



Photo: Max Jones

# DAVID JAMES JONES a.k.a. "POSSUM"

David James Jones born in 1901 at Ruapuna, South Island New Zealand was one of two children of sheep farmer James and Helen Jones (nee Crump). He came to South Australia in 1924 where he found employment shearing in the mid north and far north of the state. In 1928 his Australian Workers Union ticket had expired and in 1929 during the Depression he was turned away from the shearing shed at Lake Victoria Station in NSW.

Too proud to borrow money he walked into the bush and remained there for over 50 years until his remains were discovered by woodcutters in 1982 near Lock 8.

Living off the land he roamed the Murray River mainly between Renmark and Wentworth, but there were sightings of him in the

1930's and 1940's as far as Bourke on the Darling, Wagga on the Murrumbidgee and Albury on the Murray.

Shy and resourceful he shunned the company of others but many were the acts of kindness - mending fences, chopping wood, clearing noxious weeds and crutching flyblown sheep - that he performed unobserved for the station folk on whose properties he passed through.

His nickname "Possum" came about from his habit of taking refuge by climbing trees where he had 'hides' for sleeping and where he was fond of raiding wild bee hives for honey.

He was buried 60km from Renmark on Lucerne Day Station (formerly Wangumma) in NSW and his gravestone carries an apt epitaph *At Rest Where He Roamed.*

# CHARLES FRANCIS CHAFFEY 1859-1938

**The concept of irrigation was introduced to Australia in 1887 by Canadian brothers George and William Chaffey, following on from their successful irrigation venture in California USA.**

Charles Chaffey was summoned in 1888 by his older brothers to take charge of the new Renmark settlement. Charles had married Margaret (Ella) English in 1886 and left her and young son in California while he went to SA to inspect his brothers' latest business venture.

He then left plans for a new home with former shipwright/carpenter A.F. Matulick and returned to the USA to bring his wife and child to Renmark. Ella remained in Adelaide after their arrival, giving birth to a second son before travelling in January 1889 to Renmark. Their new home was not completed and the family resided in the Paringa Station homestead until the last months of 1889.

Charles worked from the Chaffey offices in Murray Avenue and would meet new arrivals and arrange land sales and finance. When the Chaffey's operation was liquidated in 1895 during a decade of drought, recession and no capital for irrigation infrastructure, many settlers chose to leave their fruit blocks when unable to repay mortgages.

Charles was employed by the Melbourne based mortgagor to collect payments from the remaining settlers. The Chaffey homestead "Olivewood" was visited by many politicians and high ranking clergy and the couple were highly regarded in Renmark.

In 1904 Charles, Ella and their six children left Renmark to visit British Columbia, Canada and in their absence the mortgage on the "Olivewood Estate" was foreclosed.

"Olivewood" homestead and orchards on Renmark Avenue are owned by National Trust SA. The Chaffey name is present in a local theatre, school, community centre, irrigation district and museum.

