

Factsheet 03 – How did Kidman change from cowboy to national icon?

Quirky fact :

The Kidman family still operates 19 pastoral stations and remains one of Australia's largest beef producers!

Australian Curriculum Links

Year	Subject	Curriculum Links
5	Geography	ACHGK029
	History	ACHHK094, ACHHK097
6	History	ACHHK094, ACHHK097
7	Geography	ACHGK040, ACHGK043
	Science	ACSSU222, ACSHE121
8	Geography	ACHGK049, ACHGK051, ACHGK056

Background Information

Pastoralist Sir Sidney Kidman was born in 1857 near Adelaide and educated at private schools until he left home at age 13, with five shillings in his pocket, riding a one-eyed horse he had bought with his savings. He found work with a landless drover who moved his stock throughout the 'corner' country of New South Wales in search of unfenced runs and good feed. During this time Kidman befriended an Aboriginal man known as Billy and it was he who taught Kidman the tracking and bush skills that would found his future. For the rest of his life, Kidman always travelled the back-country with an Aboriginal guide and offsider.

As Kidman matured, he continued to work for pastoralists until he had the money to buy a bullock team. From that time on he worked for himself, at first contracting to cart supplies in the country between the isolated settlements of the northern border regions of South Australia, Victoria and western New South Wales. Then later, when copper was discovered at Cobar in the early 1870s, Kidman

opened a butcher shop to service the rapidly expanding district. This enterprise made enough money to establish Kidman as a large squatter. He grew his business by setting up coach services in western New South Wales and Western Australia. He also supplied horses to the British Army in India, and bought and sold cattle.

Kidman married in 1885 and the following year bought his first station south-west of Alice Springs. He began buying a chain of stations stretching from the wet tropics of the Gulf of Carpentaria, south through western Queensland to Broken Hill, and across the border into South Australia. Many stations were located on the great rivers of western Queensland's Channel Country and Corner Country. During the next decade he acquired a second chain of stations which ran from the Fitzroy River and Victoria River Downs in the north to the Flinders Ranges near Adelaide. Dubbed the 'Cattle King', by 1915 Kidman controlled pastoral country almost equal to the area of Victoria and was on his way to becoming a national icon.



Wool press, Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame



Dusk, Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame

Inquiry Questions

Subject	Years	Questions
Geography	5/6	What environmental challenges did the early settlers have to deal with?
		How has settlement and management of spaces affected these places?
	7/8	Why did Europeans move to such remote places?
		What were the lifestyle challenges they had to address?
History	5/6	What was the contribution of families like the Kidmans, and why were they so successful?
		How did the knowledge of Aboriginal peoples help them succeed?
Science	7	What are the important features of the water cycle in the Outback and how do people use scientific understanding to manage this resource?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Diamantina Drover
Lyrics by John Williamson
www.lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/t/thediamantinadrover.shtml

REFERENCES

S. Kidman & Co Ltd
www.kidman.com.au

Australian Dictionary of Biography
www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kidman-sir-sidney-6948

FURTHER INFORMATION

Diamantina National Park
Tourism Information
Phone: 1300 794 257
Email: visitors@diamantina.qld.gov.au
www.diamantina.qld.gov.au

Queensland Government, Longreach
Landsborough Highway
PO Box 202, Longreach QLD 4730
Phone: (07) 4652 7333

Points of Interest

➤ Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach

The Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre is Australia's premier outback heritage institution. In Queensland's central western town of Longreach, the centre provides visitors with a spectacular outback experience and there you will find some information on Sidney Kidman.

Landsborough Highway, Longreach QLD 4730

Cost: Entry fee applies
Hours: 9.00am to 5.00pm daily
Phone: (07) 4658 2166
Email: museum@stockmanshalloffame.com.au
Website: www.stockmanshalloffame.com.au

- Big Red – Munga-Thirri (Simpson Desert) National Park via Birdsville
- Diamantina National Park
- Burke and Wills Dig Tree, Cameron Corner, via Thargomindah

