

ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Volume thirty-nine 2015

ABORIGINAL HISTORY

Volume thirty-nine 2015



Australian
National
University

P R E S S



Published by ANU Press and Aboriginal History Inc.
The Australian National University
Acton ACT 2601, Australia
Email: anupress@anu.edu.au
This title is also available online at press.anu.edu.au

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Aboriginal History Incorporated

Aboriginal History Inc. is a part of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University, and gratefully acknowledges the support of the School of History and the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University. Aboriginal History Inc. is administered by an Editorial Board which is responsible for all unsigned material. Views and opinions expressed by the author are not necessarily shared by Board members.

Editor: Liz Conor; Book Review Editor: Luise Hercus; Copyeditor: Geoff Hunt.

About Aboriginal History

Aboriginal History is a refereed journal that presents articles and information in Australian ethnohistory and contact and post-contact history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, are welcomed. Subjects include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, archival and bibliographic articles, and book reviews.

Contacting Aboriginal History

All correspondence should be addressed to the Editors, Aboriginal History Inc., ACIH, School of History, RSSH, 9 Fellows Road (Coombs Building), Acton, ANU, 2601, or aboriginal.history@anu.edu.au. Sales and orders for journals and monographs, and journal subscriptions: Thelma Sims, email: Thelma.Sims@anu.edu.au

WARNING: Readers are notified that this publication may contain names or images of deceased persons.

Cover design and layout by ANU Press

This edition © 2015 ANU Press and Aboriginal History Inc.

ISSN 0314-8769 (print)

ISSN 1837-9389 (electronic edition)

Contents

Preface.	ix
Liz Conor	
Contributors	xiii

Articles

Punishment as pacification: The role of Indigenous executions on the South Australian frontier, 1836–1862	3
Steven Anderson	
Unravelling the Yamaji imaginings of Alexander Morton and Daisy Bates.	27
Robin Barrington	
Harry Brown (c. 1819–1854): Contribution of an Aboriginal guide in Australian exploration	63
Greg Blyton	
Allawah Grove Native Settlement: Housing and assimilation	83
Sharon Delmege	
Hunger and the humanitarian frontier	109
Anne O'Brien	

Special Section: Aboriginal War Service

Edited by Allison Cadzow, Kristyn Harman and Noah Riseman

Introduction: Diversifying the black diggers' histories	137
Noah Riseman	
'Let us go' ... it's a 'Blackfellows' War': Aborigines and the Boer War.	143
John Maynard	
Aboriginal service in the First World War: Identity, recognition and the problem of mateship	163
Philippa Scarlett	

Lives twisted out of shape! Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers and the aftermath of the First World War.	183
Andrea Gerrard and Kristyn Harman	
‘Willing to fight to a man’: The First World War and Aboriginal activism in the Western District of Victoria	203
Jessica Horton	
‘The families were ... too poor to send them parcels’: The provision of comforts to Aboriginal soldiers in the AIF in the Second World War.	223
Kristyn Harman	

Book Reviews

Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness	247
By Eric Mjöberg	
The Aranda's Pepa: An Introduction to Carl Strehlow's Masterpiece, Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral Australien (1907–1920)	255
by Anna Kenny	
The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania	259
by Nicholas Clements	
Drawn from the Ground: Sound, Sign and Inscription in Central Australian Sand Stories	263
by Jennifer Green	
Encounters with Indigeneity: Writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	267
by Jeremy Beckett	
Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League	271
by Richard Broome	
The Invincibles. New Norcia's Aboriginal cricketers 1879–1906	275
by Bob Reece	
In the Eye of the Beholder: What Six Nineteenth-Century Women Tell Us about Indigenous Authority and Identity	279
by Barbara Dawson	
Indigenous People, Crime and Punishment	283
by Thalia Anthony	
James Grassie: Poet and Aboriginal Story Teller of Victoria	287
by Andrew Peake	
Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences	291
edited by Marshall Clark and Sally K. May	
Message From Mungo	295
by Andrew Pike and Ann McGrath	

On Track: Searching out the Bundian Way	299
by John Blay	
Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life Through the Prism of Drawing	303
by Melinda Hinkson	
Warrior: A Legendary Leader's Dramatic Life and Violent Death on the Colonial Frontier.	305
by Libby Connors	
Yamakarra! Liza Kennedy and the Keewong Mob	307
compiled by Western Heritage Group	
Information for authors	311
Aboriginal History Monograph Series	313

Preface

Liz Conor

La Trobe University
September 2015

Volume 39 of *Aboriginal History* is timely for the centenary of Gallipoli this year. The 56 Indigenous men who fought in this disastrous battle are duly noted in its special section on Aboriginal war service, edited by Allison Cadzow, Kristyn Harman and Noah Riseman. As Riseman points out in his preface, *Aboriginal History* can be credited as playing a leading role in the inception of growing interest in Indigenous combatants by devoting an earlier special issue to them in 1992, still nascent days for the field.

Growing public recognition of Aboriginal wartime service, however, hazards the affixed narratives and mythologies that often beset national remembrance of war. The Anzac myth has been riven with jingoism, particularly under the culture wars waged by recent conservative governments. Belated public interest in Indigenous service is thus susceptible to the suppression of racial discrimination and the diversity of Indigenous soldiers, and of forgetting that Indigenous servicemen fought for a 'white Australia'. Men circumvented regulations prohibiting the enlistment of persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent'; approximately 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served in both conflicts. The contributions to this edition's special section reappraise narratives and foster new avenues of inquiry, particularly on the impact of war service on families and communities, and in exploring how the entrance of Aboriginal men into Australian military service disrupted accustomed notions of defence of country.

John Maynard extends this service back to the South African Anglo-Boer War. Overwhelming public enthusiasm and patriotism was shared by Aboriginal communities who imagined their participation might secure national inclusion

and amend the historical emasculation of Aboriginal men. They faced less restriction on enlisting before state administrations tightened their regulatory control over Aboriginal movement and lives from 1910. By the First World War, military service offered an escape from board control. Despite fragmented archival evidence, Maynard shows that British commanders believed Boer guerilla resistance tactically required 'bushmen' skills, and particularly the skills of Indigenous trackers.

Andrea Gerrard and Kristyn Harman track the aftermath of the First World War for Tasmanian soldiers of Aboriginal descent. The 75 men who enlisted did not encounter the same obstruction in accessing repatriation benefits as did veterans in other states. Yet many made no claim on the 'Repat' scheme on their return while others were structurally obstructed by geographic isolation and illiteracy.

Recent recognition has emphasised the bonds forged in the level field of battle and of interracial friendship granting inclusion into the construct of Australian mateship. However, Philippa Scarlett challenges the 'mateship myth' of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) of the First World War. These egalitarian narratives are shown to harbour complex discrepancies in terms of equality which mateship did not guarantee, particularly on their return.

The denial of repatriation benefits fuelled Aboriginal people's post-war disenchantment and the political agitation of the 1920s and 1930s, as Jessica Horton shows. When military allotments and pensions were refused, assertions of national belonging deployed 'the language of citizenship so central to post-war political discourse'. Horton draws attention to local circumstance: men of the Victorian Western District did not disguise or suppress their Indigenous heritage to enlist in the AIF as they did in other regions. Men from Lake Condah drew on the language of 'Imperial loyalty, national service, personal sacrifice and masculine prowess' to express their motivations in claiming 'Britisher' identity. She finds it was in fact demand for land exacerbated by the Soldier Settlement Scheme that precipitated the closure of reserves, creating a new 'home front' for Gunditjmara veterans resisting ongoing dispossession. As noted there are many fronts in the defence of country.

Kristyn Harman looks at correspondence between white women and Aboriginal soldiers during the Second World War as overseen by the Aborigines Uplift Society's national comforts auxiliary. The paternalism of 'adopting' Aboriginal soldiers resonated uncomfortably with the policy of assimilation then being implemented by state protection and welfare boards. Enlisting men's own families were thought to be incapable of providing comforts to their men

overseas, yet Harman reveals the active participation of Aboriginal women from missions and reserves in the scheme, of women and girls knitting for the war effort at Cummeragunja Government Mission, New South Wales, in 1941.

Inclusion as facilitated through housing, rationing and welfare continues as a theme in the articles of Sharon Delmege and Anne O'Brien. Disruption to the ecological balance of bush food supplies continued unabated from first incursion. O'Brien's important history of hunger in the first half of the twentieth century in central and north Australia focuses on the provisioning at Ernabella mission in north-west South Australia in 1937. Earlier fears of dependency and pauperism as demoralising effects of relief found new impetus within post-war humanitarianism's anti-paternalism. O'Brien's research sheds light on the historical background for entrenched health disparities and the long reach of inappropriate and ineffective government policy, along with persistent public perceptions of deservedness.

The rationale for state intervention changed little in the move from assimilation to integration in the 1960s, as the goal of economic independence remained paramount. Sharon Delmege investigates policy implementation at Allawah Grove Native Settlement (1957–1969), Perth, to highlight what she sees as a missed opportunity in housing policy. Lack of access to public housing, barred private rental and local white opposition to Aboriginal residence was partly assuaged by establishing a temporary site at Allawah Grove as a palliative measure. Delmege shows that official policy created a class of fringe-dwellers and did little to realise the imposed ideal of Aboriginal assimilation. Residents afflicted with endemic health problems were treated as 'wayward minors in need of rehabilitation'. Rewards that never eventuated were held out to those deemed ready, who were encouraged to break reciprocal kinship ties, tearing at the fabric of the community. The yawning gap between policies for economic integration and their implementation are shown to founder around the critical resource of urban housing.

The grimmer antecedents to embedded disadvantage are studied in Steven Anderson's dispassionate article on Indigenous executions in South Australia, which reintroduced public hangings after they were abolished but only for Indigenous capital offenders. These public gibbetings served 'both a punitive and an elevated didactic function' in the frontier theatre of punishment. The ritual and spectacle of public executions was adapted to local crime scenes to graphically effect deterrence. Indigenous resistance to settler incursion was met with haphazard and arbitrary selection of offenders – often merely present at raids – who were hung as examples before their families and communities. Notably, murders between Aborigines were not punished with execution, attesting the critical role of capital punishment in frontier pacification.

The intercession of Europeans into Aboriginal homelands was less often met with violence than assistance. The little-known story of Harry Brown, guide to Ludwig Leichhardt on two expeditions into the interior, complicates dominant narratives of Aboriginal guides as subservient. As Greg Blyton elucidates, Brown flouted Leichhardt's authority on a number of occasions and undoubtedly saved his life – he was notably absent on Leichhardt's third and fateful expedition. Brown scouted the route ahead into country also foreign to him, found water when supplies were critically low, hunted game, fended off an attack and navigated the party's return. His exceptional abilities as an explorer in his own right are justly celebrated by Blyton.

Accurate representation of Indigenous Australians is thus a matter of public record and fitting commemoration. It is also manifestly important to descendants, as Robin Barrington shows in her corrective to the colonial visual archive. The photograph's status as 'privileged anthropological evidentiary document' is challenged in her riposte to public constructions of Yamaji individuals by Daisy Bates and Alexander Morton. Under her analysis these artefacts, circulated in scientific texts and in the popular register as postcards, are correctly reattributed, retrieved from the discursive violence of erasure and reinstated as precious family records.

In this volume, I assumed the role of editor and must thank my predecessor Shino Konishi for her work on the early stages of this edition and for passing on such an applied system for tracking the otherwise convoluted stages of submission, editing and production. Thanks also goes to reviews editor Luise Hercus, copyeditor Geoff Hunt and the journal's board members, particularly past editor Maria Nugent, for her ready guidance, and also to staff at ANU Press, especially Emily Tinker.

In its 30 years, the journal *Aboriginal History* has been widely regarded as a flagship journal in the field of Australian Aboriginal history. Its high standard of scholarship and openness to different methods, theories and approaches, its foregrounding of Indigenous scholars and inclusiveness of emerging scholars – along with new research that crosses into Aboriginal history from other disciplines – entrusts me with an established and deserved reputation. I hope this edition fulfils its mission of publishing the highest standard of scholarship in interdisciplinary Indigenous history, drawing on unconventional archives, providing new resources for researchers, as well as intervening in recently simplified discourses of national identity. As Bain Attwood observes in his history of the journal, *Aboriginal History* was formed 'in a moment of ferment that was both scholarly and political in nature'. I trust these aspirations for the journal, for scholarly intervention with an emphasis on 'inter-cultural' history foregrounding Aboriginal perspectives on European Indigenous encounters, are apparent in this edition.

Contributors

Steven Anderson is a PhD candidate in history at the University of Adelaide. His research concerns the history of capital punishment in colonial Australia with a special focus on the abolition of public executions. In 2013, he was the National Library of Australia's Norman McCann Summer Scholar and in 2014 was runner-up for the Ken Inglis Postgraduate Prize at the Australian Historical Association's Annual Conference held at the University of Queensland. In 2014, he co-authored a publication with Paul Sendziuk for *The Journal of Australian Colonial History* that examined the relationship between capital punishment and transported convicts in early South Australian history.

Robin Barrington is a Badimia Yamaji woman from the Murchison area of Western Australia. She has contributed to Indigenous education over the last 30 years and is a lecturer in Indigenous Australian Cultural Studies at Curtin University. She is completing a PhD by research on the representation of Yamaji people in photographic and written texts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The research traces significant Yamaji figures through the colonial archive to reconstruct the social biographies of photographs and the Yamaji subjects in them. She was awarded a Museum Victoria 1854 Scholarship in 2012, and her research has identified important historical information on the uses and collection of Yamaji material and cultural objects during this period.

Dr Greg Blyton is an Indigenous lecturer, historian and researcher at the Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle, where he specialises in Aboriginal history, health and social justice. He has worked extensively throughout many parts of Australia as a health worker, including remote communities in Central Australia. Dr Blyton is a strong advocate of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, which aims to bring resolution to barriers in Australian reconciliation and to promote greater understanding and appreciation of Australian Aboriginal people and culture.

Dr Liz Conor is a senior research fellow at La Trobe University and last year's Abbot Placid Spearritt Memorial Fellow at New Norcia. Her PhD was published as *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s*, by Indiana University Press in 2004. She has completed an Australian Research Council (ARC) postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Culture and Communications at the University of Melbourne from which she wrote *Skin Deep: Settler Impressions of Aboriginal Women* (UWAP, forthcoming 2016). She is editor of the scholarly journal *Aboriginal History* and former editor of *Metro Magazine* and *Australian Screen Education*. Her freelance essays and editorials have appeared in *The Age*, *The Drum*, *Crikey.com*, *Arena* and she is a columnist at *New Matilda*. Her blog has been archived by the National Library of Australia.

Dr Sharon Delmege is the Chair of Communication and Media Studies in the School of Arts at Murdoch University. Her research interests draw on a range of disciplines from political economy, cultural studies, Western Australian history and Australian Indigenous studies and she works across the areas of media, communication and culture. She created a large unit on World Indigenous Knowledges and is currently writing a book on creativity and innovation that is based on her teaching practice. Her doctorate, 'The Fringedwellers Struggle: Cultural Politics and the Force of History', was awarded for her research into the making of the fringe-dweller in the south-west of Western Australia and her examination of the conditions between 1977 and 1994 that allowed the Fringe Dwellers of the Swan Valley to secure title to land in Perth. She has continued to examine the links between legislation, politics and the media, with a particular focus on cultural politics and Aboriginal housing in Perth in the twentieth century. Most recently, *Australian Historical Studies* published her article on Aboriginal housing, focusing on the transition from camp life to suburbia in Perth.

Andrea Gerrard recently completed her Master of Arts thesis at the University of Tasmania, focusing on Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers in the First World War. She has been involved in Tasmanian history for approximately 30 years, including as a research assistant with the ARC-funded, multi-university 'Founders and Survivors' project, which links convict ancestors with their First World War descendants and investigates their life courses. Andrea has worked with Roar Film as a researcher on their production part of the 'Founders and Survivors' project, as well as with Roar Film and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as part of their collaboration to produce a digital interpretation of the First World War experiences of Aboriginal soldiers from the Bass Strait islands.

Dr Kristyn Harman is a Senior Lecturer within the School of Humanities at the University of Tasmania who specialises in cross-cultural encounters across Britain's nineteenth-century colonies, and twentieth-century Australasia. Her thematic research interests cohere around sociocultural frontiers, including transportation to, and within, the British Empire's penal colonies; frontier warfare; Indigenous incarceration; colonial domesticity; and the Australian and New Zealand homefronts during the Second World War. Winner of the 2014 Australian Historical Association Kay Daniels award for her book *Aboriginal Convicts: Australian, Khoisan, and Māori Exiles* (UNSW Press, 2012), Kristyn's work is represented in top-tier journals, including *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, and *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*.

Jessica Horton is a PhD candidate in the history program at La Trobe University. Her thesis explores the letter writing of Victorian Aboriginal people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jessica has taught history at several universities and published articles in *Journal of Australian Studies* and *History Australia*.

Professor John Maynard is a Worimi man from the Port Stephens region of New South Wales. He is a Director at the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle and Chair of Indigenous History. He has held several major positions and served on numerous prominent organisations and committees, including as Deputy Chair of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association, New South Wales History Council, Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC), Australian Research Council College of Experts – Deputy Chair Humanities, National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN) and the NSW Fulbright Committee. He was the recipient of the Aboriginal History (ANU) Stanner Fellowship 1996, New South Wales Premier's Indigenous History Fellow 2003, Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow 2004, University of Newcastle Researcher of the Year 2008 and 2012, (ANU) Allan Martin History Lecturer 2010 and Fellow of the Australian Social Sciences Academy. He gained his PhD in 2003, examining the rise of early Aboriginal political activism. He has worked with and within many Aboriginal communities – urban, rural and remote. Professor Maynard's publications have concentrated on the intersections of Aboriginal political and social history, and the history of Australian race relations. He is the author of several books: *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf*, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, *The Aboriginal Soccer Tribe*, *Aborigines and the Sport of Kings* and *True Light and Shade: An Aboriginal Perspective of Joseph Lycett's Art*. He has appeared on numerous television and radio programs, including *The Track*, *The Colony*, *Vote Yes for Aborigines*, *Captain Cook Obsession and Discovery*, *Outback United*, *Lachlan Macquarie: The Father of Australia*, *The Years that Made Us* and *Australia: The Story of Us*.

Anne O'Brien is an historian in the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of New South Wales. She has written widely in the fields of welfare history, women's and gender history and religious history. Her most recent major publication is *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). She is currently researching a history of the homeless in Australia.

Dr Noah Riseman is a Senior Lecturer in history at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. He specialises in the history of marginalised social groups in the Australian military, particularly LGBTI and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. He is the author of *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (2012), *In Defence of Country: Life Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Servicemen and Women* (ANU Press, forthcoming) and co-author of *Defending Australia, Defending Indigenous Rights: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service since 1945* (University of Queensland Press, forthcoming 2016).

Philippa Scarlett is an Honours graduate in history from the University of Sydney with a background in archives dating from 1970. Her commitment to Aboriginal history began in 1993 with research into Warangesda mission in New South Wales. The discovery of the service of Warangesda men was the beginning of her involvement in Aboriginal war service, which continued when, as a member of the National Archives of Australia's Bringing Them Home team from 2001 to 2004, she was active in the location of service records of Aboriginal people. Her continuing research focuses on the contribution these records make to the history of Aboriginal individuals and families and has resulted in publications on the relevance of service records to Darug history and, most recently, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF: The Indigenous Response to World War One* (2011). Her website, indigenoushistories.com, is archived by the National Library of Australia.

Articles

Punishment as pacification: The role of Indigenous executions on the South Australian frontier, 1836–1862

Steven Anderson¹

Black men, this is the white's punishment for murder, the next time white men are killed in this country more punishment will be given. Let none of you take these bodies down, they must hang till they fall in pieces. We are now friends, and will remain so, unless more white people are killed, when the Governor will send me, and plenty more policemen, and punish much more severely. All are forgiven except those who actually killed the wrecked people, who, if caught, will also be hung. You may go now, but remember this day, and tell what you have seen to your old men, women, and children.²

— Police Commissioner Thomas O'Halloran addressing the Milmenrura (through a translator) after the execution of two Indigenous men following the 'Maria Massacre' in 1840.

When Major Thomas O'Halloran articulated the government's position to the Milmenrura in front of a makeshift gallows at the Coorong in August 1840, he may as well have repeated it at every one of South Australia's 23 Indigenous executions. The gibbetting of the bodies was unique on this occasion but the idea that Indigenous hangings were to serve both a punitive and an elevated didactic function in the colony was not. Unlike public executions for European offenders which always took place in or around the Adelaide Gaol, public Indigenous hangings occurred at the scene of the crime with settlers and fellow tribesmen encouraged, sometimes forced, to watch. Recognising that race was

1 I wish to thank Associate Professors Paul Sendziuk and Rob Foster from the University of Adelaide for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this paper. I am also indebted to the two anonymous reviewers who offered constructive and helpful feedback on the submitted article.

2 O'Halloran quoted in Tolmer 1972 [1882]: 190.

a determining factor in the treatment of a capital offender, this paper shows how pioneering South Australians placed great value on the violent theatre of the gallows, as it was thought to pacify a troublesome Indigenous population who did not share British culture or language. It was a belief that culminated in the successful passage of an 1861 amendment through the South Australian Parliament that made provisions for the reintroduction of public executions for Indigenous offenders.³ This was after public executions for all capital offenders, regardless of race, had been abolished three years prior in 1858.⁴

In the analysis below, the spectacle of frontier hangings are invested with much greater significance than has previously been the case in major South Australian contact histories.⁵ Sentencing an Indigenous person to death was more than just punishment; it was a calculated stage-play intended to simultaneously terrify and teach Indigenous people that resistance to British colonisation would not be tolerated. The limited scholarship dedicated to capital punishment in South Australia has also failed to articulate this role of the gallows when directed at Indigenous peoples.⁶ This is in contrast to a number of scholars working in non-South Australian contexts who have noted, with varying brevity, how public executions were calculated to edify, and even terrify, Indigenous audiences.⁷ Capital punishment was an active ingredient in colonisation and ought to sit alongside more conventional thinking about how Europeans came to dispossess and pacify traditional societies – the appropriation of productive land, forced cultural and linguistic assimilation, exclusion from the political process and unchecked settler violence to name but a few. With a deeper understanding of the role of public executions in South Australian contact history, the argument presented below will provide long-term context to some of the individual case studies of Indigenous hangings that already exist in this jurisdiction.⁸ It may also provide a point of comparison to those who have written on specific clusters of Indigenous hangings in other Australian colonies.⁹ Finally, it is hoped the

3 *Act to amend an Act, no. 23 of 22nd Victoria, intituled 'An Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals' 1861 (SA) (25 Victoria, no. 1).*

4 *Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals 1858 (SA) (22 Victoria, no. 23).*

5 Foster and Nettlebeck 2012; Foster et al. 2001; Pope 1989, 2011.

6 Griffiths 1970; Towler and Porter 1990; Porter 1995. The focus of a recent paper by Paul Sendziuk and myself was on the high number of criminals with convict backgrounds executed in South Australia, not Indigenous hangings, see Anderson and Sendziuk 2014.

7 Connors 1992; Finnane and McGuire 2001; Hogg 2001; McGuire 1998.

8 Hamann 1979; Liddy 1993; 'Pivot Point', 'Murder and Mistrust' and 'Battara Battlefield' in Pope 1989: 57–65, 66–72, 93–97; Schmaal 1975.

9 Adams 2009; Barber 1975; Connors 1992, 2009; Davies 1987; Finnane and Richards 2010; Harris 1982.

discussion will add more detail to the existing literature on South Australian legal history as well as provide a postscript for how the ritual of public executions, originally borrowed from England, was transformed to suit frontier contexts.¹⁰

Western Australia offers the best comparison to South Australia regarding the distinctive treatment given to Indigenous capital offenders. The colony mimics a legal narrative in which public executions gave way to private executions in 1871, only for the law to be amended in 1875 to allow for the resumption of public executions for Indigenous offenders.¹¹ Similarly, Western Australia often carried out Indigenous executions at the scene of the crime as well as occasionally displaying the body after death.¹² The proportion of Aborigines executed in both South Australia and Western Australia approaches 50 per cent of the total number of people hanged during the colonial period.¹³ Queensland never formally reintroduced public executions after they were discontinued in 1855, but sometimes allowed for a controlled number of spectators to attend non-European prison hangings well into the 1890s.¹⁴ The proportion of Indigenous people executed in Queensland was much lower though, supplanted by a high number of Islander and Asian capital offenders to go with the Europeans.¹⁵ In complete contrast are the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, which seldom altered the public execution ceremony for Indigenous people and never contemplated its formal reintroduction once abolished.

10 For scholarship on the legal history of South Australia in the period concerning this paper, see especially, Ward 2010; Hague 2005; Castles and Harris 1987. For an overview of the legal history of Australia with a strong focus on the colonial period, see Castles 1982; Kercher 1995. The South Australian practice of public executions was borrowed from the English experience. For the extensive scholarship on the gallows in their original English context, see among others, Devereaux and Griffiths 2004; Gatrell 1994; Linebaugh 2003; McGowen 1994.

11 *An Act to provide for carrying out of Capital Punishment within Prisons 1871* (WA) (34 Victoria, no. 15); *An Act to amend 'The Capital Punishment Amendment Act, 1871'* 1875 (WA) (39 Victoria, no. 1).

12 Purdue 1993; Adams 2009.

13 Of the 120 people executed in Western Australia during the period 1840–1900 exactly half were Indigenous, see McGuire 1998: table opposite 187. Of the 47 people executed in South Australia during the period 1836–1900, 23 were Indigenous, see Towler and Porter 1990.

14 This was especially the case for capital offenders from the Pacific Islands where a limited number of spectators, drawn from the same ethnicity, were permitted to watch the private execution, see McGuire 1998: 203–208.

15 McGuire 1998: table opposite 187.

1836–1858: Accounting for Indigenous ‘outrages’ on the frontier

Of the 66 people executed in the history of South Australia 23 were Indigenous, all of whom were hanged within the first 26 years of European settlement.¹⁶ What these numbers fail to reveal is that the crimes of executed Aborigines tended to be committed on the then fringes of European civilisation. Starting in the immediate vicinity of Adelaide, the epicentre for confrontation soon migrated to the Eyre Peninsula, where 14 of the 23 Indigenous executions took place. Like a heat map tracking the advancing frontier, Indigenous crime did not rise in the colony of South Australia but was instead created by the steady march of colonisation ever outward. The victims of Indigenous aggression and resistance were the most isolated men and women of the colony – shepherds, hutkeepers and their families. Capital punishment accounted for such ‘outrages’ on the frontier, to borrow a popular expression of the era, yet also began to perform a number of surplus functions for settlers, not all strictly punitive. During the first decades of colonisation, official law enforcement was ineffectually papered over a vast frontier.¹⁷ Into this physical void the primitive theatre of the scaffold was harnessed to graphically illustrate to the traditional owners of the land that future violence against settlers would not be tolerated.¹⁸

The first Aborigines to be hanged were Yerr-i-Cha and Wang Nucha¹⁹ on 31 May 1839 in the Adelaide Parklands.²⁰ Although they were executed for two separate instances of murder, their crimes were quite alike and based on the want of food.²¹ Yerr-i-Cha was convicted of murdering a shepherd named William Duffell on the bank of the River Torrens on 21 April 1839.²² Only a week later, Wang Nucha killed James Thomson who was minding sheep near the Little Para River.²³ *The Register* concluded that the double execution ‘will act

16 ‘Execution, Whippings and Commuted Death Sentence Register’, GRS 2625/1, State Records of South Australia (hereafter SRSA); Towler and Porter 1990. For a concise table of Indigenous offenders sentenced to death during the period 1836–1862 with brief case details see Pope 2011: 175–178.

17 Even Governor Gawler acknowledged the impossibility of safeguarding those on the frontier: ‘it must be evident to every one who fully examines the subject, that no measures of police can be sufficient, in a territory so widely extended, absolutely to protect isolated individuals’, *The South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, 18 May 1839: 2. See also Clyne 1987; Nettelbeck and Foster 2007; Pope 2011.

18 Though far removed from the frontiers of South Australia, much has been made of amplifying the spectacle of punishment in particular periods of European history when the state’s grip on the monopoly on the use of force was contestable, see Foucault 1995 [1975]; Spierenburg 1984.

19 The names of some Indigenous offenders have been spelt differently in the studies of Pope, Towler and Porter, and Griffiths due to inconsistencies found in the primary documents. In this paper I have largely followed the naming conventions of Towler and Porter.

20 *The South Australian Register*, 1 June 1839.

21 ‘Pivot Point’ in Pope 1989: 57–65.

22 *The South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, 25 May 1839: 2–4.

23 *The South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register*, 25 May 1839: 2–4.

as a terror' to the Aborigines and 'be a means of deterring them in future from interfering in any way with the property or lives of the settlers'.²⁴ Later that year, the newspaper did not waiver in its conviction that the hangings had served their expressed purpose:

Since the terrible example of May last of the execution of two blacks ... the natives generally have conducted themselves in the most peaceful manner, so much so, as to have dispelled in the minds even of the most timid, all apprehensions of future danger from that source.²⁵

The experience of the 'Maria Massacre' would, however, make those statements appear naively optimistic. In late July 1840, a brig called the *Maria* with 26 passengers on board ran aground near the Coorong.²⁶ More worryingly, it was rumoured that the survivors had fallen foul of the local Milmenrura clan, a group of the Ngarrindjeri people, who were engaged to guide the Europeans back to Adelaide.²⁷ Captain W. J. S. Pullen was quickly despatched to investigate and, after a 16-day expedition, his journal made for gruesome reading:

[T]he sight I witnessed was truly horrible. There were legs, arms, and portions of bodies, partially covered with sand. In one place was a body with the flesh completely off the bones, with the exception of the hands and feet ... The bodies were in a complete state of nudity and dreadfully bruised about the face and head.²⁸

Whether the hellish scene Pullen stumbled across was born of European arrogance, sexual misdemeanours, or a simple misunderstanding over payment has been a topic of subsequent speculation.²⁹ Though, after spotting a group of Aborigines with bloodstained blankets and clothing, Pullen was sure he was among the perpetrators. Specifically, two Milmenrura men looked the most responsible, for 'if looks were a sufficient condemnation ... they were the most villainous looking characters I ever saw'.³⁰

Described as a grizzly tale of 'villainy' and 'uncivilized aggression', the 'Maria Massacre' was the single largest murder of Europeans by Indigenous people in Australian colonial history.³¹ At a special meeting of the Legislative Council convened the day after receiving Pullen's journal, the Judge and Advocate-General of the colony shared their belief with the Governor that the 'crimes in question were beyond the reach of ordinary British law, and that it was

24 *The South Australian Register*, 1 June 1839.

25 *The South Australian Register*, 26 October 1839: 4–6.

26 *The Southern Australian*, 25 July 1840.

27 Foster et al. 2001: 13.

28 *The South Australian Register*, 15 August 1840: 6.

29 Foster et al. 2001: 17–19.

30 *The South Australian Register*, 15 August 1840: 6.

31 Foster et al. 2001: 13.

imperative that retribution should be inflicted'.³² Gawler responded by ordering a punitive expedition under the command of Police Commissioner Major Thomas O'Halloran. Gawler also declared martial law at this point (although it was not declared publicly at the time) to indemnify the participants against any adverse legal repercussions stemming from their actions.³³

Governor Gawler's order to O'Halloran was to travel to the site of the killings and 'apprehend, and bring to summary justice, the ringleaders in the murder, or any of the murderers (in all not to exceed three)'.³⁴ Upon arriving in Milmenrura territory O'Halloran's party began to 'capture' groups of people, ask for the identity of the murderers and then search their 'wurleys' for evidence.³⁵ Two Milmenrura men who ran from O'Halloran's troopers by swimming across a nearby lake were shot and wounded pursuant to the orders of the Police Commissioner.³⁶ The investigation continued until two Milmenrura men were eventually charged by O'Halloran and convicted at a drumhead court martial.³⁷ It was said that the first, Mangarawata, was the murderer of the *Maria* survivors and the second, Pilgarie,³⁸ was the murderer of a whaler named Roach – a European killed in the area two years prior.³⁹ As for the burden of proof applied to the two men, O'Halloran reported upon his return to Adelaide that 'neither of the culprits denied [murdering the Europeans], though they would not actually confess their guilt'.⁴⁰ After one false start in which the rope was too long and the sand not cleared from under their feet, Pilgarie and Mangarawata were hanged at the scene of the massacre on 25 August 1840.⁴¹

The government's punitive response to the 'Maria Massacre' clearly demonstrates how capital punishment was to account for any 'outrages' on the South Australian frontier, just as it had in the less sensational cases of Yerr-i-Cha and Wang Nucha the previous year. In a reflection published in Hansard 21 years on from the summary trial and execution at the Coorong, O'Halloran appeared pleased by the expedition's outcome: 'The effect of that execution was marked and lasting; the gallows were even left standing by the blacks, and instead of molesting the whites, they have been known to bring some who had lost themselves on

32 Tolmer 1972 [1882]: 178.

33 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1840: 2.

34 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1840: 4.

35 *The South Australian Register*, 12 September 1840: 2.

36 *The South Australian Register*, 12 September 1840: 2; Pope 2011: 18.

37 Hague 2005: 767.

38 Pilargie is the name given in Tolmer's account but the second person executed is also referred to as Moorcangua in O'Halloran's report.

39 *The South Australian Register*, 12 September 1840: 2.

40 O'Halloran quoted in Pope 2011: 18.

41 Tolmer 1972 [1882]: 189.

to Encounter Bay.⁴² Notwithstanding some of the contemporary criticism of his actions, O'Halloran concluded that 'he had done what was right, and as a soldier he had done his duty'.⁴³

The practice of public executions was adopted as the colonisation of Australia's southern shores moved westward. Excluding the four 'Rainbird Murderers' executed in 1861 (discussed below) and the case of Wera Maldera hanged for a murder in the Coorong in 1845, between 1841 and 1862 all Indigenous executions were for crimes committed on the Eyre Peninsula. Stories of Aborigines purposefully driving away livestock, raiding European crops and plundering the supplies of outlying stations were commonplace on the Eyre Peninsula, especially in the early years of settlement.⁴⁴ Due to the continuing resistance offered by the local Indigenous peoples, the population of Port Lincoln fell from 270 in 1840 to 128 in February 1842, stifling economic growth.⁴⁵ The remaining settlers even began to flirt with the idea of abandoning the township of Port Lincoln entirely during the worst days of 1842.⁴⁶ To combat Indigenous resistance, the *Southern Australian* demanded that the response at Port Lincoln echo the one taken by O'Halloran at the Coorong in 1840:

[There] are few acquainted with Encounter Bay but would know the good effect which this proper example had. Would not the same judicious step do good at Port Lincoln, on any of a tribe who were known to be at a murder, instead of waiting till the identical one is taken who threw the fatal spear, of which there is as much chance of catching the crow which stole the seed of wheat?⁴⁷

If there were any doubts about the serious situation on the Eyre Peninsula, they would be wholeheartedly dispelled at two related trials in the Supreme Court in 1843. There Charles Stubbs twice took to the witness stand bearing not just his testimony but several wounds and only one of his eyes – the other had been lost to a spear. At the first trial in March, Stubbs appeared for the prosecution in the case of two Aborigines, Nultia and Moullia, who were charged with the murder of Rolles Biddle on 28 March 1842.⁴⁸ Stubbs was a shepherd for Biddle and present when approximately 36 Aborigines raided the station. According to his testimony, the attackers were arranged in rows and began throwing spears at the hut for almost an hour while potatoes and clothing were stolen. After a brief intermission, the raiding party returned but this time they numbered around

42 *South Australian Parliamentary Debates* (hereafter *SAPD*), 14 May 1861: 92.

43 O'Halloran quoted in, *SAPD*, 14 May 1861: 92. *The Register* was his most vocal opponent, stating that O'Halloran's summary trial was 'illegal and unconstitutional', with the two Indigenous men executed upon evidence insufficient to 'hang a dog', see *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1840: 2.

44 Clyne 1987: 73–79; Pope 1989: 74–78, 93–97; Foster 2009: 68.3; Wanklyn and Wanklyn 1971: 7–14.

45 Wanklyn and Wanklyn 1971: 7.

46 Wanklyn and Wanklyn 1971: 7.

47 *The Southern Australian*, 29 March 1842 quoted in Clyne 1987: 75–76.

48 *The South Australian Register*, 25 March 1843: 2–3.

80. Four Europeans were at the station by this point: the witness (Stubbs), his wife, Biddle and another station hand named Fastings. On seeing the swollen number of Aborigines, the males in the party attempted to protect the hut using a shotgun, hitting at least three of the attackers.⁴⁹ Soon Fastings was speared in the thigh and they eventually retreated to the station hut which became surrounded. The first to die was Biddle from a spear thrown through the window, second was Fastings who was murdered with a pitchfork and, finally, Stubbs' wife was stabbed to death using a pair of sheep shears.⁵⁰ Stubbs himself was speared four times; once in the head, another in his left eye and twice on his right side.⁵¹ Left for dead, the shepherd somehow managed to escape and become the Crown's only witness.

Upon hearing Stubbs' testimony the jury found the two prisoners guilty without having left the court. Despite the jury's haste, Moullia's sentence of death was later commuted to a lesser punishment by Governor George Grey who thought it was possible Stubbs had misidentified him.⁵² The Governor's decision was reached after a meeting of the Executive Council where persistent doubts over Moullia's involvement in the murders were personally raised by Police Commissioner O'Halloran as well as the court interpreter.⁵³ After initially being 'left in shackles at Port Lincoln gaol', Moullia was eventually pardoned in 1845.⁵⁴ For Nultia, known to Stubbs before the incident, a case of mistaken identity was deemed less likely. Nultia was hanged on 7 April 1843 upon a scaffold symbolically erected outside Biddle's ransacked hut, 20 miles from Port Lincoln.

The murders at Biddle's station were destined to re-emerge as a prominent issue in the colony just months later. On 23 June 1843, Ngarbi, a 'Port Lincoln black', was charged with assaulting a local settler by the name of Edward McAllister but was then tied to the Biddle murders.⁵⁵ As one newspaper explained:

It appears that on Wednesday, 10 May [1843], while Mr. McAllister was working in his garden at Port Lincoln, about forty or fifty blacks suddenly presented themselves, armed with spears and clubs. They told him to be off, that the murderers of Mr. Biddle were there, and that they would murder him too if he did

49 *The South Australian Register*, 25 March 1843: 2–3.

50 *The South Australian Register*, 25 March 1843: 2–3.

51 *The South Australian Register*, 22 July 1843: 2.

52 Governor Grey had respected the opinion of the majority of the Executive Council that found, two votes to one, that Moullia's death sentence should be commuted, Minutes of the Executive Council, 28 March 1843, GRG 40/1/Vol. 3 (1843–1855): 3–7, SRSA.

53 Minutes of the Executive Council, 27 March 1843, GRG 40/1/Vol. 3 (1843–1855): 1–3, SRSA.

54 *The Southern Australian*, 18 April 1843: 2; Pope 2011: 89. For a collection of essays on the historical use of mercy in Australia, England and Canada during the era of violent bodily punishment, see Strange 1996.

55 Pope suggests that McAllister was a 'cruel and barbaric' station owner who was particularly loathed by the local Aborigines for his readiness to use firearms in the vicinity of his property, Pope 1989: 81.

not go. The Prosecutor then went into his house, barred his doors and windows, and fired at the blacks through a port-hole. One of them at last dropped from the effects of his shot, and the rest went away.⁵⁶

When Ngarbi was brought into custody a month after this incident, McAllister identified him as one of the 'forty or fifty' Aborigines present at his house that day. Consequently, Ngarbi was ordered to stand trial for the murder of Elizabeth Stubbs, the wife of the Crown witness who testified at the earlier trial for the murdered Rolles Biddle.⁵⁷ Proceedings at the Supreme Court began in July 1843 when the prosecution swore in Charles Stubbs to the witness stand once more. After recounting for a second time how Biddle's station came to be swamped by 80 Aborigines (Ngarbi now included), the jury found the defendant guilty of killing Elizabeth Stubbs 'almost immediately'.⁵⁸ This was despite Stubbs revealing at this second trial that he had severely restricted sight when the murders were happening. Speared in the left eye, Stubbs 'could not see for blood' when Ngarbi was said to have murdered his wife.⁵⁹ Ngarbi's sentence of death was carried out on 1 August 1843, but this time the execution occurred outside Adelaide Gaol.

As the European presence grew more permanent on the Eyre Peninsula such large-scale Indigenous 'raids' were replaced by smaller conflicts with isolated shepherds and hutkeepers. On 9 November 1849, Kulgulta and Mingulta were executed at Taunto, 54 miles from Port Lincoln for the murder of the shepherd James Beevor.⁶⁰ Seven years later, on 14 January 1856, 'four Aboriginal natives of Port Lincoln' – Waduilli, Pangulta, Ilyelta and Weenpulta – were executed at Franklin Harbour for the murder of a local shepherd named Peter Brown.⁶¹ One story emerged after the execution of Kulgulta and Mingulta in *The Southern Australian* which would have assured many colonists on the Eyre. After 'some exertion' by the police to round up an audience of 'natives', only the attendance of one Indigenous boy was secured:

The boy went away and was next heard of at Mr Dunkin's station, about five miles to the west of Taunto [the place of execution], where by that time a number of natives had assembled. To them he went through in pantomime the whole scene of death, erecting a mimic gallows and imitating even the last struggles of

56 *The Southern Australian*, 27 June 1843: 3.

57 *The Southern Australian*, 27 June 1843: 3.

58 *The South Australian Register*, 22 July 1843: 2.

59 *The South Australian Register*, 22 July 1843: 2. Hearing his wife call out 'Oh Jemmy' at the moment of her death was enough to put Ngarbi at the scene of the crime by Stubbs' reckoning because, regrettably for Ngarbi, he was assigned the name 'Little Jemmy' by some of the Europeans on the Eyre Peninsula.

60 *The Adelaide Times*, 17 November 1849: 3–4; Towler and Porter 1990: 48.

61 *The South Australian Register*, 21 January 1856: 4; Towler and Porter 1990: 59.

the murderers. It is the opinion of the settlers of the district, many more of whom would have been present but that they were in the midst of the shearing, that the example will have a beneficial effect.⁶²

Six more Indigenous people were hanged on the Eyre Peninsula: Manyella at Streaky Bay in 1860, Nilgerie and Tilcherie at Fowlers Bay in 1861, Karabidne and Mangeltie at Venus Bay in 1861 and Meengulta at Venus Bay in 1862. Collectively, their victims consisted of two hutkeepers, a shepherd and the wife of a shepherd, but the circumstances of these hangings are more appropriately discussed in later sections.

In the particular cases mentioned above of Yerr-i-Cha, Ngarbi and the two Milmenrura men hanged in response to the 'Maria Massacre', serious questions can be raised as to whether the offenders were correctly identified.⁶³ Otherwise, Alan Pope has suggested that, once indicted, Indigenous defendants at murder and manslaughter trials received relatively fair trials given the legal standards of the day.⁶⁴ In Pope's broader view, however, the application of criminal law in South Australia was far from colour-blind during the early decades of settlement and used as an instrument to protect European interests above those of Indigenous peoples.⁶⁵ Such findings are confirmed by a number of passing points relating to the use of the death penalty in South Australian history. To begin with, only one European was ever hanged for the murder of an Indigenous person,⁶⁶ despite the well-documented killing of many more on the South Australian frontier.⁶⁷ Moreover, every Indigenous execution in South Australia was for the murder of a European settler with murders committed *inter se* (between Aborigines) never once punished by death.⁶⁸ Finally, during the colonial period (1836–1901) successive governors were less likely to commute Indigenous capital sentences than their non-Indigenous counterparts, a trend

62 *The Southern Australian*, 16 November 1849: 2.

63 See above for concerns over Stubbs' testimony at the trial of Ngarbi and also for the burden of proof applied to those executed in response to the 'Maria Massacre'. As for Yerr-i-Cha, three Indigenous men were originally tried for the murder of Duffell but he died before a positive identification of Yerr-i-Cha could be made, Pope 1989: 61; Summers 1986: 289.

64 Pope 2011: 104.

65 Pope 2011: 157–173.

66 Thomas Donnelly was executed in 1847 for the murder of Kingberrie, or 'Billy', near Rivoli Bay. His case at the Supreme Court was not helped by the fact that he was a former convict, see Anderson and Sendziuk 2014. For other secondary accounts of Donnelly's case, see Levison 1993; Pitt, 'Thomas Donnelly and the Shooting of the Native "Billy"', Research Note 237, State Library of South Australia; 'Execution of T. Donnelly', GRG 24/6, 1847/358, 382, SRSA.

67 Nettlebeck and Foster 2010. Across Australia, Andrew Markus states that less than 20 cases are known where Europeans were executed for crimes against an Indigenous person, compared to an estimated 20,000 Indigenous people killed by Europeans during the same period, these figures are quoted in Finnane and McGuire 2001: 283; Markus 1994: 46–49.

68 Finnane 2011: 246–247.

that was even more pronounced in the first decades of settlement.⁶⁹ These factors point to the gallows being used in a particular way that was, at the very least, favourable to the prerogatives of colonisation and repression. As for the isolated settler on the frontier, the spectacle of Indigenous hangings was seen not only as a justified response to Indigenous aggression but also a guarantee of their future safety.

1858–1861: Hang the natives ... in private?

By the 1850s a pattern had emerged as to how South Australia's Indigenous offenders should be executed. Never codified into law, convention dictated that the execution was to take place as near to the scene of the crime as possible, in front of the offender's people and for the condemned man's body to be buried nearby. This was the habit for nearly every Indigenous execution in the era of public executions in South Australia (1836–1858). The exceptions to this rule are the aforementioned execution of Ngarbi in 1843 and Wera Maldera in 1845, who were both executed outside Adelaide Gaol. This is in stark contrast to the eight Europeans hanged during the corresponding period who were publicly executed in Adelaide, despite their crimes being committed all over the colony.⁷⁰ Colonial administrators clearly saw some worth in lugging the cumbersome gallows around the colony to account for Indigenous 'outrages' wherever they may occur. The brief pause in the public hanging of Indigenous offenders between 1858 and 1861 clearly illustrates this point.

When the South Australian Parliament moved to abolish public executions in 1858 for all criminals, regardless of race, it was framed as a victory for civilisation. The push to abolish public punishment came from New South Wales (then including the Moreton Bay settlement), Victoria and Tasmania, which had already banished the practice earlier that decade.⁷¹ The decision to introduce private executions for European offenders in South Australia was broadly supported by parliamentarians who thought public executions tended to 'demoralize' those who watched and 'had no beneficial result as an example'.⁷² However, at the second reading of the bill, questions were raised as to whether

69 For the period 1836 to 1901, 47.9 per cent of guilty Indigenous capital offenders had their sentence of death carried out, compared to only 34.4 per cent of non-Indigenous offenders (the remainder were either pardoned or had their sentence of death commuted to a lesser punishment). This gap was more pronounced between 1836 and 1862 (the scope of this paper) when the execution rate for Indigenous offenders was 53.5 per cent but for non-Indigenous offenders dropped to 30.3 per cent. These figures are constructed using the, 'Execution, Whippings and Commuted Death Sentence Register', GRS 2625/1, SRSA.

70 Anderson and Sendziuk 2014; Towler and Porter 1990.

71 McGuire 1998.

72 The Chief Secretary, William Younghusband, quoted in *SAPD*, 21 September 1858: 173.

the same was true for Indigenous offenders; whether they should be executed in the seclusion of the prison yard. Thomas Strangeways was the first to notice the consequences of the proposed legislation:

The Act would entirely prevent the execution of the aborigines in the usual manner. If any of the white population committed a crime, it was perhaps desirable they should be executed under the provisions of that Act, but it had hitherto been considered necessary in the case of an aborigine that he should be executed in the place where the crime was committed, in order that the associations connected with the crime should be connected with the punishment. If that Bill were passed, however, the supposed sentence of death on aborigines would be practically abolished.⁷³

When the Bill went to the committee stage, Strangeways suggested a special clause that would allow the Governor, upon his written consent, to allow for a place of execution other than the Adelaide Gaol. With the insertion of such a clause, the option for the Governor to hang Indigenous offenders in the 'usual manner' would therefore still be a possibility. Chief Secretary William Younghusband – the man who originally introduced the Bill to Parliament – replied that it was his intention to prevent public executions entirely, regardless of racial considerations. This was partly because 'such scenes did no credit to our civilization in the eyes of savages'.⁷⁴ When John Barrow and Lavington Glyde offered their support for Strangeways' position, Younghusband declared that he was 'sorry to hear Hon. Members fall back on the old exploded idea that public executions could produce a good effect even upon the natives'.⁷⁵ The clause was withdrawn and the *Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals 1858* (SA) was assented to in December 1858.⁷⁶

The will of Parliament to banish public executions for both European and Indigenous offenders was strongly tested over the next three years, beginning at the execution of Manyella in 1860. At trial the 20-year-old Indigenous male was found guilty of wilfully murdering John Jones, a hutkeeper near Mount Joy on 13 May 1860.⁷⁷ Jones was alone in the hut when Manyella entered and fatally struck him on the back of the head, stealing foodstuffs, clothing and a butcher's knife on the way out.⁷⁸ Having been sentenced to death two years after the introduction of private executions, the law dictated that Mayella be executed in private or, in the wording of the legislation, 'within the walls of the Gaol'.⁷⁹ In conflict with the original intention of the 1858 Act that abolished

73 SAPD, 7 October 1858: 331.

74 SAPD, 7 October 1858: 332.

75 SAPD, 7 October 1858: 334.

76 *Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals 1858* (SA) (22 Victoria, no. 23).

77 *The Adelaide Observer*, 18 August 1860: 4.

78 *The Adelaide Observer*, 18 August 1860: 4.

79 *Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals 1858* (SA) (22 Victoria, no. 23).

public executions entirely, Manyella was taken on a long journey back to a police station at Streaky Bay, the closest to the scene of the murder, and hanged in the public gaze. The reason given in the Legislative Council by the new Chief Secretary, George Waterhouse, shows just how important Indigenous hangings were to the settlers on the frontier:

As to the expediency of the procedure, the Government had been requested by the settlers in the neighborhood [sic] to make an example of the murderers in the vicinity of this crime, so that his tribe might receive a salutary lesson. This had been proved to operate most effectually in the case of the execution some years since on the [Eyre] Peninsula, and he [the Chief Secretary] believed it would in this case. He would remark that a petition from the Bishop of Adelaide and others, interceding for the life of this native, set forth that his execution would do no good unless it were carried out in the vicinity of the crime. As far as possible the Government had arranged to carry out this idea, and he trusted they would need no more executions at Streaky Bay.⁸⁰

To conform with the wishes of the settlers and petitioners in regards to Manyella's execution, the disliked provisions set out in the 1858 legislation were overcome by proclaiming the existing police station at Cherriroo, Streaky Bay, a public gaol.⁸¹ After making this decision public in the *Government Gazette*, John Morphet was quick to raise the issue in the Legislative Council stating that the colony's newest gaol was nothing more than a hut.⁸² However, since this new 'prison' did not have any high walls like those enclosing Adelaide Gaol, the execution was performed in full view of the town, as well as 'within the walls of the Gaol' to avoid any accusations that the hanging was illegal. It was a creative solution to a problem that highlighted how this new legislation found itself in complete opposition to the needs and desires of those settling South Australia's outlying districts.

The noble ideals of Parliament were similarly tested the following year with the execution of the 'Rainbird Murderers'. This was the collective term for four Indigenous males ultimately held responsible for the gruesome murder of Mary Ann Rainbird and her two children who were found 'doubled up and thrust into a wombat hole' near Kapunda, north of Adelaide.⁸³ Found guilty at the Supreme Court in Adelaide the four men – Pitta Miltinda, Tankawortya and two people who shared the name Warretya – were returned to their cells to await execution within Adelaide Gaol.⁸⁴ On 7 June 1861, the four men were privately executed on a scaffold erected inside the walls of the gaol.

80 SAPD, 25 September 1860: 920.

81 *South Australian Government Gazette*, 20 September 1860.

82 SAPD, 25 September 1860: 920.

83 *The Adelaide Observer*, 16 March 1861: 7.

84 'Execution, Whippings and Commuted Death Sentence Register', GRS 2625/1, SRSA.

The public response to the first fully private Indigenous execution in South Australia revealed just how much value had been placed on Indigenous hangings. Kapunda's local newspaper, *The Northern Star*, was vehemently opposed to the colony's new mode of executing Indigenous offenders. The editor of the newspaper did not hold back when suggesting that the hanging of Indigenous people should be performed in public and near the scene of the crime:

The cannibals who murdered Mrs Rainbird and her two innocent children were choked yesterday morning outside the Adelaide Gaol. This is what we have heard from the lips of Mr Patrick Kingston, Member of Parliament, who saw the Niggers dancing upon nothing ... We do not think that, considering all the circumstances of this case, Tommy Reynolds [the then Premier of South Australia] has done justice to the colony – to the district of Light in particular. The fellows should be hanged up here, or they should have been placed at the rifle target for the volunteers to shoot at, so they would have a lingering death ... We have been cheated.⁸⁵

While this local newspaper, in close proximity to the murders, placed more emphasis on the retributive appeal of the gallows, *The Advertiser* assessed the value of Indigenous hangings to the colony more broadly. Employing a more restrained prose, it suggested that private executions for Indigenous offenders were not conducive to the aims of the colonial government:

What effect will this private execution have upon the aboriginal natives? What practical result will follow it? Where is the salutary lesson of terror that it was intended to teach other would-be murderers? The mere destruction of four murderers was surely not *all* that was contemplated by the jury who convicted them; we will venture to say it was not the *principal* idea. Of course, the law inflicts vengeance; and in a still more emphatic sense it holds forth salutary warnings; but what warning to the native tribes is there in the private hanging of these four men? ... Without some explanation, the public will be entirely at a loss to comprehend the policy of the Executive in a line of action so diametrically contrary to what was expected of them, and what, in fact, their own words justified the public in expecting.⁸⁶

The private execution of the 'Rainbird Murderers' was clearly a waste in the eyes of some. In the seclusion of the prison yard, the gallows was shorn of its additional functions that had proved so useful in dealing with disobedient Aborigines and stabilising a vast frontier. When carried out hidden from the public gaze, capital punishment was reduced to a strictly punitive function and it was obvious that the colonist did not warm to the transition.

⁸⁵ *The Northern Star* quoted in Liddy 1993: 82–83.

⁸⁶ *The Advertiser*, 8 June 1861: 2 [original emphasis].

The 1861 Amendment: Reflections on the value and rationale of Indigenous executions

In 1861, the disharmony between the laws of the colony and the will of the people was corrected when an amendment to the 1858 Act was passed along racial lines. The amendment stipulated that any sentence of death passed over 'any aboriginal native ... may be publicly carried into execution at the place at which the crime ... was committed, or as near to such place as conveniently may be'.⁸⁷ The Indigenous offender's body was also to be buried at the place of execution or close by that site. For European offenders, the basic tenet of a private execution taking place inside the gaol walls went unaltered until South Australia's last execution in 1964. Easily passed by a majority of MPs, the restoration of public executions for Indigenous criminals was conclusive proof of the high value placed on capital punishment to the colonial project. The parliamentary debate over the amendment captures this theme and offers a moment in time where lawmakers thought aloud about why the heightened symbolism of Indigenous executions ought to be maintained. Two broad justifications repeatedly emerged in the debate. First, past experience had demonstrated that public executions were successful at quelling Indigenous violence and making it safe for settlers on the frontier. Second, Indigenous people required different punishment to Europeans due to cultural and linguistic differences.

The parliamentary debate, conducted in May 1861, was studded with anecdotal accounts of the past efficacy of Indigenous hangings to the colony. Even two decades on, the perceived success of Major O'Halloran's summary execution at the Coorong was reprised. David Wark was the first to praise the expedition: 'As they dangled in the air, the natives understood that no tedious process was allowed to come between the crime and its punishment; and they remembered that sight with horror; no outrage was committed in that district afterwards, and travellers to Mount Gambier could go their way safely.'⁸⁸ David Sutherland remembered the effect O'Halloran's 'prompt and speedy justice' had on the Milmenrura: 'Why, from that day to this the natives had always been peaceful, and were the Government to do this in all cases now, the same would be the result.'⁸⁹ George Waterhouse was another who referenced the government response following the 'Maria Massacre' which saw the 'Murray blacks' become 'infinitely quieter than they were before'.⁹⁰

87 *Act to amend an Act, no. 23 of 22nd Victoria, intituled 'An Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals' 1861 (SA) (25 Victoria, no. 1), s. 1.*

88 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 111.

89 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 113–114.

90 *SAPD*, 14 May 1861: 91.

The same MPs stressed that these past benefits were not just confined to the Coorong but the Eyre Peninsula as well. Sutherland, for example, drew upon personal experience when declaring that '[t]hose that had seen the executions as he had seen them at Port Lincoln, would be aware of the far greater effect which was produced on the minds of the natives ... what terror was inspired'.⁹¹ Edward McEllister was terse in justifying his support for public Indigenous executions: 'At Port Lincoln, where some blacks were hung for a horrible murder, no similar outrage was committed for 10 years.'⁹² Henry Mildred imagined how ineffectual private executions would be if the lives of settlers were threatened again on the Eyre Peninsula: 'The withdrawal of a few natives from Port Lincoln, and their execution privately in Adelaide, would have but little effect.'⁹³ When executing an Indigenous criminal, Mildred believed that government 'should take care to strike terror into the hearts' of the 'natives' and not hide their punishment away from view.⁹⁴ John Bagot also feared future Indigenous violence, a prospect made more frightening if denied access to the pacifying qualities of public hangings. Referencing the recent Rainbird murders he thought that '[i]f some steps were not taken to check such horrible crimes upon women and children, the remote districts would be again given up to savage tribes'.⁹⁵

The second broad justification recurrent within the 1861 parliamentary debate revolved around the idea that Indigenous people required a different mode of execution because they were, in and of themselves, distinct from European man. The first difference cited was the obvious cultural and linguistic barriers that came between the settlers and the original inhabitants of the land. Making intelligible the omnipotence of British law to Aborigines, and that criminal breaches of that law would not be tolerated, were the central messages that the public gallows aimed to broadcast. Yet how such ideas could be communicated to speakers of a foreign language was difficult to determine. 'The poor creatures could not read the newspapers', pointed out Edward Grundy, 'if native criminals were [privately] executed in gaol, how would other blacks know that they were executed?'⁹⁶ For South Australia's Indigenous population, the Chief Secretary John Morphett thought 'they should be made to see the execution of the law on those of their tribe', for the simple reason that '[i]f they were not eye-witnesses of the punishment, they would not believe that it [punishment] really did follow the commission of crime'.⁹⁷ Bagot was another who highlighted the practical barriers to understanding when he postulated that '[i]f only a few

91 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 114.

92 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 111.

93 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 114.

94 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 114.

95 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 111.

96 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 112.

97 *SAPD*, 14 May 1861: 90.

blacks disappeared their fellows would not be likely to make much inquiry about them, as to whether they had been simply taken to Adelaide or whether they had been hanged, and the force of example would be entirely lost'.⁹⁸

Former references to Indigenous people in the parliamentary debate as 'natives', 'blacks' and members of 'savage tribes' who had to be terrified into recognising the wickedness of murder dovetail neatly into the idea of a fundamental distinction between European and Indigenous societies. It fostered an assumption that the punishment of death needed tailoring for 'civilised' as opposed to 'uncivilised' audiences. According to one MP, for 'whites' the effect of executions was 'demoralising' but for the 'blacks' it was another question entirely; a question, 'as different as light from darkness'.⁹⁹ As a cultural construction of the white colonists, 'the aborigines' for much of the colonial period were a people of savage and almost child-like intellectual faculties requiring European intervention to raise them to a higher rung of civilisation.¹⁰⁰ A penchant for public executions in South Australia can be easily read into a broader narrative that demanded distinctive punishment for Indigenous peoples. As they could not intellectually comprehend the consequences of breaking British law they had to be shown it, better still, terrified by it; terrified at the exact spot where the crime was committed and for the perpetrator to be buried nearby. Only such simple, physical, decipherable symbolism was commensurate with the 'uncivilised' mind, or so the argument went.

Inhabiting this colonial mindset was Edward Grundy, who proposed an intensification of the macabre symbolism of the gallows beyond that of public executions. Member for the Barossa District, near where the recent Rainbird murders had been committed, Grundy could not envisage another practice that could subdue the 'native' threat more successfully than gibbetting. Acknowledging its disappearance as an acceptable practice in England, Grundy suggested that the 'peculiar circumstances of the colony' demanded such action.¹⁰¹ His amendment to provide for the indefinite display of dead Aborigines following their execution was put under the consideration of the House. Grundy's suggestion developed from a concern that the colony's frontier was developing a reputation for danger and demanded Parliament take action:

Settlers in the outlying districts, who formed the sheet-anchor of the colony, had a right to look to Parliament for protection, especially where human life was involved. Than that of public execution what other method had they of striking

⁹⁸ *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 111.

⁹⁹ David Wark quoted in *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 111.

¹⁰⁰ To see how European constructions of Aboriginal society and intellect influenced the application of punishment in colonial Australia consult Finnane 2011; Finnane and McGuire 2001; Hogg 2001; McGuire 1998.

¹⁰¹ *SAPD*, 30 May 1861: 130.

terror into the breasts of the natives? That the blacks were not civilised as fast as could be desired was seen by the recent events in the Western District, and if mildness and kindness was of no avail, a system of terror must be resorted to.¹⁰²

Grundy argued that sometimes lawmakers must be cruel to be kind: 'Sometimes statesmen appeared cruel; as a medical man, when he amputated a limb, might appear cruel to a disinterested bystander.'¹⁰³ Only through such explicit imagery as hanging and gibbetting could these 'unsophisticated creatures' be dissuaded from future delinquency.¹⁰⁴ Grundy's enthusiasm for the practice was not shared by the other MPs who considered it a remnant from a more barbarous age and voted it down.

After the successful passage of the amendment through the legislature, it was not long until the public execution of Indigenous people resumed on the western frontier. In late August 1861, only months following the debate, a schooner departed Adelaide carrying four Indigenous offenders and a portable gallows.¹⁰⁵ The *Yatala* sailed for Fowlers Bay, at the eastern extremity of the Nullarbor Plain, where two of the passengers, Nilgerie and Tilcherie, had taken the life of a shepherd named Theodore Gustavus Berggoist on 19 January 1861.¹⁰⁶ Upon arrival the pair was executed in front of nearly 100 Indigenous men, women and children in accordance with the 1861 amendment. The onlookers to the punishment were, *The Register* noted, 'among the most uncivilized of Australian savages, and utterly without clothing'.¹⁰⁷ After hanging on the scaffold for an hour, Nilgerie and Tilcherie were cut down and symbolically buried beneath the spot where the shepherd was speared.¹⁰⁸

After the completion of this sombre duty, the *Yatala* immediately made sail for Venus Bay, on the west coast of the Eyre Peninsula, where the two remaining Aborigines on board, Karabidne and Mangeltie, were to be hanged for murdering Margaret Ann Impett. The wife of a shepherd, Impett was alone in the station's hut where the two Aborigines committed their crime on 2 May 1861. The pair was subsequently executed on 14 September 1861 before an audience of local Aborigines and Europeans.¹⁰⁹ For *The Register*, it was the 'expressed belief' of those living near where the murders occurred that 'the effect of these executions will be good, and that no other means would have been so effectual in preventing the reoccurrence of such outrages'.¹¹⁰ The following September the *Yatala* again

102 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 112.

103 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 112.

104 *SAPD*, 28 May 1861: 112.

105 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1861: 2.

106 *The South Australian Register*, 16 August 1861: 3.

107 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1861: 2.

108 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1861: 2.

109 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1861: 2.

110 *The South Australian Register*, 19 September 1861: 2.

travelled to Venus Bay to execute Meengulta who speared a hutkeeper named William Walker after a dispute over rations.¹¹¹ If hanged inside the gaol yard, the *Weekly Chronicle* speculated that Meengulta would be 'indifferent to his fate' but to execute him 'among his tribe' made the sentence of death all the more fearful.¹¹²

Conclusion

For all the effort spent partially restoring public executions in 1861, Meengulta was the last Indigenous person to hang in the history of South Australia.¹¹³ The amendment did, however, linger for over a century longer on the statute books. It was not until 1972, when Don Dunstan was the Premier of South Australia, that the right of a judge to sentence an Indigenous offender to a public hanging was finally revoked.¹¹⁴ Crucially, it survived both the 1876 and 1935 Criminal Law Consolidation Acts, the latter being (notwithstanding ongoing revisions) the primary legislative vehicle in South Australian criminal law that codifies crimes and penalties to this very day.¹¹⁵ It is a fact that complicates the idea that the 1861 amendment simply fell into disuse, rather than being completely objectionable to early twentieth-century lawmakers. Given the obvious enthusiasm for frontier hangings right up until the last Indigenous execution in 1862, more case by case research is needed to investigate why Indigenous offenders convicted after this date had their sentence of death commuted. Nevertheless, in the period concerning this study, it is clear that the spectacle of public Indigenous executions was perceived to pacify resistance to European colonisation on the South Australian frontier. Race obviously played a pivotal role in the administration of the colony's gallows but this one factor can never float free from other complex issues of historical circumstance.

111 Pope 2011: 103. The execution of Meengulta was missed by the otherwise accurate *Hempden Collar*, see Towler and Porter 1990.

112 *The South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 6 September 1862: 1.

113 Griffiths states that in 1906 an Indigenous person was executed in South Australia but, on closer inspection, the hanged man was in fact a Muslim immigrant by the name of Natalla Habbibulla, Griffiths 1970; *The Adelaide Times*, 17 November 1906.

114 The Act received assent on 29 February 1972 despite carrying the year 1971 in the title, see Lennan and Williams 2012: 676, footnote 135; *Criminal Law Consolidation Amendment Act 1971* (SA) no. 96, s. 4. Capital punishment as a whole was abolished in South Australia five years later in 1977, see Lennan and Williams 2012: 676–677.

115 *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1876* (SA) (39 & 40 Victoria, no. 38), part II, s. 14; *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* (SA) (no. 2252), s. 307.

References

Archival Sources

State Records of South Australia

'Execution of T. Donnelly', GRG 24/6, 1847/358, 382, State Records of South Australia (hereafter SRSA).

'Execution, Whippings and Commuted Death Sentence Register', GRS 2625/1, SRSA.

Minutes of the Executive Council, 27–28 March 1843, GRG 40/1/Vol. 3 (1843–1855): 1–7, SRSA.

Legislation

Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals 1858 (SA) (22 Victoria, no. 23)

Act to amend an Act, no. 23 of 22nd Victoria, intituled 'An Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals' 1861 (SA) (25 Victoria, no. 1)

Criminal Law Consolidation Amendment Act 1971 (SA) (no. 96)

Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1876 (SA) (39 & 40 Victoria, no. 38, part II)

Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA) (no. 2252)

An Act to provide for carrying out of Capital Punishment within Prisons 1871 (WA) (34 Victoria, no. 15)

An Act to amend 'The Capital Punishment Amendment Act, 1871' 1875 (WA) (39 Victoria, no. 1)

South Australian Parliamentary Debates

South Australian Parliamentary Debates (hereafter *SAPD*), 21 September 1858.

SAPD, 7 October 1858.

SAPD, 25 September 1860.

SAPD, 14 May 1861.

SAPD, 28 May 1861.

SAPD, 30 May 1861.

Newspapers

The Adelaide Observer

The Adelaide Times

The Advertiser

The Southern Australian

The South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register

The South Australian Register

The South Australian Weekly Chronicle

Other

Pitt, George Henry, 'Thomas Donnelly and the Shooting of the Native "Billy"',
Research Note 237, State Library of South Australia.

South Australian Government Gazette

Published sources

Adams, Simon 2009, *The Unforgiving Rope: Murder and Hanging on Australia's Western Frontier*, UWA Publishing, Perth.

Anderson, Steven and Paul Sendziuk 2014, 'Hang the convicts: Capital punishment and the reaffirmation of South Australia's foundation principles', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 16: 93–110.

Barber, Ross 1975, 'Rape as a capital offence in nineteenth century Queensland', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 21(1): 31–41.

Castles, Alex C. 1982, *An Australian Legal History*, The Law Book Company Limited, Sydney.

Castles, Alex C. and Michael C. Harris 1987, *Lawmakers and Wayward Whigs: Government and Law in South Australia, 1836–1986*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.

Clyne, Robert 1987, *Colonial Blue: A History of the South Australian Police Force*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.

Connors, Libby 1992, 'The theatre of justice: Race relations and capital punishment at Moreton Bay 1841–59' in, *Brisbane: The Aboriginal Presence, 1824–1960*, Rod Fisher (ed.), Brisbane History Group Papers 11, Brisbane: 48–57.

- Connors, Libby 2009, 'A hanging, a hostage drama and several homicides: Why sovereignty in 1859 is problematic', *Queensland History Journal* 20(12): 716–727.
- Davies, Susanne 1987, 'Aborigines, murder and the criminal law in early Port Philip, 1841–1851', *Historical Studies* 22(88): 313–335.
- Devereaux, Simon and Paul Griffiths (eds) 2004, *Penal Practice and Culture, 1500–1900: Punishing the English*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Finnane, Mark 2011, 'Settler justice and Aboriginal homicide in late colonial Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 42(2): 244–259.
- Finnane, Mark and John McGuire 2001, 'The uses of punishment and exile: Aborigines in colonial Australia', *Punishment and Society* 3(2): 279–298.
- Finnane, Mark and Jonathon Richards 2010, 'Aboriginal violence and State response: Histories, policies and legacies in Queensland, 1860–1940', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 43(2): 238–262.
- Foster, Robert 2009, "'Don't mention the war": Frontier violence and the language of concealment', *History Australia* 6(3): 68.1–68.15.
- Foster, Robert, Rick Hosking and Amanda Nettelbeck 2001, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the Violence of Memory*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Foster, Robert and Amanda Nettelbeck 2012, *Out of the Silence: The History and Memory of South Australia's Frontier Wars*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Foucault, Michel 1995 [1975], *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans), Vintage Books, New York.
- Gatrell, V. A. C. 1994, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770–1868*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Griffiths, A. R. G. 1970, 'Capital punishment in South Australia 1836–1964', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 3(4): 214–222.
- Hague, Ralph M. 2005, *Hague's History of the Law in South Australia, 1837–1867*, two vols, University of Adelaide Barr Smith Press, Adelaide.
- Hamann, Judy 1979, 'The Coorong massacre: A study in early race relations in South Australia', *Flinders Journal of History and Politics* 3: 1–9.
- Harris, Carmel 1982, 'The terror of the law as applied to black rapists in colonial Queensland', *Hecate* 8(2): 22–48.

- Hogg, Russell 2001, 'Penalty and modes of regulating Indigenous peoples in Australia', *Punishment and Society* 3(3): 358–361.
- Kercher, Bruce 1995, *Unruly Child: A History of Law in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.
- Lennan, Jo and George Williams 2012, 'The death penalty in Australian law', *Sydney Law Review* 34(4): 659–694.
- Levison, James 1993, 'The trial of Thomas Donnelly', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* 31(2): 54–66.
- Liddy, Peter 1993, *The Rainbird Murders: 1861*, Peacock Publications, Adelaide.
- Linebaugh, Peter 2003, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Verso, London.
- Markus, Andrew 1994, *Australian Race Relations, 1788–1993*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.
- McGowen, Randall 1994, 'Civilizing punishment: The end of the public execution in England', *Journal of British Studies* 33(3): 257–282.
- McGuire, John 1998, 'Judicial violence and the "civilizing process": Race and the transition from public to private executions in colonial Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 29(111): 187–209.
- Nettelbeck, Amanda and Robert Foster 2007, 'Reading the elusive letter of the law: Policing the South Australian frontier', *Australian Historical Studies* 38(130): 296–311.
- 2010, 'Colonial judiciaries, Aboriginal protection and South Australia's policy of punishing "with exemplary severity"', *Australian Historical Studies* 41(3): 319–336.
- Pope, Alan 1989, *Resistance and Retaliation: Aboriginal-European Relations in Early Colonial South Australia*, Heritage Action, Adelaide.
- 2011, *One Law for All?: Aboriginal People and Criminal Law in Early South Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Porter, Trevor 1995, *Seven Lengths of Rope*, The Wednesday Press, Adelaide.
- Purdue, Brian 1993, *Legal Executions in Western Australia*, Foundation Press, Perth.
- Schmaal, Jean 1975, 'The Rainbird story', *The Police Journal of South Australia* 56(3): 17–19.

- Spierenburg, Pieter 1984, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression – From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Strange, Carolyn (ed.) 1996, *Qualities of Mercy: Justice, Punishment, and Discretion*, UBC Press, Vancouver.
- Summers, John 1986, 'Colonial race relations', in *The Flinders History of South Australia: Social History*, E Richards (ed.), Wakefield, Adelaide: 283–311.
- Tolmer, Alexander 1972 [1882], *Reminiscences of an Adventurous and Chequered Career at Home and at the Antipodes, Volume 1*, facsimile edition, Gilbert and Rivington Ltd, London.
- Towler, David and Trevor Porter (eds) 1990, *The Hempen Collar: Executions in South Australia: 1836–1964*, The Wednesday Press, Adelaide.
- Wanklyn Neville and Margaret Wanklyn 1971, *The Early History of the City of Port Lincoln 1802–1971*, The Corporation of Port Lincoln, Port Lincoln.
- Ward, Damen 2010, 'Imperial policy, colonial government, and Indigenous testimony in South Australia and New Zealand in the 1840s', in *Law and Politics in British Colonial Thought: Transpositions of Empire*, Shaunnagh Dorsett and Ian Hunter (eds), Palgrave Macmillan, New York: 229–249.

Unravelling the Yamaji imaginings of Alexander Morton and Daisy Bates

Robin Barrington

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Alexander Morton and Daisy Bates deployed the photograph as a privileged evidentiary anthropological document. Their photographic representations of Yamaji from Western Australia circulated within a transnational network of discourses and practices involving anthropologists, police, pastoralists and journalists, and served to cement views of Yamaji as racially homogeneous, primitive and uncivilised. This article explores the histories behind these photographs and their polysemy to challenge some of the scientific and popular ‘truths’ disseminated about their Yamaji subjects. It discusses how Yamaji¹ as figures of Aboriginalist discourse were represented in the work of two influential public figures, Alexander Morton and Daisy Bates, and through their interactions within scientific and colonial networks of power.

Alexander Morton was a collector and the Curator and later Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (hereafter TMAG) from 1884 to 1907.² Daisy Bates was an ethnographer, Travelling Protector of Aborigines, journalist and novelist.³ The history of photography in Western Australia and elsewhere has been closely aligned with that of anthropology and colonialism, and these links are clearly discernible in the discursive, disciplinary and representational practices of both Morton and Bates.⁴ Yamaji as constructs of anthropological and other forms of Aboriginalist discourse weave in and out of Western Australian government documents, colonial records, popular cultural texts, newspapers,

1 Peoples and individuals (male and female) from the Yamaji language groups of Western Australia.

2 Also see Huxley 2008. Morton was Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania during this period.

3 Also see Bates 1936a, 1938; De Vries 2008; Reece 1987, 2007, 2008.

4 Also see Edwards 1992, 2001; Pinney 1992, 2011; Pinney and Peterson 2003; Poignant 1992; Lydon 2005 on the links between photography, anthropology and colonialism.

scientific publications and photographs. In contrast, for their descendants, including this author, photographs of Aboriginal ancestors, even those taken as anthropological specimens, are now being reinterpreted and regarded as precious visual records of personal family histories.⁵ The direct, fixed and haunting gaze of the many Aboriginal subjects in these photographs, project an inherent and enduring strength and dignity that cannot mask the trauma of invasion and colonisation. These photographs framed by colonial and scientific practices require particular ethical deliberations, and in some circumstances, carry injunctions on their re-presentation to family, community and the public.⁶ While for some spectators, the incorrect naming and captions attributed to the Aboriginal subjects discussed below may appear arcane or trivial, for Aboriginal descendants who have no other photographic record it is a vital issue, as these photographs represent a longed-for opportunity to connect with a past that colonial violence has disrupted.

Photographs of Yamaji were taken by Alexander Morton whilst he was on a collecting visit to Western Australia on behalf of the Western Australian Museum and the TMAG from August to October 1897. Two Yamaji in the photographs were named 'Billy' and 'George a Nannine Native'. The colonial archive reveals that George's Yamaji name was Jaal, and much of his story unfolds against the backdrop of the devastating impacts of colonisation in the Murchison district of Western Australia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Jaal was a prominent figure and lawman (known as King George of Meekatharra) and this article traces him, and a number of other Yamaji who surrounded him, through the colonial archive. The events and stories recorded about Jaal as an object of scientific enquiry, ethnographic informant and outlaw, also intersected with the lives of prominent colonial figures other than Morton and Bates, such as Henry Walsh and Constable (later Police Inspector) G. J. McDonald, and anthropologists Radcliffe-Brown, Baldwin Spencer, and E. B. Tylor.

This article explores the histories of the photographs and their polysemic aspects to challenge some of the scientific and popular 'truths' disseminated about four Yamaji encountered in the historical records: Jaal, Jinguru, Booreeangoo and 'Murchison Woman'. It asks what they represent to different groups, both in the past and the present, as instantiations of the various forms of disciplining and violence – from epistemic and discursive violence to the physical violence of dispossession and incarceration in hospitals and prisons – inflicted on

5 Edwards 2001; Lydon 2005; see Aird in Lydon 2014; Poignant 2004; Braithwaite et al. 2011.

6 Permissions and endorsements from Jaal's kin, and members of the Wajarri community working group guide my re-presentation of photographs here.

Aboriginal subjects.⁷ These questions will be explored through a critical analysis of the relevant colonial documents and anthropological photographs of Yamaji taken by Morton and those held in the Bates collection.⁸

A grave undertaking: The collecting expedition of Alexander Morton to the Western Colony in 1897

Morton's collecting expedition in 1897 occurred amidst political moves to establish Western Australia and Tasmania as distinct entities among the Australian colonies, expressed in part by the expansion of their museum and art collections. It was a time of nationalistic fervour for a 'white' Australia, backed by the Australian Natives Association in preparation for Federation in 1901.⁹ It was in Hobart, at a meeting of the Federal Council in January 1897, that Morton met with Western Australian representatives Mr J. W. Hackett and Sir James Lee-Steere, who invited him to undertake a collecting visit on behalf of the museums in their respective colonies.¹⁰

The Murchison area of Western Australia, a rich goldfield and pastoral district, was undergoing rapid colonial expansion at this time. This inevitably led to escalating tensions and violence between Yamaji and settlers, in particular with pastoralists, miners and the police. In 1892, Resident Magistrate and owner of Mileura station Henry Walsh warned of the increasing threat posed by the 'natives ... who will shortly make the country unbearable and dangerous to live in', and called for the reintroduction of flogging.¹¹ In April the same year, following pressure from the powerful pastoral lobby, the 'Whipping of Aboriginal Native Offenders' was reintroduced as legal punishment.¹² During Morton's visit to Western Australia from August until November 1897, the deaths of Aboriginal station workers from a brutal flogging took place near Marble Bar. The shocking nature of the case received international attention, and became

7 I refer to Jaal as Yamaji because of his connection to that country and its people. Jaal also called himself a Wanmula but spent most of his life with his Wajarri Yamaji family on his mother's country near Meekatharra.

8 The Morton photographs have been made available to Jaal's kin through this research and they consent to their publication. It was not possible to obtain permissions for the photographs in the Bates collection as will be explained below. Further research, and perhaps this publication, may enable the subjects in the photographs to be identified and reclaimed by their descendants and kin.

9 Griffiths 1996; Blackton 1958: 37–46.

10 'A visiting scientist', *The Inquirer and Commercial News*, 1 October 1897; Morton 1898a.

11 Walsh 1892.

12 *An Act to Amend the Aboriginal Offenders Act 1883 and to Authorise the Whipping of Aboriginal Native Offenders 1892* (WA).

known as 'the Bendhu atrocities'.¹³ Morton became a willing participant in the ongoing controversy over the cruelty and slavery inflicted on Yamaji, and as a scientist contributed his own 'expert' views in support of the pastoralists.¹⁴

Before commencing the expedition, Morton had written from Hobart to Bernard Woodward, Curator of the Western Australian Museum, and, in a tone of some urgency, suggested, 'my idea is we should pay particular attention to the [e]thnology of your country as every year the natives are getting lesser and lesser'.¹⁵ Morton's collecting activities occurred in a context in which Aboriginal bodies and artefacts were seen as increasingly valuable to an international market, and were procured by questionable means. The Royal Society of Tasmania and Trustees of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery met to farewell Morton and to wish him every success in the collection of 'general natural history, geological and ethnological specimens'.¹⁶ At this meeting the Speaker jokingly commented that he was 'inclined to think that if Mr Morton had to revise the Ten Commandments, he would modify the one "Thou shalt not steal" by adding "except for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery"'. Morton's genial reply to the jovial banter about recent art acquisitions for the TMAG was quoted, and indicates that neither he nor at least some of his peers saw the reference to stealing and evading customs as more than a laughing matter.¹⁷ This disregard by Morton in relation to methods of acquiring art is no less apparent in his desecration of Yamaji graves and his treatment of Aboriginal remains. At this time, Aboriginal skulls were still considered as crucial material evidence for anthropological and evolutionary theories and, despite public protests, the plunder of Aboriginal graves for scientific purposes took place out of public view.¹⁸ Morton's assistant, John Tunney, had been taking instructions from Woodward on the collection of Aboriginal skulls and skeletons before Morton's visit to Western Australia.¹⁹ For Morton, who was to later send the skeletal remains of Truganina to Baldwin Spencer in Melbourne for articulation, the interests of science and the TMAG collection were paramount.²⁰ His actions regarding Truganina's skeleton, and the exhumation of graves on the Murchison for Yamaji remains, suggest that

13 See Wills-Johnson 2014; 'Bendhu atrocities', *The West Australian*, 8 January 1898: 6.

14 Morton 1898b.

15 Morton 1897.

16 'Royal Society of Tasmania: Departure of Mr. Alexander Morton for West Australia', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 4 August 1897.

17 'Departure of Mr Alexander Morton', *The Mercury* (Hobart), 4 August 1897.

18 See Gough 2014. Lanne's body was dismembered by two doctors found to be acting on behalf of The Royal Society of Tasmania and the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Also see Turnbull 2008; Daley 2014; Chadwick 2008; McDonald 2007; Prinsep 1905, State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA) Con 255, item 425/1905.

19 See Chadwick 2008. Due to cultural sensitivities, the author is not reproducing these images here.

20 Letter from Alexander Morton to Spencer, 31 March 1904, Museum Victoria Archives. Widely held public disgust and opposition in relation to these scientific practices were known to Morton. In December 1878, the Colonial Secretary gave in to relentless demands from the Royal Society of Tasmania to exhume Truganina's remains for scientific study on the condition that they were to be kept from public view.

Morton pressed the boundaries between zealous collecting and stealing in his ambitions to expand the TMAG's collections. In 1904, Morton put Truganina's skeleton on display at the TMAG despite her express wish that her remains did not suffer the same shocking fate as those of William Lanne, whose skull was removed after his death, and a substitute put in its place.²¹

The search for origins: Salvaging Jaal as anthropological specimen

Morton's collecting visit to Western Australia and his photographs of Jaal contributed to an internationally based 'salvage' anthropology that became a matter of some urgency, especially amongst the scientific circles of Europe.²² For Morton, Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples were already extinct by then, and the Murchison area presented a 'terra incognita' for his collecting activities. From Nannine, Morton wrote to Woodward:

... I think I have got some valuable data – the stone implements they use for making their spears and the women's fighting sticks are identical the same as the Tasmanian, ... the shape is so similar that if the Tasmanian and the one from this district were placed side by side it would be impossible to tell the difference ... The discovery of these two matters I think should be of very great interest from an ethnological point.²³

It was this 'discovery' by Morton that linked Jaal to the international debates on race, evolutionism, human origins and migrations by metropolitan British scholars. This interest in the connection between Tasmanian Aboriginal and Yamaji stone axes was also shared by E. B. Tylor at Oxford.²⁴ With a letter to Tylor, Morton sent images of Jaal and his family as photographic evidence of racial type and wrote:

Dear Dr Tyl[o]r, Intended in my last to send you one or two photos of the natives I met in the Murchison district West Australia last year. The photos I now send are some I took myself during my trip. They will give you some idea of the natives

21 K. O. S. 1947; McDonald 2007; Morton 1900 AIATSIS PMS 5018; 'Death of the last Aboriginal Tasmanian male', *Launceston Examiner*, 27 March 1869; Frost 2001. The pronunciation and spelling of Truganina's name varies and continues to be debated.

22 Salvage anthropology was driven by a perception that Indigenous Australians represented a living relic of the early stages of mankind and were rapidly disappearing, either by 'dying out' or 'contamination' from the effects of the 'civilising' mission. See Edwards 2001; Pinney 2011; McGregor 1997.

23 Morton 1897.

24 Morton had previously sent a collection of Tasmanian stone implements to Tylor at Oxford in 1894. See Tylor 1894.

that have the stone implements similar to those used by the late Tasmanian Aborigines. The photos are natives some 650 to 700 miles from Perth. Trusting they may be of some slight interest to you. Yours sincerely Alex Morton.²⁵

Bates and Henry Balfour, the curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford also contributed to this discussion on the ethnological and racial similarities between Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples and Yamaji.²⁶ Bates claimed that 'the facial characteristics of Truganina, the last Tasmanian native woman, have their counterpart in some of the Western Australian natives'.²⁷ As an anthropological specimen of 'authentic' racial type, Jaal was represented as an embodiment of the primitive savage; to be anything less was of little scientific value to remote anthropological 'experts'. Morton's photographs of Jaal and his family were sent to other influential figures in British anthropology, such as Alfred Cort Haddon, to be interpreted within a discursive network of anthropologists speculating on scientific theories of race.

The reframing of Jaal as Big George: The king, cannibal and outlaw

While Jaal as 'Big George' remains a relatively unknown figure today, there are several indications that he exercised a kind of fascination over colonial society in Western Australia. Jaal was born near Lake Way around 1870 and first enters the historical record as a prisoner who was sent to Rottnest Island in 1891 for sheep stealing. Soon after his second arrest at Belele near Meekatharra in 1895 for alleged murder and cannibalism, he made a daring escape from police chains with the assistance of his wife.²⁸ Following a month of evading the police, Jaal was recaptured and marched in chains to Geraldton, where he spent a month awaiting a trial with five of his kinsmen. Jaal and his co-accused were found not guilty and released to make their own way back to the Murchison. It was this well-publicised case that established Jaal's reputation as 'Big George a reputed Cannibal'.²⁹ By the late 1890s, Jaal's increasing conflict with colonial laws ensured that his reputation as 'Big George' the 'outlaw' and 'cannibal' was well known throughout the Murchison district at the time of Morton's visit. The titles of 'Big' and 'King' indicate the high status attributed to Jaal by a colonial society that recognised his influence over Yamaji from the Meekatharra

25 Alexander Morton to E.B. Tyl[or] Esq., Pitt Rivers Museum Photographic Collection 1998.249.39.3 [LM 3/2/2009].

26 Bates 1912: 48, NLA MS365/1-3; see discussion section of Tylor 1900: 260.

27 Bates 1912: 30, NLA MS365/1-3.

28 Dolan and Breen 1895, Mt Gould Police Station Reports, SROWA Con 430, Item 1895/152.

29 'Cannibalism on the Murchison', *The Daily News*, 15 January 1895.

and Lake Way districts.³⁰ The titles ‘King of the Meekatharra natives’ and ‘mobbar man – possessed of much magic’ was bestowed upon him through the writings of Daisy Bates, and in a mock ‘obituary’ that described him as ‘King of His Tribe’ following his death in 1915.³¹ Jaal operated between two systems of law and the ‘chaining’ of Yamaji prisoners was still part of police procedure during Morton’s visit, one that would continue well into the twentieth century. The Morton photograph (Figure 1) illustrates this brutal practice, and although no other details exist, the subject fourth from the left is possibly that of Jaal.



Figure 1: ‘Chain Gang Western Australia’, photographer Alexander Morton, 1897; prepared by J. W. Beattie.

Source: Courtesy of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Q1986.8.138.

The recent incidents of violence and murder of both settlers and Yamaji in the Murchison, and elsewhere in the north-west, made the first encounter between Jaal and Morton a cautious one. In his lantern slide presentation to the Royal Society of Tasmania in June 1898, Morton expressed gratitude for the ‘fortunate’ presence of the police, noting ‘I was enabled to make a more extensive examination than I could have done if I had been alone’.³² An armed

30 The WA government’s practice of giving titles of king or governor to Yamaji men of influence had been discontinued before Jaal’s time as a senior lawman and so he would have acquired this title by reputation.

31 Sandstone Police Occurrence books, March 1915, SROWA Con 1186, Item 5; ‘King of his tribe’, *Meekatharra Miner*, 27 February 1915; Bates 1911.

32 Morton 1898a.

police presence and tobacco were used to persuade Jaal and all members of his family, including children, to disrobe for the camera (see Figure 4). Although there may have been some degree of collaboration, the gun, black tracker and Corporal Tyler captured in the images point to the unequal power relationships that underpinned the ethnological and photographic encounters at Jaal's Nannine camp.³³

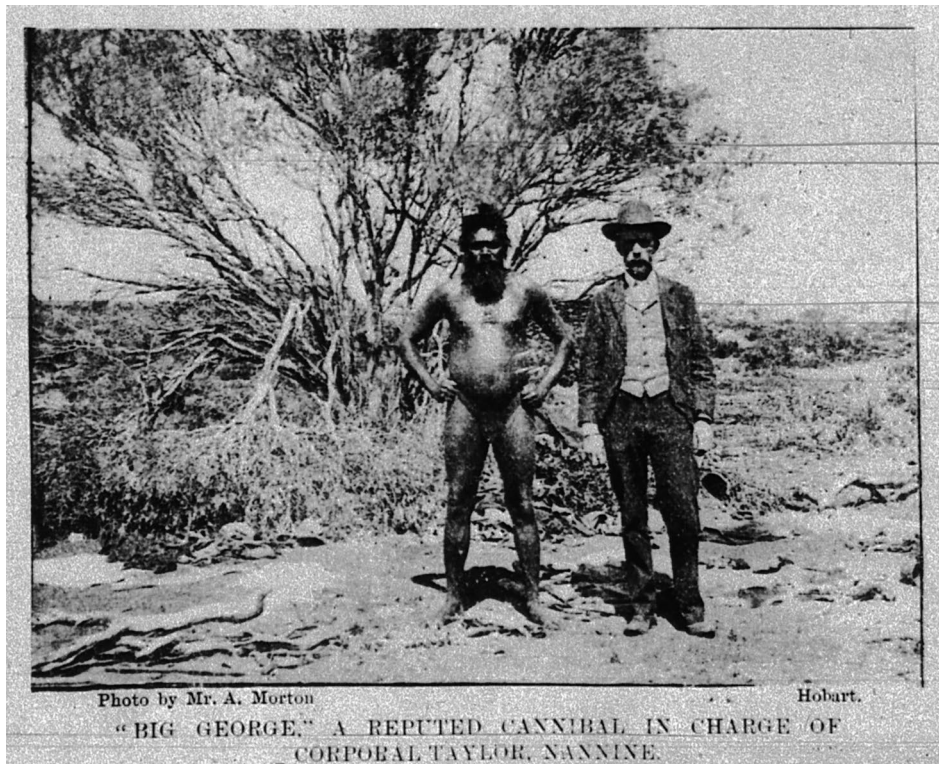


Figure 2: 'Big George a Reputed Cannibal in Charge of Corporal Taylor [Tyler]' in 'Big George', *The Western Mail*, 24 December 1897.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.

³³ Morton 1898a, 1897.



Figure 3: 'George a Nannine Native', photographer Alexander Morton, September 1897.

Source: Courtesy of the Western Australian Museum.



Figure 4: 'Nannine Natives with Tracker', photographer Alexander Morton.

Source: Courtesy of the Western Australian Museum.

The compelling photograph of Jaal and Corporal Tyler (see Figures 2 and 3) circulated in newspapers for popular consumption six months prior to Morton's presentation to the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1898. The polysemic nature of photographs, allowing them to be interpreted in a range of contexts, is evident in the way that the Morton images operated seamlessly between popular culture and salvage anthropology over time. At the Royal Society meeting and in the earlier newspaper article, Jaal was described as a 'cannibal' and a 'fine specimen' of anthropological race type. Jaal's physical size was the object of Morton's fascination, and Corporal Tyler was positioned within the frame as a prop for raciological comparisons (see Figures 2 and 3). Jaal's body was projected from a lantern slide prepared by well-known Tasmanian photographer J. W. Beattie for the scientific scrutiny of Royal Society members. These comparisons between Jaal and Corporal Tyler, the latter described as 'a fine type of the Caucasian', were articulated in the earlier illustrated newspaper story of Jaal as 'Big George' in 1897. In this popular narrative, Jaal was constructed through visual and written text as a 'fine specimen' of 'native type', the 'cannibal', 'captive', and the dangerous outlaw in a spectacle of colonial power represented by Corporal Tyler.³⁴ The authority of the photograph in disseminating representations of Aboriginal bodies as colonial spectacle was already familiar through their display at international colonial exhibitions and commercial travelling shows and circuses.³⁵ As suggested by Ballard, the power of raciology 'as an institutionalised system of knowledge has derived from its capacity to inform, and be informed by, both popular understandings of difference and the machinery of state and colonial administration'.³⁶ The photograph has played a significant role in these institutional systems of knowledge and power, and the ways in which Yamaji were represented within them.

Anthropological photographs as popular discourse

The publication of Morton's anthropological images of Jaal and other Yamaji in newspapers coincided with news coverage of the Bendhu atrocities. The atrocities near Bendhu station initially involved charges of brutality inflicted upon seven Aboriginal station workers, three of whom were flogged

34 Morton 1898; 'Big George', *The Western Mail*, 24 December 1897.

35 Poignant 2004.

36 Ballard 2008: 340.

to death for 'absconding from duty'.³⁷ Public outrage led to the charges being upgraded to wilful murder and the court proceedings surrounding the accused, the Anderson brothers, were reported widely in Australia and a 'full report of the trial ... reached England'.³⁸ Morton publicly refuted these claims of brutality and his photograph of Wajarri people working on Henry Walsh's Mileura station was used to illustrate his testimony that:

The group of station natives may be taken as typical. Mr Morton found the station natives a well fed, healthy and contented race. He felt sure, from his own personal observation, that such events as the Bendhu atrocities were so far from the normal that no blame could be broadcast because of them.³⁹

Morton continued to downplay the cruelties some months later, and in his 'Notes' read to the Royal Society of Tasmania he stated, 'As to the treatment and conditions of the natives on the various stations I visited, I can confidently say that it would be impossible for them to be treated better than they are on the Upper Murchison'.⁴⁰

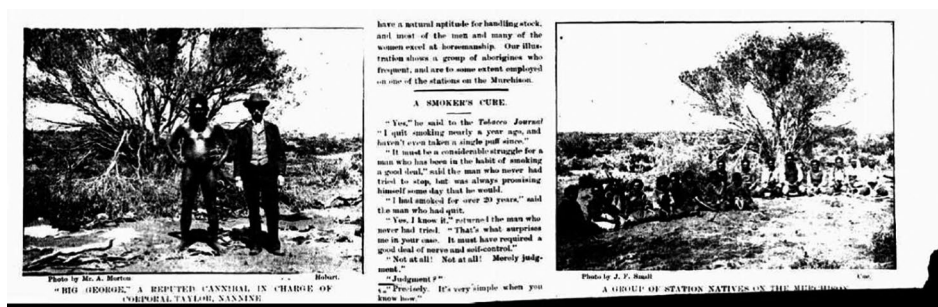


Figure 5: Jaal as the 'reputed Cannibal Big George' and as one of a 'Group of Station Natives on the Murchison' in *The Western Mail*, 24 December 1897.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.

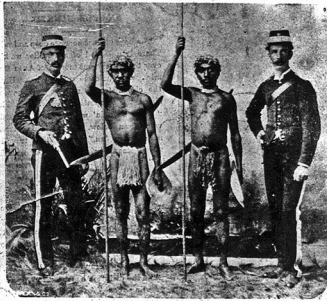
37 The Anderson brothers Ernest and Alexander, managers of Bendhu station, were initially charged with the unlawful brutality of seven Yamaji station workers in a local court at Bamboo Creek near Marble Bar, fined £2 and issued with a warning. 'The Bendhu manslaughter case: Allegations against Mr Warden Oslund', 11 March 1898, *Western Mail*: 10. Following public criticisms, the police subsequently upgraded the charge to wilful murder. The Anderson brothers were tried for murder but found guilty on the lesser charge of manslaughter. 'The Bendhu atrocities', *The Argus*, 24 December 1897: 5. According to the *West Australian*, Ernest Anderson was the first white man to be found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of an Aboriginal person under the legal system of self-government in Western Australia. 'Bendhu atrocities', *The West Australian*, 8 January 1898: 6. Alexander died in Fremantle gaol of typhoid fever before the trial, Ernest was 'liberated' on a 'ticket of leave' on 10 February 1903, having served six years of his life sentence. 'News and notes', *The Western Mail*, Thursday 12 May 1904: 4. Also see Wills-Johnson 2014.

38 'Bendhu case', *The Inquirer & Commercial News* (Perth), 28 January 1898; 'How we treat the blacks', *The Inquirer & Commercial News* (Perth), 21 January 1898: 8.

39 Morton 1898b: 26.

40 Morton recommended 'the gentlemen' who assisted him on his collecting visit to the Murchison and they were 'unanimously elected' as corresponding members of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Royal Society of Tasmania 1898.

let the police of the district as native with the largest proportion of artisans of any London borough, viz, 33 per



TWO ABORIGINAL DESPERADOES.—LILLIMARRA AND PIGEON.

these different schemes is very nearly 200,000. Naturally the complete scientific description of this undertaking belongs to an engineering paper. But the main outlines of the scheme are well within the grasp of the unsentimental mind. Between fifty and sixty tons of refuse are brought to the Dust Destructor daily, and tipped from the carts into lifts. These are moved by electricity up to the tipping platform, run on rails and emptied into bins from which the furnaces are fed. There are twelve destructor cells, or furnaces, with the large heating area of twenty-five square feet each, and also six water-tube boilers at the side, each with 1,250 square feet of heating surface. Now it is evident that dust and refuse will not burn second burns. To coax it to burn, there are motor-driven fans which cause a strong current of air to circulate. Each fan makes from 500 to 700 revolutions per minute. The hot air is drawn by suction from the top of the engine-house, forced into an air-duct by the fans, and goes underneath the cells and boilers to compel the refuse to burn. The air supply is carefully regulated by valves, so that in case of coal or other easily burning fuel being used, it can be cut off. It

advisability of grinding the ash and using or selling it themselves as a subsidiary industry. There is absolutely no coal used in the destructor cells, nothing but refuse sawn lumber from the Ottawa district for 1895 was estimated at 627,000,000ft, or 1,045,000 tons. Pulp and pulp wood alone is going to furnish an immense trade



THE HON. D. CARNEGIE'S EXPLORING PARTY.

Figure 6: 'Two Aboriginal Desperadoes – Pigeon [Jandamarra] and Lillimarra [Ellemarra]' and Hon. D. Carnegie's Exploring Party in *The Western Mail*, 15 October 1897.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.

Photographs of Aboriginal people were an important aspect of Western Australian newspapers since they were first used by the *Western Mail* in July 1897. Juxtapositions of 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' Yamaji appeared in illustrated news features to promote the 'successes' of colonisation and its 'civilising mission'. Images similar to those taken by Morton were published amidst news reports on the Bendhu atrocities (see Figures 5 and 6). These bifurcated photographic representations reproduced a narrative of colonial power where Jaal appears at the same time as one of a group of 'Station Natives on the Murchison' and as 'Big George the Reputed Cannibal' (see Figure 5). Jaal as 'Big George' became a kind of receptacle for continuing colonial anxieties about 'violent and savage natives' wanted for murder and cattle killing. These included an attempted murder of a white settler in 1901, and several alleged murders of 'white men' in 1905 referred to as 'the Peak Hill Murders' that were in fact linked to other Yamaji. The reports in the *Murchison Advocate*, *Western Mail* and *Murchison Chronicle* of 'wholesale murders of white men', Yamaji uprisings and 'poison corroborees' reflected settler panic and hysteria that echoed the earlier stories of Jaal's cannibalism.⁴¹ These events in Jaal's life paralleled the continuing mistreatment of Yamaji that would lead to yet further controls by the state with calls from settlers for the 'natives' to be disarmed.⁴² By 1902, photographs of Aboriginal people were a regular feature in the Chief Protector of Aborigines' annual reports. To quell ongoing public criticism, the Chief Protector of Aborigines issued a directive to publish 'condensed' versions

41 Growden 1905: 12–13; 'Wholesale murders by Peak Hill Blacks', *Murchison Advocate*, June 1905; 'Natives and whites: Aboriginal murders in the north: Sleeping men tomahawked and speared bodies frightfully mutilated: Cannibalism hinted at', *The Western Mail*, 1 July 1905: 18.

42 *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA).

of Travelling Inspector's annual reports in local newspapers with photographs, 'shewing [sic] how well clothed and comfortable the natives appear at present to be'.⁴³

The colonial myths attached to Jaal continued to circulate long after his death in the figure of Carringoora a Yamaji man, also known as Big Charlie, who became conflated with 'Big George'.⁴⁴ The 1935 illustrated article (see Figure 7) also coincided with investigations into allegations regarding the mistreatment of Aboriginal station workers in the north-west. What became known as the 'Aboriginal Question' was raised yet again in the 1935 *Mosley Report*, and its recommendations were written into the *Aborigines Amendment Act 1936*.⁴⁵ In the news story of 'Big George alias Carringoora' (see Figure 7), Jaal again became the threatening 'notorious native' type in a nostalgic return to the days of 'native depredations' and police heroes at the colonial frontier.⁴⁶ Jaal and Carringoora were powerful Yamaji men in constant conflict with colonial law, and these popular narratives elided an undeclared war and the bloody violence inflicted on Yamaji, despite the condemnations expressed by the 'minority reportage' of whistle blowers and humanitarians.⁴⁷ The voices of these lonely protestors were drowned out by the politically powerful pastoralist lobby and they were publicly humiliated, financially ruined and subjected to self-imposed exile.⁴⁸ In April 1899, soon after the Bendhu case, Police Constable O. Ritchie complained about the mistreatment of Yamaji station workers at Beringarra and the lack of justice afforded them by local magistrate Henry Walsh, owner of Mileura station.⁴⁹ Police Constable Ritchie was suspended from duty pending an investigation that found his allegations were 'exaggerated'. He stated that he was forced to resign from the police force on 14 August 1899, and he died within a year of the inquiry which had exonerated all those accused.⁵⁰

43 Western Australia. Aborigines Department 1903.

44 When Morton was photographing Jaal at Nannine in 1897, Carringoora was imprisoned on Rottnest Island for five years for the attempted murder of Constable Phelan. Shortly after Carringoora's release in May 1901, he speared another settler in the stomach and was shot dead by Constable Gordon at Manfred station in the Murchison on 10 June 1901. Julitha Walsh from Mileura station republished this story. Walsh 1950. Big George as Carringoora was also featured in Heydon 1990.

45 H. D. Mosley, 1935.

46 'Carringoora alias Big George: Exciting Murchison episodes of 30 years ago', *The Sunday Times*, 15 December 1935.

47 Also see Bottoms 2013.

48 Paisley 2012; Reynolds 1982, 1972; *Advocate* 1899; 'Gribble vs The West Australian: The trial and verdict', *The West Australian*, 7 June and 28 June 1887; Western Australia. Aborigines Department 1902.

49 Ritchie 1899b.

50 Ritchie 1899a; also see under Beringarra in the 1901 Chief Protector of Aborigines' annual report, Travelling Inspector G. S. Olivey 1901: 20.

CARRINGOORA ALIAS "BIG GEORGE"

Exciting Murchison Episodes of 30 Years Ago

Remarkable Exploits of Cattle-killing Natives

Recent police expeditions in this State to inquire into aboriginal misdeeds take the thoughts of old members of the Force and retired policemen back to exciting Murchison episodes of 30 years ago.

They still talk of Carringoora, alias "Big George," a powerfully-built nigger who caused officialdom no end of trouble in the early days of the present century.

Picture Mount Gould police station on the Murchison in 1906 with its complement of officers—Sergeant Harry Craven Ord, Constables James Strapp, Harry McGuinness, Harry Breen and R. Phelan.

SHEEP AND CATTLE KILLING by natives was prevalent in the district at the time, and the station was principally used as a check on the activities of such depredations.

The station had 20 horses, and each constable on patrol was supplied with three horses—one for himself, one for his tracker and a pack horse for provisions, chains, etc.

Naturally a good deal of tact had to be employed in catching offenders, especially as the tracks of the police horses (shod) gave the blacks ample warning. Usually the tracker, however, was acquainted with every native in the district, and in instances had himself once been a cattle killer.

The practice was for the police to keep their distance until about day-break, then gallop into the natives' camp, catch the blacks unaware and make them all sit down while the

before Mr. Harry Walsh, of Milleura Station (brother of Mr. Frank Walsh Registrar of the Arbitration Court Perth), and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment, sometimes with a flogging. This would not deter them, however, and on their release they would be at the killing of sheep and cattle again.

The most notorious native of the district in the early part of the present century was Carringoora,

OR "BIG GEORGE"

as he was better known. Six feet high, 15 stone in weight and as strong as a lion, he terrorised his own people and scared many Europeans. Frightened natives came into stations and towns with demands from "Big George" for food and tobacco, and everyone knew his threats to those who refused would be put into effect. For a long while he evaded arrest.

Then, one day Mr. Harry Walsh, of Milleura Station, came face to face with the powerful abo near a well on the former's station.

The native, brandishing a spear,

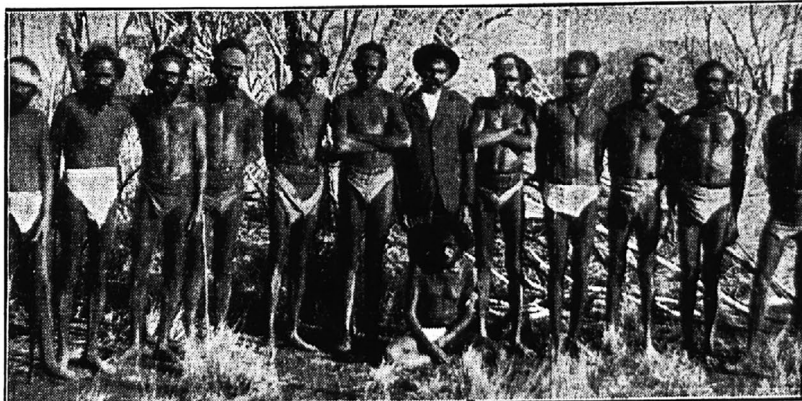
temple—but again it failed to discharge its death missile. Constable Phelan lapsed into unconsciousness, and the tracker, dashing into Milly Milly Station a couple of miles away, summoned help. The station manager, Mr. Andrew Daly, with the aid of a party, brought the injured constable to the station, where he was nursed back to health.

Constables James Strapp and Paddy Breen were called upon to apprehend Big George.

For days they sought news of the trouble-maker; then they got on his tracks, a surprise move and he was their prisoner.

They took him back to Mount Gould, where he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. The two constables were given the job of escorting the native to Cue en route to Fremantle (Constable Strapp having been transferred to Cue as district clerk to Inspector Drevy and the other to officer in charge at Lawlers). The second night Big George escaped from the lock-up, getting over a 20ft. prison wall.

Constable Strapp, with the help of a tracker, picked up the black's tracks which were followed till nearly dark. Then they came upon Big George who was suffering from an injury evidently caused in jumping from the wall. Big George was covered with a revolver, a chain was placed around his neck, and once more he was headed for goal.



A Group of Murchison Aboriginals

tracker pointed out the offenders and placed them on the chain provided. This chain was about 25ft. long, light and very strong (something like a trace chain), while about every 3ft.

threatened to kill the station owner, who carried only a stock whip. Mr. Walsh swung his horse towards the native, knocked the spear from his hand and prevented him from regaining possession of it. Big George dis-

Thus ended the activities of a notorious Murchison native. Constable Strapp, by the way, is now usher to Mr. Justice Dwyer, of the Arbitration Court, Perth.

Figure 7: Carringoora Alias 'Big George' in *The Sunday Times*, 15 December 1935.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove, trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.

The encounter between Jaal and Morton at Nannine on the Murchison took place amidst these colonial tensions and violence that became exacerbated by recent discoveries of gold there. Jaal was as a central figure in these conflicts and was represented in popular narratives as ‘civilised’, ‘cannibal’ and ‘outlaw’ and, at the same time, as an informant and ‘specimen’ of international scientific interest. This was a significant role that Jaal would continue to play for Bates in her ethnography for the Western Australian government and the Cambridge University Expedition during 1910–1911.

Daisy Bates: Jaal my brother, and other Yamaji imaginings

Daisy Bates was an eccentric and enigmatic figure who claimed to be a friend of and an expert on Aboriginal people, and her life has been the subject of a number of biographies.⁵¹ Bates’ lifetime spent amongst ‘her Aborigines’ began at a time of increasing interest in Australian Aboriginal peoples by international scientists and colonial administrators. She arrived in Western Australia from England in August 1899, following the allegations of mistreatment towards Aboriginal people published in London newspapers referred to earlier.⁵² In her ‘special report’ for the London *Times* – which she claims to have written following her ‘investigations’ through the north-west in late 1899 – she found ‘not one charge of cruelty’.⁵³ As with an earlier visit to Tasmania, this journey had apparently sparked her interest in the ‘Aborigines’ and Bates soon established herself within a discursive network of scientists and government officials.

Before her fieldwork for the Western Australian government began in 1904, Bates wrote to many people, including Alexander Morton and Baldwin Spencer, requesting ‘scientific’ information on Aboriginal people.⁵⁴ The extent of this network is indicated in a letter Bates wrote to Harry Princep, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, on 16 June 1905:

Professor Baldwin Spencer, to whom I had written concerning some ‘class divisions’ in his latest ethnological work on the Aborigines which somewhat resembled those obtaining in certain parts of the Nor’ West of this State, is looking up the subject most enthusiastically and promises me his kindly

51 Reece 2007; De Vries 2008; Salter 1971; Hill 1973.

52 These reports by Malcolmson referred to the Bendhu case and Bates also refuted Malcolmson’s subsequent 1904 protest letter to the London *Times* regarding ongoing cruelty and slavery in the north-west. See also Wills-Johnson 2014; Reece 2007.

53 ‘My natives and I: Life story of Daisy M. Bates’, *The Advertiser*, January and February 1936.

54 On 3 May 1904, Daisy Bates accepted a position offered by Colonial Secretary’s Office (CSO) to collect ‘native vocabularies and information of customs and habits’.

assistance ... Dr Delaney [Bishop of Hobart] has kindly put me in communication with Mr Morton FRGS [Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society] one of Tasmania's chief scientists.⁵⁵

To Bates, Jaal represented the embodiment of the 'authentic native'. She referred to him in a scientific paper and he was also one of the many Aboriginal people she characterised in her newspaper articles and books.⁵⁶ Jaal was a significant informant for Bates' ethnographical work that included the Cambridge Expedition to Western Australia with A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and E. L. Grant Watson in 1910–11.⁵⁷ The majority of this work was carried out at the Lock Hospitals on Bernier and Dorre Islands, where Aboriginal people suspected of having venereal disease were isolated for treatment. The traumatic conditions experienced by Jaal and other Yamaji, their illness and isolation far from their families and country are unimaginable. The horrors of this medical experiment have been only hinted at so far.⁵⁸ Jaal was incarcerated on Bernier Island on 26 January 1911, and we can discern just how ill he was from Bates who noted, 'Jaal was too wasted from venereal and operations to speak'.⁵⁹ As well as surgery, his treatment during his eight months of incarceration may well have included the toxic experimental drug Salvarsan which was used up until May 1911.⁶⁰

From October 1910 until June 1911, Bates carried out dual roles as government attaché to the Cambridge Expedition and as a Travelling Protector of Aborigines directed 'to look into the Native problem'.⁶¹ Bates reported regularly to the Chief Protector of Aborigines, and arranged for 'half-caste' children to be removed to government-supported institutions. From this time, Bates published intriguing stories about Jaal and her relationship with him, claiming him as 'her brother ... being of the same class and generation'. In this story, Bates described Jaal as overbearing and masterful, with a 'cold, cruel, selfish nature that overrides every native law in pursuit of its own ends and desires'.⁶² Her narratives juxtapose Jaal's fearsome masculinity against claims of her own superior magical powers stating:

55 Daisy Bates to Chief Protector of Aborigines, Harry Prinsep, 16 June 1905, in Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023.

56 Bates 1911, 1912, 1913, 1936b, 1938; Bates 1936c; see also Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS365.

57 Born Alfred Reginald Brown, he changed his surname by deed poll to Radcliffe-Brown.

58 Lock Hospitals were medical prisons modelled on a British system set up for women. Most Aboriginal people including Jaal were sent to Bernier and Dorre Islands suspected of syphilis and were later diagnosed with granuloma. See also Bates 1938; Jebb 1984; Grant Watson 1910–11; Grant Watson 1946; Stingemore 2010; Papers of Daisy Bates NLA MS365/71/10; Mulvaney 1989.

59 Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS365/55/52.

60 See Stingemore 2010.

61 H. H. Brodribb for Chief Protector of Aborigines to Daisy M. Bates, 10 October 1910, in Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023.

62 Bates 1911.

he [Jaal] pays me the compliment of acknowledging both to myself and to his friends that my magic is not only more powerful than his, but that when I am in his vicinity I absorb all his magic, leaving him like any ordinary [Y]amaji (black fellow) which is satisfactory from my point of view.⁶³

Through such popular narratives, Bates publicised her professed influence and authority over Jaal and other Yamaji in order to create her own persona, and establish her status and reputation in the eyes of the scientific world, with popular audiences and even royalty.⁶⁴ Bates' laments for Aboriginal people as a 'dying race' litter her writings and genealogies, either through direct references or through inscriptions such as 'last of his tribe' or as 'N.C.' (No Children). There are no photographs of Jaal in her collection, however, a photograph of Jaal's brother-in-law Jinguru, another significant informant of Daisy Bates, remains in her collection.⁶⁵

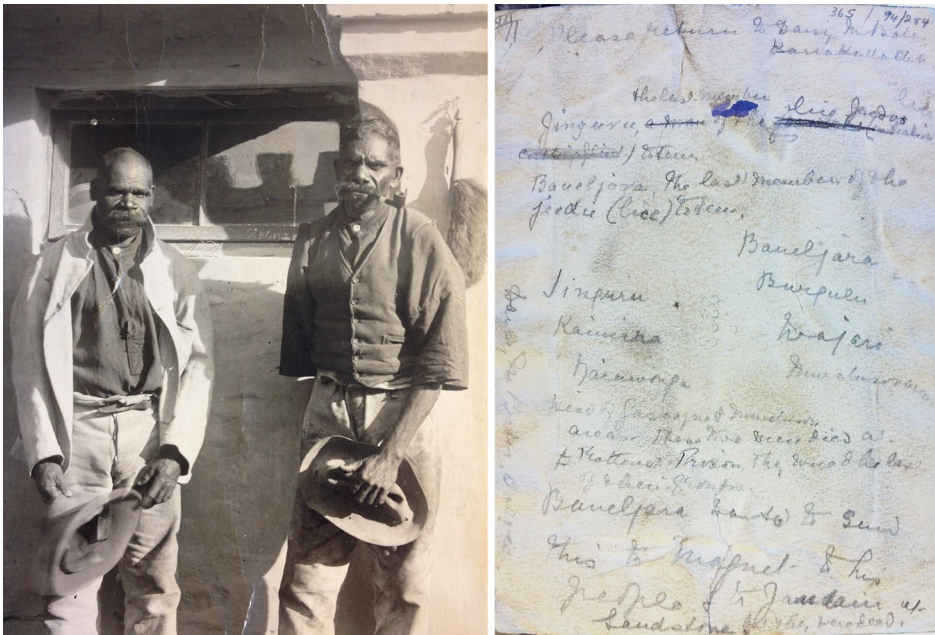


Figure 8: Bauejarra and Jinguru at Rottneest Island Prison: Daisy Bates Collection MS365/Box 40-49 (front and reverse).

Source: Courtesy of the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

63 Bates 1911.

64 Bates' ethnography was used as 'preferred' evidence in Yamaji Native Title claims. See *Badimia* judgement by Barker in CG (Deceased) on behalf of the *Badimia People v State of Western Australia* [2015] FCA 204.

65 Bates claimed that at least half of her photographic collection went missing in the offices of the *Adelaide Advertiser* in 1936.

On the reverse side of the photograph said to be of Jinguru and a Badimia man named Baueljarra (see Figure 8), Bates wrote, 'these two men died at Rottnest Prison ... and were the last of their groups'.⁶⁶ In *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent among the Natives of Australia*, she also described how Jinguru died while she was with him in the gaol cell on Rottnest in 1912, and seeing his grave 'added to the many hundreds on the island', and asserted it was one of her 'saddest memories'.⁶⁷ Bates' touching account of Jinguru's 'death' is in fact a fantasy, and one of her familiar narratives of ministering to 'a dying race'. Baueljarra's fate is unknown, but Jinguru, far from dying in Bates' arms, lived to petition the British King through an interpreter a number of times before he was eventually released from Rottnest in February 1922. Constable G. McDonald and the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, stipulated on Jinguru's release that he could not return to his country, and he was condemned to serve the rest of his sentence at the Moore River Settlement.⁶⁸ However, in 1924 he escaped back to his wife in the Murchison and, according to a local historian, died there sometime around 1936.⁶⁹

As Travelling Protector, Bates claimed that she played a direct role in Jaal's capture, as a suspected syphilitic, at Sandstone by Corporal Grey in October 1910.⁷⁰ As with Morton's visit, the Cambridge Expedition was provided with police assistance, this time from Bates' good friend, Constable G. J. McDonald who was stationed at Sandstone. He recorded his own stories about Jaal as 'Big George' in the *Western Mail* under the pseudonym 'Suter Abis' during the 1930s, later combining them into a memoir, as Bates did with her series.⁷¹ According to Bates, it was an impending police raid to capture Jaal's brother-in-law Jinguru that led to Radcliffe-Brown's decision to relocate his Cambridge Expedition to the Lock Hospitals on Bernier and Dorre Island.⁷² Interestingly, and probably unknown to Radcliffe-Brown, it was Bates who claimed to have provided the police with ethnographical information on Jinguru's country, language group and family genealogies that resulted in his arrest at Wiluna for a 'tribal' murder and his imprisonment on Rottnest Island.⁷³

66 Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS 365/94–96.

67 Bates 1938: 118.

68 McDonald and Neville 1915–1921, SROWA Con 752, item 1915/2671.

69 Heydon 1990.

70 Bates describes her role in the capture of 'natives' at Sandstone by Constable (Corporal) Grey in her 1936 newspaper series 'My Natives and I'. Bates provided a list of 'natives' to Corporal Grey that included Jaal. See letter from Daisy Bates to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 31 October 1910, in Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912, SROWA Con 1023; Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS365/71/15.

71 G. J. C. McDonald 1996.

72 Daisy Bates to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 31 October 1910, in Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023.

73 Daisy Bates to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 1 December 1910, in Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023.

Jaal and other Yamaji were transported in chains to Carnarvon, bound for the Lock Hospital on Bernier Island (for men) and Dorre Islands (for women), and this had tragic consequences for their families. Daisy Bates met up with Jaal in the Carnarvon camp on 23 January 1911, where she assisted in loading him aboard the *Olive*, bound for Bernier Island. While Jaal was sent to Bernier Island, his young 'half-caste' wife Mailgurdi was sent to New Norcia mission.⁷⁴ It was also at this time that Jaal's brother-in-law Jinguru was sent to Rottneest Island for life with hard labour, and his aunty and mother-in-law were sent to Dorre Island.⁷⁵ The Lock Hospital and other prisons were sites of trauma, punishment, discipline and surveillance for Yamaji that became an important space for ethnographic investigations and medical experiments.

Bates typified the close links between anthropology and colonialism, and her regular reports to the Chief Protector of Aborigines from Bernier Island were a testimony to her significant role in the governmentality of Yamaji.⁷⁶ Early ethnographic material, including that of Bates, is used today as 'preferred' evidence in Native Title cases in Western Australia.⁷⁷ Bates claimed that she secured Jaal's release from Bernier Island, but he remained there until his discharge as 'cured' of granuloma, in September 1911.⁷⁸ Jaal was killed four years later, reportedly from a lightning strike and was buried by his kin on the rabbit-proof fence near Barrambie not far from Sandstone.⁷⁹ Jaal's young brother-in-law Hugh (Mailgurdi's brother) kept his experiences of these horrendous times to himself throughout his life. Since Hugh's death, his daughter Jan has continued searching to find out more about her Yamaji family, despite the difficulties of having to come to terms with the dark and violent past that he kept from his wife and children. Morton's photographs of Jan's Yamaji family are now being reinterpreted as valuable visual registers of long-missing kin, despite their original intent as anthropological records.

74 See Nannine Police Occurrence books, 20 October 1910, at SROWA. CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023: 46.

75 Gaols Department, SROWA Con 968, Item 526/1911. NLA MS365/88/53–4; Medical Officer 1911, SROWA Con 652, Item 782/1911.

76 On governmentality see Foucault 1977, 2004, 2008, 2009; Dean 2010.

77 See Barker 2015; Muller 2014.

78 Medical Officer to Chief Protector Aborigines, 'Returns of Patients', June 1911, SROWA Con 652, 1911/782. Also see Stingemore 2010; Jebb 1984.

79 'Death of George King of the Meekatharra Natives at Errols', 1915, SROWA Con 1186, Item 5; 'King of his tribe', *Meekatharra Miner*, 27 February 1915.

'Please return to Daisy Bates': The fabrication of Murchison women

The haunting portraits of 'Murchison Woman' and 'Booreeangoo' of Yalgoo emerged as shadowy images in microfilm at the State Library of Western Australia.⁸⁰ My grandmother and her mother were born near Yalgoo on the Murchison, and here I thought I had found in these photographs the faces of my ancestors. For a time the photograph of Booreeangoo had 'returned' home, to be cherished and framed by her family and kin. But sadly, as I was to learn, Bates' designations cannot be taken at face value, and again bear out the unreliable nature of colonial and photographic truths. The photograph 'Aboriginal Woman of the Murchison' (see Figures 9 to 11) was published in 1936 as part of Bates' 'My Natives and I' newspaper series and, as with many of her photographs, the back was inscribed with ethnographic information.⁸¹ When searching online for photographs of Yamaji, I recognised with utter disappointment the photographic figure Bates characterised as a 'Murchison Woman'. Here in digital form though, her name was now 'Minningun' (see Figure 11), a woman from the Macleay River district of New South Wales, some thousands of miles from the Murchison. In 1909, a photograph was used to illustrate a newspaper story written by Bates of Booreeangoo's tragic death and burial ceremony in 1908 (see Figure 12).⁸² Tracing the photograph of Booreeangoo to another photograph captioned 'Coondah Moss Vale Tribe, N.S.W.' (see Figure 13) was less straightforward. The photograph of Coondah from the Kerry and Co. Studios is now part of the Tyrrell Collection held by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Although the photograph is taken at a slightly different angle to that of Booreeangoo, the visual clues, particularly the distinctive scar on her right eyebrow, and Bates' substitution of Minningun for Murchison Woman, strongly suggest that Booreeangoo and Coondah are one and the same person.

The way in which Bates acquired the photographs of Minningun and Coondah is not known, but these types of studio images were readily available for sale to the public as prints prior to 1900 and after 1903 were also printed as postcards.⁸³ The photographs of Minningun are amongst a series of 150 images from the Kerry and Co. Studios that are said to have been produced sometime between the 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁴ It is known that a photograph of 'Nerelle princess of Moruya' was also in this same series with 'Minningun', and the image was published

80 Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS 365/94.

81 Bates 1936c.

82 Bates 1909.

83 Peterson 1985; Millar 1981.

84 Barker 2009. The photographs are estimated as produced between 1880 and 1899; also see Pitt Rivers Museum and State Library of New South Wales online database.

as a composite poster in 1895.⁸⁵ Bates came to Western Australia in 1899, and it is extremely unlikely that she had access to the professional photographic equipment required to produce images such as these. It is more likely that Bates acquired the photograph from Kerry and Co. Studios, who purchased and printed photographs taken by others, and also employed staff photographers.⁸⁶

The international dissemination of photographs of Aboriginal people, including those popular images produced by Kerry and Co. Studios, were of ethnological 'interest', and their use in this context was an accepted practice from at least the 1880s onwards. The full face and profile studio photographs of Minningun conformed to an anthropometric style and, as noted by Edwards, 'if commercially produced images can be said to have an ethnographic intention through the broadly racialised discourses of colonial photographic practice, their absorption into the scientific gave them authority'.⁸⁷ Bates' motivations to publish as an authority on Aboriginal peoples, and her handwritten notes on the reverse of the Kerry and Co. Studio photographs can be interpreted as a very specific example of discursive violence through erasure and re-inscription. The Kerry and Co. signature was removed, and in her distinctive handwriting Bates expropriated Minningun as her own 'Murchison Weld Range District / The true Murchison type female', going so far as to locate her country and naming 'Weetamurra' as her 'male type from the same area' (see Figure 9). Weetamurra, a Yamaji from Yalgoo, was also featured photographically as a race type in the 'My Natives and I' series by Bates, and also photographed by C. E. Farr in a group preparing for a staged corroboree in Perth in 1909.

On the front of the photograph of Booreeangoo (see Figure 12), Bates wrote 'please return to Daisy Bates ...' as a means of establishing ownership of the image, and also recorded Booreeangoo's age, country and how she was accidentally burnt to death. Booreeangoo was a well-respected Wajarri Yamaji from Yalgoo who married, worked and raised a family near Mindoola in the Weld Ranges. Bates was present at Booreeangoo's burial ceremony, and also described it in her news article, field journal and typed manuscript.⁸⁸ Bates placed great emphasis on the specificity of ethnography through a lifetime of fieldwork; however, in her use of photographs with ethnographic captions she has demonstrated her shallow essentialist vision, where one 'native' is interchangeable with another. Bates' known views about the racial homogeneity of Aboriginal people were influenced

85 Millar 1981: 16.

86 Millar 1981: 27. Kerry and Co. also acquired the Henry King studio collection and some images of the same person have both the King and Kerry studio signatures on them. For other difficulties attributing the photographer to similar images, see Aird 2014.

87 Edwards 2001: 40.

88 Bates 1909

by scholarly debates at the time.⁸⁹ These theorists confirmed Bates' opinion that Aboriginal people were from 'one common stock, since the same distinguishing characteristics are observable in tribes occupying widely separated extremities of the continent'.⁹⁰ Her claims as to the physical resemblances between Yamaji women and Truganina, discussed earlier, were typified in the way she used the photographs of Minningun and Coondah to represent Yamaji as race 'type'.⁹¹

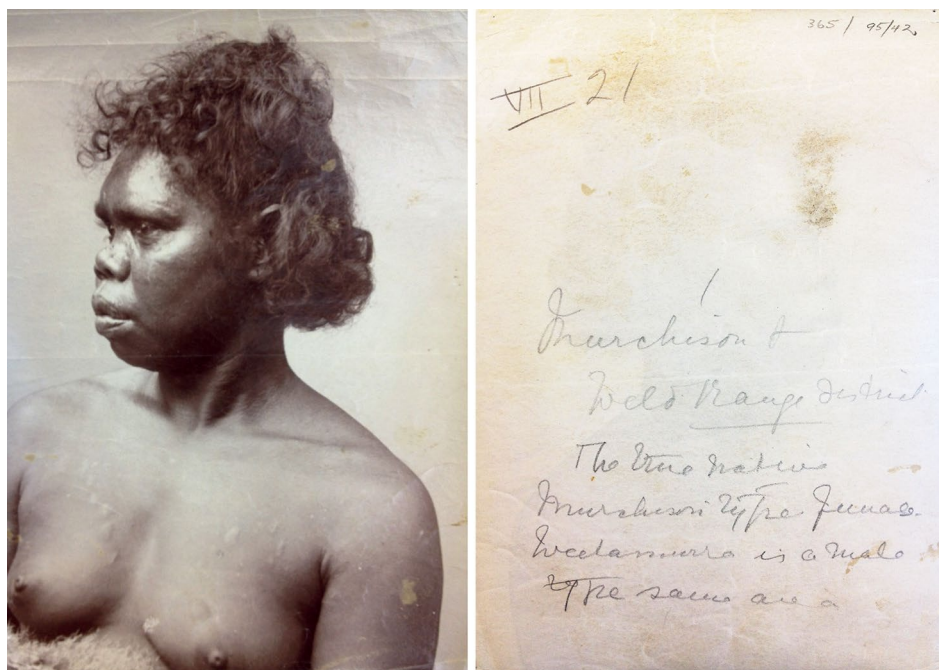


Figure 9: 'Murchison Woman', Daisy Bates Collection MS365/94.

Source: Courtesy of the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

89 Bates 1912, NLA MS365, Folio 66.

90 See Bates' unpublished draft Manuscript Chapter on Origins Section 1.1, page 1, accessed from University of Adelaide digitised special collections.

91 'Stock' images to represent race type continue in digital form today. See www.istockphoto.com/ by Getty Images for examples.

Glen Carrick, in
ance of a cousin in
ut the purchase of

b of 770 well-fed
rowsing round the
some 40 miles east
back vividly to my
ies of Adam Lind-
aterson and other
ose stirring verses
ealms of high ad-
I knew! Today I
e of a Hereford cow-
-washed faces, for
I them, with eight
or six months, 1,000
ent but some 3,000
ng behind the mob
n miles a day, and
surpassing the Irish

This great mob,
number that had
he West Kimberleys
s duly lifted from

ent I obtained from
who was a Maori
e was mostly "breed"
just a few decent
mass. Sundry drov-
o engaged, whose
le art about equalled
ourselves with the
tory and poem, and
er and his lieuten-
and branding, tried
s in true stockman-
mbing into the trees
ash, the stockwhips
p and hidden in the
ry-whip or less am-
f sapling and twine

a good English pig-
h ordinary stirrup;
wallaby skin shoes;
good British cloth,
tout holland; a felt
riding gloves, and
A compact hold-all
ried all necessaries,
ossible on the dray,
he stores for the trip
ers.

and no mounting block baffled me for a
moment, but the horse had had enough
play, and came along to an anthill, from
the top of which I mounted, and pro-
ceeded on the journey.

As we tailed along over the Eighty-mile,
prodding a sturdy little calf or clubbing
a day-old weakling, those of us who were



Aboriginal woman of the Murchison.

at the base of the great moving triangle
were surprised one morning to see the
mob suddenly split in two, leaving a
narrow lane along the centre, and along
the lane quietly walked a Jew pedlar, with
his huge pack strapped to his back.
Drovers and horses stood like statues as
Moses passed through the Red Sea, never
once hastening. No one would believe
him if he tried to tell that tale. The
head drovers were waiting for him—for

a human stomach
and six happy
and farewell.

The tablelar
are splendid
able at all tim
tableland is a
level and has a
laide.

We crossed
to the Fortes
with excellent
now increased
after day, we
thick mulga
and Mitchell g
Hill was Peter
the homestead
the early days,
a horde of
and ammunition
as they well k
for two days
his portion of
keeping the cr
They hurled the
but he had lea
pons. On the
the station.

Our

Our worst st
Hill property, o
in a fenced p
had a long an
calves reluctant
thers half ma
distracted with
men were down
and guiding th
it was dark whe
passed through

Relying on th
the safety of the
ately unsaddled
the cattle brok
fence, heading s
the pools there
cept those too v
in a twinkling,
and calves, wer
water—myself,
droving hand, w
look after our
drovers headed

Figure 10: 'Aboriginal Woman of the Murchison', Daisy Bates
in *The West Australian*, 2 February 1936.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove,
trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.



Figure 11: 'Minningun a MacLeay River Woman' from the Kerry Studios.

Source: Courtesy State Library of New South Wales and Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.



Figure 12a: 'Booreeangoo', Daisy Bates Collection MS365/94.

Source: Courtesy of the National Library of Australia, Canberra.



"BOOREEANGOO," A MURCHISON NATIVE.
Whose death and burial are interestingly described by Mrs. Daisy M. Bates, F.R.A.S.,
on Page 14.

Figure 12b: 'Booreeangoo' in *The Western Mail*, 4 December 1909.

Source: Available at the State Library of Western Australia on microfilm and at Trove,
trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper.



Figure 13: 'Coondah' from Kerry and Co. Studios (possibly taken by Henry King).

Source: Courtesy of the Tyrell Collection at Power House Museum, Sydney.

Conclusion

Morton's photographs of Jaal were produced within an anthropological framework and were disseminated within colonial and scientific discursive relationships of power that essentialised Jaal and other Yamaji as the 'authentic' and 'savage' other. The photographs of Yamaji taken by Morton and those in the Bates collection have operated seamlessly as illustrations of scientific and popular racial discourse. The photographic substitution of Minningun and possibly Coondah from New South Wales by Bates to represent Yamaji women from the Murchison, in both popular and ethnographic registers, exposes a more sinister and complex discursive violence of erasure and re-inscription. The particular histories of the photographs of Booreeangoo and Murchison Woman represent a double loss to Yamaji descendants and kin, and for now must be 'returned' to Daisy Bates.

The search for meanings within the labels and histories attached to Jaal and other Yamaji in this article is an interpretive task, but the fragmentary texts in the colonial record can tell us that Jaal, a Yamaji senior lawman and leader of his people, lived in the Murchison and Lake Way districts during the early days of colonisation in Western Australia. These records also register the occurrences of his conflicts with white laws, arrests, incarcerations and finally his death and burial at Barrambie with full ceremony in 1915. These documents trace Jaal's life of violence and surveillance by scientists and government officials, and of his criminalisation and punishment as a prisoner and suspected syphilitic. Early police accounts of Jaal as 'perfectly civilised' were later replaced with the more enduring colonial tropes of 'cannibal' and 'outlaw' that were concomitant with his increasing retaliations for violence and dispossession. What the archive also reveals is the way in which the lives of Alexander Morton and Daisy Bates, and other influential figures, intersected with each other and with Jaal, Jinguru and other Yamaji. As authoritative voices within institutionalised colonial networks of law and science, they constructed representations of Yamaji through an Aboriginalist discourse that would also serve to further their own reputations.

While Jaal and his brother-in-law Jinguru were well-known Yamaji figures of some notoriety during the early period of colonisation in the Murchison, they remain relatively unknown today. Oral histories still exist of Jinguru and Booreeangoo in the memories of their kin, but living memories of Jaal have yet to be found. The identities and stories attached to Jaal, Jinguru and Carringoorra were melded into colonial fictions and spectacle that promoted its 'success' and justified the violence inflicted on Yamaji at its frontiers. It is not possible to know the 'real' Yamaji figures of Jaal, Jinguru, Booreeangoo, Bauejarra and Carringoorra, because their histories have been transformed and conflated

with others over time. But it is possible to re-interpret and reposition Yamaji photographic figures within a more complex social and historical context, a network of discursive power relations, and the shared histories of violence, dispossession and colonisation in Western Australia.

References

Archival sources

National Library of Australia

Bates, Daisy 1912, 'The Aborigines: Their homogeneity', Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS365, Folio 66.

———1912, 'The native tribes of Western Australia', Papers of Daisy Bates MS365/1–3.

Grant Watson, Elliot L. 1910–11, Letters and Papers, NLA MS4950.

Papers of Daisy Bates, NLA MS365

State Records Office of Western Australia

Bates, D., Composite File, CSO: 1904–1912 SROWA Con 1023.

'Death of George King of the Meekatharra Natives at Errols', Commissioner of Police. Sandstone Police Occurrence Book, 2 March 1915, SROWA Con 1186, Item 5.

Dolan, A., Police Constable, and HP Police Constable Breen, 1895, 'Murder and Cannibalism', Mt Gould Police Station Reports, SROWA Con 430, Item 1895/152.

McDonald, G. and A. O. Neville, 'Aboriginal Native Prisoners: 8467 Jandababby, 8465 Morrie Alias Harry, 8466 Jangarie Alias Charlie, 8469 Georgie Coyle. Petition for Remission of Sentence', Office of the Colonial Secretary/Chief Secretary, SROWA Con 752, Item 1915/2671, 1915–1921.

Medical Officer, Supt. 'Lock Hospitals, Bernier Island: Return of Persons, Etc., Treated in the Lock Hospital at Bernier Island', Dept. Aborigines Fisheries, 1911, SROWA Con 652, Item 782/1911.

Prinsep, Henry 1905, 'Dr Durack, Marble Bar asks if he can retain Aboriginal skeletons for scientific purposes', SROWA Con 255, Item 425/1905.

The University of Adelaide Library

Bates, Daisy c. 1936, Jaal – Last native of tribe belonging to Wiluna (Wiluna Goldfields), Daisy Bates Digital Archive, Series 2 Native Testaments of old natives, 15, University of Adelaide Digital Library, Adelaide.

Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Library

Morton, Alexander 1900, 'Account of the Remains of King Billy: The Last Tasmanian Male Aboriginal', PMS 5018, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Library, Canberra.

Museum Victoria Archives

Letter from Alexander Morton to Spencer, 31 March 1904, Museum Victoria Archives, Melbourne.

State Library of Western Australia

Olivey, G. S. 1899–1901, 'Reports on Stations Visited by the Travelling Inspector of Aborigines from 1st September, 1899 to 30th June, 1901' in Western Australia. Aborigines Department, *Annual Report*, Wm. Alfred Watson, Government Printer, Perth: 16.

Western Australia. Aborigines Department 1901–1903, *Annual Reports*, Wm Alfred Watson, Government Printer, Perth.

Newspapers

Advocate

The Argus

The Daily News

The Sunday Times

The West Australian

The West Australian Sunday Times

The Western Mail

Secondary sources

Advocate, *The Murchison*. 'Northern slave owners', reprinted in the *West Australian Sunday Times*, 9 April 1899: 8.

- Aird, M. 2014, 'Aboriginal people and four early Brisbane photographers', in *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Jane Lydon (ed.), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra: 133–154.
- Ballard, Chris 2008, 'The cultivation of difference in Oceania', in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750–1940*, Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (eds), ANU E Press, Canberra: 340.
- Barker, Geoff 2009, 'Minningun: Statement of Significance', www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=30335, accessed 2015.
- Barker, Judge J. 2015, 'Native Title Claim: The Badimia People V State of Western Australia [2015] Fca 204', Federal Court of Australia (ed.), www.judgments.fedcourt.gov.au/judgments/Judgments/fca/single/2015/2015fca0204 Federal Court of Australia,
- Bates, Daisy 1909, 'The death of Booreeangoo: An Aboriginal burial', *The Western Mail*, 4 December 1909: 14, 26.
- 1911, 'My camp in the Murchison bush', *The Western Mail*, 17 June 1911.
- 1912, 'Native decorative art', *The Western Mail*, 30 March 1912: 14, 27.
- 1913, 'Social organisation of some Western Australian tribes', in *Fourteenth Meeting of Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, T. S. Hall (ed.), Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Melbourne.
- 1936a, 'Chapter V: Sojourn in the Dreamtime', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 10 January 1936: 22.
- 1936b, 'My natives and I: Life story of Daisy M. Bates', *The Advertiser*, January and February 1936.
- 1936c, 'My Natives and I: 3,000 miles in the side-saddle', *The West Australian*, 5 February 1936.
- 1938, *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent among the Natives of Australia*, Murray, London.
- Blackton, Charles S. 1958, 'Australian Nationality and Nativism: The Australian Natives' Association, 1885–1901', *The Journal of Modern History* 30(1): 37–46.
- Bottoms, Timothy 2013, *Conspiracy of Silence: Queensland's Frontier Killing-Times*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Braithwaite, Sari, Tom Gara and Jane Lydon 2011, 'Rom Moorundie to Buckingham Palace: Images of 'King' Tenberry and his son Warrulan, 1845–55', *Journal of Australian Studies* 35(2): 165–184.

- Chadwick, Ross 2008, "'Your obedient servant': The John Tunney Collection at the Western Australian Museum', in *The Makers and Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collection*, Nicolas Petersen, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby, (eds), Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic: 255–280.
- Daley, Paul 2014, 'Restless Indigenous remains', *Meanjin* 73(1): 1–16.
- De Vries, Susanna 2008, *Desert Queen: The Many Lives and Loves of Daisy Bates*, HarperCollins Publishers, Pymble, NSW.
- Dean, Mitchell 2010, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, second edition, Sage, London.
- De Vries, Susanna 2008, *Desert Queen: The Many Lives and Loves of Daisy Bates*, HarperCollins Publishers, Pymble, NSW.
- Edwards, Elizabeth 1992, *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920*, Yale University Press in association with The Royal Anthropological Institute, London.
- 2001, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*, Materializing Culture, Berg, Oxford.
- Foucault, Michel 1977, *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (trans), Vintage Books, New York.
- 2004, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College De France 1975–76*, David Macey (trans), Penguin Books, London.
- 2008, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Colleg De France, 1978–79*, Graham Burchell (trans), Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- 2009, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College De France, 1977–1978*, Graham Burchell (trans), Picador, New York.
- Frost, Lucy 2001, 'Displaying Trugernanna', In *Storykeepers*, Mary Halligan (ed.), Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney.
- Gough, Julie 2014, 'Forgotten lives – the first photographs of Tasmanian Aboriginal people', in *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, Jane Lydon (ed.), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Grant Watson, Elliot L. 1946, *But to What Purpose: The Autobiography of a Contemporary*, The Cresset Press, London.
- Griffiths, Tom 1996, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- Growden, Police Constable 1905, 'The Native Trouble: Cannibalism in the North West: Search for the Murderers: How Toby and Monkey Were Arrested', *The Western Mail*, 22 July 1905: 12–13.
- Heydon, Philip 1990, *Nannine by the Lake*, Hesperian Press, Perth.
- Hill, Ernestine 1973, *Kabbarli: A Personal Memoir of Daisy Bates*, Angus and Robinson, Sydney.
- Huxley, J. K. 2008, 'Courtier to the powerful and zealous curator for the people: The contribution of Alexander Morton to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1884–1907', *Kanunna* 2: 1–34.
- Jebb, Mary Anne 1984, 'The Lock Hospitals experiment: Europeans, Aborigines and venereal disease', *Studies in Western Australian History* 8: 13, 68–86.
- K. O. S. 1947, 'Truganini: A broken promise', *Advocate*, 20 December.
- Lydon, Jane (ed.) 2005, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- 2014, *Calling the Shots*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- McDonald, G. J. C. 1996, *Beyond Boundary Fences*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle Western Australia.
- McDonald, Helen 2007, 'A scandalous act: Regulating anatomy in a British settler colony, Tasmania 1869', *Social History of Medicine* 20(1): 39–56.
- McGregor, Russell 1997, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Millar, David P. 1981, *Charles Kerry's Federation Australia*, David Ell Press, Sydney.
- Morton, Alexander 1897, 'Letters from Morton to Bernard Woodward Curator of the Western Australian Museum', Western Australian Museum Library, Perth.
- 1898a, 'Notes on a Visit to West Australia (Read at the Royal Society of Tasmania, on Monday, June 13th 1898', Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Printed at the 'Tasmanian News' Office, Hobart, 1–8.
- 1898b, 'Some Murchison views', *The Western Mail*, 2 January 1898: 26.
- Mosley, H. D. 1935, *Report of the Commissioner appointed to Investigate, Report, and Advise upon matters in relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Fred W. M. Simpson Government Printer, Perth.

- Muller, Craig 2014, 'The "allurements of the European presence": Examining explanations of Wongatha behaviour in the Northern Goldfields of Western Australia', *Aboriginal History* 38: 59–87.
- Mulvaney, D John 1989, *Encounters in Place: Outsiders and Aboriginal Australians 1606–1985*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Paisley, Fiona 2012, *The Lone Protestor: A M Fernando in Australia and Europe*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Peterson, Nicolas 1985, 'The popular image', in *Seeing the First Australians*, Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson (eds), George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Pinney, Christopher 1992, 'The parallel histories of anthropology and photography', in *Anthropology and Photography*, Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), Yale University Press in Association with the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, New Haven.
- 2011, *Photography and Anthropology*, Reaktion, London.
- Pinney, Christopher and Nicolas Peterson (eds) 2003, *Photography's Other Histories*, Duke University Press, Durham.
- Poignant, Roslyn 1992, 'Surveying the field of view: The making of the RAI photographic collection', in *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920*, Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), Yale University Press in association with The Royal Anthropological Institute, London, New Haven: 42–73.
- 2004, *Professional Savages: Captive Lives and Western Spectacle*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Reece, Bob 1987, 'Inventing Aborigines', *Aboriginal History* 11: 14–23.
- 2007, *Daisy Bates: Grand Dame of the Desert*, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- 2008, 'Killing with kindness: Daisy Bates and New Norcia', *Aboriginal History* 32: 128–145.
- Reynolds, Henry 1972, *Aborigines and Settlers: The Australian Experience, 1788–1939*, Problems in Australian History, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, Vic.
- 1982, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood.
- Ritchie, O. 1899a, 'The black north: Modes of nigger flogging', *The Sunday Times*, 3 September 1899.

- 1899b, 'Very summary justice', *The West Australian Sunday Times*, 3 September 1899: 3.
- Royal Society of Tasmania (ed.) 1898, 'Papers and Proceedings 1897', Davies Brothers Ltd, Hobart.
- Salter, Elizabeth 1971, *Daisy Bates 'the Great White Queen of the Never Never'*, Halstead Press, Sydney.
- Stingemore, Jade L. 2010, 'Surviving the "Cure": Life on Bernier and Dorre Islands under the Lock Hospital Regime', PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, Perth.
- Turnbull, Paul 2008, 'British anthropological thought in colonial practice: The appropriation of Indigenous Australian bodies', in *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750–1940*, Bronwen Douglas and Chris Ballard (eds), ANU E Press, Canberra: 205–228.
- Tylor, E. B. 1894, 'On the Tasmanians as representatives of Paleolithic man', *The Journal of The Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 23: 141–152.
- 1900, 'On stone implements from Tasmania: Extracts from a letter by J. Paxton Moir. Communicated by Professor E. B. Tylor F.R.S.', *Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*: 30–31.
- Walsh, Harry B. 1892, 'The native question', *The West Australian*, 2 April 1892: 2.
- Walsh, Julitha 1950, 'Memories of Mt Gould and the black outlaw', *The Western Mail*, 14 December 1950: 14.
- Wills-Johnson, Brian 2014, 'An unexamined atrocity: The Bendu station killings', published electronically 2015, www.academia.edu/.

Harry Brown (c. 1819–1854): Contribution of an Aboriginal guide in Australian exploration

Greg Blyton

In recent years there have been a number of important historical works which recognise the important contribution of Aboriginal guides in the exploration of Australia. This article contributes to this field by providing a narrative history of a young Aboriginal man from Newcastle called Harry Brown who accompanied the well-known Prussian explorer, Dr Ludwig Leichhardt, on two expeditions into the interior of Australia in the 1840s. Brown was a highly intelligent, resilient and skilful man who made an enormous contribution to Australian exploration, yet has been overlooked in Australian historiography. His contribution to Australian exploration is an exemplar of Aboriginal influence during the nineteenth century which extends well beyond simplistic portrayals of Aboriginal people as useful, submissive and subservient guides. It will be demonstrated in this article that without the courageous and resolute Brown along with his perspicacity and judgement, the widespread celebration of Leichhardt's discoveries may not have been forthcoming.

The recognition of Aboriginal people in Australian history has made some progress since the late Professor William Stanner chastised Australian historians for failing to acknowledge Aboriginal people in the development of Australia. In 1968, Stanner described this omission as the 'Great Australian Silence' and referred to mentions of Aboriginal people in Australian histories, scant as they were, as a 'melancholy footnote'.¹ In some ways this may explain why Harry

1 Stanner 1991: 25.

Brown has been overlooked in Australian exploration history. Aboriginal Australian political academics, the late Dr Bruce McGuinness and Dennis Walker, stated in 1985:

Aboriginal heroes, of course, in the main remain nameless ... Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth ... are depicted as being intrepid explorers who found their way across the Blue Mountains in the greater expanse of Australia. Of course this isn't true. Aboriginal people showed them the way. Without those Aboriginal people they wouldn't have been able to get across those mountains. Those Aboriginal people remain nameless, yet the 'intrepid explorers' are forever glorified by statues and throughout the history books of Australia. There do exist, throughout those historical accounts of what occurred throughout Australian history, many examples of Aboriginal involvement in the blazing of trails, in the establishment of settlements, and in every area of Australian advancement. However, they're hidden within the historical accounts that exist. They remain nameless people.²

It is evident from nineteenth-century colonial newspapers that Aboriginal guides in Australian exploration were once recognised albeit in a brief, paternalistic and dismissive way. On 2 April 1899, Sydney newspaper the *Truth* reported that a memorial had been held at the Saint James Church Sydney to remember the tragic death of the European explorer Edmund Kennedy and heroic deeds of '... the faithful aborigine *Jackey Jackey* on a fateful expedition to Cape York in 1848'.³ On 2 November 1889, the *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal* acknowledged the important service provided to Captain Matthew Flinders by 'his black boy, Bungaree', who acted as an intermediary when encountering Aboriginal communities on several sea expeditions, including the circumnavigation voyage around Australia in 1803.⁴ On 30 December 1845, Brown is also given a brief mention in *The Australian* as 'the black fellow, Harry Brown of Newcastle' who accompanied the European explorer Ludwig Leichhardt.⁵

Nineteenth-century colonial newspapers diminished Aboriginal guides by referring to them in derogatory terms such as 'blacks', 'black boy', 'faithful aborigine'; they were characterised as submissive and obedient servants on European expeditions throughout Australia. Even in the 1970s, popularised historical novels such as *Jackey Jackey* (1976) by Margaret Paice maintained the portrayal of Aboriginal guides as timid, submissive and feeble-minded. For example, in the following passage from this book *Jackey Jackey* is depicted as lacking intellectual capacity in a conversation with Dr Vallack:

2 McGuinness and Walker 1985.

3 'Queensland exploration: Kennedy's expedition to Cape York', *Truth*, 2 April 1899: 8.

4 'The story of the blacks: The Aborigines of Australia', *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 23 November 1889: 4.

5 'Dr Leichhardt's expedition', *The Australian*, 30 December 1845: 165.

‘Where this place, Cape York?’ Jackey Jackey ventured timidly, after a moment. ‘It’s the very top part ...’ Dr Vallack scratched his head. ‘How do you explain to an Aborigine who had no knowledge of geography outside his own territory?’ ‘Look,’ he said, squatting on his heels and taking up a twig. He began to draw a map in the dust ... Jackey understood only vaguely, but he didn’t like to say this.⁶

McGuinness and Walker were justified in their protests, for it was not until the ground-breaking works of historian Henry Reynolds that a more nuanced appreciation of the importance of Aboriginal guides was advanced. Reynolds wrote in *With the White People* (1990) that the Aboriginal guide has been devalued in Australian exploration history and portrayed as ‘ubiquitous, albeit often anonymous’ despite playing ‘a vital role in the European exploration of the continent’.⁷

In recent years, historical research reveals a greater appreciation and insight into the crucial contribution of Aboriginal people to the exploration of Australia in the nineteenth century. The marginalisation of Aboriginal people in Australian exploration history has been noted by Australian historians, such as Nigel Parbury, who wrote, ‘In general Aboriginal guides were written out of the legend of Australian exploration and generations of Australian school children learnt of the discoveries and exploits of white explorers. All credit went to the white man’.⁸ Similarly, anthropologist Philip Clarke stated in his work *Aboriginal Plant Collectors* (2008) that Aboriginal guides ‘possessed bush skills and a general knowledge of landscapes that could be broadly applied across the continent’.⁹

This represents a major shift in the image of Aboriginal guides as portrayed in 1976 by Paice, who depicted *Jackey Jackey* as lacking the intellectual capacity to comprehend life beyond his ‘territory’. This elision applied also to the subject of this article, Harry Brown. American historian Dane Kennedy in *The Last Blank Spaces* (2013) notes that ‘apart from Leichhardt’s passing references’ to Brown ‘being a member of the Newcastle Tribe ... we know almost nothing’ about his life.¹⁰ Brown is minimally referenced in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* as a ‘notable Aboriginal from Lake Macquarie who was Leichhardt’s guide’.¹¹ In the following narrative on the life of this Aboriginal guide, primary sources on Harry Brown, including Leichhardt’s journal, will be used along with recent scholarship in the field to show that Brown was among the most effective and skilled Aboriginal guides in nineteenth-century Australian exploration.

6 Paice 1976: 7.

7 Reynolds 1990: 17.

8 Parbury 2005: 65.

9 Clarke 2008: 15.

10 Kennedy 2013: 159.

11 Gunson 1966: 102, 103.

Brown's early years

One of the major challenges to finding details about the life of an Aboriginal guide overlooked by Australian history is locating the relevant sources. The records left by Aboriginal missionary Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld provide a glimpse into the early years of Brown's life, but little is known of Brown's birthplace, his father, Ngo-ah-ko-ro or Moses (his European ascribed name), or his mother.¹² According to Threlkeld, Brown was a member of the 'Newcastle Tribe' and was around five years old when the missionary arrived at Newcastle in 1825 to establish a mission for Aboriginal people at Lake Macquarie. It would appear that while Threlkeld was living in Newcastle in a government cottage, Brown and his family lived in close proximity for protection.¹³ Though he does not mention Brown specifically, the missionary provides a picture of his camp's conditions:

The Native camp which surrounded our habitation gave a cheerfulness to the scene at night in consequence of the number of fires kept up by the families at the front of their respective sleeping places, which were mere erections of boughs of trees, or sheets of bark placed upright supported by stakes. The blacks chose our place of residence for their new encampment they having been so frequently molested by many of the prisoners of the crown who perambulated the settlement in the night for purposes that would not bear the light of day.¹⁴

So, according to Threlkeld, a vexatious relationship existed at Newcastle where these Aboriginal families feared molestation from prisoners. The following year Brown and his family accompanied Threlkeld to establish a mission on the eastern shores of Lake Macquarie.¹⁵ According to Threlkeld, Brown could already speak 'broken English', as well as being fluent in his traditional Aboriginal language, Awabakal.¹⁶ As a child, Brown's bilingual skills assisted the missionary record local Aboriginal words and he impressed Threlkeld as intelligent and perceptive:

From childhood Brown exhibited all the smartness of an intellectual youth, equal to any white lad and when teaching him and other aboriginal youngsters to write the English alphabet, at our establishment on the borders of Lake Macquarie, their ingenuity and quickness of apprehension were exhibited, in chopping with their hatchets on the smooth bark of the standing trees in the wilderness, the Roman characters, thus exhibiting their capacity for learning.¹⁷

12 Gunson 1974, II: 315.

13 Gunson 1974, I: 45, 46.

14 Gunson 1974, I: 45.

15 Gunson 1974, I: 70.

16 Gunson 1974, I: 46 (traditional language known today as Awabakal).

17 Gunson 1974, I: 70.

In 1828, Threlkeld's relationship with Brown was likely to have been severed when the Aboriginal families at Lake Macquarie returned to Newcastle preferring 'the attractions' of employment in exchange for foods, alcohol and tobacco.¹⁸ At the time Brown was about eight years old and he returned to Newcastle on the cusp of great social change in the Hunter region. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Brown retained his traditional cultural skills and used them effectively on the two Leichhardt expeditions. It was clearly a major disappointment to Threlkeld who had invested considerable time in educating young Aboriginal boys such as Brown. He reflected his concerns in a letter to the London Missionary Society, stating:

Of eight native children, boys, whom we have attempted to teach the alphabet of their own language, only two remain, but now, about three weeks since the commencement, not one is left; they are all with their friends at Newcastle, where drunkenness is as common with the black boys, 7 or 8 years old.¹⁹

To what degree Brown was exposed and affected by such 'vices' is difficult to gauge, but when he was around 17 years old he appeared in the Newcastle law court for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. On 6 November 1837, Brown was found guilty of riotous, drunken behaviour and received a five shilling fine or six hours in the stocks. It is not known which punishment he accepted.²⁰ Apart from this minor blemish it would seem Brown was a popular young man who had adapted into colonial society. The *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* reported on 21 June 1854 that as a youth Brown was 'a favourite among the public at Newcastle' and 'no fishing, boating, shooting or oystering party was complete without him'.²¹

In her ground-breaking work *Roving Mariners*, Indigenous historian Lynette Russell identifies Aboriginal men and women from Tasmania who played a vital role in the whaling industry in the southern waters of Australia during the nineteenth century. As pointed out by Russell, little is known of the contribution of Aboriginal people in the maritime industry, and although she does not mention Brown it would appear he too was employed in the whaling industry.²² According to John F. Mann who accompanied Leichhardt on his second expedition, Brown 'had made two voyages as a sailor on board a whaler'.²³ Mann's mention of Brown and his whaling experience suggests that

18 Gunson 1974, I: 96.

19 Gunson 1974, II: 227.

20 'Brown (Aboriginal)', (Newcastle Bench Books, AONSW Reel 2722), Free Settler or Felon?, www.jenwilletts.com/searchaction.php?page=6&surname=aboriginal&ship=&firstname=, accessed 21 June 2015.

21 'Newcastle: The last of the Newcastle tribe', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 June 1854: 2.

22 Russell 2012.

23 Mann 1888: 8.

Aboriginal people in the Hunter region may also have been engaged in the maritime industry.²⁴ How and when Brown met Ludwig Leichhardt remains a mystery.

At the same time, on the other side of the world, another young man was in European education centres studying natural sciences. According to the *Australian Dictionary Biography*, Ludwig Freidrich Wilhelm Leichhardt was born in Prussia on 23 October 1813 and was educated at several institutions, including the University of Berlin and the British Museum.²⁵ Leichhardt left London in October 1841 aboard the *Sir Edward Paget*, having completed studies in natural sciences at the British Museum, including botany and geology.²⁶ On the voyage to Australia, Leichhardt met James Calvert and John Roper who would become fellow members of the famous expedition from Moreton Bay to Port Essington. Leichhardt arrived in Sydney on 14 February 1842 and ventured to the Hunter region several months later to conduct scientific field trips. Arriving in Newcastle on 20 September with prominent Hunter landowner, Alexander Walker Scott, Leichhardt engaged several Aboriginal guides to assist him during his field studies of fauna, flora and geology in the Hunter Valley, but his diary entries do not reveal Brown as one of them.²⁷ According to historian Colin Roderick, Leichhardt had developed a close friendship with Scott, a prominent Hunter Valley pastoralist who may have nominated Brown.²⁸ It is highly probable that at the time Leichhardt announced his intention to conduct an expedition into the interior of northern Australia, Brown was a well-reputed and established Aboriginal guide in Newcastle.

Leichhardt's selection of Brown as a member of the expedition indicated that this Aboriginal man from Newcastle had much to offer. Leichhardt's proposal to explore the unknown regions of northern Australia attracted widespread interest, with numerous colonists expressing a desire to take part in the expedition. He wrote, 'in arranging the plan of my journey I had limited the party to six individuals; although many young men volunteered their services, I was obliged to decline their offers'.²⁹ As a result, Leichhardt had overlooked many of his fellow colonists and rejected notions of European superiority by choosing Brown. At around 22 years, Brown offered the expedition a strong and robust young man, bilingual and possessed of superior hunting, tracking and survival skills. Leichhardt was about to embark on a journey with European

24 Mann 1888: 8.

25 Erdos 1967: 102.

26 Erdos 1967: 102.

27 Darragh and Fensham 2013: 39.

28 Roderick 1988: 237.

29 Leichhardt 1847: xiv.

colonists with little knowledge of the Australian bush, and as leader of the expedition he had only the limited experience of short excursions into districts surrounding settled parts of the colony.³⁰

The first expedition

A party of six men made up of Leichhardt, Calvert, Roper, John Murphy, William Phillips and Brown left Sydney on 13 August 1844 aboard the steamer *Sovereign*.³¹ A week later they arrived at Moreton Bay, Brisbane, where preparations for the expedition were finalised. Another four more members were added to the party: John Gilbert, Caleb, Charlie Fisher (an Aboriginal man from Bathurst) and Pemberton Hodgson.³² By the end of September the 10 men were ready to commence the expedition with supplies of flour, sugar, tea, guns and ammunition loaded onto carts pulled by 16 bullocks along with 17 horses. On 1 October, the party left Jimbour Station on the Darling Downs and Leichhardt wrote in his journal ‘we bid farewell to civilization ... buoyant with hope into the wilderness of Australia’.³³

To a chorus of ‘God Save the Queen’ the expedition set off in a north-westerly direction, but before too long buoyant spirits were dampened by the ‘refractory bullocks’ who ‘tore the flour-bags, upset their loads, broke their straps, and severely tried the patience of my companions, who were almost continually occupied with reloading one or other of the restless brutes’.³⁴ Few entries are made by Leichhardt about Brown during the first weeks of the expedition, but his Aboriginal compatriot Fisher was mentioned as becoming irritable when Leichhardt delegated him the onerous task of managing the recalcitrant bullocks. Leichhardt wrote on 17 October, ‘Charley had been insolent several times, when I sent him out after the cattle, and, this morning, he even threatened to shoot Mr. Gilbert’.³⁵ So, even in these early stages of the expedition it can be seen that race relations were far from settled with Fisher allegedly being ‘impertinent’.

A fortnight later with peace restored, Leichhardt realised their food supplies were insufficient to maintain the expeditionary party. Having anticipated they would be able to supplement provisions with ‘game to furnish my party with animal food’, Leichhardt wrote, ‘I saw clearly that my party, which I had reluctantly increased on my arrival at Moreton Bay, was too large for our

30 As noted Leichhardt, Roper and Calvert had only had two years in Australia prior to the expedition.

31 Leichhardt 1847: xiv.

32 Leichhardt 1847: xiv.

33 Leichhardt 1847: xv, xviii, 1.

34 Leichhardt 1847: 12–13.

35 Leichhardt 1847: 14.

provisions. I, therefore, communicated to my companions the absolute necessity of reducing our number'.³⁶ According to Leichhardt, all members expressed a desire to remain on the expedition, but following a group discussion, Caleb and Hodgson 'who had perhaps suffered most by additional fatigues ... prepared their return for Moreton Bay'.³⁷ Again the importance with which Leichhardt viewed Brown and Fisher is emphasised in that he kept the two Aboriginal guides while decreasing the size of the expedition party. Reduced to eight after one month, the party travelled in a north-westerly direction encountering thunderstorms, stifling heat, mosquitoes and sand flies.³⁸

As noted by historian Edgar Beale, Aboriginal guides often ascended to become *de facto* commanders during the course of an expedition. Beale stated of Galmarra, alias Jackey Jackey, 'he soon acquired a reputation for hard work, sagacity and superb bushcrafts ... who emerged as one of its strongest members'.³⁹ Brown's role during this expedition seems primarily to be as navigator. Occasionally he killed game for food, but spent much of his time scouting ahead of the expeditionary team on horse searching for the best route.⁴⁰ Another one of the crucial roles he performed was locating water. In December 1844, the party were experiencing searing summer heatwaves and fatigue and water supplies were critically low. The situation was dire when Brown made a vital discovery of a 'magnificent lagoon'.⁴¹ On 18 December, Leichhardt noted in his journal, 'The fine lagoons – which I called "Brown's Lagoons" after their discoverer' allowed the party an opportunity to regain their strength and composure.⁴² Abundant vegetation hedging the waterholes provided 'good feed' for the horses and bullocks as well as an opportunity to replenish their water supplies.⁴³ It was at 'Brown's Lagoon' the party spent Christmas Day dining on a festive meal of 'suet pudding and stewed cockatoos'.⁴⁴

Brown's discovery of a large freshwater lagoon at a time when the party's water supply was low was a critical find, allowing the troupe to regain their stamina, continue their journey and ensure their survival. As pointed out by Kennedy in reference to Brown and Fisher, 'they loom large however, in the expedition journals of Leichhardt and several of his British companions – so large in fact, that they call into question standard assumptions about the role such guides played in relation to the European explorers who were their self-described

36 Leichhardt 1847: 26.

37 Leichhardt 1847: 27.

38 Leichhardt 1847: 26, 50.

39 Beale 1967: 7.

40 Leichhardt 1847: 52.

41 Leichhardt 1847: 76.

42 Leichhardt 1847: 79.

43 Leichhardt 1847: 79.

44 Leichhardt 1847: 84.

masters'.⁴⁵ Brown and Fisher were being utilised to 'herd stock, hunt game, find water', which was vital to the success of the expedition.⁴⁶ Their roles highlight not only the essential importance of Aboriginal guides on such expeditions, but may also explain why some European explorers resorted to abduction.

The essential ability of Aboriginal people to locate water on European exploratory expeditions in Australia has been noted by historian Philip Jones. Jones stated that Aboriginal guides were so vital to European explorers they were often abducted and then coerced to help find water on expeditions into the arid areas of the Australian interior. He wrote that it was commonplace to kidnap Aboriginal people, 'forcing them to reveal water sources'.⁴⁷ Historian Mary Anne Jebb corroborates Jones' claim that Aboriginal people were forcibly detained to find water and supply food, noting that the European explorer Frank Hann used Aboriginal people in this way on his expedition to the Kimberley in the 1890s. Jebb stated, 'Thanks to his Aboriginal assistants he had a constant supply of fish, duck, kangaroo and possum as he moved from waterhole to waterhole in the cool season weather'.⁴⁸

Indeed this raises questions about the chances of European survival without Aboriginal assistance. How successful would these expeditions have been without Aboriginal guides? Reynolds pointed out that Aboriginal guides not only found water and supplied food, but also saved the lives of lost European explorers. He noted an Aboriginal man, Yuranigh, who found a member of Thomas Mitchell's expedition into the interior of New South Wales in the 1830s. Reynolds stated that when European explorers lost or exhausted their rations they 'probably would have perished' without Aboriginal assistance.⁴⁹ And it is evident that on at least one occasion Brown saved Leichhardt's life when the two became lost in the vicinity of Mount Stewart. On 18 January 1845, Leichhardt left the main party to investigate a navigable route for the expedition accompanied by both Brown and Fisher, highlighting the importance European explorers attached to Aboriginal guides.

After finding water, he sent Fisher back to the main camp to lead them to the newly discovered waterholes – yet again demonstrating how an Aboriginal presence was critical in not only exploring new country, but also retracing past steps.⁵⁰ As noted by Reynolds, 'Aboriginal guides were also sent back on the tracks to find articles lost or forgotten along the way'.⁵¹ Leichhardt and Brown

45 Kennedy 2013: 159.

46 Kennedy 2013: 159.

47 Jones 2007: 106.

48 Jebb 2002: 2, 33.

49 Reynolds 2000: 40, 42.

50 Leichhardt 1847: 112, 113, 117.

51 Reynolds 2000: 42.

continued exploring new country of 'scrub, plain and forest land' when Brown declared, 'We are lost, we are lost'.⁵² It is apparent that Brown believed they were lost and had little faith in Leichhardt's ability to find their way back to the main party. Furthermore, to avert starvation they relied on Indigenous foods procured by Brown's hunting skills, about which Leichhardt stated, 'Oppressed by hunger, I swallowed the bones and feet of the pigeon, to allay the cravings of my stomach'.⁵³ It was also Brown who found a way back to the main party. As well as supplying Leichhardt with food, Brown reorientated and saved the European from a perilous situation. Leichhardt stated:

At last, after a ride of about four miles, Brown recognized the place where we had breakfasted on the 19th, when all his gloom and anxiety disappeared at once. I then returned on my south-east course, and arrived at the camp about one o'clock in the afternoon; my long absence having caused the greatest anxiety amongst my companions.⁵⁴

These Aboriginal guides provided a crucial link between the scouting party and the main party as well as being invaluable in instances where the party had to turn back or became lost.

It is likely Leichhardt would have died without Brown providing food and navigating a safe return back to the party. And there are many other instances during this expedition where Brown and Fisher were making the critical decisions that kept the party on track. Reynolds wrote, 'Murphy and Caleb, two members of the Leichhardt's expedition of 1844–45 were missing for two days' and would have perished without Fisher's ability 'to track them'.⁵⁵ As Leichhardt stated, there had been 'several other instances of the wonderful quickness and accuracy with which Brown as well as Charley were able to recognize localities which they had previously seen'.⁵⁶

Any notions, as found in Australian historiography, that Aboriginal guides were timid, obedient servants on European journeys of discovery are dispelled in the case of Brown and Fisher. Reading Leichhardt's journal, it becomes apparent that neither was timid nor necessarily compliant to the instructions of the European members of the expedition, including Leichhardt. While Brown and Fisher recognised Leichhardt as their leader, neither could be described as servants who unquestionably obeyed their European master. As stated above, the expedition had only been underway a few weeks when Leichhardt's leadership was tested by a recalcitrant Fisher, but this was mild compared to an incident occurring

52 Leichhardt 1847: 117.

53 Leichhardt 1847: 117.

54 Leichhardt 1847: 117, 118.

55 Reynolds 2000: 25, 26.

56 Leichhardt 1847: 118.

on 15 February 1845. Leichhardt chastised Fisher for leaving the camp without permission and verbally threatened the guide stating, 'I reprimanded him, and told him that I would not allow him any food, should he again be guilty of such conduct'.⁵⁷ Far from being the 'faithful black', Fisher retaliated and launched into a verbal tirade of his own, giving Leichhardt a 'burst' of 'the most violent and abusive language'.⁵⁸ He writes that Fisher threatened:

to stop my jaw ... Finding it, therefore, necessary to exercise my authority, I approached him to show him out of the camp, when the fellow gave me a violent blow on the face, which severely injured me, displacing two of my lower teeth; upon which my companions interfered, and manifested a determination to support me, in case he should refuse to quit us; which I compelled him to do.⁵⁹

When Fisher was expelled from the party, Brown displayed allegiance to his fellow countryman by refusing a directive from Leichhardt to have no communication with the exiled man. In a test of his authority, Leichhardt informed Brown if he chose to maintain relations with Fisher he too would be ostracised and punished. Leichhardt writes:

When he was going away, Brown told him, in a very consoling manner that he would come by and bye and sleep with him. I was, however, determined that no one within the camp should have any communication with him; and therefore told Brown, that he had either to stop with me entirely, or with Charley. He answered that he could not quarrel with him; that he would sleep with him, but return every morning; and, when I replied that, in such a case, he should never return, he said that he would stop altogether with Charley, and walked off.⁶⁰

Nearly a week passed with Brown and Fisher remaining in proximity, but at a distance to the main party. Leichhardt withheld rations from the two Aboriginal men and took away their horses, forcing them to travel on foot. It was a stalemate. Leichhardt had weapons useful for defending against possible attacks from hostile Aboriginal groups, shooting animals and birds for food, and there was safety in numbers. But Brown and Fisher brought skills the party needed. Leichhardt hinted as much when he wrote, 'If I had punished these fellows for their late misconduct, I should have had no occasion for doing so now: but full of their own importance, they interpreted my forbearance, by fancying that I could not proceed without them'.⁶¹ Kennedy highlights the critical reliance on the two Aboriginal men when he writes:

57 Leichhardt 1847: 158.

58 Leichhardt 1847: 158.

59 Leichhardt 1847: 158.

60 Leichhardt 1847: 158.

61 Leichhardt 1847: 158.

Given the power relations of racial structure in colonial Australia ... black men who assaulted white bosses could pay for their transgressions with their lives. In this case, however, Leichhardt did little more than expel Fisher from the expedition, figuring that his prospects of survival were slim in such an unfamiliar region where the local population was as likely to be hostile to strange Aborigines as strange Europeans. What Leichhardt failed to anticipate was the decision by Harry Brown to decamp with his black brother ... now the expedition was bereft of a critical source of labour and knowledge of the outback.⁶²

As Kennedy points out, power relations were far from clear and there were several incidents where Leichhardt as leader of the expedition was challenged by Fisher and Brown. Yet this insubordination was met with minimal punishment by Leichhardt, highlighting the value he attached to the two Aboriginal men.

The influence of Aboriginal culture on European members of the expedition was also apparent with Brown and Fisher introducing a variety of Indigenous foods into their diets. Leichhardt stated that European members were learning new skills: roasting and eating new foods like pigeons, lizards, ducks and marsupials – critical nutritional sources they had ‘formerly ridiculed’.⁶³ Roasting as a traditional form of Aboriginal cooking and their adoption of an Aboriginal diet therefore proved a vital factor in maintaining the health of the party on such an arduous journey. Leichhardt was open to new ideas and, as Clarke noted, ‘a reading of the Leichhardt’s journals and surviving correspondence provides ample proof that he was a skilled botanist who possessed a deep interest in how Aboriginal people interacted with the environment’.⁶⁴ It is also apparent Aboriginal words were being adopted into the colonial vernacular such as ‘co-eee’. A confluence of cultural blending was occurring of which historian Michael Davis writes, ‘Close scrutiny of these explorer texts conveys a sense that there is another knowledge system at work, barely visible, yet critical in forming a particular type of colonial knowledge – one shaped from the entanglements between European and Aboriginal knowledge’.⁶⁵

It is seldom acknowledged in Australian histories that Aboriginal guides such as Brown were exploring their own country albeit far removed from their traditional territory. It raises the question of what motivated Brown to undertake such arduous expeditions. Was it, as historian Frank Walsh has claimed, that ‘adventurous young Aborigines penetrated unknown territories with much the same motivation as young Europeans?’⁶⁶ As Clarke noted of Bungaree who

62 Kennedy 2013: 161.

63 Leichhardt 1847: 169.

64 Clarke 2008: 105.

65 Davis 2013.

66 Walsh 2004: 237.

accompanied Flinders, he had a 'deep interest in exploring',⁶⁷ and there is strong probability Brown was of a similar ilk. In many ways, these expeditions were journeys of discovery for the Aboriginal guides who were experiencing new environments and utilising natural resources in a traditional way. For example, Leichhardt noted on 6 February, 'My black companions loaded themselves with the pretty agates, which they had never seen before, and which they evidently considered to be very valuable; but, after a little time, the weight became inconvenient, and they kept only a few, to strike fire with'.⁶⁸ So it can be seen that during the exploratory expedition, Brown was finding new materials to augment his traditional skills in making a fire.

In many ways, Aboriginal guides such as Brown protected European explorers on expeditions in Australia, including against attacks from hostile Aboriginal warriors. In reference to the diaries and journals of European explorers in Australia, Tim Flannery writes, 'careful reading of these accounts reveals that Aborigines were the real, albeit unacknowledged explorers of much of Australia ... they generally carried the guns that fed and defended the expedition, they found the water, and they made the peace'.⁶⁹ This was certainly the case when Leichhardt's party were attacked by hostile Aboriginal warriors on the Mitchell River in June 1845.⁷⁰ On 28 June, Leichhardt noted how Brown and Fisher fended off the attack and saved the lives of the group after John Gilbert was speared as he came out of his tent. He wrote, 'Charley and Brown called for caps, which I hastened to find, and, as soon as they were provided, they discharged their guns into the crowd of the natives who instantly fled, leaving Roper and Calvert pierced with spears, and severely beaten by their waddies'.⁷¹ His account confirms Flannery's argument that Aboriginal guides were protecting European explorers from hostile attacks adding further to their vital importance on expeditions.

Aboriginal guides such as Brown also protected European explorers from the dangers of the bush, including crocodiles. For example, in June 1845, the expeditionary party had reached the tropical northern regions of Australia and were heading into the southern regions of the Gulf of Carpentaria. As they were travelling along the Mitchell River, Leichhardt noted in his journal on 19 June:

Charley and Brown, who had gone to the river, returned at a late hour, when they told us that they had seen the tracks of a large animal on the sands of the river, which they judged to be about the size of a big dog, trailing a long tail like a snake. Charley said that when Brown fired his gun, a deep noise like

67 Clarke 2008: 18.

68 Leichhardt 1847: 140.

69 Flannery 1998: 5.

70 Flannery 1998: 310.

71 Flannery 1998: 309.

the bellowing of a bull was heard; which frightened both so much that they immediately decamped. This was the first time that we became aware of the existence of the crocodile in the waters of the gulf.⁷²

So it can be seen that Brown and Fisher were scouting ahead of the expedition and informing the rest of the party of the potential dangers which lay ahead, safeguarding the party and ensuring their survival. As Clarke notes, 'It is apparent that for Europeans in the Australian bush their safety and the likelihood of success was often placed in the hands of their Aboriginal partners'.⁷³

Reaching Port Essington on 17 December 1845, the party spent the next month recuperating before boarding the schooner *Heroine* and returning to Sydney on the 29th where they were greeted by large crowds. Leichhardt stated, 'At Sydney a reception awaited us, the warmth and kindness of which, it is out of my power to describe'. Ten men had left Jimbour Station on the Darling Downs in September 1844, and seven completed the epic walk to the northern extremities of Australia. The following map from Leichhardt's journal shows the path taken by the exploratory party during the expedition: a journey of 3,000 miles involving 14 months of rigorous travel.

Remuneration inequity and the devaluation of Aboriginal people were evident in the variable amounts of money given to members of the expedition. All members received higher sums than the two Aboriginal guides with the exception of Phillips, who received £30 and also a pardon. Leichhardt received £600, Calvert and Roper each received £125, Murphy £70 and Brown and Fisher each received £50 for their services. Different conditions were also applied to the two Aboriginal members of the expedition whereby their money was 'lodged in the Savings' Bank, and could only be accessed with the approval of the Vice President of that Institution'.⁷⁴

72 Flannery 1998: 295.

73 Clarke 2008: 24.

74 Leichhardt 1847: 538.

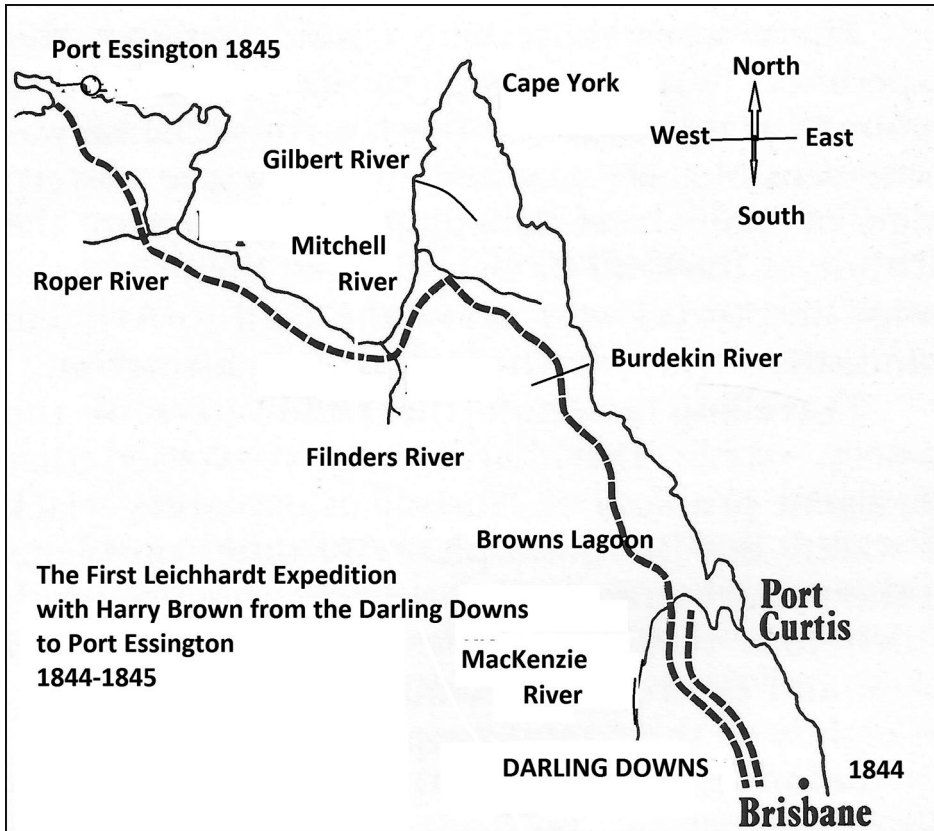


Figure 1: Map showing path taken by Leichhardt's party in 1845.

Source: Author.

The second expedition

Leichhardt conducted a second expedition in 1846 with only Brown remaining from the first expedition party. The new group included John F. Mann, Hovenden Hely, James Perry, Daniel Bunce, Henry Boecking, Henry Turnbull and Wommai, 'a Port Stephens native'.⁷⁵ It was an ambitious plan to cross Australia with half the party having little experience in the Australian bush. Furthermore, the beginning of a hot summer may not have been an ideal starting date as the expedition party of nine men set off on 7 December 1846 from the Darling Downs, trekking along the Condamine River.

⁷⁵ Mann 1888: 8.

The following extracts from Mann's diary reveal how dependent the party was on Brown and also wary of decisions made by Leichhardt. Mann wrote, 'I noticed the Doctor was following a wrong course. I did not say anything until Brown road [sic] up to me and verified my supposition. "That Doctor, he go all wrong" he remarked'.⁷⁶ Mann informed Leichhardt who defended his decision stating, 'I know where I am going'.⁷⁷ As the party proceeded they came to a difficult ascent of which Mann wrote, 'Brown was at once called to take the lead, and after penetrating this scrub for about ten miles we encamped late in the afternoon on a small open flat'.⁷⁸ Brown's traditional status as an Aboriginal man is evident when he applies his cultural ways and initiates Wommai during the expedition. As Clarke noted, 'Wommai appears to have grown into the role of expedition guide, taking on more responsibility as he gained experience. It was on this first attempt at an east-west crossing that Brown gave Wommai his chest cuts to make him a "young man"'.⁷⁹

During this expedition Brown became very ill with 'ague', a fever characterised by intermittent bouts of fever and chills. Mann noted, 'Brown, who was invaluable in looking after the cattle, was I thought in a dying state'.⁸⁰ Brown slowly recovered in the following weeks, but it is evident his leadership was missed during this period of convalescence. Adverse weather, lost cattle and illness added further distress to the expeditionary party culminating in Leichhardt aborting and taking refuge. As noted by historian Renee Erdos, the party was 'delayed by heavy rain and the straying of animals being taken for food and weakened by fever, they were forced, after covering only 500 miles, to return in June 1847'.⁸¹

The fatal expedition

If the second expedition was a failure then Leichhardt's third expedition in 1848 could only be described as disastrous. Without Brown the entire party, which included two Aboriginal guides, Wommai and Billy, set off to cross Australia from east to west and were never seen again. Both these Aboriginal men were from the Port Stephens district.⁸² It is not known why Brown was not part of this third expedition, perhaps due to differences with Leichhardt or it is also possible Wommai had succeeded him. A case can be made that Brown's omission proved

76 Mann 1888: 54.

77 Mann 1888: 54.

78 Mann 1888: 54.

79 Clarke 2008: 104.

80 Mann 1888: 38.

81 Erdos 1967: 103.

82 Clarke 2008: 104–105.

the difference between Leichhardt's success and failure. Brown had shown on numerous occasions he was critical to Leichhardt, not only as a navigator, intermediary and hunter, but also as a man capable of defending the expedition against attack. As Leichhardt had noted of his two Aboriginal guides Brown and Fisher, they possessed ability and perception superior to their European counterparts regarding bush survival skills. He wrote, 'The impressions on their retina seem to be naturally more intense than on that of the European; and their recollections are remarkably exact, even to the most minute details'.⁸³

Several search parties were despatched in attempts to discover the fate of Leichhardt and his party, including one led by Hovenden Hely. Hely had participated on the second expedition and requested Brown to assist the investigation. At the time Brown was working as a surveyor's assistant and was so highly regarded by Hely that the colonist engaged him to head the search party. Threlkeld even suggested that if Brown had been on the third expedition Leichhardt may have survived. Reflecting on Brown's omission, he wrote:

One of the name of Brown accompanied the unfortunate Leichhardt in his travels in the interior, and I regret that in the last attempt Brown, the black, was not with the heroic explorer. This aborigine might have proven of the greatest use in extricating the party from local difficulties, or in quickly discovering the ambush of hostile blacks.⁸⁴

The following extract from his epitaph, which was published in the *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, highlights Brown's achievements and demise on 21 June 1854:

'Brown,' the aboriginal who accompanied the lamented Leichhardt in his overland expedition to Port Essington, and who subsequently formed one of Hely's party despatched by Government to endeavour to ascertain the fate of Leichhardt in his attempt to reach Swan River, died at Newcastle on Saturday. About eight weeks ago the deceased, being very much intoxicated, got burnt in the most frightful manner in the Black's camp on the beach. From that time till his death his sufferings were most intense.⁸⁵

Threlkeld, reflecting on Brown, indicated he had alcohol problems of which the missionary wrote, 'Both are now counted with the dead, Leichhardt in the pursuit of science, Brown following up his evil propensity for strong drink'.⁸⁶ Alcohol seems to have had adverse impacts on a number of other prominent

83 Leichhardt 1847: 118.

84 Leichhardt 1847: 118.

85 'Newcastle: The last of the Newcastle tribe', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 June 1854: 2.

86 'Newcastle: The last of the Newcastle tribe', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 June 1854: 2.

Aboriginal guides, including Galmarra⁸⁷ and Wylie who was an Aboriginal guide for the explorer Edward Eyre. It would seem that in the post expeditionary period these Aboriginal guides, heroes of frontier exploration in Australia, returned to the camps of their families but succumbed to the effects of alcohol and its adverse consequences.

Conclusion

This article has examined the important contribution of Harry Brown, an Aboriginal guide from Newcastle, and his critical role in the exploration of Australia in the nineteenth century and challenges perceptions that Aboriginal guides were subservient and insipid servants of European explorers. In a short life of 35 years, Brown spent most of his adult life as an Aboriginal guide, apart from a brief stint in the whaling industry. Brown started his career as a guide by taking colonists from Newcastle on fishing and hunting trips, before becoming a vital member of two major exploratory expeditions. He was enlisted by Hely to lead a search party for Leichhardt on the fateful 1848 expedition, and in his later years was viewed by colonists as a public figure.⁸⁸

Brown was not only an Aboriginal guide, he was an exceptional one. Yet significant details about his life remain undiscovered, such as whether he married or had children, his parentage and burial place. NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and local Baptismal records reveal nothing of Brown. Likewise, the life of his fellow countryman Charley Fisher, who has sat proxy to Brown in this narrative, would make interesting historical research. It has been demonstrated in this article that Brown was an Aboriginal guide of the highest quality who was highly regarded by colonial society and who applied his traditional cultural skills and knowledge to provide European members of expeditions with direction, water, food and protection. Brown warrants a meritorious place in the annals of Australian exploration history.

References

Primary sources

Gunson, Niel 1974, *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L. E. Threlkeld 1824–1859*, 2 vols, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

⁸⁷ Gunson 1974, I: 70.

⁸⁸ 'Newcastle: The last of the Newcastle tribe', *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 June 1854: 2.

Leichhardt, Ludwig 1847, *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia*, T. & W. Boone, London.

Mann, John F. 1888, *Eight Months with Dr Leichhardt in the years 1846–1847*, Turner and Henderson, Sydney.

Newspapers

The Australian

Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal

The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser

Truth

Secondary sources

Beale, Edgar 1967, 'Jackey Jackey (?–1854)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jackey-jackey-2264, accessed 10 July 2015.

Birman, Wendy 1967, 'Wylie (?–?)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wylie-2823, accessed 12 August 2015.

'Brown (Aboriginal)', Newcastle Bench Books, AONSW Reel 2722, Free Settler or Felon?, www.jenwillets.com/searchaction.php?page=6&surname=aboriginal&ship=&firstname=, accessed 21 June 2015.

Clarke, Philip A. 2008, *Aboriginal Plant Collectors: Botanists and Aboriginal People in the Nineteenth Century*, Rosenberg Publishing Company, Dural.

Darragh, Thomas A. and Roderick J. Fensham 2013, *Leichhardt Diaries: Early Travels in Australia during 1842–1844*, Queensland Museum, Brisbane.

Davis, Michael 2013, 'Encountering Aboriginal knowledge: Explorer narratives on north-east Queensland, 1770–1820', *Aboriginal History* 37, press.anu.edu.au/apps/bookworm/view/Aboriginal+History+-+Volume+thirty+seven%2C+2013/10891/davis.xhtml#toc_marker-6, accessed 21 June 2015.

Erdos, Renee 1967, 'Leichhardt, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig (1813–1848)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/leichhardt-friedrich-wilhelm-ludwig-2347, accessed 5 May 2015.

- Flannery, Tim 1998, *The Explorers-Stories of Discovery and Adventure from the Australian Frontier*, Grove Press, New York.
- Gunson, Niel 1966, 'Biraban (?-?)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/biraban-1781, accessed 2 February 2015.
- Jebb, Mary Anne 2002, *Blood Sweat and Welfare: A History of White Bosses and Aboriginal Pastoral Workers*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands.
- Jones, Philip 2007, *Ochre and Rust Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, SA.
- Kennedy, Dane 2013, *The Last Blank Spaces: Exploring Africa and Australia*, Presidents and Fellows of Harvard College, Cambridge, MA.
- McGuinness, Bruce and Dennis Walker 1985, 'Sharing Histories: Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pioneers', Indigenous Law Resources, www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/other/IndigLRes/car/1993/4/13.html, accessed 10 April 2015.
- Paice, Margaret 1976, *Jackey Jackey*, Australians in History Series for Children, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- Parbury, Nigel 2005, *Survival: A History of Aboriginal Life in New South Wales*, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney.
- Reynolds, Henry 1990, *With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the Exploration and Development of Australia*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic.
- 2000, *Black Pioneers*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic.
- Roderick, Colin 1988, *Leichhardt the Dauntless Explorer with an Appendix on his last and fatal journey*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Russell, Lynette 2012, *Roving Mariners: Australian Aboriginal Whalers and Sealers in the Southern Oceans 1790–1870*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Stanner, William 1991, *After the Dreaming*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney.
- Walsh Frank 2004, *Great Southern Land: A New History of Australia*, Penguin Books Ltd, England.

Allawah Grove Native Settlement: Housing and assimilation

Sharon Delmege

It is well known that the rationale for state intervention in the lives of Indigenous Australians performed a *volte face* when ‘assimilation’ was adopted in 1937.¹ By the 1960s, ‘integration’ had emerged as a preferred guiding principle, but the goal remained the same: to incorporate Aborigines within the broader community as self-directed social and economic equals. However, a fundamental lack of respect for Aboriginal culture, combined with the idea that ‘part-Aborigines’ had no cultural heritage, ensured that Aboriginal identity, agency and autonomy were largely ignored.² Since then, we have witnessed shifts to ‘self-determination’, ‘reconciliation’ and to ‘closing the [health and well-being] gap’, but there is still a long way to go before any of these principles are fully achieved.

In this paper, I draw on the case of the Allawah Grove Native Settlement (1957–1969), Perth, to demonstrate the gap between a policy that dangled the promise for a better life and its implementation, in which that promise played out as hollow rhetoric. Since Allawah Grove is usually referred to in terms that indicate a failed experiment in assimilation, I take this opportunity to reframe this legacy and argue that it was a missed opportunity in housing policy.³ This paper

1 Adopted at the first Native Welfare Council (NWC) in 1937, affirmed at the third conference in 1951 as the aim of native welfare, and defined at the conference on Australia Day in 1961.

2 Keen 1988: 1; Berndt and Berndt 1979: 87; Rowley 1972.

3 Hasluck saw Allawah Grove as a legacy of missed policy opportunities to include urban Aborigines within the community in the 1930s. Hasluck 1988: 76; Howard 1981: 32–33; and Haebich 2008: 257–259 provide nuanced perspectives in terms of Aboriginal political activity and assimilation respectively. For references to Allawah Grove in terms of local history and reserves see Carter 1986; SWALSC et al. 2009: 297; Department of Indigenous Affairs 2003: 70–71, 99. For biographies, lifestories and oral histories see Beresford 2006: 49–50; Bropho 1980: 35–42. See Walley and Pushman 2005 for a photographic commemoration of the achievements at Allawah Grove.

contributes to existing knowledge of urban housing and to the historiography of governance and resistance by outlining its administration.⁴ I argue that although Allawah Grove existed as the only non-institutional housing community in Western Australia, due to the state's adoption of an assimilation policy in 1948, the state did little to provide the conditions of possibility for Aborigines to be included within the broader community as autonomous social and economic equals.

The Allawah Grove site

The isolated site in South Guildford, on the north-west corner of Perth airport, had a long association with Aborigines who self-identified as 'campies'.⁵ It was first gazetted in 1910 as the reserve for Aborigines, but was cancelled in 1917 because 'campies' resisted all efforts to be moved. When they were forcibly removed to the site in the 1930s, they refused to stay. The site was regazetted in 1941 and 'campies' were sent again, but it was appropriated by the Department of Defence almost immediately and the 'campies' were returned to their long-standing camps in Eden Hill.⁶ The site was transferred to the Commonwealth after the war, and the Commissioner of Native Affairs, Frank Bray, was approached to adapt the buildings for an Aboriginal community.⁷ But like previous Protectors, he was philosophically opposed to Aborigines living in Perth. The State Housing Commission used it instead as emergency housing for 'white people' until it was condemned as a 'fresh-air slum and hell hole' in 1957.⁸ By then, a new Commissioner for Native Welfare, Stanley Middleton (1948–1962), had adopted the policy of assimilation and, as an advocate of equal civil rights, he removed travel restrictions. As a result, the Aboriginal population in Perth quickly doubled to about 700, but the private rental market was still largely closed to Aborigines or charged a premium for the privilege of poor accommodation, and there was no official access to public housing.⁹ Many families were therefore forced to share overcrowded, derelict accommodation with extended family, and another 300 people camped or slept under bridges trying to avoid the police.¹⁰

4 Delmege 2000, 2014; Haebich 2005, 2008: 254; Hasluck 1988; Rowse 2005; Barwick 1964; Gale 1964; Gale and Wundersitz 1982; Wilson 1964; Morgan 2000: 190; Manning 2005: 225; Langton 1981; Rowley 1972; Howard 1981: 98.

5 State Records Office of Western Australia (hereafter SROWA) Con 993, 1937/0105.

6 Reserve no. 12720.

7 SROWA Con 993, 1931/0158: 109, 130, 144.

8 Western Australia. Commissioner of Native Welfare, *Annual Reports* (hereafter CNW, AR) 1959: 28.

9 Rowley 1970: 395–397; Hodgson 1989: 74.

10 CNW, AR 1957: 91.

The Department of Native Welfare (DNW), and an Aboriginal organisation known as the Coolbaroo League, had been trying to find a housing solution since 1954. When they learned that the site was in the electorate of the Minister for Native Welfare, John Joseph Brady (1956–1959), he made a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ with the ministers for Housing and Civil Aviation to take over the lease. This stop-gap housing measure was designed to last until, the lease expired on 30 June 1959, alternative housing became available, or the site was resumed to extend Perth airport.¹¹ In other words, within a climate of social change that demanded a housing response, Allawah Grove began as a palliative, temporary measure to provide Aborigines in the metropolitan area with desperately needed accommodation. Ironically, this most minimal acknowledgement of urban Aboriginal disadvantage achieved what decades of segregation policy had been unable to do, which was to remove metropolitan ‘campies’ to a single location. It did not, however, stop local opposition to an Aboriginal presence in the area.

To his credit, Minister Brady was more interested in minimising Aboriginal frustration and the resentment that accompanied government interventions, than with local opposition. He and the Coolbaroo League recognised the need to maximise Aboriginal participation and agency, but this extended only as far as George Harwood, who was the new President of the Coolbaroo League and an officer in the DNW. As an Aborigine, he was seen as a legitimate representative to liaise between the organisations as they determined how Allawah Grove would be managed.¹² The League began as an autonomous local Aboriginal organisation (1946–1960) that advocated civil and political rights, established a youth group, the first business in the CBD, an Aboriginal newspaper (*Westralian Aborigine*), and regular dances that were hugely popular.¹³ It had recently come under the umbrella and increasing influence of the Native Welfare Council (NWC), which had been established by Middleton in 1952 to coordinate middle-class *wadjela* organisations concerned with Aboriginal welfare. The NWC would play, as I shall show, a key role in the administration of Allawah Grove throughout the decade, largely due to the President, Cyril Gare. Like other NWC-affiliated organisations at the time in Perth, the League was therefore also committed to working with government departments ‘to promote the welfare and assimilation of Aborigines’. In the absence of the Commissioner, who was on leave, they reached an agreement on 5 November. The Minister agreed to provide a fixed subsidy for utilities and the League agreed to take on the onerous terms of administration from 1 April 1958. This included property maintenance, improvements, providing for tenants’ well-being and managing behaviour,

11 *Daily News*, 28 November 1957: 20; SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116; CNW, AR 1959: 27; SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 25.

12 CNW, AR 1958: 6.

13 Kinnane 2003: 339–342; Haebich 2008: 286–290.

subject to ministerial oversight, all without any authority to enforce tenancy or ability to raise funds.¹⁴ From the outset, they had little chance of meeting the terms of their agreement, let alone their social and cultural aspirations.

To clarify the magnitude of their task, when the first eight 'huts' were transferred to the Department in November 1957, the site was in an appalling state. The ablution blocks had been demolished; there were no hot water heaters, window panes or flyscreens; sanitation was largely inoperative and it took weeks for the water to be connected.¹⁵ But 'campies' from Bassendean and Eden Hill embraced the opportunity because they just wanted a roof over their heads and somewhere to stop, without police harassment. Demand was such that by February 1958, there were 29 families or 220 people, including 28 who held citizenship.¹⁶ Most residents shared extended kinship ties and many moved between households at Allawah Grove and elsewhere, but among the first and longest-standing were members of the Blurton, Bodney, Boundary, Bropho, Clarkson, Edgill, Kickett, Moggridge, Moore, Nettle, Parfitt, Pickett, Quartermaine, and Yarran families, and Granny Anderson who had survived autonomously for decades in the metropolitan area.¹⁷

Coolbaroo League administration, April 1958 – 30 June 1959

When the Coolbaroo League took over, four months later, the brittle, unlined asbestos 'huts' were still in disrepair, there was little working sanitation and the refuse collection was woefully inadequate. The small huts, comprised of just a kitchen and two rooms, were always inadequate for family living. Poor sanitation was an ongoing issue that was exacerbated by damage and incorrect use, but every administration failed to have all the old, broken plumbing replaced by the Public Works department. However, in a pattern that continued throughout the decade, government agencies, charities and volunteers provided a combination of long-term services and *ad hoc* assistance.¹⁸ The most important of these were provided by Public Health, which appointed a nurse and underwrote renovations to a hut for a clinic, and the Victoria League, which subsidised renovations for a preschool. The Original Australian Progress Association (OAPA) and the NWC provided a broad range of vocational and

14 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 14–26, 39.

15 CNW, AR 1958: 6; Clements 1989: 27–28.

16 Clements 1989: 29; SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 10; SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0187: 62; CNW, AR 1960: 17.

17 Clements 1989: 30.

18 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 25; CNW, AR 1958: 6.

recreational activities and several churches met requests for services.¹⁹ Initially, the DNW funded a preschool teacher and a resident caretaker, Ollie Kickett, and Minister Brady encouraged residents' interest in a library and recreational hall.²⁰

Brady and Middleton were publicly supportive of the League throughout 1958. The Minister responded to a parliamentary question, 'what interest have the residents taken in welfare of the area', by listing their achievements:

Some nine or ten truckloads of rubbish were removed ... when they first moved in. A basketball court is being prepared and many of the residents have established grass lawns ... nine months ago many of these people were living in abject poverty on the ground in miserable iron and bark humpies ... More important than the welfare of the area is the welfare of the people.²¹

The welfare of the people was important to Brady, and he did want Allawah Grove to 'become a major [project]', but he assumed that this would involve the League extending its activities rather than the Department. Middleton's Annual Report is also optimistic:

Broadly, there has been great improvement in their outlook, self-reliance and contentment ... it is appreciated that people take a long time to change their outlook and way of living. Given time, encouragement and opportunity it is possible for these people to become satisfactorily integrated into the community.²²

But privately, Brady was already frustrated by the tenants' lack of economic and social 'progress' toward 'satisfactory integration'. Middleton was philosophically opposed to any form of segregation and would not have agreed that Allawah Grove was an opportunity to advance the assimilation of Aborigines in Perth.²³ However, they took it for granted that assimilation or 'satisfactory integration' was dependent upon regular employment and rental payments, and it was assumed that the accommodation of *wadjela* behaviour and values was as inevitable as the loss of Aboriginality this would entail. Since steady employment underpinned the entire project, the lack of opportunities in Perth was a major issue. The League shared the Department's aspirations for equal citizen rights, because they wanted to see all Aborigines treated with respect and recognition, but had no uniform Aboriginal aspiration or position to draw upon.²⁴ Citizenship offered the conventional avenue to achieving inclusion and 'respectability'. It did not follow that achieving 'respectability' resulted in the loss of Aboriginality, but others, for whom equal citizen rights represented

19 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 33; SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 7.

20 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186; 1959/0198; 1959/0187; 1963/0116.

21 4 September 1958, SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 10.

22 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 29; CNW, AR 1958: 6.

23 CNW, AR 1958: 6.

24 Morgan 2000; Manning 2005: 221–235; Gale 1964: 107, 114; Rowse 2005: 54, 64, 66.

the legitimacy of their identity, resisted assimilation. Therefore, while the Coolbaroo League assumed that the opportunity to live in houses would provide 'campies' with the long-term benefits of improved living standards, they did not anticipate immediate changes to residents' social or economic behaviour.²⁵ Residents' opinion mattered little. As 'campies' they were resilient and used to accommodating *wadjela* values to suit themselves. The idea that 'satisfactory integration' could be achieved by changing 'their outlook and way of living' with 'time, encouragement or opportunity' misses the point. It was soon apparent, however, that these residents would be accorded little time, encouragement or opportunity.

The importance of unemployment throughout the decade cannot be overestimated. Middleton understood that Aboriginal families came to Perth because the rural labour market had evaporated.²⁶ But other than seasonal work and casual domestic labour, there was no work in Perth for unskilled Aboriginal workers. The lack of employment opportunities in Perth was invariably presented as though it was just a 'nuisance' for state and local governments, but it was always a major issue for Aborigines.²⁷ It also posed a significant problem for the League since it depended on rental payments to meet the terms of its agreement. Complaints about the behaviour of unemployed men added to that pressure. Drinking, gambling and fighting were commonplace and were equally enjoyed, ignored and frowned upon. In this instance, residents called for a petition to remove the worst offenders, but the League had no authority to enforce evictions for non-payment of rent or 'bad behaviour'.²⁸ Frustrated, Brady decided to bypass the residents and the League and ask Middleton to take control.²⁹

Harwood responded by urging the Department to make serious provision in its budget estimates for significant material improvements that included basic sanitation and fences to keep uninvited people out. In a lengthy, diplomatic attack on passive welfare, he also roundly condemned previous policies for creating 'pauperised scavengers and parasites', and recommended exposing individuals to the consequences of their behaviour.³⁰ His suggestions to hold both the state and residents to account were ignored, and this did not alter with the change of government on 21 March. Middleton's advice to the new minister, C. C. Perkins, was that residents were better off at Allawah Grove than in their

25 Barwick 1963: 326–327 in Rowse 2005: 66 shows a parallel trend in Melbourne.

26 Rowse 2005: 66.

27 Soil was too poor for market gardening and residents did not have the skills to manage a cooperative venture.

28 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 16–26.

29 CNW, AR 1959: 24.

30 SROWA Con 993, 1958/0321: 49–54. See also Pearson 2000.

camps and that they should leave the League in charge.³¹ By recommending the status quo, the League had no option but to ask the DNW to take over in May. They had made improvements after an embarrassing health report in March, but there were still too many outstanding sanitation issues.³² In addition to 30 occupied huts, a family of seven lived in a disused laundry, two adults slept under a hut, and there was one camp of four adults. Fifteen huts had pans that were serviced twice a week and 18 had septic systems that still had problems with the tanks and drains. All ablutions were outside, only 12 huts had hot water, four had no water at all, none had window panes or fly screens and many had been waiting months for asbestos sheets to repair walls.

The *Daily News* was quick to claim credit for the change in administration, declaring that their exposé had revealed how the 'bold experiment – a housing settlement for natives, run by natives – had degenerated into something close to chaos'.³³ They cited the resident caretaker, who was powerless to remove 'squatters and hooligans', white and black, because there were no fences; a representative from Social Services, who blamed boredom, unemployment and Child Endowment; and a Native Welfare Councillor who blamed a minority for transforming the settlement 'into a sordid centre for unbridled drinking, gambling and prostitution'.³⁴ The lack of fences was an issue that could have been addressed had the DNW the funding or inclination to assist. Given that Aborigines were only granted full access to welfare payments in 1960, it is unsurprising that bored, underemployed people used it to party. Minister Perkins' immediate promise of 'stricter control' over the 'temporary' facility was a simplistic response to a complex issue and publicly marked a shift in official attitudes. The DNW's more measured response was to provide two policy responses. It would remove metropolitan evictees, including those from Allawah Grove, to a 'native reserve'. 'Satisfactory tenants' would, eventually, be provided with alternative accommodation when the airport's extensions made 'existing quarters untenable'.³⁵ In the interim, Middleton invited the League to continue their 'welfare work for the inmates' and handed control to District Welfare Officer Bruce McLarty. By 30 June, McLarty was ready. He had made basic repairs and introduced tenancy agreements, but the language and tactics used – 'police assistance', daily patrols and one-way tickets to remove 'squatters' and other 'undesirables' – reveal traces of the paternalism that previously attended their segregation policies.³⁶

31 9 April 1959, SROWA Con 993, 1958/0321: 64–5.

32 12 March, SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186: 26; 5 April 1957, SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 69, 71–73, 83.

33 *Daily News*, 19 June 1959, SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116.

34 *Daily News*, 2 June 1959: 1; SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116.

35 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0187: 32; SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 77, 87–88.

36 SROWA Con 993, 1958/0321: 87–88, 94; SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186: 34; CNW, AR 1959: 29; 1960: 17.

However, the Department was quickly forced to reverse its plans. There would be no native reserve due to 'the intense opposition of white residents living in the neighbourhood of places selected ... and the objections raised by Local Authorities'.³⁷ The DNW would instead house 'selected families ... in existing residential areas'. The 'residue of natives' was to be left at Allawah Grove, which would function as 'a native reserve' until they were 'forcibly ejected', at which point they would be returned to the country, or 'to the conditions which existed before Allawah Grove'.³⁸ On this basis, the Department renewed the lease until 1 August 1960 and on a monthly basis thereafter.³⁹ The only recognition of Aboriginal disadvantage is this extract from a lengthy outburst by Middleton, which reveals his utter dismay at the ongoing lack of housing options:

natives were not wanted anywhere in the metropolitan area 50 years ago, and they are not wanted today; for 50 years attempts to provide them with a sanctuary have been successfully obstructed by white residents of the district concerned, backed up by local authorities ... The situation in most material respects remains substantially the same today as it was in 1908. There are no grounds for believing that there will be any appreciable change in the foreseeable future ... [despite] the immediate and urgent need of the majority of native families who cannot afford to build, buy or rent cottages.⁴⁰

However, it is clear that Middleton had also decided to make accountable those who did not take advantage of the opportunity to live like mainstream Australians. The idea of assimilation was a remarkable turn from the Department's previous position, but it was another Aboriginal policy without funding. Official policy therefore extended little further than the idea that Aborigines should be encouraged to assimilate. Yet having created a class of fringe-dwellers in the south-west, the state not only had an obligation, but an opportunity to support the conditions of possibility for Aborigines to improve their health and well-being.⁴¹ However, the Department had neither the funds nor the insight to take advantage of the opportunity that Allawah Grove presented, and they were never held to account.

37 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 87.

38 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 24; 26 June 1959. SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 93.

39 29 June 1959, SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 89, 108.

40 CNW, AR 1959: 28.

41 Delmege 2005.

The Department of Native Welfare's administration, July 1959 – June 1960

McLarty began what he assumed would be a short administration, with a population of 134 tenants and 13 authorised visitors. Overcrowding was a key feature, with 11 of the 27 huts housing large families of six to 10 people, plus their authorised visitors. Minister Perkins had begun negotiations to send the best tenants to vacant State Railway houses, but they found accommodation elsewhere and left before he was ready. The remaining tenants had little to no experience with rental accommodation.⁴² Middleton did not underestimate their difficulties in meeting the social and economic requirements for tenancy, and suggested the new 'transitional' housing that was, ostensibly, better suited to 'less assimilated Aborigines'.⁴³ But metropolitan councils would only allow conventional housing. While the State Housing Commission was building 30,000 houses to accommodate post-war immigrants, it had only built one house under the federally funded Native Housing Scheme, at Bayswater. In other words, the state failed to recognise urban disadvantage and the legitimate aspirations for decent housing. Consequently, the waiting list for families who were 'financially and socially eligible' for such housing was already long and growing – residents at Allawah Grove had no chance.⁴⁴ The point is that there were no housing options in the metropolitan area for 'satisfactory tenants' at Allawah Grove, let alone those evicted. However, the Department had no intention of making any long-term plans for Allawah Grove, despite the excuse that it had no tenure.⁴⁵ McLarty began to reduce the population and after disposing of 13 empty huts that were a 'standing invitation to squatters', he put the hall to tender in January.⁴⁶ Shortly afterwards, the Department learned that the site would not be needed for at least three years, if at all, but it was already committed to closure. From its perspective, the time and money allocated to Allawah Grove was disproportionate and worthless because residents had not 'improved' their economic and social behaviour.⁴⁷ It is true that the DNW spent more on this group than any others in the state, but this needs to be put in perspective. Under Middleton, the budget to improve living conditions across the state had grown from £0 in 1948 to £7,000 in 1957.⁴⁸ This provided a tap and toilets to half the 61 camping reserves; a third with two showers, a copper and a trough; and

42 SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515: 94–101; Oxer 1963: 62.

43 CNW, AR 1959: 26.

44 CNW, AR 1959: 25; 1960: 17. Most of the 255 Aborigines who rented were not 'natives in law'; CNW, AR 1953: 12; See Delmege 2014.

45 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198.

46 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186: 28, 43–48, 61; 1959/0187: 30; CNW, AR 1960: 17.

47 Battye 3841A/MN1246.

48 CNW, AR 1960: 18.

just six rudimentary dwellings.⁴⁹ Against such meagre standards, tenants were lavished with services, but against the standards required of a 'satisfactory' tenant, they were unfairly burdened with proving themselves worthy of basic amenities. At a time of high unemployment and homelessness, the idea that the DNW could just close the facility without regard for the consequences is breathtaking.

After initial disbelief, Cyril Gare responded by proposing that the Native Welfare Council (NWC) take over.⁵⁰ At a meeting at Mary Durack's house to discuss the situation, some argued that Allawah Grove was not an ideal vehicle for 'rehabilitating ... and encouraging assimilation', but all agreed that its closure would see residents gravitate to East Perth and 'into the company of the most undesirable elements of our white society'.⁵¹ The renowned anthropologist Dr Ronald Berndt wanted to encourage assimilation, and prevent the formation of suburban colonies, by placing just two to three families per suburb, near facilities and with the support of a social worker. However, Gare was confident that the NWC could achieve 'reasonable health, education and responsibility' and provide a model for all of Australia.⁵² To this end, he brought the glare of publicity to bear and played the assimilation card to ask for the opportunity to use Allawah Grove as a 'training centre' to 'prepare tenants for integration into the general community'.⁵³ The Department was highly sceptical, but since there were no housing alternatives, the Minister invited the NWC to supervise all aspects of tenancy, and agreed to maintain and administer the Grove. However, he flatly rejected their call for full financial support and welfare workers, but without adequate funding, the NWC was loath to repeat the Department's half-hearted, palliative effort.⁵⁴ They capitulated eventually, on 16 June, but only to avoid the imminent closure and dispersal of residents.⁵⁵ What is glaringly absent from the debate is the residents who were spoken for, as though they were wayward minors in need of rehabilitation, support and protection, because their speaking position was conflated with an Aboriginal identity that remained the province of white expertise.

49 CNW, AR 1957: 14–23; SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0187: 62; CNW, AR 1960: 9, 16–17; Battye 3841A/MN1246; Gare 1989: 35.

50 Gare to Perkins, 15 March, Battye 3841A/MN1246; CNW, AR 1960: 18.

51 Oxe 1963: 70–71.

52 Berndt debated whether successful assimilation involved individual achievement at the expense of social ties. Berndt 1962: 78–81; Battye 3841A/MN1246. Gare worked at MacRobertson Miller Airlines (MMA), founded by Durack's husband, Horrie Miller.

53 *Weekend Mail*, 30 April 1960: 4; *Sunday Times*, 7 April 1960; CNW, AR 1960: 18; Battye 3841A/MN1246.

54 CNW, AR 1960: 18–19.

55 *Weekend Mail*, 21 May 1960: 2, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

The NWC and DNW administration, June 1960 – August 1961

The Allawah Grove Committee (AGC) and the DNW shared responsibility for a year that was riven by disagreement and bad publicity. The seven-member committee, six of whom were middle-class white women, elected Cyril Gare chairman. With an eye to securing State and Commonwealth oversight and funding, they also co-opted another 12 members from relevant government departments.⁵⁶ They generated public support by courting the press and they held ‘busy bees’ that attracted volunteers, including the future Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Fred Chaney. They tried improving rental payments by replacing weekly trips to Perth with onsite collections on pay-day. But because most men were illiterate and unskilled, most achieved, at best, only casual employment and by August, 50 per cent of tenants were in arrears.⁵⁷ With no appetite for evictions, the population increased rapidly and, along with overcrowding, poor health and bad publicity, relations with the DNW quickly soured.

Headlines such as ‘Native camp seen as Health Danger’ and ‘Disease at the Grove’ helped focus public attention on the appalling living standards at Allawah Grove.⁵⁸ The latter stated that it ‘was a breeding ground for gastro-enteritis and trachoma’. And so it was. Health problems *were* endemic. Trachoma was rife and there were always children in hospital with infectious diseases.⁵⁹ But publicity invariably vilified residents rather than their living conditions. The public read that massive water wastage was due to wilful damage, rather than old plumbing and water mains.⁶⁰ In the public debate that followed, District Officer McLarty freely admits his antipathy in this complaint to Middleton on 20 April:

Without exception, the natives at present domiciled there have failed to use it as an opportunity for improvement of their own social and physical circumstances and have unashamedly exploited it for all it was worth. This was patently obvious to me when I assumed responsibility for Allawah Grove in July 1959 and was the foundation of my policy of systematic closure.⁶¹

Relations between the NWC and the DNW broke down entirely in the first week of May. Initially, Gare was outraged that the Department had complained publicly about the cost of subsidising Allawah Grove. The AGC made the point that in 19 months, not one new tenant had been offered a hut in good order and

56 Battye 3841A/MN1246.

57 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0187; 1959/0198.

58 *Weekend News*, 22 April 1961; *The West Australian*, June 1961, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

59 Clements 1989: 48.

60 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186; 1959/0187.

61 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186: 131.

despite repeated requests for plumbing repairs, most new tenants had never had 'the luxury of a proper shower'.⁶² Gare questioned the Department's accounting, lamented 'the hopeless pessimism' of many officers and reiterated that there had never yet been 'a properly planned and equipped effort' in Australia.⁶³ Middleton was then quoted in *The Bulletin* saying that Allawah Grove 'had failed as a social experiment in the education of natives to the standards of urban living', and by week's end he threatened to close it unless the AGC showed an 'immediate change in attitude and tactics'.⁶⁴ The DNW had already made it clear that it would only assist those who could conform to white standards of living. That this was extremely difficult for large families living in small houses without working sanitation or plumbing was irrelevant, but it placed the AGC in the unenviable position of trying to keep Allawah Grove open and trying to achieve a higher standard of living in appalling conditions.

Consequently, a fortnight later Gare offered, on behalf of the NWC, to manage the Grove independently.⁶⁵ Perkins' decision to accept, and to ignore Middleton's dissent, was undoubtedly influenced by national and international political pressures.⁶⁶ Nationally, ministers and the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement were calling for Commonwealth oversight of funding for housing because there had been little progress since assimilation had been accepted in 1951. For the same reason, the Department of External Affairs was also exerting pressure because international criticism was damaging Australia's reputation.⁶⁷ In this climate, Save the Children Fund took on Allawah Grove as its first Australian project and provided funding for the social worker they had waited so long for. But this was a missed opportunity to recognise urban disadvantage and the legitimate aspirations for decent housing and meaningful participation in housing choices and homemaking, by allocating adequate resources.⁶⁸

Allawah Grove administration, September 1961 – February 1969

The 14-member Allawah Grove Administration committee (AGA) began with enormous goodwill, and was comprised entirely of *wadjelas*. They elected Cyril Gare chairman and Dr Lewis formed an Advisory Panel to provide expert

62 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186; 1959/0187.

63 Gare to Middleton, 1 May 1961, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

64 3 May 1961, Battye 3841A/MN1246; Middleton to Taylor, 8 May 1961, SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186.

65 17 May 1961, CNW, AR 1961: 28.

66 CNW, AR 1961: 27–28; 1962: 29. Federal pressure saw WA Aborigines able to vote in State elections, one day before the Empire Games opened in Perth, 1962.

67 Taffe 1995: 170.

68 Milligan et al. 2011: 103. See also Milligan et al. 2010; Habibis et al. 2014, 2015; Sanders 2008.

guidance.⁶⁹ The Constitution stated that the AGA would provide one or more social workers along with adequate housing and technical training to establish 'a model training settlement as a step towards assimilation'.⁷⁰ Allawah Grove was financed by scheduled donations, which provided about half the running costs, periodic donations from the Victoria League and the Lotteries Commission, public donations, an annual street appeal and rent. The DNW maintained its fixed subsidies for utilities. The Executive held weekly meetings onsite, and some were involved in activities at the Grove, but Gare was a busy man with little inclination to consult the Executive or make contact with residents. His wife, Elsie, was on the Executive but she was also closely involved with the community throughout the decade.⁷¹

Elsie Gare instigated the Friends' Centre, where the women met each day. The name also alludes to the Gares' affiliation with The Society of Friends, or Quakers, who focused on social justice and finding practical ways to help others help themselves. Of the many activities, bark painting was a creative outlet that enabled Ruth Kickett to develop the expertise to become the teacher. It also created an income because they sold hundreds of pictures at tourist shops and at the many public talks given by the Gares.⁷² Proceeds from the weekly 'opshop' also subsidised the first kindergarten for Aboriginal children in Western Australia. The kindergarten and clinics were arguably the longest standing and most significant initiatives at Allawah Grove, and Margaret Clements was central to both as the kindergarten director and clinic nurse. Gwen Corunna recalled: 'we all knew Margaret Clements, she was just one of the sweetest persons that's ever been around, because her heart was just there for the children, for the people'.⁷³ Teachers remarked on the difference the kindergarten made in preparing the children for school, and Clements also introduced many simple but effective actions to improve children's education.⁷⁴ For example, school attendance and performance improved dramatically when the Save the Children Fund provided a school bus and materials for mothers to provide school uniforms. She also encouraged teachers to visit to help with homework and to learn about the connections between employment, health, housing and education, because many pupils had poor hearing due to ear infections from overcrowding, or lacked concentration due to late nights as adults partied or fought. The Education Department took on the responsibility for Aboriginal education in 1963, and their efforts to improve school attendance and achievement with broadbrush

69 *Allawah News*, September 1961: 4, December 1961–January 1962.

70 SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116: 163.

71 Oxer 1963: 99–100, 114.

72 Clements 1989: 30; Walley and Pushman 2005: 35.

73 Walley and Pushman 2005.

74 Clements 1989: 30; *Daily News*, 18 July 1962; *The West Australian*, 16 October 1963: 25; SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 60; Battye 3841A *Allawah News*, December 1961 – January 1962: 5.

systemic remedies such as hostels and scholarships were clearly well overdue. However, they lacked the experience and cross-cultural understanding to avoid undercutting contextually appropriate initiatives. In the new inclusive paradigm, Clements' suggestion for an onsite school, to counter the ubiquitous playground racism, was rejected as 'paternalism' and her school-readiness testing program was later suspended on the grounds that it was discriminatory.⁷⁵ Traditional knowledges were learned outside the classroom and beyond the bounds of administration. Vicki Boundary recalls: 'We were taught the culture, it was really strict ... sitting down listening to them when they used to take us to Monday's Swamp, all those little things you had to do with the turtle.'⁷⁶ Donna Pickett also recalls: 'It was really solid. I think that's where we learnt to respect one another out there, 'cause everybody was our uncle and aunty or grandmother ... there was a lot of caring and sharing.'

Residents had little access to regular health care until Allawah Grove, so the clinics were important initiatives. From the outset, a local doctor provided a weekly adult clinic and free consultations at his practice. Dr Lewis attended the children's clinic with nurses and medical students to develop their awareness of illnesses, such as upper respiratory tract, skin and bowel infections, that were endemic to many Aboriginal communities.⁷⁷ Clements assisted throughout the decade and later opened a clinic that was the forerunner to the Aboriginal Medical Service (1973). Robert Bropho wrote of the esteem in which she was held:

She was the black people's Florence Nightingale. I'll speak about her as a mighty lady ... who offered a lot of assistance to Aboriginal people, especially mothers and children living at Allawah Grove ... she'd be the white grassroots of all medical services that are in existence today ... we salute you, Mrs Margaret Clements.⁷⁸

Despite these important initiatives, all efforts to improve health and education struggled in the face of overcrowding. In an effort to ameliorate this, the AGA offered tenants a 3:1 funding deal that provided a verandah as a sleep-out for families with at least six children.⁷⁹ But overcrowding was driven by insufficient housing in Perth and increasing unemployment. With the rural labour market evaporating across Australia, Aborigines increasingly joined the urban drift in search of work and away from the appalling conditions on reserves and settlements. McClarty tried 'putting the brakes' on Aborigines coming to Perth

75 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 101; Clements 1989: 33; *Allawah News*, September 1963.

76 Walley and Pushman 2005: 43–44.

77 After 1963, other local doctors attended and encouraged attendance at their practices. Dr Lewis became Foundation Professor of Child Health at the University of Tasmania (1968–1988). SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 45; Clements 1989: 45–47; Battye 3841A *Allawah News*, October 1963.

78 Bropho 1980: 38–39.

79 Battye 3841A *Allawah News*, December 1961 – January 1962: 5.

when he denied the temporary relief routinely provided to new applicants for unemployment payments.⁸⁰ But as suburban sprawl erased traditional camping areas, Allawah Grove became *the* staging place for Nyungahs arriving in Perth. The AGA asked the DNW for shelters to accommodate visitors at Christmas and the Royal Show, families who arrived for the grape-picking season or needed to come to Perth, but the Department's planning and funding focus remained with rural housing until the 1970s.⁸¹

The AGA's response to unemployment was quite different. Having observed the effects of unemployed men 'trudging about asking for jobs they knew they wouldn't get', they were concerned at the loss of potential leaders and wanted to improve their employment opportunities. This laudable motive for intervention was, however, underpinned by the assumption that in developing leadership skills and confidence they would also encourage a desire to 'assimilate ... into the white community'.⁸² Allawah Grove presented a convenient opportunity to run pilot programs and the Adult Education Board accommodated them with a three-year program to develop literacy, family development, civic and economic skills. They also provided Des Davis and Lewis Boundary with scholarships in social studies to develop their leadership skills. While Toogood coordinated staff from teaching and technical colleges, the Health Education Council and employers, Des Davis was appointed Chairman of the Progress Association and represented Allawah Grove at the 1962 National Conference on Aboriginal Affairs in Adelaide.⁸³ However, Davis and Boundary did not complete their scholarships because there was poor cross-cultural communication and they were poorly prepared for study and had little support from their employers. As a precursor to adult training that was offered statewide from 1965, this pilot clearly offered valuable learning opportunities.⁸⁴ Toogood also tried other avenues to improve employment opportunities. He tried to establish a vocational wood and metal workshop, but the costs of installing a separate commercial meter were prohibitive, so he appealed directly to the public for regular employment opportunities. The AGA were sincere in their efforts to improve the employment opportunities of the men at Allawah Grove and by 1963 the majority of able-bodied men were in full-time or casual employment.

At the same time, the residents' Progress Association helped to create a community spirit and united voice. Toogood introduced the idea and it was heavily influenced by Gare's 'aided self-help' ethos, but it achieved much in

80 CNW, AR 1962: 19.

81 *Allawah News*, October 1961; Clements 1989: 44–45; Gare 1989: 48; Rowley 1970: 374–377.

82 Clements 1989: 43–44; *The West Australian*, 20 September 1962.

83 Battye 3841A/MN1246.

84 SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198: 56–58, 123; Gare 1989: 38.

a short period.⁸⁵ Members elected an Executive, created a code of behaviour, introduced a savings club, supported sporting, recreational and educational activities, appointed a rent collector and produced a newsletter entitled *Bebilwongai*.⁸⁶ Executive members such as Corrie Bodney, Des Davis, George Garlett, Lewis Boundary and Richard Kickett, among others, demonstrated the benefits of public speaking classes with regular public talks about their progress and the need for trained leaders and self-help, better education, housing and employment.⁸⁷ A year after taking over Allawah Grove, the Committee therefore announced that the 175 residents at Allawah Grove had become 'a community ... where self-help and self-respect had become the ideals of its native inhabitants', with at least five families 'ready to move into the white man's housing estate'.⁸⁸ This was clearly designed to legitimise their efforts, but there was a marked reduction in gambling, drinking and fighting during this period, and although more tenants grew gardens, there was little they could do to improve the houses and the area never resembled a suburb. When the new Commissioner for Native Welfare Frank Gare (1962–1972) made a brief visit and was asked to contribute to *Bebilwongai*, he wrote:

Frankly, I was disappointed with Allawah Grove ... Certainly, there are some notable achievements – the kindergarten with its bright-eyed children being one, some well cared for houses and gardens being another – but on the whole the effect is one of neglect, indifference and apathy. And this in spite of the earnest help of a host of well-wishers and the expenditure of more money than any equivalent group of people in the state.⁸⁹

Residents debated his remarks and decided to ask for proof that more money was spent on Allawah Grove than elsewhere in the state, because they had not seen it, and to inform him of the actual number of able-bodied men who were employed.⁹⁰ But the Commissioner concluded 'that the main thing wrong with Allawah Grove was its menfolk' because there was 'money going begging'. He complained that they refused an opportunity from a 'reputable buyer of aboriginal artifacts' to make 'small simple things' to an 'authentic pattern', because they had no machinery.⁹¹ But this assumes, firstly, that these men did not have access to skills that were considered 'old' and apparently 'largely lost'; secondly, that no skill was required anyway; and finally, that despite the lack of skills required, traditional or otherwise, anything they produced

85 Battye 3841A December 1961 – January 1962: 7.

86 *Allawah News*, August – November 1962; *Bebilwongai*, March – April 1962, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

87 A visiting specialist in community development supports this. *Allawah News*, November 1961, May – July 1962: 3; August – November 1962, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

88 *The Sunday Times*, 16 September 1962. See *Allawah News*, December 1961, May 1962; Allawah Grove Administration General Report, 31 August 1963.

89 Cyril and Frank Gare were second cousins. *Bebilwongai*, March 1962: 7–8, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

90 *Bebilwongai*, March 1962: 6.

91 *Bebilwongai*, March 1962: 7–8.

had monetary value because it was 'authentic'. The lack of respect for, and the exploitation of, Aboriginal culture demonstrated here is entirely lost on him. The Commissioner also assumed that the men demurred because they felt 'justified in sitting down' due to past injustices. He therefore completely ignored the manners demonstrated in avoiding a direct refusal, and the possibility that it indicated a preference for learning vocational wood and metalwork skills in their workshop.

The issue that galvanised community spirit was when Toogood was sacked. He had been appointed to an ill-defined role and the competing expectations of being a social worker and superintendent. But when tenants protested the AGA's decision and were ignored, and the AGA revised the rules of the Progress Association, they realised the limits of their autonomy.⁹² As a direct result, the Progress Association lapsed and active protests turned to apathy and discontent.⁹³ After 'three police raids on the two-up school', residents responded by saying that 'if they were not allowed to play two-up they would take up drinking again, and then the fights would start and the police would really have something to do'.⁹⁴ Oxer's interviews with members of the Executive, volunteers and residents reveal that many were critical of the AGA's high-handed approach. George Anderson said, 'Even here, whites tell us what we can do. We can't please ourselves wherever we are'.⁹⁵ Dr Lewis was especially critical of Gare's leadership, accusing him of acting as a 'Great White God' by not allowing residents to make their own plans and mistakes. He was equally dismayed that the Advisory Panel was never consulted or called upon, other than to impress donors for the purpose of extracting money.⁹⁶

The appointment of Peter Coleman as Superintendent in July 1963 had a profound effect on the community. He insisted on having the authority to evict residents and prosecute unauthorised visitors, if he was to limit overcrowding and manage poor behaviour.⁹⁷ The AGA was still loathe to evict anyone. Clements recalls their dilemma: 'It always worried us ... because we could see the children we were working with suffering [from overcrowding]. But it worried us ... when they often had nowhere to go'.⁹⁸ The AGA accepted his 'drastic measures' after one family was rehoused. Hoping that alternative housing would soon be available, they decided to focus solely on training eligible tenants for suburbia. For this reason, they closed the Youth Club to 'discourage lads and girls over school age from staying at Allawah Grove' because they wanted youth who were ineligible

92 *Bebilwongai*, March 1962: 6, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

93 Oxer 1963: 147–152.

94 Oxer 1963: 172.

95 Oxer 1963: 174.

96 Oxer 1963: 141, 97–99.

97 Oxer 1963: 116; Gare 1989: 28; *Allawah News*, August 1963: 3.

98 Clements 1989: 47; *Allawah News*, August 1963: 3.

for apprenticeships to go to the country.⁹⁹ But from an evictee's perspective, 'if anyone was caught sleeping in a place overcrowding with other people, the police was allowed to arrest them'.¹⁰⁰ Homeless families therefore either took the risk, camped nearby in scrub or caused overcrowding elsewhere. Robert Bropho describes the consequences for his family, who camped outside Allawah Grove after their application to rent a vacant hut had been refused:

The results of laying in rain soaked rugs overnight, my youngest son Harvey took sick and was taken to hospital with pneumonia ... Aboriginal people who never had homes then used to watch for the sun to go down. They'd be forever watching the weather and rolling their rugs and bags and moving off the Allawah Grove premises under some thick trees and scrubs, breaking some bushes and putting them together to try to make some shelter from the rain.¹⁰¹

Tenants were encouraged to demonstrate their readiness for life in the suburbs, but the criteria for 'readiness' removed them from social activities, marked them as 'favourites' and encouraged them to break reciprocal kinship ties. Undermining tenants' desire for community and equality, while they waited for rewards that failed to materialise, resulted in some of their 'best' tenants being evicted because they 'would not listen to the Administration'.¹⁰² Others lost any interest they may have had in leaving the settlement. The huts were far superior to anything on reserves and there was access to a range of services. Residents accepted that they had landlords and appreciated their benefactors, but a long history of broken promises made them wary. They took what they needed, kept those they were not comfortable with at bay and resisted decisions that overstepped the mark.¹⁰³ Mrs Spratt said, 'We're happy here. Why would we want to move out with white people? We've got everyone here together'.¹⁰⁴ What residents really wanted was to stay there. They complained about the 'gambling, fighting, drinking and the Administration', but the experience of Allawah Grove and the development of a community spirit resulted in exactly what Middleton had tried to avoid.¹⁰⁵ The residents had no desire to be assimilated. What they had learned was that they wanted to stay and create an Aboriginal community with regular houses and facilities. Ruth Kickett explained that she wanted Allawah Grove to be just an 'ordinary suburb' for 'coloured people' so she could live in a community where she was wanted, and accepted as an equal.¹⁰⁶

99 *Allawah News*, October 1963, Battye 3841A/MN1246.

100 Bropho 1980: 39.

101 Bropho 1980: 39–40.

102 Oxer 1963: 187.

103 Oxer 1963: 142–146.

104 Oxer 1963: 175.

105 Oxer 1963: 175–176.

106 Oxer 1963: 169.

The decade was marked by considerable debate about the state's responsibility for Aborigines, and after decades of family dispersal to break kinship ties, anthropologists were beginning to advocate the importance of group cohesion, but there was little support for group housing in the community or at a policy level.¹⁰⁷ By 1965, all discriminatory legislation had been repealed, the minister was empowered to loan money for small ventures and financial responsibility for education and health had been with the respective departments since 1963.¹⁰⁸ Training and employment opportunities were improving, but there was still no funding for the big ticket item: metropolitan housing. On average, Aboriginal households accommodated more than 14 people and many people still slept under bridges or moved between camps.¹⁰⁹ With the State Housing Commission waiting list for standard, two-bedroom houses continuing to grow and many Aboriginal families in need of four- and five-bedroom houses, there was no relief in sight.¹¹⁰ As Aboriginal housing became a public issue, Gare continued to work the media. He promoted the Grove as a 'finishing school for citizenship': a unique pilot scheme for Aboriginal advancement and integration, and tried to drive public sentiment with a feature article about families living in bush shelters.¹¹¹ In his role as the President of the Aboriginal Advancement Council (formerly the NWC), he also lead a deputation to the minister.¹¹² An Aboriginal spokeswoman, Sister Connie McDonald, drew on the example of 12 large families at Allawah Grove, with long-standing connections to the metro area, to suggest an official reserve for homeless Aborigines, so that they would not be 'kicked and pushed around by police'.¹¹³ The minister anticipated the usual public backlash to a metropolitan reserve, to explain their new policy, which was to provide houses in groups of 'two or three in different suburbs'.¹¹⁴ The introduction of this retrograde 'salt and pepper' policy was, however, yet another policy without funding or any indication of when it would be implemented.

However, shortly before the landmark referendum of 27 May 1967, and the spotlight on the national Aboriginal Welfare Conference in Perth, two families were rehoused.¹¹⁵ Media coverage a fortnight later depicted a domestic idyll, but there was no prospect of further housing. Having waited years, the AGA tried to push the government by issuing an ultimatum that they would hand over responsibility in six months. The DNW argued that Allawah Grove was in

107 See Fink 1964: 144, Coombs.

108 SROWA Con 1724, 1958/0029: 35.

109 Makin 1970: 134.

110 SROWA Con 1733, 1943/1312: 50–51.

111 *Daily News*, 17 May 1965, SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116: 111; Makin 1970: 133, 144–150.

112 *Weekend News*, 19 June 1965; Battye 3841A/MN1246.

113 Makin 1970: 134.

114 Makin 1970: 135.

115 SROWA Con 1724, 1958/0029: 125.

such poor condition that any expenditure could not be justified and asked for a year to locate 'appropriate' land for 'suitable tenants'.¹¹⁶ The NWC agreed to remain until December 1968, but when the usual public and council opposition stymied the Department's efforts, Gare formed another committee to press for a special annual housing grant.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Department had refused to rehouse anyone who was not an official tenant in November 1967.¹¹⁸ Elsie Gare appealed to the Director of Child Welfare out of concern for children whose parents were not on the list:

The tenant is a deserted defacto wife with 8 children under twelve years of age. She has her mother, who cares for another grandchild from a broken home ... They are under notice of eviction because no rent has been paid since February. Electricity has been disconnected ... two other related families are sheltering in the three room hut. One family with five children ... have come from West Perth where they say their home has been bulldozed for the Mitchell Freeway. The other family has come to the city because employment is easier to obtain here than in Pinjarra, they have four pre-school children.

You will see there are eighteen children involved in this one case. There are strong family ties, and separating the children from parents for institutional care does not seem to be the correct answer ... This household I have described is not an isolated case.¹¹⁹

Former minister Jack Brady offered support for his constituents by arguing that women with large families were 'hardly likely to be granted tenancies'. But Minister Edgar Lewis (1962–1971) drew on the new rhetoric of 'integration' and 'self-reliance' to counter that there was nothing 'to prevent native families fending for themselves'.¹²⁰ He added:

Everything possible is being done to find conventional houses for those families capable of making proper and effective use of them. However there are some families ... which have made no apparent progress in their social standards in all the years that they have been there and it would jeopardise the department's whole housing scheme to place such families in standard housing in the ordinary community.¹²¹

Elsie Gare warned that some families would need significant support to adjust to suburban living, so it beggars belief that the very people least able to secure state housing could 'fend for themselves' in the private market.¹²²

116 SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116: 166; SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186; *Daily News*, 16 October 1967.

117 SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116.

118 SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

119 5 June 1968, SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

120 *The West Australian*, 2 August 1968; SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

121 SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038; 1963/0116: 62.

122 SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

Suburban housing

Aboriginal populations had been growing fastest in metropolitan Australia where there were more jobs and increasing access to training, but it was not until 1968 that this was confirmed and the entire housing budget allocated to the metropolitan area.¹²³ As a result, 40 adults and 90 children from Allawah Grove were rehoused in the outer suburbs at Balga, Hamilton Hill, Coolbellup and Gosnells.¹²⁴ Remarkably, the minister accused the seven families who remained without water, electricity or sanitation of ‘presumably hoping to jump the housing queue’.¹²⁵ Professor Berndt and Jack Davis used the press to explain that the site would become an unofficial camping ground when more people arrived for the grape-picking season and, in a public stand-off, Gare refused to demolish huts until alternative accommodation was provided. The minister threatened to bulldoze the site, until adverse publicity ‘forced’ him to ‘consider’ finding homes, ‘if they could satisfy the Department of their willingness to pay rent and to care for a house’.¹²⁶ Eventually, everyone was rehoused, but Clements was dismayed that families were ‘dispersed all around the metropolitan area without any follow up ... in what must have been a pretty traumatic experience for them’.¹²⁷ Indeed, many families left their small suburban houses or were evicted, and in 1977 the Commissioner for Community Relations reflected: ‘Though much criticised in its time, [Allawah Grove] appears to have kept its inhabitants happier than they were later under Swan River bridges and in abandoned houses.’¹²⁸ The Department has also since acknowledged that the ‘salt and pepper’ policy was a failure.¹²⁹

Allawah Grove was the first non-institutional settlement with individual housing in the state. It existed at a time that demanded a housing policy response, but was funded as a temporary, palliative solution that provided shelter for hundreds of people who would otherwise have been homeless in an increasingly urbanised landscape. Allawah Grove offered an opportunity to promote the conditions of possibility for Aboriginal self-determination in the metropolitan area of Perth, but it was largely left to the auspices of charities and volunteers. Between them they provided significant welfare initiatives that were taken up elsewhere as well as important training for health, education and welfare professionals. But Allawah Grove was not allocated adequate resources to address the legitimate aspirations for decent housing and meaningful participation in housing choices

123 SROWA Con 1724, 1958/0029: 188.

124 SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

125 *The West Australian*, 8 January 1969; SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

126 SROWA Con 1733, 1969/0038.

127 Clements 1989: 49–50.

128 *The West Australian*, 8 September 1977.

129 Craig Somerville, Battye Library, pers comm, 12 April 1990.

and homemaking, because there was little respect for, or understanding of, Aboriginal culture or recognition of their urban disadvantage. Allawah Grove was therefore largely administered by middle-class *wadjelas* whose aspirations for Aborigines were confined to successful integration within the wider community. It was publicly presented as a 'training settlement', an 'experiment in assimilation' and a 'pilot project'. Allawah Grove presented an opportunity to implement the rhetoric of self-direction and participation, but opportunities and consultation was limited and residents were eventually 'bulldozed' into the white community at a time when the concept of self-determination was beginning to be uttered, but not yet understood.¹³⁰ Allawah Grove is but one example of a missed opportunity in urban Australia to close the gap between policies that purported to include Aborigines within the broader community as autonomous social and economic equals, and their implementation.

References

Archival sources

State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA)

Aboriginal Housing Residential Reserves, SROWA Con 2607, A0864 V1, 2607.

Allawah Grove Accounts and Stores Correspondence, SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0187.

Allawah Grove Building, Equipment and Sanitation, SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0186.

Allawah Grove Education and Vocational Guidance, SROWA Con 1733, 1959/0198.

Allawah Grove General Correspondence, SROWA Con 1733, 1963/0116 and 1733/1969/0038.

East Perth Area – Native Matters, SROWA Con 1733, 1943/1312.

Native camps in the metropolitan area – reports by Head Office Inspector, SROWA Con 993, 1937/0105.

Native Housing Project Allawah Grove Coolbaroo League Scheme, SROWA Con 993, 1957/0515 and 993, 1958/0321.

Publicity Press Release Publication, SROWA Con 1724, 1958/0029.

¹³⁰ Bropho 1980: 34.

Reserve for Natives – Guildford, SROWA Con 993, 1931/0158.

Battye Library

Allawah Grove Administration 1958–1978, 3841A/ MN1246, Battye Library.

Clements, Margaret 1989, Interview with Janice Gothard Transcript, OH 2309 Battye Library.

Gare, Elsie 1989, Interview with Janice Gothard Transcript, OH22310 Battye Library.

Government publications

Morgan, K. I. 1972, 'Aboriginal Housing – Western Australia – 1946–1971' in *Aboriginal Housing* The Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Canberra, February 10–11.

Western Australia. Commissioner of Native Welfare, *Annual Reports*, Dept of Native Welfare, Perth.

Newspapers

The Daily News

Sunday Times

The West Australian

Weekend Mail

Secondary sources

Barwick, Diane 1964, 'The self-conscious people of Melbourne', in *Aborigines Now*, Marie Reay (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney: 20–31.

Beresford, Quentin 2006, *Rob Riley: An Aboriginal Leader's Quest for Justice*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Berndt, Catherine H. 1962, 'Mateship or success: An assimilation dilemma', *Oceania* 33(2): 71–89.

Berndt, Ronald M. and Catherine H. (eds) 1979, *Aborigines of the West*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth.

Bropho, Robert 1980, *Fringedweller*, Alternative Publishing Co-operative, Sydney.

- Carter, Jennie 1986, *Bassendean: A Social History 1829–1979*, Bassendean Town Council, Perth.
- Delmege, Sharon 2000, 'The Fringedweller's Struggle: Cultural Politics and the Force of History', PhD thesis, Murdoch University.
- 2005, 'A trans-generational effect of the Aborigines Act 1905 (WA): The making of the Fringedwellers in the south-west of Western Australia', *ELaw – Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law* 12(1).
- 2014, 'Camp life to suburbia: Aboriginal housing in Perth', *Australian Historical Studies* 45(3): 368–387.
- Fink, Ruth 1964, 'Guided social change at the community level', in *Aborigines Now*, Marie Reay (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Gale, Fay 1964, 'Administration as guided assimilation (South Australia)', in *Aborigines Now*, Marie Reay (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Gale, Fay and Joy Wundersitz 1982, *Adelaide Aborigines: A Case Study of Urban Life 1966–1981*, Development Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra.
- Habibis, Daphne, Rhonda Phillips, Peter Phibbs and Julia Verdouw 2014, *Progressing Tenancy Management Reform on Remote Indigenous Communities*, AHURI Final Report No. 223, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- 2015, *Identifying Effective Arrangements for Tenancy Management Service Delivery to Remote Indigenous Communities*, AHURI Positioning Paper No. 165, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- Haebich, Anna 2005, 'Nuclear, suburban and black: Middleton's vision of assimilation for Nyungar families', in *Contesting Assimilation*, Tim Rowse (ed.), API Network, Curtin University: 201–220.
- 2008, *Spinning the Dream*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle.
- Hasluck, Paul 1988, *Shades of Darkness*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Hodson, Sally 1989, 'Nyungahs and Work: Aboriginal Labour in the Great Southern Region, WA 1936–1972', MA Diss, University of Western Australia.
- Howard, Michael C. 1981, *Aboriginal Politics in Southwestern Australia*, UWA Press, Perth.
- Keen, Ian (ed.) 1988, *Being Black: Aboriginal cultures in Settled Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

- Kinnane, Stephen 2003, *Shadow Lines*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle.
- Langton, Marcia 1981, 'Urbanizing Aborigines: the social scientists' great deception', *Social Alternatives* 2(2): 16–22.
- Makin, Clarence F. 1970, 'A Socio-Economic Anthropological Survey of People of Aboriginal Descent in the Metropolitan Region of Perth, Western Australia', PhD thesis, University of Western Australia.
- Manning, Corinne 2005, "'If Aborigines are to be assimilated they must learn to live in houses": Victoria's transitional Aboriginal housing policy', in *Contesting Assimilation*, Tim Rowse (ed.), API Network, Curtin University: 221–236.
- Milligan, Vivienne, Rhonda Phillips, Hazel Easthope and Paul Memmott 2010, *Service Directions and Issues in Social Housing for Indigenous Households in Urban and Regional Areas*, AHURI Positioning Paper No. 130, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- 2011, *Urban Social Housing for Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders: Respecting Culture and Adapting Services*, AHURI Final Report No. 172, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.
- Morgan, George 2000, 'Assimilation and resistance: Housing Indigenous Australians in the 1970s', *Journal of Sociology* 36(2): 187–204.
- Oxer, Rosemary 1963, 'Allawah Grove: An Experiment in Assimilation', Hons thesis, University of Western Australia.
- Pearson, Noel 2000, *Ben Chifley Memorial Lecture*, Bathurst Panthers Leagues Club, 12 August.
- Rowley, Charles 1970, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Australian National University Press, Canberra.
- 1972, *Outcasts in White Australia*, Penguin, Sydney.
- Rowse, Tim 2005, 'The post-war social science of assimilation 1947–1966', in *Contesting Assimilation*, Tim Rowse (ed.), API Network, Curtin University, Perth: 151–168.
- Sanders, Will 2008, 'Equality and difference arguments in Australian Indigenous affairs: Examples from income support and housing', CAEPR Working Paper No. 38, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Canberra.

SWALSC (South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council), John Host and Chris Owen 2009, *It's Still in My Heart, This is My Country*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth.

Taffe, Susan 1995, 'Australian diplomacy in a policy vacuum: Government and Aboriginal Affairs, 1961–62', *Aboriginal History* 19(2): 154–172.

Walley, Robyn Smith and Tracie Pushman 2005, *On the Outskirts: Photographs of Allawah Grove Aboriginal Settlement, Perth*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth.

Wilson, J. 1964, 'Assimilation to what?', in *Aborigines Now*, Marie Reay (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney: 151–166.

Hunger and the humanitarian frontier

Anne O'Brien

Within a few days of settlers' arrival in Eora country in 1788, disruptions to the ecological balance between population and food supply were set in train. The first conflicts were over fish and the officers soon observed that the local people were 'very hungry'.¹ Over the next century and a half as settlement spread across the continent, so too did these disruptions. Their rate and extent was not everywhere the same. Different economic modes and different demographics varied their impacts, and bush food continued to be important. Indeed, recent research shows that in some contexts settlers embraced and depended on Indigenous foodways.² But while such insights are important in variegating the larger story, disruption to food supplies was one of colonialism's irrefutable consequences. This knowledge has informed the writing of Indigenous historiography since the 1970s. Henry Reynolds' influential *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1981) saw the European invasion resulting in 'chronic insecurity' in relation to food, and much of his analysis of resistance proceeds from conflict over resources.³ A decade earlier, C. D. Rowley wrote that there was 'a kind of inevitability' in the progression from the 'destruction of native food supply, or of the incentives to hunt and gather it' to rationing.⁴

To draw out the significance of food is not to ignore the social and spiritual disruption that came from the land grab but to contribute to ways of understanding it. The 'history wars' raised questions about physical violence in the past but debate was stiflingly constricted to the extent of 'massacres'.⁵ Hunger was another form of physical violence, more difficult to determine,

1 Stanner 1977: 9–10.

2 Kimber 1986; Newling 2011; Santich 2012.

3 Reynolds 1981: 51.

4 Rowley 1970: 79.

5 See Macintyre and Clark 2003.

more deeply embedded, but one with a history of its own. Indeed Rowley's reference to the loss of 'incentives to hunt and gather' points to a second and related theme in the history of colonialism – the cluster of ideas surrounding settlers' fear that Indigenous people would become 'pauperised'. Deriving from centuries of exploitation and prejudice, the European myth of 'the lazy native' exacerbated fears that ready relief would destroy the will to work. Described by Shino Konishi as one of the most 'devastating and enduring myths about Indigenous people' this idea, too, has generated a considerable historiography.⁶

This article examines how the relationship between loss of food and fears of pauperisation were played out in central and northern Australia from the 1920s to the 1950s, a time and place when tightening tensions between the desire to include and old racist fears threw the contradictions in this relationship into sharp relief. A site of relatively late colonial occupation, central Australia was seen as the 'last frontier', a space where anthropologists, medical scientists and missionaries hoped that traditional life might continue unimpeded, but where the cattle industry was precarious, dependent on large tracts of land and Aboriginal labour. In the context of national politics, a decade of depression in the 1930s was followed in the 1940s by visions of 'a new social order' and, as Russell McGregor has argued, there was a shift in public attitudes that sought to include Aboriginal people as 'full participants in the life of the community'.⁷ Broadening the horizon to the British Empire, historian James Vernon argued that 'the hungry 1930s' were the final stage in the long 'ethical reorientation of hunger' that had started with the Irish famine and shifted hunger from the realm of moral fault.⁸

Vernon's survey offers a useful 'big picture' of British thought but the settler colonial context suggests we rethink the boundaries of its 'ethical reorientation'. As McGregor noted, the shift towards inclusion was always incomplete, impeded by a 'formidable array of prejudices and assumptions'.⁹ This article focuses on some of the prejudices and assumptions underpinning the work of missionaries, protection societies, medical scientists and government officials – all of whom were concerned in one way or another with the physical well-being of Indigenous peoples and who can thus be seen as falling under the broad mantle of 'humanitarianism'. Beginning with the food problems that dogged the mission established at Ernabella in north-west South Australia in 1937, it argues that old fears of the demoralising effects of relief were given new life by a new wave of post-war cultural awareness and anti-paternalism. These new impulses did not, however, see the end of older practices among missionaries

6 Konishi 2010: 99, see fns 1–4.

7 O'Brien 2015: 150–155; McGregor 2011: xi.

8 Vernon 2007.

9 McGregor 2011: xi.

and government officials – practices of using food to control movement that in themselves fuelled representations of Indigenous dependency. Further, the reporting of poverty and poor health was informed by racist assumptions that excited particularly virulent fears of pauperism. Even as they reported the loss of subsistence – the term ‘semi-starvation’ was not uncommon – official reports slipped into the language of pauperism: people were half-starved on one page of a report, ‘loafers’ and ‘spongers’ on the next.

Focusing on the long relationship between humanitarianism and philanthropy helps explain these contradictions. If humanitarians are usually assumed to be those whose ‘pre-eminent concern was with people’s material conditions’, that concern was entwined with a durable strain of moral reform that provided deep support for evaluations focused on personal deficiency.¹⁰ To understand the thought worlds of those who were active and influential in Indigenous policy, we need to draw on the long history of philanthropy, where humanitarianism had its origins.

Ernabella’s problems – Anangu problems

Much has been written about Ernabella, most of it less critical than analyses of other missions.¹¹ Established by the Adelaide medical practitioner and Presbyterian elder Charles Duguid as a buffer between the Anangu Pitjatjantjara-Yankantjatjara and the ‘doggers’ who had come to inhabit the area in the 1920s, it aspired to a range of culturally sensitive policies to assist people in the transition to modernity – there was no compulsion for ‘the natives’ to wear clothes, classes were conducted in Pitjatjantjara language, missionaries did not interfere with initiation ceremonies or marriage customs, nor insist that people stay on the mission. Indeed, unlike most missions Ernabella did not seek a permanent congregation so, unlike most missions, it did not use food to attract one. Historians Peggy Brock, Rani Kerin and David Trudinger have explored the problems that arose from Ernabella’s food policies.¹² I would like to build on their work by focusing on the ideological sources of that policy and contextualising the principles that informed it. At its heart was Duguid’s conviction that supplying ‘nothing but our kind of food’ would ‘wreck a fabric of life that has stood the test of centuries’.¹³

10 Laidlaw 2007: 138.

11 McGregor 2011: 105; Kerin 2011; Trudinger 2004; Hilliard 1968; Edwards 2012.

12 Brock 2007; Kerin 2011; Trudinger 2004.

13 Duguid 1939: 3–5.

Anangu had indeed managed the resources of their lands for centuries. Though the area was semi-arid, Ernabella's rockhole gave it strategic importance. When in 1873 the explorer Ernest Giles came across it after crossing miles of waterless desert, its apparent permanence led him to wax eloquent about this 'delightful and fanciful region' and it came to be seen as a safe sanctuary on the edge of a vast western desert.¹⁴ To the Pitjatjantjara and other local peoples, it was a fertile and significant site. When interviewed in the early 1980s, the part-Arabana bushman Walter Smith recalled it as 'the best place ... Plenty of rabbits, wallabies and euros'.¹⁵ Though plants and animals died out at times of drought, they re-established following good rains. Anangu were reasonably resistant to climatic fluctuations because they knew the country and they were able to move to places where food and water were accessible.¹⁶ An 'Anthropological expedition' conducted by Norman Tindale in the late 1930s found that the Pitjatjantjara turned to deep sand soaks and rock sheltered pools in dry periods, and they 'knew which springs had never failed them'.¹⁷ Narratives of 'two-way food' run through Ernabella's oral testimony. In the late 1990s, Anangu whose parents were part of this mixed economy remembered the best sites for honey ant hunting and where they had set up 'sheep camps' near the wells they had sunk.¹⁸

But outbreaks of disease cast a shadow on Ernabella's first two decades. Epidemics were not unusual in Central Australia in the first half of the twentieth century as people who had previously been isolated were exposed to infection.¹⁹ But the outbreaks at Ernabella were particularly disturbing because medical care was fundamental to its origins. Duguid had conceived it as a 'medical mission'. In his travels north in 1934 and 1935, he had been appalled by the malnutrition and disease suffered by Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and disgusted to find venereal disease rampant among Aboriginal women and children in the Musgrave Ranges. But though the Presbyterian Board of Mission rejected his initial model that it be only a 'medical mission' – he had seen 'no need for a padre' – the physical health of the people remained one of its main purposes. In addition to treating the minor injuries and infections of those who camped near the mission, each year a medical patrol moved out into the Central Aboriginal Reserve.²⁰

14 Gee 2003: 43; Hilliard 1968: 40.

15 Kimber 1986: 49.

16 Robinson et al. 2003: 22.

17 Tindale 1940: 151.

18 Cited in Young 2010: 98–99.

19 See Goodall 1994: 60–62.

20 Kerin 2011: chapter 1.

If epidemics challenged Ernabella's very purpose, the possibility that they were exacerbated by its food policy was jarring indeed. And yet this was the finding of two inspectors sent by the South Australian Aborigines Protection Board during a flu epidemic in 1943, in which over 300 Anangu contracted influenza and eight died. In their report, Constance Cooke and Alice Johnston noted the 'fortitude, long hours and self-sacrifice' of the missionaries in caring for the sick, but they also wrote that some of the Aborigines were 'under-nourished', and that the food provided to both 'the pensioners' – the old, sick and young – and to the workers was neither adequate nor nutritious.²¹ They named 'under-feeding' as Ernabella's major problem. Their reports were devastating to Duguid and he rushed to blame the Superintendent Rev. Robert Love, despite having head-hunted him for Ernabella in 1940 as one of the most 'experienced, sensible and anthropologically minded' missionaries in Australia. Now Duguid believed rumours that there had been an 'appalling' and 'preventable' death rate among the Worowa at Kunmunya in Western Australia, Love's previous posting. As Duguid's biographer Rani Kerin argues, Duguid's extreme reaction was a symptom of his anxiety about Ernabella's future – its lease was coming up for renewal – and his inability to attach any blame to the mission itself.²²

Following this, 'additional foods in greater variety' were provided at Ernabella, but in 1948 an epidemic of measles struck.²³ Its mortality rates were much worse – between a quarter and a third of the approximately 300 Anangu at Ernabella died – and it killed hundreds more people from Alice Springs to Western Australia.²⁴ Duguid flew to Ernabella with 'a plentiful supply of penicillin, sulphadiazine, and invalid foods' and stayed for a week until the worst effects were passed.²⁵ In 1957, measles struck Ernabella once more – 106 people were infected, of whom 24 children and two adults died. Three sick children sent to the Adelaide hospital for treatment were all reported to be malnourished. Duguid visited the mission to find the diet totally inadequate. It fell below the nutrition levels recommended by the Commonwealth Government's Ration Scale for Feeding of Aborigines.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, Duguid found this state of affairs 'most perturbing', given that 'all concerned' with the mission had hoped it 'would set an example to the rest'.²⁷

How can we explain the problems over food that dogged Ernabella? Why did they persist and what is their significance? There were clearly practical difficulties in running a mission 1,400 kilometres from Adelaide. Infestations of weevils

21 Cooke 1943 SRSA GRG 52/32/81.

22 Kerin 2011: 52–53.

23 South Australia. Aborigines Protection Board 1946, *Report*.

24 Goodall 1994: 62.

25 Duguid 1972: 156.

26 Brock 2008: 28.

27 Duguid 1972: 185.

made it hard to keep food and during the war transport delays of supplies from Adelaide were common.²⁸ Part of the explanation must also lie in the unpredictability of the climate and its effects on bush food. During the epidemic of 1943 Ernabella experienced a drought that lasted 19 months, the longest ever recorded since rainfall started to be measured in 1935.²⁹ There was a drought in the first half of 1957, too, by which time cattle stations were encroaching on the lands. The presence of the mission itself created population densities that put pressure on bush tucker. Twenty years of hunting and foraging in the area around the mission had thinned out supplies of food, a point Duguid acknowledged in his autobiography.³⁰ Part of the answer, then, would seem to lie in a misreading of the availability of bush tucker in 'real time', and in the context of unpredictable rainfall.

But why were Ernabella's missionaries so determined to read the environment that way? What deeper ideological assumptions were at work? If the missionaries sought to protect Anangu morally as well as physically, their moral concerns were not restricted to 'undesirables' like the doggers, but encompassed the demoralisation that came with 'paternalism'. In his autobiography, Duguid recalled visiting the reserves, missions and camps in South Australia as a newly appointed member of the Aborigines Protection Board in the early 1940s, and finding no attempts being made 'to fit the Aborigines to stand on their own legs'. Without regular work or responsibilities they were 'hand fed', so it was 'no wonder' they turned to alcohol when they could get it.³¹ Duguid was determined that Anangu would not succumb to the same fate. But, as was the case in most missions, there was frequently not enough work to meet the demand, a problem exacerbated in Ernabella's case by isolation.³² For Duguid and his supporters, 'pauperism' would be contained if Anangu remained hunters of food. And in this they could be encouraged if the food on the mission was less appealing than could be acquired elsewhere. Ernabella, then, operated on principles of 'less eligibility', the clarion call of the Poor Law reformers of the 1830s who insisted that conditions in the workhouse be less attractive than those outside in order to discourage 'pauperism'. 'No work, no food' was the policy – if not the practice – not just of Indigenous missions, but of all organisations that sought funding to deal with 'problem populations'; the Salvation Army was often commended by government for the work it extracted from the white unmarried mothers, ex-prisoners and children in its institutions.³³

28 Trudinger 2004: 258.

29 Robinson et al. 2003: 19.

30 Duguid 1972: 185.

31 Duguid 1972: 139.

32 Hilliard 1968: 147.

33 See, for example, NSW Royal Commission on Public Charities 1898, *Third Report*: xxii–xxiii.

Ernabella's Presbyterian foundations may well have deepened its anti-paternalism. Though only one branch of the radical Protestantism that Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon have argued made the idea of dependency shameful from the eighteenth century, the Presbyterian Church stood out from the other major denominations in the early years of the Depression for its newspapers' support of a particularly robust individualism, coming close to admiring fascism in some of its articulations.³⁴ But the mission's recoil from paternalism was also bolstered by respect for the qualities traditional life demanded. Duguid admired the fact that Aboriginal men were trained from boyhood to be 'courageous, self-controlled and self-reliant' and in his book *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today* (1936), Love spent many pages detailing the tenacity and skill involved in hunting – of women as well as men. In this, his book reflected and reinforced the growing fascination with and respect for what was seen as 'the authentic culture of primitive full bloods'.³⁵ But in the mission's daily operation, Love was so dedicated to saving Anangu from materialist contamination that he was reluctant to pay the 'doggers' among them more wages despite the urging of the Presbyterian Mission Board and he resisted introducing agriculture, arguing that the mission should 'let them continue to be nomadic' for hunting was intrinsic to 'tribal integrity'.³⁶ If Love's resistance to paternalism was particularly determined, he did not have it on his own. He retired in 1946 having lost, in the view of a missionary historian who knew him well, 'the tremendous drive and vitality that had characterised him'.³⁷ But in the mid-1950s, Ernabella's annual reports were still boasting that 'as little relief as possible is issued and the menfolk, where not employed, must hunt for their natural food'.³⁸ In her history of Ernabella published in 1968, the crafts teacher Winifred Hilliard was proud to declare that 'the Pitjantjatjara tribesman' was not 'dependent upon the white man's employment to live'.³⁹

How typical was Ernabella? What light do these incidents shed on broader processes? Despite the appeal of 'less eligibility', the 'no work no food' policy was not applied universally in relation to Indigenous people. Multiple strategies were employed to control their movement in the central desert and one of them involved using food. As a technology of power, food distribution stretched back to the time of Macquarie's Native Feasts, and over the next century food was

34 According to politician and Presbyterian elder Sir Thomas Henley, 'idleness and unemployment were crimes' and that 'the best cure for unemployment was for everybody to work harder and harder'. *NSW Presbyterian*, 23 May 1929; Rev. D. J. Flockhart, a NSW Moderator, declared in 1930 that he had 'no brief for Mussolini or his methods', but admired his leadership and challenged those worried about 'hard times ahead of us' not to be 'weaklings'. *NSW Presbyterian*, 30 January 1930. See O'Brien 2015: 125.

35 Duguid 1946: 23; Love 1936: 16; McGregor 2011: 29–27.

36 Trudinger 2004: 258–259; Kerin 2011: 52–56.

37 McKenzie 1969: 104.

38 Cited in Raftery 2006: 216.

39 Hilliard 1968: 154.

used to appease, cajole and control movement with little or no attempt to exact a return. As the transcontinental railway was built across the Nullarbor and from Adelaide towards Darwin between 1909 and 1957, food was used to stop 'drift', as the movement of Aborigines towards white population centres was known.⁴⁰ Seen as a threat to hygiene, morals, good order and the whiteness of the population, 'drift' impelled the United Aborigines Mission at Ooldea to provide cooked food, not just rations to the southern Pitjatjantjara in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴¹ Even Pastor Frederick Albrecht of Hermannsburg, who believed that 'a Christian cannot be a parasite', offered varied and attractive food – and he was critical of Ernabella's austerity.⁴² It is significant that things were different on some of the older missions, where the populations had been settled for decades. Without the need to manoeuvre behaviour, conditions were very poor. At Yarrabah, for example, which was grossly underfunded by the Queensland government despite having been used as an industrial school and reformatory since the early 1890s, the government medical officer, Raphael Cilento, reported in 1935 that the diet was 'entirely lacking in vitamins' and 'an actual menace to healthy development'. Three years later, the anthropologist Norman Tindale reported that rations were 'only enough to prevent starvation'.⁴³ But despite these different outcomes, the use of food in the long history of land grab compounded the ambivalence surrounding Aboriginal entitlement and hunger.⁴⁴ In a circular and self-reinforcing paradox, using food to influence movement fostered images of Aborigines as dependent and contributed to the fears of pauperisation that perpetuated hunger by representing them as undeserving.

'Malnutrition and other drawbacks'

Before addressing the significance of these tropes we need to ask what is known of the extent of hunger experienced by Indigenous people in central and northern Australia? There is no unitary, all-encompassing narrative. Bush tucker remained an important source of food as well as a source of 'independence and cultural pride' to the people interviewed by Ann McGrath in her study of the cattle industry.⁴⁵ Joe McGuinness recalled that since childhood he was 'conditioned to live off the land' and was 'quite used to lean times'.⁴⁶ Some autobiographies recall childhoods of plenty. Eileen Kampakuta Brown remembers travelling from the spinifex country, being 'very happy walking along' and of 'eating well of

40 Brady 1987: 36.

41 Cited in Brady 1987: 38–39.

42 Cited in Trudinger 2004: 265–267; Rowse 1998: chapter 5; Brock 2008: 27–28.

43 Cited in Loos 1991.

44 Nettlebeck and Foster 2012.

45 McGrath 1988: 173.

46 Cited in Broome 2002: 65.

the game you catch on the way'.⁴⁷ Jessie Lennon remembers being 'at home with the sweet bush tucker' that accompanied her family's journeys.⁴⁸ But it is not possible to know how many people were living on bush foods in the 1930s.⁴⁹ Police estimated that by 1938 about half the Aborigines in the Northern Territory were supporting themselves on bush tucker, but as McGrath has argued, they could not check country inaccessible to horses, nor did they have knowledge of those 'bush' groups who avoided Europeans altogether.⁵⁰

We do know that a slew of contemporary publications named hunger as endemic among certain groups. Two official inquiries held in response to a new mood of concern that emerged after the Forrest River massacre found that it triggered the 'outrages' that gave Australia its poor international reputation in the interwar years. In his 1929 report on 'The Aboriginal and Half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia', J. W. Bleakley wrote that the natives had been 'deprived of their natural means of subsistence by the usurpation of their tribal hunting grounds' and that it was their 'distress' that led to the killing that resulted in the Conistan massacre. In his view, Aboriginal women were forced into prostitution by 'semi-starvation', the 'camp dependents' of workers on cattle stations were in a state of 'semi-starvation', government rations were 'quite insufficient' and the majority of 'inmates' of the camps were 'in an emaciated condition'.⁵¹ Four years later, Western Australia's Moseley Royal Commission noted that mortality rates from infectious disease – made more virulent by poor diet – were 'severe' in the south and 'very severe' in the Kimberleys.⁵² The government settlement at Moore River presented 'a woeful spectacle' and the food in 'the compound' where the children were housed left 'much room for improvement'.⁵³

The inadequacy and insufficiency of food ran through the public pronouncements of urban humanitarian organisations. 'The ration scale was deplorable', wrote Rev. William Morely, Secretary of the Association for the Protection of Native Races, in his campaign to do something about the 'half-caste' home outside Alice Springs.⁵⁴ Medical scientists and physical anthropologists were important sources of information on diet, as we have seen in relation to Yarrabah. One of the most outspoken anthropologists was the young William Stanner. For him 'the poverty of native nutrition' was a central feature of 'the brutal reality' of Aboriginal life. In a chapter published in London in 1938 – the first he chose to

47 Brown 2003: 1.

48 Lennon 2000: 96.

49 McGrath 1988: 173. In one of the first studies of Aboriginal diet in 1948, the nutritionist Margaret McArthur found the diet of the Yolgnu in Arnhem Land, where fish were plentiful, was 'well balanced' by international standards. McArthur et al. 2000.

50 McGrath 1988: 27.

51 Bleakley 1928: 32, 9, 10.

52 Western Australia. Royal Commission 1935: 10.

53 Western Australia. Royal Commission 1935: 12.

54 Association for the Protection of Native Races 1930, *Annual Report*: 5.

include in his influential and career-defining *White Man Got No Dreaming* (1979) – he spent a considerable amount of text on food and nutrition, linking both directly to the dying of the race. He declared that ‘the process of extinction still goes on’ and connected this to the fact that most of the ‘detrified and semi-civilised natives’ were ‘badly under-nourished’ and living on ‘what in many cases is a wretchedly inferior diet’. Rations had been intended to supplement traditional hunting but ‘in so many outback areas’ they were all the people received and they were ‘a mockery of an adequate level of diet’ – there was no meat, and in quantity it was enough to encourage people to stay at the ration depot but not enough for ‘one square meal a day’. He was a lone voice calling for research that would find out ‘the extent to which food deficiency is actually to blame for their low condition’.⁵⁵

These were powerful words but claims of ‘starvation’ were not unusual in the Depression – particularly when newspapers were looking for good copy – and historians have disputed the use of the term in relation to the white population.⁵⁶ But these observations cannot be dismissed. Bleakley was a senior government official and he used the term ‘semi-starvation’ in what has been criticised as a ‘bland’ report.⁵⁷ While it was clearly an attempt to get the attention of politicians who ranged from indifferent to hostile, Bleakley’s words implied a threat to life. For Stanner, bad nourishment was the prelude to ‘extinction’. His call for research and his references to food that was inferior as well as insufficient reflected the growth of the science of nutrition and the ‘discovery’ of malnutrition in the interwar period, a process in which South Asia and Africa provided the ‘colonial laboratories’ for British nutritionists.⁵⁸ Certainly the term ‘malnutrition’ was used frequently in these years, particularly in relation to the young and the old. It appears in the National Library of Australia’s newspaper index ‘Trove’ over 6,000 times in the 1930s, compared with less than half that many times in the 1920s. But whereas a range of government and private initiatives addressed the malnutrition of white people, there was a sense of inevitability about Indigenous malnutrition. When A. O. Neville, the Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, told the Friendly Union of Soldiers’ Wives in 1937 that only 7 per cent of ‘cases’ examined had diseases ‘in spite of malnutrition and other drawbacks’ he was declaring it a fact of life.⁵⁹

Aboriginal activists in New South Wales and Victoria used both ‘starvation’ and ‘malnutrition’ frequently and sometimes interchangeably. In New South Wales, unemployment forced many people onto managed insanitary reserves where they

55 Stanner 1979 [1938]: 9–12.

56 Potts 2006: 25–26; Walker 1986.

57 Lydon 2012: 83.

58 Worboys 1988.

59 *The West Australian*, 5 November 1937.

were given inadequate rations instead of the dole.⁶⁰ One of activist Pearl Gibbs' enduring memories of living with her mother at the La Perouse reserve during the Depression was seeing the dole being given to the white unemployed while Aborigines were given rations.⁶¹ It is not surprising that the early 1930s saw the emergence of a coalition of Indigenous activist groups fighting for the rights of Aboriginal people.⁶² During the 1937 Select Committee into the Aborigines Protection Board, William Ferguson, President of the Aborigines' Progressive Association in New South Wales, declared there was 'starvation of aborigines on all reserves'. Malnutrition caused through the supply of insufficient food was 'largely responsible' for the 'alarming' incidence of tuberculosis at Menindie and Bulgandramine mission stations and he called for the closure of both stations.⁶³ For activists, 'starvation' may well have encompassed the authoritarianism and callousness of the Board and some of its station managers.⁶⁴ In the memory of people who were removed to institutions, food was a 'central preoccupation' – not only for its insufficiency and awfulness, but because it was used as a punishment.⁶⁵

Comparative funding of institutions support these claims. In 1905, when missions were registered as Industrial Homes for neglected children in Queensland they received an allowance of 2/6d per week per head compared with 7/- per child paid to children in the State Children's department.⁶⁶ Patricia Jacobs' biography of Western Australian Protector A. O. Neville shows the resistance offered to funding Aboriginal welfare by generations of politicians who were not interested in changing the system from which they benefited.⁶⁷ Accusations of pauperism are particularly disturbing when we consider that workers' wages were channelled into government coffers to help make up the shortfall in funding institutions.⁶⁸

There was no effective regulation of the conditions outlined in the Bleakley and Mosely reports. Bleakley had recommended the introduction of wages but pastoralists lobbied to defeat any reform.⁶⁹ Cattle workers were remunerated in food not wages and though Aboriginal workers expected employers to provide for kin, they were not legally compelled to do so.⁷⁰ While in some ways these patterns replicated those in the south and east in the nineteenth

60 Goodall 1996: chapters 13 and 14.

61 Goodall 1983.

62 Maynard 2007.

63 *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 8 September 1938; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 23 November 1937.

64 Wise 1985: 181.

65 Mellor and Haebich 2002: 201.

66 Haebich 2000: 178.

67 Jacobs 1990.

68 Kidd 1997.

69 Markus 1990: 52–53.

70 McGrath 1988: 123–124.

century, the northern cattle industry was marginal in the interwar period and survived only because of its access to large areas of land and cheap Aboriginal labour. Indeed, it was so precarious that it could not absorb all the Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory.⁷¹ This was the context in which ‘bush bandits’ hid out in rugged localities, spearing cattle for food and, on the coastal areas, in retaliation.⁷² And it was a context in which – despite knowledge of encroachment, loss of water-holes, drought and endemic unemployment – government authorities, who had the monopoly on food, used ‘bush tucker’ as a weapon and a shield. After the terrible death rate that followed four years of drought between 1925 and 1929 – which resulted in the deaths of 85 per cent of Arrernte children at Hermannsburg mission – the NT Chief Protector Dr Cecil Cook blamed the missionaries for not sending out the workers to hunt for bush foods even as visiting scientists and anthropologists declared such food to be ‘absolutely unobtainable’.⁷³

In the 1940s and 1950s, the increased activism of urban Indigenous organisations and the inclusive impulses of the ‘new social order’ saw attempts to improve the quality and availability of food for Indigenous people. In 1944, A. P. Elkin sent four of his anthropology students to north-western New South Wales to investigate the health and well-being of communities, and at the 1948 Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Welfare Authorities he argued for a ‘complete medical and health survey’ of dietary conditions amongst ‘nomadic aborigines’ and those on reserves and stations with a view to ‘correcting dietary deficiencies’. But not a lot came from these initiatives. A 1944 survey by Ronald and Catherine Berndt of conditions on Wave Hill Station that recommended decent medical services and adequate diet was never published.⁷⁴ A new Food Standards Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council was established in 1953, but its focus was on the fitness and productivity of white Australia. A massive campaign was undertaken from 1948 to 1976 to eradicate tuberculosis in Australia but, despite their vast over-representation among sufferers, no effort was made to include Aborigines.⁷⁵ In 1951, a survey by Winifred Wilson of the Australian Institute of Anatomy into the diet of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory found that 84 per cent of the 38 groups surveyed were between 60 and 140 per cent below the recommended levels of Vitamin C and Vitamin A.⁷⁶ In 1957, the Commonwealth Department of Health set down a Ration Scale for Feeding of Aborigines but it was not made mandatory. That year there was another ‘discovery’ of hunger among the

71 Markus 1990: 52–53.

72 McGrath 1988: 173, 16–19.

73 Cited in Brock 2008: 26.

74 Cited in Gray 2014: 15, 18.

75 Farrer 2005: 139; Stylianou 2009.

76 Cited in Brock 2008: 28.

Yarnangu living in and around the Warburton Range. In the midst of debate over atomic testing and increased mining, the Western Australian politician William Grayndler forced an inquiry and, with the Yorta Yorta activist Pastor Doug Nicholls, made a film that brought the urgent need for reform to public attention.⁷⁷

The perspective of families and survivors of the Warburton Range controversy challenge a monochrome interpretation of these events, warning of the potential confusion over 'norms of well-being' associated with remote Australia and the dangers of generalising over such a vast space.⁷⁸ They insist that their circumstances were localised and provoked by drought and that those living in the bush 'had to be like that'. It was a given that nomadic and semi-nomadic people 'lived with a high level of what most non-desert dwellers would consider discomfort and poverty' but their lifestyle was viable and desirable and it needed to be lived 'close to the edge'. Anthropologists Pamela McGrath and David Brooks have argued Yarnangu do not see themselves 'tossed about by colonial forces' but as having determined or actively responded to events.⁷⁹

Focusing on the changes brought by colonisation and how settlers (mis)managed them does not discount the choices that were made, nor undermine the strength and adaptability of Yarnangu. It throws them into relief. At Ernabella, the Pitjatjantjara-Yankantjajara not only survived as peoples, they developed a flourishing arts and crafts industry. Peggy Brock has argued that like many missions and settlements, Ernabella offered protection from violence, shelter and cultural and social interaction.⁸⁰ Many people have positive memories of Ernabella – particularly of Duguid and of teachers Winifred Hilliard and Nancy Shepherd. In a 1988 oral history collection, Nganjinta said of Duguid, 'He really loved us and cared about us and was one of us'.⁸¹ Heather Goodall points out that there are 'no easily identifiable villains' in the history of disease; but the deep structures of thought that underpinned 'everyday culture' permitted needless suffering and death.⁸²

77 McGrath and Brooks 2010.

78 Rowse 1998: 214.

79 McGrath and Brooks 2010: 132.

80 Brock 2008: 29.

81 Mattingly and Hampton 1988: 255.

82 Goodall 1994: 61; Lydon 2012: 26.

Pauperism and racism

What do we know of those deep structures of thought? Why did it not prompt more action to address these conditions? On one level the answer lies in the political insignificance of a small minority. After more than a decade's advocacy, it seemed clear to William Morely, Secretary of the Association for the Protection of Native Races, that governments were moved to action only 'by anticipation of votes which make or unmake them'.⁸³ Morley also considered the churches 'strangely silent', though some worked behind the scenes to stop grazing licences being issued and others engaged in terse internal correspondence with government officials over the inadequate funding of missions.⁸⁴ But churchmen who had to negotiate such funding rarely raised their voices publicly, and if they did it was usually in muted and general terms, particularly in rural areas where clergy's dependence on their wealthy congregations made them chary of getting land-owners and pastoralists offside.⁸⁵ Emergencies evoked a response. After visiting scientists correctly diagnosed scurvy at drought-stricken Hermannsburg in the late 1920s, the mission launched a national appeal and various organisations and individuals rallied to send supplies, including a 'Farmer's son' who wrote to Adelaide's *Advertiser* to organise the transportation of dried fruit and vegetables. A few years later, Melbourne artist Violet Teague and her sister Una raised more than £1,800 to construct an eight-kilometre water supply pipeline from Koperilya Springs to Hermannsburg.⁸⁶

But why was endemic hunger allowed to persist? Writers now and at the time have isolated 'indifference' as the defining politics of this period. In 1938, Stanner noted 'a few vestigial regrets' amid 'a mass of solid indifference'; historian Russell McGregor called his recent history of mid-twentieth-century policy *Indifferent Inclusion*.⁸⁷ But as a form of politics, indifference invites scrutiny. It was certainly a recurring complaint of advocates, most of whom saw government indifference as culpable. Rev. Thomas Webb of the Methodist Mission charged the government with 'criminal indifference' in 1937. Speaking in London the same year, Charles Duguid claimed neglect and indifference so great that it constituted evidence that 'the Australian Government would like to see the aborigines die out'.⁸⁸ Others cast the blame more widely. The anatomist

83 Association for the Protection of Native Races, 1937–8, *Annual Report*: 3.

84 Rev. Albrecht at Hermannsburg long argued that 'natives and cattle will never go together'; he recalled telling a newcomer pastoralist that he would 'declare war on him' and shortly after the government cancelled grazing licences in the Haasts Bluff area and made it a permanent reserve. Leske 1977: 54; Kidd 1997: 66.

85 Williams 2014.

86 Anderson 2014; Hansen 2008.

87 Stanner 1979 [1938]: 2.

88 *Daily Advertiser*, 25 August 1937; *The West Australian*, 6 December 1937.

and anthropologist Frederick Wood Jones blamed Australia 'as a nation' for being like a crook who repeatedly acknowledged that he owed a debt without any intention of repaying it.⁸⁹

But if most white Australians seemed indifferent, they were not passive onlookers. They were implicated in fundamental ways. Most would have accepted that industries benefiting from Indigenous land and labour should not have their profits jeopardised. Most would have agreed that the hunger of white people in the Depression made intolerable any hint of natives being 'carried' – and church newspapers made sure that their reports of missions dispelled any such fear.⁹⁰ The anthropologist and advocate Donald Thomson extends our understandings of the nature of this implication. He discerned forms of engagement open to constructive persuasion but rooted in assumption. Writing in 1938, he declared he was 'quite sure' there was 'a public conscience in this matter' but 'the man in the street', who had no 'technical knowledge of the question', was left 'unsatisfied' and 'a little confused'.⁹¹ Further, most of those who contributed to discussion had 'ready-made solutions' that they were 'determined to force' upon the Aborigine.⁹² His allusion to the firm opinions of interested parties suggests the pervasiveness of assumptions where, at worst, racism fed fears of pauperism that implied Aborigines were undeserving of better.

Even as they supplied evidence of hunger, many reports were couched in the language of pauperism. Despite his many references to the denuded landscape, despite knowing there was not enough work for all Aborigines in the Northern Territory, Bleakley's report was laced with complaints about 'loafers'. In contiguous sentences he noted that drought caused 'serious diminution of the food supplies' but this resulted in the 'desert blacks' drifting to the outstation wells and 'sponging upon the native well-attendants'. 'The tribal practice of sharing food', was an inducement to 'lazy ones to loaf around in the camp in a half-starved state instead of going farther afield and hunting their food in the bush'. And despite his observation that 'camp dependents' were 'in a state of semi-starvation' he did not think the government should provide for them unless 'disproportionate numbers of indigents justified it'.⁹³ The Moseley Commission also combined critique with 'the lazy native' trope. Moseley was particularly critical of missions for encouraging 'the element of laziness, which is inherent

89 Wood Jones 1926: 497–498.

90 For example, the *NSW Presbyterian* declared unequivocally that 'aged, sick and infirm' Aborigines were 'given a sanctuary' on their missions but 'able-bodied adults' were not: 'The charge that missions make the blacks idle and encourage them to become beggars is not true of the missions of the Presbyterian Church.' *NSW Presbyterian*, 26 May 1927.

91 Thomson 1938.

92 Thomson 1938.

93 Bleakley 1928: 33, 10.

in him'.⁹⁴ He found that on most missions the native 'gets his food for nothing' and he, too, recommended bush food as a solution at the same time as being aware of how uncertain it was. The natives should be 'sent to the bush to get their own food' if there was not enough work on the mission; on the next page, he notes that many 'come from the bush because they cannot feed themselves'.⁹⁵ There were deeper anxieties than those concerning laziness. Running through official discourse was a fear of native 'appetite'; 'hunger for white man's food' carried an element of danger associated with long deprivation. Bleakley thought cattle spearkers 'hungered for the beef to which they had become accustomed' and he worried they would 'cultivate an appetite for the white man's luxuries'.⁹⁶ At the 1937 Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, J. A. Carrodus, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, argued in favour of corporal punishment instead of imprisoning Aboriginal offenders because goal would give them 'a taste of the white man's food'.⁹⁷

In their efforts to penetrate popular indifference, humanitarian organisations ran the risk of fanning fears of Aboriginal people as sources of contagion, representing them as threat as well as victim and eroding perceptions of their deservedness.⁹⁸ Newspaper reports of medical opinion demonised as they exposed: all the children on Cowal Creek station in Queensland 'had rotten teeth and swollen festered gums', clear evidence of scurvy according to Archibald Watson, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Adelaide, and he recommended that Cowal Creek be 'wiped out as a pest hole'.⁹⁹ Some reports of 'the problems of malnutrition' among Aboriginal children were more direct, blaming their parents for the 'neglect of mission facilities'.¹⁰⁰ Some thought 'the native system of government' carried within itself 'the seeds of its own decay'. To Rev. John Sexton of South Australia's Aborigines' Friends' Association, the 'inadequacy of the Stone Age system to safeguard the native race' was a factor in population decline.¹⁰¹ The anthropologists Catherine and Ronald Berndt thought some humanitarians believed that Aborigines could not 'adapt themselves to white culture' and that the 'kindest solution' was 'to remain passive and await the extinction of the aborigines as a race'.¹⁰² It was not far from this deep blame to a form of genocide by neglect. Duguid was unusual in publicly accusing the government of wanting to see their demise, but he was not alone in holding such views. In reflecting on the health problems caused

94 Western Australia. Royal Commission 1935: 4, 17.

95 Western Australia. Royal Commission 1935: 17–18.

96 Bleakley 1928: 32–33.

97 *Aboriginal Welfare – Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities*, 1937: 35.

98 *The Aborigines Protector*, 1937: 6, 11.

99 *Courier-Mail*, 30 July 1936.

100 *News* (Adelaide), 6 December 1941.

101 Aborigines' Friends' Association, *Annual Report*, 1933.

102 *Aborigines Protector*, October 1946: 34.

by the rations at Cummeragunga in 1938, the local doctor observed to Norman Tindale that ‘the government may tacitly wish these hybrids to die out – at least they are doing a good job to help them’.¹⁰³ Indeed, the ‘hybrids’ were of great concern in this period because they were not dying out – in the words of Rev. Morely, ‘the half-caste problem’ was ‘a menace to the whole of Australia’.¹⁰⁴

Historicising humanitarianism

How can the historical relationship between philanthropy and humanitarianism help us understand the prejudices and assumptions that permitted so much hunger, ill-health and premature death?

There is a rich historiography of Indigenous humanitarianism in Australia, stretching back to Edmund J. B. Foxcroft’s *Australian Native Policy* (1941). The humanitarian influence was developed in the colonial and state histories of race relations of the 1970s and 1980s, in the histories of interwar feminists, in the synoptic accounts of C. D. Rowley, Henry Reynolds and Bain Attwood and by the ‘new imperial history’ which emerged in the 1990s to trace the flow of humanitarian people and ideas across various sites of the nineteenth-century empire.¹⁰⁵ More recently, global histories of humanitarianism have emerged. In 2009, as part of a series on ‘global institutions’, Routledge published a short history, *Shaping the Humanitarian World* by Peter Walker and Daniel Maxwell. Two substantial works were published in 2011: *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, a collection edited by Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim that extends to the sixteenth century; and Michael Barnett’s *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*.

Of these, Barnett’s *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* has had most impact. The work of a political scientist, its scope and argument has been critiqued by some historians, but it has been widely welcomed as the most substantial long-range history of humanitarianism to date.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, as Rob Skinner and Alan Lester have argued, it is the first ‘serious and comprehensive’ attempt to track the various strands of modern humanitarianism.¹⁰⁷ Barnett posits two defining strands in humanitarianism’s history – one he describes as ‘alchemical’, by which he means it sought to effect change that would remove the causes of suffering; the second he identifies as relief, or providing

103 Cited in Davis 2009: 112.

104 Association for the Protection of Native Races, *Annual Report*, 1938.

105 Foxcroft 1941; Biskup 1973; Reece 1974; Loos 1982; Markus 1990; Lake 1999; Paisley 2000; Holland 2001; Rowley 1970; Reynolds 1998; Attwood 2003; Elbourne 2002; Lester 2009; Laidlaw 2002.

106 See Everill 2011.

107 Skinner and Lester 2012: 730.

emergency aid in times of crisis.¹⁰⁸ He looks to the origins of the alchemical strand in the late eighteenth-century anti-slavery movement but also situates it in contemporary shifts in understandings of charity and the emergence of the movement for moral reform, which sought to alter humankind as well as human society. However, the book does little to draw out the different manifestations of attempts to reform the person from those that sought to reform the polity. Further, given that most of the book is dedicated to the period after the Second World War, it does little to trace the continuing implications of moral reform over time.

I would argue that to understand the long history of humanitarianism more fully we need to situate its origins more centrally in the history of its older near relative – philanthropy. Doing so necessitates delineating the gaze of moral reform from that of social reform, even while recognising that they were closely linked. It is particularly important to acknowledge that at the end of the eighteenth century – the seminal moment in the gestation of modern humanitarianism – moral reform was in the ascendant, and that its concerns were not with alleviating physical suffering. The evangelicals who wanted to stop the suffering of the distant ‘other’ envisaged new ways of dealing with local suffering, as the foundation of the Society for Improving the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the poor in 1795 – mid-point in the ‘years of starvation’ – attests.¹⁰⁹ Providing personal and domestic counsel but not relief, it is testament to the strength of the new wave of ‘culturally evolving assumptions about the responsibility of individuals for their own actions’.¹¹⁰ If empathy and compassion were at the core of modern humanitarianism, the ultimate act of compassion at the end of the eighteenth century was seen as enhancing the individual’s opportunity for personal transformation.

I have argued elsewhere that though the term ‘humanitarianism’ came into increasing use following the first Geneva Convention of 1863, the older term ‘philanthropy’ did not disappear. Only after the Second World War with the rise of professional social work did the term ‘philanthropy’ go out of vogue and a new modern lexicon of ‘help’ emerge. But while the new language reflected new problems, new knowledge, and gave rise to new forms of assistance, these often belied underlying continuities – ‘case work’ was arguably moral reform in professional guise, ‘community work’ hoped to reform individuals by encouraging collective action. And despite shifts in form and approach, the gaze of moral reform remained directed towards the person.¹¹¹

108 Barnett 2011: 10.

109 Owen 1964; Hilton 1988; Thorne 1997; Roberts 2004.

110 Cited in Barnett 2011: 52.

111 See O’Brien 2015.

In the Australian colonies, the continuing interactions between moral reform, social reform and relief were played out in relation to settlers and Indigenous peoples, sharpened by the dream of 'independence'.¹¹² In northern and central Australia in the first half of the twentieth century, Indigenous people who challenged the expectations of moral reform reduced their deservedness for relief and their right to a reformed social polity. Public attitudes towards Indigenous people did begin to shift in the mid-twentieth century, but the cluster of ideas surrounding settler aspirations to independence provided a backdrop to 'indifference', fortifying racist judgement. They help explain why the 'ethical reorientation of hunger' bypassed Indigenous people in Australia and why Australia's health disparities continue to be greater than those of any other settler society.¹¹³

References

Archival source

Cooke, Constance Ternent 1943, 'Impressions of a visit to Ernabella Mission', SRSA GRG 52/32/81, State Records of South Australia.

Newspapers and periodicals

The Aborigines Protector

Courier-Mail

Daily Advertiser

Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate

Newcastle Morning Herald

News (Adelaide)

NSW Presbyterian

The West Australian

¹¹² See O'Brien 2015.

¹¹³ Anderson 2007: 150.

Government publications

Aboriginal Welfare – Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April, 1937, L. F. Johnston, Government Printer, Canberra.

Bleakley, John W. 1928, *The Aborigines and Half-castes of Central Australia and North Australia: Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne.

New South Wales. Royal Commission on Public Charities 1898, *Third Report*.

South Australia. Aborigines Protection Board 1946, *Report of the Aborigines Protection Board for the year ended 30th June, 1946*, Govt Printer, Adelaide.

Western Australia. Royal Commission 1935, *Report of the Royal Commissioner appointed to Investigate, Report, and Advice upon matters in relation to the Condition and Treatment of Aborigines*, Fred. Wm. Simpson, Perth.

Non-government publications

Aborigines' Friends' Association 1938, *Annual Report*, The Association, Adelaide.

Association for the Protection of Native Races 1930–38, *Annual Reports*, The Association, Sydney.

Duguid, Charles 1939, *Ernabella: The Medical Patrol, 1939*, Presbyterian Board of Missions, Melbourne.

———1946, *The Aborigines of Australia: Broadcasts and an Address*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Adelaide.

———1972, *Doctor Goes Walkabout*, Rigby, Adelaide.

Stanner, W. E. H. 1979 [1938], 'The Aborigines', in *White Man Got No Dreaming*, Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Thomson, Donald F. 1938, 'A dying race: plight of the Aborigines', *The West Australian*, 7 May 1938: 5.

Tindale, Norman B. 1940, 'Results of the Harvard-Adelaide Universities Anthropological expedition 1938–9: Distribution of Australian Aboriginal tribes: A field survey', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 64(1): 140–231.

Wood Jones, Frederic 1926, 'The claims of the Australian Aborigines', *Reports of the Australasian Association of the Advancement of Science* 18: 497–519.

Secondary sources

- Anderson, Warwick 2007, 'The colonial medicine of settler states: Comparing histories of Indigenous health', *Health and History* 9(2): 144–154.
- 2014, 'Hermannsburg, 1929: Turning Aboriginal "primitives" into modern psychological subjects', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 50(2): 122–147.
- Attwood, Bain 2003, *Rights for Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.
- Barnett, Michael 2011, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Biskup, Peter 1973, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898–1954*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Brady, M. 1987, 'Leaving the Spinifex: the impact of rations, missions and the atomic tests on the southern Pitjantjatjara', *Records of the South Australian Museum* 20: 35–45.
- Brock, Peggy 2007, 'Nakedness and clothing in early encounters between Aboriginal people of central Australia, missionaries and anthropologists', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8(1), at: muse-jhu-edu. wwwproxy0.library.unsw.edu.au/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v008/8.1brock.html, accessed 12 October 2015.
- 2008, 'Two-way food: bush tucker and whitefella's food', *Journal of Australian Studies* 32(1): 19–32.
- Broome, Richard 2002, "'No one thinks of us": The Framlingham Aboriginal community in the Great Depression', in *Through Depression and War: The United States and Australia*, Peter Bastien and Roger Bell (eds), Australian-American Fulbright Association, Sydney: 62–81.
- Brown, Eileen Kampakuta 2003, *An Anangu-Aboriginal Love Story: My Young Life*, Nyiri Publications, Murray Bridge, SA.
- Davis, Fiona 2009, 'Calculating colour: Whiteness, anthropological research and the Cummeragunga Aboriginal Reserve, May and June 1938', in *Creating White Australia*, Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (eds), Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Edwards, Bill 2012, *Mission in the Musgraves: Ernabella Mission 1937–73, a Place of Relationships*, Uniting Church Historical Society, Adelaide.

- Elbourne, Elizabeth 2002, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain 1799–1853*, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal.
- Everill, Bronwyn 2011, 'Review of *Humanitarianism and Humanitarian Intervention*, (review no. 1141)', www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1141, accessed 15 July 2015.
- Farrer, Keith 2005, *To Feed a Nation: A History of Australian Food Science and Technology*, CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.
- Foxcroft, Edmund JB 1941, *Australian Native Policy: Its history, especially in Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Gee, P. 2003, 'The European history of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands' in *A Biological Survey of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands of South Australia, 1991–2001*, AC Robinson, PB Copley, PD Canty, LM Baker and BJ Nesbitt (eds), Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia, Adelaide.
- Goodall, Heather 1983, 'Pearl Gibbs: Some memories', *Aboriginal History* 7(1): 20–22.
- 1994, 'Colonialism and catastrophe: Contested memories of nuclear testing and measles epidemics at Ernabella', in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- 1996, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Gray, Geoffrey 2014, '"We know the Aborigines are dying out": Aboriginal people and the quest to ensure their survival, Wave Hill Station, 1944', *Health and History* 16(1): 1–24.
- Haebich, Anna 2000, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, WA.
- Hansen, Christine 2008, 'Two way flow: the Koperilya springs pipeline boomerang', National Museum of Australia, Collection Symposium 2008, Showcases 1, www.nma.gov.au/audio/transcripts/collections/NMA_showcasesI_20080530.html, accessed 20 September 2014.
- Hilliard, Winifred 1968, *The People In Between: The Pitjantjatjara People of Ernabella*, Hodder and Stoughton, London.
- Hilton, Boyd 1988, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785–1865*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Holland, Alison 2001, 'Wives and mothers like ourselves: Exploring white women's intervention in the politics of race, 1920s–1940s', *Australian Historical Studies* 32(117): 292–310.
- Jacobs, Pat 1990, *Mister Neville: A Biography*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, WA.
- Kerin, Rani 2011, *Doctor Do-Good: Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Advancement 1930s–1970s*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne.
- Kidd, Rosalind 1997, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs – the Untold Story*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Kimber, R. G. 1986, *Man from Arltunga: Walter Smith Australian Bushman*, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, WA.
- Konishi, Shino 2010, 'Idle men: The eighteenth-century roots of the Indigenous indolence myth', in *Passionate Histories: Memory and Indigenous Histories*, Aboriginal History Monographs no. 23, Ann Curthoys, Frances Peters-Little and John Docker (eds), ANU E Press, Canberra: 99–122.
- Laidlaw, Zoe 2002, 'Integrating metropolitan, colonial and imperial histories: The Aborigines Select Committee of 1835–37', in *Writing Colonial History: Comparative Perspectives*, Julie Evans and Tracey Banivanua-Mar (eds), University of Melbourne, Carlton.
- 2007, 'Heathens, slaves and Aborigines: Thomas Hodgkin's critique of missions and anti-slavery', *History Workshop Journal* 64: 133–161.
- Lake, Marilyn 1999, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Lennon, Jessie 2000, *I'm the One that Know this Country*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Leske, Everard (ed.) 1977, *Hermannsburg: A Vision and a Mission*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide.
- Lester, Alan 2009, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain*, Routledge, London.
- Loos, Noel 1982, *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier, 1861–1897*, The Australian National University Press, Canberra.
- 1991, 'From church to state: The Queensland government take-over of Anglican missions in North Queensland', *Aboriginal History* 15: 73–85.

- Love, R. J. B. 1936, *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today: Life and Adventure among a Tribe of Savages in North-Western Australia*, Blackie and Son, London.
- Lydon, Jane 2012, *A Flash of Recognition: Photography and the Emergence of Indigenous Rights*, NewSouth, Sydney.
- McArthur, Margaret, Frederick McCarthy and Ray Specht 2000, 'Nutrition studies (1948) of nomadic Aborigines in Arnhem Land, northern Australia', *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 9(3): 215–223.
- McGrath, Ann 1988, *Born in the Cattle: Aborigines in Cattle Country*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- McGrath, Pamela Faye and David Brooks 2010, 'Their Darkest Hour: The films and photographs of William Grayden and the history of the "Warburton Range Controversy" of 1957', *Aboriginal History* 34: 115–141.
- McGregor, Russell 2011, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Macintyre, Stuart and Anna Clark 2003, *The History Wars*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- McKenzie, Maisie 1969, *The Road to Mowanjum*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Markus, Andrew 1990, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Mattingly, Christobel and Ken Hampton 1988, *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Maynard, John 2007, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Indigenous Activism*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Mellor, Donna and Anna Haebich 2002, *Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation*, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- Nettlebeck, Amanda and Rob Foster 2012, 'Food and governance on the settler frontiers of colonial Australia and Canada', *Aboriginal History* 36: 21–41.
- Newling, Jacqui 2011, 'Dining with strangeness: European foodways on the Eora frontier', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 13: 27–48.
- O'Brien, Anne 2011, 'Humanitarianism and reparation', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 12(2). [dx.doi.org/10.1353/cch.2011.0016](https://doi.org/10.1353/cch.2011.0016).
- 2015, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke.

- Owen, David 1964, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Paisley, Fiona 2000, *Loving Protection?: Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919–39*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Potts, David 2006, *The Myth of the Great Depression*, Scribe, Melbourne.
- Raftery, Judith 2006, *Not Part of the Public: Non-Indigenous Policies and Practices and the Health of Indigenous South Australians 1836–1973*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Reece, R. H. W. 1974, *Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in the 1830s and 1840s*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Reynolds, Henry 1981, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria.
- 1998, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Roberts, M. J. D. 2004, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Associations and Moral Reform in England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Robinson, A. C., P. B. Copley, P. D. Canty, L. M. Baker and B. J. Nesbitt (eds), *A Biological Survey of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands of South Australia, 1991–2001*, Department for Environment and Heritage, South Australia, Adelaide.
- Rowley, C. D. 1970, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic.
- Rowse, Tim 1998, *White Flour, White Power: From Rations to Citizenship in Central Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Santich, Barbara 2002, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Skinner, Rob and Alan Lester 2012, 'Humanitarianism and empire: New research agendas', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40(5): 729–747.
- Stanner, W. E. H. 1977, 'The history of indifference thus begins', *Aboriginal History* 1(1): 3–26.
- Stylianou, Marianna 2009, '"A scandal which must be corrected": Reconsidering the success of the tuberculosis campaign', *Health and History* 11(2): 21–41.

- Thorne, Susan 1997, 'The conversion of Englishmen and the conversion of the world inseparable', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler (eds), University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Trudinger, David 2004, 'Converting Salvation: Protestant Missionaries in Central Australia in the 1930s and 1940s', PhD thesis, The Australian National University.
- Vernon, Michael 2007, *Hunger: A Modern History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Walker, Robin 1986, 'Mr Lang's dole: The administration of food relief in New South Wales 1930–32', *Labour History* 51: 70–82.
- Williams, John 2014, *Open Door: A Personal Memoir of Dilys Williams*, Australian eBook Publisher, Acacia Ridge, Qld.
- Wise, Tigger 1985, *The Self-made Anthropologist: A Life of A. P. Elkin*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Worboys, Michael 1988, 'The discovery of colonial malnutrition between the wars', in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, David Arnold (ed.), Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Young, Diana 2010, 'Dingo scalping and the frontier economy in the north-west of South Australia', in *Indigenous Participation in Australian Economies*, Ian Keen (ed.), ANU E Press, Canberra: 91–108.

Special Section: Aboriginal War Service

Edited by Allison Cadzow, Kristyn Harman and Noah Riseman

Introduction: Diversifying the black diggers' histories

Noah Riseman

When I started researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service history in 2004, this was a very niche academic area. David Huggonson did some work in the 1980s and 1990s on the First World War, and Robert Hall's canonical texts *The Black Diggers* (1989) and *Fighters from the Fringe* (1995) had set a dominant narrative of the First and Second World War experiences: notwithstanding regulations explicitly prohibiting enlistment of persons 'not substantially of European origin or descent', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people managed to circumvent the rules and served in both conflicts. For those men and women enlisted in regular units, it was largely an egalitarian experience – often for the first times in their lives – yet they returned home to continuing discrimination. Huggonson estimated about 400 Aboriginal men served in the First World War; Hall estimated approximately 3,000 Aboriginal people and 850 Torres Strait Islanders formally served in the Second World War, not to mention the hundreds more who served in informal, labouring capacities in remote northern Australia.¹ Some local histories enhanced this dominant narrative of participation, including the works of scholars such as Heather Goodall, Kay Saunders and Elizabeth Osborne.² Now the estimates have increased to at least 1,000 and 5,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel in the First and Second World Wars respectively. These men and women came from diverse cultural, educational, linguistic, regional and employment backgrounds.

1 Huggonson 1993, 1989; Hall 1997, 1995.

2 Goodall 1987; Saunders 1995; Osborne 1997.

Until the 2000s, it was not solely academics who had focused their research on other areas of Indigenous and/or military history; so, too, was there little public interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. Yet there was a growing movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defence, spearheaded primarily by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans. As one Aboriginal person I spoke to early in my doctoral research pointed out to me, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been well aware of the histories of their men and women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and its predecessors. Indeed, several Indigenous publications told the histories of their communities in the military.³ It was non-Indigenous people who knew little or nothing about it. That point has always stuck with me over the years both when researching and writing in this area.

In the 2000s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups pushed for greater recognition and were successful in numerous endeavours: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association led Perth's 2001 Anzac Day march; Honouring Indigenous War Graves was founded in 2005 and has been performing ceremonies at the gravesites of deceased Aboriginal servicemen and women across Western Australia; in 2006, Aunty Dot Peters lobbied Victoria's Returned and Services League (RSL) to sponsor a commemorative service at Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance during Reconciliation Week; since 2007 the Department of Veterans' Affairs has sponsored services across the major capital cities; 2007 also marked the first annual Coloured Diggers March in Redfern on Anzac Day. Since the 2010s, there has been a growing movement for memorials to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders military service. Adelaide's memorial was completed in 2013 and Sydney dedicated a sculpture commemorating Indigenous military service in March 2015. Indigenous military service history has also gradually infiltrated Australia's popular consciousness through cultural events such as the play *Black Diggers*, premiering in Sydney and Brisbane in 2014 and touring Australia in 2015. There is much greater media interest in the area too – including SBS programs like *Living Black*, NITV specials on Anzac Day and news features on the ABC and local radio in particular. There are resources available online through the Australian War Memorial, the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and other websites.

Accompanying the growing popular interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military history, historians, too, have focused more on this topic over the last decade.⁴ This growing body of work from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous historians has expanded the dominant narratives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service, addressing issues including Vietnam War

3 Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Kartinyeri 1996; Bray et al. 1995.

4 See Riseman 2014.

service, the links between military service and activism in the interwar period, Aboriginal women on the homefront and contextualising Australia's experience within other Anglo-settler societies. Research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service continues both at the grassroots level through the work of public historians, and through major initiatives such as the Australian Research Council Linkage project 'Serving Our Country: A history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Defence of Australia', in partnership with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Australian War Memorial, the National Archives of Australia and the Department of Defence.

Aboriginal History was early on a pioneer in highlighting this area of research, publishing a special issue in 1992 on Aboriginal military service as the field was in its infancy.⁵ As Australia commemorates the centenary of the First World War, it is timely that this special section of *Aboriginal History* continues this investigation into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military history. More importantly, the articles in this special section focus on the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel and their families. The articles expand our understanding that wars' impact on Indigenous communities was neither uniform nor even. Each of the authors in this collection approaches the topic of Indigenous military service through different angles previously unexplored, and as such they provide new understandings of the diverse ways that military service affected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

First in this collection is John Maynard's article on Aboriginal participation in the South African Anglo-Boer War. For years, commemorations of Indigenous military service have assumed their participation in all conflicts from the Anglo-Boer War through to the present, yet it is only in the last few years that historians have been able to point to concrete evidence of Aboriginal men's participation in the Anglo-Boer War. As Maynard argues, much of the speculation from the past few years about numbers of Aboriginal trackers, as well as the allegation some were left behind in South Africa, contains grains of truth, but are actually exaggerated claims. Even so, Maynard demonstrates the ways in which policymakers, non-Indigenous Australians and Aboriginal people positioned military service as an opportunity with different meanings attached for each advocate.

The theme of mateship underpins Philippa Scarlett's article about both the breadth of Aboriginal servicemen's backgrounds, as well as her complex evaluation of an 'egalitarian' experience. Scarlett draws on service records and newspaper articles to demonstrate that whilst current discourse tries to include Aboriginal diggers in the Anzac legend of 'mateship', in actuality they were

5 *Aboriginal History*, vol. 16, part 1, 1992.

not seen as equal. Instead, supposed equality on the front was still an exercise in white power, willing to elevate Indigenous Australians overseas, but just as willing to reposition them as inferior upon their return to civilian society. This analysis offers new insights into a recurring query among histories of Aboriginal people in the First World War: why prejudice and discrimination endured after the war, even amongst the ex-services' community.

Tasmanian Aboriginal participation in the First World War and the returned servicemen's post-war experiences are, as Andrea Gerrard and Kristyn Harman argue, quite distinct from the experiences of those from other states. Because popular discourse contended there were no more Tasmanian Aboriginal people (although the soldiers were recognised as being of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent) and there was no state protection board, Aboriginal veterans were not necessarily denied benefits as in the other states. Moreover, a complex situation arose through the intersections of a colour blind repatriation regime and a public that still stigmatised so-called 'half-castes' for their Aboriginal heritage. Gerrard and Harman argue that amidst these intersections, the problems Tasmanian Aboriginal people encountered with the repatriation regime had more to do with structural issues including distance and practical access, some of which were legacies of colonisation, rather than racial discrimination per se.

Jessica Horton's research addresses the important issue of repatriation benefits after the First World War, focusing on the Gunditjmara in western Victoria. It has long been understood that government policies obstructed Aboriginal access to benefits including soldier settlement, and the tale of Lake Condah Aboriginal Reserve being closed and given to non-Indigenous soldier settlers is a prominent example. Yet, as Horton argues, using letters from Aboriginal returned servicemen and their families, the Gunditjmara resisted the Aborigines Protection Board's attempts to curtail their entitlements and in some cases were successful in securing their benefits. Her article not only devotes significant attention to Aboriginal agency and how returned servicemen positioned their veterans' status, but also challenges the notion of complete Aboriginal powerlessness in the face of government oppression.

Finally, Kristyn Harman looks at gender and race relations in the Second World War through the prism of the Aborigines Uplift Society's national comforts auxiliary. This organisation recruited white women to 'adopt' Aboriginal soldiers and to send items such as socks to Aboriginal men on the front, and they in turn corresponded with the women in Australia. Harman's analysis of the letters and newspaper articles reveals ways in which even from far away, Aboriginal soldiers could challenge white women's (mis)perceptions of Aboriginal Australians. Harman also addresses the role that Aboriginal women

played across a range of Australian comfort funds, including a focus on the race relations with white women and authorities near Cummeragunja in New South Wales.

All the articles in this special section offer new insights into the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the armed forces, extending from the South African Anglo-Boer War through to the Second World War, contributing to the increasingly complex and nuanced readings of Indigenous military service that are emerging in this growing field of academic inquiry. They also challenge our understandings of how Indigenous Australians coped during the aftermath of the First World War, highlighting in particular the necessity to focus on specific times and places in order to understand better local specificities and regional variations. It was not simply a common story that extended across the nation. These articles show the value and importance of in-depth research and analysis in this area, to deepen our knowledge of the history, rather than being content to trot out the same statements that circulate about Indigenous Australians' service. There are as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of military service as there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and this special section continues to fill those gaps in academic histories and Australians' popular memories of those experiences. Lest we forget.

References

Aboriginal History 16(1), 1992.

Bray, George, Kenny Laughton and Pat Forster (eds) 1995, *Aboriginal Ex-Servicemen of Central Australia*, IAD Press, Alice Springs.

Goodall, Heather 1987, 'Not such a respected soldier: The impact of World War I on Aborigines in New South Wales', *Teaching History* 21(4): 3–6.

Hall, Robert 1995, *Fighters from the Fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

———1997, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, second edition, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Huggonson, David 1989, 'The dark diggers of the AIF', *The Australian Quarterly* 61(3): 352–357.

———1993, 'Aboriginal diggers of the 9th Brigade. First AIF-Australia. Army. Australian Imperial Force, (1914/1921)', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 79(3–4): 214–225.

Jackomos, Alick and Derek Fowell 1993, *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam*, Victoria Press, Melbourne.

Kartinyeri, Doreen 1996, *Ngarrindjeri ANZACS*, South Australian Museum and Raukkan Council, Adelaide.

Osborne, Elizabeth 1997, *Torres Strait Islander Women and the Pacific War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

Riseman, Noah 2014, 'The rise of Indigenous military history', *History Compass* 12(12): 901–911.

Saunders, Kay 1995, 'Inequalities of sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour in northern Australia during the Second World War', *Labour History* 69(2): 131–148.

‘Let us go’ ... it’s a ‘Blackfellows’ War’: Aborigines and the Boer War

John Maynard

There remains much mystery, misconception and myth surrounding the history of Aboriginal involvement with the South African Anglo-Boer War (hereafter Boer War). Unquestionably, Aboriginal men did go to South Africa and play a part, but the numbers, identity and background of these men remains sketchy. The war in South Africa remains itself somewhat the forgotten war. Jim Davidson has reflected that its memory ‘slipped from public consciousness relatively quickly ... Collective Memory of the Boer War was soon swamped by the Great War’.¹ In this study I reflect on some of the known and unknown stories and experiences of Aboriginal people during the Boer War. What were the living circumstances of Aboriginal people in Australia leading up to and during the Boer War and did this have any impact? Did Aboriginal people and communities support the war in South Africa? What do we know of the Aboriginal men that went to South Africa? Why were they there? How did they get there and did they get home? Whilst acknowledging the lack of archival sources,² I will address or reveal some of the complexities of these issues through this article.

I wish to acknowledge the groundbreaking work and perseverance of a number of scholars and amateur enthusiasts including Dale Kerwin, Philippa Scarlett, Colin Renshaw, Bill Woolmore and Peter Bakker amongst others who have conducted work over many years trying to piece together the largely fragmented and previously missing place of Aboriginal people associated with the war

1 Davidson 2015: 25.

2 ‘The relative paucity and diffusion of official Australian records of the war was made worse when many records were lost or deliberately destroyed, not through any fears that official secrets and methods might become known, but because the records concerned seemingly mundane matters relating to a conflict which seemed minor and trivial in the wake of the First World War.’ Wilcox 2000: 9.

in South Africa. It is hoped as a result of this article that I have added a few more pieces to the puzzle and that over the next three years of my involvement with the Australian Research Council-funded 'Serving Our Country: A history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the defence of Australia' project,³ further knowledge and discoveries may continue to fill the gaps in our understanding of Aboriginal people and the Boer War. In that context this article is simply a precursor to a wider and hopefully more revealing study in the future.⁴

Patriotism, dissent and opportunity

As would be seen in 1914, patriotism and excitement clearly gripped the Australian public's imagination during the Boer War. The *Brisbane Courier* reported, 'One of the largest public meetings ever held took place in the [Sydney] Town Hall'⁵ at which the NSW Premier the Hon. John See and the Leader of the Opposition Charles Lee gave stirring addresses to a highly supportive crowd. A resolution was endorsed:

That this meeting of citizens, assembled under the auspices of the Australian Natives Association, takes the opportunity of expressing its entire confidence in the British Government in the course they are pursuing in connection with the war in South Africa, and also in the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial federated army engaged therein.⁶

People were clearly caught up in the excitement of the moment, and from the beginning 'men left Australia through rapturous crowds' and as one observer remarked: 'An epidemic of war fever set in'.⁷ There was no consideration of whether the Boer War was just, or in the interest of the Australian colonies. Thomas Pakenham in his 1979 epic study of the Boer War concluded that for the Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders, 'blood was thicker than water' and they all 'felt a natural solidarity with the mother country'.⁸ But Pakenham also raised the issue that the stampede to support Britain was at odds with the

3 See website for more details: www.ourmobobserved.com.

4 The 'Serving Our Country' project is based at The Australian National University with the National Centre for Indigenous Studies and the Australian Centre for Indigenous History. The study is examining the historical contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian defence and auxiliary services from the Boer War to 2000. It draws upon community consultation meetings including oral history recording sessions around Australia and archival research to tell a more comprehensive history of Indigenous defence service. The project includes several partner organisations including the Department of Defence, Department of Veterans' Affairs, National Archives of Australia, Australian War Memorial, Australian Catholic University and the University of Newcastle.

5 *The Brisbane Courier*, 11 February 1902: 5.

6 *The Brisbane Courier*, 11 February 1902: 5.

7 Judd and Surridge 2003: 79.

8 Pakenham 1998: 249.

very tangible connection the colonials had with the Boers and argues that they 'were of the same class. They had the shared experiences: cattle ranching, gold-mining, making fortunes and losing them again'.⁹ Any sentiment for the battler and the 'fair go' was clearly lost in the minds of many Australians at the time. Henry Reynolds has raised these very issues and revealed that there were some Australian politicians prepared to question 'why the colony's soldiers should be expected to "butcher those with whom they have no quarrel and who they knew nothing about"'.¹⁰ Charlie McDonald, a Labor politician in Queensland, was adamant that the war in South Africa was 'the most unjust war England has ever taken part in'.¹¹ But in all of this excitement and controversy, voices of dissent were in the minority, and what did the Boer War mean to Aboriginal people and communities?

A mark of Aboriginal involvement later with the First World War was a widespread demonstrated sense of patriotism within Aboriginal communities, with many supporting the war effort through contributions to war fund appeals.¹² This support was girded by a belief (although in hindsight on the First World War clearly misguided) that military service might also make an impact on improving the social, political and economic well-being of Aboriginal people, their families and communities. The patriotism displayed by Aboriginal communities during the Great War was also evident during the Boer War. A South Australian journalist writing at the start of the First World War drew explicit parallels, writing of how when the:

war was in progress in South Africa a few years ago there was great excitement among the blacks on the mission. That was more a 'blackfellows' war. Our soldiers had to crawl on their hands and knees and lie in ambush for the enemy, and the enemy did the same. During the Boer war, the old men at Point McLeay used to come up from their camps to meet the mail with the newspapers and hear the news ... I remember when the news came through of some of the mistakes made by the British troops in South Africa because they were not accustomed to the style of warfare adopted, the old men felt that they would be equal to the occasion and in their native language they would say, 'Let us go.' They seemed to think that they would be able to do better, because they were more accustomed to sneaking on the game.¹³

During the Boer War there were opportunities for those with initiative. Legendary Aboriginal athlete and boxer Jerry Jerome was certainly one who took advantage of the situation. During the South African War he 'was making

9 Packenham 1998: 249.

10 Reynolds 2010: 56.

11 Newton 2014: 23.

12 Maynard 2015: 8.

13 *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 28 August 1914: 9.

£2 a day by breaking horses for the military authorities'.¹⁴ Another Aboriginal horse handler, Alfred Polson, served in South Africa. Polson, an Aboriginal man from Taree on the mid north coast of New South Wales, had been the horse handler and carriage driver for the local Taree District doctor Neville Howse. When the young doctor 'enlisted in the New South Wales Medical Corps to go to the Boer War, Polson went with him as his batman [a soldier assigned to an officer as a servant]'.¹⁵ Howse and Polson were present at a clash between British and Boer forces near Vredefort in 1900:

[A]t the height of the fighting as a line of horsemen charged toward the Boer position, Neville Howse noticed a young trumpeter fall from his horse, wounded in the foremost line. He was some two hundred metres from Howse when he cried out, clutched his stomach, fell from his horse and was on the ground writhing in agony. Despite the enemy fire being extremely heavy, Howse did not hesitate to mount his white stallion held in readiness by Alfred Polson of Taree. Howse galloped out furiously onto the battlefield to rescue the wounded trumpeter. On his way there, his horse was shot from under him by a Boer bullet or two. Nevertheless, he continued coolly on foot, reached the wounded man who was still alive and, still under severe crossfire, dressed the wounds, particularly a serious wound of the bladder. Howse then lifted the man and carried him in a series of short rushes back to the British line and to safety ...¹⁶

Alfred Polson in his supporting batman role for Howse had been on hand to witness his friend's incredible bravery. Howse subsequently became the first Australian to be awarded the highest recognition for courage in the British military, the Victoria Cross. Emeritus Professor John Ramsland, who has conducted historical research within the Manning Valley over many years, indicated that Polson was most likely Aboriginal and that Aboriginal descendants remain convinced of his ties to them.

Why did they want to go?

In analysing Aboriginal involvement with the Boer War it is important to recognise that the freedom, movement and enterprise of Aboriginal people during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was far greater than many people think. In that context, Aboriginal opportunities to go and fight in South Africa did not suffer the same level of opposition and restriction that was in place by 1915. The changing environment and tighter control over Aboriginal lives began to accelerate after 1910 and particularly so during the First World War. The time period of the Boer War is reflective of Aboriginal experiences

¹⁴ *The Leader*, 26 June 1915: 20.

¹⁵ Ramsland 2014: 6.

¹⁶ Ramsland 2014: 6–7.

nationally between 1870 and 1910. The general living conditions and freedom of Aboriginal people during these decades are complex and not uniform, but what can be ascertained quite clearly is that in many areas of the continent Aboriginal people had re-established themselves on country and through a combination of traditional methods of subsistence and European farming had become very successful on land. As Heather Goodall has explained, 'Aborigines had resettled small patches of their traditional lands and demanded inalienable, freehold title'.¹⁷ This was certainly the case across areas of New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland. These were not the heavily congested and tightly controlled reserves of the 1930s, but in most instances independent farms with one and two Aboriginal families prospering on areas of land encompassing 40 to 50 acres which they had cleared, fenced, cropped, built homesteads on and grazed livestock. Records indicate that Aboriginal people were winning blue ribbons in local agricultural shows, and in many cases clearing in excess of £100 annually from their labour.¹⁸



Figure 1: 'Men of the Fourth Queensland Contingent, who returned to Brisbane last week' reproduced in the pictorial supplement of *The Queenslander*, 17 August 1901, by W. T. Farrell, Tosca Portrait Studios. The Aboriginal soldier is visible on the right of the photo.

Source: Copy from original photo, courtesy of AIATSIS.

¹⁷ Goodall 1988: 32; 1996: 155.

¹⁸ Maynard 2007: 61–63.

Aboriginal people were effectively running their own lives and these 'reserves were not an instrument of segregation, as is often assumed, but instead reflected an Aboriginal Land Rights movement'.¹⁹ Initially, the New South Wales Protection Board had operated with a non-interventionist approach, but by 1910 Board policy was changing dramatically and beginning to exert its power over Aboriginal lives.²⁰

It was during this period of infamy that all the gains that Aboriginal people had made began to be wound back. Restrictions were placed over Aboriginal children's access to schools, hospitals were segregated and a sudden acceleration in removing Aboriginal kids from their families was applied in earnest:

From 1911 to 1927, around 50 per cent of the existing Aboriginal reserve land was lost to closer or 'soldier' settlement. Most of the land lost in this second dispossession was the most fertile farming land of the south-west of the state and particularly that of the central and north coasts.²¹

Sue Johnson has estimated that in the later stages of the nineteenth century, around 81 per cent of Aboriginal people in New South Wales had been self-sufficient.²² It was during this period of success that Aboriginal men had stepped forward to enlist in the Boer War.

It is important to understand that when the Boer War broke out Australia had not yet federated, and even after Federation there were no official restrictions on Aboriginal people enlisting with the Australian military until 1909. The introduction of the Universal Training Scheme in the *Defence Act 1903–1909* restricted inclusion to the military to men being 'substantially of European descent'.²³ In fact, before and during the Boer War 'there were Indigenous Australians who were actually in units within Australia' and during the South African campaign more Aboriginal men had come forward 'from rural areas to join up as regular soldiers, or some units actually took over a tracker with them, and they came back with the unit'.²⁴

The question remains why did these Aboriginal men want to go? Were they simply caught up in the excitement of the moment or was there something else underlying their desire to fight? Masculinity forms a major focus of the Boer War. But where did this situate the Aboriginal man? David Huggonson reveals the level of the Aboriginal challenge, stating that 'the majority of the

19 Goodall 1988: 32.

20 Goodall 1988: 32.

21 Goodall 1988: 32.

22 Johnstone 1970: 76.

23 Hall 1997: 2.

24 'Rare photo of Indigenous involvement in the Boer War – Gary Oakley interview', AIATSIS, aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/rare-photo-indigenous-involvement-boer-war.

general public saw them as a dying race and as a subject for ridicule'.²⁵ The Boer War was both fought as a 'man's war' and covered through the press as a man's war. This may have also played a part in encouraging Aboriginal men to step forward and break the shackles that had for so long portrayed them as useless, worthless and less than men. As Patricia O'Brien has illustrated, historians themselves have been complicit in reinforcing and perpetuating some of these long ingrained misconceptions:

These writers were influenced by a derogatory stereotype of the Aboriginal male which had been common in early colonial literature in Australia and was (and remains) a prominent colonial stereotype of the 'black man' applied in many other theatres across the globe.²⁶

Victoria Haskins has revealed that the 'role of Aboriginal men within their families and the broader Aboriginal communities was denied, displaced, and destroyed by the state'.²⁷ Clearly some Aboriginal men would have wanted the chance to prove that they could ride and shoot as well as any white man and track better than anyone on the planet. This was an opportunity for redemption and reclaiming their space of respect both within their own families and communities as well as the wider population.

Certainly and somewhat ironically from an Aboriginal perspective, as the twentieth century unfolded with the establishment of more heavily controlled and debilitating government Aboriginal reserves, a similar program had been earlier instigated against the Boers.²⁸ The repercussions of the collision in South Africa over wealth and power did not preclude targeting women, children and the innocent. The British adopted a 'scorched earth' strategy and established concentration camps to confine the Boer population and their families as a means of breaking resistance (later remaining a model for Nazi Germany to follow).²⁹ Discussions in British Parliament highlighted the 'alarming rate of mortality amongst the women and children detained there'. Admissions revealed that some 63,127 people were detained and that the death rate over a year was estimated to be at 12 per cent.³⁰ After the war the magnitude of that loss 'would show that 27,927 Boers almost all of them women and children – had died in the camps, more than twice the number of Boer Soldiers killed in combat'.³¹

25 Huggonson 1993.

26 O'Brien 1998: 321.

27 Haskins 2003: 109.

28 Huggonson 1990: 20.

29 Hochschild 2011: 33.

30 Pakenham 1998: 508.

31 Hochschild 2011: 35.

Barriers, offers, refusals and participation

There is evidence suggesting a number of requests and offers were made by or for Aboriginal trackers and volunteers for South Africa. For example, Don and Bev Elphick's history of Warangesda mission at Darlington Point records that five Aboriginal men volunteered for the Boer War. They wanted to 'go with the "Bushmans Contingent" to South Africa as scouts'.³² But their offer was rejected by the NSW Aborigines Protection Board: 'these five Australians were ignored, whilst the white colonials were queuing up to become involved in this "volunteers only" war'.³³ A Noongar man Fred Mead complained to the press of unfair treatment:

Sir. – I wish you to make known that there are a number of half-castes in this colony who would gladly serve under the King's colours in South Africa if they were given the chance. I volunteered once, but was not accepted.³⁴

The Chief Protector of Aboriginal people in Queensland, Archibald Meston, took a completely differing approach to that of the Protection Board in New South Wales. Meston wrote to the Queensland Premier offering to:

organise and lead a small body of fifty bushmen, expert horsemen and dead shots to accompany any further troops sent from Queensland to South Africa. The body, Mr. Meston points out, could act as guerrilla fighters and scouts, his opinion being that a properly organised and reliable body of scouts has been the most serious necessity in the war from the beginning. The Premier has, it is understood, replied to Mr. Meston to the effect that the offer has been referred to the defence force authorities.³⁵

Meston's correspondence does not stipulate or identify that these bushmen were to be Aboriginal. However, he clearly did not forget his offer, as 16 years later during the Great War he sent through a similar offer to the Queensland Minister for Defence offering up '50 to 100 North Queensland [A]boriginal warriors to the front':

You may confidently accept my assurance that the [A]boriginals selected by me are capable of doing useful and creditable work as scouts and hand grenade throwers and that their courage will not fail them when called upon to face hand-to-hand combat with weapons specially made and suitable for their peculiar system of fighting.³⁶

Meston's offer was turned down.

32 Elphick and Elphick 2004: 26; see also Scarlett 2013b.

33 Elphick and Elphick 2004: 26.

34 *The West Australian*, 28 November 1901: 5, quoted in Bakker 2015.

35 *The Brisbane Courier*, 21 December 1899: 5–6, cited in Kerwin 2013: 6.

36 *The Cairns Post*, 29 July 1915: 2.

Another interesting angle to Aboriginal involvement with the Boer War is that there were experienced Aboriginal men who had already fought a war wearing a uniform. The much-feared Native Police had been heavily involved in the 'dispersal' of Aboriginal people during the Australian frontier war period. The often described 'state of war'³⁷ between settlers and Aboriginal people had intensified and fluctuated in differing locations and time periods across the continent. One Professor Rentoul in a letter to *The Queenslander* in 1891 had stated that the 'quite ruthless and matter-of-fact way in which the "dispersing of the blacks" is described to you is a distinct and ugly fact'.³⁸ Another earlier letter to the editor in *The Queenslander* in 1866 could not have been more explicit: 'a war of extermination is the only policy to pursue'.³⁹ The Native Police of Queensland in the late nineteenth century were great shots, excellent horsemen, had proven highly effective, served under commanders and responded well to orders, and were proven killers in the field. Richards points out that today the clinical and trained Native Police would be likened to a 'Special Forces' unit: 'the Native Police should be regarded as a military force, albeit an odd or irregular one. Just as it was an exceptional police force, it was an exceptional military force'.⁴⁰

It is possible that some of these men may well have stepped forward to join the military as either soldiers or trackers for the chance to serve in South Africa. They certainly fit the criteria as expressed by Lord Kitchener's request for men in 1902, that besides an ability to 'ride and shoot', 'tracking ability by applicants will be a recommendation'.⁴¹

A telegram from the Police Magistrate of Burketown in Queensland sought to clarify whether 'half-castes' were acceptable as recruits within the Imperial Bushmen's Contingent: 'Will you accept half castes', asks Burketown's acting police magistrate, 'one is offering and is a good man, he is by a white man and [A]boriginal mother and has received schooling'.⁴² There is no further evidence to reveal whether the Aboriginal man was accepted or not.

37 Reynolds 1999: 144.

38 Richards 2008: 39.

39 Richards 2008: 81.

40 Richards 2008: 8.

41 *Portland Guardian*, 8 January 1902: 3; *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate*, 11 January 1902: 5.

42 Wilcox 2000: 40; Telegram from Police Magistrate Burketown enquiring if half-castes are acceptable as recruits for Imperial Bushmen's Contingent, 1900, MP744/11, 1900/2878.

The missing trackers?

There has been much speculation that a large group of Aboriginal trackers had been sent to South Africa and left behind after the conflict ended.⁴³ It appears that much of this has stemmed from media coverage in 1902 highlighting that Lord Kitchener had cabled the Governor General of Canada requesting that Canadian Indian scouts be provided for the British Force's assistance. This drew the ire of some in the Australian press in that Kitchener had clearly overlooked a far superior tracker commodity down under:

Lord Kitchener is probably un-aware of Australia's limitless resources in this respect. While Winnipeg Bill, Saguenay Pierre, and Man-not-afraid-of-Rain are, English, French, and Red Indian, one and all able trackers and likely to be holy terrors to the wily De Wet when once they get to work on the veldt, we may make bold to say that King Jacky of Turramurra and King Tommy of Binalong, aforetime warriors bold and lusty, could be advantageously employed in South Africa in guiding the rooineks by spruit and kloof to the secret haunt of Stein and his peripatetic 'Government'. The spectacle of one of our [A]borigines in full attire of white clay stripes, fluff, spears, and waddy, suddenly appearing at dawn, would severely bother Botha and perhaps demoralize the most adamantine dopper.⁴⁴

The Australian government for their part had earlier communicated 'with the Imperial Parliament in order to learn what is required by Lord Kitchener for the further prosecution of the South African campaign'. There was nothing in this correspondence or offer specific to Aboriginal trackers being provided. Kitchener was somewhat dismissive and replied that he was 'fully satisfied with mounted troops now at his disposal'.⁴⁵

Some eight months later with British losses and reversals in South Africa mounting, Kitchener had a change of heart and there were dispatches and cables sent to Prime Minister Edmund Barton requesting Australian 'bushmen and trackers'.⁴⁶ In response, Barton requested that the Governor General notify Lord Kitchener by telegram that he would 'dispatch 50 Bush Trackers by the S.S. "Euryalus" carrying a consignment of horses'.⁴⁷ Again it was not made clear or specific that the men requested were to be Aboriginal. The term Australian 'bushmen' was widely circulated at the time, the famed Sir Arthur Conan Doyle reported that 'a small force of Australian bushmen' arrived at Rustenburg and

43 Kerwin 2013: 4–12.

44 *The Register* (Adelaide), 8 January 1902: 4.

45 Lord Kitchener's cable in 'Age' 18 July 1901, NAA A8, 1901/20/12.

46 Kerwin 2013: 8.

47 Dispatch of Bush Trackers by Mr. Willis on SS "Euryalus", NAA A8, 1902/25/71.

added when 'the ballad-makers of Australia seek for a subject, let them turn to Elands River, for there was no finer fighting in the war'.⁴⁸ These men established a reputation for the Australian fighting man 'both good and bad':

They did sterling service as scouts: the third, fourth and fifth contingents sent from Australia were labelled as 'Bushmen' and were used in pursuit of Boer guerrillas.⁴⁹

It is highly improbable that the men proposed by Barton were Aboriginal, but it is possible that this bushmen's contingent did include a couple of Aboriginal trackers. The Boer War was one of the first wars to receive widespread newspaper coverage. It witnessed a clamouring by some of the world's literary giants to rush to South Africa to cover the conflict, including Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle and Australia's own Banjo Paterson to name but a few. Paterson did record one tongue-in-cheek incident of an Aboriginal tracker in the Boer War:

One of the Australian regiments brought over a black tracker, and was going to do great things with him. One day news came in that the supply wagons had gone astray. 'Very well,' said the captain, 'send in the black tracker!' 'Please sir, he's lost too!' was the discouraging answer.⁵⁰

It seems inconceivable that with such a high level of media interest that large numbers of Aboriginal trackers present in South Africa would not have been picked up as something of great interest. That is not to say that Aboriginal men were absent, but it indicates that the numbers were not high.

Interestingly enough, it had also been revealed that, around the same time, of the New Zealand contingent of 200 men being sent to South Africa, 'half of them [were] Maoris'. The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand, stated, 'I undertake to say that nothing will be found in their conduct on the battlefield to take the slightest objection to. They will be courageous and humane'.⁵¹ Another newspaper report noted that the Māoris of the Wairarapa district 'were said to be taking a great interest in the state of affairs in South Africa, and it is expected that about 300 native horsemen will be enrolled in the district'.⁵² Another revelation in the New Zealand press surrounds the presence of an Aboriginal man on the Coromandel Peninsula and enlisting with a New Zealand contingent: 'Teddy Collins is a very intelligent Australian black, who has been living here several years. He is reported to be a good black tracker. He is also one of our local crack sprinters. All of the men who have volunteered

48 Conan Doyle 1900: 479, 483.

49 Judd and Surridge 2003: 80.

50 *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill), 12 May 1900.

51 *The Kalgoorlie Western Argus*, 26 February 1901: 40–41.

52 *The New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1899: 5 (I acknowledge and thank Damien Seden for providing this great link and information).

are general favourites here'.⁵³ There is no evidence to reveal how Teddy Collins came to be in New Zealand, but the work of Lynette Russell has Aboriginal men working on ships through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and travelling widely. Russell's investigations have revealed the 'enterprise and entrepreneurship' of Aboriginal people and 'we see Aboriginal people exerting their individual autonomy and agency as they seek the opportunity to profit from a life at sea'.⁵⁴ It is highly likely that Collins had simply disembarked in New Zealand, liked the place and stayed on.

Aboriginal soldiers and trackers in South Africa

There are a small number of references that draw attention to the presence of Aboriginal trackers in South Africa. E. B. Kennedy's *The Black Police of Queensland*, published in 1902, has proven highly influential, telling the story of an Aboriginal tracker named 'Billy' who served in South Africa.⁵⁵ British officers derided Australian claims that Billy could track anything over any terrain. The British challenged the Australians: 'We have heard all these wonderful accounts of reading the ground, and though there may be some shadow of truth in the matter, yet we don't believe more than half your fairy stories'. The Australians, never slow off the mark in laying a bet, countered the British scoffing by telling the British officers to 'put their money where their mouth was'. The bet was taken and Billy was given the task of tracking five men, two on foot and three on horseback, returning with a verifiable report:

The tracker, first stating that the men had chosen their various routes over all the hard and rocky ground of the neighbouring veldt, then proceeded to draw five lines in the sand, and descanted on each track: these of the mounted men he had followed at a run – described how one had got off his horse and had then proceeded to light his pipe, producing the half burnt match to prove it.⁵⁶

Billy's account was breathtakingly accurate, including that one of the men had been thrown by his horse and another had tied his horse to a tree and 'climbed one of these, presumably to get a view as there was neither "possum" nor "sugar-bag"' in it said Billy'. He revealed that one of the men on foot had cut his foot badly.

⁵³ *The New Zealand Herald*, 5 October 1899: 5.

⁵⁴ Russell 2014: 97.

⁵⁵ Kennedy's account was subsequently taken up by A. L. Haydon in *The Trooper Police of Australia* in 1911, Gary Presland's 1998 book *For God's Sake Send the Trackers* and in 2010 by Dale Kerwin with *Aboriginal heroes: Episodes in the Colonial Landscape*.

⁵⁶ Kennedy 1902: 171–173.

Overall the finding was conclusive: 'Billy proved beyond doubt that he had run and read every track faithfully; and afforded other proofs, by recording many minute finds and incidents that he had done so'. The officers were thoroughly convinced, and willingly handed over their bets to the Australians.⁵⁷

A discovery of a photograph of the Fourth Contingent of the Queensland Imperial Bushmen, taken on their return from the Boer War in August 1901, clearly identifies an Aboriginal soldier as part of this contingent:

The vintage silver gelatin photograph on the original flush-cut mount was in excellent condition. But even more astounding was the Aboriginal serviceman clearly visible in the right side of the photo ... initial research suggests the serviceman's name may be Martin Grogan, but community help is needed to make a positive identification.⁵⁸

The Grogan name is of a very well-known Queensland Aboriginal family and it appears that this Aboriginal man did go to South Africa. Oakley reinforces the fact that there were already Aboriginal men serving in the military from as far back as the 1860s and that some of these men went to South Africa:

People tend to forget that Indigenous Australians were in uniform since the 1860s in this country. So there were Indigenous Australians in Light Horse Units. These men would have come out of a community, they would have basically joined the military, served overseas as part of that unit as an equal, then they would have come back to Australia and probably disappeared back into their community.⁵⁹

Two other Aboriginal men were identified as assisting operations in South Africa: 'two black trackers. Davis and F. King have been taken on the strength'. The press coverage in the *Sydney Morning Herald* highlights the possibility that they served with the Federal Contingent.⁶⁰ Certainly for Aboriginal trackers fighting in South Africa there was an added danger. Lord Kitchener had reported that a small British patrol had been cut off and forced to surrender to over 200 of the Boer forces and after 'the surrender the Boers shot all the native scouts who accompanied the patrol'.⁶¹ In contrast, after their weapons were removed, the British soldiers were released. Boer general and guerrilla commander Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger went so far as to release a letter stating that he 'will shoot all natives in the employ of the British, whether armed or unarmed'.⁶²

57 Kennedy 1902: 171–173.

58 'Rare photo of Indigenous involvement in the Boer War', AIATSIS, 50years.aiatsis.gov.au/our-stories/stories/rare-photo-indigenous-involvement-boer-war.

59 'Rare photo of Indigenous involvement in the Boer War', AIATSIS, 50years.aiatsis.gov.au/transcripts/rare-photo-indigenous-involvement-boer-war.

60 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 January 1902: 7; see also Scarlett 2013a.

61 *The Age* (Melbourne), 3 August 1901: 13.

62 *The Age* (Melbourne), 3 August 1901: 13.

William Stubbings and Jack Alick have been confirmed as two Aboriginal men who did serve in the Boer War. Stubbings served in South Africa with D Squadron of the 3rd Regiment, New South Wales Mounted Rifles between 1899 and 1902. Philippa Scarlett has indicated that Stubbings' identity was revealed as far back as 1993 when details of his Darug heritage and service in the Boer War was covered in James Kohen's *The Darug and their Neighbours: The Traditional Aboriginal Owners of the Sydney Region*.⁶³ Peter Bakker is responsible for unearthing Jack Alick as serving 'in the pre-Federation New South Wales First Australian Horse'. Bakker has revealed that Alick links to 'a well-known Aboriginal family originating in the Braidwood area of New South Wales'. Alick posted a letter home but it is assumed someone else wrote it for him since in his 1902 Attestation he could only make 'his mark'. In the letter he confessed that he had 'seen quite enough fighting and have had some very narrow squeaks'. He was certainly hopeful that he would be returning home 'which I hope won't be long, as I reckon it has lasted long enough'. On his return to Australia, Jack Alick and some of his fellow comrades were given a civic reception by the mayor of Braidwood. He obviously quickly recovered from his ordeal and homesickness because he volunteered again and went back to South Africa with 1st Battalion of the Australian Commonwealth Horse. This second foray in February 1902 was short lived, as peace was declared on 31 May. There was, it seems, no welcome home celebration for Alick and the Australian Commonwealth Horse and, perhaps, as Scarlett has pointed out, there may have been a 'change in the mood in relation to the war in some quarters following the discovery of the mistreatment of Boer Civilians'.⁶⁴

An Aboriginal man, John Searle, served in the Boer War as a private with the Western Australian Mounted Infantry. He fought at Stinkhoutboom, the battle of Rhenoster Kop, the great De Wet hunt and the attack on Pietersburg. He survived the war and it is assumed that he returned to Australia on the *Britannic* in 1901. Peter Bakker has concluded that he was 'obviously affected by his time in the Boer War and a bit disillusioned when he came back and he apparently tried to commit suicide'.⁶⁵

The aftermath

The aftermath of the war in South Africa would hold horrifying, long-standing ramifications for black people in South Africa. The British 'having fought with fervour to put down the Boer insurgents, left the country without determining

63 Scarlett 2013c, 2013d.

64 Scarlett 2014.

65 'John Searle', National Boer War Memorial Association Inc, www.bwm.org.au/site/John_Searle.asp.

the political status of the South African natives – one of the ostensible reasons for [the] intervention'.⁶⁶ Although the numbers of Aboriginal men serving in the Boer War may have been small, it appears that similarly to the First World War, those that did serve may not have returned home to a life as recognised heroes.

Another previously unrecognised Aboriginal Boer War veteran was found mysteriously shot dead in 1917:

The dead body of a half-caste [A]borigine named Jack Armstrong, was found in a hut near Drake (NSW), with a bullet wound through the breast. A rifle with a discharged cartridge in the barrel, was found alongside the body. Deceased followed the occupation of a miner. He was well known as a boxer and all-round athlete, and served through the Boer War. He was a beautifully modelled man, and was considered to be physically perfect. The coroner returned a verdict that the deceased met his death as the result of a bullet wound, but there was nothing to show by whom the wound was inflicted.⁶⁷

A 1907 report by George Valder, the Commonwealth Agent in South Africa, compiled information on at least 1,000 Australian men, women and children seeking repatriation at home due to the 'dire depression prevailing in South Africa'.⁶⁸ It was made plain to the applicants that they 'must undertake to repay the amount expended on their behalf' by the Commonwealth.⁶⁹ The report reveals that some of the men requesting assistance to return home were Aboriginal. The uncovering of Valder's report and its reference to Aboriginal men still in South Africa five years after the war has fuelled speculation that this was the missing evidence of the lost trackers. Valder confessed that he received a number of applications 'from coloured people who were natives of Australia, in some instances these were the descendants of American Negroes resident in Australia, others were evidently half caste, and two or three were either Aborigines, or Aboriginal half castes'.⁷⁰

Valder implied that changes to the Australian *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* had in effect locked these people out of their own country. The law was quite clear: 'coloured persons from Australia cannot be allowed to return unless they have, prior to leaving the Commonwealth, obtained a permit'.⁷¹ Despite correspondence from these individuals stating that they had left Australia prior to the Act's introduction, Valder revealed that he had contacted the Prime Minister for clarification. The reply was blunt: 'that all coloured persons born

66 Stevens 1980: 3.

67 *The Bathurst Times*, 19 April 1917: 4; *The Farmer and Settler*, 1 May 1917: 4.

68 Valder 1907: 23.

69 Valder 1907: 3.

70 Valder 1907: 18.

71 Valder 1907: 18.

in Australia must obtain a special permit from the Commonwealth, before they could be permitted to land'.⁷² Dale Kerwin has put forward a case that some of the men looking to get home may have been Aboriginal trackers:

By the decree of the then prime minister of Australia Edmund Barton, and the newly adopted *Immigration Restriction Act, 1901*, their repatriation would have required a special permit and there is no evidence that this was issued. The fact that the Aboriginal trackers could have paid their own fare back to Australia is unimaginable, as they would have been poorly paid.⁷³

The question remains, were the Aboriginal men mentioned in Valder's report veterans from the Boer War in South Africa? Evidence strongly suggests they were, as '80% of the men produced discharges, which showed that they had fought in the South African War, and had borne good characters whilst serving with their regiments'.⁷⁴ Valder advised the Aboriginal men to make 'applications for permits. As these men have all since obtained employment. They will I believe manage to pay their own fares'.⁷⁵ It is also possible that some Aboriginal men may have been in South Africa before the war. A good number of Australians had gone there chasing riches and work with the gold and mining boom.⁷⁶ It is quite possible that some of these men may have been Aboriginal, and this fits with Russell revealing the mobility of Aboriginal men globally in search of work and opportunities.

In conclusion, this article has highlighted the fact that archival sources for an Aboriginal presence in South Africa appear limited. As such, the Boer War experience for Aboriginal soldiers and trackers and those back at home offers more gaps in the stories than any full closure. Clearly, Aboriginal men put their hands up to go and some were accepted whilst others were turned away. Some people had opportunities as a result of the war and Aboriginal communities took an avid interest in the conflict carried along on the patriotic national fervour of the day. It has been important to point out that Aboriginal access to military service and freedom to make their own choices in life were far greater in the late nineteenth century and during the Boer War years than was to come in the early decades of the twentieth century. The desire to enlist in the Boer War and following Great War may in fact have been an Indigenous challenge to the historical emasculation of Aboriginal male identity from the earliest point of European occupation of the continent. Finally, regardless of the fact that the numbers of Aboriginal men serving in South Africa may have been small, in a similar vein to the First World War they took the opportunity to prove themselves as equal or superior to white men on

72 Valder 1907: 18.

73 Kerwin 2013: 11.

74 Valder 1907: 19.

75 Valder 1907: 18.

76 Blainey 2001: xvii; see also Limb 1999: 3, 'included many Australians working in South Africa'.

the biggest level playing arena, the battlefield. It is also important to note that despite limited archival resources, Aboriginal community members clearly carried memories of Aboriginal service in the Boer War long after the event. In a 2GB radio broadcast in 1941, famed Aboriginal activist Pearl Gibbs reminded listeners 'that men of my race served in the Boer War, more so in the 1914–18 War'.⁷⁷

References

Archival sources

National Archives of Australia

Dispatch of Bush Trackers by Mr. Willis on SS "Euryalus", NAA A8, 1902/25/71.

Lord Kitchener's cable in 'Age' 18 July 1901 NAA A8, 1901/20/12, Canberra.

Telegram from Police Magistrate Burketown enquiring if half-castes are acceptable as recruits for Imperial Bushmen's Contingent, 1900, NAA MP744/11, 1900/2878, Melbourne.

Valder, George 1907, Repatriation of Australians from South Africa, NAA A1, 1911/20405.

Newspapers

The Advertiser (Adelaide)

The Age (Melbourne)

The Argus (Melbourne)

The Bathurst Times

Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)

The Brisbane Courier

The Cairns Post

The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate

The Farmer and Settler

The Kalgoorlie Western Argus

⁷⁷ Attwood 1999: 97.

The Leader

The New Zealand Herald

Portland Guardian

The Register (Adelaide)

The Sydney Morning Herald

The West Australian

Secondary sources

Attwood, Bain 1999, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.

Bakker, Peter 2015, 'Australia's Dark Troopers in the Boer War', Conference Presentation, Brothers and Sisters in Arms Conference, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, 25 June 2015.

Blainey, Geoffrey 2003, 'Foreword', in Max Chamberlain and Robin Droogleever, *The War with Johnny Boer – Australians in the Boer War*, Australian Military History Publications, Sydney.

Conan Doyle, Arthur 1900, *The Great Boer War*, Smith, Elder, & Co., London.

Davidson, Jim 2015, 'The Boer War – A longer shadow', in *Griffith Review Enduring Legacies* 48, Julianne Schultz and Peter Cochrane (eds), Griffith University, Brisbane.

Elphick, Beverley Gulambali and Don Elphick 2004, *The camp of mercy: an historical and biographical record of the Warangesda Aboriginal Mission/Station, Darlington Point, New South Wales*, Gulambali Aboriginal Research, Canberra.

Goodall, Heather 1988, 'Winning overseas, losing at home', *Land Rights News* 4(2): 32–33.

Goodhall, Heather 1996, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.

Hall, Robert 1997, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Haskins, Victoria 2003, 'Could you see to the return of my daughter – Fathers and daughters under the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board child removal policy', *Australian Historical Studies* 34(121): 106–121.

- Hochschild, 2011, *To End All Wars – A Story of Protest and Patriotism in the First World War*, Pan Books, London.
- Huggonson, David 1990, 'The black trackers of Bloemfontein', *Land Rights News* 2(17), February: 20.
- 1993, 'Aborigines and the aftermath of the Great War', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no 1: 2–9.
- Johnstone, Susan 1970, 'The New South Wales Government Policy Towards Aborigines 1880–1904', MA thesis, University of Sydney.
- Judd, Denis and Keith Surridge 2003, *The Boer War: A History*, IB Tauris, London.
- Kennedy, Edward 1902, *The Black Police of Queensland*, John Murray, London.
- Kerwin, Dale 2010, 'Aboriginal heroes: episodes in the colonial landscape', Queensland Historical Atlas, www.qhatlas.com.au/content/aboriginal-heroes-episodes-colonial-landscape, accessed 13 September 2015.
- 2013, 'The lost trackers: Aboriginal servicemen in the 2nd Boer War', *Sabretache* 54(1): 4–14.
- Limb, Peter 1999, 'An Australian historian at the dawn of Apartheid: Fred Alexander in South Africa, 1949–50', *The Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History*, www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/limb.htm, accessed 13 September 2015.
- Maynard, John 2007, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 2015, 'Fighting for Country', in *(In)Visible: The First Peoples and War*, Education Resource Kit, Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, Lake Macquarie: 6–9.
- Messner, Andrew 2000, 'Popular constitutionalism and Chinese protest on the Victorian goldfields', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 2(1): 63–69.
- Newton, Douglas 2014, *Hell-Bent: Australia's leap into the Great War*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne.
- O'Brien, Patricia 1998, 'The Gaze of the Ghosts: European Images of Aboriginal Women in New South Wales and Port Phillip 1800–1860', in *Maps, Dreams, History: Race and Representation in Australia*, J. Kociumbas (ed.), Braxus Publishing, Sydney: 313–400.
- Packenham, Thomas 1998, *The Boer War*, Abacus Books, London.

- Ramsland, John 2014, *Major-General Sir Neville Reginald Howse VC: Manning River Pioneering Doctor and War Hero*, Manning Valley Historical Society, Taree.
- Reynolds, Henry 1999, *Why Weren't We Told? A Personal Search for the Truth about Our History*, Penguin Books (Viking), Melbourne.
- Reynolds, Henry and Marilyn Lake 2010, *What's Wrong with ANZAC? The Militarisation of Australian History*, NewSouth Books, Sydney.
- Richards, Jonathon 2008, *The Secret War: A True History of Queensland's Native Police*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Russell, Lynette 2014, "'The singular transcultural space': Networks of ships, mariners, voyagers and 'native' men at sea, 1790–1870", in *Indigenous Networks – Mobility, Connections and Exchange*, Jane Carey and Jane Lydon (eds), Routledge, London.
- Scarlett, Philippa 2013a, 'Aboriginal trackers: Boer War', *Indigenous Histories*, 2 May 2013, indigenoushistories.com/2013/05/02/aboriginal-trackers-boer-war/, accessed 13 September 2015.
- 2013b, 'Boer War: Another Aboriginal soldier confirmed', *Indigenous Histories*, 7 February 2013, indigenoushistories.com/2013/02/07/boer-war-another-aboriginal-soldier-confirmed/, accessed 13 September 2015.
- 2013c, 'More on William Stubbings Indigenous Boer War veteran', *Indigenous Histories*, 15 April 2013, indigenoushistories.com/2013/04/15/more-on-william-stubbings-indigenous-boer-war-veteran/, accessed 13 September 2015.
- 2013d, 'William Stubbings: Aboriginal soldier of the Boer War', *Indigenous histories*, 28 March 2013, indigenoushistories.com/2013/03/28/william-stubbings-aboriginal-soldier-of-the-boer-war-2/, accessed 13 September 2015.
- 2014, 'Jack Alick Bond: Boer War Aboriginal soldier', *Indigenous Histories*, 23 April 2014, indigenoushistories.com/2014/04/23/jack-alick-bond-boer-war-aboriginal-soldier/, accessed 13 September 2015.
- Stevens, Frank 1980, *The Politics of Prejudice*, Alternative Publishing, Sydney.
- Wilcox, Craig 2000, *The Boer War: Australians and the War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra.

Aboriginal service in the First World War: Identity, recognition and the problem of mateship

Philippa Scarlett

A few of them will come in pretty useful for some of the work at the front.

—New South Wales recruiting officer, 22 January 1916.¹

Think of all the half caste soldiers that were killed at war. What thanks have the half caste soldiers got for going to war. We were good men at war but looked down on now the war is over.

—Tom Blackman, ex 41st Battalion AIF, 1934.²

The popular construction of unconditional mateship, said to make the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) the band of brothers it never was, today overshadows the existence of racism in the AIF, and the fact that the negative treatment Aboriginal servicemen received post-war was often at the hands of those now said to have been their mates. This mateship myth also obscures the failure of white Australia to recognise the service of Aboriginal men. Before examining these intersecting phenomena, I first consider the diversity of the men who comprised the Aboriginal soldiers of the First World War to counter the oversimplification of this group. This masks individual stories and denies identities, including cultural identity, and in doing so reinforces generalisations about Aboriginal mateship. I then examine the contradictions in the observance of the *Defence Act 1903* (amended 1909) and draw attention to the pragmatism and racism that underpinned the enlistment of Aboriginal men and their relationships

1 *The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times*, 22 January 1916: 5.

2 Blackman to Tennant Kelly, 22 February 1935 in Trigger et al. 2011.

within the AIF. Following this, an examination of the post-war treatment and recognition of Aboriginal servicemen exposes the transient reality of the wartime 'mateship' now prominent in discussion of Aboriginal war service.

Background

Aboriginal men who volunteered to serve in the First World War came from a disadvantaged group in a deeply racist Australia. The implications of this for war service were apparent in two early acts of the new Commonwealth. The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* enshrined the policy of a White Australia, and the closely related *Defence Act 1903* (amended 1909) was interpreted as prohibiting men not substantially of European heritage from serving their country.³ Despite this, Aboriginal men served in all major theatres of the First World War and were associated with the places which are touchstones for summoning up the experience of this conflict, including Gallipoli, where records show the service of 56 men.

The complete marginalisation of Aboriginal people in Australian society meant that notwithstanding this comprehensive presence in a war said to lay the foundation of Australia's national legend, the war service of Aboriginal men was ignored, then forgotten for decades by white Australians. Recognition did eventually come, but it needs careful assessment to avoid the danger of Aboriginal war service being assimilated into the prevailing popular views surrounding Australian military engagement.

The Anzac legend has been an evolving and constantly malleable one, in which the dominant elements of imperialism and the racial superiority which attends it have been superseded by a narrative of tragedy and mateship.⁴ The susceptibility of this legend to manipulation was pointed out by Graham Seal when he located its origins in a merging of the seemingly opposed formal Anzac tradition – associated with official commemoration, authoritarianism and returned servicemen's organisations – and the grassroots, larrikin digger tradition.⁵ It has been this plasticity which has facilitated the incorporation of Aboriginal war service into the current incarnation of the Anzac myth. But this late inclusion has in large part been achieved by a misrepresentation of the context and circumstances relating to mateship in the wartime and post-war experience of Aboriginal servicemen. In 1921, in the *Story of Anzac*, official war historian Charles Bean wrote that, 'The strongest bond in the Australian Imperial

3 For discussion of this, see Winegard 2012: 62; Riseman 2014b: 178–179.

4 Holbrook 2014: 215; Lake and Reynolds 2010: 210.

5 Seal 2004: 1–8, 77.

Force was that between a man and his mate'.⁶ The concept of mateship implicit here and expressed later by ex-servicemen has been prominent in twenty-first-century discussion of Aboriginal experience in the AIF, where it has been used to imply acceptance and equality. However, the current dominant narrative of 'mateship' and the assumption that it reverses racism in the AIF environment occludes the presence of discrimination and compresses the diversity of Aboriginality and wartime experience. It also runs the risk of overshadowing the story of post-war injustice and diverting attention from the fact that most soldiers of the First World War were fighting for a 'White Australia'.

Diversity

The generic concept of 'Aboriginal soldiers' and a latter day simplistic construction of Aboriginal mateship have together homogenised these men at the expense of an appreciation of their differences and identities.

The following discussion is based on information extracted from the service records of the range of volunteers whose Aboriginal heritage is identified in Scarlett (2015a).⁷ While numbers are not definitive, to date known Aboriginal volunteers in the First World War number around 946, of whom 770 served overseas. Although these numbers have been dramatically boosted by research during the last 10 years, they are still dwarfed by overall AIF enlistment.⁸ The fact that numbers were unconcentrated has meant that there was no Aboriginal group identity within the AIF. Even when a number of Aboriginal men were members of the same unit, they did not always serve concurrently, or their numbers were minimal in comparison with total unit membership of around 1,000 men.⁹ Comments that an Aboriginal man would become the pet or mascot of his unit reinforce the reality of Aboriginality as a novel phenomenon.¹⁰

First World War volunteers and serving soldiers, described as 'Aboriginal', were a far from homogenous group. They ranged from a very few described as 'full blood' (in photographs, information in their attestations and elsewhere) to a small proportion of men, impossible to determine, whose Aboriginal descent is not overtly apparent. However, the nineteenth-century thinking and use of the term 'half caste' persisted indiscriminately as a general description of Aboriginal soldiers both during the war and afterwards, suggesting a homogeneity not reflected in the evidence in service records and external sources.

6 Bean 1921: 6; see also Bean 1946: 181.

7 These records are held by National Archives of Australia (NAA): B2455.

8 Total enlistment c. 417,000: Robson 1982: 202.

9 Dennis 1996: 314.

10 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 1916: 7.

Nonetheless, physical appearance had relevance in the context of the AIF as a factor in the official selection process, particularly after May 1917 when, in the face of declining enlistment, a military order was introduced to allow the enlistment of men with one white parent.¹¹ It was also relevant in its potential to influence racism during and after the war. Service records show that throughout the war, recruiters adopted a variable approach to volunteers, both accepting and at other times rejecting men who were clearly Aboriginal. The Aboriginality of others successfully enlisted would not have been recognised by recruiting sergeants. Of these, not all identified as Aboriginal, while others were able to suggest southern European ancestry.

Aboriginal soldiers also lacked uniformity in their place of origin. While service records show most Aboriginal volunteers came from outback and rural locations, this was not exclusively so. Of these some lived controlled lives on missions, reserves and camps, or in and outside country towns. Others lived on remote stations or were itinerant, often travelling long distances for employment and in the main evading supervision of their everyday lives. The 35 per cent of men from this range of non-urban backgrounds, volunteering in major cities, probably felt their chances of success were enhanced away from the control of Protection Boards and the prejudice of country areas. The fact attestations show only 12 per cent of all volunteers came from families closely associated with missions or reserves challenges perceptions about where Aboriginal people lived. However, this percentage is almost certainly an underestimate because of the difficulty of differentiating a town from the mission/reserve of the same name and the fact that some men may not have revealed a mission connection. Despite this, just over half of these mission-connected men successfully enlisted in the AIF.¹²

Contrary to popular thinking, a small, largely unrecognised proportion of volunteers lived in urban areas. Goodall and Cadzow, writing about Sydney, note that 'Aboriginal people are not "supposed" to have a history in city landscapes',¹³ yet they do either because that is where they have always lived or they have migrated from outside locations. Leonard Smith (described as black in his attestation) lived in inner Sydney far from his Tasmanian grandmother's people, while volunteers from the Darug Lock family lived often close to or on the land they had always inhabited in the Sydney area.¹⁴

11 Military Order 200 (2) May 1917 in Huggonson 1989: 219.

12 Missions and reserves named in attestations are Victoria: Lake Tyers, Framlingham, Lake Condah, Coranderrk, Ramahyuck, Ebenezer; New South Wales: Wallaga Lake, Roseby Park, Warangesda, Nanimba, Purfleet, Cummeragunja, Plumpton, Sackville Reach, St Clair, Brewarrina, Pilliga, Mungindi, Caroonna; South Australia: Point McLeay, Point Pearce, Koonibba; Queensland: Barambah, Taroom, Woorabinda, Bloomfield; Tasmania: Cape Barren; Western Australia: Carrolup.

13 Goodall and Cadzow 2009: 3.

14 Scarlett 2008.

The widespread willingness of Aboriginal men to enlist is evident from the fact that volunteers came from all Australian states and the Northern Territory. However, they could also have a more complex, place-related identity. This was as members of groups and nations such as Wiradjuri, Noongar or Gundijtmara, rather than say as Victorians or 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal'. The degree of identification volunteers had with their culture was almost certainly not understood by the white men they associated with, including recruiters, oblivious to the fact that culture could exist as a continuing substratum in the face of suppression by authority.

External evidence linking volunteers with culture could take different forms. Little is known about unsuccessful volunteer Sandy Jackson of Marble Bar, Western Australia, but the distinctive marks recorded in his attestation, horizontal scarring on his breast, suggest initiation. Norman and Charlie Baird, who grew up at China Camp in far North Queensland, are known to have received both an English and Kuku Yalanji education.¹⁵ In central New South Wales, the patriarch of the Cowra droving family, Tom Coe, was described as an initiated man and an informant on Wiradjuri Lachlan 'mythological and traditional information'.¹⁶ His brother and five sons volunteered and all but one served overseas. In the Blue Mountains near Sydney, a small group of seemingly 'assimilated' men were visiting locations of spiritual significance to the Gundungurra up to the early twentieth century.¹⁷ They included William Riley, a farmer and member of the local Catholic church, and his son Alfred, an AIF volunteer. Another member of this group of farmers, William Albert Shepherd, also volunteered as did his nephew Albert John Shepherd. This highlights the fact that the men described as Aboriginal who volunteered or served from a mix of urbanised, semi-urbanised, outback and rural backgrounds had cultural connections which cannot be judged by outward appearances and unfolds another layer of identity in the AIF. Perhaps the closest a recruiter came to confronting this was when he recorded the religion of Harry Hawkins as 'Aboriginal'.

15 Denigan 2006: 3.

16 *Science of Man and Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society of Australasia* 1902: 81; Submission by Mr. L Shropshire to Royal Anthropological Society of Australia, 1899, containing information provided by Charles Kable and Thomas Coe, p. 121 Roll 2 in Geographical Names Board of New South Wales, 2003 [CD].

17 Brookman and Smith 2010: 64.

The nature of Aboriginal acceptance in the AIF: Prohibitive legislation, pragmatism and mateship versus racism

The enlistment of Aboriginal men began in 1914, when at least 29 volunteers were accepted into the AIF, and continued throughout the war. The contradictions within the inconsistent application of the provisions of the *Defence Act* were apparent in South Australia, where men from Point Pearce and Point McLeay missions had a good acceptance rate, the Protector even endorsing the enlistment of underage men.¹⁸ In contrast, volunteers from Koonibba mission were rejected for 'physique not good enough for military service', an indirect way of referring to Aboriginality.

Although the military order of May 1917 allowed enlistment of men with one white parent, this did not change enlistment significantly, as men of this general description had been routinely accepted in the preceding years. However, some men who had been rejected or discouraged again sought to enlist and there was a temporary spike in Aboriginal enlistment noticeable in Queensland. Despite this, Aboriginal enlistment, like general enlistment had begun to decline.¹⁹ Where the order may have had most effect was in the acceptance of men whose European ancestry was minimal or non-existent. The seven Aboriginal men in a May 1918 photograph of the 1st Reinforcements Egypt probably fell into this category, while others were described as 'the blackest half castes'.²⁰

While apparently a weakening of restrictions, the military order was an even more explicit expression of racism than the *Defence Act*. Its intent was to promote the enlistment of Aboriginal men who associated with white people, already obvious in the successful enlistment of educated men, those identifying in their attestations as police trackers or with other connections to white families or communities. This was recognised by Darug man Henry Anolock, who attached letters from local townspeople to his attestation demonstrating his awareness of the importance of navigating white bureaucracies.²¹ The acceptance of these men was linked to the thinking behind the statutory declarations made by applicants after May 1917, stating they had 'associated with white people all my life'.²² On the other hand, possession of an Exemption Certificate (releasing the holder from the provisions of state Aborigines Protection Acts) is not an

18 NAA B2455, RIGNEY Rufus.

19 For the Queensland response, see Pratt 1990: 18. This decline is evident from a preliminary analysis of Aboriginal enlistment dates after 1916.

20 Scarlett 2011: 16; Bleakley 1961: 170.

21 See also Goodall 1996: 305; Goodall and Cadzow 2009: 72, 78.

22 NAA B2455, CUMMINGS Willie.

identifiable factor in successful enlistment. None of the 12 exempted Queensland men accepted into the AIF between 1915 and 1918 were named as such in their attestations.²³

Press reports from 1915 enthusiastically noted the enlistment of 'half castes' and documented their casualties. But the approval this implied was still firmly located in racism and had an agenda. The objective was to shame white men into enlisting, based on the accepted inferiority of Aboriginal people. This was clearly spelled out in articles like 'Loyal half-castes', which began, 'A striking example to eligible white men has been furnished by a half-caste family at Heywood, named Lovett, five sons having enlisted for active service'.²⁴ More of the same with a slight change of tactics was evident in late 1918. A report headed 'Patriotic natives' about Point McLeay men serving in France directly followed a regular feature giving enlistments by district. This was an attempt to encourage enlistment by moving from inter-district rivalry to inter-racial rivalry.²⁵ To a South Australian correspondent, 'it was a crying shame that any [white men] should be taught their duty by dependants of an aboriginal mission'.²⁶ Yet this was exactly what was hoped for. Its apogee came on Empire Day, 24 May 1917, in Brisbane when 16 men recruited from Barambah mission were participants in a stage-managed recruiting event. The theatre was provided by an emotive display involving a procession of light horsemen leading horses with empty saddles. It culminated in the administration of the oath to the Barambah men who, after mounting the riderless horses, rode up Queen Street with 'the ease so characteristic of the Australian aboriginal'.²⁷ The men were subsequently inducted into the Light Horse and issued with uniforms. A week later they were discharged and sent back to Barambah under police escort.

The incident was a revealing one. The reason for the fiasco was that the military order was not intended to apply to men 'from the camp', only to men who associated with white people.²⁸ It pinned down the exact nature of the changed regulations, but even more it exploited the willingness of Aboriginal men to serve in the most public way yet. The fact that they did not end up in the AIF was irrelevant to the impact of the scene on the large crowd which witnessed the

23 Mackett 1991.

24 Scarlett 2011: 53; see also Riseman 2014b: 184–185.

25 *The Advertiser*, 29 October 1918: 9.

26 *The Advertiser*, 29 April 1916: 13.

27 Scarlett 2015b: 54; *The Brisbane Courier*, 25 May 1917: 7.

28 *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 June 1917: 6.

event. The recruiters then proceeded north, their rhetoric depicting a situation so grave that a depleted and exhausted AIF was forced to 'fall back on the half-caste for the help [white men] were too cowardly to give themselves'.²⁹

After enlistment, the persistence of racism went in tandem with the simple fact that the AIF was dominated by the overarching philosophy of White Australia and believed it was fighting to keep Australia white. This was an extension of the community consensus underlying the passage of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, one promoted by recruiters from leading politicians down.³⁰ During the war, respect had to be won and soldiering ability proved in a way not expected of non-Indigenous soldiers. The racist basis for this defined the qualified nature of any wartime equality and the mateship which flowed from it. After the war, Walter (Chris) Saunders, a Gundijtmara man from Lake Condah, recalled an incident in which a white soldier refused to eat with him because of his race. Saunders' action in challenging him to a fight diffused the situation and they ended up friends.³¹ But while Saunders and others may have succeeded in proving themselves as individuals, they were then faced with more obstacles to overcome. Negative preconceptions about Aboriginal people led some to doubt their ability to perform in battle. As one officer said:

In the early days of the war they were looked upon by many officers and diggers as being undependable under heavy fire, but this opinion was soon brushed aside after the hard fighting in Palestine, and the aboriginals received the respect of all their fellow diggers.³²

As the war progressed, bravery citations show Aboriginal men came to the forefront as leaders and continued to earn respect. Harry Thorpe was 'conspicuous for his courage and leadership' and inspired those under him. Charlie Runga inspired a party of men to follow him and capture two enemy machine guns. Both received Military Medals and showed qualities that transcended racism for the moment at least.³³

Even when Aboriginal men passed these testing processes, they could not evade the fact that Australian society judged a man by his colour, and Aboriginal soldiers by the fact of their Aboriginality. During the war, an incident in 1916 involving Aboriginal and white soldiers on Salisbury Plain was revealing in what it showed about both groups. The issue was alcohol and the drunkenness for which the AIF was renowned. Aboriginal men were a part of this too,

29 *Morning Bulletin*, 29 May 1917: 5. Significantly for the exclusion of Aboriginal soldiers from the Anzac legend, the recruiter expressing this opinion, Colonel Garland, was closely associated with the seminal commemoration of Anzac in 1916.

30 Scarlett 2011: 4; Stanley 2011: 226; Lake and Reynolds 2010: 162.

31 Gordon 1965: 36–37. This story was related by Saunders' father Reg, an officer in the Second World War.

32 *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 3 February 1933: 9.

33 *The London Gazette*, 17 December 1917: 13200, Harry Thorpe; NAA B2455, RUNGA Raymond Charles.

the difference for them being that in Australia they were not legally permitted to drink. The basis of this incident was the behaviour of three Aboriginal men leaving a pub, which prompted an Australian captain to pursue a ban on the consumption of alcohol by Aboriginal men, as in Australia. His report was dismissed by AIF Headquarters, reinforcing the official equality of conditions in the AIF. This stemmed from the fact that, according to the AIF's interpretation of the *Defence Act*, Aboriginality theoretically did not exist in the Australian army. In this the AIF was unique, differing from other forces where non-white status was officially recognised and attracted discrimination.³⁴ However, the suggestion that AIF regulations be altered to discriminate against Aboriginal soldiers revealed that despite their undifferentiated position in the AIF, Aboriginal men could not always escape the prevalent mentality of the Australia they had left behind.

Other instances involving alcohol and Aboriginal men, such as the court martial of George Aitken for a serious offence committed while drunk, did not elicit the same response as the one received by the men on Salisbury Plain.³⁵ What may have made the first situation different was the captain's complaint that the men's 'abusive and threatening behaviour' encompassed 'shouting about the white man stealing their country'.³⁶ In doing this the Aboriginal soldiers were challenging the prevailing white narrative of peaceful colonisation. Although Aboriginal people had asserted opposition to colonisation in various forms since invasion,³⁷ the incident was a confronting demonstration of its presence within the AIF – and the captain's demand for the institution of the status quo applying in Australia undermines the later construct of AIF inter-racial unity. In another alcohol-related incident in Paris, a military policeman told a barman not to serve Willie Karpanty as he was 'under the Aboriginal Act and not allowed to be served alcohol'.³⁸ Karpanty's supposedly equal AIF status and the fact that he was in a foreign jurisdiction did not prevent this attempt to exercise white power based on race. Explaining such encounters in terms of the antagonism between Aboriginal people and state police, who were active in the administration of repressive government policies, simply emphasises the existence of outside prejudice within the AIF.³⁹ It is obvious from these incidents that relationships within the AIF were more complex than often portrayed and the prejudices which infected Australian society did not automatically disappear

34 This official equality, integral to the narrative of AIF inter-racial mateship, contrasted with the status of non-white men in other forces, for example, Black Americans, Indians and South Africans whose ethnicity attracted restrictions particularly when on leave. Levine 1998: 104,105,115; Winegard 2012: 16.

35 NAA A471, AITKEN George Robert.

36 AWM15: 7611.

37 Goodall 1996: xix.

38 Kartinyeri 1996: 43–44.

39 Cunneen 2001: 12, 13.

in the microcosm of the army and the intensity of wartime experience. Similarly, like white prejudice, Aboriginal sense of identity and injustice was not put aside when Aboriginal men put on the King's uniform.

Friendships – mateships – also reflect this complexity, one which contradicts the suggestion of a unified 'Australian' identity in war in which pre-war racial boundaries no longer existed. Two South Australian Ngarrindjeri soldiers, George Karpany and Proctor Wilson, were given the ultimate accolade when they were called 'jolly fine fellows and white, clear white inside',⁴⁰ the latter phrase an expression derived from Rudyard Kipling's late nineteenth-century ballad *Gunga Din*.⁴¹ This popular poem unambiguously references colour and is an example of a variant use of the Christian concept of 'white inside' which became prevalent in the colonial and (in Australia) early post-colonial period in relation to non-whites. This clearly indicated the superiority of white men by showing a black man behaving in a way that transcended his perceived inferior status and the behavioural expectations which flowed from it.⁴² In the case of Karpany and Wilson, Kipling's quotation appeared beside a photograph of the two Aboriginal men. In a variation of this usage, William 'Mick' King, an Aboriginal man from New South Wales, was praised with the words 'Although he was black he was a White man and a dinkum Aussie'.⁴³ In the attention it drew to his colour, this statement was racially loaded, falling outside the use of the term 'white man' as one of general approbation for other white men. In yet another indicative example of attitude to race, a fellow soldier reporting on the death of John Firebrace wrote: 'I knew him well. He was in my company. Was a half aboriginal but a very fine fellow'.⁴⁴

It was the mindset of fellow soldiers revealed in statements like these – particularly when it is considered that these were made by men who admired their Aboriginal comrades – which shows the inbuilt racism of the AIF. This did not prevent respect, admiration and friendship, but racism was a constant subtext. William Punch, a Wiradjuri massacre survivor, was to one white soldier 'the best pal I ever had',⁴⁵ while a Queensland Aboriginal soldier was described as one of his best wartime friends by Victorian white man Edward

40 *Western Mail*, 13 December 1932: 2.

41 Kipling 1892: 153.

An' for all 'is dirty 'ide

'E was white, clear white, inside

When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire!

42 For example, the obituary of Indian Nobby Bux, which appeared under the heading of the same quotation, states 'although of dark skin he was white right through'. *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 September 1923: 10. Similarly, a comment on a Barambah soldier reads 'although Archibald James Marshall was a coloured man, he was white at heart'. *The Queenslander*, 29 November 1924: 18.

43 Stanley 2011: 225–256.

44 Private H. Day in AWM: DRL/0428.

45 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 March 1916: 14.

Mylrea.⁴⁶ The existence of friendships like these in wartime is clear, but in both cases neither had the chance to be proved afterwards: Punch died in 1917 and distance ensured that Mylrea's friendship was not practically tested. Mylrea's comment was made in the context of the fragility of the war experience, which led him to lament, after praising the wartime tolerance of the AIF, 'Why was it that after the cessation of hostilities the people reverted to narrow-minded vision?'⁴⁷ His address was at an Anzac ceremony in 1932 at Healesville near Coranderrk mission. The location suggests that this could have been a pointed comment directed to his audience.

Post-war recognition

Community sentiment, and within it the actions of the main ex-service organisation, the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), as well as the work of the chroniclers, provide sometimes overlapping ways of gauging the nature of post-war recognition of Aboriginal war service.

During the war, Aboriginal membership of the AIF was kept in the public eye by newspaper articles. After the war this was no longer relevant to recruitment and the subject received less attention, only reviving slightly when the question of Aboriginal service in the Second World War became an issue. Important exceptions were the letters to the press from Aboriginal men, drawing attention to the continuation of discriminatory practices which they felt should have ended after the war service of members of their families and communities.⁴⁸ Protests were also made by the monthly paper of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (formed in 1921 to combat injustice).⁴⁹ But when queried by state Protectors, the Commonwealth made it clear that war service did not change the status of these men under the Protection Acts, and the states acted accordingly.⁵⁰

The post-war treatment of ex-soldiers and their families, particularly those living on missions, was lamentable and dominated by petty issues relating to receipt or control of war entitlements, some of it based on fear of Aboriginal empowerment through war service.⁵¹ Whether they were being forced onto missions (Willie Cummings in Queensland),⁵² barred from living on mission land

46 *Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian*, 30 April 1932: 2.

47 *Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian*, 30 April 1932: 2.

48 Scarlett 2015a: 41–43.

49 *The Australian Abo Call*, May 1938: 2; Scarlett 2015a: 45. On the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association see Maynard 2007.

50 NAA A2487, 1919/3202 [Position of Australian Aboriginal soldiers]; Riseman 2014b: 190.

51 Horton 2012; Huggonson 1993a, 1993b; Pearson 2013; Pratt 1990: 36–38; Maynard 2007: 39.

52 Mackett n.d.

once called home in Victoria (Percy Pepper),⁵³ witness to the break-up of mission land for white soldier settlement or faced with the removal of their children, many Aboriginal ex-soldiers and their families lived at the mercy of Protectors and their boards. As Tom Blackman wrote:

I always thought fighting for my king and country would make me a naturalise british subject and a man with freedom in the country but I have hardly had freedom since I returned from the war ... It seems as if a Chief Protector thinks the half caste return soldier dont want justice ... We help to fight same as the white soldiers did. Think of all the half caste soldiers who were killed at war. What thanks have the half caste soldiers got for going to war. We were good men at war but looked down on now the war is over.⁵⁴

The attitude of what became the main ex-servicemen's organisation was often no better. Service records show Aboriginal membership of the RSSILA and its advocacy for Aboriginal men seeking medals and replacement discharges. Moreover, some individuals like Tom Williams and Douglas Grant were popular League members in New South Wales branches.⁵⁵ Yet the oral history of families talks of rejection and exclusion and RSSILA membership alone is not evidence of inclusion in the social activities of the League. The potential for exclusion would have been even more pronounced after the Second World War when the Returned and Services League (RSL previously RSSILA) clubs were licensed. The widespread discrimination against Aboriginal children in public education, often children of ex-servicemen, went unchallenged by non-Indigenous League members. One known exception, an ex-member of the 15th Battalion, appears to have been a sole voice.⁵⁶ The League did display a passing interest in the service of Aboriginal soldiers when, in the early 1930s, its journal *Reveille* published the names of men from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.⁵⁷ League branches also lobbied the government for voting rights for Aboriginal ex-servicemen, legislated in 1949, but this was because they had shown they 'were advanced enough to share the danger of active service' and demonstrated they were 'sufficiently advanced to cope with the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship'.⁵⁸ This showed an attitude to their comrades that was very different from the spirit of the Aboriginal men whose letters in the inter-war period linked war service with ending discrimination.

53 Flagg and Giurciullo 2008: 93.

54 Blackman to Tennant Kelly, 22 February 1935 in Trigger et al. 2011.

55 Williams in Goodall and Cadzow 2009: 126; Grant in *Western Mail*, 22 May 1930: 2; Riseman 2014a.

56 James Bennett, letter to *Cairns Post*, 2 January 1933.

57 'Many served: AIF Aborigines', 30 November 1931: 22; 'A.I.F. Aborigines: N.S.W.', 31 January 1932: 20.

58 National Secretary RSL to Prime Minister 1961, quoted in Curthoys 2000: 136.

This post-war distancing and exclusion, which sits oddly with wartime mateships, was also present in remembrance and commemoration. There is evidence that some Aboriginal men were present at these events. Men from Point McLeay regularly marched in Adelaide until at least 1945, and returned soldier Gordon Rigney placed a wreath of swan feathers on the Adelaide memorial. An unknown Aboriginal man marched in Brisbane in 1930 and 1931.⁵⁹ But the decision by Tommy Lyons and David Mullett to travel to Sydney to march in 1930 may have been because of the potential for exclusion in country towns known for racism and bigotry.⁶⁰ In one such town in Queensland, bereaved mother Rose Martyn was ignored at the unveiling of the Goombungee soldiers' memorial in 1920.⁶¹ In Collarenebri, New South Wales, Mick Flick felt unwelcome in the town's Anzac Day march after the death of his white friend, while the great uncles of May Mead attended functions for returned soldiers in Coonabarabran but 'felt like outsiders' although supposedly among wartime 'mates'.⁶² This underlines the transience of the wartime experience and the bonds it created.

Against this background it is not surprising that the early acknowledgement of Aboriginal war service came from within Aboriginal communities themselves. In Victoria, honour boards were set up in the mission churches at Lake Tyers and at Lake Condah. A memorial at Point McLeay mission church unveiled in 1925 was the result of collections and contributions by mission members.⁶³ At Walhallow reserve in New South Wales, home to activist Bert Groves, a memorial gateway at the school was erected in 1935, and a memorial to men from Cape Barren Island was unveiled in 1937.⁶⁴ On the other hand, Aboriginal men could be omitted from official memorials. While such omissions are not consistent, their existence was most pointed in country town communities where people were known to each other.⁶⁵ The memorial at Darlington Point, New South Wales, displayed no Aboriginal names, although 10 men from the district had served overseas. These included Walter Bright, whose family were founding members of the local mission and who returned to his pre-war employment at nearby Kooba station.

After the war, Aboriginal service received virtually no attention from white Australians until *Reveille* in the early 1930s sought to 'place on record the effort of the Aborigines during the Great War' based on a search for names via an

59 *News* (Adelaide), 25 April 1945: 8; 'Many served: AIF Aborigines', *Reveille* 1931: 22.

60 Their intentions are stated in correspondence in their service records; Austin and Dodson 1974 demonstrate the depth of prejudice prevailing in country towns.

61 Huggonson 1993b: 2.

62 Goodall 1987: 3–6; Mead in Sommerville 1994: 138.

63 Kartinyeri 1996: 11.

64 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1935: 11; Mallett 2001: 36–37.

65 Edmonds 2012: 172.

appeal to readers and reports from police and Protection boards.⁶⁶ This was less evidence of a particular focus on Aboriginal war service for its own sake than part of a more general move by ex-soldiers to reflect on the war, just over a decade on from the armistice.⁶⁷

The *Reveille* articles, which were directed to a limited audience, sank without trace. Despite this they had a pivotal role in the recognition of Aboriginal war service. Their accidental discovery by Chris Clark and his 1973 and 1977 articles were the beginning of a gradually increasing interest in the role of Aboriginal men in the First World War, one which coincided with white historians' belated acknowledgement that Australia had an Aboriginal history. In addition to white writers Robert Hall, David Huggonson, Rod Pratt, Alick Jackomos and Derek Fowell and Heather Goodall, Aboriginal people like Doreen Kartinyeri, Mollie Mallett, Ida West and Patricia Davis-Hurst began to write specifically about their families' and communities' war service. But although non-Aboriginal writing prior to the twenty-first century contains references to mateship and the Anzac legend,⁶⁸ these do not feature in the early writings of Aboriginal people. In the twenty-first century, Aboriginal war service has continued to receive attention, mostly in the context of writing about broader Aboriginal issues, but has remained outside mainstream accounts of the First World War, which even fail to give passing reference to the racist provisions of the *Defence Act*. However, a chapter on Aboriginal war service by Peter Stanley in a forthcoming volume of the *Oxford Centenary History of Australia in the Great War* could signal change.

Current perceptions

Historians acknowledge the problematic centrality of the Anzac legend to Australia's national mythology and argue that much of that mythology is founded on the concept of mateship.⁶⁹ In 2000, Ann Curthoys warned of the danger the presence of Aboriginal soldiers posed to this myth, based as it was on a white exclusiveness which located the Anzac narrative and its symbolic power firmly within the service of white Australians.⁷⁰ But as the century has progressed, this threat has been addressed and defused by mateship, as the internet, press and television have become major forces in projecting the story of Aboriginal war service told by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, all emphasising the importance of mateship.

66 AWM: 27, 533.

67 Holbrook 2014: 63–70.

68 For example, Hall 1990.

69 Holbrook 2014: 215; Lake and Reynolds 2010: 119.

70 Curthoys 2000: 133.

However, a hard look at the facts surrounding Aboriginal experience during and after the First World War challenges the new narrative of wartime equality and mateship now being used to give recognition to Aboriginal war service and to incorporate it into the Anzac legend. Rather than binding black and white together into a band of AIF brothers, mateship was more likely to have been an individual thing: Mick Flick's friendship with one white digger but rejection by others in his country town emphasises the need to look at mateship more closely and in a more nuanced way. This is not to devalue friendships where they existed, but to see them in all their complexities and in the light of available evidence instead of the construct of recent years, which can generalise and sentimentalise.

First World War Aboriginal servicemen displayed the same fortitude and resilience and experienced the same suffering as non-Indigenous soldiers. They deserve recognition and a place in our history of this conflict and its defining legend, but the reality of Aboriginal experience in the AIF should not be sacrificed in order to achieve it. The centenary of the First World War is a good starting point for a re-examination of Aboriginal war service – one which moves from general interpretation to an enriched appreciation of the identities of Indigenous servicemen, and which, while recognising the service of Aboriginal men, extricates it from the potentially distorting myth of mateship.

References

Archival sources

Australian War Memorial

AWM 15, 7611, Re Sale of intoxicants to Aboriginals.

AWM DRL/0428, Australian Red Cross Missing and wounded Enquiry Bureau Files, 1914–18 War, Arthur John Firebrace 163.

AWM 27, 533/1, Returns showing particulars of men of Aboriginal parentage who enlisted and served with the AIF, Sydney, 10 Aug. 1932.

National Australian Archives

NAA A471, Courts-Martial files, 1901– .

NAA A2487, 1919/3202 [Position of Australian Aboriginal soldiers].

NAA B2455, Personnel dossiers for first Imperial Forces, Jan. 1914 – Dec. 1920.

NAA MT1486/1, Applications to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force 1915–1918.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Pearson, John Wayne 2013, 'For king, or country: the treatment of Aboriginal veterans and their families after the First World War: the South Australian experience', AIATSIS MS3914.

Newspapers

The Advertiser (Adelaide)

The Australian Abo Call

The Border Morning Mail and Riverina Times

The Brisbane Courier

Healesville and Yarra Glen Guardian

The London Gazette

Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton)

News (Adelaide)

The Queenslander

The Sydney Morning Herald

Townsville Daily Bulletin

Western Mail (Perth)

Secondary sources

Austin, John and Michael Dodson 1974, 'What it means to be black in country towns', *Identity*, 2.2.

Bean, C. E. W. 1921, *The Story of ANZAC*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.

———1946, *Anzac to Amiens*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

Bleakley, John William 1961, *The Aborigines of Australia: Their History, their Habits, their Assimilation*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane.

Brookman, Ivy and Jim Smith 2010, *Gungarlook: The Story of the Aboriginal Riley Family of Burraborang Valley*, Den Fenella Press, Wentworth Falls, NSW.

Coulthard-Clark, C. 1973, 'Aborigines in the first AIF', *Army Journal*, March: 21–26.

- 1977, 'Aboriginal Medal winners', *Sabretache* XVIII: 244–247.
- Cunneen, Chris 2001, *Conflict, Politics and Crime: Aboriginal Communities and the Police*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Curthoys, Ann 2000, 'National narratives, war commemoration and national exclusion in a settler society. The Australian case', in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration Studies in Memory and Narrative*, T. G. Ashplant (ed.), Psychology Press, New York: 128–144.
- Davis-Hurst, Patricia 1996, *Sunrise Station*, Sunbird Publications, Taree.
- Denigan, Kathleen 2006, *Norman Baird: A Spark within*, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, Cairns.
- Dennis, Peter 1996, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Edmonds, Penelope 2012, 'Unofficial apartheid, convention and country towns: Reflections on Australian history and the New South Wales Freedom Rides of 1965', *Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15(2): 167–190.
- Flagg, Simon and Sebastian Giurciullo 2008, *Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper*, National Archives of Australia and Public Record Office of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Geographical Names Board of New South Wales 2003, Royal Anthropological Society of Australia manuscripts dated 1900 [CD], NSW Government, Dept of Lands, Sydney.
- Goodall, Heather 1987, 'Not such a respected soldier: the impact of World War 1 on Aborigines in New South Wales' Aborigines and World War 1', *Teaching History*, 21(4): 3–6.
- 1996 *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1992*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Goodall, Heather and Allison Cadzow 2009, *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney's Georges River*, UNSW Press, Sydney.
- Gordon, Harry 1965, *The Embarrassing Australian: The Story of an Aboriginal Warrior*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne.
- Hall, Robert 1989, *The Black Diggers. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 1990, 'Black Australians and the Anzac legend', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 16: 51–52.

- Holbrook, Carolyn 2014, *Anzac: The Unauthorized Biography*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney.
- Horton, Jessica 2012, 'Rewriting political history. Letters from Aboriginal people in Victoria, 1886–1919', *History Australia* 9: 157–181.
- Huggonson, David 1989, 'The dark diggers of the AIF', *The Australian Quarterly* 61(3), Spring: 352–357.
- 1993a, 'Aboriginal diggers of the 9th Brigade, First AIF', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 79: 214–225.
- 1993b, 'Aborigines and the aftermath of the Great War', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 1: 2–9.
- Jackomos, Alick and Derek Fowell 1993, *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam*, Victoria Press, Melbourne.
- Kartinyeri, Doreen 1996, *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs*, Adelaide Family History Project, South Australian Museum and Raukkan Council, Adelaide.
- Kipling, Rudyard 1892, *Barrack Room Ballads*, Macmillan and Co., London.
- Lake, Marilyn and Henry Reynolds 2010, *What's Wrong With Anzac?* University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Levine, Philippa 1998, 'Battle colors: Race, sex, and colonial soldiery in World War I', *Journal of Women's History* 9: 104–130.
- Mackett, Paul 1991, 'Queensland Exemptions held in 1947', in *Queensland Aboriginal Notes*, P. J. Mackett (comp), self-published, Red Hill, Qld.
- n.d., 'Queensland Removals 1912–1939 (Further information added.)', Centre for Indigenous Family History Studies, www.cifhs.com/qldrecords/qldremovalsmod.html, accessed 2 February 2015.
- Mallett, Molly 2001, *My Past Their Future: Stories from Cape Barren Island*, Blubber Head Press, Sandy Bay, Tasmania.
- Maynard, John 2007, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Pratt, Rod 1990, 'Queensland Aborigines in the First AIF', *Sabretache* XXXI, Jan/March: 18–22; April/June: 16–19; July/Sept: 26–29; Oct/Dec: 36–38.
- Riseman, Noah 2014a, 'Aboriginal military service and assimilation', *Aboriginal History* 38: 155–175.

- 2014b, 'Enduring silences, enduring prejudices: Aboriginal participation in the First World War', in *Endurance and the First World War: Experience and Legacies in New Zealand and Australia*, David Monger, Katie Pickles, Sarah Murray (eds), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle-on-Tyne :178–195.
- Robson, Leslie Lloyd 1982, *The First A.I.F.: A Study of its Recruitment 1914–1918*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic.
- Scarlett, Philippa 2008, *The Lock Family in World War One: How Service Records Contribute to Darug History*, Indigenous Histories, Macquarie, ACT.
- 2011 and 2015a, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF: The Indigenous Response to World War One*, first and third editions, Indigenous Histories, Macquarie, ACT.
- 2015b, 'Empty saddles and the Boys from Barambah: A cynical exercise', in Mark Newman, *The Boys from Barambah: The Story of the Black Diggers of Barambah-Cherbourg of World War 1*, The Ration Shed Museum, Murgon, Qld: 52–59.
- Seal, Graham 2004, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology*, University of Queensland Press in association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, UQP Australian studies.
- Somerville, Margaret 1994, *The Sun Dancin': People and Place in Coonabarabran*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Stanley, Peter 2011, 'He was black he was a White man and a dinkum Aussie: Race and empire in revisiting the Anzac legend', in *Race, Empire and First World War Writings*, Santanu Das (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 213–230.
- Trigger, David, Kim de Rijke, Tony Jefferies, Charmaine Jones and Michael Williams 2011, *The Caroline Tennant-Kelly Ethnographic Collection: Fieldwork Accounts of Aboriginal Culture in the 1930s* [DVD], University of Queensland, Brisbane.
- West, Ida 1987, *Pride against Prejudice*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.
- Winegard, Timothy 2012, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Lives twisted out of shape! Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers and the aftermath of the First World War

Andrea Gerrard and Kristyn Harman

In this article we consider how Tasmanian soldiers of Aboriginal descent experienced the aftermath of the First World War, drawing on and supplementing several case studies from a wider body of research Andrea Gerrard has undertaken into the recruitment and front line experiences of these men. Our particular focus here is to examine how the Repatriation (hereafter 'the Repat') Commission responded to these men post-war.¹ War changed these men both physically and mentally; literally their lives were twisted out of shape in ways that would have been unimaginable when they initially volunteered. We are particularly interested in interrogating whether the Tasmanian servicemen of Aboriginal descent and their families received treatment equal to that being meted out to other Tasmanian returned servicemen. We unsettle notions that returned Aboriginal servicemen continued to suffer significant discrimination with regard to repatriation benefits in post-war Tasmania, while acknowledging that their particular circumstances may have made the requisite application process more difficult than it was for other Tasmanian returned servicemen. As the Repat records have only recently been made available to researchers, it remains to be seen whether such experiences were distinctly Tasmanian or were emulated across mainland Australia.

1 All of the soldiers mentioned in this study are Tasmanian Aboriginal men who form part of a wider study into their enlistment and service during the First World War. This work 'Overlooked: Tasmanian Aborigines in the First World War' has been submitted by Andrea Gerrard for examination to satisfy the requirements of a Masters of Arts at the University of Tasmania.

Genealogical research using a wide range of sources has established that at least 75 men of Tasmanian Aboriginal ancestry volunteered for active service between 1914 and 1918. This number includes four men from Kangaroo Island who were the descendants of Betty Thomas, a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman taken by sealers during the nineteenth century.² From references noted in their personnel dossiers, it became obvious that not all records had survived the intervening years nor their transfer from the Repat in Tasmania to the National Archives at Sydney or Melbourne. In one instance, for example, the file for a war widow could be located but not that of her late husband.³ Indeed, around 29 per cent of the men comprising Gerrard's wider study do not have a Repat file, indicating that they made no further contact. This seems to be the case particularly for those who had been discharged for acts contrary to military regulations. For example, Willard Brown, who had been eager to enlist and had made a false statement regarding his age, was later discovered to be younger than his stated years and discharged. Another example is Lionel Cox, who was one of two Tasmanian Aboriginal servicemen to be struck off as a deserter. Other Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers who appear not to have had any further contact with the Repat were those who were discharged prior to embarkation, being medically unfit. Where they originally existed and have survived the intervening years, the Repat files along with Personnel Dossiers and War Gratuity files form the archival sources for this article.

Our methodological approach builds on the foundations laid by Marina Larsson in her monograph *Shattered Anzacs*, in which she opened up a new world that many social historians and others had only glimpsed, but that had not previously been fully explored or documented. Through access to the Repat records and talking with families, Larsson revealed many of the horrors that war wrought on the lives of the men who saw front line service, as well as those nearest and dearest to them as it impinged on family life.⁴ In the new edition of *Anzac Memories*, Alistair Thomson has been able to do something similar through his search for answers about First World War veterans he interviewed in the 1980s. Accessing the Repat records of those he had interviewed earlier also added new understandings of their experiences and how they had constructed their memories of the war.⁵

2 For a full account of Betty and her descendants, including 'Tiger' Simpson, see Taylor 2002.

3 The file for Alan Montgomery Burgess could not be located despite at least two searches being made for it.

4 Larsson 2009.

5 Thomson 2013, 2015.

Tasmanian Aboriginality and military service

During the war, there was a popular myth across Australia that the Tasmanian Aboriginal population had died out with the death of Truganini in May 1876. Yet commentators of the day, according to Russell McGregor, were well aware that people of mixed Tasmanian Aboriginal descent were living on the Furneaux Islands of Bass Strait.⁶ These people were descendants of nine women known to have lived with European sealers on the islands. The survivors increased to a 'sizable population on the islands' and formed a community on Cape Barren Island. In addition, there were 'Aboriginal survivors on mainland Tasmania, who integrated into white society to hide their Aboriginality and have only "come out" again over the last thirty or so years'.⁷ To suggest in the early decades of the twentieth century that on the one hand the race was extinct and on the other to acknowledge the existence of the Straitsmen was not a contradiction in terms at the time, but one that 'followed logically' ways in which race was conceptualised as 'a discrete and bounded entity'. As McGregor explains, so-called mixed-race people were not considered to be authentically Aboriginal people, 'for inclusion demanded that the individual possess all the characteristics supposedly distinctive to the race'.⁸

Following the expansion of the Tasmanian land and sea frontiers, the composition and distribution of Tasmania's Aboriginal population became quite distinctive. The Tasmanian government interacted with people of Aboriginal descent differently from their mainland Australian counterparts. For example, unlike most mainland states, no Aborigines Protection Board was established in Tasmania. Instead, a reserve was established on Cape Barren Island in 1881 to accommodate the people of Aboriginal descent known to live there. By the 1900s, in the lead up to the passage of the *Cape Barren Island Reserve Act 1912*, both the government and the Reserve inhabitants themselves had adopted the now outdated term 'half caste'. On the Tasmanian mainland, some Aboriginal people lived in discrete enclaves, such as the communities that formed in the south of the state comprising descendants of matriarch Fanny Cochrane-Smith, and in the north made up from those descended from Dalrymple Briggs. Others had integrated into wider local communities and in many cases their Aboriginality went unremarked. For these reasons, the question of Aboriginality was possibly not considered by Tasmanian-based recruiting officers during the First World War, and in any case was not noted on any of the Tasmanian attestation papers.

6 McGregor 1997: 50.

7 Everett 2000: 2.

8 McGregor 1997: 50; Everett 2000.

Within the wider data set of Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers, the men's experiences of repatriation varied considerably. This diversity is evident, for example, in briefly considering the case studies of three of these men. While all three were wounded in action, their treatment at the hands of the officers of the Repat and the medical fraternity were quite different. On 12 May 1919, John Rollins MM was discharged from the AIF, having served exactly four years and four months on active service.⁹ Johnson, to use his correct surname, served on Gallipoli for three months before being evacuated to Malta due to illness. He was lightly wounded at Mouquet Farm on 3 September 1916 whilst serving with the 52nd Battalion, hospitalised for scabies and evacuated from the front in April 1918, with a severe bullet wound to his right hand.¹⁰ In addition, he was awarded the Military Medal for 'bravery and devotion to duty' during operations at Zonnebeke in September 1917 for locating and repairing broken signal wires, thereby ensuring communications at all times.¹¹

By way of contrast, James Anderson volunteered for active service on 7 October 1915. Being passed fit, he was allotted to the 40th Battalion, then in the early stages of its formation. On reaching Etaples, France, in October 1916, Anderson was transferred to the 51st Battalion and spent the remainder of the year alternating between front line duty, training and undertaking fatigue duties. On 2 April 1917, the 51st Battalion participated in the 13th Brigade's attack at Noreuil. Anderson suffered a gunshot wound to his left ankle. He was evacuated to England and admitted to the Eastbourne Military Hospital a week later, where he underwent an operation to amputate his left leg below the knee. He left England to return to Australia in 1 November 1917.¹²

'Harry Boy' Brown enlisted on 25 January 1916 with four other Cape Barren Islanders. Embarking with the 12th Battalion, he was later transferred to the 52nd to bring it up to fighting strength before going into action at Mouquet Farm. Here he was wounded for the first time, being evacuated with a shrapnel wound to his left hand. His wound being relatively mild, he was soon back with his battalion. In November 1916, he sustained a shell concussion and burial and was evacuated to England for treatment.¹³ Suffering from headaches, insomnia, tremors, giddiness and some cardiac changes, it was decided that he was not fit to return to the front and was marked out for discharge, which took place in Hobart on 15 September 1917.¹⁴

9 Enlisted using the name John Rollins, legal name Jack Roy Johnson.

10 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #1867 John Rollins MM aka Jack Roy Johnson.

11 *Australian Gazette*, 23 May 1918: 1124, position 172; *London Gazette*, 14 January 1918: 846, position 151.

12 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #332 James Henry Anderson.

13 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #5054 Henry George Brown.

14 NAA M1692, Repatriation File Henry George Brown, #5054, Private, 52nd Battalion.

The war experiences of these men, while quite different, were not out of the ordinary for front line soldiers in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), particularly for those in the infantry or artillery who enlisted after the end of the Gallipoli campaign. A revision of the casualty figures for the AIF has found that just under half the men (147,000 or 46 per cent) of the 318,100 who enlisted became a battle casualty on at least one occasion.¹⁵ Of these, around 35,000 were wounded on more than one occasion. While the exact number of Aboriginal men who enlisted during the First World War is not known, to date around 850 men have been identified and their names compiled into one volume by Philippa Scarlett.¹⁶ The Indigenous Section of the Australian War Memorial estimated that there were approximately 1,300 Aboriginal enlistees, while recent research indicates that the number was probably higher, at around 1,500 men. These enlistees include well-known men such as Douglas Grant or William Punch, who were considered in accordance with the thinking of the time to be 'full blood' Aboriginal men, as well as many who were considered to be 'half-castes' such as the six Lavender brothers from New South Wales.

The federal government's response to the returned soldiers

During the war years, many promises were made on behalf of the Australian government as inducements to prospective volunteers, assuring them that they would all be well looked after on their return to Australia. While it was never spelt out, it has to be assumed that this was meant to apply to all who enlisted, particularly those who embarked for overseas service. It is likely that many Aboriginal soldiers wondered as they returned home whether they would be eligible for the same benefits as those offered to other soldiers. Perhaps they wondered if they too would be given the same medical care, pensions and other benefits that their other Australian counterparts received.

As wounded and otherwise incapacitated returned soldiers began to arrive home from the front, the initial response on the part of the Australian government was slow. With no comprehensive social welfare scheme in place, the government, in line with thinking that was current at the time, expected that individuals and volunteer organisations would provide relief for soldiers and their dependants. While many individuals provided help and organisations such as the Red Cross became heavily involved, the high number of wounded soldiers returning placed great demands on the limited services that existed. The government soon realised that it needed to assume what would be an unprecedented role, starting with

¹⁵ Noonan 2014: 127–128.

¹⁶ Scarlett 2013.

a pension scheme in October 1914, which was more compensatory by its very nature. The government's response arose less through a concern for the welfare of those who had served and their dependants, or to honour any commitments made, but was more pragmatic, with many soldiers who had returned early clearly disaffected at the lack of services or support. They were proving disruptive by threatening to derail the recruitment drive, which was seen as a national priority.¹⁷ Later, in an attempt to look after those who had served, the government belatedly introduced the *Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act 1917* in July 1917 in keeping with what was described at the time as its obligations to 'those who on its behalf have gone down into the Valley of the Shadow of Death and ... of those who heroically fought and suffered in its defence'.¹⁸

While some veterans on their return to Australia refused any connection with the system that had sent them to war, for many the Repat became central to their lives. 'Without the Repat', according to Lloyd and Rees, 'the quantum of human wretchedness, physical pain, mental anguish and poverty in the Australian community over three quarters of a century would have been incomparably greater'.¹⁹ This would not always be a positive experience, with many returned veterans having to battle with the Repat in order to have their various medical conditions accepted as war related.²⁰ By achieving such recognition, the cost of any associated medical treatment was covered along with some associated financial assistance in the form of a pension or an increase in an existing benefit if required.

The inception of the Repat

Australia's response to the mass of incapacitated men was the introduction of the Repatriation Health Care Service. The scheme operated and continues to do so in conjunction with other areas of the Repat including vocational training, welfare support and pensions. Approvals for pensions were dependent on medical examinations that went beyond simply defining the nature and extent of the veteran's incapacity. Only illness or injuries established as being related to a veteran's war service were treatable and compensable under the Repatriation scheme. As Thomson points out, 'strictly speaking, the war pension was neither a pension nor an entitlement'. While it provided some compensation for the loss of earning capacity, its aim at least prior to 1936 was to 'create self-reliant

17 Richardson 2005; Lloyd and Rees 1994.

18 *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1917* (Cth); Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 18 July 1917: 195; Lloyd and Rees 1994: 5.

19 Lloyd and Rees 1994: 419.

20 Larsson 2009; Blackmore 2008; Thomson 2013.

citizens who were not dependent on charity'.²¹ While the medical aspect of the Repat was aimed at repairing as far as was practicable the bodily damage caused by war, the process of obtaining the medical, hospital and pension assistance was at times very confronting, confrontational and intensely personal.

In order to apply for benefits, veterans needed to visit an accredited doctor (Local Medical Officer) to undertake a cursory medical examination to ascertain any incapacity in line with the veteran's claim. Upon receipt of the doctor's report, arrangements would then be made for the person to be seen by a Medical Officer from the Repat, at which time a detailed examination took place. The next step in the process, and possibly the most important, was the compilation of the reports to assess the nature and extent of any incapacity, and whether it was due to war service. This information was then sent to the Board for approval or rejection. As part of the examination, the veteran was asked to state his service history and the cause of his incapacity, which was then compared with their medical records. One problem, that few if any of the veterans would have been aware of, was that many of the AIF's most important wartime medical records had been mistakenly destroyed in London in 1919. Despite this, the onus of proof was on the veteran, who then had to use his body to prove his claim that his injury or illness was due to his war service. For many returned servicemen, the whole process was disempowering and even alienating, particularly when claims were rejected. For those who had their claims accepted, it was necessary under the Repat regulations to reduce the incapacity or suffering to a number that equated to a particular pension rate.²²

Aboriginality and Repat entitlements

The Repat status of Aboriginal men who had served in the AIF was a question that exercised the minds of some bureaucrats in the aftermath of the war, particularly given their status under the control of state regimes. Service in the AIF did not change the citizenship status of mainland Aboriginal veterans in particular, with many on their return continuing to have their activities restricted by various state legislations. As Noah Riseman has recently illustrated, institutional and individual racial discrimination experienced by Aboriginal returned servicemen extended to their families as well. In some instances, quarantined monies were not paid out, contributing to the wider phenomenon that has since become known colloquially as the 'stolen wages'.²³

²¹ Thomson 2013: 285.

²² Andrea Gerrard was the one-time Officer in Charge of Medical Records at the Repatriation General Hospital in Hobart, Tasmania.

²³ Riseman 2014: 188–189.

It did, though, according to Lloyd and Rees, 'give the Aboriginal war veteran entitlement to repatriation benefits'. This was made clear by Repatriation Commissioner Gilbert in 1919, when he pointed out that while an Aboriginal man who had served in the AIF might come under the care and supervision of the state Protection Board, he was still 'entitled to the benefits under the Australian Soldiers Repatriation Act', and therefore could not be denied the 'full use and enjoyment of any benefits granted to him' by the Repat.²⁴ As Lloyd and Rees acknowledge, this would seem a very enlightened policy given the standards of the time, but they have also expressed doubts about its implementation, given the dearth of evidence uncovered to date as to how this was applied. It would seem though, that it might not have been applied equally across the board, with sporadic complaints being made about discrimination against Aboriginal war veterans during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁵

Repat processes and procedures

On their return to Australia, men were required to undergo an examination shortly after leaving the ship. In one case cited by Alistair Thomson, non-Aboriginal soldier Bill Langham was taken straight from the ship to the Sturt Street Barracks to be examined. Desperate to join his family after a two hour wait, Langham told them that he did not care what they graded him as long as he was free to leave immediately. While Langham later re-established contact with the Repat over an eye injury, others shunned the services that might have been offered to them.²⁶ One such Aboriginal soldier was George Enos Mansell from Flinders Island. Despite being wounded in action at Mouquet Farm whilst serving with the 52nd Battalion, post-war he did not expose his body or his history to questioning by the Repat.²⁷ This may have been due to the geographical remoteness of his location compared with the nearest Repat centre, which was situated in Launceston in the north of Tasmania.

Another example is Edward Rees, who initially made contact with the Repat, but made no further claims even though he was wounded in action on two occasions. It is possible that his incarceration for desertion in 1918 may have been a contributing factor, potentially souring any relationship he had with the military, which for many included the Repat.²⁸ While remoteness was certainly

24 Lloyd and Rees 1994: 107.

25 Lloyd and Rees 1994: 107.

26 Thomson 2013: 290. Langham is the only non-Aboriginal soldier referred to in this article. The remaining men are all of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent.

27 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #5149 George Enos Mansell. Any further record of file No. R6748 has not been found.

28 NAA R10512 Repatriation File Edward Rees # 4356, Lance Corporal, 12th Battalion.

a factor in not contacting the Repat for some of the Furneaux Islanders, who relied on a weekly shipping service and would have had trouble attending necessary appointments on mainland Tasmania, for others such as George Fisher, it was demonstrably not an issue. Fisher, a Cape Barren Island inhabitant, had a long history of contact with the Repat from his return to Australia until his death in 1964.

Poor literacy skills might explain why William Elmer, who according to his obituary notice suffered poor health as a result of his 'war disabilities', had not made any further claims on the Repat for his ongoing health care.²⁹ The only claim he personally made was for some mining tools to enable him to be self-employed. Many years later, the local Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (hereafter RSSILA) sub-branch submitted a claim for his funeral expenses when he died in August 1941.³⁰ However, being illiterate was not an impediment to William Stanton from Nichols Rivulet. No doubt with help from his brother, William managed to access sustenance payments whilst trying to get the soldier settlement block he shared with his brother Harold up and running.³¹ In fact, the Stanton brothers managed to access a range of support which included help with school fees as well as funeral expenses for their mother.³²

On returning to Australia, James Henry Anderson was granted a pension at 100 per cent in respect of the loss of a lower limb. Six months later this was reduced to 75 per cent. Anderson, with little education, was then forced to return to manual labour. By age 55 he was struggling to hold down a job due to his disabilities, but the Repat refused his application for a Special Rate Pension and continued to do so despite agreeing that by age 60 he was unemployable.³³ A later claim for peripheral vascular disease was accepted. There is no mention of Aboriginality in his files, so this suggests that rather than discrimination based on race, this case involved a lack of empathy. As Larsson has explained, those from the working class who had partial disabilities were at the highest risk of being unemployed as they had formerly depended on their bodily strength for their livelihoods and were now no longer in a position to do so to the same extent.³⁴

29 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #315 William Elmer.

30 NAA R7806 Repatriation File William Elmer #315, Private, 40th Battalion; *Advocate*, 27 August 1941: 2.

31 NAA P130 R4225 #2310 William Alfred Stanton, Private, 40th Battalion.

32 NAA P130 R4225 #2310 William Alfred Stanton and P130 R5098 #2341 Harold Joseph Stanton, Private, 40th Battalion.

33 NAA R310 Repatriation File James Henry Anderson, #332, Private, 40th Battalion.

34 Larsson 2009: 102.

In February 1917, in England, Henry George Brown was assessed as being permanently unfit for general service, having been diagnosed with shell shock and burial. He was sent back home and discharged at Launceston in September 1917. Brown was granted a 50 per cent pension for a period of six months. Later the Repat sought a medical opinion from the doctor on Cape Barren Island where Brown resided, but also took the unusual step of asking the local police for a report into Brown's activities. The doctor reported that Brown was incapacitated and suffering from 'war shock and ear trouble' and had 'lost his earning power to the extent of the whole'. The local policeman reported that Brown had spent eight weeks catching muttonbirds during the birding season which implied that he was in 'good health and quite able to work'.³⁵ With conflicting reports having been provided, his pension was continued at 50 per cent until June 1919, when more claims were made that he had again been muttonbirding and had also completed a brief stint at tin mining. In August 1920 his pension was reduced to 25 per cent. In 1921 Brown complained to the Repat that the 10/6 he received weekly was not sufficient to live on. However, at the end of the year his pension was cancelled altogether. In June 1930, through help from the General Secretary of the RSSILA, Brown applied for his pension to be restored, which occurred later that year, again at 25 per cent. In Brown's case, his complex interactions with the Repat seem, at least in part, to have been inflected by race in that further evidence of his activities was requested from the local police. His engagement in traditional cultural activities was taken as evidence of his capacity to work and therefore his reduced need for financial support.

Not all applications claiming illnesses or diseases were accepted as war related by the Repat, and many had their claims rejected. But this did not prevent some from reapplying or appealing against the decisions, as in the case of Julian Everett who served with the 12th Battalion. Everett appealed against the decision made in November 1947 to grant him a 60 per cent pension on account of his inability to work due to congestion, weakness and shortness of breath. As a result of his lodging an appeal, Everett was required to travel to Hobart and spend time in the Repatriation General Hospital while further tests were carried out. Everett lost his appeal for a further increase and continued to be in receipt of a 60 per cent pension rate until his untimely death from drowning.³⁶

35 NAA R755 Repatriation File Henry George Brown, #5054, Private, 52nd Battalion.

36 NAA P130 R1567 Repatriation File Julian Clifford Everett #6271, Private, 12th Battalion.

Finding employment for returned soldiers

The issue of finding employment for the returned soldiers was one that exercised the minds of many from the time the first wounded men returned from Gallipoli. In August 1915, the Federal War Committee had raised the issue of employment for returning men and the obligations and responsibilities that it had in assisting with providing this. Senator Millen reiterated this point again in December 1918 when calling on the Australian public to assist in its 'duty of the nation', impressing on them the importance of providing employment to returning soldiers as part of the Repatriation process. He stated that all Australians needed to, and could, help with this, including local and state government bodies.³⁷ While some men like William Henry Mansell had taken up the offer of educational and training programs in Britain as they waited for the next boat home, it was not until after they were discharged that the Repat was prepared to accept some responsibility.³⁸ For example, Mansell, a Cape Barren Islander, obtained work with H. Childs, a firm of painters and decorators at Reading in England. However, he appears not to have used these skills to find work once back home. He may not have found much demand for painting and decorating in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Many who had returned home early to Tasmania were at a disadvantage despite calls to employers for returned soldiers to be given preference over civilians when employing staff or issuing contracts, even long before this was enshrined in legislation. Historian Lloyd Robson has referred to the 1920s as Tasmania's 'Dismal Decade', but its economic decline had begun at about the same time as many of the men left with the first contingent.³⁹ Despite two new industries having emerged in the state – the Electrolytic Zinc Company and the Cadbury Chocolate factory – the industrial and manufacturing base remained small and the labour market very tight.⁴⁰

In order for the Repat to help with finding employment, a soldier was required to register and report on a daily basis until finding work. If more than a week lapsed, then a graded sustenance allowance was usually granted to support the returned soldier, and his family if married. Prior to 1919, this sustenance allowance was generally continued for as long as the returned soldier was looking for work.⁴¹ Again it appears that sustenance payments and help in securing employment were extended to the Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers if they chose to apply. Yet this help did not extend to the Cape Barren Islanders

37 *The Mercury* (Hobart), 18 December 1918: 4.

38 According to NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #3356 William Henry Mansell.

39 See chapter 1 in Lake 1975.

40 Electrolytic Zinc Works started in 1916, and Cadbury's confectionery plant in 1920. See Alexander 1992.

41 Richardson 2005: 200.

when they returned to their island homes. With no industry or ongoing forms of employment available on the island, the Cape Barren veterans had to use their own networks to secure seasonal or casual work. None applied for sustenance payments or other benefits whilst out of work. Another Aboriginal soldier who was formerly a labourer prior to the war took advantage of the opportunity to learn a trade through engaging in an employment scheme. Jack Roy Johnson MM, who had returned from the war having sustained a gunshot wound to his right hand and ongoing problems with the varicose veins in his left leg, relocated to Hobart and undertook a fitting and turning class at the Hobart Repatriation Trades School. He learned some basic skills and then became an industrial trainee with the Hydro-Electric Power and Metallurgy Company at Electrona, south of Hobart, earning 40 per cent of the award rate. He was then taken on with the Hydro-Electric Department (later Hydro-Electric Commission) before moving to the Electrolytic Zinc Company at Risdon, near Hobart, where he was paid 65 per cent of the award rate. His wages were brought up to the minimum award rate by the Repat. His services were dispensed with owing to the curtailment of construction work at the plant, but he was later reinstated. Frequent periods of ill health affected Johnson's employment history, forcing him to rely on sustenance payments from the Repat when not covered by his leave entitlements.⁴² Despite his ongoing health issues, Johnson was, having availed himself of assistance through retraining under the Repat employment scheme, able to hold down a variety of jobs until his eventual retirement, albeit with his income being supplemented by the Repat.

In July 1921, Frederick Brown, a Tasmanian Aboriginal man living on Cape Barren Island, lodged a claim for a loan from the Repat for the purchase of a boat to help him earn a living. According to Brown the sum required was not large, just £75 for a 27-foot cutter which he claimed was in first-class order. His application was refused because he had not proved that he was involved in the fishing industry prior to enlistment, nor had he owned a boat on enlisting. Also taken into consideration was the fact that in order to be eligible, he should have applied within 12 months of being discharged. The Repat was not opposed to helping him if he could produce the necessary proof. Seeming to have lost interest in pursuing work as a fisherman and preferring instead to pick up labouring work when it was available, Brown took no further action.⁴³

42 NAA R4618 Repatriation File Jack Roy Johnson (alias Rollins) #1867, Lance Corporal, 52nd Battalion.

43 NAA R10525 Frederick William Brown, # 3427, Private, 40th Battalion.

War gratuities

A reading of the related war gratuity files held by National Archives (series P1868) suggests that in all probability the dependents and beneficiaries of the Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers who died whilst on active service were paid all the benefits to which they were entitled, but this was not the case Australia-wide. In a number of cases, financial benefits that were paid to the soldier or to his dependents were controlled by the various state Protectors of Aborigines or even the Repat itself, as Aboriginal people were usually treated as wards of the state. Doreen Kartinyeri in her study of the Ngarrindjeri Anzacs from South Australia cites the case where one dependent had her payments controlled by the Repat.⁴⁴ In the case of Alex McKinnon, 43rd Battalion, who was killed at Passchendaele, his gratuity was eventually granted to his mother Alice (Cobb) in 1922, but was to be paid to the Protector of Aborigines and not directly to Alice. His medals were given to his stepmother Mary, a woman he had had no contact with, despite McKinnon having given Alice as his next of kin and having made her his beneficiary.⁴⁵ There is no evidence of this happening in Tasmania where there was no Protector of Aborigines to control Aboriginal lives. Tasmanian Aboriginal people living on the Cape Barren Island reserve had some controls placed on their movements, but not in the same way as mainland Aboriginal people.

In 1915 and 1916 following the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, the payment of allowances and pensions was not always carried out in a timely manner, as bureaucracy came to terms with dealing with the aftermath of mass deaths.⁴⁶ Ida Miller, widow of Tasmanian Aboriginal Private John Miller, reported 'missing in action' at the landing at Anzac Cove, claimed the allotment that he had set aside to provide for her and their family of four young children.⁴⁷ The allotment was an interim measure until a pension was awarded. In June 1915 the rules changed, and allotments were to cease 'exactly two months' after notification of the death of a soldier, though *bona fide* dependents could gain an extension of a further two months.⁴⁸ At the end of February 1916, Miller's allotment ceased. With four little children under the age of four to provide for, she turned to the head teacher at Kelleve, near Sorell, to help her.⁴⁹ After applying to the Deputy Commissioner of Pensions, it was decided to reinstate the allotment until such time as a pension could commence. In order to receive the pension, Miller had to wait until after the determination of the Court of Inquiry, which sat

44 Kartinyeri 1996: 30–31.

45 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #2230 Alexander McKinnon.

46 NAA P1868 series War Gratuity Files.

47 NAA P1868 /1 War Gratuity File #T13336 John William Miller.

48 Stanley 2014: 245.

49 Ida Miller née Bloomfield had been born at Kelleve and may still have had family living there.

in Alexandria in June 1916.⁵⁰ Her experience was not unusual, particularly among the widows and families of those killed in action at the landing at Anzac Cove, who had to wait years in some cases while enquiries were made and determinations put in writing before pensions could begin to be paid.⁵¹ Families, if able, were expected to help in the meantime, but many widows, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, were forced to go cap-in-hand to charities, such as the Red Cross, for assistance with procuring food and rent, in the short term at least.

At the outbreak of the war it was not uncommon for a son or sons to be supporting one or both parents when they enlisted. On the death of their son, it was up to the mother (or in some cases the father) to prove that they had been supported by their son for at least 12 months prior to enlistment. Alicia Maynard from Cape Barren Island, mother of Tasmanian Aboriginal soldier Edward, proved that her son had been supporting her and was granted a pension following his accidental death in August 1915.⁵² Eva, Alicia's sister, also lost two sons who had been supporting her. She was granted £2 per fortnight following the death of Frank at Pozieres in August 1916, and a further 40/- when William was killed in action in April 1917.⁵³

While most parents or widows applied for the gratuity and other entitlements owing to their deceased sons, two fathers appear not to have applied for the gratuity payment or other entitlements for their Tasmanian Aboriginal sons, a situation which, while not common, was not necessarily that unusual either. While illiteracy may have been an issue for some families, it would not appear to have been so in the case of James Gower, who claimed the gratuity for one son who died of wounds, but not for the other son who died of illness. Why Gower did this is unclear from the remaining records.⁵⁴ While the money families received would be small compensation for their loss, it did in many cases help the dependents, at least in the short term.

Depending on the situation, some gratuities were paid in bonds, while others were paid out in cash. Henry William Brown and Peter Mansell both petitioned for the amount owing to be paid to them in cash in order to settle outstanding

50 NAA P1868/1 War Gratuity File #T13336 Private John William Miller.

51 Stanley 2014: 244–251.

52 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #2294 Edward Lewis Maynard & P1868/1 War Gratuity #T13269 Edward Lewis Maynard.

53 NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #1153 Frank Maynard & P1868/1 War Gratuity #T13270 Frank Maynard; B2455/1 Personnel Dossier #6311 William Samuel Maynard & P1868/1 #T13271 William Samuel Maynard.

54 James Gower claimed the gratuity for his son John Donald Gower who died of wounds in July 1916, but not for William Harold Gower who died of illness in November 1918.

debts that they had to local shopkeepers for provisions bought on credit.⁵⁵ As a muttonbirder, a traditional occupation among Tasmanian Aboriginal people, Mansell had not earned anything since the end of the last season. During the off season, many of the Cape Barren Island families purchased stores or other items on credit. By early 1920, Mansell had debts that extended back to 1918 and wanted help to finalise these. Brown claimed that since the war two sons had left home to get married and were no longer assisting him in muttonbirding. Unable to work on his own account, he was by June 1921 forced to work for wages that had been seized to cover his debts.⁵⁶ This left him with no money to purchase provisions for himself, his wife and four unmarried children until the next muttonbird season. There is no evidence on file to suggest that these requests were denied.

Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers, racism, and the Repat

There are no recorded statements to indicate that any concerns about race underpinned the Repat's decisions in relation to Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers. However, there are some demonstrable instances of racial discrimination impacting on their lives during the process of applying for benefits. For example, the medical officer servicing Cape Barren Island described William Mansell as a 'half-caste' with a 'poor physique, very little stamina which is natural with this type of man from the island'.⁵⁷ Another local medical officer was of the opinion that all Cape Barren Islanders had a poor diet and were lacking in vegetables and fruit. Clearly, this doctor had not talked to or spent time with these men. Several accounts of island life during the interwar years, such as those of Molly Mallett and Ida West, refer to the vegetable gardens kept by their fathers.⁵⁸ As Thomson discovered when accessing the Repatriation records, the files are 'crowded with moral judgements about family traits'.⁵⁹ How well Dr G. H. Key knew William Mansell is unclear. It would appear, though, from other comments made in the file that he had not had a lot of contact with him but had formed an opinion about the Islanders, which clearly exhibits racial prejudice. Despite many of the staff, including medical officers, being war veterans, any sympathy they might have had for these returned men was 'tempered by their bureaucratic role and by the social background and values'. Most medical officers shared a

55 NAA P1868/1 #T12236 Brown, Marcus Black Norman 40th Battalion, Application for War Gratuity; NAA P1868/1 #T5351, Mansell Morgan 40th Battalion, Application for War Gratuity.

56 NAA P1868/1 #T12236 Brown, Marcus Black (Blake) Norman, Statutory Declaration dated 24 June 1921.

57 NAA P130 R9467 Repatriation File William Henry Mansell #3356, Private, 40th Battalion.

58 Mallett 2001; West 2004.

59 Thomson 2013: 286.

‘set of conservative and “militaristic” social values about hierarchical authority, personal responsibility and moral character’, that saw them situate Aboriginal people low down the social scale.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In Tasmania, evidence garnered so far from Personnel Dossiers, Repat records, and other subsidiary records suggests that Gilbert’s statement of 1919 – that Aboriginal veterans were entitled to the same repatriation benefits as other soldiers – seems to have applied across the board. By and large, Tasmanian Aboriginal veterans received on application the same benefits that they were entitled to post-discharge as other veterans, in accordance with the schedules set out under the legislation.⁶¹ However, for some, factors such as geographical isolation, poor literacy rates arising from historic socioeconomic disadvantage, and the confronting elements of the process impacted on their capacity and will to complete or contest applications. In some cases, the application process was fraught with medical officers exhibiting elements of racial prejudice in preparing the necessary reports. In at least one case, it was probably his Aboriginality that saw Henry George Brown kept under an increased level of surveillance and discriminated against on the basis of his having engaged in a traditional cultural activity that allegedly proved his health was better than he had claimed.

In Tasmania, gratuities and other payments were made directly to the beneficiaries, regardless of race, unlike some instances cited from the mainland. Evidence also demonstrates that some Tasmanian Aboriginal returned servicemen successfully applied to lease land under the Settlement Scheme. If there was any discrimination or lack of understanding on the part of the Repat, it was in requiring Cape Barren Islanders to travel to Launceston, let alone Hobart, which was even farther away, for assessment or treatment. It would appear few, if any, officers involved in organising transportation for these men had any idea of the remoteness of Flinders and Cape Barren Islands, or knew that (in this era before a regular air service) shipping called only on an irregular basis. Leaving the island was at times a feat in itself. The men, though, were connected to this land, which was, after all, their home.

⁶⁰ Blackmore cited in Thomson 2013: 286.

⁶¹ The *Australian Soldiers’ Repatriation Act 1917* has four schedules attached to it setting out general pension rates, rates for special pensions and rates payable for those who are incapacitated.

References

Primary Sources

National Archives of Australia

NAA B2455/1 Personnel Dossiers:

#1867 John Rollins MM (aka Jack Roy Johnson)

#332 James Henry Anderson

#5054 Henry George Brown

#1340 Cyril Allen Johnson

#5149 George Enos Mansell

#4356 Edward Rees

#315 William Elmer

#889 George Leonard Johnson

#2294 Edward Lewis Maynard

#1153 Frank Maynard

#6311 William Samuel Maynard

#3356 William Henry Mansell

#2230 Alexander McKinnon

Repatriation Files

P107 Series:

M1692 #5054 Henry George Brown, 52nd Battalion

P130 Series:

R10512 #4356 Edward Rees, Lance Corporal, 12th Battalion

R7806 #315 William Elmer, Private, 40th Battalion

R4225 #2310 William Alfred Stanton, Private, 40th Battalion

R5098 #2341 Harold Joseph Stanton, Private, 40th Battalion

R4618 #1867 Jack Roy Johnson (alias Rollins), Lance Corporal, 52nd Battalion

R10525 #3427 Frederick William Brown, Private, 40th Battalion

R1567 #6271 Julian Clifford Everett, Private, 12th Battalion

R9467 #3356 William Henry Mansell, Private, 40th Battalion

War Gratuity Files (P1868 Series):

#T13336 Private John William Miller, 12th Battalion

#T13269 Private Edward Lewis Maynard, 15th Battalion

#T13270 Private Frank Maynard, 26th Battalion

#T13271 Private William Samuel Maynard, 12th Battalion

#T12236 Private Marcus Black Norman Brown, 40th Battalion

#T5351 Private Morgan Mansell, 40th Battalion

Legislation

Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act 1917 (Cth)

Newspapers

The Advocate

Australian Gazette

London Gazette

The Mercury (Hobart)

Secondary sources

Alexander, Alison 1992, *The Zinc Works: Producing Zinc at Risdon 1916–1991*, Pasminco-Metals EZ, Risdon.

Blackmore, Kate 2008, *The Dark Pocket of War: War, Medicine and the Australian State 1914–1935*, Lythrum Press, Adelaide.

Crotty, Martin and Marina Larsson (eds) 2010, *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War*, Australian Scholarly Publications, North Melbourne.

Everett, Jim 2000, *Siglo* 12: 1–6.

Gammage, Bill 2010, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

- Larsson, Marina 2009, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Lloyd, Clement and Jacqui Rees 1994, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- McGregor, Russell 1997, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Clayton South.
- Mallett, Molly 2001, *My Past – Their Future: Stories from Cape Barren Island*, Blubberhead Press, Sandy Bay.
- Noonan, David 2014, *Those We Forget: Recounting Australian Casualties of the First World War*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- Kartinyeri, Doreen 1996, *Ngarrindjeri Anzacs*, South Australian Museum and Raukkan Council, Adelaide.
- Richardson, Andrew 2005, 'The Long Road Home: Repatriation in Tasmania 1916–1929', unpublished PhD thesis, School of History and Classics, University of Tasmania.
- Riseman, Noah 2014, 'Enduring silences, enduring prejudices: Australian Aboriginal participation in the First World War', in *Endurance and the First World War: Experience and Legacies in New Zealand and Australia*. David Monger, Katie Pickles and Sarah Murray (eds), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 178–195.
- Scarlett, Philippa 2013, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF*, Indigenous Histories, ACT.
- Stanley, Peter 2014, *The Lost Boys of Anzac*, NewSouth Publishing, Millers Point.
- Taylor, Rebe 2002, *Unearthed: The Aboriginal Tasmanians of Kangaroo Island*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide.
- Thomson, Alistair 2013, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, Melbourne University Publishing, Clayton.
- Thomson, Alistair 2015, 'Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History', *Oral History Review* 42(1): 1–29.
- West, Ida 2004, *Pride against Prejudice: Reminiscences of a Tasmanian Aboriginal*, Montpelier Press, North Hobart.

‘Willing to fight to a man’: The First World War and Aboriginal activism in the Western District of Victoria

Jessica Horton

In April 1916, *The Age* ran a short story headed ‘Aborigines in camp: Others willing to fight’, announcing the presence of two ‘full-blooded [sic] natives’ among the soldiers at the Ballarat training camp.¹ The men’s presence blatantly contradicted popular interpretations of the *Defence Act 1909* (Cth).² Only men of ‘substantial European origin’ were eligible to enlist in the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF), although, in May 1917, the regulations were modified allowing ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal men entry.³ The Aboriginal men volunteering to fight in April 1916 were James Arden and Richard King, Gunditjmara men from the Lake Condah Aboriginal Reserve in the Victorian Western District. In the Condah area there was already an acceptance of Aboriginal men’s participation in sport and labour; during the First World War, this extended to military service.⁴ The men’s ‘splendid physique’ may have justified their acceptance into the military.⁵ James Arden was a ‘well known rough rider’ and Richard King had ‘claimed distinction as a footballer and all-round athlete’. The journalist portrayed the spectacle of the Aboriginal men at the Ballarat training camp to

1 *The Age*, 13 April 1916. PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3, 1917 correspondence. The newspaper report misspells Arden’s name as Harding. The story also featured in the *Horsham Times*, the *Portland Observer* and the *St Arnaud Mercury*.

2 *Defence Act 1903–1909* (Cth). Scarlett 2014: 3.

3 For changes to military regulations see Winegard 2012a: 54.

4 For public support of Aboriginal enlistment in Hamilton, see ‘Departure of Soldiers’, *Hamilton Spectator*, 29 March 1916: 4. Instances of support can also be found in other locations across Victoria, Scarlett 2014: 55.

5 On discretionary recruitment, see Scarlett 2014: 55.

promote white men's enlistment. Articles announcing Indigenous enlistments were published across south-eastern Australia during the 1916 and 1917 recruitment drives.⁶

Unusually, however, *The Age* report quoted the Aboriginal volunteers. The article reported the two men were 'anxious to get out to the front as soon as possible in order to fight for the Empire'. James Arden added, 'the natives at the Condah station felt that they were real Britishers, having been born under the Australian flag, and were willing to fight to a man if they were accepted by the military authorities'.⁷

James Arden's pledge to 'fight to a man' was a statement of Aboriginal equality with other Australian 'Britishers'. He mobilised a discourse of equality founded in imperial loyalty, national service, personal sacrifice and masculine prowess. He sought inclusion in a white institution by claiming his status as a British subject, but he did so on behalf of the Aboriginal people of 'Condah station'.

Throughout his life, James Arden was a fierce defender of his rights. After discharge from the army, he confronted the ongoing attempts of the Lake Condah manager to withhold his military pension. The manager cast him as a 'trouble maker' and a 'bad example' for the other reserve residents. Nevertheless, Arden would become the first in a long line of men within his family to volunteer for military service. His grandsons Harry and Reginald Saunders volunteered for the Second AIF. Reginald Saunders would go on to become one of the first Australian Aboriginal soldiers to achieve the rank of commissioned officer.⁸

Tracing James Arden's story, as well as the stories of other Western District Aboriginal servicemen and their families, contributes to an understanding of the political dimensions of Indigenous First World War experience. First, this article highlights the connections between Aboriginal grassroots political activism and enlistment in the AIF. There is growing recognition of the ways in which Aboriginal people's post-war disappointment fuelled the political agitation of the 1920s and 1930s.⁹ Most historical narratives suggest that it was not until *after* the First World War that military service, and the concept of loyalty, became linked to Aboriginal citizenship rights.¹⁰ If, as John Maynard suggests, Aboriginal soldiers 'had gone overseas with an agenda in their kit bag', we know little about what this agenda looked like.¹¹ This is not surprising

6 Scarlett 2014: 36.

7 *The Age*, 13 April 1916. PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3 1917 correspondence.

8 New research from Tasmania has revealed an earlier commissioned Indigenous officer, Riseman 2014b: 187. On Reginald Saunders see Gordon 1965; Ramsland and Mooney 2006.

9 See Goodall 2008; Maynard 2007, 2014; Scarlett 2014; Huggonson 1989; Peterson and Sanders 1998; Jackomos and Fowell 1993; Attwood and Marcus 2009; Winegard 2012a.

10 Riseman 2014b: 182.

11 Maynard 2014: 426.

considering most Aboriginal men enlisted in the AIF by hiding their Indigenous heritage, or at least not drawing attention to it.¹² But this was not the case in the Victorian Western District.

On several occasions, Gunditjmara men used the moment of their enlistment to proclaim their rights as ‘Britishers’ and ‘natives of the Condah station’ to join the military. These are slight but tangible pieces of evidence that expand our knowledge of the ways in which Aboriginal men expressed the meaning of their military service. In order to build a larger picture of the Lake Condah men’s motivations and loyalties, I draw upon biographical material and the greater context of Western District Aboriginal history. This forms a partial account, but one which foregrounds the coherence of Indigenous people’s simultaneous and overlapping loyalties that were founded in their local, national and imperial identities. Such attempts at narration are necessary for, as historians have noted, Indigenous military service in the First World War is rendered irreconcilable, ‘bizarre’ or even ‘perverse’, when viewed through the nation state as service to ‘white Australia’.¹³

Second, this article explores the struggle of Western District Aboriginal servicemen and their families to maintain access to their military wages and repatriation benefits. Indigenous people across Australia and other settler societies – Canada, New Zealand and South Africa – did not gain equal access to their repatriation benefits and military wages.¹⁴ In contrast to other Australian states, Aboriginal authorities in Victoria did not systematically deny Aboriginal people military allotments and pensions, but judged each case on its ‘merits’.¹⁵ In Victoria, many Aboriginal people, including James Arden, successfully contested the Board for the Protection of Aborigines’ (hereafter Board) attempts to withhold their military allotments and pensions, and their government rations, by claiming their rights as returned soldiers, relatives of men at war, and Aboriginal people.

Finally, this article charts the process by which, in 1917, the demand for land created by the Soldier Settlement Scheme precipitated the enactment of the Board’s long held ‘concentration plan’ to close all reserves, except Lake Tyers in Gippsland. Soldier repatriation resulted in a ‘second dispossession’ of Aboriginal people, and soldier settlement land was not made available for returned Aboriginal servicemen.¹⁶ The Aboriginal war effort figured prominently in Aboriginal people’s arguments against these closures. Gunditjmara claims to equality through war service may be particularly visible in the archives

12 Scarlett 2014: 55–57.

13 Two historians who observe this are Huggonson 1989: 353; Bennett 2014: 466.

14 See Winegard 2012a, 2012b. On South Australia see Pearson 2013.

15 See Riseman 2014b: 188. On Queensland see Pratt 2007: 232–233.

16 Goodall 2008.

due to the dynamics of settler/Indigenous relations in the Condah area and the widespread English literacy of Indigenous people in Victoria in the early twentieth century. However, Aboriginal people elsewhere in Australia made similar public claims for inclusion in the war effort as Indigenous people.¹⁷ Moreover, on a broader level, international scholarship is now revealing shared patterns of expectation, disappointment and politicisation within histories of British Dominion Indigenous military service.¹⁸

In Australia, the centenary of the First World War has given rise to new studies and narratives that explore the history of Aboriginal military service.¹⁹ However, within public commemorations of the centenary the complexity of this history remains subsumed by the hegemonic Anzac legend, and reference to the frontier wars has been evaded.²⁰ The frequently used name 'the fighting Gunditjmara' resists this culture of forgetting. Originally referring to their long conflict with Europeans during the Eumerella Wars of the 1840s, the 'fighting Gunditjmara' is now used by the Western District Aboriginal community to refer to their military contributions for Australia and their considerable achievements in sport.²¹ It is a name that insists that the history of dispossession, and Aboriginal active resistance, remains centrally located in the Aboriginal narrative of 'serving country'. By paying attention to historical sources from the Western District, we can further contextualise the Gunditjmara military tradition, along with the service of other Victorian Aboriginal people, within a long history of diverse engagements with Europeans, and a 'home front' of continuing dispossession, Aboriginal political struggle and protection legislation.

Enlistment

In Victoria, joining the military was one of the few acts Aboriginal men living under the Protection Acts could undertake without asking the Board's permission.²² The *Aborigines Act 1910* (Vic) determined whether Aboriginal people were eligible to live on a reserve depending on their official racial status as either 'half-caste' or 'full-blood' and gave the Board extensive powers to

17 For example, Cherbourg Aboriginal men stated they were 'coloured members of the Empire', Pratt 2007: 226.

18 For transnational perspectives see Winegard 2012a; Marti 2015; Maynard 2014; Sheffield 2015.

19 Examples include the Serving Our Country Australia Research Council Linkage Project; the 2014 NAIDOC Week theme of 'Serving Country: Centenary and Beyond'; the Queensland Theatre Company's 2014 production *Black Diggers*, which toured Australia in 2015. For broadcast narratives on Indigenous service, see Bennett 2014.

20 On memorialisation see Reynolds 2013; Lake and Reynolds 2010.

21 'A fighting spirit', *The Age*, 24 April 2006, www.theage.com.au/news/features/a-fighting-spirit/2006/04/24/1145861286782.html.

22 In 1916 the Board stated that it was not in opposition to 'half castes' enlisting if the military would accept them. Broome 2005: 199.

monitor Aboriginal people's movement, work, material possessions, association with other Aboriginal people and where their children lived.²³ In 1916, Board regulations further restricted the movement of Aboriginal people on and off reserves, with a view to reducing reserve populations.²⁴ The Framlingham station, near Lake Condah in south-western Victoria and home to the Kirrae-wurrung, had been closed in 1898. It remained an unstaffed reserve.²⁵ Lake Condah and Coranderrk were under threat of closure. Employment in the army provided Aboriginal men a chance to escape the control of the Board, and to provide their families with homes off the reserves.

At Lake Condah, local sympathy for Aboriginal enlistment meant that James Arden and Richard King could take matters further. In 1916, James Arden was 43 years old, a father of six, and a horse breaker by trade.²⁶ Richard King, a descendant of Gunditjmara leader 'King Billy of Yigar', was 32 years old, single and working as a labourer.²⁷ When Arden stated that the 'natives at the Condah station' were 'willing to fight to a man', he spoke for a community that was on the verge of being exiled from their reserve. By tethering the Lake Condah men's right to enlist to their status as 'Britishers' born under the 'Australian flag', he invoked a historical relationship with the Crown that underwrote Aboriginal people's occupation of reserves and the policy of Aboriginal protection.²⁸ Arden's claim to British subjecthood on behalf of his people also countered the racial exclusions of the *Defence Act* that required Aboriginal men to negotiate recruitment on an individual basis through denying their indigeneity.

Carrying further political implications was the newspapers' description of Arden and King as 'full-blooded natives'. This was unusual due to the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the military, plus the Board classified the men as 'half-caste'.²⁹ It is possible that Arden had told the newspaper he and King were 'full-blooded', and this would indicate a pride in his Aboriginality. If this were indeed the case, this identification could also represent defiance of the Board's definition of Aboriginal people according to 'caste', which dispossessed

23 The *Aboriginal Protection Act 1886* (Vic) had created legal categories 'half-caste' and 'Aboriginal' which had age and gender qualifications, Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 29. See also Land 2006; Ellinghaus 2001.

24 Broome 2005: 203.

25 Framlingham and Coranderrk were government run stations; Lake Condah and Lake Tyers were Anglican missions. I will refer to all four as reserves. For Framlingham, see Barwick 1981; Critchett 1992.

26 James Arden, service no. Depot 573 discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/; NAA B2455.

27 Richard King service no. 579, discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/; NAA B2455. On the King family, see Cole 1994: 43.

28 For Indigenous peoples' status as British subjects, see Chesterman and Galligan 1997: 81; Evans et al. 2003: 65–68; relationship with the Crown, see Mitchell 2010; Curthoys 2008; Nugent 2012.

29 Note on newspaper clipping of *The Age*, 13 April 1916. PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3 1917 correspondence.

Aboriginal people of their land and their Indigenous identity.³⁰ A claim to be 'full-blooded' would strengthen a statement of belonging to the Lake Condah reserve.

James Arden had confidently positioned himself as a community spokesperson, and he may well have been one. Like many Aboriginal volunteers, Arden had throughout his life sought to wrestle free from the paternalism of the Victorian authorities. He had overtly confronted and defied missionaries and station managers. For years, he and his wife Christina (née Austin) and their children had lived on and off the reserves.³¹ Arden had been employed on white people's farms and this brought him into conflict with reserve managers who wished to control his movements. When, in 1912, the Board forced him to move to Lake Condah from Framlingham, Arden told the missionary John Henry Stähle that he would not be attending the Anglican services on the mission. Furthermore, he would not let his children be sent into service in white people's homes. He threatened the missionary with a police summons if he interfered with his affairs.³² From the biography of his grandson Reginald Saunders, we learn that James Arden had considerable cultural knowledge. Saunders, who lived with his grandparents when he was a boy, recalled that his grandfather would speak for 'hours' about the violent struggles between the British and the Condah Nation. Arden could still speak the Wannon language.³³

James Arden and Richard King were not the only Lake Condah volunteers to make public statements of Gunditjmara patriotism. By 1916, Lake Condah was a community already significantly committed to the war effort. From a community of around 60 people, at least nine men had enlisted and many others had attempted to do so.³⁴ In March 1916, the *Ballarat Courier* reported: '11 stalwart men from the Lake Condah Mission Station accompanied by Recruiting-Sergt Campbell marched through Gray Street to the recruiting office [Hamilton]'. Eight of the men were accepted and all were 'heartily congratulated on their patriotism'. This was a performance of loyalty that won the men local celebration and press coverage. Yet the men, when making final arrangements to go to Ballarat, ran into opposition of an unidentified nature, and were rejected. The *Portland Guardian* recorded 'great indignation' at the news of the men's rejection.³⁵ Arden and King's presence at the training camp some weeks later was perhaps less objectionable than the group of eight 'stalwart' Aboriginal

30 See McMillan and McRae 2015.

31 See Grimshaw et al. 2002. Arden letters throughout the book.

32 PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 4, Bundle 6.

33 Gordon 1965: 37–38. On dispossession in Western District, see Clarke 1998; Critchett 1990.

34 Population statistics, Victoria. Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912: 6. Of the 108 currently known Aboriginal men who enlisted in the AIF from Victoria, 33 were from south-western Victoria. See Bakker 2014: 2.

35 Cited in Martin 2014: 18.

men in an otherwise all white military camp. Regardless, Arden and King rearticulated the hope that the First World War would provide the opportunity to confront and dispel military racial discrimination, and to promote the rights and recognise the strengths of the Lake Condah people. These assertions of belonging and identity reflected not only the opportunities of the First World War, but a long history of adaptive engagement with Europeans.

In the post-frontier period, Western District Aboriginal people utilised European technologies and contemporary political discourses in pursuit of Aboriginal agendas. In the 1870s, there were ongoing reports of 'rebellion' and 'insubordination' at Framlingham and Lake Condah, over issues of labour, wages, and mobility.³⁶ Increasingly, Aboriginal people used their English literacy to write letters to white allies and officials, including the Queen's representative, the Governor.³⁷ In the early 1900s, Maggie and Ernest Mobourne saved the Lake Condah reserve from closure through a campaign that articulated their identities as Christian mission residents, honoured the Condah elders, and galvanised the support of 348 settlers.³⁸ Western District Aboriginal people also socialised and worked with local settlers, and competed with, and against, them in sport. Reserves regularly hosted well-attended sports carnivals.³⁹ Through participation in sport, Aboriginal men won esteem, respect, as well as what Richard Broome describes as 'moments of dominance'.⁴⁰

By the turn of the twentieth century, citizenship and soldiering had become inextricably linked in white Australia's political discourse.⁴¹ Martin Crotty has shown how, throughout the First World War in Australia, the figure of the citizen soldier was 'hailed as a model citizen' at the apex of the new social hierarchy, and as such could lay a superior claim to rights and privileges, because of his sacrifice and service to his country.⁴² Joan Beaumont has demonstrated that British loyalty (alongside masculinity, military obligation and racial homogeneity) was central to conceptions of Australian 'Imperial citizenship' during and after the First World War.⁴³ Victorian Aboriginal people, as mobile and connected people, were party to the nationalist and imperial discourse on the rights and obligations of 'Australian citizens', particularly those of the soldier.

36 NAA B313, Box 3, Item 49 Framlingham Station 1876, Box 10, Item 176; Christie 1979: 195.

37 See Critchett 1992; Broome 2005; van Toorn 2005, 2006; Barwick 1998; De Costa 2006; Curthoys and Mitchell 2012; 2010; Grimshaw 1999; Grimshaw and Nelson 2001; Grimshaw et al. 2002.

38 Van Toorn 2005: 26–27. See also Critchett 1998: 167.

39 For Condah Indigenous-settler relations, see Gordon 1965: 38–40.

40 Broome 1980. See also Hunter 2008.

41 See Lake 1992. See also Garton 1998.

42 Crotty 2007: 193.

43 Beaumont 2007: 172.

Aboriginal people, in the Western District or elsewhere, did not use explicit 'rights talk' in their bid to participate in war. They did not have access to the political platforms and settler support that would be important in the post-war struggle mounted by organisations such as the Australian Aborigines Progressive Association (AAPA). Rather, their relationship to the British Crown, and the tradition of asserting masculinity through participation in sport and labour, presented Aboriginal men the chance to prove their equality with other Australian 'Britishers' in what was being touted as the greatest test of manhood yet. In the process, the Gunditjmara patriots James Arden, Richard King and the group of 11 Condah men laid claim to the attributes of what would later emerge as a 'soldier citizenship' – courage, willingness to fight and sacrifice.⁴⁴

Entitlements

For James Arden and Richard King, successful enlistment did not mean they were sent overseas for 'active service'. Richard King died in the Ballarat training camp of 'influenza with heart failure' two months after enlisting.⁴⁵ James Arden, too, fell ill and suffered in military camp for seven months with meningitis before returning to Lake Condah. During this time, his wife Christina and their children moved briefly in response to the Board's request that she hand over some of her military allotment to pay for her keep on the reserve.⁴⁶ When James returned to Lake Condah from military camp, he was entitled to a military pension of £12 per month, which he applied for and received.

Australian military pay and the post-war welfare system were considered generous compared with those of other British Empire countries.⁴⁷ For example, as a private, Chris Saunders from Lake Condah earned six shillings a day and sent four shillings as an 'allotment' home to his crippled mother.⁴⁸ Outside the military, Aboriginal men found intermittent work, occasionally earning the same wages as white men on railways and in other manual labour.⁴⁹ The military offered a regular average wage accompanied by other benefits. Returned servicemen were eligible for disability pensions, including allowances for their dependents, and preference in government employment and occupational

44 Bennett 2014: 466. See also Janowitz 1976.

45 Richard King service no. 579, discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au; NAA B2455.

46 Grimshaw et al. 2002: 292–294.

47 Murphy 2011: 107–129.

48 Saunders to Board, 29 August 1917, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3 Coranderrk folder.

49 For Percy Pepper's employment, see Flagg and Gurciullo 2008.

training.⁵⁰ Several Aboriginal families in Victoria received military pensions, but whether Victorian Aboriginal families applied for and received war gratuities, a one-off payment upon discharge, remains unclear.⁵¹

With increased pressure to close reserves and allocate land for soldier settlement, the Board sought to reduce its expenditure. From 1916 onwards, local authorities were required to monitor Aboriginal people's income closely, and families receiving government rations and income from the military came under scrutiny.⁵² The struggle to gain access to repatriation benefits was a common veteran experience after the First World War,⁵³ but Aboriginal people, now caught between two 'welfare' systems, had to contend with the direct attempts of the Board to withhold their military allotments and pensions.

When James Arden returned to the reserve in October 1916, his military pension meant that he could refuse to work for the manager on the reserve for government rations. The manager, William Galbraith, took particular offence at the way Arden spent his money, and informed the Board that he 'intends buying a billiard table and is going to Hamilton to buy a £65 piano ... [their] children are dressed in finery far above their station'. This display of material gain symbolised a rise in Arden's social position inappropriate to his 'native' status. Galbraith questioned Arden's right to receive the military pension of £3-2-6 weekly. The manager told the Board that Arden was fit and well and capable of working. In response to the Secretary's request that he hand his pension 'over to the Board to be utilised in the maintenance of [himself] and family or to be held in a trust', Arden replied:

I beg to say that I can not see my way clear to hand my money over to the Board, I think I deserve the money I am getting no one knows the pains and sufferings I underwent the Meningitis and I further state that I have started a banking account of my own.⁵⁴

Rather than acquiesce to their demands, Arden decided to do away with the Board's support and 'to leave the Station'. By June 1917, the Arden family had moved into a rented house nearby in Dunmore West. Since he was officially a 'half-caste', the Board and manager had no power to stop him. He retained his pension but Galbraith attempted to have it 'reduced' by claiming that Arden was 'able to earn his own living'. He could not understand how 'a native under the circumstances is getting so much'.⁵⁵ In a letter to Ann Bon, member of the

50 Lake 1992: 319.

51 Winegard 2012a: 248-249. For an example of denied war gratuity, see Alexander McKinnon service no. 2230, discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au; NAA B2455. I am grateful to Bruce Scates for this reference.

52 Minutes of Board meetings, 4 July 1916, NAA B314.

53 See Garton 1996; Larsson 2009.

54 Arden to Board, no date on letter, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3, 1917 correspondence.

55 Galbraith to Board, 8 June 1917, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 4, Bundle 1.

Board and advocate for Aboriginal people, Arden let his opinion of the manager and matron be known: 'I must really say that no one can stand their ways, they are not fit they are to [sic] fond of drink'.⁵⁶

In 1918, reserve managers reported that there were six people in the vicinity of reserves in receipt of both rations and military allotments: two at Coranderk, three at Lake Condah, and one at Framlingham.⁵⁷ Not all families of men at war were in receipt of rations or living on, or near, Aboriginal reserves.⁵⁸ At Lake Condah, Galbraith singled out the Carter family who, in 1917, had left the reserve to live on five acres in Dunmore. Agnes Carter received government rations and money from her nephew in the AIF, Robert William Taylor, and her sons who were working on farms and railways.⁵⁹ Galbraith saw the new prosperity of families like the Carters and Ardens as an insult to the white 'race', and a disturbance, even inversion, of the racial hierarchy: 'To see a black fellow strutting about in a white waist coat like William Carter is beyond a joke while the white race is labouring'.⁶⁰

In response to Galbraith's reports, the Board advised the Defence Department that it would be in the best interests of the soldiers to hold in a trust the military allotments of the six people identified as receiving both rations and allotments. The Defence Department wished to know if the people were 'in any way dependent upon the allotments for their maintenance', but suspended the payments. With some assistance from local authorities, all six people, including Agnes Carter, successfully appealed for the reinstatement of their allotments.⁶¹ Bessie Rawlings at the nearby Framlingham reserve, whose 'dear only son' Reginald Rawlings had 'gone to give up [his life] for king and freedom', was another of these petitioners.⁶²

Frustrated in its attempts to stop Aboriginal people's military allotments, the Board decided to cut their rations. Without rations, Agnes Carter struggled to make ends meet for over a year before applying again to the government for assistance. She wrote to the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Allendale: 'In fact sir I was given to understand that I would be kept on being a Ward of the state, I being a old age (Halfcaste) came under the Act of the Aborigines, I was to be kept by the Board all my life'. She explained that although she received a military allotment of £1 per week from a nephew 'who went away

56 Arden to Bon, 12 June 1917, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 3, 1917 correspondence. For recent discussion of Ann Bon, see Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015.

57 Board notes, December 1918, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

58 Purnim Local Guardian to Board, December 1918, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

59 Robert William Carter service no. 2216, discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au; NAA B2455.

60 Galbraith to Board, 12 January 1918, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

61 PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

62 Parker to Rawlings, 2 July 1918, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 6, Bundle 1.

to the (front) to fight for (king) and (empire)', high food costs made living on this money difficult.⁶³ Carter's argument for entitlements under the *Aborigines Act 1910* (Vic), and as an Australian with a relative at war, was successful. Not all appeals to entitlements were successful, however. In the case of one Western District Aboriginal woman, concerns about her mobility and sexuality influenced the Board to withhold her husband's military allotment and to institutionalise her children.⁶⁴ Despite the fact that, as she stated, her family earned their 'own living like white people' and troubled the government for 'very little help', the Board would not vary its decision.

Exile

Aboriginal people had little access to the benefits of the soldier settlement scheme, but the scheme had a widespread effect on the Aboriginal population. Stephen Garton, when discussing the choice of the word 'repatriation' for the schemes designed to assist returned soldiers, has pointed to the role Australia's blood sacrifice at Gallipoli played in legitimising settler dominance in Australia. Gallipoli symbolically gave birth to Australia's nationhood and Australian soldiers were to be given special assistance to ensure that they claimed their new 'birthright'. Repatriation was, then, 'a final act of dispossession of Indigenous peoples'.⁶⁵ This was quite literally the case with soldier settlement scheme implementation.

Established in 1917 by the Commonwealth government to provide returned servicemen with land and assistance, soldier settlement was integral to the repatriation program.⁶⁶ In Victoria, local branches of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) put significant pressure on the Board to make Aboriginal reserve land available to them.⁶⁷ Aboriginal reserves were temporarily gazetted Crown land.⁶⁸ However, because the Board did not hold any title to the land, it could not sell it for profit as desired. Instead it could hand the land over to the Closer Settlement Board for the price of improvements only; profits from its sale would go to the Lands Department.⁶⁹ The sale of land

63 Parentheses in original. Carter to Campbell M. L. A. Allandale, 1 May 1919, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

64 See letter to Board, 22 May 1919, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1. For examples of child removal during the war, see Horton 2010, 2012; Grimshaw et al. 2002.

65 Garton 1996: 75.

66 At least one Victorian Aboriginal man received land under soldier settlement, Percy Pepper. See Flagg and Gurciullo 2008. Also Pepper 1980.

67 Barwick 1998: 306–307.

68 Coranderrk was permanently gazetted; see Barwick 1998.

69 Secretary Closer Settlement Board [CBS] to Secretary Board, 2 September 1919, NAA B313 Lake Condah 1919 folder.

at Lake Condah and Coranderrk was thus held up, but in preparation for the sale all but a few elderly remaining residents were put under increasing pressure to leave.⁷⁰

While it may have been within the Board's interest to assist Aboriginal people to become independent of government support, the Board's indifference worked to the opposite effect. Patricia Grimshaw has documented the Board's failure to assist Eliza Saunders, one of the few residents remaining at Lake Condah, to buy a house for herself and her son, Chris Saunders, who was serving in the war.⁷¹ James Arden also made several attempts to buy a piece of land. In December 1919, he wrote to Board member Ann Bon asking permission to reside temporarily on the old reserve, while he waited to hear about his application for a piece of the 'Soldiers land'.⁷² The result of this application is unclear. Arden had also tried to enlist again but was judged 'unfit for service'.⁷³ He remained living near the reserve for the rest of his life, where he provided a home for his grandsons when their father Chris Saunders returned from the war and was forced to travel to find work.⁷⁴

By 1924, Lake Tyers remained the only Victorian reserve under the administration of the Board. Small communities clung to areas around Coranderrk, Lake Condah and Framlingham, but the Board hoped to transfer these people once the required houses were built.⁷⁵ In July 1925, John Egan, an Aboriginal man living on the old Framlingham reserve site, wrote a letter of protest about the sale of the reserves to the *Portland Guardian*. It was printed under the heading 'Aborigines Rights':

Remember, Sir, that these Mission Stations have all given their loved ones to serve in the Great War. The writer has lost a brother (killed in action) over there: a family near Heywood gave five sons, a sixth being rejected ... Do the traditions of the British race condone such an action as forcibly making exiles of us?⁷⁶

Several weeks later, Egan sent the *Horsham Times* a letter titled 'Aboriginal's Sound Plea', which further commented on post-war treatment: 'The writer has lost a brother killed in action and also eight cousins who did "their bit," ... It seems, being colored [sic], the Repatriation and R.S.S.L.[sic] do not apply to them.'⁷⁷

70 Barwick 1998: 306–307.

71 Grimshaw and Nelson 2001: 305.

72 Arden to Bon, 1 December 1919, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

73 Arden to Parker, 22 May 1918 Milltown, PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 1.

74 Gordon 1965: 37.

75 Barwick 1998: 310; 'Lake Condah: New Home for Five Aborigines', *Camperdown Chronicle*, 17 July 1919: 4.

76 'Aborigines Rights', *Portland Guardian*, 20 July 1925: 4. Settlers at Hamilton supported the Aboriginal claim to the Lake Condah reserve: PROV VPRS 1694, Unit 7, Bundle 4.

77 'Aboriginal's Sound Plea', *The Horsham Times*, 7 August 1925: 5.

The imperial citizenship that had called men like William Egan to arms in the name of ‘liberty and freedom’ proved an empty hope. As Egan pointed out, the war sharply highlighted the contradiction of Aboriginal people’s political status as British subjects and wards of the state. His trenchant attack on the Board was part of a mounting wave of Indigenous activism across Australia, and indeed the British Empire.⁷⁸

With the closure of the Victorian reserves, Aboriginal people lost their homes on the last remnants of their country. After the Second World War, some of the reserve land at Lake Condah and Coranderrk was divided up and sold for soldier settlement blocks. White men who had served alongside Lake Condah men in the Second AIF received blocks of the old reserve land.⁷⁹ By 1951, only the church and the cemetery were left of the Lake Condah Aboriginal Reserve, and several years later the ‘much loved’ St Mary’s Church was blown up with dynamite. It would take the Gunditjmara over 30 years to gain back some of the reserve land at Lake Condah and Framlingham under land rights legislation.⁸⁰ In 2012, after a long community campaign, a commemorative plaque to Indigenous service was erected in the Western District centre of Warrnambool.⁸¹

Conclusion

Situating Aboriginal people’s participation in the First World War within a local context foregrounds the simultaneous and overlapping loyalties, and political exigencies, which shaped their bids for inclusion and claims for entitlements. On the eve of being exiled from the Lake Condah reserve, Gunditjmara patriots’ declarations of their willingness to fight for the ‘Empire’, as British subjects, were also assertions of local belonging. Taken together, the public statements of volunteers and correspondence about entitlements testify to the fact that Aboriginal people held hopes and expectations that their war effort would lead to greater recognition of their status both as Aboriginal people and as Australian citizens. While these desires were not framed in ‘rights’ language, they were no less crucial and coherent to those articulating them. Taking a broad view of political activism, Aboriginal people’s participation in the First World War can be framed within a narrative of persistent struggle over issues of governance, land and justice.

78 See Maynard 2007, 2014, 2015; Attwood and Markus 2004, 2009; Scarlett 2014; Grimshaw et al. 2002; Goodall 2008; Riseman 2014a.

79 Gordon 1965: 37. For John Lovett’s legal case over a denied soldier settlement application, see Burin 2012.

80 McVicker et al. 2007: 47–49.

81 ‘Indigenous servicemen honoured’, *Standard*, 1 November 2012, www.standard.net.au/story/785897/indigenous-servicemen-honoured/.

Aboriginal participation in the First World War did not lead to broad structural change in Aboriginal people's political status. Nor did it secure Aboriginal people access to reserve lands through the soldier settlement scheme. In the short-term, however, local Aboriginal protest over post-war treatment brought pressure to bear on Victorian authorities and demonstrated, once again, that Aboriginal people had the power to disrupt mission regimes. Some Western District families made small material gains during the war, which also challenged mission regimes, but ironically the Board thwarted most opportunities for becoming independent of government support. In the long-term, the experiences of Aboriginal servicemen and families formed part of the wider picture of inequality Aboriginal people continued to face in the early twentieth century. Myriad injustices shaped their political awareness and gave Aboriginal people new purchase upon the language of citizenship so central to post-war political discourse. 'Returned soldier' and 'citizen' were titles to add to the political categories, variously invoked by Aboriginal people, such as 'British subject', 'Australian', 'mother', and 'Christian'. In reality, though, they were deprived of the privileges and rights these titles bestowed.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the ties between citizenship and military service had been strengthened nationally and internationally and it seemed a more promising context in which to pursue a citizen rights agenda.⁸² As Richard Frankland, a descendant of James Arden, suggests in his film *Harry's War* about his uncle Harry Saunders, Aboriginal enlistment in the Second AIF from the Victorian Western District and across Australia points to sheer persistence on their part to see improvement for their people.⁸³

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Glenda Humes and Francis Carter for permission to discuss the lives of their forbearers. I am grateful to a number of people for their helpful comments on drafts: Richard Broome, Marilyn Lake, Scott Sheffield, Marilyn Bowler, Luke Horton, Noah Riseman and two anonymous reviewers.

⁸² Peterson and Sanders 1998: 9–17; Maynard 2014.

⁸³ Frankland 1999.

References

Archival sources

National Archives Australia

NAA B313 Correspondence Files Lake Condah

NAA B314 Minutes of meetings Board for the Protection of Aborigines

NAA B337 Aboriginal case files

NAA B332 Board for the Protection of Aborigines Annual Reports

Public Records Office of Victoria

Board for the Protection of Aborigines correspondence files VPRS 1694 Unit 1–8

Newspapers

The Age

The Horsham Times

The Portland Observer and Normanby Advertiser

The Portland Guardian

The St Arnaud Mercury

Online sources

Victoria. Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912, *Forty-eighth Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines*, Government Printer, Melbourne, AIATSIS online collection, aiatsis.gov.au/archive_digitised_collections/_files/archive/removeprotect/25381.pdf, accessed 20 July 2015.

Military Records ‘Discovering Anzacs’, National Archives of Australia and Archives New Zealand, discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au, accessed 20 June 2015.

Secondary sources

Attwood, Bain and Andrew Markus 2004, *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines’ League*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra.

- 2009, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Bakker, Peter 2014, 'Fighting for Country': *Honouring Aborigines from South West Victoria Who Served Australia During War Time*, self-published, Hamilton.
- Barwick, Diane 1981, 'Equity for Aborigines? The Framlingham case', in *A Just Society: Essays on Equity in Australia*, Patrick N. Troy (ed.), George, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney: 173–218.
- 1998, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*, Aboriginal History Monograph 5, Aboriginal History Inc, Canberra.
- Beaumont, Joan 2007, 'Australian citizenship and the two world wars', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53(2): 171–182.
- Bennett, James 2014, 'Lest we forget black diggers: Recovering Aboriginal Anzacs on television', *Journal of Australian Studies* 38(4): 457–475.
- Broome, Richard 1980, 'Professional Aboriginal boxers in eastern Australia 1930–1979', *Aboriginal History* 4: 49–72.
- 2005, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Burin, Margaret 2012, 'Aboriginal digger's son prepared to take justice fight to Canberra', ABC Ballarat, 29 August 2012, www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2012/08/28/3577955.htm, accessed 20 June 2015.
- Chesterman, John and Brian Galligan 1997, *Citizens without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Christie, Michael 1979, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–86*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Clark, Ian D. 1998, *That's My Country Belonging to Me: Aboriginal Land Tenure and Dispossession in Nineteenth Century Western Victoria*, Heritage Matters, Melbourne.
- Cole, Keith 1994, *The Lake Condah Aboriginal Mission*, Keith Cole Publications, Bendigo.
- Critchett, Jan 1990, *A 'Distant Field of Murder': Western District Frontiers, 1834–1848*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- 1992, *Our Land till We Die: A History of the Framlingham Aborigines*, Deakin University Press, Warnambool.

- 1998, *Untold Stories: Memories and Lives of Victorian Kooris*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- Crotty, Martin 2007, 'The Anzac citizen: Towards a history of the RSL', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53(2): 183–193.
- Cruikshank Joanna and Patricia Grimshaw 2015, 'Indigenous land loss, justice and race: Ann Bon and the contradictions of settler humanitarianism', in *Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Land holding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World*, Zoë Laidlaw and Alan Lester (eds), Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire: 45–61.
- Curthoys, Ann 2008, 'Indigenous subjects', in *Australia's Empire*, Deryck M Schreuder and Stuart Ward (eds), Oxford University Press, Oxford: 78–101.
- Curthoys, Ann and Jessie Mitchell 2012, "'Bring this paper to the good Governor": Aboriginal petitioning in Britain's Australian colonies', in *Native Claims: Indigenous Law Against Empire, 1500–1920*, Saliha Belmessous (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford: 182–204.
- De Costa, Ravindra 2006, *A Higher Authority: Indigenous Transnationalism and Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney.
- Ellinghaus, Katherine 2001, 'Regulating koori marriages: The 1886 Victorian Aborigines Protection Act', *Journal of Australian Studies* 67: 22–29.
- Evans, Julie, Patricia Grimshaw, David Philips and Shurlee Swain 2003, *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous Peoples in British Settler Colonies, 1830–1910*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Flagg, Simon and Sebastian Gurciullo 2008, *Footprints: The Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper*, National Archives of Australia, Melbourne.
- Frankland, Richard 1999, *Harry's War*, short film, 26 minutes, Golden Seahorse Productions.
- Garton, Stephen 1996, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- 1998, 'War and masculinity in twentieth century Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* 22(56): 86–95.
- Goodall, Heather 2008, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Sydney University Press, Sydney.
- Gordon, Harry 1965, *The Embarrassing Australian: The Story of an Aboriginal Warrior*, second edition, Cheshire-Lansdowne, Melbourne.

- Grimshaw, Patricia 1999, 'Colonising motherhood: Evangelical social reformers and Koorie women in Victoria, Australia, 1880s to the early 1900s', *Women's Historical Review* 8(2): 329–345.
- Grimshaw, Patricia and Elizabeth Nelson 2001, 'Empire, "the civilizing mission" and Indigenous Christian women in colonial Victoria', *Australian Feminist Studies* 16(36): 295–309.
- Grimshaw, Patricia, Elizabeth Nelson and Sandra Smith (eds) 2002, *Letters from Aboriginal Women of Victoria 1867–1926*, History Department, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
- Huggonson, David 1989, 'The dark diggers of the AIF', *The Australian Quarterly* 61(3), Spring: 352–357.
- Hunter, Kathryn M. 2008, 'Rough riding: Aboriginal participation in rodeos and travelling shows to the 1950s', *Aboriginal History* 32: 82–96.
- Horton, Jessica 2010, 'The case of Elsie Barrett: Aboriginal women, sexuality and the Victorian Board for the Protection of Aborigines', *Journal of Australian Studies* 34(1): 1–18.
- 2012, 'Rewriting political history: Letters from Aboriginal people in Victoria 1886–1919', *History Australia* 9(2): 157–181.
- Jackomos, Alick and Derek Fowell 1993, *Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from then Somme to Vietnam*, Victoria Press, Melbourne.
- Janowitz, Morris 1976, 'Military institutions and citizenship in western societies', *Armed Forces and Society* 2(2): 185–204.
- Lake, Marilyn 1992, 'Mission impossible: How men gave birth to the Australian nation – nationalism, gender and other seminal acts', *Gender and History* 4(2): 305–322. Lake, Marilyn and Henry Reynolds 2010, *What's Wrong With Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History*, UNSW Press, Sydney.
- Land, Claire 2006, 'Law and the construction of "race": Critical race theory and the Aborigines Protection Act, 1886 Victoria, Australia', in *Rethinking Colonial Histories: New and Alternative Approaches*, Penelope Edmonds and Samuel Furphy (eds), History Department University of Melbourne, Melbourne: 137–155.
- Larsson, Marina 2009. *Shattered ANZACS: Living with the Scars of War*, UNSW Press, Sydney.

- McMillian, Mark and Cosima McRae 2015, 'Law, identity and dispossession – the Half-Caste Act of 1886 and contemporary legal definitions of Indigeneity in Australia', in *Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Land holding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World*, Zoë Laidlaw and Alan Lester (eds), Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire: 233–234.
- McVicker, Olive, Cicely Fenton and Sue Pizzey 2007, 'A church that became a site of resistance and a symbol of hope', *Local-Global: Identity, Security, Community* 4: 41–49.
- Marti, Steve 2015, 'Embattled Communities: Voluntary Action and Identity in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, 1914–1918', PhD dissertation, University of Western Ontario.
- Martin, Maryanne 2014, *Condah During World War 1*, Heywood Sub-Branch RSL, Heywood, www.ryebuck.com.au/wp/wp-, accessed 2 December 2014.
- Maynard, John 2007, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Aboriginal Activism*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 2014, 'Land, children and politics: Native Americans and Australian Aborigines 1900–1930', *Journal of Australian Studies* 38(4): 415–429.
- 2015, 'The Politics of War and the "Battle of Balaklava"', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6(3): 83–95.
- Mitchell, Jessie 2010, "'It will enlarge the ideas of the natives": Indigenous Australians and the tour of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh', *Aboriginal History* 34: 197–216.
- Murphy, John 2011, *A Decent Provision: Australian Welfare Policy 1870–1949*, Ashgate, Surrey.
- Nugent, Maria 2012, "'The queen gave us the land": Aboriginal people, Queen Victoria's and historical remembrance', *History Australia* 9(2): 182–200.
- Pearson, John Wayne 2013, 'For King, or Country: The Treatment of Aboriginal Veterans and their Families after the First World War: The South Australian Experience', Honours thesis, University of Adelaide.
- Pepper, Phillip with Tess Araugo 1980, *You Are what You Make Yourself To Be: The Story of a Victorian Aboriginal Family 1842–1980*, Hyland House, Melbourne.
- Peterson, Nicolas and Will Sanders 1998, *Citizenship and Indigenous Australians: Changing Conceptions and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- Pratt, Rod 2007, 'Queensland's Aborigines in the First Australian Imperial Force', in *Aboriginal Peoples and Military Participation: Canadian and International Perspectives*, P Whitney Lackenbauer, Craig Leslie Mantle, and R. Scott Sheffield (eds), Canadian Defence Academy Press, Ontario: 215–236.
- Ramsland, John and Christopher Mooney 2006, *Remembering Aboriginal Heroes: Struggle, Identity and the Media*, Brolga Publishing, Melbourne.
- Reynolds, Henry 2013, *Forgotten War*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney.
- Riseman, Noah 2014a, 'Aboriginal military service and assimilation', *Aboriginal History* 38: 155–178.
- 2014b, 'Enduring silences, enduring prejudices: Australian Aboriginal participation in the First World War', in *Endurance and the First World War: Experience and Legacies in New Zealand and Australia*, David Monger, Katie Pickles, Sarah Murray (eds), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne: 178–195.
- Scarlett, Philippa 2014, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF: The Indigenous Response to World War One*, reprinted edition, Indigenous Histories, ACT.
- Sheffield, Scott 2015, 'Veterans benefits and Indigenous Veterans of the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States', unpublished conference paper, Brothers and Sisters in Arms: Historicising Indigenous Military Service, Australian Catholic University, 25–27 June 2015.
- Van Toorn, Penny 2005, 'Hegemony or hidden transcripts?: Aboriginal writings from Lake Condah, 1876–1907', *Journal of Australian Studies* 29(86): 13–27.
- 2006, *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Winegard, Timothy 2012a, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- 2012b, *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians and the First World War*, University of Manitoba Press, Manitoba.

‘The families were ... too poor to send them parcels’: The provision of comforts to Aboriginal soldiers in the AIF in the Second World War

Kristyn Harman

In mid-1941, Private Clarrie Combo from New South Wales sent a letter from Syria, where he was stationed, to Mrs Brown of Loxton in South Australia. Combo, an Aboriginal soldier serving abroad with the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF), wrote ‘it is very nice of you to write to someone you do not know. Thank you for offering to knit a pair of socks for me. I wear size seven in boots’.¹ These unlikely correspondents formed an affective relationship during the Second World War under the auspices of a scheme designed specifically to cater for the needs of Australian Aboriginal men serving abroad. Following the outbreak of the war, in August 1940 the Victorian-based Aborigines Uplift Society launched a national comfort auxiliary. This was Australia’s first fund with the express intent of providing comforts for Aboriginal soldiers, and its founding, *modus operandi* and outcomes are the subject of this article.

Combo was one of at least 3,000 Aboriginal and 850 Torres Strait Islander people known to have served Australia during the Second World War.² The advent of war, as Kay Saunders has revealed, raised numerous complex questions in relation to the nation’s Indigenous peoples, particularly in relation to their skills, capacity to serve, and loyalties. This led to some inequalities in relation to opportunities to serve. From a legal perspective, only those Aboriginal men who were exempt

1 *Murray Pioneer and Australian River Record*, 25 September 1941; *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, 7 February 1941.

2 Hall 1997: 189; Huggonson 1994: 11.

from the provisions of various state-based Aboriginal Protection legislations were obliged to undertake compulsory military training in accordance with Section 61(1)(h) of the *Defence Act 1909* (Cth). This meant that 'only those not identifying culturally as Aborigines and were thus recognised by bureaucratic procedures were obliged to join the Australian Imperial Force or the Australian Military Force'. This restricted the number of Aboriginal men who were afforded opportunities to serve Australia as soldiers. Ultimately, though, numerous Aboriginal men and women served their country on the homefront in a range of labouring capacities rather than in overseas theatres of combat.³ For example, noted anthropologist Donald Thomson later recounted how he was instrumental in establishing the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit, comprising warriors from Arnhem Land who played 'both a coastwatching role, like that of the Solomon Islanders and a harassing role like that of the Independent Companies, [in case] the Japanese should invade'.⁴

As the Second World War broke out, Australian states and territories were actively pursuing policies of assimilation. In Combo's home state of New South Wales, for example, the Aborigines Welfare Board's stated aim was 'to prepare the aboriginal people for citizenship', towards which end it claimed that 'every endeavour is being made to educate the dark-skinned people so that they will be able eventually to adjust themselves to the white man's way of life'.⁵ Some Aboriginal people were confined within the parameters of government reserves, training homes, or missions and were consequently materially poor. Others were working in the lower echelons of wider society, filling roles as domestic servants or agricultural labourers, often receiving low wages. Under these circumstances, it is unsurprising to find that the Aborigines Uplift Society's comforts auxiliary had its inception in the notion that the Aboriginal families, friends and communities of those Aboriginal men serving abroad were too impoverished to be able to provide them with the same level of comforts as other Australian soldiers. It is necessary to exercise some caution in relation to the Aborigines Uplift Society's claims, however, because as Fiona Paisley has pointed out in a comparative context, such depictions cannot simply 'be taken as fact'. Paisley, writing in relation to white middle-class women's perceptions of Aboriginal poverty, found that 'the account they gave of Aboriginal status and conditions reflected their own version of history'.⁶ In a similar way, the Aborigines Uplift Society's opinions as to Aboriginal people's living conditions would have been inflected by the standpoints of their predominantly white middle-class committees and membership. No doubt, though, the Society's Victorian members' views would have been at least in part informed by the

3 Hall 1997: 2; Saunders 1995: 131.

4 Thomson 2005: 195.

5 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1945*, Parliament of New South Wales.

6 Paisley 2000: 7.

knowledge that parcels of 'clothing, kitchen utensils, furniture, in fact anything useful' that were prepared by the Society's Ladies Committee were 'always welcomed ... for passing onto the coloured people of Lake Condah district'.⁷ The charitable scheme founded to assist Aboriginal men serving abroad could be seen as an extension of similar activities already being engaged in by branches of the Aborigines Uplift Society on home soil.

The Aborigines Uplift Society's new national comforts auxiliary was organised to procure volunteers who were willing to write to Aboriginal soldiers and to send the men parcels of comforts such as knitted garments, newspapers, chocolate, and toiletries. The terminology used, in that volunteers were asked to 'adopt' an Aboriginal soldier, resonates with the paternalistic ethos of the Aborigines Uplift Society and with the wider imperatives driving assimilatory policies from the early colonial period well into the twentieth century. In addition to forging links between individuals such as Combo and Brown, the Aborigines Uplift Society called for support to help establish and build a general comfort fund from which Aboriginal soldiers could be provisioned as required.⁸ Few records pertaining to the Aborigines Uplift Society's activities in relation to its national comforts auxiliary seem to have survived. However, its newsletter, *Uplift*, which has survived, provides a helpful chronological account of the inception and development of the comforts auxiliary, and local newspaper accounts from around Australia help to provide further context. Perhaps because of a paucity of archival source material, the Aborigines Uplift Society has consistently received only several lines of mention in relevant scholarly literature.⁹ It has proven difficult to locate much material illustrating Aboriginal responses to, and involvement with the national comforts auxiliary and comfort funds more generally. However, this is redressed at least partially through attention being given to the complexities of Aboriginal people's positioning within, and relationships with such organisations through considering the case study of Cummeragunja.

Despite the Aborigines Uplift Society's perception that Aboriginal people were not well-placed to provide comforts for soldiers, evidence has survived that demonstrates how, albeit from within the confines of a number of reserves and missions, many Aboriginal people – particularly women and children – were in fact heavily involved in raising funds and producing items of comfort for

7 'Hamilton Aborigines Uplift Society Monthly Meeting', c. 1942, Series 28, BARIO1976, State Library of Victoria.

8 'Comforts auxiliary', *Uplift: The Official Organ of the Aborigines Uplift Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940: 14, NLA.

9 For example, Attwood and Markus included the Aborigines Uplift Society twice in their book (2004: 113, 121); John Ramsland and Christopher Mooney recorded the Aborigines Uplift Society in Victoria as being 'of particular importance' in the 1930s in a footnote in their 2006 book; Robert Hall mentioned the Aborigines Uplift Society only fleetingly in his 1995 monograph.

Aboriginal soldiers. They also supported the nation's war effort more generally under the auspices of a range of patriotic funds. As Michael McKernan has explained, 'the comforts business ... [was accepted as] part of women's traditional role in war'.¹⁰ The work associated with providing comforts seems to have retained its uncontroversial nature when extended to Aboriginal volunteers. While Noah Riseman has shown how a number of Aboriginal women managed to escape the constraints of assimilation-era Australia through employment in the armed services women's auxiliaries, conversely the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board utilised the participation of Aboriginal women and children in the production of comforts to demonstrate its apparent success in preparing Aboriginal people for their eventual assimilation into wider Australian society.¹¹ This practice bears some similarities to the ways in which Australian media outlets promoted the First World War Aboriginal soldier Douglas Grant, and Reginald Saunders who served in the Second World War, as well as other Aboriginal servicemen, as models of assimilation in twentieth-century Australia.¹²

Founding the Aboriginal Uplift Society's national comforts auxiliary

The provision of comforts to Australian soldiers deployed overseas during the Second World War ensured the men were better provided for with regard to material items such as canteen orders, kit, newspapers and correspondence than would otherwise have been the case. Across the homefront, a veritable army of men, women and children voluntarily raised funds, baked goods, knitted and sewed garments, and wrote letters to soldiers to contribute to the various comfort funds as part of the war effort. As Joan Beaumont recently demonstrated, the emergence of patriotic funds such as the Australian Red Cross Society, Australian Comforts Fund and the Salvation Army during the First World War followed the devastating defeat on Gallipoli, which triggered a realisation 'that a more systematic mobilisation of the home front was needed'. More volunteers were required, not only to replace the fallen but to tend to the needs of bereaved families, repatriated men and those who remained at the front.¹³

Observing how 'war work was much more than a tiresome tally of socks, balaclavas, and pyjamas', Bruce Scates has shown how female volunteers in particular invested 'enormous emotional labour' not only in the production

10 McKernan 2014: 54.

11 Riseman 2015: 757–775.

12 Riseman 2014: 155–178.

13 Beaumont 2014: 94.

of these necessary commodities but also in other voluntary capacities such as 'mediators of grief and bereavement'.¹⁴ Beaumont states that with limited social services available across Australia, the federal and state governments 'relied to a degree that seems remarkable ... on a volunteer mobilisation in the form of the patriotic funds movement'.¹⁵ By 1938, as Melanie Oppenheimer has explained, the Australian Red Cross Society, the Australian Comforts Fund and the Salvation Army had become Australia's 'designated war charities to work with the armed forces in the event of war', with the YMCA being accorded the same status in 1942.¹⁶ Yet none of these comfort funds had a specific mandate to provide for Aboriginal soldiers. In late 1939, the Victorian-based Aborigines Uplift Society stepped in to breach this gap.

In December 1939, the founder and secretary of the Melbourne-based Aborigines Uplift Society and editor of its regular journal *Uplift*, trade unionist Arthur Burdeu, told his readers that it would 'not be news to some to know that many hundreds of aborigines fought in the Great War'. Burdeu went on to explain, however, that 'it may not be known that many gave their lives, and their blood is mingled in the fields of Flanders and Palestine with that of their white brothers'. His key point was that despite many Aboriginal people having served their country during the First World War, those repatriated to Australian soil following its conclusion had been returned to 'a sub-human status' through, as the Society described in further discourse on this topic in 1940, having had to 'hand in their manhood with their uniforms'. Written in the context of the recent outbreak of the Second World War, Burdeu advocated strongly that any Aboriginal people who enlisted in the current conflict 'must come [home] to a status the equal of their white comrades'. At the time of the journal's publication, many Aboriginal men were already known to be keen to enlist in the Second Australian Imperial Force.¹⁷ As Anne O'Brien has explained, Burdeu worked closely with the prominent Aboriginal activist William Cooper. Her observation, though, that 'white organisations worked for [the 'betterment' or 'uplift' of], rather than with, Aboriginal people' is generally borne out in this article.¹⁸

In August 1940, the Society publicised the fact that many Aboriginal people had enlisted into the armed forces across New South Wales and Victoria, with some already in England and others in Palestine. Many more remained in camp in Australia. However, rumours were circulating that moves were afoot to prevent

14 Scates 2001: 31.

15 Beaumont 2014: 94.

16 Oppenheimer 2004: 28.

17 *Uplift*, vol. 1, no. 8, December 1939; *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940.

18 O'Brien 2015: 140.

any more Aboriginal people from enlisting.¹⁹ Despite such rumours, which were indicative of continuing tensions at official levels surrounding Aboriginal involvement in the armed forces, the Aborigines Uplift Society continued to voice concern over the treatment meted out to those Aboriginal people who had served during the First World War following their return to Australia. Remembering their poor treatment, Burdeu reported that the Society's council had taken a decision to advocate for the rights of those who enlisted to serve their country during the Second World War. He wrote to the Prime Minister to argue that those Aboriginal people enrolled in the Australian Imperial Force ought to be granted Australian citizenship. Burdeu conjectured that 'surely this will not be declined'.²⁰ While advocacy was one of the strategies utilised by the Aborigines Uplift Society in its endeavours to better the living conditions and opportunities for Aboriginal people across Australia, it also played a key role in providing practical help to those serving abroad.

In the same edition of *Uplift* in which Burdeu publicised the Society's proposed advocacy role, he announced its establishment of a comfort fund for Aboriginal soldiers. Its aim was to organise the sort of support 'that will put our native soldiers on the level with white soldiers with mothers, wives and sweethearts, not to mention friends, who can send them comforts'. Such comforts might include, for example, letters as well as toiletries, foodstuff, and knitted garments such as socks, hats, and scarves, and such like. 'It need not be stressed', the Aborigines Uplift Society reminded its readership, 'that native women have not the resources to do as their white sisters'. The Society envisaged a national (rather than a state-based) scheme whereby some volunteers would be involved in corresponding with the soldiers, while others would provide comforts either to nominated soldiers or generally to a comfort fund from which such comforts might then be distributed to Aboriginal soldiers as and when they were needed. Some women had already offered their services, but one impediment standing in the way of the provision of much-needed support to Aboriginal soldiers was information as to their military addresses. 'Our Comforts Work is being retarded for the want of information', Burdeu told his readers, urging them either to provide any addresses they knew of, or to endeavour to obtain such details and to pass them on to the Aborigines Uplift Society.²¹ Because the military did not record the 'race' of those who enlisted, it was only possible to identify Aboriginal soldiers through garnering community knowledge.

By November 1940, 'several women' had expressed an interest in working as part of the comforts auxiliary. However, some difficulties were still being experienced in obtaining the full military addresses of all of those who had enlisted. Burdeu

19 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940.

20 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940.

21 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940.

asked readers to provide the Society with at least the names of those who had enlisted and the location at which they had signed up. From these scant details, it was often possible to then obtain their military addresses. This was made easier if informants were able indicate to which unit each man belonged. Given that the Society saw fit to print in capital letters its exhortation to provide contact details for Aboriginal soldiers 'no matter what state they had enlisted in', it can be surmised that at least some people may have incorrectly assumed the comforts auxiliary to be a state-based rather than a national scheme. It was, however, the Society's intention to send comforts to every Aboriginal soldier from across the nation who was serving abroad with the AIF.²² In February 1941, it was also actively seeking information on 'half castes' who had joined the navy so that these men, too, could benefit from the receipt of comforts. While 'a large number of helpers' had already committed themselves to carry out this work, still more volunteers were being sought to assist in the work of the comforts auxiliary.²³

'Adopting' Aboriginal soldiers

From the outset, the Aborigines Uplift Society intended that those involved in its comfort auxiliary as 'workers will be both native and white women'.²⁴ Articles predominantly aimed at recruiting white women ran in newspapers across Australia, explaining how the Aborigines Uplift Society was caring for Aboriginal soldiers in the AIF under its comforts auxiliary. 'Each worker writes to an allotted man', explained the *Advertiser* to its South Australian readership, 'and sends him comforts such as canteen orders, socks, and newspapers'. More volunteers were being actively sought, with those women who were interested in 'adopting' an Aboriginal soldier being urged to write to the Society's secretary, A. P. A. Burdeu, at his Melbourne address to obtain 'particulars'.²⁵ In Queensland, *Courier Mail* columnist Winifred Moore informed her readers that she had received a letter from Burdeu. In it he explained how the 'Friendly Service to Aborigines' that he organised was interested in receiving names and address details 'of any native Australians in the AIF – whether full blood Aborigines, half caste, or kanakas – so that they may share in the benefits of the organisation he represents'. Burdeu had told Moore that while there was 'quite an army of women in each state' involved in providing comforts for Aboriginal soldiers, more volunteers were required. Some soldiers were yet to be allocated to a volunteer, and as more names and addresses of Aboriginal

22 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 3, November 1940.

23 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 4, February 1941.

24 *Uplift*, vol. 2, no. 2, August 1940.

25 *Advertiser*, 24 June 1941.

servicemen became available, yet more volunteers to correspond with and provide material comforts to them would be needed. Once again, any women interested in volunteering for this 'uplift and patriotic service' were invited to write directly to Burdeu in Melbourne.²⁶ A similar call for volunteers was issued through the columns of the *West Australian* newspaper, with it being noted that as a number of Western Australian Aboriginal men were serving overseas with the AIF, some local women might want to volunteer to join the work of the Aborigines Uplift Society's comforts auxiliary. The information provided to prospective volunteers in other states was repeated in Western Australia, with the usual remarks about correspondence with the men supplemented with an observation by Burdeu that women who wrote to Aboriginal soldiers were receiving 'interesting letters' in return.²⁷ In Tasmania, several Girl Guide companies became involved in providing comforts to Aboriginal soldiers after having heard from Burdeu about the Aborigines Uplift Society's initiative.²⁸

Despite Burdeu's assurances that correspondents could anticipate receiving interesting letters from Aboriginal soldiers, at least one woman seemed surprised by the correspondence she received. Referred to in a newspaper report simply as 'a Camperdown well-wisher', the woman in question had responded to Burdeu's plea for volunteers and had been allocated an Aboriginal soldier to whom she had written 'in as simple a language as possible, of the things she thought he would best understand'. She reportedly had hoped 'at best' to receive 'a crudely worded missive, rounded off, no doubt, by the padre, or some other similarly friendly member of the unit' in reply. Instead, the correspondent was very surprised to receive a letter composed using 'English well above the average' in which the Aboriginal soldier to whom she had written provided a first-hand, albeit heavily censored, account of his activities as part of an AIF field ambulance squad. The *Camperdown Chronicle* reported receipt of the Aboriginal soldier's letter, commending it not only on the basis of its 'literary merit', but also because the correspondent had, in his own words, reported how 'we have been through some tough times together, and it has brought all the boys closer to each other'. This sentence, according to the newspaper in which it was reproduced, painted 'a picture for us of the freemasonry which has always characterised the AIF'. The soldier, the newspaper commentary continued, 'has quite unconsciously administered a well-deserved rebuke to us in this class-prejudiced world – a world which, in civil life, stubbornly refuses to recognise this man's existence'.²⁹ While some Aboriginal soldiers experienced a measure of equality while serving alongside other Australian men, on their return to Australian soil any equality largely evaporated. Interestingly, the

26 *Courier Mail*, 27 November 1941.

27 *West Australian*, 23 June 1941.

28 Harman 2015.

29 *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 July 1941.

newspaper described such socioeconomic discrimination as being predicated on the grounds of class rather than race. However, it was racial stereotyping that saw many Aboriginal people incorporated into the lower classes of Australian society, if they were incorporated at all.

To emphasise the apparently unanticipated and surprising level of literacy displayed by the Aboriginal correspondent, the *Camperdown Chronicle* proceeded to provide a series of direct quotations from his letter. This commenced with an expression of gratitude for the letter and canteen order that he had received, followed by a description of the type of work the field ambulance was engaged in, the camaraderie he was experiencing within his unit, and his thoughts of home. The soldier, who was a medical orderly, explained how the Comforts Fund and Red Cross had 'things ready for us' when he and his comrades landed in Egypt. Having recently returned from four days' leave in Jerusalem at the time of writing, he had obtained a small souvenir from Palestine, which had been enclosed with his letter as a gift to the 'well-wisher' correspondent. He assured her that he found his work 'really worthwhile'. 'What is a better way of serving one's country', he wrote, 'than by trying to keep her men alive'. He went on to describe himself as a married man from Victoria, who had 'the most wonderful wife in the world', with whom he had had two sons and two daughters. Two of these children were attending school. Having been amongst the first troops to depart Australia, on 14 April 1940, the correspondent was rather homesick and was missing his family.³⁰

Affective relationships formed between some of the middle-class white women and girls and the Aboriginal soldiers whom they 'adopted', lasting at least for the duration of the period over which the providers and recipients of comforts corresponded. Such bonds, for the women involved, are consistent with Scates' concept of emotional labour and could be discerned in the correspondence between Combo and Brown mentioned at the beginning of this article. In a similar vein, in Tasmania, several companies of Girl Guides became involved in writing and sending comforts to Tasmanian Aboriginal soldiers serving abroad with the AIF, following the lead of some Launceston Girl Guides who 'adopted' two such soldiers in 1941.³¹ As discussed at the Girl Guides' Northern District Association meeting in July of that year, it was understood 'that the families of the aboriginals were too poor to send them parcels such as are received by other men of the AIF'. The Girl Guides therefore determined to send letters and

30 *Camperdown Chronicle*, 8 July 1941.

31 Despite the international sensation following the death in 1876 of Truganini, who was seen as symbolising 'the last of the race', people of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent continued to live on the main island of Tasmania and to populate offshore islands, particularly in Bass Strait. Despite claims to the contrary, successive Tasmanian governments recognised the existence of people of Aboriginal descent in Tasmania, although, consistent with racial thinking of the time, in the early decades of the twentieth century such people were referred to (and referred to themselves) as 'half castes'. See Harman 2013: 747.

parcels of comforts to these men, with each girl doing various chores to raise funds or otherwise contributing small amounts of her pocket money, foregoing, for example, the purchase of sweets.³² By March 1942, no fewer than 16 tins of comforts had been sent to the two soldiers 'adopted' by the Launceston Girl Guides. At the same time, in March 1942, the girls got what was described in their local newspaper as 'a grand surprise' when they received an appreciative letter from one of the recipients, the contents of which remained unpublished and are therefore unavailable for further analysis.³³

Aboriginal women's and children's roles in producing comforts for soldiers

Aboriginal women and children, too, joined in the work across the homefront of producing comforts for Australian soldiers serving abroad, some items of which would have been distributed specifically to Aboriginal soldiers and others to Australian soldiers more generally. Their involvement extended beyond the Aborigines Uplift Society's national comfort auxiliary, with practical assistance being provided through various local branches of the Australian Comforts Fund, as well as under the auspices of other organisations such as the Red Cross and the Country Women's Association (CWA).

Oodgeroo Noonuccal, who joined the Australian Women's Army Service in the Second World War (being one of several members of her family to enlist), noted how 'all of a sudden the colour line disappeared' once there was a war to be fought. Using a local example to highlight her point, she explained how there had been 'a tremendous colour bar' on Stradbroke Island off the coast of Queensland prior to the Second World War. However, when the war began the women who joined the local branch of the Australian Comforts Fund 'broke down this silly barrier of racial discrimination'. As Noonuccal explained, 'the white women ... went to the black women here on the island, and said, "Look, you make socks better than us, you are better at all these things"', and recruited them into the newly established organisation. Significantly, both the Aboriginal and white women involved in producing comforts had sons serving their country in overseas theatres of war.³⁴ As the following examples illustrate, the women at Stradbroke Island were far from the only Aboriginal women to be working together with white women in providing comforts for Australian soldiers.

32 *Examiner*, 9 July 1941.

33 *Examiner*, 18 March 1942.

34 Hall 1995: 118–119.

Aboriginal children at the Purga Aboriginal Mission on the outskirts of Ipswich in Queensland were involved in knitting and sewing items to be distributed to soldiers through the Peak Crossing branch of the Australian Comforts Fund. The Peak Crossing branch, which also utilised the labour of Peak Crossing school children in manufacturing the required items, had in the year to March 1941 purchased 480 skeins of wool and 193 yards of material with funds raised through providing 'entertainments' that had been well attended by patriotic locals. These raw materials were then converted by children at the local Aboriginal mission and state school into useful items of clothing for soldiers serving abroad, such as knitted socks, balaclavas, and mittens, and sewn items such as pants, storage items (including calico bags and toilet tidies) and hussifs (or 'housewives', that is, sewing kits). These items were supplemented by other practical items of comfort such as soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and items that might be considered luxuries such as gramophone records and tins of tobacco.

Mr O. Brown, a local councillor who was present at the branch's first annual meeting held at the town hall in March 1941, observed that 'if only they [the branch members] knew what the comforts meant to the soldiers out in the desert, they would know that their work was not in vain'. Brown himself had served during the First World War, and speaking from personal experience he told the meeting 'how happy it made the soldiers to receive parcels of comfort'. Various other local dignitaries encouraged the female committee members to keep up their good work, with one being particularly pleased to learn that at least some of the comforts provided through the branch had been sent to Port Moresby.³⁵

Farther south, at the Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Station at the Richmond River near Evans Head in New South Wales, which was home to 110 Aboriginal people, an Aborigines' Ladies Guild was formed during 1940 under the leadership of the Matron, Mrs J. P. Howard. The Guild organised a number of events throughout the year. These included a 'patriotic dance' held early on at which £13 was raised towards the war fund, and, towards the end of the year, a sports day with close to 200 Aboriginal people in attendance. As part of the latter event, a large Christmas tree decorated with 'bells, balloons and streamers, and laden with presents and a bag of lollies for each child on the island' had been erected, with Santa Claus also paying a visit. Presents were distributed to the Aboriginal parents and elders, 'comprising useful articles made by boys and girls at the sewing class'. In addition to crafting Christmas gifts for the adults on the island, the children had been involved in collecting 'large quantities of

35 *Queensland Times*, 13 March 1941.

waste material' for recycling, while Guild members had knitted a range of items including socks, mittens and scarves for Aboriginal soldiers, both those at home and those serving abroad.³⁶

The children's efforts continued throughout the war years, with their being involved in knitting and sewing garments for the war effort under the auspices of the Lismore branch of the CWA. The CWA provided the necessary fabric to the Cabbage Tree Island Settlement, from which the children stitched the required garments. In 1942, under the guidance of Matron Howard, the children crafted 'a unique cot quilt' with scraps of material left over from making pyjamas. Each of the 48 children involved in this handiwork neatly embroidered their name within one of the squares that made up the 'nicely worked' piece. The quilt was displayed in the window of the CWA's knitting depot in Magellan Street in Lismore.³⁷ The children also had their own special vegetable garden, from which all profits from the sale of vegetables was donated to the Red Cross to help pay for food parcels for Australian soldiers who had been taken as prisoners-of-war by Germany. Similarly, the women at the Station, under the auspices of the Aborigines' Ladies Guild, continued to raise funds through selling handicrafts, vegetables and second-hand clothes. In 1944 they were also reported as being regular donors to the Red Cross in support of its acquisition and distribution of food parcels to Australian POWs.³⁸

While the stated objective of the Aborigines' Ladies Guild was to support Australia's war work, it is apparent that another broader social objective also underpinned its founding. In its report on the Cabbage Tree Island Aboriginal Station for 1940, Lismore's *Northern Star* newspaper observed how 'the past year ... has been one of considerable progress'.³⁹ The types of events that the Guild members helped organise, characterised as they were by strong Western cultural and religious elements, provided strong evidence of what was taken, at the time, as evidence of advancement towards civilisation and integration. When read alongside accounts of local Aboriginal men signing up to serve Australia during the Second World War, the assimilationist undertones were even stronger. The way in which the Guild's formation and subsequent activities was lauded as a sign of Aboriginal progression towards eventual assimilation into wider Australian society was consistent with one of the five stated aims of the Aborigines Welfare Board (which in 1940 had replaced the Aborigines Protection Board), an organisation that Heather Goodall has described as trying

36 *Northern Star*, 6 January 1941; *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940*, Parliament of New South Wales (Second Session), 1941.

37 *Northern Star*, 20 August 1942.

38 *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 27 June 1944.

39 *Northern Star*, 6 January 1941.

'to continue its predecessor's concentration policy'.⁴⁰ The Board's fifth stated aim delineated the pursuit of 'a policy which would result in the gradual assimilation of aborigines into the general and social life of the general community, special attention being given to each individual aboriginal family and their suitability for assimilation by virtue of education, training and personal qualities'.⁴¹ Such training was later elaborated as including 'handicraft classes on the stations', with the aim of such training ultimately being the assimilation of 'the aborigines, particularly those with lighter caste, into the general community'.⁴² A further assimilatory impetus can be seen in the way in which Aboriginal people were engaged in cultivating vegetables. This was consistent with the Aborigines Welfare Board's aim to provide station residents with 'garden space around their homes, with the object of encouraging them to form and cultivate vegetable and flower gardens'. The objectives behind encouraging gardening were to provide a ready supply of fresh vegetables and to beautify the homes on the stations. This would benefit the Board in terms of reduced costs and potentially benefit the residents in terms of improved health if they were to consume the fresh produce through providing a more 'balanced ration'. Gardens would also further encourage practices that saw Aboriginal people comply with white expectations in regard to the cultivation of land and exhibiting pride in the presentation of one's home.⁴³

The official policies of the Aborigines Welfare Board did not necessarily reflect the views of all of those living locally along the north coast of New South Wales. As John Maynard has noted in relation to Aboriginal activism in the early decades of the twentieth century, 'the response to the AAPAs [Australian Aborigines Progressive Association's] activities was strongest in areas where widespread loss of land and children was being most savagely experienced', which was certainly the case in this region. Interestingly, such hardships contributed not only to a large turnout of Aboriginal participants at the AAPAs second annual conference held in Kempsey in 1925, but also to support from 'high profile local dignitaries' and associations.⁴⁴ The comforts fund activities organised in this region therefore need to be read against this backdrop of what was a complicated history, just as each other region has its own particularities.

40 Goodall 1996: 264.

41 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940*, Parliament of New South Wales (Second Session), 1941.

42 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1941*, Parliament of New South Wales.

43 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940*, Parliament of New South Wales (Second Session), 1941; *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1941*, Parliament of New South Wales.

44 Maynard 2007: 71–73.

Cummeragunja Aboriginal Station

Cummeragunja Aboriginal Station, which became a reserve post—Second World War, was a government-run facility located in country New South Wales adjacent to the Murray River and about 30 kilometres north-east of Echuca in Victoria. In 1939, it became the site of a major Aboriginal walk off as the residents protested the conditions under which they were being forced to live. The tensions evident at this site at the time beg the question as to why Aboriginal women and children contributed to the war effort through producing comforts for soldiers, an activity that was viewed by the Aborigines Protection Board as evidence of their patriotism and which it utilised as propaganda in support of assimilation. While there is limited scope within the parameters of this article to explore this topic in depth, engaging with some of the key factors that converged to facilitate the production of comforts at Cummeragunja are a useful reminder of Aboriginal agency, the long histories of such sites, and the importance of appreciating local specificity within a relevant national and international framework.

The site at which Cummeragunja stood was, in the mid-nineteenth century, known as Maloga mission. As Christina Twomey and Andrew May have demonstrated, there was a long history in the contact period of Aboriginal people at this site providing assistance to those considered even less fortunate than themselves. Twomey and May highlighted, for example, how Maloga Aboriginal School students contributed to the Victorian Famine Relief Fund established in the late 1870s to address the plight of Indian people suffering the impacts of the 1876–1878 Indian famine. At the time, their involvement in this charitable work was read as evidence of Aboriginal people having a greater depth of feeling than that for which they were usually given credit.⁴⁵

In 1881, many of the Aboriginal people who resided at the Maloga mission moved a short distance away to the then newly opened Cummeragunja Aboriginal Station. As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, conditions for Aboriginal people living on Cummeragunja deteriorated in tandem with greater control being exerted over their lives by the Aborigines Protection Board. During the inter-war years, as was the case across many Aboriginal stations and missions at the time, Cummeragunja residents were concerned about a broad range of issues. High unemployment had seen more demand on station housing, increased pressure on rations, and a marked deterioration in people's health through living in close proximity in crowded and unsanitary conditions. The station's water pump had stopped working, and increasing numbers of residents were suffering from the eye disease trachoma. While the station was

45 Twomey and May 2012: 247.

on a sizeable parcel of land, 2,000 acres had been leased to a neighbouring white farmer with only 14 acres being reserved for the Aboriginal residents' use. In a pattern of conflict only too familiar to Australians, the white farmer stood accused by the station residents of siphoning off most of their water supply, leaving the Cummeragunja cattle in poor condition. To make matters worse, in November 1937 the Aborigines Protection Board had transferred a new manager, Arthur McQuiggin, onto the station. McQuiggin had formerly been in charge of the Kinchela Boys' Home. He and his wife, who functioned as the station's matron, became sufficiently unpopular for former Cummeragunja resident and secretary of the Aborigines Advancement League, William Cooper, to petition the Aborigines Protection Board for their removal.⁴⁶

The 1930s was characterised by a rise in Aboriginal activism built on the groundwork laid by leading twentieth-century Aboriginal activists such as Fred Maynard in the preceding decade.⁴⁷ This saw the conditions under which Aboriginal people were being forced to live as well as their own aspirations for their futures being articulated collectively through spokespeople such as Cooper, and Aborigines Progressive Association President Jack Patten. Patten was disturbed by the relatively high death toll at Cummeragunja, and publicised the matter in the media. On 2 February 1939, he visited Cummeragunja and addressed the station's residents. The following day, around 100 Aboriginal people walked off the station, with many families staying away over the months that followed. While the walk off initially garnered local media interest, the news story was ultimately subsumed by the outbreak of the Second World War in September of the same year.⁴⁸

Pressure from Aboriginal activists and their white supporters such as Burdeu led to inquiries, such as the New South Wales Parliamentary Select Committee convened in 1937 to 'inquire into the administration' of the Aborigines Protection Board. While the Select Committee failed to furnish a report, the Public Services Board ultimately recommended that the Protection Board be replaced. Accordingly, the Aborigines Welfare Board was appointed under the provisions of the *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1940* (NSW).⁴⁹

Despite the increasingly difficult conditions under which Aboriginal people lived at Cummeragunja, the women and children acquired skills that were highly relevant to the provision of comforts during the Second World War. Just a couple of years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, in March 1937, the co-director of the Aborigines Inland Mission of Australia, Retta Long, visited

46 Davis 2014: 122–123.

47 See, in particular, Maynard 2007.

48 Davis 2014: 117–126.

49 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940*, Parliament of New South Wales (Second Session), 1941.

Cummeragunja, where she was impressed by the sewing skills exhibited by the women. As Fiona Davis has explained, the women were 'already experienced in making their own frocks, [and] were working on garments to send to Aboriginal people at Tennant Creek'. The missionary, according to Davis, 'saw a sign of successful civilisation', and was gratified to see the Aboriginal women at the reserve working to help those at Tennant Creek whom Long saw as being worse off than the reserve residents.⁵⁰ The long tradition of Cummeragunja residents helping others viewed as less fortunate continued.

As well as having developed skills in sewing, the women at Cummeragunja knew how to knit. They were instructed in this by Beatrice Austin, their teacher's wife, a woman later described by one of Davis' Aboriginal informants, Lorna Walker, as having been 'a small woman with dark brown hair'.⁵¹ Walker recalled how, in addition to teaching her and other girls how to knit, Austin had also taught them needlework. Another of Davis' informants, Melva Johnson, also remembered being taught to knit by Austin, as well as how to weave baskets and to clean. 'Those are the things they learnt us', she told Davis, 'the skills that we sort of carried with us. Cause not many of us went on to anything else but being domestics'.⁵² As well as preparing Aboriginal girls for roles as domestic servants, which were seen at the time as fitting both in terms of providing white employers with inexpensive assistance and equipping young Aboriginal women with the knowledge and experience eventually to run their own homes as assimilated Australians, the acquisition of sewing and knitting skills meant the women were well-suited to assist with the war effort through the provision of comforts.

Although they resided in New South Wales, the women at Cummeragunja created comforts under the auspices of the Victorian-based Echuca Group RSL War Service Fund which, by November 1940, had been amalgamated with the Australian Comforts Fund. In its report on the number of articles forwarded from Echuca to Melbourne during the month of October 1940, the *Riverine Herald* reported that '19 scarves, 9 pairs of socks, 15 pairs of mittens, 2 helmets, [a] pair of spiral socks, [and a] pair of gloves' had been received from the women at Cummeragunja.⁵³ At the time, 207 Aboriginal people were reported as living on the station, although no further information is available to indicate how many of that number were adults, nor how many were female.⁵⁴ The articles knitted at Cummeragunja covered almost the entire range of the 2,851 articles which

50 Davis 2014: 2–3, 58.

51 Davis 2014: 98.

52 Davis 2010: 169.

53 *Riverine Herald*, 14 November 1940.

54 *Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940*, Parliament of New South Wales (Second Session), 1941.

by that date had been forwarded from Echuca to Melbourne, and represented around 10 per cent of the monthly total from Echuca. The work of the local comforts committee was said to be 'functioning exceedingly smoothly, owing to the well organised efforts of the ladies' committee in conjunction with the willing band of helpers and knitters', with the Cummeragunja women's efforts receiving a special mention.⁵⁵

It was against the backdrop of Aboriginal unrest at Cummeragunja that the Aborigines Welfare Board utilised a series of photographs of Aboriginal women and girls from the station in the widely read *Pix* magazine in November 1941 to cast its work in a positive light. At least one of these photographs, now held in the collection of the Australian War Memorial, was taken by Beatrice Austin, the teacher's wife who taught the women to knit. It depicts 24 women and girls of varying ages, all dressed neatly in typical Australian female attire of the period, arranged in two rows, one seated with another standing behind them. Each of the females is shown holding her knitting in progress, with a number of completed socks, balaclavas, and jumpers produced by the women for Australian soldiers serving abroad being foregrounded in the staged photograph. As Jane Lydon has pointed out, drawing on Edward Said's work, 'apparently neutral ... representations of Aboriginal people can be shown to serve a functional purpose for white society'.⁵⁶ On the surface, this photograph paid tribute to the Cummeragunja women's contribution of comforts to assist the war effort, and, more obliquely, to the numbers of men from the station who had voluntarily joined the armed forces. Yet its overriding message was one in which the Board congratulated itself on its visually apparent progress towards preparing the station residents for assimilation into the wider Australian community.

55 *Riverine Herald*, 14 November 1940.

56 Lydon 2004: 60.



Figure 1: Group portrait of Aboriginal women and girls knitting socks, jumpers and balaclavas for the war effort at Cumeroogunga Government Mission, New South Wales (opposite Barmah, Victoria) on the Murray River.

Identified, left to right, back row: Merle Morgan, June Morgan, Weeny Charles, Amy Briggs, Valda McGee, Edna Walker, Sheila Charles, Joan Charles, Elsie Cooper, Midge Walsh, Florry Walker. Front row: Joyce Atkinson, Clare Charles, Alma Charles, Ada Cooper, Nelly Davis?, Elizabeth Morgan, Lauraine Charles, Greta Cooper, Violet Charles, Wynnie Walker, Hilda Walker, Georgina Atkinson, Lydia Morgan, Reta Cooper, Maggie Weston. Photographer: Beatrice Austin, 1941.

Source: Courtesy Australian War Memorial: P01562.001.

Such overt usage of Aboriginal photographs to promote progress towards assimilation had also been evident in relation to Cummeragunja in January 1938, when a polio outbreak at the station had given media outlets cause to trumpet the ‘good work settler society was doing for its Aboriginal population’. As Davis has pointed out, the *Argus*, for example, speciously utilised the occasion to promote the idea that the Aboriginal people at Cummeragunja lived contentedly in their own homes, enjoying similar facilities as the residents of most country towns. This was far from being the lived experience of those at the station.⁵⁷

Conclusion

While a paucity of surviving evidence has rendered it nigh on impossible to quantify the reach and impact of the Aborigines Uplift Society’s national comfort auxiliary, qualitative evidence has suggested that the majority of

⁵⁷ Davis 2014: 111–116.

its volunteers came from the white middle classes. Some white middle-class volunteers were surprised to find their Aboriginal correspondents literate, unsettling their notions of what it might have meant to be an Aboriginal person in mid-twentieth-century Australia. Nevertheless, surviving evidence has also indicated that affective relationships formed between some of these Aboriginal soldiers and their white correspondents, at least across the temporal and spatial divides rendered by war.

The comfort auxiliary was founded on the basis that Aboriginal women were too impoverished to send comfort parcels to their men serving abroad, yet it is evident that at least some community members, albeit often living under the constraints of mission, station or reserve life, were able to do so. In some instances, such as at Stradbroke Island, the production of comforts was seen as breaking down the colour bar between local Aboriginal and white women.

Most Aboriginal contributions were channelled through mainstream patriotic funds, such as the Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund, and were demonstrably appreciated at a very practical and emotional level by the recipients. This can be seen, for example, following the repatriation of Private Clarrie Combo (the soldier who had corresponded with Mrs Brown from Loxton, and whose family lived at Cabbage Tree Island) and two companions in August 1942. At one of several 'welcome home' events, Combo's companions, Privates Dan Buckley and Cedric Lofts, informed the gathering at the hall in Tregeagle how grateful they had been for the parcels of comforts that had been sent to them by the Tregeagle Soldiers' Welfare Association.⁵⁸

Aboriginal people at stations such as Cummeragunja, where there was a long history of providing for those elsewhere who were considered even worse off than the Aboriginal station inhabitants, may have genuinely enjoyed knitting comforts for soldiers serving abroad, and Aboriginal soldiers appreciated receiving comfort parcels. State authorities such as the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board capitalised on Aboriginal involvement in the global theatre of war to promote positive visual images of itself and its assimilatory agenda. Regardless of such visions of equality, however, Aboriginal men, women and children did not find themselves on an equal footing with other Australians at the conclusion of the Second World War.

58 'Returned men welcomed at Tregeagle', *Northern Star*, 29 August 1942: 2.

References

Primary sources

National Library of Australia

Uplift: The Official Organ of the Aborigines Uplift Society

Parliament of New South Wales

Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1940

Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1941

Aborigines Welfare Board Report for the Year Ended 30th June 1945

State Library of Victoria

BARIO1976, 'Leaguery' [4], Primary Records of the Aborigines Uplift Societies,
Series 28: Aboriginal Rights Movement in Australia – Educational and
Promotional Material, Diane Barwick Papers

Newspapers and periodicals

The Advertiser (Adelaide)

Camperdown Chronicle

The Courier Mail

The Examiner

The Murray Pioneer and Australian River Record

The Muswellbrook Chronicle

The Northern Star

The Queensland Times (Ipswich)

The Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser

The Riverine Herald

The West Australian

Secondary sources

- Attwood, Bain and Andrew Markus 2004, *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Beaumont, Joan 2014, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW.
- Davis, Fiona 2010, 'Colouring within the lines: settler colonialism and the Cummeragunja Aboriginal Station, 1888–1960s', PhD thesis, School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne.
- 2014, *Australian Settler Colonialism and the Cummeragunja Aboriginal Station*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton.
- Goodall, Heather 1996, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770–1972*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards.
- Hall, Robert 1995, *Fighters from the Fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- 1997, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Harman, Kristyn 2013, 'Protecting Tasmanian Aborigines: American and Queensland influences on the Cape Barren Island Reserve Act, 1912', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41(5): 744–764.
- 2015, '"Doing a grand job": Tasmanian Girl Guides and their service across two world wars', *Tasmanian Historical Studies* (in press).
- Huggonson, David 1994, 'World War: The start of political battle for Indigenous Australians', *ATSIC News*, 10–11.
- Lydon, Jane 2004, '"This civilising experiment": Photography at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station during the 1860s', in *After Captain Cook: The Archaeology of the Recent Indigenous Past in Australia*, Indigenous Archaeologies Series, Rodney Harrison and Christine Williamson (eds), AltaMira Press, Maryland: 59–74.
- Maynard, John 2007, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Aboriginal Activism*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- McKernan, Michael 2014, *Australians at Home: World War II*, Five Mile Press, Scoresby, Vic.

- O'Brien, Anne 2015, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Oppenheimer, Melanie 2004, 'Controlling civilian volunteering: Canada and Australia during the Second World War', *War and Society* 22(2): 27–50.
- Paisley, Fiona 2000, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919–1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Ramsland, John and Christopher Gerald Mooney 2006, *Remembering Aboriginal Heroes*, Brolga Publishing, Melbourne.
- Riseman, Noah 2014, 'Aboriginal military service and assimilation', *Aboriginal History* 38: 155–178.
- 2015, 'Escaping assimilation's grasp: Aboriginal women in the Australian Women's Military Services', *Women's History Review*: 24(5): 757–775.
- Saunders, Kay 1995, 'Inequalities of sacrifice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour in northern Australia during the Second World War', *Labour History* 69: 131–148.
- Scates, Bruce 2001, 'The unknown sock knitter: Voluntary work, emotional labour, bereavement, and the Great War', *Labour History* 81: 29–49.
- Thomson, Donald 2005, *Thomson in Arnhem Land*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton.
- Twomey, Christina and Andrew J May 2012, 'Australian responses to the Indian famine, 1876–78: Sympathy, photography and the British Empire', *Australian Historical Studies* 43(2): 233–252.

Book Reviews

*Amongst Stone Age People in
the Queensland Wilderness*
(Bland Stenåldersmänniskor i Queenslands
Wildmarker [sic Vildmarker])

By Eric Mjöberg

Translated by S. M. Fryer, edited by Åsa Ferrier and Rod Ritchie, 421 pp., Hesperian Press,
Carlisle, WA, 2015, [First published in 1918 by Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm],
ISBN 9780859055932 (hbk), \$110.00.

Review by Fiona Powell
Consultant Anthropologist

Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness is the second of Eric Mjöberg's popular accounts of his scientific work in Australia, which were first published in 1915 and 1918 respectively in the Swedish language. The recent issue in English translation of this book and the first book (*Among Wild Animals and People in Australia* by Margareta Luotsinen and Kim Akerman) are valuable and welcome additions to the corpus of books about early Australia.

The author, Eric Mjöberg, was born in Sweden in 1882, completed his doctoral studies in entomology in 1910, and became a renowned Swedish zoologist (entomologist), collector, ethnographer and explorer. While working for the Swedish Museum of Natural History, he led two Swedish Scientific Expeditions to Australia. The first expedition was undertaken with three other scientists in 1910–1911 and focused on the Kimberley region of Western Australia. At the conclusion of this expedition, Mjöberg and his colleagues made a brief visit to the Blackall Range area of south-east Queensland. The second expedition, of which Mjöberg was the sole member, took place during 1912–1913 and investigated regions of Queensland's coastal subtropical and tropical rainforest and central Cape York.

Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness is more than a mere travelogue of the second expedition and includes discussion of issues that have continuing topicality, such as the situation of Australia's Aboriginal people, the conservation of its forests, protection of its fauna and flora, and husbanding of its natural resources. The book has three main sections: an editors' introduction, the translated text of the original book and an end section that contains some endnotes, references and four indexes (the main index and indexes of Aboriginal words, plant names and animal names).

The editors' introduction gives some background information about Eric Mjöberg and events associated with publication of the translation of this book (see 'Translator's notes' and the 'Translation editors' notes'). The translator, Sivi Fryer, and two translation editors – Åsa Ferrier (an archaeologist and cultural historian) and Rod Ritchie (who perhaps could be described as an environmental historian) – have their own separate histories of connection to this book. Rod Ritchie, with the assistance of two Swedish speakers, translated some portions of this book including some of its picture captions for his own book, *Seeing the Rainforests in 19th-century Australia* (1989), before he discovered in the early 1990s a computer printout of a complete translation of the book in the John Oxley Library, Brisbane, and subsequently, the translator, Sivi Fryer. There is, however, disappointingly little information about Sivi Fryer and the circumstances that led to her translation of this book and its subsequent much later publication. Åsa Ferrier has a long-standing interest in Mjöberg's research and is currently translating his Queensland field diaries into English as part of the preparation for 'a manuscript that brings forward new evidence on the Queensland expedition' (p. xi).

The translated text commences with Mjöberg's own introduction (pp. xiii–xv), in which he mentions how the brief excursion to the Blackall Range area in Queensland in 1911 at the end of the First Swedish Scientific Expedition led him to decide to undertake the Second Swedish Scientific Expedition to Australia, which 'from a biological point of view was intended to carefully and systematically explore the so-called rainforests or jungles, which thrive on the east coast of the ancient Australian continent' (p. 21). Mjöberg then introduces his readers to the continent of Australia (Chapters 1 to 3) and sets out in Chapters 4 to 20 an account of his journey of scientific investigation of Queensland's unique rainforest and savannah forest flora and fauna and its Aboriginal inhabitants. His evocatively written account provides details of his research methods and difficulties, field sites, the townships he visited, the countryside travelled through, his camp life, the bushmen and Aboriginal people who assisted with procuring specimens for the huge collections that were transported to Sweden, and descriptions of Aboriginal society and culture.

The text is well illustrated with captioned photographs of spectacular scenery, Aboriginal people, native flora and fauna, and two maps. According to the translation editors, Mjöberg took some photographs himself, and obtained others (in particular those of Aboriginal people in ceremonial dress) from photography studios and postcards because his photographic equipment was inadequate for the humid conditions he encountered (p. v). Two of the illustrations – Figure 176 ('A cannibal from the Gulf of Carpentaria') and Figure 203 ('a beautifully painted giant shield from Harvey's Creek, Q.') – are reproduced on the book's dust jacket. Figure 176 and Figure 244 ('Three little Queensland virgins') are reproductions of paintings made in 1909 by Oscar Friström. Their inclusion in this book would have had particular interest for the book's original Swedish audience, for Oscar Friström originated from Sweden and settled in Brisbane in about 1884, where he worked as a photographer and painter. Mjöberg may perhaps have obtained these paintings or photographs of them in 1911, when he visited Friström's Brisbane studio.¹

I was frustrated in my reading of this book by the lack of a detailed chronology of Mjöberg's travels and a second edition of this book would benefit from an editorial synopsis of his itinerary. To orientate myself in the historical landscapes and environments described so evocatively in the text, I supplemented the occasional mentions of dates and places in the text with information taken from Ferrier (2006) and items in old newspapers to reconstruct his itinerary. Based on this reconstruction, *Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness* comprises distinct sections. First is an introductory section that gives an overview of Australia's geological and biological history, and includes mention of its megafauna (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) and an account of Mjöberg's own journey from Sweden to this continent only five months after his return from the expedition to the Kimberley region. On reaching Rottneest Island, he went through quarantine, and being found to be free of smallpox, landed at Fremantle in late August 1912² (Chapter 4). After visiting Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, he arrived in Brisbane to commence his first stint of fieldwork during October–December 1912 in the Mt Tambourine, Lamington Plateau and Mt Colosseum regions of southern Queensland. The mention of Mt Colosseum, where Mjöberg went to hunt for the tree-climbing kangaroo, as 'one day's journey north of Brisbane' (p. 32) may be a translation error, for Mt Colosseum, which is south of Miriamvale, would in 1912 have been several days' journey north of Brisbane. While in this region, Mjöberg noted the environmental devastation caused by extensive ringbarking and found a local farmer who was willing to assist him. Together they collected an astounding '2,300 animals and amongst them were several new and interesting species' (p. 36). On his return to Brisbane,

1 'Bon Ami', 'The studio', *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 October 1911: 13.

2 'A Swedish Scientist Dr Mjöberg at Fremantle', *The West Australian*, 24 August 1912: 11.

Mjöberg tells that he 'sent off the first 10,000 animals to Sweden. After giving a lecture on my first expedition to the Kimberley to the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, I was ready to move my activities northward' (p. 36).³ By this time, it was late in December 1912.

His northern rainforest fieldwork was undertaken during January–August 1913 at several sites in the Cairns region, including places in the Yarrabah, Cedar Creek, Tully River, Johnstone River and Malanda vicinities (Chapters 7 to 16). Chapter 15 is devoted to an account of Yarrabah mission, where he says he went 'to familiarise myself with the local fauna and also to study the conditions that prevailed in this little community of whites and blacks' (p. 161). This visit seems to have begun at the end of May 1913, and to have been of several days' duration. While there, he visited the mission head station and outstations. I read this chapter with particular interest, having first visited Yarrabah in 1970, and since 1998 undertaken research relating to its former and current residents, including some descended from Aboriginal persons mentioned in Mjöberg's account. Mjöberg noted the mission's poverty and that Yarrabah's Aboriginal residents 'originate from quite diverse parts of northern Queensland [and] are all put together, accommodated in a Christian framework' (p. 168). While there, he persuaded some residents to perform traditional dances, which he filmed.

The conclusion of his rainforest field research was followed by a brief excursion in August 1913 to investigate the Chillagoe Limestone Caves, where he found only one cave insect (Chapter 17). The last stint of his fieldwork occurred during August–September 1913 and took Mjöberg via Cooktown and Laura to the Coleman River region of central Cape York (Chapters 18 to 20). At Cooktown, he was delighted to discover that the mayor, Mr Seagren (Sjögren), was from Stockholm, and received from him a sliver of the original 'Cook-tree, i.e. the tree to which Captain Cook is supposed to have moored his ship *Endeavour*, in 1770' (p. 194). From Cooktown, Mjöberg travelled by rail to Laura 'the last outpost of civilisation' (p. 195). From there, assisted by two 'bushmen' and one 'black', he set off with a packhorse caravan of 24 saddle-horses to explore central Cape York. At Laura, he stated 'being a zoologist and naturalist, I found nothing of interest in the terrain, other than the numerous termite mounds' (p. 196). Mjöberg was clearly not told that near Laura is one of the largest repositories of rock art in the world, first documented by Percy Trezise in the 1960s, for later in his book he states that: 'As far as I have found there are no cave paintings in Queensland; nor is there any known practice of painting on bark or carving figures in it or making drawings in the sand' (p. 340). I found Mjöberg's account of the magnetic termite mounds very interesting, having seen hundreds of these

3 The *Brisbane Courier*, 9 December 1912: 2, item 'Meetings'.

during my fieldwork in Cape York, but, until I read this book, knew nothing about their residents and architecture. Mjöberg took several of these mounds to Sweden, including one that weighted 400 kilograms.

Mjöberg left Queensland for Melbourne in late September 1913⁴ and the final portion of his book gives an account of his post-fieldwork activities and also has several chapters devoted to aspects of the culture and society of Queensland's Aboriginal people (Chapters 21 to 27). Chapter 21 is devoted to a discussion of current and future planning for Aboriginal people, and a plea for the preservation of their languages and the lifestyles of groups inhabiting areas of Queensland not yet colonised. In particular, he singled out Mornington Island, the largest and most northern of the 22 islands that form the Wellesley Islands group that he had hoped to visit during the second expedition (p. 245). Then follows an account of Aboriginal people's various ways of living and procuring food, their ontological and cosmological beliefs, life cycle, mortuary practices, art and music (Chapters 22 to 27), garnered not only from his own field observations, but also from the research of other observers, such as the Rev. John Mathew and the former Chief Protector of Aboriginals for Queensland, Dr Walter E. Roth. Mjöberg mentions that he 'visited several areas where Roth had stayed, and I was able to confirm his statements. I found, in most cases, them quite correct and in agreement with my own notes just taken down for my own interest' (p. 255).

His comparison in Chapter 24 of plains-living and rainforest-living people is particularly interesting, as it provides a biologist's perspective about environmental effects on Aboriginal material culture and local organisation. Mjöberg found that the rainforest people 'can only move about with difficulty and on certain known tracks in the dense and cumbersome terrain, which has made them more permanent settlers' (p. 285) and that they have unique artefacts such as cane baskets, waterbags, large battle swords and colourful and bright giant, wooden shields. He noted that the Coleman River region people had 'long fantastic fire igniters, which are amongst the most beautiful ethnographic artefacts found on the whole continent' (p. 222).

The book concludes with some results of his research (Chapter 28) and his departure from Australia in December 1913,⁵ his survival of a hurricane while at sea and arrival in Sweden in January 1914 (Chapter 29). One result of the Second Swedish Expedition was 'a rich and valuable collection of about 40,000 animals and a selective ethnographic collection' (p. 187), much of which was stored in Sweden's National Museum. The 40,000 'terrestrial animals' (mentioned again at p. 364) would have included snakes, worms, grubs, centipedes,

4 Shipping. Departures, *Cairns Post*, 29 September 1913: 2.

5 Mentioned as a passenger leaving Port Adelaide on board the Swedish steamer 'Australia' for Sweden in the *Daily Herald* (Adelaide), 8 December 1913: 4.

earwigs and ticks, as well as larger mammals and marsupials. This number may perhaps be an underestimate, for it may not include items collected during the Cape York portion of the expedition. Among the large collection of Aboriginal artefacts was 'a 16 ft long genuine canoe still in use around Cairns' (p. 195). Mjöberg also brought to Sweden the cinematographic films he made during the expedition (1,000 yards according to one report),⁶ some of which focused on Aboriginal people performing traditional dances, hunting and fishing, and going about their daily lives.

I found this beautifully written and interesting book tells us much about its author, as well as the people, places, flora and fauna he encountered, his collecting methods, and the difficulties of his fieldwork. It is a thought-provoking book for it presents an educated outsider's view of the state of the continent, in particular Queensland, just over a century ago. Mjöberg could perhaps be considered a pioneer in environmental science, and Australia gave him research situations where he could investigate not only the effect of different environments on flora and fauna, but also on its Aboriginal inhabitants. He undertook this research aware there was a limited window of opportunity to do so, given the colonisation of Australia by the 'pernicious white' (p. 269) along with introduced species and the prevailing government policies towards Aboriginal people.

Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness gives us today a picture of early Queensland, when large tracts of its rainforests were still standing and inhabited by Aboriginal people. Until I read this book, I did not know that in addition to his south-east and north Queensland rainforest research, Mjöberg spent three weeks in the Upper Alice and Coleman River region, and that he recorded ethnographic information about Aboriginal people not only in the rainforest areas but also in parts of Cape York. It is clear that his experiences during his second expedition led him to become an advocate for Australia's Aboriginal people, in particular those residing in Queensland, with respect to the recognition, protection and conservation of their societies and cultures, and the development of policies that would provide them with a dignified location in the continent's new economic and socio-political order.

As a social anthropologist, I found that although the book has some information about the Aboriginal people Mjöberg encountered, it lacks details of particular interest, such as Aboriginal names of the local groups and languages of the Aboriginal people he met and who assisted with his work, the extent of their territories, their social organisation, contact histories and so on. However, the absence of such information may be related to the fact that this book is a popular

⁶ 'Trees and natives; a plea for their preservation. Hints for Australia. Interview with a scientist', *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 3 December 1913: 14.

travel book and not an academic account. Perhaps such information may be recorded in Mjöberg's field journals, the translation of which into English may one day be available.

Mjöberg's comments on how Queensland was being developed for agricultural purposes and its treatment of its Aboriginal people are valuable contributions to Australia's ecological and social history and also, as noted by the editors (p. vi), to research now being undertaken for Native Title claims. His statements that: 'in Queensland, groups of blacks were herded like cattle down to the waterholes and mass-murdered. Their blood became mixed with the clay water and turned into red lakes. Horrific but true. Even today, there is a stench of black human blood in the southern parts of Queensland' (p. 239) brought his Swedish readers' attention to an aspect of Queensland's history that has only recently entered the public domain in Australia through the work of historians such as Gordon Reid, Judith Wright, Henry Reynolds and Jonathan Richards: the massacres of groups of its Aboriginal inhabitants.

His brief visit to Yarrabah mission may have had a profound effect on him and perhaps may have led to his later public campaign against the establishment of a Presbyterian mission on Mornington Island. Although he writes positively about the missionaries at Yarrabah (p. 162), who he described as 'very pleasant and good-hearted people, striving to do their best ... enlightened by a fervent desire to achieve the best possible result from this rather impossible material. In this, they were very different from what I had seen in other parts of Australia' (p. 162), he was not impressed by the compulsory inculcation of religion that he witnessed ('Three times a day, they had to be on their knees, automatically reciting prayers to a higher being, who had no existence in their primitive beliefs. The Stone Age man had been robbed of his own religion and had another thrust upon him ... The Christian religion and their own are totally incompatible and cannot substitute each other or be assimilated' (p. 164)). Neither was he impressed by the neglect at Yarrabah of what he termed 'the practical side of life' (p. 166), i.e. what is required for a healthy life in the present; and by the missionaries' procurement of a 'little income for the mission' (p. 169) through the selling of weapons and utensils mass-produced by the Aboriginal residents for which they received a receipt that could be used to buy basic supplies from the mission store.

Mjöberg has been severely criticised for his illegal removal of Aboriginal remains from north-west Australia during the First Swedish Scientific Expedition (Hallgren 2010). However, this should be balanced by an appreciation of his bold advocacy against Queensland's treatment of its Aboriginal people, which displays his appreciation of their cultures and societies, his compassion for their situation and his determination to do something to rectify it.

Perhaps, during his Second Expedition, through close living with Aboriginal people, he developed an appreciation in their religious beliefs, social and territorial organisation, and a deeply felt and genuine concern for their plight and future prospects. As a scientist, he was keenly interested to record Aboriginal culture and society before it disappeared or was irrevocably transformed. He was pessimistic about the future prospects of Australia's Aboriginal people, stating: 'Due to the lack of wisdom from the Australian government, it will probably not take more than at the most one hundred years until this people in its entirety are eliminated from the earth. This is in accordance with the common wishes' (p. 268). This book shows that he attempted to raise the Australian public's awareness of the essential worthiness of Australia's Aboriginal people's rich cultures and unique and highly complex societies. Mjöberg fully intended to return to Queensland for a third expedition,⁷ but this did not happen. Perhaps his outspoken criticism of the then current church-dominated policies and practices towards Queensland's Aboriginal people may have adversely impacted on these plans.

The publication of this translation into English of his *Amongst Stone Age People in the Queensland Wilderness* allows those who followed in his footsteps to appreciate his research and the courage of his advocacy on behalf of Queensland's Aboriginal people. I recommend this book as a valuable addition to Australian history, and in particular to its Aboriginal history and suggest that its next edition include a detailed chronology of the expedition's itinerary, and that the text is enriched through footnotes that refer to relevant extracts of his field journals.

Other references mentioned in the text

Ferrier, Åsa 2006, 'Dr Eric Mjöberg's 1913 scientific exploration of North Queensland's rainforest region', *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum, Cultural Heritage Series* 4(1): 1–27, Brisbane.

Hallgren, Claes 2010, 'Eric Mjöberg and the rhetorics of human remains', in *The Long Way Home: The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*, Paul Turnbull and Michael Pickering (eds), Berghahn Books, New York, 135–143.

Ritchie, Rod 1989, *Seeing the Rainforests in 19th-century Australia*, Rainforest Publishing, Sydney.

Tresize, Percy 1969, *Quinkan Country: Adventures in Search of Aboriginal Cave Paintings in Cape York*, A. H. & A. W. Reed, Sydney.

7 'Fine Type of Blacks', *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 17 November 1913: 3.

*The Aranda's Pepa: An Introduction to
Carl Strehlow's Masterpiece, Die Aranda-und
Loritja-Stamme in Zentral Australien (1907–1920)*

by Anna Kenny

xix + 310 pp., ANU E Press, Canberra, 2013, ISBN 9781921536762 (pbk), \$28.00.

Review by Peter Sutton
South Australian Museum and University of Adelaide

Recent years of Australianist writing in anthropology, linguistics and other disciplines have been characterised by an unprecedented interest in the scholarship of a relatively neglected past. These were the works of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries prior to about 1925. Much of that early recording of Aboriginal cultural life was both unrepeatable and also carried out by missionaries. Although Aranda and Loritja people have retained their old cultures more than most, the research carried out on their ideas and practices and languages more than a century ago by the missionary Carl Strehlow has been overdue for the comprehensive reassessment now taking place. Anna Kenny's book lies within this appreciative recent development and will add considerable stimulation to it.

Not least of the reasons for this is that her chosen subject, Carl Strehlow (1871–1922), was a primary actor in the history of the most romantic theatre of the colonial drama of the Australian Outback, Central Australia. He also gave us his son, T. G. H. Strehlow, whose Gothic presence remains with us so vividly still, after his death in 1978, especially through his haunting *Journey to Horseshoe Bend* (1969). And he gave us his grandson, John Strehlow, whose monumental and intense biography of his grandparents, Frieda and Carl (*The Tale of Frieda Keysser* 2011), continues for a third generation a dynasty of independent scholarship and Strehlovian struggle against marginalisation, dismissal and criticism. For a long time, T. G. H. (Ted) Strehlow worked alone to defend his

father's scholarly work against detractors, especially Baldwin Spencer. John has followed suit. In Anna Kenny, Ted and John have fine company from outside the family.

Among the various reasons for the comparative neglect of scholarly predecessors in the Australian Aboriginal field until recently has been that a number of them published only or mainly in German. Anna Kenny is able to play a significant role in this redressive process partly because she is a native speaker of German and a scholar of German-language intellectual traditions, as well as those of the English-writing world. And it is important that the large work she examines here, Carl Strehlow's five-volume *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral Australien* (1907–1920), while it has been most recently translated into English in manuscript form by H. Oberscheidt, remains unpublished in English. Or not quite. The manuscript translation by Charles Chewings (1859–1937) held at the University of Adelaide's Barr Smith Library (MSS 572.994 S91a.E) is listed by the National Library of Australia as 'Published 1996', but is held by that library only in 'microform' (Dewey no. 305.89915) and not in print.

Strehlow's grand work concentrated on extensive ethnographic descriptions and on language description, and avoided global theorising. But Kenny is able, especially in Chapter 2, to show how nineteenth-century German philosophical and historical paradigms formed a deep if veiled background to Strehlow's approach. The most important of these appears to have been Herder's model of the *Volk* and the *Volksgeist* – the appreciation, on its own merits, of a cultural group and its essence or spirit. This Herderian respect for cultural difference was rooted in his early form of cultural particularism that stood apart from the evolutionist and culture-hierarchical theories that had gained currency in the English-speaking anthropological tradition by the late nineteenth century. They were soon to be blitzed by the synchronic and relativist emphasis on societal structure and function of, among others, the professional and specialised anthropologists Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in the first half of the twentieth century.

Kenny generally prefers the term 'particularism' to 'relativism' in this discussion. She concentrates on the German intellectual traditions of the nineteenth century that clustered together under this modern rubric – it was no mystery that Franz Boas made it his stock in trade and became himself a mainspring of relativism's conquering of American anthropology. 'Cultures', not just 'culture', were an achievement of particularism in the German tradition.

Kenny does, however, point out that Strehlow's taxonomy of Aranda myths was a rather ill-fitting reproduction of the subdivisions of European folkloric narratives used by the Brothers Grimm and others – Myths, Legends, and Fairy-tales (pp. 141–146). That this was more than an ethnocentric categorisation is

made plain by Kenny, who insightfully concludes that because of it, together with Strehlow's organisation of the myths in terms of a story of creation followed by a descent from the heavens to the earth, 'the *modus operandi* of Aranda and Loritja myth was masked' (p. 145).

Although Kenny is skilled in showing how '[Strehlow's] magnum opus mirrors in a striking way the anthropological concerns in the Germany of his time' (p. 70), and that he had 'affinities both with a nineteenth century German tradition, and with the anthropology that Boas would develop' (p. 71), direct lines of transmission of such ideas to Strehlow remain largely obscure or, better, there were no direct lines and the process was instead osmotic. The grey eminence of his advisor/editor von Leonhardi may have lain somewhere in between.

The nub issue for the re-evaluation of Carl Strehlow's work that will expand once the English translation is properly published is going to be one that Kenny here already discusses in great detail. It is not that of Strehlow's particularism and modernity but that of his quality as a field ethnographer (even if sedentary) and linguist. This is because it arises from the cognate question of the value of ethnographic detail and linguistic recording as an end in itself, especially if it is considered merely a collection of words and customs and folkloric traditions, versus a globally oriented scholarship that uses descriptions in the service of shining a torchlight on the great paradigmatic questions of the day. And then there is the interstitial category between 'raw' ethnography and 'cooked' theory – namely the sorting efforts of typology and taxonomy such as 'kinship systems', 'types of totemism', 'forms of initiation' and so on. Spencer engaged in all three. Strehlow engaged mainly in the first two. More, however, is not necessarily better.

This reader, not at all a specialist in German thought, and unable to read German, is left puzzled by one of the conundrums raised by this book, though Kenny does not confront it. That is that while it is particularistic to believe that every *Volk* has its *Geist*, or *Volksgeist*, the very commitment to a people's essence as an irreducible given is not just the adoption of an intellectual framework but the embracing of an inherently emotional one as well. A national or ethnic 'spirit' is hardly a cold structure. It is never meant only as metaphor. It is an affective construction that has been put to the service of the relativism of mutual respect for difference, and the recovery of a battered indigeneity and pride within post-colonial Fourth World contexts. But it has no inherent or absolute character that enables it to be valorised as such. For it has also been put to the service of lethal emotions countless times – as when the world heard Joseph Goebbels PhD appeal centrally to the notion of *der deutsche Geist* on the night of the 'spontaneous' Burning of the Books by university students on 10 May 1933

in Berlin. Nazi ideology was, among other things, a variety of essentialist indigenism that attracted not just the marginal but academically trained middle-class intellectuals as well. Was it, then, also a case of particularism?

When the issue of translation is germane, as it is here, it raises the problem of the literary quality of anthropological and linguistic writing. The translation may always be better than the original, as a work of literature. One can hope such. This is more than a matter of 'style'. Powerful writing is not always elegant. Eloquence and insight are close bedfellows; both strain the limits of language and of the mind. They can be found in brilliance put to the service of 'mere description'. Dry, hard-hearted and pedestrian language can, conversely, be put to the service of the glamour world of hifalutin global theorising. In the end, description is not as quickly rendered passé as theorising. But dull and uninspired and insightless description will not survive much longer than the end of a theoretical paradigm that has been consigned to the dustbin of history – unless the description has a new purpose.

Native title and heritage protection and other Indigenous Affairs contexts of contemporary Australia have resurrected many of the ethnographic and linguistic legacies of the past and given them a new reason to live. In order for Carl Strehlow's master work to be considered, as Kenny claims, not just a present-day mine of data useful for, say, expert evidence in Federal Court litigations, but a 'masterpiece' as well, it will have to be an aesthetic as well as an informative experience.

The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania

by Nicholas Clements

268 pp., University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2014,
ISBN 9780702250064, \$34.95.

Review by Greg Lehman
Institute for Koorie Education
Deakin University

Nicholas Clements' debut volume *The Black War* offers an innovative approach to understanding the origins of Tasmania's historical identity. His book is not the first to attempt such a task. It is not even the first to bear such a title. The journalist, biographer and historian Clive Turnbull published his *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines* (1948). This was the first major survey of the impact of British settlement on Tasmanian Aborigines since a flurry of nineteenth-century publications by James Bonwick (*Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians* (1870), *The Last of the Tasmanians* (1870), *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (1884)), and James Erskin Calder (*Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits etc. of the Native Tribes of Tasmania* (1875)). Importantly, Turnbull's work followed a period working as a wartime press officer for Australian Associated Press. No doubt influenced by this experience, Turnbull was the first to draw a comparison between British efforts to exterminate Tasmanian Aborigines and the genocide of Jews by the Nazis.

Genocide in Tasmania has emerged in recent decades as perhaps the most contentious subject of debate on Tasmania's recent history. The supervisor of Clements' PhD, from which *The Black War* is drawn, was Henry Reynolds. Having published extensively on the Tasmanian experience, Reynolds' book *An Indelible Stain?: The Question of Genocide in Australia* (2001) backed away from the appropriateness of the term in the Tasmanian context. Reynolds argued that the absence of government directives to exterminate the Indigenous population makes use of the term 'genocide' imprecise, and that while the effect of colonial actions in Tasmania may have had a genocidal effect, there is not evidence to conclude a genocidal intention.

Clements, perhaps unsurprisingly, seems to concur with this conclusion. The significance of the author's position can be understood best in light of attacks made by Keith Windschuttle on a range of Australian historians in his book *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (2002). Windschuttle was intent on dismissing the promulgation by Australian scholars of the idea of genocide in Tasmania. At stake was the international reputation of Australia and the task of historians to provide a narrative that served the national interest as understood by the country's conservative right. This required countering not only direct claims by historians such as Lyndall Ryan, who argued in her influential book *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (1981) that genocide did occur on the island, but also a widespread acceptance of this in the Australian media throughout the 1970s. Importantly, this view was commonly used to invoke a sense of national shame, with Tasmania the crucible of colonial guilt.

Windschuttle's approach was to assuage the national conscience by redressing this popular perception of genocide in Tasmania as the product of a sloppy and partisan academy. His methodology simply excluded all evidence inconsistent with his desired narrative, and generated a vast polemic that dominated the Australian media for most of the next decade. Reynolds' placement at 'ground zero' in the ensuing History Wars was ironic given that he had never argued for genocide in Tasmania. In fact, he had sought to ameliorate the perceived fatal impact of settlers on Aborigines, arguing instead that it was more important to understand Aboriginal resistance to British occupation as sophisticated and intentional; responding to a series of unfulfilled treaties offered by the governor. Nevertheless, Windschuttle was critical of Reynolds for making such concessions, asserting instead his scientific racist argument that Tasmanian Aborigines were inherently dysfunctional and self-destructive.

Henry Reynolds writes in his foreword to *The Black War*, 'Nicholas Clements has written a book that, while reflecting upon the History Wars, has transcended their angry contention and has, consequently, brought them to an end' (p. x). To this extent, Clements' book represents an important legacy to the now-retired Reynolds' distinguished career – a desirable end to an undignified, hostile and often destructive national debate. Clements' approach to this task is a dignified one. In promoting his book, the author has been at pains to emphasise that he has sought to avoid the polemics that came to dominate the History Wars.

Interestingly, Clements is also happy to declare 'quite a lot of respect' for his mentor's critic. He explained this to *The Australian* (26 April 2014) with reference to Windschuttle's argument that historians had sought to portray European settlers unfairly. The book's preface offers a key insight into Clements' method. In it he reveals a eureka moment while reading *The Palestine–Israeli Conflict: A Beginner's Guide* (2008), co-written by Israeli and Palestinian scholars

Dan Cohn-Sherbok and Dawoud El-Alami. Clements recognised that an account 'from both sides' would enable him 'to weave the vastly different experiences of Aborigines and colonists into one volume' (p. xiv).

What follows is the division of each chapter of *The Black War* into sections marked 'Black' and 'White'. With this approach, the author attempts to construct a social history of the attitudes and actions of both parties to the conflict. He does this with extensive reference to an impressive array of primary sources, drawn from Tasmania's rich colonial archive. This formulaic approach has not appealed to all readers I have surveyed. For some it proved to be a laboured structure, imposing itself on the narrative flow, rather than facilitating it. For others it may offer a simple means of seeing past the complex of ambiguity and contradiction that inevitably besets any attempt to make a fair and inclusive social account of entrenched human conflict.

The success of Clements' approach ultimately depends on the quality of his insight into the context of the many lives to which his book refers. Such an aspiration is, however, too ambitious to succeed entirely. The most obvious obstacle is that there are no first-person accounts by Aborigines of events described in each of the 'Black' sections. Both 'Black' and 'White' must be read through the lens of a non-Aboriginal commentator, inescapably enmeshed and inevitably partisan. The author acknowledges the problem as a limitation of the archive, but I am not sure that this is enough to surmount the moral and ethical dimensions of this challenge. The Palestinian–Israeli inspiration for his approach involved two authors, each contributing perspectives, interpretations and standpoints to their respective accounts. Without an intimate knowledge of the distinct social and cultural characteristics of the Tasmanian Aboriginal experience and its heritage, can *The Black War* hope to successfully model the approach of Cohn-Sherbok and El-Alami?

It might also occur to readers that the convenient division of perspectives into a dichotomy of 'black' and 'white' runs the risk of missing more nuanced influences on events and attitudes in the colony. Many individuals and philosophies were at play in the colony that are not so easily pigeonholed. Those Tasmanians of mixed-descent are a case in point. The few references made to this rapidly growing population acknowledge the origins of today's Aboriginal community, and the vigorous campaigns for justice that continue. But there is no suggestion that such people might have played a meaningful role in the milieu of events discussed in the book. Similarly, there were many Aboriginal people who either temporarily or permanently abandoned tribal life to achieve varying degrees of integration during the period covered. These constitute a critical 'grey area' in Clements' racially based structural analysis. A compelling hint of this was successfully imagined through the depiction of Black Bill in Rohan

Wilson's historical fiction novel *The Roving Party* (2011). Wilson posed multiple questions about the agency of mixed-race individuals in colonial conflict, none of which are touched on in *The Black War*.

Those seeking a rigorous contribution to the question of genocide in Tasmania will not find it in *The Black War*. A few critical contributors to the debate are briefly dismissed in favour of Reynolds' conclusions, without reinforcing argument or discussion. In fairness, Clements makes it clear that his volume is not the place for 'delving deep into government policy' (p. 56). Rather, he argues the use of genocide because there was no ideological basis for the killing of Aborigines by colonists. 'Those who participated in the violence did so largely out of revenge and self-preservation' (p. 57), writes Clements, appearing to ignore their desire for securing land for economic interests.

Clements effectively transforms Reynolds' idea of Aborigines as a proactive resistance, into one where they formed a determined aggressor no more or less guilty of genocide than the colonists. The disproportion of power, resources and population disappears as a factor in such an analysis. As 'an eighth generation Tasmanian (whose) ancestors lived through and participated in the conflict of the 1820s' (p. xi), Clements' book certainly constitutes a significant chapter in Australia's ongoing History Wars. It makes sense of his respect for Keith Windschuttle and undoubtedly seeks to relieve some of the weight of Aboriginal extermination from his professed settler ancestors. However, his 'even-handedness' is compromised by the absence of an unmediated Aboriginal voice. Clements' version of *The Palestine-Israeli Conflict: A Beginner's Guide* is derived entirely from Israeli sources. As such it is unlikely to mark an end to the History Wars.

Drawn from the Ground: Sound, Sign and Inscription in Central Australian Sand Stories

by Jennifer Green

xvii + 270 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014,
ISBN 9781107028920 (hbk), \$145.00.

Review by Murray Garde
The Australian National University,
School of Culture, History & Language

This book is a definitive study of the Arrernte art of *tyepety* or ‘sand stories’ from Central Australia. It draws on a vast corpus of data that has been collected over a 30-year period of collaboration between the author Jennifer Green and Arrernte-speaking people, covering a range of research projects in linguistics, arts and culture. The book takes a multimodal and interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of communication and examines the total effect of individual semiotic systems in interaction. In the case of Arrernte sand drawings, this involves analysing the complementarity of both verbal and visual elements – gesture, physical props, conventional sign language, speech (including intonational features) and song. The variation in the granularity of description is impressive, both from methodological and theoretical perspectives. The objective of the book is to examine the way in which the sequential and co-occurring elements of semiotic bricolage all interact to form a unified semantic product. At a more general level, the objective is to expand the scope of linguistics by including ‘dynamic movements in a definition of language and social action’ thus challenging mainstream study of language that has to date largely overlooked the relationship between vocal and visual elements of communication (p. 3).

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the thematic content of sand stories and a classification of story styles and the tools and physical props used during performance. Sand drawing and narration would appear to be widespread throughout Aboriginal Australia, with documentation existing for Arrernte and Western Desert peoples, the Kukatja and Walmajarri people of the Balgo

region in Western Australia and western Queensland and northern New South Wales groups. Apart from a few anthropological papers and references to this art form, sand drawing performance has largely escaped the notoriety that other Indigenous Australian art traditions have enjoyed. Green's volume remedies this oversight.

Chapter 3 describes the meticulous and painstaking methodology used to record, transcribe and annotate sand stories. In documenting sand story performances, Green and her colleagues use a number of video cameras which simultaneously record performances from different angles (for example, from above and in front of a performer) in order to maximise the capture of both vocal and kinesic content and their coordination. Using the linguistic annotation tool ELAN, Green has devised an intricate system for annotation of multiple video recordings with a notation system that encompasses all semiotic systems – drawing, gestural strokes, speech and the both inter- and intra-modal transitions. It is an innovative and comprehensive methodology.

Chapter 4 effectively examines variation amongst performers to test the extent of conventionalisation of the graphic elements of a performance and concludes thematic continuity is canonical but also open to innovation.

In Chapter 5 we zoom in further on sign conventionalisation to examine those signs unique to sand story performance that contrast with the alternative set of signs used in the broader lexicon of Arrernte sign language. An important contribution in this chapter is an examination of the pragmatics of conventionalised signs and spontaneous gesture and the role that context plays in the interpretation of these co-present communication modes.

The internal structure of the narratives themselves are examined in Chapter 6 through a frame analysis of the temporal sequencing of sand drawing narratives. Together with lexical items that are concerned with sequential structure, the role of hand pointing and other forms of non-verbal deixis are important in signalling transitions from one episode to the next. This is also the chapter that provides the best examples of text to illustrate the sort of language used in these narratives, but in keeping with the focus of the book, these examples are always given in the context of their relationship to other communication modes.

'Vocal style in sand stories' is the title of Chapter 7 but it deals exclusively with the place of song or song-like speech in sand drawing performances. Green describes what appears to be a song-like form of speech that is unique to sand drawing in that there are also formal differences between this type of sung speech and that of other song genres (see p. 197). From all angles of analysis, sand drawing performance is a distinct semiotic system composed of combinations of elements from other discrete semiotic systems of communication, but these

elements also reveal an extraordinary range of typological variation. For example, in Chapter 7 we are provided with examples of sand drawing performances that demonstrate how ordinary speech morphs into rhythmic speech with or without melody and in some other stories, the narrative is totally sung. The act of drawing and accompanying gestures are also subject to variations that might include the marking movements of the hand and wire set to rhythmic motion.

The presentation of the data reflects these multimodal and variant elements. There are numerous line drawings of the bodies of performers indicating corporal movement and signing. For such a visually rich form of communication the book is appropriately sprinkled with photographs and colour plates of related artworks to which sand drawing has a close relationship. There are also many diagrams and photographs that illustrate the sequencing of sand markings, the directions of the marking, the combinatorial grammar and hierarchical structure of visual units (or 'V-Units') and the tension between convention and innovation. There are also more traditional interlinear transcripts of the speech used in narratives and, especially in Chapter 7, there are musical transcriptions of songs.

The final chapter offers some concluding reflections on the dynamic interaction of the corporeal signs of speech, song, gesture, markings or inscriptions together with other signs in the environment. This comprehensive and challenging approach to a multimodal study of human communication requires skills that go beyond the usual training and field experience of most linguists. Green has drawn on many decades of field work and life experience working with the Indigenous people of Central Australia. The depth of these relationships and the innovative analysis combine to make this an important study that is set to influence future research on multimodal approaches to human communication.

Encounters with Indigeneity: Writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

by Jeremy Beckett

246 pp., Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2014,
ISBN 9781922059772 (pbk), \$39.95.

Review by Ian Keen
The Australian National University

This volume comprises a selection of Jeremy Beckett's previously published articles and chapters in edited books, linked by the theme of Australian Indigenous studies. It encompasses studies both of Australian Aboriginal social life and culture (primarily in New South Wales) and those of Torres Strait Islanders. Beckett's wider corpus reveals an even more diverse set of interests and field areas. The book has a useful (and oddly, anonymous) foreword, and an introduction by Jeremy Beckett himself in which he outlines the circumstances of his research, and his approach to fieldwork and analysis through a career spanning half a century.

Frustrated in his early plans to do fieldwork in New Guinea, Beckett carried out research for his MA (in 1957) in the pastoral west of New South Wales, and subsequently in the Torres Strait Islands (1958–61) for the PhD. These were to become long-term fieldwork locations. He also carried out shorter-term research in the Cook Islands and the Philippines. The resulting publications demonstrate a wide range of interests and approaches: biography, political economy, history and social change, the relation between myth and history, religion, music, Indigenous identity, and Native Title.

A number of themes and perspectives connect the 11 chapters. Beckett's work as a whole is characterised by a political economy approach and, consonant with its Marxian roots, a historical perspective, aimed primarily at the colonial and post-colonial context of Indigenous lives. One of the things that makes the work special, though, is the combination of these theoretical underpinnings with a concern for individuals and their particular lives and circumstances. Each can

serve as a window illuminating the other. Beckett frames the relationship in terms of the 'encounter' with others (p. xiv), and writes of the tension between ethnographic encounter and the necessity for understanding people's lives in the changing wider contexts. Writing of the long engagement with external forces on the part of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, he suggests that: 'My task was to identify the forces bearing on them and the social and cultural resources they brought to this engagement: their sense of who they were in the broader scheme of things' (p. xiii). A further element is his comparative perspective, drawing on studies of settler societies elsewhere, especially in the Americas.

Beckett begins in Chapter 1 with his encounter with George Dutton, and sketches the course of Dutton's life against the background of the history of the colonisation and development of the far west of New South Wales. Beckett skilfully combines extracts from Dutton's own accounts of his life and circumstances with historical and social analysis of the wider context: 'He had his own message and his own way of communicating it. In showing us the country, he was telling us who he was, and what his rightful place was in it' (p. 24).

The following chapter, 'Walter Newton's History of the World – or Australia', focuses on the sense Walter Newton made of his changing world. Beckett situates this enterprise within what he sees (following Sider) as a central contradiction in colonialism; colonisers are caught between creating the colonised as 'other', and incorporating the other within a system of domination (p. 28). Rejecting the term 'syncretism', Beckett sees Walter Newton's narrative as negotiating the contradiction between alienation and incorporation in its blend of ancestral and Biblical themes, giving temporal priority to Aboriginal mythology, but in which the ancestral figure Guluwiri is melded with God. Colonisation is depicted as but one episode in a sequence of disasters, and Aboriginal and White people are encompassed within the same moral space. The next chapter discusses the relationship between myth and history, framed around, and critiquing, Lévi-Strauss' distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' societies. This is followed by a discussion of Beckett's transcription and editing of George Lalor's 'oral history' (as Lalor himself called it).

Chapters 5 to 8 are taken up with the Torres Strait Islands. The first of these is a reprint of Beckett's influential article on internal colonialism, which deals with the political economy of the islands as a group, combining historical and ethnographic perspectives. The second focuses on one particular, rather isolated island (which Beckett calls Kawa) in which the only route to status was being a good Christian. The third of the set broadens out again to consider three kinds of Christianity in the Torres Strait Islands which, Beckett argues, must be understood in the context of colonisation. Chapter 8 turns to the politics of

representation in the Torres Strait Islands, in the context of historical changes from colonisation, through the period of 'welfare colonialism' to Fourth World politics, and of changing Federal and State relations. The chapter traces the increasing skills of Islanders in the national political arena.

This leads in Chapter 9 to the Murray Islands land case that preceded the Native Title decision of the High Court in the *Mabo* case. The chapter details the history of the earlier case, picking out for particular discussion the question of authenticity, which hinged on the difficulty of demonstrating continuity in relations to land in light of the changes brought about by colonisation. Beckett links this difficulty to problems anthropology has with the analysis of continuity and change. Evolutionary anthropologists, functionalists and those coming from a political economy perspective have all tended to represent cultures depicted as 'primitive' as irreparably transformed by 'civilisation', or as having survived and incorporating alien influences, 'yet remaining essentially themselves' (p. 201).

The final chapters are on Indigenous identity, and again reflect Beckett's historical perspective. Chapter 10, on changing relations of Aboriginal people with the state, concludes that Australia has 'transformed its Indigenous population from virtually passive colonial subjects, situated inside the state but outside the nation, to a political constituency consisting of citizens who are simultaneously a minority' (p. 226). The state institutionalised marginalisation 'through the rehabilitation of Aboriginality as both a way of life and an honourable status within the nation'. Political disenfranchisement required the setting up of consultative structures, while the rehabilitation of Aboriginal identity required 'at least a gesture towards self-determination' (p. 227). The last chapter sets issues of indigeneity in Australia within a broad international context, including Mexico, Amazonia, and North America, again with some emphasis on problems of indigenous people having to appear 'authentic'.

A striking feature of the volume is that it represents a remarkably cohesive corpus of work, united by themes and perspectives to which Beckett has consistently returned, through the development of appropriate analytical tools, such as the application of the theory of internal colonialism to the Torres Strait Islands, and the concept of welfare colonialism. The corpus demonstrates the melding of the fruits of personal 'encounters' and indeed long-term social relationships, with a keen structural and historical analytical sense. The book repays reading for its insights into Aboriginal and Islander lives and their social, historical and economic contexts.

Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League

by Richard Broome

Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, Canberra, 2015, ISBN 9781922059871 (ebook) (pdf),
9781922059888 (ebook) (epub), 9781922059864 (pbk), \$39.95.

Review by Sue Taffe
Monash University

Few are better equipped to write the history of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League than Richard Broome who has written the ground-breaking *Aboriginal Australians* (four editions), *Aboriginal Victorians* and, with Corinne Manning, a biography of Alick Jackomos. Broome has a knowledge and understanding of those who people this story and of their aspirations and hopes. His interest in and respect for them as fighters is evident as he charts the fascinating story of the League, which began as a coalition powered initially by white branches and morphed into the longest continually operating Indigenous organisation in Australia.

In *Fighting Hard*, Broome relates the history of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League in three parts. The first part identifies early Aboriginal political activity from the vision of Billibellary, a Woiwurrung leader, whose homelands were in the vicinity the Yarra River. In 1843, Billibellary shared with Protector William Thomas his dream of finding a way for his people to maintain their culture and traditions while also becoming agriculturalists so they could remain on some of their own land. This vision was passed on to William Barak, Billibellary's son, and from him to Shadrach James, thence to William Cooper and then Doug Nicholls. Adopting an expression coined by American philosopher Jonathan Lear, who was reflecting on how the Crow Native Americans faced a similar challenge to their world, Broome describes the 'radical hope' which Billibellary and those who came after him expressed as they sought to maintain the core of their culture while finding a way in the white man's world. An early

key chapter in this section, 'Rocket testing launches the League', skilfully sets out the political situation in post-war Australia which enabled the formation of the reformist, activist League in 1957.

The second part, 'A duet in white and black', charts the history of the League as a black and white coalition. At its height during the years 1957 to 1969 membership climbed to 3,000, at least 98 per cent of whom were non-Indigenous Australians. During these 13 years the 46 branches raised much-needed money for Aboriginal hostels, holiday programs for Aboriginal children, educational support and much else. The League's first four guiding principles concerning citizens' rights, standard of living, education and equal pay focused on the achievement of equality with white Australians. The fifth principle, that all remaining reserves be retained for individual or communal ownership, articulated a right to land which Broome shows us was expressed from the early days of contact between colonists and the Woiwurrung people. The League's emphasis in the 1950s and early 1960s was on creating opportunities for a disadvantaged people to gain access to decent housing, schools and jobs so that they could enjoy the opportunities afforded to other Australians. At the time these goals were generally described as being an expression of the assimilation policy. Later the term assimilation becomes a pejorative one in that it implies that to gain these opportunities people would have to relinquish their sense of themselves as a people.

The last part of the book, 'A radical hope realised – Aboriginal community control', concerns the Aboriginal struggle to gain and maintain power in the League which, in the early 1970s, became an Aboriginal community organisation. This part describes an idealistic and a painful journey for aspiring leaders with limited educational opportunities but big ideas. They were thrust into challenging roles running a large, complex organisation which was constantly being challenged by governments wishing to dictate its priorities and practices.

Broome has great talent as a storyteller. The chapters concerning the efficient and energetic establishment of the League in 1957 and the dramatic accounts of the 1969–1970 transformation, from a multi-racial coalition with 60 branches of mainly white folk to an Aboriginal run body, draw us along. Ideas are thrashed out and the future seems open to many possibilities.

This book also brings to light the lives and contributions of many people who have worked in the League at different times through its half-century of life. From the original talented and hard-working quartet of Doug Nicholls, Stan Davey, Gordon Bryant and Doris Blackburn to Aboriginal leaders who have been less written about such as Harry Penrith, Reg Blow, Mollie Dyer,

Eleanor Harding and many others, we meet people of commitment and talent. The Victorian Koorie community will value having biographical introductions to so many of their leaders together in one book.

Broome has written this book for at least two audiences: Aboriginal Victorians, many of whom will have been involved with the League in one way or another; and non-Indigenous readers, many of whom will have worked in the League during its years as a multi-racial coalition. He employs the concept of 'radical hope' as a unifying thread which links Billibellary's vision in 1843 to the Aboriginal activists who came after him. In some places this linking device works: '[Bill] Onus very much adhered to the "radical hope" of his forefathers – to be both in the new world, and of an Aboriginal one'. In other places, for example where Broome is describing Aboriginal balls and 'Belle of the Ball' contests, the application of the concept of 'radical hope' seems stretched. The balls may have been distinctly Aboriginal affairs but this is far from Billibellary's original idea. Readers who were active in the early League working for Aboriginal access to better housing, education and jobs may wish for acknowledgement that gains in these areas were preconditions for the later goal of maintaining Aboriginal culture. 'Radical hope' is also invoked to describe the League being beholden to Aboriginal ways while relying on mainstream funding until it could 'find economic independence'. This is another overstretch in the service of a unifying idea for the book which evades the reality of the League's continued dependence on government funding.

Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League is a meticulously researched, well-written history of a unique Australian organisation. It is understandable that Broome shows such awareness of his Aboriginal readers. This is the first full account of the mother of Victorian Aboriginal organisations. It is also a very good read.

The Invincibles. New Norcia's Aboriginal cricketers 1879–1906

by Bob Reece

xii + 161 pp., Histrionics, Fremantle, 2014,
ISBN 9780646920375 (pbk), \$25.00.

Review by Peter Read
The Australian National University

Seventy years before Don Bradman's 'Invincibles', a group of Aboriginal cricketers also known by that name, from New Norcia, Western Australia, was enjoying similar success against all comers. Bob Reece has written an affectionate book about their remarkable success. He surmises playfully that, if the timely intervention of Our Lady of Good Counsel to save the wheat crop from fire in 1847 can be described as New Norcia's first miracle, then the success of the cricket team from 1879 was the second.

The catalyst that drew the team together was the happy relationship between Bishop Rosendo Salvado, founder of the New Norcia mission, and Henry Lefroy, a serious-minded but sporty Irishman, the young 'squire of Victoria Plains'. We do not know Lefroy's motives: Reece suggests that he was a 'practical and benevolent man who liked to get things done'. Salvado's motives in encouraging the game were more complex: he wanted to replace 'the corroboree' with 'pleasure and past-time in a good physical game', since good cricketers he thought needed 'activity, good sight, strong arms, light legs, cold blood, discernment and foresight', he wanted to show the colonists that these were qualities that the Aborigines possessed in abundance. When he discovered that two teams, spontaneously and untrained, had played each other as married men versus unmarried, he encouraged them to continue, especially on Sundays – but not during Lent.

Lefroy's first contribution was to organise the best players into a game against the local settlers in 1879. The game was to be played in Perth where the team's arrival was greeted with intense interest. We are not sure of the rules, but Reece

believes that overarm bowling was becoming popular at this time. Overs were four balls only, and a hit over the boundary was worth five, not six. Due not least to the poor quality of the grounds, any batsman was lucky to get to 20. Splendid lunches and celebration dinners added to the social occasions. The Norcians lost their first match but next day, at Fremantle, they won by nine runs. Salvado wrote that words alone could not describe the applause. The team lost the third match, but in the 1880 season they swept all before them. Many colonists were bemused at their success, surmising that their secret was their innate bush skills. There may have been something in it: John Walley, a spectacular fieldsman, threw a cricket ball 100 prodigious metres! That year, 1880, it seemed that half of Perth was turning out to see the latest match between the Norcians and the MCC (Metropolitan Cricket Club).

Reece prefers to see the team's success deriving from social, not racial origins. Naturally gifted, they played as a tight-knit group with social skills of close communication and cooperation. Their victories reflected 'ties of kin and upbringing in a cohesive and supportive New Norcia community'. Despite their success, though, the New Norcia cricket team found no permanent place in the cricket establishment. Lefroy and Salvado, for different reasons, became less enthusiastic about the endless travel. The Western Australian Cricket Association began in 1885, a mixed blessing, while the following year saw the establishment of the Aborigines Protection Board. The members of both Boards included settler colonists whose rural experiences had in no way enamoured them to Aborigines from New Norcia or anywhere else. From the mid-1880s, cricket was becoming codified and bureaucratised, in parallel to changes in the administration of the state itself. From this time Nyoongahs could expect no place as equals, whatever their sporting achievements. Reece notes that while there exists no actual record of 'administrative exclusion' it is clear that by 1887 the Norcians were no longer wanted as a united cricketing entity.

Even on their home turf the bonding of the Invincibles was short lived, to which Reece devotes a chapter to assess the three-way interaction between the cricketers, the missionaries and the New Norcia community. The cricketers enjoyed a special status, they mixed with the powerful, they learned to drink in moderation, but they may have used their familiarity with non-mission life to argue that the observance of traditional marriage rules was no longer important. They lost their novelty, and some of the settler community establishment found it hard to accept their success. Under Salvado's successor Torres, the community split, the agrarian village lifestyle declined, children finished up in the dormitories. Many of the Invincibles became dependent on rations and were buried in paupers' graves, their fate not so different from those who had not excelled at cricket. What defeated them in the end was racism, the advance of Australian Rules and the absence of their sponsors Lefroy and Bishop

Salvado. While some families like the Walleys and Yappos still talk of their great-grandfathers' cricketing prowess, the Invincibles are largely forgotten. Their only memorials are a pewter cup and the New Norcia cricket ground.

From his long familiarity with Aboriginal history, Reece has written a gentle book which contains much to enjoy. Descendants of the cricketers will love it, filled as it is with deeds of prowess, dozens of photos of the players and lists of teams and fixtures.

*In the Eye of the Beholder: What Six
Nineteenth-Century Women Tell Us about
Indigenous Authority and Identity*

by Barbara Dawson

ANU Press, Canberra, 2014, ISBN 9781925021974 (online),
9781925021967 (pbk), \$28.00.

Review by Liz Conor
La Trobe University

As Barbara Dawson comes to the close of her engaging study of six colonial women's lives in contact with Indigenous Australians, she reflects that its chief revelation is 'Aborigines' help and concern for early settlers – their care and their courtesy, curiosity and comedy' (p. 153). It is her intention to 'look into and behind the "eye of the beholder"' – the epigram she chooses as her title – to discern and detect the ways Aborigines responded and adapted to the incursion of Europeans onto their country.

With steady and assiduous historicising, Dawson does successfully uncover 'pockets of insight' (p. xv) in the writings of six settler women, which unintentionally intimates that intruded peoples continued to exercise their 'cultural and territorial authority' (p. 153) in straightened circumstances, including punitive raids, shipwreck and the ensuing demands of infirm and stranded travellers, evangelising and the strictures of middle-class respectability and unremunerated labour.

Yet also in play within the intimate domains of early station homesteads were shared domestic efforts. The accounts of the six women Dawson selects proffer rich anecdotes, such as Aborigines cautioning against building on floodplains, their rescue of an abandoned white child dying of thirst in the bush, unsolicited medical care for a scurvy-afflicted bushman and many more. Indeed, Dawson

shows these women, of varying literary talents, contributed a vivid and captivating store of description and observation that, in her hands, offers much to enrich discussions of settler perception.

Dawson situates these literary treatments within the publishing market of the nineteenth century with its reliance on sensation and pandering to racial stereotypes such as cannibalism, treachery, ferocity and laziness. The generic conventions in publishing contemporaneous to each of the writers are backgrounded, be they pioneer adventure (invigorating empire from colonial outposts), seafarer adventure, survivor narratives and captivity tales, melodramatic romance literature or autobiography.

Other influences are identified, such as the discourses of scientific racism with a shift from polygenesis to evolutionary biology and its co-option into 'doomed race' theory, Christian evangelism is more prominent with some writers than others as is their respective homage to utilitarian or instructional literature. Literary themes such as miscegenation appear (though arguably that of white women is misplaced in Australia) as do colonial types including the lubra, piccaninny, King Billy and coolie, demonstrating the reliance of the authors on extant colonial literary conventions. These usages are linked to the passage of relevant acts along with snippets from other settler autobiographies. Dawson provides a helpful bibliography of other colonial women writers, which begs the question of why these six women were selected – very early and first contact seems to be the rationale.

Dawson ably confirms that 'female narratives offer another perspective on interracial relations' (p. 8). Though it would unnecessarily delimit the ambit of her analysis, it becomes clear the women's insights deepen when they write about their interactions and relations with Aboriginal women: for example, the wonderful instances of humour, exasperation, exhaustion and protection offered between Rose Cowan and Minnie on Longford station; or the Ka'bi women who rescued Eliza Fraser soon after her birth (in the bottom of a longboat taking water surrounded by a crew of men) and her inability to understand their treatment of her.

The interpretation that can be drawn from Eliza Fraser's exaggerated 'ordeal' when collocated against recent anthropological research into Ka'bi practices around, for example, birth, is revelatory, and this is where the methodology of the book reaps real dividends. As Dawson leads us through the paper trail of Frasers' distorted 'testimony' she reveals the motivations of publishers, and makes the critical point that 'Indigenous Australians were the victims of a very bad press' (p. 28). Indeed, while Dawson contextualises these sometimes little-known autobiographies within the milieu of contemporary popular works, and

the changing relation of middle-class women to literacy, more might have been made of the coincidence of colonial modernity with the industrialisation of print such as set out in the work of colonial print historian Tony Ballantyne.

In the case of the second author Eliza Davies (who twice circumnavigated the globe), textual influences are plotted before we are acquainted with her work and the details of her life. On occasion these concomitant literary references are loosely linked to the author's but we cannot always be sure if the author engaged with these works, so the links are sometimes tenuous rather than weaving a substantiated web: for instance the influence of circus impresario P. T. Barnum on Eliza Davies might be suggestive of a *zeitgeist*-like stimulus perhaps rather than direct inspiration.

However, the development of the notion of an Australian identity from 1872 and the founding of the Australian Natives Association and pioneer clubs helps to explain the appetite for colonial adventure that some authors, particularly Emily Cowl, gratified. Dawson persistently pursues what might have shaped the women's racial perceptions. But she also asks how the women's expectations about race were 'mollified and modified' (p. xxiii), particularly through close contact and everyday relations. The survival of geographically isolated white women such as Katherine Kirkland depended on the women she lived among, as Dawson deduces from her accounts of Aboriginal women's harvesting, along with her introduction of bush tucker into her cooking, adopting Indigenous systems into her own domesticity.

As far as is plausible, given the partisan colonial archive, Dawson aims to shift the emphasis from the textual description of these six white women to the Aboriginal people they encountered, lived with and were aided by in these far-flung scenarios of first and early contact. At times her intention is hobbled by the limits of the archive. Dawson's reading of some Kurtjar men's theft of Emily Cowl's clothing near Normanton as adolescent high jinks from which we can infer humour is creative and plausible, although clothing could also become valuable objects for bartering. Reading between the lines, or 'against the grain', gleaned hints of Indigenous responses can be fraught and hazards extrapolation, however, Dawson is too attentive to historical contingencies to make unwarranted interpretations.

Her book is therefore an eye-opener on settler women's dependence on the knowledge and skills of Aboriginal people and the contribution Aborigines made to the development of, for instance, the prospering pastoral economy in Australia – despite their negligible remuneration. The intimate relations forged through working together on these properties, lopsided as claims to home might be, furnish grounds for focusing on women's interracial relations on the frontier and rural outposts. The working relationship between the last author, the astute

and irreverent Rose Cowan, and her 'beloved Minnie' shows the intervention of colonial women's writing into a canon dominated by men and affords glimpses into Aboriginal women's resistance and guidance. It suggests a kind of coexistence (p. 97), for all its asymmetries, so unprecedented Dawson asks whether the conventions were in place by which these women could express these connections.

Needless to say, these were still profoundly inequitable relations and Dawson is attentive to the imbalances intrinsic to settler dependence on largely unremunerated Aboriginal labour. She notes the pact struck on stations where custodians exchanged labour for continued occupation of their country and the maintenance of ceremony and law to pass on to children. Noting the ways Aboriginal labourers resisted unfair demands, Dawson writes, 'The white women, however, upheld the class difference between themselves and the Indigenous women, allowing them into their homes – if at all – only to fulfil their roles as domestic servants' (p. 148). It was the nature of the work they did together, however, that sometimes forged enduring bonds, despite the lopsided exchange of knowledge, workload, guidance and protection. Dawson described the connections with requisite caution as the 'toleration of difference' rather than friendship, where shared goals shaped 'reciprocal services'.

The intrinsic value in drawing together this resource of little-known works is fulfilled in this intriguing study. These 'life stories' are 'presented as historical occurrences' not just by the authors themselves but through Dawson's agile sifting of the inherently performative nature of autobiography from the contingencies and demands of colonial print markets.

Illustrated with helpful maps and the author's own photographs of the homesteads and buildings still standing, this book offers fresh insights into people living traditionally before disease and violence decimated populations. Yet the accounts are undoubtedly 'veiled' in that the women rarely betrayed their menfolk's violence. This creates an intriguing disconnect, for instance, between Rose Cowan's sympathy for Minnie's family's flight from a series of punitive raids and her own relatives' involvement in other retributive attacks. For all these gaps and silences, Dawson sets out to show that Indigenous authority and cultural identity can be gleaned in these women's writings. The words of Long Kitty reverberate: she told her very paternalistic (and evangelical) mistress Mary McConnel, 'all this yarmen (land) belonging to me' (p. 117).

Indigenous People, Crime and Punishment

by Thalia Anthony

248 pp, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2013,
ISBN 9780415668446 (hbk), \$145.00.

Review by Rebecca Wallis

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Griffith University

In her book, *Indigenous People, Crime and Punishment*, Thalia Anthony employs a postcolonial lens to carefully examine the operation and consequences of judicial recognition of indigeneity during a criminal sentence. Recognition is presented here as a process, owned by the 'white' postcolonial state, which objectifies indigeneity and determines its acceptable forms (p. 3). Thus, it orders relationships into the 'recogniser' and the 'recognised', and delivers unilateral control over the construction of 'recognisable' indigeneity to the state. This, Anthony argues, results in both the non-recognition and misrecognition of Indigenous people and communities that serves to 'uphold the legitimacy of the white community and delegitimize the Indigenous community' (p. 8).

The sentencing process is the object of Anthony's attention because the imposition of punishment represents 'a commanding "crime metaphor" of the repressive relationship between the postcolonial state and the Indigene' (p. 8). She explores how the characterisation of an Indigenous offender at sentence has vacillated between 'an object of sympathy to an object of risk' (p. 2), depending upon the nature of the recognition employed by a judge at sentence. She also demonstrates how these distorted representations of indigeneity are used to guide judicial discretion at sentence, and to justify less or (in recent times) more punitive responses. The effect of this is, in the end, the reinforcement of state hegemony. At the same time she suggests that, if judicial recognition is deconstructed and rebuilt on the basis of mutuality with Indigenous people, there is potential for the sentencing process to be a site for the transformation of this repressive relationship. In this way, although her book is concerned with the minutiae of the sentencing process, it uses this examination to make a deeper argument about the nature of justice for Indigenous people in Australia.

The book is organised into eight chapters. Chapters 1 to 3 provide an overview of Anthony's arguments regarding recognition. In Chapter 1 she introduces her conceptual framework, and in Chapters 2 and 3 provides an historical and statistical context for her analysis. She interrogates and problematises these contexts so that these chapters are critical explorations, rather than bare backdrops to her more substantive analyses. Chapters 4 to 7 provide the substantive explorations of the typologies of recognition with which she is chiefly concerned. In these chapters, she carefully examines the multiple forms of 'recognition' that characterise sentencing narratives. In Chapter 4, Anthony explores the changing nature of judicial recognition of Indigenous customs and law in the Northern Territory and the impact of this at sentence. She traces the way in which Indigenous culture has been recognised and 'accommodated' over time by the Northern Territory judiciary, before examining its most recent interpretation as inherently risky and therefore demanding of a more punitive response. This, she argues, is a 'politics of recognition that seeks to repress difference' (p. 112). In Chapter 5, Anthony extends this theme by exploring how Indigenous forms of punishment are viewed and acted upon at sentence. Again, she traces the shifting nature of recognition over time. This provides a fascinating vignette of how, even where concessions and accommodations are made, the process of recognition inevitably operates to ensure state power and dominance.

In Chapter 6, Anthony explores the characterisation of Indigenous offenders at sentence as dysfunctional people living within dysfunctional communities. She argues that this characterisation results in both non-recognition and misrecognition of indigeneity by courts which, particularly over the past decade, has been used to justify punishments that send strong messages of deterrence. In her final substantive chapter (Chapter 7), Anthony focuses on Indigenous riots in Brewarrina (NSW), Redfern (NSW) and Palm Island (Qld). She uses these case studies to demonstrate how the operation of judicial recognition at sentence serves to negate demonstrations of frustration or resistance by recasting 'Indigenous participants as lacking in self-control and reason' (p. 165).

By the end of her four substantive chapters, Anthony has built a strong case to support her argument that, no matter what form is employed, judicial recognition of indigeneity at sentence ultimately serves to reproduce and reinforce dominant power structures. Nonetheless, the book concludes with suggestions about how this could be transformed. In Chapter 8, Anthony lays out a series of key tenets in a transformative agenda, and explores potential vehicles for change such as Indigenous sentencing courts or circle sentencing options. Although she attempts to keep her final chapter as pragmatic as possible, Anthony acknowledges that the transformative restructuring of the sentencing

process is a 'bold strategy' (p. 203). Indeed, the analysis in her final chapter results in observations that fundamentally challenge the form and operation of the Australian criminal justice system.

Anthony clearly justifies why the site of her analysis is the criminal sentencing hearing, and her analysis of this process is robust, insightful and worthy of attention. Although it represents a key symbolic and instrumental point in the criminal justice system, the criminal sentence is, nonetheless, the end of the line in the process of criminalisation. Examining the problem of recognition at various other points in the criminal justice system (and beyond) would be a natural extension of this work. This would allow for an even closer engagement with the question of its transformation, given the broader dominant structure within which sentencing is nested. Clearly, such an exercise is beyond the scope of a single work but Anthony provides a solid foundation upon which others may build. In conclusion, *Indigenous People, Crime and Punishment* represents an important contribution to the jurisprudence of sentencing, and reminds us of the relationship between punishment and the hegemony of the state. By exploring the nature of recognition, Anthony clearly demonstrates the consequences of allowing a 'recogniser' to have unilateral power to construct, categorise and act upon the 'recognised'. Yet, she also reminds us that this power is never absolute; that agency and resistance are constant and important themes, and that recognition is an ongoing and constantly shifting process. This provides some small hope that recognition may also be deconstructed and rebuilt in a form that engages 'Indigenous peoples as peers in the legal system' (p. 201).

James Grassie: Poet and Aboriginal Story Teller of Victoria

by Andrew Peake

258 pp., Andrew Guy Peake, Glandore, SA, 2014, \$33.00.

Review by Jason Gibson
Museum Victoria

The poet and storyteller James Grassie (1816–1898) landed at Hobsons Bay (Williamstown, Victoria) as a free settler in 1853. He was in his late 30s at the time and had already published a collection of stories from his homeland under the title *Legends of the Highlands from Scotland: From Oral Tradition* (Grassie 1843). As a young man, Grassie had received education in the Classics and Latin at the Inverness Academy and had become well versed in poetry and the arts. The reasons for Grassie's departure from Scotland are unknown but like so many of his Scottish brethren upon arriving in Victoria he travelled in search of employment throughout the goldfields. While he worked in a range of occupations, including a tutor for squatters' children and a pastoralist, his primary interest continued to be literature and oral history.

Writing for a number of different regional newspapers such as *Border Watch* (Mt Gambier) and the *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* (south-west Victoria), Grassie exhibited his passion for poetry and literature. What is most interesting about his writing though is the record of colonial Victoria contained within it; in particular his vignettes on the effects of colonisation on the Aboriginal people living between Ballarat and the South Australia border. Unlike his contemporary and fellow Scotsman in the Western District, James Dawson, Grassie's work does not assume an ethnographic or even academic tone. While Dawson may have benefited from the support and advice of Professor Herbert Augustus Strong (in classical and comparative philology at the University of Melbourne), the works compiled in this edited volume reveal a writer without academic mentorship, more interested in literary style than empirical accuracy.

Historians, anthropologists and linguists interested in this part of Australia will find Grassie's writing thought-provoking but ultimately frustrating as it is difficult to determine what is literary fiction and what is not. His references to Victorian 'corroboree' songs and even some interpretations of the associated song texts, as well as glosses on presumably Dhauwurd wurrung words (given the region that he writes about) are tantalising, but dubious to say the least. Also amongst Grassie's prolific writings are a number of short stories and poems dedicated to figures of Aboriginal resistance in the region, particularly the individuals 'Koort Kirrup', 'King Hendo' and 'Mingburne'. The numerous poems and short stories describing these men exhibit a fascination (possibly a fixation) with Aboriginal resistance that, despite being largely sympathetic, ultimately resembles a eulogy.

Having recently travelled through the 'stone country' of the Dhauwurd wurrung and been told snippets of the local stories, it seems that Grassie's work is of historical significance but needs to be read in conjunction with other more ethnographically oriented texts from the time (Smith 1880; Dawson 1870, 1881) and more recent scholarly sources (Clark 1995, 1990; Wettenhall 2010). That Grassie witnessed some of the historical events recounted in his writing is surely the case; however, as editor Andrew Peake explains, Grassie often feigned witnessing historical events that predated his arrival in colonial Victoria. It is probably best to sum up this book then as a useful, additional resource for those interested in the history of colonisation in Victoria, but one that needs to be read with great caution as he obviously blends historical narrative with his own idiosyncratic literary embellishments and inventions.

Peake has done a good job of pulling together this disparate material (which can all be found on the National Library of Australia's fabulous Trove facility) but the index is fairly limited and unfortunately does not appear to contain some of the key Aboriginal terms used by Grassie. Bringing to attention the achievement of a popular writer of Scottish origin in regional Victoria, is timely given recent scholarship focusing on the achievements of the Scottish in Australia (Cahir et al. 2015; Inglis and MacDonald 2014). While these brought together a fantastic exhibition of Scottish art and made every effort to incorporate an Indigenous perspective on the Scots, missing from the exhibition were the contributions of this enigmatic poet and writer. Thanks to the work of Andrew Peake I am sure Grassie's contributions will now be more widely known.

References

- Cahir, Fred, Alison Inglis and Anne Beggs-Sunter (eds) 2015, *Scots under the Southern Cross*, Ballarat Heritage Press, Ballarat.

- Clark, Ian 1990, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans : An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800–1900*, Dept of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, Melbourne.
- 1995, *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria, 1803–1859*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.
- Dawson, Isabella 1870, 'The language of the Aborigines. To the editor of the Australasian', *The Australasian*, 19 March 1870: 8.
- Dawson, James 1881, *Australian Aborigines: the languages and customs of several tribes of Aborigines in the western district of Victoria, Australia*, George Robertson, Melbourne, archive.org/details/australianaborig81daws, accessed 7 September 2014.
- Grassie, James 1843, *Legends of the Highlands from Scotland: From Oral Tradition*, James Smith, Inverness.
- Inglis, Alison and Patricia MacDonald (eds) 2014, *For Auld Land Syne: Images of Scottish Australia from First Fleet to Federation*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Melbourne.
- Smith, Christina 1880, *The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines: A Sketch of Their Habits, Customs, Legends ...*, Spiller, Adelaide, archive.org/details/booandiktribeso00smitgoog, accessed 19 October 2014.
- Wettenhall, Gib 2010, *The People of Budj Bim: Engineers of Aquaculture, Builders of Stone House Settlements and Warriors Defending Country*, em PRESS Publishing for the Gungitj Mirring Traditional Owners Corporation, Heywood, Vic.

Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences

edited by Marshall Clark and Sally K. May

238 pp., ANU E Press, Canberra, 2013,
ISBN 9781922144973 (online), 9781922144966 (pbk) \$33.00.

Review by Sally Brockwell
The Australian National University

This edited volume draws together an eclectic group of 12 papers sharing a common theme as expressed in its title *Macassan History and Heritage*. It concerns the Macassans, a term used specifically to denote south-east Asian seafarers who traded trepang from the north coast of Australia to China via the eastern Indonesian port of Makassar in Sulawesi. Trepang (also known as sea cucumber or *bêche-de-mer*) is a marine invertebrate that breeds in shallow tropical waters and is highly valued in China for its culinary and medicinal properties. The volume considers the implications of this trade, Macassan encounters with Aboriginal people, and its legacy from before the eighteenth century until today. It draws on varied accounts reflected in its subtitle, *Journeys, Encounters and Influences*, and ranges from history, rock art, ethno-history and ethnography to contemporary accounts of heritage, fishing and trade routes.

The introductory chapter by the editors outlines the scope and themes of the volume. It is the result of a two-day research symposium, a 'Macassan update', run by the Institute of Professional Practice in Heritage and the Arts at The Australian National University (ANU) in February 2012. The symposium was well-designed and decidedly useful in that it brought together experts from diverse disciplines and professions to provide an overview of Macassan studies today. The editors are to be commended on publishing the volume so promptly.

A theme raised but not resolved in the introduction and revisited several times throughout the volume concerns the timing and nature of original south-east Asian contact on the north coast of Australia. On this question, the volume would have benefited significantly by including the paper presented at the

symposium by Daryl Wesley (ANU). In it, he reported the results of recent relevant archaeological research that has dated Macassan sites and Aboriginal occupation of nearby rockshelters in western Arnhem Land. The introduction would also have been enhanced by a regional map with place names from the text (which we do not get to see until p. 212) and illustrations from the collections of Aboriginal paintings that the editors discuss in detail. As they say themselves 'each painting tells a story' (p. 5).

Chapters 2 to 5 present Macassan history from different viewpoints. Campbell Macknight summarises the state of play in Macassan studies. His contribution is essentially a review of literature concerning the history of Macassan trade, a theme he has dealt with in detail in previous publications of his research over many decades. Again, this chapter is not illustrated, although in a footnote (p. 27) Macknight thanks two sources for their photographs. Anthony Reid switches the perspective of the discussion by considering the history of political relations between Australian and eastern Indonesia, which he sees both literally and metaphorically as a 'Great Divide'. Likewise, Regina Ganter puts historical relations in a different context with her chapter on 'Macassan contact in the framework of Muslim Australian history'. These latter three chapters all provide positive suggestions for ways to move forward in Macassan studies. In Chapter 5, Paul Thomas presents an intriguing history of the little-known men who provided interpretation from the Malay trade language spoken by the Macassan trepangers in their interactions with Europeans in the nineteenth century.

The subsequent four chapters (6 to 9) present several diverse Aboriginal perspectives of Macassan contact history and heritage. In a fascinating paper, anthropologist Ian Macintosh describes Yolngu mythology through the voice of senior elder David Burramurra, which reveals how contact led to rejection of the 'other' and an affirmation of Yolgnu identity. In the following chapter, Rebecca Bilous quotes senior elder Laklak Burarrwanga and her oral history of the Macassan contact story. By contrast, Bilous analyses visual representations of Macassan–Aboriginal interactions contained in popular twentieth-century magazines. She argues that Aboriginal voices were effectively silenced regarding their role in Macassan trade by depicting Arnhem Land as an empty frontier with no Indigenous agency. Paul Taçon and Sally May provide an account of recent rock art research into Macassan images by Aboriginal artists in western Arnhem Land. This discussion would have benefited from including the context provided by Wesley's paper and reference to the results of his new archaeological research in the region. Through a discussion of Aboriginal material culture, Maggie Brady untangles the history and impact on Aboriginal society of the

introduction of alcohol, tobacco and other substances pointing out that they were originally brought to Australia by Macassans rather than Europeans as is conventionally thought.

The last three chapters (10 to 12) focus on contemporary heritage issues and Macassan influence. In a slightly off-beat paper, Marshall Clark describes what remains of Macassan historical locations in Makassar and compares (unfavourably) Indonesian efforts for cultural heritage conservation with those in Malaysia. This chapter is well illustrated with photographs but could have used a map. Dedi Supriadi Adhuri provides a stimulating discussion of the contemporary trepang industry in eastern Indonesia. He compares the different approaches taken by two fishing villages and illuminates the inconsistencies in the Memorandum of Understanding between Australia and Indonesia regarding ownership and use of fishing zones. In the last chapter, Sandy Blair and Nicholas Hall present a cogent argument for inscribing the Macassan trade route, 'the Malay Road', on the World Heritage list as a cultural route akin to other famous world trade routes. Finally, in this last chapter we are presented with a regional map.

This volume contains a series of interesting and diverse papers on a fascinating chapter in the history of northern Australia and south-east Asia and the Macassan legacy that still resonates today. It offers a stimulating comparative review for scholars of the region and other interested readers. The volume would have been enhanced, however, by more comprehensive use of maps and photographs and the inclusion of updated archaeological research.

Message From Mungo

by Andrew Pike and Ann McGrath

70 mins, Ronin Films, Mitchell, ACT, 2014,
ISBN 9781922005151, Rated G, \$34.95.

Review by Kate Rogers
Southampton University

When settling down to watch an archaeology documentary you expect certain conventions to be followed: an excavation or laboratory investigation plays out on screen, an expert presenter translates the findings, and perhaps some clever CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) accompanied by a suitably dramatic score reinforces the overall narrative. Following this formula, archaeology documentaries tend to reinforce easily digestible narratives of the past rather than challenge audiences by questioning the status quo. Ronin Films' *Message From Mungo*, however, breaks with tradition and turns its lens on the history and practice of archaeology itself in order to expose some necessary but uncomfortable truths about the discipline. In this feature-length film there is no slick scientific method illustrated, no presenter, no CGI, and barely any music. Instead, through a series of raw and compelling interviews with Aboriginal elders and spokespersons, prominent archaeologists and local landholders we are guided on a journey through the stratigraphy of memory and time, gently taking us even deeper than the revelations granted by scientific investigations, to level our gaze on the very foundations of Australian archaeology and its impact on Aboriginal Australia and beyond.

Considering that *Message From Mungo* is constructed almost entirely of formal interviews, it is a surprisingly arresting story. It is a story about the impact of one individual on a multitude of others despite a distance of millennia. Mungo Lady was a woman who lived and walked the Eden-like Pleistocene landscape of what has now become the dried up ancient Lake Mungo, in outback New South Wales, an estimated 40,000 years ago. We know little more of her life. After her death she was cremated and buried in one of the dunes beside the lake, and there she remained until 1968 when geomorphologists and archaeologists

who were surveying the now arid and dramatically eroding landscape of Lake Mungo identified her remains. Realising the potential scientific importance of the fragmentary skeletal remains they had found, and concerned by the destructive forces of weather and grazing stock, geomorphologist Jim Bowler and archaeologists Rhys Jones, John Mulvaney and Harry Allen packed the remains into a suitcase the next day and took them back to The Australian National University in Canberra for analysis. That analysis revealed Mungo Lady to be the oldest then-known cremation in the world, and put Australia 'on the map' of prehistoric archaeology.

But science of course does not function in a vacuum, and the news of Mungo Lady quickly attracted the attention of three local Aboriginal groups – the Paakantji, Ngyiampaa and the Mutthi Mutthi – who found themselves excluded from these events. When local Aboriginal activists Dorothy Lawson and Alice Kelly approached the archaeologists, their curiosity inevitably turned to conflict as Mungo Lady quickly came to personify the clash of scientific research and living Aboriginal culture, all against the background of the Protection Acts, child removal, the Freedom Rides and the land rights movement. Within archaeology as a discipline too, factions arose, and as women such as Isabel McBryde and Sharon Sullivan entered the arena, they added gender as another dimension to the debate and series of allegiances. Soon the local pastoralist community also joined the fray, key among them Des Wakefield, who was concerned by the impact of the newly granted UNESCO World Heritage status on their land and livelihoods. With all the players in position, what follows is not simply an account of what became an international repatriation controversy that spanned four decades, but also the story of the creation-through-crisis of a distinctive Australian history extending into the deep past, informed by archaeology and forged by Indigenous values.

Something particularly remarkable about *Message From Mungo* is that the film never actually shows you its main character. We are briefly shown a couple of old photographs of the place of her burial with trowels stuck upright in the sand as makeshift markers, but otherwise our only clues as to who she was are words, our imaginations and the sound of the wind – a recurring motif throughout the film. In this way the film takes the position that Mungo Lady's significance is about more than her physical remains (although there is room given to the scientific importance of her age and 'gracile' characteristics). Instead, more emphasis is given to her role as an unifying influence with her own agency, a guiding light for modern Australia. Thus the argument that she was not so much 'discovered' but rather 'surfaced' of her own will at a time when she was most needed, almost King Arthur-like, is woven throughout the film.

The unique moon-like landscape of Lake Mungo, is another prominent feature of the film and in a way becomes its own character. The dramatically coloured pillars and dunes of eroding clay and sand are captured through a very human lens: for example, there is a particularly wobbly close-up of a dune top with the sand whipping off it in the high winds that are a feature of the ancient lake system. This may irritate those who dislike handheld cinematography, but in a way actually offers a human touch to what could have just been standard camerawork. *Message From Mungo* is very much an authored film, and although you rarely hear the directors Andrew Pike and Ann McGrath speak, it is through shots such as this that one can nearly sense their presence as they travel and learn from country for the eight years of the film's production. Their journey becomes ours as we too begin to gain an understanding of the weight of the Paakantji, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi's profound and continuous connection to country and its people – including those who died long ago.

Message From Mungo is a sensitive and brave act of storytelling, skilfully filmed and thoughtfully crafted. As a former ANU archaeology student, I remember the story of the suitcase being whispered in the university's corridors: it never seemed to be quite made official – and as such it is intriguing the film's production was instigated not by archaeologists but by historians. In this film not only is the story finally publicly acknowledged by academia, but all those involved are given a genuine voice to share their version of events and are treated with compassion and thoughtfulness, resulting in candid and extremely moving testimonies by some of the biggest names in Australian archaeology and Aboriginal activism. Although the controversy has not been entirely brought to rest (Mungo Man who was later discovered not far from Mungo Lady is yet to be repatriated), the film leaves its audience with a hopeful mood and a sense of more to come.

While the film is intended for general and classroom audiences interested in Australian history and archaeology (there is also a useful study guide by Wiradjuri scholar Jeanine Leane available via Ronin's website), I feel it is particularly essential viewing for archaeologists, including those outside of Australia. In fact, *Message From Mungo* would be an extremely helpful aid in explaining the tone and context of Australian archaeology to our overseas colleagues; as an archaeologist living and studying overseas I routinely meet colleagues who still consider Australian archaeology to have swung too far in favour of the rights and values of Indigenous groups – as though to the detriment of science. Thus the voices featured in this film deserve not only domestic scholastic attention but very much need to be carried to an international stage.

As a researcher examining the sometimes lonely ground between documentary and archaeology, and who therefore watches endless archaeology documentaries back to back as part of my work, I found *Message From Mungo* a refreshing

and welcome voice in what can be a jaded and static sub-genre ('Pharaohs and Fuhrers' as it is nicknamed in the film and television industry). What *Message From Mungo* deftly achieves is an original, compassionate and vital telling of the difficult genesis of Australian archaeology and its impact on Aboriginal groups. It is also a successful blending of the documentary sub-genres of archaeology with social justice filmmaking, avoiding polemics but gently reminding its audience that we still have a long way to go, and if we truly wish to understand Australia's past, including its deep past, then we cannot afford to forget the message at the heart of the story of Mungo Lady: ask first, and listen.

On Track: Searching out the Bundian Way

by John Blay

xv + 328 pp., NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2015,
ISBN 9781742234441 (pbk), 9781742242095 (ePub/Kindle),
9781742247403 (epdf), \$40.00.

Review by Harold Koch
School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
The Australian National University

The subject of this book is the geography and history of the south-eastern corner of New South Wales. It takes the form of an account of a bushwalking trip undertaken by the author from Mt Kosciuszko to Twofold Bay. It combines travelogue, observations on the natural environment and evidence of Aboriginal use of the land, discussion of what travel routes were used traditionally by Aboriginal people and, following them, by early pastoralists, as well as the reporting of earlier accounts of travel and study in the area.

The areas described in the most detail along the route travelled are Mt Kosciuszko, the Pilot Wilderness, the lower Snowy River around the New South Wales–Victoria border, the Byadbo Wilderness, Tingaringy, Delegate, Nungatta, and Twofold Bay. Much of this area is now included in the Kosciuszko National Park and the South East Forests National Park.

The main problem that is posed is the location of the ‘Bundian Pass’, described by W. B. Clarke in 1860 and reputed to have been the easiest route between the Monaro tablelands and the coast. After many pages of speculation and accounts of the author’s false leads, the reader is finally provided with a definitive answer.

The author has been guided in his search by discussions with members of the Aboriginal community of the Eden region, especially B. J. Cruse, as well as oral interviews with local long-time landholders. For written sources he has obviously used compilations such as Young (2005) and Andrews (1998). (Other secondary sources that might have been drawn on for the Alpine area are

Mitchell (1985) and Andrews (1991).) But he has also carefully studied a number of more out-of-the-mainstream sources, both published and archival, that have a bearing on the Aboriginal past and/or physical aspects of the region. These include the ethnographers A. W. Howitt and R. H. Mathews; surveyors Stewart Ryrie, Francis McCabe, and T. S. Townsend; the geologist W. B. Clarke; the land commissioner John Lambie; the Aboriginal protector G. A. Robinson; Ben Boyd's manager Oswald Brierley; and the early landholder Alexander Weatherhead.

Formally, this book is an attractive 328-page paperback. The text is divided into three parts – 'The higher country', 'The Monaro', and 'The coast' – preceded by an introduction and followed by an afterword and postscript. Illustrations include four maps – one of the general area and one at the beginning of each part – and 16 coloured photographs. The book is completed by endnotes, notes on terminology (including placenames), a bibliography, and an index. The maps provide the main landmarks – towns, roads, rivers, mountain peaks and ranges – as well as indicating the Bundian way and the author's walking route, including side trips. This reader, however, would have appreciated more detailed maps to support the text in several places.

One persistent theme is the search for Aboriginal landscapes and evidence for Aboriginal use of the land: 'I'm looking at how the country used to be before European settlement, and how it came to be the way it is today' (p. 19). Attention is given to placenames, both traditional Aboriginal names (and their variable spellings) and those introduced by settlers, and the way the traditional landscape was over-written by European occupation patterns and naming practices.

One chapter that may especially interest students of Aboriginal history is the one entitled 'Shifting "tribes"'. The relevant language groups are the Ngarigo on the Monaro, the Thawa in the Twofold Bay region, and the Bidawal in the NSW–Victoria border region between the other two and in Eastern Gippsland. Blay takes issue with Howitt's influential claim that the Bidawal (Howitt's Bidwelli) represented not a separate group but a motley collection of refugees from various tribes. The most comprehensive discussion of the Bidawal is now Clark (2011).

As for the group that G. A. Robinson refers to as Pundeang mittong, at Cathcart, and apparently also at Liscombe's Bondi station a bit further south, Blay infers that they are a subset of the Thawa-speaking group centred on Twofold Bay. Another possibility, which I have proposed earlier (Koch 2011: 133), is that they were a subdivision of the Ngarigu-speaking Monaro group; this is implied by Robinson's referring to various Pundeang people as being from the Monaro. Clark (2011) has a different solution: he suggests that the Cathcart-based Pundeang mittong were a separate group from the Bondi mittong (Bondi Blacks,

term from Howitt's papers) and that while the former were Ngarigo, the latter were Bidawal. This could perhaps be supported by the statement quoted from R. H. Mathews that Bidawal territory extended to the headwaters of the Bondi and Nungatta creeks.

Blay in the postscript (written in April 2015) reports on recent developments following from his researches. In January 2013, the Bundian Way was entered on the NSW Heritage List. A Bundian Way Aboriginal Art Gallery has been operating in Delegate since 2012. A modern, 380-kilometre walking track is being developed by the combined resources of the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council, government and volunteers. The project's website is www.bundianway.com.au. The Aboriginal community, we're told, has hopes to use the way as a means of fostering cultural learning and healing in connection with the land. In summary, Blay states (p. 294): 'The Bundian Way has come to be an innovative tourism, cultural and shared history project that promises international attention and benefits for the wider region'.

This very interesting book brings together a huge amount of knowledge about a little-known area of the country. As such it deserves a wide audience.

References

- Andrews, Alan E. J. 1991, *Kosciusko: The Mountain in History*, Tabletop Press, Canberra.
- 1998, *Earliest Monaro and Burragorang: 1790 to 1840*, Tabletop Press, Canberra.
- Clark, Ian 2011, 'Birrdhuwal language and culture: a reconsideration', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2011/1: 34–50.
- Koch, Harold 2011, 'Aboriginal languages and social groups in the Canberra region: Interpreting the historical documentation', in *Indigenous Language and Social Identity: Papers in Honour of Michael Walsh*, Brett Baker, Ilana Mushin, Mark Harvey and Rod Gardner (eds), Pacific Linguistics 626, The Australian National University, Canberra: 123–144.
- Mitchell, Elyne 1985, *Discoverers of the Snowy Mountains*, Macmillan, Melbourne.
- Young, Michael 2005, *The Aboriginal People of the Monaro: A Documentary History*, second edition, Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), Sydney.

Remembering the Future: Warlpiri Life Through the Prism of Drawing

by Melinda Hinkson

178 pp., Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2014,
ISBN 9781922059673 (pbk), \$49.95.

Review by Petronella Vaarzon-Morel
University of Sydney

This fascinating and beautifully crafted book is a companion to the much lauded exhibition of Warlpiri drawings that was curated by Melinda Hinkson for initial display at the National Museum of Australia. The focus of the book is the collection of crayon and paper drawings commissioned by the anthropologist Mervyn Meggitt in 1953 and 1954 at Hooker Creek (Lajamanu), and subsequently deposited by him in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra. Although the majority of artists were male, women also contributed to the collection.

During the 1980s, inquiries by anthropologist Stephen Wild at Hooker Creek resulted in Warlpiri men restricting some 50 drawings from public view, with the remaining 119 identified as 'open'. It was while working at the Institute that Hinkson became intrigued by these drawings. She eventually pursued a research project to reintroduce them to descendants of the long-deceased artists and collaboratively explore their meaning. This was important not only as an act of archival repatriation but also because Meggitt's information on the drawings was sparse (he destroyed his field notes) and his observations were necessarily limited by his framework of interpretation. Furthermore, as Lydon (2005) has demonstrated, the meaning of visual images can change over time. What would contemporary Warlpiri make of the drawings given the radical changes that had occurred in their world since they were made?

Hinkson's discussion of the drawings with Warlpiri at Lajamanu and Yuendumu reveals differing and, at times, ambiguous or conflicting interpretations. Keeping her own reflections separate from those of Warlpiri, she draws upon recollections

from Mrs Joan Meggitt (who was with her husband at Lajamanu) and ethnographic and historical sources to speculate upon what the drawings might tell us about the lives and perceptions of the artists who created the images. Hinkson punctuates the main chapters of the book with four 'interludes' in which we hear the voices of Olive Pink, Jeannie Nungarrayi Herbert and Elizabeth Nungarrayi Ross. Additionally, images of works collected by Meggitt are complemented by other Warlpiri drawings including those collected by Olive Pink in the 1930s, by a teacher at Yuendumu in the late 1960s and drawings produced for Hinkson in 2011. Moving back and forth between Warlpiri readings of the images and discussions of the socio-political context in which they were made, Hinkson highlights the importance of attending to different ways of seeing and 'the role of images and the practice of looking and being looked at in structuring distinctive relationships between people' (p. 3). In particular, she is interested in how stories work 'to structure relationships between people, across time and space' (p. 3).

The resulting book thus not only explores the significance of the drawings as a form of art but also how they figure in Warlpiri responses to ongoing processes of colonisation and relations with others. As such it is a wonderful illustration of how sensitive exploration of the archive may enrich our collective understandings of the past and present. This is necessarily an unfinished project as new interpretations and linkages between different Warlpiri modes of representation will continue to be revealed. For example, Hinkson (pp. 55–56) briefly discusses a drawing that Liddy Napanangka Walker made for her in 2011. It depicts Liddy's father being shot at the time of the Coniston Massacre, as Liddy crouches behind adult witnesses nearby. The year before Liddy made this picture she recounted her recollections of the terrible event to me in an interview that I recorded with Tess Napaljarri Ross for the recently released book *Every Hill Got a Story* (Central Land Council 2015: 88). While individually Liddy's drawing and story about the event are powerful, together they amplify a shocking narrative. They also raise intriguing questions about differing emphases given to the narrative in the two art forms and how they might augment or speak to each other.

Remembering the Future makes compelling reading and, as Professor Lydon is quoted on the back cover of the book, it 'breaks new ground in exploring visual culture'. In addition to Warlpiri and those interested in Indigenous art and issues of representation, the book will be of interest to historians, anthropologists and archaeologists.

References

Lydon, Jane 2005, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Central Land Council 2015, *Every Hill Got a Story*, Hardie Grant Books/SBS, Melbourne.

Warrior: A Legendary Leader's Dramatic Life and Violent Death on the Colonial Frontier

by Libby Connors

xii + 268 pp., Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2015,
ISBN 9781760110482 (pbk), \$32.99.

Review by Jonathan Richards
University of Queensland

The executions after the Myall Creek massacre of 1838 seem to have encouraged a collective silence amongst colonists about the continued killing of Aboriginal people. Violence and dispossession persisted, but not all Europeans subscribed to this 'exterminating' view. In *Warrior*, Libby Connors uses important evidence on race relations – specifically Judge Roger Therry's judgement ('A black man's camp is as much his castle as a white man's house', p. 145) – to show how complex and shifting frontier history could be.

As Connors notes, 'these events [in Brisbane, of 1850] are as deserving as the Myall Creek massacre trials. Plunkett was at the centre of both decisions' (pp. 146–147). The court cases were, as she reminds us, the 'highpoints of evangelical humanitarianism influence'. Yet Dundalli was publicly executed in Brisbane in the midst of this Christian 'civilising'. 'The formal processes of the British court had effectively rendered traditional law and authority invisible. Within its walls Dundalli, a traditional lawman, was recast as a criminal, and his enforcement of its customs as ferocious savagery' (p. 190).

The criminalisation of Aboriginal people has led some to deny that violence took place. Yet, as Connors explains, 'The Colonial Office would not define conflict with Aboriginal people as war but the European residents of Brisbane still lived with a sense of siege almost twenty-five years after white settlement' (p. 143). Fear of 'Aboriginal attack' on settlers continued across Queensland for decades.

Aboriginal people resisted invasion, but their efforts only attracted constant and massive reprisals. Connors accurately exposes the colonising violence intended to completely and permanently 'disperse' Aboriginal sovereignty: 'An imperial policy that refused to see Indigenous Australians as a rival power could only criminalise their behaviour once they were defined as British subjects' (p. 191). Furthermore, the criminalisation of Aboriginal people meant that violence could be legitimately used against them, generally without fear of legal retribution. The racial violence on the frontier was, as she clearly shows, systematic, widespread and continuing.

Many colonists believed that Australia was a land with no previous system of law. In particular, the killing of Aboriginal lawmen like Dundalli helped further the fiction of an ownerless and undeveloped land, just 'waiting' for European industry and exploitation. As Connors concludes, 'Applying British law to Australian colonial frontiers undoubtedly saved lives by placing some limitations on settler violence but it also brought a greater injustice with its ideological cloak that smothered, and silenced Aboriginal legality' (p. 191).

Her impressive research supports a thoroughly readable and most informative narrative. As Connors reminds us, Aboriginal people – despite their ordered and determined resistance to European occupation – experienced great violence and loss during the early decades of non-Indigenous settlement. This is an excellent contribution to our knowledge of the history of the south-east Queensland frontier, and to the frontier history of Australia. This will quickly become a standard historical text. I highly recommend *Warrior*.

Yamakarra! Liza Kennedy and the Keewong Mob

compiled by Western Heritage Group

280 pp., Western Heritage Group, Wilcannia, 2013,

ISBN 9780980594720 (pbk), \$49.95.

Review by Gaynor Macdonald and Anna Nettheim
Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney

It is invigorating to see an imaginative new approach to writing history and cultural understanding that totally engulfs a reader in the world of the writer. *Yamakarra! Liza Kennedy and the Keewong Mob* certainly achieves this. This respectful, informative and insightfully produced work reflects the conscious endeavours of its creators to write history 'our people's way' rather than emulate white ways of recounting history. Based around the stories of Ngayampaa elder Aunty Liza Kennedy, and constructed around a series of camping trips, *Yamakarra!* (*yamakarra* is a term of greeting) takes the form of a conversation in which many voices participate. The reader is invited to 'sit around the campfire' with the 'Keewong Mob' as their story unfolds.

Inspired by the work of linguist Tamsin Donaldson with Aunty Liza and other elders, the Western Heritage Group, who produced this book, followed up on Aunty Liza's stories through personal visits. These were read and reflected on during camping trips in Ngayampaa country, the area between what is now Cobar and Ivanhoe in western New South Wales. The group refer to themselves as Aboriginal rather than Indigenous, reflecting a preference across much of New South Wales.

Participants are introduced by way of a photo montage at the beginning of the book, and photographs are put to good use throughout. They are used to illustrate who is speaking, what is being discussed and where events are taking place. They also effectively emphasise the merging of past and present, both during these camping trips and as an ongoing feature of Aboriginal experience.

The book is organised thematically, with chapters focusing on belonging, heritage, strong survivors, determination, and celebration. However, all these themes are interwoven throughout the text. The facts, memories, thoughts and experiences within the book are presented in verbatim conversational style, as though being revealed during the camping trips. The strategy works well. It also allows the book to be read cover to cover or dipped into. These chapters are complemented by informative end pages.

The strong visual component includes not only photos but also graphs, diagrams, artworks, maps and historic documents. The text too uses various styles, incorporating a smorgasbord of dialogue, oral history, memories, stories, reflections, quotes, songs, language, beliefs, poetry and genealogies. It goes well beyond oral history, drawing on the findings of anthropologists, historians and linguists. Linguist Tamsin Donaldson, anthropologist Jeremy Beckett, and historian Heather Goodall are very much a part of the conversation which unfolds – not just as experts in their respective fields, but as trusted friends who have been involved in mutually beneficial and ongoing cultural exchanges with the Keewong Mob.

This dialogic approach is a major strength of a book that embraces rather than overlooks an entwined social history. The information recorded by anthropologists and linguists, specifically Beckett and Donaldson who worked with previous generations of the Keewong Mob, is highly valued by people for whom traditional methods of knowledge transmission were severely compromised. When one participant says she wants to tap into Tamsin's head to get hold of her language knowledge, it is a reminder that in this community, like so many others, language transmission was interrupted to such an extent that younger generations may have little or no ability to speak it. Yet with the help of linguistic information gathered in the past, and the skills and long-term commitment of linguists such as Donaldson, language can be revived, and the voices of the elders and ancestors brought to life for the younger generations, as well as the reader, as happens here.

Where required, background information is incorporated into the dialogic form, which while not always sounding genuinely verbatim, is consistent with the style of storytelling adopted in the text. In this way, the voices of the academic speakers are included where relevant, even if the speaker concerned was not on the particular camping trip in which the information is embedded.

It is this element of cultural exchange that is so often misinterpreted and misrepresented in Native Title cases, in which there is often an underlying assumption that Indigenous claimants 'read up on the past' in order to claim a continuity of cultural practice and knowledge that they do not actually hold, and which can therefore be discounted in a legal context. This text demonstrates

a very different side to that story, in which the white participants who have successfully gathered knowledge from Indigenous people in the past can now act as intermediaries between generations of people for whom previous forms of knowledge transmission has been denied in one way or another. Jeremy Beckett's work with the ancestors of some of the participants, and Heather Goodall's historical research are not the source of the Keewong Mob's cultural identity. This research nevertheless helps fill gaps in people's knowledge that are an inevitable result of waves of disruptions to their own forms of life. As Doolan points out, 'better to learn things from archives and anthropologists than not at all' (p. 119). Which is to say that Aboriginal people see it as legitimate to learn from various pasts, oral and written, as do non-Aboriginal people. The approach of this book is a reminder that genuine understanding between people starts at the level of individual relationships and a willingness to listen. What might have been seen as past appropriations are transformed into a supportive contemporary dialogue, and dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is in turn identified as a step towards reconciliation.

The campsite, as presented in this text, becomes a place where knowledge recorded in the past is brought to life in the present by and for the people to whom it is most meaningful. How that knowledge is handed down is less significant than the knowledge itself. Knowledge is power, and this work explicitly reflects the participants' attempts to access and regenerate cultural knowledge and practices in order to strengthen themselves and future generations. This is demonstrated through the revival of cultural practices such as hand stencilling, rituals enacted to welcome babies to the country of their ancestors, and the return of the ashes of the deceased to their traditional country.

The text has been designed in a way which makes it highly accessible to a wide audience. The beautiful photography, the conversational tone, the inclusion of diagrams, and poetry and songs all work together to make it a visually appealing text. However, there is a danger that because the text is deliberately non-academic in style and structure, the more academically oriented reader may overlook it. This would be a mistake: *Yamakarra!* incorporates a great deal of historical information about the region and the people concerned, as well as the impact of change, and Aboriginal responses to these changes over time. More significant still is its nuanced teasing out of culturally based understandings of laws and traditions, and of the relations between people (both past and present) and the country, creator beings, spirits and ancestors from whom their identity is derived.

We highly recommend this book to scholars and general readers interested in Aboriginal life, history and culture. It would make an excellent gift for teenagers and adults.

Ultimately, *Yamakarra*'s intention is to pass on a message of strength and hope from past generations to those of the present and future. While it does not shy away from discussing the trauma of forced dispersals, removals and disruptions to the culture and lives of Aboriginal people in the past, and mourns the lack of choice Aboriginal people were faced with, the clear message it conveys is that Aboriginal people are now much better able to make the choice to actively connect with their cultural identity and live in a way that is culturally meaningful to them.

Information for authors

Articles up to 7,000 words in length are preferred. Please submit both a hard copy and an electronic version of the paper (in .doc or .rtf file types). Footnotes should be brief and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. References should be arranged in alphabetical order by author's last name and include full publication details as given on the title page of the work. Arrange works by the same author in chronological order. Web citations should include full address (URL) and the date accessed. Only original photographs, maps or other illustrations will be accepted. Do not send scans or photocopies taken from books or other publications. If you provide electronic scans of illustrations, photos or maps, these must be separate, high resolution (300 dpi) .tif files. Do not paste scans into your text document. If accepted for publication, authors are responsible for obtaining copyright clearance for any figures and photographic images that are reproduced. Authors should follow the usage of *The Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 6th edition, John Wiley and Sons, Canberra, 2002.

Footnote style

1. Rowley 1971: 107. See also Barwick 1981.
2. Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
3. Fison and Howitt 1880: 96-108.
4. *Evening Mail*, 12 March 1869.
5. Solly to Stokell, 4 March 1869, AOTCSD 7/23/127.

Footnote numbers are placed after punctuation marks in the text. Please do not use *ibid.* or similar abbreviations, but repeat the short citation.

References

Anderson, Hugh 1995, 'Lost in the streets: a gumleaf requiem for Bill Bull', *Journal of Australian Studies* 44: 22–37.

Beckett, Jeremy 1964, 'Aborigines, alcohol and assimilation', in *Aborigines Now: New Perspectives in the Study of Aboriginal Communities*, Marie Reay (ed.), Angus and Robertson, Sydney: 32–47.

Cowlishaw, Gillian 1999, *Rednecks, Eggheads and Blackfellas: A Study of Racial Power and Intimacy in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.

Hardy, Jane, J. V. S. Megaw and M. Ruth Megaw (eds) 1992, *The Heritage of Namatjira: The Watercolourists of Central Australia*, William Heinemann, Port Melbourne.

Trangamar, E. R. 1960, 'Stories of the past: Mulga Fred', reprinted in *Coleraine Albion*, 4 and 11 February.

Aboriginal History Monograph Series

2015

- *Indigenous Intermediaries*
Edited by Shino Konishi, Maria Nugent and Tiffany Shellam
- *Long History, Deep Time*
Edited by Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb
- *Settler Governance in Nineteenth Century Victoria*
Edited by Leigh Boucher and Lynette Russell

2014

- *In the Eye of the Beholder: What Six Nineteenth Century Women Tell Us About Indigenous Authority and Identity*
Barbara Dawson
- *Dharmalan Dana: An Australian Aboriginal man's 73-year search for the story of his Aboriginal and Indian ancestors*
George Nelson and Robynne Nelson
- *Indigenous and Minority Placenames: Australian and International Perspectives*
Edited by Ian D. Clark, Luise Hercus and Laura Kostanski

2013

- *Making Change Happen: Black and White Activists talk to Kevin Cook about Aboriginal, Union and Liberation Politics*
Kevin Cook and Heather Goodall
- *Edward M. Curr and the Tide of History*
Samuel Furphy

2012

- *Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850-1870*
Fred Cahir
- *Country, Native Title and Ecology*
Edited by Jessica K Weir

2011

- *In Good Faith? Governing Indigenous Australia through God, Charity and Empire, 1825-1855*
Jessie Mitchell
- *'I Succeeded Once' – The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840*
Marie Hansen Fels

2010

- *Passionate Histories: Myth, Memory and Indigenous Australia*
Edited by Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys and John Docker
- *Racial Folly: A Twentieth-Century Aboriginal Family*
Gordon Briscoe

2009

- *Aboriginal Placenames: Naming and Re-naming the Australian Landscape*
Edited by Harold Koch and Luise Hercus
- *The Two Rainbow Serpents Travelling: Mura Track Narratives from the 'Corner Country'*
Jeremy Beckett and Luise Hercus

2008

- *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*
Edited by Peter Read, Frances Peters-Little and Anna Haebich
- *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories*
Edited by Ingereth Macfarlane and Mark Hannah

2007

- *Culture in Translation: The Anthropological Legacy of RH Mathews*
Edited by Martin Thomas
- *'The Axe Had Never Sounded': Place, People and Heritage of Recherche Bay, Tasmania*
John Mulvaney

2006

- *What Good Condition?: Reflections on an Australian Aboriginal Treaty 1986–2006*
Edited by Peter Read

2005

- *Peopling the Cleland Hills: Aboriginal History in Western Central Australia, 1850–1980*
MA Smith

- *Many Exchanges: Archaeology, History, Community and the Work of Isabel McBryde*
Edited by Ingereth Macfarlane

2002

- *The Aboriginal Population Revisited: 70 000 Years to the Present*
Edited by Gordon Briscoe and Len Smith
- *The Pajong and Wallabalooa: A History of Aboriginal Farming Families at Blakney and Pudman Creeks*
Ann Jackson-Nakano
- *The Kamberri: A History of Aboriginal Families in the ACT and Surrounds*
Ann Jackson-Nakano

2001

- *Repossession of Our Spirit: Traditional Owners of Northern Sydney*
Dennis Foley and Ricky Maynard

1998

- *History in Portraits: Biographies of Nineteenth Century South Australian Aboriginal People*
Jane Simpson and Luise Hercus
- *Rebellion at Coranderrk*
Diane Barwick

1997

- *In the Best Interest of the Child? Stolen Children: Aboriginal Pain/White Shame*
Link-Up (NSW) and Tikka Wilson

1996

- *Country: Aboriginal Boundaries and Land Ownership in Australia*
Peter Sutton

Sale and orders

Monographs are available for print on demand or download at: press.anu.edu.au/titles/aboriginal-history-monographs. For back issues, hard copies and special offers, email: Thelma.Sims@anu.edu.au. Further details about titles can be found at: aboriginalhistory.org.au