat [Morton, page 75]:

[T]he defence of the British Commonwealth ... could best be done in the Pacific ... The guided weapons project is the first practical measure to be undertaken. It will increase the capacity of Australia to defend itself with the latest weapons, which is important in view of our small manpower and large territory, and it will strengthen the security of the British Commonwealth by providing for the dispersal of these resources ...

Then Dedman took up the report of the Guided Missiles Committee and its recommendations. He also mentioned the dissenting opinion of Duguid. He pointed out that [Morton, page 76]:

[T]he authorities on native affairs representing the Commonwealth, South Australian and Western Australian Governments ... are satisfied with the measures proposed to be taken for safeguarding the interests and welfare of Aborigines, the Government has accepted the conclusions of the report.

Dedman then highlighted the unique and special role that Australia could play in the British Commonwealth [Morton, page 76]:

If we are not to be defenceless against an aggressor employing this type of [guided missile] warfare, we must keep abreast of its developments. Australia possesses the only area in the whole British Commonwealth most suited for the purpose. Successive Australian Governments have urged the decentralisation of the defence resources of the British Commonwealth and this is the first major step in this direction. I do not question the good faith of those who, in all sincerity, are concerned for the welfare of the Aborigines, but I do not concede that the Commonwealth and State Governments concerned are not equally solicitous for their responsibilities in this direction.

Kerin (PhD thesis, page 95) has summarised the end phase of the rocket range conflict, late 1947:

By the end of 1947, the rocket range controversy was over. In many ways, it was over before it began. In fighting against the rocket range, Duguid was fighting for an ideal at Ernabella that no longer existed, and perhaps never had; a sanctuary of preservation and elevation where “tribal” Aborigines could learn about white civilisation without losing their identity as “tribal” Aborigines. Likewise, Duguid was fighting for rights to land that Aborigines did not have, and for rights to a culture and “way of life” that was increasingly viewed as incompatible with Aboriginal advancement and assimilation. Yet

Duguid fought on regardless. It was the same fight he had been waging since the mid 1930s, and it was the same fight he would continue to wage in the coming decades. Having taken on government, the military and Elkin in a year-long sustained battle to save the Central Aborigines Reserve and its inhabitants from the rocket range, Duguid achieved notoriety, and a more positive fame in some quarters, as an uncompromising campaigner. While of little comfort to the Aborigines whose ancestral home became the Guided Projectiles Range- cruelly named Woomera, an Aboriginal word meaning throwing stick.<sup>11</sup> Duguid's moral victory stood him, and his cause, in good stead for the battles yet to come.

As the rocket range controversy subsided at the end of 1947, Duguid and other supporters of Aboriginal rights could not imagine the next major threat that the inhabitants of Central Australia would face a decade later from the series of nuclear tests in the two Woomera Prohibited Areas in South Australia. These were organised by the UK with Australian collaboration. Yet again the view that the “vast empty wasteland was ideal for testing British rockets” would lead to a new use for this so-called empty region of Australia, nuclear tests at Emu Fields and then Maralinga (Fig 2) starting in 1953.

Tragically, the British tests in Australia did impact the Aboriginal Australians substantially beginning in 1953.<sup>12</sup> Morton (page 224): “The atomic tests were not conducted under the joint

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<sup>11</sup> The naming exercise for the new rocket provides a droll comment on the conflict of 1947. Also, there is a connection between J.L. Pawsey and his cousin's husband, Charles Duguid. Morton (p 117) has provided details. In April 1947, A.G. Pither, the RAAF Liaison Officer to the Long Rang Weapons Organisation, connected to RPL radar activities in WWII (see Online Resource *ESM\_9.4 Air Warning , 1941-1941-1942: Applied Science and Wartime Bureaucracy, Additional Note 1* ), was given the job of assigning a member of the Evatts committee in picking a name for the new rocket range. They were told to pick an Aboriginal name. They found an eastern Australian term *WOOMERA*, a spear thrower. The word for this object in South Australian is *MIR*. Duguid attacked the choice in his usual forum, the letter to the editor in the *Adelaide Advertiser* on 10 July 1947. Duguid's text from the newspaper provided subtle, ironic comment: “Your sub-leader ‘Woomera’ from the *Advertiser* on Monday calls for the thanks of serious people. It expresses what was uppermost in the minds of many when reading of the Federal Government's choice of a name for the launching base of the rocket range. You have rightly stressed the deadly mission of the rocket, as Dr Evatt did when he described the range as ‘for the test firing of one of the most potent weapons of man's destruction.’ You have rightly stressed, too, the many peaceful uses of the woomera, and one need only add it is very seldom that the woomera is used to throw a spear to kill anything but the game that forms the meat diet of the tribal people. A more pregnant name for the site would have been boomerang, but perhaps that is too near the truth, too disturbing for the nation that is preparing to fire the rocket.”

<sup>12</sup> The first British tests occurred at Montebello Islands off the coast of West Australia in October 1952 (additional tests were also made in this area in 1956). During the following year, the testing ground was moved to a site at Emu Field (Fig 2) about 250 km south of the mission established by Dr Duguid at Ernabella. This site was used for two tests (*Totem1 and 2*) in October 1953.

[Rocket Range] project but under a separate agreement. The distinction, particularly before the foundation of Maralinga permanent test site range, was in practice a hazy one.” In the end, no nuclear weapons were tested in the rocket range itself. However, a few inert ballistic dummies of real weapons were tested. (Morton p.176)

Morton writes that the first impact on the Aboriginal Australians began with the establishment of a weather station at Giles (Fig 2), in preparation for the weapons tests at Maralinga (located 180 SW of Emu Field and 800 km from Adelaide); this site was chosen after the Emu Field site was found to be too isolated:

Despite the early forebodings of Dr Duguid and his supporters [in 1946-1947], nearly a decade passed before any need arose for Establishment staff to encroach permanently on the reserves. Even when in 1955 the proposal was first mooted for a base within the borders of the Western Australian reserve it was not as a result of any joint project work [rocket range project <sup>13</sup>]. Rather, the request came from the Meteorological Branch of the Department of the Interior for the establishment of a weather station in connection with the forthcoming tests of the British atomic bomb at Maralinga. In order that the fallout plume should dissipate harmlessly and not drift over populated regions, it was vital to have information about upper atmospheric wind currents from a point far downwind of the test site. The weather station, named “Giles” for the famous desert explorer, was established to supply this data.

The Maralinga site became well known in Australia with tests running from 1956 to 1963. Seven tests were carried out, with yields in the range 10 to 27 tons of TNT. Two major tests were conducted: (1) Operation *Buffalo* from 27 September to 22 October 1956<sup>14</sup> and (2) Operation *Antler*. Operation *Antler* was designed to test components for hydrogen bombs, with the three initial major tests 14 September to 9 October 1957<sup>15</sup>. Fallout and contamination of personnel were major problems. The Australian McClelland Royal Commission of 1985 was highly critical of the lack of safeguards against radiation exposure for the personnel. An especially egregious problem occurred at the Maralinga site Taranaki where plutonium had been released in 1959 to

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<sup>13</sup> The rocket range at Woomera (joint UK and Australia) was not directly involved in the nuclear tests. “At the Range only inert ballistic dummies of nuclear bombs were ever dropped.” (Morton, page 176)

<sup>14</sup> Two devices were exploded from towers while a small device was released at ground level. The first British nuclear weapon dropped from an aircraft, a Royal Air Force Vickers Valiant bomber, was used for the fourth test at 11,000 metres elevation (yield 2.9 kilotons).

<sup>15</sup> The yields of these devices were in the range 1 to 27 kilotons. The latter largest device was released from a balloon at 300 m above ground. Major cleanup of the Maralinga sites was carried out four decades later.

1961; in 1965 it was claimed that 20 kg of the chemically toxic plutonium (and persistent radioactivity) was entombed or ploughed into the top layers of the soil.

There was also ample evidence that there had been a disregard for the safety of the Aboriginal Australians during the Maralinga tests. Morton (page 77, 81 86) has pointed out that Charles Duguid's friend Walter MacDougall<sup>16</sup>, the first Native Patrol Officer (NPO) from 1947, was appalled by the lack of care given by the authorities in protecting the Aboriginal Australians. The Controller of the Range wrote in 1956 (Morton, page 86) that "MacDougall was beside himself with rage at what he considered to be the betrayal of his Aboriginal charges ..." Morton continued:

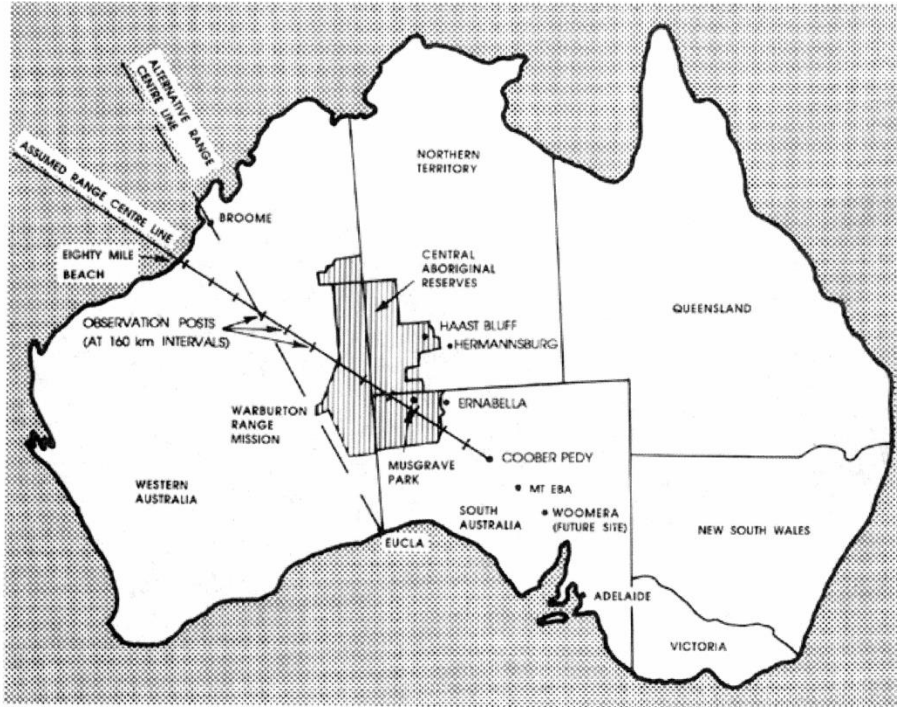
This was indeed certain because MacDougall had already expressed disquiet about the effects of fallout in the reserves. That there would be some fallout had been conceded, but the official assurance was that it would not reach a level harmful to health ... In short, the NPOs found ample evidence to substantiate Macaulay's [the second Native Patrol officer appointed in 1956, a close friend of MacDougall] summary that "natives have been living *well inside* the Maralinga Prohibited Zone *continuously* from before the establishment of the Atomic Weapons Testing Grounds". Since the NPOs lacked both specialised knowledge and instruments, they could have done nothing to protect their charges from irradiation if it had been inflicted on them. MacDougall's fears and his anger, therefore, proved in the event to have been by no means inappropriate or misplaced.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Walter B. "Mac" MacDougall was appointed the first Native Patrol Officer on 4 November 1947. He had been an outback mission worker since 1931, in later years at Ernabella Mission in the Musgrave Ranges where he undoubtedly became a friend and colleague of Charles Duguid, one of the founders of this mission in 1937. His job was to look after the welfare of the Aboriginal Australians in the Range. His base was in Woomera and his area of responsibility was one million square km. Morton (page 77): "He had the approbation even of Duguid who knew him well, felt he was ideally suited to the job, and regarded [MacDougall's] appointment as the sole lasting benefit of the protest campaign [of 1946-1947]."

<sup>17</sup> Fortunately for the Ernabella Mission, the two tests did not affect the health of the inhabitants significantly. The 1953 tests at Emu Field were about 260 km to the southwest while the Maralinga tests were slightly over 400 km to the south. From Eickelkamp (1999, *Don't Ask for Stories: The Women from Ernabella and Their Art*), Winifred Hilliard, who had worked at Ernabella as an art advisor from 1954 to 1986, reported that the black clouds from the Emu Field tests were seen at cattle stations southeast of the mission. One eye witness, Lallie Lennon, described her terrible experience at Mintable, only 150 km south of Ernabella; she reported suffering from burned skin and vomiting and dysentery associated with the tests. Walter MacDougall, the Native Patrol Officer, was one of the few whites that tried to help the Aboriginal Australians in these areas. (Morton, page 86)

MacDougall and Macaulay's point of view was subject to a vituperative attack by the authorities: "[They were guilty] of apparently placing the affairs of a handful of natives above those of the British Commonwealth of Nations." (Morton, page 87)



The centre line of the rocket range slicing through the Central Aboriginal Reserves, as indicated by 1946 Press reports.

Fig. 1. Merton (page 71)- the centre line of the rocket range.

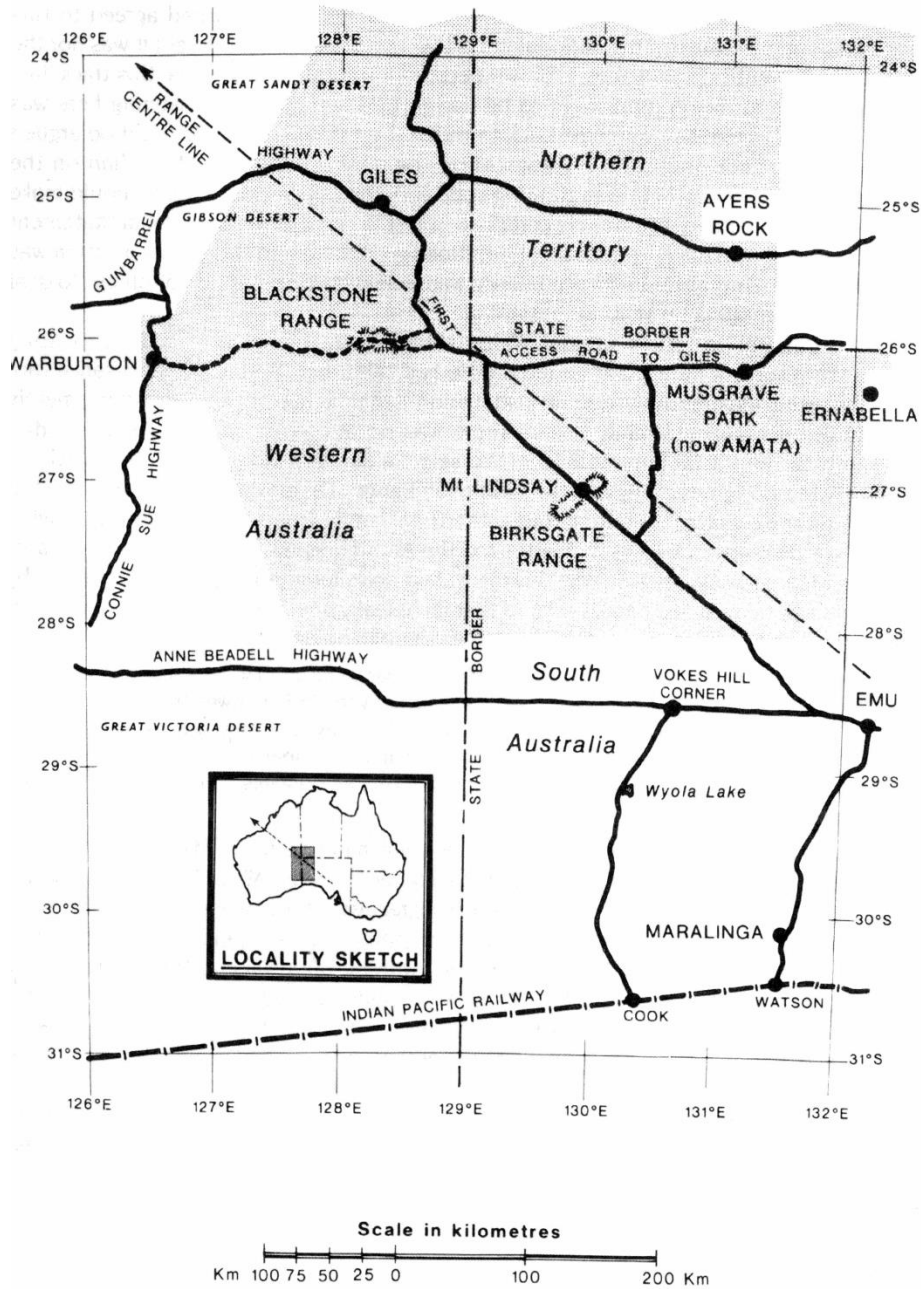


Fig. 2 A closeup of the rocket range (Merton page 85), showing the Central Aboriginal Reserve, the location of the future weather station GILES .





Fig. 3  
Charles Duguid and Phyllis Lade Duguid, Adelaide, 1948. Photo by JL Pawsey of his cousin and her husband taken when Pawsey and Lenore visited Adelaide in 1948 on their return trip to Sydney from the UK. Joe and Lenore Pawsey Family Collection