

Preface



Fig 1. 'Bungil's Cave, Flinders, 2006'

Reproduced with the permission of the Flinders District Historical Society.

This history started with maps. After a talk I gave to the Flinders District Historical Society (FDHS) in 2003, the president asked me to discover the real name of Stony Creek, Shoreham. My subsequent map research disclosed so many Aboriginal names that we formed a working group, and, confining ourselves only to the earliest records where the names came at first hand from the traditional owners of the land, we constructed the map entitled *The Boon-Wurrung Mornington Peninsula*: it was produced by Phil Hughes, Coordinator of the Mornington Peninsula Shire's Geographic Information Systems unit (GIS), and FDHS gave copies to all secondary schools on the Mornington Peninsula, as well as Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV), Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, the Surveyor-General, the Public Record Office of Victoria, and the Mornington Peninsula Historical Societies: this earliest edition of the map has been reproduced in an Indigenous publication. We also constructed a bibliography of Bungil's Cave and gave it to AAV, who made a site inspection in

conjunction with the Boon Wurrung Foundation Ltd, and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, and FDHS: as a consequence, Bungil's Cave has been placed on the register.

The names, however, were of antiquarian interest only in the absence of detailed knowledge of the activities of the Bonurong on the Mornington Peninsula in the early contact period. The library purchased from the Mitchell Library the 28 reels of the microfilmed Papers of the Assistant Protector William Thomas, and five years later, this book is the product of the research. There is little interpretation in it, no conclusion: on the contrary, the aim was to tell the story of the people's use of their land in that one year, bringing into the public domain as much of the original records as possible. The people's use of their land then led to other stories, before and after that one year, which enlarge our understanding of them. I aimed to bring individuals out of obscurity, to make connections, so that we can know them as persons, however imperfectly. I wrote in 1986 that the small details of Aboriginal lives are as important to an understanding of Australia's past as are the small details of European lives. Ian Clark quoted that in 2005, and I still believe it to be true in 2010. This book is offered as a resource book, and a platform for further research.

Joe Cauchi, Director, Sustainable Communities, Mornington Peninsula Shire, made the decision to purchase the microfilm. Geoff Carson, Manager, Libraries, Arts and Culture, and his library staff obtained material, did not charge for Inter Library Loans, gave extended loans, home loans from the reserve collection, and purchased for the library items of interest such as the authentic version of Georgiana McCrae's manuscripts; I appreciated very much this practical support and I thank them. Phil Hughes, GIS Coordinator, took Thomas' written distance and mileage figures, applied them to Smythe's maps, then overlaid the cadastre, and thus identified the sites: this could not have been done without him, and I thank him. All readers would share my indebtedness to Guy Holdgate, School of Earth Sciences, University of Melbourne, for his generosity in permitting his research findings regarding the water levels of Port Phillip to be published here: though he has lectured on them, they have not yet been published in the scientific literature. I am deeply grateful for the privilege. Thanks are due to Lighthouses of Australia for permission to reproduce from its collection the unique stereoscopic photo of the 1854 and 1883 Eastern lighthouses standing together while the latter was being erected.

I am grateful to the staff of the State Library of Victoria, especially Kevin Molloy, the Manuscripts librarian, who gave permission to read some treasures in the original when checks were necessary, and to Judith Scurfield, the Map librarian who was, as ever, helpful in sharing her great knowledge of the collection and finding relevant maps, and to Jane Miller who pursued George Smith with me and for me. The recently retired Microforms Librarian in the Mitchell Library,

Martin Beckett, was generous in providing me with readable copies where the microfilm could not be read because of age or damage to the original, and the Manuscripts Librarian, Tracy Bradford, kindly allowed me to read originals when all other efforts failed: I am grateful to both. Sebastian Gurciullo of the Public Record Office helped me in the same manner with Thomas' letters, as did Tony Morabito, Crown Land Registry, with maps, and I thank them both. Aboriginal Affairs Victoria provided the subsidy to the publishers of the monograph series, *Aboriginal History*, without which publication would not have been possible. This book was honoured in that *Aboriginal History* asked Niel Gunson to edit it, and Richard Barwick to do the illustrations. Both distinguished scholars in their own right, they have a long history of commitment to early contact history, and I am most grateful for their work. Any errors of course, are mine.

Families of researchers get used to 'I'm working' and I am grateful to mine, particularly those who read drafts, and those who rescued me from computer disasters, taught me new skills when my primitive technology failed, took photographs for me, formatted the finished text and so on: I am pleased that they think it was worthwhile being short-changed for a few years - Bob, and Nick and Rebecca, Ben and Nysa, Emma and Leigh.

Marie Hansen Fels
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