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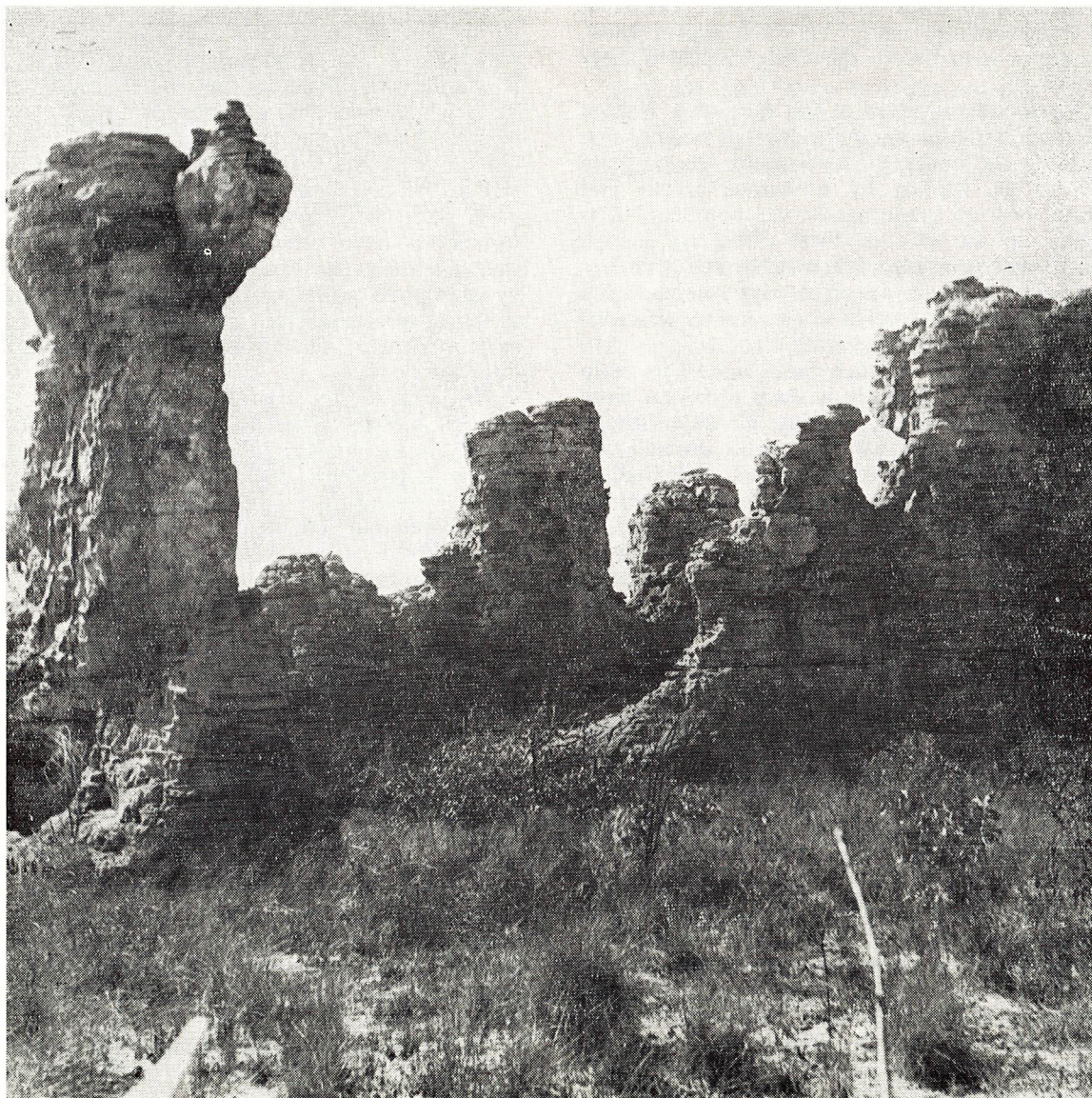
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**Ruined City of Arnhem Land.**

## **THE RUINED CITY OF ARNHEM LAND:**

**From the Sky Pilot's Log, 2CH Broadcast.**

Australia is rich in places of scenic and geographical interest. Such a place is the Ruined

City of Arnhem Land. It is over 30 years since first I saw this strange and interesting place; and



I published the story, with photographs, in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1938. Since then the Ruined City has been "re-discovered", as such places are, from time to time.

Probably the first white man to see the Ruined City was John Cameron, who visited it in 1868. Today the so-called "Ruined City" is a city of sun and silence. Central Arnhem Land consists of rough tableland country — wild, rugged and almost impassable on horseback. David Lindsay, the explorer-surveyor, crossed a small portion of this rough country many years ago and in 1887, in a paper read before the Geographical Society he says:

"We found ourselves at the foot of a wall of rock two hundred or more feet in height, and extending as far as the eye could see on both sides of us, broken by numerous creeks and ravines full of great sandstone boulders. Zig-zagging up the face of these cliffs, we passed through and over places it would have been impossible to descend. In eight days we made ten miles, and we lost twelve horses before descending into the valley of the Katherine".

It is impossible to reach the Ruined City from the west, but comparatively easy to do so from the south or south-east. For days we rode through forests of great density — literally forcing our way through. We skirted dangerous, evil-smelling bogs and creeks and finally pulled up one evening at a deep, shaded pool at the southern end of the Ruined City. Dick, the black tracker who accompanied us, was obviously uneasy and he explained that this pool was guarded by the Rainbow or Rainbull, a legendary monster of Alcheringa or "dream time". Even George seemed uneasy and remarked: "I don't like it, Smithy. I'm not superstitious and it's not the Rainbow that I'm afeared of; but — do you notice that musty smell? I reckon that the daddy of all the crocodiles must be lurking in that pool. You'd better stand by with your rifle while I water the horses. If anything happens to the horses we'll never get out of here alive".

"I'll certainly do that, George," I reassured him. "We've been in plenty of crocodile infested waters before now; but I know how you feel. Do you see that flat shining rock in the centre of the pool? If this was in another country I could imagine human sacrifice having been offered here in ages past. Perhaps the victim sat on that rock waiting for the sacred crocodile to take him."

George sulked. "Oh, for Pete's sake shut up!" he exclaimed. "I'm jittery enough already. The trouble with you is that you read too much. The night you told ghost stories back at Wadgeli a possum jumped on my net in the middle of the night. I tore a hole clean through the netting and ran slap bang into a coolabah tree before I woke up properly and realised what it was".

However, nothing unusual happened through

the night, and early next morning we saddled up and rode through the rocky entrance of the Ruined City. The rock formations, as the name suggests, closely resemble the ruins of a city. Walls and turrets stand strictly perpendicular, facing, in even rows, the narrow "streets" which divide the city into sections. So realistic are the ruins that it is difficult to believe that they were not erected by human agency.

Once this natural, wind and water eroded city was used by a long forgotten tribe of aborigines. At the present time (this was written in 1936) it is taboo — the residence of ghosts and spirits. It is only with reluctance, and when accompanied by a white man that an aboriginal will venture near the ruins in the daytime; nothing will induce him to do so after dark. The rock has been subject to the onslaught of wind and water for ages past, with the result that these fantastic rock formations have created a medley of grotesque shapes and figures. Many of the caves, decorated by aboriginal artists in the long ago, were used as tombs or receptacles for the bones of the dead, as is evident by the half decayed remains which litter the floor.

At night, say the aborigines, ghostly lights may be seen moving about the summit of the rocks. These are the ghosts of the dead, dancing a never ending corroboree. Sometimes they fight, and the dull crash of their nulla-nullas echoes through the surrounding country. In the atmosphere of the place one can easily imagine the natural streets thronged by stone-age inhabitants; the caves full of naked forms huddled and sheltered from the wet monsoon; or the huge rock walls re-echoing to the tap-tap of boomerangs beating time whilst the ground shakes to the stamp of hundreds of dancing feet.

It seemed almost a desecration to seek natural explanations of the phenomena that have given rise to aboriginal legends causing such dread of the ruins; but with great difficulty I persuaded George to camp for the night with me near enough to the ruins to see what happened. We lay on our swags and watched. I kept an eye on George. It really was amusing to watch the expression on his face. He was afraid of nothing in hoof or hide; but very mistrustful of things he couldn't understand. All at once his hair bristled like the tail of a startled cat.

"L-I-look, Smithy," he exclaimed in a hushed whisper, "strike me blind if I can't see movin' lights".

"That's only the rising stars reflected and magnified by the dazzling quartz," I told him. "But it does look for all the world as if supernatural beings were carrying flickering torches from place to place. The trouble is you've kept your eyes on it for too long. I didn't look at it until you spoke so that my eyes are not over-strained".



"But," George urged, "listen to that! Did you hear that crash? And there's another one. That'd be the fight startin'. You can't tell me I'm hearin' things that aren't there."

"No, George," I agreed; "I can hear them too. But I think it's nothing more than the crash of huge fragments of rock, undermined by erosion and sent hurtling from the summit by the force of the wind".

A sudden awful howl and a loud splash from the pool and George and I were on our feet with rifles cocked. George's hands were shaking, but he followed me as I ran to the edge of the pool. In the moonlight I could see the swirl and ripple of the water. Slowly a red stain spread over the surface and the strong musty odour was almost overpowering. I knew that George would never again see his cattle dog.

"Look here, Smithy," George told me, "I'm hittin' the home trail at piccanniny daylight tomorrow. You can come with me or stop here; but whatever you do I'M GOIN' HOME".

It is strange how the atmosphere of a place can affect normal human beings. George was one of the gamest men I have ever met, but he had a horror of the unknown. I've experienced the same sort of feeling when camping in the ruins of a deserted mining township.

Some people are afraid to be left alone with a dead body in spite of the fact that they know quite well that it cannot harm them. It all comes back to the fear of the unknown — a feeling that death as we know it was never intended to be the lot of mankind. As Tennyson says:

"Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die".

No one sets out to build a house or a city of ruins; the ruins were never visualized by the builder — they came afterwards through accident or neglect.

Man with his wars and hatred and selfishness and sin is only the ruin of what he was intended to be. God made man in His own image and the angels sang for joy at the beauty of creation. No doubt they've shed many a tear since then. And it took a man of sorrows acquainted with grief to come back to the ruins of His creation and offer His life as the only remedy for a war-torn, sin-stained world. In this short radio broadcast I cannot explain **why** He had to die; I hope to do that later. But unlike other builders God saw the ruins of mankind even at the creation and we are told that the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. Our human minds might suggest that it would have been better for us never to have been created. But God knew the risk and saw the ruin in advance

and yet He knew that it was worth while. What a glorious life must be intended for us after death to make all the misery and suffering of this life worth while. Unfortunately, though all are invited (and we are told that: "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out") not all are willing to accept God's offer of full and free salvation through faith in the finished work of Christ. Have you made your choice? If your earthly house — the body — were to fall in the ruins of death today would that be but a step to further ruin or greater glory for you?

And the final entry in today's log is: "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens". II Corinthians 5:1.

**SALE OF WORK:** The Sale of Work on 7th May was an outstanding success in every way. Once more God gave us a beautiful day and it was a pleasure to be out of doors. More friends than usual came along and we had to find a new area for extra parking for the many cars. The new pavilion was used for the first time and the Refreshments and Pie Stalls were installed here. There was plenty of room for friends to sit down to tables and enjoy their refreshments without the previous cramped conditions. The Public Meeting was also held in the pavilion and there was sufficient seating for all who attended.

Because the Refreshments and Pie stalls were moved it meant that extra room was available for some of the other stalls. It took people a little extra time to find the new stalls and unfortunately some friends missed the Public Meeting; however it should be much better next time. There is one great disadvantage: the stall holders are no longer able to hear the singing or the other items of the Meeting from where they are placed in charge of the various stalls, which of course cannot be left. Possibly at some future date it may be possible to have extra loud speakers to cover both areas of the picnic grounds!

The stalls were well stocked and almost all stall holders reported record sales. It must be remembered that an Autumn Sale is never as large as a Spring Sale as far as financial results are concerned. This time, of course, we worked in dollars and cents which was a little confusing for some of the older friends; but in spite of this everything ran smoothly and there was no real trouble. The total gross takings amounted to \$2,369.25 less expenses of \$227.83 leaving a net profit of \$2,141.42 — an all time record for an Autumn Sale. For those interested in the various stalls here are the individual stall takings before expenses had been deducted:



Balloons	.80	Boat Rides	10.18
Books	17.76	Cakes	65.06
Children's	169.05	Fancy Work,	
Jams & Pickles	48.35	Baby Wear	92.80
Parkfield	244.99	Jumble	277.43
Plants	58.13	Plain Work	119.00
Produce	149.50	Pony Rides	1.10
Soft Drinks,		Refreshments and	
Ice Cream	51.98	Pies	108.79
White Elephant	73.20	Sweets	49.98
Blue Mountains		Youth Fellowship	
Auxiliary	110.00		92.40
Donations by		Donations	553.25
Mail	75.50		

Besides the new pavilion a number of other alterations and improvements had been made since the last Sale.

At the Public Meeting the children from Marella sang very nicely. The Bible Reading and prayer was taken by Mrs. Esther Schaefer, a Baptist missionary from Pakistan, to whom we are most grateful. Mr. Ken Hodkin once again provided the music for our gathering as he has done so faithfully over very many years.

**MRS. LANGFORD-SMITH:** For some time Mrs. Langford-Smith has been suffering from a heart condition which prevented her helping at the Sale of Work. She is recovering very slowly and it will be several months at least before she is able to resume anything like her old activities. For many years she has done all the cooking for our large family of children and staff — usually over 30 people each day; besides which she supervises the children, acting as Matron; interviews the many visitors; and attends deputation meetings — besides helping at Street Stalls, etc. In mission work those in charge are not able to work office hours; it means being on call 24 hours a day 7 days a week and after a number of years the strain begins to take effect.

We pray that Mrs. Langford-Smith will be restored to health again and will long be spared to carry on her life's work of caring for these little dark children. It is touching to see the way the little ones are concerned when she is ill. A constant stream files in to see how "Mum" is and often a little child, of his own accord, kneels down by the bedside and offers a childish prayer for her recovery.

**THE DARK CHILDREN:** One of the children came home from school with mumps which spread to the other children one by one. At one time we had eleven children and one staff member down at the same time. However it appeared to be a mild form of the disease and the children threw it off rapidly. They did not mind having to miss school for the period of quarantine; but it was a problem keeping them out of mischief when they were feeling well enough to run around

and generally enjoy themselves. We have a sick bay large enough to isolate one or two children; it was quite out of the question isolating eleven. Perhaps we will escape the same infection in future as the children should have built up a certain amount of immunity.

#### CHILDREN'S HOLIDAYS AND OUTINGS:

Every year, immediately after Christmas Day (usually on Boxing Day) all the dark children go away for three weeks' holiday. During this time they stay in the various homes of Christian friends and are treated as "one of the family", joining in any activities organised by their hosts. Almost without exception the children have a wonderful time and they look forward to their holidays all through the year. At the same time they are usually very glad to get back home again to Marella after the three weeks period is over. We found that three weeks was about the maximum advisable time for the children to be away. If they stayed much longer they began to get restless and in some cases a little troublesome. Applications for the children to join a family are considered, other things being equal, in the order in which they come in for sometimes we have not enough children to go round! The children are placed and final arrangements made about the end of September each year for the following December.

We are often asked if the children may go out for other school holidays as well as the Christmas ones; but we have had to restrict their outings somewhat and it is only at Christmas time that they go away overnight. At other times of the year, of course, we are very glad if friends will take the children for an outing for the day. Some Christian groups have taken them to the zoo and for bus picnics etc. and these are much appreciated when they can be fitted into our programme. Sometimes two or three children go out with friends who cannot manage over twenty children at once; this is always possible if we remember that the choice of the children must be left with the mission authorities. It was found that a few of the more popular children were getting all the outings to the detriment of the others. Occasionally friends give the children games and afternoon tea at Marella, but we have had to restrict the number of these parties owing to our many bookings and the fact that the picnic grounds are not always available.

**DAWN:** Dawn, who has been on the staff for a couple of years is now 18 and at her own wish she has gone out into the world. She secured a position with a Salvation Army Hostel in the city and is very happy in her new work. She comes back to see us from time to time, which is pleasing as she'd been with us since she was seven years old.