

Randal Stafford and Fred Brooks

Randal Stafford, a European settler, took out a lease on the Coniston Station in 1917, and stocked it with cattle four years later. Stafford's friend Fred Brooks worked on the cattle station and sometimes did dingo trapping work, which earned him bounty payments.



Randal Stafford at Coniston Station.



The remains of the Coniston homestead in 2003.

On 2 August 1928, Brooks went on a dingo trapping trip with two Aboriginal youths, Nyinanyanu Jakamarra ('Skipper') and Yirran Pungerta ('Dodger'), who worked as camel and trapping assistants. The group reached the Yurrkuru soakage later that day and set up camp nearby. Some Warlpiri families were already camping at the soakage.

A Murder at Yurrkuru

Five days later, on 7 August 1928, Fred Brooks died from being struck on the head by a weapon such as a boomerang, club or axe. Skipper and Dodger discovered the body partly buried in a rabbit burrow near the soakage.

Some details will never be known about this event. An Aboriginal man, Kamanyarrpa Japanangka (also known as 'Bullfrog'), is thought to have been responsible for the murder. Many people believe that the murder had something to do with Brooks' treatment of Aboriginal women.

In an interview in 1978, Tim Japangardi, an Aboriginal man, said:

'The white man (Brooks) used to go into the camp and drag off women in front of the men, who he threatened with his rifle.'



The soakage at Yurrkuru. In 1928, Brooks' body was found nearby.