

Happening 50, 40, 30 years ago

By Don Poynton

October – November 1954

Rough Range-1 continued its slow and fruitless penetration drilling from 10,149 ft at the beginning of October to 13,059 ft before becoming stuck on November 27th. Hole deviation became impossible to measure as the film used downhole was unreadable due to the high temperature. The drilling consumed another 43 bits. Most of the 13 cores cut were described as hard quartzitic rock, indurated shale or crystalline limestone.

Having proved that it could build roads in tough locations (see last *PESA News* for the story of Cape Range-1), Wapet now turned its focus to a location offering even greater logistical challenges, Grant Range-1, its first well in the Canning Basin. As its three rigs were still busy down at Rough Range and

pile of worn-out bits." (extracts from *Show Me A Mountain*, Colin Simpson, 1961).

Two weeks after Wapet spudded its Grant Range-1 well using its own rig, a new drilling company entered the Australian drilling scene on the other side of the continent. Oil Drilling and Exploration Ltd (ODE) was incorporated in March 1954 and after successfully floating as a public company, purchased three new National drilling rigs. Rig #1 spudded its first well on November 8th 1954. This was the Cherwell-1 well in the Maryborough Basin in Queensland. The well was drilled for Lucky Strike Drilling Company although ODE itself had acquired a 20% interest in the permit, paid for by issuing Lucy Strike one million five-shilling ODE shares. The well reached a TD of 9,773 ft on March 6th 1955 and for many years was the deepest well

all being gas. These were Raslie-1 and Lamene-1 in the Surat Basin, West Mereenie-1 in the Amadeus Basin and Gingin-1 in the Perth Basin.

The domestic gas supply in Perth is now dominated by gas from the Carnarvon Basin but prior to the commissioning of the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline in August 1984, Perth's gas was supplied from the Dongara field and for a short period, the Gingin field located 100 km north of Perth. The Gingin field was discovered by Wapet's Gingin-1 well which spudded on November 16th 1964.

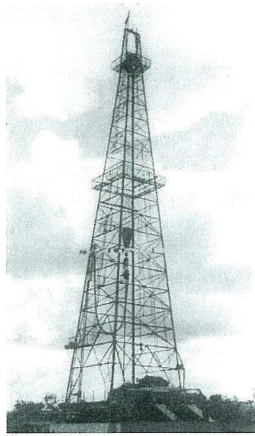
The well intersected four gas bearing sands in the Jurassic Cockleshell Gully Formation between 3865 and 4157 m (subsea). At the time of drilling, four zones were tested at rates of up to 3.85 Mcf/d but subsequent fracturing in

further attempts will no doubt be made in the future.

During 1964 GSI became the first seismic company to record digital data in Australia (for Wapet in the Perth basin). A short time later GSI set another first when on the October 4th 1964 it recorded CDP marine data for the first time in Australia. The survey was conducted for Esso-BHP and included lines over what was to become the Barracouta gas field. (More about this discovery in the next edition of *PESA News*).

October – November 1974

The low level of exploration continued with only two new-field wildcats being spudded in October-November 1974. These were Arco's Skua-1 and Curlew-1. The Skua-1 well found only traces of oil in the Tertiary section. However, the follow-up well in 1985 intersected residual oil in Late Maastrichtian sandstone and a live column in sands at the Late Santonian – Early Jurassic boundary. In 1987, Skua-3 was drilled directionally to test the Lower Jurassic. It flowed 5044 bopd. The Skua field was brought in to production in 1991 using the FSOP, *Skua Venture*. The field produced over 20 MMbbl of oil before being abandoned in 1998.



OD&E's National 80B rig drilling a deep test (9,773ft) for Lucky Strike Drilling Co. at Cherwell Creek, near Maryborough.



OD&E's first drilling crew – Jock Weir, Pete Brewster, Jay Gray Sonny Westphal (Roger Watson in background at right) – all from the USA – at the spudding ceremony of the company's first well, Cherwell Creek#1. The rig used was at National 80B, designated Rig#1.

In late November, Wapet had another attempt at evaluating the very shallow Mardie Greensand in the Robe River Embayment when it drilled the Mardie-1A well. This was a redrill of Mardie-1 which in 1967 recovered oil from cores that indicated porosities of over 50% and permeabilities of up to 200mD. The 1A well again produced cores with good oil shows, high porosities and permeabilities but extensive pump-testing failed to produce

liquid hydrocarbons although some gas was produced. The Mardie Greensand was first identified as a potential target in December 1966 when a deep seismic shothole blew out at a depth of 77 m. About 20 litres of heavy brown crude was recovered. Since that 'discovery' over 30 wells have been drilled but it appears the successful exploitation of the Mardie Greensand that has occurred offshore will not be repeated onshore. ■