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## Community voices – transcript – D 3434 L

### Edward Child

*Extract of a letter from Mount Remarkable dated 1 June 1856 written to John Sutcliffe of Halifax, describing pastoral conditions in the Mount Remarkable area.*

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Nerkinge, Sheep Station,  
Mount Remarkable, So. Australia.  
June 1. 1856.

John Sutcliffe : Esq. Halifax

My dear Friend,

I have many times intended writing to you, but have repeatedly been obliged to put it off, as my time is: so seldom at my own disposal; today therefore it is a source of pleasure to me to be able to write a few lines to you. Of course you would wish to know how I like this country, I can say that on the whole. I like it well, I do not repent of the step I took of emigrating to South Australia, in December 1852. On arriving at, Adelaide my stay there was very limited, and I soon proceeded into the outside Settlements or what is called the "Bush", engaged with a party of the name of Swinden as a shepherd, then went hutkeeping and finally became his Overseer ; on my first arriving at his Head Station, situated on the River Gilbert, he had about 20,000 Sheep, kept a few Cattle, and was likewise an Agriculturist, thus I got a little insight into all.

At that time I was only 60 miles from Adelaide, now I am about 180 at a rough guess. Mount Remarkable district is very good as a grazing country, rather indifferent as an Agricultural one, consisting of rough low hills, well timbered and well watered. I am the owner of about 1360 Sheep, a few hundred head of cattle and about 30 horses. The climate of South Australia, although the temperature is high, is generally considered healthy; it has only one serious inconvenience, that it is subject to periodical droughts, generally happening every four years.

During last summer in 1855 we had no rain for seven months. The soil where it is good is very productive, but it is very variable ; a considerable portion is tolerably fair, but almost the same quantity is equally barren and almost useless.

On the whole it is better adapted for a Pastoral than an Agricultural country. When I say this I refer to the country 80 or 90 miles north of the: city of Adelaide. Another great want is the scarcity of running creeks and springs of water. For instance I will mention a Run I am best acquainted with, having lived there upwards of 12 months ; - it is called Peachey Ritchie - extent of it is 100,000 Square Miles, more than one half is barren land with not a blade of grass, nothing but stones and a noxious prickly spear like grass called Porcupine., neither cattle, horses or, sheep will eat it or even venture amongst it ; it stands nearly two feet high, the grass runs through your trousers, pricking you like a needle and causing much pain. Properly speaking it is no grass at all. I generally make a practice of burning it at the end of the summer season, although unless great caution is used, it is attended with most dangerous results, the grass being so dry and the sun so hot, that an enormous extent of county is soon consumed and destroyed. During the Summer Bush fires are of very common occurrence, being mostly caused by the carelessness of Smokers, sparks falling from their pipes and igniting the grass. At, other times the mischief is occasioned by people camping out and leaving their fires burning ....