
JURISDICTION : CORONER'S COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ACT : CORONERS ACT 1996
CORONER : MICHAEL ANDREW GLIDDON JENKIN, CORONER
HEARD : 10 APRIL 2025
DELIVERED : 17 APRIL 2025
FILE NO/S : CORC 13 of 2002
DECEASED : GREENWOOD, DAVID

Catchwords:

Nil

Legislation:

Nil

Counsel Appearing:

Senior Constable C. Robertson assisted the coroner.

Coroners Act 1996
(Section 26(1))

RECORD OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEATH

*I, Michael Andrew Gliddon Jenkin, Coroner, having investigated the suspected death of **David GREENWOOD** with an inquest held at Perth Coroner’s Court, Court 85, CLC Building, 501 Hay Street, Perth, on 10 April 2025 find that the death of **David GREENWOOD** has been established beyond all reasonable doubt, and the identity of the deceased person was **David GREENWOOD** and that death occurred on or about 14 October 1984, in the vicinity of Gindalbie Station approximately 64 kms northeast of Kalgoorlie, in the following circumstances:*

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INTRODUCTION

1. Sometime before 5.00 am on 14 October 1984, Mr David Greenwood (Mr Greenwood) walked off Gindalbie Station (Gindalbie), located about 64 km northeast of Kalgoorlie. Mr Greenwood has not been seen or heard from since.^{1,2}
2. On 30 April 2002, a human skull and several bones were located about four kilometres from the Gindalbie homestead. The remains were forensically examined and it was concluded that they appeared to be those of an Aboriginal adult male who had died at least 10 years earlier.³
3. On 13 September 2005, Coroner Kathryn Auty issued a Record of Investigation of Death in which she found that on the basis of the available information: *“the likelihood is that the remains are those of David Greenwood”*.⁴
4. On 16 October 2024, Detective Senior Constable Ellie Wold (Officer Wold) completed her investigation into Mr Greenwood’s disappearance.⁵ On 30 October 2024, the Deputy State Coroner set aside Coroner Auty’s finding, and wrote to the Commissioner of Police on 31 October 2024, to advise that on the basis of Officer Wold’s report, she had reasonable cause to suspect that Mr Greenwood had died and that his death was a *“reportable death”*.^{6,7}
5. The Deputy State Coroner directed that the suspected death of Mr Greenwood be investigated, and in accordance with that direction, I conducted an inquest on 10 April 2025.^{8,9} Officer Wold gave evidence at the inquest,¹⁰ and the documentary material that was tendered consisted of one volume. The inquest examined the circumstances of Mr Greenwood’s disappearance and the issue of whether he had died.

¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24)

² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02)

³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 14, Forensic Pathologist & Forensic Anthropologist Report (07.05.02)

⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 19, Coroner K Auty - Record of investigation of Death (13.09.05)

⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24)

⁶ Letter - Deputy State Coroner to Commissioner of Police (31.10.24)

⁷ Sections 3 & 23(1), *Coroners Act 1996* (WA)

⁸ Letter - Deputy State Coroner to Commissioner of Police (31.10.24)

⁹ Section 23(2), *Coroners Act 1996* (WA)

¹⁰ ts 09.04.21 (Wold), pp4-7

MR GREENWOOD'S DISAPPEARANCE

Background and medical history^{11,12,13,14}

6. Mr Greenwood was born in Laverton on 5 April 1942, and was known to his family as “*Captain*”. He had six siblings, and a son (all of whom are deceased) and his medical history included chronic alcohol dependence (including the consumption of methylated spirits),¹⁵ and a chronic chest infection.^{16,17}
7. At the time of his disappearance, Mr Greenwood was described as “*emaciated*”, and as suffering from “*delirium tremens*” a serious and potentially fatal form of alcohol withdrawal characterised by agitation, confusion, hallucinations, fever, shaking, and high blood pressure.¹⁸

*Mr Greenwood goes missing from Gindalbie*¹⁹

8. On about 12 October 1984, Mr Stephen Tonkin (the lease holder for Gindalbie) employed Mr Greenwood as a stock handler. The day after he arrived at Gindalbie, Mr Greenwood displayed paranoid behaviour including claiming others were going to kill him, and shouting, yelling and hiding in bushes from “*the people who were after him*”.²⁰
9. In his statement to the police Mr Tonkin said he had seen Mr Greenwood (and others) display similar symptoms when withdrawing from alcohol, and said he “*knew it would wear off in time*”.²¹
10. Mr Tonkin asked another of his employees, Mr Alan Egan to look after Mr Greenwood, and Mr Egan agreed. He and Mr Greenwood walked off towards a camp just outside the entrance to Gindalbie, where Aboriginal employees stayed whilst working at the station (the Camp).²²

¹¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 4, Statement - Ms J Greenwood (07.05.02)

¹² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 1, P100 Report of Death (18.02.02 & 04.10.24)

¹³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 2, Missing Person Report (22.10.84)

¹⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 9, Medical records - Aboriginal Medical Service (09.08.83 - 15.05.84)

¹⁵ See for example: Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 9, Medical records - Aboriginal Medical Service (13.02.84)

¹⁶ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), para 9

¹⁷ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 20.1, Incident Report 040609 1000 8137 (05.10.21)

¹⁸ See: www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/delirium/symptoms-causes/syc-20371386

¹⁹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24)

²⁰ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 2-15 & 17

²¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), para 16

²² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), para 6-7, 10 & 18

11. Sometime after 5.00 am on 14 October 1984, Mr Egan approached Mr Tonkin and told him that Mr Greenwood was missing. While Mr Tonkin searched around the homestead, Mr Egan went off and about half an hour later, he told Mr Tonkin he had tracked Mr Greenwood to the main road running past Gindalbie and had seen: “*where a car had come along and pulled off to pick (Mr Greenwood) up*”.²³
12. Mr Egan told Mr Tonkin that Mr Greenwood had gone back to Kalgoorlie, and in his statement, Mr Tonkin said this was something his workers commonly did. Mr Tonkin said that he did not confirm Mr Greenwood was “*back in Kalgoorlie*” because “*it appeared he had got a ride back to town*”.²⁴

Mr Greenwood is reported missing^{25,26}

13. On 15 October 1984, Mr Tonkin’s wife called the Aboriginal Legal Service in Kalgoorlie to advise that Mr Greenwood was missing, and a few days later, Mr Tonkin drove into Kalgoorlie with Mr Egan on private business. Mr Tonkin visited his parents’ house, and about one hour later, Mr Egan arrived (having spoken with Mr Greenwood’s family) and told Mr Tonkin: “*We’re in trouble, Captain’s not in Kalgoorlie*”. Mr Tonkin says he immediately informed the police.²⁷
14. On 22 October 1984, a police officer contacted Mr Greenwood’s sister, Ms Elsie Ridley, and asked her to come to the Kalgoorlie Police Station and make a missing person report in relation to Mr Greenwood. Ms Ridley did so, and the Missing Persons Report notes that:

(Mr Greenwood) was visiting relatives at Gindalbie Station approximately 60 kms N/E of Kalgoorlie, and had been there for 3 or 4 days. On Sunday 14-10-84 he walked off into the bush, apparently heading for the roadway to get a lift into Kalgoorlie, which is the custom of Aborigines at Gindalbie. (Mr Greenwood) has not been seen since.²⁸

²³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 19-22

²⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 22-24

²⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24)

²⁶ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 20, Incident Report 040609 1000 8137 (14.10.24)

²⁷ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 24-27

²⁸ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 2, Missing Person Report (22.10.84)

POLICE INVESTIGATION

Overview^{29,30,31}

15. Over the period 22 - 25 October 1984, police coordinated an air and land search (the Search) in an unsuccessful attempt to find Mr Greenwood. During the Search, the following actions were taken:

- i. *Foot patrols:* on Days 1, 2 and 3 of the Search, a police aide (Mr Preston Thomas) and an Aboriginal tracker (Mr Clem Gable) conducted searches of bushland at Gindalbie.

Tracks which were about one week old, and which were thought to belong to Mr Greenwood were located. The tracks “meandered” and “criss-crossed” several times before they were lost on the road running past the entrance to Gindalbie. Mr Thomas noted that no tracks were found “*on either side of the road for a kilometre each way*”.³²

On Day 3, Mr Thomas and Mr Gable picked up and followed tracks which led to a tree. A pile of vomit was located which contained chillies, and Mr Tonkin later confirmed that he had given Mr Greenwood a jar of chillies before he went missing.

Mr Thomas noted that observations “*at the scene under the tree*” where Mr Greenwood was tracked to and tyre tacks of a vehicle “*possibly indicate that (Mr Greenwood) was picked up by this vehicle*”.³³

- ii. *Fixed-wing aircraft:* on Day 3 of the search, Mr Tonkin (who is an experienced pilot) and a police observer, conducted a “*low level grid search*” at Gindalbie; and
- iii. *Contact with nearby police stations:* on Day 4, Mr Thomas contacted police stations at Laverton, Leanora, Menzies, and the Kurrawang Mission, but no relevant information was obtained.³⁴

²⁹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24), pp1-2

³⁰ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 6, Statement - Police Aide P Thomas (26.10.84)

³¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 7, Statement - Sgt. F Morrow (26.10.84)

³² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 6, Statement - Police Aide P Thomas (26.10.84), p2

³³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 6, Statement - Police Aide P Thomas (26.10.84), p2

³⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 6, Statement - Police Aide P Thomas (26.10.84), pp2-3

16. Police contacted Aboriginal settlements in the area and alerted residents to Mr Greenwood's disappearance, but no relevant information was forthcoming.^{35,36} On the basis of information that Mr Greenwood had previously visited to Alice Springs, police made enquiries but noted that: *"Information from Alice Springs Police reveal that (Mr Greenwood) is not in that district"*. Similar enquiries in *"East, North Eastern Goldfields, and Central Reserve"* also failed to locate Mr Greenwood.³⁷

Location of human remains^{38,39,40}

17. At about 5.30 pm on 30 April 2022, a "jackaroo" at Gindalbie (Mr Adam McNally) alerted Mr Tonkin to the fact that he had found a skull and a "long bone" in scrubland three or four kilometres from the Gindalbie homestead whilst collecting sandalwood.^{41,42}
18. At about 6.00 pm, Mr Tonkin, Mr McNally, and a number of others went to the spot where the bones had been discovered. Mr Tonkin described this location as being four kilometres northeast of the Gindalbie homestead *"at the head of a water curse thicket"* and about *"500 metres north of the Poodes Dam fence line"*.^{43,44}
19. Mr Tonkin says he and Mr McNally moved the skull and what appeared to him to be *"a leg bone"* to *"an easily viewable spot"* and Mr Tonkin marked the spot with a plastic bag before contacting the police. Detectives arrived at Gindalbie on 1 May 2002, and Mr Tonkin directed them to the remains. The officers conducted an extensive search and located several additional bones, and a green wine bottle about eight metres from where the skull had been found by Mr McNally.^{45,46,47,48}

³⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 11, Memo - OIC Leonora Police Station to OIC Kalgoorlie Police Station (07.11.84)

³⁶ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 12, Memo FC Const. A Bedwell (05.11.84)

³⁷ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 10, Corro. between Police Missing Persons' Bureau and Kalgoorlie Police Station (16.11.84 & 04.01.85)

³⁸ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 13, Major Incident Briefing Note (30.04.02)

³⁹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 16, Memo Det. Sen. Const. B Morton (03.02.03)

⁴⁰ ts 09.04.21 (Wold), pp6-7

⁴¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 17, Statement - Mr A McNally (02.05.02), paras 1-18

⁴² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 38-40

⁴³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 17, Statement - Mr A McNally (02.05.02), para 19

⁴⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 41-43

⁴⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 5, Statement - Mr S Tonkin (02.05.02), paras 43-46

⁴⁶ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 14, Forensic Division Exhibit List (06.05.02)

⁴⁷ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 16, Memo Det. Sen. Const. B Morton (03.02.03), pp1-2

⁴⁸ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 17, Statement - Mr A McNally (02.05.02), para 21

20. On 2 May 2002, detectives and a forensic investigation officer returned to Gindalbie and conducted a further search including “*digging and sifting of sectioned off areas of the site*”, but no further relevant items were located. The forensic investigation officer seized the remains which had been located and transported them to the State Mortuary.^{49,50}
21. On 7 May 2002, a forensic pathologist (Dr Clive Cooke) and a forensic anthropologist (Dr Alanah Buck) examined the remains found at Gindalbie. The human bones consisted of parts of a cranium (skull), a left femur, a right femur, and a right scapula (shoulder blade).^{51,52}
22. In the report they authored following their examination, Dr Cooke and Dr Buck expressed the following conclusion:

[T]he remains appear to be those of an adult male of Australian Aboriginal ethnic background. Weathering and lack of dental material preclude a more precise age estimate. There is evidence of ante-mortem pathology on the right of the face. The time since death appears to be at least 10 years plus.⁵³

23. In his report relating to the discovery of human remains at Gindalbie, Detective Senior Constable Morton noted that:

The circumstances surrounding the disappearance of Mr Greenwood and his overall profile are reasonably consistent with the findings of the Post Mortem and the investigation to date. There is no evidence of suspicious circumstances surrounding the discovery of the human remains or the disappearance of Mr Greenwood. Inquires undertaken with the Missing Persons Investigation Unit have revealed that no other persons have been reported missing from the Gindalbie area in the last 40 years. **It would appear that there is a high probability that the remains discovered at Gindalbie Station on 30th April 2002 are those of the missing person David Greenwood.**⁵⁴
[Emphasis added]

⁴⁹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 16, Memo Det. Sen. Const. B Morton (03.02.03), p2

⁵⁰ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 18, Statement - Sen. Const. D Joiner (23.12.02)

⁵¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 16, P98 - Mortuary Admission Form (undated)

⁵² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 14, Dr C Cooke & Dr A Buck - Report on skeletal remains (07.05.02)

⁵³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 14, Dr C Cooke & Dr A Buck - Report on skeletal remains (07.05.02), p2

⁵⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 16, Memo Det. Sen. Const. B Morton (03.02.03), p5

24. On the basis that the remains were possibly Mr Greenwood's, his sister Ms Judith Greenwood was requested to provide a buccal (cheek) swab, which she did. Unfortunately, due to the degraded state of the remains, no DNA could be extracted from the bones which were located at Gindalbie, meaning they could not be positively identified.^{55,56}
25. On 5 October 2021, a DNA sample was obtained from Mr Bradley Greenwood who had confirmed he was Mr Greenwood's son. However, although the human remains located at Gindalbie were subsequently re-examined, it was not possible to extract any DNA.^{57,58}

Proof of life checks⁵⁹

26. Police conducted a range of "*proof of life checks*" with various agencies, but no information relevant to Mr Greenwood's whereabouts was forthcoming. The agencies and data sources contacted by police included: Centrelink, WA Electoral Commission, Interpol, Corrective Services, Medicare, major hospitals, Australian Border Force, major financial institutions, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and the National Criminal Intelligence System.^{60,61,62}
27. Checks with the registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages in all States and Territories confirmed that Mr Greenwood had not changed his name, nor was he recorded as having died. There is no record of Mr Greenwood having had any contact with the Police and there are no unidentified remains on the Police computer system that could be linked to Mr Greenwood.⁶³
28. Proof of life checks were completed recently and there is no record of Mr Greenwood having been imprisoned since his disappearance, and no evidence of any criminality associated with his disappearance.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 4, Statement - Ms J Greenwood (07.05.02), para 11

⁵⁶ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 15, Email - Dr A Buck to Mr J Adair (01.09.05)

⁵⁷ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 20.1, Incident Report 040609 1000 8137 (05.10.21 & 06.09.23)

⁵⁸ Email - Sen. Const. C Robertson to Coroner M Jenkin (08.04.25)

⁵⁹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24), p3

⁶⁰ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 21, Centrelink: Certificate of Disclosure (07.10.16)

⁶¹ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 21, Long Term Missing Person Checklist (01-07.10.15)

⁶² Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 21, Missing Person Investigation Running Sheets 84/1472 (07.07.99 - 01.05.02)

⁶³ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24), p3

⁶⁴ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24), pp3-4 and ts 09.04.21 (Wold), p7

Comments on the Police search and missing person investigation

29. Despite an extensive search of the area around Gindalbie, no sign of Mr Greenwood was ever detected. In her report, Officer Wold expressed the following conclusion:

There is no evidence or suggestion of criminality playing part in (Mr Greenwood's) death. There have been no signs of life since Mr Greenwood went missing. It is the opinion of myself and other investigators that (Mr Greenwood) died on or soon after 14 October 1984, on or nearby to Gindalbie Station.⁶⁵

30. At the inquest, Officer Wold said that she was satisfied that sufficient resources had been allocated to the Search, especially considering the fact that Mr Greenwood had gone missing on 14 October 1984. Officer Wold also considered that all reasonable efforts had been made to locate Mr Greenwood and that police have concluded that he is deceased.⁶⁶
31. Having carefully considered the available evidence, I am satisfied that the Search was sufficiently comprehensive, and that reasonable efforts were made to locate Mr Greenwood.
32. Despite the missing person investigation coordinated by Police, no evidence relevant to Mr Greenwood's whereabouts was unearthed. I am satisfied that the Police investigation into Mr Greenwood's disappearance was comprehensive and that reasonable efforts were made to try to locate him.

⁶⁵ Exhibit 1, Vol. 1, Tab 3, Report - Det. Sen. Const. E Wold (16.10.24), p4

⁶⁶ ts 10.04.25 (Wold), pp5 & 7

HAS DEATH BEEN ESTABLISHED?

33. In my view, the evidence establishes beyond all reasonable doubt that Mr Greenwood died on or about 14 October 1984 in the vicinity of Gindalbie. In reaching that conclusion, I have relied on the following facts:
- a. Mr Greenwood disappeared sometime before 5.00 am on 14 October 1984, and since that time, no eyewitnesses have come forward with any information about his whereabouts and an aerial and land search failed to locate him;
 - b. Tracks (possibly made by Mr Greenwood) were found at Gindalbie and appeared to establish that he had vomited as he wandered about;
 - c. At the time he went missing, Mr Greenwood had a chronic chest infection and he was described as emaciated, and was suffering from the effects of alcohol withdrawal;
 - d. There is no evidence of criminality in relation to Mr Greenwood's disappearance;
 - e. A comprehensive police investigation failed to unearth any information about Mr Greenwood's whereabouts after 14 October 1984 and concluded that he had died;
 - f. Human remains (skull, femur and shoulder blade bones) found at Gindalbie on 30 April 2002 are believed to be Mr Greenwood's, although the state of the remains has meant that DNA cannot be extracted from the bones; and
 - g. If, as seems likely, Mr Greenwood succumbed to the elements and died in bushland on Gindalbie, his body would have decomposed rapidly given the average day time temperatures at the time.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See: www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_012038.shtml

CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH

34. In circumstances where the body of Mr Greenwood has not been located, I am obliged to find that the cause of Mr Greenwood's death is unascertained and further, I make an open finding as to the manner of his death.
35. However, having carefully considered all of the available evidence, it is my view that the most likely explanation for Mr Greenwood's death is that he died from exposure after walking off from the Camp at Gindalbie.
36. In canvassing this possibility, I am mindful of the following facts:
- a. Mr Greenwood was last seen alive sometime before 5.00 am in the early hours of 14 October 1984;
 - b. the terrain at Gindalbie is rugged and inhospitable and there are limited water sources beyond the homestead;
 - c. Mr Greenwood was 42 years of age and in poor health, and he appeared to be suffering from symptoms related to alcohol withdrawal including paranoia and confusion;
 - d. the average day time temperatures at Gindalbie in October appear to average 26C°;⁶⁸
 - e. At the time of his disappearance Mr Greenwood did not have access to a vehicle and was on foot; and
 - f. Since he disappeared, Mr Greenwood has not been seen or heard from, and apart from the unidentified human remains found at Gindalbie (which may in fact be from Mr Greenwood) no physical evidence has been located which might account for his disappearance.

⁶⁸ www.weather-atlas.com/en/australia/kurnalpi-weather-october

CONCLUSION

37. Mr Greenwood was 42 years of age when he went missing from Gindalbie on 14 October 1984. He has not been seen or heard from since. Despite an aerial and land search, and a thorough police investigation, no information about his whereabouts has come to light.
38. Although there are no eye-witnesses to Mr Greenwood's final moments, it is my view that, when considered as a whole, the evidence in this case leads to the inescapable conclusion that Mr Greenwood died on or about 14 October 1984 in the vicinity of Gindalbie.
39. The most likely explanation for Mr Greenwood's death is that he died as a result of exposure after wandering in bushland on Gindalbie. However, on the basis of the available evidence, I was obliged to find that the cause of Mr Greenwood's death was unascertained, and I made an open finding as to the manner of his death.

MAG Jenkin
Coroner
17 April 2025