

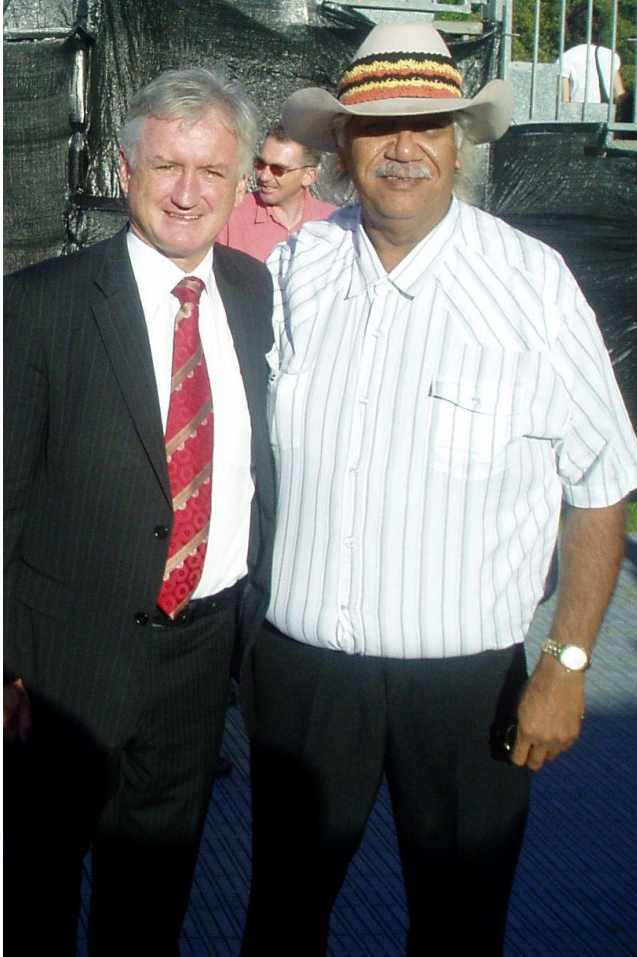
A Story of Three Pilbara Families

Compiled by Dr Bill Day



“Warrie Station” homestead, circa 1950

**Tom Price, W.A.
2004**



Above: Slim Parker and WA Premier Alan Carpenter at the broadcast of Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generation in Perth, 2008.



Sir Stephen Henry Parker. Founded Parker and Parker 1881; QC 1890; Mayor of Perth 1880-81, 1892, 1901; MLC 1878-1890; MLA 1890-2; MLC 1892-1900; Leader of Opposition 1890-2; Chief Justice 1906-1913.

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of three Pilbara families whose histories are intertwined. One common bond is the link each family has with Warrie Station, which was situated to the west of Bonnie Downs. The Warrie homestead today lies in ruins and the land has been incorporated into the vast Hillside Station. More importantly, there is a biological connection between the three families which was always rumoured and this historical research has confirmed.

There were few white women in the north in the early days. White men often took Aboriginal partners, sometimes in exchange for favours, sometimes by force and more rarely for lasting companionship. It was illegal to have an Indigenous partner and legal marriage between the races was very rare. The inspectors of the Department of Native Affairs reported suspicious relationships and were able to remove 'half-caste' children from stations and camps. It is the detailed departmental files and reports which have become an invaluable resource in researching family history.

Few white men had the desire or the courage shown by George Todd, who legally married an Aboriginal woman to protect his wife and children from the all-powerful Department. In another case, the Parker family of Warrie took young Molly Todd into their care and in so

doing, ensured she was not removed, as later occurred to Molly's mother and brothers.

Ronald Parker is remembered by some as an eccentric but kind-hearted man who came to the Pilbara as a young man with his brother Harold and established Warrie as a successful sheep station. He was not married until 1921, when he was 35 years old, but his first marriage did not last.

As this booklet discloses, in his single days, Ronald appears to have fathered two Aboriginal sons. Ronald's Aboriginal descendants remain in the Pilbara as respected members of the Aboriginal community.

Perhaps the unusual and heartening aspect of this story is that both sides of the families are willing to acknowledge each other and hopefully, in the near future to meet each other. If such a 'reunion' were to occur, it would be an encouraging and practical sign of reconciliation between West Australian white and black pioneer families.

Bill Day

Tom Price, WA.

November 2004



A cricket match at Onslow was recently held to raise funds for the Daily News Orphans Appeal. Teams were: TOWN: back row: left to right: Kim McAullay, Stephen Tucker, Bruce Clarke, Shane Stewart, Keith Purcell, Victor Temperton. Front row: Craig Butcher, Billy McAullay, Greg Butcher, Fred Sweeting, Michael Kirke. HOSTEL: back row: Timmy Parker, Noel Condon, Kenny George, Slim Parker, Les Ashburton, Mitchell Drage. Front row: Jimmy Cox, Ian Black, Victor Parker, Des Jones, Birchell Drage.

Above: Slim Parker in the back row with his cousins Timmy and Victor Parker in about 1969.



Above: Plaque at Yule River on the North West Coastal Highway in the Pilbara region of Western Australia recognising the achievements of Herbert Parker, son of Ronald Parker and grandson of Sir Stephen Henry Parker.



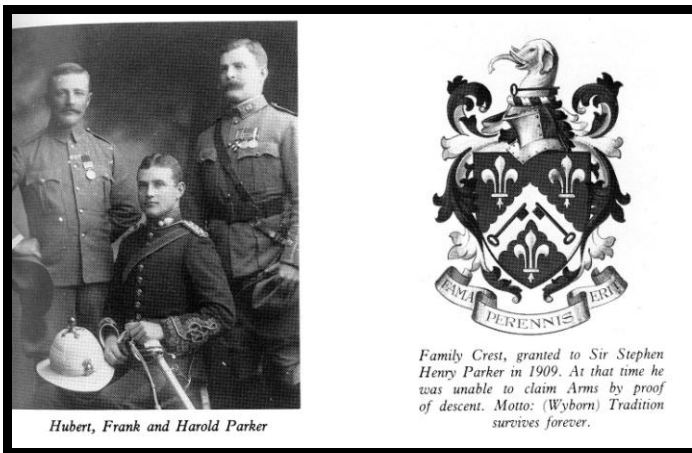
A Story of Three Pilbara Families

By Dr Bill Day

Stephen Parker arrived in Western Australia in the ship SS Hooghly from England with his wife and six children in February 1830. His grandson, Stephen Henry Parker was born near York, Western Australia in 1846. Stephen Henry married Amey Katharine Leake in 1871 and lived for forty years at 26 Saint Georges Terrace, Perth, opposite Government House. He was noted for his talented horse riding and rode winners in the Queens Plate for four years in succession from 1873. He established the legal firm of Parker and Parker in 1881. As a WA politician and lawyer he was known as ‘a battler for the underdog’ and ‘the father of responsible government.’ He was Mayor of Perth in 1880-81, 1892, and 1901 and the first

WA-born Chief Justice from 1906-1913. He was knighted in 1908.¹ Stephen and Amey Parker had 14 children. They often gave parties at their residences in the city and at Mahogany Inn. On Sundays the Parkers would lead their children and servants in a procession to Saint Georges Cathedral for morning worship.²

Sir Stephen had extensive urban and pastoral land holdings and sent his second son, Harold, to



Above: Photo and illustration from *The Northbourne Parkers*. manage Belele Station, in the Pilbara. Harold was born in 1880 and stayed in the north until he enlisted with his brothers Francis (Frank)

¹ *Biographical Register of Members of WA Parliament Volume 1 1870-1930*, p.156.

² *The House of the Northbourne Parkers: Pioneers of Western Australia 1830-1983*. Barbara Sewell, 1983, p.81.

Maitland Parker and Hubert to fight in World War I.³ The death of Frank in Egypt in 1915 was a terrible blow to the family. Hubert was promoted to major and won the DSO in France.

After the war Harold moved to New South Wales and married there in 1922.⁴ In about 1910 at Mulga Downs, while Harold was still in the Pilbara, Jackie Parker was born to an Aboriginal mother named Daisy Yitjiyangu. The anthropologist Rory O'Connor recorded in 1987 that Jackie was Harold's son.⁵

Hubert Stanley Wyborn Parker was educated at Malvern College, England, with his brother Ronald Wyborn Parker. Following in his father's footsteps, Hubert became a distinguished lawyer and a Member of Parliament for 20 years to 1954. He acted as the Attorney General of WA in 1933 and Minister for Mines and Native Affairs in the late 1940s.⁶ He married Ada Sholl of Roebourne. Their granddaughter Rosemary married Michael Chaney.⁷ Their son Stephen Parker, who died in 2004, was the Commodore of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club.

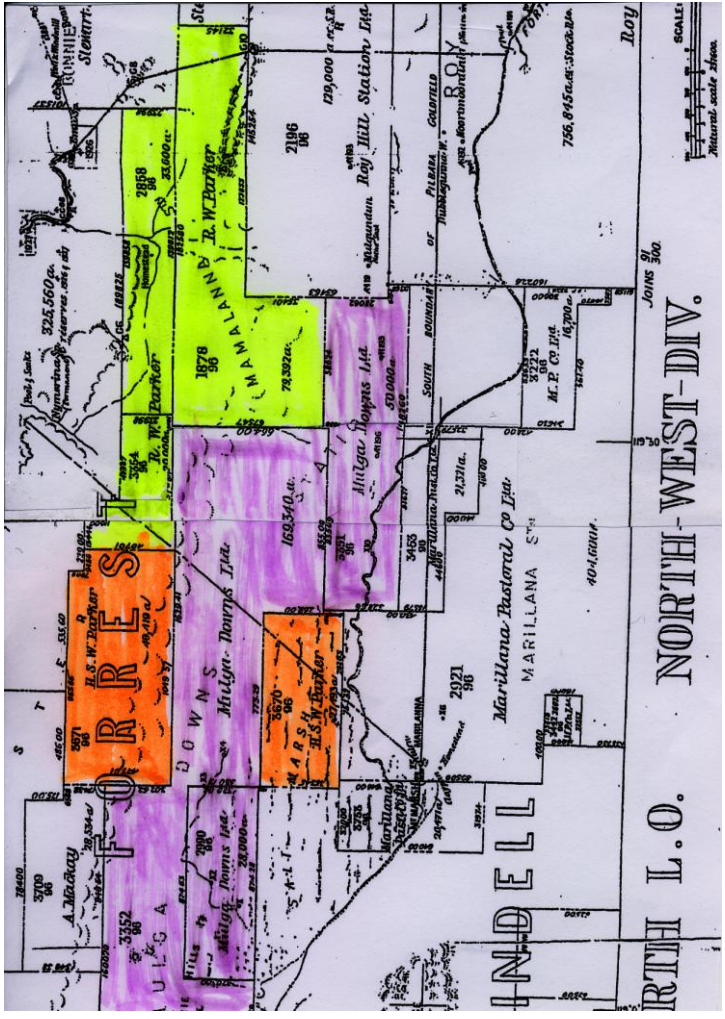
³Barbara Sewell, p. 99.

⁴ Barbara Sewell, Page 105.

⁵ *Woodstock and Abydos Reserves Management Plan*. Rory O'Connor and Associates. Prepared for the Department of Aboriginal Sites, 1987

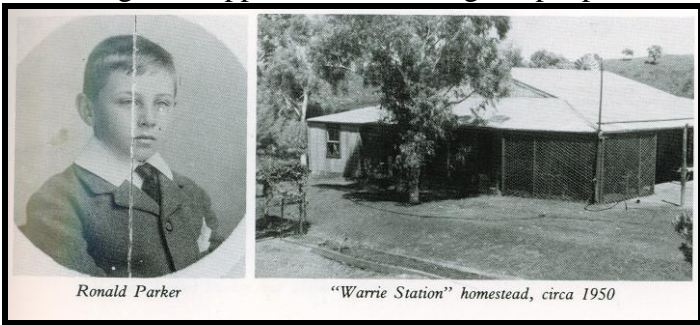
⁶ *West Australian* July 28, 1966, p.7.

⁷ *West Australian* 14 June 2004



Above: A 1920s map of Warrie and Belele pastoral leases (Ronald and Harold Parker’s properties) adjoining George Hancock’s Mulga Downs.

Ronald Parker, the youngest of the Parker brothers and tenth child of Stephen and Amey, was born in Perth in 1886. In 1914 Ronald Parker was at Woodstock Station and later leased Warrie Station.⁸ According to John Patterson, who was the Ranger at the Woodstock Reserve, Bill Pead had the lease of Woodstock Station from 1903-10. The next owner, Percy Draper, went into partnership with Ronald Parker from 1911-1945 when the station changed from cattle to sheep. Woodstock had a store which used to buy gold and sell blankets, clothing and supplies to the Aboriginal people.⁹



Ronald Parker

"Warrie Station" homestead, circa 1950



Family of Sir Stephen Henry and Lady Amey Katharine Parker. Back row from left — Ronald, Hilda, Mabel, Hubert. Front row — Mildred, Rose, Dolly, Frank, Ethel and Harold

Above: Photos from *The Northbourne Parkers*.

⁸ *Dalgetys Review* 19 October 1961, p.17.

⁹ *Jimmy Woodstock*. John Patterson, Aboriginal Sites Department, Western Australian Museum (no date).

Ronald married Christabel Annie McPherson at Woodstock on September 2, 1921, the Rev K McDonald officiating.¹⁰ Although the marriage was annulled, the couple had one daughter Amy, born in December 1921.¹¹ Amy Orr now lives in Perth. Ronald was at Hillside Station in 1927 when his father died. He married Lenore Swiaski from Collie in 1929 and raised a daughter and two sons at Warrie Station. Valerie was born in 1931, Frank in 1934 and Geoffrey in 1938. After Ronald retired to Perth his sons Frank and Geoffrey managed the station until their father's death in 1961. Valerie married Nick Guise in the Pilbara in 1947 and later Bide Heath. In 2004, she was living at Melros, south of Mandurah, in WA. Nick is buried at Cue.



Above: Warrie wool bales on the road. Photo:Valerie Heath.

¹⁰ *Nor'West Times* Saturday, September 24, 1921.

¹¹ Barbara Sewell, page 109. Sewell names Ronald's first wife as Christina Ann Sinclair from Spring Creek, Queensland.

Jimmy Todd was born at Woodstock in about 1911 and was known as Jimmy Woodstock in his early years. His Aboriginal mother, Mary Yinbung, worked as a house girl for Mr and Mrs Pead and then for Ronald Parker. Mary was born in about 1896. Her sister Gypsy was the wife of a tribal man named Tjutapangu, or 'Chinaman.' He was born in 1879 and died on 7 May 1959. Chinaman was the father of Johnny who later worked at Warrie Station where Ronald Parker named him 'Coupla Quid' because he was always asking for money. Johnny was the partner of Susie Yuline and is buried in Marble Bar.

In November 1925 Inspector Mitchell reported that a white man named George Todd was living with Mary Yinbung 'out Woodstock Station way.' George Todd was the overseer who did bookwork for Ronald Parker. Jimmy said, 'That's how [George Todd] met mum ... But I wasn't his son - but I'm his son now, as far as I'm, he's, concerned. I go under his name.'¹² Although Jimmy did not say so, it was well known in the district that he was Ronald Parker's son. Father and son had a relatively close association. For example, in May and October 1953 James Todd and Ronald Parker applied

¹² *Jimmy Woodstock* by John Patterson Aboriginal Sites Department, Western Australian Museum.

together for a mining tenement for tin, tantalite and columbite 12 miles north of Hillside.¹³

Herbert Parker was born at Mulga Downs in 1921. His mother was a Banyjima woman and his biological father was said to be Ronald Parker, making him a half brother to Jimmy Todd and a cousin of Jackie Parker. Herbert worked at Mulga Downs, Wittenoom and around the Pilbara. Although he was aware of his relationship to the Parkers, he kept his secret from his family and had no known contact with his whitefella relatives.¹⁴ However, his acknowledged work amongst his people is evidence that the politician's genes ran strong in his veins. When Herbert was awarded the Order of Australia medal in 1985, the *West Australian* reported:

The former stockman launched himself into the Aboriginal Affairs arena at the age of 64 – a time when many men are thinking of retiring. He has since been returned three times as the National Aboriginal Conference representative for the Pilbara.

¹³*Northern Times*, May 28, 1953; *Northern Times*, October 29, 1953.

¹⁴ It is quite likely that Herbert received occasional support from the Parker family. Certainly, many 'half-caste' children were removed from Mulga Downs. Herbert and his half brother Horace were spared that fate. Rose Hancock writes that station boss, George Hancock named the two brothers after two comic characters of the day, 'Orace and 'Erbert (*A Rose by Any Other Name*, Rose Hancock, page 273).

At the Herbert Parker Rest Area, where the North West Coastal Highway crosses the Yule River, a plaque states: ‘He was the founder of the concept of the bush meeting. These meetings have operated in the Pilbara since 1971.’ After his death on 23 July, 1985, Herbert received many tributes from Baha’i Communities.¹⁵ He was buried in Onslow. Amongst others who recognise the assistance of Herbert Parker is the linguist Alan Dench. Herbert’s sons and daughters carry on his traditions of service. Maitland Parker was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2003.¹⁶

Ronald Parker moved from Woodstock in about 1918. At the same time, Mary and George moved from the Station with Jimmy and his brother Archie. Fortunately, Jimmy was not taken away by the Native Affairs Officers. Jimmy said, ‘We always got a message from the people at the station that people were coming on such and such a day and we got out of the road.’ Another worker at Woodstock Station, a girl named Uni, also told how the Parkers helped her to hide from the police. However, she said, ‘One day Mr Parker came along and said, “Well Uni, the Policeman has come to take you. Mrs Parker talked to me to calm me down.”’ Uni was only removed as far

¹⁵ *West Australian*. Death notices, 27 July, 1985.

¹⁶ See also *Weekend Australian*, 23 June 2001.

as Port Hedland.¹⁷ She later married Jackie Parker and lived at Abydos as Mrs Uni Parker. Jackie died in 1983 and is buried in the South Hedland Cemetery.

It was a brave step for George Todd, a white man, to legally marry Mary on 3 January 1931. Jimmy Todd said, 'I was only a boy when Dad got married to Mum, a boy of 15 or 16 years of age.' [Jimmy was probably referring to the year his parents began living together]. In 1936 George and Mary were living at Tambourah with their children James (19), Archie (15), Norman (12), Molly (9), Donald (6), Daniel (4) and Mavis (2). George Todd died on 22 August 1938, in debt, leaving Jimmy to look after the family.

On December 1937 Native Affairs gave approval for Mary's daughter Molly to work for the Parkers at Warrie. An officer of the 'Aborigines Department' noted on November 10, 1938: 'Mr Ronald Parker expressed the wish to employ Mary Todd's daughter Molly as a [companion] for his youngest born and she would also have as a companion one of his other children who is somewhere near her own age...'

¹⁷ *Djawal Idi* Vol. 10 No 5 1986; *Listen to the Old People: Aboriginal Oral Histories of the Pilbara Region of Western Australia*, Town of Port Hedland, Australians for Reconciliation and Wangka Maya, page 49.



Left: Valerie Parker with Geoffrey Long at Warrie in about 1935. Photo: Valerie Heath.

Right: Valerie Heath, nee Parker, in 2003. Photo: B Day.



Above: Valerie, Molly Todd, Frank, Geoffrey and Lenore Parker at Scarborough Beach in about 1940. Photo: Valerie Heath.

Ronald Parker wrote from Warrie to the Commissioner on December 10, 1938:

My girl Valerie aged 8 [who] has been 2 years boarding at St Hilda's School Cottlesloe is coming home next week for 12

months, so that by having Molly here for the next year she should pick up quite a lot from Valerie.

On 10 December 1938, Ronald and his wife Lenore signed an agreement to care for Mary Todd's daughter. The agreement stated in part:

I Lenore Parker of Warrie Station hereby request that you will place in my care your ward known as Molly Todd now said to be 12 years of age the child of native woman Mary and Geo. Todd, who married her. In the event of this permission being granted I will undertake to feed, clothe, educate, and generally care for her in all respects as though she were my own child, until she reaches the age of 16 years.

A letter from Warrie Station, dated April 10, 1939, states: 'I went and got Molly Todd on the sixth and she seems quite at home here with my children. R W Parker'

Meanwhile all was not well with the Todd's at Tambourah. On 29 September 1939 J H Bisley, the Officer in Charge of the district wrote to the Commissioner Re Mrs Todd and children:

Since George Todd died the family have been continually getting into trouble. I did everything I could for them but it seems to have done very little towards holding them together ... All the elder boys are frightened of the mother as she gets very violent with them and chases them away from the camp ... There is another daughter named Molly about 13 years of age who is at present with Mr Parker at Warrie Station - this man is alleged to be James Todd's father.

On November 1939 the Commissioner of Native Affairs decided to remove Mary Todd and her younger children to Moore River. He noted: 'Might be advisable that Molly also be sent down to the Settlement.' Mr J H Bisley replied to Mr Bray on 24 March 1940 that Mrs Todd 'should not be allowed to go to anywhere in the vicinity of Tamborough until such time as German Jack departs from there.'

On November 29, 2000, Dan Todd was interviewed in *North West Telegraph*. The article said:

Mr Todd grew up in Mogumber Mission after being separated from his Aboriginal mother. He saw his mother, brother and younger sister also taken away at gunpoint from their home. 'We were rounded up with revolvers and taken away,' he said. 'Mum was chained up and we were brought in by the police. When my

mother was sick and dying I applied for permission to go and see her. I wasn't allowed to go.'

File 486/25 of the Native Affairs Department tells the story of the following years for

George and Mary Todd's family:

29.9.39 O/C Port Hedland Hospital reported that in his opinion Mrs Todd is ... mentally subnormal.

9.10.39 Mrs Todd was committed to custody of Native Hospital pending transfer to native Institution.

10.10.39 Mrs Todd escaped custody but was apprehended on 11.10.39.

22.11.39 Mrs Todd and three children arrive on "Koolinda" and were placed at Mary Morden's camp at Guildford.

10-6-40 The Lieut. Governor cancelled the court order against Mary.

25.7.40 James Todd is quite willing to take care of his mother.

12.9.40 She returned to Port Hedland by boat.

20.10.41 Police report that Mary is living with [Roderick] Mackay. Mackay states that he has found a [gold] leader and [Mary] is helping him work it.

4.11.41 She was arrested [under Section 12] and placed in the lockup to await arrival of the boat.

24.11.41 Mackay appeared before the court on a charge of breach of Section 46.

15.12.41 Mary Todd arrived at Fremantle by “Koolinda”

17.12.41 Transferred to Moore River Settlement.

Jimmy’s handwritten letter is preserved in the files of the Department. He wrote from Port Hedland on 15 December 1941:

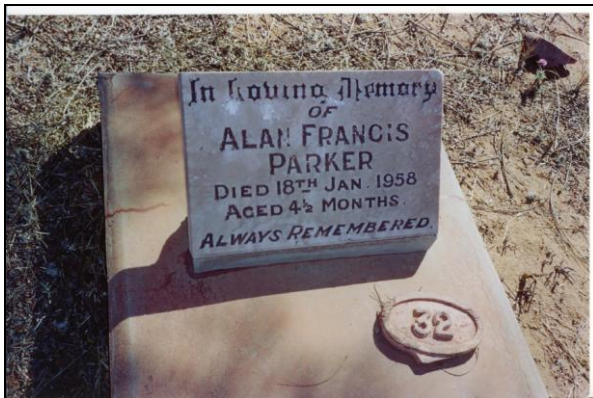
Dear Mother,

I was very sorry to miss you. Norman and myself got to Hedland two days after you left and we are going back to Bonnie Downs well sinking and we will be there until the end of January... Chinaman is very lonely and he says he will take proper care of you if you like to come back to him. Nobody can stop you and he is your proper lawful husband according to abo. law... [he] is a good worker and has always got a turn out of money... After all, your own colour seems to be more honest and true than many of the others... Goodbye dear mother from Norman and myself. We send our best love. James

PS Mr Parker will help in any way to get your wishes.

Mr J H Brisley had advised Mr Bray on 24 March 1940: ‘According to tribal law in that particular part, when Mrs Todd became a widow she automatically became the wife of “Chinaman.”’

While World War II raged, Jimmy’s sister Molly Todd remained with the Parker’s at Warrie. Photographs show her enjoying a holiday on Scarborough beach as one of the family. She had become a well-developed teenager. Ronald wrote: ‘been paying Molly 7/6d per week since April 1942 ... Molly has told Mrs Parker that she would like to marry Dick Dann [who was] working as windmill man for Bonny Downs for over 12 months.’



Above: The Port Hedland grave of the baby son of Frank and Glenice Parker of Warrie station, Pilbara.

The Commissioner of Native Affairs’ response to Mr R W Parker on 25 February 1943 was abrupt: ‘I must object to this marriage taking

place but will give further consideration to the matter if Mrs Todd's written consent is forthcoming.' Eventually, on 8 April 1943, Molly signed a consent form: 'I hereby give my consent to the marriage of my daughter Molly to Ignatius Dann. Signed X Her mark (Mary Todd).'

Mary was suffering from a serious illness at Mogumber and concerned for her children. She sent a letter to Commissioner of Native Affairs:

6 October 1943

To the Commissioner

I'd like [my son Don] to go and work for Mr Parker, he's a very good man and he teaches the boys how to work and is very good to them. Mrs Parker is very nice too, Molly used to work there and I worked for them a long time, I know what a good place it would be for Don to go to.

Mary Todd

MRNS, Mogumber

Another letter is dated 24 February 1944

Dear Sir

I've been here two years and have been very very sick and would like to go back and see my sons. I would also like to take my two little sons Don and Dan with me. Dan is twelve and Don is fourteen so I think they are old enough to leave the settlement. If they stay here they will only grow up like the other boys here, always fighting and getting into trouble. I'd like them to come up North with me and let them work on Mr Parker's Station, I could work there too and I'd be able to look after Don and Dan. I'm writing away to Jim and Archie to get some money for the train fares. I've been very good and have been behaving myself since I've been here and you've got my little girl down there so if I can have my two sons we'll be square.

I've been off colour all the time I've been here and I do want to go back so as I can be amongst my own people if any thing should happen to me.

Mary Todd

MRNS, Mogumber



Above: Sue Parker, Autrey Wabbie and Christine Parker at Warrie in about 1958. Photo: Frank Parker.

Back in the Pilbara, James was also concerned. He wrote:

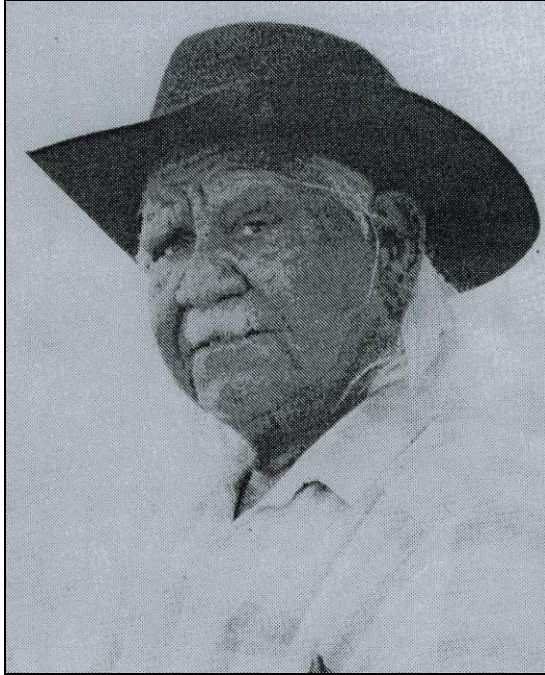
Mr Bray
Abo Department
Perth
Dear Sir

Would you kindly advise me, the condition my mother is in if serious kindly advise me as early as convenience by wire, She will find me at Hillside Station...I was away working when she took ill...

Mr J Todd

Comet Mine, Marble Bar, Sept 19, 1945

The end for Mary Todd has still to be written. One letter bears a note:
‘15.9.1945 Mary Todd, [transferred] Girls Home to Perth Hospital.’
She is buried in an unmarked grave at Moore River.



Above: Herbert Parker, OA, 1911- 1985



Plaque at the Yule River, Pilbara, Western Australia (Photo: B Day)



Above: Valerie Heath (nee Parker) and Bill Day at her home in Dawesville WA, 2007



Above: Margaret Parker at YWAM in Perth, 2005.

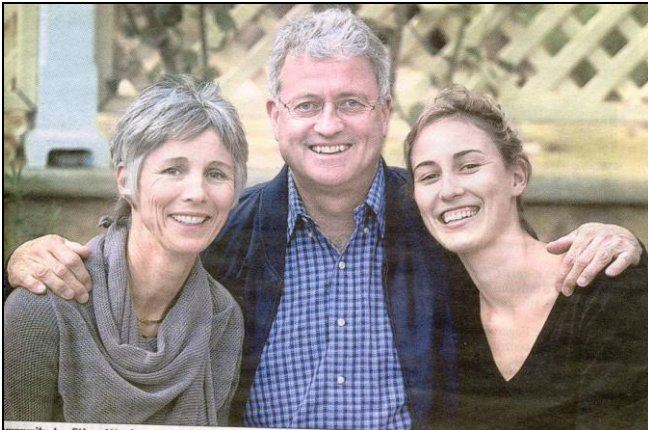


**Above: Four descendants of Herbert Parker. From top left, clockwise -Trevor Hicks (grandson, dec.), Guy Parker, Maitland Parker and Slim Parker (sons).
Below: South Hedland cemetery (Photo B Day)**





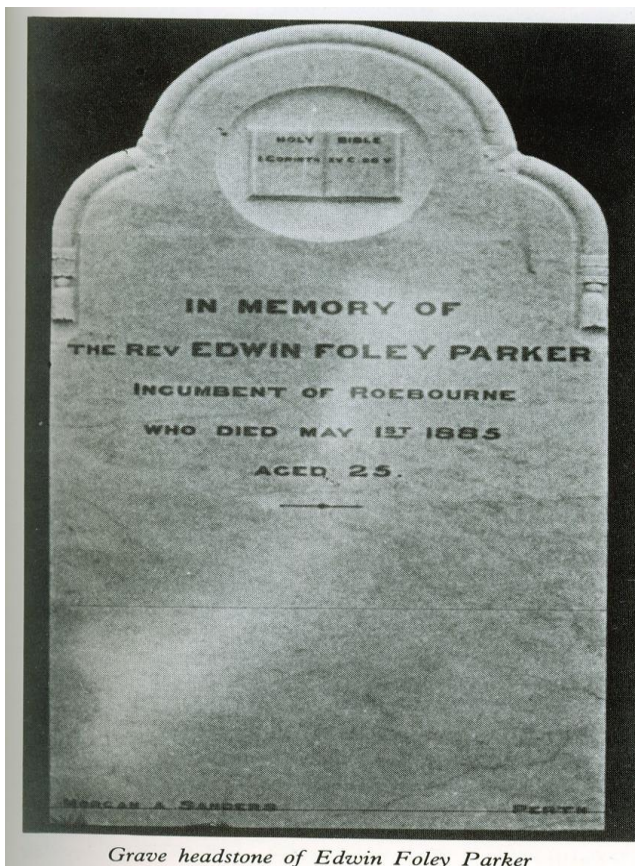
Above: Andrew Forrest is the chairman of Fortescue Metals Group. He and his brother David are the great-grandsons of Mary Forrest (nee Parker), the daughter of John Wyborn Parker, and cousin of Stephen Henry Parker, making Herbert Parker's children Andrew's fourth cousins. Photo *West Australian*.



Rose Chaney (left) is the grand daughter of Ronald Parker's brother and therefore a second cousin of Herbert's children. Photo *West Australian*.



Above: Sandy McKenna and Frank Parker at Warrie in about 1943.



Grave headstone of Edwin Foley Parker
Above: Headstone in Roebourne Cemetery.

Edwin Parker was the fourth child of Mary and Edward Read Parker. He was the cousin of Sir Stephen Henry Parker and died after only eight months service in Roebourne as the result of being struck by a cricket ball. Photo from *The Northbourne Parkers*

TO NIKKI [granddaughter of Ronald Parker]

By Keith Lethbridge senior

Nikki, you lover of dogs and kangaroos,
I shed a tear when I heard the news,
To think of the old Tuckanarra shack,
With the broken down wind-mill out the back,
And the little wood fire we all sat around,
When the winter chill was drifting down,
Me drinking tea and you sipping wine,
And everyone having a wonderful time.

Hambones and Sprocket and old Wally too,
And always some blasted kangaroo,
The dogs, the chooks and the radical weather,
And Nikki, you bringing it all together.
Those great old songs right from the heart,
The bones and the mouth organ playing a part,
And now it's all gone and it's too damn late,
But Nikki, we'll always love you, mate.

How can we ever drive down that track,
Past Cue, past the old Tuckanarra shack,
Without crying, without laughing, without breaking down,
Without looking to see if Nikki's around?
Bare-foot and smiling that big cheeky grin:
'Hey, Hambones ... look what the cat dragged in.'
My God, if a bloke can't cry for you,
Then what in the world are we coming too?

Nikki, you woman of rare intellect,
Even Wally held you in high respect;
In your tumbledown castle just out of Cue,
You could teach brother Ghandi a thing or two,
And yet, you never put anyone down,
Black, while and brindle, we all hung around.
You taught us to see that the world was great,
And Nikki, we'll always love you, mate.

[From: '*Wild Camel Stew and Even Worse Verse*', 1998]