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Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Library

MS 5074

**Port Keats Mission (Wadeye) papers, including language books (Murrinh-
Patha) and diaries**

1950-1974

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MS 5074 Port Keats Mission (Wadeye) papers, including language books (Murrinh-Patha) and diaries

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creators: Father William H Flynn, Father J Leary

Title: Papers relating to Port Keats Mission, Wadeye, including language books (Murrinh-Patha) by Fr William Flynn, and diaries

Collection no: MS 5074

Date range: 1950-1974

Extent: 0.51 m (2 oversize boxes plus 3 archive boxes)

Repository: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY STATEMENT

It is a condition of use of this finding aid, and of the collection described in it, that users ensure that any use of the information contained in it is sympathetic to the views and sensitivities of relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This includes:

Language

Users are warned that this finding aid may contain words and descriptions which may be culturally sensitive and which might not normally be used in certain public or community contexts. Terms and descriptions which reflect the author's attitude, or that of the period in which the manuscript was written, and which may be considered inappropriate today in some circumstances, may also be used.

Deceased persons

Users of this finding aid should be aware that, in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, seeing images of deceased persons in photographs, film and books or hearing them in recordings etc. may cause sadness or distress and in some cases, offend against strongly held cultural prohibitions.

Please be aware that this material contains the names of deceased Aboriginal people.

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ACCESS TO COLLECTION

Access and use conditions

Materials listed in this finding aid may be subject to access conditions required by Indigenous communities and/or depositors. Users are advised that access to some materials may be subject to these access conditions.

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Although Manuscripts are not available on Interlibrary loan, they may be available via document supply (photocopying), subject to access conditions, if they are already digitized.

Access conditions

Open access – reading. Open copying for private study (in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968), closed quotation. Not for Interlibrary loan.

Series 1, Item 29 and 30, **Closed** until Access conditions are determined

Preferred citation

Items from this collection should be cited as [Title or description of manuscript item], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS [insert number], Series [insert number], Item [insert number].

For example:

Language books (Murrinh-Patha) by Father William H Flynn, diaries by Father J Leary and others, and other papers relating to Port Keats Mission, NT, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 5074, Series 1, Item 1.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Scope and contents note

The collection of language books in Series 1, contains thirty seven notebooks, foolscap, lined. They are all fragile. Thirty notebooks relate to the Murrin Bada language and they are arranged alphabetically. Five notebooks relate to topics such as characteristics, folklore, working people, and two notebooks relate to conjunctions and interpretations.

The collection of 18 diaries received in 2018, Series 2, consists of diaries from the Port Keats Mission, and covers life and events in and around Wadeye. Some of these diaries, including some marked 'Private', were written by Father J Leary, others were written by other unidentified Fathers. The subject matter includes: cultural narratives, ceremonies, languages

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in several dialects of the region, cultural sites, rock art sites, football matches, church services, bush foods and hunting, school events and sports.

Provenance

The collection was donated to the AIATSIS Collection by Mark Crocombe, acting for the Kanamkek-Yile Ngala Museum, and the Thamarrurr Development Corporation. The collection is the property of the Wadeye Community.

The diaries, numbering 1 to 18, were received in Feb 2018.

Material separated from the collection

The language books were received with 600 VHS/SVHS tapes and 500 mini DV tapes. The VHS tapes and mini DV tapes have been transferred to the Moving Image section of Collections and will have identification numbers assigned to them.

Related material

For related Murrinpatha material from Port Keats see: 'Port Keats Roman Catholic Mission', by Father William Flynn and MF Bailey, from 1940-1960, MS 848; and, 'Field notes: Murinjpatha, Port Keats NT, 1972', by Michael Walsh, MS 397 held in the AIATSIS collection.

Related material about Port Keats and Father RJ Docherty can be found in the papers of WEH Stanner, MS 3752.

For information about the establishment of Port Keats mission see pMS 1706, 'The story of the Port Keats Mission', by WEH Stanner, and Rp WIL, 'Remembering founding of Port Keats Mission: 75 years ago 1935-2010', by Martin J Wilson, in the AIATSIS collection.

For other material from the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre see PMS 6213, and PMS 6219, deposited by Mark Crocombe.

For colour slides see: CROCOMBE.M03.CS Wadeye Cultural Recordings: rock art sites in the Wadeye area. CROCOMBE.M02.CS Rock art sites in the Fitzmaurice River area.

For a complete list of works by or about Father William Flynn or Father Richard Docherty, and for works about the Port Keats Mission, or the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, held by the Library, and for other related material consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

For moving image and field recording material related to Port Keats and the Wadeye community, deposited by Mark Crocombe, please search the [Mura®](#) catalogue. For example: CROCOMBE_003

For access to Audiovisual material contact AIATSIS [Collections](#).

Important: Before clicking on the links to the catalogue entries please read our [sensitivity message](#).

Archivists note

The language books were received with a collection of VHS and mini DVD tapes which was meant to include eleven diaries of Father Richard Docherty. These diaries have not been received as yet (September 2020).

After consultation with the conservator, it was decided to house and store the language books flat, in oversize boxes.

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Eighteen diaries/notebooks were deposited with AIATSIS on 28 Feb 2018. There are more diaries and possibly other material expected at some stage.

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BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

The establishment of the Port Keats Mission was formulated when the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector Dr Cook and the Administrator of the Northern Territory J.A. Carrodus asked Father Gsell, who was working on Bathurst Island, to start a Mission in the far north of the Northern Territory.

Bishop Gsell MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart) sent Father Docherty MSC, an experienced bushman, down the 'saltwater' coast to find a good site for the mission. Father Docherty took a small party in the Mission lugger St. Francis (from Bathurst Island) to search for a suitable location. The first missionary party arrived at Port Keats on 20 June 1935, including Father R. Doherty MSC, Pat Ritchie as lay assistant, and Mr. Stanner, an anthropologist.

A flat spit of sandy ground was found on the mainland south of an island called Kinmu and the first site chosen was Wendakagaiji. (Find and Connect names the place as Werntek Nganayi in the Daly River district) Father Docherty returned to Darwin to make preparations and departed Darwin again on 6 June 1935 in two luggers, the St. Francis and the Ariake, with four Europeans and five Aboriginal men, as well as the boat crews. On the first Sunday after their arrival, Father Docherty celebrated the first Mass, held in a tent on the beach at Port Keats with about one hundred people present. The Mission remained at this location until 1939, using temporary buildings.

Father Docherty chose a new site in 1937, called Idiji, or Wadeye, approximately nine miles further south, on a rocky ironstone ridge overlooking a sea of mangroves. Father Docherty was guided to the place by an Aboriginal man called Tjimari. This new site was on Diminin land which is the existing Wadeye community.

The period between 1939 and 1941 was one of construction for the future, with an air strip, presbytery, convent, and church built of iron and termite proof timber, and the hospital and dispensary, dining room, kitchen, school and quarters for the brothers built out of rough timber and bark.

During 1941 three sisters arrived to take care of the young Aboriginal girls, but were removed to Darwin as the Japanese entered the Second World War, returning to Port Keats in 1945.

Father William H Flynn MSC, was stationed at the Port Keats Mission between 1946 and 1952. While there he gained an extensive knowledge of Murrin Bada (Murrinpatha), and recorded the language material in notebooks. He was sent to Japan to further the missionary work of MSC in 1953.

References

Find and Connect 2018, *Port Keats Mission (1935-1978)*, viewed 23-9-2020, <<https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/nt/YE00004>>

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Griffith University, *German Missionaries in Australia, Port Keats Mission 1935-*, viewed 1 September 2020, <<http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/mission/port-keats-mission-1935#sdendnote1anc>>

Stanner, WEH 1973, 'The story of the Port Keats Mission', an address to the Newman Graduate Association, Canberra 9 October 1973, held by AIATSIS, collection number pMS 1706

Thamarrurr Development Corporation, *Wadeye*, viewed 23-9-2020, <<https://thamarrurr.org.au/job-submit/>>

Names of Aboriginal people mentioned in WEH Stanner's speech

Tjimari

Accruals note

More material, including 11 more diaries, is expected in the future.

Controlled access headings

Murrin Bada. Murrinhpatha people [N3]

Port Keats Mission (N.T.)

Wadeye / Port Keats (Daly River NT Top End SD52-11)

Port Keats map area (NT Top End SD52-11)

Missionaries – Northern Territory – Port Keats

Religions – Christianity – Catholic Church

Religions – Christianity – Missionaries

Religions - Christianity - Ceremonies - Church services and processions

Ceremonies

Stories and motifs

Art – Rock art

Education

Education - Skills and curriculum - Sport and physical skills

Sport – Football

Food - Bush tucker

Hunting

Leary, John

Flynn, William

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SERIES DESCRIPTION

MS 5074/1 Series 1. Murrin Bada language books 1950

Access note

Items 29 and 30 are Closed access until access and use conditions have been determined. They are labelled 'Moralia'.

The Wadeye accession number [for e.g.: KYNM_01 Murrin Bada A] appears after the AIATSIS manuscript and item number in the list.

Language books

Folder / Item

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| MS 5074/1/1 | KYNM_01 Murrin Bada A. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 19p. |
| MS 5074/1/2 | KYNM_02 Murrin Bada B. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p. |
| MS 5074/1/3 | KYNM_03 Murrin Bada B no. 2. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, starting from page 41, 25p. |
| MS 5074/1/4 | KYNM_04 Murrin Bada C. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p. |
| MS 5074/1/5 | KYNM_05 Murrin Bada C Bk 2. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook starting at page 41, 27p. |
| MS 5074/1/6 | KYNM_06 Murrin Bada Calico clothing. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 19p. |
| MS 5074/1/7 | KYNM_07 Murrin Bada D. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 30p. |
| MS 5074/1/8 | KYNM_08 Murrin Bada E. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 15p. |
| MS 5074/1/9 | KYNM_09 Murrin Bada F. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 37p. |
| MS 5074/1/10 | KYNM_10 Murrin Bada G. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 25p. |
| MS 5074/1/11 | KYNM_11 Murrin Bada H. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p. |
| MS 5074/1/12 | KYNM_12 Murrin Bada I. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 9p. |

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- MS 5074/1/13 KYNM_13 Murrin Bada J. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 8p.
- MS 5074/1/14 KYNM_14 Murrin Bada K. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 19p.
- MS 5074/1/15 KYNM_15 Murrin Bada L. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p.
- MS 5074/1/16 KYNM_16 Murrin Bada M. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 29p.
- MS 5074/1/17 KYNM_17 Murrin Bada N. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 10p.
- MS 5074/1/18 KYNM_18 Murrin Bada O. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 9p.
- MS 5074/1/19 KYNM_19 Murrin Bada P. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p.
- MS 5074/1/20 KYNM_20 Murrin Bada P book 2. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, beginning at p41. 21p.
- MS 5074/1/21 KYNM_21 Murrin Bada R. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 29p.
- MS 5074/1/22 KYNM_22 Murrin Bada S. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 52p.
- MS 5074/1/23 KYNM_23 Murrin Bada S. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 42p.
- MS 5074/1/24 KYNM_24 Murrin Bada T. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p.
- MS 5074/1/25 KYNM_25 Murrin Bada T Book 2. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, beginning at p41. 23p.
- MS 5074/1/26 KYNM_26 Murrin Bada W. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 44p.
- MS 5074/1/27 KYNM_27 Murrin Bada W Book 2. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, starting at p41. 14p.
- MS 5074/1/28 KYNM_28 Murrin Bada Q.V.X.Y.Z. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 20p.
- MS 5074/1/29 KYNM_29 Private Murrin Bada Book 1, Moralia. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. There are some additional sheets of paper with letterhead: *Sacred Heart Monastery Kensington, New South Wales*, glued onto the notebook pages. Some pages have become separated. 49p.

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- MS 5074/1/30 KYNM_ 30 Private Moralia Book 2 Murrin Bada. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, starting at page 40. 45p.
- MS 5074/1/31 KYNM_ 31 Murrin Bada physical postures, sickness. c.1950. Extremely fragile. Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 36p.
- MS 5074/1/32 KYNM_ 32 Murrin Bada Physical postures and characteristics Book 2. c.1950. An index to pages is on the inside of the cover and Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, starting at page 18. 27p.
- MS 5074/1/33 KYNM_ 33 Murrin Bada notes on conjugations, incorporations etc. Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 43p.
- MS 5074/1/34 KYNM_ 34 Murrin Bada notes on conjugations, incorporations etc. Bk 2. Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook, starting at page 41. 22p.
- MS 5074/1/35 KYNM_ 35 Murrin Bada Aboriginal Folklore Port Keats. c.1950. Flynn has numbered the pages in the notebook. 21p.
- MS 5074/1/36 KYNM_ 36 Murrin Bada Working people commencing 30/6/1958. c.1958. Only the front cover and the inside of the back cover are written on. 2p.
- MS 5074/1/37 KYNM_ 37 Murrin Bada Trouble book, before August 10th 1953. 1953. Only the front cover is written on. 1p.

MS 5074/2 Series 2. Diaries 1953 to 1974.

Series description

This material consists of diaries from the Port Keats Mission, and covers life and events in and around Wadeye. They were written by J Leary and other members of staff at the Mission.

Scope and contents note

The diaries document daily activities on the Mission and arrivals and departures by boat or aeroplane of mission staff, clergy, and members of the community. Some of the places mentioned are: Darwin, Melville Island, Channel Island (which also housed leprosy sufferers between 1931 and 1955), Bathurst Island Mission, Garden Point Mission Melville Island and Sea Gull Island.

The subject matter includes: cultural narratives, ceremonies, languages in several dialects of the region, cultural sites, rock art sites, football matches, church services, bush foods and hunting, gardening and harvests, school events and sports.

Diaries

- MS 5074/2/1 1953 exercise book, 'J Leary 'Private'. Diary to May 1953, and July to Sept 1954. J Leary MSC, Darwin. Personal diary describing daily activities and experiences. Some of the places J Leary worked at or visited included Darwin, Melville Island, Channel Island (which also housed leprosy sufferers between 1931 and 1955), Bathurst Island Mission, Garden Point Mission Melville Island and Sea Gull Island

- MS 5074 Port Keats Mission (Wadeye) papers, including language books (Murrinh-Patha) and diaries
- MS 5074/2/2 1955 Woods' diary. No name. Includes information about gardening: preparing the ground, planting and harvesting, start times for the day's work, how many members of staff were working that day, visits from medical officers, notes about rain, soil tests, and total weight in lbs (Pounds) of fruit and vegetables produced from Jan to Dec 1966
- MS 5074/2/3 1955 Woods' diary, 'General', written in a different hand. Notes on Mass times, health of staff, activities, rainfall, and marriages
- MS 5074/2/4 1957 diary, written in by different people. Records volume of water being pumped and description of daily gardening activities undertaken by the men and women who were staff and a record of produce planted and harvested. Fragile
- MS 5074/2/5 Diary 1958. Describing daily activities including prayers, arrival of mail planes, weddings, rainfall and gardening
- MS 5074/2/6 Diary 1959. 'J Leary, Private'. Includes an account of a death, sermon notes, daily activities including church services (Mass), births, baptisms, building, arrival of planes and arrival of doctors and dentists. Also a card for Father M. Simms, Catholic Mission Port Keats, NT 5791, requesting a 'Complete atlas of Australia' be sent to him for examination. There is also a loose sheet of paper titled, 'Moyle Mob', 10 Jan-24 Jan 1960 that lists family names. Fragile
- MS 5074/2/7 Diary 1963. Entries start Tues Feb 26th 1959. Includes arrivals and departures of staff, plane arrivals, and daily activities. Entries finish Sat 23 March 1963
- MS 5074/2/8 Diary 1963. 'J Leary, Private'. Includes deaths, burials, mail and medical plane arrivals, numbers of cattle, accidents and illness, rainfall, births, staff arrivals, garden preparation, and marriages
- MS 5074/2/9 Diary 1965. Includes: staff arriving and leaving, rainfall, gardening, plane arrivals and departures, other daily tasks, births, Father Flynn mentioned on Thurs 18 March
- MS 5074/2/10 Diary 1966. Includes: ship arrivals, staff arriving and leaving, rainfall, gardening, plane arrivals and departures, other daily tasks, births, deaths
- MS 5074/2/11 Diary 1967. Includes: staff arriving and leaving, rainfall, gardening, plane arrivals and departures, other daily tasks, births, deaths
- MS 5074/2/12 Diary 1968. 'J Leary Private'. Includes a handwritten note on pink paper, with a shopping list and activities list, staff arriving and leaving, rainfall, gardening, plane arrivals and departures, other daily tasks, births, deaths
- MS 5074/2/13 Diary 1968. Includes: staff arriving and leaving, rainfall, gardening, plane arrivals and departures, other daily tasks, births, deaths
- MS 5074//2/14 Diary 1969. Includes five loose sheets of paper inside the front cover. The notes contain information about: population statistics for the Mission, as of 16 July 1969; Christmas week church services and activities; programme for talent quest 8 Nov 1969; Sports programme for the Feast of all saints 1969;

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programme for Easter ceremonies 1969. Diary includes notes on: plane arrivals, sometimes listing passengers; rainfall and weather; staff and clergy (including Bishops) arrivals and departures; activities, including pictures [movies]; church services; some health information; gardening and harvesting; adult education classes

- MS 5074/2/15 Diary 1970. Includes nine loose sheets and one notebook – Eisteddfod August 1970. Diary includes notes on: Plane arrivals, sometimes listing passengers; rainfall and weather; staff and clergy (Bishops) arrivals and departures; activities, including pictures, beach, sport and picnic days; church services; some health information; gardening and harvesting; Baptisms; Americans on mining survey (29 April 1970)
- MS 5074/2/16 Diary 1971. Includes seven loose sheets and one business card. Diary includes 'Main events', for the years 1971, 1972, 1973 and 1974. This diary has been used to record activities for the years 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975 and some 1976. Includes notes on: Plane and boat arrivals, sometimes listing passengers; rainfall and weather; staff, clergy arrivals and departures; activities including sport, gardening, running the mission; births, deaths and notes on accidents and medical issues
- MS 5074/2/17 Diary 1971. 1 Jan to last entry 31 March 1971. Includes a description of the trip from Parramatta to Darwin [?], and includes arrivals and departures of staff and other people, most are named
- MS 5074/2/18 Diary 1972. 'J Leary Port Keats'. Includes notes on: Plane and boat arrivals, sometimes listing passengers; rainfall and weather; staff and clergy arrivals and departures; activities including sport, school and church services; family and individual arrivals and departures; Baptisms

BOX LIST

Series	Item	Box
1	1-18	1 Oversize
1	19-37	2 Oversize
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2	9-14	4
2	15-18	5

Finding aid compiled by Cathy Zdanowicz, July 2016. Additional material added 2020 by Cathy Zdanowicz

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