

4. Tubberubbabel, Protectorate head station

Tubberubbabel/Tubberrubabel/Tub er rub ber bil/ Tubburub*
Aborig Station/Mr Thomas' First Station/Tubberrubbabil/
Tuberubbabel/Tubbarubbabel/Terabbabl

Tubberubbabel is the Protectorate head station, shown to Thomas by the owner Burrenum (Mr Dredge) who was born there. It is Bonurong heartland where the 100 huts were found by Gellibrand's party in 1836. It is also the place where the Bonurong accepted Thomas' proposals for a future. The intimacies of daily interaction at the site are presented here, and in Chapter 9 the issues are examined surrounding the paid work done at this place by the Bonurong: at the end of this chapter is the Bonurong retrospective view of it all.

Its location has been identified by the following steps. Kangerong's position is located precisely on Surveyor Nutt's map of Jamieson's Special Survey of 1840. Thomas, who navigated his way round the bush with a compass and Aboriginal mudmaps, locates Tubberubbabel one mile north-east of Kangerong, and Robinson's description agrees: Tubberubbabel is one mile from Kangerong. After Gellibrand's party landed on the beach near Sandy Point, they walked for nine miles in a north-westerly direction heading for Port Phillip: this party also had compasses. After nine miles walking, followed by a pause because Gellibrand was ill and they were out of water, they sent out scouts who found water. The whole party then tracked the scouts' path and came upon the waterholes and the 100 huts, within a quarter of an hour.

Overlaying the cadastre and the topographic maps on Smythe's 1841 map,¹ Hughes drew a circle of one mile radius around Kangerong, and in the direction of north-east from Kangerong, this circle intersects Tubbarubba Creek near its junction both with Bulldog Creek, and with a tributary of Tubbarubba Creek. Using Gellibrand's information to check this identification, a back bearing of nine miles south-east from this place ends in the middle of the sandy Somers beach, which must be presumed as Gellibrand's starting point, as, even though he uses the only descriptor available to him at the time, Sandy Point, seamen do not anchor or disembark at actual points or promontories where currents swirl, especially when there is a gentle sloping sandy beach a stone's throw away:² somewhere on what we now know as Somers beach would have been the

1 Smythe was found to be astonishingly accurate.

2 The final version of these working maps is P Hughes, 'Location of Protectorate stations and Tuerong, 1 September 2009'.

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departure point for the walk across the peninsula. William Jackson Thomas' mileage and distance estimates agree with this identification: his mileage estimates in two directions, from Arthurs Seat to Tubberubbabel, and from Port Phillip to Tubberubbabel are out by only 0.6 miles. In February 2010, as this book was going to the editor, by courtesy of the Surveyor General's office, I saw Smythe's field notebooks: they confirm the location.



Fig 18. 'Location of Protectorate Station'

© Phil Hughes, 2010, Mornington Peninsula Shire.

It is now private property, near the Old Moorooduc road, and is thus inaccessible to the public: its address cannot be given for reasons of privacy. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria has been notified in line with the legal obligation under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* of any person who finds an Aboriginal site, and AAV will contact the owners. Though the site is effectively lost to the public, here, for a short time, there was optimism, and for that reason alone it needs to be remembered.

There is an undated sketch of an encampment included in the papers which Thomas sent to Mr Duffy for publication many years later of a corroboree at an encampment. Thomas has written across the bottom 'Let me have this again:

I lay great value on young productions'. Young means early in this context, so it is possible, or even likely, that this sketch showing his tent is done at Tubberubbabel.³

It needs to be remembered that at the time these records were made, the only referents of observation for the Mornington Peninsula were Cape Schanck, Point Nepean, Arthurs Seat and Sandy Point, all places known to everyone, having been named more than 30 years earlier by the navigators, charting from the sea. Much of Thomas' correspondence with Robinson and La Trobe in Melbourne is sent from Arthurs Seat when his journal indicates he was living at Tubberubbabel.

In this chapter all the recorded mentions of Tubberubbabel which I have found in the various primary records are presented chronologically, including the lengthy quotation from William Jackson Thomas who recorded more detail than did his father: he, and Thomas' assigned convict servants, and the Bonurong levelled the ground, built several buildings, one 30 feet by ten feet with sashed windows, plastered with lime from the limeburners at Point Nepean, plus a good stockyard for the bullocks, a fenced garden, and a bridge over the creek: these several buildings, and the bridge may well have left physical traces, not yet found because prior to this, we have not known where to look. Surveyor Smythe's field notes show a road, which is the road from Hobson's station at Kangerong, shown also on one of Thomas' undated maps.⁴ Thomas mentions once in his journal the desirability of cutting a road from Tubberubbabel straight across to Mt Martha, thus cutting a triangle off the route that his supplies had to take from Melbourne, that is from Melbourne to Hobson's, then up and across to Tubberubbabel. There are three burials here, Kurnboro/Old Maria, Bunggame who was Mr King's father, and Old Morragine.

27 January 1836

Joseph Tice Gellibrand was a passenger in the *Norval*, a vessel chartered by the Port Phillip Association to bring 1000 sheep from VDL to Port Phillip. Bad weather forced the ship instead into Western Port and the sheep were landed near Corinella: most perished. Intending to get help from the settlement at Melbourne, Gellibrand led a party which was taken across Western Port in a boat and dropped off at Sandy Point with the intention of walking overland to Melbourne.

Gellibrand's party walked about nine miles north-west from Sandy Point. Then he collapsed, and some members of the party went in search of water. They returned over an hour later 'with the intelligence that they had fallen in with about 100 native huts and near the huts had discovered water'. When Gellibrand

3 CY 2984: 555, ML.

4 CY 2984, frame 300, ML.

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recovered, they 'packed up our things and proceeded on our course and in about a quarter of an hour, came to a few waterholes surrounded with a thick scrub'.⁵ The name of these waterholes, with the 100 huts nearby is Tubbarubbabel.⁶

26 August 1839

Having arrived on the Mornington Peninsula on 17 August 1839, and having spent the next nine days visiting his people at their encampments at the settlers' stations and exploring the country south of Arthurs Seat, looking for a place where the natives congregated, on this day Thomas selected the site for his station where Burrenum (Mr Dredge)⁷ said he was born: it was opposite to a series of waterholes called by the natives Tubbarubbabel.⁸

Burrenum/Bore.rer.num/Booronung/Booronung/ Boorunun/Borremum/Bun.Ranrung/Mr Dredge/Jack

Burrunun is the name of a large jew fish of the porpoise kind (CY 3130, frame 93, ML).

Co-owner with Bobbinary of the southern peninsula.

Burenum/Jack/Mr Dredge – influential healer, married to Wigal a daughter of Billibellary. Burenum was a brother to Munmunginna/Dr Bailey, had recognised authority, but not named as chief (Barwick 1984: 117).

20 Mar 1839 – Booronung alias Jack, age 30, Boonworong tribe, wife Wyulk alias Mary Ann aged 18 (Dredge Census in Robinson Papers, vol 54, ML); 24 Mar 1839 – One ... a Boonworong who calls himself my brother and names himself as Mitter Dredge received a severe contusion to the right temple at a fight between Waworong and Tonguerong tribes (Assistant Protector James Dredge, Journal No 2, Box 16, SLV); Jul 1839 – Burenum/Mr Dredge, name taken in encampment

5 Joseph Tice Gellibrand, 'Memorandum of a trip to Port Phillip' in Bride 1983[1898]: 11.

6 The identification was made thus: Kangerong's position is located precisely on Surveyor Nutt's map of Jamieson's Special Survey of 1840. Thomas, who navigated his way round the bush with a compass and Aboriginal mudmaps, locates Tubbarubbabel one mile north-east of Kangerong. Phil Hughes of the MPS GIS department has pinpointed this spot. Gellibrand's party landed on the beach near Sandy Point and walked for nine miles in a north-westerly direction headed for Port Phillip: this party also had compasses. After nine miles walking, they came upon the waterholes and the 100 huts within a further quarter of an hour. A back bearing from Tubbarubbabel in a south-east direction, extended for nine miles, ends on Somers beach.

7 26 August 1839 in Thomas Summary of Proceedings during August 1839, CY 3082, ML; Byrt 2004, CD WT 3082S.DOC.

8 Thomas Summary of Proceedings during August 1839, CY 3082, ML. Byrt 2004, CD WT 3082S.DOC. From 4 June 1839 – 3 October 1839, Thomas Journal CY 2604, item 3 is indecipherable because the ink is so faded. The record of observation presented here is constructed from this summary of August, together with the published version in *HRV*. There is often a difference of one day between the two versions.

(Thomas 'A' diary, set 214, item 1, ML); 13 Jul 1839 – Fell from a tree, arm swelled (Thomas Journal 1839–40, set 214, item 1, ML); 17 Jul 1839 – Bun-ranrung and six other named blacks arrived at Geelong (Assistant Protector Sievwright to Robinson, enc with 39/10217 in 4/2471, AO of NSW); Jul 1839 – Burrenum in a sad state – appears as if his arm will never get better from a burn – treated it for two days then Burrenum, one of the greatest ramblers in the whole tribe, was off (CY 2604, item 2, ML); 26 Aug 1839 – Burrenum, Tubberubabel is his birthplace (CY 3082 S DOC); 27 Aug 1839 – Burrenum alias Mr Dredge cut bark for Thomas' hut roof at Tubberubabel (Thomas Journal, set 214, item 1, ML); 4 Sep 1839, Thomas visited Burrenum's miam at Tubberubabel – it was like a butcher's shop with legs and parts of kangaroo hung all around (*HRV*, vol 2B: 541); 27 Sep 1839 – Burrenum Western Port doctor called in to officiate on an old man, the first Thomas knew that he was a doctor (*HRV*, vol 2B: 547); 4 Nov 1839 – Wigul at Tubberubabel making a fine basket (*HRV*, vol 2B: 555).

23 Jan 1840 – Yal Yal and Burrenum return to the encampment at Tubberubabel with plenty of fowl, enough for the whole encampment (Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1); Feb 1840 – Burrenum and his lubra, a party of two, are listed at Arthurs Seat as among those determined to go to Western Port [on the Gippsland raid] (Thomas Journal, CY 2605, frame 8, ML); 5 Jun 1840 – Thomas rode out from Tubberubabel to look for the returning party from Western Port; he fell in Burrenum and his two brothers and his lubra (CY 2604, item 3, ML); Jun 1840 – Bore.rer.num, his name is on a list of those presently at Arthurs Seat given to Robinson in Melbourne by Billy Lonsdale (Robinson in Clark 1998b: 344); 11 Oct 1840 – Borremum alias Dredge, his wife Mary Anne has been co-habiting with white man, rascally, called Bill (Robinson in Clark 1998, vol 2: 344).

5 Dec 1842 – He always knows where his wife is with Europeans; merely by fits and starts he requires her; he is a wandering unsettled black, she is the reverse (Thomas to Robinson, VPRS 11, unit 8, PROV).

1846 – Burrenum, male aged 25 and his lubra Wigal aged 20, and Tilberburnin, a male aged 11, all Western Port are on Thomas' Family Connections census. Burrenum's own country is Moody Yallock [though Thomas lists him as well as owner of the Mornington Peninsula, his birthplace]. His name is listed immediately after that of the principal owner Old Doctor (CY 3083, ML).

5 Aug 1850 – On a list of the number of Bonurong and Waworong tribes left [26 of the former all named, 38 of the latter all named] Thomas lists Burrenun and Wigal as a group of two (CY 3127, ML).

13 Dec 1851 – Boorunun alias Jack, male Boonoorong tribe, has 2 lubras Wigul alias Christianna and Mynggrook [inserted later by Thomas Mynggrook dead (1852)] (Thomas census, set 214, item 12: 143, ML).

William Jackson Thomas' description of the establishment of the Protectorate station

At length after some weeks⁹ pleasantly travelling [with the Bonurong] we came to a creek about six miles NE of Arthurs Seat and about the same distance from the Bay – here the blacks wanted the station to be located.¹⁰ It was a pleasant enough place, the mountains at the back, splendid light wood flats, well grassed hills, creek with large permanent waterholes. We camped and took some time looking around before determining to make it a permanent station. About four miles distant at Kangerong we found a cattle station occupied by Mr Hobson (brother of Dr Hobson a celebrated medico in those days). He had always been on friendly terms with the natives and had no objection to their proximity. So after due consideration we decided to remain here. A gentle rise was selected for the house, a sort of table land well out of reach of the floods, the blacks showing us by the marks on the trees to what heights the floods sometimes rise; the ground [was] cleared of trees and undergrowth, and levelled. Now I wonder if it is worthwhile to tell you how we built a house, wind and weather tight, warm and comfortable out of materials altogether found on the ground. Perhaps it will for it will show you some of the work of the early pioneers of the Colony.

The first thing was to mark out the house 30 feet by 12 feet wide, divided into three rooms each 10 feet. Then collect sufficient saplings which when barked would be 5 inches in diameter. A dozen blacks with the men soon brought in loads. The stay at home blacks quickly barked them. These were then cut to 9 feet lengths for standards. Thicker wood was required for the wall plates. These were adzed flat on both sides so as to rest fair on the posts to which they were spiked. The work of

⁹ The Bonurong, with Thomas' son plus the bullocks and cart, set off at least a week before Thomas, camping at Brighton, Mordialloc and Frankston along the way (CY 3106, frame 59, ML).

¹⁰ The location of Tubbarubbabel, identified by the shire's GIS is 6.6 miles: William Jackson Thomas' estimate agrees well.

digging holes was done by the men. I superintended the carpentering, or rather, did most myself. The posts [were] erected all 7 ft 6 ins from the ground, wall plates in and spiked, the corners and joints halved.

Then came the process of wattling, for the structure was to be what is called Wattle and Daub. The standards were spaced to leave openings of 3 or 4 feet. A thin sapling was nailed on each side of the standard, a center one stuck in the ground midway between the standards as under –

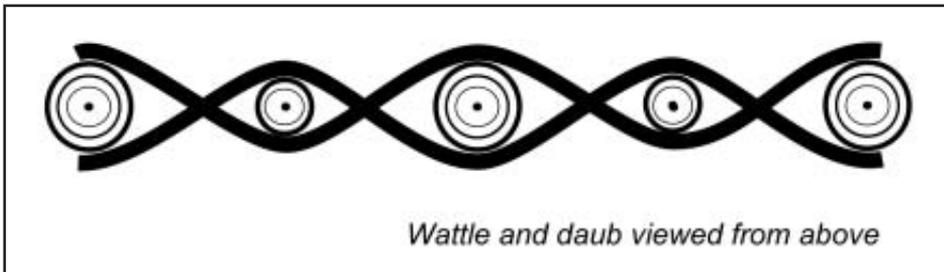


Fig 19. 'Wattle and daub construction'

Sketch, © Richard Barwick, 2010, based on a sketch by William Jackson Thomas, in the William Thomas Papers, Mitchell Library.

Ti tree was cut the required lengths, and this kind of basket work carried from ground to wall plates. A large quantity of mortar [was] made with loam chopped from and a little lime which latter was got from the lime burners at Point Nepean. Then the work of plastering laid on, on both sides simultaneously, one man inside and me outside. The roof was of saplings, rafters, ridge, the whole covered by sheets of stringy bark for which we had to send several miles into the mountains. The chimney of sods, with a flour barrel on the top.¹¹ The whole was completed in a fortnight and habitable in three weeks, it took time for the plaster to dry. Doors, table and bunks were made of boards from Mr Hobson at Kangerong. The blacks worked very well. Father made it an invariable practice to pay them for their work, rewarding them with Tea, Sugar, Flour or Tobacco. Our house being completed we took a good rest and time to look round. We had encamped near us about 130 natives. These took something to feed. Daily a large number went out in the morning and generally brought back a full bag. The game is plentiful. There were lots of women who went out with their Merriny sticks to dig roots, and a good many children romping about. I have arranged to accompany them in a Kangaroo hunt Native fashion.¹²

¹¹ Robinson later described this building as an old wattle and daub hut in the Tower of Peiza style, at least two feet out of perpendicular, see 27 July 1840 ff.

¹² CY 3106, frames 60–62, ML.

Having described his days' hunting, and the walking tree method of stalking kangaroos, William Jackson Thomas went on to add further detail about the buildings at Tubberubbabel:

Time went on, other rooms were added to the house. Glazed sashes were provided from the Settlement. Hobson had sawyers in the forest: from him we [obtained] floor boards which were to floor the house. Canvas [was] nailed up for ceiling. Out buildings erected and at length when all was ready Mother and my sisters arrived. In the mean time, I had by riding about become well acquainted with the Country many miles around. And discovered a tract of land which I considered would make a First Class cattle station, well grassed, permanent water, and a clear run of good country for five miles around in every direction. So after due consideration I determined to at once secure the run. I went to town, applied to and obtained license for a Squatting Run 'Touerng', about four miles east of the northern point of Mt Martha, engaged two men, borrowed father's small tent until we had huts built ... borrowed father's bullocks ... soon I had a good slab hut, and a comfortable hut for the men, strong stock and milking yards and Dairy were gradually added. The house and station buildings were erected on the flat top of a rise from the creek, the large Waterhole in front, to the right hand run a tributary stream ... our buildings were thatched with reeds got from a swamp nearby ... soon year after year more runs were taken up – Dr Barker and John Barker took up Cape Schanck, Maurice Meyrick took a sheep station between Cape Schanck and Arthur's Seat, Capⁿ Reid dropped on a station down to the point of Mt Martha, Tom Goring a sheep station about four miles from Tuerong in the Melbourne road, and Stratton on the beach between Mount Martha and Mount Eliza. We were all very good friends, visited each other and exchanged many little neighbourly services. The one thing we were combined about was to prevent any other squatters dropping down between us. Intruders were respectfully warned off, but if that was ineffectual, the services of the Crown Lands Comm. were called in ... I was the first in the district to make cheese [description follows] ... after a time it was found that the position of 'Terubbabl' was unsuited for a permanent Aboriginal Station. A site was selected on the Dandenong Creek ... I used frequently to ride over to see Father and the family, the distance was about 30 miles. Although a large number of blacks migrated with Father to the new station, a good few remained at my station not liking the strict regulation of the issue of stores etc. About this time, the descent of the Gipps Land Blacks upon the station of my friend Mr Jamieson and the plunder and destruction of his property took place. The part I took in the pursuit is fully told in another place. We will now pass over some years during which I had

disposed of the Station and removed to land my Father had purchased at Coburg (then called Pentridge). We had then somewhere about 100 acres...¹³

27 August 1839

Thomas was at his quarters at Tubberubbabel with 15 blacks about his tent before breakfast: they appeared delighted to see Thomas' lubra's miam in the process of construction. Burrenum got his tomahawk and cut bark for the roof of Mrs Thomas' hut. Thomas gave breakfast to Burrenum and three unnamed lubras, who then went with Thomas' son to cut tea-tree. One of the lubras was an old woman and Thomas and his son tried to persuade her not to go out cutting down tea-tree but she insisted, and Thomas' son said at the end of the day that she had cut as much as any of the young ones. The rest of his 15 visitors lay idling by the fire all day, and the whole party from Kangerong except the old man paid a visit.¹⁴

28 August 1839

While he was on his way from Tubberubbabel to Kangerong, Thomas met a party of lubras coming to Tubberubbabel with tomahawks to cut tea-tree for his house. Thomas gave them a note to his son, authorising the payment in tea and flour for their work. They worked well according to Thomas' son, and when he returned Thomas gave them all a good feed. They lay down to sleep till evening and he gave them more flour and sugar to take away.¹⁵ In his summary version Thomas adds the fact that an old woman insisted on going with the younger lubras to cut tea tree, and though he and his son tried to persuade her not to as she was so old, she cut as much as any of the young ones.¹⁶

13 CY 3106, frames 62–65, ML. For those interested in European history, WT Jackson gives an account of the Barker/Meyrick duel, which was occasioned according to Thomas, by Barker's cutting down a magnificent oak tree, the first in the district, in the dry creek which was the boundary between the two runs, an oak tree which Meyrick painted, the painting being sent home to England. Dr Barker was a stutterer; the account casts him in an unfavorable light.

14 HRV, vol 2B: 538–539, and 'Summary of Proceedings during August 1839', CY 3082, ML. The old man (unnamed), three lubras and four children had arrived at Kangerong on 18 August in 'a very distressed state'. It is almost certain, that this is Old Mr Man – this is the exact structure of his family, and there is no other Bonurong family with one old man, three lubras and four children, but why he should arrive distressed is not recorded.

15 HRV, vol 2B: 539.

16 Thomas Summary of Proceedings during August 1839, CY 3082, ML. Byrt 2004, CD WT 3082S.DOC.

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29 August 1839

The blacks came in numbers to his tent, and Thomas gave beads to an attractive widow (unnamed) and her three children: he put a double row on her, and a single row on each of her children, all girls, as fine children as he had ever seen Black or White.¹⁷ He also gave five knives to five men, and a hank of twine to be shared. They wanted as well, thread and needles but he had none. Even so, they must have been cheerful – they were 'all on the *qui vive*' he wrote. But all the stores for them were finished, except for tea, and he had to feed them from his own private supplies – a sheep, 27 pounds of flour, seven pounds of sugar, one and a half pounds of tea and a pound of tobacco. It is 'unmerciful and inconsistent' he wrote, that he was sent to civilise and protect them, and see that their wants are supplied, but he has not been given the means to do so.¹⁸

30 August 1839

More people visited him, including a man with a fine gun, and a fresh family introduced by the widow to whom he gave the beads the previous day; Thomas fed them all, but he had so little food that he was glad when they all left that night so that he himself could have a bite to eat.¹⁹

31 August 1839

Overnight there was heavy rain, 'dreadful' Thomas called it, 'torrents': it continued all day and flooded his tent: the flats were under water, and even the blacks had to shift to higher ground. Thomas could not light a fire so some of the blacks swam the creek with firesticks in their mouth and he was grateful for their thoughtfulness. Because of the rain he had few visitors and was glad, as all his provisions were gone.²⁰

Bunggane/Bungumm

Married man, aged 60, Bunggane died at Arthurs Seat, August 1839; he was Tuaningrook's Kolin, an elder (Return of Births and Deaths, 1 April 1839 to 29 February 1840, VPRS 4410, unit 3, PROV); Bunggane, married, Mr King's father, died at Arthur's Seat after leaving the encampment S of the Yarra (CY 2604, item 4, ML); Bunggum, male Bonurong, 60, a man of influence died at Arthur's Seat in August 1839 (CY 2946, item 2, ML).

17 Thomas Summary of Proceedings during August 1839, CY 3082, ML. Byrt 2004, CD WT 3082S.DOC.

18 HRV, vol 2B: 539–540.

19 HRV, vol 2B: 540.

20 HRV, vol 2B: 540; Thomas Summary of Proceedings during August 1839, CY 3082, ML. Byrt 2004, CD WT 3082S.DOC.

1 September 1839

Thomas was reduced to feeding the people out of his own family supplies. The lubras came with their children and watched Thomas shave. His man Ross gave them a brush and comb and soap, and they washed and combed the children and everyone looked 'smart'. It was a Sunday so he held two Divine Services, am and pm, and boiled a leg of mutton for dinner. This, with some kangaroo they had, 'filled their bellies'.²¹

2 September 1839

Thomas sent his dray to Melbourne for supplies; he confided again to his journal that sending him to his people without provisions was 'truly uncharitable'. He was afraid to visit the encampment because 'the poor creatures' would want food. Only three blacks visited his tent.²²

3 September 1839

This day he did visit their encampment but found only the old sick man and six others. They told him '**Black fellows go another white man's miam. You no flour**'. He tried to placate them by assuring them that he would soon have provisions, and stayed the day with them. In the evening he was amused that the lubras made their fires and prepared for the return of the men just like careful domesticated wives in England, getting a clean hearth and a good fire going before the return of their husbands from their labour.²³

4 September 1839

Thomas visited Burrenum's miam – it was like a butcher's shop with legs and parts of kangaroo hung all around. He and two other men had returned the previous night heavily laden. Thomas gave beads to two lubras and others followed him back to his tent. He gave them all the mutton he had left over, and a trifle of flour which he could ill spare being short himself.²⁴

5 September 1839

When he visited this day Thomas found that they had a great abundance of meat, enough for a week. Nevertheless some followed him back to his tent, hoping. He had nothing to give but what he had borrowed from his son at Tuerong.²⁵ The blacks fetched him three pails full of mud for the wattle and daub hut he was building and Thomas paid them wages for the labour.²⁶

21 HRV, vol 2B: 540.

22 HRV, vol 2B: 540.

23 HRV, vol 2B: 540.

24 HRV, vol 2B: 541.

25 This observation challenges William Jackson Thomas' Reminiscences. WJ Thomas recorded that the building of Thomas' house at Tubbarubbabel took two weeks, plus a week for the plaster to dry. Then WJ Thomas took a rest, then selected Tuerong. But this observation of William Thomas places his son at Tuerong earlier. WJ Thomas' Reminiscences were written in the twentieth century, so it is his estimate of elapsed time which is more likely to be at fault: the sequence is clear – first they built Tubberubbabel, then he selected Tuerong as his own station.

26 HRV, vol 2B: 541. He paid wages not in money but in food.

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6 September 1839

A large party of blacks came to Thomas' tent and he gave them all tomahawks, for which they sat down and started making handles, complaining about the poor quality of the eyes of the tomahawks, which Thomas agreed, were certainly the worst that he had ever seen.²⁷ He lent them an iron pot and got them to boil some mutton and kangaroo tails, but he was critical of their manners and their impatience. Burrenum was 'a little my confidant'. They sat around, sang and slept for the rest of the day and he wished he had some employment for them.²⁸



Fig 20. 'Trade tomahawk of the 1830s', the quality of which the Bonurong men criticised

From the Wilson P Evans Collection, State Library of Victoria.

7 September 1839

There were 36 in the encampment, anxious to know when Thomas' dray would return from Melbourne. It arrived in the afternoon with ten letters from Robinson, critical of Thomas and demanding his immediate return to Melbourne. Thomas was anguished; he could not find the words to tell his people he had to leave them, and when he did they were not happy. He quoted them as saying '**Black fellows no more sit down here**'.

²⁷ An illustration of a tomahawk from this period is reproduced as Fig 20.

²⁸ *HRV*, vol 2B: 541.

Thomas departed Tubberubbabel at sunrise, calming his spirits with the biblical quotation 'Even so seems it good in Thy sight'. In Melbourne, he found that the Chief Protector had been harassing Mrs Thomas, threatening Thomas' dismissal for not answering correspondence which he had not even received while at Tubberubbabel.²⁹

23 September 1839

Thomas, still in Melbourne, despatched his son William Jackson Thomas and his servant to Tubberubbabel to continue the building work.³⁰

His Honour the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, Charles Joseph La Trobe arrived in Melbourne on 30 September 1839 and the blacks started to talk of the feast that would follow (similar to the feast which the protectors had put on in March). On 2 October Thomas recorded that he must go to Tubberubbabel; also that the blacks 'have it in their head that they are all going to be supplied with everything'. On 3 October he had to unpack the dray as the order to depart for Tubberubbabel was rescinded. On 8 October, Thomas finally received permission from the Chief Protector to take his family to Tubberubbabel but to return immediately to Melbourne.³¹

12 October 1839

Thomas and his family arrived at Tubberubbabel from Melbourne after a difficult journey – the cart was up to its axles in mud and the bullocks up to their bellies; they got stuck at Moody Yallock and had to unload everything; Mrs Thomas was unwell and their little children were screaming; they spent a night in a swamp on the south side of what is now Frankston after trying for three hours in darkness to get the cart unstuck. The lubras and their children were pleased to see Mrs Thomas and the Thomas children. He issued rice to them, and a blanket to an old man. After dinner, he visited the encampment, obliged to tell the people that he was under orders to return immediately to Melbourne; they were 'very dissatisfied, say "**big one lie. You tell blackfellows to come to you and then you no stop**"'. Thomas felt the truth of their remark and felt sure that 'such duplicity would not succeed but disgust them, but orders must be obeyed'. Next day he held a prayer service not at his tent, but at the native encampment 200 yards away, then he left for Melbourne, leaving Mrs Thomas and the children at his tent.³²

29 *HRV*, vol 2B: 541–542.

30 *HRV*, vol 2B: 546.

31 *HRV*, vol 2B: 548, 549, 551.

32 *HRV*, vol 2B: 552.

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21 October 1839³³

After a week in Melbourne, Thomas told Robinson that most of his blacks had left Melbourne for the Arthurs Seat district and requested permission to follow. He despatched his son and his servant with the cart and followed himself later in the day with the dray and his other man.³⁴ On the same day, Thomas wrote another letter to Robinson in which he states that Tubberubbabel is a place much frequented and never deserted.³⁵

22 October 1839

Again, the dray got stuck crossing Moody Yallock Creek – they waded across up to their middles in water unloading it, then borrowed two more bullocks from Mr Newton's station and got the dray free. Two miles after the creek they fell in with 54 blacks en route to Thomas' hut at Tubberubbabel.³⁶

24 October 1839

Thomas had another arduous and dramatic day. They broke camp early because they had to make Konnigo Creek (Kannanook) at what is now Frankston, before high tide. But the dray got stuck in the creek anyway, and a bullock turned sulky and lay down and nearly drowned. Then in the evening when they were encamped, something spooked his milk cow who broke loose and swam the creek to head back to Melbourne; she was followed by her calf, then by the four bullocks who were hobbled, thus could not swim, and were in danger of drowning. Thomas' man, who was a good swimmer,³⁷ plunged in and they were all rescued. That night, while Thomas was on watch, he dropped off to sleep and the bullocks strayed and had to be caught again in the moonlight. Next day, at the last creek (Balcombe) they had to do it all over again, but some of the blacks came and helped them and they made Tubberubbabel at sunset. He saw his dear wife and children and had a comfortable tea with the blacks all around him and he thanked God for all His mercies.³⁸

33 In his Letter book for this date Thomas wrote a memo suggesting that since Tubbarubbabel was 48 miles away, by cutting a cross road from the main road, he could reduce the journey by three to four miles, giving a good direction and thus make it easier for people to find him (CY 2946, ML). There is no listing in PROV of this letter being sent to the Chief Protector.

34 *HRV*, vol 2B: 553. Ross and Bob Davis were the two men. Ross (no given name) was discharged from servitude to the Protector of the Aborigines in May 1839 (*HRV*, vol 3: 264).

35 Thomas to Robinson, 21 October 1839, enc with 40/2215 in 4/1135.1, AO of NSW.

36 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

37 This man must have been his man Bob Davis as his other man Ross could not swim, see 11 March 1840 in Chapter 3.

38 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 114, ML.

25 October 1839

Up early, he distributed rice and sugar and proposed a spot for those presently with Mr Hobson at Kangerong to erect their miams at Tubberubabel and they promised to do so the next day.

26 October 1839

Thomas went early to Kangerong ‘their principal encampment’; the people broke up their encampment, said good-bye to Mr Hobson and followed him to his hut at Tubberubabel. He then outlined his proposal for a manufacturing industry – the women would make baskets, Thomas’ daughters would teach them how to make hats, and the men were to skin the kangaroos. In return, Thomas would give them the worth of the goods in flour, tomahawks etc: the goods would be sent to Melbourne to be sold.³⁹ Thomas did not record their response. But to his ‘great surprise’, just before sunset, the lubras presented him with two baskets they had just made for Thomas’ two eldest girls. He offered to pay for them in rice and send them to Melbourne but they were insistent that these particular baskets were a gift. He quoted them as saying ‘**make em plenty by and bye for Melbourne. Your Pickaninys them**’. Thomas ‘obeyed’ them and gave them a reciprocal gift of flour and sugar from his own store. Then, with a timing that was wretched for him and his proposal for a manufacturing industry, a messenger (unnamed) arrived from Melbourne summoning them all, and there was much excitement.⁴⁰

27 October 1839

Thomas was up early and walked around the encampment, stopping to rub Old Jack and Morragine’s feet with emu oil. He ‘mustered’ everyone after breakfast – family, servants and blacks for the first of Sunday’s two Divine Services, but had to cut the service short because the messenger was urging them to go now: ‘What restraint they must be under when summoned’, he recorded. He distributed rice and sugar to them and they were off, even Morragine whose foot was so bad that Thomas bandaged it for him for the walk. ‘To comfort’ Thomas, they left lots of spears and some bags, saying they had to go, but they would soon return. 61 people departed and five remained at Tubberubabel.⁴¹

39 This is all he wrote in his journal on this day; how it worked out in practice is discussed in Chapter 9 on manufacturing industry, food policy and theories of civilising.

40 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 114, ML.

41 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

Morragine

20 Nov 1839 – In Thomas' census of the Bonurong, Morrigan is described as male, Bonurong, aged 32, has lost the use of his legs and is under the charge of Mr Thomas at Arthurs Seat (VPRS 10, unit 1/242, PROV). He was attended by the Aboriginal doctor in Melbourne on 4 October 1839 (*HRV*, vol 2B: 550) and is possibly the old man who was attended by the doctor Burrenum (Mr Dredge); this was the first time that Thomas knew Burrenum was a doctor (*HRV*, vol 2B: 547). Thomas' son found Morrigen dead at Tubberubbabel on 19 December 1839 (CY 2604, item 4). He was Tarlongrook's husband (Thomas Return, VPRS 4410, unit 3). His European name was Jack Lope (Names Taken in Encampment, July 1839, CY 2604, item 1, ML).

It is apparent from his journal that the five who remained were two women and three children. They lived together for the next nine days 'as family', being rationed by Thomas as well as being fed, sometimes from his table, making baskets, learning to read, paying 'astonishing' attention to Divine Service. 'They assure me **that no long time and all my blacks come back and set down by me**'. He mentions only one by name, Wigal, the wife of Burrenum the owner of the country,⁴² who made a fine basket for Thomas to send to Melbourne to get flour for the black lubras. On 4 November Thomas' cart arrived from Melbourne with a summons from Robinson to return immediately – the fourth time he had been called back from his district. He left immediately and en route met 17 of his blacks at Mr Newton's station at Mordialloc, already on their way back to Tubberubbabel.

Except for a there and back journey to Tubberubbabel from 3 to 10 December to bring his seriously ill wife to Melbourne, Thomas remained in Melbourne doing work for Robinson until January 1840. On his flying visit to Tubberubbabel he found 27 still living there but he mentions only one by name, Old Maria who wept bitterly and clung to the cart on Mrs Thomas' departure. During this period in Melbourne, on 12 November, he selected his five Native Police, three from the Warworong and two from the Bonurong – Buller Bullut aged 20, and Tulemlgate aged 24.⁴³

The first fortnight in December was characterised by much fighting with the Barrabools who came en masse to Melbourne. Thomas submitted his first petition for land to La Trobe who agreed to forward it to Sydney and who

42 One wonders if she was the responsible person left behind to keep an eye on things.

43 Unlike the successful 1842 Native Police Corps, the protectors' domestic police were supposed to keep order within the tribe, in effect, to be put in a compromised position, caught between age-old law and custom and the new imperative, European law and custom. All the recovered details of the 1839 Domestic Police have been included in Chapter 3 of Fels 1988.

spoke about the necessity of getting the blacks out of Melbourne.⁴⁴ Thomas told the people that the Governor was 'plenty sulky' with them, as were Captain Lonsdale and the soldiers: it was the women who started packing up on hearing this. But the men refused to leave, harking back again to the time of plenty they experienced with Mr Batman. Some pages are cut out of Thomas' journal, and when it resumes with a list of deaths from April to December, the next entry is 1 January 1840 and the encampment at Melbourne is deserted except for a few.

8 January 1840

By this date all Thomas' blacks had left Melbourne and Thomas took his requisition for stores, already signed by Robinson, to La Trobe for approval. To his dismay, La Trobe reprimanded him for being still in Melbourne and refused to give permission for the stores: as he confided to his journal, he had nearly 200 blacks anticipating these stores, and it was a far cry from what was promised: he got on his horse and set off for Tubberubbabel travelling ten miles before camping under a gum tree and committing himself to God.⁴⁵

10 January 1840

Thomas arrived at Tubberubbabel; some blacks were ready to pull him off his horse and shake hands; the lubras and children in the bush under the trees were 'hollowing out' long before he saw them. 65 people were there and he went from group to group 'pacifying' them, assuring them that his wheelbarrow would arrive soon with supplies. 'Truly this is bad work' he wrote 'if ever any department was despised and had obstacles thrown in the way, we have. Could the Home Government see my situation now, they would order things different'.⁴⁶

11 January 1840

Six children attended lessons but showed very little anxiety to learn their letters; some could repeat the alphabet but not recognise the letters when shown. Three people were ill requiring treatment – Old Maria, and Mr King's mother, and Kurbkening, a youth aged 11 who was Old Doctor's son and whose health was in serious decline.⁴⁷

44 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 4, ML. Item 4 is a fragment of Journal covering the period 8 December 1839 to January 1840. A marginal note indicates that it is a first draft which Thomas intended to re-write later. It contains the important information from Surveyor Smythe, lately at the Swan River, regarding the three named Bonorong women abducted from Western Port by the master of the *George* in 1834, presently at King Georges Sound and wanting to return to see their friends at Western Port.

45 CY 2605, item 1, frame 31, ML.

46 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, frame 31, ML.

47 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, ML.

'I Succeeded Once'

12 January 1840

At Divine Service the people were 'remarkably attentive' at the singing⁴⁸ and seemed 'delighted' with Thomas' son's flute-playing.⁴⁹ Burrenum (Mr Dredge), D'Villiers, Nerreninnen (Mr Young), Poleorong (Billy Lonsdale) and Ningolobin (Captain John Bull) left on a four day emu hunt,⁵⁰ Thomas having given them sugar and rice. In the afternoon a native arrived with news of the cart on the way being filled with plenty of Yellowniboy, Nerong, Caom, Bulganner etc and Thomas concluded that His Honour had reconsidered the case of the poor blacks. At 11.30 pm Budgery Tom came and said that there were wild black fellows in the bush, whereupon he, Jackia Jackia, Thomas, and three other unnamed men set off into the bush to search. They found no-one and Thomas laughed at their folly.⁵¹

13 January 1840

By this date, Thomas had succeeded in collecting all the blacks from the five different encampments⁵² on the Mornington Peninsula where he found them on 9 January, and 'they all encamped together on the north and south sides of a creek called Tubberrubabel, my tent in the midst where we erected a shed of some length for teaching the children and to be used as a place of worship'.⁵³ Thomas' large tent was erected this day.⁵⁴

Thomas' description of an encampment

Their habitation is frail but answers well their purpose, a few sheets of bark cut in a few minutes and erected is their habitation. These sheets of bark are about six feet long, oblique raised to the angle of about 90 degrees windward, every alternate sheet is reversed so that no rain can enter. The sides are filled up with short pieces of bark and brush and a sheet of bark at the top thus ////. A good miam or hut will hold 2 adults and 3 children – they are not permanent, are knocked down or burnt on breaking up the encampment – they consist of one apartment only.

In a large encampment they are divided into hamlets – some influential black taking charge of six or eight miams & so on, say 5 hamlets. These hamlets are 50 yards or more from each other while the miams in a single hamlet is not more than 3 or 4 yards apart, merely sufficient to avoid

48 It remains to be discovered whether the Bonurong were different in their enjoyment of music. In 1844 when Thomas gave a service at Merri Creek for the Loddon River blacks, he noted that 'They paid great attention but would not sing like my blacks' (ML MSS 214/3, 1 September 1844).

49 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, ML.

50 The Balnarring racecourse in Coolart road is called Emu Plains.

51 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, frame 32, ML.

52 In his journal he calls these encampments 'suburbs of Tubberubabel', CY 2605, item 1, ML.

53 First Periodical Report, *HRV*, vol 2B; 621.

54 Thomas' large tent was double, bell shaped.

danger from each others fires. The head of each hamlet keeps order, settles all grievances. But the Chief of the tribe governs all their movements. I should have stated that in wet weather a trench is dug with a tomahawk round the back and sides of their miams to let off the water.⁵⁵

When the Bonurong were encamped by themselves, the encampment would have followed the general principles explained to AW Howitt by Barak⁵⁶ – a favourable position relative to the weather, and in many cases facing the rising sun. The relationship of miams on the ground depended on the relationship of any individual or group with the important clan heads and principal families. Thomas drew this too, from Barak’s information which would have been as true for the Bonurong as for the Waworong. Barak put himself at the centre of the diagram for illustrative purposes.⁵⁷ He and his wife and child were number one; his brother and wife and child were number two close to him; Barak’s father and mother were number three, double the distance away and in another direction; Barak’s wife’s mother and father were even further away in the same direction and screened from Barak’s sight; the young men’s miams were the furthest away from Barak, and lastly Bonurong visitors were the same distance away from Barak as his own mother and father, but in a different direction. When Thomas camped with them, he situated his tent so that its flap or opening faced their miams.

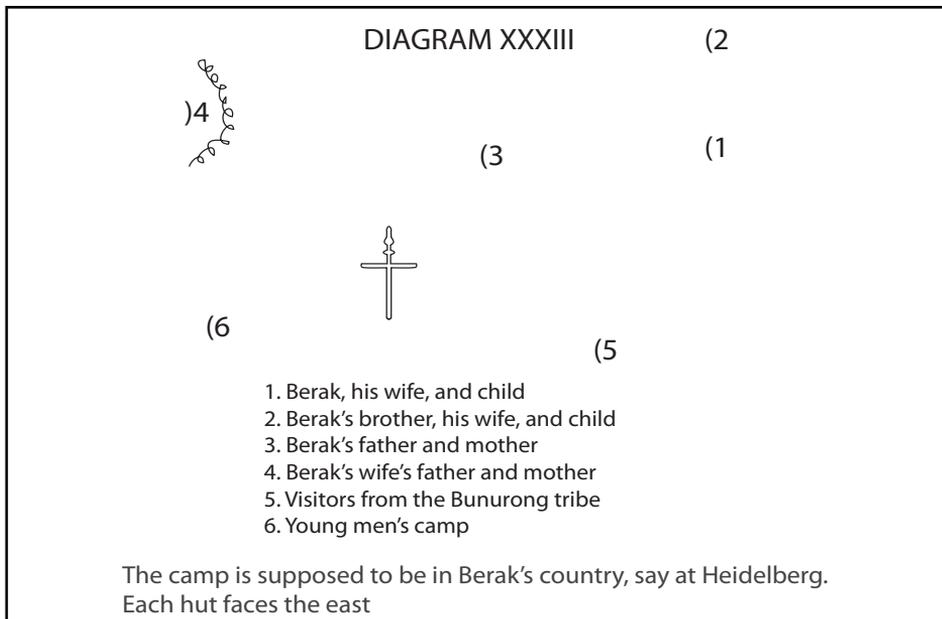


Fig 21. ‘William Barak’s mudmap of an encampment’

Reproduced from Howitt 1904: 775.

⁵⁵ William Thomas Miscellaneous Papers, CY 2984, frame 52, ML.

⁵⁶ Howitt 1904: 775.

⁵⁷ Barak’s drawing is reproduced as Fig 21.

'I Succeeded Once'

14 January 1840

The blacks were restless and 'very disappointed' at the non-arrival of the stores and refused to help in the construction of a hut.⁵⁸

15 January 1840

One of the blacks went to Bob Davis who was sick in bed and said '**all bungarly you**' whereupon Davis leaped from his bed 'like a madman' and threatened Thomas' life. Then Davis absconded with two blacks and the rest were sulky and called Thomas '**plenty sulky with Maregii Davis**'. Thomas had ten children at school learning with wooden letters, but one by one they all went off to bathe.⁵⁹

16 January 1840

'At Tubberubbabel native encampment there are about 90 natives and 23 miams'. In this letter Thomas adds the further detail that it is a series of waterholes, and it is his large tent that is pitched in the midst of them. He goes on to say that they are not merely disappointed at the non-arrival of the stores, they feel 'deceived' and he pleads yet again that La Trobe would condescend to grant supplies to these people – the most peaceable and the least troublesome to the settlers, more than any other district.⁶⁰

17 January 1840

Surveyor Smythe and some of the blacks went hunting;⁶¹ other blacks showed 'great anger' with Thomas' treatment of Davis and threatened to leave Tubberubbabel if Thomas would not have him back. Thomas was copying his letters into his letter book when he was interrupted five or six times by emissaries acting like 'aidecamps' from Davis in the bush: in the end Davis came back penitent, saying that he had misunderstood the blacks – it was Smythe the surveyor who did not like Davis, not Thomas. All the blacks were at Tubberubbabel except Bogy Bogy and Mr Man. Thomas put a stop to Mr Mann's going to VDL,⁶² and called on Mr Hobson who was out. Thomas made a place for public worship and put a looking glass in a tree 'for the coming Sabbath'. The people came and looked into the glass highly pleased.⁶³

58 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, ML.

59 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, frame 33, ML.

60 VPRS 11, unit 7/299, PROV.

61 Surveyor George Douglas Smythe was called by the Bonurong '*Mamghie*' and his brother Henry Hutchinson Smythe '*Dareem*' (McCrae 1934: 100).

62 It has to be asked, though I cannot answer it, why were they going to VDL? Thomas stopped Old Mr Mann this time, but Pinterginner went a couple of months later, and on his return he brought back Mary from George Smith's place.

63 Thomas Journal CY 2605, item 1, ML.

18 January 1840

This was a Saturday and Thomas recorded that he 'amused' himself with the blacks: amusements for Thomas means playing games. It is about this time at Tubberubbabel that he recorded the vocabulary for ball games including wicket and ball, his named informant being the Western Port chief Budgery Tom.⁶⁴

As this is probably the first ever record of the Indigenous ball game believed by many in Victoria to be a forerunner of the high kicking game, Australian Rules football, Thomas' later description of it is given here.

Marngrook

The Marngrook (or the ball) is a favourite game with boys and men. A party assemble; one makes a ball of opossum skin or whatnot of a good size. The ball is kicked up and not thrown by the hand as white boys do. The ball is kicked into the air not along the ground. There is a general scramble to catch it in the air. The tall blackfellows stand the best chance. When caught it is again kicked up in the air with great force and ascends straight up and as high as when thrown by the hand. They will play at this game for hours and fine exercise it is for adults or youths. The girls play at Marngrook but throw it up as white children.⁶⁵

19 January 1840

Thomas was 'much hurt' to discover that though it was the Sabbath, Munmunginner and seven others, unnamed, intended to go hunting with spears.⁶⁶

20 January 1840

Thomas had 14 children at school – he made a twig alphabet which failed, then wrote large capital letters on bark. He got the children to say as far as G: he put the letters up in the following order A C F D E B. He gave sugar to those who did not attend school in order to encourage them. In a marginal note, Thomas records that Yal Yal, Mr Young (Nerreninnen), Pinterginner, Karlmile, and Burrenum left on Sunday.⁶⁷

64 See Chapter 12.

65 Aborigines: Amusements and War Implements, 15 June 1858, CY 3131, frames 37–38, ML.

66 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, frame 35, ML.

67 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, ML.

Yal Yal/Mr Meyrick – Bonurong – son and heir of Bobbinary, co-owner of the southern peninsula

Yal Yal, heir to Bobbinary, clan head (Barwick 1984: 117); no date – Henry Meyrick found in him a friend on whose loyalty and affection he could always rely (Meyrick 1939: 142).

20 Mar 1839 – Yal Yal aka Dr Ewen, male aged 14 of Boonworong tribe whose family is not ascertained (Protector James Dredge's Census in Robinson Papers, vol 54, ML); Jul 1839 – Yal Yal's name taken on a census of Bonurong in the encampment (Thomas 'A' diary, January – July 1839, set 214, item 1, ML); 20 Nov 1839 – Yal Yal, Bonurong tribe, male aged 18, listed on census taken by Protector William Thomas at the encampment on the banks of the Yarra (VPRS 10, unit 1/242).

1840 – Burrenum and Yal Yal return with plenty of fowl etc etc, enough for the whole encampment at Tubberubbabel (Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, ML); Yal Yal's name is on a list of single men taken by Protector Thomas (Thomas Journal, CY 2605, set 214/2, item 1, frame 23, ML); 14 March 1840 – Yal Yal was one of a group of five leading men who got a lift to Melbourne in a dray from O'Connor's station about 30 miles east of Melbourne: the others were Poleorong, Budgery Tom, Worwodor and Burrenum (CY 2605, item 1, ML); 7 Apr 1840 – in Melbourne for a great meeting of the tribes, young Yal Yal is mentioned as a participant in a Council of six Port Phillip blacks; the others were Collerlook, D'Villiers, Toltoy's brother, Old Jack Weatherly and Billy Lonsdale (CY 2605, item 1, ML); 12 Apr 1840 – Yal Yal has the bad disorder (CY 2605, item 1, ML); 10 Dec 1840 – Yal Yal was among a party of Western Port Aborigines who came to the new Protectorate station at Nerre Nerre Warren, all wanting food and blankets even though they had their own possum skin rugs. They were trying to entice the others to leave Nerre Nerre Warren (Byrt 2004: 44). Yal Yal's father Bobbinary was one who had come in to Nerre Nerre Warren the previous day (Byrt 2004: 44).

8 Jun 1841 – Yal Yal murdered Bareing, a Yarra black at Mr Ruffy's station at Mahun in Westernport. Nerre Ninnon was with him. (Protector Thomas 'List of murders in the vicinity of Melbourne by Aborigines on Aborigines', set 214, item 9, Corr. Returns etc 1835–1845, ML); 14 Sep 1841 – Yal Yal's mother intervened on his behalf when he and Nerreninnon were undergoing Aboriginal judicial proceedings over the boy they murdered (Thomas Papers, set 214/2, item 5, Transcription¹ CY 2605, frame 348, ML);

I. There is an amazing amount of detail in Thomas' account of this ritual spearing. It has been transcribed by Pauline Byrt

19 Dec 1841 – Yal Yal's recent murdering of the boy has encouraged the blacks to believe that no punishment awaits such deeds (Thomas to Robinson, VPRS 11, unit 8/417, PROV); 21 Dec 1841 – Yal Yal is an informant, with Kollorlook, Yanki Yanki and Beruke alias Gellibrand regarding the murder of the Adelaide black Jemmy at Whitehead's station, by the Goulburn blacks (Thomas to Robinson, VPRS 11, unit 8/418, PROV).

6 Jan 1842 – Yal Yal and party were at Captain Reid's station^{II} (Byrt 2004: 74); 24 Feb 1842 – Yal Yal received blankets, clothing and equipment; enrolled in the Native Police and made his mark; deserted a few days after enlistment; since wished to return, but in the meantime Commandant Henry Edmund Pulteney Dana had received orders from Superintendent Charles La Trobe to limit the Native Police Corps to 20 men, so Dana refused to have him back (Dana to Superintendent, 31 March 1842, VPRS 19, Box 28, 42/674, PROV); 31 Aug 1842 – on Medical Dispenser's list suffering from Pseudo Syphilis, treatment Liq Arsenic and aperients internally and Blackwash externally (Henry Jones to Chief Protector, VPRS 4410, unit 2, item 50, PROV).

1844 – Yal Yal accompanied Henry Meyrick who left his station Boniong on the Mornington Peninsula, driving 2000 sheep for 10 weeks on a trek to a new station on the Thomson River in Gippsland (Meyrick 1939: 171).

Mar 1845 – Ninggolobin told Thomas that Yal Yal shot Pinterginner (Byrt 2004: 99); 30 Apr 1845 – Thomas to Latrobe regarding the report of the Native Police and the Westernport blacks killing Gippsland blacks – the report was fabricated to account for Pinterginner's death at the hands of Yal Yal. Two reliable informants Moody Warrin (Mt Macedon) and Bon John (Barrabool) said that Yal Yal had often threatened to kill Pinterginner and did so, and fabricated the story. (VPRS 19, Box 70, 45/759, PROV); 18 Aug 1845 – there is a report that Yal Yal is about to lead to the hymeneal altar – the fair Puppa-co-ran-go-rook, only daughter of Brikko-Mirring, or the one-eyed (Hales and Le Cheminant 1997: 27); same date – in his letter to Mama from the Prince of Wales hotel in Melbourne, Henry H Meyrick writes that Yal Yal who is with him particularly desires to be remembered to her, or in his own words, he wishes that I would write his name very big on the paper (Ms 7959, Box 654: 15, SLV).

II. Now The Briars.

Jan 1846 – Yal Yal is listed in Thomas' criticism of the Native Police Corps as one of the Melbourne tribes who joined the Native Police and then deserted (Thomas Quarterly Report, enc to 46/3341 in 4/2745.1, AO of NSW); Jan 1846 – Yal Yal is listed on Thomas Family Connections census, as Kangerong section of the Bonurong, male aged 20, father Bobbinary a widower, sister Boyyeup aged 23 (CY 3083, ML); 3 Feb 1846 – Yal Yal en route again with Meyrick's party for Gippsland (Meyrick 1939: 193); 13 Feb 1846 – Yal Yal named the creek the party crossed to get onto the Wild Cattle Run, then armed with Alfred Meyrick's rifle helped to hunt and shoot a wild bull (Hales and Le Cheminant 1997: 36); 16 Feb 1846 – listed by Robinson as son of Bup.in.nar.ing, of the Bur.in.yung balluk belonging about Pt Nepean, presently stopping with Mr Merrik (GA Robinson, Vocabulary Papers, quoted in Clark 2002: 220); 19 Apr 1846 – Yal Yal's name is on a list of blacks which La Trobe requested to go to King's Island following the wrecking of the ship *Cataraqui* (Thomas Journal CY 2606, ML); 21 May 1846 – Yal Yal's name is on a list of Western Port blacks gone with murderous intent to catch wild blackfellows (Thomas Journal CY 2606, ML); 9 Sep 1846 – Yal Yal and other Westernport blacks were examined by the committee in charge of the search for the alleged white woman in Gippsland; Yal Yal was supposed to have seen her; not so; Yal Yal got the story from a Gippsland black (Thomas Quarterly Report, enc to 46/9277 in 4/2745.1, AO of NSW); 9 Sep 1846 – Yal Yal avoids Thomas who believes that the blacks are telling the truth as they know it, but that they are misled by certain parties (Thomas Journal, CY 2606, ML); Sep 1846 – in his monthly report for 1 – 30 September 1846, Thomas expresses doubts about the evidence the committee has gathered. 'Even Yal Yal says "another one blackfellow in Gippsland say so"' (set 214, item 10: 67, ML); 14 Sep 1846 – Thomas writes that Yal Yal and two other blacks will not come near him because they know that Thomas fears that not everything they have said is the truth (Thomas to Chief Protector, set 214, item 10: 61, ML); 20 Oct 1846 – Thomas farewelled the party who were going to search for the white woman – they were 10 in number, all excited, looking clean and comfortable; they left with Mr de Villiers on the steamer *Shamrock*. The party included Little Benbow (Boollut), Lively (Warwado), Yal Yal, Charley (Lillero), Tearram, Toby (Talleorong), Nowrrup, Minghim and Dollar (Nerretnunin) (Thomas Monthly Report for October 1846, set 214, item 10: 79ff, ML). In his journal of this date Thomas notes that they were all armed and well turned out in new clothing (CY 2606, ML); Dec 1846 – Yal Yal is mentioned as one of the people Thomas has closely

examined and on whose word much reliance has been placed regarding the white woman (Thomas Quarterly Report, 1 September–30 November 1846, enc with Lonsdale to Col Sec 46/9277 in 4/2745.1, AO of NSW).

Jan 1847 – Yal Yal alias Mr Meyrick was cool and deliberate with Christiaan de Villiers on the expedition in search of the alleged white woman in Gippsland (*Port Phillip Patriot*, 10 February 1847); 6 Apr 1847 – Yal Yal – a black with Tommy, Toby and Jack a wadden, in the boat crew under Mr McLeod and Mr Hill, setting off today in another search for the white woman (Commissioner of Crown Landers Tyers to LaTrobe, VPRS 19, Box 92, 47/701, PROV); 22 Apr 1847 – Yal Yal is mentioned as one of the search party in Tyers' instructions for the search (enc to VPRS 19, Box 92, 47/907, PROV); 22 Nov 1847 – in a letter to Mama Henry Meyrick quoted Yal Yal's mode of expressing tiredness 'me plenty leepy' (Hales and Le Cheminant 1997: 40).

5 Aug 1850 – Yal Yal and his lubra Kikerterbruk are on a census of names of all the remaining Bonurong and Waworong taken by Thomas in Melbourne on this day (Thomas Journal, CY 3127, ML).

26 Mar 1852 – Yal Yal alias Mr Meyrick, male of the Boonoorong tribe was killed on this day. He had 2 lubras who were Lurkerbruck, and Wyoorung alias Judy (Thomas Census, in set 214, item 12: 143, ML). According to George Gordon McCrae, 'Yal Yal died off the road between Mordialloc and Brighton. He fell in single combat with another man of his tribe known to us as Williamstown. He was buried where he fell, with his right arm projecting from the soil' (George Gordon McCrae, *Reminiscences*, vol 4, 2523/5 d, SLV).

21 January 1840

This day he had only five at school for whom he made a large alphabet on cartridge paper which seemed to please them very much.⁶⁸

Death of Kurnboro/Old Maria

Old Maria was very ill with brain fever, out of her senses, jumping into the water. Thomas was sure she was deranged and consulted surveyor Smythe. They agreed that bleeding was necessary but they could not prevail on the native doctors to do it. But the native doctors did agree to have four leeches put on her temple (there were leeches in part of the creek, they said). Maria's

⁶⁸ Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, ML.

'I Succeeded Once'

daughter went to fetch leeches but did not return till the afternoon, without the leeches. Maria became 'frantic': Thomas prevented her on several occasions from throwing herself into the creek, though the others about her seemed unconcerned. Benbow arrived from Melbourne with a rumour about a collision which excited everyone, and by the time Thomas turned to check on Maria, she was absent, with her husband Doctor sitting alone by his fire. Thomas immediately made them light a bush to go and seek her, and they found Maria in the creek 'near drowned, lost all strength and just the top of her head was seen'. They pulled her out by her arms, and after a quarter of an hour, she a little recovered, her frantic fits returned. Thomas and Smythe remained with her till 1 am. When Thomas checked on her again at 5.30 am he 'found her still alive, but her feet dead, the rattles was in her throat'. He made her some tea and got the husband to try her with a spoon, and the tea went down but with difficulty. At 8 am he had just left her, but Mr Smyth was still present, when all life departed. She was bound up precisely as men but without half attention.⁶⁹ In his Return of Births and Deaths for the period, Thomas names her as Kurnboro, a Bonurong, aged 41, much attached to whites.⁷⁰

23 January 1840

Burrenum and Yal Yal etc etc who left on 20 January returned with plenty of fowl, ten kangaroos, 14 opossum and swans, enough for the whole encampment; Burrenum much concerned about Maria.⁷¹

25 January 1840

After leaving Tubberubabel on 25 January because they had not caught any food for two days, they encamped at Tuerong about five miles SE from Mt Martha where they remained ten days. The whole party was 101 people. They then split into smaller groups in order to procure food, and Thomas accompanied the largest group of 57 to cross the country to the east side of Western Port. 44 remained in the vicinity of Arthurs Seat.⁷²

February 1840

Thomas' party camped at 11 places all of which are marked on his map of 29 February 1840. This is the famous raid on their enemies in Gippsland, the events of which were outlined in Chapter 3, and the context and consequences of which form Chapter 8. Then they returned to Melbourne via Dandenong at the end of March. Thomas was in Melbourne for all of April, the encampment at one stage consisting of 496 people – 203 Waworong and Bonurong, 87 Mt

69 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, frames 36–37, ML.

70 VPRS 4410, unit 3/66, PROV.

71 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, ML. Burrenum/Mr Dredge was a doctor: Old Maria may have been his wife, but this is not confirmed as yet.

72 Thomas First Periodical Report, HRV, vol 2B; 621.

Macedon, 95 Barrabool and 111 Goulburn.⁷³ Thomas and all the blacks left Melbourne on 29 April after a stay of 49 days and by 6 May everyone was south of Moody Yallock.⁷⁴

17 May 1840

Thomas having issued an invitation to the two encampments at Kangerong and Buckkermittewarrer to visit him at Tubberubbabel, 66 people arrived, and sat down in five groups according to their family connections, with 'the strangers, Mt Macedons and Barrabools 1 [separate party]', an 'imposing' sight. He distributed rations, gave Kollorlock a red shirt 'with which he was much pleased', then read Divine Service. They departed in the afternoon, promising him that 'all' would return next day.⁷⁵

18 May 1840

All the blacks (122) came and encamped opposite Thomas' hut at Tubberubbabel. He distributed flour to the people he considered to be his own blacks, and he gave blankets to the old, but to the Mt Macedon blacks who were with his Western Port blacks he gave only a 'trifle' of flour, and even then he emphasised that they (Mt Macedons) had to bring him skins in return for rations.⁷⁶

19 May 1840

Thomas distributed 48 blankets and 15 shirts to the whole of his Western Port blacks, cutting blankets in half for the children, giving the shirts to those who had opossum skin cloaks, so that by the end, everyone was well-clad. Thomas made a marginal note 'except the Dr and his family – his son ill had one'. The blacks cut bark for Thomas' hut, made a good brush stockyard for the bullocks, and made a fence for Thomas' garden.⁷⁷

20 May 1840

This day they wanted flour, but Thomas wanted work in exchange. They threatened to go to the Governor: Burrenum and the Mt Macedon man Captain Turnbull were 'very saussy', so Thomas locked the store and retired to his tent to write. They came and apologised, and set to work to cut bark for his house. 12 of them worked hard, he wrote. He gave to each of the 12 workers one and a half pounds of flour, plus two pounds of sugar to be shared between them. Several lubras walked to Tuerong to work for his son, as did some of the Barrabools and Mt Macedons, and were rewarded, but in addition, to encourage them, Thomas

73 Thomas Journal, 11 April 1840, CY 2605, item 1, frame 95, ML.

74 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 140, ML.

75 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 142, ML.

76 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 142, ML.

77 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

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gave more flour and rice on their return to Tubberubbabel. There were still 122 people at Tubberubbabel. Thomas has 'perished in the nights with cold' because his hut has been almost un-roofed.⁷⁸

21 May 1840

'The blacks again work hard at my hut, re-cover it'; his last sentence for this days' entry is 'natives finish my hut': Derrimut's mother Dindow and another lubra made three baskets which Thomas promised to send to the Governor for sale. They talk of taking a circuit round to Point Nepean to Sandy Point then back to Tubberubbabel. Thomas decided that if they take the lubras with them, he will not follow them, but if they leave the lubras behind, he will follow them 'as then only is their time of destruction'. Thomas recorded his scale of payment for manufactured goods – two cups of flour and a small amount of sugar for each basket; two cups of rice and a bit of sugar for every two skins; three cups of rice for four skins etc.⁷⁹

22 May 1840

From Tubberubbabel Thomas forwarded items manufactured by the Aborigines to Mr Lilly.⁸⁰ Items included seven baskets, four opossum skins, one kangaroo skin, and one dozen squirrel skins. Thomas says they have many more, and only in the last few days has he made them aware of the benefits they might derive from their labour; he estimated production at two dozen of each, weekly.⁸¹

On the same day, Burrenum and Bobbinary left for Kermitterrewarrer⁸² ahead of the others who will follow in seven days; they took supplies of seven pounds of flour and two pounds of sugar.⁸³

24 May 1840

Sunday. This was the day Thomas 'extorted' from the blacks the confession of the killing of the Two Fold Bay men, women and children on their February excursion. He made them bring to him the souvenirs they still had in their possession. He preached on the commandment 'Thou shalt do no murder' and explained the difference between wilful murder and accidental killing (Chapter 8).⁸⁴

78 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

79 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 143–144, ML. He had learned from the experience of February when they successfully deceived him regarding their intention to go to Gippsland to kill their enemies the Two Fold Bay blacks.

80 George Lilly is the Melbourne merchant who 'volunteered to act gratuitously as agent in all matters where the private property of the natives are concerned, to receive monies when due and deposit the same in the Melbourne Savings Bank in accordance with the terms of the Agreements entered into', *HRV*, vol 2B: 766.

81 VPRS 11, unit 7/309, PROV.

82 Both Georgiana and George Gordon McCrae mention the Aboriginal encampment below their house, which I believe is Kermitterrewarrer (see Chapter 10). Much later settler accounts mention Chinaman's creek at Rosebud as an encampment. By then the old wooden lighthouse and the keeper's cottages would have been built at McCrae below the old homestead. The possibility exists that they shifted their traditional encamping place because of the European intrusion.

83 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

84 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 144, ML.

25 May 1840

The whole of the blacks leave 'Tubberub' after a stay of seven days. Thomas was very ill from sleeping in a faulty tent and asks his son to go look for them at Buckkermittewarrer. Some return asking if he was angry.⁸⁵ He asked them what route they intended to take, and they made a mudmap on the ground. He shook hands with them and they left. There were still 122 people in the encampment before this dispersal. Then, to his 'great surprise' Nuluptune returned and stayed the night with him, 'pretends he will go no more with his Blackfellows'.⁸⁶

26 May 1840

Poleorong returned to 'chat' with Nuluptune and Thomas watched the latter 'very closely'. He gave them both flour.⁸⁷

They went first to Kangerong, then Buckkermittewarrer, then around their country on a triangular route ending at Sandy Point. Thomas went looking for signs of their return each day from 1 June to Arthurs Seat and along the coast of Port Phillip, but then remembered from the map that they were intending to return from the Western Port coast; he met up with the principal men of the Western Ports on 5 June – Derremut, Ningenow and lubra, Dindoo, Budgery Tom and family, Burrenun and lubra and Burrenun's two brothers, and Munmanginna. These 13 stayed one night at Tubberubabel then shifted encampment to join the others just beyond Kangerong.⁸⁸

6 June 1840

Saturday. Thomas proposed the work for the following week to be building a bridge across the creek at Tubberubabel, two doors for the store, and if possible begin splitting.⁸⁹

7 June 1840

This was a Sunday and 82 blacks came to Tubberubabel for the service but they returned to their encampment by Kangerong to sleep. He gives the structure of this population according to how many mouths he fed: 42 men, 17 lubras, 19 male children, four female children.⁹⁰

85 It seems that when Thomas retires to his tent, they interpret that as sulkiness.

86 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 144, ML. Nuluptune would have been deputised to keep a watching brief on Thomas.

87 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 144, ML.

88 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

89 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

90 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

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8 June 1840

To Thomas' great surprise, three blacks left in Mr Martin's boat for Melbourne, the brothers Poleorong and Buller Bullup, and an unnamed person, the only three absent from his tribe (tribe, singular), all of whom were encamped by his hut.⁹¹

Also on this day, Poleorong, having arrived in Melbourne gave the following list of people presently at 'Tubberrubbabil' to the Chief Protector:

- Derremart
- Pardynup
- Niggerenaul
- Pubbernarrin–Bobbinary
- Neer.re.min.min alias Mr Young
- Lum.mare.rer–Nern Nern, alias Old Man Billy
- Man.nite
- Murn
- Ningcallerbel–alias Captain Turnbull
- Nunupton–Billy Langhorne
- Hill–Murremmurrembean
- Bore.rer.num–Mr Dredge
- Wore.rer.gor.uc
- Tallun–Mr King
- Ly.bil.ly
- Bee.her.rac–Bearack
- Pen.dug.ge.min
- Wor.ro.gope
- Mr Man, old 30–Mingarar
- Young Mr Man
- Car.per.re–Kurburo
- Doctor, Tare.im
- Nar.ner.ring
- Um.mer.gil.pow.⁹²

91 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 145, ML.

92 Clark 1988, vol 1: 344.

Mr Man/Mangerer/Mungarer/Mingerer

Son of Old Mr Man, the venerable chief; his sister is Maryagrook; he is the younger brother of both King Benbow and Big Benbow; he is not to be confused with Old Mr Man the chief who bears the same name.

3 Jan 1840 – In names taken in encampment Mangerer is son of Chief Mingearagon, listed with four siblings (Thomas CY 2605, item 1, ML).

Jan 1846 – Old Mr Man plus 2 Benbows plus Derrimut are listed as Weeriby Yallok section of the Boonurong tribe; Mangerer, male aged 18 is listed still with his father, a widower, and his sisters, his father's name having been overwritten (Family Connections census, CY 3083, ML).

31 Dec 1847 – Near Brighton Thomas: 'saw the graves of Old Mr Man alias [blank] & Dindoo the two oldest in the tribes, buried in at present an unenclosed spot about 3 chains from the road. Poor Old Dindoos seemed a careless grave but [blank] seemed to have some pains taken with it. Its enclosure was in the form of a heptagon thus & seven wattle saplings making the figure lay horizontally on the ground. On enquiry, as I had never seen one of this horizontal form before, I was led to understand that it was to show their fast defunction, that but 7 remained of his tribe. A bit of fern had sprung up over his mortal remains which I drew out, and left the spot full of reflection on the mysterious dealings of providence, as finite mortal unable to unravel the mystery of the rapid decrease of these people, apparently diminished (tho the idea is uncharitable) to make room for a more intelligent race, for I must bear testimony for the last 10 years that the tribes to which he belonged have never been (save in Major Lettsom's cruel mission) injured by white men but always welcome visitors at stations, nor have any been before our courts but for the crime of drunkenness. I was much pleased on my return to Melbourne to see the son of this Old Man basking under a tree with 6 white men resting at mid-day from the toils of the field. I heard of him a good character. I told him I had been thinking over the grave of his father & hoped that he would keep from drink & live happy with the whites.' (Thomas, CY 2606, frame 476, ML). (This son of Old Mr Man, the recently deceased Chief Mingearagon, is Mangerer).

5 Aug 1850 – On Thomas' census of 26 Boonurong still alive, Mr Man and his sister Maryagrook as a 2 person group (CY 3127, ML).

13 Dec 1851 – On Thomas' census as Myngerra, male Mr Man, no lubra (Thomas Papers, set 214, item 12: 143, ML).

25 Oct 1853 – On Thomas' census of Boonoorong as male no lubra (ML MSS set 214/13: 141).

1 Sep 1863 – On Thomas' census as Mon-ga-ra, Mr Man (CRS B 312, item no 9, AA).

9 June 1840

Tuesday. Blacks begin the bridge across the creek.⁹³ On this same day, Thomas wrote directly to La Trobe enquiring if the skins were saleable, noting that if so, the money could go towards defraying the cost of supplies. He also said that among his 122 people were 35 'strangers', which means in effect, confirmation of his Bonurong population as 87.

10 June 1840

The blacks just going to work at the bridge when Budgery Tom, Bobbinary and Burrenum urge them to stop the work – they propose all at once to shift off, in five mins confusion, debate, cabal. Part agree to go, part to stop. I upbraid those who are going as I give them their portion of flour. Burrenum in sulks would not wait for his. This is a [illegible] wanderer. Those who left were Burrenun and family, Turndine and family, Bobinary and family, Mr King and family, Budgery Tom and family, Devillers and family, Turnbull and lubra, and young and old Kolorlok.⁹⁴

That evening, after an altercation, two people drew a very correct chart of where the departed party were going – both charts tallied and there were 100 people left after the departures.

11 June 1840

Old Mr Man at Buckkermittewarrer is accused of taking away a Mt Macedon lubra. Jack goes off with three large glass spears to kill her and Mr Man. Thomas went to Buckkermittewarrer to investigate but the tale was false. Bridge finished.⁹⁵

12 June 1840

It rained in torrents this day. Some women made baskets and some went for grass for basket making; some men stretched skins 'got overnight', while some

⁹³ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 146, ML.

⁹⁴ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 146, ML.

⁹⁵ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML. There is still a bridge across the creek at the site of the old protectorate station, near Old Moorooduc Road.

cut wood. 'Old Dindow [this is not a male, she is Derrimut's mother] shows that Wooden Pickaxe better than Iron one, by with dexterity making some holes for rails before house'. Thomas took an account of where all his blacks were:

AT ABORIGINAL STATION

Kurboro, 2 lubras and Old Tuat – 4

Murrunbean and 2 lubras – 3

Budgery Tom, lubra and 1 picks – 3

Ning lubra and Dindow – 3

Big Benbow and lubra – 2

6 Western Port children left.

TOTAL 21

BARABOOLS ETC (ALSO AT ABORIGINAL STATION)

Linnaret and lubra and child TowangKurran – 3

Korun, lubra and child – 3

Balladul and two children – 3

Wondut and lubra – 2

Merridut, lubra and two children – 4

Tugal, lubra and pick – 3

Welgromin, lubra and Pick – 3

Golan and lubra – 2

Karngedon and lubra – 2

Turrin, lubra and child – 3

Gorreker, lubra and child – 3

Torungerong, Torrederebun, Gungangrun, Bollute, Bokatungamun,

Torrenbaltum, Morum, Torrenwakun, Moodewarren – all young men

TOTAL AT STATION 61

AT BUCKKAMITTORWARRA

Old Mr Man and family – 8

Binbangrook and lubra – 2

Winnunning lubra – 1

Bagumbaboot lubra – 1

Young men – Dollar, Lillero, Tamarabun, Tarem, Lillyrook, Mingar – 6

TOTAL 18

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AT TURTGURUK

Old Doctor and family – 6
Bogy Bogy, 2 lubras and 2 pick – 5
Little Benbow and lubra – 2
Ben Bengener and lubra – 2
Lummer Lummer, lubra and child – 3
Kulkubulluk and lubra – 2
Wallan and lubra – 2

TOTAL 22

AT PORT PHILLIP

Young men – Lively, Bullut Bullut, Poleorong, Nunuptune

TOTAL 4

OUT ON RAMBLE

Burrenum and lubra – 2
King and lubra – 2
Turnbull and lubra – 2
Bobinnary one lubra and 2 children – 4
Turtgurruk or Nern Nern and lubra – 2
Young men – Nerreminen, Yal Yal, Toby, Warrantitlong,
Lutguderwrungun, Mumbo, Minnen, Boronmoto, Nerimbineck or
Young Winberry – 9

TOTAL 21*

* Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frames 146–147, ML.

13 June 1840

Ningeranown came in with 'a very long tale about the Governor sending Billy Lonsdale and the blacks out of Melbourne'. Thomas' man Ross arrived from Melbourne with an official letter approving a grant of land for a reserve, and Thomas broached to them the subject of 'Good Land' they talked of.⁹⁶

The next day was a Sunday and Thomas would not make elective journeys on the Sabbath. On Monday 15 June they set off for the good country of the Western Port blacks' choice, Kullurk [Coolart]. They returned to Tubberubbabel on 19 June.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 148, ML.

⁹⁷ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

20 June 1840

Pinterginner returns from VDL and brings with him Mary from Mr Smiths.⁹⁸ Mr Hobson made a complaint about the blacks' dogs rushing his sheep, but after a bit, considered it a tale of his shepherds. Thomas took a 'good view' of the station.⁹⁹ The encampment was excited about a report of Budgery Tom's son and Old Kullorluk being killed by 'wild black fellows'; there was much howling. In a letter to Robinson Thomas states that he has 89 people at Tubberubbabel and 42 at the stations of settlers around him.¹⁰⁰

21 June 1840

'2 Settlers come at night in consequence vile report of a surveyor – that I had begged of Government to make Kangeron a settlement and with intent to [illegible]'. His marginal note, as always emphasising highlights, reads 'vile report of settlers by Smythe'. Thomas brought into the encampment three Yarra blacks named Worworong, Palangoon and Paladary, whom he found in the bush a few miles from Tubberubbabel, and learned from them that Kullorluk and the youth (Budgery Tom's son, unnamed, either Buckup or Munite) are safe: he gave them each a red shirt. 43 men attended Divine Service but not the women, they being too far off to hear. Hobson called again and said that the report about the blacks' dogs rushing his sheep was false, that the shepherd had left his flock and they had scattered, and the shepherd made up the story.¹⁰¹

23 June 1840

All peaceable, sparingly with supplies – gave liberally to three lubras who brought baskets – all on a sudden a Council sits. The result was that Encamp* was to shift. When I enquired were [sic] I was much disappointed – it was not 500 yards from my hut. They made pretence wood got short, but I was given to understand afterwards that they feared the Governor would come and see me and be sulky with them. Mr Hobson comes to inform me that 2 VDL lubras was in the District, run away from Mr Robinson.¹⁰²

98 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML. The fact that Thomas links these two facts – of Pinterginner's return from VDL and his removing Mary from the Smiths – suggests to me that he had been on an embassy to Mary's mother. Four vessels arrived from Launceston in the week prior to this journal observation, the *Elizabeth*, *Pickwick*, *Enterprise* and *Sir John Franklin*.

99 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 149, ML. I have searched, so far unsuccessfully for this sketch.

100 Thomas to Robinson, 20 June 1840, VPRS 11, unit 7/311, PROV.

101 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 150, ML. The explanation of the vile report comes in the journal six days later: it is a report which Thomas regards as a slander on him, that Smythe had told settlers that Thomas was pressing the government for Edward Hobson's run Kangerong as a reserve for the blacks (Thomas Journal, Saturday 27 June 1840, CY 2604, item 3, ML).

102 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

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These women are Trucaninni and Charlotte who was Johnny Franklin's mother. Charlotte/Sarah/Kalloongoo was not a native of VDL but a Kurna woman taken by sealers from Kangaroo Island to Bass Strait.¹⁰³ It was because she came to Port Phillip as part of Robinson's black 'family' that Thomas described her as being from VDL.

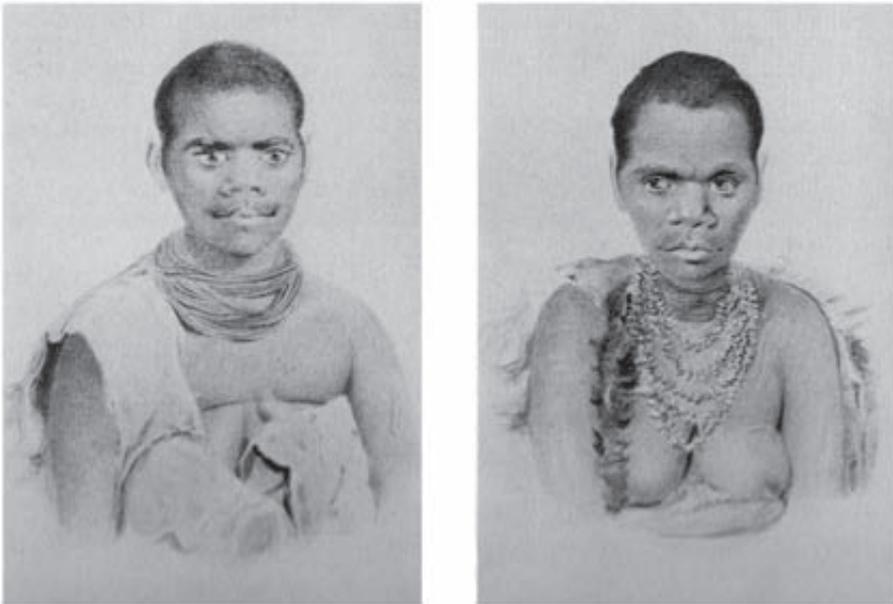


Fig 22. 'Trucanini'

Reproduced from James Fenton's *A History of Tasmania from its Discovery in 1642 to the Present Time*, J Walch, Hobart, 1884.

24 June 1840

The whole of the blacks are in the encampment except Old Doctor and his three children, and Kullorluk and Budgery Tom's son. Mr Mann again disturbs the encampment because he wants a lubra (he has three wives at this time) but all ends in talk. Thomas' stores were all gone so some lubras went to Mrs Thomas at Tuerong and she fed them, presumably according to her husband's instructions which were to feed the lubras 'sparingly' but to 'fully relieve three old lubras and four children'.¹⁰⁴

25 June 1840

Food is short. Over two days, Murrumbein and his family, and Poleorong, and six Mt Macedon blacks, and Bob and three others shift to Poleorongon, Mr Hyatt's

103 Amery 1996: 42.

104 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 150, ML.

station where surveyor Smythe has his tents. Thomas ‘appeases’ the blacks by feeding them from his private store. The Chief Protector’s son arrived looking for Trucannini and Charlotte, and Thomas told him where they were, but he returned that night saying he could not find them. The blacks are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the dray with the stores.¹⁰⁵

25 June 1840

In Melbourne, Robinson took delivery from Assistant Protector Thomas’ station the following articles: 11 buckets, two table mats, 25 kangaroo skins, 23 opossum skins, 65 squirrel skins and 25 basins.¹⁰⁶ Thomas had sent this consignment off three days earlier, recording that it was 13 baskets, two mats, 75 *Tuins* (Flying squirrel), 55 *Bemins*, 14 *Wallerts* (possum), 24 *Koem* (Kangaroo).

26 June 1840

The lubras made baskets but Thomas told them to keep them until the dray returns. Lummer Lummer, Old George’s lubra and Tuat are very sick, and Thomas fed them and gave them medicine. Ningolobin and his lubra left for surveyor Smythe’s encampment, and Thomas learned that Smythe proposed to take three Western Port blacks plus the Mt Macedon blacks to Melbourne. There were 100 people at Tubberubbabel.¹⁰⁷

27 June 1840

At daybreak Thomas went to Poleorongong at the back of Mt Eliza and confronted Smythe who said that he was not intending to take the three Western Port blacks to Melbourne, only the Mt Macedon blacks. Then Thomas fronted him about the report Thomas heard from the two settlers,¹⁰⁸ regarding Thomas allegedly wanting Kangerong for a reserve; Smythe said it was ‘a d--- lie’. Robinson’s son arrived back having found Trucaninni and Charlotte and they stayed overnight. The Mt Macedon blacks left Poleorongong and returned to Tubberubbabel, making 112 people in the encampment. In the margin Thomas wrote that he warned his Western Port blacks ‘not to go to Melbourne without a note from me’.¹⁰⁹

105 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 150, ML. I cannot identify Bob with certainty. It is possible but unlikely, that it is Ben Benger whose European name was Robert Webb, unlikely because Ben Benger was well known in Melbourne society under his real name, not his exchanged name; it could be a diminutive of Bobbinary, but when Thomas’ pen is flying and he abbreviates, he usually writes Bob plus a superscript squiggle, and though it may be suspected that he means Bobbinary, such observations have not been included in the biographical details: they are not certain. This reference to plain Bob is most likely to refer to either Robert Bullet or Robert Allen, two of Batman’s VDL blacks who signed work agreements with Mr ET Newton at Mordialloc, Thomas Journal, 9/10 June 1839, CY 3082: 11, ML. One of these men married into the Bonurong.

106 Clark 1988, vol 1: 347.

107 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 151, ML.

108 The two settlers are Edward Hobson and Robert Jamieson.

109 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 151, ML.

'I Succeeded Once'

28 June 1840

Sunday. It rained in torrents and Thomas held Divine Service in the hut but only four attended. Robinson junior, Trucaninni and Charlotte departed for Melbourne via Tuerong where they received supplies from Mrs Thomas, and Nuluptune brings a report that the cart has broken down at Poleorongong. Mrs Thomas complains of the demands made on her by the blacks.¹¹⁰

29 June 1840

Two Yarra blacks, Old Mr Murry and Young Murry arrived with the news that Billibellary was ill at Clow's station near Nerre Nerre Warren, and four young men, Woranditalong, Munmunginna, Turnmile and Willu departed immediately with a gift from Thomas of a red shirt, plus an invitation to bring all the Yarra blacks down to Tubberubbabel. Ross returned from Mr Hyatt's with the news that it was untrue that the dray had broken down, and he brought with him flour from Hyatt's, repayment of a loan from Thomas' store. Nuluptune was reported to have stolen something from Mr White, but on enquiry Thomas learned that some flour was found in a shirt by him in the hut. There are 119 people in the encampment.¹¹¹

30 June 1840

Several of the lubras went to Tuerong to obtain potatoes from Mrs Thomas. The stores finally arrived – 1000 lbs of flour, 400 lbs of sugar, 600 lbs of rice and eight lbs of tobacco, together with a gratifying communication from La Trobe, for which Thomas thanked God, plus what looks to be a personal present from La Trobe for the Aborigines – two dozen 'Tommyhawks', two dozen knives, four dozen hooks, nine balls of string, four dozen needles and one bundle of thread. Thomas repaid to his son William Jackson Thomas the rations which were advanced for the blacks out of private stores held by Thomas junior, and re-iterates that food obtained from Thomas junior must be paid for with labour by the blacks. 'Gave Nuluptune a lecture on Mr Stratton's concern¹¹² and threaten to send him to jail. Nul seems very careless; however he and his brother Mumbo start about an hour later for the Yarra'.¹¹³

1 July 1840

Thomas received three good baskets from lubras and paid one of them three pounds of flour, and the other two a tomahawk each which much pleased them all. The Mt Macedon blacks importune him much for the same privileges as his

110 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 151, ML.

111 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 152, ML.

112 Mr Stratton's station is shown on Thomas' map at Poleorongon, on the Nepean Highway between Mt Eliza and Mt Martha.

113 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 152, ML.

Western Port blacks, but Thomas says they have to go to their own country as they have been down here for a long time. Two Mt Macedons work and Thomas rewards them. 'They form a deputation and beg of me a letter to pass them through to their own country in case Governor or others should stop them'. Three strange blacks arrived and claimed kinship with Thomas' blacks: he was suspicious, but Benbow, Derrimut and Moragine identified them as Murrnaban (Barabool), Turrenbulkon (Barabool), and Mulgum (Mt Macedon), with two lubras and one child. The blacks one after another come from Tuerong and tell Thomas that his wife is very ill.¹¹⁴

2 July 1840

At daybreak Thomas returned to Tubberubbabel, to find that the strangers importune to stop ten days more, but Thomas does not encourage them. The blacks held a two hour council by Thomas' hut which finally produced the decision that the Mt Macedon blacks would go home, but only if Thomas gave them a letter. This he did, writing a large letter with all their names in the margin, which seemed to comfort them. But he had to hold his pen in the air for five minutes, pointing at the date on the letter, till at last they said 'tomorrow'. Thomas shook hands with everyone, telling them not to rob etc on the way, and they left stopping one night at Tuerong. Thomas visited them at Tuerong and gave each departing family from Mrs Thomas' store flour and rice, and before they left the lubras said goodbye to good Mrs Thomas. Thomas did not record how many people were left but he noted that:

- 4 gone to Mr Hobson's [Buckkermittewarrer]
- 4 gone to see Billibellary [Nerre Nerre Warren]
- 2 gone to Mr O'Connor's [south-east of Dandenong]
- 2 gone a little way with Surveyor Smythe [from the back of Mt Eliza]
- Dr, wife and child and Captain Turnbull to Mt Macedon.¹¹⁵

3 July 1840

Thomas visited Tuerong and found the Mt Macedon's not inclined to leave, though he noted that it certainly was a cold and frosty morning: he suspected that his blacks were pressing them to stay. They eventually left in the afternoon and encamped at Poleorongon. At Tubberubbabel, Derrimut and his family pressed Thomas for a letter to go to Melbourne.¹¹⁶

114 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

115 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 153, ML.

116 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 154, ML.

'I Succeeded Once'

4 July 1840

The blacks are beginning to experience a shortage of 'provender game', and Old Tuat and Young Murry depart for Mr Ruffy's station (Cranbourne), intending to continue on from there to Mr Ryrie's on the upper Yarra. Thomas encourages the blacks to persevere because he expects Robinson soon, to approve of their chosen place, Kullurk, as their reserve. There are still 98 people at Tubberubbabel, with only a few out at known places. Thomas gave tomahawks to Tuat, Bogy Bogy and Wigal who wished to leave, and they changed their minds and stayed.¹¹⁷

5 July 1840

This was a Sunday. Thomas' men reported that some blacks who slept in the men's hut (the European men's hut) stole seven pounds of meat: the blacks were Murrum, Burrenum and Moragin and son, Davy and Borunmoolook¹¹⁸ who was supposed to be the thief. 'Much angry feelings' Thomas recorded, but he gives no indication whether the men were angry, or the blacks were angry, or both groups.

Alleged theft by Toby's brother

With this modest report commences a lengthy and stubborn stand off between the blacks and Thomas' men. In the evening Thomas' men asked to question Toby's brother, but it was Thomas who questioned 'the young youth'. Thomas thought he heard an Aboriginal voice saying 'must not tell' and that, in turn made Thomas 'very angry'. Whereupon Toby jumped up and threw three wonguims at the men's hut, breaking a corner of it. Thomas ran towards Toby who whipped out a gun and pointed it at Thomas. Thomas seized the gun and gave it to his man Davis to put away in Thomas' hut and secure the door. But on the way to the hut Burrenum stopped Davis and said that the gun was his, that he had only lent it to the young man to get kangaroo, half of which Toby would give to Burrenum in exchange for the loan.

'The whole camp was in confusion, the aged came about me to see if I was hurt'. Thomas insisted on not issuing the rations until the robber was discovered. 'The blacks insisted it was a dog that stole it, the men the reverse'. Then Thomas 'very solemnly charge[d] the men what the result was likely to be [hungry blacks]. They wish me to look over it [Thomas means overlook] & appeared sorry that they had made any stir about it. I said no, they never had committed a robbery till now and I was determined to shew my determination to punish'.

¹¹⁷ Ruffy's, O'Connor's and Clow's stations are between the top of Western Port and Dandenong.

¹¹⁸ Toby/Borunmoolin, male, Westernport, aged 20 is listed on the 1846 Family Connections census as a young man, an orphan; his brother is also named Toby-Nerrimundock male orphan, aged 15 (CY 3083, ML). This would make them respectively 14 years old and nine years old in 1840.

Thomas questioned the men again: the verisimilitude that Thomas' men provided was that the trunk where the meat was kept was tied with bands of strong string around the lid, twisted around about three inches below the lid and the ends of the string were interwoven into the bands: it was exactly as they left it when they woke up in the morning. 'On the finding the string so twisted hung the certainty of the theft'.

The blacks again denied the theft, asserting that it must have been the dogs, and as Thomas wrote, if they did indeed steal the meat then it would be the very first instance of theft and he would not stand for it: in his heart though, he was inclined to believe them. They were insistent that two or three times in the night the dogs came into the men's tent and had to be driven out.

Thomas retired to his hut having told the blacks that neither he nor his men could tell who did it but that God knew and one day would tell. The old men spent another hour trying to get the truth. In the end the blacks all thronged into Thomas' hut, and crowded the passage outside and protested their innocence. They said '**no we sulky you, know give flour, good you, no you sulky**'. The anxiety of the whole to appease him touched Thomas and he assured them that he was not sulky – he just wanted them to tell him who did it. They all declared that they could not tell him who did it, that it must have been the dogs as they would have found out who did it. 'I could not help in my mind believing them' wrote Thomas.

Then they went further and explained that Toby was not sulky with Thomas, only generally sulky because Thomas' men claimed that his brother stole the meat, and that when Toby shot off the gun, he was not aiming at Thomas but at his own dog. 'All entreated that he [Toby] might come to me, stating **Toby big one cry**'.

Thomas consented to a formal interview with a little preliminary scene setting: he built up his fire and lit a candle. Escorted by Burrenum, Mr King and d' Villiers, Toby entered the hut and 'rushed' to Thomas, took hold of his hand and shook it for a 'long time'. Then he sat down on the flour and said '**me plenty tell you**' in English and his own tongue. His story was as follows.

Toby's testimony

That '**in morning Man Davis tell me [my] Brother steal meat. [My] Brother say no [not] me steal Bulgana – [then] me and brother gogo kangaroo – When me get in Bush, me make Brother stop & say why you steal meat. Me take Wonguin tilbert Brother, Brother big one cry, no me steal meat, me sleep – Me [Toby] said you now tell me lie. Brother [said] no lie, me tell you no lie, no lie. Then me**

and Brother gogo nangheit Koen [kangaroo] Boo [shoot]. We both sat down, make fire, eat no me, let my brother eat. Me say no – me plenty tilbert you, no you, you tell me big one lie. You steal man Marminarta meat. My Brother Big Big Big one cry – no me steal meat, no you kill me, no me meat Pilmerlaly [take or steal], no me see meat, me sleep. Me [Toby] Big one cry then, me tell my Brother no more you cry, big one Bungarly [stupid] Davy.

Me make my brother eat & me wipe my brothers face, say no more cry you, big lie Davy – Brother eat Pikaniny [small], then me and brother nerlingo [come back] Your Miam. When sit down, Davy come, say your Brother stole meat – me say you lie and me big one sulky, threw wonguim – then you [Thomas] come and tell me what for you do that? – me take up Tranbullabil [gun] and shoot my dog, no me shoot at Marminarta, no, no, no, plenty sleeps you Marminarta [ie Thomas will not be dead] no me boo [shoot] you, me boo wonguim, me warmbil sulky.

Thomas goes on to say that he had called both his men in prior to permitting Toby to speak, and without making any comment on Toby's narrative, Thomas questioned the men yet again. Ross was not so sure but he stuck to his story. Then Thomas had a brainwave – he asked if anything else was in the box, only to find that there was half a cooked damper.

Thomas knew immediately that the blacks had not stolen the meat – no black would take salt beef when damper was available, and perhaps the men read his face because they in their turn 'straight away seemed most anxious to drop the matter'. Thomas recorded 'After this, for my part, I believe the box was neither fastened at night nor found so in the morning'. He took the opportunity, missed in the morning because of the 'cabal', to hold a Divine Service and preached on the topic of 'Thou God seeist me'. He does not record whether he said out loud that the blacks had told the truth and his men had lied.

Thomas made a marginal note as follows:

When a black is sulky, he will throw wonguims, spears or anything promiscuously in the encampment. The blacks never chastise him for so doing, but avoid the danger, and when all thrown, men of importance will scold him and make him desist.¹¹⁹

6 July 1840

Next morning they were all about him early, with skins, anxious to see if he had forgotten the anger of yesterday. Wollum, a Mt Macedon black slightly

119 Sunday, 5 July 1840, CY 2604, item 3, frames 154–157, ML.

spearred his lubra for not getting him water. Thomas categorises this action as disobedience by the lubra, explicable because Wollum had another lubra in his miam at the time: he punished Wollum by not buying his skins from him. Thomas set the blacks to cutting wood and paid them as workers and then ordered them to make *benaks* for two days. The four people returned who had gone in the boat to Melbourne saying '**No Captain Lonsdale but Governor big one sulky. Benbow return and say No sulky. Governor say come to Mr Thomas**'.¹²⁰

7 July 1840

Blacks importune him to go to Melbourne and take them. Murrumbean brings a report that two Mounted Police are at Mr Hyatt's station. 'I ascertain that they are not, and appease the encampment'.¹²¹

8 July 1840

The blacks appear very satisfied with their rewards for skins and *benaks*. It is reported that two Yarra blacks are on the way here on an embassy. The encampment is peaceable, but over-anxious to see Melbourne and not very industrious.¹²²

9 July 1840

Thomas received two officials (letters) and as he opened them, the blacks were anxious to know if Mr Robinson is coming and whether or not the Governor is sulky. They bring in a tale that two white men say that they are to go to Melbourne – plenty to eat there. He received so many skins and *benaks* that he put them in the store without counting them.¹²³

10 and 11 July 1840

The blacks' anxiety to go to Melbourne is increasing daily, but the women continue to make their baskets. Thomas spends his time walking round the encampment and encouraging them, and he shows them much satisfaction at their efforts. 'Some blacks after receiving their stipend go they say for a few days. They begin to enquire when Chief Protector will come and **find out country**'.¹²⁴

12 July 1840

This was a Sunday and Thomas had 32 at a comfortable service 'all males, the females are not allowed to attend'.¹²⁵ (Later this year, on 15 November 1840 at

120 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

121 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 157, ML.

122 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 157, ML.

123 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 157–158, ML.

124 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 158, ML.

125 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

'I Succeeded Once'

Nerre Nerre Warren, Thomas made a point of recording the very first time that he ever knew the females to attend Divine Service with the males.)¹²⁶ The subject of his sermon was the Goodness of God in day by day giving his creatures food. Many people wanted to bring him skins and baskets but he would not accept them on the Sabbath. Some asked him for knives – he refused 'No give only Tungang on Sunday. One said **No you sulky me gogo**. I said no sulky but why you gogo leave Marminarta? They said **only little way** and gave me a full direction of where going'. He said the reason was that they have no *wuller wullert* (possum); they were sick of kangaroo and they loved *wuller wullert*. Thomas wished them God speed and shook hands and they scribed a map of their route which was a triangle:

- To Bukkermitterwarra near Hobson's
- Then Boneong near Mr Merricks
- Then Willarmarang, Cape Schanck
- Then Kunnite by Ner
- Then Kunnulong near Kullurk
- Then Kokubell
- Then Tuerong, Mr Thomas
- Then Tubrub Station.

Then they left saying '**Bengaro**' four times then '**Nerlingo**' which Thomas translated as '8 sleeps then come back'.¹²⁷

Those who left on the ramble were:

- Ben Benger and lubra – 2
- Mr King and lubra – 2
- Burrenum, lubra and brother – 3
- Morragen – 1
- Toby and brother – 2
- Nerreninen and Toranbilgum – 2.

13 July 1840

Next day four more blacks tell Thomas that they are departing on the same route, but instead of returning to Tuerong from Kokobul, they will turn right and go to Mahun and will be away 11 days. This group consists of:

¹²⁶ Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 1, frame 186, ML. Much later, on 23 April 1848 in Melbourne, Thomas had a Divine Service at an encampment of 18 women and five children in the morning, then in the afternoon, found that eight men and a boy had prepared for Divine Service, made up a seat for him etc. '[I] apologize for speaking to the lubras and children first, but tho they did not like the preference, they shook hands and said "**never mind, no sulky us**" [Thomas' quotation marks]', CY 2606, frame 505, ML).

¹²⁷ Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 159, ML.

- Lummer Lummer and lubra – 2
- Nern Nern and lubra – 2
- Bobinary and lubra, leaving children behind – 2
- Waworong – 1
- TOTAL – 7.

The lubras also departed to get grass for baskets, and Thomas gave them six pounds of flour and six pounds of rice in case of emergency, as the encampment had caught only one kangaroo. The fact is, he said, that they must leave this district for a time. They call out '**plenty hungry**'.

14 July 1840

Two messengers arrived from the Yarra blacks in Melbourne saying '**plenty to eat, plenty bunglerlarly**' and Thomas' blacks are all agog to go to Melbourne; he could not get a word in edgeways, he wrote. In the evening they came to him and said they must leave Tubberubbabel as there no kangaroo to be got. There have been but two kangaroo and opossums got in the last two days, he wrote, and what is that among so many? He found it necessary to give extra this day, besides what Mrs Thomas has given them. He fed 42 people – 20 men, five lubras, eight boys and nine girls.¹²⁸

15 July 1840

Thomas recorded that it was very wet and windy, and this was fortunate for the poor blacks for game. The women must be back from getting grass because he feeds 12 lubras, but the men are very dissatisfied with their ill success in game.¹²⁹

Wind and hunting

The necessity of wind for successful hunting is mentioned again on 31 July. The men have not been successful at hunting, and Thomas suspects that their failure is organised by them in order to put pressure on him to allow them to go to Melbourne. 'It is singular if game was rare a fortnight back, that they find no difficulty now. I state my suspicions to them – they say **now plenty of wind**. The last few days certainly was windy'.¹³⁰

One of the songs that Betbenjee taught the young George Gordon McCrae at Arthurs Seat was a 'song for raising the wind', presumably for hunting.¹³¹

17 July 1840

The men are idle, Thomas recorded but he received two baskets 'in fact men make women work or they would be starving'. He received a 'very superior

128 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

129 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 160, ML.

130 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 166, ML.

131 George Gordon McCrae, 'Reminiscences not exploits', vol 4, Ms 2523/5(d), SLV.

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basket' for which he gave 'most liberal' but the 'rogue of a husband' took it and would not let the lubra have a bit, so he gave the unnamed woman some bread, and gave her husband a 'good scolding'.¹³²

18 July 1840

The youngest Murry, one of the Yarra blacks who arrived on 14 July departed with two warm red shirts, one for Billibellary and one for Old Murry (also known as Tuart, also known as Old Jack Weatherly), and a message to the Yarra blacks not to go to Melbourne but to come down here to Tubberubabel.¹³³

19 July 1840

The blacks all moved to Tuerong, so early that Thomas could not have his service. It being a Sunday, he could not follow them so he gave instructions to Mrs Thomas to give them 24 pounds of potatoes and six pounds of rice.

20 July 1840

Thomas caught the bullocks, loaded the dray with his tent and followed them to Tuerong, but they were not happy with the hunt – they had no wax to stick the glass on their spears.¹³⁴

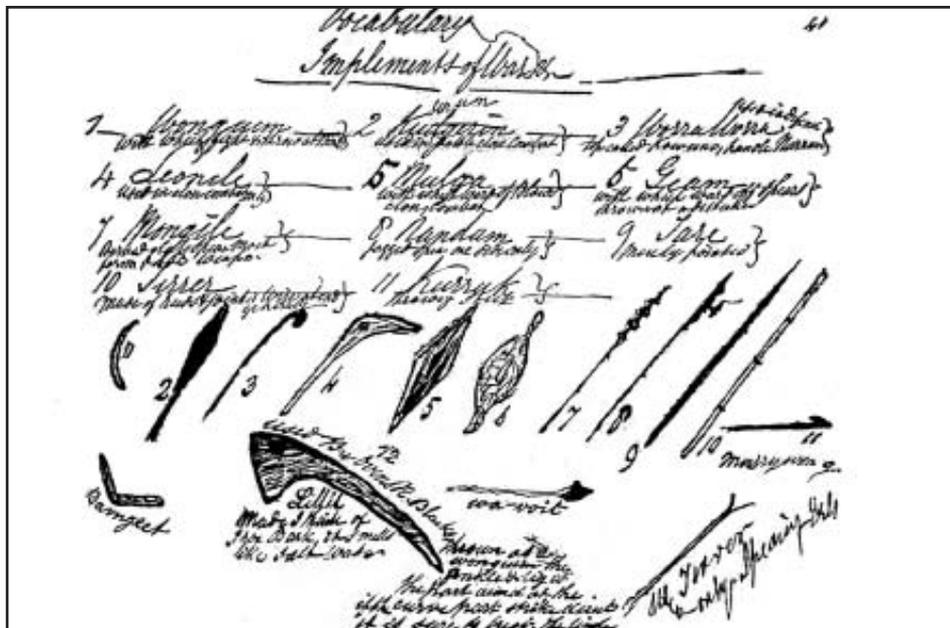


Fig 23. 'Implements of War'

Thomas sketch showing barbed glass spear, from the William Thomas papers, 1834–1868, 1902, Mitchell Library, reproduced with the permission of the State Library of New South Wales.

132 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

133 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

134 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

21 July 1840

The blacks gave Thomas to understand that it was 'no good' that the rambling parties were still away, and further, that the rambling parties would not come in unless told to. So he went to Buckkermittewarrer, Poleorongong and Tontine looking for them. Bob, Nuluptune and Bogy Bogy returned next day.

23 July 1840

The people are anxious to go to Melbourne '**Merygeek [very good] white man say plenty Bungarly [stupid] Mr Thomas.**' Thomas viewed this attitude as ingratitude and reminded them of the goodness of the Governor, what a large amount of white and paper money (**Noogra**) that flour and rice and sugar cost. He pointed out that he was receiving few skins and showed 'more than ordinary displeasure'. They said '**Marminartra big one sulky**'. Nevertheless he gave them their allowance, whereupon they said '**we all gogo no work**'. He lost his temper and 'threw the panican as I gave the last into the bag, and said no good my blackfellows'. They went off and had a long discussion by the fire, while he with his eldest daughter ostentatiously took the crosscut saw and cut down two trees. This was too much for Bob¹³⁵ who came over and took the saw out of Thomas' daughter's hand, and he and Thomas cut down two more trees. They all came back to work and continued till the evening, whereupon Thomas' son fed them as the work had been done on his property. The day finished with the blacks saying '**all gone sulky**'.¹³⁶

24 July 1840

Before even he had a chance to wish the people good morning, the cry went up '**gogo Melbourne**'. Two more blacks came in, and one of them, the Yarra black Mr Murry, left again without saying goodbye, 'at which I am angry'. They were still 'unfortunate' in game and Thomas felt sorry for them.¹³⁷

25 July 1840

They appeared more satisfied this day and all worked well getting wood and water so there would be no need to work on the Sunday. They also harrowed. Budgery Tom acted as foreman and appeared proud of it. A settler, Mr Hyatt¹³⁸ called, and said he did not know what Thomas had done with the blacks, but

135 Unidentified.

136 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

137 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

138 From Poleorongong on the Nepean Highway between Mt Eliza and Mt Martha. John Highett was thought to be the first person who crossed Dandenong creek taking his stock to the neighbourhood of Frankston (Sutherland 1888).

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whenever they come now they are always willing to work. The lubras came at the end of the day to say 'tomorrow big one Sunday no work'. Thomas relieved (ie fed) 53 persons: 20 men, 17 women, nine boys and seven girls.¹³⁹

26 July 1840

Thomas had a comfortable service with his natives, his family also present. Three 'poor' lubras brought him baskets which he refused to accept because it was Sunday and he went on to make the observation that they are learning to observe the Sabbath and he has already noticed a difference – 'an extra streak [of ochre] of the face or clean shirt'.¹⁴⁰

Ochre

Bright red ochre is a sign of joy and mirth; white ochre is a sign of death and grief; yellow ochre and brown ochre are used in corroborees. Mt Eliza abounds with almost all kinds of clay.¹⁴¹ The extra streak to mark the Sabbath would have been red ochre.

27 July 1840

Thomas wrote again to La Trobe, copying it to Robinson, requesting La Trobe 'when his weighty duties would permit' to select the reserve for his blacks. Budgery Tom's lubra made a 'basket of superior work' as a gift to Mrs La Trobe. Thomas then went to Poleorong and Tontine looking for parties of his blacks but they had departed towards Konigo (Frankston); when he returned to Tuerong he found that Robinson had arrived.¹⁴²

27 July 1840

The Chief Protector visited 'Tub.er.rub.ber.bil', two and a half miles from Thomas Junior's station (Tuerong) and one mile from 'Gan.jer.ong [Kangerong]' Thomas Senior's second station.

Here was an old wattle and daub hut in the Tower of Peiza style, at least two feet out of perpendicular, it was shored up and thatched with grass. This part of the country is hilly and thickly wooded. There is an abundance of grass.¹⁴³

In his entry for this same day, Thomas notes that Robinson criticised him severely for writing to La Trobe without going through Robinson, for neglecting half his

139 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

140 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 164, ML.

141 Thomas Papers, CY 2984: 111, ML.

142 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 165, ML.

143 Clark 1988, vol 1: 357.

duties ie the Yarra blacks, and generally found fault with him. Robinson simply refused to speak about a reserve for the Bonurong, and Thomas could get no instructions, which Thomas experienced as 'unjust and unkind'. Robinson was prepared to leave without giving Thomas any orders: it was only on the road back to Melbourne when Thomas accompanied Robinson for some miles that Robinson opened up and told Thomas to collect all his blacks together, bring them to Melbourne, find the Yarra blacks and together settle on a reserve for both tribes then order blankets and supplies.¹⁴⁴

1 August 1840

Thomas sent a party off to bring in the blacks who were down towards Point Nepean, and he made up his last returns of stores. In the 30 days since the stores arrived on 30 June, he had distributed to his people 796 pounds of flour, all of the rice which was 600 pounds, 373 pounds of sugar, six pounds of tobacco. His stock on hand was 204 pounds of flour, nil rice, 36 pounds sugar, eight pounds of soap, seven pounds of tea, and one and a half pounds of tobacco.¹⁴⁵

4 August 1840

Mr Man and his family came in and upon questioning him Thomas found that only the blacks at Buckkermittewarrer intended to follow. There were other parties out who had failed to return. Thomas decided to go and bring these parties in himself, but the people demurred by telling him that the absent ones were on the mountain (Arthurs Seat) and '**too much wood no gogo Yarraman**' ie the forest was too dense for Thomas to ride his horse. Thomas said he would walk instead of riding his horse, to which their response was that he would '**plenty break foot**'. Thomas reminded them that Robinson had said he (Thomas) was 'big one lazy', and that persuaded them that he really was determined to go. So they made a mudmap on the ground of where the absent parties were, and he took compass bearings from it. Then they had a full debate about the wisdom of his going off by himself and informed him that '**you be kill'd by Wild Black Fellows, no Marminarta then**'. Thomas said 'no mind'. Then Budgery Tom and Bogy Bogy stepped forward and said '**no long way – two sleeps and nerlingo [come back], no you go alone we go with Marminarta**'.¹⁴⁶

Thomas took his compass and four days supply of damper plus his tea making gear; they had firearms. They walked first to one of the blacks' encampment places by Sandy Point, arriving at 4 pm and making tea. Finding no one there, they turned south in the direction of Cape Schanck, and walked till sunset when they were at an encampment called Kunnite where there was fine water in deep

144 29 July 1840, CY 2604, item 3, frame 165, ML.

145 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML.

146 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frames 167–168, ML.

gullies like a creek issuing from the Wonga range (Arthurs Seat).¹⁴⁷ Thomas was taken by this place noting that at this time of the year the beach was unbroken, and there was a great sized lake about 200 yards from the beach of salt water locked in by the drifting up of sand; he thought that it must be a formidable inlet of the sea in the wet season, little, if at all known.¹⁴⁸ There were some pretty patches of good feed, and during the night about 40 cattle passed them on the way to drink. He noted that 'I slept soundly under a gum tree here with 2 armed savages about me, I am sorry to say with more apparent safety that with 2 of my own colour so arm'd promiscuously in the Bush'.¹⁴⁹

Next morning, Budgery Tom and Bogy Bogy informed him that not having found the absent parties at the two encampments, they must be on the mountain, and that Thomas could not go on the mountain because he would break his legs. They said that they would bring them in, and Thomas reluctantly agreed, giving them most of his supplies. They gave him another compass bearing, a straight line from Kunnite to Tuerong; they wanted to give him an easier route but he was adamant – a straight line was what he wanted. They parted and he passed over some 'queer' country (possibly grasstree country), slept another night in the bush and got back safely to Tuerong, their compass bearing bringing him out within 600 yards of his son's hut.

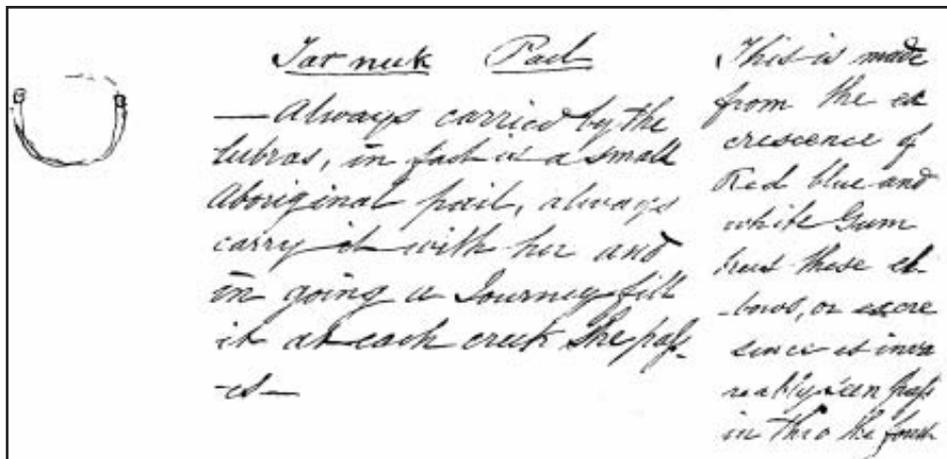


Fig 24. 'Tarnuck', vessel for carrying water

Thomas sketch, from the William Thomas papers, 1834–1868, 1902, Mitchell Library, reproduced with the permission of the State Library of New South Wales.

147 Kunnite is unidentified as yet, but it must be either Stony creek at Shoreham or East creek at Point Leo.

148 There are two creeks which rise near the top of Arthurs Seat, East Creek emerging at Point Leo beach and Stony Creek emerging at Pines beach Shoreham. Each of these two creeks blocks up with sand according to wind and tide conditions. The Kunnite encampment is at one of them, not yet identified.

149 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, frame 168, ML.

When he arrived back at the encampment, it was in ‘a cabal’ because Kurboro (Mr Ruffy) had speared his lubra for not getting water.¹⁵⁰ Kurboro came to him and told him his tale ‘**she no fetch me water and I big one sulky, plenty sorry me, plenty cry, big one sulky Marminarta**’. Thomas, ‘knowing that such is their custom’ reproved him, dressed his wife’s wound, and noted that they both seemed sorry. The supplies are all gone, he wrote, so he gave to the aged from his own private store. Next day he expressed his anger that the absent parties had not come in, and announced that he was leaving the following Monday whether they were all with him or not. On Sunday he had to break his rule about not travelling on the Sabbath because a report came in that a black had attacked Hobson’s dray en route Buckkermittewarrer to Kangerong.

They finally departed on Monday 10 August after 21 days at Tuerong, with the dray overloaded with the blacks’ luggage; they encamped at the usual places, Poleorongong, Konigo, Moody Yallock, then with Nulupton as guide, struck off the usual route to the east, finally camping in a miserable swamp not three miles south-east of Melbourne. Thomas had been worried – it was a dull day, no sun, his compass was on the dray, the bullocks were knocked up and they had no food. They finally arrived at Kurruk, a very pretty encampment on a north rise where the Yarra blacks were, and that night, Thomas had nearly all his charges in the one place – 215 of both tribes.

Thomas’ summary half-yearly report for the period 29 February 1840 to 31 August 1840 states that he is preaching to the Western Port blacks at Tubberubbabel in their own language; that the women make baskets for three to four hours daily; that the men instead of throwing the animal whole on the fire carefully skin the animal and present the skins for a cup or two of flour or sugar; that in July a total of:

- 79 kangaroo skins
- 41 opossum skins
- 50 *bimen*
- 151 flying squirrels
- 69 baskets
- 5 mats
- 6 watch pockets

¹⁵⁰ Kurboro’s biographical details are in Chapter 7.

'I Succeeded Once'

were forwarded to Melbourne; that the blacks had constructed a good bridge over Tubberubbabel Creek; that the blacks had done much good work for his son and other settlers including fencing for Meyricks at Boniong; most of the blacks can handle a cross-cut saw as well as any white man; and finally, that there are many good shearers and dressers of sheep among them, one having been a shepherd for six months.¹⁵¹

Bonurong retrospective on Tubberubbabel

3 September 1844

Tuesday. Thomas told Yankee Yankee that great good might be done if he would prevail upon the Western Port blacks to settle down and cultivate the ground. His answer was:¹⁵²

Where it [illegible] Black Fellows want Kulluck and white man would not let them have it. You know when you was at Tubbarubbabel Black fellows stopped with you and worked and wanted to sow potatoes but you go away and go to the Yarra blacks. These observations were so [illegible]. I am so often upbraided by the Western Port tribe for removing from them that it is useless arguing with them when I know I have not the power to accede were they so disposed.¹⁵³

No date but after 1845

There used to be close to the Jamiesons at Kangerong an Aboriginal Mission Station called Terubbabel, a name gradually improved upon by the Darkies till it found itself in Tubberubbabel ... the Tubberubbabel waterhole actually figuring on the map of the period, a well established rendezvous also for men making out for cattle during the dry season.¹⁵⁴

151 The shepherd is Kolorlook; Thomas, enc to La Trobe to Col Sec 3 December 1840, 40/12629 in Port Phillip 1840, 4.2512/1, AO of NSW.

152 Thomas used quotation marks, unusual for him: he must have regarded Yankee's comment as important.

153 Thomas Journal, CY 2606, item 3.

154 George Gordon McCrae, 'Experiences not exploits', vol 3, Ms 2523/4/c, SLV.

