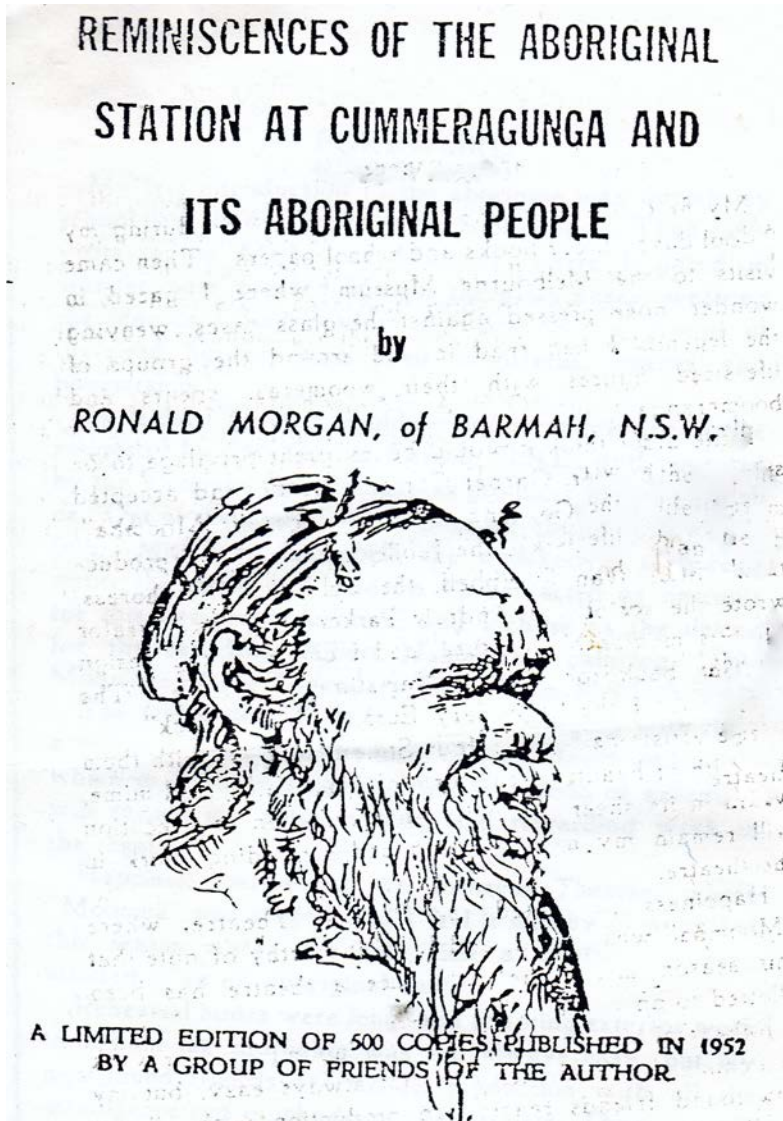


**Appendix One: Ronald Morgan's
(1952) *Reminiscences of the
Aboriginal Station at Cummeragunga
and its Aboriginal People***



Introduction to Papa's Book

Throughout my life I grew up hearing the stories of Papa Ron Morgan from my darling mum Brenda who was so proud of her father Ron. I was only a little girl when Papa passed away, but he has always been a powerful 'presence' in my life – Thanks to mum, I have grown up with a strong 'sense' of who this amazing man was, his compassion, wisdom, gentleness and quiet strength as a very proud Yorta Yorta man.

As mentioned in our earlier story, Papa Ron was an avid writer, always writing letters to newspaper editors such as the *Argus* and others, to raise his concerns about the plight of his people. So, when my mum was a young teen, her father sent her on a long bike ride from Moira Station to Barmah shop to buy him a little case in which he could put all his 'writings' for safe keeping.

Looking back I remember as a child, frequently going through that case, reading over and over its contents – many old letters Papa had written to those newspapers and anyone else who would take note – and he received many knockback letters from editors thanking him politely, but refusing to print them. Sadly, over time, wear and tear has seen much of this case's contents disappear. But today, it still holds something very special – the handwritten manuscript of a book Papa wrote titled: *Reminiscences of the Aboriginal Station at Cummeragunga and its Aboriginal People*. Papa wrote this book, sharing his thoughts about life on Cummera, and had it published by a group of 'friends' in 1952. Please refer to the ANU Press website for a copy of the newspaper article about Papa's own book launch, from the *Argus* 4 April 1953.

When he passed away, he passed this little case and its contents, on to mum, who then sat with me one day during 2007 and in an emotional conversation, she passed it on to me, to treasure as she has. I was so very proud to be given such a deeply moving responsibility, and took this on wholeheartedly in honour of both my precious mother and Papa.

As holder of Papa's case and its precious contents, my mother lived with the dream of someday re-publishing this beautiful story. So now as we complete our book, and I hold this manuscript in my hands, my mum's dream is at the forefront of our minds.

We had first made an effort to have his book re-published in its own right. But with advice from our publisher, it has now been agreed, that the quickest and surest way of seeing his work in print is to now include it in our book. This is not what we would have chosen or liked to see as our end result. In some ways it feels as though our book has swallowed Papa's book up, like an afterthought. Please know that that is not our intent at all. Not for one moment.

Our intent is to see that my mum's dream is fulfilled, and Papa's story can live on and be accessible to our family, friends, community, future generations and the broader readership universally. Ultimately, now, at the end of our journey, both Grampa and Papa's stories have been shared here with the great love, respect and admiration we have for them, shining through. That is all that matters.

So, here is Papa's book -- as you read it, picture him sitting by candlelight, at the kitchen table, earnestly writing his many, many letters to newspapers, while his little daughter Brenda played on the floor at his feet, her eyes shining bright from the flicker of the candle, as she every-so-often looked up to her dear old dad. And then picture him still writing, ten years later, as he sat down with an old exercise book, to pen this story you are about to read. On the surface it may seem like a tiny pebble of a story – when in fact, it really is pure gold. Enjoy!

Robynne Nelson

Reminiscences of the Aboriginal Station at Cummeragunga and its Aboriginal People

Ronald Morgan of Barmah, NSW

Foreword

My first introduction to the Aborigine was during my school days, in our books and school papers. Then came visits to the Melbourne Museum, where I gazed in wonder, nose pressed against the glass cases, weaving the legends I had read in and around the groups of life-sized figures with their woomeras, spears and boomerangs.

Little did I think it would be my great privilege to be suggested by Mr Garnet Carroll OBE and accepted by the Victorian Government, as producer of "Moomba" or "Out of the Dark", the Jubilee all-aboriginal production. Miss Jean Campbell, the well-known authoress, wrote the script and Andrew Parker acted as narrator for this memorable venture, and I chose as the design for the backdrop Albert Namatjira's painting, "The Monoliths of the Legendary Euro, Palm Paddock".

The artists came from four States, bringing with them a wealth of beauty in the form of song, dance and mime, which in its sheer simplicity and perfection of execution will remain my most exciting and rewarding work in the theatre.

Happiness permeated the Princess Theatre, where "Moomba" was staged and I feel it worthy of note that this season marks the only time a theatre has been allotted to an all-aboriginal cast.

Rehearsal hours were long, and adapting exterior work to behind the footlights was not always easy, but my new-found friends reacted to production with all the intelligence and quickness of old troupers. These lovable "old" Australians have their own talented way of executing their various arts, as the widely-proclaimed success of "Moomba" proved.

The preservation and encouragement of all aboriginal art is necessary if we are to speak with pride of Australian culture; indeed, we cannot use the words Australian arts without their inclusion.

The idea of this publication was Mr AE O'Connor's. Mr O'Connor, a Swan Hill resident, is a sincere friend of Ronald Morgan, whose work is the first of its subject and style I have had the pleasure of reading. The author decided, wisely I feel, not to have it edited. I warmly commend his story to all those who wish to learn more of the Australian aboriginal, and I hope that the numerous legends he relates will also find their way into print for, as he says of his own people, "The aboriginal has much to be proud and thankful for".

Irene Mitchell

Melbourne Little Theatre

May, 1952

Reminiscences of the Aboriginal Station at Cummeragunga and its Aboriginal People

Ronald Morgan of Barmah, NSW

Being a descendant of the Aborigines, one born and brought up on the Aboriginal Station Cummeragunga, I take up my pen to write, with feelings somewhat of a mixture of pride and regret, reminiscences of the place of my birth and its people as told to me by older Aborigines, by my parents, and to the best of my ability as my years permit.

My Parents

Firstly my mother Elizabeth Walker was born of aboriginal parents, being of a native tribe known as the Yullaba Yullaba. This tribe's territory extended from the Moira Lakes on the Murray River, upstream beyond what is now the town of Tocumwal. Although my grandparents lived in their primitive ways, my mother started work at an early age and spent much of her time on some of the earlier pastoral properties. She died at the age of sixty seven and was buried at Cummeragunga in the year 1925. Her father Edward Walker was recognised as the last King or Chief of his tribe and lived in his primitive ways to be a very old man. He was eventually brought into the Aboriginal Station Cummeragunga where he died in the year 1897. There were many stories told by him, both of and before the coming of the white man to these parts, and in turn told to me by my mother. Of this family there were but two children, being my mother and her brother, Frederick Walker, he and his wife Sarah being the first married couple to live on the Maloga Mission, a place founded by a Mr and Mrs Daniel Matthews, of which I am going to write very shortly, for it is a marked incident and chapter in the lives of many Aborigines. But firstly I would like to say something of my father for, as told to me, he encouraged many of the Aborigines to come and live on Maloga, to give up their ways of living, and learn of the white man. He built many of the dwellings on Maloga as well as on other aboriginal stations of later times.

My Father

My father, Bagot Morgan, was born of an aboriginal mother, his father being European. He was born on the Moira Station, one of the oldest pastoral properties in the Riverina, in the year 1849. Most of his childhood days he spent with his

mother's native tribe roaming the wilds. This tribe was known as the Yorta Yorta and joined the territory of the Yullaba tribe at the Moira Lakes. Its territory however extended down the River Murray to what is now the town of Echuca and out to join some of the Goulburn River tribes. This tribe was reputed to be the largest of these parts and its language was definitely the last language of the Aborigines to be spoken hereabouts. Going back to work at an early age on the station of his birth, my father became a good stock and horseman and in later years turned his hands to many occupations. From Moira he went to work on Madowla Park, another pastoral property some few miles further down on the Victorian side of the River Murray. It was while he was working on this property that he came in contact with Mr Daniel Matthews, who had selected a property on the New South Wales side of the Murray. Telling my father of his intention of forming a Mission to gather in the Aborigines for moral and Christian teaching, he asked if he would assist him and encourage some of his aboriginal friends to come and live there. My father promised to do whatever he could in his spare time or such time as he could get off from his employer, a Mr Kinnear, which he did. The first couple taken into the Mission to live as I have previously mentioned was Frederick and Sarah Walker with their baby son Herbert. Their dwelling was just a crude bark hut built by my father in the year 1874 and so the first Aboriginal Mission of these parts was formed. The photo of this bark hut, the origin of the first Mission Maloga which was eventually to become Cummeragunga, I still have in my possession. My father lived to the age of eighty five years and was well known and respected throughout the district. A marked indication of this was shown by the many who paid their last tributes of respect when he was laid to rest in the year 1934 at Cummeragunga.

The Moira Lakes

Having made mention twice at this point of the Moira Lakes, perhaps it may be appropriate to say something of them before I pass on to speak of the Maloga Mission. These lakes are situated within four miles of the Barmah township and are well known to holiday makers for many spend their vacations fishing and shooting in their locality. These lakes run parallel with the Murray on both the Victorian and New South Wales sides of the river. The River Murray at this point is very narrow. It was referred to by people of earlier times as the Narrow River. In later years it has been called the Narrows. The lakes on both sides of the river were known to the Aborigines and older people as the Moira Lakes but in recent years those in Victoria have been called the Barmah Lakes, while those in new South Wales still retain the original name of Moira Lakes, derived from the sheep station of that name, a place that I have previously mentioned. The appearance of the lakes and their surroundings, no doubt, changes according to seasonal conditions but nevertheless it is a picturesque spot and even today there

are hundreds of wild birds on the waters and Emus and Kangaroos, although rare can still be seen. Leaving the lakes and travelling down the Murray about two miles, we would notice on the New South Wales side of the river a long green-grassed plain. This is known as Algabohnyah. There can be no doubt that in years gone by this plain looked very beautiful, for the word Algabohnyah was often used by the Aborigines when speaking of some young miss blessed with the fortune of being good looking and handsome. The place itself was very often referred to by old Aborigines as Miss Algabohnyah. By way of interest, a horse named Algabohnyah and owned by Mr Maloney of Barmah, raced with success at Melbourne some years ago. The same gentleman raced another by the aboriginal name Dunupna, meaning the Black Swan. Both these names are of the Yorta Yorta tribe. I have seen the holiday boat, Coonawarra, pass by many times and have learned that Coonawarra also means the Black Swan in another of the aboriginal languages. There were hundreds of different languages spoken by the Aborigines and of this I hope to be able to say something later.

As we travel downstream, although we find no other places still known by their aboriginal names, there are points to interest the reader. For after leaving Algabohnyah we have not travelled far before we find the river running a straight south course for about half a mile. Suddenly it takes a circle and runs easterly and therefore this place is called the Circular. It is also known as a landing, a name given to places where the giant gum logs are hauled to in readiness to be loaded on to barges and towed by paddle steamers to the saw-mills of Echuca.

The next place of interest would be the Bough-yard although there is now no mark to indicate the particular spot and it is probably known only to the older people. It has an historical interest, for there the Aborigines built a yard of boughs and brambles in the dry months of the year and in flood time they would go out in their canoes and, spotting a shoal of fish, drive them as one would a herd of cattle into the yard already prepared, where they would be a much easier target for the spears.

As we leave the Bough-yard and travel down the river we see on the Victorian side the Barmah Creek which, in high river, is a vast stretch of water but, in dry times, is littered with logs and snags. Then we pass the First Creek. We are drawing very close to the Barmah Ferry but before we reach the Ferry there is one other place to be mentioned. It was called by old hands the Bunyip Hole. How did it come by that name? I have heard many speak of the Bunyip. Some people believe such an animal, whatever it was, existed; others think it was a superstitious belief of the Aborigines. For my part, I believe that there was such an animal. If asked to describe it I would say it was like nothing so much as a pig, that its habits were shy and harmless, and to my way of thinking it is now extinct. After this mention of the Bunyip we shall pass on down stream and, taking the next short bend, we find ourselves at the Barmah Ferry. And now to return to my story.

Maloga Mission

Perhaps one might best describe the Maloga Mission by the inscription on the back of the old photo of eighty years ago I before mentioned and so I will here quote it.

The Maloga Mission

INTERDENOMINATIONAL

Founded by Mr and Mrs Daniel Matthews

June 1847

Branches: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia.

Objects: The social and moral elevation of the blacks in all the colonies.

 The protection and care of young children.

 Training and Christian teaching in Village Settlements.

 Supported by voluntary subscriptions. No salaried officers. No official collectors.

 Daniel Matthews Director. Headquarters, Argyle Villa, Berry Street, Carlton.

It is obvious that Maloga developed into a large Mission in a few years. There were people brought in from near and far, even from as far away as Sydney. There were many marriages took place at Maloga. My parents, not being married until after Maloga was formed, were married there in the year 1878. Most of the marriages performed there were by one a Rev. Johnstone. There were also many children born at Maloga. My eldest sister Lydia (Mrs Charles) was born there in the year 1880 and as a child of six came to Cummeragunga where she spent the best of her days. Like many others of our people, she left the station near the closing years of her life, that were spent in Shepparton and Mooroopna where she died in the year 1950 in her seventieth year, her remains being brought back for interment at Cummeragunga where she was followed twelve months later by her aged and loving husband (William Charles) who was also a Maloga-ite. Of the people born at Maloga, only but a few remain. But one finds in speaking to any one of them, the thoughts of happier bygone years. For instance Mr Herb Walker only son and surviving child of the first residents of Maloga, one who has always taken an interest in the missions and their works; this dear old man who has lived an active life up until a few weeks ago but now is in failing health, oft-times tells of past incidents. His face beams with a smile as he speaks of happier bygone years. And there are times when tears of remorse roll down his cheeks as he speaks of later years and what has happened to his people, the Aborigines. One meets another such person in Mrs Kate McDonald.

This dear old Christian lady receives a pension and lives quietly in the Picola district. During many of our conversations, she has shown me several photos of the Maloga Mission and its people. One might say that her collection is a history in itself and a good indication of how Maloga did progress. Although we still have a few of the Maloga-ites among us, time shows that the eighty years are upon them and so we cannot expect to have them much longer, but as often as I think of Maloga, I think of it as it was told to me by my mother. It was run on strictly religious principles. Each and every day started with morning prayers, asking God's blessing upon it; likewise Church services in the evenings. Sunday was strictly observed; no work whatsoever, no matter how small, being done on the Sabbath, but all work being done in readiness on Saturdays. No one ever wanted to violate the rules and they found ample time for their usual course of work and recreation. I have always found down through the years that the founders, Mr and Mrs Matthews, won the hearts of the people and have always been spoken of highly by the Aborigines concerned. However Maloga was not without its sorrows. Many of our aboriginal people died there. Sad though it seems, there is no mark or indication of that burial ground for it has been obliterated by the ploughs of more recent owners and fortune hunters. Before I pass on to Cummeragunga, there is another incident of note I would like to mention for it, too, concerns many Aborigines. This, however, is the one time Aboriginal Station Warangesta on the Murrumbidgee, for it was not long after Maloga was formed that a party under Messrs Matthews and Gribble set out across country to build houses on Warangesta. These houses were built by Aborigines, two of whom I know of, one being my father, the other the late James Turner. After this work was completed my father and some others of the party returned to Maloga. There were others who stayed on at Warangesta. James Turner being one who settled there, where he eventually brought up his family. And from what information I can gather, he was the last Aborigine to live there. For Warangesta is like many more of our Aboriginal Stations and doesn't exist any more. Now let us go back to Maloga and, though it's going to be no easy matter, on to Cummeragunga.

Cummeragunga

After about thirteen years at Maloga, the people were taken in hand by the State Government and were removed some two miles further north to a spot known as Ulunja. Here they were under the care of one a Mr Bellenger. The chosen spot proved to be unsuitable for it was some distance from the river and the water supply was found to be inadequate for so many people and so another move northwards found them settled on what is now Cummeragunga in the year 1888. At its origin, this place comprised a large area of land, some thousands of acres of virgin soil, being made up, as it is of rich high country, with sand hills that pass through a portion. It is topped off by having the Murray flowing from

one of its boundary's end to the other. Thus one find the timber that grows there of a mixed variety. There is the black and grey box, the yellow jack, Murray pine and, along the river flats, the old red gums. As I draw a mental picture of how I can first remember it; I often think of what it was. To look today one would never imagine that it ever existed. But there was wealth in it. If only this land could be cleared and cultivated one would not find a better property in the Riverina. But how was such a huge task to be accomplished? This problem was duly solved. The portion of the station known as Ulunja was measured into blocks and given to the more able men of the place to clear and work for themselves. The men worked hard clearing and fencing in their allotted blocks, receiving the station rations while doing so. In between times they would go to the shearing and other seasonal work outside the station. Working untiringly as they did, many got their land cleared and had the pleasure of having a crop off it. There were still others who reached the stage of clearing their land but never had the opportunity of getting a crop. Something unforeseen was discovered. Having no horses or implements of their own, what the Station had were insufficient to supply the needs of all. What was to be done? This problem, like the first, was also solved. The Board, then known as the Aborigines Protection Board, decided to work the land on a community system, the revenue going to the upkeep of the Station. This was eventually done, much to the resentment of the Aborigines, and has been one of the life-long grievances of Cummeragunga. Most of the men who held these blocks have passed on to the Great Beyond. There are only three living at the present time, these being Mr Herb Walker of Cummeragunga, Mr Harry Atkinson of Echuca, Mr Willie Murray of Balranald. This portion of the Station of two thousand acres was first leased out in the early twenties, and is still in private hands in one a Mr Wally Smart. I would like to mention here that, although Cummeragunga had two managers since leaving Maloga, one a Mr Bellenger, who I before mentioned, and another in Mr Pridham. I prefer to carry on from the time of Mr Harris. For it was then that the farm block concerned was taken over by the Aborigines Protection Board and there began the most active and financially prosperous time in the history of Cummeragunga. The Station at this time had a large population, and, although the majority of the menfolk went to work outside the Station, it was customary to come back for weekend or other recess. For it was home and offered other amenities. Everyone was eligible for medical attention. An appointed doctor of the neighbouring town Echuca visited the Station once weekly. There was a dispensary on the Station. There were two stores, one a sale store where residents could buy their supply of both groceries and drapery, at cost price, and a free issue store where rations were issued once weekly. All children and many of the adult population received rations. Meat was issued once daily for the Station raised both its own cattle and sheep. They had a milking herd and on an average milked from twenty to thirty cows, there being a regular daily supply of milk. There was a school

where the syllabus was good and children were educated under a very capable teacher, the late Mr Thos S James, an amiable coloured gentleman who devoted his life and knowledge to the Aborigines of Cummeragunga, for as well as being school teacher he acted as physician and did the dispensary work on the Station, a work that was highly appreciated by the Aborigines as well as the medical advisers of the place in Drs Smith and Stoney respectively. He came among the people at Maloga, then on to Cummeragunga where, after a long and valued career, he retired in the year 1921. The people were not without their recreation as in later years. For there were many good organisers of sport of both sexes among the Aborigines and they were responsible for promoting many kinds of entertainment on the place. Such functions were often patronised by many of the white population of the surrounding district. They held processions in which were shown by the dress of the characters much skill and patience of the womenfolk. They held concerts of various kinds and dancing. In athletic sports, they had a cricket team which had the honour of holding many trophies won in local district competitions; likewise their football team. This sport seems to be the one they took to very seriously and, as far as the team was concerned, it was widely known. There were also many individual players who showed a lot of prominence in many of the country teams in this particular game known as Australian Rules Football. During Xmas they staged a Sports Carnival. There were bike riding, wood chops and foot running and other athletic events, for Cummeragunga produced many noted athletes. Of these I hope to be able to say something later. But here I would prefer to go back to the more important working of the place at this period. Seeing that the manager's time was fully occupied, by book-keeping and general management of the place, it was decided to appoint an overseer to look after the agricultural part of the work. This position, however, was secured by one a Mr William Wilkinson of Moama. Very soon they had four teams of horses, new ploughs, disc cultivators, drill combines – in fact, all the farming implements required. It seemed very different from some of the old methods I have seen, such as the sower with his bag of wheat strapped in front of him as he plodded up and down the furrows casting the seed one way and then the other by hand, and other primitive methods. However, Aborigines working under the newly appointed overseer cultivated some hundreds of acres of land and in the harvest seasons it was common to see some hundreds of bags of wheat stacked on the river banks waiting to be removed by cargo steamer down stream to Echuca. While wheat-growing was the major industry, they raised both cattle and sheep for commercial as well as for the Station use. This was the procedure for many years under Messrs Harris and Wilkinson. But even before we say goodbye to Mr Harris we remember that the taking away of the farm block caused friction between the people and manager and there were always strained relations between the Aborigines who believed they were exploited and those in authority. Mr Harris gave long service on Cummeragunga where he brought up his family of five children, and

resigned his position there in the year 1910. He was succeeded by a Mr Bruce Ferguson, although, before I could ever remember, this gentleman had previous experience as a young man book-keeping on Cummeragunga. After leaving there he married a Miss Clara Pridham, a daughter of one of the earlier managers of the Station. And now they were back in their new roles as Manager and Matron, as the manager's wife is known with their daughter Brucinda, who later acted as assistant school teacher. With Mr Wilkinson still acting overseer, the general working of the place was carried on in much the same way. But it was not long before the first signs of decadence began to show in every quarter. After about three years or so came drought. Next came war. Cummeragunga and its people, like others, suffered. Fewer people received rations, causing more to go out to strive for a living. The younger people were being looked upon more as aliens and a nuisance to the place, rather than an asset, and as time went on there was more and more friction between the manager and the residents. The rules and regulations of the place were being put more into force. People of all ages were summoned to Court more often for breaches of the law or Mission regulations. After a gaol sentence or a fine which usually varied from two pounds up to ten, the offender, more times than not, received a ticket of expulsion. Although there were several cases apart from drunkenness at these times, drinking began to show prominence and, as the years passed, became slowly but surely worse. I am not prepared to offer any reason for such turns of events for they were beyond my comprehension. But I will say, while strong drink has caused deterioration among our Aborigine people, there are many other things that have contributed to the unpleasant state we find ourselves in today. Expulsions from the homes have been detrimental. I have no intention of giving the details of every manager that has come to Cummeragunga. For since the time of Mr Ferguson, we have had fifteen managers of various types. We have had those who preferred to come with their Bible and those that favoured their bullets and batons, each one believing as he came that he would in his way achieve a revival and bring things back (to use one of the manager's expressions) to their former glory. But they did not take long to find out that their castles were built on old foundations and soon crumbled away. There was unrest on Cummeragunga for many years. The Aborigines had a taste of civilisation and they knew too civilisation was coming in on them. They knew too, that not far away was something people called democracy. Were they enjoying this on the Station, with all its rules and regulations, perhaps under a manager who could not control his temper or one who would become vindictive at the least provocation to some or perhaps to all the people they were there to take care of? The climax came in the year 1939. The people rose in a body and shifted into Victoria. There was one John Paton cited as their leader. Unfortunately they had no leader or anyone else to state their grievances, for such grievances had accumulated all through the years. Each and every person had at some time or another found he was at difference with the regulations or

the manager. On being asked what they wanted, their reply was, Citizens rights. They were told they had them. If they did, it's about all a good many did have. Those with larger families came back to the Station. Being unsettled as they were, it was only a matter of coming and going periodically. There were others who, instead of returning to the place, went further afield. Many such people had spent the best of their years on Cummeragunga, but sadly were only brought back to be buried eventually with the ones that were so dear to them in this life. What of Cummeragunga, this place that once numbered its population in hundreds, now with its population about thirty at the most, a place and a people that have been a centre of controversy for this last three years? And while I am on this subject, I will say that a lot of the controversy reflects on the outcome of expulsion. And many decent living Aborigines who, living in poor circumstances, perhaps through adverse conditions or misfortune, are only looked upon as exiled for wrongdoing in some way cut loose or escaped from Governmental control.

Reading through the pages of the monthly aboriginal paper Dawn, we find these words by one Miss Ruby Ewan, Secretary for the Protection of Aborigine Race. "It would be very unusual for a white person to be deliberately unkind to another person because he has dark skin". These words sound logically true, but let us go a little further and investigate some of the controversies and complaints regarding the Aborigine and what will one find? Either those concerned have had some difference with a small section of the Aborigines or even perhaps some individual. Rather than settle as a personal matter, for the Aborigine may not always be the offending party, such incidents or happenings are fastened on to the Aborigines in general in which cases can only be classed as racial and not colour prejudice, which is far worse and can only spell disaster for the Aborigine. Let us not overlook the fact that there are people among the community who show a more humane feelings toward the Aborigine and have needed no prompting to voice their feeling towards them, while there are many more who are only luke warm and prefer to remain neutral.

Cummeragunga and its people have a good deal to be proud of for living even as they have been for the last sixty five years in semi-segregation, there have been some fine types come of their people who have been intelligent and proved they can adapt themselves to various kinds of employments and have been found to be efficient. Likewise in the world of sport they have produced some of the best as I before mentioned in football and in footrunning it has a record that I do not think could be equalled by any town in Australia. For it has claim to such men as the one time world's champion, Lynch Cooper. Stan Charles, a runner-up at Stawell, Doug Nicholls, the late Eddie Briggs. this too reminds us of our old-time champion in the late Alf Morgan, a winner of the Botany Bay Handicap, a race equivalent to the Stawell Gift of today, also the late Bobby McDonald, famous as the introducer of the crouch start in footrunning. These

latter named are interred at Cummeragunga with many more of our pioneers who have justly earned their places in the memory and hearts of us all. There are also our boys who served in the first world war. I can remember many schoolmates who answered the call. Some returned home and two at least lie at rest with our pioneers at Cummeragunga. What is going to happen to this place? Perhaps share the same fate as Maloga and other of our aboriginal places and burial grounds.

There is no doubt that our aboriginal languages are lost to us of the younger generation, especially where our stations have been in the more heavily populated districts. I would say Cummeragunga was one of the most noticeable in this respect. This is not very surprising for as I before mentioned that there were people brought in from many places to this Station and so there were people there whose languages were not the same and so it was found far easier to concentrate on English, which they did. However, there were also many of the local Aborigines of the Yullaba and the Yorta tribes, who often spoke in their own respective language. This seems one of the great mysteries in the aboriginal languages to me, for in many instances they understood the language of a strange tribe, but could not speak it, consequently they carried on a conversation in their own respective languages. I have been told that much of this came about through marriage, for it is well known that young women of marriageable age were given into tribes of hundreds of miles apart. In this way the languages became known. Even though civilisation seems to have come in quickly, it is not so very long since we have had some of our very old Aborigines in our midst. I can remember many such old people, and although we cannot speak any of our aboriginal languages fluently we have had the pleasure of learning the meaning of many aboriginal words and phrases. Also we have learned from our aboriginal people themselves that they had their customs and beliefs that were of a high order. The myths and legends of the Aborigines many such as were told to me for bedtime stories even though they were of some wild bird or animal, something primitive, still none lacked a moral background or teaching. The place of the happening would be some spot known to the listener and one where the events related would most likely happen. Such is the story, of the greedy old man who was turned into a water rat, and which explains why the water rat can open the mussel without smashing or damaging the shell. To repeat this story as it was told to me, it goes:

Many years ago the water rat was an old man who was very lazy. He would not hunt for his food but depended on what others brought home. Even then he would expect to have the best and fattest of the game for he loved eating fat. At last the rest of the tribe got tired of him and turned him out to do for himself. However, there was a young man, his nephew, who felt sorry for the older man and went with him. But the old man did not improve. In fact, he got worse and depended on the young fellow to go out and get food for them both, while he did

nothing but sleep all day. The young man, although very fond of the old uncle, began to get discouraged and often pondered over some way of curing the latter of his lazy habits. It so happened one day that the young fellow was luckier than usual in his hunting for he had not gone far from their camp when he came upon a flock of emus. With cunning stealth he got very close to them and speared the bird of his choice, a nice young fat bird. He hastened to the camp to get the old man to help him to carry it home. As emu was the old man's favourite meat he was overjoyed and though it was hard for him he went and helped the boy to carry it to the camp. When they got home the boy said to the old man, "Uncle", as he called him, "if you go up to Algabohnyah and get some mussel shells I will give you all the fat off this bird, for we cannot open it until we get some shells". So the old man, thinking of the wonderful fat he was going to get, set off on his six mile journey. In the meantime the boy, knowing where there were mussel shells much closer, soon got some and had the bird cleaned and on to cook. As it took the old man a long time, the boy became anxious about him, and climbed up on to a high tree stump to see if he could see him coming. After a time he saw the old man returning in the distances. Then suddenly a thought struck him. As the bird was about cooked he climbed down and cut off all the fat and some of the flesh and climbed back on to the tree stump with it. He then came down again and got some of the red hot stones which had been used to cook the bird, and climbed the tree stump once more to await the old man, whom he could see coming not very far away. When the old man arrived and saw that the boy was missing, he called out for him. The boy sat quiet for some time but finally revealed his whereabouts. The old man was overjoyed and enquired immediately for the fat of the emu. The boy said "I have it up here, Uncle. Come climb up". The old man made several attempts, but was unable to climb the stump, and he called to the boy to drop him down the fat. "But it will fall in the dirt and be wasted", said the boy. "But I'll tell you what. If you stand with your mouth open as wide as you can manage it I will drop the fat into it". The old man being so anxious to get the precious fat at all cost said, "Alright, my son". So the boy took the fat and also one of the red hot stones he had carried up and rolled the fat around it. This he dropped into the old man's mouth, and the fat, melting as it came down ran down into his throat. He ran as fast as he could to the river for the fat now started to blaze, and on reaching the river he plunged headlong into it, taking a huge mouthful of water as he did, and immediately turned into a water rat. And so as the story goes, the water rat can blow out terrific heat, and thereby is able to open the shell of the mussel without difficulty. And thus as our old Aborigines would say, for being greedy the old man was turned into a water rat.

To return to the subject of the language, there is an incident I would mention I had one day with a gentleman who seemed interested in the Aborigines. Firstly, he asked me if I could get him some boomerangs. I promised him I would. Then he asked if I knew the aboriginal name for bread. I told him, the only aboriginal name I knew of was "birrit". I got a bit of a surprise when my friend told me he thought I was telling him fibs. On asking him what made him think so, "Well", he said, "Because they did not have any bread". No, but as civilisation came in, such things came with it, and the Aborigines gave it a name as it appeared to them. This is shown quite clearly by the word Maloga, or rater, as pronounced by the Aborigines. Maloga, meaning sand. On seeing sugar, which looked much the same in substance, they called it Maloja. the same happened in regard to many aboriginal names of places given to describe their appearance, such as Algabohnyah, meaning a long stretch of green plain. I often wonder if this plain was always green in the bygone years, for there are times that I have seen it dry. The primitive Aborigine or an Aborigine who inherits some of the good qualities of his ancestors, has much to be proud and thankful for. For the Aborigine is of a quiet disposition. This quietness gives him self control and contentment so often shown on the pleasant smiling face of an old Aborigine. This self control has been beneficial to them in the work and, I dare say, sport they prefer to follow and become famous for, such as station stockmen, handling and breaking in of young horses, tracking, boxing, and many other things where such calm collectiveness is an advantage and essential. But what of assimilation? This, however, is inevitable from every point of view, for let us not forget that assimilation began from the entry of white men to our shores. To ameliorate or to deteriorate, one can only conjecture and strive for the best. To assimilate favourably, one needs to be intelligent. The Aborigines have proved to be intelligent. Knowledge, either good or bad, comes with assimilation. A good standard of education is certainly an asset and makes one's way much more easily fitted for a higher level. Next is physical ability, which is a very necessary factor, and one's willingness to use it to the best of one's ability. A person's disposition is important, not overlooking the fact that we Aborigines are only human, with feelings hurt by words or by deeds, humans that have come a long way in a short time, for our Grandparents were the true children of Nature and lived as naturists in the purest and simplest of innocence.