

# SOME MATTERS OF MEDICAL INTEREST OCCURING DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY BY SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1863 - 1911

The basic motivation for this project was financial but this hope of monetary gain proved illusory. The Federal Government, in 1911, took over the £6 million of debt incurred by the failed enterprise. Whether the other aspects of changes associated with the intrusion benefitted the people is still in the balance. [See SA History Hub](#)

In this work, the names of ships are italicised. [Official records](#) kept by the S A administration are not digitised.

Details of medical matters is sparse. Doctors on whom data is available are underlined in blue and hyperlinked. Other persons, lay or medical, with little or no information are underlined in black\*. Interested researchers may find [this link](#) helpful. The fullest set of biographies of Northern Territory persons can be found in [The Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography](#).

Administrative details are set out in [Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory](#) edited by [Ted Ling](#).

Other interesting data is found in the [Goyder Park site](#).

Information on the illnesses in N T precolonisation is scant and mainly concentrates on introduced conditions. [Dowling](#).

The range of diseases and trauma reported was more or less as expected with gunshot wounds regrettably high on the list. Mostly white fingers pulled the trigger. Treponemal infections were common even before colonisation. Smallpox was present but there is doubt in the accuracy of diagnostic labelling. Later, the reports of the chief medical officer e.g. [Strangways](#) document the maladies suffered.

The [book](#) by [Nurse Ellen Sarah Kettle](#), published in 1991 is much more medically orientated but lacks fine detail. She refers to a large number of medical men listed below but not what they did.

(No women doctors – of course, only those upstart nurses! One cringes at the attitudes of one's forbears!)

## **Extracted from Chapters two and three.**

Further data has been added on [other survey parties](#)

In 1824 [British Captain James Gordon Bremer](#) established [Fort Dundas](#) on Melville Island as a part of the Colony of New South Wales. Fort Dundas was the first settlement in Northern Australia. Dr R M Davis who was the Medical officer with the expedition noted skin disease in natives, thought to be smallpox but probably yaws.

The [Finniss expedition](#) of 1864 is generally regarded as a failure

[Dr F E Goldsmith](#) was Protector and Surgeon but resigned [[Letter – Trove](#)]

[Dr Ninniss Belgrave](#) arr on *Beatrice* 1864. Also view this [Link](#).

[Dr J R Elsey](#) came with the [A C Gregory](#) expedition 1885.

[Dr John Burton Cleland](#) arrived on *Bengal* March 1865 and departed on *Eagle* January 1867. He joined [McKinlay's party](#) in July 1866.

[Dr John Mildred Creed](#) with [Francis Cadell](#) 1867 expedition.

[Edward Cecil Rix](#) (b1846) a pharmacist, served as Doctor's assistant. He arrived on *Kohinoor* in December 1869, and wrote an informative Diary which can with difficulty be [read online](#). He was a member of the Goyder Expedition 1869 and Medical officer with Patterson's 1972 [Overland Telegraph expedition](#). He had pharmacies at Thebarton and Clare. (He married 19/3/1874 Holy Trinity Adelaide, Ellen nee Porter and died 31/8/1906 at Mt Barker SA.)

Also with the Goyder group was official photographer Sea Captain [Samuel W Sweet](#) He was in charge of the *Gulnare*. His work is considered of great significance.

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[Dr R Peel](#) ([See image below](#)) and [Mr W W Hoare](#), assistant, not surgeon came with Goyder 1868 on *Moonta*. In December 1868 and left on *Kohinoor* in February 1870. Hoare did watercolour illustrations of [Schultze's specimens](#). Peel returned to England and died in 1927 at Ramsgate. Darwin's [Doctor's Gully](#) was named for Peel, who also undertook religious services.

[Dr. J. Stokes Millner](#) arrived with Captain Bloomfield Douglas, shipmaster on *Ellen Lewis* in September 1865 between 1865 -69. He returned on three occasions.

1. As Surgeon and Protector of Aborigines. He was Appointed to Govt Resident's staff in 1865
2. On *Eagle* January 1867
3. With the Goyder expedition 1869

Millner and family were lost at sea on [SS Gothenburg](#) in 1875. He was a well-loved practitioner.

Around this time alcohol was available from unscrupulous dealers as Gin mixed with kerosene Worcester sauce, ginger, and sugar.

From 1872 the earliest form of 'Telehealth' was available for Northern Territory patients consulting with doctors in Adelaide.

## Extracted from Chapter three

[Miss da Costa](#) founded the hospital in 1873

Dr F G Guy died after a few months from January to November 1875. There is a report of an inquest in [The Local Newspaper](#). Trove mentions his home as the place of departure of the funeral of a well-known Darwin identity. He was [an antiwar agitator](#)

[Dr T J Sturt](#)

[Dr H Eustace Astles](#) President of BMA SA 1982 1983 Visited NT in 1873. Jennings 204

[Dr J H Houston](#) died of sunstroke 1875.

[Dr P M Wood](#) after serving the gold fields in 1883.

[Dr Robert J Morice](#) Remembered for his part in the Daly river massacre Jennings 243

[Dr Henry Howe Bovill](#) [Report of 1887](#) Also in Jennings 376

[Dr Percival John Whitfield Ternau](#) 1889 Briefly mentioned in [The Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography](#), in Jennings 437, and Also in [Trove](#)

[Dr Leonard S O'Flaherty](#) 1889 Jennings 346 [Report](#) on the Fannie Bay gaol

[Dr Frederick Goldsmith](#) 1899

[Dr T E F Seabrook](#) 1902

## CONTINUING MEDICAL LINKS BETWEEN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AND NORTHERN TERRITORY

Although the control of medical services ended officially in 1911, many South Australian doctors continued the service the area and some specialists still do.

The names are many, but notably [Dr John Hargrave](#) looking after patients with leprosy and [Allan Green](#) about skin diseases. The areas serviced are depicted [in this map](#), part of the N T Health department [site](#)

\*Any reader with more information on the doctors mentioned in this document is welcome to forward it to the Secretariat, AMA SA ([admin@amasa.org.au](mailto:admin@amasa.org.au)) for publication on this website.

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Not in mentioned in Kettle but famous [Dr Herbert Basedow](#) last Protector of Aborigines (NT) during the S A Administration

[Strangman Cecil L](#) 1907-14 List of diseases treated etc. [From report](#)

[Colonial Surgeons](#) in general

In June 1885, the South Australian Register published a long letter from Dr Robert Morice, the Territory's colonial surgeon and protector of Aborigines, revealing the extraordinary geographical range of the massacres. [South Australian Register 2.6.1885, 4.6.1885, reprinted in the NTT 11.7.1885.]

[More information on Dr Peel](#)

