

In Remote Corners of W.A.

**Reminiscences of H. W. B. Talbot—Speared by Blacks
—A Long Trek**

There are probably few citizens still amongst us who can claim a better acquaintance with the remote and little-known portions of the State than Mr. H. W. B. Talbot, whose earliest exploration work in Western Australia dates back a matter of 37 years. Mr. Talbot has been connected with the Freney Kimberley Oil Company as field superintendent for some years past, and the exploratory work he has assisted in since his first trip with F. S. Brockman in 1891 has taken him from Carnarvon in the west to Mt. Gosse on the South Australian border, and from Wyndham in the far north to Hopetoun on the southern coast.

Mr. Talbot recalls the occasion when Parliament granted a sum of £5000 to equip an expedition to explore a section of country in the far north of the State lying south-west of Cambridge Gulf and north of the King Leopold Range. This was in 1891, and at that time few white men had been across that belt of country. F. C. Brockman was in command of the expedition, Charles Crossland second in



H. W. B. TALBOT

command, Dr. House was attached as

naturalist, and Mr. Gibb Maitland was the geologist. Mr. Talbot was a member of this expedition, which numbered 13, including two blacks. It was rough country they had to travel, and they took with them 55 pack horses and about 20 riding horses. Numerous blacks were encountered, but no trouble was experienced. The party was away eight months, and some good pastoral country was found.

From 1899 to 1932 Mr. Talbot was with the Geological Survey Department, and during that period he had some interesting experiences. He was with the Canning expedition in 1905-9, and assisted in the survey of the Canning stock route. Leaving Wiluna they proceeded approximately 900 miles north to Hall's Creek, putting down 54 wells. There were 25 in the party, and Talbot was with them for 14 months altogether, his next variation being to the Tanami gold rush in 1909.

Mr. Talbot is one of the few white men who have been speared by blacks and lived to tell the tale. This little chapter in his eventful life occurred in 1916, when he journeyed to the South Australian border to report on an auriferous belt of country near the Warburton Range. The party comprised three white men—E. de Courcey Clarke (at present lecturer in geology at the University of W.A.) a man named Johnson and Talbot—and their investigations were done by making a base at a suitable spot and traversing the country in flying trips. On one of these excursions they went as far east as Mt. Gosse, which is on the South Australian border, and while peacefully sleeping one bright moonlight night (having followed the bushman's axiom of camping in the open in strange country) treacherous spears came flying through the air and in a twinkling the dusky throwers had vanished into the night, leaving two wounded explorers to get back to civilisation as best they could.

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Johnson who was found with a nasty wound in the leg below the groin. As Talbot made a move to assist him he found he had also received an issue in the left arm, the black's spear also going through a cardigan shirt and six thicknesses of blanket and just scratching the flesh on his chest. Talbot probably owed his life to the fact that he likes a plentiful supply of blankets when sleeping out—more, perhaps, than the average citizen. Johnson's wound was found to be serious, and his companions had a trying nine days getting him to the base camp. Then followed a wearisome and arduous trek of 550 miles to Laverton, the nearest civilisation, the journey taking nine or ten weeks. Johnson was eventually taken to Perth for medical treatment, but the wound continued to give him trouble, and he died in the Perth Hospital, almost two years elapsing between the spearing and his demise. Talbot's wound did not give him much trouble, but he carries the scar as a vivid reminder of the expedition.

These are only a few of the numerous expeditions and survey trips Mr. Talbot has undertaken, and he has an intimate knowledge of the remote parts of the State that has been acquired in the field of practical experience. He belongs to that group of bushmen who could take chaps like Michael Terry into a hundred-acre paddock up north and lose them.