

**From Colonisation to My Generation: An  
Aboriginal Historian's Family History Research  
Past to Present**

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Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University

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## DECLARATION

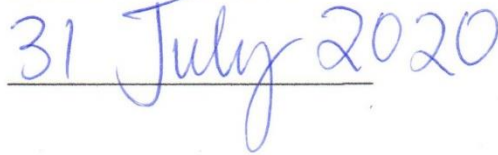
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Date:



## ABSTRACT

I am an Aboriginal historian, and this thesis is a narrative of my personal research journey. Figuratively speaking, I travelled into the past as a *genealogist* and traced my four Aboriginal grandparents' family lines to as far back as I could go in the written historic record, which was just after the settlement of northern New South Wales. But it was the *historian* who slowly returned from the past to the present, unearthing interesting, turbulent and surprising histories to be placed within the context of Australian and Aboriginal history. The scope of this thesis spans five generations and examines my ancestors' lived experience, from witnessing the continuing encroachment of white settlement, to segregation on Australian Government Aborigines reserves, to the control of the Aborigines Protection Board, to the eventual exodus to the city, to radicalisation and the fight for land rights, to Aboriginal advancement and creative expression, and onwards. The connection of this past chronology to present times culminates with my own historian's *ego-histoire*, thus creating an unbroken umbilical and historical connection to time immemorial.

The key contribution of this thesis is the disclosure of copious amounts of (previously unaccessed) archives. These Aborigines Protection Board (later the Aborigines Welfare Board) archives detail the reprehensible maltreatment of Aboriginal people and the astounding incompetence of these Australian Government bodies in their destructive determination to control Aboriginal lives. Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation files reveal that government surveillance of my family members did not end after the Aborigines Welfare Board was abolished in 1969. The primary achievement of this thesis is the illumination of the long-term struggle of Aboriginal people to wrest a living free from Australian Government control and surveillance. To finally live in this country on equal footing, with the same rights and conditions as non-Indigenous Australians. Scholarly, multi-generational Aboriginal family history research, with intense archival research on Aboriginal individuals and their entire experience through time, illuminates much more than what we already know about Aboriginal history. Additionally, it is only when this kind of historical research is placed into the cosmic, big-history context that we fully understand both the cataclysmic effect of colonisation on Indigenous Australians and their tremendous survival efforts, struggle and continuing recovery.

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A special message of love and gratitude to my ancestors and beloved family members who are no longer with us. I have heard your whispers and felt your presence every step of the way.



## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|         |                                                                               |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4RAR    | 4th Royal Australian Regiment                                                 |
| AAPA    | Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association                                 |
| AFTRS   | Australian Film Television and Radio School                                   |
| AIATSIS | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies         |
| AKA     | also known as                                                                 |
| APA     | Aborigines Progressive Association                                            |
| APB     | Aborigines Protection Board                                                   |
| ASIO    | Australian Security Intelligence Organisation                                 |
| AWB     | Aborigines Welfare Board                                                      |
| AWU     | Australian Workers' Union                                                     |
| BDMs    | birth, death and marriage certificates                                        |
| CPA     | Communist Party of Australia                                                  |
| DPI     | Department of Public Instruction                                              |
| FAA     | Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs                                             |
| FCAATSI | Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders |
| NSW     | New South Wales                                                               |
| NSWAA   | NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs                                          |
| PPU     | Primary Producers' Union                                                      |
| PRC     | People's Republic of China                                                    |

|     |                              |
|-----|------------------------------|
| UAM | United Aborigines' Mission   |
| WCG | Wollumbin Consultative Group |

## Introduction

One night, in 2008, I was about to go to bed when the phone rang. The call was from my Uncle in Sydney. He sounded incredulous, so I anticipated a significant reason for his unexpected, late night contact.

‘I’ve just been on the phone with a Bostock woman ... a “white” Bostock woman from A.J.’s side of the family. You won’t believe what she told me about the white side of the family!’

Immediately I knew he was referring to Augustus John Bostock, my non-Indigenous great-great-grandfather whom he had nick-named ‘A.J.’. Uncle explained that the elderly caller’s name was Thelma Birrell, but her family name, like ours, was Bostock. He explained that Thelma was an avid genealogist who had traced the Bostock family tree for over 30 years. She knew her family’s rumour that her grandfather’s cousin, Augustus John Bostock, had ‘taken up with’ an Aboriginal woman in the 1800s, but she did not know if there were any descendants from that union. Incredibly (after seeing a photograph online of this obviously Aboriginal man with the Bostock surname), she tracked down my Uncle, and in their first conversation she told him that she had traced the Bostock family line back to the 1600s in England.

‘Guess who our white ancestors were?’ Uncle deliberately paused for effect before he blurted out, ‘They were slave traders! A couple of generations of slave traders! ... Can you believe it? Imagine that!’

A deep, loud belly laugh erupted down the line, and he snorted as he added, ‘Those white ancestors of ours must be rolling in their graves knowing we turned out to be a mob of blackfellas!’

—Conversion with my Uncle, the late Gerald Bostock.

## How the Bostock Name Came to Australia

Up until that time, Augustus John Bostock was known to us only as ‘the whitefella who gave us our family name’, but when I heard this new information about *his* family history, a burning desire to find out more was ignited. I made contact with Mrs Thelma Birrell in 2008 when she was 70 years old. For over 30 years she had travelled around Britain and to Australia’s southern states many times to compile her trove of archival and church records. I met with her several times and she was thrilled that I was interested in her work, and so proud to gift me a copy of

her self-published book, *Merchants, Mariners ... then Pioneers*.<sup>1</sup> Thelma explained how she had been able to trace the Bostock family back to an ironmonger called Jonathan Bostock, who lived in Chester in late-seventeenth-century England. Jonathan Bostock was the father of Peter, Peter was the father of Robert, and Robert was the father of Robert Jr. The two ‘Roberts’ were slave traders who operated ships out of Liverpool to Sierra Leone, and from there traded slaves to America and Cuba. When slave trading was abolished, the British Government tracked down Robert Jr, arrested him and sentenced him to 14 years ‘transportation’ to the colony. Robert Bostock and his business partner John McQueen were the only two people to have ever been ‘transported’ to Australia for slave trading. However, they managed to secure pardons shortly after they arrived in Australia and, after establishing a merchant business, Robert moved to Van Diemen’s Land (later Tasmania) and became a wealthy land owner.<sup>2</sup> That was all I ever knew about Robert Bostock until the work of Emma Christopher recently surfaced.

Slave trade historian Emma Christopher wrote a book called *Freedom in Black and White: The Story of the Illegal Slave Trade and its Global Legacy* about Robert Bostock and John McQueen’s West African slave-trading business, their arrest by the British Government, the court case where five African slaves testified against them, their transportation to the colony, and their lives in this country after they were pardoned.<sup>3</sup> It is a compelling read. I found it quite confronting and distressing to read the details of my own fourth-great-grandfather’s crimes against African people, his cold and callous slave-trading practices and his ‘illegal compounds bursting with sick and anguished captives’.<sup>4</sup>

I met my friend Emma Christopher back in 2008 and today, now that I am also a historian, I can fully understand her surprised delight when Thelma Birrell told her about the Aboriginal branches of the Bostock family. As my uncle observed, it is indeed an ironic twist of fate that

---

<sup>1</sup> Thelma Birrell, *Merchants, Mariners ... then Pioneers* (Kawana, QLD: Campbell Printing (Self Published), 1993), 31–33.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 31–33.

<sup>3</sup> Emma Christopher, *Freedom in White and Black: A Lost Story of the Illegal Slave Trade and Its Global Legacy* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., back cover. Chicago style endorses the use of hyphenation to eliminate confusion in writing genealogical terms, but does not specify a standard of how to refer to a multi-great relative. Some people use ordinal numbers to describe ancestors (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup>-great-grandfather), while others use ‘four times great grandfather’. It is more common to write your ‘great-great-great-great-grandfather’ as your ‘fourth great-grandfather’. He is your ‘fourth-great-grandfather’ because of the four times ‘great’ is said in spoken conversation. I go as far as ‘great-great-grandparents’ in this thesis and anyone earlier than them has an ordinal word. A thorough online discussion on this topic can be found at <https://gegbound.com/great-great-greats-question-style/>.

among the slave trader's multitudinous progeny, there exists whole lines of Aboriginal descendants.<sup>5</sup>

It seems a travesty of justice that after they arrived in Sydney Cove on the *Indefatigable* in late April 1815, Bostock and McQueen landed on their feet and deftly began new lives free from hardship.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other convicts who were allotted as private servants for settlers in outlying areas (such as Liverpool, Parramatta or Windsor), or as labour for the colony's works, Bostock and McQueen remained in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW).<sup>7</sup> There, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, whose vision was to establish Sydney on seaborne trade, utilised the expertise that Bostock and McQueen offered.<sup>8</sup> Christopher reveals that, 'The opportunities Macquarie offered to convicts were so controversial that in 1819 Britain sent out Commissioner John Brigge to investigate what on Earth was going on ... Brigge was horrified by what he found: lax rule and little intense agriculture'. Prior to Brigge's arrival, NSW was the ideal environment for convicted men to start over again, so Bostock and McQueen had plenty of time to set themselves up comfortably before Brigge came.<sup>9</sup> There was huge demand for imported goods and luxury items, and Bostock and McQueen became wealthy merchants. In June 1815, the ship *Fanny* brought news that Napoleon Bonaparte had surrendered, and alongside news of Wellington's victory were Bostock and McQueen's pardons.<sup>10</sup>

Correspondence about the Prince Regent's pardon of Bostock and McQueen can be found in the Historical Records of Australia.<sup>11</sup> Later, Robert and his new young bride Rachel left Sydney and moved to Van Diemen's Land (later called Tasmania) where they had 11 children. Thelma Birrell's genealogical research authorises that my great-great-grandfather Augustus John Bostock was Robert and Rachel Bostock's grandson.<sup>12</sup> Birrell also told me that Augustus John was orphaned at 11 years of age, so the family sent him to England to be educated at a wealthy

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<sup>5</sup> I say the plural 'branches' and 'lines' because George Bostock, Augustus John Bostock's cousin, lived in the Northern Territory, Australia, and had children with a Jingili woman named in the records only as 'unknown F/B [full-blood]'. According to the family, he had more children by other Aboriginal women. See Christopher, *Freedom in White and Black*, 223.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher, *Freedom in White and Black*, 147.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–49.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>11</sup> Commonwealth Government of Australia, 'Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, Volume 8, July 1813 to December 1815, Despatches', ed. The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament (Sydney, NSW: Commonwealth Parliament), 602–603.

<sup>12</sup> Birrell, *Mariners, Merchants ... then Pioneers*, 38.

private boarding school and he later returned to Australia at the age of 18 years old.<sup>13</sup> It is not known when Augustus John Bostock travelled north to Bundjalung Country, but around the age of 27 years old he married my great-great-grandmother. I know this because on his death certificate, in the section marked 'Marriages: Where, at what age and to whom deceased was married', the corresponding details recorded were 'Tweed River, about 27, One My otherwise Clara Wollumbin'.<sup>14</sup> Her name, this record and other archival documents support my claim that she was a traditional Aboriginal woman from the Wollumbin/Mt Warning people.

I realised that if I could trace my ancestors from the present day back to Augustus John Bostock and connect my Aboriginal family history line with Thelma's white, transnational, genealogical line, I would create an unbroken Bostock family line from seventeenth-century England to the present day. That realisation was the beginning of my research journey to find out more about my ancestors. I have included my great-great-grandfather Augustus John Bostock's family line here because my non-Indigenous ancestors' history is brought into the conclusion of this thesis.

## **Topic/Research Focus/Investigation**

Thelma's presentation of her vast knowledge of the broader, non-Indigenous Bostock family genealogy brought my attention to my limited knowledge of my own family's history and raised a lot of questions for me. When I asked my parents questions about our family history, I was surprised by how little they knew, not just about the family tree but also the everyday life and experiences of my grandparents and other ancestors. I recall when I was in my early teens I asked my father what a mission was, and I remember him saying bluntly that it was a 'racist place where blackfellas were segregated from whitefellas'.<sup>15</sup> I think I was always curious about where we came from, but it was not until I met Thelma in my mid-40s that my dormant curiosity was suddenly reawakened. After researching the Bostock family line from the present to the past, and successfully constructing a family tree that connected the Aboriginal Bostocks with the British Bostocks, I gained the confidence to expand my research to more family lines.

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<sup>13</sup> Thelma Birrell, Personal Conversation, 17 May 2009.

<sup>14</sup> QLD Government, 'Death Certificate for Augustus John Bostock, 24 August 1927, No. 1927/2219' (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1927).

<sup>15</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use the colloquial, Aboriginal English terms 'whitefellas' and 'blackfellas'. These are treated by Aborigines as harmless racial nicknames that Aborigines use to describe themselves and non-Indigenous people. They are not racial slurs. They are just conversational terms, proper nouns without capitalisation. According to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, when referring to racial categories and writing the words 'whites', 'white people', 'blacks' or 'black people', these are to be written in lower case (Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed., 8.39, p. 402). The suffix 'fellas' is Aboriginal slang for the English word 'fellows' (e.g., 'whitefellas' = 'white fellows', and 'blackfellas' = 'black fellows', as in 'white man' and 'black man').

Specifically, I wanted to trace each of my four Aboriginal grandparents' family lines as far back as possible in the written historic record.

Initially, my research question was simply, 'How did my ancestors' survive colonisation?', but as I began to delve more deeply into my family history, the research question for this multi-generational investigation needed to become more complex to encompass the macro-historical scale of history, as well as the immensity of the research findings within it. My research question morphed over time to become, 'Can an Aboriginal family history, over several generations, illuminate something more than what has already been done in conventional scholarship on Aboriginal history—and if so, what?'

In 2009, Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath wrote that 'professional historians can sometimes be sceptical of family histories, seeing them as amateurish', but more recently they acknowledge that in the last decade the status of family history research has been considerably elevated by scholars who combine it with methodologies of academic social and cultural history.<sup>16</sup> Tanya Evans's groundbreaking journal article 'Secrets and Lies: The Radical Potential of Family History' articulated how she was intrigued by the way 'academics and family historians were categorised as different, our needs and requirements dichotomised by cultural institutions within which we worked on some of the same sources and where we shared space'.<sup>17</sup> She suggests that the findings of family historians disrupt many of our assumptions about the past:

The construction of a family tree, the discovery of manifold secrets and lies, throw into question the solidity not only of the history of family, class relationships and the power relations between men and women but also of the history of nation and empire.<sup>18</sup>

Evans believes that if you are passionate about the democratisation of historical knowledge then it is crucial that outputs of research be as broad-ranging as possible, targeting professional and amateur historians. She argues the appropriateness of reassessing 'the condescension shown towards the motivation, methods and findings of family historians as some innovative Australian historians have begun to do'.<sup>19</sup> An academic who could be described as one of those

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<sup>16</sup> Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath, *How to Write History that People Want To Read* (Sydney, NSW: University of NSW Press, 2009), 39. Ann McGrath herself wrote in her comments on my draft that that comment is now somewhat outdated now for the reasons I have described.

<sup>17</sup> Tanya Evans, 'Secrets and Lies: The Radical Potential of Family History', *History Workshop Journal* 71, no. 1 (2011): 49.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

‘innovative historians’ is Graeme Davison, author of his own family history *Lost Relations: Fortunes of My Family in Australia’s Golden Age*.<sup>20</sup> Davison stated that he ‘tried to give an account of not just what happened to the family’, but how he ‘approached the voyage of discovery’. In 2015, Davison also remarked that family history enabled him to write with a ‘distinctive voice’ that allowed him to ‘express the kind of quandaries that any family historian has when they come upon unexpected discoveries, or a gap in the record’. I write and speak in a similar voice and consider myself to be an Aboriginal ‘academic story-teller’.

A strong point that Davison wanted to make to his fellow academics is that he could not have told his family history story five years earlier where it not for (at that time) new online databases like Trove (National Library of Australia), or nineteenth-century British newspapers, or the online records of British parliamentary papers. Davison was impressed with the quality of the family histories he had read and respected them for ‘their knowledge of the techniques of genealogical research’—but he added that they ‘sometimes falter when it comes to understanding the significance of what they have found in the larger context’. He argued that academic historians bring more to understanding the larger contexts in which people lived, and find clues to why they acted as they did. Davison observed that accounts become much less conjectural ‘if you understand all the pressures that were operating on them in the society at the time’.<sup>21</sup>

## **Aim**

I wanted to know ‘all the pressures that were operating’ on my ancestors and other Aboriginal people throughout every era of this historical chronology. Like Evans, I recognised that ‘big pictures are constructed using lots of little people’—and of course individuals that emerge from varied social classes, genders and races and from within specific social, economic and cultural contexts need to be our focus.<sup>22</sup> This thesis is a contribution to scholarly family history research that specifically focuses on Aboriginal individuals and groups that emerge from the nethermost depths of Australian social, economic, political and cultural contexts. All the parts of this thesis are connected by the following underlying aims that I wanted to achieve.

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<sup>20</sup> Graeme Davison, *Lost Relations: Fortunes of My Family in Australia’s Golden Age* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Trevor, ‘Lost Relations: Fortunes of My Family in Australia’s Golden Age, Graeme Davison Talks to Sarah Trevor about His New Book’, *Traces*, 31 October 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, ‘Secrets and Lies’, 68.



The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate and give testimony to the lived experiences of my ancestors (and other Aboriginal people) so that future generations would know who they were and where they came from. Second, I wanted to produce a multi-generational, academic Aboriginal family history research project that situated my ancestors' and other Aboriginal peoples' lived experiences within the context of Aboriginal and Australian history. Lastly, I wanted to construct an authoritative project that would be conducive to the elevation of the academic status of family history research by providing a valuable contribution to the discipline of history.

## **Objective**

Therefore the objective of this thesis is to present an academic example of Aboriginal family history research with enough evidence to answer the research question—that is, to authenticate that scholarly Aboriginal family history research *can* transform our perceptions of Aboriginal Australians—and that this kind of broad-scale, multi-generational approach to Aboriginal family history *does* bring to our attention more than what we already know about Aboriginal history.

## **Indigenous Methodologies**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* is considered a groundbreaking benchmark text within the field of Indigenous research. Looking through the eyes of the colonised, it is a counter-story to Western ideas about the pursuit of knowledge. Tuhiwai Smith understood research 'as a set of ideas, practices and privileges that were embedded in imperial expansionism and colonisation and institutionalised in academic disciplines, schools, curricula, universities and power'.<sup>23</sup> Tuhiwai Smith's book quashes the notion that research methods are culture-free. She brings attention to the ways that imperialism is embedded in disciplines of knowledge and calls for Indigenous researchers to take control over our ways of knowing and being by decolonising our methodologies. It is a powerful critique of Western (or in antipodean terms) European research methodologies that alienate non-European races and cultures as the 'other'. This separation of Western and Indigenous concepts was first established as a benchmark for discussion in Edward Said's book

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<sup>23</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012), Foreword.

*Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient*, when he wrote about the West's skewed view of the Arab and Islamic world. Said came to the conclusion that:

Modern thought and experience has taught us to be sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in socio-political role of intellectuals, in the great value of a sceptical critical consciousness. Perhaps if we remember that the study of human experience usually has an ethical, to say nothing of a political, consequence in either the best or worst sense, we will not be indifferent to what we do as scholars.<sup>24</sup>

Also citing the work of Said, Tuhiwai Smith states that 'research is a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other', namely, Indigenous people.<sup>25</sup> In New Zealand, stories about researchers and their research in Indigenous communities were intertwined with stories about all other forms of colonisation and injustice, where cultural protocols were broken, small tests failed, values negated and key people ignored. Research 'told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs'.<sup>26</sup> Two Australian examples of research being a 'site of significant struggle' between the 'interests and ways of knowing of the West' and Aboriginal people were presented at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) National Indigenous Research Conference in early July 2019. Traditional Owner Descendants of the Willandra Lakes area (in NSW) presented a paper titled 'Towards a Rights Based Approach to Research on Country: Lake Mungo and the Willandra Lakes'.<sup>27</sup>

There are three tribal groups with traditional ties to the Willandra Lakes Region, the Barkindji, the Mutthi Mutthi and the Ngyimpaa, and along with sympathetic National Parks and Wildlife Services representatives, the elders spoke emotionally about the pain they experienced at the actions of a non-Indigenous researcher.<sup>28</sup> The researcher did not speak to key elders from all

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<sup>24</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (1995 Reprint With Afterword) (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1995), 327.

<sup>25</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> AIATSIS, 'Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies National Indigenous Research Conference 2019 Program', [https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/news-and-events/events/Conferences/2019/ANIRC2019\\_Program\\_WEB.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/news-and-events/events/Conferences/2019/ANIRC2019_Program_WEB.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Commonwealth Department of Environment, Sport and Territories, 'Sustaining the Willandra: Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Property Plan of Management' (Canberra, ACT: Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1996), <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/Types-of-protected-areas/sustaining-the-willandra-lakes-region-world-heritage-property-plan-management-1996.pdf>.

three tribal groups and received his university's human research ethics approval based on his engagement with unauthorised Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal elders were incredulous when they discovered that he had written a book titled *Made in Africa: Hominin Explorations and the Australian Skeletal Evidence*. This book refers to the ancient Aboriginal skeletal remains of their ancestors 'Mungo Lady' and 'Mungo Man' which were discovered on their traditional land at Lake Mungo in 1968 and 1973, respectively. The researcher described the Aboriginal ancestors as representing modern humans at the end of their 20,000 km journey from Africa. The elders at the conference, however, felt that their ancestors were misrepresented because these tribal groups have never endorsed the 'Out of Africa' theory, and passionately stated that 'we have always been here!'<sup>29</sup>

At the same conference, Aboriginal researchers Tyson Yunkaporta and Donna Moodie expressed how university approval of their research methodology was also a site of struggle. They presented a paper called 'Thought Ritual: An Indigenous Data Analysis Method for Research' that proposed:

A stand-alone Indigenous data analysis tool that is a hybridisation of ancient oral culture practice and contemporary thought experiment, grounded in Aboriginal protocols of communal knowledge production that are aligned with principles of complexity theory. It represents a significant departure from Western academic approaches while promoting high levels of intellectual rigour. It also offers the intriguing possibility of examining non-Indigenous data-sets using an Indigenous Knowledge process, potentially resolving the issues described by Walters (2005) of quantitative data being largely ignored to date in Indigenous research.<sup>30</sup>

Moodie is working on a project about better engagement processes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the field of Natural Resource Management in the Social Sciences. She wanted to use Indigenous methodologies, but when it came to her data analysis she became stuck. She said that she felt like she had 'recolonised herself thinking too much about who was going to mark the thesis, and what non-Indigenous methodology she should be using for data analysis'. Moodie confided in Yunkaporta who suggested they work together on his Thought Ritual Indigenous Data Analysis method. Yunkaporta explained at the conference that, before it was finally approved, his research methodology was rejected by their university on numerous

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<sup>29</sup> See also Ann McGrath and Mary Anne Jebb, eds., *Long History, Deep Time: Deepening Histories of Place* (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press and Aboriginal History Inc., 2015) Introduction, and Chapters 13 and 14.

<sup>30</sup> Tyson Yunkaporta and Donna Moodie, 'Thought Ritual: An Indigenous Data Analysis Method for Research', Paper presented at the AIATSIS National Indigenous Research Conference Brisbane 2019, QUT Gardens Point Campus, Brisbane, QLD, 1–3 July 2019. The Walter (2005) citation referred to M. Walters, 'The Power of the Data within Indigenous Research Practice', *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2, no. 27 (2005).

occasions. He told the audience with cheeky humour, ‘if you think you’re doing an Indigenous methodology, and you haven’t been rejected and had to re-submit your work several times, then you’re not doing Indigenous methodologies’.

In his book *Disciplining the Savages and Savaging the Disciplines*, Martin Nakata, an academic from the Torres Strait Islands, discussed how to undertake analysis that elucidates the Indigenous experiences at the ‘cultural interface’ by addressing an overall Indigenous Standpoint Theory. Indigenous Standpoint Theory is an Indigenised version of the original Feminist Standpoint Theory that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. This theory articulated that practices of knowledge production theorised ‘women’s positions as rational, logical outcomes of the natural order of things, when in fact they were socially constructed positions that were outcomes of particular forms of social organisations that supported the position and authority of men over women’. Standpoint Theory then became used as a method of enquiry by a diversity of marginalised groups whose accounts of experience were either subjugated within or excluded from academic knowledge production.

For Indigenous scholars, Nakata summarises Standpoint Theory as ‘a method of inquiry, a process for making intelligible the corpus of objectified knowledge about us as it emerges and organises understanding of our lived realities’.<sup>31</sup> Nakata proposed an Indigenous Standpoint Theory that can generate accounts of Indigenous people in contested knowledge spaces, affords agency to people, acknowledges the everyday tensions, complexities and ambiguities as the very conditions that produce the possibilities in spaces between Indigenous and non-Indigenous positions.<sup>32</sup>

In these ways, he believed that we can put forth an Indigenous standpoint to ‘help unravel and untangle ourselves from conditions that delimit who, what or how we can or can’t be, to help see ourselves with some charge of the everyday, and to help understand our varied responses to the colonial world’.<sup>33</sup> In her paper titled ‘Towards an Indigenous Women’s Standpoint Theory’, Aboriginal academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson outlines an Indigenous Women’s Standpoint Theory, but not before critiquing Nakata’s Standpoint Theory and arguing that

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), 215.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 217.

Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory generates problematics formed by our (female) knowledges and experiences.

While Moreton-Robinson acknowledges Nakata's work as an important development and contribution to Indigenous Standpoint Theory, she felt that his version was gender-blind, perhaps because it is centred on his knowing as a Torres Strait Islander man. Moreton-Robinson argues that she cannot 'know as an Indigenous man' and finds it ironic that by Nakata omitting gender from his Indigenous Standpoint Theory, he actually produces an Indigenous form of patriarchal knowledge that is the same kind of patriarchal knowledge production that feminists reviewed. She said, 'One of the strengths of feminist Standpoint Theory is the inextricable link between theory, politics and practise and the ability to generate a problematic from women's embodied and lived experience'.<sup>34</sup>

Moreton-Robinson proposes an Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory that is:

constituted by our sovereignty and constitutive of the interconnectedness of our ontology (our way of being), our epistemology (our way of knowing), and our axiology (our way of doing). It generates its problematics through Indigenous women's knowledge and experiences acknowledging that intersecting oppressions will situate us in different power relations and effect our different individual experiences under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share consciously or unconsciously.<sup>35</sup>

According to Moreton-Robinson, the patriarchal white sovereignty and its continual denial of our sovereignty is an 'omnipresence' that our lives are always shaped by, but we deploy a 'tactical subjectivity' as a way to 're-centre depending upon the kinds of oppression to be confronted within and outside our communities'. She adds that we 'can present a seminar paper and perform according to the protocols of the white patriarchal academy while simultaneously challenging its episteme'.<sup>36</sup> The Willandra Lakes Elders, and Yunkaporta and Moodie are just two examples of 150 papers presented by Aboriginal practitioners of Indigenous knowledges at the AIATSIS National Research Conference that did exactly that.

Tuhiwai Smith's book challenges the white patriarchal episteme in a way that empowers Indigenous researchers to be true to their Indigeneity. She said she wrote her book for the

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<sup>34</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Towards an Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory', *Australian Feminist Studies* 28, no. 78 (2013): 339.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

growing number of researchers who, like me, identify themselves as Indigenous and want to ‘tell our stories in our own way for our own purposes’. There exists a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit. ‘The sense of history conveyed by these approaches is not the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts crash and collide into each other’.<sup>37</sup>

## **My Methods and Methodology**

When I began my research, I imagined that my family history would be easily inserted into the context of Aboriginal and Australian history—that photographs of my ancestors would be pinned on or between year markers on the timeline—and that my project would be a horizontal, past-to-present, two-dimensional chronology. But I discovered that changing the lens of the site imbued history with a kind of three-dimensional solidity. Similarly, Tom Griffiths, in his book *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and Their Craft*, described time as having a ‘topography’. He stated that historians ‘often take time for granted even though it is their medium’, and he added that ‘Australian historians travel in time, but also analyse time itself, finding that it has a topography and history of its own’.<sup>38</sup> This ‘three dimensional solidity’, this ‘topography’, comes naturally when looking at history from different perspectives, using a variety of angles and approaches. In tracking my ancestors’ movements across Country, there were frequent vertical ascents from people and places, and descents to different people and places on the colonial landscape. So, rather than a dull linear chronology, this movement engenders a feeling of ‘journeying’ with my ancestors through time, as though time itself is the historic ground on which we walk. The methods I employ in my thesis are the scales of history known as micro-history, macro-history and big history—and the thesis concludes with this historian’s autobiographical approach known as *ego-histoire*.

Macro-history was a new approach to the study of history that emerged in France in the late 1920s around the scholarly journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*. The Annales School, as it came to be known, grew to be the preeminent twentieth-century movement in historical scholarship. Its bold agenda of a ‘total history’, embracing all the social sciences, captivated historians worldwide. Fernand Braudel was a central and defining figure of the

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<sup>37</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Tom Griffiths, *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and Their Craft* (Carlton, VIC: Black Inc., 2016), 7.

school.<sup>39</sup> Throughout his life, Braudel championed the multiplicity of time and the need for historians to look beyond ‘social time’ or *l’histoire événementielle*, the history of events, in order to embrace *la longue durée*, the slower-moving structures and cycles of centuries.<sup>40</sup> Century-wise, in non-Indigenous recorded history, Australia is relatively young in comparison to European countries, so in my research I refer to macro-history as any scale of history after colonisation that is not micro-historical. While David Christian describes big history as ‘the *longest durée*’, I would describe my practice of macro-history for this thesis as an ‘*Australia-appropriate durée*’, a somewhat condensed version of Braudel’s *la longue durée*. These are the larger scales of Australian history, for example, from colonisation to the present day, or from Federation to the present, or the span of the Aborigines Protection era, and so on.

Micro-history developed as a response to Fernand Braudel and the French Annales School, the practices of the methodological significance of the *longue durée* and macro-history, and its emphasis on plural time. The Italian *microhistoria*, applied to the short term and was associated with such figures as Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi and Edoardo Grendi. What has come to be known as *microhistoria* in Italy is not a school, but has been described by one of its main practitioners as a ‘community of style’. Through what Carlo Ginzburg refers to as a process of ‘equalization of individuals’, serial history disregards particulars and cognitively recognises only what is homogenous and comparable. Italian *microhistorians* have engaged a highly experimental and, indeed, eclectic set of historiographical practices whose common thread is a self-conscious reduction in the scale of observation. They embrace the singular, the peculiar, the out of series and the anomalous, and engage in close analysis of highly circumscribed phenomena, such as a village community; a group of families; or an individual person, event, or object. However, their concern with reduction in scale is not a preoccupation with the local and small-scale systems. As Giovanni Levi writes, ‘it becomes immediately obvious that even the apparently minutest action of, say somebody going to buy a loaf of bread, actually encompasses the far wider system of the whole world’s grain markets’. Rather, the reduction in scale’s purpose is to reveal previously unobserved factors. Thus, micro-historical practice entails intense methodological and historiographical experimentation with the short term, the local and the particular. The radical reversal of perspective and reduction in scale illuminates

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<sup>39</sup> Nicolas Lewkowicz, ‘The Annales School: An Intellectual History’, *Intellectual History Review* 21, no. 2 (2011): 250–51.

<sup>40</sup> Tom Griffiths, ‘Travelling in Deep Time: *La Longue Durée* in Australian History’, *Australian Humanities Review* 18 (June 2000), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-June-2000/griffiths4.html>.

otherwise undisclosed relations and processes.<sup>41</sup> An example of micro-history in this thesis is close examination of individuals, family groups and the Aborigines reserve or mission space.

Big history takes the opposite approach and has been described as the ‘longest *durée*’. Developed by David Christian in the late 1980s, big history ‘explores the past at very large temporal scales. It takes familiar arguments for the importance of the *longue durée* and pushes them to their limits by surveying the past as a whole’. Using the methods and evidence of modern scientific scholarship, big history surveys the past on all scales up to those of cosmology and answers questions explored in traditional creation stories and universal histories. Although quite marginal in historical scholarship, in 2009, Christian stated that ‘big history is attracting increasing interest and holds the promise of a fruitful unification of different disciplines that study the past at many different scales’.<sup>42</sup> Christian believes that we must ‘look beyond the details if [we] are to understand their meaning, to see how they fit together. We need large scales of history if we are to see each part of our subject’.<sup>43</sup> In the conclusion of this thesis, I engage with big history to place my multi-generational, large-scale family history research within the much larger cosmological context.

After becoming aware of the scholarly approaches of *micro-history* and *macro-history*, and *big history*, I stumbled upon the work of Pierre Nora and the methodology of historians’ writing of autobiographies called *ego-histoire*. *Ego-histoire* is the phrase coined by Nora to describe the collective product of his advice to historians to write about themselves. In the introduction to the Gallimard’s *Bibliothèque des Histoires* (Library of Stories) collection *Essais d’Ego-Histoire* (Ego-History Essays), Nora describes the compiled essays as ‘contributing to the development of a new genre: ego-history, a new genre for a new period of historical consciousness’. Nora stated that for a century, ‘the scientific tradition as a whole has forced historians to absent themselves from the scene of their work’, that their personalities were hidden—‘behind their knowledge to set up barricades with file notes, to run away to some other period, to only express themselves through others’—leaving the self as a mere mention in the dedication or the preface of a book. Historiography, however, has ‘shown up the pretenses of this impersonality and how its guarantees lie on shaky ground’. Nora argues ‘that spelling out

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<sup>41</sup> Dale Tomich, ‘The Order of Historical Time: The *Longue Durée* and Micro-History’, *Almanack. Guarulhos* 2 (2011): 52–65.

<sup>42</sup> David Christian, ‘Big History: The Longest “*Durée*”’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 20, no. 2 (2009): 91.

<sup>43</sup> David Christian, ‘The Case for Big History’, *The Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 223–24.



one's involvement with the material offers a better protection than vain protests about objectivity'. What was a stumbling block becomes an advantage, and 'the unveiling and analysis of existential involvement, rather than moving away from some impartial investigation, becomes instead an instrument for improving understanding'.<sup>44</sup>

I would describe my methodology as utilising the above methods as well as deploying a combination of both my positions as a history scholar and a mature-aged Aboriginal woman researching her own family history. There is no moral high ground from which I observe my subjects and make judgements about them. I am one of them. Through my umbilical cord I am connected to generations of my ancestors going right back to time immemorial. The duality of my roles as a family member and also an academic enables me to highlight nuances of both positions. I think that is what Pierre Nora means when he uses the term 'existential involvement'. I am not conducting an 'impartial investigation' and my 'existential involvement' is an advantage because, rather than recording this history with 'impersonality', I am 'spelling out my involvement' and using my position/s as 'an instrument for understanding'.

This employs my own authentic, first-person, storytelling writing style which includes weaving into it my own personal response and narrating the research processes. Like Tuhiwai Smith, I want to 'tell our stories in our own way for our own purposes'. Contrary to what Davison stated, that family historians sometimes 'falter when it comes to understanding the significance of what they have found in the larger context', the duality of my position enables me to successfully place the Aboriginal experience inside the larger historical context.<sup>45</sup>

## About the Archives

My primary sources are archives, handwritten letters, manuscripts, diaries, historic newspaper articles, photographs and films. But the most important primary sources that I have collected are the Aborigines Protection Board (APB)/Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB) personal files on my ancestors. The Board's records are completely closed to public access. They are not in the public domain of the NSW State Records archives, nor any other library or repository in

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<sup>44</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Introduction' from *Essais d'Ego-Histoire*. Translated by Stephen Muecke, in *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In Turn, in Turn: Ego-Histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia*, eds. Vanessa Castejon, Anna Cole, Oliver Haag and Karen Hughes (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press, 2014), 21.

<sup>45</sup> Trevor, 'Lost Relations', Interview.

the state. They have been locked away by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (NSWAA) who state that ‘Due to the personal and sensitive nature of the information pertained in these records many of the records are closed to public access’.<sup>46</sup>

Up until very recently, I did not grasp how precious my family history archives were until I fully understood the restrictions that the NSWAA department have placed on accessing Board records. I asked historian Victoria Haskins questions about the history of the NSWAA records and she graciously sent me a copy of a book chapter that she and her husband, Aboriginal historian John Maynard, wrote for a 2019 book called *Contesting Australian History: Essays in Honour of Marilyn Lake*.<sup>47</sup> Maynard and Haskins are part of a team that includes five Indigenous academics, and they are working with Ray Kelly, Lawrence Bamblett, Lorena Barker and Jaky Troy on a study of the NSW APB/AWB. They have searched for archives in the NSW State Library and the NSW State Records and are currently conducting community consultation in La Perouse, Redfern, Newcastle, Western NSW and the south and north coasts of NSW. Although their ‘interview material is rich and rewarding’, they experienced great disappointment with archival materials. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ‘gatekeepers were putting up barriers’. Maynard and Haskins’s essay, ‘“For the Record”: A History of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board’ outlines the history of the Aborigines Protection Board records, and when and why they were removed from public access.<sup>48</sup>

This essay brought to my attention work by my Supervisor Ann McGrath that I did not know about previously. She was part of a Senate Committee on Stolen Wages in 2004. McGrath said there is scant scholarly work on the Indigenous history of NSW, especially government administration, and she stated that:

[this] may be partly explained by permission and access difficulties, especially due to restricted access to personal records and the ethical responsibility to preserve privacy. The process of gaining permission to access records is thus viewed as too high a hurdle by many researchers, especially early career scholars who often undertake the most significant research into new subjects. While changes have been made in the

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<sup>46</sup> New South Wales Government, ‘Finding Your Mob: Family Records Service, Personal Family History Research Application’. Family Records Service (Mascot, NSW: Aboriginal Affairs NSW, 2019).

<sup>47</sup> Joy Damousi and Judith Smart, eds., *Contesting Australian History: Essays in Honour of Marilyn Lake* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2019).

<sup>48</sup> John Maynard and Victoria Haskins, ‘“For the Record”: A History of the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board’, in *Contesting Australian History: Essays in Honour of Marilyn Lake*, eds. Joy Damousi and Judith Smart (Clayton, VIC: Monash University, 2019), 121–35.

last ten years to improve this situation, the system needs to become more researcher friendly to both community-based and other historical researchers.<sup>49</sup>

Haskins and Maynard have been refused permission for their team to access ‘significant sections of material, including the Ward Registers 1916-28, the correspondence files of the Welfare Board 1949-69, and the recently discovered Chiefs Secretary’s Records Letters Received relating to Aboriginal matters 1938-49’. The grounds on which access to them was refused was because of ‘the personal and sensitive nature of the records’. So after one-and-a-half decades since the Senate Committee’s Report, nothing much has changed in the Australian Government’s sequestering of archives relating to the APB. Although Haskins and Maynard believe that ‘the decision of NSWAA refusing permission stems from their fears of criticism and litigation from Aboriginal community members, rather than because they are hiding anything in particular’, they say that ‘the ongoing secrecy makes it impossible to write a full history of the Board’ and ‘reinforces the impression that the authorities, actions and policies are being hidden from public exposure’.<sup>50</sup> Historian Peter Read, also one of the Supervisors on my panel, has told me many times that he was the last person to have looked at all the records relating to Aboriginal people held at the archive.<sup>51</sup> Haskins and Maynard stated that Read’s experience does not include the ‘Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949. Chief Secretary’s Letters Received’ which were ‘recently discovered’ or ‘turned up’ in 2008. Haskins and Maynard explained that historian Heather Goodall researched the Board’s records back in 1975 when working on her PhD thesis about Aboriginal land activism, six years before the new Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was established. Goodall told Haskins and Maynard that she had seen the Ward Registers which were ‘two dusty old volumes listing the names and details of around 800 girls and boys taken from their families between 1912 and 1928’. Goodall said that the registers were left in the old Directorate of the AWB and should have been on restricted access for 100 years, but somehow a man with the Aboriginal Legal Service, Peter Thompson, organised for them to be deposited in the NSW State Records under the 30-year access rule, thus enabling her to research her thesis. It was only after the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was created in 1981 that access to the records was restricted to people named on the files, or their direct descendants.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ann McGrath, ‘Reconciling the Historical Accounts: Trust Funds Reparation and New South Wales Aborigines’ (Canberra, ACT: Australian Centre for Indigenous History, ANU, 2004), 36.

<sup>50</sup> Maynard and Haskins, ‘For the Record’, 131.

<sup>51</sup> Personal conversation.

<sup>52</sup> Maynard and Haskins, ‘For the Record’, 132.

The only reason the NSWAA allowed *me* access to my family members' files was on the condition that I submit proof of a direct genealogical lineage to every person whose file I applied for. By 'direct', I mean that I could only access my biological grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents records, and could not access any of their siblings' records without special permission from their descendants. The application I compiled for access to the APB records sourced for this thesis was 27 pages long. It included numerous proof of identity papers, including my birth and marriage certificates; multiple birth, death and marriage certificates (BDMs) from parents', grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations; and family tree charts to map out my genealogical relationship to family members.

My ancestors' files provide a great deal of information about their lived experiences. I have chosen to keep some files from this thesis because they either do not support the historical topic of interest, or because I have simply chosen not to include them. That decision was made by me *after* access to my family files was permitted. I am empowered by my newfound knowledge of history and not disempowered by having information withheld from me. I commented that the NSW Government's restrictions on access to these records are, in my opinion, reminiscent of the same kind of control that the APB used in the past to disempower Aboriginal people. Ann McGrath, however, reminded me that, as a historian, I have had many years to get used to seeing such records and prompted me to recognise that they could be quite confronting for Aboriginal people seeing them for the first time. I understand that, but at the same time I still take issue with these records being withheld from us. I hope that in the future, the gatekeepers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and history researchers can come together to formulate a system that can release these records to everybody's satisfaction. I am very fortunate that I am a history researcher who also has numerous genealogical connections, and as a result of that duality have been able to access a large number of files. If I was not *directly* related to my ancestors, these records would never have seen the light of day. This biological relationship is the key that unlocks the padlock on some of the archives held by the NSWAA. Family history research acts as a conduit for these important archives to flow into the public domain where they can be placed under the scrutiny of other history scholars.

## **Limitations and Resistance**

The scope of this thesis has turned out to be its greatest limitation. It covers such a large timeframe that to keep within the overall word count required ruthless decisions about what could and could not be included. The research had to head in the direction of milestone topics

in the chronology, and the forward-moving momentum also had to be maintained, regardless of the treacherous topography of time. The most crucial questions I had to ask myself in the editing process were, ‘What do I keep?’, ‘What do I discard?’ and ‘What is most important to this thesis?’

Another limitation of this thesis is its lack of interviews. Sadly, the number of remaining relatives from my parents’ generation has diminished quickly. Before I commenced the academic writing of our family history, my Aunt (my mother’s sister), Aboriginal author Ruby Langford Ginibi, passed away in 2011. Then, in the course of writing this thesis, we experienced the passing of my uncle Gerry Bostock, my mother Rita Bostock and, more recently, my other uncle Lester Bostock. Alive today are an Aunt who is a former activist that was fully immersed in the Redfern scene, but she outright refuses to be involved with any aspect of my research; an uncle who I never see; and my father another Aunt who never associated with the young radicals or took part in political organisations or protests for change. That is why I felt an increasing sense of urgency to research and record our family history to pass on to future generations. Tuhiwai Smith noted that ‘the story and the story-teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story’.<sup>53</sup> That is exactly what I have set out to do. My research has felt like I have reached back through time and brought our ancestors into the present, to introduce them to the children in our family, to counteract their erasure, and to humanise and remember them.

Lastly, a point of resistance that I have had throughout the writing of this thesis is a reluctance to paraphrase the written words of Aboriginal people in history. In my research, I have come across a number of letters to newspapers and private letters written by Aboriginal people strongly objecting to their treatment at the hands of the Australian Government and/or non-Indigenous people in positions of power. The letters I refer to in this thesis are certainly not tomes of information; in fact, they are usually only three or four paragraphs long. Our ancestors’ words explicitly express their emotional response to extraordinary circumstances, and these circumstances were almost always completely beyond their control.

Culturally, as an Aboriginal descendant, rewriting my ancestors’ and other Aboriginal Elders’ words to paraphrase them or otherwise put them in my own words feels like a disrespectful

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<sup>53</sup> Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies*, 146.

intervention. As Tuhiwai Smith stated, ‘there is a very real ambivalence in Indigenous communities toward the role of Western education and those who have been educated in universities’, and I am very conscious of treading carefully.<sup>54</sup> I have decided to include full transcripts of their writing in a few instances, but I have tried to use these as exemplifications that are subsequently unpacked by interrogation of a number of points made in the correspondence. I hope that I have been successful in finding a balance between presenting credible, academic history scholarship and being authentic to my Indigenous culture.

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter 1 is called ‘Bundjalung Beginnings’ and starts in 1882, the earliest year of an archival record about my family members in the written historic record, which was Augustus John Bostock’s 1882 application for a Conditional Purchase of land (AKA a Pioneers Selection) at the base of Wollumbin/Mt Warning. This chapter begins with the origins of each of my four Aboriginal grandparents’ family lines, the Bostocks, the Andersons, the Cowans and the Solomons. The changes to the landscape, the impact of land acts on pastoral leases and the rapid encroachment of settlers attracted by the gold rush and free selection of land are explored. Although each family line begins in different locations on Bundjalung Country, this chapter ends up at Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve (AKA Box Ridge Mission), near Coraki, where all four family lines merge ‘on the mission’.

Chapter 2 is called ‘Birth and Marriage on the Reserve’. This chapter begins in 1911, the birth year of my paternal grandmother and my maternal grandfather, and ends in 1934, the year both sets of my grandparents left Box Ridge Mission to embark on married life away from the reserve. As the title forecasts, this chapter examines all four grandparents’ and other Aboriginal peoples’ lives on the reserve. Research reveals the townspeople’s racism, Aboriginal segregation, the education of Aboriginal children, APB surveillance and everyday life ‘on the mission’. Family connections to four Aborigines reserves incite closer inspection of my grandmother Edith Cowan’s birthplace, Nymboida Aborigines Reserve; my great-grandparents Gus and Lena Bostock’s time living at Ukerebagh Island Aborigines Reserve on the Tweed River; my grandfather Henry’s birthplace at Dunoon Aborigines Reserve near Lismore; and Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve (AKA Box Ridge Mission), near Coraki.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 75.

Chapter 3's title is 'Work and Movement on the Landscape' and it spans 1934–1944. My grandparents' lives after they married and left the Aborigines reserve are examined. This timeframe also covers the APB's transition to become the AWB. I use my great-grandfather Sam Anderson's and my grandparents Henry and Evelyn Anderson's APB/AWB files to provide insight into the incredible surveillance experienced by them. Their AWB files reveal bureaucratic red tape and astonishing incompetence. I reveal how the inconsistency of Family Endowment payments seriously impacted the everyday lives of my grandparents. After my grandmother deserted her husband and her children, my grandfather placed my mother and her sisters at Box Ridge Reserve to be looked after while he found work. The chapter ends with the heightened surveillance and harassment my grandfather experienced as a single father, the sudden removal of his children from the reserve and his evacuation from the country to the city.

Chapter 4 is called 'Exodus off Mission and Country' and covers 1944–1955. Of all the chapters in this thesis, this one features the most archival material. Again my grandfather Henry Anderson's AWB files are accessed. These files reveal the incredible extent of the harassment and surveillance experienced by my grandfather Henry at the hands of the bureaucrats of the AWB. Fed up with their mind-boggling attempts to control his life and their continued surveillance and harassment, Henry, so like many other Aboriginal people from the country, migrated to Sydney, drawn by the employment opportunities in Redfern's inner-city factories. He and my grandmother were part of the 'first wave' of Aborigines arriving in Redfern in Sydney and many more followed.

Chapter 5's title is 'Youth and Modernity in the City', exploring from 1955–1972. It is about how Aboriginal people connected with each other in Redfern. It was the beginning of the formation of Aboriginal organisations. This chapter highlights the work of the Charles Perkins Foundation and other Aboriginal organisations who looked after the interests and well-being of Aboriginal families in the city, including mine. An examination of the Foundation's work reveals that they went beyond meeting the needs of the people, and so I coined the phrase 'social upliftment' to describe how I saw their work as having much greater significance than just social work.

Chapter 6 is called 'Radicalisation, Creative Expression and Aboriginal Voice' and spans 1972–2002. Where the previous chapter explored the lives of Aboriginal people in Redfern, their organisations and social lives, this chapter examines the reasons why the young

Aboriginal population became radicalised and involved in politics, protests and Land Rights demonstrations. Aboriginal creative expression was birthed in Redfern, and later there was a sudden growth in Aboriginal literature across several genres. Highlighted here are my family members' contribution to this surge in Aboriginal storytelling.

Chapter 7 is my own *Ego-histoire*. It is the story of my life which began in 1964, and it brings this thesis into the present. This kind of autobiographical writing style was defined by French historian Pierre Nora and illuminates the subtle nuances and differences between autobiography and *ego-histoire*. This chapter is about reflections of my life, and I incorporated into my autobiography the theoretical components of *ego-histoire* to illustrate how they can elevate and enhance autobiographical history writing.



## Chapter 1: Bundjalung Beginnings, 1882–1911

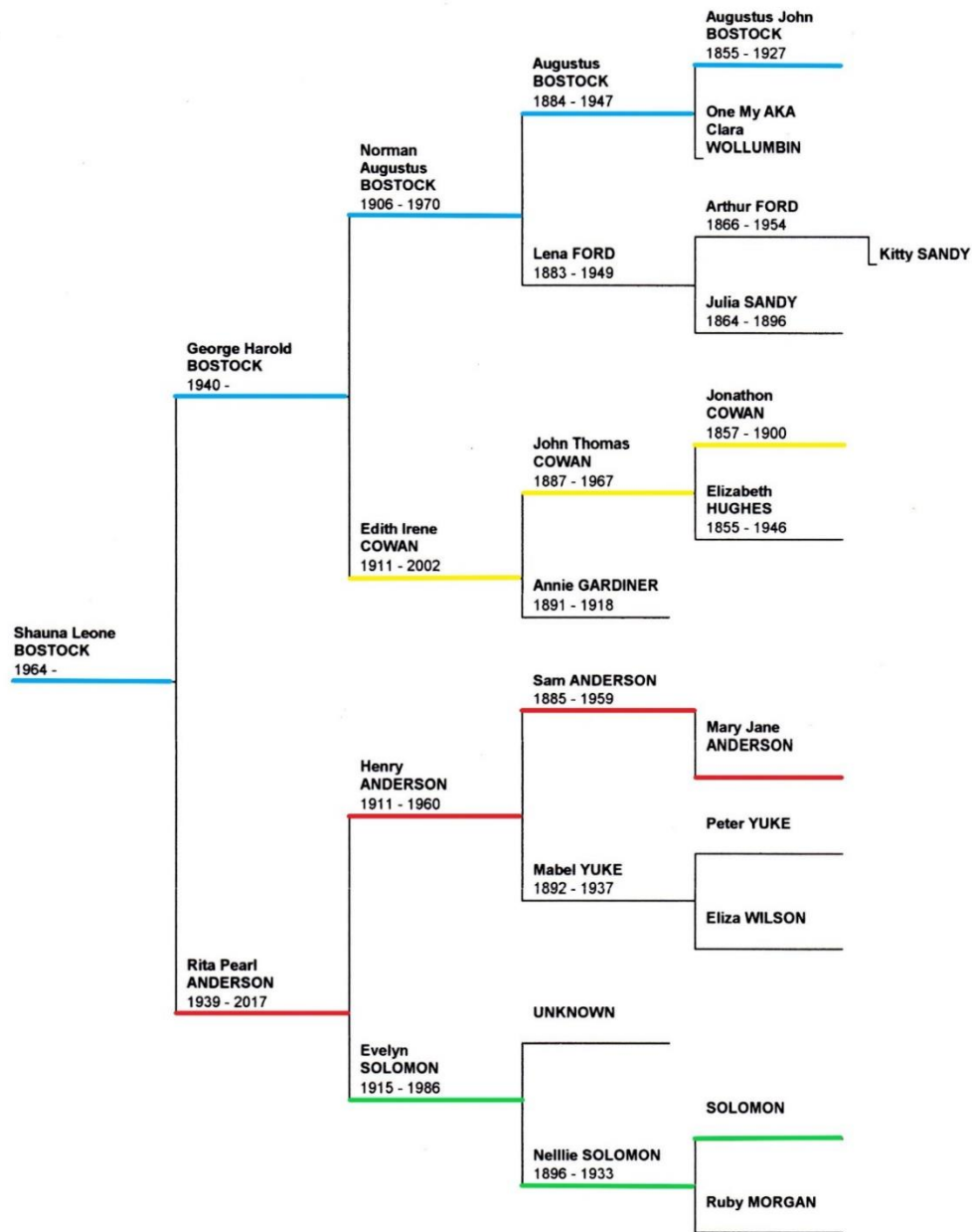


**Figure 1: My family tree from my generation to my great-great-grandparents (with one third-great-grandparent)**

Note: My four grandparents' lines, the Bostocks (blue), Cowans (yellow), Andersons (red) and Solomons (green), are coloured.

The full-blooded aborigine is vastly superior to the half caste. In intelligence, physique, humour and reliability – I have known few exceptions. The reason undoubtedly is because only the worst type of each race come together in physical union. There are many people who advocate intermarriage. It is sheer madness. I have heard it even from the pulpit. Show me the minister who would like his daughter to

marry an aborigine, or his son a black gin. Nature seems to scream out – ‘Don’t do it!’

—Retired Pastoralist Cunningham Henderson, 1946, aged 81.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 The Origins of My Four Grandparents’ Family Lines

This chapter begins in 1882, because that is as far back as my Aboriginal family history can go in the written historic record, to just after European settlement of northern NSW. The initial goal of this chapter was to find the beginning of each of my four grandparents’ family lines and trace them through time to 1911, the year of birth of both my paternal grandmother and my maternal grandfather. In the process, and as the above quotation hints, I also examine settler attitudes towards Aborigines and interracial marriage. This chapter could also be considered an exploration of humanity and inhumanity during the colonisation of Bundjalung Country.

I have made the preceding family tree chart (Figure 1) to assist the reader in understanding the relationships that my family members have to each other. This is an overall family tree with my generation on the left, then columns of my parents’, grandparents’, great-grandparents’ and great-great-grandparents’ generations from left to right (with Kitty Sandy being the only third-great-grandparent I could locate). I have colour-coded my four grandparents’ family lines. Three of my four grandparents’ family lines descend from interracial relationships.

In her book, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia*, Ann McGrath notes that present-day national histories still tend to portray distinctly separate coloniser and colonised pasts, and aspects of our national story have only partially been told. McGrath argues there is a forgetting of entangled histories and an unwillingness to acknowledge that, for generations, coloniser and colonised had sex, courted and married each other. But by examining the *longue durée*, we can see that the histories of coloniser and

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<sup>1</sup> Cunningham Henderson, ‘Main Camp Reminiscences, 1864-1950, with Miscellaneous Writings, Manuscript Number 910761, M.L.M.S.S 1863’, in *Manuscript Collection* (Sydney, NSW: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, 1864–1950). See also, Cunningham Henderson, ‘Australian Aborigines, by Cunningham Henderson “Mynumi”, Coraki, New South Wales, 1864-1950’, ed. Jack Hart (Tweed Heads, NSW: Tweed Heads Historical Society Inc., 1864–1950), 17. I have referenced both the Mitchell Library’s and Tweed Heads Historical Society’s copies of Henderson’s Reminiscences because both are missing chunks of writing, but when combined they fill in each other’s missing sections. See also, ‘Cunningham Henderson (Obituary) 1864-1953’, *Pastoral Review and Graziers’ Record* (Armidale, NSW: Monthly 1913–1977), 19 January 1954. Henderson’s obituary in the *Pastoral Review and Graziers’ Record* states that he wrote his autobiography in 1946 at the age of 81.

colonised are intimately interwoven.<sup>2</sup> Both the Bostock and the Anderson family originate from the marriage and ‘physical union’ of a white-Australian and an Aboriginal woman, the Solomon family originate from an Indigenous couple and the Cowan family originate from the marriage of an Aboriginal man and a white-Australian woman. So, contrary to Mr Henderson’s ideas about nature and social and ‘physical’ propriety, my ancestors certainly *did* do it:

**The Bostock family** descend from a white-Australian, Augustus John Bostock, who married a traditional Bundjalung woman, believed to be a ‘full-blood’ from Wollumbin/Mt Warning called One My. Her name is recorded on his death certificate as ‘One My otherwise Clara Wolumbin’.<sup>3</sup>

**The Anderson family** originated from the union of a white-Australian believed to be called Samuel Anderson and a ‘full-blood’ Wakka-Wakka woman originally from Crows Nest near Esk, Queensland. Her traditional ‘native’ name was listed as *Bunjue*, but later she was known as Mary Jane.<sup>4</sup>

**The Cowan family** originated in the Grafton area can be traced back to a Bundjalung man called Jonathan Cowan who married a white-Australian woman called Elizabeth Hughes.<sup>5</sup>

**The Solomon family** can be traced back to an Aboriginal ‘full-blood’ couple, Ruby and Solomon, who were a married couple at Runnymede/Kyogle Aborigines Reserve.<sup>6</sup>

The starting point of my genealogical family history research was collecting official BDMs on a large number of ancestors. The assembled collection of BDMs were used to build a genealogical framework on which the academic family history was constructed. BDMs provide numerous pieces of information other than just the date of the event. Apart from information about when the ancestor was born, who their parents were, who their siblings were, who they married and when they died, extra information on BDMs includes places where people were

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<sup>2</sup> Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 5–6.

<sup>3</sup> QLD Government, ‘Death Certificate for Augustus John Bostock, 24 August 1927, No. 1927/2219’ (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1927). One My/Clara’s surname is spelled with a single ‘l’ (Wolumbin), but unless directly citing the text of this certificate, I use the correct spelling of ‘Wollumbin’ in all other references to her.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Habermann, *Deebing Creek & Purga Missions 1892-1948* (Ipswich, QLD: Council of the City of Ipswich, 2003), 31. Mary Jane is recorded as an inmate of Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve. I highlight the word ‘native’ because that is how the records at Deebing Creek illustrated traditional names.

<sup>5</sup> NSW Government, ‘Marriage Certificate for Jonathan Cowan & Elizabeth Hughes, 31 Oct. 1883, No. M40521’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1883).

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Phillips, ‘An Introduction to the Study of the Iso-Haem-Agglutination Reactions of the Blood of Australian Aborigines’, *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (7 April 1928): 432.

born, churches where people married, cemeteries where people were buried, witnesses to and informants of these events, and even medical causes of deaths.

Where information about an ancestor or ancestor's family group is unknown, cross-checking with other BDMs can help find the basis for a fair assumption to be made. For example, if there is no birth certificate for an ancestor, then subtracting their age at marriage from the year of their marriage provides an approximate year of birth. Additionally, if a family group's first-born child is born in one location, then the next three children are born at another distant location, the time of the family's move can be assumed to be somewhere between the first and second children's birth dates. By knowing BDM information about my ancestors, situating them in family tree charts and finding photographs of them—as well as mapping their travels; reading archives about them; knowing the changes to their lifestyle that came with colonisation; and knowing the historical, social and political climate of their times—we can gain a very clear picture of their lived experience through each decade. In this chapter, I argue that family history research is in fact a way to counteract my Aboriginal ancestors' subordination and erasure so that, rather than being a nameless part of the collective noun called 'Aborigines', their individual humanity is restored.

## 1.2 The Bostock Family

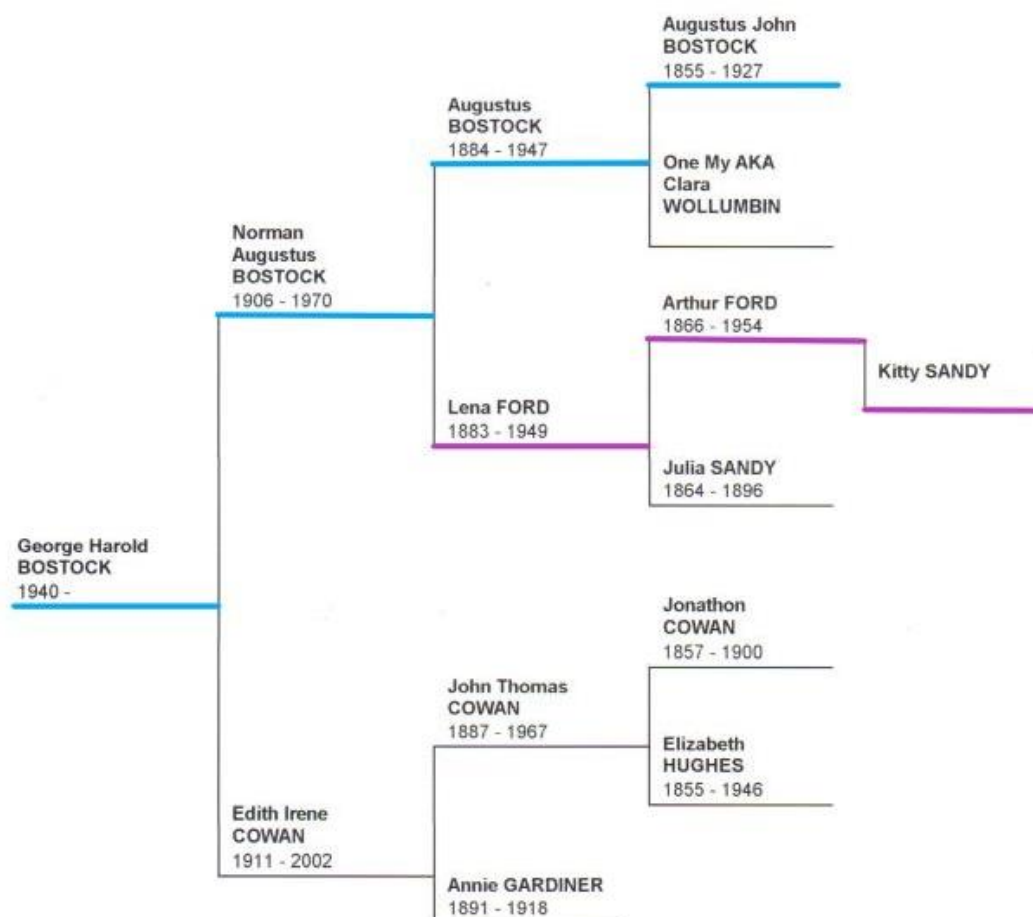


**Figure 2: My father George Bostock's paternal connection to the Bostock family line**

Note: The Bostock family line (blue) connects with the Ford family line (purple) by the marriage of one of George Bostock's grandparents.

### 1.2.1 One My (AKA Clara Wollumbin)

Up until finding more records fairly recently, we only ever knew of my great-great-grandmother as 'Noumie' (Uncle Gerry pronounce it 'Now-mee') from her son's marriage certificate where the parents of the groom were recorded as 'Augustus John Bostock and Noumie' (see Figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> NSW Government, 'Marriage Certificate for Augustus Bostock & Lena Ford, 21 Nov. 1905, No. 1905/010012' (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1905). 'Noumie' is believed to be a transcription error for 'One My'.

| Conjugal status | Birthplace               | Age         | Father's name, mother's name and maiden surname | Father's occupation |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bachelors       | Tweed River<br>New Wales | Years<br>21 | Augustus John Bostock<br>Noumie (Native)        | Laborer             |
| Spinster        | Southport<br>Queensland  | 22          | Arthur Ford<br>Julia Sandy                      | Farmer              |

This Marriage was solemnized between us { Augustus Bostock  
Lena Ford } By me, Nicol Clarence Bell  
Officiating Minister of Religion.

In the presence of us { Ina Bostock  
Emma Bell } RECEIVED and Registered by me, this 23rd  
day of November 1905.  
W. Smith District Registrar.

Before accepting copies, sight unaltered original. The original has a coloured background.

REGISTRY OF BIRTHS  
DEATHS AND MARRIAGES  
SYDNEY 11 Feb 2008

I hereby certify that this is a true copy of particulars recorded in a Register in the State of New South Wales, in the Commonwealth of Australia

Greg Cerry

**Figure 3: Marriage Certificate for Augustus Bostock and Lena Ford**

Note: Augustus Bostock's parents are named as 'Augustus John Bostock' and 'Noumie (Native)'.

I became fascinated with finding out more about the life and times of the Aboriginal matriarch of the Bostock family, One My/Clara Wollumbin, who married Augustus John Bostock and gave birth to Augustus Bostock Jnr (AKA Gus). I believe that the recording of her name above as 'Noumie' was a transcription error for her true name of 'One My'. I say this because her children's baptism register states her name as 'Wonmie' and her granddaughter was named 'Meta Julia Onemy Bostock' after her aunt and both her grandmothers.<sup>8</sup>

My Uncle Gerry Bostock told me that 'One-My' was just blackfella talk for 'first born'. He said English was a second language for my ancestors and they spoke in simple, broken English in those days. He told me that 'One-My' meant 'first born', 'Two-My' meant 'second born' and so on. Uncle rationalised this by informing me that a 'mie' in the Bundjalung language means sleeping place, dwelling, or gunya. This statement is backed up by a 1925 newspaper

<sup>8</sup> Anglican Church of Australia, 'Baptism Register: Parish of Tweed River, County of Rous in the Year 1894, No. 200, 1st November 1894, Augustus Bostock' (13 Grafton Street, NSW: Grafton Diocese of the Anglican Church, 1894), 13; QLD. Government, 'Birth Certificate for Meta Julia Onemy Bostock, 11th Nov. 1910, No. 1910/7322' (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1910).

reporter's interview with one of the oldest surviving pioneers of the Byron Bay district, Mr William Flick, who said that the local Aborigines 'would rather live in their hut or "gunyah" or "mie-mies" than a house'.<sup>9</sup>

There is seemingly a correlation here of Aboriginal family oral history with non-Indigenous knowledge, but I have recently discovered that we cannot take that at face value because, besides the written historic record and Aboriginal oral history, there is another realm of Aboriginal history that is just as important. In modern times, researchers can find both correlations and contradictions within three realms of knowledge in Aboriginal history, the written historic record, Aboriginal oral history and Aboriginal cultural knowledge.

For example, I assumed the words 'otherwise Clara Wolumbin' on Augustus John's death certificate (see Figure 4) was an attempt to accommodate the white man's practice of using a first name and a surname. This is reasoned from the knowledge that the Bundjalung name for Mt Warning is Wollumbin, and my great-great-grandmother was from the Wollumbin group.

| Queensland<br>DEATH CERTIFICATE                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                              | 6805621<br>REGISTRATION NUMBER<br>1927/ 2219 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>DECEASED</b><br>Name and surname . . . . .<br>Occupation . . . . .<br>Sex and Age . . . . .<br>Date of Death . . . . .<br>Place of Death . . . . .<br>Where born and, if not born in Australia,<br>period of residence in Australia . . . . . | Augustus John Bostock<br>Old Age Pensioner<br>24 August 1927<br>Brisbane Hospital<br>Campbell Town, Tasmania |                                              |
| <b>PARENTS</b><br>Name and surname of father . . . . .<br>Occupation . . . . .<br>Name and maiden surname of mother . . . . .                                                                                                                    | Thomas Edward Bostock<br>Landholder<br>Catherine Jane Mackersey                                              |                                              |
| <b>MARRIAGE(S)</b><br>Where, at what age and to whom<br>deceased was married . . . . .                                                                                                                                                           | Tweed River, New South Wales, about 27<br><i>One My otherwise Clara Wolumbin</i>                             |                                              |
| <b>CHILDREN</b><br>Names and ages . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Augustus 43 years<br>3 females deceased<br>1 male deceased                                                   |                                              |
| <b>MEDICAL</b><br>Cause of death . . . . .                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Senile dementia Cardiac failure                                                                              |                                              |

**Figure 4: Augustus John Bostock's Death Certificate**

Note: His Death Certificate states he was married at Tweed River, at about 27 years old, to 'One My otherwise Clara Wolumbin' (circled in red).

### 1.2.2 Bundjalung Tribes/Clans/Groups

In the Tweed River valley, Mt Warning is a spectacular mountain situated 30 kilometres from the coastline. Keats wrote that the Nganduwal people (the name of the Bundjalung group that

<sup>9</sup> Claude A. Mann, 'A Dying Race: Authentic Stories of Australian Aborigines: Mr W. M. Flick's Experiences: Peace and War', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 25 April 1925, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93484947>.

lived on and around the mountain) looked upon it as ‘a great main central sacred site and it was known to them as Wollumbin. Wollumbin, so legend has it, was the Spiritual domicile of ancestral warriors of the Nganduwal people. Wollumbin was the legendary name of a foremost warrior’.<sup>10</sup> I was interested in Keats’s use of the name Nganduwal and wanted to know more about know the names and boundaries of different groups within Bundjalung Country.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, I wanted to know which tribe or clan group of the Bundjalung people we were descended from; as in, ‘We’re from the \_\_\_\_\_ tribe of the Bundjalung Nation’, like naming Bundjalung Country as the state and a name for the more specific tribe/clan group as the post code.<sup>12</sup> This proved to be problematic because there are many maps available, each one depicting conflicting boundaries (see Figure 5). Adding to this confusion is the diversity of the names of Aboriginal groups and the spelling of these names. Finally, the omission and inclusion of Aboriginal groups varies across different studies of the Bundjalung people. Even today there continues to be contention about group boundaries, especially in the arena of Native Title. Keats stated that Aboriginal people agreed on boundaries thousands of years ago ‘based on the natural geographic phenomena of mountains rivers and creeks; and where there was more unavoidable boundaries in open terrain, these were usually of a very short delineation and were signified by boundary marks on rocks and trees’.<sup>13</sup> The six maps in Figure 5 (split across two pages) record the variety of group boundaries recorded by white-Australian researchers.

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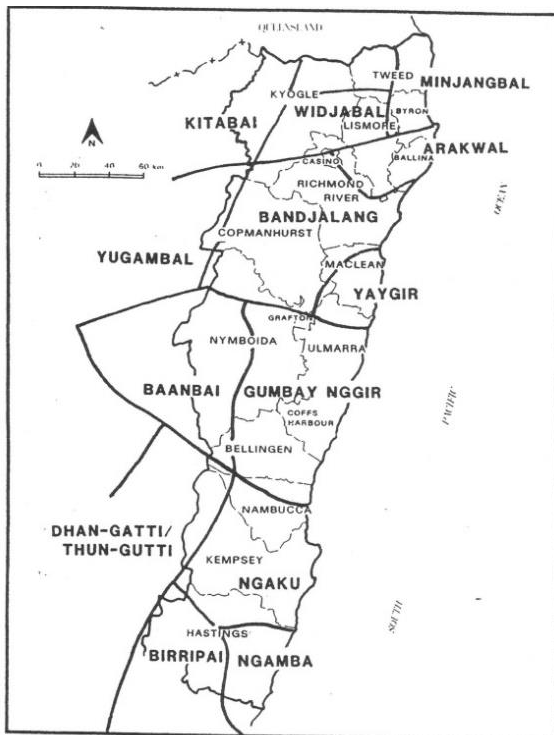
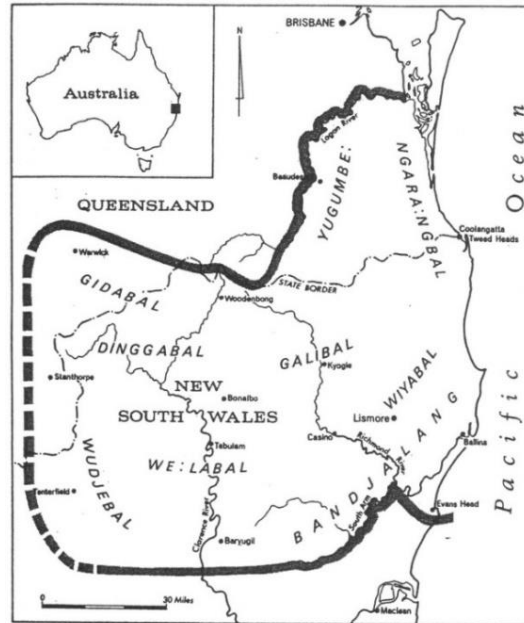
<sup>10</sup> N. C. Keats, *Wollumbin: The Creation and Early Habitation of the Tweed, Brunswick, and Richmond Rivers of NSW* (Tweed Heads, NSW: Tweed Heads Historical Society Inc., 1988), 49.

<sup>11</sup> I was interested in Keats’s use of the name ‘Nganduwal’ and wanted to know more about know the names and boundaries of different groups within Bundjalung Country.

<sup>12</sup> The Australian ‘post code’ is a four-digit number allocated to postal areas all over Australia. It is equivalent to the five-digit ‘zip code’ in the United States.

<sup>13</sup> Keats, *Wollumbin*, 16.





**Four of the six maps whose details appear on the following page (see p. 32).**

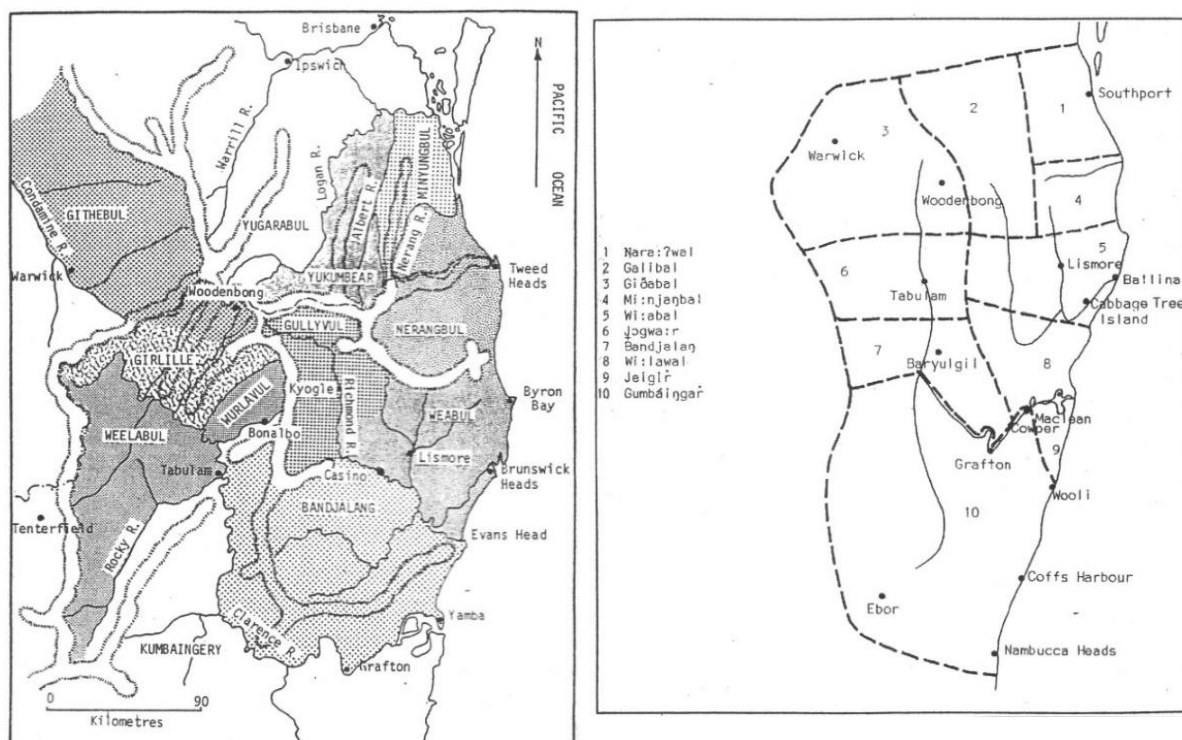


**Figure 5: Six maps of the various Bundjalung tribe/group boundaries recorded by white-Australian researchers**

Note: Reading from left to right, the maps are by Smythe (1945),<sup>14</sup> Hausfeld (1960),<sup>15</sup> Crowley (1971),<sup>16</sup> Geytenbeek and Geytenbeek (1971),<sup>17</sup> Tindale (1974),<sup>18</sup> Keats (1988)<sup>19</sup> and the NSW Aboriginal Legal Service (1993).<sup>20</sup>

In this thesis, I have decided to use Keats's map of Bundjalung Country (see Figure 6). Keats also mapped pastoral runs that are relevant to this thesis and I have used this map and shaded the area called 'The Big Scrub', which I will refer to later. According to Crowley and Keats, there are seven group dialect territories of the Bundjalung people of the Richmond, Brunswick

<sup>14</sup> W.A. Smythe, 'Appendix Map Bandjalang Grammar' (1945), in *The Middle Dialects of Bandjalang*, edited by T. Crowley (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Australian University Press, 1978).

<sup>15</sup> R.G. Hausfeld, 'Yugambeh-Bundjalung Dialects Map', in *Dictionary of Yugambeh Including Neighbouring Dialects*, edited by M. C. Sharpe (Canberra, ACT: Pacific Linguistics Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1960).

<sup>16</sup> T. Crowley, *The Middle Dialects of the Bandjalang* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> B. Geytenbeek and H. Geytenbeek, 'Gidabal Grammar Dictionary', in *The Summer Institute of Linguistics Australian Aboriginal Studies* 43, Linguistic Series No. 17 (Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> N.B. Tindale, 'Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: North Coast Extract Map' (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University, 1974).

<sup>19</sup> Keats, *Wollumbin*.

<sup>20</sup> New South Wales Aboriginal Legal Service, 'Map of the Bundjalung Sovereignty Claim Area', *Northern Star Newspaper*, 8 July 1993 (accompanying article by Doug Parrington).

and Tweed Rivers. They are Nganduwal, Galibal, Birihi/Birihnbal, Bandjalang, Wiyabal, Nyangbal and Minyanbal.<sup>21</sup> I find these dialect/tribal/clan group names to be too underdetermined in these maps, and so I prefer instead to use the more definitive words ‘Wollumbin group’ as my primary description of my ancestors, because there is no contention on the word ‘Wollumbin’ or its location. For references to other family members, I have decided to just refer to them as Bundjalung, because the boundaries and names are not as certain as the mountain.

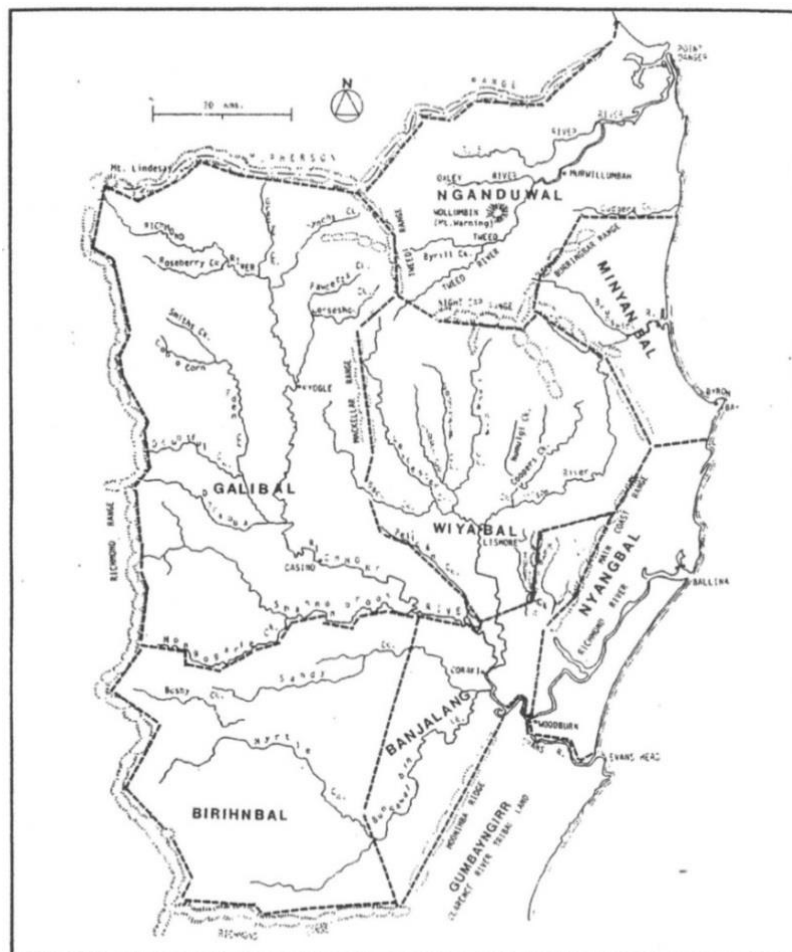


Figure 6: Keats's (1988) Conception of *Wollumbin*<sup>22</sup>

### 1.2.3 Wollumbin Johnny

Wollumbin Johnny was the name of the leader of the Wollumbin people. Around 2009, my late Uncle Gerry told me he was certain that our family were related to Wollumbin Johnny, but other than my great-great-grandmother's name being recorded as ‘One My otherwise Clara

<sup>21</sup> Keats, *Wollumbin*, 16–17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Wollumbin', I had not found any definitive evidence that linked us to him. Wollumbin Johnny was often called 'King Wollumbin Johnny' by the early settlers and he was highly regarded. A local history enthusiast by the name of J.J. Byrne wrote an article for the *Tweed Daily* that described Wollumbin Johnny as 'the Kings of Kings' and 'the greatest of all the kings', and he differentiated Wollumbin Johnny from other elders who were awarded their titles by the whites. Byrne narrated, 'King Johnnie was of good appearance, being about 5ft 11 in height, of dignified mien, athletic, of a quiet temper, low voiced and kind. He was looked up to by his people and evoked considerable respect from the whites'.<sup>23</sup> The first reference to Wollumbin Johnny appears in a letter written by early pioneer Joshua Bray to his fiancé Gertrude in 1863.<sup>24</sup> Joshua Bray was one of the first non-Indigenous men to settle on the Rous River, and it was Wollumbin Johnny who guided Bray to land that later became known as the Walumban Run. The latest reference I could find about Wollumbin Johnny was a newspaper article written in 1885.<sup>25</sup>

A scan of a photograph of Wollumbin Johnny (see Figure 7) was given to me by Joshua Bray's great-granddaughter, Mrs Beverly Fairley, after she sought permission from the photograph's owner, her very elderly Aunt, Mrs Noella Elworthy (nee Bray). At the time, Mrs Elworthy was the only surviving grandchild of Joshua Bray. Although I forget when the conversation took place, I do not think I will ever forget what a distant relative and friend of mine, Aboriginal anthropologist Michael Aird, said when I mentioned to him that 'we might be related to Wollumbin Johnny'. He broke into laughter and responded dryly, 'Every blackfella within a hundred-kilometre radius of the mountain wants to be related to Johnny!'<sup>26</sup>

Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath stated that in family history research, 'the possibility of finding a famous or infamous ancestor can spark great interest'. Having a connection to British royalty is coveted by English family history researchers and 'Americans have long enjoyed discovering connections with the founding *Mayflower* arrivals'. In Australia, trends have changed from wanting the same kind of ancestors as the English, such as royal or titled gentry, to becoming obsessed with finding a convict relative.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> J.J. Byrne, 'Hundreds of Blacks Lived on the Tweed', *Tweed Daily* (Murwillumbah, NSW: 1914–1949), 18 December 1945, 2, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/192801988>.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Kinsman, *Joshua Bray: A Tweed Valley Pioneer* (Chatswood, NSW: Bannerman Bros., 2007) 16.

<sup>25</sup> 'Settlement on the Tweed', *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* (NSW: 1871–1912), 21 November 1885, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/162818771>.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Aird, Personal Conversation, circa 2009/2010.

<sup>27</sup> Curthoys and McGrath, *How To Write History*, 38–39.

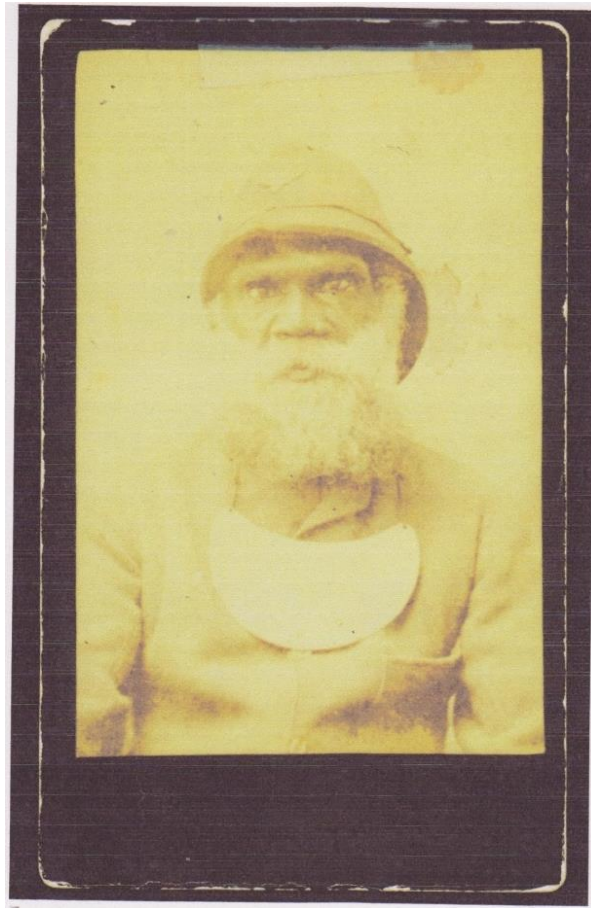


**Figure 7: Wollumbin Johnny, known as ‘King Wollumbin Johnny’ by the Tweed Valley Pioneers<sup>28</sup>**

I would say that the Australian Aboriginal equivalent would be finding out that one of your ancestors was a great warrior, cleverfella or kurradji, respected elder, freedom fighter, or resistance leader.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Reproduced with kind permission from the descendants of Tweed Pioneer Joshua Bray, Mrs Noella Elworthy and Ms Beverly Fairley.

<sup>29</sup> A ‘Cleverfella’ or ‘Kurradji’ are Aboriginal terms used to describe what other Indigenous Peoples, such as the Native Americans, would call a ‘Shaman’ or ‘Medicine Man’. They were intuitive, shamanic healers, keepers of Spiritual knowledge, and communicators with the metaphysical ancestral realm.



**Figure 8: Wollumbin/Mt Warning<sup>30</sup>**

#### **1.2.4 Background to Augustus John Bostock's Conditional Purchase**

As I mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the earliest document I found pertaining to my ancestors was about Augustus John Bostock's land. When I first asked my father where our family came from, all he could tell me was that 'our mob were from the Tweed'.<sup>31</sup> I travelled to the Tweed Heads Historical Society and found a reference to Augustus John Bostock's land selection in 1882.<sup>32</sup> Later I found out that this land at the base of Wollumbin/Mt Warning was a selection of land known officially as a Conditional Purchase in accordance with the Crown Lands Acts.<sup>33</sup> The demand for free selection of land came after the gold rushes over two decades earlier when the diggings became less profitable. There was an influx of miners into rural areas and cities and they hoped to find the prosperity on the land that the gold rushes failed to award. Even while they were on the diggings, the miners held a vision of a future on the land. They were very vocal in political debates at the time and, while the Eureka Stockade

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<sup>30</sup> Photograph taken by me on one of my many visits to my family's ancestral home. Photograph now part of My Family Collection.

<sup>31</sup> He meant the Tweed River, which opens to the sea at Tweed Heads, nestled against the northern border of New South Wales and the southern border of Queensland.

<sup>32</sup> Bill Bainbridge, 'Tweed Valley Land Records 1868-1918 Pioneers/Individuals Recorded Per Entity as at 9/2/2008' (Tweed Heads, NSW: Tweed Heads Historical Society, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> NSW Government, 'Conditional Purchases - Augustus John Bostock CP82.201 [10/35310, 87/321] & CP 88.75 [10/17759, 91/50]', Crown Lands & Alienation Branch of the Lands Department (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1882 & 1888).

in 1854 called for an end to miner's licenses, the call to 'unlock the land' was equally determined. The growing Australian working class resented the hold that pastoralists had over vast amounts of land and demanded free selection of land that they could be 'entitled to own free-hold, if they could just meet low repayments and the residence qualifications' (the 'Conditional' element of Conditional Purchase).<sup>34</sup>

Because squatters increasingly began to regard these contested areas as property that belonged to them, when in fact they were only the licensed occupiers of the land, Governor Gipps attempted to regulate stations and runs in 1844. The *Imperial Wastelands Occupation Act of 1846* and the Orders in Council replaced earlier restrictions and, in 1847, only charged a £10 rent payment for 4,000 sheep and guaranteed an eight- or 14-year tenure. This system remained in place until the *Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1861* and *Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1861*, both known as the Robertson Land Acts after John Robertson, then premier of NSW.<sup>35</sup> The Robertson Land Acts were a new system of land occupation where all Crown Land, including that held on pastoral leases, was open to European settlers for 'free selection'.

### **1.2.5 Augustus John Bostock's Land**

It was under the *Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1861*, *Lands Act Amendment Act of 1875*, *Lands Act Amendment Act of 1880* and *Crown Lands Act of 1884* that my great-great-grandfather Augustus John Bostock attempted to own land at the base of Wollumbin/Mt Warning. The first attempt to own 40 acres was recorded in 1882. It was selected and officially applied for with a deposit of £10, paid on 16 November 1882 and received by the Agent for the Sale of Crown Lands, Mr Joshua Bray.<sup>36</sup>

Augustus John Bostock was required under the Crown Lands Act to meet certain conditions. Although he built a hut, fenced the land and felled trees, there are reports from the district inspectors that he was not resident on the land at the time of some inspections. The land was therefore declared abandoned by the selector and, consequently, the forfeiture was made public

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<sup>34</sup> Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 69.

<sup>35</sup> Rodney Harrison, *Shared Landscapes: Archaeologies of Attachment and the Pastoral Industry in New South Wales* (Sydney, NSW: University of Sydney Press, 2004), 28–29.

<sup>36</sup> NSW Government, 'Conditional Purchases, Augustus John Bostock'.



in the Government Gazette on 24 December 1886.<sup>37</sup> More records reveal that, in 1888, Augustus John Bostock repurchase the same 40 acres of land of his previous Conditional Purchase (Portion 3) as well as an adjacent Conditional Purchase of 40 acres of land (Portion 9), making a total of 80 acres of land at the same location (see Figure 9). In 1890, these Conditional Purchases were again forfeited due to the conditions of residence not being met.<sup>38</sup>

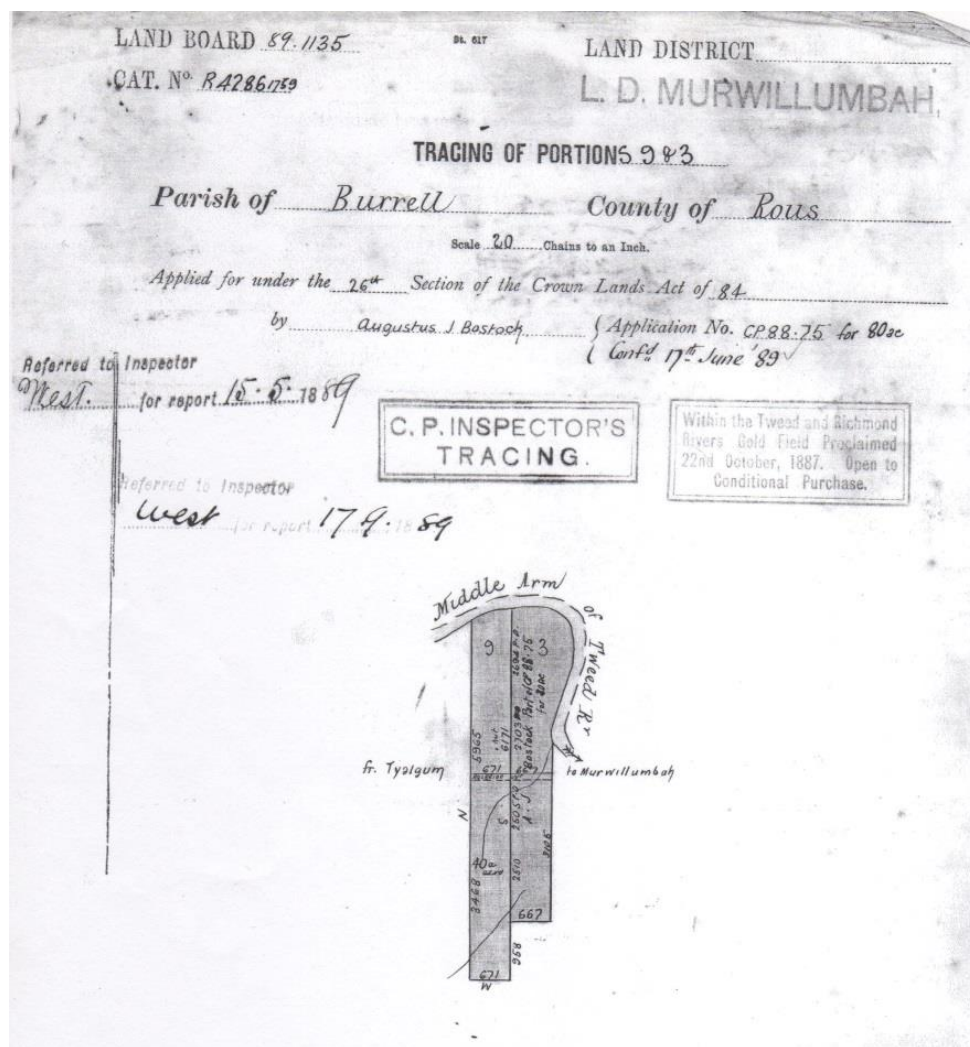






**Figure 10: A broad aerial view of the location of Augustus John Bostock's Conditional Purchase<sup>39</sup>**

It is interesting to note that the location of Augustus John Bostock's conditional purchases are near Wollumbin Creek on the road to Tyalgum. This location was one of places identified by settler Mr Lever as being one of the original camps of the traditional Wollumbin/Tweed Aborigines.<sup>40</sup> The northern Bundjalung Knowledge Holder confirmed there was a 'big camp there and a few others at Tyalgum'.

On its own, the fact that Augustus John Bostock married One My at a time when such interracial marriage was a rare occurrence is very interesting. However, the additional information that on two separate occasions he tried to secure land located at the traditional camp of his wife's people—and the fact that no further record can be found of an attempt to secure land elsewhere after the forfeiture—led me to wonder if he was sympathetic or close to his wife's people, the Wollumbin group.

### **1.2.6 Family Life for Augustus John and One My**

As previously mentioned, Augustus John Bostock's Conditional Purchases were forfeited because inspectors reported that he did not reside on the land. This condition seems unfair,

<sup>39</sup> Image generated using Google Earth.

<sup>40</sup> F.J. Lever, 'Letter to Mr R. Whittle About the original Aboriginal Camps on the Tweed River Basin' (Tweed Heads, NSW: Tweed Heads & District Historical Society, 1964).

because he had to move around for work to pay for his purchase of land. During the years of his Conditional Purchases from 1882–1890, the Crown Lands Inspector and a police constable reported in 1882 that Augustus John Bostock was ‘working on the South Arm at Murray’s’; in 1888 he had ‘another house 6 miles away from where he lives’; in November 1888 he was ‘in the employment of Mr Langley’; in 1889 ‘he was living at the Tweed’; and at the end of his second Conditional Purchase in 1890 he ‘left the Tweed and is at home on the Mid Arm (of the Tweed River) near Kelly’s’.<sup>41</sup> To provide an idea of the incredible speed of settler encroachment on Bundjalung Country, between 1880 and 1889 on One My’s country, there were 683 Conditional Purchases sold, and most of the accessible land to the east and north of Murwillumbah had already been taken up by settlers.<sup>42</sup> Between 1900 and 1909, the number of Conditional Purchases had nearly doubled to 1,224.<sup>43</sup> In 1895, Mary Bundock of Wiangarie Station (to the southwest of Wollumbin/Mt Warning) commented on the detrimental effect this rapid encroachment had on young, local Aboriginal men. Her acute observations sadly emphasised the changes that came to Aboriginal culture with settlement and she lamented, ‘they do not use the spear or the boomerang as their fathers did. They work spasmodically on the stations and like riding and work amongst the cattle, but drink and gambling are their curses’. Referring to all of the Aborigines on Wiangarie Station with empathy and inclusion she stated, ‘our tribe is fading away, though we do all we can to save them. I fear another generation will see few or any left’.<sup>44</sup>

### 1.2.7 Christian Baptisms Found

The chance of finding records of the births of Aboriginal ancestors diminishes past my parents’ generation. Of my four Aboriginal grandparents, I have managed to locate only one birth certificate. The birth years of my other three grandparents was calculated by subtracting the age that they identified at the time they were married from the year the marriage took place. The same can be said for all of my great-grandparents except Gus Bostock. He has no birth certificate, but I was very lucky to find another definitive record.

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<sup>41</sup> NSW Government, ‘Conditional Purchases, Augustus John Bostock’.

<sup>42</sup> H.W. Denning, *Historical Manuscripts of the Tweed* (Murwillumbah, NSW: Tweed Shire Council Civic & Cultural Centre, 1988) 56–57.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Bundock, ‘Notes on the Richmond River Blacks’, in *Papers of the Bundock Family of Wyangarie Station, Richmond River, ca. 1835-1898, Microfilm CY2227, A6939 Original Call Number* (Sydney, NSW: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, 1835–1898).

Some years ago, the Anglican Diocese of Grafton begun digitising their historic registers and my friend Ian Fox brought my attention to entries of Augustus and Meta Bostock's baptisms in their 1894 Baptisms Register.<sup>45</sup> Before this, I had never heard of a sibling called Meta, so I travelled interstate to the town of Grafton to see if I could get photocopies from the actual register. The Reverend was inconvenienced by my request, and so the heavy, dusty, smelly book was gracelessly plonked on the table before me, but a church volunteer was kind enough to photocopy both pages for me.

Upon seeing the pages of the register, I was struck by how many baptisms Reverend Reynolds had done on one day, 1 November 1894. My father told me that the other children who were baptised on that day were Aboriginal or Islander, because he recognised their surnames as families that he had grown up with. Further enquiries revealed that Reverend Reynolds did a 'bulk baptism'. A bulk baptism was explained to me as a kind of public call, where Reverend Reynolds put the word out to the local Aboriginal and Islander people to bring their children in to be baptised all at once. Instead of a Monty Python-style (Black Plague) 'Bring out yer dead!' call, Reverend Reynolds put out a racial, albeit Christian, call.

Reverend Reynolds probably had many miles to cover in the diocese, and so I am guessing that bulk baptisms were infrequent events with not just babies present. Meta was 11 years old when baptised and Gus was 10. (Augustus Jnr was known as 'Gus' later in life. We refer to Augustus Jnr as 'Gus' to better differentiate him from his father, Augustus John Bostock.) Reverend Reynolds recorded their parents' names as 'Augustus J & Wonmie' (see Figure 11).

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<sup>45</sup> Anglican Church of Australia, 'Baptism Register Entry for Augustus Bostock, 1<sup>st</sup> Nov., 1894', in *Baptism Administered in the Parish off Tweed River, County of Rous in the Year 1894* (13 Grafton Street, NSW: Grafton Diocese of the Anglican Church, 1894), 13; Anglican Church of Australia, 'Baptism Register Entry for Meta Bostock, 1<sup>st</sup> Nov., 1894', in *Baptism Administered in the Parish off Tweed River, County of Rous in the Year 1894* (13 Grafton Street, NSW: Grafton Diocese of the Anglican Church, 1894), 14.

| PAGE 13                                                                                   |                |                         |                      |          |                    |                        |                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| BAPTISMS Administered in the Parish of Tweed River in the County of Ross in the Year 1894 |                |                         |                      |          |                    |                        |                                     |
| When Baptized.                                                                            | When Born.     | Child's Christian Name. | Parents' Names.      |          | Abode.             | Quality or Profession. | By whom the Ceremony was performed. |
|                                                                                           |                |                         | Christian.           | Surname. |                    |                        |                                     |
| 1897<br>2 November<br>1894                                                                |                | Charlie                 | Mannure              | Mannure  | labourer           | Y. C. Reynolds         | At St. Peter's Tweed River.         |
| 1898<br>1 November<br>1894                                                                |                | Louie                   | Nomie                | Nomie    | labourer           | Y. C. Reynolds         |                                     |
| 1898<br>1 November<br>1894                                                                |                | Jennie                  | Yipi                 | Yipi     |                    | Y. C. Reynolds         |                                     |
| 1898<br>1 November<br>1894                                                                |                | Maggie                  | Selokee              | Selokee  |                    | Y. C. Reynolds         |                                     |
| 1899<br>1 November<br>1894                                                                |                | Mary Ann                | Tanbern              | Tanbern  |                    | Y. C. Reynolds         |                                     |
| 1900<br>1 November<br>1894                                                                | May 20<br>1884 | Augustus<br>Nonmie      | Augustus J<br>Nonmie | Bostock  | Bungahora labourer | Y. C. Reynolds         |                                     |
| (Kanakas & Aborigines)                                                                    |                |                         |                      |          |                    |                        |                                     |

**Figure 11: Anglican Diocese of Grafton 1894 Baptism Register for Augustus Bostock Jnr**

Note: The page was folded to decrease the image's size and show Augustus's baptism at the bottom.

This was the fourth recorded name I had for my great-great-grandmother: Noumie, One My, Clara Wolumbin and Wonmie. Of all the children baptised that day by Reverend Reynolds, there are only a few parents' names recorded. Interestingly, Meta and Gus are the only children who have an actual date of birth recorded. I imagine this was because of Augustus John Bostock's education and the likelihood that the other parents could not read or write at that time in history. I note that Tommie and Maggie Selokee are recorded as parents too (see Figure 12). There are a number of Indigenous families in northern NSW and further south today with the 'Slockey' or 'Slockee' name. Reverend Reynolds seems to have spelled the South Sea Islander name phonetically as he heard it. South Sea Islander cane cutters intermarried with Aborigines in northern NSW and many families have that connection. I wondered if the two-syllable 'Slock-ey' family name had been Anglicised over time from its original three syllable 'Sel-o-kee' Islander sounding name. Interesting to note here is the power of the transcriptions

of white-Australians and the clergy in the retention or adaptation of Indigenous names for church records.<sup>46</sup>

PAGE 14

*BAPTISMS Administered in the Parish of Tweed River in the County of Ross in the Year 1894.*

| When Baptized.            | When Born.       | Child's Christian Name. | Parents' Names.       |                 | Abode. | Quality or Profession. | By whom the Ceremony was performed. |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                           |                  |                         | Christian.            | Surname.        |        |                        |                                     |
| 281<br>November 1<br>1894 | March 25<br>1883 | Meta                    | Augustus J<br>Bostock | Bungama Latauer |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |
| 282<br>November 1<br>1894 |                  | Lena                    |                       | Rose            |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |
| 283<br>November 1<br>1894 |                  | George                  | Tommy<br>+<br>Maggie  | Selokee         |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |
| 284<br>November 1<br>1894 |                  | Norman                  | Tommy<br>+<br>Maggie  | Selokee         |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |
| 285<br>November 1<br>1894 |                  | Ida                     | Tommy<br>+<br>Maggie  | Selokee         |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |
| 286<br>November 1<br>1894 |                  | Robert                  |                       | Mindaay         |        |                        | J. H. Reynolds                      |

**Figure 12: Anglican Diocese of Grafton 1894 Baptism Register for Meta Bostock**

In 1897, when Augustus Jnr (Gus) was 13, he was enrolled at Myora Aboriginal School on Stradbroke Island.<sup>47</sup> Further records for Gus could not be found until his wedding in 1905. Gus Bostock was 21 years old when he married 22 year old Lena Ford.

### 1.2.8 Gus and Lena

My great-grandparents on my father's side were Augustus Bostock Jnr, known as 'Gus', and Lena Ford (see the family tree charts in Figures 1 and 2). Lena was the daughter of Arthur Ford and Julia Sandy.<sup>48</sup> Remarkably, Julia gave birth to 11 children (including two sets of twins) before she died aged 32 years old. Julia's family were from the Beaudesert area, and a poignant

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> QLD Government, 'Myora Aboriginal School Admissions Register 1893-1941, Augustus Bostock in Student Enrolments List, a/45751' (Brisbane, QLD: Queensland State Archives, Queensland Government, 1897), <http://www.cifhs.com/qldrecords/edumyora1.html>. In this digitised record, he was not listed as oysterman. However, I travelled to the Stradbroke Island Museum and saw the handwritten original entry that shows him as an oysterman.

<sup>48</sup> NSW Government, 'Marriage of Augustus Bostock & Lena Ford, 21 Nov. 1905'.



discovery that I made during my research was that she was buried in the Aborigines cemetery located near the former Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station.

Only one grave marker exists in this cemetery today, a solitary headstone for my great-great-grandmother, Julia. A 1975 newspaper article titled 'Blacks Want "Relic" Back' describes how the local Beaudesert Aboriginal population wanted the burial ground at Deebing Creek and Julia Sandy's headstone to be classified as relics to be preserved and owned by the (Aboriginal) people. The newspaper article included a transcription of the headstone's engraving, 'In loving memory of Julia. Beloved wife of Arthur Ford. Died 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 1896. Aged 32 years'.<sup>49</sup> When Julia died, her oldest child Lena (my great-grandmother) was only 13 years old and she was left with seven siblings (an infant, a two-year old, a four-year old, five-year old twins, an eight-year old and a 12-year old) to care for, while her father no doubt had to find work to survive. She had already experienced the loss of three of her siblings at various ages.<sup>50</sup> I doubt that she would have been completely alone and imagine the Aunties and Beaudesert Aboriginal community would have come in to help where possible.

A year after her mother died, Lena's father Arthur Ford married Eva Williams. Arthur was 31 and Eva was 19, just five years older than his daughter Lena. Arthur and Eva went on to have 14 more children. So my great-great-grandfather, Arthur Ford, was the father of 24 children to his two wives.<sup>51</sup> On the subject of marriage and children, an oral history story that has often been told in our family is that on 21 November 1905, the day Gus and Lena were married in Murwillumbah, Lena was approached by Lily Williams who was carrying a three-month old baby in her arms. Lily told Lena that Gus was the father of the child and she was unable to care for the baby girl. Lena then took the baby, known as Lillian, and raised her as her own. The child grew up alongside my grandfather, Norman, and my father and his siblings always knew of her as 'Aunty Lilly'. While researching Gus and Lena's early life, I re-examined their marriage certificate and discovered that it yielded the unexpected revelation that Augustus John Bostock, like his son Gus, also had a relationship with another Aboriginal woman.

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<sup>49</sup> 'Blacks Want "Relic" Back', *Sunday Mail*, 11 May 1975, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Jacqueline MacDonald, 'Descendants of Kitty Sandy Family Tree Chart', in *Kitty Sandy Descent Group* Tweed Heads (QLD: Jacqueline MacDonald), 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

### 1.2.9 Augustus John Bostock's Other Family

One of the witnesses on Gus and Lena's marriage certificate was called Ina Bostock (see Figure 13). I became curious about who Ina was and my investigation yielded one of those family history 'surprises' that I mentioned above. Ina's marriage and death certificates reveal that she was indeed Augustus John Bostock's daughter, but her mother was not One My. Her mother was Jessie Unarn Walumba.<sup>52</sup> I assumed Jessie was another Aboriginal Wollumbin woman because, like One My, she took the Wollumbin name.<sup>53</sup> Ina married a year after Gus and Lena in 1906 when she was 18 years old.<sup>54</sup> This makes her year of birth 1888, so she was four years younger than Gus. Although I am aware that polygamy existed in traditional Aboriginal culture, I wondered if polygamy existed in pre-Federation Australia.

| Conjugal status | Birthplace               | Age         | Father's name, mother's name and maiden surname | Father's occupation |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bachelors       | Lewes River<br>New Wales | Years<br>31 | Augustus John Bostock<br>Fannie (Native)        | Laborer             |
| Spina           | Southport<br>Queensland  | 32          | Arthur Ford<br>Julia Sandy                      | Farmer              |

This Marriage was solemnized between us {  
 Augustus Bostock  
 Lena Ford  
 By me, Victor Clarence Bell  
 Officiating Minister of Religion.

In the presence of us {  
 Ina Bostock  
 Emma Bell  
 Received and Registered by me, this 22nd  
 day of December 1905.  
 W. Smith District Registrar.

**Figure 13: Gus and Lena Bostock's Marriage Certificate**

Micaela Ash's article in the *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* journal 'situates polygamy in a historical context by drawing on the history of the legal status of polygamy in Australian law, which is largely based on British legal precedent'. As a natural consequence of colonisation,

<sup>52</sup> QLD Government, 'Marriage Certificate of Edward Williams & Ina Bostock, 8th August 1906, No. 1906/1655' (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1906).

<sup>53</sup> Ina is remembered as being Aboriginal by her descendants. I thought 'Walumba' and 'Wollumbin' were two different ways to spell the same word. Transcriptions of the spoken word can vary. According to Keats in his *Wollumbin* (1998, p. 228), Samuel Gray and Joshua Bray were the original graziers at 'The Walumban Run', which later became known as 'Wollumbin' and finally as 'Kynnumboom'. Both Ian Fox (Bundjalung History expert) and Michael Aird (Aboriginal Anthropologist) concur that 'Walumba' and 'Wollumbin' are the same word with different spelling.

<sup>54</sup> Ina married Ted Williams who was an Aboriginal man.

British common law became the basis of our Australian legal system and British law did not recognise polygamous marriage. This decision was founded on the well-known case of *Hyde v Hyde & Woodmansee* in 1866, which is frequently held up as the precedent confirming the non-recognition of polygamous marriages under British law.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, at the time of Augustus John Bostock's unions with these women, polygamous marriage was not recognised by British law. Based on both marriage records, I am guessing that One My and Jessie Unarn Walumba were alive when their children married within a year of each other, but I cannot know whether Augustus John Bostock maintained a relationship with both women at the same time.<sup>56</sup> In *Illicit Love*, Ann McGrath notes that the possible factors that contributed to white men gaining opportunities to freely obtain a sexual partner among Indigenous women could be that there were fewer white women on frontiers, and a single white man had less compulsion to act with propriety or to be monogamous than in his previous social environment. McGrath added, 'by having more than one Indigenous wife, or by "sharing" a wife with an Indigenous man in a polygamous marriage, many colonizer men effectively became cross-cultural practitioners of polyandry, polygyny, or both'. Two of her points that I find very interesting are that 'white Australian men were well aware of Indigenous polygamous marriage practices and contrasting attitudes toward women's sexual options', and Indigenous kin and family protocols in polygamous marriages 'potentially enabled the outsider man to enhance his strategic and economic position and to gain expanded networks of influence'.<sup>57</sup>

Adding this information to the facts that my great-great-grandfather Augustus John Bostock tried twice to secure land at the traditional camp of the Wollumbin people—and that no further record can be found of an attempt to secure land elsewhere after the forfeiture—I wonder if there was much more to what I thought was just his 'sympathy' for his wives' people. Perhaps Augustus John Bostock had some kind of transactional arrangement with the Wollumbin people? How could Augustus John Bostock have benefitted from polygamous relationships with One My and Jessie? McGrath wrote:

Observers tended to view the white man, as a coloniser man, to be in the superior, controlling position. He might feel the same, but this was not always so. He might be

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<sup>55</sup> Micaela Ash, 'Preventing Harm or Fortifying the Borders?: Political Discourse on Polygamy and Islam in Australia', *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013): 1–12.

<sup>56</sup> Both Gus and Ina identified their mothers on their marriage certificates. If parents were not alive at the time of their children's marriage, the rule was to record the name of the parents regardless and then write '(deceased)' after their name, for example, 'Jane Doe (deceased)'; '(deceased)' was not written after One My or Jessie's name.

<sup>57</sup> McGrath, *Illicit Love*, 343.



smitten. He might also be ensuring the sustenance of a large extended Aboriginal family or community.

I am resigned, unfortunately, to leaving my itching curiosity unscratched (at least in this thesis).

Interestingly though, Michael Aird gave me a copy of the only known photograph of Augustus John Bostock (see Figure 14). Aird showed the photograph to Aunty Lilly several years before she passed away. She pointed to the tall, bearded man standing by himself behind the fish crates and said, ‘that’s my grandfather’. Aird confirmed that Aunty Lilly was identifying Augustus John Bostock. It is disappointing that the clarity of the image is so poor, but a group of dark-looking women and children can be seen standing nearby to the left.



**Figure 14: Only known photograph of Augustus John Bostock, identified as the tall man standing by himself behind the fish crates<sup>58</sup>**

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<sup>58</sup> My Family Collection.

## 1.3 The Cowan Family

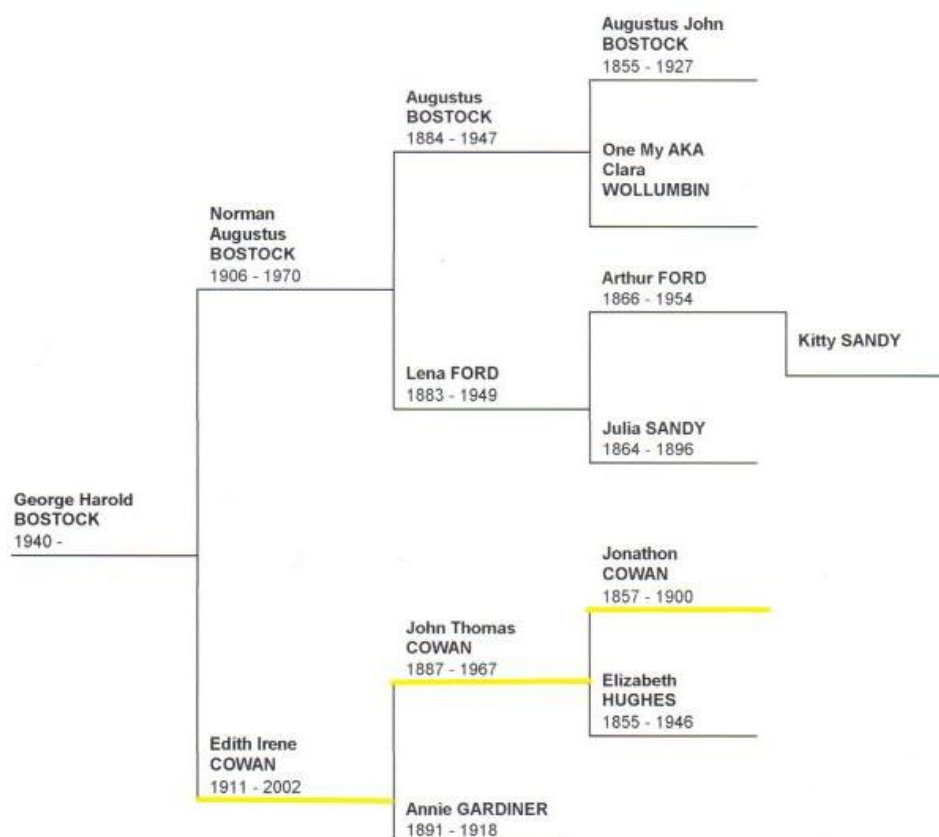


**Figure 15: My father George Bostock's maternal connection to the Cowan family line**

The Cowan family can be traced to the marriage of an Aboriginal man from the Bundjalung people of northern NSW called Jonathan Cowan (AKA Jack Cowan) and a non-Indigenous woman called Elizabeth Hughes (see Figure 15). On his death certificate, Jack's occupation was written as 'gold miner-quartz'.<sup>59</sup> Near Grafton there was once a thriving gold-mining town called Solferino with an estimated population of 2,000. Nothing remains of Solferino today except a historic photograph taken by John William Lindt (see Figure 16).<sup>60</sup> This photograph was included in the vast J.W. Lindt Photograph Collection, and the Grafton Aboriginal community could not raise sufficient funds to purchase the collection. The Cullen family bought the collection and gifted it to the Grafton Regional Gallery on the condition that a search be conducted for the names of the people in the photographs. The Aboriginal Community of

<sup>59</sup> NSW Government, 'Death Certificate of Jack Cowan, 22 Feb. 1900, No. 1900/001633 (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1900).

<sup>60</sup> Jude McBean, ed., *Dreaming the Past: The Lindt Story* (Grafton, NSW: Grafton Regional Art Gallery, 2012) 39.

the Bundjalung, Gumbayngirr and Yaegl people embraced the gift and the Lindt Research Project was formed.

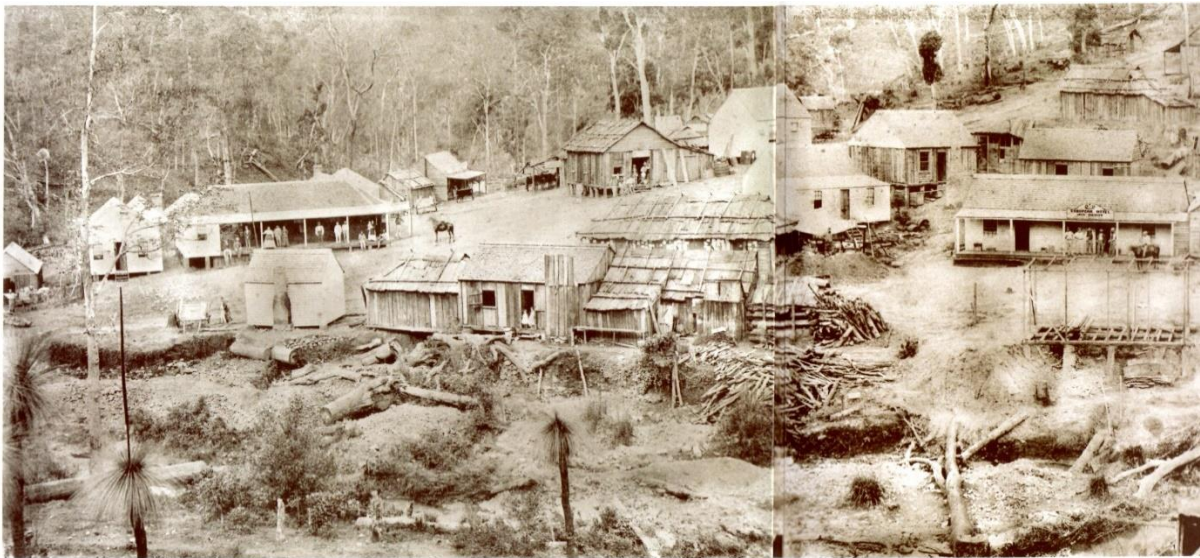


**Figure 16: John William Lindt's photograph of the historic gold-mining town of Solferino, west of Grafton<sup>61</sup>**

German-born John William Lindt was one of Australia's preeminent photographers and had a career spanning 60 years. His work encompassed a range of photographic genres including portraiture, landscape, architectural, ethnographic and narrative subjects. He lived in Grafton from 1863–1876, and it was here he produced his first significant portfolio titled 'Australian Aborigines (1873-74)'.<sup>62</sup> As stated above, this portfolio was gifted by the Cullen family to the Grafton Regional Gallery. After several years of investigations, it was announced in 2012 that the Aboriginal woman in one of the John William Lindt photographs titled 'Mary Ann of Ulmarra' (see Figure 17) had to be Mary Ann Williams.<sup>63</sup> Mary Ann was my great-great-grandfather Jonathon Cowan's older sister.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 58.



**Figure 17: ‘Mary Ann of Ulmarra’ photographed by John Willian Lindt, circa 1873**

I heard about this photograph in 2013 when I received a phone call from my father insisting that I watch a documentary on the ABC Television channel because, ‘it’s all about your research!’ Intrigued, I quickly changed the channel and caught the last part of an ABC *Australian Story* documentary called ‘The Light of Day’.<sup>64</sup> Upon seeing the documentary’s close-up on the photograph of Mary Ann of Ulmarra and hearing who they believed she was, I was somewhat stunned and did not realise that I still had Dad on the phone until he whispered, ‘Doesn’t she look like Mum’.

The documentary’s history researcher Nola Mackey said there was a great possibility that Mary Ann Cowan was Lindt’s ‘Mary Ann of Ulmarra’. Both were born near Ulmarra and looked to be the same age group. Mackey stated that she had searched hundreds of records and Mary Ann Cowan was the only ‘Mary Ann’ she could find in the area.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Jennifer Feller, ‘The Light of Day’, *Australian Story*, season 18, episode 1, screened 4 February 2013 (Sydney, NSW: ABC, 2013), Television Broadcast, <https://www.abc.net.au/austory/the-light-of-day/9170148>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



Based on this information and our family's recognition of the similar facial features and likeness to my grandmother Edith Cowan (see e.g., Figure 18), we believe that Mary Ann of Ulmarra was Mary Ann Cowan.



**Figure 18: Forward-facing Lindt photograph of Mary Ann of Ulmarra (left), believed to be Mary Ann Cowan taken in 1873, and comparison photograph of my grandmother Edith Cowan as a young woman (right)<sup>66</sup>**

The interest in the 'Light of Day' documentary was phenomenal, so the Grafton Regional Gallery hosted a special screening of the documentary in March 2013 for the descendants to share family history information.<sup>67</sup> I invited my father and two other Cowan elders, Aunty Pat and Aunty Esmay (Dad's distant cousins), to come with us to this event, and so we went on a four-hour road trip to Grafton and returned the next day. It was a heart-warming and emotional experience for them.

In 2014, historian Jane Lydon asked me to write an essay about the experience for her book, *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*. Lydon brought together contributors who

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<sup>66</sup> Grafton Regional Art Gallery, 'The John William Lindt Collection' (Grafton, NSW: Grafton Regional Art Gallery, 2004). A collection of high-quality scans of the J.W. Lindt Photograph Collection were gifted to me by a friend who was given them by a private collector. Lindt's photograph in Figure 18 is from this collection. The photograph of my grandmother Edith is in our family album. Both are part of My Family Collection.

<sup>67</sup> Jennifer Feller, 'The Light of Day'.

‘examine historical interactions between photographer and Indigenous people, and the ways that some images can be understood to express the process of cultural exchange—as well as the rich and vital meaning photographs have today’.<sup>68</sup> My essay contributed to the latter. The essay, called ‘Connecting with the Cowans’, explained that the return of these photographs to their rightful place had brought about the reconnection of Aboriginal people to their ancestors, their relatives and their Country. I remarked that seeing this photograph and hearing this news had a profound effect on me. It felt like Mary Ann had spiritually reached through time and altered my perception of her today. I wrote that she had ‘magically transformed from an abstract entity – a name on her marriage and death certificates – into a real life, flesh and blood, young Aboriginal woman’. She was no longer a two-dimensional archival record, her humanity was restored.<sup>69</sup>

More information came through from just looking closely at the photograph. I noticed that she has scarification on her chest; this tells me she was an initiated woman. ‘Initiated’ in this context means that means that Mary Ann had gone through a ceremony of change, a rite of passage called the initiation process. This is a rite of passage ceremony that is the female equivalent of the initiation at puberty of young men, and it creates scars. In one example, I read about how girls were observed as being ‘anxious to have the ceremony performed and took great pride in the scarred evidence of their womanhood’.<sup>70</sup> The left photo in Figure 18 shows Mary Ann with a snake’s vertebrae around her neck and a dingo’s tail on her head.

According to Jennifer Hoff, author of a collaborative book with Bundjalung Elders called *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country*, the dingo-tail headband was traditionally worn by initiated men and Lindt persuaded the women to wear them for his photographs.<sup>71</sup> For her book, Hoff sourced several early photographs from the Richmond River Historical Society that captured traditional young men wearing this adornment. Mary Bundock was one of the first non-Indigenous women in the area southwest of Wollumbin, and at the Mitchell Library I found

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<sup>68</sup> Jane Lydon, ed., *Calling The Shots: Aboriginal Photographies* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Shauna Bostock-Smith, ‘Connecting with the Cowans’, in *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies*, ed. Jane Lydon (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014), 61–65.

<sup>70</sup> Faye Gale, ‘Roles Revisited: The Women of Southern South Australia’, in *Women Rites & Sites: Aboriginal Women’s Cultural Knowledge*, ed. Peggy Brock (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 123.

<sup>71</sup> Jennifer Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun: Bundjalung Country* (Lismore, NSW: Richmond River Historical Society Inc., 2006), 236.

a manuscript called 'Papers of the Bundock Family, 1835-1898'. Included is a copy of Mary's handwritten memoir called 'Notes on the Richmond River Blacks'. Here she stated:

I never saw the women wear any ornaments in those days, these being reserved for their lord and masters who, beside the shell and cane ornaments, wore necklaces of dog's teeth and coloured beans while the skin of native dogs tails fastened around the forehead was a favorite [sic] decoration amongst the younger men.<sup>72</sup>

John William Lindt strived for authentic scenes for his photographs, and he utilised many props at his Grafton studio, including dead kangaroos and snakes, dirt, trees, logs, woven dilly bags, spears, boomerangs, woomeras and dingo tails. He also had landscapes painted onto large sheets to be used as fake backdrops to situate his Aboriginal subjects. I imagine it could have been puzzling for Mary Ann and other 'subjects' to come into Lindt's studio and be set up with his props and natural artefacts in his indoor location. It was worth it for Lindt to go to such effort because there was high demand for photographs like these.

The Colonial Secretary's Office sent copies of Lindt's album to various scientific institutions in Britain and a number of flattering letters about excellence of the work were received.<sup>73</sup> The series was acclaimed at several international exhibitions including the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876.<sup>74</sup> Lindt must have provided substantial incentives for the people in his photographs. These were extremely difficult years for Aboriginal people and I imagine Lindt paid the people in food rations of some sort, because a large number of people participated and all look miserable, like they do not want to be there.

The emergence of affordable, palm-sized cards with photographs called *carte de visite* or visiting cards became an international craze. This prompted an international trade in photographs of celebrities and different 'types' of people from all over the world. Photographs of Aborigines ended up in scientific collections around the world.<sup>75</sup> Photographers like Lindt recognised the popularity and on-sell capabilities that *carte de visite* photographs of Aborigines would generate (see e.g., Figure 19). Michael Aird, the curator of an exhibition at the Brisbane Museum called 'Captured' (an exhibition of Aboriginal *carte de visite* photographs), explained that 'the photographers wanted the Aboriginal people to look as exotic or savage as possible to

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<sup>72</sup> Bundock, 'Notes on the Richmond River Blacks', 2. There are photographs of Bundjalung men wearing the dingo's tail in this way, see Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 106, 150, 234, 258.

<sup>73</sup> Lydon, *Calling the Shots*, 59.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 4.

have something interesting to sell in these postcards'. Some European people and early settlers had vast collections of *carte de visite* postcards in elaborate albums to be displayed in their front parlours when guests visited.<sup>76</sup>

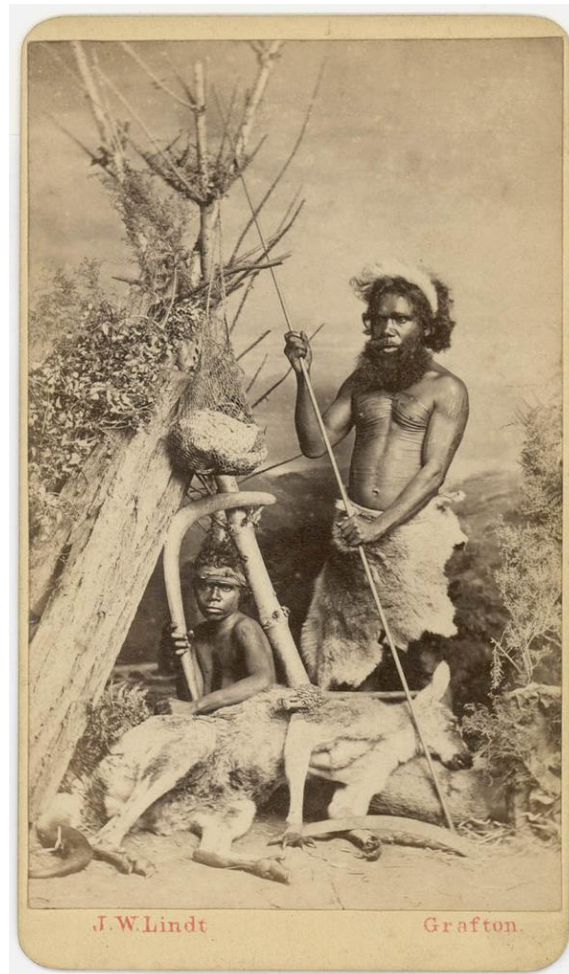


**Figure 19: ‘No. 9 Snowy and his wife, 1873’ by John William Lindt<sup>77</sup>**

Figure 19 is an example of such *carte de visite* postcards and family album shown in Figure 20, which was exhibited in the ‘Captured’ exhibition, is an example of the keen interest non-Indigenous people had for collecting photographs of Aboriginal people. This magnanimous interest seems at first glance to be a respectful curiosity, but is this not just a more subtle way of *othering*? Indigenous academic Marcia Langton argued in 1993 that, with regard to analysis

<sup>76</sup> Kathy McLeish, ‘Postcards of 19th Century Brisbane Aboriginal People on Display at “Captured” Exhibition in Brisbane’, Australian Broadcasting Commission, 31 March 2014, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-28/early-photos-of-brisbane-aboriginal-people-in-captured-exhibit/5336752>.

<sup>77</sup> McBean, *Dreaming the Past*, 57. McBean identifies this photograph as ‘No. 9 Snowy and his wife, 1873’. This scan of the Lindt *carte de visite* photograph is from a collection of high-quality scans of the J.W. Lindt Photograph Collection gifted to me by a friend. These scans are now part of My Family Collection.



of visual representation of us, ‘the problem’ is in ‘the positioning of us as object, and the person behind the camera as subject’.<sup>78</sup>



**Figure 20: The Archer Family Album (1865–1874) at the ‘Captured’ Exhibition at the Brisbane Museum, curated by Michael Aird, March 2014<sup>79</sup>**

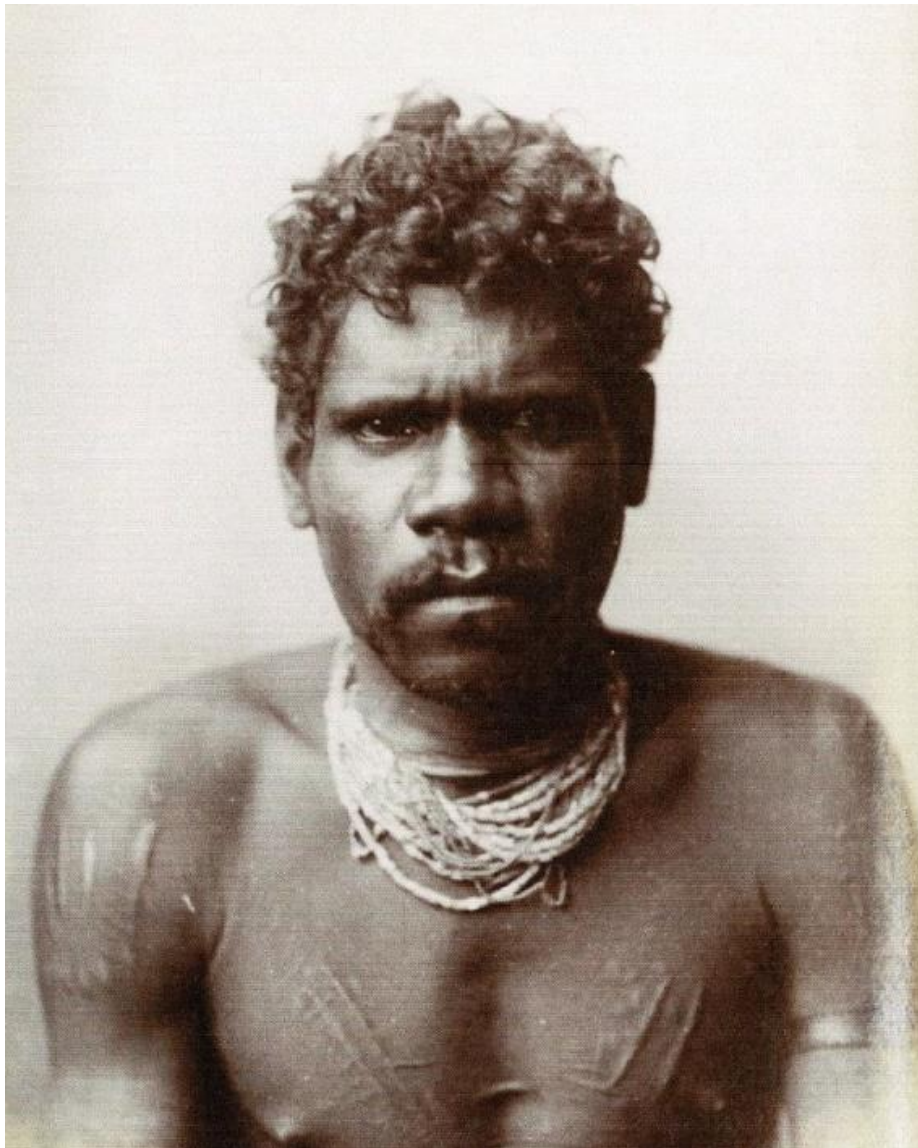
These photograph collections and photo albums provided a way for non-Indigenous people to observe Aborigines from a distance, in much the same way that glass separates visitors from zoo exhibits or museum dioramas. Being looked upon as exotic anthropological oddities or ‘savages’ does not equate to acceptance or equality. Although *carte de visite* images of Aborigines resided in photograph albums in the front parlours of settlers’ homes, I have no doubt that few Aboriginal people, if any at all, were physically allowed past the front door in real life.

John William Lindt became a wealthy man and an internationally acclaimed photographer, and he sold sets of his prints of the Bundjalung people until about 1922. Hoff poignantly stated, ‘The people in Lindt’s portraits were survivors of nearly thirty years of warfare. While they

<sup>78</sup> Marcia Langton, ‘Well I Heard it on the Radio and I Saw it on the Television: An Essay for the Australian Film Commission on the Politics and Aesthetics of Filmmaking by and about Aboriginal People and Things’ (Sydney, NSW: Australian Film Commission, 1993), 39.

<sup>79</sup> Photograph by Giulio Saggin. Permission to use this photograph was kindly granted by Giulio Saggin, Brisbane, QLD.

hold themselves with self-possession and dignity in spite of their bizarre surroundings, the sadness in their eyes tells their story'.<sup>80</sup> When I was at the Grafton Regional Art Gallery, I met a distant Cowan cousin who lived locally. I was standing there staring at the faces and she came and stood beside me. She said, 'You know, we look at these faces and we can rattle off all the local family names'. Pointing to one of the people she said, 'This one here, he looks like a [family surname], and this woman is definitely a [family surname], and that fella there, well the [family surname] family are his mob'. Then she sighed and said, 'Look at their faces. Don't they all look just so sad!'<sup>81</sup> (see e.g., Figure 21).



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<sup>80</sup> Hoff, *Bundjalung Jugun*, 126.

<sup>81</sup> Private conversation with a distant relative (name withheld). The lack of numbers and captions on the photographs in Figure 21 is deliberate and intended to recreate gallery poignancy.



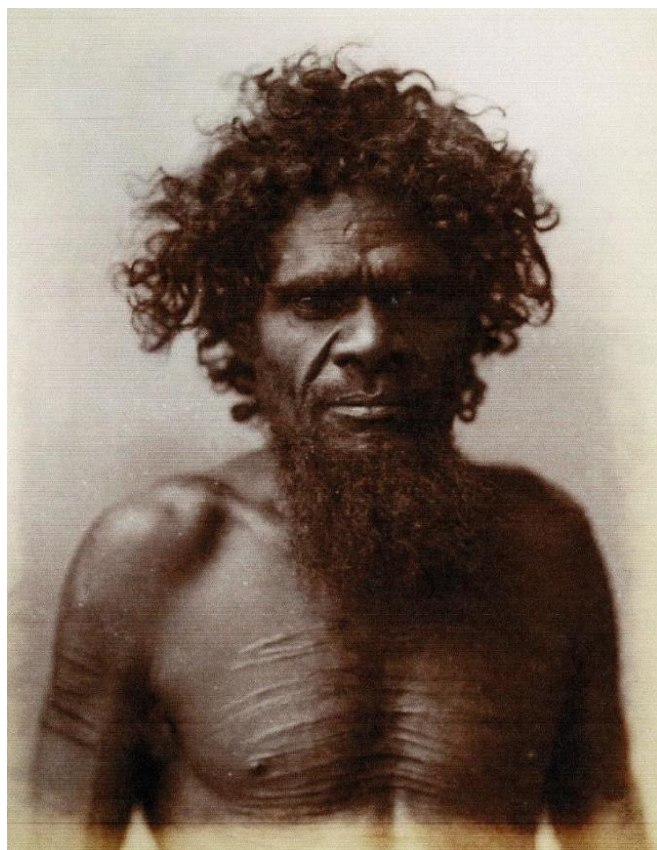
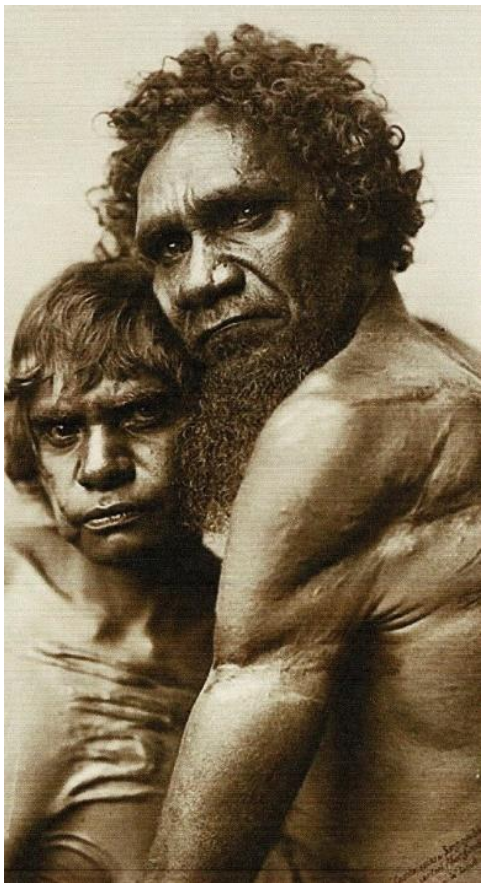




**Figure 21: Some of J.W. Lindt's photographs<sup>82</sup>**

Note: The women in the bottom photograph have the end of their left-hand little fingers removed. This was part of a female initiation practice.

### **1.3.1 A White Woman's Two Aboriginal Husbands**

We have already seen a sample of pastoralist Cunningham Henderson's thoughts on interracial marriage (see quotation at the beginning of this chapter). Henderson's words were an explicit articulation of the social taboos and racial stigma for such (so-called) transgressive unions. Only 10 years after Lindt's photograph of Mary Ann was taken, her younger brother, Jonathan Cowan (my great-great-grandfather), married a white woman called Elizabeth Hughes in 1883.<sup>83</sup> My great-great-grandmother Elizabeth's choice to marry Jonathan came at a cost though, and through our family's oral history we are told that Elizabeth's family disowned her because she married a blackfella.

<sup>82</sup> Grafton Regional Art Gallery, 'The John William Lindt Collection' (Grafton, NSW: Grafton Regional Art Gallery, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> NSW Government, 'Marriage Certificate for Jonathon Cowan & Elizabeth Hughes, 31 Oct. 1883'.

In 2005, historians Victoria Haskins (a white woman) and her husband John Maynard (an Aboriginal man) co-wrote an article called ‘Sex, Race and Power’. They stated that ‘studies of interrelationships between Aboriginal men and white women were obscure, neglected and missing from the Australian historical landscape, just as social taboos and racial stigma were an effective deterrent in preventing such relationships forming across this enforced divide’.<sup>84</sup> Katherine Ellinghaus explained that the rarity of unions between Aboriginal men and white women, as opposed to those between white men and Aboriginal women, was simply about biology because the consequences of relationships were very different: ‘A white woman [unlike a white man] ... would be literally left holding the baby’.<sup>85</sup>

In their article, Haskins and Maynard retold some stories of white women who lived with or married Aboriginal men. They explained that these women received ‘pity and that the desire to rescue on the part of white society was mingled with revulsion, abhorrence and fear’.<sup>86</sup> They stated that by capturing the ‘perspectives and experiences of both white women and Aboriginal men in this history, we cannot overlook the overarching framework of white patriarchal power that made decisions to marry and bear children more than just individual (and eccentric) choices’.<sup>87</sup> For a white woman to willingly make her body available to an Aboriginal man was to render the white man impotent.<sup>88</sup> Haskins and Maynard wanted to ‘articulate a space in which the individuals’ voices from the past might be heard in the present’.<sup>89</sup>

Family history research is such a space, and throughout this thesis, even in this chapter alone, I have articulated ‘a space in which the individuals’ voices from the past might be heard in the present’. I will now add my white great-great-grandmother Elizabeth’s story. Ellinghaus described the predicament of white women being ‘left to hold the baby’, but in Elizabeth’s case she was not just left holding the baby (Roy), but also five other children. In 1900, at the age of 43, my Aboriginal great-great-grandfather Jack Cowan died of pneumonia and asthma, leaving Elizabeth with six children. Their names and ages at the time of their father’s death are as follows: Alice, 15; John Thomas (my great-grandfather), 12; Edith, 11; Walter, seven; Harold

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<sup>84</sup> Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, ‘Sex, Race and Power’, *Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (2005): 191.

<sup>85</sup> Katherine Ellinghaus, ‘Margins of Acceptability: Class, Education, and Interracial Marriage in Australia and North America’, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no. 3 (2002): 55–75.

<sup>86</sup> Haskins and Maynard, ‘Sex, Race and Power’, 200.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Arthur, four; and Roy nine months. I have often wondered how Elizabeth, a white woman with six mixed-race children, survived after 1900.

The depression in the 1890s and later drought that affected most of NSW until the early 1900s caused high unemployment in most areas. There was no government unemployment relief, so unemployed Aborigines relied on the Australian Government's APB for basic rations, which consisted of a small dole of dry goods such as flour, sugar and tea. There was never meat, as Aborigines were expected to hunt and fish for themselves. Many previously self-sufficient Aborigines were forced to move to reserves and the rise in the general population considerably diminished their potential for self-sufficiency.<sup>90</sup> The need for Aboriginal people to come forward and collect rations also put them under the APB's spotlight. The APB became increasingly alarmed that mixed-descent people were not separating themselves from the Aboriginal community. In 1907, they wanted new legislative power to remove all authority of Aboriginal parents over their children and give it to the Board *in loco parentis* ('in place of the parents').<sup>91</sup> As the campaign for more power *in loco parentis* became more frenzied, the APB began to lease reserve land for its own revenue, to fund future plans for training homes for Aboriginal children.<sup>92</sup> Robert Donaldson, an APB member since 1904 who helped draft the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909*, crafted an amendment to this Act that would see the removal of Aboriginal children from their families without the consent of the court. Goodall states that although the Act was not officially amended until 1915, from 1912 the APB began removing as many children as it could.<sup>93</sup>

The current elders in Grafton told me that Elizabeth had to flee from Grafton for fear of child removal and in the process left one of her children behind. A few years after Jonathan died, their son Harold broke his leg at the age of seven years old. They told me that, because the family lived out of town, and Harold needed to go to Grafton hospital, he was left with and eventually 'adopted' by his Aunt Mary Ann. My enquiry found that Harold was four in 1900 when his father died, so it was 1903 when he broke his leg. Mary Ann Williams was previously Mary Ann Cowan, the same Mary Ann that we saw in the Lindt photographs (Figures 17 and 18) above who was called 'Mary Ann of Ulmarra'. Elizabeth had five other children to care for

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<sup>90</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 111.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 121–22.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.



on her own, and so ‘he remained in the care of his aunt for a number of years and was known by the name of Arthur “Codger” Williams’.<sup>94</sup>

At the age of 21, Arthur joined the Australian Imperial Force in 1917 during the First World War (see Figure 22) and his military records list ‘Mrs Mary Ann Williams’ as his next of kin. To enlist, Arthur Harold Williams had to change his name back to his biological name of Cowan, and although his birth name was Harold Arthur Cowan, in the army he was known as Arthur Harold Cowan.<sup>95</sup>

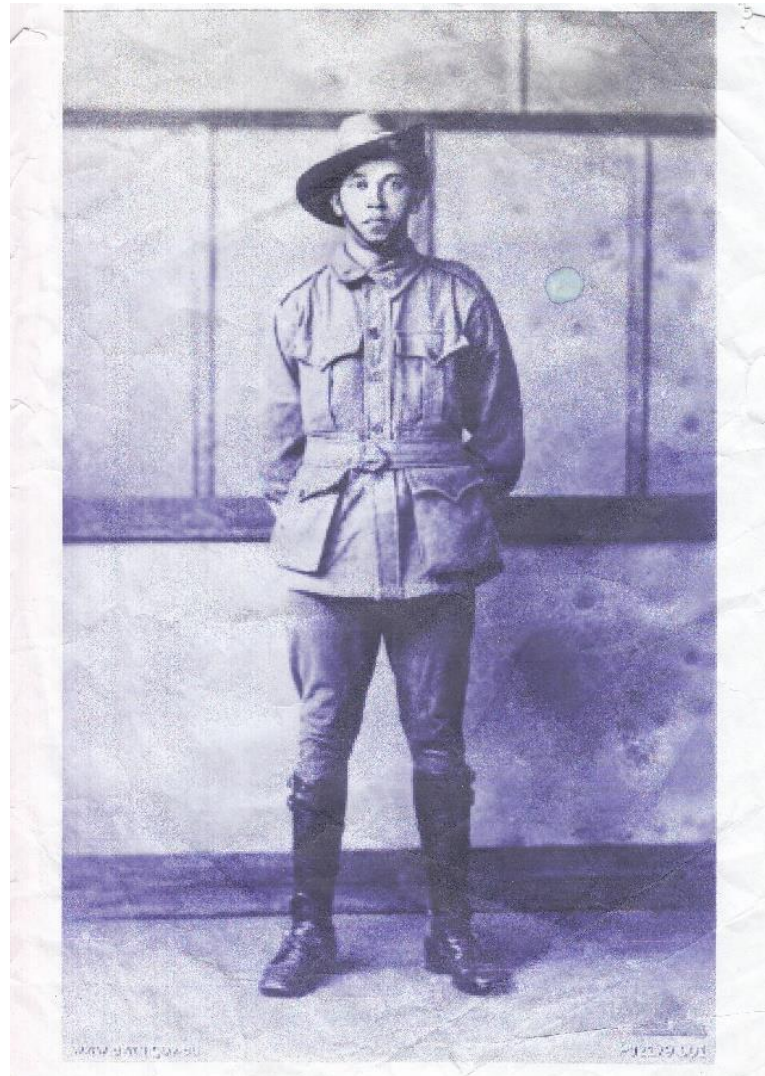


**Figure 22: Harold Arthur Cowan (photographed here in Australian Army uniform)<sup>96</sup>**

Note: Harold was taken in by his Aunt, Mary Ann Williams, and known as Arthur Harold Williams until he had to use his biological name to enlist.

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<sup>94</sup> McBean, *The Lindt Story*, 58. What the elders told me correlates with what is recorded in McBean’s book.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>96</sup> My Family Collection.

Arthur's mother (my great-great-grandmother), Elizabeth Cowan, was lost from the historic record from 1900 after Jonathan died until 1920 when she married another Aboriginal man called William Olive (see Figure 23).



**Figure 23: William Olive and his wife (my great-great-grandmother) Elizabeth Cowan/Olive (nee Hughes)<sup>97</sup>**

Even though my research was in the recent past and only a small space of *present* time had passed between losing her trail in 1900 and ‘finding her again’ in 1920, in the interim I could not help but worry about her and her children. I prayed that she did not suffer too greatly, this poor white woman, who was probably a social outcast, trying to survive with five mixed-race

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<sup>97</sup> My Family Collection.



children during drought, depression and increasing APB surveillance and removals of Aboriginal children.

So I was delighted to find out about her second marriage to William Olive who was, interestingly, *another* Aboriginal man. Family oral history tells us that she lived with William for several years before married. Elizabeth was 65 years old when she married William, who was 10 years her junior, aged 55. In our family, he was endearingly known as ‘Grandpa Olive’ by my grandmother and her siblings. I suspect the above photograph (Figure 23), was taken on their wedding day given their ages and the fact that they are dressed so formally. Figure 24 shows a more ‘everyday’ photograph of William.

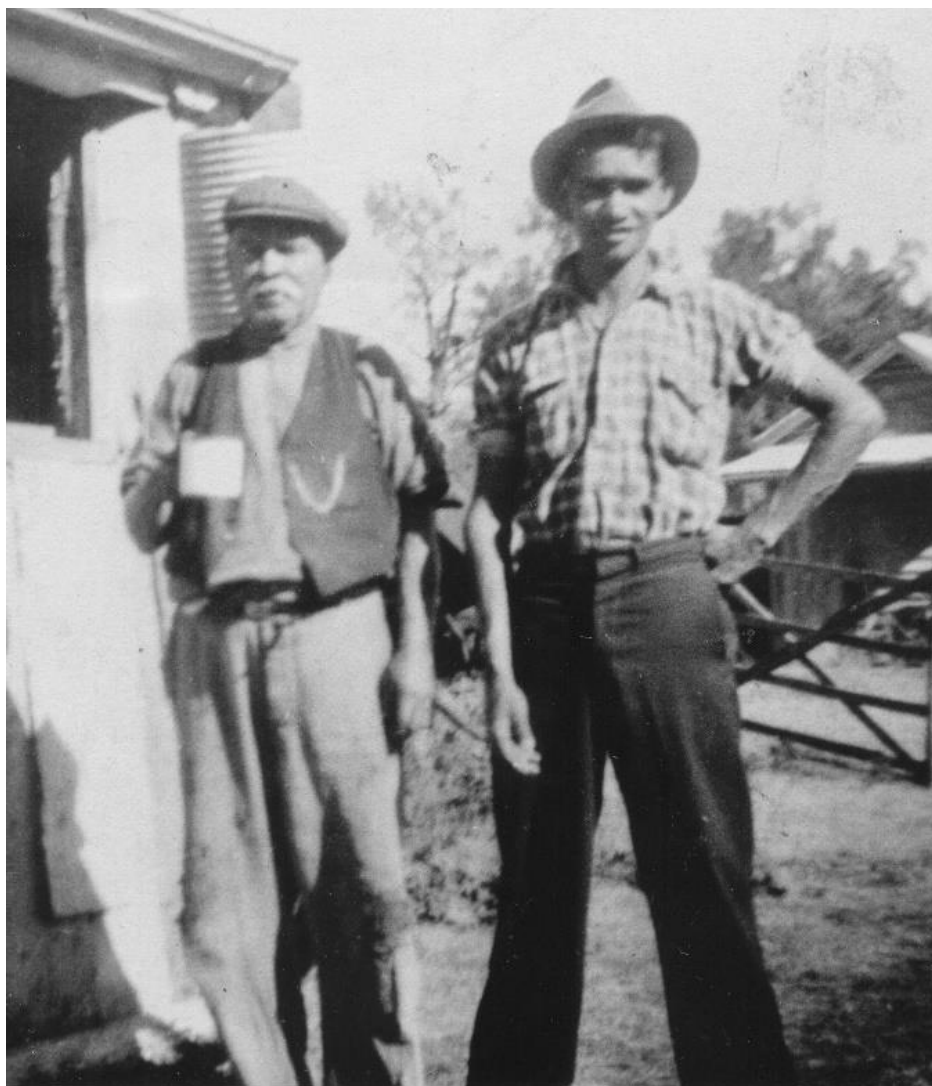


**Figure 24: A less formal photograph of ‘Grandpa Olive’ (AKA William Olive) with my grandmother’s brother Jack Cowan Jnr<sup>98</sup>**

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<sup>98</sup> My Family Collection.

## 1.4 The Anderson Family

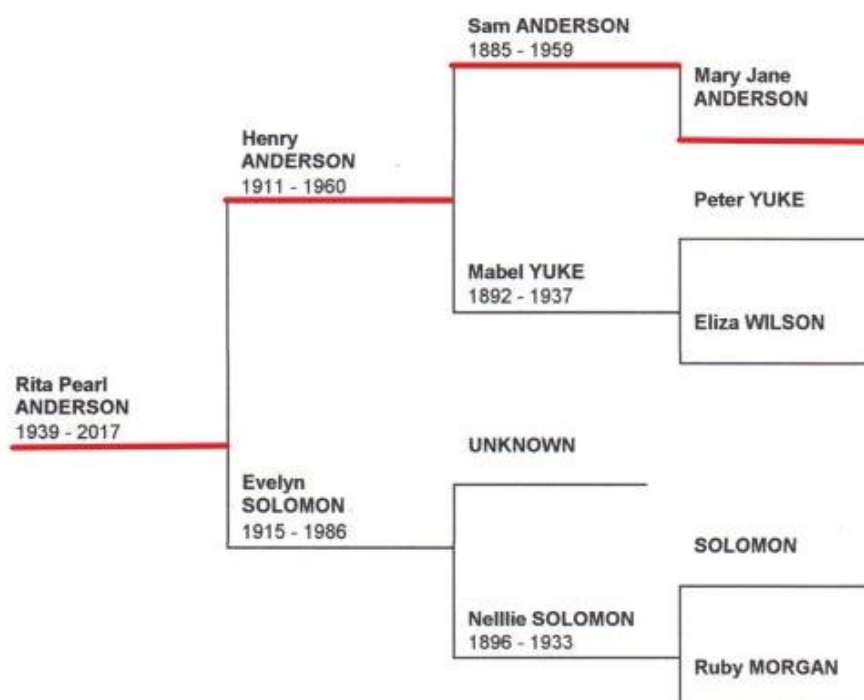


**Figure 25: My mother Rita Anderson’s paternal connection to the Anderson family line**

When I was growing up, my mother told me that her grandfather, Sam Anderson, was a famous cricketer. That was all I ever knew about her side of the family until the early 2000s when my aunt, Aboriginal author Ruby Langford Ginibi (Aunty Ruby), showed me a photograph taken at Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station in 1895.<sup>99</sup>

In the photograph, Aunty Ruby pointed out Sam (the boy seated on the far right, with his arms crossed) and his ‘full-blood’ mother Mary Jane (standing behind him with a baby in her arms) (see Figure 26). Until then, I had neither seen the Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station photograph or known that Sam’s mother’s name was Mary Jane. I was fascinated by the photograph. Later I travelled to Lismore to meet Maurice Ryan, the man who Aunty Ruby told me had identified Mary Jane and Sam in the Deebing Creek photograph.

<sup>99</sup> Aborigines reserves that had an APB-appointed superintendent or manager were sometimes called ‘Aborigines reserve stations’. Unsupervised reserve lands were just called ‘Aborigines reserves’. Places that were not official Aborigines reserves, or places on Crown land or pastoralist properties where large groups of Aboriginal families lived together, were often called ‘camps’ or ‘settlements’. Additionally, as seen in Chapter 2, some reserve spaces were known colloquially by Aborigines as ‘missions’ because Christian missionaries ministered to people at these locations. For example, Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve was also known as Box Ridge Mission.



**Figure 26: Deebing Creek Mission residents, circa 1895<sup>100</sup>**

Note: Sam Anderson is the boy sitting on the far right with his arms crossed. His mother, Mary Jane, stands behind him wearing white and holding a baby. Superintendent Thomas Ivins (circled) can be seen in the far left, reclining in the grass.

Maurice Ryan, a former senior lecturer at Southern Cross University, Lismore, wrote a biography of Sam Anderson called *Dusky Legend: Biography of Sam Anderson, Aboriginal Cricketer*.<sup>101</sup> This self-published book began its life in 1976 when Ryan set his student Margaret Keller the task of researching and writing an assignment about the life of Sam Anderson, a locally famous Aboriginal county cricketer. Over the years, Ryan added to his collection of information about Sam Anderson and, in 2001, published the book. In the Deebing Creek photograph (Figure 26), Superintendent Thomas Ivins can be seen reclining in the grass. Mr Ivins's children grew up on Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station with their parents and, in the 1970s, Margaret Keller wrote them many letters to ask them about their memories of Sam Anderson. Mrs Doris Smith, Thomas Ivins's daughter, clearly identified 'Sammy' and his mother Mary Jane from the group photograph.<sup>102</sup> Maurice Ryan passed away a few years

<sup>100</sup> State Library of Queensland, 'Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station, Group Photograph of Inmates, Negative Number 18939 & 48639' (Brisbane, QLD: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, 1895).

<sup>101</sup> Maurice Ryan, *Dusky Legend: Biography of Sam Anderson, Aboriginal Cricketer* (Lismore, NSW: Northern Rivers Press, 2001).

<sup>102</sup> Doris Smith, 'Letter from Mrs Doris Smith to Mrs Margaret Keller Identifying Sam Anderson in Deebing Creek Photograph, Written 4th August 1977', Byron Bay, NSW, 1977.

ago, but before he died he gave me a pile of original documents about Sam Anderson and Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station, which included these letters.

It was only as recently as 2012, from enquiries made to the Queensland State Archives, that I found out that Mary Jane (Sam's mother, standing behind him in the photograph in Figure 26) was a Wakka-Wakka woman originally from Esk, Queensland.<sup>103</sup> The *Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1898* was enacted in Queensland and resulted in many Aboriginal people being sent great distances to Aborigines reserve stations, and Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station was one of them.<sup>104</sup> Finding out that she came from Wakka Wakka Country is extremely important because now we can remember her to that land (rather than the reserve, a place so far away from her home Country).

Deebing Creek had a cricket club that was established in 1894.<sup>105</sup> Sam played country cricket with local cricket clubs up to the time he left the reserve 'to escape the strict rules of the Native Affairs Department of Queensland'. In NSW, he went to Woodenbong, then on to Casino where he worked at an abattoir. Many Richmond River towns had turned to dairying, along with beef and timber industries, and there were plenty of opportunities for rural workers.<sup>106</sup>

Sam gained employment from Cunningham Henderson at Main Camp, one of the first major properties in the Casino area. As mentioned earlier, Henderson's opinion of interracial marriage and 'half-castes' was clear and he called 'half-caste' Aborigines 'outcasts', but in his writing he went on to explain that there were three 'outcasts' who were exceptions to the rule and he named my great-grandfather Sam Anderson as one of them. Henderson wrote about how he met Sam: 'He came to me looking for a job, and I liked him on sight. He was a medium horseman, but a splendid man at other work. Everything he did showed capability and intelligence'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Queensland Government, 'Cherbourg Social History Card for Kathleen Black, C.H.H.C./B169' (Brisbane, QLD: Queensland State Archives) (nee Anderson, Sam's sister). according to this card Kathleen was born at Mt Esk on 18 September 1897 to a 'White man' and an Aboriginal woman called Mary Jane. Tindale noted Mary Jane was a Wakka Wakka woman ('Tindale Genealogy, Cherbourg Sheet 105, Col/A337 82/2918', Queensland State Archives). An Aboriginal woman named Mary Jane was listed as living at Eskdale in 1882 (QLD Government, 'Return of Blankets Issued to Aborigines at Esk on May 1, 1882. Col/A337 82/2918' (Brisbane, QLD: Queensland State Archives)). Mary Jane, Sam Anderson's mother and Sam Anderson were identified by the daughter of Mr Ivins, Manager of Deebing Creek Mission, Queensland, in a photograph of mission residents taken circa 1895. See Ryan, *Dusky Legend*, 13.

<sup>104</sup> Habermann, *Deebing Creek & Purga Missions*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> Ryan, *Dusky Legend*, 22–25.

<sup>106</sup> Ryan, *Dusky Legend*, 36.

<sup>107</sup> Henderson, 'Australian Aborigines', 17.

After working for Henderson for a fortnight, Sam asked him where he could find a cricket game, so Henderson sent him to his neighbour Mr Yabsley who was a keen cricketer with his own team called the ‘Bungawalbyns’. Henderson said that the next time he saw Yabsley he described Sam as the best county cricketer that he had ever seen, so Henderson decided to ‘transfer him altogether’. Sam played against the best North Coast and New England teams for many years (see Figure 27). He was generally a good bowler and fielder, an all-rounder, but he stood out as a batsman and wicket-keeper. Later he became famous locally (and in our family) for getting Don Bradman out for a duck. I thought this was just a family myth until I found the newspaper article that reported it (see Figure 28).

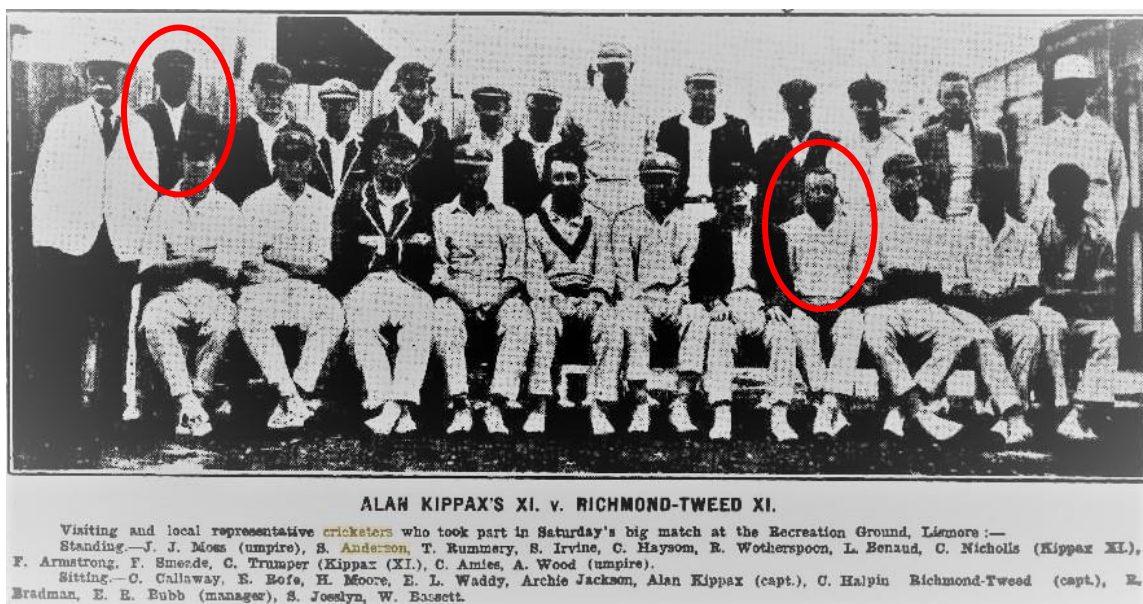


**Figure 27: Don Bradman (circled mid-right, first row) was on Kippax’s XI team and Sam Anderson (circled far left, second row) played for the Richmond-Tweed XI<sup>108</sup>**

<sup>108</sup> ‘Narrow Win: Kippax’s Team Visit: District Men Shape Well’, *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 17 September 1928, 4, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/94046801>.



| SEPTEMBER 17, 1928.                                                                                          |     |    |    |     |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----|-----|--|
| Sundries .. .. .                                                                                             | 24  |    |    |     |  |
| Total .. .. .                                                                                                | 203 |    |    |     |  |
| Fall of wickets: 1 for 0, 2 for 18, 3 for 39, 4 for 62, 5 for 73, 6 for 83, 7 for 101, 8 for 180, 9 for 200. |     |    |    |     |  |
| BOWLING.                                                                                                     |     |    |    |     |  |
|                                                                                                              | O.  | M. | R. | W.  |  |
| C. Nichols .. .. .                                                                                           | 10  | 0  | 37 | 4   |  |
| E. R. Bubb .. .. .                                                                                           | 7   | 1  | 48 | 0   |  |
| A. Calloway .. .. .                                                                                          | 9   | 2  | 26 | 1   |  |
| D. Bradman .. .. .                                                                                           | 7   | 1  | 35 | 3   |  |
| E. Rofe .. .. .                                                                                              | 3   | 0  | 28 | 0   |  |
| S. Josslyn .. .. .                                                                                           | 3   | 1  | 5  | 1   |  |
| KIPPAX'S TEAM.                                                                                               |     |    |    |     |  |
| A. Jackson, b Irvine .. .. .                                                                                 |     |    |    | 58  |  |
| S. Josslyn, c Amies, b Benaud ..                                                                             |     |    |    | 25  |  |
| D. Bradman, c Anderson, b Irvine                                                                             |     |    |    | 0   |  |
| A. Kippax, b Benaud .. .. .                                                                                  |     |    |    | 6   |  |
| E. L. Waddy, c Smcade, b Hay-                                                                                |     |    |    |     |  |
| som .. .. .                                                                                                  |     |    |    | 78  |  |
| C. Nichols, c Irvine, b Benaud ..                                                                            |     |    |    | 6   |  |
| E. Rofe, l.b.w., b Haysom .. ..                                                                              |     |    |    | 28  |  |
| A. Calloway, b Haysom .. .. .                                                                                |     |    |    | 2   |  |
| —, Waugh, not out .. .. .                                                                                    |     |    |    | 5   |  |
| E. R. Bubb, c Halpin, b Irvine ..                                                                            |     |    |    | 3   |  |
| C. Trumper, injured .. .. .                                                                                  |     |    |    | 0   |  |
| Sundries .. .. .                                                                                             |     |    |    | 11  |  |
| Total .. .. .                                                                                                |     |    |    | 222 |  |
| Fall of wickets: 1 for 82, 2 for 82, 3 for 95, 4 for 95, 5 for 115, 6 for 195, 7 for 202, 8 for 218.         |     |    |    |     |  |

**Figure 28: A newspaper article confirming that my great-grandfather Sam got Don Bradman out for a duck<sup>109</sup>**

Henderson said that:

with the addition of Anderson the Bungawalbyns won nearly all their matches. He knew every stroke and move in the game, and was entirely without conceit. He was unfortunate in two things. He was a drinker and a half caste.<sup>110</sup>

The late Aunty Ruby Langford Ginibi, my mother's sister, angrily responded to what Henderson said by saying, 'That's right, my grandfather became a commodity that could be handed from one white man to another. Whoever could use him could have him!'<sup>111</sup> Aunty Ruby wrote four books between 1988 and 1999. She included excerpts of Cunningham Henderson's manuscript in her third book, *My Bundjalung People*. She made it very clear that

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Henderson, 'Australian Aborigines', 17.

<sup>111</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 1994), 98. She was always Ruby Langford to us, but was later given the Aboriginal name of 'Ginibi' (meaning 'black swan') by one of our elders.

she thought that Henderson's effort to gain the trust of the local Aborigines was purely motivated by his need for workers. She added:

it was to his advantage to win their respect because in return he received sixty years of *Koori* labour which he used to increase his own wealth. Let's face it those early settlers could not have built up their empires without Aboriginal labour.<sup>112</sup>

In my head, I can hear Aunty Ruby's voice saying this very angrily. Her first impression was right; it *was* to Henderson's advantage to win their respect, and he *was* motivated by his need for workers, for which he *did* receive many years of service. Henderson was always upfront about that. I think Aunty Ruby's anger comes from her impression that her grandfather was being exploited, but I think deeper analysis is required here.

A couple of points need to be acknowledged here, and they are Sam's agency and the reciprocity in action. Sam wanted to play cricket, and so Henderson transferred him to Yabsley where he could still have a job, but also enjoy the sport that he was so gifted at playing. Henderson met Sam's needs, securing another job for him, and in return he received his neighbour's gratitude and guaranteed a winning streak for the Bungawalbyn Cricket Team. I am not denying the unequal power status of 'the Boss' and 'the Employee' here, but for Aboriginal people, just having a job at that time was a rare commodity. The reason why Henderson and Yabsley won the loyalty of their employees was because they provided good, consistent, long-term work for them and treated their workers respectfully (at least by the standards of the time). So it is no surprise that Aboriginal employees stayed with them for many years.

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<sup>112</sup> Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, 90.

## 1.5 The Solomon Family

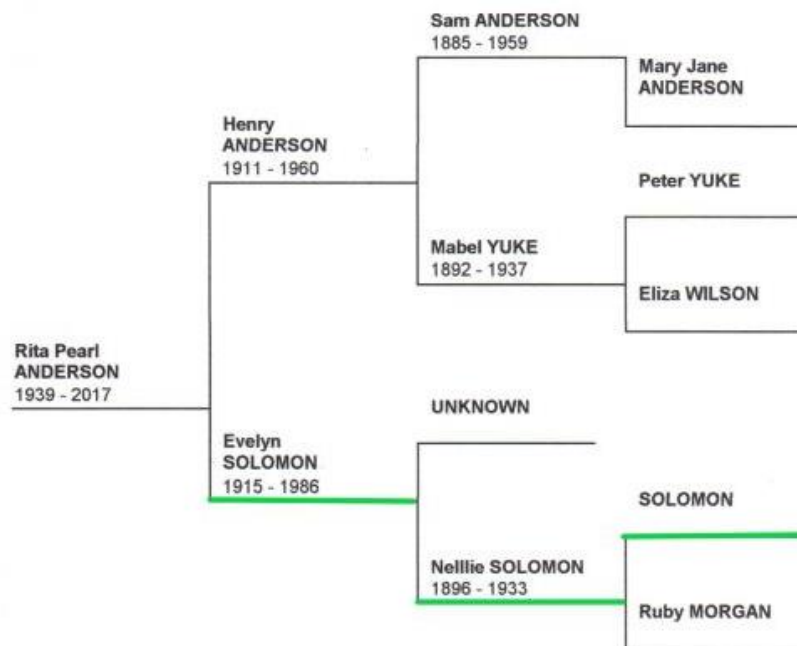


**Figure 29: My mother Rita Anderson’s maternal connection to the Solomon family line**

My grandparents on my mother’s side of the family were Henry Anderson and Evelyn Solomon. On my mother’s maternal line, the Solomon family began on the Aborigines reserve at Kyogle with a ‘full-blood’ man known as Solomon and a ‘full-blood’ Bundjalung woman called Ruby. Solomon and Ruby were the parents of a son called Octo Solomon and my great-grandmother Nellie Solomon. As I said earlier, I use the term ‘full-blood’ like this when an archival record has recorded the person as such. As an Aboriginal family history researcher, I do not find the term ‘full-blood’ offensive, because the white man’s differentiation means that I have discovered a traditional ancestor, one who I see as a bridge back to our pre-colonisation ancestors on the continuum of Aboriginal history.

Unlike the Anderson’s, the Solomon family were always on country at a location near Kyogle, NSW. The Kyogle Aborigines Station Reserve was first recorded in the historic record as a pastoral lease called ‘Runnymede’. Later it became known as Runnymede Aborigines Reserve and/or Runnymede Aborigines Home, before finally being known as Kyogle Aborigines Station (see Figure 30).





**Figure 30: Photograph titled ‘Aborigines Home, Runnymede, near Kyogle NSW’, taken in 1906<sup>113</sup>**

My mother and her sisters only ever knew that their grandmother’s name was Nellie Solomon, but they did not know who their great-grandparents were. Unexpectedly, I managed to locate a record of a reference to Nellie Solomon at the Queensland State Archives. It was a very strange way to find out who the last set of my great-great-grandparents were. The reference was to a paper written by a man called Gilbert Phillips, B.Sc., from the Department of Physiology, University of Sydney, for the Australian National Research Association. The article, titled ‘The Introduction of the Study of the Iso-Haem-Agglutination Reactions of the Blood of Australian Aborigines’, was published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* on 7 April 1928.<sup>114</sup>

Phillips travelled to the Runnymede (Kyogle) Aborigines Reserve Station at the time that my great-grandmother Nellie Solomon lived there. He wanted to test the blood of ‘full-blood’ Aborigines and in his article he made sure to include information about the genealogy of the Aboriginal people who he tested (see Figure 31). Phillips outlined the process that he went through to ascertain that the people he tested were ‘full-blood’ Aborigines:

This work was carried on at the expense of the Australian National Research Council at Runnymede Aboriginal Station South Kyogle, New South Wales. As no record of

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<sup>113</sup> ‘Photograph: Aborigines Home, Runnymede, near Kyogle. P.X.A 608/49’ (Sydney, NSW: Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, 1906). My family members and other older Aboriginal people have always called the Reserve ‘Stoney Gully’. This was my mother’s birthplace.

<sup>114</sup> Gilbert Phillips, ‘An Introduction to the Study of the Iso-Haem-Agglutination Reactions of the Blood of Australian Aborigines’, *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (7 April 1928).

genealogy was kept on the station, I investigated the purity of my subjects in three ways;

- By information supplied by the Manager of the Station.
- By careful cross-examination of the subjects.
- By the cross-examination of other people who had known the parents of each subject.<sup>115</sup>

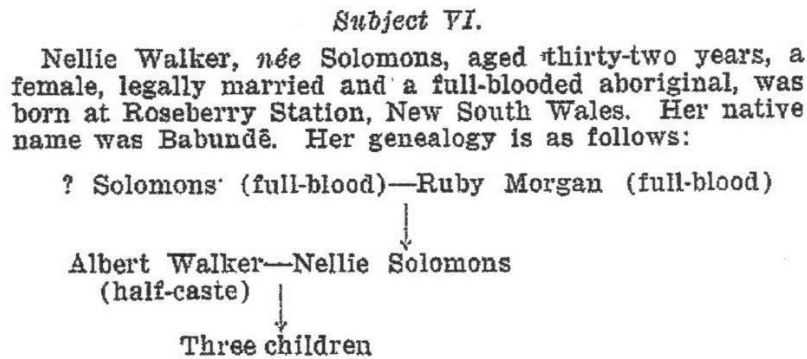


**Figure 31: Segment from Phillips's article confirming the genealogy and traditional name of my great-grandmother Nellie Solomon and her parents' names<sup>116</sup>**

I was curious about why Phillips was testing the blood of 'full-blood' Aborigines on the reserve. I found that Phillips conducted another study at Barambah Aborigines Reserve Queensland, now known as Cherbourg. I sent this study to the Aborigines Reserve museum, 'The Ration Shed', because in this study Phillips recorded the names and original country of all the 55 Aboriginal people he tested. Incredibly, this record has the potential to inform 55 families of their ancestors' original home country before they were incarcerated at Barambah.

I have to admit that I was immediately suspicious of Phillips's motive. Like my Auntie Ruby, I wondered if my relatives were just being exploited by whitefellas. I thought, 'Why on Earth did they want to test my ancestors' blood? Is this some kind of Darwinian *Origin of the Species* investigation? Did they really think we weren't human?' I wanted to get to the bottom of what this was about, but both articles contained a lot of medical jargon that I did not understand. Accordingly, I decided to search for a haematologist who could explain it to me. Daringly, I sent an email to the Secretary of Australia's Haematologists Association with both of Phillips's studies attached, an explanation of who I was and what I was hoping to find out. To my delighted surprise, I received an immediate response.

<sup>115</sup> Phillips, 'An Introduction', 431.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 432.

Dr Steven Lane<sup>117</sup> took the time to read Phillips's studies and wrote an email in response to my questions. He said:

This paper is interesting, but quite outdated by today's standards ... the methods are outdated (no consent information provided, we would usually de-identify research subjects these days). Basically – the author was looking to see if Aboriginal Australian population blood types had distinct differences to Caucasian blood types. This is really important to know for purposes such as blood transfusion (incompatible blood can be fatal if administered). There were some differences identified (as one might expect). Group I-IV are the groups we now speak of as AB, A, B, and O (ABO blood groups). The paper concludes that Aboriginal Australians have the same distribution of ABO groups as Caucasian Australians, although this is not specifically tested. Again, they don't identify the other antigens (sometimes rare, sometimes common) that cause the agglutination, but in the subsequent 100 years, these have been classified in detail.<sup>118</sup>

Phillips and his delegating superiors were not being 'evolutionists'; they were genuinely investigating Aboriginal blood because if they did transfusions on Aboriginal people, 'incompatible blood can be fatal'. Previously, I stated that I thought Aunty Ruby's anger came from her immediate impression that her grandfather was being exploited. I am now confronted by the fact that my immediate response to Phillips's blood testing was as defensive as Aunty Ruby's was.

Here is another trigger for introspection. Why did my Aunty think the worst of Cunningham Henderson's actions? Why did I think the worst of Phillips's actions? I sat here wondering how to answer this question and the conclusion I have come up with is that Aboriginal people have, historically, seen the worst of white-Australians. There have always been low expectations placed on *us* as far as our ability to succeed goes.<sup>119</sup> Are our (Aboriginal peoples') defensive

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<sup>117</sup> Dr Steven Lane is a Leukaemia researcher and Clinical Haematologist. He is an Associate Professor and, in April 2018, was appointed as the new Head of the Cancer Program at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute. For Dr Lanes's profile, see QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, 'Associate Professor Dr Steven Lane Appointed New Head of Cancer Program' (17 April 2018), <https://www.qimrberghofer.edu.au/2018/04/associate-professor-steven-lane-appointed-new-head-cancer-program/>.

<sup>118</sup> Dr Steven Lane, *Email correspondence* (14 January 2019).

<sup>119</sup> Multiple examples of low expectations can be seen in the historic record, most prominently in APB legislation, reports and correspondence. Later chapters will many illuminate examples. For an in-depth look at how this legacy continues in recent times in some Aboriginal communities, see Aboriginal Educator Chris Sarra's book, *Good Morning Mr Sarra: My Life Working for a Stronger, Smarter Future for Our Children* (St Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2012). The book is described as 'One man's fight to turn the tide of low expectations'.

reactions also an indicator of reciprocal low expectations of non-Indigenous peoples' fairness, kindness and humanity?

I was very happy to find Phillips's study because I was finally able to know *all* of my great-great-grandparents' names (except for Sam Anderson's unknown white father). Additionally, Phillips recorded my great-grandmother Nellie Solomon's traditional name, *Babunde*. So along with finding that Deebing Creek Reserve Station's 1902 list of Aboriginal residents records my great-great-grandmother Mary Jane's traditional name as *Bunjue*, I now knew my great-grandmother Nellie's traditional name as well.<sup>120</sup> What are the odds of me finding an obscure archive written by an educated whitefella who visited my ancestors on an Aborigines reserve in 1928? It is beyond extraordinary to discover that he personally interviewed my great-grandmother Nellie to ask her about her pedigree and record it in writing.

Like many other Aboriginal children, Nellie was removed from her family to be placed into domestic service. The removal of Aboriginal children from their families was an integral part of APB policies.<sup>121</sup> It started in normal court proceedings under the *Neglected Children and Juvenile Offenders Act 1905*:

A 'neglected' or 'uncontrollable' child may be apprehended and brought before a court which can release the child on probation, commit the child to an institution until the age of 18 years, or to the care of a willing person A child in an institution may be apprenticed in accordance with the Apprentices Act 1901.<sup>122</sup>

This Act regulated apprentices' terms and conditions and provided for a minimum age of 14 years old for apprentices.

The *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* gave the APB statutory powers in relation to all reserves. The Board's duties included that they provide for the custody, maintenance and education of the children of Aborigines. The APB could apprentice 'the child of any aborigine or the neglected child of any person apparently having an admixture of aboriginal blood in his veins' subject to the *Apprentices Act 1901*. The APB was vested with the power to control all Aborigines reserves and that included the power to remove people from them. Regulations

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<sup>120</sup> Habermann, *Deebing Creek & Purga Missions*, 31.

<sup>121</sup> Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000* (Freemantle, WA: Freemantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), 183.

<sup>122</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines Protection Acts in New South Wales: Legislation/Key Provisions', <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/remove-and-protect/new-south-wales>.

‘could be made for the care, custody and education of Aborigines and prescribing the conditions on which certain children may be apprenticed under the Act’.<sup>123</sup> I will more extensively discuss APB child removal in the next chapter, because the APB really ramped up their actions in the next timeframe (1911–1934). The APB Minutes below pertain to my great-grandmother Nellie and I have deliberately formatted them the same way as they appear in the actual APB Minute Books to show the perfunctory way in which the APB made decisions about Aboriginal lives.

9/11/1911

*Indenture of Miss Nellie Solomon, Runnymede, to Mr E F E Edwards, Kyogle*

**APB Response:** *Completed*

6/6/1912

*Local Committee, Kyogle, re conduct of aboriginal girl Nellie Solomon, apprenticed to Mrs J C Edwards, of Roseberry Park, Kyogle*

**APB Response:** *Cancellation of indenture approved, arrange for the girl to be sent to Sydney*

27/6/1912

*Further reports re Aboriginal girl Nellie Solomon, apprenticed to Mrs Edwards Kyogle*

**APB Response:** *Nellie Solomon to be allowed to remain with Mrs Edwards*

26/9/1912

*Re: Aboriginal girl Nellie Solomon of Runnymede Home, apprenticed to Mr Edwards of Roseberry, Kyogle*

**APB Response:** *Arrange for this girl to be sent to Sydney*

16/10/1912

*Refusal of aboriginal girl Nellie Solomon (lately employed by Mrs Edwards of Kyogle) to come to Sydney, as directed by Board*

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

**APB Response:** *Inform Local Committee a member of the Central Board will be visiting in the New Year; meanwhile endeavours might be made to obtain another place locally for the girl.*<sup>124</sup>

From the above entries, we can see that Nellie's conduct was cause for APB concern. Whether she just resisted being employed by (specifically) the Edwards family, or whether she resisted being indentured overall is unclear. The APB teetered between wanting to make her stay where she was or sending her to Sydney, I think as punishment, but they were seemingly powerless when she refused to go. Nellie was not the only young girl to resist relocation, and the APB Minutes Books record other instances of Aboriginal girls refusing to go. However, there are numerous other experiences contrary to this outcome, and I speculate that the reason Nellie and other girls of her time (19/11/1912) who were successful in staying on country might have only achieved such a feat because the APB were still fumbling along in trying to implement legislative changes to the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909*. The APB wanted the power to remove Aboriginal children without having to prove 'neglect'. The *Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915* removed that requirement so that children could be taken away without the court or anyone else obstruct the APB's intention.<sup>125</sup> Goodall stated that even though the legislation was not officially passed until 1915, the 'obsessive tenacity of Robert Donaldson' saw children removed by as early as 1912.<sup>126</sup> Here we see my great-grandmother Nellie first being removed in 1911.

## 1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has established the beginning of each of my four Aboriginal grandparents' family lines on Bundjalung Country. From there, I moved forward in time to examine each of the four family's origins. The Bostock family provided the largest amount of information in this chapter/timeframe, but in later chapters all of the families have the chance to move in and out of the spotlight, depending on the amount of information available in each timeframe.

Apart from establishing the beginning of my four grandparents' family lines, this chapter has provided us with the opportunity to take a closer look at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous

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<sup>124</sup> NSW Government, 'A.P.B Minute Book References to Nellie Solomon, 9 Nov. 1911 to 26 Sep. 1912, Original Location 4/7117', Aborigines Protection Board (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1911–1912).

<sup>125</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines Protection Amending Act, No. 2 1915', Aborigines Protection Board (Canberra, ACT: AITSIS, 1915), [https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised\\_collections/remove/52290.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/52290.pdf).

<sup>126</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 123.

people in the colonial landscape. Firsthand accounts are a rich source to draw from. From Henderson's comments on interracial marriage and his opinion that 'half-castes' were the lowest of Aborigines, and from Henry Reynolds' observation that the early settlers used derogatory terminologies about Aborigines to 'make them seem further removed from humanity', it is clear that white settlers saw themselves as being above Aborigines on their perceived hierarchy of humanity. These name-calling words and the words used to categorise Aboriginal people are devices that have the effect of 'un-naming' Aboriginal people, as in they act as 'nameless' labels. John William Lindt photographed scores of Aboriginal people, but Mary Ann of Ulmarra was one of only a handful whom he bothered to name.

I have learned that discovering archival records of Aboriginal ancestors' experiences, seeing old photographs and matching faces with names is much more than just a search to find out who my earliest ancestors were. When this research is written as a piece of scholarly history writing within the context of Australian and Aboriginal history we can see how Aboriginal family history research can be an important contribution to national history.

Specifically, this Aboriginal family history has provided me with the opportunity to interrogate generic labels (like 'full-blood' or 'half-caste') and the racial insults used to describe my ancestors and other Aboriginal people. I was able to see them for what they really were. By understanding that they were devices used to by white settlers to separate us from them, position us as objects, subordinate our status and erase our humanity, my perspective on these labels has changed significantly. But they are just mirrors that reflect back to white settlers' their own inhumanity. For me, it is in that shift of perspective, in that moment of recognition, that their power is evaporated.

Family history research ensures that Aboriginal people in history can no longer be thought of as being a nameless component of a collective racial grouping. They are no longer invisible. They are *One My*, my great-great-grandmother whose name was recorded four different ways; *Wollumbin Johnny*, leader of the Wollumbin people; *Sam Anderson*, famous Aboriginal county cricketer; *Elizabeth Hughes/Cowan/Olive*, the white wife of not one, but two Aboriginal men; and *Nellie Solomon*, the gutsy girl who refused the APB and was able to remain at home (albeit for an unknown time). Although once viewed condescendingly, strong family histories are emerging and gaining recognition. They can bring incredible richness to historical narratives and importantly (among many other attributes) can restore the humanity of previously forgotten Aboriginal people.



## Chapter 2: Birth and Marriage on the Reserve, 1911–1934

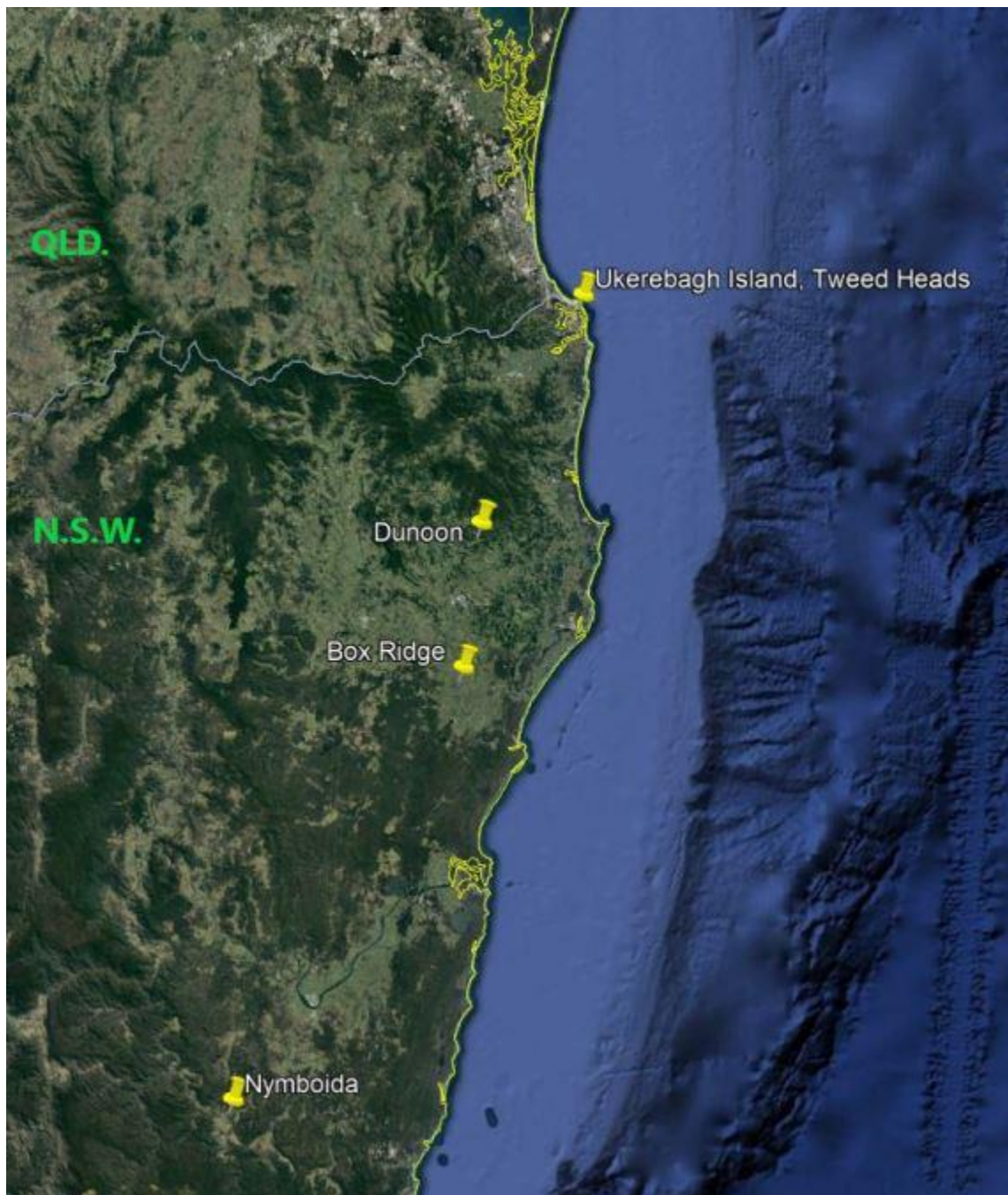


**Figure 32: View of Aborigines reserves in northern NSW where my family members lived<sup>1</sup>**

So you intend to pack us in like sardines in a tin! The 52 here now are only part of the tribe – where are the remaining thirty or forty going to live? How are 52 going to make a living on 10 or 12 acres as you propose they should do? This is our home for

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<sup>1</sup> Image generated using Google Earth.



life granted by Messrs. Barrie, Hewitt, Garrard and Inspector Evans who informed us that no white man was to interfere with us ... We are not asking the Protection Board for help. If we are left alone we can do what requires doing ourselves – if we were only left in peace to earn our bread the same as the white man does.

—Letter from Aboriginal man, Billy Robinson (Dunoon Reserve), to Minister for Lands.<sup>2</sup>

The above quotation is an extract from an emotion-packed letter that Aboriginal man Mr Billy Robinson from Dunoon Aborigines Reserve sent to the Minister for Lands in 1922. It was published in the *Northern Star*, Lismore's local newspaper. I consider the full text of this letter to be an exemplar of Aboriginal frustration and distress over the capricious, niggardly decisions of the Australian Government's APB in regard to reserve land. Dunoon Aborigines Reserve was my maternal grandfather Henry Anderson's birthplace. He and my paternal grandmother were born in 1911 and, by 1934, both sets of grandparents had left the reserve/mission to embark on independent married life, hence the timeframe of this chapter.

My intention for this chapter was to discover what everyday life was like for my ancestors and other Aboriginal people who resided on Aborigines reserves and missions. APB archival documents relating to my ancestors, APB Minutes and Yearly Reports, 'Aborigines Only' school files, photographs and local newspaper articles have provided a deeper understanding of my ancestors' and other Aboriginal peoples' lived experiences. However, an unexpected outcome of examining the microcosm of the Aborigines reserve/mission space has been the provision of informative insights into the actions of both the white-Australian government officials and white-Australian people on and around the reserve. These non-Indigenous people were APB officials, Aborigines reserve managers and matrons, the 'Local Committee', local police, Department of Public Instruction<sup>3</sup> (DPI) inspectors, 'Aborigines Only' school teachers, the Primary Producers' Union (PPU), and United Aborigines' Mission (UAM) missionaries. The reserve/mission space was a place of interaction between Aboriginal people and all of the above.

This chapter provides evidence of the unfair ways in which Aboriginal people experienced disadvantage on the basis of their race. Not all interactions between white-Australians and

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<sup>2</sup> 'Aborigines Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 26 August 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93403237>.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Public Instruction (commonly abbreviated to 'Dept. of P.I.') was the early name for what we now call the Department of Education.

Aborigines on the reserve/mission space were negative ones, and I have deliberately included in this thesis some examples of white-Australian kindness that deserve attention. However, this research builds on previous contentions that the ‘deliberate and detrimental government policies and actions had serious and severe repercussions for Aboriginal people and issues’, and I argue that the greatest of these ‘severe repercussions’ was that the Australian Government crushed Aboriginal aspirations for future security and independence.<sup>4</sup>

The reserve/mission spaces brought into this chapter are Dunoon Aborigines Reserve Station (where my grandfather Henry Anderson was born), Nymboida Aborigines Reserve Station (where my grandmother Edith Cowan was born), Ukerebagh Aborigines Reserve (where my great-grandparents were segregated from white-Australians and sent to live) and Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve/Mission (where all four of my grandparents lived and were married).<sup>5</sup>

Before launching into telling the stories about the reserve/ mission spaces where my ancestors lived, it is important to provide information about terminology, the Closer Settlement Scheme, and a brief history of reserve land and the APB in NSW.

## 2.1 Terminology

The difference between reserves, reserve stations and missions are as follows. ‘Reserves’ were similar to what the Native Americans would describe as (Indigenous) ‘reservations’. Reserves in Australia were officially known as ‘Crown Land for the use of Aborigines’. ‘Reserve stations’ were reserves overseen by a white-Australian manager employed by the APB, and ‘missions’ were reserves where Christian missionaries ministered to Aborigines and taught Sunday school to Aboriginal children.

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<sup>4</sup> John Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Activism* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), 141.

<sup>5</sup> Originally called ‘Runnymede’ after an early pastoral station’s name, Stoney Gully Reserve, my mother’s birthplace near Kyogle, later became known as ‘Kyogle Aborigines Reserve’. In the white-Australian historic record, it is usually called ‘Runnymede’ or ‘Kyogle Aborigines Reserve’, but my mother, Aunts and other older Aboriginal people always called it Stoney Gully. In this thesis, I call it ‘Stoney Gully Reserve’ and include the other names in footnotes where necessary.

## 2.2 The Closer Settlement Scheme/Soldier Settlers

The Returned Soldier Settlement Scheme was an expansion of the original Closer Settlement Scheme. A definite policy of Closer Settlement was first decided by Governor Lachlan Macquarie (the fifth Governor of NSW, 1810–1821) because, among various reasons, he was principally opposed to large landholding which he believed discouraged genuine settlers. Lavish granting of large areas would hinder genuine settlers and force new men to go further out. By the 1830s, the Closer Settlement Scheme had been superseded by the squatting era when land grants by purpose or auction were introduced to raise government revenue. (That is how Joshua Bray purchased the ‘Walumban Run’.) A swing back to closer settlement came in the 1860s when the gold fields’ yield diminished.<sup>6</sup> When the First World War ended and soldiers began to return home, the government saw the reward of a block of farming land as a cheaper alternative to rehabilitation. The government expanded the Closer Settlement Scheme of 1905 which enabled soldier settlers to select a small block of agricultural land in certain areas. When the goal of closer settlement was coupled with the call to compensate the ‘heroic diggers’, government departments found it almost impossible to deny the requests for reserve lands. Therefore, the Returned Serviceman’s Settlement Scheme accelerated the demand to revoke existing Aborigines reserve lands.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.3 Aborigines Reserves in New South Wales

The idea to allocate land as reservations for Aborigines or ‘reserves’ goes back to the 1830s when the British abolished slave trading in 1833. The Anti-Slavery Society and other humanitarians turned their attention to the Australian colonies and the conditions of their land. For the first time, Crown land was reserved for Aboriginal use, reflecting British concerns about Aborigines and their access and rights to land.<sup>8</sup> British Secretary of State Earl Henry Grey argued that leases were ‘not intended to deprive natives of their former right to hunt over these districts or to wander over them in search of subsistence in the manner in which they have been hitherto accustomed’. Grey also argued that ‘Crown lease to pastoralists allowed only limited rights, and that much of the rights of possession remained reserved to the Crown’.<sup>9</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Connor, ‘Closer Settlement Schemes’, *The Australian Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (March 1970): 72–73.

<sup>7</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 123–24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

late 1849, Governor Fitzroy and the Crown Land Commissioners supported restrictions on pastoral leases, but were not keen on the creation of Aborigines reserves in the squatting districts. Any form of recognition of Aboriginal rights to land was bitterly opposed by squatters.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, the creation of Aborigines reserves went ahead and 35 reserves were created in 1850, but as a small fraction of once vast traditional lands they offered little protection from continuing violence which threatened to cut off Aboriginal access to their land altogether. The discovery of gold in 1851 dramatically changed the relations between Aboriginal people and pastoralists as workers abandoned their jobs and squatters and pastoralists, who only a few months prior attacked Aborigines, now coveted Aboriginal workers who they desperately needed to care for stock. For the first time, pastoralists began to offer reasonable conditions, cash wages and safe access to traditional lands, so the reserves faded in significance as Aboriginal people returned to country. Heather Goodall called this period ‘dual occupation’.<sup>11</sup> From the 1860s, fencing became more common and, as a result, cattle work only became available at set times for mustering. Therefore, pastoralists only paid Aborigines for seasonal work, and during the off-season Aboriginal people lived off bush tucker.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, after gold rush land was opened up with the Robertson Land Acts, settlers, like my great-great-grandfather Augustus John Bostock, could apply for ‘free selection’ of land under Conditional Purchases.

Aboriginal people became distressed over the rapid changes to land and loss of traditional game, arguably all over the state. Missionaries at Maloga on the Murray River and Warangesda on the Murrumbidgee River appealed to the NSW Government for immediate benevolent aid for Aborigines they described as ‘impoverished’ and without any alternatives’.<sup>13</sup> In 1881, a Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr George Thornton, was appointed and given a secretary and a few hundred pounds of funds for the distribution of necessary aid. The following year, an inquiry was launched into the workings of two Aboriginal mission stations at Maloga and Warangesda. The government, as a result of the inquiry’s report, decided to appoint a ‘Board for the Protection of Aborigines’ composed of five to seven member and it was gazetted on 5

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 52–53.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 62. ‘Tucker’ is an Australian slang word for food.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 88–89.

June 1883.<sup>14</sup> The Lands Department provided the APB with ‘plans and particulars of twenty-five reserves in different parts of the Colony, including a total area of 3,500 acres, which have been set apart for the use of aborigines’.<sup>15</sup> The Chief Secretary approved that a ‘Local Board of Advice and Management’ be appointed for each station and these came to be known as the ‘Local Board’. In May 1910, the Local Boards officially ceased to exist and ‘Local Committees’ were created in their stead.<sup>16</sup> The Local Committees usually comprised of a handful of upstanding town citizens (always men) appointed by the APB as local agents for matters concerning most Aborigines reserves/stations. They acted as the eyes and ears of the APB on the ground, enacted what the APB asked them to do and regularly reported back to APB.

The APB functioned without any statutory power until 1909 when the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* was passed. As previously stated, the depression in the 1890s and later drought which affected most of NSW until the early 1900s caused high unemployment in most areas, and unemployed Aborigines relied on meagre and insufficient APB rations. From 1891 onwards, many Aborigines were forced to apply to the APB’s managers or the police for support as the rise in population on independent reserves considerably diminished their potential for self-sufficiency.<sup>17</sup> This chapter presents evidence of how the initial humanitarian ideology behind the setting up of Aborigines reserves dissolved over time and did not translate to supporting Aboriginal independence.

## 2.4 Dunoon

A record of my maternal grandfather Henry Anderson’s birth could not be found, but his marriage certificate revealed that he was born at Dunoon Aborigines Reserve in 1911.<sup>18</sup> This certificate recorded his ‘place of birth’ and I calculated the year he was born by subtracting his

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<sup>14</sup> NSW Government, ‘Aborigines’ Protection: Report of the Public Service Board, 16th August 1938, Reel1649’, Public Service Board (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1938), 7.

<sup>15</sup> NSW Government, ‘Protection of the Aborigines (Report of the Board)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1883–1884), 4; NSW Government, ‘Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1910)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1911), 1.

<sup>16</sup> NSW Government, ‘Aborigines. (Report of Board for the Protection of, for Year 1910)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1911), 1; NSW Government, ‘Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1910)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1911).

<sup>17</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 111.

<sup>18</sup> NSW Government, ‘Marriage Certificate of Henry Anderson and Evelyn Solomon, 1 Sep. 1934, Certificate No. 1934/011544’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1934).

age at marriage from the year the marriage took place. I had to do the same with three of my four grandparents because birth records simply did not exist for Aboriginal people at this time.

The Dunoon Aborigines Reserve was situated on the Lismore Tweed Road, six miles north of the country town of Lismore. It consisted of 420 acres, was gazetted as AR35824/5 on 25 January 1903 and later marked as revoked on 16 August 1935.<sup>19</sup> Sometime before June 1916, my great-grandparents decided to take their family far away from Dunoon and migrate south to Box Ridge Mission, near Coraki, where my grandfather (then five years old) was enrolled at the Coraki Aborigines Only School (see Figure 33).<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 33: Photograph taken at Box Ridge Mission, near Coraki<sup>21</sup>**

Note: My grandfather Henry Anderson is the rightmost boy leaning on the chair. This photograph was taken just after his family migrated from his birthplace, Dunoon Aborigines Reserve, to Box Ridge Mission.

The quotation that opened this chapter was from a letter to the Minister of Lands written by Aboriginal Dunoon resident Billie Robinson, in which he clearly declares that the reserve ‘is our home for life granted by Messrs. Barrie, Hewitt, Garrard and Inspector Evans who informed

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<sup>19</sup> A. McGuigan, ‘Occasional Paper Number (No. 4): Aboriginal Reserves in New South Wales: A Land Rights Research Aid’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Undated), 25.

<sup>20</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Homersham to A.P.B Secretary, 3 June 1916, Coraki Aboriginal School Files 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Alma Smith and Alva Atkins, ‘Alma Smith and Alva Atkins (Nee Smith) Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work (U.A.M) in N.S.W and W.A, 1909 - 2006. M.L.M.S.S. 8315/Boxes 1-5, Folder 6.X, & P.X.A 1303/Boxes 1, 2 & 3’ (Sydney, NSW: Mitchell Library, 1909–2006).

us that no white man was to interfere with us'. These were the names of the Local Committee members whom the people trusted. (We will see later in this chapter that not all Local Committees were as respected and trusted by Aboriginal people as these men were.) Goodall wrote that Chief Protector Thornton's wording of 'Crown Land for the use of Aborigines' as land 'grants' and the use of this terminology implied a more permanent process. Police and land officials such as Local Committees explained reserves lands in this way, and this is why Aboriginal people strongly believed their reserve land belonged to them.<sup>22</sup>

According to Goodall, when a manager was employed at the previously unsupervised reserve at Dunoon in 1914 the reserve became a station and 'this led to a series of conflicts between him and the Koori [Aboriginal] residents'. The people were alarmed at the 'managerial interference and threats to remove children were so great that Kooris [Aborigines], including those who had been farming the land, moved off the reserve to unreserved vacant land closer to Lismore, vowing they would not remain under APB control'.<sup>23</sup> Goodall remarked that this Aboriginal strategy forced the manager to resign and the station to revert back to being an unsupervised reserve, with the 'special' [Aborigines Only school] closing in December 1916.<sup>24</sup> In concentrating my research focus on Dunoon Aborigines Reserve and trying to understand why my great-grandparents Sam and Mabel left my grandfather's birthplace (Dunoon), I am now able to elaborate on what Goodall meant when she referred to 'managerial interference'.

In September 1914, the school teacher left Dunoon and was replaced by Mr Terry as a teacher/manager with the APB providing a house for he and his wife.<sup>25</sup> When he arrived, Mr Terry told the people that he was a 'school teacher and a Christian manager'. In a letter to the local newspaper several years later, Aboriginal resident at Dunoon Charlie Brown said with

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<sup>22</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 143. I added 'Aboriginal' and 'Aborigines' to assist non-Indigenous Australian and global understanding. We Aboriginal people use particular words to name ourselves. These words vary from different regions on the East Coast of Australia. In the south coast and inland southern areas, Aborigines call themselves 'Koori' (as individuals) and 'Koories' (as a group). In Brisbane and large parts of Queensland, Aborigines call themselves 'Murri' (as individuals) and 'Murries' (as a group). In the North Coast of NSW, we describe ourselves as 'Goori' and 'Goories', pronounced with a hard 'g'. This is how my family elders described our terminology. Adding the 'e' in my spelling the plural is just a personal preference. Goodall respectfully referred to us using the words that we use to name ourselves.

<sup>24</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 143. I choose to call them 'Aborigines Only schools' to highlight the racist segregation of Aboriginal children from white-Australian children at 'public' schools. These may have been schools for the public, but the public did not include Aboriginal children.

<sup>25</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Secretary APB, to Mr Terry, 2 Oct. 1914, Dunoon Aborigines School Files, 1876-1939, Item Number 5/15768.2' (Sydney, NSW: NSW State Records, 1914).

hindsight, 'if we had known he was a manager [from the APB] we would not have allowed him to enter our reserve'.<sup>26</sup>

Mr Terry told the Aboriginal residents that if they performed any paid work outside of the reserve, then he (Terry) must receive their wages for them directly from their employers. Brown stated, 'those that did not agree to that walked out of the reserve'. Here we see that extortion could be added to the list of transgressions against Aborigines. Brown wrote in his letter to a local newspaper:

We don't understand why the Aborigines Protection Board gives these managers a job of looking after the aborigines when we are well and able to look after ourselves. We are honest and can work as well as the next one, so we don't understand why they allow the white man to make his living by the aborigines ... We would like you to have more respect for aborigines. By them you are making your living.<sup>27</sup>

Goodall stated that Aboriginal people returned to Dunoon in 1917 when it was clear that no manager was going to be reinstated, and Dunoon 'became a focus for migration [from other reserves] as Aboriginal people tried to escape APB interference'. Despite the fact that the APB had leased much of the land in 1917, the population grew substantially in 1919, and in 1922 even more had arrived 'seeking refuge from managerial interference on Runnymede and Cabbage Tree Island'. To stop this movement, the APB decided to revoke the Dunoon Aborigines Reserve in May 1922. Goodall states that this was 'met with sustained and effective Koori [Aboriginal] protest, expressed in the letters to the Board from the Kooris [Aborigines] themselves and from white supporters'.<sup>28</sup> This 'sustained and effective' protest by Aboriginal people and white-Australian supporters was also made public by letters to newspapers and this section provides a few examples of what the newspapers revealed.

In the same letter to the newspaper referred to above, Charlie Brown asked, 'supposing you were working under a manager, how would you like him to receive your money from your boss where you were working?' Brown almost apologises for having rich soil and poignantly describes the effect of the harassment they experienced from white-Australians, but he defiantly stands his ground:

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<sup>26</sup> Charlie Brown, 'Cabbage Tree Island Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 9 August, 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93390682>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 144.



We know we have rich soil here, but ever since the home was appointed out for us we were never left alone by the whites. We are still in trouble. We don't know whether we are on our head or feet. The members of the P.P.U. are trying to remove us. They have got as much chance as of getting water to run up hill.<sup>29</sup>

From 1917, the reserve also under the watchful gaze of white-Australian individuals and groups like the PPU, the farmer's union. The PPU openly revealed that they were determined to have the land made available for soldier settlers.<sup>30</sup> It is likely that this was the first the Dunoon Aborigines had ever heard about the potential revocation of their reserve, because correspondence reveals that they were shocked at the turn of events.

While the PPU were set on taking land from the Dunoon Aborigines, the Municipal Council of Lismore were set on ejecting the North Lismore Aborigines from the town. The mayor, the Lismore Council and the inspector of police wanted Aboriginal people out of their town entirely, so it was decided to close down the north Lismore house where they lived, and the inspector served verbal notice.<sup>31</sup> The north Lismore people who refused to return to Dunoon then had no choice but to go to land located at the back of the cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

In April and July 1921, the Toolaroo PPU reported that the Minister Mr George Nesbitt had presented the branch's request to the Department of Lands, but the Under-Secretary of the Department of Education declined the request because the APB advised that all the huts on the reserve were occupied and the people were making improvements (e.g., clearing the lantana for future cultivation). Additionally, the people had clearly stated their intention to make the reserve their permanent home.<sup>33</sup>

However, the Dunoon Aborigines could not rest assured that they could live peacefully on the reserve because, in May 1922, another white-Australian group, the Terania Shire Council, became involved. They sent the Shire Clerk to report on the reserve and he found that nine weather board dwellings were in need of extensive repairs. The Shire Council decided to draw

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<sup>29</sup> Brown, 'Cabbage Tree Island'.

<sup>30</sup> 'Primary Producers' Union: Lismore Branch', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 21 January 1918, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article92928082>.

<sup>31</sup> 'Blacks at North Lismore', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 27 November 1918, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article92910513>.

<sup>32</sup> 'Lismore District: A Suitable Home', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 3 December 1918, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article92911179>.

<sup>33</sup> 'Toolaroo Branch P.P. Union', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 2 April 1921, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93054179>; 'Aborigines Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 28 July 1921, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93101951>.

the attention of the APB to the reserve by requiring the Board, under Section 281 of the *Local Government Act*, 'provide sanitary conditions to each of the dwellings on the reserve'.<sup>34</sup> In view of the Shire Council's complaints about the reserve, the APB decided to demolish the buildings and remove the residents to Kyogle.<sup>35</sup> So, rather than fix the problems, the APB's immediate reaction was to close the reserve and relocate the people. Defiantly, the people refused to leave. I have deliberately refrained from editing the following three letters from Aboriginal people so that readers may intrinsically *hear* the depth of despair and uncertainty in these Aboriginal 'voices'. In June 1922, a statement was issued under the pseudonym 'The Aborigines' which angrily and powerfully declared:

We should like our neighbours around us to attend to their own affairs. It is through them that we are in trouble. Through their complaining and taking the bread out of our mouths we are remaining here. We will not be shifted. We have a few acres cleared and we want to know where we stand. When this reserve was given us we were told it was our home for life, and we are not going to leave it. When we first came here it was dense scrub. After years of hard work we have made our homes and envious people want to dispose us.<sup>36</sup>

A month later, Aboriginal man Albert Morthen wrote an angry letter to the editor about the Toolaroo PPU, the full text of which is reproduced below. His beseeching tone and emotions are evident:

Sir, - We object strongly to the action of the Toolaroo P.P.U. in trying to remove us from our homes on Dunoon Road, according to a report we saw in the paper of their last meeting. Are we harming anyone, or are we being pests to anyone in any way? Have we stolen anything belonging to any member of the Toolaroo branch of the P.U.U? We want to know are you going to leave us alone? We do not agree with you in trying to get these five acres from us. You have got hundreds of acres of your own without interfering with our little bit. We ask you to show more respect for us and leave us alone before there is any trouble. We have stood it long enough. It would suit you better to look after your own cows and pigs instead of looking after us. Are you not satisfied with your own home and shelter? We have wives and children just the same as you have. When old friends saw us, camping under a ti-tree bark, they pitied us and told us they would get a home for us, which they did. They were the late Mr Barrie, Mr Hewitt, Mr Garrard, and Inspector Evans. They told us this was to be our home for life, and that no white man would interfere with us. We belong to the

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<sup>34</sup> 'Aborigines' Houses: Insanitary and Dilapidated: On Dunoon Aborigines Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 10 May 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article223949134>.

<sup>35</sup> 'Lismore: Aborigines' Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 24 June 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article20533608>. Stoney Gully (AKA Runnymede, or Kyogle reserve).

<sup>36</sup> 'Refuse to Leave: Aborigines Standing for Rights', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 12 June 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article179016251>.

soil you are living on. There is no law to say that anything given to the aborigines shall be taken back, so we are remaining here for good.<sup>37</sup>

The following is the full text of Billie Robinson's letter to the Minister of Lands. It is yet another anguished outcry from yet another Aboriginal person suffering from dogged harassment and frightening uncertainty:

We have seen your report regarding our reserve. You have ascertained that it is overgrown with lantana, and is harbouring noxious animals. The statements, made to you regarding noxious animals supposed to be sheltering in our reserve are untrue. As for the lantana, it is being brushed and cleared every day. Had the police given us a decisive answer at first we would have had it cleared by now, but they caused delay and kept us back seven or eight weeks. No one consented to go to Runnymede. We are all remaining here. There are 52 here now. You have proposed to allow us ten or twelve acres. So you intend to pack us in like sardines in a tin! The 52 here now are only part of the tribe—where are the remaining 30 or 40 going to live? How are 52 going to make a living on 10 or 12 acres as you propose they should do? This is our home for life granted to us by our old friends Messrs. Barrie, Hewitt, Garrard and Inspector Evans, who informed us that no white man was to interfere with us. We are not willing for our reserve to be cut up because it is small enough already, and there will be trouble if another acre is taken. Two or three acres of it have already been taken for the soldier settlers. ... We are trying to get along with our crops and rebuild the houses ourselves. We are not asking the Protection Board for help. If we left alone we can do what requires doing ourselves—if we were only left alone in peace to earn our bread the same as the white man does.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.5 Nymboida Reserve

The fact that the photograph in Figure 34 has survived as part of My Family Collection generation after generation earns it an important place in my family history research. It was taken at Nymboida, a small town southwest of Grafton. My grandmother Edith Cowan was born there in 1911.<sup>39</sup> Bostock family oral history specifically retold that she was born at 'Nymboida mission' and later 'the mission moved to Box Ridge', near Coraki, but the reason for the move was unknown. As we see on the map at the beginning of this chapter (Figure 32), Box Ridge Reserve is a considerable distance north of Nymboida, particularly by foot or horse

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<sup>37</sup> 'Dunoon Aboriginal Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 19 July 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93387327>.

<sup>38</sup> 'Aborigines' Reserve', *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW: 1876–1954), 26 August 1922, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93403237>.

<sup>39</sup> NSW Government, 'Marriage Certificate of Norman Bostock and Edith Cowan, 21 Nov. 1933, Certificate No. 1933/016759' (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1933).

and sulky, and so the question of why the ‘mission’ and the family moved was added to the many questions I wanted to find answers to.



**Figure 34: Nymboida Aborigines Reserve (date unknown)<sup>40</sup>**

Note: The word ‘Nymboida’ was scratched into the original film reel’s negative.

Since the early 1880s, Aborigines had camped on a portion of the water reserve near the Nymboida River.<sup>41</sup> By the mid-1890s, they were destitute and in need of the provision of rations and clothing from the APB.<sup>42</sup> Some Aboriginal people had built gunyahs on the camping ground, and one ‘industrious half-caste’ had even built a hut, fenced off an eighth of an acre and planted vegetables and maize.<sup>43</sup> The local white-Australians strongly objected to them being there on the grounds that it was an important travelling stock route and camping

<sup>40</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Won’t Disturb Those Aborigines’, *Evening News* (Sydney, NSW: 1869–1931), 7 October 1903, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article113798254>.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Aborigines Protection’, *Evening News* (Sydney, NSW: 1869–1931), 21 June 1895, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108095474> (accessed 17 February 2017).

<sup>43</sup> ‘An Industrious Halfcaste: Poor Encouragement’, *Evening News* (Sydney, NSW: 1869–1931), 28 February 1898, 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108766027>. Oxford Online Dictionary describes a gunyah as ‘an Aboriginal bush hut, typically made of sheets of bark and branches’. Oxford University Press, *English: Oxford Living Dictionaries (online)* ‘Definition of Gunyah’, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gunyah.html>.

reserve.<sup>44</sup> In 1903, the Grafton Land Board considered that the camping of the Aborigines with their dogs on the reserves was ‘detrimental to depasturing of stock, and should be prevented’.<sup>45</sup> In 1908, the APB applied for 20 acres (of the Crown land) to be ‘set apart for the use of Aborigines out of Water Reserve number 360’, but the Inspector at the Grafton Land Board recommended that it be refused ‘in the interests of the travelling stock traffic and the public generally’.<sup>46</sup> The welfare of their stock seemed to be a continuing concern for the white-Australian settlers.

By 1910, the Minister of Lands approved an area of 20 acres on the left bank of Nymboida River for a reserve for Aborigines.<sup>47</sup> Four years later, complaints continued and the integrity of the water supply was added to the list of local residents’ concerns. So the Member for Raleigh, on behalf of the South Grafton Municipal Council, wrote an application to the Chief Secretary to ‘have the aborigines station removed from Nymboida, as the camping ground is within the area from which the Nymboida water supply is obtained for the towns of South Grafton and Grafton’. The Chief Secretary informed him that it was not necessary to remove the station, but certain precautions would be ‘adopted so far as the station is concerned in order to prevent pollution of the water supply’.<sup>48</sup> This begs the question of how Aboriginal people, who depended on the supply of water and had successfully camped there since the early 1880s, could possibly pollute the whole town of Grafton’s water supply more than herds of travelling cattle. It is clear that the white-Australians at Nymboida thought more of their cattle than Aboriginal people.

Not satisfied with the removal of Aborigines from the vicinity of their stock, white-Australians at Nymboida also wanted Aboriginal children removed from their public school. The townspeople signed a petition and sent it with a letter of objection to the District School Inspector Mr Henderson.<sup>49</sup> This was a common occurrence and the petition did not surprise Henderson, who explained to the Chief Inspector that ‘inclusion of aborigines at our ordinary

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Land Business’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton, NSW: 1889–1915), 31 March 1903, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article61393256>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> ‘Pastures Protection Board’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton, NSW: 1889–1915), 7 March 1908, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/61546723>.

<sup>47</sup> ‘The Clarence Electorate’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (Grafton, NSW: 1889–1915), 10 May 1910.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Official Information’, *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* (NSW: 1889–1915), 29 August 1914, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article61634700>.

<sup>49</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Ellis to Inspector Henderson, Dept. of P.I., 16 Sep. 1907, Nymboida School Files, Item Number 5/17197.1’, Department of Public Instruction (Sydney, NSW: State Records of NSW, 1907), 12.

public schools is an old trouble'. Henderson, as he had previously done at other places, recommended that the teacher of Nymboida Public School be instructed that he must not allow the Aboriginal children to attend the public school, and the Aboriginal parents should be informed that the Minister would be prepared to consider an application to establish an 'Aborigines Only' school at Nymboida.<sup>50</sup>

All recommendations were approved and Henderson promptly acted on this authority. On 8 August 1908, construction of the Nymboida Aborigines Only School was officially completed.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, in his report of 1908, Henderson stated that the local Aborigines 'have been here for years and are likely to remain' and the Nymboida area is 'looked upon as their home. If they go away for a short time, I am told, they invariably return'.<sup>52</sup> Noted here is how Henderson's observation contrasts with the common white-Australian belief that Aboriginal people were nomadic hunters and gathers. In fact, Aboriginal people tried to stay on their traditional lands, but were often forced to move by circumstances beyond their control.

A few years later, when my grandmother Edith Cowan was a small child, all the Nymboida Aborigines had left the Aborigines station. In 1913, according to the local newspaper, the APB appointed Mr Newnham as manager and it was 'not long before all the blacks left the station'.<sup>53</sup> The hostility from the town's residents, the segregation of the children from the public school and the APB's employment of a station manager increased both surveillance of Aborigines and the tensions between Aborigines and white-Australians in Nymboida, but the critical reason for the mass exodus of Aboriginal people from the reserve was fear of child removal. In January 1915, a Grafton newspaper reported an incident at Nymboida that pinpoints fear of child removal as the reason why Aboriginal people, including my family members, left Nymboida *en masse*.

The following is the story of what happened at Nymboida. Like many other Aboriginal people who received rations from the government, Jackie and Gracie Lardner sought employment to

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>51</sup> NSW Government, 'Completion of Contract Form, 8 August 1908, Nymboida School Files, Item Number 5/17197.1' (Sydney, NSW: State Records of NSW, 1907), 6.

<sup>52</sup> NSW Government, 'Inspector Henderson's Summary Report for the Application of the Establishment of an Aborigines Provisional School, 1 April 1908, Nymboida School Files, Item Number 5/17197.1', Department of Public Instruction (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW), 7.

<sup>53</sup> 'Nymboida', *Daily Examiner* (Grafton NSW: 1915–1954), 30 March 1916, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/194988176>.

earn extra money because the rations alone were insufficient to survive on. It was fortunate that they were regularly employed at the Nymboida Hotel because they had two children to support, Norman, aged seven and Gracie's daughter Janie McDougall, aged 13 (born before the Lardner's were married). The Nymboida school teacher Mr Newnham wanted the Lardner's to live in a house on the reserve, but the Lardner's objected because 'some of the tribe had died in the house'.<sup>54</sup> They chose to live in a gunyah of their own not far away. The full text of this article reveals white-Australian's sympathy for Aboriginal people, but most importantly, the article reveals the heart-wrenching sadness and grief of the people:

A lady inspector from Sydney, a Miss Lowe was at Nymboida recently and it is believed she made a report on the matter. However word came to the police to arrest the boy. A police officer went out from Grafton on Thursday and arrested Norman under the Neglected Children's Act as instructed. There was a great weeping and wailing from the tribe – it was heard nearly a mile away. The child was brought into Grafton but was discharged from the Grafton Children's Court, no evidence being forthcoming that the child was neglected in any way. He was clean and healthy looking and a splendid writer, and a regular attendant at the Nymboida School and also at Coutts Crossing when the family were there. The charge of having no fixed place of abode a ridiculous one to aim at nomadic people like the blacks. The police officer mentioned, we are informed, was also instructed to offer another 14-year-old (Jenny Layton) her fare and 'safe conduct' to the home near Cootamundra Girls Home, but the girl refused to go and the mother to let her stir.<sup>55</sup>

The parent's decision to reject Newnham's suggestion to live in a house, based on cultural reasons, resulted in Norman Lardner being labelled as 'neglected'. Word of this spread far and wide, and within days 24 Aborigines fled from Nymboida. The non-Indigenous author of the newspaper article then poignantly added:

the affection the blacks have for their children is well known, and the sight of the whole Nymboida tribe calling at the police station to say 'goodbye' to Norman Lardner on the morning after his arrest will not soon be forgotten by those who saw it.<sup>56</sup>

Days later, more scathing comments about the incident came from a non-Indigenous supporter who had considerable knowledge and experience with Aboriginal people. This anonymous person wrote:

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<sup>54</sup> The teacher/manager's name was Mr Newnham, not 'Noonan' as spelled in this article.

<sup>55</sup> 'Darkies and Officialdom: Trouble on the Clarence', *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1945), 2 February 1915, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article125928005>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

The idea of trying to compel blacks to live in a house or hut where another aborigine had previously died reveals a lamentable ignorance of the feelings and customs of the natives. In bygone days it was quite the rule to destroy by fire the hut which had been the scene of a death, and in many cases the whole camp was shifted to another spot. The aborigine superstition is very strong on this point.<sup>57</sup>

In the APB Yearly Report for 1912, I read that Miss Lowe was appointed as the new ‘home-finder’. The report stated that the home-finder’s duties consisted of visiting the camps and stations to ‘induce’ Aboriginal parents to allow their children to be apprenticed out, or (if they were too young) to consider sending them to Cootamundra Girls Home to undergo a course of training to ‘fit them for situations’. This announcement goes on to state that once suitable homes are found for the girls, they are visited regularly by the home-finder who sees they are properly treated and receive pocket money.<sup>58</sup> An interesting point to note here is that Norman must have been the last child to get away with the court rejection of his neglect, because it was literally just a few days later that the *Aborigines Protection Amending Act 1915* was ‘assented to’ on 15 February 1915.<sup>59</sup> I suspect that Donaldson was outraged by the court’s rejection and wanted the APB’s ultimate power legislated once and for all.

The ‘pocket money’ received by indentured Aborigines was usually a sixpence, hence the name of a renowned documentary film on the subject, *Lousy Little Sixpence*. This 1983 documentary was produced by Alec Morgan and my uncle Gerry Bostock. The associate producer was my other uncle, Lester Bostock. *Lousy Little Sixpence* is held in very high esteem by Australian filmmakers who consider it a landmark film.<sup>60</sup> At the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, Uncle Gerry interviewed elderly Aboriginal women who were around my grandmother’s age and asked them about their experience of being indentured. Violet Shea had to go and work for white-Australian strangers when she was just 12 years of age. Here is another Aboriginal voice speaking from the past:

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<sup>57</sup> ‘The Nymboida Aborigines Case’, *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser* (NSW: 1874–1875; 1879–1882; 1888; 1892; 1899–1922), 1 February 1915, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/235455929>.

<sup>58</sup> NSW Government, ‘Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1912)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1913), 4.

<sup>59</sup> NSW Government, ‘Aborigines Protection Amending Act, No. 2 1915’, APB (Canberra, ACT: A.I.T.S.I.S, 1915), [https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised\\_collections/remove/52290.pdf](https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/52290.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> When I attended a science and documentary filmmakers conference, I was repeatedly introduced by one of the conference organisers as ‘Gerry Bostock’s niece’, and several well-known Australian documentary filmmakers actually told me what a landmark film *Lousy Little Sixpence* was. The conference was the World Congress of Science and Factual Film Producers Conference, Brisbane Convention Centre, Brisbane, QLD, 27–30 November 2018. I was invited as a member of a panel for a discussion on the topic of history.



They used to wake me up at half-past five in the morning and I had to do everything, the washing, the ironing and the cooking, and I hardly knew how to cook but I pretty soon learned. I worked seven days a week, whatever had to be done in the house - I did. At Camerons, Mr and Mrs Cameron's it was one and six a week. A shilling into a trust fund with the AP Board and a sixpence a week pocket money for me, but I never ever, *never* ever [sic] got that sixpence, and different people have said to me 'Well, why didn't you ask for it?', but you - you just didn't do those things. If I'd have asked for it well they just probably would've said 'Well I'm putting it away for you'. Or something like that, but err, she dressed me, [pause], not well! I didn't wear a pair of shoes, oh, all the time I was with her. The children were always well dressed. Now these were missionaries, more or less, preaching the word of God to you. They drummed it into our ears, morning and night.<sup>61</sup>

Aunty Violet's account was added to Margaret Tucker's account of being indentured. Aunty Margaret and her two sisters were taken from their mother and sent to Cootamundra Girls Home to be trained as indentured servants for white-Australians.<sup>62</sup> At the age of 13, Aunty Margaret was punished with physical abuse at Cootamundra Girls Home and, when interviewed at the age of 74, she said, 'I have marks on my body right now from the beltings I had'.<sup>63</sup> Three months later, after being indentured to a white-Australian family, she was again punished with humiliating physical abuse.<sup>64</sup> According to Inara Walden:

570 girls were apprenticed as wards under the (NSW) Protection Board between the 1910s and the 1930s. Over the course of three decades more than 1200 employers in city and country areas benefited from the services of these 570 girls. During any one year in the 1920s there would have been between 300 and 400 aboriginal girls apprenticed to white-Australian homes. Aboriginal wards thus represented approximately 1.5% of the domestic workforce at this time.<sup>65</sup>

Inara Walden's choice to use the quotation 'That Was Slavery Days' in her article's title to describe that time is completely appropriate. Aboriginal people were 'the property of and wholly subject to another'.<sup>66</sup> The APB Yearly Report for 1912 records that the appointment of

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<sup>61</sup> Alec Morgan and Gerry Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, directed by Alec Morgan (1983; Sydney, NSW: Ronin Films, 1983). The whole documentary can be seen in four parts on YouTube. This part of Aunty Violet's interview can be seen on YouTube, Part 2 of 4, from 3:04 minutes to 4:27 minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7z2Ad5K27s&t=20s>).

<sup>62</sup> Aunty Violet is not my biological Aunt, nor is Aunty Margaret. It is customary in Aboriginal culture to show respect for our elders by addressing them as 'Aunty' or 'Uncle'. In this thesis, I refer to my biological Aunts and Uncles immediately as such. For non-biological Aboriginal elders, I initially state their full name and later in references call them 'Aunty' or 'Uncle' followed by their first name..

<sup>63</sup> Morgan and Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, YouTube, Part 2 of 4, from 0:20 seconds to 2:01 minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7z2Ad5K27s&t=20s>).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., from 2:39 minutes to 3:04 minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7z2Ad5K27s&t=20s>).

<sup>65</sup> Inara Walden, '“That Was Slavery Days”: Aboriginal Domestic Servants in New South Wales in the Twentieth Century', *Labour History*, no. 69 (1995): 196–209.

<sup>66</sup> See Dictionary.com description of a slave: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/slave>.

Miss Lowe was well-justified because, since having started her job, Miss Lowe brought an enormous credit to the Board's trust account that year of £493 1s 8d as opposed to the £322 8s 8d achieved at the end of the previous year.<sup>67</sup> There is no doubt that Miss Lowe was zealous in the execution of her job.<sup>68</sup>

## 2.6 Ukerebagh Island Reserve

Gus and Lena Bostock, my great-grandparents, were at one time quite literally 'on the Tweed' when they lived on Ukerebagh Island Aborigines Reserve, located at the confluence of the Tweed River and Terranora Creek, south of Tweed Heads (see Figure 35). We know from family oral history that they lived on the Aborigines Reserve on Ukerebagh Island and later moved across the river to live on the southern bank of the Tweed. The story of Ukerebagh Island can be likened to other stories within this thesis of the plight of Aborigines who, like Gus and Lena, were pushed to live on the margins of white society.

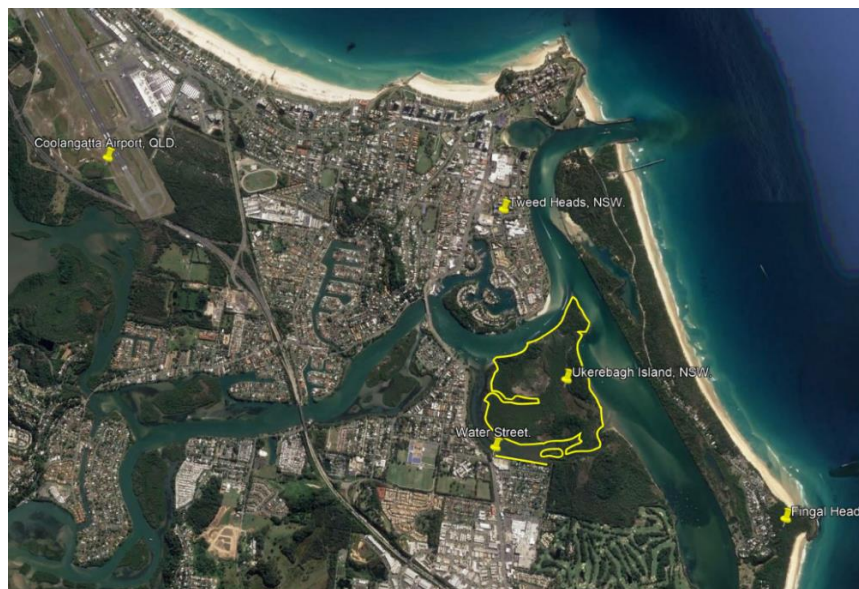


**Figure 35: Ukerebagh Island, Tweed River, NSW<sup>69</sup>**

Note: Water Street is where my great-grandparents later lived.

In 2004, heritage consultant Megan Goulding conducted a study to examine the significance of Ukerebagh Island to local Aboriginal people in order to establish its suitability to be declared

<sup>67</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1912)', Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1913).

<sup>68</sup> For more on Miss Lowe, see Victoria Haskins, *One Bright Spot* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Image generated using Google Earth. Digital outlines inserted by my daughter, Brenna Smith.

an 'Aboriginal Place' under the *National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974* (NSW). The results of this study were published in 2005 and is most comprehensive information I could find about Ukerebagh Island.<sup>70</sup>

There is no mention of Ukerebagh Island in McGuigan's 'Occasional Paper (No. 4)' on Aborigines reserves in NSW which he compiled for the NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, nor is there any information about Ukerebagh in the 1938 'Report of the Public Service Board'.<sup>71</sup> Ukerebagh Island Aborigines Reserve is only named in the APB/AWB yearly reports as 'Tweed Heads (Ukerebagh Is.)' in a 'List of Aboriginal Reserves' for 1940, 1941, 1943 and 1944, with corresponding population numbers of 12, 22, five and zero, respectively.<sup>72</sup> Goulding's report, however, alerted me to the NSW Government Gazette 'Revocation of Reserves from Sale or Lease' which states the portion of land to be revoked 'from sale and from lease generally' was 'The Whole; Ukerebagh Island'.<sup>73</sup>

As seen in the historic parish map in Figure 36, the island is listed as an area of about 180 acres, was gazetted as Reserve 59497 and 59498 from sale or lease 'generally for use of Aborigines' on 4 February 1927, and this reserve was revoked on 26 October 1951. Although estimated to be 180 acres, AWB yearly reports record the reserve space as being only 37 acres, and a large portion of the island was (and still is today) uninhabitable mangrove swamp land.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Megan Goulding, 'Ukerebagh Island Aboriginal Place Nomination Background Investigation', Department of Environment & Conservation (Hurstville, NSW: Department of Environment & Conservation NSW, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service Cultural Heritage Division, 2004).

<sup>71</sup> A. McGuigan, 'Occasional Paper Number (No. 4): Aboriginal Reserves in New South Wales: A Land Rights Research Aid' (Sydney, NSW: NSW Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, undated). See also, NSW Government, 'Aborigines' Protection: Report of the Public Service Board, 16th August 1938, Reel1649', Public Service Board (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1938).

<sup>72</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for the Year Ended, 30th June 1940)', 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for the Year Ended, 30th June 1941)', and 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for Year Ended, 30th June 1944). This last report lists both 1943 and 1944, hence three reports and four numbers.

<sup>73</sup> NSW Government, 'N.S.W Government Gazette: Revocation of Reserve from Sale or Lease, Etc.', Lands Department, Issue 182 (Sydney, NSW: National Library of Australia, Trove), 5145, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/220108183?searchTerm=&searchLimits=exactPhrase||anyWords||notWords||requestHandler||dateFrom=1832-01-01||dateTo=2012-12-31||l-advcategory=Government+Gazette+Notices||sortBy||l-state=New+South+Wales>.

<sup>74</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for the Year Ended, 30th June 1940)', 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for the Year Ended, 30th June 1941)', and 'Aborigines Welfare Board (Annual Report for Year Ended, 30th June 1944)'.



**Figure 36: A historical parish map of Ukerebagh Island<sup>75</sup>**

It was a general practice of the APB to move Aboriginal people away from European population centres, and even though it officially became a reserve in 1927, Aboriginal people were forced onto Ukerebagh Island in the early 1920s.<sup>76</sup> Like other Aborigines reserves, people survived on rations of tea, flour and sugar that were limited to certain amounts per adult and child. The people supplemented the APB rations with more traditional food resources nearby such as fish, mud crabs, oysters, ukeres (another word for pippies), wallabies, birds and lizards.<sup>77</sup> Goulding interviewed elders (Tosie Terare, George Browning, Rosalie Browning and Robert Corowa) and they explained that this continued until the 1930s when the men obtained work wherever they could in farm labouring, chipping bananas, cane cutting, bean picking and commercial fishing. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, men's work was rationed to two days a week for it to be shared equally among many.<sup>78</sup>

Ukerebagh Island was isolated. The nature of the island made it difficult for people to access work and school and, aside from a precarious, often-flooded, handmade rock wall of stepping-stones on the southeast edge of the island, the only access to the mainland was via boat. Goulding added oral histories of local Aborigines, and Aunty Joyce Summers said that 'going back a long time ago', she asked Uncle Toesy Trent:

<sup>75</sup> NSW Government, 'Historical Parish Maps: County of Rous, Parish of Terranora, Sheet Reference 1, Edition No. 12', NSW Land Registry Services (Sydney, NSW: NSW Land Registry Services, 1935), <https://hlrv.nswlrs.com.au/>.

<sup>76</sup> Goulding, 'Ukerebagh Island Aboriginal Place', 31.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 34.

How come all the people moved off Ukerebagh island? He said, ‘when the war came they had all their boats towed up the river’. Now you [sic] might remember that. Towed all the boats up the river and tied them up, apparently so the Japanese couldn’t get hold of it and do damage. I don’t know what damage they was supposed to do. But the people didn’t have any way of going shopping, getting the kids to school or anything, you know, so they had to leave the island. So it was around about that time that we left. So I don’t remember, sort of, my childhood on that island because we sort of had to leave there.<sup>79</sup>

My father’s cousin, Auntie Joyce Frater, the oldest surviving grandchild of Gus and Lena Bostock, told me the same story. Senator Neville Bonner, the first Aboriginal person to be sworn into the Australian Parliament (on 17 August 1971), was born ‘on a government blanket laid over the hard ground’ at Ukerebagh Island on 28 March 1922.<sup>80</sup> Family oral history relates that my great-grandmother Lena acted as a midwife for his mother and he came into the world under the island’s well-known palm tree. In 1975, Senator Bonner spoke about Ukerebagh Island in a speech to the Australian Senate, and he was very explicit and emotional about the island and the treatment of Aboriginal people from the Tweed River area:

It’s uninhabited except for the ghosts of Aborigines and Islanders who lived and died there – victims of the white man’s greed. You came, you saw and you conquered as you proclaimed in those days that our land was your land. The white people of that era herded my parents and grandparents and their contemporaries on to Ukerebagh Island to live and die in the blacks camp there. Your crime in those days was hideously cruel; ours was that we were of black skin and therefore presumed savages or unintelligent. Yes, many, many did die through your insufficient rations, your exotic diseases, heartache and the cold – that unforgettable cold that I knew and suffered as a little boy on Ukerebagh Island. You introduced grog. But equally as many people lived, and I stand here this evening, Australia, as your ghost, your conscience, your demand to right what was wrong on Ukerebagh Island 53 years ago.<sup>81</sup>

Senator Bonner’s research reveals that Ukerebagh Island was actually declared a water reserve on 24 December 1861, and Aboriginal people were ‘herded’ there long before its gazettal as an Aborigines reserve in 1927. Bonner stated that Aboriginal people did not move to the mainland because they wanted to live there; rather, when authorities decided that Aboriginal children should be educated, they were forced to leave because Aboriginal people could not

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>80</sup> Angela Burger, *Neville Bonner: A Biography* (South Melbourne, VIC: The MacMillan Company of Australia Pty Ltd, 1979), 2.

<sup>81</sup> (Senator) Neville Bonner, ‘The Senate Adjournment: Ukerebagh Island New South Wales Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation - Candidate: Bass Electoral Division Speech Wednesday 11th June 1975’, ed. The Senate: Parliamentary Debates (Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia, 1975), 2568.

afford rowing boats to get their children to school. Authorities threatened that if parents did not send their children to school, the parents would be jailed and their children taken away. So on the basis that the people had left the island, the government decided that it would revoke what had been done in 1927. The Welfare Department was contacted and asked if the department required the island for an Aborigines reserve. When the answer was no because Aboriginal people were not living there, the reserve was gazetted and reserved from sale for future public requirements. All of this was done without consulting the Aborigines and without ascertaining the reason why they had left the island in the first place.

Senator Bonner had heard that the Tweed Shire and the NSW Government had decided that the island should be opened up for development and he tried to contact the Minister for Lands but he was away. There were development plans in place for a road from Tweed Heads to Ukerebagh Island and on to Fingal Head (see locations in Figure 35). Maxwell's fish factory had been promised 40 acres of the reserve. Senator Bonner urged the government to 'make a thorough investigation into this matter because things are moving very fast on the Tweed'. Senator Bonner stated that had he visited Ukerebagh and found surveyors pegs all over the island that had only been placed there in the previous 12 months. At that time, sand was being pumped to reclaim some of the swamplands. Senator Boomer remarked to the Senate, 'I am sure that very shortly they intend to develop Ukerebagh Island, again for the greed of the white man in that area'.<sup>82</sup>

Bonner was right when he said the people did not go to the mainland because they desired to live there. My great-grandparents Lena and Gus Bostock moved off the island and settled just across from the island, on the southern bank of the Ukerebagh Passage, where Water Street is today (see Figure 35). In later years, they lived at Perry's Estate (today Chinderah Road), which was to the left of the island on the southern side of the bridge to Tweed Heads.

Lena Bostock was renowned for her midwifery and 'mothering'. As previously mentioned (in Section 1.2.8), her mother died when she was just 13 years old so it is likely that, alongside the 'Aunties' that would have stepped in, Lena helped raise her siblings. She was also given Auntie Lilly to raise when she married Gus. Stories were told to us of how 'Granny Bostock' took in a number of children who were not her own. Granny Bostock's life, like Mary Ann Cowan's, highlight a common cultural practice among Aboriginal people.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 2569.

As a family history researcher, I have found numerous documents about Aboriginal people that have the phrase ‘was raised as’, or ‘known as’, or ‘went by the name of’. In Aboriginal culture, when one of the family did not have a mother they were never motherless because an Aunty stepped in to honour the role, accepting a relative’s child as her own. Aboriginal people ‘took in’ family members without parents—no questions asked, no seeking white-Australian government approval or legal authority, it was just done.

Aboriginal people address older Aboriginal women as ‘Aunty’ regardless of whether they are a biological Aunt or not. We perpetuate this terminology today as a sign of respect, but I would also say that this is done as a way of remembering the important roles Aunties and Uncles played in caring for children who were orphans or needed to be cared for (see e.g., Figure 37).





**Figure 37: Family photograph at Tweed Heads, circa 1946<sup>83</sup>**

Note: At the front left is my father and on the front right is Uncle Gerry. Uncle Lindsay is between them and Uncle Lester has his hand on his hip, leaning on Lena ‘Granny’ Bostock. On the right is Owen Morgan.

Lena (and Gus) Bostock cared for her deceased sisters’ children. Claude McDermott was the youngest of five children and was born in 1921, the same year that his mother Jessie (Lena’s sister) died. Lena’s other sister Alexandra’s son Edward (‘Ted’) Andrews was raised alongside Claude, my grandfather Norman and his siblings. Ted Andrews used the last name of Bostock

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<sup>83</sup> My Family Collection.



up until he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (see Section 1.3.1). When men enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force, they were required to go by their certified birth names (just like Harold Arthur Cowan, ‘raised as Williams’). During the Second World War, Lena was also the next of kin for her brother Curtis Ford. Figure 38 shows telegrams notifying my great-grandmother of her adopted children’s well-being. Uncle Ted was wounded in action and Uncle Claude taken as a prisoner of war. A few years after the war, Uncle Claude stated, ‘I also was in F-Force which worked on the Burma Siam railway. We came back to Changi less than half our force, cholera hit us pretty bad’.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Australian Government, ‘McDermott, Claude: Series No. B883, Control Symbol: Q.X. 22571, Personnel Dossiers 1940-1947’, Second Australian Imperial Force (Canberra, ACT: National Archives of Australia, 1941–1946). The photocopies of the telegrams were given to me by Aunty Joyce Frater (nee Byerley), oldest surviving grandchild of Gus and Lena Bostock. The direct quotation of Uncle Claude is from a letter he wrote to the War Gratuity Officer, Victoria Barracks Brisbane, undated but between 27 October 1949 to 5 December 1949, page 31 of the file.



DEAR AUNT

I AM A PRISONER OF WAR. I AM IN GOOD  
HEALTH. HOPEING YOU ALL ARE THE  
SAME.

Give my LOVE To all at home

LOVING NEPHEW  
CLAUDE

PTE. C. McDERMOTT. QX22571

BE SURE TO FULLY ADDRESS POSTAL ARTICLES FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN ARMY ABROAD

Include No.,  
Rank, Unit, etc.,  
thus:—

P. X 1234 Pte. J. Digger,  
8th Company, 2/5th Battalion,  
Australian Imperial Force,  
Abroad.

Place your own name  
and address on the  
back of the envelope,  
if the usual "Return  
Request" is not printed  
on the front.

8/1941.

NOTE.—The standard time for the Eastern States of Australia (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania) is half an hour in advance of the standard time for South Australia and two hours in advance of the standard time for Western Australia.

T.G. 42. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

Funds may be Quickly, Safely and Economically Transferred by  
**MONEY ORDER TELEGRAM.**

(PLEASE TURN OVER)

Sch. C.3365. 8/1941.

## TELEGRAM

This Telegram has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations. The time received at this office is shown at the end of the message.

The date stamp indicates the date of reception and lodgment also, unless an earlier date is shown after the time of lodgment.

| Office of Origin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | No. of Words.    | Time of Lodgment.        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| <p><i>Joowoomba</i></p> <p><i>Mrs Byerley</i></p> <p><i>PO Sydney N.S.W.</i></p> <p><i>Arrived safe wounded 119 A G H Joowoomba</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>J Andrews</i></p> <p style="text-align: left;"><i>926450</i></p> | <p><i>14</i></p> | <p><i>4.53p 16th</i></p> |



**Figure 38: Telegrams received by my great-grandmother Lena Bostock notifying her of Claude McDermott's and Ted Andrews's wartime situations<sup>85</sup>**

Note: 'Mrs Byerley' was Lena Ida 'Marlee' Byerley [nee Bostock], or Aunty Marlee. Aunty Marlee was Gus and Lena's only surviving daughter.

Claude McDermott's War Records reveal that prior to enlisting, he lived with Gus and Lena and 'contributed half his earnings' to them. When he enlisted, he registered his uncle, Augustus Bostock, as being 'Wholly dependent' and organised an 'allotment' for Gus, stating he was 'old and infirm and unable to work'. From 1941–1946 (when he was discharged), my great-grandparents received financial help from their nephew, Claude. At one stage, the Australian Army inquired as to what income, if any, my great-grandparents 'household' was receiving. From this war record, I was able to learn that my great-grandparents also received invalid pensions from 1943.<sup>86</sup>

In Uncle Claude's file, a document also refers to Lena Bostock as 'Foster Mother and Aunt of E. A. Andrews' and states that Uncle Ted received a War Pension for 'GSW [gunshot wound] Forearm'. When I told my father George Bostock about this, it triggered a long-forgotten memory about Uncle Ted. He said that Uncle Ted's arm and elbow were badly damaged by a gunshot wound sustained during combat and, as a result, his elbow was immovably fused at an odd angle. Therefore, he had an unusual walk where the elbow would swing in and out from

<sup>85</sup> My Family Collection. Both Uncle Claude and Uncle Ted served on active duty in the Second World War. Lena was their Aunt who adopted them. They used the Bostock name as their surnames right up to enlistment.

<sup>86</sup> Australian Government, 'McDermott, Claude, Personnel Dossiers 1939-1947'. An 'allotment' was a regular payment of a portion of a soldiers wage to send to dependents back home.

his body as he walked. My father shook his head in disapproval, but smiled as he admitted, ‘As kids, we used to call him Uncle Wing-ee’.

## **2.7 Box Ridge Mission**

### **2.7.1 My four grandparents’ home**

Family BDMs from 1920–1934 record a variety of names for the place where my ancestors and other Aboriginal people lived. The name gradually changed over time from ‘Coraki Aborigines Reserve’ in 1920,<sup>87</sup> to ‘Coraki Aboriginal Camp’ in 1923,<sup>88</sup> to ‘Aboriginal Reserve, Box Ridge’ in 1933,<sup>89</sup> and finally to ‘Box Ridge Aboriginal Reserve’ in 1934.<sup>90</sup> Although I have been unable to locate a record of how the name ‘Box Ridge’ came about, I have visited the location during my research travels and a natural ridgeline of hills that could be described as a three-sided box must be driven around to where the mission and cemetery are located. The box-like ridge geographically separates the town of Coraki on the Richmond River from the mission and cemetery further inland. Coraki Aborigines Reserve evolved over time to become known as ‘Box Ridge’ Aboriginal Reserve. Colloquially, it was always known in my family as ‘the mission’.

The events that lead to the segregation of Aborigines from the town of Nymboida were remarkably similar to those experienced at Coraki, on the Richmond River. In March 1907, Mr Henderson was also the DPI District Inspector for Coraki, and like at Nymboida, he was presented with a petition from the townspeople calling for the exclusion of Aboriginal children from the local public school.<sup>91</sup> This petition did eventually bring about the erection of a segregated school for Aboriginal children, but not straight away. A year later, Aboriginal children were still excluded from the town school. So after requesting that the local police sergeant provide him with a list of the school-aged children, Henderson wrote another letter to the DPI informing them that ‘They (the Aboriginal children) are entirely without the means of

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<sup>87</sup> NSW Government, ‘Marriage Certificate of William Olive and Elizabeth Cowan, 23 Feb. 1920, No. 1920/004792’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, 1920).

<sup>88</sup> NSW Government, ‘Death Certificate of Daisy Anderson, 26th December 1923, Certificate No. 1923/002567’, NSW Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages (Sydney, NSW: Department of Justice, 1923).

<sup>89</sup> NSW Government, ‘Marriage Certificate of Norman Bostock and Edith Cowan, 21 Nov. 1933, Certificate No. 1933/016759’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1933).

<sup>90</sup> NSW Government, ‘Marriage Certificate of Henry Anderson and Evelyn Walker, Certificate No. 1934/011544’ (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, 1934).

<sup>91</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Inspector Henderson to Dept. Head Office, 3 March 1907, Item Number 5/15528.1, Coraki Aborigines School Files 1876-1939’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1907).

education. I am of opinion which is based upon the statements of the local residents that about fifteen children of school ages are likely to remain on the camping ground’.

In the same letter, Henderson went on to recommend that ‘the APB be informed it is proposed to establish a Provis. [provisional] school for aborigines at Coraki’. Closer examination of the Board’s notations reveals that a department official took the time to write in red ink the bracketed words ‘(Aborigines Reserve)’ under Henderson’s description of this space as being a ‘camping ground’, and also written on the side of the letter were the words, ‘Site for school to be on Aborigines Reserve’, with ‘Reserve’ underlined (see Figure 39).

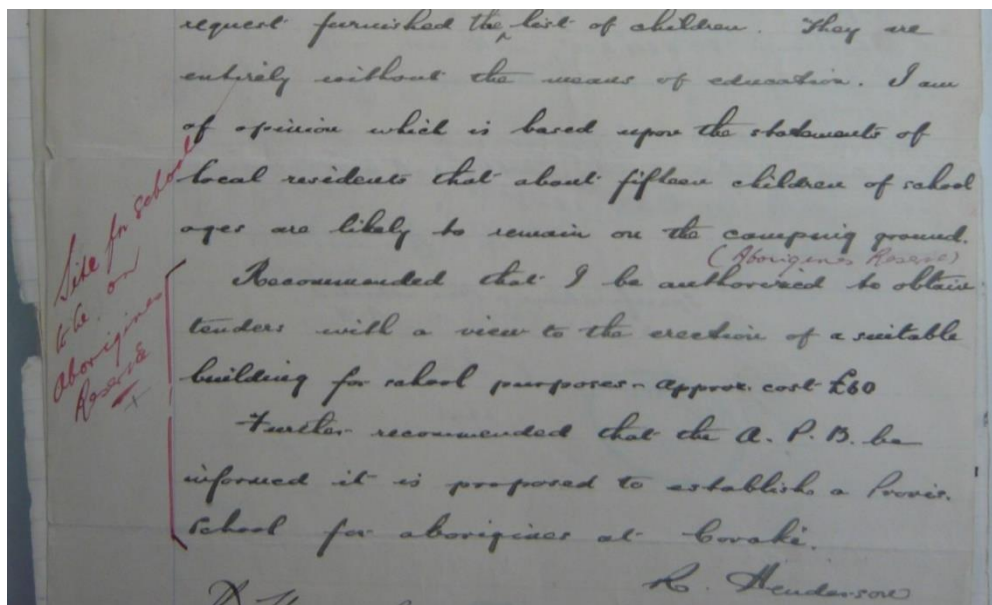


**Figure 39: Section of a letter from Mr Henderson, District Inspector for the Department of Public Instruction, to the Department on 20 June 1908<sup>92</sup>**

Note: This letter was sent one year after Aborigines were excluded from the public school.

These notations were significant because they raised questions about the terminology used by Henderson and the DPI to describe the place near the township of Coraki where Aboriginal people lived. Henderson’s terminology in the cover letter that he sent with the signed petition, dated March 1907, stated that the Aboriginal children were ‘from an adjacent camp’. However, in the above letter dated June 1908, his use of the term ‘camping ground’ was deliberately corrected by the DPI, who insisted that the place was an ‘Aborigines Reserve’. By 1908, the former ‘camp/camping ground’ had indeed become an official Aborigines reserve.

<sup>92</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Inspector Henderson to Dept. of P.I. Head Office, 20 June 1908, Coraki Aborigines School Files 1876-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1908).

Government records cite that ‘the Reserve situated in the Coraki area in the Parish of West Coraki, County of Richmond with an area of 10 acres (believed to be 16 acres) was gazetted as AR 41808/9 on the 10 July 1907’.<sup>93</sup> I think that the DPI’s insistence on naming the place an ‘Aborigines Reserve’ once again illustrates their expectation that the APB would contribute financially to the building of an Aborigines only school.

On 22 July 1908, Inspector Henderson wrote a letter to the Chief Inspector of the DPI recommending one of the two tenderers to build the school house. He added, ‘owing to the nomadic instincts of these people, their residence in any location cannot be relied upon. It is not advisable therefore to erect one of your usual buildings, but one on a cheaper scale’.<sup>94</sup> The building of the school house was approved a month later, but no record can be found regarding when exactly it was built. It can be assumed this occurred sometime in 1909, because on 4 January 1910, Mr Caldwell applied for the position of teacher and began work at the Coraki Aborigines School after 4 February 1910.<sup>95</sup>

In the years leading up to 1909, the APB was alarmed at the high number of children it described as ‘half-caste’, but their demand for more power was disregarded. Like NSW’s Children’s Relief Department, and as illustrated earlier with the return of Norman Lardner, the APB could only take control of children if the courts judged them neglected.<sup>96</sup> According to Anna Haebich, the APB complained that it had difficulty proving ‘neglect’ when the children appeared in court ‘decently clad and apparently well-looked after’.<sup>97</sup>

Some children at Coraki, possibly because they were too young for indenture, were able to live on the mission and attend school there if it was open. The next record of the Coraki Aborigines School surfaces in 1915, when Mr Dowall, Inspector of the Casino District, wrote a report to the DPI about the re-establishment of the Aborigines school at Coraki as a provisional school. According to the NSW Government’s ‘Glossary of School Types’, the difference between a

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<sup>93</sup> McGuigan, ‘Occasional Paper Number (No. 4)’.

<sup>94</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Inspector Henderson to Chief Inspector Dept. of P.I., 22 July 1908, Coraki School Files 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1908).

<sup>95</sup> NSW Government, ‘Dept. of P.I. Inspectors Report, 4 Jan. 1910, Coraki Aborigines School File 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1910).

<sup>96</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 120.

<sup>97</sup> Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000* (North Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), 183. See also the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* in NSW Government, ‘Aborigines Protection Acts in New South Wales: Legislation/Key Provisions’, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/remove-and-protect/new-south-wales>.

subsidised school and a provisional one was size. Subsidised schools were ones where minimum numbers of students could not be obtained, therefore, the DPI paid a ‘subsidy’ for each student, but it was up to parents to build the school and pay the teacher’s salary. A provisional school was a school with a minimum of 15 students, but less than the 25 required for a public school. Parents provided the building and furniture, while the DPI supplied books and equipment and paid the teacher’s salary.<sup>98</sup>

In 1913, it was proposed that the settlement be moved to Dunoon, but that did not eventuate and the school was reopened as a subsidised school, only to close again because of the resignation of the teacher. Miss Annie Green had been appointed as the subsidised teacher in November 1914 with an enrolment of 14 students, but it was not until May the following year that Coraki Aborigines School became a provisional school for Aborigines and Miss Green’s salary increased to £132 per annum.<sup>99</sup>

At Coraki, the members of the Local Committee were William Nolan, Herbert Hunt, J.T. Olive and A. Stanley Homersham, who seemed to be eyes and ears of the APB on the ground. Although the APB decided to disband Local Committees in 1915, it was with the understanding that this would be undertaken over a period of time. A. Stanley Homersham was the Reverend of St Mary Magdalene Church Coraki and the Local Committee continued to inform the APB even after they employed two new full-time inspectors, Mr H.L. Swindlehurst and Mr R.T. Donaldson.<sup>100</sup> The inspector’s role was to supervise all the various reserves and stations.<sup>101</sup>

In his previous role, Donaldson ‘led a deputation to the Chief Secretary in May 1912 in which he pleaded that Aboriginal parenting and community life was so corrupting that the only hope for children was to be taken away regardless of their own wishes’ or those of their families. At this meeting, government officials were persuaded by Donaldson’s determination to give the APB an undertaking by which all the powers it wanted would be granted. Although the legislation was not actually passed until 1915, the APB began to remove as many children as

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<sup>98</sup> NSW Government, ‘Education, History of New South Wales Government Schools Website: Glossary of School Types’, [https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-people-and-structure/history-of-government-schools/media/documents/glossary\\_AA.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-people-and-structure/history-of-government-schools/media/documents/glossary_AA.pdf).

<sup>99</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Undersecretary to Miss Green, 21 June 1916, Coraki School Files 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1916).

<sup>100</sup> NSW Government, ‘Extract of Report by Inspector Donaldson, Aborigines Reserve Coraki, 5 July 1916, Coraki School Files 1876-1934, Item Number 5/15528.1’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1916).

<sup>101</sup> NSW Government, ‘Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1915)’, Legislative Assembly (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1916).

it could from 1912. According to Goodall, local people named Donaldson the ‘kid collector’, and he was one of the most hated and feared men among Aboriginal people in the state.<sup>102</sup> This was a man that my ancestors and other Aborigines strenuously avoided, so here is another influence on the movements of Aboriginal people.

Reverend Homersham sent the Secretary of the APB a letter informing him of the names of the children to be enrolled at the proposed Coraki Aborigines School.<sup>103</sup> The list comprised 17 children with ages ranging from five to 13 years old. At five years old, my grandfather Henry Anderson was one of the youngest on the list. The oldest child on the list was Jessie Breckenridge, my father’s grand-aunt.<sup>104</sup> I was saddened to see what Homersham had written about Aunty Jessie. The letter extract read:

Jesse Breckenridge. The President – Ald (Alderman) Nolan undertook to make enquiries as to finding a suitable situation for Jesse Breckenridge and to report at the next meeting (Nov 6<sup>th</sup>) the result of the enquiries will be communicated to the Board.

Homersham added:

Most likely the committee will send in a report on the evils on the Reserve. The committee realises that the Board’s policy in the removal of likely girls to the Cootamundra Home might be very beneficial in some instances. Yours Sincerely, A. Stanley Homersham.<sup>105</sup>

I do not know what the implied ‘evils’ were on the reserve, but Aunty Jessie was only 13 years old.

Two days later, Reverend Homersham requested forms be sent to the committee setting out the conditions of apprenticeship be forwarded to them from the office of the APB.<sup>106</sup> I could not locate any records that reveal whether Aunty Jessie went to Cootamundra Girls Home or was apprenticed out as a domestic. There is a palpable inevitability in the tone of Reverend Homersham’s letter that children of a certain age would *of course* go into indenture as the

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<sup>102</sup> Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 122–23.

<sup>103</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Homersham to A.P.B Secretary, 3 June 1916, Coraki Aboriginal School File 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1916), 23.

<sup>104</sup> Jessie was known as ‘Aunty Jessie’ by my father and his siblings, and although she was Dad’s Grandfather’s brother’s wife, the huge age difference between the brothers and her youth at marriage made her seem more like an Aunt than a Grand-Aunt to my father and his siblings.

<sup>105</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter Mr Homersham to A.P.B Secretary, 9 Oct. 1916, Coraki Aboriginal School File 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1916), 39–40.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.



servant class for non-Indigenous rural families. School prepared them for that inevitability. At Box Ridge, sewing lessons for the girls were taught by Mrs Hunt, a local lady who was paid by the DPI to conduct two hours of lesson per week.<sup>107</sup> Mat-making was also taught to the girls, and the boys at the school were given a set of tools and instruction on how to use them. A quarter-acre plot was fenced in for gardening purposes.<sup>108</sup> The APB supplied the mission with rations. Almost all the BDMs I have collected over the years have my female ancestors' occupations recorded on their BDM certificates as 'domestic' and my male ancestors' occupations recorded as 'labourer'. These were the options available for Aboriginal people at that time in history. I do know that Aunty Jessie married my great-grandfather's brother, Roy Cowan, at Box Ridge (see Figure 40) and lived on the mission until her death in 1969.

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<sup>107</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Caldwell to Inspector of Schools re: Funding for Sewing Lessons, Approved 20 Feb. 1911, Coraki Aboriginal School Files 1886-1939, Item Number 5/15528.1' (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1911).

<sup>108</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines. (Report of the Board for the Protection of, for Year 1913)' (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1914).



**Figure 40: Aunty Jessie and Uncle Roy Cowan on their wedding day, Box Ridge Mission, circa 1923<sup>109</sup>**

The Coraki Aborigines School remained a provisional school with Miss Annie Green as the teacher up to 1920, when she requested and was allowed to attend further professional training on how to teach at ‘a school under one teacher’.<sup>110</sup> It is not known why Miss Green did not return to her role as teacher at Coraki Aborigines School after the course, but her writings on what she learned during this training provide us with incredible insight into what was being taught in schools at the time.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>110</sup> NSW Government, ‘Dept. of Education Form from Miss Green to District Inspector, 14 June 1920, Item Number 5/15528.1, Coraki Aboriginal School Files 1886-1939’ (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1920).

<sup>111</sup> Word limits constrain me from elaborating here.

On Box Ridge Mission, the teachers and the missionaries (usually women) worked side by side. A Scottish woman named Mrs Helen Mitchell was hired as a temporary teacher to replace Miss Green, but remained on at the school until her departure in 1930 (see Figure 41).



**Figure 41: Mrs Mitchell with Aboriginal women at Box Ridge Mission<sup>112</sup>**

Note: Mrs Mitchell was identified by Mrs Alma Smith's handwriting on the back of the photograph.

My grandmother is not in the photograph above, but I recognise Hannah Breckenridge and some of my grandmother's friends. I also found another photograph of Mrs Mitchell with a group of children (see Figure 42).

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<sup>112</sup> Alma Smith and Alva Atkins, 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins (Nee Smith) Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work (U.A.M) in N.S.W and W.A, 1909 - 2006. M.L.M.S.S. 8315/Boxes 1-5, Folder 6.X, & P.X.A 1303/Boxes 1, 2 & 3' (Sydney, NSW: Mitchell Library, 1909–2006).



**Figure 42: Mrs Mitchell with children at Box Ridge Mission<sup>113</sup>**

After Mrs Mitchell, a woman called Mrs Irene English was employed as the matron-teacher and stayed at the mission from 1931–1936. She was well-liked by the Aboriginal people at Box Ridge Mission. A newspaper article glowingly reports the ‘gratitude of Aborigines’ for her long and faithful service. It records that the people at Box Ridge Mission threw her a gala farewell party and presented her with gifts when she left to begin a new job as a district inspector with the AWB.<sup>114</sup> From this time on, up to 1944 when my grandfather Henry Anderson removed my mother and her sisters from Box Ridge Mission, the matron at the mission was Mrs Ella Hiscocks. In Chapter 3, the early married life of my grandparents is explored and we will see the role Mrs Hiscocks played in the surveillance that my grandfather Henry Anderson suffered at the hands of the AWB. Additionally Mrs English’s questionable treatment of my grandmother Evelyn Anderson is illuminated.

### **2.7.2 The missionaries**

The UAM was a non-denominational Christian organisation that started in NSW and drew its members from a range of non-conformist denominations. The mission saw the Aboriginal population of Australia as an enormous challenge and they were determined to ensure that

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Farewell Party at Coraki - Gratitude of Aborigines’, *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1942), 25 August 1936, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article126094853>.

Aborigines were exposed to all aspects of ‘civilised’ and Christian culture.<sup>115</sup> The photographs in this chapter of the Box Ridge Mission and the missionaries come from the private collection of the personal items belonging to the UAM missionaries Mrs Alma Smith and her daughter Mrs Alva Atkins. Their family contributed their belongings to the Mitchell Library, but under strict conditions. I was the first person to have access to this collection and had to gain access permission from the family first. This archive was well worth the effort because it provides information and insight into the thoughts, teachings and actions of the missionaries.<sup>116</sup>

The missionaries lived in the town of Coraki and went out to the mission to minister to Aboriginal people on a daily basis (sometimes even doing multiple visits on any given day). They were devoted Christians and believed that working on the reserve to convert Aborigines to Christianity was a Divine call to God’s service. Like the managers, matrons and teachers, the missionaries were involved in every aspect of daily life on the reserve. They organised regular church services for the Aboriginal adults; religious instruction and Sunday schools for Aboriginal children; and conducted services for christenings, weddings and funerals. Outside of religious ministering, they tried to make life happier for Aboriginal people, for example, organising clothes for children and organising pre-Christmas celebrations that they called ‘Christmas Trees’ (see Figure 43). These were Christmas parties that included festivities and donated gifts.

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<sup>115</sup> J. Jacobs, C. Laurence and F. Thomas, ‘Pearls from the Deep: Re-evaluating the History of the Colebrook Home for Aboriginal Children’, in *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, eds. D.B. Rose and T. Swain (Bedford Park, SA: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions at the Australian College of Advanced Education, Sturt Campus, 1988), 140–55.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work’, Mitchell Library.





**Figure 43: Photographs of a typical ‘Christmas Tree’ on Box Ridge Mission<sup>117</sup>**

Newspaper articles report that both my grandmothers Edith Bostock (nee Cowan) and Evelyn Anderson (nee Solomon) had lovely weddings on the mission that would have been very hard

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<sup>117</sup> ‘Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work’, Mitchell Library.

to achieve without considerable help from the missionaries and others. At my grandmother Evelyn's wedding to Henry Anderson, the local paper reported that:

Mrs English presented the bride with a beautiful wedding cake. During the afternoon the scholars of the reserve school entertained the company with yodelling solos and duets, also numerous selections on the gum leaves. The church was tastefully decorated by friends of the bride.<sup>118</sup>

With a grin, I would also like to add to this an oral history story that a very elderly Aboriginal man, Gilbert King, told me in about 2011/2012 not long before he passed away. He was a Bundjalung elder and at a meeting of the Wollumbin Consultative Group (WCG). My father and I are members of the WCG who are the Traditional Owner Descendants of Wollumbin/Mt Warning. The WCG meets regularly with NSW National Parks and Wildlife to discuss the preservation of the mountain and the national park. When I told him that Evelyn and Henry were my grandparents, he excitedly told me that he was present at their wedding on Box Ridge Mission. Uncle Gilbert told me that my Auntie Ruby was a small baby then and was also present at the wedding. He laughed and said, 'Your grandmother Eve-lyn had to stop the service halfway through because Ruby was screaming so loud that she had to give her some titty to shut her up!' It is generally well known that 'good Christians' of that era adhered to the rule that one did not engage in sexual relations outside the sanctity of marriage (or have children out of wedlock), and with tongue in cheek I silently think, 'Hmmm, I wonder why that didn't make it into the newspaper?'

My other grandmother Edith Bostock's wedding was a great deal more elaborate than Henry and Evelyn's. Closely re-reading the newspaper article below brought my attention to the wording and tone of this piece of writing. Newspaper articles written by men at the time were quite obviously masculine, and I seriously doubt that a male, white-Australian newspaper reporter would be asked to report on a blackfellas wedding at the local Aborigines reserve. The details in the following narration of the wedding confirm that the author would have had to have been present at the whole of the wedding. Newspaper articles written about social events at Box Ridge Mission have a decidedly feminine tone. This article refers to the wedding party, the female Aboriginal organist (Auntie Jessie) and helpers, the presiding religious officiant Mr Thompson (Methodist), the hymn sung, and Mrs English—the only women left to write the

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<sup>118</sup> 'Wedding on Coraki Abo Reserve, Anderson – Walker', *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1942), 4 September 1934, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/127178675>.

article were the missionaries. Therefore, I am certain that one of the missionaries (I suspect Mrs Smith) would have written this article:

A large and interested gathering filled the little church on the Coraki Aborigines' Reserve on Tuesday afternoon on the occasion of the marriage of Norman Augustus Bostock, son of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Bostock of Eungella, Tweed River, to Edith Irene, daughter Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Cowan, of Coraki. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a gown of white morocain, with veil and coronet of orange blossoms, and carried a sheath of white flowers. She was attended by Miss Florrie Kahn as bridesmaid, the latter wearing pink silk rayon, with pink hat to tone, and carrying a bouquet of pink rosebuds, carnations and blue cornflowers, tied with blue and pink streamers. The church was prettily decorated for the occasion, a special feature being the floral arch and bell, the latter opening at the close of the ceremony and showering the happy couple with rose petals. Mrs Roy Cowan, Aunt of the bride, presided at the organ, and played a verse of the hymn, 'All People That On Earth Do Dwell', which the congregation sang as the bridal party entered the Church. The Church decorations were the work of Mrs Geo. Breckenridge and Miss Hannah Breckenridge, friends of the bride. Mr L.A. Thompson (Methodist) tied the nuptial knot, and Mr. Harold Yuke was best man. After the ceremony, the happy couple and guests adjourned to the bride's home where a splendid wedding breakfast had been prepared, and where the customary toasts were honoured, speeches made, and solos rendered by several of the natives. Matron English was responsible for most of the arrangements, making bouquets, preparing breakfasts etc. Many cameras were in evidence after the register had been signed, and numerous snaps were taken of the bridal party. The future home of the newlyweds will be at Eungella, Tweed River.<sup>119</sup>

Why would they bother to write about Aboriginal weddings in this way? Reading between the lines, I see these newspaper articles as a kind of presentation of achievement. It is as though the missionaries were saying, 'Look at our good work! Look at what we have managed to achieve! See how we have civilised them!' In her book, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia*, Ann McGrath comments that Aboriginal marriage ceremonies orchestrated by missionaries were mainly for show: 'Weddings are, after all public performances serving multiple agendas'.<sup>120</sup> Anna Haebich sheds light on missionaries' agendas in her book, *Broken Circles*, about the fragmenting of Aboriginal families called. She states that it was a UAM imperative that missionaries be self-supporting, and they were obliged to use a substantial amount of their working and free time for fundraising. Haebich added that their tireless work, including 'newsletters and magazines, public lectures, addresses to mission conferences, lantern slide evenings, concerts, visits to congregations accompanied by their

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<sup>119</sup> 'Aboriginal Wedding - Interesting Function at Coraki - Bostock-Cowan', *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886-1945), 24 November 1933, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article127169918>.

<sup>120</sup> McGrath, *Illicit Love*, 144.



young charges, and exhibitions of their work were all opportunities to extol the fruits of their labour'. Their vision was of 'material progress, donations well used, growing self-sufficiency leading to reduced financial support, an increasingly settled civilised mission population and evidence of conversions'. They were 'inveterate letter writers, keeping in touch with distant friends and soliciting funds and support through Christian and other woman's networks at home and abroad'.<sup>121</sup>

The UAM were zealous in their work and their beliefs. I cynically see the fanatical enthusiasm of these devout Christians' teachings as indoctrinating and dogmatic, and Aboriginal people were obvious targets for their redeeming work. The following extract from the UAM's own registered newspaper, *Australian Aborigines Advocate*, in 1925 exemplifies how they saw themselves and their ministry in relation to Aborigines on reserves:

We have to praise the dear Lord for graciously supplying our needs in many ways, and thus enabling us to carry on His Work on the Reserve in spite of many discouragements, looking unto Him that loved us and made us Priests, intensely we desire the salvation of our people around us.<sup>122</sup>

In 'All One Blood?: Race and Redemption on Maloga Mission, 1874-1878', Claire McLisky examines mission relations and argues that 'when constructing colonial identities we need to move beyond a dichotomy of *good* colonist/*bad* colonist and see their structural and personal contexts'.<sup>123</sup> She studied missionaries Daniel and Janet Matthews and concluded that their religious teachings, notions of human rights and concept of the 'family of man' were underpinned by assumptions of racial hierarchy. McLisky argues that closer inspection may reveal that colonial identities were 'delineating the boundaries between themselves and their racial others, reinforcing their links between Christianity, civility and whiteness and reaffirming their own role in the civilising process'.<sup>124</sup>

To find out that the weddings of both sets of my grandparents were detailed in local newspaper articles was an extraordinarily surprising discovery, but nothing prepared me for the shock of being in the grand reading room of the Mitchell Library in Sydney and discovering that among

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<sup>121</sup> Haebich, *Broken Circles*, 356–57. Also see Chapter 3 of *Illicit Love* by Ann McGrath for the significance of weddings to the missionaries.

<sup>122</sup> *The Australian Aborigines Advocate*, 31 August 1925, in 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work', Mitchell Library.

<sup>123</sup> Claire McLisky, 'All One Blood?: Race and Redemption on Maloga Mission, 1874-1878', in *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of Identity*, eds. L. Boucher, J. Carey and K. Ellinghaus (Melbourne, VIC: RMIT Publishing, 2007), 414.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

the missionaries' personal collection was a photograph of my grandmother, uncle, aunt and father. UAM missionary Mrs Alma Smith's collection contained photographs that my grandmother had sent to Mrs Smith of my father and his siblings at various times in their childhood. It also contained an address book that belonged to Mrs Smith, and in its pages she had recorded a number of addresses of my grandmother. This address book proves that she maintained contact with my grandmother decades after the latter left the mission to begin married life.

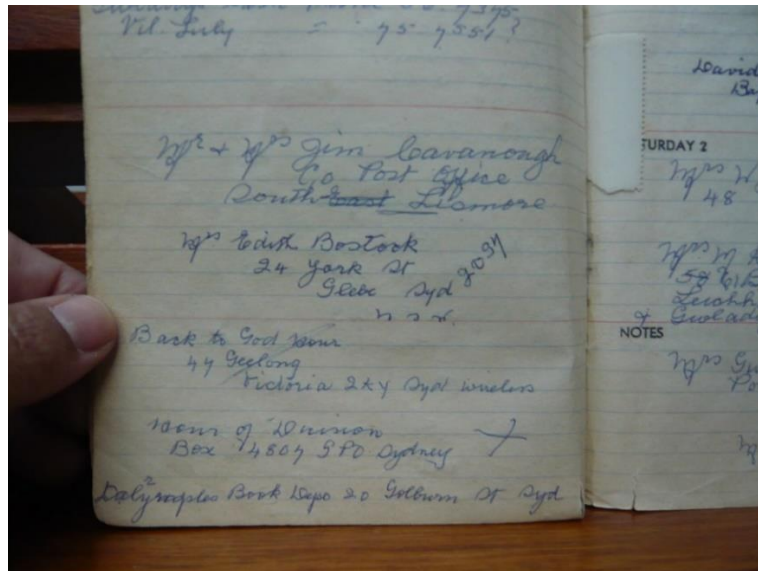


**Figure 44: The address book of UAM missionary Mrs Alma Smith with my grandmother Edith Bostock's address<sup>125</sup>**

<sup>125</sup> 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work', Mitchell Library.



**Figure 45: From left to right: My Aunt Euphemia ('Phemie'), Uncle Lester, Nan and my father George Bostock<sup>126</sup>**

This tangible evidence of an obvious affection between these two very different women seemed really sweet. Nan was friends with Mrs Smith and they continued to stay in touch, but the more I thought about the missionaries the more unsettled I became.

On the one hand, I could clearly see that the UAM missionaries at Box Ridge Mission worked tirelessly for the well-being of my ancestors and other Aboriginal people. They provided lovely weddings for both sets of my grandparents, they organised musical performances for the people, they organised special food treats for all of the children at Christmas time and they made sure the little ones received Christmas presents from 'Santa'. In general, the missionaries seemed to try to make life happier for Aboriginal people on the reserve.<sup>127</sup>

On the other hand, I think it is important to note that the missionaries were motivated by their steadfast belief in the dogma of their religion, and I think that a lot of what Clare McLisky has written has a great deal of truth to it. UAM's religious teachings and actions were underpinned by assumptions of racial hierarchy. The missionaries actually wrote that they saw themselves as 'Priests' working for the 'salvation' of Aboriginal people, and the impetus for this drive, in my opinion, does not come from a place of equality.

<sup>126</sup> 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work', Mitchell Library.

<sup>127</sup> See this newspaper article as it is an exemplar of the many newspaper articles about the celebration known as a 'Christmas Tree': 'Abo Childrens's [sic] Christmas Tree: Visit from Santa Claus', *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1942), 18 December 1934, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article127173003>.

What I found unsettling was that a religious group such as the UAM, who preached the tenets of Christianity, found nothing wrong with being active participants in the separation of very young Aboriginal babies and children from their mothers and families. Some of the children deemed neglected who were not old enough for indenture were taken to the APB's institutions at Cootamundra Girls Training Home, or Kinchela Boys Training Home. If they were very young, or babies, these removed children were taken to the UAM's Children's Home at Bomaderry. The UAM supported the activities of the APB by providing a home for these young Aboriginal children (see Figure 46).<sup>128</sup> I would say that Bomaderry Children's Home was like a greenhouse that 'grew them up' in readiness for their institutionalised training before their inevitable indenture.



**Figure 46: UAM missionaries with young (possibly removed) Aboriginal children<sup>129</sup>**

An article in UAM's own registered newspaper, *Australian Aborigines Advocate*, stated that 'the Aborigines Protection Board deemed it wise to take away twelve of our bigger boys, and in their place have sent a similar number of girls and younger lads'. The article went on to say 'several boys were placed in situations, and so far as we have been able to learn, have and are giving satisfaction'. The author wrote that 'the same can be said for most of the girls' and then expressed their dissatisfaction by cryptically adding 'but one or two, yielding to the influence

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<sup>128</sup> 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work', Mitchell Library.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

brought upon them by white associates, have not rendered as good an account of themselves as could have been wished'.<sup>130</sup>

'Yielding to the influence brought upon them by white associates'? Is this a non-direct, socially acceptable way of hinting that those girls had sexual liaisons with white men? Does the UAM comment that they 'have not rendered as good an account of themselves as could have been wished' insinuate that? Did they come home from indenture pregnant, later to give birth to fair-skinned children? 'Yielding'? The terminology used here by the missionaries sounds accusatory and appears to blame the girls for their lack of morality. Girls who turned 14 years old were supposed to, in the UAM's words, be 'apprenticed' as domestic workers up to the age of 18, but these ages were not strictly adhered to at the beginning and the end of indenture. Let us remember that in *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Aunty Violet told us that she was indentured at 12 years of age.<sup>131</sup> Many young girls suffered sexual abuse within the NSW Government's Aboriginal indenture system. How could the missionaries not see this for what it was? How would they feel if their 12- to 14-year-old daughters were taken away from them by the government and sent places unknown, with no protection, vulnerable to any male predator in the state's capital city or remote farmhouses on rural properties?

In 1927, Fred Maynard, the leader of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA), the first all-Aboriginal activist group, wrote to a young Aboriginal girl who was sexually abused while indentured and his anguish and anger is revealed in the text:

My heart is filled with regret and disgust. First because you were taken down by those who were supposed to be your help and guide through life. What a wicked conception, what a fallacy. Under the so-called pretence and administration of the Board, governmental control etc. I say deliberately. The whole damnable thing has got to stop and by God[s] help it shall, make no mistake. No doubt, they are trying to exterminate the Noble and Ancient Race of sunny Australia. Away with the damnable insulting methods. Give us a hand, stand by your own Native Aboriginal Officers and fight for liberty and freedom for yourself and our children.<sup>132</sup>

In her book, *One Bright Spot*, Victoria Haskins acknowledges that 'Aboriginal apprentices were not the only state wards to be sexually exploited' and she declared resolutely:

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<sup>130</sup> *Australian Aborigines Advocate*, 28 December 1920, in 'Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs Relating to Missionary Work', Mitchell Library.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*; Morgan and Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*.

<sup>132</sup> John Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Activism* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), 1.

The NSW Aborigines Protection Board colluded in, condoned and indeed encouraged the systematic sexual abuse and impregnation of young Aboriginal women in domestic apprenticeships with, I contend, the ultimate aim of eradicating the Aboriginal population.<sup>133</sup>

Haskins's contention initially seems like an extraordinary statement to make, but her accumulation of a large amount of archival evidence has placed her in the informed position of being able to do so. This notion of the Australian Government's collusion in, and endorsement of, decisions that went against the best interests of Aborigines has also been articulated by Haskins's husband, Aboriginal historian and family history researcher John Maynard. (AAPA leader Fred Maynard was John Maynard's grandfather.) In his book, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Aboriginal Activism*, John Maynard used his large collection of archives and information to make the contention that 'the AAPA tried valiantly to alter what it considered to be deliberate and detrimental government policies and actions that had serious and severe repercussions for Aboriginal people and issues'.<sup>134</sup>

## 2.8 Conclusion

The onus of these contentions is that the Australian Government's policies and actions were deliberate, and although this chapter does not contain enough information to write a book, or make such strong contentions on its own merit, it does contain evidence of the 'serious and severe' repercussions for Aboriginal people that add to Maynard's and the AAPA's contention. I would say that the most depredating and demoralising repercussion of the Australian Government's 'deliberate and detrimental policies and actions', aside from the removal and indenture of Aboriginal children, was the crushing of Aboriginal aspirations for future security and independence.

This chapter has provided many examples that demonstrate that white-Australian citizens did not want Aborigines living anywhere near them, and their objections often meant that Aboriginal people were forced to move on to be out of sight out of mind. It did not matter that Aborigines had done years of back-breaking work to clear the land for their families to physically and existentially put down roots. When white-Australians' demands for Aboriginal

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<sup>133</sup> Victoria Haskins, 'A Better Chance?—Sexual Abuse and the Apprenticeship of Aboriginal Girls under the NSW Aborigines Protection Board', *Aboriginal History* 28 (2004): 53. See also Haskins, *One Bright Spot*.

<sup>134</sup> Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, 141.

land became louder and more determined, the Australian Government gave in to them. In *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Auntie Geraldine Briggs from Coomeragunja Aborigines Reserve explained:

A lot of the men were very keen on having farms of their own, and they sent a petition to the Board asking for land, and they were given so much land down near the river, and they were very enthusiastically cleaning it up, and chopping all the trees down and they planted crops. As a child I remember that vividly, it was really something to see this wheat grown by our own people. Then all of a sudden the Board informed them that they are taking their land back again. And it proved that Aborigines had no rights whatsoever. And I think that's what broke the spirit of the men who had done all that work, really for nothing.<sup>135</sup>

After all the uncertainty experienced at Dunoon, no truer words were said when Charlie Brown exclaimed, 'We don't know whether we are on our head or feet'.<sup>136</sup> Those words could have been the attestation of every Aboriginal person in NSW at that time. Aboriginal people fully embraced the hard physical work and wanted to become independent. They wanted to 'earn their daily bread just as the white man does', but were thwarted not only by local citizens, but the very people who were employed to assist and 'protect' them.

In only two decades, the Dunoon reserve was reduced from 420 acres in 1903 to 10–12 acres by 1922. In *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, John Maynard mentioned in passing the push for an investigation into the missing Aboriginal Trust Funds: 'What happened to the money received for Aboriginal farming land? It has been estimated that some 13,000 acres was revoked and, if it was valued at £50 an acre that equates to £650,000—an incredible sum by today's standard'.<sup>137</sup>

There is no other way to put it; white-Australians saw Aborigines had something of value and they wanted to take it away. Their covetous greed and inherent racism overrode any notions of fairness and Aboriginal peoples' human rights to make a living to support their families and live in peace. The racist actions of white-Australians and the APB's capitulation to them caused Aboriginal people great pain, suffering and anxiety, and examples of their insecurity and uncertainty about their future can be seen across the whole state of NSW.

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<sup>135</sup> Morgan and Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*. This section of Auntie Geraldine Briggs's interview can be seen on YouTube, Part 1 of 4, from 5:15 minutes to 6:15 minutes ([youtube.com/watch?v=2TfaXdI5Z8Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TfaXdI5Z8Q)). When Auntie Geraldine refers to 'so much' land, she means 'an undefined quantity' of land, and not 'a great amount' of land. This was common vernacular at the time and should not be taken literally. For example, if I asked my grandmother for some flour to bake a cake, she would narrate that to her friend by saying, 'Well I gave her so much flour, put the tin away, and then asked her what else she needed'.

<sup>136</sup> Charlie Brown, 'Cabbage Tree Island'.

<sup>137</sup> Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, 63.

## Chapter 3: Work and Movement on the Landscape, 1934–1944

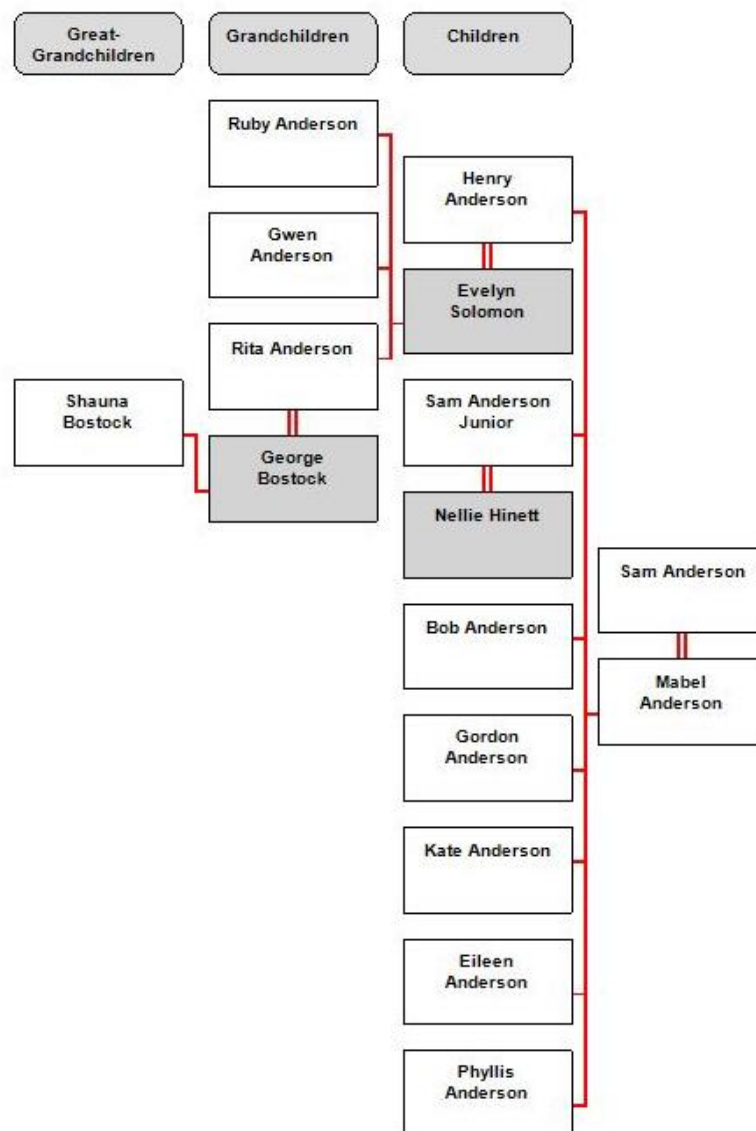


**Figure 47: Descendant chart for my great-grandparents Sam and Mabel Anderson**

Note: To be read from right to left, with descendants' spouses in shaded boxes.

The large amount of archival records found for Chapter 3, which spans from 1934–1947, are an indication of the incredible proliferation of surveillance and control of Aborigines by the APB, which in 1940 became the AWB. This chapter's focus is on my great-grandfather Sam Anderson, my grandparents Henry and Evelyn Anderson, and my grandfather Henry's much younger sister Phyllis, who was a child when Henry and Evelyn married. The Anderson family focus is partly because not much is available about the Bostock family at this time, but mostly because I am astounded not only by the copious amount of archival records about the Anderson



family members, but also by the revealing content in the correspondence written by the Stoney Gully APB Station Manager Mr Joseph Percival Harris Howard.<sup>1</sup> By examining the archival documents in the ‘Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949. Chief Secretary Letters Received’ about my family members and placing their individual files into chronological order, we see the gripping power that the APB/AWB had over them. However, like watching an arm-wrestling competition, in the course of the chapter we are eye witnesses to the substantial struggle my family members endured before gaining what appears to be the upper hand early in the next chapter (1944–1955).

My grandfather Henry Anderson met my grandmother Evelyn Solomon in the area around Kyogle, a place where her family originated from before written historic records. ‘Runnymede’ was the name of the first pastoral station in the Kyogle area and this was also the original name of the Aborigines reserve there. But ‘Runnymede Aborigines Reserve’ also went by two other names. My mother always said, ‘I was born at Stoney Gully’, and some archives record it as such. As time went by, and the town of Kyogle became more settled, APB records started naming the reserve as ‘Kyogle Aborigines Reserve’.

Although my grandparents Henry and Evelyn were married at Box Ridge Mission in 1934, prior to their marriage they both lived at Kyogle Aborigines Station, and that was the year that Joseph Percival Harris Howard became the new manager of the reserve.<sup>2</sup> Howard was a prolific writer of letters to the APB/AWB, so much so that I have explicit narrations of his observations and opinions of my grandparents and my great-grandparents. Howard is revealed to be a person who vigorously carried out his duties, and his obsequious diligence in carrying out the wishes of the AWB places him alongside Mr Donaldson in tenacity, which bordered on obsessive.

In Chapter 2, I used a large number of newspaper articles to capture the exact words of Aboriginal people in history, as a means of ensuring that their thoughts (and their voices) are heard in the present. This chapter does a similar thing in that it uses APB/AWB archival files to capture the exact words of a white-Australian APB station manager and Board officials to ensure that their thoughts (and also their voices) are also heard in the present. The focus of this chapter moves back and forth from the microcosmic focus on the individuals and the reserve/mission space to the prevalent, macro-cosmic bureaucracy of the Australian

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<sup>1</sup> I have seen records that record his name as John Percival Howard. In most, he is recorded as J. P. Howard, but in a legal Court document in my files, he provided his full name as Joseph Percival Harris Howard.

<sup>2</sup> Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1996), 220.

Government's APB/AWB, and I argue that family history research reveals that Aboriginal resistance was ramping up during this time not only on the larger political scale (with freedom fighters like William Cooper, Bill Ferguson, Pearl Gibbs, Jack Patten and Fred Maynard), but also 'on the ground' in the everyday day life of Aboriginal families.

### **3.1 Centralising Reserves and APB Manager J.P. Howard**

Heather Goodall recounts that Kyogle Station Manager J.P. Howard was instructed to use 'any reasonable means' to finally put an end to the disputes between the white townspeople and the Aborigines at Lismore, as well as centralise the large number of separate Aboriginal communities in the areas of the Woodenbong and Kyogle Stations. After the APB had created a reserve around the Tuncester campsite, and the Dunoon School was transferred there in 1932, Aboriginal people, including the (Aboriginal) Roberts families, tried to have their children admitted to Lismore public school, but again the white townspeople protested.<sup>3</sup>

Aboriginal man Frank Roberts's account of events after the revival of the Lismore townspeople's protests (in 1934) was validated by Goodall, who inserted the dates on which the APB's minutes showed its authorisation of Howard's actions from 1934–1936. This account is just one of many in this chapter that shine a spotlight on Uncle Frank's account which narrates Howard's terrible treatment of Aboriginal people:

Howard, on his first visit to Tuncester, stopped the rations completely, starved the inhabitants, acting on instructions by his Board [12.9.1934; 16.11.1934] ... He then attempted to bluff the people, saying that the Aborigines Protection Board is forcing them to another reserve and if they don't comply with his instructions he, or his Board, would take the children away from their parents [16.11.1934]. Next step was to demolish the school at Tuncester [5.2.1936] and remove it to another settlement 52 miles away [Woodenbong, 6.5.1936]. The result is now the thirty-five children without a school. Words cannot express what is scandalous treatment by the Destruction Board.<sup>4</sup>

The people at Baryulgil were refused rations and instructed to move to Woodenbong. Both the Tuncester and Baryulgil people refused to move even though 29 of their children were being denied access to education. Both these communities were still standing their ground against Howard in 1938, until the APB decided that it was best to amalgamate Woodenbong and Kyogle Reserves, which they did in 1940, a year after my mother was born there. 'The number

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 220.

of students in both cases would have been adequate to justify the establishment of an Education Department provisional school for the children', but Goodall states that at this time the Education Department was 'still denying the responsibility for the education of Aborigines'. The universal segregation of Aboriginal children from public schools in northern NSW, the refusal to establish a school at Baryulgil and the removal of the Tuncester School 'must be seen as intended to enforce its confinement aims', and Howard was ruthlessly determined to carry out the wishes of the APB at all costs.<sup>5</sup>

There are a number of historical records that provide insight into the character of APB Manager J.P. Howard and the lengths to which he went to ingratiate himself with the APB. He was in a position of authority over Aborigines, and he took his job so seriously that the needs of the people became secondary to the eagerness with which he presented himself to the APB. He used whatever means at hand, in one even resorting to cajoling Aborigines to allow their children to be removed. In Alec Morgan and my Uncle Gerry Bostock's film *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Florence Caldwell said that during one of Inspector Donaldson's visits, Donaldson chose the girls to be taken from their families for indenture. Shortly after that, Howard came to see her parents armed with police officers. Aunty Florence said:

They asked my mother if she'd agree to send me down to Sydney. He [Howard] told me that I'd have a lot of pretty frocks and I'd be going to parties, and all that kind of thing, and I knew he was telling lies. Even at that age I wasn't stupid.<sup>6</sup>

For Aunty Florence he tried a cajoling tone, but for my great-grandmother Mabel he commanded that she 'get them out' (for indenture) and if she didn't 'the Board would'.<sup>7</sup> Violet Shea also spoke of Howard coming to her family home with police officers in tow. Speaking sadly with a soft voice, Aunty Violet said:

One day the Manager came over to our island, Ulgundahi Island, and um, told me that I was to go and work for them. He wasn't living on the island, because there was too much flooding for them. So, er, anyway I went along with it, because you just didn't,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>6</sup> Alec Morgan and Gerry Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, directed by Alec Morgan (1983; Sydney, NSW: Ronin Films, 1983). The whole documentary can be seen in four parts on YouTube. This part of Aunty Flo's interview can be seen on YouTube, Part 1 of 4, from 10:42 minutes to 11:22 minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TfaXdI5Z8Q>).

<sup>7</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 6 March 1939, N.R.S 905, A48/228 [12/7773.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 13.

well you just couldn't do anything about it, you just had to go. When I got over there, I was told I was to work for them, and I was only twelve years of age.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 APB Manager J.P. Howard and My Family

On 19 September 1937, my great-grandmother Mabel Anderson died at the age of 48 on the Kyogle Aborigines Station. Her death certificate records that she was buried at the Kyogle Cemetery and Howard was the undertaker.<sup>9</sup> She left behind her husband (my great-grandfather) Sam Anderson and their children (my grandfather) Henry, aged 26; Sam Jnr, aged 22; Bob, aged 21; Kate, aged 19; Eileen, aged 18; and her mid-life surprise baby Phyllis, who was three months short of her seventh birthday. (Gordon, who is recorded in the descendant chart in Figure 47 at the beginning of this chapter, died tragically in his early teens.) Under the *Deserted Wives and Children Act 1901* (NSW), on 17 August 1938, my great-grandfather Sam Anderson was charged with a 'Maintenance Order for the payment of support for his daughter Phyllis of 10/- [10 shillings] weekly with the first payment to be made on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1938 to Mr J. P. Howard'. Custody of Phyllis was 'granted to the Aborigines Protection Board'.<sup>10</sup>

Phyllis had been cared for by my grandparents Henry and Evelyn, and my grandfather Henry applied to the APB for 3/- [3 shillings] a week from the maintenance that was to be collected to support her. His request was approved.<sup>11</sup> As much as Howard was detested by Aboriginal people, I cannot fault his pursuit of maintenance for Aunt Phyllis. My great-grandfather Sam Anderson was an alcoholic who changed jobs frequently and also travelled far and wide to play county cricket matches. When Howard found him just prior to 3 November 1938, Sam was over 10 weeks in arrears. He had not deserted his responsibilities to Phyllis and had paid maintenance since 24 August 1938, as per the legal order, but he became unemployed. Sam

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<sup>8</sup> This part of Aunt Violet's interview can be seen on YouTube, Part 1 of 4, from 11:26 minutes to 12:22 minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TfaXdI5Z8Q>).

<sup>9</sup> NSW Government, 'Death Certificate of Mabel Anderson, 19 Sep. 1937, No. 1937/016975' (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1937).

<sup>10</sup> NSW Government, 'Minute of Order – Maintenance of Wife and Children: Deserted Wives and Children Act, 1909-1931, Complainant: Howard, J.P. Manager Aboriginal Station Kyogle, 17 August 1938, NRS 905 A48/228 [12/7773.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1.

<sup>11</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B Inspector Mrs English, 20 August 1938, N.R.S 905 A48/228 [12/7773.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1939–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1938), 3.

assured Howard that he would get another job and ‘pay up’, but after Sam left, Howard said his whereabouts were again unknown.<sup>12</sup>

A few months later, Howard wrote an astonishing letter to the APB about my family members. It was a detailed summary of the Anderson family’s major events from December 1930 to March 1939. As a family member, I frowned at Howard’s nasty comments about my ancestors, but they did not cause me any pain or embarrassment. We all knew Sam had an alcohol problem. It was known through family oral history and has been written about by Maurice Ryan. Not surprisingly, as an *academic* researcher I devoured every word of Howard’s letter and ‘read between the lines’ to pull out every nuance and revelation. I have included the full text of this letter here to unpack its components. This letter was written on 6 March 1939:

Phyllis Anderson was born at Coraki on 1-12-30. The family was transferred here in 1931 on account of continual quarrelling of the parents, due chiefly to the father’s drunkenness and non-support of his family, a large one. The mother was also a very hard person to reason with. She had three adult sons and would not let them go out to work. There was further trouble in 1935 when two daughters were ready for service in 1935, and when told if she did not get them out - the Board would, she left the Station. The family lived more or less a nomadic life from then on, chiefly between McLean, C.T. Island [Cabbage Tree Island] and Coraki. They eventually drifted apart, practically only the youngest, Phyllis, being with her mother. The latter took seriously ill and went to hospital. Phyllis being left in the care of relatives at C.T. Island. Later Mrs Anderson returned here a physical wreck, to reside with a married son [Henry]. She asked for Phyllis to be returned here as she heard she was being neglected. Mr Dalley [APB Manager of CTI] was communicated with and he was of opinion that it would be to the child’s advantage to come here, and arranged a transfer. The mother died shortly afterwards, and Phyllis was left in the care of her married brother [Henry] and well looked after.

In September last year there was trouble in this family owing to the wife’s [Evelyn’s] immoral relations with another man. An inquiry was held and the matter settled, but she fancied people were talking about her and persuaded her husband to go away for a change. They left in October, leaving Phyllis with a cousin here [Kyogle]. This arrangement was not very satisfactory, but was not interfered with as word kept coming of Anderson’s intended return.

In December, an adult brother of Phyllis’ [Bob Anderson] came from Cabbage T. Is. to see if he could take Phyllis away for the holidays. He was told that a court order was taken against his father on August 17<sup>th</sup>, and an order for 15/- a week was made against him. Also that the child had been made a ward of the Board and committed to the care of the Station, so that I could not give any permission without referring

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<sup>12</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B. Secretary, 3 Nov. 1938, N.R.S 905 A48/228 [12/7773.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 8.

the matter to Head Office. He said he would take her at once. He was asked to sign the attached paper (not found with this letter).

Inquiries have been made re the girls return here, on account of the above order, it being intended, failing Mrs Anderson's return meantime, to place her in the care of Mrs Breckenridge until they return. A separate brief report re maintenance of this child is enclosed. J.P.H.<sup>13</sup>

I assume that the missionaries asked my great-grandparents to leave Box Ridge Mission because of Sam's drinking and their quarrelling. Perhaps they thought that a male station manager would be better able to positively influence Sam? I do not know why Mabel would not let her sons go to work. At the time that they moved to Kyogle, my grandfather Henry was unmarried and 20 years old, Sam Jnr was 16 and Bob was 15.

Just as he did with Uncle Frank Roberts, Howard threatened that the APB would take away my great-grandmother's children. I am proud that Mabel refused to allow her daughters Kate (then 17), and Eileen (then 16) to be indentured. They had managed to avoid it thus far. Like Aunt Violet and her parents, a lot of Aboriginal people did not have the power to refuse, especially when Howard brought the police with him. Mabel must have got away before Howard had the chance to organise a police visit. I am also proud of Uncle Bob, who repudiated the authority of both Howard and the APB in no uncertain terms. Both these stories are evidence of my family member's agency and their complete rejection of APB attempts to control them.

When Mabel became ill, Phyllis was at Cabbage Tree Island, probably in the care of her older sister Kate. Her older brother Bob also lived there and was probably sent by Kate to collect her. It angers me that even as ill as Mabel was, knowing she was a 'physical wreck', knowing her fears that Phyllis 'was being neglected' (remember these were Howard's choice of words), and hearing Mabel's request to have Phyllis brought to Kyogle, Howard still sought APB approval to reunite the ailing mother with her youngest child. He seemingly could not make a decision by himself.

It seemed strange that my grandparents left Phyllis with a cousin at Stony Gully when Henry was previously receiving some maintenance money for caring for her. I wondered why they did not just adopt her, like my great-grandmother Lena Bostock and many other Aboriginal people did. This letter by Howard was written in March 1939, and his recollection was that

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<sup>13</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office', 6 March 1939.

Henry and Evelyn left Kyogle five months earlier in October 1938. Digging deeper, I found information that conflicted with Howard's account.

The above information came from one of Sam Anderson's APB files which mostly contained letters about Phyllis' maintenance. I cross-checked one of Henry's APB files and found that Howard had sought and received approval for Henry and two other Aboriginal men to build three standard huts for the reserve because conditions at Kyogle were becoming overcrowded. Correspondence revealed that prior to 29 August 1938, Howard had approached Henry Anderson and brothers George and Bruce Breckenridge about the project. He later informed the APB that 'these men are willing to undertake the proposed work'.<sup>14</sup>

The APB approved the buildings in writing on 14 October 1938 and Henry and the others could go ahead and build one hut as a trial, and if done well enough, they would get the contract for the other two.<sup>15</sup> During the Great Depression, the Australian economy collapsed and unemployment reached a peak in 1932. It took Australia almost a decade to recover.<sup>16</sup> Jobs were a rare commodity for Aboriginal people in these times, so I find it hard to believe that Henry would leave the reserve, and confirmed regular income, to indulge his wife.

Additionally, on 11 November 1938, Howard wrote to the APB and, among other regular matters, informed them that 'Anderson is in hospital with influenza complications and might be off work for a month'. Howard then put off the build until the first week in February (1939).<sup>17</sup> It is not known how long Henry was in hospital, but I do know that Henry, Evelyn and their two children did take a trip to Grafton and returned on 15 March. They sought from the APB, and received, train fares to return to Kyogle after being stranded in Grafton when the

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<sup>14</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B. Secretary, 29 August 1938, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1.

<sup>15</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from A.P.B Secretary to A.P.B Vice Chairman, 14 Oct. 1938, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 3.

<sup>16</sup> National Museum of Australia, 'Great Depression', accessed 14 April 2019, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/great-depression>.

<sup>17</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 10 November 1938, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1938), 6.

roads were cut due to floods.<sup>18</sup> Henry paid the money back later and Howard's accounts ledger shows that Henry commenced working for him on 20 March 1939.<sup>19</sup>

Henry's file does not explain why Phyllis was left with a cousin at Kyogle. Phyllis stayed with the cousin from October until December when Uncle Bob collected her for the Christmas holidays. Howard took the APB's custody of Phyllis seriously and he wanted to keep his 'ward' under his supervision at Kyogle, so he planned to place Phyllis with Mrs Breckenridge until my grandparents returned. However, in April 1939, APB Inspector Mrs English overrode the maintenance order and recommended that Phyllis live at Cabbage Tree Island under the care of her married sister Kate.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting that Inspector Mrs English from the APB had the power to override the Special Magistrate of the Children's Court's Maintenance Order under the *Deserted Wives and Children Act 1901*.<sup>21</sup> Also interesting is a later letter from Howard which reveals that Auntie Katie Bolt refused to return Phyllis to Kyogle after the holidays, and it was because she wrote directly to the APB, probably to Mrs English specifically, that Phyllis was allowed to stay. Here we see another calculated form of resistance as Auntie Katie rejected Howard's authority and his demands to send Phyllis back to Kyogle, then went behind his back to a higher authority to ensure that Phyllis live with her.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.3 Trouble at the Worksite

In a letter dated 1 March 1939, Howard wrote that Bruce Breckenridge had given him an ultimatum that if he did not employ him straight away, he had a long contract of work lined up in Coraki.<sup>23</sup> As mentioned earlier, Howard found it extremely difficult to make a decision

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<sup>18</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 14 March 1939, N.R.S 905 A48/228 [12/7773.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 10.

<sup>19</sup> NSW Government, 'Accounts Ledger of Mr Howard, 2 March 1939 to 20 May 1939, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 12.

<sup>20</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Howard A.W.B Secretary, 14 April 1942, N.R.S 905 A44/2309 [12/76881.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1.

<sup>21</sup> NSW Government, 'Minute of Order – Complainant: Howard, J.P. Manager Aboriginal Station Kyogle', 1.

<sup>22</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from A.P.B Inspector Mrs English to Mr Howard, 5 April 1939, N.R.S 905 A48-228 [12/7773.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 14.

<sup>23</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 1 March 1939, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 8.



without first gaining APB approval, but his accounts ledger shows that immediately after the ultimatum, he commenced paying Breckenridge.<sup>24</sup> When Breckenridge more or less forced him to make a decision on the spot to employ him, Howard was almost prostrate in explaining to the APB the reasons why he employed the men without prior consent:

Feeling that the men could do a good job, anxious to prove that much could be saved in labour costs, also realising that the feelings of the men were touch and go that they would not do the work, it being so hard to instil reason into their stubbornness, added to the uncertainty of getting other labour and so having the job again postponed indefinitely, as well as the fact that the timber would deteriorate on the ground, and probably a quantity disappear, I told them they would be given a trial of one hut, to start forthwith, and that further work should be subject to approval after inspection ... Approval for this action is respectfully requested, as under the circumstances, an immediate decision was felt to be necessary. Could arrangements please be made for the remittance of 55/- per week, as the men will expect weekly payments?'<sup>25</sup>

Whether Breckenridge really had other paying work lined up at Coraki or was just deliberately hastening a financial commitment from Howard, is unknown. I suspect the latter. Breckenridge's defiance and his disrespect of Howard, his role as manager and the APB was made very clear later that year. Breckenridge was left in charge during Howard's frequent absences to perform his duties as manager and began grumbling about pay and inciting others. Again, Howard reveals a great deal of incredibly insightful information, and again I transcribe a large part of the text because I want to discuss several points that support the argument of this chapter. Howard's letter, written on 26 November 1939, explains:

This was a constant worry. As time went on he adopted a cheeky attitude toward me showing off to the men. To save a row, and the stoppage of men, this was ignored or passed off ... The next move was to induce the women to complain that the school was being neglected, and whenever the Matron (Mrs Howard) or I had occasion to speak to them about untidy homes, or misbehaviour of children, it was always blamed in a spiteful way on the lack of schooling. ... At such times as it was necessary for me to remain on the job all day, or on manual days, the girls would be placed in the care of the Matron, for domestic training, and the boys go with me to take lessons in carpentry. This was looked upon as neglect of school and working the children for our own benefit. ... [One day] I left Breck to drive in the pegs and nails on the boards and Anderson mixing cement ... on my return I had found that the framework had been nailed 18" short, a most obvious error, especially as boards were cut to size. When pointed out, in quite a nice way, Breck said, "*That's with you going riding about instead of getting on with your work*". I pretended not to hear him, but when he came to the office to collect his pay I asked him why it was he spoke in such a

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<sup>24</sup> NSW Government, 'Accounts Ledger of Mr Howard', 11.

<sup>25</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office', 8.

cheeky way so often? He said he had to for the pay he got and for other reasons. When asked the reasons he refused to state them, said he was keeping them 'til someone else came along. I told him I was quite able to listen to any complaint, but in any case he must speak properly to the Manager.<sup>26</sup>

Breckenridge's defiance is another example of Aboriginal resistance, but there is a remarkable difference between this kind of openly aggressive resistance and the passive resistance I have seen in earlier archives. Here we see an Aboriginal man scornfully ridiculing an APB station manager face to face. When Howard first proposed to the APB that the Aboriginal men could build the huts, he was very positive about Breckenridge's carpentry skill, stating that compared to his brother George, Bruce was 'a much superior workman, and a very reliable man' and he paid Bruce Breckenridge a higher wage than the other men because of his experience and skill.<sup>27</sup> I believe that this information, and the fact that the boards were cut to size, are indicators that Breckenridge (and perhaps my grandfather Henry too) had deliberately nailed the board short just to torment Howard. Breckenridge also used APB policy against Howard, accusing *him* of neglect when he took the Aboriginal children out of school for the 'manual days' (indenture training days) and of working the children for the benefit of the Board. Howard chose to 'save a row', 'ignore and pass off' and 'pretend not to hear', but Breckenridge's 'cheeky attitude' and criticism of his absence from his work clearly got under Howard's skin.

In addition to pressure from the workers and the AWB, Howard also experienced stress over the white townspeople's interest in what he was doing on the reserve. The new building was right on the main road and drew peoples' attention. Some people called in to inspect the building and others stopped him in town to ask questions. Howard said that 'when told it is the natives work, our voracity is doubted'. A contractor asked Howard why he had not called for tenders and 'give the white man their due?' Howard responded that he thought the Aboriginal men should be given a trial. The contractor said that he had seen the work and admitted it was a very good job, but in a veiled threat he told Howard that he thought he was not giving tradesmen a fair deal and he would make further enquiries about it. This is another example of white-Australians wanting to take away something valuable that the Aborigines possess, this

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<sup>26</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 26 Nov. 1939, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 17.

<sup>27</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum from Mr Howard A.P.B Head Office, 29 August 1938, N.R.S 905 A4176 [12/7592.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1. Also shown in the accounts ledger pages.

time paid work. No doubt Howard included this in his report as a means of forewarning the APB of the possibility of backlash from the townspeople.

### 3.4 From APB to AWB

The APB exercised control over Aborigines by way of the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* and its various official Amendments in 1915, 1918, 1936, 1940 and 1943. The amendment in 1940 saw the transition of the APB (Aborigines Protection Board) to the AWB (Aborigines Welfare Board).<sup>28</sup> The history of why this transition came about is as follows.

In April 1937, the Commonwealth of Australia held a conference in Canberra where the state and territory representatives of the APB all came together to discuss policy.<sup>29</sup> In November that year, Labor Member Mark Davidson MLA moved in the Legislative Assembly that a Select Committee inquire into and report on the general administration of the APB. He wanted to continue the momentum of the Canberra Conference, and so he put the question to the House. Ashlen Francisco, an Indigenous PhD candidate researching the history of the APB before and after its transition to the AWB, stated that the Select Committee Inquiry was the most controversial of political events leading up to the Amendment in 1943, ‘because of its systematic detailing of the failure of the Board’s Administration’:

The inquiry uncovered a Board, whose power was wielded by managers and inspectors, that comprehended and managed inhumane policies that perpetuated Aboriginal people into a cycle of disadvantage, dominated by political handballing and racial profiling. The Inquiry was jeopardised by a lack of a quorum on numerous occasions and the committee was disbanded when government was reformed in 1938.<sup>30</sup>

On 16 August 1938, the Public Service Board published ‘Aborigines Protection: Report of the Public Service Board’ due to the inability of the Select Committee to produce a report.<sup>31</sup> An exhaustive survey of APB activities, including Head Office administration and the conduct of its stations, reserves and homes, was carried out by the Public Service Board. A report

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<sup>28</sup> Full text copies of these Acts, Policies and Amendments, as well as summary notes, are available online at NSW Government, ‘Aborigines Protection Acts in New South Wales: Legislation/Key Provisions’, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/remove-and-protect/new-south-wales>.

<sup>29</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, ‘Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities: Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd of April 1937’ (Canberra, ACT: Aborigines Protection Board, 1937).

<sup>30</sup> Ashlen Francisco, ‘Creating Space for Exemption in New South Wales’ (PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2019). Francisco is a PhD Candidate and contributor to an ARC Project that is about to be published by John Maynard, Victoria Haskins and Laurie Bamblett and others about the Aborigines Protection Board.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

containing important recommendations was printed on 4 April 1940 and presented to the House of Representatives during the passage of a bill to amend the Aborigines Protection Act. These recommendations included the reconstitution of the APB to become the AWB; reorganisation of staffing, including separation of the roles of managers and teachers; appointment (if possible) of fully qualified teachers; increased production of crops to augment Aboriginal diet; additional funds for housing improvement; and policy to gradually assimilate 'suitable' Aboriginal families into the general community. Other recommendations covered issues such as health, hygiene, education and training, issue of food and clothing, and administration of family endowment.

Under a provision of the *Family Endowment Act 1927* (NSW), endowment payments for Aborigines were to be made to the APB which then, through its managers and police, issued orders for food, clothing, etc. as desired by the Aboriginal people concerned. In certain cases, where 'it was considered by the Commissioner, and on the recommendation of the Aborigines Protection Board', exceptions could be made to this strict rule and payments made directly to the Aboriginal person in cash. How these exceptions were decided will be presented below. By 1938, there was a total of 646 'Endowees', of which 449 were paid by way of order of goods. Of those who received direct payments in cash, 10 were residents on stations and 56 were on reserves.<sup>32</sup>

### **3.4.1 Family Endowment: Painstaking APB/AWB bureaucracy and incompetence**

The earliest record I have about my grandmother Evelyn Anderson and her child endowment is her account balance as at 31 July 1938, which was £3/1/8.<sup>33</sup> As previously stated, my mother was born on 11 May 1939, and a letter written by Howard on 17 September that year reveals that although he had posted a claim for an extra child on 29 May, my grandmother had still not received an adjustment to the account for her new baby, my mother, who was by then four months old.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines' Protection: Report of the Public Service Board, 16th August 1938, Reel1649', Public Service Board (Sydney, NSW: State Records NSW, 1938), 15.

<sup>33</sup> NSW Government, 'Department of Community Services, Endowees List as at 31 July 1938, A.G.Y 114, N.R.S 1063 [4/8565.2]', Aborigines Protection Report of the Public Service Board 1938–1940 (Sydney, NSW: Department of Community Services, 1938), 1.

<sup>34</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B Head Office, 17 Sept. 1939, NRS 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1.

This was just one of the many stressful delays that my grandparents Henry and Evelyn Anderson, and other Aboriginal people, had to suffer through to receive family endowment. As mentioned above, there were two ways Aborigines could receive endowment. It was either made directly to the recipient as a cash cheque, or the recipient was instead given endowment cards where debits (otherwise known as Endowment Orders) were recorded. It is important to note the dates of these archival documents to see that when my grandparents had to move to other towns for work, the bureaucratic red tape that the APB had in place meant that they had to survive long periods of time without the assistance of endowment payments.

Peter Read, in his PhD thesis on the Wiradjuri people, stated that there was considerable discrimination through the social welfare legislation. While not specifically directed at Aborigines, it was still discrimination because the endowment funds were paid directly to the AWB, who used the money for general disbursement. This enabled the AWB to accumulate a large amount surplus of funds, and when a family left a reserve or were ejected, the home improvements component was not transferrable. Similar to Maynard's question asking where the money from the sale of Aboriginal farming land went, I would ask where did the unclaimed or not transferrable endowment money go? Peter Read stated:

The first child in each family whose parents received rations were ineligible for the allowance. Aborigines were also excluded from old age pensions, and mothers whether Aboriginal or married to an Aboriginal were excluded from maternity allowance ... The regulations for emergency relief and unemployment schemes also discriminated against Aborigines. For the first few months of the depression, Aborigines were permitted to queue with other unemployed workers but as the depression deepened, the antipathies between the local councils and the camps increased. In 1932 it was decided that only those previously independent of the Board would be allowed to apply for state relief. Others had to seek rations at the nearest Aboriginal Station.<sup>35</sup>

A copy of an endowment card is shown in Figure 48, providing an example of what endowment looked like to my grandparents and other Aboriginal people in the 1930s and 1940s. This card belonged to my grandmother Evelyn. It shows the cost her of purchases from the 'Owl Stores' and 'Biggs & Sons' at Kyogle. The date of the last purchase on this page was 10 May 1939, which was the day before my mother was born. This particular APB record sparks my imagination as I visualise my grandmother waddling into the store, heavily pregnant with my mother. As a visual tool to assist with understanding the time delays of the physical postage

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Read, 'History of the Wiradjuri People 1883-1969' (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1983), 170–71, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/109803>.

[illegible]

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On 27 September 1940, a man named James Rayner sent a letter to the AWB championing the case of ‘Mrs Henry Anderson’ whose endowment was sent to Woodenbong, but Evelyn was residing in Casino ‘doing casual work’. He insisted that she receive direct payment there. It is unclear who Rayner was, but I suspect he was a white-Australian employer because in the same letter he also champions another Aboriginal lady, Mrs Lexie Hogan, who was also employed as a casual worker.<sup>36</sup>

In response, the AWB then requested on 19 November 1940 that the police constable at Casino fill out a form about my grandmother and send it to them. It was common practice at the time for the Board to send forms to Aborigines reserve station managers, teachers or matrons at Aborigines reserve schools, and local police constables to fill out and send back to the AWB before direct payment would be approved. Officially, the standard form was titled ‘Report on Application for Direct Payment of Family Endowment’, but to me they are character assessment forms, because white-Australian people in positions of power reported to the AWB their opinion on the character of family endowment recipients. The descriptors to report on were: ‘Aboriginal caste’ (e.g., HC = half-caste or FB = full blood), ‘Thrift’, ‘Sobriety’, ‘Whether addicted to Gambling’, ‘Morality’, ‘Police convictions (if any)’, ‘Associates’ and ‘Good Worker, or Otherwise’. My grandmother Evelyn’s character assessment form for Direct Payment is shown in Figure 49.

On 21 November 1940, Constable Charles M. Ryan of Casino Police Station filled out the AWB Application for Direct Payment Form. Constable Ryan reported that my grandmother was ‘a half-caste aborigine and resides at Casino? [sic] She is of good character, strictly sober and of good morals. Is a good worker and cares for her children, keeps her home clean and does not gamble’. He recommended that ‘she be granted the usual allowance for her children and the money is paid direct to her’. The judgements of these people determined whether an Aboriginal person could be trusted with cash. This form was stamped as having been noted by the AWB on 28 November 1940.

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<sup>36</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Rayner to the Commissioner of Family Endowment, 27 Sept. 1940, NRS 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 128–29.

**ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD.  
ABORIGINES PROTECTION BOARD.—FAMILY ENDOWMENT.**

**REPORT ON APPLICATION for Direct Payment of Family Endowment by**

No. APB..... Full Name Evelyn Anderson.

Address Casino.

|                                 | Wife.           | Husband.           |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Aboriginal Caste .. .. .        | Half Caste      | Half Caste.        |
| Thrift .. .. .                  | Good            | Good.              |
| Sobriety .. .. .                | Good            | Good               |
| Whether addicted to Gambling .. | No              | No.                |
| Morality .. .. .                | Good            | Good               |
| Police convictions (if any) ..  | Nil             | Nil                |
| Associates .. .. .              | Other aborinals | Other aboriginals. |
| Good worker, or otherwise ..    | Good Worker     | Good worker.       |

**GENERAL REPORT.**

Nature of Home 4 roomed weather board cottage Is it kept clean? Yes.  
 Do children attend School regularly? One child of school age attends regularly.  
 Do children appear well clad and nourished? Yes.  
 Is home building kept in decent state of repair? Yes.  
 What has been previous experience of expenditure of endowment moneys when paid direct?  
Any monies received by the applicanat has always been spent in clothing t children and food for them.  
 If direct payment granted, could the parents be entrusted with the expenditure of a possible large sum of money wholly in the interests of the children and without extravagance? Yes.

**GENERAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATION.**

The applicant is a half caste aborigine and resides at Casino? She is of good character, strictly sober and of good morals. is a good worker and cares for her children well, keeps her home clean and does not gamble. I recommend that she be granted the usual allowance for her children and that the money be paid direct to her

*Registered* DIRECT PAYMENT APPROVED.  
*28 NOV 1940* SUPERINTENDENT  
*28 NOV 1940*  
 (Signed) *Charles M. Ryan*  
 Constable 1st Class  
 Police Station *Casino.*  
 Date 21/11/40

**Figure 49: The APB/AWB's standard form for the Direct Payment of Child Endowment<sup>37</sup>**

Note: This form is about my grandmother Evelyn Anderson.

<sup>37</sup> NSW Government, 'Application for Direct Payment of Family Endowment, Evelyn Anderson, 21 Nov. 1940, N.R.S 905, File No. A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: Aborigines Protection Board).



In the course of my research, I was dumbfounded to learn that the members of the APB were not employed full time for this role. The Board usually consisted of high-ranking public servants. In 1938, they were the Commissioner of Police, the Undersecretary Chief Secretary's Department, Chief Inspector of Schools Department of Public Instruction, the Director General of Public Health, and the Metropolitan Superintendent of Police. These extremely busy men met only met once a month on all matters relating to Aborigines.<sup>38</sup> That added to the explanation of why it took four months for Evelyn to finally receive approval for a direct payment of endowment that she so desperately needed.

Returning to the initial request by Mr Rayner on 27 September 1940 that my grandmother be paid endowment by direct payment, Table 1 shows that this application was finally approved on 13 January 1941.<sup>39</sup> It took the AWB four months to approve that Evelyn receive direct payment of her endowment, but there was further bureaucratic delay.

After Evelyn's direct payment of endowment was approved, she still had to wait to actually receive it. The AWB required that she send her endowment card to their Head Office in Sydney for checking. This meant that she could not go to the stores for food because she did not have her endowment card. She was a mother of three small children who only worked casually doing laundry, and then my grandfather Henry fell ill.

My grandmother Evelyn was in such dire straits that she had to present herself at the police station to beg for Food Relief to survive the delay that the AWB's bureaucratic bungling and breathtaking incompetence had forced her to endure. I know the above because, in a 1940 letter, Casino Police Constable McKinnon wrote to his senior Sergeant Madelin, then to the AWB, requested that:

whilst Mrs Anderson was waiting for a decision to be made concerning her endowment, and owing to the sickness of her husband, she applied for and was granted Food Relief at this station to the value of £11/0/6, and a Christmas grant of £1/4/6.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> NSW Government, 'Aborigines' Protection: Report of Public Service Board' (1938), 9–11.

<sup>39</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Mr Rayner to the Commissioner of Family Endowment, 27 Sept. 1940, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 128–29.

<sup>40</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Police Constable McKinnon to Sergeant Madelin to A.W.B Secretary, 24 Feb. 1940, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 38.

Fundamentally, family endowment was welfare money, a government support intended to ensure that people could meet their basic human needs such as food and shelter. Endowment could be critical to sustaining life because, as my grandmother's situation shows us, it could determine whether parents could feed their children. Yet the APB's disregard of urgency, the shocking inefficiency of the bureaucratic systems they had in place and overall incompetence inflicted frightening uncertainty and continuing stress upon Aboriginal people.

I have constructed Table 1 from 27 September 1940 to 27 February 1941 because that is the amount of time it took for my grandmother to receive financial help. I say 'financial help' because in the end it was *not* endowment. While Table 1 may appear unconventional for a history thesis, I see it as a vital way to shine a spotlight on the ways in which the AWB's management of endowment for Aborigines, whether intentional or not, became a controlling and drip-feeding mechanism. The table illuminates AWB incompetence and why Evelyn needed emergency relief. I have tried to recreate the feeling of sitting with a pile of (date ordered) letters on your desk reading the first, then the second, and so on, just as researchers do in libraries. I want to 'show' the reader the content, rather than 'tell' them about it.

**Table 1: Correspondence between Evelyn and AWB from 27 September 1940 to 27 February 1941**

| <b>Date</b>                           | <b>From/To</b>                                                | <b>Type of Document</b> | <b>Content (<i>italics indicates handwritten content</i>)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 27 Sept 1940                          | From: Mr James Rayner<br>To: Commissioner of Family Endowment | Letter                  | Mrs Henry Anderson, who was in receipt of Endowment sent to Woodenbong APB Reserve. This woman is residing in permanently in Casino and doing casual work.                                                                                                     |
| (Stamped as received)<br>24 Oct. 1940 | From: Commissioner of Family Endowment<br>To: Rayner          | Letter                  | You are advised that the matter for direct payment of endowment is one for the determination of the Aborigines Welfare Board., and your communication regarding Mrs Anderson's application had been referred to the Secretary of that Board for consideration. |

|                |                                                                      |                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 19 Nov<br>1940 | To: Police Officer<br>in Charge, Casino<br>From: AWB                 | Letter                                     | Application for Direct Payment of Family Endowment. In connection with the abovementioned application, will you please complete the attached form and furnish a recommendation. S.L. Anderson. Chairman AP Board.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 28 Nov<br>1940 | To: Police Officer<br>in Charge, Casino<br>From: AWB                 | Letter and<br>blank table not<br>filled in | The Officer in Charge of Police, Casino. Will you please supply hereunder a list of the debits raised by you against the abovenamed during the last, say, 12 months.<br><br>This information is required for the purpose of checking the account in this Office.<br>(S.L. Anderson. Chairman AP Board).<br>Debits for which claims have not yet been submitted should be indicated.<br>Where two or more were included in the claim submitted to this Office, please bracket same.                             |
| 30 Nov<br>1940 | From: Police<br>Station Casino<br>To: Aborigines<br>Protection Board | Letter                                     | Subject: Family Endowment APB No. 11373 Mrs Evelyn Anderson.<br>Reference: Attached File.<br>I beg to report that no debits have been raised against the abovenamed at any time at this station. She has however, during the present month been issued with food relief to the value of £3/13/6, being issue for 3 weeks on B3 Scale.<br>W.A MacPherson, Sergeant 3 <sup>rd</sup> Class (Abse. Sgt. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class Madelin.)<br><i>Send to Police Kyogle and Manager Woodenbong for list of debits.</i> |
| 13 Jan<br>1941 | To: The Manager<br>Aboriginal                                        | Letter                                     | Subject: Family Endowment APB No. 11373 Mrs Evelyn Anderson. Will you please report if the abovementioned has                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                |                                                                                                                                |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                | Station,<br>Woodenbong                                                                                                         |                        | received any Endowment Orders during the past twelve months. If so will you please furnish a list on the attached form and note that no more orders will be issued as direct payment has been approved.<br>A.C. Pettitt, per Secretary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 13 Jan<br>1941 | To: Police Officer<br>in Charge, Kyogle<br>From: AWB<br>To: Police Officer<br>Kyogle to<br>Woodenbong<br>Aboriginal<br>Station | Letter                 | Subject: Family Endowment Mrs Evelyn Anderson.<br>Will you please report if the abovementioned has received any Endowment Orders during the past twelve months from your Station. If so will you please furnish a list on the attached form and note that no more orders must be issued as direct payment has been approved. S.L. Anderson, Chairman A.W Board. Forwarded- Perhaps you could show us particulars.                                                                                                             |
| 14 Jan<br>1941 | To: AWB<br>From: Police<br>Station, Kyogle.                                                                                    |                        | No record is kept at Kyogle in regards to Endowment Orders.<br>Sergeant 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class 14/1/41                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 15 Jan<br>1941 | From: Aborigines<br><del>Protection</del><br>Welfare Board,<br>Superintendent to<br>the Secretary<br>AWB                       | AWB Internal<br>Letter | Application for transfer of Endowment. Several months ago Henry Anderson an aborigine from Stony Gully Reserve, transferred his residence to Casino. It is understood that this transfer took place about four months ago. Interviewed at Casino he reported that he made several applications for the transfer of his Endowment to the Police at Casino. He stated that he made the application for the transfer purposely. Anderson has asked that the payment should now be made on the basis of direct payment. Since the |

|             |                                                                        |        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                                                        |        | family have now been without endowment for four months this matter should be investigated as a matter of urgency and a recommendation placed before me for approval or otherwise. Superintendent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 16 Jan 1941 | From: Aboriginal Station<br>Woodenbong<br>To: Police Station<br>Kyogle | Letter | Reference: A39/5300 to Officer in Charge Kyogle. The attached list shows debits raised since I took over from Mr Howard at the closing down of Aboriginal Station Kyogle.<br>Mrs E. Anderson's card now shows a credit balance of £1 and no further orders will be issued.<br>Alan G. Hamilton Manager.<br>(Woodenbong).<br><i>Account checked - Credit as at Jan 23.</i><br><i>£3-17-.5</i><br><i>Less O/S                      <u>£3-00-.0</u></i><br><i>Cr Bal   £0-17-5   X</i><br><i>(initialled)</i><br><i>Plus Endowment Due to the 18<sup>th</sup> Feb £4.</i><br><i>Voucher for £0-17-5 to accounts branch</i><br><i>[further illegible scribbled sums]</i> |
| 16 Jan 1941 | From: AWB<br>To: Manager<br>Aboriginal Station<br>Woodenbong           | Letter | The family of Henry Anderson was previously administered by the Manager at Kyogle and it is understood that when the administration of the cases from that station was readjusted, Anderson's account was transferred to you.<br>It is understood that he is now living at Casino. If you have not already done so would you please arrange to send his card to the Officer in Charge of Police at that place who will advise Anderson accordingly. Anderson also made verbal                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|             |                                                                                                                    |                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                                                                                                    |                                              | application to the Superintendent for direct payment. Will you please furnish a report and recommendation on attached form. A.C. Pettitt. Secretary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 16 Jan 1941 | From: Constable 1 <sup>st</sup> Class Ryan Casino<br>To: Sergeant 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class Madelin Casino fwd to AWB. | Letter                                       | Subject: Family Endowment Henry Anderson<br>Reference: Communication form Aborigines Welfare Board dated 16/1/41<br>Attached<br>I beg to report having interviewed Mrs Evelyn Anderson concerning Family Endowment. Report on Application of Direct Payment of Family Endowment has been completed by me and attached hereto. C.E. Ryan, Constable 1 <sup>st</sup> Class, AWB - forwarded, A. Madelin, Sergeant 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class, Casino, 22/1/41.                                               |
| 21 Jan 1941 | Signed Manager Woodenbong Station                                                                                  | AWB Direct Payment Character Assessment Form | I have been unable to answer three questions, as the present home in which they live is unknown to me, but whilst residing on boards property, their home was always nicely kept. I would strongly recommend that cash payment be made to Mrs Anderson, as this couple are quite capable of taking their places in the white community, and are far above the average aborigines in their mode of living.<br>Anderson is a good worker and a total abstainer.<br>Alan G. Hamilton Manager Woodenbong. |
| 21 Jan 1941 | Signed Police Constable Ryan Casino                                                                                | Signed Police Station Casino                 | I recommend Evelyn Anderson be paid Child Endowment direct, as she is thrifty, and cares for her children by spending the money on clothes and food for them.<br>Constable Ryan, Casino.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                                               |                                                                                                  |        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 Feb<br>1941                                                | From: AWB<br>J.H. Maloney<br>Acting Secretary<br>To: The Managers<br>Station Taree<br>(Taree???) | Letter | <p>Please note that direct payment in this case has been approved. Mrs Anderson's endowment card should be forwarded to this office for checking purposes and it should be noted that no further orders are to be issued.</p> <p>When the account has been checked a cheque will be forwarded to Mrs Anderson for the balance standing to her credit to the Board, and thereafter, endowment cheques will be received direct from the Family Endowment Department.</p> <p>J.H Maloney, Acting Secretary.</p> |
| 24 Feb<br>1941                                                | From: AWB J.H.<br>Maloney<br>Acting Secretary<br>To: Police Officer<br>in Charge Casino          | Letter | <p>Please note that direct payment in this case has been approved. Mrs Anderson's endowment card should be forwarded to this office for checking purposes and it should be noted that no further orders are to be issued.</p> <p>When the account has been checked a cheque will be forwarded to Mrs Anderson for the balance standing to her credit to the Board, and thereafter, endowment cheques will be received direct from the Family Endowment Department. J.H Maloney, Acting Secretary.</p>        |
| Around 24<br>Feb 1941<br>(date is<br>covered by<br>stamp ink) | Constable<br>McKinnon to<br>Sergeant Madelin<br>forwards letter to<br>A.W.B.                     |        | <p>Subject: Mrs Evelyn Anderson- Direct Payment of Family Endowment -</p> <p>Reference: Attached File from Aborigines Welfare Board, No. A41/332, dated 24.2.41.</p> <p>I beg to inform that Mrs Anderson's endowment card is now attached to this file, to be forwarded to Sydney as</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  | <p>directed in the attached memo. It might be added that while Mrs Anderson was waiting a decision concerning her endowment, and owing to the sickness of her husband, she applied and was granted Food Relief at this station to the value of £11/0/6 and a Christmas grant of £1/4/6 [Illegible Signature] Constable 1<sup>st</sup> Class</p> <p>The Secretary, Aborigines Welfare Board, Sydney.</p> <p>Forwarded endowment card attached as directed.</p> <p>S. Madelin, Sergeant 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Casino.</p> |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

All of the correspondence in this table came from my grandmother Evelyn's APB/AWB file.<sup>41</sup> Her file consists of 131 pages of documents. It begins on 17 September 1939 and ends on 13 February 1947. Around April 1942, Henry and Evelyn left Casino for the Woodburn area as Henry had secured a job working for the forestry. When they were in Casino, Evelyn reignited her affair with Eddie Webb. Sadly, she left my mother and her sisters behind, taking baby George with her. It turned out that Henry was not George's father. Constable Ryan stated in his letter to the AWB that:

Mr Anderson has sent his three children to the aborigines Reserve Coraki, where they are being cared for by people named Breckenridge. It is evident that Mrs Anderson has deserted her children, and has no real home for them. Perhaps this matter could be brought under the notice of the Aborigines Welfare Board.<sup>42</sup>

My grandfather Henry had no choice but to leave my mother and her sisters in the care of others at Box Ridge Mission because he needed to find work to support them. The surveillance that Henry experienced before Evelyn had left him was mild compared to what he experienced afterwards as a single parent. Every time he changed jobs or moved for work he had to resubmit requests for direct payment of endowment. Rather than construct another lengthy table, an illuminating way to show the extent of this surveillance is to simply list the dates of AWB,

<sup>41</sup> NSW Government, 'Complete Aborigines Protection/Aborigines Welfare Board Files on Evelyn Anderson from 27 Sept 1940 to 13 Feb 1947, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 1–131.

<sup>42</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Constable Ryan to AWB Head Office, 12 May 1942, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 85.



police and other correspondence relating to Henry Anderson, most of them requiring character assessment forms and/or action of some sort. In 1942 alone, such correspondence was sent on 12 May, 10 June, 15 June, 17 June, 20 June, 8 July, 10 July, 13 July, 24 July, 28 July, 31 July, 14 August, Undated (but between these two letters), 25 September, 3 October, 20 October, 2 December and 29 December.<sup>43</sup>

My mother and her sisters were three, five and seven years old and Henry left them with Ted and Lucy Breckenridge. The AWB Chairman sent instructions to the Casino police to ask the Kyogle police to inform Mrs Breckenridge to apply for child endowment.<sup>44</sup> Sergeant Taylor of Coraki police also wrote a letter recommending that Lucy Breckenridge be paid endowment. Constable Thomas in Coraki received this instruction and completed a character assessment form for Lucy Breckenridge which he returned to the AWB on 15 June, recommending that she be paid child endowment for the Anderson children.<sup>45</sup> This was the beginning of tension between Henry and the Breckenridges that lasted for over two years.

There are 37 letters on file about my grandfather Henry from the time Evelyn left him. The first is dated 12 May 1942 and the last is dated 30 October 1944, which was Henry's letter stating he had taken the girls from Box Ridge Mission. These letters went back and forth from AWB officials to the police to the matron at Box Ridge Mission, Mrs Hiscocks. Henry applied for endowment but was knocked back. Mrs Hiscocks championed Lucy Breckenridge and accused Henry of not sending any money to her. Henry subsequently wrote a furious letter stating that he *had* paid maintenance (apart from 'a bout of malaria fever and being unable to work for a short time'),<sup>46</sup> adding, 'I have started work again, and Mrs Breckenridge will be paid £3 per week and if it aint enough to keep three children I don't know what will'.<sup>47</sup> In September 1944, the AWB received a typed letter (written by Mrs Hiscocks) signed by Mrs Breckenridge requesting that my grandfather be made to support his children and alerting them

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<sup>43</sup> All these letters are from the same AWB File on Evelyn Anderson.

<sup>44</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter to from Constable Ryan to A.W.B., 12 May 1942, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 49.

<sup>45</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter and Direct Payment Form from Constable Thomas to A.W.B, 15 June 1942, N.R.S 905, A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1942), 50 and 52.

<sup>46</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter & Form from Constable Thomas to AWB', 15 June 1942.

<sup>47</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Henry Anderson to A.W.B Head Office, 14 May 1943, NRS 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 87.

that Henry was working as a truck driver for the Bonalbo Timber Company Ltd.<sup>48</sup> The AWB became suspicious after that and sent a copy of Henry's letter to Mrs Hiscocks, asking for an account of dates and sums of money that Lucy had received for maintenance, but she could not produce one. Mrs Hiscocks wrote, 'Lucy Breckenridge has no records of amounts paid, so cannot furnish information required', but she continued to be fierce in her determination to see that Henry pay more money to Mrs Breckenridge.<sup>49</sup>

The AWB knew that Hiscocks had written the September letter, because Acting Secretary Mr Mullins opened his next letter with, 'In connection with the letter of the 12th of September received from Mrs Breckenridge, and apparently prepared by you for her signature'.<sup>50</sup> The Bonalbo police were notified and a whole round of character assessment forms and surveillance began at Bonalbo. Henry's brother Uncle Sam Anderson Jnr lived with his wife Nell, so I imagine Uncle Sam Anderson got him the job. A character assessment form was sent to the Bonalbo police and Constable Burgess recommended that he receive direct payment. The constable also stated that 'Sam Anderson [Jnr] is employed by the Bonalbo Timber Company and is a good worker. He lives more or less lives like a white man and is well-respected'.<sup>51</sup>

The letter in Figure 50 voices my grandfather Henry's frustration as he explains why he left Box Ridge Mission (the transcription is below the figure).

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<sup>48</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Lucy Breckenridge to A.W.B Head Office, 12 Sep. 1944, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 100.

<sup>49</sup> NSW Government, 'Memorandum to A.W.B, re: Maintenance of Children of Henry Anderson, 28 Sep. 1944, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1944), 103.

<sup>50</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter A.W.B Head Office to Matron Hiscocks, 28 Sep. 1944, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 30.

<sup>51</sup> NSW Government, 'A.W.B Direct Payment of Endowment Form for Henry Anderson, 9 Nov. 1944, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 19.

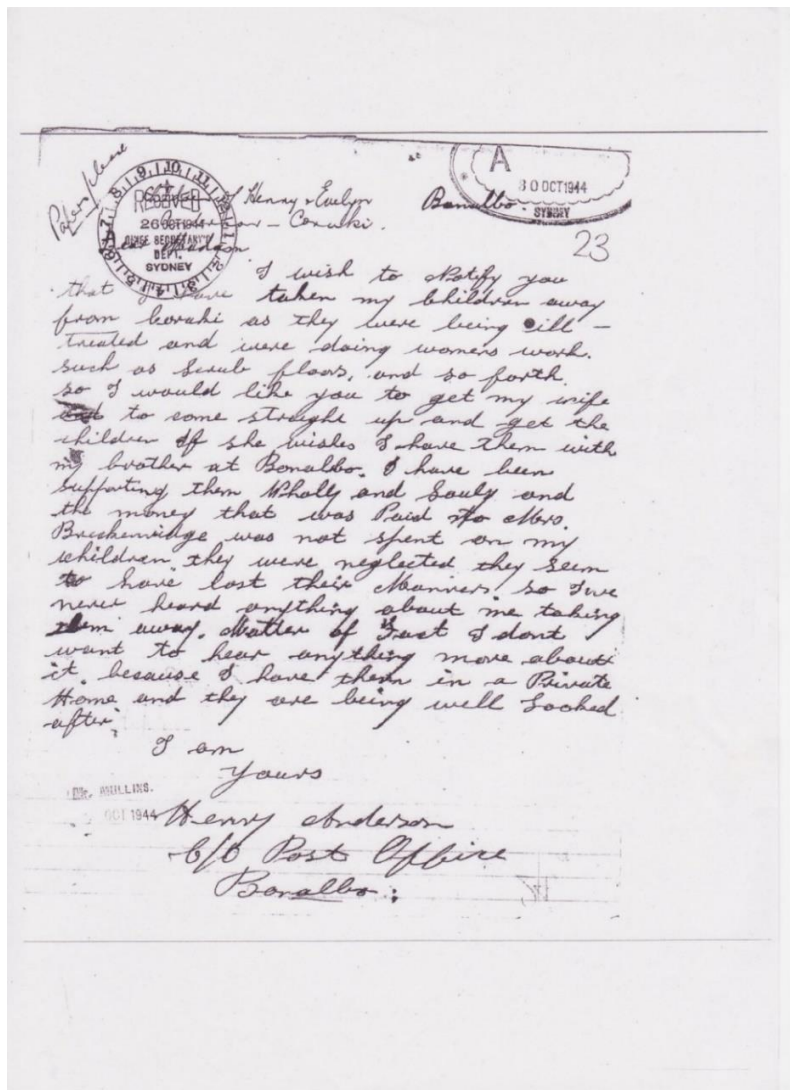


**Figure 50: Letter to the AWB from my grandfather Henry Anderson, received on 26 October 1944<sup>52</sup>**

I wish to notify you that I have taken my children away from Coraki as they were being ill-treated and were doing women's work such as scrub floors, and so forth. So I would like you to get my wife to come straight up and get the children if she wishes. I have them with my brother in Bonalbo. I have been supporting them wholly and souly and the money that was paid to Mrs Breckenridge was not spent on my children. They were neglected, they seem to have lost their manners so I've never heard anything about me taking them away. Matter of fact I don't want to hear any more about it because I have them in a private home where they are being well looked after.

I am yours  
Henry Anderson, C/O Post Office, Bonalbo.

<sup>52</sup> NSW Government, 'Letter from Henry Anderson to A.W.B Head Office, Received 26 Oct. 1944, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]', Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: APB, 1939), 23.

My Aunt Ruby wrote about how poorly she, Aunt Gwen and my mother Rita were treated (after their mother had left them) when they lived at Box Ridge Mission. As a young child, my mother once fell on a sharp ‘squaring axe’ and needed several stitches, but Aunt Ruby stated that ‘they didn’t even take her to the doctor’. My mother had a gaping, open, elongated scar on the underside of her forearm that went from just below her wrist and extended almost to her elbow. Aunt Ruby added:

One afternoon I was sent to stoke the fire. It was down to the coals so I put chips on and brambles and fanned it with a piece of cardboard. It still wasn’t lit so I poured kero on and the rings were still on top of it and it blew up in my face with a loud boom. I was in pain for weeks, I had no eyebrows and all my face was blistered. They didn’t take me to the doctor. Not long after that some kind person must have got word to Dad about the way we were being treated. He came in the truck and packed our things. Uncle Ernie was the only one who knew we weren’t coming back. He helped us into the truck and kissed us goodbye then walked away from us with his head down crying.<sup>53</sup>

I remember Aunt Ruby telling me that the way my grandfather Henry removed them from the reserve was done like a covert operation to avoid surveillance. Henry led Mrs Hiscocks and others to believe that he was just visiting the reserve to take the girls out for a picnic that day, but only Uncle Ernie knew the truth. Fed up with the treatment of his children, Henry removed them from Box Ridge Mission and never returned.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The most exciting part of family history research are the times when the focus is on ordinary, individual lives in history—and then extraordinary peripheral insights appear as though a thick cloud of fog has lifted, and the similarities of these insights enable important ideas to be formulated. The initial purpose of this chapter was to investigate the lives of individual relatives within the timeframe of the chapter, but in the process this chapter has provided evidence of a broader shift in the power of Aboriginal people, with some of the APB/AWB’s attempts to control being thwarted and even outright rejected by regular, non-political family members, ‘on the ground’ in everyday life.

When APB Manager J.P. Howard tried to remove my great-grandmother Mabel’s daughters in 1935—Mabel was so heroic because she suffered from a severe, long-term illness before her

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<sup>53</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), 9.

death in 1937—she was able to get five-year-old Phyllis and her two older daughters away from the reach of Howard, the APB and the police. Mabel died at the young age of 48.

I am speculating here, but I would not be surprised if ‘push came to shove’ when Uncle Bob was told by Howard that Phyllis was a ‘Ward of the Board and committed to the care of this Station’.<sup>54</sup> Bob took her away immediately and Howard was powerless to stop him. A less confrontational but no less effective form of resistance came from Aunty Kate, who went behind Howard’s back to gain custody of nine-year-old Phyllis from a higher APB authority.<sup>55</sup>

Uncle Bruce Breckenridge (not a family member) demonstrated a resistance targeted at Howard. He was defiant, made snide comments, undermined Howard’s authority, openly criticised him and I suspect tormented him.<sup>56</sup> I believe that my grandfather Henry was a more passive man, but even he had his limits. Fed up with the volumes of bureaucratic paperwork and the struggle over child endowment after my grandmother Evelyn had deserted the family—compounded by terrible neglect of his children at Box Ridge Mission—he and Uncle Ernie Ord organised the pre-planned ‘kidnap’ of his three daughters Ruby, Gwen and my mother Rita from Box Ridge Mission. Like his mother Mabel, Henry completely rejected AWB plans for his children and moved them to where they were free from the fear of child removal, and under the loving care of Uncle Sam and Aunt Nell, while Henry worked all over Bundjalung Country to support his children.

Without doubt, one of the greatest examples of injustice in Australian history is the APB’s hypocrisy. On the one hand, they accused Aboriginal parents of neglect as a means to justify child removal, thereby *causing* the most heart-wrenching pain and suffering, yet the APB’s appalling neglect of Aboriginal peoples’ basic human needs has to date been unaccounted for. Is it any wonder then that, like the political freedom fighters of that time, regular, ordinary Aboriginal people were ramping up resistance and even outright rejecting the authority of the Australian Government’s ‘Destruction Board’.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Howard to A.P.B. Head Office’, 6 March 1939.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter Mr Howard to APB Head Office’, 26 November 1939, 17.

<sup>57</sup> Deliberate use of Uncle Frank Robert’s powerful words.

## Chapter 4: Exodus off Mission and Country, 1944–1955

Before researching my family history, I never knew how long my mother Rita and her sisters Gwen and Ruby were ‘on the mission’ at Box Ridge Mission, near Coraki. Constable Ryan reported to the AWB that my grandmother Evelyn Anderson had deserted the family around 12 March 1942, so I estimate that my mother Rita was only two years and 10 months old when her mother left.<sup>1</sup> The girls were on the mission until October 1944, so Rita was five years and five months old when she left the mission, making her time there approximately two years and seven months in total. The photograph in Figure 51 is the earliest I have of my mother. It is believed to have been taken at Box Ridge Mission. Judging her age to be about three at the time of the photo, I suspect this was not long after she and her sisters arrived at the mission.



**Figure 51: Photograph of my mother Rita Anderson (the smallest girl with the bow in her hair, second from the right), Aunt Gwen (third from the right) and two unknown girls<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Constable Ryan to A.W.B Head Office, 12 May 1942, N.R.S 905 A47/483 [12/7746.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1942), 49. He noted Evelyn’s desertion was two months earlier, so the approximate date was around 12 March 1942.

<sup>2</sup> My Family Collection.

All that my mother remembered of Box Ridge Mission was the accident where she fell on an axe and cut her arm open. But she constantly spoke of her love for Uncle Sam and Aunt Nell, and her memories of her time with them were retold over and over again through the years. Although not exclusively about my mother, this chapter spans the time of her early childhood at Bonalbo to her early adulthood in the suburb of Redfern in Sydney's inner city. Researching and reconstructing this timeframe was made much easier by juxtaposing the AWB archival documents with my Aunt Ruby's book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*.<sup>3</sup>

During the course of this chapter, we will see that, even though my grandmother Evelyn was well and truly gone, my grandfather Henry still did not easily receive child endowment, and this chapter brings to the thesis another large amount of archival materials that recorded the second wave of AWB red-tape paperwork. These AWB archival records, like the ones in the last chapter, are records that have never before seen the light of day. They reveal the mind-numbingly bureaucratic and incompetent operations of the AWB in its distribution and monitoring of child endowment for Aboriginal people. This chapter argues that Aboriginal people 'on the ground' were being hounded by white-Australian government authorities, and those that managed to live away from government reserves and out of the reach of Australian Government authorities lived much happier lives.

Nell Anderson (nee Hinett) had lived in Bonalbo all her life except the last two years. Born in approximately 1903, she was a country girl who came from a large family. She was 40 years old, and the mother of an 11-year-old girl called Shirley (known as Auntie Midge), when she married 30-year-old Sam Anderson in 1943 (see Figure 52).<sup>4</sup> Sam and Nell Anderson all but legally adopted Henry Anderson's three daughters, and in my heart I consider them to be like grandparents, such is my gratitude for their love and care of my mother and her sisters. Sam and Nell Anderson also welcomed a new baby girl into their lives, Judy, born in 1946.

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<sup>3</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> QLD Government, 'Death Certificate of Nellie Anderson, 15 June 1954, No. 2521/1954' (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1954). On Nell Anderson's Death Certificate the informant was Sam Anderson. The certificate states that she was 40 years old when married. Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (p. 10) states that Sam was 10 years younger than Nell when they married. Also, Midge was two years older than Ruby, making her birth year as 1932.



**Figure 52: Nellie Hinett (left) and Sam Anderson Junior (right), my grandfather Henry's younger brother<sup>5</sup>**

The photograph in Figure 53 is of the Hinett family. Missing are a son called Earnest, who was absent on a droving trip, and another son Stewart who died of typhoid fever at the age of 15. The approximate ages of Aunt Nell and her siblings at the time this photograph was taken are Nellie 19, Mary 29, Willie unknown, Gertie 27, Harry 16, and Florrie 23.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>6</sup> 'Death Certificate of Nellie Anderson', QLD 2521/1954; 'Birth Certificate of Mary Hinett', NSW 10242/1892; 'Birth Certificate of Gertrude Hinett', NSW 9931/1894; 'Birth Certificate of Harry Hinett', NSW 21955/1905; and 'Birth Certificate of Florence Hinett', NSW 11201/1898.





**Figure 53: The Hinett Family, circa 1921<sup>7</sup>**

Note: Left to right, Back row: Nellie, Mary, Willie, Gertie and Harry. Middle row: Mr Thomas and Mrs Alice Hinett. Front row: John Hinett (grandson) and Florrie.

Thomas Hinett and his wife Alice retired to the Bonalbo township in the 1920s and died within a short time of each other in 1943.<sup>8</sup> In that same year, Sam Anderson Junior and Nellie Julia Hinett were married. A year later, my mother Rita and her sisters Ruby and Gwen arrived in Bonalbo to live with their Uncle Sam, Aunt Nell, cousin Midge and the Hinett Family (see Figure 54).

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<sup>7</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Ralston, *Bunawilbu-Bonalbo: A Pictorial History of Bonalbo* (Tabulam, NSW: West of the Range Historical Society, 1987), 13.



**Figure 54: My mother as a child (centre with coat and hat) at the Bonalbo show with members of Aunt Nell's family, the Hinetts, circa 1948/1949<sup>9</sup>**

Note: Left to right: Susie Hinett, an unknown boy, Gertie French, Harry Hinett, Rita Anderson (my mother), Laurence Hinett, Willie Hinett, Judy Anderson and Florrie Hinett.

The photograph in Figure 54 is of my mother with members of her Aunt Nell's family at the Bonalbo Show. A copy of the original was given to Aunty Ruby by her (and my Mum and Aunty Gwen's) late cousin Judy Anderson (the small girl second from the right). In June 2020, Aunty Gwenny told me that she believed that Phyllis was Judy's mother and that Aunt Nell and Uncle Sam (Phyllis' older brother and his wife) had 'adopted' Judy. It was a bombshell, particularly after my research had uncovered so much information about Phyllis. I mentioned in Chapter 1 how I experienced an emotional response when I lost track of my great-great-grandmother Elizabeth Cowan in research, and my concern for her was only eased when I found that she was happily married later in life. Here is another example of family history connecting me with my ancestors, because I have met Aunty Judy (now deceased) once or twice in my life, and so remembering her feels like my connection to Aunty Phyllis just became a little closer. Again, I went back to re-read Aunty Ruby's book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, in which she said:

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<sup>9</sup> Author's Collection.

I didn't know Aunt Nell was pregnant. Nothing about women's matters ever got mentioned, even between the women. The first thing I knew about the pregnancy was when Aunty Nell got off the bus at the end of Dryrabba Street with a baby in her arms.<sup>10</sup>

On the same page, Aunty Ruby said that when she got her period, Aunt Nell said to her, 'You'll be getting these every month now. They're called monthlies, you have to wear a pad and a belt. Now Ruby, you're not to mess around with boys or you'll get in the family way'.<sup>11</sup>

I cannot find any record of Aunty Judy's birth, but I ordered her marriage certificate and was surprised to see that, unlike regular marriage certificates, Aunty Judy and her husband's birth dates were recorded beside their ages. She was born on 25 August 1945, and recorded her parents as 'Sam Anderson and Nellie Juliet Hinnett (deceased)'.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that when Judy was born, Phyllis was 14 years, eight months and 20 days old. Aunt Nell was 43 years old.

Given that Aunty Ruby was 11-and-a-half years old, said that 'the first thing [she] knew about the pregnancy was when Aunty Nell got off the bus with baby Judy', and the quite open chat that Aunt Nell had with Ruby about menstruation, surely at that age Ruby would have known if Aunt Nell was pregnant before the baby came. Aunt Nell was 43 years old when Judy was born. These factors add weight to Aunty Gwenny's belief that Aunt Nell adopted the baby Judy. If this is true, then Aunty Phyllis was 'in the family way' at a strikingly young age. If so, what were the circumstances of this? Aunty Phyllis and Aunty Judy are both deceased, so we can only speculate, but I wonder if she was indentured.

Over the years, I have witnessed a few reunions of my mother and Aunts with Aunty Midge (Shirley) and Aunty Judy, and when they got together they would shout over the top of one another to be the first to tell all the stories of the mischief they got into as children. It was the happy stories they wanted to tell. I never heard my mother or her sister Gwen speak of their lives before moving to live with their Aunt Nell and Uncle Sam. Perhaps it was because they were so young. Only Ruby had memories of mission life at Box Ridge Mission, but I have no

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<sup>10</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> NSW Government, 'Marriage Certificate of Francis Daniel Clarence Gomes and Judith Grace Anderson, 28 Nov. 1964, No. 29922/1964' (Sydney, NSW: NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1964).

doubt that if my grandfather Henry were alive today he would have a great many things to say about those times.

I would have thought that the harassment Henry received from the AWB would have dissolved after his angry letter in 1944 stating that he had taken his children to a private home where they were being well cared for, but that was not the case. I have constructed another table to again shine the spotlight on the correspondence between the AWB and police regarding the payment of endowment to Henry Anderson after he removed my mother and her sisters from Box Ridge Mission to Bonalbo. Table 2 is a visual tool to assist understanding and is followed by detailed analysis.

**Table 2: Transcription of Select Contents of My Grandfather Henry's AWB File**

| <b>Date</b>  | <b>From/To</b>                                                      | <b>Correspondence</b>                                            | <b>Content (<i>italics indicates handwritten content</i>)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1944</b>  |                                                                     |                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1st Nov 1944 | From: Superintendent AWB<br>To: Matron Ab. Reserve Coraki           | Letter                                                           | Subject – Child Endowment - Henry Anderson.<br>Advise the Child Endowment Dept. of the names of the children Henry Anderson has removed to Bonalbo.<br><i>A.W.G. Lipscombe – AWB Superintendent</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1st Nov 1944 | From: Chairman AWB<br>To: Officer in Charge Bonalbo.                | Letter                                                           | Subject – Child Endowment -Henry Anderson-Bonalbo.<br>In connection with the above mentioned application will you please complete direct payment of child endowment form and furnish a recommendation.<br>S.L. Anderson, AWB Chairman.<br><i>Per, P.G</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3 Nov 1944   | Police Constable Bonalbo<br>Stamped by Chief Secretary's Department | AWB Child Direct Payment of Endowment /Character Assessment Form | Re: Henry Anderson- Bonalbo.<br>Anderson's wife deserted him three years ago. Until recently his three daughters were cared for a woman named Breckenridge at Coraki. Anderson considered they were not being properly treated so he brought them to Bonalbo and placed them in the car of his brother and sister-in-law, Mr & Mrs Sam Anderson. Sam Anderson is employed by the Bonalbo Timber Company and is a good worker. He lives more or less like a white man and is well respected. I recommend direct payment of family endowment in this case.<br>W.E. Burgess, Constable F/C No. 3879.<br>[Stamped by Mullins- Acting Secretary- 14/11/44, Stamped Approved by A.W.G Liscombe – Superintendent 20/11/44] |

|             |                                                                         |                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 24 Nov 1944 | From Acting Secretary AWB to the Deputy Commissioner of Child Endowment | Letter                                | <p>Subject – Child Endowment -Henry Anderson-Bonalbo</p> <p>It has been reported to this office that the children of Henry Anderson, previously cared for by Mrs Breckenridge of Coraki, are now under the control of their father at Bonalbo. He has placed them in the care of Mr and Mrs Sam Anderson. It is recommended that endowment in respect of these children be paid direct to Henry Anderson.</p> <p>Mullins AWB Acting Secretary.</p> |
| 30 Nov 1944 | From Deputy Commissioner Child Endowment To Acting Secretary AWB        | Letter                                | <p>Re: Henry Anderson Bonalbo Ref No. A43/702.</p> <p>In reply to your communication of the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1944, I would be glad if you would have the above named person complete the enclosed endowment form in respect of his children under the age of 16 years and have same returned to this office as soon as possible. F. Pogson, Deputy Commissioner, Child Endowment</p>                                                      |
| 8 Dec 1944  | Mullins AWB Acting Secretary On Behalf of AWB Chairman                  | Letter                                | <p>The attached form should be completed by the above named person in respect of his children under the age of 16 years and returned direct to the Deputy Commissioner of Child Endowment, 52 Carrington Street, Sydney</p> <p>S.L. Anderson,<br/>Chairman</p> <p><i>Per J.M</i></p>                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>1945</b> |                                                                         |                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 10 Jan 1945 | From Police to AWB                                                      | Letter                                | <p>I beg to report that the form referred to above has been completed and forwarded to the Deputy Commissioner of Child Endowment.</p> <p>W.E. Burgess, Constable 1/C, Bonalbo</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 8 May 1945  | AWB Form to Police Constable Bonalbo                                    | Letter                                | <p>Application for Direct Payment of Child Endowment</p> <p>In connection with the above mentioned application, will you please complete the attached form and furnish a recommendation.</p> <p>S.L. Anderson,<br/>Chairman</p> <p><i>Per, P.G</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 12 May 1945 | Police Constable Bonalbo to AWB                                         | Letter                                | <p>I beg to inform that the attached form has been completed and is forwarded herewith.</p> <p>Constable No. 4298, G.H. Upward, Bonalbo.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 12 May 1945 | Signed form from Police Constable                                       | AWB Child Direct Payment of Endowment | <p>Home complies favourably with normal Australian standards.</p> <p>Monies paid directly – in this case it appears to be quite satisfactory.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|             |                                                  |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             | Bonalbo to AWB                                   | /Character Assessment Form                                          | Recommend that direct payment continue until time for the next review.<br>Constable No. 4298, G.H. Upward, Bonalbo.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>1946</b> |                                                  |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 4 Feb 1946  | AWB Form to Police Constable Bonalbo             | Letter                                                              | Application for Direct Payment of Child Endowment<br>In connection with the above mentioned application, will you please complete the attached form and furnish a recommendation.<br>S.L. Anderson, Chairman.<br><i>Per I.S.</i>                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 16 Feb 1946 | Signed form from Police Constable Bonalbo to AWB | AWB Child Direct Payment of Endowment<br>/Character Assessment Form | There is not a resident Constable at Bonalbo at present. I visit there weekly. From enquiries made it is apparent that the money has been wisely spent on the children.<br><br>Senior Constable H.J. Doak, Bonalbo.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>1947</b> |                                                  |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5 Feb 1947  | AWB Letter Form to Police Constable Bonalbo      | Letter                                                              | Subject – Child Endowment -Henry Anderson-Bonalbo<br>In connection with the abovementioned application, will you please complete the attached form and furnish a recommendation.<br>S.L. Anderson, Chairman.<br><i>Per, I.S</i>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 13 Feb 1947 | Signed form from Police Constable Bonalbo to AWB | AWB Child Direct Payment of Endowment<br>/Character Assessment Form | Anderson is a good clean half-caste aborigine. Although not living with his wife, the children are well cared for by his sister-in-law, Mrs Sam Anderson, with whom the applicant resides. All monies are spent in the welfare of the children who are well clothed and nourished, and attend school regularly. Under the circumstances I recommend that endowment monies be paid direct to the Applicant. |

At first, I had difficulty understanding why the AWB kept asking the police at Bonalbo to send in Direct Payment of Endowment/Character Assessment Forms. Even after they had completed them and sent them in, they were being asked again to do so. Then I realised when transcribing the letters that I seemed to see only the initials and words ‘S.L. Anderson, Chairman’ and had not looked past the name to see what followed. It was then I realised my mistake.

What followed after the name ‘S.L. Anderson’ was the word ‘Chairman’, and then a few lines down was the small word ‘*per*’ followed by scribbled initials. It seems that S. L. Anderson was

the official Chairman, but other AWB staff were initialling letters on his behalf, as though his role was a static position that any official could ‘act’ as. Perhaps he was on leave, who knows? But his staff were acting in his name as ‘Chairman’. If we examine all the ‘*pers*’, there was ‘P.G’ (who is unknown); ‘J.M’, who was the AWB’s Acting Secretary, Mr Mullins; and ‘I.S’, whose initials are so indecipherable I transcribed them as ‘I.S’ to mean ‘illegible signature’.

On top of that confusion, there were different hierarchical roles at the top of the AWB. There was ‘A.W.G. Liscombe’ (at times he initialled his name as ‘A.W.G.’ for short), the AWB ‘Superintendent’; ‘Mr Mullins’ (or J.M), the AWB ‘Acting Secretary’; and ‘S. L. Anderson’, the AWB ‘Chairman’. It seems to me that ‘A.W.G.’ was the boss and the others acted in separate roles.

A classic saying comes to mind when I think about the AWB and its hierarchy, as well as the Child Endowment Board, ‘the left hand didn’t know what the right hand was doing’. What is unforgiveable is that the incompetent actions of these bureaucratic, hierarchical positions worked to the detriment of Aboriginal families trying to receive child endowment. Looking at 3 November 1944, we see the stamps of approval by the Acting Secretary (Mullins) and the Superintendent of the AWB (A.W.G. Liscombe) on 14 and 20 November 1944. One would think that that was it, that my grandfather Henry’s application was approved and he received his child endowment. Yet correspondence dragged on and on. Delays, delays, delays!

Not all interactions with the AWB were negative or controlling. Through archival records, I found out about a welfare officer, a man named Mr L. Austen, employed by the AWB to look after the Casino District. Records reveal that my grandmother Evelyn Anderson left her husband and three daughters in March 1942, but in December 1946 there was seemingly an attempt at reconciliation.

On 7 December 1946, the AWB issued a rail pass to Evelyn to enable her to return to her husband in Casino.<sup>13</sup> While Henry was away working during the week, on Friday, 13 December, Evelyn went to see Mr Austen, told him that she had ‘made up’ with Henry and asked him for a rail warrant to travel to Sydney to retrieve ‘some clothes etcetera’. He dutifully sent a telegram to the AWB and awaited instruction, and also sent a telegram to Henry and arranged for him to come in and see him on Saturday, 14 December, as Henry was away on

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<sup>13</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from A.W.B Superintendent Liscombe to Mr L. Austen, 16 Jan. 1947, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1946), 8.

weekdays. Austen received a telegram immediately from the Board that questioned, ‘cannot clothes be collected and forwarded from Sydney?’

In his report, Austen explained that on Saturday, 14 December, Henry met with him and told him that he thought they had made up, but Evelyn had taken Friday afternoon’s express train to Sydney. Then, on Monday, 16 December, Austen received a telegram from the AWB informing him that ‘Returned to Sydney, with Webb, now applies pass return Casino to resume with husband, confirm whether husband agreeable and will pay cost pass’.<sup>14</sup>

Henry returned to Austen’s office saying he had received a telegram informing him that Evelyn wanted him to send her the train fare to return to Casino, which he could not afford. Henry then asked Austen if the Board would pay for a pass and he would reimburse them after Christmas. Austen sent a telegram to the AWB stating that Henry desired reconciliation with Evelyn and the fare would be reimbursed later, ‘see my report’.<sup>15</sup> In that report, Mr Austen appealed for the AWB to help Henry. He explained that Henry wanted a reconciliation but did not have enough money. What spare money he had needed to go towards an operation for kidney stones which he had put off to support his children. If Evelyn came home, he could get the operation done. Until then, he had to keep working because his daughter Ruby was starting high school the following year and needed clothes. This report shows Austen’s kindness and compassion.<sup>16</sup>

I closely examined this rail pass application and the accompanying declaration that is *allegedly* signed by my grandmother Evelyn. I got a feeling that something did not seem quite right here, so I cross-checked this handwriting with letters I have that were written by her. My grandmother Evelyn had less confident writing and her grammar skills were poor. She used phrases like ‘and she tell me’ and ‘the last time they was here’.<sup>17</sup> Judging by her writing, I do not think she was capable of writing the formal, well-written words and sentences on this application form. I draw attention to the following sentence as an example, ‘I wish to return to

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<sup>14</sup> NSW Government, ‘Telegram from Mr Austen to A.W.B, 16 December 1946, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1946), 2.

<sup>15</sup> NSW Government, ‘Telegram from Mr Austen to A.W.B (Illegible Date) 1946, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1946), 3.

<sup>16</sup> NSW Government, ‘Austen’s Report for A.W.B, 16 Dec 1946, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1946), 5.

<sup>17</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Evelyn Anderson to Mr Howard, 23 August 1938, N.R.S 905 A393 [2/7582.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1942), 1–2.



my husband and children with whom I have been separated. I am anxious to make a fresh start in caring for them’.

Given Evelyn’s poor writing and grammar capabilities, I do not believe that she wrote these words. When you compare Mrs English’s writing (see e.g., Figure 55) with a handwritten letter from my grandmother, Evelyn’s writing is childlike and not at all like the fluid writing below. Their handwriting samples just do not match. This is the second record I have found of a female white-Australian government employee deceitfully writing letters for an Aboriginal person that serves their own purpose. Remember, Matron Hiscocks wrote for Lucy Breckenridge too.

ABORIGINES WELFARE BOARD  
NEW SOUTH WALES.



Application for Money Advance, Rail Warrant, etc.

1. Mrs Ellen Evelyn Anderson, the undersigned.  
(Name in full.)

residing at 33 Beaumont St. Waterloo, request—

(a) an advance of \_\_\_\_\_ (State amount.)

(b) the issue of a Rail Warrant for a ~~return~~ single journey from Sydney to Basins at a cost of £ 2 : 16 : 11.

The above request is submitted for the following reason—  
I wish to return to my husband and children from whom I have been separated. I am anxious to make a fresh start in caring for them.

I hereby declare that ~~I~~ my husband Henry Anderson c/o cbr Austin will undertake to refund to the Aborigines Welfare Board ~~Welfare~~ Officers within 2 months months, the amount of the Advance such payment to be Basins made in the following manner—  
Refund to be made to cbr Austin by 3 instalments

(Signature) E. E. Anderson  
 (Date) 16/12/46

WITNESS J. English  
Abor. Welfare Board

(Date) 16. 12. 1946

Space reserved for Head Office Use.  
conditional for approval  
17.12.46  
Uch. X 58981 issued

1679 3.46

**Figure 55: Application for a money advance written by Inspector Mrs English of the AWB Head Office**

I returned to my archive collection to locate the pages of Mrs English's diary to see if I could find anything else. I cite below two comments from Mrs English's diary relating to indentured Aboriginal girls.

Diary for

Week Ending 12<sup>th</sup> January 1945

Name of Officer I. English Position Inspector

~~Aboriginal Station~~ Head Office

Monday – Head Office – attended to general welfare matters – ... interviewed F. D’Arcy who had absconded from her home at Clifton Gardens. Remained with girl until employer came for her at 6pm.

Wednesday – Head Office – attended to general welfare matters – ... 10am To Bellevue Hill visit A. Lyons conferring with employer – Annie proved very difficult to manage – was violent & stubborn – visited M. Kapeen while at Bellevue Hill. Returned to H.O.<sup>18</sup>

Monday’s diary entries paint a very different picture of the Mrs English to that I described in Chapter 2 as a woman ‘who was well-liked by the Aboriginal people at Box Ridge Mission’. Let us remember that it was Mrs English who presented the bride, my grandmother Evelyn, ‘with a beautiful wedding cake’.<sup>19</sup> She was also the person responsible for all the arrangements of my other grandmother Edith’s wedding (making bouquets, preparing the breakfasts, etc.), yet on the Monday in Sydney, Mrs English waited with a girl who had run away from her employer to make sure she returned to them.<sup>20</sup> A photograph of Mrs English is shown in Figure 56.

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<sup>18</sup> NSW Government, ‘Diary Entry of Mrs I English, A.W.B Inspector, 12 Jan. 1945, N.R.S 905, A46/96 [12/7717.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1945), 1.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Wedding on Coraki Abo Reserve, Anderson - Walker’, *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1942), 4 September 1934, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/127178675>; ‘Aboriginal Wedding - Interesting Function at Coraki – Bostock-Cowan’, *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser* (NSW: 1886–1945), 24 November 1933, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article127169918>.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Aboriginal Wedding - Interesting Function at Coraki’, 24 November 1933.

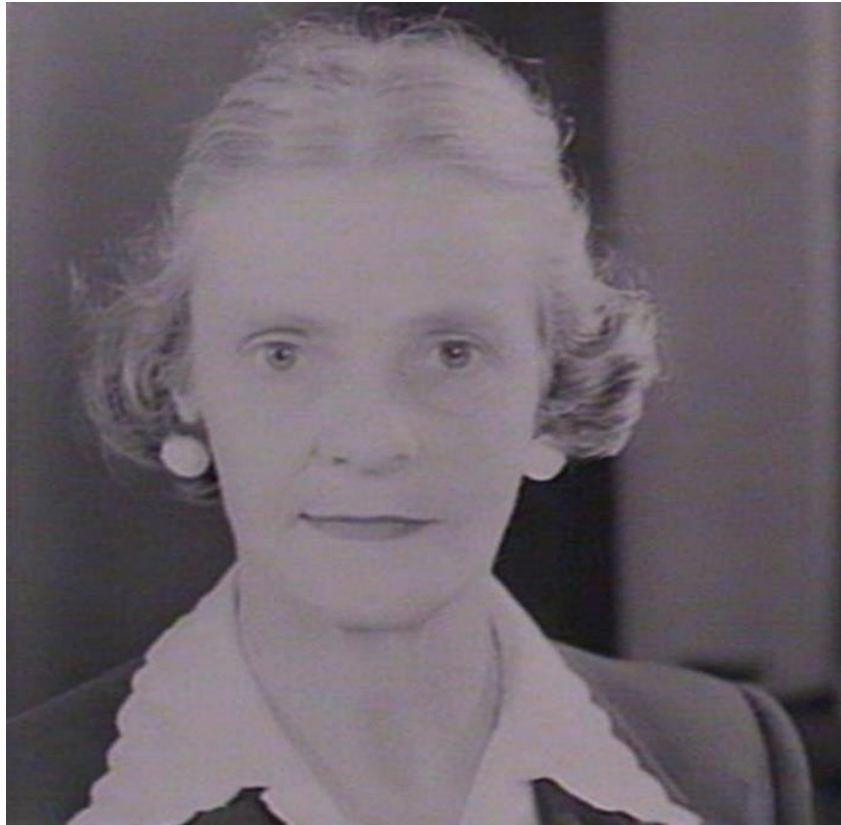


**Figure 56: Mrs Irene English<sup>21</sup>**

In Victoria Haskins book, *One Bright Spot*, a young indentured Aboriginal woman wrote a letter to sympathetic white supporters and told the story of how she was kept in servitude even after her term of ‘apprenticeship’ had expired. She wrote, ‘I won’t [sic] to go home where I came from ... and Mrs English doing her best to keep me under them but the first train I can get home I am going home and they are not going to stop me I tell you’.<sup>22</sup> We do not know the reason why Miss D’Arcy had absconded from her employment, but I cannot help but ask the question, what if her reason for running away was sexual abuse? Haskins stated:

There is no doubt that the Board knew of the high rates of pregnancies to girls in service and was aware of cases of alleged sexual abuse and rape. The Board’s own records (which we may consider an underestimation) show more than 10% of the young women in service gave birth and the rate was notably higher among those who worked in Sydney, where the figure came closer to one in five.<sup>23</sup>

Evelyn had deserted her family, Miss Darcy had absconded from her indenture and Miss Lyons was difficult to manage. These ladies were not happy, but I think that according to Mrs English

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Alma Smith and Alva Atkins Papers and Photographs relating to UAM Missionary Work’, Mitchell Library.

<sup>22</sup> Victoria Haskins, *One Bright Spot* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 187.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

these were defiant young Aboriginal women who were not where they *should* be or behaving as they *should* have according to the AWB.

I am certain that Mrs English filled out this form for rail pass reimbursement given the fact that Evelyn almost immediately abandoned Henry and the girls for a third time to return to Eddie Webb. I also think it was Mrs English who sent the telegram to Austen on Monday, 16 December, that said Evelyn ‘now applies pass return Casino to resume with husband, confirm whether husband agreeable and will pay cost pass’. And it was Mrs English who sent the telegram to Henry on 16 December informing him that Evelyn wanted him to send her the train fare to return to Casino. She was making sure that the fare would be paid so that she would not have to account for it. I believe that Mrs English was using coercion, threats and possibly force against my grandmother Evelyn. Perhaps the police *helped* her to put Evelyn on the train, as the police had *helped* Howard remove Aboriginal girls from their families.

In his dealings with my grandfather and other Aboriginal people, Mr Austen’s report about Henry and his diary entries show that he practised care for Aboriginal people that went above and beyond his duties and responsibilities. About my grandfather Henry Anderson, Austen explained:

I had to lend him a couple of pounds personally for him to get himself and his children back to Bonalbo where he has a home. I shall see him in a few weeks and arrange for the return of the cost of the pass. I am of opinion that Evelyn must be having an affair with someone in Sydney. Perhaps you could contact her and find out what her future intentions are.<sup>24</sup>

Also on the same day, 16 January 1947, Austen was sent a terse letter from Mr Liscomb, the AWB Superintendent, reminding him of his December report and that the rail pass was issued on the understanding that Henry would pay him (Austen) back £2/16/11.<sup>25</sup> The letter demands to know what Austen is going to do about it. The superintendent’s determination to recover the money is outlined in letters that follow, but a handwritten letter from Henry on 23 January 1947, addressed to ‘Whom it May Concern’ at the AWB, sheds light on more details about Evelyn’s latest desertion of her husband and children.

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<sup>24</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Mr Austen to A.W.B Head Office, 16 Jan. 1947, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 7.

<sup>25</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from A.W.B Superintendent Mr Liscomb to L. Austen, 16 Jan. 1947, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 8.

Henry stated that, three weeks prior, Evelyn had made the trip to Casino and he had taken the children ‘down to her to look after’ (he must have come from Brisbane where he was working at the time). He stated that he agreed to give her an allowance of three pounds a week and the use of the endowment for upkeep of the children, and had also given her four pounds for a week’s allowance. Henry said, ‘and with that she left the kids with friends and took off back to Sydney’. When he found out she was gone, he took the children back to Bonalbo where they were living with Uncle Sam and Aunt Nell and wrote, ‘so I would like the Welfare Board to recover that four pounds off her or take Police Action against her for recovery of same. Her address is 33 Beaumont Street Waterloo or 44 Walker Street Redfern’.<sup>26</sup> The AWB informed him on 3 February 1947 that they would not take such action, but would bring the matter to his wife’s attention. However, the debt still stood.<sup>27</sup>

The AWB response to this letter on 5 February 1947 was to request that the Bonalbo police constable fill out *yet another* character assessment form for direct payment.<sup>28</sup> This time, the constable on duty was Constable Flowers and, not surprisingly, he wrote a good character assessment on Henry Anderson, dated 13 February 1947:

Anderson is a good class half-caste aborigine – Although not living with his wife, the children are well cared for by his sister-in-law Mrs Sam Anderson, with whom the applicant resides. All monies are spent in the welfare of the children who are well clothed and nourished, and attend school regularly. Under the circumstances I recommend that endowment monies be paid direct to the applicant.<sup>29</sup>

What does ‘a good half-caste Aborigine’ imply? Or for that matter, what values are involved in being ‘a good Aborigine’, ‘a good breadwinner’, or ‘a good husband’? Ann McGrath asked these questions and explored the notion of ‘a good husband’ in her book, *Illicit Love*. In Queensland, white protectors saw themselves as ‘fathers of the bride’ to all Aboriginal women in their care, exercised authority over interracial marriage, and approved or disapproved choices. When they assessed a white man’s suitability to marry an Aboriginal woman, they

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<sup>26</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Henry Anderson to A.W.B, 23 Jan. 1947, File: C1058’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 9.

<sup>27</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from A.W.B to Henry Anderson, 10 Feb. 1947, File: C1085’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 11.

<sup>28</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from A.W.B to Bonalbo Police, Direct Payment Form, 5 Feb. 1947, N.R.S 905, A47/483 [12/7746.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 128.

<sup>29</sup> NSW Government, ‘Letter from Police Bonalbo, Direct Payment Form to A.W.B, 13 Feb. 1947, N.R.S 905, A47/483 [12/7746.1]’, Files Relating to Aboriginal Affairs, 1938–1949, Chief Secretary Letters Received (Sydney, NSW: AWB, 1947), 130.

applied 'eugenicist thinking and contemporary values around the constitution of a good husband'. McGrath stated that:

As captives to their own protectionist rhetoric, the protectors had to apply a fair test as to whether man applying for a marriage permit woman matched up to their criteria for a 'suitable' husband ... defining anticipated duties and behaviors of a good husband was especially challenging. Ideal husbandly attributes of the time included home ownership and settling down to a sedentary lifestyle, yet transient frontier zones had little substantial housing and highly mobile work patterns.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Aboriginal breadwinners lived in 'transient zones' with 'highly mobile work patterns' but little hope of 'substantial housing'. Reviewing what was written on all the character assessment forms about Henry and other family members, we can see that the NSW protectors valued sobriety, thrift, no association with gambling or other 'unsuitable' Aborigines, clean and tidy residences, well-clothed and well-cared for children, attendance of children at school, and generally good and moral behaviour according to white social idealism.

Evelyn deserting her husband and children to run away with her lover would have been anathema to the strict social ideals of the time. Henry's stubborn refusal to pay for the rail pass would have also been seen as anathema to the moral principles of the AWB and society at the time.

We see in Table 3 that, as promised, the AWB brought to Evelyn's attention the money that Henry wanted returned to him. We also see that, after much correspondence, Evelyn called on the AWB three years later and pointed out that the payment of the rail warrant was the responsibility of her husband, Mr Henry Anderson of 22 Great Buckingham Street, Redfern. She produced a telegram from Henry dated 16 December 1946 in which he asked her to proceed to the AWB to pick up a pass that *he* had arranged for her. It appears that she, as well as Henry, were refusing to pay the AWB for the rail pass. This table illuminates the AWB's determination to recoup the £2/16/11 my Grandfather owed them and his stubborn refusal to comply.

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<sup>30</sup> Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 271–72.

**Table 3: Correspondence between AWB and various persons (from 10 February 1947 to 10 April 1951) on the £2/16/11 my Grandfather owed the AWB**

| Date        | From/To                                                       | Correspondence           | Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 Feb 1947 | AWB's Formal Response to Henry's Letter                       | Letter                   | Formal letter written and sent to Henry C/- Acacia Ridge Post Office. With reference to your letter dated 23 <sup>rd</sup> January 1947. AWB not in a position to take action. Debt still stands.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 13 Feb 1947 | Signed form from Police Constable Bonalbo to AWB              | AWB Child Endowment Form | Anderson is a good class half-caste aborigine – Although not living with his wife, the children are well cared for by his sister-in-law Mrs Sam Anderson, with whom the applicant resides. All monies are spent in the welfare of the children who are well clothed and nourished, and attend school regularly. Under the circumstances I recommend that endowment monies be paid direct to the applicant.<br>Constable 1/C S. Flowers (?), Bonalbo. |
| 19 Feb 1947 | AWB TO Evelyn Anderson at 33 Beaumont Street Waterloo address | Letter                   | Your husband desires that the money be returned and he states that you departed to Sydney immediately receiving this amount. This matter is referred to at your husband's request.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2 Apr 1947  | From: AWB<br>To: Austen                                       | Letter                   | Please report whether you have been able to arrange with Henry Anderson the return of the cost of, the rail pass in instalments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 11 Jul 1947 | From: Austen<br>To: AWB                                       | Letter                   | Henry Anderson is now working at Warragamba Dam. Would you please communicate with him direct? His address is care of Post Office at Warragamba Dam.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 24 Jul 1947 | From: AWB<br>To: Henry                                        | Letter                   | C/o Warragamba Dam Post Office<br>Dear Sir,<br>I have to remind you that there is still an amount owing £2/16/11 due by you to the board for a pass issued to your wife in December 1946, and would be pleased if you would arrange to forward a remittance in reduction of this indebtedness as soon as possible. Acting Secretary                                                                                                                  |
| 15 Sep 1947 | From: AWB<br>To: Henry                                        | Letter                   | C/o Warragamba Dam Post Office<br>Dear Sir,<br>I have to remind you that you have not made payment of amount owing £2/16/11 due by you to the board for a pass issued to your wife in December 1946. Will you please give this matter your urgent attention. J.R. Mullins, Acting Secretary                                                                                                                                                          |
| 28 Apr 1948 | From: AWB<br>To: Austen                                       | Letter                   | Several letters have been written to Henry Anderson addressed to C/o Warragamba Dam                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |



|             |                                          |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             |                                          |                                     | Post Office, but to date Anderson has not communicated with this office.<br>Will you please therefore interview Evelyn Anderson<br>A.W. Liscomb Superintendent                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 24 Aug 1948 | From: AWB<br>To: Austen                  | Letter                              | Henry Anderson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 5 May 1950  | From: Evelyn Anderson<br>To: AWB         | Letter                              | Madam you are advised unless immediate attention is given to the liquidation of your debt of £2/16/11 incurred in respect of a rail pass issued to you in 1946, the Board will have no alternative but to consider taking action to recover the amount due.<br>J.R. Mullins Secretary.                                                                                                                   |
| 9 May 1950  | Note from staff to Mr Mullins            | Added to the bottom of above letter | Mrs Anderson called at the Department today and pointed out that the payment of the rail warrant was the responsibility of her husband Mr Henry Anderson, of <u>22 Great Buckingham Street, Redfern</u> . She produces a telegram from her husband dated 16 <sup>th</sup> December 1946 in which he asked her to proceed to the Aborigines Welfare Board to pick up a pass that he had arranged for her. |
| 8 Jun 1950  | From: J.R. Mullins<br>To: Henry Anderson | Letter                              | The gist is 'We wrote to your wife, she produced telegram, the warrant was issued only by your undertaking you would pay it back'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 16 Oct 1950 | From: J.R. Mullins<br>To: Henry Anderson | Letter                              | Gist – 'Board regards this your responsibility'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10 Apr 1951 | AWB Internal Letter                      | Letter                              | The rail warrant issued in this case was conditional and as it would not appear that there is much chance of recovering the debt it is recommended that the amount be written off.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Aunty Ruby's book stated that they left Bonalbo and moved to Sydney in 1949 when she was 15 years old.<sup>31</sup> My mother stayed with Uncle Sam and Aunt Nell as she was still in school. I am unsure when my grandfather Henry met his second wife Joyce (AKA 'Mum Joyce'), but they had two sons. Uncle Dennis was the oldest and Uncle Kevin was born in 1951 (see Figure 57). The AWB finally gave up on chasing Henry for the rail pass money that he stubbornly refused to pay. Their mind-numbing persistence to gain remittance ended in 1951 after *four-and-a-half years* of writing letters of demand. It is important to note here that the AWB

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<sup>31</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 42.

administration staff were exceedingly efficient when it came to chasing money from Aborigines, but incredibly incompetent when distributing it.

Henry, his new family, and Ruby and Gwen lived in a one-bedroom flat at Great Buckingham Street, Redfern. Ruby and Gwenny ‘shared a three quarter bed on the balcony and at the other end was a kitchenette’. (Redfern’s terrace houses and their enclosed balconies can be seen behind my mother Rita in Figure 60 in Chapter 5.) The main room had a foldout table, big bed and double bunks for the boys, and a wardrobe. Mum Joyce looked after Henry, and after he left his job at Warragamba Dam he finally had a home and a family again.<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 57: Uncle Kevin and Uncle Dennis Anderson, grandfather Henry Anderson and Mum Joyce’s sons (one black and one white)<sup>33</sup>**

His next job was at Henderson Federal Springs, and here he experienced something that most white people took for granted. For the first time in his life, at the age of 38 years old, he experienced the certainty of continuing full-time work and worked at the same place for 10 whole years.<sup>34</sup> Aunty Ruby got pregnant with her first child and she and the baby’s father, Sam Griffen, left the city to go and live in the country with Sam’s mother in Coonabarabran until the baby was born. Aunty Ruby said that (by becoming an unwed mother) she did not want to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>33</sup> Author’s Collection.

<sup>34</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*, 46.

bring shame on her father, but he was more upset that she was leaving and did not want her to go.<sup>35</sup>

Aunty Ruby gave birth to her first son, William Henry, my cousin 'Billy', in October 1951.<sup>36</sup> With baby Billy in her arms, Aunty Ruby ran into her cousin Aunty Midge (Shirley Hinett) in Casino who told her that my grandfather Henry and Mum Joyce were in town for her wedding to Uncle Doug. Aunty Ruby did not tell her father that she was pregnant again with my cousin Pearl (who was born in Casino in December 1952), but she did tell him that she was going to live with Aunty Midge and Uncle Doug while Sam got work at the sawmill in Woodenbong.<sup>37</sup> Later, after Billy fell very sick, Sam and Aunty Ruby left the country to go back to Sydney, but when they were living in a Housing Commission flat things did not work out, and Aunty Ruby and the kids moved back to Great Buckingham Street in 1954.<sup>38</sup> That year, Aunt Nell was very unwell in Toowoomba hospital and not expected to live, so grandfather Henry gave Aunty Ruby the bus fare to go and visit Aunt Nell and Uncle Sam. It was the first time Aunty Ruby had seen her sister Rita in the five years since she had left home. My mother Rita was still in high school. When Aunt Nell passed away, my grandfather Henry took my mother Rita to live with him, Mum Joyce and the boys at Great Buckingham Street, Redfern, Sydney. This was the beginning of her single life in the big city. The move from the country to the big city dramatically changed my grandfather Henry's and his family's lives for the better. As mentioned earlier, he experienced job certainty for the first time in his life, and with that came a better standard of living and prosperity. Better yet, he was free from Australian Government control.

## 4.1 Conclusion

This chapter has illuminated a remarkable contrast between the lives of two Aboriginal brothers, Henry Anderson and Sam Anderson Jnr. Unlike Henry's experience of having to live a life unwillingly shackled to the AWB and Aborigines reserve (and therefore dealing with the incredible harassment of the APB/AWB) and the stress and uncertainty in rural, working life while trying to feed his motherless children, Sam Anderson Jnr lived a very different, very happy, comfortable life away from any of the APB/AWB reserves, marrying into the Hinett

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 68.

family and living his life ‘more or less like a white man’.<sup>39</sup> There can be no doubt that the greatest difference between Sam Anderson Jnr’s happy and secure life and Henry Anderson’s unhappy and stressful life is the drastically different amount of white-Australian interference in their lives.

The white-Australian townspeople at Bonalbo were not racist. The Hinett family and Uncle Sam Anderson were completely accepted by the townspeople. They were not pushed out of town because they were blackfellas, their children were not segregated from the public school and the white-Australian timber mill workers did not stop Uncle Sam from working alongside them. These factors allowed his integration into Bonalbo society.

The second reason Sam lived as happily as he did was because the APB/AWB did not have control over his life. Sam severed the APB’s links to him by living a self-sufficient, assimilated lifestyle. He lived far away from any Aborigines reserve, had a well-paying *permanent* job that provided security for his family in a town that accepted him and respected him, and he was without the need of reserve rations, family endowment or an exemption certificate. All things considered, the APB/AWB were akin to parasites. They were an organism that lived off another organism, in this case another *race*, and Aboriginal people were the hosts. The APB/AWB lived on the nutriment of controlling Aborigines. Uncle Sam starved the parasitic life force of its nutriment. He negated the APB/AWB’s need to control his life. Uncle Sam was truly free.

In stark contrast, Henry was dependent on the AWB for child endowment to support his three girls as a sole parent. Therefore, he was under constant surveillance. By providing samples of the correspondence he received and placing them in easily readable tables, we can clearly see that Henry was hounded by authorities. The Australian Government’s racialised structures differentiated the way white-Australian endowment recipients and Aboriginal recipients were treated. These structures, rather than providing Aboriginal people with the same kind of support that white-Australian citizens enjoyed, created a drip-feeding of funds for Aboriginal people that perpetuated Australian Government control and made it more difficult for Aboriginal people to be autonomous. It is unknown whether other Aborigines who, like Uncle Sam, lived lives free from government control, were as happy as he was. There is certainly anecdotal evidence, but more research would be required to form a conclusive position.

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<sup>39</sup> This is a quotation from the character assessment of Sam Anderson Jnr where the Bonalbo Constable Burgess wrote, ‘Sam Anderson is employed by the Bonalbo Timber Company and is a good worker. He lives more or less like a white man and is well-respected’.

## Chapter 5: Youth and Modernity in the City, 1955–1972

The inner-city suburbs of Sydney attracted many Aboriginal people who found jobs in the labour-intensive manufacturing industries, and it was a place of new beginnings for many country Aboriginal people. Sydney supplied work and anonymity for Aboriginal people and there was a tolerance for Aboriginal people that could not be found in rural country towns. Increasing numbers of Aboriginal people were arriving in Sydney not just from rural NSW, but also from elsewhere in Australia.<sup>1</sup> Census figures showed that, contrary to popular rhetoric about Australia ‘riding on the sheep’s back’, more Australians were working in city industries than farms or mines.<sup>2</sup> This chapter illuminates the lives of my parents’ generation as well as highlighting the ways in which Aboriginal organisation assisted Aboriginal people with the transition from country life to life in a big city. While the early Aboriginal organisation known as the AAPA played an important role in the political ‘fight for liberty and freedom’, I argue that the Charles Perkins Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA) played an equally important role in the ‘social upliftment’ of downtrodden Aboriginal people.<sup>3</sup>

Out of necessity, a number of organisations sprang up in Redfern to serve the cultural and recreational needs of Aboriginal people. One of the earliest Aboriginal organisations was the Redfern All Blacks football club in 1951. The FAA preceded later organisations such as the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, Black Theatre, Redfern Land Council and Radio Redfern.<sup>4</sup> Marcia Langton said that these organisations were generated by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people, to support each other dealing with ‘extreme poverty, hunger, alcohol and drug problems, trying to get people into hospitals, and all kinds of violence,

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<sup>1</sup> Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales* (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.

<sup>2</sup> NSW Government, ‘Report on City of Sydney Industrial & Warehouse Buildings Heritage Study’ (Sydney, NSW: City Plan Heritage, 2014), 27–28.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Fight for Liberty and Freedom’ is a reference to John Maynard’s book of the same name about his grandfather Fred Maynard and the APAA. See John Maynard, *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Activism* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007). What I call ‘social upliftment’ is defined in the conclusion of this chapter.

<sup>4</sup> AIATSIS, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia, Volume 2 (M–Z)*, ed. David Horton, 932–33 (Canberra, ACT: AIATSIS); AIATSIS, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia, Volume 1 (A–L)*, ed. David Horton (Canberra, ACT: AIATSIS, 1994).

and it was a tough life for Aboriginal people especially those who didn't have a job, and didn't have any education'.<sup>5</sup>

Thankfully, my grandfather Henry Anderson got a steady job and, by 1955, he had been living in Redfern at Great Buckingham Street for approximately five years with Mum Joyce, their two sons Uncle Dennis and Uncle Kevin, and his daughter Aunty Gwen. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, when Aunty Nell Anderson died in Toowoomba in 1954, Henry went there to collect my mother Rita and take her back to Sydney 'so she could get work'.<sup>6</sup> At the age of 15, she worked as a seamstress at various clothing factories (like the Effco Stubbies Factory), using the big, high-powered industrial sewing machines.<sup>7</sup> Ruby was a young mother living in country NSW by then, but in her book she described their early years in Redfern and the Aboriginal community life in general as being very social.

The family used to go and watch the All Blacks football games, and on Friday and Saturday nights, 'everyone met at the picture theatre in Lawson Street'. She added that some Sundays in summer, the Aboriginal population of Redfern hired buses to go to the national park to picnic and swim, and the All Blacks held dances and Presentation Balls in Redfern and Waterloo Town Hall.<sup>8</sup> The photographs in Figure 58 are of the night Aunty Gwen was 'The Belle of the Ball' at one of the Aboriginal socials, and they are of great interest to me for what they reveal. Aunty Gwen is on the far right of the group photograph, and seated at the same table, second from the left, is her mother, my grandmother Evelyn. These photographs are important because they show that my mother Rita and her sister Aunty Gwen were at the same function as their mother, Evelyn, and this surprised me.

All my life, I have known that both Mum and Aunty Gwen never forgave their mother for deserting them when they were young, so I naturally expected that they would never have socialised with their mother when they were young adults, because they certainly did not do so in my lifetime. Aunty Ruby reconciled with her mother after they moved to Redfern and later called Evelyn 'Mum'. It took a much longer time for my grandfather Henry's anger to dissolve,

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<sup>5</sup> Marcia Langton, in Darlene Johnson and Sue Milliken, *The Redfern Story*, directed by Darlene Johnson (2014; Australia: Samson Productions Pty Ltd, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> QLD Government, 'Death Certificate of Nellie Anderson, 15 June 1954, No. 2521/1954' (Brisbane, QLD: QLD Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, 1954). See also Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), 71.

<sup>7</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 71. My mother told me she had worked there, but I am not sure if it was her first ever job as a machinist.

<sup>8</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 48–49.

but eventually he and Evelyn ‘treated each other as friends and visited and ate meals together’.<sup>9</sup> Aunty Gwen and Mum, however, always referred to their mother as ‘Old Evelyn’ (or much worse), and Mum in particular was very open and vocal about hating her. Contrary to my understanding that my mother never spoke to Evelyn, these photographs suggest otherwise.



**Figure 58: My grandmother Evelyn Webb (formerly Evelyn Anderson), seated second from the left in the group shot, and my mother Rita with her sister Gwen<sup>10</sup>**

In Figure 58, in the photograph on the left, seated second from the left is my grandmother, Evelyn Webb, formerly Evelyn Anderson. Although my mother Rita is not photographed with her mother, the photograph on the right shows that both Mum and Aunty Gwen were at the same function, an All Blacks ball that my grandmother Evelyn attended. In her article, ‘Transmuting Australian Aboriginal Photographs’, Jane Lydon argues that photographs are ‘tangible and powerful relics that provide a link with the past, and bring it concretely into our time. This is the power of photographs to address absence, to reconnect relatives with each other and to Country, and to heal’.<sup>11</sup> Where my family connection to the Mary Ann Cowan photograph (Figure 17, discussed in Chapter 1) merely helped me to put a face to an archival name, the discovery of the photographs in Figure 58, as well as that in Figure 59, held much more emotional intensity. They held an unexpected poignancy because they captured the *possibility* of a better relationship developing between my grandmother and her daughters, even though that did not eventuate later. It is a small piece in the puzzling portrait that I am trying to construct of my ‘unknown’ grandmother.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>10</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Lydon, ‘Transmuting Australian Aboriginal Photographs’, *World Art* 6, no. 1 (2016): 57.

<sup>12</sup> I say ‘unknown’ because I have never met her.



**Figure 59: Photograph of Gwen (centre) and her mother Evelyn (right), taken at the Waterloo Town Hall, circa 1954/1955<sup>13</sup>**

Note: Evelyn is holding her daughter Gwen's arm.

Photographs birth conversations. This is something that I would never have known about had Aunty Ruby not given me copies of these photographs later in my life. Aunty Ruby's forgiveness of her mother meant that my cousins knew our grandmother Evelyn as 'Nan', but my sisters and I never knew her at all. I envied my cousins' experience of such beautiful forgiveness that enabled them to know and love Evelyn as a *real* grandmother. I am saddened that my mother Rita was so hurt by Evelyn's choice to abandon them that she carried the hatred of her mother all of her life. The poignancy in these photographs lies in me now knowing that that was not always the case.

I only ever saw my grandmother Evelyn once in my entire life. Dad was driving us through Redfern, Sydney, and Mum was in the passenger seat on the left. My three sisters and I were

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<sup>13</sup> My Family Collection.



sitting on the red vinyl backseat of our old Holden Belmont. I was about seven or eight. Suddenly, and violently, Dad swerved a hard right over to the wrong side of the road and pulled up tight against the gutter, facing in the opposite direction of traffic. He told us to wind the window down. My mother gasped out loud when she realised what he was doing and immediately turned her head to the left looking away from Dad's side of the car. She was furious and did not say a word. Dad called out, 'Evelyn! Evelyn!', and an older Aboriginal woman came rushing over to the car. Dad said, 'These are your granddaughters', and with that she started crying, reached into the car window and tried to touch each of our faces and squeeze our hands, all the while saying over and over, 'Oh babies! Oh my babies! Oh babies!' My mother refused to turn her head to even look at her. She just stared out the window in a white-hot rage with every muscle in her body as hard as steel. As a child, I was bewildered, but today, as an adult, I am blinking back tears.

As I describe family stories and have an emotional response to them, I question whether these personal and emotional stories have a place in a PhD history thesis. In answer to any questions that might arise, I would once again argue that this *is* the very nature of family history research. Old photographs can trigger emotions in *any* family's history. In my research, I have found that photographs can sometimes be the 'only' tangible link with the past that Aboriginal family members have, so the telling of personal and emotional stories connected with images of ancestors by descendants are in a sense our *primary sources* that perpetuate oral histories. Therefore, our photograph collections *are* our archives. An important point to make here is that my family elders did not collect historical information from books, archives, ephemera, documents and files in the way I have, but photographs were always treasured, coveted and jealously guarded.

Photographs taken at Redfern before my mother Rita Anderson met my father George Bostock capture glimpses of the inner-city terraces of Redfern housing at that time (see Figure 60). Aboriginal activist Gary Foley said:

one thing everybody there had in common was that we were all poor. Redfern was regarded by the rest of Sydney I suppose as the slums, and despite there being some fairly dodgy landlords, it was a place where Aboriginal people could actually get somewhere to stay.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 3:52–4:18, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

My Uncle Lester Bostock said, ‘There was cheap housing in Redfern and it was close to the railway station, and just a short walk in to the main part of the city’.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Henry and Mum Joyce lived in a one-bedroom flat at Great Buckingham Street. Aunty Gwen and Mum shared a space on the balcony that would have been like the closed-in balconies seen on the terraced houses in Figure 60.



**Figure 60: My mother Rita Anderson at Great Buckingham Street, Redfern, Sydney, circa 1957–1960<sup>16</sup>**

My grandparents Henry and Evelyn were bound to run into each other in Redfern, as Henry worked at the Henderson’s Federal Spring Factory at O’Riordan Street (see Figure 61) and would have had to walk right past Beaumont Street where Evelyn lived with her second husband, Eddie Webb. As previously mentioned, grandfather Henry worked for Henderson’s for 10 years. His job was near a furnace rolling eyes in springs, and cars drove in to have their springs changed (see Figure 62).<sup>17</sup> In 1954, Henry had a heart attack and ‘was in St Vincent’s hospital on his back for two months while the doctors dissolved a clot in his heart valve’. He was very conscious that his boys were still very young and he had to provide for them. He

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<sup>15</sup> Lester Bostock, 4:18–4:25, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>16</sup> Author’s Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*, 46.

could not afford to be out of work, so Henderson's sent home a small machine with the metal for making small springs and sometimes at night Henry would sit up and roll springs.<sup>18</sup> Noted here is that it was a conspicuously kind gesture from a white-Australian employer for an Aboriginal worker. Noted also is my grandfather's continuing ill health. Family history research has enabled me to see that he was ill and in and out of hospital throughout his life.

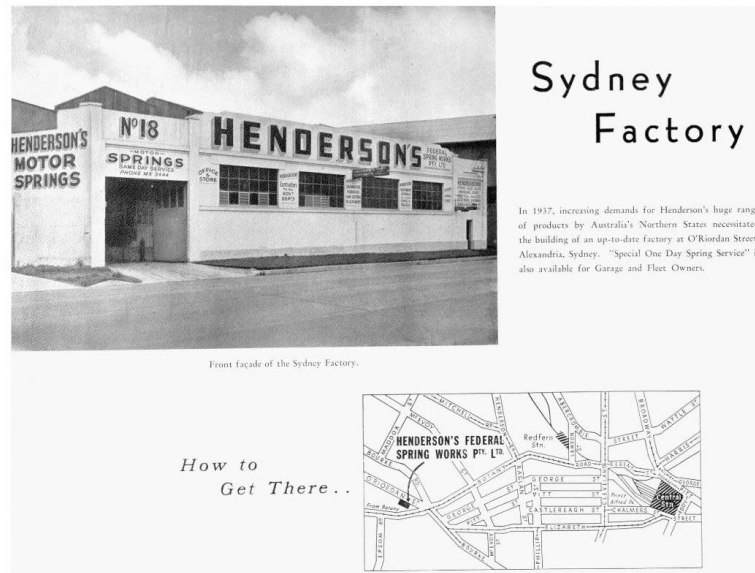


**Figure 61: The Henderson's Federal Springs Factory in Alexandria, near Redfern, Sydney, where my grandfather Henry worked<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 71–72.

<sup>19</sup> Henderson Federal Spring Works Pty Ltd, 'A Pictorial Tour of Henderson's Spring Works Pty Ltd', Manuscript No. LTP 338.7621824 P 58 H (Melbourne, VIC: Journals and Magazines Room, State Library of Victoria, 1945), 1–45.

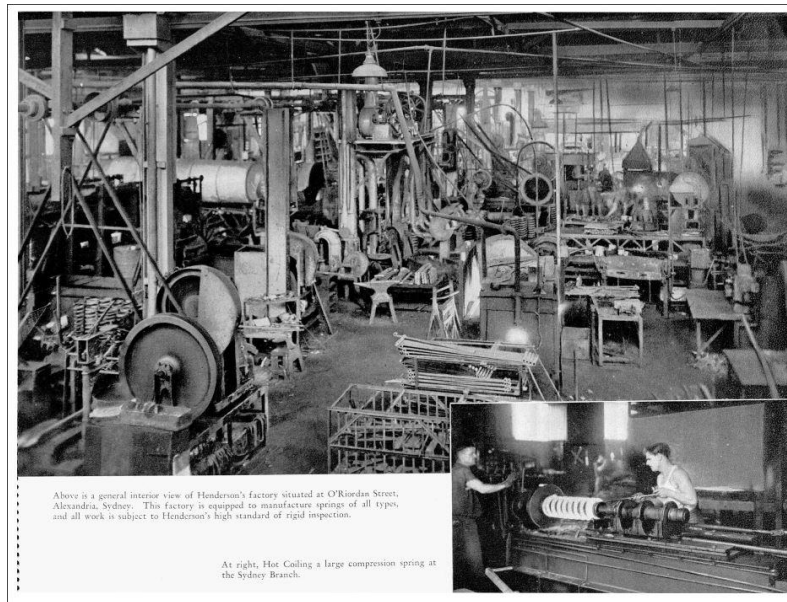


**Figure 62: The furnace at the Henderson's Federal Springs Factory where my grandfather Henry worked<sup>20</sup>**

Note: Like the worker pictured above, Henry often worked shirtless because of the heat.

In 1956, Aunty Gwen married a shearer called Ronald Griffen and they moved back to country NSW. Aunty Ruby was also in country NSW when she read a newspaper article in the *Northern Star* stating that their grandfather, my great-grandfather, Sam Anderson Snr was found dead in a drovers shack.<sup>21</sup>

In February 1960, a year after Sam Anderson Snr died, his son Henry Anderson also passed away. No record of my grandfather Henry's birth was ever found, but in Aunty Ruby's book she stated that he died at the age of 44. This was based on the information supplied by my mother Rita, who was the official 'informant' on his death certificate. Recalling Chapter 2, when I wrote about the four grandparents' family beginnings, I cited that Henry began school at Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve in 1916 when he was five years old. That makes his year of birth 1911.

Upon finding these archives, I did the maths and concluded that if Henry died in 1960 at the age of 44, then that would make his birth year 1916, the same year that he is listed as a *five*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 9; Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> I cannot find the newspaper article on Trove, but it is cited as 'Northern Star of May 25<sup>th</sup> 1959' by Maurice Ryan, *Dusky Legend: Biography of Sam Anderson, Aboriginal Cricketer* (Lismore, NSW: Northern Rivers Press, 2001), 75.

year old at Box Ridge Aborigines Only School. I asked my mother why his age at death was recorded as 44 when he was actually 49, and she said:

Oh I didn't know how old he really was. I was only nineteen when he died. He always lied about his age and told me he was forty-four every time I asked him! There was never any birth certificate, so when they asked me I just told them he was forty-four.

Aunty Ruby took Henry Anderson's and Sam Anderson Snr's death certificates at face value, but I have learned that it is only when you cross-check sources (particularly BDMs) with other sources that you can get closer to the truth.

When grandfather Henry died, my mother Rita was 20 years old and living with Henry, Mum Joyce, Uncle Dennis and Uncle Kevin in a two-bedroom terrace in Phillip Street, Alexandria. Aunty Ruby, Peter Langford and her seven children moved to Sydney and crowded into Phillip Street for a while before going back to the country. Mum Joyce and the boys moved to Wilson Street, and my mother Rita moved in with her then boyfriend, my father George Bostock.<sup>22</sup>

My parents (Rita Anderson and George Bostock) never really seemed certain about when they got together. We know from earlier in this thesis that Mum's father Henry Anderson grew up on Box Ridge Mission alongside Dad's mother Edith Cowan, and that my grandparents Henry and Evelyn Anderson were married at Box Ridge Mission a year after my other grandparents Norman and Edith Bostock. Dad grew up calling Henry Anderson 'Uncle Henry' and Mum grew up calling Edith Bostock (nee Cowan) 'Aunty Edie', so the families were on close terms. Around the time the Anderson's left country for Sydney, the Bostock family had also left country and moved to Brisbane. I have a vague memory of Mum once saying that she and Uncle Sam Anderson visited Uncle Norman and Aunty Edi Bostock in Brisbane after Aunt Nell died.

The Bostock family lived in a suburb of Brisbane called Moorooka, in a shanty town where the poor Indigenous and non-Indigenous people lived, before they moved to a Housing Commission house at Acacia Ridge. Dad was, by his own definition, 'a young knockabout', meaning he knocked about with (in modern-day terms, hung out with) his friends in the city. He and his siblings went to the Rock 'n' Roll dances at the Boathouse which were fund raisers for the All Blacks Aboriginal football team (see Figure 63). Similar to the social functions organised in Redfern, the Boathouse dances were organised by Aboriginal people for the

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<sup>22</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 100–04.

benefit of Aboriginal people. ‘The dances were also a focal point of significant social change in the lives of many Aboriginal people driven by Aboriginal people experiencing new agency’.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 63: A rare photograph of a more than ambulatory Lester Bostock (before he became a leg amputee) Rock ‘n’ Roll dancing at the old Boathouse, Brisbane, circa 1950s<sup>24</sup>**

The O’Connor Boathouse was a two-storey ‘Queenslander’-style building situated on the northern bank of the Brisbane River. The lower level stored boats for the local rowing club and the upper level was a large hall surrounded by a wide veranda that overlooked the river.<sup>25</sup> Every Saturday night from 1957–1962, Uncle Charlie King and the Boathouse committee would

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<sup>23</sup> T. Whyte, C. Matthews, M. Balfour, L. Murphy and L. Hassall, ‘Getting to Know the Story of the Boathouse Dances: Football, Freedom & Rock n’ Roll’, in *Creative Communities: Regional Inclusion & the Arts*, eds. Janet McDonald and Robert Mason (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2015), 81.

<sup>24</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>25</sup> Whyte, Matthews, Balfour, Murphy and Hassall, ‘Getting to Know the Story of the Boathouse Dances’, 84.

organise dances for local and regional Aboriginal people. These dances raised funds for the first Aboriginal football team in Brisbane and an Aboriginal women's vigoro team.<sup>26</sup>

Queensland was a conservatively governed state and, believe it or not, curfews were imposed on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal movement restricted. In the lead up to the 1967 referendum, enforcement of draconian laws started to relax, but 'Native Affairs still held sway in many Aboriginal lives and had the power to implement drastic and terrible change upon Aboriginal people':

The Brisbane River and roads, that were aptly named Boundary Street, marked out the boundary for the imposed curfew on Aboriginal people. During the curfew, Aboriginal people were not allowed on the North side of the river unless specific permission was given. Hence by the 1950s the North side of the river was generally considered amongst Aboriginal people as the domain of white society.<sup>27</sup>

Faye Gundy recalled being stopped by a man on a red scooter, one of the suspected 'Native Affairs spies', from crossing the Victoria Street bridge. She told the person, 'Get out of my road or I'll knock you off!'<sup>28</sup> Auntie Faye Gundy remembered having to report to the Native Affairs Department weekly and found out that the man had informed on her:

We used to have to report to the Native Affairs Department every Thursday. On our day off we had to go there and report to them. ... I remember there was this one time ... and they said 'You were seen walking across that bridge.' Big Brother was watching you. You know because the boundary they used to have at Boundary Street, we weren't allowed to cross that.

Uncle Charlie had to use 'deft intelligence and political manoeuvring' to obtain Aboriginal access to the Boathouse. To organise an All Blacks Football Club and gain official approval to do so, Uncle Charlie King had to meet with Ron MacAuliffe, the Secretary of both the Queensland Rugby League and Brisbane Rugby League. MacAuliffe was discouraging, advising Uncle Charlie to form a team under the name of 'Souths' or 'West's', but Uncle Charlie King was adamant that he wanted a team named the 'Brisbane All Blacks':

Don't be ashamed. Because ... of the Native Affairs, we were classified as natives. It came under natives; I said no. We're not ashamed to call ourselves Blacks we'll stay with the name, Brisbane All Blacks. Brisbane All Blacks, ay. We're not ashamed if they call us 'abo', because 'abo' is Aboriginal. We are the originals! Let them call us

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 86.

that, we will love it! We love it because when I say ‘abo’ I say, you, we are the originals. We are the original one ... First here, where’d you come from, ay? Boat people, you the original boat people, you’re still coming out in boats. Huh, yeah! They come from other countries.<sup>29</sup>

Uncle Charlie King also had to meet with other officials. The Commissioner of Native Affairs Frank O’Leary summoned Uncle Charlie King to the Brisbane Offices to investigate what he was trying to do. The authorities both at Native Affairs and the Police Department did not like the idea of a large gathering of Aborigines and imposed the presence of two policemen and ordered the dance committee to pay their wages.<sup>30</sup>

The Boathouse dances were built around the notion of respect. The evenings were multi-generational with elders and children watching the dancing. The music was a combination with a three-piece band playing old time music for the elders and a record player hooked up to a sound system for Rock ‘n’ Roll. The tempo would start off slow and increase during the night, building up the excitement of the dance, and then slow down to prepare for the close of the dance so everyone could make the last tram or bus home. Strict social codes were in place, including no broken glass or drinking, and (a courteous rule that my father remembers) no woman was to be left seated during a dance. It was an ideal opportunity to meet other Aboriginal people and ‘check-out the opposite sex’.<sup>31</sup> Dad said that the young people were absolutely expected to follow the rule and so the football players got old Aunties and little kids up to dance.

The Boathouse dances were respectable, wholesome, community events with well-behaved young people getting together, ‘establishing new relationships and falling in love’. But at other places around town, young adults like George Bostock used to get into all kinds of mischief with ‘the lads’, including ‘punch-ups’ with other suburban Brisbane groups. Dad was unusual in that he socialised with two communities. He had his Aboriginal mates on the Southside, but he also knocked about with his white mates known as ‘The Albion Boys’ (see Figure 64). Some of his mates began knocking about with petty criminals and he realised that he would probably end up in jail if he did not change his ways.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 86.





**Figure 64: George Bostock in the back row, second from right (left), and George with cigarette in hand (right)<sup>32</sup>**

My father George Bostock went to Sydney and he and my mother Rita Anderson began dating, then living together after her father Henry died in 1960. Mum became pregnant in March 1961, and Dad joined the army in May of that year, leaving her in Sydney while he underwent his basic training at Kapooka. When he arrived at basic training, he was very surprised to see that his brother Gerry was also doing basic training there (see Figure 65).

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<sup>32</sup> My Family Collection.



**Figure 65: Gerry and George Bostock in Army uniform in Sydney, circa 1961<sup>33</sup>**

The brothers were both posted to the 1st Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), which was based in Sydney. Rita Anderson and George Bostock were married at Ingleburn Army Camp and their first child, a daughter, was born in December 1961, followed by another daughter in 1963, and then twin girls in 1964. I was one of the twins. When we were babies, both George and Gerry volunteered to join the 4th Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR), which was based in Woodside, not far from Adelaide. They made the move because the word was out that 4RAR would be the next battalion to be posted overseas. My father knew that (in those days) soldiers could not get War Service Home Loans unless they had completed war service on an overseas posting.

The 4RAR tour during the Indonesian Confrontation was its first one overseas. The unit arrived at Terendak, Malaya, in September 1965 where they carried out familiarisation exercises before being deployed to Borneo in 1966. Per the Australian War Memorial, 'Indonesian activity was small-scale and aimed to confront or challenge, rather than provoke open warfare. As a result, periodic heavy mortaring of security bases was more customary than direct enemy contact'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> My Family Collection.

<sup>34</sup> Australian War Memorial, '4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, Claret Operations', accessed 13 August 2018, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U60457>.

The signing of a peace treaty on 11 August 1966 between Malaysia and Indonesia officially ended the conflict. British Commonwealth units were ordered to cease operations in Borneo the following day. 4RAR left Borneo for Terendak on 30 August. On 2 September, the battalion handed over to the 3rd Malaysian Menjers. It carried out training in Malaysia and members began returning to Australia from August 1967. The battalion officially handed over to 8RAR on 16 October 1967.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, whole 4RAR families (mine included) were posted and resided at Terendak Garrison while the soldiers were working.

Upon returning to Australia, my father posted to Brisbane and his family accompanied him there. Later he and his brothers served in the Vietnam War. Interestingly, his decision to leave his extended family and city life to join the army, for the betterment of the lives of his children, echoed the decision that his parents' generation made to leave country and move to the city.

Norman and Edith Bostock had three of their four sons in the Australian Defence Force and at one time all three sons were on active service overseas. My father George decided that he and his brothers should have a portrait photograph done of them all in uniform and gift it to their mother before they departed, just in case one of them did not come back (see Figure 66).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 66: A portrait photograph of the three Bostock Brothers (from left to right: Gerry, George and Lindsay) in Army uniform<sup>36</sup>**

Note: All three brothers wear the Australian Active Service Medal (1945–1975) (ribbon form) for their active service in the Indonesian Confrontation. Gerry and George both wear the red lanyard and hat badge of the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. Lindsay wears the white lanyard and hat badge of the Royal Australian Artillery. At the time of the photo, both George and Lindsay were Lance Corporals (indicated by their sleeve chevron), while Gerry was a Private.

My father's tour of Vietnam must have been a very difficult time for my grandmother Edith. Fortunately, my father returned unharmed (see Figure 67) (as did both his brothers). In the background of the photograph, you can see the dull grey side of HMAS Sydney, but shining in the sunlight is his mother's radiant smile.

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<sup>36</sup> My Family Collection.



**Figure 67: George Bostock's return from active service in Vietnam<sup>37</sup>**

Note: Here George is welcomed home by his mother, Edith Bostock. In the background is HMAS Sydney.

In the early 1960s, the Bostock family, minus the married army sons George and Lindsay, moved to live in inner-city Sydney, to a suburb called Glebe. Aunty Phemie (pronounced 'Fee-mee', and short for Euphemia) Bostock said she moved from Brisbane to Sydney in 1962 because:

In Brisbane in the 1960s the credit squeeze was on and it was hard to find work. I was living on a deserted wife's pension, which was nothing. I read in the paper that there was a lot of work in Sydney so I came down, landed here in the morning and walked into a handbag factory by 11 o'clock.<sup>38</sup>

When Uncle Lester Bostock moved to Sydney in 1962, he attended Tranby College. Tranby College was founded 1952 when the Australian Board of Missions appointed Reverend Ralph Clint as the Director of Co-operatives in Australia and Papua New Guinea. Clint had already established many co-operatives and so the Christ Church of St Laurence gave him a building in Glebe called 'Tranby'. The 'Co-operative for Aborigines Ltd.' was formed in 1962 as an

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Euphemia Bostock, 'Euphemia Bostock: Artist', in *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers & Performers*, ed. Liz Thompson (Marleston, SA: J.B. Books, 1999), 123–27. My Aunty's family nickname is Phemie (pronounced 'Phee-mee'), and she only uses her full name, Euphemia, professionally as an artist.

independent, non-profit benevolent society. Formerly known for decades as ‘Tranby Aboriginal College’, and now known as ‘Tranby National Indigenous Adult Education and Training’, the college’s fundamental principles of communal ownership and self-management and the philosophy of shared working and learning environments remain with the organisation today.<sup>39</sup>

Political organisations such as the Aboriginal Australian Fellowship and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) were the only organisations there for Aboriginal people at the time, and it was there that Uncle Lester gained his grounding in his socialist outlook on life. He learned that the group was more important than the individual, and here there was a surge in political activism by people who wanted to make a difference for Aboriginal people after the 1967 referendum.<sup>40</sup>

Not far from there in George Street near Central Station was the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA). The FAA was a self-help organisation from 1963–1975 set up to assist rural Aboriginal people migrating to the city. Prominent members included Charlie Perkins, Reverend Ted Noffs, Ken Brindle, Myrtle Cox and Bill Geddes, but Aboriginal people often called it the Charlie Perkins Foundation. This group gained significant support from a number of influential people including the NSW Premier, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, judges, politicians, academics, and the Catholic and Anglican Archbishops. They were able to purchase their George Street premises from the money raised through an appeal. By the mid-1970s, the FAA was run entirely by Aboriginal people, with an 18-person executive and 15 staff members. They offered a wide range of services for Aboriginal people including short-term accommodation, food orders, fares, bond money for housing, help with electricity and gas bills, scholarships, counselling, employment and legal aid.<sup>41</sup>

The FAA played a recognised role in Sydney’s Aboriginal community during the 1960s and early 1970s, and unlike government counterparts such as the AWB which sought to control and define Aboriginal people and engage in petty arguments over degrees of Aboriginal ancestry, the FAA made the decision ‘to regard as Aborigine any person who identifies as, or is identified

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<sup>39</sup> Tranby College, ‘Tranby: National Indigenous Adult Education & Training’, ed. Co-operative for Aborigines Ltd, <http://tranby.edu.au/about-us/history/>.

<sup>40</sup> Lester Bostock, interview by Rachael Maza, ‘Best Foot Forward’, ABC TV, 5 September 2003.

<sup>41</sup> AIATSIS, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia, Volume 1 (A–L)*, ed. David Horton (Canberra, ACT: AIATSIS, 1994), 388.



by others to be Aboriginal'.<sup>42</sup> Charles Perkins said that apart from meeting Aboriginal people coming in from the country and looking after their obvious needs of education, employment and housing needs, they also looked after the social needs of Aboriginal people:

We used to run concerts there, and oh, they used to come in their hundreds from all over the place, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. Concerts and dances. And they were legendary, you know. And a lot of the blacks around Sydney and around NSW and around Australia have all been to the concerts. And they've met each other, got married there, and had kids and you know. They've set them up for life in that sense, and they all remember that. And so it was brand new in everything we did.<sup>43</sup>

Aboriginal activist Gary Foley stated that when he first arrived in Redfern in 1966/1967, the White Australia Policy was still in force and you could walk all over the city and never see a non-white face. He made an interesting comment that, 'from a couple of thousand people, within three years you had an Aboriginal community that was in excess of 20,000 people. It was the biggest Aboriginal community that ever existed in over 60,000 years of the history of Australia'. Foley aptly described Redfern as 'an impoverished community of landless refugees'. Many Aboriginal people often met for the first time at the FAA. According to Foley:

Charlie sought to try and prevent young Aboriginal people from getting caught up in police brutality, so he tried to create opportunities for them to get employment. A place where they could meet socially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, and be relatively free of police harassment. So many of us at about the age of sixteen would go to the foundation. It was a place to meet beautiful young Aboriginal women on a Friday and Saturday night. On Sunday night they had the talent quest where anybody who thought they could sing or dance or do anything could get up on stage, and it was a great community social organisation.<sup>44</sup>

A number of active committees were set up as the FAA became more established including 'Education', 'Social Welfare', 'Health', 'Fund Raising', a 'Women's Auxiliary' and a 'Dancing Group'. After the landslide 1967 referendum, it was the dancing committee who held a large-scale debutante ball in the centre of town.<sup>45</sup> My cousin Pearl Anderson (Aunty Ruby's daughter) famously danced with Prime Minister John Gorton at the FAA Debutante Ball in July 1968 (see Figure 68). Pearly wanted to go the ball, but Aunty Ruby could not afford it, so she went to the Smith Family in Crown Street, Darlinghurst, and asked a welfare worker for a

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<sup>42</sup> Anna Cole, 'Making a Debut: Myths Memories and Mimesis', in *Passionate Histories*, ed. Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys and John Docker (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal History Inc., 2010), 205–15.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Perkins, *Australian Biography Interview Transcript*, Tape 5, [www.australianbiography.gov.au](http://www.australianbiography.gov.au).

<sup>44</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 3:17–6:34, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>45</sup> Cole, 'Making a Debut', 205–06.

white ball gown.<sup>46</sup> The size 18 dress was way too large for Pearl, and so Ruby got her sewing machine out, took the dress apart and re-made the dress to fit Pearl's petite body. Unfortunately, halfway through, Ruby was broke and had to pawn the sewing machine to feed her children. Typical of my Aunt's steadfast, can-do attitude to life, she rolled up her sleeves and continued making the dress, hand-sewing it until it was done just in time for the ball. Aunty Ruby said, 'I did up Pearl's hair' and 'Charles Perkins bought her a pair of white shoes and gave me a free ticket to the ball'.<sup>47</sup> This is a great example of the kind of work Charles Perkins did for Aboriginal people at the FAA.

In 'Dancing with the Prime Minister', Jennifer Jones stated that 'when Ruby Langford Ginibi and her daughter Pearl prepared for the FAA Debutante Ball ... they contributed to the development of a new expression of Aboriginal identity and community belonging'. Historically, debutante balls were a traditional and formal way for a select group of young ladies to be introduced to British high society, and although they had declined in popularity in England by the late 1950s they remained popular in Australia, developing an important status as fundraising events for local organisations. Jones explains how 'an exclusive, sexist British ritual' had been transformed into 'a vital, inclusive Aboriginal rite of passage' and how as a non-Indigenous reader she was challenged to re-evaluate her own assessment of the tradition:

Ruby Langford was one of the authors that made me stop (alas, only fleetingly) to examine my ingrained assumptions and recently acquired prejudices. According to my newfound feminist perspective, debutante balls exemplified and perpetuated the repressive class bound practices of patriarchal whiteness; yet here ... (on page 141 of Ruby's book, *Don't Take your Love to Town*), an Aboriginal mother openly celebrates her daughter's presentation to the Prime Minister ... Shouldn't Ruby have been protesting instead?<sup>48</sup>

Anna Cole, part of an Indigenous and non-Indigenous team who made a fortieth anniversary documentary about the historic ball, was also puzzled by the Aboriginal response. She stated that when they began to talk about the event with former debutantes, family and friends, it became immediately clear that 'the night had not become a source of cultural cringe, but

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<sup>46</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 140. Like the Salvation Army, the Smith Family were a charitable organisation (established in 1922) that worked to support disadvantaged children and young people in Australia.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>48</sup> Jennifer Jones, 'Dancing with the Prime Minister', *The European Association of Studies on Australia* 3, no. 1 (2012): 101–02.



triggered memories of goods times, of pride and shared joy against a backdrop of much tougher times'.<sup>49</sup>



**Figure 68: My cousin Pearl Anderson dancing with Prime Minister John Gorton at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs Debutante Ball, July 1968<sup>50</sup>**

The documentary ‘Dancing with the Prime Minister’ was made for ABC Television and aired on 22 August 2010 on an Indigenous program called *Message Stick*. Charles Perkins was interviewed and told the reporter that the idea was to ‘stimulate a sense of pride and dignity’ and help Aboriginal people ‘become part of the community in a way that, you know, we think is acceptable and I think that they would think would be acceptable too’. Aunty Ruby said that at the time there were a lot questions as to why the Aboriginal girls should be going to a debutante ball at all considering it is a product of:

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<sup>49</sup> Cole, ‘Making a Debut’, 205–15.

<sup>50</sup> Anna Clements, ‘Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs Debutante Ball, Sydney Town Hall, 13 July 1968, Australian Photographic No. 29022, Ref. No. 119166’ (Sydney, NSW: State Library of NSW).

the white man's culture, you know, of coming out and blah, blah, blah ... they said it was something to show everybody that we were as good as anybody else. And that we could dress up and be nice and pretty too.

John Gorton became prime minister seven months after the 1967 referendum and he and his American wife were considered modern thinkers who embraced the new civil rights era. A debutante by the name of Sue Bryant said that she thought that Charlie Perkins said to the prime minister that he should 'put his money where his mouth is' and if he really wanted to support Aboriginal people then he should come to the ball because 'we want our young debutantes to be presented to you'. Prime Minister Gorton explained that he did two or three debutante balls every year and when asked to attend this one said he was delighted to come. He said nonchalantly, 'Is there a significance in it? Perhaps there's this - that I think it might be the first time that a Prime Minister has been to an Aborigine debutante ball. I don't know, but I think it might be'.<sup>51</sup>

Anna Cole saw this ball as having much more significance. She stated that while it was publicised in government media and national papers as 'proof' of the 'success of assimilation', the memories of the women involved have disturbed this myth. The presence of the prime minister had little impact on them. Lasting impressions for them were of relatives who had died since, or difficulty hailing a cab after the event, or the police presence around the town hall that night.<sup>52</sup> Cole felt as though the documentary makers were called upon to understand that the women who were debutantes participated 'on their own terms' rather than mimicking 'white society' or as 'assimilationist stories'. Cole admitted to thinking too long and hard on theories like 'the idea of mimesis as explicated by Taussig on colonial exchange' in an effort to understand the Indigenous debutantes' motivations for being part of the ball. Readers of Cole's draft of her essay, including Indigenous academic Frances Peters-Little, advised her that there was less cross-cultural mimetic transformation going on than what she thought. The Aboriginal women simply saw it as a big night out:

The debutantes' real freedom from the historical processes all around them was not to be resisting assimilation or fighting it that night, but just to be themselves-young, stylish, 'groovy' women having fun. The Taxis would not stop for them at the end of the night because they were 'Aboriginal', which some of the debutantes remembered 40 years on, or the police presence outside because of a large gathering of 'Aboriginals' in central Sydney, are part of the same story. But having a ball, neither

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<sup>51</sup> Lara Cole, 'Dancing with the Prime Minister', in *Message Stick*, ed. ABC-TV (Neutral Bay, NSW: Enhance Videos, 2010), <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/stories/s2988499.htm>.

<sup>52</sup> Cole, 'Making a Debut', 210.

fighting nor ‘resisting’ but being proud of whom you are, dancing and enjoying a night out, was the greatest freedom of all in that moment. As the former debutantes told me it was about being with a big group of people, dressing up, looking great, feeling proud, knowing about the taxis and the police presence but knowing that we are more than the sum of our oppressions.<sup>53</sup>

My cousin Pearl, who was named after my mother (her middle name being Pearl), died tragically a year later in 1969 when she was hit by a car. She was buried with our grandfather Henry Anderson. Pearl’s brother Bill also died tragically a year after Pearl’s death in 1970. He drowned in a half-full laundry basin after experiencing an epileptic fit and was buried near the graves of his sister and our grandfather.<sup>54</sup> Aunt Ruby was distraught with grief at losing two of her children and she continued to live a very tough life, this time in Riley Street, Surry Hills.<sup>55</sup> She had had her name down for a Housing Commission home for nine years when, in 1972, she was finally allocated a house in Green Valley, in the western suburbs of Sydney.<sup>56</sup> The Housing Commission was established in 1941 to answer the growing need for housing in Sydney and throughout NSW, especially for ex-servicemen. On top of building new homes, a program of slum clearance and re-housing people from some of the older, more densely crowded parts of Sydney was undertaken. New blocks of medium-density and high-density, high-rise flats on old sites like Redfern housed some inner-city residents, while others were moved to new housing estates like Green Valley. The population of Green Valley grew from about 1,000 in 1960 to over 20,000 by 1965. Poor, fatherless and young families were given priority, and later Aboriginal families were added.<sup>57</sup>

The house Aunt Ruby moved into was the first Aboriginal house in the valley, and the people who lived there before her were the first Aboriginal family to arrive. When Aunt Ruby and my cousins arrived, there were still only three or four Aboriginal families in the whole of Green Valley. She said that putting Aboriginal families together with whites was part of the government’s policy on integration, but because there were very few Aboriginal people there in 1972, she felt very isolated from her friends and our culture:

All my neighbours were white, and there weren’t many black kids in the school. I found out that you were not supposed to create a nuisance or disturb any of the neighbours. You also weren’t allowed to have anyone come and stay without

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 211–12.

<sup>54</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*, 159.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 174. Aunt Ruby writes about having moved there in 1972, thus I deduced the nine years.

<sup>57</sup> Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, 172–73.

permission from the commission. It reminded me of the missions. The rule was useless in our culture, where survival depended on being able to stay with friends and relatives. Here I thought I'd got away from this, finally.<sup>58</sup>

Employment was hard to find or reach locally. Most of the public phones were vandalised and residents had to depend on poorly coordinated public transport to maintain contact with work, family, friends and all other services so badly needed. By the early 1970s, Green Valley had a bad reputation and, whether fairly or not, became synonymous with unemployment and juvenile delinquency.<sup>59</sup> The house that Aunty Ruby and my cousins had in Green Valley was an exact replica of the house that my family lived in at Holsworthy Army Base in western Sydney. The style of our house at Holsworthy and Aunty Ruby's house at Green Valley was one of a small number of house designs that were replicated over and over in Housing Commission suburbs and Defence Force Housing areas. That said, our lives in Holsworthy were very different from how Aunty Ruby and my cousins lived at Green Valley.

I remember visiting Aunty Ruby there when we were kids and recall it being a really rough place. We lived very sheltered lives at Holsworthy Army Base. Anything that needed fixing was done immediately and there was no such thing as vandalism, juvenile delinquency or petty crimes because everyone who lived there was answerable to their superiors in the army. Although the house styles were exactly the same, Holsworthy could be described as being much more peaceful. General schoolyard racism aside, our childhoods were very safe and secure. One of the few similarities I had with my cousins growing up was that although we lived in the western suburbs separated from our inner-city Sydney family members, we frequently maintained contact with them. Also similar to Aunty Ruby and her family, practically all of our neighbours were white-Australians. The only other Aboriginal people who lived in Holsworthy were my Uncle Lindsay Bostock's family. At Holsworthy Primary School in the 1970s, the school population was wholly comprised of Defence Force kids, so my two older sisters and I, and years later my little cousin Joanne, were practically the only non-white children at an all-white school.

## 5.1 Conclusion

With the increasing influx of Aboriginal people from the country into the city, the FAA realised that their role was not only financially supporting Aboriginal people, and the organisation

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<sup>58</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, 173–74.

<sup>59</sup> Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, 173.

expanded its assistance to include addressing individual and family social needs. If I were to label the kind of work that the FAA did, rather than call it ‘social welfare’ work, I would refine its description to call it ‘social upliftment’.

The FAA’s intention was not just to ‘assist’ Aboriginal people. The people in this organisation seemingly exhibited a moral consciousness that imbued them with a responsibility to socially uplift downtrodden and deprived Aborigines. It was as though they expanded the boundaries of ‘political upliftment’ to raise the standard of living of Aboriginal people and advance them on a more personal and familial level. Their assistance was not so much benevolence in a dutiful Christian way, but more like a parental way of supporting children in their transition from dependence to independence. The use of this parent–child analogy is not intended to infantilise Aboriginal people, but rather to highlight the similarity of the FAA’s actions to the more nurturing side of parenting that supports and encourages one’s offspring during any period of training and personal development.

## **Chapter 6: Radicalisation Creative Expression and Aboriginal Voice, 1972–2002**

Aboriginal activist Gary Foley and my Uncles Gerry and Lester were part of a group of young radicals in Redfern that became very politically active in the early 1970s. This chapter draws a great deal of information and a large number of direct quotes from Darlene Johnson's documentary, *The Redfern Story*, which I painstakingly transcribed from a digital sound recording of the documentary. I chose to do this for three reasons. First, *The Redfern Story* contains a number of personal interviews with frontline Aboriginal people who, at that time in history, were actively engaged in political activism, the Black Theatre and organisations working for the care, support and advancement of Aboriginal people. Second, included in the documentary are interviews with my two Uncles, Gerry and Lester Bostock, who are both now deceased. Third, I argue that quotations from the documentary insert authentic Aboriginal voices and opinions into this thesis, and I assert that these are as valid as any archival, handwritten letter found in a state library. They are just more modern versions of documentation.

This chapter argues that in this timeframe the young radicals' activism—and later realisation that creative expression gave them a stronger more penetrating voice—triggered in Aboriginal people an awareness that being a part of Australian society did not mean that they had to conform to being more like white-Australians.

### **6.1 The Beginning of the Land Rights Movement**

In 1972, the Australian Government under Prime Minister William McMahon saw mining as a 'national interest' and allowed unimpeded access to Aborigines reserve lands. W.E.H. Stanner and Nugget Coombs (from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs) were supportive of the Yirrkala peoples' right to claim royalties. They favoured leasehold ownership of land in all states and advocated for the provision of funds to buy land outside the reserves. They conducted an interdepartmental study and advised the Federal Government that there were political opportunities for change. Prime Minister McMahon's Coalition rejected the report, and on 25 January, the day before Australia Day, the McMahon Government announced that the Yirrkala people would receive only paltry royalties from the bauxite mining, only a weak form of Aboriginal leasehold was available in the Northern Territory only, and traditional ownership

was not to be regarded as a reason for renewed tenure. There was no reference to land acquisition outside ‘traditional’ areas, nor any compensation for dispossession.<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister McMahon was basically saying that his government would never grant Aboriginal land rights. Infuriated, the young radicals decided to set up a ‘Land Rights’ protest on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra with the initial intent of getting a photograph in the *Canberra Times* so the world would know they rejected McMahon’s statement.<sup>2</sup>

Less than two days after McMahan’s announcement, four young men were sent to Canberra. Tony Coorie, Bertie Williams, Billy Craigie and Michael Anderson arrived at Parliament House and, in the early hours of 27 January, they set up a beach umbrella and declared it the site of the Aboriginal Embassy. They boldly explained that McMahon’s statement had relegated them to the status of aliens in their own country and they needed their own representation. This stunt captured the national imagination. A few weeks later, Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam visited the protesters and told them that if he was elected he would reverse McMahon’s decision.<sup>3</sup>

More support came from *The Tribune* newspaper. This newspaper, in print from 1939–1976 and also known as *Tribune: The Peoples’ Paper*, was published by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).<sup>4</sup> The depth of the support for and the organisation of the young Aboriginal activists in Sydney can be clearly seen in a *Tribune* article dated 27 March 1972. Aboriginal activists advertised their Moratorium-style demonstration in support of Aboriginal rights and asked workers, students and others to stop work and attend a rally and a march. This newspaper article provides insight into how radical the politics of the young Aboriginal activists had become. Far from being like other mainstream newspapers of the time, the *Tribune* wrote articles explicitly detailing the voice of the Aboriginal activists and the wording of this article, titled ‘Black Rights March July 17’, has me wondering if it was written by or co-written with the activists themselves. Part of this article read:

National Aborigines Day has been marked in the past by such events as the former Prime Minister Gorton receiving Aboriginal debutantes at a National Aborigines Day

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<sup>1</sup> Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 338.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 3:17–6:34, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Lydon, *Flash of Recognition: Photography and the Emergence of Indigenous Rights* (Sydney, NSW: NewSouth Publishing, 2012), 230–31.

<sup>4</sup> National Library of Australia, ‘Browse Newspaper Titles on Trove’, accessed 5 January 2017, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/1002>.

Ball in Sydney. Militant young Aborigines in Sydney have decided that the farcical and paternalistic way National Aborigines Day has been celebrated in the past should not occur this year.<sup>5</sup>

This selection reveals how the young radicals' view of the FAA had changed and the scorn with which they regarded the 1968 Debutante Ball denotes a separation from the older Aboriginal establishment. It became passé and the young Aboriginal activists' experiences of racism and police brutality angered them. They felt the circumstances of that time called for more aggressive action.

## 6.2 Police Violence

The Aboriginal activists interviewed in *The Redfern Story* concur on the extraordinary extent of police violence and racism experienced by Aboriginal people in Redfern. Aboriginal actor Bindi Williams explained that back in the 1970s there was no Aboriginal liaison or modern 'go-betweens' to turn to, and so if there was a crime that was down the street and you happened to be a blackfella who was nearby, then you would be immediately blamed for committing it.<sup>6</sup> Marcia Langton (a former Aboriginal who later became an academic) described 'the war between the police and Aboriginal people' as constant, adding, 'It was a crime to be black. It didn't matter what the charge was, the real charge was walking while black'.<sup>7</sup> My Uncle Lester Bostock said bluntly, 'if you were black, you were a thief'.<sup>8</sup> An important point made by Gary Foley in the documentary was that 'police harassment had a significant role in politicising all of us. I've always said that the beginning of my political education was when I got a good kicking from a bunch of thug coppers at the Regent Street Police Station'.<sup>9</sup>

An important point to make here is that police brutality against Aborigines was not confined to Sydney. I told my father George Bostock about this documentary and expressed my surprise at how blatant the police actions were, saying 'you could be arrested just for being a blackfella', and my father said that the same thing happened in Brisbane. Like Sydney, he said:

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<sup>5</sup> 'Black Rights March July 17', *The Tribune Newspaper* (Sydney, NSW: 1939–1976), 27 March 1972, 12, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/rendition/nla.news-article2378684>.

<sup>6</sup> Bindi Williams, interview, 6:43–7:00, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>7</sup> Marcia Langton, interview, 7:03–7:11, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>8</sup> Lester Bostock, interview, 7:12–7:15, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>9</sup> Bindi Williams, Marcia Langton, Lester Bostock and Gary Foley, interview, 6:34–8:59, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.



Aboriginal people in Brisbane had their own special pubs, the places that only blackfellas went to drink. Ordinary blackfellas drinking at the blackfella pubs got arrested. They weren't *goomies* either, they were just your regular blackfellas. Back in those days they had the black mariahs [sic] ... they were like a police prison transport vehicle, but bigger than a paddy-wagon, and you could get about eight to ten people in the one truck. You know, six of them black mariahs would be lined up, waiting outside the blackfella pubs at closing time.<sup>10</sup>

'Goomies' was an Aboriginal nickname for chronic Aboriginal alcoholics, the point being made here is that it was not just the goomies (who you would expect to be arrested for drunkenness) being arrested, but also regular Aboriginal pub patrons who were not drunk, just socialising, were being locked up for no reason.

The young Aboriginal radicals in Redfern realised that they needed to educate themselves and learn how other people around the world were responding to police brutality and racism. They looked at ways in which they might adopt and adapt some of the strategies used by the (American) Black Panther Party.<sup>11</sup> One of the strategies they decided to use was to monitor the police, so they set up what they called the 'Pig Patrol' to spy on police and record what they were doing in the community. They then expanded on the 'Pig Patrol' to start the first shopfront, free Legal Aid Centre staffed with volunteer lawyers, on a rostered basis, to help the victims of the rampant arrests and assist Aboriginal people to mount at least some kind of defence within the court system. Foley proudly stated that 'Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service was the first ever free shopfront Legal Aid Centre in Australia for anyone, and once we started creating our own organisations, the Legal Service was just the beginning'.<sup>12</sup>

### 6.3 The Black Theatre

The idea of Black Power in Australia, and also the Black Theatre in Redfern, came directly from the Black Power movement in the United States. In 1970, Bob Maza travelled with other Aboriginal people to a Black Power conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and from there went on to New York where visited the National Black Theatre in Harlem. Maza immediately saw the possibilities of a political Black Theatre in Sydney and came back from his trip all fired up. He and Jack Charles produced a Nindethana Theatre production called *Jack Charles is Up and Fighting*, and Foley said that seeing this play really opened his eyes to the possibilities of a

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<sup>10</sup> Personal conversation with (my father) George Bostock.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 10:31–14:59, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>12</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 14:59–16:17, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

Black Theatre: ‘I was a young crazy political activist and never thought about theatre in my entire life’. Maza moved his family to Sydney and set up a National Black Theatre at Regent Street, becoming a kind of hub for Aboriginal people. Founding board member, my Uncle Gerry Bostock, said that:

The Black Theatre was used as a gathering place for a talk-fest every week, people from other organisations like the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service, and the Aboriginal Housing Centre would meet at the Black Theatre to discuss ourselves. In the community it was known as ‘The Black Caucus’ and so we were able to unite with one another and support all the other organisations ... So people who were on the Board of the Black Theatre were also on the Board of the Legal Service and the Medical Service and other services around.<sup>13</sup>

In *The Redfern Story*, Rachel Maza, daughter of Black Theatre founder Bob Maza, said, ‘Mind you theatre was basically a political tool, it was a way to get our stories on the street. It actually started with street theatre. It was a very kind of, almost pantomime-esque ... the masks, very heavy metaphors and representations’. Bronwyn Penrith, a former activist, explained that they wanted to use street theatre to raise awareness of the land rights struggle, but it was also about the incursion of the mining companies onto Aboriginal land and the disturbance of sacred sights.<sup>14</sup> Aboriginal people gravitated to the new Black Theatre, attracted by the unification of organisations and the machinations of the Black Caucus.

## 6.4 The Tent Embassy

In another newspaper article published in the *Tribune* on 30 May 1972, John Newfong responded to those who thought of the Tent Embassy as an eyesore by saying, ‘they ought to go and see some of their own government settlements’. Newfong is described by the *Tribune* as an ‘Aboriginal Embassy spokesman’, and it was not until I read his comments that I fully appreciated the full extent of the Australian Government’s embarrassment internationally. The dramatic Embassy gesture received worldwide coverage in the media.

Regardless of the scrutiny of the international press, a decision was made that, on 20 July, saw 100 ACT police officers forcibly remove the tents. This became a violent clash that was televised and resulted in eight Aboriginal people being arrested. Three days later, another

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<sup>13</sup> Gary Foley, Rachel Maza, Lisa Maza and Gerry Bostock, interview, 17:43–21:28, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>14</sup> Gary Foley, Rachel Maza and Bronwyn Penrith, interview, 21:28–22:10, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

violent clash was televised. Fanned by opponents, fear grew that the overall black–white relations would become more violent. However, with the benefit of hindsight, historian Jane Lydon explains why it was so effective:

The 1972 Tent Embassy was a stroke of genius for several reasons. As a statement of alienation it was deeply embarrassing to the government in its failure to represent its Indigenous citizens. Second, as an ‘eyesore’ it effectively disrupted the smooth lawns and symmetrical vistas of Canberra’s monumental landscape, peopling its empty spaces with a scruffy makeshift straggle of campers that precisely illustrated the relationship between comfortable white Australia and the living conditions of most Aboriginal people.<sup>15</sup>

By creating a fringe camp at a site considered to be the symbolic heart of the nation, Lydon stated that the embassy ‘exploded at a blow all those familiar images of assimilation showing neatly marshalled houses filled with docile black families as proof of successful assimilation and management of the Indigenous population’.<sup>16</sup> ‘Demands for freedom were no longer marginalised or quietly intellectualised; rather, they became the stuff of public theatre’.<sup>17</sup> Uncle Gerry, Uncle Lester and Aunty Phemie Bostock were present at the Tent Embassy demonstrations, and in *The Redfern Story* there is footage of my Aunty Phemie dancing in a street performance with other Aboriginal dancers from the Black Theatre. In Foley’s opinion, these acts were all relatively harmless but effective, because it was a tremendous embarrassment for the McMahon Government to be asked by foreign journalists, ‘An embassy? An internal embassy? Is there an internal nation of people?’<sup>18</sup>

## 6.5 Communism

Another tremendous embarrassment to the Australian Government was the controversial journeys that Aboriginal activists embarked on in 1972 and 1974 to visit The People’s Republic of China (PRC). The first visit in 1972 was led by Charles ‘Chicka’ Dixon and included my Uncle Gerry Bostock, Ruby Hammond, Lynette Thompson, Lilla Watson, Cheryl Buchan, Terence Widders, Peter Long and Ken Winder.<sup>19</sup> The 1972 delegation, at the invitation of the Chinese Government, went on an all-expenses-paid trip with the intention of seeking ‘China’s

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<sup>15</sup> Lydon, *Flash of Recognition*, 230–31.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>17</sup> Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines and Activism: Race, Aborigines & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia* (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2008), 242.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Foley, 23:59–25:11, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>19</sup> ‘9 Aborigines Go to China’, *Tribune* (Sydney, NSW: 1939–1976), 24 October 1972, 12, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/237867326>.

support in forming an international lobby directed at shaming Australia to alter its policy toward Aborigines'.<sup>20</sup> The second delegation went to China in 1974 and included Gary Foley as leader of a 10-member group who were guests of the Chinese Association of Friendship with Foreign People. The Australian Government was ignoring them, so their next move was 'to take the entire case of Aboriginal Land Rights into the international sphere and embarrass Australia that way'.<sup>21</sup>

In 1961, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union declared its support for 'all peoples who are fighting for the complete abolition of the colonial system' and, as a result, the CPA started to refer to Aboriginal Australians as a 'national minority' and began to attack the Australian Government's policy of assimilation. The Director of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) concluded that the 'CPA now regards the aborigines and their problems as an issue to be developed and used by the Party for political purposes, and for the furtherance of its own programme for the political power in Australia'. ASIO interpreted Aboriginal dissent in the context of the international struggle against communism, which Foley described as 'a convenient way to ignore the legitimate claims of the Aborigines themselves'.<sup>22</sup>

Foley did not find out until 2002 that ASIO maintained a voluminous file on the Aboriginal Embassy and kept files on numerous Aboriginal organisations and people, himself included. ASIO's interest in the surveillance of the Aboriginal political movement provides a better understanding of what Foley calls 'ASIO's specific, obsessive preoccupation with possible communist infiltration, or manipulation of the Aboriginal rights movement from 1951 until the end of the cold war'.<sup>23</sup>

On the night of 21 January 2014, a four-part documentary series called *Persons of Interest: ASIO's Dirty War on Dissent*, written and directed by Haydn Keenan, was screened on SBS. The documentary told the story of four different men who were targeted by ASIO between the 1950s and 1970s, and Foley was one of them. I had seen the advertisements in the lead up to this screening, and I made sure I watched the documentary because I wanted to know more

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<sup>20</sup> 'Ten Aborigines Going to Peking', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 October 1972, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/news/china/med72b.html>.

<sup>21</sup> 'Blacks to Tell China', *The Melbourne Age*, 17 January 1974, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/news/n1.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Gary Foley, 'ASIO, the Aboriginal Movement, and Me', in *Dirty Secrets: Our ASIO Files*, ed. Meredith Burgmann (Sydney, NSW: NewSouth Publishing, 2014), 93–96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

about Aboriginal activism in Sydney in the years my Uncles were there. Journalist Mark McKenna wrote a review of *Persons of Interest*, and one thing that surprised him about Foley was that he expressed gratitude to ASIO, saying, 'I'm able to piece together vast tracts of my life that had disappeared from my memory ... some of the files are very good historical records ... in certain ways ASIO has done us a bit of a service'.<sup>24</sup> This documentary series has also done me 'a bit of a service' too because it alerted me to the fact that there was a possibility of files on my family members as well.

While watching the documentary, I was very surprised to see footage of my grandmother Edith Bostock. Knowing that these kinds of documentaries are often re-run, I had my camera in hand for the re-run the following day. I took the photographs in Figures 69 and 70 of the television screen and recorded some notes. The footage was of a 'March Against Racism' rally in 1971, and while the television camera scanned those present, Nan popped her head up, so the camera zoomed in on her for a close-up (see Figure 69). In a later photograph, she is seen standing beside other marchers (see Figure 70). The photo in Figure 70 shows that she and the two other people were identified by red numbers handwritten onto the surveillance photograph. The narrator then stated that the numbers indicated that there were ASIO surveillance files on these 'persons of interest'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mark McKenna, 'ASIO Surveillance in Persons of Interest', *The Monthly*, February 2014, <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2014/february/1391173200/mark-mckenna/asio-surveillance-persons-interest>.

<sup>25</sup> Haydn Keenan, 'Episode Three: Gary Foley - Native Title is not Land Rights. Reconciliation is not Justice', *Persons of Interest: ASIO's Dirty War on Dissent*, episode 3, directed by Haydn Keenan (Melbourne, VIC: Smart Street Films, 2013).



**Figure 69: My grandmother Edith Bostock under ASIO surveillance at a ‘March Against Racism’ rally in 1971<sup>26</sup>**



**Figure 70: My grandmother Edith Bostock (left) at a ‘March Against Racism’ rally in 1971<sup>27</sup>**

Note: The narrator of the documentary stated that the red numbers (handwritten onto the photo) meant that ASIO maintained dedicated files on these individuals.

<sup>26</sup> Photograph of my television screen during the documentary *Persons of Interest: ASIO's Dirty War on Dissent* screened by SBS on 21 January 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

I was shocked, but also intrigued, and so I made enquiries at the National Archives of Australia and they informed me that they could not locate a file on my grandmother Edith Bostock, however, my two Uncles Lester and Gerry Bostock, like Gary Foley and other Aboriginal activists, had ASIO files.<sup>28</sup> I immediately ordered copies of their files.<sup>29</sup>

ASIO surveillance of my family members included the bugging of my grandmother's telephone, and also the bugging of both my Uncles' telephones when they lived together in a house at Marrickville, an inner-city suburb of Sydney. The ASIO files diligently record the movements of my Uncles, the people they associated with and the political meetings and social events they attended. From the transcriptions of conversations in the ASIO files, it was clear the Aboriginal activists sometimes knew they were being recoded and often joked about it.

Like cats tormenting mice, they played games with ASIO, joking about being bugged and deliberately not using names when speaking about others. One transcript details Uncle Gerry Bostock as saying, 'And which one was that on the phone? Was that the one with the Italian husband?'<sup>30</sup> After one conversation a frustrated ASIO agent wrote, 'It's impossible to work out whether the above conversation was serious or not, as their conversation was conducted in a very light-hearted manner'.<sup>31</sup>

I knew my Uncles were activists in the 1970s, but it was not until I read their ASIO files that I fully understood the extent of how deeply they were immersed in working for organisations involved in the advancement of Aboriginal people. Uncle Gerry articulated his political convictions predominately through the arts, while Uncle Lester chose the more hands-on path of working tirelessly for a large number of organisations that supported Aboriginal advancement.

## **6.6 Gerry Bostock's ASIO File**

The ASIO file on Uncle Gerry held the photograph shown in Figure 71, taken from a Western Australian newspaper. The other surveillance photographs in Figure 72, taken at Mascot (Sydney's International Airport), were of the first Aboriginal delegation's departure for China

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<sup>28</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File: BOSTOCK, Lester Fraser, Volume 1, Series No. A6119, Control Symbol 6060, Barcode 13161348', ASIO (Canberra, NSW: National Library of Australia).

<sup>29</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File: BOSTOCK, Gerald Leon, Volume 1, Series No. A6119, Control Symbol 6088, Barcode 13161339', ASIO (Canberra, NSW: National Library of Australia).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 64.

on 22 October 1972. These photos were taken by an undercover agent using a concealed camera in a briefcase. Imagine for a moment how strange it would be as a history researcher to open up an archival file on your ancestors and discover that your family members' phones were bugged and clandestine photographs taken of them by government agents with hidden cameras. This sounds like such a cliché, but it feels so surreal, like something out of a James Bond film.



**Figure 71: Gerry Bostock (bearded man in the centre) with the first Aboriginal delegation to Peking, China, October 1972<sup>32</sup>**

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<sup>32</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO Photos: BOSTOCK, Gerald Leon, Series No. A9626, Control Symbol 689, Barcode: 30485991', ASIO (Canberra, ACT: National Archives of Australia, 2015).



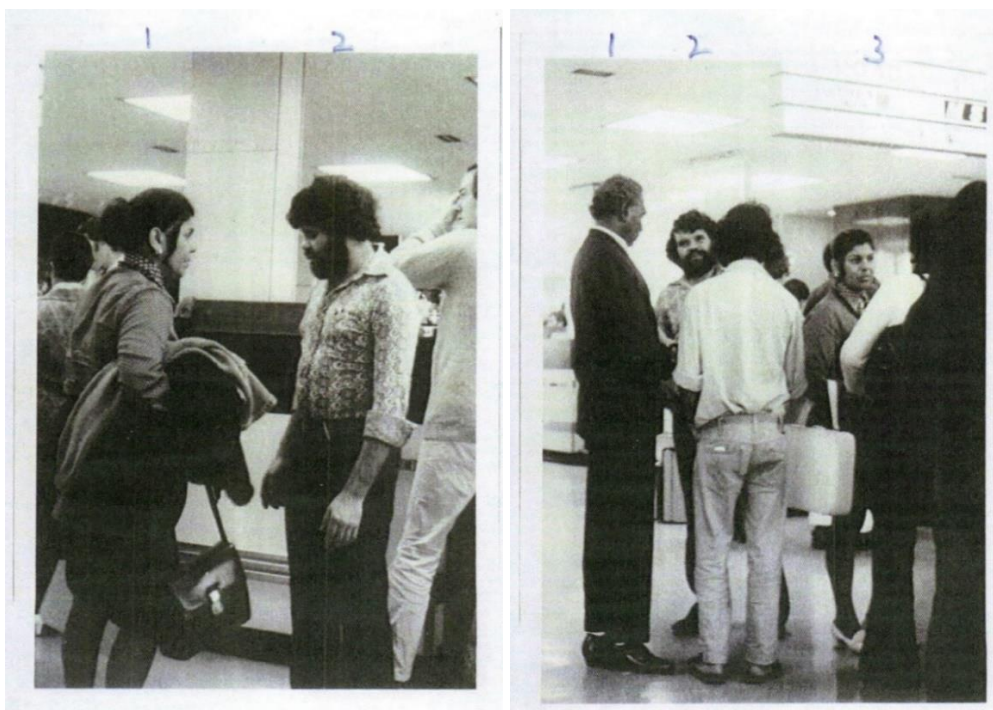


**Figure 72: Surveillance photographs of the first Aboriginal delegation's departure for China, 22 October 1972<sup>33</sup>**

Note: These photographs were taken at Mascot (Sydney's International Airport) by an ASIO operative using a concealed camera. Ruby Hammond and Gerry Bostock are numbered '1' and '2' in the photograph on the left, and Peter Long is numbered '1' in the photograph on the right.

Similar to the photograph of Edith Bostock in Figure 70, the 'targets' in Figure 72 were numbered and their corresponding names written on the back of the photographs. Gerry Bostock was also photographed at the customs desk on his arrival home from China (see Figure 73). The *Tribune* reported that 'an enthusiastic crowd of Black militants and supporters chanted "Land Rights Now!" when Mr Dixon, Mrs Lyn Thomson, Mr Gerry Bostock (all from Sydney) and Mrs Ruby Hammond (from Adelaide) came out of customs'. Gerry Bostock recited one of his radical poems on his arrival at Sydney airport.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> 'Aboriginals Back', *The Tribune* (Sydney, NSW: 1939–1976), 21 November 1972, 3, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/237868714>.

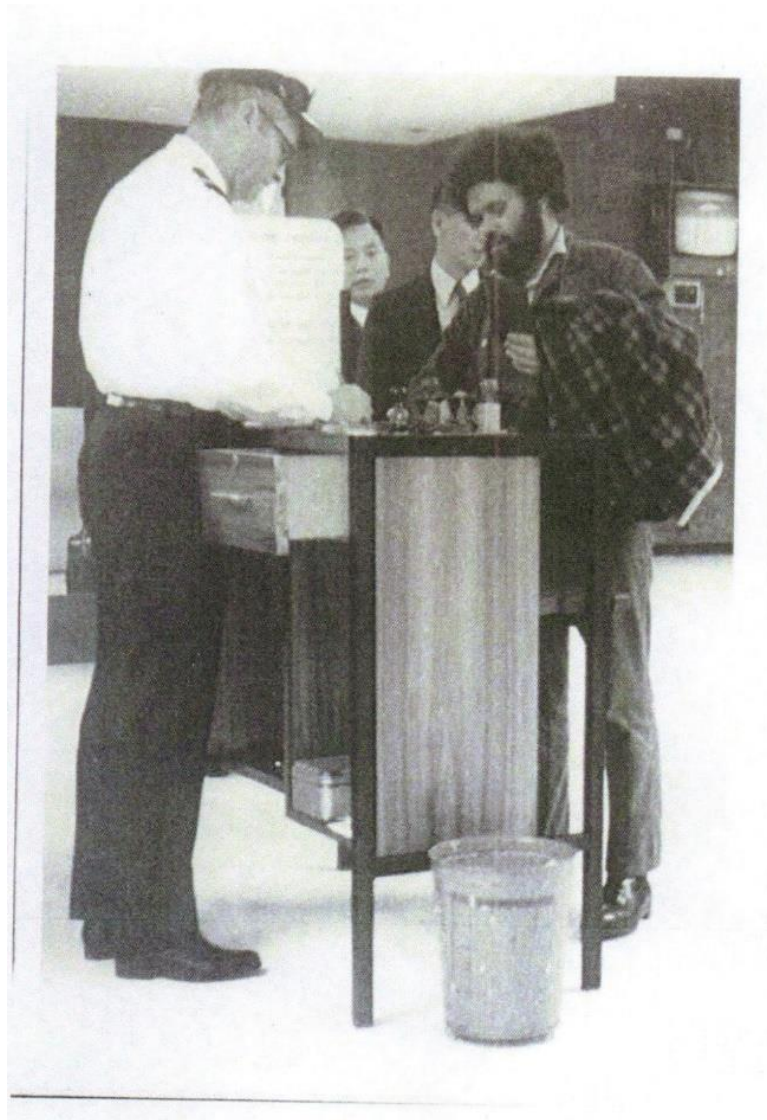


**Figure 73: Photograph of Gerry Bostock upon his return from China, 22 October 1972<sup>35</sup>**

Note: This photograph was taken by an ASIO operative using a concealed camera.

Similar to Gary Foley's experience, these files enable me to piece together vast tracts of my Uncles' lives as they contain large amounts of information about their involvement in Aboriginal activism and advancement. But they are also a record of the Australian Government's fear of Aboriginal people being influenced by communists and communism in general. These records illustrate that the surveillance of Aboriginal activists was like a watered-down version of the post-war American McCarthyism in that Australia was equally paranoid about communism, but fortunately without the witch hunts and testimonies before an (I

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<sup>35</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO Photos: BOSTOCK, Gerald Leon', 10–12.

imagine) American-style *House Committee on Un-Australian Activities*.<sup>36</sup> The China visits were (for the Aboriginal activists) about learning how China treated its minorities, not communism, and although the activists wanted to highlight the plight of Aboriginal people on a global scale, they also wanted to increase awareness on a local scale.

## 6.7 Lester Bostock's ASIO File

Uncle Lester's file begins in 1964 with a secret ASIO list of people on the boards of the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) in Sydney and the Aboriginal Advancement Leagues in Newcastle, Nowra, the South Coast and Blacktown. Interestingly, the APA Board list included the names of three of my family members. The document states that the APA was 'formed on initiative of: Ruby Langford, Charles Perkins and Raymond Peckham'. The President was Herbert Groves, the Secretary was Isabelle McCallum, and the Treasurer was Lester Bostock. There were also four Vice Presidents: Ray Peckham, Joyce Mercy, Clive Williams and my grandmother Edith Bostock.<sup>37</sup>

In her book, Aunt Ruby mentioned that Isabelle McCallum was the daughter of the founder of the original APA, Bill Ferguson. They elected Charles Perkins as a spokesman and Aunt Ruby became the editor of their newspaper called *Churringa*, which means 'message stick'. Although she attended meetings, including an important meeting of the APA at Martin Place on National Aborigines Day (in the presence of the governor-general and other dignitaries), her time with the APA was short-lived. She said her de facto husband was unhappy about looking after her children, 'so I had to give up my political work before I'd edited the first issue of *Churringa*'.<sup>38</sup> Uncle Lester, however, continued his political work as treasurer of the APA in Sydney, and his ASIO files reveals his interesting political interests.

In August 1964 (my birth year), Uncle Lester Bostock's name was on an ASIO list of 'National Sponsors' of the Australian Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament.<sup>39</sup> The file also contained a transcription of a *Pravda* newspaper article titled 'The Fifth Continent says "No!" to War'. *Pravda* (meaning 'truth') was the official newspaper of the Communist

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<sup>36</sup> For a useful explanation on McCarthyism, see US History Online Textbook, 'McCarthyism' (Independence Hall Association, Philadelphia), <http://www.ushistory.org/us/53a.asp>.

<sup>37</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File, Lester Bostock', 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), 115–18.

<sup>39</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File, Lester Bostock', 9.

Party of the Soviet Union from 1918–1991.<sup>40</sup> This article reported that the congress was considered a success by the participants. J. Heffernan, a member of the Federation of Metal Workers Unions and the Executive Committee of the Australian Trade Union Council, said:

A specific feature of the peace movement in Australia is that the Trade Unions are its broad base. And this base is becoming wider and wider. For the first time at the congress there were representatives present from the Trade Union, which were considered to be conservative and to stand completely aside from the struggle for peace.

Lester Bostock was named as ‘the aboriginal [sic] representative’ and cited as stressing that ‘the ideas of peace, race equality and social justice are penetrating more and more deeply into the ranks of the aboriginals [sic]. We are marching side by side with all progressive Australians’.<sup>41</sup>

In Uncle Lester Bostock’s ASIO file, there is a photocopy of an article from *The Bulletin* magazine in the ‘Aborigines’ section titled ‘Legal Reforms But ... Failure of the Door Knockers’. This article highlights 1964 as a year of ‘drastic legal reforms for Aborigines’, but ends with the disappointing results of a fundraising door-knock appeal where the FAA failed to reach its target of £150,000, raising only £80,000. Interestingly, someone in the ASIO underlined the part that reports that Lester Bostock and Joyce Mercy were invited to the Christian Youth Council in Manila.<sup>42</sup> Even more interesting to me is an adjacent article on the same page in the ‘Trade Unions’ section titled ‘New Men and New Ideas’. This article states that ‘probably the most significant feature in Australian Trade Union affairs for 1964 was also the least reported—a growing social consciousness. The major efforts in this direction centred on Australian Aborigines’.

In Brisbane, the Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) applied for equal wages for Aborigines in Queensland who were working under awards, which would no doubt affect Aborigines in other states working under AWU awards. General Secretary of the AWU Mr T. Dougherty applied

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<sup>40</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, ‘Pravda: Soviet Newspaper’, accessed 7 January 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pravda>.

<sup>41</sup> Australian Government, ‘ASIO File, Lester Bostock’, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Australian Government, ‘ASIO File, Bostock, Lester Fraser’, 10. This photocopy is of *The Bulletin* magazine, 26 December 1964, p. 9. This page has both the article ‘Legal Reforms But ... Failure of the Door Knockers’ in the ‘Aborigines’ section and the ‘New Men and New Ideas’ article in the ‘Trade Unions’ section.

for new federal pastoral award that would give Aborigines the same wages, rights and privileges as white workers covered by the same award. Dougherty told the court:

We are deliberately setting to prove the rights of the people, irrespective of who they are, to receive the award rates and conditions ... It is the right of Aborigines to be employed under the same wages as their fellow Australians, whatever their colour and nationality.<sup>43</sup>

According to the 'New Men and New Ideas' article in *The Bulletin*, there were 'less reassuring trends' with 'the come-back of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and the extreme Left in a number of unions'. In fact, this article names the Sydney Peace Congress as a 'Communist Front'.<sup>44</sup> The CPA is frequently mentioned in my Uncle Lester's ASIO file, but I cannot see any evidence to support that he was a card-carrying member of the CPA. There is, however, a large amount of evidence that he frequently associated with CPA members and trade unionists. The most interesting document in Uncle Lester's ASIO file is a letter sent on 19 January 1965.

The centre top of the letter has the Australian Government coat of arms, and to the right of that are the words 'AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY MOSCOW'. The letter was from Australian Attaché, D. Wallace to The Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Canberra. Wallace informed the secretary about an article written by a man called Yuri Yasnev for *Za Rubezhom* (a weekly review of foreign press and a publication of the Union of Journalists of the USSR) on 7 January 1965. Yasnev was living in Canberra as a *Pravda* correspondent, and Wallace provided a translated transcript of Yasnev's lengthy article (see Figure 74).

Apart from providing insight into everyday Australian economic life (politics, inflation, strikes, etc.), Yasnev also wrote about the peace forum, summarising that the reason for the success of the peace forum was that the trade unions in Australia played an active role in the struggle for peace. He stated, 'here the slogan, "Peace is the affair of the Trade Unions" is not just an empty slogan but meets with material support'. Yasnev added that the movement of peace workers was coming more and more to include Aborigines. To the Soviet Union he described Aborigines as 'the original inhabitants of the Fifth Continent who are given unequal rights both politically and socially, who live as outcasts: these people instinctively find themselves drawn to the peace forum, the most progressive section of the Australian people'. I read with interest

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<sup>43</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File, Bostock, Lester Fraser', 10 (photocopy of *The Bulletin* magazine, 26 December 1964, p. 9).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

Yasnev's description of meeting Uncle Lester during the congress at the Trocadero Hall, where Nobel Prize Laureate Professor Poling was speaking.

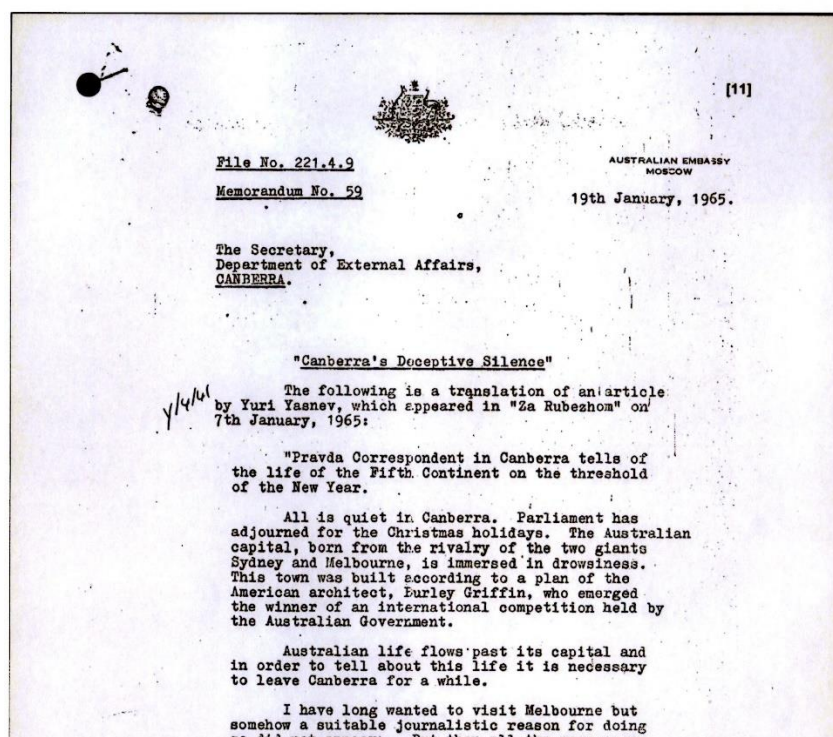


**Figure 74: Yuri Yasnev's article in *Za Rubezhom* as transcribed by the attaché at the Australian Embassy Moscow and sent to External Affairs, Canberra<sup>45</sup>**

Yasnev wrote that when he caught sight of an Aboriginal man called Lester Bostock on crutches, he immediately thought that he was an invalid of the Second World War. What he wrote next had me staring at the page for several moments in a state of open-mouthed shock before I burst out laughing:

It turned out that Bostock had lost his leg in another war – the war for a dry crust of bread. For a long time his only weapon for the struggle for existence was pearl hunting. Together in the Torres Strait with other aborigine youths he had to dive to a great depth to seek out the valuable shellfish. The manager of the boat paid comparatively good wages, but it was dangerous work and many were frightened away from it. The divers sought out the pearl but sharks hunted them. More than one of them perished in the jaws of these monsters. Bostock did not escape unscathed.<sup>46</sup>

My family and I know that dear old Uncle Lester always took wicked delight in telling completely outrageous, poker-faced stories every time some compassionate, unsuspecting soul

<sup>45</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File, Lester Bostock', 13–16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 14.



asked him how he had lost his leg. He had never been a pearl diver (or anywhere near the Torres Strait). Uncle Lester had an injury (Dad said from playing football) that did not heal properly and gangrene set in. That is why he lost his leg. But it was this intrepid story, of the courageous survival of an oppressed Aborigine, that was published by journalists in the USSR's communist newspaper during the Cold War. Putting aside my raconteur Uncle's complete fabrication, I marvelled at finding such a delightful illustration of the Communist Party's empathy for Aboriginal Australians.

Both the CPA and the trade unions supported Aboriginal activists not just politically, but also in practical ways. As seen above, the CPA assisted Aboriginal activists by publishing articles in their tone of voice and advertising their protests, rallies and conferences in the *Tribune*. The CPA was under surveillance by ASIO, and a document in his ASIO file reveals that Uncle Lester's phone call to Noel Hazard, the photographer at the *Tribune*, was recorded and transcribed. Uncle Lester sought and received Hazard's help to take photographs for an upcoming State Aboriginal Conference. Hazard also agreed to develop films of photographs that had already been taken by conference organisers.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, on the night of 26 January 1972, it was Noel Hazard who drove the four Aboriginal activists to Canberra to establish the legendary Tent Embassy. Foley described Hazard as 'a close friend of many activists at the time'.<sup>48</sup>

The trade unionists were also friends of the Aboriginal activists and provided practical support on the ground, accommodating them with venues for meetings and events. The Building Workers Industrial Union Hall at 535 George Street, Sydney, accommodated a special Aboriginal Conference held on 16–17 October 1965. This hall was also the venue for the '10<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration of the Aboriginal Australia Fellowship' on 15 October 1966 and the 'Australians Action Against Racism' Seminar on 20 June 1971.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the 'Forum on Racism' was held at the Boilermakers Hall, 232 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, on 12 September 1971.<sup>50</sup> Gary Foley said that ASIO made a basic mistake in their interpretation of the Black Power movement's association with other external political activists, especially the CPA. They chose to interpret it as CPA manipulation of Aboriginal people and they failed to realise that they were very close because they were simply good friends.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>48</sup> Foley, 'ASIO, the Aboriginal Movement, and Me', 104.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 22, 37 and 87.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 94.

Foley added that they (Aboriginal activists) ‘admired the leaders of the Builder’s Labourers’ Federation and became good friends with Bob Pringle and Joe Owens in particular’. Aboriginal people ‘didn’t judge their white friends on whether they were Communists or not, but rather on the quality of their personal character’. Their relationships with them were based on mutual respect, and there was never any question of them (Communist or otherwise) trying to manipulate the Aboriginal activists. Tabloids inspired the idea that the people involved in the Black Power movement were racists who hated white people, and ASIO bought into this nonsense. Foley concluded that ‘the lunacy of their logic was that, despite thinking we were black racists, they still believed that we were taking orders from white communists’.<sup>51</sup>

Other than what I have discussed above, there is no further information about my Uncle contacting members of the Communist Party. The rest of Uncle Lester’s ASIO file contains surveillance records of bugged phone conversations, meetings of organisations, seminars and conferences, lists of who attended these events, copies of agendas, and transcripts of what each meeting was about and who said what. The following is a quick summary of the main organisations Uncle Lester was involved with:

While treasurer of the APA, Uncle Lester also attended meetings of the Australia Indonesian Association of NSW. Uncle Lester was photographed at an ‘Education Day Cocktail Party at the Indonesian Embassy’ in Sydney on 2 May 1965. He was a member of, and Publicity Officer for, the Aboriginal Australian Fellowship. Lester Bostock was an early member of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, which later became the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), and he attended their conferences. He studied and lived at Tranby Co-Operative for Aborigines before being elected as Co-manager of Tranby with John Julius. He later became the administrator and book-keeper. Uncle Lester was involved in the ‘Moratorium for Black Rights’ outside Sydney Town Hall and photographed secretly by ASIO on 14 July 1972.

I will close my exploration of Uncle Lester’s ASIO file with another important piece of information that I did not previously know about him. He was once nominated for Australian Labor Party selection. His ASIO file has a photocopy of a newspaper article from the *Sydney Morning Herald* dated 17 November 1970, reporting that he ‘was nominated against the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 104–05.



Minister-in-charge of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr W. C. Wentworth, for the next election for the House of Representatives' (see Figure 75).

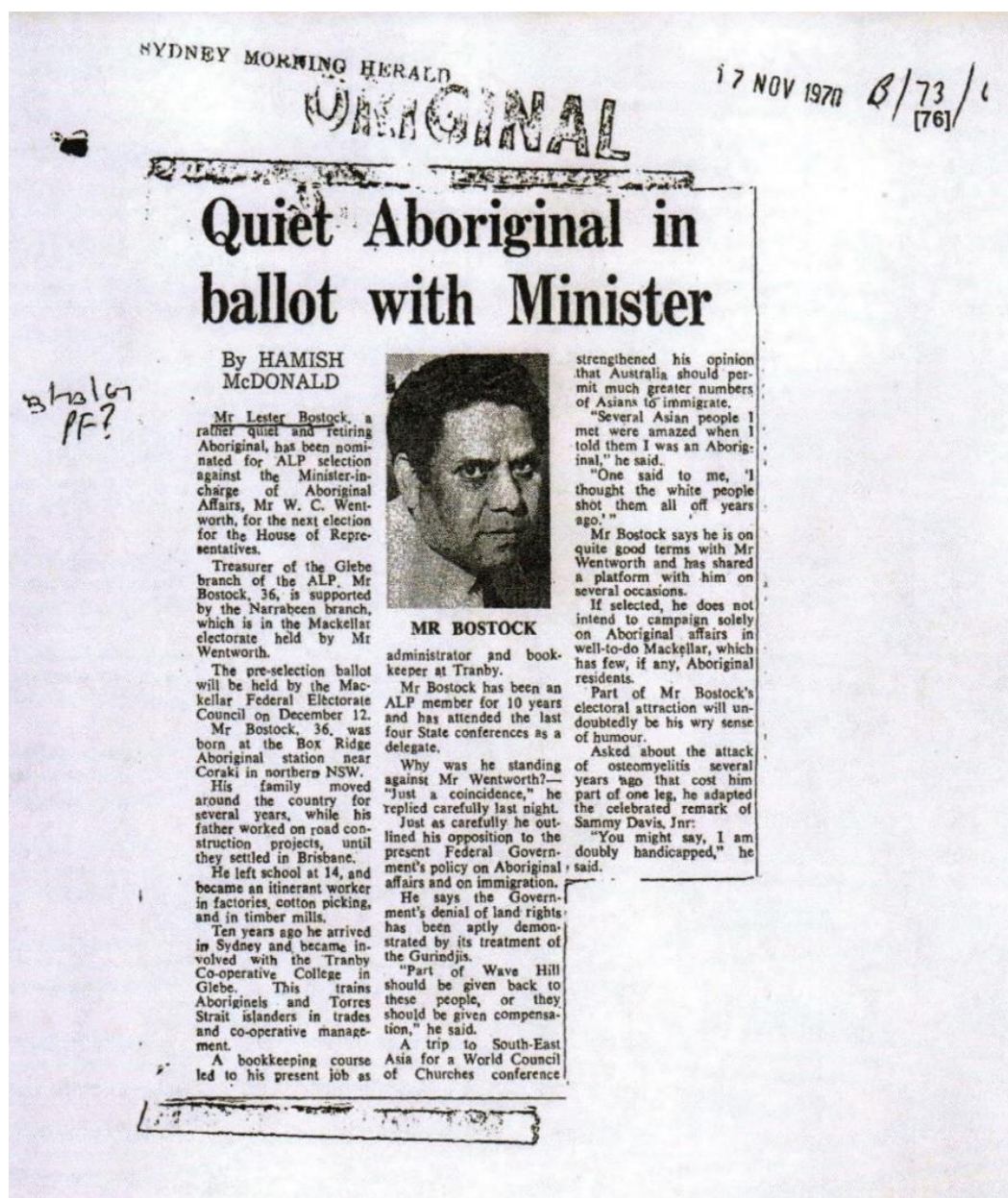


Figure 75: ASIO file photocopy of *Sydney Morning Herald* article reporting Lester Bostock's appointment for Labor Party selection in 1970<sup>52</sup>

## 6.8 Creative Expression and Aboriginal Voice

Rather than focusing exclusively on land rights, the Black Theatre in Redfern was more about presenting to the audience all those ordinary things that were happening to Aboriginal people.

<sup>52</sup> Australian Government, 'ASIO File: Bostock, Lester Fraser'.

Bob Maza wanted to attack what he perceived as the preconceived ideas that non-Indigenous people had about Aboriginal people. He saw regular theatre as exclusive and elitist and wanted to bring theatre to all people, and thereby take messages down to the grassroots level of community. He produced 'Basically Black', which was like a review with a number of little skits put together. Gary Foley was enlisted by Bob Maza to become a member of the cast of 'Basically Black'. The Aboriginal activists realised that public speeches created hostility in the wider, non-Indigenous community, but being on stage and making people laugh at themselves with satire and ridicule could get their message through to white-Australians. Creative expression brought racism and the plight of Aborigines into the public arena. Their performances of political satire and ridicule brought in packed houses and good reviews.<sup>53</sup>

It was an exciting time for the theatrical activists, because 'Basically Black' was picked up by the ABC and was given a pilot series. Bindi Williams said that non-Indigenous people did not know how to take it and wondered whether it was inappropriate to laugh at what they were doing. He said 'Basically Black' showed people that 'we knew what people were saying, and for us to perform it to other people showed them that we had another nature, other than what was really thought of us at that time'. The show was a great forum to express their sense of humour, but it only had a short run. Bob Maza's daughter, Lisa Maza, thought it was interesting that 'people weren't ready for that kind of in your face, satirical, hard-core kind of stuff from blackfellas'.<sup>54</sup>

A wonderful example of this humour was an endearing character that Gary Foley wrote exclusively for Zac Martin called 'Super Boong'. Imitating early Superman comics and television shows, the 'Super Boong' segment was preceded by an excited narrator reporting:

Look up in the sky, is it a bat, is it a crow, is it the flying doctor??? No... it's SUPER BOONG! Strange visitor from a northern tribe, who came to the city possessing powers far beyond those of mortal Kooris. Faster than a killer boomerang... and able to leap over tall gum trees in a single bound! SUPER BOONG uses his secret identity as a mild mannered Aboriginal ex-boxing champion Lionel Mouse, to fight a never-ending battle against racism wherever it may be found!!!

[Lionel Mouse in a suit approaches two Aborigines outside a pub]

'Hi guys, seen any racism around?'

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<sup>53</sup> Gary Foley, 25:30–31:43, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>54</sup> Bob Maza, Lisa Maza and Gary Foley, 32:55–33:54, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

[They answer] ‘Not today Bud.’

[A short distance away a fight breaks out]

[Lionel Mouse] ‘Looks like someone’s in need of help from an artful Abbo! I think I’ll race into the toilet of this hotel and change.’

[Super Boong] ‘What’s up Bud?’

[Aboriginal Man] ‘They don’t allow Blacks in that Pub!’<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 76: Zac Martin as Super Boong in the ‘Basically Black’ ABC pilot series (1973)<sup>56</sup>**

<sup>55</sup> Gary Foley and Zac Martin as Lionel Mouse, 35:21–36:38, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>56</sup> Retrieved from Gary Foley, ‘The Koori History Website’, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/1970s/blacktheatre/abctvdx.html>; Gary Foley, ‘The Koori History Webpage: Great Moments in Aboriginal History’, <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/images/history/1970s/blacktheatre/abctvdx.html>.

Ernie Dingo remembered Super Boong as an endearing character:

Yeah Super Boong was just a deadly character, man. Somebody calls you a name and as soon as you go to think about it, Super Boong appears on the scene, ‘Step aside son, I’ll fix this for you!’ and then you’d watch Super Boong tell these people that their racist actions, well there’s no place for it ... and have a good laugh about it, and teach whitefellas that you don’t mess with blackfellas, because we’ve got Super Boong on our side.<sup>57</sup>

The Black Theatre took up residence at a premises at Cope Street, Redfern, just around the corner from the original Black Theatre at Regent Street. Uncle Gerry said that the premises was originally owned by the Uniting Church and was handed over to the Aboriginal people of Redfern, making it ‘the first land settlement that Aborigines had’.<sup>58</sup> I remember going there as a child of nine or 10 years old with my sister to do karate classes and attend the dance classes organised by Carole Johnson, an African-American lady who came to Australia in 1972. Johnson worked with Indigenous Australians for 35 years and taught Australians how to ‘discover the richness of Indigenous dance’. She was a founding director of the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association and established the Bangarra Dance Theatre Australia Company.<sup>59</sup>

When Uncle Lester Bostock went to the Australian Arts Council to try to get some kind of funding for the theatre, the Arts Council agreed on the condition that they have white directors come in and run the show for them, do the directing and the producing. Uncle Lester refused. He was adamant that they ‘needed to do everything from top to bottom’, otherwise it could not be called a Black Theatre.<sup>60</sup> Around that time, and after 16 months of lobbying, the Black Theatre received minimal government funding (of \$9,200) from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. In June 1975, the theatre received a grant of \$86,000. Former Indigenous Blues singer Bettie Fisher became the administrator of the newly established ‘Black Theatre Arts and Cultural Centre’ and used the money to renovate the old warehouse and develop a theatre and studio area.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ernie Dingo, interview, 36:38–37:15, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>58</sup> Gerry Bostock, interview, 38:01–38:30, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>59</sup> Australian Dance Council, Ausdance Inc. ‘1999 Hall of Fame: Carole Johnson’, <http://www.australiandanceawards.net.au/award-winners/hall-of-fame/carole-johnson>.

<sup>60</sup> Lester Bostock Interview, 44:13–44:41, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>61</sup> Anna Cole and Wendy Lewis, ‘Fisher, Bettie (1939-1976)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 14 (1996), <http://adb.anu.edu/biography/fisher-bettie-10187/text18001>.

The first full-length Aboriginal play to be performed at the Black Theatre in Redfern was *The Cake Man* by Robert Merritt in 1975 and it gained critical recognition. Based on a narrative about life on a mission, the story is about a family, Ruby, Sweet William and their child Pumpkin Head, as they struggle to survive.<sup>62</sup> It was a milestone for Aboriginal people because it was written, directed, produced and initiated by Aborigines. From his prison cell, Uncle Bob Merritt wrote the play as part of his prison workshop, and Uncle Bob Maza rushed back and forth from the prison to collect script pages.

In 1976, a season of 'Black Plays by Black Artists' was planned and included works by Uncle Gerry Bostock and others. However, after Bettie Fisher, the manager of the Black Theatre, died in May 1976, the theatre lost its funding in June of that year. Tension grew between the Aboriginal Arts Board and the management of the Black Theatre. The Board accused the theatre of 'being irresponsible and/or perhaps acting illegally within the terms of their own article'. The Board was critical of Uncle Lester Bostock's appointment as Fisher's replacement, and this resulted in the Black Theatre's application for \$76,000 for the 1976–1977 financial year being unsuccessful. In an interview with Maryrose Casey, the author of a book called *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967-1990*, Marcia Langton said that there was a clash of agendas between some Indigenous arts bureaucrats and the Black Theatre's management. Langton believed the difficulties faced by the Black Theatre was in many ways a 'last gasp of assimilation' because their work challenged the accepted expectations of Aboriginal people:

We were a serious theatre and we weren't taken seriously, certainly not by Aboriginal bureaucrats ... there was never a misappropriation of funds but the bureaucrats were terrified of expressions of Aboriginal life. Their job, whether they recognised it or not, was to convince their 'white masters' that Aborigines were assimilating and living useful lives, in three bedroom brick veneer homes [This was compounded by] the Anglo hang-up about theatre. It infected them as much as it did anyone else. [There was an underlying message] that a 'good Aborigine' was one who played soccer or football. It was a psychological war-zone.<sup>63</sup>

Here we can see that there were different ways in which Indigenous bureaucrats and activists contested negative stereotypes of Indigenous Australians in general. For some, 'such as the members of the Black Theatre, the pathway was in part to contest assimilationist views; (but) for others it was to demonstrate how Indigenous Australians could *adapt* to the dominant

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<sup>62</sup> Belinda Wheeler, ed., *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2013), 157.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–09.

monoculture, in effect supporting assimilationist perspectives'. By presenting the problems of Aboriginal people and representing them as 'real human beings dealing with conflict', the Black Theatre's productions challenged 'cartoon' representations of Indigenous Australians. The Black Theatre represented Aboriginal people as 'human beings with a specific and different culture and experience in urban environments'. Subsequently, tension was created with other Aboriginal activists with different agendas. In a newspaper article, Uncle Gerry Bostock was quoted as saying, 'If white Australia has ignored the fact that urban blacks have a culture, the more respectable Aboriginal cultural organisations don't seem too interested or excited about the idea either'.<sup>64</sup>

The Black Theatre was completely dependent on government grants and the decision to cut funds created a crisis. Uncle Lester Bostock and members of the company met with church groups and arts organisations and established a committee to raise funds for the theatre. Uncle Lester recognised that 'without money the theatre would fold', and so they focused their limited resources on producing his brother Uncle Gerry Bostock's play, *Here Comes the Nigger* (see Figure 77).<sup>65</sup>

*Here Comes the Nigger* had major themes of racism and sexism in Australia. In fact, my Uncle actually said that, 'If you scratch a sexist you'll find a racist and vice versa'. The play was about a blind Aboriginal man named Sam who was tutored by a white-Australian woman called Odette. The play explores the racist attitudes of both the white-Australian and the Aboriginal sides when other characters wrongly assume there is a sexual relationship between the two young people. In the play, Sam's brother Billy and his partner Verna are militant Aboriginal activists and they accuse Sam of being a sell-out of his people. Odette's brother Neil, a Vietnam veteran, is a self-proclaimed racist and horrified that she is having a relationship with an Aborigine. Neil and his army mates set out to teach Sam a lesson, and the play ends tragically when Sam is beaten to death.

Uncle Gerry's play was different to the early 1970s work by Jack Davis and Harry Williams because their works did not impinge on the broader theatre community. The primary context of Kevin Gilbert's play *The Cherry Pickers* focused on the experiences of itinerant Aboriginal rural workers, and *The Cake Man* by Robert Merritt focused on Aboriginal mission life. Gerry

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 109–10.

Bostock's play was the first production of a play by an Aboriginal writer set in an urban environment, and with this play urban Aboriginal voices began to be heard.<sup>66</sup>



**Figure 77: Playbill poster for *Here Comes the Nigger***

Marcia Langton played the role of Verna in *Here Comes the Nigger* and, in 2014, she spoke about her memories of the play:

So what the play 'Her Comes the Nigger' by Gerry Bostock did was, take the heart of racism and serve it up to the audience in a way that they had never seen it or thought about it before. And even the title... 'Here Comes the Nigger!' Shocking! The play was shocking! That's why it was so exciting.<sup>67</sup>

In mid-1975, non-Indigenous Australian actor Bryan Brown was performing in a play at the Nimrod theatre when he was approached by Bob Maza who told him about a new play at the Black Theatre and that there was a part that was right for him.<sup>68</sup> Brown described *Here Comes the Nigger* as 'a raw, gutsy drama, and I played the role of a Vietnam vet (Neil) who doesn't like the idea of his sister being involved with a black man'.<sup>69</sup> The play generated a lot of

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 110–11.

<sup>67</sup> Marcia Langton, interview, 49:45–50:08, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>68</sup> Bryan Brown, interview, 49:10–49:45, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>69</sup> Bryan Brown, interview, 50:09–50:19, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.



excitement in the Redfern community and everyone was behind it. Uncle Gerry Bostock noted that the support of the Aboriginal community even extended to the goomies, who immediately recognised what these young people were trying to achieve, and so, as a very dignified and respectful gesture, they deliberately stayed away from the location of the theatre:

When we started putting on the performances, the *goomies*, the Aboriginal local alcoholics, would bypass the theatre, they would skirt right around it, because they didn't want to give the white audience any bad vibes about the theatre - because they wanted them [he pauses] ... there was a pride in the community about people giving their bit to the Black Theatre performance.<sup>70</sup>

Marcia Langton worked during the day at the Aboriginal Medical Service and would go from there to rehearsals at the Black Theatre:

I was a nurse or a receptionist or something, you know, so I was like the barrel girl, I would walk on and say 'Frank's here' you know, or 'There's somebody to see you', ... so I had a very small role, but it was so tremendously exciting.

Bryan Brown laughed as he explained how his role in the play made him nervous about being a whitefella in Redfern at that time:

of course doing, *Here Comes the Nigger*, where, you know, in that play I get to kick the shit out of Kevin Smith, you know the terrific Aboriginal actor, who's since passed away, ... but you know, I beat the shit out of him, and it was a bit scary me wandering around Redfern after that ... a lot of the time people can't get the difference between what goes on stage and what doesn't, you know, I remember one time a lady coming up on the matinee and attacking me with an umbrella during the play!<sup>71</sup>

Marcia Langton also laughed as she remembered how Indigenous people in the audience reacted to this part of the play, but then her tone became serious as she gave full credit to Bryan Brown for his acting performance and acknowledged the risk he took to be a part of this groundbreaking play:

They were so upset by the fight scene, they thought it was real, and they jumped into the stage area and started bashing Bryan with their umbrellas and saying 'You stop that! You leave him alone!' and we had to call the play off and calm everybody down and explain that it wasn't real, and they said 'Yes it was!' and we said 'No, no, it's not real.' But yeah, people who had never seen theatre before thought it was real – they thought we were bashing each other up on the stage every night ... and Bryan

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<sup>70</sup> Gerry Bostock, interview, 50:24–50:51, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>71</sup> Bryan Brown, interview, 51:21–51:48, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.



was so good! He played the role of the white-racist so well. You know they were very brave to do that. That was very courageous, they could have gotten killed you know.<sup>72</sup>

As CEO of the Black Theatre, Lester Bostock's role was to find funding for the theatre. So he went to the local bank manager at Redfern and the bank gave them an overdraft.<sup>73</sup> Bryan Brown said:

The buck stopped with Lester, he had to try and find the finance, the money every week to pay the actors, um, to just keep the place running ... that wasn't easy and there's a bank manager there, I don't know which bank he went to, but geez I would think that he may have had a mental break-down sometime during that, because Lester squeezed money out of that bloke every-week. He must have been a good salesman Lester.<sup>74</sup>

At that time in Redfern, police arrests of Aboriginal people were so frequent that the theatre staff and actors were forced to be prepared for the more than likely event that someone would be locked up by the police. Marcia Langton remembered that they had put aside money for a bail fund and had someone stand by every night. Police arresting blackfellas was the 'modus operandi' and if someone got arrested there had to be someone available to run up to the police station and bail them out, otherwise the show could not go on.<sup>75</sup>

Bryan Brown explained how tight the money was and how the play ran on a week-by-week basis:

and come Friday we would never know if we were going to get paid, and we knew that Lester was down there, late afternoon Friday, talking to the local bank manager to convince him to give the money to pay the cheques, because next week there was crowds coming to the play! Each Friday we'd go 'Well, are we on next week or not?' and he'd pay out the money and he'd say 'Yep! We're on for another week!'<sup>76</sup>

At a certain point, Marcia Langton realised that the work they were doing was groundbreaking, and that was when they saw the impact the play had on the white audience and how very powerful that impact was.<sup>77</sup> Bryan Brown added:

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<sup>72</sup> Marcia Langton, interview, 51:49–52:36, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>73</sup> Lester Bostock, interview, 52:39–52:50, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>74</sup> Bryan Brown, interview, 52:50–53:16, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>75</sup> Marcia Langton, interview, 53:17–53:36, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>76</sup> Bryan Brown, 53:37–54:01, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>77</sup> Marcia Langton, interview, 54:08–54:26, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

It had no hype, it had no money for marketing, it wasn't in the mainstream theatre there of Sydney, it ... the only way it could get recognised or known was to have its door open and to have a play on – and people to discover it.<sup>78</sup>

By 1977, there had been no grants for a year and the Black Theatre was in serious financial difficulty. It continued to operate for the community even after the phones and electricity were disconnected, but the unresolved rent became insurmountable and they could not continue. The people became burnt out from having to try and find money for the theatre while also trying to make their own living. Langton remembers:

The rest of society just saw us as a criminal element, apart from the group who went on to get small parts in professional productions ... We kept going for a year without money, but you can't live on twenty dollars a week.<sup>79</sup>

According to the late Aboriginal actor Kevin Smith, the Black Theatre in Redfern 'inspired confidence among the community'.<sup>80</sup> Another Aboriginal actor, Bindi Williams, added that just seeing someone like yourself can change you, and you begin to think, '“Yes, I can do that! If they can do it, I can do it! If she can do it, we can do it!”'

At the end of the documentary *The Redfern Story*, Gary Foley makes a comment that I at first perceived to be somewhat exaggerated, but later, upon reflection, I recognised that there was indeed truth to what he said. Foley stated plainly, 'We believed that we could change the world ... and we did, we changed the world around us, we changed the way in which the world around us related to us, we changed the shape of Australian society'.<sup>81</sup>

The forward-moving momentum for Aboriginal people in Sydney did not end with the demise of the Black Theatre in 1977. Lester Bostock continued to be passionate about the arts. He helped form Radio Redfern (now Koori Radio) in the early 1980s and was the first Aboriginal presenter on SBS radio. Later he joined SBS Television and was part of the first Aboriginal program, teaming up with Rhoda Roberts, another Bundjalung woman.<sup>82</sup> He then took some

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<sup>78</sup> Bryan Brown, 54:27–54:41, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>79</sup> Maryrose Casey, *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967-1990* (Brisbane, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 116.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>81</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 55:06–55:20, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>82</sup> Sara Irvine, 'Uncle Lester Bostock Awarded an Honorary Doctorate by AFTRS', First Peoples Disability Network Australia, 2016, accessed 23 November 2017, <http://fpdn.org.au/uncle-lester-bostock-awarded-honorary-doctorate-by-aftrs/>.

time off SBS to help create a documentary film with Gerry Bostock and Alec Morgan, *Lousy Little Sixpence*:

I was one of the producers on that. Because we had a bit of knowledge, we'd be working on those programs. So those types of things came about not because one had a desire to pursue some sort of career, but one reacted to what the situation was at the time.<sup>83</sup>

As previous discussed in this thesis, Uncle Gerry Bostock and Alec Morgan directed the film which was a groundbreaking documentary on the treatment of Aboriginal people in the 1920s and 1930s. The film features interviews with five elderly Aboriginal people, Margaret Tucker, Bill Reid, Geraldine Briggs, Flo Caldwell and Violet Shaw, who were part of what we now call the Stolen Generations. These people were the same age as my grandparent's generation. They told their stories to the filmmakers and the documentary was narrated by Chicka Dixon. It depicts how the APB created a servant class on Aborigines reserves, with little regard for human rights. Gerry Bostock and Alec Morgan wisely decided that the stories that the old people were telling had to be backed up with archival evidence, and so they found photographs, newspaper articles and newsreel footage, most of which had never been seen by the general public.<sup>84</sup>

They travelled through Victoria and NSW, with the film taking three years to research and produce. Their research was not funded, so they lived off unemployment benefits and slept in a caravan. They had some small investors from a variety of sources, such as the Australian Film Commission and the Nurses Union, but they needed \$10,000 to finish the film. At that time, Bob Hawke was the newly elected prime minister, and so Gerry Bostock, Alec Morgan and Chicka Dixon set up a meeting with the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Clive Holding. Uncle Lester Bostock remembered, 'the Labor Party needed to show they were on side with Aboriginal people. We were euphoric when we got the money and Clive Holding took us out to dinner'.<sup>85</sup> With this support, they were able to finalise the film (see Figure 78).

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<sup>83</sup> Lester Bostock, interview by Rachael Maza, 'Best Foot Forward', *ABC TV*, 5 September 2003.

<sup>84</sup> Margaret Smith, '25 Years On, Classic Film Still Shocks', *Koori Mail*, 22 October 2008, <http://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/koori-mail/koori-mail-issues>.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

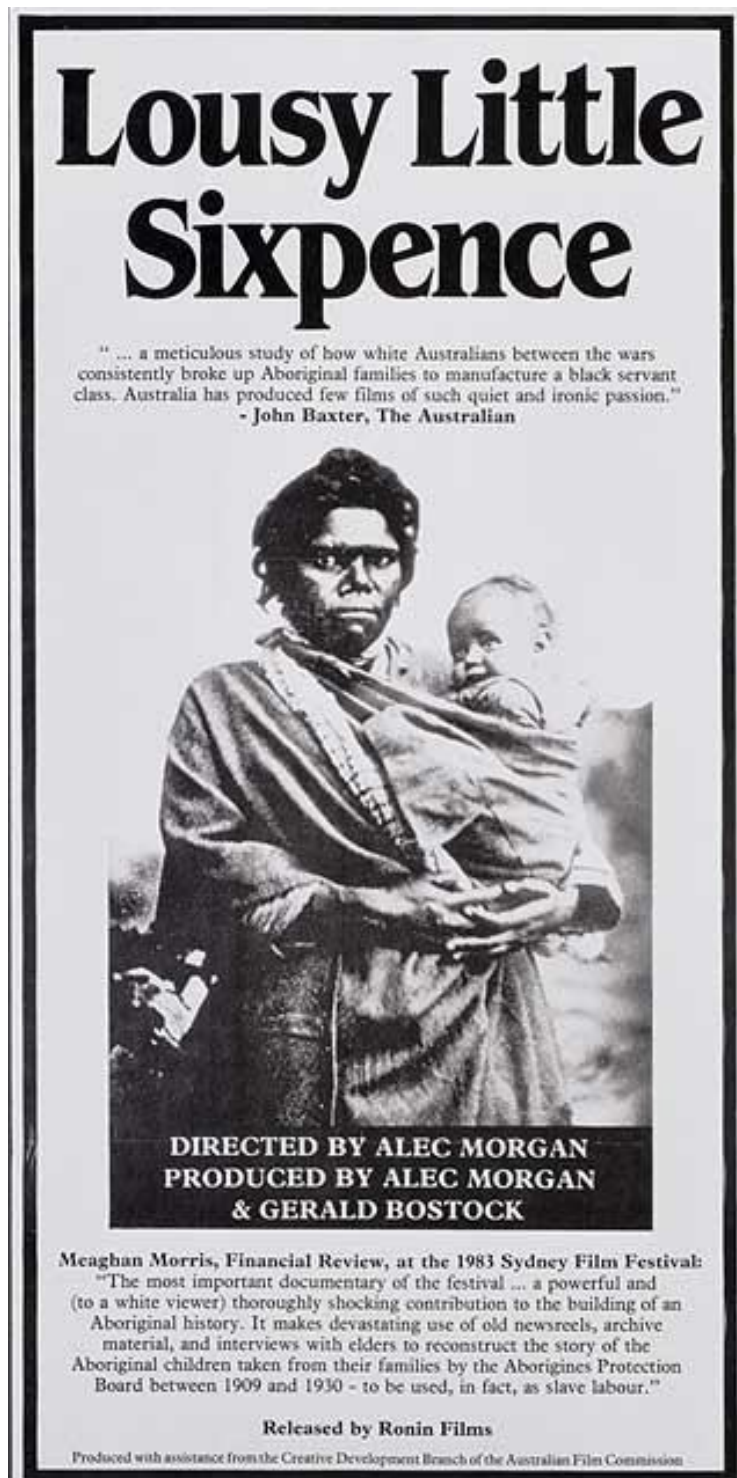


**Figure 78: Film poster for *Lousy Little Sixpence***

Morgan said 'the film was a phenomenon when it opened in 1983', but even after six weeks at the Dendy theatre in Sydney they experienced trouble and resistance: 'It was the same time as Henry Reynolds book, *The Other Side of the Frontier* was released, and there was a hunger in the wider community to learn more about Aboriginal people, as nothing was out there'. Mainstream white-Australian society did not seem ready to accept this raw Australian history

narrative, and Uncle Gerry Bostock said that even though they backed up the elders' stories with archives, 'we were accused of fabricating the evidence'. The ABC was not interested in screening the film, so like our earlier freedom fighters (William Cooper, etc.), they got a petition together. Linda Burney was then the head of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. She took the film up and it became a text for schools. Morgan explained that back then there was no terminology or words used to describe what we now know as the Stolen Generations, so the film was very significant in bringing this whole issue to the public. Later it influenced Philip Noyce's film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002). It took another 25 years for the Prime Minister of Australia to apologise to the Stolen Generations.<sup>86</sup>

Marcia Langton's earlier comment about *Here Comes the Nigger*, that it 'was shocking, and that's what was so exciting', could also apply to *Lousy Little Sixpence*, because here was another example of Aboriginal creative expression by Uncle Gerry Bostock (with Alec Morgan) that caused the wider Australian public to learn about the treatment of Aboriginal people, this time the Stolen Generations. *Lousy Little Sixpence* preceded 'an explosion of Aboriginal literature in various genres including life writing, fiction, poetry, film, drama and music'.

Anita Heiss and Peter Minter agree that the literature of the 1970s was inspired by the drive for more political and territorial self-determination, which they say 'demonstrated a fusion of political and creative energies'. Aboriginal social and political life delivered new forms of agency, and new types of authorship were explored and invented. Heiss and Minter described Aboriginal writers like Kath Walker, Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert, Gerry Bostock, Monica Clare and Lionel Fogarty (who were all politically active while simultaneously writing their own creative literature) as 'catalysing a nascent Aboriginal publishing industry' and writing their own vanguard pieces of creative literature.<sup>87</sup> Just as Bindi Williams explained when he said 'If they can do it, I can do it', it was these literary Aboriginal activists who truly inspired other Aboriginal people to tell their own stories, because they gave their people the confidence to do what they had done.

It was as though these 'pioneering' Aborigines gave other aspiring Aborigines *permission* to do the same; because after years of oppression, racism, subordination and white control,

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, eds., *The Macquarie Pen Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2008), 5–6.

Aboriginal people were only beginning to believe in themselves and their own capabilities. Therein lies the truth of Gary Foley's statement, 'We believed that we could change the world ... and we did, we changed the world around us, we changed the way in which the world around us related to us, we changed the shape of Australian society'.<sup>88</sup>

Behind the scenes, a vigorous and commercially independent network of Aboriginal presses was consolidated with a new generation of Aboriginal authors, editors and publishers who worked alongside elders. 'Mainstream publishers also took a strong interest in Aboriginal authors and by the end of the 1980s Aboriginal writing was firmly established as a major force in Australian letters'.<sup>89</sup>

My Aunt, Ruby Langford Ginibi, started writing her first book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, on 23 May 1984. She described it as 'a true story of an Aboriginal woman's struggle to raise a family of nine children in a society divided between black and white cultures in Australia'.<sup>90</sup> *Don't Take Your Love to Town* was published in 1988 (see Figure 79) and Aunt Ruby went on to write another four books: *Real Deadly* (1992), *My Bundjalung People* (1994), *Haunted by the Past* (1999) and *All My Mob* (2007).

Aunt Ruby said in a 1999 ABC interview that she was always going to write a book because (at that time) 'there was nothing taught in this country about Aboriginal history'. She thought that if she could tell people what it was like from the Aboriginal perspective, 'then maybe they'd understand us a little better'.<sup>91</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi was part of a large number of Indigenous female writers who published in the late 1980s and 1990s. According to American academic Belinda Wheeler, the first time that the wider Australian public showed genuine interest in Australian Aborigines, their culture and their literature was, arguably, in the lead up to the bicentennial celebrations. 'A large portion of Australia's non-Aboriginal community wanted to explore literature written or performed by Australian Aboriginals'.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 55:06–55:20, in Johnson and Milliken, *The Redfern Story*.

<sup>89</sup> Heiss and Minter, *Macquarie Pen Anthology*, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, Acknowledgements.

<sup>91</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, '[Replay of Interview on 5th July 1999]', by Margaret Throsby, *Radio National* (10 December 2012).

<sup>92</sup> Wheeler, *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature*, 1.

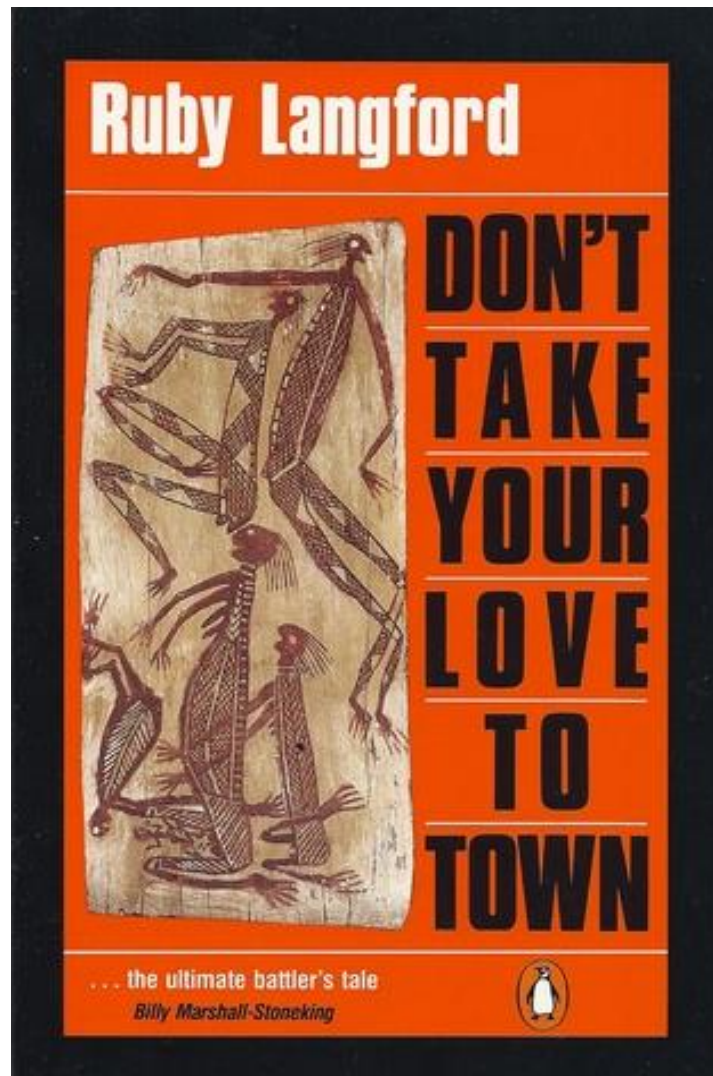


**Figure 79: Front cover of Auntie Ruby’s first book, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town***

At that time, autobiographical narratives and testimonial fiction became key storytelling genres and a growing number of Aboriginal women embraced literary writing as a vehicle for both authorial independence and cultural responsibility.<sup>93</sup> There is an abundance of academic analysis and reviews of Auntie Ruby’s books, including papers from Pat Grimshaw, Suvendrini Perera, Carole Ferrier and Penny van Toorn. There was also a scathing review in *The Australian* by author Mary Rose Liverani in 1992, to which Auntie Ruby responded, ‘No white could write that sort of story, because no white has ever lived the life of an Aboriginal person like me’. Tim Rowse’s review was the most detailed I could find about Auntie Ruby’s writing, and his detailed analysis of her writing style and what he said about the technicalities of ‘narration of

<sup>93</sup> Heiss and Minter, *Macquarie Pen Anthology*, 7.

subject' generated a great deal of thought for me. It brought my attention to the nuances of writing. I saw it as a forensic study of narration that I could learn from. For example, he said:

As my account of *Don't Take Your Love To Town* points out, the narrating subject does not marshal the incidents of life into such an easily intelligible pattern; rather we are treated to a proliferation of incident, a life set out for review but not presented as something already reviewed and understood by a subject ... But if there is an obstruction to Ruby Langford as the subject and assured interpreter of her own destiny, it is not non-Aboriginal hegemony, not the weight of colonial history, ... it is something more immediate; the contingencies of kinship fractured by rural-urban migration and the fickle vulnerabilities of men. We have to work harder to see the coherence of Langford's book ... and the effort delivers a more innovative and uncomfortable knowledge.<sup>94</sup>

During the filming of *Lousy Little Sixpence* and on later filmmaking ventures, Uncle Lester Bostock noticed there were very few Indigenous people working in the film industry:

I was producing. My brother Gerry was directing. You could count them all on one hand, the number of (Indigenous) film and television makers around at that time in 1990. And that's not too long ago. And the only way we're gonna get Aboriginal crew is train them ourselves. So I went and saw some film-maker friends of mine, and I ran into Tom Jefferies, who was then head of the film school. What was produced out of those two courses was about 30 Aboriginal people came out of those two courses.<sup>95</sup>

In a ceremony to award Uncle Lester an honorary degree, Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) Chair Juliann Schultz called him the pioneer of Indigenous media, describing him as a filmmaker, a mentor and an advocate.

As mentioned above, it was his role as a producer of *Lousy Little Sixpence* (1983) that motivated Uncle Lester to push for film and television training for Indigenous people. He has written policies and protocols on filming in Aboriginal communities and for Indigenous employment. In the 1990s, Uncle Lester ran accelerated workshops at AFTRS in television. His legacy has helped to pave the way for the formation of the AFTRS Indigenous Unit. Uncle Lester has received numerous awards for community service over the years, including a Centenary Medal, the NSW Law and Justice Foundation Award for Aboriginal Justice and, in 2010, was NAIDOC's Male Elder of the Year. AFTRS Chair Julianne Schultz said Uncle

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<sup>94</sup> Tim Rowse, 'The Aboriginal Subject in Autobiography: Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Australian Literary Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 14–29.

<sup>95</sup> Australian Film, Television and Radio School, 'AFTRS Bestows Honorary Degrees on Lester Bostock and David White', accessed 13 January 2017, <https://www.if.com.au/aftrs-bestows-honorary-degrees-on-lester-bostock-and-david-white/>.



Lester's training programs were instrumental in the increase in Indigenous drama production among emerging filmmakers, and he has contributed greatly to the talented pool of Indigenous filmmakers we have today.<sup>96</sup> Both Uncle Lester and Uncle Gerry trained Indigenous students in film and television and their graduates include Aboriginal actor and director Wayne Blair, who directed the drama series *Redfern Now*, and Nakkiah Lui, actor, director and producer of the *Black Comedy* series.

My father George Bostock has always said that his life began at 60, because the strange and wonderful direction his life took was rejuvenating. In 2001, his play 'Seems Like Yesterday' was produced by Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performing Arts Company (see Figure 80). It was about a young Indigenous soldier who goes on active service to fight in the Vietnam War. Following the run of his play, then Aboriginal Director Wesley Enoch approached him and asked if he was interested in auditioning for a small part in a play called 'Fountains Beyond'. Dad went along, got the part and was on stage in the blink of an eye. He thoroughly enjoyed himself and later got a part in Kevin Gilbert's play 'The Cherry Pickers'. Once again it was Enoch who asked Dad to audition, and once again he was successful. He was incredulous when he got the part, and I remember saying, 'Geez Dad, there must be a shortage of short, fat, blackfellas!'

A year or so later, Enoch asked Dad if he would like his role in 'The Cherry Pickers' back and to tour with the original cast. My father thought, 'What the heck!' and nearly fell over when Enoch told him they were touring England. The novelty of an all-Indigenous cast had their performances filling up at every venue and the tour was a great success.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

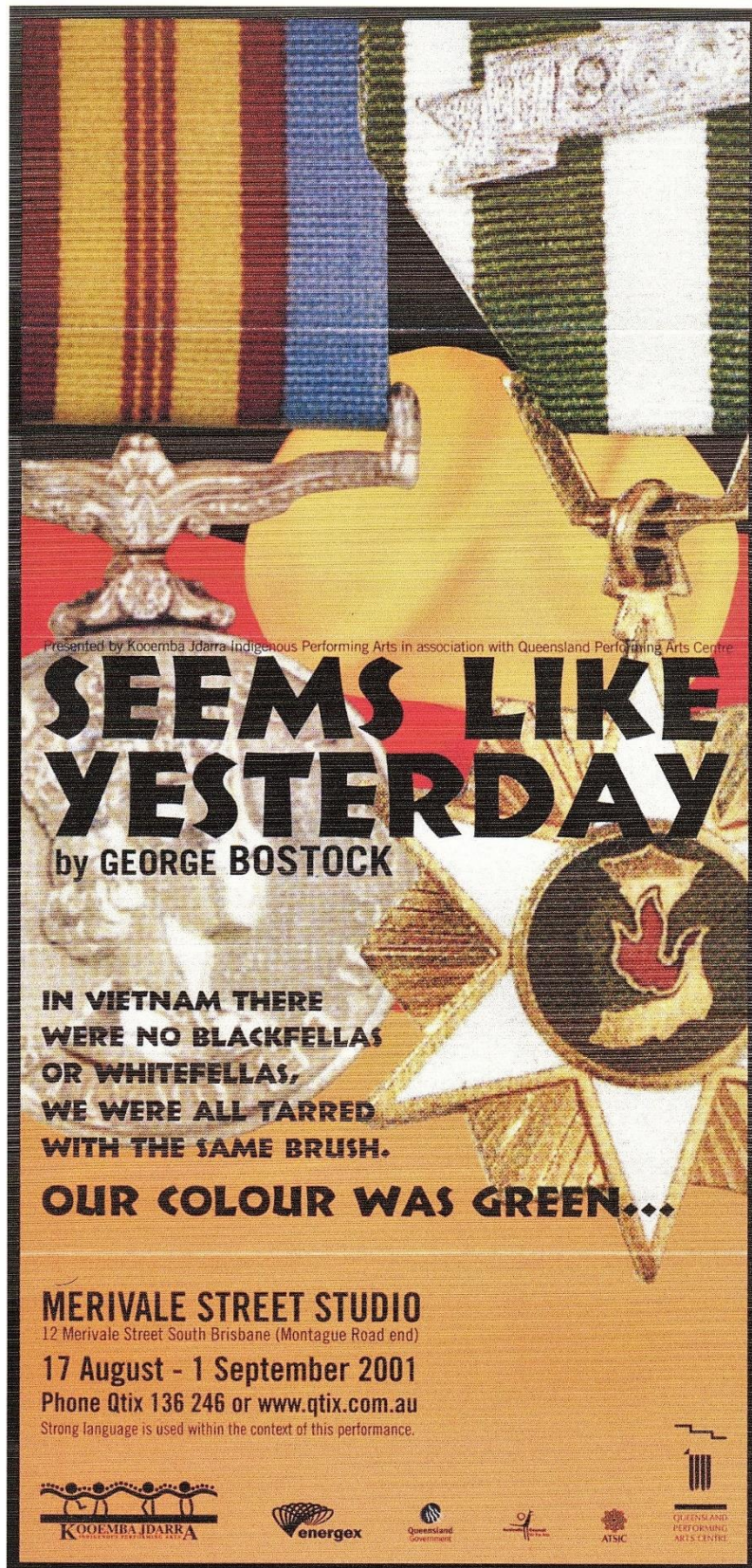


Figure 80: Poster for George Bostock's play 'Seems Like Yesterday' (2001)

## 6.9 Conclusion

The young Aboriginal activists' ingenious Tent Embassy protest for Aboriginal land rights embarrassed the Australian Government on the global stage, but the activists soon came to realise that by investing in theatrical and creative expression they could spread their stories to a wider, more receptive non-Indigenous public. That realisation did not mean that they regretted their public protests. Each action served its own purpose. Protests and demonstrations brought about public/non-Indigenous awareness of their land rights message, and theatrical and creative expression maintained and continued non-Indigenous awareness of the struggles and experiences of Aboriginal people in Australia. Both the Tent Embassy and the birth of creative expression generated a new kind of Aboriginal pride because it was in that non-conformity and creative expression that Aboriginal people began to realise that they did not have to forsake or renounce their Indigeneity to be a part of Australian society. I think it was this realisation that triggered the birth of Aboriginal literature.

By the end of the 1980s, Aboriginal writing was firmly established as a major force in Australia as the mainstream became increasingly interested in Aboriginal writer.<sup>97</sup> Like Auntie Ruby's books, the key storytelling genres of the late 1980s and 1990s were autobiographical narratives and testimony, particularly from 'the growing number of Aboriginal women who found in literary writing a vehicle for both authorial independence and cultural responsibility'.<sup>98</sup>

I stated in the Introduction chapter the importance of Indigenous methodologies being authentic to who we are. Storytelling has always been an intrinsic part of Aboriginal culture. We have yarns and yarning circles, and Dreamtime Legends and Songlines which were passed through the generations by way of storytelling, and even in modern times (as this thesis confirms) I do not think that we have ever lost that need to tell our stories. I think it is in our DNA. In saying that, I have just now realised that this chapter has revealed that it is certainly in *my* DNA.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 7.

## Chapter 7: My *Ego-Histoire*, 1964–Present

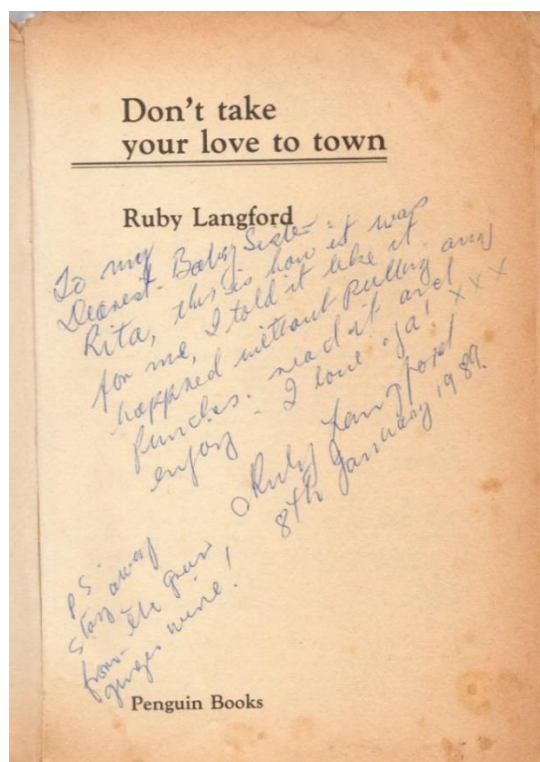


**Figure 81: My mother's copy of Auntie Ruby's book which Auntie Ruby autographed for her<sup>1</sup>**

*To my Dearest Baby Sister,  
Rita, this is how it was for me, I told it like it  
happened without pulling any  
punches. read it and  
enjoy. I love ya! XXX  
Ruby Langford  
8th January 1989.<sup>2</sup>*

*P.S. stay away from the green ginger wine!<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Author's Collection.

<sup>2</sup> My mother's copy of her sister, Ruby Langford Ginibi's first book, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. Auntie Ruby wrote this inscription and signed and dated it. Note that she signed it 'Ruby Langford', not 'Ruby Langford Ginibi'. Auntie Ruby's Aboriginal name was given to her after she wrote this book.

<sup>3</sup> Also note that my mother will 'haunt me for eternity' if I do not add that she was almost always a teetotaler and abstained from drinking alcohol, except for a little nip of green ginger wine, heavily watered down with lemonade, on extremely rare occasions. This comment is Auntie Ruby laughing at the pitiful intoxication gained from my mother's rare lapses from sobriety.



## 7.1 About *Ego-Histoire*

Academic autobiography has emerged as an approach used by an increasing number of scholars, not simply as a means for negotiating writing on lived experience, but also as a method of scholarly analysis and argument.<sup>4</sup> I found that there was not only an extensive corpus of historians' autobiographies, but also numerous examinations and analyses of theoretical connections between history and life writing.

*Ego-histoire* is the phrase coined by Pierre Nora to describe the collective product of his advice to historians to write about themselves. In the introduction to the Gallimard's *Bibliothèque des Histoires* (Library of Stories) collection *Essais d'Ego-Histoire* (Ego-History Essays), Nora describes the compiled essays as 'contributing to the development of a new genre: ego-history, a new genre for a new period of historical consciousness'. Nora stated that for a century, 'the scientific tradition as a whole has forced historians to absent themselves from the scene of their work'. Their personalities were hidden—'behind their knowledge to set up barricades with file notes, to run away to some other period, to only express themselves through others'—leaving the self as a mere mention in the dedication or the preface of a book. Historiography, however, has 'shown up the pretenses of this impersonality and how its guarantees lie on shaky ground'. Nora argues 'that spelling out one's involvement with the material offers a better protection than vain protests about objectivity'. What was a stumbling block becomes an advantage, and 'the unveiling and analysis of existential involvement, rather than moving away from some impartial investigation, becomes instead an instrument for improving understanding'.<sup>5</sup> This final chapter of my thesis presents my own *ego-histoire*, and I argue that mindful inclusion of the theoretical components that differentiate *ego-histoire* from autobiography serve to elevate autobiography to create a more enhanced narrative of history.

Jeremy Popkin stated that although Nora invented the label *Ego-histoire*, and published *Essais d'Ego-Histoire* in 1987, it was not the first modern autobiographical publication by a French historian. He cites Philippe Aries's *Un historien du dimanche* (1980) and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Paris –Montpellier* (1982) memoir as attracting significant attention, but clarifies

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret K. Willard-Traub, 'Scholarly Autobiography: An Alternative Intellectual Practice', *Feminist Studies*, Inc. 33, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 188.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Nora, '“Introduction” from *Essais d'Ego-Histoire*. Translated by Stephen Muecke', in *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In turn, in turn: Ego-histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia*, eds., Vanessa Castejon, Anna Cole, Oliver Haag and Karen Hughes (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press), 21.

that it was Nora's initiative that 'converted such enterprises from individual initiatives into a collective movement'.<sup>6</sup>

Jeremy D. Popkin is a Professor of History at the University of Kentucky. Apart from interests in the Haitian Revolution, the abolition of slave trading and French history, Popkin studies *ego-histoire* and historians' autobiographies. In 1999, he wrote an article called 'Historians on the Autobiographical Frontier', and in 2005 *History, Historians and Autobiography*. In 2007, he turned his attention to Australia. In 'Ego-histoire Down Under: Australian Historian-Autobiographers', Popkin writes that with the publishing of their own versions of *ego-histoire*, Australian historians placed themselves 'on the way to becoming one of three countries—along with France and the United States—where one can legitimately speak of a genuine corpus of historians' autobiographies, as opposed to a few isolated initiatives'. Popkin stated that historians' memoirs in the United States and France have been usually judged to be too ordinary and predictable to be of interest to general readers or literary critics, but he has high praise for Australian historians:

Nowhere else have historians been recognised as having made such an important contribution to their society's overall tradition of first-person writing. In part, this reflects the smaller size of Australia's cultural elite, but it also reflects the literary quality of many Australian historians' memoir and their authors' conviction that being a historian should not preclude being a good writer.<sup>7</sup>

Popkin concludes that Australian writing (of the same period as American and French) is more explicit in demonstrating 'the close connection between individual and national identity and the understanding of history'. While American and French historian-autobiographers have taken for granted the stability of their own country's identity, Australian historian-autobiographers have used their stories to dramatise this country's relationship to Britain and Europe, define a distinctive national personality, define the role of gender in that definition, and come to terms with its troubled relationship with Aboriginal people. In 'casting personal issues as well as public ones', Popkin stated that Australian historian-autobiographers have bridged a gap that usually exists between academic scholars (with their greater learning) and the general public.<sup>8</sup> I found Popkin's praise of Australian historians' writing daunting, because

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremy Popkin, 'Historians on the Autobiographical Frontier', *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 731.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Popkin, 'Ego-histoire Down Under: Australia Historian-Autobiographers', *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 107.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

this chapter has been the most difficult for me to write, and so when I read about Ann Curthoys's initial struggles with writing her book about her participation in the Australian Freedom Ride in the 1960s, I found it both comforting and illuminating.

In Ann Curthoys's journal article 'Memory, History and *Ego-histoire*: Narrating and Re-enacting the Australian Freedom Ride', I was interested to read that, like me, Curthoys had not learned about *ego-histoire* until recently. She wished she had known about it before writing her book 'Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers' because she said it might have helped her with issues that she struggled with, namely, the question of how to position herself.<sup>9</sup> Curthoys said she was 'torn between the form, the memoir, which relies on the authority of the participant and eyewitness; and the genre of professional history, whose authority derives from the quality of its research and the strength of its interpretation'.<sup>10</sup>

On the technicalities involved she asked:

How should I manage the fact that I was both participant and historian? Should I say 'I' or 'she' when referring to myself, and should it be 'we' or 'they' for the students? 'I' seemed too personal, 'she' a little ridiculous, and 'we' implied a false unity, while 'they' I thought, seemed unnaturally distant, implying a false objectivity. In the end I used 'I' for myself, and 'we' and 'they' for the students, as the context demanded.<sup>11</sup>

In conclusion, Curthoys stated that if, because her book was 'only lightly self-reflexive', it could not be considered a true *ego-histoire*, or even a historical autobiography, 'since there it so little about me', the whole process of narrating the story of the Freedom Ride over so many years has nonetheless led her 'toward intellectual self-examination in an "*ego-histoire-mode*"'.<sup>12</sup>

A number of Indigenous historians have written both inside and outside of the histories that they narrate. However, searching exclusively for examples of Indigenous historians' autobiographies was a difficult task. Apart from the small number of Indigenous historians to choose from, I wondered, for the same reasons as Ann Curthoys did above, whether some of the writing I found could be considered 'true' *ego-histoire*. For me, questions arose about what is considered autobiography and who is considered to be a historian.

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'Memory, History, and Ego-Histoire: Narrating and Re-enacting the Australian Freedom Ride', *Historical Reflections* 38, no. 2 (Summer, 2012): 31.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

Gordon Briscoe's memoir *Racial Folly* appears to be the only true, *ego-histoire* autobiography written by an Aboriginal historian. I find this pleasingly apt considering he was the first Aboriginal Australian to achieve a PhD in History. In the preface of this book, Briscoe respectfully acknowledges that he was 'indebted to two other Aborigines in particular' with whom he had 'life-long social and political relationships and who have written autobiographies'. These were Charles Perkins, who wrote an autobiography called *A Bastard Like Me* in 1975, and John Moriarty, who wrote *Saltwater Fella: An Inspiring True Story of Success Against All Odds* in 2000, but they were not historians.<sup>13</sup>

Aboriginal activist Gary Foley is now a historian and has written extensively about his life experience in the 1970s. His PhD undertaken Melbourne University was titled 'An Autobiographical Narrative of the Black Power Movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy'.<sup>14</sup> Foley has constructed his own website, 'The Koori History Website', and his writings and essays are important contributions to Aboriginal history.<sup>15</sup> Although most of his writing has an autobiographical tone, the parameters of much of his work is set by the duration of events and political timeframes. On that basis, like other possible contenders, he was struck from the 'Indigenous Historians' *Ego-Histoire/Autobiographies*' list that I was trying to compile.

In Canberra, in 2007, there was an international conference on 'Indigenous Biography and Autobiography' and, the following year, the convenors of the conference, Peter Read, Anna Haebich and Frances Peters-Little, edited a publication that presented a compilation of conference papers 'as state of the art Indigenous life-writing, and also as an earnest discussion of the complexities and difficulties involved'. Oliver Haag presented a paper called, 'From Margins to Mainstream: Towards a History of Published Indigenous Autobiographies and Biographies'. Haag has written about the history of the growth of published Indigenous autobiography and biography over 50 years and compiled a very comprehensive bibliography on both styles of Indigenous writing. This bibliography spans from 1956–2004, thus excluding

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<sup>13</sup> Gordon Briscoe, *Racial Folly: A Memoir of Twentieth Century Family* (Canberra, ACT: ANU E-Press and Aboriginal History Inc., 2010), xx. See also, Charles Perkins, *A Bastard Like Me* (Sydney, NSW: Ure Smith, 1975); John Moriarty, *Saltwater Fella: An Inspiring True Story of Success Against All Odds* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books Australia, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Gary Foley, 'An Autobiographical Narrative of the Black Power Movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> Gary Foley, 'The Koori History Website', <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/indexb.html>.



Gordon Briscoe (2010). Arguably, the only other academic on this list is Stephen Kinnane for *Shadow Lines*, but that book is about his grandparents lives.<sup>16</sup>

Another post-conference publication of essays, titled *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In turn, in Turn: Ego-histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia* (edited by Vanessa Castejon, Anna Cole, Oliver Haag and Karen Hughes), was published with the intention to ‘weave together professional and personal accounts of studies that have Australia and Indigeneity at their heart’.<sup>17</sup> This source yielded the only other autobiographical *ego-histoire* by an Aboriginal historian that I could find: ‘Ngarranga Barrangang: Self and History, a Contemporary Aboriginal Journey’ written by Victoria Grieves.<sup>18</sup>

## 7.2 Autobiography and *Ego-Histoire*: What is the Difference?

At the beginning of my research journey, I really struggled with finding a writing style and voice, and I naïvely thought that to be considered a serious scholar it was mandatory that I ‘absent myself from the scene of my work’. Family history research, however, does not allow for the kind of ‘pretense of impersonality’ that Nora described. I understood what he meant when he said that ‘spelling out one’s involvement with the material offers a better protection than vain protests about objectivity’, but while this seems like a permit to escape existing generic boundaries, this is not as easy a venture as it seems.<sup>19</sup>

It was only upon reading Ann Curthoys’s analysis of *ego-histoire* in terms of her struggle with writing her book about the Freedom Rides that I fully understood the complexity of *ego-histoire*. Curthoys cited a collection of essays in 2001 that were attempts by a number of historians to produce the spirit of *ego-histoire*, but they fell short of the mark because they ‘could manage autobiography well enough, but not the theoretical enterprise we now label as *ego-histoire*, with its combination of personal history, a broader social history, and historiographical history’. I too missed that mark in the earlier drafts of this chapter. I embraced

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<sup>16</sup> Oliver Haag, ‘From Margins to Mainstream: Towards a History of Published Indigenous Australian Autobiographies and Biographies’, in *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*, ed., Peter Read (Canberra, ACT: ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc., 2007), 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Vanessa Castejon, Anna Cole, Oliver Haag and Karen Hughes, eds., *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In turn, in Turn: Ego-histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia* (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Victoria Grieves, ‘Ngarranga Barrangang: Self and History, a Contemporary Aboriginal Journey’, in *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In turn, in Turn: Ego-histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia*, eds., Vanessa Castejon, Anna Cole, Oliver Haag and Karen Hughes (Canberra, ACT: ANU Press, 2014), 25–39.

<sup>19</sup> Nora, ‘“Introduction” from *Essais d’Ego-Histoire*’.

the notion of becoming ‘an instrument for improving understanding’, and so I talked about racism I have experienced in my life as a way of improving non-Indigenous understanding of Aboriginal experience. But when using *ego-histoire* as an approach to history writing, there is so much more to it than just ‘improving understanding’. The following is my final attempt to write an *ego-histoire* that keeps in mind the specific nuances of the theoretical enterprise that is *ego-histoire*.<sup>20</sup>

In thinking deeply about this, I found myself scribbling Venn diagrams on paper to try to *get my head around* how I can describe the position I find myself in. I am in an unusually complex position, because I am an Aboriginal historian researching and writing a thesis about my own Aboriginal family history, and concluding it with my own autobiography, specifically an *ego-histoire* (see Figure 82). It is a very personal reflection about my Aboriginal life. The diagram below is what I came up with to try to articulate my position. Curthoys came to see that ‘we are always and inevitably both inside and outside of the histories we narrate’. She explains that we are ‘inside in that the stories affect us emotionally’ and at the same time ‘outside insofar as we necessarily rely on records and memories other than our own’.<sup>21</sup> My thoughts on the subject are a little different because of my unique position.

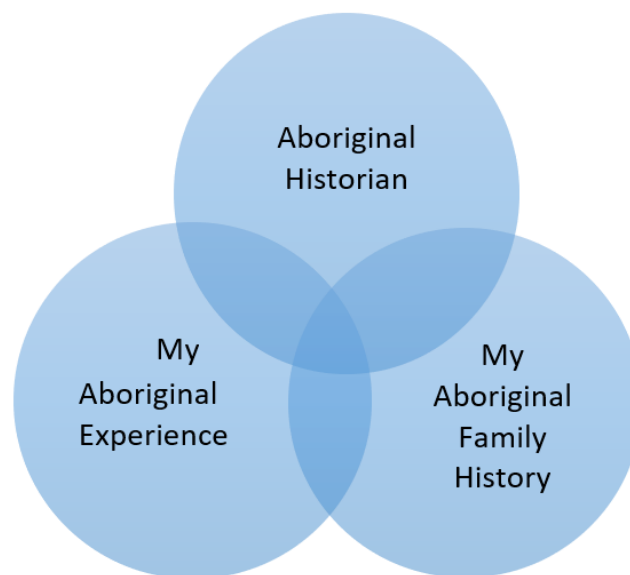


**Figure 82: The three aspects of my involvement in history**

<sup>20</sup> Curthoys, ‘Memory, History, and Ego-Histoire’, 31. I must state that Curthoys cited this because the website I retrieved it from is no longer accessible. Her reference was: Pierre Nora, ‘L’ego-histoire est-elle possible?’, in Luisa Passerini and Alexander C. T. Geppert, eds., ‘European Ego-Histoires: Historiography and the Self, 1970–2000’ [Special issue], *Historiein* 3 (2001), <http://www.nnet.gr/historein/historeinfiles/histvolumes/hist03/hist03nora.htm> (accessed 1 October 2011; site discontinued).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

While I have relied on records and memories other than my own, I do not *feel* as though I am ‘outside’ my family history narrative. It is important to point out that I created the diagram in Figure 82 well before I re-read (and more fully absorbed) what Curthoys was saying about her experience with *ego-histoire*. If we imagine all aspects in Figure 82 as being Australian and Aboriginal history, I see myself situated in the darker, overlapping centre of the three-petal flower in the middle. I believe that I am less outside the history and more fully immersed in it. In fact, I am securely connected to the history of my family by way of my umbilical cord, and that umbilical cord physically grounds me to Bundjalung Country, and Bundjalung Dreamtime and Creation stories and Songlines spiritually connect me with the Earth my mother.

The diagram in Figure 82 tries to describe my inherent sense of being grounded in the centre, and utilising all three aspects of myself to write this family history. Curthoys also said that ‘while academic history may value originality and public history desires relevance and strong story-telling, the differences between them are more ones of degree than kind’.<sup>22</sup> I interpreted that to mean that when academic history and public history (autobiography/*ego-histoire*) are intellectually examined, they are not necessarily two stand-alone entities because the theoretical components of *ego-histoire* (personal history, historical history and historiography) may overlap and/or merge with academic history. Where Curthoys observed that ‘the differences between them are more ones of degree than kind’, I imagined that in terms of *literal* degrees, as I envisaged myself in the centre and turning 360° to utilise one, two, three or all of my existential involvements. I think that is precisely what Nora meant when he wrote that ‘the unveiling and analysis of existential involvement, rather than moving away from some impartial investigation, becomes instead an instrument for improving understanding’.<sup>23</sup>

If I am going to write *ego-histoire*, then it should be done properly as a theoretical enterprise—inclusive of reflections on its components of personal history, broader social history and historiographical history—otherwise it is just another autobiography.

I had a light-bulb moment when I looked at these three theoretical components of *ego-histoire*. I suddenly realised that they could be superimposed over my diagram of the three aspects of my involvement in the writing of my family history. I realised that my existential involvement as an Aboriginal historian enables me to academically inform the ‘historiographical history’ component of *ego-histoire*. I also realised that research of my Aboriginal family history over a

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>23</sup> Nora, ‘“Introduction” from *Essais d’Ego-Histoire*’, 21.

number of generations informs the ‘broader social history’ component of *ego-histoire*. Lastly, I realised that my own Aboriginal experience informs the ‘personal history’ component of *ego-histoire* (see Figure 83).

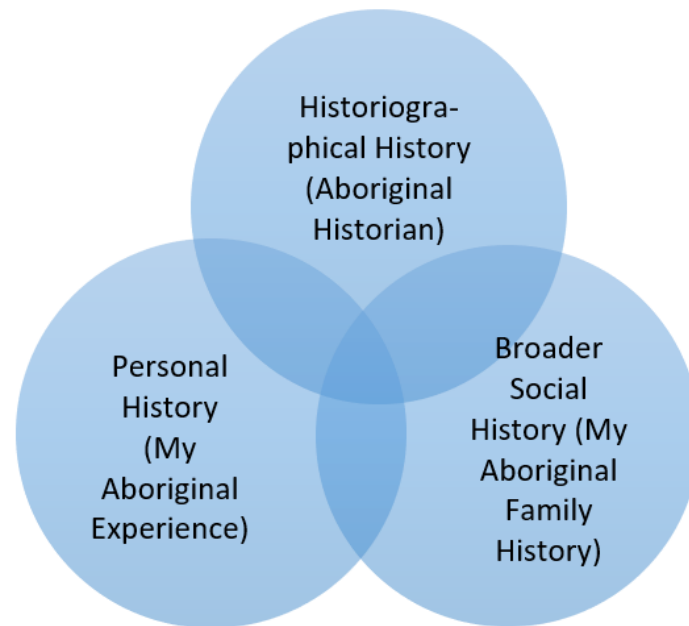


**Figure 83: Components of *ego-histoire* and the three aspects of my involvement in history**

### **7.3 My *Ego-histoire***

My personal history naturally begins with my birth. I, and all of my sisters, were born in Sydney. After my oldest sister was born in 1961 (see Figure 84), my next older sister was born in 1963, and then my twin sister Janna (pronounced ‘Jar-nah’) and I were born in 1964. My mother (who passed away in 2017) always bragged that she had had four children under the age of three. It was a badge of honour that she carried with her all her life, cherished, regularly polished and deliberately pinned to any conversation that happened to remotely come close to the subject of motherhood.



**Figure 84: Left to right: Uncle Gerry, Dad, Mum and a friend at my oldest sister's christening, circa early 1962<sup>24</sup>**

Note: Both Uncle Gerry and Dad are wearing Australian Army dress uniform.

When Janna and I were toddlers, Dad had an army posting to Woodside, near Adelaide. After living in South Australia for a while, we moved on to Brisbane and were living in army 'married quarters' in the suburb of Inala. The historic photograph in Figure 85 was taken on 21 May 1968 at Hamilton Warf, Brisbane, where Dad (along with the rest of 4RAR) boarded HMAS Sydney for their first tour of Vietnam. I have circled our family, among the many other families who farewelled their loved ones on their departure, and provided an enlargement (see Figure 86).

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<sup>24</sup> My Family Collection.



**Figure 85: My family at Hamilton Wharf, Brisbane, 21 May 1968, for Dad's departure to Vietnam<sup>25</sup>**

Note: Dad and the rest of 4RAR boarded HMAS Sydney for their first tour of Vietnam. My family is circled here. An enlargement is provided in Figure 86 below.



**Figure 86: An enlargement of my family on Hamilton Wharf, Brisbane, 21 May 1968, for Dad's departure to Vietnam<sup>26</sup>**

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

In the enlargement in Figure 86, my mother can be seen with her hair in a ponytail. Nan is standing on Mum's right with her arms clasped behind her back and a light-coloured scarf on her head. Dad has his head down looking at my twin sister as she tries to escape the pram. Janna had Down Syndrome and was frequently unwell as a child. She was in a pram a few years longer than I was. I am barely visible, standing on her left-hand side beside the pram. The two girls to the right of us are my older sisters.

We lived in two different army married quarters in Brisbane, one in Inala until I was around five years old, and another at Keperra, where we were living when I started school at Mitchelton Primary School. From my earliest memories as a very young, innocent child, I was acutely aware that we were different. Our 'otherness' was glaringly obvious and we truly stood out like a half-dozen black sheep would in a flock of thousands of white sheep. Whiteness was physically everywhere you looked. I remember my surprised recognition of the truth of Gary Foley's words in *The Redfern Story* when he stated that 'you could walk all over the city and never see a non-white face'.<sup>27</sup> Foley articulated so succinctly something that I had always felt as a child growing up in the 1970s, but had never before put into words. The truth of Foley's statement resonated with me and validated my own life experience.

I wondered how I could help my daughter's generation understand the full extent of how very different life was for Aboriginal people in the 1970s. I found a fantastic YouTube video clip, a compilation of film clips shot in Sydney from 1971–1975. It was put together for the ABC series called *Paper Giants: The Birth of Cleo* which screened in June 2011.<sup>28</sup> The film footage is of crowds of Sydney-siders on the bustling city streets going about their everyday lives. There is, for example, the grocer on the street selling fruit, lawyers in their wigs and black robes crossing the street, a policeman directing traffic and crowds of commuters disembarking at the ferry terminal. It is a broad panorama and these combined film clips illustrate the typical spread of the Australian population at that time in history. Watching closely, I could only spot two Aboriginal faces in a sea of white faces. A camera scans the densely overcrowded Bondi Beach on a hot summer's day, and as far as the eye could see there are only white-skinned bodies. This film footage truthfully captures an extraordinary delineation of the aftermath of

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<sup>27</sup> Gary Foley, interview, 3:17–6:34, in Darlene Johnson and Sue Milliken, *The Redfern Story*, directed by Darlene Johnson (2014; Australia: Samson Productions Pty Ltd, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Geeza, *Sydney 1971 to 1975* (online video, 5 June 2012), <https://youtu.be/mluSCgXb-jM>. 'Cleo' was a new, cosmopolitan, glossy magazine in the early 1970s and the television series was a drama about the life of its editor, Ita Buttrose. As at June 2020, the film footage is still available online.

the White Australia Policy. My daughter, almost 18 years old at the time, watched it with interest and said, ‘I’m so used to seeing a wide array of people whenever I walk in the city, that it would just be really, really odd to see that everyone else was white. I’m just so used to the diversity. I see it every day at school’.<sup>29</sup> I felt like an alien in my own country.

Why am I making this point? Well, for anyone to truly understand the significance of our *otherness*, I must try to paint a very clear picture of the incredible extent of it, and this ‘eye-witness’ television footage communicates it with, I think, far greater impact than written words. Using this device is just part of Nora’s ‘rules of the game’ as a means of ‘deepening our understanding of the times’. Nora elaborated, ‘The idea [is] to explain, as an historian, the link between the history you have made and the history that has made you’.<sup>30</sup> In this thesis, I have already written about the racism my family members experienced, as well as that experienced by other Aboriginal people, specifically the Aboriginal activists of the 1970s. Rather than being arrested and incarcerated ‘for just being black’, my experience of racism as a child in the suburbs was less violent, but similarly isolating and emotionally damaging.<sup>31</sup>

The education curriculum and school resources at that time were what we today would call outdated and stereotyped, which only served to reinforce my otherness and exacerbate my own confusion about where I fitted into life. My teachers taught about Aborigines from a strange mix of a victorious coloniser’s perspective and a detached anthropological perspective. Captain Cook gloriously *discovered* Australia, the First Fleet became indomitable pioneers and nation builders, and Aborigines were naked nomadic natives who were labelled as *hunters and gatherers*.<sup>32</sup> I vividly remember sitting in a Year 4 or 5 classroom when the teacher held up a poster bearing a typical depiction of an Aboriginal man. He was naked and standing on a hill, holding long spears in one hand (which were staked in the ground for balance) and a boomerang and woomera in the other. Draped over his shoulder was a dead kangaroo. My teacher said something like, ‘This is an Australian Aborigine’. Then she said, ‘and children, did you know that *Shauna* is an Aborigine?’

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<sup>29</sup> Personal conversation, Brenna Smith, 20 August 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Nora, ‘“Introduction” from *Essais d’Ego-Histoire*’, 22.

<sup>31</sup> This ‘just being black’ citation refers to what Bindi Williams, Marcia Langton and Lester Bostock stated in *The Redfern Story* documentary.

<sup>32</sup> This is becoming an outdated stereotype. See Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture* (Magabala Books, 2014) and Bill Gammage’s *The Greatest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia* (Allen & Unwin, 2012) for more about Aboriginal cultivation.



I died of mortification and vividly remember how deeply embarrassing it was. Oh how I hated the attention on me. I remember myself as that little child thinking, 'I know I'm Aboriginal, but we're not like that at all. My family live in a house. We wear clothes. My Dad drives a car. We've got a telephone inside our house now, and we get food from the supermarket just like everyone else does'. Being the only other was always apparent, and I always knew I was Aboriginal, but learning about Aborigines in traditional settings at school caused me great confusion, separation and sadness. Where did I fit in? All the other students and I were taught that Aborigines were crude, primitive people. The teacher might as well have painted a target on my back. Much as I tried to fly under the radar, make myself inconspicuous and participate as part of the mainstream, I was often reminded of my subordinated status in life.

School learning in the 1970s opened the flood gates for scorn, ridicule, racist name-calling and insulting remarks. I was regularly referred to as a 'boong' or an 'abo'. Other kids would search my lunchbox for witchety grubs and snicker as they asked if I had kangaroo sandwiches instead of vegemite ones. There was no such thing as political correctness in those days, and certainly no sensitivity for it either. Even Janna's 'special' school was owned by the 'Sub-Normal Children's Association', and the words 'The Sub-Normal Children's Association' were painted on the side of the small bus that picked her up every school day. In my early high school years in the late 1970s, racism had become more subtle and less conspicuous. I walked home from school one day with a girl from a younger grade who was the sister of a non-Indigenous boy I liked. She said her brother told his father that he really liked me and retold how he said that he would have liked to have asked me out to the movies, 'but she's Aboriginal'. I remember another teenage friend confessing to me his surprise that we had developed our 'unlikely' friendship, and he heartily patted my back as he exclaimed with surprise, 'You know Shauna you're the only Aboriginal person I know, and you're OK!' It seemed to me that even though I was functioning adequately in white society, some members of white society did not have the expectation that I could.

Also mentioned earlier was our move to Holsworthy Army Base in the outer western suburbs of Sydney. This was our longest army posting, and I was there from the beginning of Year 2 to the end of my first year of high school, Year 7, in 1976. Dad got his last posting to Brisbane and we arrived during the Christmas holidays that year. In Queensland, high school began in Year 8, and so in 1977 I started high school again, this time coincidentally at Mitchelton State High School, completing Year 12 in 1981. My mother (who had started Teachers College in

Sydney) finished her Diploma of Teaching in Brisbane and had been teaching primary school for a few years before getting a job in the Queensland Education Department's Head Office in the city. Dad left the army after 20 years of service, around the same time he and Mum got a divorce.

After finishing high school, I was a rudderless ship for a while. I had a few jobs here and there with large breaks of unemployment between. You could say that nepotism saw me employed in my first real job with the Queensland Education Department, because my mother recommended me when they needed a general office helper for a time. Her non-Indigenous colleague was writing the curriculum for the Aboriginal community schools such as Lockhart River, Doomagee, Palm Island, Aurukun, Kowanyama and Yarrabah. At first, I just performed general office duties, but when my boss saw my drawing talent, I ended up illustrating the Language Arts Curriculum Program. My job was to draw cartoon-style pictures of Indigenous teachers in the classroom working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and Indigenous community workers working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The idea of the cartoons was to impress upon teachers and students the idea of Aboriginal people contributing professionally in important ways. It is important to note that this idea was only introduced as late as the early 1980s.

Similarly, a prime objective of my mother's role as the first Aboriginal Education Officer in Queensland was to replace outdated, stereotyped teaching resources on Aborigines. She encouraged teachers to use more appropriate materials, and an example of this was producing sets of posters with photographs of *modern, urban* Aboriginal role models to be displayed in classrooms. These poster sets were sent out to Queensland schools, and the photographs were of Aboriginal people in the community doing important jobs and contributing to society in ways that were equal to non-Indigenous contributions. For example, in each set there was a photograph of an Aboriginal nurse in a hospital setting, an Aboriginal teacher in front of a class teaching, an Aboriginal fireman in full firefighting regalia, an Aboriginal policeman on his high-powered police motorcycle, and even an Aboriginal ballerina gracefully standing *en pointe* in her leotard and ballet slippers.<sup>33</sup>

Within the Queensland Education Department in the first few years of the 1980s, this burgeoning consciousness of the appropriateness and inappropriateness of depictions of

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<sup>33</sup> I remember this photograph was of Roslyn Watson. She was the first Indigenous student to train as a classical ballet dancer at the Australian Ballet School, graduating in 1972.

Indigenous people came about because my mother's friends, the non-Indigenous teachers who were writing the curriculum, had *actual* experience teaching in Aboriginal community schools. They saw the absence of Aboriginal role models and Aboriginal faces in the literature that children were exposed to in community schools and set about changing this when they were promoted to the department's Head Office. I do not know when these kind of changes spread to mainstream schools, and can only sadly reflect that I do not remember seeing literature at school with anything other than outdated, stereotypical images of Aborigines.

Two more jobs and a hospitality course at TAFE came and went, bringing me to 1986 when I successfully applied for a job as a flight attendant at Ansett Airlines of Australia. Passing the first interview, I was short-listed for a second interview at the airport and later notified that I would begin at the Flight Attendant Training School at Tullamarine Airport, Melbourne, on 8 October 1986. I happily stayed with Ansett Australia for over 15 years until the airline collapsed in 2002 and I was made redundant (see Figure 87). Being forced to leave Brisbane to fly out of Ansett's Melbourne base benefitted me immensely, and I refer to my early years of flying as my 'growing up time'. I had lived a very sheltered life that was completely controlled by my dominating mother. As a result, I was an incredibly naïve, gullible and sensitive girl up to the age of 22. My job with Ansett Australia meant that for the first time in my life I was able to make decisions for myself, and say and do as I pleased. It was liberating! Upon reflection, I realise it was much like my own personal 'mini-exodus' and I became a changed person after it.



**Figure 87: Happy days as a flight attendant for Ansett Australia from 1986–2002<sup>34</sup>**

After being based in Melbourne for two years, my transfer request finally came through and I became part of Ansett's wonderful Brisbane Crew, and although we did not live together, I was happy to be reunited with Janna. Later, in 1993, I met my husband and we enjoyed happy times until Janna became ill. She passed away in January 2000 and it felt like half my heart was cut out. I believe we were closer than regular twins because she had Down Syndrome. Then, from such deep, deep sadness, came great joy. Our daughter was born in November 2000. When I came back from maternity leave, Ansett Australia was in serious financial trouble. I was only able to fly for a few months on *rationed* flights before the airline finally folded in 2002. I was so grateful to work on a few flights before saying a final goodbye to a wonderful job and lifestyle. It was a devastating and lifechanging time for me, but I knew that I had to pick myself up, dust myself off and start planning new beginnings.

I decided that I would study to become a teacher, with the ulterior motive of not having to work on school holidays and, therefore, be able to spend quality time with my daughter. From 2003–

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<sup>34</sup> Author's collection.

2006, I completed my Bachelor of Education at Australian Catholic University, majoring in Early Childhood, and soon after I was employed as a primary school teacher. My motivation for teaching should have set off warning bells that my heart really was not in it. I wanted to be present in my daughter's life with a loving, motherly connection that I had never experienced in my own childhood. Even when I was a student in the Bachelor of Education course, I always intuitively knew that teaching was only ever going to be temporary and that one day I would go on to something different. The pathway that I took ended up leading me to family history research.

When I met Thelma Birrell (nee Bostock) in 2008, my curiosity was quickly ignited. Family history research invigorated me. The more I found out, the more I wanted to know, and I soon realised that this history was an important contribution to Australian and Aboriginal history. I decided to give up full-time teaching for supply/relief teaching. Changing to daily and short-term contract teaching brought with it a great amount of joy because I was able to spend much more quality time with my daughter, block-off her special days (sports carnivals, performances, etc.) and be a much more active participant in her life.

Contract teaching also gave me more freedom to return to tertiary education, and I chose that path because I intuitively knew that I would write a book about my family history. I wanted my book to be a well-written, credible contribution to Australian and Aboriginal history, and I certainly recognised that there was so much that I had yet to learn about academic research and scholarly writing. With a PhD as a distant goal, I enrolled at Griffith University for a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and completed this part time over two years. My thesis was about the lives of my grandparents at Box Ridge. I was awarded First Class Honours and was able to enrol at ANU to complete my PhD in Aboriginal History, with my PhD thesis about my family history.

Writing my own autobiography carries this thesis into the present, but to transform it into 'the theoretical enterprise that we label *ego-histoire*' it is necessary to reflect on my own personal history, the broader social history and historiographical history.<sup>35</sup> There are many stories and instances in this thesis that provide opportunities to reflect on these three historical perspectives, but from my autobiography the following are primary examples of each.

Expressing my childhood pain at being 'othered' was a deeply personal memory for me, and choosing to write about it placed me in a very uncomfortable position. I found myself weighing

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<sup>35</sup> Curthoys, 'Memory, History, and Ego-Histoire', 31.

up whether I ‘should’ include it in my *ego-histoire*, and when I did choose to include it I kept asking myself why, ‘What purpose does it serve?’ In the end, Pierre Nora’s words always came back to me. Choosing not to be impartial and expressing my existential involvement makes my experience ‘become an instrument for improving understanding’.<sup>36</sup> Writing about my experiences of racism and expressing the childhood pain it caused is a very effective way of explaining how different times were back in the 1970s. Looking back on my childhood, the first thing that comes to mind is how very different it was compared to my daughter’s childhood. Being in my mid-50s enables me to remember what it was like growing up Aboriginal in the 1970s and compare that time with the most recent decades of my nearly 20-year-old daughter’s life. On a personal level, her experience has been completely different to mine. She has *never* experienced racism or the emotional pain of being treated as the ‘other’. In fact, throughout her school life her Indigeneity was celebrated alongside the variety of other cultures that her fellow students brought into the classroom. That in itself is an indication of how Australian society has developed over the years.

In the broader social history, the macro-cosmic view of generations of my family members enables us to see just how much society has changed since my ancestors’, grandparents’ and parents’ times. It was only as recently as 1959 that this country saw the first Aboriginal person graduate from a university.<sup>37</sup> Like many other Aboriginal people, my parents left school at 14 and 15 years of age to go straight into the workforce. In my family (from 1979–1981), my sisters’ and I completing Year 12, when many of my cousins did not go past Year 10, was seen as educational advancement. Yet, finishing in 1981 meant that I am part of the cumulative generations of Australian citizens who missed out when it came to learning about Aboriginal history in school. We see that it was only after I left school that the Education Department made efforts to rectify the absence of positive Aboriginal images in schools. From that experience we see that society had finally evolved to recognise the modernity of Aboriginal people and began to place it into mainstream education. It is lamentable that this happened so late in the historiography of the school curriculum.

On the topic of historiography, a comment made by Aboriginal historian Jackie Huggins in one of her lectures stuck with me from the moment I heard her say it and I have never forgotten it. In 2012, Huggins was invited as the guest speaker for the Loris Williams Memorial Lecture at

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<sup>36</sup> Nora, ‘“Introduction” from *Essais d’Ego-Histoire*’, 21.

<sup>37</sup> There is a myth that Charlie Perkins was the first but that is not true; it was Dr Margot Weir (AKA Margaret Williams) from Melbourne University in 1959.

the State Library of Queensland. Loris Williams was an Aboriginal librarian and archivist, and a wonderful mentor to my sister (who now works as a librarian and archivist in the Heritage Collection at the State Library of Queensland). Loris Williams passed away in 2005 and the Australian Society of Archivists continue to host the Loris Williams Memorial Lecture annually. I went to see the lecture given by Jackie Huggins and she surprised me when she said frankly:

I am part of the assets generation! My parents were on the mission and they had nothing, my grandparents were on the mission and they too had nothing, and my great-grandparents were living tribal. I am part of the assets generation because, as recently as *this* generation, I am able to own my own home. That is the *incredible* impact that invasion had on Aborigines! It means that it is only now (at least in my family history) that Aborigines have been able to afford to buy our own homes. In fact I am able to afford to get a cleaning lady to come and clean my house, and in closing I'd like to say one more thing, and that is ... a *white* woman comes to clean *my* house!<sup>38</sup>

As an Aboriginal person, I could see similar circumstances in my own extended family, but from an Aboriginal historian's perspective I realised that in the historiography of Aboriginal history here was an interesting shift towards thinking about Aboriginal parity with non-Indigenous Australians. When did something that is not uncommon for non-Indigenous Australians (such as home ownership actually) enter the Aboriginal timeline? Essentially, what Huggins was saying was that colonialism has had such an impact on Aboriginal lives that it is only *now* that we are beginning to achieve the great Australian dream of owning our own homes. Thinking in historiographical terms, within the greater Australian history we can see that Aboriginal people are in a kind of catch-up mode with non-Indigenous people.

Great insights can be found by historians when the scales of history are utilised. I have frequently changed the lens of this research, zooming into the micro-history (e.g., individuals and Aborigines reserve sites) and zooming out to the macro-history (e.g., government legislation changes and the Protection era) multiple times throughout this thesis.<sup>39</sup> At times, it has felt like I was riding history on Google Earth, frequently making vertical ascents from and descents to different spaces on the colonial landscape. Alternating between micro-history and

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<sup>38</sup> Jackie Huggins, 'Guest Speaker at the Annual Loris Williams Memorial Lecture at State Library of Queensland' (Brisbane, QLD: State Library of Queensland, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> In the Introduction, I stated that 'Century-wise, in non-Indigenous recorded history, Australia is relatively young in comparison to European countries, so in my research I refer to macro-history as any scale of history after colonisation that is not micro-historical'. This is my adaptation to make the difference between micro-history and macro-history more Australia specific.

macro-history has created a more interesting narrative, and so for me, rather than a dull, linear chronology, this movement has engendered a feeling of ‘journeying’ with my ancestors through three-dimensional space.

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, there is a larger scale of history called big history developed by historian David Christian. Christian believes that we must ‘look beyond the details if [we] are to understand their meaning, to see how they fit together. We need large scales of history if we are to see each part of our subject’.<sup>40</sup> Remembering that French historian Fernand Braudel championed the need for historians to look beyond ‘social time’ or *l’histoire événementielle* (the history of events) to embrace *la longue durée*, the slower-moving structures and cycles of centuries, Christian tremendously expanded the frame to describe big history as ‘the longest *durée*’.<sup>41</sup>

Christian stated that ‘frames can hide as much as they reveal. It’s all too easy to forget, when studying what is inside the frame, how much lies outside’. Citing Stanner’s famous quotation that ‘It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape’, Christian reasoned:

If the frames through which historians conventionally view the past can hide 50,000 years of Aboriginal history this efficiently, there is clearly something to be said for experimenting with other frames. In principle, each time scale can add something new to our understanding of the past, and each scale, can also help us understand all the other scales.<sup>42</sup>

From the observations above, we can see how the three aspects of my involvement in history (Aboriginal experience, Aboriginal family history and Aboriginal historian) have informed the theoretical components of *ego-histoire*. By consciously delving into personal history, broader social history and historiographical history when writing an autobiography, the narrative is enhanced and captures the spirit of *ego-histoire*. This kind of autobiography seems to ‘hit the mark’ more than just chronological narrative.

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<sup>40</sup> David Christian, ‘The Case for Big History’, *The Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 223–24.

<sup>41</sup> Tom Griffiths, ‘Travelling in Deep Time: *La Longue Durée* in Australian History’, *Australian Humanities Review* 18 (June 2000), <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-June-2000/griffiths4.html>. See also David Christian, ‘Big History: The Longest “*Durée*”’, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 20, no. 2 (2009): 91.

<sup>42</sup> David Christian, ‘Macro-history: The Play of Scales’, *Social Evolution and History* 4, no. 1 (March 2005): 22–59.



## Conclusion

When a child is born it carries the light of all the ancestors' of the past all the way back to the Creator. Every child born wants to know who they are so they can understand where they are going. Their past, present and future are intertwined and if they know where they come from it gives them the road to walk on in life.

—Grandmother Pauline Tangiora<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has presented a multi-generational Aboriginal family history that transforms our understanding of the lived experience of Aboriginal people from colonisation to the present generation. The enormous amount of archival records, most of which were unseen until now, and the intense study of this Aboriginal historian's family history has illuminated more than conventional scholarship of Aboriginal history.

Initially, the research for this thesis undertook two directions. First, my four grandparents' family lines had to be established by tracing their genealogies back as far as possible in the written historical record. The research then about-faced and proceeded to fill in the gaps between the past and the present. The aims of this body of work have been achieved by the investigation of the lived experience of my ancestors' and the production of this testimonial multi-generational history that situates my ancestors' lives and experiences within the context of Australian and Aboriginal history. It has delivered an authoritative project that is a valuable contribution to the discipline of History. The following section provides a summary of the main components of this thesis.

### Summary

The cedar getters had been on Bundjalung Country well before the first white settlers started arriving in the early 1860s. By the 1870s, so many strangers arrived on Bundjalung Country that the traditional pattern of life was changed forever. Not only did the Europeans dispossess Aboriginal people of their camping sites, food, water, sacred and cultural sites, and burial grounds, they totally destroyed the land. It is unknown when my great-great-grandfather

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<sup>1</sup> Natalia O'Sullivan and Nicola Graydon, *The Ancestral Continuum: Unlock the Secrets of Who You Really Are* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 159. Grandmother Pauline Tangiora is a Māori Elder from Rongomaiwahine of the East Coast of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Augustus John Bostock arrived on Bundjalung Country, but the earliest archive material I have revealed he was there in the early 1880s.

The foundations of this thesis were laid by locating the origins of my four grandparents' family lines. These origins were investigated up to the end of the first chapter's timeframe, 1911. First, the Bostock family origins were explored and we found out that Augustus John Bostock had twice attempted to take up land at the base of Wollumbin/Mt Warning. Although his two selections of land were forfeited, he did manage to 'take up' two Aboriginal wives, Jessie Unarn Wallumba and my great-great-grandmother, One My. One My was a traditional Wollumbin woman whose name was later Anglicised to Clara Wollumbin.

Second, the Cowan family originated in the Grafton area. The early history of the area was explored and the story told of the discovery that the woman in the famous J.W. Lindt photograph 'Mary Ann of Ulmarra' was in fact my great-great-grand-aunt Mary Ann Cowan. She was the sister of my great-great-grandfather Jonathan Cowan. Jonathan married my great-great-grandmother Elizabeth Hughes, who was a white woman. Many years later, well after Jonathan died, Elizabeth fled from Grafton for fear of child removal. At the age of 65, she married another Aboriginal man called William Olive.

Third, the origin of the Anderson family is illuminated. This section was mostly about my great-grandfather Sam Anderson who migrated from Deebing Creek Aborigines Reserve Station to Bundjalung Country and became a well-known county cricketer who famously got Don Bradman out for a duck. Fourth, the Solomon family origins were near Kyogle at the Kyogle Reserve Station. The story is told about how a travelling medical man took blood samples of my ancestors, but also recorded my great-grandmother Nellie's traditional name and genealogy. Another story about how she resisted the APB's plans for her indenture reveal the gutsy character of this young woman. Family history research has counteracted my ancestors' erasure. They are now named, remembered, and embraced as kin, and in the process their humanity is restored.

The thesis then moved on to examine the Closer Settlement scheme before investigating what life was like for my ancestors and other Aboriginal people on four Aborigines reserves, Dunoon, Nymboida, Ukerebagh Island and Box Ridge. Common themes were APB control, segregation in the towns and Aborigines only schools being established. White people on and around the reserve spaces were also scrutinised, especially the role of the missionaries. The

conclusion was made that all across NSW the racist actions of white-Australians and the Australian Government's APB caused Aboriginal people great pain and suffering, as well as bewildering insecurity and uncertainty about their future. Aboriginal aspirations for independence were deliberately crushed by white Australians.

In the 1930s, a proliferation of surveillance and control of Aborigines by APB, which later became the AWB, was examined. The focus moved from the APB/AWB to one of their minions, Reserve Manager Mr Howard, his bureaucratic control and his obnoxious behaviour. In this chapter, copious amounts of archival material provided incriminating evidence of the true extent of the AWB's bureaucratic red tape. Up to the mid-1940s, ordinary (non-politically active) Aboriginal people were ramping up resistance and even outright rejecting the authority of the AWB.

The 11 years from 1944–1955 were hell for my grandfather Henry Anderson as he was bombarded with bureaucratic paperwork. The government created a drip-feeding of funds for Aboriginal endowment recipients that perpetuated its control over Aboriginal lives and made it more difficult for Aboriginal people to be autonomous. I had accumulated so many archives for this timeframe that tables were constructed to illuminate the frequency of government interference, and there were no surprises when the research revealed that Aboriginal people who lived away from reserves and government control experienced happier lives.

Redfern in Sydney attracted thousands of Aboriginal people from the country as there was plenty of work in the city factories and industry. My parents' generation were the focus of Chapters 4 and 5 which span from 1955–1972. Charlie Perkins was a founding member of the FAA, and this organisation found numerous ways to support Aboriginal people who had just arrived from the country. To describe the FAA's work, I coined the phrase 'social upliftment' because what they did went above and beyond regular social work. This was also a time when young adult Aborigines became radicalised.

From the late 1960s and into the 1970s, police brutality was the trigger that radicalised young adult Aborigines in Redfern. They started to fight back. In the early 1970s, the government's choice to undervalue Aboriginal royalties from mining (among other injustices) gave birth to the Aboriginal land rights movement. The young radicals learned from the American Black Power movement strategies to fight racism. They organised the Aboriginal Medical Service to aid Aborigines' well-being and the Aboriginal Legal Service to make the police accountable

for illegal incarceration. The Tent Embassy in 1972 was a pivotal moment in Aboriginal history that brought the plight of Australian Aborigines out of the shadows and into the domestic and international spotlight. The radicals then focused on the arts and used their creative voices to bring Aboriginal issues to a wider audience. Experimenting in different genres led to a boom in Aboriginal literature, around the time of the Bicentennial Year 1988, and female life story narratives flourished. Aboriginal people were awakened to the fact that they did not have to change or forfeit their Indigeneity to be a part of Australian society and the fight and sovereignty of the young radicals in Redfern engendered a new collective Aboriginal pride.

However, racism still continued to remind us of our ‘otherness’, and in my *ego-histoire*, I disclosed how it felt to be a child growing up in the 1970s when racism was much more confronting than in recent times. As a historian, I understood the theoretical enterprise of Pierre Nora’s *ego-histoire* approach and the value of combining an academic historian’s autobiography with *ego-histoire*’s components of personal history, broader social history and historiographical history. *Ego-histoire*’s purpose is to improve understanding, and I utilised this approach to bring this body of work into the present, thus completing this past-to-present chronology of an Aboriginal historian’s multi-generational Aboriginal family history ‘from colonisation to my generation’.

## **Research Question**

The original research question for this thesis was ‘Can an Aboriginal family history, over several generations, illuminate something more than what has already been done in conventional scholarship on Aboriginal history—and if so, what?’ This begs the questions of how has this body of work transformed our understanding of the lived experience of Aboriginal people and what does it actually add to conventional scholarship. It is interesting to see that some of the topics that I named in the Introduction chapter as limitations and negative phenomena have, with hindsight, metamorphosed to become positives.

## **Scope**

Whereas the scope of this chronological thesis meant that the forward-moving momentum had to be maintained, prompting strict editing, the broad scope of this thesis has become an advantage in the sense that it is the *actual* scope that allows us to see the steadfast continuity of Aboriginal progress. Micro-history, like Stanner’s famous ‘view from the window’

quotation, excludes us from seeing ‘a whole quadrant of the landscape’, but the macro-history view of the whole Aboriginal experience since colonisation, rather than creating ‘a cult of forgetfulness on a national scale’, actually incites a revolution of remembering.

## **Interviews and Aboriginal Voice**

I also explained in the Introduction that the reason for the lack of interviews in this thesis was because most of my parents’ generation have passed away and those remaining are either not interested in contributing to my research, or have never associated with radicalised Aborigines or Aboriginal political groups and organisations. Again, however, what was predicted in the Introduction to be a disadvantage has turned out to be of no concern, because I have managed to find many direct quotations of my Uncles Gerry and Lester Bostock from numerous interviews they gave before passing away. Similarly, Auntie Ruby gave a number of interviews, and her books carried my research through times when the archives were scarce. All three were sought after for interviews because of the significant work they performed during their lives at critical times in Aboriginal history. Thankfully, they were prolific communicators in their lifetimes.

## **Future Work**

This thesis has demonstrated why the APB and AWB files are so important to Aboriginal history and to understanding every facet of the lived experience of Aboriginal people in this country. I see my family history research as being an exemplar that other Aboriginal people may be keen to replicate for their own families, and I have thought long and hard about the way in which future work can continue in what I see as ‘a burgeoning field research’, that is, Aboriginal family history research.

It is vital that Aboriginal people (in NSW) know that APB and AWB files on their family members are available at the NSWAA. I have found that many in the Aboriginal community people are surprised at the knowledge and records that I have accumulated over the years. I believe that some kind of campaign to educate Aboriginal people in NSW is necessary and I know how to do it.

For the last year or so, I have reserved an email address with internet service provider Bigpond, [abfamhistory@bigpond.com](mailto:abfamhistory@bigpond.com). After submitting this thesis, I intend to start up a website under the name ‘ABFAMHISTORY’. I would like to create a collection of tutorial information and

digitised resources and archives to assist Aboriginal people to research their own family history. Later, I hope to start up an 'ABFAMHISTORY' Facebook page for the same purpose.

In the meantime, I have been a contributor to the 'Bundjalung People' group Facebook page administrated by John Patten. He has encouraged my postings of Bundjalung history and they have become quite popular. As a result, several extended family relatives have contacted me by way of Facebook Messenger. I have been invited by Gloria Anderson to visit, and she has offered to take me to Cabbage Tree Island to 'meet your mob'. Her grandmother Eileen and my grandfather Henry were siblings. I see this as an extraordinary opportunity to visit not just the Cabbage Tree Island community, but all the communities on Bundjalung Country. That is where I see my future work heading, with the ultimate goal of expanding my research to write a book.

## **Thesis Contribution**

The greatest contributions of this thesis are the profound insights that a multi-generational Aboriginal family history reveals, and the contribution of a large number of previously unseen archives that I have made public in this thesis. Remember, these archives may never have seen the light of day had I not been genealogically related to several Aboriginal people who experienced the astonishing control of the Australian Government's APB and AWB. This thesis has also provided incredible insight into the 'Protection era' of Aboriginal history. The actions, bureaucracy and incompetence of the administration of the APB and AWB are laid bare. It is abundantly clear that the APB and AWB's motivations were to manage and control Aboriginal lives. The never-before-seen archives discussed in this thesis detail the true extent of the Australian Government's reprehensible bureaucratic control and surveillance of Aboriginal people's lives well into the second half of the twentieth century. The consummate achievement of this thesis is the illumination of the long-term struggle of Aboriginal people to wrest a living free from Australian Government control and surveillance. To finally live in this country on equal footing, with the same rights and conditions as non-Indigenous Australians.

Seemingly thwarted by a racist society and a malevolent government, my ancestors adapted, formulated new survival strategies and were incredibly resilient. Aboriginal family history research such as this thesis empowers Aboriginal people in the present and has the potential to shift the consciousness of *all* Australians Indigenous and non-Indigenous on the history of this country:

When we find out who our ancestors were—exploring names, the places where they were born and lived, their occupations their marriages, illnesses and deaths—they start to come alive again. By resurrecting their memory, we bring them towards us into the present time. And as we do this work of excavating our family's past, we will also find ways to heal ourselves, our relatives and our family tree, thereby offering a legacy for the many generations that follow.<sup>2</sup>

The union of Augustus John Bostock and One My brought together an Indigenous line and a British line which continued down to me. I feel like the process of completing my family history research has in some way *re-woven* the frayed cord connecting me to my pre-colonisation family members, a cord that was almost severed by colonialism. Big history pushed the frame back to enable me to connect with that past. Engaging with multiple scales of history in family history research evokes a heartfelt feeling of spiritual connection to *all* my ancestors—not only the ones I have managed to name in this thesis, but ancient ones as well.

I have often questioned if there was some kind of existential significance to my non-Indigenous ancestors being slave traders, the Bostock family becoming blackfellas and my attention being frequently drawn to slavery themes in my research. There are similarities between slaves and Aboriginal people's experience of racism—being treated as lesser human beings, indenture, exploitation and oppressive control. Ruminating on the slavery theme, I wondered if family history research was the key to emancipation, because researching my ancestors' lives has, in a spiritual sense, unshackled them.

In a way, I too am unshackled. I am freed from the emotional sadness that I carried for their pain and suffering because I now know their stories of bravery, courage and their valiant determination to extract themselves from the bindings of colonialism, to push forward on the road to equality. Family history research is a revealing journey of self-discovery that will ultimately liberate Aboriginal people from the burden of our ancestral history, and when we know where we come from, the light of all the ancestors of the past illuminate the road to walk on in life.

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<sup>2</sup> O'Sullivan and Graydon, *The Ancestral Continuum*, xv.

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