

CORRESPONDENCE WITH AGNSW

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Contact the Gallery

Thank you, your message has been sent.
You submitted the following data:

Email address chris@wavehand.one

Name Christopher Tillam

I have a boomerang (aka 'throwing stick') which Sid Nolan gave me in 1952 or '53 at his Wahroonga studio. It was acquired by Cynthia's daughter Jinx during the family's trip in 1946 across the 'top end'. The trip and the throwing-stick are documented in Cynthia Nolan's 'Outback'; the studio and dates in Paula Dredge's 'The Artist's Materials - Sidney Nolan'. I've been in touch with Jinx Nolan in Boston. (We last met when she had

Message an exhibition in Sydney back in the 1970s). She is not in good health. I have no-one appropriate to whom I could pass on the throwing-stick, and am wondering if the Gallery might be interested in having it. I'm not interested in remuneration. An image and more detail to this story are available on request. Looking forward to hearing from you in due course, Yours sincerely, Christopher Tillam 33 Nerrim Street Bundanoon NSW 2578 02 4883 6910 0488 330 167

Area of enquiry The collection

Re: Submission from Contact Us

July 20, 2022 4:26 pm 21 KB

From: ArtMail <ArtMail@ag.nsw.gov.au>

To: chris@wavehand.one

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for your email.

Can you please send through an image of the boomerang.

Kind regards,

The Art Gallery Team

From: chris@wavehand.one

Sent: Friday, 22 July 2022 11:05 AM

To: ArtMail <ArtMail@ag.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Submission from Contact Us

Dear AGNSW Team,

The throwing stick was given to Jinx ("Polly" in *Outback*, the book is dedicated to her) at the Ord River Station in W.A. (*Outback* p.141). It's the only stick in the book.

The station is a heritage site:

<http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/Public/Inventory/Details/883ccb4b-ff06-409f-90f4-404fa9552185>

I notice you are missing one copy of Cynthia Nolan's *Outback*; you would be welcome to mine.

You do not have Paula Dredge's later work on Nolan, *The Artist's Materials - Sidney Nolan*: you would be welcome to this too. See 'The Wahroonga Studio', pp.76ff, which verified my memories, of the studio at the back of the lawn, and of the smell of canvasses stacked in the hallway, off-gassing.

Attached is a photo of the throwing stick:
dimensions 650mm x 90mm.

Yours sincerely,

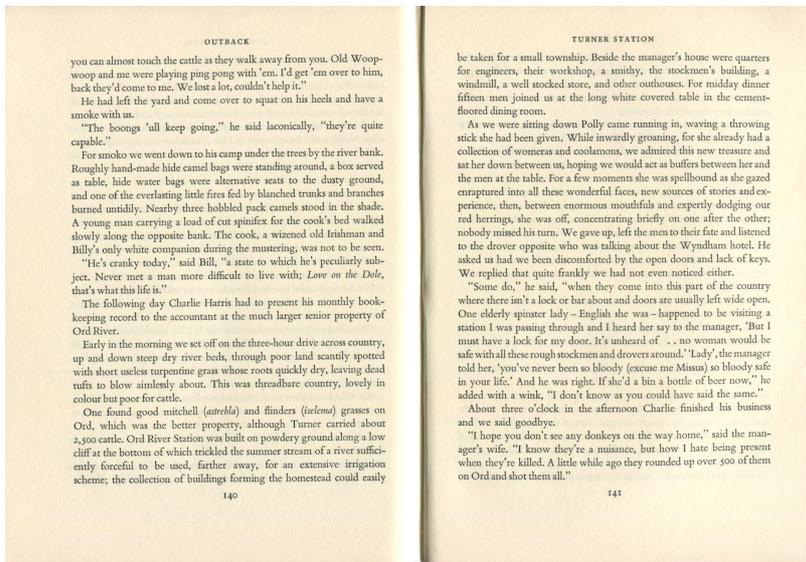
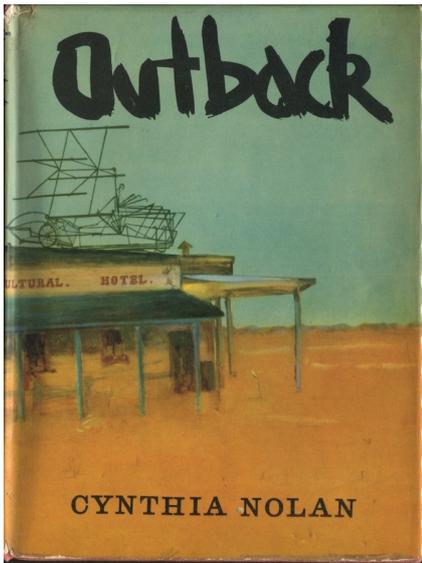
Christopher Tillam

33 Nerrim Street

Bundanoon NSW 2578

02 4883 6910

0488 330 167



OUTBACK

you can almost touch the cattle as they walk away from you. Old Woop-woop and me were playing ping pong with 'em. I'd get 'em over to him, back they'd come to me. We lost a lot, couldn't help it."

He had left the yard and come over to squat on his heels and have a smoke with us.

"The boongs 'ull keep going," he said laconically, "they're quite capable."

For smoko we went down to his camp under the trees by the river bank. Roughly hand-made hide camel bags were standing around, a box served as table, hide water bags were alternative seats to the dusty ground, and one of the everlasting little fires fed by blanched trunks and branches burned untidily. Nearby three hobbled pack camels stood in the shade. A young man carrying a load of cut spinifex for the cook's bed walked slowly along the opposite bank. The cook, a wizened old Irishman and Billy's only white companion during the mustering, was not to be seen.

"He's cranky today," said Bill, "a state to which he's peculiarly subject. Never met a man more difficult to live with; *Love on the Dole*, that's what this life is."

The following day Charlie Harris had to present his monthly book-keeping record to the accountant at the much larger senior property of Ord River.

Early in the morning we set off on the three-hour drive across country, up and down steep dry river beds, through poor land scantily spotted with short useless turpentine grass whose roots quickly dry, leaving dead tufts to blow aimlessly about. This was threadbare country, lovely in colour but poor for cattle.

One found good mitchell (*astrella*) and findlers (*isolema*) grasses on Ord, which was the better property, although Turner carried about 2,500 cattle. Ord River Station was built on powdery ground along a low cliff at the bottom of which trickled the summer stream of a river sufficiently forceful to be used, farther away, for an extensive irrigation scheme: the collection of buildings forming the homestead could easily

TURNER STATION

be taken for a small township. Beside the manager's house were quarters for engineers, their workshop, a smithy, the stockmen's building, a windmill, a well stocked store, and other outhouses. For midday dinner fifteen men joined us at the long white covered table in the cement-floored dining room.

As we were sitting down Polly came running in, waving a throwing stick she had been given. While inwardly grooming, for she already had a collection of womers and coolamons, we admired this new treasure and sat her down between us, hoping we would act as buffers between her and the men at the table. For a few moments she was spellbound as she gazed enraptured into all these wonderful faces, new sources of stories and experience, then, between enormous mouthfuls and expertly dodging our red herrings, she was off, concentrating briefly on one after the other; nobody missed his turn. We gave up, left the men to their fate and listened to the drover opposite who was talking about the Wyndham hotel. He asked us had we been discomfited by the open doors and lack of keys. We replied that quite frankly we had not even noticed either.

"Some do," he said, "when they come into this part of the country where there isn't a lock or bar about and doors are usually left wide open. One elderly spinster lady - English she was - happened to be visiting a station I was passing through and I heard her say to the manager, 'But I must have a lock for my door. It's unheard of . . . no woman would be safe with all these rough stockmen and drovers around.' 'Lady', the manager told her, 'you've never been so bloody (excuse me Missus) so bloody safe in your life.' And he was right. If she'd a bin a bottle of beer now," he added with a wink, "I don't know as you could have said the same."

About three o'clock in the afternoon Charlie finished his business and we said goodbye.

"I hope you don't see any donkeys on the way home," said the manager's wife. "I know they're a nuisance, but how I hate being present when they're killed. A little while ago they rounded up over 500 of them on Ord and shot them all."

Re: Submission from Contact Us

July 22, 2022 2:08 pm 28 KB

From: ArtMail <ArtMail@ag.nsw.gov.au>

To: chris@wavehand.one

Dear Christopher,

Thank you for your email.

I have passed your enquiry along to the appropriate staff and a member of staff will be in touch with you.

The Art Gallery Team

Boomerang and books

July 27, 2022 7:42 am 24 KB

From: Steven Miller <Steven.Miller@ag.nsw.gov.au>

To: chris@wavehand.one

Dear Christopher,

Your email to the general Gallery number was forwarded on to both the senior curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and myself.

I am not sure if you are the same Christopher that donated to the archive a number of year's back material related to your mother Joan Tillam? I only ask because the email I had for this Chris Tillam is different to your current one.

I'm sad to hear the Jinx is not in good health. She is a lovely person. Many years ago I represented the Gallery in the case about the paintings that belonged to her mother. I took the Gallery files on the Nolan exhibition to the court, as they clearly showed that the works were in the collection of her mum. However, lawyers can always twist things around and the one for Mary Nolan got the evidence disallowed on the grounds that I could not show without a doubt that no-one had ever had access to the files and could have tampered with them!

Anyway, we would love to have the throwing-stick and books you mentioned for the archive, if you are agreeable.

On 1 November we open our fantastic new premises, the main research library, but also facilities for our National Art Archive.

Kind regards, Steven

[Steven Miller](#)

[Head of Research Library and Archives](#)

[T + 61 2 9225 1762](tel:+61292251762)

Steven.Miller@ag.nsw.gov.au

Re: Boomerang and books

July 28, 2022 12:32 pm 13 KB

From: chris@wavehand.one

To: Steven Miller

Dear Steven,

Great to hear from you: yes, I'm the same Chris Tillam, with a new email. I am delighted to hear that the Gallery would like to acquire the material offered.

Outback is a classic: it's meticulous and clear-eyed reportage of racism in its many forms. I could imagine some scans looping on a screen above a vitrine with a throwing-stick... I'm going to have to buy another copy.

Virginia and I will look forward to bringing the boomerang and the books to the Gallery.

Cheers,

Chris Tillam

Fwd: throwing-stick to be bequeathed to AGNSW
August 9, 2022 12:14 pm 1 MB

From: chris@wavehand.one
To: Steven Miller
Bcc: chris@wavehand.one

Dear Steven,

Further to our recent correspondence: when I recently came to prepare the books and the throwing-stick for the journey to Sydney, I was overwhelmed with a sense of regret at the thought of the throwing-stick being absent from its accustomed place in our household. I sat on this for some time. I have decided that the three items which you have indicated you would be happy to acquire are now to be bequeathed to the Gallery. I have made a codicil to my will to this effect.

The gifts are made to commemorate the life of Jinx Nolan.

Looking forward to an acknowledgement of this email in due course.

My best wishes for the launch of the new Research Library.

Cheers,
Chris Tillam

From:
Steven Miller <Steven.Miller@ag.nsw.gov.au>
To: chris@wavehand.one

Dear Chris,
That is totally fine. Many thanks for making provision to bequeath them. If you are around, could you pencil in Monday 31st October at 10.30am, as that is the date for the launch and preview of the new library and archive. It would be great if you could attend. Regards, Steven

http://jinxnolan.com/jinx_web_site_12-30-15_002.htm
jinx_web_site_12-30-15002001.jpg

OUTBACK

Landscape 36" x 36" Paint and Collage on Masonite 2015



// ends

