

The Amateur Tramp

A Walk of Ten Thousand Miles
Around Australia

Colin Choat



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The Amateur Tramp

A Walk of Ten Thousand Miles Around Australia

Colin Choat



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To
The Cull Family,
who were found by chance during research,
for generously providing details
of their family history
relating to Herbert Charles Cull
and his family

*I cannot offer you cake and ale,
But camp-fire bread and a billy of tea –
A loafer's dream and a swagman's tale,
I cannot offer you cake and ale,
But a johnnie-cake and some post and rail¹
I trust you'll share by the track with me.
I cannot offer you cake and ale,
But – camp-fire bread and a billy of tea.*

– John Le Gay Brereton



¹ Post and rail: strong bush tea.

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Aidan de Brune, the "Tramp Journalist" who walked around Australia, photographed in 1921, prior to his walk.

[State Library of New South Wales. (P1/2062)]

Introduction

Aidan de Brune was the first person to walk around the perimeter of Australia. He accomplished the walk a hundred years ago, unaccompanied and unassisted, walking 10,000 miles (16,000 kilometres). There is compelling documentary evidence to support the claim, most of it gathered by de Brune, himself, during his walk.

However, there is much more to Aidan de Brune than completing this epic walk. He was a prolific writer of serialised mystery stories, which were syndicated in newspapers throughout Australia and New Zealand. He was also a journalist who regularly wrote articles during his walk and submitted them to the Sydney *Daily Mail* and other newspapers. Then, too, he was an accomplished musician who gave music lessons and, at one time, played piano accompaniments to silent films in London.¹

Yet who, these days, has heard of the man? There is no entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography and scant mention on the internet, beyond the extensive reproduction of his stories and journalistic work in the “Digitised Newspapers” section of *Trove*, an initiative of the National Library of Australia.”²

De Brune’s words, and those of other journalists, as well as those of people de Brune met along the way, contributed much to this book. The available material has been organised into a coherent narrative. There are also several photographs and other images at the end of the book.

Roy Glashan, of *Roy Glashan’s Library*,³ an online site which hosts free ebooks, mentioned de Brune to me in August 2017, after Terry Walker, a book lover from Western Australia, brought to Roy’s attention the fact that there were several of de Brune’s stories serialised in newspapers. These were available

at *Trove* and Terry suggested to Roy that he, Terry, might prepare the serials and contribute them to Roy's site, to be offered as free ebooks. From there, Terry, Roy and myself catalogued and accumulated the available material and put it online, at the same time researching the author's life.

It was during this time that we stumbled upon the fact that "Aidan de Brune" was an alias of Herbert Charles Cull, who did not simply use the name "Aidan de Brune" in his writing, but lived and died as Aidan de Brune, once he took on the name just before he set out on his walk around Australia.

Colin Choat
Sydney, 2018

Herbert Charles Cull/Aidan de Brune

According to *Australian Literature*, by E. Morris Miller,⁴ Charles Francis Aidan de Brune was born at St. Mary's, Montreal, Canada, in 1879. However, there seems to be no such suburb of Montreal, but only St. Mary's Hospital. De Brune, himself, probably proffered this information about his birth but, as with most autobiographical information supplied by him, it is not true.

In fact, Aidan de Brune (1874-1946) was born Herbert Charles Cull, in the parish of Camberwell, London, England, on 17 July 1874.⁵

In both the 1891 and 1901 British census, Cull was living with his parents in East Dulwich, London. In 1891, when he was sixteen or seventeen years old, his occupation was shown as "printer," the profession he later gave when he arrived in Australia. Ten years later, in 1901, he was shown as being a "tea traveller."

He married Ethel Elizabeth Crofts (1883-1967) at South Norwood, London on 29 June 1907⁶ and a son, Lionel Charles Cull, was born on 3 October, 1909, at Mitcham, London.⁷

In 1910 Cull left his wife and son in England and, on 23 May 1910, arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia aboard the *Seydlitz*. His occupation on his arrival document was given as "printer."⁸ In an "autobiographical" article written in 1933⁹, de Brune stated that he

...broke down in health in America, with eighteen months of neurasthenia; more than half that time helpless on a bed. American doctors sent me to England. There the fraternity declared me a hopeless case. Perhaps

to get me off their hands with the least trouble, they decided that my only hope was a voyage to Australia. Hospital attendants carried me on board ship, but at Port Said I walked ashore to see the sights. By the time I reached Fremantle I had decided there was still room in this world for me. I looked at that western capital and decided that the country was good; also that doctors were darned bad guessers."

We cannot know whether de Brune was telling the truth about coming to Australia for his health. However, immediately before he began his walk around Australia he wrote to the *Referee* that "for some time I have been in...hospital with neuritis"¹⁰ and, in a letter to his wife in 1913, a transcription of which appears later in this chapter, he wrote that "I am still an invalid and oh! I am so tired of illness. This past attack has now lasted two months and though I feel much better now, I am as weak as a gnat and have lost nearly two stone in weight."

De Brune's wife and son followed him to Australia and arrived in Albany, Western Australia, on the *Persic* on 26 November 1910.¹¹

In 1911 Cull was, for a short time, the editor of the *South Western Advertiser*, at Pinjarra, South of Perth, Western Australia. He then secured a position with the Murray Roads Board, based at Pinjarra. During this time he advertised in the *Advertiser* as a teacher of "pianoforte, organ and theory of music," as well as a performer at "concerts, dances and entertainments."¹²

In October 1911 a new Secretary was appointed to the Road Board, after it had called for applications for a new position of Secretary-Supervisor. The Chairman "asked the present secretary (Mr H. C. Cull) whether he would undertake the duties of supervisor under the conditions advertised, and Cull had

expressed his willingness to do so, provided he had the support of all members of the Board.”¹³

Since unanimous support for Cull was not forthcoming, another person was appointed to the position. Cull declined to accept an honorarium of £5 and requested that the usual one-month notice period, for termination of employment, be shortened, if the new secretary could start earlier.

On 22 October 1912, Cull’s wife and son left Australia aboard the *Omrah*, and returned to London. After the pair’s departure, Herbert and his wife corresponded. A letter, seemingly Herbert’s last to Ethel, was written from Perth, dated 10 June 1913:¹⁴

My dearest Ethel,

I am still an invalid and oh! I am so tired of illness. This past attack has now lasted two months and though I feel much better now I am as weak as a gnat and have lost nearly two stone in weight. Yesterday I was weighed at the hospital and did not quite reach eight stone five pounds. Still I have at last made a turn for the better and if I can only keep off the pains, should pull up rapidly.

The weather of late has been absolutely brutal. I never remember so much rain falling at one time in this abominable country. Yesterday was easily the worst day I have ever known. It rained one torrent throughout 23 hours and Hay Street was flooded into the shops. Today the air is like a steam laundry – it’s steam everywhere and over the low-lying country hangs a white fog.

You will notice that I have headed this letter GPO. It is most probable that I shall go out into the country for a month or two as there seems no prospect of getting a job in Perth. Besides I think it best to get up my health again before I start for England and as far as I can see Perth does not agree with me. So address GPO Perth and mark “Please Forward.”

How are you and the dear boy keeping? I do so long to be with you both again and once we come together again we won't separate again in a hurry. I am always thinking of you both and wondering what you are doing.

The count of the election is coming in day by day and it looks probable that there will be another election in the course of a few months. Up to now the two parties are exactly balanced with the Liberals in a majority of one.

Trade is bad as bad can be. I thought it would improve after the elections started but it was not so. It seems as if everyone was waiting to see the final result. Will it improve then? I doubt it. The bankruptcy court is full and a series of fresh liquidations are prevalent. It is probable some of the big traders will smash before things come level. As it is they almost daily reduce staff and the poverty and distress in Perth is awful. Everyone is living on capital and when that gives out – God help them!

First chance I get I'm for England so don't be surprised to hear I am on the way any day. Lots of love and kisses to both my darlings.

Yours always, Bert

It seems that Herbert Cull never returned to England and remained in Australia for the rest of his life. His next few years in Australia are obscure, however his name appeared on the Australian Electoral Roll, for the district of Perth, in the years 1914 to 1919.

In 1916, during World War I, when anti-German sentiment was rampant, Cull was working as a clerk for Mr Le Mesurier at the Perth-based All-British Co-operative Society Ltd., when he was called to give evidence in a legal case. A libel suit had been filed by Henry Gervase Shugg, a State school teacher, against the Co-operative, in connection with the publication of an article titled "German School Teachers," in which Shugg was evidently described as being German. The defendant society was

represented by Le Mesurier. A newspaper report, covering the trial, described Cull's testimony as follows:¹⁵

Herbert Charles Cull, journalist, said he had followed that profession for over twenty years and had visited Germany in the course of his professional work, as well as other foreign countries. He had been in Cornwall and had visited St. Ives, and had never heard of the name of Shugg. To him the name certainly suggested German or North European nationality. He had found the word "Schugg" in a Commonwealth directory – that of Victoria – some years back. He did not consider it a libel to call a man a German or of German origin.

His Honour: You do not suggest it is complimentary to say a man is carrying about a German taint with him?

Witness: To call a man a Prussian is derogatory, but not a German.

The witness said he would consider himself flattered to be called a clever German: Germans had been recognised as leaders of learning.

His Honour: You had better be careful or you will be called a pro-German. (Laughter.)

Cross-examined, the witness said he was at present clerk to Mr Le Mesurier. There were also four people of the name of Shugg in the directory he had mentioned.

This concluded the evidence for the defence.

In early 1920 Cull was working for the *Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express* and, on 13 April 1920, the first incarnation of the name *de Brune* appeared in that newspaper. Cull wrote an article concerning a Mr Mahony's withdrawal from contesting an election. The name "H. F. C. de B. Culle"ⁱⁱ appears at the end

ⁱⁱ Herbert Francis Charles de Broune Culle.

of the article.¹⁶ It was quite an appellation. Perhaps, at the time, Cull did not know who he wanted to be.

During 1920 de Brune wrote two serial stories for the *Bunbury Herald*. *The Pursuits of Mr Peter Pell* commenced on 24 January 1920, under the name of Frank de Broune.¹⁷ *The Mystery of the Nine Stars*, also by Frank de Broune, commenced on 28 May 1920,¹⁸ and ended abruptly, unfinished, in the 5 November issue.

Something had prompted de Brune to move on without completing the story because, on 24 November 1920, he began his first long walk – across Australia, from Fremantle, Western Australia to Sydney, New South Wales – a distance of 2792 miles. Ninety days later, on 21 February 1921, he arrived in Sydney, having crossed the waterless and treeless Nullarbor Plain in high summer, following the Trans-Australian Railway, moving from fettle's camp to fettle's camp.

Beyond this information, little else is known about de Brune's life before he began his long walk around Australia, in September 1921, at which time he stopped using the name "Cull" altogether.¹⁹

During his literary career he used the names Aidan de Brune, Charles Francis Aidan de Brune, Frank de Broune, H. F. C. de B. Culle and John Morriss. However, Aidan de Brune was the name he nearly always used during and after his walk around Australia and during the rest of his life. His death, on 15 February 1946, was registered as the death of Charles Francis Aidan de Brune, with no mention of his birth name.

In 1921 de Brune made an agreement with the newly founded Sydney *Daily Mail*, wherein he would walk all the way *around* Australia – more than 10,000 miles, or 16,000 km – and the *Daily Mail* would publish his articles. This amazing walk, the first such walk in Australia's history, took nearly two and a half years and by the time he had completed it, Aidan de Brune was famous.

During this around Australia he kept a travel diary in which he recorded the places he passed through and the daily and cumulative distances which he walked.

Back in Sydney, after his walk, de Brune embarked on a career as a writer. His first book, *The Carson Loan Mystery*, was published in 1926, followed by *The Dagger and Cord* (1927) and *The Shadow Crook* (1930). The latter two books were also serialised in newspapers throughout Australia. It was as a writer of serialised stories that he made his living and several of his serials were also published in New Zealand newspapers. He used the pen-name “John Morriss” for some of his output.

During his walk de Brune often represented himself as a French-Canadian and when, in 1933, he published what he held out to be his “autobiography,” he repeated this claim,²⁰ stating that he was a Canadian, born outside Montreal, who was raised in South Africa and who later moved to England. He maintained that he had served in the Boer War and travelled extensively, including to the United States of America and the East, before arriving in Australia in about 1920 and commencing his great walk. None of the information in this “autobiography” was correct.

* * *

On 23 March 1923, while de Brune was on his walk around Australia, the *Bunbury Herald* reported on

“the arrival of Mr Aiden de Brune (known in Bunbury as Mr F. de Broun Culle) at Onslow, in the course of his walk around Australia. Everyone to his taste. In the Mechanics’ Institute, the pedestrian lectured on his experiences, before a fair gathering. After he had done lecturing, the gathering, probably stirred to energy by his exploit, started dancing, and kept it up till midnight. Whether the wanderer’s toe likewise proved light and fantastic is not reported.”²¹

By the way, Mechanics' Institutes, sometimes termed 'Institutes,' were educational establishments, originally formed to provide adult education, particularly in technical subjects, to working men. They were often funded by local industrialists on the grounds that they would ultimately benefit from having more knowledgeable and skilled employees. They were used as 'libraries' for the adult working class, and provided them with an alternative pastime to gambling and drinking in pubs. Institute buildings can still be seen in many Australian country towns. (Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanics%27_Institutes)

A sour note is struck in the *Bunbury Herald* article. De Brune had worked for the newspaper before he abruptly left it to start his first walk across the continent from Fremantle to Sydney. One can only wonder at the cause of the journalist's negativity. Furthermore, immediately before he began his first walk, the newspaper had notified readers that "Herbert F. de B. Culle is in no way connected with the *Bunbury Herald*, and has no authority to receive money or issue receipts for the *Bunbury Herald*."²²

* * *

Regarding the skills which de Brune possessed to enable him to undertake his long walks, in a newspaper article written during his walk around Australia, he cautioned inexperienced people not to attempt the walk and answered the question, "You have walked around Australia – why not others?"²³

He stated that "the traveller must be a natural bushman. That is to say, he must not only be a trained bushman, but he must have the bush instinct. He must know the signs of the bush, and invariably interpret them correctly."

Whether de Brune picked up some bushcraft at some point, or whether he learned things as he went along, we will probably never know. We *do* know that we cannot take de Brune's word when he provides personal information about himself.

On 25 October 1938, more than fourteen years after Aidan de Brune had completed his walk around Australia, an article

appeared in the Sydney *Labor Daily* under the heading *Puzzle of Missing Writer*.²⁴

Aidan de Brune, sixty-five, writer of many mystery thrillers, is himself the subject of a mystery puzzling the police of two States. They cannot locate him, and he has been listed at the Missing Persons Bureau. His real name is Herbert Charles Cull, but he is known all over Sydney and New South Wales by his professional *nom-de-plume*. In September, the Western Australian police received a request from the NSW Agent-General in London to locate de Brune. His wife, of Earlsthorpe Road, Sydenham, England, who last saw him in 1913, is inquiring for him.

As already mentioned, Cull, now de Brune, had written to his wife on 10 June 1913, so it seems that his wife had not *seen* him in 1913, but had, in fact, received a letter from him at that time, perhaps the letter quoted earlier.

Descendants of Herbert Charles Cull believe that his wife wanted to contact him to advise him that, in September 1938, his first grandchild, a son of Lionel Cull, had been born.

Constable Thompson, of the Sydney Missing Persons Bureau, stated that he could not trace de Brune after 1929, when de Brune worked for a Sydney newspaper. However, The *Labor Daily* newspaper was able to ascertain that

a member of the Australian Journalists' Association saw him in the city less than six months ago; Mr Alan Foley, literary agent, who handled some of his yarns, saw him taking his dog for a walk in Centennial Park about three months ago; he was in the office of Napier and Gardiner (literary agents) some time this year. Furthermore, the Superintendent of Mails was confident that a letter to a GPO box would find him.

The newspaper went on to note that

the title of ‘Sydney's Edgar Wallace’ could appropriately be applied to Aidan de Brune. He has written dozens of gripping thrillers based largely on life in the underworlds of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. De Brune could always provide an exciting and ingenious ending to his yarns.

In the following day's edition of the newspaper, a follow-up article appeared under the heading *Story Finds Lost Writer*.²⁵

Aidan de Brune, mystery writer, has been located, thanks to a story in yesterday's *Labor Daily*. His address, for the time being, however, is not being disclosed. The *Labor Daily* has been informed that de Brune, whom the police have listed as missing for nine years, can be reached via a GPO box.²⁶

It seems that de Brune never contacted his family again. Earlier, in 1928, four years after his walk around Australia, de Brune wrote an article for *Smith's Weekly*, which may provide an explanation for his own change of identity.²⁷

***Where the Lost Legions Go:
Mysteries That Will Never Be Solved.***

He left the house and..."

These words are often the prelude to one of those mysteries the police departments of the States are coming to dread. Where has he gone to? What were the reasons behind his action? All efforts to probe his past – to discover some clue that will place the trackers on his trail – fail.

How did he do it? In these days of the greatest freedom for the individual it is remarkably easy to disappear. "John Smith" kissed his wife and family and walked out of his home. They watched him disappear round the corner and returned to the house, prepared to welcome him at night.

But "John Smith" did not return. He did not take his usual train, or tram, into the city. Instead, he walked to some line of communications where he was unknown. Once in some strange city he went to a big store where he was an unregarded purchasing unit. There he purchased clothes varying considerably from his usual tastes. With the change of clothing he changed his identity. He became "Tom Brown."

Completing the alias.

In new clothes, bearing a new name, he assumed a new manner. "John Smith" may have been studious, and retiring; "Tom Brown" sought the high spots of the night life of his new city. His first object was to establish a new history; perhaps also a new means of livelihood. Amid the unobservant masses of the city he was fairly safe, even if he could not completely discard the many little mannerisms he gathered in his former life, though these are danger-points likely to betray him to a keen watcher who knew him in his "John Smith" days.

Why do men and women disappear? There can be no doubt that a majority of the disappearances are voluntary. A review of scores of cases shows that a large proportion are persons regarded by their acquaintances as unimaginative plodders. Can it be assumed that the daily grind, the unadventurous, placid existence, suddenly palled? Did a psychological reaction drive the victim out in search of a dimly visioned adventure? Was there some sudden awakening of a long dormant

subconsciousness inducing an unreasoned fear that the long-worn groove was leading to mental stagnation – at the end, the madhouse?

The article might have been an apology for the life which de Brune, himself, had chosen to lead.

Around the time that he wrote the above article, de Brune was living at the *Astoria*, a block of flats at 1 Waruda Street, Kirribilli, near the northern pylon of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.²⁸ The bridge was opened in 1932, after de Brune had moved from the *Astoria*, though construction had begun in 1923.

In *North Sydney History Walk*, a guide published by North Sydney Council, which describes a walking tour of Kirribilli, the following description of the *Astoria* is given:—²⁹

Built in 1908, Beulah Flats (as it was originally named) was one of the first high rise apartment buildings on the Sydney Harbour foreshores. The property was owned by Mrs Helen White, widow of James White MLC, resident and owner of Cranbrook, Rose Bay, and owner of famous Melbourne Cup racehorse, Carbine. The building was renamed the *Astoria Flats* and contained 171 rooms, a 10,000 sq. ft. roof top garden, lounge and billiard rooms, dining room and private sea baths beneath the ground floor.

De Brune was obviously doing very well from the proceeds of his serialised stories. Perhaps he was also doing other journalistic work. However, he was forced to make a hasty exit from the *Astoria*. The “walking guide” continues: –

Mrs White, thrice married and twice titled, left Sydney soon after the building was completed. When she died in the early 1920s she left the *Astoria* to her stepdaughter Mab McLachlan. In 1928 the property was sold to Emanuel Myerson for £22,500 and renamed Hotel Braeburn. The residents of the property were

evicted suddenly in October 1930 when the landlady Mrs L. McCormick fell into arrears with her rent.

The *Evening News* of 22 October 1930 described the situation:³⁰

Faced with the stern realities of having the bailiffs on the premises, of there being no possibility of getting a meal, and of having the carpets auctioned from under their feet at noon, the residents of this fashionable Kirribilli establishment tumbled out in unceremonious fashion.

Following his hasty departure from the *Astoria*, De Brune moved to 60 Kellett Street, Darlinghurst, on the southern side of Sydney Harbour. He remained there for some years. In 1943 he was living at 4 Pittwater Road, North Manly, and, at the time of his death, was living in Randwick, one of Sydney's Eastern Suburbs.³¹

After his death, the works of Aidan de Brune fell into obscurity. By 1938 the flood of serialised stories was over, and de Brune, at the age of sixty-four, seemingly retired. Only very occasionally can one of his books be found for sale. A few can be in public libraries. Fortunately, the serialised stories which appeared in newspapers have been rescued from oblivion as ebooks and can now be accessed on the internet. A link is provided in Appendix 3.

Herbert Charles Cull, or Charles Francis Aidan de Brune, as his name appears in the Australian Electoral Rolls in the 1930s, died at the Little Sisters of the Poor Home at Randwick, Sydney on 15 February 1946, a few months short of his seventy-second birthday. He was buried as Charles Francis Aidan de Brune, in the Catholic Cemetery, Botany, New South Wales.³²

The death registration records his mother's maiden name as Mary Ann Everleigh. Her marriage certificate shows Sarah Ann Eveleigh. De Brune did have a sister, Mary Eveleigh Cull, so perhaps he was acknowledging his sister, when he provided

these details before his death. His father's name was shown as Aidan de Brune, occupation unknown.

Herbert Charles Cull/Charles Francis Aidan de Brune died from "chronic myocarditis" and was shown on his death certificate as having never been married.

* * *

A grandson of Herbert Charles Cull was a merchant seaman. He decided in 1964 that he did not wish to continue his life at sea and settled in Perth, Western Australia, with friends he had made through his many trips to Fremantle and around Australia. By chance, he had come to the same town that his grandfather had reached, about fifty years before. Some years later, Herbert's son, Lionel Cull, came to visit *his* son and, for the first time, related the story of how Herbert Charles Cull had come to Perth and then "disappeared."

The grandson was very surprised to find that, just by chance, he had landed in the very place his grandfather had lived. Later, other members of the family came to live in Australia including, in the 1980s, Lionel and his wife Doris. Lionel spent some time trying to track down his father, Herbert, but without success.

Now, at last, members of the Cull family know what became of Herbert Charles Cull. However, they will never really know why he changed his name to Aidan de Brune and why he severed all contact with his family.

A Note from the Cull Family

Lionel Cull spent much of his life trying to track down his father, Herbert. He was also totally fixated with finding his Cull ancestors. Like his father, Herbert, Lionel would daily walk miles upon miles. He sought to reach libraries and he travelled around the country (both in the United Kingdom and Australia) to continue his search, in the hope of piecing together where his father had ended up and details of the journey along the way.

Every day Lionel lived and breathed his mission, documenting everything, writing and re-writing, typing and re-typing his findings, formulating books of any Cull that ever existed. However, ultimately he was unsuccessful in his goal of finding his missing father.

Did Aidan de Brune know of his own son's growing family? We will never know. Lionel was an only child and never really got to know his father as he was only a toddler when he and his mother Ethel returned to England.

The family now believe that the newspaper article in 1938, regarding the search for Herbert's whereabouts, was to advise Aidan de Brune of the birth of his first grandchild.

Since the article mentioned both names – Aidan de Brune and Herbert Charles Cull – one must ask whether Ethel knew of Herbert's pseudonym. If she did, we can only presume that she never told her son, as this would have been a key fact for Lionel in assisting him to trace his father's footsteps.

Thanks to technology, the internet, the *Trove* online library of newspapers and one very dedicated researcher in Colin Choat, Aidan de Brune's family was accidentally found. Colin contacted a distant relative who had an online "tree" of the Cull family, asking her whether she had any information about Herbert Charles Cull. She passed on Colin's email to us. We

could not believe what he had to tell – that Herbert Charles Cull and Aidan de Brune were the same person.

Herbert Charles Cull/Aidan de Brune's Family:

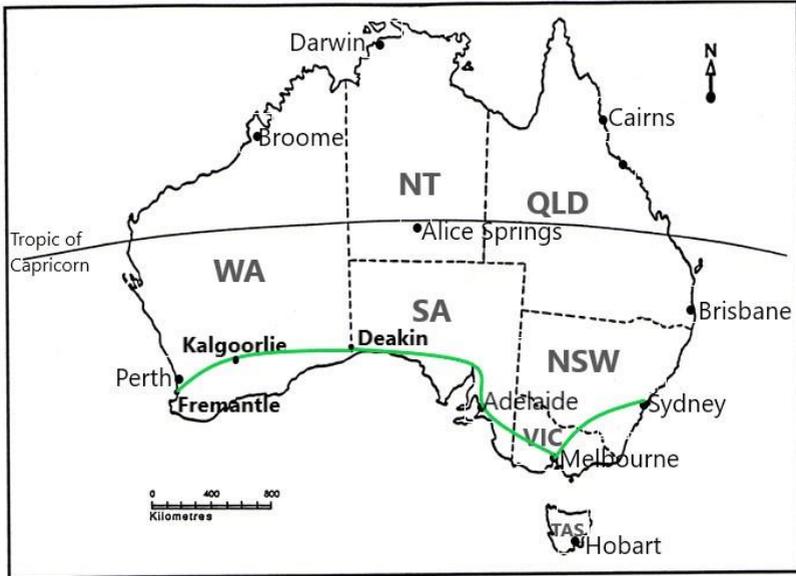
- Son: Lionel Charles Cull.
- Grandchildren: Michael, Margaret, Richard, Timothy.
- Great Grandchildren: Simon, Ruth, Mandi, Melanie, Alexander, Juliet, Margaret, William, Rebekah, Michaela, Caroline.

We sincerely cannot thank Colin Choat enough for solving this family mystery! For so many years we knew nothing of the man – it was as if Herbert just vanished. Our family is overjoyed to learn that he was someone with an incredible story and a creative spirit, who achieved this astounding and historical feat, while held in great and warm regard by those he met. It is unfortunate that Lionel did not get to experience this day during his lifetime.

Herbert/Aidan did have a family who would have loved to have known him.

The Cull Family
2018

A Walk from Fremantle to Sydney



On 24 November 1920 Aidan de Brune left Fremantle, Western Australia, in an endeavour to walk to Sydney by way of Kalgoorlie, along the Trans-Australian Railway, and then via Adelaide and Melbourne, a distance of approximately 2800 miles. He intended to walk the distance in eighty-five days, at an average of thirty-three miles every day.³³

About a month later, on 31 December 1920, from Kingoonya, 200 miles west of Port Augusta, de Brune explained his position:³⁴

The following particulars of my walk from Fremantle to Sydney in eighty-five days may be of interest. The walk was undertaken for a wager, and at the present time

I am well up to my timetable. I must walk from Fremantle to Sydney in eighty-five days. I started on November 24. I am not allowed to ride in any public vehicle or any vehicle engaged by anyone for any purpose. I may accept occasional lifts, but they must be offered – I cannot ask for them.

I started on 24 November, 1920, and walked to Kalgoorlie (387 miles) in ten and a half days. I walked across the Nullarbor Plain, Naretha to Ooldea, in eleven days, crossed the Western Australia-South Australia border on 18 December 1920 and passed the 521-mile mark (Trans-Australian Railway) on 19 December. This was one-third of my total distance. I am well up to timetable, and hope to enter Port Augusta on January 5, and will then write further. I feel quite fit, and my feet are behaving excellently.

De Brune was meticulous in his record-keeping. He was also well-regarded by those who came in contact with him. However, he was not averse to adding a little colour to the stories he told to his audience, when giving lectures, and in articles submitted to newspapers. A few paragraphs hence, we find the reporter on the *Bunbury Herald* refer to de Brune arriving in Sydney “five days too late to win the *alleged* wager” of £400 sterling. The *Bunbury Herald* was a little leery of de Brune, following his unexpected departure from Bunbury, hence its use of the word *alleged*. Perhaps there was no wager at all.

On another occasion, during his walk *around* Australia, de Brune stated that:³⁵

His travels through the Territory and East Kimberley were comparatively uneventful, the natives being friendly throughout. He is unarmed, and walks,

bareheaded, except for a few hours in the middle of the day.

Of course, it was hot *all* day on most days, when he was in the tropics and the few photos that we have of him show him wearing a hat. Then, too, he referred once to an aborigine trying to steal his pack, and being given a “thrashing.”³⁶ Later, in the walk he maintained that he had had no problems with the aborigines.

These examples are provided as an early indication that some of his remarks may be a little *exaggerated*. However, there is not a doubt that he walked the distances that he stated, in the time that he stated. His diary of his walk around Australia is meticulous in listing distances walked and in providing certification of his location by people who were there.

Following the report, above, from Kingoonya, the following article appeared in the Bordertown *Border Chronicle* on 28 January 1921:³⁷

Mr Aidan de Brune dropped casually into the *Chronicle* Office on Friday last and, in spite of the weather, coolly stated that he was walking across Australia from Freemantle to Sydney. He certainly looked like it or even more so. He said that he was walking for a wager and would win if he did the journey in eighty-five days. He arrived at Bordertown at 11.30 on Friday – fifty-nine days out of port. He had crossed the Nullarbor Plain and reached Adelaide on Friday, 14th January, starting immediately for the trip to Melbourne and crossing the desert in three and a half days. He had averaged thirty-three miles a day since starting out.

His complexion, when he arrived here, harmonised so well with the brick front of the *Chronicle* office that, as

a man and a brother, the editor could not refuse his mild request to sign and authenticate his diary, before he departed, hurriedly, for Wolseley, *en route* for Melbourne.

The whole thing seemed a kind of wild goose caper, but Australia is a free country and, as Mr de Broune appeared of full age and entitled to please himself, the editorial staff gave him its blessing and a free copy of last week's paper. He cheerfully departed for Wolseley, flying light *in re* the matter of baggage, carrying nothing, in fact, except his hopes of winning his wager, our blessing, and the *Chronicle*.

Five weeks later, on 4 March 1921, the *Bunbury Herald* reported:³⁸

WEARY WALKER, FREMANTLE TO SYDNEY.
LOSES £400 WAGER.

Those who knew Mr Herbert Cull, or Culle de Broune, when in Bunbury, will be interested in the following Sydney telegram of 21 February:

A MESSAGE FROM GOULBURN SAYS THAT A CANADIAN ARRIVED YESTERDAY, AFTER WALKING FROM FREMANTLE IN EIGHTY-FIVE DAYS. HE UNDERTOOK TO WALK FROM FREMANTLE TO SYDNEY IN EIGHTY-FIVE DAYS FOR A WAGER OF £400 STERLING. HE ARRIVED AT GOULBOURN YESTERDAY AND ANNOUNCED HE HAD LOST THE WAGER, AS HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN SYDNEY. THE TRAVELLER WAS FOOTSORE AND EMPHASISED THAT, ONLY FOR AN ATTACK OF DYSENTERY, HE WOULD HAVE WON. HE EXPECTS TO REACH SYDNEY FIVE DAYS HENCE. A LATER MESSAGE ANNOUNCED HIS ARRIVAL IN SYDNEY FIVE DAYS TOO LATE TO WIN THE ALLEGED WAGER.

The walk from Fremantle to Sydney took ninety days—24 November 1920 to 21 February 1921. De Brune claimed the following records for the walk:³⁹

- Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, 387 miles in 10½ days;
- Across Western Australia (Fremantle to Deakin), 841 miles in 24 days.⁴⁰
- Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta, via Trans-Australian Railway, 1051 miles in 46 days;
- Nullarbor Plain, 400 miles, in 11½ days;
- Fremantle to Adelaide, 1710 miles, in 52 days;
- Fremantle to Melbourne, 2199 miles, in 68 days;
- Fremantle to Sydney, 2792½ miles, in 90 days;
- Adelaide to Melbourne, 489 miles, in 16 days;
- Adelaide to Sydney, 1082 miles, in 38 days;
- Melbourne to Sydney. 593½ miles, in 22 days.

On his next walk, around the perimeter of Australia, de Brune kept a travel diary and donated it, after he had concluded the walk, to the State Library of New South Wales. The library refers to it as a *manuscript journal*. This will be discussed in the next chapter. We have no such record of his first walk, from Fremantle to Sydney.

However, while de Brune was on his walk *around* Australia, the *Sydney Mail* published a short story written by him, titled *Just a Woolly*.⁴¹ In Australia, the term *woolly* is used to refer to a sheep. However, when de Brune wrote the story a *woolly* was also a slang term applied to *fettlers* on the Trans-Australian Railway. Therefore it seems that de Brune was, in the story, using the impressions gained during the walk from Fremantle to Sydney. A vivid description of the conditions which he, himself, would have experienced, is provided:

The midsummer sun beat down remorselessly on the Nullarbor Plain, covering the bare earth with a haze that quivered unceasingly. There was not a tree to be seen, and the distant horizon encircled the earth as the edge of a vast saucer. Here and there were stunted saltbushes, withered and gaunt, rising only a few inches from the soil. They were bushes in name only, resembling more bundles of dried twigs set on end.

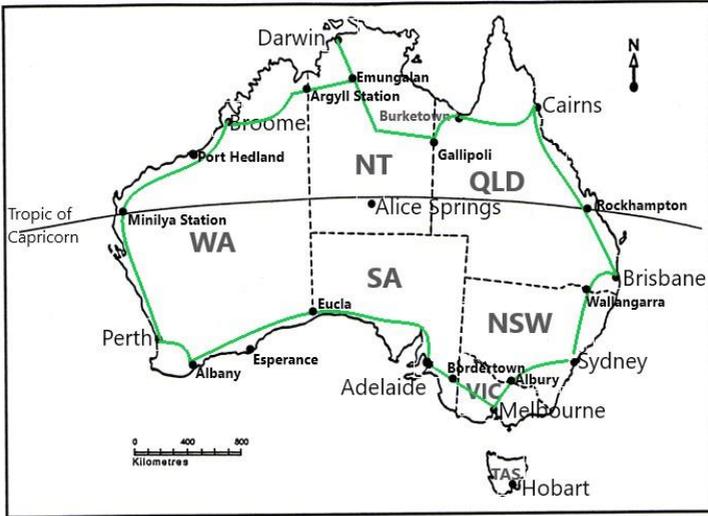


Across the, centre of the great circle ran the iron road of the Trans-Australian Railway, the tie that binds East and West Australia. At intervals along the railway were the slender iron columns bearing, on crosspieces, half-a-dozen telegraph lines. They were the only things that stood definitely above this plain of desolation. So far as eye could see there was no living thing. There was no vegetation, not a blade of grass to keep life in a

kangaroo, had one ventured so far from the bushlands.

Perhaps it was during this walk that de Brune conceived the idea of doing a walk around the perimeter of the continent.

A Walk Around Australia



The route of Aidan de Brune's walk around Australia from Sydney to Sydney, walking anticlockwise.

*

*On the official letter paper of the "Daily Mail" Newspaper Company, Limited, of 7, 9 and 11 Pitt Street, Sydney, and over the signature of Mr. J. J. Gay, manager, for and on behalf of the company, is the following: "To whom it may concern. Bearer, Mr. Aidan de Brune, whose signature appears below, left the Daily Mail office, Sydney, at 3.45 p.m. on Tuesday, September 20, in an effort to walk round Australia via Brisbane, Cairns, Port Darwin, Wyndham, Geraldton, Fremantle, Albany, Port Augusta, Adelaide, and Melbourne, in twelve months."*⁴²

Aidan de Brune set out from 7-11 Pitt Street, Sydney, a stone's throw from Circular Quay, on 20 September 1921 and travelled north through New South Wales and Queensland. At Cairns, in northern Queensland, he turned west and travelled through Queensland and the Northern Territory to Darwin. He then crossed into Western Australia, travelled west to Broome, down the coast to Perth, and on to Port Augusta. He then walked east into South Australia and visited Adelaide, walked through Victoria and visited Melbourne and then headed north, back into New South Wales. He reached his starting point in Pitt Street, Sydney on 4 March 1924.

There is no record of any successful attempt to achieve this goal of walking around Australia, unaccompanied and unassisted, *before* the successful completion of the walk by de Brune. His initial goal was to complete the walk in twelve months. In the event, it took him almost two and a half years (897 days). He walked on 572 days and for 325 days he spent time in hospital recovering from sickness and injury (mostly bad feet) or rested. He accepted no lifts and used no form of mechanical transport. This is truly remarkable feat, that has unaccountably slipped into obscurity in the one hundred years since its completion.

By his own account, de Brune organised his walk around Australia in the following manner:⁴³

At that time certain gentlemen were forming the Sydney *Daily Mail*. One day I wandered into Mr Gay's Offices and announced that I proposed to walk around Australia – and would he pay for articles on the trip? Mr Gay was blunt. First he told me exactly how many kind of fools I was to think of such a trip, then came to an agreement, with business-like promptitude. Within a few hours I had gathered together what I thought necessary for an 11,000 miles trip, and had left Sydney. Two and a

half years later I came to Sydney again having, in the meantime, visited nearly every port on the extensive coastline. More to the point, I had proved possible a trip which quite a number of Sydney wise-heads had declared to be sheer suicide.

The *Daily Mail* was published from 6 January, 1922 to 22 January, 1924, when it was incorporated into the *Labor Daily*.⁴⁴ The first edition of the “new series” of the *Labor Daily* was published on 23 January, 1924.⁴⁵ It seems that the only editions of the *Daily Mail* known to exist, with the exception of the very first edition,⁴⁶ are those from October 1923 to January 1924.⁴⁷ This is unfortunate, as we do not have access to articles written by or about de Brune, which first appeared in the *Daily Mail*, for the greater part of his walk, except where other newspapers carried the stories and acknowledged that the source was the *Daily Mail*. The exception is a column in the first edition of the newspaper.

However, many newspapers carried their own articles about him as he made his way around and whenever he passed through a town with a newspaper office he always made himself known. He was always happy to receive publicity and he was always happy to have people enter in his diary certification of his presence in a place.

The Amateur Tramp, as he styled himself, at least for some of the walk, maintained a travel diary for the entire trip, which provided details of daily distances travelled and the places he passed through, or at which he camped. He also sought *certification* of the fact that he was at a particular place at a particular time and the diary is littered with testimonials and good wishes, signed by people with whom he came in contact.

Following his walk, he typed up the diary into a book, titled *Record Diary of a Walk Around Australia*. In 1924, both the diary, consisting of four small pocket books, and a copy of the

book, were donated by de Brune to the State Library of New South Wales. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.

The diary does not provide long descriptions of the places he passed through. Sometimes a brief note describes something unusual. We must look to the newspaper articles which he and others wrote, in order to build the story of his walk.

De Brune made an entry in his diary for every day he was on his walk, a total of 897 days. He did not number the first day, on which he started out in mid-afternoon, probably because he did not get out of the Sydney Metropolitan area. Thereafter he numbered every day and, after some time, began also recording the number of days on which he actually walked, totalling 572 days.

Sometimes he did not walk because of bad weather, because he was ill, or because he wished to rest. Along the way he sometimes made minor errors in the day number, here and there duplicating a number or skipping a number. Then, towards the end of his walk, he realised that, because of errors, his day numbers did not tally with the actual number of days (897), although he had an entry for every day, showing the date.

The day number referred to in *this* book is the *actual sequential day*, starting from day one, 20 September 1921, and ending at day 897, 4 March 1924.

Quotations from the diary are shown in italics, unreferenced, mostly under the “date heading” for the day on which they were written.

All distances are given in miles (m.), the unit of measurement used at the time of the walk. One mile = 1.60934 kilometres. Multiplying miles by 1.6 provides a quick, reasonably accurate conversion to kilometres. In the diary, de Brune records his mileage for the day and, in brackets, his cumulative mileage for the walk. Statistics for the walk are provided at the end of the this book.

Where possible, the current spelling of place names is given. De Brune would often have heard names from others and “guessed” the spelling, when he later wrote them in his diary, so we cannot assume that his spelling was always accurate. In some cases the name he used was not found on the internet.

* * *

Having reached Sydney earlier in the year on his walk from Fremantle to Sydney, de Brune was, no doubt, aware of the scale of the challenge which he was about to undertake. It did not start well. His journey began in this way. Writing from the State Hospital, Lidcombe on 10 September 1921, he explained:⁴⁸



For some time I have been in the above hospital with neuritis. However, I am now quite fit again, and hope to be in Sydney on Monday week. While I have been here I have projected a journey around Australia, via Brisbane, Cairns, Port Darwin, Wyndham, Broome, Derby, Geraldton, Fremantle, Perth, Albany, Eucla, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney; the trip to be accomplished within twelve months. This will mean about the same average as I made on my trip from Fremantle to Sydney last November to February. This time I hope to take a camera with me, and get a record of my travels, which will be of interest. If I can get away from here (and there is little doubt) on Monday week, I propose to leave Sydney, northwards, on Wednesday, 21st inst.

We have no idea what symptoms de Brune showed, to warrant a diagnosis of neuritis, but he maintained that he was over it, as he prepared to begin his walk. Neuritis is “inflammation of a nerve or the general inflammation of the

peripheral nervous system. Symptoms depend on the nerves involved but may include pain, paresthesia (pins-and-needles), paresis (weakness), hypoesthesia (numbness), anesthesia, paralysis, wasting, and disappearance of the reflexes.”⁴⁹

In the event, he *did* set off on 20 September 1921. At the same time, the world was still turning and the *Sydney Morning Herald* was there to tell some of the world’s stories. The newspaper has been published since 1831 and is the oldest continuously published newspaper in Australia. In 1921 it was Sydney’s premier newspaper – a broadsheet of from about twelve to twenty-four pages, selling for twopence.

Fortunately for us it usually provided, on page one, a summary of events. The edition of 20 September 1921 was no exception.⁵⁰

In news from Ireland, Edward de Valera and Lloyd George were organising a conference. De Valera said that it would be unreasonable to expect the British Government to recognise the Irish Republic, as a preliminary. In the same way it would be unreasonable for the British Government to expect Ireland to surrender her position. If Mr. Lloyd George sought to impose a preliminary surrender, the conference could not meet.

The League of Nations Assembly at Geneva discussed international action against traffic of women and children. The *Daily News* correspondent reported that France, for inscrutable reasons, opposed decisive action on this subject. Mr. Balfour, representing Britain, demanded that this urgent social evil should be dealt with without delay. The Australian representative raised the question whether the League was a body that could or could not do things. France's attempt to refer the subject back to Individual Governments was defeated.

A message from Constantinople stated that the Turkish successes compelled the Greeks to withdraw from the River Sakaria. The Greeks, however, denied the withdrawal, and stated that they drove back the enemy with heavy losses.

Mr. Smith, manager of the Australian cricketers, stated that the financial results of the tour exceeded all expectations; while W. T. Tilden, the world's champion tennis player, defeated W. Johnson in the American championship at Philadelphia, 6-1, 6-3, 6-1.

Reports from Mount Mulligan colliery tended to confirm the fears that practically no hope existed of there being any survivors as a result of a mine disaster. Of seventy-four men who were in the mine at the time about twenty bodies had been recovered. The work of identification was difficult. Rescue work had been impeded seriously by the poisonous atmosphere encountered by the workers. Both the tunnel and the air shaft of the mine were wrecked when the explosion occurred. Nevertheless the rescuers had worked with splendid heroism ever since the disaster happened.

During the fiscal year 1920-21, 560 estates, aggregating 462,242 acres, were acquired for closer settlement. Of farms allotted during that period 884 were to soldiers and fifty-four to civilians.

During last season the equivalent of 673,754 sacks of wheat were delivered at the grain elevators in the State. The cost of the silos on capital account up to August 17 1921 was £2,172,930.

The Jubilee Show of the Royal Victorian Agricultural Society opened in Melbourne on 19 September 1921.

A statement was made by the Acting-Premier on what was being done for the unemployed. Up to July 1921,

49,266 persons were sent to employment, 25,927 being placed on Government works.

The State Agricultural Chemist spoke before the select committee on agriculture on the need for a soil survey. These surveys, he claimed, would be of great advantage in determining the nature of the soils of the State. They would also be of use in valuing the soil from the point of view of its productive possibilities.

Eleven rats believed to be infected with bubonic plague were found on the steamer *Wyreema*. The Health authorities said that although it was not certain, there was little doubt these rats suffered from plague.

A settlement of the strike at the Commonwealth Portland Cement works, Portland, had been effected, all the men having returned to work, but the *Ivanhoe* coalminers had not yet returned.

It was stated, by the Minister for Works, that some of the silting in Newcastle harbour was caused by flood action. A report from Newcastle stated that the port would probably be declared a port of export for butter.

Sydney to Brisbane

*With wine of love and bread of truth
I face the winding way
And, dowered with everlasting youth,
Through bush and city stray,
And hope the far receding goal
May never cease to lure my soul.*

– John Le Gay Brereton

Leaving the troubles of the world behind him, Aidan de Brune left the office of the *Sydney Daily Mail* on Tuesday 20 September 1921, travelling twelve miles on the first day. He could not leave his own troubles behind him. His most pressing concern would have been to find a camping place for the night.

The first entry in the diary is by J. J. Gay, noting that “*bearer left the office of the Daily Mail Sydney at 3.45 p.m. on Tuesday 20 September 1921.*”

Following this appears de Brune’s first entry, as he followed the railway line, heading north:

20 September 1921. Day 1. 12m. (12m.)

Walked out of Sydney and about a mile and a half from Burwood went on with Jimmy Brand of the Clyde Engineering Co. Thence to Rhodes, and took track over Parramatta River to Meadowbank. Thence to Eastwood and Epping where failed to cross railway and got bushed. Camped out.

This was not an auspicious start, however the next day he fared better.

21 September 1921. Day 2. 25m. (37m.)

The three roads. On to Hornsby. Arrived Hornsby 10.10 a.m. Left Hornsby 11 a.m. to Asquith and Mt. Colah (669 ft. above sea level.) About a mile past station and 100 yards off left side of road a black disc on stones marking highest point of Mt. Colah. Thence to Ku-ring-gai (702 ft. above sea level – a rise of 33 ft. in a mile.) Thence to Berowra (27 miles) and rested. Then on to Cowan to edge of hill overlooking Hawkesbury River, and camped. (Note views along hills and from Mt. Colah and summit marks.)

De Brune had called into the office of the *Hornsby Star* newspaper and R. C. Tweedie signed his diary, confirming that the traveller had arrived at 10.10 a.m. He travelled twenty-five miles that day and, as he noted, camped overlooking the Hawkesbury river.

Next day, he walked to Wyong.

22 September 1921. Day 3. 24m. (61m.)

At Dawn descended by bad track to Hawkesbury River and walked across on railway – beautiful views. Wondabyne half-way over. Then through tunnel about mile long to Woy Woy (45 miles). About two miles past, the monument to JACOB CUTTER, MXCXM.⁵¹ Then via Tascott (4 miles) and Point Clare (5 miles) to Gosford. Arrived Gosford 2 p.m. (3 miles outside Gosford the sign post moved to a new road, not necessary.) Thence to Lisarow (great orange show from here to Gosford.) Thence to Ourimbah and camped out about 2 miles from Wyong.

The original railway bridge over the Hawkesbury River was opened in 1889⁵² and provided the final link in a railway network that connected Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. It was a major engineering feat at the time. It had dual tracks, though the line on either end of the bridge was single track. Severe structural faults developed in the original bridge and a second bridge was built, which was opened in 1946.

The railway tunnel to Woy Woy was, as de Brune noted, about a mile long and it, like the bridge, also had provision for two tracks.⁵³ So there would have been no danger from trains when walking through the tunnel, though one wonders what it would have been like to walk through it in the dark with a train passing.

Wondabyne station, *half-way over*, as de Brune described it, has the reputation of having the shortest railway platform in Australia and of being the only station in Australia without road access. A pontoon and walkway provides access to the station for those along the river who have boats.⁵⁴

Wondabyne was constructed together with the Hawkesbury River Railway bridge. Before the bridge opened, and after the Woy Woy Tunnel was opened, railway passengers took a ferry between Wondabyne station and Hawkesbury River station, thus enabling them to complete a journey between Sydney and the New South Wales north coast.

Wondabyne is a popular starting point for bushwalks into the surrounding Brisbane Water National Park and the Wondabyne to Patonga walking track, and also provides access to the Great North Walk.

23 September 1921. Day 4. 33m. (94m.)

Started before dawn. To Wyong, 2 miles. About 3 miles past Wyong called at farm for drink and well-entertained – English people. Then to Catherine Hill Bay, Middle Camp and Main Camp. To Swansea – where had only meal of day. Thence to Belmont and camped.

So the days passed. De Brune's first goal was to reach the New South Wales-Queensland border at Wallangarra, by following the railway line, which generally ran parallel to the Great Northern Road, now the New England Highway. He walked through Belmont, Charlestown, Adamstown, Hamilton, Newcastle, West Maitland, Lochinvar, Greta, Branxton, Whittingham, Singleton, Rixs Creek, Glennies Creek,

Ravensthorpe, Antienne, Muswellbrook, Aberdeen, Scone and then on through Willow Tree, Tamworth, Armidale and Glen Innes.

After a week of walking, on 29 September he noted, *on at dawn to Willow Tree, (girls in motor camping out), 4 miles. Thence within 4 miles of Wallabadah, and camped at Chris Foster's, owing to creek flooding.* The modern view of the railway line and station at Willow Tree, with the paddocks in the background, shows the landscape as it probably appeared as de Brune walked by one hundred years ago.

Should the reader be concerned that this book is comprised of diary entries, listing the towns visited and the distances travelled, he need not worry – that will not be the case. Certainly, there was not much excitement at the outset, when de Brune was walking through large towns and villages and nothing was being reported about his trip. However, this was to change a little once he was north of Brisbane. It was to change *greatly*, after he reached Cairns.

However, it is as well for the reader to get a “feel” for the rhythm of the walk. Day after day, de Brune woke to face another day of walking or, where he was ill or needed to rest, of spending time at a location, often remote. It is also worth noting that some of the locations through which he passed, no longer exist, particularly in less populated areas. However, one can always follow his general path.

6 October 1921. Day 17. 25m. (327m.)

At Bendemeer the walker noted that, in the first 300 miles, which he reached near Tamworth, he *only saw one road-mender at work. At 42-mile and 43-mile marks, saw two road-menders at work. At 31-mile mark, met a traveller going south.*

11 October 1921. Day 22. 17m. (374m.)

At Black Mountain he saw his first aborigines since starting out, *a gin with 2 children*.

In the same way that he called at the farm outside Wyong, so he adopted the usual practice of the traveller, calling at homesteads, road camps, fettlers' camps and drovers' camps along the way. He would be given food and drink and in return would tell of his experiences during his walk. At times, when one was present, he would play the piano, at which he was very proficient.

He also told a good story and later, in some of the towns which he passed through, lectured on events which occurred during his walk. He was well-regarded by most of those who made comments in his diary.

At Armidale, the *Daily Herald* reported:⁵⁵

Mr Aidan de Brune, who left Sydney (NSW) on September 20 to walk around Australia, arrived at Armidale on October 8. The weather had not been good, a considerable quantity of rain being encountered, greatly delaying the traveller. The country passed through has been magnificent. The constant change of views through the mountains were equal to any scenery in the world. The great necessity of the districts traversed so far has been the lack of population, thousands of acres of most fertile land lying idle. Mr de Brune arrived at Guyra early on October 12 and left immediately for Glen Innes (418 miles).

15 October 1921. Day 26. 30m. (511m.)

De Brune reached Wallangarra, on the Queensland Border, on 15 October 1921, twenty-five days out from Sydney. He had travelled 492 miles, walking on eighteen days and averaging

about twenty-seven miles a day. On many days the traveller simply recorded the mileage for the day in his travel diary, together with his accumulated mileage. Where possible, he included signed verification, or a comment from someone who was at the place mentioned. Most of the scribes wished him luck and some tried their hand at poetry. Many of these notes are peppered throughout this book.

After a time, when he became well known as a result of articles in newspapers, and members of the public began to realise that he had walked a considerable distance, the number of comments in his diary increased as people sought him out.

Many tramps, or *swagmen* as they were often called, were on the road at the time de Brune made his walk. The *swag*, a bundle which carried one's personal articles, was a necessary requirement for all tramps. In the photo of de Brune at the beginning of this book, we see that his swag consisted of two bundles, one carried on his back and one slung over his left shoulder and resting on his chest.

John Le Gay Brereton, a keen walker, described his own swag thus:⁵⁶

In my swag I carry two extra flannel shirts and a few pairs of socks, with a piece of American oil-cloth measuring about six feet by four. In the "nose-bag" are small "tucker-bags" of tea, sugar, oatmeal, rice, and lentils, and a tin of mixed pepper and salt. The swag is made by rolling your pair of blankets into cylindrical shape, with your extra clothes inside. This bundle is strapped at each end, and the end fastenings are connected by a "shoulder-strap" which, in my case, is represented by a rolled towel. The swag is slung from the right shoulder. The nose-bag containing food is bound to the upper end of the swag, and hangs in front

of the body over the left shoulder. The whole load when properly adjusted is perfectly balanced and easy to carry.

De Brune would also have carried a water bag and a billy can, matches, plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon.

In June 1923, when well into his walk, *The Guardian*, in Geraldton, Western Australia, reported:⁵⁷

He is not carrying any surplus flesh, for humping a swag weighing about fifty pounds, in addition to a water bag, is not conducive to the putting on of weight. He carried food in case he did not strike any people, and of course tobacco. On one occasion he had to live eleven days on rice. "Thirty-four consecutive meals of rice," he observed, did begin to pall a little on the taste.

He also stated that, after walking about 6500 miles, he had probably worn out six or seven pairs of boots, but when the going was soft in the sand, he usually slung his boots over his shoulders and walked barefooted.

The report went on to say that, everywhere he went he received the greatest hospitality and kindness, whether at a stationⁱⁱⁱ or at a lonely camp. Particularly at the camps was he welcome, because their visitors were few and far between, and they were glad to see anyone from the outside world.

In reaching Wallangarra, de Brune had generally followed the Main Northern railway line from Sydney Central. Wallangarra is a heritage-listed station in the Southern Downs Region of Queensland. It was built in 1877 along the state border of

ⁱⁱⁱ In Australia, large cattle or sheep properties are referred to as *stations*. The reader will often need to consider the context to determine whether a sheep or cattle station is being referred to, or a *railway* station.

Queensland and New South Wales and was added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 28 March 2003.⁵⁸

Until 1930 the station was on the only railway route between Sydney and Brisbane and had to handle the break-of-gauge where Queensland Railways' 1067 mm (3ft. 6in.) Southern line met the New South Wales Government Railways' 1435 mm (4ft. 8½in.) Main Northern line. Wallangarra was the terminating point for the Sydney Mail service, with passengers transferring to the Brisbane Limited service for the remainder of the journey to Sydney.

In the 19th century, each of the Colonies of Australia had adopted their own gauges. However, in 1901 when Federation occurred, trade barriers were removed between states and the short-sightedness of different gauges became apparent. However, it would be 1995 before all mainland state capitals were joined by one standard gauge line.⁵⁹

In 1930, the New South Wales North Coast line from Sydney to Brisbane was completed. As it used only standard gauge for the entire route, it was a more efficient route than travelling via Wallangarra. This led to the decline of Wallangarra station which, however, continued to be served by passenger trains until the services from Brisbane and Sydney were truncated at Toowoomba and Tenterfield respectively on 1 February 1972.

At this point, it seems appropriate to mention de Brune's fondness for following railway lines, wherever possible. A number of times he mentions, in his diary, "*losing the line*" and "*finding the line*," as he makes his way around the continent. From the outset, he followed the railway, without a break, from Sydney's Central Railway Station to Mackay in Queensland. Then, after a short break in the line where a railway bridge had not been constructed over the Pioneer River, he picked up the line again further up the coast at Proserpine. He then followed it to Cairns and into the North Queensland inland. On and off, he

followed it wherever he could, and if he could not follow the railway line, he tried to follow the telegraph line.

The steam locomotives which plied the rails, required water to fill the boiler. The water was heated and converted into steam to drive the wheels. To this end, bores were sunk in the ground and windmills were erected to draw the water to the surface, where it was held in tanks. This infrastructure provided a reliable source of water for the locomotives, and de Brune made use of it as well.

Then, too, there was often a track beside the railway line for maintenance vehicles to travel along and camps where the maintenance gangs set up a base. De Brune could walk the track and make contact with the men in the gangs, to obtain food and to get information about local conditions and the best course to follow.

16 October 1921. Day 27. 45m. (556m.)

At Warwick, south of Toowoomba, de Brune noted that it was *the only town with baths, so far as I know*. The Warwick Harriers' Swimming Club had control of the Municipal Baths.⁶⁰ Perhaps they were uncommon, but there were other public baths in the 1920s. For example, the Katoomba Municipal Baths opened in 1913.⁶¹ Initially there were separate pools for men and women.

Of course, there were many *ocean* baths around Sydney. For example, in the 1890s, club swimming carnivals at the Bondi and Bronte pools were held.⁶²

21 October 1921. Day 32. 47m. (658m.)

At Toowoomba, *The Chronicle* reported:⁶³

Yesterday morning Mr de Brune strolled into the *Chronicle* office, presented his credentials, had an interesting few minutes' chat, and proceeded upon his journey to Brisbane via the Tollbar-road.

The man who has undertaken this big task is a bright-eyed, tanned, and wiry individual, whom one would at first glance take for a real “sundowner.”^{iv} He is a French Canadian, and was brought up in the Transvaal. His association with the Boers enabled him to perform good work for the British Army during the last Boer War. He was only sixteen years of age at the time, and is still on the right side of forty.^v On the previous day this intrepid walker had travelled thirty-five miles – from the south of Elphinstone to within three miles of Toowoomba, where he camped for the night, and came into this city early yesterday morning. The longest stretch he has performed “between sleeps” was seventy-seven miles, during which period he crossed the Queensland-New South Wales border.

As he wanders along his lonely way, he takes notes of all the localities visited, and converses with people whom he comes across. It is his intention to write up his long trip when the journey has been accomplished, and it certainly should make very interesting reading.

He has no money on him, except what he earns along the route here and there at various occupations, principally of a rural character. He is also of the opinion that if the people of Australia “used their legs more,” instead of riding in trams, trains, and motor cars, they would become healthier and better citizens, live longer and be bigger assets to the Commonwealth.

^{iv} Sundowner: A swagman who arrives at a homestead at nightfall, too late for work, but obtains shelter for the night. *Macquarie Dictionary*.

^v This is not correct. De Brune was 47 years old, at this time. As has already been noted, he was given to flights of fancy regarding his personal details. He seems to have wanted to change his identity from Herbert Charles Cull to Aidan de Brune and to live another life.

At the present rate of progress he is well ahead of time, and has no fears re the result of his long trek. A party of three soldiers left Sydney a month ahead of him, and he has made a wager of £20 with them that he will reach Cairns before they arrive. He feels confident of duly collecting the score of notes. Mr de Brune left this city before 11 o'clock yesterday morning, quite enamoured of its size and beauty, and continued his journey to the metropolis.

During the walk, de Brune gave two interviews to newspapers,⁶⁴ which provide a summary of the itinerary for his walk. These interviews have been split into sections, which are quoted in *calligraphy* typeface throughout the book, in order to indicate that the text is part of the interviews.

As we leave Toowoomba, it is appropriate to relate the first part of de Brune's account, that of his walk from Sydney to Brisbane, which he reached on 24 October, 1921.

To leave Sydney on foot, to walk ten thousand miles (more or less) around Australia, calling at all the ports en route on the four coasts, and to return to Sydney, was the task set me on 20th September, 1921.

It was summer time when I left Sydney. My route lay up the east coast through Tamworth, Armidale, Glen Innes and Tenterfield to the Queensland border, some 492 miles. This country is some of the most fertile in New South Wales and carries a large population.

Around the Queensland border the orchardist owns sway. Here are large and magnificent orchards surrounding the go-ahead towns, where, on market days, one meets prosperous farmers and merchants, everyone intent on the progress and prosperity of the district and town.

The country changed after a while, and I climbed up on the Darling Downs. Have I entered a new but still

prosperous, district? Wheat and sheep hold this country, and still fine towns were passed.

Passing through Toowoomba and Maryborough, both big towns with fine streets and shops, I came to a land new and full of interest - the land of the sugar cane.

Here, huge fields of cane in various stages of growth met the eye. Tramways were everywhere and led to fine mills. Cane-cutters' camps dotted the fields, and everywhere was activity. About the mills, towns had grown up with clubs for the workers and well-equipped stores.

Brisbane, the capital city of Queensland, is not a large town for the size of the state it rules over. But this is the policy of Queensland. Decentralisation is the rule in the Northern State and, in consequence, the country is covered with a network of railways running from one large town to another.



Up the Queensland Coast to Cairns

*Fling off the threads that bind
The limbs of Love to-day,
And let him, unconfined,
Go laughing on his way
In bush and street, and bid him greet
All souls by whom his guided feet
Instinctive stray or stay.*

*And while he speeds along,
Or wanders left or right,
Let certain speech or song
From his warm lips take flight,
Lest, like a bird that flits unheard,
He pass, for lack of spoken word,
Unnoticed in the night.*

– John Le Gay Brereton

24 October 1921. Day 35. 29m. (732m.)

To Oxley, 2 miles. Rested—not too well. About 8 miles south of Brisbane, sign post where three roads meet, turned round. To Brisbane, 10 miles. Left at 3 p.m. To Kearon. To Chernside. To Downfall Creek. To Ball Hills. To Petrie.

Harry C. Perry noted that *Mr de Brune called at the office of the Daily Mail, Brisbane, Queensland, today.*

In the description of his walk in his diary, little space was given to describing the places through which de Brune walked, or the people he met along the way. It is much the same in the articles he wrote for newspapers.

A hundred years on, further description and *personal* observations would be extremely interesting to the reader.

However, we must rely on the photographs and news articles of others, to provide some idea of the places he visited and the people he met.

5 November 1921. Day 47. 26m. (1013m.)

On Saturday 5 November 1921 de Brune arrived at Miriam Vale, about thirty miles south of Gladstone, where he completed the first 1000 miles of his journey, having been on the road for forty-six days. He then walked on to Bororen, Iveragh, Toolooa and Gladstone.

At Gladstone he called at the *Observer* Office where his diary was signed by *C. W. MacMillan, editor*. His diary entry also included the words *The Impersonation* as a reminder of an incident which occurred at Gladstone.

The Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*, of 11 November 1921, carried the story:⁶⁵

In our issue of Tuesday last there appeared a paragraph under the heading "Solitary Walk Round Australia," which set forth that Mr Lar de Bruen, a French Canadian, had arrived at Rockhampton from Gladstone *en route* to the north to continue his long walk from Perth, round Australia, for a wager of £500, no time being stipulated. Mr Aidan de Brune, whose stories and sketches in various newspapers over the pen name of "The Amateur Tramp" are familiar to many, arrived at this office at half past seven o'clock last night and produced credentials proving that he is that which he represents himself to be, namely, a genuine trampler around Australia.

De Brune told the reporter that nothing of exceptional interest occurred in the course of his long journey until he arrived on Monday last at Gladstone, where the coolness of his reception aroused his curiosity and, in

answer to his questions, he learnt that, on the previous Saturday, a “solitary walker” with a name that sounded like his, had been received in mistake for him and treated right royally. “I do not need monetary help on my journey,” said Mr de Brune, “since I live comfortably, so for as money is concerned, on the income I earn from my writings.”

Mr de Brune resumed his journey north at a-quarter-past eight o'clock last night. He expected to reach Kawana, about ten miles out of Rockhampton, before camping.

The Impersonator was actually a traveller known as “Micky the Sailor” whom de Brune mentioned in a column, published in the *Daily Mail*.⁶⁶

Here I should mention “Micky the Sailor,” with whom there is no hobo in the same class, from Adelaide to Brisbane. He will work successfully every house in town or country, and his tucker bag is a mine of good things. I came across him outside Uralla. I had not heard the last of him, however. North of Brisbane I began to get news of him. No one appeared to know where he came from or what were his credentials.

11 November 1921. Day 53. 26m. (1137m.)

At Rockhampton, after travelling 1100 miles, de Brune noted that he was experiencing *bad feet*. It would be the beginning of ongoing problems with this part of his body.

The locations visited by de Brune, in making his way north from Gladstone via Rockhampton to Mackay, sound like place names chanted by a person singing the song *I've Been*

Everywhere:^{vi} Pyealy, Yarwun, Ambrose, Lorne Siding, Epala, Raglan, Toonda, Marmor, Bajool, Ardur, Midgee, Gavial, Rockhampton, Parkhurst, Etna Creek, The Caves, Yamba, Canoona, Marlborough, Kooltandra, Styx, Wumalgi, Kalarka, Yukolgy, Carmila, Ilbilbie, Karremal, Koumala, Loloma, Yukan, Sarina, Mackay.

These names are mentioned to remind the reader that every day de Brune walked another twenty or thirty miles. It is difficult to imagine what an amazing feat this was. We shall soon come to some of the problems he encountered during the walk and witness what courage and tenacity were required by him to stick to the task.

The list of names also serves to remind us that, before European settlement of Australia, the aborigines populated the entire continent. Naturally, they had names for all the various locations and landforms in their “country.” Australia certainly has many Aboriginal place names, bestowed by the early Europeans, but it is interesting to note that, in 1788, the year that the Europeans made the first settlement in Australia, the aboriginal name *Parramatta*, was given to what is now the oldest inland European settlement in Australia and the economic capital of Greater Western Sydney.⁶⁷ The Europeans began using aboriginal names *very* early on.

20 November 1921. Day 62. 18m. (1323m.)

To reach Mackay from Gladstone, de Brune walked by day and camped by night, a total of 270 miles in two weeks. He had covered 1323 miles, (2100 kilometres) in the two months since

^{vi} *I've Been Everywhere*: A song written by Australian singer Geoff Mack in 1959, and made popular by Lucky Starr in 1962. The song, as originally written, recited the names of Australian towns.

he had left Sydney and, in reaching Mackay, he had crossed the Tropic of Capricorn. Perhaps he had begun to realise that he would not fulfil his intention to walk the entire 10,000 miles in twelve months. Perhaps he always believed that he would not be able to do it. Ten thousand miles in one year had a nice ring to it, and de Brune could certainly turn a phrase.

The railway ended at Mackay.⁶⁸ In 1922, the year after de Brune passed through, work to take it over the Pioneer River was recommenced, after a delay of some years. At the same time it was being extended from Proserpine, north of Mackay, down towards Mackay. The connection was finally made in December 1923 and the days of travelling to coastal cities by steamer finally came to an end. There was an unbroken railway line from Brisbane to Cairns.

Other than not being able to follow the line, the railway mattered not to de Brune – he was walking. However, he did note that *from now, only road miles from large towns to large towns can be given. Railway ends.* He could not use railway mileage indicators to calculate the distance he walked each day. As usual, on he walked, until he picked up the line again at Proserpine on 26 November 1921.

4 December, 1921. Day 76. NR.^{vii} (1528m.)

At Clevedon: Just raced storm – potty one. Oh, the mosquitoes.

6 December 1921. Day 78. NR. (1577m.)

Cromarty and Clevedon called the “Mosquito Farm.”

^{vii} NR: Not Recorded. Sometimes it was necessary for him to walk for a few days before he picked up a distance marker which enabled him to calculate the distance walked since the last distance marker which he had encountered. He then entered in his diary the cumulative distance for that stretch.

20 December 1921. Day 92. NR. (1828m.)

At Cairns, the *Post* reported:⁶⁹

THE AMATEUR TRAMP

The term forming the above heading has been adopted by Aidan de Brune, who has just passed through Cairns in the course of a tour round Australia. Burnt almost black with the sun and presenting a lean figure with a considerable growth on his face, de Brune cuts anything but an amateurish appearance. He called into this office, bearing a letter from the editor of the *Daily Mail*, Sydney, dated 20th September, 1921, and stating; that the bearer was starting on a walk round Australia, also wishing him success.

Three months have so far been spent on the way, and according to de Brune's reckoning he is a few days overdue. He says this is due to bad travelling, particularly during the last stages, from Townsville to Cairns. During this part of the journey, hot and wet weather conditions were encountered. Favourable conditions, however, had prevailed throughout the greater part of the journey, especially in South Queensland. The tourist intended spending a few days in Cairns, but owing to his late arrival, decided to push on.

He is gathering matter on the way, which he intends using in journalistic work later on. By contributing to the *Daily Mail*, Sydney, as he goes along, de Brune is enabled to independently carry on. Kuranda was the first port of call after leaving Cairns, for which place the traveller left in high spirits.

A less benign report was published by the *Northern Miner*.⁷⁰ It contained a prescient warning of the conditions which the walker would face in his trek across the Gulf Country. De Brune,

himself, had noted the hot and wet weather conditions encountered since leaving Townsville, but probably had no idea of what lay ahead.

Another of those pedestrians who are out for notoriety for trying to do something which no one else has done, in the person of a man named Aidan de Brune, turned up in Cairns yesterday, come on the hoof overland from Townsville. His object is to do a walking stunt around Australia, but what good this will do to anyone, I am at a loss to understand.

After a short stay in Cairns he again left on his long journey intending to travel via Georgetown. I am afraid at this time of the year, when the wet season is on, he will find out walking in the Gulf Country is no child's play and that his timetable will be considerably out of joint by the time he reaches Burketown. When he arranged his trip I don't think he took into consideration the weather prevailing in North Queensland from December to April.



Through the Gulf Country

One must question de Brune's decision to begin his walk at the end of September. It seems that, from far away Sydney, he was not aware of climatic conditions in the tropics in the wet season, which ran from December to April. He would soon find out that walking in the Gulf Country in the wet season was, indeed, *no child's play!*

21 December 1921. Day 93. NR. (1830m.)

On 20 December 1921 the walker had passed through Cairns and tramped on to Edgehill, noting that there had been *rain all day*. It was an ominous warning.

Next day it was *on to Stratford. Rain hard all day. To Freshwater. To Redlynch. (Over the pad). To Jungara. (13 tunnels in 5 miles).^{viii} On to Barron Falls. (2 tunnels, one long). To Kuranda. To Fairyland. To Myola. To Mantaka. To Kowrowa.*

23 December 1921. Day 95. NR. (1830m.)

Held up by rain. Very heavy.

Next day: *To Mareeba. To 7-mile camp.*

The next day, Christmas day, and on succeeding days, he continued to be held up by rain. The wet season had begun. No mention is made of what he did on Christmas Day, 1921, but next day he noted that he walked *on to Dimbulah, 27 miles. Stayed at Bailey's. Good old time.*

Through Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville I walked, ever north, until I came to Cairns, the end of my first long lead. At Cairns I turned westward and started my second coast. My route lay along the famous Barron

^{viii} Railway tunnels.

Valley, with its magnificent waterfall, to Mareeba. There I turned towards Almaden and again to Forsayth.

The Etheridge Railway line branches off the Mareeba-to-Chillagoe railway at Almaden and heads south for 142 miles to Forsayth via Mt. Surprise and Einasleigh. The line was built to supply ore to the Chillagoe Company's under-utilised Chillagoe ore smelters.⁷¹

The diary began to mention the railway distance markers.

30 December 1921. Day 102. NR. (1930m.)

To Lime Siding and on to 27-mile camp. Rain all night.

2 January 1922. Day 105. NR. (2004m.)

At Mt. Surprise the traveller would have been surprised to meet a travelling show. There was a dance in the evening at the Railway Hotel, where he met Pedro Labb, showman, and George Davies, and also "Darto"^{ix} and his men.

The station master at *Mt. Surprise Railway Station, Etheridge Line, Cairns Railway, North Queensland, George Klarke*, signed the diary, as did two of the performers, Pedro Labb and Jack Brown, boxer.

One hundred years on, the Mt. Surprise Railway station is listed on the Queensland Heritage Register. Tourists can visit the station, travelling on the *Savannahlander*. One tour includes a four-day return trip from Cairns to Mt. Surprise, with side-tours.

The significant remaining elements of Mt. Surprise station include signals, a turning fork, a trolley shed, two railway houses, a metal sandbox, large water tank, tank stand and shower, a siding south of the main line, and other features.⁷²

^{ix} *Darto*: Leo Darton, a Belgian-born boxer. *Trove*, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20913635>

From Mt. Surprise de Brune followed the line through Einasleigh and walked on to Forsayth, where the railway ended. He then turned north and walked the 25 miles to Georgetown.

7 January 1922. Day 110. 25m. (2136m.)

Over the ridge to Georgetown was the next stretch of country. Here were no railways, but the roads were good. As a mining town, Georgetown is almost dead. Houses have been pulled down and abandoned. One queer thing I noted. Georgetown at one time had a local newspaper, but with the downfall of mining the paper lapsed and, when I visited Georgetown, the printing press was standing out in the street.

Then de Brune walked the 85 miles through Crooked Creek and Gilbert River to Croydon, where the railway began again.

13 January 1922. Day 116. NR. (2206m.)

On to Croydon, another mining town, with, alas, the few mines operating in the hands of tributers and half the town dismantled. Here I again found a railway and followed it to Normanton, a small port on the Gulf of Carpentaria. Normanton was once a big town exporting an immense quantity of gold, won at the Croydon gold mines.

A few days later the traveller passed through Blackbull Siding. Today, this siding is significant only in that the tank and waiting-shed were still standing in 2008, when the scene was photographed.

20 January 1922. Day 123. 25m. (2337m.)

When de Brune arrived at Normanton, the terminus of the Croydon to Normanton railway line, he stayed at the Normanton

Hotel. The publican had noted in the diary: *arrived at C. Rutherford's Leichhardt Hotel, Normanton, 20 past 1, 19/1/22.*

He rested in Normanton for a few days. He had walked from railway camp to railway camp, small settlement to small settlement, all along collecting entries in his diary, as evidence of his progress; all along seeking food and shelter where he could; and all along contending with the tropical rain. He had travelled 510 miles since leaving Cairns.

My next port of call was Burketown, a small agricultural port on the Gulf, and noteworthy to me as the last Queensland town I was to visit.

31 January 1922. Day 134. NR. (2518m.)

De Brune left Normanton, and the railway, on 24 January 1922 and walked to Burketown, a distance of 180 miles. He arrived at Burketown on 31 January 1922, at which point he had walked 2500 miles and had been away from Sydney for nearly five months. From Normanton to Burketown had been the toughest section so far.

A glance at the map shows that Normanton is on the Norman river. To the North is the Mutton Hole Wetlands Conservation Park which is bounded on the west by the Norman River and on the east by Wills Creek, an offshoot of the Norman. In January the area would have been *very* wet.

From Normanton the traveller walked to Magowra Station and then on to Inverleigh, on what is now known as the Burke Development Road. In doing so, he crossed the Bynoe and Flinders Rivers. At the point where de Brune crossed, the Bynoe has two streams. He referred to them as the Big Bynoe River and Little Bynoe River.

On 25 January, before reaching Inverleigh he noted that he was *detained by rains*. From Inverleigh he walked to Wernadinga Station, then to Yarruna and then on to Burketown.

He went directly into the hospital, lucky to have ended up at a place *with* a hospital, being in such a sparsely populated area of Australia. He remained in hospital for *seven weeks*. The wet had taken its toll.

Burketown was named after Robert O'Hara Burke and Wills Creek, in the same vicinity, was named after William John Wills. The men were the leader and the second-in-command of the first expedition to cross Australia from south to north. They found a route across the continent from the settled areas of Victoria to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Burke and Wills camped at their "Camp 119," on the Bynoe River, in early February 1861. De Brune must have passed close by their campsite when there in late January 1922, exactly sixty-one years later.

On the Burke and Wills expedition, Wills kept a series of Field Books. Field Book 9 included activity at Camp 119, and described the weather.⁷³

Finding the ground in such a state from the heavy falls of rain, that camels could scarcely be got along, it was decided to leave them at Camp 119, and for Mr Burke and I to proceed towards the sea on foot. After breakfast we accordingly started, taking with us the horse and three days' provisions. Our first difficulty was in crossing Billy's Creek, which we had to do where it enters the river, a few hundred yards below the camp. In getting the horse in here, he got bogged in a quicksand bank so deeply as to be unable to stir, and we only succeeded in extricating him by undermining him on the creek's side, and then lugging him into the water.

Having got all the things in safety, we continued down the river bank, which bent about from east to west, but kept a general north course. A great deal of the land was so soft and rotten that the horse, with only a saddle

and about twenty-five pounds on his back, could scarcely walk over it. At a distance of about five miles we again had him bogged in crossing a small creek, after which he seemed so weak that we had great doubts about getting him on.

We, however, found some better ground close to the water's edge, where the sandstone rock crops out, and we stuck to it as far as possible. Finding that the river was bending about so much that we were making very little progress in a northerly direction, we struck off due north and soon came on some tableland, where the soil is shallow and gravelly, and clothed with box and swamp gums. Patches of the land were very boggy, but the main portion was sound enough; beyond this we came on an open plain, covered with water up to one's ankles.

The soil here was a stiff clay, and the surface very uneven, so that between the tufts of grass one was frequently knee deep in water. The bottom, however, was sound and no fear of bogging. After floundering through this for several miles, we came to a path formed by the blacks, and there were distinct signs of a recent migration in a southerly direction. By making use of this path we got on much better, for the ground was well trodden and hard. At rather more than a mile, the path entered a forest through which flowed a nice watercourse, and we had not gone far before we found places where the blacks had been camping.

The delay caused by the rain must certainly have contributed to the time taken by Burke, Wills and King, another member of the party, to get back to their camp at Cooper Creek. Gray, a fourth member of the party, died on the way back. Burke had asked the depot party to remain at the camp on the Cooper for thirteen weeks. The party had actually waited for eighteen weeks

and was running low on supplies and starting to feel the effects of scurvy. They had come to believe that Burke would never return from the gulf and decided to return to Menindee.

Both Burke and Wills died at Cooper Creek, having reached the camp only hours after the depot party had left. The story of their triumph in crossing the continent, and their tragedy, ensured that the pair would be remembered as two of Australia's most famous explorers.

On 16 February 1922, while de Brune was in the Burketown Hospital, John W. Tarlington MOA^x wrote in the diary, *Arma virumque cano*, the opening phrase of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The first six of the *Aeneid*'s twelve books tell the story of Aeneas's wanderings from Troy to Italy.⁷⁴

Chris Rowson offers a translation of the phrase: "This is the story of a man and his struggle."⁷⁵ This translation is certainly appropriate to de Brune's situation, where he had already been laid up in Burketown Hospital for two weeks, and would be there for another five weeks, with another 7500 miles to walk to complete his journey. The MOA had certainly read his man correctly.

Later, when he reached Darwin, the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* reported:⁷⁶

"The wet season had started two days before Mr de Brune's arrival at Cairns, and he was never dry for six weeks until Burketown was reached. He was seven weeks in the Burketown Hospital. The last fifty miles of the stage from Wernadinga Station towards Burketown was walked in almost continuous rain, non-stop, in twenty-nine hours, over black soil marsh lands, at times up to his knees in water."

^x MOA: Medical Office Assistant.

24 February 1922. Day 158. 0m. (2518m.)

The invalid left the hospital, walked four miles and camped. Next day he walked a further six miles. Then he walked back to the hospital. He remained there until 22 March 1922.

22 March 1922. Day 158. NR. (2518m.)

Left hospital at 9 a.m. and Burketown at 9:30 a.m. Took lower road, 2 miles out of town, saving some miles. Met a Mr King carting down to Camooweal way. About 11 [a.m.] went to Albert River and camped until about 4 p.m. Very hot. I am very soft and heat beats me. Feet poor. About sunset caught up to Booth and had cup of tea. Then, on to the pool (1 mile) and by Punjaub swamp, to the Hut, arriving there about midnight. Camped on verandah.

23 March 1922. Day 185. NR. (2518m.)

Found Shackleton [was] away from hut. (A traveller there, old man, very shaky.) Ate nothing yesterday and a slice of bread for this breakfast. Then, on to the ruins at Brookdale Hotel and onto the Punjaub Road. About 11, heat overwhelming and went across paddock to water. About 8 miles out. Then on through night to try to reach Punjaub. Mosquitoes very bad last night and today. Arrived at rabbit-proof gate about midnight and camped.

24 March 1922. Day 186. NR. (2518m.)

Crossed 12-mile creek and on to Punjaub fence and over swamp. Heat, flies and mosquitoes very bad. Touch of fever and feet very painful.

On 25 March De Brune found the morning to be very hot. *Flies very bad. Feet very poor. Arrived Punjaub Station about noon."*

On 26 and 27 March he rested at Punjaub.

28 March 1922. Day 190. NR. (2563m.)

Left Punjaub early. Road very bad. Took 60-mile road as believed better watered. Road very cut up. Black Soil. Walk at night in bush (experiment). Found water in morning to westward. Very hot, no wind, mosquitos and flies bad.

29 March 1922. Day 191. NR. (2563m.)

Road improved after first ten miles from Punjaub and fair pad along. Found Lawn Hill Creek, a nice running stream. Country fairly well wooded but little black soil. Saw no one. Plenty water. Creek close by and swamps. Mosquitos terrific at camp and flies bad. Very hot. Feet improving.

Later:

Mosquitos bad. Feet much better. Country better wooded and water abundant. Very hot day. Did a fair distance. Saw no one. Very little stock.

30 March 1922:

Cooler morning. Road not so good. Much bush and good red soil. Hills on each side of distance. Camped midday by double pools. Very hot. On to boundary rider's hut, 18 miles from Lawn Hill Station.

31 March 1922:

Left early. Low hills on each side. Fair going. Not so warm. Red and black soil mixed. Plenty water. Bush bigger and trees larger. Lawn Hill Station.

During this time, since leaving Burketown, he walked only 45 miles in 8 days. Then, for five weeks, from 1 April 1922, to 7 May 1922, he was laid up at Lawn Hill Station with a series of abscesses on his feet, too ill to travel. Oh, those wretched feet!

12 May 1922. Day 235. NR. (2623m.)

Finally, after five weeks, the traveller walked on again, to Lilydale Springs. He noted in the diary that two pages were missing from the diary, *being records of the period while laid up*

at Lawn Hill Station, and covering the 28 miles from Lawn Hill Station to Lilydale Springs boundary riders hut.

The only certification in the diary, for this time, is a statement that de Brune *arrived Lawn Hill Station. (Signed) W. Stewart, manager. 31/3/22.*

It was a remarkable feat, among many remarkable feats, that for his entire walk he was able to protect the diary from the wet weather and during the crossing of rivers and creeks.

19 May 1922. Day 242. 10m. (2710m.)

From Lilydale Springs, the tramp walked on to Herbertvale Station, rested for a day, and then walked ten miles to the pumping station at the rabbit-proof fence, on the Queensland-Northern Territory border.

20 May 1922. Day 243. 11m. (2721m.)

He then walked to Gallipoli Station, in the Northern Territory. He had travelled 2721 miles since leaving Sydney and had walked for 145 of the 243 days which had elapsed since the beginning of his walk.

Two hundreds of miles westward from Burketown I began to climb on to the Barkly Tableland. Lawn Hill Station was the last place I passed in Queensland, and then I came to Herbertvale Station on the Queensland-Northern Territory border.^{xi}

Aidan de Brune had weathered Northern Australia's wet season! The prediction of the journalist in Cairns that, during the wet season, walking in the Gulf Country was no child's play, had been prophetic.

^{xi} De Brune actually came to Gallipoli Station, on the border. Herbertvale Station is in Queensland and he reached it on 17 May 1922, three days before he reached Gallipoli Station.

The Barkly Tableland and Darwin

*Rest, for the purple haze the bush bedims,
And, flushed with toil, flung loose along the west,
Day, sighing, feels within his languid limbs
Rest.*

*His brow by gentle breezes is caressed,
In weary sight the quiet landskip swims,
And silence of all blessings is the best.*

*With shadow now the gully overbrims;
And Night breathes to his peace-bedrenched breast
—The while her many-twinkling lights she trims—
Rest.*

– John Le Gay Brereton

In 1877 the overlanders, Nathaniel Buchanan and Sam Croker, crossed the Barkly Tableland and rode on to the Overland Telegraph Line, opening new land for settlement. With the introduction of generous leasing arrangements on the Barkly some years later, the region became more settled.

In 1883, Harry Readford, one of the inspirations for the literary character Captain Starlight, drove a mob of cattle to the Barkly and subsequently established Brunette Downs (then called Corella Creek), with outstations at Anthony Lagoon and Cresswell Creek, for Macdonald, Smith and Co. In 1884, 2500 cattle were driven to Brunette Downs and in 1885, Readford brought in 1200 mixed cattle from Burketown.⁷⁷



I saluted my first Territorian at Gallipoli, a sub-station of the huge Alexandra Station, containing some 14,000 square miles of country.

I had travelled over 200 miles from the last Queensland town^{xii} and for some three or four hundred miles I was still to wander without sight of more than an isolated station. It was pure pastoral land and some of the finest grazing country I had seen in the whole of Australia. It was land that gave a promise of a big future for the coming State, and it was land that would have to be developed and conserved to get the best out of it. The pity was that over these many hundreds of miles very little development work had been accomplished in spite of the fact that the stations hereon had been in existence for many years.

A country of plains. For miles I walked across plains of the finest Mitchell and Flinders grasses. At times I came across clumps of gidyea thickets, with coolabah trees in isolated series resembling scouts advancing before an army. Water was scarce, but there were innumerable creek beds that, with proper damming and clearing, should hold water from one rainy season to the next.

Cattle and horses were met in bunches around the few water holes and, with the extension of the water, the country should carry many times the present number of stock.

21 May 1922. Day 244. 14m. (2735m.)

From Gallipoli the walker travelled from bore to bore – number 21; number 20; Lulu Waters; Golden Waters; Dead Man's Hole, near where he met Mr Holt in motor car; Belyabba

^{xii} Burketown.

Crossing, on Buchanan Creek, where he met Mr Cannington; number 3; number 4; Alexandria Station. Then on, across plains of fine grass, to Brunette Downs – 150 miles from Gallipoli Station.

The Barkly Tablelands I consider some of the finest grazing lands in Australia. On them I have travelled plains 20 to 30 miles across and never anything but grass. Miles and miles of it, some of the finest grazing in Australia. One wonders if these plains have an ending. Then a dark line appears on the horizon. Later it resolves into a belt of gidyea (gidgee) trees, with coolabah trees standing before it. These belts of trees are never more than a few hundred yards across. And then out on to another plain, appearing almost illimitable in extent.

Overhead, a fierce tropical sun beats down on this shadeless plain and, throughout the day, dances the mirage.

Scenes of water, vast lakes, with villages, stations and people, the mirage dances the whole day long. How many men have seen these beautiful illusions and taken them for realities? How many men have wandered from the track and finally laid down under some tree to face the inevitable end? One has to set one's face sternly to the one path and disregard the tempting vision.

05 June 1922. Day 259. 14m. (2930m.)

After nearly 3000 miles the tramp reached Anthony Lagoon.

The first town I struck in the Territory was Anthony Lagoon - a police station, a store and an out-station of the Brunette Cattle Station. When I arrived there I found drovers Conway and McClennan (the latter we know as the Scotsman of Mrs Gunn's book, "We of the Never

Never^{xiii}) held in quarantine. The cattle had been dipped and had immediately wandered into the lagoon, the water of which was the sole drinking water of the place. Just imagine what state the water was in after some 3000 cattle had bathed in it after being dipped. Condy's crystals had no effect on the water nor any other clearing substance. A bore had been put down by the Brunette people, but no mill erected and consequently it was useless.

(More walking) brought me to the edge of the tableland and Newcastle Waters. Crossing late at night, I reached the station, content to have passed over one of the most perilous zones of my journey. This country did not contain a single head of stock. Natural water was scarce. It was a lonely trail, broken only by arrival at Mr Peacock's construction camp - [his party was] erecting the windmills, bores, and earth tanks, for the stock route.

8 June 1922. Day 262. 21m. (2969m.)

At sundown on 8 June 1922, the tired, solitary traveller arrived at Peacock's camp at No. 2 Bore, 250 miles and nineteen days from Gallipoli Station. Syd Peacock verified the fact in de Brune's diary and noted that de Brune was *looking tired, and well worthy of a good rest*. De Brune stayed with the Peacocks for a few days. Then he walked again and, on 17 June 1922, he met P. H. Peacock at No. 8 Bore, and again rested for a few days.

20 June 1922. Day 274. 18m. (3119m.)

The traveller arrived at Newcastle Waters on 20 June 1922, where he was laid up for two weeks *with bad feet and lumbago*.

Newcastle Waters is situated on what is now the Stuart Highway, running from Port Augusta to Darwin. It boasted a Telegraph Station, on the telegraph line running from Adelaide

^{xiii} *We of the Never Never*: an Australian literary classic, written by Jeannie (Mrs Aeneas) Gunn.

to Darwin. De Brune, having been without a railway for some time, now followed the telegraph line, on and off, to Darwin.

Later, when at Yardea, SA, he was to recall “Gretchen,” whom he met at Newcastle Waters:⁷⁸

We named him “Gretchen” because of his fair girl-like skin. He had walked up from Adelaide, carrying his swag. He said he was seventeen years old, and a Swede. Certainly he was a foreigner, for his “Australianese” was something to wonder at. His manners were curiously refined, and girlish – in fact at Newcastle Waters Station he was unanimously voted a girl, and a pretty one too. His bush lore was vile, and he seemed incapable of boiling a billy. But he had walked on the [telegraph] line from Adelaide and appeared to think nothing of it. I dare say a good many people at Darwin will remember “Gretchen.” He hung about for a few days and then got on a steamer for Java. The quaint part of the incident is that “Gretchen” appeared to think nothing of his long walk.

6 July 1922. Day 290. 13m. (3132m.)

De Brune left the Telegraph Station at Newcastle Waters on 6 July 1922, following the line. He passed through Frews Ponds and, a few days later, camped 200 yards short of a bore, not seeing it in the dark.

On this track, just outside Newcastle Waters, I passed the Adelaide motor party. They did not stop – a certain sign, in the bush, of city people. Out in the Never Never no man passes another without exchanging news. In fact if one is camped and sees a traveller approaching, the billy is set to boil and the tucker bag opened.

The “Adelaide motor party.” was made up of three members of the Commonwealth Government Public Works Committee. They were investigating a proposal to construct two further sections of the railway line between Adelaide and Darwin – from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs (297 miles) and from Katherine to Daly Waters (149 miles).⁷⁹

De Brune was a strident proponent of the idea of extending railways in the North, to aid its development. As it happened, it was not until February 2004 that freight and passenger trains began travelling along the entire route between Adelaide and Darwin.⁸⁰

From Newcastle Waters the country changed. The bush became more frequent and at times I passed dense thickets. The soil was good but had not been worked. In fact from Newcastle Waters to Daly Waters Telegraph Station, a matter of between 80 and 100 miles there is no sign of habitation.

At Frew Ponds, some thirty-five miles, north of Newcastle Waters I met Mr Percy Money, the Director of Works for the Northern Territory. We camped down for a while and exchanged news. Mr Money was motoring down to Anthony Lagoon, then to Tennant Creek and then down the Murrniji Track. Some journey that! Later, at Daly Waters, I met Mr Urquhart, the Administrator, and had a long chat with him that lasted well into the night. The future of the Territory was thoroughly discussed and Mr Urquhart took notes of many things I had seen in the course of my journey that required attention. I found him a very reasonable man and a pleasant companion for a social evening – well read, and with a good knowledge of the world, men and manners.

8 July 1922. Day 292. 18m. (3171m.)

On to Mill Bore No. 6. Met Director of Works, N.T., 6 miles north of Frew's Ponds and he gave me the following mileage which will be adopted as official:

Frew Ponds to No 6 (Milner), 18 miles. To No 5 (McGowry), 18 miles. To Daly waters, 13 miles. To No 4 (Rodericks), 12 miles. To No. 3 (Ironstone), 18 miles. To No. 2, 18 miles. To No. 1, 18 miles. To Warlock Ponds, 27 miles. To Bitter Springs, 14 miles. (Bitter Springs to Mataranka, off road, 3 miles.) To Marranboy, 40 miles. To Katherine, 38 miles. Total, 234 miles.

Came down Jump-up and across 3 miles. Black soil plain. Camped about 200 yards south of bore, not seeing it in dark.

Interestingly, a photo of the area of the Jump-up, taken in 1923, exists. It is difficult to imagine a lone traveller *walking* through *that* country.

10 July 1922. Day 294. 12m (3201m.)

The tramp arrived at Daly Waters Telegraph Station on 10 July 1922 and remained there for three days. He then set off again on 14 July 1922, walking from bore to bore, noting that *three out of seven mills on this route were broken or useless*. The windmills pumped the water from the bores. If they were not working, the tanks beside the bores were not being filled. Next day he *met a donkey team*.

18 July 1922. Day 302. 27m. (3301m.)

On 18 July the diary records a walk of 27 miles, or 40 kilometres, to Warlock Ponds. It may not seem a long way, when one reads it without thinking. It is as well to remind oneself, as one scans the diary, that one's eyes are covering hundreds, then thousands of miles, all walked, day upon day.

At Warlock Ponds, he *met 2 donkey teams and also man with packs*. Even in remote places there was *some* activity occurring.

H. Gill, a mail contractor from Katherine, noted that he *met Mr A. de Brune on overland telegraph line and we had lunch together at post No. 2020, about 20 miles from Warlock Ponds.*



Next day de Brune walked to Mataranka Station, and on to the old Elsie Downs Station. “Mataranka” and “Elsie Downs” featured in *We of the Never Never*, which was mentioned earlier, in connection with the incident of the drovers polluting the water at Anthony Lagoon.

I arrived at Mataranka Station - the stock station run by the Commonwealth. Here I had an interview with Mr Morrice, the manager, who answered my questions freely and was anxious that I should be fully informed of all activities of the station. Along this route I met team after team of donkey wagons drawing supplies and material for the bores being placed on the Murranyi track.

From now on I passed through more settled country. At Maranboy I visited the Inland Mission Hospital and was much interested in the work of the mission and the nurses who work so far from the comforts of civilisation.

23 July 1922. Day 307. 0m. (3367m.)

Maranboy was the second town which de Brune came to in the Northern Territory, after Anthony Lagoon. He remained there for a day. L. W. Dunlop, the matron, and J. Gray, a sister, of the Inland Mission Hospital, signed the diary.

Then he was on the road again, crossing the Roper River and walking towards Katherine. Twelve miles before Katherine, with its Telegraph Station and railhead, he camped at Bullock Head with D. Sergeant, the Katherine-Maranboy mailman.

Camping out would entail making a fire to boil the billy and heat some food. The swags would be unrolled and the groundsheet laid out. The eating utensils, cup, plate and fork would be set aside. The fire also provided light in the night and, when in cooler areas, warmth.

There would be conversation about the road being followed and the distances to other locations, and talk of past experiences and whatever else came to mind. Then the travellers would lie on their groundsheet and, if the night were clear, could stare into the clear, dark sky, filled with countless stars. If it were raining, that would, of course, be an entirely different matter.

25 July 1922. Day 309. 20m. (3399m.)

Thence to Katherine. Here I struck a railway after over 1000 miles [and six months] of travelling. The land along the line is excellent, and tobacco, rice, cotton, and all tropical vegetation grows well on this soil. At Bachelor Farm, some time ago, tobacco was grown that sold in Europe for over 10/- a pound. The pity is that so good a start was not sustained.

De Brune became interested in the development of the Northern Territory and spoke and wrote on this subject on many occasions after he reached Darwin on 10 August 1922. Some of the issues being raised by him are still being raised today.

Interestingly, in 2018, there is still a lament about the Northern Territory not reaching its potential as a possible “food bowl” for Asia. In an article on the ABC^{xiv} internet site titled “Why doesn't the tropical north produce more agriculturally?” the many reasons contributing to this perceived under-production were canvassed:⁸¹

^{xiv} ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation. <http://www.abc.net.au/>

- Developing the difficult terrain of northern Australia takes time, and is expensive to do.
- Many things can be grown in the north, but Australia has high labour costs which reduce its competitiveness.
- Land tenure is a problem because of the existence of pastoral leases which cannot be subdivided and which are affected by native title.
- Northern Australia is only represented by ten seats in the Federal House of Representatives. Urban voters influence what happens in the north. That affects everything from live cattle exports, tree clearing, funding allocation for infrastructure, roads and tourism, and Aboriginal communities
- Access to markets and getting produce out year-round would be required if the north were going to be more than a “dry season” industry.
- Geographic isolation comes at a cost. There a relatively small local population and freight costs to ship goods to distant markets is high. Further, the cost to bring goods into the north is expensive.
- Dryland agriculture – growing crops without irrigation – has been tried many times and, while there might be high rainfall, it is too unreliable in its timing and amount to rely on.
- Regarding the idea of the “food bowl of Asia,” even if the north produced its maximum potential, it would still only produce a relatively small amount of food by world standards.

Four miles past Katherine township de Brune came to the most northern railway in Australia – the section of the future north-south railway from Emungalan to Darwin.

Often there was not a mile *post* or *stone* or *mark* to indicate distance, but some infrastructure which was located at a certain distance from a known point. Hence the 2½-mile loco-shops on

day 324 were 2½ miles from Darwin. Sometimes de Brune simply wrote, for example, *at 7-mile*. The word *mark* has sometimes been added on these occasions to indicate that he did not walk a distance of 7 miles. Sometimes indicators along the railway lines or the telegraph lines were used, as in the entry for 18 July, above, *I met Mr A. de Brune on overland telegraph line and we had lunch together at post No. 2020, about 20 miles from Warlock Ponds.*”

28 July 1922, day 312 to 10 August 1922, day 325.

Below are some entries which appeared in the diary during this period. They provide an indication of walking conditions at this time. From 28 July to 10 August, inclusive, de Brune walked 201 miles.

28 July. *On to 23-mile (mark) along railway road. Very rough and many creeks crossing road, all dry. On to Edith River 17-mile camp.*

29 July. *On to 160-mile camp, passing Horseshoe Siding at 170-mile mark and Ferguson River at 166-mile mark. The deviation of railway at Ferguson River – concrete piles in river and embankments. On to Cullen Siding and camped. Why not native names for sidings, as in other parts of Australia?*

30 July. *Arrived at Pine Creek. “(Signed) E. C. Nicholls, office in charge, police station.”*

2 August. *Yesterday, road through hills was stony and bad. On to Lady Grace (113-mile mark), and then to 112-mile camp. Then on to Brock's Creek, passing train.*

3 August. *At Brock's Creek. On to 100-mile camp. Then to 88-mile camp. “I have this day interviewed a man who gave his name as Aidan de Brune, who is passing through here per boot and going towards Darwin. H. P. Cameron, Mounted Constable, Daly River.”*

10 August. *At Darwin. “Reported at NT Times Office, Darwin at 8.45 a.m. (Signed) J. A. Porter, editor.” “Pleased to*

meet such a 'sport.' (Signed) Allan L. Evans, Deputy Commissioner Taxation, Darwin."

De Brune reached Darwin on 10 August 1922, 325 days after leaving Sydney. He had walked on 201 days and had travelled 3624 miles.

He had left Burketown on 22 March 1922, after being laid up in the hospital for seven weeks and noted, on arriving in Darwin, that he was meant to wire South (to the *Daily Mail*) 100 words weekly. However, since he had left the telegraph line at Burketown and met it again at Katherine, about 800 miles away, there was no way that he could comply with his obligations.

He lamented that he did not know that there were no telegraph facilities in such a large area of Queensland and the Northern Territory and that the information was not readily available.⁸²

In fact, de Brune *had* met the line again *before* he reached Katherine – at Newcastle Waters, 600 miles from Burketown. He reached Newcastle Waters on 20 June 1922, and was therefore *three* months without telegraph facilities. Either he was confused or mistaken about the distance or he was indulging in a spot of hyperbole – a favourite occupation with him.

The fact that he had to *telegraph* his stories, accounts for the fact that there are many short articles by him in the newspapers. He would have needed to *mail* longer articles to the *Daily Mail* or, as he frequently did, provide articles to the local newspaper office, or give an interview, when he was in a town which had a newspaper.

It was a maze of bewilderment to me and it took hours to get used to the many people about me. I had been for months accustomed to seeing one or two people at intervals of days and the ordinary life of even a small town was a novelty and distraction. I received a great welcome into Darwin, so warm that I really began to

consider that I had done something wonderful in walking the 3624 miles between there and Sydney.

A sample of the comments in his diary, particularly those by prominent people, show that the people of Darwin also thought that he had done something wonderful:

- *Reported at N.T. "Times" Office, Darwin at 8.45 a.m. (Signed) J. A. Porter, editor.*
- *Pleased to meet such a "sport." (Signed) Allan L. Evans, Deputy Commissioner Taxation, Darwin.*
- *H. G. Nelson, Agent, Darwin.*
- *M. Wilson, Accountant. The Territory Agency for H. McGuire.*
- *E. M. Christie, Government Secretary, Darwin.*
- *W. Adams, Mayor, Darwin.*
- *Best wishes for the journey. (Signed) Percy Kelsey.*
- *J. H. Millican, Officer in Charge, N. T. Railway.*
- *D. McKinnon, Managing Editor, "Northern Standard", Darwin.*

Not one to miss an opportunity, de Brune had the following piece inserted in the *Darwin Northern Standard*:⁸³

WE ARE INFORMED THAT MR HARRY ROBINSON IS THE ONLY ACCREDITED PERSON TO SELL PHOTOS OF MR AIDAN DE BRUNE (THE OVERLANDING JOURNALIST), IN QUEENSLAND (NORTH OF BRISBANE), THE TERRITORY AND WA. A SMALL SUPPLY OF AUTOGRAPHED PHOTOS CAN BE OBTAINED AT NELSON'S MART.

12 August 1922. Day 327. 0m. (3624m.)

Before de Brune left Darwin, the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* reported:⁸⁴

He struck the Territory near Alexandria Station on May 20, and was laid up with fever at Newcastle Waters

for fourteen days. He had no trouble with blacks except at Abrahams Billabong where an abo. tried to steal his swag and was rewarded with a thrashing. He avoided trouble among the blacks by conjuring tricks and was known and feared as a devil-devil. His reputation preceded him by many days. Blacks everywhere were aware of his approach and fled the locality.^{xv}

De Brune reports that the country everywhere looks magnificent especially on the tablelands and the trip was made much easier by being able to obtain water at Government bores. The wet season started two days before his arrival at Cairns, and he was never dry for six weeks until Burketown was reached

So far he has worn out five pairs of boots. De Brune leaves for Wyndham to-morrow. He will have to retrace his steps to Pine Creek before he can branch off on the track towards Wyndham.

Regarding the reference to aborigines, de Brune had noted in his diary that he met three aborigines near Abrahams Billabong. One, he noted, was called “Kimberley Jack.” Later, in a newspaper article, he stated that he had had no problems with aborigines while on his walk – a different story to that related here. There is little mention of aborigines – or “blacks” or “abos,” as they were often called at that time – in de Brune’s diary. However, it is certain that they were marginalised, even in remote locations.

De Brune’s political leaning was towards the left. He became associated with the *Daily Mail*, which later merged with the *Labor Daily*, and he visited the Labor Party office in Adelaide and met prominent identities, including F. P. Ward, Secretary, of the S.A. Branch of the Australian Labor Party.

^{xv} Perhaps more hyperbole on the traveller’s part.

In Darwin, he became involved in mediation to settle a strike involving The North Australian Industrial Union. The *Northern Standard* of 15 August 1922 carried the story, offering a sympathetic view of de Brune's involvement.⁸⁵ A rival newspaper, The *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, under the headline "By Gee, by Gosh, by Gum." was scathing in its reporting, and referred to de Brune's chest-beating regarding the part played by him.⁸⁶ De Brune rebutted criticism of his part in settling the strike.⁸⁷

While in Darwin, de Brune became interested in the idea of the Northern Territory becoming a state. He wrote in the *Northern Standard*, on 22 August 1922:⁸⁸

A State in Making.

Within the Commonwealth of Australia lies a large territory that has so far hardly been touched by the hand of the State maker. In fact this land is not a State, as we know States. It is a territory developed and administered by the Federal Government.

It has been claimed, and I think justly, that had the northern Territory had State Government and State rights the country would to-day not be in the present backward condition. State citizenship would have attracted men of character who would have invested their money and their lives in the country and by the increase of population and productiveness made out of the tropical wilderness a new self-governing State of the Commonwealth. What has the Commonwealth Government accomplished in the development of the NT since they took it over from the South Australian State? One of the conditions on which they took it over was that a railway should be built from North to South. Although years have passed, that railway is still on paper. So far as the people of the Territory can gather the railway is

mainly an excuse for parliamentary trips, expensive and useless.

De Brune was obviously induced to elaborate on his ideas. On 25 August and 29 August, under the headline, *The Northern State*, the newspaper published lengthy articles by de Brune, outlining his ideas on the subject.⁸⁹

In Darwin, de Brune met J. T. Beckett, formerly an Inspector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Beckett was known to J. J. Gay, who had commissioned de Brune to write articles for the *Daily Mail*, and had just come into Darwin with his wife “out of the Gulf of Carpentaria, where we had been wafted about by sundry cyclonic disturbances, when I got a wire from the *Daily Mail* asking me to look out for Aidan de Brune walking round Australia.”⁹⁰

In April 1920, Beckett had travelled overland from Burketown to Townsville and he said “his eyes had been opened to the wonderful possibilities of the great unoccupied areas in the Gulf country.”⁹¹ No doubt, he discussed his ideas with de Brune, who had also travelled overland from Cairns to Darwin via Burketown.

Later, as de Brune passed through some of the larger towns, he began to give talks, or “lectures,” as he termed them, on his experiences in the “Northland” and seemed always to wax lyrical about its potential and the need for a state, or states, to be created. This subject is mentioned here as it comes up in newspaper articles and in comments in de Brune’s diary. Even a year later, when in Adelaide, de Brune noted in his diary:

Lectured at Public Library Lecture Room in evening under presidency of Dr H. Basedow, M.A. M.D. B.Sc. F.G.S., who was President Northern Territorians' Association, an association for the advancement of the Northern Territory.

19 August 1922. Day 334. 10m. (3634m.)

The celebrity left Darwin for Wyndham. Next day he walked on to 22-mile mark, passing siding at 10 miles. New boots rubbed heels badly, arrived late.

As a parting shot, regarding the conditions in the Northern Territory, de Brune wrote an open letter to the Administrator of the Northern Territory,^{xvi} posing questions about the situation there and pointing out many apparent shortcomings in the administration of the Territory.⁹² He had met the Administrator eight weeks before and had found him to be “a very reasonable man and a pleasant companion for a social evening.”

30 August 1922. Day 345. 0. (3770m.)

At Pine Creek, after retracing the steps he took on the way to Darwin, he wrote:⁹³

Arrived here last night after a good journey from Darwin. Re-walking these 200 miles I have kept to the road in preference to the railway along which I travelled to Darwin. The road out of Darwin winds considerably but passes through some magnificent country, fit to grow any tropical plants. Between Adelaide River and Brock's Creek I passed over thousands of acres of flats on which wild rice was growing plentifully. With cultivation, these flats should easily provide all the rice Australia can consume.

The road for the first fifty miles out of Darwin is a nightmare. Washaways abound and at places the road is hardly distinguishable from bush. Further South it is much better but still requires a lot of repair work. It is sad to see crossings and cuttings that must have taken much money to build, falling to ruins for want of a little care.

^{xvi} Mr Frederick Charles Urquhart.

I suggest the establishment of road camps at Darwin, Brock's Creek, Pine Creek and Katherine, where out of employment men could do a bit of work instead of being forced on to rations.



The Pilbara and The Kimberley

The Pilbara consists of three distinct geographic areas. The western third is the Roebourne coastal sandplain, which supports most of the region's population in towns and much of its industry and commerce. The eastern third is almost entirely desert, and is sparsely populated by a small number of Aboriginal groups. These are separated by the inland uplands of the Pilbara Craton, including the predominant Hamersley Range which has a considerable number of mining towns, the Chichester Range and others. These uplands have a number of gorges and other natural attractions.⁹⁴

The Kimberley consists of the ancient, steep-sided mountain ranges of north-western Australia, cut through with sandstone and limestone gorges and steep ridges from which the extreme monsoonal climate has removed much of the soil. The southern end of the Kimberley, beyond the Dampier Peninsula, is flatter, with dry tropical grassland, and is used for cattle ranching. In parts of the Kimberley, such as the valleys of the Ord and Fitzroy Rivers in the south, the soils are relatively usable cracking clays, whilst elsewhere they are lateritic orthents. Although none of the mountains reach even 1000 metres (3280 ft.), there is so much steep land as to make much of the region very difficult to traverse, especially during the wet season when even sealed roads are often flooded. The coast is typically steep cliffs in the north but flatter in the south, all subject to high tides.⁹⁵

De Brune had retraced his steps and mostly followed the railway back to Emungalan. He implied that he did not see a railway again until he reached Port Hedland. However, he did actually meet the Port Hedland-Marble Bar line at Strelley, and walked along it to Port Hedland.

Ten days' rest in Darwin prepared me for my long trek to Derby. First, I had to come back to Emungalan - a distance of about 190 miles. Then I branched westwards along the Katherine River to King's River.

Here I passed through some of the finest agricultural land in Australia. Let my readers look at a map and draw a line south from Darwin along the railway from Emungalan and then to Wave Hill Station. Turn your pencil westwards to Hall's Creek and then along the Margaret and Fitzroy rivers to Derby. The country enclosed will be some of the finest plantation land in the world and will one day furnish our country with all the rubber, indigo, tobacco, tea, coffee and cocoa it needs.

My route lay through Vestey Bros. series of stations - Manbulloo, Willeroo and Delamere. Then I passed on to Bovril Estates Ltd and came to Wickham Downs Station on the Victoria River.

Turning at an angle I came up through Jasper Gorge - one of the wonders of Australia - to Timber Creek Police Station, and three miles on to Victoria River Depot, a lonely store on the banks of the lordly river. Here I met Mr Matt. Wilson, one of the best known identities of the northlands, and found him a kindly host.

Again on an angle I passed through the country owned by Messrs. Connor, Doherty and Durack, by Auvergne, Newry and Argyle stations to the Ord River in Western Australia.

19 September 1922. Day 365. 26m. (4077m.)

The tramp came to Jasper Gorge, "one of the wonders of Australia," as he described it, by walking from Katherine, to King River Crossing and then on through Limestone Creek, Scotts Creek, Native Cat, Mathieson River, Camp-Oven Creek, Rock Hole, Bulls Creek, Willeroo Station, Baldy Springs, Paddy Springs, Freds Creek, Delemere Station, Ruby Springs, George

Creek, Revolver Springs, Battle Creek, Water Bag Creek, Victoria River, Victoria River Station, Crawford Creek, Surprise Creek and Sundown Hill. Passing through Jasper gorge he walked on to Slatey Hole, Skull Creek, Dingo Spring, Timber Creek and Horse Creek. In reading the names, one can almost smell the outback.

Jasper Gorge is within the Judbarra National Park, the second largest in the Northern Territory, after Kakadu. “The park was formerly known as Gregory National Park, but on 21 October 2011, it was announced that, under a joint management plan with the traditional owners, the park would be dual-named ‘Judbarra’ for a period of ten years. Beginning in 2021, its official name would be Judbarra National Park.”⁹⁶

28 September 1922. Day 374. 27m. (4210m.)

The weary traveller walked 27 miles until, about midnight, he reached Keep Station. There was a storm brewing and it rained about an hour before dawn. He sometimes walked at night as it was cooler. He stayed for two days, before walking through Old Newry Station and on towards Wyndham.

2 October 1922. Day 378. 8m. (4247m.)

It was at Old Newry, some miles past the present Newry Station, that I passed out of the Northern Territory into Western Australia.

I had then walked 4229 miles, made up of 492 miles in New South Wales, 2218 miles in Queensland and 1519 miles in the Northern Territory. I had still to walk three-quarters of the way around Western Australia, through South Australia and Victoria and half way through New South Wales to Sydney, my final destination.

On he walked, to Argyll Station, stayed a day, and next day made the ten miles to the Ord River. Being bushed, trying to

follow a faint camel track, he saw a drovers' fire, late at night, and made for it.

From Argyll Station I went along the banks of the Ord River to Ivanhoe Station, commonly known as "The Stud," and then branched slightly away to Wyndham. To show how well-watered and difficult this country is, I may add I covered 627 miles between Darwin and Wyndham, whereas the journey by sea is about 300 miles.

The Ord River is one of the fastest flowing rivers in Australia, during the wet season and, with rich fertile soils, the East Kimberley area boasted all the dynamics for a successful irrigation scheme. The fertile plains of the lower reaches of the Ord River had long lured pastoralists and farmers to the East Kimberley and, despite the extremely heavy rainfall in the "wet," the "dry" season reduced the Ord from a fast flowing river to a series of waterholes.

In 1959 a grant from the Commonwealth Government was finally approved, enabling the Western Australian Government to start work on the massive Ord Irrigation Scheme, which involved developing a dam on the river which would capture much of the 2500 gigitalitres of water that flowed into the ocean each day during the wet season storms – enough water to supply Perth for ten years.⁹⁷

De Brune, as he walked through it then, could not have imagined, in his wildest dreams, the area as it is today. Of course, one could say the same thing about walking through Sydney, then and now, or of most of the other places that he walked through. How the world has changed in a hundred years.

9 October 1922. Day 385. 29m. (4351m.)

The walker covered fifty-four miles in two days after he left Ivanhoe Station, to reach Wyndham. He spent a night on the

trail, before passing through Goose Hill to Wyndham Telegraph Station, situated on the Cambridge Gulf. Wyndham is the oldest and northernmost town in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia. At the 9-mile mark he surprised Mr Riddell who got the shock of his life *when de Brune informed me he had just strolled in from Sydney.*

At the Wyndham Post office, W. A. Smith noted that de Brune was *looking very well after his long journey.* At this time he had travelled 4350 miles from Sydney.

From Wyndham to Turkey Creek, where I met Mr Jim Cunningham, reputed to be the heaviest postmaster in the State. Thence to Hall's Creek, one of the most northern and oldest mining centres in WA, and down the banks of the Margaret and Fitzroy rivers to their junction at Fitzroy Crossing.

12 October 1922. Day 388. 17m. (4374m.)

At Muggs Lagoon, near Wyndham, "Albert" took the opportunity of writing, via the diary, to J. Simpson of Eyre, advising that he was *spending a few days at Nine-Mile after the big event. Heaps of good wishes from the wife and self to Mrs P., Billie, wife and self.* J. Cameron also took the opportunity to send a message to *Billie Pearce, Eyre – Kind regards to all of you. Father out about Goose Hill.*

If we fast forward to Eyre, 3500 miles and eleven months ahead, we can read Billie Pearce's response. *Mr de Brune may be a famous "Sydney Mail" pedestrian, but it strikes me he's a lady's man too. He loves his cups of tea. We have thoroughly enjoyed his stay with us. I thank him for bringing a message from Wyndham for Billie Pearce. Eyre, 10 September 1923.*

One wonders whether Billie's father was still out at Goose Hill by the time Billie received the message. And didn't de Brune do well to remember to show Billie the message, a year

after it was sent from Muggs Lagoon? It says something of de Brune's desire to see things through and to please others.

At the places he passed through, more people began to make entries in the tramp's diary. Since reaching Darwin he had become well-known, because of the newspaper coverage of his walk.

15 October 1922. Day 391. 6m. (4414m.)

Without comment in his diary regarding his health in the days beforehand, de Brune noted that, near Mr Brennan's property at Dry Lagoon, he *broke down on the road, owing to heat*. Brennan noted simply, on the morning of the 17th, that *Aidan de Brune arrived here on the 15th about 8 a.m. Continued his journey on the morning of the 17th. Wishing you the best of luck on your journey. E. R. Brennan, Dunham Station.*

17 October 1922. Day 393. 20m. (4434m.)

On he went, walking the 20 miles to Dunham River, Upper Dunham River Crossing, McPhee Creek, and on to Junction Station and the hospitality provided by Archie and Hilda Martin. where he was laid up with *dysentery* for five days.

From 23 October to 8 November the wayfarer walked 250 miles. The diary records a kaleidoscope of names of creeks and stations and crossings and wells, including Butlers Bow, Turkey Creek and Halls Creek, together with the distances between, interspersed with entries made by people along the way, and sprinkled with a little rain and a rest for three days at Cartridge Station.

8 November 1922. Day 415. 36m (4676m.)

After de Brune had walked 36 miles from Lamboo Station, Chas. Arthur was *enjoying the pleasure of Mr A. de Brune's company at the Margaret River Station, East Kimberley and wishing him good luck upon his arduous trip.*

The wayfarer remained there for 2 days and then walked 16 miles to Louisa Downs Station where he stayed for a day.

13 November 1922. Day 420. 9m (4701m.)

After leaving Louisa Downs Station, de Brune walked *on towards Fitzroy, then to 9-mile Yard and then had heat stroke and had to go back [To Louisa Downs Station] and start out again next day.*

18 November 1922. Day 425. 13m. (4776m.)

A week before he reached Fitzroy Crossing, de Brune noted: *to Fossil Downs Station gates, 10 miles. Road very sandy. Felt very ill and cannot stand sun. To Fossil Downs Station, 3 miles.*

27 November 1922. Day 434. 9m. (4803m.)

The invalid remained at Fossil Downs for a week before arriving at Fitzroy Crossing, from where he telegraphed the *Daily Mail*:⁹⁸

I arrived at Fitzroy (on 27 November) after a very bad time on the track, from Hall's Creek. The weather is bad, with constant storms, and much heat. I have recovered from a breakdown which I suffered near Louisa Downs Station, and am going forward slowly, doing from ten to fifteen miles a day. The roads are good but rather sandy, and I can only walk in the early morning and late at night, owing to the extreme heat. I expect to reach Derby within a fortnight. The distance which I have covered so far is 4800 miles, in 266 walking days.

Fitzroy Crossing is a unique township. It consists of three houses. First, one comes to the police station, a mile and a half on to the hotel, turn at an angle and travel two miles to the post office. From there it is about a mile and a half back to the police station.

De Brune did not remain at Fitzroy Crossing, but walked on a further 4 miles to camp. A few days later, *along the Fitzroy Road, near Jubilee Station*, he met *C. Moynihan, P.C. 1227, Fitzroy Crossing, Kimberley Mounted Police* who wished de Brune *best of luck on his lonely trip*.

Then he continued for a fortnight – fourteen days where he rose and walked and stopped and ate and slept, only to repeat the procedure next day. He travelled 250 miles to reach Derby.

One wonders what he thought about as he made his solitary way around the continent? Was he a dreamer, living in his head, or was he an acute observer who noticed the flora and fauna around him? Did he begin to construct the mystery stories which he would write after he returned to Sydney? Did he think of his wife and child in England?

Following the north banks of the Fitzroy River, through stations only a couple of days apart, I came eventually to Derby and there ended my second coast of Australia.

13 December 1922. Day 450. 26m. (5020m.)

Reaching Derby, 3200 miles from Cairns and 5000 miles from Sydney, he noted:

Southwards was the next point of the compass. The route lay along the dreaded Madman's Track to Broome, where I enjoyed my second Christmas of the journey.

An account, below, by J. K. Warner, places the Madman's Track between Broome and De Gray Station, near Port Hedland. Obviously de Brune intended to write *from* Broome (to Port Hedland). In fact, at Pardoo Station, south of Broome, the manager of Pardoo, noted that *Mr de Brune arrived Pardoo Homestead 15/1/23. Left 16th on his way back to Sunrise after*

getting over the Madman's path. Best wishes. Leo L. Miller, manager, Pardoo. 17/1/23.

In 1926 J. K. Warner was travelling around Australia in a motor car. He stated that “the roughest part of his journey was from De Gray Station, near Port Hedland, to Broome, a distance of approximately 180 miles, embracing a 90 miles' stretch known as 'Madman's Track.' This is covered with drift sand and the going was very heavy. This stage occupied three days, the most arduous, he averred, he had ever experienced.”⁹⁹ Warner was driving in the opposite direction to that which de Brune walked.

For the record, it seems that N. R. Westwood was the first to *drive* around the perimeter of Australia. On 4 August 1925 he set out from Perth in a Baby Citroen car and completed a journey of 10,700 miles, travelling in a clockwise direction, arriving back at Perth on 2 January 1926, after five months.¹⁰⁰

Just before reaching Derby, de Brune had walked 5000 miles of his 10,000 mile journey. With 5000 to go to reach Sydney again, he had walked half the total distance to be travelled. He had been away from Sydney for 450 days, and we now know that he had 447 days still to go, so he was also half way in terms of total time taken.

He had detoured from his line, in order to visit Derby, on the coast, and now retraced his steps, to once again pick up the road to Broome.

However, before the traveller leaves Derby it is interesting to note that the town has the highest tidal variation in Australia with the peak differential between low and high tide reaching 11.8 metres. The town was famous in the 1920s as the terminus of the first scheduled aviation service in Australia operated by West Australian Airways Ltd. Their service began with their first flight on 5 December 1921. At one time the Perth to Derby service was the world's longest passenger airline route.¹⁰¹

23 December 1922. Day 460. 20m. (5155m.)

Nine days after leaving Derby, de Brune reached Broome. He had rested for three days and then travelled 135 miles (28, 0, 0, 25, 22, 26, 14, 0, 20 miles) – 135 miles, 217 kilometres, 6 walking days. He might have used the time to walk from Sydney Harbour Bridge to Sussex Inlet; Rushworth to Wodonga; Adelaide to Port Pirie; Perth to Bunbury; Darwin to Pine Creek; Kuranda to Cardwell. Instead, he walked from Derby to Broome.



Down the Western Australian Coast to Albany

25 December 1922. Day 462. 0m. (5155m.)

De Brune was in Broome on Christmas Day, 1922, staying at the Star Hotel. Many people signed his diary, and wished him well for the remainder of his trip. As usual, he now seemed to be popular, wherever he walked. Now and then someone tried his hand at poetry. J. Hillard wrote:

*I dreamed last night to heaven I did go.
Where did you come from they wanted to know.
And when I said "Broome," Oh didn't they stare.
Walk right in. You're the first one from there.*

Broome was, indeed, an isolated spot. However, when the Geraldton-Derby airmail service first landed at Broome in 1922, the isolation would have been eased. The "airport" was a smooth patch of sand on Cable Beach. In the mid 1920s, a dirt strip was graded, adjacent to the old racecourse.¹⁰²

As usual, de Brune delivered an address, this time to a gathering assembled at the Star Hotel. It was Christmas night and the audience enjoyed his sharing of his experiences about his journey on foot, from Sydney to Broome. The address was *very interesting and much appreciated*, as George Moss wrote. De Brune was given *best wishes for the safe and successful completion of his undertaking, and 3 cheers for what he had already done.*"

One well-wisher waxed lyrical:

Many people see nothing in anything which does not lead to personal aggrandisement. But it is to such men as Mr Aidan de Brune that we owe the present position and power of the British Empire. Without men of the spirit of adventure where would our Empire have been today? The worst part of his travels, I believe,

has been accomplished, and my wish is that he will successfully win through, to the gratification, at least of H. D. Forbes.

Another expressed it all in a simple eloquent sentence: *Wishing success to a 'Lone Hand' on his long trek. Duke Morgan.*

In cards, a *lone hand* is a hand played against the rest, or a player playing such a hand. In life, a *lone hand* is a person who, by preference, conducts his or her affairs without the advice or assistance of others. De Brune was certainly able to enjoy the company of others and he attracted the admiration of others. However, at heart, one would have to be a lone hand to travel ten thousand miles alone.

27 December 1922. Day 464. 24m. (5191m.)

On walked de Brune again, covering 24 miles for the day. *On to 26-mile well, 16 miles. Heavy rain last night. Across marshes!!! To gate, 4 miles, and to Thangoo Station, 4 miles.* At the station, Alice Park reminded him, *Don't forget the aniseed...!* A minor request from someone who could not easily procure aniseed.

It had been a year, almost to the day, since de Brune had encountered rain at Cairns and had walked through constant rain to Burketown. The rain mentioned in the previous paragraph is one of only a handful of days on which rain is mentioned, as he made his way down the Western Australian coast.

However, in the summary of his walk, de Brune wrote, "from Onslow I touched trouble. The season above Carnarvon had been abnormal, and for miles I waded through water." He reached Onslow on 19 February 1923 and encountered the bad weather later that month. It continued until the end of April, causing him to experience a severe problem with his feet. We will come to that point soon enough.

Then down to Lagrange Telegraph Station, a few miles north of the famous Eighty-mile Beach. Frazier Downs was the next point of call, and a long stage led to Colangatie outstation, and then to Anna Plains Station. Leaving that station, I turned on to the stock route that lay along the beach^{xvii}, and one day turned on to the seashore to enjoy a swim, from off the centre of this wonderful stretch of sand.

Now, it seems, he *was* on the Madman's Track. He makes no comment about it in his diary. Perhaps it was not so arduous on foot as it was in a motor car, since he was walking along the stock route that ran along the beach.

At Anna Plains Station he was *making a waterbag*. Oh, the importance of a water bag to Aidan de Brune on his travels. Every day he would be relying on crossing a creek or river, or of coming upon a tank or bore, or of arriving at a station or town, so that he could refill his waterbag. In the wet season, perhaps he could make do, but in the dry he would be experiencing very hot conditions. The waterbag was his life insurance.

Aborigines have had a presence along Eighty-Mile Beach for tens of thousands of years:¹⁰³

“Traditional ownership of the northern part of Eighty Mile Beach, within the vicinity of the Anna Plains pastoral lease, is shared between the Nyangumarta People and the Karajarri (or Garadjari) People. [Some years ago] the two groups filed overlapping native title determination applications over the area, which were determined together on 25 May 2012. The judgement of the Court was delivered on country at Talgarno, a former military site within the Anna Plains pastoral lease.

^{xvii} Eighty-Mile Beach: A beach between Broome and Port Hedland, the longest uninterrupted beach in WA.

“In the Karajarri language, Eighty Mile Beach is called *Wender*, meaning "a creaking noise", with reference to the sound of walking through dry sand. Many Aboriginal people with connections to the area now live at the Bidyadanga Community (formerly the La Grange Mission) and nearby at Frazier Downs. Several soaks, known as *lirri*, lie behind the beach and were traditionally important as sources of fresh water. Many of the soaks became Water Reserves on the Kimberley-De Grey Stock Route, which was used until the 1960s for long distance cattle-droving.”

16 January 1923. Day 484. 0m. (5439m.)

Aidan de Brune walked on and spent 2 nights (7 and 8 January 1923) at Wallal and three nights (9, 10 and 11 January 1923) at Wallal Downs Station.

Wallal, along the "Madman's Track," has a unique claim to fame which involves the theory of relativity, propounded by Albert Einstein. The general theory of relativity is one of humankind's greatest achievements. With it, Einstein suggested that gravity was not a force, and that space and time could be bent and stretched.

The theory was published in 1915 but there was the difficulty of finding a practical means to show that the theory was valid. It was soon realised that a photograph of an eclipse could provide evidence to back the theory.

In 2018, University of Western Australia physicist David Blair explained that "if you had a look at stars that were a bit near the sun, then the stars ought to be in the wrong position because the starlight will just follow the shape of space. The shape of space is going to be different near the sun, and so the stars ought to be in the wrong place in the sky."

As a result of this realisation, soon after the theory was proposed, it was decided in 1922 to photograph an eclipse of the sun from Wallal, 350km from Broome.

On 21 September 1922, the photographs were taken. Developing the photographs in the dust and heat of Wallal proved too difficult, so the parties made the decision to go back to Broome to develop the plates. They went to the Broome Coastal Radio Station, and were given everything they needed to get perfect photographs from the plates. They provided conclusive proof that the sun caused space to curve, passing the first test in verifying Einstein's theory.

In 2018, Broome historian Robyn Wells realised that her local bowling club at Broome had played a fundamental part in such a significant historical moment.

"The then radio station is now the Broome Bowling Club," she noted. It is actually the ladies' and gentlemen's toilets."

This story about Einstein's Theory of Relativity was related on the ABC internet site on 24 September 2018. See <https://tinyurl.com/ydahhr7>.

De Brune arrived in Wallal on 16 January 1923, about four months after the date of the eclipse. On 21 September he had been at Timber Creek, in the Northern Territory. He does not mention the eclipse in his travel diary.

The waterbag maker spent a few days at Wallal Downs Station then walked on to Yunadong Well, 8 miles and then to Burgen Well, 12 miles.

Next day it was *to Warnagul Well, 12 miles, and on wrong road, 9 miles.*

Then, next day, *down the fence to the new well. On to Fence Mill out-camp, 9 miles. To rabbit-proof fence, 9 miles.*

The fifteen miles walked on the next day saw him at Pardoo Station, *on his way back to Sunrise(?) after getting over the Madman's path*, according to Leo Miller, the manager of Pardoo.

The next house I arrived at was Pardoo Station, and then on to the lonely telegraph station at Condon, once the shipping point for Marble Bar, but deserted when the Marble Bar-Port Hedland railway was opened.

De Grey Station was now only 18 miles away. From there I went to Strelley Station and then on to Pundano, on the railway.

24 January 1923. Day 492. 19m. (5494m.)

The railway-walker left de Gray Station at 7.30a.m. and arrived at a "mile" camp about 10.30 a.m., *looking fresh*. Ray Marshall penned a ditty:

*"Mr A. de Brune walking strong and fitly.
He passed the heat of day.
He wouldn't camp with us
But kept right on his way."*

Next day, at Strelley Station, which the pedestrian reached after walking 8 miles, an incident occurred which was unusual enough for de Brune to record it in his diary.

Arrived at Strelley station at 10.30. Went to homestead. Manager came out and asked how I dare come on verandah. When I gave my name he said he had heard of me and told me he would come out later. He came out after a while but did not come to me. Presently Chinese cook came to me with some tucker wrapped in paper.



It seems that the manager took de Brune to be a *professional*, as opposed to an *amateur* tramp. Apparently, men calling at stations for food would normally stop on the ground in front of the homestead and speak from there. De Brune obviously did not consider himself in such company, so he went onto the verandah. This is the only occurrence of such a “welcome” that appears in de Brune’s diary.

Walking on to Pundano, twelve miles away, de Brune stayed there for the night. Henry Bell noted, *Mr A. de Brune arrived last night. Pleased to meet so interesting and entertaining a gentleman. He is going strong on his great walking stunt.* Next day he walked the twenty miles to Port Hedland.

26 January 1923. Day 494. 20m. (5534m.)

I had now travelled 1700 miles since I had seen a railway,^{xviii} when I reached Port Hedland. My next objective was Roebourne, which I reached after an easy walk. From there I travelled down to Onslow, a town soon to be moved to Beadon, a few miles up the coast.

He had followed the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway from Strelley, where he met it coming from Pardoo. He now walked on to Ajana, without the help of a railway, where he met the Northampton railway line which ran on to Geraldton.

At Port Hedland, the well-wishers again added comments to his diary:

To wish Mr Aidan de Brune (the Amateur Tramp) every success in his walk around Australia. May he be successful in

^{xviii} The railway went from Port Hedland to Marble Bar, in an easterly direction. De Brune was travelling south, so he did not follow that railway.

enlightening others, through his experience. Thomas G. Heydon, editor, Pilbarra News, Port Hedland.



Australian Inland Mission, Nursing Home, port Hedland. Very pleased to meet Mr A. de Brune, who has walked from Sydney to here. May he continue to have health and strength till he again reaches Sydney. K. Donald, sister.

And just south of Port Hedland:

Mr A. de Brune arrived Boodarrie 4 o'clock afternoon of 29/1/1923, walking like a two year old.

Good luck to him and the work he has undertaken. G. T. O. McPherson.

05 February 1923. Day 504. 23m. (5678m.)

The *Northern Times* gave an account of his visit to Roebourne.¹⁰⁴

At Roebourne the pedestrian gave a most interesting address in the Jubilee Hall, to a large and representative gathering of residents, upon his wanderings from Sydney. Mr de Brune is hard, tough and wiry, and apparently fit to stand any amount of hardship. During his trip he has only suffered from minor ailments, with one exception, when he was for seven weeks in the hospital at Burketown, North Queensland. On Louisa Downs Station, on the Margaret River in Kimberley, he was found wandering in a state of delirium from heat apoplexy, but this he considers a small matter, as after a day's spell he was on the track again.

The people certainly took him took a fancy to him in Roebourne:

Mr A. de Brune arrived at Roebourne in a vehicle commonly known as "per boot", probably the nearest approach to

travelling by Ford car – I being the proud owner of one. He seemed to be suffering from gear box trouble, which was immediately attended to in order that he might proceed on his tireless journey. I wish him every success – Frank Porter, Jubilee Hotel, Roebourne, 5/2/23.

*Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand alone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.*

De Brune has the courage of 100 men to take on a lone hand through country infested with blacks, dry tracks, and the seven plagues of Egypt combined. Best of wishes to A. de Brune who has the heart of a lion and the pluck of the good old Bull Dog breed, to carry on. He has my sympathy, humping Matilda, under present climatic conditions. He is a good ad. for the White Australia Policy. He is also a walking encyclopedia on Australia and things Australian. One reward he should have, should be a snug billet at Australia House, Strand. Billy Hughes please note this.^{xix} – Alfred E. Neaves. Roebourne, 6/2/23.

19 February 1923. Day 518. 27m. (5881m.)

After resting and lecturing in Roebourne for a few days the traveller was on his way again. He called in at the Fortesque Telegraph Station, Mardie Station, Peedmulla Station and also camped out as circumstances dictated. Two weeks and 200 miles later, he reached Onslow.

A large jetty was built at the original site of Onslow, however repeated cyclone damage and the silting up of the river caused increasing problems with the loading and unloading of visiting ships. The cargo had to be transferred by lighter from the ship to

^{xix} The writer was urging Billy Hughes, then Australian Prime minister, to appoint de Brune as Australia's representative in London, supposedly a "cushy" job.

the jetty, then by horse-tram from the jetty, across marshland, to the town. This led the state government, in 1923, to develop a new town and jetty to the north, at Beadon Point. The residents of Old Onslow moved across in 1925. The new location offered better protection from storm damage, with the town more conveniently located on the coast. On 15 May 1943, Onslow became the most southerly town in Australia to be bombed by the Japanese in World War II, when a single plane bombed the airfield. However, there was no damage or casualties.¹⁰⁵

At the Ashburton Hotel, Frederick J. Laphorn described de Brune's method of conveyance, i.e. walking, using the archaic expression, *per Irish Tandem*. Laphorn went on to note that de Brune *looks well and fit, having covered 27 miles today, making a total to date of 5881 miles. Mr de Brune is most interesting to converse with, as his knowledge of other countries is so large and varied and his unique knowledge of this continent, acquired first hand, is most valuable. We wish him a successful finish to his tour, and hope his reward will be in line with his effort.*

Next day de Brune called at the Onslow Post Office. The postmaster, James Coles wrote that the traveller *called at Onslow post office. Temperature 110.^{xx} Wrote his telegram outside the office. Thought he was in Hades. We admire his courage and fortitude in facing the arduous task of walking around Australia, and wish him every success. Jas. J. Coles, postmaster.*

One wonders whether de Brune or the postmaster thought that de Brune was in Hades. De Brune still managed to speak at the Onslow Hall on that date. Later the gathering started dancing and kept it up till midnight.¹⁰⁶

^{xx} 110 degrees Fahrenheit, or 43 degrees Celsius.

From Onslow I touched trouble. The season above Carnarvon had been abnormal, and for miles I waded through water.

22 February 1923. Day 521. 22m. (5903m.)

At Minderoo Station, a few days later, F. E. McDougall noted that *Mr de Brune arrived here tonight. He looks well and says that the heat here is the most oppressive since he left Sydney, and the flies are giving him hell. I wish him every success in his great undertaking.* The Richardsons, R. L. and Gertrude (Mrs), seconded the walker's opinion, remarking on the *most damnably hot weather.*

After a rest day, de Brune walked on to Kooddarrie Station and then on to a dam, where he camped. Next day he *went on 6 miles on out road and then took track which bent eastwards and, after full day's walk, landed at Horse Works Mill – well away from my route. About 25 miles.*

At the camp, C. R. Smith mused that *Mr de Brune arrived at our camp at Horse Works at sundown, having lost his way. He is on a trip round Australia 'per boot.' Mr de Brune is perfectly sane and normal on every other subject and I feel quite sure his trip will effect a perfect cure. Good luck and a happy ending to his trip.*

Another camper was more sanguine: *The Lone Boundary Rider of the sixteen-mile wishes the best of luck and happiness to one of the whitest of Australians, Mr A. de Brune, during the remaining last few months of his trip. G. Keeling.* Surely there was a meeting of minds between these two men who were both, in their own way, playing a dangerous lone hand in the vast solitariness of outback Australia.

It was only a few days later, at Yanrey Station, that the drovers Kilmurray and Matbury added their best wishes.

We had much pleasure in meeting Mr A. de Brune, on his long and somewhat tiresome tramp around Australia.

*We say 'hats off' to Mr de Brune,
For he cares not for the bubbles of fortune's fickle tide
Who like Bendigo,^{xxi} can battle
As he tramps around Australia,
And takes hardships in his stride.
Good luck to him.*

Perhaps meeting these characters was the reason that de Brune remained at Yanrey for a few days. In any event, he was soon off again, this time towards Winning Pool.

5 March 1923. Day 532. 13m. (5995m.)

Left Yanrey at 4.30 p.m. Wet night. Camped on 13-mile hill.

Next day he walked to 34-mile catchment tank, 2 miles. On to 22-mile tank [34 - 22 = 12 miles] and then on 5 miles. At 31-mile telegraph post made the 6000 miles of journey.

Next day he went on to 12-mile tank, 5 miles, and camped. Day too hot to walk.

8 March 1923. Day 535. 12m. (6031m.)

An early start, and another twelve miles for the day and de Brune reached Winning Pool, where he was laid up with bad feet for a week. On 15 March 1923, recovering temporarily from his bad feet, he headed off to Carnarvon, a walk of two weeks.

18 March 1923. Day 545. 18m. (6097m.)

At Minilya Station, after four days of walking, during which he covered sixty-six miles, he noted in his diary that the previous night he *had camped just south of the line of the Tropic of Capricorn. From Rockhampton, where I entered the tropics, to here is 4968 miles and I have been 486 days in the tropics.*

^{xxi} Bendigo: Probably referring to William Abednego Thompson (1811-1880), known as *Bendigo*, a champion boxer who was said to never step down from a challenge. Wikipedia – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thompson_\(boxer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Thompson_(boxer))

J. F. McLeod noted that *Aidan de Brune arrived here today looking splendid and making good headway south. We all wish him the best of good luck.* Another well-wisher, Mrs B. LeFroy, wished him *a safe return to Sydney. I very much hope he will issue a record of his journey in book form which will be a second 'We of the Never Never.'*

De Brune remained at Minilya Station for two nights, then walked *along telegraph line towards Carnarvon. Crossed swamps about a mile long making about 15 miles for day.*

Next day he walked only nine miles, noting that *rain blowing up.* Then, on the following day, it *rained heavy all night. Stayed at catchment shed all day. Rained until following morning.*

24 March 1923. Day 551. 20m. (6141m.)

Showery morning, much wind. Took to road. Very rough and lots of water. At 44-mile went on [telegraph] line again. Large clay pans.

25 March 1923. Day 552. 14m. (6155m.)

T Kempton, at his camp at Cardobia Creek, noted that *Mr de Brune arrived at my camp at Cardobia Creek and camped there while the creek was in flood.* He was there for three nights.

Arriving at Boolathanna Station on the 28th, de Brune noted, *remember the big swamp, 1 mile from Cardobia Creek.*

He was experiencing some wet weather, and the after-effects of the rain on the ground would have made walking more difficult.

As usual, he would have received food and drink and, possibly, a bed, while at stations. Perhaps he preferred to sleep on the verandah, on his bedroll. In any case, it would have made a welcome relief from sleeping outside where it was raining. Then he set off for Carnarvon.

Carnarvon to Geraldton was my last stretch of the wildlands. From Carnarvon to the Murchison River was

bad for sand, and for a few miles past the river. Twenty-four miles from Murchison House Station I struck the railway at Ajana - and civilisation. At Geraldton I met with a warm reception.

29 March 1923. Day 556. 20m. (6179 m.)

The pedestrian arrived at Carnarvon, after walking 20 miles from Boolathanna Station. He checked into the *Northern Times* office at 6 p.m. Along the way he had met the mail vehicle and the occupants performed the usual ceremony with his diary. *Met Mr de Brune between Boolathanna and Carnarvon - J. F. Pearson, mail contractor. Rowland Stevenson, passenger. P. R. Perrin, passenger. P. J. McNamara, passenger.*

There is no indication of the means of transport employed, in this instance, by the mail contractor - either a horse-drawn coach or cart or a motor vehicle. An Australia Post list of historical milestones, states that "mail trucks replaced Cobb & Co horse-drawn mail coaches in 1924."¹⁰⁷ However, later, at Esperance in August 1923, de Brune was photographed when standing beside a motor car which was being used to deliver mail.

Delivering mail to people in the Australian outback has always presented a challenge. In *We of the Never Never*, alluded to earlier in this book, the author provides a wonderful description of the outback mail man:¹⁰⁸

The Fizzer is unlike every type of man excepting a bush mail-man. Hard, sinewy, dauntless, and enduring, he travels day after day and month after month, practically alone - "on me Pat Malone," he calls it - with or without a black boy, according to circumstances; and five trips out of his yearly eight throwing dice with death along his dry stages, and yet at all times as merry as a grig, and as chirrupy as a young grasshopper.

With a light-hearted, “So long, chaps,” he sets out from the Katherine on his thousand-mile ride, and with a cheery “What ho, chaps! Here we are again!” rides in again within five weeks, with that journey behind him.

The Fizzer, Henry Ventlia Peckham, was born in Adelaide on 28 February 1872. For some time he was a stockman at Renner Springs, about 300 miles south of Eleyse Downs Station, the setting for *We of the Never Never*. When the mailman for the area perished near Lake Brunette in the drought of 1902, Peckham secured the mail contract.

Peckham threw his last dice with death on 17 April 1911 when he drowned while trying to cross the flooded Dashwood Crossing over Campbell's Creek, on Victoria River Downs, with mail which included a letter seeking medical help at the Station for a sick woman. Ironically, it was not the *dry stages* which were his undoing.

Peckham was buried on the banks of the River but was reinterred at Eleyse in 1944 when the Army (NT Force, Brigadier Dollery) made moves to restore some of the graves of the characters of *We of the Never Never* to a central Eleyse Cemetery.¹⁰⁹

De Brune certainly belonged to the same class of man as The Fizzer – “hard, sinewy, dauntless, and enduring.”

From Carnarvon, the reporter reported to the *Northern Standard*:¹¹⁰

My feet are very bad. I left Minilya on March 21, and I was held up at a catchment tank the next day by torrential rains for forty hours. The track was very bad and the country was flooded. I waded mile-long lakes and at Cardobia Creek got into fifteen feet of swift flowing water. I was swept down fifty yards before I could catch hold of a branch of a tree. I nearly drowned.

I reached Boolathana Station on March 28, and Carnarvon on the following day. I have now covered a distance of 6179 miles. Sore feet have detained me again. I hope to reach Hamelin Pool within ten days.

While at Carnarvon, John Waugh, of the Presbyterian Church, as part of the Australian Inland Mission, congratulated *Mr de Brune on his pluck in this arduous enterprise. Wish him a good trip for the rest of his journey, and may we meet again in dear old Sydney-town.*

Another amateur poet, Mrs Isabella Louden, composed a ditty:

*Some are taught on Bibles to rely
Some on Koran's word will live and die,
Among the deities ranks 'Delf,'
Aidan de Brune relies on self.*

Mr Louden, probably Isabella's husband, of Louden's Picture Palace, noted that *Mr Aidan de Brune has given a lecture on his travelogue to a well-attended meeting in my Picture Palace. I wish him all good luck.*

Others who wrote messages in the diary were concerned about his feet. *Hoping his feet keep good, on life's road, and how many pairs of boots have you worn out? and I hope you won't lose your boots going across Eucla desert and God speed your feet.* Messages of interest and concern from people with whom he made brief contact on his journey.

Another Carnarvon local, E. Gibbon, at the Port Hotel, noted that *Mr de Brune, whilst in Carnarvon on 2 April 1923, had the pleasure of attending a Clay Pigeon match and he states this is a novelty for all North West people. There was a good crowd of sports and all thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I think Mr de Brune is the best sport we have seen for many a day and his experiences are very interesting.*

15 April 1923. Day 573. 19m. (6198m.)

The foot soldier was at Carnarvon for seventeen days, resting and attending to the barcoo rot^{xxii} on his feet

Leaving Carnarvon, he set out for Hamelin Pool along the telegraph line. *To gate, 3 miles. To gate, 3 miles. To gate, 5 miles. To gate, 3 miles, and on 5 miles.* A total of nineteen miles for the day. Next day he walked eight miles, noting, *Oh! those mosquitos*, before noting that he had reached Boodalla Station. Hopefully, he had outwalked the mosquitoes. Unfortunately, those bad feet kept him at Boodalla for a week.

He was no imposition at Boodalla, as evidenced by this note: *We, the undersigned, of Boodalla Station, thank Mr de Brune, Australia's champion pedestrian, for his entertaining visit. We wish him good health and a safe journey. R. W. Stirling, overseer; D. Richards, stockman; W. T. Tittams, stockman; E. Lynch. A few days later T Williams, R. Bird, P. J. Phillips, H. Wilkinson, Patrick O'Mearn and R. W. Scott also signed the book, for good measure.*

25 April 1923. Day 583. 20m. (6226m.)

Then, on walked the mosquito-bitten champion pedestrian traveller to Wooramel Station. *To gate, 1 mile. To gate, 4 miles. To tank (catchment), 2 miles. To gate, 3 miles. To catchment shed, 4 miles. To gate, 1 mile. To gate, 4 miles. To bore drain ½ mile. To broken catchment shed, ½ mile.*

It rained all night and in the morning, which would not have helped his feet. He started at mid-day and walked 9 miles to a catchment shed where he encountered more rain.

It was 25 April and in Australia Anzac day is held on that date each year. It is a national day of remembrance in Australia and

^{xxii} Barcoo rot: An ulcerous skin condition, apparently endemic to tropical or desert climates, taking its name from the Barcoo River, which rises on the northern slopes of the Warrego Range in Queensland. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barcoo_River and https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Barcoo_rot

New Zealand that commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders "who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations" and "the contribution and suffering of all those who have served"¹¹¹

De Brune was at Lawn Hill Station in Queensland on Anzac day in 1922, laid up with abscesses on his feet. One year later, it was Anzac day again and he was at Wooramel Staion in Western Australia.

The *Tambellup Times* mentions an Anzac Day commemoration for 1921.¹¹²

The residents of Tenterden and surrounding districts assembled at the hall for a service organised by the R.S.S.I.L.^{xxiii}...After the service, light refreshments were distributed by the ladies, after which vocal items were rendered by Mrs Wheaton, Mr Meingler and Mr Cameron-Smith. The singing of the National Anthem terminated the ceremonies.

The procedure would have been much the same for 1923, at Tenterden. De Brune passed through a few months after Anzac day. They would have also been similar to the commemoration which took place in many, many others towns throughout Australia. One hundred years on, Anzac Day is still celebrated throughout Australia in the same way.

Next day the walker was met with a fine morning and travelled 28 miles to Wooramel River. Three more days of walking brought him to Hamelin Pool.

1 May 1923. Day 589. 2m. (6304m.)

E. Milnes, senior lineman, confirmed that *Mr de Brune camped here last night and we had an interesting conversation re his travels. I wish him success and good health through the*

^{xxiii} RSSIL: Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League.

remainder of his journey. At this point his water bag broke and he had to make a new one. He remained at Hamelin Pool for 2 days.

Then, on again towards Murchison House Station, one of the oldest stations in Western Australia, where he noted that he had *not seen a person since leaving Hamelin Pool 4 days earlier.* It was an *awful track.* Next day he reiterated that he had *seen no one for 4 days, nor a gate. Absolutely wild country. No stock on it.*

9 May 1923. Day 597. 11m. (6394m.)

De Brune called at Murchison House Station and while there *went back six miles to find swag lost on rocks.* This might have accounted for his remaining at Murchison for another day.

19 May 1923. Day 605. 19m. (6486m.)

At Ajana, the traveller came on to the railway line to walk to Northampton, Isseka and Geraldton.

Ajana was the terminus of an extension to the first government railway line in Western Australia. The line originally ran from Geraldton to Northampton and was extended to Ajana to encourage the development of lead mining and agriculture in the area. Ajana railway station opened on 6 January 1913, and the town site was declared on 26 November 1915.¹¹³

At Isseka, the lecturer *gave a very nice lecture to several residents* at the home of J. W. M. Williams. An abscess on his heel kept him there for a day.

A few days later at “Queechy,” Oakajee, he again rested for a day. *Mr A. de Brune arrived here 6 o'clock this evening. We were pleased to see him and to hear his very interesting account of his travels. We wish him the best of luck. McClusky Bros (three), per Frank McClusky.* This note is not unusual, however the address given in the diary was unusual enough to warrant a check of the name at *Trove.* “Queechy farm,” Oakagee is correct

and an interesting story concerning James McCluskey is recorded in the *Geraldton Guardian and Express* of 16 February 1937, 12 years after de Brune's visit.¹¹⁴

Mr Jas. McCluskey, of "Queechy" farm, Oakagee, had a narrow escape from being bitten by a snake on Thursday last. He went to the oat-bag in the barn to get a feed of oats for the horses. Feeling something heavy and cold pass over his hand, he dropped the oats back into the bag. He pulled the bag out of the barn on to a cleared piece of ground and tipped the contents out. With the oats a snake came out. Spades and sticks flew pretty fast on to the snake, which was killed. It measured three feet six inches and was very thick and of a brown colour. Mr McCluskey was very fortunate that he was not bitten. There are more snakes around this locality this season than there have been for years.

De Brune makes no mention of snakes in his diary, though he must have come across some in the two and a half years he was on the road.

Returning to May 1923, de Brune left Oakagee to walk to Geraldton.

21 May 1923. Day 609. 15m. (6501m.)

At Geraldton he gave a substantial interview:¹¹⁵

Most people would rather ride than walk any day, but walking seems to agree with Mr Aidan de Brune, who is engaged in performing the colossal task of walking round Australia in furtherance of an engagement entered into to that effect with the Sydney "Daily Mail." Mr de Brune, has so far spent twenty mouths on his task and hopes to complete it by Christmas next, particularly as

he has got the worst of the journey over, with the exception of the stretch alongside the Bight to the South Australian border.

Mr de Brune struck Geraldton yesterday afternoon, and those who were in Marine Terrace at the time were interested to see him striding along at a steady gait, showing no effects of the 6500 miles he had already tramped. Mr de Brune called at the "Express" and "Guardian" offices. Naturally, being a journalist, his first care is to get in touch as soon as he arrives at any town where there is a newspaper, with his fellow knights of the pen and paste brush. He looks fit and well, with his skin tanned a deep brown. He is not carrying any surplus flesh, for humping a swag, weighing about fifty pounds, in addition to a water bag, is not conducive to the putting on of weight.

Having walked round the biggest part of Australia's coast, and having come into contact with all sorts of people, from heads of administrations, local bodies, squatters and farmers, to lonely prospectors and boundary riders, Mr de Brune has naturally a huge fund of interesting experiences to draw upon, and he is apparently a keen and shrewd observer.

When he left Queensland one individual offered to lay him substantial odds that he would never get to Wyndham, but he did get to Wyndham, and has done much walking since then. Coming through the Nor-West and on towards the Gascoyne country he was troubled much by the heavy rains, walking for days up to his knees in water, with the result that his feet began to protest, and since then he has had to make his daily trek a little shorter to give his feet a chance to recuperate. He has had months in hospital with fever, and on one occasion, not knowing where he was, tumbled into a

creek in which there was fifteen feet of running water, and he was carried a hundred yards or more, before he was able to catch hold of the branch of a tree, and save himself.

In a conversation describing his experiences, Mr de Brune said he undertook the journey as a result of a conversation over the much discussed question of what various parts of the empire had done in the war, and this caused him to ask what Australians had done for Australia. A challenge was thrown out to him to go and see for himself, and that was the reason he commenced his lengthy walk on September 20th, 1921.

It was, he said, 609 days since he left Sydney, of which he had been walking for 363 days, during which he had walked approximately 6501 miles. Asked what he did, when offered a ride, Mr de Brune said he must hold the record for the number of rides he had refused. He had to do the whole of the journey on foot, and his arrangement was that he must visit certain ports on the walk. Incidentally, he remarked that he had probably worn out six or seven pairs of boots, but when the going was soft in the sand, he usually slung his boots over his shoulder and walked barefooted.

Describing the progress of his trek from New South Wales, through Queensland, into the Northern Territory, part of which lay by the overland telegraph route, he said after leaving Darwin he had to make a detour of over 600 miles round the Cambridge Gulf to get to Wyndham. From there he came down through Turkey Creek, where naturally he interviewed Jim Cunningham, known to all and sundry in those parts as the "Tropical Frog." In his walk down from the Nor'-West he called at all the ports, and on the Eighty-mile Beach he had a plunge in the sea as near to the half-way distance as he could estimate it.

After leaving Carnarvon he worked his way southward and then followed the telegraph line, across to Murchison House, where he saw the graves of the airmen who lost their lives on the disastrous initial trip of the Nor'-West Mail Service.^{xxiv} He said Mr Drage was very much concerned that so far no suitable memorial had yet been erected to mark the gallant airmen's final resting place, and it was to be hoped this omission would soon be rectified. When he reached Ajana he saw a railway line again, and he had walked through practically 2600 miles of country without railways, because the Hedland-Marble Bar line could not be seriously called a railway. In times of flood, he observed, the people had to go out and hunt up the lines and put them back. From Emungalan in the Territory, to Pundano, on the Marble Bar railway, it was 1690 miles, and from there on to Ajana about another 900 miles.

Asked as to his general impression of the northern part of Western Australia. Mr de Brune began to wax enthusiastic.

“It is a wonderful country,” he said. “From Carnarvon the land improves the further north you go. As far as I could see, the Kimberley are as good as any land in Western Australia, and richer than a good deal of Queensland. There is a good rainfall – about 40 inches. Of course, it is tropical, but with irrigation it should be possible to grow any tropical produce up there. Irrigation will be essential, because the intervals between the rains are too long. There are some fine rivers and good harbours and with the provision of railways, a wonderful development could be brought about. There is a prevailing opinion down south that the north is not fit for

^{xxiv} See “The Aerial Smash,” *The Daily News* (Perth) 6 December 1921, p. 7. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article83109692>

white men to live in. Look at me! I have been living there for twelve months practically like a blackfellow in the open air.”

Mr de Brune said he had seen all sorts of tropical products growing, and the people of Western Australia did not realise what a wonderful country was there awaiting development. But they could not do much without railways. The reason, he thought, South Australia was so keen on the North-South railway was because of the commanding advantage it would give that State in the trade with Asia. Western Australia was better situated in that respect and should reach out her hands for that great and growing trade. He added that the Northern Territory was a wonderful country, spoiled through bad administration, and he hoped to tell the people of Australia a good deal on that point.

Everywhere he went, he concluded, he received the greatest hospitality and kindness, whether at a station or at a lonely camp. Particularly at the camps was he welcome, because their visitors were few and far between, and they were glad to see anyone from the outside world. The only supplies he carried with him were rice, tea and sugar, in case he did not strike any people, and, of course, tobacco. On one occasion he had to live eleven days on rice. Thirty-four consecutive meals of rice, he observed, did begin to pall a little on the taste. The wayfarer, who has been in the heart of Africa, the wilds of Alaska, and in practically every country on the globe, except New Zealand, after a brief stay in Geraldton, will continue his journey via the Midland railway track. After leaving Perth he will go through the southwest ports, and then along the south coast to Port Augusta, and on through Adelaide and

Melbourne to Sydney, hoping to end his journey by Christmas. He has about 3500 miles yet to walk.

At the Queen's Hall in Geraldton, de Brune, *speaking to a good audience, gave an interesting account of his travels over and his impressions of the Northern portion of the Australian continent.* The report of the talk, or "lecture" as de Brune termed such events, provided here, is representative of the many such talks which he gave from this point in his travels.¹¹⁶

Mr de Brune said that he had left Sydney on 20th September, 1921, at 3.45 p.m., on his tour round Australia. Two conditions were laid down for the journey. One was that he must walk, and the other was that he must call at certain specified ports *en route*, so that there would be no possibility of cutting off big angles. To keep strictly to the coast was impossible owing to the large mangrove tracts which distinguished the foreshore – especially in the north of the continent. Accordingly he had departed from Sydney by what was known as the Great North Road, and traversing the New England portion of NSW, had passed into Queensland and had called at Toowoomba, on the Darling Downs. From there he had gone on to Brisbane, and, keeping thereafter almost to the coast he had touched at Maryborough, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns – 1820 miles north of Sydney. He had then made a detour west across the Gulf country, calling at Croydon, once a thriving mining town. Croydon mines, however, were now in the hands of tributers, whose best return did not average more than £1 per week.

The speaker described graphically the tropical rainfall of the Gulf, where the rainfall on occasions reaches 24 feet, or a simple matter of 8 yards! From Normanton to

Burketown he had to wade for miles knee deep in water, and he was at times deluged to the waist. Moreover, in that country, the flood waters in certain creeks sometimes bank up and, when that occurs, the only safety lies in reaching the high ground without delay.

He had called at Lawn Hill Station fort, about 350 feet above creek level. This place had a reputation for once having stood a siege from the surrounding natives who, having armed themselves with guns, had attacked the white settlers, and bullet holes were still to be seen in the posts of the ancient fort.

Crossing into the Northern Territory he struck the overland telegraph line from Adelaide, and had visited Darwin, situated on a beautiful stretch of water capable of sheltering half the fleets of the world. From Darwin he had travelled across the Daly and Victoria Rivers to Wyndham and, after touching at Hall's and Turkey Creeks and the Fitzroy River, came on to Derby.

The next stage was Broome, then La Grange Bay and Carnarvon, and so on to Geraldton – completing a journey, as near as he could estimate, of 6500 miles. He had still to make the trip to Perth and, from, there, round the Bight to South Australia, through Victoria, to his home in Sydney.

At Geraldton he seemed to be at a half-way house – a border town between the empty spaces of the north and the more populous districts of the south. In his journey he felt that he had been to school again. He had had certain preconceived notions of the north of Australia, gleaned from reading and what he had heard from others, but from the first-hand information he had been able to obtain on his trip, he had scrapped his old notions and got entirely new ones. The administration of the Northern Territory, for instance, was a scandal. When he

was there the Territory had no State rights – except the right to pay taxes. In fact the 'right' – a compulsory one – to contribute to the Commonwealth Treasury, was the sole difference between the civil status of the white and the black.

Since he was there the Commonwealth Parliament had passed the Northern Territories Representation Bill. This permitted the Territory representative to speak in Parliament, but not to vote. The administrator of the Territory was an autocrat, and his absolute position led, he [de Brune] thought, to grave abuses. He gave several instances. Some enterprising residents had formed a scheme for hunting and killing buffaloes (which are plentiful in the Territory), salting them down and exporting the meat to Asia. But, having elaborated their scheme, they were met by an ordinance that all buffaloes intended for consumption must first be examined on the hoof by the Stock Inspector, and certified free from disease. Fancy making a veterinary overhaul of a live buffalo. (Laughter.)

On another occasion, the local Director of Agriculture had announced that he had found disease in the citrus trees of the Territory. As a result an ordinance was promulgated, ordering all citrus trees to be grubbed out. This was done at a cost of £800, and now a single orange or lemon costs Territorians anything from 9d. to 1/-.

Dealing with the Wyndham meat works, Mr de Brune claimed that the disrepute into which the works had fallen was entirely due to the fact that only about one third of the freezing space required had been supplied. The 'go-slow' charge against the workmen resulted, he said, from orders from the manager, who had stated that if the work was speeded up there would soon be a

congestion of frozen products at the works which would necessitate double the shipping available to clear.

He gave some amusing instances of how the capital cost of the works had amounted up. In one case a concrete floor with a raised crown had been put in. Subsequently it was thought that channels should have been provided for drainage, and the work was undertaken with chisels. Just then someone thought of consulting the plan of the works and found that a 'dip' instead of a 'crown' was provided for and the whole floor was taken up and remade. There was also a 'lift' in the works, but when this had been installed it was found that there were no gateways through which the lift could go up and down, and someone had to devise means for cutting openings in the concrete ceilings.

A striking picture was drawn of the Barkly Tableland, which the speaker described as the finest pastoral country in the world. The whole country, when he traversed it, was covered with grass four feet high, and resembled a wheat field. But the great difficulty was surface water. Travelling in a blazing sun, the only water which he could carry was in a water-bag. The traveller was constantly tantalized with the ever-receding mirage, which always took the form of placid water and tempting shade. It had betrayed many a wayfarer into leaving the beaten path, and the finding of his bones years afterwards was usually the final chapter in the tragic story.

Mr de Brune animadverted severely on the condition of native labour in the North-West, and compared the native laws of Queensland and West Australia to the detriment of this State. The holdings in the Kimberley were far too large and this he attributed to the lack of

understanding on the part of the Government in Perth, who knew nothing of the conditions of the north.

He concluded by stating it as an axiom that only the northman was capable of governing the north. This State was unwieldy. He considered that no Government could properly function further than 400 miles from the capital. West Australia should therefore be divided into at least four states, and he hoped when he visited Geraldton again, it would rank as the capital of a sovereign state. (Applause.)

On the motion of Mr E. Constantine a hearty vote of thanks was accorded Mr de Brune, who briefly acknowledged the compliment.

If he met with a “warm reception” at the meeting, he received some less than complimentary remarks from “The Seer” in the Geraldton *Guardian* of 29 May 1923.¹¹⁷ Since de Brune held himself out to be a Canadian, it would have served him well to have done some research before he spoke about Canada. He was caught out on this occasion:

Though every man has a perfect right to his opinions, he ought not to get woefully astray as to his facts, especially when he catalogues them for alleged public enlightenment. “Canada,” said Mr de Brune in a recent *Guardian* article on ‘New States and Old States,’ “has a series of small States.” This simply isn’t true. The Canadian Dominion has an area of 3½ million square miles, approximately that of Australia, and it is divided into seven states only (Australia has six). There are some “districts” just as there are “territories” in Australia, but these aren’t provinces, as they call them in Canada, any more than the territories in Australia, are States. Again: “Twenty people,” said the “Mail” man, emigrate to

Canada where one comes to Australia... Considering the nearness of Canada to the overflow population of Europe this statement might easily be true, but it isn't. Canada's population doesn't aggregate more than 3¾ millions now, and the country passed under British rule in 1759, and there were English and French settlers there a generation or two before that, in pursuit of the fur trade. A good Gazetteer and a few population statistics ought to be lent the Shank's pony man at the next newspaper town. They're evidently too much to add to a fifty-pound swag.

Still on the railway, de Brune walked to Mingenew, Three Springs and Carnamah, where A. J. Mortimer, station master, signed the diary. Then it was on to Moora, where he noted that *he was welcomed as one from a far, far, perilous journey.*

4 June 1923. Day 623. 6m. (6705m.)

At Moora *Mr de Brune called on us during a Picnic Shoot* and in the evening the Chief Steward of the Moora Club advised that de Brune had treated the members to *a very interesting night with stories of the North-West.*

Now, he was calling himself the “*Daily Mail Pedestrian.*” He had left behind the title of “*Amateur Tramp.*”¹¹⁸ While at Moora he wrote two articles for the *Midlands Advertiser* titled “*An Impression of the Midlands of Australia*” in which he argued for the creation of *smaller, compact states. We want more centres of population, means whereby the people will be drifted out of the present few huge capital cities, and the whole land developed equally and systematically.*¹¹⁹

In reaching Moora, the pedestrian had clocked up 6705 miles and had been away from Sydney for 623 days, walking on 375 days.

From Moora I am travelling to Perth and Fremantle. Then to Albany along the south coast to Esperance, Eucla, Port Augusta to Adelaide, Melbourne and back to Sydney, my starting point.

Everywhere I have been received cordially and every assistance has been given me on my wearisome way. When I arrive home I shall have very pleasant memories of the many friends I have made on this ten thousand miles trip on foot.

After resting for a day at Moora, he walked 15 Miles to Walebing. Next day he walked 18 miles, almost reaching New Norcia, being delayed by constant rain and hail, which prompted him to look over the New Norcia monastery. At New Norcia, one scribe wrote: *That he may accomplish a task which only a man of stout heart would attempt, is the fervent wish of Mrs Lanigan and myself. Joseph P. Lanigan, R.M.^{xxv}*

Then on successive days, he walked 21 miles to Wannamal; 19 miles to Moondah Farm; 19 miles to Gin Gin; 20 miles to Herne Hill; 20 miles to Perth; 14 miles to Fremantle. That is 113 miles, or 180 kilometres in six days, all the while calling in at hotels, post offices and houses to have his diary signed and to chat with the people who signed it, and many others besides. As usual, he seemed to have a rapport with everybody, from “the lone boundary rider of the sixteen-mile,” to the publican and his wife, to the retired missionary.

He wrote of “friends,” but in reality he caught but a glimpse of the lives of the people he encountered, and they caught but a glimpse of his life. Certainly, one assumes, nobody knew that he was actually Herbert Charles Cull. It probably would not have mattered to them anyway.

14 June 1923. Day 633. 14m. (6860m.)

^{xxv} R.M. Returned or Retired Missionary.

From Perth, he walked to Fremantle via Nedlands, Claremont and Cottesloe. His diary shows that, while in Fremantle, he called in on two newspapers and made at least two other visits. On the same day he then walked 4 miles back to Cottesloe and called in on the Friese family.

Miss Beatrice Friese wrote in the diary:

This day has linked up pleasant memories and recalls happy hours at the piano with my old teacher and friend, Mr de Brune. May God speed him on the remainder of his 'tramp' around Australia. With hope to see him back again in the West in the New Year."

Other well-wishers were (Mrs) K. Friese, A. E. Friese, S. Thomas, and Arch. E. Friese, jnr.

In Bunbury, where he had lived and worked before his first walk, de Brune was known as Cull, or Culle. One presumes that Beatrice Friese also knew him as Cull. One wonders what explanation he gave to the Friese family for now using the name de Brune.

Next day the pedestrian, no longer a tramp, walked back to Perth, spent the night there and then walked back to Midland Junction. He had made a detour from Perth to Fremantle and Cottesloe, in order to see people he knew, particularly the Friese family. For whatever reason, he did not walk the 100 miles from Fremantle to Bunbury.

Mr and Mrs George Tarrant signed the diary at Midland Junction and sent a message on to Adelaide, to be delivered by de Brune. *To Professor Henderson, Adelaide University. Mr de Brune, the man who is walking around Australia, called here on 16 June 1923 – in fact is just having afternoon tea on the verandah – and will call on you. From Mr and Mrs George Tarrant.* The diary does not record a meeting with Henderson or any comment by him.

The railway walker followed the railway to York, then south to Beverley and on to Albany. As de Brune put it, from Perth he

went slightly *inland down the great Southern Railway to Albany; there I turned eastwards and followed the coast telegraph through Hopetown, Esperance, Israelite Bay, Eyre to Eucla.*¹²⁰

At York a “wag” wrote: *Have inspected pack and diary and would rather ride. A. Massey.* A dozen others penned lines wishing him well for the completion of his journey. It was thus, wherever he went.

20 June 1923. Day 639. 8m. (6950m.)

At Beverley, Alf. T. Thomas, proprietor of the *Beverley Times*, wrote, *wishing you continued success on your journey and the realisation of your hopes of reaching Sydney by Xmas.* The pedestrian had now clocked up 7000 miles since leaving Sydney. A mere 3000 miles to walk. It was to be 4 March 1924 that he arrived at the same building in Sydney from which he had departed on 20 September 1921.

The *Beverley Times* wrote:¹²¹

During his brief stay in Beverley Mr de Brune, sitting in our office waiting, took out his pen and wrote the following:

One of the first questions asked me on arriving in a town is: ‘Why don't you have a mate with you’ My answer is: ‘Find someone to go with me’ – and there the subject rests. I go on by myself. The majority of people seem to think a walk round Australia is something super-human. After nearly 7000 miles walking through some of the wildest of Australia's land I must conclude that only one ability is required – to stick to it.

When I was on my previous trip, walking from West to East across the continent, a letter was sent on and thrown out to me from the train. Someone on the train had scrawled in pencil, across the top: ‘Keep on pegging along, Aidan.’ It was a grand slogan and to-day, when

tired and weary of the many miles behind me and before me, I cheer up at the thought and keep on ‘pegging along.’

Mile succeeds mile, across bush and plain. Weary, endless miles that seem to carry me nowhere. I think often of the large waste spaces I have passed over; of the few towns I have visited; of the isolated stations often days apart. But I hope that before my time comes to ‘go west’ through another Unknown Land, that the Northlands of Australia will develop far from the conditions I found them in. That the new growing race of Australians will have taken them in hand, regardless of the difficulties and magnitude of the task. Let them take also the slogan given me: ‘Keep on pegging along.’ Every little is a progress. Every Australian who adds his bit to the development of the North, helps to the day when they will be a valuable asset to Australia's national wealth.

The traveller's immediate destination was Albany, 250 miles away, along the railway – a walk through towns with such unusual names: Karping Siding, Papanyinning, Yomaning, Cuballing, Narrogin, Nuralin Pool, Piesse. At Nuralin Pool, S. F. de Lany wrote, “*although the weather is very wet Mr de Brune seems to be in the best of spirits, and going strong and well. With best wishes for the successful completion of his journey.* At Piesse, he was persuaded to stay the night with the Harveys and, in return, he gave a short lecture on the impressions gained during his long journey.

27 June 1923. Day 646. 14m. (7049m.)

At Wagin he again encountered rain and the postmaster, H. C. Tombs remarked *that Mr de Brune arrived looking fresh as*

paint notwithstanding the storms and floods. I hope that his pluck will meet with the best possible reward – success.

On he went, through Lime Creek, Boyerine, Woodanilling, Woojeebing, Katanning, Murdong, Broomehill, Peringillup, Tambellup, Tingerup and Pootenup and many other locations with equally romantic names.

At Tambellup, on 30 June 1923, A. Ashton of Katanning noted that he *met Mr de Brune at Tambellup, being away from home and staying in a railway sleeping van. He was pleased to have a warm at our fire. I wish him every success in his walk around Australia. Very pleased to have had a talk with him.*

S. Scarborough noted that he, too, was *isolated at Tambellup, owing to railway line being washed away. About 7 p.m. the bearer Mr de Brune announced his arrival. His diaries and conversation were very interesting, indeed. I wish him every success on his long walk.*

L. Hanna remarked that he *met Mr de Brune and he don't like Billy Hughes.*

2 July 1923. Day 651. 6m. (7139m.)



At Tenterden de Brune visited the school. His diary was signed by Connie Wornum, W. Irving, A. Wornum, T. A. Toovey, O. Colmes, R. T. Davis, G. Wornum, Billie Carrick, A. Mildwaters, G. Mengler, R. Mengler, E. Herbert, J. Spratt, E. D. Hatt, D. Herbert, Ada Carrick and Edward Davis – teachers and pupils of Tenterden School whose names were immortalised in his diary, on 2 July 1923.

“Tenterden is a town located 328 kilometres (204 miles) south-east of Perth in the Great Southern region of Western Australia. The town site is located on one of the sidings on the Great Southern Railway line. The siding was established in 1891

and shortly afterward the government made land available for agricultural purposes in the area. The town was gazetted in 1893 and is named after a town in Kent”¹²²

A few days after de Brune passed through Tenterden, The Spinsters' Club of Tenterden held a very enjoyable dance. The spinsters had gone to great trouble in carrying out an attractive scheme of decorations, using paper streamers with evergreens, transforming the hall into a veritable fairyland, in which danced the Fairy Queen and her admirers. An Old Witch carried on a flirtation with the Clown, in leading the grand march of masqueraders, and their antics caused great mirth.¹²³

De Brune would have livened things up with some piano playing, had he been there. He would have passed through many towns such as Tenterden, a town established on a railway siding, with a small population; a small community with a small school, whose social activities included dances and a tennis competition, and social gatherings held in the local hall or Institute.

Leaving Tenterden next day, the pedestrian walked 5 miles to Lake Matilda, then a further 5 miles to Kendenup. He kept walking, but darkness and rain overtook him after three miles and he called in at the Webb's residence.

Kalgan River, Carbarup, 3/7/23. Had a surprise visit from Mr de Brune. Darkness and rain had overtaken him. Very interested in account of his travels. P. J. Webb, E. H. Webb.

As can be seen, he was made welcome and, in turn, paid for the courtesy extended, by providing some entertainment.

6 Jul 1923. Day 655. 10m. (7200m.)

The pedestrian completed his 250-mile trek from Beverley, arriving at Albany, a sea port on the coast, two weeks after leaving Beverley. From his diary, we see that he had become vocal about his political interests. W. Mather, State Representative, Waterside Workers Federation of Australia and R. A. Pike, President, Albany Lumpers Union, waxed lyrical:

Aidan de Brune, a blazer of the track in working class hopes in Australia. That the future will be kind to him and his is our very earnest wish.

A fellow-journalist, Reginald Greenwood, of the *Albany Advertiser* noted: *Mr de Brune has a wonderful story to relate of his journeying around Australia's coastline. A keen observer and fluent speaker, his articles and lectures should do much to dispel the erroneous impressions possessed by many residents of the East regarding this State.*

While at Albany, de Brune wrote a piece in the *Albany Advertiser* titled "The Gift: to See Ourselves as Others See Us".¹²⁴ He describes sitting by a fire and reading an adventure story about the sea. He slips into a reverie and imagines that he hears outside the crack of a shot, only to be woken by the Mayor of Albany, who points out that it is a hot day and perhaps he should let the sergeant of police escort him back to his quarters. De Brune concludes, *I thought so, too. A too imaginative author is as bad as a night out with the boys.* Did de Brune actually have this experience in Albany? Who can say.

On Saturday 7 July, during the intervals at the Town Hall and Empire Theatre entertainments, de Brune *addressed the audiences briefly on his travels by foot around the coastline of Australia.*¹²⁵

The *Albany Advertiser* reported¹²⁶:

From Albany [Mr de Brune] will strike East for Eucla, and will touch at Port Augusta, Adelaide and Melbourne and hopes to have finished his 10,000 miles' trip by next Christmas; and he smilingly declared that when he does reach Sydney he will not walk any further

and will not cross Pitt Street^{xxvi} without the aid of a motor car.

After a week in Albany, with 7200 miles under the soles of his shoes, and about 3000 miles in front of him, de Brune set off again, leaving the railway line and turning eastwards to follow the coast telegraph along the Great Australian Bight to Eucla, on the Western Australia-South Australia border. He could not have anticipated the difficulties which he would encounter.



^{xxvi} De Brune departed from 9 Pitt Street, a well-known street in Sydney, at the beginning of his walk.

Following the Telegraph Line

*Stars that wake when the dusk is flowing
—Drifting in from the purple deep,
Through an infinite silence glowing
Shine my thoughts as I sink to sleep
One by one from the dim sky gazing;
Then the moon in the lucid blue
Mounts, and the heaven of rest is blazing
Bright and white with a dream of you.*

— John Le Gay Brereton

14 Jul 1923. Day 663. 9m. (7209m.)

After staying at Albany for a week, the traveller set off and walked just 9 miles to Kalgan Bridge. He stayed at the Smith's house at Lower Kalgan for two nights, owing to a bad cold. The Smiths, Ben and Agnes, were delighted with his company. Ben *had the pleasure of reading his diaries and thereby renewed many old acquaintances and associations of my travels from Wyndham to Albany. I consider his feat in accomplishing what he has so far done is nothing short of marvellous, knowing the State as I do. I wish him God Speed and a safe journey for the remaining portion of his wonderful tour, and hope some day to renew my acquaintance with him.*" Agnes simply wished that he might *have the success your pluck so richly deserves.*

Then, on he went again, visiting and, sometimes, staying at stations, or camping out. He visited Warriup Station, Cordiup Station and Marra Station, the Bremer Bay Telegraph Station and Quailup Station, where Hannah Powell thought, at first, that *he was a tramp.* He was a tramp, but not one of the "professional" variety.

Now he was on the telegraph line, with its catchment sheds spread along the line, to catch water for use by the line maintenance crews. Locations were referred to by the pole numbers which were used to identify the places where maintenance was required.

24 July 1923. Day 673. 33m. (7391m.)

F. A. Lowman *had a very interesting hour with Mr de Brune. I wish him the very best of luck in concluding his long trip – 950-pole, east of Bremer Bay.*

Then it was on to Hopetoun, where he again addressed an audience which he *delighted with stories of the experiences during his travels, and a hearty vote of thanks was accorded him and he was wished good luck, good health and a safe termination to his long, tiresome journey.* Everyone loves a winner.

A few days later, walking 25 miles towards Esperance, he travelled *to telegraph line, 5 miles. To 199-pole catchment shed, 5 miles. To rabbit-proof fence, 13 miles. To fence-rider's hut, 2 miles.* Fence-riders rode back and forth along the rabbit-proof fence, making repairs to the fence where necessary, and staying overnight in huts placed along the way.

Next day de Brune walked forty-five miles, one of his longer walks. *On towards Esperance. To telegraph line, 2 miles. To Bald Rock, 12 miles. To Oldfield River, 4 miles. To Manjanup, 5 miles. To 1241-pole (Fanny Cove) and five miles on – and lost road – 22 miles.*

It is surprising that he did not lose his way more often, walking as he did along roads that he had never before travelled on. There must have been many forks in the road which required him to make a choice about which one to follow.

29 July 1923. Day 678. 24m. (7512m.)

Still making his way to Esperance, the pedestrian walked 4 miles up the River Young, at Fanny Cove, before he found a ford across the river. He then walked to the telegraph line 4 miles away and walked on 15 miles, a total of 24 miles for the day.

Next day, after walking 12 miles, he stayed at the Stewart's Station at Dalyup for a few days, delayed by heavy rains. He would have appreciated the rest.

2 August 1923. Day 682. 19m. (7543m.)

After leaving the Stewarts, the Daws met him on the road. *When driving home, about six miles out of town (Esperance) we met Mr de Brune, with his swag up and walking very lame. We didn't know whom he was and took him for a sundowner at first. But he told us his name and we gladly escorted him back to our house for the night and spent a very pleasant evening in his company. The stories of his experiences, etc., his papers and diary were both wonderful and interesting. With best wishes and good luck for the remainder of his journey. Florence Daw, Fred C. Daw.*

3 August 1923. Day 683. 7m. (7550m.)

After leaving the Daw's residence, it was seven miles to Esperance.

In a telegram to the *Daily Mail* de Brune wrote:¹²⁷

Esperance Bay, Sunday—I arrived at Esperance yesterday with a sprained ankle, after a rough passage from Hopetoun. The rivers were swollen, necessitating big detours to avoid huge swamp areas. Owing to storms I was detained at Dalyup Station for two days. At my first crossing, the river was arm-pit high.”

He remained at Esperance for about two weeks, presumably to let his ankle heal. Then, too, he would certainly have given a few lectures. John Ryan, Officer in Charge of Police, Esperance, W.A. wrote: *I have read Mr de Brune's journal and being acquainted with many of the isolated places in the Kimberley that he has visited, I can only admire the pluck and endurance of the man who has travelled through them on foot. I wish him every success on the rest of his journey around Australia.*

The traveller also wrote a pamphlet promoting the town and appeared on the front cover, in a photograph taken in front of the Esperance Hotel.¹²⁸ No doubt he enjoyed the attention of the many people who now saw him as a hero and admired his courage and tenacity.

Esperance – The Sunrise Town

Three roads lead to Esperance; by rail from Kalgoorlie; by sea from Albany; and per boot, as happened to be my fate. I would not advise anyone to follow my footsteps over the 700 miles of road between Perth and Esperance. Fate ordained I was to undertake this section of my journey during the rain months, and at times I wondered whether I was engaged in a swimming or walking stunt.

Weary and footsore I mounted the hill road that turns and twists amid the verdure-clad sandhills between the Pink Lake and Esperance. At times I glimpsed the roofs of the wireless station buildings perched almost on the summit of a high round hill guarding the town from the cold West winds. But never a sight of the town. Bushy sandhills were on all sides, and in the valleys between were small holdings of rich loam that spoke eloquently of the dairying possibilities of the district.

A sharp climb over a ridge between two sandhills, and the town and bay stood revealed at my feet. It has been said that towns have an individuality of their own. I found this so on my first survey of Esperance. Surrounded and sheltered by heavily

bushed sandhills, the town formed a green oasis beside one of the most beautiful natural harbours I have ever seen in a 7500 miles walk around the coast of Australia.

Will anyone consider the town, when the panorama of Esperance Bay lies before them? I doubt it. Personally my eyes were irresistibly drawn to the vast sheet of tranquil waters, intensely blue yet iridescent; landlocked by high islands that reflected the noonday sun in tints of green, pink and blue. A landlocked harbour! So my eyes informed me. Wherever I looked seaward I saw land that sheltered the bay from the storms and fury of the Great Australian Bight.

Some days later I climbed the large granite hill on which the wireless station is situated. The view was superb. Looking out to sea I saw the almost innumerable islands of the Recherche Archipelago – islands from the size of a humpty to huge masses of granite and soil towering hundreds of feet above sea-level. Between the bewildering array of islands that shelter Esperance Bay are fair waterways, roads of delight to the yachtsmen who have visited Esperance. Two main channels lead into the Bay, one from the East and the other to the South-West.

Directly Westward from where I stood on the granite hill lay West Beach, a small rocky bay famous among the local sportsmen as a fishing place. Surrounded by high sand and granite cliffs, it is sheltered early in the afternoon from the direct sun-rays, while the broad sands form a splendid playground for children. Still further along the coast lie Second Bay and Fourth Bay, both splendid fishing centres.

Rossiter Bay, another picnic spot, claims to be regarded as a good fishing centre. Local anglers allow the claim with some reservations, but admit its beauty. Beyond, stretches miles of broad, firm sandy beach right to Cape Le Grand (over 1100 feet high), affording an ideal motor run, similar to that leading to the Bay.

Looking inland, one sees miles and miles of low hills and wooded valleys extending towards the Northern horizon. On a fine day a dark belt of timber shows, marking the beginning of the mallee country that recently received such warm praise from the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Maley. Between the hills I saw huge lakes some thousands of acres in extent.

May I break away here to write of the Pink Lake? It lies about three miles from Esperance and is truly one of the wonders of the West. A widespread lake that speaks of salt. When I passed along its banks the recent rains had well filled its basin, but I was yet able to see the peculiar pink sheen that has given it the name of "Pink Lake." It was early morning and the sun had only just topped the bordering sandhills. White clouds hung overhead drifting along before a slow Westerly wind. The sun's rays, deflected from the drifting clouds, struck the waters of the lake at all angles, giving a fascinating iridescent effect to the salt crystals that heavily impregnate the waters. Every colour of the rainbow reflected, but above all was the elusive pink, pale as the colour of a pink pearl.

From the hill, a magnificent view of Esperance is obtained. The green checkboard of the town, with the houses half hidden by trees, stood revealed as a miniature. Beyond the town the Norseman road climbed the hills, to be lost in the distant haze.

To-day, Esperance consists of three main streets. Along the shores of the Bay the Esplanade, starting from the shelter of the granite hill, extends far beyond the town to the East. The authorities have wisely reserved the seaward side of this road to the public use, and it is to be hoped funds will be available at an early date to beautify and lay out this land. The ground slopes gently to the water's edge – an ever-calm sea bordered with clean white sand. Ideal for the children's playground and for bathing.

From the Esplanade, a jetty half a mile long runs out into the Bay, and I never saw the jetty without some angling enthusiasts

wooing the multitude of various fish that throng Esperance's natural harbour.

Andrew Street joins the Esplanade to Dempster Street, and is but a bare quarter of a mile long, but to-day it is the shopping centre of the town, containing the stores and offices. At the corner of Andrew and Dempster Streets is the Post Office, a substantial stone building well equipped for a large business.

Dempster Street, from the granite hill to the present temporary Police Station, is about a mile and a half long, and is the main residential street of the town. To the West is the Bijou Hall, a well-fitted theatre with a fine dancing floor. Further along is the fine two-storied house erected in boom days by the late Captain Douglas.

Going East Past Andrew Street, one passes the Residency, the Institute, and the Road Board offices; the two latter standing in a small park wherein the grass is so luxuriant that the question arises, why dairying is not carried on to a greater extent around the town.

The railway crosses some distance along Dempster Street, East of the Board's offices. To-day the railway is in the process of construction, although trains run regularly to Circle Valley, sixty miles South of Norseman. Esperance is hoping the Government will sanction the construction of this section, thus joining her up with the outside world.

Esperance has a peculiar fascination. Set apart, the most easterly port of W.A.; without railway connection with other centres of the State; dependent on the State s.s. "Eucla" as the main link with the outside world; she rests and invigorates. "Healthy?" you ask. Esperance, with her exquisite sea breezes, her sea bathing, and all weather yachting facilities, is one of the healthiest spots in the world. No one ever dies in Esperance except the doctors, and it is said that within the last five years two medicos have died in Esperance from sheer exasperation at the healthy townsfolk and visitors.

Esperance deserves a visit for its natural beauty and life-giving qualities. For the children, there are wide, safe sands and strength-giving sea bathing. For the ladies – the mothers especially – rest and recuperation amid natural beauty. For their male relations, sport by sea and land.

Inland lie the new lands of Western Australia. Here are the wheat lands that will double and redouble the productiveness of the State. Here are lands for the orchardist and the mixed farmer. Millions of acres, abundantly fruitful, await development – and even discovery.

The Esperance district is rich in minerals. The town is unique as being a port, the natural port of a huge hinterland, extending to the gates of the famous Kalgoorlie goldfields; it is one of the finest holiday and health resorts in W.A. Many rare minerals are to be found within a short distance of Esperance. The islands contain wealth yet unexplored. Indications of oil are abundant, and it is possible, nay, more probable, that when oil is found in the State, the first discoveries will be within the Esperance district.

The town contains good accommodation for visitors. Houses are to be obtained for the season, but early application is necessary, and rooms are to be let at several houses. There are three hotels. The Esperance Hotel, facing the Bay, has accommodation for 50. The Pier Hotel, also facing the water, has room for 16. The Royal Hotel, Andrew Street, can accommodate 18.

Esperance may be reached by boat from Albany, and by train from Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie to Norseman, thence by motor or mail to Circle Valley (4 miles south of Salmon Gums) to the Esperance Railway.

The entire text of the pamphlet has been transcribed so that the reader can appreciate de Brune's power with words. If only he had taken up his pen to write the full story of his walk, we

would now have some wonderful descriptions of the many places that he visited and be able to see, in our mind's eye, those places as they were a hundred years ago.

16 August 1923. Day 696. 15m. (7565m.)

The “walking stunt” man left Esperance and, after travelling 15 miles, came to Stockyard Creek and Mr Hannett's property. Hannett noted, *A second meeting with Aidan de Brune. First I met him at Wallal in the north-west of WA. Now I have met him again near Esperance, at Stockyard Creek, a distance of 2200 miles from Wallal, and still going strong – like Johnnie Walker. I was pleased to meet him again and wish him good luck. His journey's back is broken and I hope he pulls through safely.*

Then it was three days of walking (59 miles) to Lyburn Station, at Thomas River, where he again rested his ankle for two days. W. N. Matthews, the owner, noted, *having had the pleasure of Mr de Brune's company for two days, he has stood the test of my batching.*^{xxvii} *I wish him the very best of luck and may he always sleep on bags minus fleas.*

23 August 1923. Day 703. 32m. (7656m.)

Leaving Mr Hannett, the walker covered 32 miles. *On to Cape Paisley. To telegraph line, 8 miles. To camp, 7 miles. To turn-off road, 7 miles. To hut, 10 miles.* He was detained at the hut for a day because of his bad foot. Then he walked on to Israelite Bay.

26 August 1923. Day 706. 12m. (7689m.)

At Israelite Bay, the limper had covered 7700 miles in just over 700 days. He *arrived mid-day looking as fit as a fiddle and smiling* according to W Looney, the postmaster. Mrs S. Brown read some of his diary and found that it *contains names of friends*

^{xxvii} Batching: Living as a bachelor.

in other parts. W. T. Brown was certainly accurate in his observation that *his hard and wonderful task shall never be fully appreciated, other than by those who know the class of country he has travelled through and have had to depend on their own resources.*

The smiling traveller stayed at Israelite Bay for two days and then set off for Eyre. A few days later he was *on to catchment shed at pole 939, 11 miles. To catchment shed at pole 1243, 15 miles.*

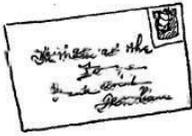
A few days after that he came upon the No. 1 Telegraph Line Party Camp, eighty-eight miles east of Israelite Bay, *looking well and going strong.*

07 September 1923. Day 718. 24m. (7899m.)

On he walked, from pole to pole, catchment shed to catchment shed, coming upon the occasional line party. He reached Eyre Telegraph Station in the evening of 7 September, *looking very well, after what must have been one of his worst stages.*

In case we become used to noting the miles receding underneath de Brune's boots, we might bring to mind the fact that, on most days, the walker girded his loins for another bout of walking – ten miles, twenty miles, thirty miles or more – he walked on. He had already walked for 718 days, covering 7900 miles, and had another 179 days and 2100 miles to march, from Eyre Telegraph Station.

The postman carried a message to Eyre for Sydney J. Simpson, the postmaster, from Wyndham, a distance of 4000 miles. Of course, the sender at Wyndham could have posted the message, but what fun to have someone deliver it 4000 miles by hand – or by foot.



He also carried a letter for Billie Pearce, who noted, *Mr de Brune may be a famous "Sydney Mail" pedestrian, but it strikes me he's a lady's man too. He loves his cups of tea. We have thoroughly enjoyed his stay with us. I thank him for bringing a message from Wyndham.* The message carrier rested in Eyre for two days.

The Eyre telegraph station operated for 50 years from 1877 to 1927. Australia was a relatively early adopter of telegraph technology, despite its low population densities and the difficult conditions sometimes encountered in laying lines. From 1858 onwards, the major capitals were progressively linked, culminating in the link to Perth in 1877.

Australia was linked to the rest of the world for the first time in 1872, via the Overland Telegraph, which ran some 2000 miles from Adelaide through to Darwin where, in November 1871, an undersea cable to Java had been laid. The network continued to expand in size and sophistication until 1959 and was in heavy usage until 1945, after which time telephone usage began to erode public patronage of telegraphy services. The final publicly provided telegraphy service was closed in 1993.¹²⁹

After its closure in 1927, the Eyre telegraph station building was left to decay for the next fifty years. In 1977 it was the focus of a restoration program, by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union, now Birds Australia, with assistance from the Western Australian Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and the Post Office Historical Society, in order to establish it as the Eyre Bird Observatory, Australia's first. The building is listed on the Australian Register of the National Estate.¹³⁰

12 September 1923. Day 723. 27m. (7952m.)

De Brune walked beside the telegraph line towards Eucla, counting, one supposes, the poles and noting the pole number in his diary when he came to a catchment shed. There was no one out there to meet. He passed the old Clifton Homestead, then

came to Moldua Homestead, only to find the owner absent. He camped there, anyway. W. H. Vincent was camping there as well and signed the diary. Proof of de Brune's presence at particular places had long since ceased being a necessity, but it made an interesting record.

More poles, more catchment sheds, more camping out, until, a few days later, after walking 23 miles for the day, he came to Mundrabilla Station and spent the night with J. Booth. They would have shared a meal and, in return, Booth *had the pleasure of de Brune's company. He tells the most interesting stories of his travels.*

It is not every swagman who can entertain his host with interesting stories. De Brune had been on the road just a few days short of two years (726 days) since leaving Sydney and had covered 8000 miles, walking on 446 days. Enough time to accumulate some interesting stories.

Swagman, swaggie, tramp, sundowner, tussocker; different names for the same type: a person, who travelled on foot from place to place, carrying his possessions in a swag. He might live on his earnings from occasional jobs, or on gifts of money or food. Swagmen were prevalent during times of economic uncertainty.¹³¹ Of course, there was *never* a swaggie like de Brune – he was but an *amateur* – no, now he was a pedestrian and, from his diary, we see that he gave plenty in return, for what he received.

Sometimes a swagman was said to be *on the wallaby track*, tramping the country on foot. Often, in the bush, the only perceptible tracks and, sometimes, the only tracks by which the scrub could be penetrated, were the tracks worn down by the wallabies. These tracks might have led to water or they might have been aimless and rambling. Thus the man *on the wallaby* might have been looking for food or for work, or might have been aimlessly wandering by day and getting food and shelter as a *sundowner* at night.¹³²

After a day at Mundrabilla, on walked the pedestrian. *To woolshed, 6 miles. To abandoned homestead, 4 miles. To gate, 4 miles. To sump, 7 miles. Twelve miles east of station, motor record breakers passed me – going strong.*

19 September 1923. Day 730. 24m. (8069m.)

The amateur tramp came to the Telegraph Repeating Station at Eucla, his last place of call in Western Australia, bringing with him *a most welcome shower of rain*. W. H. C. Shaw wished *good luck to Aidan de Brune, the man who blazed the track around Australia.*

The trail-blazer rested at Eucla for 2 days then set off again to cross the Western Australia-South Australia border, nine miles from Eucla.



South Australia and Victoria

23 September 1923. Day 734. 29m. 8115m.

There was no fanfare to mark the trail blazer's entry into South Australia. He walked *to dam, 13 miles. To sump, 1 mile. To sump, 15 miles*, and camped.

Next day it was *rain and gale of wind all day. Thought I was in a dry area!! To dam, 17 miles. To catchment shed, 4 miles.*

Occasionally he met a lineman and he also came upon Nullarbor Station, staying the night. Walking on next day, he came to what he considered to be the *edge of the Nullarbor Plain* and, after walking another 20 miles, camped at White Well Station with T. Butler, J. Lambert, Ellen Lambert, R. Borey.

More walking brought him to Colona Station. *Mr de Brune arrived here on the long trail and stayed for the night. Very interesting and not the average tramp. Lots of good luck. F. Evans.*

Evans used the term “the long trail.” De Brune occasionally mentioned the trail or track or road, mostly when it was sub-standard, or when it was under water. However, for the most part, there is no mention of the road. He just walked on it, whatever its condition. Therefore, Edward Thomas is co-opted to fill the gap left by de Brune regarding roads. Thomas opens his book, *The Ickniel Way*^{xxviii}, with this:

Much has been written of travel, far less of the road. Writers have treated the road as a passive means to an end, and honoured it most when it has been an obstacle; they leave the impression that a road is a connection

^{xxviii} The Ickniel Way by Edward Thomas; ebook at Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/57097>. The Ickniel Way is one of the most famous ancient British roads.

between two points which only exists when the traveller is upon it. Though there is much travel in the Old Testament, “the way” is used chiefly as a metaphor. “Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south,” says the historian, who would have used the same words had the patriarch employed wings. Yet to a nomadic people the road was as important as anything upon it. The earliest roads wandered like rivers through the land, having, like rivers, one necessity, to keep in motion. We still say that a road “goes” to London, as we “go” ourselves. We point out a white snake on a green hill-side, and tell a man: “That is going to Chichester.” At our inn we think when recollecting the day: “That road must have gone to Strata Florida.” We could not attribute more life to them if we had moving roads with platforms on the sidewalks.

We may go or stay, but the road will go up over the mountains to Llandovery, and then up again over to Tregaron. It is a silent companion always ready for us, whether it is night or day, wet or fine, whether we are calm or desperate, well or sick. It is always going: it has never gone right away, and no man is too late. Only a humorist could doubt this, like the boy in a lane who was asked: “Where does this lane go to, boy?” and answered: “I have been living here these sixteen years and it has never moved to my knowledge.” Some roads creep, some continue merely; some advance with majesty, some mount a hill in curves like a soaring sea-gull.

5 October 1923. Day 746. 11m. (8355m.)

On the road, outside Penong, the trail-blazer *met a motor party who took my photo* and, while at Penong, he wrote to the editor of the *Transcontinental* newspaper at Port Augusta

advising of his impending arrival. There would be some lectures to do.

A few days later he was *very bad all day with an attack of dysentery. Took the wrong road and found myself further from Murat Bay than when I started.* He walked 10 miles and reached Mr Skinner's farm at Goode and remained there for 3 days.

12 October 1923. Day 753. 14m. (8417m.)

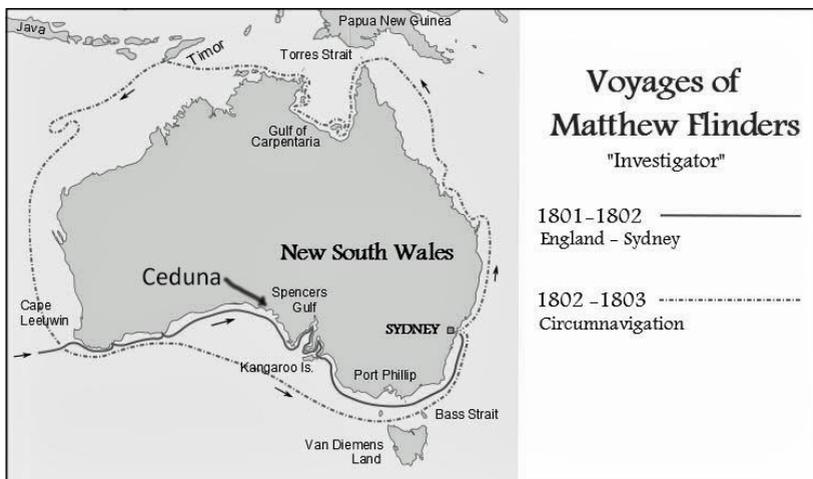
Ceduna is on Murat Bay, at the western end of the Eyre Peninsula, in South Australia and is an inlet of the Great Australian Bight. It was initially named *Baie des Saints* by Nicolas Baudin and, on the same voyage, renamed *Baie Murat* (Murat Bay) after Joachim Murat, a Marshal of France.

In 1802, after Baudin had named Murat Bay, Matthew Flinders sailed east along Australia's southern coast, from Cape Leeuwin to Sydney. Later that year he sailed north from Sydney, charting the coast as he went. After passing through Torres Strait his ship began to leak so Flinders sailed to Timor for repairs and then proceeded to circumnavigate Australia and return to Sydney by way of the western coast.¹³³

On his first voyage, unaware that Baudin had already named the bay, Flinders named it "Denial Bay." Baudin's name received precedence and the name *Denial Bay* was later applied to a small community on the western side of Murat bay.¹³⁴ Flinders was the first to sail around Australia and de Brune the first to walk around Australia. Unlike Flinders, de Brune did not have the naming rights for *any* of the places he visited. They had all been named before he arrived.

13 October 1923. Day 754. 0m. (8417m.)

From Ceduna, de Brune wrote to the editor of the *Transcontinental* newspaper at Port Augusta,¹³⁵ advising that the editor would need to ignore the letter from Penong.



Voyages of Matthew Flinders showing location of Ceduna

Leaving Penong feeling fairly fit I went down the second day with a bad attack of dysentery that laid me by for four days and it was quite an effort to get into [the town of] Murat Bay, or Ceduna, as they now call it.

“It is therefore necessary to revise my time table as, although am I going on the track to-morrow, I shall not be able to put in a full day's walk for some time. I hope to reach Port Augusta on the morning of the 4th November – thus making me ten days late all along the track.

“At Penong I delivered a lecture to a small but very enthusiastic audience on “Through the Never Never Lands on Foot.” The arrangements were quite impromptu as I did not reach the town until midday and only then was a lecture discussed. After the lecture and, in conversation with townsmen, I was told I had given a lot of information not generally known about the vast wilderness of the north lands. I am speaking here (Murat

Bay) to-night. Interest is very keen along my line of route on the journey and especially on what I have seen in the Never Never Lands. I am certain that if I could only speak to a majority of the people of Australia in a body and then answer their questions that something would immediately be done to open up these lands.

The country I am now traversing interests me greatly, The farmers on this West Coast are putting up a great fight, but are not getting the backing they should have, either from the Government or their Country Party. The railway is an advance but when on earth is it to be finished – only a few men are at work and I hear of unnecessary and exasperating delays. Then, why leave the railhead in the air at Penong? That town is terminus to nothing, and there are large areas of good lands far beyond. The railway must go forward towards the border. If there is a reason for a railway from Murat Bay to Penong, then the same reason applies for a railway from Penong to Fowlers Bay.

There are farmers struggling for an existence around Fowlers Bay who are entitled to be brought at once into railway communication with the rest of the State. The Australian Governments have yet to learn that one of their primary reasons for existence lies in the construction of railways and roads. They have learned nothing from history, and the opening up of other new countries. Every other nation has accepted the dictum that settlement follows the railway – not railway the settlement.

“Every State should keep an army of permanent railway builders always at work. They are as necessary as income tax collectors. Main lines should be pushed out into the wilderness – not in short lengths and at irregular intervals, but by steady progress along a well-

defined plan. This West Coast railway system should be extended as soon as possible to the border and the South Australian Government should urge the West Australian Government to adopt a policy of south coast railway construction that would result in a coastal railway from Port Augusta and Port Lincoln to Albany and Busselton, linking up the ports, and with regular branch lines extending inland to the East-West (Commonwealth railway).

I am leaving Ceduna in an hour *en route* to Yardea and Iron Knob. As I have said above I cannot move very quickly at present, but hope to improve in health as I progress.

The invalid pushed on, slowly by his standard, along the track beside the telegraph poles. At this point he left the coast as he headed due east. He arrived a week later at Yardea, 160 miles west of Port Augusta, having travelled 140 miles from Ceduna. *To gate, 6 miles. To dam, 2 miles. To old homestead, 14 miles. At 6 miles I was at foot of Gawler Range and, 4 miles on, entered pass through range.* He camped and next day walked the 12 miles to Yardea Station, after finding the out-camp.

21 October 1923. Day 762. 12m. 8559m.

E. H. Bird, the postmaster and bookkeeper at Yardea Station, wrote: *Mr de Brune walked into Yardea yesterday. A very plucky undertaking and he should adopt as his motto veni, vidi, vici!*^{xxix} The postmaster might have added ‘*ambulavi*’. – *veni, ambulavi, vidi, vici* – *I came, I walked, I saw, I conquered*, or, as Roy Glashan suggested, might have used the more compact *ivi, vidi, vici* – *I went, I saw, I conquered*.

^{xxix} *Veni, vidi, vici.* I came, I saw, I conquered.

De Brune wrote an article from Yardea, for the *Daily Mail*, in which the acute observation of the bookkeeper was borne out.¹³⁶

At last I am out of the wilderness. No more long stages, no more days of lonely travelling, with only the horizon before me, and the wild creatures of the bush for companionship. Now, towns and people and only about 1600 miles to reach my destination.

Reaching Yardea (pronounced Yardee), yesterday, I had a long sleep all the afternoon, and then early to bed, to awake late this morning. Perhaps this is the relaxation of the strain of the long bush journey. Today I have been reading the weekly and daily papers, trying to catch up a knowledge of what is happening in the great world from which I have been absent so long.

One of the first thing I chanced on was the report of the loss of two Youths, H. Steenbohm and E. Stevens, in the York Peninsula, while attempting to walk around Australia. I was terribly grieved for it seemed to me that I have been lacking in not asking the "Daily Mail" to issue a warning against such enterprises.

People may say, 'You have walked around Australia – why not others?' Let me try to put on paper some of the reasons why I succeeded in this endeavour and also the very peculiar qualifications necessary for this journey.

First let me say there is not money enough in Australia to tempt me to walk around again. When I look back on my footsteps I am full of awe at my colossal luck, indeed it is nothing else. By the law of averages I should have laid my bones in the Northlands again and again. Luck has been with me throughout, and only luck pulled me through.

But luck alone is not sufficient. The traveller must be a natural bushman. That is to say, he must not only be a

trained bushman, but he must have the bush instinct. He must know the signs of the bush, and invariably interpret them correctly. And the bush of Australia is not one but many bushes, all opposite in character, all with a deadly menace, to the unfortunate traveller who relaxes his watchfulness for one moment.

The traveller must know and understand the unvarying signs for water. Water is the great question in Australia. Time and again I have hurried or tarried so as to reach a district at the right time of the year. I knew I dare not travel the district except at certain seasons. To disobey this rule would have been death.

Along my route I passed the graves of men who have paid the penalty of the bush. There are hundreds of these, small 'God's acres' throughout the Never Never Lands – monuments to the inflexible punishment of Nature to those who disregard her laws. Constant watchfulness, invariable good luck, and a pig-headedness that amounts to fatalism are necessary for the man who tries to walk around Australia. The person, or persons, who acquiesce in anyone attempting this feat without first assuring themselves that the adventurer possesses these qualifications is almost guilty of assenting to suicide.

But it is not necessary to class Cooke's^{xxx} walk from south to north in the category of dangerous adventures. He had only a space of about 800 miles between the two railheads of Oodnadatta and Katherine to cover, and that stretch of country is traversed by the overland telegraph line, and also is well-supplied with stations.

^{xxx} On 7 March 1923 Edward A. Cooke and C. W. Reed set out to walk from Melbourne to Darwin. At Mildura, Fred McGlashan and C. A. Tomlinson joined the party.

Six days the conqueror wrote from Noning:¹³⁷

Another week and I shall be at Port Augusta and preparing for the last stages of my walk. From Port Augusta to Sydney is 1440 miles, measured by the Trans-Australian Railway. The road will carry me a bit round, but 1500 miles should cover the remainder of my journey, and somewhere between Albury and Goulburn I will have completed the 10,000 miles of a walk round Australia.

The calculating pedestrian wasted no time and, after one day in Yardea, pressed on towards Port Augusta, staying the night at Thurlga Station. Next day it rained so he stayed an extra day. The day after that he lost the track, walked 20 miles, and ended up camping at Mt. Ive Tank.

It must have been a luxury to stay at the Iron Knob Hotel on 31 October 1923. At every stop, at a hotel, station or camping out, people wrote in the diary of the pleasure they had had in meeting him and chatting with him.

2 November 1923. Day 774. 26m. (8725m.).

Soon the walker was at Port Augusta, lecturing at the Town Hall. The proprietor of the *Transcontinental* newspaper, Maurice Hill, noted that *nearly three years ago we made Mr de Brune's acquaintance when he was walking across Australia – Kalgoorlie to Sydney. May he complete his task in the best of health.*

After a stay of three days, the tramp, the pedestrian, the traveller, the swagman, the conqueror, moved on. He *was* out of the wilderness. Before him were 1250 miles of walking, but he must have felt that he was nearly “home.” The towns disappeared under his feet: Wilmington, (which he reached, *after a tramp of about 25 miles from Port Augusta, looking tired and weary but as hard as nails, and as though he could stand a*

good deal more); Melrose; (where he lectured); Wirrabara, (where, on the road in, he *would not accept my invitation to ride in car* and where he lectured once more).

At Wirrabara, J. F. Beckett (not J. T. Beckett, referred to elsewhere) related that, *whilst motoring north this afternoon and exchanging the usual courtesy to a pedestrian, making south,*^{xxxii} *I remarked to my friend Mr Passow, 'that's the Joker walking round Australia.'* I had occasion to find out later that there is many a true word spoken in jest, when I met Mr A. de Brune at the Hotel, that evening, and passed with him a most pleasant time.”

12 November 1923. Day 784. Gladstone.

It seemed certain that the walker would make it back to Sydney on foot. He arrived at Gladstone (SA) on a *hot, dusty day*, after walking 7 miles from Laura, and lectured at Gladstone Primary School at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and at the Memorial Hall in the evening. The head teacher at the school noted that *Aidan de Brune called at this school on his long journey on foot from Sydney to Sydney, and addressed the children in most interesting and descriptive language on his experiences. This lecture was better than all the text books on this subject. Good luck to him and a safe return to his home.*

Vivian Simens, travelling postmaster, who met him at the Commercial Hotel, stated that *Mr de Brune built castles in the air when he left Sydney. Now he is putting a foundation under them.* Alfred Warren had *spent a most enjoyable evening and [was] going home with different thoughts of conditions of isolated spots in Australia, [which have been] visited by Mr de Brune.*

^{xxxii} Probably by sounding the horn of the vehicle.

It might be recalled that all of the comments quoted in this book, by people along the way, appear in de Brune's diaries, details of which are provided in Appendix 1.

A platform attendant crying out the names of the towns through which a train will travel, might proclaim de Brune's route, which followed the line: All aboard for Georgetown, Gulnare, Yacka, Brinkworth, Blyth, Kybunga, Hoyleton, Halbury, Balaklava, Dalkey, Grace Plains, Mallala, Two Wells, Virginia, Gepps Cross, and Adelaide.

No more camping out under the stars, or under cover of a catchment shed, or in a bunk in the workers' accommodation at a cattle station. No more eating out of the tucker bag or worrying whether there would be water at the next well, bore, catchment tank or soak. No more nights camping alone. From Adelaide the going should be easy.

At Brinkworth, Tim Whitehorn, at the Junction Hotel, *had the pleasure of meeting Mr de Brune and I think he is one of the best – game as Ned Kelly – and should be thoroughly supported by all boot makers.* R. B. Griffith, mounted constable, lamented that the weather was *trying* between Brinkworth and Blyth.

The lecturer lectured. Every town he passed through he seemed to lecture, not only to the adults at night, but to the children during the day. The people loved his lectures, thought him brave and true, and wanted to buy the book when it was published. Then they wished him Godspeed. With his lecturing he must have been accumulating a tidy sum against his return to Sydney.

23 November 1923. Day 795. 6m. (8938m.)

Walking the 6 miles from Gepps Cross to Adelaide, de Brune dropped in to the Imperial Hotel about noon and Jack Flannigan informs us, *carried a letter to me from Allan Evans, Deputy Commissioner of Taxation, from Port Darwin, Northern*

Territory.^{xxxii} *In undertaking to walk around Australia he has proved himself to be the possessor of great courage and endurance. We will give him a real Adelaide welcome and a royal send-off.*

From Darwin to the Imperial Hotel is 5314 miles, as de Brune walked it. Carrying the letter was, no doubt, done for fun and to get some good publicity. Still, it was quite a delivery service and the feat was claimed by him as a world record.¹³⁸

While de Brune was in Adelaide, the *Register* carried a long article about him.¹³⁹

“Australia's fiercest animal,” Mr de Brune observed, “is the fly,” and he went on to speak of the birds and beasts which he has seen on his tramp. Kangaroos abounded everywhere. At Nookambor Station a hunter had told him that he had killed 15,000 kangaroos in the last season. Near another station he had seen about 70 dingos drinking at a pool. On his approach they fled. In the swampy portions of the Northern Territory wild buffaloes roamed, and there had been projects to export their flesh, which, according to Mr de Brune, is quite as good for eating as that of ordinary cattle.

There was one shameful practice that disgraced Australia, and that was the catching and exporting of our beautiful bush birds. Near Wyndham (Western Australia) he had seen a bird catcher who had 6000 of the marvellously plumaged painted finches secured in cages, which the man was taking to port for transshipment. It was pitiable (Mr de Brune exclaimed) to see Australia being robbed of her wonderful birds.

^{xxxii} De Brune collected the letter in Darwin in August 1922 and delivered it on 22 November 1923.

The trumper emphatically asserted that a walking trip of thousands of miles is not a task for the new chum. There (he said), one realized that Nature is a formidable antagonist, whose forces had to be overcome if existence was to be maintained. Mr de Brune said that a journey, such as that upon which he is now engaged, calls for solid, slogging endurance. It was a matter, not merely of keeping walking, but of keeping alive, of going without food, water and rest. And apart from the menace of thirst and hunger, and the horror of being lost, there was the occasional danger of molestation by blacks.

“Then,” the bushman declared, “weapons are no good, for you are on your own, and must sleep. You must have cunning and skill sufficient to beat the aborigines at their own game.” Truly, the Australian bush is a thing sometimes to be loved; often to be feared.

Aidan de Brune is short and spare, and he weighs nine stone twelve pounds. Although he is somewhat battered and burned by long exposure to the elements of Nature, he is in excellent health and perfectly fit. He confesses that he is forty-three years old, and that he is not able to cover the long stretches he used to, but is confident that for many more years he will be on the track, living with Nature. The call of the bush is irresistible to him; he cannot remain long in cities. One week in town, he considers, is a little mild excitement; at the end of a fortnight he is uncomfortable: but when the third week comes, the call of the wilds is too strong, and he must take up his swag again, and get on to the track.

Once away from civilization he is happy. He eats little, but possesses the Australian bushman's faculty of being able to consume enormous quantities of tea. His journey (8938 miles) has taken 795 days (26 months) of which he has walked 498 days. The remaining days were

consumed in rests, and in enquiry at stations for directions His daily average is 18 miles.

In the north, where the stages were long, he carried about sixty pounds, which later he reduced to twenty-five pounds. On one occasion he walked 156 miles between stations, and once, when water was scarce, he was forced to eat his rice dry, for four days.

Mr de Brune will deliver lectures in Adelaide.

As the reader is aware, de Brune could spin quite a yarn and often he did not let truth stand in the way of a good story. We will never know, when he tells a story, where truth ends and fiction begins. Still, it all reads wonderfully well, doesn't it?

The storyteller not only delivered lectures but also found time to meet some interesting characters. In Adelaide, His travel diary was signed by:

- Dudley E. Kelsay, hon. sec. N.T. Association;
- F. P. Ward, Secretary, S.A. Branch, Australian Labor Party;
- Raymond L. Lean, Commissioner of Police, Adelaide;
- John Gunn, Leader Opposition, Adelaide;
- W. C. Quinton, Parliamentary Library, Parliament House, Adelaide;
- Dr. H. Basedow, M.A. M.D. B.Sc. F.G.S., President Northern Territorians' Association;
- Alfred Seary, Clerk of Parliament, Adelaide.

29 November 1923. Day 801. 13m. (8951m.)

De Brune rested in Adelaide for about a week and then set off again. We now know that he was on the road for another three months, before he reached Sydney. On his first walk he went all the way from Fremantle to Sydney in about the same time.

The diary continued to record details of distances travelled, but there are no mention of pole numbers or camps or calling at stations. Rather, hotel proprietors are signing the diary. He has left the hard life behind, to be replaced by the soft life – accommodation in hotels along the way. He had earned it!

1 December 1923. Day 803. 7m. (8970m.)

Leaving Adelaide on the 29th I went over Mt Lofty to Stirling and then through Ambleside to Nairne. My route home is through Murray Bridge and Bordertown to Ballarat and Melbourne. Then by way of Benalla and Albury to Sydney – my finishing point. A few State mileages may interest you.

- *N. S. W. 492 miles;*
- *Queensland 2218 miles;*
- *N. Territory 1519 miles ;*
- *W. Australia 3849 miles;*
- *S. A. (to date) 891 miles.*
- *This total mileage to date is 8970.¹⁴⁰*

In another newspaper article he continued his description of his walk from Adelaide to Melbourne, giving some chatty details:¹⁴¹

Nine miles from Monteith I came to Tailem Bend, the western edge of the old Ninety Miles Desert. Here I rested three days. Then on to Cooke Plains – a few houses around a store and railway station. Then to Coomandook, another small place. There was a bachelor's ball on at Coomandook the night of my arrival. but the people wished to hear something of my adventures in the Never Never Lands of Australia. So, a special interval was made for me, and I described some

of the wonders of the Northlands. After I had completed my lecture a collection was taken for me which I had great pleasure in donating to the Children's Christmas Fund, on behalf of the Sydney "Daily Mail."

Yumali and Ki-Ki, two railway sidings, were my next calling points, and then to Coonalpyn. Here I lectured on Sunday evening after church, and was plaintively informed by the missionary that I had a bigger audience than he had been favoured with.

At Coonalpyn, John B. Rynne noted that *Mr Aidan de Brune arrived this evening after a hard day's walk from Coomandook, and was very wet, having to walk most of his journey in a steady soaking rain.*

Since leaving Sydney, 9000 miles had now passed under his feet. The newspaper article continues:

I was to lecture at Keith, on the eastern edge of the desert, but when I arrived I found diphtheria had broken out in the town. The day after my arrival two little children died in the same house within a few hours. The postmaster and clergyman asked me to abandon my lecture as they did not think it wise for the people to gather together and, of course, I immediately agreed. Later inquiries, however, showed that while my lecture was abandoned, church services were still held. Quaint, isn't it?

This outbreak of diphtheria was entirely due to laxness in observance of the health laws. The house in which the outbreak occurred belongs to one of the "big" men of the district. Some few years ago diphtheria broke out in this house and one or two deaths occurred there. No attempt was made to properly disinfect the place, and it appears to me that the germs lay dormant until the late

severe winter encouraged their growth. The house is low set and looks insanitary. I am told it is infested with mice. The owner, a storekeeper, keeps goods – flour and so on – stored in part of it. I saw foodstuffs being brought over to the shop from this store while the house was in quarantine. Some of these "big" country men can truly get away with anything!

A small town, Bordertown, shows signs of prosperity. Buildings were in progress and trade appeared good. Mr Donald Campbell, the proprietor-editor of the *Border Chronicle*, tried to arrange a lecture for me but the Institute authorities wanted too much for the hall – 20/- for a free lecture, in a small town like Bordertown – this is absurd. The collection to defray expenses would not reach that amount. Finally, by permission of the police, Mr Bert Gilmore, of the Bordertown Hotel, gave me the use of his billiard room, and I had a good audience there.

In all my lectures I have stressed the folly – in fact, I might say the insult – to our White Australian policy of the Hughes Government, in reference to the important position of Administrator of the Northern Territory

The country around Bordertown is good, and should, when the remaining big estates are cut up, prove an important part of South Australia.

14 December 1923. Day 816. 13m. (9123m.)

At Bordertown, on his walk from Fremantle to Sydney in 1920-21, de Brune had called in at the *Border Chronicle* office and told of his walk. The newspaper reported on 28 January 1921 that *the whole thing seemed a kind of wild goose caper, but Australia is a free country and, as Mr de Brune appeared of full age and entitled to please himself, the editorial staff gave him its blessing and a free copy of last week's paper.* One wonders whether de Brune reminded "the editorial staff" of that earlier report in the newspaper.

On this occasion, Donald Campbell of the *Chronicle* proffered *hearty good wishes from the Tatiara (the good country) to Mr Aidan de Brune.*

15 December 1923. Day 817. 9m. (9132m.)

At Wolseley, 200 miles east of Adelaide, de Brune's lecture inspired L. N. Wait, secretary to the Institute, to compose a few lines of poetry for the diary:

*The flood was down in the Carpentaria swamp,
Three feet over the mud,
And de Brune camped on the bushy bank,
And swore at the rising flood*

L. N. Wait also made a note in the diary: *I have had the pleasure of being chairman at Mr de Brune's meeting here, in the hall at Wolseley, on his tour around Australia on foot, and can say that he is very interesting.* One hundred years later, the Institute is still standing, as is the old corner store.

17 December 1923. Day 819. 9m. (9146m.)

The holder of the world record for "the distance walked, to hand-deliver a letter" entered Victoria three weeks after leaving Adelaide. He had covered 200 miles in 3 weeks, averaging about 10 miles a day. At the outset of his walk he had intended to travel 30 miles a day, on 330 of the 365 days he had estimated that it would take. He didn't seem to be in a hurry now. He had been away from Sydney for over 2 years, he was earning an income as he walked and, perhaps, the journey had become more important than reaching the destination.

In Adelaide, at the *Herald* office, H. Kneebone had shrewdly noted in the diary that *if he adheres to his present occupation, he need never be unemployed. The work is healthy and the result, if published, should be both interesting and educational.* Still, time was passing. De Brune would be fifty years old on 17 July 1924, though he held himself out to be five years younger.

So the wayfarer must have begun to contemplate the end of his journey. Would he publish a book of his travels? Would he do more walking? Would he take up full time journalism? In the event, he would take up writing serialised stores, as he had begun to do in Bunbury in 1920, before he did his first walk, across the continent.

25 December 1923. Day 827. 18m. (9238m.)

The *Horsham Times* reported:

Aidan de Brune, the Sydney *Daily Mail* pedestrian who is walking around Australia, passed through Horsham on Christmas Day. As private matters in Sydney require his attention he is concluding his walk as soon as possible." Still, it would be two months before he arrived in Sydney.

On Christmas day, his third on the road, de Brune walked the 12 miles from Pimpinio to Horsham and then another 6 miles to Dooen. Before leaving Pimpinio, he had an *interesting chat* with A. S. Eales at the Pimpinio Hotel. At Horsham, W. Lloyd, at the Royal Hotel, was *pleased to meet Mr de Brune and to provide his Christmas dinner. It is an honour one seldom obtains. I wish him every luck and God speed on his remaining journey and the compliments of the season.*



Thomas Doyle, of the Dooen Hotel, was equally honoured: *I am proud to say Mr de Brune stayed at my Hotel on Christmas night. I wish him every success and a prosperous new year.*

If the reveller over-indulged at the Dooen Hotel on Christmas night, it did not slow him down. Next day he walked twenty-six miles to Lubeck.

On 30 December 1923 de Brune walked through Beaufort. A. G. Evans, constable of police, noted, 4.30 p.m. *Mr de Brune called here – dreadfully hot day. I am pleased to have had the pleasure of greeting him but do not envy him on his journey in this heat.*

1 January 1924. Day 834. 23m. (9395m.)

On New Year's Day the walker called at Gordon railway station. He had picked up the railway at Port Augusta and would follow it to Sydney.

On 5 January, at Deer Park, Mrs Dora Manning, of the Cricket Club Hotel, noted that *Mr A. de Brune arrived at the hotel looking fit and well. Trusting he will accomplish his great tramp in good health.*

E. B. Manning noted that *there was a large number of customers present and, as Mr de Brune arrived and stated his object in view, he was accorded a great reception as everyone present recognised the task he had undertaken, and wished him every success in his undertaking and a happy and successful new year.* One can imagine the back-slapping, the offer of drinks and the general camaraderie of the group.

Back in Cairns, the seer who had correctly predicted the trouble that de Brune would experience in walking through the Gulf country in the wet season, had also written, "what good this will do to anyone, I am at a lost to understand." The walk had done *many* people good; those with whom he had shared a camp; those he had lectured to and provided with an evening of entertainment; those whom he had inspired with his courage and

tenacity; those at the Cricket Club Hotel on 5 January 1924, who recognised his achievement and felt, just for a moment that they were part of it.

Next day he walked the three miles to Sunshine and spent the night with the 1st Sunshine Troop, Australian Boy Scouts Association – camping out, one supposes.

7 January 1924. Day 840. 9m. (9461m.)

A walk of nine miles saw de Brune reach Melbourne on 7 January 1924. This was his last state capital and the last coastal city to be visited before he headed north to Sydney. He remained in Melbourne for two weeks. There is little mention of it in his diary and, surprisingly, few certifications and comments.

He did meet Ernest G. Mitchell, a Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (L.R.A.M.). As mentioned earlier, de Brune was a competent pianist and music teacher. Perhaps he knew Ernest Mitchell from elsewhere.

26 January 1924. Day 859. 24m. (9564m.)

Five days and 100 miles after leaving Melbourne, the musician reached Euroa and reported to the *Labor Daily*:¹⁴²

"I arrived here late last night, some 24 miles behind my schedule. The roads from Melbourne to here are all abnormally rough and hard. In fact, I may say from Melbourne to here I have experienced the worst roads throughout my journey.

"In consequence, my feet have become very swollen and inflamed, and to-day (Sunday) I have had to lay up and rest. I cannot put my right foot square on the ground. Anyhow, I hope to go on some distance to-morrow, perhaps, to Baddaginni – anyhow, to Violet Town. In

any case, from here to Albury, at least, I shall continually lose time, and do not expect to reach that town until the end of the week, instead of Tuesday next.”

29 January 1924. Day 862. 21m. (9585m.)

The lame traveller stayed the weekend at Euroa and then pushed on. At Baddaginnie, H. S. Gilbert, a hairdresser penned a ditty:

*I saw in the distance a young man on a walking tour,
He had whiskers down to the floor,
We shaved him quite clean on Monday eve
And he continued his walk in the morn.*

R. A. Sutherland noted that he *felt honoured to have had the pleasure of shaving and haircutting Mr de Brune. It was 28 months since he had had a shave, but I was lucky to have a razor with a strong handle and removed the beard, I think, painlessly.*

De Brune was still a month from Sydney, but it seems that he was preparing for his arrival there.

On he walked to Benalla, Winton, Glenrowan, Wangaratta, Springhurst, Chiltern, Barnawatha, and Wodonga. Then he crossed the Murray River and was back in New South Wales, at Albury.



Albury to Sydney

3 February 1924. Day 867. 4m. (9670m.)

After walking 9670 miles and being away from Sydney for 867 days, de Brune was feeling it. Constable W. J. Armstrong noted that he had *much pleasure in having met Mr de Brune at Albury. He, apparently, at the present moment, is fighting a battle against his strength, but I hope he is successful in his ambition of being the first man to walk round Australia.*

Still, the conqueror walked on, staying at hotels along the route and gathering more *best wishes* in his diary. Marathon runners say that after twenty miles one feels that one has only run half way – the last six miles will be as difficult, if not more difficult, than the first twenty.

In de Brune's case, perhaps he was beginning to *unwind*. For two and a half years he had kept his shoulder to the wheel or, rather, his feet to the road. He had faced the task, day after day, his eye always on his final goal – Sydney. From Albury he had but thirty days to go – thirty days to cover the remaining distance of 400 miles.

17 February 1924. Day 881. 9m. (9860m.)

Mr Aidan de Brune reached Yass at 1 p.m. today, having travelled on foot round Australia, 9860 miles to Yass. He will complete his long journey when he reaches Sydney, next week. His great feat is one that will stand as a memorial to his endurance and will be a matter of admiration to all Australians. J. F. Cuninsen, Yass Courier.

21 February 1924. Day 885. 15m. (9916m.)

The *Labor Daily* reported:¹⁴³

Mr de Brune arrived at Goulburn looking bronzed and weather-beaten after a trek of 9916 miles around Australia...He is suffering from sore feet, and is pleased that his long trip is coming to an end. To-night and to-morrow he is resting at the Grand Central Hotel, and intends resuming his trip on Saturday morning. Taking the remainder of his journey in easy stages, he will arrive in Sydney on March 3

27 February 1924. Day 891. 24m. (10022m.)

Mr Aidan de Brune arrived here, at the Family Hotel, Thirlmere, last night at 6 p.m. and had a long lemon squash, which he well deserved after his long tramp of 24 miles from Mittagong. He stayed at my hotel last night and is now finishing his breakfast. He is prepared to take to the dry and dusty road again and to complete his tramp around big Australia. Mr de Brune is not a very big man in build but has a very big heart to undertake such a hard and long tramp for the past two years and more. I wish him good luck and success, back to Sydney amongst his friends. – Thomas Sawyer.

After having his location certified by Thomas Sawyer, the big-hearted pedestrian set off again and, still following the railway, walked the 24 miles through Picton, Maldon, Menangle and Glenlea to Campbelltown, where he stayed the night at the Club Hotel. Miss Florence Munnery quite *enjoyed his playing on the piano*. One wonders what music he might have chosen to play.

28 February 1924. Day 892. 14m. (10036m.)

Next day the relaxed adventurer walked the 14 miles to Liverpool, on the outskirts of Sydney. He had travelled 10,036 miles and had been away from Sydney for 892 days, of which he had walked on 565 days. He stayed the night at Casey's

Family Hotel, as noted by Phyllis Cox: *we were all interested in hearing his story about his wonderful journey.*

Next day he walked 9 miles to Bankstown where he stayed at the Bankstown Hotel for a few days. He was not in a hurry as he basked in the glory of his achievement, as evidenced by the many congratulatory messages in his diary. He had already agreed with J. J. Gay on a date and time, to walk up to the same building from which he had departed two and a half years earlier – the former office of the *Daily Mail*.

Since de Brune had left Sydney, the *Daily Mail*, for which he had provided articles throughout his walk, had become part of the *Labor Daily*, the “new series” of which began publication on 23 January 1924. R. F. Kearney, of the *Labor Daily* was pleased to meet him at the Bankstown Hotel. *One of the greatest pleasures of my uninspiring life has been to receive a grip of the hand from Mr Aidan de Brune. The pleasure was accentuated by the fact that I was the first member of the ‘Labor Daily’ staff to greet Mr de Brune and welcome him, after his record walk, to the environs of Sydney.”*

De Brune spent a few days at Bankstown and then walked 6 miles to Enfield, and then to his accommodation at Ireland’s Hotel, Burwood.

4 March 1924. Day 897. 9m (10,060 m.)

On 4 March 1924, after 897 days away, during which he had walked 10,051 miles, the home-comer walked the final 9 miles to Sydney, a mere doddle for the seasoned walker. He had walked a total of 10,060 miles. John J. Gay signed him in, as he had signed him out, with an entry in the diary.

Mr Aidan de Brune arrived at the office of the “Financial and Commercial Times,” 9 Pitt Street, Sydney in the forenoon of the fourth day of March, 1924. He left the door of this office, then occupied by the “Daily Mail” Newspaper Company, at 3.45 in

the afternoon of the twentieth day of September, 1921. His journey is completed. – John J. Gay.

Then it was H. Barry, the accountant's turn. He noted, *I have followed the walk of Aidan de Brune with great interest and his powers of description and humour are all powerful. May his shadow never grow less.*

No matter that de Brune took a year and a half more than he intended, to complete his walk. In the event, as it often is, the journey was more significant than reaching the destination. Still, he must have had some fun in reaching the destination and celebrating with one or two large glasses of lemon squash.

The shadow of Aidan de Brune (Herbert Charles Cull, to give him his birth name) *did* grow less. His name and his achievement *were* lost, in the one hundred years since he walked his amazing walk. It has been a privilege to resurrect the details of his achievement from almost certain oblivion and to assist in making his diary and other publications available to all who wish to read them.

* * *

In de Brune's diary, underneath J. J. Gay's statement that the walk was completed, and the compliment by H. Barry, is a note by J. T. Beckett:

"I had the pleasure of meeting Mr de Brune at Darwin. He had then come through some terrible stages and, knowing what was ahead of him, thought he was continuing a hopeless task. While in Darwin Mr de Brune endeavoured to reconcile industrial troubles, but failed by reason of the active efforts of certain Government officials, whose desire was to foment them. Aidan de Brune is one of the gamest men I have ever had the honour to know."

When he met de Brune in Darwin, Beckett had just come in from Vanderlin Island in the Pellew Group, just off the coast from Borroloola, Northern Territory.¹⁴⁴

In an article which appeared in the Darwin *Northern Standard* on 5 October 1923,¹⁴⁵ when de Brune was in Penong, South Australia, Beckett caught more than a glimpse of de Brune. The article appeared when de Brune was about 1700 miles from finishing his walk in Sydney:

Travelling towards us at the average rate of between fifteen to twenty miles a day is a compact storage packet of dynamic force known as Aiden de Brune. This extraordinary human machine has covered thousands of miles in his walk round Australia, and is now on the home stretch, somewhere along the coast of the Great Australian Bight, approaching South Australia's western border.

When de Brune set out he attracted no notice. A few hundred miles further on he was regarded as a homeless tramp, because he looked like one. In Queensland folks began to take notice of him, and considered him a crank who would end up dead beat in some back country town. When he reached the Northern Territory border, bushmen wanted to know where he was bound for and if he needed any help. When he got well in after covering a couple of thousand miles, they asked why he walked when he could steal a horse, and offered to steal one, or several for him, or give him a few if he would prefer them as a present.

When they found that all he needed was friendship, a drink of tea and a bit of beef and damper now and again, they reasoned with him and tried to induce him to settle down on good food and water with them. They had discovered that he could extract from a shanty piano

music that nobody knew was in it; could sing a good song, tell a good story, squeeze sweet sounds out of a concertina, give some very excellent advice to those in travail, and generally act like a being from a better world.

In Darwin he tried to make peace between two rival unions, and only realised the impossibility of it when he discovered that the disturbing element was the Commonwealth Government, and that factional strife had been deliberately fomented to break industrial unionism in the interest of moneyed combines. But he earned the good will of both sides as an honest hearted trier.

I had just come into Darwin with my wife out of the Gulf of Carpentaria, where we had been wafted about by sundry cyclonic disturbances when I got a wire from the *Daily Mail* asking me to look out for Aidan de Brune walking round Australia. I expected to see a superman come striding in with a gun on his hip, dominating everybody he met with the magnificence of his physique, and then I forgot all about him. In a month or so a little man, who was positively droll, came stepping along the [railway] sleepers into Darwin, followed by a number of aboriginals who wanted to know what tribe he belonged to. However they soon found out Aiden de Brune was a proper white man, and a high grade at that.

De Brune is under five feet six inches, weighs under nine stone, and has a face that looks weak. But he also has a will that is steel. He has arrived at a station hut with a half-eaten goanna in his belt, and left it with a few johnny cakes, and the undying friendship of the lonely stockman. When you see him you want to get away from him. When you speak to him you don't want him to go away from you. He is a man and a gentleman up and down, and a library of information. He is a sport among

sportsmen and a man of whom the Australian Journalists' Association should be proud, for he has not spared himself to get copy.

Aiden de Brune has not finished his walk but should he never move another yard further, he will have put up a record that few, if any, will ever attempt to equal.”

* * *

5 March 1924.

The *Daily Standard* (Brisbane) reported:¹⁴⁶

Aidan de Brune, who left Sydney twenty-nine months ago to walk around Australia, returned to Sydney yesterday, having successfully carried out his intention. He looks fit and well after many hardships and escapes, and in his somewhat picturesque garb he attracted a great deal of attention as he walked along the city streets.

9 March 1924.

“Joan” wrote in the diary:

“Whoever is this sunburned stranger? Ah, Mr Aidan de Brune. On this day, 9/3/24, Mr de Brune appeared on our doorstep, springing a surprise on all those dwelling within. We all spent a pleasant evening, thanks very much to Mr de Brune's beautiful playing.”

One wonders whether de Brune carried out the intention, which he gave in Albany, not to cross Pitt Street without the aid of a motor car.



After the Accolades

*A loafer, lying where the grass is deep,
I listen to the warm air softly sighing
In sympathy at seeing half asleep
A loafer lying.*

*A swarm of insects crowd about me, crying
Faint mating-cries, or clicking as they leap
From tuft to tuft, or flashing gauze in flying.*

*I murmur: I hate you, imps that flit or creep,
Born for an hour for the mere sake of dying;
Have you no message fit to catch and keep?—
"A loafer—lying!"*

— John Le Gay Brereton

Little is known about Aidan de Brune following the conclusion of his walk. We catch a glimpse here and there.

On 28 March 1933 an article by de Brune appeared in the *Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser*⁴³ as one of a series of articles about Australian novelists. The article was about de Brune himself, in which he outlined his life. It was mostly fictitious. As we know, de Brune was actually Herbert Charles Cull and he did few, if any, of the things mentioned in the article.

However, the last paragraph poses the rhetorical question: "My amusements?" He then answers the question: "Two absorbing ones. Writing-mystery stories and barracking Federal politicians to foster a national Australian literature. The first easy; the last apparently very difficult."

Details of his mystery stories and other articles which he wrote, appear in the bibliography, later in this book.

Also in 1933, an article appeared in the *Port Augusta Transcontinental*, under the heading “Health Hiking.”¹⁴⁷

The inviting sunshine which lured so many local residents out of doors for the Easter vacation, enticed four fair Port Augusta disciples of Aidan de Brune, the renowned globe-trotter, out on a health hike on Monday morning. They left Port Augusta at 9 a.m. for One Stick Bay – a fourteen-mile tramp – where they arrived at 1 p.m., a little weary but quite proud of their powers of natural locomotion, and soon forgot their disappointment at not getting a lift with some sympathetic motorist.

De Brune’s walk was obviously still remembered in Port Augusta.

* * *

Herbert Charles Cull, H. F. C. de B. Culle, Aidan de Brune – What are we to make of this enigmatic man who could reel off words by the thousand in writing serialised mystery stories but who, later, never wrote about his experiences during two and a half years on the road, *per boot*.

From his description of the desert in *Just a Woolly*, related earlier in this book, and the many descriptions in his mystery stories, it is obvious that he could have written something worthwhile. He could have told us what it was like to camp alone, night after night in the open. He could have told us what it was like to visit town after town to lecture to the residents about his travels, to enjoy their company for a short while, and then to move on. He could have told us when and where he learned to play the piano, when he picked up his proficiency with words, why he left England, never to return to his wife and child,

why he changed his identity. Alas, we will probably never know what he thought about any of it. Why was it that everybody he met had a good word to say about him in his diary, yet he seemed to prefer his own company so much of the time?

Percival Searle, who wrote the *Dictionary of Australian Biography* in 1949, covering the lives of a thousand people, had obviously thought about whether *he* was really capturing something of the essence of the people he wrote about. He included the following epigraph to the Dictionary:

When Plutarch placed in noble array, for the contemplation of ages to come, his images of heroes and sages, or when Dr Johnson drew that gallery of poets, so many of whom only survive in his portraiture, the writers must have been conscious how little of the real men lay behind those strong or graceful representations, how much that was even faithfully recorded may convey a false impression, how much was inevitably omitted which might contradict every deduction and alter every estimate.¹⁴⁸

It is to be hoped that you, the reader, have caught at least a glimpse of this fascinating man who possessed the courage and tenacity to keep walking for two and a half years, often in unpleasant and even appalling conditions and who then came back to Sydney and settled down to a life of “*writing-mystery stories and barracking Federal politicians to foster a national Australian literature.*”

ivi, vidi vici

[I went I saw, I conquered]

Arda de Bruce

Appendices

1. De Brune's Diary and Book of his Walk

Aidan de Brune converted his travelling diary, or manuscript journal, into a book titled *Record Diary of a Walk Around Australia*. A copy of both the diary and the book are held by the State Library of New South Wales.

The book consists of typed foolscap pages, bound in a maroon cover, with gold lettering on the spine. A hand-written note on the title page of the book states:

"The original manuscript journal in four small pocket books is in the mss. room of the Mitchell Library. Oct. 1924."

The next page of the book (unnumbered), contains the heading for the commencing section of the walk (New South Wales). It has a vertical, hand-written, note down the left side of the page, which states:

"Donated Aidan de Brune 25/10/24"

Following the title page and the unnumbered *section* page, are 176 numbered pages, together with six unnumbered pages which indicate the start of each subsequent section of the walk: Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales.

This book, *The Amateur Tramp*, contains many quotations from *Record Diary of a Walk Around Australia*, which has been made available as an ebook by Project Gutenberg Australia.

Refer to the Bibliography at the end of this book for a link to the ebook.

The diary consists of 4 notebooks.

- Book 1 measures 2½in. x 4½in. (60mm. x 115mm.) and contains about 100 ruled pages. It covers the period 20 September 1921 to 12 May 1922
- Books 2, 3 and 4 each measure 3in. x 7in. (75mm x 180mm.) and contain about 250 ruled pages.
- Book 2 covers the period 13 May 1922 to 20 May 1923
- Book 3 covers the period 21 May 1923 to 22 December 1923
- Book 4 covers the period 23 December 1923 to end of the walk (4 March 1924).

Entries for each day have been neatly written up and contain details of the distance walked each day, together with the cumulative distance walked to the end of each day. Often there are entries made by people whom de Brune met at his destination, or along the way, certifying that he was at the place stated, on the stated day. Sometimes the people making the certification added well-wishes and other comments.

It is remarkable that the diaries survived the walk intact, when one considers that de Brune walked in all weather, including heavy rain, and that on many occasions he forded creeks and rivers. On one occasion, day 230, de Brune notes that two pages are missing from the diary.

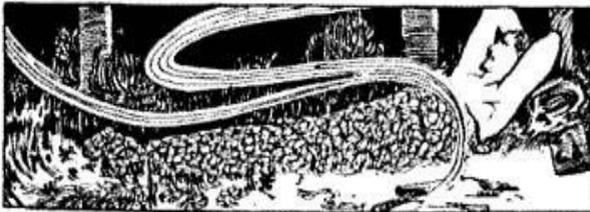
2. Statistics

The following statistics have been compiled from figures appearing in the typescript, *Record Journal of a Walk Around Australia*, although they do not appear in the book in the format presented here. In compiling the statistics, the mileage walked each day was entered into a spreadsheet. From these figures the total miles walked, total for each state/territory, cumulative mileage at the end of each day, and number of days on which de Brune did not walk, were calculated.

De Brune was remarkably accurate in his arithmetic. A few non-material errors were made which, in total, had virtually no effect on the totals. He was as accurate as he could be with distances. In many cases he had to use his best guess to calculate the distance travelled in a day. No doubt he was careful to check his distances with the overall distance between points, which he found on sign posts, along railways lines or telegraph lines, or on maps. Whatever the exact total distance he finally travelled, his was an epic walk. Let us not be churlish about allowing him to describe it as a walk of "ten thousand miles."

Aidan de Brune's Walk Around Australia

	NSW-1	QLD	NT	WA	SA	VIC	NSW-2
Started	20/09/21	15/10/21	20/05/22	02/10/22	23/09/23	17/12/23	04/02/24
Ended	14/10/21	19/05/22	01/10/22	22/09/23	16/12/23	03/02/24	04/03/24
Distance (miles)	492	2218	1519	3849	1059	533	390
Total days	25	217	135	356	85	49	30
Days did not walk	6	92	44	137	22	19	5
Days walked	19	125	91	219	63	30	25
Cumulative							
Distance (miles)	492	2710	4229	8078	9137	9670	10060
Total days	25	242	377	733	818	867	897
Days did not walk	6	98	142	279	301	320	325
Days walked	19	144	235	454	517	547	572



3. A Bibliography of de Brune's Writing

Go to <http://gutenberg.net.au/plusfifty-a-m.html#debrune> for ebooks of most, if not all, of the titles listed below.

Aidan de Brune also wrote as Frank de Broune, John Morriss and H. F. C. de B. Culle. This bibliography excludes details of *articles* written by, or about, de Brune which relate to his walks. Most are referred to in the Endnotes at the end of this book.

Novels

The Nine Stars Mystery (1920) (incomplete) (Frank de Broune)

Dr Night (1926) Dr. Night Trilogy No. 1

The Carson Loan Mystery (1926)

The Dagger and Cord (The Lonely Lady) (1927)

The Phantom Launch (1927)

The Shadow Crook (Fingerprints of Fate) (1928)

The Little Grey Woman (1929)

The Green Pearl (1930) Dr. Night Trilogy No. 2

The League of Five (1930)

The Unlawful Adventure (1930)

Douchard's Island (1931)

Find This Man (1931)

The Grays Manor Mystery (1931)

The Murders of Madlands (1931)

Whispering Death (1931) Dr. Night Trilogy No. 3

The Three Snails (1932)

Cain (The Framing of Inspector Denvers) (1933) (The serialisation as "Cain" was by John Morriss)

The Flirting Fool (1933)

The Kahm Syndicate (1934)

The Fortune-Telling House (1935)

Saul and the Spinster (1935)

Short Fiction

Mary Cronig:

Meet Mary Cronig (1928)

Mary Quite Contrary (1928)

Mary's Little Lamb (1930)

Mary's Fleece (1930)

The Pursuits of Mr Peter Pell (1920) (Frank de Broune)

Just a Woolly (1922)

Who Killed David Condon? (1927)

Silver Bells (1928)

The Marrickville Murders (1928)

The Empty Match-box (1929)

The Dope Runner (1930)

Whiteface (1930)

The Five Minute Murder (1931)

Voodoo Vengeance (1931)

The Three Cats (1933) (John Morriss)

The Pearl of Peri (1935)

Adelbert Cay: Wanted on the Phone (1937)

Non Fiction

The Gift to See Ourselves As Others See Us (1923)

A Stroll Around Australia: 10,000 miles (1923)

Where the Lost Legions Go (1923)

Record Diary of a Walk Around Australia (1924)

Fifty Years of Progress in Australia 1878-1928 (1928) as
editor

Ten Australian Authors (2017)

4. Places Visited – In Chronological Order of Visit

The names are listed down the first column to the end of the page, then down the second column on the same page, then down the third column on the same page.

NSW	Middle Camp	Murrurundi
Sydney	Main Camp	Ardglen
Burwood	Swansea	Willow Tree
Rhodes	Belmont	Wallabadah
Meadowbank	Charlestown	Goonoogoonoo
Eastwood	Adamstown	Tamworth
Epping	Hamilton	Newingham
Hornsby	Newcastle	Tintinbull
Asquith	West Maitland	Moonbee
Mount Colah	Lochinvar	Bendemeer
Kuring-gai	Greta	Armidale
Berowra	Branxton	Black Mountain
Cowan	Whittingham	Guyra
Hawkesbury River	Singleton	Llangothlin
Wondabyne	Rixs Creek	Glencoe
Woy Woy	Glennies Creek	Stonehenge
Tascott	Ravensworth	Glen Innes
Point Clare	Antiene	Bolivia Pass
Gosford	Muswellbrook	Bolivia
Lisarow	Aberdeen	Bluff Rock
Ourimbah	Scone	Bungulla
Wyong	Wingen	Tenterfield
Catherine Hill Bay		

QLD	Gatton	Budger
Wallangarra	College	North Arm
Bald Mountain	Forest Hill	Eumundi
Wyberba	Laidley	Cooroy
Lyra	Granchester	Pomona
Ballandean	Calvert	Tural (abandoned)
Glen Alpin	Lanefield	Cooron
Beverley	Rosewood	Monkland
Stanthorpe	Thagoona	Nashville
Applethorpe	Wallon	Gympie
The Summit	Karribin	Harveys Siding
Thulimbah	Ipswich	Kinsella
Cottonvale	Oxley	Gimelda
Dalveen	Brisbane	Theebine
Warwick	Kearon	Paterson
Millhill	Chernside	Gundiah
Rosehill	Downfall Creek	Bongmallon
Toolburra	Ball Hills	Netherby
Deuchar	Petrie	Tiaro
Hendon	Morayfield	Maryborough
Ellinthorp	Cobulture	Aldershot
Elphinstone	Elimbar	Colton
Clifton	Beerburum	Torbanlea
Nobby	Glasshouse Mtns.	Burrum
Greenmount	Berrwah	Howard
Finnie	Landsborough	Isis Junction
Drayton	Mooloolah	Goodwood
Harristown	Eudlo	Woodapine
Toowoomba	Palmwoods	Gotlow
Withcott	Woombye	Elliott
Helidon	Nambour	Bundaberg
Grantham	Yandina	Goolburum

Baloongie	Midgee	Milleve
Meadowvale	Gavial	Farleigh
Moorland	Port Curtis Junct.	Coningsby
Avondale	Rockhampton	The Leap
Yandaran	Parkhurst	Hampden
Littabella	Etna Creek	St Helens Station
Mullet Creek	The Caves	Bloomsbury Stn.
Watalgan	Yamba	Lascelles Stn.
Rosedale	Canooka	Proserpine
Murrays Creek	Marlborough	Longford Creek
Lowmead	Kooltandra	Mookarra
Korenan	Strathmuir	Bowen
Colosseum	Styx Quarries	Don
Miriam Vale	Styx	Delta
Bororen	Wumalgi	Nerinda
Iveragh	St Lawrence	Euri
Toooloa	Kalarka	Wathana
Gladstone	Yukolgy	Salisbury Stn.
Boyne Valley Jct.	Carmila	Guthalungra
Mt Miller	West Hill	Kyburra
Pyealy	Ilbilbie	Broadlands
Yarwun	Mt Christian	Gumlu
Mt Larcom	Karremal	Wakala
Ambrose	Koumala	Babawaba
Lorne Siding	Loloma	Koberinga
Epala	Yukan	Inkerman
Arno Quarries	Sarina	Keebah
Raglan	Bakers Creek	Ivah
Toonda	Sandy Ck. Ssp. Br.	Koolkuna
Marmor	Coles Hall	Home Hill
Bajool	Mackay	Carstairs
Ardur	Glenella	Marali

Katoora	Pudilliba	Deerel
Macdesme	Rollingstone	Figtree Creek
Mirrigan	Kinduro	McDonnel Creek
Ayr	Mongobulla	Fishery Creek
Brandon	Mutarnee	Mt Sophia
Pioneer	Coolbie	Meerawa
Lochinvar	Bambaroo	Quingilli
Hodel	Yurunga	Bohana
Poopoonbah	Toobanna	Aloomba
Giru	Ingham	Banna
Minehan	Lilypond	Pyramid
Piralko	McNabs	Gordonvale
Cromarty	Ripplecreek	Meringa
Clevedon	Cardwell	Kemma
Alligator Creek	Murray Bridge	Yates
Nome	Tam O'Shanter	Edmonton
Smyths Siding	Maria Creek	Warwon
Partington Siding	Marurilyan	White Rock
Stewarts Creek	Innesfail	Woree
Cluden	Daradgee	Cairns
Garbutts Siding	Garradunga	Edgehill
Ooononba	Eubenangee	Stratford
Quealban	Waughs Pocket	Freshwater
Townsville	Moolaba	Redlynch
Townsville West	Mirriwiral	Jungara
Garbutts Siding	Mopa	Stoney Creek
Netjar	Babinda	Barron Falls
Kulburn	Palmas	Kuranda
Yabulu	Frenchmans Creek	Fairyland
Purono	Bellenden Ker	Myola
Angea	Harveys Creek	Mantaka
Kurakan	Cunia	Kowrowa

Stoney Creek	Sawmill Siding	Clarina
Oaklands	Wirra-Wirra	Normanton
Koah	Forsayth	Bynoe River
Kambul	Lorne Valley	Big Bynoe River
Biboohra	Georgetown	Flinders River
Mareeba	Durham	Inverleigh
Dimbulah	Cumberland	Warnadinga Stn.
Boonmoo	Crooked Creek	Yarruna
Petford	Forest Home	Burketown
Lappa Junction	Gilbert River	Albert River
Kooboora	Little River	Punjaub Swamp
Almaden	Moonlight Creek	Punjaub Station
Lime Siding	Croydon	Lawn Hill Creek
Lyndbrook	Golden Gate	Lawn Hill Station
Frehurst	Green Creek	Lilydale Springs
Mt Surprise	Black Bull	Herbertvale Stn
Einasleyh	Haydon	

NT	Pine Creek	Baldy Springs
Gallipoli Station	Union	Paddy Springs
Lulu Waters	Lady Alice Camp	Freds Creek
Golden Waters	Burrundie	Delemere Station
Dead Mans Hole	Lady Grace	Ruby Springs
Belyabba Crossing	Brocks Creek	George Creek
Alexandria Station	Adelaide River	Revolver Springs
Connells Lagoon	Stapleton Siding	Battle Creek
Brunette Downs	Rum Jungle	Water Bag Creek
Anthony Lagoon	Darwin	Victoria River
Cobbs Creek	Rum Jungle	Victoria River Stn.
Goose Creek	Stapleton	Crawford Creek
Turkey Creek	Adelaide River	Surprise Creek
Eva Downs Stn.	Howie	Sundown Hill
Broad Creek	Burrundie	Jasper Gorge
Cattle Creek	Lady Alice Camp	Slatey Hole
Bundarra Creek	Union	Skull Creek
Gravel Creek	Pine Creek	Dingo Spring
Monmurra Waters	Cullen	Timber Creek
Tangi Idgi Waters	Edith River	Horse Creek
Newcastle Waters	Emungalan	Sandy Creek
Frews Ponds	Mandolloo	Alea Creek
Daly Waters	Katherine	Auvergne Lagoon
Warlock Ponds	King R Crossing	Auvergne Station
Bitter Springs	Limestone Creek	The Keep
Mataranka Station	Scotts Creek	Dicks Creek
Maranboy	Native Cat	Snakes Creek
Roper R. Crossing	Mathieson River	Baines River
Katherine	Camp-Oven Creek	Stoney Point Ck.
Edith River Camp	Rock Hole	Keep Station
Horseshoe Siding	Bulls Creek	Moriarty Creek
Ferguson River	Willeroo Station	Newry Station
Cullen Siding		

WA	Panton River	Neilabublian Well
Argyll Station	Prospect Creek	Yalleroo Well
Ord River	Duffers Well	Deep Well
Granite Creek	Sheep Camp Well	Yalleroo
Ivanhoe Station	Halls Creek	Roebuck Plns Stn
The Bend	Nine-Mile Well	Cockles Well
Goose Hill	Rock Hole	Broome
Wyndham	Koogall Station	Thangoo Station
Muggs Lagoon	Lamboos Station	Jacks Well
Spring Creek	Margaret R. Stn.	Goldwinners Well
Cheese Tin Creek	Louisa Downs Stn.	Deep Well
Sandy Creek	Pond Springs	Nybrica Well
Dillons Springs	Louisa River	Lagrange
Dry Lagoon	Black Hills	Frazer Downs Stn
Dunham Station	Fossil Downs Stn.	Anna Plains Stn
Dunham River	Fitzroy Crossing	Nooteen Well
Upper Dunham Xg	Jubilee Downs Stn	Moojan Well
McPhee Creek	Troy Lagoon	Nambeet Well
Junction Station	Snake Creek	Marlambool Well
Bow River	Quanbun Station	Woroo Well
Butlers Bow	Halfway Lagoon	Wallal
Turkey Creek	Nookombar Stn	Wallal Downs Stn
Cartridge Station	Upper Liveringa	Yunadong Well
Frogs Hole	Mt Anderson Stn	Burgen Well
Fletchers Old Stn.	Lower Liveringa	Warnagul Well
Six Mile Crossing	Willum	Pardoo Station
Ord River	Yeeda Station	Condon
Dougals Well	Derby	de Grey Station
Wolfs Creek	Nobbys Well	Strelley Station
Reedy Creek	Fitzroy River	Pundano
Alice Downs Stn	Logue River	Pippingarra Siding
Grants Creek.	Logue Waters	Port Hedland

Boodarie Station	Yankie Tank	Bluff Point
Yeule River	Griersons Tank	Utakarra
Mundabullangalla	Shaws Tank	Geraldton Race.
Balla Balla Station	Cardobia Creek	Meru
Sherlock Station	Boolathanna Stn	Narnghulu
Sherlock River	Carnarvon	Bootenal
Little Sherlock R.	Boodalla Station	Georgina
Warranby Station	Wooramel Station	Bradley
George River	Wooramel River	Walkaway
East Harding R.	Hamelin Pool	Crampton
Roebourne	Murchison River	Bookarra
Commonage Well	Murchison Stn.	Dongarra
Shallow Wells	Mount View Farm	Yardarino
Karratha Station	Ajana	Irwin
Fortescue TeleStn.	Binnu Siding	Strawberry
Mardie Station	Hutt Siding	Lockyer
Yaraloola	Ogilvie Siding	Minganew
Peedamulla Creek	Weld Siding	Yandanooka
Peedamulla Stn.	Baddera Siding	Arrino
Onslow	Northampton	Three Springs
Minderoo Stn.	Isseka Siding	Prowaka Siding
Ashburton R. Xing	McGuire Siding	Carnamah
Kooddarrie Station	Oakbella Siding	Winchester Siding
Horse Works Mill	Howatharra Siding	Coorow
Ryans Well	Oakajee Siding	Marchagee
Conks Well	White Peak	Gunyidi
Yanrey River	Wokarina	Watheroo
Yanrey Station	Glenfield	Namban
Winning Pool	Waggrakine	Coomberdale
Mia Mia River	Chapman	Delaroo
Linden River	Bluff Point	Moora
Minilya Station	Geraldton	Walebing

New Norcia	Beverley	Marbellup
Mogumber	Mt Kokoby	Elleker
Wannamal	Brookton	Grassmere
Mooliabeenee	Pingelly	Cuthbert
Moondah Farm	Karping Siding	Gladhow
Gingin	Papanyinning	Albany
Bullsbrook	Yomaning	Kalgan Bridge
Upper Swan	Cuballing	Lower Kalgan
Herne Hill	Narrogin	Warriup Station
Midland Junction	Highbury	Cordiup Station
Redcliffe	Nuralin Pool	Marra
Belmont	Piesse	Cape Riche Stn
Subiaco	Wagin	Marra Station
Nedlands	Lime Creek	Palinup (Salt) R.
Claremont	Boyerine	Bremer Bay T'gph
Cottesloe	Woodanilling	Bremer River
Fremantle	Moojeebing	Qualup Station
Perth	Katanning	Drummond Spring
Mt Lawley	Murdong	Hammersley River
Maylands	Broomehill	Riverlea Station
Bayswater	Peringillup	Hopetoun
Guildford	Tambellup	Jerdacuttup River
Midland Junction	Tingerup	Spring Dale Farm
Greenmount	Pootenup	Bald Rock
Mundaring	Cranbrook	Oldfield River
Sawyer Valley	Tenterden	Manjanup
York	Lake Matilda	Fanny Cove
Qualen	Kendenup	Esperance
Gwambygine	Carbarup	Stockyard Creek
Gilgering	Mt Barker	Boyatup
Dale Bridge	Narrikup	Quagup Soak
Edwards Crossing	Redmond	Lynburn Station

Cape Paisley Point Malcolm Israelite Bay Wattle Camp	Point Culver Flying Gang Camp Toolina Camp Eyre	Moldura Station Mundrabilla Stn. Eucla
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SA	Pandurra Station	Adelaide
Wilsons Bluff	Knob Tank Station	Stirling
Nullarbour Station	Port Augusta	Ambleside
White Well Stn	Stirling	Monteith
Colona Station	Wilmington	Littlehampton
Fowlers Bay	Melrose	Nairne
Glenboree	Murray Town	Kanmantoo
Bookabie	Wirrabara	Callington
Belamount	Stone Hut	Monarto South
Penong	Storm Hut	Murray Bridge
Charra	Laura	Tailem Bend
Denial Bay	Gladstone	Cooke Plains
Goode	Georgetown	Coomandook
Murat Bay	Gulnare	Yumali
Ceduna	Yacka	Ki Ki
Waranda Well	Brinkworth	Coonalpyn
Chinbringina	Blythe	Culburra
Petina	Kybunga	Tintinara
Wirrulla	Hoyleton	Kumorna
Yardea	Halbury	Coombe
Thurga Station	Balaklava	Banealla
Mt Ive Station	Dalkey	Keith
Kolinda Station	Grace Plains	Brimbago
Nonning Station	Mallala	Warrego
Siam Station	Two Wells	Cannawigara
Carunna Station	Virginia	Bordertown
Iron Knob	Gepps Cross	Wolseley

VIC	Dobie	Donnybrook
Servicetown	Buangor	Beveridge
Lillimur	Middle Creek	Wallon
Kaniva	Beaufort	Kilmore
Miram	Trawalla	Broadford
Diapur	Burrumbeet	Tallarook
Tarranginnie	Alfredton	Seymour
Nhill	Ballarat	Mangalore
Gerang Gerung	Bungaree	Avenel
Dimboola	Wallace	Moonea
Wail	Gordon	Lockley
Pimpinio	Ballan	Longwood
Horsham	Myrniong	Euroa
Dooen	Bacchus Marsh	Balmattum
Jung	Melton	Violet Town
Murtoa	Fulham Park	Baddaginnie
Ashens	Rockbank	Benalla
Lubeck	Deer Park	Winton
Wal Wal	Sunshine	Glenrowan
Glenorchy	Melbourne	Wangaratta
Stawell	Broadmeadows	Springhurst
Great Western	Somerton	Chiltern
Ararat	Craigieburn	Barnawatha

NSW	Jugiong	Braemar
Wodonga	Bookham	Colo Vale
Albury	Bowning	Hill Top
Bowna	Yass	Balmoral
Mullengandra	Gunning	Buxton
Woomargama	Breadalbane	Picton Lakes
Holbrook	Yarra	Thirlmere
Little Billabong	Goulburn	Picton
Kyeamba	Marulan	Maldon
Upper Tarcutta	Tallong	Menangle
Lower Tarcutta	Wingello	Glenlea
Hills Creek	Penrose	Campbelltown
Mundarie	Bundanoon	Liverpool
Tumblong	Moss Vale	Bankstown
Gundagai	Bowral	Enfield
Coolac	Mittagong	Sydney

Photographs



*Aidan de Brune in Darwin, July 1922. (J J Gay
Papers, State Library of NSW)*

Aidan de Brunes
 back round Australia,
 in 12 months
 this is to certify
 that he has left the
 office of the "Daily
 Mail," Sydney, at
 3.45 p.m. on Tuesday
 September 20, 1921.
 J. J. Gay (J. J.)
 Manager Daily Mail

Went out of Sydney
 and about a mile
 + half from Burwood
~~with~~ ^{with} a ~~gun~~ ^{gun}
 Brand of Bible
 Engineering Co. to
 Concord rd. + thence
 to Rhodes + took track
 over Parramatta River
 to Meadow Bank
 thence to Eastwood
 crossing the bridge
 over the river +
 camped out
 10 miles

First page of Aidan de Brune's travel diary



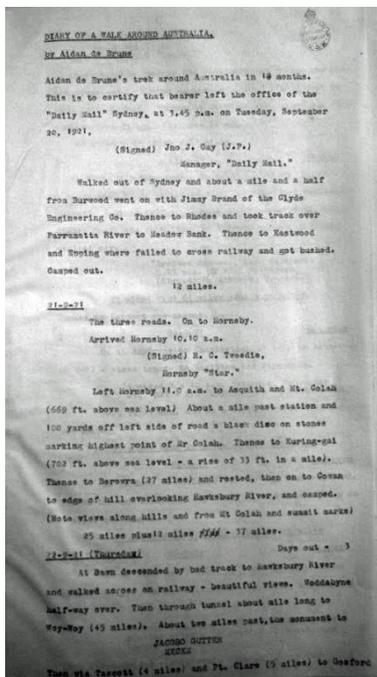
Aidan de Brune in 1933. (Maryborough Chronicle, 4/4/1933, p.8)



John J. Gay (J J Gay Papers, State Library of NSW)



J T Beckett. (J J Gay Papers, State Library of NSW)



First page of the typescript of 'Record Diary of a Walk Around Australia' (State Library of NSW)

The weather of Paté has been absolutely brutal - I never remember so much rain falling at one time in this abominable country. Yesterday was easily the worst day I have ever known. It rained one hour throughout twenty three hours and Hay sheet was flooded into the shops. Today the air is like a steam launch - it's steam everywhere and over the low lying country hangs a white fog x

Part of Herbert Charles Cull's last known letter to his wife (Courtesy of Cull Family)

Puzzle Of Missing Writer

AIDAN de BRUNE, 65,
writer of many mystery thrillers, is himself the subject of a mystery puzzling the police of two States.

They cannot locate him, and he has been listed at the Missing Persons Bureau.

His real name is Herbert Charles Cull, but he is known all over Sydney and New South Wales by his professional nom-de-plume.

In September the Western Australian police received a request from the N.S.W. Agent-General in London to locate de Brune.

Wife Inquires

His wife of Earlethorpe Road, Sydney, England, who last saw him in 1913, is inquiring for him.

Constable Thompson, of the Sydney Missing Persons Bureau, could not trace de Brune after 1929, when he worked for a Sydney newspaper.

The Labor Daily yesterday ascertained that:

A member of the Australian Journalists' Association saw him in the city less than six months ago.

Mr. Alan Foley, literary agent, who handled some of his yarns, saw him taking his dog for a walk in Centennial Park about three months ago.

He was in the office of Napier and Gardiner (literary agents) some time this year.

The Superintendent of Mails was confident a letter to a G.P.O. box would find him.

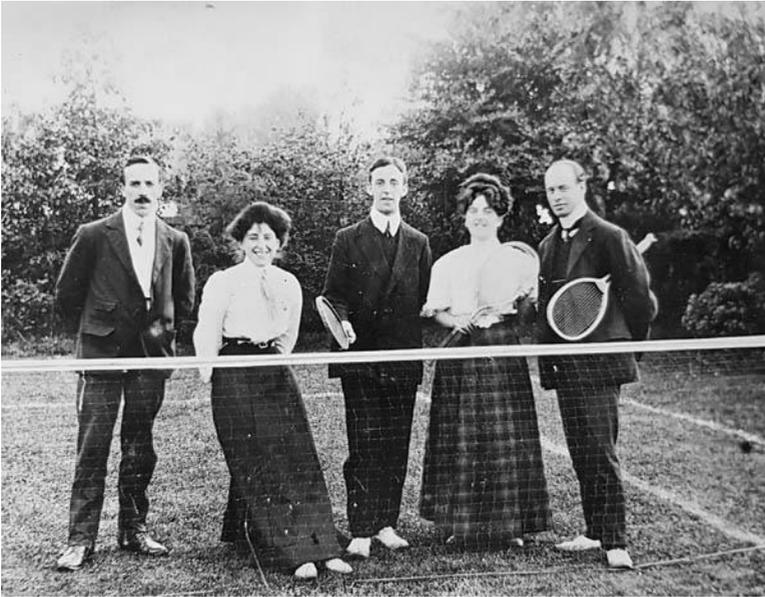
Wrote "Thrillers"

The title of "Sydney's Edgar Wallace", could appropriately be applied to Aidan de Brune.

He has written dozens of gripping thrillers based largely on life in the underworlds of Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane.

De Brune could always provide an exciting and ingenious ending to his yarns.

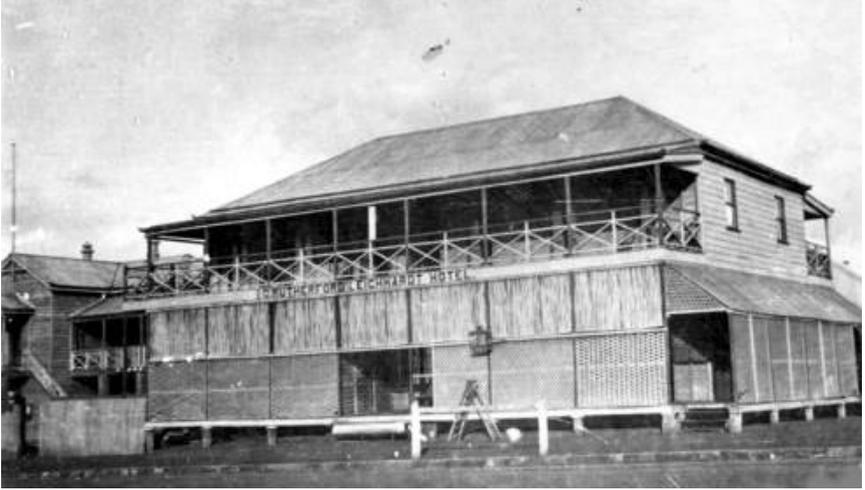
Newspaper article linking Aidan de Brune and Herbert Charles Cull (Labor Daily, 25/10/1938, p.5)



Herbert Charles Cull (left) and Ethel Elizabeth Cull (2nd from right), c. 1908 (Compliments of Cull Family)



Meade Street, Glen Innes c. 1925 (State Library of NSW, FL1671891)



C. Rutherford's Leichhardt Hotel, Normanton (State Library of QLD, negative number 44859)



Wharves at Normanton (State Library of Qld, negative number 142194)



People board a picnic train with a B class locomotive at Normanton 11-mile, c. 1920 (State Library of Qld, negative number 142193)



Burketown Hospital, 1924 (State Library of Qld, negative number 46495)



Bore sinking, 1921. (State Library of SA, PRG 1365/1/460)



Work on Overland Telegraph Line, 1919 (Territory Stories, NT Government, photo PH0820/0070)



Daly Waters Telegraph Station, c. 1910. (State Library of SA, B72713/40)



Aidan de Brune at Esperance, Western Australia, from a pamphlet, 'Esperance – the Sunrise Town' (State Library of WA, PR8679/ESP)



Aidan de Brune delivers a letter from Port Darwin to Jack Flannagan at the Imperial Hotel in Adelaide (State Library of SA PRG 280/1/37/54)



A group of men looking for work. This activity was sometimes referred to as being "on the Wallaby track." (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Image 28324)



Pamphlet: 'Esperance - The Sunrise Town,' 1923. Written by Aidan de Brune. (State Library of WA, PR8679/Esp. 13)



Eyre Telegraph Station c. 1897 (State Library of WA, 025965PD)



*Passengers on the Jundah Mail Transport by Cobb & Co.,
Longreach, Queensland, ca. 1920*
(<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/95983035779774010/>)



*Gulf Country Royal Mail Coach,
Burketown, 1920, (State Library of Qld,
negative number 108558)*



*Maintenance man on the Overland Telegraph Line
(State Library of SA, PRG 1365/1/133)*



*Carnamah Railway Station (Carnamah Historical
Society and Museum,
<https://www.carnamah.com.au/midland-railway>)*



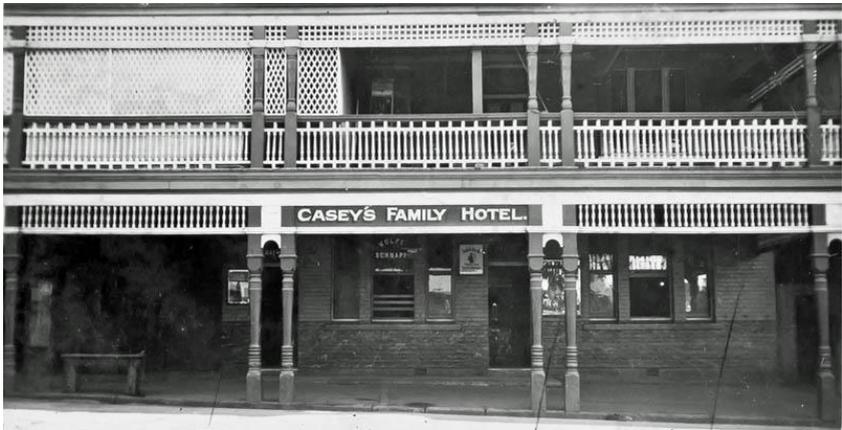
Willow Tree station, NSW, in 2018 – little has changed since 1921, when de Brune walked past. (Colin Choat)



House flooded by the Barcoo River, 1906 (State Library of Qld, negative number 78511)



A team of donkeys in harness, Northern Territory, 1927 (National Library of Australia, call number PIC P850 5/47 LOC Cold store PIC AIM 12/505)



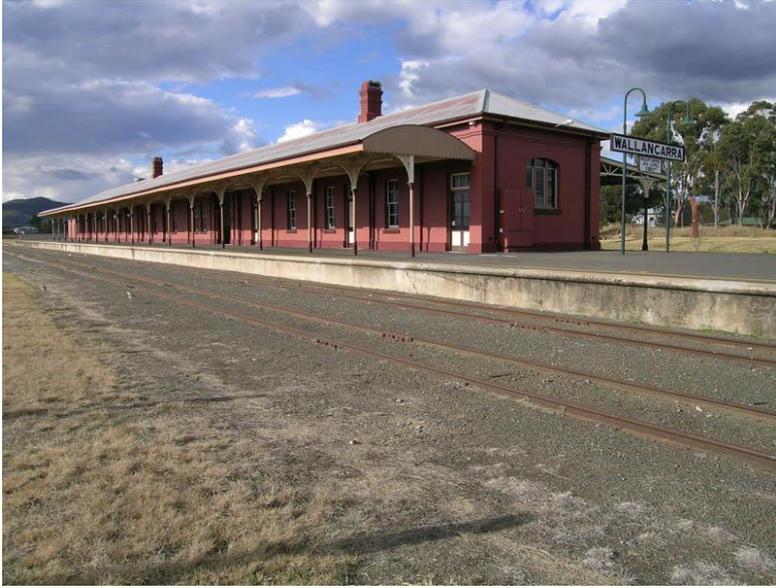
Casey's Family Hotel, Liverpool (Australian National University, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/100630>)



Blackbull Siding, Normanton-Croydon Railway Line

http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/heritage/photodb/imagesearch.pl?proc=detail;barcode_no=dig006165. De Brune was there on 16 January, 1922. (above and below)





Wallangarra Railway Station. By Cgoodwin - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4175069>



The Astoria, Kirribilli, in 2018. Photo by Colin Choat

Endnotes

Introduction

¹ Advice from descendants of Herbert Charles Cull.

² *Trove*, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

³ Roy Glashan's Library, <http://freeread.com.au/>

Herbert Charles Cull/Aidan de Brune

⁴ Miller, E. Morris, & Macartney, Frederick T. *Australian Literature: A bibliography to 1938*, by E Morris Miller; (Revised and extended edition, 1956), Angus and Robertson.

⁵ Copy of Birth Registration, Herbert Charles Cull

⁶ Copy of Marriage Registrations, Herbert Charles Cull and Ethel Elizabeth Crofts

⁷ Copy of Birth Registration, Lionel Charles Cull

⁸ Passenger List, *Seydlitz*, which arrived at Fremantle Western Australia, 23 May 1910. Reel 031: May 1910-Sept 1910, from *Ancestry* internet site. Retrieved 1 September 2017.

⁹ *Daily Advertiser* 28 March 1933, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article143145550>

¹⁰ *Referee*, 21 September 1921, p. 9. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article121159371>

¹¹ *Albany Advertiser*, 30 November 1910, p. 2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70094435>

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<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article149940420>
- ¹⁴ Copy of letter provided by Cull family.
- ¹⁵ *The West Australian*, 26 May 1916, p. 3,
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/26980455>
- ¹⁶ *Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express*, 13 April 1920, p. 3.
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- ¹⁹ *Referee*, 21 September 1921, p. 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article121159371>
- ²⁰ *Cairns Post*, 29 April 1933, p. 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article41201380>
- ²¹ *Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express*, 23 March 1923, p. 4.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87062233>
- ²² *Bunbury Herald and Blackwood Express*, 16 November 1920, p. 2,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87053086>
- ²³ *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 21 December 1923, page 4,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48012886>
- ²⁴ *The Labor Daily*, 25 October 1938, p. 5,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236416852>
- ²⁵ *The Labor Daily* 26 October 1938, p. 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236417088>
- ²⁶ Advice from descendants of Herbert Charles Cull.

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²⁸ Address provided on Copyright Registration for *Fifty Years of Growth and Progress in Australia*, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article232539513> page 974.

²⁹ *North Sydney History Walk: A Walking Tour of Kirribilli*, <https://preview.tinyurl.com/y7dh2j2n>

³⁰ The Great Exodus from Braeburn, *Evening News*, 22 October 1930, p. 1., <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article118755620>

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A Walk from Fremantle to Sydney

³³ *Observer* (Adelaide) 15 January 1921, p. 29. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article165642141>

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⁴⁰ Deakin is the most easterly railway siding in Western Australia, on the Trans-Australian Railway, and the closest to the border of Western Australia and South Australia. Co-ordinates: 30.767°S. 128.970°E. From *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deakin, Western Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deakin,_Western_Australia)

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A Walk Around Australia

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⁴⁴ *State Library of NSW*, Call No. RAV/FM4/259

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⁴⁶ In J. J. Gay's papers, *State Library of New South Wales*. Call No. MLMSS2352/MLK1121.

⁴⁷ *State Library of New South Wales*, Call No. RAV/FM4/259.

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⁴⁹ Neuritis at *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuritis>

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 1921, page 1. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article15977740>

⁵¹ "A Strange Monument." *The Register* (Adelaide, SA) 29 October 1921, p. 13. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63427985>

- ⁵² Hawkesbury Railway Bridge at *Wikipedia*,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawkesbury_River_Railway_Bridge
- ⁵³ Woy Woy Tunnel at *Wikipedia*,
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- ⁵⁴ Wondabyne and Wondabyne railway station, at *Wikipedia*,
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- ⁵⁵ *Daily Herald (Adelaide)*, 17 October 1921, p. 4.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article106629311>
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<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks13/1300671h.html>
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<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article87063457>
- ⁵⁸ *Wikipedia*, Wallangarra Railway Station.
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- ⁵⁹ Rail gauge in Australia at *Wikipedia*,
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<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20582132>
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- ⁶² Ocean Baths at *Dictionary of Sydney*,
https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/ocean_baths
- ⁶³ *Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser (Qld)* 28 October 1921, p. 2.
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article81870180>
- ⁶⁴ *The Moora Herald and Midland Districts Advocate (WA)* 8 June 1923, p. 2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207313599>, and 15 June 1923, p. 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207313643> and *Northern*

Standard (Darwin) 15 August 1922, p. 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48007094>

Up the Queensland Coast to Cairns

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https://www.proz.com/kudoz/latin_to_english/other/243594-arma_virumque_cano.html. Accessed 2 Oct 2017.

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