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PREPARED and PRESENTED BY: G.H. Cumming.

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**Bro. EDMUND ALBERT COLSON
(1881-1950)**

EXPLORER

Edmund Albert Colson, explorer and bushman was born on 3rd June 1881 at Richmans Creek, near Quorn, South Australia, eldest of eight children of Peter Errick Colson (Carlsen), a farmer from Sweden, and his second wife Ellen Amy, nee Lines, who was English born. Educated at Yatina Public School, Ted became a voracious reader and developed a retentive memory. In 1896 he and his father sailed to Western Australia and walked 150 miles (241 km) to the Norseman goldfields. Ted stated that he was a contractor when he married a domestic servant, Alice Jane Horne on 7th December 1904 at the Christian Chapel, Kalgoorlie, with the forms of the Churches of Christ; they were to remain childless. He took up a job at Brunswick Junction in the south-west of the State before moving in 1917 to Victoria, where he worked on the construction of the Maroondah dam and in 1926 began a motor transport business between Healesville and Melbourne. Next year he was employed in extending the railway north of Oopdnatta, South Australia. In 1931 he leased Blood Creek Station at Abminga, north-west of Oodnadatta; there he ran sheep, tendered the government bore and kept a store.

In 1928 Colson had explored west of the Goyder River for 300 miles (483 km) beyond Mount Irwin Station. Familiar with the Musgrave Ranges, he opened the route north from Moorilyanna ill and Ernabella Creek to Kelly Hills and Opparinna Creek. He was cameleer and guide on Michael Terry's 1930 expeditions to the Peterman and Tomkinson ranges, and conducted A.P. Elkin on his anthropological investigations west of Charlotte Waters. Colson understood the rites, customs and dialects of several Aboriginal tribes. Over camp fires he sang, told yarns and indulged his talent for mimicry. Equally resourceful with camels and motor cars, he had a genius for mending and adapting equipment. He was burly and strong, with a shock of hair and a bristling moustache. Gentle, cheerful and unassuming, he was trusted both by Aborigines and whites. He was a Freemason and a district master of the Loyal Orange Institution of South Australia.

The triumph of Colson's Explorations was his crossing of the Simpson Desert, which had previously defeated Charles Sturt and David Lindsay. Prompted by an exceptionally wet season and accompanied by only by young Eringa Peter of the Antakurinya tribe, Colson set out from Blood Creek on 26th May 1936. He led a train of five camels eastward along the 26th parallel, clambering over a thousand steep, red sand-ridges, and naming Alice Hills, Glen Joyce and Lake Tamblyn.

KING OF THE SIMPSON DESERT



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Ted Colson – the man behind the milestone . . .

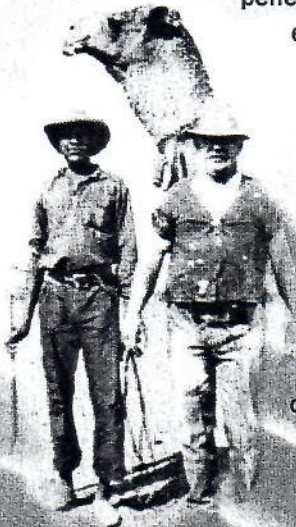
To many, Australia's grand tradition of exploration ended during the wild colonial days of the 19th century – but this is not the case. Such is the nature of the 'wide brown land', the Australian Continent still had many secrets in the 20th century, and many men, driven by a thirst for knowledge and inspired by the deeds of their forefathers, bravely sought to reveal those secrets.

Ted Colson was one such man. An experienced bushman with a rich knowledge of indigenous cultures, and a cameleer and guide on previous missions of exploration, Colson was inspired by Madigan's aerial crossing of the Simpson Desert in 1929, and decided to attempt the journey by camel during 1936. Some of Australia's most famous explorers – including Charles Sturt, Ludwig Leichhardt and Burke & Wills – had penetrated or skirted the arid environment of the Simpson Desert, but none had actually made the crossing.

Despite being told that it was impossible, Colson left Blood Creek north-west of Oodnadatta in a bid to cross the desert from west to east on 26 May 1936, taking five camels and Peter Ains, an indigenous man of the

Antakurinya tribe, as his assistant. Relying solely on his compass, Colson trekked across the inhospitable landscape with remarkable accuracy, and having clambered over a thousand steep, red sand-ridges, he and his companion marched into Birdsville a week earlier than was thought possible – on 11 June. After spending time recovering from the arduous journey, they then set off for Blood Creek, arriving on 29 June 1936.

An extraordinary achievement, with little support and no prospect of financial reward, Colson trekked across nearly 900km of largely unexplored hostile country in just 36 days. Continuing to pioneer routes through Central Australia, before dying in a car accident in 1950 at the age of 68, Ted Colson will always be remembered as the first European to cross the Simpson Desert.



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