



"The gateway is in the form of a pagoda arch, which bears the inscription, Elsey Cemetery and National Reserve"

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There are dozens of these characters, and their names are household words to Australians—even if they haven't read the book. But as the years have passed, Jeannie Gunn has learned with deep sorrow of their passing one by one, until now only two of them are left: Tom Pearce, "Mine Host," whose life story is itself a long chronicle of adventure, and who now lives in quiet retirement in a South Australian town, and "The Quiet Stockman." The others have died as they lived: "The Fizzer," swept away by a flood on his first trip over a new mail route; "Tam O'Shanter," dead of thirst, trying to bring a sick traveller to water; Dan, the Head Stockman, quietly under a tree, as he watched his mob grazing; "Little Johnny," as he forded his pack-team across the swollen stream.

#### Bringing Them Back

Time has taken them far apart, so that their graves were scattered far across the great North country where they lived, but all through the years Jeannie Gunn has cherished in her heart the hope that one day they might be brought back to sleep their long sleep in the quiet of Elsey station-yard with the Maluka they all loved so well. Recently her dream was realised.

In 1943, Michael Barry, well-known writer, suggested to the Administrator of the Northern Territory, that a fence should be erected round the graves of Aeneas Gunn, Lee Ken, and William Neaves, all three of whom had been buried at the Elsey. This was done, and at the same time Mrs. Gunn was asked if she knew of the resting place of any others of her immortal band, for there were others who felt, as she did, that it would be fitting if they could all lie together. Jeannie Gunn knew every grave, and the Northern Territory Army Command energetically set about making plans for bringing them together.

They made application to the Deputy Crown Solicitor for official permission to proceed, and it was given immediately in the case of all except those who were buried in the Katherine cemetery. It was felt that remains should only be removed from an established cemetery for a very good reason. There was a good deal of discussion, but after H. V. Evatt, the Federal Attorney-General, and other Ministers had interested themselves in the matter, permission was given, and the work proceeded. In recent months, the 11th Australian War Graves Unit have finished the task.

#### Quiet Sanctuary

Reverently the tough Australian diggers have gone out east and west, to Ivanhoe and Victoria River, to all those widespread places where they lay, and brought back the bodies of the men who were their childhood heroes, so that travellers passing along the great North-South Road may now see a signpost which says, simply, "To the Maluka's Grave" and, should they follow the way it leads, they will come to a quiet sanctuary, beautiful with trees and lovingly kept, where lie all the characters so well known to Australians. Its gateway is in the form of a pagoda arch, which bears the inscription, Elsey Cemetery and National Reserve, and in its centre is an obelisk, erected by the natives themselves as a monument to the "Maluka" they loved.

The obelisk's base is made from the kitchen stones from the old Elsey homestead and its centre is reinforced with the axle of the homestead's old horse-drawn vehicle. In the centre portion there is a recess in which are relics of the old Elsey station, with a perspex-covered Roll. And a plaque reads: "Erected by Northern Territory Army natives to the memory of the Maluka—August, 1945." "We of the Never-Never" have come home.



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