

Extract from the Mutawintji Board of Management & the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (2007) *Mutawintji Lands Draft Plan of Management, Version 9, December 2007*

British colonists began passing through the region in the 1830s. Captain Charles Sturt, Major Thomas Mitchell, Burke and Wills, and William Wright all travelled to and through Mutawintji on their inland expeditions and explorations.

By the 1850s the Darling River was occupied by pastoralists and their sheep and cattle had begun to change the landscape. There was resistance and during the 1850s gold rushes many white stockman deserted the Darling River pastoral runs, and this combined with severe drought early in this decade, slowed the pace of settlement and allowed Aboriginal People to temporarily reclaim some of their traditional lands. It also forced the pastoralists to come to co-existence with the area's original owners.

Mutawintji was visited for water by the 1861 Burke and Wills expedition and soon after this, pastoralists occupied land in the area. While carrying on small expeditions into far western NSW in search of pastoral lands, Ernest Giles – who later became the first Europeans to sight Uluru (Ayers Rock) – visited Mutawintji and left an engraving recording the years of his visits in June 1861, August 1862 and September 1863. (A photojournalist damaged this engraving in the 1930s, which caused uproar among the non-Aboriginal community and within days, a senior member of the Raven family who lived at nearby Ravendale Station, travelled across to Mutawintji and created a copy of the original engraving.)

By about 1880 the British occupation had extended to the far north-west corner of NSW.

The first non-Aboriginal lessee of the Mutawintji area was Henry Raines who built the rock walls at the rock holes to increase their water holding capacity and transported water from the rock holes to his residence via a ceramic pipeline. It is understood that when forced to relinquish his lease, Henry Raines released his herd of Goats and they may be some of the founders of the current large Feral Goat population in the area.

The Raven family followed when they established Ravendale Station and built the original Rockholes Hotel to service the horse-drawn coach service which travelled through Mutawintji delivering passengers, mail and supplies to White Cliffs and Tibooburra. This coach service was owned and operated by Sir Sidney Kidman with the coaches being built in Wilcannia.

With the arrival of pastoralist, Aboriginal people were dispossessed and displaced. They could not control what the new-comers were doing at Mutawintji. Some people did continue to visit, while others stayed away, but they never stopped passing on knowledge about this sacred place.

