

CAMEL STATION, SANDSTONE — REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Statement by Minister for Heritage

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Heritage) [12.06 pm]: I am pleased to advise members of this house that the ruins of Camel Station in Sandstone have been included in the state Register of Heritage Places. This heritage listing encapsulates the fascinating story of the Murchison murders, the hard and isolated life of boundary riders on the rabbit-proof fence, and the role of camels in Western Australia's development.

Camel Station was significant as a government farm. It was established in 1908 to breed camels as pack and draft animals servicing station outposts, and once housed 350 camels. Located along the rabbit-proof fence, the site now comprises the ruins of a 1920s stone residence, wooden structures and a timber-lined tank. The story of the Murchison murders at Camel Station, Sandstone, and killer Stanley "Snowy" Rowles has its origins in the work of Australian crime novelist Arthur Upfield and his fictional Aboriginal detective Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1929, Arthur Upfield was working as a rabbit-proof fence boundary rider, stationed at Camel Station. During the writing of his novel *The Sands of Windee*, he discussed the perfect disposal of a fictional murder victim with fellow workers, including labourer "Snowy" Rowles. The method involved burning the body and then sifting through the ashes for identifiable metal objects that were to be dissolved in acid, and crushing any remaining bone fragments. Later that year, Rowles left Camel Station with two local labourers, James Ryan and George Lloyd. Although Rowles was seen driving Ryan's truck, the two labourers were never seen again. In 1930, Rowles left the station with New Zealander Louis Carron, who had a £25 cheque. Rowles cashed the cheque and was later seen burning clothes. Carron was never seen again. Dah-dee-dum-dee-dah!

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I do not know whether that can be recorded in *Hansard*!

After his arrest, as members tense up —

The SPEAKER: No more singing, minister!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: — it was discovered that Rowles was prison escapee John Thomas Smith. Rowles was convicted of the murder of Carron and executed at Fremantle Prison in 1932. The story of "Snowy" Rowles, who was never charged with the murders of Ryan and Lloyd despite substantial evidence, features in the true crime tour at Fremantle Prison.