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MS 2483

**William F MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs**

1923 – 1965

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COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:	William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie
Title:	William F MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie, Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs 1923 – 1965
Collection no:	MS 2483
Date range:	1923 – 1965
Extent:	1.3 shelf metres
Repository:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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Items from this collection should be cited as, William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie, Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 2483, Series [insert number], Subseries [insert number], Item or Folder [insert number].

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COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Scope and contents note

The papers of William and Geraldine MacKenzie document their administration of the Presbyterian Mission at Aurukun from 1924 to 1965. They include the diaries of both William and Geraldine MacKenzie, William's correspondence with the Presbyterian Board of Missions and others, miscellaneous files and maps.

Some papers documenting the period after the MacKenzies' retirement in 1965 are also held, including correspondence regarding the commencement of bauxite mining, maps and plans for Aurukun site development, visitors' books and press cuttings.

Provenance

The collection was deposited in the AIATSIS Collections by the Uniting Church of Australia, Sydney on 11 March 1987.

**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965**

Material separated from the collection

Photographs are held in the AIATSIS photographic collection at MACKENZIE W01.BW – W10.BW made and collected by William MacKenzie, including community, ceremonial and economic activities, and mission life and buildings, at Aurukun, Mapoon and in the region.

Maps, Tracings and plans are held in Map Cabinet 5, drawer 2, in the Closed Access Stack.

Related material

MS 1525 Aurukun Mission Papers, 1891-1982.

MS 1620 Aurukun Mission School, 1970-1972.

UNITING_C01 William and Geraldine MacKenzie, Oral history relating to Aurukun and the Rev Bill and Mrs Geraldine MacKenzie, Qld, 1963-1984.

For a complete list of works by William and Geraldine MacKenzie, held in the AIATSIS Collection, and for other related material, consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

For access to Audiovisual material contact AIATSIS [Collections](#).

For material relating to William and Geraldine MacKenzie held in other institutions, consult Trove, www.trove.nla.gov.au

Important: Before clicking on the links to the catalogue entries please read our [sensitivity message](#).

Archivist's note

In December 2016 and January 2017 the Aurukun papers of William F and Geraldine MacKenzie were re-housed and the original typescript finding aid was converted to digital format.

In the original finding aid, the MacKenzie papers were classified into four series, itemised as one sequence of items, Nos. 1-71, plus a further series of maps and plans, Nos. 1-32. The actual items in series 1 – 4 were stamped with the box number and item number which were cited in some publications.

Rehousing the papers for protection required the use of four-flap folders which, being larger than the original manila folders, would not fit into the original boxes. The papers, including the maps and plans, have now been arranged in five series, but the original sequence of item numbers has been retained.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Rev WF MacKenzie was Superintendent – Missionary of Aurukun Mission between 1923 and 1965. Mrs G MacKenzie was honorary Principal of the Aurukun School for 20 years until 1965.

See also Appendix: Geoff Wharton, *Biography of William Frederick MacKenzie, CBE BA, 1897-1972, and Geraldine Adelaide Propsting MacKenzie, BA, Dip Ed. 1900-1980.*

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**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965**

SERIES DESCRIPTION

MS 2483/Item 1 Guide to MS 2483, William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie, Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965, and related papers.

Series 1 Diaries, 1926 – 1954

MS 2483/1/2 William MacKenzie's diary, 1927 (includes notes / summary from 1926)

MS 2483/1/3 William MacKenzie's diary, 1928

MS 2483/1/4 William MacKenzie's diary, 1929

MS 2483/1/5 William MacKenzie's diary, 1930

MS 2483/1/6 William MacKenzie's diary, 1931

MS 2483/1/7 William MacKenzie's diary, 1932

MS 2483/1/8 William MacKenzie's diary, 1933

MS 2483/1/9 William MacKenzie's diary, 1934

MS 2483/1/10 William MacKenzie's diary, 1935

MS 2483/1/11 William MacKenzie's diary, 1936

MS 2483/1/12 William MacKenzie's diary, 1937

MS 2483/1/13 William MacKenzie's diary, 1938

MS 2483/1/14 William MacKenzie's diary, 1939

MS 2483/1/15 William MacKenzie's diary, 1940

MS 2483/1/16 William MacKenzie's diary, 1941

MS 2483/1/17 William MacKenzie's diary, 1942

MS 2483/1/18 William MacKenzie's diary, 1943

MS 2483/1/19 William MacKenzie's diary, 1944 (1 January – 1 June)

MS 2483/1/20 William MacKenzie's diary, 1944 (17 April – 30 December)

MS 2483/1/21 William MacKenzie's diary, 1945

MS 2483/1/22 William MacKenzie's diary, 1945 (23 December – 8 November 1946)

MS 2483/1/23 William MacKenzie's diary 1946 (10 November – 22 January 1947)

MS 2483/1/24 William MacKenzie's diary, 1947 (Overlap from Item 23) January – December)

MS 2483/1/25 William MacKenzie's diary, 1948

MS 2483/1/26 William MacKenzie's diary, 1949

MS 2483/1/27 William MacKenzie's diary, 1950 (1 January – 12 September)

MS 2483/1/28 William MacKenzie's diary, 1950 (13 September – 12 January 1951)

**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965**

- MS 2483/1/29** William MacKenzie's diary, 1951 (13 January – 31 December)
- MS 2483/1/30** William MacKenzie's diary, 1952
- MS 2483/1/31** William MacKenzie's diary, 1952 (1 January – 12 January 1952, 1 Jan – 1 May 1953)
- MS 2483/1/32** William MacKenzie's diary, 1953
- MS 2483/1/33** William MacKenzie's diary, 1954
- MS 2483/1/34** Geraldine MacKenzie's diary, 1926
- MS 2483/1/35** Geraldine MacKenzie's diary, 1927
- MS 2483/1/36** Geraldine MacKenzie's diary, incomplete record from 15 October 1925 to 23 August 1926
- MS 2483/1/37** Geraldine MacKenzie's diary, 1928
- MS 2483/1/38** Gallery Proof of G MacKenzie's Aurukun Diary, pp.1-118, published as, Geraldine MacKenzie, *Aurukun diary: forty years with the Aborigines*, Melbourne, Aldersgate Press, 1981.
- MS 2483/1/39** Summary Aurukun Logs and Diaries 1925 – 1965 (1955 – 1965 is in Mitchell Library)

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Series 2

Chronology

- MS 2483/2/40** Staff at Aurukun, 1924-1965; Bill Miller's Report Extracts, 1933-1964; Summary Queensland Committee minutes, 1931-1973; The Gulf Boats

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Series 3

Correspondence

- MS 2483/3/41** Vol.1, Letters from WF MacKenzie to JRB Love, Jan 1924 – Nov 1930
- MS 2483/3/42** Vol.2, Letters from WF MacKenzie to JRB Love, Mar 1931 – Nov 1937
- MS 2483/3/43** Vol.3, Letters from WF MacKenzie to JRB Love, Apr 1938 – Aug 1945
- MS 2483/3/44** Correspondence / Order forms re Cattle / Horse purchases
- MS 2483/3/45** Correspondence re Cattle Project at Aurukun
- MS 2483/3/46** Correspondence from RAAF Group, Townsville to Mission
- MS 2483/3/47** Correspondence from Mission Residents to MacKenzies – 1960s
- MS 2483/3/48** Correspondence to WF MacKenzie from AJ Macleod, Mitchell River Mission 1939 – 1942
- MS 2483/3/49 Pt 1** Correspondence: Business and Personnel – WF MacKenzie to Alec Simpson 1935 to 1969

**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965**

- MS 2483/3/49 Pt 2** Correspondence: Business and Personnel – WF MacKenzie to Alec Simpson 1935 to 1969
- MS 2483/3/50** Correspondence concerning Aurukun Airstrip 1949
- MS 2483/3/51** Correspondence concerning Mining Controversy including letters to/from G MacKenzie; interpretation by Rev R Bos; Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relations; Map of Area with Proposed Airport Development; Address to Australian Mining Industry Council 1976
- MS 2483/3/52** Correspondence and Birthday Cards to MacKenzies – 1960's
- MS 2483/3/53** Miscellaneous Correspondence to MacKenzies

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Series 4 **Miscellaneous**

- MS 2483/4/54** Aurukun Associates Agreement Act 1945, plus Parliamentary Debate
- MS 2483/4/55** Recorded Interviews from various Aboriginals, plus tapes of MacKenzies
- MS 2483/4/56** General information on Aboriginals provided by Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions
- MS 2483/4/57** Church Paper: details of naming aircraft 'Bill MacKenzie' – 1968, plus Anzac Day Service details for 1950
- MS 2483/4/58** Church News: early missionary – Mrs Hey
- MS 2483/4/59** Church Paper: Ministering Women 1926 – 1958
- MS 2483/4/60** Talks by WF MacKenzie: 1960's and 1970's
- MS 2483/4/61** Report by T.W.C. on Aborigines of Australia – 25/2/1936
- MS 2483/4/62** Report by JB McCarthy on Initiation Ceremonies, 1950
- MS 2483/4/63** Report on visit to Aurukun and other Missions by the Convenor, Aboriginal Mission Committee – August to October 1934
- MS 2483/4/64** Reprint: Study of Aborigines at Aurukun and Weipa Missions – D Galbraith, 1967
- MS 2483/4/65** Personal Notes: Rhymes, Limericks – written by residents at Aurukun
- MS 2483/4/66** Notes on David Unaipon's Lecture/Address – 9.9.1931
- MS 2483/4/67 Pt 1** Miscellaneous File: *Frontier News* August 1962; Qld Committee Minutes; Chronology; Memorial Minutes; AIAS Library Catalogues; Staff; Mapping; Education; Tourism and Intruders; Agriculture; People, wages, Weekly mail service; Staffing (including Peret); Water and bores; Employment; Tenure; Sacred sites; Weipa and Aurukun amalgamation; Blood types; Reports; Medical; Vegetation and wild life; cattle
- MS 2483/4/67 Pt 2** As above.
- MS 2483/4/68 Pt 1** Miscellaneous File: Early History Gulf Stations; Bill MacKenzie's

**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
Aurukun diaries, papers and photographs, 1923 – 1965**

Background and Early Life; Geraldine (née Storrs) MacKenzie's
Background and Early Life; Department of Native Affairs Material; Letters
from G MacKenzie to V Leeper 1927 – 1937 (photocopies)

- MS 2483/4/68 Pt 2** As above.
- MS 2483/4/69 Pt 1** Press Clippings: 1924 – 1984, plus other miscellaneous and undated
clippings
- MS 2483/4/69 Pt 2** Press Clippings: 1924 – 1984, plus other miscellaneous and undated
clippings
- MS 2483/4/70** Visitor's book, Aurukun, 1943 – 1960
- MS 2483/4/71** Visitor's book, Aurukun and Strathdon, 1960 – 1979

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Series 5

List of maps and plans

Maps and plans are held in Map Cabinet 5, Drawer 2, in the Closed Access
Stack.

- MS 2483/5/1** Holroyd sheet 1. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
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- MS 2483/5/2** Holroyd sheet 2. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
Jan 1963
- MS 2483/5/3** Holroyd sheet 3. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
Jan 1963
- MS 2483/5/4** Aurukun sheet 1. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
January 1963
- MS 2483/5/5** Aurukun sheet 2. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
January 1963
- MS 2483/5/6** Aurukun sheet 3. Advance copy. Scale 1:48,000. Topographic Branch, 21
January 1963
- MS 2483/5/7** Holroyd 1. 1:48,000. Copy
- MS 2483/5/8** Aurukun 3. 1:48,000. Copy
- MS 2483/5/9** Aurukun. 1:48,000. Copy. UNTITLED.
- MS 2483/5/10** Aurukun. 1:48,000. Copy. UNTITLED. (Boundary lines sketched in pencil.)
- MS 2483/5/11** Aurukun. 1:250,000. SD 54-7, edition 1, series R.502, Royal Australian
Survey Corps, 1965. "Story places"
- MS 2483/5/12** Aurukun. 1:250,000. SD 54-7, edition 1, series R.502, Royal Australian
Survey Corps, 1965. "Proposed improvements"
- MS 2483/5/13** Aurukun. 1:250,000. SD 54-7, edition 1, series R.502, Royal Australian
Survey Corps, 1965. Coloured zones added
- MS 2483/5/14** Aurukun. 1:250,000. SD 54-7, edition 1, series R.502, Royal Australian

**MS 2483 William MacKenzie and Geraldine MacKenzie,
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Survey Corps, 1965. Pencilled and coloured annotation

- MS 2483/5/15** Holroyd. 1:250,000. SD 54-11, edition 1, series R.502, Royal Australian Survey Corps, 1964. Coloured zone and pencilled agreed boundary July 1969
- MS 2483/5/16** Holroyd. 1:250,000. SD 54-11, edition 1, series R.502, R.A.S.C. 1964. Boundaries and proposed improvements
- MS 2483/5/17** Aurukun mission reserve. Tracing
- MS 2483/5/18** Aurukun mission reserve, with revisions. Tracing
- MS 2483/5/19** Photo map – Pera Head photo index, 6/31. 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, June 1957
- MS 2483/5/20** Photo map – Gumbol Creek photo index, 6/32. 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, June, August 1957
- MS 2483/5/21** Photo map – Aurukun photo index, 6/35. 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, June, July 1957
- MS 2483/5/22** Photo map – Crescent Lagoon photo index, 6/36, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping June, August 1957
- MS 2483/5/23** Photo map – Archer River photo index, 6/39, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, June, July 1957, August 1958
- MS 2483/5/24** Photo map – Running Creek photo index, 6/40, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, June, July 1957
- MS 2483/5/25** Photo map – Keerweer photo index, 6/43, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, July, August, September 1958
- MS 2483/5/26** Photo map – Holroyd photo index Kendall River, 6/47, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, September, October, November 1957, July 1958
- MS 2483/5/27** Photo map – Holroyd photo index Holroyd, 6/51, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, October 1957, July 1958
- MS 2483/5/28** Photo map – Holroyd photo index Edward River, 6/55, 1:50,000. Division National Mapping, October, November 1957, July 1958
- MS 2483/5/29** Plan – Aurukun – Present school building
- MS 2483/5/30** Plan – Aurukun – Proposed alterations – additions – School
- MS 2483/5/31** Plan – New Toilet Block. Department of Works, 9 September 1969
- MS 2483/5/32** Plan – Aurukun community site development. Department of Works, November 1969

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Finding aid revised by Judy Armstrong, January 2017.

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APPENDIX

Biography of

William Frederick MacKenzie, C.B.E., B.A.

1897 – 1972

and Geraldine Adelaide Propsting MacKenzie, B.A., Dip. Ed.

1900 – 1980

by Geoff Wharton

An abridged version of this article was published in
Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 15: 1940-1980 Kem – Pie.
Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000, pp.245-246.

MACKENZIE, WILLIAM FREDERICK (1897-1972), clergyman and missionary, was born on 16 February 1897 at Ambrym Island, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), son of Rev Dr John William MacKenzie, a Canadian Presbyterian Church missionary from Nova Scotia and his second wife, Alicia Rosa Bertha nee Roberts.¹ Known to many people as Bill and to the people of Aurukun as 'Peepa' (meaning father in the Wik Mungkan language), WF MacKenzie attended Otago Boys' High School, Dunedin, New Zealand 1911-1912 and was awarded the Junior Writing prize for handwriting in 1912.² His parents had retired to Epping in Sydney at the end of 1912.³

MacKenzie enrolled in a B.A. at the University of Sydney in 1916 and on 8 October, he joined the Australian Imperial Force in Sydney and gave his height at the time as 5'7³/₄" (172 cm), with the weight of 148 lbs. (67.13 kg).⁴ He embarked for overseas service in December 1916 as a gunner with the 12th Reinforcements of the 5th Field Artillery Brigade, arriving in England in February 1917.⁵ He served in France from July 1917 with 54th Siege Battery (later renamed 1st) of the 36th (Australian) Heavy Artillery Group, Royal Garrison Artillery.⁶ On 10 April 1918 he was observing for the Central Plotting Station at Fanny's Trench, Messines in Flanders when he was taken prisoner during a German attack.⁷ MacKenzie was repatriated from Rotterdam to England in December 1918 and prior to demobilisation received advice from AIF senior chaplain WF Shannon that he should apply to the Presbyterian Foreign Missions Committee for a course of study as a prospective missionary.⁸

¹ *Who's who in Australia*, 19th ed (Melb, 1968), p.569; Extract from Register of Births, Western Pacific High Commission, MS 2483/6 Item 68, MacKenzie Papers, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS); J.G Miller, *Live a History of Church Planting in the Republic of Vanuatu: Book Five* (Port Vila, 1987), pp.19-21, 25, 444; Certificate of Marriage of WF MacKenzie and GA.P. Storrs, MS 2483/6 Item 68, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

² The correct spelling of the word in Wik Mngkan is 'piip'. C. Kilham, M. Pamulkan, J. Pootchemunka, and T. Wolmby, *Dictionary and Source Book of the Wik-Mungkan Language*. (Darwin, 1986), p.307; J.O. Lucas, GH. Fairmaid, M.G McInnes and W.J. Patrick (eds), *Otago Boys' High School Old Boys' Register*, (Dunedin, 1963), p.261; David Billing, Otago Boys' High School Archives and Museum to author, 20 February 1997.

³ J.G Miller, *Live a History of Church Planting in the Republic of Vanuatu: Book Five* (Port Vila, 1987), p.24.

⁴ A. Wilson, University Archives to author, 13 May 1997, quoting University of Sydney Archives No.G3/135, Item 9; Personnel dossier for Gunner William Frederick MacKenzie, Australian Archives (National Office). CRS B2455.

⁵ Personnel dossier for Gunner William Frederick MacKenzie, Australian Archives (National Office). CRS B2455.

⁶ Personnel dossier for Gunner William Frederick MacKenzie, Australian Archives (National Office). CRS B2455; C.E.W. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Main German Offensive, 1918* (St Lucia, 1983), p.14; D. Homer, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery* (St Leonards, 1995), pp.81-82.

⁷ C.E.W. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Main German Offensive, 1918* (St Lucia, 1983), pp.429-430; Statement made by repatriated prisoner of war, 31102 WF MacKenzie, AWM 30 Item B4.2, Australian War Memorial.

⁸ 'Personnel dossier for Gunner William Frederick MacKenzie, Australian Archives (National Office). CRS B2455; Statement made by repatriated prisoner of war, 31102 WF MacKenzie, AWM 30 Item B4.2, Australian War Memorial; WF Shannon to MacKenzie, 18 January 1918, MS 2483/6 Item 68,

Discharged on 27 June 1919, MacKenzie enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts course at the University of Melbourne and was a resident of Ormond College where he studied theology. At Ormond he met James Robert Beattie Love who later invited him to spend the Christmas holidays at Mapoon Presbyterian mission in 1921.⁹ MacKenzie corresponded with Love during their missionary service and he was influenced by Love's philosophy of mixing compatible Aboriginal cultural practices with Christianity.¹⁰ MacKenzie recalled later that his Mapoon experience had changed his original intention to follow in his father's footsteps in the New Hebrides, because he 'fell in love with the work amongst' the Aboriginal people.¹¹

In April 1923 MacKenzie's B.A. was conferred and he applied to the Presbyterian Church of Queensland for work as a missionary. At the meeting of the Queensland Committee on Missions to the Heathen on 7 August 1923, it was recorded that a letter from MacKenzie 'a second year student in the Theological Hall at Ormond College was read in which he offered himself for work amongst the Aborigines, and a strong recommendation in his favour was read from Mr Love with whom he had worked for some time at Mapoon'.¹²

MacKenzie was appointed superintendent of Aurukun Presbyterian mission in December 1923, where he served until returning to Melbourne in December 1924 to complete theological studies.¹³ He was married to Geraldine Adelaide Propsting Storrs on 8 October 1925 and was ordained a Presbyterian minister five days later.¹⁴ Geraldine (b. 25 January 1900) had attended Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar School from 1911 to 1917 and graduated with a B.A. and Diploma of Education from the University of Melbourne.¹⁵

MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

⁹ Personnel dossier for Gunner William Frederick MacKenzie, Australian Archives (National Office). CRS B2455; Transcript of interview with Billy MacKenzie, 15 March 1968, MS 2483/6 Item 55, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS; MacKenzie was at Mapoon from 28 December 1921 to 9 March 1922. JRB Love, Annual report of the Mapoon Mission Station for the year ending June 30th, 1922, Presbyterian Church of Australia, Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relation (BOEMAR) Records, Box 11, ML MSS 1893, Mitchell Library.

¹⁰ G MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years With the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.22; WF MacKenzie to JRB Love, 9 February 1943, MS 2483/Item 43, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

¹¹ Transcript of interview with Billy MacKenzie, 15 March 1968, MS 2483/Item 55, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS. Aurukun resident, Gladys Tybingoompa, who knew the MacKenzies expressed the opinion that MacKenzie's experience as a child and the close bond that he had with his New Hebridean nanny shaped his respect for traditional culture. Gladys Tybingoompa, personal comment to author, 7 July 1997.

¹² Minutes of the Committee on Missions to the Heathen, Presbyterian Church of Queensland, 7 August 1923, Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records (QPHR).

¹³ Student record card for MacKenzie, William Frederick, The University of Melbourne Archives; *The Presbyterian Outlook*, vol.4, no.65 (1 January 1924), p.18; 'Report of the Committee on Missions to the Heathen', *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church State of Queensland*, Session 76th, May 1925, p.55.

¹⁴ Jean Guy (Geraldine MacKenzie's niece) to Rev J.M. Stuckey, 27 April 1984, copy in author's possession; Certificate of marriage, WF MacKenzie and GA.P. Storrs, 8 October 1925, MS 2483/Item 68, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS; *The Presbyterian Outlook*, vol.5, no.85 (1 November 1925), p.5.

¹⁵ Jean Guy (Geraldine MacKenzie's niece) to Rev J.M. Stuckey, 27 April 1984, copy in author's possession; Storrs family tree, MS 2483/Item 68, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS; G Benness, Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, personal comment to author, 1 July 1997. The school record indicates that Geraldine received her Dip. Ed. in 1924.

After Bill's ordination, the MacKenzies travelled north to Queensland and arrived at Aurukun Presbyterian mission on 27 November 1925.¹⁶

Aurukun was established by Moravian missionaries in 1904 as a Presbyterian mission to the Aboriginal people of the Archer Bay area on western Cape York Peninsula and its influence had gradually extended north towards Weipa.¹⁷ When the MacKenzies arrived, there were still many people living a traditional lifestyle in the country to the south of the Archer River and about seventy-five people lived permanently at the mission.¹⁸ Until 1937, Aurukun did not have wireless communication with the outside world and the MacKenzies' only contact with other missions and medical assistance was by sailing lugger.¹⁹ Patrols of the mission reserve were conducted on horseback. In her reminiscences published in 1981, *Aurukun diary: Forty years with the Aborigines* (Melbourne), Geraldine wrote with great respect for the Aboriginal people and their country: 'I had learnt admiration for their hardiness, their cheerfulness in the face of odds that would have flattened me....The spaciousness and unhurried peace of the land they lived in had claimed both of us....Their land was our land, their trees were our trees'.²⁰ Until 1955, Geraldine was matron of the mission dormitory and hospital and she became known as "Mother" to the people of Aurukun, while she signed letters to friends as "Gerrie".²¹

Under the Queensland Aboriginal legislation, the missionaries were responsible for the health, education, employment and community discipline of people living on the Aboriginal reserve, as well as their evangelistic responsibilities.²² Occasionally Bill's rough justice, including cutting off girls' hair for alleged impropriety and chaining people to trees, brought criticism from some visitors, particularly anthropologists.²³ However inappropriate his actions appear in hindsight, they were often in response to serious cases of domestic violence and MacKenzie reported to the Committee on Missions to the Aborigines that 'many of the

¹⁶ Transcript of interview with Billy MacKenzie, 15 March 1968, MS 2483/Item 55, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

¹⁷ Rev Richter, [Report of] Archer River, 'Annual report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for 1904', *PP Queensland*, 1905, vol.1, pp.767-768.

¹⁸ Geraldine MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years With the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.12.

¹⁹ Geraldine MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years With the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.53.

²⁰ Geraldine MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years With the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.48.

²¹ The medical duties were taken over by Sister Alison Cameron in 1955. G MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years With the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.166; Geraldine signed her letters to Aurukun people "Mother" and her headstone at Aurukun cemetery bears that name. *Wik Inana*, no.24, 2 May 1980, p.14; Information supplied to author by Mrs Gladys Tybingoompa, 19 June 1997.

²² The legislation included: *The Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (Qld) and *The Aborigines Preservation and Protection Acts, 1939 to 1946* (Qld).

²³ Aurukun mission diary, 2 November 1944, MS 2483/Item 20, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS; for an account of criticisms by anthropologist Ursula McConnel see R. Kidd, *Regulating bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840-1988* (PhD thesis, Griffith Univ, 1994), pp.384-387. A linguist who was stationed at Aurukun in the 1960s recalled that MacKenzie would chain an offender to a tree with a long length of chain for easy movement, rather than lock them up 'in a closed building'. Rev F. White, Transcript of interview with Barbara Sayers, Cairns, 22 September 1992, p.17, QPHR. Former missionary Margaret Little (née Winn) recalled that the public chaining was also done at the request of the Aurukun elders to enforce discipline. Margaret Little, personal comment to author, 26 June 1997.

women's health and safety and the survival of many of the future generation' depended upon his discipline.²⁴ Responding to a question about MacKenzie's authoritarian approach in a 1992 interview, an Aurukun elder recalled that Bill MacKenzie 'done this, but he made a good man and woman out of that. He had discipline....'²⁵ In December 1946, anthropologist Dr Donald Thomson wrote a series of three newspaper articles on Aboriginal welfare and their treatment on mission stations in which he strongly criticised the forcible removal of children from their parents into the dormitory system and he claimed that all missions 'set out to destroy the native culture'.²⁶ In a letter to the Melbourne *Herald* the following April, Gerrie refuted Thomson's generalisations and said their mission 'urged them to modify some of their customs' where it was necessary for people's health or for the protection of women.²⁷

During 1942-1943 when Cape York Peninsula was threatened with Japanese invasion, Gerrie was evacuated south and in June 1942, Bill re-enlisted in the Army as a private attached to corps headquarters of the Queensland Volunteer Defence Corps. He remained at Aurukun and provided coast watch intelligence reports until his discharge with the rank of Corporal in October 1944.²⁸ MacKenzie valued his military experience and he commented to JRB Love in 1943 that it was a 'hard school, but... a good one'.²⁹

Bill and Gerrie took a keen interest in improving the health of the people and in reducing infant mortality rates but their principal secular interests were respectively, the development of a cattle industry and the creation of a school curriculum adapted to Aboriginal requirements. While visiting Melbourne in 1942 Gerrie met Frances Derham, an authority on child art, who encouraged her to publish a set of six English primers illustrated with local stories.³⁰ Published by F.W. Cheshire of Melbourne from 1951 to 1952 under the title *The first Australian's first* [and subsequent numbers] *book*, they were illustrated by Roma Thompson and Mornington Island missionary, Rev Doug Belcher.³¹ In his foreword to the series, then Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Queensland, Professor F.J. Schonell wrote that 'Mrs MacKenzie, realising the difference in cultural background of aborigine [*sic*] children, has used in her reading scheme the very words, experiences and situations which they use in everyday life'.³² Although English was taught in the school, the MacKenzies did

²⁴ WF MacKenzie to Rev G Kirke, 3 November 1931, Committee on Missions to the Aborigines, Correspondence file 1931, QPHR.

²⁵ Rev F. White, Transcript of interview with Ian Peinkinna, Aurukun, 24 September 1992, pp.2-3, QPHR

²⁶ D.F. Thomson, "'Justice" for Aborigines shocking travesty', *The Herald*, 28 December 1946, p.4; 'Slow extermination of our natives', *The Herald*, 30 December 1946, p.4; 'Aborigines' rights to tribal lands should be recognised', *The Herald*, 31 December 1946, p. 5.

²⁷ G MacKenzie, 'New story of mission work: Gulf replies to Doctor's charges', *The Herald*, 30 April 1947, p.8.

²⁸ Allotment ledger card and pay ledger and history card, William Frederick MacKenzie, CRS J1204/2, Q167025, Australian Archives (Brisbane Office); Extract from WF MacKenzie's service record, Soldier Career Management Agency, Melbourne, supplied by A.D.B., 13 March 1997.

²⁹ WF MacKenzie to JRB Love, 9 February 1943, MS 2483/Item 43, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

³⁰ G MacKenzie, *Aurukun Diary: Forty Years with the Aborigines* (Melb, 1981), p.148.

³¹ G MacKenzie, *The first Australian's first book* (Melb, 1951-1952). Books 1 and 2 were illustrated by Roma Thompson and Books 3 to 6 by Rev Douglas L. Belcher.

³² G MacKenzie, *The first Australian's first book* (Melb, 1951-1952); the books are still used in the Aurukun-Kolkan State School. Gladys Tybingoompa, personal comment to author, 7 July 1997.

not discourage the use of traditional languages and at Bill's invitation, the Summer Institute of Linguistics commenced bi-lingual research at Aurukun on 7 June 1962.³³

MacKenzie's standing among his fellow churchmen was reflected in his unanimous election as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, the highest state office, for its centenary year from May 1949 to May 1950.³⁴ As Moderator, he and Gerrie visited every Presbytery in Queensland and he took the opportunity to draw attention to the difficulties experienced by church staff in remote parts of the state.³⁵ In his address to the Assembly in May 1949, MacKenzie used the analogy of sharing the evening campfire with the Aboriginal people of Aurukun in a spirit of fellowship to demonstrate the need for public worship and he emphasised the importance of missionary work when he said that 'every man, woman and child of our Church should feel that call to work for Christ's Kingdom in the winning of souls....Where the Church ceases to grow it is a dying Church'.³⁶ MacKenzie retained his commitment to practical Christianity at Aurukun mission and in addition to leading the daily mission worship regularly played the flute to lead the hymns at Aurukun church services.³⁷

The Church and the Queensland Government came to regard Bill MacKenzie as a leader among missionaries and occasionally called upon him to advise on controversial issues on other missions, such as unrest at Mapoon in 1953.³⁸ In January 1958, he was appointed M.B.E. and later was promoted to C.B.E, presented personally by Her Majesty the Queen in 1963.³⁹ Gerrie too was nominated for state honours in 1964, but for reasons unknown no award was made.⁴⁰

On 4 December 1965, the MacKenzies retired from Aurukun to live in Melbourne. Writing in support of a testimonial to Bill and Gerrie, then Queensland Governor Sir Henry Abel Smith noted that the MacKenzies 'by their example of joyous service, generate and radiate happiness to all around them. Their aim has not been to destroy the tribal customs, but to preserve all that is good in them'.⁴¹ Bill provided occasional locum services for Victorian vacant parishes, including Rochester, Tatura and Warrnambool and he travelled back to Vanuatu for the

³³ J.M. Stuckey, Unpublished biography of WF and GA.P. MacKenzie. (Copy in author's possession.)

³⁴ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 101, 1948, pp.16-17.

³⁵ *Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland*, Session 103, 1950, p.104.

³⁶ 'The Moderator's address to Assembly', *Presbyterian Outlook*, vol.32, no.12, (June 1949), p.3.

³⁷ Lady Florence Hibberd to author, 18 November 1996.

³⁸ For example, in response to complaints by Mapoon residents about their mission's administration in 1953, he was asked to report to the Director of Native Affairs on the future of the mission. WF MacKenzie, *Report on investigations at Mapoon*, 14 July 1953, Director of Native Affairs File 6G/20, Box 728, Transfer R 254, Queensland State Archives (QSA).

³⁹ Chief Secretary's Batch 240, Part 2 Honours - General, Box 1286, TR 1860, QSA; Reverend WF MacKenzie - Civil honour, CRS A463/61 Item 1958/3161, Australian Archives (ACT); Chief Secretary's Batch 240, Part 2 Honours - Recommendations and Awards, Box 1314, TR 1860, QSA.

⁴⁰ Queensland Cabinet Secretariat. Cabinet minute Decision 7336, 9 February 1965, Premier's Department Batch 240, Part 2 Honours - Recommendations and Awards, Box 1303, TR 1860, QSA.

⁴¹ Sir Henry Abel Smith to W.E. Nixon, 8 October 1965, WF MacKenzie File, Biographical Files, QPHR.

unveiling of a monument to his parents' missionary service just before his death on 29 June 1972.⁴² His funeral service was conducted by Rev Fred McKay and his ashes were transported by Gerrie and Sister Alison Cameron for burial at Aurukun cemetery in June 1973.⁴³ Gerrie had completed the manuscript of her reminiscences but did not see *Aurukun Diary* published before she died on 25 April 1980.⁴⁴ Her ashes were buried next to Bill's at Aurukun. The MacKenzies had no children of their own.

In 1980, the Uniting Church in Australia commissioned a former General Secretary of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, Rev James Stuckey, to prepare a biography of the MacKenzies.⁴⁵ A manuscript based on the mission diaries from 1942 to 1965 and recorded interviews with former mission staff and MacKenzie relatives were prepared but not completed or published.⁴⁶ Strongly built, Bill MacKenzie spoke deeply and deliberately with a cultured Australian accent.⁴⁷ In middle age he developed a limp which may have been caused by undiagnosed polio but he overcame this disability through self-discipline.⁴⁸ Bill preferred manual labour and the practical aspects of mission management to office work, nevertheless his surviving correspondence and reports are written with clarity and creativity.⁴⁹

The MacKenzies are commemorated annually at Aurukun by the presentation of awards to school students at a November function known as the MacKenzie Awards Night.⁵⁰

⁴² J.M. Stuckey, Unpublished biography of WF and GA.P. MacKenzie.

⁴³ M. McKenzie, *Fred McKay: Successor to Flynn of the Inland* (Brisb, 1990), p.154; J.M. Stuckey, Unpublished biography of WF and GA.P. MacKenzie; 'Mother MacKenzie's visit', *Wik ngeeyow*, no.65, 1 June 1973 [Aurukun newsletter].

⁴⁴ Rev John P. Brown, Press release, [May] 1980, MS 2483/6 Item 67, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

⁴⁵ Rev John P. Brown, Commission for World Mission, Uniting Church in Australia to Rev Jim Stuckey, 23 October 1980. (Copy in author's possession.)

⁴⁶ It appears that ill-health forced Rev Stuckey to abort the project. Mrs E. Haughton to author, 23 January 1997. Some of his notes are held in the MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

⁴⁷ Audio cassette tape interviews with Bill and Geraldine MacKenzie, recorded on 15 March 1968, are held by the AIATSIS and draft transcripts of those interviews are located at MS 2483/Item 55, MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS.

⁴⁸ J.M. Stuckey, Notes of interview with Alison Cameron, 8 February 1982. (Copy in author's possession.)

⁴⁹ The correspondence may be found in the Aboriginal missions committee correspondence files held by Queensland Presbyterian Historical Records, Fortitude Valley, Qld. and the MacKenzie Papers, AIATSIS. MacKenzie's reports to the church for the period 1933 to 1965 are in the BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2545, ML MSS 1893 Add-on 1173, Mitchell Library. The Aurukun mission diaries for the period 1927-1954 are held in the MacKenzie papers, AIATSIS. The diaries for the period 1955-1965 are held in the BOEMAR Records, Box MLK 2585, ML MSS 1893 Add-on 1173, Mitchell Library.

⁵⁰ Mrs Gladys Tybingoompa, Manager Aurnkun State School, personal comment to author, 19 June 1997.

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