Notes and Documents

Oral histories of childhood and playlore: the Aboriginal Children’s Play Project, Museum Victoria

Kate Darian-Smith

The Aboriginal Children’s Play Project (ACPP) comprises a unique and highly significant oral history collection documenting the experiences of childhood, games and growing up in Indigenous communities in urban and rural locations across a 50-year span. It consists of almost 70 recorded interviews, some stretching for up to two hours, that were conducted in the mid-1990s with Aboriginal children, teenagers and adults. The collection also includes some photographic material, interview transcript summaries and fieldwork datasheets. Located in Museum Victoria, as part of its expansive Australian Children’s Folklore Collection (ACFC), the Aboriginal play collection is a valuable, but hitherto unknown, historical resource for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and researchers.1

The ACPP was initiated in 1991 by the noted folklorist, author and academic June Factor as part of the ACFC, which she founded in the 1970s and donated to Museum Victoria in 1999. Factor had obtained a grant from the Stegley Foundation, which covered the costs of the interview and fieldwork program. The overarching aim of the project was to collect oral interviews that focused on the playlore of Aboriginal children (activities initiated by children themselves), as well as playlore that was for and about children (initiated or directed by adults for children). This focus on play marked a departure from previous, albeit limited, research undertaken on the experiences of childhood in specific Aboriginal communities, or where Aboriginal children’s activities have been primarily perceived in relation to the acquisition of adult skills and knowledge.

1. The Australian Children’s Folklore Collection (ACFC) was donated to Museum Victoria in 1999 and is among the most comprehensive collections of folklore for and about children internationally. The ACFC consists of more than 10,000 files and documents listing children’s games, rhymes and other kinds of children’s folklore; photographs and other audio-visual materials; and play artefacts and specialist collections. It was the first Museum Victoria collection to be placed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register. See <http://museumvictoria.com.au/discoverycentre/Infosheets/Australian-Childrens-Folklore-Collection/>
In selecting participants for the ACPP, the interview program sought to include Aboriginal people of different ages, and those living in a range of urban, rural and regional locations so as to record the diversity of experiences of childhood across geographical place and generations. A non-Indigenous interviewer, Judy McKinty, was appointed to the project and she followed up on initial contacts provided by the then Koori Education Officer at Museum Victoria, Joy Sellars, and drew upon the assistance of other Aboriginal community leaders. McKinty found that the responses to her requests for interviews were greeted with generosity and that a ‘snowball’ effect occurred as those interviewed suggested family and friends who might be interested in contributing.

Interviews were conducted around Victoria: in Warrnambool (including Framlingham Aboriginal Settlement), East Gippsland (including Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust), the Healesville area in central Victoria and in suburban Melbourne. They were informal in structure, and were recorded – usually audiotaped, but sometimes via written notes – in homes, workplaces, schools and outdoors. Those interviewed ranged from children aged as young as four years, through primary and high school age, to adults; the two oldest participants were respected elders aged in their 70s. In some instances, group interviews were conducted and these tapped into shared reminiscences across and between generations. The majority of participants had grown up in Victoria, although a handful had spent their childhood years in New South Wales, at La Perouse in Sydney and in rural towns. The collection provides insight into childhoods spent in places ranging from Cummeragunja Mission to inner-city Fitzroy in Melbourne, with memories that not only reflect on experiences of hardship and racism, but also attest to the strength of community bonds, the ties with culture and the centrality of family life. And because these are oral accounts, there are many fine yarns and stories about the pleasures and fun, and the occasional bewilderments and hurts, of childhood.

As an oral history collection, the ACPP documents various experiences of school, with many of those interviewed reporting on the discrimination they were accorded by non-Indigenous teachers and sometimes students – although there are also a few accounts of teachers who offered inspiration and support. Activities that occurred in the school playground included ‘hanging out with friends’, imaginative games, building cubby-houses and climbing trees. There are descriptions of organised sports, such as football, cricket, rounders and netball and, for younger respondents, basketball and baseball. Games mentioned that were popular include marbles, string games, skipping games and rhymes, yo-yos, hopscotch, chasey, clapping games and team games such as Red Rover, British Bulldog, What’s the Time, Mr Wolf? and Cowboys and Indians. Many participants reported that while girls and boys, and older and younger children, did not play together in the school playground, they certainly did so out of school. At home, many games were taught to children by parents and older siblings.

The ACCP also provides a record of the objects that were incorporated into children’s play. Things like bikes were purchased, while other things were made by parents, relatives or the children themselves. Participants have strong memories of playing with homemade toys, including billycarts (remembered in great detail), dolls, little cars formed out of clay, shanghais constructed from saplings and old tyre tubes, tin rollers where a can is pulled along by a piece of string, and kites fashioned from
brown paper and string. Other everyday objects could be transformed through imagination: for instance, old brown beer bottles stood in as ‘students’ or ‘customers’ in games of schools or shops, and sheets could be ‘wings’ when pretending to fly. Daily chores also offered some opportunities for play, so that the collection of firewood could lead to games with twigs and sticks. Singing and music, whether listening or playing an instrument like the guitar, are recalled as favourite pastimes for some. Some participants also mentioned listening to radio serials and watching television. Younger respondents indicated that they liked to play board games at home and spent time playing with electronic toys such as Nintendo and on computers. Pets, including dogs, cats, birds and even domesticated possums, are also remembered, across all ages, as companions and the source of amusing incidents.

Many older participants recalled playing in the bush and swimming in rivers with other children as well as fishing, trapping rabbits and gathering food (fruit, mushrooms, grubs, eggs and so on) with adults. There are some accounts of using mud and stones for artwork, or painting bodies with ochre. These times spent in the bush are seen – across the collection of interviews – as among the highlights of childhood, as are the stories that were told to children by adults. Some of the Aboriginal participants who are now parents and grandparents reflected on the differences between children’s play in the late 1990s and that of earlier decades. For example, Sandy Atkinson, who was born in 1932 and grew up at Cummeragunja Mission on the New South Wales side of the Murray River, reflected that during his childhood, unlike today, ‘older people had a fair bit of control’ over the behaviour of children and young adults. Recognising the difficulties in comparing children’s play between generations, Atkinson nonetheless felt that he enjoyed a greater sense of freedom during his childhood at Cummeragunja than that experienced by his own children. This theme of carefree days is, not surprisingly, emphasised more by older interviewees. Those who were interviewed while they were still at primary or high school are recounting their daily lives and contemporary experiences – talking about their present rather than their past.

An overview of some of the material contained in one interview provides a glimpse of the depth of social history contained within this remarkable oral collection. Sisters Irene Swindle and Josephine Smith, interviewed at Coranderrk Koori Cooperative in Healesville, Victoria in 1996, remembered a childhood spent initially at Deniliquin in rural New South Wales, briefly in Sydney and later at Healesville. At Deniliquin, the family lived on the fringe of the town along the riverbank, in a house made of kerosene tins with a dirt floor. There was an icebox for a fridge; fruit and vegetables would be purchased from an old Chinese man with a horse and cart; and the girls would be sent to the dairy to get a billy of milk. They spoke of schoolground games like skipping, Fly and Beetle (games played with sticks), Drop the Hanky, Leap Frog and Tiggy. Activities at home, some taught to the girls and their siblings by their parents, included Dots and Dashes, Hide the Penny and a variation of Noughts and Crosses played on drawn-up cardboard with buttons as markers. Other games involved putting penny and two-bob coins in sequence on fingers, and doing puzzles that were printed

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2. John ‘Sandy’ Atkinson, interviewed by Judy McKinty at the Koori Heritage Trust, 1 July 1997; Tape and Summary Transcript of Interview held in the ACCP, Australian Children’s Folklore Collection, Museum Victoria.
on the back of matchboxes. Along with other children, the two sisters spent much time at the river, where they would see who could remain under water for longest or dive for a bottle or tin thrown into the water. When asked if any distinctive Aboriginal games were played, the sisters recalled that they made ‘mud switches’, where a ball of mud or clay was skillfully flicked from the end of a flexible tree branch.

My own research on children’s play in school playgrounds from the 1950s to the present indicates that many of the games that were played at school and at home by ACPP participants are similar to those remembered by non-Indigenous informants who were children during the same historical periods. The broader social and cultural context for such play was, of course, often very different for Aboriginal and non-Indigenous children. When the American children’s folklorist, Dorothy Howard, visited Australia in 1954–55 to survey Australian children’s play activities, she was very interested in Aboriginal children’s play practices, including their use of string games and other toys. Howard visited the government school near the La Perouse Aboriginal Reserve on Botany Bay and observed Aboriginal boys and girls. But despite Howard’s early interest in playlore, including that of Aboriginal children, the documentation of children’s play in Australia is patchy. In this sense, the ACPP collection is a significant resource – not just for Aboriginal histories, but also for understanding Australian playlore as a barometer of cultural values and of children’s extraordinary capacity for creativity and linguistic, technological and cultural adaptation.

At the time of the original ACPP interview in the 1990s, participants stipulated their preferred conditions for any future research and public use of their recorded interview and associated visual materials. For several reasons, the majority of participants elected to apply some form of access restriction. The transfer of the ACPP to Museum Victoria in 1999 meant that, because the Museum had no direct agreement with the interviewees, all the original access arrangements were frozen. With the aim of making the oral histories open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and researchers, as well as to its curatorial, exhibition and promotional staff, in 2006 Museum Victoria successfully sought additional funding from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria to re-contact individuals and their families to secure formal permission for access to the material.

The original interviewer, Judy McKinty was contracted to undertake this task and she worked with Museum staff from its History and Technology Department (where the ACFC is located) and its Indigenous Cultures Department to compile a list of participant contact details, and to develop a consent form and information sheet. The new consent form has an option for participants to appoint family representatives to be responsible for access arrangements in the event of the participant’s death. Following the lengthy period of locating the interviewees, which McKinty acknowledges

3. This research-in-progress is funded by an Australian Research Council Grant LP0669282 ‘Childhood, Tradition and Change: a national study of the historical and contemporary practices and significance of Australian children’s folklore’, in association with the National Library of Australia and Museum Victoria.

unfolded through a combination of ‘persistence, patience, goodwill and serendipity’,\textsuperscript{5} permission forms were eventually signed with almost all the original participants.

McKinty has commented that during the interviewing done in the 1990s, as well as when she re-contacted participants almost a decade later, she asked individuals about their hopes for the future use of the interview materials:

Unfailingly and unanimously, they replied that they would like the information to come back out in the community in some way, so that they can share it with their families, and particularly so that the children can learn about their own culture, and how childhood was in the past.\textsuperscript{6}

From August 2008, researchers and other interested community members are able to consult the ACPP materials (in line with access requirements) at Museum Victoria. This marks the first step in bringing this remarkable oral history collection to wider attention. This collection makes it possible for Aboriginal children’s play to be more centrally incorporated in the historical record and for the continuity, change and adaptation so evident in these varied and engaging accounts of Aboriginal childhoods to be appreciated more fully.

**Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the assistance of June Factor, Judy McKinty and Deborah Tout-Smith (Museum Victoria) in compiling this history of the ACPP.

**References**

Darian-Smith, Kate 2005, ‘Children, families and the nation in 1950s Australia’ in Kate Darian-Smith and June Factor (eds), *Child’s Play: Dorothy Howard and Australian Children’s Folklore*, Melbourne Museum, Melbourne.


\textsuperscript{5} McKinty 2008: 1.

\textsuperscript{6} McKinty 2008: 3.
Not tigers - sisters! Advances in the interpretation of historical source spellings for Dhudhuroa and Waywurru

Christina Eira

Introduction

Two major language groups of north-east Victoria are approaching an important milestone after ten years of research, analysis and community language planning. The current language worker, Tom Kinchela, is at the final stages of preparing a dictionary for the Waywurru and Dhudhuroa Language Program, complete with cultural notes, photographic illustrations and a linguistic introduction. This represents a very significant advance in the possibilities for these languages, as neither has been spoken as an everyday language for several generations. Because of this, the work has relied heavily on written documents of two main types: (i) historical sources of 19th century speakers such as ‘Joe’ Mul ler min ner and ‘Black Mag’, as recorded by GA Robinson, Thomas Mitchell, RH Mathews and others, and (ii) recent analysis of these sources by linguists, primarily Barry Blake and Julie Reid. The work of the communities and their language workers has included collation and analysis of all available wordlists and, crucially for the present paper, the development of an orthography which represents the sounds of the languages in a way satisfactory to their new community of speaker/learners. One of my tasks as consultant linguist has been the phonological analysis of each word in the database (around 1,000 in total) in order to respell it in the community orthography.

This implementation of the orthography has necessitated a re-evaluation of both historical sources and the reconstructed spellings previously proposed in the academic arena. While the majority of these reconstructed spellings\(^1\) have been confirmed and hence simply transcribed into the new orthography, advances have been made in the interpretation of quite a number of words, with the benefit of an extended period of

\(^1\) Blake and Reid 1999, 2002. Note that in Blake and Reid’s work, the label Pallanganmiddang is used, according to the main word list (GA Robinson) for what the community now call Waywurru. See discussion under the following section.
study and access to a wide range of sources. In particular, incorporation of GA Robinson’s syllable and consonant cluster breaks has been highly pertinent to the reinterpretation of several grapheme sequences. This, together with analysis of some of the more consistent spelling choices by individual collectors and comparison across different collections, has now given rise to a much clearer and more definitive identification of more than 60 forms. The purpose of this paper is to discuss this reanalysis of the historical sources, maintain currency of the updated forms of the words in the academic community, and present the new community-developed orthography.

It will be of interest to preview just one example of the updated pronunciations as reflected in the new spellings before moving to a general background of the two language groups. (I will use italics throughout to denote current community spelling, while angle brackets < > denote historical and academic source spellings. Slash brackets / / and square brackets [ ] are used for International Phonetic Alphabet according to standard linguistics conventions, to indicate phonemic and phonetic transcriptions respectively.)

The Waywurru word *dika* ‘sister’ was reconstructed as <tayiga> /taiga/ in Blake and Reid (1999). Historical sources list <ti.ger> (Robinson), <tiega> and <tiga> (Mitchell). It should be kept in mind that the collectors were relying largely on the spelling conventions of English for their records. In this light, while /taiga/ is a feasible reconstruction for <ti.ger>, it seems less likely for <tiga>. Taking <tiega> into account clearly eliminates /aɪ/ as a possible first vowel, especially when compared with other uses of <ie> by Mitchell: <jiemba> djimba ‘star’, <tierah> dheerra ‘tongue’, and <yiera> djirri ‘man, person’. Hence, not /taiga/ but *dika* ‘sister’.

**The Waywurru and Dhudhuroa language groups**

The Waywurru and Dhudhuroa language communities are working in collaboration on their distinct, but related, languages. With a northern border of the Murray River, the territories of the two groups share a north-south border from around Wodonga, with Waywurru to the west, featuring the Ovens River, and Dhudhuroa to the east, featuring the Mitta Mitta (see map).

While the name ‘Dhudhuroa’ (in various forms including Theddora) is well known for this language, the name for Waywurru has a more chequered history, labelled Pallanganmiddang (Pallanganmiddah, Pal-lern mitter) in two of its main word lists as well as in the major academic sources to date. There are many questions around original names for the languages and peoples of this region in general, and so the terms used in this paper reflect current community decisions and usage. Although representatives of Waywurru people accept the designation *Pallanganmiddang* as applied to their language records (as observed at a series of language planning meetings), they consistently use the term ‘Waywurru’ (or sometimes ‘Waveroo’) to refer to themselves. In the present, ‘Waywurru’ has become the term conventionally

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2  Wesson 2000.
Waywurru and Dhudhuroa approximate locations. Map courtesy Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

used in the community for the language also. Wesson (2000) reproduces the various references to the name as found in historical sources.

Given the likely reality of linguistic relationships prior to colonisation as well as the status of the 19th-century records, it has been most appropriate to assign each name not so much to a single, clearly-defined language as to a linguistically coherent range of language. For this purpose, all available data was analysed into two language groups of similar internal composition in terms of lexicon and some grammatical items. The Waywurru group encompasses sources labelled Pallanganmiddang, Upper Murray, Minubuddong, Kilure, Yackandandah and Wangaratta, as well as some unlabelled wordlists collected under the names of Robertson, Andrews and Yackandandah Bank Museum. The Dhudhuroa group subsumes the lists labelled Dhudhuroa and ‘Barwidgee, from Wodonga along Upper Murray’. Although it is possible that in some cases these lists did reflect identifiable dialects with identifiable groups of speakers, similarities between lists and dissimilarities between the groups which emerge (compared also with other languages/language groups of the area) are sufficient to assert a basic division into two language groups without controversy.

Different researchers’ assessments of the level of shared vocabulary may vary slightly, due to fine differences of emphasis and implementation of criteria for ‘same’ and ‘different’ words. However, the overall outcome for language identification purposes is the same. Blake and Reid (1999) assess the sources in our ‘Waywurru group’ as sharing between 61 and 90 per cent of their vocabulary (my figures 64%–88%,
and just over half between the Murdock (Wangaratta) list and the others), and only 10.7 per cent with the Dhudhuroa sources overall. Blake and Reid (2002) record common vocabulary between the Dhudhuroa and Barwidgee lists at 62 per cent (my figures 58%), but 30 per cent between Barwidgee and Pallanganmiddang. This suggests that the Barwidgee list may have been drawn from a dialect on the border between the central areas of the two languages – but in any case shows a significantly greater alignment with Dhudhuroa.3

A community orthography

Community research into the Waywurru and Dhudhuroa languages has been under way formally since 1997. In the process of that research, language workers Lisa Arnold, Pettina Love and more recently Tom Kinchela developed an orthography in alignment with phonological analysis of collated sources. The final version, completed through consultation with Traditional Owners, community members and myself, is summarised in the tables below. This orthography is now in use for preparation of speeches, songs and various materials, including a dictionary in the last stages of publication.

Table 1: Summary of orthography: Consonants
(Tabulated according to traditional articulation – see notes below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>apical</th>
<th>laminal</th>
<th>dorsal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial</td>
<td>alveolar</td>
<td>retroflex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stop</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>nn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lateral</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>rl</td>
<td>lh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rhotic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approximant</td>
<td>(w)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

(1) Although at least two rhotic phonemes are likely historically, the distinction between them is not recoverable from available sources. There are a very small number of exceptions to this. For example, the place name Wangangarra is spelt in English ‘Wonnangatta’, suggesting an original rolled or tapped rhotic. Words such as these are annotated with explanatory notes in the forthcoming dictionary.
(2) Palatals are now generally pronounced respectively as the affricate [ʤ], and consonant clusters [nj, lj].
(3) The retroflex and laminodental series are being re-taught as target articulations, but it is too soon to make a statement about actual community norms of pronunciation.
(4) While it is accepted that voicing is not distinctive, articulation now alternates between [+vce] and [-vce + asp] rather than [+vce] and [-vce], as presumed for the historical language.4

3  Blake & Reid (1999) suggest both this explanation and the possibility that it is a mixed list.
4  The conditions for the contemporary alternation approach a free alternation. It is unclear at this stage whether a more predictive environmental conditioning was in effect for the historical language.
### Table 2: Summary of orthography: Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Graphemes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>bandjina ‘baby, child’ (Dh)5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a:</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>yaaka ‘reed spear’ (Dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>bedha ‘mosquito’ (WW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e:</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>kehko ‘black ant’ (Dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>maliwa ‘swan’ (Dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iː</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td>birreedba ‘damper’ (Dh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>morroka ‘young man’ (WW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oː</td>
<td>or</td>
<td>borbangka place name, interpreted as ‘meeting of the waters’6 (WW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>kunarru bununa ‘runaway’ (WW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uː</td>
<td>uu</td>
<td>dudhuu ‘canoe’ (Dh)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. The long vowel /oː/ is the contemporary target pronunciation – it may have been lower historically.
2. The spelling of /oː/ gave rise to much discussion, and several options were discussed – none of them free from difficulties. The problem for the above choice is of course contextual ambiguity between <or> and <o> + retroflex. It was decided to resolve this by use of a dot for the long vowel where necessary, as in bikor.nba ‘net bag’ (Dh). Fortunately, this ambiguity is relevant to only six words in the database.
3. In word-final position, /ʊː/ is more likely to be pronounced [uː].

The orthography above implies a phonological analysis which differs to some extent from that of Blake and Reid (1999) and Blake and Reid (2002).7 Firstly, in terms of the consonants, my analysis fills out the inventory to include the full contrast set of retroflex, dental and lateral consonants. Blake and Reid list the retroflex, dental and palatal laterals as only tentative for Waywurru, and omit them from the inventory for Dhudhuroa. Secondly, for the vowels, we accept the five-vowel system implied by RH Mathews, rather than the reduction to /a ʊ i/ in BR-Dh (BR-P maintains a five-vowel distinction for Waywurru).

It should be understood that these differences are related more to project decision-making than definitive phonological analysis, as the evidence for either analysis is somewhat thin on the ground. The evidence which supports these decisions is discussed below.

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5  The abbreviations Dh(udhuroa) and W(ay)W(urru) will be used from this point.
7  Henceforth BR-P and BR-Dh respectively.
**Lateral consonants**

The main evidence for inclusion of the retroflex lateral is the verbal suffix -*darli* (meaning unknown). I suggest a retroflex in this suffix on the basis that (i) Robinson emphasises the lateral <pay.woo.dal.le> (WW), as RH Mathews also seems to in his Dhudhuroa list <butta’le>, and (ii) all other examples in the historical sources involve an <arl> spelling. The spellings <l.l> and <’l> exemplify some of the various means that language collectors resorted to, to indicate their perception of something unfamiliar to them. There are, however, issues for the morphological analysis assumed above for <butta’le>: firstly, that the suffix appears otherwise to be restricted to Waywurru, and, secondly, that removal of the putative suffix appears to result in a monosyllabic stem, although this cannot be certain.

The only possible evidence for a dental lateral is *balhelhua-yawarro* ‘old man kangaroo’ (WW). This word is fairly problematic to interpret overall, in its single appearance as <pahlēhwōwerōw>.8 I suggest that <hl> and <lh> may be attempts to represent the dental lateral, by analogy with English *th*.

For the palatal lateral, there is again only one piece of evidence, in *molyan* (WW). The source spelling in this case is <moilun>, obtained from a manuscript by J Wilkinson (surveyor).9 I have taken this spelling to indicate a perceptual modification of the vowel in anticipation of the following palatal. Although this evidence is decidedly meagre, there is certainly a case to be made for assuming a complete set of laterals for Waywurru rather than missing one slot.

In the case of Dhudhuroa, clearly the evidence for a full contrast set is somewhat lacking, limited to a single tentative retroflex lateral in one word. As these two language groups are working together, however, it is useful to present a single unified orthography, even if the lateral graphemes in question are only used for Dhudhuroa in loanword contexts.

**Retroflex series**

Blake and Reid (1999 and 2002) suggest the occurrence of at least the retroflex stop and nasal, but remain cautious.

Evidence for the retroflex lateral is discussed above. The stronger evidence for the stop and nasal is also to be found in Waywurru. Good candidates include:

Waywurru: *kordi* ‘one’ (<korde, kore.de, guddee> – Robinson)

*marnndanye* ‘brains’ (<marn.dung.e, maren.dung.e, marndunye> – Robinson)

Dhudhuroa: *kurdawungga* ‘one’ (<kurrawunga, kurdawung-a> – RH Mathews)

Robinson’s three variations on the medial consonant for *kordi* can be taken as an attempt to signal ‘an unfamiliar type of d’, as can Mathews’ <rr> and <rd> for the cognate. Similarly, Robinson’s variation between <marn> and <maren> seem to indicate a retroflex nasal – although parallel evidence in the Dhudhuroa sources is difficult to find. It has been decided at community level to employ an orthographic

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8  Mathewnd a, collected by Mitchell.
9  Wilkinson ‘Surveyor’s field book’.
series *rd, rl*, and *rn* at this stage, in order to maintain the awareness of a series characteristic of Australian languages in general, and very possibly of at least Waywurru, if not Dhudhuroa.

**Vowels**

Similarly to their treatment of the consonant inventory, Blake and Reid leave the analysis of Waywurru vowels open to a greater degree than in their Dhudhuroa analysis. This is due to the significantly lower level of data available for Waywurru. However, as they note, the Dhudhuroa sources do use five vowel symbols to represent the language. Given that some other languages of Victoria are accepted as having five vowels,\(^\text{10}\) we have preferred to give RH Mathews and others the 'benefit of the doubt', maintaining five vowels for both languages. This obviates the necessity of making sometimes arbitrary adjustments to the records available.

Similar principles apply to the listing of long vowels. That long vowels are used in both Waywurru and Dhudhuroa seems beyond doubt (see below). Whether they are phonemic is another question. Our database lists –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>waari</em> ‘bark’ (WW)</td>
<td>[waːRɪ](^\text{11})</td>
<td>TMC(^\text{12}) waaree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>warri</em> ‘hut’ (WW)</td>
<td>[waRɪ]</td>
<td>RC war.re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>weengka</em> ‘dog’ (Dh)</td>
<td>[wiŋkə]</td>
<td>RMA wingga, weengga, M45 wehnga, whunga, wiŋgah, wiŋgah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>wingkilai</em> ‘whistle’ (Dh)</td>
<td>[wiŋkɪlai]</td>
<td>RMA winggillai(^\text{13})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>borko</em> ‘internal organs’ (WW)</td>
<td>[bɔːkɔ]</td>
<td>RC po.or.go, TMC boogu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bokong</em> ‘bogong moth’ (WW)(^\text{14})</td>
<td>[bɔkɔŋ]</td>
<td>RC bugung, RJ bogong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly the evidence for a length distinction as such is somewhat sparse – given that the only potential minimal pair may well represent a single (polysemous) word – given that ‘huts’ are made of ‘bark’.

\(^\text{10}\) See for example Bowe and Morey 1999; Hercus 1986.
\(^\text{11}\) R represents an unspecified rhotic.
\(^\text{12}\) See under the next section for source abbreviations.
\(^\text{13}\) Note that *(l)*ai is an imperative suffix.
\(^\text{14}\) The latter word is shared between both languages, with possible variations.
\(^\text{15}\) Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.
counters the usual assumption that the best orthography is phonemic, with the justification that the primary target for the orthography is people who are learning the language from an English base. A minimal level of phonetic detail, it is hoped, may assist this group in the retention of apparent variation of phonemes in particular words.

Two-vowel graph sequences are employed in the implementation of the orthography, such as ai (bakulai ‘arise’ – Dh), ia (biarra ‘gum tree’ – WW), and ua (buarranda ‘bad, poor’ – WW). These sequences are not intended to represent diphthongs but disyllables. The option, usually taken up in orthographies for Australian languages, of including a glide <w> or <y> in between the vowel graphs, was discussed, but the abbreviated spellings listed here were ultimately preferred. The exception to this rule is the sequence iye (as in biyeba ‘fight’ – Dh), which was selected to avoid confusion with an English pronunciation of ie as in ‘lie’ or ‘piece’.

One diphthong, <ay> /ei/, is, however, included, despite its unlikely occurrence in the historical language, according to the monophthong-only pattern usual in Australian languages. In the contemporary language, this diphthong is established in the pronunciation of Waywurru, and is spreading to a small number of other Waywurru words (baynka ‘spear thrower’, daydha ‘sky’, payorro ‘magpie’). The pronunciation of Waywurru alone necessitates a representation for /ei/ in the orthography.

The graph sequences ay and ai are included in the community descriptive orthographic tables, to avoid confusion between the two. Both are listed as ‘combined vowels’.

Rerevaluating the sources

The historical sources referred to are as follows:16

Dhudhuoroa

M45 A response by JFH Mitchell to John Mathew’s language and culture surveys, designated as ‘Barwidgee language from Wodonga along Upper Murray’ (Mathew nd a).

M15 A response, probably also by JFH Mitchell, to John Mathew’s language and culture surveys, apparently recopied by Mathew in a manuscript entitled ‘Vocabulary of Australian Aboriginal language’ (Mathew nd b).

MEC A wordlist provided by JFH Mitchell and incorporated into an extensive comparative table in John Mathew’s Eaglehawk and Crow: A Study of the Australian Aborigines including an Inquiry into their Origins and a Survey of Australian Languages (Mitchell 1899).


RMM Manuscript notes for the above article (Mathews nd).

---

16 The codes listed here will be used from this point. See BR-P and BR-Dh for a more detailed account of the major sources.
Waywurru

MSM A wordlist provided by WL Murdock labelled ‘Wangaratta’, published in Science of Man (Murdock 1900).

RC Collected papers of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Aboriginal Protector. These are available in a four-volume publication edited by Ian Clark (2000a).


RJ The journals of GA Robinson, Chief Aboriginal Protector. These are available in a six-volume publication edited by Ian Clark (2000b).

TMC A wordlist provided by TW Mitchell entitled ‘Upper Murray’, included in EM Curr’s work, The Australian Race: Its Origin, Languages, Customs, Place of Landing in Australia and the Routes by which it Spread itself over that Continent (Mitchell 1887).


As stated in the introduction, my analysis for the most part confirms that of Blake and Reid, so that in the majority of cases only transliteration into the new community spelling system has been required. In this section, I will focus only on those items for which I have been able to update the phonological analysis.

In the sections below, one example is given for each type of revised analysis. A full list of newly analysed words can be found in the Appendix.

Response to phonemic analysis

It will be clear from the discussion in the third section above that a number of revisions arise from our analysis of the phoneme inventories of the two languages, such as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{deerra (WW) ‘summer’} & \quad \text{RC teer rer} & \quad \text{BR-P tirra} & \quad \text{long vowel} \\
\text{kobalo (Dh) ‘short, low’} & \quad \text{MEC koblo, M15 453} & \quad \text{BR-Dh gabalo} & \quad /ɔ/ \text{ rather than } /a/^{17}
\end{align*}
\]

Conservative principles

In general, in this project I have erred on the side of caution in my interpretation of collector spellings. Given that relatively little is known about the phonology of the languages of this region, we have wished to avoid eliminating from the language in its implementation in the community any feasible possibilities suggested by collector spellings. In some cases this has overridden the principle of aligning the form of a word

\[^{17}\text{In this case, BR-Dh do use <o> at the end of the word, but their preference for a three-vowel analysis leads them to interpret the sources’ <o> and <u> as /a/ in the first syllable. In our system we select /ɔ/ as not inconsistent with RH Mathews’ <u>.}\]
with (sometimes better attested) cognates. In addition, we did not wish to lose the possibility of significant variant pronunciations of a given word. Hence my analysis of some words is more conservative, in the literal sense, than that of Blake and Reid:

\[
\text{bulana (WW) 'sick'} \quad \text{RC bul.lan.ner} \quad \text{BR-P balana, bulana}
\]

In this example, given the natural tendency for collectors to refer to familiar English spellings, I have selected /ʊ/ over the alternative reading, /a/, by analogy with words such as ‘bulrush’, ‘bull’ or ‘bulwark’.

In some cases, this conservative working position is evident regardless of our extension of the phoneme inventory.

**Robinson’s syllable and consonant cluster breaks**

The single most important feature of the historical sources informing my analysis is the marking of syllable and consonant cluster breaks by Robinson. This allows several types of revised analysis:

**Number of syllables**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{biarra (WW) 'gum tree'} & \quad \text{RC pee.are.rer} \quad \text{BR-P piarrerra} \\
\text{daiarra (WW) 'fishing net'} & \quad \text{RC ty.er.re} \quad \text{BR-P djarra}
\end{align*}
\]

Without the syllable/consonant cluster breaks, words such as ‘peearerer’ could easily be interpreted as <piarrerra>. Robinson’s original notation, however, clearly indicates three syllables, not four. Similarly, the initial component of <ty.er.re> is now readily understood as /daɪ/, rather than the single phoneme /ʤ/.

\[
\begin{align*}
/\text{nk}/, /\eta/, /\text{jk}/ \\
\text{karrinkadhi, karrinkarru (WW) 'coohe, shout, call'} & \quad \text{MSM karrin} \quad \text{BR-P karring(g)arru} \\
\text{morrangurro (WW) 'man, dirty blackfellow'} & \quad \text{RC mor rang.oor.ro} \quad \text{BR-P morrang(g)urra}
\end{align*}
\]

The breaks resolve the query noted in BR-P as /nk/ in the former type of case and /ŋ/ in the latter.

---

It should be noted that, due to community consciousness of possible distinctions between their languages and related languages, combined with a lack of thorough historical reconstruction for languages of this area to date, I have not taken a comparative analysis further than what has been readily available to me through Blake and Reid’s published work.
In one case, the relevant syllable breaks are provided, not by Robinson, but by RH Mathews:

*nawiyu* (Dh) ‘sun’  
RMA nau’-i-u, MEC noweyu  
BR-Dh nawiu, nawayu

The analysis <nawayu> is quite feasible for <noweyu>, but less so for Mathews’ <nau’-i-u>. Both the break and the choice of <i> indicate a clear auditory distinction between the vowels of the first two syllables, rather than a reduced second vowel harmonious with the first as suggested by<nawayu>.

In a number of cases, Robinson’s break marks act as contributors to a revised analysis in the context of other information:

**Vowels**

+ **marndanye** (WW) ‘brains’  
  RC maren.dung.e,  
  marn.dung.e, marndunye  
  BR-P ma(re)ndanye

+ **winu** (WW) ‘veins’  
  RC win.u  
  BR-P wayinu

+ **dika** (WW) ‘sister’  
  RC ti.ger, TMS tiega, tiga  
  BR-P tayiga

In *marndanye*, the breaks marked together with the apparent emphasis on the <r…n> sequence suggest /ɳ/, and of course a single syllable. This kind of graphemic emphasis was often the only recourse of collectors of Robinson’s era in representing the unfamiliar retroflex series (see discussion of the retroflex lateral under Lateral consonants above). For <win.u>, the implications of English spelling conventions for <win> seen as a separate element strongly indicate /win/ rather than /waɪn/. For the explanation of *dika* ‘sister’, see the first section.

**Comparing collectors’ spellings**

For some items, I have revised the reconstructed spelling by revisiting the comparison of alternative spellings found across historical sources:

+ **boa** (WW) ‘dog’  
  RC bor TMC boa  
  BR-P bawa

+ **manda, munda** (WW) ‘thigh’  
  RC mone.der, TMC munda  
  BR-P munda, manda

+ **ngadjba** (Dh) ‘sing’  
  RMA ngutchbai, ngatchbai,  
  MEC gudba  
  BR-Dh ngatjba, gadba

Given GA Robinson’s consideration for syllabic representation, <bor> suggests that BR-P’s disyllabic interpretation overstates the status of the two vowel positions suggested by <boa>. While /ɔa/ is an unusual sequence, and certainly not expected as a diphthong, the frequency of the <oa> sequence in the sources triggers our conservatism principle – particularly since it appears to feature in the language name *Dhudhuroa*. While the exact form for ‘thigh’ still remains uncertain, Robinson’s <mone.der> rules out the possibility of /a/ as the first vowel. For words such as *ngadjba*, given that 19th-century collectors very commonly mishear initial /ŋ/, it is a
fairly safe assumption that its appearance word-initially in one source is to be accepted over its non-appearance in another. In much the same way, the palatal stop is also commonly interpreted by English speakers as the alveolar, so that the palatal is a safe analysis of the second consonant.\(^\text{19}\)

Similarly, sometimes comparisons of different forms based on the same root have been the key:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bandj</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bandju, bandjun (WW) ‘track (of foot), road’</td>
<td>RC pun.joo TMC bunjun</td>
<td>BR-P bandju, bandjan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngurr, yuungurru (WW) ‘plenty’</td>
<td>RC noor.ro, TMC yuungurru</td>
<td>BR-P nurru, yung(g)urru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the second vowel of <bunjun> alone is ambiguous between /a/ and /ʊ/, the <oo> of <pun.joo> confirms an interpretation of /ʊ/. Following the same logic as for ngadjba, I have selected ngurru as more likely given the appearance of /ŋ/ word-medially in what appears to be a derivative form.

Occasionally, the recording of a particular word in both languages confirms its form in each. In the following example, /ŋk/ as distinct from /ŋ/ is overtly specified as a ‘hard g’ in M15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bangk</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bangkonowo (Dh), bangkowo (WW) ‘hungry’</td>
<td>M15 bungunowo (Dh), TMC bungowanabee (WW)</td>
<td>BR-Dh banganowo (Dh), BR-P bang(g)owo (WW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some forms have been revised simply through a cross-check of the most common usage of a particular grapheme combination by a given collector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buarrand</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>buarranda(^\text{20}) (WW) ‘bad’</td>
<td>RC poor.ander (cf po.or.go ‘bowels’)(^\text{21})</td>
<td>BR-P purranda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wundju, wundja (Dh)</td>
<td>RMA wûndyu, wûndyu (cf wûrura-dyaua ‘ground goanna’)</td>
<td>BR-Dh wundju, wandya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{19}\) Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this aspect of ngadjba to my attention.

\(^{20}\) Or possibly buarrandha, as –ndha is tentatively proposed as a suffix (meaning uncertain).

\(^{21}\) From this evidence, it seems likely that Robinson’s own pronunciation of ‘poor’ was the diphthongised form of some English varieties.
Finally, a small number of revisions have seemed to me uncontroversial, though their earlier reconstruction may have been related to cognate forms which we have placed at lower importance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dh</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>BR-Dh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>darrangkarra</td>
<td>'white'</td>
<td>durrunggurra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niu</td>
<td>(Dh) 'teeth'</td>
<td>MEC niyu, M15 nēēyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wurridba</td>
<td>(Dh) 'peppermint (tree)'</td>
<td>M45 woorēetbah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Reclaiming language from a primarily archival base is a constantly unfolding process which must respond to successive waves of research, priorities and goals of the language community, and new approaches to analysis. The initial analysis of the Waywurru and Dhudhuroa lexicons by Blake and Reid is fundamental to the recent layer of analysis and decision-making represented in the dictionary about to be released. The processes described in the present paper build on that initial research, revisiting what are probably the same historical sources through a number of standard methods such as comparison across collections, but also with a stronger focus on the syllable break indications in the manuscript sources of Robinson. In addition, a reanalysis of the phonology of each word in the collection, and a chosen principle of conservatism in regard to possible variation have altogether resulted in the updating of a significant number of words as represented here. This paper has emphasised the need to remain open to new analyses in the language revival process, as well as presenting the new orthography devised by the community for spelling the whole of the lexicon.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Traditional Owners Group, Waywurru and Dhudhuroa Language Program, for inviting me to prepare this paper, and to two anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions and comments.

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— nd b (probably recorded by JFH Mitchell), ‘Vocabulary of Australian Aboriginal language’, AIATSIS manuscript 950, section B, item 15-2.

22 It is not always fully clear in Blake and Reid (2002) which exact manuscripts are referred to.


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Ann Curthoys launches *Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories*¹

It’s my very great pleasure to have been asked to launch this book. I think it’s a book for the future, for future scholarship in Australian history and Indigenous Studies. Not only are the authors historians and anthropologists at the beginning of their careers, but their work builds on the insights of older scholars, and of the society around them, in new and exciting ways. Their work will be valuable for researchers and readers for many years to come.

When I agreed to launch the book, I knew it would contain interesting empirical material in the field of Aboriginal history, for that is what the journal *Aboriginal History*, and its monograph offshoots, typically does. For over 30 years now, the journal has consistently been a site for new scholarship. Anyone who teaches Australian history or Indigenous Studies knows that this is where you have to go to get the detailed studies needed if we are to know our own history. I also knew it would not be conventional history, for again the journal has always tried to cross disciplinary boundaries, to produce forms of knowledge which combine historical with linguistic, archaeological, and anthropological approaches. And it was no surprise to me that the book would be interested in the variety of experience around the country, from the Northern Territory to Tasmania, from the cities to the bush. This is what the journal *Aboriginal History* traditionally does.

But what *was* a surprise, I think, was how well these early career scholars carry it off. These essays don’t simply add a little bit of new knowledge here and there – many of them radically revise our usual understandings, suggesting new interpretations, and asking new questions. Before explaining this further, I want to talk first of all about these authors.

When you look at the information on the contributors at the beginning of the book, you are struck by the fact that they were nearly all doctoral students when they wrote their chapter for this book. They come from all over the country – five were studying at The Australian National University, as was the originator of the book, Mark Hannah, while the other six were elsewhere, at the University of Western Australia, Queensland, Monash, the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney. You also notice that nearly all of them have now finished their studies and moved into various careers. So we have here a book which demonstrates the power of some new scholars at the beginning of their careers as historians and anthropologists and social scientists.

¹ Transgressions: Critical Australian Indigenous Histories, Ingereth Macfarlane and Mark Hannah (eds), Aboriginal History Monograph 16, 2007
The book kicks off with a wonderful essay by Shino Konishi. The brief to the authors was to emphasise the ‘writerly aspects of creative thinking, promoting the portrayal of character, alternative prose styles and inventive narrative forms’. Shino does this admirably. She begins: ‘Francois Peron was my first’. By this she means her first historical romance. Peron was a member of the Baudin expedition of 1800–1803, and his comments on Australian Aboriginal people were often very derogatory. Shino describes how she moved from simply dismissing his ideas as offensive and ridiculous to trying to engage with him, to understand his ways of thinking and feeling. ‘Without realising it’, she says, ‘I have developed a relationship with him, and like all romances it is turbulent. At times he appals me and I detest him.’ Peron’s negative comments on the Aboriginal Tasmanians at first seem to be fuelled by his bitter disappointment that they were not the noble savages that Rousseau had promised; they had become, Shino muses, perhaps ‘merely innocent unfortunates caught in the crossfire, purely a means to Peron’s end of proving that Rousseau was a charlatan philosophe’ (p 5). But no, she goes on, perhaps ‘his vitriolic fire was not sparked by Rousseau alone, but also fanned by the Tasmanians’, whose cool indifference to him he could hardly believe; he had the ferocious anger of the jilted lover. The best part comes at the end, as Shino asks again, why she sympathises with this man. ‘As an Indigenous historian’, she says, perhaps she, too, has had ‘idealistic fantasies about Aboriginal society, and [has] attempted to impose this romanticised vision on the historical record’. She, like him, may have misinterpreted the agency of 18th-century Aboriginal people. Having recognised what she
was doing, she is now free, she says, to ‘fall in love with the Tasmanians and other Indigenous historical figures all over again’.

The theme of romance is also important in Jinki Trevillian’s chapter, about the loves, marriages and sexual relationships of the people she interviewed of Cape York Peninsula, a cohort of people who were born around the First World War and came to adulthood during the Second. Their ideas, she says, about love and romance are explored in story and song. Conventional history, Jinki suggests, might be good at understanding the social and legal contexts of relationships, but it has more trouble with the emotional aspects of the romances themselves. ‘It is’, she says, ‘the difference between a musical and a documentary; both forms tell a story about people and the world but in the musical the story is augmented by emotional outbursts of song’. Oral histories, like those she conducted, she believes ‘are like musicals’. From this starting point we come to learn about the separation of girls and boys in mission schools and the effects this had on their adult relationships; the disruption of Aboriginal marriage laws by the missionaries; the importance of song and dance in the interactions between Aboriginal, Islander, and visiting American troops. We also learn about the attempts by government to prevent interracial marriage and interracial sex, even while the cohabitation of white men and black women was commonly tolerated throughout the Cape.

Missions and missionaries are quite a theme in this collection. Angelique Edmonds considers the impact of the Church of England mission at Roper River, in the Northern Territory. In the modern communities affected by the mission, both Christian and traditional kin-based Aboriginal orientations of relatedness continue to co-exist. Devin Bowles writes about the impact of the missionaries at Mapoon at around the same time, and the ways in which the Aboriginal people there creatively adapted Christianity and redefined the Christian notion of moral transgression for themselves. Jessie Mitchell also writes about missionaries, but her stories are a century earlier, in Victoria and New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s. These early missionaries are significantly less powerful figures, often lacking much economic power or government support or social acceptance. Jessie warns us that these missionaries were rather different from those who came later. Few of them saw Aboriginal people as a doomed race, though they were horrified by the death and disease they witnessed around them, and few regarded Aboriginal men as a sexual threat to white women. They rarely tried to arrange respectable Christian marriages, as so many missionaries were to do later. They were concerned, though, about what they saw as sexual immorality and what they understood to be the lending or prostitution of Aboriginal women to European men, and they were ‘keen to implement systems of bodily and mental surveillance and control’ (p 231). In short, she makes us realise how the relationship of missionaries to Aboriginal people changed considerably over time.

Three chapters consider the history of Aboriginal leadership. Kathy Lothian reminds us, in a well told story, of the importance of the ideas of Black Power in the Tent Embassy of 1972. Dennis Foley talks about Aboriginal leadership in the figures of Pemulwuy, Mosquito and Windradyne, and connects the historical record to the oral history accounts in his own family about the attacks on the Wiradjuri in the Bathurst region in the 1820s in an interesting way.
Musquito reappears in Naomi Parry’s excellent essay, a painstaking reconstruction of Musquito’s life and especially of the way he has been remembered, or in her argument, misremembered. Musquito came originally from the Middle Harbour and Manly area, and was involved in hostilities between Aboriginal people and settlers in the Hawkesbury area. For his role he was exiled to Norfolk Island for eight years and then sent to Launceston. In Tasmania he worked for settlers, and also helped in recapturing bushrangers. He became part of the so-called ‘tame gangs’ outside Hobart, bands of Aborigines who had become disconnected from their own people, some of whom had spent their childhoods in white households. Musquito’s group consisted of 20 or 30 men, women and children, subsisting on kangaroos, possums and oysters. As violent clashes accelerated during 1824, Musquito came to be known as a leader of the Aboriginal attacks on white settlers, though Parry says evidence of his involvement is limited. Musquito and another man were captured and tried for murder, with neither allowed to speak in his own defence, call witnesses or brief counsel. When journalists and historians began from the late 1830s to write the story of the Black War and the destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines, some of them depicted Musquito as the ring-leader, an outsider who stirred the Tasmanian Aboriginal people into action. While others saw it differently, this was the version that has been passed into Australian folklore. In recent times historians have all seen Musquito as a leader; some, like Dennis Foley in this collection interpreting him romantically as a resistance fighter, and others, like Keith Windschuttle, as an outsider on a violent crime spree. Lyndall Ryan, though, saw him as the leader of one band but not of the Aboriginal movement as a whole. Parry concludes that historians have fitted his life to their narratives.

Finally three chapters focus on Indigenous–non-Indigenous relationships in new ways. Jane Mulcock looks at the questions of non-Indigenous belonging, and of non-Indigenous people’s desire to be seen as Indigenous, as belonging, as from nowhere else. Where a number of commentators have been critical of these desires, seeing them as seeking to appropriate Indigeneity for other purposes, Jane focuses closely on those instances where Indigenous people have been somewhat sympathetic to these desires, seeing them as perhaps a basis for greater respect, and also paying serious attention to birthplace as a marker of belonging and identity. Her material is from Western Australia. She quotes David Mowaljarlai, a Ngarinyin elder who said to the Federal Court in the context of his native title claim: ‘We don’t want to hurt you because you were born here in Australia, so you belong in Australia. But you have to learn about the culture of Australia so you know your own belonging, your naming and your identity. … The law for this land is recorded in this land. We can teach you that law. That way you won’t be strangers in your birth country.’ While I still retain doubts about the appropriate nature of some desires for Indigenous belonging, and think all non-Indigenous people do need to come to terms with their having come from somewhere else, I also think that Mulcock through her fieldwork approach has brought new insights to the discussion. And as she says, ‘like them or hate them, settler discourses of belonging and indigeneity are probably here to stay’ (p 77).

Thalia Anthony explains pastoralist–Aboriginal relationships in the Northern Territory from around 1900 to 1966 with originality and clarity. She says this was a unique relationship in which both pastoralists and their Aboriginal workers deviated from government control. Pastoralists created their own jurisdiction over Aboriginal people,
bypassing the assimilationist tendencies of government policy, and allowing Aborigi-
nal people to practise customs and ceremonies and retain connections to country. On
the other hand, this arrangement maximised pastoralists’ capacity to exploit Aboriginal
labour and pay minimal wages. The state, recognising the economic value of the cattle
industry, was largely complicit. This whole system, however, depended on pastoralist
need for Aboriginal labour, and came to a sudden end with the mechanisation and
equal pay changes of the 1960s. This all made a lot of sense to me, and provides a way
of reconciling the very negative accounts of some oral histories and historians with the
much more positive memories of this period recounted by others.

I’ve saved one of the best chapters till the end. It is also about the Northern Terri-
tory in the mid-20th century. This is Jillian Barnes’s discussion of the use of the
photographic image of Gwoja Tjungurrayi, otherwise known as One Pound Jimmy. We
all know it as the classic image of an Aboriginal man’s head and shoulders, used on
Commonwealth stamps in the 1950s, and familiar to us in tourist promotions and mag-
azines like *Walkabout*. Barnes not only traces the capturing and use of this image from
the 1930s to the 1960s, but also explores the life of the man whose image it was. Tjun-
gurrayi, she shows, though represented as the original wild Aboriginal man outside
western civilisation, was in fact as a young man a survivor of the Coniston killings of
1928, who subsequently worked for several years as a miner and then spent most of his
life working for pastoralists within or near his ancestral country. As tourism grew in
the area, he became known to visitors as a man with encyclopaedic knowledge of his
Dreaming country, and came to insist on proper payment and acknowledgement for his
services. Anthropologists and writers frequently sought him out to gain access to his
unsurpassed knowledge of Warlpiri-Anmatyerre country. He became a living keeper of
totemic sites, and he was driven by a desire to pass on the Law. Three of his sons
became leading figures in the Western Desert art movement, including his adoptive son
Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, and the knowledge Tjungurrayi passed on to them was
important for the art they developed. Barnes acknowledges the work of Vivien Johnson,
an expert on the Western Desert Art movement, in drawing attention to these connec-
tions, but her own research adds a great deal to the story.

In terms of their brief, to produce new histories written in new ways, these
authors do remarkably well. Nearly all have uncovered new material, and present new
ways of understanding Indigenous history. The subtitle ‘critical Australian Indigenous
histories’ is well deserved. In terms of writing in new ways, some are perhaps newer
than others. Kathy Lothian has two narrative voices, one much more scholarly and in
the past tense, the other more direct and in the present. Shino Konishi imagines herself
in relation to her subject. Jinki Trevillian’s extensive oral histories sing to us from the
page. Taken as a whole, these essays remind us strongly of what John Docker and I
described in *Is History Fiction?* (University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2006) as
the double character of history, both rigorous scholarship grounded in the evidence
and a form of literature, with narrative, character, and plot.

These essays were originally drafted in 2003, at the height of what we now
describe as the History Wars. That is, an atmosphere that for early career scholars was
stimulating perhaps but also intimidating and highly politicised. To make a mistake
could be seen as ideologically driven falsehood, even lying. It seemed to us when we
completed *Is History Fiction?* in 2005 that the mood of literary experimentation had been
suppressed. It is a credit to these authors that they have continued to forge their own paths some, like Naomi Parry, responding directly to the critics of ‘black arm band history’ but most developing stories from either their own experience or their more general intellectual and emotional engagement with Indigenous histories. This book, and other recent scholarship like it, indicates perhaps that history will always retain its double character, and neither aspect can be suppressed for long. It is, as a practice, intrinsically looking both to art and science.

In the hands of early career writers like these, I think Indigenous history is in good health – critical, lively, responsive and interesting. I recommend the book to you, and declare it launched.

Gleebooks, Sydney
20 June 2008
Susan Upton launches *Culture in Translation: The Anthropological Legacy of RH Mathews*¹

Robert Hamilton Mathews, my great grandfather, was born in 1841 – soon after his parents emigrated from Northern Ireland. He died in 1918, aged 77, and is buried in Parramatta. He married Mary in her mother’s home in Tamworth. I wear her wedding ring.

Their first born was Hamilton – my grandfather – followed by Georgiana, whose middle name was Transit, as she was born in the year of the Transit of Venus. Then came Gregory, Australie, Mary, William and Robert, totalling nine children in 13 years, one of them stillborn. The names Robert and Hamilton have been handed down since: my brother is Robert, and my sister and our first cousin both have Hamilton as a middle name.

Robert and Mary’s third child, Gregory, was a renowned ornithologist, and the National Library has a significant collection of his work, which marries well with his father’s collection. Australie, their fourth child, died before she was six, and neither of their surviving daughters married. From RH and Mary’s four surviving sons, in my generation there are only four of us: my sister and brother, a first cousin and me.

Our family always knew Robert Hamilton Mathews as ‘Old RH’ or sometimes ‘old RHM’. Many Aboriginal people knew him as ‘Miranen’, meaning ‘well-liked man’. Although no-one in the family has any proof, it is known that on numerous occasions among Indigenous people he was given many of the privileges of an initiated man.

My father Frank remembered his grandfather very warmly, even though old RHM died when my father was 15. He said his robust grandfather, who was a qualified surveyor, had intense concentration, a lovely sense of humour and was very good indeed with children providing they were not too shy. He was also very good at languages, mathematics and astronomy, the latter being very useful when he was surveying new areas. As well, RHM was a good draftsman, that being invaluable for copying the Aboriginal rock art he saw on his anthropological expeditions. Old RH sang a number of Aboriginal songs, but my father wasn’t sure who had transcribed them.

Old RH had pastoral interests. He didn’t inherit any money, and so all he had he’d earned. In 1882, when he was 41, he and Mary went overseas for a year: first to New Zealand, and then through the US and Europe. Later, all four sons went to The Kings School in Sydney and Aunt ‘Georgie’ was sent to a private girls school in Sydney.

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When he was about 50, old RH more or less retired as a surveyor and for the rest of his life devoted himself to his anthropological work. Many of you will remember Bill (WC) Wentworth, a Member of Parliament and the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Knowing of my mother Janet’s musical ability, he asked her to research and record some Aboriginal music before it died out. The Institute for Aboriginal Studies supplied her with a tape recorder and tapes and off she went. The family was extremely impressed and astounded, for here was a woman who’d lived a privileged life for her 50 odd years, heading off to places unknown and with little physical comfort at all. If she was referred to a particular person as an informant and he was in jail, she would sit and record with him there. She loved the work.

My mother started her investigations on the far south coast of New South Wales, and quickly realised that to learn and understand the music, it was essential for her to learn and understand the culture and some of the language of the areas where she was researching. When she introduced herself, quite a number of the older people, especially the men, asked if she was related to ‘that old Mr Mathews’ or ‘Miranen’. When she said that he was her grandfather-in-law, she was immediately welcomed, was warmly accepted and everyone willingly co-operated with her in her quest for knowledge. We are all extremely proud of her and her achievements.

Our family is delighted that Martin Thomas has undertaken such unremitting investigation and research into old RH. I have very much enjoyed my frequent contact with Martin since 1999 and we all have learned an enormous amount about our ancestor from Martin’s work. Martin, congratulations; you’re wonderful and good luck in your future endeavours. No matter where they take you, I will always value our friendship.

National Library of Australia
17 October 2007
A tribute to Colin Campbell, an elder of the Ngaku clan and the Dhunghutti nation (1942–2008)

Delivered at a graveside service in Kempsey in the Macleay Valley
22 February 2008 by John Williams

Colin, known to all as ‘Cody’, asked me a number of years ago and again quite recently to give the eulogy in the event of his passing and I accepted on the basis that he would do so for me in the event I preceded him. We were the same age and sadly the task has fallen to me, but what a privilege it is share with all here today why this man stood so tall in our midst.

Cody was born on the Aboriginal verandah ward at the Kempsey District Hospital, which was itself a stark reminder of the die that was cast from birth for Aboriginal people in this town: right from the cradle he experienced the disparity and injustice that were the hallmarks of colonial dispossession.

Cody told me that his earliest memory as a child was at the Burnt Bridge Reserve in Kempsey, swinging on the front gate beside the manager’s cottage watching people present their passes for permission to visit their relatives: another early indelible imprint upon the mind of a small boy of the intrusive control over Aboriginal lives and society.

But Cody also recalled happy childhood memories at Burnt Bridge: close family ties; collective community discipline and shared communal responsibility; experiencing the genuine camaraderie with people sharing their meagre rations and joint incomes with those in greater need; and the freedom to enjoy the 1,000 acres of bush on horseback, before the bulk of the Aboriginal reserve was sold to a local dairy farmer for $5,000 in the 1950s.

On a happier note, as late as last week Mary Lou Buck and other family members returning from Canberra personally relayed the news about the belated National Apology to the Stolen Generations. This was a reassuring occasion for which Cody and all Aboriginal communities had waited so long and it was fitting that he lived to witness it. It was indeed a moment of historical significance and, with the world closely watching, it could be said that Australia had finally come of age.

Whilst Cody was always optimistic and welcomed this momentous symbolic occasion, this important apology by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Commonwealth government and so many Australians of good will – as appropriate and moving as it was – still cannot undo the two centuries of destruction and upheaval of so many nations, communities and families that made up Aboriginal Australia. As Cody stated in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission document in 1997: ‘Reconcilia-
tion is a two-way process and total recognition of all areas of dispossession should be acknowledged and compensated for in a fair and just manner’. 

As the cedar cutters came through the Macleay Valley in the early 1830s, followed by squatters, graziers and finally townsfolk, Aboriginal people were increasingly moved from their ancestral lands. And during the 1840s, in response to further incursions into their hunting grounds, scattered resistance by the local Aboriginal inhabitants was met with severe reprisals, in spite of regulations providing for the protection of Aboriginal people. In 1856 a mercenary contingent of Moori police, camped at Belgrave Falls, brought the courageous defiance of the dispossessed of the Macleay Valley to an abrupt end at Nulla Nulla Creek, west of Willawarrin – a victory achieved through the help of black trackers.

For the historian and casual reader this may be a mere note of some historical interest, but for the Aboriginal communities of the Macleay Valley the subsequent dispossession and dislocation were devastating: they undermined their very society and way of life. The irreparable damage of dispossession done to communities, and to families like the one represented here today, is still felt as succeeding generations experience the effects of grief and trauma and economic disadvantage, all factors which undermine the building blocks of Aboriginal families and society. Its relevance for us here today is that Burnt Bridge Aboriginal Reserve, together with the reserves at Bellbrook and Kinchela, epitomises this passage of Aboriginal history in the Macleay.

We also should not underestimate the effect of the inexpressible aching void on Cody, having witnessed Aboriginal Law being severed from his ancestral country and the Dhunghutti language forbidden. The final act, bereft of conscience, was that of the colonisers actually seeking the demise of the Aboriginal people by deliberately attempting the genocide of the Aboriginal race. Is it any surprise that dysfunctional consequences resulted from such a blatant denial of basic human rights?

Let us not be mistaken here as this is not hyperbole or embellishment for there is well documented government evidence that this was the actual purpose of the Stolen Generations policy and the reasons for homes like Kinchela Boys Home, built on one of three former Aboriginal reserves on the Macleay and situated in the pristine valley of the lower Macleay, just on the outskirts of town on the road to South West Rocks.

The confidence in the words of the Protection Board’s Chief Investigator is quite evident, when he stated that there would be no need for expanding Aboriginal reserves in the future ‘as the only solution of this great problem [was] the removal of the children; the old people will have passed away, and their progeny will be absorbed in the industrial classes of the colony’.

It is not a matter of being political at such a time of sadness, but the opportunity to affirm that Cody, like many of you here today, witnessed this passage of history and to acknowledge that Cody’s actions as a leader in his community was to defy every attempt to further intrude upon the rights and dignity of his people.

Cody told me about the punishment at the Burnt Bridge Reserve for being caught speaking the Dhunghutti language and how his uncles had told him how they fled when recruited for initiation because they did not want to be removed from their families on the mission. What an agonising decision. But this was calculated policy because
the prohibition of language was the key to undermining Aboriginal Law, religion and society, it being so essential for instruction and conveyance of knowledge and culture.

It was in this context that Cody was very concerned in the late 1980s when the teaching of Aboriginal languages – introduced by elder Pop Pacey and Ruth Campbell Maruca at the Ngaku Aboriginal Pre-school in South Kempsey – was stopped after departmental instruction.

Another important point Cody made to me, which has been lost on historians, was that economic independence was sought by Aboriginal people at the Burnt Bridge Reserve. Cody told me that he clearly remembered during his childhood observing an operating saw mill which employed many men and provided technical skills. The mill became so successful and competitive that it threatened the saw mill run by non-Aboriginal people in the town and after a complaint to the authorities the Burnt Bridge Reserve timber mill was closed. The successful agricultural farms on one of the Fattorini Islands, both former reserves, and on land at Rolland Plains, also suffered the same fate. Hunting and gathering for wholesome food was officially forbidden and dependence on food rations – with their dangerous dietary implications for current health problems – became the regimented order of the day.

In the current biased debate about the dependency of Aboriginal people on welfare, it is a forgotten fact that the Aboriginal people’s attempt to enter the market place was thwarted as they were excluded from the economy of this country, never choosing dependency upon these enforced intrusions into their autonomous life styles. This historical context was known to Cody and its being glossed over today as a matter of political pragmatism concerned him greatly.

When Cody was 16, he moved to Sydney seeking employment opportunities but returned to Kempsey in 1974 to work with Aboriginal community organisations and for the rest of his life he gave untiring committed service to bridging gaps within the community and tirelessly working to achieve a better life for all Aboriginal people. He became the regional manager of the Mid-North Coast Regional Aboriginal Land Council and was repeatedly voted by his peers to the Regional ATSIC Council to represent his people and community as a man who had gained their trust and respect.

It was during the early months of 1980 that Cody and I met, as he was striving to acquire housing for his community. The extent of the racism that he experienced as we sought to buy homes throughout the town was unbelievable. People rudely denied access to their homes; doors were slammed in our faces as the vendors refused to sell their properties. We were told that even if they did sell their homes in ‘white enclaves’ to the Aboriginal community they would be shunned by the town folk for doing so. We were told by reliable people of good will that they had been solicited to actually sign a petition to stop Aboriginal people moving into their particular areas. Intimidated people who had agreed to sell were harassed until they took their properties off the market. There was even a death-threat letter. I remember Cody kindly assisting one genuine woman who had already exchanged contracts. She told us that she had suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of the relentless harassment. She was being called every hour of the day and night with loud whistles over the telephone and her children were being ridiculed, abused and bullied at school. Cody caringly cancelled the binding contract out of respect for this genuine, well-meaning lady.
It was within this degrading and overwhelming oppression that Cody revealed his maturity, patience and great stature as a leader of his people. He was not embittered and did not retaliate in kind. He did not stoop to the level of ignorance but he stood tall as a proud Ngaku-Dhungutti man as an example of integrity, courage and honour.

To bear out his exemplary status and sheer wisdom, let me share with you a personal experience that revolutionised my own thinking and philosophy. One day he came into my office in Kempsey accompanied by a non-Aboriginal officer from the Aboriginal Development Commission. The officer waxed long about how he was going to bring millions of dollars, jobs, opportunities, housing and business enterprises to the Aboriginal community in the Macleay Valley and Kempsey. Cody then excused himself, as he had work to do, and asked the officer to talk further to me about possible business enterprises and housing development propositions. When Cody left, this man, not knowing who I was or my close association with Cody, then berated the Aboriginal community with some of the worst racist remarks imaginable. He stated he would not be putting any funds into the area, as he couldn’t trust Aboriginal people with money. I let him dig himself deeper into his hole of deceit and, when he left, I immediately rang Cody and told him I had urgent worrying business about his visitor. I am sure Cody already knew the outcome and some six hours later he casually strolled into my office and when I anxiously explained to him how racist this man was. Cody calmly responded: ‘Don’t you realise that I know that he is a racist, but look how far he has come’.

His remarkable response was so startling. I had been educated in ethics, studying the non-violent resistance philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, yet here was a man that would even accept being discriminated against for the self-development and maturation of his racist opponent. I was stricken dumb by respect and sheer admiration. The significance of his philosophy was so profound. I know of no equal, other than Nelson Mandela, who patiently respected his abusive prison guards for 26 years and finally won them over to his all inclusive philosophy.

Cody could always see the best in others when I could see nothing other than man’s inhumanity to man. Presumptuously, I had thought my western university education was sufficient to address all significant issues one confronted in life. Alas I had to learn from this Indigenous exemplar that my education was deficient when placed beside this man’s understanding and example. Let us not be misunderstood here: not for a moment did Cody condone racism, for he was its sharpest critic, but he did not have the capacity to hate those who racially vilified him. He hated racism with a passion, but not the racist.

Cody was also a patient and wise educator of cultural values and protocol. I remember him coming into my office one day very agitated and upset with the Macleay Argus newspaper in hand with its front page dramatically indicating that the Kempsey Shire Council planned to bring a bulldozer into Burnt Bridge Reserve to cut off the water supply as the underground pipes were all leaking. I impetuously responded ‘Cody, they can’t do this; I will stand in front of the bulldozer’. Cody responded by quietly asking, ‘Has any one asked you to stand in front of the bulldozer?’ ’No’, I replied. He continued, ‘Keep working on these maps and finding the parcels of land available as potential land claims. When they find out you’re one with us, then your use in this area will be limited and then you can come and stand with us in front of bulldozers.’ I had to
learn that it was ‘his’ and ‘your’ struggle, and not mine; and if I were to work with the Aboriginal community, then it could only be on that basis. It was a lesson I needed to be taught from the outset and every time I have considered working in a particular position within the Aboriginal community over the past 25 years, I always sought Cody’s advice and direction, for I was but a tool that could be used for his people.

Cody was a man of utter integrity; he was a man without a price. I remember Cody telling me of an event when the Ngaku Aboriginal Housing Cooperative bought, through my real estate practice, four town houses in east Kempsey. There was much town opposition and municipal resistance, as this was the first Aboriginal land holding in an otherwise white enclave. Shortly before settlement, he had been approached by a distinguished owner of a house nearby who, feeling that the land values would depreciate, passed Cody a brown paper bag with $5,000 for his own use. The bag was passed straight back without comment. How many of us have a price? Whether cash, hidden commissions, furthering our career, a better position, a higher place on a priority list or a position on a board to enable personal advantage. Cody had no price. He could not be bought. His position on boards was for the betterment of his people – not for power or for personal advantage but for the advantage, better conditions and additional resources for all his people and community.

Cody was unpretentious, unassuming, humble and unaffected by one’s station in life. Yet these egalitarian values concealed a depth of wisdom, patience and understanding seldom encountered in society. He surely walked tall amongst us and yet because of his humility and laidback persona, his greatness as a person and thinker were sometimes overlooked. He was a wise and mature person who did not have the capacity to hate, not even those who misunderstood his vision and good will for all his people in a divided community. In all our discussions, even during the last weeks, the community’s interests, not his, were always paramount. One can see why he was my mentor and my dear friend and why he was a friend to so many of us.

A few years ago, in the early hours of the morning, Cody rang me very distraught. He was reading the Dhunghutti dictionary, which I had managed to have copied for him and, seeing the footnotes by the respected initiated elder John Quinlan from Kempsey, he realised that so many of his slang words were actual words from the Dhunghutti language. Like the elusive shadow of a passing cloud, he felt that he had just missed out on retaining his native tongue and culture. He felt so close and yet so far from the essence of his Aboriginal birthright. He felt cheated, betrayed, by an uncaring dominant culture that denied him retaining his own language, so essential for regaining his own cultural tradition.

He was therefore, regrettably, a man in transition. A transition from community traditional cultural practice, which just eluded him by a generation, to the contemporary Aboriginal scene whose future and direction were now governed not by external forces and removal of Aboriginal children but by financial determinants – a future dependent upon pragmatic competitive manoeuvring and the professional development of the ‘submission’ into an art form to obtain limited funds. Yet, Cody knew that if all that is achieved through this process is that the Aboriginal community becomes a mere black replica of white society, then it has dismally failed.
I know that I speak for all of us here when I say that we will miss Cody so much. Personally he was my inspiration and guide and my dearest friend. My exposure whilst in Kempsey to this man’s courage and strength as a resolute and diplomatic leader of his people in an uncaring and racist divide assisted me in learning how best to try and serve humanity – a service in which he so naturally and unconsciously attained the ultimate. To those whom Cody touched, we are all the better for having had that privilege. May we allow all that Cody stood for remain with us like a spark within to assist us in our own pilgrimages as we face the inevitable continuing struggle that lies ahead.

Cody was also a proud member of the Dhungutti nation. He was on the Dhungutti committee that achieved the first successful Native Title claim on the Australian mainland, following the successful Mabo decision. It was a decision that made the Dhunghutti a name of international significance and that gave Cody great pride that his people’s traditional claims on the Macleay had been recognised by the wider community.

Cody was a man of conciliation. He did not make circles to exclude others by drawing people out but he made circles to include others by drawing people in. He magnanimously and selflessly sought to accommodate all who genuinely sought the best interests of the Aboriginal community. At the same time he offered a challenge to forget old wounds and to come together and create a new future for Aboriginal people. Cody cared for everyone with personal sincerity and empathy. It is something for which we must be most grateful and humbled and honoured to have been chosen to have shared time with this caring human being.

In 1959 Teresa Clements, of the Ulupna Tribe, was buried at Cummeragunja on banks of the Murray River. She was the grandmother of Dr Naomi Mayers, Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Medical Service in Redfern, who attended her funeral service as a teenager. Teresa, or Yarmuk in her tribal language, was the last to speak the language of Cummeragunja fluently. Following the service, a poem was written by a visiting journalist, Michael Thwaites from the Melbourne Argus, and I have received permission from Dr Mayers to quote the poem for this eulogy, as it appears so fitting with regard to Cody.

**Yarmuk of the Ulupna tribe**

A worn-out body laid in quiet earth,
Grey watching gums, a wattle’s throb of gold,
The unhurried river hollowing its path,
Wind in the grass – what more is to be told?

You, last of all that knew your tribal tongue,
Sleep now with them in this ancestral ground.
Above your grave the towering, ancient wrong
Speaks in a silence pregnant and profound.

Besides your grave I stand, among your folk
Who loved this land before the white man came.
Burned by the burning words you never spoke,
I ask forgiveness for my people’s shame.
For named and nameless ills your people bore
From us, who killed by bullet, axe and pride,
For our stone blindness; for the day we tore
In Kindness name your children from your side.

What could we answer if your ghost should rise
To curse our children’s children from the grave?
You rise – but with redemption in your eyes
Before we knew to ask it, you forgave.

A fire of truth and love was lit by you
Who, unembittered, fought with bitter fate.
We took the land and life your fathers knew,
You never claimed your heritage of hate.

But poured your life, in spite of death and hell,
For those you loved, the world you longed to see.
Rest quiet in this place you loved so well,
And let the wakeful spirit wander free.

Now to that father of all human kind,
In whom you trusted, gallant, tireless, tied,
We give, with you, our strength and will and mind
To win the world your warrior heart desired.

And now it is our turn to make the circle complete and to release Cody back to the earth in the Country he loved so much. Farewell to a bold Ngaku and Dhungutter Warrior. Good bye, dear friend and friend of us all.
Lois Tilbrook (née Howell) was born in the Brunswick area south of Perth, where she was brought up by her grandmother. After finishing high school at Collie, she matriculated through a College of Technical and Further Education in Perth and then completed a degree in Anthropology at the University of Western Australia. After graduating, she moved to Singapore with her first husband, where she lived for a short time, studying sociology at the University of Singapore and doing some teaching herself until the failure of their relationship. They had one son, who returned to Perth with her but later went back to live with his father. Joining the Western Australian Department of Native Welfare as a District Officer, Lois met Harvey Tilbrook, a descendant of a pioneer settler family from Kellerberrin. They were married in 1971 and had a daughter the following year. In 1973, Lois completed an MA thesis on the social adaptation of Aboriginal girls living in a Perth hostel, together with a Diploma in Education. In 1975 she was appointed as Lecturer in Anthropology at Mt Lawley College of Advanced Education (CAE), which had initiated a pioneering program of Aboriginal teacher education (ATEP), as well as courses in Aboriginal Studies for non-Aboriginal education students, with Commonwealth government support. Her first research project was a study of Aboriginal children of the Moora area, north of Perth, which prompted her first publication in 1977. Securing a large grant from the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1978, she established the South West Aboriginal Studies Project (SWAS), with the aim of collecting and collating genealogical and other oral information about the Nyungah people of Western Australia’s South-West, together with photographs and other documentation. A number of Aboriginal interviewers were employed to work at centres in the South-West and a substantial database was gradually assembled and displayed to provide wide community access.

Together with her senior non-Aboriginal researcher, Anna Haebich, she published a useful bibliography of published writings on the Nyungah. A travelling exhibition was taken as far as Albany where it attracted intense interest. This material was to provide the basis for her ground-breaking social history, *Nyungar Tradition*, which was joint winner of the Western Australian Premier’s Book Award for Non-Fiction in 1983 and is now a collector’s item. Continuing demand for the book, particularly by Aboriginal people because of its unique collation of genealogical information, has led to its being made available on the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) library's website. In 1982 Lois became a member of the committee responsible for the Aboriginal volumes of the *Dictionary of Western Australians* project initiated by Rica Erickson and went on with Sylvia Hallam and Neville Green to compile two of these with the assistance of research funds provided by AIATSIS. In the meantime she had enrolled to write a doctoral thesis at the University of Western Australia under the supervision of Dr Robert Tonkinson and Dr David Trigger on the

Lois Joan Tilbrook (1943–2006)
nature of contact between European settlers and the Nyungah of the Swan River area from the mid-1820s until 1860, the first in-depth study of its kind in Western Australia. Completed in 1983, which was also the year of her husband Harvey’s death, this unfortunately remains unpublished.

Lois’s interest in and talent for art had always been very strong, and this led her to write the notes for the Art Gallery of Western Australia’s published catalogue of the paintings by a locally stationed British military officer, Richard Atherton Ffarington, of Aboriginal life in the South-West in the 1840s. She also assisted the New Norcia Benedictines in an exhibition of their collection of works brought from Europe by Bishop Rosendo Salvado. In December 1988, Lois left Mt Lawley College and subsequently moved to Sydney with her new partner. There she became the first recipient of the Miklouho-Macleay Centenary Fellowship to research the 19th-century collectors who contributed to the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney. She then left to live in Cambridge, England, where she worked mostly in sculpture while attending classes in Art History at the Courtauld Institute in London. She also took out a qualification in psychotherapy and established her own home-based practice. It was there that she died of cancer in December 2006. As well as her important artistic legacy, Lois’s memorial consists of her substantial addition to the social history of the Nyungah through SWAS and her various publications, together with the affection of many of the Nyungah people with whom she worked. At the launch of Nyungar Tradition in 1983, Lois had learned for the first time from a relative of Harvey’s that his grandfather was himself a Nyungah from the Busselton area.

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