

## F Skyring SERRP presentation

### Total word count

I am a historian, and started work for native title organisations in 1998 when I was employed by the Kimberley Land Council in Western Australia. I wrote history reports for a number of Kimberley traditional owner groups whose native title claims were litigated, and I was cross examined on these reports in the trials in the Federal Court. That is where I first worked with Dr Tony Redmond, when we both worked for Nyarinyin people in the Kimberley whose lengthy native title trial resulted in a recognition of their native title over an area about the size of Tasmania. After leaving KLC in 2005, I worked on a number of projects including the stolen wages submissions that the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia made to the Senate Committee in 2006. Some people may have seen the film, *Servant or Slave*, on NITV the other night, in which I talked about the impact of stolen wages in Western Australia. I was commissioned to write a history of the ALS of WA, and after this was published in 2011 the book won several awards, including the WA Premier's Prize. In recent years I have worked for native title organisations in WA and Qld, as well as for the State and Aboriginal heritage groups in Victoria.

### Groundwork

I researched this report with the assistance of QSNTS research staff in 2011, and Hayley Young and Sue O'Brien here today were among the QSNTS team who have made a major contribution to this project from the outset. I would also like to acknowledge Sue's work and commitment in initiating this research and driving the project for these past five years. The historical report

represents the initial stage of the work on South East Regional Research Project, or SERRP, and was completed in late 2011 a year before Tony Redmond started the anthropological fieldwork. So we began this historical report with an incomplete understanding of the nature of people's identification with their traditional country in this region. In my instructions from QSNTS I was asked to investigate a research area that included the asserted traditional lands and waters of Yugembeh peoples, of sub-groups of the Yugembeh dialect group, and of Githabul, Yagera and Ugarapul peoples. I was also given a list of individual and family names on which to focus my research, although again these were ancestors and families identified before the anthropological work began. The intention of the historical report was to assist QSNTS to get an assessment of the extent of historical evidence that could substantiate claims for native title, and part of this assessment was whether the historical evidence would meet the standards required by the Federal Court and State government in negotiating consent determinations of native title. The historical report was also intended to provide background and context for the work of the anthropologist, since history has had a profound impact on all of us, not least Aboriginal people in the south east. This historical report is by no means a complete account of the history of Aboriginal people in the south east since colonisation, what I call our shared past, but it has provided a basis for further, more detailed research.

The research for the report was a major undertaking, and with the QSNTS research team we reviewed over 200 records at the Queensland State Archives office, and at libraries in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. Most of the research we did was of what are referred to as primary source documents. These are

the original documents on which published history is based; the diaries and journals of the squatters, police and other colonists, government reports and records, newspaper reports and other eyewitness accounts. Some examples are on the screen. A lot of the records we reviewed were identified and indexed by the Community and Personal History Unit at the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and many of you have probably already had your family history researched by Kathy Frankland and the staff at CPH. People can phone up and make an appointment to go to the Queensland State Archives Office at Runcorn, and get assistance from the CPH staff there to search the index of publicly available government records in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Although if people already have put in a request to CPH, travelling to QSA may not be that useful since CHP staff would already have gathered the records relevant to their request. At the Queensland Museum, Leonie Coghill and Imelda Miller can also assist people in searching for photographs of their family and community, as the Museum has an extensive collection of historical photos and artefacts from communities and missions across Queensland. I can provide contact details to people later if you are interested to know more.

Go to Moreton Bay map slide

An important point about research based on documentary records in Australia is that few of these records in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were written by Aboriginal people. These records were mostly about Aboriginal people, rather than by them, although in this presentation I do have several documents and quotes from Aboriginal people themselves. But generally, it was not their voices in the written records but those of the settlers and police and government officials who interacted with Aboriginal people in

the various contexts of appropriating Aboriginal land, securing Aboriginal labour, or removing people from their country.

It is this context for the creation of the documentary records that is a crucial starting point for identifying what the records can tell us. These accounts written from the perspective of those doing the dispossessing tended to reinforce a historical narrative that downplayed Aboriginal people's agency and cultural survival'.<sup>1</sup> Several of the published histories of south east Queensland include references to Aboriginal people and culture having 'passed' or 'vanished forever'. People were referred to as 'the last of their tribe'. For instance, in 1913 Bullum, whose English name was John Allen, was referred to as 'almost the last of a once numerous tribe,' the Wangerriburra.<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s elderly Yugembeh people at Hillview, on Christmas Creek off the southern reaches of the Logan River, were recorded as being 'the last elders of the tribe'. But these assertions of people being 'the last of their tribe' were simply not true. Many of the descendants of the original Aboriginal inhabitants stayed on or close to their country, often living and working in the same districts where their forebears had been when white men first arrived. This was documented throughout contemporary newspaper accounts, mission archives, police records, departmental records and local histories.

While there are these limitations on what the records can tell us, they do tell a consistent story for south east Queensland. The records showed that Aboriginal people fought to protect their traditional country against the first incursions by white men with livestock in the 1840s. Through different

---

<sup>1</sup> / F. Skyring, 'History and Native title: some comments on practice' in *Handbook for Interns; Anthropology, Law, Other Social Sciences – December 2010* edited by M. Castan and D. Walker, The Aurora Project, Sydney, 2011, pp. 133-136, p. 135

<sup>2</sup> / J. Lane and J. Allen, 'The Grammar and vocabulary of the Wangerriburras', in *Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for the year 1913*, Government Printer, Brisbane, p. 23.

historical stages, Aboriginal people in the research area did not relinquish their traditional ownership. They used the language of civil rights to defend their communities, and demands for land justice were an important part of the ongoing struggle by Aboriginal people to have their rights as the First Australians recognized and protected.

## War

In August 1824 Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane gave Lieutenant Miller instructions to go to Moreton Bay to establish a penal settlement as 'a place of security and subsistence for runaways from Port Macquarie'.<sup>3</sup> In 1825 Captain Logan was sent to take charge of the penal settlement, and by this time there were thirty convicts there.

It was not until February 1842 that the Moreton Bay district was declared open for settlement and land sales were announced. The colonial government was one step behind the squatters in the rush to occupy land in the new district, and it was estimated that in the early 1840s about half of the sheep in the colony were illegally grazing on land that had not been officially leased.<sup>4</sup> The Darling Downs was more geographically accessible for squatters droving large herds of sheep and cattle from NSW than were the river valleys east of the Great Dividing Range, and it was from the overcrowded regions of New England and the Hunter Valley that the first settlers came. Stations were established across the Darling Downs in the early 1840s before the Crown Lands Commissioner was appointed in 1842. The establishment of stations east

---

<sup>3</sup> / *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> / J. Ward Brown for Rosenthal Shire, *Rosenthal - historic shire*, Warwick, Qld.: Rosenthal Shire Council, 1988, p. 5.

of the Great Dividing Range in the 1840s was very similar, if slightly later. The map on the screen from 1842 shows some of the stations and settlements, and most of the area within this map is within the SERRP area.

As in the Darling Downs, the invasion of country in the area east of the ranges it was violent. In May 1840 surveyors Grenville Stapylton and William Tuck were killed by Aboriginal men near McPherson Range, and this is marked on the map. Aboriginal people regularly raided stock and attacked isolated shepherds and outstations. In 1843 at Wyangerie station in northern NSW, over the McPherson Range near the southern Darling Downs, the first homestead was burnt down by Aboriginal people and they slaughtered the livestock.<sup>5</sup> In 1848 there was another large gathering of what were referred to as the 'Rosewood Scrub and Lockyer Creek tribes'. Under the cover of night Aboriginal people harvested and took eleven acres of maize from a station near Grantham, and then retreated to the scrubs 'to hold a grand corroboree'.<sup>6</sup> On the Albert River, Aboriginal people repeatedly attacked shepherds and livestock.

The quote on the screen refers to the threat by Multugerrah to wage war on the 'jackeroos', or white people. This term is an English corruption of the word for white men. In 1850 William Ridley recorded the Yugarabul word 'dhuggai', which meant 'man'. It was a word common to speakers of different Aboriginal languages along the Brisbane and Logan Rivers, and of the southern Darling Downs. The word for a ghost was 'dhuggai-iū' (pronounced dhuggai-ee-oo). Aboriginal people applied this term to the first white men they saw in southern Queensland, thinking they were the ghosts of dead friends and relatives returned. Linguist F.J. Watson in 1944 wrote that the name 'dhuggai-iu' for

---

<sup>5</sup> / N. C. Hewitt, 'The Bundocks of Wyangerie', undated manuscript, Mitchell Library, Sydney

<sup>6</sup> / 26 February 1848, *Moreton Bay Courier*.

white man became common usage among Aboriginal people in southern Queensland, and continued to be used long after they realized that the settlers were not dead relatives returned. White people could not properly pronounce 'dhuggai-iu', converting it to the word 'jackaroo'.<sup>7</sup>

In September 1843 Multugerrah led a successful ambush on a party of about 40 settlers travelling along the road with supplies. Aboriginal casualties in this conflict were high, and although no European was killed, though several were severely wounded, it was an event that struck fear into the colonial authorities. After months of sustained attacks on stations and livestock by Aboriginal warriors under Multugerrah's command, several runs were simply abandoned. Multugerrah and his men continued to attack and harass settlers in the Moreton bay district, and in 1846 a group of about five hundred Aboriginal men gathered near Rosewood, west of Ipswich, and demanded food and money from the station owner Coutts. In the ensuing conflict, three Aboriginal men were shot, and we know that one of those killed was Multugerrah, also known in the records as Black Campbell.<sup>8</sup>

### 'Affray of tribes'

The estimated population of the watersheds of the Logan, Albert, Coomera and Nerang Rivers prior to the 1850s was between 1,500 and 2,000.<sup>9</sup> As the range implies, this was an estimate. Records from the time indicated a large population. Crown Lands Commissioner Christopher Rolleston wrote in 1844

---

<sup>7</sup> / F.J. Watson, *Vocabularies of four representative tribes of South Eastern Queensland*, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> / 5 September 1846, *Moreton Bay Courier*, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> / J.A. Gresty, 'The Numinbah Valley', in *Queensland Geographical Journal*, Vol. 51, Session 1946-47, p. 60.

that 'from what has been seen of the Tribes at different periods there is every reason to suppose them numerous and powerful'.<sup>10</sup>

As land was being appropriated by settlers, Aboriginal people in the Moreton Bay district continued their practice of law and culture. From the earliest records of white settlement, there were accounts of large gatherings of neighbours. One report from 1842 described a meeting near Brisbane of 1,600 people referred to as the 'Ningey Ningey blacks, the Bribie Island, Logan [River] and Bay tribes, and the Ipswich blacks'. The picture on the screen, from the London Illustrated News, shows a gathering near Brisbane in December 1853 (aside – the disparity in dates is because it was reprinted from an article in the Moreton Bay Free Press in 1853). There were numerous written accounts of ceremonial gatherings, and references to 'kippas' and 'bora' rites in the late nineteenth century. Thomas Hardcastle, who was the grandson of one of the early selectors near Boonah, later recorded that 'kippa' was a Yugarabul word meaning 'going from boy to manhood'.<sup>11</sup> It seemed that this word was common to all languages of the south east river valleys and the southern Darling Downs, since like the word 'bora' it appeared throughout the records. Tony will talk more about Hardcastle's accounts of ceremony.

Many of the colonial commentators noted the unwillingness of Aboriginal people to divulge information about what went on at some of these ceremonies. While there were ceremonies to which everyone was invited, others were kept secret. For instance, in 1864 about 300 Aboriginal people gathered from the Pimpama, Coomera and Tambourine districts to hold a corroboree at Waterford, near Beenleigh. They invited local settlers, and King

---

<sup>10</sup> / 5 January 1844, C. Rolleston to the Colonial Secretary, in Toowoomba & Darling Downs Family History Society, *Initial settlement on the Darling Downs 1843-1852: a transcription of Rolleston's records*, Toowoomba, Qld.: The Society, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> / T. W. Hardcastle, 'The vocabulary of the Yugarabul language spoken in the Boonah district', p. 24.

Jackey/ Bilin Bilin's brother Mark was one of the participants in this corroboree. The strict rules applying to sacred ceremonies were relaxed for these more entertaining events, and on this occasion in 1864 Mark performed a popular English song in addition to Aboriginal songs and dances.<sup>12</sup> But other ceremonial events were kept hidden from the colonists. William Hanlon recalled that at Burleigh Heads on the coast there was,

a very sacred borah or ceremonial arena...Should any uninitiated aboriginal intrude therein or even touch an object, however trifling, death was sure to inevitably follow this impious act.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the importance of keeping the practice of law and culture secure, it was often held in secret, unobserved and unrecorded. As a correspondent to the Moreton Bay Free Press wrote in 1853, if the colonists tried to stop the conduct of ceremonial fights, Aboriginal people would simply move them 'further on, out of the reach of the authorities'.<sup>14</sup>

### Depredations and dispersals

'Depredations' was a word used to describe Aboriginal attacks on livestock and people. Such strategies were a way that Aboriginal people fought back against the occupation of their country by the settlers. These 'depredations' were used as excuses for 'dispersals'. Though 'dispersals' is an innocuous sounding word, it was a euphemism for murder on a mass scale by the Native Police.

The Native Police played a central role in the expansion of the frontier in colonial Queensland. They were a force of displaced Aboriginal men

---

<sup>12</sup> / *Beaudesert Times*, 12 June 1931, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> / W. E. Hanlon, 'The Early Settlement of the Logan and Albert Districts', pp. 234-235.

<sup>14</sup> / 'Aboriginal Affray in New South Wales', *Moreton Bay Free Press* 27 December 1853 and 10 January 1854, reprinted in *Illustrated London News* 17 June 1854.

commanded by European officers. Historian Jonathan Richards described them as,

the infamous force created to kill Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. The force operated as part of a widespread campaign of frontier racial violence in colonial Australia in general, and in Queensland in particular.<sup>15</sup>

Lieutenant Frederick Walker (pictured on the right) commanded the first Native Police incursions in the Darling Downs, and had his headquarters at Callandoon station in 1849 with ten troopers. The Queensland Native Police Force was established in 1859, the same year as the Colony of Queensland was proclaimed. The pictures on the left were of Native Police in 1865. Their fellow Native Police Lieutenant, Frederick Wheeler and his troopers murdered many people in the Logan and Albert River valleys. Wheeler's murder of three elderly Aboriginal men at Fassifern in 1860 was condemned by some local settlers and the Coroner, and in part led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Inquiry into the Native Police in 1861. Settler Thomas Hall recalled that King Blucher's son Tommy was killed by Wheeler's 'Black Lambs', as Hall called them, near Fassifern station.<sup>16</sup> Wangeriburra man Bullum, of John Allen, whose story will be detailed a bit later, remembered a brutal attack on his people. And these are Bullum's words:

...on the bank of Nerang Creek in or about the year 1857... a party of 'Alberts', among whom was old blind Nyajum, was there camped on a visit to their friends and neighbours of the Nerang and Tweed. There had been a charge of cattle-killing brought against the local tribes, and

---

<sup>15</sup>/ J. Richards, *The Secret War*, p. 4

<sup>16</sup>/ Hall, *A short history of the Downs Blacks known as "the Blucher tribe"*, p. 4.

someone had to pay. The police heard of this camp, and, under the command of Officer Wheeler, cut it off on the land side with a body of troopers. The alarm was given. The male aboriginals plunged into the creek, swam to the other side, and hid in the scrub. The black troopers again were bad marksmen – probably with intent – as the only casualties were one man shot in the leg and one boy drowned. The old blind man had been hidden under a pile of skins in a hut, but was found by the troopers and dragged out by the heels. The gins told the troopers he was blind from birth. The troopers begged the officer not to order the poor fellow to be killed. The gins crowded round Wheeler imploring mercy for the wretched victim; some hung on to the troopers to prevent them firing. But prayers were useless; Wheeler was adamant. The gins were dragged off or knocked off with carbines, and the blind man was then shot by order of the white officer.<sup>17</sup>

### The story of Slab and his countrymen from Nerang

Many Aboriginal Native Police were ‘recruited’ by kidnap, and were brutally treated by their white commanding officers. From 1860 to 1888 in Queensland there were at least ten Aboriginal troopers shot dead by white police or Native Police commanding officers. On the screen is a picture of a camp of troopers and their wives, and unfortunately we were unable to locate a photograph of Slab and Billy Galeen and the other men in this account.

According to an account from early settler Carl Lentz, sometime in the 1860s, Billy Galeen was taken by the police from Nerang, along with other men and boys, to work as trackers at Port Douglas in far northern Queensland. Billy was

---

<sup>17</sup> / *ibid.*, p. 24.

only a boy, and he and the other boys cried with homesickness. But the Nerang men, Slab and Kipper Tommy, told the boys not to cry, since they would get plenty of food, would learn tracking and would go home eventually. After they had been in Port Douglas for a while working for the police, one night Slab announced they would go home. They travelled at night and covered their tracks so that local men would not attack them. They travelled on foot for 1,000 miles until they saw Mt Lindsay and knew they were nearly home, relieved that 'they were in their own country once more'. Their countrymen sent smoke signals from the mountain tops, and in celebration at the return of the men and boys after several years everyone gathered and held big corroboree.<sup>18</sup>

This account was also recorded, with some variation, by historian J.A. Gresty, writing in the 1940s, who was told how some men and boys from what he called the 'Nerang-ballums' tribe were taken in the 1860s and enlisted as trackers with the police. William Hanlon recorded the same story in the late 1890s, although in Hanlon's version Billy Galeen was taken on his own.

### Working for the settlers

By the 1850s, much of the area east of the ranges was covered by pastoral leases, and settlers built station homesteads on former Aboriginal hunting grounds. This map shows the stations in the SERRP research area, from a map originally produced in 1872.

Aboriginal people provided much of the labour to run the sheep and cattle stations, becoming skilled stockmen and drovers. Indeed some of the records described how they helped the settlers build their first houses. Also, everybody

---

<sup>18</sup> / Lentz, *Memoirs and some history*, pp. 10-11

worked. Women also worked to maintain the homestead and look after children, and people tended the station garden. As these picture show, even children worked, looking after the smaller children and helping with housework.

People also worked for timber getters in the coastal hinterland. Aboriginal people became skilled timber cutters and one man, Bill Drumley at Beaudesert, could dress fence posts so accurately that they looked like milled timber. Not all workers lived on the stations, but stayed in their own camps, often in their own country, and worked as itinerant labourers.

Settler Carril Lentz recalled that Kipper Tommy and his wife stayed in Nerang, and this was the same Kipper Tommy who had trekked home with Slab and the other police recruits in the 1860s. Kipper Tommy's daughter married and stayed in her parents country working at a station on the Upper Coomera.<sup>19</sup> Lentz recalled that Kitty Blow and her three sons remained living in Nerang.

Even after the introduction of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* and the era of mass forced removals, in south east Queensland, many people were able to stay on their country because they were an important part of the local labour force. Southern Protector Archibald Meston reported in 1897 that,

*There are 45 blacks at present on the Logan, from Beenleigh to Christmas Creek. Some of these work for settlers or squatters, or townspeople and so obtain clothes and food. They are free from drink, opium and disease, and consequently there is no need to remove them. It is not advisable to*

---

<sup>19</sup> / *ibid.*, p. 12.

*interfere with any healthy blacks who are earning their own living, nor to add any avoidable expenses to the Deebing Creek station.*

The photo on the left is of William Smith's family and another family, taken at Beaudesert in 1907. Above right is a photo of a couple at their camp in Beenleigh in 1895. At right is a photo of the living room at Canning Downs homestead in 1900, which shows the stark contrast in living standards between the station owners and the Aboriginal families who worked for them. Other photos show Salvation Jack and his family in Beaudesert,

When I was researching and writing this report, I only had time to skim the surface of the history of the Aboriginal contribution to the economy in south east Queensland. There is a lot more to be recovered from the documentary records about Aboriginal labour in the various local industries, and the history of people living and working on their traditional country.

## Leaders

Old Coolum was described in the records as 'the head of the 'Beaudesert clan'. His father was King Coolum of the Muningalli tribe, according to local historians in Beaudesert. Old Coolum worked on many of the cattle stations in the area and when he passed away he was given a public funeral. This photo of him was taken c. 1900-1908

The photo on the right of Tarampa Johnny looks to be very similar to the photo of Bilin Bilin in the next slide. We think it is probably the same man.

Yugambah man Bilin Bilin, who was also called Jacky Jacky, was made leader of his people in the early 1860s. Settlers gave him a breastplate with the inscription 'Jackey Jackey - King of the Logan and Pimpama'. The photo on the

left is from 1895. On the right is a photo captioned 'On the Albert – a day with the tribe and King', and was taken in 1893. . Bilin Bilin had three wives, and John Logan was his son from his second marriage. Bilin Bilin's daughter was Emily Logan.

### Bullum and Bunjoey and their knowledge of language and country

Bullum, whose English name was John Allen, was born at a place near Tabragalba station on the Albert River in about 1850. He worked for the Collins family from the age of about twelve. Bullum lived mostly at Maroon station, but also accompanied Robert Collins on expeditions to the West, droving or looking for new land to lease. Bullum spent his final years on his country on the Albert River and lived in a house on Mudoolan station. Bullum was the informant for John Lane's 1913 publication about the language and country of the Wangeriburra people and their neighbours, the Kombummerri, Mununjali, Migunburri and Bullongin. The photo was taken in 1913.

Bunjoey whose English name was Susan McArthy, provided information about Yugarapul legends and language to Enid Bell of Coochin Station. This was published in a series of articles in 1935, and Enid Bell later published a children's book, also based on information that Bunjoey shared with her. Bunjoey was born in about 1850 and lived all of her life in the Boonah district, spending the later years of her life at Coochin Coochin station. Bunjoey was the daughter of Moolpajo, called the 'King of the Yugararpul tribe'. This photo shows her on Coochin station, and was taken sometime in the 1920s.

## Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897

Many of you in the audience know and had lived through the devastating impacts of government policies in relation to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Here I quote from the the 'Founding documents' website, as I think it gives a good summary:

This Act controlled the fates of Indigenous people in Queensland – the State containing the largest number of surviving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – throughout much of the 20th century. It was the model for similarly 'protective' and restrictive legislation in Western Australia in 1905, the Northern Territory in 1910 and South Australia in 1911...

Furthermore, the legislation was utilised to control Aboriginal people at the workplace and to remove their basic civil rights, reducing them to the position of State wards. It was intended to limit the reproduction of part-Aboriginal offspring – the so-called 'half-caste menace' – seen at the time as a threat to an ideal 'White Australia'.

The 1897 Act was strengthened by subsequent Amendment Acts ...Then, in 1965 and 1971, new Protection Acts were passed which were also closely moulded on the original 1897 legislation. Although presented at the time as a charitable, humane and philanthropic measure, the 1897 Act in its practical outcome was oppressive and restricted the freedom of Aboriginal people more effectively than the sale of opium.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> / <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/item-sdid-54.html>

The Act gave the government sweeping powers over the lives of Aboriginal people in Queensland. Under the Act, the Minister could order the removal to a reserve of any person defined as an Aboriginal under the Act. Reserves were where the segregated missions and settlements were located, and these places were always overcrowded and with abysmal living conditions. Section 31 of the Act provided for the control of Aboriginal people on reserves (including their wages), and the custody of Aboriginal children.

Those appointed as 'Protectors', who were often the local police officers, had wide powers over the employment and forced removal of Aboriginal people.<sup>21</sup> The style of governance under the Act was completely autocratic, and decisions were made by a handful of bureaucrats based in Brisbane. There were no avenues of appeal against decisions of the Chief Protector, and he wielded his extensive powers with virtually no accountability.

### Forced removals to Deebing Creek

Queens Park in Ipswich, on the Bremer River, was made a public reserve in 1862 and was a regular camping place for Aboriginal people. Historian William Thorpe suggested that it was 'almost certain' that this was a traditional pre-colonial camping and meeting place for 'local Yuggera'.<sup>22</sup> An Ipswich town meeting in 1870 endorsed the establishment of a mission and added that Aboriginal people should be encouraged to 'settle and engage in industrial pursuits', as well as to be 'enlightened' by Christianity.<sup>23</sup> The first area gazetted for an Aboriginal reserve was at Purga, but townsfolk objected to the site being

---

<sup>21</sup> / *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*, No 17 of 1897, Sections 4, 6, 9, 10 and 16.

<sup>22</sup> / B. Thorpe, *Remembering the forgotten: a history of the Deebing Creek Aboriginal mission in Queensland 1887-1915*, Henley Beach, S. Aust. : Seaview Press, 2004, pp. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> / *ibid.*, p. 3.

so close to Ipswich so a new reserve was gazette at Deebing Creek, about 8 kilometres south of Ipswich. In 1892 Rev Fuller 'induced several of the Queens Park campers to go out with him and settle on the land at Deebing Creek'.<sup>24</sup>

These original residents of Deebing Creek mission were local Yagera people, and they came and went as they pleased, and worked for local farmers. In 1892 there were Emily Harvey and her mother Mary Ann, and Thomas Dugandan, who had been camping at Queens Park and were returning to the mission from a hunting expedition. At the mission settlement itself, some people had built huts – the men cut the timber themselves – but most lived with their families in traditional 'gunyahs'. An 1894 list of Deebing Creek residents included members of the Aboriginal Collins family, Billy and Topsy Brown and their children, Alf Coolwool, Fred Fogarty, Maryann Drumley, and 12 year old Ida Drumley. Also at Deebing Creek there was Johnny Logan, 27 year old son of King Jackey/ Bilin Bilin, and Sarah Logan, 25, and their children, along with the Thompson family. The Sandy, Green and Woods families were also listed. Very few of the Deebing Creek residents were elderly, the oldest being Tommy Duggandan at aged 60.<sup>25</sup> There were others on this list from 1894, but as I mentioned before when I started the research in 2011 I was asked to focus on particular families and individuals.

With the introduction of the Act, the population at Deebing Creek changed dramatically. People were forcibly removed from across Queensland and brought to Deebing Creek mission, and in 1897 there were 120 people there. The photos you see on the screen are from the early 1900s, and as the caption

---

<sup>24</sup> / D. Habermann, *Deebing Creek & Purga Missions, 1892-1948: history book*, [Ipswich, Qld.] : Ipswich City Council, 2003, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> / List, undated but c 1894 in Queensland State Archives Item ID 716219, Papers.

indicates, Bilin Bilin was seated in the photo on the left. His friend Billy, who was probably Billy Turner, recalled that,

*He and Jackey were too old to travel about and that Mr Meston had at last caught them to go to Deebin. They were always frightened that Meston would send them to Fraser Island. They abhorred the Fraser Islanders as nothing less than headhunters.*

In the photo on the right, from the early 1900s, is of children at the Deebing Creek school. The children in the photo were not identified, but school records showed that George Query started at the school in 1900. Peter, Elsie and Clara Williams were students at the school along with Stanley, Mary and Mabel Brown. Violet Collins was enrolled in 1904 and Harriet Collins the following year. Superintendent Ivin's children, Gordon and Doris, also went to the school.

Next slide

The photo on the left is from the early 1900s, and shows men dressed for ceremony. The different styles of body paint and headdress suggested that several groups were represented. As we know, people were forcibly removed from all over Queensland. The photo on the right from the same era showed the Deebing Creek mission cricket team. Though the men in the photo were not identified, and earlier report from 1895 listed Curtis as captain of the cricket team, with team members George and William (Billy) Collins, (John) Logan, Sandy, Paul, Roger Bell, Edwards, E. Brown, E. Williams and William (Billy) Brown.

## Deebing Creek and Purga

In 1904 there were 167 people living at the Deebing Creek mission. The labour of the men on neighbouring farms contributed £49 pounds to the mission budget and people at the mission grew their own food.

Deebing Creek mission was closed in 1913, as the place was overcrowded and dilapidated, and people were moved to a new mission site at Purga, slightly closer to Ipswich, over 1914 and 1915. In 1921 the Salvation Army was appointed to run the mission and it became a Salvation Army Home until Purga was closed in 1948.

Across Queensland, Aboriginal children were charged with being neglected under the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act 1865*. Under this Act, any child of an Aboriginal mother could be 'sentenced' to indefinite terms in industrial schools. Deebing Creek and Purga were declared industrial schools where children were 'committed'. Children were sentenced to particular terms at the industrial school at Deebing Creek, from four years up to 'indefinite' sentences, and the mission received ration payments from the government for these children. Government correspondence in 1905 and 1906 showed that as soon as the children were old enough to work, and even before they were properly old enough, the Chief Protector sought to have their sentences remitted so they could be sent away from the mission to earn 2/6 (two shillings and six pence) in wages.<sup>26</sup> Girls were particularly in demand as domestic servants, and were sent to work as young as nine years old to clean the houses and care for the children of white families in Brisbane and other areas.

---

<sup>26</sup> / 28 September 1906, from Under Secretary, Home Secretary's Office to Chief Protector, and Deebing Creek Industrial School 1905-1907, in Queensland State Archives Item ID 716225, Papers

## Life on the mission; Purga, Barambah and Taroom and applications for exemption

Aboriginal people from the southeast were also forcibly removed to Barambah and Taroom settlements. Barambah was officially gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve in 1904, and was renamed Cherbourg in 1932. It became the largest Aboriginal settlement in the State. By 1939 there was a total population of over 1,000 on the settlement. This was all attributed to people being sent there, as there was zero natural population increase. The high mortality rate on the settlement was particularly so amongst babies; Barambah had an infant mortality rate between four and five times the Australian average, and during the 1930s this increased to between six and seven times the Australian average.<sup>27</sup> As with all settlements to which Aboriginal people from across Queensland were forcibly removed, the general health standards at Barambah were terrible, with grossly inadequate health care and living conditions. The written complaint from a resident of Purga, shown on the screen, described what it was like. This damning report was probably written by Stanley Bell.

Taroom Aboriginal reserve, on the banks of the Dawson River just over 300 kilometres north of Toowoomba, was opened in May 1911. People were forcibly removed to Taroom from all over the State, from Cooktown in the north, as well as Kamilaroi people from northern NSW. The enforced mixing of diverse groups created tension among the reserve population, which by 1915 numbered 300 people.

Taroom, like Deebing Creek and Barambah, was an important supplier of labour for the surrounding districts, and on the settlement itself all able bodied

---

<sup>27</sup> / T. Blake, *A dumping ground: a history of the Cherbourg settlement*, St Lucia, Qld. : University of Queensland Press, 2001, pp. 34-35, pp. 90-91.

men were expected to work. At Taroom, the working routine started at 7.30am with an assembly and those who worked outside the station did so as stockmen and domestic servants. Although people took pride in their skill, they objected to exploitation. There is little in the archival records that indicated why people at Taroom went on strike in 1916, but the Superintendent reported that the strike was 'chiefly due to the influence of Jerry Jerome, Cobbo Williams & Percy Queary'. The Superintendent recommended their removal, and by the mid-1920s Percy Queary and his family lived at the settlement at Myora, on Stradbroke Island.<sup>28</sup>

Under section 33 of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act*, the Minister could exempt individual 'half-castes' who applied. There were substantial advantages for Aboriginal people who were exempt from the various Acts which governed Indigenous Queenslanders. Exemption from the Act meant that people could no longer be forcibly removed to a mission or settlement, and did not have a local Protector or Departmental officer controlling their wages. It was a tenuous freedom, and exemptions were entirely at the discretion of the Chief Protector and his delegates and could be revoked without appeal. On the right of the screen is a letter from Stanley Bell, seeking exemption from the Act. Also included is the response from the Chief Protector, denying Bell's request for liberty. Giving no reason, the Chief Protector told Bell that, 'after inquiry, it has been decided not to comply with your request'.

Many Aboriginal people in the south east sought and were granted exemptions, and one effect of this was that they were no longer part of the

---

<sup>28</sup> / Progressive 1916/3143, from Superintendent Taroom, Queensland State Archives Item ID 302747.

population under constant surveillance by the Chief Protector's office, and the voluminous documentation of people's lives under the Act ceased.

## Hillview

### Hillview

In 1962 Yumaree, whose English name was Sam Yarry, told local historian M. Sullivan that Hillview was part of Yugumbeh country. Migunberri was the group at Christmas Creek, and there were an estimated 300 Migunberri people when white men first arrived in the mid 1840s.

Some Yugumbeh residents of Hillview lived through the period of closer settlement of the area in the 1870s, and worked for the settlers. These were Joe Coolham, Fred Yarry, Williams, Bilin Bilin and Joey Hagar. Joe Coolham told Sullivan in 1962 that Joey Hagar was the 'king of all kings' and was a clever man.

Yugumbeh people were recorded on the Hillview school register, starting with Robert Yarre [Yarry] in 1897. William and James Cahill were enrolled in 1897, and Clara Williams in 1899. In 1903 Sam Yarry was a student at the school and it seems that it was Sam, rather than his brother Robert, who was in this photo from 1909. Between 1900 and 1912 Margaret Yarry, Ethel Jacky, and Margaret and Charles Fogarty were enrolled at Hillview school. Chris Coolum, probably a relative of Old Coolum was enrolled in Hillview school in 1918. Others who appeared in the school register were children from the Fogarty, Coolwell and Clark families. In the 1909 photo where you can see the children's feet, it seemed that none were wearing shoes.<sup>29</sup> Hillview may have been a poor

---

<sup>29</sup> / *Hillview State School centenary souvenir*, p. 6.

school, but the Yugembeh children who attended were among the relatively few Aboriginal children in Queensland who had access to the same education as white children.

The later photos on the screen show Fred Yarry and Sylvia Cobbo, and then members of the Coolham family in 1958, Lea, Joe, Lucy and Joyce.

### Aboriginal diggers

Even though the *Defence Act 1909* prohibited men of Aboriginal descent from enlisting in the armed forces, over 1,000 Aboriginal men joined the First AIF and saw active service in WWI at Gallipoli, the Middle East and on the Western Front. Regulations were changed in 1917 to allow some so-called 'half-caste' men to enlist, but others joined up by not revealing their Aboriginal heritage. They were also probably welcomed by recruiting officers as enlistments declined in the later years of the war. These photographs are from the collection at the Australian War Memorial, as well as the Kombumerri Aboriginal Corporation publication, *Yugambeh: in defence of our country*.

Of the 133 Queensland Aboriginal men whose records historian Rod Pratt was able to confirm, 57% of them joined mounted units such as the Light Horse Regiments. For example, in the 11<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, 24 out of 30 of a contingent of reinforcements were Aboriginal men from Barambah mission. The 11<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment became known as the 'Queensland Black Watch' after its ranks were increased by 26 Aboriginal recruits in 1918, who saw active service in the Jordan Valley against the Turkish Army.

The overwhelming majority of Aboriginal enlistments in the First AIF were station workers – 76% – and many of them were already skilled horsemen. Indeed, Aboriginal soldiers matched the ideal of the skilled bushman type created in C.E.W. Bean’s famous construction of the Anzac legend. This was in contrast to the many more numerous white soldiers from urban centres who had spent little time in the bush and were more familiar with trams than with horses.

### Fighting for our liberty

When Aboriginal diggers returned from WWI, they could reasonably expect to be honoured for the sacrifices they had made alongside their white comrades and ‘cobbers’. But as historian Robert Hall wrote ‘the nation turned its back on them’.

After WWI across the nation legislation in relation to the governance of Indigenous populations became increasingly harsh. Aboriginal returned soldiers never benefitted from repatriation policies and soldier settlement schemes.

The Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) was established to protest against this and other injustices. AAPA was officially established in NSW in 1925, and activists called for the repeal of so called ‘protection’ legislation and the granting of full citizenship rights for Aboriginal people. As the AAPA expanded into south east Queensland, by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals there. When AAPA campaigner Basil Renaudin Vel, later organiser and Secretary of the Coolangatta branch of the Australian Aboriginals

Progressive Association, moved to Queensland in 1919 he was put under surveillance by the Chief Protector and had his mail intercepted.

Yugembeh returned soldier Frederick Coolwell established a branch in Beaudesert, and his letter to the Minister is on the screen. Coolwell's letter was forwarded by the Minister for Justice to the Chief Protector, and that was where the matter ended. His demands for justice for himself and his people seemed to be of no concern to the Queensland Minister of Justice.

## Texas and Inglewood

### Texas and Inglewood

Several families never moved far from their country. Government records from the 1950s showed that there was an Aboriginal settlement of about 50 people on the NSW side of the Dumaresq River, opposite Texas. The children attended school in Texas and most of the adults were in paid employment. A number of the women worked as domestic servants in Texas, and the men were employed on tobacco farms. In 1952 the people living in this community were Eva and Stan Doolan and their children Malcolm, Nelly, William and Mary. Billie, or William, Brown and his wife Mary Brown (possibly a nickname for Minnie Brown) lived at the community with their daughter Edith Ruth Brown. She was married to Mervyn, and their child was Raymond. The Brown's younger children were Ernest, Robert, Barry and Margaret. Also living at Texas were Charlie and Sophie Connors, Jessie and Ada Spearim, and Bessie and Dave Spearim.

In the 1970s, Aboriginal families continued to live along the Dumaresq River. The Texas Historical Society referred these people as descendants of the 'Texas tribe'.

## Woodenbong

In 1908 the Woodenbong Aboriginal station in NSW was first gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve by the NSW Aboriginal Protection Board, the counterpart to the Qld Chief Protector's Office.

In the 1930s, some people travelled to Woodenbong from the mission at Purga as the legislation in Queensland became increasingly draconian.

In the 1950s, the station population varied from 135 to 184 people.

Station manager Russell Hausfeld recorded in the late 1950s the continued practice of Githabul law and culture at Woodenbong, the 'secret life' he referred to which people were reluctant to reveal.

People at Woodenbong rejected assimilation into white society, and wanted to stay with their relatives on their traditional country.

In the late 1960s, the Aboriginal residents of Woodenbong station wanted the New South Wales government to hand the reserve over to them, so they could manage and legally own their traditional land.

## OPAL

One People for Australia League (OPAL), a conservative organization promoting 'unity and welfare of the white and coloured people of Australia'.<sup>30</sup> OPAL had been established in 1961 as a state wide organization with the encouragement and financial support of the Queensland government. In correspondence in

---

<sup>30</sup> / W.E. Tomasetti 'One people of Australia League', typescript essay, p. 2 in *William Thorpe Papers*.

1962 the Director of Native Affairs stated that OPAL was ‘in effect, founded in my office’.<sup>31</sup> Its membership was predominantly Christian and it was one of the few Aboriginal advancement organisations that did not affiliate with the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI).

It seemed that the Ipswich Coloured Welfare Council sought membership of OPAL in part for the funding and infrastructure advantages it provided, and the Council was able to then access the benefits of a State-wide organization.<sup>32</sup> It also meant that the Ipswich branch had Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, which was the norm for Aboriginal advancement organisations at this time. OPAL also held social events, and a photograph from the early 1970s showed children at an OPAL holiday camp. One of the girls in the holiday camp photo was identified as Colleen Currie.

### The campaign for Deebing Creek Cemetery

Starting in 1967, Aboriginal people at Ipswich sought to have the cemetery at the old Deebing Creek mission site protected. At that time it was privately leased by two non-Aboriginal farmers.

In 1974 local leader Les Davidson continued the campaign, writing to the Federal Minister to ask that the site be gazetted as a reserve.

---

<sup>31</sup> / 22 January 1962, Director of Native Affairs to Minister for Health and Home Affairs in Queensland State Archives Item ID717611.

<sup>32</sup> / *ibid.*

After Davidson's death in 1978, his his relatives and fellow campaigners formed the Deebing Creek Cultural Committee to carry on the work of securing the former mission site.

In the early 1980s, the Deebing Creek Historical Association took up the campaign to secure the land, and Senator Neville Bonner was one of the Trustees along with J and Mrs G Davidson, and Mrs F Wright, as well as the Mayor of Ipswich.

In 1984 farmers O'Neill and Adams still refused to sell their lease of the site. O'Neil shot his rifle whenever Aboriginal people visited the gravesites. Then State Minister Bob Katter refused to negotiate with the Aboriginal group.

In December 1985 Budger Davidson erected the first tent near the site of the cemetery, and several people followed forming the Deebing Creek Cultural Camp.

In February 1986, under threat of eviction and legal action by the Ipswich Council, the Deebing Creek Cultural Camp was abandoned.