

'I Succeeded Once'

It has links with the distant past as the site of the pre-contact massacre when almost half the Bonurong were killed in a dawn raid by their traditional enemies the Kurnai of Gippsland (see Chapter 8).

It has links with the colonial past – it was the place where the young girl named Barebun also known as Mary, who was both daughter of the Bonurong chief Benbow and wife of the Waworong chief Billibellary, was assaulted: from here two gentlemen, Mr Hobson and Mr Meyrick caught and saddled their horses at 10 pm on a cold Sunday night in May and rode seven miles to the Assistant Protector to report the assault – an expression of concern unseen anywhere else in the ethnographic literature.

It was Barebun/Mary's brother, Yankee Yankee, also known as Robert Cunningham, who was the boy abducted off the beach in 1833 who subsequently turned up at the encampment at Merri Creek in Melbourne in 1841 with such an astonishing story that Thomas was at first disbelieving. He had been taken in the kidnappers' ship to Preservation Island in Bass Strait, then made his way to Launceston, then to the Swan River settlement where he worked for two years; he then took passage to Adelaide where he worked a further two years for two masters. He then took ship for Melbourne (see Chapter 11). Yankee Yankee was the Bonurong man who subsequently accused Thomas of bad faith in promising the Bonurong the place known as Kullurk/Coolart as their reserve, and then not delivering on the promise (see Chapter 7).

The site may have a link with Coranderk. The Mr Tommy known as Hobson's black, who went to Gippsland with him, is more than likely to be the Tommy who went to California with George Smith, and may be the same Tommy Hobson who ended up at Coranderk where he was photographed prior to 1866: more research is needed.

Thomas described Buckkermittewarrer as a model station, good for the blacks: it seems that there was scarcely a day when some Bonurong were not there. He called it a dormitory suburb of the head Protectorate station Tubberubbabel. All the references to the place are presented here in chronological order.

It has significance in the present: it has an extension to 2013 of a valid planning permit granted by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, to start to build 'a Holiday Resort incorporating a winery, a function centre, a restaurant, a residential hotel, a caravan and camping park and a golf driving range'.¹ Its initial Cultural Management Plan was rejected by Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, but after archaeological excavations the developer has submitted another which has been approved. Archaeological excavations have demonstrated extensive use of the site, with one sample dated to 6000 BP. It is in the Green Wedge Zone.

1 VCAT reference no P1025/2006; Permit application no P05/2642; VCAT Extension reference P1942/2009.

Buckkermittewarrer is virtually unknown, not featuring in any of our histories, but it should be there. The following chapter is a chronological record of observations about the site.

no date

Bagometterorer, Mr Hobson's Farm Station, is on a list of Aboriginal placenames which Thomas recorded in his journal.²

no date

'Backermadderrewaarra, inland from Arthur's Seat'.³

no date

'Buckermerderra Warra is two miles from Kangerong. A Tea Tree creek empties itself into arm of the swamp between Bukermerderwarra and the Coast'.⁴

no date

Shown as Buckerrmorderrewarra on a creek line on Thomas' map entitled Tuerong and surrounds.⁵

17 August 1835

The settlers on board Fawkner's *Enterprise* commanded by Captain Lancey landed at Arthurs Seat and returned to the ship in the evening.⁶

March 1836

John Aitken's brig the *Chile*, bringing stock from VDL, ran aground near Dromana and he was forced to unload the sheep at Arthurs Seat. He described his contact with the Bonurong thus: 'With reference to the natives – On landing at Arthur's Seat, they were most friendly, assisting me to land my sheep, etc. About 80 was the number I then saw, being the Western Port tribe, some of whom accompanied me in my journey round the Bay to Melbourne'.⁷

June 1839

Thomas reports that three of John Batman's VDL blacks, named Bull, Pigeon and Joe, have been engaged or decoyed in the service of Mr Smith Junior, son of Mr George Smith of the Lamb Inn Melbourne, at Arthurs Seat, about 50 miles from Melbourne: they went in a boat.⁸

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

3 Thomas Journal, CY 2984, ML.

4 Thomas Journal, CY 2984, Map p. 543, ML.

5 Thomas Papers, set 214/22: 529, ML.

6 Billot 1982: 5.

7 Bride 1983[1898]: 49.

8 Thomas to Robinson, CY 3082: 7, 13, ML. Edward Hobson transported stores and people from Melbourne to Dromana by ship, and thence by dray via Buckkermittewarrer to Kangerong. It is believed that he and his

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17 August 1839

About 2 pm on this day Thomas and his son 'arrived at the first station, Mr Hobson's, 48 miles from Melbourne ... Mr H made us very comfortable. After taking refreshment we went to the blacks, who were within quarter of a mile'.⁹ On 18 August he spent most of the day with them and was much surprised to see how comfortable they were compared to what they are when in Melbourne. There was one old man about whom he wrote a comment which is indecipherable, but he said the rest seemed well and happy. He took a census of the blacks. On 19 August Thomas saw the signed work agreement papers of the above-mentioned three natives¹⁰ at Hobson's and was 'most pleased to find the straightforward conduct of this settler'.¹¹

25 December 1939

Samuel Rawson returned with his business partner Robert Jamieson to Edward Hobson's hospitable hut at Arthurs Seat to celebrate Christmas with Hobson, Mr and Mrs Smith, the Meyrick cousins Alfred and Maurice, and George Desailley. He described the hut as having walls full of holes, a roof covered with bark through the crevices of which a person might have crept with the greatest ease, and an earth floor,¹² situated in the middle of the eternal forest when till 18 months before a white man had never trod.¹³

Robert Jamieson

Samuel Rawson and Robert Jamieson were fellow cabin passengers in the *Florentia* on the voyage out to New South Wales in 1838. Jamieson bought the Cape Schanck run for just under 4000 pounds sterling, including 750 cattle, drays, horses, six months stores and the station. He bought it on terms with three years to pay off, and Rawson bought in for 1000 pounds, which was the amount of Jamieson's second term payment due 1 January 1840. At this time, they were in the process of moving the whole enterprise to better grazing land at the head of Western Port, the pastoral runs Tobinerk and Yallock. They did well initially in the highly speculative market; Rawson informed his father in England at the end of 1840 that the station and stock at Western Port were worth just over 8000 pounds. But then came the economic crash.

brother Dr Edmund Hobson owned the *Rosebud* after which the town is named (Cole 1984: 82). This could not have been Hobson's first boat, a mere dinghy capable of being carried by two people across the beach, see Samuel Rawson's Journal, November 1839, 204/1, NLA.

9 *HRV*, vol 2B: 536. It needs to be noted that Thomas' dates differ by a day in his Summary of Proceedings for August.

10 In a draft letter to Robinson, Thomas names the third man as Joe the Marine (CY 3082, ML).

11 Thomas Summary of Proceedings for August 1839, CY 3082, ML.

12 Rawson Papers, Ms 204/1, NLA.

13 This suggests a mid-1838 occupation by Hobson.

Samuel Rawson

Samuel Rawson was just 20 years old at this time, having arrived from England in the *Florentia*. He had family capital to invest, but was himself ambivalent about a career in the army, or life as a squatter. He did both, first trying the squatting then accepting a commission in the 28th Regiment, which left Sydney for India in 1842. The National Library has a large collection of his papers, including journals and letters, of which the most valuable for present purposes are his 'Journal from 1839 kept while forming a new station at Western Port on the southern coast of New Holland' and 'Journal of an expedition after some VDL blacks'.¹⁴

This latter expedition in November 1841, to apprehend Bob and Jack, Trucaninni, Fanny and Matilda who killed the two whalers named William Cook and The Yankee in the vicinity of the coal mines at Cape Paterson, had all the elements of an impending disaster – a classic massacre: there was a large party of armed Europeans including government officials, Commissioner of Crown Lands Powlett, Assistant Protector Thomas, Lt Vignolles and eight of his soldiers, settlers including Jamieson, Hobson, Rawson, Mundy, plus eight Bonurong and Waworong trackers including Warwardor (Lively), Billy Langhorne (Nunuptune), Warrengitalong, Poky Poky (Johnny's father see Chapter 10), Beruke (Gellibrand), Buller Bullup (Mr McArthur) and Backup (Budgery Tom's son), plus Pigeon, the VDL black formerly with Batman, but now with Hobson.

But *nothing happened* – the party simply captured the five VDL blacks. This expedition requires a fresh look, a comparison with later similar expeditions into Gippsland and the western district which did end in massacres, in an effort to discover what made the difference.

10 January 1840

The blacks having left Melbourne on 6 January,¹⁵ Thomas arrived in his district and collected 65 from the 'suburbs' of Tubberubbabel which were Buckkermittewarrer and Kangerong. They remained all day with him then went back to their suburbs.¹⁶

14 Rawson, Ms 204/1, NLA. Included are some accounts made out to Rawson by George Smith of the Lamb Inn Melbourne, for a stay from 25–27 March 1839, breakfast 2/6, dinner 2/6, bed 2/6, horse stabling and feed 6/- (Ms 204/9, folder 3, NLA).

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

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

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First week in May 1840

With Maurice and Alfred Meyrick, and Messers Hobson and Brodribb, Henry Howard Meyrick, just arrived from England, rode from Melbourne down to Packomedurrawurra which is the name of Hobson's Station.¹⁷

9 May 1840

23 blacks were encamped at Hobson's farm.¹⁸

10 May 1840

At 10 pm on this Sunday night, two gentlemen, Hobson and Meyrick, rode from Buckkermittewarrar (near Dromana drive-in) to Thomas's son's station at Tuerong (near the intersection of Balnarring Road with Old Moorooduc Road) where Thomas and the Bonurong were encamped. The gentlemen informed Thomas of a 'gross outrage' on an Aboriginal girl called Mary at Mr Hobson's farm station at Buckkermittewarrar, seven miles away to the south, near Arthurs Seat. Thomas could not catch his horse in the dark, probably because he had no night paddock or yards, but the gentlemen assured him that the girl was safe in the house with the gentry.¹⁹

Thomas owned a pretty little Arabian mare named Bess, for whom he paid £60.²⁰ (When she later took ill and collapsed under him while he was riding her, he wept, and stayed out in the bush with her all night with no food, and no matches to light a fire; he was forced to leave her next day by a creek but she was caught subsequently, and brought home, and she recovered.)²¹ But at this time she was heavily in foal, as well as having a colt running at foot. Robinson noted this in his journal, criticising Thomas because he was still drawing forage at two shillings and sixpence per day for the mare.²² Presumably, Robinson thought she should be turned out on pasture, not working, in which case Thomas would not be eligible for the forage allowance. It was one of Robinson's numerous criticisms of Thomas when in fact it was Robinson who was to line his pockets in a big way in land and gold speculation.

11 May 1840

At daybreak Thomas rode to Buckkermittewarrar, Mr Hobson's farm station, and took the sworn depositions of Mr Smith and two of Hobson's men: he also took a deposition from the Aboriginal girl. He then 'Visited the natives

17 Hales and Le Cheminant 1997: 10.

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

19 Thomas to Robinson, VPRS 11, unit 7, item 307, PROV; Thomas Report, 7 November 1840, enc to 40/12629 in 4/2512.1, AO of NSW; CY 2604, item 3, and CY 2605, item 1, ML; also Byrt 2004, CD WT 2946, 11 May DOC.

20 She carried him through all his bush journeyings (William Jackson Thomas, CY 3106, frame 60, ML).

21 Thomas Journal, 11, 12 and 19 March 1841, CY 2605, item 5, ML.

22 Clark 1998, vol 1: 358.

encampment at Bukker about 24 men women and children, was much pleased at seeing 2 Lubras wash as well and handy as a Laundress in London. Men and boys making fence, in fact Stations of this kind are a benefit to the Aborigines'.²³

The gross outrage on Mary

Her real name was Barebun. She was not just an ordinary girl: she was a high-status individual being a daughter of Baddourup/Big Benbow,²⁴ who was a son of the most influential clan head of the Bonurong, and who was also a brother to King Benbow. Mary's mother was Barbungrook/Old Maria, and her brother was Yankee Yankee/Robert Cunningham, who was abducted as a young boy off the beach at Point King by sealers about 1834, and walked back into the Bonurong encampment in Melbourne in 1841 after seven years working at the Swan River and Adelaide.²⁵ Mary had been given in marriage to Billibellary, the Waworong chief, in November 1839, but she ran away from the marriage back to her father Benbow. Billibellary had woken up in the morning to find her missing, so he went to Benbow's miam with a tomahawk, cut her head and dragged her back by the hair to his own miam.²⁶ Thomas scolded Billibellary regarding his cruelty to his new young wife. But then her father waddied her because she would not stay with Billibellary and Thomas took her to the colonial surgeon because he thought her arm was broken.²⁷

Clearly with the knowledge of the protector,²⁸ she was living as a companion/servant/adoptee/protégé of Mr and Mrs George Smith. Thomas wrote to Robinson that she had made herself very useful to the Smiths, having been with them for some time. She slept in the same apartment with them (by that, the very proper Thomas meant that she slept in the house, not the servants' hut), and travelled with the Smiths wherever they go; she spoke English well, and Mr Smith proposed teaching her to read. She was very desirous of conforming

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

24 Thomas Family Connections Census, January 1846, CY 3083, ML. Mary is also listed as daughter of Buddorup, in a group of two on a list of 26 Bonurong and 38 Waworong in Melbourne on Monday 5 August 1850, CY 3127, and on the Census of 13 December 1851, in Thomas Papers, set 214, item 12: 143, ML. Thomas revisited this 1851 census, updating it with subsequent deaths. As it was his practice to link married couples on his censuses, and Mary is still listed with her parents, the presumption is that she did not marry again. She died 15 June 1852.

25 See his recovered biographical details in Chapter 9.

26 *HRV*, vol 2B: 567.

27 Marriage and Thomas scolding Billibellary, 25 and 26 November 1839, Thomas Papers, uncat Ms set 214, box 1, ML; Taking Mary to surgeon, 2 December 1839, *HRV*, vol 2B: 571.

28 I suspect that Mary's mother, Big Benbow/Baddourup's wife was one of the women abducted off the beach, and that is the reason she was living with Baddourup's friend George Smith.

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to the habits of civilised life, and though the blacks have decoyed her away sometimes, she has always returned to the Smiths. She had come with Mr and Mrs Smith to Buckkermitterrwarrer about a fortnight previously on a visit.²⁹

George Smith³⁰

This man has a long history of good relationships with the Bonurong, documented from 1836 to 1850. Robinson described him as 'an encourager' of the blacks,³¹ and Thomas described him as 'Mr Smith, the late publican of the Lamb Inn ... is very kind and liberal to the Aborigines, they camp near him'.³² In fact Robinson records that George Smith, unlike other settlers, allowed the natives to camp *inside* his paddock fences.³³ In a letter to La Trobe in 1840, responding to a note directing Robinson to move the blacks out of town, Robinson said they were encamped next to Mr Smith's and added a PS to his letter:

Mr Thomas informs me that Mr Smith is very kind to the Blacks and rewards them liberally for any little service they perform. It is therefore not surprising the Blacks should take up their Station near to Mr Smiths when he affords them such liberal encouragement.³⁴

He arrived from VDL in 1836,³⁵ initially as manager of Charles Franks' sheep station at Mt Cotterill, near Werribee. In his testimony regarding the killing of Franks and his shepherd by the blacks, George Smith showed that he understood the reciprocity involved in Batman's treaty. He said that Franks 'had a great aversion to the native blacks, and would not give them food, thinking it the best way to prevent them from frequenting the station'³⁶ Franks would not meet the reciprocal obligation. Notwithstanding the facts that Batman's treaty was rejected subsequently by the authorities as illegal, and that the Aboriginal signatories must have had a less than perfect understanding of it (simply because Batman's Sydney blacks' language was foreign to the locals), it

29 Thomas to Robinson, from Tubbarubbabel, 11 May 1840, VPRS 11, unit 7/307, PROV.

30 I am more than usually grateful to the State Library of Victoria, in particular Jane Miller, who, recognising the importance of George Smith to Aboriginal settler relationships went to extraordinary lengths to search for him in records far and wide.

31 Clark 1998, vol 1: 369.

32 Thomas to Robinson, enc with Lettsom to Thomas, 24 September 1840, 40/10673 in 4/2511, Port Phillip 1840 (2), AO of NSW.

33 Clark 2000, vol 6: 87.

34 Robinson to La Trobe, 16 September 1840, VPRS 10, unit 2, 1840/909, PROV.

35 Billis and Kenyon (1974[1930]: 42) give his arrival date as 25 May 1836, with 500 sheep owned by the executors of Charles Franks.

36 Sworn deposition, 21 October 1836, HRV, vol 2A: 43 ff. All the letters, depositions and sworn witness statements related to the killing of Charles Franks and his shepherd Flinders alias Hindes comprise most of Chapter 2.

nevertheless functioned on the ground as a reciprocal obligation – the local Port Phillip Aborigines expected to be fed, and were fed. But not by Franks and he was killed.

The killing of Charles Franks and his convict shepherd

A recently published book makes a mocking and scornful judgement on George Smith and accuses him of vigilantism.³⁷ Powerfully written by an Indigenous author, it specifically states in the title pages that ‘This is not history, it’s an incitement’: under these circumstances a critic is discomfited. But Pascoe’s account is simply deceitful in that it leaves out of the narrative the significant fact that it was a joint European/Aboriginal party.

The Aborigines they were tracking were not Goulburn men as Pascoe asserts, but Waudthourong (to be fair to Pascoe, he is only following the editor of *Historical Records of Victoria* in asserting that Callen and Dundom were Goulburn blacks – that they were Waudthourong has only come to light in this current research via Benbow’s testimony). The most serious mistake that Pascoe makes is listing 23 names of ‘heavily armed volunteers’ who go out ‘not involved in casual reprisal but a calculated vigilante campaign’ without telling the reader that seven of those names were the names of Aboriginal men.

In listing these 23 names Pascoe does not tell the reader that Benbow, the clanhead so prominent in this story of the Bonurong, was an Aboriginal member of the so-called vigilante party, as were the well known Derrimut, Baitlange (usually spelled in the records as Ben Benger, chief of the district adjoining the Werribee River; he was Georgiana McCrae’s friend and her portrait of him is well known) and Ballyan. Nor does Pascoe tell the reader that the killing of Franks by the Aborigines happened on Benbow’s own land ‘near Mt Cotterill on the Werribee River’. Nor does Pascoe inform the reader that another three of the so-called vigilante party were John Batman’s Sydney blacks – Bullett, Stewart and Joe the marine. Had Pascoe told the reader that seven of the 23 were Aboriginal men, including the real owners of the land, a thoughtful reader might just have wondered about the flat statement that it was a vigilante raid. In this case, Pascoe has not allowed the facts to get in the way of a good polemic.

Even so, the evidence which it seems that Pascoe has not seen, reveals a situation of greater complexity than simple vigilantism, a situation that Clark has pointed to in his biography of Derrimut: Clark has sub-titled this article ‘traitor, saviour or a man of his people?’³⁸ According to John Pascoe Fawkner’s journal, the Europeans at the settlement when the news arrived of the killing of Franks and his shepherd:

37 Pascoe 2007: 6.

38 Clark 2005.

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enlisted as many Natives as would consent to go & agreed to send them out to deal with the Murderers as they think according to their Rules they should be treated. [They were] well armed and provided. I furnished Provisions, Arms & Ammunition for our party.³⁹

This is a painful record to read now: it has already been seen in Chapter 1 how painful it was at the time – Benbow owned his own actions, acknowledged that he had done a hard thing, was almost crying when he reminded Thomas of all the good services which he and the Bonurong had rendered; 'booing' the Wathaurung was one of those 'good services' he recollected.

Judgement of the Europeans' action is easy – devious, manipulative Europeans who sent the Aborigines off to do the dirty work. But this is a simplistic view, implying as it does, that the Aborigines were without volition, mere tools of a white agenda, and mere objects at the disposal of the Europeans. It is an outdated way of looking at the past – good and simple Aborigines and awful Europeans. We know that situations were more complex than that, and we have learned to look for, and respect, evidence of Aboriginal volition. We are in the presence here of mature adults, intelligent men, black and white, with their own agendas. My best understanding is along the lines of 'my friend's enemy is mine own enemy'. I suspect that if the killers of Franks and Flinders were, for whatever reason, at odds with Benbow, Derrimut, Ben Benger and Ballyan, then it might have been a case of their own agenda corresponding with the European's agenda. If this is not true, the motives of those four who elected to throw in their lot with the Europeans, and the motives of those natives who were asked to but refused, remain unknowable on the available evidence.

**Betbenjee/Bedbenje/Bet Bengai/Besberger/
Besbenger/Baitbanger/Ben-Benjie/Baitlainge/
Betbenji/Ben Benger/Nerrongho-Ben Benger/
Ner-rong-er/Robert Webb/Captain Good**

Kurung-Jang-Balluk clan headman, country at Werribee River, on margins of two Bunurong clans, two Wathourung clans and two Woiwuorung clans, born around 1814 or 1815, died July 1847 [this is incorrect, see below] (Barwick 1984, part 2: 121).

Visited Tasmania in 1836 with Buckley and Derrimut; Prince or Chief of district adjoining Werribee district; got drunk on arrival in Tasmania and was so heartily disgusted that he could never be induced to touch spirits since (Bunce 1857: 60).

³⁹ Billot 1982.

16 Nov 1835 – with Dallah Kal Keith and another black, Bait Bainger is guiding Fawkner's party (Billot 1982: 15).

6 Mar 1836 – with JP Fawkner down the river a-pleasuring (Billot 1982: 48); 23 to 25 Mar 1836 – hunting and fishing for Fawkner; 27 Mar 1836 – Bait banger refused to carry a sail to the boat for Fawkner, and Fawkner 'turned him adrift to learn better manners' (Billot 1982: 53); 13 Jul 1836 – with Mr John Woods party en route to the property of Charles Franks lately murdered (*HRV*, vol 2A: 47); 28 Oct 1836 – now with Derrymock in VDL (*HRV*, vol 2A: 47).

10 Dec 1837 – Besbenger with whom I have sent in the prisoner Smith to the doctor (de Villiers [Native Police Commandant] to Lonsdale, VPRS 4, unit 3, 37/167, PROV).

16 May 1838 – de Villiers' testimony that Bet Bengai and Derrimut and Dela Kal Keith gave him an account of the sheep stealing to the westwards by the Aborigines now in gaol (*HRV*, vol 2A: 299–301).

20 Mar 1839 – Bedbenje/Robert Webb, Watowrong tribe, aged 25, wife Ligu/Eliza aged 17, on Dredge's census of Aborigines in the vicinity of Melbourne (Robinson Papers, vol 54, ML); July 1839 – Ben Benger/Ner-rong-or/Cap Good, alternative names recorded in encampment, also wife's name Lodiget (Thomas A Diary, set 214, unit 1, ML); 17 Jul 1839 – arrived at Geelong with party from the Yarra Ningolobin, Derrimut, Billy Lonsdale, Murra Murrabine, Warwordor alias Mr King, Burran rung (Sievwright to Robinson, enc with 39/10217 in 4/2471, AO of NSW); Nov 1839 – Thomas' 'more correct' census of this month lists Neronger, male aged 24 years with wife Ligu aged 18 years (CY 3082, frame 50, ML). (There is another copy of this at VPRS 10, unit 1/242, and a corrupt and incomplete version published at *HRV*, vol 2B: 603–607).

1840 – His name is the list in a group of four including Moolmungo, Henry and Toby, at Arthurs Seat, not going to Westernport (Thomas Journal, CY 2605, frame 8, ML).

18 Jul 1845 – Bentbenjie and Eliza and her brother Charlie came to quamby (Georgiana McCrae in Weber 2000: 564); 18 Jul 1845 – in Hugh McCrae's published version, he has added another name, that of Sally, and he has altered the Charlie of the original to George so that the public record of Georgiana McCrae states that Ben Benjie, Eliza, Sally with her brother George came to quamby for the night (McCrae 1966: 196).

1846 – On Thomas Family Connections census as Nerrongho/Ben Benger, male, wife Lygee (CY 3083, ML); 28 Dec 1845 – at Arthur's Seat, Ben-Benjie went out with the gun in search of ducks; throwing his boomerangs (McCrae 1966: 240); 29 Dec 1845 – he was spearing fish (McCrae 1966: 241); 30 Dec – Ben-Benjie gave me three bommerings, one *leanquill* (waddy), one fishing spear and a woomera, and to Sandy a *mulka* (shield) to keep for him as he went to Devine's [a lime burner] this morning (McCrae 1966: 241).

4 Jul 1847 – Vile murder ... A girl, Lygu, lubra of Ben Benger a Western Port black was stolen or decoyed away by Nerreninnen alias Mr Young, tracked by Ben Benger, Nerreninnen had a gun and shot Ben Benger beyond Arthurs Seat (Thomas to Robinson, VPRS 11, Box 10/665, PROV); 7 Jul 1847 – Thomas discovers that Ben Benger was not killed at Pt Nepean, the report came from King Benbow and others: a footnote states that Ben Benger and four others saved Melbourne in the early days (Thomas Quarterly Report, June–August 1847, 47/7444 in 4/2783, AO of NSW);

After June 1851 – Ben Benger died, a Western Port [This is incorrect (Thomas census, 13 December 1851, CY 3127: 143, ML).

25 Oct 1853 – Ben Benger, male, no lubra, on Thomas census of Boonorong tribe. In pencil against Ben Benger's name is written 'At Mr Balcombe's' (Thomas set 214/13: 141, ML).

No date – Ben Benger and his wife were an inseparable couple, seldom parted (Thomas, in answer to a question on Chastity, CY 2984: 82, ML).

No date – Then there was Benjy, the black fellow, friend of the McCrae children, and later of the growing Balcombe's, who eventually gravitated to The Briars, and whose grave is under a big gum tree near the homestead (Brookes 1956: 30).

1860s – 'Lady Murphy would journey from The Briars to visit her friends at McCrae [Burrell family]. On her carriage sat a black man in green livery' (McLear 2006: 34). It can only be hoped that this liveried servant was not the distinguished Betbenjee, but the observation is inserted here for the sake of future researchers.

There is no doubt that George Smith arrived with Franks' sheep and managed them, and subsequently sold them to Edward Hobson who did very well out of

them, but he was actually the agent for the brothers Charles and John Franks according to the editor of the *Clyde Company Papers*, and the accounts rendered to him by the Clyde Company are made out to George Smith and Co.⁴⁰

George Smith became a publican, obtaining a liquor licence quite early, in 1836, by virtue of his good reputation in VDL,⁴¹ and developed the business from a rented cottage of Fawkner's to the substantial 31 roomed Lamb Inn with cellars and stables by 1839.⁴² At the first land sales he purchased the freehold of the land on which it was situated in Collins Street, later to become Scott's Hotel, and he held as well a depasturing licence for his 1200 sheep and 20 cattle on the north side of the Yarra not far from Melbourne.⁴³ He was free, Protestant and married, four persons in his household, all above the age of 12, one of whom was a female: this census information suggests a family, but the most exhaustive efforts by the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office have not been able to discover his wife's name or the names of his children, nor when and in what ship he came to Australia or even if he was native born, though I am now fairly sure that he belongs to the family of Thomas Smith and Co, shipbuilders and merchants, of Pyrmont, Sydney.

George Smith was clearly a man of means for in addition to owning the Lamb Inn he owned property described thus in his insolvency proceedings:

That beautiful and truly valuable suburban section No 61 belonging to the said estate [George Smith] situated on the Yarra Yarra about one and a half miles from town. The property consists of 25 acres the greater part of which is in cultivation, a large portion of it being laid out a garden in the highest state of improvement and filled with the choicest fruit trees. There is on the ground a neat cottage with stable and other outhouses.⁴⁴

The description could have added the vegetable garden – there is a news item in the *Port Phillip Herald* of 28 February 1840 that George Smith cut from his garden a pumpkin weighing 38 lbs with a girth of 54 inches which was available for viewing at the house in Collins Street which he lately purchased from Mr Greiner. George Smith is listed in Kerr's *Melbourne Almanac* in 1841 as living at Carrencurrenalk, South Yarra, which was also Dr Edmund Hobson's address. Carran-Carranulk, as Georgiana McCrae spells it, named after the *carran* or

40 Brown 1941–1971, 1836 vol: 40–41.

41 *HRV*, vol 4: 396–397.

42 *HRV*, vol 4: 465. PL Brown states that at the time when the Lamb Inn was advertised for sale in January 1840, its relatively large public rooms. Cellars, stone foundation, stables and outhouses could justify its use as the general meeting place for professional and business men, for an increasing group of suburban satellites and less frequently for squatters from the bush (Brown 1941–1971, vol 2: 303).

43 *HRV*, vol 6: 136–137, 153, 186. His run was said to be at Bundoora see Billis and Kenyon 1974[1932]: 141. Kenyon's Card Index at SLV records that Smith's sheep were on Keelbundora at Preston, Sections 11 and 19.

44 *Port Phillip Herald*, 29 July 1842: 1.

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prickly myrtle, is shown on Fawkner's 1841 Plan of Town of Melbourne⁴⁵ on the north side of what is now Victoria Street, Abbotsford, near Church Street: on Fawkner's map. It is opposite Edward Curr's property, St Helliers, which became in later years the Good Shepherd convent site and is now a community arts centre and the Collingwood children's farm.

George Smith sold the Lamb Inn in 1840 to a Mr Watson⁴⁶ then became insolvent in February 1842,⁴⁷ probably because Watson failed to pay. Niel Black described in his journal the system operating in a cashless Port Phillip in 1840:

everything is done by bills at six months and twelve months, and to enable the party to meet his bills he disposes of the property ere the end of that term and takes bills of the same date which he discounts and pays off his own bills when due. In this way business is carried on to a fearful and dangerous extent.⁴⁸

In the newspaper account of George Smith's application to the Insolvency Court to be discharged from insolvency, Judge Croke, in granting the application, is quoted as saying 'he believed the applicant to be a very deserving person and that the depression of the times only had compelled him to go to the Insolvent Court'.⁴⁹

Contrary to what is widely asserted, he did *not* hold a licence for Wul-Wul-a-Bulluk on the Mornington Peninsula: a thorough search of the original Pastoral Run Papers produced no papers for Wul-Wul-a-Bulluk in the box which holds all the original 'W' Pastoral Run Papers.⁵⁰ Wul-Wul-a-Bulluk is not a pastoral run; it is the name of the house at Capel Sound where he lived in the 1840s.⁵¹

He *did* hold the licence for Tootgarook through the late 1840s,⁵² and he is on Commissioner of Crown Lands Edward Grimes' list for 1848 of people who have not paid their licence fee.⁵³ George Gordon McCrae described him as a 'settler' whose 'little station' was seven miles from Arthurs Seat, the first establishment

45 McCrae 1934: 51 map-endpapers, description.

46 MacKellar 2008: 154–155 (Niel Black's Journal 5 February 1840).

47 Kenyon Card Index, Ms, SLV. George Smith is also mentioned in the Clyde Company's Papers, listing articles purchased by him shortly after his arrival in 1836.

48 MacKellar 2008: 154–155 (Niel Black's Journal 3 December 1839).

49 *Port Phillip Herald*, 4 November 1942: 2.

50 PROV. I am grateful for the opportunity to search the original files.

51 It was situated opposite the Cameron's Bight jetty, within the triangle bounded by Cameron's Close, Morotai Street and the beach.

52 Marion Button 'Depasturing Licence Index, 1840–1851 from *Port Phillip Herald* and *Argus*', CMF 92, Box 38, SLV.

53 Letters received Treasury, January 47 to December 49, VPRS 7, P0000, item 2: 88, 159, PROV. On the same list were the Wedge brothers of Ballymarang, Henry Tuck of Manton's Creek, Thomas Russel of Mt Martha, Andrew McCrae of Arthur's Seat, William Dawson of Tewrong, George Playne of Tanti, James Davey of Ballyrungan.

past the Old Settlement site when travelling towards Arthurs Seat from Point Nepean. It was 'called by the natives Wul-wul-buluk', and it was a little to the south of what used to be called the Big Swamp.⁵⁴ George D Smythe's 1841 'Survey of the coast from the west side of Port Phillip to Western Port'⁵⁵ locates the first establishment past the old settlement site when travelling towards Melbourne as Dr Hobson's sheep station. It is perhaps a quarter of a mile from the eastern sister on the track to Arthurs Seat and Melbourne, with Cameron's station a little further on, about midway around Cameron's Bight.⁵⁶ Smythe's map also locates Tootgarook but he records it as a place or an area with a native name, not as a run; in fact he makes three of his characteristic dots for locations of settlers, only one of whom he names, Freeman (Thomas records Freeman as running sheep).

The simple, though for the time, extraordinary explanation is that George Smith lived with Malvina Hobson nee Lutterell, mother of Edward and Edmund at Capel Sound. George Gordon McCrae devotes pages to describing their lovely house and garden and view, and Mrs Smith's culinary achievements and her kindness to the McCrae boys. But there is no record of a divorce from Edward Hobson senior and she died as Malvina Hobson, as indicated earlier.

The biographer of the Lutterell family⁵⁷ tells an amazing story of Malvina's life. Baptised in Tonbridge Kent in 1799, one of ten children in the family, she was brought to New South Wales by her father Dr Edward Luttrell who received a land grant and an appointment as assistant colonial surgeon at Parramatta. She was married as a child-bride to Edward Hobson senior in 1813, and produced her two sons Edmund and Edward quite quickly. They are alleged to have been born in Parramatta, but New South Wales has no record of this and their baptisms are recorded in VDL, and Edmund at least was raised by his grandparents in Hobart. Edward Hobson senior is last picked up in the records running a school in Clarence Plains, VDL.

By 1823 Malvina was living openly with a convicted man named Bartholomew Broughton: Broughton's offence is unspecified but he was a gentleman, formerly a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Malvina's parents must have approved of Broughton because when he died, he was buried with Dr Lutterell in the Lutterell family vault. But Dr Lutterell definitely did not approve of Malvina – in his will, in which he left his estate to his sons and to his dearly beloved grandson Edmund, he noted that Edmund was a poor unfortunate orphan whose parents did not love him and who left him without any provision or patrimony.

54 McCrae 1987: 58.

55 CS 17a, VPRS 8168, PROV.

56 Cameron's on Smythe's map is probably Henry Garvis Cameron, listed by Billis and Kenyon as being at Point Nepean from 1840–1857 onwards, and as being the author of an 1840 report on coal in Victoria (Billis and Kenyon 1974[1932]: 39).

57 In 1992.

Malvina Lutterell/Hobson/Broughton/Smith was a practical woman it seems. In 1844, when Sarah Anne Cain, a lime burner's four year old daughter was found, exhausted, keeping crows off her face with her hand, having been missing for four days and five nights, it was Mrs Smith who had the knowledge and the presence of mind to put the child in a warm bath, then feed her a teaspoon of food at a time until the little girl recovered.⁵⁸ She was generous as well. In the winter of 1845 Georgiana McCrae sent one of the men working for the McCraes to Mrs Smith to borrow some beef because the McCraes had run out, and the contract with their workers Henry Tuck and Lanty Cheney specified a ration of ten lbs of beef per week; Mrs Smith sent back not only the requested beef but a ham and greens as well.⁵⁹

The Smiths were living at Capel Sound in July 1846 when George Smith's blackfellows called in en route from Melbourne with the bag which Georgiana McCrae's servant raided for onions, but which contained daffodil bulbs.⁶⁰ The McCrae's tutor Mr John McLure was a visitor to George Smith's station along the beach in 1848, as was Mr Liardet.⁶¹ However they managed it, Mrs Smith was acknowledged in polite society, and George Smith remained connected to her sons and grandsons, though not to her. She was buried in Brighton after her death in 1866 with a neighbour as informant, ignorant of her living son's name and whereabouts, aware only that she had a son who was a doctor.⁶² There is a letter in the Hobson Papers from George Smith by this time, 1867, resident in Sydney, addressed to Dr Hobson's son, dealing with the issue of 125 acres of land in Sydney granted to Malvina Luttrell the mother of Edward and Edmund Hobson.⁶³

It was George Smith and Edward Hobson who established the fame of the cups country for horse breeding, not James Purves who purchased the run as a going concern with an already established reputation. George Gordon McCrae mentions Smith's horses well before Purves came to the district, 'It was always a pleasant tramp for us from Arthur's Seat [to Boniong] through Hobson's flat with its little knots of horses and browsing cows'.⁶⁴

In 1849, George Smith purchased shares in a joint venture company, set up by the Sydney firm of Thomas Smith and Company, which built and fitted out the brigantine *Sea Gull*, 62 tons, 66 feet long, copper bottomed, with a spacious 12 berth cabin for the gentry and a smaller cabin for the crew. The prospectus was

58 McCrae 1934: 140.

59 McCrae 1934: 170.

60 McCrae 1966: 197.

61 McCrae 1966: 236.

62 Death certificate, Registry of Births, Deaths, Marriages, Victoria.

63 'Luttrell, Edward (1756 – 1824)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 2: 139.

64 Noted horse breeder – PL Brown in Brown 1941–1971; horses and cattle on flats – GG McCrae, 'Experiences not exploits', vol 3, Ms 12018, SLV.

for a commercial profit making visit to the California goldfields, and it stated that two Aboriginals would be among those sailing as crew, to receive a bonus (unspecified). Thomas Smith, the head of the Sydney shipping firm of Thomas Smith and Co, Western Lea, Pyrmont was the owner of the vessel, and he sailed with three sons – GFC Smith, WH Smith and FM Smith. But in the newspaper account, George Smith’s name on the passenger list is inserted between the names of the father Thomas and those of his three sons.⁶⁵ To me, this suggests that George Smith was family, possibly a brother of the shipping owner Thomas, possibly but less likely, the eldest son.⁶⁶

The Captain was Richard Henry Alexander Napper who married Emma Lutterell, sister of Malvina. Captain Napper and Mrs Edmund Hobson are often mentioned in George Augustus Robinson’s journal in the late 1840s engaged in reciprocal visiting and social and scientific discussions with Dr Godfrey Howitt. A daughter of the Napper/Lutterell marriage, named Marie Ann Martha Celine Helena Napper subsequently married her cousin Edward Hobson, brother of Edmund and son of Malvina and Edward Hobson senior.

The *Sea Gull* sailed from Sydney on 17 December 1849, with the two Bonurong young men, Pokey’s son named Johnny, and Tommy (almost certainly Tommy Hobson), and arrived in San Francisco via Tahiti on 1 April 1850, 105 days out from Sydney. The *Sea Gull* was sold in California three weeks later by Robert Campbell’s agent.⁶⁷ In San Francisco, George Smith (and presumably Johnny and Tommy) lived in a weatherboard house constructed on piles built out over the water near the dock. It is not generally known that there was a rush of Victorian settlers to the California goldfields before gold was found in Australia, and the index of these people lists a Mr Smith as arriving back in Melbourne per the ship *J Merithew*, master Captain Abbott,⁶⁸ and this is probably George Smith as the date of arrival (5 October 1850) corresponds with the date on which Thomas saw Johnnie and Tommy back in Melbourne. Johnny’s subsequent death and burial near the lighthouse is the subject of Chapter 10.

George Smith’s relationships with the Bonurong

Back in 1838 George Smith wrote, from his Collins Street address, a letter of protest to Police Magistrate William Lonsdale complaining that Mr Christiaan de Villiers was endeavouring by threats and every other means in his power

⁶⁵ *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, Saturday 22 December 1849: 2.

⁶⁶ Genealogists may be more successful in identifying George Smith. My difficulty has been that entering George Smith, post 1788 into the NSW Register of Births Deaths and Marriages gives a zero result: there is no other certain fact regarding his mother’s name or father’s name, or child’s name, or date or place of birth or death, or place where such was registered, so there is nothing for the computer to sort.

⁶⁷ Bateson 1963: 91–94.

⁶⁸ McLeod 2006.

to induce two of his blacks to join the Native Police. They are mentioned by name – Bondeom whom George Smith has fed and clothed for upwards of two years, and Mr Mann to whom Smith had paid a great deal of attention and who was now exceedingly handy with habits of industry and who goes out to work with the white men who are employed 'down' on Smith's station. It is wrong, he wrote, to entice blacks already partly civilised at considerable expense and trouble, and he requested that Lonsdale tell de Villiers to desist.⁶⁹ Bondeom is securely identified as Big Benbow/Old Benbow/Baddourup, Mary's father. Spelled as Poor-tow-rup, Baddourup/Benbow is on the July 1839 census of the Bonurong as having the exchanged or conferred name of Mr Smith.⁷⁰

Only a month before the assault on Mary, Thomas had been forced by La Trobe (in his turn acting on a specific directive from the Governor in Sydney) to confiscate guns from the Bonurong. Thomas knew that it was perfectly safe for them to have the guns, that they needed the guns now that game was so scarce, that they did not use the guns on each other, or on whites. But La Trobe went by the book: he was mindful that official policy towards Aborigines specifically warned against settlers giving the natives guns. The guns were given to the Bonurong men by European men with whom they had reciprocal relationships, and one of them was Benbow's gun, given to him by George Smith.⁷¹

Big Benbow was known as one of George Smith's blackfellows, and it was an enduring friendship: ten years later, when Big Benbow's health was failing, George Smith wrote to the Chief Protector stating that he would take care of him, and defray all his medical expenses.⁷² Big Benbow's wife Barbungrook/Old Maria became a close friend of Thomas' wife, and appears often in the records of the Protectorate. One of Benbow's wives was one of the women abducted off the beach between Arthurs Seat and Point Nepean in 1834.

Mary's situation with Mr and Mrs Smith is interesting. Thomas expressed the opinion that Aboriginal children living with Europeans were placed there by their relatives as spies. This is a partial truth. Aboriginal children were left in school at the 1837 Mission in the care of George Langhorne in exchange for food for their parents. Aboriginal children were also frequently left with Thomas as a signifier that their parents would return. There is always an element of reciprocal obligation in the placement of these children, even when Europeans think that they have adopted them permanently. Always and inevitably, the children were removed from Europeans when they reached puberty. These children⁷³ were at risk in ways which were not appreciated at first, but which

69 George Smith to Lonsdale, 29 September 1838, VPRS 4, box 5, 38/207, PROV.

70 CY 2604, item 1, ML.

71 Thomas Journal, Friday 17 April 1840, CY 2605, item 1, ML.

72 George Smith to Robinson, 5 July 1849, Robinson Papers, vol 57A: 499, ML.

73 This subject does not appear to have been researched anywhere. I have about 50 cards of individual children 'adopted' by Europeans. There is much more to be understood about the nature of this relationship.

Thomas came to recognise. Their European masters/guardians/adoptive parents took the children with them when they travelled, and the children, being in other people's country, not properly introduced and properly sponsored, were sometimes killed (Thomas uses the word assassinated). This is what happened to Peter, the Murrumbidgee boy adopted by George Langhorne, the missionary. He was killed by the Bonurong men Derrimut and Poleorong (Billy Lonsdale) and Tallon (Mr King): the blacks said to Thomas **'no good that blackfellow, no his country'**.⁷⁴

Mary's situation with the Smiths raises even more questions than usual. Was she there of her own choice? Seemingly yes is the answer. Did her father place her there? Did Thomas place her there as a rescue, in light of the fact that she had been injured by both her father and her husband? What was Billibellary's attitude? She did after all belong to him by law.

Whether the gentlemen went to the trouble they did because they were gentlemen, or whether it is an example of George Smith's good relationships, or whether the respect they paid Mary was due to her high status, is not made clear in the records. But for two European gentlemen to catch and saddle their horses, then ride seven miles in the cold and dark of a May Sunday night on the Mornington Peninsula to report to the Protector, is a demonstration of concern unprecedented in the records of the Protectorate.

Mary's deposition

Mary alias Barebun stated, me by water butt for water. Bullock driver red shirt pulled her away. She said You Blackguard. Bullock driver put hand on mouth, and hand on back, pulled me to ground. Me got hand away from mouth and plenty cry out. Bullock driver pull away, and white man, cook, brought me to Mrs Smith. Bullock driver no hurt me, only knocked me down, and make nose and mouth bleed.⁷⁵

The three other depositions from the Europeans add further facts. William Smith, an agricultural labourer in the employment of Mr Hobson at Buckkermittewarrer, heard screaming in the dark at about seven o'clock at night. He went towards the sound and found Mrs Smith's house maid crying, next to a tree about 30 yards from the hut. She said that a white man **'been beating her, White Man Kimbarly bullocks today'**. That was all he knew.

⁷⁴ 18 September 1839, Thomas Papers, uncat Mss, set 214, ML.

⁷⁵ Thomas Letterbook, draft letter, CY 2946, frames 51–52, ML. The official letter reporting the outrage and enclosing copies of the depositions is Thomas to Robinson, 11 May 1840, VPRS 11, unit 7/307, PROV.

Anthony Thompson was hut keeper to Mr Hobson at Buckkermittewarrar. He gave the same bare outline, adding the details that 'she was crying, her nose was bleeding and she seemed stupefied'. He asked her what the matter was and she did not answer, so he took her to Mrs Smith.

George Smith confirmed that about seven o'clock the previous night, Thompson had brought Mary to the hut, bleeding at the nose. She said that the bullock driver with the red shirt had struck her. This was Pierce Dunfield, about six foot tall, with dark hair and high cheekbones, about 40 years of age. Smith sent for him but the men said that he was already in bed. Nevertheless he turned up, with 'trowsers' on and the red shirt. Smith told him to leave the premises immediately; he enquired what for, and George Smith replied that he knew well what for, and Smith would say it again before Captain Lonsdale. Smith then sent Meyrick and Hobson to the Protector. About an hour later, when the girl was washed and calm and collected, Smith asked her for more details. She said that she was standing by the water cask when Pierce Dunfield took her by the arm and forced her away. When she resisted, and told him he was a blackguard, and he had better be off, he replied that if she called him that name,⁷⁶ he would knock her down. Mary said 'very well, you knock me down'. He then put his hand over her mouth and nose, and she struggled and fell. He put his knee or foot on her breast and she cried out, and then heard the Europeans calling for her. George Smith concluded his testimony by saying that there was no other man on the premises who wore a red shirt but Pierce Dunfield, and that Dunfield cleared off as soon as Smith sent for the Protector.

If that is all that happened, then by modern standards, the assault would not be described as 'a gross outrage'. Dunfield's intent was probably sexual gratification⁷⁷ but Mary stood up to him. Her use of the word 'blackguard' placed him in an inferior position in the social scale, and seems to have enraged him. It didn't help her in the short term to the extent she was slightly injured physically, but where it matters, in her nerve and her self-possession, Mary won the encounter.

14 and 15 May 1840

Thomas visited the blacks at Buckkermittewarrar; the blacks told him 'a strange story' that two boys had been killed in a dray accident in going round Arthurs Seat. The day before, 13 May, he had sent the dray from Tuerong to the

⁷⁶ Blackguard was a demeaning insult in polite society of the time; according to the Oxford dictionary it carries connotations of inferiority, an insult handed out to a menial. It is interesting that a bullock driver objected so vehemently to it coming from an Aboriginal girl.

⁷⁷ Thomas calls it an 'attempted assault' in CY 2604, item 3, ML. and in another version an 'attempted violation'.

Meyricks' station at Boniong to obtain potatoes of which they were very fond.⁷⁸ In fact the boys were not killed but there had been an accident and two were injured.⁷⁹

On Monday 15 May 1840 all the blacks left the two encampments at Buckkermittewarrer and Kangerong and shifted to the head protectorate station Tubberubbabel where they remained for a week. On Sunday 24 May 1840, Thomas extracted from the blacks their confession to the massacre and they all promptly left Tubberubbabel.

26 May 1840

Thomas was very ill this day, he suspected through sleeping in a leaky tent, so he sent his son to Buckkermittewarrer to look for the blacks.⁸⁰

29 May 1840

Thomas visited the encampment at Kangerong and found it had shifted to Buckkermittewarrer by Arthurs Seat. Next day he rode there but they had all gone on their journey around the country to Sandy Point.⁸¹

5 June 1840

Thomas rode out to meet the returning blacks, and fell in with some of the principal Western Port blacks – Derrimut, Derrimut's brother Ningnow and his lubra, Derrimut's mother Dindoo, Budgery Tom and his family, Burrenum (Mr Dredge) and his lubra and his two brothers, and Munmungina, 13 persons in all. They stayed one night with him at Tubberubbabel and moved the next day to join the others 'just beyond Kangerong where they were encamped'. There were 55 in all.⁸²

11 June 1840

Old Mr Man at Bukkumitterar is accused of taking away a Mt Macedon lubra, Jacks, who goes off with three large glass spears to kill her and Mr Man. Me and my men pacify him by stating that I will go following morning to Bukku & if Mr Man has, to bring her home – I however went that even and saw & found old tale false – return – Jack immediately leaves, says to me **bungarlarly**...⁸³

78 Missionary Langhorne, *HRV*, vol 2A: 174.

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

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

81 Thomas Journal, CY 2604, item 3, ML. For Sandy Point see entry for 2 June.

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

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

Mingaragon/Old Mr Man/Mr Mann/Mingal-gur-rer/ Min.gare.rer

Jul 1839 – Name taken in encampment, Mingal-gur-rer, European name Mr Man (Thomas 'A' diary, January-July 1839, set 214, unit 1, ML); 18 Aug 1839 – A family arrived in 'a very distressed state', consisting of an old man, three lubras and four children (*HRV*, vol 2B: 536. There is only one Bonurong family with this structure.); 20 Nov 1839 – On Thomas' census as Mingaragon, male, aged 68, with three wives, Togerrook aged 50, another Togerrook aged 46, Lagerrook aged 29, and five children, Yellerrook, female aged 8, Yit Yit female aged 4, Maryagrook female aged 6, Waregulk female aged 4, and Lellerbook male aged 2. Described as a man of some importance has three wives and all are sisters. He seldom visits the settlers unless something of importance is going on that requires the whole of the tribe (Thomas, VPRS 10, unit1/242, PROV).¹

3 Jan 1840 – Names taken in encampment, Chief Mingaragon, his three lubras Togerurrook, Tugerurrook and Lagurook, and his children Mungerer c,ⁱⁱ Lillerenook c, Lillerook c, Maryagrook l,ⁱⁱⁱ Waregull l (Thomas, CY 2605, item 1, ML); Feb 1840 – Old Mr Man and his family, eight persons in all are at Arthurs Seat, not going to Gippsland, and Old Mr Man is to head up one of the five parties remaining (Thomas, CY 2605, frame 8, ML); 11 Jun 1840 – At Bukkermitterar Old Mr Man is accused falsely of taking a Mt Macedon lubra (Thomas, CY 2604, item3, ML); 12 Jun 1840 – At Buckkumittorwarra, are Old Mr Man and his family, 8 in all (Thomas, CY 2604, item3, ML); 22 Jun 1840 – At Tubberubabel, Old Mr Man makes a disturbance, wishes another lubra he having three already (Thomas CY 2604, ML); 30 Sep 1840 – Jack Weatherley came pm and reported that Min.gare.rer alias Mr Man had been taken to jail by the constables ... Mr Man is a Yalloger (Robinson in Clark 1998, vol 1: 376).

Aug 1842 – Minkerra – Mr Man, on medical dispenser's list at Nerre Nerre Warren being treated for Psora, treatment being magnesium sulphate etc (Henry Jones, VPRS 4410, unit 2, item 50, PROV).

28 Nov 1843 – The Chief of the Western Port blacks, Old Mr Man's lubra dies near Punt road, named Lundum Merneeyowrook, aged 40 (Thomas, CY 2606, item 2: 21, ML).

I. Thomas meant that Old Mr Man seldom visits the settlement of Melbourne.

II. In a list of names like this 'c' does not represent child but coolin, ie male child, boy.

III. In a list of names like this, after the adults have been named, Thomas uses l to represent female child, girl.

Sep 1844 – ‘Old Mr Man gives me a sad account of the loss of his three wives’ (Thomas, CY 2606, item 3, ML); 30 Nov 1844 – Thomas list of births and deaths for the six month period shows that Mr Man’s three wives died one after the other as follows – 15 Jun, Largarook, aged 38, WP, died in the bush south of the Yarra; 9 Aug, Toogoorook, aged 44, WP, died in the bush south of Yarra; and 12 Aug Toogoorook, aged 25, WP, died in the bush south of Yarra, three lubras one family (CY 2604, item 5, frame 264, ML).

Jan 1846 – Family Connections census, Old Mr Man, 2 Benbows and Derrimut are listed as one section, Werrerby Yallook. On the list of names Thomas has overwritten and the name appears to be Wombungnurlook, male widower, his children being Mangerer male 18, Lillerook 13, Dit Dit 10 and Warregulk 11, 5 persons in the family (Thomas, 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^{IV} & 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 Minishid (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).

IV. Thomas’ sketch is reproduced as Fig 29.

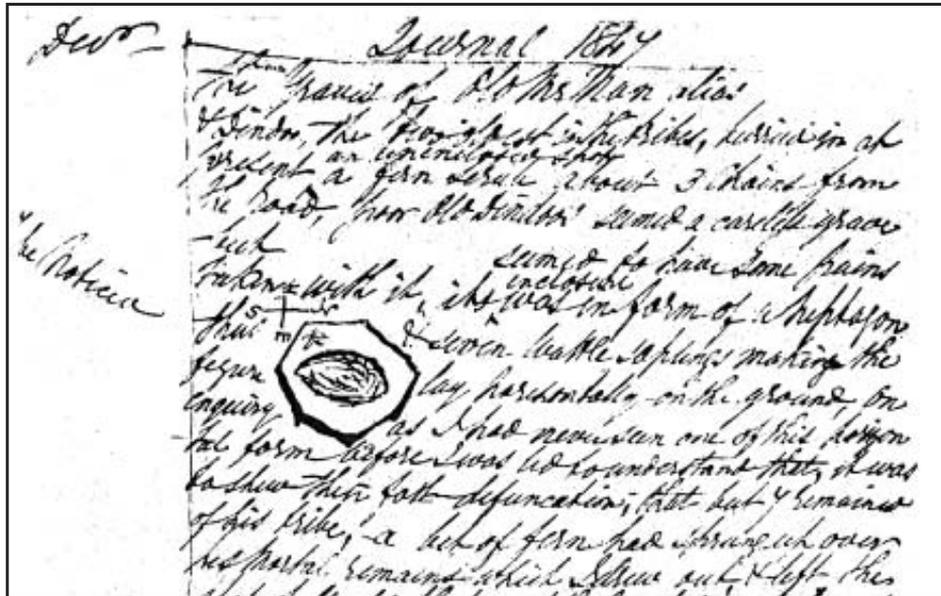


Fig 29. 'Old Mr Mann's unusual hexagon-shaped grave'

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

16 June 1840

Three black guides (unnamed) took Henry Howard Meyrick from Packomedurrawurra to Boniong then showed him Colourt which he described as having a splendid salt water river running through it.⁸⁴

2 July 1840

Four blacks are at Hobson's.⁸⁵

22 July 1840

The blacks at Tubbarubbabel were concerned that some small parties had been away for too long, and said to Thomas that they would not return unless ordered. Thomas visited Buckkermittewarrer and found Old Mr Man and family, Old Billy, Dollar and Lively there. Old Mr Man asked Thomas to write a letter telling the absent ones to come back – *nerlingo*. Thomas wrote the letter in their own language and addressed it to the Koolins, and Old Mr Man carefully held it up to dry as if it had been a cheque for 1000 pounds; they all read the letter.⁸⁶

84 Henry Howard Meyrick, Letters, Ms 7959, Box 654, SLV.

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

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

27 July 1840

The Chief Protector visited and recorded 'Bag.er.me.dare.re.wur.rer', alternative phonetic Bag.ger.me.dare.re.wur.rer. 'This is Mr Thomas Senior's third station, one and a half miles from Gan.jer.rong. From here to Bor.ny.yong, Merrick's Station is 12 miles'.⁸⁷

28 July 1840

This day the Chief Protector rode over the country between Hobson's first station (Kangerong) where he had a fine view of the heads to Wongo (Arthurs Seat):

Rode over some flat country resembling the American prairies. Level as water and green as an emerald and studded with clumps of casuarina and cherry trees and mimosa or silver wattle and small clumps of tea tree. Saw a party of natives at Hobson's fetching water and getting wood' [Hobson's farm station Bag.er.me.dare.re.wur.rer].⁸⁸

4 August 1840

Thomas had received instructions to round up all the blacks and bring them to Melbourne to select a reserve. Mr Man and his family arrived this day at Tubberubbabel, only to inform him that the blacks were not on their way in, only those whom Thomas had seen a few days previously at Buckkermittewarrer, plus those on the mountain (Arthurs Seat). Thomas was angry and said he would go and fetch them himself, but they said '**too much wood – no gogo Yarraman**' meaning Thomas could not ride his horse because the mountain was too timbered.⁸⁹

9 August 1840

Thomas at Tuerong got word that there had been an Aboriginal attack on Hobson's dray laden with stores that had arrived by boat, travelling on the road from Buckkermittewarrer to Kangerong. Thomas inspected the spot on the road where the event happened, within 400 yards of Kangerong, and the tree behind which the attacker hid; the road was muddy and there were signs of a scuffle. The dray driver was back at Buckkermittewarrer, but the overseer, Mr Atkins, described the man as being very big and tall and strong, as tall as, if not taller than the Old Doctor. Atkins said that the dray driver knew the Old Doctor and it was not him; the dray driver knew that the Old Doctor and his family were far away down towards Point Nepean, and besides, the Old Doctor was 'well disposed'.

87 Clark 1988, vol 1: 356.

88 Clark 1988, vol 1: 357.

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

'I Succeeded Once'

Thomas went to Buckkermittewarrar and interviewed Hobson and the dray man. The dray driver's story was that he was driving along the road nearly at Kangerong when he heard a black say **give bread** and the next minute the black had jumped into the back of the dray. The dray driver cooeed to the men at the hut at Kangerong but they did not hear. He wrestled with the black and the dray man had tufts of the black's hair and tufts from his opossum skin cloak as evidence. The black got away from him in the greasy conditions, in the direction of Mt Martha. As a strange black had been seen on Mt Martha over the previous days, Thomas went to look for him but found no evidence.⁹⁰

30 August 1840

Superintendent La Trobe and Eliot Heriot, who had taken up a run at Cape Schanck adjacent to James Thomson, rode from Melbourne to Arthurs Seat 'a long ride, the last part in the dark to Hobson's'. La Trobe calls the run 'Karangarong', and records that they camped at 'the Creek' for two nights, then on the shore at Capel Sound where he saw the remains of 'Collins Settlement (1802)' (La Trobe was mistaken in the year) then back to Hobson's and returned to Melbourne on 3 September.⁹¹ This creek is the same one on which the Bonurong camped but La Trobe makes no mention of Aborigines.

14 December 1840

By this date the Central Protectorate Station for the Yarra and Westernport blacks had been established at Nerre Nerre Warren and La Trobe had inspected it and approved. But the Western Port blacks did not like it, and kept coming and going to their own country. On this date Thomas rode in search of them and went to Buckkermittewarrar where Mr King (Tallon) indicated that they were at Tuerong.⁹²

16 May 1841

Hobson is sold out by one of these villainous special surveys.⁹³

22 May 1841

Thomas visited Tubberubbabel, Kangerong, Bukkermerderra and Deangeong only to find all the Aborigines had gone to Melbourne. Old Doctor and his family had been at Buckkermittewarrar. Slept at his son's station at Tuerong.⁹⁴

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

91 La Trobe, Memoranda No 4 in Australian Notes, 1839–1854, MSM 541, safe, SLV.

92 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, items 2–3, ML.

93 Hales and Le Cheminant 1997: 20. Hugh Jamieson had made his 'Special Survey' purchase of 5120 acres bounded by Dromana beach, Ellerina Road and Nepean Highway. It included both encampments Buckkermittewarrar and Kangerong (and both Hobson's sheep station and farm station).

94 Thomas Journal, CY 2605, item 5, ML.

18 November 1841

Shown as Baggamahjarrawah with fenced paddocks and a mark to indicate the location of the homestead on George D Smythe's map.⁹⁵

No date but between 1840 when he arrived, and prior to the birth of his twins in 1843.

Dr Edmund Hobson was at Buckkermittewarrer convalescing from serious illness. He wrote to his wife at Yarra Yarra care of the Post Office in Melbourne that the 'blacks celebrated my arrival by dancing the Corobbara in fancy dress'. He also said that the men are splitting timber for the dairy.⁹⁶ In another letter a week later he wrote that the house (this could be Kangerong House or the house at Capel Sound) is coming on, and he looks forward to dear Margaret's joining him because it is more salubrious and beautiful and interesting country. He sends a kiss to his little son Jack and regards to his mother (Malvina).⁹⁷

15 February 1844

Georgiana McCrae and her husband were house guests of Captain and Mrs Reid at Tichingorourke (Reid's station, now The Briars). These two couples, together with Hugh Jamieson, rode to inspect Jamieson's Survey. After calling first at Kangarong House, where they saw a Mrs Newby and her two girls,⁹⁸ Captain Reid took Georgiana to see his standby station on Bakmadarroway Creek. After leaving the Survey they came upon the Commissioner of Crown Lands Powlett who had suggested to Georgiana's husband as a possible run, the land subsequently taken up by Andrew McCrae called Arthur's Seat.⁹⁹

No date but between 1844 and 1851

Jamieson's Survey – fine flat green country the good quality of the soil being evidenced by the beautiful blackwood trees dotted all over it.¹⁰⁰

No date but between 1844 and 1851

'During the winter months with the big creeks running bankers, the Cananuke and the Mordialloc, and the flat land north–easterly of what is now Dromana a bog', the McCrae family used lime boats to get to Melbourne during the 1840s.¹⁰¹

95 'Survey the Coast of Port Phillip from the Mouth of Tangenong Creek to Arthur's Seat with internal features', CS 81A, PROV.

96 Edmund Hobson to Margaret Hobson, in Hobson Papers, Ms 8457, Box 865/2B, SLV.

97 Edmund Hobson to Margaret Hobson, in Hobson Papers, Ms 8457, Box 865/2B, SLV.

98 Mrs Newby was a survivor of a ship lost in a storm in Port Phillip, with her husband the Captain going down, as well as other children including her son.

99 McCrae 1966: 127.

100 McCrae 1911: 20.

101 McCrae 1911: 17.

1850s

'In the early years emus were plentiful ... during the 1850s Bill, George, John and Tom McLear would visit the aborigines who had their kitchen middens among the honeysuckles (banksias) on the sand rise by the mouth of Dunn's Creek'.¹⁰²