Goyder Park is all that remains of Goyder’s Camp and is significant as the first European settlement in Palmerston from which would grow the modern city of Darwin. George Woodroffe Goyder, Surveyor General of South Australia, landed at an area between Fort Hill and the Darwin escarpment on 5 February 1869. From this location Goyder’s party surveyed the city that would become Darwin and eight other townships along Northern Territory waterways between February and September. Following Goyder’s departure in September 1869, the camp was occupied for many years during the early settlement and expansion of Darwin.

The area is significant as the landing point for the submarine telegraph cable between Java and Darwin that linked Australia to rest of the world in 1871 arising from construction of the overland telegraph line.

It is also significant because of its connection, both physical and visual via Hughes Avenue, to buildings on the escarpment above.
History

Discovery of Darwin – Stokes and the Beagle

In the absence of any definitive evidence to suggest any previous European discovery or discoveries of Darwin and its harbour, it is generally accepted that John Lort Stokes and the men of HMS Beagle were the first Europeans to sail on its waters and land on its shores.

The Beagle was under the command of Commodore John Clements Wickham and Lieutenant John Lort Stokes. Their instructions included the finalisation of a survey of both Bass and Torres Straits, and the completion of an examination of the north-western coast that might lead to navigable inland waterways. The Beagle and its crew spent over five years on the lonely, dangerous task, but it was in September 1839 that the northern port that became Darwin was discovered.

On the morning of 4 September 1839, Wickham sailed the Beagle from Port Essington and steered past Cape Don to the coast of Melville Island. He then headed south to define any reefs in Clarence Strait, but he noted that the passage was easily navigable, suggesting that the Adelaide River might be more accessible to the markets of the East than first thought.

The Beagle continued its voyage over the next week, heading for a large bay (Shoal Bay) Phillip Parker King had reported in May 1818 during his voyage on the Mermaid, but not inspected. The Beagle sailed through and both Shoal Bay and Hope Inlet were named before...

Rounding a low point of land - now known as Lee Point - they followed the coast along a low beach and past some cliffs, and finally saw the point (East Point) which marked the bay’s eastern entrance. It was nearly sunset, but they sailed on in the half-light, landing at the point after dark...Stokes could not wait to discover what lay beyond. [Leaving the Beagle and]...By the light of a lamp he and Forsyth picked their way through the mangroves and scrambled up the cliff, but on emerging from the dry monsoon forest...they could see nothing but a vast gulf of darkness. Before daylight on September 9, Stokes and Forsyth again climbed the cliff, and this time their persistence paid off. The paling sky revealed a ‘most cheering’ sight:

A wide bay appearing between two white cliffy heads, and stretching away to a great distance, presented itself to our view. Far to the southwards, between the heads rose a small table-topped hill... (Hordern 1989:167-168).

The flat-topped hill was named Kings Table for Phillip Parker King, and Stokes and Forsyth later climbed and named Talc Head, from where ‘...opened a splendid harbour with broad stretches of water leading southeast and south-west. Only an eastern arm was hidden by land.’ Filled with triumph, Stokes then began thinking about a name for the harbour. Recalling the hardships of a previous voyage and the companionship of a former shipmate, he saw in his discovery

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1 This history is extracted from the Heritage Assessment Report of Goyder’s Camp, Heritage Branch, 2004, the Heritage Assessment Report of the John William Ogilvie Bennett Memorial, Heritage Branch, 2014, and other records held by the Heritage Branch.
...an appropriate opportunity of convincing an old shipmate and friend, that he still lived in our memory... (Hordern 1989:168, 170).

Stokes named the harbour Port Darwin in honour of an earnest young man he had watched fossicking for natural specimens on the shores of South America, and who later became a towering scientific figure, Charles Darwin.

The Beagle then moved up the harbour, after first running aground on a shoal, and over the next few days from 14 September explored its reaches by small boats. One officer, Pasco, sounded and charted the main harbour, whilst another, Helpman, went ashore to set up a tide pole and construct a tide table.

But, as Hordern reflects in Mariners be Warned!, of all the officers, it was the experienced water hunter, Emery, who first made his mark in Port Darwin. The Beagle's tanks, capable of storing 2,800 gallons were low, and the need for water was a pressing one. Emery knew he must find water, but it also had to be close enough to the boats to allow easy transport.

Selecting a spot in a small depression behind a beach on a nearby sandy bay, he set men to work digging. It was hard going and over five days they managed to reach 23 feet and softer soil. On the 20th, water flowed briefly into the well, but it was a further five days before they had dug enough for clear water to flow and fill the ship's tanks.

The digging of the well by the ship's crew was a surprise to the Larrakia, no doubt in light of their knowledge of nearby springs. They were coaxed into gazing down a 23 foot deep excavation, but it was some time before they

...could be induced to look down the well. At length by stretching their spare bodies and necks to the upmost, they caught sight of water in the bottom. The effect upon them was magical and they stood at first as if electrified. At length their feelings gained vent, and from their lips proceeded an almost mad shout of delight. Nothing perhaps could have more decisively shewn the superiority of the white man...than our being able to procure this necessary of life...Perhaps their delight may be considered a sign how scarce is water in this part of the country. I should certainly say from the immense quantity each man drank...that this was the case (Stokes 1846:20).

Stokes reported that their meetings with the Larrakia were friendly. A crew member, Helpman, demonstrated cutting hair with scissors which "quite delighted them" and when a flint and steel was used to light a cigar,

...all eyes were open...but when [Eden] proceeded to place the lighted cigar between his lips, and roll forth...a thick and perfumed cloud, fright took full possession of them...[and] they darted off most unceremoniously...In a few days they had forgotten their fright, and had returned to renew the friendly relations this little incident had interrupted (Stokes 1846:22).

On 26 September 1839 Wickham took the Beagle out of the harbour and sailed westward towards Port Patterson. The Larrakia were again alone in their country, but their tenure was to last only a further three decades.

The land surveyed—Goyder's Camp and settlement

It was almost 30 years following the visit of the Beagle that a permanent settlement was established at Port Darwin, though the British had attempted settlement along the north
coast from 1824 to 1866—and failed—at Fort Dundas, Raffles Bay and Port Essington. On 6 July 1863 the Northern Territory was annexed by South Australia and a year later an attempt was made to establish a northern capital, at Escape Cliffs, which also failed, with the expedition recalled to Adelaide.

In early 1869 Surveyor George Goyder and a survey party headed to Port Darwin aboard the *Moonta*—again to establish a northern capital for the Northern Territory of South Australia—where they landed and set up camp below Fort Hill on 5 February.

The survey followed delays and variations to the conditions imposed on land-order holders taking up their holdings in the Northern Territory of South Australia; three changes to the ministry in South Australia in a month; a dispute between the Lower House and the Legislative Council; and a number of uninformed recommendations for a northern capital including the Liverpool River and Escape Cliffs.

Forced against his own personal land interests, the leader of the ministry in succession to Boucat, Henry Ayers, advocated a new scheme which denied land holders the return of their money and offered instead half again the amount of land they had purchased and an additional five years before they had to take it up. Following delays and three changes of ministry within a month, a new ministry under H.B.T. Strangways amended the bill to give land-order holders twice their original lands. The new bill was passed into law on 24 November 1868 (Powell 1982:81).

In his work *Far Country*, Alan Powell (1982:81-82) summarised the background to, and the subsequent surveys of, Port Darwin recording that the need

...for a survey of the Much-Promised Land now became urgent, for what land-order holder would convert to the new scheme for the doubling of nothing? Even before the new land bill had been passed the Surveyor-General George Goyder was given the task. English born, widely experienced in colonial survey and exploration, the diminutive Goyder was a dynamic and personable leader, widely known as ‘Little Energy’. The name was well earned. He demanded and got £25,000 for the survey costs plus a £3,000 bonus for himself and £2,000 for his party, and the right to choose 120 men and his own stores. He chose with care, and he knew where he was going - straight to Port Darwin, selected from the writings of John Stokes and later callers at that vast harbour. In the chartered coastal barque Moonta, old and roomy, he and his men arrived...

Margaret Goyder Kerr (1971:63), wrote of the arrival of Goyder and his team at Port Darwin, in her work, *The Surveyors*, recording that:

After forty-one days of nothing to look at but sea and sky...a little rain and each other, the *Moonta* carried the men to the entrance of Darwin harbour. Its two great land arms stretched out to welcome them and offer them shelter. All who had telescopes brought them on deck to survey the magnificent harbour in front of and all around them. Those without visual aids let their eyes feast on the green hills and the verdant plateau that seemed to be coming steadily towards them. Goyder’s telescope first swept the perimeter of the harbour, then paused at various points as he examined them with a view to choosing their future camp...at five past three on the afternoon of 5 February 1869, within 400 yards of the shore, the *Moonta* dropped anchor.
All were in agreement with Goyder’s assessment that Fort Point, where a shoal jutted into the sea at low tide, was probably the best place to land, whilst the saddle between Fort Hill and the plateau was the best place to set up a base camp.

Shortly afterwards, the captain, Goyder, the doctor, the naturalist Schultze, and a couple of the surveyors and men climbed into a boat and rowed ashore. After a quick examination of the coastline, from both sea level and Fort Hill, they climbed down the saddle between Fort Hill and the plateau. There they found that it was cooler in the saddle than on either elevation. There also appeared to be several spots where the well-sinkers could try for fresh water.

After landing at the site, Surveyor Dan Daly wrote to his friend, Henry Turton, the husband of his cousin, Caroline Louisa Daly, and youngest daughter of the former South Australian Governor, recording that they

...had a very favourable passage, casting anchor on the 5th inst. in Port Darwin, one of the most beautiful ports I have ever seen. The heads [Point Emery and Talc Head] on either side are 100 ft. high and about a mile apart (Kerr 1971:64).

Despite the optimism by Daly, however, there was a problem to be overcome. There was no sign that the steam powered schooner Sea Ripple had ever reached Port Darwin with the party’s supplies and equipment, and prepared a landing stage.

Thus, there was no jetty for the safe landing of the stock and stores, and if the Sea Ripple was not there, nor was the expedition’s hardware and other cargo. Importantly also, she could not sail to Escape Cliffs to salvage the houses, drays, abandoned equipment and dinghies Goyder had hoped to have to add to his own supplies. It was a major blow but the men were quick to realise there was work to be done in establishing and stocking the camp as best they could.

Despite sharks and crocodiles, there was no alternative but to swim the animals to shore, though this in itself was a problem in that there was a tidal rise of twenty to twenty-six feet, which receded at about eight miles an hour, thus slowing the progress of the animals towards the shore.

Once the stock was landed, the stores also had to be brought ashore and Goyder set to work to solve the problem. According to Margaret Kerr (1971:69), the beach became a

...fever of activity. One team of men spent most of the day up to their elbows in water, unloading goods at the tide-line. The timber cutters were busy felling logs which the bullocks hauled down the track through the saddle to the site picked out for the camp, out of reach of the tide...Goyder drew a rough sketch of a floating jetty. Two big empty water tanks were laid over with logs and held together with timber spars. The floating jetty could raft in more stores more quickly than if all had to be carried by dinghy...while one team of men lashed the raft together, another cleared rocks from the shore at the site where a small stone jetty to land the goods from was to be constructed.

Water was also required for the duration of the surveys, and beyond, and again Goyder had thought out the problem. He and the captain rose early and left the ship to sound along the coast and look for water. They found fresh surface water oozing out of the rocks nearby and
also discovered surface water in a gully between Points Fort and Emery, along with a fresh water swamp two and a half miles from Point Emery.

Two Aborigines had also volunteered to show some of the men ‘where plenty of fresh water’ was to be found, but after a long, roundabout trek, they came upon the spot Goyder had picked out the day before and where a well had already been sunk.

Work on the camp proceeded quickly, with all available men assigned to work parties to construct huts, stores and stables. In correspondence to his friend Turton, Dan Daly wrote that prior:

...to commencing the survey of the township all the party was employed making a jetty and storehouse...There is a tribe of very miserable half-starved blacks here. They have camped a few yards from us and are quite peaceable as yet... (Kerr 1971:87).

But even while work on the camp progressed there was also an air of despondency setting in with the failure of the Sea Ripple to appear:

Men’s eyes constantly swept over it when they were at Fort Point, hoping to see the supply schooner Sea Ripple arrive...

Margaret Kerr (1971:88) wrote:

...Their health and appetites craved fresh food and a bit of fruit or vegetable which her captain had been ordered to pick up at Koepang, in Timor. But most of all they craved the mail and newspapers the ship would bring—news from home! Every day now Goyder’s diary noted: No appearance of schooner.

By March the Moonta was due to return to Adelaide, and Goyder set about making up his official report and package for the Commissioner of Crown Lands. He had also decided to send Surveyor Dalwood, who was suffering with bronchitis, back to Adelaide on the Moonta rather than wait for a now long overdue Sea Ripple.

The package Goyder prepared included a range of material. There were photographs taken by Brooks of the coastline and at the site of the township, eight sketches by Surgeon’s Assistant, William W. Hoare, giving panoramic views from Fort Point to Point Emery and plans of townships and details of explorations already carried out.

As a part of his report Goyder added that the schooner Sea Ripple:

...has not yet arrived. In her absence the iron stores being on board of her—I had to construct a store, stable, smithy, &c. The store is fifty by twenty feet, and twelve high in the walls & roofed partly by galvanized iron and partly by bark brought in by natives, of whom there are a few here, and who appear friendly. The stable was constructed large enough for all the horses, as I considered it necessary to feed them at first and gradually accustom them to work and to the vegetation. It is simply a covered shed—the roof, branches of trees. A well was sunk and a supply of good water obtained, in the Doctor’s Gully, where also a garden was laid out... (Kerr 1971:84-85).

The Moonta sailed from Darwin Harbour, exactly a month after arrival, and after her departure the harbour looked vast and very empty. In the event the Sea Ripple never left her southern port. From as early as 15 January the SA government had received
correspondence from Melbourne stating the vessel was condemned. Instead they purchased the *Gulnare*—initially captained by Captain T. Bicknell, who promptly resigned when his wife was refused passage to Port Darwin. Instead, Captain Samuel Sweet (‘Professor of Photography’ and ‘Eight years round Cape Horn’) stepped in, complete with camera. The *Gulnare* arrived the day before Easter Sunday 1869. On board she also carried the *Midge*, a small steamer for use by the surveyors in river navigation. But, while it had no ‘spectacular capabilities’, as Margaret Goyder Kerr (1971:105) wrote:

...she proved adequate for chugging down the three arms of Darwin Harbour so far as they were navigable, carrying officers and their gear as near as possible to their starting-off points for surveying [and had the distinction of being the first steamer to ply Darwin’s harbour].

On 13 March a salvage party under R.C. Burton left the camp bound for Escape Cliffs, from where Goyder hoped to salvage any items of use at the abandoned site. Burton was directed to take a list of all the articles left that were likely to be of any use and to bring back what he could. The men stayed at the Escape Cliffs site over a few days surveying the former settlement. The buildings, while blackened by fire were essentially intact. Burton salvaged what he thought would be most valuable for the ‘Fort Point party’s emergency situation’ and in packed boats returned to Port Darwin. Among the goods salvaged were horseshoes, a complete bullock dray and the ironwork of another, a cap for the observatory, an anchor and chain, wire netting, chains, yokes and bowes for working the bullocks, a few plants, some bars of iron and three ten pound parcels of nails. There was also some fruit.

By mid-July 1869 work at the Fort Hill camp continued with a number of construction tasks underway. Margaret Kerr (1971:152-153) wrote that a:

...programme of construction work was in full swing. One of the most important jobs was deepening the gully wells. The fresh-water supply was still critical. There had been practically no rain since the Dry had set in. The well-diggers had tried a number of new sites, but none could be called a pronounced success. There were new and more permanent stables to be put up, also sheds for the carts, and a jetty to replace the emergency one the men had laboured over when they arrived at Port Darwin. There were roads round the depot and the point to be made and it was proposed to send a party, properly equipped with horses, drays and tools, on a gold-seeking expedition...the iron stores were being cleaned to make mess houses for the returning twelve surveyors and twelve cadets. Large tents were being erected inside the camp fence, each to be divided into four messes of twelve men...the camp was beginning to take on a more cheerful aspect...Even the hospital tent, which still had a few patients, including Hazard, the coloured cook, was moved to a site with a brighter outlook.

Roofing for the sheds meant much grass-cutting and team of men under Armstrong gathered large quantities of it. The bullocks then pulled load after load of grass down the hill to the camp via a formed track that became Hughes Avenue.

By the end of July there was not enough water for normal needs available from the wells, even without the men washing. There were also boats pulling over to the mouth of the gully to load tanks of water brought down to the shore by bullock dray. Then of course the boat crews had to put in a backbreaking effort to row the boats. At the time Goyder was experimenting with a way of distilling sea water using the engine of the *Midge*. He was able to produce an appreciable amount of fresh water, but unsatisfied, he insisted that more could be produced if the engine were in top condition and ordered it overhauled. There is no record of any further efforts to produce water from the engine.
On 24 August 1869, the *Gulnare* arrived in the afternoon with stores, clothing and mail. There was also a cutting from the *Adelaide Observer*, praising a picture by Hoare of Fort Point, which he had sent down with the *Gulnare* on its previous trip.

By that time the surveys were well advanced and Goyder called for volunteers to remain at Port Darwin until the *Gulnare’s* next trip with a government resident and the first settlers later in the year. Peel volunteered as did a number of others. Peel was left in charge of the settlement following the departure of Goyder and the Gulnare, until relieved by Dr. J. Stokes Millner.

On 15 September, Captain Sweet gave a humorous lecture on the voyage of the *Gulnare* from Port Darwin to Adelaide and return, while Brooks and the Captain took photographs of everything worthwhile photographing around the camp and surrounds.

The *Gulnare* finally left with Goyder and his men on 28 September bound for Adelaide via Koepang. They were in sight of Kangaroo Island on 14 October. During their time at Port Darwin they had carried out Surveys [that]

...comprised portions of four native districts, viz., the ‘Woolner,’ ‘Woolner-Larrakeyah,’ ‘Larrakeyah’ and ‘Warnunger,’ Goyder said. They included:

1st Principal town at Fort Point, 999 half-acre allotments, roads, parks, reserves and cemetery reserves totalling 2,506½ acres.

2nd Township on the River Blackmore: 498½ acres, including roads, reserves, parks and cemetery.

3rd Township on the Elizabeth, a total of 628½ acres.

4th Township at Fred’s Pass, a total of 794½ acres.

5th 1,708 blocks each 320 acres.

6th 208 blocks each 160 acres.

7th 330 blocks of irregular area 73,964 acres.

8th Roads, 7,554 acres.

9th Reserves, 80 acres.

Total 665,886 acres (Kerr 1971:173-174).

In *Far Country*, Alan Powell (1982:82) writes that the survey

...was a remarkable feat and it met the demands of the Adelaide government. Whether the land would support settlers was another thing.

George McLachlan remained as senior surveyor and signed off a detailed plan of the camp prepared by Dan Daly in December that year. Others to remain were Hood, McCallum, Packard, Wells, Ringwood, Frederick Schultze the naturalist, Cherry, Colard, Albert Schultze and Hayball among others.

But, whilst Goyder and his men, including those who had volunteered to stay temporarily, two of his party, J.W.O. Bennett and the cook, Richard Hazard, would never return south. Bennett was speared at Fred’s Pass on 24 May and died some days later, whilst Hazard died of illness at the camp.
Goyder prepared a monument for Bennett and Hazard to be mounted at their grave site atop Fort Hill. It was erected in time for the arrival of the *Gulnare* and for Captain Sweet to photograph before he sailed. Hoare painted a plate on the monument.

1870 - the monument to John William Ogilvie Bennett and Richard Hazard on Fort Hill. Image: Samuel Sweet Collection, State Library of South Australia.

1921 – Alfred Searcy’s photograph of the grave. Image: Searcy Collection, State Library of South Australia.
According to Margaret Kerr (1971:169), painting the inscription on the tomb was a labour of love for Hoare, but he:

...was almost blinded by the sun’s rays, so that he had to erect an awning to see what he was doing. The flies kept getting into his eyes and he was so distressed that his work was not perfect he cleaned it all off and started again, sitting astride the tomb.

The ornate headstone to the pair was later demolished and the remains exhumed when Fort Hill was demolished to make way for a short-lived iron ore venture at Francis Creek in 1965. The remains of Bennett and Hazard were interred in the centre of the avenue at Darwin General Cemetery on McMillans Road, marked by a stone and plaque².

But, despite the inscription describing the treacherous nature of the Aborigines, Goyder seemed more enlightened, even in those times. His attitude was that he

...had to bear in mind that we were in what appeared to them unauthorised and unwarrantable occupation of their country, and where territorial rights are strictly observed by natives, that even a chief of one tribe will neither hunt upon nor remove anything from the territory of another without first obtaining permission...Our relations with the natives are peculiar. We are liable to be the consequences of their sudden and treacherous attacks: yet retaliation on our part would, by many...be looked upon as little short of murder, as we have no right to take the lives of men such be done in actual defence of, or by the laws of our country... (Kerr 1971:146).

Goyder and his men had seen contact with the Aboriginal people over a range of experiences. From the death of Bennett; to work parties being threatened; tensions being calmed by Aboriginal leaders and a familiarity that saw them venture into the camp.

But, it seems the Aborigines were as fascinating to the men of the expedition as no doubt they were to the Aboriginal people themselves. Hoare bartered with them so that he could paint or draw the artefacts (weapons and crafts) he acquired from them, and came to know some of them by name. Goyder, with an eye to the future, wrote that the sooner,

...therefore, that someone can be found willing and competent to learn their language, and undertake this mission, which might readily be carried into effect at Fort Point, the sooner will be the great object of a peaceable and useful intercourse with the numerous native tribes in this locality be secured (Kerr 1971:147).

A twist in the death of Bennett is that he had been with the Finniss party at Escape Cliffs, the 1964 failed expedition to establish Palmerston there. Bennett had a talent for Aboriginal language and began to document the language and rituals of the Woolna people in that vicinity. When Goyder’s party landed at Port Darwin, they were greeted by Woolna who, according to Hoare, ‘seemed pleased to see us’. But:

...the apparent pleasure the Woolna showed in renewing their former acquaintance masked a deeper obligation. Bennett was probably the only one in the party with sufficient knowledge of the Woolna language to have understood the import of the exchange. It was Goyder who wrote

² A different plaque was added to the graves in 1919. Its whereabouts are unknown. A memorial tablet sculpted by Samuel Peters was erected by public subscription in St Paul’s Anglican Church in Adelaide and was transferred to the Northern Territory when St Paul’s was deconsecrated in 1982. It is presently held by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.
later that: we were informed on arrival of the *Moonta* by the blacks here that those on the Adelaide [River] or near that locality intended to kill two of our party.\(^3\)

This indicates that Bennett’s death was not a random attack, but rather a specific response to something that had occurred some years earlier at Escape Cliffs.

**The new settlers**

Goyder’s work had been the start of a permanent European association with the waterfront that has developed through the settlement of Palmerston in 1870, the arrival of the submarine cable, and the linking of north to south via the overland telegraph in 1872.

Following Goyder’s departure in September 1869 the remaining volunteer party continued work around the camp and surveyed area atop the plateau. Dan Daly drafted a plan of the camp area and southern extremity of the plateau, which he completed on 23 December and Senior Surveyor George McLaughlin signed it off a month later. The settlement then comprised 29 structures, including huts, stores, messes, stables, a cueing pen for stock, a stock yard, a dynamite magazine; 24 tents; a lime kiln; and three wells—one of which was marked ‘(salt)’. The main track meandered up to the plateau, whilst another branched off past the lime kiln to the future site of the Government Residence (Daly 1869).

In December also, Dr. J. S. Millner, Acting Government Resident, and 44 others, including three surveyors, five policemen and ‘the perennial Ned Tuckwell’, who had been with Finniss [at Escape Cliffs] and Goyder, arrived at Port Darwin (Lockwood 1977:39). There, in Alan Powell’s words, they ‘waited for something to happen’ (Powell 1982:84).

Four months later, Captain Bloomfield Douglas was appointed Government Resident, however he was undecided about accepting the post as he would have to leave his family in Adelaide. In the event he elected that they would accompany him and they arrived at Port Darwin aboard the *Gulnare* in July 1870. Among Douglas’ family was the eldest daughter, Harriet, who went on to marry Dan Daly and write of her experiences in her work *Digging Squatting and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia*.

Harriet Daly provides a unique insight into life in the small settlement at Port Darwin, or Palmerston as it was then known. The arrival of the *Gulnare* saw her write of her impressions as they neared the small settlement.

> ...the shores were clothed with masses of rich green vegetation down to the water’s edge, and the cliffs overspread with thickly growing palms...we sailed along, passing smooth white beaches, onto which waterfalls from the overhanging cliffs shed glittering streams of crystal, dancing and shimmering in the sunlight...Beautiful it certainly was; but oh! so lonely and desolate, not a sign of human habitation could we yet discern...the scene of our exile - for such we deemed it then...was hardly inviting.

> At last we came in sight of the little settlement; it was situated in a little gully on a broad tract of level ground between two steeply rising hills, having the sea on both sides. The “camp,” to use the name so familiar to every one...consisted of a number of log and iron houses on either side of the gully. On Fort Hill to our right, a steep hill with a flat summit, one of the most prominent landmarks of the harbour, was a flagstaff, on which the Union Jack was flying. It was delightful

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to find this familiar flag in this far-away corner of the British Empire. Close to the flagstaff was a lonely grave—the last resting place of a young surveyor (sic)... (Daly 1887: 43-44).

The arrival of the *Gulnare* and its passengers did not go unnoticed by the Larrakia people. Harriet Daly recorded her feelings towards them, reflecting the attitude of the times, in writing that:

The opposite hill was covered with green shrubs, and at this moment it literally swarmed with black men and women. These unclothed spectators were the “oldest inhabitants” of this part of the world - members of the Larrakiah tribe. The heads of the clan were amongst this eager and excited crowd. But as far as we could discern, there was nothing to distinguish them from the lesser lights of that barbarous horde of natives...I cannot say; on looking back to what my impressions were then, that I viewed the prospect of having so large a tribe of natives for our immediate neighbours as by any means an unmixed joy...

A closer view of the camp did not tend to raise our spirits to any very exalted elevation—a handful of log huts, with crowds of natives looking over our heads; and this tiny settlement literally the only one in the vast tract of Northern Australia.

Looking straight through the gully, away over the roofs of the buildings, one beheld a long stretch of water...we realised, too, that no hope of communication with the outer world could be looked for, as the settlement had not become sufficient important to induce a line of steamers to call there (Daly 1887: 45, 47).

Whilst the view from the *Gulnare* had not provided her any great impression of her new home, this changed somewhat when she landed with her mother and family:

...after the Resident had landed and the official reception was over...on a closer inspection we found a pretty, well-kept, and neatly laid out camp. The married people lived on the left hand side below the Larrakiah's camp, in log huts, with neatly thatched roofs; at the further end on the same side was the stable, a long shed made of logs, roofed with sheets of bark, and well filled with horses...Close to the stable were the police barracks...The quarters assigned to our use were two huts, not large enough to accommodate such a party, but they were pleasantly situated close to the sea, and were, moreover, the best the place afford[ed] (Daly 1887: 48).

The new arrivals settled into life at the new settlement, and as time passed their attitudes towards the Aboriginal people changed. Even though her writing reflects the terminology and attitudes of the time, Harriet Daly also made an effort to get to know them and at times employ them, particularly the women, in household tasks.

We had...visited the native camp, and had been formally introduced to old Nilunga, the king of the Larrakiah tribe,

Harriet wrote,

...He had several wives, of several ages and others growing up ready to fill any vacancies...The other family of distinction were the Mirandas. We soon knew the tribe very well indeed, made friends with the lubras, and remembered each piccaninny’s name. The relationships of the Larrakiahs were as complicated as those of an ancient Irish family, and from the likenesses between each member of the clan one knew from what family they had descended. One of the greatest marks of friendship shown by them was changing names with the white people in camp. For instance, my sister and I might rejoice in the appellation of Billymook or Miranda—a
classical but strictly Larrakiah name—while they took our own in exchange. They lived in wurleys just as the natives do in other parts of Australia. These miserable substitutes for houses are “lean-to’s,” (sic) made of sheets of bark propped up by saplings. Underneath crouched the different families; the Nilungas, the Billymooks, the Mirandas, and other families whose names are legion and whom I have forgotten (Daly 1887: 66-67).

Harriet Daly also recorded her impressions of life in the settlement below the plateau on which Goyder’s teams had laid out the plan for Palmerston. She provides many glimpses of life there, including recreational activities, hunting, picnics and of

Some of the men spend[ing] the evening in walking Fort Point, the only promenade the camp possessed. A pathway had been made here by cutting down a portion of the hill, and levelling the ground at its base. It was a pretty walk as one had the sea on one’s right all the way round, and a fine view of the south and east arms of the harbour could be gained from there (Daly 1887: 53).

While the saddle between Fort Hill and the escarpment remained a focus of Darwin’s development, with access to the township via a walkway, the Douglas family were looking to a bigger and more fitting residence. The beginnings of a Government Residence was erected on the promontory overlooking Fort Hill and the camp, initially in 1870-71, and has developed to become Darwin’s grand mansion.

Harriet wrote of her impressions of the site, recording that it:

...[was on] the hill overlooking the camp and facing Fort Hill, the one on which we saw the Larrakiah assembled the day we arrived. No better site could have been selected. We had a most exquisite view of the harbour; for this hill was flat-topped, and formed a kind of peninsula, and from it we commanded a view to the south, east and west arms of our lovely harbour—of which we were quite as proud as the Sydney people are of theirs... It is a generally conceded opinion, and agreed to by all those who have visited the Northern Territory, that in point of beauty Port Darwin has few equals...

She continued:

Building this house was a matter of great difficulty...In fact the word seems to be the one most frequently associated with every...enterprise connected with the Northern Territory...Robinson Crusoe had nothing like the difficulties in obtaining building material that we had...we literally had to begin at the beginning of everything...from the very laying of the foundation-stone...nothing but difficulties and makeshifts attended the work (Daly 1887: 108, 43-44).

The Douglas family moved up to the new, albeit leaking and ramshackle Residence soon after, and even then they had to share the new building in its use as a courthouse for a time. It seems they were followed to the site of Palmerston in part by a number of other settlers, though during the 1870s and ‘80s the foreshore remained a focus for the development of Darwin, with the Harbour Master, Medical Officer and other bureaucrats located around Goyder’s old camp site.

Swimming baths were also erected on nearby Lameroo Beach below Government House in the 1880s. In 1886 the Australasian printed an article by a correspondent, ‘Overlander’, who described the swimming enclosure erected on the foreshore at Lameroo Beach as:
A portion of the beach [which] has been enclosed by palisades, forming a swimming bath, or rather three baths, subdivided into three sections to enable people to bathe safely at all times. The outer edge of the enclosure is completely under water at full tide, the rise and fall of which is tremendous... (Daly 1887: 347).

The baths remained a part of Darwin’s recreation scene to the post-war years, when the ‘hippies’ of the 1960s and 70s camped there. The site is now part of Damoe Ra Park overlooking the point where the undersea cable came ashore from Banjowangie in 1872.

The Overland Telegraph

By 1870, Charles Todd, the Government Astronomer and Superintendent of Telegraphs in South Australia, was working furiously on plans for a momentous undertaking, the construction of a 3,000 kilometre telegraph line, the ‘great electric chain’ as he called it, to link Australia to the world.

Only 29 years old when he was appointed, Todd arrived in Adelaide from England with his wife, Alice, on 5 November 1855 on a salary of £400 per year.

Charles Todd was the driving force behind the Overland Telegraph Line (OTL) and had much in common with surveyor and compatriot George Goyder. Powell (1982:86) described Todd as:

...small in stature, full of energy and conceit, he was a hard fair-minded employer and a brilliant organiser.

The description proved true, particularly in his selection of personnel and the designation of parties and sections that would, under Overseers, carry out construction of the huge undertaking over terrain that traversed a country so diverse in climate and geography—ranging from the Mediterranean climate of Adelaide to the hot arid desert regions of central Australia and on to the wet tropics of the top end and Port Darwin and its hinterland.

In September of 1870, the successful tenderers for construction of the northern section of the OTL from Port Darwin to about 500 miles (800km) inland arrived at Port Darwin. Joseph Darwent and William Dalwood had signed a contract on 20 July 1870, and were bound to commence no later than 15 November of that year and complete the line ‘ready for use’ by 1 January 1872.

When the Omeo arrived in September 1870 with the first of the mails for the settlers, it also brought the first consignment of material for the construction of the OTL. The settlers were on hand for the arrival, though their expectations were probably more to do with the delivery of goods that would make life a little more bearable.

Harriet Daly (1887: 82-83) wrote:

Our delight was intense...the Omeo brought us our first mail from Adelaide, and many parcels, newspapers, and a small supply of books...a busy time naturally followed the steamer’s arrival. Her heavy cargo had to be landed, and this was no easy matter, for there was no jetty, even of the rudest description, at which a boat, let alone a ship, could lie. However, the cargo was landed without harm or accident of any kind. The horses were...hoisted in slings and lowered over the ship’s side...and swam to land. Drays were floated ashore, their wheels following them in a boat, and a large telegraph camp was formed on the tableland overhead...before a week...
The honour of doing this fell to myself...amidst a gathering of the whole community...I declared the pole “well and truly fixed,” after I had rammed the earth well round it, and, wishing success to the contractor and his expedition, the first section of the overland telegraph was begun...

As has been well documented, the northern section from Port Darwin ran into considerable difficulties in the wet season of 1870-71, though the contractors did complete the Southport to Pine Creek section. In some desperation McMinn controversially cancelled the contract on 3 May 1871, with the government taking over—and faring little better until the arrival from Adelaide of railway engineer, Robert Patterson, who eventually joined the lines, at Frews Ponds south of Daly Waters, on 22 August 1872.

The land line was eight months late in its completion, but the trio of cable ships, sent to the Territory by the British Australian Telegraph Company (BAT), arrived in Port Darwin at the date appointed, 6 November 1871. The ships were the steamship *Hibernia* of 3,182 tons; the *Edinburgh* of 2,315 tons laden and the *Investigator*. The three ‘magnificent and imposing vessels’ were the largest Port Darwin had seen.

Captain Robert Halpin was in charge of the work, and it seems that through his good office, and certainly through the kindness of the Secretary of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, that Harriet Douglas was able to convey:

> ...accurate information about the cable itself. The Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company manufactured the Anglo-Australian cable at their works at Greenock in 1870-7, and despatched it...in the three vessels I have just mentioned. The ships left England on the 3rd August and arrived at Port Darwin on the 26th October, 1871, making the passage via the Cape of Good Hope in eighty-four days. The *Investigator*, bringing the operating staff, came through the Suez Canal. The cable had previously been laid from Singapore to Batavia, a distance of 555 miles. From Batavia to Banjoewangie the messages ran overland on the Dutch lines. The length of cable from Banjoewangie to Port Darwin is 1082 miles, making a total distance of cable laid down 1637 miles. The ships landed the shore end of the cable in Port Darwin, and began paying out from there till they arrived at Banjoewangie, making the line of communication complete so far, thus Port Darwin became the first portion of Australia united to the mother country by telegraph (Daly 1887: 134-136).

The landing of the cable at Port Darwin was completed on 7 November 1871 and was attended by a large crowd of well-wishers who assembled on the foreshore at Lameroo Beach. But, despite the success of the undersea cable:

> The delay in the land line completion was very irritating to the cable company, who, having fulfilled their part of the contract, were anxious to reap the first-fruits of their labour. The staff of operators, under Mr. J. E. Squire, waited patiently, hoping each day for a message to come through announcing that communication was complete; and Mr. Todd was busy at work in the centre of the continent, using every effort to close up the gaps in the different sections...[and] just when everything pointed to a complete success, the cable broke between Port Darwin and Banjoewangie, and for two months communication was interrupted...[Eventually] the two ends of the transcontinental line were united; and Mr. Todd, in the very centre of the work at Central Mount Stuart, received congratulations, not only from his own colony, for which he had laboured with such zeal and earnestness, but from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland....(Daly 1887: 134-136)
With the construction of the Overland Telegraph came the discovery of gold, in a post hole for an OT pole at Yam Creek in 1871. That gave rise to a ‘rush’ by hopefuls bent on making their fortunes. Diggers with dreams of wealth arrived by ship, heading straight to Southport on the Blackmore River and thus avoiding the often impassable track from Palmerston.

The route via the Blackmore River was also nearer by fifteen miles, with transport much quicker and more reliable. Small lighters and ketches conveyed goods up river and vessels of 200 tons or more could negotiate the Blackmore.

While Palmerston was the ‘capital’ of the Northern Territory, it was overshadowed for a time by the bustling township on the Blackmore where ships had to wait to unload.

Despite the boom enjoyed by Southport, Port Darwin also developed rapidly during the early days of the rush to the diggings. When Harriet Douglas and her husband, Dan Daly, returned after a 15 month absence in Adelaide, she wrote of the changes:

> There were many improvements...the Overland Telegraph and the Cable Company had built a block of handsome stone dwellings on the esplanade overlooking the harbour, very near the Government Residence. The “Sleepy Hollow” of auld lang syne had become a large mining town; bark huts and log shanties were dotted about all over Palmerston, and instead of one vessel in the harbour as of yore, a fresh arrival was a daily occurrence. Parties of diggers were leaving incessantly for the goldfields, which were 110 miles from Port Darwin. Boats went to Southport, taking up swags and mining implements so as to save the long transit by land...Of course, all this influx of trade and population made great changes in the settlement. Shops were opened, in which, like the general stores so common all over Australia, one could purchase anything...Drinking saloons were [also] very soon opened—did ever a settlement start without one? (Daly 1887: 145-149).

She might also have asked: did ever a settlement start without a jetty from which goods might be unloaded from the many ships that arrived in the port?

**Mariners – be warned!**

From the day of Goyder’s arrival at Port Darwin on 5 February 1869, there was a complete lack of facilities for ships to either berth or unload close to shore. All tasks were undertaken by floating drays and equipment to shore; swimming stock to shore, slinging stock into boats or letting them swim to shore, and transporting goods and equipment by rowing boat to the small beach at the camp below Fort Hill.

In all it was a most unsatisfactory arrangement and was the focus of many adverse comments. Goyder’s men had started to construct a jetty of stone soon after their arrival and later when a considerable amount of surveying had been completed work commenced on replacing it with a more substantial structure.

A causeway known as Cook’s Jetty was constructed at Fort Hill soon after Goyder left Port Darwin, however its exposed position saw it abandoned shortly after. William J. Sowden, a journalist who accompanied the 1882 South Australian Parliamentary Party to the Northern Territory, wrote a narrative of the expedition, *The Northern Territory As It Is*. In it Sowden (1882:122) wrote that:
Accommodation was first sought to be given to shippers by the construction of a causeway to the north of Fort Hill (interestingly a plan in Bartlett. Port of Darwin 150 Years, shows it on the southern side of Fort Hill) in an exposed position. That is Cook’s Jetty, the one denoted by the first of the nailcans. It is never used and it is less likely to be than it ever was.

Nine years earlier, when Dudley Kelsey and his family arrived at Port Darwin aboard the vessel Birch Grove on 12 July 1873, little had changed from Goyder’s time. Kelsey (1975:10) wrote in The Shackle that soon after dropping anchor:

...about half a mile offshore to the west of Goyder’s old camp in the gully, my father, among a few other passengers, left the ship to go ashore to try and arrange for some form of accommodation...The passengers remained on board the ship overnight, and next morning saw them busy preparing to leave...in the ship’s boats, and I can well remember our boat load and point of landing...on a rocky point under the southern side of Fort Hill, and about a hundred yards south of Goyder’s old jetty near their camp.

The next attempt at providing a suitable landing was opportunistic. When the Gulnare ran aground during work on the overland telegraph, she was salvaged and brought to Port Darwin in 1874. The hulk was declared unseaworthy and lodged at the water’s edge adjacent to the eastern side of Fort Hill, where it was overlaid with a jetty.

Designed by John George Knight, the construction of Gulnare Jetty was announced in the 27 February 1874 edition of the NT Times and Gazette. The jetty was from then the official landing for the port, and though it trended towards deeper water larger vessels could not use it.

On 16 August 1880 Port Darwin ceased to be a free port. A Customs Department was set up to ensure the proper duties were paid on incoming goods. A customs office was set up nearby with J. A. G. Little the superintending officer of the Overland Telegraph, and Cate, his second in command, officiating along with a small staff.

In June 1882 Alfred Searcy arrived in Darwin to take up the post of Subcollector of Customs following a decision by the Minister for the Northern Territory J. Langdon Parsons that the Territory be brought into line with South Australia in the administration of tariffs and customs regulations. Searcy’s arrival was at best unfortunate, and as he described in his work In Australian Tropics:

It was dark...when we dropped our anchor in Port Darwin...

Searcy (1909:11) wrote:

...[and] so commenced for me a residence of fourteen years in the tropics...The Port Darwin Custom-house was a large iron shed on the beach near the landing stage, known as Gulnare Jetty. The floor, which stood some three feet off the ground, was of wood; or rather what the white ants had left...

Sowden (1882:124) also commented on the jetty in The Northern Territory As It Is, writing that:

...there is besides a galvanized iron store and office on the beach at the end of the Gulnare Jetty...
But in his reporting of the facilities available at Port Darwin, Sowden (1882), was at best vitriolic, writing that if one arrived at high tide, he might catch sight of:

...the top of a long pole surmounted by an empty nail-can on the northern side of Fort Hill; and he scarcely gives mouth to his surprise, ere he sees at the other side of the Point another pole similarly capped. These mark the termini for the two apologies for jetties, and they are placed there to warn vessels not to run into them. If he come[s] at low water he will see them as beacons at the edge of a sea of high-flavoured mud...you cannot see a single inch of any of the present jetties at high tides, and small craft go completely over them. Neither is used by any of the steamers; all their cargo is lightered, and the transhipment from the ship to the shore - a distance of 300 yards - costs fifteen shillings a ton. The goods are landed short of high-water mark sometimes, and what with scarcity of drays, and tide and rain, considerable loss is incurred each year by importers... The baths separate [Cook’s Jetty] from the stump end of a semi jetty, quarter-breakwater, which, of solid rocks, was run a foot or two into the sea from the centre line of Fort Hill and then discontinued. The position of this structure is said to be worse than that of the other, as the fullest rush of the currents passes it, and it would be difficult for a vessel to lie alongside of it. If it were continued a hundred yards or so as a breakwater it would shelter the third of the apologies—the Gulnare Jetty, so called because a former Government schooner of that name staved in her sides across it, and now forms part of it, with her ribs in the middle...Its top, of loose slimy stones, and the side beams which keep them together, are slippery as a greased eel and it is quite an exhausting exercise of ingenuity and agility to step from it to a boat, or from a boat to it...and the walk along the top of the oily mass is...a walk full of surprises, and varied, if the pedestrian be not mighty in carefulness, by occasional full-length tumbles. These in a shark and alligator and swift-current harbour would be sensational if it were not for the fact that the danger is lessened by some stakes which have been run along outside and close to the jetty to keep from jumping it at high water the reckless craft who ignore the warning conveyed by that nailcan! Seriously, I think I will command all the “Ayes” when I say that the wharfage accommodation at Port Darwin is about as bad as it could be—so bad that for any real use it is there might almost as well be none at all. Bad as [it] is I believe, and the general opinion even of the residents is, that it will be quite sufficient for many years at least, unless railway be made...but if they sanction it, the most common sense thing for the Government to do will be to take practical steps in the matter of wharf accommodation before they turn a shoveful of sod on the [railway] track (Sowden 1882:122-123).

Curiously, in 1880, according to Barbara-mary Pederson (2000) and her heritage assessment of the wharf precinct, ‘a petition with 111 signatures was presented to the South Australian Parliament calling for a new jetty at Port Darwin’. In the event the Gulnare Jetty remained in use until 1892, but Sowden’s prediction regarding the railway was closer than he probably realised.

A year after Sowden’s visit and subsequent report, the prominent architect, former Mining Warden and later Government Resident, John George Knight, had a residence constructed of pisé on a concrete foundation on the seaward side of the walkway leading from the old camp to Palmerston town.

Known as the Mud Hut—and less flatteringly as Knight’s Folly—it was apparently constructed by prison labour, and possibly by Chinese, to a unique design that was the subject of many comments, not all complimentary. But perhaps the description of the structure, a two storey building set into the side of Hughes Avenue and looking out to the port, is enough:
The main structure was partially surrounded by a verandah and upper balcony supported on twin columns; these in turn supported off Doric capitals, a cranated beam with saw-toothed edge, and lent a certain Moorish character to the building. Between the columns on the upper floor, [Knight] employed louvred shutters to shield the sunny sides, while on the lower floor he used horizontal wooden louvres for the same purpose. The use of louvres was unique in Australia at the time, as was the design as a whole... (Clinch 1999:71)

The Mud Hut was occupied by the Superintendent of Works when Knight moved into Government House as Government Resident in 1890 and it later became the residence of the Crown Law Officer, Eric Asche and his family, who remain a part of Darwin’s pioneering links through the former Chief Justice and Administrator, Austin Asche AC QC. Anecdotal information also attributes occupancy to a former Senior Magistrate who served at Borroloola for some years. The old Mud Hut was destroyed on 31 December 1933, when a fire:

...started on the ground floor at about 9.45 pm, and at the south western end. It burnt rapidly with great heat...Evidence was given that the fire was caused by an electrical fault in old wiring...[but Police] Superintendent Stretton was unable to decide the cause (Clinch 1999:71).

Only the foundations of the old Mud Hut remain, but a number of buildings attributed to Knight, including Browns Mart and the Town Hall ruins remain a part of Darwin’s streetscape, as do the old Police Station and Courthouse, now in use as the Administrator’s offices overlooking the port area.

In his report on the 1882 visit by the Parliamentary Party, Sowden (1882:159), saw the potential of the Territory, along with its constraints, recording that:

Before I write anything about what...I am convinced must be carried into effect ere the Northern Territory can advance appreciably—namely, a railway to the reefs at least...

Of course his observations were not long in being realised.

Biography – George Goyder


George Woodroffe Goyder (1826-1898), surveyor-general, was baptized on 16 July 1826 at Liverpool, England, son of David George Goyder, physician and Swedenborgian minister, and his wife Sarah, née Etherington. The family later moved to Glasgow where George studied surveying and was articled to a railway engineer. He migrated to Sydney in 1848. After three years with an auctioneering firm he visited Melbourne and went to Adelaide where he decided to settle. In June 1851 he entered the South Australian civil service as a draftsman and on 10 December at Christ Church, North Adelaide, married Frances Mary Smith.

Goyder joined the Department of Lands as chief clerk in January 1853. In quick stages he rose from second assistant to assistant surveyor-general in January 1857. In April he took charge of an exploration to report on country north of pastoral settlement. He was amazed to find Lake Torrens full of fresh water and its flourishing eastern surroundings very different
Goyder's northern surveys had attracted many large pastoralists who soon demanded modified conditions for their leases. With extra duties as inspector of mines and valuator of runs Goyder went north to classify grazing leases, rents and rights of renewal. In less than twenty months he rode over 20,000 miles (32,186 km), visiting 83 stations and handling his departmental correspondence each night. When his valuations were published the outback lessees complained bitterly and inside pastoralists demanded re-assessment while smallholders and urban anti-squatters condemned any concession to hungry graziers. In this three-sided struggle four ministries rose and fell but Goyder stood firm. In 1865 three commissioners were sent north to reassess rents but found the country in severe drought. In November Goyder was directed to go north and from his own observations to lay down on the map 'the line of demarcation between that portion of the country where the rainfall has extended, and that where the drought prevails'. With a small mounted party he went to Swan Reach on the River Murray and thence north-west to Pekina, east to Melrose and returned through Crystal Brook to Adelaide. A map published in 1866 showed his line of travel with a wing sweeping east from the Murray to the Victorian border and another from Spencer Gulf far to the west.

Goyder's rainfall line was first used for the reassessment of leases and the relief of stricken pastoralists. After the drought broke in 1867 he cautiously admitted that his line separated 'to a certain extent' lands suitable for agriculture and those fit only for grazing. This statement strengthened the urban land reformers in the general election in April 1868. Led by Henry Strangways they introduced 'Agricultural Areas' where sections up to 320 acres (130 ha) were to be sold at auction on credit, thus enabling small farmers to compete against wealthy speculators. When the new Act was passed in January 1869 Goyder had chosen six areas, each with easy access to the coast. While the new sections were marked out he took 150 men to the Northern Territory where incompetence and delay in the surveys were causing much discontent. His prompt and firm action soon restored confidence. He recommended Palmerston (Darwin) as the capital site, completed the survey of 665,860 acres (269,467 ha) in six months, reported on traces of minerals and located a million acres (404,690 ha) of average quality suitable for the growth of tropical products. He sailed for Adelaide in November and next February visited Victoria to see the working of land regulations there. He disliked random selection before survey but his mission led to amendments of Strangways’ Act. Liberal extensions of credit to new farmers and good seasons in the 1870s brought land sales of nine million acres (3,642,210 ha) for the decade. With larger sections and better opportunities to buy land in well-watered areas he discouraged attempts at farming beyond his line. He pursued this policy as chairman of the railways commission in 1874-75 but northern newspapers claimed that the southern districts were full and ridiculed the accuracy from the desert described by Edward Eyre in 1839. His exuberant report persuaded the surveyor-general, Captain (Sir) Arthur Freeling, to examine the area in September. No more rain had fallen but hot winds had killed the vegetation and turned the lake into a bed of mud. Freeling returned to criticize Goyder for mistaking flood for permanent water, being misled by mirage and misconceiving the value of the northern country. Although Goyder had proved that Eyre's horseshoe of salt lakes was penetrable and thereby opened the way to further exploration, he was too conscientious to ignore his blunder and in 1859 at his own request led survey parties to triangulate the country between Lakes Torrens and Eyre and to sink wells. When Freeling resigned Goyder was recalled from the north to become surveyor-general on 19 January 1861 at a salary of £700.
of the line. Scorning Goyder's warnings the government yielded in 1874 and made land available beyond the line. Farmers pushed north and had fair harvests but the onset of bad seasons in 1880 left them in dire distress. At great expense they had to be relocated south of the line, their sections reverting to sheep runs spoiled by wind erosion and destruction of native vegetation.

One of Goyder's many enterprises sprang from the colony's severe shortage of timber. He did his utmost to preserve trees and encourage planting. In 1873 he recommended the use of forest reserves and in 1875-83 was chairman of the Forest Board with John Ednie Brown as chief conservator. Another constant project of Goyder's was water conservation. Starting with wells and dams on northern stock routes he persuaded the government to spend £300,000 on drainage in the south-east in 1867. In 1871 he inspected pumping machinery and irrigation works in Britain and America and returned to Adelaide with much knowledge of boring for artesian water. He advised many pastoralists on water problems and rejected such impracticable schemes as irrigating the Adelaide plain by a canal from the River Murray. His paper on the development of water conservation in 1883 indicated the immense scope of his inquiries.

Nicknamed 'Little Energy', Goyder was reputed the ablest administrator and most efficient public servant in the colony. A martinet in office hours he won the respect and affection of his subordinates. As 'king of the lands department' he served under 24 different commissioners of crown lands through 34 changes of ministry and helped to amend over 60 Lands Acts. Costs of his department rose from £15,000 in 1861 to £165,000 in 1883 when his power began to wane but in the same time he quadrupled the colony's revenue from land sales and leases. Disgruntled graziers, farmers and miners all charged him with partiality but it was never proved. In fixing rents, boundaries and valuations he was scrupulous and firm, and his rulings were tolerated because of his integrity and honour. In fieldwork his powers of observation were almost uncanny; he brought fortunes to many settlers but remained comparatively poor. He tendered his resignation in 1862, 1873 and 1878 but each time was persuaded to withdraw it by increments to his salary. He was earning £1250 a year when he retired on 30 June 1894 and was then given £4375 in lieu of a pension. In October leading citizens gave him a purse of a thousand sovereigns. He was appointed C.M.G. in 1889.

Goyder consistently overworked himself and his health suffered. For years after 1861 he had scurvy and in 1869 returned from Darwin with 'nervous and muscular debility' and was ordered complete rest. His wife was then recuperating in England where she died on 8 April 1870 at Bristol from an overdose of sleeping pills. In 1871 Goyder took nine months leave and visited Britain and America leaving his nine children with Ellen Priscilla Smith, his deceased wife's sister. On 20 November he married her: they had one son and twin daughters. Goyder died on 2 November 1898 at his home Warrakilla, near Aldgate, leaving an estate of £4000.
The Survey Expedition Team

Many of the names appearing below appear as place or street names in the Top End. The First-Class Surveyors have been honoured in CBD street names.

Moonta Herald and Northern Territory Gazette (NT: 1869), Wednesday 24 February 1869, page 2

LIST OF OFFICERS AND MEN COMPRISING THE NORTHERN TERRITORY SURVEY EXPEDITION.

Leader—G. W. Goyder.

Surgeon—Dr. Peel.

Photographer—Mr. J. Brooks.

Draftsmen—J. N. O. Bennett, E. S. Berry, A. Ringwood, and W. M. Hardy.

Accountant and Postmaster—J. M. Lambell.

Botanist—F. Schultze.

Doctor's Assistant—W. W. Hoare.

Assistant Photographer—W. Barlow.

Assistant Botanist—A. Schultze.

Storekeeper—H. C. McCallum.


Coxwain of "Midge"—James Burton.


In charge of Stock—R. Beard and W. Rowe, sen.


Farrier—J. W. J. Gepp.
Smith—T. Sayer.

Gardener—W. B. Hayes.

Carpenter—B. Wells.


Assistant in Store—J. Nottage.

Well Sinkers—T. J. Bennett, D. McAulay, E. M. Moyse, T. McIntyre.

Published by W. M. HARDY, for the Editor and Proprietor, WILLIAM FISHER, at the Office, Ship Moonta, every Saturday Morning.
1863 - George Woodroffe Goyder.  
*Image: State Library of South Australia*

1869 – Government survey party members, each with his tool(s) of trade.  
*Image: State Library of South Australia.*
1869 – Government surveyors.
*Image: State Library of South Australia.*

1869 – Goyder’s Camp.
*Image: Graham Poeling-Oer Collection.*
1870 - the Camp in the saddle between Fort Hill & Palmerston Hill. At right is Captain Sweet's Gulnare which had done time as a slaver in the Caribbean. Centre is the Government store in Goyder's camp. Left is the Overland Telegraph camp.
Images: Captain Samuel Sweet photos, Mike Owen Collection.

Circa 1870 - The Moonta at anchor in Darwin Harbour.
Image: State Library of South Australia.
1891 – Goyder’s plan of Palmerston.
Image: National Archives of Australia.

1893 – By now, it was simply known as ‘the Camp’. Goyder had long since left and the town of Palmerston was well on its way to a boom-bust cycle of life. Pictured, by Foelsche, is the Officers Camp, the Government Residency at the top of the escarpment. The track that became Hughes Avenue is on the right. Image: National Library of Australia.
1895 – Goyder in Adelaide three years before his death.
Image: State Library of South Australia.

15 September 1870 - the ceremonial planting of the first Overland Telegraph pole in Palmerston, Harriet Douglas (with mallet in hand) presiding.
Image: Spillett Collection, Northern Territory Library.
1871 – the British Australia Telegraph Fleet comprised the Hibernia, Investigator and Edinburgh. The Gulnare is also in this photograph.
*Image: Samuel Sweet Collection, State Library of South Australia.*

1871 – the sub-sea cable coming ashore.
*Image: Samuel Sweet Collection, State Library of South Australia.*
1904 map showing the incoming point of the cable.
*Image: State Library of South Australia.*

Undated photograph of Knight’s Folly, constructed in 1883 by John George Knight, between Hughes Avenue and Kitchener Drive.
*Image: State Library of South Australia Collection.*
Further Reading


Daly, Daniel D. *Plan entitled Plan of Main Camp Port Darwin NT*. 23 December 1869. Held DIPE Place Names Committee.


