

# 9

## Friendship and the Grave

Windradyne's grave sits on a low rise above Winburndale Rivulet in a broad valley overlooked by Big Flat and Mt Wiagdon. The grave is raised into a mound or 'tumulus' and rests alongside a second grave mound. This form of grave is particular to the Western Plains and to Wiradjuri burial practices. Surveyor General John Oxley, leaving the Lachlan River to return to Bathurst in July 1817, documented a burial tumulus under which a man's body was buried in a sitting position, wrapped in a possum skin cloak, facing east. Two of the nearby trees were stripped of bark on the side facing the grave and marked with 'curious characters deeply cut upon them'. Jane Piper, whose family lived on a property neighbouring Brucedale, also described the burial of Wiradjuri people in a seated position, wrapped in a cloak with their own tools and weapons, under an ant nest-shaped tumulus presided over by carved trees.<sup>1</sup> Commemorative carved trees, had they once marked the graves at Brucedale, no longer stood there in the 1960s. A ground-penetrating radar survey carried out in 2010 detected signs that the remains of at least three people lie within the two graves. A third burial tumulus rests beside an ancient, and now

---

1 The party disturbed the grave out of curiosity, after which 'the whole was carefully re-interred, and restored as near as possible to the station in which it was found'. Oxley, *Journal of the Two Expeditions*, 138–41. Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS, MS21/2, 1–2. A.W. Howitt noted the Wiradjuri practice of wrapping the body of the deceased in a skin rug, depositing some of the deceased's belongings in the grave and covering it over with sticks and bark and then earth, as Oxley had described. He did not mention the burial mound, but noted the marking of surrounding trees. Howitt, *The Native Tribes*, 466.

deceased, yellow box tree nearby. The area may be a Wiradjuri burial ground from pre-contact times, or a burial place for Wiradjuri people who worked on Brucedale.<sup>2</sup>

The low mound of Windradyne's grave is easily hidden by the grass when it grows long, as it was when I visited in January 2009. More prominent are the concrete memorial (dedicated by Mr and Mrs Roy Suttor and the Bathurst Historical Society in 1954) and the young eucalypt trees, which frame the grave in the traditional diamond pattern, and were planted by the local Wiradjuri community in 2000.<sup>3</sup> It is a tranquil place, suffused with the solemnity of death and memory. I signed the visitors' book and headed off with John Suttor to talk somewhere cooler.

The Voluntary Conservation Agreement over Windradyne's grave, initiated in 1995, was signed by New South Wales Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, in May 2000, and sent to Brucedale. The Suttor family and members of the local Wiradjuri community gathered at the grave. Dinawan Dyirribang performed a cleansing smoking ceremony, and he and Gloria Rogers spoke of the importance of the site for the Suttor family, local Wiradjuri people and for the nation. About 50 people gathered on the verandah of the old Brucedale homestead where John Suttor signed the agreement.<sup>4</sup> As a *Sydney Morning Herald* article put it:

Yesterday, the friendship between the Suttor family and the Wiradjuri warrior was formally recognised. His gravesite was given formal preservation status with the signing of a Voluntary Conservation

---

2 Gresser recorded in 1964 that there was 'not a tree standing' in the vicinity of the graves; they had all been used for firewood many years earlier. Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS MS21/3/a, 119–20. Gresser believed there was more evidence that the small burial ground was for Wiradjuri workers on Brucedale. Papers of P. J. Gresser, AIATSIS, MS21/3/a, 119–20. Interestingly, the other burials and their relationship with Windradyne's grave is often overlooked. For example, the heritage listing of Windradyne's grave mentions the adjacent grave in its description of the site, but not in its assessment of the place's significance. Wiradjuri Elder Dinawan Dyirribang told me that the grave beside the yellow box tree may be where Windradyne's father is buried. Dinawan Dyirribang, in conversation with the author, 8 July 2011; Heritage Listing, Grave of Windradyne, State Heritage Register Database, Record Number 5051560.

3 Debra Jopson, 'Grave a Symbol of 180 Years of Friendship', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 2002; John Suttor, in conversation with the author, 20 January 2009.

4 A Voluntary Conservation Agreement is an agreement between the government and landowner. See Community Based Conservation, Voluntary Conservation Agreements, Brucedale–Suttor, Bathurst District, VCA075, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water File: F/2030 (hereafter Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000), 'Signing of the Suttor VCA Near Bathurst, Speech Notes' and associated photographs; Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 13 July 2010.

Agreement by John Suttor, William's great-grandson. 'There was a sense of co-operation and co-existence', Mr Suttor said of the relationship. 'We have cemented that here today. That spirit still exists.'<sup>5</sup>

The Conservation Agreement covers just under one-third of a hectare, taking in the three grave mounds and the 1954 memorial.<sup>6</sup> The agreement is highly unusual; such agreements have overwhelmingly been made to protect natural values, with the protection of cultural values incidental.<sup>7</sup> The agreement recognises the complex history of the place and its many layers of cultural significance today: as an Aboriginal burial site and burial place of Windradyne; as a part of the 'first war arena between Aboriginal people and settlers on the Western Plains'; as part of 'Brucedale', one of the original settlements in the area still in the ownership of the Suttor family; as a property that was not attacked by Windradyne and his warriors; and as a site of commemoration, via the erection of the memorial in 1954. It specifies that Wiradjuri people and members of the Bathurst LALC 'shall be permitted access to the conservation area provided that at least 24 hours' notice has been given to the Owner', and directs the property owner to consult with and coordinate with these parties in undertaking works and maintenance within the site.<sup>8</sup> The agreement 'runs with the land'—that is, it binds not only John Suttor, and now his son David, but any future owner.

Isabel Coe's 1993 native title writ had a different vision. In claiming the whole of Wiradjuri country (whether claimable under native title or not), its aim was 'to contribute to a political settlement of claims made by the Aboriginal people of Australia or by the Wiradjuri who constitute part of that people'.<sup>9</sup> It was one of a series of cases that sought to 'articulate through legal avenues the relationship between Aboriginal people and their land' and to show that the ongoing alienation of Aboriginal people from their land was 'a continuing act of genocide'.<sup>10</sup> A *Sydney Morning Herald* report on the proceedings sketched the geographical oppression

5 Nick Leys, 'Black Warrior's Spirit Preserved', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 May 2000, 9.

6 As noted above, a third visually identifiable grave is located outside the area covered by the agreement, which Dinawan Dyrribang claimed was Windradyne's father's grave. Dinawan Dyrribang, in conversation with the author, 8 July 2011.

7 Sally Ash, state co-ordinator Conservation Partners Program Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, in conversation with the author, 23 June 2010.

8 Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, section 2.3 and sections 2.2.4, 2.2.5, 3.1.

9 Solicitor General for New South Wales, Keith Mason QC, quoted in Nettheim, 'Isabel Coe on Behalf of the Wiradjuri Tribe'.

10 Walker and Bhuta, 'Upholding the Law', 15–18.

of Wiradjuri people, their confinement on the reserve at Cowra, the prohibition of hunting and fishing on private land, and the impossibility of visiting important cultural sites without permission from private land holders, citing Windradyne's grave as such a place.<sup>11</sup> The Conservation Agreement, in formalising the right of local Wiradjuri people to visit the grave and their right to have a say in future management decisions, returned Windradyne's grave to Wiradjuri people in a way that could never have been achieved under native title (seeing as it is situated on private property), but in a way that also requires ongoing cooperation with the land owners.

John Suttor was aware of the parallel tradition that places Windradyne's burial near the old hospital. Diane Johnson, engaging closely with those who care most for the grave, acknowledged both stories about Windradyne's death and burial in her book *Lighting the Way*. Dinawan Dyirribang, Gloria Rogers and Warwick Peckham of the Bathurst LALC were also aware of the hospital story; it is included in Windradyne's entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, written by David Roberts.<sup>12</sup> However, there is a very strong consensus among those who care for the grave at Brucedale that Windradyne died there and is buried there in the Wiradjuri way.

In seeking to make my own contribution to Windradyne's story, I inadvertently tested the strength of this consensus early in my study of the story. I had noted that the State Heritage Register listing of the grave at Brucedale did not refer to the parallel story of Windradyne's burial near the hospital. I wrote to the New South Wales Heritage Branch about the possibility of revising the register's listing of Windradyne's grave to include this additional information. I was anxious that, in leaving out part of the story, the listing left room for a whistleblower (such as a future owner of the property not committed to the conservation of this important place) to burst onto the scene with the 'new' evidence contained in 'Colo's' 1829 letter and attempt to have the place delisted. In taking this action, I was not entirely comfortable; I worried whether, in doing what I felt was my job as a historian, I was threatening to disturb Windradyne's remains. Apart from the removal of the carved trees around the graves at Brucedale,

11 Tony Hewett, 'Wiradjuri People's Writ Immortalises a Warrior', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1993, 8.

12 John Suttor, in conversation with the author, 20 January 2009; John Suttor, letter to the author, 4 February 2009; Johnson, *Lighting the Way*, 56. David Roberts seems to have brought 'Colo's' 1829 letter, with its statement that Windradyne was buried alongside the old hospital, back to light. Roberts, 'Windradyne (1800–1829)'.

the remains had been allowed to rest in peace, unlike the remains of so many Aboriginal people, which have been exhumed, collected, measured and classified, to produce knowledge that further disempowered their descendants.<sup>13</sup> The ancestors buried at Brucedale appear to have been neither exhumed nor threatened with exhumation, yet the fear that they might have been is never far off. For example, Mary Coe wrote: ‘It is rumoured that even Windradyne’s body was disturbed by these grave robbers and his head shipped to England’.<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding my conviction that the wider acknowledgement of both stories would help to protect his grave into the future, I worried that my attempt to complicate the connection between the story and the grave (within one of the very mechanisms that supports its conservation) might be disrespectful. The people I consulted on the matter reassured me that they knew about the hospital story—it was no secret—and that knowing that a member of the Suttor family had written it down in 1829 did not shake their conviction of Windradyne’s burial at Brucedale or the robustness of their commitment to care for his grave and share his story. Warwick Peckham told me that he had consulted with a number of people on receiving my letter, and it was his own view and theirs that I should leave the State Heritage Register listing as it is. Many people believe very strongly that Windradyne rests at Brucedale. It is better to let it rest.<sup>15</sup> Gloria Rogers told me:

We have heard that story of him supposedly dying up there at the hospital ... and that he was buried there near the hospital. *But* ... we think it was just a story ... If he was buried there, why take him from that resting place back to Brucedale? Certainly Aboriginal people would not have done that, once a person is laid to rest, that is where they stay ... Because the Suttor family had a good relationship with Wiradjuri people ... we could not see [them] agreeing to Windradyne being taken ... from the hospital grounds out to their place ... So that is why I believe he died out there [at Brucedale] and that was his last resting place.<sup>16</sup>

Rogers’s conviction that Windradyne’s remains now rest at Brucedale was so strong that the only alternative she could conceive of was that he was buried at the hospital, and then moved to Brucedale later on—a scenario that she did not find credible.

13 Byrne, ‘The Ethos of Return’, 73–77; Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 25–31.

14 Coe, *Windradyne—A Wiradjuri Koorie* (1989), 73.

15 Warwick Peckham, in conversation with the author, 17 June 2010.

16 Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010.

When I visited Brucedale for the first time in 2009, I noticed that ‘Colo’s’ 1829 letter, with its striking obituary of Windradyne (as well as the statement he was buried at the hospital), was not among the sources in the family file. I sent John Suttor a number of copies of this letter, asking him to forward one to Dinawan Dyirribang, whom I had not yet met. John replied with great enthusiasm, saying he was looking forward to showing it to a group of Wiradjuri visitors the following day.<sup>17</sup> When I wrote a few months later proposing to amend the State Heritage Register listing, John told me about the current works at the site, hoping that the national parks service’s interpretation panels—then being drafted—might answer my concerns about the evidence for the hospital story being included.<sup>18</sup> The panels, right at the graveside itself, acknowledge that ‘there has ... been some doubt about exactly where Windradyne’s grave is—and even if he was buried here at all’. An explanation is offered in an effort to combine the two stories into one, in a way that is supported by the circle of people who care for the grave:

In his recently discovered letter of 1829, George Suttor wrote at length about ‘Windrodine’, and his death. He says the warrior died ‘in the hospital at Bathurst, near which place he was buried ...’ Was Suttor being deliberately vague to protect Windradyne’s resting place? We may never know the answer to these and other questions.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, the panels, installed by the NPWS later that year, affirm the visitor’s understanding that Windradyne is buried at Brucedale. The panels refer to the 1954 memorial as a ‘gravestone’, subtly changing its status from memorial to memorial marker, linking it intrinsically to the grave. The panels cite the burial of Windradyne at Brucedale (along with William’s knowledge of the Wiradjuri language, the fact that the Suttor property was not attacked when others were and George Suttor’s 1826 letter) as a key piece of evidence for the friendship. Dinawan Dyirribang is quoted as saying that ‘Windradyne formed a close friendship with this white man culminating in him being buried on the Suttor family property’.<sup>20</sup>

17 John Suttor, letter to the author, 4 February 2009.

18 John Suttor, letter to the author, 17 June 2010.

19 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, ‘A Shared History’ panel and ‘Two Centuries Later’ panel.

20 Ibid.

In the meantime, I went to the NPWS offices to look at the Voluntary Conservation Agreement documents. Although they do not include the hospital story either, the wording of the agreement links the significance of the site to the ongoing relationship between the Wiradjuri people and the Suttor family and the commemorative value of the site as much as the believed presence of Windradyne's remains, making it a robust conservation document in any eventuality.<sup>21</sup> Reassured by this, and accepting the consensus that I should leave the heritage listing as it is, I wrote to the Heritage Branch retracting my inquiry.

At the same time that layers of commemoration honouring Windradyne's memory have been laid down at Brucedale, the old Bathurst hospital site, on the corner of Bentick and Howick streets, has been transformed into a hectic supermarket precinct with little open space and constant car traffic. It is not a place that invites reflection or commemoration. When I met Dinawan Dyrribang in Bathurst in early 2011, he pointed out the site of the old hospital and explained that Windradyne had left there, tearing off his bandages, and returned to Brucedale.<sup>22</sup>

Dinawan Dyrribang has brought many local school groups to the grave site, and Gloria Rogers and others occasionally 'bring some people out' or just 'come and sit'. As well as creation stories, the landscape around Bathurst is rich with historical associations, including places associated with the 'sorry business' of the 1820s. Bill Murray, narrating Windradyne's story in 1993, said there were 15 massacre sites known to the community within a 10 mile radius of Bathurst. The LALC had acquired small blocks of land close to two of these significant places, at Wattle Flat and on the banks of the Macquarie River, but these were sold again in the 1990s. These sites, though very much in mind, remain unmarked and are seldom visited.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, over the past two decades (at least), Windradyne's grave, situated at the confluence of Windradyne's own importance in Wiradjuri heritage and the generous amicability of the Suttor family,

---

21 Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, 2, clauses A–H and Plan of Management, section 6, 'Cultural Conservation Values'.

22 Dinawan Dyrribang, in conversation with the author, 8 July 2011.

23 Pearson, Windradyne: Wiradjuri Resistance. Dinawan Dyrribang, in conversation with the author, 8 July 2011; Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010. The site of the potato farm where Wiradjuri people were killed in 1823 or 1824 is thought to be on the Macquarie River near the Japanese Gardens. There has been some discussion about extending the river parklands to commemorate Elizabeth Macquarie. However, the proposal to locate this new garden on the site of the potato farm has been highly controversial. Wayne Feebrey, in conversation with the author, 13 March 2012.

has become a place of reflection and refuge. When I asked Gloria Rogers whether Windradyne's grave was a place where people go to think about 'sorry business' as well as Windradyne himself, she replied:

Yes, of course ... we're always made to feel welcome, and treated very respectfully. So when we do go out there, it is all those things that you mentioned. We go out there to sit, to reflect, to evaluate and get strength from it I suppose, and to remember ... those Elders past and present.<sup>24</sup>

Dinawan Dyrirribang told *The Sydney Morning Herald* that visiting the grave gives him access to a past in which all the country was Aboriginal country, and that this enables him to draw strength for the present. He explained: 'I look back to when he was alive and think of what the country would have been like and the values he and his family had'.<sup>25</sup> Dinawan Dyrirribang also visits the grave with a men's group that maintains the area by weeding and cleaning up fallen branches, providing an opportunity for visiting and caring for this important part of local Wiradjuri country. A research project discussing kinship with the natural world involving Aboriginal people from various parts of New South Wales found that the opportunity to visit special places and to care for them regularly was extremely important to participants. For example, Phil Sullivan, a Ngiyampaa man based in Bourke, explained how caring for rock art at Gundabooka as part of his role as an Aboriginal Sites Officer with the national parks service connected him to significant places right across the Manara Hills, and with his own ancestors, who may have been among those who placed their hands on the rock walls to create the stencils he cares for today.<sup>26</sup> In the same way, caring for Windradyne's grave is an activity that can help Wiradjuri people to connect with country much more broadly.

For a decade, John and David Suttor continued to accompany many of the grave's visitors, opening and closing gates to keep the cattle in, and conveying those without a four-wheel-drive vehicle along the rough track to Windradyne's resting place.<sup>27</sup> Discussions with the NPWS about

<sup>24</sup> Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Debra Jopson, 'Grave a Symbol of 180 Years of Friendship', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Dinawan Dyrirribang, in conversation with the author, 26 July 2011; Bird, James and Watson, *Indigenous Kinship*, 61.

<sup>27</sup> John Suttor, in conversation with the author, 20 January 2009. This number included some local visitors, but many from further afield as well. John was particularly impressed by a group of Aboriginal visitors from Western Australia and the strength of their respect for the place, so far from their own home. One young man was left under a tree at some distance from the burial ground, as he had been forbidden to approach the grave by his elders, due to a wrong committed at home.

improving access to the site bore fruit in late 2010 and, as well as cattle grids en route to the grave, new interpretation panels have been installed, joining the traditional grave mounds, the 1954 memorial and the tree memorial planted by the Wiradjuri community in 2000. Making the place all the richer, these tributes of different eras to Windradyne combine with an occasional, invisible curdling of the air as they refuse to align.<sup>28</sup>

The 1954 memorial still sits quietly beside the grave with commemorative sediment from an earlier age embedded in its cement. In 1986, Mary Coe addressed its inscription:

The Historical Society did not understand Windradyne and his people. The Society called him 'the last chief' but this is wrong. There have been a great many Wiradjuri leaders since the days of Windradyne, right up to the present ... 'First a terror and then a friend to the settlers'—Windradyne was trying to defend his land, his people, his culture against the invading forces and in the end, if he had continued his armed resistance against them, the whites would have surely killed all his people ... Windradyne is a true patriot to the Koorie people of Australia.<sup>29</sup>

For Coe, the memorial's first two epithets were inept and unjust. However, the affinity of the 1954 memorial to a war memorial appealed to her. Her re-bestowal of the epithet 'a true patriot' on Windradyne resonated with the discourse developed by Kevin Gilbert and others around the Aboriginal patriot as a person of rare courage, vision and commitment, who could truly advance the Aboriginal 'nation'.<sup>30</sup> Commemorating Windradyne in 2000, the Wiradjuri community did not place a priority on 'correcting' the 1954 memorial. In fact, the Voluntary Conservation Agreement documents suggest that the memorial is embraced by the Wiradjuri people involved because of the vital role it has played in attesting to the grave and marking its presence. Drawing on Dinawan Dyirribang's comments on the initial site recording form, the final agreement includes a clause stating that both the Aboriginal burial sites and the 1954 memorial are of 'special significance to the Wiradjuri people'.

28 Frances and Scates discussed the way in which 'a dialogue in which one perspective [on] history challenges another' can be achieved by the addition of a memorial alongside pre-existing commemorative material. The conversation they referred to was between the La Grange memorial standing in Esplanade Reserve, Fremantle, commemorating the deaths of a group of explorers at the hands of Aboriginal people, and a new memorial, proposed in 1988, which was to give the Aboriginal side of the story, and affirm 'the right of Aboriginal people to defend their culture and their land'. Frances and Scates, 'Honouring the Aboriginal Dead', 78–79.

29 Coe, *Windradyne—A Wiradjuri Koorie* (1989), 62.

30 See Gilbert, *Because a White Man'll Never Do it*, 191–92; Gilbert, 'Pearl Gibbs', 4–9.

The management plan specifies that the memorial be conserved. Rogers feels that John Bugg's collaboration with the Suttor family to protect the grave was so important because 'it was just a stone in the middle of a paddock' at that stage, but also because the 'stone' itself was beginning to weather.<sup>31</sup> The Conservation Agreement documents, as overseen by Dinawan Dyrribang, and the recently commissioned interpretive material, also make prominent references to Windradyne as a 'patriot', as well as a leader and warrior. This creates a certain solidarity with the 1954 memorial and with Coe's story, even though the epithet looks somewhat archaic as Aboriginal commentators continue to modify the pan-Aboriginal nationalism championed by Gilbert, Michael Anderson and others in the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

Dinawan Dyrribang's notes reveal that the erection of a statue of Windradyne was considered; however, by 1997, the idea had been abandoned.<sup>33</sup> Instead, the memorial chosen by the Wiradjuri community in 2000 was a reinstatement of the traditional diamond pattern of eucalypts around the grave, which observes and honours the rising and setting sun. According to Rogers, because Windradyne's age and personal and clan totems are not known, there is no plan to carve the trees in the traditional Wiradjuri way. Rogers talked about Windradyne's trees in conjunction with the trees planted around the remains of an unknown 'old fella' recently repatriated from the Australian Museum.<sup>34</sup> The planting of trees around Windradyne's grave was, in a sense, a reclamation of Windradyne and his resting place for Wiradjuri culture and history.

---

31 Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, 2; Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010.

32 Julia Martinez found that Aboriginal people increasingly articulated multiple layers of identification through the 1980s and 1990s, not necessarily repudiating the pan-Aboriginal model, but rendering it secondary to family networks and local identifications. Martinez, 'Problematising Aboriginal Nationalism, 133–46. One of the few changes Gloria Rogers would have liked to see to the National Parks Service brochure (2011) was that its title describe Windradyne as 'warrior' rather than 'patriot'. Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010.

33 Voluntary Conservation Agreement, Brucedale, 2000, Dinawan Dyrribang, National Parks and Wildlife Service site recording form, 12 July 1995. The Draft Plan of Management, dated December 1995, in the same location, includes a reference to the statue which is crossed out and replaced in handwriting with 'a cairn on the site will be maintained' (p. 4). The Draft Plan of Management, 1997, includes no reference to a statue.

34 Gloria Rogers, in conversation with the author, 15 June 2010. Wiradjuri people have also undertaken more general plantings of local species around the graves 'in memory of Windradyne and the Wiradjuri nation'. See 'Brucedale—site of Windradyne's grave—caring for our cultural heritage', *Bush Matters* (National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW) (Spring 2002), 3.



Figure 6: Windradyne's grave conservation area in 2018.

Source: Photograph taken by author.

The trees will grow and mature and eventually die, in contrast to the concrete and brass memorial, which was intended to remain the same for all time and to give out the same message. The tree memorial is also a memorial with meanings chiefly accessible to the Wiradjuri people who planted the trees and continue to maintain them. As National Parks Ranger Gavin Newton put it, it looked like 'just a block of land'—the story was not visible to the visitor unless he or she was accompanied by a knowledge holder. The trees do not spell out a new version of history for the visitor, or directly address their relationship with the 1954 memorial or the graves themselves. In that sense, the commemorative work carried out in 2000 could be seen as 'unfinished'.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The plantings are in some ways an 'anti-memorial' in the sense that Sue-Anne Ware developed—they will change, grow and die along with memory, instead of attempting to freeze memory in time. Sue-Anne Ware, 'Contemporary Anti-Memorials and National Identity in the Victorian Landscape' (2004), quoted in Ashton and Hamilton, 'Places of the Heart', 8. Batten and Batten, 'Memorialising the Past', 107–12; Gavin Newton, National Parks Bathurst Area, in conversation with the author, 31 May 2010.

The interpretive material prepared under the auspices of the NPWS in 2010 takes on the task of articulating the story of Windradyne and his grave in a way that educates the new visitor and supports the memory work of regular visitors. The panels within the conservation area tell a broader story of Wiradjuri life in the three rivers country before invasion and, in answer to the 1954 memorial, point to the survival of the Wiradjuri as a ‘strong people ... proud of their heritage and how they have adapted to massive changes in their way of life’. The panels give an account of Windradyne’s life in the context of the wars, and support the site’s function as a *de facto* commemorative place for massacre and sorry business, by telling the story of the mutual bloodshed of 1823–24. The signs installed at the entrance to Brucedale prepare the intending visitor to be embraced by a shared place of memory; they welcome the visitor to Windradyne’s grave—‘a special place for two cultures’—on behalf of the ‘Wiradyuri people and the Suttor family’. The panels develop the theme of shared history and shared knowledge by quoting extensively from Dinawan Dyirribang and Coe, along with ‘Colo’ and W. H. Suttor.<sup>36</sup>

The friendship between Windradyne and William is honed to a fine point, focused on the night encounter of 1824. This dramatic fulcrum looks back to the advice of George Suttor to his son to ‘treat the Wiradyuri with respect’, and forward to the ongoing good relations that saw Windradyne buried at Brucedale. Meditating on this ‘unique’ encounter, the visitor is asked to consider whether ‘a different history might have been possible’, presumably one in which mutual respect and compromise prevented bloodshed. While this is a viewpoint from amid the conflicts themselves, it is also a point of stillness, a moment of calm amid the storm. The panels depict the Suttor family as a neutral party in the conflicts of the 1820s, claiming ‘although the Wiradyuri wars boiled around the Suttors, they were unscathed’.<sup>37</sup> As much as this suggests a ‘liberal fantasy’ (i.e., that goodwill might have prevented dispossession), it is also in keeping with the meaning of Windradyne’s grave as a place of rest. As visitors approach Windradyne’s grave, they are informed that they are entering a ‘quiet place’. The Voluntary Conservation Agreement has created an island of calm among the landscape of ownership and

36 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, panels titled ‘People of the Three Rivers—Wiradyuri life’, ‘Wiradyuri Wars’ and ‘Windradyne, a Wiradyuri patriot’; entry sign installed at the gate of Brucedale, Peel Road, 2010.

37 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, ‘A Shared History’ panel.

dispossession. As a place where a range of voices can be heard on an equal footing, Windradyne's grave is also a place of calm amid the storm of history-making.

David Roberts described the Bells Falls Gorge massacre story as a 'nut without a kernel'—so much of its detail has been lost over time that it cannot be fleshed out and it remains on the threshold between myth and history.<sup>38</sup> Though this story of friendship is comparatively well documented, it too has lost much of its meat. The story's substance could almost be said to exist in the *feeling* between the sparse constellation formed by the mercy extended to the Suttor family and their property by the Wiradjuri warriors, William's language skills, George Suttor's 1826 letter and Windradyne's burial at Brucedale, as much as in these factual pillars themselves. In recent years, the friendship has chiefly been in the telling. John and David Suttor, Dinawan Dyrribang, Gloria Rogers and others tell Windradyne's story, and the story of his good relations with the Suttor family, with a conviction based in history, but which extends beyond history. The feeling at this place, Windradyne's grave, is significant to the story whether or not Windradyne's remains lie there or elsewhere. Who taught William the Wiradjuri language and how proficient was he? To what extent was William adopted into Wiradjuri networks and ways of thinking? What did William and Windradyne say to each other on that fateful night in 1824? How did Windradyne and other Wiradjuri people understand this friendship? How much did the relationship change when William married and as European settlement on the Bathurst Plains became more established and more populous across the late 1820s and 1830s? Did some local Wiradjuri people maintain links with country at Brucedale beyond the Suttor family's understanding? These and many other questions about the overlapping histories of the Suttor family and the local Wiradjuri people are hushed at Windradyne's grave. They are not silenced; instead, as William and Windradyne look into each other's eyes through the thick air of a dangerous night, and as Windradyne and his companions lie in the earth, they are calmed.

---

38 Roberts, 'Bells Falls Massacre', 626.

This text is taken from *The Lives of Stories: Three Aboriginal-Settler Friendships*, by Emma Dortins, published 2018 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.