Aboriginal History

Volume six 1982
VOLUME SIX

June 1982

Eliza Kennedy and Tamsin Donaldson
Coming up out of the nhaalya: reminiscences of the life of Eliza Kennedy 5

Bernard J. O’Neil
Beyond trinkets and beads: South Australia’s Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, 1971-1978 28

W.E.H. Stanner
Aboriginal humour 39

R.G. Kimber
Walawurru, the giant eaglehawk: Aboriginal reminiscences of aircraft in central Australia, 1921-1931 49

David Nash
Aboriginal knowledge of the aeroplane ‘Kookaburra’ 61

R.E. Barwick
The anatomy of an aircraft: A Warlpiri engraving 74

VOLUME SIX

December 1982

Alan Atkinson
The ethics of conquest, 1786 82

Norman B. Tindale
A South Australian looks at some beginnings of archaeological research in Australia 93

Adam Shoemaker
Aboriginal creative writing: a survey to 1981 111

Fay Gale
Community involvement and academic response: the University of Adelaide Aboriginal Research Centre 130

Laurie Parkes and Diane Barwick
Beginning a national Aboriginal biographical register at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies 135

Jennifer Laycock
The Elkin Papers: a brief description and guide to the collection 139

Rosslyn Fraser
A guide to selected Commonwealth archives (Canberra and Darwin) relating to Aborigines 142

Reviews 149
ABORIGINAL HISTORY INCORPORATED

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Committee of Management: Niel Gunson (Chairman), Peter Grimshaw (Treasurer/Public Officer), May McKenzie (Secretary), Diane Barwick, Isabel McBryde, James Urry.

Board Members: Diane Bell, Patricia Croft, Stephen Foster, Luise Hercus, Marcia Langton, Hank Nelson, Peter Read.

ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1982

Editors: Diane Barwick and James Urry. Review Editor: Isabel McBryde.

CORRESPONDENTS

Robert Reece        Tom Stannage

Aboriginal History aims to present articles and information in the field of Australian ethnohistory, particularly in the post-contact history of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, will be welcomed. Future issues will include recorded oral traditions and biographies, vernacular narratives with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, résumés of current events, archival and bibliographical articles, and book reviews.

Aboriginal History is administered by an Editorial Board which is responsible for all unsigned material in the journal. Views and opinions expressed by the authors of signed articles and reviews are not necessarily shared by Board members. The editors invite contributions for consideration; reviews will be commissioned by the review editor.

Contributions and correspondence should be sent to: The Editors, Aboriginal History, c/-Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, Australian National University, P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600. Inquiries about subscriptions should be addressed to: Australian National University Press, P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600.

© Copyright 1982 by Aboriginal History Inc., Canberra, Australia. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced by any process whatsoever without the written permission of the publisher.

Printed in Australia by A.N.U. Printing Service
ISSN 0314-8769
ARTICLES

Eliza Kennedy and Tamsin Donaldson  
*Coming up out of the nhaalya: reminiscences of the life of Eliza Kennedy*  

Bernard J. O’Neil  
*Beyond trinkets and beads: South Australia’s Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, 1971-1978*  

W.E.H. Stanner  
*Aboriginal humour*  

R.G. Kimber  
*Walawurru, the giant eaglehawk: Aboriginal reminiscences of aircraft in central Australia, 1921-1931*  

David Nash  
*Aboriginal knowledge of the aeroplane ‘Kookaburra’*  

R.E. Barwick  
*The anatomy of an aircraft: a Warlpiri engraving*  

Cover: Scale drawings of Gypsy Moth D.H. 60, and engraving of aeroplane on Warlpiri pearlshell pendant, designed by R.E. Barwick from photograph and rubbing by R.G. Kimber (see *Aboriginal History*, 6(1), 1982: 74.)
Plate 1

Top: Eliza Kennedy and her son George (born 1932), at Mulga on Orana Station

Lower: Eliza's husband George Kennedy with his parents Jim and Margaret Kennedy (seated), Eliza's cousin Millie Hall (rear) and niece Ida Singh, and friends Ted and Mick Gallagher, at the Kennedys' returned soldier's block, Yelty, Ivanhoe, c. 1923

Photographs courtesy of Eliza Kennedy (A.I.A.S. 1837-4,2778-9).
When Eliza Kennedy was born, a year or two after the turn of the century, her people were still ‘camping about’ in their own country, the dry riverless belar tree country between Cobar and Ivanhoe in central western New South Wales. She grew up speaking Ngiyampaa, ‘the lingo’ — the kind of Ngiyampaa also known as Wangaaypuwan because wangaay is the word it has for ‘no’.

Most of Ngiyampaa country had already been occupied by white pastoralists for several decades. They had divided the country up into stations, with fences which Eliza’s people helped to build. The newcomers had also renamed the features which mattered to them, sometimes anglicising Ngiyampaa names and sometimes supplying new ones.

Because the group of families Eliza grew up with camped most often in the area around Keewong station (which they called Yakararay) they were known as ‘the Keewong mob’, and she and her sisters, like her mother and some of her other relatives, used the surname Keewong. They kept their distance from the stations, camping no closer than a couple of miles away. Rabbit scalps were taken there for payment of the bounty, and Eliza remembers the ‘big old white starched aprons and white caps’ worn by Ngiyampaa women who worked in the station kitchens. But the world of station life impinged very little on her early years, for among her closest kin only a couple of uncles ever did station work, and that late in their lives. Everything that was familiar and significant from the perspective of a small girl had to do with camp life, in particular the daily life she shared with her mother and sisters, and her maternal aunts and uncles and their families. Eliza’s mother, Rosie Keewong, had five daughters: Mabel the eldest, Elsie the youngest, and the three who are still alive today, Lizzie, Lily and Eliza herself, whose story continues mainly in her own words.

The most dramatic part of ‘camping about’ was shifting camp: Whenever they felt like doing this, they’d just get their little kulay [women’s net bag], put it on their backs, and their billycan and their pint [enamel...
mug], a little bit of tucker. Walk. Nothing to move from one dam to another, carry what belonged to you.

The small girls were keen to do their bit:

‘I’ll carry this, ngathu ngina kaawayaka!’ Just a little pint tied with a string, bundled up. Walk along, that was even too much to carry, poor old mum’d have to put it in her kulay.

Then they would get to a camp:

might be a nice spot, bit of a clean patch, ‘Ngini yuwakirri! Let’s sleep here!’ Just chuck a blanket down there, that’s how we lived. In the summertime we’d just have a bough shed and camp around anywhere, a bit of a windbreak, and lay alongside of that. We wouldn’t go to much bother unless it looked like coming up stormy. Then we’d have to prepare a bit of a humpy of some sort.

One memorable wet night:

Mummy and Lizzie, we all helped one another building this little camp with bits and pieces of bark and bushes, and bits of rag here and there. We was in this little miami and it was leaking. I remember Mummy covering me and poor Elsie up. She used to look after us with pieces of blanket and clothes to keep us dry, but we’d be sleeping in wet beds and walking about in wet clothes that dried on us.

Once there was a surprise at the end of a journey to Kirraawara, to Carowra Tank, a government water reservoir:

We started from near Koonaburra station and walked around a place called malkangurrunhu that was only a crabhole [small waterhole], but they camped there for many weeks sometimes because it was a good-holding crabhole. We left two little kittens, couldn’t carry them, at some of the camps on the way. It took us three or four days, then we got to Carowra and made our camps, a big bush break around. And do you know them little kittens got there a couple of nights after? “Minyawaa wurrakara?” the old people said, “Something’s rattling in the kathurr [windbreak]. Might be a snake!” It was these dashed kittens that trailed us along.

Cold and hunger, like wetness, were memorable but commonplace features of this way of life:

Some mornings if we was hungry, Aunty Kate, she was a fast walker, you’d have to trot alongside of her, with a firestick maybe. We’d come to these old dry mukarr [tussocks of porcupine grass] that grows in the mallee, light one of them and have a bit of a warm, and go on. Catch a kangaroo and have a good old feed, just meat. Walk on with a back leg of kangaroo on your shoulder or in your kulay, right as pie.

For children, winter had its special attractions too, such as eating ice off the horsetrough at Carowra Tank, a pleasure Eliza realizes now was not without risks:

Dogs and horses and cattle drank and blew their noses in it I suppose. We
used to eat ice off that horsetrough, wintertime. There we'd sit over this little old fire we'd make, eating ice.

Even though the children rarely came in contact with station people, there were plentiful signs of their presence; their livestock were everywhere, and the tracks of their vehicles traced a network of roads across the country. The vehicles were better known than those who rode in them, though the 'beautiful diamond-cut track' of the first motorcar was a puzzle. Eliza's sister Lizzie was among those who carefully avoided treading on the evidence while they tried to work out what sort of a *wanta* (supernatural being) could pull a four-wheeled vehicle without leaving any track of its own. The general attitude towards anything to do with white people, whether initially mysterious or not, was avoidance wherever possible. After cars had become commonplace: 'If we was walking along the road and heard a motorcar, we still scooped into the scrub'.

This attitude was partly dictated by fear: 'If we saw anybody with a camera we'd reckon, "They going to shoot us" and run off away and hide. That was a gun, we thought'. But it was also partly the result of *kuyan*, an expression of respectful behaviour usually talked of in English as 'shame' or 'shyness'. Its full force is liable to be missed by non-Aboriginal speakers of English for whom the words shame and shyness rarely have positive connotations. According to the Ngiyambaa scheme of things, *kuyan* is not an uncomfortable feeling to be overcome, but an appropriate and expected reaction in many social situations:

We were brought up to know right from wrong in our own way. We wasn't cheeky to anyone. We had to respect them for what they were to us in the blacks' law. We carried that out. Our people told us how to treat others that weren't in our tribe, how to treat strangers.

In the system of etiquette which provided the ground rules for everyday life, various sorts of avoidance were prescribed as the chief means of showing respect — both physical avoidance and restrictions on conversation. Here for instance is how men and women behaved respectfully towards one another:

The men had what they used to call their *ngulupal*, a big sort of shed where all the single fellows was staying. All the men used to go there. That was their place. They used to sit down and play cards or talk about something. Women wouldn't join them, that'd be the men's quarters. Women, if they wanted to gather up talking about some thing, they'd just visit from camp to camp. They were the *ngurrangkiyalu*, the camp pigeons, the home ducks, and the men, they could go and join them young fellows. Say if me and Edie [Eliza's cousin] went to one's place and started talking, well that man would walk away and join his group, he wouldn't sit and listen to us talking.

So Eliza and her sisters grew up feeling 'ashamed' or 'shy', as a matter of normal propriety, in the presence of many people, including strangers both black and white. The heart of their daily lives lay in the activities they shared
with those Ngiyampaa relatives they belonged to be close to, ‘taking notice’ where they were not yet skilled enough to participate effectively, and joining in where they could.

Some of their elders’ pursuits were of a time-honoured kind. For instance Eliza watched skins being patterned with criss-cross rubbing as they were prepared for rugs, and bags being knotted from a loop secured round the maker’s big toe. Some of them were self-taught, such as dressmaking, which her mother was particularly good at.

Say, white people might’ve given them some old clothes, she’d unpick them. She’d copy off whatever garment she could unpick and cut out by that. After that she only had to look at what was on you. Say you came there with something she’d never seen before, she’d look you over and she’d sit down and cut that out and make it exactly the same.

The cloth too came mainly from unpicked cast-offs. Once some of her relations were given some clothes to wash from one of the stations, but never given no tubs or boilers or anything. We had nothing to wash in, never knew what soap was, *warrikal pakaa tyii mayii* [my people were really wild]. So they wore them! The station people wouldn’t have them back after the blacks wearing them, *kapulpuwan* [lousy] I suppose. Serve ’em right to my way of thinking! We had nothing to wash. What we had on we wore until they dropped off.

Where it wouldn’t be too far for the children, they gathered wild food alongside their older relatives: wild cabbage, yams, crowfoot with stalks like rhubarb, quandongs, wild apples, the gum of various trees, eggs and so on — some things required preparation and cooking, while others were enjoyed on the spot:

But there wouldn’t be any kids if they were out walking. Not unless it was a little one that was still on the breast, the mother’d have to carry it sitting up on the back in a blanket, like a little pouch, and strapped on with an old shirt or something tied in front. Some of them used to walk for miles. By the time they’d get home of a night they’d be dog-tired, and feet swollen. They’d have to rest up for a couple of days before they’d hunt again.

Some of their growing knowledge the children expressed in games, getting stiff necks from playing all day in miniature miamias that they built for themselves. And there were other games played in the Keewong camps too, involving *kutyurrri* [pointed throwing clubs] and *thapit* [balls, sometimes made of inflated kangaroo pouches].

Despite the fact that the Keewong people had been ‘a little mixed-breed mob’ ever since ‘our grandmothers were taken advantage of’, the children of ‘white’ fathers rarely knew anything of them. Though some of them may have worked on the stations, Eliza recalls that as children, ‘We had no acquaintance with the station hands because we used to hide from them’. There were however two exceptional outsiders who married into the Keewong mob and shared a good deal of their way of life, though neither of them ever learned Ngiyampaa properly. The first and most significant, in
that among his children were girl cousins of much the same age as Eliza, was Dave Harris, a New Zealander. The other was ‘Sabre’ [Saba] Singh, an Indian hawker who married Eliza’s eldest sister Mabel as Eliza’s childhood approached its end.

Dave Harris made a big impression on Eliza, though she didn’t tell him so at the time. He was

A lovely old man with long white hair as white as the snow and the prettiest blue eyes you’ve ever seen on anyone. And do you think I could talk to that old fellow? He christened me No Tongue. He’d say “Hallo, No Tongue!” and No Tongue’d hang her bloody head and wouldn’t look up. I often think if he’d only lived long enough to hear Eliza Kennedy today, he wouldn’t believe his ears.

Dave Harris’ movements did not follow exactly the same pattern as those of his in-laws:

He used to mind the government tanks, he had to collect whatever travelling stock was coming through and charge a penny a head. He used to buy old kangaroo skins, rabbit skins, fox skins and he used to take them to Armidale, somewhere up there, now and again. He took birds too, parrots and cockatoos live for pets. He’d grow melons and pumpkins, tomatoes and potatoes and give us. We used to cook them in the ashes.

When the first war came, he ‘used to do a bit of reading to them that could understand’, reading from the paper that was brought once a week from Mossgel to Carowra with the mail. Dave Harris camped with his family at Carowra and other government tanks, but his wife, Eliza’s aunt Emily, was too sickly to go with him by wagonette on his trips to Armidale.

After Mabel’s marriage to Saba Singh:

We went up in the world. Our Indian brother-in-law kept us going. He fed us most of the time, because we had nothing. He used to have plenty. Indian curry and Johnny cakes, curried bacon, wonderful tucker we thought.

In those days their hair was as often as not ‘just stuff like old ropes, mitimiti, all matted up. He gave us combs, a few yards of material and that’. It was then that ‘Latya’, as he called Eliza, began to wear her hair long and plaited up, as she still does today.

Saba Singh came from Calcutta:

He used to carry a bundle, people tells me that knew him when he first got here. But I remember him going around hawkering with a covered-in van with four horses in it when he met up with my sister. I don’t know how they came to be together I’m sure because people are sort of scared of other nations, mainly from over there. Anyhow they finally got married — it was wartime I think, or war brewing — and ended up with seven or eight, they were about ten altogether.

As to his religion:

When he first come out he used to get around in a turban, but when he
got in with us, he give everything away, he wore a hat. He just had to be one of us, one of the Ngiyampaa mob. He’d eat anything we ate, all sorts of goannas and things. He even used to make curry out of this wild cabbage yuluumay.

By contrast, his fellow countryman old ‘Motto’ [Motu?] Singh (no relation), who also came hawking to Carowra, ‘wouldn’t eat anything unless he killed it himself, he had to bleed it before he ate any of it, otherwise he wouldn’t touch it’.

Hunting expeditions were easier after Mabel married Saba Singh, too: We could yoke up a pair of horses — when it got to that stage my sister had a wagonette — and go out hunting, bring home a load of kangaroos, rabbits or whatever we could get — goannas, bogeys, porcupine. We never learnt to shoot but we had reliable dogs. Saba used to get these dogs, greyhounds, staghounds and all kinds, off an old fellow named Charlie Wright, used to breed kangaroo dogs out there.

Mabel travelled everywhere with her husband. ‘They used to have tents and that, the van was for the things he was selling, mainly clothes’. Though ‘They’d always make back to this Carowra, the main camping centre’, Saba Singh’s hawking took him to Ivanhoe, Hillston and beyond. Like Dave Harris, he had travelled more widely than his in-laws, particularly his wife’s young unmarried sisters:

We never left our territory until we got married. We were a group of people that never separated from one another, us Keewong clique, we were always bunched together.

This territory was part of the wider ‘belar’ ngurrampaa [camping country, homeland] which they shared with another local grouping of Ngiyampaa people, the Trida mob: ‘Trida was their end of the world’. From time to time Eliza’s people would meet up with people from the Trida mob (Fred Biggs, who drove the wagonette with the mail from Mossgiel to Carowra, was one of them). Their dialect and their ways were occasionally different enough to provoke Eliza’s interested attention:

The husband and wife used to sit back to back, leaning on one another’s backs. If they wanted to give any tea or anything they’d pass it around, never face one another eating anything. That was the Trida mob style, more-or-less, because our people sat side by side facing the same way, or might be facing one another.

It seems that in this the Ngiyampaa couples around Trida station were simply more conservative than their Keewong counterparts. Both mobs still maintained the practice of ‘not naming one another, and just calling one another mayi [person] all the time’, though that too was soon to die out.

Perhaps the most intense period of contact with other Ngiyampaa groups, and with Aboriginal people from even further away, came at the end of Eliza’s childhood, when the last purapa or ‘school for making men’ was held in bull oak country in 1914.3

3 A description of this event by Eliza and her sister Lily is recorded in Ngiyampaa and English in Donaldson 1980.
COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAA LYA

Though Eliza's own experience was limited to her native territory, a few of her older relatives had made journeys beyond the Nguyampaa world and had come back with tales to tell. One such person was a maternal uncle of Eliza's, Red Tank Jackie. He had acquired a reputation for 'magic eyes' after tracking down a small girl who had been lost for a week. So 'they put him down as a policeman' in 1900, to help in the search for the killer Jimmy Governor and his companions as they made their wild months-long dash through central and north-eastern New South Wales.4 Eliza's uncle Red Tank is said to have discovered their whereabouts shortly before their final capture, by spotting some ants carrying grains of sugar:

He followed this little streak of ants, up and down, and they came to a dry tree with a hollow in it. That's where the ants was carting from, and that's where this tucker was hidden. He proved to himself then that he was on their track. And they [the search party] was convinced then, when they found the tucker bags, that he was on their track. They were down in a gully in among the hills, and just a little smoke going up. And he said, "There they are down there!" And they said to him, "Go and get 'em!". "No", he said, "You go and get 'em! I found them, you go and get 'em".

Years later, Roy Governor, a brother of Jimmy and Joe, was in Condobolin and Mabel warned Eliza, 'Don't mention Red Tank in front of that fellow because he might kill us, seeing that we're related to him'.

This whole early period of her life, during which she 'camped around' with her family and stuck with the Keewong mob, Eliza refers to as 'growing up in the ashes'.5 She looks back on it with affection and a pride born of hindsight: 'A lot of people wouldn't talk like this about them days, they'd be ashamed, but I'm proud of the way we survived'. Her childhood gave her a sense of achievement which has remained a source of strength in later years:

We roughed it. It's a wonder we never died with T.B. or starvation even. But we managed, we were happy. It's a sad story, but thank God it's honest and good. I'm grateful to my mother that she stuck with us and showed us how to live. We lived happy because we had no sickness. What we ate — as I always say and I'll still say it — it was food and medicine for us. A lot of the young folks say "Oh, things couldn't have been that bad" when I say we hardly had any clothes on our back. You'd see a dress torn, you'd put in into a bit of a knot, and a bit of a trail hanging somewhere else. We had to wear them because we had nothing else. Sinful really,

4 The Governor brothers were the 'Breelong blacks' whose story underlies Keneally's (1972) well-known novel The chant of Jimmy Blacksmith and the film of the same name.
5 NHAA LYA is the word for the fallen leaves which accumulate to form circular carpets under the scrubby bushes and low trees of Nguyampaa country. 'Growing up in the ashes', 'coming up out of the NHAA LYA': these phrases assimilate a stock metaphor of English-speaking culture for giving shapeliness to the story of a life — the notion of rising from low or humble beginnings. But they manage also to deflect the pejorative associations of metaphorical 'lowliness'. The ashes and the NHAA LYA are vividly evocative of a childhood hearth and home that were quite literally close to the ground.
but we survived and turned out great women, I reckon anyhow, us three old women and my two other sisters that died. I think it's great how we battled through it all and come up out of the *nhaalya* [fallen leaves].

As time went on both Keewong and Trida mobs had gradually become more dependent on visits to Carowra Tank, the only permanent water in belar country, which was on the border between the 'beats' of the two groups:

We used to wander around here there and everywhere but all end up back there at old Carowra Government Tank, that's where we used to get our government rations and mail. They'd know by the moon when it was time to come back.

The rations used to arrive at 'the little one-horse town' of Mossgiel, and some of our folks used to have to go over there, or meet the people that was bringing them across [to Carowra] somewhere along the road, meet the wagon halfway perhaps. Carowra was the main place for the rations, somebody'd be there to read out the names.

The monthly rations consisted of:

- just plain old flour, tea and sugar, and the tea leaves, well they were like sticks, post-and-rails lots of people used to call them. They'd be in a little bag for each one.

Twice a year there were bundles of government clothes too, the summer and winter issue, with a blanket included in the winter issue.

As the Ngiyampaa camps at Carowra grew larger and more permanent it became more and more necessary for individuals to spend periods away from their families to earn a living. Eliza was growing up and it was increasingly clear that the skills she had learnt from her mother and other relatives would be insufficient to gain her a livelihood. However *thaarmaay* (skilled, competent) she became, their way of life would not support her generation as adults. Yet in respect of every skill marketable among white society she was *mayaal* (incompetent, ignorant). For all the knowledge she had picked up through years of watching and listening to her elders, 'You wouldn't give a bumper for me when I was a kid, I was worth nothing.' The task ahead was how to feel sufficiently at ease amongst white people to 'take notice' of their ways too, and learn new skills that would be advantageous to her. She had to overcome some of her shyness without feeling 'shameless' and learn to use that tongue which Dave Harris had said she did not have — to speak a second language she was still less at home in than Ngiyampaa.

Eliza's older sisters had a long start on her. Lizzie and Lily had done washing and ironing on Marfield Station, and Lily had gone on to work as a kitchen maid at the tiny hospital at Mossgiel and then on Mossgiel Station.

---

6 Reflexes of this word are widespread in New South Wales. 'Myall' for 'wild Aboriginal' probably entered Australian English through Dharuk, spoken at Port Jackson.
When she was there:

She used to ride down to Ivanhoe [30 miles] on a horse, in riding breeches. If a horse was broke in today she’d ride it tomorrow, or drive it, whatever it was broke for. She was game, and so was the oldest sister, poor old Mabel.

Lizzie was housekeeper at the Mount Hope pub (since claimed by some to have inspired Slim Dusty’s famous song ‘The pub with no beer’). As for Eliza:

I knew nothing and I wouldn’t go out to learn. A fellow name of Mack MacDonald had a place just away from Conoble Station and they took me there for a while. I used to cry every day wanting to go home to old Carowra where my people was. They took me to Mount Hope so I’d be with my sister. They said “You’ll be right here!” And I went, but I was frightened every day. They got sick of me. I pulled up at Trida, then one day back at Carowra and that was that. I never learned to do anything, only cry!

There was also a more combative side to Eliza’s reluctance for domestic work, as she reveals in her comment on another attempt by the same family to get her to work for them. They hoped she would accompany them to Junee, way out of her territory to the southeast: ‘They wanted me for a bit of a slave, I suppose, but I wouldn’t be in it’.

As Carowra became more of a centre, interested ‘white people’ came out from time to time ‘to help the people what way they could’. At one stage there was a teacher from whom Eliza’s eldest sister had learnt to write her name, ‘But the teacher couldn’t settle out there’. Then there were two women, the first of a series of lay missionaries sent by the Aborigines Inland Mission, a non-denominational fundamentalist group which influenced most western New South Wales communities during the 1920s and 1930s:

They camped there in tents with us, big bough sheds they used to live under. They came along to try and teach us, either to be Christians or to read and write. All we learnt off them was the hymns they used to sing us. One of these hymns reinforced the economic pressure to acquire housekeeping skills. It became a favourite, and is still sung with relish by women of Eliza’s generation to liven up a long car journey (with appropriate variations on ‘Irish’ such as kirrpatya [kangaroo] or even thitaka [a small inedible lizard]):

In the house and out the door
Chopping wood and scrubbing floor
Washing, ironing, mending too
Sometimes making Irish stew
I’ll do it all for Jesus
I’ll do it all for Jesus
I’ll do it all for Jesus
He done so much for me.

Later, after a woman missionary ‘cleared out because she reckoned someone was giving her electric shocks’ the missionaries were all men.
We wasn't a bit interested in the fathers, oh we loved them and everything you know, they'd do a lot for us, medicine and one thing and another. Yet we never appreciated them that much. I often think how foolish we were, we might have been educated people. But we just battled on.

Economic and moral pressure were not enough to make Eliza change her ways:

I was one that took a bit of taming, and it took old George Kennedy to tame me. I was still wild when old George tried to make love to me first time. I called him everything but a man. My old brother-in-law said to me 'You don't want to swear like that, he's a sergeant and he'll put you in gaol.' And I told him off too, told him what to do with the gaol and himself too.

George Kennedy was a good deal older then Eliza. He was born in 1883. Like Eliza herself he was of mixed descent, but unlike her he had not grown up 'in the ashes'. 'He had black blood in him, black father and white mother. He was pretty fair and he was brought up as a white person'. His mother was from around Jerilderie and his father probably from somewhere near Darlington Point. He came courting Eliza at Carowra after returning from service in the first World War:

He was a shoeing smith in the Light Horse Brigade, that's how he started off. From there he worked his way up, and he was a warrant officer then.

Yes, he tamed me and learnt me a lot, like how to get myself clean and how to cook.

They were married in 1923, in St Paul's Pro-Cathedral at Hay. It was a double wedding, for her cousin Cissie Harris married an Englishman, Jimmy Evans, at the same time. The Kennedys started their married life at Yelyt, a 17,000 acre returned soldier's lot seven miles outside Ivanahoe. They had 'a few sheep but very few, might've been a couple of hundred or so, a few pigs, chooks, horses, that's all'. George 'got a fellow he knew to put up a shack for us, a kitchen and a lounge, a little bit of a verandah back and front, no stove till very late'. Eliza cooked in 'the old camp oven, which was great', and boiled all their clothes in a four-gallon drum.

In the drought year of 1923 all the Trida mob were forced to move to Carowra for survival. By 1926 there was a permanent 'mission' at the tank. At this Aborigines Protection Board station, run by a European manager, the people lived a sedentary life in two-roomed tin huts supplied by the government. 'When they started the mission there they wanted all the blacks, and they only got their rations there'. This form of coercion to come to the settlement simply institutionalised the movement already taking place among the Keewong and Trida mobs: 'when the mission came in, we sort of clubbed in together'. But it also affected a third group, not nilar people but nilyah tree people from further west, who spoke a dialect of Paakantji ('Darling River talk') as well as their own Ngiyampaa. They had 'always lived about on their own and used to hang out around Marfield and Neckarbo'.
COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAALYA

The Marfield mob 'didn't like the idea of coming to the mission at all'. Dave Harris (a son of the blue-eyed New Zealander) and some of the girls were sent out to coax this wild mob in. They didn't even know what it was to ride in a car, and this big truck went out there and brought them in. The 'mission' was demoralising for everyone:

I reckon they ruined the people, putting them all together. Before that they battled alright, although I don't suppose they'd've survived because there'd been no rain.

Meanwhile the drought together with inexperience and lack of capital was also forcing many of the soldier settlers off their blocks. George 'couldn't make a go of anything on the farm'. They lost their sheep: 'Drought-time come and that wiped them out'. Then: 'All his mates used to come out there and they used to drink up, and different ones would come there for the night, and they all had grog on them'. Eliza would not join in, nor would she go dancing: 'I kept away, and looked after myself'. Whatever the private difficulties in the marriage, then or later, people 'always reckoned Uncle George and Auntie Liza were a great couple', and that was what mattered most of all. 'We always had plenty to wear and eat and drink, and whoever came along our way, we'd always give them a bit of tucker for the road'.

After five years or so the farm had to be sold and the second period of wandering in Eliza's life began, its scope no longer dictated by the availability of wild food and water supplies, and collection points for government rations, but by the search for wage work on pastoral stations. The area over which George and Eliza Kennedy travelled together was much larger: 'We wandered everywhere after we left the farm'. 'Everywhere' meant over the whole of the territories of the Keewong, Trida and Marfield mobs, and even beyond Ngiyampaa country into Wiradjuri country to the south-east, along the Lachlan River as far as Condobolin.

The style in which they travelled changed to match. There was no more walking, 'carrying our little rags and bags' over the shoulder. They rode in a wagonette with a new range of belongings. They had a tent, a camp oven, 'our beautiful old iron bed, and our tucker-box in the front under the seat so we'd have a snack going along. And we learned to always carry a few chooks. If we got a permanent job we'd have a crowd of chooks in no time'. They took on any work they could get, mainly looking after stock, boundary riding, and occasional contract work fencing, or cleaning out silt for tank-sinkers. Sometimes Eliza was able to sell some of what she baked, or to find some sort of domestic work while George 'would help in the tank, scooping [it out] or yoking up horses, nine or ten horses, maybe more'.

Speaking of herself and her generation of Ngiyampaa women, Eliza says that 'We woke up to ourselves mainly through our husbands'. This was the period when Eliza 'came out of the shell'. She had been a person who wouldn't ride a horse ('it took me all my time to ride in a cart'). Now she learned to drive a car. Her husband taught her what he knew on a Dodge utility truck at Marfield Station, but she was the one who got the licence:
They wouldn't give him one because he was a boozers. 'Coming out of the shell' meant not only acquiring new skills but asserting herself in a setting where she expected that her ideas and feelings might not be respected, so that she could exploit the new skills as she thought fit rather than be herself exploited for having them. The sort of way in which she eventually managed is illustrated in the following story from later on in her married life.

Jimmy Evans, who married Eliza's cousin Cissie, was a shearer's cook. Eliza had learnt from watching and asking him how to cook as he did (pastry and yeast cookery included), and how hard shearers were to satisfy. So when the station boss at Wardry was shorthanded and asked her to cook for the shearers, she was reluctant. But he was 'such a nice old fellow' and she thought:

Oh well, I'll do it for his sake, not the shearers' sake. I lined these fellows up and give'em to understand "I know you fellows are hard to please. I can't read nor write, I can't give youse anything in the modern line, dainty dishes and all that. I know nothing about that". I told them "First one that moans, I'm just going to drop everything". By gee, they smooched around then. "Oh, we'll see there won't be any of that". "There won't want to be, because I'll give you the kitchen quick smart".

Eliza cooked her best, 'no shortage of anything':

They were well satisfied, the brutes. They said they wanted me to go with them to cook, they'd be happy. But I said "Nothing doing. This is not our people's way. We just poke about, always together, we know what we're doing. We'd probably get out with you fellows somewhere and we'd be dumped".

After nine years of marriage young Georgie Kennedy was born in Condobolin, in 1932, and a shady spot was found for him in the wagonette under a sheet over the front board. He was their only child. That she should have only one child when so many of her relations were having large families is something that worried Eliza then and still puzzles her.

In 1937, when George was five and ready for school, the family moved to Menindee on the Darling River for a few years. George Kennedy got a job as handyman at the Menindee Aboriginal Station. This had been started by the New South Wales authorities three years earlier when they realised that Carowra Tank would not long continue to provide enough water for the 250 or so people then living there. In September 1933 the Aborigines Protection Board moved all the Carowra people (but not all their possessions) to Menindee, shifting them by truck and then train out of their own ngurampaa into the country of the Paakantji, and set them down to live in a white-run institution with Paakantji people whose own recent experiences had scarcely been more reassuring. The Ngiyampaa people were not consulted, or even given a chance to contact absent relatives: 'I don't know what their ideas was, to get them onto a permanent water I suppose mainly'. The period which followed was one of fear, disease and death: 'They averaged one a month, the deaths. Nine of our people died in the first nine months they were there'.
COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAALYA

Members of the Marfield mob were particularly vulnerable and only a couple of them survived. There were plenty of possible explanations, but the people had no control over any of the causes which they could identify.

The Ngiyampaa ‘drylanders’ had always been wary of the Paakantji ‘river people’, whose language and way of life were very different from their own. ‘Only lot we were very frightened of was the Darling mob, supposed to have been a mob of clever people. There were very few clever ones among our people, like one or two that I remember’. Maybe the Paakantji were using the power of their doctors or ‘clever men’ against the intruders.

The site chosen for the settlement was unfortunate: ‘They built the mission on a bit of a sand ridge and when the wind was blowing the sand away you’d see skeletons lying full stretch.’ Powdered human bone was one of the ingredients of pathampatha, the poison traditionally used against enemies — ‘Blacks were superstitious about human bones’. Nobody knew whose these bones were or how they came to be there. Some of the Ngiyampaa people ‘raked them up and bagged them and they made a cemetery. A lot of them people died’. It was thought that others too might have ‘died from dust from off that ridge’, which blew everywhere on windy days, getting into the food as it was being cooked, and making the tea gritty.

The housing was no better than at Carowra. They had the same two-roomed tin huts with no windows:

- no windows at all, just open. There was no door to separate the kitchen and the bedroom, no privacy whatever. They could hang any old bag or blanket I suppose. Family of people, they’d just have to lay around anywhere and they didn’t like that at all. A lot of them added a little more onto their house that had a big family, or couple of families might’ve been living in the one place.

There was very little furniture. When they first ‘really settled down at Old Carowra’, some people had improvised ‘stick bunks. Forky sticks at the corners, railings, keep on putting railings either crossways or longways, then load it up with bushes, kirraa, for a mattress’. Later wooden bunks were carpentered, with an ‘auger bit to bore holes in the head part — there was wire netting and wire about then’. But ‘A lot of them had no beds, the only time they had beds was when the St Vincent de Paul men came out and they could see what was needed, and they sent out wardrobes, dressing tables, beds, things like that’.

There was only one difference between the tin huts at Menindee and those at Carowra — they had floors. This apparent improvement, given the lack of beds, actually made matters worse:

- They all had cement floors which wasn’t right because most of them lied on the floor, and I think that’s why a lot of them died. Cold and pneumonias I suppose, because the ground would warm up quicker than the concrete.

When people fell sick they were taken off to hospital in Broken Hill. This only increased their relatives’ fears: ‘My poor old uncle reckoned “They
must be doping them in Broken Hill, they don’t seem to come back from
there”’. Eliza had her own speculations as to why they didn’t return:
Probably might have died when they didn’t know how they were going to
be treated in hospital. White people mauling them and bathing them
might have killed them too, that’s a thing we knew nothing about,
dipping in old dams.
By the time the Kennedy family reached Menindee, the diminished
‘Carowra mob’ was inured to the new way of life, though far from reconciled
to it. The authorities continued to organise the people’s lives with little
reference to their possible reactions, and the people continued to act
according to their own views. George and Eliza, arriving on the scene from a
background of other experiences, saw the irony in some of the situations
which arose. It was part of George Kennedy’s job to issue the rations and
weigh out the meat. They were much better rations than those at Carowra —
peas, beans and rice as well as meat, flour, sugar and tea. And expectant
mothers got cocoa, custard and milk. But the Carowra mob didn’t know how
to deal with the dried peas and beans, they put them down the toilet because
they wanted the bags:
They did not say “Can I have something else in the place of this?” They
might’ve got more rice which was easy to cook, or a bit more meat. That
was where the tucker used to go, down the toilet, go and get more, get the
bag and sell it.
Soon it was wartime, when ‘you had to have coupons for everything. They
didn’t even realise how lucky they was with all this tucker’.
Eliza herself drew on the skills she had learned during her life with
George. For cooking, the huts had
just a big old open dirt fireplace. You couldn’t do much by the time
you’d made a big fire in there, why it’d roast you. We fitted a old stove
that somebody give us. I’d use the camp oven as well if I was doing a lot of
cooking, we knew more about the old camp oven, how much fire to put
underneath and on top. The stove you just had to guess how much
wood. But I managed very well. Lot of them used to come to me to buy a
loaf of bread or some buns or jam tart or apple tart or whatever.
Eliza’s nephew Ralphie, one of Lily’s boys, learned too. (Eliza had reared his
elder brother Rossie for three or four years: ‘He was my little mate before I
had my own kid’). The other children
was sitting there hungry looking at him. And they’d tell one another
‘Yata yuwan wirrinya yaay, kuniingkulaay luku, kapaanytya luku, lovely buns
he’s turning out, just like his mother, and his auntie.’
It was at Menindee that Eliza made up her mind about Christian
religion. When she was younger, ‘We knew nothing about church really, not
to be inside of a church, only when I got married as a Catholic’. At Menindee
she was confirmed by Bishop Fox and services were held in her house ‘with
the mantelpiece done up for an altar’. She was able to reconcile her
Catholicism with the beliefs she had learnt in childhood, to which she
remained and still remains loyal. When Pastor Cec Grant, related to the Menindee people and now preaching in the Wagga district, was talking to her recently about how to receive Christ, she told him, ‘Our people knew there was something up there with more power, but they called it Kurikuta—that was the same thing’. And it is to that power that she is grateful for the survival of her people during the difficult early days when ‘we should’ve died, the way we lived. We was taken care of, thanks to God and this stuff that He put on this earth and in the ground and everywhere for us to eat. That was His gift to the blacks, we knew that’. There are rules which she learnt as a child that Eliza, like most of her generation of Ngiyampaa people, has never broken since to do so would offend Kurikuta ‘the same as people are afraid of Lord Jesus, if you do something wrong you’ve got to confess’. For instance, she has never cooked emu in any other way than ‘in the hole’, lest Kurikuta, smelling singed emu fat, should descend and scorch the earth — ‘in the hole, that’s his place’.

When a Sydney nun adopted a Ngiyampaa baby from Menindee whose mother had died in childbirth, Eliza was asked to:

look after her for a fortnight to build her up, because she had these sweat boils breaking out on her little backside and up her little back and she was really miserable, coming out of hospital like that mind you.

Nine months later, when ‘she had improved out of sight’ and she was starting to call me mummy and the old fellow daddy, the old bishop and the nun came and took me and the little girl in, and they allowed them that was fond of her to come with us, and we seen her off at the train.

When European visitors came to the mission, the manager’s wife used to tell them to take a look at the Kennedys’ place, with its flower garden in front. Often these visitors would comment to Eliza:

"Why can't they all live like this now?" Well, I simply told them, "They just too tired, too lazy, that's all that's wrong with them".

This is not quite the righteous answer that it sounds like to someone who has not grown up in the Ngiyampaa tradition. 'Too tired, too lazy' is the closest English can come to yalamakirri, a verb which simply describes the state of not feeling like being active, without assigning any cause to this feeling. 'Tired' says too much by suggesting a physical cause and 'lazy' by suggesting a blameworthy lack of moral strength. Eliza was certainly alarmed by the apathy some of her people were experiencing, but her chief reaction was less to judge than to help where she could: 'If they wanted anything mended or cut out, I'd do the best for them'. Another cause for concern at Menindee was the way in which some of the people she had grown up amongst were now taking to drink:

We never seen no drunks at all in our time. There was only one old fellow and he was a harmless old fellow. All around Carowra there, wherever we seen him, just to get away from him we used to duck out in the scrub and camp for the night.

But it was not until after their second uprooting, when the Menindee people
were shifted to Murrin Bridge outside Lake Cargelligo in 1949, that women as well as men, and eventually children of school age too, began to drink to any extent.

The people took what opportunities they had to protest against their condition, as for instance when:

The head fellow came down from Sydney and they had a meeting there and a lot of them said the huts wasn’t good enough, wouldn’t be a good enough place for their cowsheds, because they were cold in the winter and roast you in the summertime. They were cruel, no verandahs, no ceilings or anything.

But the people were without power. Even the manager, who was all-powerful in the residents’ everyday lives, was unable to influence the Board to substantially improve their lot: ‘They didn’t like the manager that done too much for the blacks, they’d sack them fellows’.

In the early 1940s, after experiencing both sympathetic managers and one who proved to be ‘a no good fellow and stingy’, the Kennedys left the mission at Menindee and ‘come back out again on the stations’. George Kennedy had had enough of his job there, particularly issuing out the rations. ‘He used to get accused for a lot of things and he was more or less trying to help the people, so he got sick of it and left’.

It was at this time that Eliza’s mother Rosie left Coombie Station in belar country for Menindee, and was taken from there to Broken Hill hospital, where she died. All Eliza’s sisters had married and had travelled beyond the scenes of their childhood. Lizzie married ‘Cobar’ Williams, whose language was a little different from the Carowra people’s Ngiyampaa — ‘Where we’d say pumali for “hit”, he’d say kumali’. He had got a medal for his service in the First World War, and ever since he had worked as a station hand, mostly in his wife’s country. They were never at Menindee, but eventually went to Murrin Bridge. Lily’s husband Harold Hampton came from further north too. He had grown up speaking English. After meeting Lily in Condobolin he came to Carowra. He worked mainly on stations around there, mostly at Trida, with periods elsewhere, for instance at Griffith. The Hamptons had been shifted to Menindee when the Mission was started there, but they had left again very early on. Lily was particularly incensed by the way in which the authorities had promised to bring her turnout across from Carowra, but had left it behind. As she says, ‘They made a fool of us’. Elsie married Duncan Ferguson, a brother of William Ferguson, founder of the Aborigines’ Progressive Association in 1937. As a resident at Menindee, Duncan Ferguson was able to keep his brother in touch with conditions there.7

For the next ten years, after they had left Menindee, Eliza and her husband wandered as they had before, over the same area, though ‘old Mount Manara and Marfield was our main beat’. There were reminders of the vanished Marfield mob:

7 See Horner’s (1974) biography of William Ferguson for a brief account of Duncan Ferguson’s protests about conditions at Menindee.
COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAALYA

That was their area. Little miamias everywhere, some of them was still standing. This yarran [hardwood used for the frames of the shelters] lingers, it’s very strong. I often used to think about them people. And they went to that mission, and that’s where they all disappeared, excepting one or two.

Many of the anecdotes which Eliza tells about work on the stations concern her reaction towards the European people she got to know, and theirs towards her. The Kennedys were at Orana station immediately before going to Menindee:

At Orana we used to live outback at a place called Mulga, minding the stock out there, and Mr Williamson [who brought the food out] always used to bring this forequarter part of the sheep. We’d fancy a nice roast leg, say for Sunday’s dinner, because this schoolteacher used to come around sometimes, but shoulder, shoulder, shoulder, shoulder we’d get always! I asked him one day ‘Do these sheep have hind legs?’, and he brought us some legs after that.

The Kennedys camped quite a few times on Booberoi station, in the fertile country near the Lachlan river:

On what they call the Farm they used to grow everything, hay and oats and barley, and a bit of cotton too. Sometimes there were over fifty men just working on this farm, independent of the station.

Though many of these workers would be ‘white’, ‘It was a great place for blacks just the same’, with frequent opportunities for employment. (Further out, in the Ngiyambaa dryland, overseers and bosses were ‘white’, while station workers were ‘mainly black, because no whites’d hang out in them parts of the world I suppose. Except for the shearer, of course they only come whatever season it was shearing times.’) One time at Booberoi, Eliza and one young ‘white’ woman who had also come with her husband were the only women. The Kennedy camp was on the bank of the creek:

waatyin [the white gin] was living not that far away from me. ‘How do you keep your place like this?’ she said to me. ‘I just throw water about and sweep it over with a broom.’ And in the kitchen I’d have bags to walk on and she said ‘It’s just like cement!’

The admiration was not mutual, for the couple were careless, both in how they kept their camp and how they looked after their baby. The husband tried to persuade Eliza not to bother carting away her ashes, so that she would have hot coals in the morning: ‘To my idea’, I said, ‘that’s only lazy people’s fashion, fire’s no trouble to light. I’ve lived like this for years and you’s telling me how to light a fire?’

It was on the way from Booberoi Station to Euabalong that George Kennedy had a stroke:

He fell backwards out of a spring cart and he never got conscious till he died. He died on his birthday in 1952 and he was sixty-nine the day he died… That’s when it rained and rained and rained, and we had to move from Euabalong out to the west, living there in tents [a ‘calico town’ set
up by the government] for three months before the road was dry.

The first years of her widowhood Eliza spent in Euabalong, ten miles from the new Aboriginal station at Murrin Bridge. Her son George was now in his twenties. At Murrin Bridge he met Violet Collins who had come to live there too, after growing up mainly in Tingha, Tamworth and Armidale. (Her father was from further north and had a reputation for speaking half-a-dozen Queensland languages.) They married and began their own career, sticking roughly to the same area as the Kennedy parents, working sometimes on the railway (which had been laid through belar country in 1919) and sometimes on stations, and spending a while at Wilcannia. Eliza stayed in Euabalong, doing domestic work for a couple called Silverside, and having younger relatives to live with her so that they could go to school.

Between 1956 and 1958 the anthropologist Jeremy Beckett was spending time in Euabalong, Murrin Bridge and Wilcannia. Silverside recommended Eliza to him as a knowledgeable person. By then Fred Biggs, a whole generation older than her and a prolific composer of Ngiyampaa songs, was already teaching Beckett, so she rebuffed him. ‘If you can’t learn anything off Fred Biggs it’s no good of your asking me’. It was a question of proper reticence, the Ngiyampaa feeling of kuyan. Not only was Fred Biggs older and more authoritative, but Beckett was a man. And anyway the language was not a thing to be lightly exposed to strangers. Thinking back, she feels ‘I would’ve got a bit of help there, if I’d’ve took notice of Beckett’.

Eliza visited George and Violet every time a new grandchild was born. Then when George got a job as a railway fettler at Trida, she joined them permanently. They were to stay there until, after a dozen years, George’s continuing career with the railways involved them in further moves. The little school at Trida was populated mainly with Eliza’s own grandchildren, and it was here that she eventually found an opportunity to try to read and write for herself. The teacher was young and enthusiastic: ‘That would have been great for him, to teach an old Aboriginal woman to read and write’. But the experiment was short-lived:

I was too old to think about going to school. And Lily was saying “I suppose we’ll see Liza when she comes up for her school holidays!”

Making fun of me. Well, you can always make that!

But she did learn to tell the time, by watching the clock when her grandchildren came home for dinner:

“Oh it’s such and such a time now” they’d say, I’d look at that, then they’d run back to school. And they’d come home and the school had ended and I’d look again. No trouble. I suppose learning lessons would have been just as easy but I couldn’t settle down to it.

After Trida the family returned to Euabalong for a while until they got ‘that minyangkaa [rubbishy] old place at the Lake [Lake Cargelligo] that we used to have when you first started coming around’.

See, for example, Beckett 1959, 1965, 1978 for a sympathetic description of the lives of the Wanggaaypwuan and their neighbours in far western New South Wales.
At this point, having entered the story which I have been writing down, I should explain myself and how I came to be told it. In 1971 Luise Hercus, who had been recording Australian languages for many years, took me with her on a field trip. During her travels in northern Victoria and up into New South Wales she had met and worked with several speakers of the Wangaaypuwan variety of Ngiyampaa, all of them of Eliza's generation, and she felt that their language deserved to be properly recorded by someone in a position to work on it full-time. The purpose of the trip was to introduce me, then a graduate student in linguistics at the Australian National University, to the people she knew. Unsurprisingly, most were at Murrin Bridge. Luise and I spent some time talking with two sisters, Sarah Johnson and Mamie King. They mentioned a number of other people there who were able to speak Ngiyampaa, including several of their brothers and sisters ('brothers' and 'sisters' including for them their parallel first cousins).

When I returned by myself to visit them again, we drove out from the 'mission', partly to get privacy for my language lesson, and partly to see if we could find any of their sisters, who had gone off feeling 'ashamed' or 'shy' at the thought of my approaching them. As soon as they saw my car coming across the paddock they 'scooped into the bushes' just as they used to at the sight of a car more than half a century ago. Unobserved, they watched us boil our billy.

Within a few days a sort of routine began to establish itself. I would ask Mamie and Sarah what they would like to do, and after a few skirmishes during which they said 'Ngintu maathakara' ['You're the boss'] and I replied in my beginner's Ngiyampaa 'No, you two are the masters', we would usually end up going on a hunting expedition, mainly digging for rabbits with crowbars. Each time more people would join us until the car was regularly crammed. And as we sat round the dinner-camp fire cooking our catch and talking into the tape-recorder I was outnumbered by teachers and in an ideal language-learning situation.

However from time to time my questions taxed my teachers' memories and they would say 'Better ask so-and-so', mentioning one of a number of names, usually their oldest brother at Murrin Bridge, Archie King, and sometimes Lizzie Williams, who would not leave her house unsupervised to join us. Often they spoke of Lizzie's sister, saying 'Lizakaa thiirpayaga' ['Liza might know']. I asked if they would take me to meet Mrs Kennedy, but she was away visiting their other sister Lily Hampton in West Wyalong. When I got there later, on my own, I did not need to explain myself. The news had travelled ahead of me.

The three of us sat down with a cup of tea and the tape-recorder and Lily and Eliza put me gently through my paces, asking what I had learnt with the others and correcting me where I had made an imperfect job of it. Eliza explained to me how she had refused to talk to Jeremy Beckett nearly twenty years earlier: 'Wangaay tyu na ngiyal-kuwa-nhi [not I him speak-kuwa-past] I didn't want to tell him nothing'. She included the suffix -kuwa in the word...
for 'spoke' and I asked her what it meant if you put that in. She said, 'That makes it a sort of a pitiful word, that.' Then she went straight on to give another example: 'Say if the old man comes in and he says "Hurry up with my tea!" you might say: "Mal-kuwa-nha thu na' [do-kuwa-present I it], I'm doing my best!"' I knew that I was in the presence of someone with an analytic turn of mind and a loving feeling for her language who had decided to trust me. I drove back to Canberra buoyant with the realisation that between us all we should be able to make a decent record of the language, and that writing it down was a project that was approved of.

In the event, this was only the first of many many hours of collaboration, discovery and rediscovery, in the course of which Eliza and I sometimes sat up obliviously late, in my hired caravan in the park next to her home at Lake Cargelligo, drawing together examples of some particularly pleasing Ngiyampaa way of putting things. At times she would wake having thought of something new for the record, and I with a nightful of questions turning in my head.

One of my discoveries, which somehow remained hidden until I was committed to the Ngiyampaa people through their sharing with me, was a purely personal one: I was repeating family history. My grandfather had devoted much of his life to compiling the remaining texts of Cornish, the disused language of his forebears, collecting words still surviving in Cornish English, studying the language and teaching it in a small weekly class in St Ives. As a child I had taken very little notice of his work, and was shyly sceptical of his passion for it. I did learn to count in Cornish — because he would only push me on the swing if I counted the pushes. Now I could understand what saving his language meant to him. I was in a way acknowledging my own cultural roots, while putting down new ones in Australia.

For Eliza, the opportunity to work on her language came appropriately at a time when her accustomed range of activities and influence was shrinking. Physically, she was almost immobilized. Forty years earlier she had 'fallen into flesh' after her son was born. Before that 'You could put a span around my waist, and emus' legs was big alongside of mine'. During the 1970s various medical complications made carrying her weight more difficult until she became unable to walk more than a few steps at a time. Within the family, her eldest granddaughter was expecting her first child, and of the nine other grandchildren in the rickety old house at Lake Cargelligo with its single outside tap, the two youngest were already attending the pre-school at Murrin Bridge. Much of her emotional energy was taken up with worrying about the lives ahead of her growing grandchildren, anxieties that they were powerless to set entirely at rest however much they might wish to, since she felt their approach to things was unlike her generation's at the same age. 'We listened to our people. They reckon they're in this modern world and they go along with it'. Under the Voluntary Family Resettlement Scheme financed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Kennedys were promised a five-bedroomed Housing Commission home in a suburb
PLATE 2

Top: Lily Hampton (L) and Eliza Kennedy (R) at the Condobolin Show, 1952
Lower: Eliza Kennedy with Tamsin Donaldson and three of her great-niece Faye Johnstone’s children, at Ivanhoe, 1980

Photographs courtesy of Eliza Kennedy (A.I.A.S. 1857-2) and Tamsin Donaldson
of Wagga Wagga. They were to move ‘within three months’. The three months stretched into five years of waiting. When eventually they did move, material conditions improved enormously, but Eliza was further out of her ‘beat’ than she had ever lived before, and emphatically surrounded by the modern world.

In the summer of 1980 I had a phone call from Wagga Wagga. The five-bedroomed house had burnt down through an electrical fault in its construction, and the family were again in temporary overcrowded accommodation. Would I take Nanna for a trip somewhere?

We headed out towards the country Eliza had grown up in. She brought her copy of the now completed Ngiyampaa grammar to show to any Ngiyampaa people we visited who had not already seen one. I brought a tape-recorder as usual. I had told her that friends of mine (some of whom she had met on a visit to Canberra) would be happy if she would like to add her story to a book of the life stories of Aboriginal women. So this time she recorded her reminiscences in English.

This account of her life is based on a verbatim transcription of those recordings. Excerpts on the themes she returned to most often are arranged so as to form a chronological story. Most of the recordings were made as she talked over old times in company with others who shared many of her memories. Besides her immediate family, these included, at various stages of our journey, Eliza’s nephew Bill Williams, born at Carowra and overseer at Wee Elwah Station for the past thirty-three years; Gloria Bartle, a ‘white’ woman at Trida, now herself a grandmother, whose comment on the grammar was ‘Nanna never ever tell us the talk when she was up here!’; Edie Kennedy, a daughter of old Dave Harris and Eliza’s aunt Emily who, after a lifetime of fetching wood and water and cooking ‘with a kid sitting on her hip’, is still battling on out in the scrub at Ivanhoe, and ‘can get around straight as a gunbarrel’; and Eliza’s great-niece Faye, her husband David Johnstone and family, whose rabbit chiller was the only cool spot in Ivanhoe while we were with them.

This story is only part of what Eliza feels is a more important story. Shortly after this expedition, I received a letter which she had dictated to a grandchild; in it she remarked that the trip had been a waste of time because we had not picked up enough of the lingo when we were with others such as Edie who know it well. What Eliza Kennedy most hopes to have live on within the pages of a book is that vanished way of life whose obvious hardships and satisfactions she has described here in English, but whose most intimate qualities can only be captured in the language of her mother and her mother’s people. To this end, the next project on which I shall have the privilege of working with the old-timers from Kirraawara will be a Ngiyampaa dictionary-cum-encyclopaedia.

RAILWAY RESIDENCE, WHITTON, N.S.W. and
AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Beyond Trinkets and Beads: South Australia's Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement, 1971-1978*

Bernard J. O'Neil

Other than expressing sentiments of equality and humane treatment, the Proclamation read aloud by Governor John Hindmarsh at Glenelg on 28 December 1836 gave no indication of how the Aborigines in South Australia were to be treated. Relations between the races in South Australia almost immediately followed the general pattern which characterised settler-native relations in the other colonies. Colonists soon ignored the fact that Aborigines held the rights of British subjects. Rather than all being equal under British law, the Europeans relied on their legal system to protect them from, and to suppress, the Aborigines.

Few Europeans took exception to this denial of justice and equality. Although Judge Sir John Jeffcott stated in 1837 that Aborigines ought to receive less severe punishments than Europeans who were convicted of similar offences, his suggested discrimination in favour of the Aborigines was not adopted. The application of British justice to indigenous society was rarely questioned by the majority of colonists. The only alteration to the imposed legal system was incorporated in the colony's Evidence Act of 1846, which enabled Aborigines to give their evidence without taking oaths.

* This study was originally undertaken in partial fulfilment of the coursework requirements for the B.A. Honours degree at the University of Adelaide and was submitted in 1978. I thank Ian Campbell and Bill Gammage of the University of Adelaide and Hank Nelson of the Australian National University for their comments on the original project. Special thanks are due to Diane Barwick whose editorial suggestions were of great value in preparing the final version of this paper. In revising the paper for publication it has not been possible to update the information to include events since early 1978 which may have affected the Movement. As there is a lack of readily available documentary evidence about the formation of the Movement I have relied on material collected orally from people who have been associated with it. Most interviews were conducted in September and October 1978, mainly on 4 and 13 September 1978. Other interviews were used to corroborate and add to the information provided. In accordance with their wishes I have preserved the anonymity of the people interviewed by citing their information as 'Record of interview' of a specific date. Detailed statistics have not been reproduced, but can be found in the relevant Annual Reports and in publications by Biles (1973), Eggleston (1976, 1977) and Gale (1972). The South Australian situation is not unique and it would be useful to compare the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement with Aboriginal legal services in other States to up-date the survey described by the late Dr. Elizabeth Eggleston at a 1974 conference (Eggleston 1977). A study of legal issues from the European perspective must inevitably involve cultural assumptions: things may not look so good from the Aboriginal point of view. I hope that the Aboriginal perspective will be espoused more frequently in future.

1 Gale 1972:41-42.
In 1860 a Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon the Aborigines acknowledged the complex relationship which existed between the two races but simply reasserted the earlier principles rather than suggesting improvements. Thus no new regulations were promulgated and there were few administrative changes. The protectionist /missionary approach of providing food, clothing and blankets was reaffirmed. The general pattern of the Aborigines' existence on government and mission stations had been determined by the 1860s.\textsuperscript{2} Conditions deteriorated further in the latter part of the 19th century and prompted another Parliamentary enquiry. However, the Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill in 1899 did not introduce fresh initiatives.

In 1911 the South Australian Parliament passed legislation extending restrictions on the legal rights of Aborigines. The humanitarian overtones indicated by the sub-title — \textit{An Act to Make provision for the better Protection and Control of the Aboriginal and Half-Caste Inhabitants} — were belied by later events. The Act granted further powers to the protector of Aborigines, who became the legal guardian of all Aboriginal and 'half-caste' children until they reached the age of twenty-one years. This Act dictated the nature of the relationship between Aborigines and Europeans, and defined who was an Aboriginal for the purposes of protection and control. The Aborigines remained legally underprivileged in that certain civil rights were subject to the discretion of the authorities.

The report of a 1913 Royal Commission urged adoption of even more stringent measures — for example the segregation of 'full-bloods' and 'half-castes'. Shortly afterwards the government assumed control of the large reserves at Point Pearce and Point McLeay. More authoritarian measures were introduced by means of regulations so that, as Rowley notes, 'control meant further restriction of rights . . . the continuation of a process of lowering legal status which had been cumulative from the time of first contact'.\textsuperscript{3} The exclusion of Aborigines from the larger society had been reinforced by statutory and common law.

Within the broad constitutional problems of the status of Aborigines there were persistent difficulties for people caught in the legal processes. But the predicament of Australian Aborigines became more publicly politicised after the Second World War. For example, the creation of the United Nations Organisation and concurrent international pressures on racial issues resulted in some official modification of Australia's racist stance. Debates over attitudes

\textsuperscript{2} For a detailed discussion of this period see Rowley 1974, Gale 1964, Jenkin 1979, Hassell 1966.

\textsuperscript{3} Rowley 1964:221.
and policies were conducted on a national and State level. On the local level the development of an Aboriginal civil rights movement and social action groups, as well as the publicity given to specific issues (such as the 'Stuart case' of 1959 and the resulting Royal Commission) raised community awareness of the many problems faced by Aborigines. This politicisation of the Aborigines' plight presumably encouraged the successful passage of the 1967 referendum proposals giving the Commonwealth power to legislate for Aborigines. Subsequently most States transferred their administrative responsibilities to the Commonwealth.

It is noteworthy that this constitutional amendment was 'widely interpreted as giving a mandate to successive Australian governments to improve the legal, social and economic position of Aborigines'. There has been a consensus among the major political parties since 1967 on these matters yet no Commonwealth government has fully implemented and effectively carried out its accepted mandate. In 1971 Prime Minister John Gorton recognized his government's failure to reduce the legal discrimination practised against Aborigines. While politicians played with words a small group of concerned Aborigines and Europeans had already struggled to achieve some significant changes. The Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) formed in Redfern, New South Wales, was the first legal aid group specifically designed to cater for Aborigines. Although it originated in 1969 it was not firmly established nor fully operational until July 1971. A participant has reported that this first Aboriginal Legal Service was founded by a few Aborigines who were fighting back against 'an alien apparatus of law enforcement which bore oppressively on [them] and did not operate to protect their rights'. They took the initiative because they desired improvements in the treatment they received from police and courts. It was obvious that they were discriminated against by a system which was slow to respond to their needs.

In April 1971 Gorton's successor, Prime Minister William McMahon, spoke of his government's strengthened resolution to assist Aborigines as individuals and, if they wish, as groups to hold effective and

---

4 The trial of Rupert Max Stuart is described by Inglis 1961 and Chamberlain 1978.
5 Similar proposals had been made by H.V. Evatt in the 'package deal' referendum of 1944 in which fourteen wide-ranging issues were covered by the one 'yes or no' vote. It was defeated.
6 Sackville 1975:263.
respected places within one Australian society with equal access to the rights and opportunities it provides and accepting responsibilities towards it.\(^\text{11}\)

The Liberal government followed these words with some action in the face of an impending election. The 1972/73 Budget provided $57,300 for extension of the three existing legal services for Aborigines.\(^\text{12}\)

One of the services to receive financial support was the recently-established Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) in South Australia. As had been the case in New South Wales, ALRM 'was set up because Aboriginal people were complaining about the way they were being treated in society and also by the police'.\(^\text{13}\) Both the Aboriginal Cultural Centre and the Aboriginal Women’s Council based in Adelaide had received frequent complaints about mistreatment of Aborigines during the 1960s and they had organised a committee to investigate some of the problems, especially complaints in regard to police matters. Gale indicates the influence of these organizations in her comment that ‘in matters affecting Aborigines, few political or administrative decisions [were] made without at least some consultation with these Aborigines’ groups’.\(^\text{14}\) Once again it was the well-founded discontent of Aborigines that led to the formation of a legal service.\(^\text{15}\)

There was a general reluctance to turn to any European-managed institution which operated for the whole community: ‘it had long been felt by the Aboriginal people involved in the initial stages in the Movement that a special service was needed’.\(^\text{16}\) During a visit to Adelaide late in 1971 Professor J.H. Wootten described the operation of the New South Wales service to a group of Aboriginal and European people who were concerned about the treatment of Aborigines under the South Australian legal system. The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (as it was known from the outset) was formed in November 1971 and commenced active operations the next month.\(^\text{17}\) Although the impetus for a special legal service developed within South Australia, the organization was based on the Redfern model:

we refer to the experience in New South Wales where the Commonwealth recognised the value of the Aboriginal Legal Service . . . Only after this was proved successful did we in South Australia undertake a similar scheme.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Lippmann 1973:49.  
\(^\text{12}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 29 August 1972.  
\(^\text{13}\) Record of interview, 4 September 1978.  
\(^\text{15}\) Record of interview, 4 September 1978.  
\(^\text{18}\) Anonymous 1972:2.
It was recognised from the outset that Aboriginal control of the Movement was essential for its success: the Constitution required that two-thirds of the seventeen members of the controlling council be Aborigines. Although the Movement was to be run for and by Aborigines, some committed Europeans were necessarily involved. It is not easy, however, to distinguish the roles played by specific people. For example, one correspondent claimed that 'the ALRM was the brainchild of the Civil Rights Movement . . . [Mel Davies] was the brains behind the structuring of the whole idea'. One of the people interviewed commented that there were a number of people [Europeans] involved, of course, but the person who has given most support, on-going support, and probably the brains behind the whole thing is Mr. Elliot Johnston, Q.C. . . . it was his expertise which made it possible to structure the Movement. Another interviewee pointed out that there were actually 'quite a few lawyers involved'. Irrespective of the relative importance of individuals it is clear that Europeans played an essential part as supporters and advisers during the establishment of the Movement. Initially they held several important administrative positions such as President, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and lawyer. Except for the lawyer's role, these positions were later held by Aborigines.

The ALRM quickly expanded its operations despite the continual problems caused by lack of funds. At first it could only operate at a very basic level as the original allocation of $22,000 from the Liberal government in 1972 was barely sufficient to cover the wages of a secretary and field officer, the purchase of a car and administrative expenses. Following the election of a Labor government in December 1972 there was a substantial increase in funds for the Movement. In fact most of the Aboriginal legal services now operating throughout Australia were established with financial assistance from the Commonwealth government after December 1972. Various Aboriginal legal services received additional grants totalling $850,000 for the last five months of the 1972/73 financial year: the ALRM was granted $100,000 to develop and extend its operations.

Many concerned Australians believed that although the injustices of the past could not be remedied, those of the present could be

20 Johnston was the first President of the ALRM. Record of interview, 13 September 1978.
21 Record of interview, 4 September 1978. Eggleston (1977:354) reports that 'during the first year the field work was performed by Aboriginal volunteers and the legal work by a panel of lawyers working with the Law Society'.
corrected by providing legal advice and representation. Before he became Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam had stated in November 1972 that his objectives in this matter were ‘to ensure that Aboriginals are made equal before the law and that the Commonwealth will pay all legal costs for Aboriginals in all proceedings in all courts’. This led the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to believe that unlimited funds were available. The assumption was incorrect.

The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement was intended to supplement existing legal services and it was expected to brief lawyers from outside the Movement as they were needed. The inability of existing legal services to cater for Aborigines’ needs meant, however, that the Movement was forced to conduct an ever-increasing number of cases itself rather than directing clients to outside lawyers. The rapid expansion of the ALRM, and the need for its services, effectively meant that the supplementary role became the dominant one. Increased funding offset the financial and geographical barriers which had limited the legal assistance available to Aborigines in the past. Distance and costs still hinder the Movement’s efforts to extend legal aid to all Aborigines in the State, but ‘no-cost’ or ‘low-cost’ legal aid and the sensible provision of a bail fund have reduced the financial burden for many clients able to use the service.

Aborigines on trial no longer have to plead guilty automatically because they cannot afford to be represented. Lawful release of defendants can be obtained in order to prepare a proper case for the defence. The ALRM has even attempted to find employment for those awaiting trial or those recently released from detention. State-wide operation, involving long-distance travel, means that the frequency of visits from the Adelaide office to regional centres is restricted, but there have been improvements on the old days of ‘bush justice’ for rural and ‘traditional’ Aborigines.

The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement has not always had a tension-free existence within the Aboriginal community. The incompatibility of tribal and European laws has been apparent from the 1830s and this has created a perplexing conflict for the Movement in its dealings with traditionally-oriented persons. Indeed, the Movement found that many Aborigines from urban, rural and traditional groups were initially suspicious: ‘a lot of people identified us with the police and a government body’. The Movement recognised that a

26 ‘It was [a problem] when we first started but now they know what the Movement’s there for’ (Record of interview, 4 September 1978). The ALRM now has a better understanding of tribal situations also: it only intervenes where necessary or if called in by the elders.
27 Record of interview, 4 September 1978.
large part of this problem was psychological:
even though the idea behind the whole thing is that they are going
to be assisted by being represented by the legal Counsellor, their
whole life experience does not seem to justify that . . . they won’t trust
people enough.28
Therefore it was necessary to encourage Aborigines to use and trust
the Movement, and to reduce ignorance about the legal system. This
was achieved through lawyers’ and field officers’ contributions, by
personal experiences, and by word-of-mouth dissemination of know­
ledge about the European legal system and the role of ALRM. This
educative aspect was enhanced by successful actions of the Movement,
especially in the courts, ‘because they have to work on the basis that
justice has to be seen to be done’.29 The spread of information was
facilitated by the closeness of the Aboriginal community:
    once they got to use the service or know of someone who has used it,
    they know what its all about . . . It's well-known now, it has taken
all this time since ’72. It's well-known through the community,
throughout the Aboriginal community.
Q: Has an Aboriginal’s knowledge of European laws changed
much?
A: Yes! A lot more people, as far as we are concerned; the people we
are dealing with are a lot more aware of their rights and
responsibilities.30
While many Aborigines learned of their rights and responsibilities,
they still had to contend with the police and judicial and corrective
services which retained the prejudices of society at large. It was not
enough to tell Aborigines about the Movement: Europeans also had to
be educated. The ALRM has attempted to increase government and
public awareness of Aborigines’ difficulties within the legal system
and of the discrimination and prejudice sanctioned by society.
The relationship between the police force and Aborigines was
particularly notable for mutual hostility. As Ligertwood notes, the ALRM
hoped for and worked toward improvement. The creation of the
Aboriginal/Police Steering Committee in 1972 was a significant
achievement.31 The development in 1975 of the unique Aboriginal/
Police Liaison Committee and the distribution by the Police
Commissioner’s Office of the circular ‘PCO 354’ of 24 March 1975
containing guidelines for the conduct of police officers were further steps
forward.32 Such co-operation had never existed before. But the reforms

28 Record of interview, 13 September 1978.
29 Record of interview, 13 September 1978.
30 Record of interview, 4 September 1978.
31 Ligertwood 1975:270.
32 South Australia, Police Commissioner’s Office 1975 (hereafter PCO 354).
BEYOND TRINKETS AND BEADS

dealt more with the relationship between police and ALRM than with Aborigines in general. The police did not go out of their way to assist Aborigines. For example, the Movement had compiled a booklet of ‘rights upon arrest’ but PCO 354 noted that the ‘distribution of such printed information was dependent upon its delivery to the Police Department by the ALRM’.33 Even when it was delivered to police stations it was not always distributed to those arrested.34 There were important implications in statements such as the PCO 354 statement that ‘where and when supplies are made available . . . these instructions are to be complied with’.35 But what happened when copies were not distributed — were the acknowledged guidelines followed? The PCO 354 directive was ambiguous in parts, while the work of the Steering Committee was often subject to personality and philosophical clashes.36 These innovations were significant yet it is questionable whether they represented a real improvement in relations at the ‘grass roots’ level. PCO 354 informed all police that ‘it is not Force policy to discriminate in favour of Aborigines any more than it is to discriminate against them . . . the rules have been devised to ensure equality of treatment’.37 This equality is yet to be attained. It would seem that in 1978 police probably felt that the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement was a nuisance and an obstruction to their duties.38

Although a prime reason for establishing the Movement was the apparently excessive attention given to Aborigines by police, ALRM was not solely concerned with criminal matters. The Constitution’s objective specified that the Movement would not only attempt to provide legal aid but would also make efforts to secure legal rights for the Aboriginal community which seemed proscribed within South Australia. The Annual Report for 1976/77 noted that ‘Again and again the Council . . . discussed the need to develop the positive side of the work — the positive work of asserting the legal and social rights of Aboriginal people’.39 But the urgency of criminal cases meant that these were given priority over non-criminal matters. Jim Stanley, President in 1976/77, recalled that ‘when the Movement first started one hundred per cent of the work was in support of Aboriginal people in conflict with the police’.40 During 1974/75 civil cases temporarily became more important but the 1975/76 figures indicated another rise in the

34 Records of interview, 4 and 13 September 1978; also Anonymous 1977.
36 Record of interview, 13 September 1978.
38 Record of interview, 4 November 1978.
40 Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement 1976/77:2. Eggleston (1977:357-359) noted that the ALRM handled over 250 matters in its first year. Cases increased substantially (after a full-time field officer and solicitor were appointed) between December 1972 and March 1973 but criminal and civil cases were relatively balanced in 1973.
number of criminal cases in comparison to civil cases. The ALRM solicitors opened 639 new files in 1975/76: 65 per cent of the 483 cases handled by one solicitor and 72 per cent of the 156 cases taken by a second solicitor concerned criminal matters.\textsuperscript{41} Figures for the following year confirmed the importance of this work: the solicitors retained in 1976/77 handled 746 cases, including 543 of a criminal nature. Briefings outside the ALRM for that year consisted of 486 criminal cases and 128 non-criminal matters.\textsuperscript{42}

The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement has been responsible for a decrease in the rate of convictions against Aborigines. Ligertwood found that ‘in areas where Field Officers have worked well with the police the number of charges against Aborigines has significantly decreased’.\textsuperscript{43} An example of the Movement’s effectiveness occurred in May 1972 when thirteen Aboriginal people from Yalata reserve were charged at Nundroo, South Australia, with 121 offences ranging from assault to obscene language. When the ALRM represented the defendants most charges were dropped and convictions were recorded for only eighteen offences.\textsuperscript{44} Since ALRM was founded, sentences for convicted Aborigines have been less severe (although this may be related to changing social values in the 1970s in that Europeans have also received less severe punishment).

The ALRM has always gone beyond the role accorded to it by its Constitution and official policy statements and ministerial directives. This has generally been caused by practical necessities. Many legal problems were of a multi-faceted and complex nature involving welfare and associated issues. Thus the Movement has inevitably become involved in welfare work as an integral part of its approach to legal matters and this can affect an appraisal of the organisation’s value in the legal field \textit{per se}. The fact that ALRM has been kept busy since its inception indicates the need for the service and the overwhelmingly favourable response to it. Most clients genuinely seek aid and there have been only a few cases of people abusing the system.\textsuperscript{45} In 1976 the Commonwealth government commissioned D.O. Hay to report on the delivery of services financed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. He found little evidence of waste and concluded that in spite of administrative and financial difficulties experienced by the

\textsuperscript{41} Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement 1975/76:4, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{42} Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement 1976/77:14-18. The range of non-criminal matters included questions of civil rights, legal rights in a broad context, discriminatory legislation, ‘de facto’ discrimination, test cases on land, mineral rights and community development, matrimonial issues, workmen’s compensation, road accidents and so on.
\textsuperscript{43} Ligertwood 1975:271.
\textsuperscript{44} Measdav and Pearce 1973:14. They noted that ‘once a stand has been taken on behalf of a particular Aborigine or in a particular type of case, the police are more reluctant to proceed in future and only do so with great care’. See White 1974 for an account of the Nundroo incident.
\textsuperscript{45} Record of interview, 4 September 1978. Eggleston (1977) argued that welfare and legal issues are inextricably mixed in legal service work.
Legal Services and by the Department, the Aboriginal Legal Services have been effective in delivering aid to the Aboriginal community.\textsuperscript{46}

The ALRM has had a valuable community function to fulfil. The concept of special legal aid has been a potentially expensive but nevertheless worthwhile enterprise. The Movement has effectively represented its clients, protected their rights and appealed against unjust decisions. The objective that ‘justice should be done and be seen to be done’ is important in an immediate sense yet the ALRM should aim to go beyond this. It can act as a catalyst for reform in a broader context. It can seek to resolve the causes of the Aborigines’ predicament and not just the symptoms. This should not, of course, be a process conducted solely by Aborigines; there must be an understanding between the races, or at least a recognition of each other. Actual equality must be granted and not just stated as a theory. But legal justice alone will be insufficient. Aborigines have been the most disadvantaged group in the community and they argue that social justice is needed as well: ‘until we can get social justice, I can’t understand how you’re going to be able to improve the social status of Aboriginal people’.\textsuperscript{47} If real equality can be accompanied by dissimilar, but not separate, development then Aborigines will be accorded a more satisfactory position in society. Rowley has pointed out the ‘fallacy of assumptions that money and public service manpower can quickly solve racial and social problems’,\textsuperscript{48} but it is clear that additional finance is needed to fulfil the immediate needs of the ALRM and to enable it to look beyond these needs.

It remains to be seen whether the cycle of the last 146 years will continue in South Australia or whether a more equitable society will evolve. In the future the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement can provide a valuable means of solving this dilemma. It may achieve even greater historical significance by being the force to break the cycle which has characterised race relations in South Australia.

\textbf{THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE}

\textsuperscript{46} Hay 1976:163.
\textsuperscript{47} Record of interview, 13 September 1978.
\textsuperscript{48} Rowley 1978:2.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

— Untitled typescript dated 18 May 1972. (This document discussed the problems of Aborigines and the law, the formative stages of the ALRM, and a request for additional government funds).
— Correspondence. Undated but written 14 September 1978.
Eggleston, Elizabeth. Fear, favour or affection: Aborigines and the criminal law in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Canberra, 1976.
The Sydney Morning Herald, 29 August 1972.
ABORIGINAL HUMOUR

W.E.H. Stanner

A life by flood and field is a hard one and Aboriginal life was very hard indeed. Unknowledgeable Europeans have thought it joyless, but this was far from being the case. The Aborigine's culture was materially simple, but it was adequate to his needs; his social organisation was exceedingly complex, but it allowed him a life of great satisfaction when not too much interrupted by Europeans; we are slowly discovering that he had a rich aesthetic capacity and an interesting metaphysical conception of life and world; and I can testify from much acquaintance that he added to these a very marked sense of humour. He had, in short, fundamentally all that we have. At least he once had. He was fully equipped to meet life on even terms and, with humour, to get a little the better of it in passing. To understand and appreciate his humour is one of the best ways of rounding out an estimate of him as a human personality.

Much of what I shall say amounts in the end to a roundabout statement that the Aborigines found amusing much the same kind of things which we find amusing. In other words, we are dealing with human universals. It is therefore, perhaps, as well for me to begin by saying that there were of course major differences.

We find a certain amusement — kindly, but still amusement — in much Aboriginal custom. This is parochialism on our part, but it is well matched: the Aborigine felt (and feels) much the same way about European custom. Much of our scheme of life does not 'make sense' to him. A quick handful of things that baffle him about us, and for which he laughs at us behind our backs, would include our inexplicable passion for unremitting work; the fact that men willingly carry things when there are women to carry them; that we actually thrash small children; that we accumulate, and hold in perpetuity, stupidly large amounts of goods instead of dispersing them to gain reputation; that we have no apparent rules of marriage — I could give many such instances to show how the two schemes of living lie across each other. It is remarkable, in the circumstances, that the universals of humour show through so strongly. Sometimes, of course, all communication breaks

* The late Emeritus Professor W.E.H. Stanner identified this manuscript as the reading script for an informal talk given to the Canberra Fellowship of Australian Writers in September 1956. He intended it as an entertainment for a small circle of friends but a quarter of a century later his words have considerable historical importance as a unique anthropological account of Aboriginal humour. Professor Stanner had discussed publication with the editors but had not completed his planned revision. Mrs W.E.H. Stanner kindly gave permission for publication in the present form. Handwritten corrections on two copies of the manuscript were collated and incorporated (for example the change to past tense in the first two paragraphs) but except for capitalising the word Aborigine(s) the editors have made no further changes.

39
down, and blackfellow and European look helplessly at each other over an uncrossable frontier.

Several years ago I was making some psychological tests which required the Aborigines to repeat, days and weeks later, a story I had told them. Many of the recalls broke down, the blacks being overcome with laughter at the same point. The story was about two brothers who had quarrelled over a girl. As the blacks began to tell me how one brother sneaked up and killed the other with one stroke of a stick, their self-control failed and they hooted with mirth. Something about the idea seemed to them quite risible. I suspect it may have been the connotation of romantic love. I saw too late that this kind of theme suffused the story. Sexual passion of course they know and understand, but the sensible thing for Aboriginal brothers to do if they like the same girl is to share her favours. The cult of romantic love, as far as they can comprehend it, possibly seems to them a sort of lunacy, very much as some of us look on tooth avulsion, the cutting of bodily cicatrices, or widow-strangling.

You will appreciate the difficulties. I have to rule out of my discussion a certain amount of Aboriginal humour since it rests on — indeed, only makes sense within — the context of their own outlook and customs. But I cannot go to the other extreme and propound a general theory of laughter to account for what I call ‘the universals’. One of the most distinguished of anthropologists, Bronislaw Malinowski, once said that ‘anthropology is the science of the sense of humour’. That is not the impression you would derive from a study of the standard texts. I am simply telling the truth when I say that humour is not a subject to which the discipline of anthropology has given much serious thought. I find this, on reflection, a curious matter. I know of only one anthropologist who has written on the subject — Professor Ralph Piddington, an Australian; but he did so when he was still a professional psychologist; and he subsequently had to go to New Zealand. The only ‘theory’ I have is that ‘humour’, as we ordinarily use the word, is a way of looking at things or situations. The ‘humorousness’ is first of all in the things. Laughter is a sign of acknowledgment, our way of relating ourselves to ‘humorousness’.

The underlying philosophy of Aboriginal humour is likely, therefore, to baffle a European mind. This is not surprising. The philosophy of all humour is baffling. If it were not, we should not have had wit likened by Burton to ‘the rust of the soul’, and we should not have had Ogden Nash advising us that

It is better in the long run to possess an abscess or a tumour than to possess a sense of humour.

There are, I know, delicate souls to whom the idea of fingering the anatomy of humour is repulsive. The anatomy of melancholy, they feel, is a fit subject. Men’s sadness has a wistful fascination. It also often allows the sad to live very comfortably writing about their almost incommunicable sensibility. But they make an examination of why men laugh seem to be a
ABORIGINAL HUMOUR

kind of morbid hepatoscopy. True, there is some kind of affinity between
humour and tragedy, an affinity which is almost too painful for many minds
to wish to know too much about.

O, unseen jest, inscrutable, invisible,
As a nose on a man’s face, or a weathercock on a steeple.
But this is no reason for not studying it. Everyone who thinks or reads is
aware of the affinity, and of a strangely concealed antinomy within it. What is
it, Horace asked, that forbids us to speak the truth, laughingly? The paradox
which humour forms with truth is one of man’s oldest insights into himself
and his situation. I think I have recognized its evidences among the
Aborigines.

An Aborigine of whom I was fond was once discussing with me the
extinction of his tribe. He was being dispassionate about it — I thought too
dispasionate, for the area was one in which there had been violence,
betrayal and murder. Many of his countrymen had been translated to a
higher place by European marksmanship, disease and the genial use of
strychnine in the waterholes. My old man had observed much and had
thought much. Perhaps because his thoughts went too deep for words,
perhaps only from good manners — his were impeccable — he parried my
questions and showed some amusement. I said: ‘In a few years you will all be
dead; there will be no blackfellows left; but you laugh about it. Why do you
laugh? I see nothing amusing’. He would not be drawn for some time.
Finally he said, ‘Bye-and-bye, altogether blackfellow dead. Plenty white
man sit-down this country. White man walkabout longa bush. Him losim
himself longa bush. Altogether white man try findim. Altogether white man
Blackfeller dead’. And he smiled sardonically.

This is Lancashire humour. ‘Wit’s nowt, till it’s dearbou’. There is a good
deal of dear-bought Aboriginal humour, pointing to their insight into the
‘gravity concealed behind the jest’ and also to their courage to proceed,
nevertheless, to make the jest. At a mission station which I know, a certain
conflict was raging. The issue was between what the old Aborigines wanted to
do, and what God wanted them to do. The matter was not at all clear to the
Aborigines. They knew what they wanted. They were being told what God
wanted. They thought there was something second-hand about the
instructions. The questions turned on how their instructor knew what God
wanted. Some said the clergyman just knew; others that he only said he
knew; both these unreasonable theories failed to convince them. One man
finally volunteered: ‘might-be him got telephone longa God’. I was
appealed to. Did he or didn’t he? I said I did not know, but that I had always
found the clergyman truthful. I also said that he had a lot of tea, sugar, flour
and tobacco. This argument appealed to the Aborigines. One of them said:
‘That man, him good man, y’know. Him got plenty everything. Plenty
tucker. Plenty wian [i.e. tobacco — the word also means human excrement].
Plenty mouth [i.e. words]. Might be him got plenty savvy-belong-himself
[i.e. private knowledge or wisdom]. I said that this might be so. I was then asked if I had a telephone. I said that I had; but it was only a small one. ‘You savvy belong God?’ I was asked. I said that I sometimes thought I heard a voice, a long way away. I was asked what the voice said. I replied that I could not quite make out the words. My inquisitor said: ‘that’s what blackfeller reckon’. I then said: ‘Well, what are you going to do?’ My friend said: ‘Today, tobacco. Sunday, God’. We both laughed.

I do not feel called upon, or indeed competent, to prove anything to you about Aboriginal humour. I can simply narrate some of the things they say, describe some of the things they laugh at, and add a sort of minimum glossary. The main point to keep in mind is that the Aboriginal scene is in most respects the universal scene. Humour wears familiar garments, but with a twist all its own. There is coarse buffoonery, salacity, punning, practical joking, and all the rest. I would not mention them were it not that a perfectly intelligent European once asked me, quite seriously, if the Aborigines laughed and cried ‘just like other people’. It made me wonder what image of savage life many Europeans can possibly have in mind to suggest such idiocies. The hammer on the thumb, the slip on banana peel, the sudden loss of dignity — all these ‘reversals’, the basis of a universal class of humour, evoke much the same responses among the Aborigines as among Europeans. Perhaps the principle is carried a little far: I have seen Aborigines roaring with laughter at another chased by a crocodile, or at an old man trying to climb a slippery tree to escape a rogue buffalo. The sentiments of pity and compassion are, on the whole, a little on the weak side, a fact which itself requires another kind of explanation. But it is not of this level of humour that, I imagine, you would wish me to speak. I myself would rather try to bring out, if I can, the aspect of humour we call wit, which Aristotle described as ‘cultured insolence’. For it is a capacity which the Aborigines unmistakably have. At least, we can recognize a certain pawky vein of wit in spite of the surrounding crudity.

I was once building a bush hut as a shelter from the wet season. I was putting on the ridge-pole when an old blackfellow called out to me to come down. He said that he would fix it himself. He was twice my age and very authoritative in his manner to me, as Aborigines frequently are when they know you well. He said: ‘Bye-and-bye you fall down, breakim leg’. I told him to mind his own business. ‘You’, I replied, ‘have one leg in the grave anyway’. ‘No matter me’, he said, ‘you come down, like I bin tellem you. Straightaway. Me blackfellow. Supposim you fall down, breakim leg, every policeman from Darwin race up longa this country, chasim up altogether blackfellow. Full up humbug. Plenty trouble. You come down. Straightaway’.

Then there was the day my old bush friend Charlie Dargie and I went hunting. We did not see even a lizard all day. We came home out of spirits and rather grumpy. Charlie suddenly found a solution. ‘We’ll go and shoot a barramundi’, he said. The barramundi is the best-eating fish in Australian
ABORIGINAL HUMOUR

waters, fresh, salt or mineral. We walked some miles to Bamboo Creek, a slack tributary of the Daly River, where barramundi often lie sunning themselves a foot below the surface. We stood on the top of the steep jungle-covered bank and sought our quarry. Charlie soon pointed to a fine fat fish faintly swishing near the surface. He shot like a Bisley marksman, swift and true, and the stunned fish floated to the top. We had it, in imagination, almost sizzling in the pan when a shrill ‘yackai’ came from a nearby bush and the face of Jarawak, a Madngella man, thrust out. ‘What-the-matter you Charlie’, he cried, ‘you try stealim fish belonga me?’ We had touched the depths. To shoot a caught fish tied up to the bank by a string. Jarawak saw that the tale spread. The blacks never forgot it. To this day, half a lifetime later, they still laugh. When I go fishing with them, someone is sure to say in an innocent tone: ‘You got plenty bullet?’

On a nearby station they were breaking-in some rough colts in the horse-yard. One mankiller threw every stockman and black ‘stockboy’ on the place until only the manager and Jacky were left. The manager said: ‘Come on, Jacky, your turn now’. Jacky, slouched on the top rail, looked in turn at the wild-eyed and perspiring colt, at his dishevelled companions, and back at the colt. He seemed lost in thought. ‘Well, come on’, the manager snapped. Jacky gave him an under-the-eyebrows look and said ‘No-more’, which meant ‘nothing doing’. He then added: ‘You better go first-time, boss. Plenty more white man. Blackfellows getting scarce round here just now’.

But these, after all, are but episodes. They may make us smile but they do not necessarily help us to understand what humour is. There is another and very distinct kind of Aboriginal humour which, I think, to some extent does: it can be spoken of as ‘formal’ humour. That is to say, there are certain well-known situations in Aboriginal life which, in their understanding, have to be signalized and resolved by a kind of banter, half-serious, half-humorous.

I shall draw a parallel with a situation which we will recognize in European life. Among a close company of friends, some occasion arises - say, the departure of one person to live elsewhere, or a retirement from active life - and the occasion is thought appropriate for him to be entertained in a rather formal way: perhaps a presentation, perhaps a dinner. At such times a certain embarrassment is felt, especially perhaps among men. Their feelings, and what they are met to do, lie a little across each other: it is embarrassing to appear sentimental, but they desire and are expected to express emotion; they wish and are expected to say words of praise but feel self-conscious about doing so. Their relations with the guest of honour are ‘ambivalent’: they are pulled one way, pushed another. Not uncommonly, men solve this little social problem by a very patent conversion. They praise, but they praise mockingly; they show affection, but tinge it with malice; they make use of what we may call the venomous endearments; they may use bad, even indecent language. Everyone knows and understands the convention and few take it amiss. No one ‘means’ to be really offensive. It is a symbolic way of dealing with ambivalence.
When an Aborigine meets his wife’s brother, he utters (in certain tribes I know) a very odd expletive sound (by forcing air between his lips) — a sound which, to European ears, is extraordinarily vulgar. He will sit or stand some distance away and, in a high-pitched voice (quite unlike the voice he ordinarily uses) will call out a long series of insinuating epithets, vulgarities and sometimes obscenities about his wife’s brother. They are our ‘venomous endearments’. He doesn’t ‘mean’ any of them. The tone and pitch of voice show this — both are consciously stylized. A chorus of appreciative laughter from the audience, if he thinks of something really outrageous, also shows the presence of formal convention. The men often say astonishing things. The anthropologist calls this the ‘joking-relationship’.

The ambivalence here comes from the common interest of the two men in one woman, wife to one and sister to the other. The Aborigines have the idea that there is something embarrassing in such a relationship between men. Anthropologists are not agreed as to the precise way in which they should describe or examine the nature of the embarrassment. I mention it for several reasons. One is to show the common form, between Aborigines and Europeans, of dealing with a comparable situation. Among the Aborigines, to avoid showing embarrassment, the two men act as if they were not being embarrassed. They pretend there is a different kind of situation. They act as if to say that two men who can say such things about each other cannot possibly be embarrassed. As if no tension could possibly exist between them — for, look! — they are laughing at each other, taking liberties with each other. As if the relationship had no ambivalence at all. The symbolisms — laughter and mock hostility intermingled — are the means of this as if solution. They are expressive and symbolic means of dealing socially with feelings resting on ambivalence.

Anthropologists are so used now to this kind of custom that they tend to take it for granted: there is a good and, on the whole, satisfying theory about it; but the theory explains everything except the humour — the ‘joking’ in the ‘joking-relationship’.

The embarrassment a man feels in the presence of his wife’s brother is a modified form of a man’s feelings toward his wife’s mother. The Aborigines have the idea that there is something excessively shameful, even dangerous, in the mother-in-law relation. An Aborigine cannot bring himself to mention her name. If he is compelled to do so, it seems to cause him an agony of embarrassment. Since he cannot avoid all reference to her, he speaks of her as aiyanimbi, which means ‘the stinging hornet’. But he goes out of his way to avoid meeting her. If by chance the two encounter one another on the same path, the man makes a wide detour through the bush. In camp, he always faces away from her. He sleeps on the opposite side of the camp circle, as far away as possible. He never hands things to her direct, but always through a third person. If some emergency compels him to say something to her, he turns away and shouts at the top of his voice. This is a way of suggesting
that, in actuality, the two are really an immense distance apart, and are not having any close relationship.

The analysis of what lies behind this ‘shame’ relationship (as it is called by the blacks) is very complex and it concerns my paper only in one respect: the connection between humour and shame in the particular relationships mentioned. The only way to make the connection is to consider briefly the use of expressive symbols or signs in human affairs. It is part of the vastly larger question of the communication of meaning by signs of all kinds. The expressive symbols or signs I am speaking of are those which communicate states of feeling about the ‘significance’ of things, as the Aborigines have been taught to see them.

They regard the bullroarer as so ‘significant’ that they treat it with something very close to ‘reverence’. They keep its whereabouts a secret; they smear it with human blood; they give it names which only initiated men can hear; they kill women who stray near its hiding place; when they show it on formal occasions they sing certain songs, dance certain dances, use certain musical forms, and wear certain bodily decorations which call forth their highest capacity for visual, plastic and mimetic art. The word ‘reverence’ is a piece of shorthand for all these activities. We have to interpret the activities as ‘signs’ symbolic of the significance, worth or value which the Aborigines attribute to the bullroarer. The bullroarer itself is a sign of almost ineffable and immensely significant meanings: it ‘points beyond itself’, as any sign or symbol does. What it points to is the metaphysic of The Dreaming. The Aborigines use songs, dances, music, secrecy and so on as a means to convey and express their grasp of these larger significances.

Anything — literally anything — which can stand for, or represent, or designate, or indicate something about something else can be a ‘sign’: a mark, a word, a number, a gesture. The signs are gathered up into different kinds of systems. The Aborigines have hit on the device of using aesthetic means — song, music, dancing, art — as one sign-system for expressing their grasp of and attitudes to the significance of the most important things in their life. This will seem strange only to people of other cultures who use different types of symbolic idiom.

If one studies Aboriginal life closely, one can see several gradations in their system of significances. Some things are treated with ‘reverence’; other things with ‘respect’, i.e. something less than reverence; other things with ‘formality’, i.e. a little less than respect. It is possible to range the signs in a perfectly logical series, strange though the idiom may seem to be to Europeans. The ‘strangeness’ simply means we are too wrapped up in our own sign-languages. The signs are simply the means of outward expression of inward sentiments in some convenient idiom. The Aboriginal idiom is part of the mystery of their past. The peculiar significances they see in particular things and situations are not always easy to grasp.
Some of the signs, or sign vehicles — music, songs, dances, art — belong, as I have said, to an aesthetic order. But bodily movements and gestures of all kinds can also be used. Laughter and the display of shame, in the circumstances I have described, are both ‘signs’ belonging to the large and complex class I have outlined.

By laughing at the brother-in-law, and showing shame in the presence of the mother-in-law, the Aborigines are expressing attitudes or sentiments towards the relationships in which they stand, not towards the individual persons themselves. And the expressions are formalized, i.e. they are socially stylized, set in form and pattern for everyone. But they belong to what we may call the negative signs — that is, they fit in the same group as the signs which indicate grief, disrespect, irreverence, informality, hostility and so forth.

The signs used between brothers-in-law are, as I have said, a mixture — partly signs of hostility, partly signs of levity and jocularity. The signs of hostility (criticism, depreciation, mocking) can be traced to the fact that an Aborigine is never fully reconciled to the loss of his sister by marriage. But women have to marry and, because of exogamy, they have to marry out of the group; they have to be ‘lost’ to their brothers; yet brothers cannot forget. The only solution is to do what the blacks do. They couple two sets of signs — one positive (good humour), one negative (hostility) and, in a way, reverse them. They use humour to convey hostility. The symbolic signs are turned, as it were, inside out.

This custom is a perfect model for the analysis of much that lies within humour. If we study the ‘humour’ of things or situations, we will see that it nearly always consists of some incongruity, paradox, contrast or antinomy which our minds perceive. Hobbes said the perception was due to the passion he called ‘sudden glory’. Leigh Hunt saw the nature of humour in ‘the clash and concealment of incongruities, the meeting of extremes around a corner’. One revealing epigram was attributed to Montesquieu: ‘wit consists in knowing the resemblance of things which differ and the difference of things which are alike’. The ‘humour’ of things is external to us: laughter is the sign we make towards what is humorous. It reconciles us to the humorous. But the sign can also be put to many other uses — some of them ambivalent, some hostile. European life is filled with equivalents of the Aboriginal ‘joking-relationships’. We are all familiar with the humour — at least with the smile or laugh — of malice, of inner superiority, of condescension, of concealed hatred, of emotional falsity. So are the Aborigines. They can laugh and dance on the graves of their enemies about as well as we can. The only difference between us is that we make the savagery worse by doing so politely. Behind the ghastly ‘social’ smile is the image of the painted savage.

I have mentioned Horace’s question: ‘What is it that forbids us to speak the truth, laughingly?’ There are clearly some truths, personal
and social, which we cannot ignore, cannot solve by laughter — even insincere laughter — and from which we can only turn away.

The 'shame' felt between an Aboriginal mother-in-law and her son-in-law — felt actually on both sides — is, I think, of this kind. It has not, in my opinion, a sexual basis, although this has been attributed as a reason. I do not think any single reason can be attributed. But if I were asked to find a single reason I would say that in my opinion it is due to the fact that, typically, a brother's loss is less than a mother's loss. One can find other possible explanations from Aboriginal society, but this comes somewhere near the heart of it, in the sociological sense — i.e. the sense in which one looks for 'general' explanations. A mother-in-law and son-in-law simply cannot come to terms, yet if they are to associate they must come to terms. Brothers-in-law can: the tie between each man and the girl is a degree less intense than between mother and girl. The Aborigines draw an arbitrary line and 'formalize' the relation of mother-in-law and son-in-law by actually preventing the characteristic clash which often disfigures the counterpart relation in European society. I would argue that the Aborigines tag the relation with the sign of 'shame' because the relation is irreconcilable, and that this is why they 'show' shame. The brother-in-law relation is irreconcilable, but it can be solved partly by an *as if* fiction — the fiction that no hostility exists; partly by humour; and partly because it has to be solved. By rule brothers-in-law exchange sisters in marriage, by convention they are trading partners, and (in a small community) they have many other necessary relations, being of the same sex and usually of the same age. But the mother-in-law and son-in-law relation is thought wholly irreconcilable. Its solution, however, has a logically equivalent form: there is an *as if* fiction — the fiction that they never really meet; complete avoidance so that in most circumstances they do not meet; and a logically compatible sign, 'shame', if they do meet.

This has taken me rather far afield. But only in a sense, for it reveals as clearly as any situation can part of the social background in which any humour is to be understood. When Tacitus said that 'a bitter jest that comes too near the truth leaves a sharp sting behind' he may not have had marriage in mind; but our mother-in-law jokes are truly his 'bitter jests'. Understood, they tell us something very important about the inward anatomy of 'the humorous' and the logic as well as the pathos of the human sign-language. I must not be supposed to be attacking marriage; I think that every family should have one; but, as Radcliffe-Brown used to say, one aspect of every marriage is, fundamentally, that it is an act of hostility. It creates for one set of people a kind of incongruity — inevitable loss, lamented loss; for another set a different incongruity — the eating and being eaten in marriage. I simply point out that the Aborigines recognize one of these situations more clearly than we do. Our means of dealing with the incongruities is to raise the value of marriage itself, or
each person in it, to so high a value that the 'signs' — respect, love, obedience, deference, dignity — ennoble it. Our way of dealing with the perpetual antinomy of love and not-love within marriage is to make it a sacrament, as permanent as baptism, though not as one-sided; as necessary as penance, though not as just; and as final as extreme unction. The Aborigines do not sacramentalize marriage: but they formalize a different set of relations from those which we stress. Their sign-system avoids one set of clashes and treats another set with humour, as far as possible.

Luckily, laughter does not only antagonize: it also ameliorates and heals. It is the good angel of enmity. I think the story that best illustrates the gift is that of one of my Aboriginal companions who had an unconquerable passion for tinned milk. In other ways he was thoroughly honest, but he stole milk at every opportunity. His conscience pricked him, especially as he had the complete freedom of my few bush stores, but he always lost his battle. I gloomily watched a carefully hoarded case of milk dwindle day by day. Now and then it irritated me, but I usually took the view that he was just a crazy mixed-up septuagenarian. Finally I found every tin except one empty, but all carefully repacked in the case. I looked at him and he looked at me. We both knew it was a crisis. I gave him the last tin, and with the true feeling which makes the martyr, said: 'Go on, you like milk'. He took it in silence (there is no Aboriginal word for thank-you and perhaps anyway it would hardly have been appropriate) and with great dignity. Then he went to the case of empty tins, and held up one or two so that I could see the tiny holes through which he had sucked them dry. He held one tin speculatively, poked at the hole, looked across at me, and said: 'Rust'.

I shall close with the story of a patrol — one of Stanner's Irregulars — in the war. The patrol was out looking for Japanese visitors. The men were crossing a plain and the track skirted a vast cluster of termite pillars in such a way as to create the illusion that the plain was in two halves, one covered with ant-beds, the other wholly bare. A soldier asked the detachment commander for the explanation. He could think of none, and put the question to an Aboriginal tracker. 'What name, boss?' the blackfellow asked in a puzzled way, not catching the drift of the question. The officer said: 'You puttim eye longa track'. 'Yowai [all right, will do, O.K.], said the tracker, all discipline, 'I puttim eye'. 'Now you look', said the officer, 'One side, nothing ant-bed. Ain't it?' 'Yowai', agreed the tracker. 'Now you look nother-one side. Million ant-bed. Ain't it?' 'Yowai', agreed the tracker. 'Well', enquired the officer, 'how did it all come about? Why were there so many ant-beds on one side and none on the other?' The tracker grinned impishly. 'That side', he said, gesturing magnificently towards the ant-beds, 'plenty ants. That side, no ants'. This seems to fit Pope's 'midwives' phrase: concerning humour — a perfect conception, and an easy delivery.
A number of Pintubi and Pintubi-related people in central Australia and the Western Desert have vivid memories of the first aircraft which visited their country more than half a century ago. This paper records such reminiscences by seven elderly people, gives brief biographical notes on their lives, and assembles documentary evidence on those early flights to date this unique Aboriginal perspective on Australian history.

A number of European explorers had passed through these areas in the late nineteenth century but apparently impinged very little for their visits are not now recalled by Aborigines. The only European now remembered was Joe Brown, possibly the greatest of all Australian bushmen, who travelled widely in the Western Desert between the 1890s and 1920s and was known to the Pintubi people as Kunki.

The first aeroplane to visit Alice Springs landed on 26 September 1921. This event was described to me on 26 March 1982 by Mrs Ada M. Wade:

That first plane, it landed right near Billygoat Hill, just this [south] side. We were very interested. The Aborigines, though, they cleared out. They reckoned it was a Devil-Devil or something. We went down and had a look at it. The Aborigines, they threw their spears at it, some of them.

They went bush. They didn’t come back. Not ’til after it was gone. There was only one other flight to Alice Springs prior to 1929, in which year several aeroplanes flew over parts of central Australia and most landed at Alice Springs. It was not until 1930, however, that Aborigines in remote areas of central Australia and the Western Desert experienced aeroplanes and for many it was their first direct contact with the wider Australian society. Two ventures brought aircraft to central Australia in the early 1930s: the first Mackay Aerial Survey Expedition and the Central Australian Gold Company Expedition, known at the time as the C.A.G.E. Expedition but later as the Lasseter Expedition.

The Mackay Expedition’s task was to map from the air those large tracts of the arid regions of Australia that had not been travelled over by Gregory, Giles, Forrest, Warburton and other explorers of the 1850s-1890s. In addition, the expedition aimed to correct existing maps. The detailed planning and

---

1 Pintubi is a term used by several tribes or linguistic groupings of Aborigines. All of the people mentioned in this paper use this term and more specific names to identify their local groups. Individual identifications are given in brief biographical notes in Appendix 1.
2 See Giles 1872, Tietkens 1889, Carnegie 1897.
3 A biography of Brown is in preparation.
4 Connellan 1979:1.
5 In 1921 Billygoat Hill was on the outskirts of Alice Springs; today it is in the centre of the town. See Appendix 1, No.1, for biographical information on Mrs Wade.
efficiency of the operation, together with the fact that there were no mishaps, meant that the achievements were ‘solid’ rather than spectacular. In contrast, the Lasseter Expedition provided headline news for a year. Its purpose was to locate a gold reef so rich that it might well lift Australia out of the Great Depression. However, almost every misfortune that could have befallen the party did so: there were problems with vehicles, and four aeroplanes either crashed, made forced landings or were damaged in landings. Search parties had to be sent to look for lost airmen. Finally Lasseter died while travelling alone, having believed, as his diary revealed, that he had re-located the fabulous reef. These events ensured that Lasseter's lost gold reef was to become an Australian legend.

Both the Mackay and the Lasseter Expeditions used the Ilpili (Ilbilba, Ilbilla) area in the Ehrenberg Range as a base camp. Ilpili means ‘tea-tree’ and was a key spring at times of stress for the Aborigines. The Pintubi and Pintubi-related people who visited Ilpili at this time do not usually differentiate today between the two expeditions, and there is a strong tendency for both to be associated with the Lasseter Expedition as Lasseter's name has most often been mentioned by enquirers during the last fifty years. However, a close study of the evidence indicates that the Mackay Expedition had the greatest impact as it was the first group to establish a camp at Ilpili.

The 1930 Mackay Expedition

In 1930 Australia was in the grip of what was to become known as The Great Depression and there was little money to spend on expeditions. For this reason Donald Mackay's aerial survey work, planned and organized at great personal expense, was hailed by the Federal Government of the day as an act of faith in Australia. Leading politicians farewelled the survey party, including Prime Minister Scullin who stated in his address:

[Mr Mackay] is anxious to assist in the development of civil aviation. . . .
The expedition has been thoroughly organised. A white man with more than 70 camels, 11 natives, 2 Afghans, and an interpreter left Alice Springs almost two months ago to prepare a base camp. The wireless services, navigating and surveying photography, and other aspects of the expedition are all in the hands of experts, and the two pilots who will accompany the expedition have already jointly flown half a million miles without injury to any passenger. 7

The advance party included R.H. (Bob) Buck as leader; P. Johns, labourer; Ali Mahomet and Mahomet Bux, cameleers; and probably a man called Joe Oliver as labourer and cook. The Aborigines with the advance party included the interpreter Hawkeye, his wife Tuma on the kitchen staff, 'Tom' and Melinda also on the kitchen staff, Button, Ludwig and Ralph as

labourers and Hawkeye Junior, a small boy. The expedition proper consisted of the leader Donald Mackay; the pilots, Captains Frank Neale and H.B. Hussey; H.K. Love, radio operator; Commander H.T. Bennett, navigator and surveyor-photographer; P.C. Morrison, journalist, and Joe Oliver (?) who acted as cook for this party as well.8

The advance party left in two groups. Bob Buck with several Aborigines, left Alice Springs on Easter Monday. In addition to establishing a camp, this party had to clear an aerodrome and enlarge the well. A week or so later a larger train of 60 camels, in charge of two picturesque old Afghans, Ali Mahomet and Mahomet Bux, left with the main stores, travelling hard, sometimes far into the night, for 19 days to traverse the country . . . 9

It appears that one of the Afghans travelled ahead of the main camel train, probably to check the water supply, and reached Ilpili a short time ahead of Bob Buck.

Ray Inkamala Tjampitjinpa,10 who was approximately ten years old at the time, recalls that he was one of a group of Aborigines camped about half a mile away from the spring, on soft soil beside the creek-bed that runs out from Ilpili. The people were living on rock wallaby, euro, kangaroo, bush turkey, goanna, and the occasional perenti lizard. Mai-i dampers, food-cakes made from the seeds of wokati (munyeroo), and a plant known as yirria were also eaten. He remembers that camels (which no-one in the group had seen previously) suddenly appeared in the distance. A strange figure (strange because a person wearing clothes had also never been seen) was leading them on foot. Ray and the other Aborigines, who had not been sighted by the distant mamu (devils), were very frightened. They climbed up a stony ridge to the west of the main spring and hid behind rocks. From there they watched the approach of the Afghan and the string of about ten camels.

The movements of the strange figure were carefully observed. He tracked the dingo pad to the water like a man, walked like a man and looked about him like a man: the Pintubi decided that he must be human. They noticed that he had power over the mamu, and was unafraid of them. After much close attention it was decided that some of the group should go down and approach close to the strange beings, to determine the nature of the man and beasts.

The Afghan proved friendly, and soon everyone emerged from his or her place of concealment. Ray recalls that his name was Ali-m'omit [Ali Mahomet] and remembers being intrigued by his clothing, the foot-
prints left by his shoes, and the features of the man. The camels, initially thought to be *mamu* and thus feared, were at the same time fascinating. Soon the Pintubi had tasted their first damper made from flour, lollies (boiled sweets kept in a tin), tea, sugar and treacle. They had seen their first drums of petrol and oil.\(^1\)

Shortly afterwards, all members of the advance parties were encamped at Ilpili. The fuel dump contained 2,000 gallons of petrol and supplies of lubricating oil; a camping area with a surrounding brushwood fence was established; and Bob Buck organised the clearing of land for an aerodrome 700 yards long.\(^2\)

Ray Tjampitjinpa and George Tjangala\(^3\) remember how Pintubi men helped to clear the strip; both — as much as young boys can be imagined assisting — took part in the work. They and indeed several other senior people recall Bob Buck, and some also remember Ali Mahomet. Ray recalled two other men. The first was ‘Mutati’ (the Pintubi pronunciation of ‘Musty’), an Afghan who had a very long string of camels loaded with petrol, oil and food supplies. ‘Mutati’ (probably Mahomet Bux) was known to be the father’s brother of Musty Civic [Sadikh] who today resides in Alice Springs and is well known at Papunya, where he once lived. The other man was ‘Mr Oliver’, who helped clear the aerodrome; this presumably was the cook ‘Joe’ mentioned in contemporary newspaper reports.\(^4\)

Hawkeye, the Luritja interpreter, had been important in gaining the cooperation of the Pintubi. Bob Buck now used him to tell the Ilpili people: ‘of the coming of two great birds from the bellies of which more white men would come’. Flour, sugar and items of clothing were distributed to maintain the goodwill of the Aborigines.\(^5\) All the grass, trees and shrubs that had been cleared to make the aerodrome had been stacked in various heaps about the perimeter of the strip and were to be used as signal smokes for the aeroplanes. The first heap to be fired produced a comic incident:

When Bob [Buck] put up his first smoke on . . . the earliest possible date of our arrival, it was answered north, south, east and west by Aborigines fires, which would have made it impossible for the machines to pick up the correct position of the aerodrome. ‘Bob’ sent frantic messages through black interpreters to all the country around that no fires must be lit until the great birds came.\(^6\)

It might be expected that the activities of the advance party would have attracted the attention and interest of these dispersed Aboriginal groups, and initially this was so. However, an incident shortly after the party’s arrival

\(^{11}\) Information from Ray Tjampitjinpa (recorded in R.G. Kimber Journal 16 March 1978 and recalled details). This and other Aboriginal accounts ascribe these events to the better-known Lasseter Expedition yet provide circumstantial details fitting documentary evidence about the prior Mackay Expedition.

\(^{12}\) *The Australasian*, 2 August 1930.

\(^{13}\) See Appendix 1, No.5.


\(^{15}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 1930; *The Australasian*, 2 August 1930.

\(^{16}\) *The Australasian*, 2 August 1930.
caused many Aborigines to leave. Joe, the cook, . . . was sent out to Ilbilba before the others to prepare a landing ground. Joe, according to Mr Mackay, had the best command of bush language he has ever heard, and also a hasty temper. Unfortunately, the day he arrived an irate husband chastised his wife by hitting her on the head with a nulla, and prodding her none too gently with a spear. Joe lost his temper, and the things he did were so fearsome that most of the local inhabitants departed, and, while the expedition was there, remained absent.17

Among those who remained at Ilpili were the families whose members included Ray Tjampitjinpa and Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula.18 For both, their first memory of an aeroplane was the sound of its approach coming from the east. The only sound they knew that resembled the noise that came from the sky was thunder, yet this noise was not thunder. Then they saw the aeroplane. Walawurru! A giant eaglehawk! Men fitted spears to their woomeras. It came in fast, circled high and then swooped down. Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula saw his father and a few other men throw spears. Then all were running! Ray and Johnny ran in fear; everyone ran in fear.19 They ‘took to their heels’, wrote Commander Bennett, ‘and were not seen again for nearly three weeks’.20

The sound of the giant eagle, its great size and threatening shadow terrified those who fled and news of the event spread like wildfire. There were some, however, who had been far enough away not to be terrified, only amazed and cautiously interested. They had seen the bird disappearing behind the range, obviously intending to land.21 Tapa Tapa Tjangala had been even further away. He had wondered at a far-distant shining speck in the sky, and later discovered that it had been sunlight gleaming on the metal of the banking aeroplane; he also heard how the Pintubi men had thrown spears, and then run for their lives.22

Interest eventually overcame fear, and the Pintubi began to return to Ilpili where they examined the manufactured items. Then they dispersed again. Charlie Tjararu Tjungurrayi, at the time a small boy camped at the Kintore Range with his mother, well recalls his father’s return from the Ehrenbergs:

---

17 The Brisbane Courier, 1 July 1930.
18 See Appendix 1, No.4.
19 Ray Tjampitjinpa, R.G. Kimber Journal, 16 March 1978; various accounts 1974-82, Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula. Marshall-Stoneking 1981:42-43 gives a similar account but inaccurately. The dating of the event as 1966 assumes that Tjupurrula was middle-aged instead of a small boy; the information on sites is inaccurate and Johnny was not transported to Papunya by aeroplane as stated.
20 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 July 1937.
22 R.G. Kimber Journal, 4 March 1982; it is possible that Tapa Tapa Tjangala glimpsed an aeroplane of a later flight. See Appendix 1, No.5.
Although he told of flour, tea and sugar, and treacle, it was not these that impressed him so much as waru. He drew attention to the waru (matches) he had carried back to Kintore, then with family watching but unable to comprehend why the little sticks were waru [fire-sticks], he struck one and touched it to a tuft of spinifex. Charlie recalled them all stepping back in fear. How could this be waru? It was mamu [devil] of some kind. His father had not sawed back-and-forth with a woomera edge [to make fire by the traditional friction method]. Thus, as Charlie reiterated, it was waru (matches) that had first impressed. The family had then moved on to Ilpili, and later Hermannsburg, and had come to know the other goods of the white man — most particularly flour, and tea-and-sugar.23

It is quite possible that Charlie Tjararu Tjungurrayi’s father had experience of both the Mackay and the Lasseter expeditions.

The Lasseter Expedition

Fred Blakeley was the leader of the Lasseter Expedition, other initial members being ‘Harry Lasseter, guide; George Sutherland, prospector and miner; Philip Taylor, engineer; Captain Blakiston-Houston, explorer; and E.H. Coote, pilot’.24 In addition Fred Colson, bushman and transport-driver, Mickey, the Aboriginal guide, Pat Hall, pilot, and Paul Johns, camel-man and dogger, were to join the party on the way to or at Ilpili. Later, among others involved who are significant to this paper, were the pilots Pittendrigh and Hamre who made a forced landing near Haasts Bluff, and Flight-lieutenant Eaton, leader of the search party for these two men.25

The fact that the Thornycroft truck of the Lasseter Expedition used the camel track of the supply teams of the Mackay Expedition as a guide to Ilpili, and occupied the Mackay camp-site and aerodrome only two months after the Mackay Expedition’s departure,26 helps explain why Pintubi have tended to link the two ventures in their reminiscences of the expeditions. The expeditions are also associated because Bob Buck was involved with both. He was in charge of the building of the Mackay camp and aerodrome, and he also sent his camel team out to Ilpili while the Lasseter Expedition was based there. The purpose of this journey was to retrieve all empty fuel drums: these were later cut and flattened to provide an iron roof and walls for his home. Furthermore, Bob Buck’s name is inextricably linked with Lasseter’s as it was he who located Lasseter’s body in its shallow Aboriginal-made grave, and who brought in to Alice Springs news and evidence of his death.26 The major reason why the two expeditions are confused appears to be the fact

23 _R.G. Kimber Journal, 4 March 1982, quoted directly. See Appendix 1, No.6._
25 See Coote 1934:Chapters 21-25, Blakeley 1972:Chapters 3-4, for details of personnel.
26 Blakeley 1972:45,57.
that prospectors, miners, adventurers, writers, and film and television producers questioning Pintubi between 1931 and 1982 have only been interested in the legend of Lasseter and his supposed gold reef and not Mackay's survey.

It seems probable that after the departure of the Mackay Expedition from Ilpili the Pintubi had moved east to the Mount Liebig area, towards the country from which they perceived the European food supplies, clothing and other interesting items had come. Blakeley recorded what appears to have been an unusual concentration of Aborigines near the mountain:

We were late in starting out...[in the] morning, and the going was slow, but a most remarkable sight appeared just after we started. From every direction we could see smoke-signals going up. Before we started there was not a sign of one, but as soon as the old Thorny [Thornycroft truck] got into low gear, up they went.28

Accounts confirming that Pintubi observed the truck and the men of Lasseter’s Expedition have been given to me several times between 1972 and 1982 by George Tjangala and Nosepeg Tjupurrula.29 It seems that in the Mt Liebig area and further west they remained out of sight, content merely to watch the progress of the vehicle. As a result, it was not until the members of this Expedition were encamped at Ilpili that the Europeans first saw Aborigines. The first Aboriginal to visit the camp was a man wearing an old hat who asked for food and matches. A little later his wife came forward and, as she also asked for matches, Blakeley reasonably assumed that they previously had been in contact with the Mackay Expedition.30

During a probe to the west the party was kept under surveillance by Aborigines although they again did not show themselves. Blakeley commented that they ‘did a lot of talking on the air with their smokes’.31 Upon the Expedition’s return to Ilpili, the old Aboriginal who had first met them again asked for various goods, and soon other families came to visit the camp. Their interest in Europeans and their manufactured goods was reciprocated by Blakeley’s interest in their reactions:

They showed more interest in Phil [Taylor] than any of us; he had on shorts and sports singlet and was burnt almost as dark as these fellows. They walked around him and had a good look at him. Phil had a fair amount of black hair on his legs and this seemed to cause much amusement; they had clean legs and only very few hairs on the chest... .

We had a tin of lollies, so gave the kiddies a handful each. I had to show them what they were for. I took one and put it in my mouth and the little fellow slowly put one in his mouth, at the same time watching his

28 Blakeley 1972:45.
29 See Appendix 1, No.7. Nosepeg Tjupurrula’s name became nationally known in the 1950s-1960s through the Pintubi patrols. Details of his character and work are given by Long (1964) and Lockwood (1964).
30 Blakeley 1972:77-79.
father. It was great to see the surprised look on his face when he tasted it...

The big truck seemed to fascinate...[the boys]. They were interested in the wheels and both put their fingers in the tread of the tyres and yabbered away to each other, the big chap pointing to the ground. The little chap would poke his finger in the imprint and both looked along the track of the wheels, pointing the way the truck had come. They had evidently seen our tracks and seemed quite delighted to find out what made the track. Phil lifted the bonnet to show them the engine, but the part they were interested in was the bonnet's movement, it seemed to please them. Blakeley also recorded Pintubi reactions to the lighting of matches, the use of looking glass and spoons, and their first experiences with boiling water and the taste of sandwiches.

It seems clear that the Pintubi made a rapid and fearless adjustment to European visitors and their manufactured goods. At least some of the assembled Pintubi had become familiar with aeroplanes while at Ipiipi during the previous expedition's visit. Given the number and wide range of the Mackay Expedition's flights it is probable that most Pintubi had now seen at least one aeroplane fly overhead, and that all now understood they need not be afraid. This seems to be the most reasonable explanation of the fact that neither Coote nor Blakeley reported signs of fear when the Lasseter Expedition's aeroplane finally arrived at Ipiipi. The day after the arrival of a very small aeroplane, Hall (the pilot while Coote was recuperating from an injury) and Lasseter flew a south-westerly search course. Blakeley was not at all impressed with the irresponsible 'fun' Hall and Lasseter had with Aborigines they sighted during the flight. The fearful Aboriginal reaction, whether they had previously had close experience of aeroplanes or not, is entirely understandable. Blakeley wrote:

[We] found where two natives had been sitting near a fire. Harry [Lasseter] had told us about this fire and how he and Hall had seen two natives standing near it. Hall had banked sharply and swooped down low over them, and the wind from the plane covered them with dust and sand. I could see their tracks in the sand where they had run, and I could also see how close the plane had come down over them — their footprints were almost blown out for about 50 yards.

A much friendlier attitude prevailed when, a little later, Coote flew to Hermannsburg Mission:

Hundreds of black children were lined along the aerodrome, and, as I gave the engine short bursts, taxi-ing to the mooring pegs, they ran in all directions. When the engine was just ticking over they came up to the machine again.

33 Blakeley 1972:110-111; see also Coote 1954:160-161 for Aboriginal interest in a rocket and matches.
34 Coote 1954:146-147; Blakeley 1972:127-128.
35 Blakeley 1972:133-134.
The final note on the ill-fated Lasseter Expedition, insofar as it concerns the Ilpili area, occurred when Pittendrigh and Hamre had to make a forced landing north of Haasts Bluff. Flight-lieutenant Eaton, in charge of the search for the missing airmen, made full use of all Aboriginal reports of sightings. The key early evidence, quoted by Coote, was:

that a wild tribe of natives had seen an aeroplane, 20/12/30, flying in a westerly direction eight miles north of Ilbilla . . . , and that a black boy from Hermannsberg [sic] had seen the aircraft at about 1230 hours on 20/12/30 at a spot about 12 miles E.S.E. of Ilbilla flying in an E.N.E. direction . . . . From this information it was decided that Pittendrigh had failed to locate Ilbilla, had made a wide circle around the Ehrenberg Range, and had then endeavoured to return to Alice Springs via outward route, had run out of petrol, and had been forced to land in some spot in MacDonnell Ranges north of Hermannsburg.

Other Aboriginal evidence from Hermannsburg and Haasts Bluff areas confirmed this information and the search was successful, the men being rescued on 11 January 1931.37

The Consequences of Contact

Some Pintubi-related people had migrated to the Hermannsburg and Haasts Bluff area in 1929 following the severe drought that prevailed for most of the 1920s. This migration, and reports of the Mackay Aerial Survey Expedition in mid-1930, prompted two very different groups of outsiders to make contact with Pintubi of the Ehrenberg Range. Firstly there were missionaries from Hermannsburg in 1930 and 1931,39 and secondly, members of the Adelaide University Expedition in 1932.40 These two groups, for entirely different reasons, promoted the migration of Pintubi eastwards to the Mt. Liebig area.

Following the Lasseter Expedition wild rumours drew prospectors to the Ehrenberg Range, with disastrous consequences for Pintubi remaining in this region. In 1934 the Aborigines' Friends' Association noted that:

The Ilbilla tribe of Aborigines . . . are greatly perturbed and distressed

37 Coote 1934:239-246 and end-map.
38 Albrecht 1977:46-47.
over the loss of their supply of fresh water, caused, it is considered, by
some prospectors searching for Lasseter's lost reef interfering with their
ancient soak . . . rendering it useless.41

The late Paddy Tucker, prospector and dogger, told me that he had arrived
at Ilpili shortly after prospectors had dynamited the spring; it was 1932 and
for a short but critical time the spring dried up. In 1934 the Rev. F.W.
Albrecht wrote:

The disappearance of the Ilbilla waterhole has been a severe blow to the
tribe concerned, as the bushtucker of the natives, growing in the
Ehrenberg Ranges, is no longer available to the Aborigines, nor can
Ilbilla be any longer used as a resting place for people going through to
the Kintore Ranges. The loss of the soak has entailed much hardship on
the natives concerned, who are now at their wits' end to know where to
locate themselves. It is considered that the best course to pursue under
the circumstances is to seek for a reserve for this tribe, in the vicinity of
Haasts Bluff, so as to secure for these Aborigines a supply of food and
water.42

In 1937 grazing licences in the area were revoked and in 1941 the Haasts
Bluff Aboriginal Reserve was declared.43

It is clear, therefore, that the arrival of aeroplanes and the support
services associated with them, dramatic though these were at the time,
merely presaged greater change in the lives of the people of the Ehrenberg
Range. It was not until 1976 that government support for the 'homeland
movement' at last enabled regular travel back to Ilpili by Ray Tjampitjinpa,
Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula, George Tjangala, Nosepeg Tjupurrula and
other Pintubi people who had been both encouraged and forced to migrate
eastwards in the early 1930s.44

ALICE SPRINGS, N.T.

41 Aborigines' Friends Association 1934.
43 Albrecht 1977:54.
44 See the B.B.C. film 'Desert Dreamers', filmed in October 1976 and released in 1977, for
a record of an important homeland visit prior to the provision of facilities.
APPENDIX 1

Biographical Notes

1. Mrs Ada M. Wade was born at Arltunga, 100 km east of Alice Springs, in 1909. She is fluent in the Aranda language and recalls with pride her Welsh father and Arabana-descent mother. Her great-grandmother was an Arabana woman from the Peake area of South Australia. The Smith family left Arltunga when Ada's father died in 1914 and, driving their flock of goats before them, walked in to Alice Springs. Ada and several brothers and sisters, including Jean (Mrs Jack Shaw), were among the first students at the first school in Alice Springs, where their mother Mrs Topsy Smith was assistant to Mrs Ida Standley, the teacher.

2. Ray Inkamala Tjampitjinpa is the key owner figure for Ilpili. He was born c.1920. Both his parents died as a result of introduced diseases when he was still a boy, and he was adopted by an Inkamala family at Hermannsburg. He has an excellent knowledge of the Ilpili area and country for a radius of almost 100 km. He is a Maiatjara man, but also uses the term Mautjara.

3. George Tjangala has very strong ties with the Kintore Range country, west of the Ehrenberg Range. He was born c.1920 and has an excellent knowledge of his own Maiatjara country as well as Winanpa country to the south and Maiatjara to the north.

4. Johnny Warangula Tjupurrula strongly differentiates Maiatjara country from that of the 'inside' Pintubi further west. Although he has strong ties with Ilpili, his key country is approximately 80 km north-westerly from the Ehrenberg Range. He has exceptional knowledge of the country north of the Ehrenbergs because although he migrated east to Hermannsburg in the early 1930s, he travelled extensively by camel in his own country thereafter. He was born c.1922.

5. Old Tapa Tapa Tjangala was born c.1912, and is the senior man of authority in the Kintore Range. He is a Maiatjara man, with strong ties with the Winanpa and Pintubi people. He has an exceptional knowledge of traditional ways and is an ever-cheerful person, a wonderful character.

6. Charlie Tjararu Tjungurravi was born c.1924. His home country is in the Buck Hills-Dovers Hills area of Western Australia, west of the Ehrenberg Range. He identifies himself as a Pintubi, but has strong ties with the Maiatjara of the Kintore Range. He is a man of great intelligence with a ready wit, and a strong interest in traditional ways.

7. Nosepeg Tjupurrula was born c.1914 near Lake Macdonald, on the West Australian/Northern Territory border. He is of the Winanpa tribe, and for 30 years has been one of the great ritual leaders of the Pintubi and Pintubi-related Aborigines. His knowledge of Aboriginal lore and law is unrivalled, and he has travelled as widely in the Western Desert as any other living person.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clune, Frank Last of the Australian explorers: the story of Donald Mackay. Sydney, 1942.
Connellan, E.J. Brief history of aviation in the Northern Territory. MS dated 20 May 1979. Copy held in Central Australian Aviation Museum files, Alice Springs, N.T.
Coote, Errol Hell's airport: the key to Lasseter's gold reef. Sydney, 1934.
Clune, Frank Last of the Australian explorers: the story of Donald Mackay. Sydney, 1942.
Connelan, E.J. Brief history of aviation in the Northern Territory. MS dated 20 May 1979. Copy held in Central Australian Aviation Museum files, Alice Springs, N.T.
Giles, Ernest. Australia twice traversed: the romance of exploration, being a narrative compiled from the journals of five exploring expeditions into and through Central South Australia, and Western Australia, from 1872 to 1876. Sydney, 1979 (1st published 1889).


In April 1929 two airmen, Keith Anderson and Bobby Hitchcock, died of thirst next to their airplane ‘Kookaburra’ at 17°56'S 131°58'E in the Northern Territory. They had hurriedly flown from Sydney in their Westland Widgeon II to join the massive air search the authorities had mounted to locate the famous aviator Charles Kingsford Smith, who had made a forced landing in the Kimberley and was out of radio contact. On the leg from Alice Springs to Wyndham, Anderson and Hitchcock, old friends of Kingsford Smith, made a forced landing and perished. Their bodies were buried at the site by Flight-Lieutenant Charles Eaton’s expedition soon afterward. In May-June 1929 another expedition using a Thornycroft truck recovered the bodies, but their scheme to tow the aeroplane back to an area of European settlement proved impossible. For almost fifty years ‘Kookaburra’ was considered ‘lost’ by non-Aboriginal Australians but in 1978 the airframe was at last recovered after being located by a well-publicised expedition organised by the entrepreneur Dick Smith.¹

The whereabouts of ‘Kookaburra’ had remained a puzzle despite a series of expeditions by European Australians. Evidence for this uncertainty is provided by two official map names, Kookaburra and Eaton,² both outside the area they are meant to commemorate. Kookaburra is too far to the southeast, while Eaton is south of the forced landing site although it extends into the southern limits of areas covered during searches for the aircraft, including the contemporary search conducted by Charles Eaton.

Indeed, because of the featureless terrain and the demanding nature of travel across it the experienced bushmen and surveyors in V.T. O’Brien’s party, who chanced upon ‘Kookaburra’ on 24 July 1961, were unable to record the location of the aircraft accurately enough to pinpoint the site for subsequent searches — two of which included O’Brien himself.³

Yet Aborigines who had assisted both the Eaton and Thornycroft expeditions were well acquainted with the locality and this knowledge was preserved within specific Aboriginal communities. The role of Aborigines in the various expeditions which sought to find and recover the ‘Kookaburra’ has received scant attention in published accounts. Their efforts and their knowledge are the subject of this paper.

¹ See Davis 1980: Chapters 10 and 11.
² These 1:100,000 sheet names are employed by the Division of National Mapping.
The Thornycroft Expedition reach 'Kookaburra', 1929

Top: Bobby (Bob Jangala); Tommy (Midjanu Jampijinpa);
Hughie (Hughie Jampijinpa); Jack (Jarramirnti Jangari)

Below: Frank Nottle, Les Miles, Stan Cawood and Constable Murray

Photography by W.N. Berg, courtesy of Dick Smith
'KOOKABURRA'

The 'Kookaburra' site lies in the northeastern Tanami semi-desert, a region familiar to neighbouring Aborigines for millennia. It has thus been far less remote to man than, say, Antarctica. Yet the Tanami has been consistently avoided by all but the most skilled or adventurous non-Aborigines. In 1929 Lester Brain reported that 'only two white men' had previously 'penetrated the huge tract of desert country in which Anderson and Hitchcock crashed... One travelled for over 100 miles without a sign of water'.

In May 1896 Nat Buchanan had travelled westward some 55km to the south of the Kookaburra site, and experienced a long dry stage. He may well be the traveller Brain had in mind. Buchanan's sole companion, without whose guidance his trip would have been impossible, was a Warumungu man called Jack from the Tennant Creek area. At a place some seventy miles northwest of Tennant Creek Buchanan forced Jack to continue westward from the country he knew well — and subsequently encountered fewer waters. The journal of the explorer A.A. Davidson for 3 June 1900 records that he found native twine and an oval piece of ochre in a tree at Duck Pond waterhole on the Winnecke Creek floodout. Davidson's closest approach was thus some 110km southwest of the 'Kookaburra' site.

The main European incursion prior to 1929 was a 1909 traverse of the region by Dr Charles Chewings' party, which was also dependent on Aboriginal guides. Chewings travelled northwest from Barrow Creek, on the Overland Telegraph Line between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, to the headwaters of the Victoria River. His journal records Aboriginal occupation along the entire route, which also lay to the southwest of the 'Kookaburra' site.

Lester Brain himself was involved in an aerial search of the area in 1925-26 but probably his route was to the southwest, closer to Tanami. The closest European approach to the 'Kookaburra' site was a little-known railway survey conducted from May to 5 November 1928. Surveyor A.M. Nash and his party crossed the northern side of the area, travelling westward. Their route lay about 65km north of the locality where 'Kookaburra' landed the following year. In fact the Thornycroft party which recovered the bodies followed the survey line for '101.5 miles', from where it crosses the Murranji Track 60 km from Newcastle Waters.

5 Buchanan 1896.
6 Davidson 1905:25.
7 Duck Pond's name is Miririnyungu, as mentioned by Engineer Jack in evidence quoted below. It is the place referred to by Tindale (1974:222) as 'Morerinju on Winnecke Creek'.
8 Chewings 1930.
10 Berg 1929:2.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1982 6:1

ABORIGINES AND THE 'KOOKABURRA' IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA.
The 'mystery' of the lost aircraft 'Kookaburra' has attracted much public interest in the last twenty years. Some of the many unsuccessful searches are described in Davis' book about Dick Smith's successful expedition, based on information supplied by Smith.\(^{11}\) Searches not mentioned by Davis include an attempt made by the RAAF during a 1971 exercise. Acting on information in O'Brien's record of his 1961 discovery of the aeroplane, an RAAF aircraft searched the area without success.\(^ {12}\) In September 1971, John Kenna financed an aerial search with Jim Thomas of Alice Springs as pilot, and Ian Pirie and Ron Flavel. They followed O'Brien's 1961 wheel tracks, which were still clearly visible across the drought-stricken area. In July 1972, Jim Thomas flew Hitchcock's sister and her daughter over the area. The wheel tracks seen the previous year were no longer clear, owing to significant falls of rain. Harry Mason, a geologist with Otto Exploration, made an aerial search again with pilot Jim Thomas in May 1977. By this time, the only place where O'Brien's 1961 tracks were visible was the Renehan Ridges area.\(^ {13}\)

In 1974 an overland expedition was made by the writer Joyce Batty and Ron and Helen Riding, all of Adelaide. This party enlisted Aboriginal guides, two men from Hooker Creek named Jimmy Blanket (a 'chief tracker' assisting police) and Victor. From a sinkhole\(^ {14}\) somewhere to the east of Hooker Creek their route went 40 km southeast, then about 8 km to the east to skirt around dense growths of turpentine bush. Hindsight suggests that they were off to the south of 'Kookaburra'.

The ground searches mentioned by Davis involved different people, namely Vern O'Brien who 'participated in another search in 1974', and John Haslett who 'led five people with three vehicles into the desert'.\(^ {15}\) A Darwin group, including Vern O'Brien and John Haslett, 'went into the desert at the expense of those participating', after 'initial reconnaissance flights ... provided, free of any charge, by Mr E.C. Osgood of Arnhem Air Charters P/L'.\(^ {16}\)

The search for 'Kookaburra' exemplifies a heroic theme which recurs in historical records of European exploration of this continent: newcomers aiming to conquer a hostile environment see themselves as pitted against

---

\(^ {11}\) See also Commonwealth of Australia 1929, Berg 1929, Haslett 1978, 1979 and Anon. 1979.


\(^ {13}\) Personal communication, Jim Thomas to R.G. Kimber.

\(^ {14}\) 'Kookaburra flight remembered in S.A.', *Centralian Advocate* 19 April 1979:9. Joyce Batty (personal communication, 27 May 1981) comments that 'The blowhole pictured and described by Smith in his book is not the same we found. "Our" blowhole was cylindrical, and further south ... the number of artifacts around the vicinity proves the locality was an important place for the Aborigines. Numerous chipped stone fragments, including white quartz, weathered grinding "dish" and stones ... nearby we found a tree from which wood for a boomerang had been recently cut'.

\(^ {15}\) Davis 1980:115-6. Haslett 1978:6 believes that the 1974 search vehicles 'had passed the wreck site by only a few hundred metres.'

the land in a test of individual endurance. This attitude is typified by searchers' statements that they are not going to 'let the desert beat them'. This point of view has been coupled with a curious blindness about the knowledge possessed by Aboriginal inhabitants, very apparent in Davis' summary of the 'Kookaburra' expeditions. Recent searches for the 'lost' aircraft made little use of Aboriginal navigational knowledge. Indeed, none of the four Aborigines who had guided the Thornycroft expedition was ever consulted.

Those four appear in a photograph taken in front of the Kookaburra (see plate 1). When I showed this photograph to men now living at Elliott in the Northern Territory, they immediately identified the man second from the right as 'old Hughie', confirming the caption 'Hughie'. The reference is to Hughiejampijinpa, who died aged in his seventies on 19 September 1976. He was the father of Hughie Jackson Jangala, current president of the Kulumindini Progress Association at Elliott. The three other men were also recognised when I prompted those interviewed with the names given in the caption: Bob, Tommy and Jack. Tommy is Midjanu Jampijinpa, also known as Long Tommy or Tracker Tommy, who was born about 1903 and who I had met at Elliott before his death there in June 1978. He had been interviewed at Elliott by researchers Neil Chadwick and Ken Hale (both in 1966-67), and Peter Read (on 10 August 1977). Bob’s subsection was Jangala, and his ngurlu (matrilineal social totem) was yimiyaka. Jangari (Japangardi) was the subsection of Jack (Jarramirnti).

Three Aboriginal stockmen who were part of Eaton's ground party just prior to the Thornycroft expedition appear in another photograph, which is not sufficiently clear to allow positive identification. However, the names of two of them, Daylight and Sambo, are given by Davis. Joyce Batty met Sambo at Wave Hill in 1976:

He is known as Brisbane Sambo, on account of having travelled from Queensland to Wave Hill Station with pastoral inspector Mr Moray. I talked at length with Sambo, he had total recall of his participation in the journey to locate Kookaburra, even numbering horses, site of departure. He is a very important person in this story. .

Dandy Danbayarri Jimija of Daguragu (Wattie Creek), a son of one of Eaton’s guides, has recorded his father’s tales of helping Europeans make the first trip to the site. He can describe the route and some incidents (including a report that they were guided over the last section by messages

17 Expedition photographs, originally published in The Daily Guardian on 28 June 1929, are reproduced in Davis 1980:95,87,28.
18 Aboriginal Population Record, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Tennant Creek. I am grateful to Mrs E. van Maarseveen for assistance with that Record.
20 Read and Read 1978:238-240, 259-266.
21 Joyce Batty, personal communication 27 May 1981.
dropped from a scouting aeroplane) presumably recounted to him by his father.\textsuperscript{22}

At least seven Aboriginal men visited the 'Kookaburra' site with the first two parties to reach it, and thus had firsthand knowledge of its location. The unique nature of the two trips, together with Aboriginal concern for precise memory of geography and itineraries (accurately preserved in community memories by public re-telling and cross-referencing to Dreaming\textsuperscript{23} tracks), would have ensured that knowledge of the location of 'Kookaburra' spread quickly through surrounding Aboriginal communities and was retained.

Thus it is not surprising that the Aborigines still use the location of 'Kookaburra' as a reference point when giving the locations of places in the area, or, alternatively, can locate the 'Kookaburra' site with respect to their named places. In particular, the following places have been mentioned to me\textsuperscript{24} in connexion with the site, often referred to as 'where that early days aeroplane fell down': Jardamalyamalya (a soakage); Pininyina (a soakage); Yirikilyikilyi; and Jakali-rawurr (a waterhole with gum trees).

The linguist Patrick McConvell has summarised other Aborigines' reports that the site was not far from 'Kuyukuyuka (a billabong on a bend in Cattle Creek) which was the setting-off place for an old “bush road” from there eastward to Jikaya (Lake Woods, along the west of the Stuart Highway south of Elliott'). This route may well be the one shown to 'Greenhide Sam' Johnson, manager of Wave Hill Station, by two Aboriginal guides late in the nineteenth century. They came mustering cattle directly across to the Overland Telegraph Line at Tomkinson Creek, south of Lake Woods.\textsuperscript{25}

In Aboriginal terms, the area is known for the Dreaming tracks in the area, of which three important ones are:\textsuperscript{26}

Jurntakal (Giant death adder) — travels south-eastward to the south of the *Kookaburra* site, and continues along the trend of the sandhills to west of Banka Banka Station.

Wampana (Western hare wallaby) — travels northward, having left Lajamanu initially travelling eastward, and turning in Lawurrpa area.

\textsuperscript{22} About March 1979 Dandy Danbayarri told his story of Eaton's expedition to Norman McNair, a linguist working at Kalkaringi (Wave Hill Settlement). I am grateful to McNair for playing me the recording and interpreting relevant parts (it is entirely in the Gurindji (Kuurrinyji) language).

\textsuperscript{23} David Lewis' study of navigational powers of Western Desert men led him to appreciate that 'in physical orientation the spiritual world, manifested in terrestrial sacred sites and Dreaming tracks, would appear to be the primary reference' (Lewis 1976:253).

\textsuperscript{24} Personal interviews, 1979-81.

\textsuperscript{25} McConvell's one-page sketch 'Camel road to Elliott', prepared from information supplied by Splinter Tunkulyanu and others. C. Hemphill's letter 'Central Australian Exploration', *Adelaide Observer*, 4 April 1901:27, column 1.

\textsuperscript{26} See McConvell 1976, Nash 1980. Evidence on these Dreamings was heard in a recent traditional land claim (Aboriginal Land Commission 1980, especially for the days of 1, 2 and 4 November 1980).
Warlu (Fire) — travels north-westward, along line of sandridges (in direction of prevailing wind); meets another Fire and makes Warlujarrajarra, the large open grass plain at Cattle Creek.

The area was one of the last havens in Australia for Aborigines continuing a nomadic life. J.W Bleakley noted after his visit to Wave Hill in the second half of 1928 that:

The only areas of any extent, where now it can be said that natives' hunting rounds have not been encroached upon, are Arnhem Land, ... the desert country east of the Tanami gold-fields and the large reserve... in the south-western corner of Central Australia.27

W.E.H. Stanner, who had begun research in the vicinity of Tennant Creek and Wave Hill station in mid-1934, reported in February 1935 that Aboriginal local organisation had been disrupted in all the tribes with which he made contact, but:

There is still an area, however in which the local organization, and apparently all other aspects of tribal life, are in all probability intact. This area is roughly west of the overland telegraph line between Barrow Creek and Newcastle Waters, south of Wave Hill and east of Tanami and Gordon Downs. This corresponds roughly with the Central Australian desert, and is inhabited by the Warramulla and other tribes. If it is possible I hope to touch this area later in the year, by working down from Wave Hill to Gordon Downs and Escape Creek.28

Stanner was not able to make that trip, but there is sufficient documentation about the area for us to be sure that it was inhabited.

The question of Aboriginal territorial affiliation in any tract of country is a difficult one, particularly in this semi-desert country which was shared by many groups. Tindale's map29 places his uncertain boundary between the Mudbura and the little-known Bingongina through the 'Kookaburra' area. Patrick McConvell has done the most intensive documentation of Wave Hill and adjacent areas. When working as a linguist at Daguragu (Wattie Creek) in the mid-1970s, he prepared a map,30 necessarily quite approximate, about locations in the semi-desert. The 'Kookaburra' site would be placed in Eastern Mudbura territory, close to that of the Warlpiri, the Warlmanpa, and the Kartangarurruru, a southern Gurindji group.

What is curious, then, is the lack of success encountered by the recent expeditions which enlisted local Aboriginal help. The inherent difficulties of navigation in the area are not disputed, but of more importance is how and from whom Aboriginal assistance was sought. Enquiries were usually made

27 Bleakley 1929:33.
28 Stanner 1979:97.
29 Tindale 1974. Subsequently Tindale (personal communication) has recognised Warlmanpa rights in the area.
at Wave Hill Station or one of the camps on this station such as Daguragu (Wattie Creek) and Cattle Creek, or at Hooker Creek Settlement (now known as Lajamanu).

People making enquiries at these locations in the 1960s and 1970s would not normally have encountered men with firsthand knowledge of the 'Kookaburra', for such men were then living at Elliott or in the Tennant Creek area (especially at Warrabri Settlement, now renamed Ali-Curung). The present-day residents of Lajamanu are mainly Warlpiri moved there by the government in the 1950s from points to the south. A number of people who were in the Wave Hill area in 1929 subsequently travelled (some of them directly, on foot) to the Tennant Creek area and have continued to live there. People at Wave Hill or Hooker Creek who were offered positions as guides to the 'Kookaburra' site would presumably have jumped at the chance, to get back to their country or just to get away from life at the Settlement. They would do so in good faith since almost anyone in the local Aboriginal communities possessed at least a little knowledge of the location.

We have little idea of the Aboriginal conception of Europeans' interest in 'Kookaburra'. But it is surely relevant that the leader of the Thornycroft expedition was the infamous Mounted Constable Murray, who had played a murderous role in the Coniston Massacre ten months earlier. News of the killings quickly reached a group of Warlpiri who had not long before walked from the lower Lander to Wave Hill; anxiety about the aftermath of the massacres caused them to delay by several years their decision to leave Wave Hill, which they had only intended to visit briefly. Presumably Constable Murray's visit alarmed the Aboriginal community at Newcastle Waters, where he recruited four Aboriginal guides. Murray's treatment of them when the Thornycroft expedition was following the tracks of Eaton's horses was later described by a participant, Les Miles:

We were on the move at 7 o'clock retracing our track back for nine miles where we found Eaton's horses had branched off in a N-W direction. Here Constable Murray had a lot of trouble with the trackers, they wanted to desert us, Murray had to take the drastic measure of threatening them with his revolver before they would continue on. They were far from friendly for the rest of the day and we had to watch them closely in case they turned on us.

31 This refers to the events of August 1928 around Coniston station and the Lander and Hanson Rivers, all to the south and south-east of the Kookaburra site. See Hartwig 1960, Read and Japaljarri 1978, Langdon and Robertson 1978.
32 This group is called the Warlmala by Read and Japaljarri, corresponding to Stanner's Warramulla. The term has been recorded by anthropologists as applying to a (geographically based) division of the Warlpiri. The Warlpiri term *warrmarla* at Yuendumu has the meaning 'warriors'.
33 See Aboriginal Land Commission 1980 (particularly the testimony of Engineer Jack, Tuesday 28 October 1980), and 1982.
34 Read and Japaljarri 1978.
35 Quoted by Davis 1980:86; not mentioned by Berg 1929.
A contemporary account by another participant, W.N. Berg, did not mention this incident but reported that the four Aboriginal men on the Thornycroft expedition were greatly disturbed by the exhumation of the aviators' bodies at the site:

The blacks, who had not known the nature of our expedition until they reached the plane, were filled with superstitious terror of the dead, and that night they slept between two guardian fires, close to our camp, instead of some distance off, as usual.36 Moreover, on the return journey Constable Murray took custody of an Aboriginal named Willroberta Jack south of Tennant Creek and led him on a neck chain to Alice Springs to be tried for the murder of pastoralist Harry Henty. He was acquitted because Henty had stolen his wife.37 Tales of Murray’s injustice are still remembered.

It is becoming harder to discover details of the events of 1929, since the generation of men who were involved firsthand is passing away. Stan Cawood is still living in Cairns, but Charles Eaton died on 12 November 1979,38 and Lester Brain died after a car accident in October 1980.39 None of the Aborigines who went right to the site is alive.40 However, Aborigines who were young at the time, and at one remove from visiting the site, still live at surrounding communities. For instance, Blind Alec Jupurrula remembers the Eaton expedition as he accompanied it part of the way.41 And his longtime associate Engineer Jack Japaljarri42 had this to say at a recent traditional land claim hearing, when giving evidence on the Wampana (western hare wallaby) country:

Q: Engineer, do you know where that Kookaburra aeroplane went down? Do you know that aeroplane that crashed out there?
A: That was a long time ago, 1929. He finish up near that Cattle Creek. He fall down, that big plane. That plane go travelling over that bush.
Q: Where were you? Out in the bush?
A: No, it was a man who been picking (?) with the country.
Q: That is that kumanjayi place? [a reference to Lawurrpa, a landmark south of the Kookaburra site]
A: Yes. Well, he been hearing that plane, its sound, just like a motor... , and that plane him been fall down along that Jardamalyamalya, and along that creek.

36 Berg 1929:18. Davis 1980:88 adds: ‘Tortured by superstition, they became increasingly agitated when a cool wind rocked the plane, causing eerie creaks in the half-light’.
38 Davis 1980:81. Joyce Batty was able to interview Eaton, and it will be interesting to see the results of a comparison of his account with the details given in Davis 1980.
40 Sambo was alive in 1976 — see earlier note. Joyce Batty (personal communication) also informs me that Les, Hitchcock’s only surviving son, died on 13 February 1981.
41 Personal communication, Ali-Curung (Warrabri), November 1980.
42 The pair contributed the text in Read and Japaljarri 1978.
Q: Can you show us where that kumanjayi place is?
A: That . . . country?
Q: Yes. Can you point it out?
A: Yes. Little bit to the south. Here's the Winnecke Creek — well, he was running across. There is a waterhole here, Mirirrinyungu. He going from Mirirrinyungu, Jijimulungu here, and Wajawanta, Kuna, Kalymyamalya. That is near Jarndamalyamalya. [indicating points on a composite 1:275,000 chart]. . .

Several points become clear. It is not possible to maintain the belief, voiced in 1929 by Lester Brain, that 'there was no habitation and that blacks rarely visited here owing to the lack of water'. Erroneous views as to the lack of traditional Aboriginal occupation in the area were aired during the publicity campaign for Davis and Smith's book. As part of his dramatisation of the European feats associated with the 'Kookaburra' saga, Smith made such remarks as 'Aborigines never went into the Tanami desert', and, talking of the site, said 'There's no water there', and 'Nearest water is 80 miles'. Why exaggerate when the facts are fascinating?

As for the availability of water, Brain himself pointed out that the sinkhole about 33km from Kookaburra was a possible source of water, and during Eaton's expedition Aboriginal stockmen found water between Jangaminji and the sinkhole. Smith's own research shows water was located near Eaton's campsite of 25 April 1929 which apparently was about a third of the way from Jangaminji to the sinkhole, 59km directly to the south of east of Jangaminji. The relevant water features marked on the 1:1,000,000 HALLS CREEK chart are Blue Lagoon, about 20km from Jangaminji, and the upper reaches of Cattle Creek, about 40km from Jangaminji and 20km from the sinkhole. It was probably Blue Lagoon that was near the campsite of 25 April 1929, as the son of one of the guides has said there was water at a place called Bluebush which was the second camp out from Wave Hill. He added that Eaton’s party's last possible water was at Jakali-rawurr, further to the southeast. Eaton testified in the 1929 inquiry that 'there was no water, so far as he could see for 45 miles (72 kilometres). He said that there were no

43 Aboriginal Land Commission 1980:685, 1 November 1980. The questioner is the counsel for the claimants, Mr Ross Howie. I have added the remarks in square brackets. It is conceivable that this memory is of another aircraft flying over the area in those years. The only other possibility known to me is Brain's earlier aerial searches, mentioned above.
44 Davis 1980:58.
45 Telephone interview with Dick Smith, broadcast by ABC Radio 'Australia all over' on Sunday morning, 12 October 1980. Smith (personal communication, 9 March 1981) informed me that '80 miles should be 80km'.
46 Davis 1980:70. For the distance, see Davis 1980:123-4, though there is a possible error of a few kilometres. Jangaminji is the standard Gurindji spelling of what some maps spell Junjimini or Chungamidgee.
47 Davis 1980:73.
48 Dandy Danbayarri, in his account to Norman McNair; see above.
animals in the area, adding: "There was one rather gruesome test of that — the bodies were not touched in any way at all." It would have been more cautious of Eaton to observe that scavenging carnivores probably had not visited the site in the seventeen or so days since the airmen's death, and that the fire they had started, which burnt out some twenty-five square kilometres around them, may have had something to do with that.

As to how often Aborigines visited the area, there is the overwhelming testimony of the number of place names and Dreaming tracks in the area, as recorded for example in the course of traditional land claims recently before the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, which point directly to occupation and use of the area all around the 'Kookaburra' site up until at least the 1930s, marginal as the region was. Only insofar as the Aboriginal occupants usually retreated to the better watered hinterlands in the drier times could one agree with Brain that 'there was no habitation'.

Europeans have removed virtually all physical traces of the events of 1929 from the Tanami: Hitchcock lies buried in a Perth cemetery, Anderson at Mosman in Sydney and the airframe of the 'Kookaburra' is now in the Central Australian Aviation Museum in Alice Springs. The name of the aeroplane and of Eaton appear on maps of the area and a cairn has been placed near the site — both typically European ways of commemorating events in the landscape. The ancient Aboriginal marking of ancestral 'events' in the landscape is still carried on in the Dreaming songs and ceremonies, even though it is unlikely that Aborigines will ever again occupy this land in the way their ancestors did. The landing of the 'Kookaburra' over fifty years ago was a new intrusion into this area which left a mark and a 'mythology' on the landscape for both Europeans and Aborigines.

PARKES, NEW SOUTH WALES

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Warlmanga, Warlpiri, Mudbura and Warumungu Land Claim. Report by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and to the Administrator of the Northern Territory. Canberra, 1982.


Berg, W.N. 'The story of the Thornycroft expedition to the centre of Australia. May-June 1929'. 16pp. [Daily Guardian, 1929?].

Buchanan, Nathaniel. 'Notes of a journey from Tennant's Creek to Sturt Creek, W.A.', South Australian Register, 10 October 1896.


O'Brien, V.T. Plan of Exploratory Survey West of Tennant Creek. (Scale 1:1,000,000. Trace 41/60.) Survey Branch, Department of Lands, Alice Springs, 1960. Revised 1961.


Plate 1: Engraving of aircraft on Warlpiri pearlshell pendant, redrawn to actual size.
THE ANATOMY OF AN AIRCRAFT: A WARLPIRI ENGRAVING

R.E. Barwick

My cover illustrations for volumes 1 to 5 of *Aboriginal History* have used motifs from Aboriginal rock art, redrawn for reproduction by offset printing. In response to Dr James Urry's request for Aboriginal renderings of aircraft, Mr R.G. Kimber of Alice Springs sent a photograph of a Warlpiri pearl-shell pendant in his possession. Warlpiri and Anmatjera Aborigines agreed that publication of this particular engraving was acceptable. The cover drawing for Volume 6 is derived from the engraving, redrawn to actual size.

When examining published studies of rock art I have been impressed by the numerous anatomical details incorporated in paintings and engravings of animal species. These details reveal the artist's acute observation of essential characteristics and in many instances enable a zoologist to make positive identification of the animal. I was struck by the possibility that this Warlpiri engraving might provide clues to a 'species'-level identification of the aircraft.

As is often the case in Aboriginal drawings of animals, the perspective of this engraving of an aircraft includes features that could be seen in both plan (in this case the underside as seen from the ground) and lateral views. A number of features are immediately obvious. The wings are square-ended and the tail is elliptical in plan form with strong rib-like cross-hatching. The slab-sided fuselage is slightly tapered and extends through the wing to an asymmetrical nose which is extended upwards as a separately-hatched area. On the lower edge of the tail a distinct finely hatched band represents an oblique view of the flat underside of the tail. The engraving offers no definitive evidence for the aircraft being either a monoplane or biplane, but the 'wing' is bordered by a hatched frame with two prominent symmetrically placed transverse bars and it is possible that the fore and aft borders of this 'wing' represent upper and lower wings and the transverse bars indicate struts connecting two wings. Above the fuselage as it passes through the wing a second finely hatched rectangle is placed close to the upper transverse bar, seemingly either a continuation of the upper fuselage hump or perhaps the usually distinct petrol tank which was located in the mid-central segment of the upper wing in early aircraft. Such a tank is seen in Tiger Moths still flying today. Similarly, the upper rectangular extension of the nose probably indicates the bank of enclosed engine cylinders typical of certain aircraft with in-line engines mounted in a 'normal' upright position. This was a characteristic of the Gypsy Moth and Cirrus Moth but later aircraft such as the Tiger Moth have a similar engine in the inverted position so that the upper extension of the engine is lost and the propeller moves higher on the nose.
PLATE 2
Before seeking information from Mr Kimber about the provenance of the engraved pendant I searched technical magazines on aircraft construction (which contain accurate scale drawings) for depictions of an aircraft which combined features apparent in the engraving: a raised nose, wing petrol tank, square-tipped wings and rounded tail. The plan and side views of a Gypsy-engined D.H. 60 'Gypsy Moth' (as shown in Plate 2) exemplified all four characteristics.

Another portion of this engraving seems to depict a crashed aircraft (see Plate 1). The tapered fuselage (showing a distinct tail fin) is cocked at an angle. A square-sided fuselage is again shown in oblique view. One frame-bordered 'wing' lying parallel to the fuselage carries a cross-hatched transverse bar within the frame. A second 'wing' extends from the fuselage at an acute angle. Both wings are tapered rather than parallel-sided, perhaps indicating damaged structures. A finely hatched narrow bar extends to the rounded tail fin. The attitude of this aircraft is typical of a forced landing: tipped over with nose buried and wings shattered so that the craft comes to rest with fuselage inverted.

Despite the inherent uncertainties of identification it seemed possible that this engraving depicted aircraft of the period when aeroplanes first flew in the Alice Springs area. I therefore searched the early records of Central Australian aviation for evidence that might confirm the anatomical clues which suggested a 'species' identification for this aeroplane. Crashes happened with some frequency in the early days when emergency landings on rough airstrips were not uncommon. For example, the first aircraft used by the Central Australian Gold Exploring Expedition, a Gypsy Moth D.H. 60 ('Golden Quest', VH-UNR) made just such a landing at Yavuv Creek, west of Papunya, in 1931.

Blakeley's posthumously-published account of this expedition describes the scene when he reached the site of Errol Coote's crash landing:

When the truck got down about two hundred yards we saw the plane. What a relief! It was however standing on its nose and upside down and forty or fifty yards off the runway, tipped up on the bank of the big creek and lying on top of a big old rabbit warren that was all big holes where the natives had been digging them out. Both wings were crumpled up.1 Blakeley's description closely matches the pendant engraving. This aircraft was later removed to Alice Springs to be replaced by a similar aeroplane ('Golden Quest II', VH-UGX) in which the original Cirrus engine was replaced by the more powerful Gypsy engine recovered from the wrecked Golden Quest I. Errol Coote's book Hell's airport includes a photograph of the wrecked Golden Quest I at Aiai Creek after it had been pulled back on to its nose and wheels for eventual removal to Alice Springs. Another

1 Blakeley 1972:69.
photograph shows Golden Quest II and a third Gypsy Moth ('Magic Carpet', VH-UJN) belonging to Bailey's Arnheim Company which was also flying in the Alice Springs area about the same time.²

Of course there can be no certainty that the aeroplane depicted in this engraving is a Gypsy Moth. Other well-known chartered aircraft were used by early aviators in the Centre: the Mackay Aerial Survey Expeditions³ of 1930-37 operated a Percival Gull, a D.H. Moth, a Monospar, a twin-engined D.H. Dragon Fly, and D.H. Puss Moths as relief planes in 1935 and 1937. This shell pendant engraving is not, however, likely to be a representation of the forced landing of 'Kookaburra' (a Westland Widgeon II) since this monoplane successfully came to rest on its wheels and was not damaged in the emergency landing.⁴ The R.A.A.F. search party led by Flight-Lieutenant Charles Eaton which located 'Kookaburra' in 1929 employed five biplanes (three of which were lost in various mishaps), but all were of the D.H.9A type.⁵ These two-seat day bombers had a blunt square radiator in the nose and lacked the raised cylinders, typical of the Cirrus Moth and Gypsy Moth, which seem to be depicted as a raised rectangular extension of the nose in this engraving.

Two more engraved pearlshell pendants depicting aircraft are located in the ethnographic collection at the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra.⁶ One example (belonging to a set of eleven 'charms' from the northwest of Western Australia) clearly shows a biplane in plan view. The fuselage is complete with cockpit and tapered propeller. Two wings, shown in plan view as crossing the upper side of the fuselage, are joined by diagonally arranged struts.⁷ This detail supports my interpretation that the bars connecting the leading and trailing edge of the 'wing' on the aircraft used for the cover illustration are a rendering of the struts which connect upper and lower wings. As in the illustrated example, crosshatching on the wings of this second engraving may indicate a ground-based observer's view of the supporting ribs visible through the translucent fabric covering when the craft is in flight. A much simpler engraving appears on a shell public pendant from the Karadjeri of northern Western Australia. In this example, collected by A.P. Elkin in 1927-28, there is no crosshatching but each half of the square-ended wing bears three diagonal striations. The propeller is shown but the parallel-sided fuselage terminates in a jagged

² Coote 1934: Plates IX, LIV.
⁵ Pentland 1978.
⁶ I am indebted to Isabel McBryde and David Kaus for drawing my attention to these examples (Institute of Anatomy Serial Nos. A-S 46-54, Accession Nos. 1183-91, received from R.H. Goddard 1948; and Serial No. A-S 9, collected by A.P. Elkin 1927-28, No. E.60).
⁷ A somewhat similar engraving (except that one wing is clearly on top of the fuselage and the second is underneath) is depicted in Plate 152 of Berndt, Berndt and Stanton (1982:143).
line ahead of where the tail should be, suggesting that this engraving may depict a crashed aircraft.

It would seem that the details of these engravings provide historical evidence of Aboriginal observations of early aircraft. R.G. Kimber\(^8\) reports that the engraved pearlshell pendant used for this cover illustration was purchased from an Alice Springs shop-keeper to whom Aborigines offered many artefacts for sale in the early 1970s. Enquiries indicated that the seller had almost certainly been an elderly Warlpiri man of Yuendumu settlement. Further enquiries of Warlpiri and Anmatjera Aborigines indicated that the individual owner had the right to make such a sale, and that this owner had probably been a senior Tjangala man who had worked at both The Granites and Tanami gold-fields. Kimber notes that the engraved designs on the reverse side of the pearlshell include depictions of a motor-vehicle. On the basis of their form, the nature of their execution and the impact that aeroplanes and motor-vehicles had in the 1930s, he concludes that these engravings date from the 1930s (possibly late 1920s) and suggests that experiences at The Granites may have influenced the artist’s depiction. His recent conversations with Aborigines suggest two other possibilities in identifying the ‘crashed’ aircraft in this pearlshell design. One is ‘Kookaburra’ (discussed above). The other is an aircraft first mentioned to Kimber about 1976, and cited again when Warlpiri and Anmatjera discussed publication of the cover illustration. Kimber’s understanding is that parts — or most — of this aeroplane still exist in the Tanami area and that it was almost certainly involved in a crash.

In the 1930s aeroplanes fell out of the skies almost as often as they stayed up. Kimber accepts my proposal of the Gypsy Moth D.H. 60 as a ‘likely’ identification of the aircraft depicted in a portion of this engraving. After half a century both memories and written records of the majority of crashes and aerial searches in central Australia are blurred. All we know with certainty is that the artist who laboriously incised this pearlshell used keen observation and the artistic conventions of his own society to make an enduring record of a phenomenon which was new and important in the history of this region.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

---

\(^8\) I am most grateful to R.G. Kimber for his helpful comments (personal communication).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Alan Atkinson  The ethics of conquest, 1786  82
Norman B. Tindale  A South Australian looks at some beginnings of archaeological research in Australia  93
Adam Shoemaker  Aboriginal creative writing: a survey to 1981  111
Fay Gale  Community involvement and academic response: the University of Adelaide Aboriginal Research Centre  130
Laurie Parkes and Diane Barwick  Beginning a national Aboriginal biographical register at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies  135
Jennifer Laycock  The Elkin Papers: a brief description and guide to the collection  139
Rosslyn Fraser  A guide to selected Commonwealth archives (Canberra and Darwin) relating to Aborigines  142

REVIEWS  149

Ward McNally. Aborigines, artefacts and anguish (Ronald M. Berndt); Tulo Gordon and John Haviland. MILBI Aboriginal tales from Queensland's Endeavour River (Genevieve Bell); Dulcie Levitt. Plants and people (Phyllis Nicholson); Ronald Lampert. The great Kartan mystery (Paul Mellars); Josephine Flood. The moth hunters (Sylvia J. Hallam); Elaine Godden and Jutta Malnic. Rock paintings of Aboriginal Australia (Andrée Rosenfeld); Peter Austin. A grammar of Diyari, South Australia (Luise Hercus); V. Rae Ellis. Trucanini: queen or traitor; Lyndall Ryan. The Aboriginal Tasmanians (Marilyn Lake); William McNair and Hilary Rumley. Pioneer Aboriginal mission (R.H.W. Reece); C.T. Stannage ed. A new history of Western Australia (William Ferguson); Guboo Ted Thomas. Mumbulla — spiritual — contact; Brian J. Egloff. Wreck Bay: an Aboriginal fishing community (Gretchen Poiner); Dean Jaensch and Peter Loveday eds. Under one flag (Alan Powell); Willie Thaiday. Under the Act (Eve Fesl); Elspeth Young. Tribal communities in rural areas (Gordon Briscoe); Book Notes.
THE ETHICS OF CONQUEST, 1786

Alan Atkinson

'No one paused to ponder the effect on the aborigine', writes Manning Clark, in his account of the first British settlement in Australia.¹ None of the historians who have joined with him in the long debate about the reasons for settlement has spent much time on it either.² But while it may be true that the fate of the Aborigines did not concern the British government much, there were Englishmen outside the government who not only paused to think, but took up their pens and wrote in anger on the subject. Ministers acted against a background of vigorous public opinion, in which their policies were much opposed. Some of the arguments referring to Aborigines, all dating from the autumn of 1786, appear below.

Perhaps there is some excuse for the government. In spite of all that has been written lately, it is not yet clear what they meant to do with the new territory. They possibly saw themselves taking up Botany Bay alone, which according to current information would mean trespassing very little on native rights. To begin with they certainly gave no encouragement to any free enterprise worth the name, something very unusual in the forming of British colonies. So for the time being there was no chance of the country being overrun with adventurers. Possibly they expected the Governor to maintain such absolute power as to be able to deal justly (in his own terms) with the native people simply as the need arose. Admittedly, Phillip was given nominal control over all the territory lately discovered by Captain Cook, which may be evidence of large ideas for settlement. But perhaps this should be seen as establishing nothing more than a pre-emptive claim against other Europeans, the French and the Dutch in particular.³

The announcement of the Botany Bay expedition, in September 1786, sparked off a vigorous discussion among Londoners. During the autumn it became one of the chief topics of polite — and no doubt impolite — conversation, especially among the friends of Opposition.⁴ But since Parliament was in recess these latter gentlemen had to be satisfied with the newspapers as the only medium of public debate. It was quickly taken for granted in the papers that the new colony would be similar to the old ones in America; that 'many bold adventurers will soon resort to it, to make it a desirable situation for a commercial and enterprising people'.⁵ Whatever their own intentions may have been, Ministers seem to have made no effort to contradict this idea. They seem to have thought that they could best divide and confuse the Opposition by letting them believe that Botany Bay was intended as a bustling outpost of empire. If this is in fact what Ministers hoped, they were quite right.⁶

The fate of the Aborigines was discussed within this context. It was one of a number of issues raised, but it was the first and the most strongly debated. Also, except for the question of expense, all other points were more or less connected with it. At least this is

¹ Clark 1962:72.
² Martin 1978b, Frost 1980. Since this article was written Frost has published more on this theme (1981).
⁴ Public Advertiser, 23 September 1786; Letter from 'Amicus', Morning Chronicle, 20 September 1786; Letter from 'A Friend to the Constitution', Daily Universal Register, 12 October 1786; Daily Universal Register, 18 October 1786; Letter from 'A Constant Reader', Morning Chronicle, 20 October 1786; Morning Chronicle, 28 November 1786; Public Advertiser, 28 November 1786.
⁵ Morning Chronicle, 19 October 1786.
⁶ Atkinson 1978.
ETHICS OF CONQUEST

what appears from the newspaper material which has survived. All such material relating to Aborigines is printed below. A number of contemporary newspapers have been lost so that the full debate, as it appeared in the press, is not available. But a certain conversational logic may be unravelled from the pieces that survive.¹

The decision to settle Botany Bay with convicts was taken in Cabinet on or about 18 August.² On 1 September a notice appeared in the Morning Herald, calling for shipping tenders. But it was not until 9 September that the London Chronicle, a paper which seems to have been close to Government sources, carried the first explanatory article. Comment seems to have begun in a third paper, the Morning Chronicle, on 15 September (No.1, below). This first piece of discussion was pro-government. The earliest piece of criticism comes from the Morning Chronicle in the following week (No.2). While the Morning Chronicle wrote in terms of justified invasion, the Herald's correspondent was wholly concerned with the rights, especially the territorial rights, of the native people. His protest seems to have led to a letter in the Public Advertiser (No.3) — 'It is not the intention of Government to annoy the natives' — which was in turn answered by a very sarcastic note in the same paper (No.4). On 6 October another writer in the Advertiser suggested that the new settlers might well find the Aborigines armed against invasion, and with 'expert soldiers' from France and Holland among them (No.5). This echoes the Morning Chronicle's early statement, that they were a ferocious and intrepid race (No.1). But everyone else seems to have assumed that they were quite the opposite, and that they would be entirely at the mercy of the settlers.

Attention now turned to the moral and religious character of those who made up the expedition. The convicts must have a chaplain. And they must have women equal to the number of men, or, as one writer declared, 'civil strife, and even worse consequences, will ensue'. Would they perhaps be calling at Tahiti for 'helpmates'?³ Or did the Government hope to see the male convicts 'incorporated by marriage' with the Aborigines?⁴ Either way, according to critics, the native brides must be ruined. 'A Plain Englishman', writing to the English Chronicle (No.7), called the future settlement a mission 'pro propaganda vitibus Anglicis'. There would probably be no chaplain, he thought, and the convicts would almost certainly spread English vices far and wide among the people of New Holland, Tahiti and the entire South Seas. In such an argument, full of evangelical idealism, native rights were less important than the 'honour' of Britain itself, as a Christian nation. But by now it seems to have been settled that the Aborigines could not benefit in any moral sense from having a British colony among them. This is presumably why pro-government writers had given up that part of the question altogether. Instead they had begun to concentrate on the ways in which Botany Bay might benefit the Empire.

From 12 October the General Advertiser, so far apparently silent in the debate, began to publish extracts from James Matra's proposal for the settling of New South Wales. These appeared in a number of instalments, ending on 17 October. They set out all the points now familiar to historians: the apparent availability of flax and timber, and the advantages of the place from commercial and strategic points of view. These seem to have been new ideas at least to part of the public. The Morning Chronicle had earlier stated that New Holland was 'so much out of the way of navigators' that the convicts would have no chance of coming home again: one of the chief virtues of the place. Now the same paper agreed that a colony there would be 'of great convenience... to this maritime state'.⁵ The

¹ Most of the newspapers used are in the Burney Collection in the British Library, London. I have also used the Daily Universal Register, on microfilm in the National Library, Canberra. In spite of what Ged Martin has written in his otherwise very useful article, this last paper seems to have copied much of its news on Botany Bay from its contemporaries (see Martin 1978a).
² Frost 1978:229.
³ 'Boianv Bav: Letter II, Public Advertiser, 7 October 1786.
⁴ Morning Chronicle, 31 October 1786.
⁵ 14 October 1786.
Aborigines meanwhile became a marginal issue. Their sympathisers could only demand that they be given some kind of compensation for what was to be taken from them. An understanding of this point calls for a wider political perspective.

Contemporary supporters of the Botany Bay scheme assumed that criticism came mainly from members or friends of the Parliamentary Opposition, and the newspapers confirm this. The Opposition of the time were usually referred to as the ‘Patriots’, either with pride or sarcasm. They acted within a Whiggish tradition, but some of them were beginning to behave with a new enthusiasm as if they meant to apply Whiggish ideas to all mankind. The most direct concern of Opposition was, as always, to cut down on government expenditure. But as Whigs they also aimed to defend the liberty of the subject, especially the property rights, and some were beginning to look to the rights, especially the property rights, of any national or quasi-national community that seemed to require it. Numbers of gentlemen in Opposition had, for example, sympathised with the revolutionary elite in America, and with the recent campaign in Ireland for the independence of the Dublin Parliament. These concerns meant that the Opposition drew on two main bodies of opinion: first, independent capitalists anxious to increase the scope of free enterprise, and the large monopolies chartered by government; and second, humanitarians and supporters of civil liberty, who were suspicious of any advance of government power, at home or abroad.

It was possible for these two branches of Patriot opinion to be nicely combined in a single Parliamentary campaign. A good example, at least in its early stages, was the impeachment of Warren Hastings, lately Governor of Bengal. This was mainly an attempt to expose the chartered greed of the East India Company, and its invasion of the rights, laws, and liberties of the people of India. Hastings’ impeachment was launched during the spring of 1786, while Ministers were moving towards agreement on Botany Bay, and the speeches in prosecution were due to begin when Parliament reassembled early in 1787. Edmund Burke was the prime mover.

In many ways the cause of the New Hollanders was very like that of the people of India. There was every reason that, like the Indians — the quotations are from Burke — ‘Their blood, their opinions, and the soil of their country make one consistent piece, admitting no mixture, no adulteration, no improvement; and as with the Indians, this ancient harmony could not survive the avarice of... English dominion’. One writer on Botany Bay almost echoed Burke when he said of the Aborigines that they were a people ‘who are content with the spot nature has allotted them... and whose virtue, perhaps, exceeds our capacity of thinking’ (No.9).

As with India then, humanitarians had good reason to be outraged at the prospect of their government breaking into the Aborigines’ way of life. But from a party political point of view the Botany Bay question was more difficult than the Indian one. Humanitarian Patriots might be angry, but any man who valued free enterprise might well be pleased with such an advance of empire. The East India Company’s monopoly of trade included not only India but the whole Indian and Pacific Oceans. In India the government was obviously in league with the Company, so that the impeachment of Hastings was a clear attack on Ministers. But according to the newspapers, the situation was to be different at Botany Bay. Press comment implied very clearly that the new settlement would open — a little at least — the door to the Indies, in spite of the great Company. ‘Botany-Bay and the East Indies’, as one newspaper put it, might now be considered ‘your only places for adventurers to “better their fortunes as other folks do”’.15

15 Daily Universal Register, 13 November 1786.
So by the end of October, when the newspaper debate was over, the Opposition apparently was at odds with itself, and when Parliament met in the New Year, its leaders had nothing to say. The Patriots were obviously not concerned with ‘the avarice of . . . English dominion’ as long as they could share in it themselves.

What was the logic of the humanitarians’ position? There were two legitimate ways of treating the Aborigines, short of leaving them alone. One was to deal with them as a sovereign community, just as, say, His Majesty’s government dealt with that of Louis XVI in France. But Englishmen had every reason for thinking this impossible. The Aborigines seemed to have no government that they could recognise as such, and their manners were not those of a people who knew about international relations. They were therefore not a sovereign community in any practical sense. The other alternative was to fill the gap and assume government over them. This had been implied in the procedure followed by Cook when he took possession of New South Wales in the King’s name, an act confirmed by Governor Phillip’s commission. But it did not follow that the native people were entirely subject to the whims of government. According to current thinking, their rights — both their primeval natural rights and their new rights as the King’s subjects — were to be reconciled somehow with the Royal prerogative. Thus as ‘A.Z.’ pointed out in the Morning Chronicle (No.9), William Penn’s title to land in North America had been founded not only on Royal grant but on purchase from the native people. (This was an opinion based more on ideas of equity than on strict law. Technically, only the Crown had a right to such purchase.) The same thing, he thought, should be done in New South Wales, if only one knew what to offer the people there. ‘Can any one’, wrote ‘A.Z.’, ‘form an idea of what they may be willing to accept for their ground?’

It is worth stressing that ‘A.Z.’ was not talking about making a treaty, because he had no idea of the Aborigines possessing sovereignty. But as subjects of the King, they had certain property rights. Their land was to be acquired not by treaty, but by fair — if compulsory — purchase. Such an argument had its own internal logic. But it did depend on assuming that a people whose ideas did not allow for acts of treaty could yet negotiate the sale of land.

Among English observers there seems to have been a certain amount of agreement about the government’s commitment in New South Wales. Some one suggested, on the basis of Cook’s report, that the local inhabitants were few, and ‘not attached to any particular spot’, and would thus be free to move out of the way, preserving ‘their morals from corruption, and their little property from depredation’. But others assumed that the Aborigines might be given their own place within the new body politic. An early report took it for granted that the local administration would include a ‘Superintendent of the natives’. A supporter of the scheme stated elsewhere that the government meant not to ‘annoy’ the local people, but to ‘form them into a more civil community’ (No.3). Another spoke of ‘the present undertaking of Government to colonize a part of this extensive track [sic], and civilize its inhabitants’. As we have seen, some one else suggested that natives and convicts would intermarry.

The policy of the government itself is by no means clear. On the one hand Phillip’s instructions clearly distinguished between ‘our subjects’ and the people ‘inhabiting the neighbourhood of the intended settlement’, and there was reference to ‘our intercourse with these people’, as if they were a community beyond the Empire. On the other hand Phillip was ordered to prevent ‘any unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several

---

16 Hawkesworth 1773, 3:102,230. See also the evidence given by Sir Joseph Banks before the Select Committee on Convicts (House of Commons), Public Record Office (P.R.O.) (London), HO 7/1; Frost 1981:519-520.
19 Daily Universal Register, 22 September 1786.
20 Daily Universal Register, 27 September 1786.
occupations'. Englishmen who offended in this way were to be punished 'according to the
degree of the offence'. The Aborigines were thus to be protected by English ideas of
justice, and yet they were to be outside the formal jurisdiction of the courts, and the
government made no commitment to 'civilizing' them. Their way of life (and therefore
their personal property) was to be guaranteed more or less as if they were subjects, and yet
their territory was to be taken from them as if they were aliens. Such a programme seems to
have had no precedent in international law. One of Pitt's own ministers condemned their
whole plan for Botany Bay as 'very undigested'. Certainly, as far as Aboriginal policy was
concerned contemporary letters to the papers made more sense than the ideas of
government.

The matter of compensation was possibly set at rest by the false report, on 24
November 1786, that 'an immense number of toys . . . for the natives' were to go with the
First Fleet. But discussion on this point was bound to run out of steam from a sheer lack
of information. As 'A.Z.' pointed out, no-one knew enough about the Aborigines to do
them justice (by which he meant English justice). A pro-government writer, as if in reply,
declared that no-one knew enough to warrant sympathy (No.10). I have suggested earlier
that opposition to the settlement itself failed through greed. The idea of compensation for
settlement might be said to have failed through ignorance.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

APPENDIX 1

1. Morning Chronicle, 15 September 1786
The scheme for transporting felons to New Holland, bids fair to answer better than
any yet projected; that country lying so much out of the way of navigators that they will
have no chance of returning clandestinely, to this country; and if they attempt to
escape into the woods, they must meet with inevitable destruction, our late circum-
navigators representing the natives as a race of cannibals, extremely fond of human
flesh, and no less remarkable for their intrepidity than ferocity. They are not at all
pleased even with occasional visitors, and will be still less so with settlers.

2. Morning Herald, 23 September 1786
Mr. Editor, The transportation of felons to Botany Bay, seems the most extraordinary
of all the extraordinary measures adopted by the present immaculate administration.
The climate is said to be good, but the inhabitants inhospitable. Those, therefore, who
are the pests of Society in this country, are to be favored with a settlement in a much
more delightful region than that from which they are removed; and the natives
because they are justly and naturally jealous of such invasion, must be destroyed by
the armed force which is sent out with the convicts, to support the occupancy of lands
not their own. I should have thought that a slight regard to the common rights of
mankind might have prevailed in the breasts of the ministers who consulted upon this
plan; and that they would have revolted at the idea of so much human blood being
spilled in such unjustifiable acquisitions.

21 'Phillip's Instructions', 25 April 1787, Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. I, Part 2:89-
90.
22 Duke of Richmond to William Pitt, 3 September 1786, Chatham Papers, P.R.O. (London),
30/8/171.
23 Public Advertiser, 24 November 1786.
ETHICS OF CONQUEST

The voyages of our late Navigators are full of shocking instances of murder, and shew us how improbable it is, that any plantations can be made upon the lately discovered islands on the continent [sic], without a cruel disregard for the lives of the natives. If, however, it be admitted for the sake of argument, that we could take peaceable possession of such part of the country as should seem good in our eyes; — what consequences can we expect from the settlement of such a colony? Of the most ignorant, most wicked, and most abandoned wretches under Heaven? Is the moral law to be inculcated by their example? Is our glorious system of Revelation to be preached by them? or rather, will not the innocent Pagans be corrupted, and vices, crimes and diseases unknown, be disseminated amongst them?

That this has been too much the case already, in consequence of the short visits of Europeans to the new discoveries, is beyond contradiction. — Bougainville's ship carried the Neapolitan fever to Otaheite, where, from the promiscuous commerce of the natives, it will in a few years doubtless annihilate the race, in the most dreadful manner, for the honour of Christian humanity: — What therefore may be expected from a permanent settlement, supported and encouraged by an armed and invincible force? I most seriously wish this scheme may be re-considered, before it be actually put into execution; but if it must proceed, I hope no man, who has a regard to truth, will hereafter talk of the justice of goodness of heart of the Minister.

Your's, &c
A MAN

3. Public Advertiser, 28 September 1786
Sir, In all the settlements which Europeans have made in new-discovered countries, Englishmen have ever been distinguished by their gentleness and humanity to the natives. The conquest of Mexico, the cruelties of the Dutch which exceed all belief, the barbarity of the Portuguese, are proofs of my assertion. Who has not heard of Cortes, and of Amboyna?

The excellent plan which is in contemplation for ridding us of such of our countrymen as have highly offended against the laws of society, reflects much honour on Administration. The island of which Botany-Bay is a part, is very thinly inhabited; it is at the same time in a temperate climate, and may be brought to a luxuriant state of cultivation in a few years. It is not the intention of Government to annoy the natives; they wish to form them into a more civil community, so as that they and our countrymen may reciprocally contribute to the felicity of one another. Englishmen detest the mode of securing the affections of mankind by gibbets, racks, and tortures, and those too under the specious pretext of religion, by which millions have been murdered.

As it is not probable we shall have this nation involved in war for many years, the settlement in New Wales [sic] may be brought to high maturity before such an unwished-for event. The vast population of that island may furnish us with men to stand our ground in the East Indies, as well as afford abundance of excellent provisions for our navy in that part of the globe on a short notice. This new colony will in all probability give us a decided superiority in the East Indies, which is an object of great consequence to a country whose defence must depend on her marine.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant.
Sept.23.
NAUTICUS.

4. Public Advertiser, 30 September 1786
We have been gravely told that Government, unwilling to annoy the natives of Botany Bay, wish rather to form them into a civil community; to ensure success of which laudable measure, and promote civilization among them, our prisons are to be ransacked

87
for Solons and Lycurguses! — Sanguine hopes have likewise been entertained of the number of men that may hereafter be drawn from thence to defend our possessions in the East. The consequence to this country from having colonized America with gaol-birds and saints of the Newgate Calendar, would surely be sufficient to deter us from repeating the experiment, unless with a design to invite a similar return. Unacquainted with the arts of honest labour, and destitute of habits of industry, what is more naturally to be expected from such a colony as is now projecting by our ministerial wiseacres, than that, among the horrors to be dreaded from them, if disease and the length of the voyage should spare them to increase, they will turn pirates, to the terror of every vessel they can master?

5. *Morning Herald*, 2 October 1786

BOTANY BAY

'Is the intended transportation of convicts to Botany Bay disgraceful to a civilized community?'

This important question has been communicated to the conductors of the Westminster Forum, (late Coxe's museum) Spring-Gardens, by a gentleman of great eminence in the republic of letters, and will, at his particular request, be investigated this evening.

— Chairs taken at eight o'clock.

Admittance to ladies and gentlemen, 6d. each.


Sir, I am just arrived from a journey through parts of France and Holland. In various companies I have heard the opinions of many respecting the island in the East Indian sea, to which we intend sending our convicts. As I apprehend neither France nor Holland would wish this very extensive country to become a colony of Great Britain, it is very probable our troops will find the natives not so unacquainted with the efficacy of powder and ball as they were when Captain Cook was with them; nor is it impossible that some very expert soldiers from both France and Holland may be found amongst the Aborigines. It will, therefore, occur to those who have the conduct of this settlement, that much circumspection upon landing the troops will be requisite. When we reflect that this island extends from the 10th to the 38th degree of south Latitude, we may easily guess how uneasy the Dutch are for fear we should rival them in the growth of what their SPICE ISLANDS produce, and which have proved to them of such immense value. That consideration alone is of great consequence; but how ought we be elated when we are well assured that indigo and silk may be cultivated there in vast abundance? Besides, rice and tobacco, and in the seas adjacent the whale fishery may be carried into a great extent; in short, with proper attention, the loss of the Thirteen Rebellious Provinces may soon be made up, with this scourge to them for their ingratitude that a rival in all their productions will be found to be in the power of a country from whom they cannot have the effrontery to expect much favour: and as the Loyalists, whom they have so inhumanly oppressed, will probably be the principal farmers on this new colony, every exertion on their part will be made to raise such articles as are more immediately calculated to cut them totally out of the British market, as well as to supplant them in every other European port. These are no small advantages. To which let us add others. In case of a rupture, our fleets in India will readily be supplied with fresh provisions, and recruits of men abundantly furnished on nearly the spot; at the same time our enemies must send to Europe for them.

I am, Sir,
your obedient servant,

MERCATOR
Mr. Editor, I can scarcely think it possible, though our newspapers have repeatedly announced it as fact, that the King’s Ministers can have it seriously in their intention, to transport so large a body as six or seven hundred convicts to New Holland, in the South Seas. I observe your correspondent Sylvanues [not found] takes the point so much for granted, that he has amused himself, and the readers of your paper, with no little pleasantry, by proposing by way of improvement to this most sagacious plan, to augment the new colony by an accompaniment upon the expedition, of all the poachers throughout the kingdom.

Sportively as this gentleman has treated the subject, I am inclined to consider it as a matter much intitled to a very grave and solemn discussion. For it appears to me an affair in which the national honour and character are deeply involved. According to the accounts we have received of the distant country, in which it is proposed to establish so extraordinary a colony, it is but thinly peopled. A circumstance of some consolation with respect to the few savages who may approach the confines of a society of English banditti. For that the manners and morals of even the natives of New Holland, could escape being rendered worse than they now are, by the contagion of such a neighbourhoud, is next to impossible. I am afraid it would be altogether superfluous, to take religion into the consideration: for if its interests are to be as little regarded upon this occasion, as I understand it uniformly to have been on board the ballast-lighters, it is no unreasonable presumption to suppose, that this formidable emigration is to be unattended by a chaplain of any denomination whatsoever.

I am at a loss to conceive the degree of horror which a plan of this kind must excite in the minds of the foreign societies, pro propaganda fide: — will they not most naturally, with uplifted hands, exclaim against it, and bestow upon it, the appellation of a plan formed by some English society, pro propaganda vitiis Anglicanis? And, however, in excuse, it may be alleged, that the propagation of vice upon the coast of New Holland, or, as it is generally called Botany Bay, is not likely to be very extensive amongst the New Hollanders, on account of the scantiness of their numbers: yet I am afraid such will be the zeal of these English Missionerists, that this excuse will not be of any very long duration. Many of the islands in the South Seas, as we are assured by our late circum navigators, are exceedingly populous; — but they are not only populous, they are also extremely fertile; and they are inhabited by some of the handsomest women in the known world. Can any thing therefore be more probable than that parties of these abandoned wretches, will, after a while, be formed for a fresh transportation of themselves to better climates and more cultivated regions? The inevitable consequence of which will be, that the contagion of English vice, and English villainy, will be disseminated in the space of a few years, throughout every country, situated in the South Seas.

For the honour of the Christian religion, for the honour of humanity, and for the honour of my country, I very anxiously hope that a scheme so injurious to the interests of mankind in general, will not go forward; or if it does, that all imaginable care will be taken to prevent, as much as possible, the national disgrace, which will follow so probably [so] wide a diffusion of national iniquity, without some means to counteract its effects to this salutary end; it ought surely to be held indispensibly necessary, that every gentle method be imploied of reclaiming, at least, in some degree, the intended exiles before they embark for the place of their destination. And in order to bring them to some sense of moral and religious duties, surely Government will take care that they be attended on their voyage by a clergyman of irreproachable character; for whom should be made a very ample provision, upon express condition, that he make New Holland his residence, as chaplain to this convict colony for the remainder of his days.

A PLAIN ENGLISHMAN

October 6, 1786.
8. *Daily Universal Register*, 14 October 1786
It is supposed that a gibbet will be the first exotic the poor natives of Botany Bay will see planted among them; and it is probable the first fruit it bears will be from the hopeful blossoms that are sent from this country to give examples of mortality to the new [sic] Hollanders!

9. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 October 1786
Sir, The convicts going to Botany Bay, will, if they arrive there, strike a panic in the inhabitants of that country already in some degree sensible of our hostilities as they denied a parley with those who have been visiting them, and in vain attempted to oppose their landing.
The Great Penn, when he obtained a grant from the King of Land in America, carried with him cloth and utensils, &c. suitable for the climate, and made the Indians sensible that if they would grant him so many furlongs of their land, he would give them so many yards of his cloth, &c. To this day his name is famous among the natives, and perhaps will be so to the latest posterity.
I hope the English annals will never be stained with shedding innocent blood. What are we to think of men who have already notoriously forfeited the friendship of their own countrymen, and been denied the benefit of our laws and society now going to colonize with guns, &c.? Will they at all benefit a race of men who are content with the spot nature has allotted them; whose wants are few and whose virtue, perhaps, exceeds our capacity of thinking; they go quite naked, so did Adam and Eve in Paradise.
Do we, can we carry or send out any thing to gain the favour of such a people? Is there no one acquainted with the desirables for such a climate? Can any one form an idea of what they may be willing to accept for their ground? Do they not despise toys and trinkets? For heaven's sake let some one speak. I am alarmed for those whom we may ignorantly style Barbarians. Colonization was the ruin of the Roman State, the empire was too widely extended. Is there not ground uncultivated nearer home? May not convicts male and female suffer sufficiently in the streets of London or highways of England? May they not be compelled to become hewers of wood, drawers of water, cleaners of streets, and menders of roads, or doomed to the labouring spade, and become tillers of the ground? Or may they not be sold to such as deal in the Slave-trade; any thing that may strike terror greater than that so frequent at the Old Bailey; those publick executions do not, nor perhaps ever will put a stop to the mal-practices of men. Do they not rather increase since death has been made less tremendous by being more instantaneous? Is there no method to be found of lessening the number of prostitutes? A virtuous woman does what she pleases with our sex - in her power it is to make heroes or philosophers, and a vicious one may influence the unguarded and thoughtless to become desperadoes and publick offenders: decrease the number of those, and we may expect better times.
These are instances of increasing immorality. May providence influence the Magistrates to exert themselves in their publick capacities to stop the torrent of wickedness!

I am, Sir,  
Your's  
&c. A.Z.

Friday, October 13, 1786

10. *Morning Chronicle*, 3 November 1786
The patriots are the most virtuous souls on earth! It is distressing, in the highest degree, to their tender sensibility, to think that their countrymen are about to take possession of a single inch of the soil of Botany Bay. It is true they know nothing of the natives; it is true that the spot on which the settlement is to be made is, at present, unoccupied, and a perfect blank in nature so far as the productions of art go; and it is
ETHICS OF CONQUEST

likewise true, that the settlement in the Bay promises to be of general utility to this island; but still the idea of it wounds the feelings of the patriots, and inspire them with sentiments so pathetick and sublime, that all who mark them must admire them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Clark, C.M.H. A history of Australia I. From the earliest times to the age of Macquarie. Melbourne, 1962.


Gammage, Bill. 'Early boundaries of New South Wales', Historical Studies, 19 (77), 1981:524-531.

Hawkesworth, John. An account of the voyages undertaken by the order of his present majesty for making discoveries in the southern hemisphere. London, 1773.


Top: Norman Blunden displaying the Kartan type side-pebble chopping tool from the base of Noola rock shelter a few moments after its excavation, 1 January 1963

Lower: Harold M. Cooper (right) at Hallett Cove, 22 October 1968, displaying new Kartan surface finds to David W.P. Corbett and June Scrymgour of the South Australian Museum

Photographs courtesy of Norman B. Tindale
A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LOOKS AT SOME BEGINNINGS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA*

Norman B. Tindale

It may be recalled that D.J. Mulvaney suggested that the full potential in Australia of controlled excavation of an archaeological site was first demonstrated in 1929 in the excavation at Devon Downs rock shelter (now correctly to be known as Ngautngaut), situated in the Miocene marine limestone cliffs of the Lower Murray Valley, in South Australia. Rich stratified occupational deposits were found extending down to a depth of over six metres.

An adjoining open air site on Tartanga Island was found, where surface-eroded, to carry there and in upper layers, some of the small stone tool types found deep in the deposits at Ngautngaut. At Tartanga these upper beds covered several earlier consolidated limy layers denoted as Tartangan, also containing human occupational remains, including mineralised bone and food shells. These layers extended down for two metres to below normal river levels. Implements found in the Tartangan Beds differed in types from ones in the Upper Beds which conformed to ones in the Ngautngaut layers.

When eustatic terrace and radiometric data came to be marshalled, the Ngautngaut sequence was found to extend back to near 5200 BP (Ga-K 1024) while it was evident that the consolidated Tartangan Beds were ones that had been drowned for some two thousand years by the rise of sea level accompanying the Peronian high waters of the interval after 6000 BP, following the earlier rise during the Flandrian Recession, marking the end of the Pleistocene and the earlier part of the Recent. Its several beds go down to below 6000 BP.

In 1929 the consensus seemed to be that no cultural changes were evident, and that the residence of the Australian Aborigines had not extended far enough back to have affected the ecology of the land. The Murray River finds thus were a direct contradiction of prevailing ideas.

Today the indications of antiquity seem very different. At least two recent finds of Kartan type stone tools, mentioned later in this paper, both derived from shore deposits of the Woakwine marine terrace in the south east of South Australia, may suggest that man has been here at least since the interstadial between Wisconsin I and II Glacial times. Perhaps some of the earliest folk to arrive crossed over the ever present sea barriers dividing Asia from Australia, well before the rise of sea level marking the end of Wisconsin I.

Early studies in archaeology in South Australia

It should not be forgotten that prior to the finds at Tartanga and Ngautngaut there were much earlier efforts at archaeological exploration, and there were recordings which assumed importance in the light of later studies. As a South Australian, this writer recalls that as early as 1918 he had met Robert H. Pulleine, who, during much

---

* This paper is based on the Presidential Address given by Dr Tindale to Section 25A (Archaeology) at the ANZAAS Jubilee congress, Adelaide, May 1980. The Editorial Board gratefully acknowledges the co-operation of Dr Grant McCall, who had also invited Dr Tindale to publish his address in Anthropology in Australia: essays to honour 50 years of Mankind (The Anthropological Society of New South Wales, 1982).

1 Mulvaney 1975:118. See below, p.93.

2 The South Australian Lands and Survey Department has determined that the name Devon Downs lies on the western side of the Murray River at a distance of some kilometres northward, hence the choice of the original Aboriginal name, Ngautngaut [gautqaut] for the site, as known to the Ngangaruku tribespeople. It was also the name of one of their sinister beings.
of the next decade, was not only studying mainland Aboriginal sites but also was exploring the Rocky Cape caves in northern Tasmania. However, we understand from his 1929 presidential address to ANZAAS he failed to be convinced of any great antiquity in Australian prehistory and had not found indications of cultural change over the past. A.L. Meston who followed in his footsteps in studying some of the same deposits also failed to see differences.

One early find had been made at Fulham, west of Adelaide, near the coast, in 1893 by Samuel White. It was twenty five years later when his son, Samuel A. White, reported the discovery of a series of large stone implements during digging to depth in a large area to form a small private lake. They had been found on a land surface underlying marine deposits. Walter Howchin, South Australia’s geologist, confirmed the stratification. At the time the find made little impact, but when the Anthropological Society of South Australia was formed in 1926, one of its first team projects was the hand-drilling of a line of holes, each to a depth of five or six metres, from the present coastline to the inner line of reddish sand dunes marking an earlier eustatic terrace, a distance of over a kilometre. Many early members took part in the hand-drilling and recording of the section, using implements loaned by the then Adelaide Electricity Company. This work, continued over months of Saturdays, confirmed the significance of the early find and suggested that what would later come to be known as classic Kartan tools and hammerstones had been made and used far earlier than the small tool types of implements which were present on several campsites well above the former marine bed. In South Australia Howchin had been one of the first systematically to collect and study stone implements, but, surprisingly, despite the Fulham occurrence, he did not look for possibly significant differences in tool types, perhaps because much of the gathering had been done during geological fieldwork in the nineteenth century. In later years any temptation to do so could have been discouraged when his description of supposed eolithic type flints from the Sturt Stony Desert was rejected by others as non-human in origin. At that time Howchin was the only local researcher who had taken part in archaeological work in Europe. As a young geologist in Newcastle-on-Tyne, he had retrieved relics from early wells along the Roman Wall.

Percival Stapleton was one who had long been interested in rock carvings and modern campsites, particularly in the south east of South Australia where he had spent part of his life. He helped the first members of the newly formed Anthropological Society in many ways. Only in later years was he persuaded to place some of his observations on record. He was the first to record the worked flints of large size, commonly found near sources of flint along the Port MacDonnell coastline. These have since been established as bifacially knapped blocks of sizes convenient for transport in trade and have been found transported along presumed trade routes as far as 300 kilometres northward from the mining sources. Incidentally, one of his notable finds near Port MacDonnell was a cache of several Polynesian type adze heads, now in the South Australian Museum, perhaps witness to some unrecorded event in our prehistory. Several other seemingly authentic individual finds of such implements have been made in southern Australia and need to be studied.

Harold L. Sheard was a foundation member of the Anthropological Society who also had been interested in rock carvings and paintings. In the days of almost non-existent automobiles, his Ford and a truck borrowed from the Electricity Company were mainstays of much of the teamwork of the Adelaide school. Sheard was the finder of several important rock shelters along the cliffs of the Murray River. Devon Downs (Ngautngaut)

1 S.A. White 1919.
2 Stapleton 1931 and 1945.
rock carvings were reported first by him. Although he dug to a depth of somewhat less than a metre, he did not have the good fortune to light upon the considerable depth of occupational deposit further out from the back wall. One other find was a parcel burial of a child wrapped in grass, concealed in a rock crevice where it had become sealed down and preserved by the camping of native opossums over it. After his publication of this find a pipirri projectile point was found in the parcel, suggesting that the child had been placed there perhaps more than four thousand years earlier.

Other teamwork by members of the Society was concentrated on known former camping places of the Aborigines, particularly on a large area near the mouth of Pedler Creek on the coast south of Adelaide, a locality later known as Moana. In the mid-1920s Thomas D. Campbell, Herbert M. Hale, Paul S. Hossfeld and this writer spent many weekends studying the surface sites which seemed to be distributed over an area of half a square kilometre of earth rise running down to sand dunes of several ‘colours’ on the south side of Pedler Creek where it entered the waters of St Vincent Gulf. There was some evidence suggesting that the creek had shifted its lower estuarine reaches progressively northward for several hundred metres during the times when Aborigines had lived there.

The sites on the southern bank of Pedler Creek (marked as C) appeared to be much younger than the others, with fresh charcoal and ash, and other indications of recent occupation, such as well-charred pieces of wood. Also there were bones of small animals, recognised to be of species known as part of the fauna near Adelaide. Food shells such as unionids from the creek, and Donax cockles from the sea shore, often had their nacre still preserved. Some shallow burials were present. The principal tools were irregular flakes, and stone axe heads were reported to have been found on the surface in places where it was eroded. Later on, our assessment of recency was confirmed when our oldest informant, Milerum of the Tanganekald tribe, led us to the places where, as a boy in the 1870s, he and his parents had camped while on journeys to Adelaide from their home near the mouth of the Murray River. Milerum also took us to the low wall of rocks which marked the place on the cliffs to the south where older men used to camp during the day, watching for schools of mulloway fish that swam up the Gulf, following the shoreline in the rise of water as it came to break as surf on the shore.

B indicated dunes aligned parallel with the seashore, but up to a hundred metres inland from the present-day beach line. Their sands show a greyish colour rather than the fresh yellowish colour of the creek-side sands. In B the food remains appeared scant since most of the animal remains had decayed. Instead of the irregular, casually-worked flakes of area C the regular implements of B were exceedingly well-worked geometric flakes of

Sheard 1927.
small size, including crescents and triangles, together with small discoidal adze stones. The latter were made on prepared flakes bearing a well-defined striking platform. Hammerstones were present.

Area A to the south continued to yield only some larger well-patinated flakes which at the time did not arouse particular interest.

Generally more than one hundred metres inland from the alignment of the B dunes was a similar, much higher line, at first well-anchored by vegetation. In places where
erosion had commenced pirri projectile points appeared along with some geometrics. No bone relics seemed to have been preserved. The sands had a distinctly reddish colour. This area was designated as D.

At this stage of our study Hossfeld and Campbell, whose special interests were in obtaining series of implements, spent many weekends systematically crawling over the whole area, picking up and taking away all worked pieces present on the surface. This would test whether the supposed differences would be registered again when further erosion took place. During the winter following this effort a series of exceptional gales blew away vast amounts of sand from much of the area under study, thus revealing richer layers of wind-excavated and winnowed occupational debris. Since all significant surface material had been removed each of the four areas provided fresh evidence of the differences which had already been noticed. The inland D dunes continued to yield unifacially worked pirri points in abundance together with some rather poorly worked geometrics. Erosion, partly by water from the slope to the south, revealed some further larger flake tools on A, while the B camps continued to yield the 'good' geometrics and discoidal adze stones. By 1929 therefore, there was some evidence for differentiation in implement types from different sites, but thoughts then of eustatic changes in sea level had not been evaluated seriously, and the succession of types was still a matter of opinion, if indeed there was thought to be a succession.

The excavation of Ngautngaut and Tartanga changed the picture and revealed that there had been a series of changes. Further, since Moana and the Murray River sites were well over 100 kilometres apart, and beyond two present-day tribal boundaries, the changes had taken place on a regional basis. A new field of study had opened. It was realised also that similar stone tools had been collected on eroded desert campsites at distances away exceeding 1000 kilometres, while others were known to be still in use among peoples living equally far away to north and west, and some even had been used on the eastern coast of the continent.

Prehistory in South Australia after Ngautngaut

For several years after the report on the Murray River excavations had appeared, under the non-committal title of 'Notes on some human remains in the Lower Murray Valley, South Australia', in the Records of the South Australian Museum, the authors heard relatively little of comment.

This writer continued work on the stratigraphic leads and implications which had been registered. Additional data soon became available. A discovery at Hawks Nest on Kangaroo Island, South Australia's great island, was made by R.G. Thomas in 1930, while conducting a survey for the Commonwealth Nutrition Laboratory in connection with the then newly aroused interest in the effects of cobalt deficiency on mammalian life. His find of many large quartzite pebble tools and hammerstones led at once to a study by W.W. Jolly, B.G. Maegraith and this writer, recovering many hundreds of these tools, spread over an area of several square kilometres on an older series of north-eastern shores of the formerly much larger and now brackish-water lagoon, called Murrell's, after one of the lawless white men who were escapees from Tasmania and lived on the island with their captive Tasmanian Aboriginal wives during the early years of the nineteenth century.
The find by Thomas was not the first from Kangaroo Island, since Howchin had already reported hammerstones there, just a century after explorer Matthew Flinders had discovered the island and found it to be uninhabited. Further fieldwork by this writer with Frederick J. Hall, and with L. Keith Ward of the Mines Department indicated implements in situ (e.g. Figure 2) in pre-coastal-dune stream deposits at Rainy Creek. When Harold M. Cooper (Plate 1) became a volunteer helper in the Anthropology Section of the South Australian Museum in 1934 he was assigned as study project the distribution of occupational sites on the Island, where he had a holiday home. He was able to demonstrate the presence of as many as a hundred sites of occupation and confirmed our suspicions that none of the post-Pleistocene coastal dunes had ever been trodden by early man, thus indirectly supporting a link with the pre-marine tools of similar type from Fulham.

Interest in South Australian results became evident in 1935. Frederick D. McCarthy of the Australian Museum, Sydney, was taken to see the Murray River excavations and a few months later Hallam L. Movius of Harvard was escorted over the Kangaroo Island sites. About the same time a letter from J.L. Shellshear of Sydney requested help in stimulating interest in archaeology in New South Wales.

Thus in June 1936, during the first days of a year-long study visit to America and Europe, this writer met with Elsie Bramell, F.D. McCarthy, J. Shellshear and some others at the Australian Museum, Sydney. Detailed discussions took place on methods, the results of work done by Shellshear in South East Asia and the discoveries of P.V. van Stein

7 Howchin 1903.
8 Tindale 1957.
BEGINNINGS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Callenfels. Later a small party viewed the sites of rock carving studies by McCarthy and discussed methods for casting them, as developed in Adelaide. Using a Fisheries Department launch the party searched for possible rock shelter deposits along the cliffs of the Hawkesbury River, and discovered one cave near Cowan Point with some sixty paintings of hands. Shellshear was interested in the technical aspects of our work at Tartanga and elsewhere, and in the telpher line on which excavated material had been run by gravity out of the cave at Kongarati near Second Valley in South Australia. The results of this dig were then going through the press. They had included discovery of well-preserved post-Mid-Recent materials. Incidentally, this writer, two months later, spent a day at the open air excavations being conducted on the Folsom site at Lindenmeier, Colorado, even locating a projectile point. Still later he handled some of the Callenfels finds in Amsterdam, and spent time attempting to convince M.C. Burkitt in London that unifacially worked flake tools, with well-formed striking platforms, known to us in Australia as tula, and tula slugs, were the same implement, one a lot more used than the other, from being repeatedly knapped in resharpening, while set with resin in a chisel or adze handle. The term scraper was indicated to be a very inappropriate one.

Following return to Australia in 1937 two years were spent in fieldwork shared with Joseph B. Birdsell. While emphasis of the programme was on physical and cultural anthropology, each of the States of Australia were visited and at many field stations archaeological data found. As examples large stone axes with hafting grooves were present archaeologically at Monamona on the Atherton Tableland in northern Queensland. From the Tjapukai tribespeople it was learned that their use had continued up to the present, being hafted, using wrap-around long handles of lawyer cane, and employed in the felling of rain forest trees. Side-pebble chopping tools of seemingly ancient date were present also in the rain forest. Similar side-pebble chopping tools were also found to be present both on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands in Bass Strait, between Australia and Tasmania. Evidence for microlithic industries was present in many places (Figure 3), while pirri, unifacially worked points, were identified as far west as Eucla and well formed geometric ones west to the Gnowangerup district in south-western Australia. A highlight was the finding of what appeared to be a trade parcel of seventy four discoidal flint flakes, each about 6-9 cm in diameter, in a sand dune site at Eucla. Seemingly these were partly worked pieces brought from a native mine at Wilson Bluff, a few kilometres to the east. These flakes were described by Tindale and Noone, and it may be of interest to note that a quarter century later, when on several field trips with John Greenway, we visited the mine in the marine cliff. We also recorded, in the Rawlinson Ranges, more than 750 kilometres to the north, a seemingly mythic song cycle which ascribed evil to a turkey bustard being, in stealing fire from man. When successively more southern versions of this myth were collected from the Nakako and more southern tribes this became a recognisable itinerary recounting by name the line of watering places leading deviously across the difficult-to-traverse Nullarbor Plain to Wilson Bluff, where two hawk beings had prevented the turkey being from drowning fire flints in the sea. It may even be that this elaborate ceremonial song cycle has preserved a memory of one of the latest effects of the Post-Glacial rise of sea level in the Mid-Recent. Earlier work in north-western Australia and collected among the Nakako had revealed the wide distribution in the Western Desert of the large, rolling-pressure finished flake knives now called tjimari, such as are the normal tool of several Desert tribes. It became evident the Eucla hoard had been planned to be tjimari-like tools.

9 Tindale and Mountford 1936.
10 Tindale and Noone 1941.
In the last days of the Harvard Expedition in 1939, on the way to western New South Wales, evidence was found of man’s presence on the northern shores of the former Lake Menindee, in apparent association with extinct species of large mammals. Actual honours went to the late Dorothy M. Tindale who picked up the first fossil bone. Preliminary studies were made but the onset of World War II delayed further research there for some years.¹¹

While preparing an exhibit in the South Australian Museum showing the progress in archaeological discovery, this writer wrote a summary article for the Australian Journal of Science confirming the sequence and significance of the several culture phases proposed earlier for the Murray Valley sites, and indicated their far wider spread.¹² In addition, the Kartan culture phase was recognised as the earliest detected in Australia. The name was based on the Ramindjeri tribal name for the mystical island of the dead, lying uninhabited to their south: Karta, our Kangaroo Island. It was noted that the Fulham finds were closely related.

Some useful archaeological work continued during the war period. Beginning in 1940, South Australia was privileged to have as a long term visitor, H.V.V. Noone, whose knowledge of stone tools stimulated interest, and his guidance and encouragement led to more than one researcher’s placing his observations on record. Noone stressed the significance of the microlithic tools. For some years after 1940 South Australian workers

¹¹ Tindale 1955; Tedford 1967.
¹² Tindale 1941.
continued to dominate the field in archaeology but their studies became far-ranging. South Australians found pirri point sites, for example, as far to the north in Queensland as near the Gulf of Carpentaria, and J.B. Birdsell found typical Bondi (Bondai) points at Smithsonia Waters, far inland in Western Australia (Figure 3). During the early 1940s members of the Anthropological Society also continued limited fieldwork. H.M. Cooper was hampered by being entrusted with the transfer of the Museum collections for wartime safety to a tunnel located in the Adelaide Hills, but had other opportunities and located several Kartan sites in the Flinders Ranges. H.L. Sheard had earlier found extensive sites at Hatherleigh in the south east of South Australia and others conducted wide surveys in the same area.13

On leave after return from overseas duty in 1946, this author spent several weeks in the same area, first following up a report of a find by C.G. Stephens (during soil survey work in the Hundred of Young) of deeply patinated yellow discoidal flakes of formerly black flint, sometimes almost completely changed to chalk, and similar to those of H.L. Sheard. Both sites were assessed as Tartangan. On the same visit the Cape Northumberland site was discovered, later dated as beginning at 1470 BP.14 Two days later (17 January 1947), the coastal consolidated dune site (with the same patinated discoidal flints as at Symon and Hatherleigh in situ) was located at Cape Martin. Later these were dated as close to 8700 BP. In the absence then of other dating methods this author developed an eustatic terrace study of the area of the south east.15

Within a month of the above finds (February 1947) there was a working conference at Millicent where South Australian anthropologists J.B. Cleland, T.D. Campbell, Gwen Walsh, and this writer met with Dermot Casey, R. Keble, and Stanley R. Mitchell of the Victorian group interested in archaeology. This was the first formal meeting between students of the two States. Sites at Bevilaqua Ford, Kongorong, Symon, and Mount Muirhead were examined and eustatic terraces studied. Mitchell illustrated some of the large discoidal and yellow-stained flints from Kongorong (drawn by G. Walsh)16 but did not note the fresh microlith-containing layers which lay above them at more than one of these sites. The activities of the conference members were noted in the South Eastern Times of 21 February 1947.

A year later the same South Australian group, with the addition of E. Couper Black and P.S. Hossfeld, met at MacDonnell Bay with S.R. Mitchell. The Cape Northumberland site was confirmed as similar to the ‘marniong’ mounds of Victoria. The Hood’s Drift site at Kongorong was studied in some detail, establishing the presence of the upper microlith bearing bed of classic type, overlying a much earlier horizon with the large discoidal flints which were deeply patinated.17 It was on this field study that a site with pirri points was discovered at Middle Point (Section A, Hundred of MacDonnell), the easternmost then known occurrence of such implements. Although it had a deep influence on their thinking, much of this south-eastern work lies unchronicled in the field books of the several researchers, being overshadowed by the ‘glamour’ of the more ancient discoveries elsewhere.

In 1949 a single pebble side-chopper was found at Carlton, in southeastern Tasmania, thus extending the area of distribution of the Kartan type from St Helens and the Bass

13 Campbell, Cleland and Hossfeld 1946.
17 Mitchell 1949:175; Tindale 1957, Fig. 24; Tindale 1981, Fig. 10a.

101
Strait Islands. The specimen has recently been figured. One of the finds in 1950 by H.M. Cooper, important because of its possible sociological significance, was a hoard of some seventy-five elongate-oval slate stones with sets of incised transverse lines. Usually there was a median dividing groove and the number of lines on one half closely approximated the other. A dozen were whole and the rest had been broken more or less in half. Not one of the matching halves was present. This hoard was situated at Yudnapunda Springs in the Flinders Ranges. Kartan type tools were present nearby. Another important discovery was an old Flinders Range Aboriginal of the Wailpi tribe who still used a hunting weapon of his ancestors, a well-worked spherical ball, called maru, (a word elsewhere used for the word 'hand'). White quartz was favoured because of ease of finding after a throw. This implement occurs on Kangaroo Island and on mainland sites of all ages.

One of the highlights of 1951 was the finding of a rich microlith site at Policeman Point (Section 2, Hundred of Santo) on the mainland side of the Coorong on the shore of an old bay which had been cut off from the main estuary by a bank formed when the sea was about two metres higher than at present. It was a one-culture-phase site, clearly a well-developed Mudukian one. The occasion had general historical interest since Anthony N. Sturt, descendant of the Captain Sturt who had explored the Murray River one hundred years earlier, was one of the party, along with Harold A. Lindsay. In later years this site continued to furnish important data. Most of the highly developed microlithic implement types known, including one clear quartz crystal discoidal flake, completely worked and only 6 mm in diameter, were present on one concentrated area.

In 1952 the University of California (Los Angeles) and Adelaide University Anthropological Expedition began its three years of fieldwork, with J.B. Birdsell and this writer, by gathering material for the radiometric dating of Layer C at Tartanga, later recorded as $6020 \pm 120$ BP. The Harvard-Adelaide pre-war programme was continued, chiefly in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The extensive archaeological finds ancilliary to the main endeavours are registered in the South Australian Museum collection, and as circumstances permit are being reported. A useful result was the finding at Moolabulla, in the north west of Western Australia, in an eroded old soil of a solitary, grooved quartzite edge-ground axe of the old type. At some time in the past it had been reworked as a chopping tool. Above it was a sandy soil with numerous unifacially worked pirri points and signs of occupation. The Government Station had been established there and present day Aborigines, who use bifacially pressure-flaked spear points, and not pirri, were also camping there. To the Djaru and Kitja the pirri were "eagle claws" of the people before'. In filming their pressure flaking techniques it was observed that the initial flakes struck off the cores were similar to pirri blanks, and the cores, brought from more than a day's walk away, were similar to large bifaces found across the continent in the Mount Gambier area of South Australia.

In October 1955 C.S. Ashley presented the South Australian Museum with a series of Mudukian microliths which he had just discovered on a site at the entrance to Koonalda Cave on the Nullarbor Plain. Further specimens were collected there by John Greenway and the writer in October 1965, confirming Ashley's finds. A. Gallus was directed to the cave and began work in it in January 1957, leading to his remarkable discoveries.

In January 1956 Derek John Mulvaney and a team from Melbourne began the excavation of Fromms Landing shelter on the River Murray, at Walker Flat, thus starting a series of rock shelter and cave diggings which have added much to our detailed knowledge of
BEGINNINGS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Australia's past. The Fromms Landing results, at a place only ten kilometres or so south from Ngautngaut, showed little beyond casual differences. Radiocarbon dates indicated that both shelters had been occupied by microlith-using peoples beginning in the Mid-Recent. Later work on their Site 6 yielded an early specimen of the dingo along with an indication of what turned out to be a women's cooking area.

During the mid-1950s, the Moana area was being studied by this author, chiefly with Harold M. Burrows and in December 1956 with John Greenway of the University of Colorado. It became even clearer from the implements exposed by continued erosion of the sands in the several areas that the campsites on B were definitely linked with the Murray River horizon we had termed Mudukian and that area D further inland was clearly of Pirrian time, since we found many unifacial spear blades, and at one place, we were able to map what appeared to be a man's actual workshop for pirri points with the finished blades still lying in a line where they had been, for some reason abandoned. My interpretation of the site was influenced definitely by the workshop for pressure-flaked spear points I had filmed in 1955 at Moolabulla, Western Australia, of which a considered account is appearing this year. It was on one of these study visits that we found, further inland on the surface of eroded kunkar limestone, at an estimated ten metres above sea level, a typical side-pebble chopping tool. This tool was coated with lime when found and now is specimen a.48749 in the South Australian Museum.

In November 1960 members of the Anthropological Society of South Australia also paid a visit to the Moana site and saw the latest results of the fieldwork begun in 1924. At this time the work at Waldeila campsite (Section 185, Hundred of Willunga) began in 1955 also was exhibited and it became an interest of a member, the late Rodney D.J. Weathersbee, who in 1980 completed an important study. Early finds had indicated that it had been used in microlith times and that pebble choppers, worked on the end, and characteristic of the latest days, were present on the surface.

In 1957, on the suggestion of Hallam L. Movius, who had followed the results being obtained in South Australia, an attempt was made to summarise the several culture phases that had been recognised, from the Recent to Late Pleistocene. One purpose was to try and prevent the unnecessary duplication of culture marker names, and confirm priorities of those published.

In 1957 there began a series of opportunities, through cooperation with the patrol officers of the Woomera Project, to visit then remote areas, such as the Rawlinson Ranges and beyond, in order to develop links with tribespeople who had never been in contact with ‘white’ people. The work continued into the 1960s. For archaeology, this led to useful indications that ceremonial arrangements of stones were still living shrines, and that newly-met people still used resin-hafted discoidal stone implements, characteristic of the early Recent in southeastern Australia, as usual tools. Earlier fieldwork in north-western Australia had revealed them as surviving only as secret implements used in the male rite of circumcision. Much of this data is still to be published but some results are in print. Of widest impact was the demonstration, by Nakako tribesmen, of the ‘rolling pressure technique’, using a smooth stone to press off the projections remaining from hammer-dressing. Francois Bordes (personal communication) has said that this unrecognised technique seemingly had been in use as far back as Mousterian days in Europe, and that he had, on occasion, unconsciously used it when attempting to replicate ancient tools.

In 1959 H.A. Lindsay was in communication with Norman Blunden and suggested he contact the South Australian Museum to obtain typical artefacts for the collection he was developing. In February 1961 he did so (following correspondence with archaeologists in

---

23 Mulvaney 1960.
25 Tindale 1957, Fig. 6.
26 Tindale 1957.
Chicago) reporting a rock shelter on his station at Noola, near Rylstone, New South Wales, and requesting advice. Having long sought such a shelter this writer visited the site in May of that year and, since Blunden had organised a team of interested helpers, the shelter was excavated to a depth of some three metres and a preliminary report published. The results have been interpreted as possessing a rich range of microlithic tools for the upper first half to one metre, closely comparable with the tools of the Mudukian of points west, underlain by some two metres of sparser signs of only periodic occupation beginning after a great rock fell out of the roof, perhaps long before a time twelve thousand years ago. These earlier visits were of people using tools clearly related to those found on Tartangan sites so plentiful further west, south west, and north, in Queensland. The excavated section of this rock-shelter was published in 1981. It shows that a single Kartan pebble chopping tool was found in the very bottom of the creviced chamber, undated, but obviously older than the dated hearths above it (Plate 1).

In 1960 a question was raised with this author concerning the possible relationship of the Kartan implements of Australia with the similar pebble tool cultures in Pleistocene Asia. He was led to a conclusion that the earliest home of modern man might well have been in South East Asia, spreading to Australia, to the Americas, and far west towards the Caucasus Mountains and Europe. Thus he independently reiterated ideas probably first set out by C.O. Sauer.

Interest in the South Australian discoveries of Kartan implements in old soil horizons (indicating such old tool types were significant in the geological history of the Late Pleistocene) was evident during the symposium on Soils, Geochronology and Land Surfaces held in Adelaide in December 1961, under the auspices of the Australian Academy of Science. Participants saw the site at Section 586, Hundred of Willunga with a perched red sand dune site at 165 metres above sea level incorporating Kartan implements. Observers at this conference included F.E. Zeuner of London, who visited the Rainy Creek Pleistocene site on Kangaroo Island, and at Hallett Cove discovered in situ material which he took to London. Figure 4 shows one of his finds. In company with G. Blackburn, J.T. Hutton, Nellie H. Ludbrook, W.T. Ward, and this writer, he viewed eustatic terraces in the south east of South Australia, observing a pre-Mount Gambier eruption Tartangan implement horizon at Mount Gambier and the two beds, widely separated in time (respectively Early Recent, and almost present day) at the Cape Martin site. This had already become, by erosion from fierce Indian Ocean waves, Martin Island.

In October 1962 this writer was flown into the heart of the Arunta (or Simpson) Desert to an archaeological site, discovered by geologist Reginald C. Sprigg, situated 4.5 kilometres west of Geosurvey Hill. Highly patinated large discoidal flint implements of the tjimari type (Figure 5) were present in soils underlying the present parallel dune system, as well as later in time microlithic implements of types made known in the writings of G.A. Horne and G. Aiston. The earlier implements were assessed as related to the Tartangan ones of South Australia. There was a brief account of this visit published in the Mail, Adelaide, 3 November 1962.

Shortly afterwards (December 1962) a coastal horizon at Shellharbour, New South Wales, was observed being bulldozed to make a parking area, and a charcoal layer containing pebble end-chopping tools, closely similar to those typical of the most recent occupational sites near Adelaide, was salvaged. It was dated subsequently to c.140 years ago.

Beginning in 1962 Norman Blunden became a field observer (Plate 1), noting extensive sites being revealed by an agricultural policy in western New South Wales, where chisel-
Figure 4. Sketch of Kartan type chopping tool found at Hallett Cove by F.E. Zeuner of London. This extensive Kartan site discovered by H.M. Cooper was one of the earlier ones studied on the Australian mainland. It is the only one to be found close to a glacial period foreshore. There is very deep water close to its present day shoreline.

Figure 5. Large tjimari type flake showing roller-pressure secondary trimming on cutting edge. From Site 0 in red soil layer underlying parallel dunes near billabong 4.5 km west of Geosurvey Hill, Simpson Desert. Specimen was broken across line of section in antiquity and differentially and deeply patinated on reversed faces. Assessed as of Tartangan culture faces. (Specimen A.60728 in South Australian Museum).
plowing and fertilisers were being used to improve pasture lands. A widespread result was the unearthing of vast numbers of stone tools assessed to be of Kartan types, in areas where there were no signs of the later microlithic culture types but including some tool-like objects, such as the ones locally called 'Bogan picks', and also large well patinated stone axes with hafting grooves, unlike the ones widely associated with post-5000 BP camps. Some of the materials discovered by N. Blunden and his daughter June Blunden have been drawn to attention, along with some useful deductions that have been made. Much remains to be told.

In May 1964 G. Lawton and this writer were able to take J.G.D. Clark of Cambridge and D.J. Mulvaney to see Ngautngaut, and we saw the excavations at Fromms Landing which Mulvaney and Lawton had just completed. Subsequently, Professor and Mrs Clark collected on the four sites at Moana, and this writer took them by air to Papunya in the Western MacDonnell Ranges, where the Aborigines revealed a mining place for the chlorite schists which have from times past been used in making their stone tjurunga.

In September 1964 David Corbett (Plate 1) led a South Australian Museum party to 'Myrtle Springs' Station on the eastern shore of Lake Torrens. The primary object was to discover meteorites of the type known as australites. These were found to be associated with campsites of the Pirrian culture phase which were abundant in the area of the reported strewn-field, providing a post-shower date for them. A Pirrian horizon was dated at Pine Dam to $1860\pm110$ BP, indicating survival of pirri implements for more than a thousand years there, after disappearance from the Murray River. In the upper Victoria River area as among the Korindji, Ngarinman and Bilingara tribes, far to the northwest, use of such weapon heads survived into modern times indicating the direction of one probable culture shift or change within Australia.

Having retired from his position in the South Australian Museum in 1965 this writer gave a summary account of his developed concept of the culture phases detected in Australia. Following additional studies he submits Figure 6 as a diagrammatic summary of observations to 1980. A later paper, mentioned below as in press in July 1982, gives a possible date for man's presence in Australia much closer to 100,000 years ago.

T.D. Campbell and P.S. Hossfeld in 1966, having long continued their interest in the area, joined with Robert Edwards in studying sites at Mt Burr and at Bevilaqua Cliffs in the south east of South Australia. Key findings included the presence of dingo remains at a date close to 7500 years ago and of another at a level not earlier than 8300 BP. The cultural succession they noted was clearly the same as at Cape Martin over a seven thousand year period. A long period of scant occupation in the Mt Burr shelter followed until close to 1000 years ago when microlith implement makers were present.

Much other archaeological work has been done in the South Australian area since then and the field has been productive of much evidence on Australian man, so that it might be said that there are only two campsites, one continuous one on the left and another on the right bank of the Murray from Albury to the sea. Roonka, north of Blanchetown, South Australia, received special attention with unprecedented rains on 17 November 1961. Mr S. Armstrong reported Aboriginal remains exposed and Harry Bowshall, Harold Burrows, and this writer, accompanied by a TV cameraman, found extended burials. A fire had been lit in one grave and its charcoal was preserved for possible radiocarbon dating. A month later Graeme L. Pretty joined the South Australian Museum staff and, realising the potential of the area, started by making observations in a riverbank rock shelter, and then began open air studies. Over the following twenty years his Roonka study has developed as a major one which is providing much information. Reference may be made to one of his later papers.

---

34 Tindale 1977 and 1981.
35 Mulvaney, Lawton and Twidale 1964.
36 Corbett 1967.
37 Tindale 1968.
**FIGURE 6**
SEQUENCE OF STAGES OBSERVED IN AUSTRALIAN PREHISTORY
(GENERALISED INTERPRETATION OF N.B. TINDALE, 1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLIMATIC CHANGES AND SEA LEVELS</th>
<th>YEARS BP</th>
<th>CULTURE PHASES and selected sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Peronian high seas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>W. Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Peronian high seas</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>MURUNDIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MUDUKIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PIRRIAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLANDRIAN RECESSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>TARTANGAN latest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last and coldest Lower</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phase of the sea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin II Glacial level</td>
<td>25000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A major advance in cold</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paudorf somewhat warmer interval</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periglacial conditions in</td>
<td>35000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Kosciusko area,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aridity at Lake Mungo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UPPER PLEISTOCENE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WISCONSIN II</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering sea levels</td>
<td>45000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50000</td>
<td>KARTAN undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset of Wisconsin II cooler</td>
<td>55000</td>
<td>Undated Kartan tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditions and end of Eem</td>
<td></td>
<td>widespread over the Australian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstadial</td>
<td></td>
<td>mainland; on pre-marine landsurf-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ace at Fulham, S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High sea levels</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin III/II</td>
<td>65000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstadial, the Eem, appears</td>
<td>70000</td>
<td>KARTAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as the Woakwine 7.5-8 metre</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kartan folk, presumed to be of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terraces in Southeast of South</td>
<td>75000</td>
<td>gracile type arrived during</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td>late Wisconsin I, date not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yet established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin I Glacial</td>
<td>much</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>older</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Cape Northerland, S.A.
- Ngaurgaut (Devon Downs)
- Small tools appear
- Tarranga, River Murray
- Cape Martin, S.A.
- Noola Cave, N.S.W.
- Kangaroo Island, S.A.
- Post-Kartan (Lampert)
- Lake Menindee, N.S.W.
- Hunter Island, Tasmania
- (Bowdler)
- Lake Menindee, N.S.W.
- (Tedford)

Niah Cave woman, Borneo.
Lake Mungo and gracile people using gjimarti-like hafted flake discoidal knives
Undated Kartan tools widespread over the Australian mainland; on pre-marine landsurface at Fulham, S.A.
Woakwine Range, S.A.
side chopping tool and grooved axe linked with Woakwine Terrace shore deposits
Kartan folk, presumed to be of gracile type arrived during late Wisconsin I, date not yet established
which contains results of considerable importance. He makes interesting comparisons with the sequence of occupational horizons at Tartanga and Ngautngaut, and confirms what had been deduced in the original paper ie that the Upper Beds were the ones contemporary with the levels in the Ngautngaut rock shelter, actually being separated from the real Tartangan Beds by the water-laid muds now called the Coonambidgal Formation. Pretty had not considered the effect on river level of the Peronian Terrace high seas of the Mid-Recent which would have affected water levels far upstream beyond Tartanga. It can be deduced that the calcareous hardening of the Tartangan Beds and the mineralization of the bones happened in the progressive risings of water level during late stages of the Flandrian Recession, a point that had been made earlier in a eustatic terrace paper by this author. An important aspect emerges in Pretty's discussion of the Mudukian culture horizon. He indicated that it was originally defined on the basis of the presence of muduk bone toggles which are not always present at other sites. At the time when Ngautngaut was being studied little was known about the geometric microliths, also present. It will be noted that in later studies the geometric microliths have been rightly given the first place in denoting this culture horizon, the separation from the Pirrian coming at a point where they become highly standardised and the pirri projectile point disappears, presumably because of the greater efficiency introduced by the multiple arming of spear heads with such geometrics. Geometrics present in Pirrian horizons are far inferior in skills of manufacture.

Having devoted attention to other facets of his lifework, this writer had less data to offer on the progress of archaeological research linked with South Australia during the 1970s. When the time comes to chronicle it in full there will be much to tell of the detailed teamwork at Roonka with Graeme Pretty, the peat bog finds of wooden boomerangs and other weapons near Millicent dating back to near the beginning of the Recent Period by Roger Luebbers and his associates, and the significant excavations on Kangaroo Island which are beginning to reveal the antiquity of the Kartan culture phase and something of post-Kartan days near the end of the Pleistocene, findings which we owe to Ronald J. Lampert. There has been systematic and dedicated work by members of the Anthropological Society of South Australia, as instanced by the recently completed survey of the Waldeila site south of Adelaide by R.D.J. Weathersbee, and the continuing work at Moana being carried out by Valerie M. Campbell and other members.

What of the future? In 1968 I reported a find of a transported basaltic side-pebble chopping tool of classical Kartan type which had been dug up by Tom McCourt from the foreshore deposits of the Woakwine eustatic terrace, inland from Beachport, South Australia. This find is now supported by the ploughing up on the same eustatic terrace foreshore near by of a large grooved axe of the type thought to be associated with Kartan sites in western New South Wales. It is also in the McCourt Collection.

This paper is based on the Presidential address given to Section 25A (Archaeology) at the ANZAS Jubilee Congress, Adelaide, May 1980. Shortly after the address was given von der Borch and his associates published dates for the Woakwine terrace based on an amino acid racemization technique which made possible further study of the time factor. Their date of 92,000 BP for a site enabled the writer to consider the possibility that man was already established in southern Australia by that time and that his arrival could have been at a time closer to 100,000 years ago than had previously been suspected. A paper on the significance of Woakwine implements, also confirming finds of Kartan implements in all parts of Australia, was read before a conference at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in October 1981.

38 Pretty 1977.
39 Hale and Tindale 1980.
41 Lampert 1981.
43 von der Borch and others 1980.
44 Tindale 1982 in press (Scripps paper).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


— Supplementary notes on the occurrence of Aboriginal remains discovered by Captain S.A. White at Fulham . . .', Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia, 43(1), 1919:81-84.


— The great Kartan mystery. (Terra Australis 6.) Canberra, 1981.


— Bifaced stone implements from south-eastern South Australia', Records of the South Australian Museum, 8(2), 1945:281-287.


Tindale, N.B. 'Native burial at Pedler's Creek, South Australia', South Australian Naturalist, 8(1), 1926:10.


— A dated Tartangan implement site from Cape Martin, south-east of South Australia', Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 80, 1957:109-123.

— Man of the hunting age', Colorado Quarterly, 8(5), 1960:229-245.


— 'Adaptive significance of the Panara or grass seed culture of Australia', in Wright, R.S.V. ed. Stone tools as cultural markers. Canberra, 1977:345-349.


— 'Australian Aboriginal techniques of pressure-flaking stone implements—some personal observations'. (University of Idaho.) 1982 (in press).


Tindale, Norman B. and Noone, H.V.V. 'Analysis of an Australian Aboriginal's hoard of knapped flint', Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 65(1), 1941:116-122.

ABORIGINAL CREATIVE WRITING: A SURVEY TO 1981

Adam Shoemaker

Most Australians seem unaware of the extent and quality of Aboriginal literature. My survey focuses on creative writing in English as this has been an important expression of the political aspirations of the Aboriginal people, as well as a significant component of modern Aboriginal history. Aboriginal poets, playwrights, novelists and short story writers have been among the most articulate and influential of spokesmen in recent years; as Bernard Smith has observed, ‘a few black writers . . . are playing a leading part in developing a new awareness of nationhood among their own people’.1

Naturally much of what these authors write does not come under the rubric of creative writing. Aboriginal contributions in autobiography, biography, legendary tales and political discourse are by no means negligible. Indeed, the importance of these contributions deserves separate consideration. The tone of much Aboriginal creative writing is strongly political and increasingly it is standing on its own merits as talented work. This article provides a brief overview of the past twenty years, attempts to analyse the past and present writing situation, and offers some tentative predictions for the future.

Poetry

It is commonly believed that Kath Walker was the first Aboriginal author to be published. In fact, David Unaipon's brief Native legends — a fascinating synthesis of Aboriginal and Christian mythology — appeared in Adelaide over fifty years ago.2 Walker was the first Aboriginal to have creative writing published in Australia: her collection of poetry entitled We are going was first released in 1964. Despite a generally adverse critical reception (‘Bad verse . . . jingle, clichés, laborious rhymes all piled up . . . This has nothing to do with poetry’3) We are going went through seven editions extremely rapidly.

A second volume of verse, The dawn is at hand, appeared in 1966. Four years later Walker published a major book of poetry, My people- A Kath Walker collection which reprinted her poems, added ten more and several brief essays plus one short story. After three reprints a new version of My people was released in 1981. The only substantive change was the replacement of the earlier essays with excerpts from a 1979 speech entitled 'Black Australia in the seventies'. Since 1970 new individual poems have appeared in various journals, magazines and books compiled by others, and Walker has increasingly chosen to channel her poetic energies towards children.

Walker's poetry has been maligned for its lack of sophistication and its qualities of 'sing-song' verse, but such a dismissal is far too harsh. Not only was the intention of the author to achieve an impact — which she surely has — but some of her blank verse in particular has special and intrinsic merit. Such poems as 'Stone age' and 'We are going' in the first book and 'Nona' and 'The past' in her second collection are impressive examples of this:

A thousand thousand camp fires in the forest
Are in my blood.
Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.
Now is so small a part of time, so small a part
Of all the race years that have moulded me.4

1 Smith 1981:35.
2 Unaipon [1929].
3 Anon. 1964:143.

*Photographs courtesy of Jack Davis*
ABORIGINAL CREATIVE WRITING

In 1970 a West Australian of the Bibbulmun tribe, Jack Davis, had his collection The first-born and other poems published by Angus and Robertson. Davis has had poetry in print regularly over the past ten years, most frequently in the magazine Identity (which he edited for six years). In 1978, he released his second compilation of verse, Jagardoo: poems from Aboriginal Australia. Davis has been described as 'the gentlest and most contained' of the major Aboriginal poets yet his verse can be most impassioned:

Oh, this earth! This sun! This sky I see
Is part of my heart, my heritage!
Oh God, I cry. Cry God for me,
For a place in a land of plenty.6

This expression of sorrow is not typical. Davis, especially in his second volume, devotes much attention to a poetic examination of natural phenomena — birds, animals, landforms — and does so with sensitivity. While all Walker's poems in We are going concern what can be termed 'Aboriginal themes' (dispossession, tribal mythology, the schism between the races), just one-third of the poems in Jagardoo can be so classified. Davis considers a range of subject matter which exceeds that of almost every other Aboriginal poet. Even a child's balloon can elicit his tender amusement:

This was not a minute thing,
But huge dimensional.
All her emotions were there:
Astonishment,
Anger, fear, joy,
All blending into hurt.
Better that you learn now, small one,
That balloons
At some time or other
Always
Burst.7

Probably the most controversial Aboriginal poet today is Kevin Gilbert. In recent years Australians have become familiar with his name: indeed, the September, 1980 issue of the Bulletin was advertised on the basis that one of his poems was to be included! Gilbert wrote a great deal during his fourteen-year imprisonment. A typescript copy of over fifty 'Poems written while in prison' is held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney. Many of these were chosen for Gilbert's collection, End of dreamtime, published in 1971. A large number of these had been altered from the original version by some unnamed editor, evidently without Gilbert's permission.8

Gilbert published individual poems in subsequent years but it was not until 1978 that his second anthology, People are legends, appeared. Quite a number of poems published in 1971 re-appear with the same title in 1978 but their content has been revised: according to Gilbert, the 'original versions came out' in this second collection9 (although the poems are not necessarily identical to the typescript version). In End of dreamtime several poems were concerned with such themes as love and solitude; significantly, every poem in the 1978 volume focuses upon Aboriginal themes (ranging from drunkenness and 'better blacks' to land rights and the figurative emasculation of Aboriginal men). Gilbert is a decidedly indignant poet. In People are legends the tone is almost unremittingly serious and critical both of Australian society and of certain Aboriginal people. The style of the 1978 book displays more poetic experimentation — more use of varying line lengths and rhythms,

5 Beston 1977a:461.
6 Davis 1970:35.
7 Davis 1978b:27.
8 Interview with Kevin Gilbert 6 May 1981.
9 Interview with Kevin Gilbert 6 May 1981.
more sarcastic use of dialect, more internal rhyme — than his first, and is frequently very powerful:

'white lady' white metho despair
I too am part of the price, brother
the price that has battered me here.
Give it and spare me the pain brother
Of repugnance in your burning eyes
I'm not drunk by choice, I'm a black
Brother
Escaping the hate I despise.10

Walker, Davis and Gilbert are without doubt the three major figures of Aboriginal poetry at the present time, yet many others have published single poems or collections.

One of the most intriguing and innovative 'Black Australian' poets is Bobbi Sykes, widely known as a political activist. Over the past decade Sykes has written numerous poems for Aboriginal newspapers and periodicals such as Aim, Identity, Koori-Bina, and Scopp.11 By 1975 her work had appeared in anthologies such as Australin voices, edited by Rosemary Dobson. In 1979 twenty-seven examples, entitled Love poems and other revolutionary actions, were published by the Saturday Centre of Cammeray, N.S.W. The tripartite collection includes nine poems for 'the revolution', ten 'for love', and eight 'of people'.

Sykes's poetry is unconventional and fascinating, especially in its line positioning and in its liberal use of the 'slash' line of punctuation, which operates with varying degrees of success. Her work is firmly committed to Aboriginal rights but it displays a more positive approach to the Aboriginal theme than does much of Kevin Gilbert's work. For example:

Let them know that this/
Was no country of beaten losers/
But proud warriors/
Whose time has almost come.12

Sykes's poetry also addresses themes relevant far beyond Aboriginal / Australian society, as in 'On visiting prisoners':

Mr. Warden-In-Charge/
Why do you lock me
Into a room . . .
I won't run away . . .
I live on the outside,
And that's a prison/too/
Regulated by twelve million citizens/
Who play warden to each other/
And twelve million clocks
That measure out our 'time'.13

Unlike most poets writing for 'public' consumption, Sykes reveals the self-abasing wit which is so much a part of Aboriginal and Islander humour, as in the innovative poem entitled 'That man'. After levelling often amusing criticism at her 'man' throughout most of the poem, Sykes executes an abrupt and humorous about-face in its closing lines:

12 Sykes 1979:10.
13 Sykes 1979:17.
Is that his foot-step/
    Coming down the path?
    So soon?
    So early?
Better dash/fix my face
    'n'
Rehearse what I'm
    going to say/
    another day.14

Another Aboriginal poet whose collected work has recently been published is twenty-
three-year-old Lionel George Fogarty of Queensland. His 1980 book, Kargun (obtainable only
from specialized outlets) was published by Cheryl Buchanan, 'black activist' author of We
have bugger all! The Kulaluk story.15 Fogarty sees the struggle of the Australian Aboriginal as part
of a global battle against European oppression, as some of his titles clearly indicate: 'Death
to Rhodesia-Zimbabwe Awakes' and 'To the P.L.O. Brothers and Sisters'. Fogarty's verse is
bitter and reveals more passion and anger than traditional poetic skill:
They butchered our people.
They are still butchering.
They say and show they'll never stop cutting as
long as we're here.
They want to get rid of us.
Well I say they are going to be surprised one day
by people like you and me
For we will gain what's ours.16

Fogarty is harsh in his condemnations — he is anti-academic, anti-church and anti-
'white' and his work offers incessant exhortations to Aboriginal people and threats to
Europeans:
Red power show me you're not lost
Black power row me to meeting you
Yellow power sing me a wing, tall in flight
Brown power make me sounds, aloud
White power, don't take me
Aboriginal power give me power
Now, I'll go — take.17

Not all of the author's poetry is as vitriolic but it is all as starkly-drawn. In fact the most
impressive aspect of this book (in terms of skill) is the talented graphic illustrations by
Aboriginal artist Johnny Cummins of Cairns.18

The most recent anthology of Aboriginal poetry is Gerald Bostock's collection, Black
man coming. It was published in 1980 but was not widely circulated until 1981. Bostock's
involvement since 1970 in Aboriginal political campaigns is reflected in half of his twenty-
one poems. The longest and most fervent of these, 'Black children', was written (he notes)
immediately after the forced removal of the Aboriginal tent 'Embassy' from the Parliament
House lawns in 1971.19 It is an impassioned and very rhythmic exhortation:

14 Sykes 1979:22
16 Fogarty 1980:15.
17 Fogarty 1980:95.
18 Fogarty's second volume of verse, Yoogum Yoogum, was released in September, 1982. It displays a
maturing, colloquial poetic skill.
19 Interview with Gerald Bostock 22 July 1980.
Come on, Black Children,
Rise on your feet!
Get out of the gutter
And onto the street;
United together,
Hand in hand,
Heads raised high we stand
Then, march as one,
Surging forward and onward,
For justice,
For freedom
And for our land.20

Bostock is clearly a believer in the development of the power of pan-Aboriginalism in Australia. He feels his verse has a role to play towards that end:
So Murrawina.
Black woman;
I will do as you request:
Unite your sons and daughters
And in your eyes be blessed.21

A powerful sense of rhythm and commitment is perhaps the most impressive aspect of Bostock's poetry; often rhyme augments the strong cadences of his verse, but occasionally word choice — and metre — become noticeably forced:
We speak our mother's lingo
And hunt with our brother, the dingo
We have our lore and tribal rites
And we dance corroboree at sacred sites.22

A growing number of Aboriginal people have published one or several poems in various magazines and newspapers. One of the most promising is Aileen Corpus, who contributed two poems to Identity and five to Meanjin. Her poetry is frequently urban in focus, quite colloquial, and often captures sounds in an onomatopoetic fashion:
bright red spurted out
in warm tiny drops
to my heart-beats,
ph.pht.pht.23

Corpus also displays a talent for effective usage of consonants and phonetic sounds, as in 'blkfern-jungal':
wlk'n down regent street i see
blks hoo display blknez
(i min they sens of blknez)
n they say t'me . . .
'ime gonna lif yoo outta
yor blk hole n shoo yoo
how t'wlk n dress n tk24

20 Bostock 1980:18
23 Corpus 1977:473.
24 Corpus 1977:470.
Finally, Corpus, when using rhyme, does so with impact:

Then darkness
Hurled a legacy as he recoiled
Leaving me ashamed
I'd become cheap game, soiled,
Another gin for another jockey
Who kept a score
No doubt to him a bore.
A gin, another token
Another one is done
Another black is broken
In more ways than one.23

Her 'blkfern-jungal' exemplifies a singular approach to poetry which emphasizes the sounds of words perhaps even more than their meanings. It is possible that this trend will be carried further to incorporate the lyrical sounds and cadences of Aboriginal languages, which would represent a further unique contribution to Australian poetry. This process may have already begun, for in the July 1980 issue of Overland is a poem written by Tutama Tjapangati of Papunya, Northern Territory:

Ohhh,

too much/

little bitta cheeky bug/

kapi purlka / walpa purlka / ohhh! ebbrywhere!

jitapayin WHOOF! gone. Finished!

/ kapi kapi kapi / cough'a cough'a cough'a

ohhh, too much


In addition to this emerging ‘phonetic current’ of poetry, a growing number of Aboriginal authors are publishing more conventional verse. Among the writers are Maureen Watson27, Lola Cameron-Bonney28, Banjo Worrumarra29, Mary Duroux30, Vicki Davey31, Lorraine Mafi-Williams32, Hyllus Maris33, Ngiti Ngiti [Mona Tur]34, Daisy Utomorrah35, Robbie Walker36, and John Judabah37. It seems that poetry is the most popular medium of creative expression in English. Any Aboriginal newspaper or magazine will almost certainly include poems. Naturally not all of this can be considered skilful poetry but an increasing amount deserves this appellation.

The novel

One of the most popular modes of creative expression in the western world today is the novel, yet few Aboriginal people have published works of this genre. To date, only Colin Johnson, Monica Clare, Faith Bandler and Archie Weller have written what can be considered novels. Nevertheless, these four have made a distinct and significant contribution to Aboriginal creative writing in English.

30 Mafi-Williams 1978:3.
31 Maris 1978:27.
33 Utomorrah 1975:27.
34 Walker 1981.
35 Judabah 1981:3.
Johnson was the first Aboriginal to publish in this form. His *Wild cat falling* (really a novella) was first released in 1965, re-issued in paperback later that year, and reprinted in 1979. *Wild cat falling* is a lucid and impressive study of a young outcast — a 'part-Aboriginal' who feels alienated from all around him and is searching for some sort of identity that will provide him with inner peace. As the author says, 'The character I portray is not against the world — he thinks the world is against him'. The protagonist has served a term in prison (a place he detests but, paradoxically, where he first feels that he really belongs). The novel details his turmoil as he tries to find a place for himself and unsuccessfully endeavours to break away from the world of crime.

Johnson displays an assured and consistent talent in this novel. His imagery is apt and succinct:

A ticket was put into my hand when I was born, but if it gave a destination, well, time had smudged the ink and so far no collector had come to clear the matter up.

His sardonic humour is most effective: 'Maybe she thinks if she keeps it up long enough I will leap out and do a corroboree in the middle of the floor'. And, with reference to white sunbathers: 'Funny how they oil themselves over and bake to achieve the despised colour I was born with'. *Wild cat falling* is not a flawless novel but it does make one regret Johnson's fourteen-year absence from Australian book publishing while he travelled the world and became deeply involved in Buddhism.

Johnson's second novel, *Long live Sandawara*, is quite different in scope and intention. There are certain thematic parallels with the earlier book (the evils of liquor, robbery, the spectre of jail, a Beatnik idiom, and the presence of a venerable Aboriginal mentor) but this 1979 novel attempts and achieves far more. It is in a sense two novels wedded into one. The first describes a happy-go-lucky commune of urban Aboriginal teenagers whose leader, Alan, prompts them to undertake a suicidal bank robbery. The second details in epic style the historical independence struggle in the Kimberleys of the Aboriginal 'freedom fighter' Sandawara. These two halves are skilfully woven together by the author and each derives added impact from the parallel structure, as was Johnson's intention. However, the style in which these two segments are written is disparate: in the urban section 'the two teeny-boppers sit on the mattress, very, very, bored' whereas in the Sandawara episodes the old man Noorak is finally ready to commence his 'last journey back to the strong places of my ancestors and to the land which Sandawara called his own'. It is a testament to Johnson's talent that his often mundane urban characters can be viewed as a profitable counterpoint to the heroism of Sandawara.

*Long live Sandawara* is more complex than *Wild cat falling*, in its more comprehensive characterization, more frequent creation of drama, and wider-ranging satirical focus. The second novel also differs from the first in that the 1965 work was intended far more for the European reader. As the author commented, 'the second book is consciously directed towards Aboriginals more than the first, even in terms of style, which is an non-intellectual as possible. I didn't want words getting in the way of the action and the argumentation'. Finally, instead of the uncertain self-awareness which the protagonist experiences at the end of *Wild cat falling*, one is left in the 1979 novel with the optimistic vision of Alan as a confirmed and surviving Aboriginal patriot who is returning to tribal land with the old man Noorak.

Johnson was until 1981 the only male Aboriginal novelist. 'Perhaps the first novel by an Australian Aboriginal woman' (according to its own Foreword) is Monica Clare's *Karobran*,

38 Johnson 1965:xiv.
40 Johnson 1965:75.
42 Johnson 1979:41.
44 Interview with Colin Johnson 27 August 1980.
ABORIGINAL CREATIVE WRITING

published posthumously in 1978. *Karobran* presents an unusual and difficult case: as the author died 'before the manuscript could be revised and rewritten by herself' the book was edited by Jack Horner with the help of Mona Brand. *Karobran* amounts to a very autobiographical novel and readers are left unsure of the extent of Monica Clare's fictionalizing.

The book concerns the experiences of a part Aboriginal girl, Isabelle, raised with her brother Morris by her bullock-driving father. It details in fairly unemotional fashion the forced removal of the children from their father by the 'Child Welfare Board' and their vicissitudes in various institutions and private homes. One of the most potent aspects of the novel is Isabelle's apprehension of racial prejudice amongst children: 'When she went to collect her suitcase, she found that it had been put apart from the others — and written on the side of it, in white chalk, was "Your Black"'. The novel is reasonably successful in its description of Isabelle's trials as a young working woman in the city and seems to be introducing the important theme of trade unionism as it progresses. Unfortunately, the narrative line peters out towards the end of the book, in which Isabelle travels from reserve to reserve speaking with her people. The novel closes rather abruptly without resolving a number of issues and has the air of an unfinished work.

Faith Bandler's first novel, *Wacvie*, was published in 1977. It is a semi-fictionalized historical account of the abduction of Pacific Islanders to work as slave labour in the sugarcane fields of Queensland. The novel centres upon the experiences of the eponymous character — Bandler's father — who acts as a leader of his transported people in their battle for rights and justice from their employers. In addition Bandler offers a believable view of the lifestyle of the Queensland plantation owners and their wives, down to the last touch of rouge on the women's cheeks:

> She sat her huge body on the small exquisite chair, covering it all except the delicate back-rest, her stays holding in the layers of fat that would otherwise have smothered the beautifully grained wood.

However, the novel also suffers from a number of weaknesses. For example, as reviewers such as Mercer have noted, the author devotes a disproportionate emphasis to the sufferings that many Kanaka labourers experienced, without paying enough attention to the positive adaptation of these people to Australia. Secondly, it is ironic that, due to the author's genial, affectionate and reserved writing style, those sufferings that were experienced are somehow robbed of their full impact. Finally, *Wacvie* rushes to a rather sudden close, again a function of Bandler's explicit concern to detail the hardships of the Islanders as slave labourers.

Bandler's writing style is well-suited to books for children. Her 1980 book, *Marani in Australia* (co-authored by Len Fox) uses this to advantage in describing the same general area of Australian history. In this sense *Marani* is closely related to *Wacvie*. Bandler calls it 'more or less a sequel to the first book. There is a lot of me in it'.

As a result of the complexities surrounding the editing of *Karobran* and because Faith Bandler is of Ambrymese (New Hebridean) extraction it can be argued that until 1981 Colin Johnson was the only published Aboriginal novelist. *The day of the dog*, an important first novel by twenty-four-year-old Archie Weller of East Perth, appeared in that year. Weller's

---

45 Clare 1978:vii. Jack Horner (interview 17 November 1982) declares that 'I may have shortened sentences, tidied grammar and transposed some phrases but I left her expression and wordage alone. She had an idea that a small child would have a sentimental expression in speech, and that I cut out'. He reports that Monica Clare had always wanted to write the novel; she took a Wollongong Workers' Educational Association course in creative writing then 'rewrote till she was satisfied. So it was her creative effort, whatever cultural invasion may have come from W.E.A.'

46 Clare 1978:47.

47 Bandler 1977:55.


49 Interview with Faith Bandler 23 July 1980.
writing skill first became evident in 1977 when, under the pseudonym of Raymond Chee, he won a short story contest sponsored by the magazine *Identity*.\(^{50}\)

Weller's *The day of the dog* describes the frequent desperation and violence of Australian urban life for both Aboriginal people and poor Europeans. Like *Wild cat falling*, the novel details the misadventures of a young Aboriginal ex-convict and the irresistible web of crime which entraps him upon his release from prison; as in *Long live Sandawara* the themes of police brutality, carefree sexual gratification, and of drinking and the Bush as refuges or escapes are underlined. But despite thematic similarities *The day of the dog* is an original work with a tremendously immediate and strikingly dramatic atmosphere. Weller's slightly unorthodox use of the first-person present tense is readable and successful and his powers of description are finely-honed and evocative. He describes the protagonist Doug Dooligan and his mates most graphically:

> No-one owns them. They have cobwebs in their hair and minds and, spiderlike, they dream up new dastardly deeds for their initiation. They paint on lies and blood from fights, to make themselves look elegant with patterns from their new Dreaming. They dance to their gods of flashing lights and hopes.\(^{51}\)

Weller's use of metaphor is impressive:

> Doug stays where he is for a long time. Once, he hears a motorbike zoom down the lane with radioed messages bombarding the air. He can smell the bitter scent of the dying tomato bushes amongst which he lies. Their season is almost over, but his is just beginning. The police will pick him from the bush and let him stew in prison.\(^{52}\)

Both Johnson and Weller have further manuscripts in preparation and, if the talent exemplified in their work encourages publishers' interest, the number of Aboriginal novels should continue to grow steadily in the coming years.

**Drama**

The dramatic tradition of the Aboriginal people — exemplified in religious rites and camp 'corroborees' — extends back thousands of years. Aboriginal choirs and concert troupes have given successful public performances in southeastern Australia since the 1880s. Mime and impromptu sketches have long been a popular form of entertainment within many Aboriginal communities but it is only in the last decade that Aboriginal dramatists have produced written scripts for public performances by Aboriginal actors.

In his introduction to the 1965 edition of *Wild cat falling* Colin Johnson mentions that he had 'written a play called *The delinks*\(^ {53}\) but I can find no evidence that it was ever performed publicly in Australia. All of the dramatic productions by Aboriginal playwrights discussed below were either performed or published in this country.

The first such play was Kevin Gilbert's *The cherry pickers*, which was staged at the Mews Theatre in Sydney in August 1971 and was highly commended in the Captain Cook Bicentenary Competition\(^ {54}\). The play revolves around a group of seasonal workers — Aboriginal cherry pickers — who are preparing to begin work at the orchard. They are awaiting the arrival of 'Johnollo', a hero for the children and an inspiration in more ways than one for the women: 'that Johnollo! 'leven babies he made las' season an' only one miss!'\(^ {55}\) They are also delayed because the cherry trees (especially 'King Eagle', the largest of them) are apparently sick. Gilbert presents his audience with a wide range of emotions in the play — elation, disgust, amusement and sorrow — and does so utilizing a very appropriate Aboriginal idiom. It is a decidedly vibrant play which profits from music and a solid amount of humorous dialogue. It also appears to present a more optimistic attitude than does much of the author's poetry:

\(^{50}\) Chee 1977:28-30.  
\(^{51}\) Weller 1981:44.  
\(^{53}\) Johnson 1965:xii.  
\(^{54}\) 'The cherry pickers' 1971:9.  
\(^{55}\) Gilbert 1971a:12.
Phonso- 'I — I don't think I'll ever find a - a live Rosella. Only dead 'uns and dead feathers! Those white boys shoot all the live Rosellas with their pea-rifles jus for fun an' there is no Rosellas left for us blackfellahs to love - only dead 'uns.'

Mrs. Gegg- 'One day the blackfellahs will find a beautiful live Rosella for their very own and it will be a black whitefellahs' and a white blackfellahs' Rosella, and no one will ever, not ever, try to shoot it down, Phonso!'

Phonso- 'What sort o' Rosella could that be Mrs. Gegg?'

Mrs. Gegg- 'A very big, very strong and very beautiful one, Phonso — a sort of Rosella and a — type of beautiful, grown-up love-bird I think.'

A number of themes run through The cherry pickers: the affinity between Aboriginal people and nature; the spoliation of nature by European society; the inability of Aboriginal people to return to the past despite the retention of tradition and superstition; the definition and value of culture; and the inability of even 'good whites' to fully comprehend and appreciate the Aboriginal ethos. One of the highlights of the play is its interlude of pure fun and mocking, termed 'geenjing time', in which both Europeans and Aboriginal people who behave in a pretentious fashion are lampooned. Despite the pathos of the ending, when it is revealed that Johnollo has perished in an automobile accident and that 'King Eagle' is dying, the play illustrates Aboriginal resilience and humour.

Gilbert has also written a number of sketches for the stage (some of them rather bizarre) which were performed in tandem with The cherry pickers. What is salient about these sketches (titles include The gods look down, Evening of fear, Eternally Eve, Everyman should care and The blush of birds) is that unlike the rest of Gilbert's writing none is at all concerned with Aboriginal themes. It is regrettable that The cherry pickers and the sketches can only be read in typescript form in the Fryer Library collection. The play in particular merits publication.

The second venue for an Aboriginal dramatic production was the Nindethana Theatre of Melbourne where, in 1972, the revue Jack Charles is up and fighting was staged. The show, starring Aboriginal actors Jack Charles and Bob Maza, was a 'revue of short skits depicting, sometimes humorously, sometimes poignantly, the confrontation of black and white cultures, from the Aboriginal point of view'. Maza left Nindethana in order to form the National Black Theatre in Redfern, Sydney, and his first production there — another series of sketches entitled Basically black — was largely derived from the material for Jack Charles. Nindethana's revue met with 'a fairly good reception from white audiences in Melbourne and Canberra'; Basically black was quite successful when it opened in Sydney later in 1972, but was not so fortunate when it was taken on tour through Queensland in 1973. Public criticism was frequently vitriolic, although 'black audiences responded enthusiastically'. Neither script has been published.

Two extremely brief Aboriginal plays that have been published but not performed are Kath Walker's Tail of platypus and Daisy Utemorrah's Mugugu. Both are directed towards children and employ the technique of personifying animal characters. They were printed in the magazine Identity in April 1974 and January 1975. The first describes the distress of a platypus who has lost his tail and ultimately discovers it being used as a diving board by a frog; the second involves two brothers who go fishing, catch a mugugu (toadfish), and then are persuaded by its entreaties to return it to the sea.

The year 1975 was significant for Aboriginal drama. The first full-length Aboriginal play in four years was staged in the recently-renovated National Black Theatre Art and Culture Centre in Redfern. Robert Merritt's The cake man, the most successful Aboriginal

---

56 Gilbert 1971a:18.
57 Gilbert 1971b.
58 The typescript of The cherry pickers held there unfortunately omits one scene and appears to be the only copy extant.
dramatic production to date in terms of exposure across Australia and overseas\(^61\), opened at the Centre in January 1975. The popularity of Merritt’s play was such that it was successfully revived in 1977 for a season at the Bondi Pavilion Theatre in Sydney. A condensed version was televised nationally by the A.B.C. later in the same year. In 1978 The Currency Press of Sydney released the play in print, making it the first published full-length work by an Aboriginal playwright.

_The cake man_ is a very popular play among Aboriginal people because of its verisimilitude: it captures the lifestyle of Aboriginal reserves (popularly called ‘missions’) as it was for many during their childhood. Song-writer Candy Williams’s sentiments are typical: ‘It really freaked me out. The first production was really tops. It moved me no end, because on every mission there’s a Cake Man story\(^62\). But it is not simply a matter of relating to the play from personal experience, for _The cake man_ has been generally well-received by all audiences. To account for this one must credit not only the dramatist’s subject matter, but also the skill with which he delineates the relationships between his characters. Merritt’s sensitive and realistic treatment of dialogue is particularly noteworthy. The affectionate speech of Ruby for her son, Pumpkinhead, and the despondency revealed in the words of her husband, Sweet William ('I been stewin' all my life. Ain't made me no better, Rube') have the ring of truth. And, running through this is a singular sort of credible levity which remains undampened even in the face of misfortune. To cite one example, the above-quoted line of Sweet William’s is followed by Ruby’s ‘You always tasted good to me\(^63\), which brings a smile from her dejected spouse.

The major themes of the play are generally not optimistic: the emasculation of Aboriginal males via the loss of traditional authority; the deplorably insufficient conditions of many ‘missions’; and the hopelessness of searching for prosperity in the city as an Aboriginal; though all of these are offset by the resilience and affection of the Aboriginal family. Whether or not _The cake man_ is ultimately uplifting is a matter of some debate. The play closes with the innocent Sweet William’s arrest outside a Sydney pub (solely because he is standing near a brawl when the police arrive) and this is followed by a musing Epilogue in which he addresses the audience in a monologue, pleading for the return of his separate ‘reality’. Some have questioned the appropriateness of casting the non-Aboriginal Mr. Peterson as the ‘Cake Man’ who gives Pumpkinhead and his mother a box of food (and a cake), arguing that it replicates too closely the pattern of paternalistic donation.

_The cake man_ is strongest in its portrayal of the Aboriginal ‘mission’ family; it is slightly out of its depth when it utilizes exaggerated caricatures of Priest, Soldier and Civilian at the outset of Act One. Though the points made may be true, their manner of expression does not do justice to the subtlety, skill and humour of the remainder of the play. Nevertheless, Merritt’s script is a significant and successful piece and it is to be hoped that he will continue as a dramatist.

In 1975 two one-act plays by Jack Davis, _The biter bit_ and _The dreamers_, were performed on a double bill at the Black Theatre. The latter had been presented on its own in 1973 in Bunbury, Western Australia. Although neither play has been published, the latter was rewritten and expanded into a full-length production by its author for its performance at the 1982 Festival of Perth.\(^64\) In fact, Davis is the most prolific Aboriginal playwright and his major full-length play, _Kullark_, was one of the highlights of the 1979 Sesquicentenary celebrations in Western Australia. Indeed, it ‘was acclaimed by some critics as the finest thing to come out of the year’s celebrations’.\(^65\)

---

\(^61\) _The cake man_ finished a successful season in Brisbane, following seasons in Melbourne, Sydney, and at The Festival of World Theatre, Denver, Colorado, U.S.A between July and September 1982.

\(^62\) Interview with Candy Williams 21 July 1980.

\(^63\) Merritt 1978:18.

\(^64\) Interview with Jack Davis 13 November 1981.

\(^65\) Watts 1980:58.
The play itself ‘is a blend of traditional and modern Aboriginal culture’; ‘some segments incorporate traditional song and dance, whereas others use country and western music’.\textsuperscript{66} The play is a tripartite, largely historical play which skilfully depicts the racial attitudes and actions involved in the ‘colonizing’ of Perth and south-western Western Australia from the 1880s to the present day. Significantly, it is one of the first bilingual dramatic productions in Australia: the three European and three Aboriginal actors deliver most of their lines in English, but some parts are spoken in the author’s language, Bibbulmun. The play revealed some facts deeply disturbing to Western Australians. In the author’s words, ‘We said in Kullark, that 13,000 Aboriginal people were wiped out in the short space of 71 years’.\textsuperscript{67} Some have challenged the veracity of Davis’s play but he maintains that ‘it is all fact, based on material in the Battye Library’.\textsuperscript{68}

Nevertheless the play is not sombre. Humour pervades the entire work and Davis’s wit enables him to offer entertaining, covert didacticism which emphasizes the buoyancy and resilience of Aboriginal Australians. As he put it, ‘Aborigines had learnt to keep themselves alive by laughing’\textsuperscript{69} and this approach to life is evident from the outset of the play: one of the major characters, Alec Yorlah, dismisses the local Priest as ‘just a bookie’s clerk’ and continues ‘and Him up there . . . ‘e’s sort of in charge of the T.A.B. in the sky’.\textsuperscript{70} Kullark obtained a significant amount of exposure through its production by the National Theatre Company of Perth in 1979. The company toured various Western Australian country towns and had a successful season in the capital. Kullark is scheduled to be published by Currency Press in tandem with the revised version of The dreamers late in 1982. Publication and possible television and feature film productions should enable more Australians to become acquainted with these major contributions to Aboriginal drama.

Another Aboriginal play performed during the past decade is Gerald Bostock’s Here comes the nigger, first presented at Redfern’s Black Theatre in 1976. Bostock’s play has not been published, but it may well be the first Aboriginal work transformed into a feature film. The author revised the play script considerably and with actor Bryan Brown approached the Australian Film Commission. In March 1980 the Creative Development Branch of the Commission awarded Bostock $2,000 to develop his script.\textsuperscript{71}

The revisions the author has effected since his play was staged are quite considerable, but the theme of the work and its characterization have remained relatively unchanged. Here comes the nigger is the most powerful and the most visibly violent of all the Aboriginal plays written to date. Unlike all others it mounts to an intense climax at the very end and provides no dénouement. The two major characters are a blind Aboriginal poet named Sam Matthews and the woman, Odette O’Brien, who is tutoring him for his H.S.C. examinations. They gradually develop an affectionate relationship and (though the playwright is careful never to portray a sexual dimension) those round the pair are convinced that each is sexually taking advantage of the other. Bostock is perhaps strongest in his lucid illustration of racist stereotypes employed on both sides of the colour line. Says Billy, Sam’s brother: ‘You know what these gubbah [European] women are like. They can screw you right up’.\textsuperscript{72} And Neil, Odette’s brother, says: ‘You know what they say about white women who muck around with black men. They say they’ve got a sweet tooth; that they’re partial to the taste of licorice sticks’.\textsuperscript{73} These racist misconceptions can be very destructive, Bostock suggests. The tragic ending of the play is a direct result of their operation.

\textsuperscript{66} ‘Kullark” “A play” 1978:7.
\textsuperscript{67} Forrest 1980:5-10.
\textsuperscript{68} Watts 1980:58.
\textsuperscript{69} Watts 1980:58.
\textsuperscript{70} Davis c.1979:5.
\textsuperscript{71} Anon. 1980:194.
\textsuperscript{72} Bostock c.1976:13.
\textsuperscript{73} Bostock c.1976:87.
Although the specific context the dramatist presents is Australian, the theme is universal and Bostock argues that his play 'can be adapted to any urban area where there is a majority and a minority'. In addition, Bostock highlights another theme which many overlook — the position of the handicapped in our society. As he puts it, 'Family groups get over-protective of any family member who is handicapped, and try to take them over. Sam and Odette are involved in a paternalistic relationship also, but they try to overcome their in-bred patterns and become individuals'. Bostock's production is also unique in focussing wholly on urban Aboriginal people. The setting is the city, the police are ubiquitous, the idiom is urban and the pace is swift. The play suffers to a degree from an excessive number of sub-plots which divert attention from the main relationship and, given the liberal views of the author concerning oppressed minorities, it is curiously illiberal toward homosexuals.

Here comes the nigger occupies a singular position in the field of Aboriginal drama and may soon spread its powerful message much further. Dramatists have made a most important contribution to Aboriginal creative writing in English: in Jack Davis's words, 'I think we'll find people are going to ask for more of this type of theatre'.

The short story

In the 'Aboriginal Issue' of Meanjin (Number 4 of 1977) John Beston said of the short story: 'No Aboriginal has done extensive work in that form. Colin Johnson and Kath Walker, however, have both published several'. Beston was inaccurate. By 1977, Walker had published five stories and Johnson two in various books and journals, while Jack Davis had published nine original short stories (under this name or his tribal name 'Jagardoo') in the magazine Identity. In addition to being one of the most respected poets and playwrights, Davis deserves to be recognized as the most prolific Aboriginal short story writer to date. Moreover, as longtime editor of Identity he encouraged younger authors so that this magazine became the main showcase for short stories by Aboriginal people.

Davis displays a range of approaches in his stories, but all are unified by Aboriginal themes. Some stories are Aboriginal only in the sense that they are autobiographical, such as 'My brother Harold' and 'The contest'. In such stories Davis's tone is most amusing: 'Then came Dad's voice, "What the dickens is going on in there?" My Dad never read Dickens, but this was a favourite expression of his'. The author usually selects a contemporary incident in order to provide some revelation concerning human nature. The story 'White fantasy — black fact' is a case in point, for it details the rescue of an Aboriginal girl suffering from snakebite by a gang of 'bikies'. These supposedly tough customers are the only ones willing to stop by the roadside and offer help while average citizens continue to speed down the highway.

Yet another approach Davis employs is to describe an Aboriginal 'fringe-dwelling' situation (as in 'Heat') in which nothing substantive actually occurs. The characters nevertheless manage to laugh in spite of their destitution and discomfort. Not all of Davis's stories have uplifting endings: 'A day' describes an uncared-for Aboriginal child who collapses in school due to malnutrition, fatigue, and blood poisoning.

A number of stories represent dramatizations of historical incidents. In 'Deaf mute mother' Davis describes the pitiful plight of a deaf mute, Iltja, who dies after her baby has been forcibly removed by the authorities for adoption. In 'Pay back', cruel white explorers are doomed by the treachery of one of their fellows (who has previously poisoned a soak to exterminate Aboriginal people) when they force a native to lead them to the nearest water hole. Whereas this story relies heavily upon irony for its success, 'The stone' uses the supernatural to enhance its impact. A young tribal girl is lured by a dazzling opal to follow its flight when thrown into a pool: 'Then as the water engulfed her, the light became a crown in

74 Interview with Gerald Bostock 22 July 1980.
75 'Kullark' "A play" 1978:7.
77 Davis 1974b:29.

124
the spot where she had slipped into the pool's embrace. Then the curlew's sobbing cry cut through the midnight air. Even when he uses lyrical and mystical language, Davis's stories are carefully controlled and exhibit the same reserve and sensitivity as his poetry.

As Beston noted, Kath Walker and Colin Johnson have also made several contributions to the genre. Walker's entire Stradbroke dreamtime can be considered, in one sense, a collection of short stories. Several of these have been excerpted for publication in various magazines. She has, however, also penned stories of animal fantasy purely for children. 'Koo-Poo' is a simple didactic tale about an errant baby kangaroo, which instructs all offspring not to disobey their mothers' orders to stay by their sides. Walker has also contributed to Australian anthologies such as The cool man and other contemporary stories which appeared in 1978. In 1981 she entered the field of juvenile book publishing with her story Father sky and mother earth, which she described as 'purely environmental propaganda directed towards children'.

Although most Aboriginal short stories have appeared in Identity Colin Johnson's two stories, 'A missionary I would have been' and 'Safe delivery', reached a wider audience in his home state by publication in Westerly. Neither story has anything to do with Aborigines or, indeed, with Australia. In the former the protagonist undergoes a 'dark night of the soul' experience in Nepal. The story is replete with conflict, particularly internal conflict — between lust and self-control, Buddhism and Christianity — and the tortured atmosphere is lucidly conveyed: 'I was lost! Hideous scene — beautiful scene of my damnation. No — of my purging! Arak, more Arak, what matter — desire!'. The environment of the story is cloying and overwhelmingly tactile and sensuous: 'The rain began to fall — like a white mist of sperm. The clouds bulged heavy with dripping lust,' and 'tunnel of alley, oozing slime; falling steps slippery with my desire — worn with my countless thoughts'. In striking contrast is Johnson's 'Safe delivery', which uses irony to throw into relief the space traveller's psychological trauma born of fear, solitude, and helplessness. It also analyzes the cold, ironic comfort provided by technological language. As it turns out, the traveller is doomed and the detached, clinical diction only serves to accentuate the perception of horror. It also serves to illustrate Johnson's wide-ranging stylistic talent.

Probably the most promising new writer introduced in Identity was 'Raymond Chee', alias Archie Weller. When a short story contest for Australian authors was inaugurated by the magazine at the end of 1976 forty-five entries were received from all over the country. Winner of the Adult Section was nineteen-year-old Weller. One is immediately struck by the similarities between the beginning of Chee's story 'Dead dingo' [Thus: ('The gates . . . close behind him and he's free. Free? Ha, that's a laugh')] and the opening lines of Johnson's Wild cat falling: 'Today the gates will swing to eject me, alone and so-called free'. In fact Weller emulates Johnson in numerous ways in this story describing the plight of a thin, solitary 'part-Aboriginal' ex-convict who rejoins his friends as a hero because of his crime. The man goes to a party, drinks, smokes dope and chats up an unknown girl; he feels forced to break the law again because he cannot make money in a legitimate fashion. Despite the abundant similarities, Chee's is an original work: his style has nothing of Johnson's Beatnik idiom about it and significantly more action is compressed into a short space.

This indebtedness is less apparent in his longer 1977 story 'Stolen car'. Chee details the fall from innocence of a country Aboriginal who journeys to the city and becomes totally corrupted and desensitized by urban life. There is no sense of free will in this story; from the moment Johnny Moydan accepts a lift into town with Benny Wallah (in a stolen car) his

---

78 Davis 1975b:25.
79 Interview with Kath Walker 27 August 1980.
82 Johnson 1975:8.
84 Johnson 1965:3.

125
fate is sealed. The author offers a bitter and detailed description of police brutality which harmonizes well with his intense, staccato style of writing:

Then the sergeant gets in
Middle-aged and thin. Greyish hair, a little curly. A hard lean, bony, face. A slit for a mouth, and cruel, dark eyes boring into the youth, alight with a madness that frightens and paralyses him.

Jerk his brain up and down.

Johnny's brain snaps. He becomes a loose, ragged, spineless wreck.

The protagonist fights the system but after being branded and being treated as a criminal for such a long time he finally breaks down and acts the role:

Something deep down in Johnny's tortured heart breaks. . . . The car is a smooth blue sports type. A prostitute, flaunting her body sensually. Teasing and tempting him. He desires her. Be as good as the boy who owns her.

In yielding to the temptation Johnny internalizes all the forces of destruction surrounding him and causes his own self-destruction in a high-speed chase.

Chee moves totally away from the 'urban youth and crime' model in his 1979 story 'The storm'. Although in some senses this story is less complete than 'Stolen car', the style is more mature and less frenetic. Chee's imagery is precise: 'Cars roaring past on the highway, half a mile away, left the memory of their drone hanging, with clothes on the line, still and expectant'. His images can also be savage:

He was out of the car and in his storm.
Suddenly, it wasn't his storm anymore, but an animal born from the heaving gross belly of the clouds, threatening to destroy his little daughter with its bloody teeth.

There is no overt Aboriginal theme in 'The storm'. The reserve inhabitant is buffeted by the wind and rain just as much as the most obnoxious European in the district. But the story does clearly underline the potency of nature — a fact that Aboriginal people have been particularly aware of for thousands of years — while it exemplifies Chee's maturing talent as a writer.

No anthologies composed exclusively of Aboriginal short stories have yet appeared, although the collection Aboriginal voices edited by Howard Kelly, John McArthur and Barbara Putt does include several stories by Michael Parsons and Hyllus Maris. Certainly the talents of Jack Davis and Chee/Weller illustrate the potential for such an exclusive collection. Other writers such as Reg Saunders, Lola Cameron-Bonney, Bob Randall, and Louise West (so far published only in Identity) can only be named here, but their work suggests that the short story genre may continue to be an important mode of Aboriginal literary expression.

85 Chee 1977b:30.
86 Chee 1977b:33.
89 Cameron-Bonney 1972:37.
ABORIGINAL CREATIVE WRITING

This paper has surveyed expressions of Aboriginal creativity in written English. One point which should be emphasized is that Aboriginal writers feel that they are singularly qualified to explain a unique racial experience to other Australians. The effective birth of Aboriginal creative writing in English occurred in the 1960s: the 1970s have seen the rapid maturation of that literature. The primacy of poetry as the most popular medium of Aboriginal written expression is likely to persist. Jack Davis, for example, has had two further volumes of verse accepted for publication.92 Exciting and innovative developments in the area of phonetic and dialect poetry may well be in the offing with the talents of those such as Bobbi Sykes, Aileen Corpus, and Tutama Tjapangati providing the impetus.

The obvious talents of Colin Johnson and Archie Weller give hope of further significant novels. It is next to impossible to predict the development of the short story genre, but if writers such as Weller pursue their craft some noteworthy achievements could be forthcoming. Certainly in this regard it is imperative that national magazines such as Identity, which maintain editorial policies conducive to the development of new Aboriginal writing talent, continue to exist.

The most auspicious area for further creative writing in English may be the theatre. Drama provides a total visual impact which cannot be achieved through the medium of print. Plays may be profitably and successfully transformed into film and video scripts. The talent that Gilbert, Merritt, Bostock, and Davis have displayed suggests that further powerful, skilful and effective drama is a real likelihood. If Bostock’s attempt to film Here comes the nigger succeeds it could well act as a catalyst for increased Aboriginal involvement in both cinema and television script production.

Gifted and motivated Aboriginal authors of all ages responded in the 1960s and 1970s to editorial encouragement and new opportunities to make known their perceptions of life. Their numbers will surely increase as young people take advantage of higher education and growing public sensitivity to the richness and variety of Aboriginal culture. A significant proportion of the Aboriginal people have been urban residents since the second World War. The fact of urbanization and the factors of change and continuity in Aboriginal culture have not yet been adequately understood by other Australians, who tend to perceive the Aboriginal people as ‘tribal’. The granting bodies which support Aboriginal endeavours—in literature and in other fields—must become more responsive to Aboriginal definitions of their own culture and society. Urban as well as non-urban authors deserve recognition and funding for their efforts to make the Aboriginal experience enrich the lives of all Australians.

In his Boyer Lectures, broadcast nationally, Bernard Smith noted that the Aboriginal community is now the most ‘important and vocal national minority’ in Australia.93 Many Aboriginal voices are now communicating fluently in indigenous languages and in their own forms of English. The sympathy of editors and funding bodies is necessary to ensure publication of their words so that what Aboriginal people say, and the way they say it, can be appreciated by other Australians and by audiences round the world.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

92 Interview with Jack Davis 13 November 1981.
93 Smith 1981:56.
ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1982 6:2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(*indicates Aboriginal author)

Anon. 'Brief notices', Australian Book Review, 3(7), May 1964:143.
Anon. 'Production survey — Australian Film Commission, Creative Development Branch'. Cinema
Beston, John B. 'Who are the Aboriginal writers in Australia?', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 2(9),
*Bostock, Gerald. 'Here comes the nigger (excerpts)', Meanjin, 36(4), 1977:479-493.
—— Here comes the nigger. MS in possession of author. [c.1979].
*Buchanan, Cheryl. We have bugger all! The Kululuk story. Carlton, 1974.
—— 'Stolen car', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 3(9), 1977b:29-35.
—— 'The storm', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 3(9), 1979:26-27.
*Corpus, Aileen. 'Different shades', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 2(7), 1976a:25.
—— 'Another black bird', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 2(8), 1976b:23.
*Davey, Vicky. 'Black anguish'; 'Black survival'; 'Blind justice'; 'The shadow of life', in Kelly, Howard,
—— 'For a short time'; 'When love is no more'; 'That special friend', Identity, 4(3), 1981:2
—— The dreamers. MS in possession of author [c.1973, and revised 1982].
—— 'Deaf mute mother', Identity, 1(10), 1974a:33.
—— 'A day', Identity, 2(1), 1974c:15.
—— 'The bridge dwellers', Identity, 2(8), 1975a:30.
—— The bitter bit. MS in possession of author [c.1975].
*Kollark. MS in possession of author [c.1979].
—— 'Our dreamtime', in Kelly, Howard, John McArthur and Barbara Putt, eds. Aboriginal voices.
Richmond, 1978:25.
*Forrest, Vic. 'Reflecting the sesqui-centenary [Interview with Jack Davis]', Wikaru, (8), 1980:5-10.
Gale, J.A. The Aboriginal short story, viewed from a Third World perspective. Conference paper,
Adelaide, 1980.
*Gilbert, Kevin. 'Poems written 1969-70 while in prison'. Mitchell Library, Sydney. MS. No.2429
[1969-70].
—— The cherry pickers. Fryer Library, Brisbane. MS. [1971a].
—— The gods look down and other sketches. Fryer Library, Brisbane. MS. [1971b].
—— End of dreamtime. Sydney, 1971c.
—— People are legends. St. Lucia, 1978.
—— 'A missionary I would have been', Westerly, (1), 1975:5-11.
ABORIGINAL CREATIVE WRITING


*Maris, Hylus. 'The way forgotten'; 'Joey comes to the city'; 'Spiritual song to the Aborigine'; 'The season's finished', in Kelly, Howard, John MacArthur and Barbara Putt, eds. Aboriginal Voices, Richmond, 1978: 5-6, 7-8, 27, 29.


— — 'Spring rain', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 3(4), 1978a:23.

— — 'What now Aborigine?', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 5(6), 1978b:23.


— — 'Minjilung, the one who came with the sun', Identity, 1(7), 1978b:30-36.


— — 'Tragedy at the ridge', Aboriginal and Islander Identity, 3(2), 1977:19.


*Utemorrah, Daisy. 'Mugugu', Identity, 2(3), 1975:11.


*Walker, Kath. We are going. Brisbane, 1964.

— — The dawn is at hand. Brisbane, 1966.


— — Stradbroke dreamtime. Sydney, 1972c. [Revised 1982].


— — Aboriginals in Australian poetry, in Wright, Judith. Because I was invited. Melbourne, 1975a:188-150.

Early in 1979 John Austin, who was then Director of the Aboriginal Community Centre in Adelaide, approached the University of Adelaide with a request to establish a community-based research unit within the University. Informal meetings were held between representatives of Aboriginal groups, academics who were already involved in Aboriginal research at the University and the Vice Chancellor. These led to a formal submission being put to the University Council at the end of 1979.

The proposal recommended that a centre be established whereby Aborigines in the community could have access to the skills and knowledge of academic specialists in a number of fields and in ways not readily available to them previously. It suggested that past research had been initiated largely by non-Aborigines without Aboriginal involvement or consultation in many cases. Often students undertook studies without Aboriginal approval. As one Aboriginal member of the committee said, 'We are tired of being researched; we want to be in the research ourselves, to have a say in what needs to be studied'.

For the University Council the recommendations were somewhat unusual. The University was being asked to set up a research base where academics would not have sole control of the research decisions. Projects would be formulated outside academic circles. Research would be judged by two criteria not usually accepted: how useful the results might become and how Aborigines would be involved at all stages of planning and implementing the research. It was very much applied research and Aborigines would be learning research skills at the same time as they were making significant contributions to each project.

The concept was accepted by the Council and a committee consisting of equal numbers of academic staff and community-based Aborigines was appointed. The first meeting of this committee was held at the University on 4th February 1980. The aims written down at that meeting are summarised as follows:

1. The prime aim is to undertake research requested by Aboriginal organisations.
2. To make it possible for groups to have independent studies and evaluations made that would not be bound by any government or agency direction or finding.
3. To make sure that the findings of such studies are fed back to the Aboriginal groups.
4. To involve Aboriginal people in each research project.
5. To make sure that the participating Aboriginal people learn the skills involved in doing research.
6. Informally to act as a training centre for Aborigines in various agencies who wish to acquire skills for use in preparing reports and submissions.
7. To help Aboriginal groups which request assistance to set up statistical or computer systems, judged to be of increasing importance to the survival of independent Aboriginal agencies.
8. To assist Aborigines to gain entry to University as full-time students.
9. To make available facilities for conferences and workshops.
10. To prevent overlap of research in projects, to introduce prospective research students to the committee and to allow Aboriginal members, in consultation with their groups, to accept or reject research proposals.

These aims were seen to be quite comprehensive and the committee considered that it would be wise to start somewhat slowly especially as the Centre's resources were limited. Some goals were achieved quite early. The University changed its special entry provisions to allow non-matriculating Aborigines to enter the University at the beginning of 1981. As a result eight have become full-time students, three in law and five in arts. This was a big breakthrough for a university which has had no Aboriginal graduates. In addition two
students, one in science and one in mathematical science, have been admitted under normal matriculation requirements.

The Research Centre acts as a social focus for these students and tries to keep them in touch with both campus activities and Aboriginal community groups. Aboriginal staff (a research worker and a secretary) facilitate the process. The Centre has become a haven on a campus of all white faces.

The initial research goals were defined in terms of urgent projects. A workshop, organised by the Aboriginal Training and Cultural Institute of Sydney, was held early in the program to work out priorities. Mrs N. McNamara, who is co-director of the Institute, is also a member of the Research Centre committee. She conducted the workshop and produced a report on research needs and directions as viewed by Aboriginal people in South Australia.

The first project to be defined and taken up was one on young offenders. Representatives of the Aboriginal Community Centre, the Aboriginal Child Care Agency and the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement viewed the high proportion of young Aborigines coming before the courts as a major concern. They also saw it as a very complex legal and social issue which needed detailed study. At the request of community representatives the Aboriginal Research Centre approached three academics (in Education, Geography and Law) to set up an interdisciplinary study. The project gained A.R.G.S. funding. An Aboriginal member of the committee, Mrs M. Van der Byl, undertook the major part of the interviewing for study and worked closely with the academics.

The issue has indeed proved to be a complex one and research is continuing. Justice does not operate equally for all Australians and in spite of the establishment of Aboriginal Legal Rights offices, Aboriginal youth are still over-represented to an extreme degree in the court system. The research to date suggests there is no evidence to show that Aboriginal youth are any more anti-social or more criminally motivated than are non-Aboriginal youth. The procedures, the statistics and all the forces at work combine to misrepresent the true situation. The researchers believe it is important for the self-respect of Aborigines that their image as offenders is put more accurately than is presently revealed in published records and media reports.

Doreen Kartinyeri, an Adelaide resident who had earlier lived on both Point McLeay and Point Pearce reserves, became the first full-time member of the research staff at the Centre. She had already commenced work on a genealogical program with funding assistance from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and the Aboriginal Arts Board. The new Centre was able to provide her project with resources in terms of accommodation, materials and personnel. A historian was appointed to work with Ms Kartinyeri and between them they have been able to merge the knowledge contained in an oral tradition with the skills of interpreting written records and recording verbal material. The extensive work done so far and the response being received from Aboriginal people illustrate the value of Aboriginal-initiated programs. This ambitious study has three research components. One is recording genealogies of the main Aboriginal families in southern South Australia. To date the Rigney family containing some 900 members and the Wanganeen family with over 850 persons have been typed up. Individual names have been indexed so that descendants can trace their ancestors. The collection of details for another thirty-one families is in progress. Because of the interrelatedness of information on families, much material is collected simultaneously so that work on a number of families proceeds at the same time. Some half-dozen have been finished or are nearing completion.

A second aspect of Ms Kartinyeri's research is the collection, indeed often the salvage, of old photographs of Aborigines in southern South Australia. The identification of people and places recorded in such photographs is very slow, painstaking and sometimes requires a great deal of travel to check with informants. But in many cases these photographs capture unique aspects of the social history of Aborigines in southern South Australia. The University has reproduced these photographs for Ms Kartinyeri and she has been meticulous in returning the originals, along with the produced negatives and spare copies of prints, to the persons who gave them to her. The production of good prints from old photographs has
enabled Ms Kartinveri to make displays which she has taken to a number of centres. The interest generated is considerable. A sense of identity and pride in the local history is fostered and more photographs and information are forthcoming as a result. For National Aborigines Week, 1982, the people of Point Pearce decided to set up a display in the hall at the reserve depicting the history of the settlement and its people. They called on Ms Kartinveri, who had lived on the reserve for much of her life, for assistance. She both acted as a consultant and helped to establish displays of her photographs. These were arranged in sections, such as 'Early settlement', 'Farming on the mission', 'Families at Point Pearce', 'Children and schools' and 'Early pioneers'. Several hundred people attended the exhibition from many parts of the State and overseas and many questions were asked about people and happenings in the early days of the mission.

The third phase of the research consists of a series of descriptions of aspects of the lives of the people being recorded in the genealogies and photographs. The material is obtained from oral sources as remembered by Ms Kartinveri and the people she works with. Various written sources such as those available at the South Australian Museum, the State Archives and the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages are used to relate and co-ordinate oral material. When the Aboriginal Research Centre was established it was anticipated that the unit would function as a resource centre as well as a research group. Ms Kartinveri's work has shown that to be true. Her genealogies have provided a source for those Aborigines who had lost contact with their people. In South Australia, as elsewhere, welfare authorities in earlier days saw it as their duty to remove young children from their mothers and place them in institutions or foster care or place them out for adoption. In most cases such young children grew up in non-Aboriginal homes and lost contact with their relatives.

For many young people this paternalistic program of earlier years produced considerable emotional strain and conflict. The results are still being experienced amongst teenagers and young adults although officially that program has been abandoned. But the long-term results did not end with the change in welfare policy. The search for kin is now very strong. Ms Kartinveri has had a steady flow of inquiries from young people wishing to find their families and from mothers wondering what happened to the children they lost. Her detective-like skills in searching out relationships is quite uncanny. She has reunited several families with great joy and benefit to all concerned. In one case a couple who were contemplating marriage consulted Ms Kartinveri about their true identities. Both had been adopted at birth and did not know their natural parents. Ms Kartinveri found that in fact they were very closely related and had they not been adopted and their true parentage lost they would not have contemplated marriage. They were very pleased 'to find out in time' and to learn about families they had never known. The research is thus helping to overcome some of the complex problems which have resulted from former welfare policies to which Aborigines were subjected.

There is a growing interest amongst younger Aborigines in their historical roots and not only amongst those whose links were severed by fostering or adoption. There is an increasing concern to know more about the past, a past which so inextricably links Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal experiences, values and attitudes. As Doreen Kartinveri has taken examples of her work to various communities, groups have begun to request training in collecting and recording their local histories. Plans are under way to develop such programs at the Centre in 1983 and several people have asked to attend these proposed workshops. Since the establishment of the Aboriginal Research Centre and the deliberate policy of introducing non-Aboriginal researchers, including students, to community groups a growth of exchange has evolved. Some Aborigines have come to see that research need not be yet another piece of 'white man's domination'. It can be a two-way process with advantage accruing to both parties. As a result the Centre has been asked to search out various sources and let Aboriginal people know what written records might be available for them to study. For example, interested Aborigines have requested information about the Basedow and Bates collections held in Adelaide libraries. Others also want to know what kinds of material may help them to learn more about the past experiences of their particular groups.
Jane Jacobs, whose project was the first to be introduced to the Centre Committee, has worked closely with committee members. Her study has been supported by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. The starting point for her research was the inadequacies of land rights legislation at present in use. She argued that the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 and the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act 1981 set precedents for the interpretation of land rights based on the concept of 'Aboriginality': the more traditional the community the more deserving they are of land. Such legislation has created a model based more on defining traditional 'Aboriginality' than concern for the realities of the contemporary Aboriginal land legislation. Ms Jacobs' study of land rights amongst the 'non-traditional' people of the Port Augusta area has been a very complex project. It has progressed well because of this student's commitment to feedback to Aboriginal groups and to mutual respect and exchange of ideas. Some academics might consider that such a process slows down research (if success is measured in terms of time taken to get a degree or produce publications). But the depth of the resulting research, and the benefit to the groups concerned far outweigh the supposed costs. Jacobs' research has been a two-way venture and it has shown that academic research properly carried out can be an important resource for an Aboriginal group.

When another potential post-graduate student approached the Centre with a project it was referred to, and rejected by, the community concerned, which did not want to have such research carried out at that time. Therefore the project did not go ahead. The Centre felt that this experience was valuable because it showed that the University would accept a community's refusal even though the group had no land rights or power in legal terms.

The Centre has been approached at other times by various groups and organisations seeking studies of particular events or places. One Aboriginal member of the committee, who is also a member of a community liaison body looking at the problems of Aboriginal youth in Adelaide, asked the Centre to consider a study of young people in Hindley Street. This area is the major social scene for Aborigines in Adelaide and young people come great distances to interact here. Aboriginal community workers and welfare staff wanted to know why so many young Aborigines come to this locality, who comes, how they relate to each other and whether the opportunity to achieve identity and a sense of 'groupness' outweigh the risks posed to them from the socially disadvantageous activities engaged in by non-Aborigines in the area. Through discussion with involved groups a study project was set up and graduate students were introduced to the work.

Other students were asked to record in detail the political and bureaucratic difficulties faced by the Aboriginal Community College in its attempt to move its location. Public action, planning appeals and eventually arson bedevilled various attempts to re-locate the College in a better facility. The College Council considered it would be useful to have these events documented in a chronological sequence for future reference.

As the requests for projects increased it became evident that the need for a research and resource base was indeed as great as John Austin's vision had predicted. The committee was enlarged so that all Aboriginal groups and organisations in Adelaide could be represented. Aboriginal membership is now twice the size of the non-Aboriginal academic representation. This is very important because the Centre has recently been approached by government departments and asked to undertake consulting work related to Aboriginal communities and organisations. Such requests can now be very carefully discussed by groups with widely-based support across the Aboriginal community.

In some ways the Centre has acted as a neutral forum for the expression of ideas and dissatisfactions. Academic specialists have been called in from various areas to offer advice and to assist with action programs. One such case was the reading of the Pastoral Act Amendment Bill 1982 in the South Australian Parliament. Concerned Aborigines requested the Centre's assistance in making their case. They were worried that the proposed legislation would limit Aboriginal access to traditional lands and prevent further land rights claims. Meetings were held, academic lawyers gave advice and wrote submissions and the Centre
was able to put forward submissions to the government which helped in defeating the proposed Bill. In this case the Centre, its committee considerably augmented for the purpose, worked in close conjunction with the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement.

Universities have traditionally provided a relatively neutral environment for unhampered research. The Aboriginal Research Centre at the University of Adelaide can offer resources such as 'neutral territory', training, and expert advice on request. These things are particularly important to Aborigines, who have had limited educational opportunities and little access to sophisticated technology and specialist skills, and who feel themselves tightly controlled by outside pressures. The Aboriginal concept of this Centre vests power and decision-making in a consultative process. But is this concept too threatening to non-Aboriginal institutional structures to enable the Centre to obtain the funding it needs to survive?

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE
BEGINNING A NATIONAL ABORIGINAL BIOGRAPHICAL REGISTER AT THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES*

Laurie Parkes and Diane Barwick

In 1968 W.E.H. Stanner complained to a nationwide radio audience that the several hundred thousand Aborigines who had lived and died since 1788 had been given 'no place in our past'. The inadequacy of available biographical information about Aborigines still has serious consequences for the teaching of Australian history in schools and universities. In 1976 a search of Greenway's comprehensive bibliography and the catalogues and indexes of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Library yielded only eighty-eight publications which could be classified as reminiscence or biography. No more than a dozen books and perhaps the same number of biographical articles have been published since 1976.1

The elders of every Aboriginal community of course preserve considerable biographical and genealogical knowledge. Recording this information is seen as an urgent task by many Aboriginal historians. Written information on named persons is also preserved in historical records, newspaper files, government archives and researchers' notebooks. Collating and indexing these scattered sources is an essential task for the development of Aboriginal history. Accurate and comprehensive records of the names and stories of Aborigines who played a significant part in past events could assist in 'rewriting' general histories and school text books so that the Aboriginal contribution is suitably recognized. A national collection of biographical material could also be a useful resource for the cultural and educational programs undertaken by Aboriginal communities and organisations.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies has recently begun a national Aboriginal Biographical Register, held at the Institute's Library in Canberra. The first stage of this project is a non-selective alphabetical card index of names and sources of information, modelled on the General Name Index maintained by the Australian Dictionary of Biography project at the Australian National University. With sufficient support from Aboriginal communities and interested researchers the register could become a central repository for a national collection of Aboriginal biographical data. Anyone wishing to consult the register or contribute information for it should contact either the Research Officer (History) or the Senior Bibliographer, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, P.O. Box 553, Canberra City, ACT 2601. This note merely aims to draw attention to the existence of the register and the historiographical problems of such a project.

Institute committees first discussed the neglect of Aboriginal biography when planning an Oral History Conference for Aboriginal researchers in 1979. A report on the utility and feasibility of a national Aboriginal biographical 'dictionary' project was prepared for the Institute's Council (at the request of chairmen of all advisory committees) in April 1979. This memorandum noted that only fourteen of 3,159 entries (0.004 per cent) in the Australian Dictionary of Biography volumes covering the period 1788-1890 were devoted to Aborigines. Eleven more names had been selected for the period up to 1939.

* Bob Reece, Sylvia Hallam, Lois Tilbrook and Anna Haebich have inspired and supported the idea of a national biographical project since 1979. We also wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Rod Stroud of the National Library of Australia; Chris Cunneen and Jim Gibbney of the Australian Dictionary of Biography; and Marcia Langton, Warwick Dix, Vanessa Elwell, Rosslyn Fraser, Anna Shnukal, Tamsin Donaldson and the Library staff at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

1 Stanner 1979:214.

2 Greenway 1963; Barwick, Urry and Bennett 1977:126-128. A substantial amount of biographical data has appeared in Aboriginal History since 1977; recent book-length studies are listed in Barwick 1981 and Gunson 1981. A methodological overview is provided by Shaw 1980.
Aborigines as such were not distinguished in the A.D.B. General Name Index and the availability of information could be determined only by searching for a specific name. Dictionary staff members, who were eager to secure a better representation of Aborigines, suggested that A.I.A.S. Library holdings and indexes were the best source for retrieving biographical material. Mr Jim Gibbney gave expert advice on appropriate stages for the project, suggesting that the *Papua New Guinea Biographical Register Short List*, recently published by the University of Papua New Guinea, might be an appropriate model.

In October 1979 the A.I.A.S. Council agreed that Library staff should begin abstracting biographical material for the first stage of the project, a non-selective name register, and appointed a committee to advise on future planning. Members and co-opted advisors met on 19 May 1980. Dr Chris Cunneen of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; Dr R.H.W. Reece, Ms Sylvia Hallam and Ms Lois Tilbrook (researchers involved in the South West Aboriginal Studies project and the preparation of Aboriginal biographies for the *Dictionary of Western Australians*); Mr Stephen Albert of the National Aboriginal Education Committee; Mr Michael Mace, chairman of the A.I.A.S. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee; Dr Diane Barwick (convenor); and Ms Rosita Henry of the A.I.A.S. Library attended.

Biographical dictionaries (volumes of selected biographies of deceased persons who were ‘significant’ in the past, organised by chronological periods) are a European form of literature, and rely upon European forms of record-keeping. A major problem in compiling biographies based upon oral history (as Mr Gibbney had pointed out) is the lack of ‘vital statistics’ — documentation or confirmation of dates. A second historiographical problem is that European notions of relevance have determined selection criteria for such dictionaries, and this kind of ethnocentrism had to be avoided. A third concern was that circulating or soliciting information about deceased persons might offend Aboriginal communities which maintain an indigenous convention forbidding the naming of the dead for some years. On the other hand many Aborigines have long expressed distress and resentment that the achievements and tribulations of their ancestors have been ‘written out of the histories’ which shape the perceptions of generation after generation of Australian children. It was clear that the committee must consult Aboriginal opinion to ensure that the proposed project would be useful in fostering pride in Aboriginal identity and increasing public sympathy and understanding.

After discussion of these issues the committee advised Council that a national collection of biographical information would be a valuable historical resource and a vital educational tool. Their report recommended that the project be supervised by an expert committee which would consult and work with staff of the A.D.B. and Bicentennial History projects and with the National Aboriginal Conference and the various Aboriginal education consultative groups. The essential first stage was compilation of a non-selective name register (filed alphabetically and indexed by region and period) which listed known sources of information. Initially the register would be based on A.I.A.S. Library holdings. As a second stage specially-designed register forms should be made available to Aboriginal communities and organisations and other interested researchers. Individual files containing biographical data could be held in the Library for use by researchers and, perhaps, by writers commissioned to prepare selected volumes of biographies at a later stage of the project. The committee advised that the organization of the base register should be similar to that of the A.D.B. and that the same standards of confidentiality and propriety should be maintained. The register would include material on living persons but published volumes would be restricted to those whose lives had ended, as is normal ‘dictionary’ practice. The committee emphasised that Aboriginal communities must have a real voice in preparation of the register and in the selection of names for any publication: their criteria of historical relevance, ‘eminence’ or representativeness should influence the development of the

---

The committee concluded that even if published volumes never eventuated, material collected for the biographical register would provide an important record of the achievements of Aboriginal people, and be a source of pride for generations to come.

Council necessarily deferred consideration of this report in October 1980 and in March 1981 referred it to the newly-appointed Interim History Committee, which was asked to brief Council on A.I.A.S. involvement in the rapidly-growing field of Aboriginal history. At their meetings in August-September 1981 the members: Ms Marcia Langton, Mr Michael Williams, Dr S.G. Foster (acting for Professor K.S. Inglis, a General Editor of the 1788-1988 Bicentennial History and chairman of the A.D.B.), and Dr Diane Barwick (convenor) endorsed the previous report and recommended that the proposed History Committee should take responsibility for the biographical register, to be compiled initially by existing Library staff.

But although Library staff had shown sympathy — even enthusiasm — for the project, they were so overburdened that the work could be only a part-time task for one bibliographer. When the Interim History Committee’s brief was discussed by Council in October 1981 the Principal, Mr Eric Willmot, stressed the educational value of this project and suggested that funds be earmarked for six months’ research by a historian to plan and initiate a National Aboriginal Biographical Register.

Although Library staff will continue to add data to the register established by Ms Laurie Parkes in January-June 1982, financial constraints (and an impending Ministerial decision on a government review of Institute activities) preclude further development of the project. Researchers’ interest in and use of the register will determine its ultimate fate. A suitably qualified researcher might well apply for an A.I.A.S. research grant to undertake biographical studies which could contribute to the expansion of the register. Work on an Aboriginal volume of the Dictionary of Western Australians is proceeding; it is to be hoped that sesquicentenary celebrations in other States and the national Bicentennial history project will stimulate further research on Aboriginal biography.

Organisation of the A.I.A.S. Aboriginal Biographical Register

Register cards are filed alphabetically, using Aboriginal names in preference to European names, although names are of course cross-referenced. To facilitate further research each name is ‘tagged’ — that is, identified by State of origin (and residence if this is different); occupational designations (which may include European forms of employment and indigenous occupations such as ceremonial leader, healer and so on); and by the clan, tribe or language group to which the person belongs if this information could be found. Each entry cites the source of information, using publishing citations in preference to standard catalogue notation so that the register could be incorporated into a subject-based bibliography or, since each source is separately tagged and annotated and each name is indexed in numbered runs, bibliographies on individuals could also be made up easily. The cards are written in artist’s needlepoint pen so clear photocopies can be made. The entry for Bungaree, for example, has a run of twenty-one separately tagged and annotated citations. The annotations are a brief description of the source, such as:

**BLAIR, HAROLD**

1. **Qld/Vic**
   Tenor
   Foundation member Aboriginal Arts Board
   Biog (monograph) illus.
   Harrison, Kenneth. Dark Man White World
   Novalit [Melbourne] 1975

2. **Qld/Vic**
   Tenor
   Foundation member Aboriginal Arts Board
   Article on the setting up of the Board,
   Aboriginal News 1(1) 1975:11-12.
There are currently some 1,100 'tagged' entries and 500 'strays' — names which have not been incorporated into the register because Parkes could not find sufficient information to tag them properly during her brief period of research. Further contributions by interested researchers will no doubt assist in 'tagging' more names, as is the case with untagged entries in the General Name Index maintained by the A.D.B. Tagging is essential to make the register a useful reference tool, but it is a time-consuming task to read all sources, resolve discrepancies and eliminate unreliable information.

It is precisely because so little attention has been given to Aboriginal biography that the basic information necessary for tagging is often difficult to find. Frank Stevens\textsuperscript{4} has described the mechanics of racism in terms of depersonalization and dehumanization. The treatment of Aborigines as an amorphous mass is still a noticeable feature of media coverage. Descriptions of 'high profile' individuals pay insufficient attention to their Aboriginality. Abstracted from their Aboriginal background, they float in a limbo between tokenism and the museum. A more informed analysis of the lives of significant Aborigines is needed. For example, any historical account of the founding of European settlement at Sydney in 1788 which does not incorporate Stanner's\textsuperscript{5} reconstruction of the Aboriginal-European dialogue makes very little sense as a study of cause and effect relationships — which is usually considered to be one of the primary concerns of historians.

The problem of anonymous, group or community achievements is one which be devils any historian working outside the hegemonic mainstream. This is as true of working class history and women's history as it is of Aboriginal history. Biographical research can shed new light on aspects of Australian society which have been poorly described. It can also demonstrate the narrow ideological base which has hitherto predetermined selection of 'the great men' whose actions have preoccupied historians.

The fledgling Aboriginal Biographical Register is an attempt to list the names of men and women who have made undervalued contributions to the history of Australia. A national collection of biographical material could increase popular appreciation of the cultural strength and dynamic heterogeneity of Aboriginal society.

ADELAIDE S.A.
and CANBERRA, A.C.T.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


\textsuperscript{4} Stevens 1980.
\textsuperscript{5} Stanner 1977.
THE ELKIN PAPERS: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION
AND GUIDE TO THE COLLECTION

Jennifer Laycock

When Emeritus Professor A.P. Elkin, C.M.G., died in July 1979 he was still editor of Oceania Publications and still actively involved in academic affairs. His career and achievements have been well described elsewhere. Some introduction is useful, however, as a context for the brief description of his papers which follows. The collection amounts to some two hundred archive boxes, together with a quantity of 'loose' material such as films, records, tape-recordings and maps. It covers the years 1891-1979, with most of the material falling into the period between 1926, when the Anthropology Department of the University of Sydney was founded and 1956, when Professor Elkin retired.

A.P. Elkin held the chair of Anthropology at the University of Sydney for twenty-three years, and prior to this appointment had been associated with the Department as research worker and lecturer. He belonged to many organisations and made significant contributions in many fields. He was, for example, a member of the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board from 1939 and its vice-chairman for twenty-six years. He also played an important part in shaping Aboriginal policy implemented by the Commonwealth and other States, and the collection includes correspondence with various State and Commonwealth politicians and officials from the late 1920s. Elkin also corresponded with numerous Aboriginal organisations throughout Australia. He collected newspaper clippings on Aborigines from the 1920s.

The collection contains much valuable material for the study of Aboriginal history. One rare document included is the Manual of instructions to managers and matrons of Aboriginal stations and other field officers issued by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board. Moreover, there are a number of agenda documents for Board meetings in the 1960s. Such agenda papers, which appear to be more detailed than the minutes of meetings, have not survived as a complete set among records held elsewhere. Two other items worth mentioning are a collection of correspondence, reports and other documents on the Guided Projectiles Project in central Australia in 1947, and correspondence and reports concerning the survey of Aboriginal labour and conditions on Northern Territory pastoral properties conducted by R.M. and C.H. Berndt in 1945-46 for the Australian Investment Agency (Vesteys).

Professor Elkin's papers include not only his own research notes, correspondence, teaching material and writings in anthropology, sociology and history, but also records of the origin and development of academic anthropology in Australia. All correspondence of Sydney University's Department of Anthropology from its foundation in 1926 until Elkin's retirement in 1956 (except for the period 1939-43) is included in the collection, together with papers of the Australian National Research Council from 1926. The Elkin Papers also include records of the journals Oceania (from 1930), Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania, and Human Biology in Oceania until Elkin's death in 1979.

The largest part of the collection is made up of written material, but there are about eighteen boxes of audio-visual material including prints, negatives, slides, tapes, records and films. Manuscript material includes such things as field notes, notes on Professor Elkin's reading and research, and notes for lectures, addresses, articles and correspondence. Published material includes newspaper clippings, pamphlets and leaflets, publications, reports, etc.

The Elkin Papers are being catalogued in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney and will eventually be deposited in the University of Sydney Archives. Arrangements for access have not been finally decided. For the time being researchers wishing to see any part of the collection should seek permission from Professor P.K. Elkin (English Department, University of New England, Armidale N.S.W.), and Professor Peter Lawrence (Anthropology Department, University of Sydney). For some papers in the Elkin
collection not written by Professor Elkin himself, permission of the author(s) is required before access can be granted.

Appendix 1 is intended to indicate the range of contents of the papers as well as their arrangement. Further details are available on request from the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

APPENDIX 1

THE ELKIN PAPERS: A SHORT GUIDE TO THE COLLECTION

A. RESEARCH MATERIAL

1. AUSTRALIA (BY AREA)
   Kimberleys
   H.J. Coate
   South Australia
   New South Wales
   Queensland
   Northern Territory
   W.E. Harney
   O.M. Pink
   R.H. Mathews

2. AUSTRALIA (BY SUBJECT)
   Human biology
   Prehistory
   Economics and material culture
   Social organisation
   Religion and magic
   Music
   Art
   Linguistics

3. NEW GUINEA AND THE PACIFIC

4. ABORIGINAL-WHITE CONTACT AND HISTORY
   Government policy and administration (by state)
   Missions (by denomination)
   Aboriginal organisations (alphabetical)
   Organisations (miscellaneous)
   Elkin's working notes
   (Main headings: Writings on Aborigines since 1788; Contact, policy and administration; Surveys, statistics, etc; Aborigines and the law; Education; Culture contact - comparative material; Culture)
   Addresses and lectures by Elkin
   Guided Projectiles Project
   Articles by authors other than Elkin

5. SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

6. RESEARCH DATA FILES

B. ORGANISATIONS AND COMMITTEES, ETC

1. ANTHROPOLOGICAL
   Anthropology Society of New South Wales
   ANZAAS
   South Pacific Commission
THE ELKIN PAPERS

Pacific Science Association
Pan Indian Ocean Science Association
Australian Museum
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies
Institute for Aboriginal Development
Australian Association of Social Anthropologists
Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia

2. UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
   St Paul’s College
   International House
   Selle House
   Senate/Finance Committee

3. NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT
   Road Safety Council
   Geographical Names Board

4. OTHER
   Australian-India Association

C. HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA
   1. Australian National Research Council
   2. Oceania Publications
   3. Correspondence
      Anthropology Department 1926-1956
      Personal 1956-1979

D. PERSONAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL
A GUIDE TO SELECTED COMMONWEALTH ARCHIVES
(CANBERRA AND DARWIN) RELATING TO ABORIGINES

Rosslyn Fraser

In 1977 a brief note on a group of Commonwealth records appeared in the first volume of *Aboriginal History*.¹ The resulting interest in my article encouraged me to apply to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies for a research grant to produce a more extensive guide to Aboriginal material in Commonwealth Archives. An interim draft guide based on two years of work is now available at the A.I.A.S. Library and at the Australian Archives Reference and Guide Room. The guide is intended for publication when completed. In the meantime I would appreciate comments from researchers concerning the form and content of the interim draft guide.

The records

Every government activity produces records of some kind. When these records cease to be used administratively, and if they are intended to be kept permanently, they become 'archives'. Under the Australian government's present access policy, most records over thirty years old (i.e. up to the end of 1951, and, from 1 January 1983, up to the end of 1952) are open to the public. The guide thus includes records to the end of 1951 and some records from 1952 will be added to the final guide when they become available in 1983.

The records described in the guide are in the Northern Territory and ACT Branches of Australian Archives in Darwin and Canberra respectively. They are some of the records kept in the conduct of their business, and themselves constituting part of that business, by a variety of Commonwealth government agencies² the functions of which have in some way impinged on Aborigines' lives. (Agencies so far included are given in the Appendix.) They relate mostly to the Northern Territory, for which the Commonwealth became responsible in 1911, and they include some papers from the period of South Australian administration of the Territory (1863 to 1911; most papers arising from the South Australian administration are in the State Archives Section of the State Library of South Australia.) There is also, however, some material relating to the States, and work in 1982/83 is expected to reveal a larger proportion of material with significance to people in the States than has so far emerged.

Just about anything can constitute a record if it is made or kept for that purpose. Different types of record so far represented in the material described in the guide include cards, volumes, photographs, maps, plans, charts, sketches, objects, notebooks, published material, unfiled papers, forms and files, which may contain any of the foregoing. It is hoped that the completed guide will include details of some films and sound tapes, and possibly other forms of material.

The nature and level of the transactions of which the records are the evidence are even more varied than their physical form. Papers (and other forms of record) covered by the guide deal with a range of matters from, for example, national policy to the payment of a day's wages to a particular person. Unfortunately for current research, most of the papers relating to minor transactions such as the latter have been destroyed as a matter of course, and some major, as well as less inherently important, material has similarly been destroyed or otherwise lost.

² A Commonwealth agency is defined for the purposes of the guide as a separate administrative unit of a government, having its own independent record-keeping system. An agency can be of any size or complexity, and may administer one or many function.
Researchers intending to use material covered by the guide should write requesting applications for access and search tickets or call at the appropriate office:

Material in Canberra: Regional Director (ACT), Australian Archives, P.O. Box 447, Belconnen ACT 2617. (Tel. (062) 421 411)

Material in Darwin: Regional Director (NT), Australian Archives, PO Box 293, Darwin NT 5794. (Tel. (089) 85 2222)

Applications require the sponsorship of a person on the electoral roll (who need not hold any academic or public position), so it is best to get the application forms in advance. Your application should also give a clear and precise description of your area of interest, to enable staff to give you informed help. The same procedures apply to Australian Archives Branches in all State capitals and in Townsville, which also have relevant holdings.3

Why use government records?

Many Aborigines are very aware of the value of having access to records about themselves or with a bearing on their situation. In the attempt of the rest of Australian society to control and regulate every aspect of their lives, one of the essential weapons for enforcing control has been pieces of paper. Whether Aborigines live in isolated areas or in towns and cities, and whatever their age group, they have been subject to constant bureaucratic and other intrusions. Their lives have been full of questions and full of requirements to supply information, make statements, fill out forms, fill out more forms, and present themselves at government agencies. Pieces of paper have at various times been referred to as authority in arresting people, in gaoling them, taking away their children, evicting them, keeping their property and earnings from them, depriving them of employment, forcing them into compounds, keeping them in these compounds after dark, confining them in institutions, interfering in their marital relationships, preventing them from drinking liquor, isolating them from their country, threatening them, and according them or disqualifying them from benefits automatically enjoyed by the rest of the community.

Aborigines are also well-acquainted with the frustrations of trying to get access to information about them or originally provided by them. There are illustrations of both aspects of the process in the film Wrong side of the road. Leslie is shunted from agency to agency, and refused even the possibility of access to his natural mother’s name without his initiating action just to try to obtain a Supreme Court Order. Even his adoptive parents conceal the relevant piece of paper from him, and he has to steal it to have the mere chance to establish his identity. The Truant Officer, when she arrives to track down George (shown by the school records to be consistently truant), brings with her a clipboard on which she records not facts but value judgments of a kind commonly used before tribunals as evidence that children should be taken from their families. Vonnie refers to the absurdity of the classification of two of her children, born under former South Australian legislation, as having x parts Aboriginal blood. The police who arrest Ronnie and his mate no doubt have existing Australia-wide computerised records scanned for any previous convictions that they might have. And so on. It is no wonder that Aborigines appreciate the uses of records.

Aborigines are also, of course, quite aware of the shortcomings of the records, which are, after all, the artefacts of a bureaucracy informed by and serving Anglo-Australian values. At their best and most objective, records must remain culture-bound, circumscribed

---

3 The addresses of these branches and other major archival institutions are listed in: H.J. Gibbney, 'Archives', in Barwick, Diane, Michael Mace and Tom Stannage eds. Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander history. Canberra, 1979: 5-12.
by the values and perceptions of their recorders; at their worst, they contain deliberate distortions. The greater part of them is liable to be beset by poor observation, mis-recording and misinterpretation.

The archives are nonetheless often the sole record of the transactions recorded in them. They have additional value, particularly in the period dealt with by the guide, in that their recorders generally did not imagine that they would ever become the subject of public, let alone Aboriginal, scrutiny. As a result of this they can often provide an unselfconscious picture of what was done, observed and thought by one set at least of the participants in post-contact history. They are significant not only because they are one essential source in putting together more realistic versions of this history (by both Aborigines and non-Aborigines) than have been available until recently, but because they can have an immediate and compelling bearing on people's lives. What W.T. Hagan says of North American Indians and their access to records can be extrapolated to Australian Aborigines' situation now:

.... for the Native American this is more than just some intellectual game. What is at stake for the Indian is his historical identity, and all that can mean for self-image and psychological well-being.

At stake also is the very existence of tribes, and the validity of their claims to millions of acres of land and to compensation for injustices suffered in earlier transactions with the federal and state governments.4

Both policy records and documentation of day-to-day administration can have evidentiary value for individuals and communities. Their usefulness has been shown in evidence given for land claims made under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, which of course emanates from the same cultural basis as the records themselves. While Aboriginal and anthropological evidence has been most important, Commonwealth and South Australian government records (both archives and, in the former case, current records), and private papers, have provided a wide range of information. Such documents may give clues to the post-contact history of claim areas, and the historical relations between Aboriginal groups and between Aborigines and others. Documents may mention traditional practices, languages, and cultural innovation. They may also contain genealogies, evidence of individual and group attachments to the land, and explanations for some people not having been able to maintain an unbroken association with their land. Written materials may describe the effects of European settlement on the environment and on Aboriginal economy and social organisation; demographic change; health; Aboriginal resistance to, and accommodation with, incursions; institutionalisation and its effects; and the Anglo-Australian legal status of the land in question. The Northern Territory government recognized the importance of records in the determination of claims when it amended the Evidence Act in 1981 to restrict access to government documents to be used in court cases. The government strongly denied that its action was intended to impede the hearing of the Kenbi claim following a High Court verdict enabling the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to hear evidence on this claim.

Aboriginal people in the States will also find information in State government and other records which can contribute to their own sense of identity. When legislation for land rights is introduced in the States, archival materials will be useful in satisfying the requirements of tribunals.

There are other areas of Anglo-Australian law, too, where recourse to records can at least raise the possibility of entitlements previously denied, and may sometimes be instrumental in resolving such issues favourably. A recent example of the former was proclaimed in an article in The Age: 'Blacks may act on $60m in war back pay claim.'5 This possibility has arisen from an article by Major Robert Hall, based on archival and other

---

5 The Age, 15 September 1982.
sources. It may or may not prove feasible to pursue this particular question through the courts or at a political level, but it has at least been raised and publicised. If it did prove feasible, Forces’ personnel, policy and other records would be essential to its determination.

In New South Wales, in the context of the excellent work done by the Aboriginal Children’s Research Project, Linkup, and the Task force for Aboriginal Children, and of Aboriginal concern about the Community Welfare Bill, the New South Wales Branch of the National Aboriginal Conference passed a resolution in January 1982 which said in part:

State welfare departments hold information about Aboriginal children who have been removed from their families over the years. This information rightly belongs to the Aboriginal communities. It is recommended that arrangements be made to give Aboriginal people access to such information regarding their relatives, through the vehicle of appropriate Aboriginal organisations such as Aboriginal children’s services in each State.

For some people of all age groups in New South Wales, these records may provide the sole link with family, community and identity, as with Leslie Stevens in Wrong side of the road.

These are examples of uses within some kind of legal framework to which archival and current records can be put, but there are many others. While the information in written records may or may not be correct or appropriate from either an Aboriginal or a non-Aboriginal viewpoint, if it is known about it can be evaluated. When the information about known or remembered facts and events is ‘correct’, and compatible with memory, it can be an appreciated reminder about places, people or events. Whether correct or not, it may explain the outcome of situations, or the behaviour of non-Aboriginal participants, both of which may previously have been incomprehensible and for that reason alone unsettling. If it is incorrect, or biased, when the record is available it is possible for people to give an alternative account, if that is important to them. At times, such information is all that remains about the matters it concerns, and is important simply for that reason.

As well as records which directly concern Aborigines and administrative dealings with them, many types of records can be useful for Aboriginal history. For example, in studies contributing to reconstruction of the pre-contact history of western New South Wales, Jeannette Hope, Brenda Jacobs and Jane Balme are using records of various government agencies (such as the Water Resources Commission) as well as early descriptions written by European explorers and ‘settlers’. Their work is helping to establish how long Aborigines have occupied this part of New South Wales, and how they lived at different times in the past. Archaeological research has disproved the old view that Aborigines have occupied Australia for only a few thousand years. Some of Jane Balme’s findings suggest that Aborigines may have been using fishing nets at a period long before there is evidence for that kind of technology elsewhere in the world. Archival documents can assist in the interpretation of other kinds of evidence in a way which is of value not only to world archaeology but to present-day Aborigines in their assertion of their identity. Written records can provide evidence about the continuity of their society, their technological and cultural development, and the length of their occupation of this continent.

The guide

The guide attempts to make known, and provide easier access to, Commonwealth records which constitute a basic resource for Aboriginal history. The framework of the guide is an archivally conventional one: records are described in relation to their provenance, that is, in relation to the agency or agencies which produced or kept them. The elements of description and the terms used are taken directly from the

Australian Archives documentation system. Within this provenance-oriented framework I have tried to assist researchers by annotating some entries (see below). If possible, the final guide will include a name/place/subject index to the text, to entries at all levels of description, and to the annotations. (Annotation and content indexing are levels of description which archival institutions with large holdings cannot generally attempt. Indexing of archival content is rather like trying to include every possible index entry in every book in the library in the library's catalogue.)

An introduction to the existing draft defines terms and explains how the guide works. This will probably be expanded eventually to include discussion of how records are made and kept, and how they can be useful to Aborigines and to other researchers.

The body of the guide is in two parts, the first dealing with records in Australian Archives, ACT Branch, and the second with records in the Northern Territory Branch in Darwin. Each part is divided into two sequences. The first lists some of the Commonwealth Agencies (see footnote 2 and Appendix) and Commonwealth Persons which, or who, have had functions in some way giving rise to records relevant to Aborigines. With each Commonwealth Agency or Person entry there is a summary list of at least some of its record series or accessions which contain (or, occasionally, are likely to contain) relevant records. Where possible, there is also a brief administrative history or biographical note. For the one hundred agencies and fifteen people so far included, approximately four hundred record series/accessions have been listed.

The summary series/accession entries in this sequence are noted to show whether additional information about them occurs in the second sequence, and, if so, what level of information is given.

The second sequence in each part is a numerical list of all series/accessions referred to in the first sequence, with any additional information. Each entry gives the series/accession title, date range, and all agencies which had a hand in recording it. Where it has been both desirable and possible, additional information has been included which may relate to its physical form, its history, previous and subsequent series, its content, and existing finding aids to it created by the agency recording it and/or by Australian Archives.

It is also in this sequence, under the series/accession entries, that select lists of some record items (e.g. files in a file series, photographs in a photograph series) have been included where possible. At present (November 1982) there are about 87 such item lists, with about 3,500 items listed.

Approximately 1,000 of the entries for the items listed in this way have been annotated to give some indication of the range and type of content in the files. There is a serious danger that such annotations, which are not intended to convey the full content or significance of any file, may conceal as well as reveal information, particularly when a controlled vocabulary has not been developed. They have been included, however, because users' needs in the present social, legal and political situation require that at least some specific information can be quickly retrieved. They are also aimed at seducing and cajoling people, who otherwise might not use the records, into doing so, and into using archival collections in general. The important thing is that researchers realise that annotations are partial, necessarily subjective, and based on only a hasty inspection of files.

There is no space here to discuss why the agencies, series and items included have been chosen over others, or why some have been annotated and others not. Selection has been basically a pragmatic process, in response to numerous variables. As with annotations, researchers should recognise that the selection of agencies, series and items far from represents everything available. However, an initial reference to the selection as it

The term 'record series' here designates the totality of records within a particular numerical or other symbolic sequence, or which have been accumulated for the same purpose or following the same format. 'Accession' refers to a discrete collection of records transferred to archival custody by an agency; an accession may consist of one or more series, or parts of one or more series.
stands makes a wider search possible, by greatly reducing the time and effort researchers must individually put into the areas which it touches on and leaving them free to pursue other avenues.

One thing that I hope the guide will do when it is eventually published is to demystify archives, and encourage people, particularly Aborigines, to use not only the Australian Archives' holdings it describes but also the numerous other archival and manuscript collections within and outside Australia which contain a wealth of relevant government, business and personal papers.

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL STUDIES

APPENDIX

Commonwealth Agencies Included (ACT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorney General's Department</td>
<td>1901-</td>
<td>Information, Department of</td>
<td>1939-1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Institute of Anatomy</td>
<td>1931-</td>
<td>*Interior [I], Department of the</td>
<td>1982-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian War Memorial</td>
<td>by 1925-</td>
<td>*Interior [II], Department of the</td>
<td>1939-1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Secretariat [I]</td>
<td>1901-1968</td>
<td>Investigation Branch</td>
<td>1919-1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Solicitor's Office</td>
<td>1903-</td>
<td>Jervis Bay Office</td>
<td>1937-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence [III], Department of</td>
<td>1942-</td>
<td>Pensions and Maternity</td>
<td>1912-1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*External Affairs [I], Department of</td>
<td>1901-1916</td>
<td>Allowance Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Capital Commission</td>
<td>1925-1930</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Department</td>
<td>1911-1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Executive Council</td>
<td>1901-</td>
<td>Research and Civil Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor-General's Office</td>
<td>1901-</td>
<td>Directorate of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Department of</td>
<td>1921-</td>
<td>Royal Commission on Northern</td>
<td>1919-1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Home Affairs [II], Department of</td>
<td>1928-1952</td>
<td>Territory Administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Home and Territories, Department of</td>
<td>1916-1928</td>
<td>Social Services,</td>
<td>1939-1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Department of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Territories, Department of the</td>
<td>1951-1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>War Cabinet Secretariat</td>
<td>1939-1946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Departments with administrative responsibility for the Northern Territory

Commonwealth Agencies Included (Northern Territory)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator, Office of the</td>
<td>1911-1927</td>
<td>Land Office, Darwin</td>
<td>1869-1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator, Office of the</td>
<td>1931-</td>
<td>Lands and Mines Department</td>
<td>1921-1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator, Office of the —</td>
<td>1937-1942;</td>
<td>Lands and Survey Branch</td>
<td>1931-1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office, Alice Springs</td>
<td>1945-?</td>
<td>Lands and Survey Department [I]</td>
<td>1914-1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk of Courts, Darwin</td>
<td>1924-1950</td>
<td>Lands and Surveys Department [II]</td>
<td>1925-1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts Office of the Northern Territory</td>
<td>1950-1962</td>
<td>Land Department</td>
<td>1912-1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Law Office, Darwin</td>
<td>1922-?</td>
<td>Local Court of Anthony's Lagoon</td>
<td>1929-1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaol and Labour Prison, Alice Springs</td>
<td>1938-1974</td>
<td>Medical Officer, Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaol, Palmerston, and Darwin</td>
<td>1872-1942;</td>
<td>Medical Service and Health Branch</td>
<td>1930-1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaol and Labour Prison</td>
<td>1947-?</td>
<td>(North Australia Medical Service)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Resident [of North Australia], Office of the</td>
<td>1927-1931</td>
<td>Aboriginals Branch, ('Northern Territory Medical Service')</td>
<td>1931-1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste Institution, Alice Springs ('The Bungalow') and, Half-Caste Institution Balaklava, South Australia</td>
<td>1942-1946</td>
<td>Medical Service, Health and</td>
<td>1936-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1932-1972</td>
<td>Aboriginals Branch, Patrol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Officer, Alice Springs and Jay Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mines [I], Department of</td>
<td>1912-1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Department of, Northern</td>
<td>1939-1978</td>
<td>Mines Branch [I] (head office)</td>
<td>1928-1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory Divisional Office ('Northern Territory Medical Service&quot;)</td>
<td>1939-1978</td>
<td>Native Affairs Branch (head office)</td>
<td>1939-1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Native Affairs Branch, Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Aboriginals Branch</td>
<td>1927-1930</td>
<td>North Australia Commission</td>
<td>1927-1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Police, Office of Commissioner of,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>1927-1928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Police, Office of the Commissioner, of Darwin: 1924-1927
Police Inspector’s Office [I]: 1869-1924
Police, Office of Superintendent of Police Camp, Birdum: 1931-1964
Police Stations:
- Adelaide River (1946-)
- Alice Springs (1886)-1927
  1928-1942
  1945-
- Alice Well 1912-(1928)
- Anthony’s Lagoon 1889-?
- Arltunga 1927-1944
- Barrow Creek 1926-1945
- Borroloola 1886-?
- Bow Hills ?1913-1919
- Brocks Creek 1898-?
- Charlotte Waters 1930-1938
- Daly River ?
- Darwin 1942-
- Emungalen ?
- Finke 1938-
- Frew River 1918-1921
- Gordon Creek 1894-1898
- Groote Eylandt ?
- Hammond ?
- Harts Range 1944-
- Hatches Creek (1937-1950)
- Illamurra by 1897-1912
- Katherine 1886-
- Lake Nash ?
- Larrimah 1944-
- Maranboy by 1917-
- Mataranka 1928-
- Nectar Brook ?
- Newcastle Waters 1913-1951
- Pine Creek 1873-
- Platelayers’ Camp 1928-1929
- Powell’s Creek 1889-1913
- Range River 1911-1963
- Roper River 1889-
- Tennant Creek ?
- Timber Creek 1898-
- Wave Hill 1919-
- Yardea ?
- Supreme Court, NT 1911-1924
- Survey Department 1912-1914
I opened this book with mixed feelings. I closed it with sadness.

My initial misgivings were reinforced by the book's title, adorned with a band of what appear to be tjurunga and thread-crosses, the dedication (which bears no relationship to Ted), the self-righteous appendage to Strehlow's letter in the Preface, and the pre-publication blurbs on the back cover. I was saddened because Ted is judged and found wanting, not only by McNally but also by one of his own sons (pp. 73, 97-100, 198-199). If the evidence supplied by McNally is taken alone, posterity will have little opportunity to make its own assessment. Ted Strehlow himself is, unfortunately, not in a position to reply!

Two interrelated issues are involved here. One has to do with biographies in general: with such considerations as motive and intent, range and choice and handling of material — and what is omitted. The other is specific: this particular account, of a particular person. One question is: does this biography portray the whole man who was Strehlow — or, at least, provide a reasonably rounded picture? To the best of my knowledge, it does not. This is not merely a matter of sympathetic treatment, or otherwise, or whether or not the subject would have liked the result. It concerns also how the book is written, the emphases which receive more attention than others, and the selection of available material written by or about or otherwise referring to Strehlow. Even more crucial is the ability of a biographer to interpret both the person, and the changing contexts within which the events are relevant. The overall treatment in this biography would, in my view, make any potential subject think twice (or more) before placing himself (herself) in the hands of a biographer.

In the Strehlow biography so much is left out. McNally's access to pertinent documents was not complete. For instance, I have large files of correspondence between Ted and myself over a twenty-five-year period. These reveal facets of his thinking which do not appear in the biography, and suggest at least partial answers to some of the problems of Ted as a scholar of Aranda traditional life and as a person — if these were strictly separable. Those files, of course, could not be made available. I have only three letters from Ward McNally (for February, March and April 1980), and copies of my three replies, one with attached comments on nine questions he asked me. We had no discussions except through that correspondence.

What is particularly frustrating is that no sources are mentioned at all. I should have thought this a sine qua non for all good biographical writing; and in this case, the Literature Board of the Australia Council provided funds for McNally to carry out research to enable him to compile the book. Without readily accessible sources and references, readers have no opportunity of checking quotations or written documentation in order to see them in their original context. They are completely at the mercy of the biographer, with no alternative but to accept his interpretation of the person and of the events. This comes out clearly at the end of Chapter 1 and in Chapter 2, which leads up to Carl Strehlow's death. Ted's Journey to Horseshoe Bend (1969) is referred to only briefly, and not in that connection; on page 139 it is mentioned as 'a near-classic'. Yet where else except from that book could a summary of this kind be obtained? Compare, for instance, the death scene of Carl Strehlow in both these works. Ted's eye-witness account is a masterful rendering by a person intimately and emotionally involved. It is not only with that death scene that liberties appear to have been taken, but also with Ted's own (p. 200). This appears to be common practice throughout the biography. In Chapter 9, for example, the Stuart case is discussed, with no reference to K.S. Inglis's book on that subject.

Difficulties of interpretation are most apparent in what purport to be quotations from my own remarks. I note only two examples. With regard to his early article Ankotarinja (1933), I said: 'That made a deep impression on me. There was nothing comparable which encapsulated in quite this way the mythic quality and deep attachment of Aborigines to their land'. In McNally's rephrasing, the article 'made such an impression on [me] ... that the work inspired [me] to apply new vigour to [my] own
studies of Aboriginal culture' (p. 78)! Much of Strehlow's work I thought outstandingly good; but I did not say that his 'contributions had far wider implications than anyone else's work on the subject' (p. 101). And so on. Whether or not this is deliberate I do not know: it is at least careless, with insufficient concern for veracity. If such changes have occurred in my case, it seems likely that they have happened in regard to others as well.

A great deal could be said about the various incidents and events discussed in this book — actual statements as well as interpretation, including even more apparent inaccuracies. As in the case of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies' air-conditioners (p. 130), certain aspects are either overdrawn or incomplete, or are given an undue emphasis. For instance (see p. 135), I did not know Donald Stuart in 1964; nor did I write a letter introducing him and his wife to Ted. As to pp. 137-138: Don Stuart submitted an application to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in November 1965 (Doc. 65/311) for fieldwork in the Pilbara of Western Australia — not in Central Australia, and gave as his referees both Strehlow and W.E.H. Stanner. The Institute's Council did not approve the application. It is not clear, therefore, how Ted could have sent Stuart to Central Australia, or whether he had funds from elsewhere. McCarthy (e.g. p. 136) was not a 'professor'; and McNally's account of the Strehlow Aranda map 'controversy', in which Scherer was involved, is far from complete (pp. 137 et seq.). Good biographical writing depends on getting one's facts right. For instance, McNally speaks of H.C. Coombs (whose name is misspelt) resigning from the chairmanship of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (pp.146 and 147). Coombs was not elected a member of that Institute until 1978-79 and was not its chairman. The resignation refers to Coombs' chairmanship of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council.

With regard to Mountford's volumes *Ayers Rock* (1965) and *Winbaraku* . . . (1968). I do not believe that Ted was motivated by spite or jealousy when he made his critical review entitled '“Ayers Rock” and “Winbaraku” by C.P. Mountford: a critical examination'. Strehlow was concerned with accuracy, and the facts presented by Mountford did not necessarily tally with his own. The review (55 pages, plus appendices) was sent first to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, but was not well received there because of its outspoken statements about Mountford and the University of Adelaide. There is no doubt that this episode had a negative effect on relations between the Institute as such, and Strehlow. The way the whole business was handled was most unfortunate. I offered (in March 1969) to publish the review in *Anthropological Forum* provided Strehlow removed the *ad hominem* discussion, because it included a wealth of interesting and valuable ethnographic material. I repeated the offer on two other occasions (in May and September 1969), but Ted could not make up his mind. He was smarting under the strictures of the Institute, and considered all his criticisms to be justified. It was not until January 1970 that he wrote to me to say that the matter 'will keep for the present'. This was not, as McNally would have it (p. 145), a curt reply, since that letter brought up other topics not related to Mountford. Moreover, we were corresponding quite regularly over that particular period. In fact, I remember that on one occasion during that time, the Strehlows drove me over to see Mountford, who was then living in Rose Park.

McNally suggests, both here and on page 192, that a rift had grown up between Ted and myself. The last page number refers to the publication of Aranda religious photographs in *Stern and People*. I won't go into this, except to say that I telephoned Strehlow immediately it was drawn to my attention (by an interstate Aboriginal phone call) and advised him to make a public statement. The essence of my discussion with him was not framed in the way McNally has it (pp. 189-90). Certainly, I was disturbed about the whole business; but it is not true that 'angry letters' were sent to me by both Ted and his wife. I made this clear to McNally in my letter to him of March 3rd 1980. I remained Ted's friend up to the time he died. Inevitably, there were differences of opinion between us: it would have been astonishing if there had not been, because of our differing backgrounds and experiences and commitments. But I did not resign from the chairmanship of the Strehlow Foundation because of any of these matters.
I think I have said enough, at this juncture. I have demonstrated (although rather briefly) that there are defects in this biography. We are presented with one face of Ted Strehlow, seemingly darkened, his foibles too heavily drawn. His full portrait, his full stature, are yet to be delineated. In fact, this particular exercise of McNally's should provide a lesson to us, to anthropologists and to social historians, when it comes to assembling a biography.

Ted Strehlow was without doubt a difficult and complex personality. In some respects he was unpredictable and unsure of himself, and he took too much notice of what others said and did vis-à-vis himself. He collected more enemies than most of us seem to do, or think we do — but they were not always of his own making. In short, it is not the man Strehlow who was, who counts in the long run, but the scholar who remains. In this last respect, his reputation continues unblemished.

RONALD M. BERNDT UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA


My interest in Aboriginal literature dates from 1976 when I lived in the Northern Territory on an Aboriginal settlement. I am now fifteen and live in the A.C.T. but have continued to read many books containing both Aboriginal tales and myths, most of which have been aimed at children. I found Milbi difficult to criticise because it rates with the best of them.

This anthology of Aboriginal tales from the Queensland Endeavour River region is told and beautifully illustrated by Tulo Gordon and translated by John Haviland. It should appeal to everyone. Although each story is complete in itself, characters introduced in one chapter are often found in the next and the overall effect is one of a rich tradition. The stories are easy to read and understand and the pictures add to the myths to create a beautiful image.

These stories may sound like fairy-tales to many of us but we must remember that the people to whom the stories belong have a very different society and culture from us. Most of these stories are told by adults to their children to explain and show something about their values and society but not all these tales are just for children. Some are for adults to exchange with other adults, but again the purpose is to explain the society by recounting things that have happened.

My favourite tale in the collection is the story of how the Nhinhinhi fish changed the languages. It tells of long ago when all men had a single language and of how the Nhinhinhi fish, a groper, swallowed all the people who had gathered for a ceremony. Some time later when the fish vomited all the people out, they found that they spoke different languages. This explanation tells us why people are all the same but different, and that is an important lesson for all of us to understand.

The explanatory notes at the end of the book complement the tales well. They add important footnotes which expand the book and its contents. Overall, Milbi is an enjoyable collection of tales that should give many people an insight into Aboriginal culture.

GENEVIEVE BELL CANBERRA


This unusually interesting book records the author’s experience and knowledge
derived from living for twenty-five years with the Aboriginal inhabitants of Groote Eylandt, fifteen years before any major outside influence disturbed their lives and ten years after the establishment of manganese mining on the island.

The date of the original occupation of the island by their ancestors, probably from nearby Arnhem Land, is not known. It was in the Dream Time. Abel Tasman (1644) and Mathew Flinders (1803) both passed by. Years later, in 1921, a Church of England mission was established, and in 1938 a flying boat base and subsequently landing slips were built. Probably the first regular contact with the outside world began with the annual visits of the Macassan trepangers, possibly two hundred years ago. They introduced steel axes and with these the islanders built dug out canoes which replaced their bark canoes and enabled them to venture further out to sea.

A major change in the life style and economy of the islanders came in 1963 with the development of the known manganese deposits. Mining brought money and goods to be bought especially for the younger men. The change in the economy and values disturbed the older Aborigines and this book was written 'with their co-operation to preserve some, at least, of the basic bushcraft before it is lost for ever'.

Part 1 of the book consists of chapters on their language, everyday activities, the many and diverse uses of plants and plant products, methods of preparation of food and other resources. The Aboriginal's accurate knowledge of the environment from which he, as a hunter-gatherer, must obtain his resources is reflected in the 'Bush Calendar' of the Groote Eylanders, e.g. 'Flowering of Cocky apple... shows it is time to catch turtles. When Pandanus nuts are orange and dropping, turtles are laying their eggs'.

'Sickness: causes and treatments' is a wide ranging and interesting chapter; it includes a variety of treatments — not all are designed to cure. While it was recognised that there was no cure for leprosy and cases were not isolated because that would be unloving, yet a mentally ill person who became dangerous might be speared.

Part 2 deals more fully with the flora of the island and since it is a continental island the flora is dominated by mainland species, but it also includes a number of variants. Some 385 plants are listed, each with its botanical name and family, its native name, and notes on its habitat, size and form, characteristics and any other feature including its use. Full page illustrations of one hundred of these plants are included to aid in their identification. Unfortunately, these sketches show the disadvantages the illustrator has experienced in drawing from herbarium specimens rather than from the living plant.

The broad scope of the author's experience and interests and her sympathetic understanding of the Aborigines of Groote Eylandt had combined to produce a rare and valuable story of the pre-contact life and the contact history of Groote Eylandt.

PHYLLIS NICHOLSON


When the first European explorers made contact with Kangaroo Island in 1802 they found the island to be totally uninhabited. Despite its large size (over 4,000 square kilometres) and relative proximity to the South Australian mainland (only 14.5 kilometres at the nearest point) there was no indication of either permanent occupation by the Aborigines or even of sporadic contacts by visiting groups. The 'mystery' surrounding the island deepened further when an initial archaeological exploration in the early years of the present century revealed a comparative wealth of archaeological sites, clearly indicating relatively intensive occupation of the island at some point in the past. The challenge to the archaeological community could hardly have been clearer: what was the age of this early human occupation of Kangaroo Island, and why did this occupation come to an end?

Ronald Lampert devoted his doctoral research to attempting to resolve these and other problems posed by the Kangaroo Island material and has now presented his results as
volume 5 of the Terra Australis series. The most obvious and immediate objective was to secure some hard archaeological data relating to the human occupation, largely free from the biases and ambiguities inherent in the earlier phases of surface collecting. In addition to a careful survey of existing material, therefore, Lampert conducted a series of controlled excavations on a total of six sites, chosen so as to represent a variety of settlement locations and — hopefully — a wide chronological range. Any selection of this kind must of course inevitably involve a large element of chance (not to mention good luck) but in general the author seems to have been successful in squeezing an impressive amount of evidence from the sites on which he chose to work.

Viewing the results as a whole, the evidence has been least forthcoming on the chronology of the so-called 'Kartan' industries — the rather distinctive industries (named by Tindale after the Aboriginal name for Kangaroo Island) which initially drew the attention of archaeologists to the island. As yet, there are no radiocarbon dates for these industries, and no recorded occurrences in well stratified geological contexts. While a broadly Pleistocene date for the Kartan industries seems beyond dispute, there will no doubt be mixed reactions to Lampert's suggestion that at least some of these industries may go back as far as 50,000 B.P. Basically, Lampert's argument here is that on general typological and technological grounds the Kartan tools find their closest parallels in some of the earliest dated industries on the Australian mainland, and that on more theoretical grounds this is precisely the kind of favourable ecological habitat (offering a combination of terrestrial, marine and estuarine resources) in which one might expect to find some of the earliest traces of colonization in Australia. Aside from these chronological questions, the author is generally successful in showing that the very heavy, steeply-flaked pebble and core tools (including the 'horse-hoof cores') which have always been used to define the Kartan do seem to represent a distinctive industrial variant which can be identified not only on Kangaroo Island itself but also on several adjacent parts of the South Australian mainland. Now that the character of the Kartan phenomenon has been more sharply defined, future research on Kangaroo Island will no doubt aim at putting the chronology of the sites on a more secure footing.

The best-documented sites included in Lampert's survey belong to the so called 'small tool tradition'. Substantial excavations were carried out at four of these sites and yielded a range of apparently reliable radiocarbon dates extending from $4,910 \pm 90$ B.P. (for the Sand Quarry site) to $10,940 \pm 60$ B.P. (for the upper occupation level at Seton Cave); the much earlier date of $16,110 \pm 100$ B.P. recorded for the lower occupation level at Seton Cave has been tentatively attributed to the same industrial tradition, although on the evidence of a single retouched tool this attribution inevitably remains tenuous. The excavation at Seton Cave also yielded the only substantial evidence at present available for the character of prehistoric economic activities on Kangaroo Island; faunal remains from the upper occupation level suggest a primary emphasis on the exploitation of the grey kangaroo, accompanied by the collection of emu eggs and at least six species of marine molluscs. The only other hints of economic activities from the island are provided by a few seal bones from the Cape du Couedic, and by a number of sparse shell scatters at various points around the coast.

Seen from the standpoint of a European prehistorian there is a good deal in Dr. Lampert's monograph which is of more general methodological and theoretical interest. The methods he adopts for analysing the lithic industries are by no means entirely new, but provide excellent illustrations of how a wide range of approaches can be brought to bear on specific, clearly defined problems. In this context I found myself in warm agreement with his comment that 'the selection of data sensitive to some specific hypothesis seems preferable to a broad empirical net, making it desirable for an archaeologist to have some idea of the questions to be asked and the range of attributes most likely to answer these before choosing and measuring attributes' (p. 52). By pursuing this policy he is able to extract a good deal of useful information from classes of artefacts which have sometimes been regarded as too simple or basic to yield any worthwhile cultural or technological information. His demonstration that various forms of pebble tools can be used to provide valuable data of this kind is one which might well be pursued, for example, by some African prehistorians.
In discussing the possible relationships between the Kartan industries and those belonging to the small tool tradition, Lampent raises a further theoretical issue which will have a familiar ring to European prehistorians. So long as doubts remain over the chronology of the Kartan industries, the possibility must of course be allowed for that these could represent merely some kind of 'functional' variant of the small tool tradition. Issues of this kind are notoriously difficult to resolve from the archaeological data, but the approach adopted by Lampent seems to me as sensible and rigorous as any that can be adopted in this situation. The most positive approach, as he demonstrates, is to set up an explicit model of exactly what patterns of variation can be predicted from specific functional interpretations, and then to test these predictions systematically against the archaeological record. Ethnoarchaeology clearly provides one of the most valuable sources of predictive modelling in this context, and it is interesting to see how the Australian ethnoarchaeological data collected by Hayden, Gould and others can be brought to bear on the particular problems posed by the Kartan material. By reasoning along these lines Lampent has little difficulty in showing that the hypothesis of functional variation does not provide a very convincing explanation for the Kartan/small tool dichotomy.

There is hardly space in a brief review to comment on the intriguing problems posed by the final stages of human occupation on Kangaroo Island. No doubt the debate will continue between Lampent and Jones on the question of whether the archaeological record for the Holocene period represents continuous occupation by a 'relict' population, or whether the permanent occupation of the island effectively came to an end with the dramatic rise in sea level which eventually led to its isolation from the mainland sometime around 10,000 B.P. To an outside observer there are valid arguments on both sides, although my impression is that Lampent has built up a reasonable case in favour of the 'relict population' view. Whichever view one adopts there remains the central problem of why the human use of the island — whether permanent or intermittent — eventually came to an end. Lampent's suggestion that this was related in some way to the increasing aridity of the climate between the fifth and third millennia B.P. is interesting, but is hardly developed in sufficient detail to provide more than a hint to the critical ecological factors that may have been involved. Despite the impressive contributions of this monograph, at least one aspect of the Great Kartan Mystery remains, perhaps, as mysterious as ever?

PAUL MELLARS
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.


First, it has to be said, this is the chronicle of a wide-ranging enterprise, carried out with enormous energy and efficiency, deploying a wide variety of people and resources, and brought to completion inside three years. Isabel McBrady's New England survey is the only published Australian regional survey showing comparable range in time and space and across the disciplines. Are only women sufficiently tough, conscientious and foolhardy to collect and analyse such a mass of trivia, and hammer it into meaning and shape?

Dr Flood is tough indeed. She employed a great variety of skills — herself a climber, bushwalker, surveyor, photographer, field archaeologist, excavator, artefact assemblage analyst, statistician, and historian; and she marshalled and drew on the skills of others — amateur, student and professional archaeologists; geographers, zoologists, botanists; bushmen, climbers, landowners. Her data range from field monuments, artefact scatters and excavated stratified sites; through stone tool assemblages, distributions and environmental resources; to early European descriptive accounts of Aborigines in a landscape.
Second, despite, or because of, its wide range, this is not a scrapbook, a hotch-potch. Dr Flood essays a total picture of Aboriginal communities and their use of and impact on terrain through time. 'Pure' archaeology is not enough. Archaeology plus the environmental sciences is not enough. Ethnohistory is not enough — for it is a view from the wrong side of the frontier. Only from an amalgam of archaeology, landscape sciences and documentary studies can a living portrait be moulded of any part of Australia and its people. Daunting though the task may be, this is the only way it can be done.

Josephine Flood has chosen as her study area the Southern Uplands, comprising the Australian Alps and the surrounding tablelands and montane valleys, used by groups centred on a variety of differing areas either side of the ranges, but drawn together by their seasonal preoccupation with moths. The high point of the book, as of the Upland economy, was millions of walnut-flavoured moths, congregating in the summer months about masses of granite in the high ranges of the Dividing Range, sought as a 'lusious fattening food' which inaugurated a season of festivity, when people grew fat and sleek, and indulged themselves in love-making, marriage, barter, initiation, ceremonies and battle.

Some lack of clarity results from recurrent uncertainty about the limits of the region under discussion in various sections of the text. The study area is set within a wider frame, variously shown on figures 2 (relief), 5 (exploration of northern half of the area, and further west), 8 (tribal movements), 10 (moth movements), 12 and 13 (tribes and drainage basins), depicting differing overlapping areas on differing scales. The rectangular 'study area' indicated on figure 2 is never mapped again. Those who do not live in Canberra (and the book surely addressed a wider audience) would appreciate a key map of this whole study area, showing the relationship within it of the sub-areas mapped, with a variety of scales and conventions, in figures 21, 22, 24, 25, 26. How, for instance, do the Lower Snowy locations on figure 25 relate to those on figure 26? Where is Clegg's Cave in relation to everything else? Does the word 'Gippsland' appear on any map?

Ambiguities in the text also stem from the assumption that the reader knows the area, and therefore it is not necessary for the maps to be sufficient to explain the text. For instance, on p.19 Dr Flood states that there is no evidence of burning in sub-alpine or alpine tracts. On p.12 the alpine/subalpine regions are defined as those above 1500m; and from figure 2, at a very small scale, one can deduce that these comprise only a very small part (perhaps less than a tenth) of the study area. The 'symbiotic inter-relationship of man, grasslands and game' so beautifully described by Cunningham for the Tablelands affected an area many times as extensive. But how extensive are the Tablelands? How much is now 'forest, woodland and savannah' and how much 'treeless plains'? Is the labelled portion of figure 25 the total extent of treeless plains? A large map of the rectangular study area from figure 2 would solve these problems, if it showed contours, ecological zones, and preferably sites, and provided a key to the more detailed maps of small areas, at a larger (standard) scale.

A good ecological map is essential to understanding resource distribution, site distribution, group movements, and the variety of impact made by Aboriginal groups each using a variety of fire regimes, in a variety of environments. Howitt's 1890s accounts of 'the influence of (European) settlement on Eucalyptus forests' cannot be fully understood unless the reader can relate them to a better map than figure 2. Howitt makes masterly use of a combination of botanical observation (e.g. in the mountain forests of Gippsland a few very large scattered trees stood out from the dense forests of young trees predominantly of different species, which had grown up since the 1860s); European oral tradition (in the Snowy valley it was 'difficult to ride' through forests of young saplings where 'the few scattered old giants' indicated earlier open grassy alluvial flats); Aboriginal oral tradition (the ranges of the Omeo district, grown dense with Eucalypt saplings and Acacia scrub, which 'were, as a whole, according to accounts given me by surviving aborigines, much more open than they are now'); and archaeological evidence ('constant discoveries during the process of clearing of blackfellows' stone tomahawks' in dense thickets of gum saplings and shrubs among the 'few very large old trees' of the great forest of South Gippsland). Flood does not
put sufficiently clearly Wakefield's point that it is not burning, but frequency of burning, which is crucial. Infrequent burning by European pastoralists would actually open the canopy and increase scrub growth, and increase coppicing from burnt stumps. It would follow that where Aboriginal groups moved annually to and fro along valley bottoms, e.g. the Suggan Buggan, burning as they went, open parklike zones would result; while along the margins of such zones of movement patchy firing would produce a mosaic of thickets at various stages of regrowth. It works both ways — zones which were most frequented would be most fired; and zones kept open by being most fired were easiest to move through, and so most frequented.

There are some signs of 'splicing' to adapt a 1973 thesis to 1980 publication. Although Singh's work on evidence for firing in the Lake George deposits is cited (as 'pers. comm.', and by publication reference) it is not really incorporated into the argument (p. 18). Flood does not seriously consider the very real probability that the initial human use of the Southern Uplands may be as early as the last interglacial and may from the first have involved a very substantial impact on the environment. This is supported not merely by high values for charcoal particles, indicating increases in fire frequency, but by the decline of fire-sensitive *Casuarina* woodland, and the first dominance of open eucalypt woodland, a very different landscape from that of previous interglacials. The consequences for understanding settlement history are spelt out on p. 280, ignored on p. 281.

Purists may object to the survey methods — 'In view of the low archaeological visibility of upland Aboriginal sites, various techniques of site prediction, based on the distribution of food and stone resources in the local topography, were employed, and these proved surprisingly successful, revealing over fifty campsites'. Predictive rather than representative sampling? Not quite, for having predicted a site, Dr Flood then took 'a narrow [!] transect' and examined this on foot, showing not only that there was archaeological material in the area where she has predicted it, but also that there was no archaeological material visible elsewhere in a 1 km wide swathe from valley floor to peaks. However, despite triumphs in the prediction and discovery of sites, Dr Flood must admit for parts of her enormous area that 'little reconnaissance has been done in this area as yet'. Those areas which have been more closely sampled (predictively, or however) should be shown on the site distribution maps, e.g. figures 25 and 26 are meaningless unless they show the sample areas examined by Margus, Lewis, Gallard and Chapman. A statement that no sites have been found on the treeless Monaro Plains means nothing until a sample area has been examined with thoroughness comparable to their work.

Much of the value of this study lies in the use of ethnographic evidence providing a detailed picture of Aboriginal social, economic and ceremonial life in that thin slice of time where European observation intersects the continuous flow of life — a 'still' as the endpoint of the somewhat blurred 'movie' shots which comprise the archaeological record. Dr Flood does not now need to defend the validity of using ethnographic material. But she confuses the issue by calling it 'ethnographic analogy'. Ethnography provides for the archaeologist not analogy to plug gaps, but a base line from which to measure differences. The archaeological imprint of each phase in the use of a region shows a pattern of intensities of use differing from previous and succeeding patterns, and the totality of phase patterns traces a multi-dimensional graph of change, through to a known contact baseline, from which every other point can be triangulated and calibrated. Gould was not the first practitioner of ethnarchaeology in Australia, just the first to use the label. Flood's use of documentary material owes more to Betty Hiatt (Meehan) and McBryde than to Gould.

The value of ethnographic material for understanding the archaeological record is clear in the sections on movement and site distribution and type; in the argument that death spears, and the quartz fragments which arm them, imply hunting big game; or that shell scrapers and bone awls are indices of skin garments (cf. Bird and Beeck in *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania* for 1980); but particularly in the section on demography. Population densities in the range 5-20 people per 100 ml², centering around 10 per 100 ml², accord well with order of magnitude for other areas of Australia (e.g. the western wheat belt)
REVIEWS

which lie neither at the sparsest (desert) nor at the densest (coastal and major riverine) extreme of the population spectrum. It is essential to realise that more than 60 per cent of groups encountered comprised 10 or fewer people before one can begin to hope to understand processes of site formation and site variety, distribution, and visibility (but this phenomenon is not confined to areas of low population density or small sites).

To me the most fascinating section is Chapter 13 on ‘Stone assemblages of open campsites’ because this, with the work of Isabel McBryde and Richard Gould, is among the first attempts in Australia to draw up a series of equations between surface archaeological material on the one hand and the behaviour and changing grouping of Aboriginal communities on the other.

Full tabulations of assemblage data from surface sites are sadly lacking in Australian archaeological publication. It is good to have so much detail of stone assemblage data; but annoying that different tables (e.g. 12, 13, 14) treat different selections of sites differently; and difficult to collate tables of assemblage characteristics with distribution analyses for the same sites. Try comparing Table 14 with Table 11. Currawong is listed as Central Snowy in one, Lower Snowy in the other. Tombong and Jindabyne are Tableland sites in 11, Central Snowy in 14. Sawpit Creek, Bulls Flat and several Victorian Border sites are given assemblage analyses, but not distributional analyses; Lake Maffra and Cathcart have distributional but not stone assemblage statistics. It is similarly difficult to move between Table 10 and Table 13. Such data are so rare and valuable that it is disappointing to find that the Tables, like the maps, are not standardised, and it would thus be difficult to test distinctions (camps, special purpose camps, ceremonial camps, manufacturing sites) which are by no means as self-evident as Flood would have us believe. How, for instance, does a ‘factory site’, when it is not the immediate adjunct of a quarry, differ from a multipurpose camp, in which stone-working was one among a wide range of activities? Are there any scatters of stone which do not document artefact manufacture? Even a much worn adze slug is not usually discarded until a new adze flake can be substituted. What are the characteristics of ‘manufacturing sites’ which are also ‘in the nature of transit camps’ (p.181)? What effect has date on percentage of ‘waste’, and so on diagnosis?

With her data Flood could have moved towards a standard scheme by which she set out site and assemblage characteristics, and then discussed explicitly their equation with the behaviour of Aboriginal groups and processes of site formation. Site ‘size’ (i.e. artefact quantity) is given a 1-5 rating (are all collections total?). Similarly density could be allocated to defined ranges in a continuum, on the basis of maximum number of artefacts (collected and estimated) per square 10m by 10m; thus —

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Number of artefacts per (10m)$^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$10^4$ (i.e. c. 100/m$^2$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$10^3$ (i.e. c. 1/m$^2$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$10^2$ (i.e. c. 1/(10m)$^2$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$10^1$ (i.e. c. 1/(100m)$^2$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10^{-1}$ (i.e. c. 1/(km)$^2$)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combination of quantity and density would give a matrix within which sites could be set and clusters defined; and correlations tested between those clusters and assemblage and locational characteristics. Total date range must affect the interpretation of every one of the other factors. Quantity must be estimated within a definable entity, and in less sparsely used regions, with greater archaeological visibility, there is a real problem in defining the entities.

The general aim of ethnoarchaeology must eventually be to devise equations between clusters of archaeological characteristics (density, quantity, assemblage characteristics, date range) and the behaviour of Aboriginal groups in the past — group composition (families or young men or whatever), numbers, length of stay (hours? days? weeks? months?), frequency of stay (once, occasional, yearly, frequent, continual) and activities (e.g. domestic, ceremonial, quarrying, hunting). Flood’s combination of ethnohistorical and archaeological data gives
us at least one such equation — the archaeological imprint of moth-hunting groups among the high peaks.

Josephine Flood's excavations, like Bob Pearce's, demonstrate that the ratio between backed blade use and the predominance of chips and bipolar pieces is not exclusively a matter of date, but also demonstrably linked to predominant tool material. Lampert had already suggested that apparent 'degeneration' in stone tool typology followed because the bipolar method is the most suitable for quartz flaking. But Flood's graphs and statistical tests demonstrate clearly the see-saw between silcrete/backed blade dominance and quartz/bipolar pieces/chips (what are the measurements of her 'flakes'? Artefacts like the dimpled anvil in figure 28 may have more to do with flaking quartz than crushing seeds. What does increased quartz use mean? Flood suggests bipolar flaking saves time — but this imputes a most unlikely Protestant time ethic to Aboriginal life. The ubiquity of quartz is surely the key. Pressure of population on land, decreasing group range, perhaps increasing intergroup conflict, may have militated against total reliance on stone which must be obtained from outside the local area (p.253) — and compare Hallam in the 1978 FEPA conference at Poona (Peter Bellwood and V.N. Misra eds. New advances in Indo-Pacific prehistory, in press). Furthermore, such pressures would not necessarily be even or synchronous. Flood shows them operating on the east coast earlier than on the upland behind. Did coastal populations rise more rapidly? Where were the silcrete sources? Does site function (domestic or ritual) affect stone used?

One small point. Flood implies that similar small flakes (chips) were used to arm both quartz-barbed spears and taap knives. However the King George Sound knife described by Hayden was clearly not armed with small chips, but with larger, rectangular bipolar pieces, with crushing and battering on the ends, and a cortically backed side, which is hafted in gum. 'Each is a flake from a scalar core, or the core itself (assuming the distinction is meaningful or possible)' (see Brian Hayden, 'Analysis of a “taap” composite knife', *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, 1973:116-126).

In moving southward, coastward and downhill (to 76m above sea level) to Clogg's Cave Dr Flood clearly goes beyond her brief (and beyond her maps. Nowhere is its location shown relative to the other areas discussed.) This important investigation does not really integrate with the rest of her work, or add to our understanding of the Southern Uplands. Nor does its discussion here add to what had already been published, or put it in a wider or more up-to-date frame. The unity of 'the Australian core tool and scraper tradition' is difficult to maintain in the light of Lampert's heavy Kangaroo Island material. The Pleistocene use of bone points is now widely documented, and it is necessary to distinguish 'needles' (concave spatulae, which when twisted leave a gap through which a sinew may be threaded) from pins, circular in cross-section, for fastening a cloak. Bone points need not necessarily imply possum skin cloaks, for southwest cloaks were stitched from up to seven kangaroo skins, and even one-skin cloaks were pinned. Geographically the closest parallel is with the sparse early material in Cave Bay Cave, published in 1974, but Bowdler's excavation is not mentioned.

There are a few printer's errors — Plate 39a is upside down; leannest (p.99); a stray line on p.802; some editorial slips — 'Plates 40 & 41' (p.101) should be 33a & b; a few details one might query — why a variety of scales for artefact drawings? Are there too many Appendices?

These are quibbles. This is a most impressive and important piece of work. Between the completion of the study in 1973 and its publication in 1980 it had already provided fuel for a number of controversies. Was there a recurring overall pattern of resource usage among Australian societies — a combination of spreading one's bets over a broad range of resources and concentrating on those abundant storable staples which made possible la dolce vita, at least seasonally? Other authors have used Flood's work when it suits their argument (as on ceremonial staples, or the late penetration of alpine areas) or ignored it. The coastal a colonisation versus savannah spread controversy, or the consequential notion that montane (as distinct from alpine) areas were penetrated only late, both ignore Dr Flood's work in...
Clogg's Cave, and the Lake George evidence. Dr Flood is perhaps wise not to enter here upon these later controversies. Did Pleistocene Australians pass a self-denying ordinance, to use as staples only the resources of marine and fresh waters, and ignore the plant and game resources of the same areas? The answers are clear. There is no need for overkill.

SYLVIA J. HALLAM UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA


This is an unusual book on Aboriginal art. It is not a specialist treatise on some selected theme or category of Aboriginal art, nor does it attempt the generalised overview of the Aboriginal visual arts of the more general literature. In her introduction to Rock paintings of Aboriginal Australia, Elaine Godden emphasises that rock painting is merely one small part of the very varied and rich tradition of Aboriginal art, and further, that it is merely one part of the more usually treated category of rock art, which also comprises engravings on rock. She is also very conscious of the dangers of applying western ideas of aesthetics in our evaluation of this art.

In electing to treat painting on rock as a distinct category of rock art, Elaine Godden is re-emphasising an entrenched technological division of Aboriginal pictorial art, rather than selecting say, regional, stylistic, temporal or thematic boundaries. She is not explicit in her reasons for doing this. Admittedly, the vast scope of Aboriginal rock art may have imposed the need to define limits for adequate treatment in a relatively short text (45 pages of 3 column). Possibly her personal experience with Aboriginal people in the Kimberleys prompted her choice and original approach to the subject. The main theme throughout the book is to present Aboriginal rock paintings within their wider contemporary Aboriginal cultural context.

Painting on rocks is known to have been practised until very recently, into post-European contact times. It may still be practised in certain circumstances. Many rock paintings of some areas, notably in the Kimberleys, are totally meaningful and relevant to Aboriginal people of the region. No such immediacy of tradition has been identified for engravings on rock. Images of contact items in rock engravings are rare (but not unknown). There is a widespread implicit assumption that, by and large, most rock engravings are older than most paintings, and hence further removed from current traditional Aboriginal knowledge and concern. The dichotomy between a recent (living?) painting tradition and a prehistoric (extinct) engraving tradition, is however far from sharp. Many rock paintings, notably throughout the southeast of the continent are, as indicated by Godden, fully prehistoric. It is perhaps less widely recognised that in some areas rock engravings also have great relevance to contemporary Aboriginal people, even though they no longer practise, or claim to have practised the art. Pragmatic considerations must necessitate delimiting the scope of any work, but it might be questioned whether a technological criterion was the most apt for a book in which technical considerations of materials, technique and durability are of very subsidiary importance.

Elaine Godden begins by placing Aboriginal rock art in its archaeological context. In this she avoids the false security of a 'potted' outline of Aboriginal prehistory by attempting to introduce the lay reader to some of the methods and principles of archaeological reconstruction and rock art studies, with their inherent lack of precision. To reduce the complexities of the discipline to a few pages in simple language is difficult. Godden's obvious attempt to avoid technical terms and jargon leads to a style at times reminiscent of a school textbook. She is, however, clearly up to date with the major recent developments in Australian rock art studies. Her outline gives a clear, though uncritical précis of much current thinking in this field.
The following chapters demonstrate the contrast between this 'western' approach to origins and development with Aboriginal perceptions of their past. This is achieved fairly impressionistically by recounting a miscellany of myths from various areas, which introduce the reader to some concepts of creation and of the ancestor beings and their relevance in explaining Aboriginal society, their mores and customs. Elaine Godden's accounts of art and land in the Kimberleys in terms of Aboriginal myths and comments are particularly successful in their evocation of the deeply emotional relationship between Aboriginal people and their land, and the role of the Wandjina style paintings in this context.

A digression into the technical and ethical questions of conservation and control of heritage is superficial and lacks sophistication. It tends to mar the flow from the previous section to her final chapter which is a descriptive account of the major regions of rock painting in Australia. These regional descriptions are interwoven with the ideas evolved out of the earlier chapters, illustrated with myths and stories from the areas and reference to recent historical or prehistoric data. Godden is, however, meticulous in pointing out the lack of direct correlation between art and known Aboriginal culture for areas such as Cape York Peninsula, and especially south-eastern Australia. It is probably for this reason that these areas receive more sketchy treatment than the Kimberleys and western Arnhem Land. Well over half the book and over half the colour plates are devoted to these two regions.

The photographs by Jutta Malnic are generally of a high standard of clarity, and include a welcome array of new items, not featured in the literature. Unfortunately, the colour balance in the printing is often poor, and some of the black and white photographs dispersed through the text lack adequate contrast.

The book is aimed at a general, perhaps fairly unsophisticated readership with little or no prior knowledge of Aboriginal culture. It attempts to induce the reader to view Aboriginal rock paintings from an Aboriginal perspective, rather than the essentially academic or aesthetic emphasis of most literature. This is a unique quality, and in this respect the book is a most welcome addition to the growing body of publications on Aboriginal art. It is to be hoped that the fairly lavish style of publication, and correspondingly high price will not place it beyond the reach of the readership for which it is (apparently) intended.

ANDRÉE ROSENFELD

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.


The history of the people who once occupied the eastern part of the Lake Eyre Basin is one of the darker chapters of Australia's past. It is a history of alienation of lands, massacres, and resettlement of much of the remnant population at the Lutheran mission at Killalpaninna on the lower Cooper. There was considerable similarity in the languages and traditions of the people of this area, and they have all suffered a drastic decline. The Biladaba and Garangura have been extinct for some time and they have left no descendants. There are still a few persons of Ngamini, Yawarawarga, Yandruwandha and Yarluyandi descent, but knowledge of these languages has become negligible over recent years with the death of the last fluent speakers, while Dhirari is reduced to one speaker. During the years that Peter Austin's work was in progress, the best represented language, Diyari, suffered a further decline, so that there are now only three fluent speakers still living. Peter Austin's study therefore represents a remarkable 'salvage' operation that throws light not only on Diyari, but on the whole language situation of a vast area, the eastern Lake Eyre Basin.

Through the efforts of the Lutheran missionaries at Killalpaninna Diyari became better known than any of the languages in the area. The language work of the missionaries consisted mainly of a large vocabulary by Reuther, and a translation of the whole of the New Testament. But the grammars by Planert and by Reuther, and the unpublished sketches by
Flierl and Schoknecht are not meant to be major studies. Peter Austin’s book therefore fulfils a most important role, it is a detailed, well argued and coherent account of the language. It is sophisticated without being excessively theoretical, it is in the forefront of the recent advances in our knowledge in this field and it makes Diyari one of the best documented Australian languages.

The work uses only a minimum of special symbols, the spelling system is close to a ‘practical orthography’. This leads to just one problem: Diyari, like the neighbouring languages, has three r sounds, the single tap r, the retroflex, and the strongly trilled r, which Dr Austin regards as the intervocalic allophone of d. There can be no argument that within the framework of Diyari this interpretation is accurate, but it means that the strongly trilled r is always written as d. Having frequently heard Diyari spoken, I find this hard to take: I see words like waddu ‘white’ and sindwa ‘east’ and can’t understand until I realise that of course these words are pronounced as warnu and jirruwa. This might well be a case where a phonetic spelling would be preferable to the theoretically more justified phonemic spelling.

It is hardly fair to look for errors in a work of such excellence — but there are a few minor slips that should be corrected in a future edition, even if it is only a hook left out as in yata for yata ‘to speak’ (p.68), or the ‘lignum tree’ for ‘lignum bush’ which appears on p.22. The outline of the semantic content of adjectives mentions physiological characteristics, where ‘personal attributes’ might have been better (e.g. silly, clever, quiet): pali ‘naked’ is hardly a physiological characteristic, besides pali just means ‘bare’ and can even refer to clear, open ground. It is true (p.58) that a number of bird-names in Diyari and related languages are inherently reduplicated nouns such as kilaykila ‘galah’; but the interesting part is that no bird any bigger than a galah has such a name and the names of a number of other small creatures such as tiny lizards, and tadpoles yuwdayua are inherently reduplicated. The diminutive aspect of reduplication may still be involved here. The dustjacket comments: ‘This is the first account of an Australian language with a “switch-reference system”’. This is not strictly accurate. W.H. Douglas pointed out such a system in An introduction to the Western Desert language in 1964, (p. 115) but he uses the older terminology ‘Actions of Two Subjects’. The work is excellently documented and the examples given not only illustrate the grammatical points in question but also show the kind of things Diyari people talked about, and this gives some insight into recent ways of life in the area. The collection of the mythological text — when all such traditions were regarded as extinct — is a remarkable achievement, as is the whole work. We must be grateful to Peter Austin for this outstanding study, he did his work in the eleventh hour and has made a major contribution to Australian languages.

LUISE HERCUS

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Trucanini: queen or traitor. By Vivienne Rae Ellis. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1981. Pp x+196. h.c. $9.95, p.6. $6.95.

and


Trucanini and The Aboriginal Tasmanians both deal with the struggle of the Tasmanian Aborigines to survive invasion. But each tells a different tale. Whereas Trucanini laments the extinction of the Aboriginal race and memorializes the life of ‘The last Tasmanian’, The Aboriginal Tasmanians pays tribute to their ultimate survival. Indeed Ryan states her overriding purpose to be to demolish the ‘myth of extermination’. In this purpose she unquestionably succeeds.

A comparison of the two books provides an instructive exercise for the student of history. Using many of the same sources, Ellis and Ryan produce strikingly different accounts.

161
Given that Trucanini is a biography one would expect a biographical emphasis and given the nature of her sources (Robinson's journal and letterbooks), it is not surprising that the dynamic of Ellis' account resides in the relationship between Robinson and Trucanini. A 'close association' (p.19) develops into a 'love affair' (p.35) which is consummated during the long trek of the Friendly Mission around the island when 'Trucanini began to share Robinson's blanket' (p.88). The story ends with Trucanini abandoned, left to suffer Robinson's cruel 'indifference' (p.116). The strengths of Ellis' account are her vivid portraits of her protagonists, 'the pompous little white man and the effervescent Aboriginal' (p.19).

The differences between the two books are more important however than differences in form. Ryan celebrates the Aborigines' resistance, cultural and military, and their adjustment and adaptation. Ellis underlines their collaboration. The chief collaborator is deemed by Ellis to be Trucanini, 'chief protector of the Chief Protector', 'betrayed of her own people' (p.1.). Ryan on the other hand chooses to emphasise Trucanini's (spelt Truganini) spiritual independence of whites and her ultimate rejection of Robinson's authority (pp.217-218). In Ellis' account William Lanne, the last male 'full blood' was 'fat and unhealthy'. 'He drank far too much... [and was] regarded as a ridiculous figure of fun by most of [Hobart's] inhabitants... and, as rather an interesting oddity, he had been introduced to Queen Victoria's son... ' (p.136). Ryan's Lanne, by contrast, is a figure of dignity. 'His proudest moment came in 1868 when during the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh in Hobart Town, he was introduced as the 'king of the Tasmanians'... he had not been exposed to the disease and despair that overtook the rest of his compatriots... he took his responsibilities as the last male "full blood" Aboriginal very seriously' (p.214). In Ellis' book the sealers and whalers are victims of the class prejudice which usually informs accounts of early European settlement. They were not 'men of the calibre and compassion of the early exploring parties' and they are quickly enrolled as the villains of the piece. In Ryan's version the pastoralists are the real villains for their occupation of the land allowed no means of survival to the Aborigines, no accommodation. The sealers on the other hand 'saved Aboriginal Tasmanian society from extinction because their economic activity enabled some of its traditions to continue' (p.71).

What do we make of these divergent accounts? The point is of course that whether its practitioners are aware of it or not the writing of history is a political activity. Emphasis, inclusion and omission all derive from a political perspective. A comparison of these two works nicely illuminates this fact.

The authors' differing treatment of women further illustrates this point. In both accounts, refreshingy, women move beyond victim status and their important political role in 'black-white' contact is highlighted. The most prominent women in Ellis' account are the mission Aborigines, the 'traitors' Trucanini, Dray and Pagerly who are instrumental in enticing their compatriots to surrender. On the west coast for example 'Dray had done much of the spade work for the Mission and it was probably through her efforts that the Mission was successful in making its first conquests so easily' (p.66). Ryan prefers to examine the activities of the resistance. There is the notorious Walyer or Tarerenorerer, leader of the Emu Bay people whom she taught to use firearms after escaping from the sealers. 'Walyer was known to stand on a hill and give orders to her men to attack the whites, taunting them to come out of their huts and be speared' (p.141). In captivity in Bass Strait she told Robinson that she liked the late tawin or white man as much as a black snake. When kidnapped by the sealers Walyer continually incited the sealing women to rebel. Their rejection of the culture of European 'civilisation' Robinson found most disappointing.

Together Ellis' and Ryan's books show the difficulties in generalising about the impact of European settlement on Aboriginal women. Ellis ponders Trucanini's apparent preference for the company of 'white' men and suggests that considerations of power influenced her. Unfortunately the nature of that 'power' is never probed. Neither author explicitly joins the debate on the position of Aboriginal women in pre- and post- contact society pursued by Hamilton, Grimshaw, Larbalestier et al., though both provide information relevant to it. Ryan also provides a helpful framework: 'Their skills at first made them chattels in the
exchange system devised by the Aboriginal men and the sealers but later proved a useful means with which to bargain for their independence' (p.69). The Aboriginal women introduced the sealers to a new industry — mutton birding — and by adapting their traditional technology the women were able to maximise production. By laying the basis for the Bass Strait community's economic security, it is argued, the women thus saved their race from extinction. It is the descendants of these women who now demand recognition of their identity and rights.

Marilyn Lake

Monash University


The work of Bishop Salvado at New Norcia is well known through his own writing and the survival of the institution he founded (albeit long since diverted from its original purpose). Few West Australians would realise that the Benedictine Order's efforts were preceded by an SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) mission at Fremantle and a Wesleyan mission sited first at Perth and later transferred successively to Wanneroo and York. The Rev. John King's Fremantle school (1841-1851) has still to be rescued from historical oblivion, but the Wesleyan Native School which operated during the same period is the subject of this useful monograph by a retired Methodist minister and a senior tutor in anthropology at the University of Western Australia. The University's press is also to be congratulated for the quality of production which leaves little to be desired.

Professor R.M. Berndt's reference to the authors in his Foreword as 'coordinators' might well be seen as acknowledging the undigested nature of parts of the book. Pioneer Aboriginal mission is a good semi-official account of the mission and the Rev. John Smithies' relations with both the colonial government and the 'Fathers and Brethren' of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in England, but some of the larger slabs of documentation could surely have been summarised as part of the narrative. Smithies was an indefatigable worker, serving the spiritual needs of the Swan River Colony Wesleyans as well as supervising the Native School. Unlike Francis Armstrong, the teacher employed there, he had neither the time nor the interest to learn the local Aboriginal language and consequently attained very little knowledge of the culture he was dedicated to extirpate. He continued to believe that Aborigines were completely bereft of spirituality in their natural state, although he was enormously gratified by the spate of conversions made at the School in 1844. Ironically enough, some of these were girls and boys dying of tuberculosis peritonitis contracted from the milk so thoughtfully supplied. It was this mortality and the subsequent outbreaks of pulmonary diseases and measles which caused Aboriginal parents to withhold their children and thus destroyed the mission's raison d'être. Smithies' attempt to transform it into a self-sufficient farm at Wanneroo proved unsuccessful due to poor soil and the final move over the Darling Range to York reduced numbers to a handful when the children refused to move away from their own country.

Smithies had received willing support from Governor Hutt, who incidentally overrode strong opposition from his Executive Council, and during its early years the Native School made good progress. A marriage between an Aboriginal girl from the School and a European artisan in March 1845 confirmed Hutt's faith in the principle of close association between the two races. Nevertheless, in spite of all the vaunted benefits of Christianization and civilization, there was an extremely limited employment market for even the most advanced students. Domestic service, the only opportunity for girls, had its own occupational hazards. Nor did the Wesleyan community take the new converts to their bosom, although they supported the school financially. Some advance was made in teaching work-skills along Moravian lines at the Wanneroo farm, but the government was loath to make over land to would-be Aboriginal farmers.
Smithies was limited by the difficulties of conducting both a colonial and an Aboriginal mission, but greater resources would not necessarily have achieved better results. However, the need to make the mission more financially independent led to comparative segregation from 'white' society — a development which contradicted Hutt's assimilationist ideas but pleased the Fathers and Brethren. The authors' conclusion that Smithies 'arguably accomplished a great deal' reflects an uncertainty as to what he did in fact achieve. Much of the early success of the School seems to have been due to Armstrong, who enjoyed excellent rapport with the Aborigines through his knowledge of their language and customs and his work as court interpreter. Nor do the authors produce much evidence to support their claim that Smithies, like Salvado, was a mediator between black and 'white'. He did oppose the 1848 proposal for the summary trial and punishment of Aboriginal offenders but at no point does he appear to have upheld the principle of Aboriginal rights so gallantly attempted by Robert Lyon and his own Wesleyan predecessor, the Rev. Louis Giustiniani, whose brief but stormy career in the colony awaits proper recognition. What can be said is that Smithies' work helped cushion Aborigines of the Perth area against the full impact of conquest and dispossession during the period following the end of conflict.

While the book documents an important aspect of early Aboriginal institutional history in Western Australia, it is disappointing that the authors did not attempt to collect oral tradition about the mission from its students' descendants. There must surely be Aboriginal families with stories from great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers about the Native School and the Wanneroo farm. The recent opening of Ken Colbung's Lake Gnangara Aboriginal school in the Wanneroo area seems a particularly appropriate memorial to well-meaning efforts of the past.

R.H.W. REECE
MURDOCH UNIVERSITY


This book is the first attempt in over twenty years to provide a complete history of Western Australia, but unlike all previous attempts, it is not a single-author volume. Included are contributions by nineteen historians of different temperaments and interests. It is, as the editor explains, a product of the current dynamic nature of historical research within the state. If there is any single theme, it is one of diversity in the ways the past can be viewed through contemporary eyes. There are twenty-two chapters divided into five thematic sections, an extensive bibliography, and a remarkably thorough index. It is intended for general readers, secondary schools, colleges, and universities. It is a huge volume and very broad of scope. I have, therefore, limited myself to describing only briefly the contents of those subject areas outside the topic of specific interest to readers of this journal.

Part I, 'First settlers and white settlers', contains four chapters which deal specifically with Aboriginal history. The first two ('Aboriginal cultures of Western Australia' by I.M. Crawford, and 'The first Western Australians' by Sylvia J. Hallam) use the writings of the early explorers and settlers combined with the results of recent archaeological research in an attempt to reconstruct Aboriginal history before the coming of the Europeans. Chapter 3, 'Aborigines and white settlers in the nineteenth century', by Neville Green and Chapter 4, 'Black and white after 1897', by G.C. Bolton, provide a record of the interaction between the two peoples from initial contact to the present day. All the authors are Australians of European stock; there are very few contributions from Aborigines among the source materials upon which their chapters are based. It is an essentially European view of Aboriginal history. Thankfully, the authors are well aware of this limitation, state it explicitly, and attempt to compensate for it where possible.

Crawford spends the first third of his chapter attempting to analyse the cultural biases in the early records he proposes to use in describing the Aboriginal cultures. This is an
absolutely necessary exercise, and sets the stage for the entire Aboriginal section, but it unfortunately leaves him very little space in which to describe the cultures themselves. He deals briefly with three separate cultures: those of the Southwest, the Western Desert, and the Kimberley Aborigines. He explains that the process of adjustment to differing environments is, in part, responsible for some of the striking differences between these cultures. It certainly does seem to account for variations in the diet, seasonal movement patterns, and a large proportion of the material culture. It does not, however, necessarily explain the difference in more abstract traits of the societies such as religion. Crawford suggests that these differences result from the separate histories of the cultures after they presumably separated from a more uniform parent population. Just what these separate histories are, of course, is very difficult to know. Crawford reviews the informed speculations of others, and, using evidence from archaeology, adds a few speculations of his own.

This first chapter finishes with an attempt to give some idea of how the Aborigines of the early nineteenth century may have viewed the quality of European culture in relation to their own. This should be especially enlightening to those who automatically assume that the invading culture with its wealth of material goods would be instantly considered superior. As Crawford writes, ‘In retrospect, the European civilization of the nineteenth century appears very unattractive, and must have held even fewer attractions for the Aborigines’ (p.34). While undoubtedly specialists in the field might quibble with many of its statements, this chapter provides a good introduction to Aboriginal history in the west. Although no full-rounded picture of any of the cultures emerges, it is probable that the fault lies more with the paucity of available data and the lack of space in which to present it, than with Crawford himself.

Hallam’s chapter deals in detail with the archaeological data already introduced by Crawford. It focuses on the material culture of prehistoric Aborigines as it is preserved in archaeological sites. This mainly consists of stone implements and what bone has survived the ravages of time. Archaeology is a specialist field, often dealing in arcane concepts and terminologies probably unfamiliar to the general public. Archaeologists also need to work closely with data from other sciences like geology and palaeontology, so this will not be a chapter which the average reader will necessarily easily read or understand. Hallam does her best to make things clear by explaining her terms, and a glossary is provided at the end of the chapter. Some illustrations of the prehistoric implements she is describing are also provided; more of these would certainly have been helpful.

Archaeology is a relatively new field in Western Australia; formal excavation was only begun in the late 1960s. It is an extremely active field, however. Many new, sometimes quite large, research projects are undertaken every year, and the data base is expanding rapidly. The still rudimentary understanding of Western Australian prehistory is constantly being altered by this new information, so the reader would be advised to view most of Hallam’s statements and conclusions as provisional. For instance, at the time this book was published, there was proof that human occupation of the state had begun at least 33,000 years ago. Such is the dynamic nature of archaeological research, however, that since then, a further 5000 years of antiquity has been documented. The state now has the oldest secure evidence for human occupation of the continent of Australia. Humans undoubtedly have been present in Australia for somewhat longer than that, too; but evidence confirming just how long has yet to be found. Hallam’s suggestion that this may have been for as long as 150,000 years must be considered speculative.

The breadth of Hallam’s knowledge is awesome. She presents an enormous number of facts: indeed, almost every fact known that is relevant to the prehistory of Aborigines in the West, and perhaps a few of which the relevance is not so immediately clear. Because of the nature of archaeological research, however, these facts are necessarily often tied together by speculation, and the somewhat effusive writing style will sometimes make it difficult for the untrained person to separate one from the other. She always does separate the two, however, even if this is not always done incisively; if the reader proceeds carefully he will end up knowing as much about the prehistory of Western Australia as anyone else did at the time this chapter was written.
Green's chapter begins the actual history of white and Aboriginal relations in Western Australia. The earliest known sightings of Aborigines by Europeans in the West were those of the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century, and isolated encounters are recorded from then on. Green notes these but begins his discussion in earnest with the establishment of the first European settlement at King George Sound in 1826. His major theme is that the history of contact should not automatically be poured into a mould of ready-made taxonomies such as Elkin's six phases of Aboriginal reaction to the European presence. He shows that the Western Australian evidence suggest there were few universals in the patterns of 'white' and Aboriginal behaviour and response.

At King George Sound, on the south coast, the only hostilities recorded occurred when a woodcutter was speared on the first day the European party landed. Major Lockyer, the commander, judging it the result of a misunderstanding, allowed no reprisal. From that time, until the local Aborigines were totally decimated by European diseases several years later, relations remained most amicable. The two peoples, in fact, joined in a mutual support relationship. The Aborigines moved into the village, even into the houses with the whites; not as servants, but as co-residents. Albany for several years was a joint settlement of both Europeans and Aborigines.

At the other extreme is the history of contact in the Kimberley. From their experiences with the Macassans, the Aborigines there were already aware that lands existed over the seas populated by other peoples, and they wanted nothing to do with them. They fought encroachment onto their lands by the Europeans from the very first, with numerous bloody battles and massacres occurring right up to the 1930s. Green supplies very thorough documentation for these events and discusses a wide variety of contact situations from all over the state. Throughout he tries to isolate and explain the variables which made each situation different from all the others.

This is an excellent contribution to the history of cultural contact in Australia. There are few villains, mostly just ordinary human beings with all their frailties trying to live their lives in difficult times. It provides a welcome relief from early themes of noble pioneer heroes beset by homicidal savages, and the more recent ones of vicious genocidal invaders swooping on helpless innocents. Here we see normal individuals dealing with other normal individuals of a different colour, both caught up in an historical process much greater than themselves, and over which they have little control outside their immediate sphere. The reader, however, will be left with a prevailing sense of tragedy; no matter what the variety of European-Aboriginal relationships the result was ultimately the same.

Bolton begins his history of European-Aboriginal interaction in 1897, the year the Western Australian government took over administration of Aboriginal affairs from the British Colonial Office. One of the few general trends in European-Aboriginal relationships that Green was able to isolate in the previous chapter, was that native-born 'white' Western Australians were generally less tolerant of the Aboriginal life style and Aborigines than were migrants from Europe. Newcomers had a sense of intruding onto someone else's land, and, at least in the early days, were often aided in surviving by Aboriginal assistance and know-how. For Europeans born in the colony, however, actual survival was not so much a problem, but 'getting ahead' was, and the Aborigines were seen by them as obstacles in the path of expansion and development. At the turn of the century this element of Western Australian society took control of the destiny of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the state. It marked the beginning of a period perhaps more devastating for some than the years of initial contact.

At that time, the state's Aborigines were living in almost every stage of the contact situation imaginable. The new laws, however, saw them all as equally 'Aboriginal'. Legislation was passed which, in effect, established a feudal system for control of the still war-torn north. It restricted the Aborigines to servitude on the pastoral stations, but at least allowed them to retain much of the basis of their culture. In the southwest, however, the traditional culture had completely collapsed. Its descendants were now mostly part-Aborigines living on the fringes of Australian society. Many were engaged in more or less regular employ-
ment, and some owned their own farms. Bolton carefully documents the disaster wrought when these people came under strict government control for the first time in their lives. Their articulate petitions for citizenship were ignored, and their children were suddenly denied access to schooling. They were eventually driven out of the towns and herded onto reserves where supervisors exercised total autocratic authority. The quality of life for these people continued to decline until the mid-1930s, when there was only one Aboriginal farmer left in the entire south-west.

It is generally accepted that during the Second World War things began to change for the better; Bolton devotes over half of his chapter to documenting the slow rise in Aboriginal status over the last thirty-five years. Although he tries to be even handed when dealing with controversial figures such as Don McLeod, and explosive problems like Noonkanbah this chapter will not please everyone as it loses the benefit of historical perspective and moves into the thorny realm of modern politics.

The remainder of the book focuses on the development of the European-derived society in the state. Part II is divided into four chapters on economic and demographic history. The first two cover the period from settlement to 1914, and the authors, Pamela Statham and R.T. Appleyard, are involved primarily with collecting the data base for this early period. Extensive detail is often lacking and their conclusions are tentative, but these chapters will be informative and clearly understandable to the general reader. The second two chapters by G.D. Snooks and R.N. Ghosh deal with the current century. Here, the data base is well established, and the authors are free to delve deeper into the interpretation of economic trends. These, like Hallam's chapter in the section before, are specialist studies: full of tables, graphs and formulae. General readers are apt to find them fairly tough going.

Part III is on political history. It contains two chapters by B.K. De Garis and three chapters by David Black which trace the evolution of the Western Australian political system from colonization as a free settlement through the introduction of convicts, self government, and reluctant federation on to the present day. Also included is a chapter by I.H. vanden Driesen on the development of the trade union movement in the state.

Part IV deals with social history. Its seven chapters each explore a separate subject: the family, architecture, education, religion, literature, crime, and sport. The quality of these varies considerably from Marian Aveling's chapter on religion which is little more than a succession of lengthy and loosely integrated quotations from original sources, to Margaret Grellier's excellent study of the family in the mid-nineteenth century. The latter is undoubtedly the finest piece of historical research in the book, an example of the way the 'new' history should be written. It has an explicitly stated theoretical framework, meticulous research, and a punch-line conclusion which will aid the reader to a better understanding of why people today act as they do.

Only one of these chapters ('Crime and society' by J.E. Thomas) deals in more than a passing nature with Aborigines. Thomas' theme is that systems of criminal justice strike out at deviance not necessarily because the latter is morally wrong, but because such activity is a threat to the ideology of those who hold power in parliaments. He deals extensively with two examples: crime relating to the use of alcohol, and the specifically Aboriginal crime of cattle stealing in the north of the state. This chapter is full of details of the criminal apprehension process and the use of criminal statistics. The reader will be convinced that there are proportionately more Aborigines than 'whites' in the prisons of Western Australia simply because the Aborigines do not make the laws. If they did, undoubtedly, the situation would be reversed.

Part V contains a single chapter, 'Western Australia reflects on its past'. The author is again G.C. Bolton, and it is a history of history. Bolton traces the development of the discipline from the early uncritical and jingoistic volumes where the focus was on economic development and founding pioneers were seen as heroic figures, through the slow changes that led to a more critical and pluralistic view of the state's past.

The present volume amply illustrates what Bolton considers to be the best trends in contemporary historical research. The forgotten portions of society: Aborigines, women,
convicts, 'footy fans', and other 'disreputable' types who seldom figured in the previous histories are well represented here. Many of the topics included are covered in more detail elsewhere, but this book brings them all together under one cover. As far as I am aware, this volume is without parallel elsewhere in Australia. It is for the most part eminently readable and very informative. It could serve admirably as an advanced text for high schools and colleges, but its obvious destiny is as a superb introductory reader for university courses.

WILLIAM FERGUSON

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY


and


The aim of both these books is to draw public attention to the Aboriginal viewpoint on issues which have become the foci of conflict in two different places along the south coast of New South Wales. Both involve matters of land use and land rights. Hopefully these works foreshadow others in which there is an endeavour to circulate generally in Australian society the Aboriginal perspective on such contentious issues in more than simple and often distorting headlines. Attitudes towards Aborigines are characterised by stereotypes and in limiting understanding not only do stereotypes provide the means of their own recreation, but ignorance can be mobilized by those with specific interests so that the propriety and subsequent advance of such interests is not generally challenged. This is hardly new information but it is useful to restate it in order to underline the need for books such as these which are accessible to and readable by the public.

Guboo Ted Thomas is an Aboriginal leader at Wallaga Lake. He speaks for the Yuin people in whose history Mumbulla Mountain is so important. For years he has been distressed by the despoliation caused by logging of the natural environment of the mountain which threatens the local Aboriginal cultural heritage. He is the inspiration behind this work.

The book is beautifully produced and in itself is something of a work of art. Unfortunately its size, which contributes to its visual appeal makes it impossible to store on a normal bookshelf. It is thin but very tall and wide. Yet it clearly does not belong to the common coffee-table category; the direction of its content assures that. Nearly all the pages are given to large photographs with simple captions. The photographs, which are excellent art productions although not always very informative, are by Wes Stacey. They represent a change of direction for him as his reputation as a photographer was earned in presentations of architectural history. The two critical series of photographs are firstly of an apparently unassailed Mumbulla — distant views of the mountain or studies of natural features and associations which constitute places of Aboriginal significance; secondly and in contrast, records of the ravages of logging and attendant works.

The captions underscore the points made in the foreword by Ted Thomas, in the afterword by Terry Fox, and in the petition to the Legislative Assembly to protect the sites which is reproduced in this work. The bones of the case as presented are: Mumbulla Mountain is a special place to Aborigines of this area and there are many sacred sites on the mountain where initiation and other important rituals took place. There is a known, deeply felt and traceable connection between Aborigines on the south coast today and this Aboriginal heritage. Further, there is a close relationship between all natural features of the environment: 'the bush is part of the place, the trees and the rocks belong together'. Logging in the
area of sacred sites is threatening them with destruction. At the time of this threat no local Aborigines had been consulted about the proposed action. Indeed, it was not until the Aboriginal people became organised and vocal in their objections that heed was paid to them. Even then the economic pressures exercised on the Forestry Commission led it to turn a deaf ear to recommendations made to State Parliament.

The book ends with a plea for the whole area of Mumbulla Mountain in which sacred sites are located to be gazetted as an 'Aboriginal Place'. It is important to note that in 1979 Brian Egloff, working for Aboriginal and Historical Resources, National Parks and Wildlife Service, produced a full and persuasive report in which he details evidence in support of the significance of this locale to Aborigines in the area (B.J. Egloff. Mumbulla Mountain: an anthropological and archaeological investigation. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney, 1979).

But a realistic review must take into account that all people will not find that these photographs necessarily illustrate or support the written messages. Particularly if the readers are not moved by the messages in the first place. There will be no problem of fit for those people who already know what the connections are or who are sympathetic towards them. But for others, the photographs will not provide evidence of any spiritual or sacred quality of the mountain. It must be acknowledged in the circumstances of Aboriginal/white relations on the south coast that for some they will portray no more than a piece of Australian bush which has the potential for economic development. Moreover Aboriginal claims to it, which are of another order and less comprehensible, are suspect. Thus, for those who want to see, this book is eloquent with hope — and there is also an element of despair — but the entrenchedly antipathetic may well find it printed proof for their rejection of Aboriginal culture and any Aboriginal cause. Yet hopefully, there will be some people, otherwise indifferent or perhaps even hostile in their ignorance, who will be persuaded by the case presented. The book is directed at them.

There is a postscript. Mumbulla Mountain continues to be logged, but not in any area which local Aborigines see as threatening their significant sites.

In the second decade of this century Aborigines established permanently the fishing settlement of Wreck Bay. This second book reviewed here aims to reconstruct the social history of the village. Some of the early settlers were local people, others came from the far south coast of the State, others from the north — La Perouse and beyond. The important point to be stressed is that over the years a strong sense of community developed, linking the residents and the place.

The settlement is on Australian Capital Territory land (originally designated for the port of Canberra), and recently conflict has arisen over land use. Although Wreck Bay is in federal territory, the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board was persuaded to undertake the administration of this Aboriginal Station in 1928. It was not however until 1952 that its boundaries were gazetted. By that time early assumptions on the location of the boundaries had been completely accepted by the residents and were believed to have legal standing. Yet what were thought to be the customary limits were not followed in the official physical delineation of the station, and thus for years this matter has been of concern to the Aboriginal population. Since the 1971 proclamation of nearly all this territory as Jervis Bay Nature Reserve — which contracted the old gazetted boundary quite dramatically — the issue has become critical. There are other pressures on the community, such as those associated with education, housing and welfare, but land rights to the area originally associated with the settlement are paramount. The land is significant also because it includes a number of traditional sites.

Egloff describes well the development of this problem, although it would have been more useful to have done this fully at the beginning of the work rather than at the end, with some of the relevant information appearing in other parts of the text. Especially as the book, commissioned by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, was born of the land rights controversy. The Secretary of the Wreck Bay Housing Company asked that a social history of the community be written with the intention of making clearer the Aboriginal perspective.
This is not only a worthwhile project, it is an important one. Unhappily the result holds disappointments.

The work is not directed to anthropologists. It is likely to be read more widely by Aborigines, local Europeans and hopefully by those people in positions of authority who act in connection with the settlement. Egloff has obviously sought to match his style and presentation with this generalised readership with variable success. It is a small book, attractively presented and well larded with illustrative material — some of the historical photographs are splendid. There are however two major weaknesses. In the first place the Wreck Bay of today remains unknown to the reader. There are some informative photographs of the surrounds of the settlement, but there is no thoroughgoing discussion of the present day community. Snippets concerning individuals are embedded in various parts of the text but I doubt that they are very meaningful to readers who do not know the place. There is no general information given on the size or structure of the population, kinship patterns, the cast of relations within the community or how the residents interact with the outside world. It is an historical profile of a community, never really clear, but which strangely becomes less distinct in recent times. Given the purpose of the work this is certainly a defect.

The early section on the prehistory of the region provides a background to understanding aspects of traditional and past behaviour. The following chapter on European occupation of the south coast of New South Wales — and some of its consequences for the Aboriginal population — takes us up to the first few years of the twentieth century. There are no available data relating specifically to Wreck Bay and the intention in both chapters is to create a general picture. But the second weakness of the work, which escalates as a real difficulty in the succeeding and most substantial chapter on the settlement itself, is already noticeable here. This is a scrappy presentation of a range of disparate parcels of information. It is not incorporation for they are not drawn together as a coherent whole. They remain snippets of details of various practices or events. Thus, without explanation or connection, in three short successive paragraphs (p. 16) we are given results of an athletics carnival at Berry, brief comment on an instance of Aboriginal street theatre and what Aborigines working on the Coolangatta estate received in wages and rations. This tendency to throw together all manner of information, coupled with Egloff’s endeavours to write in a light and relaxed style has some curious results. For example, following a paragraph dealing with station housing, road building, an epidemic of mumps and touching on the payment of unemployment benefits, there is another (p. 37) which states:

In 1964, when a catch of mullet sold for 2 cents a pound, the Wreck Bay primary school closed. Thirty-eight station children then attended mixed classes at the Jervis Bay Primary School. From an enrolment of 3 in 1959 the figure rose to 11 Aborigines at Nowra High School; this was the year of the stranded whales.

Community or district histories are commonly enough characterised by a dislocated presentation of recorded information (usually gleaned from official records) or personal and episodic recollections. Egloff is not alone in experiencing difficulty in managing the presentation of these kinds of data. His task was no doubt made harder by the fact that he both researched and wrote the history in forty-five days. The results suggest that this was not long enough. He acknowledges that his research was limited, but in this context that is not the real problem which lies in the non-integration of detail he has collected. As it is, sorting out the information presents something of a challenge to the reader who is stranger to the community for there is no historical framework in which to place and interpret the quantity of offerings. The overall result is a form of timeless collage.

GRETCHEN POINER

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
REVIEWS


This book is one of the major publications stemming from a continuing programme run by the North Australia Research Unit, Australian National University, under the energetic direction of Peter Loveday. The sub-title is a little misleading — the book covers a good deal more than the campaign and results of the 1980 election. Bob Reece begins with a concise assessment of attitudes apparent in the various new masters of the Territory (South Australia, 1863, Commonwealth 1911, N.T. Government 1978) at the time they took up their new responsibilities. Determined optimism was the mood in each case, contrasting with considerable relief felt by those who were ridding themselves of their northern burden. Lenore Coltheart follows Reece with a stimulating attack on the progressive — or 'Arcadian' — view of Australian history as it has been applied to the Northern Territory. Regrettably, neither Reece nor Coltheart has enough space to fully develop their arguments.

Alistair Heatley is able to do more with his chapter on constitutional, legislative and political developments in the immediate pre-election years, highlighting particularly the shrewd, pragmatic attitudes of the ruling Country-Liberal Party (C.L.P.) government which enabled it to keep the campaign initiative — at least amongst 'white' urban voters — and cast the A.L.P. largely into the roll of 'knockers' of economic development; and, as several of the contributors emphasize, economic development is the great shibboleth of the Northern Territory. The editors of the volume both contribute, singly and in collaboration with others, to scholarly appraisals of parties, issues and the composition of the electorates. The results of painstaking fieldwork amongst a small electorate (c.55,000 electors) are apparent; and the work of scholars is offset by contributions from Jon Isaacs and Neville Perkins, then leader and deputy-leader respectively of the Territory A.L.P. (both have since left N.T. politics) and from C.L.P. member for Stuart, Roger Vale, and Graeme Lewis, the C.L.P. campaign director. There is a certain amount of unintentional humour in Lewis's enthusiasm for the promise and performance of his party; but the liveliest contribution by far is that of Neville Perkins, in putting an Aboriginal viewpoint.

Given the current land rights situation in the Territory and the fact that there alone of all Australian States and Territories do the Aborigines form a powerful element in the voting population, it is not surprising that discussions of 'black' and 'white' attitudes towards one another provide the most interesting sections of the book. The work of the various authors confirms at least one common assumption about Territory Aborigines, that land rights ranks with them as the most important political issue; but it also becomes clear that land is far from being the sole issue of significance to them; Loveday and John Summers list local support services (school, police, health, roads, airstrip), sea rights and protection of sacred sites as important concerns of Aboriginal communities. Another assumption commonly made by 'whites', that Aborigines have little interest in or understanding of the 'whitefella business' of politics, is not supported by fieldwork studies carried out by the N.A.R.U. team. Neither, in spite of an Aboriginal voting pattern which strongly favoured the A.L.P. does it seem that Aborigines indulged in the kind of bloc voting so much feared by conservative Territory 'whites'. Aborigines reacted more positively to individual candidates and their views on local issues than to party labels. As Roger Vale points out, the 1977 Northern Territory Assembly election saw the C.L.P. lose three seats to Labor on the Aboriginal vote, while the Aboriginal vote for the C.L.P. increased in at least two other seats. Vale's own retention of the strongly Aboriginal electorate of Stuart is testimony to the influence of an active local member, even one of the 'wrong' party for land rights.

According to N.A.R.U. surveys, land rights did not rank highly with 'white' voters as an election issue. Even in Alice Springs, where racial tensions can run high indeed, Dean Jaensch's survey team found that transport and communications easily outranked Aboriginal policy as the main pre-occupation of 'white' voters. This does not invalidate Neville Perkins' scathing comment on Alice Springs 'whites' whose attitude 'gives the strong impression of a
town under siege, with the black hordes beyond the gap just waiting to move in and take over; but the evidence this book presents on the great diversity of ‘white’ concerns should help to divest southerners of any preconceptions about mass anti-Aboriginal feeling in the Territory. The editors candidly admit that the results of their work are ‘to some extent impressionistic, tentative and open to further argument’ — and indeed they could be little else at this early stage in the study of Territory politics — but the Aboriginal issues which the Territory faces now are spreading to Queensland, Western Australia and may even make an impression some day on the insulated havens of New South Wales and Victoria. Territorians should read the book to gain greater understanding of their political environment. Southerners might well consider the future implications for their own society.

ALAN POWELL

DARWIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE


All Queensland Aborigines and Islanders who read Thaiday's book will recognize the patterns of history that followed the post-contact period of the invasion of our land. Some of them, along with other peoples who have lived in a police state, will re-live the hopelessness and futility that saps all desire to fight against a system.

Thaiday’s story is told simply — too simply in fact. The casual reader who has no knowledge of oppression cannot be blamed for wondering, particularly, in the early pages, at the Island boys' seemingly calm acceptance of further banishment from their home, after having just completed their initial punishment for a 'crime' of minor proportions. A chapter on the futility of protestation and the types of additional punishment that were imposed as a result thereof, is a serious omission. Non-aborigines have, for nearly 200 years, been indoctrinated into a belief that Aborigines and Islanders have inferior intelligence; this omission reinforces such a stereotype.

It would have been interesting to have more detail of Thaiday's own struggle to establish his banana farm — the means by which he was able in part, to overcome the system, particularly after his family's horrific experiences at Woorabinda.

On the other hand, the author has not been able to resist the temptation in his pages, to have a 'go' at some Aborigines now prominent in the community. His 'guns' would have been better held for those still enforcing the Queensland Act (still oppressive in its amended form). 'White' supervisors' taking credit for Aboriginal achievements is well-known to Queenslanders — Thaiday tells the story well. 'Palm island reflections', is perhaps the most important chapter — a warning that the developers have their eyes on Palm Island with a view to seizure for a resort. It is hoped that all who read this will take political action to avert another takeover of Aboriginal land.

EVE FESL

MONASH UNIVERSITY


Dr Elspeth Young's book is the first of five that will come out of the Aboriginal economics project of the Development Studies Centre of the A.N.U. Her own project began in 1977, and involved about fifteen months of fieldwork at three locations in the Northern Territory.

Her book shows that it is not easy to write an economic analysis of Aboriginal people in the centre and northern Australia who have a basically 'welfare' economy and are few in
number. Usually, in such an exercise, questions of what constitutes production and labour would not be raised. That is not to say, however, that the author should have concentrated solely on production and consumption of goods and services by the 'Aboriginal component in the Australian economy'. For if that were the case the interdependence and the interrelations between the Aboriginal social and economic system would not have emerged.

If there is a weakness in the book, which of course may be corrected in the next four volumes, it is that all of the communities studied are in the Northern Territory. This means that comparisons between groups with even less support, such as Yalata in South Australia (without land of their own) or between communities in New South Wales, Queensland or Western Australia cannot be made.

Although it is one more in an already lengthy line of reports and enquiries on Aboriginal societies that have been produced by non-Aborigines, it is at a considerable distance from most earlier works in that Aboriginal day-to-day struggles and the many frustrating aspects of institutional living have been revealed. Its style at times approaches that of government reports but for the most part the book is understandable and easy to read.

The Commonwealth government has now had seventy years of direct control over the administration of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. Its 'race' policies have ranged from the 'intelligent parasitism' of 'assimilation' to the current hybrid policy of 'paternalism/self-determination', now boldly called 'self-management' and 'self sufficiency'. Elspeth Young's work reveals however, that government policy and its administration have left Aboriginal society pretty much fully 'institutionalised' (Tomlinson 1978:208-221).

The situation in the N.T. is that 'Land Rights' has widened the boundaries of the government reserves and missions; 'economic' enterprises are nowhere successful, and therefore highly subsidised, and socio-political control is still very much in the hands of 'whites'. Young (p.11) provides a clear example of this when she writes that 'the problem is not simply an inability on the part of both Aborigines and non-Aborigines to comprehend each other's concept of labour, but also that Aborigines have rarely been given the responsibility for running monetary enterprises'. She emphasises that 'theoretically, self-management of Aboriginal communities should provide a remedy but unless it is associated with control over an economy (e.g. land, mineral rights) adequate to provide an income for the population, it will never succeed in practice'.

Young's book shows that Aboriginal communities do not have control over their economic policies and are now economically dependent. Their habitat is largely unproductive, their ecological system so finely balanced, and there is over-population; traditional life is really no longer possible because the original parameters upon which it was based have drastically changed, i.e. self-government, plentiful food, water, recreational, spiritual life and a low population.

The communities shown in this book: Yuendumu, Willowra and Numbulwar, can still largely be seen as social experimental playthings for 'white' society to salve their colonial consciences. For example, at Yuendumu government settlement 'lack of resources and the creation of extreme feelings of dependency have inhibited the growth of independent business ventures' (Young p.101). Moreover, 'with high rates of population growth unlikely to be alleviated through outmigration to out-stations or to Darwin or Alice Springs, the gap between the size of the potential labour force and the local job market will increase. Thus community dependence on government funding, which currently provides most of the necessary financial support, will also increase. If restrictions are placed on such funding, Yuendumu can hardly survive' (p.65).

It is worth quoting Young's (p.165) summary of the situation at Willowra, an Aboriginal-owned pastoral station:

Willowra is therefore above all an Aboriginal community and according to most of its residents, a highly congenial place in which to live. Its social cohesiveness stems from its closely knit kinship structure — as people have frequently said "We Willowra mob are one family"; its strong and united leadership; and above all, ownership and control
of its tribal land. Willowra is lucky to have all these things. Most other communities in Central Australia contain a variety of family and language groups, many of which are cut off from their land. This causes divisive leadership and generates enormous social pressures which often lead to violence and alcohol abuse. Willowra people are well aware of the difference and indicate this in their unwillingness to spend long periods of time in such places as Yuendumu or Warrabri even although they have relatives living there. Preservation of the social stability of Willowra is obviously crucial, and a major reason for the grant of freehold title to the land

Although Willowra's position is, in some ways, relatively favourable it would be false to suggest that there are no problems which are a cause for future concern. First, there is the land right issue, coupled with the issue of control over the entry of outsiders. If government policies change towards the imposition of rigid control over the use of Aboriginal controlled property, then both of these issues will be vital. The Willowra people undoubtedly want to be able to decide on the use of their land, and to control who has rights of residence upon it. Secondly, there is the high rate of population growth, both through natural increase and migration: since this is likely to continue, the strains within the community will grow and the benefits to be gained through monetary earning will decline. As Bell and Ditton (1980:55) note, Willowra has so far managed to retain its young people; although its leaders hope that this process will continue, they are also worried about what these young people are going to do with their lives. Thirdly, although relatively well-knit, Willowra does have internal divisions. These are likely to become more significant as the population grows and equitable distribution of resources becomes more difficult. Present residents are concerned about an influx of relatives from Yuendumu or Warrabri, because it is usually from these sources that alcohol reaches the communities and hence generates violence. Finally, like other Aboriginal communities, Willowra does have problems in dealing with the white bureaucracy.

Numbulwar, on the Gulf of Carpentaria was originally called Rose River Mission. It was established during the severe droughts of the 1940s and early 1950s. The Nunggubuyu people migrated south during that period and settled at Roper River Mission. They were then resettled at Numbulwar due to over-population at Roper. The sixty people who were moved from Roper River to Numbulwar could hardly have been described as over population. Nevertheless the church, i.e. the Church Mission Society (C.M.S.), took full responsibility for mission management, schools, employment and training etc.

The policy of the C.M.S. from the 1950s was 'aimed at teaching Aborigines agriculture and industrial pursuits and encouraged them to relinquish their nomadic past for a more settled life-style' (Cole 1977:182-183). This was in line with the government's assimilation policy as officially stated in 1951.

Neither the 1950 policy of church and of government, nor the 1978 policy which emphasised self management have worked at Numbulwar. For example, out-station formation or, if you like, re-migration to traditional land is still very dependent on the amiability of seasonal weather patterns, transport, availability of stores and other essential services. Since these re-migration sites or centres are not supplied with essential services there is almost no ability to move permanently.

Pious statements of policy hide the fact that the necessary support services, which require adequate funds, are not forthcoming. This means that the so-called policies have failed. They are also seen as failures by Aborigines because they have not controlled the many mining companies anxious to take up leases, such as at Gove and Groote Eylandt. Because social and economic support were kept to a minimum these disrupted communities found it next to impossible to re-colonise their own land; they could not make their own living in ways they knew, nor in 'white' ways.

Such places as Willowra, Yuendumu and Numbulwar were affected by the 1968 A.C.T.U. motion to alleviate Aboriginal wage rates (Stevens 1980:89-92) which requested
REVIEWS

pastoralists to provide equal wages and housing, and the ensuing 1965 equal wages hearing which to all intents and purposes backfired.

In general, Aboriginal men followed the seasonal muster and drifted conveniently with labour demands. But as labour costs shifted upwards following the 1965 award decision, alternatives such as ‘white’ contract labour were preferred. The ‘surplus’ black labour then drifted to the fringe of towns or back to their home cattle stations — ‘the nigger farms’. Gibb’s 1971 report put it in these terms:

The Pastoralist requires a supply of labour competent and reasonably skilled. . . In the past he has usually been content to have resident on his property a community of Aborigines from which he could draw it (the ordinance under which his pastoral lease is granted requires at least access for hunting and ceremonial obligations) (Gibb 1971:63). Suddenly many populations became permanently larger, thus compounding the reserve, cattle station and mission population problems. The then Minister for the Interior, Mr Peter Nixon, said ‘I am anxious to have the situation of Aborigines on pastoral properties in the Northern Territory looked at in some depth’ (Gibb 1971:1). Of course this had next to nothing to do with the unemployment or the squalor in which the people lived or the appalling health problems which existed, but was done because of the way pastoralists saw Aboriginal groups. ‘Today, called upon to pay wages and to meet the accommodation demands of the pastoral awards, the pastoralist is increasingly unwilling to continue on this basis’ (Gibb 1971:63). So it had become with the sons of the ‘righteous pioneers’; in the 1920s and 1930s many of their fathers simply shot Aboriginal people, as Young’s book reminds us.

Health is of particular importance to the functioning of any labour force in any economy. Young shows that Willowra (a pastoral lease) has a different administrative relationship to the funding body, D.A.A., than does Yuendumu or Numbulwar. ‘Willowra is not designated as a settlement’ (p.140) despite the fact that upwards of 270 people live there. The essential services, including health services, that municipal and shire councils in the eastern seaboard States have supplied to even very small numbers of ‘whites’ have just not been supplied to Aboriginal communities.

When the C.D.H. had responsibility for health in the N.T. it was very slow to provide even the most rudimentary service. It knew little at best about Aboriginal society and the dynamic changes taking place. When the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 was proclaimed on 27 January 1977 the C.D.H. had no idea what this might do to the health requirements of Aborigines. They still do not know, and neither does the N.T. Government which inherited the reponsibility. It still does what ‘whites’ in other States have always done — control and use scarce health resources themselves. Young (p.141) notes that the N.T. Department of Health’s 1979 Environmental Health Survey described the condition of people at Willowra as ‘absolute squalor’. While the Commonwealth had the responsibility no such survey was ever carried out, whereas the main aim of the N.T. survey seems to have been to make it possible to blame Aboriginal people and to allow the government to relinquish its public health responsibility by claiming that it was an ‘environmental health’ problem. Yet this necessarily involves health facilities. Back in the nineteenth century health authorities had handed over to local government authorities all responsibilities for facilities vital to community health. What is done now, it seems, is simply blame Aborigines for living in their own pollution. Commonwealth Department of Health evidence to a House of Representatives Standing Committee did, however, blame the D.A.A. for not providing the necessary facilities (see Aboriginal Health 1979 and the official Hansard transcript for 21 October 1977:5-41, 44-91). This of course means that health officials feel no need to put unnecessary strain on their budgets or medical staff. Young’s volume does not examine health questions, or mention any examination of evidence contained in the 1979 study by the House of Representatives Standing Committee or the 1972 report of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Environment.

In Australian society both education and health are considered necessary investments. Just as past neglect of health has consequences, the past has had a significant effect on what
is now possible in education. Up to a decade ago (economic) decision makers in these communities were deprived of the most rudimentary schooling.

The situation of education today is a little better — but we still need to ask if it is appropriate for the economic systems in which these communities are placed. First, it has been clearly shown that these three economies are not able from their own resources to sustain their already high populations. Second, any further economic growth can probably only take place if minerals or hydro-carbons are found. Not only would such a wind-fall probably be detrimental to such communities but they have not been given any meaningful opportunity in the situation in which they now find themselves. All they have is limited control over artefact industry, limited control over settlement employment, limited prospects in cattle industry employment, and low prospects of out-migration. One of the bad aspects is the refusal by the Commonwealth Government in the early 1970s to acknowledge the racial prejudice in such frontier towns as Alice Springs, Gove and Tennant Creek. After seventy years, no Aboriginal people hold positions of any significance in the N.T. Government, Local Government Council administration, or in private or government banks and private industry or clubs. The Aboriginal Study Grant scheme begun in 1973 and various employment schemes (including those discussed in this book) have had virtually no educational impact on these communities. There has been no proper attempt by the education authorities to provide a model to suit the environment of these communities.

Consultation with these (and other) communities is scandalously bad, as this book clearly shows. For example, throughout the book Dr Young complains about 'consultation' regarding school buildings, the lack of education models for out-stations, the lack of adult education and the lack of programs for tertiary education. Clearly government policy has failed Aborigines in education. Dr Young (p.89) points out that 'The maintenance of the bi­lingual program, on which much of Yuendumu's success rests, depends on Department of Education policy which may become less favorable'. This passage shows that a fragile structure has been created. What is worse, hundreds of Aboriginal youths are being churned through such schools as Yirrara and Dhupuma to return, as shown, to a situation of despair because their chances of economic development at home remain slim.

Research in and/or about Aboriginal communities is slowly becoming relevant; this work by Elspeth Young is concrete proof of this trend. Much of the research so far has been completely out of the reach of most Aboriginal people but this work and the others in the series will expose many facts about the daily lives of Aborigines throughout Australia.

GORDON BRISCOE

REFERENCES


Senatore Standing Committee on Social Environment (Ref. — Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) 1971-76. Vol. 1, 1972.


BOOK NOTES

(Inclusion here does not preclude review in future issues)

All that dirt: Aborigines 1938. Edited by Bill Gammage and Andrew Markus. An Australia 1938 Monograph, History Project Incorporated, Canberra, 1982. Pp x+109. p.b. $8.00. (Obtainable from the Secretary, Bicentennial History, R.S.S.S. Australian National University, P.O. Box 4, Canberra 2600).

The various teams involved with research for individual volumes of the Bicentennial History are all concerned that Aboriginal history should be a vital part of their studies of Australian society. This has often led them to new and exciting research on hitherto unstudied topics, especially in the field of social history of twentieth century communities. This volume is the result of such research and indicates its rich potential. The papers present individual and community histories in New South Wales and Western Australia, and studies of 'attitudes' in a survey of 'coverage' relating to Aborigines in one daily newspaper in 1938 and of scientific writing of the time, and its impact on administrators and politicians. As the editors say in their introduction, 'These studies serve to highlight the gulf between Europeans and Aboriginal Australia in the 1930's'. This gulf is seen as in part imposed by Europeans, in part the product of the continuing distinctive Aboriginal culture which resisted attempts at assimilation.


Eight studies of modern Aboriginal political activity, first presented at a University of Western Australia seminar in January 1975, make a useful text for courses on contemporary society. The writers (Howard, Sackett, Douglas, Vaszolyi, Dagmar, Dix, Kolig and R. Tonkinson) assess government programs and Aboriginal reaction in isolated reserves, country towns and Perth. Warwick Dix raises important questions about sites legislation, suggesting that the interests of Aborigines may conflict with those of conservationists and archaeologists. Erich Kolig provides an analysis of how religious dogma can be used to validate changes in land use. Wilfred Douglas uses mission records to extend his analysis of social change. All of the papers are useful. Tonkinson’s account of the Jigalong community council is an elegant essay which deserves reprinting in future anthologies.


Press reports are invaluable records of events and attitudes. We all make our own collections of clippings, but regret that these are unsystematic and culled from a limited range of daily and periodical publications. So this presentation in microfiche form of a comprehensive and representative collection of material from the Australian press should prove invaluable. It covers news items, commentaries, letters, book reviews and pictorial features and offers an index sequence to guide users to relevant items. Issues will come out twice yearly; those for 1981 are now available from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (P.O. Box 553, Canberra City, ACT 2601).


Blomfield's Baal Belbora records the events of Aboriginal history in the rugged country between the high New England plateau and the coast, country forming the catchments of the Manning, Hastings and Macleay Rivers. This area was a refuge for dispossessed
Aboriginal communities in the period when graziers followed cedar getters into its rich valleys and ranges. The writer knows the land and its people, of Aboriginal and of European descent, well. He shares his knowledge, and his concern for what he sees as a tragic series of events. The book indicates the richness of oral evidence and local tradition awaiting the researcher of regional histories in this part of New South Wales. May it stimulate further detailed studies of these sources on Aboriginal history in the land of the Three Rivers.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1981. Pp.17. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Manuscripts Guides 1). Free copies may be obtained from the Institute (P.O. Box 553, Canberra City, A.C.T. 2601).

These archives were deposited in the Institute in 1979 where they were catalogued. The archives are open to researchers though certain papers are restricted and permission of various authorities is required before they can be consulted.
INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced and with ample margins to allow for editorial marking. Submit two copies and keep a carbon. Footnotes should be as brief as possible, typed on a separate sheet and numbered consecutively throughout the paper. A short form of citation should be used for references to literature (for examples see current issue). The bibliography, on a separate page, should show the author's name and full publication details as given on the title page of the work, listed alphabetically by author and chronologically for each author. Tables and maps should be submitted in final form (except for size), on separate sheets, numbered on the back, and accompanied by a list of captions and photographic credits.

Authors should follow the usage of Style manual for authors and printers of Australian government publications except for numbers: use numerals for all requiring more than two words (e.g. 105, five thousand). Express percentages as: 45 per cent.

Footnote style:
1 Rowley 1971:107; see also Elkin 1965.
2 Colonial Secretary to Denison, 7 January 1850 (TSA CSO 24/93/3033).

Bibliography entries:
Author's first name or initials must appear as on title page; do not abbreviate to initials.
Tasmanian State Archives, Colonial Secretary's Office. (TSA CSO 8/157/1166; TSA CSO 24/93/3033).

Miss Jakelin Troy of The Women's College, University of Sydney (15 Carillon Avenue, Newtown, 2042), is an Honours (B.A.) student in the Department of Anthropology, the University of Sydney, and is interested in the origin and development of pidgin English in New South Wales. As this subject involves extensive research of early published and unpublished historical materials, much of which is scattered about in different repositories and therefore may be overlooked, she would appreciate the help of anyone reading in the early history of N.S.W., in noting references to the use of English by Aboriginals and/or to quotations in it (however usual, or unusual these may appear to be). She expects to present the results of her research in Honours, and hopefully, in due course, higher degree theses, as well as in seminar papers in linguistics. In these, any and all assistance will be acknowledged and sources detailed.