



Kimberley Society

Book Note

Last of the Packhorse Stockmen: Warwick Edwards: the city kid goes bush by Neville W Tickner. [Private publication](#), Rockhampton, 2003. Soft cover, 207 pages, maps and sketches, ISBN 0-9580724-1-8, RRP \$25 including postage and handling in Australia.

Warwick Edwards went to the Kimberley at the age of 14 in 1946. He was as raw as could be but dead keen to become a drover. Forty-two years later, Nancy Benson inspired him to have his story told. The long process of turning a multitude of yarns into a book fell to Nev Tickner and others.

The book, the first in a trilogy, is written in an easy-to-read style. It contains a wealth of information and plenty of bush humour. Many Kimberley people appear in it, and I really enjoyed the opportunity to gain a physical impression of some about whom I had previously collected information. In describing a drover who was responsible for a mob of Anna Plains cattle in 1946, Rick Edwards recalled that:

Jack Evans was a man in his seventies and looked really fit for his age. A shock of white hair spilled out from under his hat and he sported this great white flowing beard. He cantered across to us and sprung out of the saddle like a twenty year old. He was only about five foot nine but the leather leggin's on his boots with tassels down the side made him look much taller. I straightaway noticed the buckle on his belt was the shape of a horseshoe. The belt itself seemed to carry everything, watch pouch, matches pouch and knife pouch. Most striking of all though was his great big, high, wide-brimmed Akubra hat. The large tinkling spur rollers sung in rhythm with his stride as he strode briskly across to Stan, offering his hand as he spoke.

Jack Evans interests me because, as well as being a long time resident of the Kimberley, he was a veteran of both the Boer War and the First World War. I also found Rick Edwards' references to the man called Stan of interest because it showed that Frederick Stanley Mullen, the long-serving manager of Anna Plains Station, was generally known by his second name. Such points make reminiscences of this sort valuable historical sources as well as good yarns because, with the old timers passing away, we are losing firsthand knowledge of their contemporaries and the ways in which things were done in earlier times.

Book 1 of the trilogy covers only the first few years of Rick Edwards' time in the Kimberley but, because he moved from place to place, it covers a lot of ground. The people and places mentioned include Frank Lacey and Mrs Lacy (Walla), George Solway (a drover), Kim Male, Mrs Male, Rabbit Fleming and Sam Taylor (Roebuck Plains), Jack Knox (Broome), Jack Tyres (ex-Broome), Len McAlear, Luluigui Tommy and Jack Wilson (Luluigui), Jack Huddlestone and Stewart Orr (Nerrima), Kim Rose (Liveringa), Beatrice Bickley and her parents (Derby), Scottie Sadler (Derby), Jack Rudduck and Scotty Rayburn (Tableland), Smiler Smith, Tableland Jack and the latter's son Billy (Mornington) and Jim and Ella Kelly who were among the people working on the construction of the meatworks at Glenroy Station. The book is not indexed but the above list more or less follows the sequence in which the individuals appear.

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