

LIVERINGA STATION

At a regional meeting held in Derby on 24 June 1998, Jim Anderson spoke about Liveringa station and outlined its agricultural and pastoral history within the context of today's interest in irrigation enterprises along the Fitzroy River. At the time of the talk, Jim and his wife Norma were due to leave the Kimberley after working for about 12 years as caretakers of the Liveringa Homestead. Jim's varied activities prior to going to Liveringa include active Navy service in World War II, twenty years with the Customs Department and completion of a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Western Australia. He describes one of his greatest achievements at Liveringa as succeeding in having the homestead and woolshed listed on the State Register of Heritage Places.

Jim's talk centred on a recent visit to the Camballin area by his nephew Mark and brother Glen. It was Mark's first visit and Jim described his reactions as they visited sites at Inkata (formerly Willumbah), Camballin, Liveringa and Nerrima. The sites, Jim noted, forcibly remind us 'of how often reality makes mockery of human—in this instance non-Aboriginal—expectations and aspirations'.

Jim spoke of Mark's reaction to the enormous waste of human effort and financial resources, both private and public, at Inkata. Left are buildings fallen into disrepair, abattoir, rodeo yards and a tank transported from Talgarno. This was the site of Agricon Bore No. 1. There was infrastructure to water 9000 head of stock, irrigate crops, feedlot thousands of head of cattle and produce export sorghum and maize. Even as late as 1987 they were experimenting with growing vegetables. There were irrigation drains, barrages, levee banks and a \$2,000,000 storage shed built near the jetty at Broome. Two cattle sales were held at the Inkata yards mid 1986. The shed at Broome remains empty, and now only the Inkata stockyards are used (during the annual mustering season). This was the 1980s response and result.

Next Jim spoke of the 1960s when Camballin saw the Northern Development Co., with the involvement of Kim Durack, commence the rice growing venture that utilised the best Liveringa lambing paddock. The history of that project is well documented elsewhere. It did not succeed for a variety of reasons including physical constraints.

Going further back in time Jim outlined the early history of Liveringa station as a pastoral enterprise. The carrying capacity of the station was such that, by the turn of the century, Percy Rose was having over 100,000 sheep shorn. The substantial stone homestead was constructed in five months in 1908; the store room prior to that; and the shearers quarter just prior to World War I. During the 1920s and '30s

it became evident that the land was fragile and that overstocking was causing degradation.

In 1930, 21-year-old Kim Rose took over as manager. At the beginning of the 1935 shearing season an overnight downpour of 12" (300mls) of rain disrupted the shearing program to such an extent that the outstation of Paradise with an additional shearing shed was built. Wool production continued at Liveringa until the 1950s.

In concluding his talk Jim said that the examples provided by the pastoral and agricultural history of Liveringa station make it imperative that comprehensive in-depth research should precede any major development along the Fitzroy River. He also argued for adoption of the "Precautionary Principle" outlined by Peter M Davies and Stuart E Bunn in a paper presented to the Australian Society for Limnology Inc. workshop on the Limnology of the Fitzroy River, Western Australia, in February 1998. On page 27 of the Proceedings of that workshop they state that:

Due to this [the extremely limited data on the basic ecological processes of the Fitzroy River] . . . the "Precautionary Principle" should be invoked where, in the absence of adequate information, the river should be left in its currently unregulated regime.

Pam Masters

Further reading

Anderson, Jim. 'Liveringa: Fable, Fact, Farce and Failure'. *Early Days: Royal WA Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, vol. 10, part 1, 1989, pp. 25–38.

Camballin Farms Project: Abridged History. Author/publisher unknown, 1989, held by WA Dept of Agriculture Library.