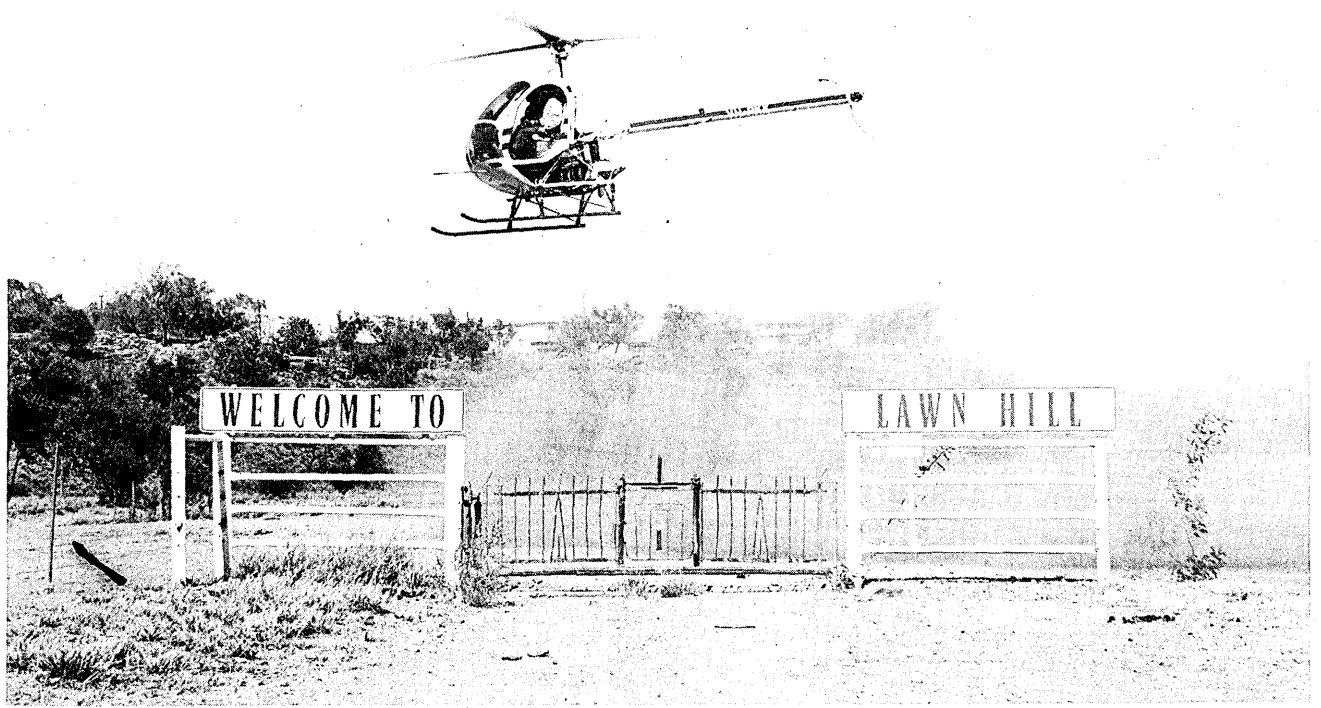


BAGMEN MILLIONAIRES

**LIFE AND PEOPLE IN
OUTBACK QUEENSLAND**

JOHN ANDERSEN

VIKING O'NEIL



Coming in to land after a muster on Lawn Hill Station.

Senior Constable Alfred Wavell's grave at Lawn Hill. The piping rails to the left of the policeman's grave surround the final resting place of the outlaw Joe Flick.



Nym's grave at Lawn Hill.



Another grave on Lawn Hill Station.

Maia knows how to enjoy his money and he is rumoured to spend vast amounts of it on beautiful women. He has married four times but admits happily that one marriage cannot be counted because it finished inside the church. In 1972 he married Miss Universe Maria Da Gloria, but this liaison, like all of his matrimonial adventures, was short-lived. A reporter from a Brazilian magazine once asked him what he thought was the most beautiful aspect of a thirty-year-old woman. Maia replied without a moment's hesitation that he had never had a woman as old as thirty. He now spends from four to six months a year at Lawn Hill and usually he brings at least one nubile nymphet to ensure that his stay in the outback is not too uncomfortable. The lithesome beauties who accompany him to Lawn Hill are usually a source of much interest at bush shindigs such as the Burketown Races, where young Gulf country bucks scan the ladies with rapt attentiveness. Maia's stays at Lawn Hill are viewed by his Australian staff as more of a rest and recreation period before he heads back to the Nevada gambling capital for another bout of terminally fast living.

I asked Maia what he wanted out of life, now that he was at an age when most men were thinking of buying a three-metre dinghy and spending the remainder of their lives fishing the local broadwater. He smiled softly and replied that he wanted nothing more than peace and tranquillity. I said, 'Mr Maia, what do you mean by peace and tranquillity?' 'Girls, girls and more girls,' replied the cheeky old reprobate. Clearly Mr Maia has no intention of spending his autumn years sitting by the fireplace with only a dozing Labrador for company. One of Maia's business associates once asked him: 'You have everything you asked God for?' The billionaire replied: 'No. I would never ask God for so much!'

Tragedy struck Lawn Hill late in October 1889 when one of Australia's lesser-known outlaws shot dead a senior police constable and an Aboriginal boy named Nym. The owner of the station at the time, Mr F. H. Hann, was also shot in the chest when the halfcaste Joe Flick besieged the homestead. Today, the only physical reminders of this bloody encounter are the graves of Nym and Senior Constable Alfred Wavell and the unmarked grave of the outlaw. In 1979 a former Queensland Police Commissioner, the late Mr N. W. Bauer, wrote an account of Joe Flick's life in *Sphere*, a journal published by the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. In the following account of Joe Flick's life, much of the credit should be reserved for Mr Bauer, who painstakingly researched this little known tragedy, and to the Society for allowing the information to be told on these pages.

Joe Flick, the son of a white man and an Aboriginal woman, was born at Burketown. He was raised as a white man but as he grew older he manifested the special bush skills unique to the Aboriginal race. As a young man he was a noted cattleman and horseman and was in demand around the local stations. Despite Flick's prowess as a bushman and the respect it earned him in some circles, the half-caste was subjected to much ridicule about his mixed blood. In the mustering camps on the stations he no doubt had to endure the taunts of being a 'creamy'. He would also have had to suffer the indignity of being described as a 'yeller feller' or a 'brindle'.

Early in his text Bauer asked the question: 'Did he [Flick] resent the

white attitude towards his mother, of whom he was very fond, or did he resent the jibes concerning his breeding which came his way in the droving and mustering camps? Nobody knows just what went on in his mind.'

The events leading to the drama at Lawn Hill had their beginning early in December 1889 when Flick rode home from a droving trip to find his father thrashing his mother. Flick, in blind anger, attacked his father and gave him a savage hiding. About this time Flick was courting an Aboriginal girl who worked as a housemaid at the Brook Wayside Hotel on Beames Brook, south of Burketown. Suddenly the girl broke off the relationship. Flick believed that the owners of the hotel had persuaded her not to have anything more to do with him. Set on revenge, he waylaid the owners and savagely attacked them before they managed to fight him off. Flick was later arrested as a result of this assault and charged with attempted murder. He was placed in the Normanton lock-up but soon escaped into the bush.

Some time later Flick was sighted at Turn Off Lagoons, north of the Lawn Hill homestead, by an Aboriginal houseboy. Flick surprised the houseboy in the bush near the house and threatened him with 'pointing the bone' if the boy did not tell him where the police were. Flick also wanted the location of the police horses. It happened that at this time Senior Constable Wavell was at nearby Corinda Police Station suffering from fever and dysentery. On the night of 23 October he visited Mrs Anderson, who had been treating his illness at Turn Off Lagoons. Mrs Anderson told Wavell about Flick's visit and his threats to the houseboy.

That night, as Wavell and Mrs Anderson talked, a sound came from the vicinity of the back door. Mrs Anderson, thinking it was her husband returning, called out and opened the door. She saw a horseman galloping away into the darkness and the sound of a cooe came floating back through the night air. Mrs Anderson returned and told Wavell she was sure the horseman had been Joe Flick. Only a day or two before this, Wavell had received information that Flick had stolen a horse and committed a series of thefts in the Gregory area. Instructions had already come ordering him to search for the halfcaste escapee.

The following morning, 24 October, Wavell was personally thrown into the case when he discovered his troop horse Railway, and another horse he had bred himself, shot dead in the police barracks horse paddock. Wavell was enraged by the crime, and despite his poor health he borrowed some stock horses from the Andersons and set off in pursuit of the outlaw. Mrs Anderson begged Wavell to be careful, telling him she had had a dream which told her he was going to be killed. Mrs Anderson's warning must have had some impact on Wavell for, before he left, he wrote out his will and tidied up some personal papers and insurance certificates.

Accompanied by an Aboriginal tracker, Wavell arrived at Bannockburn at 3.30 am on 25 October. Here they found a Mr Symes who had been up all night after the house had been pelted by stones. Symes had fired a shot and heard someone hoot and gallop away. Early the next day Wavell and the tracker picked up fresh tracks which led them across the Nicholson River towards Lawn Hill Station. That same day Wavell met a Constable Gunn who had with him a police dray and horses. They exchanged horses and Wavell collected another tracker and followed Flick's trail until dark. Wavell's

health was rapidly deteriorating, but he was doggedly determined to capture the outlaw.

At midday on 27 October they sighted Flick, who was alone with a loaded pack horse. The outlaw dropped the lead-rope on the pack horse and galloped off towards Lawn Hill, seven kilometres distant. Flick galloped up the incline of Lawn Hill. Near the homestead he turned in the saddle and saw Wavell and one of the trackers in hot pursuit. The outlaw fired a shot which felled the horse beneath the tracker.

Reaching the homestead, Flick leaped from his horse, ran to the kitchen-dining room and barricaded himself inside. Wavell and the two trackers surrounded the building and opened fire. Flick was an accurate shot and managed to keep the trio pinned down. Bauer has chosen to call a 'brave show of courage' the fact that Wavell walked towards the building calling on Flick to surrender. There was no sound inside. When Wavell was thirty metres from the building Flick appeared at a window and shot the Constable through the chest. Wavell was dead when he hit the ground. With the help of station employees, the two black trackers managed to keep Flick pinned down all through the afternoon. At about sundown the station owner, Mr F. H. Hann, a man named O'Shea and an Aboriginal boy named Nym arrived on the scene.

Flick was well known to Hann, as he had broken in horses on the station some time earlier. Hann had the reputation of being a fair man, and was well thought of by the Aborigines. Hann thought he could talk Flick into surrendering. Calling on the men to cease fire, he walked towards the kitchen, quietly assuring Flick of fair treatment. Flick agreed to come out if Hann would go to the door. Hann did as he was told and as soon as he opened the door Flick opened fire. The bullet struck Hann in the chest, narrowly missing his heart. As he fell, Hann, who was also holding a rifle, fired a shot which missed the renegade. The men outside then fired at will into the kitchen, allowing Hann to crawl to safety.

That night, although a watch was kept on the building, Flick managed to escape down the cliff face at the rear of the house amid the confusion of a storm. At daybreak on 28 October the men charged the kitchen, only to find spent rifle cartridges, bloodstains and pieces of bloodsoaked rag. It was apparent Flick was wounded.

Hann had sufficiently recovered to lead a party, which included the Aboriginal boy Nym, in search of the desperado. They discovered blood marks and foot tracks which ran for some distance along Lawn Hill Creek. Less than a kilometre from the homestead, a shot rang out and Nym fell dead, shot through the heart. Then Flick unleashed a furious rate of fire, but the search party had taken cover at the first shot. Hann despatched a member of the party back to Burketown with news of the deaths, and his belief that Flick would head for a wild gorge further up the creek. This gorge, now known as Lawn Hill Gorge, would afford the outlaw a formidable hiding place, and Hann believed that should he be allowed to reach it he would be impossible to flush out. Hann ordered the grass along the creek to be set on fire and in a short time Flick was flushed from his hiding place. The search party opened fire on the running figure and the outlaw fell dead, hit by more than one bullet.

Today Flick's grave can be seen alongside that of Senior Constable Wavell. It is surrounded by steel pipe, but bears no headstone or epitaph. Wavell's tombstone bears the inscription: 'This monument was erected by the comrades (in conjunction with the Government of Queensland) of Alfred Wavell, a Senior Constable of the Queensland Police Force, who was shot dead whilst bravely performing his duty on the 27th October 1889. Aged 37.'

Nym's grave on the other side of the creek is alongside that of an Aboriginal woman. A crude epitaph written on the marble headstone reads: 'Nym, black boy who was shot by Joe Flick, 28th October 1889. A faithful boy was Nym.'