“SUNG FOR GENERATIONS”

Tales of Red Kangaroo, War Leader of Gunnedah
"SUNG FOR GENERATIONS"

'Old' Joe Bungaree’s tales about Red Kangaroo, an 18th Century Gamilaraay 'Big-Man' of the central Namoi River NSW: The “Red Chief” of Ion Idriess.


Documents Transcribed, With Commentary, by

Michael O’Rourke
M.Phil. Cantab., MBA UNSW, BA Syd.

Sometime Keeper of the Great Seal of Australia; member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; author of Kamilaroi Lands; etc, etc.
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The Author

Michael O'Rourke
706 Phoenix Apartments,
86-88 Northbourne Ave
BRADDON ACT 2612
Australia

*Do not, repeat not, send* land mail to this address. Please use the
e-mail below for all inquiries.

mjr@velocitynet.com.au

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I will go alone to raise a burial mound
over my best-loved brother.

Sophocles: Antigone, 80.

The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil’d,
Is from the book of honour razéd quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil’d.

Shakespeare: Sonnets, XXV.

Ngurungu burrulaa yugal ganugu bawilday.
(Gamilaraay: They used to sing many songs about
him. - “Of him many songs they sang often/used
to sing.”)

‘About/of him: he-GENITIVE + many +
song[s] + they-as-doers: 3RD PERSON
PLURAL ERGATIVE + sang-always: sing-
REGULAR/FIXED PAST.’

. . . this ancient chief whose name and burial-
place have been sung and known for
generations.

The Sydney Mail 1891: Document
One, para 25.
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Points to notice: The open woodland; the ‘foot-pad’ (walking line) around the mound; and the three carved trees.

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Point to notice: The very open woodland with extensive grassland. Early travellers compared the Liverpool Plains
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16. View north-east from near the Mooki-Namoi junction, showing the range of hills including Nobby Rock. The Rock is easily distinguished with the human eye, but hard to see in this photograph.
I first sighted the Ewing Papers in 1980. I was revisiting Gunnedah, the town of my birth, and Tambar Springs where I grew up.

Until 1968-69 my parents owned a farm near Tambar Springs, on the eastern side of Coxs Creek. They had retired thence to Gosford. In 1980 we undertook a northern pilgrimage, returning for the 100th anniversary of the Tambar Springs school.

We also visited Brenda Mary O’Rourke, my father’s sister, in Gunnedah - Auntie Brenda of blessed memory - herself a long-time resident of the town.

I was already well interested in Gunnedah’s history. This was due partly to an interest in my family history, and partly to my having encountered Ion L Idriess’s novella *The Red Chief* when Angus & Robertson reissued it in paperback form in 1965.¹

I call his book a “novella” only because it is short: although meant as entertainment, *The Red Chief* is closely based on what can be regarded as a true story and, to that extent, is not fiction. As Idriess explains: see his Preface, reprinted as Document Four in this book, his novella was closely based on a set of handwritten notes that I have dubbed the “Ewing Papers”, kept by the Gunnedah Historical Society.

So it was natural for me to visit the then president of the Historical Society, Lionel Erratt, to ask if I could see the original notes. I was curious about what more may have existed than Idriess chose to publish.

Mr Erratt kindly agreed to show me the ‘Ewing Transcripts’. Indeed he bravely gave me, a stranger to him, permission to carry the precious manuscripts down-town for photocopying. Perhaps I had an honest face. Or he may have trusted me because he knew my aunt.

¹ First edition 1953. For an outline of the novella, see Appendix One. Tom Thompson of ETT Imprint Pty Ltd, who kindly granted permission for Idriess’s preface to be reprinted here, notes that *The Red Chief* is also available under the Bolinda imprint in both large print and full audio editions.
The Historical Society subsequently approved of my lodging a photocopy with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra.

* * *

"Old" Joe Bungaree, a local Aboriginal elder, was the source of most of the information. Police Sergeant J P (John Peter) Ewing and his youngest son Stanley wrote the notes, or a first recension, in about 1890. The Sergeant published a version of the 'Cassilis Raid' story in the local newspaper at that time (see Document 3B, MS Page 34; and 3C, MS Page 34).

Evidently some of the stories were taken down directly by the Sergeant as Joe Bungaree related them. Other parts of the documents come from notes made by the Sergeant but afterwards transcribed by Stanley. And Stanley drew on his own memories, having been a boy aged nine when the “chief’s” grave was dug up.

Noting that there are several documents explicitly dated to the period 1938-1945, I would guess that the main text, originally set down in about 1890, was recopied or transcribed in neat form in the late 1930s.

The preface and postscript to Ion Idriess's *The Red Chief* offer a clear and correct account, drawn nearly verbatim from the Ewing Transcripts, of how in 1887 the bones of the so-called "Red Chief" - a term never used by Joe Bungaree or the Ewing family - were dug up from under the streetscape of the rising village of Gunnedah. The "old" Sergeant was then aged 58. His youngest son Stanley, as noted, was nine years old.

Stanley and his brothers watched the excavation, but it seems the Sergeant was not actually present, having gone back to work after putting the organiser of the dig, Dr Haynes, in contact with Joe Bungaree. There were three Aborigines (reluctantly) present at the dig. They stood back at some distance: "old" Joe Bungaree, aged about 70; Donny McKay, an even older man; and Jacob Painter, a much younger man.
Idriess quotes at length, but not always exactly, from Stanley Ewing’s account, written in 1938, of the opening of the grave of **Red Kangaroo** (as he is more correctly called). The same document goes on, after describing the excavation, to relate the tales about Red Kangaroo’s wife-stealing raid to Coonabarabran and the war with the Kingstown-Bundarra men. Ewing’s account is now published in full (Document 3B).

In addition we have a letter written in 1945 by John Ewing junior, Stanley’s older brother, giving his memories of what happened in 1887. This is published here as Document 3A.

A further short document, also apparently in John Ewing junior’s handwriting, contains an unrelated story told by Jane (Jenny or Old “Jinnie”) Griffin. She was the Aboriginal matriarch of Coonabarabran. Her story deals with a clash between the Coonabarabran people and the Cassilis people that took place when Mrs Griffin herself was a child, in other words around 1830.

Finally there is the second longest of the documents, which contains Joe Bungaree’s quasi-epic tale of “How Red Kangaroo Baited His Trap to Catch the Powerful Cassilis Tribe” (the title supplied by Stanley Ewing).

Present-day Cassilis is a small settlement south of the Liverpool Ranges. In former times it was apparently the seat of a substantial Aboriginal community or ‘tribelet’ who at different times were at war or peace with their various neighbours. No doubt they were often friendly with their neighbours, but of course peace does not supply material for stories quite as exciting as does warfare. At any rate, in Joe Bungaree’s tale, set apparently at the turn of the 18th century, the Cassilis people launch a raid on the Gunnedah people’s main camp. They are decisively defeated thanks to the coolness and cleverness of the Gunnedah leader, Red Kangaroo/Kambu Kanuurru.

* * *

Why did Sergeant Ewing and his son choose to record the stories? The short answer is ‘we don’t know’.

3
As it appears, in 1887 Sergeant Ewing was called on by the town doctor, Edward Haynes, to help persuade Joe Bungaree to tell him (Haynes) "all you know about the carved stump and what the carvings mean, and to tell . . . all you can about the great warrior chief of your tribe who lived here long, long time ago". Haynes had already decided to dig up the grave, evidently in search of the skull. He was a collector of "rare and fine types of Aboriginal skulls". But Haynes seems to have known only that the grave in question contained the body of a 'great warrior'.

In the event, Bungaree would tell him nothing (for religious reasons). Haynes had to cajole other Aborigines to tell the traditions. He had succeeded by 1891 in drawing out a general account, but only in outline - as explained in the Sydney Mail article published here.

It seems implied that it was not until after 1891 that Sergeant Ewing sat down to listen at length to Joe Bungaree's stories and to make detailed notes. Why Ewing did so is not stated. The Sergeant, from his days at Coonabarabran, was a collector of stone axe-heads: this may suggest he had a general or specific interest in Aboriginal culture.

In Stanley's case, he had, or came to have, a curiosity about the meaning of the name 'Gunnedah' and the name of the "chief" whose grave he had witnessed being excavated. When Stanley had grown up - around 1900 - he asked his father, and the Sergeant told, what he had learnt from various Aborigines in the Gunnedah-Coonabarabran region.

As noted, the Ewing Papers as we have them today were written, or transcribed, in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1938, an inaccurate item in The Land newspaper provoked Stanley (then aged 60) to record his own memories and (as it appears) also to copy out all, or parts, of his long-dead father's notes. Evidently Stanley meant to offer his text to the Gunnedah newspaper.

John Ewing junior wrote a further short account in 1945, evidently responding to an inquiry from Russell McDonagh of the local historical society.
There are several reasons why I have judged it important to publish the documents.
First, the tales about Red Kangaroo are interesting in their own right. Who is not interested in stories of love and war? Second, the papers constitute a corpus of material unique in Australia in that they deal with events dating to well before the first British colonists landed at Sydney Cove. As such, they provoke questions about how oral traditions are transmitted through time before being "captured" in writing.
The tales were told by - mainly - one Aboriginal elder (Joe Bungaree). He related them, in English, to - basically - one English-speaking white man (Sergeant Ewing). This raises two questions: "What if anything was lost, or added, in the handing down over several generations of stories about a man said to have died in about 1745?" And: "What if anything was lost, or added, by their being recorded in English during the High Victorian period, when most white people looked down on Aborigines and Aboriginal culture, and the 'science' of anthropology was still in its infancy?"
It is impossible, of course, to give any definitive answer to these questions. Aboriginal Australia before 1770 is a vanished world about which we can know nothing (except for what archaeology may reveal). But the tales contain information on how life was lived in the period 1650-1750. Or perhaps we should say: as life was believed to have been lived. Thus the authenticity of the tales can be tested - but only up to a point - by looking at what we know, from other writings, about "traditional" life in the early 1800s.
I deal with some of these issues in the Introduction that follows. In addition I have supplied a running commentary alongside (or rather, in between) the text of each document.
My commentary is intended to alert readers to the existence of other information and hence supply a context. For example, when smoke-signals are first
mentioned, I have added a note on what we know - it is not a great deal - about Aborigines in other parts of the continent using (or not using) smoke as signals.

On occasions I have ventured to suggest some different conclusions from those reached by the Ewings and Idriess. I have also drawn attention to some inconsistencies between the various documents.

I hope I have done this charitably. If, however, my editorial interventions make me seem a modern-day 'smart-alec' correcting the mistakes of poor uneducated folk of the past, well, I apologise to the reader. (The fine phrasing of Document 3E, "Jinnie’s Tale", proves that John Ewing at least was as well educated as anyone needs to be; but libraries were fewer and poorer in their time.)

The Ewing brothers and their father, Sergeant Ewing, were very decidedly concerned with being accurate and complete in what they wrote. Ion Idriess’s main purpose, however, was to entertain his readers. Naturally Idriess did not write as a detached scholar. He was not seeking to be careful and correct about every little point. So, when I note that, in certain places, he has omitted some statement or other in the Ewing Papers, this is not meant to suggest any failing on his part. On the contrary, we owe a great debt to Idriess and the Ewing family and the McDonaghs. Evidently it was Russell McDonagh who asked John Ewing, after Stanley had died, to write down what he recalled. More importantly, McDonagh persuaded Idriess to turn the Ewing Papers into a novella.

I, for one, am very admiring of the pains they took to record, preserve and publicise these stories from long ago. As has been said: ‘we see so far today only because we stand on the shoulders of the giants who preceded us’.

My commentary, like all contributions to scholarship, can and should be criticised. If I have committed errors of interpretation, then they deserve correction. For only by removing errors will we more closely approach the truth. In the Latin: *judicent tamen doctiores, et siquid probabilius habuerint, proferant.* – ‘Those more
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

learned may judge [my work], and, if they have a more probable [proposal], well, let them put it forward.’

MICHAEL O’ROURKE
Canberra 2005
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TOM THOMPSON of ETT Imprint Pty Ltd, for permission to reproduce the extract from The Red Chief.
### Metric and Imperial Measures

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<th>Imperial</th>
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<td>1 inch = 25.4 mm</td>
<td>62 miles = 100 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.94 inches = 10 cm</td>
<td>100 miles = 161 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 foot = 30.4 cm</td>
<td>1 acre = 0.405 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 yard (3 feet) = 91.5 cm</td>
<td>2.471 acres = 1 hectare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 feet = 1.83 metres</td>
<td>1,000 square miles = 640,000 acres = 259,000 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 feet or 1 surveyor’s chain = 20.11 metres</td>
<td>3,860 square miles = 10,000 square km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 yards = 91 metres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109 yards = 100 metres</td>
<td>1 pound (weight) = 454 gm</td>
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</table>
A Pedantic Note on Spelling and Pronunciation

*Cumbo Gunnerah or Gambu Ganuurr?* – There is no short or simple way of explaining pronunciation and spelling. So I will discuss them at some length.

The first problem is that English has no consistent way of spelling the difference between a short ‘u’ and a long ‘u’. The vowel sounds in English ‘full’ and ‘fool’ are different and spelt differently; but the sound in ‘wool’ is not the same as in ‘tool’. So, for writing out Aboriginal languages, present-day linguists tend to prefer Indonesian or Italian-style spellings. They use ‘u’ for the short vowel in “wool” [*wul*] and ‘uu’ for the long vowel in “tool” [*tuul*]. The 19th century missionary-anthropologist William Ridley preferred diacritics (“hatted letters”) to make this distinction.

A further problem arises from the fact that in Gamilaraay word-stress often fell on the *first* syllable. In English the default (or most common) stress is on the *second* syllable.

The English-style spelling of our hero’s name, ‘*Cumbo Gunnerah*’, has the advantage that it prompts the reader, correctly, to put the stress on the first syllable of Gambu: we read it as *Cumbo Gunnerah.* It seems,

---

1. John Giacon and his colleagues (Ash et al. 2003) prefer *Gambuu* (long u). The older texts, however, suggest that both vowels were short. I have mostly followed Ash et al.’s reading of phonemes throughout this book, but in this case I will stay with the short u in *Gambu.*
however, that the second vowel in ‘Gunnerah’ was actually long (uu); so correctly Ganuurrru.\textsuperscript{3} Long vowels were stressed, so a better English-style rendering would actually be G’noora or G’nooru.

The old spelling also shows that Gamilaraay-speakers would sometimes pronounce the ‘hard C/K/G sound’ with “voicing” (K as in English ‘come’) and that at other times it was “unvoiced” (G as in English ‘gum’). But there was no difference in meaning between Kumbo Gunnerah, Gumbo Cunnerah or Cumbo Kunnerah.

The 19th century spelling misrepresents some of the vowels. There was no ‘o’ sound in Aboriginal languages. The second vowel in ‘Cumbo’ was [pace Giacon] actually a short ‘u’, as in English ‘wood’, and is better written as bu. The vowel ‘e’ in ‘nner’ likewise was really a long ‘u’ and is better written as nuu.

The –ah (+a) suffix in ‘Gunnerah’ marked the dative- ablative case, meaning “at, on, in, by, with”. Ganuurrra means “in, at, on the red kangaroo”. It would be more apt, however, to use the ergative-instrumental case (with +u) since Ganuurrru means “the red kangaroo as the doer or agent of the verb”\textsuperscript{4}.

\textsuperscript{3} Variously rendered as ‘cannoor’ (Breton 1834); ‘ganoor’ (Greenway SM 1910: 76) and ‘ganu:r’ (Ridley). Ash et al. 2003 propose that the final consonant was a ‘rolled’ or so-called “Scottish” r, i.e. rr.

\textsuperscript{4} “Cases” refer to grammatically different forms of a word. English may be said to have three cases, as in I-me-my or she-her-her. “I” and “she” (the doer) are nominative or subject case. “Me” and “her” (to whom it is done) are accusative or object case. “My” and “her”, indicating ownership, are possessive.
Unfortunately, the Indonesian or Italian-style spelling *Gambu Ganuurrru* will be read, wrongly, by some people as “gaemboo g’nooroo” or “gaemboo gannuroo”. In English-style spelling it would be better to represent the name as “gummbu g’noor-ru”. But this is not very elegant. So I have reluctantly chosen to use the Italianate ‘*Gambu Ganuurrru*’. The letter ‘a’ represents the short vowel in English ‘one’, ‘come’ and ‘gun’.

In short: do not pronounce his name as Gaemboo Gaenooroo! Say it as Gummbu G’noor-ru.

* * *

Note too that, in the name of the language, *Gamilaraay* or Kamilaroi, the first and fourth syllables were stressed [gàmil+aràày]. Hence the second ‘a’, the third syllable, was effectively silent. Arguably the best spelling would be Gamil’raay.

So, do not say “Ka-mill-a-roy”! Say it like the three English words *Gum+ill+rye*.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

**Maps**

Map 1: The Region, showing highways etc
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

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(hypothetical)
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

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Introduction

1. GEOGRAPHY AND PLACE- NAMES

1.1 Physical Geography and Climate

Gunnedah is located at the centre of the Liverpool Plains. The latter is the name that the explorer John Oxley chose for the generally flat, wide river-valley: the Peel-Namoi River and its major tributaries, the Manilla River, Mooki River and Coxs Creek [Map 2].

The Liverpool Plains can be visualised as a five-sided basin. They, or it, are bounded by four mountain ranges and an open fifth side. But one has to be flying very high, or look at a map, to actually see this. The ordinary car-traveller does not see this pattern because of the many minor lines of hills.

Listed clockwise, the four major ranges are the Nandewars, the Moonbi Ranges (the edge of New England), the Liverpool Range and the Warrumbungles [Maps 1 and 2]. There is a fifth, open side where the Namoi River runs out onto the level plains country beyond Narrabri.

The Namoi catchment west of Tamworth is generally flat, a fact disguised for car-travellers along the New England Highway by the prominence in the near west of the small Melville Range with its landmark peak, Mt Duri (pronounced dyoo-rye or jew-rye).

The flattest segment is the central river valley running from Breeza through Gunnedah and on to Boggabri. Indeed fully 85% of Gunnedah Shire has land slopes of less than three degrees. But, because of this, the 15% that is hilly country appears prominent: the “sweeping plains” of Dorothea Mackellar’s famous phrase.

In addition to rivers and creeks, there are many depressions which, in seasons of heavy rainfall, remain as shallow lakes for long periods. The
largest such lake-depression is Goran Lake, south of Gunnedah. The entire floodplain, where water may lie for weeks after a flood, extends for 12,000 square kilometres.\(^5\) See Maps 1 and 2.

**The Rivers:**

The Peel and Namoi Rivers, despite their distinct names, are best seen as parts of a single river-system. See again Map 2. It is purely a quirk of colonial history that the major watercourse is called the "Peel" at Tamworth and the "Namoi" at Gunnedah.

The Peel River rises in the Liverpool Range and flows for about 130 kilometres through the towns of Nundle, Tamworth and Somerton. Then the name disappears and the river takes the name Namoi at the Peel-Namoi junction a few kilometres east of Gunnedah. The Mooki River joins the Namoi at Gunnedah, and Coxs Creek joins at Boggabri.

The Namoi River itself (as we have named it) rises in New England. It runs thence to Manilla and Keepit Dam to join the Peel a little upstream from Carroll. The Namoi continues thence to Gunnedah, Boggabri, Narrabri and trickles across the north-west plains to join the Barwon River near Walgett. The length of the whole watercourse, from its source in the eastern highlands to distant Walgett, is about 850 kilometres [over 500 miles] as the fish swims, making it Australia’s fifth-longest river.

On average, the Peel-Namoi floods two years in five. Or rather, it used to, before the Chaffey, Keepit and Split Rock dams were built.

There is no ‘inland sea’ but certainly there seems to be, for some weeks after a major flood.

**The Slopes:**

If we ignore the minor lines of hills, the land can be seen to rise gently from the low flats of the Namoi and Mooki into the surrounding mountains. If one takes a transect to the south-east, the land rises from 264 metres [876 feet] at Gunnedah to 389 metres [1,279 feet] at Quirindi and then 630 metres [2,073 feet] at the top of the low pass over the Liverpool Range near Murrurundi. Or, tracking east and north from Gunnedah, the country rises from 264 metres [876 feet] above sea level to more than 350 metres [1,150 feet] at Somerton, Attunga and Manilla, while Barraba is somewhat higher at 498 metres [1,639 feet].

The Mountains:

The Nandewars extend westward from New England. For the first 160 kilometres, the range is an irregular upland between 600 and 900 metres in height. At its western end, near Narrabri, there is a series of high volcanic plugs. It is these peaks to which the name Nandewar Mountains properly attaches. Several summits reach over 1,300 metres [4,300 feet], including Mt Kaputar [at over 1,500 metres, the highest], Mt Lindesay and Mt Couradda. Snow sometimes falls on the highest peaks in winter. Altogether there are 13 summits that exceed the winter snowline of 1,200 metres above sea level.6

The Liverpool Range, part of the main section of the Great Dividing Range, separates the inland Peel-Namoi basin from the coastal Goulburn-Hunter basin. About 140 kilometres long and relatively narrow, the Liverpool Range is volcanic in origin. Its summits average about 1,000 metres, with a handful of peaks exceeding 1,100 metres [3,700 feet]. The vegetation is mostly dry forest but there are small patches of sub-tropical rainforest, as for example in Cedar Brush Nature Reserve, north-west of Scone.

6 Fox 1994.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

The Warrumbungle Range is a mountain outcrop separate from the Great Dividing Range. It lies at around 600 metres [2,000 feet] above sea level. A few peaks, all eroded volcanic plugs, rise to about 1,225 metres [4,000 feet]. The trees on northern aspects of the mountains are cypress pine and narrow-leafed ironbark and other dry western plains species. The sheltered southern slopes have vegetation more related to the eastern New England Tableland.

Climate:

Using longitude and latitude, Gunnedah’s counterpoint in the northern hemisphere (its “antipode”) is a spot in the eastern Atlantic Ocean west of the Canary Islands.

More relevant in terms of understanding the climate, north-central NSW is transected by the same latitudes as Texas, Morocco, Iran, northern India and central-eastern China. And, in the southern hemisphere: northern Argentina and the north-eastern sector of South Africa.

As would be expected, the climate of the Liverpool Plains is similar to these regions. The west-to-east flow of our planet’s weather means that Gunnedah’s climate is most comparable with that of the San Antonio-Austin-Dallas sector of the USA.7

7 The nearest continental “antipode” of Gunnedah is a spot in the Morocco-Algeria border region south-east of Marrakesh. But that region is, as a result of the world’s west-east weather flow, rather more arid. Morocco and western Algeria form part of what we might call the “exposed western inlands” (like the Geraldton-Kalgoorlie section of WA). If we turn to the world’s “sheltered eastern inlands”, and use the same latitude and elevation, then we find that central Texas is the nearest cognate of the Liverpool Plains.

In the Köppen system, Gunnedah’s climate is classified as “Cfa” or ‘humid sub-tropical’ (map in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol 16, p.499).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

If we trace the isotherm for a summer average temperature of 25 degrees Celsius, we find that it runs through the Liverpool Plains of NSW, South Africa, Argentina, southern Spain, southern Italy and northern Greece. Thus summer in central-eastern Australia is like that of the Mediterranean.

Winter is relatively mild, generally warmer than in the Mediterranean. The band for a winter average of 10-15 degrees runs through central-eastern Australia, southern South Africa, northern Mexico and North Africa. (In Europe only parts of western Sicily and western Greece average over 10 degrees Celsius in winter.)

In the Liverpool Plains, the winter minimum sometimes falls below zero. Indeed, in an average year at Gunnedah, there are 149 days (a little short of five months) with frost. We are not surprised therefore to find that the Gamilaraay traditionally wore heavy possum-skin cloaks in the cooler seasons of the year. They went naked only in the hot half of the year.

The rainfall band of 500-1000 millimetres per year crosses inland east-central Australia, and, in the northern hemisphere, southern California, the Mexico-Texas border region and southern Spain. The central section of the Peel-Namoi catchment receives 600-700 mm of rain per year on average. In any five-year run, of course, the reality may be three years of drought, one very wet year and only one year that approximates the average!

At Gunnedah itself rainfall averages 607 mm or 23.9 inches per year. This is similar to central Texas (16-32 inches) and the rainier parts of South Africa, for example the Eastern Cape (700 mm). Most of South Africa (national average 464 mm) and much of the eastern Mediterranean - for example Athens 406 mm and Cyprus 513 mm - are drier than Gunnedah, as are the Great Plains in the USA (mostly under 510 mm or 20 inches).

Cities in the United States with rainfall similar to that of Gunnedah include Flagstaff in Arizona.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

(average 22 inches – 560 mm), Norfolk in Nebraska (25 inches - 640 mm), Dodge City in Kansas (24 inches – 610 mm), and Abilene in Texas (also 24 inches). A major difference is reliability: rainfall is much more variable in Australia. We have more droughts and more floods. As noted, the Peel-Namoi used to flood two years in five, and sometimes two of the other years would be (and are) dry years.

1.2 Fauna and Flora

Various animals and plants are mentioned in the several documents published here. They constitute a generally quite representative selection of the fauna and flora of the central Murray-Darling basin. It is interesting also to note that certain animals and plants receive no mention.

** = Locally extinct or very rare today.

Mammals:

- Red kangaroos;
- Common kangaroos (eastern greys);
- Wallabies;
- Swamp wallabies;
- Wallaroos;
- Dingoes;
- Possums generally [there are two species]; “porcupines” (echidnas);
- “Wild cats” or “tiger-cats” (**quolls);
- Kangaroo-rats;
- Water-rats; and
- Marsupial mice.

The documents speak of "grilling" wallaby meat, presumably on hot coals.

Not mentioned, but known to have been important to the Kamilaroi as totems or as foods: bandicoots and platypuses.  

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Birds:

Emus; ibises; cranes; pelicans; brogias; ‘turkeys’ [probably **the bustard or plains turkey]; ducks; “water birds”; crows; owls (“the downy owl”); and curlews. The documents speak of cooking duck eggs in bark ashes.

In the tale of the Cassilis Raid, one of the main characters is called "Weetah", i.e. Wiidhaa, “bowerbird” (the spotted bowerbird, Chlamydera maculata), her totem name. She is “a young married lubra”, the elder sister of Tukki [Dhagaay] and wife of Gilwan.

Not mentioned, but known to have been important to the Kamilaroi as totems or as foods: wedge-tailed eagles; sparrow-hawks; swans; kookaburras; white cockatoos; magpies; curlies; ’pee-wees’ (mudlarks); "quails" so-called; and galahs.

Riverine animals:

Turtles; fish generally; yabbies; and mussels. The documents speak of "broiling" fish on hot coals. In north—central NSW there are several species of yabbies and ‘shrimps’ [Gamil. giiray and mirrindyaya] and two species of mussel: large [Gamil. dhanngal] and small [giinbay].

The following fish were totems for the Kamilaroi: **Murray cod; yellow-belly (golden perch); silver perch (bidyan); bony bream; and catfish (“jewfish”).

Animals as totems and foods are discussed in O’Rourke 1997.

Interestingly, Tim Curran informs me that several quolls were found near Gunnedah in 1997; but nowadays the animal is so rare that one of the specimens was sent the Australian Museum.

The Namoi and Manilla Rivers provided the site for the groundbreaking studies of Harry Burrell. Or should one say "stream-breaking"? - See Burrell’s The Platypus: Sydney, Angus & Robertson 1927. On the importance of his work, see Ann Moyal, Platypus, Sydney [Crows Nest], Allen & Unwin, 2002.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

The golden perch or yellowbelly fish, *Macquaria ambiguа* [Gamil. *Dhagaay* = Tukki] appears as the totem-name of a boy about nine years old, a character in the tale of the Cassilis Raid.

*Other fauna:*

Goannas; lizards; snakes generally; frogs generally; tree frogs; insects generally; centipedes; and beetles.

The totems of the Kamilaroi included the black snake, death adder and carpet snake.

*Flora:*

The texts refer to trees and other plants as part of the descriptions of the locations in which the events unfold. No food plants are mentioned except for yams.

a. *West and south of Mullibah Lagoon camp:*

Myall thickets on the western and south side of the Mullibah Lagoon Camp; and, further south: “the dense and hard-to-shove-your-way-through hop-vine scrub that grew all along the Porcupine Ridge”. In other words, "semi-evergreen vine thicket" (SEVT) covered what is now the southern half of the town-site. (See Appendix Three for further discussion of SEVT.)

b. *In the hop-vine scrubs:*

Yams.

e. *Where the Uniting (formerly Methodist) Church grounds now are:*

“Big box trees”.

d. *In the area of the grave:*

Various box-trees; wilga (*Geijera parviflora*), pine [cypress], and belah.
Boxes are the dominant tree species in the central section of the Namoi catchment: White Box, *Eucalyptus albans*, and Yellow Box, *E. melliodora*, with some Grey Box, *E. microcarpa*, and Bimble Box, *E. populnea*, on the western fringe.

e. *Bloomfield Street in 1865*:  
“Virgin bush heavily timbered with box-tree, wilga-pine-belah and some scrub”.

f. *Mullibah Flat Lagoon*:  
Red gums and "yellow jackets" [probably *Euclayptus melliodora*] to the east; and, on its western and south side, myall, wilga and box.

g. *On “Blackhill”, i.e. near the intersection between Boundary Road and Kamilaroi Road (between the railway line and Porcupine Ridge):*  
Hop-vine and heather scrub.

h. *Lining the creek or flood-runner that connects Mullibah Lagoon to the Namoi*:  
Thistles; also "clover". Thistles were likewise found along the river itself, near where the bridge now crosses.

i. *Porcupine Ridge*:  
Spinifex grass and hop-vine scrub, with a large patch of the latter at foot of Porcupine Ridge.

j. *Between Gunnedah and Coonabarabran*:  
Pine scrub.

k. *At Coonabarabran*:  
Reeds along watercourses.

l. *In New England, near Kingstown, where RK defeated the Bundarra men*:  
Pine scrub, stringy-barks and heather-scrub.
1.3 The Kamilaroi-speaking Lands

The people of the Murray-Darling basin originally belonged to a number of ‘culture blocs’ or ‘alliance networks’. The largest and best known are the Kamilaroi [Gamilaraay] in the central-north, and the Wiradjuri [correctly: Wirraadhurraay] in the central-south, each with originally 10,000 or more members.\(^\text{10}\)

The ‘Gamilaraay-speaking peoples’ would have recognised themselves as a set of kindred communities, reflected in their use of a common tongue. Borrowing a term from Californian anthropology, we could call the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi ‘ethnic nationalities’. The archaeologist Harry Lourandos prefers the term ‘alliance networks’. These are more convenient labels than ‘tribe’ for dispersed groups of people sharing common linguistic, social and cultural traditions and who recognised themselves as part of a single culture distinct from that of other peoples.\(^\text{11}\)

There were many local independent communities or tribelets (“local groups”). Each consisted of at least 150 people, sometimes up to 300.

If originally 10,000 people spoke the Gamilaraay tongue, then there may have been as many as 50 or 60 such communities (before the smallpox

\(^{10}\) Wiradjuri: Originally the name was pronounced like ‘wir-RAHD-thoo-RYE’, with stress on the long syllables (Donaldson 1984). Hale 1845 offers the spelling Wiradurei. The spelling ‘Wiradjuri’ is common today, with its English-influenced pronunciation ‘w’RADJ-a-ree’.

Ten thousand people: see the population data in Milliss 1992 Chapter One and O’Rourke 1997. The figure of 10,000 should be taken as indicative. Much depends on the severity of the several smallpox epidemics (discussed later in the main text). It would not be wrong, however, to imagine a regional population of even 20,000 in 1790.

pandemic). Alternatively, using the archaeologist Harry Lourandos’ ‘magic figure’ of 40-60 persons per ‘band’, we may envisage a pre-contact population of 10,000 as divided seasonally into some 200 bands.

The extent of the language and the names of the neighbouring languages were as follows.

i. The southern sector

Gamilaraay-speaking groups held effectively the whole of the Upper Hunter Valley and probably both sides of the Goulburn Valley, or the northern side at least. The topographical centre of what we might call the ‘Lesser Kamilaroi’ lands lay at present-day Denman, near the Hunter-Goulburn junction.

The latter-day authors N B Tindale, James Miller and Helen Brayshaw are quite mistaken in believing that the ‘Geawe-gal’ group lived in the Upper Hunter Valley. The same error occurs in *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* (ed. Horton, 1994). The fact is that all our best sources - from the earliest explorer Howe in 1819 and the early tourist Breton in the 1830s, to Ridley’s and A W Howitt’s informants later in the 19th century - recognised Kamilaroi as the language used upstream from Singleton. It is quite clear from

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12 On smallpox, see Judy Campbell, *Invisible Invaders* 2002. It appears there were two pandemics: one in 1785-95 and another in 1825-35.

George Clarke told Mair that “one in six” people (only 17%) died on the middle Namoi in 1830-31 (quoted by Mair, in Campbell 2002: 140). As Campbell argues, this was probably an under-estimate. She proposes that overall about half the entire Aboriginal population had died, directly or indirectly, from smallpox by 1840, and in some regions up to 60%. This was the compound effect of several epidemics and would include indirect effects, i.e. people starving who were too weak to hunt and gather (2002: 150, 222-24).

these sources that Geawe-gal was just one of several lower Hunter Valley dialects.14

The Gamilaraay language extended east to about Singleton. The exact point where Gamil’raay met the Hunter basin languages, Geawe-gal, Wanarua, and Darkinyung, is not known with certainty. Possibly the junction of Wollombi Brook with the Hunter River immediately upstream from Singleton formed the meeting point. Or the meeting point may have been higher up, to the west of Jerrys Plains.15

ii. The eastern sector

The ‘Corborn Comleroy’ [Gabawaan Gamilaraay] occupied the slopes and plains to the west of New England including the Liverpool Plains. The tag ‘Corborn Comleroy’ might be rendered as ‘Greater Gamilaraay’ (Corborn = Gabawaan, ‘Big’ or ‘True’ + Gamilaraay).

A line running from Murrurundi along the Dividing Range to the foot of the Moonbi Range above Tamworth marked the eastern limit of the Gamilaraay-speaking countries, according to the one-time convict worker, Charles Naseby, who knew the region from the 1830s.

There are several very low passes through the Liverpool Ranges, notably Pandoras Pass near Coolah and Doughboy Hollow near Murrurundi [Map 1]. But even the more difficult higher passes would have presented no barrier to people travelling on foot. Perhaps for that reason, the hills did not coincide with a major ‘ethnic’ boundary. We find Gamilaraay-speaking peoples occupying both sides of the Range.

In the east, the upland communities of New England spoke an unrelated language that the early chronicler William Gardner called “Ennewan”, i.e.

15 See O’Rourke 1997 for an extended discussion.
Anaywan or more correctly: ‘Nganyaywana’. The border between the western slopes and the eastern highlands coincided with a significant linguistic break.

In the north-east the major language was Yugambal (“Ucumble”). According to John MacPherson’s main informant, a Ngarabal-speaking man from Glen Innes, the Yugambal ‘tribe’ was limited to the Boggy Creek-Inverell-Bukkulla region. He placed the Anaywan or Nganyaywana language at Tingha and Bundarra.

If, however, we follow William Gardner and W T Wyndham, then Tingha and Bundarra [Map 2] lay in Yugambal country. Wyndham was the son of the first squatter at ‘Bukkulla’ station, north of Inverell. He described the country of the ‘Ucumble’ [Yugambal]-speaking people in general terms as “the western fall of New England from the Peel to the Sovereign” (i.e., Dumaresq River). ‘Ucumble’ was spoken, he says, on the Bundarra River, contiguous on its south-west with ‘Cumilri’ (Gamil’raay).16

iii. The northern sector

The whole north-central plain, from the Gwydir River above Moree to the Namoi-Barwon junction at Walgett in the west, was Kamilaroi-speaking country.

This is already clear from the work of G B White, Major Mitchell’s deputy during the 1831-32 expedition. White compared the vocabularies used in different areas. He found that the language spoken on Moomin Creek, the lower Mehi River and the upper Barwon was the same as that used on the Liverpool Plains around Tamworth, namely Gamilaraay.

The language of the Rowena area, west of Waterloo Creek, likewise was named as “Comileroy”

16 Gardner MSS; Wyndham 1889; McPherson 1904; Crowley 1976 and 1997.
in 1839. And we know that Kamilaroi (Gamilaraay) was spoken around Terry Hie Hie and Moree; on Gil Gil Creek at Garah; and along the Boomi River in the region of Boomi township (as it now is).\textsuperscript{17}

The language of the Moonie-Barwon junction too was Gamilaraay, and Gamilaraay-speaking groups held both banks of the Barwon River from Mungindi through Collarenebri to Walgett. Ridley found that it was also the language spoken on the Moonie River below about Thallon in 1855. Fieldwork done in the 1930s by N B Tindale suggests that originally Gamilaraay extended as far north as Nindigully, Qld.

To the west and north-west, the languages were Yuwaaliyaay (or Yuwaalayaay), Parker’s Eu-ahl-a-yi, and Yuwaalaraay. Significantly, the politico-linguistic boundary, as revealed by the contrasting speech names, Gamilaraay-Yuwaaliyaay and Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay, lay between the two rivers, the Barwon and the Narran. This is what should be expected, as we know that the major watercourses formed the centre-lines of tribelet territories.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} See O’Rourke 1997. The primary sources include: G B White Journal 1832; The Australin and The Colonist both 17.8.1839; The Sydney Herald and The Monitor both 19.8.1839 (trial of Aboriginal cattle-killers); and various papers by Ridley and Mathews.

\textsuperscript{18} Yuwaalaraay (Major Mitchell’s Jerwoolleroy) was the language of the communities living along the Narran River where it crosses the present-day Queensland-NSW border. A very closely related form of speech, Yuwaalinyaay (Katie Parker’s Eu-ah-la-yi or ‘Euahlayi’), belonged to the country on and around the lower Narran River west of Lightning Ridge.

O’Byrne, Mathews and Vernon, writing late in the 19th century, placed Yuwaalaraay and/or the closely related Yuwaalinyaay tongue on (part of) the Moonie River including Nindigully; O’Byrne even put Yuwaalaraay as far east as the lower Weir River. Most writers, however, have located these two tongues on and around the Narran. Tindale’s map shows the St George-Nindigully region as the intersection point of four languages: Kamilaroi, Koamu (= Kogai), Mandandanji and Bigambul.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

iv. The western sector

The Namoi-Barwon junction near Walgett marked a boundary-point between Gamilaraay and the Wayilwan language, the northern variety of Ngiyambaa. Gamilaraay was spoken at Walgett on the Namoi River and on the upper Barwon River above Walgett, while Wayilwan was the language of the lower Barwon below Walgett.19

The western boundary of the Kamilaroi tongue ran, according to Charles Naseby, from Walgett by a line through Baradine and Coonabarabran to the Dividing Range near the sources of the Talbragar and Goulburn Rivers. West of Baradine, the neighbouring language was Wayilwan (Ngiyambaa).

In short, Kamilaroi was spoken in the Namoi basin, while Wayilwan was spoken in the lower Castlereagh basin [Map 1].

In the Warrumbungle Mountains, and at Dubbo and Wellington, the language was Wirraadhurraay, or, as it is more commonly spelt, “Wiradjuri”. Wangaaybuwan (“Wongaibon”), another variety of Ngiyambaa, was spoken further westward.20

James Günther, the Wellington Valley missionary, and William Ridley said that Wiradjuri was used on that section of the Castlereagh River nearest Sources and commentary: Mitchell 1848 (Narran River); Ridley 1855 in Lang 1864; Honery quoted in Ridley MSS 1871-73; O’Byrne in Curr 1887, iii: 258; Mathews 1902; Vernon in Howitt 1904: 688; MacPherson 1904 (map); and Tindale 1974.

White, Mitchell, Ridley and Naseby as before; and Greenway 1910. The Barwon River above the junction of the Gwydir was implicitly excluded from Gamilaraay country by Charles Naseby (“down the Gwydir and Barwon to Walgett”) (Naseby in Howitt 1904: 57); but White's journal shows that this was an error.

Williams Grammar 1980, and earlier, Honery in Ridley MSS 1871-73; Ridley 1873b: 259 and 1875: 47, 119; and Ridley 1878. Also Mathews in several papers, e.g. 1895b. The Wangaaybuwan variant of Ngiyambaa differed markedly from Gamilaraay, having only 36% total vocabulary in common (Austin et al. 1980: 172 ff). Presumably the Wayilwan variant was likewise only distantly related to Gamilaraay.
Wellington, while a variant of Kamilaroi called *Ko-inburri* (i.e., Guyinbaraay), was spoken on the section of the Castlereagh nearest the Liverpool Plains.

This is confirmed by an examination of place-names. On and around the upper stretch of the Castlereagh we find the Gamilaraay names Ulamambri, Piambra and Uarbra (suffix -m+baraay) [Map 2]. This indicates that the boundary between Gamilaraay-Guyinbaraay and Wiradjuri lay in the eastern Warrumbungles, on or west of the early curve of the upper Castlereagh. Other place-names, for example Dandry and Tenandra, have the Wiradjuri suffix -dhurraay. This would suggest that the Warrumbungle mountains themselves, or at least their western sector, belonged to the Wiradjuri.21

In short, the boundary between Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri fell approximately along a line drawn from Coonabarabran to Coolah.

**Cassilis**

It is obscure whether the Upper Goulburn River community (the “Cassilis tribe”) spoke Gamilaraay or Wiradjuri.

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21 Most place-names in the Coolah-Cassilis region have the Gamilaraay +bri/+aroy suffix, for instance Paiambra near Binnaway; Bullaroy trig point, west of Coolah; Vinegaroy Road, north-east of Uarby; and Uarby itself. But there are also several names with the -ong [-aang] and -therie [-dhurraay] endings of Wiradjuri, namely Bong Bong Creek, south-west of Coolah; and Merotherie crossing, south-west of Uarby.

Frank Bucknell greatly simplified in telling Howitt that “between the Bogan and the Kamilaroi boundary, which runs north-westward from Wonabarabra (sic: misprint for Coonabarabran!) to the junction of the Peel River (sic: actually Namoi) and the Darling (sic: Barwon), the language is a mixture of Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri” (in Howitt 1904: 58).

See further the discussion and maps in O’Rourke 1997, citing Günther 1892; Ridley 1875: 119; also Quinn 1958 (and see the map of early stations in Pickette & Campbell 1984).
Based on Naseby’s line and Rusden’s statements (quoted below), we would expect them to have been Gamilaraay-speakers. And indeed several obviously Gamilaraay-language place-names are mentioned in the early court case *R v Walker* (see the Chronology under 1836). On the other hand, George Suttor in 1826 grouped the Nandowey/Cassilis people with the Wiradjuri-speakers of Mudgee, perhaps implying that they spoke that language.

Rusden referred to a Gamilaraay group living on the Talbragar River, who may have been the same as the ‘Cassilis tribe’:

“They [the Geawe-gal of the central Hunter Valley] were always in dread of war with the Kamilaroi who followed down [intruded] from the heads of the Hunter [and] across from the Talbragar to the Nunmurra [sic: Munmurra] waters ...” (the Munmurra River being the watercourse on which modern Cassilis is located).

This seems to imply that Gamilaraay-speakers held the Goulburn Valley or at least its northern tributaries. And if we turn to a modern map we find several place-names in the upper Talbragar-Goulburn Valley bearing the familiar Gamilaraay suffix “bri” or -baraay, namely Uarbry, Collaroy and Gundebri. This serves to confirm Rusden’s report.

Rusden also said that “a section of the Kamilaroi occupied the upper sources of the waters flowing into the Hunter River and those which form the heads of the Goulburn River, for instance the Munmurra Creek”. He implies - but he does not state it explicitly - that Kamilaroi was spoken on the Hunter River at least as far downstream as Mussel

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22 ‘Colo’ 1826; also in *The Australian* 14.10.1826.


23 ‘And’ vs ‘the’: Rusden’s words are quoted slightly differently in 1880 and 1904.
Brook (the tributary stream at modern Muswellbrook). As he says, the Kamilaroi “even made raids as far as Jerrys Plains [upstream from Singleton]”. 24

It would appear therefore that Kamilaroi-speaking communities held not only both sides of the Upper Hunter but also the region north of the Goulburn River.

Blanket distribution records show that in 1833, at the end of the smallpox pandemic, 111 Aborigines (80 adults and 31 children) survived in the greater Cassilis district. As late as 1843 the ‘tribe of Munmurra’ numbered at least 94 people. Those receiving blankets included one man, Nedabri, whose name incorporates once again the distinctive -bri/-baraay suffix of Gamilaraay. 25

1.4 The Name “Gunnedah”

The exploring expedition of Surveyor-General Major Mitchell in 1831 bypassed what is now the site of the town of Gunnedah. Mitchell passed to the north, crossing direct from Kelvin to Boggabri through the back country. See Maps 3 and 4. So his Aboriginal guide ‘Mr Brown’ did not supply the name for the explorers to record.

‘Gunnedah’, the cattle station of that name, was formed by the employees of John Johnston (or Johnstone) some years later, in about 1835. By this time the newest holdings were already established further out, beyond ‘Narrabri’.

24 Rusden in Fison and Howitt Kamilaroi and Kurnai 1880: 279; and Naseby and Rusden in Howitt 1904: 57, 84, emphasis added.

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It was not necessarily immediately that a run would be called by its Aboriginal name. All we can say is that the whites began to use the name ‘Gunnedah’ sometime between 1835 and 1848. It was not until 1859 that “Gunnedah” would displace “Johnston’s Woolshed” as the official name of the post office.26

Our main authority on the name, William Ridley, having learnt a little of the Gamilaraay language, proceeded to the Namoi River during 1853-54 as a missionary. He revisited the district in 1855 on a part-anthropological, part-evangelising tour, and again, finally, in 1871. Most of the material for his books and articles was collected on this third trip. Thus 36 years elapsed between the first recording of the name (around 1835) and Ridley’s note of its meaning (1871).27

In the meantime a township was emerging at ‘Johnston’s Woolshed’, as the village was first called. A post office was established in 1856, and the village soon spread towards and over the burial ground of the local Aboriginal people. The old Kamilaroi cemetery and its remaining carved trees, located where Little Conadilly Street now exits into Abbott Street, were often visited as a local curiosity.

26 Johnson originally applied for a squatting licence in 1836: application no. 10-423, received at the Colonial Secretary’s Office 12.12.1836 (SRNSW 4/1117.1: Applications for Depasturing Licences Beyond the Limits of Location, 1836-37). But it was not until the 1847 Land Act that applicants were asked to supply the names of their runs.

27 Ridley 1871, 1873 and 1875. In his 1871-72 MSS, Ridley supplied both meanings, namely ‘destitute’ (1871 letter) and ‘place of white stone’ (1873 letter). Also Ferry 1978b: 193.

William Ridley, 1819-1878, graduated from the University of London (Kings College) in 1842. He took up an appointment as classics professor at the Australian College, Sydney, in 1849 and was ordained a Presbyterian minister the following year. In 1851 he was posted as curate to Dungog, north of Newcastle, where he met an expatriate Kamilaroi man ‘Harry’, from ‘Bungul-gully’ station near the lower Namoi River. Friendship with Harry led Ridley to become an itinerant missionary in the interior (ADB under ‘Ridley’; also Bridges 1970, 1971).
Originally the burial ground lay in woodland or open forest on the southern edge of the village. Following the great flood of 1864, however, most new buildings were located above the high flood line [Map 12]. As part of this process, the streetscape of the rising village spread past and around the stumps and low mounds of the old cemetery – by about 1870.

In 1887, Dr Edward Haynes, the town’s surgeon and future mayor, arranged for the most important grave, that of the ‘great chief’ Red Kangaroo ['Cumbo Gunnerah' or Gàmbu Gànuru], to be dug up from under the streetscape. Haynes was a collector of Aboriginalia and wanted to examine the bones.

**Spelling the Sounds of the Gamilaraay Language**

In the pages that follow, when ‘correcting’ the spellings in the older sources, we will use the modern linguists’ preferred Italianate style (as detailed in Austin’s articles and books; also Ash et al. 2003).

In Gamilaraay, as in most Australian languages, there was no essential distinction between “voiced” and “unvoiced” consonants. Thus “b” was the same as “p” (bilaarr = pilaarr); “d” was the same as “t” (dhandarr = thantarr); and “k” the same as “g” (Kambu = Gambu). In technical terms we say the differences were ‘not phonemic’.

It is also important to note that there were six vowels in Gamilaraay, three long and three short; and also two diphthongs or ‘glides’:

**“Italian style” spelling; sounds represented and examples:**

| aa | = Australian-English ‘father’, ‘can’t’. As in gaalan ‘meat’ |
ant’ (“gahl-unn”: rhymes with Australian-English ‘marlin’). 28

**a**

= ‘come’, ‘gun’. Not as in English ‘can’, ‘man’! Example: **gali** ‘water’. Same sound as English “gully”; not English “galley”!!

**ii**


**i**

= ‘bit’. Example: **bilaarr** ‘spear’. Pronounced “b’lahrr”: as in the first syllables of Killarney, with the ‘r’ clearly enunciated.

**uu**

= ‘pool’, ‘rune’. Example: the second vowel of **mang.uul** ‘broad, wide’ (“munng-ool”: vowels as in English ‘dung fool’, the first vowel short, the second long).

**u**


**aay** (= aa+y)

= Like English ‘die’, ‘my’. Example: garaay ‘sand’. In

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28 Australians and most British English speakers pronounce “can’t” with a long vowel [kaunt]. In General American English, “can’t” is pronounced with a quite different vowel [kaent]. Also, in Australian English the R in “marlin” is silent. Thus: **maal’n**. In most or many varieties of American English, the r is pronounced: **maarrl’n**.

29 Ash et al. 2003: 93 prefer guli.
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English spelling, “guhr-eye”; stress on the second syllable.

\[ \text{ay} (= a+y) \] = Like English ‘day’, ‘mate’.
Example: \text{garang.ay} ‘duck, black duck’. “Gàrang-ay”: rhymes with English ‘wrung hay’.

* * *

William Ridley, our earliest authority, recorded both of the meanings offered by later commentators:

i. ‘place of white stone(s)’; and
ii. ‘motherless, or, as some say, place of the destitute’.

In the latter case, “The name indicates that at some time a man was found there, destitute, without food, fire or blanket”.

i. \text{Guuniidha} = “The Place of White Stone(s)”?

‘White stones’ (= quartz pebbles?) is attested not only by Ridley but also in the Ewing Transcripts (see in this book: “The Death and the Career”, Document 3B, MS Page 12).

Ridley obtained his information from the Aborigines at or from ‘Burburgate’ and ‘Wandobah’, the stations bordering Gunnedah on the north-west and south respectively. In the case of the Ewing MSS, it was ‘Old’ Joe Bungaree and other local

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\[ 30 \] Ridley, MSS 1871-73. ‘White stone(s)’ is proposed by Gardner 1854; Ridley MSS 1871-73 (Gunnedah and Gunyerawarildi); Ridley 1875: 28; Günther 1892 (Wiradjuri); Ewing MSS; MacPherson 1930: 130 (Gunyerwarildi); and Mahaffey 1982: 105 (Conadilly). ‘Motherless’ is proposed by Ridley 1871-73, and 1875; \textit{The Sydney Mail} JFH 1891 (quoting Old Maggie); and Cain 1922.
people living at Gunnedah itself who supplied the meaning.

Ion Idriess pointed - evidently a guess - to a hillock of white stone, either crushed quartz or limestone, extant in Elgin Street in the 1870s [Map 12]. But the Ewings’ informants, ‘Old’ Joe Bungaree, a Gunnedah man, and various Aborigines from the Coonabarabran side known to Ewing senior, said that the district was so-named from the white stones often found in the soil or gravel in the general area of the town. “It all about here” (they told him), in hills and hillocks, “an’ now [after 1900] make roads in town”.31

Stan Ewing represents the Aborigines’ own pronunciation of the name as ‘gunn-e-darr’ (in Document 3B, MS Page 13). This rendering, unfortunately, is entirely obscure.

The first syllable may at first glance seem clear enough, i.e., short vowel gan- as in English ‘bun’ and ‘fun’. And the separation of the third syllable ‘-darr’ may suggest that it was stressed and hence contained a long vowel (long vowels commonly being the stressed vowels in Gamilaraay). But we cannot tell what the second vowel was in ‘gunn-e-darr’, nor whether the third syllable ended with a consonant (?daar, ?daarr) or a vowel (?daa). Ewing’s ‘gunn-e-darr’ may be equivalent to the Italianate form ganad(h)aa[rr] or ganidaa[rr], or indeed something else again.32


32 The final ‘r’ in many English words is silent (in Australian and British pronunciation) e.g. ‘car’ (=kaa), ‘under’ (=anda) and ‘father’ (=faatha). So Ewing’s rr spelling (‘darr’) could indicate just a long vowel (aa) or a long vowel with a rhotic (aarr) or even a short vowel with a rhotic (arr).
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There are a number of similar names throughout the region tagged with similar meanings. ‘Gunnandilly’ or ‘Gunadilly’ [Conadilly], the name of Jock Allen’s early holding on the Upper Mooki, is said to mean ‘place of stones’. It was another name for the Mooki itself. ‘Gunyerwarildi’ (Gardner’s ‘gunyaworldi’) too, on Croppa Creek north-east of Moree, is translated as ‘home of the white stones’. Specifically the root-word “gunyer” [= guun+nyii] alluded to ‘a kind of white stone found in the riverbank’. And compare the form ‘gunnama’, which in Wiradjuri meant ‘hailstones’.

Judging from the English-style spelling of these names, we would take the first syllable as gan. Ridley, however, said ‘Gunyerwarildi’ was derived from “goonee” [second vowel long: guunii or guunyii], ‘lime or white stone’. The suffix was ‘wha:ru:-ldi’ [i.e., probably warru+ldhay34], meaning ‘spread or let out’ (warru ‘to spread out’) + past aspectual (-ldhay)35; hence probably Guunnyii-warruldhay, ‘the used-to-be spread out white stones’. (Here “dh” represents a sound not known in English, but which is similar to the ‘dth’ sound in English “hid them”.)

The first syllable of the stem in Gunyerwarildi seems to have been long: guun. Ridley’s spelling of the Namoi River name likewise had a long first vowel: G

Gardi 1854; Ridley MSS 1871-73 (Gunnedah and Gynyerawarildi); Ridley 1875: 28; Günther 1892 (Wiradjuri); Ewing MSS below in text; MacPherson 1930: 130 (Gunyerwarildi); and Mahaffey 1982: 105 (Conadilly). In Ridley’s spelling system, both vowels in ‘white stone’ were long, hence: guunii. Cf Yuwaaliyaay guun, ‘lime gypsum’ (short vowels).

Ridley has long vowels (wauru), whereas Ash et al. 2003 consider they were probably, but not certainly, short (warru). They give ‘wide, spread out’ as warru and the transitive verb ‘to spread (something) out’ as warruma+.

Past fixed or past non-continous: ‘used to be spread out, was spread always’.

33 Gardner 1854; Ridley MSS 1871-73 (Gunnedah and Gynyerawarildi); Ridley 1875: 28; Günther 1892 (Wiradjuri);
Ewing MSS below in text; MacPherson 1930: 130
(Gunyerwarildi); and Mahaffey 1982: 105 (Conadilly). In Ridley’s spelling system, both vowels in ‘white stone’ were long, hence: guunii. Cf Yuwaaliyaay guun, ‘lime gypsum’ (short vowels).

34 Ridley has long vowels (wauru), whereas Ash et al. 2003 consider they were probably, but not certainly, short (warru). They give ‘wide, spread out’ as warru and the transitive verb ‘to spread (something) out’ as warruma+.

35 Past fixed or past non-continous: ‘used to be spread out, was spread always’.

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was probably **GÜNNIIDHA** [guunii+dha, ‘white river-stone’ + locative/dative case**]. To see how this was originally pronounced, say the English words goon+need+thud but stress the first syllable and leave off the final d from ‘thud’.

** “CASES” refer to grammatically different forms of a word.**

Compare English I-me-my, or she-her-her. “I” and “she” (the doer) are **nominative or subject case.** “Me” and “her” (to whom it is done) are **accusative or object case.** “My” and “her”, indicating ownership, are **possessive or genitive case.**

Moreover in English we signal location or origin with subsidiary words called “prepositions”. For example: “at school” or “on the corner”. In most Aboriginal languages, however, this was done by adding a syllable (“suffix”) to the end of the word. When the meaning is “from”, we say the word takes the **ablative or source case.** When the meaning is “at”, we have the **locative case.**

Words ending in –ii took the suffix +dha in the locative. Thus guuniidha (guunii+dha) meant ‘at (the place of) the white river-stone(s)’. 36

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**ii. Or was it Gunidhaa: “Orphan, motherless, destitute”?**

As reported in the *Sydney Mail* (Document 1), Old Maggie [?Margaret Griffin] told Dr Haynes and the *Mail*’s travelling correspondent (1891) that the town’s name meant ‘motherless’ – “as the blackfellow puts it, ‘no fader, no moder’”. 37 This

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36 Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay had as many as 10 cases, including distinct forms for the locative and the ablative or source case (Williams 1980).

37 In Yuwaalaraay a *motherless* child (gunidyaa) was distinguished from a *fatherless* child (gawun). No term for the
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confirms Ridley’s (MS 1871-73) alternative etymology, and corroborates a similar statement by one of Maggie’s relatives, Mary Cain. It is known that Gamilaraay children called their mothers ‘guni, gooni or goonee’ [this is gunii in our spelling style: second vowel is long]. That is to say, gunii was the Vocative or familiar term, used in speaking to one’s mother. The Indicative form for ‘mother’, used in speaking about a mother, was ngambaa.

Compare also ‘gunnyja’ for ‘mother’, as supplied to Curr by the Nundle police (vocabularies in Curr 1887). Plainly this was the same word as Corinne Williams’ gunidyar, ‘mother’ [first two vowels short; in Ash et al. the final consonant is rr - gunidjar]. Williams also recorded a quite distinct Yuwaalaraay word gunidyaa, ‘motherless child, orphan’. Once again there was a cognate Wiradjuri form: ‘gunnindyang’ [probably guni+n+dyaa+ng, i.e. gunindyang], ‘motherless’.

Thus, if ‘motherless’ was the true meaning of ‘Gunnedah’, then the form of the name was probably GUNIDYÀÀ or GUNIDHÀÀ, with stress on the last syllable.

Now gunidyaa (first vowel short like English ‘good’) is the linguists’ Italianate-style spelling of latter was recorded for Gamil’raay, but probably there was one. Ridley MS 1871-73 and book 1875; JFH 1891 (quoting Old Maggie); and Cain 1922. Also Australian Town and Country Journal 1873: “goono-dha”, meaning ‘a poor or destitute man’.

Ridley 1875: 18; Nundle police in Curr 1887 vol III; Günther 1892; Greenway 1901; and Williams 1980. Peter Austin’s reconstruction gunidhaa (‘orphan’), in Appleton 1992 and Austin 1992, 1993, seems unlikely, given that +dy(a) was the final consonant at Nundle and in the Yuwaalaraay and Wiradjuri forms. Gun as vocative: Austin 1993 says it was "perhaps" vocative. According to Williams 1980, in Yuwaalaraay the second vowel at least was long: gunii.

Ash et al. 2003: 96 have guessed, no doubt correctly, that gunidyaa was a contraction of guni+dyalibaa (“mother+without”). Since the preferred form of this suffix in Gamilaraay is –dhalibaa, we should expect to find the form gunidhaa to be preferred.

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sounds that we might write in English style as ‘goonidyah’ or ‘goonijah’ (rhymes with ‘goodie-jar’). The present-day anglicised pronunciation of ‘Gunnedah’ (rhymes with ‘gunner-bar’) is actually closer to ganudhaa, the Yuwaalaraay word for ‘deep’, but this is coincidental. There is no suggestion that the town’s name derives from that word, nor from gunadha, ‘boggy’.

In short, we are left with two etymologies, between which it is almost impossible to choose. Both versions are well attested, namely [1] ‘at [the place of] white stone(s)’, Gùuniidha; and [2] ‘motherless child, orphan’, Gunidhàà. But, if we wish to choose a singular meaning, then the former, ‘PLACE OF WHITE STONES’, should be preferred. It is better attested, having been supplied by older local people such as ‘Old’ Joe Bungaree. ‘Maggie’ Griffin and Mary Jane Cain, by contrast, were more closely connected to the Coonabarabran region.

2. PEOPLE AND HISTORY

2.1 Aborigines, Explorers and Settlers

The first white man, John Oxley, entered and named the Liverpool Plains in 1818. At that time the colonists had not settled anywhere in the interior except in the central-west, around Bathurst (whence Oxley commenced his journey). Indeed there was as yet no overland route even from Sydney to the Hunter Valley. The penal settlement at Newcastle was a distant outpost linked to the rest of the British colony only by sea.

Eventually, after several failed attempts, in November 1819 John Howe and Benjamin Singleton
trekked north from Windsor, guided by friendly Aborigines from the Hawkesbury. After traversing the heavily timbered region of the Wollemi National Park (as it now is), their party reached the middle Hunter River below Denman. This was on the southern edge of Gamil’raay country.41

Because of the penal settlement at Newcastle, the colonial government was at first reluctant to let free settlers enter the Hunter Valley. Soon, however, it relented. A ‘road’ or track was marked out from Windsor to “Patricks Plains” [today’s town of Singleton] in 1823. A few British settlers and their convict labourers quickly entered and occupied parts of the upper Hunter in the direction of Scone (as it now is). At the same time, other settlers pressed north from Bathurst to the region of Mudgee.

By 1826 the colonists held a line of mixed farms and cattle stations as far as the Liverpool Ranges, the boundary of Oxley’s Liverpool Plains.

The first settlers to send stock and stockmen across the ranges and into the north-west interior were Otto Baldwin, the erstwhile trekker Benjamin Singleton, and William Nowland, in 1826-27. They and their men set up temporary outposts in the upper Mooki Valley.

Also in 1826, William Cox’s men took stock from Mudgee west around the outer end of the Liverpool Ranges. They set up an out-station in the basin of Coxs Creek. Hence the name.42 See Map 2.

Ben Singleton and the others were seeking temporary forage in the face of drought. The dry conditions continued, however, and soon they found it convenient to leave their cattle

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42 Primary sources: Gardner 1854, I:3; Nowland 1861.
Secondary: Campbell 1922; Carter 1974; Rolls 1981; and Milliss 1992.
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permanently in the interior. The result was a line of stock-runs across the tributaries of the upper Mooki west of present-day Willow Tree. The residents were mainly convict workers (employed as shepherds, cattle-hands and hut-keepers).

There was conflict with the local Gamilaraay within the first year. At Singleton’s run ‘Yarrimanbah’ in October 1827 a party of 11 shepherds and stockmen, most of them assigned convicts, fought off a large body of Kamilaroi, said to have been as many as ‘200’. There were Aboriginal women present as well as men, but if (say) a quarter of the ‘200’ Aborigines were males, then the stockmen were confronted by as many as 50 spearmen. One of the colonists was wounded and a “considerable number” of Aborigines killed.

The colonists deployed their muskets with even more devastating effect in about 1828. In that year, if the date is right, a further force of “hundreds” of Kamilaroi came to Joseph Onus’s run ‘Borambil’ in the Upper Mooki Valley to challenge the white men. Fully “200” Aborigines (no doubt a great exaggeration) are said to have been killed on that occasion, but not a single white man. Some of the Aborigines were drawn from the Namoi River country and may well have included men from Gunnedah.43

Among the convicts pouring musket-fire into the Aborigines at ‘Yarrimanbah’ in 1827 was a young Londoner called George ‘the Barber’ Clarke. The nickname indicates his profession before he was transported to NSW.

43 Yarrimanbah: Contemporary letters by Singleton and others, quoted in Milliss 1992: 78ff. Women: mentioned in Singleton’s letter. Borambil was not on the present-day Borambil Creek near Quirindi, but located higher up in the foothills of the Liverpool Ranges. The site is clear from the primary sources: Gardner (1846 and 1854) and Cash (ed. Burke 1870). Both give an extended description of the battle.

Roger Milliss proposes that there was really just one battle. My own view is that the differences between the various accounts are more consistent with two separate clashes.
Clarke absconded from Singleton’s service soon thereafter, probably at the start of 1828, and fled to the Namoi River. There he was taken in by the local Aborigines at a main camp opposite Boggabri.

Clarke’s story is full of interest as the source of some of our best information about the arrival, from the north-west, of a devastating epidemic of smallpox. And it was his tale of a great river called the ‘Kindur’ that provoked the first exploring expedition of the Surveyor-General, Major (later Sir Thomas) Mitchell.

The ‘Barber’ lived as a ‘white Aborigine’ for about four years. The final year of his freedom, 1831, was devoted to ‘bushranging’, which at that period of colonial history meant leading the Boggabri Aborigines on cattle-stealing raids. We may guess, although there is no direct evidence, that the Gunnedah Aborigines joined in these raids.44

In late 1831, when Mitchell was readying himself to set out in search of the great river Kindur, a few white settlers already occupied the fringes of the Liverpool Plains. The line of cattle runs extended from near Coonabarabran and present-day Coolah through the upper Mooki Valley to the Peel River near Tamworth.

The holdings farthest out on the western or Mooki River side seem to have been these: ‘Binnia’ near Coolah; Lawson’s ‘Premer’ and ‘Bone Creek’; Druitt’s ‘Phillips Creek’ (later part of ‘Windy’); Blaxland’s Kilcoobil (present-day ‘Kickerbell’); and, the most remote of all, Cox’s ‘Nombi’ near Mullaley. On the eastern or Peel River side, Eales’ holding

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44 In the early 1800s ‘bushrangers’ were overseas-born convicts, frequently unused to bush life. By contrast, in the later 1800s, they were free-born Australians, often with well developed bush skills.

‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

‘Duri’, Brown’s ‘Wallamoul’ and William Dangar’s ‘Waldoo’ (near present-day Tamworth) marked the limits of British settlement. See Map 1.

In the decade following the return of Mitchell’s expedition, the squatting movement, or to use a different phrase: the ‘White Invasion’, reached a peak of intensity. Simplifying a complex process, we can say that in our region the cattle-men (some were sheep-men) advanced broadly in two directions: out along the Namoi; and northward from the Peel into the Gwydir Basin.

This new phase of expansion was stimulated partly by Mitchell’s positive reports of good grazing land lying just beyond the 1831-32 frontier. Another impetus was the pre-emptive grant of two huge stretches of country in the Mooki and Peel Valleys to an investment holding called the Australian Agricultural Company (the AAC). This prompted a number of the prior squatters on the Mooki and Peel to lift stakes and investigate the newly explored Namoi River country.

The Breeza Plains were already occupied, having been settled by the colonists on a permanent basis from about early 1831. Some of the squatters sent their stock and employees further out, to the Namoi River below Boggabri in 1832. By 1834 the most remote holding in that direction was ‘Narrabri’.

Stock were also driven north, via Manilla and Kingstown, to the Gwydir or so-called ‘Big’ River. This was the country of the Waalaraay (“Wolaroi”) and Yugambal people. The first cattle-holdings on any part of the Gwydir seem to have been ‘Keera’ holding near Bingara and ‘Bungarie’ at the mouth of the Horton River, both occupied in 1835. The Namoi push intersected with the push into the Gwydir basin in 1836-37 when squatters

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opened a further line of penetration north from the middle Namoi to the Mehi River. Two of the earliest stations in that region, George Bowman’s ‘Terry Hie Hie’ and J B Bettington’s ‘Combadello’, were occupied from quite different directions.

Conflict between the colonists and the Aborigines broke out in each newly penetrated district, typically a year or so after the first sheep or cattle were brought in. This is sometimes called “war”. It is better to see it as a process of feuds conducted between aggrieved individuals on either side. They knew each other by name, or nick-name. Thus it was not stranger killing stranger but acquaintance killing acquaintance.

Gamil’raay men killed white workers near Boggabri and at ‘Baan Baa’ and ‘Therrabri’ in 1833, 1834 and again in 1835. The serious “battle” (Patrick Quinn’s word) fought at ‘Narrabri’ in 1833 or 1834, which may have been simply a massacre of Aborigines, was doubtless part of the same vendetta.47

### 2.2 Feuds, War and Disease

Violence, where there was any violence, was generally carried out as private enterprise. Or perhaps we should say that violence represented a failure of private enterprise. The squatter48, after all, would not have wanted his convict workers or free employees to antagonise the local Aborigines.

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47 See references below in the section on Chronology: under 1834.

48 Overseas readers should note that the ‘squatters’ were the principals or land-holders, holding leases from the Crown. They were generally absentee ‘capitalists’ living in Sydney or the Hunter Valley. Their frontier holdings and the stock were put in charge of a superintendent. Thus ‘squatter’ is equivalent in some respects to the American term “rancher”. Ranches in Australia were, and are, called “stations”.

Most fatal clashes involved the killing of one or two on either side. Nevertheless, feuds between individual whites and blacks did sometimes flare into generalised and large-scale battles or massacres. This occurred for example in the Mooki Valley in the late 1820s, near Narrabri in about 1834, and on several occasions in the Gwydir Valley in 1837-38.

This part of the story has been told by Wood, Reece, Milliss and Connor: in Allan Wood’s *Dawn in the Valley* (1972), R H W Reece’s *Aborigines and Colonists* (1974), and in great detail in Roger Milliss’s massive and moralistic study of racial conflict on the Gwydir River frontier, *Waterloo Creek* (1992). John Connor’s *Australian Frontier Wars* (2002) is a shorter survey.

Milliss has been correctly criticised by Keith Windshuttle (2000) for credulity in relation to the numbers of Aborigines killed; but the fact remains that pogroms did occur, albeit rarely.

Sometimes, exceptionally, it was the colonial state that did the killing, specifically the troopers of the Mounted Police. They were a force of regular soldiers seconded to frontier duty. Several cases were recorded in our region. John Connor’s *Australian Frontier Wars* provides a good summary.

First, in 1826, troopers under Lieutenant Lowe ‘executed’ (murdered) several Kamilaroi men they had captured in the upper Hunter Valley. Then there were the pogroms carried out in the Gwydir Valley during 1837 and 1838: one by a mounted police detachment under Sergeant Temple, and several by a large body of troopers and stockmen under Major Nunn. (The white Border Police and the black Native Police, two later frontier forces, are not known to have been responsible for any fatalities in the Namoi or Gwydir valleys.)

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The main motive of the white men on these occasions was to punish Aboriginal sheep- or cattle-killers, or to retaliate for an earlier killing or wounding of a shepherd or stockman. On the other side, a common motive for Aboriginal violence was revenge for wife-stealing. The ‘borrowing’ of Aboriginal women for sex was extremely common. A ‘war party’ - typically Aboriginal kinsmen aiding an aggrieved husband – would rarely kill more than one or two white men in any one incident.

How significant was the violence? To put it in perspective, in 1840 there were about 120 ‘squatters’ or colonial proprietors holding grazing runs in the central-north, or about 140 stations, remembering that some licensees held more than one run. In the whole preceding decade, which was the high point of the ‘invasion’ so-called, it appears that at least 110 of the 140 stations experienced precisely no violence at all between the two races.

It is not so easy to estimate how prevalent was large-scale cattle-spearing by the blackfellows. But again it seems clear that the great majority of grazing runs did not see massive attacks on their stock.

Those today who wish to see the colonial take-over as a ‘violent invasion’ will correctly point to the fact that in any one district there was a brief period - a year or so - when the white workers never ventured away from their huts unarmed, and briefer moments when the whole population on Police were, however, active further out, i.e. beyond the Barwon River and along the Macintyre River. I am aware that Windshuttle 2000 has proposed that the Temple and Nunn clashes were botched arrests rather than premeditated pogroms, and that the numbers of casualties have been greatly exaggerated. He may well be right, but the case has not yet been made.

both sides, the blacks and the whites, may have felt fearful of being killed.

On the other hand, those who wish to see the process of white colonisation as ‘peaceful settlement’ will correctly observe that the Aborigines typically welcomed the first whites to arrive in their country, and that the vast majority of white workers, although heavily outnumbered, never once needed to lift a musket or rifle\(^{51}\) in anger against an Aborigine. They will also emphasise that any killing of Aborigines was largely irrelevant to the success of the British takeover.

**Which view is correct?** Both and neither. The fact is that some regions saw little fighting, while other regions saw a great deal. In general, I believe, exotic diseases were very important, and actual violence was much less important.\(^{52}\)

N G Butlin has argued, rightly in my view, that overall no amount of sporadic shooting or poisoning could have equalled the systemic impact of exotic foreign diseases and the ecological changes wrought by the sheep and cattle. Indeed, such were the indirect effects of pastoralism, said Major Mitchell, that the herds of the *whitefellows* were by themselves practically “sufficient to produce the extirpation of the native race”.\(^{53}\) If so, then the

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\(^{51}\) *Musket* = muzzle-loader. *Rifle* = gun with a rifled barrel. The period 1825-1850 saw spark-ignited (“flint-lock”) muzzle-loaders replaced by muzzle-loaders ignited with explosive pellets (“percussion caps”). In the same period, lead “balls” (round projectiles) were replaced by lead “bullets” (pointed projectiles). Some muskets had rifled barrels; most did not. Modern-style firearms, i.e. breech-loading rifles firing bullets in the form of metal-cased cartridges, did not appear until the second half of the 19\(^{th}\) century.

\(^{52}\) I write here of south-east Australia before 1850: it seems that violence may have been more significant later in what is now Queensland.

\(^{53}\) Mitchell 1848: 83; also Butlin 1993: 130. In his 1982 paper, Butlin assumed, for modelling purposes, that just one in 100 Aborigines each year was killed by whites (1982: 67 ff). For the contrary view, see Reynolds (1981, 1990b).
intensity of the feuding among settlers and Aborigines, where it was intense, served only to speed-up or mask an irresistible result.

An unknown, but very large, number of Aborigines - certainly thousands - died from the diseases that the colonists brought with them, such as tuberculosis, measles and venereal diseases. Smallpox, in contrast, had arrived from the interior of the continent, having perhaps originated in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies). The smallpox pandemic of 1830-32 swept away at least a third (probably more than that) of the whole native population of inland NSW. I will repeat the point for emphasis: at least a whole third, perhaps half, perished from smallpox in the early 1830s.54

After the smallpox abated in the mid-1830s, malnutrition or even starvation killed an unknown number, perhaps hundreds. This was partly the result of Aborigines being excluded from the best river-sites and partly the result of the apparently faint but in fact profound ecological changes wrought by the intruders’ sheep and cattle. Major Mitchell wrote of cattle trampling ponds and lagoons, destroying “forever” the surrounding grassland. Ridley wrote of “cattle, driving away the


Clarke said “one in six” (only 17%) died in the Namoi Valley (quoted by Mair, in Campbell 2002: 140). As Campbell argues, this was probably a conservative figure. She proposes that overall about half the entire Aboriginal population died directly or indirectly from smallpox in the half-century to 1840, and in some regions up to 60%. This was the compound effect of several epidemics and included the indirect effects, i.e. people starving when they were rendered too weak to hunt and gather (Campbell 2002: 150, 222-24).

Early NSW was in no way unique. As Butlin 1982: 22 notes, smallpox caused ‘kill rates’ of 50 to 60 percent of the population across large areas in North America. On smallpox in southern Africa and more generally throughout the Americas, see Johnson 1991: 277; also S Aronson & L Newman, Smallpox in the Americas, 1492-1815: Contagion and Controversy (Providence, Rhode Island, 2002).
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kangaroos” (the numbers of macropods being much smaller in the 19th century than today). The population fell not only because of the high death rate but also because of a low birth rate. Fewer Aboriginal women survived than men, and, because of malnutrition, venereal and other diseases and alcohol, the women who did survive produced few children.

In summary, if we follow the records, we must ascribe the post-conquest reduction in the population of the Tamworth-Gunnedah region primarily to measles, influenza, syphilis, gonorrhoea and the other diseases brought by the colonists, and secondarily to the disruption to, or seizure of, Aboriginal food sources.

2.3 Chronology of the Central-North and Gunnedah

9000 years before present (BP):

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55 Ecological change: Mitchell, *Tropical Australia* 1848: 83; and Ridley in Lang *Queensland* 1864. As noted in the text, Major Mitchell (1848) believed that the herds of the British were by themselves “sufficient to produce the extirpation of the native race”, such were the indirect effects of pastoralism. N G Butlin has concurred with this judgment (1993: 130).

56 Fewer women: See the blanket distribution records in Brayshaw 1986, and analysis in O’Rourke 1997. Few children: Butlin remarks that gonorrhoea tends progressively to reduce reproductive capacity as persistent and increasing inflammation affects the uterus and occludes the fallopian tube. Syphilis likewise limits the ability to produce viable children.

57 Many people with a certain ideological conviction reject anything other than the simple-minded proposition that “the Aboriginal population was reduced by the gun”. Anyone interested in the truth must ask: *What evidence do we have for massacres? What evidence do we have for epidemics? And, what else besides the gun and imported microbes killed Aborigines?* Reynolds 1981 and Milliss 1992 were fixated on the musket - because of their anti-imperialist predilections. Having read all the same sources, I disagree. Yes, there were a few massacres (defined, say, as occasions on which 10 or more Aborigines were killed). But shootings were much less important than exotic diseases and the disruption to traditional food sources.
The oldest dated archaeological site in north-central NSW (McBryde 1977). Future archaeological work will no doubt yield dates of up to 40,000 BP.

**7000 years BP:**  
At the end of the last ice age, Australia’s climate shifted from cold-dry to warm-dry. As a result, surface water became scarce. Most inland lakes became completely dry or dry in certain seasons. Most large, predominantly browsing animals lost their habitat and retreated to a narrow band in eastern Australia, where there was permanent water and better vegetation. One of Australia’s megafauna, Diprotodon, may have survived on the Liverpool Plains until about 7,000 years ago.

**1804:**  
Possibly the first-ever contact between the Gamilaraay and white men. - According to Huntington, an “affray” (battle) took place between a large force of Aborigines and British cedar getters who had penetrated “70 miles” up the Hunter River. This seems a very long way to go in boats, but if correct it means the whites rowed perhaps as far as present-day Muswellbrook. If so the Aborigines in question were probably Gamilaraay-speakers.  

**1818:**  
John Oxley discovers and names the Liverpool Plains.  
His party came eastwards from the Castlereagh River through the valley of Garrawilla Creek. They crossed Coxs Creek south of Mullaley [27 August] and then the Mooki River east of present-day Curlewis [31 August]. (There are memorials to Oxley located three kilometres south of Mullaley and on the Wandoba Road.)

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59 The modern convention is not to use the possessive apostrophe in place-names. Hence Chinamans Gully, not Chinaman’s Gully.
Oxley's party climbed a prominent hill near Curlewis, which he dubbed View Hill, probably today's Dimberoy Mountain. The expedition's artist made a sketch looking westwards which is the *earliest illustration of the Liverpool Plains.*  
Although they met no Aborigines, Oxley and his men saw “a great many smokes arising from the fires of the natives” in the direction of Somerton or Attunga [downstream from Tamworth]. See Map 2.

**1819:**
First overland journey to the Hunter Valley by colonists: John Howe’s party, guided by friendly Aborigines from the Hawkesbury, reaches the middle Hunter River between Denman and Singleton. Howe’s note of “Coomery Roy” as the language of the Upper Hunter would appear to be the first-ever record of the name *Gamilaraay.*

The Howe family afterwards (in the 1830s) established ‘Carroll’ holding, east of Gunnedah, and pioneered white settlement on what is now the NSW-Queensland border.

**1822:**
Travelling from Bathurst, William Lawson explores and names the upper Goulburn River including the Cassilis district (Jervis 1954: 78). Cf 1825.

**1823:**
North-east of Mudgee, near present-day Coolah, the botanist-explorer Allan Cunningham found, but did

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61 See generally Johnson 2002. The coordinates of Curlewis itself are 31°07’30” East, 150°15’00” South. Oxley’s bearing of 31°07’E and 150°10’S, taken on 30 August, if accurate, places his party about 15 kilometres directly west of the present-day village of Curlewis. Thus on 31 August they passed either through or very near the future site of Curlewis.
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not cross through, an easy pass into the Liverpool Plains. He named it Pandora’s Pass.62

1825:
1. The first whites to visit the Warrumbungle Ranges were several convict workmen from William Lawson’s holding on the Talbragar River near Mudgee (Jervis 1954: 83).

2. A year of much rain. Cunningham travels north through Pandora’s Pass and into the Liverpool Plains along the muddy and marshy flats of Coxs Creek. His party penetrated almost to Boggabri before turning back. Their only significant meeting with Aborigines was on Coxs Creek upstream from Boggabri.

When at about Tambar Springs, they saw smoke from fires about 60 kilometres away in the direction of Gunnedah. Later, when about halfway between Mullaley and Boggabri, they came upon a deserted group of 14 large huts or houses (“conical habitations”). Nearer Boggabri, at a point north-west of Gunnedah, again they saw smoke ahead at several points: that is, along the Namoi River. Cunningham himself was not aware that a major river lay just ahead, and he turned back without quite reaching Boggabri.63

1826-27:
The first cattlemen enter and occupy the edges of the Liverpool Plains, west of present-day Willow Tree.

1826-31:

After Oxley [1818: published 1820], Cunningham in 1823 was one of the first to record how the Aborigines’ of the interior buried their dead: see his unpublished journal entry, 9 May 1823, noting a “burial mound of Aborigines” (SRNSW: Reel 6035; SZ15 pp 34, 122).


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63
Presumed date of "Jinnie" Griffin's childhood. She stated that the attack by the Cassilis men on the "tribe" of Coonabarabran took place "when I was very small piccaninni" (Document 3E, "Jinnie's Tale"). It appears too that "Cuttabush", in later years the patriarch of the Coonabarabran Aborigines, was born around this time.

1827:

1. Travelling north, Allan Cunningham passes to the east of Breeza and crosses the Namoi River near present-day Carroll. Far to the north, in what is now Queensland, he will discover and name the Darling Downs. On his return journey, the botanist crossed the Namoi River between Gunnedah and Emerald Hill.  

   • Cunningham's party may well have been the first white men ever to be noticed (although he did not see them) by the Aborigines of the immediate Gunnedah district.

2. (1827 or 1828:) Aborigines from the Namoi are said to have been involved in a major battle or battles with settlers (convict stockmen) recently arrived in the Upper Mooki Valley, west of Willow Tree. After the battle proper, the white workers on horseback pursued the surviving Aborigines to an area called 'Waterloo Plains', probably a section of the Breeza Plains. More Aborigines were killed there.

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64 McMinn 1970. Excerpts from Cunningham's journal have been published by Lee 1925: see at pp 548 ff for the botanist's crossing of the Liverpool Plains. The full text of Lee's book is available on line: see details in Bibliography.

65 Gardner 1846 and 1854; Cash 1870; Reece 1974: 29 and Milliss 1992: 78 ff. Gardner refers to the Aborigines in question as the "Namai tribes" or "Manilla and Namoi tribes" [in Calvert 1846: 40 and 1854 ii: 76], but we may believe that the local Mooki River bands also participated. Waterloo Plains is not to be confused with a later battle or massacre at Waterloo Creek in the lower Gwydir-Mehi valley.
3. George ‘the Barber’ Clarke, a young convict, escapes from ‘Yarrimanbah’ station in the Upper Mooki Valley. He makes his way to Boggabri, where he joins the local Aboriginal community. See 1830.

1828:
It was reported that cattle from 'Mooki' station were never allowed to go past “the rocky crossing place” (at modern Caroona) “on account of the blacks” (Carter 1974: 27).

From 1828:
Proceeding north down the Mooki River, the squatters’ men gradually occupy the Breeza Plains (as related in Allan Wood’s, Eric Rolls’ and Roger Milliss’s books).

There are conflicting claims about who the first arrivals were. John Rotton of Patricks Plains in 1828-30 briefly occupied part of what became Walhalla run [modern ‘Walhallow’]. He may have been the first. Burns’ superintendent Bloomfield took Burns’ cattle further down the Mooki at about the same time. ‘Breeza’ station, or the area that would become ‘Breeza’, was first occupied for T P Macqueen in 1831 by Donald McLauchlan, or at least McLauchlan temporarily grazed some of Macqueen’s bullocks there; later McLauchlan held a licence of his own for nearby ‘Long Point’.

Casual grazing gave way to full occupation in 1832 when J M Blaxland’s men formed a permanent run at ‘Breeza’.67

1829:

66 Clarke had worked in London as an apprentice barber before being transported.

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Drought. Charles Sturt explores along the nearly dry Castlereagh River.

**Late 1830:**
Having lived free for nearly three years with the Gamilaraay people of Boggabri, Clarke came in to surrender.

‘The Barber’ told florid tales of a massive river called the Kindur. It lay, he said, beyond a lesser river called the “Gnammoy” (our earliest record of the name Namoi). The story about an inland sea can be explained by his having seen, from high ground, a very large flood.68 (On average, the Namoi floods two years in five. Or rather, it used to, before the Chaffey, Split Rock and Keepit dams were built.)

**1830-31:**
Smallpox ravages the Aboriginal population of the Namoi Valley. George Clarke said that the disease came up-river, from the interior, to Narrabri. It spread thence to Boggabri and Gunnedah in October-November 1830. Among the many who died was the "king" (patriarch) of the Boggabri band.69

**1831:**
1. Clarke absconded again. He guided the squatters Richard Yeomans and Ben Singleton to the Peel, which they followed down in the direction of

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68 Boyce 1970. The Aborigines were full of stories about great floods. Naseby mentions a great flood “long, long ago” that, they said, covered the land “from mountain to mountain” north of the Warrumbungles, a distance of at least "80 to 90 miles". And Telfer mentions Aboriginal traditions of a "cobbong flood" [cobbong = gabawaang, meaning ‘big’] some “300 miles long [with] a large lot of islands in the middle of it”. "The ridges about Gunnedah were swept away by the great rush of water in its course down the Namoi country" (Naseby and Telfer, quoted in Miliss 1992: 29).

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Gunnedah. Clarke escaped somewhere before Gunnedah, presumably in the present-day Keepit area. It seems that Yeomans and Singleton went on as far as the Peel-Namoi junction below Keepit, and probably further. After Clarke himself and Cunningham, they were the first white men to reach the modern Carroll area.

With other convict runaways (as many as seven men), Clarke now began to lead the Boggabri Aborigines on cattle-stealing raids. It is highly likely that Aborigines from Gunnedah were involved, as Clarke organised raids as far east as the new runs around Tamworth. ‘The Barber’ was captured by the Mounted Police not far from ‘Nombi’ holding (near Mullaley) in October 1831.70

2. **First stations set up on the Peel River near modern Tamworth.**

3. December 1831: Major, afterwards Sir Thomas, Mitchell arrives in search of Clarke’s Kindur River. Travelling broadly westwards from the lower Peel River, Mitchell’s expedition crossed into the Kelvin district.

   They ascended Nobby Rock in the hills 15 kilometres north-east of Gunnedah, and observed Mt Binalong [near Boggabri] in the middle distance. Mitchell recorded the Gamilaraay name of Nobby Rock as *Ydire*, whereas his second-in-charge, G B White, said it was called *Coorial*. See Map 3; photograph no.2.

   The expedition bypassed the site of Gunnedah itself. They proceeded from the Kelvin district nearly direct to Boggabri. So there was no opportunity for Mitchell to ask his Aboriginal guide, a Kamilaroi man nicknamed ‘Mr Brown’, for the name of the area at the Mooki-Namoi junction.

1832:

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70 Boyce 1970: 30-32; Milliss 1992: 82.
1. Edward Parry visits the Manilla River on behalf of the Australian Agricultural Company (AAC). He crossed to the Manilla River from the Peel, and did not visit the Gunnedah area [Map 2].

The AAC was a conglomerate whose principals in London were able to engineer the grant of pre-emptive rights to two large segments of the Liverpool Plains: one on the Upper Mooki (“Warrah”), the other including the left or western bank of the Peel River (“Goonoo Goonoo” and “Calala”).

2. Expedition to the Nandewars by a Mounted Police patrol under Captain J D Forbes in search of runaway convicts (April-May). There were as yet no cattlemen at Gunnedah. Forbes found that the frontier was located on the lower Mooki River around Breeza (see in McLachlan 1981).

3. First stations formed on the Namoi. The first, according to Eric Rolls, were Sir John Jamison’s two runs: ‘Barbers Lagoon’, opposite present-day Boggabri, formed in about May or June 1832, and ‘Baan Baa’. Cf 1833.

4. First survey map of the Tamworth-Gunnedah stretch of the Peel-Namoi Rivers, by G B White [July-August 1832]. No sheep or cattle stations are marked, because none had yet been formed in that sector. White gives the following spellings: “Namoy”; “Coonadilly” [sic: our Mooki River]; “Mooloworindi” [the Namoi above the Mooki-Namoi junction]; and “Coorial” [Nobby Rock, a landmark north-east of Gunnedah].

The Breeza Plains were described thus by an early tourist: “From its summit [a hill near

Rolls 1981. The date of 1832 derives from Jamison’s 1836 letter of application for a squatting licence; he said his stock had occupied ‘Baan Baa’ for four years.

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‘Kickerbell’ station] we could see, even to the horizon, immense plains of the greatest verdure, without a tree upon them. ... I can only compare them [the Plains] to the boundless savannahs or pampas of America” (William Breton 1834: 95).

1832-38:
The frontier of British settlement was extended along the Namoi River from ‘Baan Baa’ to ‘Narrabri’ in 1832-34. Then ‘Wee Waa’ was occupied in about 1836 or 1837.

The first runs on the ‘Big River’ or Gwydir can be dated to 1835-36, while the Moree district was reached from two directions in 1837-38.

1833:
1. This year saw a number of squatters reach and form stations in the Manilla-Gunnedah-Boggabri sector of the Namoi River. The following list is in alphabetical order of the stock-holder’s name. Whose men and stock arrived first - as between Baldwin's, Bowman's, Onus's, Parnell's, Robertson's, Thorley's, Wentworth's and Williams' - is not clear.⁷³

   [i]. Otto Baldwin’s men formed ‘Diniwarindi’, opposite present-day Manilla, the first holding on the upper Namoi River (says Eric Rolls; or in “about 1834” if one prefers to follow Roger Milliss).

   [ii]. (1833 or 1834:) George Bowman's men set up a temporary station, which remained unnamed, at the Mooki-Namoi junction, where the town of Gunnedah now stands. They held it for only about two years before moving north into the Gwydir basin.

   [iii]. Joseph Onus and Robert Williams (also Thomas Parnell and Philip Thorley) were early

⁷³ Longmuir 1956; Jeans 1972; Rolls 1981: 103 ff; 105 ff; Milliss 1992: 77 etc.
stockholders on the Upper Mooki who faced eviction in favour of Australian Agricultural Company (AAC).

Onus's men moved his stock out to 'THERIBBY', while Williams' men set up 'BOGGABRI', both in 1833 (if we follow Rolls' account).

[iv]. Thomas Parnell senior was another of the early stockholders on the Upper Mooki who faced eviction in favour of the AAC. Thomas Parnell junior set up 'BULL' run near Boggabri on behalf of his father in the early 1830s.

Presumably the Parnells also formed 'BURRELL' and 'WEETALIBA' stations soon thereafter (say between 1833 and 1838). 'Burrell' lay north-west of Gunnedah while 'Weetaliba' is eight kilometres upstream from Gunnedah [Map 3]. In the 1848 squatter lists, Parnell held 'Bull' and 'Burrell'; 'Weetaliba' appears on a map of 1852. Station names only became fixed during the 1840s.

[v]. James Robertson's superintendent, Alexander Bloomfield, briefly held 'COWMORE' run, "just north" [sic] of Gunnedah in 1833, according to Eric Rolls. As Rolls places it, the station seems to have been located where the eastern boundary of 'Burburgate' met the western boundary of 'Weetaliba'. If so, then perhaps Rolls is saying that Bloomfield was only

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The lagoon named Burrell is located about eight kilometres (five miles) downstream from Gunnedah on the Boggabri road.

According to the Gunnedah Committee 1935: 5, Parnell's original stations were 'Burrell' and 'Weetalibah', the latter afterwards subsumed within 'Gunnible'. The three stations were later combined into one massive holding called 'Gunnible' (cf Longmuir 1956: 17, and Pastoral Maps).

By the 1880s 'Gunnible' took in the whole northern side of the Namoi, opposite Gunnedah (see land maps at www.lpi.nsw.gov.au). The NW sector, i.e. north of Gunnible Mountain, was known as 'Burrit' [sic], while 'Gunnible' proper and Gunnible Lagoon fell in the station's far western sector. The combined run extended as far as the north side of the Namoi upstream from the Mooki junction, taking in the old 'Weetaliba' holding.
there for a matter of months.\textsuperscript{75} By 1848, John Robertson also held 'Arrarownie' run (or 'Arrarrowme', as it is spelt in the *NSW Government Gazette*), located to the west of Boggabri. Rolls suggests that this station was formed in about 1835.

[vi]. According to Rolls, Phillip Thorley formed 'Bondabolla', located below Gunnedah on the left bank opposite 'Burburgate', i.e. east of present-day Emerald Hill. ('Bondabolla' station is dated by other historians to about 1835) \textsuperscript{[Map 3]}. Thorley was yet another of the land-holders with stock on old-established runs on the Upper Mooki who knew they would be forced out by the AAC and moved in anticipation.

[vii]. W C Wentworth's men formed 'Burburgate' station, 12 kilometres downstream from present-day Gunnedah. It ran 2,000 sheep as early as 1833, rising to 6,000 by 1837.


3. A large group of escapee convicts ("20 men with firearms") was rumoured to be based in the Nandewars at a place called "Gourada". The rumours proved to be either false or exaggerated.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{75} Irritatingly, Rolls does not cite his sources. It is never possible therefore to check his conclusions.

\textsuperscript{76} Hunt 1980: 22. A mounted police expedition led by Commandant Williams scoured the area in August-September 1833 and failed to find any trace of the "Gourada" hide-out (SRNSW 4/2199.1; also Wood 1972: 228). As against this, we must note the "shed" and cattle-pads that Cunningham had found north-east of the Nandewars in 1827. And in 1831 (see there) Clarke had been joined by apparently seven other runaways.
4. Late 1833: The first AAC sheep reach ‘Warrah’.

**1833-43:**
Blanket distribution records show that the Aboriginal population of the Upper Goulburn Valley, around present-day Cassilis, was relatively stable in this period: falling from 111 people [80 adults and 31 children] in 1833 to 94 [77 adults and 17 children] in 1843.⁷⁷ (Cf 1836 below.) This post-dated the smallpox pandemic, so the “pre-contact” population in the 1820s was probably at least 220.


**1834:**
1. Patrick Quinn, superintendent for the Doyle family, establishes a holding at ‘Narrabri’ on 17 March, St Patricks Day:
   “Just prior to the occupancy of Narrabri, and quite close to the site of the township, now known by that name, a serious battle ... raged between the blacks and the whites, many of the former falling before their better-armed foes who got entire possession of their camping ground” (obituary of Quinn in *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 1876: it may be implied that Quinn himself did not precipitate this clash).

2. As noted, in 1833 or 1834, George Bowman’s convict foreman John ‘Black’ Johnston – who is not to be confused with the Sydney-based squatter John Johnston - formed a *temporary cattle station at or near Gunnedah* (until 1836).⁷⁸

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We know that the local Kamilaroi community had camp-sites in several places. Their burial ground was located only a few hundred metres from what would become a dray-route and then the main street of the town of Gunnedah. But we have no information at all about the relations between the local Kamilaroi and the first white settlers, except for a brief comment by Joe Bungaree: “plenty white man coming all about – and bring plenty cattle. Tribe get small. White men take our young lubras. Young warriors go away for lubras down Nammoy River, never come back no more” (Document 3B, MS Page 5).

3. The first cattle station in the Gwydir basin was Robert Pringle’s holding ‘Rocky Creek’ on the watercourse of that name. It was established, the Australian Town and Country Journal said, ‘in the latter end of 1834 or beginning of 1835’. Roger Milliss suggests that Pringle’s men probably drove his stock from the Namoi through the Nandewar Range via the Killarney Gap.

1834-35:
1. Charles Coxen leads an expedition down the Namoi as far as about Pilliga in search of animal, bird and plant specimens. He was working in collaboration with his England-based brother-in-law, the ornithologist John Gould (see 1839-40).

2. ‘Gunnedah’ itself, the sheep- and cattle-station of that name, was formed relatively late: probably in the second half of 1835 by John Farrell, foreman for

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79 Names did not become fixed until the 1840s. The Gunnedah Committee, 1935: 5, state that Johnston’s station was known as ‘Bolomin’ before it came to be called ‘Gunnedah’. This looks to me like a misreading of ‘Pullaming’, which was a quite distinct run, east of Curlewis. [In Gamilaraay bulamin means apple tree (angophora spp.) – Ash et al. 2003: 44.]
the Sydney-based squatter John Johnston (or Johnstone). By that time, the newest stations were already further out, beyond ‘Narrabri’.

A later description of the boundaries of the run reads as follows: “Bounded on the north by the Namoi River; on the east by Howe’s and Brown’s runs ['Carroll' and 'Pullaming'], by a line about south-west to the dividing range from the station of Sumner ['Wandobah']; on the south by Sumner; and on the west by Robertson ['Arrarownie'], commencing at a lagoon by the river Namoi”. See Maps 2, 3 and 10.

Buchanan (1985) suggests that Farrell and his men built a slab hut and a woolshed as early as 1834. Such a date seems a little too early, noting that Johnston did not apply for a licence until late 1836. A date of 1835 seems the safer conclusion.

The Tourist Bureau booklet (1967) notes that Johnston’s slab hut (“homestead”) was located on the northern side of what is now Maitland Street, between Marquis and Elgin Streets. Johnston’s woolshed was on the Namoi river-bank, downstream from the Mooki junction. The Mooki divided ‘Gunnedah West’ from ‘Gunnedah East’. See Maps 3 and 8.

3. If we follow Roger Milliss’s reading of the early sources, Parnell and Thorley formed several runs between Gunnedah and Boggabri probably in the first half of 1835. But, given that they were forced out by the AAC, this probably occurred before 1835 (as Rolls proposes).

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80 See Maps 2, 3 and 10.
81 Buchanan (1985). See also Johnstone: application no. 10-423, letter of application dated 22.11.1836. Johnston was asked to fill out the required form, which he did; it was subsequently received at the Colonial Secretary’s Office on 12.12.1836 (SRNSW 4/1117.1: Applications for Depasturing Licences beyond the Limits of Location, 1836-37). For a near contemporary document, see R Muir’s Diary [Breeza station 1841], Mitchell Library MS no. B-1496.
82 Milliss 1992: 91.
1835:
1. According to Rolls, this was the year that W C Wentworth's employee, James Watson, formed 'Burburgate' and other stations for Wentworth (the true date would seem to be earlier). Cf 1837.

2. Aborigines killed one of Jamison's men on the Namoi River, presumably at his ‘Baan Baa’ holding.83


1836:

Walker was convicted of murdering certain Thomas Woods at or near Cassilis and Gore of aiding and abetting this. A local Aboriginal “boy” (youth) was used to track the suspects: “We could not see any tracks, but the black boy ran them easily, and said in his native tongue that there were four [men]. Blacks are so quick in tracking, that he showed us where they had stumbled over bushes in the night, and the cause of their fall.” Key place-names mentioned in testimony have the familiar Gamilaraay suffix –araay, namely Binnagaray or Binn[e]goroy station; and Bennegillaroy. Cf 1840.

1836-38:
The “war” or feuding between Aborigines and whites shifts to the lower Namoi and the new Gwydir River frontier.

1837:
‘Burburgate’ had developed into a substantial station, almost the size of a small village, with 10 convict shepherds, five hutkeepers, four bullock-

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drivers, a manager and a house-servant (Jeans 1972: 142).

1837-38:
Alexander Paterson, the first Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Liverpool Plains, made several trips through the region, including to the Gunnedah area. The commissioners were charged with collecting leasehold fees, settling boundary disputes and protecting the Aborigines.

Paterson reported that Aborigines were still killing some cattle on the (upper) Namoi and Manilla Rivers (cf below: 1838-39). But the major locus of conflict was further out, in the Wee Waa-Merah region. Fear of the Aborigines prompted the workers at 'Merah' holding, west of Wee Waa, briefly to abandon the run in 1838.84

1838:
The Myall Creek massacre: Seven white workers were hanged in Sydney for killing, in cold blood, 28 “tame” Aborigines camped at ‘Myall Creek’ station, west of present-day Inverell.

1838-39:
Namoi River Aborigines were said to be assisting the Waalaraay people of the Horton River in cattle-spearining raids (Milliss 1992: 574, 665). The Namoi men were probably from the Upper Namoi (above Manilla) rather than the Gunnedah region. Cf 1841, 1843.

1839:
1. "Between the Rivers Namoi, Peel and Gwyder [sic] . . . there is a black native population of between 2,000 and 3,000", reported Commissioner Mayne. If we include the Upper Barwon region (with which Mayne was not yet familiar), then the entire

84 Paterson in HRA xx: 253; also Reece 1974; and Milliss 1992: 154-55.
surviving Kamilaroi-speaking population may have been as large as 7,000.\textsuperscript{85} Compare 1841.

2. Compared with about "80" runs in 1837, at the end of 1839 there were 120 squatters altogether with stations in the Peel, Namoi and Gwydir basins.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{1839-46:}  
In this period, inland NSW was governed by Commissioners of Crown Lands, each now supported by a detachment of Border Police.

The second Commissioner for the Liverpool Plains inspectorate was Edward Mayne, based on the lower Peel River at ‘Goora’ station (modern Somerton), between present-day Tamworth and Gunnedah. See 1841.

The inspectorate of Bligh comprised the Castlereagh basin and the eastern half of the Macquarie basin. It was supervised by a Commissioner located at ‘Coolah’ holding (until 1847, when ‘Dubbo’ station became his base).

\textbf{1839-40:}  
John Gould, the future author of \textit{Birds of Australia}, travelled to the “Mokai” River (his spelling of our Mooki) collecting specimens. He proceeded thence to ‘Gunnedah’ and along the Namoi for about 150 miles - some 240 kilometres, or almost as far as Walgett - before returning to the Hunter Valley.

Near “Brezi” station (our Breeza), where he was assisted by the local Gamilaraay people, Gould discovered and drew the budgerigar, among many other species. He also mentions \textit{red kangaroos}.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{85} Mayne in VPLC 1839: 23; and the data collated in O’Rourke 1997: 228 ff.
\textsuperscript{86} Milliss 1992: 158 and 804 n8, citing Paterson 1837; and list of Liverpool Plains and New England licences: \textit{Government Gazette}, 19.2.1840. Also Campbell 1968: 19 ff.
1840:
1. The first recorded major flood on the Namoi, described in the Sydney Gazette, 18 February (also by John Gould, above). Until dams were built in the 20th century, the Namoi used to flood two years in five.

2. Winter 1840: Blankets, supplied by the colonial government, were distributed to 87 Aborigines by Joseph Threlkeld at his holding near the Manilla River [Barraba-Rocky Creek area]. The Aborigines were a heterogeneous group drawn from the Manilla and Peel Rivers, the Muntara [sic: ? Bundarra], Big River [Gwydir] and Macintyre (papers of Threlkeld snr, ed. Gunson 1974: 275).


1841:
Commissioner Mayne described the surviving Gamilaraay of the Liverpool Plains as “perfectly harmless”. The ‘war’ between Aborigines and settlers had shifted to the Barwon-Macintyre River frontier. But see 1843.

Mayne said that already the Aboriginal population had “dwindled away” in the longer-settled half of his inspectorate, i.e. south-east of a line drawn from about Narrabri to about Bingara. Only about "1,000" survived in that sector. We have

Gould wrote: “On arriving at Brezi, to the north of the Liverpool plains, in the beginning of December [1839], I found myself surrounded by numbers [of budgerigars], breeding in all the hollow spouts of the large Eucalypti bordering the Mokai”. Gould took the first living budgerigar specimens to England in 1840. He reclassified them as Melopsittacus undulatus, the scientific name they bear today.
no exact count of the size of the white population in the south-east sector, but it was already of the order of 900 people.\footnote{Aborigines: Mayne, SRNSW 4/2565.1, HRA xxii: 170 and Millis 1992: 766. For the white population, compare the count of "626" whites for the \textit{inner} sector [broadly Tamworth-Bingara-Narrabri-Coonabarabran], or an average of over seven people per station on "80" stations, in 1837: Commissioner Paterson's estimate, published as an appendix to the Report on the Crown Lands Bill, VPLC March 1839; also Milliss 1992: 158, 804 note 80. In the 1846 Census, the count was 2,110 whites in the whole "Liverpool Plains" inspectorate [the Mungindi-Goondiwindi-Tamworth-Coonabarabran-Walgett sector]. Perhaps two-thirds (say 1,400) of this total lived in the longer-settled half. Thus, by back extrapolation, a fair guess would be about 900 for the \textit{inner} sector in 1841. Compare Ware's [UNE MS no.A695] count of "164" proprietors in 1841: if we use a figure of five employees per squatter as an absolute minimum, Ware's figure yields a population of at least 820.}

\section*{1843:}
A number of "tame" blacks from the Namoi River, along with "myalls" [i.e., Aborigines still living free] from the Gwydir basin, were reported to be killing cattle at 'Rocky Creek' (\textit{SMH}, 1 February 1843).

\section*{1844:}
Mary Jane Cain (nee Griffin), daughter of "Jinnie" and Eugene Griffin, born at 'Toorawandi' station, east of Coonabarabran. See Document 3E.

\section*{1845:}
The records of the Crown Lands Commissioner list James Hall as the stockholder at "Gunedah" [sic: one N]; and his partner John \textit{Johnson} as the resident superintendent [sic: corrected to \textit{Johnston} in later records]. According to the Gunnedah Committee 1935, Hall was a relative of Johnston's.\footnote{SRNSW 4/5498; reel 1483: Returns of Population and Livestock, and Gunnedah Committee 1935: 5.} Including Johnston, there were 13 people residing on the run. There were seven free males; two free
females; three ‘bond’ males and one ‘bond’ female (convicts on parole). They had in their charge 1,170 sheep, 832 cattle and eight horses. Note that there were about two people for every one horse, the reason being that shepherds walked rather than rode.  

‘Burrell’ and ‘Carroll’, like ‘Gunnedah’, were small-to-medium-size stations, staffed by 10-15 people. They ran up to 2,000 sheep as well as 1,000 or more cattle (sheep outnumbered cattle on most Namoi River stations). For comparison, a very large station, such as Wentworth’s ‘Burburgate’, was staffed by over 30 workers, running over 3,000 head of cattle and, in some years, over 10,000 sheep.

1846:
“The Namoi and Maniella [sic: Manilla River] tribe are a powerful tribe and considered by both the settlers and the blacks to be a superior tribe to those who border them”. Thus writes the early chronicler William Gardner. This should be read as a general statement about the lowland Aborigines living to the west of New England, where Gardner was based [Map 1]. The word “superior” perhaps translates as ‘more extroverted’ or ‘arrogant’.

Gardner also mentions Johnstone’s [sic] “sheep and cattle [station at the] junction of the Muckie [Mooki] River”.

1847-48:
The colonial government reorganised the framework of government in inland NSW. Fixity of tenure was ceded to the squatters in the form of long-term leases of land, and Courts of Petty Sessions were established. In the central-north, the courts sat at Wee Waa and Warialda.
1848:
Surveyor Gorman surveys the Mooki junction stretch of the Namoi River. For the Mooki, he gives the spelling "Mucki or Connaadilly". The area southwest of the Mooki-Namoi junction - the north-east quadrant of today’s township - is marked on his map “thickly timbered”.

The first three stations below the Mooki-Namoi junction appear as 1. Robinson’s [sic: Robertson’s ‘Arrarownie’], 2. Thorley’s ['Bondabolla’]; and 3. Wentworth’s ['Burburgate’]. Gorman’s map records only an "old woolshed" at the site of Gunnedah. This is curious, as the records of the Crown Lands Commissioner show that in late 1847 John Johnston was running over 3,000 of his and his partner James Hall’s sheep at “Gunedah” [sic: spelt ‘Gunnadah’ in the Return for 1850].

1849:
Beginnings of a future village: Daniel Macfarlane purchased the homestead or main hut of the ‘Gunnedah’ run and converted it into the Golden Fleece Inn (Longmuir 1956:17) [Map 9].

A map of 1849 shows “The Woolshed Reserve” as a group of five huts or houses. The huts were located immediately west of Johnston’s stockyards, broadly along what would later become Maitland Street. They included the Golden Fleece Inn, a store and a police hut. One dwelling was marked ‘Johnston’s hut’, although it was Hall, not Johnston, who held the station licence until at least 1852. See 1856.

From 1851:
Period of the Gold Rushes in south-east Australia. The 1851 census, taken on the eve of the discovery of gold in various parts of the colony, showed a...

total of 2,335 whites living in the Liverpool Plains pastoral district. Only 27% of the white population were women and girls. The number of Aborigines in the region was "about 1,000". 93

The latter estimate covered the whole Tamworth-Walgett-Mungindi sector, so we may guess that only about 400 Aborigines survived in the longer settled half nearer Tamworth: a loss of more than 50% in one decade (cf 1841). 94

The white population included 254 and 68 people in the villages of Tamworth and Wee Waa respectively. Tiny Wee Waa was the "capital" of the Liverpool Plains, being the seat of the Court of Petty Sessions and the headquarters of the Crown Lands Commissioner.

The departure of many white workers to the goldfields meant that the pastoralists had to recruit Aborigines as stockmen and shearsers. This brought an improvement in the material living conditions of the surviving Gamilaraay people after 1851.


94 Indeed 400 may be an overestimate for 1851. Already in 1844, Commissioner Allman had estimated there were only 750 survivors in the Peel-Namoi sector (Milliss 1992: 727). The Commissioners put the total Aboriginal population of the entire inspectorate (as far as Walgett) at just 345, 330 and 250 in 1853, 1854 and 1859 respectively [Huwthwaite and Durbin in SRNSW 4/1146.4]. These figures suggest that the 1851 estimate of "1,000" was probably an over-estimate. Ridley’s observations during his tour of 1855 (see in Lang 1864) are fully consistent with the tiny number of survivors reported by the Huwthwaite and Durbin.

The presumed total of up to "1,300" Aborigines for 1851 [1,000 in the greater Liverpool Plains and 300 in Gwydir] might be raised to about 1,500 if mixed-race people were included. This can be compared with a population of 1,469, now including people of mixed race, counted in 1882 in the North-West and Namoi police regions (police census for the APB published in VPLA 1883).

The numbers of "full-bloods" (among whom deaths exceeded births) continued to decline. It was not until the period 1890-1900 that the rising number of people of mixed-race (among whom births would eventually exceed deaths) began first to slow the rate of decline and then (after 1900) to increase the size of the overall population.
1852:
A further map by surveyor Gorman lists the stations upstream from the Mooki-Namoi junction as: 1. J Parnell's 'Weetalibah' (north bank); 2. "J Hall's sheep station" i.e. 'Gunnedah'; south bank; 3. "J. Howe's sheep station", the western-most run in a series of runs held by the Howe-Dight families; 4. "H Dight's sheep station", i.e. Hannah Dight's 'Carroll'; 5. H Dight's 'Kaybah': his spelling, nowadays spelt Kibah; and 6. J Howe's 'Carroll'.

1854:
1. Petition to the colonial government from residents in the district proposing that The Woolshed Reserve was “a fit and proper place for a township” (Gunnedah Committee 1935: 9; Longmuir 1956: 17). This was in due course agreed to: see 1856.

2. William Gardner described ‘Gunnedah’ station (“formerly Johnstone’s” [cf 1856]) as “a principal camping place” for the bullock drays that took supplies to the holdings further out. It was also a major node on one of the droving routes from the Darling Downs.

   In the 1850s, large numbers of cattle were driven south from northern NSW, including what is now Queensland, to feed the diggers on the goldfields of Port Phillip (present-day Victoria). Three main routes ran from the Darling Downs to Dubbo: [i.] through Tamworth to Pandoras Pass near Coolah; [ii.] through Gunnedah also to Pandoras Pass; and [iii.] through Wee Waa westwards around the Warrumbungles to the Castlereagh River [Map 1].

3. The diary of C W Lloyd of ‘Burburgate’ station mentions that “two or three” Aboriginal gunyahs were to be seen at Gunnedah in 1854.

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95 SRNSW, Map 3431.
c. 1855:

_Last Aboriginal initiation in the Gunnedah region?

This date is approximate, deduced from the fact that the Bora [Buurra] ceremonies were no longer being held in the Wandobah-Gunnedah-Burburgate district by 1871.\footnote{Ridley 1871, 1873, 1875.} Cf 1860/61 – Bora at Wee Waa.

It is possible, of course, that some Gunnedah boys were still being initiated elsewhere after 1855, perhaps for example at Wee Waa and Terry Hie Hie (on the northern side of the Nandewars). Bora ceremonies were held at Terry Hie Hie until about 1883.\footnote{See in O’Rourke 1997. Ridley travelled from Murrurundi across the Breeza Plains. At ‘Burburgate’ station, downstream from Gunnedah, his main informant was a ‘Koinbere’-speaking man ‘Murri Bundar’ (i.e., Marii Bandaarr, ‘Grey Kangaroo’), nicknamed ‘Old Billy’. The latter’s father, ‘Ippai Mute’ (Yibaay Mudhay, ‘Brush-tail Possum’), had “lived near Wundubar on Liverpool Plains” or “Wundula [sic] near the Mooki”; i.e., present-day Wandobah, south of Gunnedah, west of Curlewis.}

1856:

1. The records of the Crown Lands Commissioner show John Johnston as now the stockholder at ‘Gunnedah’ station (his name replacing that of his partner Hall). Compared with the fewer than 3,000 sheep that he and Hall ran in the 1840s, Johnston was now running over 9,000.\footnote{SRNSW 4/5498 reel 1483. Hall still held Gunnedah in 1851; thus his partner Johnston took over (or took back) the licence some time in the early 1850s.}

2. Post office opened. The village was known at first as “The Woolshed” as it was located beside Johnston’s woolshed [Map 9].

3. Surveyor B C Flide draws up a design for a future town-site, with a grid of proposed streets drawn over the existing huts and tracks [Map 8]. His map
shows seven or eight existing buildings, including a police hut, a smithy, the inn and a store. Although not labelled as such, the eastern-most huts were presumably the ‘old woolshed’.\(^{100}\)

Longmuir (1956: 17) notes that there was a flood in progress when the surveyor visited the area. So Flide decided to abandon his original idea of a township on both banks of the river and instead restricted the town lands to the southern side (where the slopes of Porcupine Ridge lie well above the flood line: see Maps 8 and 12).

- Flide’s town plan was gazetted on 26 November 1856.

4. First fenced paddocks on the Liverpool Plains. A fenced lambing paddock on ‘Burburgate’ holding (where J C Lloyd had replaced W C Wentworth as the licensee) was the first large paddock ever to be fenced in any part of Australia, according to Eric Rolls (1981: 166). Cf 1858.

1857:
First sale of town lands. - Longmuir correctly imagines the village as basically a group of slab huts. As he says, it was “a line of straggling cypress-pine slab huts along a bullock track beside the Namoi River, with just an odd slightly more pretentious but similar building serving as taverns, [and] bullock wagons drawn up on the common land nearby, [and] the glow of the camp fires of bearded teamsters … [B]eyond the rutted tracks of Maitland Street, with only a clearing here and there for a rude hut or two, dense scrub stretched towards the hills south of Gunnedah” (1956: 23, emphasis added) [Map 8].

c.1857:

\(^{100}\) SRNSW, Map 2877. His name was Flide, not ‘Hide’ as the Gunnedah Committee has it (1935: 9). This error is repeated in Longmuir (1956: 17).
'Red Kangaroo' of Gunnedah

Cuttabush kills Togee, a leading man of the Butheroo band (south of Coonabarabran). See Document 3E.

1858:
William Telfer junior wrote thus of the wild grassland of the Liverpool Plains in the era before paddocks were fenced off:
"In 1858 I saw grass on those plains [Breeza Plains] 10 feet [over three metres] high, which you don't see [these] days - now the country has been fenced in and overstocked - of the wild oaten variety - and a few inches from the ground. In the middle of this forest of long grass were wild carrots, crowsfoot and a splendid lot of herbage of all descriptions of the most fattening kind" (Telfer 1980: 128, emphasis added).

1859:
The post office ceases to be called 'The Woolshed'. The name Gunnedah is adopted, from the name of the pastoral station.

By 1860:
Gunnedah became a two-hotel village with the establishment of the Ben Bolt Inn, afterwards renamed the Bridge Hotel. Counting taverns, it seems there were at least four establishments serving alcohol.101

1860 or 1861:
Bora held at or near Wee Waa (Glass, quoted in Mathews 1994: 103).

101 Gunnedah Committee 1935: 17. But the booklet also quotes Surveyor Flide’s report of 1856, which spoke of four “hotels”, namely the Golden Fleece (Grover’s); the Ben Bolt (Smith’s); the Caledonian (Boland’s); and the Paragon (Mrs Nowland’s). Perhaps all four served alcohol while only two provided accommodation?
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

1861:
The Census shows 247 whites living at Gunnedah. Tamworth had 654 white people, and the Liverpool Plains, meaning broadly the whole Peel-Namoi basin, 4,852 whites (Milliss 1980: 306).

1861-1876:
First (failed) attempt to promote “closer settlement” under the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1861, commonly known as the ‘Free Selection Act’.

Individuals could purchase from 40 to 320 acres (16 to 130 hectares) of land for £1 [one pound] per acre, including land already held under pastoral leases. The Act had limited effect, however, because the squatters had sufficient capital to purchase the choicest areas from their leases and so could deny most ‘selectors’ the chance to buy any large pieces of good land. Cf 1884.

1862:
1. Private primary school opened at Gunnedah. Cf 1875.

2. Further serious flood.

1864:
1. The town's white population was about 300.

2. First church built: an Anglican Church; and also the first coach services (Longmuir, pp.27, 33). A four-horse coach service ran from Narrabri to Gunnedah and thence to the rail-head at Murrurundi. Another service ran three times a week from Gunnedah to Coonabarabran.

3. A great flood, the highest flood in the 19th century. Many of the buildings in Maitland Street were washed away.\(^{102}\)

\(^{102}\) The 1864 flood [9.44 metres] was the highest in the 19th century, exceeded only by the flood of 1955 [9.60 metres].
Retailers and others began thereafter to relocate from the flood-prone section along Maitland Street to the higher ground in Conadilly Street. As a result, Conadilly replaced Maitland Street as the main street by 1875.

“Prior to 1864 Conadilly Street was a thick scrub and allotments could be purchased for a mere £4. Carriers [had] built shanties there to house their families while they were outback with station supplies” (Gunnedah Committee 1935: 17, emphasis added). This is confirmed by the words “thickly timbered” on Gorman’s survey map of 1848 and by the statement in the Ewing MSS that “big box trees [grew] where the Wesleyan Church grounds now are” (Abbot Street) [Map 12].

1864-70:
Frederick Ward, the bushranger known as “Thunderbolt”, was active in the Hunter Valley-Tamworth-New England region. In one incident (1865) he robbed the patrons of the hotel at Carroll east of Gunnedah. A nearby hill with a prominent outcrop on top is called Thunderbolt Lookout.

A partial list of the crimes ascribed to Ward (NB: Gunnedah district only) is as follows. Manilla appears to have been a favourite striking point for ‘Thunderbolt’:

From February 1865: With John Hogan, William McIntosh and 16-year-old John Thomson, Ward commits a series of armed robberies around the Bourke and Narrabri districts. He adopts the name 'Captain Thunderbolt'. Then:
1865: Manilla - robbery of two horses from Messrs. Lloyd; Manilla - robbery of the Warialda mail; Currambula - robbery of Tamworth mail; Currambula - robbery of Davis hotel; Quirindi - robbery of Cook's hotel; Carroll - robbery of Griffin's hotel.
= 8 December 1865: Ward and gang hold up the town of Quirindi. Police Constable Agate was wounded in the ensuing gun-battle.


From http://groups.msn.com/ManillaHeritageMuseum/yourwebpage5.msnw.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

1866: Liverpool Plains - theft of Mr. Ross's horses; Liverpool Plains - robbery of Warialda mail; Liverpool Plains - robbery of Mr. Duff's Eucalyptus racer; Liverpool Plains - robbery of stations; Currabubula - robbery of hotel; Manilla - robbery of travelers; Manilla - robbery of Warialda-Tamworth mail; Manilla - robbery of Mr. Arndell’s Rocky Creek station; Manilla - theft of a grey racer of Mr. Cobcroft;

Ward’s common law wife was Mary Ann Bugg, a ‘half-caste’ Aboriginal woman. Despite having two children (and a third in March 1866) all evidence indicates that Mary Ann accompanied Ward and the gang on some of their depredations although she may not have been armed. Also, she seems to have been very adept at finding food and shelter for the gang in the mountainous terrain in which they concentrated most of their activities, including catching and butchering stolen cattle. She also seems adept at going into townships undetected to obtain supplies or information about police and coach movements as well as the latest gossip. Several reports describe her as looking like a young man wearing knee-length, Wellington boots, moleskin trousers, Crimean shirt, monkey jacket and a cabbage tree hat, the dress of the flash stockmen of the day (and at a time when women didn’t wear men’s clothing). Also, she rode astride and not sidesaddle.  

1867: Manilla - robbery of Warialda mail; Manilla - robbery of Hill's hotel; Manilla - robbery of Veness' Inn; Manilla - robbery of Bowden Mail; Manilla - robbery of Warialda mail.
25 May 1867: Reward of £200 offered for Ward's capture plus £50 for each of his accomplices. 
(1868-69: nil crimes in the Gunnedah region.)

1870: Manilla - robbery of Warialda mail; Manilla - theft of Mr. McDonald's horse. 25 May 1870: Ward commits several robberies near Blanch's Inn on the road south of Uralla. Ward was chased and caught by Police Constable Alexander Walker and killed in the ensuing fight.

c.1865:

Newly arrived in Gunnedah, Arthur Turner senior comes across “quite a number of marked stumps” [old carved trees] in the scrub or woodland on the south-east side of the village. Mentioning this to the villagers, he finds - as we would expect - that they have known about the Aboriginal burial ground for many years.

1866:
First bank branch opened at Gunnedah (Longmuir p.27).

1867:
Date of the watercolours by Anon. published in this book - see illustrations no’s 3, 4, 5.

1869:
Telegraph office opened at Gunnedah. - The telegraph has been described as "the Internet of the mid 19th century".

1870:
Manilla: Final robberies by Thunderbolt (see above).

Further flood. The Australian Town and Country Journal (Nov. 1873) reported that in 1870 the floodwaters lay along Maitland Street for six weeks after the flood.

Gunnedah’s white population was growing fairly rapidly, reaching about 500 in 1873. By 1891 the town would have 1,362 white people. The Aboriginal population was perhaps 50-60 in 1873 (cf 45 people in 1882).

1871:

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105 Australian Town and Country Journal Nov 1873; Census of Aborigines, in VPLA 1883; Longmuir 1956; Rolls 1981: 110; and Buchanan 1985: 19. Among residents of Gunnedah in 1866 was the present author’s great-grandfather, the saddler/sawyer John O’Rourke.
The missionary-anthropologist William Ridley visits Gunnedah and 'Burburgate' station. See the Bibliography for a list of his writings.

1874:
1. Further flood.

2. First timber reserves gazetted, in what is now Doona State Forest, south-east of Breeza. (The first State Forest as such came 40 years later: Breeza State Forest, dedicated in 1914.)

1875:
First public (state) school opened. Cf 1878/79.

1876:
First newspaper published, *The Namoi Independent*. A second paper, *The Gunnedah Advertiser*, was established in 1881. (They amalgamated in 1919.)

1878-79:
Catholic nuns (the Sisters of Mercy) establish a convent and school at Gunnedah.

1879:
1. Railway line built from Breeza to Gunnedah. Gunnedah railway station was opened on 11 September. (Until the Hawkesbury River rail bridge was built in 1889, trains ran only to Newcastle.)

2. Building of the courthouse; and the convent-school of the Sisters of Mercy.

3. First resident Methodist minister. The parsonage, today's Uniting Church, was built in 1880 - near the site of the old Aboriginal burial ground.

4. A new electorate called Gunnedah was created for the enlarged NSW Legislative Assembly of 1880. J P (later Sir Joseph) Abbott, a Murrurundi-based solicitor whose father had worked at Gunnedah as a
Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

land agent, held the seat until 1887. Abbott later became Speaker of the Assembly (1890-1900).

Gunnedah’s Aboriginal Population in 1882

The Aboriginal population of the district comprised 45 men, women and children:

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<td>1. Men:</td>
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<td>2. Women:</td>
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<td>3. Children and others under 20:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtotal:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part Aborigines, called &quot;half castes&quot;:</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Source: Police census 1882, taken for the Protector of Aborigines, published in Votes and Proceedings
of the Legislative Assembly of NSW 1883, vol. ii, pp. 901-02.

NB: The terms “full-bloods” and "half-castes" are the terms used in the 19th century; in using them, the present author in no way endorses them.

Points to notice:

- Anyone aged 52 or under was born in 1830 or later. Thus as many as 10, certainly at least four, people had been born before the coming of the white man.
- None of the 'half castes' was older than 40, i.e. all had been born since about 1842.
- Among people of full ancestry, men greatly outnumbered women. This is a demographic pattern consistently observed in 'post-invasion' populations in Australia. 106
- There were 10 women over 20, but just 11 people aged under 20 (teenagers and children). In other words, it would seem that the mothers who survived had only about one surviving child each.

The police in each area also supplied short answers to a questionnaire. The answers for Gunnedah, which Sergeant Ewing's predecessor would have supplied, were as follows:

Q: How are they [the local Aboriginal people] employed, if at all? A: "On cattle and sheep stations."

Judging by the answers for Breeza, the Aboriginal men of Gunnedah would have worked as general labourers, for example as shepherds and boundary riders. Perhaps one or two were skilled workers who may have received above average pay, for example bullock-drivers.

If in need of government aid, why? "No". - This may imply that every family at Gunnedah had some access to a monetary income.

106 See data and discussion in O'Rourke 1997: 223-225.
Any receiving education? "None". In some other towns in the region a tiny minority of mixed-blood children were attending public schools. This was at the beginning of the era of state-funded "secular, free and compulsory" primary education.

The questionnaire continued thus: - Supplied with Government blankets? "All supplied with blankets." - Any needing supply of clothing from the government? "No." - Any addicted to intemperance? "Yes, addicted to intemperance at wineshops and public houses." - How are they medically tended when sick? "By Govt doctor" [i.e. by Dr Haynes]. - Other remarks? "They are well employed and taken as much care of as possible by the squatters and selectors in this district."

The Aboriginal populations of neighbouring towns or police circuits were: Narrabri 150, Breeza 51, Coonabarabran 27, Carroll five and Boggabri three. Of the children at Narrabri, most did not attend school, but three were enrolled at the public school. As for Breeza, "many are employed shepherding, boundary riding and bullock-driving". Among the children at Breeza, just one individual was attending school. "All can be supplied with Government blankets by going to Gunnedah, but none has gone for them."

1884:
A new steel bridge replaced the old wooden bridge across the Namoi. It was called the Cohen Bridge in honour of George Cohen, the town’s leading shopkeeper since 1861.

1884-1900:
“Free selection” or closer settlement began in earnest. Under a new Land Act, large parts of the
great squatting runs were carved out and sold in blocks to small graziers and farmers.¹⁰⁷

- The Member for Gunnedah, J P Abbott, was at this time the NSW Secretary (minister) for Mines.

1885:
Gunnedah was proclaimed a municipality. The white population of the town exceeded 1,000.

- The Member for Gunnedah, J P Abbott, was at this time the Secretary (minister) for Lands.

1887:
Red Kangaroo’s grave dug up. This is related in Document 3A, “The 1945 Letter” and Document 3B, “The Death and Career”.

1888:
1. First Gunnedah Show.

2. Tamworth became the first town in the southern hemisphere to be lit by electric lights. Coal from Gunnedah powered the power-station. Compare 1891 and 1908.

In 1888, after a century of white settlement, the whole Aboriginal population of NSW had fallen to just 7,485. It had now begun, at first imperceptibly,

¹⁰⁷ For example, the present author’s grandfather, James N O’Rourke, purchased a ‘selection’ east of Tambar Springs. It was a tiny part of a large excision from the great ‘Bando’ station (and adjoined another old squatterage: ‘Merrigula’).
to stabilise as the number of births rose to about equal the number of deaths. In the following decade (by 1898), the population would begin very slowly to rise as the number of babies being born began - for the first time since the "white invasion" - to exceed the number of old and young people dying.

In 1888 only 1,386 (or 19%) received any food ("rations") or other aid from the NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB). Most people were self-supporting, relying on wages or bush food or perhaps their own vegetable gardens and stock (or all of these).

The police census counted 2,954 Aboriginal people aged under 20 in the colony of NSW. The APB reported that 379 were attending school. If about 1,000 were of statutory school age, then the attendance rate in 1888 was perhaps greater than one in three. This was a quite respectable proportion, given that a network of free public schools was still being established. By 1896 (see there), schooling for Aborigines, as for whites, was effectively universal.

There was no population figure published for Gunnedah, but we would expect the number of Aborigines, including mixed-race people, to be about 30 (compare 1882 above and 1896 below). The APB reported that four adults at Gunnedah received "aid", meaning some food rations, in 1888. The other 26 or so people would have supported themselves with wages and bush food.

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108 Annual census of Aborigines, taken by the police for the Aborigines Protection Board (APB), published in VPLA 1889, vol 5, p.656. There are counts of the Aboriginal population for most years from 1885 to 1915 and beyond (published as appendices to the annual reports of the APB in VPLA).

In 1888 the picture was somewhat complicated by the movement of people into and out of NSW on the Queensland, Victoria and South Australian borders, as the Board itself noted. The total fell from 7,902 people in 1887 to 7,485 in 1888, but such movements masked a small underlying increase.
1888-1890:
Approximate date that Police Sergeant J P Ewing wrote down, or began to write down, Joe Bungaree’s tale about Red Kangaroo’s ‘greatest exploit’, the defeat of the Cassilis raiders (see Document 3B, MS Page 34; also 3D: Fragment 1). As it appears, other tales were written down by the Sergeant’s son Stanley in the period 1901-11.

1890s:
Early highpoint of the “land rush” by ‘free selectors’:

Wheat growing expanded dramatically during the 1890s: wheat acreage in NSW stood at 420,000 in 1890, more than trebling to 1.4 million acres or 570,000 hectares by 1901. But it was not until 1923 that NSW would overtake South Australia and Victoria as the leading wheat-growing state.

The extension of the railways was a necessary but not sufficient condition. The development of rust-resistant varieties by William Farrer and others, and the use of superphosphates, were also vital (see Bromby 1986: 95-97).

Land clearing would lead to the near extinction of the koala in the period 1898-1925. Evidently small remnant populations survived in the Milroy-Wandoba Forest and probably also in Black Jack State Forest [Map 10]. Koala numbers have grown in recent decades and Gunnedah is sometimes styled “the koala capital of the world”.109

1891:
1. First street lamps at Gunnedah: kerosene lamps were installed at four intersections.

109 Smith 1992. Today the koala population around Gunnedah is considered one of the most significant populations in NSW. Koalas may be seen at Gunnedah itself on the Bindeva Walking Track and in the last decade or so have been regularly sighted in the township itself, including (conveniently for tourists) opposite the Visitor Information Centre (Curran pers. comm. 2002).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

2. Gunnedah’s white population was 1,362 people; and the Aboriginal population was 30 or 38 (see discussion below). At Coonabarabran, or at least in the Coonabarabran district, Aborigines and part-Aborigines numbered about 45.\(^\text{110}\)

**Gunnedah’s Aboriginal population in 1891**

The counts of the Aboriginal population made for the APB can be compared with the returns from the 1891 general census of NSW, the first (since that of 1841) for which the full returns have survived.

The data collected by the collectors in 1891 was quite limited. They recorded the name of household head; number of males; number of females; and location of the dwelling. The ages and relationships of people were not recorded. But, which is helpful for our purposes, people were classified into three racial categories: whites, Chinese (or part Chinese) and Aboriginal (full and "half-caste").

There were 11 households at Gunnedah with at least one Aboriginal person: 30 persons in total. That the census was a full count is not to be doubted: every inhabited house or shack was recorded as such.\(^\text{111}\)

All 30 Aborigines are recorded as "half castes", meaning (probably) that the collectors considered that all had at least some European blood, or else they failed to distinguish a few individuals (such as Joe Bungaree) who were "full bloods".\(^\text{112}\)

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\(^{110}\) Wood 2001: 211, citing a report of 1891. The context was a proposal for the establishment of an all-Aboriginal school, so we may guess that "45" took in those Aboriginal people within a few hours’ ride of the town. The census figures from 1891 put the district population a little larger.

\(^{111}\) Census of NSW, Collectors returns, Book no 55: NLA mfm G.22629.

\(^{112}\) The APB figures report a majority of "full bloods" and a minority of "half-castes" at Gunnedah in the period 1880-1900. "Full blood" is perhaps to be interpreted as people having more than 50% Aboriginal ancestry in the opinion of the APB agent,
Of the 11 households, six were "mixed" and five were all-Aboriginal (all members "half castes"). In the case of the six mixed households, it would appear that five were headed by non-Aboriginal men: three by white men or 'Anglos'; one by a Chinese man; and one by a Japanese man [the latter case is noted as such in the Remarks column of the census form]. The sixth household contained no white males, and so (probably) was headed by an Aboriginal man: a white woman was living in a dwelling with five "half caste" Aboriginal men, one of whom we may presume was her husband. These six households all resided in the town itself (Maitland Street, Conadilly Street and Chandos Street).

The five all-Aboriginal households were smaller and more heterogeneous. In the town proper there was one household of two females (presumably mother and daughter) and one Aboriginal woman who was living alone. Two households (a single man, and a household of three people headed by a woman) were living "on [the] Reserve". This meant probably a stock reserve, as there were also several "all-white" families residing at the "reserve". The two all-Aboriginal households there were probably a single family living in two dwellings, as the names of the two household heads were the same. The fifth and final all-Aboriginal household was made up of a male and a female living "south of [the] railway".

In addition there were several mixed families (and indeed several all-white families) living outside the municipal boundaries on the "Gunnedah Common" on the Boggabri side of the town. If we add the Aboriginal members of these households, the total in and around the town recorded as "half caste" becomes 38 people.

namely Sergeant Ewing. Ewing also served as the "enumerator" (supervisor) for the general census, but the collectors working for him were other (white) townspeople.
Interestingly, there is no sign in these records that there was any large "blacks' camp" at Gunnedah, notwithstanding Stan Ewing’s allusion to one in Document 3B at MS Page 4: "somewhere in the vicinity of where the municipal sale yards are today". Or was this a reference to the Aboriginal people living on the Common? - At any rate, from the census we have a picture of 11 Aboriginal families or households living integrated in and around the town. (It should be noted that the policy of confining darker-skinned people to Aboriginal reserves and forcing lighter skinned people to live elsewhere was a policy not instigated until after 1900.)

Joe Bungaree does not appear as the head of any household. But only the name of the self-identified household head was taken, and he may have been counted elsewhere. Jacob Painter [mentioned in Document 3A] is recorded as the nominal head of a household of two Aboriginal males living outside the municipal boundaries on the Mullaley side of Gunnedah ("no fixed abode", camped at or near "Sugarloaf"). It is possible that the second male was Joe Bungaree.

Aboriginal Population of the Greater Gunnedah District

The census district of Gunnedah extended east towards Carroll, south-east to beyond Curlewis and in the south-west to beyond Tambar Springs. There were altogether 41 Aboriginal ("half caste") people living in the district (or 31 if we subtract the several people at Gunnedah Common and Jacob Painter's two-person camp). They lived mostly in single households on or near several pastoral stations. So we may guess the men were employed by the pastoralists.

c. 1885-95:
(Before 1896:) Small reserves, i.e. residential lands, for Aborigines were set aside at Gunnedah, Borah Crossing [Manilla], Narrabri, Wee Waa, Cuttabri and Pilliga.

1896:
The Aboriginal population of Gunnedah fell from 45 people in 1882 to 30-38 in 1891 and just 17 in 1896. We may guess that, in the following table, the lone "full blood" man aged over 60 was Joe Bungaree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Aged under 20</th>
<th>20-40</th>
<th>40-60</th>
<th>Over 60</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. &quot;Full-bloods&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women:</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and teenagers:</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtotal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. &quot;Half-castes&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and teenagers:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtotal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The same report records that just four of the 17 people at Gunnedah were receiving aid from the
Board. Supplementary "rations" and some clothing were provided to four (of 11) adults at an annual cost of £26 10s 1d [about 30 pence per person, or less than three shillings, per week]. We may guess that the other seven adults had some access to wage income (and no doubt "free" bush foods). The six children or teenagers presumably belonged to the self-supporting families.

Medical expenses paid at Gunnedah by the APB were 10 shillings (the number receiving medical attention was not reported).

The Aboriginal populations of the other towns or districts in the region were: Coonabarabran 44; Manilla 36; Baradine 27; Narrabri 25; Boggabri 23; Werris Creek 20; Tamworth two people; and Tambar Springs one person.

No separate total was given for Breeza, but it is stated that three adults and five children there received aid. Presumably they were counted as part of either the Gunnedah or the Werris Creek populations.\textsuperscript{113}

\begin{center}
\textbf{In the whole colony of NSW there were altogether just 6,984 Aborigines in 1896, down from 7,485 in 1888. The population of Aborigines of full ancestry was still falling: 3,503 "full-bloods" in 1896, down from 3,660 in 1895. They still slightly outnumbered the now rising population of mixed ancestry: 3,481 people, up from 3,386 in 1895.}\textsuperscript{114}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{113} The census was taken by each police station. Thus the figure does not necessarily mean the town. At a guess, the "Baradine" figure included Cuttabri reserve and "Werris Creek" included Quirindi-Wallahlow.

\textsuperscript{114} 1896 figures, published in VPLA 1897. Taking the whole of NSW, there were 1,217 full-blood males aged 20-60 in 1896. With only 79 full-ancestry births, this means that fully 1,138 potentially fertile men - more than nine in every 10 - failed to father a child during 1896. No doubt there were psycho-social factors at
The 1896 census of Aborigines in the colony recorded 2,997 "children" (including teenagers, i.e. aged 19 and younger), of whom 1,033 were "full-bloods" and 1,964 (66%) "half-castes".

We may guess that about 1,000 were of school age. The Board reported that 690 children were attending school: 564 at government schools and 126 at "private" schools, the latter presumably mostly at Catholic schools.115 Thus it is clear that primary schooling among Aborigines (at 70% or more) was not too far from universal at this time. See also entry below for 1899-1929.

1896-1912:
The NSW Aborigines Protection Board set up supervised estates or 'Aboriginal Stations'.

The people on these so-called 'missions' came under the control of NSW government officials. There was also a large number of old and new 'reserves', where small groups of Aborigines camped free of supervision, except for the irregular control exercised by the police and any employers of casual labour.116 The reserves were just small portions set aside for Aborigines: parcels of land not available to white farmer-selectors.

work (not seeing the point of having children in a "cruel white-man's world"). But probably the more important reason was biological: disease, especially venereal disease, had rendered many men and women unable to produce children.

The number of "half-caste" births in 1896 was 153. Of course, because some or even many women would have had white partners (but probably very few men had white wives or partners), it is not possible to calculate the actual fertility of "half-caste" men.

There were also all-Aboriginal schools on a few of the larger "managed" reserves known as 'Aboriginal Stations'.

Local police sergeants exercised de facto control until 1909, and were formally appointed as "Guardians of Aborigines" under the Aborigines Protection Act of that year. The local police station continued to serve as the ration point for people living on reserves (Horner 1974, Chapter One).
In the central-north, the first APB-managed ‘station’ was Caroona (Walhallow), near Quirindi, gazetted in 1896. It was followed by Burra Bee Dee near Coonabarabran, 1910; Sevington near Inverell, also 1910; Terry Hie Hie, 1912; Euraba (Old Kunopia), 1912; and Angledool.

By 1896 there were altogether 110 Aboriginal reserves across NSW, some large and many quite small. The average size was 230 acres or 93 hectares [APB data in VPLA 1897]. On the Namoi River there were reserves were at Borah Crossing [Manilla], Gunnedah, Narrabri, Wee Waa, Cuttabri and Pilliga.\(^\text{117}\)

1899-1900:
Extensive coal mining begun by the Gunnedah Colliery Company (coal had first been discovered during the sinking of a well in 1877).

1899-1929:
This was a difficult period for Aborigines and people of mixed Aboriginal-white descent.

It was believed that 'full-blood' Aborigines would, over a generation or two, die out. For their part, the people of mixed blood were expected to adopt a lifestyle identical to that of white citizens. So the NSW Government pursued a policy (see under 1909) of restricting "full-bloods" to living on the reserves and forcing away people of mixed descent, expecting or hoping that the latter would "merge" into white society. As part of this program, many of the smaller reserves were abolished during and after World War One.

On the other hand, however, white society itself was frequently, indeed almost universally, hostile to anyone with Aboriginal ancestry. In many country towns white parents began to exert pressure on state schools not to enrol Aboriginal

\(^\text{117}\) Goodall 1996. I have not been able to trace when the Gunnedah reserve was established (presumably some time in the early 1890s).
and part-Aboriginal children. Catholic schools continued to take in Aboriginal children, but after 1900 many received little or no schooling. This further undermined their desire and ability to make their way in the wider society.  

1906:
First telephone exchange at Gunnedah.

1908:
1. Flood.
2. Electricity generating station built at Gunnedah: electric streetlights replaced kerosene street lamps. Also a reticulated water supply was installed (Gunnedah Committee 1935: 35).

1909-10:
The NSW Parliament passed the Aborigines Protection Act (1909) and associated Regulations (1910). For the first time, the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) had statutory power to enforce its policies.

Under the Act, people of mixed ancestry were not defined as 'Aborigines' unless they were residing on a reserve or had applied for or were in receipt of rations or aid from the Board. In other words, those part-Aborigines who were able to support themselves were free from the control of the APB. At the same time, however, the Act empowered the Board to "move on" anyone at all having any degree of Aboriginal ancestry.

The government's aim was to sever any connection between ‘full-bloods’ and people of mixed ancestry. The policy was forcefully implemented under the regime of Robert Donaldson, the "feared and hated" CEO of the

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118 See discussion in Horner 1974 and Goodall 1996. Readers interested in the human, or rather: inhumane, impact of these policies are referred to the autobiography of James Barker, Two Worlds, 1977.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Board from 1915 to 1929 (as Horner tags him: 1974, chapter one).

1910:
Major flood on the Namoi, the second highest in the 20th century, exceeded only by that of 1955. The floodwaters were about 25 kilometres [15 miles] wide at or near Gunnedah.119

1911:

1914:
Breeza State Forest was the first to be dedicated in the Gunnedah region. Wondoba [sic] State Forest followed in 1918.

1914-1927:
As noted earlier, the Aborigines Protection Board revoked or leased out many of the small Aboriginal reserves.

Most of the larger supervised estates or 'Aboriginal Stations' continued, including Caroona [Quirindi], Burra Bee Dee [Coonabarabran], Pilliga, Moree and Gingie [Walgett]. They were maintained into the era of ‘welfare’, in the 1940s, when the Aborigines Protection Board became a partly Aboriginal-elected Welfare Board (the AWB) (see Goodall 1996).

2.4 The Griffin, Cain and Orr Families of Coonabarabran and Gunnedah

Two Aboriginal women, “Jinnie” Griffin and “Old Maggie”, figure prominently in the documents.

“Jinnie” (Jane or Jenny) Griffin is the main character in Document 3E and the narrator of the tale of how the Cassilis men attacked the Coonabarabran people. This occurred in about 1830 when she was a child.

Old Maggie is mentioned as a main informant of Dr Haynes of Gunnedah, the man who dug up Red Kangaroo’s grave in 1887.

The birth-date of “Jinnie” Griffin is not known with certainty, but it was probably around 1826. (A genealogical source says “1822.”) She married in about 1840 and had a (second) daughter in 1844.

Mrs Griffin is described as “a full blooded Aboriginal” who was brought up in the Mudgee area by the pioneer Cox family, or perhaps by an employee of theirs. This may imply that she belonged to the Wiradjuri people, but this is not certain. In the later 1820s-early 1830s the Coxes set up several stations in the direction of Coonabarabran. It cannot be ruled out that Jinnie was, by birth, a Kamilaroi woman. Indeed she related the tale of the raid on Coonabarabran by the Cassilis men (in 1830 or earlier, perhaps around 1827) in terms that seem to imply she belonged to the Coonabarabran country (“we”, “our”: see Document 3E). It may also be relevant that her daughter, Mary Jane Griffin Cain, knew the meanings of both Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri place-names. Mary Jane herself was born at ‘Toorawandi’ station near Coonabarabran, just inside Kamilaroi country.

Based on Mrs Cain’s account, Marilyn Wood has suggested that Jinnie moved with the Coxes or their

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121 Place names: Cain 1922. Marilyn Wood (2001: 208) rather too confidently supposes that Jinnie was an orphan of the “war” of the mid 1820s between the colonists and the Wiradjuri (which ranged over the triangle Bathurst-Mudgee-Wellington). This is possible but by no means certain. The fact is: we do not know.
employees to the south-west Liverpool Plains probably in the 1830s.

Jinnie married an Irishman Eugene Griffin [variously ‘Griffis’ or ‘Griffith’, 1801-1860] in Muswellbrook in about 1840. They already had a daughter (Sarah, born 1838). Griffin had arrived in the region as an assigned convict, working initially for the squatter Hayes at ‘Belar’ station south of Coonabarabran. Having married Jinnie, Griffin sometimes worked as a hawker trading goods along the line Maitland to Coonabarabran. At other times he and Jinnie did pastoral work on various stations in that sector.

The date of their marriage is confirmed by her daughter, Mary Jane Griffin Cain, who mentions an encounter between her newly wedded parents and the bushranger known as ‘the Jew Boy’ (Edward Davis, hanged 1841). Davis’s gang was active in the Tamworth-Quirindi-Muswellbrook region during 1840.

Jinnie and Eugene Griffin were working for James Hale at ‘Bomera’ run near present-day Tambar Springs in the early 1840s. Evidently they moved to J B Bettington’s nearby holding ‘Toorawandi’ (between Tambar Springs and Coonabarabran) by 1844. At any rate their daughter, Mary Jane Griffin (later Cain) [1844-1929], was born at ‘Toorawandi’ in 1844.

After a period at ‘Toorawandi’ station, the Griffins returned to ‘Bomera’ in the 1850s. The birth-places of their children are a guide to their movements: Sarah 1838-1873: birthplace unknown; died Wandobah; Mary Jane 1844-1929: born at ‘Toorawandi’ station; Ellen 1849-?: born at ‘Bomera’ station; Margaret 1851-1904: born at Binnie Mountain (near Quirindi); and Eliza Griffin Allan 1858-1913: born at Coonabarabran.

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Their second daughter Mary Jane married a white worker named Joseph Budsworth, in the late 1850s when she was aged about 14. Joseph and Mary's second child, James Budsworth, was born at Coonabarabran in 1860.

Budsworth senior died, however, and in 1865 Mary Jane remarried: to "Yellow George" [George William] Cain, a white workman employed at 'Weetaliba' station near Coolah.

Jinnie Griffin too may have been living at Coonabarabran by the late 1850s. At any rate Document 3E has her there by the early 1870s. She is described as the "consort of King Cuttabush of the Coonabarabran blacks", the words "king" and "consort" simply meaning that the couple were the patriarch and matriarch of the "small band" of Aborigines (27 people) living at Coonabarabran. (Eugene Griffin had died in 1860.).

As recorded in Document 3E, Jane "Jinnie" Griffin died in 1882, when her daughter Mary Jane was aged 38. Jinnie herself would have been about 56.125

* * *

The identity of "Old Maggie" is rather less certain.

In Document 3E it is stated that “there was another daughter Margaret [by implication: another daughter of Eugene and Jinnie Griffin] - once of Garrawilla Station - who fell on evil days with the passing of the Orr regime at Garrawilla. Margaret, or Mag as she was known for many years around
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Gunnedah, eventually finished up at her camp on the Namoi - near the Burrell water hole. = had 3 children, Emma Orr, Georgie Griffin & ... [illegible].126

This passage would seem to be describing Margaret Griffin (1851-1904: born at Binnie Mountain west of Quirindi; died Gunnedah). As it appears, some of her children took the name Orr (after their father) while her later children took her birth-name, Griffin - no doubt because their white father (a subsequent partner of Mag's) did not wish to recognise them.

The Orr brothers, James and Ebenezer, had first arrived in the region in the late 1840s, taking work as stockmen on 'Borah' holding north-east of Coonabarabran. In 1852 they took over the grazing licence for the station and became self-employed. Ebenezer later transferred his grazing licence to 'Yaminba' and 'Garrawilla', two other stations to the north-east of Coonabarabran, or about half-way to Gunnedah.

Mary Jane Griffin Cain mentions how the Orrs relied on Aboriginal labour when most white workers departed during the Gold Rushes of the 1850s.127

If we follow Eric Rolls (in A Million Wild Acres), Ebenezer Orr was living with "two" Aboriginal women, at 'Garrawilla' in the 1860s. One was named Betsy. The other, one imagines, was a very young (teenage) Margaret Griffin, although this is not stated.

The Coonabarabran historian Joy Pickette informs me that the Orr family adopted the natural Aboriginal children of Ebenezer Orr, namely Jane

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126 Emphasis added. Pickette and Campbell (1984: 45) mention a Jane and a Mary as the daughters of Ebenezer Orr “and his favourite dusky shepherdess of the time”. This claim follows Rolls 1981: 172, who unfortunately does not cite his sources. He speaks of Mary, Ebenezer Orr’s daughter, marrying a man called Cain.

Orr and Mary Orr. In addition by 1873 there was a white daughter, Ethel Orr, born in that year to Ebenezer's white wife, Tryphena.

The "passing" of the Orr regime at 'Garrawilla' came with Ebenezer Orr's death in 1874. Presumably "Mag" Griffin moved to Gunnedah thereafter (or possibly earlier, noting that in 1869 Ebenezer had married a white woman, Tryphena Bird). Certainly "Mag" was living at Gunnedah in the period 1882-92.

The Sydney Mail (Document 1) states that "the story of Cumbo has been drawn piecemeal from Old Maggie, who is now about 91 years old, and others who verify it". "Now" would mean either 1887, the year that Ganuurru's grave was dug up, or 1891, the dateline of the article in the Sydney Mail.

If Maggie really was 91, then she was born in either 1796 or 1800. If, however, as Document 3E implies, she was the sister of Mary Jane Griffin Cain's sister, then Maggie had been born in 1851. That would have made her at most 36 when Haynes dug up Red Kangaroo's grave (or 40, calculating to 1891). (Document One, para. 19 speaks of "blackfellows' way of counting". Now 91 divided by

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128 Conversation 1.11.2001 with Joy Pickette. Eric Rolls states that Mary, the younger of Ebenezer Orr's mixed-race daughters, married a man called Cain. This is difficult to follow unless there were two men named Cain, one who married Mary Jane Griffin and another who married Mary Orr. (This is not impossible: a Thomas Cain, "settler" at Coonabarabran, is listed in Greville's Post Office Directory for 1872.)

129 Rolls 1981: 160, 166, 172, 173. Pickette and Campbell (1984: 45) add that Ebenezer Orr and "his favourite dusky shepherdess of the time" had two daughters Jane and Mary. But the source for this is Rolls.

"Died 1874": as shown in the State records, death no. 66/1874: Orr Ebenezer, son of James and Sarah. The only child of Ebenezer to appear in the BDM records is Ethel M Orr [1873-1886], daughter of Ebenezer or "Eben" and Tryphena or "Trophina" Orr [sic: Tryphena was a not uncommon woman's name in the later 19th century]. 'Eben' Orr had married 'Trophina' Bird in 1869 (marriage no. 1159).
two gives 45.5; and added to 1851 45.5 years yields 1896, which is near enough to the date of Maggie’s death: unfortunately we have no record of half a whitefellows’ year constituting a blackfellows’ year ...

Much is obscure here, and it is to be hoped that future researchers will be able to clear up the story.

3. ASPECTS OF CULTURE

3.1 Material Culture in the Ewing Papers

The Ewing Papers generally confirm what we know from other sources about Aboriginal clothes, tools and equipment.

There are one or two details that are new. Especially interesting is a unique and obviously authentic listing of the contents of a woman’s dillybag.

Items used by both men and women:

- Possum-skin robes; and water-bags or so-called ‘water gourds’ made of sewn animal skin.
- Possum-skin robes were often large: “The possum rug [will be] rolled about stick[s] tied in bundles, or about grass, to look like a man wrapped in his possum rug asleep [by] the dead fires. At each man-like form in its possum rug, a spear will stand upright in the ground” (Document 3C, “The Cassilis Raid”, MS Page 11).  

Used by men:

- Spears for hunting and for war; woomeras (“wommerahs”); shields; boomerangs of various
Red Kangaroo of Gunnedah

kinds, including the “heavy war boomerang”; waddies and nulla-nullas; and “tomahawks” (stone hatchets). Evidently a distinction was made between the tools of war and of hunting: the text at one stage speaks of men “being unarmed for war, only having their hunting weapons with them”.

Men wore a wide girdle woven from animal hair, from which their hatchet was suspended in an animal-hide “carrier” (see “The Death and Career”, Document 3B, MS Page 26).

Used by women:

Yam sticks; large and small plaited bags; needles; and grinding mills:

i. Yam sticks: of hard wood, about 1.5 metres long, used as a digging tool, staff and weapon (Document 3C, MS Page 13; and 3B, MS Page 35).

ii. Large plaited bags: described variously as a ‘game-bag’ or “pack” slung across the shoulders; “bark-plaited bags slung across shoulders”; and “bark- or rushes-plaited game-bags”.

iii. Small plaited bags, namely the familiar dilly-bag: “a dilly bag contains many useful things for an Aboriginal woman: needles of bone; wood; sewing thread of hair; bark; sinews of animals; tying cords of animal hide; flint knives; tinder to dust on her two


132 No doubt there were many types of bags used for many purposes. Curr’s informants list names for just two types (1887: III, 305).
fire-stick[s] as she rubs them together; balls of clay wetted and used to put over a wound; and many other things” (from “The Cassilis Raid”, Document 3C, MS Page 5).

iv. Needles made from fish bones, kangaroo and emu bone: mentioned as prized by white collectors in the later 1800s.

v. Stone seed-grinding mills: also collectors’ items.

3.2 Kinship and the Naming System

To understand the system of names in use among the Gamilaraay, it is useful to start with our own Western or English naming system.

In our society, ‘John Andrew Smith’ has three names: two are given names (John and Andrew: chosen by his parents, who sometimes will choose his paternal grandfather’s given name). The third of course is a family name inherited from his father.

He is variously called ‘Mr Smith’ or ‘John’ or ‘Uncle’.

I might call him ‘Mr Smith’ if he is an older man and only distantly related to me or not related at all. I would call him ‘John’ if we had a close relationship as equals or presumed equals. Or I could call him ‘Uncle’ if he happened to be my mother’s brother. But in our society there are other kin terms that we do not use as forms of address. Mothers’ sons do not call each other “brother”, except in jest or sarcasm. “Brother” is, for us, a dead or dying form of address: so moribund that even the members of Masonic lodges and trade unions no longer call each other ‘brother’. As for ‘sister’, even the feminists have failed to revive that noble title.

Turning to Aboriginal society, we may take as an example our Gunnedah Big Man, ‘Red Kangaroo’ or Kambu Kanuurru. Like all the Gamilaraay, he bore
'Red Kangaroo' of Gunnedah

three names: a section name (his was Gambu); a matri-clan or totem name (his was Ganuurr or Ganuurru, 'red kangaroo'); and a personal name or sobriquet which unfortunately has not survived in our sources. The section name was inherited from his maternal grandmother; the totem name was inherited from his mother; and his sobriquet was acquired or ascribed (often from an incident or event occurring when the person in question was a baby). Section and totem names are further explained below.

To call Red Kangaroo by his (unrecorded) personal name was very intimate, whereas to use 'Gambu' or 'Ganuurru' was fairly neutral (many others also bore these names). More often he would have been called 'Brother' or 'Uncle' or 'Cousin', not only by his actual sisters or nieces or cousins, but also by his classificatory kin: people who, via section and matri-clan connections, were his notional or ascribed relatives. His ‘brothers’ might...

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133 The largest of living marsupials, the plains kangaroo, Macropus rufus (formerly Megaleia rufa). In Gamilaraay red kangaroo was Kanuurr or Ganuurr; also “bawurra”. Various renditions as ‘cannoor’ (Breton 1834); ‘ganoor’ (Greenway SM 1910: 76) and ‘ganu:r’ (Ridley). The suffix +ah in “Gunnerah” (Document 1) may have indicated the locative-dative case (+a): hence Ganuurr, ‘at/from/in the red kangaroo’ or perhaps the ergative-instrumental case +u, Ganuurru.

134 Three names including a sobriquet or nickname: Ridley 1875: 163, 267. Ridley 1875 gives the following examples of names (section name first, totem name second, personal name third – NB: his spellings): Murri Bundar Ngumera-Gunaga (“Old Billy” of ‘Burburgate’); Murri Bundar Gungguele (“Gungguele” meaning “charcoal”); Murri Ganurr Yawirawira; and Murri Duli Wagura. A further example is given in Ash et al. 2003: Mrs Ginny Rose, a Yuwwaaliyaay woman, born in 1880, was given the name Dhaay-galiyawaay, literally ‘this way-climbing’, an allusion to the rising floodwaters at the time of her birth.

135 Totems and totem names are explained in O’Rourke, Kamilaroi Lands 1997. See earlier Coxen 1866, Ridley 1875 and Mathews 1895c on Kamilaroi names; and Howitt 1904: 737 ff for south-east Australia generally.
be true or ‘close’ brothers. Or they might be distant, classificatory brothers, not unlike the union or lodge mates of our exemplar John A Smith.

Two Moieties and Four Sections

‘Moiety’ is the anthropologist’s term for the two widest categories into which Aborigines divided all natural phenomena, animate and inanimate. Because literally everything was so classified, we may call them “cosmographic” divisions.

The Kamilaroi moieties, as we know from the early settler Cyrus Doyle, were Dhibay (‘dilbi’) and Gubadhin (‘kupathin’).136 A human being or any other living thing belonged to one moiety or the other, never to both.

Each moiety was further divided into two, creating four ‘sections’. In northern Australia, sections are sometimes called, in English, ‘skin groups’. They were additional categories or subcategories into which nature and culture alike were divided “so as to give formal and systematic order to the world”. Each man, woman and child belonged by birth to one section and only one.137

The names of the four Kamilaroi sections took a masculine form for men and boys and a feminine form for women and girls:

i. Masculine gambu (‘kumbo’, ‘combo’) = feminine buudhaa (‘butha’, ‘booda’);

ii. Masc. yibaay (‘ipai’, ‘hippi’) = fem. yibadhaa (‘ipatha’, ‘hippithaa’);

iii. Masc. gabii (‘kubi’, ‘coppa’) = fem. gabudhaa (‘kubbitha’, ‘coppethaa’); and

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136 Howitt South-East Australia 1904: 104, citing Cyrus E Doyle of Moree.

‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah


Here, as earlier, “dh” represents a sound not found in English. It resembled the ‘dth’ sound in English “hid them”. Thus *madhaa* sounded like English ‘mud thar’ without the final ‘r’.

Membership of a section was inherited from the mother, but indirectly. A person’s section was the same as his or her maternal grandmother’s. For example, a grandmother of *Buudhaa* section would have a daughter of *Yibadhaa* section; her son (the grandson) would be *Gambu* (the male equivalent of his grandmother’s *Buudhaa*).

**The Totemic “Clans”**

In anthropology ‘clan’ is a technical term for descent groups (real or notional descent lines). Each descent line took its name and identity from a totem, usually an animal or plant species, such as ‘Grey Kangaroo’, ‘Bandicoot’, ‘Brolga’, ‘Wood-duck’, ‘Catfish’ or ‘Cypress Pine’.

The word ‘clan’ must not be read to imply that the Kamilaroi clans were localised units. On the contrary, in inland NSW the totemic clans were notional matrilineal descent lines, with representatives throughout the region: “The people of any given locality are not all of the same totem, nor are the people of any one ... totem collected in

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\(^\text{138}\) Preferred spellings as in Ash et al. 2003; except for *gambu* (long uu is preferred by Ash et al. (Austin 1993 analysed certain vowels differently.) Fison remarked that “The Kamilaroi class [Section] names were first published, I believe, by the Rev W Ridley, MA, whose attention had been called to them by Mr T E Lance [i.e., before 1871]” (Lorimer Fison in Fison & Howitt 1880: 37n).

Ridley, letters to Col. Sec. 1871-73, explained that the name of the section, *marrii* - second vowel long, was quite distinct from the word for ‘person, human being, people’, *mari* (‘murri’) - second vowel short. The r’s were also different: rr = trill alveolar r; r = plain or retroflex r.
the same locality". There were (or could be) Bandicoot women and Bandicoot men at Walgett and Bandicoot women and Bandicoot men at Gunnedah.

Because the recognised line of descent was matrilineal, and because marriage within one’s own matri-line or clan was forbidden, fathers and sons belonged to distinct clans. A woman of the Ganuurru (Red Kangaroo) totem had a son (and daughter) of the same totem; the boy’s father would belong to a different totem.

The latter-day Gamil’raay people, when they had learnt English, chose ‘meat’ to translate their term for a clan or totem (Gamilaraay dhii, ‘meat, flesh, kin, relation, totem species, matri-clan’). Not that the totem was food (yuri, ‘meat food’). On the contrary, to eat one’s totem was anathema. Rather, the idea being rendered by ‘meat’ was that of ‘body’ or ‘flesh’ in the sense of totem-body.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN TRADITIONS

Fison and Howitt 1885; also Mathews, Kamilaroi class system 1895c: 20. Non-anthropologists often apply the term ‘clan’ to residential groupings. Anthropologists use ‘clan’ for the kinship grouping, and prefer other terms such as ‘band’ for residential groupings. ‘Clan’, then, is the modern anthropological term for a real or notional descent line, either matrilineal or patrilineal. Fison and Howitt themselves had used it to label patrilineal local groups (cf Hiatt 1996: 21).

Clan as “meat”: Taylor and Jardine 1924: 279; Dunbar 1943; and Elkin 1945a. Ash et al. distinguish the noun dhii ‘meat, totem, animal’ from –dhi, the kinship or possessor suffix, but probably they were the same (i.e. dhii)

The sky-god Baayama (“Baiame”) was the source of all totems: every part of his body, even the fingers and toes, had a totem name, and he gave a totem to sets of people as he departed (proceeding on his mythic travels). His wife Birrang-ulu likewise retained all the totems on or in parts of her body. So all the matri-clans claimed her as kin (Parker 1905: 7).
4.1 Oral Traditions: Religion, History, Entertainment

In Aboriginal societies, as in other ‘traditional societies’, everyone had some basic understanding of the group’s and their own family’s past. The knowledge was contained in songs, spoken tales and anecdotes. There were songs and tales of all kinds: stories about tricksters and malignant spirits, tales of love and amorous adventure, stories of feuds and killings.

It is not possible to sort the songs and tales neatly into discrete categories such as religious versus secular, or historical versus non-historical. Some tales would have dealt with the doings of one’s immediate ancestors, e.g. one’s own grandfather(s). Other tales would deal only incidentally with the past doings of real people.

The group’s major religious myths were embedded in the often long songs chanted privately by the men during the secret phases of the initiation festivals. The myths (or parts of them) were also related in simpler, public versions. There were simple narratives about how the natural species came to have the shapes they have today; how certain topographical features came about; and how human beings came to be as they are.141

In Aboriginal Australia, religious stories, which featured the doings of the sky-gods and other mythic beings, and were set at the time of creation, tended to be sung. Secular tales, including those about one’s immediate, real ancestors, tended to be told in narrative prose. But this is only a broad generalisation. Sometimes the creation myths would be recounted in narrative prose, and of course there were any number of secular songs, some of which would take as their topic events in the recent past.142 In Document 3B Joe Bungaree says that the information about Red Kangaroo

"came down by song and tale on [sic] our tribe as told by the old men" (at MS Page 33).

Oral traditions served to entertain, to teach and to reinforce people's moral understanding. To make the same point a different way, oral traditions fulfilled multiple social functions.

Not the least important of the many reasons for the existence and perpetuation of "folk literature" was the need for release from the boredom that comes from sitting around in camp (especially perhaps on long winter evenings).

In addition to their value as entertainment, stories were a means of teaching the values and beliefs that were integral to the culture - the proper relationship between humans and animals, for example, or the obligations of kinship and affinity. Thus the oral traditions served to reinforce people's moral understanding. In Joe Bungaree's tales, for example, Red Kangaroo protests against the elders' flouting of age-old laws relating to marriage. In other words, as Tosh (1991) remarks, stories helped to validate the particular social and political arrangements that currently prevailed - the distribution of land, the share that each lineage had to potential marriage partners and the pattern of relations with neighbouring groups.

Traditions about origins and great migrations might fall into one category (teaching), while those which recounted the doings of particular groups and individuals might belong to another (validating). But again there was no hard-and-fast division: many traditions were both cosmological statements and also political charters.¹⁴³

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In ‘non-literate’ or traditional societies the traditions of the group were (from our perspective) narrowly circumscribed.¹⁴⁴ First, they did not go back very far. The collective memory usually did

not exceed a century, although some special events might be recalled for as long as 250 years. Beyond that, one came to an indefinite, pre-historical past. This distant or ‘pre-remembered’ past is sometimes called “the Dreamtime” in (latter-day) discussions of Australian Aboriginal stories. Thus at one point Red Kangaroo says, “our laws come to us by word of mouth, handed down from each group of elders going back to long, long ago in the time of our first elders and when our tribe was formed” (Document 3B, MS p.21). In this statement we see the immediate, remembered past linked to the long-distant pre-remembered past.

For example, in one Kenyan story, the arrival, life and eventual departure of the first colonial officer in an isolated district has been explained as standing in the place of 60 years of colonial history. The tribe's memory of an individual Englishman passed as a metaphor for their experience under colonialism. This was described as “a dreamlike or poetic sort of condensation”; it compressed years of the memory and significance of a vast region under colonialism into the more prosaic story of cultural contact between a tribe and a colonial officer. - John Murphy, The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory, Historical Studies, 22 (1986), p.160, citing L. Haring, 'Gusii Oral Texts', The International Journal of African Historical Studies, vol. 7, 1974, p. 116.

For example, in the stories of one group of Papua New Guinea Highlands people, there was an ancient “Time of Darkness” marked by the eruption of a certain volcano, now no longer active. A study of the ashes shows that the earliest date for its last eruption was 1640, or at most 300 years “before present” (Vansina, Oral Tradition as History 1985: 188).

Sometimes memory did not extend even that far. A Dutch expedition landed on the west coast of Cape York peninsula in 1623, alarming the local Aborigines, who were the ancestors of the latter-day Yir Yiront people. The Dutch gave gifts of iron and beads. No memory of this remained in 1935, 312 years later. That may not be surprising. But the next encounter with whites, a party of cattlemen who entered Cape York with a small herd of cattle, took place in 1864. For whatever reason, the Yir Yiront attacked the intruders, but suffered defeat. The cattlemen killed about 30 Yir Yiront men. The whites retired, however, abandoning their idea of setting up a cattle station. Again, but very surprisingly, no memory of this survived in 1935, after only three generations (71 years) (Sharp 1952/1990: 261).
Stories about the doings of the great sky-god Baayama\textsuperscript{146} and other supernatural creatures belonged of course to the distant or pre-remembered past.\textsuperscript{147} Such stories can be called myths. The tales about our hero Red Kangaroo, however, because they concern a real human being acting in remembered time, can be called legends. (Compare Box One below.)

In traditional societies oral traditions were restricted in space as well as in time. The songs, spoken tales and anecdotes were usually limited to events in the lands that the group inhabited and those of its immediate neighbours. This is in no way surprising: literate Rome and literate ancient China had only the vaguest knowledge of each other’s existence.

So we find that the Aborigines of inland New South Wales knew about the Pacific Ocean (it is 265 kilometres from Gunnedah in a straight line to the Pacific near Kempsey).\textsuperscript{148} In the other direction, the most distant locality mentioned in Joe Bungaree’s

\textsuperscript{146} Ash et al. 2003 prefer the spelling Baayami.

\textsuperscript{147} The creation myths of the Kamilaroi are recorded in scattered and fragmentary form in the writings of Greenway, Ridley, Mathews and Parker (see the Bibliography). I give the myths only a brief treatment in my own Kamilaroi Lands (1997). The most accessible source for people interested in this topic is Parker’s Euahlayi Tribe (1905).

\textsuperscript{148} Breton 1834: 205 remarks that the “Corborn Comleroy” [the ‘Greater’ Gamilaraay’, from the Liverpool Plains] attended ceremonies at Port Macquarie on the Pacific Coast. Likewise George ‘the Barber’ Clarke mentions a shaman (“krajjee”) from Boggabri who travelled to the sea, also perhaps the Port Macquarie area. He lived there for some time before returning to Boggabri (cited in Campbell 2002: 140). Moreover it seems that the Gamilaraay group interviewed by Major Mitchell near Mungindi in 1832 knew about the penal settlement at Moreton Bay [modern Brisbane]. “When Callidé, ‘the sea’ was pronounced to them, they pointed in the direction of Moreton Bay, repeating very frequently the word ‘Wallingall’”’ [Mitchell, 6 February 1832: discussion in O’Rourke 1995: 38]. Callidé was galidhaay, “water(s) running thence”. Wallingall was walaayngal, ‘many camps’ (i.e., of white men).
tales is Walgett. It is located 230 kilometres from Gunnedah as the crow flies (Document 3B, MS Page 30). In other words, *effectively the whole known world of the Gunnedah people was contained within a radius of less than 300 kilometres.*

* * *

There were individuals who specialised in becoming knowledgeable about all aspects of local history. Jan Vansina in his book *Oral Tradition as History* (1985) calls these people ‘men of memory’ or ‘encyclopaedic informants’. Some of them, of course, were women.

The specialisation is, or was, relative: every man made spears, everyone hunted or gathered food and everyone knew something about the group’s history. But of course some individuals were much better at making spears, while others were better at remembering and relating whose grandfather had done what. Doubtless there were some who preferred to sing and others who liked to conjure up the past in prose tales.

R M Berndt and C H Berndt have noted that in some areas of Australia the community’s repertoire comprised as many as 400 or 500 distinct myths and major secular stories. Of course many people would not have known even a quarter of them, and only a few individuals would have known all of the 400-500.149

Anthropologists and folklorists collecting historical and mythological material may obtain it from all and any members of the group. Obviously it makes all the difference when an especially

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We moderns tend to under-estimate the power of memory in non-literate societies. The American Homeric scholar Millman Parry took down from an illiterate bard in southern Serbia an epic poem of 12,000 lines – equal to the length of the Odyssey (itself an a "written" epic) (*Encyc. Brit* 15th ed, entry on "Heroic Poetry").
interested and talented performer - a Man of Memory - does the telling or performs the story rather than an average member of the group who may have little interest or capability in relating the group’s historical tales. Ion Idriess claims that Joe Bungaree of Gunnedah was such a Man of Memory: “In every tribe there are men trained to remember. And so my father trained me!” (Document 4: Idriess’s Preface to The Red Chief). In truth, this idea does not occur in the source document, “The Death and Career” (Document 3B). What Bungaree actually said to Ewing in Document 3B was simply this: “Yes, my father told me lot of tribe-talk about what Red Kangaroo and him warriors do …. My father an’ old men in tribe tell me, an’ tell all young boy of tribe, about great warriors of the Nammoy River tribe: all about wars ….” No specialisation seems implied.

Box One

LEGENDS "VERSUS" MYTHS

Oral traditions can be classified in various ways. In one classification, a story is a ‘legend’ if the main actor is a human being, and a ‘myth’ if the actor is divine. When the tone is less elevated, as for

150 If contemporary western culture awards the highest creative value to the imagination, our ancient and medieval forebears considered those with the greatest creative powers to be those with the best memories. Ancient and medieval scholars would not even understand a definition of intelligence that did not include a superior memory. As Carruthers notes, “in their understanding of the matter, it was memory that made knowledge into useful experience, and memory that combined these pieces of information-become-experience into what we call "ideas", what they were more likely to call judgments” (Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.3).
example in versions designed for children, the story may be called a “fairy tale” or a “fable”.¹⁵¹

1. **Legends:**

In folklore theory, a legend is a traditional narrative about a person, place or object that really exists, existed or is believed to have existed. Thus the stories about Red Kangaroo are technically-speaking *legends*.

Even when a story recounts a supernatural or highly unusual event, the event is claimed to have occurred in real life. Legends offer information, moral judgments and warnings. In some cases the truth of the tradition is a matter for heated dispute, e.g. King Arthur or Robin Hood.

- The word ‘legend’ originally denoted oral and written lives of the (Christian) saints, which of course we know today to contain some very fanciful elements.
- In modern English, in secular discourse, ‘legend’ tends to mean a traditional story popularly regarded as basically true, even if its truth is nearly buried beneath the fanciful elements. For example, the legend of Ned Kelly. (Obviously Kelly was a real person. The question is: “was he just a charismatic thug?”)

2. **Myths:**

Put simply, myths are stories about divine beings. The stories are (or were) revered as true and sacred, and closely linked to religion.

But the word ‘myth’ is somewhat plastic in modern English discourse. On the one hand it can mean any narrative or story of religious

¹⁵¹ This is a "native" classification: supplied by the Trobriand Islanders to Malinowski (in his *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, 1926). The original Trobriand terms are *liliu*, rendered as 'myth' by Malinowski; *libwogwo* 'legend' and *kukwanebu* 'fairy tale'.

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significance. On the other it can mean a secular belief that is wholly false, as in “urban myths”. The latter are sometimes called ‘contemporary legends’. Traditional religious stories, of course, are considered true by believers. Unbelievers will distinguish between pure myths, i.e. stories whose core elements most scholars would regard as false, such as “the Resurrection myth” or “myth of the Virgin Birth”, and historical myths, i.e. stories that contain some important truths beneath a heavy layer of colour, e.g. “the myth of Jesus”. Troy is both a legend and a myth. The early Greeks probably did attack such a city in Asia Minor, and there probably was a hero called Achilles. But the Greek expedition to Troy is a myth to the extent that the story attributes the outcome of many events to the intervention of the gods. Like the early Greeks, the Kamilaroi had many gods and many myths. But the myths about the sky-gods such as Baayama and his several wives were located in a distant pre-remembered past, the so-called ‘Dreamtime’. The sky-gods were “otiose” or hidden gods [Latin otiosus, “hidden or neutral”]. Baayama and the others, having anciently retired to the world beyond the sky, no longer intervened in the present-day life of the Aborigines.152

3. Folktales:

Folktales are simple stories that lack a high religious tone, including those designed to be told to children. We call them fairy tales and fables.

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152 See the discussion in O’Rourke 1997: 171 ff. Baayama was wholly “otiose”, never revealing himself except in thunder, which was his voice. Dharramalan, Baayama’s half-brother and legate or messenger, did sometimes appear on earth, but not to intervene by way of interfering with human actions. A third major supernatural being, Garriya the rainbow-snake, seems to have been part-god, part-monster and moved between living in the lower world and living in the sky.
The principal characters can be gods and superhuman beings, or heroes, or animals and humans. Sometimes folktales are myths that have degenerated. The link with religion has broken, and the actors in the stories are no longer regarded as gods but as human heroes, giants, monsters or fairies.

As the Berndts have pointed out, Australian Aborigines had many ordinary 'camp stories', some meant for an adult audience and some specifically tailored to children. Sometimes these camp stories were outline versions of the great religious myths or altered 'exoteric' versions of them. Important parts of the religious myths were reserved for initiated men and so were kept back from women and children.\textsuperscript{153}

4.2 Oral History and the Epic

Can we call the stories of Red Kangaroo an "epic"?

The long stories that we call epics - and an epic "must" be long - often involve a confrontation between humans and fabulous (divine or demonic) protagonists.

The term is often reserved for full-scale works \textit{in verse} such as the Greek \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey}. But sometimes we find other, shorter genres being called epics, e.g. the 'heroic prose' texts of medieval Ireland containing the old Irish \textit{Ulaid} ('Ulster') cycle of stories, which originated probably in the first century BC, and the 13th century AD Icelandic sagas.

The Irish \textit{Ulaid} cycle consists mostly of stories that are quite short, although \textit{The Cattle Raid of Cooley} has the scope of an epic. The Anglo-Saxon
historical poem about the Battle of Maldon (10th century), describing a Viking raid on Essex, is in verse and deals with heroic acts. But it is too short to perhaps qualify as an 'epic'.

Sometimes all the elements of the grand epic - deities, humans and grand tribal or national struggles - may be present, as in the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh; the stories in the Hebrew Bible; the Iliad of the Greeks (the story of Troy); and the Mahabharata of ancient and modern India.

In the 'classical' Greek and Roman epics, typically we find a great man displaying his heroic qualities by enduring some form of crisis or by engaging in a war or great quest. Importantly, the gods intervene to help or hinder him. Famous examples include the wanderer Odysseus in the Greek epic called The Odyssey (ascribed to Homer) and the Trojan prince Aeneas in the Latin epic by Virgil [Lat.: Vergilius] known after its hero as The Aeneid, which deals with the founding of Rome.

As Peter Toohey has explained, the epic starts with the hero at odds with his community. Some difficulty or tragedy develops, often brought on by his disrespect for the gods or his companions, and the tragedy allows him to gain a greater understanding of his own nature. Sometimes this involves a fight in which he kills a prominent opponent.

In the works of Homer and Virgil, and in some medieval European epics, the key event may be a confrontation between an intruder-hero (representing the Individual) and an establishment-king (representing Society).

Having become, as a result, the possessor of great qualities such as loyalty, patience or endurance, and a proper attitude towards his community, the hero finally returns to his people to occupy his rightful place.

Heroes challenge, and thereby define, the limitations imposed by the gods, fate, or self-

absorption, as well as those social, political, economic, religious and sexual roles by which humans define themselves.\footnote{Toohey \textit{Reading Epic} 1984. Also W T H Jackson, \textit{The Hero and the King: an Epic Theme}, New York 1982.}

Much the same applies to the 'Quest Story', a type of tale found in many cultures. As analysed by the Russian anthropologist Vladimir Propp, a Quest Story always begins with some injury or need. The hero is \textit{told to go somewhere}. He has adventures which usually involve meeting a man or creature who sets him various tasks or tests; this often involve \textit{combat}. In the end, after various adventures, following an almost standard pattern, the hero is always rewarded, \textit{or married}, or becomes king.\footnote{Propp, \textit{Morphology of the Folk tale}, Austin Texas 1968. Also the early essay 'The Hero of Tradition' [1934] by F R Somerset (Lord Raglan), in Dundes, ed, 1965: 152 ff.}

*   *   *

A number of these elements appear in the stories of Red Kangaroo (hereafter “RK”). Equally, there are crucial differences from the style and content of a Greco-Roman epic.

Consider, for example, the tale of the Ambush of the Cassilis Raiders. As we will see, in this tale RK is a great man (or a young man ready for greatness). He goes on an expedition; he displays strong leadership qualities; and he engages in combat. But there is no sense of psychological change. Nor does his status change.

i. A great man?

In the Ambush of the Cassilis Raiders, RK has been ‘warrior chief’ for two years, and plainly he is more gifted intellectually, morally and physically than the rest. But, unlike an ancient Greek hero, he is not disrespectful to the gods or his companions.
ii. At odds with his community?

RK is not at odds with his community. But, when the tale opens, the young warriors are not being allowed to go on a hunting expedition and they are grumbling. As a consequence their wives are gossiping negatively. Fearing dissension, RK berates the younger men and instructs them in their rightful duty to the community.

In another tale, RK goes to Coonabarabran on a quest to capture his first wives (Document 3B, "The Death and Career"). He is driven to do so because the dominant elders of his Gunnedah tribelet have bent the age-old laws concerning the allocation of women (or so it is presented). When he returns, RK kills the leading "chief" Jerrabri and re-proclaims the age-old laws.

In this story, he is a little like a medieval European hero who challenges, and thereby defines, or overcomes, the limitations that an unhappy world imposes: in this case imposed by local politics.

iii. Quest, war or crisis?

In the Cassilis story, when the enemy raiders are detected, RK rushes back from his hunting expedition. The crisis he faces is that the Cassilis war-party heavily outnumbers the available Gunnedah men. But, whereas in ancient Greco-Roman epics the hero will often leave his community, RK takes the whole body of Gunnedah warriors with him in a counter-raid on Cassilis.

In the other tale, where he goes to Coonabarabran on a quest to capture his first wives, RK faces and defeats the 'war-chief' Kulki, "the bravest and most fearless warrior in the Coonabarabran tribe" (Document 3B, MS Page 27). Returning from Coonabarabran to Gunnedah, he confronts the "chief" Jerrabri and kills him in a duel.
This is perhaps reminiscent of a Propp-style ‘Quest Story’ and the confrontation between the intruder-hero and the establishment-king that we see in Homer, Virgil and some medieval European epics.

iv. Heroic qualities?

In the Cassilis tale, RK devises a clever ambush plan and convinces the others that this is the best form of defence. In heroic fashion, he leads the defence and the counter-attack.

v. Understands himself?

This is precisely where the Cassilis Raid fails as an epic if we choose a (pagan) Greco-Roman yardstick. RK may well have come to understand himself better (no doubt he did), but no trace of this appears in the tales as we have them.

At the same time there is a moral, already drawn by RK at the start of the tale: that ‘duty comes before pleasure’. Young men must understand that their enjoyment of hunting cannot be put ahead of their duty to defend the women and children. In other words, RK shows his wisdom before the crisis unfolds.

vi. His rightful place?

The defeat of the Cassilis men is presented as RK’s first major exploit and the beginning of his great reputation in the region. “It was many years before the warlike Cassilis tribe built up to be [a

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157 In the Christian Roman Empire of Constantinople ("Byzantium"), the epic is a late phenomenon: the tale of Diogenes Akritas was not possible during Byzantium’s first 700 years. It has often been asserted that the epic is lacking too in Chinese literature. But to inquire whether this is actually so, and why it should be so, would take us too far from our present topic. Cherchez-y qui peut ("those who can may search this out").
menace to other tribes. But never again did Cassilis warriors venture to attack the Nammoy tribe.”

No Golden Age

In the Greco-Roman epics, the ‘world’ of the heroes presents a past time that is in some ways more desirable than the present. The epic evokes a self-contained and appealing world in which heroes were braver and more numerous; issues more clear-cut; and things altogether more noble. The past is thereby glorified.\footnote{Toohey 1992: 19.}

We also encounter an idealised picture of a remote past in some - but not all - of the medieval Icelandic sagas, namely in the aristocratic “kings’ sagas”.

Again, there is almost nothing of this in the Red Kangaroo stories. RK himself is braver and more clever than others, certainly, but the world of his time is not presented as intrinsically more noble than later times.

This is in no way surprising. Only three or four generations separated his time from that of Joe Bungaree’s parents. Moreover Aboriginal societies were in principle wholly egalitarian, with no room for princes and paupers.

The Red Kangaroo stories are more like a standard Icelandic saga, in which the saga-authors depict life as they themselves experienced it or as they imagined life to have actually been in the past. Most of the sagas of medieval Iceland deal with people who are fully integrated members of society.\footnote{Encyc. Brit. 15th ed (1989), entry on "The Art of Literature".} Just as the leading figure in the sagas is either an ordinary farmer or a farmer who also acts as a chieftain, so Red Kangaroo is presented as a real, albeit exceptionally skilled, hunter-warrior: "a man for a' that". 
4.3 Authenticity "versus" Story-telling

Can we regard the Ewing papers as fully authentic? How much ‘story-telling’ or convenient invention was added or found its way into the texts?\footnote{By authenticity I mean genuine and accurate. A tradition is authentic if (1) it is sincerely believed to be true by a teller intent on telling it faithfully and also (2) it does in fact represent the past (however well or badly). The post-modernists per contra argue for (or rather, they dogmatise about) the ‘negotiated’ quality of authenticity. They see “‘authenticity’ as a negotiable concept whose precise connotation is different for intellectuals, experts and ordinary members of the public…” Thus: “Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority. Objects have no authority; people do”. So writes JoAnn Martin, Contesting Authenticity: Battles over the Representation of History in Morelos, Mexico. Working Paper #194 - June 1993; at http://www.nd.edu/~kellogg/WPS/194.pdf [accessed Feb 2003].}

In terms of elapsed time, this question breaks into two parts: first, ‘did Bungaree accurately tell the Ewings what he heard from his father [transmission from 1800 to 1890]?’ This we can examine. Second: ‘were the results of this retelling an accurate representation of what happened before Bungaree’s father was born [transmission from before 1750 to 1800]?’ This we cannot test.\footnote{There has been a long debate about the question “how much are oral accounts of the past actually telling us about the past, and how much about the present?” The Belgian historian Jan Vansina, who worked in the Congo, proposed that oral traditions in non-literate societies can be regarded as authentic documents from the past. He later modified this in the second edition of his influential book (1985: xii), saying that oral traditions were ‘representations of the past in the present’. In either case, it is an open question whether the oral traditions are true. This is a problem familiar from the history of Christianity: “how much of the oral tradition captured in the Four Gospels is true?”}

Except for the scraps that archaeology may reveal, we do not know how life was lived before 1750.\footnote{From Red Kangaroo's time to our own is less than 300 years. In its present state, archaeology can tell us next to nothing about life-style changes over so short a period. And what it can}
The core of the material is beyond doubt authentic for the period 1800-1890 (even if some aspects are subject to question, e.g. the exactness of the numbers of people taking part in each incident). There are many points of detail that can be confirmed from other sources. For example: hunting for yabbies by muddying the creek-bed; and the use of echidna fat for medicinal purposes.

And even when not confirmed in other sources, many points of detail are convincing in themselves. For example, the contents of a woman’s dilly-bag are described in terms that could hardly have been imagined by white men in the later 1800s, writing many decades after dilly-bags had fallen out of use (see in Document 3C, MS Page Five).

A further example is the difference between lowland and highland spears. We read that the New Englanders (as we may call them) used spears shorter and thicker than those of the lowlanders of the Liverpool Plains. The highland spears were too thick to fit into a plains woomera. So the Liverpool Plainsmen could not pick them up and re-use them (Document 3B, MS Page 32). It is conceivable of course that the Ewings invented this detail. It is much more likely to be an authentic record of a centuries-old difference between the culture of the plains and that of the highlands.

As for what may appear to be misrepresentations or misunderstandings of traditional Aboriginal life, it is important to draw a distinction between fanciful inventions on the one hand and the appropriate ‘translation’ of Aboriginal ideas or expressions into Western terms on the other. For example, the Ewing Papers speak of “six o’clock”. We may decide that this was an appropriate translation into white man’s terms of a phrase like “not very long before sunset”. Alternatively, Joe Bungaree, who grew to middle-age when the country was already dominated by the white settlers, may himself have
tell us, e.g. the declining use of macropods and the increasing reliance on possums in the diet, is not pertinent.
used the words “six o’clock”. He knew both cultures and therefore had a choice of words when speaking to white men.

It is possible too that at certain points the Ewings may have misunderstood Bungaree’s intentions as storyteller, or they may have added some ‘colouring’ that was not actually conveyed in Bungaree’s narrative.

If we can detect such errors, then we would be expect them to be innocent ones. The Ewings père et fils (John senior and Stanley) were obviously serious men of integrity, seeking to record no more and no less than they heard. But they, and indeed Joe Bungaree too, may have added some colour. There is, after all, no black and white distinction (as it were) between legends as history and legends as entertainment.

In any case, it matters little whether we believe that Red Kangaroo was everywhere and at all times an admirable and mighty hero. Presumably he was a very capable leader (“the Napoleon of his times”163) and otherwise just a human being.

Of more interest (at least to the present editor) is to see where “factual” errors may have crept in concerning traditional Aboriginal life as we know it from New South Wales in the early 19th century or from northern Australia in the early 20th century. We are allowed to assume that Joe Bungaree imagined the style of life lived by Red Kangaroo in the 18th century to be the same as Bungaree himself had lived - before seed-cakes, possum-meat and yabbies were supplanted by ‘sugar, flour, jam and tea’.

* * *

What do the documents contain that is probably false or at least very hard to believe? - I have drawn attention to a few possible errors or lapses in my

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163 Document 1, para. 16.
Commentary. Here I will list only some of the more interesting cases.

i. Numbers of People and Distances Cited

Many readers will ask, ‘how can one possibly believe all the exact details related about events that occurred probably more than a century before Bungaree heard the RK legends?’ In other words: Are there any details that would need to be imagined ("invented"), or, alternatively, that purport to be exact information conveyed from RK's time, transmitted without change over four or five generations?

I will deal first with enumeration and the numbers of people, before coming to the specification of distances.

It is widely believed today that numbers and counting were not known and used in traditional times. It is supposed that Aborigines were unable to count beyond ‘one, two, many’. This is an entirely mistaken opinion. In fact, they are known to have counted to at least 150. (The evidence for this is presented later: see the introductory section to Document 3C, "The Cassilis Raid").

When the Ewing documents list numbers of people, we may distinguish between a plausible order of magnitude and what might be called 'spurious precision'.

A major battle would sometimes have involved several tens of men. Thus, if the documents contain a rounded figure of "150" men coming to blows (about 75 on either side) then we will not automatically reject this as unbelievable. On the other hand, one must query whether oral tradition was capable of reliably transmitting exact figures like "152" or "157", "73" or "78".

Some examples are listed below.

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164 I thank Derek Frampton for pointing out the need to deal with this issue.
It is not impossible, given that Aborigines could count, that such numbers were conveyed through several generations and remembered precisely by Joe Bungaree. But this is highly unlikely. One can only suppose that the numbers were supplied by the Ewings, no doubt after getting Bungaree's best guess about the general size of "tribes" or the numbers typically involved in war-parties. The Ewings may have been seeking to give the story more authority. Or perhaps the exact numbers were supplied to make the tale easier to follow, as a modern reader or listener would soon become bored by vague expressions like "some", "several", "many", "a big mob".

Perhaps J P Ewing and/or Stanley asked Bungaree, 'about how many men were in that war-party, Joe?' And he may have offered an educated guess: 'oh, about 15'. If so, then the order of magnitude could well have been based on his memory of group sizes from when he was young, in the early 1800s. But it is hard to believe that exact figures like "81", "34" and "31" really represent the 'true' numbers from RK's own heyday around the year 1700. Consider the following list:

* = Not multiples of five or ten; thus cases of "spurious precision".

150: "We know there are tribes 100 and even some with 150 spears [i.e., 150 men], four to seven suns’ march from us" (Life and Career, MS Page 30).

140: "Before he was 40 years old, his tribe had 140 spears and young warriors coming into the war-parties every year. Six small tribes had been absorbed into the original, and every warrior had a wife" (Life and Career, MS Page 30).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

*Eighty-one: "Had they come on and not camped, most would have been killed as they came loaded with meat amongst 81 Cassilis warriors" (Cassilis Raid, MS Page 16).

Sixty-five: "... They [the Gunnedah “tribe”] had lost six killed and only two with crippling wounds for life – but [word omitted?] had made two raids had brought into [the] tribe 27 young women and had had only five warriors killed. The tribe now mustered 65 fighting warriors. But 15 were old warriors of 60 years of age; 20 were men from 35 to 40 years old; and 30 young warriors from 17 to 26 years old." (Cassilis, MS Page 1).

Sixty: "Of the original 60 spears [=men] that were trapped into the U, there were now only 15 warriors left and they now fled in panic ... " (MS Page 15)

Thirty-five: "we must get every man we have at the secret camp. That would give us 35 spears" (MS Page 13).

*Thirty-four: "Burradella counted 34 killed and six badly wounded inside the first 60 yards of the U [and] with the three killed at other end by Red Kangaroo and some of his warriors. (Cassilis, MS Page 15)

*Thirsty-three: "Counting heads, the tally gave RK 33 warriors, and the combined force 32, out of 90. Losses of the Nammoy tribe: seven; combined force: 18 [i.e., 33 + 32 survivors + 7 + 18 losses = 90]; and numbers with wounds" (Life and Career, MS Page 32).

*Twenty-seven: "... two raids had brought into tribe (sic: “the” omitted) 27 young women and [we] had had only five warriors killed ...” (Cassilis, MS Page 1).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

*Twenty-six:* “... 15 were old warriors of 60 years of age; 20 were men from 35 to 40 years old and 30 young warriors from 17 to 26 years old” (Cassilis, MS Page 1).

*Seventeen:* “17 warriors with Burradella on one side of the trap” (Cassilis, MS Page 11).

Fifteen: “Why weren’t those 15 old warriors left to guard the camp - and let the rest of the warriors pull lot [sic] to see what nine of them had to stop and guard camp also ...” (MS Page 2).

*Fourteen and Thirteen:* “... Sending another warrior to take the fifteen boys to from 12 to 14 years old to the edge of the hop scrub. Two were sent to the smoke signal post to tell the three warriors there that Burradella wanted them [by] sunset to join him on edge of hop-scrub, boys to guide them. The 13 left [...] warriors, he stationed 10 yds [yards] apart ... (MS Page 7).

*Twelve:* ”12 guards ran off for their life [sic] chased by 10 of Red Kangaroo[’s] warriors” (MS Page 17).

*Seven:* "[They] counted 15 dead enemy. And they had four killed and seven wounded but only one seriously" (Life and Career, MS Page 31).

**Distances Cited**

As will be seen from the next list, the distances cited seem purely conventional, chosen to be consistent with what the hearer of the tale would expect. Certain sites are described exactly by their spatial size or distance, but here of course they were real places known intimately to Bungaree (and indeed the Ewings). The key point is: There are no distances stated that would definitely require being
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reminded and transmitted in precise terms through several generations of re-telling.

1. "There was a cave 100 yards away hidden in scrub. I’d found it chasing a snake to make a meal of" ('The Death and Career', MS Page 23): - This looks like simply a conventional rounded number, not an attempt at historical specificity.

2. "Two men, one carrying a kangaroo, came out of the scruffy timber onto clear ground on [the] opposite side of creek 60 yards away" ('Death and Career', MS Page 26): - The next events in the story are that the two Coonabarabran men will call out to the women held captive by RK and the two men will proceed to attack him. In this context, "60 yards" looks like the sort of distance any narrator might choose.

3. "They were to use all war weapons, standing 100 yards apart" ('Career', MS Page 28): - Again a rounded and conventional figure.

4. "No other tribe claimed to have a chief his equal for 100 miles [160 km] all around Gunnedarr" ('Career', MS Page 33): - This looks like simply a generalised statement, a round figure again, not an exact fact needing to be transmitted in precise terms through several generations of re-telling. Indeed, we might expect Bungaree or the Ewings actually to have said '300' miles, given that RK's reputation was a regional one.

5. "He and nine seasoned warriors ran 15 miles to save their women and children" ('Career', MS Page 34): - This refers to the return of RK with a hunting party from the Breeza Plains. Again it looks like a round figure (15 being halfway between 10 and 20 miles), and so can be regarded as a generalised remark, not a memory conveyed though oral tradition.
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6. "They ran fast along the low banks of [the] creek but in the last 200 yds [yards] the variegated thistles grew seven and eight feet high [over two metres] and densely along both banks and out for hundreds of years [sic: yards]. So they ran along the creek bed, a dry one unless after a flood or heavy rain. Within 50 yards of where the creek ran into river, they slowed down to walk ... ." (‘The Cassilis Raid’, MS Page 5):
- The site here is the creeklet or flood-runner at Gunnedah connecting Mullibah Lagoon to the Namoi River, a place known intimately to both Joe Bungaree and the Ewings. Note too that the distances are rounded. The thistles of course were the same in RK’s time, and the Ewings and Bungaree both would have known how high they grew.

7. "They [Red Kangaroo and others] looked out onto a small clearing 300 yards wide and a length of 1,700 yds. Not a tree, bush or stump and only short grass was on the clearing” (‘The Cassilis Raid’, MS Page 7):
- This was at Gunnedah itself, Bungaree’s home. So he is describing a site known to him personally. Moreover it is easy to believe - and plainly Bungaree made the same assumption - that the site had not changed since RK’s time.

8. "He (RK) caught [up with] them after they had done four miles of their journey" (The Cassilis Raid, MS Page 8): - 'Four' may seem overly specific, and hence dubious, but perhaps Bungaree was simply imagining that 'four' miles [six km] was about right for a good runner paced against a group of average runners.

9. "[A] clearing that stretched for a mile and 300 yards wide on the east of the Porcupine Ridges hop-vine-edge scrub" (‘Raid’, MS Page 10): - Again,
a site known personally to Bungaree and the Ewings.

10. “You Burradella will have 17 warriors and yourself on one side of the U [u-shaped clearing] 40 yards from U mouth. You will stand back two feet in hop-vine” ('Raid', MS Page 11): - It is not necessary to see this a precise memory handed down for over 100 years. Knowing that a large body of the enemy warriors was to enter the clearing, and all of them would enter, ‘40 yards’ would strike any narrator as about right. And “two” feet would have seemed enough for the thick hop-vine to conceal a Gunnedah ambusher.

ii. Stone hatchets (“axes”) wrongly presented as weapons:

Hatchets are known to have been valuable tools. They were used in warfare only when normal weapons were not at hand.165 The Ewing Papers, however, present hatchets as routine instruments of war (see especially in Document 3B, at MS Page 32: the battle in New England).

I would attribute this error to the Ewings rather than Joe Bungaree. Already a young man of about 15 in the 1830s, Bungaree must have known the conditions of warfare even before steel hatchets were acquired by the Namoi River Aborigines.

The mistake is easily understood. In the western world, cutting instruments such as two-handed axes were, from ancient times, used both as wood-cutting tools and as weapons (e.g., famously by the Vikings).

‘Tomahawk’, of course, is an indigenous American term for the stone-headed war-maces of North America.166 The word was borrowed and

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165 See the commentary below against para. 16 of Document One.
166 Tomahawk - 1612, tamahaac, from Algonquian (probably Powhatan) tamahack "what is
transferred to Australia as a name for stone- and iron-headed hatchets.

Knowing that Native Americans used tomahawks for war, white men not closely familiar with Aboriginal life would readily, but wrongly, have guessed that Aborigines used stone hatchets as a primary fighting instrument. In truth, hatchets were essentially wood-working tools.

iii. Smoke signals:

The Ewing Papers present the Gamilaraay people as able to use smoke to send fairly complex coded messages.

Unfortunately it is not possible to say, drawing on other sources, whether this is a definitely a case of romantic invention or a true report about traditional practices. The fact is that the use of smoke by Aborigines was little studied. As far as I know, almost nothing has been written about it (see Appendix Four).

My own best guess is that, in central NSW, Aborigines did indeed use smoke to send coded messages. But probably only simple messages could be sent (see again Appendix Four).

iv. Moons and Months, Suns and Days:

Interestingly, some references to time seem to reflect traditional categories. Other terms such as "hours" seem to have been supplied by the narrator-transcriber (Stanley Ewing) or perhaps they reflect the 'English' measures of time that Joe Bungaree would have learnt from the white men (by, say, 1840).

*Point in time:*

One phrase frequently used is “sun”, as in “at high sun (midday)” or “on the 8th sun”. This strikes

used in cutting, “from tamaham "he cuts."
one as plainly a traditional concept. So does “every evening at full moon” (Old Maggie speaking). But apparently non-Aboriginal terms are also used: “The sun was still three quarters of an hour high”; “at three o’clock every guard will crawl to the scrub edge”; and “up to [until] 10 o’clock”.

It is not clear whether these phrases were supplied by Joe Bungaree or by Stan Ewing, but obviously Aborigines living in the time of Red Kangaroo did not count by hours.

As to the ‘truth’ of these statements, there are two possibilities: 1. they were authentic (unvarnished) details conveyed via the tales told to Bungaree when he was a boy, or 2. they were added for colour, in the sense that when the tale was re-told by someone else, this was an optional detail.

So, did RK really instruct his men that they must have the ambush ready by mid afternoon (“three o’clock”)? - We cannot know. But one possible answer is “yes, he did”. This point may have been a precisely recounted element in the tales passed down to Bungaree when he was a boy, around 1830. The older men of course would have used a phrase in Gamilaraay like “the half-way point between noon and dusk”. If so, the English equivalent “three o’clock” would have been a natural translation. Compare the Yuwaalaraay term ngadaa dhuni, ‘mid-afternoon’, literally ‘the sun [is preparing to] go down’; evidently it was used to mean what we in English would express as “around 4pm”. In similar fashion ngarribaa dhuni, literally ‘the sun [is now well] up’, meant mid-morning. It was used for “around 10 o’clock”.

*Duration:*

Aboriginal concepts such as “one sun” and “two moons” are used, but so too are “minutes”, “hours”
and “months”. "Years" (one cycle of seasons) might be regarded as both Aboriginal and Western.

Examples include: “20 minutes passed”; “for an hour”; “they slept two hours each man”, “six hours of sunlight”, “for the next seven suns”; “for almost [a] whole moon”; “a month in enemy country” (RK speaking); “three months after he was made a warrior”; “he was 17 years old”; “in the last two years”; “he had years of war experience” (RK speaking); and “many years of fighting”.

In several places the two styles are combined: “for three hours by the star-setting time” and “after nine o’clock setting of Djurrabl (evening star)”. The number of hours is the measure of duration used most frequently. Again, it is not clear whether the duration in hours was supplied by Joe Bungaree or Stan Ewing. Plainly hours are a non-Aboriginal concept, and so could not have been used in narrating the tales until after about 1840. But, as we have said, Joe Bungaree would have come to learn the white-man’s system of telling time. Thus he could have begun injecting hours into his tales about RK from about 1840.

**Distance by time:**

In one place, distance is presented in walking time: “four to seven suns’ march from us” (Document 3B, MS Page 31).

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### 4.4 Dimensions of Style

The Ewing Papers have some interesting stylistic features, all of which seem to confirm their origin in tales told by Aborigines to fellow Aborigines who of course were listeners, not readers.

It may be going too far to say that the style validates the authenticity of the tales’ content. But the style is certainly not inconsistent with the tales
being authentic in most respects (as we established in section 4.3).

First, there is much repetition, with ‘the story so far’ summarised from time to time. Plainly this is done for the sake of refreshment. It allows the listener to remember what has already happened and so keep track of the ‘big picture’. Narrative repetition is a characteristic of all ‘oral literature’ and indeed of written literature containing stories designed to be read to an audience.\(^\text{168}\)

Second, characters are sometimes introduced without a name. They acquire a name only after having become actors in the story. For example, in "The Death and Career" (Document 3B), Naroo and Nareen are captured by Red Kangaroo before we learn their names. And we find out who Kulki is only after Red Kangaroo has killed him. This may reflect how "fixed" the story was. The listener already knew, from many hearings, who the new character was and so their name was not of great importance.

Third, there are occasional figures of speech that may echo expressions in the original Gamil'raay, for example “the night smelt cold” (3B, MS Page 14) and listening "with both ears" (3C, MS Page 3).

Finally, perhaps the most striking stylistic feature of the stories about Red Kangaroo (at least for us moderns) is the Byzantine flatness of the characters.

In a Byzantine Life of the Saint ("hagiography") there is no sense of the individuality of the actors as people. One looks in vain for any sense of the Saint's psychological development. He (rarely she) always routs demons; puts physicians to shame; offers alms to poor widows; never wavers in his purpose. Byzantine mosaics are the same: the Virgin cradling the Christ-child always stares into space; Christ Pantocrator [the 'Ruler of All'] wears a beard invariably parted down the middle.

Individuality is missing, or rather it is not attempted.

Likewise in the Kamilaroi tales: the actors think and feel, but their thoughts and feelings are wholly predictable. The actors behave as stereotypes. The young Coonabarabran captive-wives, Nareen and Naroo, both act as any strong-hearted young woman would act. Indeed there is nothing at all to tell the pair apart. If you know how a young woman with a strong heart should act, then you already know how they will both act. Likewise Red Kangaroo’s older friend, Burradella, acts as any wise and loyal friend should act. And the selfish “chief” Jerrabri is suitably jealous, envious of and angry with Red Kangaroo. In short, they are stock figures (I almost wrote stick figures!)\textsuperscript{169}

The same applies to Red Kangaroo himself. He behaves as any powerful war-leader would behave. In this he is just like a Byzantine saint: a paragon of power and ability from his earliest childhood, with no negative aspects, and whose spiritual strength

Part of the reason may have been a different ‘culture of emotion’ in ‘pre-modern’ societies (Byzantine, Icelandic and Aboriginal). In the Icelandic sagas, the characters seem to us to have crude thoughts and rudimentary feelings. They almost never talk in any depth about what they are feeling, and words for emotional states (as distinct from behaviours) are rare. William I Miller has argued (in various essays and books including \textit{The Anatomy of Disgust} and \textit{Humiliation}) that this difference is more than a difference between our norms and the codes of honour in the Middle Ages. He proposes that in pre-modern societies, emotion was overwhelming a social matter, nota private one. People did not usually experience emotion as an essentially personal experience (as perhaps we moderns do). They did not “feel” angry; they just “were” angry. A any rate, the saga writers present their characters as having distinctive and usually permanent dispositions: cunning, fierce, affectionate and so on. As a result, when a character’s behaviour is at odds with his known disposition, there is (or was) a pronounced emotional charge for the saga’s audience, especially when a situation hinges on rules of honour and revenge.

\textsuperscript{169}
(or war-fighting skills), we know in advance, will remain the same throughout his life.\textsuperscript{170}

This 'Byzantine flatness' is by no means unique to Byzantium and Aboriginal Australia. Indeed it is a hallmark of folklore everywhere, to the extent that "mere" folklore is distinguishable from "true" literature. All folklore uses conventional themes and stylistic devices and makes no effort to disguise its conventional quality. Literature (or post-medieval literature at least) by contrast tries to avoid cliches of either form or matter. Folk ballads are very different from the poetry of "art".\textsuperscript{171}

Probably a Kamilaroi camp-audience enjoyed the predictability of the tales just as the Byzantine reading public enjoyed a Saint's Life or as we ourselves enjoy the predictability of a Western movie. Camp tales, hagiographies and westerns, in their different ways, all offer edification and also wish-fulfilment. It is precisely because they are so utterly predictable that they are so deeply satisfying.

Or to make the point in a cruel way: originality and individualism are the sickness of modernity (as in Freud's \textit{Civilisation and Its Discontents}).

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\textbf{5. Who Was Red Kangaroo? Outline Of His Life And Career}

Before proceeding to the documents, it is useful to present a summary of Red Kangaroo's ("RK's") life, career and character.

\textit{His Life}


\textsuperscript{171} Taylor, Folklore and the Student of Literature, in Dundes, ed, \textit{Folklore} 1965: 39-40.
The documents call RK variously “chief”, “war-chief”, “great warrior chief” and “great chief and warrior”. For example: Document 3B, p2 and p6. He was the “greatest warrior chief the Nam moy River [Gunnedah] tribe ever had” (3B, p98). On the other hand, he is also called a “headman” (3A, p8).

He lived before the time of a great flood, said to have occurred in about 1750 (Document 1: paras 14-15). This may imply that he ‘flourished’ [Latin floruit] in about 1730. If so, then we may guess that he was born in about 1680, making him 50 in about 1730. The Sydney Mail proposes that he died in “about 1745” (1:21).

We can construct the broad outlines of his life from the references to his age at the time he carried out various exploits:

Age 17: RK’s age at the time of his expedition into Coonabarabran territory to capture wives (Document 3B, p17).

Age 17-18: By this time RK had already killed five men: two raiders from Narrabri, two Coonabarabran men who tried to prevent him taking two wives, and the leading "chief" at Gunnedah, a man called Jerrabri (3B, pp17, 29). But RK declined the community’s request to become their war-leader. He preferred to serve as one among several band leaders for two years: "[M]y head is only a boy’s now, and the tribe needs middle-aged heads to think and plan for wars ... Give me a

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172 Here the Sydney Mail article (Document One) is cited by paragraph number. So “1:7” means the seventh paragraph in Document One. I have used the paragraph number for the 1945 letter, Document 3A. The longer documents, 3B and 3C, are cited by the page numbering of the manuscripts (not the pagination of this book). Thus “3B, p7” means at the seventh page of the manuscript of Document 3B, not paragraph 7 or page 7 of this book.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

*fighting-party leadership under your new chief* (3B, p30).

Age 19: Became “warrior chief”.

Age 21: RK had been “a chief of two years” when he led the counter-raid against the Cassilis men. This was regarded as his greatest exploit (3B, p34; 3C, p1).

Late 30s: By this time, the Gunnedah community or tribelet had been built up, and RK had led raids against Walgett, Moree, Murrurundi and into New England (3B, pp30-31).

Aged 40: He led the Gunnedah, Goonoo Goonoo and Manilla men on a grand expedition into New England (3B, pp30-31).

Age at death: Not mentioned.

*His Physical and Moral Qualities*

Red Kangaroo (RK) was a tall and large man. The size and structure of the arm-bones make clear that he was “a man of powerful nerves and muscles” (Document 1: 26). He was, said Dr Haynes, “simply a giant” (1:26).

Haynes, who examined the skeleton, deduced that RK was over 190 cm tall (“6 ft 3in or 4in”) (Document 1: 30), which was some 12-14% above the average height of Aboriginal people in the 19th century. (The average for both Aboriginal and white people has risen noticeably since then.)

To quote Document 3B: "He was so tall and broad to look upon that enemies quailed on sight of him. His war weapons were heavier and bigger than other warriors'. And shields had to be made of
tough wood because he often split a shield with his second spear if the spears had been taken point on shield." }

Joe Bungaree speaks of him as "deep-chested and broad-shouldered" (3B, p17). The documents also stress his "loud and feared" voice (3C, p15). As a teenager, his voice got stronger "every month" (3B, p17).

There is some confusion about whether RK’s skeleton lacked an upper tooth, the removal of the first bi-cuspid being the sign of an initiated man. John and Stan Ewing say the tooth was indeed missing, as one would expect (3A, p9; 3B, p8 and p10). According to the Sydney Mail, however, all his teeth were present (1:31).

It is almost certain that the Ewings were right and the Mail was wrong on this point. After all, archaeology shows that the practice of tooth avulsion goes back over 7,000 years in southern Australia. In Kamilaroi country itself we have a jaw with an avulsed tooth from Collarenebri that is over 1,000 years old.\(^\text{173}\)

Strong-willed: As a teenager, RK already had “strong ideas” about people’s rights and duties under customary law (3B, p17). Although he was still young, already the older men could see that he would one day become the leader in war (3B, p19).

War Wounds

According to the Sydney Mail, RK had both his arms broken. “The old traditions state that [he] had both arms broken, his thigh speared, many ribs smashed and wounds in the head” (Document 1: 16, 1: 28).

An examination of the skeleton confirmed most of this, and showed also that both lower bones in one leg had been fractured (1: 27-29). Stan Ewing, however, was adamant that just one arm was

\(^{173}\) Campbell & Prokopec 1984; and Pardoe 1987.
broken. John Ewing too seems to imply that only one was broken (3B, p83; A:5). This is very difficult to accept. RK was the leader in many battles and surely would have been wounded many times. So it is much more likely that, here, the Sydney Mail was correct.

_family and friends_

RK’s father had been killed when RK was still a child (Document 3B, p19). Accordingly it was an uncle, rather than his father, who gave him fire with which to light his first campfire as a married man (3B, p19).

RK inherited from his father a prized shield with a V-shaped end (3B, p26). As Joe Bungaree explained, “War weapons were hard to make, so old, old men of tribe long, long time ago said ‘give dead man’s weapons to his blood kin or best friends’”.

There is no mention of his mother. All we know about her is that given the rules of descent she must have belonged to the Yibadhaa kinship-group or section (their sons were all Gambu section) and, like her son, she must have belonged to the Red Kangaroo (Ganuurru) totem. Thus her kin-names were Yibadhaa Ganuurru.

RK had two wives, Nareen and Naroo, who he captured from the Coonabarabran people (3B, p25; 3C, p12). He fathered at least two children. We are told that both his wives had a baby child at the time of the raid on Gunnedah by the Cassilis men (3C, p12). In Aboriginal society the influential men tended to have many wives. It is highly likely therefore that he took more than two wives and had many children. But this is not attested.

Document 3B speaks generally of RK’s “friends and relations” (3B, p18). Little else is said on this topic. Burradella, a man about 38 years old, is described in the tale of the counter-raid against Cassilis, as “a close friend of Red Kangaroo’s . . .
wise in the tribe’s councils, fearless in war and 2nd chief of the tribe”. It may seem odd that a 38-year-old would befriend a 21-year old. But perhaps Burradella had seen that the younger man represented the community’s best hope as their future “first chief”.

Career

RK achieved his first notable exploit when he was a “newly made warrior”. This probably meant at age 15 or 16. A strong raiding party from Narrabri came to Gunnedah looking to steal women. RK killed two of the raiders (Document 3B, p17).

It was not only at fighting that he excelled. As a teenager he was already a good dancer in corroborees, “the strongest dancer and the most active of all” (3B, p17).

Next, when still 17, RK went into the country of the Coonabarabran people and captured two young women as his first wives (3B, p22). On this expedition he was challenged by a leading Coonabarabran man, killing him with his father’s pointed or V-edged shield (3B, p26).

On his return RK spoke against the elders, and then defeated the 38-year old “chief” Jerrabri in a duel, killing him too with the V-edged shield (3B, pp22 ff; 3B, p29).

As noted, RK became ‘chief’ at age 19, and in a two year period defeated four raids by wife-seeking raiders from four other communities and led the Gunnedah men on two successful wife-stealing raids (3C, p1).

At the age of about 21, after two years as “a chief”, he achieved what was regarded as his most impressive feat. He rallied the Gunnedah men against a large raiding party from powerful Cassilis, ambushed them, and then led a decisive counter-raid on the Cassilis home-camp (3B, pp 34-45, and 3C, pp1-2 ff). This brought Gunnedah to the early peak of its power: “with the downfall of Cassilis
came the strength of the Nammoy River tribe under RK" (3C, p17).

In addition, in his prime, he led wars against ( - in alphabetical order): Barraba-Bingara (the "Walleri or Gwydir blacks"), Bundarra, Coonabarabran, Goonoo Goonoo, Kingstown, Manilla, Narrabri, Quirindi, Terry Hie Hie and Walgett (1: 21; 3B, p16; and 3B, pp30-31). "Before he was 40 years old, his tribe had 140 spears, and young warriors coming into the war-parties every year. Six small tribes had been absorbed into the original, and every warrior had a wife" (3B, p31).

By the time RK was 40, peace had been negotiated with Goonoo Goonoo and Manilla. He led a large combined force of their men and his against the highland Kingstown-Bundarra people. RK killed the leading Bundarra man, Kibbi, using on this occasion a spear rather than the special sharp-pointed shield (3B, p32).

As it appears, the Gunnedah community reached its greatest strength during RK’s 40s, after the raid into New England (3B, pp30-31).

As noted earlier, RK died “20 moons” before a great flood that is supposed to have taken place in about 1750. This is interpreted by the Mail reporter (or by his white informant Dr Haynes) as meaning that our hero died in “about 1745” (Document 1: 21).

His age at death is not recorded. It seems implied (by omission) that he died a natural death. Quite possibly, but this must be a guess, he lived out his allotted “three score years and 10”.

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174 According to Idriess 1953, chapter 34, the Gunnedah men under Red Kangaroo’s leadership also raided Coonamble, Gulargambone, Moree, Murrurundi, Tamworth [presumably distinct from Goonoo Goonoo], Walcha, Warialda and Wingen. The surviving MSS as published here do not list these names. Idriess may have drawn on other papers now lost, or perhaps he created an imaginary list.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

**Line Illustrations**

1. Sketch of the Liverpool Plains 1818-20: view west from near Curlewis
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

2. Red Kangaroos 1839, drawn by Richter for Gould
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

3. ‘Woolshed Plain’, water colour by anon. 1867
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

4. View from ‘Gunnible’ run, water colour by anon. 1867
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

5. Another view from ‘Gunnible’ run, water colour by anon.
1867
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

6. Drawing of caved tree from ‘Burburgate’: after Etheridge 1918
The town of Gunnedah is a beautiful quiet village in the Liverpool Plains. Its people have formed themselves into a collection of happy cliques, each trying to tell the other what to do, but eventually helping them to do it. Its large main street seems to have been laid out and planted to inspire poetry and court the mind to leisure and lull it to rest. Some excellent buildings break the unpleasant monotony of the small rookeries that housed the pioneer fathers of the happy homes that make this the substantial easy-going place it is.

Commentary:
Village: With a white population of 1,362 according to the NSW census of 1891, and probably about 30-35 Aborigines. A photograph taken in 1887, reproduced in Buchanan’s booklet, shows Gunnedah
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

looking more like a large village than a small town.\textsuperscript{175}

\textit{Small rookeries:} Possibly meaning the carriers’ shanties mentioned under 1864 in our chronology of Gunnedah (see earlier).

2. “The “City of the Dry Plains” as Gunnedah is known by the whites, or the “Home of the Fatherless and Motherless” as its name implies in the nomenclature of the Kamelroi [sic] blacks, is inhabited by some 1,200 people, and has a reputation for cattle and sheep growing second to but very few places in this colony or out of it.”

\textit{Motherless:} As explained in the Introduction, there are two overlapping or competing traditions concerning the town’s name. Some sources said that it was Gùuniidha, meaning ‘at [the place of] white stone(s)’ (perhaps more likely). Others said that it was Gunidyàà, meaning ‘motherless child; orphan’ (probably less likely).

\textit{Kamelroi:} More usually ‘Kamilaroi’. In the style of the modern linguists: Kamil’raay or Gamil’raay. Pronounced as if composed of the three English words ‘gum+ill+rye’. The third syllable was often omitted or at least left unstressed.

The difference between K and G is ‘not phonemic’. That is to say, the difference between the two sounds never changed the meaning of a word. ‘Cambu Canuru’, ‘Gambu Ganuurru’ and ‘Kambu Kanuurru’ all had the same meaning.

\textsuperscript{175} Photograph and census data: Buchanan 1985: 7, 19. Aborigines: cf 45 people counted in 1882 and 17 in 1896 (VPLA NSW).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

3. “The ‘city’ is destined, by its location in a large and fertile district, to some day make a name in the commercial and industrial history of the white man commensurate with that it held in the annals of the blacks, who now transmit its history in their descending legendary song.

4. As the archaeology and ethnology of the [A]boriginal tribes of Australia are always interesting, I took the pains to search out all authentic information I could relating to a great chief whose deeds I have so often heard related elsewhere. The finding of Cumbo Gunerah’s grave and bones, with all the marks to verify the traditional tales and songs of his prowess, is an interesting item in aboriginal history.”

Great chief: The majority opinion among anthropologists holds that there were no chiefs and no formal councils of elders among the Aborigines.  

CHIEFS: Whether there existed a (male) gerontocracy is a much debated point. For the history of the debate, see Hiatt 1965: 143 ff, Hiatt 1996: 86 ff and 96 ff and Hiatt 1998; also Keen 1989 and Edwards 1998. The minority who believe there were councils of elders includes some eminent names, notably R M and C H Berndt and T G H Strehlow. 

Certainly Aboriginal society was very patriarchal. The difficult question is how far older men influenced or even controlled the decisions affecting a whole tribelet or community.

A W Howitt, for one, preferred to believe that ‘headmen’ did have a power of control, at least among the Wiradjuri of south-central NSW (1904: 303 ff; 319 ff). But he was relying on people’s latter-day memories of how traditional society had previously operated. When we turn to James Günther, who knew the Wiradjuri in the earliest period (before 1840), we find that he reported the elders’ influence as quite limited (Günther’s Lecture, Mitchell Library MS no. B.505, cited in Reynolds, With the White People 1990: 96-97).

The problem is to explain how old men could have managed to control young men, something that usually the proponents of
Older Aboriginal men usually took the lead in influencing community affairs. The oldest men would speak freely, while middle-aged men - especially those with the reputation of fighting well or speaking well - would sometimes speak. Women and younger men usually remained silent. So, because the community deliberated as a group, and because the older men spoke more than the rest, it often appeared that there was a (male) council of elders.

It is important to remark that the absence of chiefs is not the same thing as the absence of leaders. Individuals would become leaders because their knowledge or ability persuaded others to follow them in certain contexts. The term ‘Big-Man’ is sometimes used for influential men. So we may speak of Red Kangaroo as a leader (in war) even if we may not properly speak of him as a chief. No doubt there were others who took the lead in other communal pursuits such as hunting, religious ceremonies and secular dancing (“corroborees”). We need not believe that Red Kangaroo organised or decisively influenced everything that the Gunnedah people did as a group.

Cumbo Gunerah: First mention of his name. In the “Italian-style” spelling style preferred by linguists, this is Gamu Ganiuuru. Cumbo or Gambu was his Section name. Gunerah [= Kanuurr +u or +a] was his totem or matri-clan name.

‘headmen’ do not do. Warner states that the elders controlled younger men by prohibiting, or threatening to prohibit, their initiation into certain ceremonies. But he also concedes that the secular power of a religious or ceremonial leader was slight and that the senior elders exercised their leadership in the field of ritual rather than government (Warner 1937/1958: 131, 389).
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Kanuurr or Ganguurr meant 'RED KANGAROO'. This was his totem name. It is not certain which suffix is represented by "ah", but I will guess that it was +u, the suffix marking the ergative-instrumental case.\(^{177}\) Ganguurr was spelt as "ganoor" by the squatter-ethnographer-clergyman Charles Greenway, and as "canuhr" on the 1984 plaque installed in Abbott Street. Stress fell on the long vowel, thus: ganguurr and ganguurr.

One of the earliest formal accounts of the red kangaroo, *Macropus rufus*, was by the English zoologist John Gould, who is best remembered for his studies of bird life.\(^{178}\) Gould described the red kangaroo's range as including the Liverpool Plains ("the plains bordering the rivers Gywdyr [sic], Namoi and Morumbidgee [sic]"). He mentions seeing a pair of the animals resting under a group of myall trees on "the plains near the Namoi" in 1839. This was probably a reference to the Breeza Plains.\(^{179}\)

Population numbers in 1839 were small, and Gould feared that the guns of the settlers might soon exterminate the species. This fear was indeed almost realised. The

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\(^{177}\) Ergative-instrumental case: subject of a transitive verb; agent of an intransitive verb.

\(^{178}\) Your humble editor had the honour, at Tambar Springs in 1961, to be one of many members of the Gould League of Bird Lovers. Cf St Augustine: "Love calls us to the things of this world". Literally: *the lovely things of Your creation*: in his *Confessions* X: 27.

As I recall, our main duty was to stop other boys stealing birds' eggs from their nests. I thought this a quaint idea, as I had never imagined boys stealing birds' eggs. They did of course; but I had never seen my favourite cousin do so, and if he didn't, well nobody did.

\(^{179}\) Gould used the name "Osphranter rufus" for our *Macropus rufus*. See the watercolour portrait, probably by Richter, with notes by Gould, in Gould, John: *A Monograph of the Macropodidae, or Family of Kangaroos*. Two parts. London: published by The Author, 1841-1842.
Red kangaroo was nearly extinct on the Liverpool Plains during the century 1860-1960 (although increasingly numerous further west). Eric Rolls, the historian of the Pilliga Scrub [Map 1], notes that in the mid 20th century red kangaroos spread east into heavily timbered country “that they had never encountered before” (i.e. since about 1860). They were seen in increasing numbers in the east from the 1960s.180

5. “I am indebted to Dr Haynes for very valuable assistance in collecting the information in this article. Dr Haynes is a brother of Mr John Haynes, MLA for Mudgee. He is Government medical officer, surgeon to the hospital, captain of the rifle corps and Mayor of Gunnedah - a perfect encyclopaedia of industry.

6. In his capacity of medical officer he has a lot to do with the blacks in the district. These blacks now belong to two different tribes that speak different languages. These languages are the languages of the old tribes, but those now in existence are themselves a mixture or aggregate of many remnants of the tribes.”

Haynes: Dr EDWARD J A HAYNES, c.1830-1909, the town’s physician, was an alderman in 1890, and, for less than a year, in 1891, the mayor of Gunnedah. Born in West Maitland, Haynes studied at Sydney University and the London Medical College. He died at Hamilton NSW in 1909 [BDM record no.13605, 1909].

Tribes: This confusing sentence seems to slip from ‘tribes’ defined by dialect (“the old

‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

... tribes”) to ‘tribes’ defined by residence (“those now in existence”).

Different languages: Three languages are mentioned in the present document: Gamilaraay proper; Guyinbaraay or “Coonbri” (itself as variant of Gamilaraay); and Waalaraay or “Walleri”.

‘Old Maggie’ placed the speech-variant Coonbri or Guyinbaraay at Terry Hie Hie, on the north side of the Nandewars [Map 2]. This seems to be an error, which is to say: probably an error on the part of Haynes or the Travelling Correspondent. The standard sources, Ridley and Mathews, locate the Guyinbaraay dialect at and around Gunnedah itself.

Waalaraay was the language of the area where the Horton River enters the Gwydir River, west of Bingara (O’Rourke, Kamilaroi Lands 1997).

Maggie is quoted in the article as saying, “There are very few of our tribes left now. We are mixed up with the Coonbri. When the Walleri or Big River [Gwydir] Blacks fought us they killed a great number of our tribe, but when the white man came we began to die right out.” At a guess, these statements would translate as follows:

>>There are few Aboriginal people still surviving. My own group is nowadays mixed up with the Gunnedah people known as the Guyinbaraay. When the Waalaraay or Horton-Gwydir River men fought the Gunnedah men, they killed a great number. ... <<

7. “The story of Cumbo has been drawn piecemeal from Old Maggie, who is now about 91 years old, and others who verify it. Cumbo’s grave was
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

discovered by Dr Haynes himself upon information obtained. I prefer letting him tell the story; here it is:"

Old Maggie: As explained in the Introduction, this was probably Margaret "Mag" Griffin, born at Binnie Mountain 1851; died at Gunnedah 1904.

Age 91: This figure is very puzzling. If we are right in believing she was Margaret Griffin, Maggie was aged only 36 in 1887 and 40 in 1891, when this document was published.

Others: This probably refers to Joe Bungaree (see Document 3B).

8. >> Since my arrival here, I [Haynes] have spent much time in drawing from the old blacks some account of the tribes before the white man came among them. I could buy but little information and found that kindness drew the most from them. They are cautious about divulging their race traditions, being considered tribal secrets and sacred to the tribe. I could never get a full account of Cumbo Gunerah, whose bones you see there, until Old Maggie - who has lived here for years, sometimes going down the Mooki to Breeza - gave it to me.<<

Came among them: As noted in the Introduction, the first explorers - Oxley in 1818, Cunningham in 1827 and Mitchell in 1831 - all skirted the district. Cunningham came the closest, crossing the Namoi River near Carroll (between Tamworth and Gunnedah, nearer the latter). See Map 2.

The first white man known to have reached the site of Gunnedah itself - the
Mooki-Namoi junction - was the convict escapee, George ‘the Barber’ Clarke. He joined the Gamil’raay band at Boggabri in the late 1820s. Cattlemen crossed the Liverpool Ranges and advanced into the Namoi basin during 1826-31; it was not until 1832 that they began to occupy the immediate area of Gunnedah on a permanent basis.

Down the Mooki: The Mooki River enters the Namoi on the north-east of the town. Although the word “down” is used, Breeza is actually upstream from Gunnedah on the Mooki River. See Map 2.

9. “It appears that, from the accounts given by the old blacks (and there are some 70, 80 and 90 years old about here), Gunnedah, being pretty well surrounded by mountains and on the edge of a great plain, was selected as the seat and main camp of the powerful Kamelroi tribe. <<

Mountains ... great plain: The front (northern section) of Porcupine Ridge overlooks the town from the south. Otherwise the country is open on all sides and generally flat. There are hills here and there, but the only major line of hills is the Melville Range which cuts into the basin from the south-east. The Melville hills divide the Mooki River from the Peel River. The landmark peak, Duri Mountain, lies a little over 50 kilometres from Gunnedah.

Thus the mountains "surround" Gunnedah only to the extent of forming a far horizon: the heights of the Nandewars are over 50 kilometres away (the nearest high peak, Mt Byar, is fully 55 kilometres away and the
highest points closer to 80 kilometres away), while the Liverpool Ranges lie 90 kilometres distant, and the Warrumbungles are 110 kilometres away.

The seat: Gunnedah was a ‘seat’ only in the sense of being the main summer campsite of one community or tribelet. It was far from being the only such “seat”. Other Gamilaraay-speaking communities had their main summer camps as close as Manilla (50 kilometres) and Goonoo Goonoo (65 kilometres). It must be emphasised moreover that during a large part of the year each community or tribelet dispersed across its territory in smaller groups.\footnote{Manilla and Goonoo Goonoo: see in the text, Document 3B, MS Page 31. Harry Allen, cited by Keen 2004: 112, proposes that in central NSW more than half of the population lived away from the main river during winter.}

Nor should we imagine Gunnedah as having many huts packed closely together, like a Native American encampment in a movie. It is clear enough that the people were often spread out, or they shifted camp, across eight or nine kilometres along the
Gunnedah stretch of the Namoi: from the Mullibah Lagoon camp near the Mooki River junction to the Burrell Lagoon camp. (There is a whole series of billabongs or lagoons along the 12 kilometres of the river from Gunnedah down to 'Burburgate'.)

10. “I looked out to the north of the town, about 15 miles, and met the bold, precipitous Warrumbungle Range, and standing out in bold relief from this range is ‘The Rock’, a huge block of sandstone such as checked the great Hannibal [sic] in his descent upon the inland plains.”

Warrumbungle Range: An error. It is the Nandewars that lie north of Gunnedah, at about 80 kilometres (or 40 kilometres or 25 miles if we count just to the foothills). The Warrumbungles lie south-west, and much further away.

The Rock: Perhaps a reference to Mt Ningadhn in the Nandewars, a volcanic plug that juts out of the side of the larger mass of Mt Kaputar. But more likely, “15 miles” [about 25 kilometres] indicates that the author meant Nobby Rock. This is a prominent feature in the hills 15 kilometres north-east of Gunnedah in the direction of the present-day Keepit Dam. The words "huge block" are accurate, if Nobby Rock is meant.

His descent: Here the Travelling Correspondent, or a sub-editor at The Sydney Mail, may be confusing ancient Rome’s great opponent, Hannibal, with the latter-day explorer Major Mitchell. Perhaps
the *Sydney Mail*’s sub-editor simply mis-corrected ‘Mitchell’ to ‘Hannibal’? The Carthaginian general Hannibal crossed the Alps into northern Italy to confront the ancient Romans. It was the Scotsman Mitchell who (in 1831) was checked in the Nandewars before descending onto the *inland plains* of modern NSW.

11. “To the south west is *Black Jack*, the bold, lone mountain of coal, joining, by its spurs, a bit to the west, the Sugarloaf Mountain and Binalong Range. Here in this *fortress valley* were gathered the *helpless*, the old and the infirm, the women and children, where they could be easily defended, and left with tolerable safety while the chief led his warriors to battle or away in the more peaceful hunt for wallaby, *turkey* or emu.”

*Black Jack Mountain*: A prominent hill of 600 metres, about seven kilometres south-west of the town. See Map 3. A major deposit of coal was discovered there in the 1880s. *Sugarloaf Mountain*: Map 4.

We may doubt that Gunnedah really served as a “*fortress valley*”. This tag, I think, is just a rhetorical flourish on the part of the *Sydney Mail* journalist. Certainly there was a “secret camp” nearby, used as a place of refuge. Its location is never quite specified; only that it was somewhere in the hop-vine scrub on the slopes of Porcupine Ridge (see in ‘The Cassilis Raid’, Document 3C). Otherwise, the stretch of the Namoi River at Gunnedah was just as open and defenceless as many another site.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

It follows, I believe, that Gunnedah was simply the summer base for this community. Naturally their base was raided by enemies on more than one occasion. People camped at Gunnedah, I would suggest, not because of any special defensive features the site possessed, but simply because, being near the Mooki junction and rich in river foods, it was a very good part of the river on which to meet during summer. There were (are) many large billabongs along the Gunnedah-'Burburgate' stretch of the river.

Turkey: It is not clear whether this refers to the plains turkey (bustard) or the brush turkey, which are different species. Since the bird in question is mentioned alongside the emu, we may guess that it is the bustard that is meant.

The Australian bustard, Ardedotis australis, was known to the Kamilaroi as barawa (spelt ‘burrowar’ by Bucknell). The brush turkey or scrub turkey, Alectura lathami, was known to the Kamilaroi as wagun; also wirrilaa (spelt ‘wirraller’ by Bucknell). Both species are now locally extinct - except in the Pilliga Scrub, where, as Rolls 1981 notes, some brush turkeys survive, or did, in the 1970s.182

12. “The plain and the hillside scrub were well supplied with food and water, thus fairly entitling Gunnedah to its name, ‘the Home of the Fatherless and Motherless’, or, as the blackfellow puts it, ‘no fader, no moder’. The wallaby, wallaroo, bundarra (Kamelroi for kangaroo) and the delicious opossum183 of Gunnedah were noted far beyond the

182 Bucknell 1933; Rolls 1981.
183 This means Australian possums, not the opossum of the Americas (MO’R).
ranges for their flavour and tenderness. The o’cow and the o’sheep have taken up the running and do no discredit to their indigenous forerunner, the opossum. To the head camp all the old people and the widows and orphans of those who fell in battle were sent. It seemed that those who suffered by some misfortune were principally housed and defended in this Eden. <<

Entitling: It is hard to see how “fatherless and motherless” might have a connection with good supplies of food and water. Ridley said the name implied ‘place of the destitute’. But perhaps the Sydney Mail author was proposing that those who arrived destitute soon revived when they gained access to Gunnedah’s plentiful food and water.

Fader/moder: The two ‘th’ sounds of English (this and then) are not found in Aboriginal languages. So people who learnt English imperfectly would tend to say ‘faa-dha’ and ‘ma-dha’.

Bundarra: i.e., bandaarr +a. The suffix +a marks the locative/dative case. Thus the name meant “at (the place of) the kangaroo [eastern grey kangaroo]”.

To the head camp + defended: As noted earlier, I believe that the Mooki-Namoi junction was simply the main summer camping site of the Gunnedah community and not a special place of refuge.

13. “All along the banks of the Namoi existed camps of Cumbo’s followers. Wherever there was a ‘bri’ there was a camp. Bri means plentiful supply
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of water. Hence we have Boggabri (long water), Narrabri (shallow water), Therrabri (swampy water), and so on. From all these bris were collected the inhabitants of the main camp whose qualifications were something like the following - years of residence on the river, having grown old or infirm, or having displayed great valour as a warrior, or great skill as a game-catcher, and being unable to further practise these avocations. <<

Cumbo’s followers: In truth, the middle Namoi River groups were often mutually hostile. Ridley 1875 recorded, for example, an old man’s account of a clash between the Wee Waa people and the band living around ‘Burburgate’ (downstream from Gunnedah). And, in the Ewing transcripts, the Narrabri men - possibly the same as Ridley’s Wee Waa community - are enemy raiders killed by a very young Red Kangaroo/Gambu Ganuurru in one of his first exploits (Document 3B, MS Page 17) [cf map of territories: Map 2].

On the other hand, relationships could also be friendly. For example, Document 3B relates how Ganuurru struck an alliance with the men of Manilla and Goonoo Goonoo to attack an enemy group in what is now New England.

Bri = +baraay, a suffix that also occurs as +mbaraay and +araay (“-aroi”).

The “bri” or “roi” suffix did not mean ‘plentiful water’. Literally it meant “with” or “having”. But, if water was not part of the actual denotation, then it may well have been implied in the place-names. Compare Boggabri: one tradition renders its meaning as “with (many) creeks”, i.e., Bagaaybaraay, from bagaay ‘creeks’ + baraay ‘having’.
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It should be noted that no other source gives “long water” as the meaning of Boggabri, nor “shallow water” for Narrabri.\(^{184}\)

*Collected ... from all these bris:* This is not likely to be correct, because the various communities were often hostile to each other. As mentioned earlier, the Ewing Papers record that Ganuurru fought against the Narrabri men (Document 3B, MS page 17). On the other hand, Document 3B also records that in Red Kangaroo’s heyday the Gunnedah community absorbed a number of smaller, neighbouring groups.

14. “There are records of certain great epochs handed down in the legendary stories or songs. One of these is the great flood that must have happened in about 1750, when, through a protracted wet winter, many of the old hands died off with a cough or what medical science would call an epidemic pneumonia. This is fairly inferred, as those who were moved across the river to a drier and healthier spot, known afterwards as the ‘Wietalabah’, lost the cough. But the continued rain, and the reported prophecy of a great flood by the old blacks, caused all the people to be moved to the hills. It is said that no sooner had this been done than the flood came. It deluged the whole country and even the camp fires at ‘Wietalabah’ were submerged. Hence the name ‘Wietalabah’, meaning ‘fires all gone out’. There are unmistakable traces and evidences that the Mooki and Namoi have changed their courses which doubtless happened at the time of this great flood.<<

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\(^{184}\) The sources, and the difficulties of reconstructing the meanings of place-names, are discussed in O’Rourke 1997.
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Great flood: William Telfer junior of Tamworth mentions Aboriginal traditions of a "cobbong flood" [cobbong = gabawaang, pidgin for 'very big'] in which "the ridges about Gunnedah were swept away by the great rush of water in its course down the Namoi country" (emphasis added). The flood-waters covered an immense area "300 miles long [with] a large lot of islands in the middle of it".\textsuperscript{185}

This reads like an overstatement, given that "300 miles", more than 480 kilometres, is longer (as the crow flies) than the entire length of the Namoi Valley. But Telfer’s point would be that he was told that the larger part of the Peel-Mooki-Namoi basin was submerged, from above Quirindi and Tamworth through Narrabri to beyond Walgett.

It is stated (below: para. 15) that the "great flood" came after Red Kangaroo’s death. The burial ground where he was interred was located barely above the highest modern flood (see Map 12). But the grave and the trees around it survived. It would seem to follow either (a) that the flood of "about 1750" was not so overwhelming as to wash away the burial ground; or (b) that the line of the Namoi ran more to the north than it now does.

\textit{Wietalabah . . . across the river:} Doubtless a reference to the high ground north-east from Gunnedah that afterwards formed the hinterland of Parnell’s station ‘Weetaliba’ [as it is spelt today].\textsuperscript{186} The modern homestead

\textsuperscript{185} Telfer, quoted in Milliss \textit{Waterloo Creek} 1992: 29.
\textsuperscript{186} Spelt "Wec Tuliba" in the NSW Government Gazette 1848. The homestead or huts of Parnell’s ‘Weetaliba’ station were located on the north-east side of the Namoi-Mooki junction, i.e.
of 'Weetaliba' is on the Namoi eight kilometres upstream from Gunnedah [Map 3].

It seems implied ("even the camp fires at 'Wietalabah' were submerged") that the people moved thence into the Nandewar foothills or, perhaps more likely, into the small range ("the hills") that includes Nobby Rock. See Map 4.

‘Wietalabah’ [wiidhalibaa] meant literally "lacking fire or firewood", from 'fire [wii] +lacking [-dhalibaa]"; the understood meaning was probably 'hearthless, unpartnered, having no one to cook for him'. Plainly there was always plenty of firewood in the district. The name possibly referred to the time of the great flood, when no dry wood could be found; or it may have referred to some particular event, when a person lived there on their own.

About 1750: It is not clear why this "must" have been the date. Perhaps the author was imagining there had been a proverbial 100 year flood, and 100 years subtracted from 1850 is 1750. As will be seen, the article says later that Gambu Ganuurru died "20 moons" before the great flood. This is interpreted by the reporter, or by Haynes, as meaning that he died in "about 1745".

The dating of 1745/1750 ought be testable against the life-span and decay rates of trees. Any such test, of course, will be very crude. "What is the longest time diagonal across from ‘Gunnedah’. The run itself extended over most of the hinterland north of the river, i.e. towards Kelvin. Longmuir 1956:17 says that 'Gunnible' was "another name for" 'Weetaliba' or Wee Tuliba, Thomas Parnell's run. He means that the two runs were later joined into one vast holding (cf Gunnedah Committee 1935: 9).

187 Ash et al. 2003: 141.
that Gambu's grave-marker might have survived?" Unfortunately, all we can say is that 1745/1750 is 'not inconsistent' with what we know about the longevity of box-trees, and it cannot be ruled out that Gambu died even earlier (see discussion Appendix Two).

15. “The other epoch marks the powerful and daring chief or king, Cumbo Gunerah, who lived before the great flood, and to whose prowess may be attributed the superiority of the Kamelroi tribe which for over a hundred years, according to aboriginal tradition, had possession of the country from Singleton to above Narrabri and whose power was dreaded by all the adjacent tribes. <<

Tribe/tribes: As noted earlier, this term was used very loosely in the 1800s. It could mean either a band (several tens of people) or a local community (several hundred people) or the whole wider population, distributed in many communities, who shared the one language (sometimes thousands of people).

Attributed - prowess: One person’s efforts around the year 1700 would not explain the wide extent of the Gamilaraay language. But “condensation” around heroes is common in historical tales. Jan Vansina in his Oral Tradition as History (1985) stresses the tendency in oral tradition to keep updating legendary foundational events, keeping them always at a short distance, a couple of generations before one’s own time. And heroes are always placed at the centre of foundational events.
The more rational explanation for the wide extent of the Gamilaraay language is of course materialistic, namely ease of communication on the open slopes, and grass-seed as a rich and reliable staple food, allowing bands to visit and camp together for relatively long periods. The archaeologist Harry Lourandos, in Continent 1997, has shown that this "intensification", as he calls it, took place over several millennia, having begun about 3,500 years ago.

Singleton to above Narrabri: The language was actually spoken from the Upper Hunter basin to beyond the present-day Queensland border. The centre-point of the Gamilaraay-speaking lands lay near Narrabri (see map and discussion in O’Rourke 1997).

16. “His deeds, exploits, name and fame have been handed down in the camp legends, songs and traditions of the Kamelroi and surrounding tribes to this day. That fact alone would make the great warrior the Napoleon of his times, as there is a custom among the blacks of Australia that when a man dies his name is never again spoken by the tribe, and no one is permitted to take such a name. To thus preserve a name is tantamount to saying that the man was practically worshipped or feared as a god in his day. Old Maggie said that so great was the fear of Cumbo, to this day his name was used to frighten or hush children to sleep; she spoke as a mother. Her story is confirmed by the old blacks of the other tribes about, and they also state that his illustrious name was used to fortify the warrior and cheer him on to battle as late as the advent of the white man among themselves. That was in her and their early days. The legends relate that Cumbo won every battle, was in the front rank of attack, and by personal valour and prowess
urged his men on to victory. The old traditions state that this soldier king had both arms broken, his thigh speared, many bones (ribs) smashed and wounds in the head from the tomahawk or battle-axe.<< [Evidently the direct quote from Haynes ends here. MO’R]

Never again spoken/Permitted to take: Personal names were indeed suppressed. It is perhaps for that reason that the Gambu’s personal name is lost to us. But section names such as Gambu and totem-names such as Gauuurrnu were borne by hundreds of individuals in the 1800s, just as they were in the 1700s. Far from being forbidden to take such names, people were obliged to bear section and totem names!

Joe Bungaree explained to Sergeant Ewing that he knew Red Kangaroo’s section and totem names, but could speak them only when away from the burial ground. Thus, in 1887, when the grave was being dug up and Bungaree was standing nearby, he would not tell Haynes the name of the buried man (see in Document 3B, ‘The Death and Career”, MS Page 14).

As a god: This is simply a colourful journalistic phrase. The Kamilaroi were faithful believers in the Thunder-God Baayama and other transcendent beings (see in O’Rourke 1997). They were not likely

188 Howitt 1904: 440 ff, 466.
"1700s": Strictly speaking: Totem names were probably millennia-old, whereas section names were probably only hundreds of years old. This we may deduce from the fact that in historical times [1810-1860] totem names were in use across the whole continent, while section names were spreading from inland Australia eastward and southward towards the coasts (see in Howitt 1904 etc). We may believe that in Gamilaraay culture the four-section system was already deeply embedded by 1700.
to have seen a fellow human as literally or even figuratively a ‘god’.

As a mother: Maggie seems not to have belonged to Gunnedah by birth. Her people’s origins evidently lay on the Coonabarabran side. If so, then Gambu’s ghost would have been ( - when she was young) the ghost of an enemy.

Both arms broken: In Document 3A John Ewing records that “the left upper arm bone (humerus)” was broken. This perhaps - not definitely - implies that just one arm was broken. Stan Ewing was insistent that only one arm had been broken (see Document 3B at MS Page 8). But we may doubt this. It is very difficult to imagine that Red Kangaroo could have led the men of Gunnedah in many battles over several decades and yet have broken just the one arm.

Battle-axe: In truth, “tomahawks” or stone hatchets [Gamil. yuundu] were wood-cutting tools, not weapons. They were too valuable to be risked routinely in combat, a token of their high value being the vast area over which they were traded (axe blanks from the Tamworth district were traded to beyond Walgett). Moreover their short handles made them quite unsuitable for fighting.189

Andrew Abbie (1969) simplifies in stating that stone hatchets were used for fighting and hunting as well as for wood-working.

189 In exact terminology, a hatchet is a chopping instrument used with one hand, whereas an axe requires two hands. A tomahawk originally meant a one-handed weapon tipped with either a blunt or a sharp stone or metal head, or what we might call a ‘Native American mace’. As we use it in Australia, however, tomahawk means a hatchet: Aboriginal stone hatchet and/or British steel hatchet.
True, sometimes they were used in warfare, but only by default, when no better and cheaper instrument was available.  

Spears were the primary weapon of war. For hand-to-hand combat, which was rare, Aborigines ordinarily used waddies and nulla-nullas, i.e., wooden maces and clubs. This is already clear in Bungaree’s narrative (see Document 3C below, e.g. MS Page 11: the ambush).

17. “Having been engaged on the surgical staff of Prince Alexander, the gallant Roumanian [sic] Sovereign in his brilliant campaign against the then King (Milan) of Servia [sic], the doctor became much interested in Maggie’s story of the historic war king of her tribe. So was I [the Travelling Correspondent]. Having been very kind to her, the story she and the other blacks refused to divulge, flowed freely. She would never more give the burial place and no one else would. It was sacred to the tribe and the power of Cumbo still lived in the spirit of the black.”

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Binns and McBryde (1972: 1) usefully list the main uses to which hatchets were put: (a) cutting notches in trees for climbing; (b) cutting open trees (to get possums etc); (c) cutting down trees; (d) cutting off sheets of bark; (e) shaping wooden implements; and (f) cutting/dressing meat and skins.

Surviving hatchets from Manilla, Moree, Walgett and Lake Narran etc are held by the Australian Museum (see in White 1993; and Pulverstaft & Gordon 1994).
Alexander: In 1859, recently freed from centuries of Turkish domination, the Moldavians and Wallachians elected Prince Alexander Cuza to be their first native ruler. In 1861 the two regions were united as Romania, and Alexander took the title King. He was deposed in 1866.

Her tribe: Maggie’s birth-community may have spoken Gamil’raay, but on such evidence as we have, she herself was not from Gunnedah (see Introduction: 2.4 "The Griffin, Cain and Orr Families of Coonabarabran and Gunnedah").

The burial place: It is clear from the Ewing Papers that the townspeople definitely knew the place of his burial. How could it be otherwise? After all, the carved tree, or trees, was located in the bush just a few hundred metres from the old main street and former dray-track (Maitland Street). White people knew generally that mounds in the vicinity of carved trees were Aboriginal graves. The townspeople also knew very early (it was “common knowledge”, writes John Ewing: Document 3A, MS Page 2) that one of the carved stumps marked the buried remains of a “great warrior and chief”.

Perhaps what the whites did not know was the great warrior’s name and the exact nature of his exploits.

18. “A few days before the old woman’s death, when the doctor’s kindness with a little stimulating rum had won her confidence, she divulged the site so many generations a secret in the tribe.”
A secret: It is not correct that burial sites were kept secret. On the contrary, their location was advertised, at least in the case of leading men, by the presence of carved trees beside the grave.

As noted, in Stan Ewing’s account, Sergeant Ewing and the rest of the white community already knew, before it was dug up, that the grave contained the remains of a “chief” who had lived at Gunnedah a long time in the past.

19. “This is her story put in plain English. >>I am now about 91 years old by blackfellows’ way of counting. When I was a girl we used to go to the grave and put out possum rugs over it every evening at full moon<< (a custom she could not exactly account for; only it had been the traditional custom of the blacks, who were then very old when they were young, too, a kind of reverence, she thought, to inspire the young).

20. >>There are very few of our tribes left now. We are mixed up with the Coonbri. When the Walleri or Big River [Gwydir] Blacks fought us they killed a great number of our tribe, but when the white man came we began to die right out (or in her own words, white feller swell [sic] kill all Murri blackfellers).<<”

 Plain English: As is shown when her words are quoted verbatim, Maggie seems to have spoken in ‘frontier pidgin’ rather than standard English. This may appear odd, given that she was born in 1851 to an Irish

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Frontier pidgin: The lingua franca used between whites and Aborigines in the early colonial days. Australian pidgin was constructed largely from English and the Dharruk language of western Sydney; see Dixon et al. 1990 and Troy 1990. For verbatim exchanges in pidgin, see Dawson 1830.
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father and an Aboriginal mother raised among white people. But the colonists continued to use pidgin rather than standard English when conversing with Aborigines to at least mid century (see, for example, in Telfer’s Wallabadah Manuscript).

**Possum Rugs or Robes**: Traditionally the major item of clothing of Aborigines in southeastern Australia.

Although called ‘rugs’, they served as coat, robe, cloak and blanket, and were sometimes very large (over 1.5 metres long or high). They were made from many skins of the common or brush-tail possum sewn together with animal sinew.

Mitchell noted that the Aborigines on the edges of the colonised regions in 1831 supposed "low slang words" to be the colonists' language. Many of the colonists likewise, in using pidgin, imagined that they were speaking the Aborigines' language (Mitchell 1839: 63-64).

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Large: see Document 3B MS Page 14 - man-sized logs wholly wrapped in cloaks. Alexander Harris 1847 (1953: 75) mentions rugs of 30-60 skins. One rug from Victoria was made from 81 (!!) skins and measured 76" by 56" [2.29 metres by 1.68 metres] (Mulvaney 1969: 81).

Early drawings and photographs show "rugs" of differing sizes. Some were more like stoles or shoulder-wraps, while others were like huge cloaks. Only 15 examples have survived, held in museums in Australia and overseas.

A NSW example: Mountford 1963: 534-35 reproduces a unique drawing of the incised designs on the skin side of a rug from the Hunter Valley nearly five feet (149 cm) long, made from 22 skins. The original is held in the USA, catalogued thus: "Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC: Registration No: 5803. Animal: Possum. Place: Australia "near Sydney" (almost certainly from the Hunter River area). Collector: Wilkes’ exploring expedition. Date: 1838-42. Size: L - 58 ½" [149 cm]. W - 57" [145 cm]. Description: Features rectangular pelts. The skins are laid in four rows of six skins each, and sewn on the back, edge to edge with very fine overhand stitch of cotton cord sinew [hence post-colonial: MO'R]. Fur has been left on and the backside of the
Their value can be judged from the fact that the Namoi basin experiences up to five months of frost-days each year.

**COONBRI or Guyinbaraay:** Recorded also by Ridley and Matthews as the name of a local variant of Gamilaraay.

The Coonbri or Guyinbaraay dialect of Gamilaraay belonged to the Burburgate-Gunnedah-Wandobah region. It may have extended to the south-west almost as far as Coonabarabran. In short, Guyinbaraay was the name of the variant of Gamilaraay spoken on and south-west of the central Namoi, the distinctive name being a recognition of some differences in vocabulary from other variants of Gamilaraay.

'Old Maggie' (see below: para. 20) seems to place the Coonbri-speaking people around Terry Hie Hie, or so we have it from the Sydney Mail reporter. According to Ridley and Mathews, Gamilaraay proper was the language spoken in that region [Map 2].

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193 Coonbri: Ridley, on his first major journey in 1855, found Kamilaroi spoken along the Namoi’s southern tributary, the “Mukai” (Mooki) River. On a further trip to the Namoi in 1871, however, he found “Koinbere” or “Goinberai” spoken at Gunnedah, or rather, at ‘Burburgate’ station 15 kilometres downstream.

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Walleri was Waalaraay, the language of the region west of Bingara where the Horton River joins the Gwydir River.¹⁹⁴

White feller kill: As noted in the Introduction, there is no record of whites killing Aborigines in the Gunnedah district, although there were certainly clashes on the upper Mooki River (south-west of Quirindi) in the later 1820s and in the Boggabri-Narrabri region in the early 1830s.

Namoi River Aborigines were reported to have joined in the clashes on the Upper Mooki. But, if we follow the records, we must ascribe the reduction in the population of the Tamworth-Gunnedah region primarily to the diseases brought by the colonists and secondarily to the disruption to Aboriginal food sources. (We may distinguish, I suppose, between the ‘primary’ diseases such as measles, gonorrhoea and syphilis,

Thus the language of ‘Wandobah’ and, by implication, of ‘Burburgate’ and Gunnedah was Guinberai or Koinberai (Austin’s Guyinbarraay). It was, said Ridley, the language spoken “on part of the Liverpool Plains and the Castlereagh River”, with ‘Wirathere’ (Wiradjuri) spoken "lower down the Castlereagh". His placement of the ‘+bri’ language ‘Goinberri’ on the Castlereagh River and part of the Liverpool Plains agrees with the evidence of place-names (map in O’Rourke 1997).

The work of the surveyor and ethnographer R H Mathews, who first visited north-central NSW in 1867, generally confirms Ridley’s results. Mathews too found ‘Guinbarai’ spoken “about Gunnedah”. It was, he explained, a variant of Kamilaroi. The only difference was some lexical items (Ridley 1873: 273 and 1875: 140; Mathews 1903b: 270; Austin et al. 1980).

The Waalaray or ‘Walroy’ tribelet were mentioned in the reports of the Crown Lands Commissioner in 1840s and 1850s. As it appears, their country lay on the north side of the Gwydir, from near Bingara to about Pallamallawa and including Warialda, and also on the south side, extending up the Horton River.

The band of 12 blackfellows that Ridley encountered at Warialda in 1855, who knew or could speak Kamilaroi “as well as Uolaroi (sic)”, were Waalaray speakers (see discussion in O’Rourke 1997).
and the 'second order' diseases 'released' by impoverishment, namely influenza and kidney disease or heart failure manifesting as body-swelling or oedema: "dropsy" as it was known in the 19th century.)

Murri: ‘Man, human being, Aboriginal person’. In Italian-style spelling, mari. Rhymes with English curry and worry.

21. “Long before she was born, her ‘old man blackfellow’ (father) said, the Coonbri tribes around Terry-hi-hi [sic] were very powerful, and had made many depredations on the Kamelroi tribe around Narrabri. To avenge these hostile attacks, Cumbo Gunerah led his warriors against them, and slaughtered every warrior of the Coonbri tribe that fought him. In this battle his arm was broken badly and he died at Gunnedah 20 moons before the great flood. This would be about 1745.”

“Slaughtered every warrior”: This would be an allusion to individual contests, not a mass killing. Not every man in the "tribe" - but rather every individual who came up against Ganuurru - was killed.

About 1745: There was mention earlier of “about 1750”. It is difficult to see how 1745 plus 20 months could yield ‘1750’.

22. “His grave, said the old aboriginal, is near the courthouse, for >>when I was there about 10 years ago [?1881] getting blankets, we were afraid that the white people would build a house over Cumbo’s grave<<.”
Getting blankets: The Aborigines Protection Board, created in 1883, revived the old colonial practice of donating one blanket a year to each Aborigine, usually on Queen Victoria's birthday. The distribution was managed by each local magistrate, which in practice meant the local officer in charge of police.

Finding The Grave
[sub-heading in the original]

23. “The great secret having been drawn out, and the legendary story confirmed by talks and queries among the male members of the old tribes now living, the interesting search for the grave began.”

Male members: Joe Bungaree is mentioned, but not by name (see next paragraph). Curiously, there is no reference to Sergeant Ewing. In the Ewing transcripts the Sergeant plays a key role, introducing Haynes to Bungaree.

24. “In front of the Wesleyan Church and near the court house, on the street crossing the main street of Gunnedah, stood a peculiarly marked old stump. There was a boomerang cut on each side with a yelliman [shield figure] at the bottom. The tree seemed to have been down for years. The carvings were in the bark but the second growth around it showed the growth of many years of development in the tree since the engraver had been there. The search was conducted with the black of another tribe. On reaching the stump he stopped, pointed at the crude headstone and said, “Great man him; big
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chief that feller”, Indicating a place near the street, he continued, “You dig him here all round about two feet, you find him somewhere. Keep out from root. Blackfeller no put grave where root is, for water get in by root”.

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Street crossing the main street: Abbott (earlier Poe) Street, which runs broadly north-south. See Map 12.195

The site of the Wesleyan (Methodist) Church - now the Uniting Church - was gazetted in 1871; the parsonage itself was built in 1880.

Stan Ewing, in Document 3B (below), said “the stump stood opposite the old Wesleyan Parsonage, well back from the roadside of Poe Street (later Abbott Street)”. This shows that the grave was located on the eastern side of Abbott Street. More specifically, the site was at “the outlet of Little Conadilly St ... into Abbott St”.

In 1887 the site was on vacant land. In saying that the stump was “in front” of the Wesleyan Church, the Sydney Mail writer meant, I take it, to convey ‘directly across from’ the church.196

Boomerang cut: That is, an incised design or designs carved in the shape of a boomerang. A comparable carved burial-tree

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195 Poe Street: Renamed Abbott Street in honour of a long-serving Member of the NSW Parliament, Sir Joseph (J P) Abbott (1842-1901), the Member for Gunnedah during the 1880s and afterwards Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly (see in ADB vol 3).

The site for Wesleyan Church site, on the western side of Poe Street, was gazetted in 1871. The first resident minister arrived in 1879 (Longmuir, p.44).

196 Document 3B, MS Pages 6 and 11; Gunnedah Committee 1935: 53; and 1972 Department of Lands map.
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with boomerang-shaped incisions is known from the Bingara area.\textsuperscript{197}

\textit{Yeliman}: A parrying shield; more often spelt ‘hieliman’. ‘Heilamon’ in Ewing’s spelling; elsewhere variously ‘hielamon’ and ‘hielaman’. Cf Dunbar: “The \textit{eeliman} or shield was of two types, one for spear attack and one for warding off boomerangs and throwing sticks. The former was wider and flatter than the latter” (1943: 172).

The word was borrowed into pidgin and English from the Aboriginal language of Sydney. The Gamilaraay word for a shield was \textit{burriin}.\textsuperscript{198}

\textit{Was conducted}: In 1887, according to “The 1945 Letter”, Document 3A.

\textit{Black of another tribe}: Presumably Joe Bungaree. He was certainly a Gunnedah man, so the reference to "another tribe" probably alludes to Maggie’s not being a Gunnedah woman by birth.

In Stan Ewing’s account Joe Bungaree did not approve of the digging up: “He [Dr Haynes] do very bad thing: get Mr Ashby to dig grave of one of my tribe open when I still on bury ground”. The tracker Bundaar too, although he was not a Namoi River man, was unhappy: “I know ghost blame me for not [leave] him bones in his grave” (Document 3B, MS Pages 14 and 9).

\textit{Crude headstone}: A reference to the stump, i.e., not literally a head-stone.

\textsuperscript{197} Illustrations in Emma McPherson, \textit{My Experiences} 1860: 225, reproduced in McBryde 1974: 149.

\textsuperscript{198} Etheridge 1897; Dunbar 1943: 173; Blake 1981: 94; Austin’s \textit{Dictionary} 1992.
25. “The excavating was begun, but no price or persuasion could induce the, that, or any black to assist in looking for the bones of this ancient chief whose name and burial-place have been sung and known for generations. Soon the remains were found. By carefully digging around so as not to disturb the original posture of the remains, the illustrious black was discovered in a sitting posture, as if squatting, with his face to the east, and his tomahawk at his feet.”

As if squatting: That is, with the knees doubled up; as also reported among the Hunter Valley Kamilaroi. The technical term in archaeology is “flexed”. This form of burial was widely practised throughout south-east Australia. In 1887 the excavators dug for “several feet” before reaching Red Kangaroo’s bones (Document 3A, para. 4). Thus the depth of his grave was probably at least a metre.

Cf Telfer: “They used to bury their dead in an opossum cloak sitting up in the grave, about four feet in height [i.e., about 120 cm deep],

Kamilaroi burials: Breton 1834: 179; McDonald 1878: 256; Naseby in Howitt 1904: 466; and Greenway 1910: 198. For northern NSW more generally, see McBayde 1974: 147 ff, citing Oxley, Gardner, Emma McPherson 1860 and others. Also Henderson 1832: 149; Wyndham 1889: 39-40; Howitt 1904: 468, 646; White 1934: 225; and Dunbar 1943.

Cunningham was one of the first to record details of an Aboriginal grave: see journal entry, 9 May 1823: “Burial mound of Aborigines” (SRNSW: Reel 6035; SZ15 pp.34, 122).

Ridley states that the bodies of highly respected men were placed in hollow trees or in the ground in bark coffins up to 13 feet long (over 4 metres) (1875: 271). That is to say: burial in the ground was the usual practice, with a hollow tree being used only if there was insufficient soft soil (cf Bucknell 1933: 36). Among the “Wollaroi” (i.e., the Yuwaalaaya: to the north-west of the Kamilaroi) and on the Maranoa River in south-west Queensland, the body was sometimes laid out on a “stage” before being buried (Crowthers and Lethbridge in Howitt 1904: 467-68).
covered over with a lot of saplings to keep away any animals, and, \textit{if he was a chief}, they would \textit{carve three trees with symbols, diamond shape}" (Telfer, ed Milliss 1980: 120, emphasis added).  

And Dunbar, describing the customs of the Wayilwan people: "The deceased was prepared for burial by being bound in the \textit{twice-bent sitting position} until rigor mortis had set in. He was then buried in a grave some four or five feet [up to 150 cm] deep in that position, with his face towards the east. \textit{The weapons and other personal property of the deceased were placed in the grave at his feet}. Bark was then placed over the corpse and the hole filled in" (1943: 145, emphasis added).

\textit{Tomahawk at his feet}: The Ewing brothers were present at the excavation. They stated that no weapons were found in the grave (John Ewing in Document 3A, “The 1945 Letter”, MS Page 1; and Stan Ewing in "The Death and Career", Document 3B, MS Page 8).

26. So much for the grave mark of the illustrious black, and the confirmation of Maggie’s story about the grave.
27. “Now”, said Dr Haynes, “we will go through the bones and see if they give the evidences of strength and valour related by those who never saw Cumbo. The legends say that \textit{both arms were broken}. Several of these bones are nearly, and some \textit{completely petrified}. This is the bone of the right arm. It is broken. The \textit{crude} way in which it is spliced is very interesting, as showing the \textit{crude} surgery of the blacks. It is shortened, as you see, at least 3in [\textit{three inches}, i.e. eight centimetres] by this break. Now here is the right

\footnote{Three trees: For any one grave, there were usually at least two trees and sometimes up to seven (Etheridge 1918: 15; Bell 1982: 6).}
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

arm (similar) bone of an Englishman - an anatomical subject, and they are selected from large and well-made men. By measuring them you see that the black's bone is still as long as the one you hold. It was thus at least 3in longer unbroken. You will notice another extraordinary thing, that the black's bone is larger than this, and the tubicles [sic: tubercles, i.e. projections from the bone\textsuperscript{201}] show that he was a man of powerful nerves and muscles. He was simply a giant.”

\textit{Both arms broken}: As noted earlier, John Ewing states that “the left upper arm bone (humerus)” was broken. This perhaps - but not definitely - implies that just one arm was broken. For his part Stan Ewing was quite adamant that only one arm was broken.

\textit{Petrified}: It is literally impossible for bone to become stone in only a few hundred years. Haynes' word 'petrification' probably meant simply a hardening of the remains. This can be caused by encrustation by soil carbonates. Or it may result from the beginnings of mineralisation through the uptake into the bones of soil minerals such as manganese and silica.\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{201} The greater and lesser tubercles of the humerus or upper arm bone: “The tubercles are separated from each other by a deep groove, the inter-tubercular groove (bicipital groove), which lodges the long tendon of the muscle (Biceps brachii) and transmits a branch of the anterior humeral circumflex artery to the shoulder-joint” (\textit{Gray’s Anatomy}).

The ratio of the radius to the humerus between racial groups was studied by the founder of French anthropology, Pierre Paul Broca, 1824 -1880, the first head of the French Society of Anthropology (1859) and the first School of Anthropology (1876). But it is unlikely Haynes knew of Broca's work.

\textsuperscript{202} I owe this point to Paul Gorecki. For particulars, see Mays 1998 and Ubelaker 1999.
Crude surgery: On Ewing’s testimony, what Dr Haynes in fact said at the time was that “a clever surgeon-doctor in the tribe ... did his job excellently” (Document 3B, MS Page 8).

27. “Take the left arm (following up the traditions of him). Both bones of the forearm of the left arm have been broken but as very little shortening has taken place a better comparison can be instituted. It is much longer than the other. That would show him to be about 4in longer in the reach, and with a more powerful arm, than the white subject.

Following up: That is, in order to check whether the stories about him were confirmed by any breaks in the arm or arms.

28. “There is a spear wound in the thigh bone, showing that a fearful abscess had formed over it and that the bone was diseased by some poison. The two lower bones of the next leg were also fractured. Here are two broken ribs. They have knitted well.”

Poison: Probably infection; not a reference to poisoned spears.

29. “Picking up the skull, I ventured to remark that Cumbo was an animal, and not an intellectual development; that he lived by main strength or prowess and not by intellect. “Yes”, said the doctor, “he has a low sloping forehead and narrow across the temples but the back of his head is a perfect mountain, and he had a neck you couldn’t break by pulling. The camp fire stories say that [?he] was clouted, and he has the record. His skull has been opened over the left
eye and has been bashed by some blunt instrument behind.” I laid this skull down convinced that if Cumbo was not great I wondered how much more it took to make a man great.”

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**Picking up:** It seems implied that in 1891 - four years after the grave was excavated - Haynes still had the skeletal remains and had not yet dispatched them to the Australian Museum (cf para. 32 below).

**Not by intellect:** To the contrary, one of the major themes in the Ewing documents (Documents 3B, 3C) is how intelligent Gambu was, as well as being strong and physically skilful: - able to “think quickly and plan out” what needed to be done.

**Low sloping forehead:** It was a presumption, deeply entrenched and believed nearly universally before about 1950, that a group’s physique revealed its racial superiority or inferiority.

Of course it was always *one’s own* group that was superior: we Africans have fine muscles; we East Asians have the least hair on our body; we Indians have straight noses; we Europeans have white skin ... . Naturally it helped to believe this if one prevailed in battle!

In the 19th century ‘phrenology’ was regarded as respectable science, in Australia as elsewhere. It was based on the supposition that the shape and size of the skull determined, or at least revealed, human intellectual and emotional capacity. Given the prejudices of the time, it is perhaps not surprising that phrenological investigation tended to reaffirm the ‘great chain of being’ [*God, angels, men, beasts*] and to confirm that Aborigines were on the lowest scale of humanity. It also was used to
emphasise Aboriginal savagery, as for example in Barron Field's suggestion in 1820 that phrenology demonstrated (his words) the "animality of Aboriginal behaviour". 203

30. "This man", the genial surgeon remarked, "is reputed to have been over 6ft high. Here is the thigh of a big, powerful white man who was one of the first to be run over by the Sydney trams. Being [from] a large well-formed man, this bone after amputation was kept as a study. Now measure them. That blackfellow's bone is 1½ in. longer than this one. If you follow the proportion you will get 1½ in. [longer] from ground to knee and over 2 in. from the hip up; or in other words he was approximately about 5in taller than this man, who was about 5ft 11½ in. high, so Cumbo must have been about 6ft 3in or 4in high. His thigh bones are larger than that of this large white man and he is built like an athlete across the hips." The grave, the size of the man and the body marks on the skeleton all verify the legendary history of this mighty nigger [sic]."

6ft high: = 183 cm; and 6ft 4 in = 193 cm.

Historically the average for male Aborigines was 168-173 cm or 5 ft 6 to 5 ft 8 in. This was just the average. Some individuals of course were over 180 cm tall. As John Mathew remarked (1889), "There is . . . hardly a community in which two or three six-footers will not be found". 204


204 J Mathew, 1889: 385. Average stature: Fraser 1892 and Abbie 1969: 36. For comparison, 23 Kamilaroi descendants in the 1920s measured by Taylor and Jardine (1924: 280) averaged 66.2 inches [168 cm]. The average statures of whites and Aborigines were, and are, approximately the same; but stature has increased in both races since about 1930, due to better nutrition.
31. “I looked in his mouth and found all his teeth there at burial which goes to show that he lived prior to the Deborrah custom of knocking out the first bi-cusp tooth\(^205\) as an announcement of the passage of the boy to manhood. This custom has been in existence ever since the advent of the white man so far as I am able to learn.”

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All his teeth there: John Ewing recalled, more credibly, that “the skull had a perfect set of teeth, except one that was missing from [the] upper jaw” (below: Document 3A, MS Page 2, emphasis added). Stan Ewing likewise was adamant that one tooth was missing (Document 3B, MS Page 8).

Deborrah: More usually ‘Bora’ or Buurra, the ceremony and ceremonial site at which boys were initiated into manhood. Literally “at /the place of/ the girdle of manhood”, from buurr ‘belt of manhood, rope, string’ +a, locative case.

The girdle or belt of manhood, woven from human and/or animal hair, was presented to the initiate at the larger of the two rings that formed the Bora ceremonial ground: hence the name.\(^{206}\)

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\(^{205}\) That is, the "maxillary first bicuspid": counting back from the middle, it is the fifth tooth in the upper mouth (or the fourth if one counts forward from the back). It is the tooth with two points immediately behind the "canine". There are four bicusps: - two in the upper mouth ("maxillary") and two in the lower ("mandibular"). They do not appear until a child is about 10 years old.

\(^{206}\) O’Rourke 1997. The proceedings at Kamilaroi initiation ceremonies have been described in detail by R H Mathews (see in Bibliography). For a more recent discussion, describing the broadly similar proceedings at Wiradjuri ceremonies, see Maddock 1974.
Has been: Ridley found that the Bora and the practice of tooth avulsion were already defunct on the Namoi by 1871. The Bora had still been going strong in the later 1840s. Hence it seems likely that, on the Liverpool Plains, initiation ceased by about 1860. In the farther north-west, the Bora was kept up until the end of the century. 207

32. “Dr Haynes has kindly consented to send the skeleton of Cumbo to the Sydney Museum; also the stump headstone. The word Cumbo means, in Kamelroi, cousin.”

Museum: Idriess (Document 4) notes that a search was made in the early 1950s but it yielded no trace of the skeleton (also White 1993). Nor is it held by either of the two museums at Sydney University. (One imagines that the skeleton was indeed sent, but has since been misplaced.)

Means cousin: Gambu was, strictly speaking, one of the four section names. Everyone, all in the known world, belonged to one or other of the four sections.

Although “Gambu” does not literally mean ‘cousin’, the section system was a summary of, or ‘ready reference index’ for, kinship connections. Ridley remarked, for example, that a Yibaay man regarded all Yibaay-section men (all the children of Buudhaa-section women) as his ‘brothers’, and all Gambu-section men - depending upon their age - as either his ‘uncles’

33. “The blacks here lived largely on the nardoo plant, which was ground into a powder by a kind of stone pestle-and-mortar mill. One of these is now in existence in the Lands Office, Gunnedah. The explorers, in passing through here, lived, by the assistance of the blacks, on this plant.”

_Lived largely:_ Grass seed from “native millet”, _Panicum_ species, not nardoo, was a major food source in inland NSW. (Nardo, _Marsilea drummondii_, is more commonly found in the further inland.) _Panicum_ and other seeds were ground on a stone mill and cooked in the form of tiny cakes. But meat, especially possum, and river foods including fish were at least as important. Thus it is quite wrong to say that the Kamilaroi depended “largely” on grass-seed.

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208 Ridley 1875. Also Mathews 1895c; Elkin 1945 and 1975-76; and Maddock 1974.

209 To be precise: nardoo is the common name of the fern _Marsilea drummondii_ the seeds of which were fed to Burke and Wills by the Dieri/Diyari people of Cooper’s Creek. I am not aware of any references to its use for food in the Gamil’raay region, although Ash et al. 2003: 30 give _bal_ as the Gamil’raay name for _M. drummondii_. Since there is evidence that it was eaten in the Narran River area, probably it was also used by the Gamil’raay; but presumably much less than other species. In our region we also meet the _Aboriginal_ (Yuwaalaraay language) word _nhaadhu_, but it referred primarily to seed from south-eastern grasses such as genus _Panicum_, and seems to have been a word borrowed from elsewhere (Williams 1980; Ash et al. 2003).

Tim Curran informs me that common nardoo (i.e. _M. drummondii_) is found in low-lying areas of the Liverpool Plains, e.g. along the floodplains and indeed there is some at Mullibah Lagoon. But, as noted, our sources do not record it as a food in this region.

210 See O’Rourke 1997 pp. 150-54, citing Greenway, Ridley, Dunbar, Allen and McBryde. Also Tindale 1974: 98 ff,
The explorers lived: In truth, there is no record of Oxley, Cunningham or Mitchell ever relying on grass-seed. To my knowledge, John Oxley and Allan Cunningham never even mentioned grass-seed cakes. Major Mitchell tasted ‘native millet’ only out of curiosity.

At a later period members of the Burke and Wills expedition briefly survived on nardoo seeds (*Marsilea drummondii*), but of course they travelled through what is now the far west of NSW and far western Queensland, not through north-central NSW. (Not all the party survived: nardoo has to be carefully processed before it can be eaten safely: the local Diyari people knew how to do this, but not the explorers.)

34. “Many of the *grinding beds*, where the warriors sharpened and made their stone tomahawks, are still to be seen down the banks of the Namoi River. The Government should make some effort in the interest of *ethnology* to trace out, while some of the old hands still live, all the historic matter that can be gathered from them.”

35-36. [Two final paragraphs thanking the people of Gunnedah are omitted here.] [Text ends.]

*Grinding beds*: Isabel McBryde has published a map of the locations of hatchet-grinding grooves throughout northern NSW, including several in the Boggabri district. There are also grinding sites still extant in the Breeza and Trinkey State Forests.

104-106.


‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Ethnology: In 1891, R H Mathews, a surveyor and coroner, was already hard at work gathering material, but in his spare time. See the Bibliography for a list of his publications.  

R H Mathews, 1841-1918, surveyor, coroner and anthropologist.

Born in Narellan NSW, Mathews worked for the NSW Railways as a surveyor. He helped to survey the northern rail route to Tamworth in 1867-69. Then, having received a professional surveyor’s licence in 1870, he worked as a licensed land surveyor throughout the central-north. Much of his knowledge of the Kamilaroi and other Aborigines dates from this period. He settled at Singleton, where in 1883 he was appointed coroner. Mathews published many papers on the Aborigines while serving at Parramatta as deputy coroner in the 1890s.

He made several visits back to Kamilaroi country, e.g. to Kunopia near Boomi in 1892, to Talwood (Qld) in 1895 to witness one of the last Boras, and to Terry Hie Hie in 1901 to inspect a disused old Bora ground.

205
Document 2: Article In *The Land*: “Gunnedah’s Aboriginal God-Father and His Deeds”


The article supplies no fresh information. Indeed Prescott succeeds only in adding a couple of errors. I have reproduced his article only because it prompted Stanley Ewing to write Document 3B.

Prescott’s own source was *The Sydney Mail* article of 1891. This is clear from the fact that he copied the spelling “yeliman” for ‘shield’ and “hi-hi” for Hie Hie on the end of the place-name Terry Hie Hie.

TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES

The sub-headings are those of the original.

It may not be generally known that the town of Gunnedah takes its name from a famous aboriginal, Cumbo Guuerah [sic: misprint for Gunnerah], who was the hero of the Kamilaroi tribe long before the coming of the whites to the district.”

*Takes its name*: This is an error. The name of the "hero" was Gànur/Gànuru, which means ‘Red Kangaroo’. As explained in our Introduction, the name of the town-site was either Gùuniidha, meaning ‘at [the place of] white stone(s)’, or Gunidyàà, meaning ‘motherless child, orphan’.

“Toward the end of the 19th century, Dr Haynes, well known throughout the district as mayor of the town, Government medical officer, surgeon of the district hospital and captain of the local rifle club, often found himself intrigued by the presence in Abbott Street of an old gum stump from which, years before, a large sheet of bark had been removed.”
Gum stump: Stanley Ewing, in Document 3B below, was insistent that the stump was a box-tree (a rough-barked *Eucalyptus* such as yellow box or poplar/bimble box) and not a gum-tree (a smooth thin-barked *Eucalyptus* species). This is likely to be correct, since carvings were made on the inner wood (“heartwood”), after the removal of an oval or cigar-shaped section of the bark. This would not work so well with a smooth-bark tree.

Bell & Wakelin-King (1985) note that most extant examples of carved trees are box-trees, although some are *Callitris* (cypress pine). For example, the carved trees surrounding a Wiradjuri grave-mound at Dubbo were yellow boxes (*Eucalyptus melliodora*).214

“Carved on the wood were intricate criss-cross designs, with a boomerang carved on each side and a yeliman at the bottom.

One day the doctor questioned an old aboriginal about the stump. Speaking in soft tones, so as not to disturb the spirit which might be about, the old man replied, “Great man him. Big chief that pfellar”.


Before the White Man

Towards the end of the 17th century a black boy was born somewhere along the Namoi. Possibly because of a likeness to his cousin Gunerah, the boy was given the grown-up name of Cumbo Gunnerah, or Cousin of

214 Thomas 1899: 64 (Dubbo); McCarthy 1940: 164 (heartwood); Bell & Wakelin-King 1985.
Gunnerah. [words missing] manhood he developed a strong physique, great muscles and a stature of about 6 ft 4 in.”

Possibly … cousin: This is a distorted and erroneous reading of the inaccurate statement in The Sydney Mail that “Cumbo means cousin”. Ganuurru was the man’s own totem name (Red Kangaroo), and Gambu does not mean ‘cousin’. Totem names were inherited from one’s mother.

“Cumbo Gunnerah became a mighty fighter and had many wives. His fame extended from Narrabri to Breeza and from Tamworth to Coonabarabran. There was plenty of food and plenty of water along the Namoi, and here were the camps of Gunerah and his followers. Narrabri (Shallow Water), Boggabri (Long Water), and Therrabri (Swampy Water) were all included in his excursions, friendly and otherwise.”

Shallow Water etc: As noted above, these meanings are not to be relied upon.

A Mighty Warrior

When the tribes went to war (and tradition says that Gunerah never lost), the women and children, with the old and weak men, were gathered about the present site of Gunnedah, and the champions sallied forth to fight. The tribe of Cumbo Gunnerah was always superior in battle owing to the prowess of its champion, and his power was dreaded by all the adjacent tribes. His deeds were handed down by camp legends and songs, even to the last days of the tribe.
He was in the foremost of every battle and attack and fearless in fight against his foes, chief among whom were the Coonbri blacks about Terri-hi-hi, and the Walleri or Big River blacks.

The Big Flood

Many years before the coming of the whites, and somewhere about the year 1750, a great flood changed the courses of the Namoi and its tributary the Mooki. Tradition tells that Cumbo Gunnerah lived before this flood, which almost decimated the tribe, many dying from pneumonia. Thus, by the time of the coming of the white man, there were only a few of the tribe left.

The songs say that the great fighter died about 20 moons before the great flood. That would place his death about 1745 to 1747.

One of the Last

"One of the last surviving blacks of the pre-white era was Old Maggie, who knew all the tribe’s history, stories and legends. One day poor old Maggie lay dying in hospital, with Dr Haynes as her attendant, and to him, in whispers, she told the whole story of Cumbo Gunnerah.

He was a great fighter, she said. He had had both arms broken, his thigh speared, many ribs smashed, and his head gashed by tomahawks on several occasions.

Facing death, Old Maggie, as with all blacks, told her secrets; and one of the secrets was that of the burial place of the great warrior. And so dies Old Maggie, the last of those who knew the tribal secrets.”

The last/dying: The source article in the Sydney Mail was published in 1891. Other records suggest that Maggie (if she was Margaret
Proof of the Story

"Dr Haynes at once began excavating, and soon found the remains. Cumbo Gunnerah had been buried in a sitting position with his face to the east and with a *tomahawk at his feet*. The bone-breaks and smashes were all there, just as had been told, and the bones were those of a man of 6 ft 3 ins to 6 ft 4 ins in height. *All the teeth were present*, so he must have lived before the time of knocking out a front tooth at the tribal initiation ceremony."

*A tomahawk at his feet*: As will be seen, this is disputed by Stan Ewing. He also says that a tooth was missing, as we would expect (Document 3B, MS Page 10).

Name of Gunnedah

"The first whites coming to a district always asked the blacks the name of the district, but the blacks usually had *no name for big areas*, though rivers, rocks, hills and gullies all had names. So the Gunnedah blacks, like their brethren all over Australia, would give the *first name that came into their heads*. The white man’s question would be accompanied by a sweep of the hand and the Kamilaroi with no other thought than that of Gunnerah, the hero of his tribe, would reply “Gunnerah”, with a hard nasal twang on the last syllable; and the pronunciation which occurred to the white man would be “Gunnedah”."
The first name that came into their heads + no name for big areas: Taken literally, Prescott’s claim is wrong. We find, for example, names for the whole of the Liverpool Plains and names for the smaller districts occupied by each tribelet or community. But certainly there was much scope for misunderstanding when whites asked Aborigines how far a name extended. The reason was that Aborigines had a choice of names and different contexts called forth different names.215

‘Gunnerah’ heard as ‘Gunnedah’: This is unwarranted speculation, and almost certainly false. The only white man to whom this notion has occurred is Prescott.

“Among the so-called civilised nations, the name of such a man would have been long preserved and remembered. He would have been honoured by a bronze statue. But the chief of the Kamilaroi has no

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Cf Donaldson’s important paper ‘What’s in a name?’ (1984).
The Aborigines of the Hunter called the Liverpool Plains ‘Corborn Comleroy’ [gabawaan gamilaraay] or ”Greater Kamilaroi”, from gabawaan, the frontier pidgin for ‘great’ + gamilaraay (Breton 1834: 90, 179, 205). The Liverpool Plains, or at least that section north of Pandoras Pass, were known as Uraboon or Eurambone to Mudgee people, and perhaps also to the local people [’Uraboon’ in Lawson’s journal 8.12.1822, quoted in Jervis 1954: 78; ‘Eurambone’ in Cunningham’s journal 8.5.1823 and 6.6.1823: Reel SZ15, SZ16, State Records of NSW].

At a lower level, the Baradine district north of Coonabarabran was known as Burigaly or Burriigalu ie burii+galu: ‘having many myall trees’, literally ‘myall-tree + human plural’. [Myall, Acacia pendula, is usually maayaal but sometimes is ?mis?recorded as burrii; burrii is usually Acacia harpophylla, brigalow wattle]. Following Ash et al. 2003: 83, the form of suffix may have been –gaaluu; they render it as ‘dweller in’, ‘inhabitant of’. Although a territorial name, the primary reference of Burriigaalu was to people: in this case, ‘those who inhabit the brigalow/myall country’ or the ‘brigalow/myall mob’.

211
monument. Surely it is not too late to erect a tablet near the place of his burial to the man and his record – the man after whom Gunnedah is named.” [Text ends.]

Monument . . . tablet near the place of his burial: A plaque was installed at the front of the nearby office building in 1984, a little short of a century after the excavation of Red Kangaroo’s grave.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Photographs

1. Anon: Photograph 1945: Town of Gunnedah, showing Cohen bridge and Porcupine Ridge in distance. View is to the south-east.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

2. View from Porcupine Ridge Look-Out: view to the north-east showing the hills that included Nobby Rock. The town is located to the left, just out of the photo.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

3. The *Breeza Plains* from Porcupine Ridge Look-Out: view to the SSE.
4. View to the WNW from Porcupine Ridge Look-Out, showing the northern edge of the Black Jack range (left), Little Sugarloaf Mountain (the small peak in the centre) and Sugarloaf Mountain (centre-rear).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

5. Porcupine Ridge from South Street. View is south.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

7. Mullibah Lagoon (B): central section. View is NNE.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

8. Mullibah Lagoon (C): south-eastern end. View is east.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

10. View from Little Conadilly St across Abbott Street to the Uniting (formerly Wesleyan) Church. The Aboriginal burial ground was (is) located where the photographer is standing. View: north.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

11. View from Abbott St into Little Conadilly St. Direction: SSE.
12. The flood-runner: view south-east from Henry Street towards Mullibah Lagoon. The flood runner is the channel running from lower-left to the middle ground. The vegetation at centre-right is a thick bed of reeds, very green at the time the photograph was taken.
The flood-runner that connects Mullibah Lagoon to the Namoi. View north-west from Henry Street, i.e. towards the river. The flood-runner is the channel running from lower right to the mid-ground.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

14. View south from near Cohen Bridge. The ridge in the distance is Porcupine Ridge. Right: Cohen Bridge. Town houses may be seen centre-left, above the river bank.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

15. Namoi River: view east (upstream) from near Cohen Bridge. The flood-runner exits into the river at the top of this photo.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

16. View north-east from near the Mooki-Namoi junction, showing the range of hills including Nobby Rock. The Rock is easily distinguished with the human eye, but hard to see in this photograph.
THE EWING PAPERS

The Gunnedah Historical Society holds notes on the Aboriginal history of Gunnedah and Coonabarabran produced by the family of Police Sergeant J P Ewing (1829-1911).

John Peter Ewing was a young Scots merchant-marine officer who arrived in Australia at the age of 24 in 1853. He joined the New South Wales (NSW) Police in 1856. After service at Forbes and the Merlo goldfields, he was transferred to Coonabarabran in 1865 at the age of 36. By 1872 he held the rank of senior constable. A photograph in Idriess's Red Chief (page 134 of the 1953 edition) shows him aged about 40, with alert eyes, short hair and a massive beard heavily streaked with grey.

After 20 years at Coonabarabran, Ewing was appointed Sergeant at Gunnedah in 1885. He died at Gunnedah in 1911, aged 82.

The Sergeant's youngest son, Stanley Craig Ewing, was born at Coonabarabran in 1878. Although already 36 years old when the Great War broke out in 1914, Stan enlisted and was wounded. There is a photograph of him in army uniform in Idriess's Red Chief (page 134 of the 1953 edition). He died at Gunnedah on 18 October 1938, aged 60.

The texts here are transcribed from my photocopy of the original MSS held by the Historical Society. As will

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216 Idriess 1953; also NSW State Records of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM: Internet): Stanley Ewing, born 1878: record no 11390 of 1878, died 1938: no 13231; son of John Peter and Eleanor Ewing.

John and Eleanor had nine children: Grace (1859-1944); William (1861-1882); Alexander (born 1864); Christina (1866), Janet (1868), Robert (1871-1936); John Peter junior (born 1874), Jessie (1876) and Stanley (1878-1938).

217 In 1980 I made two photocopies. By kind permission of the Historical Society, one set was lodged with AIATSIS. The other I kept for myself.

Pickette & Campbell 1984: 122-123 mention that J P Ewing wrote a "Diary of reminiscences .. With the Gold Escort and Mounted Police of NSW 1857-1890". This I have not been able to
be seen, there are four documents that have survived in full. In addition there are some lost papers of which the Society holds only fragments. The Society has explained that in 1956 the full set of papers was lent for a display. Not all were returned. The lost papers have been mislaid ever since, despite strenuous efforts over the years by Mr Don McDonagh (Russell McDonagh’s nephew) to locate them.  


The mention of “Rob and Stan and myself” and the signature JE indicate that the author of the letter was Stanley’s older brother John P. Ewing (junior), aged 71 in 1945.

The original is well written, with few lapses in either spelling or punctuation. But there is no paragraphing. To make the narrative more readable, I have added paragraphs; supplied an occasional pronoun where the text itself slips into note form; and changed a few capitals to lower case. One peculiarity of punctuation has been retained: the author’s favoured used of the double-dash or ‘equals mark’ (=).

The paragraph numbers have likewise been added by me (MO’R).

TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES:


Mr R[ussell] McDonagh:

= In reference to the inquiry re the exhumation of an aboriginal skeleton in Abbott St Gunnedah. = In 1887 trace.

218 Correspondence 20 August 2001.
we were then living in the Police Barracks in Abbott St (then called Poe St)."

_R McDonagh_: The McDonagh family, arriving from Carroll, opened their store at Gunnedah in 1908 (Buchanan 1985: 96). Russell McDonagh came to be interested in local history. In 1947, with Fred Bridge, he published a booklet entitled _Carroll Centenary 1847-1947, Back to Church Sunday Official Souvenir_ (34 pages, printed by the Gunnedah Independent Advertiser). It was he who persuaded Ion Idriess to turn the Ewing Papers into a novella.

= (double dashes) - a form of punctuation in the original.

1887: Emphasis added.\(^{219}\) _We_: The family of Sergeant J P Ewing.

_Poe St_: The name was changed to honour a long-serving member of Parliament, J P (Sir Joseph) Abbott, the Member for Gunnedah from 1880 to 1887. Abbott was later Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly, and knighted Sir Joseph in 1891. An associate of the future first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, Sir Joseph played a leading role in the push for Federation and the drafting of the Australian Constitution.

2. “Dr Haynes had been shown some dead stumps nearly opposite the Barracks = with mounds [sic: plural] of earth near them resembling abandoned ants nests. = One [stump] in particular interested him as it had _deep cuts in it V V V like these_, and also had a

\(^{219}\) Roworth’s date of “1865” for the digging up of the grave is an error (Roworth _Kamilaroi Dreaming_ 2000: 9).
small earth mound at its foot. He got permission to have this one opened up. And [he] employed the late Mr Jim Ashby to carry out the job.”

\[\text{Mounds, plural: Document 3B (MS Page 7) says one mound, singular. But there were at least several graves, and probably many, at the site (see 3B, MS Page 6). Thus mounds would be correct.}\]

\[\text{V V V = The cuts were v-shaped.}\]

\[\text{Permission: Presumably it was the lot-owner or nearest white householder who agreed to the excavation. As might be expected, the Aborigines disapproved. Joe Bungaree said “he [Dr Haynes] do very bad thing: get Mr Ashby to dig grave of one of my tribe open when I still on bury ground” and “Dr Haynes has done a terrible thing to send Red Kangaroo’s bones way from his country” (sent to a Sydney Museum). The tracker Bundaar too was unhappy: “I know ghost blame me for not [leave] him bones in his grave” (Document 3B, MS Pages 9, 14, 37).}\]

3. “Just as the work started, my brothers Rob & Stan & myself came home from school to dinner, and, seeing what was in progress, of course we soon joined the Dr’s [Doctor’s] party of three - i.e., Dr Haynes, Jim Ashby and young Bill.”

\[\text{Rob & Stan & myself:}\]
\[\text{Rob = Robert B Ewing, 1871-1936; aged 16 in 1887.}\]
\[\text{Stan = Stanley C Ewing, 1878-1938; aged nine in 1887.}\]
Myself = John P Ewing junior, born 1874; aged 13 in 1887; died after 1945.

Dinner: The midday meal, as we country-bred people prefer to call it. The evening meal of course is tea.

4. “As soon as the mound was removed it was found that the hole was circular, about 2.5 feet diameter [less than one metre]. About several feet down, Dr Haynes said, “Go steady now, don’t break any bones”.

5. “The skull was first reached, as the Aboriginal had been buried in a sitting position facing towards the Wesleyan Church site. Then the left upper arm bone (humerus) was found to have been broken at some time during life, and had knitted with a lump about mid way up the bone. Dr [the doctor] had a look at it and said, “A good mend but not a Gunnedah Hospital job”.

6. When all the skeleton was recovered the hole was found to be quite circular and about five feet deep [about 1.5 metres]. But there were no weapons found in the grave. Anything such as [possum-] rugs would have decayed long before.”

Facing towards: Facing west (or perhaps north-west).

Built in 1880, the Wesleyan Church, now the Uniting Church, is located on the western side of Abbot Street. The word “towards” confirms that the grave was located on (or rather: beneath) the eastern side of the street, not the western side as implied by the Sydney Mail article. See Maps 9 and 12.

Five feet or about 1.5 metres: Naseby spoke of a “shallow” hole used by the southern
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Gamilaraay. Bucknell says the hole was typically about four feet [1.2 metres] deep. 220

7. “While this job was on, three of the local aboriginals, Old Joe Bungaree, Donny McKay & Jacob Painter, drifted along to the intersection of Bloomfield & Abbott St (Tennis court site). But [they] firmly declined Dr Haynes’ invite to come up any closer. //MS Page 2//

8. They said it was the grave of a headman or chief, called “Red Kangaroo”, but seemed rather hazy as to how long he had been buried. In fact [they] were none too anxious to have anything to do with the business at all.”

“Donny”: Elsewhere ‘Donal’ and ‘Donald’ McKay (see Document 3B, MS Page 13).

“Red Kangaroo”: The first reference to his name in this document. Interestingly, The Sydney Mail article (Document 1) did not report that Gunerah or Ganuurru meant ‘Red Kangaroo’.

9. The skull had a perfect set of teeth, except one that was missing from [the] upper jaw, probably knocked out in some tribal ceremony. = The site would be about where the lane that [is] called Nowlands Lane came onto the street. At that time [it was] mostly unoccupied land, with many stumps & some trees about.

10. The skeleton and portion of stump with markings was sent down [to] the Sydney [Museum], by the Dr [doctor] & probably is still there.

220 Naseby in Howitt 1904: 466; Bucknell 1933: 36.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

**Upper jaw ... knocked out:** An upper bicuspid or incisor was removed when a boy was initiated at about age 12.

**Nowlands Lane:** As noted in Document 3B, MS Page 6, Nowlands Lane was an informal name for what is called officially Little Conadilly Street (see Map 9; photographs 9 and 10).²²¹

“**Museum**:” Omitted in the original. Compare Document 4, where Ion Idriess says that the Australian Museum (College Street, Sydney) no longer had any record of the skeleton or stump. The Anatomy Museum and the Macleay Museum at Sydney University likewise have informed me that they do not hold them.²²²

11. “The late Sam Turner used to tell us he remembered quite a number of marked stumps /illegible/ thereabouts that were destroyed for firewood. [So] no doubt there are still other skeletons under the street & sidewalk on that side, that cannot be located now. =

12. That’s about all I can remember now of this incident, and of all who were there that day. I believe [my]self & Bill Ashby of Curlewis are the only survivors. But I don’t think Bill will be able to add to this [or] locate the exact spot of this grave either. =

13. So if you decide to use this letter, rewrite [it] in a more concise form maybe. And so to save time & space

²²¹ Nowland is a well-known name at Gunnedah. James Nowland was one of the first purchasers of town blocks in 1857, and an E J Nowland owned various allotments in the block formed by Abbott, Bloomfield, Henry and Conadilly Streets. R J Nowland ran the first coach service from 1864 (Gunnedah Committee 1935: 17, 21; Longmuir 1956: 19). Later Catherine Nowland's Paragon Hotel, managed by her son in law, was in Bloomfield Street, at the eastern end.

²²² Pers. comm. 2001: Denise Donlon and Rose Stack of Sydney University, at the Shellshear (Anatomy) and Macleay Museums (Archaeology) respectively (by e-mail, 2001).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

in your address on the subject of Old Gunnedah doings & history.

Remain yrs etc
JE.

NB: Think the name Conadilly St was probably a surveyor’s name for it. Never heard of any Abor. Con or Dilly here. That’s probably a fake name.” [Text ends.]

Sam Turner: Arthur Turner is listed as a teamster (bullock-dray driver) in Greville’s Post Office Directory for 1872.

Your address: Presumably Russell McDonagh was to address the Historical Society. Exact spot: We may guess that this was what McDonagh had asked Ewing to recall.

JE = Presumably John Ewing jnr.

‘Conadilly’ is certainly genuine. It appears as "Coonadilly" and "Conidilli" on the first survey maps, by G B White and Henry Dangar in 1832. It was also the name of John “Jock” Allen’s station, ‘Gunnadilly’ or ‘Gunandilly’, on the upper Mooki River. Allen first occupied the run in about 1828. Possibly what was originally a name for a stretch of the upper Mooki became (for the whites) an alternative name for the Mooki as a whole.223

223 See my discussion of place-names, in O’Rourke 1997: 94-95. Dangar surveyed the “range that divides the Peel and Conidilli Rivers” (i.e., the Melville Range) in December 1832: Map no.3363, State Records of NSW [formerly Archives Office]. The name Conadilly is also mentioned by Mitchell, Telfer, Greenway and Mahaffey. Allen’s ‘Gunandilly’: Grazing Licence no.167 in the supplementary list for 1849. Also Campbell 1968: 42 and Wood 1972: 226.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

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‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Document 3b. Short Title: “The Death And Career”. Stanley Ewing’s Account Of The Excavation; and Joe Bungaree’s Tales of Red Kangaroo, as Related to Sergeant Ewing.

A manuscript, or rather two MSS, in the possession of the Gunnedah Historical Society.

The longer document, 36 pages, is in the form of a letter, or a draft for a letter, to the editor of the Gunnedah newspaper, the Namoi Independent & Advertiser. It is written neatly in ink, i.e. with a fountain pen.

The second MS, two pages, is in the same hand, but in pencil, and with less carefully crafted characters. This MS reproduces parts of Prescott’s article at greater length. It is, in effect, an appendix to the ink letter. But much of the text of Prescott’s article is missing, as apparently the writer only wanted to copy out the key parts of it.

The main letter, or first MS, 36 pages, is written in a thick, neat and clear hand. The handwriting is the same as that of the document (see next) detailing ‘How Red Kangaroo Baited His Trap’. And it has the same occasional errors in spelling, notably “piccinnies” for piccaninnies. This shows that the author was the same as the author or transcriber of “The Cassilis Raid”, Document 3C, known to be Stanley Ewing.

We know that the author (or author-transcriber) was one of the Ewing brothers because he says “my father was senior sergeant in charge of Gunnedah station” (MS Page 3). As noted, he quotes (MS Page 1) from the article by Prescott published in The Land on 6 May 1938. Thus the letter was almost certainly written by Stanley Ewing in mid 1938, not long before he died.

The main document starts out as a letter to the editor, and begins by quoting the first few paragraphs of Prescott’s article. Then follow 13 pages devoted to an explanation, in Stan Ewing’s voice, of how the grave was dug up in 1887. Joe Bungaree is quoted speaking in pidgin-influenced English. Then, at about page 14, Ewing turns to recording what Bungaree told Sergeant
Ewing about Red Kangaroo/Kambu Kanuurrurru’s exploits. Here the voice of Joe Bungaree takes over, or rather the voice of a neutral narrator.

In short, what begins as a letter about the digging up of the grave turns into an adventure story or epic set in the early 18th century.

Ewing quotes explicitly (see MS Page 4) from notes his father made when Joe Bungaree was still alive. Indeed it is not always clear whether it is Stanley who is presenting the tales told by Joe Bungaree, or his father.

The text is continuous without paragraphing. The punctuation is idiosyncratic. Often capitals and full-stops mark out phrases rather than whole sentences. Nouns are often wrongly capitalised, almost as if the text were in German rather than English. For the sake of readability I have added paragraphing, quotation marks and other punctuation, and replaced the Germanic capitals with lower-case. Once again, words have been italicised to emphasise points of interest. Section headings in capitals have been added.

I have also restored missing words and placed them in square brackets. For example Ewing’s “to police station” becomes, in this edition, “to [the] police station”. But I have not done this on every occasion, in order that not all of the original flavour should be lost.

Where it appears to me that Ewing was specifically recording the style in which an Aborigine spoke, I have not restored any missing words. At MS Page 15, for example, Joe Bungaree says, “Sarjun, you know what it is like in thick scrub! That good place to wait for young lubras you come to steal away.” We might call this style of speech ‘pidgin-influenced standard English’. If the passage were translated into correct standard English by restoring ‘missing’ words, the authenticity of the old man’s speech would be lost, thus: >>Sergeant, you know what it is like in the thick scrub! It is a good place to wait for the young lubras that you have come to steal away.<<

By contrast, when Red Kangaroo himself is speaking, I have treated this as narrative, restoring an occasional
word to correct grammatical mistakes made by Joe Bungaree or Stan Ewing. In other words, the character of Red Kangaroo is deemed always to speak in standard English.

**The Players and The Narrative**

i. People

* = 18th century characters in the tales about Red Kangaroo (RK).

Ashby, James/Jim: A workman engaged by Haynes in 1887 to dig up the grave.


Bungaree, Joe: Patriarch of the Aboriginal people of Gunnedah. So-called “King of the Nammoy Tribe”. Aged “about 70” in about 1890.

*Cumbo Gunnerah: Gambu Ganuurru, or Red Kangaroo (“RK”). Our buried hero. Aged 17 when he travelled into the Coonabarabran lands and captured two wives. Became ‘war-chief’ at age 19: see MS Pages 17, 29, 34.

“Donal’”: Donald McKay, an old Aboriginal man. Joe Bungaree’s predecessor as “warrior-chief”. By 1887 “Donal[d]” was mentally feeble. It seems implied that he had led the Gunnedah “tribe” until about 1860. At any event he had developed some form of mental illness well before 1887.
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Ewing, J P, Sgt: Stan Ewing’s father (MS Page 3).

Haynes, Edward: Medical practitioner at Gunnedah; Mayor in 1891.

*Ilparra: “The Goonoo Goonoo chief”. The leading warrior from Goonoo Goonoo in the expedition into the highlands.

*Jerrabri: “Chief” of Gunnedah when RK was a teenager. Killed by RK. At MS Page 21, it is said that Jerrabri had “four wives and [was] 38 summers and winters old”, while at MS Page 29 it is said he had “three” wives.

*Kibbi: The “great war chief” of Bundarra. Killed by RK.

*Kulki: War-chief of Coonabarabran, a “middle aged warrior”. “The bravest and most fearless warrior in the Coonabarabran tribe”. Killed by RK.


*Nareen: One of the two Coonabarabran girls or young women captured by RK.

*Naroo: The other Coonabarabran girl captured by RK. In the story, she warms first to RK (MS Page 26).
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She is also mentioned in the story of the raid by the Cassilis men, but is not identified there as RK’s wife (Document 3C, Ms Page 14).

Painter, Jacob: Aboriginal man of the Gunnedah community. Relatively old in 1887, although younger than Joe Bungaree. He is listed in the 1891 census as the nominal head of a household of two Aboriginal males living outside the municipal boundaries on the Mullailey side of Gunnedah (“no fixed abode”, camped at or near “Sugarloaf”).

Prescott: Author of the 1938 article in The Land.

Turner, Arthur, jnr: An old Gunnedah identity who could recall the 1860s. He would be the teamster listed in Greville’s Post Office Directory for 1872.

Turner, Mr S [Sam]: One of the on-lookers at the excavation.

ii. Locales

Bloomfield Street: A street running broadly west-east, with the heart of the original village to its north, and the present site of the Uniting Church (built in 1880) and Red Kangaroo’s grave to its south. 

See Maps 8, 9 and 12. According to Ewing (confirmed by the old timers consulted by the Gunnedah Committee, 1935: 17),
this area was in 1865 “virgin bush heavily timbered with box-tree, wilga-pine-belah and some scrub”. In other words, the Aboriginal burial ground with its carved trees was originally surrounded by woodland or open forest.

**Breeza Plains:** South-east of Gunnedah. Gunnedah’s neighbours on the south-east were the communities of Goonoo Goonoo and Quirindi (MS Page 16). It follows that only the north-western sector of the Breeza Plains can have belonged to the Gunnedah community. See Map 2.

**Bundarra and Kingstown:** Located north-east of Manilla in the Gwydir basin. Their raids on the Manilla and Goonoo Goonoo communities prompted the latter to seek an alliance with the Gunnedah men.

**Goonoo Goonoo and Manilla:** Head-camps of communities allied to Gunnedah in the tale of the war with the New Englanders. The Manilla people are also listed as a group with whom the Gunnedah men fought at other times (MS Page 16).

**Narrabri:** Red Kangaroo, when still in his teens, “killed two [men] who came with a strong raiding party from Narrabri” (MS Page 17).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Railway Hill: Located not far from Burrell Lagoon (MS Pages 13 and 19). Thus probably one of the hills on the left (south side) of the railway line between Gunnedah and Emerald Hill, about 10 km west-north-west of Gunnedah.

iii. The Narrative

Page references to the original manuscript pages, not the pages of this book:

Pages:
1-2: Criticism of Prescott’s article. Turner’s memories of the 1860s.
3-4: Dr Haynes as a collector. Sergeant Ewing arranges for Haynes to meet Joe Bungaree. Bungaree described.
5-6: Bungaree explains Gunnedah’s history. Playing with the bullroarer. Haynes is introduced. The meaning of the carved stump. People gather to watch the grave being dug up.
7-8: Bungaree refuses to divulge the buried man’s name. The excavation begins. The Aboriginal people flee. Bones uncovered. One arm-bone has a healed break.
9-10: Stan Ewing tells Bundaar, the tracker, what has happened. Bundaar complains to Sergeant Ewing. The bones later sent to Sydney. Ewing again objects to Prescott’s errors.
14-16: Bungaree tells the dead man’s name, Red Kangaroo (RK), and starts to relate the tales about him. Abduction of wives. How RK noted the shortages of wives. Need to build up the
tribe. The entitlements of young men. RK not supported by fellow younger men.

17-19: Young RK seen as a future rival of the chiefs. RK disappears; he is nowhere to be found. Speculation that he has been killed by the elders. After nearly a month, RK re-appears, accompanied by two unknown young women.

20-21: “Who are these women?” RK tells how he went away in search of a wife or wives. He criticises the elders for not respecting the law.

22-24: RK tells of his JOURNEY INTO THE LANDS OF THE COONABARABRAN PEOPLE. He tracks the foraging parties of Coonabarabran women and children. Two young women fall behind, and RK captures them.

25-26: Nareen and Naroo resist when RK tries to force them to go with him to Gunnedah. Eventually they submit. Suddenly searchers from Coonabarabran appear. Two men attack RK, but he kills them. One of the dead men turns out to be Kulki, war-chief of Coonabarabran.

27-28: RK takes Nareen and Naroo on to the Mullaley Plains and thence to Gunnedah. Jerrabri and the elders confront RK. Jerrabri tries to take Naroo. RK challenges him to a duel.

29: The duel. RK kills Jerrabri and then gives Jerrabri’s wives to other men. RK refuses the community’s request to become war-chief, but agrees to do so in two years’ time [i.e., when aged 19]. RK’s fame grows.

30: RK becomes war-chief. He persuades the Gunnedah people that additional wives must be found and that neighbouring groups must be attacked or made into allies. Summary of RK’s achievements from age 19 to age 39.

31-33: Alliance with Goonoo Goonoo and Manilla against the Kingstown-Bundarra people. RK leads an EXPEDITION INTO NEW ENGLAND. A pitched battle takes place near present-day Kingstown. Tactical retreat to the scrub brings victory for RK’s lowlanders. RK kills the
Bundarra war-chief, Kibbi. Peace is imposed and many of the Bundarra women are surrendered.

34-36: RK as greatest-ever war-chief. Mention of his greatest exploit, the ambush of the Cassilis raiders. How children were taught to track. How boys learnt to use weapons. Mention again of the grave and the meaning of the name ‘Gunnedah’.

TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

The Editor Gunnedah Ind & Adv:
Recently in an old paper of The Land I read an interesting XXXX narrative by Mr Edward C Prescott entitled “Gunnedah’s Aboriginal Godfather and his Deeds.”

And Mr Prescott goes on to say “it may not be generally known that the town of Gunnedah takes its name from a famous aboriginal Cumbo Gunnerah who was the hero of the Kamilaroi tribe long before the coming of the whites to the district.”

Then Mr Prescott speaks how “towards the end of the 19th century Dr Haynes of Gunnedah often found himself intrigued by the presence of an old gum tree stump in Abbott St which had years before had its bark removed, and carved on the wood were intricate criss-cross designs with a boomerang on each side and a yeliman on the bottom. Dr Haynes questioned an old Aboriginal about the stump. The old man speaking in a soft voice said, ‘Great Man him – Big Chief that pfeelar.’” [Here the extract from Prescott’s article ends.]

XXXX: Word/s blacked out in the MS.

Prescott’s narrative: Document 2 above.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

I enclose with this letter a copy XXXaccount of Mr Edward C Prescott’s letter to The Land on ‘Gunnedah’s Aboriginal Godfather’.

Now, Mr Editor, as one of a small party present over 50 years ago [I can recall] when Dr Haynes got Mr James Ashby to dig up for him the remains of an ancient aboriginal buried close by the stone tomahawk-carved box tree stump (not gum tree stump) that stood almost opposite the small entrance gate of the old Wesleyan Parsonage and well back from the roadside of Poe Street, for it was named Poe Street then and changed to Abbott St later.

I enclose: This refers to the appendix in pencil, a long, but only partial, transcript from the Prescott article.

XXXaccount: The words are struck out in the MS.

Stan Ewing, we know, died in 1938. Document 3A says that the grave was dug up in 1887. This is consistent with the statement “over 50 years ago”, since 1887+51 years = 1938.

Not gum: ‘Box’ trees are rough-barked Eucalyptus species such as white box and yellow box. ‘Gum tree’ by contrast tends to mean smooth-barked Eucalyptus. Given the location of the grave-site, close to the flood plains, just above the high flood mark, quite likely the tree-stump was either yellow box (Eucalyptus melliodora) or poplar/bimble box (E. populnea).224

224 Curran pers. comm. 2002. White Box or Eucalyptus albens, Yellow Box or E. melliodora and Bimble Box or E. populnea are the dominant tree species in the central section of the Namoi catchment, with some Grey Box or E. microcarpa scattered throughout.
Well back from the roadside of Poe Street + almost opposite the small entrance gate of the old Wesleyan Parsonage: In Document 3A, it is stated that "the site would be about where the lane that [is] called Nowlands Lane [= Little Conadilly Street] came onto the street [Abbott Street]" (3A, Ms Page 2). The Wesleyan parsonage, today's Uniting Church, was and is on the western side of Abbott (Poe). Little Conadilly Street exits from the east into Abbott (Poe) Street between the State Government Office and a private house. Thus it would appear that Red Kangaroo's grave was located where the private house now stands, on the northern corner of the Abbott and Little Conadilly intersection. Compare Map 12.

“Now, there was no great mystery or secret made about //MS Page 2// the burial place of an ancient warrior chief of the Nammoy river tribe who had had its main camping area where Gunnedah is today. As an instance, shortly after Mr Arthur Turner Senr came to reside in Gunnedah in 1865, [and] in following the tracks of his straying horses across Bloomfield Street, they headed west along what is now Abbott Street. But at that date, once you had crossed over Bloomfield Street and struck south, west or north-west, you were entering virgin bush heavily timbered with box-tree, wilga-pine-belah and some scrub. Conadilly Street lay years away in the future.”

No secret: This corrects also the Sydney Mail, which was the source of Prescott's error.

Nammoy: It is not clear why the name of the river should be spelt thus, unless to reproduce the stress pattern of the original name (Ngamaay). In Gamil'raay, stress fell on long vowels, thus: Ngamâày.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Crossed over Bloomfield: Bloomfield Street runs broadly west-east. The heart of the original village was located to its north, with the present site of the Wesleyan, now Uniting, Church (built in 1880) to its south. Thus Turner would have had to cross Bloomfield to reach the Aboriginal burial ground. But it is curious that Ewing should say “west” along Poe/Abbott Street, as that street runs broadly north-south. Perhaps he meant that the horses kept to the western side of Poe/Abbott. See Maps 8, 9 and 12.

Conadilly Street+the future: Maitland Street, which runs near the river, was originally designated as the main street (it was the route of the old bullock track) [Map 12]. The great flood of 1864 showed that Maitland Street was too low down, and the new shops etc built in the next decade were built in Conadilly Street. Thus, by 1885, the year that the Ewing family transferred to Gunnedah, Conadilly had replaced Maitland Street as the dominant commercial precinct. In 1865, the white population of the village was some 250-300. In that year Conadilly may well have appeared as a marked-out street, but with few buildings.

“Following the horse tracks amongst the big box trees growing where the Wesleyan Church grounds now are, the tracks continued on but headed across to McDonagh’s store’s side [i.e., the eastern side] of what’s Abbott St now. The horses were camped amongst a thicket of wilgas. Driving them back towards Bloomfield Street, Mr Turner rode close to a box tree stump 12 feet [four metres] high. From six inches above ground, right up to the stump’s jagged [sic] broken-off top, the box tree stump had been skilfully
Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

carved by some aboriginal who used a stone
*tomahawk* to do the work with."

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**Carved Trees** (“dendroglyphs”): Those marking graves are sometimes called ‘taphoglyphs’ [coined from the Greek words for ‘tomb+carving’]. Carved trees, in larger numbers, were also located at initiation grounds, where they served as instruments for the teaching of initiates.\(^{225}\)

The bark was first removed in a large oval or cigar-shape and then the exposed wood was carved. The shapes carved on burial trees were mostly non-figurative - ovals, diamonds, curved lines, wavy lines, zigzags, chevrons, loops, spirals and/or cross-hatching.\(^{226}\)

Carved trees at initiation grounds are sometimes called “teleteglyphs”. The general term “dendroglyphs” covers both types.

The most comprehensive recent account of **carved trees** is by Bell 1982; the fullest early study was by Etheridge 1918. Also: Mathews 1896a; McCarthy 1940 and 1945; McBryde 1974: 126 ff; and Bell & Wakelin-King 1985.

Carved trees at ceremonial grounds were found on the NSW coast as well as in inland central NSW; carved burial trees, however, were limited to the inland (the eastern sector of the Murray-Darling basin). In New England at least, carved trees also marked out group territories (Gardner 1854).

Illustrations can be found in Sturt, Mitchell, McDonald and Etheridge. (Etheridge's book contains illustrations of tens of carved trees, mainly initiation-ground trees and mainly from northern Wiradjuri country.) - Charles Sturt first of all published a very clear but plainly idealised drawing of a "burial place" from north-west NSW: frontispiece to Sturt 1833. The drawing shows a lone, large grave-mound with a pad or foot-path running around it, and three carved trees.

Mitchell published a drawing of a large burial ground in the Darling basin showing many old, weathered and depressed grave-mounds: in Mitchell 1839 vol 2.

McDonald’s (1878) drawings of Kamilaroi ceremonial trees from the Upper Hunter are reproduced in Brayshaw 1986. Burial trees at ‘Burburgate’, down-river from Gunnedah, are illustrated in Etheridge 1918: Plate 36.

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\(^{225}\) Carved trees at initiation grounds are sometimes called “teleteglyphs”. The general term “dendroglyphs” covers both types.

\(^{226}\) The most comprehensive recent account of **carved trees** is by Bell 1982; the fullest early study was by Etheridge 1918. Also: Mathews 1896a; McCarthy 1940 and 1945; McBryde 1974: 126 ff; and Bell & Wakelin-King 1985.
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Compare Dunbar 1943, p.146: “In some cases, on a tree south of the grave a piece of bark was removed and marks similar to the cicatrices on the men’s chests were marked on a tree; aged Aborigines declared that they could identify the man who was buried nearby whenever one of these marked trees was located.”

F D McCarthy says, citing Howitt, that the spirit of the dead man went to the sky-world by means of – spiralling upwards from - the burial tree. It was believed that the spirit of each individual came down from the sky-world via the trees and at his death returned in the same way.227

12 feet or four metres: This was by no means exceptional. Breton (1834) mentions burial trees carved with incisions to a height of 20 feet or over six metres.

Stone tomahawk: Steel hatchets were traded from group to group ahead of the advancing frontier of white settlement in the period 1826-


Extant carved trees: Fully 78 carved trees still survived at their original locations in NSW in the 1970s (Bell & Wakelin-King p.302). Examples removed to the Australian Museum, Sydney, include one from west of Gunnedah (from ‘Derwent Park’ station) and two from Wee Waa (Brigalow Creek). Five specimens from Boggabri were ‘repatriated’ from the museum to an unstated place - presumably to a local Aboriginal organisation (Pulvertaft and Gordon 1994; also White 1993).

McCarthy 1940: 165. On the sky-world as the home of Baayama the ‘All-Father’ and the resting place of the soul, see O’Rourke 1997.
32. Doubtless steel quickly made stone obsolete.\textsuperscript{228} Thus, if a carving was made using a stone hatchet, it dates to before that time.

“Mr Turner knew the carved box tree stump marked an aboriginal burial ground – and that it also bore the totems of some great warrior chief buried nearby. Mr Turner reckoned the carved box-tree stump might have been a green tree 20 ft [nearly seven metres] high when it was originally carved. But time and weather had rotted the top away from time to time.

[“The Blackfellows’ Tree”:] 

Mentioning his find to townspeople, he learned it was common knowledge about the aboriginal burial ground, the carved tree stump and knowledge [missing word] that a one-time great chief & warrior was buried close by that carved tree stump. Numbers of white women had gone from time to time for a Sunday afternoon walk to see ‘the Blackfellows’ Tree’. Some of the oldest residents remembered the box-tree stump when it was all of five feet higher. But it had rotted off or blown off in a windy time years ago.”

\textit{Common knowledge}: ‘Gunnedah’ station was set up in about 1835. It would indeed be extremely odd if, 30 years later, the whites were not aware of the carved trees. They were located in scrub just 500 metres from the route used by bullock-drays, already re-designated Maitland Street, the settlement’s main road!

\textsuperscript{228} Cunningham found both stone and steel hatchets in use near Boggabri in 1827; and Mitchell noticed trees felled with steel hatchets to the north-east of Narrabri in 1831. About two-thirds of all the surviving carved trees inspected by Etheridge (1918: 14) had been cut with steel tomahawks. In other words, only about one-third pre-dated white settlement.
Some considerable time in years had slipped away when Mr Turner heard that the old carved box tree stump had crashed to the ground. Going up to see for himself, he found there still remained a stump four feet high. But the fallen timber had been eaten to a thin shell by white ants and on its fall crumbled to dust and fragments.

When Dr Haynes came to reside in Gunnedah he was enthusiastic on collecting ancient aboriginal weapons of war and domestic implements like stone grinding mills, needles made from fish bones, kangaroo and emu bone and kangaroo teeth. He found here some keen collectors in J Smyth, T B Roberts and J P Ewing. But the Dr was keenest about getting possession of some rare and fine types of Aboriginal skulls. None of the other three collectors’ keenness ran that far. They preferred something extra in a boomerang; the material, shape and fixings of a stone tomahawk; the shape and carvings on a nulla-nulla, heilamon or wommerah [sic]."

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**Grinding mills**: For the grinding of grass-seed, a principal food. The ground seeds were baked in ashes in the form of small loaves or cakes. Fruits and nuts too were ground²²⁹

**Nulla nulla**: The Gamilaraay name was bundi, ‘club or throwing stick’, which Bootle (1899: 4) renders as “big nulla nulla”.

**Wommerah**: i.e., woomera, or spear-thrower. A word originally borrowed from a Sydney district language (Blake 1981: 106).

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²²⁹ Greenway 1910: 16; and Bucknell 1933: 35

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“My father was Senior Sergeant in charge of Gunnedah Station and lived in the same quarters as the officer in charge of Gunnedah does today. One Friday afternoon Dr Haynes came to the police barracks to get my father to arrange a meeting between the Dr and Bungaree, the ‘king of the Namoi River tribe at Gunnedah’. For so the brass half moon swung by a cord about Bungaree’s neck was inscribed.”

Brass half moon: Throughout the 19th century the settlers gave inscribed metal gorgets or ‘king plates’ to the strongest or oldest or most respected local man. They were worn so as to hang across the chest, hence ‘breast-plates’.

“These kings, however, are no better than the rest and are looked upon [by the whites] with contempt” (said Ludwig Leichhardt in 1842: translated in Aurousseau p.548).

In general terms king-plates ceased to be presented and worn by the time of the Great War, 1914-18; but there are accounts of plates still being worn in a few areas even into the 1920s.

Joe Bungaree’s own plate may have survived. One plate in a private collection bears the inscription “Joe Bungaree, King of the Blacks, 1886”. Among other extant plates are one for “Jerry, Overseer of Woolshed” (Gunnedah?) and one each from Breeza, Piallaway and Werris Creek.230

“Arriving just at that time from school, [I] was given a message for Bundaar the tracker down at the stables: to saddle his horse and come quickly to the office. Bundaar was //MS Page 4// to ride down to the camp...

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and tell Bungaree to come to police station by half past nine next morning and that Dr Haynes left a plug of Conqueror tobacco at the police station for him. Dr Haynes said, “Sergeant, if you’re not too busy, come over to the old carved stump with me to have a look about it. Afterwards I’ll drive down and arrange with Mr Ashby about his job tomorrow.”

Bundaar: Gamilaraay bandaarr (rhymes with English ‘bun+bar’, but with the final rr strongly pronounced), meaning ‘Grey Kangaroo’. His totem or clan name.

To police station: “The” is omitted. Ewing frequently leaves out the article.

“Next morning at 8 a.m. Bungaree, accompanied by a one-eyed and much younger aboriginal known as Jacob Painter, arrived at police station. Very soon their pipes were going full blast on some of the Conqueror tobacco.”

At police station: Again “the” is omitted.

“The blacks’ camp at that time was somewhere in the vicinity of where the municipal sale yards are today. - I take this from notes my father made at that time. - There are about 40 in the blacks’ camp. The majority are half caste men, women and children. But there are some full blood aboriginals: mostly old or middle-aged men, and the women are all old ones.

“Bungaree, King of the Nammoy Tribe”: Bungaree is the king but there is no Nammoy River Tribe at Gunnedah now. On inquiry I find that many drift here from all about this district and from other localities as far away as Walgett and Coonabarabran.”
Sale yards: Immediately west of the town, where Conadilly Street becomes the road to Boggabri.

Notes my father made: Emphasis added by me [MO’R].

It is not clear when the notes were made. Document 3B, "The Death and Career", seems to imply that Ewing senior, died 1911, made the notes in, or a little before, 1890 (see at MS Page 34). Document 3D likewise seems to imply that the Ewing senior originally took down some if not all of Joe Bungaree’s tales in about 1887-1893. But Stanley Ewing also states there that he (Stanley) had extensive discussions with his father thereafter, or in other words, in the period 1896-1911.

Idriess for his part suggests that it was Stanley who took down the tales "long after he [Stanley] had reached manhood", meaning well after 1899, but "in the presence of the old sergeant", who we know died in 1911. "Young Ewing got the old aboriginal and the old sergeant together" (Document 4).

At a guess, the surviving documents, transcribed in the 1930s, contain both material written before 1911 by J P Ewing and material added after 1911 by his son. I would guess further that Joe Bungaree’s tales were mostly taken down by J P Ewing, while the account of the digging up of the grave and the other "non-oral" traditions are due wholly to Stanley Ewing.

There are about 40 … (including) half-castes: The police, i.e. Sergeant Ewing himself, took a census of Aborigines in 1882 for the NSW Protector of Aborigines. At that time, people of mixed ancestry still formed the minority: only 14 of 45 at Gunnedah. In the general NSW
census of 1891, the count was 30 Aboriginal people in the town people (or about 38 if one counts those living just outside the municipal boundaries). All are recorded as being "half caste". By 1896 the population had fallen further, the APB census recording just 17 people, 12 of full ancestry and only five people of mixed ancestry.\textsuperscript{231}

The number "about 40 . . . in the blacks camp" would fit best with a dateline of 1887, i.e. when the grave was excavated. On the other hand, the reference to "half-castes" as a majority fits better with the period after 1911, i.e. when (as it appears) Stanley recorded his own recollections.

The 1891 general census returns seem to indicate that there was no longer any large "camp" by that time, nearly all Aborigines being integrated in the town proper (see discussion under 1891 in the Chronology).

\textit{Nammoy}: Presumably the spelling inscribed on the king-plate.

\textit{No Nammoy tribe ... now}: There were of course people of Aboriginal ancestry living at

\begin{footnote}
 APB censuses: Published in \textit{Votes and Proceedings of the NSW Legislative Assembly}: for 1882, see 1883 vol III at pp 891 ff. For 1896, see the 1897 volume. General census of NSW, 1891: NLA microfilm copy.

 That there were no full-ancestry people at all, as the 1891 general census suggests, seems unlikely (albeit possible). Perhaps to the collectors of the 1891 census, everyone "appeared" of mixed blood? The APB counts perhaps reflected Sergeant Ewing's more intimate knowledge of people's racial background. At a guess, the true position was that even as late as 1896 most of the 17 people were more than 50% Aboriginal.

 The APB records show much variation between districts in the proportions of "full-bloods" and people of mixed ancestry. Full-ancestry people were still the majority in most places in 1882, but already the police census (undertaken for the government by police officers) recorded a majority of mixed-race people in some districts, for example, at Breeza and Manilla.
\end{footnote}
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Gunnedah in 1938. But, because they were all of mixed ancestry, and lived in much the same style as their white neighbours, Ewing junior doubtless would not have regarded them as a ‘tribe’.

“Bungaree himself is a full blood Aboriginal about 70 years old and a very active man in his movements still. He has a well-formed massive head. His face is large and round, enhanced greatly by a long and wide growth of grey beard that adorns it. He has a smiling face and is given to hearty laughter. He is about five foot seven in height [170 cm], has a broad and deep chest and wide shoulders, good eyes, teeth and hearing. He has a decidedly potty or Falstaffian stomach, and in talking with him, one realises he is an intelligent man.”

This paragraph appears to be a direct quote from the Sergeant’s notes. (Falstaff is a portly character in Shakespeare.)

If aged 70 in, say, 1890, Bungaree would have been born in about 1820. So he was already a teenager when the first white settlers appeared on the middle Namoi River.

“Bungaree from many years' association with white people could speak a very fair type of English. I have always found that the Australian Aboriginal will quickly learn to talk a good class of English if you teach and make that talk to them. It's easier for you to talk your natural tongue to an aboriginal than to try and talk and teach him pidgin English. How puzzled the pidgin English Aboriginal talker is to hear [two] English-speaking white men talking.”
I have always found: These would be the Sergeant’s words, rather than his son’s.

English: Bungaree’s own English (see text below) was somewhat non-standard. Presumably a number of other Aborigines spoke a style of English that was even less standard. It seems implied too that some, perhaps most, whites, when conversing with Aborigines, still – before World War I - used a bastardised form of English, or more politely: ‘frontier pidgin’.

It will be noticed that Dr Haynes prefers to use pseudo-pidgin while the Sergeant always speaks respectfully to Joe Bungaree in correct standard English.

“There was a very old aboriginal in the camp: ‘Donal’ he was called by townspeople. He was quite childish. Bungaree said he was a very old man; had been a warrior in the tribe when he, Bungaree, was a small piccinny [sic] playing with the piccinnies232 [sic] of the tribe – and Donal’s own piccinnies amongst them.

“He [Donal] became the warrior chief [said Joe Bungaree] and led [us] against enemies for long time after I [was] made a warrior. Then he get very old and I [was] made warrior chief.

Donal: Elsewhere called Donald or ‘Donny’ McKay (Document 3A, MS Page 2). It is clear that he was a generation older than Joe Bungaree. If aged, say, 90 in 1887, then Donal would have been in his prime (aged 21-36) at the time the first whites entered the district.

But plenty white man coming all about – and bring plenty cattle. Tribe get small. White men take our

Piccinnies: spelled thus throughout.

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young lubras. Young warriors go away for lubras down Nammoy River, never come back no more. Old man [i.e., Donal] get sick here”, touching head; “no get better. But him happy: he eat, he drink, he sleep. Me, I getting old man; some day I finish. Then no more king; no more Nammoy River tribe. All gone, finish – .”

On seeing Bungaree and Jacob Painter squatted down at the stable talking to Bundaar the tracker, like any other schoolboy [would], it was no time before I’d joined them, carrying the bull-roarer Bundaar had made for me. Then the three of them took it in turn to whirl the bull-roarer round, producing roaring buzzing noises.”

Like any other schoolboy: It appears that here Stanley Ewing ends the quote from his father’s notes and resumes in his own voice.

Tribe get small: There is no record of whites killing Aborigines in the immediate Gunnedah district, although there were certainly serious clashes on the upper Mooki River in the late 1820s and in the Boggabri-Narrabri region in the early 1830s. As explained in the Introduction, the reduction in the population was due rather to diseases brought by the colonists, such as influenza, syphilis and gonorrhoea, and the damage done (ecologically) to Aboriginal food sources. An

True, ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’. But William Telfer senior lived through the period, and his son William Telfer junior [born Tamworth 1841] was a keen recorder of battles and massacres. It is certain that Telfer senior would have told Telfer junior of any cases of shooting, cutlassing or poisoning of Aborigines in the Tamworth-Gunnedah sector. The latter says there were none, and no other source avers that there were any.

The reasons are not hard to guess: first, the smallpox pandemic would have gutted the morale of the Peel-Namoi groups; second, they would have already noted what the white man’s guns could do: on the Upper Mooki in 1827/28 and then in the Boggabri-
earlier major factor in depopulation was a smallpox pandemic that had swept through Gamilaraay country in 1830-31; but this took place before the first sheep and cattle reached the Namoi.\textsuperscript{234}

\textit{Take our young lubras}: The detaining or ‘borrowing’ of Aboriginal women and girls as concubines is mentioned repeatedly in the early sources. Indeed, so common was the practice in the 1830s and 1840s that practically every white man living Beyond the Boundaries “took” an Aboriginal wife.\textsuperscript{235}

\textit{Bull-roarer}: When the traditional culture was still strong, the bullroarer had been a secret-sacred object. It was not permitted to be seen by females and uninitiated boys (Gamil. \textit{yirrah-murrun}, from \textit{yira} ‘teeth’ and \textit{murrun} ‘alive’: ‘those with their teeth still all alive’).

Its sound was, or represented, the feared voice of the evil god Dharramalan. Women and children believed, or were expected to believe, that the distant sound of the bullroarer was literally Dharramalan speaking. The initiated men knew that really it was they who swung the bullroarer and that its sound simply symbolised or re-enacted the god’s voice.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{234}Narrabri sector in 1833-34. See further details in the Chronology.

\textsuperscript{235}Judy Campbell 1983, 1985, 2002, citing George ‘the Barber’ Clarke and others.

\textsuperscript{236}Secret-sacred: Naseby and Doyle, cited by Fison & Howitt 1880: 268 and in Howitt 1804: 594-95; also Parker 1905: 81 and Mathews 1989h and 1907.
Bull-roarers were known in many parts of the world. Andrew Abbie (1969: 183) notes that they were used in secular contexts in Devon, England, as late as 1800.

“During a lull in the whirling Warder Neil on sentry go-along the promenade on top of gaol’s towered wall told Bungaree to take the bullroarer and his friends down into the far end of horse paddock and make his blinking noise there.

“Just at this time Dr Haynes drove into [the] police yard station and he and my father walked down to where we were. “Bungaree, this is Dr Haynes. He wants you to tell him all you know about the carved stump and what the carvings mean, and to tell the Dr all you can about the great warrior chief of your tribe who lived here long, long time ago. Will you go with the Dr now?”

My father went back to his office work [words missing?]. A constable went with the Dr and Bungaree.

Jacob Painter wasn’t a Nammoy River tribesman. He walked on the centre of [the] street keeping off the burial ground side.

For an illustration of a Kamilaroi bullroarer, see Mathews 1898: 57-58. For a short account of Baayama, Dharramulan and the other gods, see O’Rourke 1997: 171 ff.
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My brother who [sic: mis-constructed sentence] had been seated with Mr Ashby on a log on [the] other side of the street amongst a clump of box trees alongside Roache’s two-rail fence. He and some other boys told me Mr Ashby had a pick and shovel to dig a blackfellow out of a grave for Dr Haynes.”

A constable: Constable Lambert, named in a later paragraph, below.

Centre of the street: Red Kangaroo’s grave itself was located “well back from the roadside” on the eastern side of Abbott Street (Document 1). The burial ground, which may have been large, extended “under the street & sidewalk [sic] on that side” (Document 3A).

Roache’s fence: The Post Office Directory for 1878 lists a D. Roach, contractor, in Conadilly Street.238

“At that time my interest was centred on Dr Haynes and Bungaree – and I write now only of those things I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. Coming to the old carved stump, Dr Haynes said, ‘Why was this stump carved like this?’ Bungaree put his hands on his head and said, ‘Stump long time ago was tall live tree. Blackfellow, come, carve him plenty, make all about bury ground for my tribe. That time, long long ago, great warrior chief of Nammoy River tribe, him die, and him sit down close up this stump. All blackfellows, look it, this stump, know great warrior chief sit down close up’ (meaning that from the totems carved on the stump any Aboriginal would see that a great warrior chief of the Nammoy River tribe was

237 Some burial grounds contained hundreds of graves (Ridley 1875: 159, 100; and Honery 1878: 254).

238 I owe this reference to Shirley Coote.
buried nearby and, according to the *customs of this tribe*, buried in a sitting up position).”

**Sit down:** This ‘Aboriginalism’ derives from a distinctive verb that occurs in all Aboriginal languages, meaning variously ‘to stay, sleep, camp, sit’. In Gamilaraay: stem *baabi-* , past continuous form *baabilaay*, ‘[he] was sitting down, staying, camping [there]’.

*From the totems carved on the stump:* The number of totems was far larger than the number of different designs used on burial trees. And, from what we know of totemic designs, they were figurative, quite different from the (mostly) non-figurative geometric carvings on burial trees. It seems to me unlikely therefore that the tree carvings can have been totem designs (*pace* McCarthy 1940: 161, 165). More likely, I would guess, they were a kind of personal heraldic badge.

Or, were the designs on carved trees a combination of totem and personal and other emblems? - We know from Katie Parker that, among the Yuwaaliyaay, at least some of the incisions on possum-skin cloaks (also weapons) were the totem marks of their owners. (Incised on the outside, skin-side: the cloaks or “rugs” were worn fur-side in.) And we have it on good authority (Greenway, Fraser, Howitt) that the marks on a leading man’s burial tree were the same as were incised on his possum-skin cloak during life. Putting these two points together, it is not possible to rule out that some of the carvings on burial trees were totemic.239

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239 O’Rourke 1997 for number of totems; Bell 1982 for number of designs; also the discussion in Etheridge 1918: 22-24.

Same symbols on cloaks as on burial trees: Greenway in *Science of Man* 1910: 198 and Fraser in JRSNSW 1893, cited by Etheridge 1918: 29. Howitt too discusses the designs found on the
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*Customs of this tribe:* As we noted earlier, the sitting-up position was a method of burial common throughout much of the continent.

“Dr Haynes said, “Are there many more sit down close up?” Bungaree didn’t speak for a time. Then he walked a few steps towards Poe, now Abbott, Street and turned and pointed towards the outlet of Little Conadilly St (known as Nowland Lane then) into Abbott St. “Young lubra an’ her little bit piccinny sit down close about there.”

At this time those present near [the] carved stump were Dr Haynes, Constable Lambert, Bungaree and we four schoolboys. Mr Ashby was near Roache’s fence talking to Mr S Turner who had not long arrived. This small group, gathered near the old marked stump, had raised the curiosity of half a dozen people who wended their way down from off Conadilly St towards us.

Dr Haynes said, “Bungaree, this great warrior chief: what name that one?” //MS Page 7// Bungaree put his hands over [his] mouth and shook his head from side to side. "Come, come", the Dr said, "tell him name if you know that one." Bungaree said, "I bin know that name; I no tell name here."

“Why not, why not?” the Dr said a bit angrily. Bungaree said, “Bad talk blackfellers speakin’ name of dead alonga bury ground”. “Oh, all right Bungaree, I don’t want you any longer. You can go.”

cloaks and how these could be used to identify the wearer. He states: “each man’s rug is particularly marked to signify its particular ownership. A man’s designs from his possum-skin rug were put onto trees around the site of his burial” (1904: 123).

Parker 1905 (quoted by Ash et al. 2003: 103) says that among the Yuwaaliyaay rug incisions designated the owner’s totem and sub-totem or local group, eg an arrow head [emu’s foot] pointing down to indicate the emu clan along with the figure of a kurrajong leaf to show that the owner belonged to the kurrajong country. In contrast, the carvings on burial trees were almost invariably non-figurative geometric shapes.

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[The Excavation:]

Bungaree started to walk away slowly. The Dr beckoned Mr Ashby to come to him. “Here Ashby, dig there.” ‘There’ was a slight mound in the ground that looked like an old abandoned red ants’ nest. It stood not far away from [the] stump and it was the grave of the warrior chief of the Nammoy River tribe.

Mound: This text speaks of one mound, singular. Document 3A speaks of mounds plural (3A, at MS Page 1). We may guess that some or all of the mounds were flattened out by road and house construction in the period 1865-1887.

“Thud”, the pick struck the ground. Bungaree, just 30 feet away, turned round to see the pick thud down for the second time into the grave. He let out a pitiful wailing cry as he ran, waving his hands about his head. In front of him down past Bloomfield St ran Jacob Painter wailing loudly. They ran on to their camp near the lagoon. Near the present-day municipal sale yards.

Near the municipal sale yards: Struck through in the manuscript.

“There wasn’t an Aboriginal in the town or camp that night except Bundaar the police tracker. The Aboriginals went into camp somewhere down near Doubledah Reserve and it was a month before they came back to a new camp on the river above Burrell waterhole. And nearly half their number had drifted down-river to Narrabri and Wee Waa.”
Doubledah Reserve: North-west of the town, at the Emerald Hill turn-off on the Boggabri road from Gunnedah. There was an inn (pub) there as late as 1872.\footnote{I thank Shirley Coote and John Buchanan of the Gunnedah Historical Society for advice on geographical names.} A land-parish of the same name, spelt Dubbleda, takes in the Emerald Hill district.

Burrell waterhole: A long lagoon or billabong beside the Boggabri road some eight kilometres [five miles] from Gunnedah, i.e. upstream from 'Burburgate' and 'Bondabolla' stations. Elsewhere it is called "Burrell fishing hole" (Document 3B: MS Page 13). \textbf{See Map 3.}

The Gunnedah Committee 1935: 35 mentions "Burrell Hole" as located "near Pritchard's slaughter yards" in the context of a proposal (in 1901) to create a town water supply. The plan, never implemented, was to pump water to a reservoir that would have been built on Pensioners Hill [Map 11].

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Dr Haynes said “Go carefully Ashby, and only use the shovel. Ah, that’s a skull: give it to me.” The Dr shook the damp earth off the skull and wiped it all over with a handkerchief. “This is a very fine skull”, he said, holding it out to [the] townspeople standing around [the] grave, for about 20 more [people] had joined us since Mr Ashby started to dig down into the old grave.

The Dr said, “This man had a perfect set of teeth, none decayed: //MS Page 8/\ not even a crack in any. Of course the missing tooth in [the] front jaw was knocked out when this man was a youth and undergoing all the endurance tests of the Bora ceremonies to prove him fit to be a warrior.”

Mr Ashby was kept going handing the Dr human bones out of the grave. The Dr kept saying the names of these bones but said nothing else about them until...
he got an arm bone. “Ah, now, this is a fine exhibit. See: it was broken here. And a very bad break it was too. And though there was no Gunnedah hospital here then, there was nevertheless a clever surgeon-doctor in the tribe who did his job excellently. It is a fine job to look at.” Numbers of other bones were handed put of the grave to the Dr. But he never made any remark about any of them having been broken.

Missing tooth: This corrects the error in The Sydney Mail, repeated in Prescott’s article, that the skull had all its teeth. As explained earlier, a missing tooth was the sign of an initiated man. It seems doubtful that Red Kangaroo would have had literally “a perfect set of teeth, none decayed: not even a crack in any”. After all, he would have been fed with the best cakes made from ground grass-seeds, bones, nuts, fruits etc, all ground with a grind-stone and pestle, resulting in a diet of grit that would have worn down his teeth seriously.241

Broken: Here Ewing is implicitly querying the Sydney Mail account, which said that Red Kangaroo had “both arms broken, his thigh speared, many bones (ribs) smashed and wounds in the head”. On first principles, the Mail’s version is likely to be true. It is very difficult, after all, to imagine that Red Kangaroo could have led the men of Gunnedah in many battles over several decades and yet suffered just one broken arm.

“Mr Ashby cleaned the narrow and shallow grave of all loose earth. Dr Haynes said to various men present, ‘It’s a strange thing that there are no war weapons

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241 I owe this point to Paul Gorecki (pers. comm. 2001).
Grass-seeds were collected, ground on grinding slabs and cooked in hot ashes in the form of tiny loaves or cakes.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

buried with such a great warrior chief.’ No one present at [the] gravesite saw any war weapons taken up from the grave.”

War weapons buried: Wooden weapons of course could have decayed. But it does seem odd (if true) that no stone hatchet-head was found in the grave. We have many reports of a person’s property being buried with them, e.g. in the Hunter Valley; on the lower Barwon River; and on the NSW north coast.242

On the other hand, Ewing quotes Joe Bungaree as saying explicitly that, “In my tribe we don’t put war weapons in grave along with dead. War weapons were hard to make, so [the] old, old men of tribe long, long time ago said ‘give dead man’s weapons to his blood kin or best friends”’ (this Document, below, at MS Page 14). This is consistent with the statement that Red Kangaroo inherited his special pointed or V-edged shield from his father (3B, MS Page 26).

Dr Haynes remained at [the] grave side until Mr Ashby had scraped it clean of all loose earth. Then he wrapped the skull and the broken arm in some sacking; told Mr Ashby to put all the other bones in sacking and tie [them] up in a bundle; and take them over to [the] police stable and leave [it] in [the] forage store room. Then [to] get a cross-cut saw and saw a good thick slab of wood from top to bottom of the old carved box-tree stump, making a cut across [the] stump above [the] grass line to get [the] totems of [the] warrior chief stone-tomahawk-carved into the stump. And to fill in and flatten the old grave down again. The Dr took the skull and broken arm away with him.

The small gathering about [the] grave soon dispersed, leaving when Mr Ashby began to fill in [the] old grave.

[I] went home by stable-yard front gate, and, seeing Bundaar outside stable sea-sanding the stirrup irons, [I] went down to tell him about the digging-up of the old grave. But Bundaar, who was mostly keen to hear any news, said, “Now don’t tell me nothing. //MS Page 9// I won’t listen to you and won’t look at anything you got from that place.” “Well [I said], Mr Ashby is carrying most of the bones from that grave rolled up in sacking; and he is going to put them in the forage store room where you sleep. There he is now, coming in [the] front gate.”

Bundaar jumped for [the] stable door, went inside for [the] key and out in a flash: locked door and raced for [the] police office where my father was. My father said he burst into the room with eyes staring and cried out, “Sarjun, Sarjun: I clear out dreckly this minnit [sic]: I no stand this: I sack myself. Guvment can [keep] my last two week pay! When I roll my swag, will bring you key of stable. I go back horse-breaking for Mr Mosley on ‘Tibbereena’ [a station near Narrabri. MO’R].”

“Sit down Bundaar, and tell me what’s the trouble. Have those two young constables been playing more larks up at the stable?” They had mixed brown sugar in the sea-sand [with which] Bundaar polished stirrup irons, buckles, bits etc, and caused him to have a sticky mess on [his] hands and stable gear.

“No, Sarjun, it not them. It’s that Dr Haynes and Jim Ashby. They dig up old warrior chief grave. Old Bungaree nearly die from fright. Everyone in camp clear out Boggabri way. Now Jim Ashby bring a bundle of that old warrior chief’s bones for Dr Haynes to leave in forage store room where I sleep. I leave, Sarjun! Can’t stand that. I no Nammoy River Tribe man, but I blackfellow, and tonight I can’t stop in my bed in forage room along that old warrior chief’s bones. Tonight I know, him ghost sit on bundle of bones and look and look at me and I know ghost blame me for not bury him
bones in his grave. Now all his tribe run away frightened.”

“Light up your pipe, Bundaar. Don’t worry: no one is going to put the old warrior chief’s remains in the forage room with you. I’ll go and tell Ashby to take them away from here. And while you’re here: sweep this room out for me.”

Down at the stable Jim Ashby waited. But [he] went along with my father to the gaol and took [the] bones [to the] tower up on [the] wall. Bundaar was too good a man with sick //MS Page 10// or injured horses to lose, and had given proof of being able to track over stony land away from road – or soft ground animal pads.

At a later date Dr Haynes cleaned and packed the remains of the old warrior chief and sent them to the College Street Museum [in] Sydney. And also the old sawn-off slab from the old box-tree carved stump. Some years ago the old sawn-off box-stump slab was still [there] amongst other Aboriginal tree carvings. The set-up skeleton of the old warrior may be there also, though such exhibits are loaned or exchanged with other Australian museums, I am informed.

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*Museum + may be there*: The Australian Museum, in College Street Sydney.

Perhaps Ewing failed to see it when he visited the museum? At any rate, by 1953 the skeleton had been misplaced (see Idriess’s Preface: Document 4 below). Nor is it held at either of the two museums at Sydney University.

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“In reading Mr Edward Prescott’s narrative about Dr Haynes, and how he put on to discovering where the grave of an ancient warrior chief was, and how that chief had no teeth missing, a proof that he lived in the pre-Bora ceremony times: well, Dr Haynes himself pointed out to all present at the old chief’s grave side that there was one tooth missing. But Dr Haynes said that would be knocked out in the Bora ceremonies.
Ewing here turns to commenting on Prescott’s article. He will return to Joe Bungaree several pages later.

“Then Mr Prescott speaks of a stone tomahawk got at the feet of the old chief in his grave. At the time, no one saw that tomahawk [and] no one spoke of it in after years. Dr Haynes remarked on more than one occasion that day that it was strange that a great warrior chief like this one should have no war weapon in the grave with him.

Thinking since reading Mr Prescott’s narrative, where he mentions the stone tomahawk found in [the] grave at [the] old chief’s feet, that possibly I and my brother didn’t see (and we were all eyes and ears that day) the tomahawk lifted out of the grave, I looked Mr S Turner up some weeks ago. He was a young man at that time and was present at [the] grave-side. He never heard of the stone tomahawk found in [the] grave until he read Mr Prescott’s narrative. He, like myself, saw the skull with missing tooth; also the broken arm reset by some Aboriginal doctor, for whose skill for setting such a bad break Dr Haynes spoke highly at that time. Yet Mr Turner never heard Dr Haynes remark on any other bones as having been broken. Neither did I, and it seems strange for the Dr to point out the broken bone in one bone of the old chief and not refer to the numerous broken bones Mr Prescott refers to.

Then again it does seem particularly strange that Dr Haynes never gave to his friend T B Roberts, editor of [the] Gunnedah Advt [Advertiser] that tale of “Cumbo Gunnerah, Gunnedah’s Aboriginal God Father”. The Gdh Advt of that date merely recorded how Dr Haynes had had the remains of an ancient Aboriginal chief dug up from the vacant land opposite [the] Wesleyan Parsonage and off Poe St.”
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Gunnedah Advertiser: Regrettably, issues of the newspaper from 1887 have not survived. The Advertiser amalgamated with the other paper, the Namoi Valley Independent in 1919. The State Library of NSW holds copies only from 1894, and the National Library holds copies only from 1969.

Vacant land: The historical parish maps and the 1972 Department of Lands map of the town show that the blocks opposite the Wesleyan (Uniting) Church were owned, or at least originally purchased, by the local squatter John Johnston.

“At one time the old Aboriginal had sustained a badly broken arm, but some Aboriginal doctor had reset it and made an excellent job, the Dr said. At no time did J J Smyth, T B Roberts or J P Ewing ever mention the name Cumbo Gunnerah. Evidently Dr Haynes kept it a secret and it comes to light 50 years later in the narrative of Mr Prescott in The Land. But that stone tomahawk must have been well suppressed the day the old chief’s grave was opened up. My father was a keen collector of stone tomahawks. [He] Had salvaged some hidden away up in caves up in the Warrumbungle Ranges out from Coonabarabran. It seems strange that Dr Haynes, such an enthusiast to show his latest Aboriginal find in war or domestic implements [sic], and to see those of his co-enthusiasts, should button up on one stone tomahawk and the tale about Cumbo Gunnerah.”

Mention the name: The name ‘Cumbo Gunnerah’ [Gambu Ganuurru] was first published in the Sydney Mail article of 1891 (see Document 1). It is unquestionably genuine. Ewing himself records the “chief’s” name as Red Kangaroo, and we know that the Gamil’raay
word for ‘red kangaroo’ was Ganuurr or Ganuurru (“Gunnerah”).
As explained earlier, Cumbo/Gambu was a kinship title. It would seem that Stanley Ewing was not aware of this.

[The Name of the Town:]

“And now before concluding I would speak on the name Gunnedah and why the Aboriginal called this locality Gunnedah, as we spell the name.
I was too young to have had the inclination to inquire of the old Aboriginals around here why they called //MS Page 12// this place Gunnedah. But when I had grown up to manhood all the old Aboriginals in this locality had died off. There were young Aboriginals but most I talked with knew next to nothing or nothing about their tribal customs. They had been born and reared about the town or on stations. Few had ever seen a corroboree or could throw a boomerang or spear, let alone know how to make one. There were middle-aged Aboriginals [who] drift here and stay for some years but they didn’t know the meaning of local Aboriginal names.
Jacob Painter was about the oldest here. But Jacob could never tell the same tale the same [?way] on his second attempt. If cornered over some change in his second telling, he said, “Well, that how Bungaree or old Barney bin tellit me, an’ Bungaree him dead and Barney him worst liar in camp”.
When grown up [I] asked my father did he ever ask the old Aboriginals why Gunnedah was called that name. And [I] also asked him did he ever find out the name of that old Aboriginal chief that Mr Ashby dug up for Dr Haynes. My father told me he had often talked with old Aboriginals about [around] Breeza, Tambar Springs and Rocky Glen when on mounted patrol. And when he asked them what Gunnedah meant in their talk, they said “The Place of White Stone.” “Yes, but where is the white stone?” Everyone he ever asked
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

would laugh when he asked where the white stone was. “Why, it all about there: in little hills near [the] Carroll road close to [the] Common; [?on the] trucking yard; hill all ‘long [the] railway line; that big hill; and along lot other little hills: you must see white stone, all them place, an’ now make roads in town.”

grown to manhood … grown up: Elsewhere it seems implied that Sergeant Ewing began to record Joe Bungaree’s tales in about 1890 (below: MS Page 34). Stanley grew to manhood, i.e. turned 21, in 1899. His father died in 1911.

Tambar Springs and Rocky Glen: On the far side (south-west) of Mullaley from Gunnedah; nearer to Coonabarabran.

Carroll Road + white stone: On the Tamworth side of Gunnedah: the present Oxley Highway [Map 11].

The white stones were probably quartz pebbles. Quartz is a very common crystalline mineral whose many varieties include rock crystal, rose quartz and amethyst. The principal difference between clear rock crystal and white or milky quartz is the presence of innumerable microscopic bubbles or fluid-filled cavities, which scatter the light, producing a white appearance.

The sedimentary rocks around Gunnedah, when originally laid down (Permian and Triassic ages), would have incorporated old ‘fossil’ river or beach pebbles. Erosion over many thousands of years would have freed the pebbles, leaving them scattered locally on the surface.243

Little hills: According to Idriess (1953: 225), there was, in the 1880s, a small hill of white stones in Elgin Street, on the site of what is now the High School. (This probably read the primary school, which was established in 1873 on the corner of Elgin and Conadilly Streets. The high school is actually on Marquis Street.) The hillock was afterwards removed, says Idriess, and the stones used in street-making.

“Tell me how you talk ‘the Place of White Stone’.” In nearly every case they pronounced it with a sound like Gunn-e-darr. And when they talked of the river, its name was pronounced Nammoy, not Namoi as we whites call it. And I think it was the explorer Major Thomas Mitchell who on 16th of December 1831 discovered a river not very far from where the town of Boggabri is today. The Aboriginals in that locality called it the Nammoy.”

Gunn-e-darr: Ewing’s spelling ‘gunn’ might suggest that the first vowel was short (as in English “gunman”). As noted in the Introduction, we believe that it was actually a long u (as in English "goon"). If so, then in Italianate style the spelling would be Guuniidha (rhymes with English ‘goon+need+thud’ but leaving off the final -d and placing stress on the first syllable).

Namoi-Nammoy: In our English pronunciation, the stress falls on the first syllable (“næmoi”). In using the spelling “Nammoy”, Ewing was probably trying to indicate that in Gamilaraay the stress correctly fell on the second syllable. If so, then the second vowel was probably long.
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Thus: *Ngamàây* (to rhyme with English ‘numb+my’).244

*Mitchell*: The exploring expedition led by the Surveyor-General, Major Thomas Mitchell, crossed our Namoi River below present-day Keepit Dam on 14 December 1831.

Guided by a Kamilaroi man nicknamed “Mr Brown”, the expedition proceeded into the back country, and, after inspecting Nobby Rock, a prominent outcrop in the hills north-east of Gunnedah, continued on past Kelvin, heading broadly westwards. In other words, Mitchell and his men passed to the north of Gunnedah. They regained the Namoi at a point a little upstream from Boggabri on 16 December (map in O’Rourke, *Raw Possum* 1995).

The name of the Boggabri stretch of the river was given by Mitchell’s guide as “Nammoy” (as Ewing correctly observes). This was, it should be noted, the name of the section downstream from Gunnedah. The Gamilaraay knew the section of the river upstream from Gunnedah, our Upper Namoi River, as the ‘Mooleuarinda’ or ‘Muluerindi’.245

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244 First consonant Ng- (velar nasal consonant) as in the English word *ringing*: cf Clarke’s rendering ‘Gnammoy’ (in Boyce 1970).

The stress patterns in English words can reflect the number of syllables or the pattern may be unique to each word. Cf: HAPpy; reMINDER; BYZantine; unUSual; periODical; invinciBILity. In Gamilaraay, stress was governed by the type of vowel: the primary stress normally fell on the long vowel [aa, ii, or uu]. When there was no long vowel in the word, the first syllable took the primary stress (see in Austin 1992 etc). For example, in the following sentence, the accents indicate the stressed syllables: *Ngàya yànawàanha walàaygu gùndidha bàabilìgu*.

“Some months after, Bungaree and most of the old Aboriginals and some of the half-castes and their families [...] returned to Gunnedah and selected a new camp site nearer the river and up-river above the deep water of the Burrell fishing hole.”

“One day Bungaree came to me very worried about ‘the old man’ – he never called him Donal as the whites and half-castes did.

“Old Man [said Bungaree] more sick in head: he say him see a bunyip in Burrell fish hole – him clear out in night, carry him camp an’ everything. An’ we find him next day camped otherside [sic] railway up on side Railway Hill. We carry him and camp back to our camp; fix it all up for him: he go and eat and drink tea at every camp and come back and go to sleep in him own camp.

Next morning Old Man gone and all his camp. We find him camped [on] Railway Hill. We carry camp back and make him well; put camp up: he walk about cadging drink of tea and tucker. Sunday him go to bed. This morning Old Man gone an’ camp and things. He up on railway hill. You tell me what I better do for Old Man”. “Send two of the old lubras [Ewing responded] to camp up there to look after him.”

That seemed to fix things satisfactorily, though in his periodical tantrums old Donal sent two screeching lubras in flight down the hillside, as he chased and threw blazing fire-sticks after them!

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New camp above Burrell: Burrell Lagoon is about eight kilometres from Gunnedah, alongside the Boggabri road. It seems implied that the new camp was upstream, nearer the Cohen Bridge, possibly opposite the present site of the airfield.

Donal: Elsewhere Donald or ‘Donny’ McKay.
'Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Bunyip: The Bunyip was the rainbow snake or rainbow serpent. In Kamilaroi: Garriya or “Kurrea”. In Wiradjuri: Wawii.

Multiple lagoons and river water-holes were simultaneously inhabited. Garriya also lived in the night sky. So perhaps we should use the plural: rainbow-serpents. People feared being devoured by the Garriyas, but the shamans or “Clever-Men” had the ability to ‘charm’ the monsters, and indeed they learnt their best songs from them.246

Railway Hill: Evidently one of the hills on the left of the railway line and the Boggabri Road, about 10 kilometres west-north-west of Gunnedah. (Given the proximity to Burrell Lagoon, I think this is not a reference to the hill in the town centre south side of the railway line, nor to Pensioners Hill, a landmark on the immediate west of the town.)

[I Can Tell You Here]: Joe Bungaree’s Stories of Red Kangaroo:

One day my father asked Bungaree: ‘Are you allowed to speak the name of that dead old warrior chief of your tribe? – that one that was buried near the carved box-tree stump.’ //MS Page 14// Bungaree was

246 O’Rourke Kamilaroi Lands 1997: 179-180, citing Mathews 1904a, etc.

Mud-sculptures show that the rainbow-serpent had a snake-like head, a forked tongue and it lacked legs. But the bunyip could also be represented as a kind of walrus or dugong with legs, as in the sketch by “Liverpool, King of the Eurambone” [the SW Liverpool Plains]. ‘Liverpool’ served as guide to the Mounted Police in 1832. His drawing is reproduced in Maclachlan 1981 and Mulvaney 1994.

As Radcliffe-Brown 1930 remarks, Katie Parker 1905 wrongly confused the rainbow-serpent with the “alligator” (i.e., crocodile). Regrettably, this error has been perpetuated by Ash et al. 2003: 82.
sitting down. He got to his feet and turned to face the west. He said, ‘I can tell you here. That old warrior chief of the Nammoy River tribe was name of Red Kangaroo’. ‘But Bungaree, why couldn’t you tell his name to Dr Haynes that day when he asked you?’ ‘Because we stood on my tribe’s bury ground. Not one of my tribe must ever speak aloud the names of the dead when on the tribe’s bury ground. It very bad thing of everyone in tribe – because ghost of the dead are called back to the ground of the bury ground. Someone in the tribe has to die to let the ghost go away off the bury ground. In my tribe everyone was killed quick, no matter who they were, if two of their tribe heard them speak aloud the name of the dead on the tribe’s bury ground.

That why I no tell Dr Haynes name of old warrior chief. Dr Haynes gettem [sic] angry at me. But I bin tell him I no speak that name there. But Dr Haynes no understand an’ he get more angry an’ tell me to go, he no want me any longer. Then he do very bad thing: get Mr Ashby to dig grave of one of my tribe open when I still on bury ground.’ ‘Bungaree, why weren’t there war weapons buried in the old chief’s grave?’ ‘In my tribe we don’t put war weapons in grave along with dead. War weapons were hard to make, so old, old men of tribe long, long time ago said “give dead man’s weapons to his blood kin or best friends.”’

[“My Father Told Me”:]

“Bungaree, did you ever hear about the great battles Red Kangaroo fought and led the Nammoy River tribe in?”

“Yes, my father told me lot of tribe-talk about what Red Kangaroo and him warriors do to other tribes come here to make war, or come here, travel in night and hide and sleep in day: all strong young warriors been in war [at] other times now come to steal our young women for wife.”
Sometimes tribe’s warriors away on raid after wives themselves, or young women get too careless and go to far along river or to lagoons for fish, mussel, duck, ibis, pelican eggs or young birds not able to fly yet. Or they go dig yams in scrub like here. Walk 20 strides into hop-vine scrub an’ look back: you no see them others with you if they stop where you left them. You lay down an’ look back way you come: you might see feet and leg up to knee if no tree or scrub hide it. Sarjun, you know what it like in thick scrub! That good place to wait for young lubras you come to steal away.”

ABORIGINAL FEUDING AND WARFARE

Make war: The best discussion of feuding and warfare is by W L Warner (1930, 1958). He devotes a whole chapter to the topic (as did Wheeler 1906).

In the Top End of the Northern Territory there were three types of group-battles: [i.] unannounced night-time ambush-assassinations in which the enemy camp would be surrounded; [ii.] pre-arranged “general open fights” or mass duels in daytime; and [iii.] all-out, pitched battles, also conducted in daytime. (The same general typology appears in Buckley’s [1852] reminiscences of pre-colonial Victoria in the early 1800s.)

Pitched battles – a sort of “fight to end all fights” – were very rare, at least in the Top End during the early 20th century. Warner’s informants were able to count altogether 70

247 Not enough was recorded about the Gamilaraay language for us to know the conceptual distinctions that were drawn in north-central NSW. One source gives yiilinhi (from yiili ‘angry’) as the word for ‘war’ in Gamilaraay. And in Yuwaalaraay we have girray ‘a battle’ and girraybaa ‘battle ground’; these two words presumably allude to individual duels rather than true battles (Ash et al. 2003: 89). But no Yuwaalaraay word for ‘war’ has survived, nor any Gamilaraay word for ‘battle’ or ‘duel’.

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battles in a period of 20 years, or up to four a year on average, in a region containing a population of some 3,000 people. But just two clashes in the whole 20 years were true pitched battles.\footnote{On this data we can calculate a rough fatality rate. Let us assume that 800 of the 3,000 people were males of fighting age. If an average of five men were killed in each battle, then we have an average of about 20 dying \textit{each year}, or one in every 40 males of fighting age, or one in 150 people (children, women and men). Geoffrey Blainey, citing Buckley, suggests that in south-central Victoria (around Geelong) the \textit{annual} death rate in warfare probably equalled one in every 270 people, but perhaps as high as one in 150, \textit{the same as Germany's casualties in World War Two}. He notes that that the death of two men in a battle involving 40 men represented casualties on the scale of the Battle of the Somme in World War One (1975: 109-10).}

The main cause of armed conflict, says Warner, was vengeance, specifically pay-back for prior killings. Other killings not directly involving blood revenge were carried out to punish: people were punished for abducting women (wife stealing), for using black magic and for breaking religious taboos.

Les Hiatt says that alleged sorcery was the main cause of fights between widely separated communities, while between neighbouring groups the acquisition of wifes, adultery, insult and injury could lead to fighting. Again, the same picture is presented in Buckley’s (1852) account of pre-colonial Victoria.

The Central Australian informants of Deborah Rose likewise explained Aboriginal “war” as most commonly caused by the abduction of women. The killing of wife-stealers, they said, was fully authorised by traditional Aboriginal law ( - a law that, in later years, after payback killings had ceased, they came to see as harsh and unreasonable).\footnote{Warner 1930: 458, 481; Warner 1958, Chapter Six, esp. pp.148-49; Hiatt 1965: 123; and Rose 1991: 101 ff.}
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**Steal for wife:** Wives were obtained primarily by negotiation and betrothal, not by abduction. Girls were allocated to future husbands soon after birth or even before they were born. But all accounts of “traditional” Aboriginal societies also mention wife-raiding parties and marriage with captured women.  

Doubtless wife-stealing received more attention in story-telling because it was (for men) a more exciting and glorious way of obtaining a spouse.

**Hop-vine scrub:** The Yuwaalaraay name was *yiilay*, from *yil-* ‘to bite’ (also ‘cooked’ or ‘ripe’, alluding to its medicinal use, for it was the plant’s ‘bite’ that did the curing: Ash et al. 2003 p.153, quoting Ian Sim). The Gamilaray name has not survived, but we might expect it to take the form *yiilar* with an –r.

Hop-vines or hopbushes are a genus of large shrubs that can grow up to three metres high. For example, *Dodonaea viscosa*, the “Giant Hop Bush”. Hop-vine typically forms ground-level thickets, or a dense under-storey, in woodlands of blue-leaved ironbark and bimble box.

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250 Coxen 1866; Fison and Howitt 1880: 344 [quoting Doyle]; Howitt and Spencer & Gillen: cited by the Berndts 1996: 201; Warner 1958: 66, 75, 77 and passim; and Hiatt 1965: 123.

In northern Arnhem Land, wife stealing had ceased by the late 1950s; but older people well remembered the phenomenon of wife-stealing expeditions as practised in earlier times (Hiatt 1965: 123).

251 There are 55 species in Australia. Nine species are found in north-central NSW, the two most common being *Dodonaea viscosa* and *D. attenuata*. Also found is the hairy hop-vine, *D. boronifolia* (Rolls 1981: 256; Forestry Commission 1985).

*D. viscosa* may constitute the dense under-storey in woodlands of blue-leaved ironbark (*Eucalyptus fibrosa*), bimble box (*E. populnea*), grey box (*E. woollsiana*) and pilliga box (*E. pilligaensis*). *Dodonaea attenuata* likewise may form thickets beneath blue-leaved ironbark and bimble box; and under narrow-leaved ironbark (*E. crebra*) (see in Beadle 1981). In the Nandewars, hop-bush typically forms a dense shrub layer on...
Hop-vine was not the only type of thicket. Indeed on Porcupine Hill today there are still patches of over-ground thicket formed from tree branches and tree-vines. This forms patches of ‘dry rainforest’ with a nearly closed canopy. Botanists call it “semi-evergreen vine thicket” (SEVT) (see Appendix Three). Tim Curran, University of New England, has suggested that much of the eastern and northern slopes of Porcupine Ridge would have supported SEVT at the time of white settlement.252 That is no doubt true, but it would appear from the Ewing Papers that hop-vine scrub was even more extensive on the northern slope and toward the present town-site.

“Young lubras my tribe, all tribes, no take advice of older lubras to keep together with old lubras an’ picinnies [sic]. Some always sneak away ahead or hide and drop behind: might do it often and often nothing happen. Other[s] do it and first time warrior raiding party been watching and when lubras get to some thick scrub or reedy banks on river or creek or swamp, they jump out behind lubras and knock them on head with their nulla-nulla: they stunned. Then put bit of wood in mouth, tie it with cord made of bark or animal skin. Lubra, when she get over being stunned, can’t squeal and make any noise to let any one of her tribe hear. Warrior have a cord about lubra’s neck and hold in one hand. When lubra can stand up, warrior point or tell her to if he can talk her tribe talk: “you run now in that direction!” She no move: he give her two light tap

252 Tim Curran 1997 and pers. com. 2002. I am very grateful to Tim for the careful and patient guidance he gave me on botanics and geography.

253 Consistently misspelled thus.
with nulla [sic] on her head. She still stand; no make a move. Warrior jerk cord around her neck, choke her wind off. Both her hands tied behind back, so no can undo cord choking her. Warrior watching her; then he undo cord to let her breathe again. Soon get her on feet, tell her, or point way, to go.

Some lubras, strong heart, and have to be choked down lot of times before they walk and then run ahead of their captor.

Red Kangaroo tell his warriors lubras who are strong heart when captured are the mothers for our warriors' sons. And the raiding party must try and bring such lubras into our tribe, even if they have to let the quiet lubras free, to have more warriors to drop behind and keep back the rescuing tribesmen.”

Talk her tribe talk: Neighbouring groups usually understood each other’s speech. Linguists speak of ‘dialect continuums’. The farther away a foreign community lived, the more likely its speech would be hard to understand. The Wayilwan language, for example, spoken in the middle and lower Castlereagh basin, shared only about 36% of vocabulary with Gamilaraay (Austin et al. 1980: 172 ff).

‘My father an’ old men in tribe tell me, an’ tell //MS Page 16// all young boy of tribe, about great warriors of the Nammoy River tribe: all about wars against most of the tribes as far away as Quirindi, Cassilis, Coonabarabran, Narrabri [and] Manilla. And raids for wives for young warriors that Red Kangaroo led.’

[The Shortage of Women:]  
Red Kangaroo said all young warriors just gone through the Bora ceremonies that proved them to be a warrior had to get a wife from the lubras of the tribe.
Quirindi etc: The mention of these neighbours allows us to make a very broad calculation of the **EXTENT OF TERRITORY** occupied by each “tribe” - a community or collection of allied bands.

From Gunnedah to Manilla is 50 kilometres as the crow flies; to Quirindi 70 kilometres; to Narrabri 85 kilometres; to Coonabarabran 100 kilometres; and to Cassilis 115 kilometres. Goonoo Goonoo Creek too is named as the seat or main summer camp of a community; it is about 60 kilometres from Gunnedah. **See Maps 1 and 2.**

Thus a communal territory may have been as small as 50 by 50 kilometres (= 2,500 square kilometres) and was not usually larger than 85 by 85 kilometres (= 7,225 square kilometres).\(^{254}\)

In the case of Gunnedah, we can perhaps make a calculation using the two axes Coonabarabran-Gunnedah-Manilla (150 kilometres) and Narrabri-Gunnedah-Quirindi (155 km). These lines lie broadly at right-angles. We assume that half the distance along each axis was the territory of the 'Burburgate'-Gunnedah-'Wandobah' people (our "Gunnedah tribe": speakers of the **Guyinbaraary** dialect of Gamilaraay). The result is 5,625 sq km (i.e., 75 km x 75 km).

Alternatively, if one multiplies the distance from their nearest neighbours (Manilla, 50 km) by the distance from their farthest immediate neighbours (Coonabarabran, 100 km), then the result is 5,000 square kilometres.

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\(^{254}\) For comparison, Keen 2004: 113 posits an average of about 2,000 sq km for the six or seven “countries” making up the lands of the Yuwaalayaay (Narran River: NW of Walgett).
Or again one might ask: "How far along the Namoi did their territory run, and how far out onto the plains?" Along the river valley (floodplain), the length of the axis Narrabri-Gunnedah-Goonoo Goonoo is about 150 kilometres. Let us generously imagine (it must be a guess) that as much as two-thirds or 100 km of this axis was held by the Gunnedah "tribe". As for the plains, we know [below, MS Page 22] that the Gunnedah-Coonabarabran boundary lay around Mullaley: probably a little to the south-west of Mullaley (at say 40 km). On the northern side of the Namoi, let us imagine, again generously, that the Gunnedah people controlled the country for three-fifths of the distance to Manilla. This yields a territory as large as perhaps 7,000 sq km (i.e., 100 x [40 +30] km).

[For older readers more accustomed to imperial measures: 6,500 sq kilometres is about the same as 50 miles by 50 miles or 2,500 sq miles.]255

Just gone through the Bora: A young man was not allowed a wife until he had gone through several Boras. Parker 1905: 81 remarks that a man was regarded as an "elder" (fully initiated) as soon as he had been through five Boras.

Weren't enough: The shortage of wives was due fundamentally to POLYGAMY [or to be

255 The treatment here of territorial size is obviously abstract, speculative and notional. Watercourses formed the summer home-bases, so one could also look at major creek basins to draw up hypothetical territories. ("As between say Narrabri and Gunnedah, which major tributaries might have fallen on either side of a common boundary?" Etc.)

On Guyinbaruay: see the discussion of Ridley’s work in the Introduction, and the commentary to Document 1, para 6. And, for an equivalent discussion of population densities (people per square kilometre), see O'Rourke 1997: 133 ff.
pedantic: *polygyny*]. The older and more powerful men took more than one wife.

In north-east Arnhem Land, the average per middle-aged man was *over three* wives. Quite exceptionally, one man is known to have had *17* wives. The corollary of course was that some or many younger men had to remain unmarried (until aged about 30). The level of polygyny was possibly lower in inland NSW. According to Parker – but she was writing after the breakdown of the traditional life – most Yuwaaliyaay men had only one wife and it was exceptional to have three wives.²⁵⁶

As Warner and Hiatt have noted, the chronic shortage of unmarried women was a major stimulus to feuding. And, if such feuds were not settled, all-out war could result. Conversely, according to Warner, polygamy was only possible because warfare killed off a significant number of younger men, thus allowing older men to have more than one wife.²⁵⁷

Because Red Kangaroo’s command was that all five-season warriors had to get a second wife: the tribe had to be strong in warriors to hold such a wonderful territory, as theirs was a big plain country (Breeza Plains) swarming with *all kinds of kangaroos and emus* to be found everywhere about it; fish in every lagoon, besides the swarms anywhere in the Mooki; and water birds everywhere. Then their own Nammoy River: that teemed with fish and water birds, and every lagoon alive with *fish, mussels and yabbies* about the tribe’s main camping locality, Gunnedarr, and the ridges behind swarming with scrub wallabies. And the big mtns [sic] across the river to the rising sun and to the north, alive with wallabies, kangaroos, wallaroos.

No one would ever *starve for food* or perish for water in the Nammoy River tribe’s territory. That [was] why

²⁵⁶ See discussion of regional patterns in Keen 2004: 186; Parker 1905.

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all the other tribes near or far away had come from
time to time and made war on them, to try and take
their territory. And so many wars caused our tribe to
have continual losses in warriors killed or injured.

All kinds of kangaroos etc: The Aborigines of
north-central NSW ate a wide variety of
FOODS.
The staples included possums; fish and other
river-foods; grass-seed ‘bread’; larger land
mammals; birds; honey; and insect larvae or
‘grubs’. Especially favoured were possum-meat
and the flesh of aquatic animals such as fish,
crayfish (“yabbies”) and freshwater mussels.

In north—central NSW there are several
species of yabbies and ‘shrimps’ [Gamil. giiray
and mirrindyaa] and two species of mussel: the
large [Gamil. dhanngal] and the small [giinbay].

Although grass-seed ‘bread’ – seeds ground
and cooked in the form of tiny loaves or cakes -
was a staple, the Gamilaraay seem to have
preferred animal foods (Gamilaraay Yuri, ‘meat
food’) overall.

Green plants, fruits, roots and tubers (Gamil.
yuul or manhdha, ‘vegetable food, bread’) formed a lesser proportion of the diet, if we may
rely on the contemporary sources. This
contrasts with some other parts of Australia,
where plant foods formed a vital part of the diet
and indeed were more important than animal
foods (or so it is argued).258

For sources and commentary, see O’Rourke 1997. On
regional differences in diet across Australia, now see Keen 2004
(including the seasonality of food sources in north-central NSW at
pp 40 ff).

Many modern writers believe that, in the early literature, the
use of plant foods was systematically under-reported, at least in
south-east Australia. The early writers (they propose) found the
hunting done by men to be more interesting. For that reason (it is
argued) meat foods were mentioned more often than the plant
foods typically gathered by women.
If we look at the provenance of the favoured foods in north-central NSW, we find that the *woodland* foods: possums especially; also honey, ‘grubs’ and plant-creepers, were mentioned most often in the sources. Indeed Ridley (1875) called the possum "the staff of life". Next came the *river* foods: fish, yabbies and mussels. Finally there were what we might call the foods of the *open plains*: grass-seed cakes, kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, emus, bustards, lizards, snakes, roots and yams.259

*Take their territory:* There is no record that war was ever fought for territory in Aboriginal society. Indeed all our authorities are adamant that territory simply could not be acquired by war.260 Perhaps what Joe Bungaree was trying to

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One male observer who did insist on the vital importance of plant foods in central NSW was Dunbar 1943: 80, 175 (Wayilwan people, lower Barwon River).

The case for the ‘vegetarian-feminist’ thesis is summarised in Blainey 1975: 167 ff. See also Allen 1968: 34 ff and Betty Hiatt 1978. The counter-thesis is that animal foods formed at least half the total intake *in better-watered regions* (O'Rourke 1997).

Allen 1968 and McBryde 1976 have analysed the sources at length. ‘Grubs’ meant various insect larvae, “especially a certain fat kind” (Ridley 1875: 151, also Greenway 1910: 16).


Fraser 1892: 37 claims, on the testimony of an early settler in Yuwaalaraay country [Narran River: west of Collarenebri and Mungindi], that one group, its population having grown too large to be easily supported in its own country, threatened by force of arms to take over the land of a neighbouring group. This assertedly happened in about 1842. But Fraser also records that the land was not in fact taken by force. The issue was actually settled by a duel between individuals. So we may prefer to believe that the dispute really concerned resources (hunting rights) on the borderland between the two groups.

Deborah Rose writes of armed conflict in the Victoria River Downs sector of the Northern Territory as a matter of “territorial expansion”. But she is describing people temporarily pushed out of their own territory (by fear of aggressive neighbours). If enemies made it too dangerous to stay, groups would temporarily leave their own country. It was not the *title* to the land that was
convey was that neighbours were contesting hunting rights on or across the borders of the Gunnedah people.

And the old men had been told by the old men of the tribe when they were like us - had been only boys - how those other old men had told them all about their tribe’s great men and about the greatest one of all, Red Kangaroo: how he, when just made a warrior from the Bora ceremonies, found there weren’t enough young lubras in the tribe to supply each new young warrior with a wife. The chief and the tribal elders didn’t bother about the young warriors. But the young warrior Red Kangaroo had strong ideas about the tribal rights of the newly made warriors and the duty the chief and elders of [the] tribe owed to the young warriors. But he could not rouse the other young warriors to claim their tribal rights. They wouldn’t back him up in anything.

Warrior, elder etc: The term "warrior" has no special significance in terms of what people did. Ewing (or Joe Bungaree) uses it simply a convenient term for any initiated man, including a teenager who has gone through the Bora ceremonies. Later the document speaks of "elder, chief, medicine man (doctor) or warrior".

being contested but the use of its resources: the retreating group was being denied the use of the resources from its own land (Rose 1991: 104).

It must not be thought, however, that territory was never acquired in 40,000+ years. Rather, in Aboriginal ideology it was not permitted to take land by force and living people had never known it to happen. Sometimes small groups must have died out, or were effectively destroyed by warfare. Their land must have been used subsequently by neighbouring groups. Doubtless, over time, mythological title would have been gradually extended to bring the new stretches of land within their ownership. But, to repeat, in ideology it was not possible to acquire title to land by force, and living people had never known land to change hands.
But elders, “chiefs” and doctors all fought in battles like the rest; in that sense they too were warriors. Parker 1905: 81 notes that a man was regarded as an elder as soon as he had been through five Boras. If a Bora was held every two or three years, then there would have been ‘elders’ (in the sense of full initiates) aged under 30.

[The Young RK Disappears:]

The moons came and passed away, and a summer and a winter had come and gone since Red Kangaroo had become a warrior. He was 17 years old and few men of the tribe were as tall as he. And he was deep-chested and broad-shouldered. No one could throw a spear so far and to its object.

When not out hunting game or taking his turn on some post as a watchman, he was always ready to stand in some clear ground armed with a shield (heilamon) and a nulla-nulla. And [he would] let the other warriors throw - from a distance of 100 yds or 80 yards - their spear or boomerang at him, each man throwing in rotation after he had would block its spear or boomerang with his shield or nulla. But only the best warriors would stand up and let him throw a spear or boomerang at them.

He was the only new-made warrior to kill his man: he killed two who came with a strong raiding party from narrabri to steal their young women (lubras) for their wife. He made his skills three months after he was made a warrior, spearing one and nulla-nullaring [sic] the other in a close hand fight.

His voice got stronger every month. His cooee [yell] could be heard a very long way. The chief

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261 Ewing’s note.

262 For overseas readers: A cooee is a slow, loud utterance designed to carry a long distance. The first syllable is enunciated very slowly, with a rising pitch on the shorter second syllable,
didn’t like him. He was jealous of how the old men predicted he [RK] will be a great leader in battles.

A new moon was born in the sky, and, as was the custom, a big corroboree dance was held to welcome the new moon. For days everyone carried wood to a great heap that would keep the corroboree fire burning big and brightly for hours and light up all around the corroboree ring.

But Red Kangaroo, the strongest dancer and the most active of all, wasn’t there for the corroboree. //MS Page 18// His friends and relations made much talk and inquiries, and no one could remember seeing him from early dark of the night before when he carried into camp and tossed on [the] corroboree wood-stack a great pine log no other man in tribe could carry three steps.

No one could say they had seen him since sunrise. His hunting spears [and] boomerangs were still in his gunyah (camp made out of tree-bark). But his war weapons were all gone, and a possum rug, and he hadn’t been in any of the parties whose turn it was to go to lookout posts to watch for enemies.

Nor [was he] in the strong party that camped in the caves of the big rock on the side of the mountain range across the Nammoy River east of Gunnedar [sic]. It was a lookout place that spied upon many open tracts of country that an enemy had to cross before gaining cover again. And, from the mountain skyline above, the watchers could keep their eyes on any enemies coming up the other side of the ranges from Manilla or from the fierce New England tribes, particularly those about Bundarra [and] Kingstown. Then there were the Barraba-Bingara blacks more to the north. But in every case they would come in war or a sudden raid to steal the young women of the Nammoy River Tribe if their scouts spied out and found the time favourable for a sudden attack.

\[\text{\textit{thus: kuaa}, \textit{wii}}\] It was used to attract attention, announce one’s presence, rally one’s companions or call for help.

263 Ewing’s note.
Big rock . . . east of Gunnedar: Almost certainly a reference to Nobby Rock, a large outcrop in the hills 15 kilometres north-east of Gunnedah. See Map 4 and photographs 2 and 16.

It is impossible to believe that people standing on the Rock could have seen ("keep their eyes on") human figures at a distance of 10 kilometres and more. But the men on lookout duty would have been able to see the camp-smokes of a group of foreigners encroaching into or towards Gunnedah's territory.

But nothing hid that big rock by day from the eyes of the watchers of the Nammoy River Tribe. Nor even from those in the various camps about Gunnedarr [sic]. All could see the smoke signals sent off the top of that great rock by day – and the flash of a fire’s blaze being screened and unscreened at night – to send warning messages to the watchers in Gunnedarr. But RK was on no lookout posts. But [sic] no sign of or tiding of Red Kangaroo.

The tribe[s]people talked in secret or where no one could creep up and hear what they said. Some said openly and loud in all listeners' ears: “Some party of enemy tribesmen prowling about spying on the camps, or on watch to steal some of our young women, ambushed and captured and took Red Kangaroo away as a prisoner, or killed him and threw his body in the Nammoy”, which has been in small floods //MS Page 19// for weeks.

But those who talked in secret and where no one could hear them said, “This is the chief and elders’ work. They have murdered him in a sudden and treacherous attack. And perhaps his body is in the Nammoy River.”

The chief and elders could see Red Kangaroo was soon going to be chosen as the warrior chief to lead the tribe in wars or raids by the tribesmen. Distrust and suspicion had the whole tribe worked up. Any day
something said or done would cause the tribe to take sides.

[The Return of RK:]

The moon had waned almost to the end of its last quarter – and [there was] no tiding of Red Kangaroo.

One morning, as the camp was gathered about its own gunyah cooking fires, they were startled by a loud cooeeing [yelling] that came down to them camped at the Burrell Lagoon from the top of Railway Hill.

Everyone at the sound of the first cooeeing call froze. But on the cooeeing being repeated, [they] woke to life. “It’s Red Kangaroo come back!”

Railway Hill: One of the hills west-north-west of Gunnedah, on the left-hand or western side of the railway line.

From these hills to the line of the river it is over six kilometres. Or at least four kilometres, if we picture a camp-site located west of Burrell Lagoon where the Boggabri Road now runs. A strong cooee (I suppose) might just carry so far! 264

Warriors grabbed weapons and ran cooing [sic: cooeeing] to meet him. Lubras and piccinnies [sic] streamed after them jabbering excitedly. Again they were all struck dumb when they saw RK marching behind two young women, holding in his left hand the ends of the cords about their necks and his heavy war boomerang in his right hand. The two young women, carrying wallaby meat across shoulders, walked with heads up, looking everyone in the eyes.

There was greater excitement on seeing Red Kangaroo had returned to his tribe. He went to his own gunyah - followed by everyone who had left the camp to meet him - telling his wives to cast their bundles off. He took the cords off their necks. “Make a fire and cook a meal” [he said]. One got wood as the other got the meat ready.

An uncle of Red Kangaroo came up to him with a lighted fire stick and handed it to him. Red Kangaroo’s father had been killed years before in a war. So it was his uncle’s right to give him fire to light his first campfire with the tribe now he had brought a wife or wives //MS Page 20// to live amongst the tribe.

Then RK and his two wives were left to themselves. But the whole camp were excited to know how, and itching with curiosity to know how and where, RK got his two wives. The seven elders of the tribe sent a command to RK to meet them and all the warriors of the tribe in camp upon the corroboree ground and to bring his wives, as all the wives in camp were commanded to be there.

[Many Wives and No Wives:]

At high sun (mid day) a great muster of the tribe’s people were there to listen to what RK had to say. When the oldest elder commanded him to tell them - why he had gone away from his tribe for almost [a] whole moon? And where he had gone to? And what he did there in that time? And how he came possessed of two wives? One wife was all a young warrior of one summer and winter was entitled to in the laws of their tribe.

An uncle: Perhaps his mother’s brother. In Kamilaroi society it was the female line who

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Here the punctuation and sentence structure are left as in the original.
took most interest in the welfare of its junior members.

*High sun . . . whole moon*: “Time was kept in the day by the sun, and in the night by the position of the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters in the northern sky, the time being reckoned by its position above the horizon. Days [and weeks] were reckoned by the moon, and elapsed time by the season” (Dunbar 1943). In Yuwaaliyaay the word for midday was *ngarribaa bidyunda*, from *ngarribaa* (up) [referring to the sun] and *bidyun-da* (middle-at).266

RK had come to the corroboree ground bearing the war weapon he carried into camp that morning. His two wives carried something rolled up in possum rugs slung across their shoulders as when they came into camp. The wallaby meat they had carried was either eaten or hanging in RK’s gunyah. There were no cords around their necks now.

RK in a strong, loud voice said: why had he gone away from his tribe for almost a whole moon? “I went away to get myself a wife, and if I hadn’t got one in one moon, I’d have been away yet for another moon, or moon after moon. That should not be: that the young newly-made warriors of this tribe are all wifeless (except me), a summer or winter after they are Bora-made warriors.”

“We know there were no marriageable lubras in our tribe just at that time or even now. But who is to blame? We all know. It’s the elders and the chief who have taken as many as three and not less than two wives each in the last two years – all young wives – and give their old wives to the new Bora warriors. No warrior in our tribe should take more than one wife from our tribeswomen. If he wants other wives, then let him and other warriors who want more wives make up

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a strong raiding party and raid some other tribe for their young women. That was done by the chief and warriors of our tribe long, long ago, and up to the time of our present chief.” //MS Page 21//

“But **the elders with our chief’s agreement and backing, or our chief with the elders’ consent and backing in our tribal councils**, have made new laws for themselves, not for the good of our tribe. These new laws are to suit only themselves.”

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**High sun:** This phrase, meaning “mid day”, occurs regularly, e.g. below at MS page 25 and in “The Cassilis Raid”, Document 3C, MS Page 3. Presumably it was an expression used by Joe Bungaree himself as the original narrator.

**Our chief + elders + council:** As noted earlier, there was no formal post of chief in Aboriginal society. The man in question, Jerrabri, was no doubt simply the most powerful fighter - “warrior chief” being the tag used elsewhere. At age 38 he was sufficiently influential to have taken four wives.

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“Who gave these elders the right to make these laws? And who gave our chief the right to either agree with and back these elders up in making these new laws? They never called for a tribal council to discuss their proposed new laws on the rights of elders and chief to take one or more wives from our tribe’s young and marriageable lubras. Yet they have done so, in spite of our old tribal law that has come to us from word of mouth from even these elders who had been told from young boyhood by the elders of our tribe then. And they had been told when boys by the elders of tribe. So did our laws come to us by word of mouth, handed down from each group of elders going back to long, long ago in the time of our first elders and when our tribe was formed.
And that tribal law said no man of the tribe – elder, chief, medicine man (doctor) or warrior – can take more than one wife from the tribal women if there be unmarried men in tribe: young new-made warriors or men whose wife has died. But the young warrior must get a wife before the widower can put his claim in to elders’ council that he be allowed to take a wife from the marriageable young tribeswomen. But no man who has had a wife from the tribal women can claim for a second tribal woman for his wife unless there be more marriageable young tribal women in the tribal women [words struck out] than there are new Bora-made warriors. And the youths preparing themselves for next Bora have to have their right of a wife safeguarded before any tribesman can take a second wife from the marriageable young tribeswomen."

"Yet, when I and the last lot of newly made warriors passed our Bora tests, there were no marriageable young women in our tribe for us, because the elders had all taken a wife, some two wives, and our chief two young wives although he had a wife and had given his oldest and first wife to a previous Bora ceremony test[ed] warrior.

So you see: our chief has had four wives and is 38 summers and winters old. And our tribal law said those who want more than one wife must seek them from other tribes by making up a raiding party to go and steal some tribe’s young marriageable women and take // MS Page 22// the risk of losing their life in trying to steal a wife and carry her off from her tribesmen. But the elders and chief of our tribe took the marriageable young lubras for wives, and when the last Bora ceremony made young warriors for our tribe, there were no wives for them!"

Medicine man (doctor): The Gamilaraay term was wiringin or wirringan. In Aboriginal English, “Clever Men”. Called ‘SHAMANS’ by the anthropologists [pronounced “shey-m’nz”, singular: shaman].
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

‘Clever Men’ were believed to possess a supernatural belt or cord; invisible wings; magic stones (crystals of clear quartz); and a mystical personal flame. These they used to fly or climb though the air: a power they displayed by crossing from tree-top to tree-top unsupported; and to walk on fire; to perceive events at impossible distances; and run at incredible speeds. In a world in which all serious illness was due to sorcery, they cured ailments within their own groups and inflicted sickness on distant enemies.267

In *The Red Chief* (chapter 11), Idriess presents the leading Clever-Man of Gunnedah as the malign influence behind the self-serving group of elders led by “chief” Jerrabri. This theme does not occur in the surviving Ewing papers.

No more than one wife from the tribal women, etc: It is very difficult to interpret this passage.

We know that most marriages were pre-arranged through betrothal or promises when girls were still babies, sometimes even before the girl-babies were born. And certainly tensions and jealousies could have built up, given that it was entirely normal for middle-aged men to have three or more wives. But there was no need for any explicit rule about taking just one wife from within one’s own group. The fact is that the small size of a community, and the rule of ‘clan exogamy’ (never marrying a person of one’s own totem), meant that most marriages had to be with people from a different community. Young women left their own ‘tribe’ (band) when they married and moved to live with their husband’s ‘tribe’ (band).

One can only speculate that the strife was due to the older men taking too many of the

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available women, with the result that young men could not obtain wives from nearby groups (members of the same “tribe” in the sense of using the same dialect). The younger men may have felt too that the older men were being unhelpful in declining to join wife-stealing raids to obtain women from more distant groups.

An alternative guess is that the issue was simply Red Kangaroo himself as an individual. Possibly there was no quarrel about rules or principles. Perhaps it was a quarrel about him and his cohort getting wives (“I and the last lot”). Although already physically powerful at the age of 17, RK would have lacked moral influence. Perhaps he was seeking moral authority by criticising the more influential members of his community?

RK’s uncle is mentioned (see earlier). Unfortunately we do not know anything about the role played by RK’s immediate kin, not even whether this uncle was a paternal uncle or a maternal uncle. Ordinarily it would have been RK’s maternal uncle who sought out a marriage partner for him. Fathers took less of an interest. But in any case RK’s father was dead. Conceivably - but this is very speculative - the problem arose because RK lacked a maternal uncle to find him a wife.

“That is why, after a year, I went to get a wife for myself from some other tribe. And it took a month in enemy country before I did get not only one wife but two.”

“And you my tribemen have heard the elder say one wife is all that a warrior of one year is entitled to by the laws of our tribe! But you my tribemen know that the elder who speaks for the elders’ council has not fully spoken our tribal law that a year-old warrior is

268 On baby bestowal and the role of the maternal uncle, see O’Rourke 1997: 167-69.
entitled to one wife only. The law says “to one wife only out of the tribal young marriageable women”. And that is the law for all men in our tribe unless there are times when there are more marriageable women than men in the tribe. And also when a warrior’s wife dies: then he may get a 2nd wife from the tribal women if all other claimants have been supplied. But just listen to me with both ears. I have no tribal wife! But I have every right by our tribal laws to a wife from out of my tribal unmarried young women. Our laws don’t make a limit of the wives we should have, whom we get from other tribes. And my two wives are women from another tribe to ours.”

**[RK’s Visit to Coonabarabran:]**

“Now I will tell you where I went to get a wife: into the territory of the Coonabarabran tribe. And mostly by day I slept in caves because I roamed the country in the young moonlight, and in the dark too, spying on various camps. They are numerous those Coonabarabran tribe and have their camps – large ones – miles apart. But there are small parties camped in numbers of places, some within a day’s walk of here.”

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**Coonabarabran tribe:** From the mention of Mullaley as a borderland area (below: MS Page 27), we would assume that the Coonabarabran and Gunnedah peoples constituted adjoining communities.

Idriess, 1953, chapter five, also speaks of groups or grouplets at “Coolah, Bomera, Weetalibah, Deringulla, Ulamambri, right to the fighting tribes of the Warrumbungle Ranges” [all in the Coonabarabran-Cassilis sector].269 One can only guess that some of these grouplets, e.g at Ulamambri, were bands within the Coonabarabran community, while others, e.g. at

269 Weetalibah near Coolah is not to be confused with Weetaliba near Gunnedah.
Coolah, belonged to the wider community of Cassilis.

Within a day’s walk of here: In the next document, we will read of RK’s attack on Cassilis. He led a war-band from Gunnedah to Cassilis – more than 115 kilometres away - apparently in less than two days. This was a forced march, so we are safe in believing that Aborigines could very easily make 25 kilometres in a day travelling at a steady but deliberate pace. After all, they were well-trained walkers.

From Gunnedah to Coonabarabran it is about 100 kilometres as the crow flies. Mullaley lies on Coxs Creek about 35 kilometres southwest of Gunnedah. See Maps 1 and 2. Thus RK seems to be saying that some Coonabarabran people were camped on the Gunnedah side of Mullaley (which is not referred to by name until later: see MS Page 27: there the Mullaley Plains are mentioned as a borderland between the Coonabarabran and Gunnedah territories). Presumably a few Coonabarabran people were trespassing on Gunnedah land.

It is odd that RK should need to point this out, because the Gunnedah people would have known where Coonabarabran territory began. But the narrator, Joe Bungaree, was telling the tale to white men.

Up in the Warrumbungles there are many caves: great ones that our whole tribe couldn’t fill. Up there in daylight you could see a man coming up the mtns [sic] a half-day before he could get up to you.

When the moon got bigger and gave longer light, I left the high mountains and came down into the scrubby land and day after day watched parties of women and children leave camp to go fishing: musselling in creeks and rivers or hunting small game.
There were young women with the older women and picannies [sic]. But they kept close together.

Going down the river one night, in the dark because the moon was late, I saw camp fires. Creeping near, [I] could see a lot of children and old & young women and a number of warriors about fires. When the moon rose [I] sought for a place to sleep and hide in next day and spy on that camp.

The reeds were six and more feet high, and in daylight [I] could see the creek was shallow with a white-sand bottom, with here and there a small deep hole of water. The river had great lengths of tall reedy banks on both sides.

When daylight came, [I] could see the camp was a temporary one and only made not many weeks before, judging by small ash-heap of fire places.

Soon the camp fires were alight and everyone seemed to be grouped about them. After a time, the 10 warriors in camp got together and later two stayed in camp and eight went off in parties across the river to hunt big game: kangaroo or wallaby. //MS Page 23//

After a lot of yabbering, the lubras and some young women and a lot of piccinnies came wading up the river – about 30 of them. They were laughing and shouting and the youngest boys racing in the shallow water, until two lubras took command and put them all [to] looking for mussels and set older ones netting potholes or spearing fish in shallow holes. But they kept coming up-river, and all the hunting party of men had gone into the thick scrub down-river but across on other side.

[Left Behind:]

Two young lubras carrying bark-plaited bags slung across shoulders seemed to be getting mussels and putting [them] in their bags as they worked along the reedy edge of river bank, and they were being left behind.

Watching them from reeds of creek now only 100 yds away, [I] saw the two young lubras step quickly
into the reeds of river bank. And the picciniies and older lubras were now wading upriver 50 yds away: would they leave river and come into reedy creek [or] perhaps divide party into creek & river? But a shout from a boy who had speared a big fish in a mid-river pothole caused all to rush over to see the fish, and other boys eager to spear a fish as big or bigger rushed ahead causing the lubras to hurry after and switch them all back to a proper line across the shallow water. By that time, all were past the creek’s mouth and going up-river.

_Switch them_: Herding them using a branchlet or switch from a tree?

Where had those two young lubras gone? After a good wait, the reeds along [the] river bank began to sway about. Looking quickly across river, [I] could see none of the hunting party. The lubras and piccinny party were going fast up-river. The camp fires were out and only a few old lubras about. The two warriors were under the _bushes-and-grass mia-mias_.

_Bushes-and-grass mia-mias_: The statements here and also in Document 3C: MS Page 2 ("_bushes & tree-bark mia-mias"_) seem to confirm that on the Liverpool Plains huts were sometimes substantial dwellings, more like those of the far western plains. This is already clear from Cunningham’s discovery in 1825 of large solidly-built huts with conical roofs between Mullaley and Boggabri (see the chronology in the Introduction). Elsewhere, including in New England, many Aboriginal groups usually built simple lean-to’s using just one or two sheets of bark. The Gunnedah people too sometimes built simple
Hidden in the creek reeds, [I] saw the two young lubras slip out of reeds and run to mouth of creek and wade along it. They didn’t stop to tread for mussel[s], just walked quick along for half as mile. And [I] followed through the reeds, keeping them in sight. Thinking they were going to meet some other party unknown to their camp people, [I] had my weapons ready against surprise by someone sitting in the reeds.

The young lubras came suddenly across to my side of the creek, climbed up to bank and they laughed and pointed to the older lubras and the piccinny party. They talked, and [I] knew all they said: ‘Let’s go up to the big rock where we got so many fish the last time we slipped away from the old women and piccinneys. We will get duck eggs in the reeds now it’s nesting time.’ ‘Won’t our mothers be angry with us?’ ‘Oh, when they see the fish and eggs they won’t say much!’

[I] knew that rock: I’d drunk water there and eaten fresh duck eggs two mornings ago. There was a cave 100 yards away hidden in scrub. I’d found it chasing a snake to make a meal off [sic].

[RK Captures Nareen and Naroo:]

Keeping well in cover and behind, [I] followed them to the big rock. They put a net in [the] rock hole and then went duck egg hunting in reeds of creek. I slipped into reeds and waited until they separated. One said, “Oh, I’ve got a lot of eggs: come and see them”. “So have I got some here.”

They wandered apart, eyes watching ground. I slipped through reeds as one lubra knelt putting eggs in her [xxx] bag. The other one was walking away with [her] back to me about 30 yds. With my nulla [I gave]...
the one kneeling a crack on skull to stun her. She dropped instantly, and [I] gagged her mouth and tied her hands behind her back and looked for the other //MS Page 24// lubra.  
She came walking towards me 20 yds away. I held all the reeds about me. She said, ‘Where are you, Nareen?’ Then she said, “Oh here’s the best nest of all”. And she dropped down with bag and began to put eggs in.  
One crack and she lay still! And I gagged and tied her hands also. Then ran back to first one. She was coming conscious.  
I fixed my weapons about me and carried her on my shoulders with my boomerang in right hand, put her inside cave, returned for the other one. And then tied both their legs and looked at gags and saw they were secure. Then went out and got the bags with eggs and fish-net with four fish: put all in cave. Then crept up to spy on the river camp and the scrub where hunting party had gone. All quiet: no one in sight. Returned and wiped out all tracks about rock hole and duck nests. Hurried to cave. Found both lubras fully recovered their consciousness.  
I rolled up my cooked meat keeping out enough for my high-sun meal. Packed my food and rolled it up in my possum rug - had my water gourd of skin full. Ate good meal – offered the two lubras a drink but they only glared like tiger-cats.

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Nareen: Here we learn her name for the first time.

Tiger-cats: Quolls or native cats, genus Dasyurus, nowadays locally extinct (or at least very, very rare). Compare Native Cat Creek and Native Cat Plain, place-names to the west of Gunnedah. Historically quolls were first recorded by Gould in 1839 (see in Datta 1997: 134).
To stop in cave until darkness came was too risky. There was too much daylight and we were too close to the camp and there were bigger camps not many miles away. Once the young lubras were found to be missing from the lubras & piccinny party, and were not up with party at high sun, then that party would hurry back to camp. And when they hadn’t gone back to the camp, and hadn’t kept up with the older women and piccinnies, then the alarm would be sent out by smoke signals and runners to other camps.

It was safer to go now in my journey back home in the high-sun time and chance meeting some small party out hunting. If I saw them first, might have time to take cover and let them pass by. The lubras couldn’t call out or strike a stone or stick on something to make a noise to call attention to them. Whilst to hide in cave until dark meant six hours of sunlight, and with all the women and the piccinnies scouting to pick up the young lubras’ track from where they were last seen, near river’s reedy bank before coming up past where the reedy creek ran into river, [sentence not completed].

And the lubras of 30 years old are the best trackers in a tribe, from their lifetime of running the tracks of all small game for food - animals - birds - reptiles - insects. All that hop run, creep or wriggle on the ground leave tracks the lubra knows and can follow. And they had only to get my track to tell them an enemy had trailed and spied on them and their camp, and had by now stolen the two young lubras. And, with all eyes on my track, they would find the cave I hid in and held the lubras prisoners.

[“With Tears Falling From Their Eyes”:] 

Putting a hide cord about each lubra’s neck //MS Page 25// [I] told them they were to be my wives. And that they were to walk or run in front of me all the way to my tribe’s camps at Gunnedah.
Undoing the cords about their ankles, [I] told them to stand up. They sat and scowled at me. “Get up.” – Not a move. I jerked the neck cords. It cut off their wind, choked them. Their hands were tied; they could not unloose the cord. I watched their eyes and lips. Then I unloosed cord, gave them breathing time, then said, “Get to your feet”. Nareen stood up; Naroo sat and scowled at me. I jerked her neck cord again, and told Nareen to stand whilst I put her game-bag across her shoulders. She lifted a foot and held it out at Naroo. “Yes, when your pack is on your shoulders.”

Naroo: Here we are given her name for the first time. She also appears in the tale about the raiders from Cassilis (Document 3C).

Naroo would have been her totem name: possibly Ridley’s “Gnaroo” [?Ngaru], Black Duck.271

For five times Naroo forced me to choke her with cord. Then on sixth time, she jumped and stood for me to put her game-bag across her shoulders.

Leaving them standing in cave, [I] went and spied about and found all quiet and no-one in sight and no sound of voices. Went [to] cave and said, “Come out.” And pointing said, “Jog along ahead of me”. They turned about, looked to their camp and then turned, jogged on in front the way I pointed, with tears falling from their eyes. For three hours we walked and ran and [then] came to a cave up in a hard place to get to, a

271 Austin gives garrang-ay (Bucknell’s “curling-a”) for Black Duck, i.e. *Anas superciliosa*, the Pacific black duck. More likely, as Ash et al. 2003: 81. 173 propose, garrang-ay meant duck in general (name for any duck); they note that in Yuwaalaraay black duck was *budhanbaa*. They record no Gamil’raay word for black duck. Thus Ridley’s (1875) “gnaroo” may well have been the correct Gamilaraay word. Cf Gamil’raay *ngaru*+ stem word for the verb ‘to drink (something)’; and *nguarr*, ‘hard, strong’.
place one could see all about for a long way in daylight.

Undoing Naroo’s arms, [I] helped her up into cave and tied her arms again and went back for Nareen whose arms had to be free also. She climbed up quickly and went into cave. I said, “Naroo: I am going to eat and drink. Will you eat and drink if I free your arms? We will travel all tonight and where and when we eat again is hard to say”.

She spoke for the first time: “I am thirsty and I could eat some eggs. I won’t scream or call out here”. So she drank and ate some eggs. Then I tied her up, hands now in front, but tied so she couldn’t lift [them] up to mouth to pull her gag out. Nareen drank and ate some cooked meat, no eggs raw.

As we were in the high mountains, we could only walk. So, whilst the daylight lasted, I pushed on. Another drink and cooked meat before dark. And then all night we travelled. I had walked this part by dark and the moonlight.

Towards morning, it got cold in the mtns [sic] and the sun wouldn’t rise for three hours. I knew a small cave not very far away. Coming near it, tied the two lubras about a sapling and crept to cave and listened for any breathing, hearing none. Crawled in and felt about with spear in left hand and tomahawk in right. No one there. Brought the lubras, got the big bundle of grass I’d left propped up along wall on a forky pole, spread it down and took lubras’ bags off and undid my possum rug. Taking a cord, tied their right feet together. Told them to lie on the grass on cave floor, spread the possum rug over us. Woke [?], and listening, heard birds. Got up, looked out: just breaking day.

Our cooked meat was almost finished. This place was safest to make a small fire to cook with. Got fire wood and made a fire. When [?] the lubras up, freed their hands but gagged them and kept their right foot [sic] tethered together. Cooked all the duck eggs in bark ashes and grilled the wallaby meat I had in my pack. We ate a good meal, for we had a long way to go...
through my enemies’ country and by now a strong party was on my track waiting for daylight.

Packing each lubra and securing their arms to side. [Sic: incomplete sentence.] They were carrying my possum rug and water gourd, for I must be free for action for using [my] spear, boomerang, shield or other weapons should I be attacked.

We went along now at a jog-trot, stopping once when I killed a big wallaroo, and chopped best meat off with my tomahawk. At high sun we stopped in a thick pine scrub and I ate a good meal and so did Nareen who was freed first. Then, tying Nareen’s arms & fixing gag, unloosed Naroo. //MS Page 26// She ate a big meal quickly and drank deeply of our water.

We had to get more water to fill the gourd. Naroo said, “Can’t you let our arms be unbound now? We could travel faster.” “Not until you get to my tribe’s camps.” She laughed and said, “Nareen: what do you think of your husband man?”

[Intercepted by Coonabarabran Men:]

We jogged along for two hours and came to a creek with water. [I was] Filling the gourd - I had just tied it to Naroo’s pack - when two men, one carrying a kangaroo, came out of the scrubby timber onto clear ground on [the] opposite side of creek 60 yards away. They called out, “Naroo – Nareen - When did you come here? Where is your camp?”

I was standing just behind the lubras. “Who’s the warrior with you?” the oldest said. The young man shouted as he fitted a spear to his wommerah [sic]. “See, they are gagged & arms tied! He is some enemy!” He raised his arm to cast his spear. But mine was on the way and took him through the chest.

“Throw yourselves on the ground, girls!” the elder man shouted. But they stood still on their feet. He ran up the creek to get a clear throw at me. And I didn’t know if they were alone or the first of some party making camp for the night on this creek.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

He had a spear; I had none now. But had my war boomerang, tomahawk, nulla [sic] and my father’s shield that had V-shaped sharp ends.

V-shaped: Shaped thus to serve as an extra offensive weapon - to cut an opponent’s throat (see the next several paragraphs in the text). In the battle with the Bundarra men, we will find Red Kangaroo telling his companions, “Don’t forget you have V-ends on your shields” (below: MS Page 32). Presumably, when he became war-leader, he required all the Gunnedah men to shape their shields with sharp v-ends.

In The Red Chief, chapter 7, Idriess makes the shield his grandfather’s.

He threw his spear which I blocked with my shield. I threw my boomerang which he turned away with his shield. I moved back to get his spear. He must have thought I was trying to get away from him. He ran towards me and cast his boomerang. I turned it aside, and, keeping my eyes on him, went in search of his spear. He ran across the creek and towards me. I threw a stone and hit him on the chest. And still walked and looked for his spear in the long grass. We met circling and hitting with nulla but blocking with shield or nulla. He kept rushing me and I could see his wind was failing him. But he had years of war experience and I was looking for a chance to end this fight quick. I feared others of his tribe might arrive any moment.

He ran at me and threw his nulla [sic] at my knee. I was watching him but not for that! But I managed to jump high and his nulla [sic] hit the ground and skidded away. I landed on the ground, ran at him and threw my nulla at his belly. He blocked it with his shield but I had come right up to him now and jabbed him in the throat, a slashing sweep with my sharp-ended shield. He went down, almost a dead man as he hit the
ground. I’d cut his throat right across and to his neck-bone.

Quickly I ran across creek, pulled my spear out of the young warrior, took his boomerang and tomahawk and his possum rug. Also the older man’s rug he had thrown down with his tomahawk wrapped in it. Found my own boomerang. Ran back and picked up the nulla and spear of the elder man. Went to the two young lubras. They pointed to my nulla and where the other spear was. My own tomahawk I’d lost. It had come loose in its hide carrier fastened to my girdle and had slipped out where I’d filled my water gourd.

Had that middle aged warrior Kulki, whom the young lubras xxx [illegible] me [sic: incomplete sentence]. [He] was reckoned the bravest and most fearless warrior in the Coonabarabran tribe. His brother was the chief but he led all war parties. The warriors of the tribe wanted him to be their chief. But he said his brother was the best chief for them, whilst he only could fight to kill men.

Taking the lubras away down the creek into thick scrub, [I] made up two bundles of possum rugs with war weapon[s] and gave each lubra one to carry. Bearing away from the creek, [we] struck for the hill-ranges that would lead out onto Mullaley Plains. Once across the Plains [I] would be in my own territory.

Girdle: Men wore a girdle or belt (Gamil: buurr). It was woven from human and/or animal hair, up to six inches [150 cm] wide and long enough to be wound several times around the waist.272

Kulki: His name is introduced entirely casually, just as earlier Nareen and Naroo began their part in the story before the narrator had supplied their names.

272 Document 3B, MS Page 26; also Mathews 1904a: 267; Parker 1905: 120; and Dunbar 1943: 141.
“The bravest and most fearless ...”: Here we have an epic-like element. In Greco-Roman and other epics it is always a prominent opponent that the hero kills at a key point (see the discussion of Epics in the Introduction).

Mullaley: First mention. One imagines that the “hill-ranges” were those around ‘Garrawilla’, south-west of Mullaley.

At dusk we came to the range that leads down to the plains. Here we rested, after a good meal, for three hours by the star-setting time. “Why didn’t you girls throw yourselves onto the ground when the warrior called to you to do so? Had you done that, he would have had a close target in me to spear at.” “We knew that, but we are your wives now.”

We crossed Mullaley Plains and made camp before morning on Railway Hill.

“There, you have heard why I left the tribe for a moon’s time; where I went; what I did there; and how I got myself two wives.”

The elders had been angry but also very uneasy whilst RK talked, and the chief was angry, jealous and envious of RK. But he meant to show his chief-ship authority backed by the elders. He strode across to RK and his two wives, followed by his oldest wife. He said, “I am giving you a tribeswoman for a wife. As you said, there were no marriageable women in the tribe when you were made a new warrior. Here she is: take her!”

RK said, “You can’t give what I haven’t asked you to give. I don’t refuse to take a wife from amongst my tribeswomen. But until I demand my just right, no-one can force their wife on me.”

The chief said, “It’s the order of the elders and my right as chief that I take one of these women of the Coonabarabran tribe as my wife in exchange for the tribeswoman wife I give you. I will take this one”, he said, seizing Naroo by the hair and pulling her towards him.
Her hand flashed to his girdle and tore his nulla from it. Then Naroo struck him in the face, knocking him down with blood spurting from his nostrils. Naroo stood with nulla upraised and said, “Handle your own wives as you wish! But I’m Red Kangaroo’s wife, and I’ll kill any man but him who dares lay hand on me.”

The chief got to his feet and grabbed a boomerang from his girdle to throw at Naroo. But RK had rushed up and tore it from his hand. “If you are a man, Chief Jerrabri, you’ll fight Red Kangaroo and not his woman! Here’s your boomerang!” [he said], dropping it at [the] chief’s feet. “But it needs a man to throw it in a fight against a man.”

_Star-setting time:_ Dunbar (1943: 179) has explained that time was kept in the night by the position of the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters in the northern sky, the time being reckoned by its position above the horizon.

_Jerrabri:_ First use of his name. As with other characters, he enters the story for some time before being accorded his name.

The whole of the warriors and elders knew that RK challenged chief Jerrabri to fight him - and he couldn’t refuse - because he had broken two tribal laws. [First:] to take, or attempt to take, by force from a tribesman a wife or wives he has stolen by raiding from another tribe. Such wife or wives cannot be taken by any tribesman from the tribesman who stole them. But the tribesman who stole the woman or women can give her or them to any of his tribesmen. And [second:] no tribesman has the right to throw a war or hunting weapon, or hold in hand and strike with one, to hurt or kill the wife or wives of a tribesman. The tribesman alone has that right to use against his wife or wives.
RK’s friends, and they were many, rushed about him, and the chief’s friends and the elders gathered about him.

The chief was furious with anger and hate, jealousy, envy of RK; but Naroo had injured his pride and made him a byword in the tribe. He had to fight RK by the tribal law’s penalties for breaking them. If he refused, he would be driven out from tribe or [made] outcast.

But he wanted to fight RK. Jealousy and envy had spurred him on the moment he saw RK returning to tribe bringing two wives from another tribe. And the more he heard and saw of RK’s raiding, and the sight of his two wives, made his hate more bitter and his envy greater. He would fight and kill RK and then the victor took [sic] the vanquished’s property. He would show that Naroo who was her master then! And she would feel the weight of his nulla, to make her sorry for many days.

[The Duel with Jerrabri:]

The fight came off in seven days’ time on the open plain where the grass had been burnt off: nothing but clear level ground. They were to use all war weapons, standing 100 yards apart. They had two spears each; two boomerangs; [a] tomahawk; nulla; and their shields.

Relatives and close friends of each man inspected the war weapons and took them to each man’s position and laid [them] upon the ground. Then they all left, except one man from each party. They stayed until the contestants came out. They helped to fix weapon[s] in girdle. When each man had fitted a spear in wommerah and stuck the second spear upright in ground, these two men walked to centre between [the] fighters and walked backwards facing the centre of duelling ground; stopped at distance of 20 yds to one side; and then they shouted loudly one call.

Each man’s spear left its wommerah and the lookers-on saw the shields turn them aside. Whilst Jerrabri’s had taken the spear in one edge and right through, just
grazing his hip [sic: ill-formed sentence.] He trod and broke spear and had to ward off boomerang. He threw his and it was glanced away. Each man blocked the second boomerang */MS Page 29//. Then they moved up closer to each other, tomahawk and shield in hand, each watching for an opening to throw or jump in close and chop. But both th[rew?] at each other’s tomahawk hand and warded away with shield. Nullas were now in use to strike blows or block one.

RK stepped back and back to draw Jerrabri to rush him, and Jerrabri came at him shouting abuse. Lifting his nulla high and throwing it low, RK used the trick the great Coonabarabran warrior had used, though unsuccessfully, against him (owing to RK’s nimbleness and good eyesight).

The nulla struck Jerrabri on his left kneecap. As he fell backwards, RK ran in on him, snatched his nulla out of his hand and smashed it to his left temple. Then slashed the sharp V-end of his [RK’s] heilamon (shield)273 across his throat.

After the fight RK claimed the victor’s rights: all the three wives of Jerrabri and all his war weapons, hunting weapons and household (gunyah) goods.

There were seven who were Bora-made warriors at the same time as RK; none of these had got a wife yet. So RK told them he would let them draw lot for the two young lubra widows of Jerrabri. The warrior who drew the longest emu feather and the warrior who drew the shortest feather, from seven feathers he held in his shut fist with only the seven quill-tips showing, would win a wife.

The middle-aged widow of Jerrabri he gave to a warrior whose wife had died not long before and left two young children.

Jerrabri had no children by his wives. He divided the household goods among the three widows before they became wives again. He kept Jerrabri’s nulla-nulla and

273 Ewing’s note. Round brackets mark wording in the original manuscript. Square brackets are used when I as editor have added a few words. MO’R.
gave the hunting weapons and war [ones] to Jerrabri’s father.

The tribe held a big tribal council of warriors, and nine picked warriors with seven to 20 years’ experience in wars and raid[s] came to [ask] RK to be their war-chief. He said, “I am still a boy, although in fair fight I have killed five grown warriors. In two more years, if I am still alive and in health and strength, if the tribe wants me then to be their warrior chief, I will accept. But my head is only a boy’s now, and the tribe needs middle-aged heads to think and plan for wars and scheme how to get out of a tight place when the enemy are many and your party a small one. Give me a fighting-party leadership under your new chief.”

So the tribe chose his uncle as war-chief for two years. And before those two years had half gone, the name of Red Kangaroo was known and feared by our tribe’s enemies. And those three rapid blows RK struck to kill Jerrabri in their duel were put into song and tale by the tribe. And the fame of those blows, and the man RK who made them, was carried far down the Nam moy River and many miles N, S, E and West about the camps of RK at Gunnedah.

Tribal council of warriors (and) a fighting-party leadership: We noted earlier (see commentary under para. 3 in Document One) that the majority opinion among anthropologists holds that there were no chiefs and no formal councils of elders among the Aborigines. But sometimes groups did deliberate as whole groups, and there were people who took the lead in various circumstances.

The Gamil’raay term was dhuurranmay, literally ‘that which is top of its group or kind’, applied to any group of things or people (Ash et al. 2003: 68). We may guess that this would have been the term covering ‘a fighting-party leadership’ as well as leadership at a corroboree or of a hunting party.
When RK was made warrior chief he told the warriors at his first council with them that the old seven elders had never had the tribe’s good first in their thoughts. Such old men with such young wives! In a tribe with young warriors with old wives or no wives at all! New elders this tribe must get and get th... [illegible] day. And the old elders would be allowed to keep one wife. But each other wife who was a tribeswoman would be taken back to the tribe.

“You all know [he said] no man, chief, elder, medicine-man can have two tribeswomen-wives in our tribe unless [there are] special circumstances. This tribe must find wives for its newly made warriors. If there are not enough in the tribeswomen, then we must raid other tribes to get wives for our young warriors. Our tribe will die out if there are no wives and children. For where are the new warriors to come from to take the place of the warriors killed? “

“We are not a strong tribe now, though we are 60 spears. We can’t hold & keep our wonderful territory for long, because next Bora only six warriors will be made. We know there are tribes 100 and even some with 150 spears, four to seven suns’ march from us. But there are tribes near us with no more spears than we have.”

“Shall we hunt and fish and eat & sleep and grow fat and lazy, not able to run or to throw a spear 40 yards? Then one day a new and a numerous enemy comes suddenly on us, and we are killed because we have forgotten how to use war weapons or never learned. Do you want that to happen in your lifetime?”

“No! Then I will tell you what we must do: carry war to the tribes near, of our own strength. Kill in fight the warriors who fight against us. Give life to those who come in to our tribe. Let them bring their wives and children to build up our tribe’s strength. We can do this to four tribes close to us. We lose men fighting with
them as small parties out hunting or on a small raid. Let us next attack them suddenly as a war party!"

60-100 spears etc: The authenticity or credibility of these figures can be tested in broad terms using data from the 1800s.

If men of fighting age constituted from one-third to one quarter of the total community, then we have group populations of 180-400 (men, women and children) [minimum 60 x 3 = 180; maximum 100 x 4 = 400].

As we noted earlier, territories seem to have ranged from 2,500 sq km to over 7,000 sq km (above: commentary to 3B, MS Page 16). Thus the typical population density in RK's time would appear to have been from 14 to 18 square kilometres per person; a high figure would be six sq km per person [2,500/180 = 13.8; 7,250/400 = 18.1; and high figure: 2,500/400 = 6.25].

These densities are quite consistent with latter-day observations from the 1800s and 1900s. The "typical" figure of 14-18 is of the same order as inland Arnhem Land [one person per 20 sq km there]. The "high" figure of six is of the same order as for inland western Victoria and on the lower Darling River, NSW (three to nine sq km per person).

If anything, the implied population densities in RK's time are too low. As noted in the Introduction, smallpox swept across south-east Australia after RK's time, in the period 1790-1840, and large numbers died. We would expect the population before 1790 to have been correspondingly higher.274

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In short, Joe Bungaree’s presentation in the Ewing Papers does not contain implied population densities that are obviously exaggerated.

And RK carried out this plan. Before he was 40 years old, his tribe had 140 spears and young warriors coming into the war-parties every year. Six small tribes had been absorbed into the original, and every warrior had a wife. Five-year warriors had two or three. The children were numerous. And RK had led strong raiding parties of one and five year warriors to as far as [the] Barwon River-Nammoy junction, about where Walgett is now, to raid the Barwon tribes of their young women. They were successful. [Also] Raids as far as Moree and MS Page 31/ Murrurundi and into New England localities.

140 spears: This implies a total community figure of (say) 560; or perhaps as many as 700 if one prefers to imagine that there were four babies, boys, girls, women and old men for every one "warrior".

As noted earlier, the territory of the Gunnedah "tribe" extended for perhaps 5,000 to 7,000 sq km. This suggests that the population density at the peak of RK’s career was of the order of one person per nine or 10 sq km [5,000/560 = 8.9; 7,000/700 = 10.0].

Again, this is not a higher density than was observed in historical times (sparser than the estimates for inland western Victoria and the lower Darling River NSW around 1840).

The tribe holding the territory where Bundarra and Kingstown towns now are were a very fierce warlike tribe. They had raided the Goonoo-goonoo [sic] tribe near where Tamworth is and also the Maneela river
(Manilla river) tribe, and took many young lubras away and killed a number of the warriors who gave fight to them.

Both these tribes sent envoys to RK asking his help with a strong force, to go with their small combined forces, to help them get their women back. And RK’s party were to have all the Bundarra young women taken. But if many were taken perhaps RK would give some to them.

**Raiding to Walgett, Moree, New England etc:** As the crow flies, the distance from Gunnedah to each of these districts is: Walgett 230 kilometres; Moree 180 km; Murrurundi 105 km; New England [Kingstown] 100 km; Goonoo Goonoo 65 km; and Manilla 50 km.

Goonoo Goonoo Creek enters the Peel River at Tamworth. Presumably there was one community or tribelet holding the triangle formed by Goonoo Goonoo Creek and the middle Peel [Map 2].

In the 19th century these were all Gamil’raay-speaking territories, except for New England. The language of the highlanders of the Kingstown-Bundarra region was Yugambal.

It may seem incredible that the Gunnedah men raided as far as Walgett. After all, we would expect to find, in 230+ kilometres of river-land, four or five potentially hostile communities. RK would first have had to “absorb” or make alliances with (say) the communities as far as Wee Waa. Even then, between Wee Waa and Walgett there would still have been (say) two further communities whose permission was needed for the Gunnedah men to transit their territories and so reach Walgett. On the other hand, we have record of Aboriginal war-bands
sometimes travelling as far as 160 kilometres [100 miles] to fight distant enemies. 275

The Walgett men may have been known personally to the Gunnedah men from their having met at ceremonies, for a Bora sometimes drew in groups from hundreds of kilometres away. And sorcery was the most common grievance between widely separated groups (as we know from the Top End of the Northern Territory: cf Hiatt 1965: 123). In Aboriginal societies black magic was believed to explain nearly all deaths, including those that today we would attribute to natural causes. (Suppose someone died by being struck from a falling tree branch. We would say ‘just a freak accident’. To the Aboriginal mind, however, the question was ‘who influenced the person to be there when the branch fell?’)

We may guess, therefore, although it is only a guess, that the Gunnedah men believed that one of more of their people had been killed by the sorcery of the Walgett people. We may further guess that the intervening communities concurred, and, for that reason, allowed the Gunnedah men to travel through their lands to reach Walgett.

So, if difficult to believe, it is not impossible that the Gunnedah men may have raided Walgett.

RK took a full day to consider the [illegible] proposal in council with his warriors. The prizes of the Bundarra young women from a raid were of no great concern to our tribe. But, “It’s another thing to have this Bundarra tribe come raiding so close to our territory. Next time, if they are not dealt with very soon, they will catch us off our camps away hunting or [away on?] a raid

ourselves. And come and steal our young women. We are strong now, and we have to break any strong tribe who is a danger to us. This tribe must be strong to raid so far from their territory and they are fighting warriors! Now let us test out who is the strongest tribe! The Nam moy River Tribe will die out in the life of two generations if it’s going to be second tribe and Bundarra first. Next thing, some other tribe will make us third tribe for strength and soon a tribe will absorb us as we have done to a lot of tribes. We don’t want to fight Bundarra tribe for their young women. But, do you agree with me that we fight the Bundarra warriors to prove whose tribe is the ruling tribe, first and last?”

[The New England Expedition:]

So the envoys went back to their two tribes to tell them RK and a force of warriors would help them against Bundarra, taking a force of 40 men, and the Goonoogoonoo [sic] and Maneela tribes mustered 50 men.

They had no chance of making a surprise-raid attack because small parties [of the enemy] hung about on each flank and behind, in their front, spying on them and driving game they needed for food away. But [soon] a bigger force than theirs came to give them battle on a long granite sand-flat through which a wide stony creek ran.

RK led his men, and the Goonoogoonoo chief, Ilparra, the combined forces of his and Maneela tribe’s warriors. Mooti, the Maneela chief, was second in command.

*Wide stony creek:* The watershed between the Namoi and Gwydir basins runs a little to the west of Kingstown. RK remarks that “we don’t know this country, only the track we came here by” (below: MS Page 32). This shows that the battle was fought inside the territory of the Kingstown-Bundarra people. And, after the
battle, RK and his lowlanders quickly reached Bundarra itself [Map 2]. Thus the “wide stony creek” was probably one of the tributaries that enter the Upper Gwydir (or Bundarra) River from the left (west), below Kingstown.

*Mooti*: That is, *Mudhay*. His totem name, meaning ‘Possum’ (the common or brush-tail possum). Rhymes with English ‘wood-they’.

*Ilparra*: Possibly a mis-rendering of *Yapaa+ra*, ‘Carpet Snake [+suffix]’.

Ilparra was killed early with a spear through his throat. Mooti [then] led the combined force, and for two hours neither his nor the Bundarra force opposing him gained or lost ground. And [they] counted 15 dead enemy. And they had four killed and seven wounded but only one seriously. //MS Page 32//

RK could see his party were getting too far ahead and out of touch with Mooti & party. He swung his warriors across to take the party fighting Mooti’s party in their flank. But three shouts were sent up by the main party fighting against RK: just a shout, a pause of time to count four, another shout, and then the third shout. At once those warriors opposite Mooti’s party turned and ran back to main party. And Mooti’s party chased them in spite of RK’s calls to hold back until his party and theirs linked up again.

RK’s party had thrown all but one spear each and found that the Bundarra tribe had broken every one they could lay hands on. Their spears [i.e., the lowlanders’] were from 6 ft to 6 ft 6 inches [i.e., up to two metres] long and had a small tapered butt-end to fit into the small hole of their wommerah from which their spear is cast when thrown. The spear [of] those Bundarra tribesmen was five foot [about 1.5 metres] long, thicker all along its length than RK’s and his warriors’, or the Maneela and Goonoogoonoo warriors’.

It was found that the Bundarra spear-butt was too thick to be thrust into the hole of the wommerah of
RK's warriors or Mooti's warriors. RK gave orders to break every Bundarra spear. “We have to make them spear-less also. As we are now in a tight corner, we must make across into that pine scrub where neither spears nor boomerangs can be thrown. It will be close together then for tomahawk and nulla-nulla fighting. Don’t forget you have V-ends on your shields, and keep together! Get separated in this fight and you’ll be cut off and killed! We don’t know this country, only the track we came here by.”

So the fight became hand to hand. And RK had an advantage over most men: his height & size and loud voice for his men to rally to, if getting behind or to one side.

Mooti was killed by tomahawk blows given by two Bundarra men who ambushed him from a clump of heather-scrub. His party broke and fell back in small groups and were attacked and many killed before they rallied to the voice of RK.

Counting heads, the tally gave RK 33 warriors, and the combined force 32, out of 90. Losses of the Nammoy tribe: seven; combined force: 18 [i.e., 33 + 32 survivors + 7 + 18 losses = 90]; and numbers with wounds.

Losses of [7 + 18 = 25 men lost or killed]: On the use of number-systems for counting in traditional times, see the discussion of Harris’ work in my introduction to Document 3C, ‘The Cassilis Raid’.

The number of fatalities may seem massively large, indeed even impossible. Most accounts of Aboriginal warfare in NSW in the 19th century state that only a handful were ever killed in any one clash. A typical example is Harvie (1927): he reports a battle in the hinterland behind Coffs Harbour between "500 men" (i.e. up to
250 spearmen on either aside) in which only "three" men died.\textsuperscript{276}

On the other hand, in Arnhem Land in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, 14 and 15 men respectively are known to have died in two pitched battles, and there is record of even larger numbers of dead in battles and ambushes in Central Australia.\textsuperscript{277}

Keeping together in a half-moon shape with strong-voiced men calling at each end and RK in the centre, the Bundarra tribe was driven back through the pine scrub and stringybark.\textsuperscript{278}

Coming in sight of another clear space, RK told his men to have their last spear ready for use and to send it to kill or wound their man.

The Bundarra tribe had lost heavily in the hand to hand fighting in the scrub. They had fought alone or in small parties, not as one party keeping together and directed by strong voices. They broke cover and ran to get cover across the open space to use their spears on the pursuing enemy. But they lost heavily and fled disheartened.

Their great war chief Kibbi was killed by RK’s spear as he ran to reach the cover of scrub across flat, from where he [Kibbi] and his men would send flights of spears into the pursuing Nammoy warriors. He had told his men to break the spears of the Nammoy tribe warriors pursuing in a close-together //MS Page 33// party.

\textsuperscript{276} While the number killed in Harvie’s account is credible, the dating (c. 1883) is odd. It is extremely difficult to believe that as late as the 1880\textsuperscript{s} 500 men - with women and children bringing the total to at least 750 - would have assembled near Coffs Harbour. More likely, the clash was observed by Harvie’s father at about the time Harvie was born (i.e., around 1844).

\textsuperscript{277} Warner 1958: 147, 156; Kimber 1990.

\textsuperscript{278} This sentence is mis-constructed. It was of course the Gunnedah men who kept together in a half-moon shape and the Bundarra men who were driven back.
[The Terms of Peace:]

RK and warriors [now] came to the main camp of the Bundarra tribe.
Only old men and old women were there. RK had the old men brought to him. "Go out, find your oldest warriors, and tell them Red Kangaroo has sharpened the ends of the Bundarra spears to fit into his and his warriors’ wommerahs. Tell those oldest warriors to bring their women and children back to this camp. And all the women taken from the Goonoogoonoo and Maneela tribes. No warrior who comes back to this camp will be harmed. But those that stay out lurking in the scrub: my warriors will get on their tracks and run them down and kill them. If a warrior, with or without women, can’t get to camp before the sun sets, then they must not try to come into the camp after dark. My warriors will spear or nulla anyone trying to come in once the sun has set. Go now and carry my words to your people!"
Some came in before sunset but all came in next day.
The rescued women were given to the Maneela & Goonoogoonoo tribesmen. Five women of the Bundarra tribe were given to each of those tribes. Thirty-four young women and five young boys and girls were also taken by RK & warriors. RK wanted those boys for future warriors and girls as wives for his tribe. [The] Bundarra tribe, still strong in men, would have to get young wives somewhere [else].
RK[’s] voice in the distance [had] rallied his warriors to a fearlessness, though a small party and hard pressed. He was so tall and broad to look upon that enemies quailed on sight of him. His war weapons were heavier and bigger than other warriors’. And shields had to be made of tough wood because he often split a shield with his second spear if the spears had been taken point on shield. To glance a spear away with shield needed practice and experience.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

He was the greatest warrior chief the Nammoy River tribe ever had. And in his time no other tribe claimed to have a chief his equal for 100 miles all around Gunnedarr. “So it came down by song and tale on our tribe as told by the old men to the young and they grew up and told //MS Page 34// the young folk and so on by word of mouth, by song or story. We heard of our greatest warrior chief and the deeds he did in battles and raiding.”

[“His Greatest Deed:”]

“But”, said old chief Bungaree, “of all the wars and raids RK took part in, his tribe claim his greatest deed and victory was won when he and nine seasoned warriors ran 15 miles [24 kilometres] to save their women and children and help the 25 warriors left to guard the children in the Gunnedarr camps. Because 80 Cassilis warriors had come on a raid to take the young women and fight a battle if they had to.

And in that time RK was a chief of two years and a very powerful young man. And there were 65 warriors in the tribe counting every spear. And 15 of the warriors were 60 years old.”

This tale [was] told by King Bungaree to Mr J P Ewing (who made notes of it as Bungaree talked). Said Bungaree: “This fight of Red Kangaroo and his small force of 35 warriors against 80 fierce and warlike Cassilis warriors proved that RK could think quickly and plan out a way to trap [the] Cassilis warriors even though they outnumbered the Nammoy warriors by more than two to one”.

From the facts told by King Bungaree, Mr J P Ewing wrote an account of that clever trap-ambushing of the Cassilis warriors by RK and his warriors. This account was printed by Mr T B Roberts in the Gunnedah Advertiser somewhere about 48 years ago. Appended, I have attached a fuller account of that ambushing of the Cassilis warriors.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Made notes ... + ... Wrote an account ... 48 years ago: That is, in about 1890. Unfortunately copies of the Gunnedah Advertiser from that period apparently have not survived (the State Library of NSW holds issues only from 1894).

Appended: Document 3C, below: the account of “The Cassilis Raid”.

“Tell me, Bungaree, how you learned to be so good at tracking - not one man only but so many?”

“When we all little piccinnies, we stop along our mother: old women, young women and all other piccinnies. Every day in good weather we taken along with women. ‘Boy’, my mother say, ‘you look at this track (in dust or mud). You know what made that track?’ ‘No.’ ‘That track possum. Now see: you can follow that track to possum home.’

“I follow track little way, then lose tracks. My mother say, ‘Come back to where you see last track’. ‘Show me.’ ‘There it is. Now you look close all about. What you see?’ ‘No track at all.’ ‘You see this tree?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘What you see there on bark? Little mark like scratch my own fingernail?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Possum claws do that, climbing tree to his home. He out all night; he sleep all day. Now you see me climb up to that hollow limb and cut possum out. We eat possum for our dinner.’


Mother or other women tell us what make the track and set us to track along following it. ‘See this track: that kangaroo-rat. Now we follow it.’ It gone into grass. Mother say, ‘You creep up quiet after me. Look there in that grass: what you see? Only grass? ‘Yes.’ But don’t you see the grass there (pointing) is in a mound shape?’ ‘Yes I see.’ ‘Well now you watch me hit that mound with my yam-stick.’ Crack! The mound
kicks and struggles and then lays still. Mother says, ‘You go and see what you find in that mound of grass.’ ‘It’s a kangaroo-rat!’ ‘Yes, and it was asleep in its nest. Kangaroo-rat out all night; sleep in nest all day.’

[Learning to Dig for Mussels:]

Then mother takes me to the river or lagoon to net fish or tread lagoon mud bottom for mussels.

In clear water of river in sandy bottom and only a foot or two deep, my mother point to a mark in sandy bottom, like you dragged a small stick point along sand and then lifted stick off sand. ‘You see that mark in sand?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘You know who made it?’ ‘No.’ ‘Well, that made by a mussel. You run its track and find it.’ ‘But mother, the mussel’s not there.’ ‘Can’t you see the sand’s clear of any mussel?’ ‘Yes, I see there’s no mussel on top of sand.’ ‘But come and see what I point out. You see this end of mark in sand?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Well, there’s bubbles coming up out of the sand all of the time at this end. Go and look at other end and tell me if you see bubbles coming up there.’ ‘No bubbles here at all.’ ‘Come back this end. Those bubbles are coming up from the mussel buried under sand. You dig down with your hand where bubbles coming up. What you got?’ ‘Why, a mussel!’ ‘Yes: old mussel, when he move about, he open his shell and his body make a thin line along sand or mud bottom and when finish his walk he dig down a hand’s depth or more. So water-rat – old crane or fish can’t get at him. Now you know how to find mussel.’

To net fish: Fish net-traps, often very large, were made from the fibre of kurrajong bark. Bucknell remarked that a single net-haul sometimes yielded enough fish to feed a group of 40 people for one day.279

279 Mitchell 1839: 100; Greenway 1910: 15; and Bucknell 1933: 34.
In a few years every piccinny [sic] can track and know who made the tracks. We are set to track our mother, or some piccinny, or one of the old men. We learn all tracks’ shapes, and if a man or woman, a boy or a girl. We are taught to find birds’ nests in trees – rocks – or in reeds or on the ground. We learn to spear fish, net or trap animals.

[Learning to use Weapons:]

When a boy gets seven or eight years old he goes to the old men to be taught how to throw a spear, boomerang, and use a shield.

The first spears are made from dry river reeds or dry thistle stalks: no sharp end. Our wommerahs are made with [a] small hole to fit the reed spear [or] in bigger hole for thistle stalk.

Our boomerangs are small and made of thin bark off trees. These we throw at one another from places the old men stand us at, facing each other and we have our shield (heilamon) to block spear or boomerang. But we have small real spears & boomerangs to throw with wommerah at a target: a skin of a kangaroo dried and stretched on a wooden frame. We are taught to throw a boomerang at some mark or throw it in different ways.

As we grow older, our weapons ... [sentence illegible] ... until we are judged fit to throw [illegible] spears at each other using our shield to block the spear, and also boomerang when we practise with them. Then we - when growing up 12 or 13 - stand with a shield and nulla in our hands, and the other boys throw a spear or boomerang at us, each throwing in his turn, and we have to block the spear or boomerang on shield or with nulla.

That was how I was first taught to track by my mother & other tribeswomen. //MS Page 36// Then the old men taught us how to throw a spear, boomerang, how to guard with shield, or with nulla, using both. And as we got older we learned how to fight and defend
ourselves, getting us prepared all the time. We would
 go through the Bora ceremonies and be judged to be fit
 for warriors to fight for our tribespeople against any
 attacking enemy.
 “That, Sarjun, was how the women of our tribe
 taught boy and girl how to track and all kinds of
 bushcraft. None of us would starve for food if game
 was about and we knew where to look for water in
 drought times.”
 “Tell me, Bungaree, were the bones taken out of that
 old grave those of that great warrior chief?” “Yes,
 Sarjun, they were Red Kangaroo’s and no other man’s.
 And Dr Haynes has done a terrible thing to send Red
 Kangaroo’s bones way from his country. Never again
 will I point out where others of my tribespeople are
 buried! Not only in that place but more places not far
 from this town, and others miles way.”
 “What does the name Gunnedarr [sic] mean,
 Bungaree?” “The Place of White Stone. You see white
 stone in the hills all about this place.” [Text ends.]

As noted earlier, there is a second document or
 enclosure in pencil. I have not reproduced it,
because it is simply an extract from Prescott’s
 article.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah


Manuscript in the possession of the Gunnedah Historical Society: 17 pages, not in the same hand as the 1945 letter (Document 3A).

We are told that J P Ewing senior made notes as Bungaree narrated the tales and that a recension of the Cassilis Raid was published in the local newspaper in about 1890. The extant document looks like a later transcription.

Based on the handwriting, it would seem that the writer or transcriber was Stanley Ewing rather than John Ewing junior.

Variant spellings seem to confirm that we have here a different author, or a different transcriber, from "JE's" 1945 letter to Russell McDonagh (Document 3A). Here ‘Aboriginal’ is spelt with a capital, and, whereas John Ewing in Document 3E (“Jinnie’s Tale”) spelt piccaninies correctly, the writer here writes “piccinnies“. This is perhaps just an idiosyncrasy of spelling: The use of words such as “ineradicable” and “variegated” [albeit mis-spelt ‘varigated’] suggest that the author was far from uneducated. - Or, do we say that a primary school education in the late 19th century provided a superior grounding in basics to a high school education in the early 21st century?

The text is written in a continuous flow without any paragraphing, in a thick-drawn and very clear hand with few spelling mistakes. But there are too many capitals, as if it were written by a German: e.g. capital-w ‘Warriors’ instead of ‘warriors’ and capital-t ‘Tribe’.

The punctuation is also unusual: full stops occur at the end of phrases rather than at the end of sentences; apostrophes and commas are sometimes omitted; and

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280 It may be that Stanley Ewing knew well enough how to spell 'piccaninny', and perhaps "picannies" was how Joe Bungaree spoke the word.

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frequent use is made of dashes. The dashes seem to be the author’s own ‘stream of consciousness’ style (cf the start of page 2 in the MS). It is possible, however, that the dashes were a way of representing the narrator’s (Joe Bungaree’s) pauses in the original oral tale.

To make the text more readable, I have added paragraph breaks, changed the superfluous capitals into lower case, and corrected the punctuation. Quotation marks have been added where it is clear that direct speech is being used. Square brackets mark my interpolations (M.O’R.).

The Players, The Locales and The Action

i. The Players:

Boobuk: “A seasoned warrior”. He led the 29 warriors who were left to continue hunting on the Breeza Plains. Later he led one of the two war-bands of Gunnedah men who routed the Cassilis men on the south-west side of Black Jack Mountain.

Burraleda: “A close friend of Red Kangaroo’s, about 38 years old, wise in the tribe’s councils, fearless in war and 2nd chief of the tribe”.

Gilwan: Weetah’s husband. He led a small band to spy on the Cassilis men when they reached Burrell Lagoon.

Kuribri: A “warrior”. One who accompanied RK on the hunting expedition to Breeza Plains.
Red Kangaroo (RK): “Cumbo Gunerah” [Kàmbu Kànuru]: When the story opens he has been “the warrior chief of the tribe for two years”. In Document 3B, “The Death and Career”, it is stated that he became war-chief at about age 19, which would make him about 21 in this tale (3B, MS pages 17, 29, 34).

Tukki: Probably Thagaay or (Ridley’s “dukkai”), i.e., the Golden Perch or Yellowbelly fish, Macquaria ambigua. The totem name of a boy “about nine years old”. Younger brother of Weetah.

    Dhagaay rhymes with English “the guy”, but the first consonant was a ‘dental stop’: similar to the ‘dth’ sound in English “hid them”.


    As before, the middle consonant dh was a ‘dental’: similar to the ‘dth’ sound in English “hid them”.

2. Locales:

“Blackhill” or Black Hill: Location uncertain, but probably one of the knolls or hillocks south of the present railway line, north of the foot of Porcupine Ridge. The best candidate would seem to be a knoll immediately south of the intersection of Boundary Road
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

and Kamilaroi Road. See map 10. Idriess seems to have erred in saying that Black Hill was a small rise on Porcupine Ridge itself (Red Chief, chapter 24).

According to the Ewing Papers, below: MS Page 12, a "rib" connected 'Blackhill' to Porcupine Ridge. This seem to be a reference to the low ridge that extends NNE from the main Ridge.

The reference in the Ewing Papers to the north-westerly side of the Blackhill as the “back” side may imply that its south-east side was regarded by Aborigines as its front (perhaps because that was the side nearest the Secret Camp).

Burrell Lagoon: A large billabong, site of the western camp of the Gunnedah people. Located beside the Boggabri Road eight or nine kilometres from Mullibah Lagoon, i.e. about two-thirds of the way to 'Burburgate' station [Map 4].

Mullibah Lagoon: The eastern camp at Gunnedah. Located nowadays at the north-eastern edge of the town [Map 11]. A usually dry creek or marshy “flood-runner” - running parallel with Maitland Street - connects the lagoon to the Namoi. In this book the photographs of the

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281 I thank Tim Curran for his advice and suggestions on this point (pers. comm. 8 November 2002 and earlier e-mails).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

flood-runner were shot from the northern section of Henry Street (Photographs No’s 12, 13; Maps 8, 10).

Porcupine Ridge/s: On the southern side of the town of Gunnedah. Site of the present-day tourist look-out [Map 5]. Connected via a low ridge or “rib” to Blackhill (MS Page 12). There was a hop-vine scrub leading to Porcupine Ridge and on the north westerly side of Blackhill, i.e. where the built-up edge of the modern town is now located.

The secret camp: Nowhere is its location stated precisely. Evidently it lay in the hop-vine (Dodonaea) scrub between Mullibah Lagoon and Porcupine Ridge, nearer the latter. On Maps 10, 11 I have placed it conjecturally at the northern foot of Porcupine Ridge, but this remains a guess.

U-shaped clearing: The text speaks variously of [1] "a small clearing 300 yards wide and a length of 1,700 yds" (MS Page 7); and [2] a "mile-long-by-300-yard-wide strip" (MS Page 15), which would appear to be the same feature. In addition there was [3] a U-shaped clearing "130 yards deep by 40 wide" in the thick hop scrub at the “back” or north westerly side of Blackhill (MS Page 11).

The smaller u-shaped clearing was ordinarily used as a ‘wallaby-catch’ but in this case it served as
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

an ambush site for human visitors. Its exact location is unclear but presumably where the edge of the town now stands.

iii. The Action:

The main events in the story can be summarised as follows.

A. Time: Two years since Red Kangaroo ( = RK) has become warrior chief.
Place: Gunnedah: from Burrell Lagoon to Mullibah Flat Lagoon.
Events:
1. Shifting camp.
2. RK plans to go emu hunting, but the younger warriors who would be left behind grumble.
3. RK calls a “high sun council” and rebukes the young men.

B. The next day:
Gunnedah/Breeza Plains.
4. RK leads most of the men out to hunt emus and kangaroos, while Burradella and others stay behind as guards for the women and children.

C. After eight days:
Breeza Plains.
5. They start back to Gunnedah, bearing kangaroo meat.
Meanwhile:
Lagoon on the north side of the Namoi (downstream from the modern bridge):
7. Women head back to Mullibah. Weetah has forgotten her dillybag, and, with her brother Tukki, returns to get it. Strangers are seen. Tukki is sent back to warn Burradella, while Weetah stays to observe the enemy scouts (from Cassilis).
D. The secret camp of the Gunnedah people:
8. Burradella orders all to go there for safety.
9. A smoke signal is sent up to warn RK.

E. On the 8th sun:
Mooki River:
10. RK leads a small group back from Breeza Plains; at the Mooki River they see the warning smoke signal. (The rest under Boobuk follow behind slowly.)
Meanwhile:
On the Namoi, just downstream from the present-day bridge:
11. A group of Gunnedah men led by Gilwan spy on the Cassilis interlopers.

F. End of the 8th day:
Secret camp:
12. RK arrives. Weetah tells her tale.
Meanwhile:
Mullibah Lagoon:
13. The main Cassilis war party arrives from downriver.
14. RK rules out a counter-attack for the moment. Then he thinks of a way to ambush the large Cassilis raiding party.

G. At the U-shaped clearing in the hop-bush scrub (? north-west of Porcupine Ridge):
15. RK shows Burradella the site of the intended ambush. He explains how they will lure the Cassilis men into the trap by having the Gunnedah women make a camp in the clearing and act as if all is normal while the Gunnedah men hide on both sides of the U, just inside the surrounding scrub.
Meanwhile:
Mooki River:
16. Boobuk’s party arrives back from the Breeza Plains, quite unaware of what is in train.

H. Day nine:
The U-shaped clearing.
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17. The ambush is prepared.

I. Evening of day nine:
The u-shaped clearing.
18. Cassilis scouts observe the Gunnedah people: all appears normal.
19. The Cassilis men enter the trap. Many are killed; others retreat into the scrub. The Gunnedah men follow and attack them again.

J. The next day:
Mullibah.
20. The surviving Cassilis men fall back to Mullibah, where they are surprised by Boobuk’s group, who have just arrived from the Mooki. Some surviving Cassilis men escape south-westwards.

K. South-west of Gunnedah, probably about where the Wandoba Road meets Black Jack State Forest:
21. The retreating Cassilis survivors are attacked again by the pursuing Gunnedah men.

L. The next day:
Towards Cassilis:
22. RK orders a forced march direct to Cassilis, leaving behind the remnants of the Cassilis raiding party.

M. Evidently after one more day:
Cassilis:
23. RK attacks and routs the Cassilis camp. The Gunnedah men capture 40 Cassilis women.

Computation and Numbers

It is a common but entirely mistaken view that in traditional times Aborigines were unable to count beyond ‘one, two, many’.

John Harris has shown that many, indeed probably most, Aboriginal groups counted by fives. Five is of course the number of one’s fingers or toes. The use of
five and 10, based on the five-fingered hand, is basic to the vast majority of the world’s counting systems.\(^{282}\) In Central Australia, writes Harris,

> The old people were able to explain ... some of the circumstances under which [in traditional times] the number system was used. Hunting was one context. Another was that it was used to count the number of warriors who went out to fight and the number who returned. Combining the use of the terms with tallies on the ground [marks in the soil], one person carried out the operation 50-10=40.\(^{283}\)

Harris’s thesis is confirmed for our area. Charles Greenway, who knew the Kamilaroi people of the Upper Barwon River as early as the 1840s, and learnt their language well, recorded names for the numbers from one to 20.\(^{284}\)

Another careful student of the language, William Ridley, mentions Aborigines on the Barwon in NSW and the Balonne River in south-central Queensland counting to 20 using words for “hand” and “foot”. The name for 19, for example, was “bular-bular-dinnamulanbu”, i.e., two+two+one’s feet (10)+one hand (five). More accurately rendered, the words are: bulaarr ‘two’; and dhina ‘foot/feet’. Ridley’s “mulanbu” [maalanbu], evidently meaning ‘you count (the hand) once’, was probably derived from the word maalan ‘once’. The Gamilaraay word for ‘hand’ was mara.\(^{285}\)

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\(^{282}\) Harris 1982 and 1987; also *Hale 1975: 269. For a comprehensive list of basic numbers in a range of Australian languages, see [www.zompist.com/aust](http://www.zompist.com/aust).

Harris notes that numbers up to at least 40 were used in Central Australia (by the Aranda people); numbers to 100 or more in western Victoria (Tjapwurong people); and to at least 150 in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Groote Eylandt).

Among those wrongly asserting that Aborigines were unable to count beyond four is Blake 1981: 3-4.

\(^{283}\) Harris 1982: 169.

\(^{284}\) See listed online at [www.science.uts.edu/msc/AborCount.pdf](http://www.science.uts.edu/msc/AborCount.pdf); accessed January 2005.
Katie Parker likewise mentions numerals up to at least 15 in use among the Yuwaaliyaay, the neighbours of the Kamilaroi in the north-west.\textsuperscript{286} We must therefore reject Bucknell’s claim that the Gamilaraay could not count beyond ‘one’ ("marl"), ‘two’ ("boolar"), ‘three’ ("coolarbar") and ‘many’ ("boodalarbar") (Bucknell’s spellings).\textsuperscript{287} More correctly rendered, Bucknell’s “coolarbar” is kulibaa or gulibaa ‘three’. His “boodalarbar” (burrulaabaa) was a variant on burrulaa, ‘many’.\textsuperscript{288} We also have record of a word for ‘four’, namely buligaa.\textsuperscript{289}

In this document, “39” is the highest number which is not a multiple of five; “65” is the largest number not a multiple of ten; and “130” the largest number mentioned (see Table One below). In the earlier major document, we encounter “140 spears” and “150 spears” [meaning the number of warriors] (3B, MS Pages 30, 31).

But, were these numbers supplied by Stan Ewing? Or did Bungaree learn from the whites to count in the European style and then invent or inject precise numbers that were not originally part of the tale? Or were the Gamilaraay actually able to count beyond 20,

\textsuperscript{285} For comparison, counting systems based on composite units of five and 20 are common in Papua New Guinea. The 800 different language groups have their own counting systems with a variety of basic number words. Commonly used number words are ‘hand’ as five, and ‘person’ (10 fingers and 10 toes) as 20. A few groups have a hand as four (without the thumb) or as six (with the thumb as two knuckles). See Owens, K. (2001). The work of Glendon Lean on the counting systems of Papua New Guinea and Oceania, Mathematics Education Research Journal 13(1), 47-71. See also in The Helix, Dec 2002-Jan 2003, pp 19-22, ‘Ethnomathematics, a world of numbers (introduction to ethnomathematics using examples for the Pacific region)’.

\textsuperscript{286} Greenway 1910: 55; Ridley MS 1871, 1872 article, p.261 and book 1875: 32, 140; and Parker 1905: 11.

\textsuperscript{287} Bucknell 1933: 33.

\textsuperscript{288} Austin’s spelling; also Ash et al. 2003. Cf Bootle’s “boorallaabba” for ‘many’ (1899: 4). This is probably to be rendered as burrulaabaa. The suffix -baa meant 'domain/time/place'. Thus "condition of being many".

\textsuperscript{289} Ash et al. 2003: 44.
even though this was not recorded by certain early writers?

Harris notes how in the 1920s the anthropologist N B Tindale bargained with Groote Eylandters (Anindilyagwa people) demanding 150 spears which he, Tindale, indicated as $10 \times 15$, i.e., 10 fingers by 15 sticks. The Groote Eylandters brought him the correct number, 140 of them being tied in bundles of 20 (plus 10 loose) because that was obviously how they preferred to group them.\footnote{Harris 1987: 30, citing Tindale 1925. Also Harris’ other publications at: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig_prgm/ethnomathematics/ethno_content.htm (accessed July 2004). Compare the Yuwaaliyaay words \textit{ganduwi} ‘one emu’, \textit{wugalwugal} ‘four emus’, \textit{gayaangay} ‘five or six emus’ and \textit{ganurran} ‘14 or 15 emus’ (Ash et al. 2003: 79). Presumably these were ‘rough estimate’ terms rather than numbers as such, perhaps meaning respectively “fewer than a handful of emus”, “nearly a hands-worth of emus”, “about a hands-worth of emus” and “about three hands-worth of emus”?}

Accordingly, although it cannot be proven, I would suggest that probably the Kamilaroi could count above 20 when they needed to. (For details of counting above 20 in Northern Australian languages, see Harris 1982.)

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Examples of numbers mentioned in the tale that follows:}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\hline
\textbf{130:} & Children in the Gunnedah “tribe” (below: at page 4 of the MS.) \\
\textbf{90:} & Wives in “our tribe”, including 20 no longer able to bear children (MS Page 4). (At MS p. 6, however, it is said that there were 20 women aged 60 to 80. This is odd given that there must have been further women aged 40-60 who were no longer able to conceive.) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
65: Number of fighting warriors in the Gunnedah “tribe” two years after RK became their war-leader (MS Page 1). This included 24 younger, inexperienced men (MS Page 2). *(Note: 130 children + 90 wives + 65 warriors = total 285 in the “tribe”, if we assume that the three categories are exhaustive.)*

60: Cassilis men who entered RK’s trap (MS Page 15).

39: Number of men who went hunting on the Breeza Plains with RK (MS Page 4).

35: Strength of the combined Gunnedah party under RK and Burradella after the first ambush (MS Page 15).

34/37: Cassilis men killed in the first ambush: 34 died at the mouth of the clearing plus three more at the other end (=37; MS Page 15). Apart from “six” wounded, there were “17” survivors whom Red Kangaroo pursued: ...“Burradella counted 34 killed and six badly wounded inside the first 60 yards of the U (and) with the three killed at other end by Red Kangaroo and some of his warriors.”

27: “...two raids had brought into tribe (sic: “the” omitted) 27 young women and had had only five warriors killed ...” (MS Page 1).
26: "... 15 were old warriors of 60 years of age; 20 were men from 35 to 40 years old and 30 young warriors from 17 to 26 years old (MS Page 1).

24: "... along with 24 young warriors in age but (who were) warriors of three or four years experience in war" (MS Page 2).

15 and 9: "Why weren’t those 15 old warriors left to guard the camp – and let the rest of the warriors pull lot [sic] to see what nine of them had to stop and guard camp also ...” (MS Page 2).

14, 13, 12: "... Sending another warrior to take the fifteen boys to from 12 to 14 years old to the edge of the hop scrub. Two were sent to the smoke signal post to tell the three warriors there that Burradella wanted them (by) sunset to join him on edge of hop-scrub, boys to guide them. The 13 left [...] warriors, he stationed 10 yds [yards] apart ... (MS Page 7).

11: "... So Red Kangaroo picked the 20 unmarried lubras and 40 of the youngest of the 70 lubras in camp, and Tukki and all boys and girls from eight to 11 years old” (MS Page 12).


7:
“You all want to go for your own pleasure, hunting the emu and gorging on its meat for the next seven suns and leave the 15 old warriors and some nine of you to guard this camp” (MS Page 3).

6: “They had lost six killed and only two with crippling wounds for life” (MS Page 1).

DOCUMENT 3C: TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES

As before, I have added italics to emphasise points of interest. Words placed in square brackets are words that seem to have been omitted, or else brief comments by the present editor (MO’R). The section headings, in capitals, likewise are not original, but have been added to make reading easier.

It was now the season of the year for the warriors, especially the last Bora-made ones, to go emu hunting and feasting on its meat to make them strong in strength and strong-hearted against enemies in fighting. And the emu fat mixed with ashes they would rub all over their body."

The tale begins abruptly, as if part of a longer saga. Red Kangaroo/Gambu Kanuurru is introduced (below: paragraph 2 in the text) without any explanation.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

_Bora-made:_ Initiated as men in the ceremonies of the Bora. 291

_Emu meat:_ Certain foods were forbidden to the young, e.g. emu and emu eggs; also ‘wild turkey’ and their eggs: probably meaning the bustard or plains turkey, _Ardedotis australis_. The food taboos were successively released during the course of a boy’s (and a girl’s) several initiations. 292

In this case, the young initiates’ keenness for emu meat may reflect the novelty of their being allowed to eat it. "Forbidden fruit is sweetest."

_Rub all over:_ Emu fat and goanna fat were used medicinally. Possum fat, echidna fat and fish fat too were used for various purposes.

Modern studies show that some animal fats at least contain anti-inflammatory agents that work through the skin. 293

"

"Red Kangaroo had been the _warrior chief_ of the tribe for two years and no women had been stolen away by the _raiding parties from four tribes_ in that time – and a number of enemy warriors had been killed. They [the Gunnedah ‘tribe’] had lost _six killed_ and

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291 Gamilaraay _Buurr_ = English Bora, the initiation or man-making ceremonies. Literally ‘at the /place of/ the Belt of Manhood’, from _buurr_ ‘belt of manhood’ + _a_ , locative case.

As many as six or eight communities would assemble, primarily to initiate boys as men, but also to trade and negotiate marriages. For example, about 800 men, women and children came together north of the middle Gwydir River in the winter of 1841. They were drawn from the Macintyre River as well as the Namoi and the Gwydir (SMH, 27.10.1842; and Mayne 1842, SRNSW 4/2565.1).

292 Ridley 1875: 151 and 155; Mathews 1904a: 263 ff and 268; and Doyle, Naseby and Crowthers, cited in Howitt 1904: 593 ff and 769.

293 Mathews 1904a; Parker 1905: 38; Whitehouse 1999: University of Queensland natural medicines group.
only two with crippling wounds for life - but [word omitted?] had made two raids had brought into [the] tribe 27 young women and had had only five warriors killed. The tribe now mustered 65 fighting warriors. But 15 were old warriors of 60 years of age; 20 were men from 35 to 40 years old; and 30 young warriors from 17 to 26 years old."

‘Warrior chief’: As we observed earlier, it is not thought that individuals occupied positions of authority as such. The phrase ‘warrior chief’ would simply mean that Red Kangaroo was recognised as the community’s best fighter and best strategist.

Raiding parties from four tribes (in two years) + six killed, etc: For comparison, deaths from warfare averaged about 10 men per year in north-east Arnhem Land in the early 20th century (Warner 1958: 147).

Brought ... young women: The abduction of women is emphasised as if it were the main or typical method of acquiring a wife. Certainly the practice of wife-raiding parties and marriage with captured women is reported by every writer describing “traditional” Aboriginal societies. But the primary and usual means of obtaining marriage partners was by negotiation, not abduction.

Girls were allocated to future husbands soon after birth, or indeed sometimes even before the baby girl was born (by agreeing that a particular woman should be acknowledged as the man’s "future mother in law").

Fighting warriors + years old: Curiously, the group aged 27-34 seems to have been omitted.

It is most unlikely that there was no-one of that age.

“All was bustling about and excited [among the] women and piccinnies [sic] at the camp because Red Kangaroo had ordered that they would shift from the Burrell Lagoon camp up to the Mullibah Flat lagoon, where, on its western and south side, myall, wilga and box grew thickly. On the eastern side, on the open flat country, big red gumtrees and yellow jacket (white man’s name) Mullibah grew plentifully. But there was no scrub or other cover for an enemy to hide behind except the big tree trunks. But behind the camp, to the west-western and south-southern, three quarters of a mile [about one kilometre] away, [lay] the dense and hard to shove your way through hop-vine scrub that grew all along the Porcupine Ridges [sic: plural], Black Hill and extended over a great area of land in the Gunnedah district (old residents of town and district will remember those dense hop scrubs that seemed ineradicable – yet when Brother Rabbit came here in millions, they ate the bark of hop-vine roots and the hop-vine scrubs disappeared). ///”

/// - punctuation in the original.

Burrell and Mullibah: About eight kilometres [five miles] apart.
The former is located beside the Boggabri road some seven kilometres from Gunnedah. Elsewhere called “Burrell fishing hole” (Document 3B: MS Page 13). It is also mentioned in the manuscript about Jinnie Griffin (Document 3E).
The Mullibah Flat Lagoon is a section of the flood-overflow, or billabong, in what is now the

295 ‘Piccinnies’: Spelled thus throughout.

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north-east sector of the town. See photograph xyz.

*Porcupine Ridge* and *Black Hill*: See Maps 10 and 11. *Open flat*: Evidently this meant the area east of the Mooki-Namoi junction in the direction of Carroll.

Tim Curran has suggested that *Black Hill* means one of a series of knolls or small hills scattered between Mullibah Lagoon and Porcupine Ridge. The most likely candidate is a knoll near the intersection of Boundary Road and Kamilaroi Road (i.e., much nearer Porcupine Ridge than Mullibah). See map 10.

*Hard to shove your way*: The reference to “the dense and hard to shove your way through hop-vine scrub” would mean thickets of hop-bush (*Dodonaea* spp.). Such thickets typically form beneath blue-leaved ironbark and bimble box trees.

In addition, on parts of Porcupine Hill or Ridge the canopy was (and is) so dense as to justify being called ‘semi-evergreen vine thicket’ (“SEVT”). Tim Curran notes that there is a particularly dense (though very small) stand of SEVT on the eastern slopes immediately below a sandstone cave known locally as ‘Red Chief Cave’.

*Yellow jacket*: It may be implied that the word Mullibah was the Gamil’raay name for ‘yellow jacket’. This name ordinarily refers to *Eucalyptus similis* or *Corymbia leichhardtii* (found in Queensland). In the case of Gunnedah, however, it probably meant Yellow Box, *Eucalyptus melliodora*. Tim Curran has noted that there are several very old yellow-boxes at Mullibah Lagoon.
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*Brother rabbit + hop-vine disappeared*: Rabbit numbers exploded from about 1895, reaching a peak in the 1920s. The rabbits ate so many seedlings that already by 1900 the regeneration of woodland was stopped, especially cypress pine.\(^{296}\)

*On top of the Porcupine Ridge – that part above where the spinifex still grows (though locally white people call it needle or porcupine grass owing to its sharp points) – that was one of the Nammoy River Tribe’s smoke signalling and look-out posts.*

Anyone who has been up there on a clear day has an idea of the distance to be looked across to the east and south across that plain country. And to the Aboriginal eyes - out somewhere on those plains - they would see the smoke signals being sent up and repeated, calling on the tribesmen to hurry home as danger threatened the women and piccinnies [sic] and the warriors from a very strong enemy force resting in cover, unaware they had been seen."

*Spinifex, needle or PORCUPINE GRASS:*
According to Idriess, the Gamilaraay name for Porcupine Ridge was “Bindea” [bindiyyaa or bindayaa], meaning ‘the place where the spinifex and shrubs with thorns-like-porcupine-quills grow’ (*Red Chief*, chapter 24).

Strictly, bindiyyaa does not mean spinifex as such; rather it was a generic name for ‘prickle’ or any kind of sharp or prickly plant, including ‘roly-poly’ plants. The word has been adopted into English as ‘bindi-eye’.\(^{297}\) (The actual animal

\(^{296}\) Forestry Commission 1985; and Smith 1992, citing Wheeler.

\(^{297}\) Ash et al. 2003: 40.
itself, the echidna or ‘porcupine’, was known in Gamil’raay as marrawal and bigibila.

There are several species of coarse grass called ‘porcupine grass’ or ‘needle grass’ (genus *Triodia*). The botanist Barbara Rice has advised me that the species found around Gunnedah is *Triodia scariosa*. In the past it has been called *Triodia irritans* var. *laxispicata* and *Triodia scariosa* subspecies *scariosa*.298

*Triodia* grows in tufts or hummocks to a height of about one metre. The species is most commonly found in the semi-arid and arid climatic zones. At Gunnedah, it grows on a slope of Porcupine Ridge where the soil moisture is much lower than that of the adjacent areas and hence appears to occupy a relatively dry microclimatic position (Curran 1997; and pers. comm. 2002).

The Ewing Papers indicate that originally the porcupine grass extended down to the foot of the Ridge, where today it abuts the remaining "semi-evergreen vine thicket" [SEVT]. (As explained in Appendix Three, SEVT originally covered what is now the southern half of the town-site.)

*Looked across to the east and south* [from Porcupine Ridge]: In other words, to the plains country in the direction of Breeza. *See Illustration xyz.*

**Smoke-signalling:**

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298 Barbara Rice (pers. comm. 1998) considers that the species was probably more common in the area before the country was cleared, and no doubt it would have been considered an annoyance by anyone walking or riding through it. Dr Rice herself collected specimens from Porcupine Hill (or Ridge) in Gunnedah in 1990, and from an "extraordinarily dense" population on a hill near Nea (between Curlewis and Breeza). Tim Curran (pers. comm, 2002) adds that the porcupine grass at Nea is very spiky, capable of hurting as well as annoying.
The nature of Aboriginal use of smoke is disputed. At one extreme, it is denied that Aborigines used smoke for signalling. A less extreme position is that they used smoke to send pre-arranged messages. The third position is that there was a fixed code or vocabulary used to convey at least simple messages and perhaps quite complex statements.

I am prepared to accept that the Kamilaroi were able (in the right weather conditions) to send a relatively large number of coded signals. But I doubt that the shape of smoke has enough potential variations for the Kamilaroi to have had a smoke-symbol for, say, very many numerals (as in “four been seen on creek”). (See Appendix Four for more discussion and sources.)

“Having got the whole tribe into their new camp of bushes & tree-bark mia-mias, Red Kangaroo [RK] pick[ed] the warriors to guard the women and children. Burradella, a close friend of RK’s, about 38 years old, wise in the tribe’s councils, fearless in war and 2nd chief of the tribe, was to remain and guard the women & children, along with 24 young warriors in age but [who were] warriors of three or four years’ experience in war.

Mia-mia: A dwelling or shelter. Rhymes with ‘higher-higher’. The word was originally borrowed into pidgin English from a Victorian language. From pidgin it was adopted into Yuwaalaraay as mayi-mayi. The word ‘gunyah’ is also used in this document (e.g. MS Page 3).

The local Gamilaraay term for hut or house was gundhi ‘bark shelter’ - short ‘u’ as in English
'Red Kangaroo' of Gunnedah

'good'. Another term was *dhaadharr*, 'bark hut; slab of bark used for shelter'.

*Burradella*: First mention.

“There was a great discontent and talking among these warriors. “Why weren’t those 15 old warriors left to guard the camp – and let the rest of the warriors pull lot [sic] to see what nine of them had to stop and guard camp also? It was only right [that] the young new Bora-made warriors had gone to many [?] hunttings of the emus and feastings on their meat! It was only right that now they should stop and guard camp and let the younger warriors go to the hunt and feasting on the emu meat!” And the old warriors, fathers and uncles of a number of the discontented three or four-year warriors, talked among themselves and with the discontented ones, saying they would stop and guard camp. They didn’t care whether they went to the emu hunting and feasting on the meat or stopped behind at camp. But RK with the //MS Page 3// backing of Burradella had chosen the guard to stop in camp with the women and children, and who amongst them would refuse to obey RK’s command?

But RK and Burradella heard the camp gossip of the women and had heard the younger warriors grumbling. So the two chiefs [...] sent the message-stick bearer to every warrior of the tribe, commanding them to a *high sun* council of the warriors that day.”

*Message sticks*: Called *maang* in Gamilaraay; also *dhulu*, literally ‘stick’. Message sticks bore notches simply to remind the bearer of the message he was conveying. They were not a form of writing.300

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[The ‘High Sun’ Council:]

Every warrior was present and curious to know what this council was called for. They sat in a circle around their first & second chiefs seated on the ground.

Burradella stood up and every warrior struck the ground hard with his *nulla nulla* once. “This council is called because there is [sic] much murmurings of discontent amongst the younger warriors. Talk gets to women’s ears and they add to that, talk it back to the warrior or warriors of their *gunyah* (home). And it is not good that that this should be in our tribe – because the women will take their warrior [sic: warrior’s] side against the warrior side of the other womens [sic] and as the women continue to tell talk about other women’s warriors, the warriors hear it, and then the warriors begin to row and finally fight and kill each other.

“You younger warriors are only murmuring now, but already the women are gossiping about it in every gunyah. Now RK is going to talk to every warrior here, and I say to all to listen to him with both ears, for much good it will do to all!”

*Nulla nulla*: The local Gamil’raay name was *bundi* - with a short u, as in English ‘wood’ or ‘pull’ - denoting the long-handled club with a round knob at the end. Various other types of clubs had their own names, e.g. *murrula* ‘game club’, a plain type of pointed club used for killing game; and *gudhurru* ‘small club’, possibly from gudhurr ‘belt’: small enough to be carried on one’s belt (Austin, *Dictionary* 1992; Ash et al. 2003).

 propose that probably it was borrowed from another language (I would guess from Wiradjuri).
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

*Gunyah*: Bark shelter. As noted earlier, ‘mia-mia’ is also used.

*“With both ears”*: This is not an English figure of speech, so it was probably an idiom in Gamilaraay.

“As Red Kangaroo stood up, every warrior struck his shield with his [?] nulla-nulla. Speaking in his deep strong voice, Red Kangaroo said: ‘You three and four year warriors have only thoughts for yourselves. You have been grumbling because you are to remain the guard back at this camp. Your discontent made our tribeswomen quarrel with each other. You all want to go for your own pleasure, hunting the emu and gorging on its meat for the next *seven suns* and leave the 15 old warriors and some nine of you to guard this camp. //MS Page 4// Now all you three and four year warriors are married and have *one or two wives* and one or more piccinnies [sic]. Are not our wives and piccinnies and our near-to-marriageable-age young lubras worth fighting for and protecting from any enemy come here to attack us and steal our women away?’

“‘Yes, yes’ – you say now.’ ‘Then why did you strong young warriors of three or more years want to go to the emu hunting and feasting on its meat? And leave it to these 15 old warriors to stop and guard the women and children – your women, your children as well as mine and other married warriors?

‘Have not these old warriors done many years of fighting to protect the women & piccinnies of our tribe long before you or I were born? And do we not know how they have fought against enemies to protect us all when we were piccinnies?’

‘And yet you want to shirk your duty to the women and children of our tribe, so you can chase the emu and gorge on its meat and leave the old warriors to guard our women & children! What chance would the old warriors have against young strong enemy warriors
of equal numbers to them? The old warriors would fight to the last to save our women and children. But even with the help of the nine young warriors you would leave with them, are you still ready to risk an enemy attack of, say, 25 young strong warriors when you know there are 90 wives in our tribe – 20 are old women – but 70 can still be mothers of piccinnies and there are 20 young lubras who will soon be of marriageable age? And there are 130 boy & girl piccinnies.’

‘Do you strong, young warriors of three or more years still want to go to the emu hunting and feasting on its meat?’ ‘No, no, Red Kangaroo, we will guard the women & children of our tribe – your words burn us like firesticks!’”

Seven suns: “Time was kept in the day by the sun, and in the night by the position of the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters in the northern sky, the time being reckoned by its position above the horizon. Days were reckoned by the moon, and elapsed time by the season” (Dunbar 1943: 179).

One or two wives: Middle-aged men tended to have two, three or four wives. So, ordinarily, young men would not have expected to marry until they were perhaps 25. As the manuscript notes, “when just made a warrior from the Bora ceremonies, [Red Kangaroo had] found there weren’t enough young lubras in the tribe to supply each new young warrior with a wife” (Document 3B, MS page 16). Thus, for young men to have one or even two wives was presumably a token of the power and influence that the Gunnedah group had already achieved under Red Kangaroo’s leadership.

Lubras: ‘Women’. First occurrence in this text. ‘Lubra’ was borrowed into pidgin from a
Tasmanian language. The term ‘gin’ is older, having been adopted very early from a Sydney district language (Blake 1981: 94, 98). The Gamil’raay word for ‘women, woman’ was yinaar, often spelt “einer” by the early writers.

“160”: Crossed out in the text.

Next day Red Kangaroo, with 39 men, went to hunt emu on Breeza Plains and for seven suns the new Bora-made warriors hunted and feasted to their great content.

On the 8th sun Red Kangaroo order[ed] the final emu hunt to get a good quantity of the best meat to carry back [. . . ] the guard over camp. Red Kangaroo and nine picked warriors would start for their camp. When they had enough meat and go leisurely home xxx [illegible]. Boobuk, a seasoned warrior, was left in command of the remaining 29 warriors. //MS Page 5// His party were to get a supply of best kangaroo meat and return to camp before sunset [the] next day.

*Emu hunt:* One method used by the Kamilaroi when they stalked emus was to deploy a bush, held in the hand, as a hide or disguise. The birds were killed with a heavy specific-purpose emu spear.301

*Breeza Plains:* The large flat plain of the Mooki River valley, south-east of Gunnedah. The village of Breeza is about 35 kilometres from Gunnedah as the crow flies.

Oxley noted in his journal for 31 August 1818 that “the abundance of game, such as emus and kangaroos, and of wild ducks on the stream [the Mooki], was wonderful”.

301 Greenway in Science of Man, vol.14, 1912, p.15; and Bucknell 1933: 34. Also Fred Reece, quoted in Ash et al. 2003: 115.
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_Boobuk:_ First mention.

On the morning of the 8th sun, the women and piccinnies, accompanied by guards, went _netting and spearing_ fish in Nammoy [sic] (where _bridge_ spans it now).

A small party went up-river to wade the shallows to cross over. And [from there] they went to a _lagoon_ (left side of _Road going to Gunnible_) to tread for mussels and at the same time they stirred up [the] mud-bottom to thicken the water muddily. This caused the fish to rise to surface, smothering, with mud-clogged gills. And the _yabbies_ and turtle crawled out up the bank mud-sick. And everyone filled their bark- or rushes-plaited game-bags, besides having a feast for their dinner.

_Burradella_ was strict. Any lubra straying from party or stopping behind, he ordered the guards to rap on head with their nulla [sic]. Piccinnies running ahead or hiding and not coming when called must be well _switched_. And at 4. p.m. [sic] everyone had to muster at a named place and keep together going back to Mullibah Lagoon camp.

Note the frequent omission of “the”. This may mirror Joe Bungaree’s pidgin style of speech.

_Netting and spearing fish:_ The Gamilaraay made fish-nets from the twisted or spun fibre of kurrajong bark (Greenway 1910: 15).

_Where bridge spans it:_ That is, the stretch of river where the Mullibah flood-runner enters. Opened in 1884, Cohen Bridge replaced an earlier, more basic wooden bridge. The new bridge was named for George Cohen, the first storekeeper at Gunnedah [Maps 5 and 9].

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‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Road to Gunnible [Gunnible Mountain]: North-west, which is to say: downstream.\(^{302}\) The “road going to Gunnible” presumably means modern Blue Vale Road (the first road going left after one crosses to the northern side of the river). The lagoon in question was perhaps the one near the present-day Gunnedah airfield. See Maps 4, 6 and 7.

Yabbies: Muddying the water to force out yabbies is also mentioned by Greenway 1878: 235 and Dunbar 1944: 176, 179. Again this serves to confirm the essential authenticity of the Ewing Papers (even if the numbers of people are invented or exaggerated).

Switched: Beaten with a tree switch?

“This [?] 8th sun the party who had been to lagoon on other side of river had crossed back and were hurried by their guards to catch up the main party waiting for them before starting back to camp.

When the party got as far as where the Osric St drain empties out on Mullibah Flat, a young married lubra named Weetah found she had lost her dilly bag [she] had left it on a log at crossing place to go across to lagoon on other side. And a dilly bag contains many useful things for an Aboriginal woman: needles of bone; wood; sewing thread of hair; bark; sinews of animals; tying cords of animal hide; flint knives; tinder to dust on her two fire-stick[s] as she rubs them together; balls of clay wetted and used to put over a wound; and many other things.”

\(^{302}\) For an excellent illustration of the open woodland country around Gunnible Mountain in 1867, see the watercolour painting at: http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an5263713 [accessed January 2005].
Where the Osric St drain empties out: Osric Street runs north-eastwards, terminating at the lower or north-western end of Mullibah Lagoon. The drain is at the far eastern end of Marquis Street: See Maps 11 and 12.

Weetah: Gamilaraay wiidhaa, ‘Bowerbird’, her totem name. The spotted bowerbird, *Chlamydera maculata*. Totems were inherited from one’s mother. Thus the fact that her totem name was different from her brother’s (Dhagaay or Tukki, ‘yellowbelly fish’) would mean that they had different mothers but the same father.

To go across: Struck out in the original MS.

A dilly bag contains . . .: This list is not one that could easily be invented by a white man and serves to confirm the tale’s essential authenticity. Such detail plainly represents Joe Bungaree’s memories of traditional life. The Gamilaraay for ‘dilly bag’ was gulay, ‘carrying bag’. They were made from fibres spun from the bark of kurrajong trees (Bucknell in Curr III: 305).

She told her guard-husband and said, “You take our piccanny [sic] to camp. I’ll run back for it and take Tukki my young brother with me. Run quickly there and back: I’ll tell Burradella why you had to go back – and go and come back the creek way”. – That creek way is still the natural run of water from Mullibah Lagoon to enter river.

Tukki was about nine years old. They ran fast along the low banks of creek but [in] the last 200 yds [yards] the variegated thistles grew seven and eight feet high [over two metres] and densely along both banks and out for hundreds of years [sic: yards]. So they ran along the creek bed, a dry one unless after a flood or
heavy rain. Within fifty yards of where the creek ran into river, they slowed down to walk across sticks and logs. They didn’t talk as their fast run had made them feel winded.

_Tukki:_ First mention. Almost certainly _Thagaay_ or _Dhagaay_ (Ridley’s “dukkai”), i.e., the golden perch or yellowbelly fish, _Macquaria ambigua_.
The boy’s totem or clan name.

_The natural run:_ The creeklet - or “flood-runner”, to use the technical term - drains north-westwards from Mullibah Lagoon. It enters the Namoi a little upstream from the Cohen Bridge. See Maps 5, 6 and 7, and Illustration xyz.

[Enemies Appear:]

“Within 20 yds of the river they froze in their tracks when they heard a man’s guttural voice say, “Look at this!”

Weetah put her hand over Tukki’s mouth, and pointing to the dense thistle[s] growing on [the] bank, whispered, “Enemies - creep like a snake after me into thistles”.

Creeping in some distance, Weetah whispered, “Tukki //MS Page 6// crawl in thistles as far as they grow. There look all about you for enemies. None in sight, slide into creek and run where creek banks are high and crawl on creek-bed where banks are low. Tell Burradella [that] Weetah and you heard the voice of an enemy talking on this side the river at our crossing

303 The English term is awkward and non-standardised. Being indigenous, the Gamilaraay language naturally had an ordinary, standard word: _warrambul_ (typically spelt Warrambool in present-day place-names), ‘overflow channel, watercourse that contains water only during flood times’ (Ash et al. 2003: 139).
place. But who to, and how many others, we don’t know.”

Weetah had pulled some green [...] vine, twisted some strands into cords, made a head cover of clover and thistle leave [sic] and tied [it] with cords to Tukki’s head to hide his dark hair from enemy eyes as he crawled on his belly, low down on [the] clover and thistles.”

A man’s voice: The narrator – Joe Bungaree or Stan Ewing - usually prefers “warrior”, except when there is a contrast of genders. The words “man” and “men” are avoided. By contrast, “women” is used frequently, as well as “lubras”.

“Say: Weetah will stop to spy and find out how many warriors and what tribe and [I] will come as quick as I can to camp by creek way. Go now: be careful not to show much of yourself in the open places.”

Tukki did the last 400 yards in quick time into camp. Some of his people ran to meet him and said, ‘Where is Weetah, what’s happened? Is she hurt?’ ‘Where’s Burradella?’ Tukki asked: ‘Take me to Burradella’. Tukki told him all Weetah had told him to say.

[Withdrawal from Mullibah Lagoon:]

Burradella ordered all the women and piccinnies to start for the secret camp taking food and water. And 15 warriors were sent to guard them, leaving Burradella and six warriors at camp with him: three others were on the smoke-signal and look-out post on Porcupine Ridge.

THE SECRET CAMP. First mention. Nowhere is its whereabouts stated precisely. Presumably - see the next two paragraphs - it was located in the scrub somewhere between Mullibah Lagoon
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

and the foot of Porcupine Ridge, most likely below the northern or north-eastern face of Porcupine Ridge. That is to say, at the foot of Porcupine Ridge, immediately below the present look-out point. [see Map 11]. Hop-vine scrub can grow up to three metres, and so would have afforded suitable cover.

There were 20 old women, none under 60 years of age and some 80 years old. As they couldn't keep up with the younger women and piccinies hurried along by the guards, Burradella told them to take their time and make to the edge of the hop-vine scrub, push through it along some wallaby pad keeping together, to come out of hop-vine scrub on the edge of spinifex grass patch at foot of Porcupine Ridge.

They were to [shelter?] back in the hop scrub, make no fire, eat some food and lay [sic] down and sleep close together - until Burradella sent a message to them just as Djurrabl (The Evening Star) was going down. Burradella knew that few enemies killed the old women of a tribe, though they did kill at times the old men because they were makers of war weapons for their tribe.”

The Evening Star: i.e., Venus. Note that the Morning Star, the morning appearance of Venus, was believed to be a quite different star, called Maliyan ‘Eagle’ (the wedge-tailed eagle).

William Ridley gave two different Namoi River names for the Evening Star: Bioian-gummer and Gunu or Goonoo. Neither looks like ‘Djurrabl’.

John Giacon and his colleagues (Ash et al. 2003: 123) list the Gamilaraay name as Nganundi Gindamalaa, literally ‘(he) laughs at me’ [nganundi, ‘at me’: source case + gindama, ‘laugh’ +?laa, ‘then’].

The latter is similar to Ridley’s Ngindi-gindoer [ngindaay-gindawaa], evidently the
Wayilwan or lower Barwon River name for the evening appearance of Venus. In his book (1875), Ridley spells this Ngindi-kindawa, meaning “the one that laughs (at you)” [here ngindaay = ‘the one who’ ie the relative clause marker]. The Wayilwan also called the evening-Venus Ngaije-kindamawa [ngay-kindama-waa], “the one who laughs [always laughs] at me” [ngay ‘to or at me’, and kindama-, ‘laugh’ + waa, continuous aspectual].

In traditional lore, the star was an old man who once laughed at an old woman’s bum (bottom), for which indiscretion he was banished into the sky. Now when Venus changes colour, he is said to be still laughing (Yuwaalaraay version: Ash et al. 2003: 116).

Aborigines were of course keen observers of the patterned movements of the sun, moon and stars. As Dunbar says, “Time was kept in the day by the sun, and in the night by the position of the Pleiades or the Seven Sisters in the northern sky, the time being reckoned by its position above the horizon. Days were reckoned by the moon, and elapsed time by the season”.

Sending two warriors along with Gilwan, the husband of Weetah, to find and send back to camp and to spy on [the] enemy - find out how many and where camped - and who they were if possible - and to get back to

304 Some of these renderings are uncertain. Evidently the object of ‘laugh’ sometimes took the genitive case: ngay, ‘to me’ in the sense of ‘done for’ me; while in other contexts it could take the source case: nganundi, ‘at me’, or even the dative case: nganunda, ‘to me’, in the sense of ‘movement to’ me [see further Ash et al. 2003].

Ridley 1873: 273; Dunbar 1943: 179.

Like ancient Greek and some other languages, Gamilaraay had singular, dual and plural forms. You singular: cf old English ‘thou’ = nginda. You two (dual) = ngindaali. You (plural): ‘you-all’, three or more = ngindaay.
camp by sunset: if delayed until later, go to smoke signal post instead of camp.

Buradella had taken 15 boys aged 12 to 14 to stay with him, and the best runner of the 15 guards, taking women and piccinies to secret camp. He sent [the runner] ahead with message to [the] smoke signal post: “signal to Red Kangaroo – ‘enemies been heard speaking on river between Burrell Lagoon camp and Mullibah Flat Lagoon camp – women and children rushed off to secret camp under strong guard.’”

Weetah came //MS Page 7// back to camp, had met Gilwan and other two warriors as she came along creek-way [sic]. They [she and Tukki] went on to spy on the Cassilis warriors - she had crept into the thistles to river bank and saw two warriors of Cassilis tribe on [?] lagoon/long] camp side of river at the crossing. They [the Cassilis men] had found the dilly bag and had its contents spread on log looking at them – a crow called twice down the river: they jumped up, put the things in dillybag and ran off one having the dilly bag. Two other warriors came to meet them. They stopped to talk and point to the tracks of the main party of women & piccinies and their guard going back to camp. They were too far away to hear what they said but they pointed in the camp’s direction. And turned and ran toward Burrell Lagoon.

Narratively, the repetition serves to remind the listener of the story.

Sending two ... : The text is not always in the form of full sentences. Large parts of it read like notes taken down from speech. As we have remarked, “the” is often omitted. This perhaps reflects the original pidgin or non-standard English spoken by Joe Bungaree.

Gilwan: First mention of this person.
Message: As noted earlier, there are differing views on how simple or complex Aboriginal smoke signals were, and whether signals had any fixed meanings or were just pre-arranged signs.

The message that Burradella asked to be sent was: “enemies been heard speaking on river between Burrell Lagoon camp and Mullibah Flat Lagoon camp – women and children rushed off to secret camp under strong guard”. This contains at least five elements: 1. >Enemies<; 2. >Here [%on river” implied]<; 3. >Women+children<; 4. >Secret camp<; and 5. >Safe/under strong guard/all is well for the moment<. Presumably this would have required a signal in five parts or “words” which would be repeated. In the actual message, as sent to and read by Red Kangaroo ( - see in text below), there were as few as three elements i. >Enemy<; ii. >here/on Nammoy/secret-camp<; and iii. >Come<. In Ewing’s words: “Enemy near on Nammoy River – come quickly – secret camp.”

Cassilis: First mention. Present-day Cassilis is a hamlet on an upper tributary of the Goulburn River north-west of Mudgee [Map 2]. From Gunnedah, it lies to the south, over the Liverpool Ranges, at a distance of 115 kilometres. The Cassilis people also figure in Jinnie Griffin’s tale (Document 3E).

As explained in the Introduction, it is uncertain whether the language of the Upper Goulburn River community was Kamilaroi or Wiradjuri. Such evidence as we do have indicates that they spoke Kamilaroi.

“Weetah got some food & water and possum rugs and set off for [the] secret camp. The sun was still three quarters of an hour high [?meanwhile: missing
word] – sending one warrior to smoke-signal post to send up a message [reading] “enemies – Cassilis tribe – four been seen on river – looks like a war party is camped close". Sending another warrior to take the 15 boys from 12 to 14 years old to the edge of the hop scrub. Two were sent to the smoke-signal post to tell the three warriors there that Burradella wanted them [by] sunset to join him on edge of hop-scrub, boys to guide them. The 13 left [...] warrior, he [Red Kangaroo] stationed 10 yds [yards] apart between every pair of boys, he and one boy in the centre. They looked out onto a small clearing 300 yards wide and a length of 1,700 yds. Not a tree, bush or stump and only short grass was on the clearing.”

Here again the text reads like notes taken down from a narrator.

*Three quarters of an hour:* Presumably Joe Bungaree’s rendering of “a short period”. Plainly Aborigines in the 1700s did not use hours and minutes.

“Gilwan and the two other warriors ran into camp at a fast pace to find only Burradella and one warrior waiting there. Gilwan said, ‘They are in Burrell Lagoon camp and we crept as close as we dare [sic] - they were eating a meal and there are more warriors there than all warriors of our tribe. We crept away to [get?] ... cover to watch – then warriors have been sent out to find our camp. They ran off to river to get our lubra & piccinny & guards’ tracks to follow to our camp. Then we hurried here. They won’t be long coming in sight.’

Burradella and his warriors left the camp and watched from trees, lying flat or seated in forks with bushes in their hands. As soon as the first scout spies showed up, Burradella ordered his men to jog back to the edge of the hop-vine scrub. There he found the boys and his warrior. The sun was going down when
the warrior returned from smoke-signal post, making Burradella’s party seven warriors and 13 boys, with three warriors yet to come.

Choosing two boys from his 13, Burradella told them to go up to [the] smoke-signal post [and] get the other two boys, and all of them, without talk, were to [go to the] secret camp. One was to give two calls of a curlew, [and] an owl would hoot twice but from different directions. Then the boy was to make only one curlew call and they were to stop where they were, until a voice said ‘come to me’ – and they walked up to one of their guards in /sic/ his wommerah ready to throw: they were to say ‘Burradella sent us as //MS Page 8// guides for Red Kangaroo to where Burradella is’. The guard croaked twice like a tree frog and another armed guard came out of the dark. “Burradella’s guides for Red Kangaroo: take them inside the camp.”

[Red Kangaroo Returns:]

On the eighth sun, Red Kangaroo and his nine war-seasoned warriors, having got good supper of best emu meat, started leisurely on the journey back to their camp … coming to the Mooki. They followed its course, and, where there was a narrow shallow weedy hole, they saw fish splashing and jumping in the thick weeds.

Quickly they waded in with spear and nulla [sic] and soon had a great lot of fish flapping about on the bank. Making a fire, they broiled the fish on the coals. After a week of emu-meat meals, the fish were a very welcome change, and every warrior ate a strongman’s meal. They sat and talked whether they shouldn’t get some more fish to take back to camp some [14?] miles away.

Suddenly Kuribri jumped to his feet to [see?] smoke coming up from their Porcupine Ridge smoke signal and lookout post.

Red Kangaroo and his nine warriors’ eyes were now all on the smoke that went up in the sky in a big ball, or small one, dies out, then another big one, or a series of
big ones or small ones – some very black smoke – other[wise] white – or bluish smoke.”

Kuribri: First reference to this person. It is not explained exactly who he was, and he is mentioned only in passing.

Red Kangaroo, still keeping his eyes on the smoke signal, said, “Kuribri: tell me what you read in the smoke.” “Enemy near on Nammo River – come quickly – secret camp.” Burradella xxx [illegible] I have seen that in smoke just now. “What have you seen?” he asked ... his warriors. “Same as you’ve seen.”

Red Kangaroo said, “Leave the emu meat here. See that all your war weapons are secure on you. I will stop here and send up three smoke signals to warn Boobuk’s party in case they miss our lookout-post signals. It won’t take me long to send a smoke signal up off your cooking fire. You nine will run for the secret camp. I will soon be following you there. /word inked out/ And we have [?an hour] and a half before sunset.”

Half: Struck out in the manuscript.

Red Kangaroo [hereafter RK] made up the cook [sic] fire and gathered arms-full [sic] of dry leaves. Some he wetted in [the] Mooki to place upon a strong fire blaze and cause[d] it to burn the wet grass and make it give off dark smoke.

RK was soon running after his nine warriors and he caught them after they had done four miles [six kilometres] of their journey. Running with them, he told them to go to [the] secret camp. There he could leave them a message. Then RK ran off again, and his warriors watched his long powerful legs carrying him further & further ahead of them.
The sun had set when RK arrived at secret camp. RK’s two wives rubbed him from neck to ankles with porcupine [echidna] fat to take the stiffness from muscles and limbs. Then they brought him food and water.

One of the guards told him how Weetah and her little brother Tukki had gone back to river to get Weetah’s dillybag, and whilst in cover they heard an enemy voice at crossing place. “Weetah sent Tukki back to warn Burradella. He crawled on belly through thistles along bed of creek where bank was low and ran where banks were high. And told him all Weetah had told him to say. And also that Weetah said she would stop and spy to find out who enemy was: how many and where they were camping. Burradella [had] sent the lubras and piccinnies off to secret camp. Everyone who could carried food and water. Twenty of the old lubras haven’t come in yet, nor Weetah.”

Notice how the tale of the dillybag is repeated, presumably for the sake of narrative refreshment.

Four miles: Miles of course are an English, not Gamilaraay, measure of distance. But Joe Bungaree would have learnt English distances. In “The Death and Career”, we even have RK himself speaking the word "miles": camps of the Coonabarabran people "miles apart". But an Aboriginal measure is also supplied: "a day’s walk" (Document 3B, MS Page 22).

Porcupine: The old term for the echidna, Tachyglossus aculeatus. Animal fat was still being used medicinally as late as the 1940s in the farther north-west of NSW (Reay MS 1944, p.43). Traditionally it was also used as hair oil (Ash et al. 2003: 37).

River: As before, “the” is often omitted.
“Send Tukki to me”, RK said, and seated him alongside of him when he came and gave him some of his food to eat. Weetah came into camp with another guard who said to RK, “Weetah has news to tell you”.
“Tell me everything Weetah.”

[Weetah Reports to Red Kangaroo:]

“I spied on the enemy [she began] at [the] crossing place on river. They were two Cassilis warriors and they had found my dillybag and had it spread out on [the] log they sat on. A crow called down river. They jumped up, put things into my dillybag again and ran off with it to join the other another two warriors. They all ran [?] beside] our tracks for a little way, stooping and pointing. But too far off for me to hear what they said. But think they spoke of so many women and piccinnies and so few warriors with them. They pointed along tracks in direction of our camp on Mullibah Lagoon. Then they turned and ran fast towards our Burrell Lagoon camp. And I ran for our camp along the creek and met Gilwan my m[...] [?man and] two other warriors sent by Burradella (to find me and send to camp) and to go and spy on the enemy – telling them they were Cassilis warriors, the four I’d seen, and they were [in?] our Burrell Lagoon camp.”

“They went on to spy and I went to camp and told Burradella and he sent me to secret camp – and [said] to tell you everything if you were here, and/or when you got here.”

So many ... so few: That is, deduced from their tracks.

“Weetah” [said RK] “you’ve done a warrior’s job to spy alone on the enemy and get to Burradella and me such good information about the Cassilis warriors.”
“And here”, he said to the warrior guard, tapping his index figure over Tukki’s heart, “is a brave warrior growing up fast - inside here.”

Shortly after, the nine warriors came into camp. RK ordered them to get their wives to rub porcupine [echidna] fat on them from head to ankles. Then they were to eat a meal and sleep for two hours. He was taking nine of the 14 guards of the camp with him down to Burradella. The guard would wake five of them in two hours to do guard over camp, and the other four, they would wake in an hour along with one of the five guards. Everyone would do one hour guard at each guard. To keep their ears and eyes alert. Sleepy guards see things that are not there and miss those that do come close and they don’t hear the thumping of a wallaroo in flight, passing near. Wakeful guards hear even the downy owl’s wings whirr as they flit near in passing.

To keep their ears: Here again the text lapses into notes, rather than full sentences.

[He also directed that] If Boobuk and his 13 young warriors came in early in the night, they were to rub themselves with porcupine fat, neck to ankles – eat – and sleep two hours and take over the camp guard. If they came in at two or three in the morning, they must take over the camp guard, as RK would want his nine warriors and the other five warriors to come to him. //MS Page 10// Taking two of the four boys Burradella had sent to guide RK to him [...]. The other two would guide the next party.

[RK then proceeded to Burradella’s position:] Burradella told RK that Gilwan and two other warriors had spied on the Burrell Lagoon camp. They reported a big party of Cassilis warriors were eating a meal there. More warriors than their tribe had.

When 10 warriors left the camp at a run going towards river, where they had got on the tracks of
Lubras & picinnies [sic] and the small party of warriors with them, Gilwan and his companions ran in a straight route for the Mullibah Lagoon [...]. Burradella left two other warriors to spy on the 10 warriors.

Towards river: As so often throughout the text, “the” is omitted.

[Here it seems that Gilwan is narrating what he saw:] “They warily crept close to camp and two crawled into it from opposite ends. They signalled to the other eight who ran in from various points. They were excited and ran from mia-mia to mia-mia. And picked up the tracks of the lubras & picinnies and their warrior guards headed for the open country. That would bring them to the Mooki through a sparsely timbered scrubless open country below the Blackhill [sic]. Three ran [?] the tracks for a short distance, but they had no cover, and might be easily seen, so they ran back to Mullibah Lagoon camp.”

“Burradella had purposely sent the women and children and guards out in the open country as if going [east] to a camp on Mooki. But had ordered they turn south, when they got in the long grass and go up into the hop-vine & heather scrub on Blackhill.”

“Five spies ran off at a fast run back towards Burrell Lagoon Camp. The other five hid in the myall thickets on the western and south side of the Mullibah Lagoon Camp.”

Blackhill: First mention. Located apparently south-east or south of Mullibah Lagoon. As noted earlier, it was one of the knolls south of the present railway line, possibly the knoll near the intersection of Boundary Road and Kamilaroi Road (which is nearly due south of Mullibah). The document says (below: MS Page 12) that a
"rib" (a line of higher ground) connected
Blackhill to Porcupine Ridge [Map 10].

*Myall thickets:* 'Western' and 'south' means
where the town now stands, or to be precise:
the north-east quadrant of the town.

[Enter the Cassilis Warriors:]

“The sun was setting behind the ridges to the west
when a great number of Cassilis warriors came at a jog-trot into the Mullibah camp. They lit no fire – they lay or
sat in groups and talked. The two Nammoy River spies
crawled up and could hear some of the talk. “Where
was the camp the lubras & picinnies were going to?”
“Not far away on the Mooki.” Their spies [i.e., Cassilis scouts] would soon bring news of it now. If it was dark,
their [the Gunnedah people’s] fires would show – There
weren’t many warriors with them. They had a lot of
camps to move about to. This one they had seen in
/sic/ that morning. The ashes were still hot.”

“Burradella had ordered that the wood of every fire
burning when Tukki brought warning of an enemy on
river was to be taken to the lagoon, put out and every
charred stick thrust below water into the muddy
bottom out some yards from shore. The oldest
picinnies with some young lubras [were] to show how
to do it. [They] Did this job whilst the other lubras
packed up food & water and possum rugs and personal
belongings ready to get away to the secret camp.

The [Cassilis] spies came back in half an hour to
report no sign of [a] camp on Mooki, nor any camp-fire
showing in the ridges to the south. “We will get on their
tracks early in the morning and fight their warriors.
They must have a camp not far away. Their tracks are
not hurrying ones like they would be if in flight from an
enemy. They might be up on that place (Black Hill
[sic]): we will send spies up to it.”

The Nammoy warriors crept away and then ran to
tell Burradella. He sent three warriors to try and see
the Cassilis spies if they tried to cross the clearing that stretched for a mile and 300 yards [about two kilometres] wide on the east of the Porcupine Ridges hop-vine-edge scrub.

RK and Burradella discussed whether to make a raid attack with their 19 [*] warriors and themselves or risk all on a putting-in of the 14 warriors guarding the secret camp with every one of the 35 of them in a night raid. The enemy had, according to all their warrior spies, [& for] [?illegible] of two warriors to their one. Some said there were more warriors still than two to one in the Cassilis tribe against their force.

RK took one man with him and went to spy on the Cassilis warriors. Leaving his warrior, he crept near the camp to find they had lit fires and had posted guards all around. That did away with a surprise night raid. They ran back to Burradella.”

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**East:** Burradella and his men were facing northwards. Thus the three main features were, from west to east: (a) the hopvine scrub that ran down from the high ground of the Porcupine ridges, (b) the clearing; and (c) Mullibah.

**Man:** A rare use of this word. Usually “warrior” is preferred.

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**[Planning the Ambush:]**

“Then RK thought of a way he might trap the Cassilis warriors into an ambush. Burradella spoke [about] going or sending someone to guide the 20 old lubras to the secret camp. ‘Let //MS Page 11// them stay there a bit longer until I come back to you’, RK said. He went away along the edge of the hop vine scrub making to the back of the, or north westerly side of the, Blackhill [sic] and its thick hop scrub. Into this scrub a U-shaped clearing penetrate[ed] 130 yards deep by 40 wide.
North-westerly side: It is difficult to follow the movements of the various war bands. As far as I can make out, the u-shaped clearing was (as Tim Curran proposes) below the north-west slope of Porcupine Ridge, whence it would be possible to see (about 1.5 kilometres away) "the twinkle of fires on Mullibah Lagoon camp". That is to say, where today there is open ground, between the fringes of the town and the Ridge [below: MS page 11: compare Map 11].

The survivors from among the defeated Cassilis men (see below) fled south-eastwards in the direction of Black Jack Mountain and then no doubt turned south (given that they were headed ultimately for Cassilis). In other words, they probably travelled broadly in the direction that the Wandoba Road now takes. There were two further encounters when the Gunnedah men caught up with several bands of fleeing Cassilis men. Presumably these clashes took place about where the Wandoba Road intersects with the western reaches of Black Jack State Forest. See Maps 7 and 8.

“On [the] full moon the whole tribe, armed with waddies, used to line along the fringe of hop scrub leading to Porcupine Ridge and the fringe of the hop scrub on the north westerly side of Blackhill. Inside the U, warriors with spear and nulla lined the U all around from its mouth entrance. Out on the narrow strip of clear ground, warriors and picinnies hunted the wallabies feeding on the open grass land. They hopped [?into] their scrubs and the lubras and picinnies threw waddies at them and made many [?noises] to turn the wallabies away in frightened bewilderment until eventually a fair number entered the U, followed to its entrance by lubras and picinnies who hit any trying to get past them out of the U again and away from the warrior’s spear or nulla.”
Going over to the gap into the thick hedge of hop vines and heather, [Red Kangaroo realised] it offered a possible trap to anyone who rushed heedlessly into it. **Looking from a small tree growing in [sic] end of this U pocket, Red Kangaroo could see the twinkle of fire on Mullibah Lagoon camp.**

Again, “the” is frequently omitted.

Open grassland: This would be a reference to the creek-valley feeding out of the northern face of Porcupine Ridge which today still supports open grassland.\(^{306}\)

RK could see the twinkle: In other words, he was looking from the U pocket (below the northern face of Porcupine Ridge) NNE towards Mullibah - about one kilometre away [Map 11].

Waddies: First use of this term. Usually ‘nulla nulla’ is preferred. One might suppose that a ‘waddy’ meant a hunting club and that ‘nulla nulla’ denoted a mace or war club. But on one occasion at least (above: MS Page 8) ‘nulla nullas’ were used to kill fish.

Going back to Burradella, he took him to the U gap in hop-vine scrub and told him to plan to try to trap the Cassilis warriors. Walking inside the U mouth 40 yards, [he said] “Here is where the guards will have their fires that will burn to ashes and warm coals before grey dawn. The guards will sit, lay about and walk about fire in the early part of night. Then they will all lay down about fire to sleep, except for a few guards posted here and there. But there will be no guards sleeping or awake about the died-out fires after two in the

\(^{306}\) I thank Tim Curran for comments on the geographical clues concerning the battle sites.
morning. The possum rug [will be] rolled about stick[s] tied in bundles, or about grass, to look like a man wrapped in his possum rug asleep [by] the dead fires. At each man-like form in its possum rug, a spear will stand upright in the ground.”

… like a man wrapped in his possum rug: Possum-skin cloaks or “rugs” were sometimes very large. A cloak from the Hunter Valley nearly five feet (149 cm) long, made from 22 skins, is pictured in C P Mountford 1963 (a unique drawing of incised designs, cut on the skin side of possum skin cloaks); and Alexander Harris 1847 mentions rugs of 30-60 skins. One rug from Victoria was sewn from 81 (!) skins and measured 7'6" by 5'6" [2.29 metres by 1.68 metres].

“At the far end of the U and along its sides for 20 yards each way there will be bushes leant against the hop scrub to make a mia-mia for the night. And early and up to 10 o’clock there will be fires at each mia-mia, and young lubras not yet married will walk from fire to fire and talk with young married women, and the picinnies, boys and girls of nine or [10] years old, who will run about the camp in early part of night until sent to bed by the older lubras after nine o’clock setting of Djurrabl (evening star). Some old women will have a row and some guards will stop the row. Then every lubra & piccinnie will go to bed and sleep.”

“But a young (baby) piccinin [sic] will start to cry and cry. Its mother will get up and make up her fire and sit at fire to warm piccinin. At different time[s] during the night picinnies will cry and cry, and their mothers will get up and make up her fire and sit it with piccinin – until three in the morning, when they will slip away in

307 Mountford 1963: 534-35; Harris ed, Clarke 1953: 75 (first published 1847); and Mulvaney 1969: 81. See also the cover picture of my Kamilaroi Lands 1997 – a drawing from the 1860s of a man wrapped in a large cloak with incised designs on the outer, skin side.
the scrub and go back to the secret camp where all the others will be, except 10 old women left in camp. At three o’clock every guard will crawl to the scrub edge either side of U leaving a spear at the head of a possum-rugged figure asleep by the died-out guard fire.

“You Burradella will have 17 warriors and yourself on one side of the U 40 yards from U mouth. You will stand back two feet in hop-vine. On the other side I will have 16 warriors and myself, and we will stand two feet back in hop scrub from three in the morning until grey dawn is coming. Then, if the trap is good, the Cassilis warriors will creep through mouth of U and along the hop vine scrub edge. Then they will throw the spears at the possum-rugged figures on guard and rush with tribal war-shouts to nulla-nulla any of our warriors they didn’t spear. We will in that time [MS Page 12] [?] steal out of scrub and send a shower of spears into them and no one is to rush to nulla nulla any warrior he can get near. They must run to the end of the U and let us give them a second spear. Then our warriors can get up close for using nulla nulla.”

As before, ‘the’ is often omitted in the manuscript.

[Burradella and Boobuk Approve Red Kangaroo’s Plan:]

“What do you say about my plan, Burradella?” – “We are forced to take risks [replied B.], either to wait for daylight and fight against a much stronger force than ours, or risk a raid on them with only 21 of us. And our warriors who have seen their war party say there are 70 or 80 warriors in it. We can’t surprise-raid them in the night as you have seen for yourself. We must risk a fight in the dark when they can’t see how few we are to them. And we must get every man we have at the secret camp. That would give us 35 spears. We have to
risk all to keep our women and picinnies. But how are you going to get the women to come here and camp as if they didn’t know an enemy was near them?”

Red Kangaroo said, “I can depend on my two wives”. “And my three will come”, said Burradella. “Then there’s Weetah: she would come, and that little Tukki. Then there’s the 14 warriors in [camp?]. Their wives [sic] and picinnies old enough to come will join us here.”

“We will take the risk Burradella!” “You get 10 of the old women here. Put the boys with you gathering firewood for the mia-mia fires – and some warriors getting small leafy trees to lean against the hop-vine to make a makeshift camp for a night for the women and children. And keep a strong double guard out in front of the U in case any Cassilis spies find it before I get the women here and picinnies. My wives both have a (baby) picinin [sic].”

Red Kangaroo ran all the way, as only a strong man like him could do. Boobuk’s party had arrived. Red Kangaroo told the guards of the enemy forces [? ranged] against theirs and his plan to try to trap them in the U wallaby-catch308 by baiting it with his young wives and Burradella’s.

Were the other warriors prepared to risk their wives [he asked]? Or would they stay in secret camp until tracked down and killed by the Cassilis warriors who had killed off [??would kill off] Red Kangaroo and their 19 warriors and 13 boys?

“We follow where you lead us, Red Kangaroo, and so must our lubras and piccinies!”

So Red Kangaroo picked the 20 unmarried lubras and 40 of the youngest of the 70 lubras in camp, and Tukki and all boys and girls from eight to 11 years old. Taking six guards and 40 young women, Red Kangaroo started back. The other eight guards came at a slower pace to give the younger picinnies every chance of not getting exhausted before [illegible: ?three-fourths?] of the journey had been done.

Halting his party at the top of Porcupine Ridge, Red Kangaroo went down the rib that leads to Blackhill and got in touch with Burradella. All was going well: bush lean-to mia mias; wood for camp fires; wood for guards’ fires; and plenty of grass and bundles of sticks tied up [and] hid under grass. And some of the old women came to their place: Burradella had told them what he wanted them to do. The younger women were all settled down. The strongest picinnies were coming in with the other lubras and the smallest picinnies were being brought in short stages until all had arrived. Weetah had borrowed a baby (picinin)\textsuperscript{309} from a woman left in the camp.

\textit{Down the rib that leads to Blackhill:} That is, in modern-day terms: NNE from Porcupine Ridge following the low ridge or slope down towards Boundary Road. To reach the "wallaby catch", he would then have turned west. See Maps 10 and 11.

“When all was arranged in the camp, the fires were lit, and one lit at the mouth of U to catch the eyes and roving scouts/spies of the Cassilis tribe.

Red Kangaroo and seven warriors [lay?] watching for Cassilis scouts. And when it looked as if they didn’t see [?] //MS Page 13// the fire. [?] Burradella had gone with six warriors on to Blackhill to watch the Cassilis partie’s [sic] fires in Mullibah Lagoon Camp. Suddenly they all went out – been put out. He and his warriors ran back to tell Red Kangaroo. Then they robbed the fire in the U of its wood, taking it to the guards’ fire. The hot ashes were swept into a heap and a hole dug with tomahawk where fire had been made. Then hot ashes were swept into it, dirt put back and stamped flat, and loose grass scattered over

\textsuperscript{309} Ewing's note. It may be implied that "picinin" was how Joe Bungaree said 'piccaninny'.

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[the] dug-up ground. Now the Cassilis spies would have to move around to the north-west to look at the fires inside the U and they would have to cross the narrow strip of treeless scrubless ground to get north-west of the U.

The two chiefs and seven warriors lay on the edge of the Porcupine Ridge hop scrub waiting to see if the Cassilis spies had seen their fire and put theirs out because of it. Twenty minutes passed; then a man was seen to raise himself from the ground and beckon with his hand. He showed up in the firelight of the guards’ fire to Red Kangaroo and party. Then he dropped to earth and made to the east of the U entrance. Crossing that guard’s firelight, 15 warriors were seen: their head or back as they crawled on ground.

To Blackhill to watch the Cassilis partie’s [sic] fires: As noted earlier, Blackhill was possibly the knoll near the intersection of Boundary Road and Kamilaroi Road. The distance from there to Mullibah lagoon is 1.5 kilometres. Compare Map 10.

Twenty minutes: Minutes were not a division of time that Aborigines used in the 17th and 18th centuries. We must imagine that Joe Bungaree, with his good knowledge of English, chose ‘20 minutes’ to convey a short, but not very short, period.

[The Cassilis Spies Inspect the Gunnedah Camp:]

“The picinnies [?as they now saw?] were laughing and talking and chasing one another about their bushes-lean-to shelter[s] leant against hop scrub at back of U and 20 yards along both sides. Some lubras came and shouted at them to go to bed and chased boys who ran to some other camp fire. And the 20 unmarried young lubras stood talking in groups at the
fires until the camp-owners covered the fires with ashes. Then some of the old women started rowing. Some chief or leading warriors [i.e., Cassilis men?] had been brought up by some spies sent for them. They crept to U mouth when the young unmarried lubras stood about the camp fires talking to the young married women. The old women started to fight with their yam-sticks until some guards ran to them and bumped their heads together. The guards began to come up to the fire and a number stuck a spear upright in ground, rolled their possum rug about them and lay down to sleep. Other guards sat at fire wrapped in rug and others walked about across U entrance or as far as the women and picinnies camp and they stood at hop-vine edge and leaned against it.”

Yam-sticks: The Gamilaraay name was ganay. Dunbar writes that “The women . . . carried a digging stick . . . approximately five feet long [about 1.5 metres], undecorated, and made of mulga wood, hardened and pointed at each end; it was used as a weapon of offence and defence, and for digging out bilbies, yams, roots etc, in the ground, as a staff, and for handling the fire in cooking operations.” When women fought - and fighting was far from rare among women - they usually relied on their digging sticks.310

Leaned against it: Hop-vine or Dodonea is too slight for a grown man to lean against it; but the small trees forming part of the 'SEVT' complex ("semi-evergreen vine thicket") would provide such support.311

311 Tim Curran, pers. comm. 2002.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

[Seeing this ...] The chief or some leading warriors went away towards Mullibah Lagoon camp and left seven spies. They stayed on until it got late at night. Then Naroo’s (baby) piccinin /sic/ started to cry and cry. She got up and made up her fire and sat over it with piccinin and self wrapped in her possum rug. After [that] she went back to her camp and all became quiet and the night smelt cold. A piccinin started crying in another camp, and Weetah, another young woman, got up and started her fire into a blaze and sat over it with her wailing piccinin. Then the piccinin stopped crying and, covering over her fire, she stood a while and then went into her bushes-camp.

Naroo: First mention in this document. She is introduced into the story without explanation. As we know from "The Death and Career" (Document 3B, MS Pages 25 ff), she was Red Kangaroo’s wife, originally from Coonabarabran. Following Ridley, Naroo was probably “Gnaroo” [?Ngaaru], Black Duck, her totem name.\(^{312}\)

The night smelt cold: This is not a normal expression in English. It may represent a figure of speech in Gamilaraay.

“The spies murmured together and one pointed to the Southern Cross and the emu and two hunters. Another cry of a piccinin sounded high on the cool night air and the spies watched another young woman come from the other side of camp and make up her fire. And the piccinin kept on crying. Then two grey-haired old lubras got up and talked with the young mother and they warmed something at the fire to put on the piccinin. And it stopped crying and the young

\(^{312}\) In northern Gamilaraay, Black Duck (\textit{Anas superciliosa}, the ‘Pacific black duck’) was \textit{garrang-ay} [Backnell’s “curring-a”] (\textit{Austin Dict.}) Ridley’s “gnaroo” may well have been a southern Gamilaraay word.
mother went to her camp and the old lubras wrapped their possum rugs about them, covered the fire over, and lay in [sic!] the hot ashes."

**Murmured together:** One of my readers suggested that this scene is a little theatrical, and sounds like the sort of embellishment that a white man would add (i.e., the Ewings). This need not be so. We must allow for the fact that some, even many, Aborigines were clever and subtle narrators of camp-tales. There is no reason to believe that they were unable, imaginatively, to recreate the feelings and attitudes of the enemy side.

**Emu and two hunters:** This would be the name of a constellation.

The leader of the spies pointed to sleeping guards by their dying fire and the four guards leaning sleeping against hop-scrub. Then they crept away for a short distance and ran for their camp.

Red Kangaroo and nine warriors scouted in search of other Cassilis scout-spies but there were none.

Burradella had taken the 10 old lubras back into the thick hop-scrub. And the sleeping guards were grouped about the dying fires. Every bundle of sticks and grass [was] rolled into a possum rug. Two guards made of man-sized logs wrapped in possum rugs leant sleepily against the thick hop-vine sides of the U, 50 yards from the entrance into it.

Red Kangaroo sent one warrior with his two wives and Weetah to top of Porcupine Ridge at smoke-signal post – and they were to go to secret camp.

**[The Ambush Is Ready:]**

“Red Kangaroo and his warriors stood along one side of the U and Burradella and his warriors along the
other side. All were hidden back three feet in hop-vine scrub, and no one was to attack the Cassilis warriors until they threw their spears into the possum-rug-and-sticks guard[s] seemingly asleep about fire. Then each man would step clear of the scrub as the Cassilis warriors rushed past to nulla-nulla any Nam moy River warrior not speared. And send a flight of spears into the Cassilis warriors. And each man must throw a second spear into the Cassilis warriors still on their feet before rushing them with nulla-nulla. They may not send all their warriors to attack us in first rush.

The time passed slowly but at last there came a change in the sky in the east. Then different ones caught sight of creeping warriors. They [had] sent their spies to see how things were.

Quickly they signalled [the presence of] a sleeping guard. Then the Cassilis warriors ran through the mouth of the U in the greying light before day when certain birds gave their call.

They ran in 10 yards //MS Page 15// and launched 60 spears into the sleeping possum-rugged guard[s]. Then, with the war cries, they ran forward to nulla nulla any un-speared guard and ... they running close together and so many of them became an easy target for 35 spear-throwers. Those un-hit either stood still or fled in terror up the [?missing word]. But a second shower of spears was launched at them. Then the loud and feared voice of Red Kangaroo to his warriors, “Get your spears! There’s more Cassilis warriors somewhere about!” Every warrior pulled his spear from [the] dead or dying. “Now Burradella, you and your warriors look to the U mouth and any Cassilis warriors that may try to slip by. I’ll take my warriors to deal with those Cassilis warriors getting away at U end.”

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_Gave their call:_ This may refer to imitation bird calls, used as a prearranged signal. Or, was it just the dawn bird chorus?
They speared three trying to break their way through the thick hop-vine scrub. But a number escaped into hop scrub. They [the Gunnedah men] followed with shield and nullas [sic] in hand. Burradella counted 34 killed and six badly wounded inside the first 60 yards of the U [and] with the three killed at other end by Red Kangaroo and some of his warriors.

Burradella and his party went through their side of the U and beat (keeping close together) back through hop-vine scrub towards Blackhill. Nothing came towards them from the Mullibah Lagoon Camp or break [sic] out of the scrub to cross the mile-long-by-300-yard-wide strip that fringed the hop-vine scrub of the Porcupine Ridges – or lay on the north-west edge of Blackhill scrub. But after a while, battle cries of the Nammoy River tribe and Cassilis war cries [came] from the south-east side of Black Hill [sic].

Red Kangaroo’s party had been on the tracks of the 17 survivors of the trap, and they weren’t standing to fight. They were hoping to join in with 21 warriors sent around to the south of Black Hill to cut off the fleeing lubras and picinnies from the U camp. It was this party, now combined, that came to attack Red Kangaroo’s party of 17.

**Counted 34 killed and six badly wounded:** These numbers may seem massively large, as we remarked earlier. But they are by no means impossible. Warner listed two pitched battles in Arnhem Land in the early 20th century that resulted the deaths of 14 and 15 men respectively.

Likewise in Central Australia there were lengthy feuds which sometimes culminated in battles with large numbers of fatalities. R G Kimber has proposed, based on a reading of the early sources, that this endemic feuding may have involved a death rate of "possibly five percent every generation . . . for the regions of
least conflict and a high death-rate of perhaps 20% every three generations elsewhere". He cites one clash, remembered from the period 1875-78, in which an attacking party of "perhaps 50-60" warriors killed as many as "80-100" men, women and children among an enemy group. And the kinsmen of the victims retaliated remorselessly. Over the following three years, in a series of clashes, all of the "50-60" killers save one were themselves killed in 'pay-back'. This was related many years later to T G H Strehlow by the old men who as children had survived these ‘wars’.

All this should be read against the background that the arid interior is regarded by most authors as having the lowest rate of deaths from warfare.

In the case of north-central NSW, the figures are more credible if we posit a much higher population density in the 17th and 18th centuries than in the 19th century. It is known that smallpox struck Aboriginal Australia very heavily in the later 18th-early 19th centuries. There was at least one and probably two pandemics, namely in 1785-95 and in 1825-35. Judy Campbell proposes - rightly in my view - that smallpox may have killed over half the population of south-east Australia between 1785 and 1835.313

"Mile-long-by-300-yard-wide strip that fringed the hop-vine scrub of the Porcupine Ridges – [and] Blackhill scrub": It seems implied that this "strip" was distinct from the 'wallaby catch' itself, which is described as a U-shaped clearing (only) "130 yards deep by 40 wide" (MS Page 11). On my Maps 10 and 11, the location of the wallaby catch is speculative.

‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

[Hand to Hand Battle in the Hop Scrub:]

Red Kangaroo and his warriors fell back into the hop scrub where only tomahawk or nullas could be used. And Burradella and his men got in touch with RK, making them 35 strong. Then Red Kangaroo led his warriors to attack again, roaring his battle cry. And the warriors of Burradella worked through [the] scrub, and on an agreed battle cry, they rushed from two directions at the centre of the Cassilis warriors. It was nulla and shield or tomahawk and shield – no spears or boomerangs could be thrown in that scrub and heather.

Cutting the Cassilis party in two, both Nammoy River tribe parties turned on the same Cassilis-separated party and killing [sic] two Cassilis warriors. The rest fled for the open country, and every warrior ran for his life. RK and Burradella let them go, to attack the other party and put them to flight [too], with no casualties among them.”

Tomahawk: As noted earlier, tomahawks were tools, not weapons. But tools would normally have been carried, and thus available for use as emergency weapons.

“Of the original 60 spears that were trapped into the U, there were now only 15 warriors left and they now fled in panic, scattering in twos and threes and running over the open country and keeping in the scrub country as much as they could. They headed for Black Jack Mtn and would keep to the scrub country as long as they could in their desperation to get home to Cassilis and as far away from Red Kangaroo and his warriors as they could.
"Red Kangaroo" of Gunnedah

Black Jack: First mention. - Black Jack Mountain, 700 metres, lies south-west, about eight kilometres as the crow flies, from Gunnedah [Maps 3 and 7]. Scrub country: The ridges north and south of Black Jack Mountain all still support 'semi-evergreen vine thicket' (SEVT).

The 21 Cassilis warriors who were to have cut off the flight of the lubras and picinnies from the [illegible] camp: when they broke and fled before the attack of RK’s force and Burradella’s force, they ran for Mullibah Lagoon Camp to get their possum [MS Page 16] rugs and extra spear, boomerang. And, as they got close to the camp, another party of Nammy warriors jumped out of the ground and rushed with their war cries at them and three spears and boomerangs. They fled without throwing a spear and made for Black Jack, a landmark standing high over all others in the west of Mullibah Lagoon Camp. Later they found three [of] their warriors were missing. They were strong young warriors and fresh, so they soon outran their pursuers and they headed to the west.”

Another party: Under Boobuk.

West: More exactly, Black Jack Mountain is to the south-west.

“The party who attacked them had only come into the camp a short time. They had travelled from Breeza Plains with a heavy load of best kangaroo meat and had travelled most of the night until they came to the Mooki, two miles from Mullibah Lagoon Camp. They decided to camp on Mooki and come into camp next morning.

Had they come on and not camped, most would have been killed as they came loaded with meat amongst 81 Cassilis warriors. They hadn’t seen the
smoke signals. They had come upon a big mob of kangaroos and chased and made their kills over miles of plain country. After the first kill by the 21 of them, the old warriors cut off the best meat from the kills and made heaps of it here and there on the tussocky grass on the plain, to be got when the meat hunt was over. They all had a meal and all slept, except two on guard for an hour, each pair of guards.”

Night: Conventionally Aborigines are said to have avoided night travel, being afraid of ghosts and demons. On the other hand, we know from Warner that, at least in Northern Australia, most war-raids were conducted as night attacks. Fighting, he says, rarely took place in the daytime. In north-east Arnhem Land, the only type of mass fighting held in the daytime was the uncommon type of pre-arranged pitched battle (Warner 1930 and 1958: 155-56, 161).

Kangaroos: There were various methods of hunting kangaroos and wallabies: not just by spearing them. The Aborigines of north-central NSW also used long nets strung between trees, neck-nooses, and traps with foot-nooses.314

“Had they come into the camp that night, it would have upset Red Kangaroo's plan to trap the Cassilis warriors. And they, by coming in that morning, had jumped out of the ground. To the eyes of the Cassilis warriors, running to a deserted camp to get their

belongings, nothing would ever make them believe that the Nammoy River tribe hadn’t many warriors.

Red Kangaroo soon came at a run, followed by his warriors, to the camp and spoke with Boobuk, and [asked?] how they hadn’t seen the smoke signals. He looked at the three Cassilis warriors they had killed.

Burradella came limping into camp. He had jumped onto a sharp root that cut deep into sole of foot.

RK ordered that a lot of meat be cooked at once. He sent the 15 old warriors to secret camp well supplied with meat. He and Burradella sat apart and had a long talk. Then everyone ate a strong [?meal of] meat [?meat meal].

[The Counter-Raid:]

Then he picked 35 warriors including himself and told them he wanted them to come with him to chase the Cassilis warriors. “Few must get home! We will steal their women instead of them stealing ours. Who will come with me?” The whole tribe would have. But he had left 30 including Burradella to guard the women and picinnies.

Each man took cooked food, a possum rug and his war weapons. And RK led them across the lower ridges of the Porcupine Ranges [sic] and his well-fed warriors travelled fast. They were ahead of the 18 who had got such a surprise to have more Nammoy River warriors come out of the Mullibah Lagoon Camp.

These 18 warriors were keeping together and were hungry. They decided to get some wallabies. And RK’s party, from some low ridges, watched wallabies break out from the scrub on the south side of Black Jack and come across in their direction. After a while six warriors, each carrying a wallaby on his shoulder, came down the mtn [sic] side followed by 12 warriors. They went into a dry deep gully and made [sic] fire to cook their meat.

Dividing his force into two parties: Boobuk took one, //MS Page 17//RK the other. They skirted wide out to approach from down-gully and up-gully, and
cropt into the gully. Then, when within easy spearing, they yelled and threw their spears. The Cassilis warriors not speared raced up the steep gully side and fled for the Black Jack scrub. Only seven got into it.

The younger warriors of Red Kangaroo wanted to follow them. “No [said RK], we must get to Cassilis before any Cassilis warrior – to surprise the guard left with their women. Those seven won’t leave the scrub unless driven out. They won’t follow on our tracks too close. We have to get ahead of the other party now.”

They travelled fast and stopped to eat at three, and with strong guards circling them. They slept two hours each man. At dusk they went on again and travelled until one in the morning. Then half the party slept whilst the other half kept guard.

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**Across the lower ridges + Black Jack scrub + steep gully side**: The present-day Black Jack State Forest lies east of Black Jack Mountain. It would seem that the Cassilis men headed south-west across the lower western ridges of Porcupine Ridge and thence southwards past Black Jack Mountain ("steep gully side"). In other words, they probably travelled between the Mountain and the State Forest: perhaps a little west of where the Wandoba Road now runs [cf Map 7].

**Two hours each man**: It seems implied that they slept in two shifts for two hours each, i.e. from 3 pm to 7 pm.

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At day-dawn a big meal was eaten and they travelled fast, stopping to kill some kangaroos. Coming to a creek with water, they found tracks. Following them, they saw five Cassilis warriors eating. They swept down on them and none got away. And right along they gave no mercy: they were going to teach [the] Cassilis tribe a lesson they wouldn’t forget.”
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

**Travelled fast:** As noted earlier, the distance from Gunnedah to Cassilis is 115 kilometres as the crow flies. Of course, allowing for topography, the distance would be longer on foot, say 125 kilometres. If it seems that RK’s party covered the distance in very good time, then we must remember that 18th century Aborigines were much better trained at walking than we are today.

**[Attack on the Cassilis Home Camp:]**

“They came upon the camp in the early morning and took the guard of 30 men by surprise, when Red Kangaroo gave his war-cry and his warriors repeated it. The Cassilis guards were scattered about their gunyah cook-fires. The women and piccinnies fled in all directions screaming. Then RK threw his spear and his warriors looked for targets. The guards rushed together and RK threw his second spear, and a flight of spears were sent by his warriors. Yelling his loudest, Red Kangaroo with tomahawk and shield charged followed by his warriors. But 12 guards ran off for their life [sic] chased by 10 of Red Kangaroo[’s] warriors.”

**The camp:** The Cassilis head camp.

**Tomahawk:** As already remarked several times, Aborigines used wooden weapons for close combat, i.e. waddies and nulla-nullas. Tomahawks were too valuable to be risked being broken in fighting, except in an emergency.
They rounded up the women and piccinies, ordered the women to eat a meal and had one themselves. Then, choosing 40 young women and 10 piccinies of 10 to 11 years, Red Kangaroo started back from Gunnedah. He never lost a man in the fighting, and of the 11 wounded, no wounds were more than flesh ones.

It was many years before the warlike Cassilis tribe built up to be [a] menace to other tribes. But never again did Cassilis warriors venture to attack the Nammoy River Tribe.

With the downfall of Cassilis came the strength of the Nammoy River Tribe under RK. In much later times Cassilis warriors made a raid on [the] Coonabarabran tribe and not one warrior lived to get back to Cassilis. But that was a tale told by the old chief Cuttibrish 60 years ago. But [it] has nothing to do with Red Kangaroo and how he set a trap and caught the Cassilis war party and women-stealers.” [Text ends.]

Cuttibrish: Spelt “Cutterbush” by May Nevell, and “Cuttabush” in Jinnie’s Tale, Document 3E (see there). Cuttabush is supposed to have been born in 1825. That would have made him only 53 in 1878. But no doubt he seemed old to young boys.

Told 60 years ago: 1938 less 60 years = 1878, i.e. when the Ewings were still living at Coonabarabran.
DOCUMENT 3D: FRAGMENTARY PAPERS

Some of the original papers have not survived, or at least they are unlocatable. The Gunnedah Historical Society has explained that in 1956 the full Ewing papers were lent for a display. Some pages have been mislaid ever since, despite strenuous efforts over the years by Mr Don McDonagh (Russell McDonagh’s nephew) to locate them.

As with the other documents, I have corrected the punctuation, or added it, and also added italics to highlight points of interest.

Fragment 1.
[Isolated page numbered “2”. Discusses the big box stump; Prescott; Haynes; Ashby and Bandaar. Written in Stanley Ewing’s handwriting. As it appears, it was another letter, or another draft of the same letter, to the Namoi Advertiser.]

[SURVIVING TEXT BEGINS:]
... [“Page 2”] “... Gunnedah. There was a big box tree stump about (9) nine feet [three metres] high and it was carved by stone tomahawk work from a foot above the ground up to its then rotten top. Mr Turner said the old stump must have been a green tree 20 foot high when it was stone-tomahawk carved, but time and the varying climatic conditions gradually rotted it away bit by bit from the top. Some years later another big part, eaten to a shell by white ants, cracked off and fell into pieces on the ground leaving only a big stump four feet [120 cm] high and 20 inches [50 cm] in diameter and having a four inch [100 mm] diameter pipe in its centre going down to roots.

Here the text is very similar to, but not identical with, Document 3B. The comparable passage in
Mr Turner reckoned the carved box-tree stump might have been a green tree 20 ft high when it was originally carved. But time and weather had rotted the top away from time to time. [ . . . . ] he found there still remained a stump four feet high. But the fallen timber had been eaten to a thin shell by white ants and on its fall crumbled to dust and fragments.<><

20 foot high + 20 inches in diameter: 20 feet [nearly six metres] would indicate that the tree was relatively young when carved. On the other hand, a 20 inch (50 cm) diameter would suggest that it grew to be reasonably large and quite old for a box (Tim Curran pers. comm. 2002).

“This is the stump Mr E C Prescott speaks of as an old gum-tree stump. Thinking it may be of interest to you and the readers of your paper, I am setting down other facts about that [sic] ancient [A]boriginal's bones, and what I heard Dr Haynes say about that [A]boriginal's bones at the grave-side and other remarks he made there at that time. Also what happened when Dr Haynes instructed Mr Ashby to start digging "down here", scoring ground with his boot heel, and what effect it had on Bundaar the black-tracker when told that Mr Ashby was coming with a sack of old blackfellow's bones, to put them in the police stables forage room until Dr Haynes had time to classify them. And Bundaar slept in that forage room! – Writing about things I had looked at with my own eyes and heard with my own ears, besides having the notes written about them at the time by my father. Or recollection of many conversations I had with my father during later years about the digging up of the ancient [A]boriginal's remains and incidents that occurred that day, and notes my father wrote down from talks he had with Bungaree, King of the Namoi [sic] tribe. Bungaree ...” [SURVIVING TEXT ENDS.]
The phrase ‘my own eyes’ also occurs in Document 3B, MS Page 6. Thus: - >> ... At that time my interest was centred on Dr Haynes and Bungaree – and I write now only of those things I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears. Coming to the old carved stump, Dr Haynes said, “Why was this stump carved like this?” ...<<

* * *

Fragment 2.
[Isolated page numbered “5”]. The reference to Coonabarabran police station (“my 19 years”) shows that this document was written, or at least composed, by Sergeant Ewing himself. But it is in Stan Ewing’s handwriting.

The tone and style is markedly smoother than the other texts written by Stanley Ewing, although the word “the” is several times omitted. On the other hand, the sometimes disconnected sentences are reminiscent of Stanley’s own style. Quite possibly it is part of a transcription by Stanley of his father’s (now lost?) Diary of reminiscences ... with the Gold Escort and Mounted Police of NSW 1857-1890, which Pickette & Campbell mention (1984 p.123.)

[SURVIVING TEXT BEGINS:]
“. . . scrub and rock wallabies, wallaroos, and the mtn kangaroo species.

Mtn ranges are well watered. Many creeks and gullies are running seven or eight months in a year and a chain of waterholes for the rest of the year. Even in a big drought there are good waterholes in many creeks that last out until drought-breaking rain falls. Amongst those mtn ranges there are numbers of springs.

In my 19 years as Officer in charge of the Coonabarabran police station I spent hundreds of days
and nights among the Warrumbungle Mtn Ranges, and in my patrols about those Ranges on horseback as well as on foot, I gathered a general knowledge of the mtn ranges that cannot be conveyed by word of mouth nor by written instructions to any other person for their information.

Only by going up amongst those ranges by day and by night could a first-timer gain a practical knowledge of those mtn ranges, by hearing what was told him and seeing what was shown him by someone who had spent many days and nights amongst those ranges over a number of years in the getting of worthwhile knowing. That by following a certain gully one could lead a horse up from or down into some particular gorge-valley whose sides were too steep for a man to even clamber on foot into or out of. Whilst in other places the gorge-valley’s sides went sheer up in places 20 feet. To get out of that gorge-valley, one would have to ride back three miles to find a place up which horse could be lead. To get into gorge valley from the mtn side above meant five miles of riding and walking through scrub and masses of fallen rock and great trees before a place could be found to get the horse down the gorge side into valley below. Whereas once the first-timer learned where the gully was blinded hidden by scrub and big rocks.

In a scrub patch of some five acres in extent, below where a pinnacle had weathered away and huge masses of rock had fallen over the flight of time, a man on foot could go down to the valley below in 15 minutes easily . . .” [SURVIVING TEXT ENDS].
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

DOCUMENT 3E: SHORT TITLE: “JINNIE’S TALE”. - JINNIE GRIFFIN’S TALE OF THE RAID ON COONABARABRAN BY THE CASSILIS MEN

Manuscript in the possession of the Gunnedah Historical Society: three foolscap pages, undated; written in apparently the same hand as the 1945 letter to Russell McDonagh, whose author was almost certainly John Ewing junior.

Part of the text has been published in Pickette & Campbell 1984 and by Sommerville 1994.

The authorship seems confirmed by the writer’s preference for the word “site” and his favoured use of the double-dash or ‘equals’ sign ( = ) as a punctuation mark. Accordingly we can be fairly sure that the text was written by John P Ewing junior, Stanley’s older brother. What is not clear is whether the original recorder was J P Ewing senior, the old sergeant, or his son J P Ewing junior. Quite possibly the younger Ewing was simply the transcriber.

Sergeant Ewing and his family left Coonabarabran for Gunnedah in 1885. The youngest son Stanley had been born in 1878. "Jinnie" (Jane or Jenny) Griffin died in about 1882 when he was aged four - surely too young for him to remember anything she told him. Possibly the tale was related, just before Mrs Griffin's death, to Stanley’s brother John junior, who was eight in 1882. His authorship seems confirmed by para.4: “us children”. Perhaps some or all of the material was originally put down in writing by the ‘old’ Sergeant and adopted later by John junior?

When the text says (see first paragraphs) that “she died some years ago”, it is unclear whether the reference is to Jinnie Griffin (d. 1882) or her daughter Mary Jane Cain (d. 1929). If Mary is meant, then the document was probably written-out in the 1930s,

315 Even at age eight, John junior would seem too young to have remembered many details of Jinnie’s tales. But he would have remembered finding her tomahawk (see end of this text). And perhaps his father, Sergeant Ewing, over the years had refreshed their memory of what they had heard from Jinnie.
although obviously the tale was remembered from before 1882. The events described took place when Jinnie was a "very small piccaninni", presumably around 1827-1830.

The story is presented dramatically, like a tale to be read out aloud. It is related mainly in Ewing’s own words. When Jinnie Griffin’s words are quoted they are rendered usually in standard English but occasionally with some of the flavour of 19th century pidgin. At other times Ewing’s words seem to blend with hers.

As before, the paragraph numbers, italics and the interpolations in square brackets have been added by the present editor. The words struck through are crossed out in the original MS.

TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

In the early Eighties XXX/seventies at Coonabarabran XXX there was an elderly middle-aged Aboriginal gin living at the blacks' camp - Parkers Paddock site on the Castlereagh River.

2. She was known locally as Jinnie Griffin and was the consort of King Cuttabush of the Coonabarabran blacks, a small scattered wandering band that is still represented at Burrabadee [sic] Mission Station (Forked Mountain) (Gunnedah-Coonabarabran Road). (Burrabeedee is the Aboriginal name for the small flying mice) = By the Cain family who are direct descendants of Jinnie Griffin = through their mother Mary Cain (nee Griffin), who, until she [?]Jinnie or Mary] died some years ago, was regarded as their born and hereditary leader. =

Eighties XXX = Wording crossed out.

Seventies: As noted above, Sergeant Ewing and family left Coonabarabran for Gunnedah in 1885.
Blacks' camp: A census of Aborigines was taken by the Police in 1882 for the Protector of Aborigines. The count for Coonabarabran, which would have been supplied by Sergeant Ewing, was 27 people: five were of full ancestry (including three men over 60; nil children), and 22 people were recorded as "half castes". Among the latter were 11 "children", defined as those under age 20 including teenagers.\footnote{Published in \textit{Votes and Proceedings of the NSW Legislative Assembly}, 1883, vol. iii.} 

"Burrabadee" Mission Station: The former Aboriginal Station near Coonabarabran, more properly spelt Burra Bee Dee. 'Mission' is simply the vernacular name for a Reserve: there was no church involvement.

The site was gazetted as a Reserve by the NSW Aborigines Protection Board in 1910-1912. The Forked Mountain site was older, having been gazetted in 1892; it was subsumed within Burra Bee Dee.\footnote{Wilkin 1987 and Sommerville 1994.}

\textit{Jinnie Griffin}: Lived c.1826-1882. Her daughter Mary Jane Griffin Cain lived 1844-1929.

\textit{Cuttabush}: As explained in F M Nevell’s notes, Cutterbush [sic]\footnote{The –sh sound is not found in Aboriginal languages. We may guess, therefore, that his name was actually an English nickname, perhaps from “bush cutter/cutter of bushes”.} was an Aboriginal man from Coonabarabran known for having killed Togee, "king of the Butheroe tribe". This is a reference to 'Butheroo' station, west of Coolah; north-west of Mendooran. Togee is described as "an early friend of the whites". 

Cutterbush was born in about 1825. That would have made him a toddler when the first colonists arrived, and a "young man" (as Miss Nevell describes him) in 1845. By that time, his
future victim Togee was already working from time to time as a stockman for the squatter Vincent at ‘Butheroo’ station.

Miss Nevell says Cutterbush killed Togee "probably" in the 1850s. The date must have been 1857 or soon thereafter, since it was her grandfather H H Nevell of 'Coolah' who buried Togee, Nevell having come to the district in that year. Although it is not stated, we may guess that a duel took place.\footnote{319}

Togee is called a ‘friend of the whites’, but it must not be assumed that Cutterbush killed him for that reason. No surviving Aborigine could have been an active enemy of the settlers by 1857. A better guess would be that the pair duelled over some private matter.

If Cutterbush was born in 1825, then he was aged 32 in 1857. He later became "king" [patriarch] of the Coonabarabran tribe (aged 60 in about 1885).

*Flying mice:* Written between the lines. A species of glider: perhaps the squirrel glider, *Petaurus norfolcensis*, or the feather-tail glider, *Acrobates pygmaeus*.

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3. "There was another daughter Margaret - once of Garrawilla Station - who fell on evil days with the passing of the Orr regime at Garrawilla. Margaret, or Mag as she was known for many years around Gunnedah, eventually finished up at her camp on the Namoi - near the Burrell water hole. = She had three children, Emma Orr, Georgie Griffin & a waxx [illegible] little girl [illegible phrase running down the side . . . ]

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The grave of ‘King’ Togee is to be found 29 km west of Coolah on the left-hand side of the Neilrex Road, just past the ‘Langdon’ homestead. Presumably this site is where Cutterbush killed him. The grave consists simply of a weather-worn sandstone headstone surrounded by four white posts with a sign overhead reading: *Togee King Of The Butheroe Tribe*. 
Another daughter: By implication, Margaret Griffin, sister of Mary Jane Griffin Cain. (See the discussion in the Introduction.)

Garrawilla: A property near Mullaley, located about half-way between Gunnedah and Coonabarabran. First formed in about 1830, the station was acquired in 1852 by the Orr brothers, James and Ebenezer. The “passing of the Orr regime” presumably means 1874, when Ebenezer died.

4. “Jinnie sometimes, when in a confidential mood, would tell us very young children about old happenings amongst the Aboriginals of the district & their immediate enemies - raiding (?) from her /?other/ blacks from other districts, when food was scarce through droughts etc. “One time, long time ago”, she would start off, as we settled down to listen to her always interesting tales. =

5. One very wet winter’s day, she came up to the town & of course called at the house where she was always sure of a warm reception. [Interpolated text, illegible, running down from the left hand margin:] .. methodical in his camp life .. Mrs Griffin ... her early life ... who followed up station work, was very clean (?) [text uncertain] ... //MS Page 2//

[Jinnie’s Tale:]

6. Probably the cold wet day and the cheerful log fire in the kitchen woke up some long forgotten incident in her early life. Without any further preamble, she started off = “Long time ago, when I was very small piccaninni [sic], = the men = hunting party = started off early one bright day to hunt for kangaroos, wallaby
and other big game. = = Leaving only a few old men and the gins and piccaninnies & the dogs = to look after the camping ground.”

“When I was very small piccaninni”: Presumably around 1830. At that time, the colonists had already settled part of the Cassilis district, while Coonabarabran lay just beyond the advancing frontier (see the Chronology in the Introduction).

Gins: Women. This writer does not use ‘lubras’, which is further evidence that he was John Ewing rather than Stanley Ewing.

7. “About middle of that day we were all scared by the arrival of a raiding party of the Cassillis [sic] district blacks. It wasn’t known then as the Cassilis district though. = Our hunting party returned earlier than we expected & caught the raiders at a disadvantage, = they being unarmed for war, only having their hunting weapons with them. So, in a running fight, the Cassilis blacks were forced back from the river to some caves (overlooking the town of Coonabarabran).

8. “In desperation these raiders took shelter in one large cave which had only an entrance but no other outlet. A fatal move, as the Coonabarabran tribe closed in on it. And their chief ordered all the piccaninnies & gins to go up on the hill above the cave mouth and throw down dead bushes and dry sticks to close the mouth of the cave, which we all did cheerfully as we were quite safe up there.

9. As soon as a big heap was ready, a lighted spear was thrown by one of the men. And soon it was a great blazing fire we kept going. //MS Page 3//

10. The heat and smoke forced some out of the cave through the blazing rubbish, when they were immediately clubbed & killed by the waiting tribesmen. Those who preferred to stop in the shelter all perished.
of suffocation, as was found next day when the cave was opened up & searched by the victorious tribe.”

11. The telling of this episode quite scared us all, but it cheered up Jinnie considerably, and she left for the camp whistling cheerfully through the steady downpour.

12. *Jinnie died* at the camp near Parkers Paddock *in the year 1882*, I think it was; greatly regretted by all the white children who knew her as well. Her camp gear etc was burnt with her gunyah, including a treasured steel-headed tomahawk, before the few other blacks shifted holus bolus to a new site about ½ [half a] mile away.”

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*Died ... in 1882*: If she was aged (say) 18 in 1844 when her daughter Mary Jane was born, then Jinnie was born in about 1826. That would make her about 56 when she died. (Or, if she was born in 1822, 60 years old.\(^{320}\))

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13. “A few days later one enterprising boy, searching through the ashes turned up the steel tomahawk head, greatly to the chagrin of the other XXX [inkblot] searchers, who had no sentimental qualms in this respect. *This envied boy* cleaned up the tool & and put it in a new handle & kept it for the rest of his boyhood to use & also braggingly display as old Jinnie’s special tomahawk. What the other blacks thought of it we never knew; perhaps it was just as well we didn’t know.” [Text ends.]

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*One enterprising/envied boy*: Presumably the author himself, John Ewing junior.

XXX: An inkblot obscures a word in the MS.

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\(^{320}\) Born 1822: [http://aussie57.digitalrice.com](http://aussie57.digitalrice.com); Altona-Porter family tree; accessed January 2003.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah
DOCUMENT 4: ION IDRIESS’S PREFACE TO “THE RED CHIEF” [PAGES VII-XX OF THE 1953 EDITION]

Introduction

Ion Llewellyn “Jack” Idriess - born Waverly, Sydney, 1889; died Mona Vale, Sydney, 1979 - was the author of a number of books that have been instrumental in helping Australians to see themselves as a distinctive people.

His books include *Lasseter’s Last Ride*, 1931: about a fabulous gold reef in Central Australia; *The Desert Column*, 1932: about the Australian Light Horse in World War One; *Flynn of The Inland*, 1932: about the missionary John Flynn, founder of the Royal Flying Doctor Service; *The Cattle King*, 1936: about the grazier Sidney Kidman; and *Lightning Ridge*, 1940.

Idriess was the son of a mines inspector. His father was frequently posted to new appointments. So the family moved around NSW, including to Tamworth in 1897.

‘Jack” himself briefly attended the School of Mines at Broken Hill, but found working as an assayer uninteresting. At about age 16 he started a nomadic existence that would last for a quarter of a century and provide him with the experience that informs his writing. This included a stint at opal-mining at Lightning Ridge in 1909-11 and tin-mining near Cairns in 1911-13.

With the outbreak of the Great War, Idriess [age 25] enlisted in the 5th Australian Light Horse and served at Gallipoli, where he was wounded, and in the Sinai and Palestine. He witnessed the charge at Beersheba and was wounded again in the fighting after the battle of Gaza. Much of *The Desert Column* (1932) was drawn from personal experience.

During the 1920s, Idriess travelled and worked in many places, from Central Australia through south-west Queensland to Cape York Peninsula, Torres Strait, and...
the Gulf Country and across to the Northern Territory. He worked variously as a pearler, a gold-fossicker, an explorer, a surveyor and a hunter of buffaloes and crocodiles.

**Idriess’s Writing Career**

Idriess’s first publications were articles in the famous *Bulletin* magazine in 1910 when he was a 21-year old opal miner at Lightning Ridge. It was not until 1927, however, that his first book, *Madman’s Island*, was published.

Having settled in Sydney in 1928, Idriess became a free-lance contributor to the *Sunday Pictorial*. In 1931 *Prospecting for Gold*, a fossicker’s guide, was written and published all within five weeks. It sold 2,000 copies on the day of its release (helped of course by the Great Depression).

His first great literary, or yarn-telling, success came with *Lasseter’s Last Ride*, also in 1931, when he was 42. This was the now-famous account of the expedition to search for a rich gold reef that Harold Lasseter claimed to have found in Central Australia in the late 1920s. The book was subsequently published in Britain by Jonathan Cape (1936).

Idriess produced at least a book a year from 1931 to 1964 and twice published three books in a single year (1932 and 1940). Most are factually based stories, imaginatively recreated. A few are novels, namely *Drums of Mer*, 1933, and *Forty Fathoms Deep*, 1937.

It was a measure of his success that *Flynn of the Inland* (1932) and *The Cattle King* (1936) were to go through 40 to 50 reprintings.

In 1964, aged 75, Idriess suffered a stroke. This effectively ended his writing career, although he continued to travel widely to Angus & Robertson bookshops to autograph his books. He was awarded an OBE in 1968.

Idriess contracted typhoid when young, was twice wounded in war, and in his later years suffered from
recurring malaria. Having suffered a stroke, he nevertheless lived to the age of 90.

Julian Croft summarises his achievement thus: “Idriess’s contribution to Australian publishing and literature was profound. His combination of the bush yarn and historical or geographical subjects brought a new vision of Australia to its city-bound readers. . . . Idriess was no stylist but his writing was immediate, colourful, well paced and, despite the speed at which it was written, always well structured.”

Preface to ‘The Red Chief’

As will be seen, when Idriess quotes Stan Ewing, Ewing’s words are not cited exactly at every point from Document 3B. This may indicate that there was yet another recension of the document, one of the lost papers mentioned earlier, or, more probably, that Idriess did not quote the papers word for word.

Idriess chose in a few places to ‘smooth out’ the original text. And while sometimes he quotes Joe Bungaree’s words exactly in the semi-pidgin style in which they appear in the Ewing MSS (e.g. “sarjun” and “Me go soon!”), at other times he renders the quasi-pidgin of the MSS in fully standard English (e.g. “no one of my tribe must ever speak aloud the name”).

As before, the italics have been added for emphasis; also the bracketed interpolations. And I have supplied some headings (bold in brackets) to break up the long text.

TEXT, COMMENTARY AND NOTES:

Ion Idriess: Preface to The Red Chief (1953).
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In ADB 1983.
This story [writes Idriess] needs an explanatory note, otherwise many readers could be forgiven for doubting that it is a factual story. ... The notes were lent me – or rather forced upon me in such a nice way that I had to grudgingly promise “Oh well, I’ll have a look at them!” – by Mr Russell McDonagh, of McDonagh Pty Ltd, Gunnedah, NSW.

Mr Russell McDonagh is very keen on recording the old pioneering records of his district. He has an interesting collection, painstakingly gathered through the years. Among these were notes, actually the aboriginal [sic: lower case a] in straight-out form, of far and away the best remembered chief of the now extinct Gunnedah tribe. This story was written down word by word years ago by another well-known Gunnedah identity, the late Mr Stan Ewing. The story was from the lips of old Bungaree, last full-blood aboriginal of the tribe.

The late Stan Ewing was the son of Senior Sergeant John P Ewing who was in charge of the Gunnedah Police District of those days. Sergeant Ewing, like J J Smyth, T B Roberts, Doctor Hayne [sic] the Government Medical Officer at Gunnedah, and others, was a keen collector of aboriginal stories and relics. Stanley and his brother Ernest, with their school boy mates in those happy old bush days, grew up to play with and know the last of the local aboriginal youngsters as well as they did their own mates. [Stanley was aged seven when his father was transferred from Coonabarabrant to Gunnedah in 1884/85. MO’R]. And young Ewing reached manhood imbued with a great sympathy towards the last of the local tribesmen. [Born in 1878, Stanley reached the age of 21 in 1899.] The brothers were respected, but

323 Correctly ‘Haynes’, with an –s.

NB: All footnotes to this document have been added by me: MO’R.
above all trusted by them – as was the father, though they were always in awe of his official position.

**His brother Ernest:** There is no record of an Ernest, son of J P and Eleanor Ewing in the Births, Marriages and Deaths records of NSW.

Time slowly passed, and the old sergeant was ageing too. It was fitting then that young Stan Ewing, long after he had reached manhood [*presumably after 1899* - MO’R], in the presence of the old sergeant and the old aboriginal, should receive this story he had long been curious to hear from the lips of the last of the tribe – but only after the very remnants of the tribe had faded away and the old “King” Bungaree knew that he was going too. [*This may imply that the story was told and recorded sometime between 1899 and the year of Ewing senior’s death, 1911, and perhaps nearer 1911 than 1899. It is also implied in Document 3B, MS Page 34, that some of the story at least was recorded as early as 1890. MO’R.*] Yes, just as the wind blows the last stem of dried grass that was once upstanding and rich and green and “covered all the earth” – as the aboriginals believed they did, long before the white man came.

And now for Stan Ewing’s own written description of old Bungaree, the real teller of this tale:

**[Stanley Ewing’s Account, as quoted by Idriess:]**

“At the time of the digging up of the old chief’s grave [*in 1887 – MO’R*], there were only 40 people in the Black’s Camp – I take this from *notes my father made at the time*. The majority were half-castes but there were still a few full-bloods amongst them, mostly

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324 Compare the population figures in the Chronology under 1891 and 1896. - MO’R.
middle-aged or old. Bungaree was 'king' of the tribe, but there is no Namoi River tribe at Gunnedah now.”

This is a condensed extract from Document 3B above (see the text in Document 3B at MS Page 4).

“Bungaree was a full-blooded aboriginal about 70 years old, and a very active old man in his movements. He had a well formed massive head. His face was large and round, enhanced greatly by a long and wide growth of beard that adorned it. His was a smiling face, given to hearty laughter. He was about five feet seven [1.68 m] in height, a broad and deep chest, wide shoulders, good eyes, teeth and hearing, with a decidedly poddy or Falstaffian stomach, while in talking to him one realised he was an intelligent man. Bungaree, from many years' association with white people, could talk a very fair type of English. I have always found that the Australian aboriginal will quickly learn to talk a good class of English if you teach him, and talk that way to him.”

Talk that way to him: The original MS has “make that talk to them”.

So much for the teller of the tale [continues Idriess]. It would never have been told except for the professional interest and the curiosity of a hunter after relics. But let Stan Ewing carry on:

[The ‘Blackfellow’s Tree’:]  

“It all came about because of the Blackfellow’s Tree. Even before 1865 the Blackfellow's Tree was well known in the little township, very different then to the
Gunnedah of today. The “tree” then was only a huge box-tree stump some 12 feet [four metres] high, carved from base to top with intricate totemic designs, the work done by stone tomahawk. The stump stood opposite the old Wesleyan Parsonage, well back from the roadside of Poe Street (later Abbott Street). All knew the stump as the burial site of some great aboriginal chief and warrior, the stump carved with his totemic designs when the tree was hale and hearty in the long-gone days when the tribe had its favourite camping site where Gunnedah is today. Numbers of white women for a Sunday afternoon stroll used to walk to the Blackfellow’s Tree. Even by 1865 it had weathered and blown down and [was] rotted and eaten to a shell by white ants. It was then only a 12-foot stump. In that year Mr Arthur Turner, following tracks of his straying horses across Bloomfield Street [i.e., in a direction south-east from the township proper - MO'R], examined it. All around him then was virgin bush heavily timbered with box-trees, wilga, pine, belah and patches of scrub. Box-trees grew where the Wesleyan Church grounds are now.”

This text is somewhat different from the original MS (Document 3B above). Either there was another document now lost, or, more probably, Idriess was quoting fairly freely from Document 3B.

"Old" Parsonage: Old by 1953. The site of the Wesleyan/Methodist, now Uniting, Church, was dedicated (gazetted) in 1871: marked thus on the 1972 Department of Lands map. The Gunnedah Committee (1935: 53) records that the parsonage itself was built in 1880.

Heavily timbered: By the early 1860s there were 247 white people living at Gunnedah and an unknown, no doubt small, number of Aborigines. Some clearing would have taken place for
“Red Kangaroo” of Gunnedah

houses. So we may doubt that what is now the town centre was still “all” heavily timbered. But certainly it once had been so: the survey map of 1848 drawn by Gorman is annotated “thickly timbered” (SRNSW, L.1.1307, Map 3392).

“Years slipped away. Gunnedah slowly grew. When Dr Hayne came to reside in Gunnedah he was an enthusiast on [sic] collecting ancient aboriginal weapons of war and domestic implements, such as stone grinding-mills, needles from fish-bones, kangaroo and emu bones and kangaroo teeth. He found here some keen collectors in J J Smyth, T B Roberts and my father J P Ewing. But the doctor was keenest about getting possession of fine types of aboriginal skulls. The others preferred something extra in a boomerang or in the material, shape and fixings of a stone tomahawk or in the shape and carvings of a nulla-nulla, heilamon (shield) or wommera [sic].

My father was Senior Sergeant in Charge of Gunnedah Station and lived in the same quarters as the Officer in Charge of Gunnedah does today. One Friday afternoon Dr Hayne came to the Police Barracks to get my father to arrange a meeting between the doctor and Bungaree, the King of the Namoi River Tribe at Gunnedah – for so the brass half-moon swung by a cord about Bungaree’s neck was inscribed.

Arriving just at this time from school, I was given a message to deliver to Bundaar, the tracker, down at the police stables, telling him to saddle his horse and come quickly to the office. Bundaar was then told to ride down to the Blacks’ camp and tell Bungaree to come to the Police Station by half past nine next morning, and that Dr Hayne had left a plug of Conqueror tobacco at the Police Station for him.

Doctor Hayne said, “Sergeant, if you are not too busy come over to the old carved stump with me to have a look about the job. Afterwards I’ll drive down and arrange with Mr Ashby about his job tomorrow.”
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah

Drive down: i.e., in a sulky.

“Next morning at 8 am Bungaree, accompanied by a one-eyed and much younger aboriginal known as Jacob Painter, arrived at the Police Station. Very soon their pipes were going full blast on the doctor’s Conqueror tobacco.

On seeing Bungaree and Jacob Painter squatted down at the stable talking to Bundaar the tracker, as any other schoolboy would, I joined them, carrying the bull-roarer Bundaar had made for me. The three of them took it in turn to whirl the bullroarer round, producing roaring buzzing noises. During a lull in the whirling, Warder Neil, on sentry-go along the promenade on top of the jail wall, shouted to Bundaar to take the bullroarer and his friends too down into the far end of the horse paddock, and make his blinking noise there! Dr Hayne drove into the Police Station yard, and he and my father walked down to where we were.”

As any other schoolboy would, I joined them: The MS actually reads “like any other schoolboy it was no time before I’d joined them”. Idriess has slightly smoothed the text.

“Bungaree”, said Dad, “this is Dr Hayne, he wants you to tell him all you know about the old carved stump, and what the carvings mean, and tell the doctor all you can about the great warrior chief of your tribe who lived here long, long time ago. Will you go with the doctor now?”

Said Dad: Words added by Idriess; not in the original MS.
“My father went back to his office work. A constable went with the doctor and Bungaree. Jacob Painter wasn’t a Namoi River tribesman; he walked on the centre of the Road, keeping off the burial-ground site. My brother Ernest, who had been seated with Mr Ashby on the other side of the street amongst a clump of box-trees along Roache’s two-rail fence, came running to join us. He and some other boys told me that Mr Ashby carried a pick and shovel to dig a blackfellow out of a grave for Dr Hayne. At that time my interest centred on Dr Hayne and Bungaree – and I write now of only those things I saw with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears. Coming to the old carved stump, Dr Hayne said to Bungaree, “Why was this stump carved like this?”

My brother Ernest: In “The Death and Career”, Document 3B at MS Page 6, the original text simply says “my brother” and does not give the name “Ernest”. Moreover, there is no record of an Ernest, son of J P and Eleanor Ewing in the Births, Deaths and Marriages records of NSW. This looks to be an error by Idriess.

Bungaree put his hands on his head and said, “Stump long, long time ago was tall, live tree. Blackfellow come, carve him plenty, make all about bury ground for my tribe. That long, long ago ... Great warrior chief of Namoi River tribe, him die, and him sit down close up this stump – all blackfellows look at it, this stump, know great warrior chief sit down close up” – meaning that from the totems carved on the stump any aboriginal would know that a great warrior of the Namoi River tribe was buried nearby, and, according to the customs of this tribe, buried in a sitting position.

At this time those present at the carved stump were Doctor Hayne, Constable Lambert, Bungaree, and we four schoolboys. Mr Ashby was standing near Roache’s
fence talking to Mr S Turner, who had not long arrived. This small group gathered near the old marked stump had aroused the curiosity of half a dozen people who wended their way down from off Conadilly Street towards us.

Dr Hayne said, “Bungaree, this great warrior chief buried here, what name that one?” Bungaree put his hands over his mouth and shook his head from side to side. “Come, come,” the doctor urged, “tell him name if you know that one.” Bungaree answered, “I bin know that name – I no tell him name!” “Why not, why not?” the doctor said a bit angrily. Bungaree replied, “Bad talk, blackfeller speakin’ a name of dead alonga burial ground.”

“Oh, all right, Bungaree, I don’t want you any longer, you can go”, said the doctor. Bungaree started to walk slowly away. The doctor beckoned Mr Ashby to come to him. “Here, Ashby, dig there.”

[Excavating the Grave:]

There was a slight mound in the ground that looked like an old abandoned red ant’s nest. It stood not far away from the stump. It was the grave of the warrior chief of the Namoi River tribe. “Thud!” The pick struck the ground. Bungaree, just 30 feet [10 metres] away, turned round to see the pick thud down for the second time into the grave. He let out a pitiful wailing cry and ran, waving his hands above his head. In front of him, down past the Wesleyan Church grounds and round the corner into Broomfield Street, also ran Jacob Painter, wailing loudly. They ran on to the camp near the lagoon. There was not an aboriginal in the town or camp that night except Bundaar the police tracker. It was a month before a few returned to a new camp above the Burrell waterhole. But most of them drifted down river to Narrabri and Wee Waa.”

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*Lagoon:* i.e., Mullibah.
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_Narrabri and Wee Waa_: The original MS explains that, after a month, about half the Aborigines came back to a new camp on the river above Burrell waterhole. The other half remained at Narrabri and Wee Waa.

“Dr Hayne said, “Go carefully, Ashby, and only use the shovel. Ah, that’s the skull, give it to me.” The doctor shook the damp earth off the skull and wiped it all over with a handkerchief.

“This is a very fine skull!” he said, holding it out to the townspeople standing round the grave, for about 20 more had joined us since Mr Ashby started to dig. The doctor said, “This man had a perfect set of teeth – _none decayed_ – not even a crack in any. Of course, the _missing tooth_ in the front jaw was knocked out when this man was a youth undergoing all the endurance test of the Bora ceremonies to prove him fit to be a warrior.”…

Mr Ashby was kept going handing the doctor human bones out of the grave. The doctor kept saying the names of these bones, but said nothing else about them until he got an arm bone.

“Ah, now! This is a fine exhibit! See, it was broken here, and a very bad break it was, too. And though there was no Gunnedah Hospital here then, there was, nevertheless, a _clever surgeon doctor_ in the tribe who did his job _excellently_. It is a fine job to look at.”

_Clever surgeon doctor_: Dunbar likewise remarked the skill of Aboriginal surgeons: “Broken bones were handled _skillfully_ with a splint. The limb was straightened out, soft bark bound around it and kept in place with a _mixture of blood and beefwood gum_” (1943: 178, emphasis added). This contradicts the _Sydney Mail_: “The crude way in which it is spliced is very interesting, as showing the crude surgery of the blacks” (above: Document 1).
“Numbers of other bones were handed out of the grave to the doctor, but he never made any remark about any of them having been broken. Mr Ashby cleaned the narrow and shallow grave of all loose earth. Dr Hayne said to various men present, “It’s a strange thing there are no war weapons buried with such a great warrior chief.”

No one present at the grave-side saw any war weapon taken from the grave. Dr Hayne remained at the grave-side until Mr Ashby had scraped it clean of all loose earth, then he wrapped the skull and the broken arm in some sacking – told Mt Ashby to put all the other bones in a packing bag and tie up in a bundle and take them over to the Police Stable and leave in the forage store-room. Then to get a cross-cut saw and [take] a good thick slab of wood from top to bottom of the old carved box tree stump, making a cut across the stump above the ground grass line to get the totems of the Warrior Chief, and the stone tomahawk carved into the stump. Then to fill in and flatten the old grave down again.”

[Bundaar complains to Sergeant Ewing:]

“The doctor took the skull and broken arm away with him. The small gathering about the grave dispersed, leaving when Mr Ashby began to fill in the old grave. I went home by the stable-yard front gate and, seeing Bundaar the tracker outside the stable clean-sanding the stirrup irons, I went down to tell him about the digging up of the old grave. But Bundaar, who was generally very keen to hear any news, said, “Now, don’t tell me nothing – I won’t listen to you and won’t look at anything you got from that place”.

“Well”, I replied, “Mr Ashby is carrying most of the bones from that grave rolled up in the sacking, and he is going to put them in the forage store-room where you sleep. There he is now coming in the front gate!”
Bundaar ran for the stable door, sprang inside for the key and was out in a flash, locked the door and raced for the Post Office where my father was. He burst into the room with eyes staring from his head and cried out “Sarjun, sarjun, I clear out dreckly [sic], this minute! I no stand this, I sack myself – Government can keep my last two weeks pay. When I roll my swag I will bring you the key of the stable. I go back horse-breaking for Mr Mosely on Tibbereena.”

“Sit down, Bundaar”, ordered my father, “and tell me what’s the trouble. Have those two young constables been playing more larks up at the stable?” They had mixed brown sugar in the sand Bundaar used to polish the stirrup irons, buckles, etc, and had caused him to have a stickiness on his hands and the stable gear.

“No, sarjun, it is not them”, answered Bundaar urgently, “it is that Dr Hayne and Jim Ashby! They dig up the old warrior chief’s grave. Old Bungaree nearly die from fright – everyone in camp clear out Boggabri way. Now Jim Ashby bring a bundle of that old warrior chief’s bones for Dr Hayne to leave in forage store-room where I sleep. I leave, sarjun, can’t stand that! I no Namoi River tribe man, but I blackfellow and tonight I can’t stop in my bed in forage room along that old warrior chief’s bones. Tonight I know, him ghost sit on bundle of bones and look at me for not bury him bones in his grave now all his tribe run away frightened. And I know ghost will blame me now!”

“Light up your pipe, Bundaar,” said my father soothingly. “Don’t worry, no one is going to put the old warrior’s remains in the forage room with you. I’ll go and tell Ashby to take them away from here. And while you are waiting here sweep this room out for me.”

Down at the stable Jim Ashby was waiting for the key, but went along with my father to the gaol, and took the bones to the tower up on the wall. Bundaar the tracker was too good a man with sick or injured horses to lose, and had given proof of being able to track over stony land away from a road, or upon soft ground, or over animal pads. And father was not going
to lose him if he could help it. At a later date Dr Hayne
cleaned and packed the remains of the old warrior
chief and sent them to the Australian Museum in
College Street Sydney, and also the sawn off slab from
the old box-tree carved stump. Some years ago the old
sawn off box stump slab was still there amongst other
aboriginal tree carvings. The set up skeleton of the old
warrior may be there also.

Tower: Presumably part of the wall of the police
lock-up.

Museum/still there: As Idriess notes later, by
1953 there was no trace of the skeleton in the
museum.

So that was that [writes Idriess], as told by Stan
Ewing. Watching the digging up of the old chief’s
skeleton, the wailing despair of Bungaree, the horror of
Bundaar the tracker, the immediate fly-away reaction
of his friends the blacks, made a lasting impression on
the white boy’s mind. Years later when he reached
manhood, and the ageing Bungaree had confided to
the “sarjun”. “Me go soon!” young Ewing got the old
aboriginal and the old sergeant together. Bungaree
was now the last of his tribe. And the young man asked
his father to try hard, before it was too late to get the
story of that long dead warrior chief from old
Bungaree.

[Joe Bungaree Relates the Story to Sergeant
Ewing:]

“At first, quietly they smoked the pipe of fellowship,
of long years of understanding. Presently the old
sergeant said, “Bungaree, are you allowed now to
speak the name of that dead old warrior chief of your
tribe, that one that was buried by the carved box tree
stump?”

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Bungaree was sitting down by the sergeant's feet. Slowly he arose, took the pipe from his mouth, turned to face the west. He stood silently for a while, then turned to the sergeant.

“I can tell you here, sarjun, now. That old warrior chief of the Namoi River tribe was name of Red Kangaroo – the Red Chief!”

**RED CHIEF**: First use of this tag, which does not occur in any of the Ewing documents. John Ewing writes simply of “a headman or chief, called Red Kangaroo” (Document 3A, MS Page 2). Stan Ewing, quoting Joe Bungaree directly, refers to him as simply a “great warrior chief” (Document 3B, MS Page 3).

“Now why, Bungaree”, said the sergeant gently, “why couldn’t you tell his name to Dr Hayne that day years ago when he asked you?”

Bungaree’s old form straightened, a gleam came to his eyes.

“Because”, he answered defiantly, “we stood upon my tribal burying ground. No one of my tribe must ever speak aloud the name of the dead when standing upon the tribal burying ground, because the ghost of the dead is called back to the burying ground. Then someone in the tribe must die, to allow the ghost to go away again. In my tribe anyone was killed quick, no matter who he was, if two of the tribe heard him speak the name of the dead on the tribe’s burying ground!”

*Must ever*: It will be noticed how Bungaree’s English suddenly becomes fully standard here. The same passage in Document 3B reads thus: “It very bad thing of everyone in tribe – because ghost of the dead are called back to the ground of the bury ground. Someone in the tribe has to die to let the ghost go away off the bury ground.
In my tribe everyone was killed quick, no matter who they were, if two of their tribe heard them speak aloud the name of the dead on the tribe's bury ground. That why I no tell Dr Haynes name of old warrior chief."

“I see”, said the sergeant slowly.
“Yes. That why I no tell Dr Hayne name of old warrior chief. But Dr Hayne no understand. He get more angry. He tell me to go! Then he do very bad thing - he get Mr Ashby to dig grave of one of my tribe when I still on my tribal burying ground!”

That: Emphasis in the original.

“I see”, said the sergeant. And there was silence for a while.
“Bungaree”, asked the sergeant quietly, “did you ever hear of any great deeds, of raids or battles, in which that Red Chief led your Namoi River tribe?”

“Ah, yes!” breathed Bungaree, and he seemed to have grown in stature. “In every tribe there are men trained to remember. And so my father trained me!”

Trained to remember: This idea does not occur in the Ewing Papers. What Joe Bungaree says to Ewing in Document 3B is simply this: “‘Yes, my father told me lot of tribe-talk about what Red Kangaroo and him warriors do .... My father an’ old men in tribe tell me, an’ tell all young boy of tribe, about great warriors of the Nammoy River tribe: all about wars ...’.”

Of course the detailed tapestry of the tales does show that Bungaree had an excellent memory. But whether he was specifically
trained in this by his father it is impossible to say.

“And thus Bungaree, with feelings and memory unleashed, started on his long, continuous story, a goodly feat of memory. As much of it as I could [I] have used, almost just as Sergeant Ewing’s son years ago wrote it down from the mouth of old Bungaree.

[Idriess’ Other Sources:]

“With but slight deviations to help make the story more plain every here and there, this book is, in the main, practically word for word as handed down by the legend-memory of the Gunn-e-darr tribe. I have had help from a little book, Kamilaroi and Other Australian Languages, by the Rev. William Ridley, MA, published in Sydney in 1875.”

_Gunn-e-darr:_ Ewing’s spelling.

“Ridley, way back in the eighteen-fifties, was working among the _then numerous_ aboriginal tribes along the Namoi, Barwon and other New South Wales Rivers. Later he worked over the Liverpool Plains, along the Barwon, Darling, Macintyre, Moonie, Condamine and Bundarra. In 1871 he again visited the Barwon and Namoi on behalf of the Government to obtain further information of the Kamilaroi tribes, their languages, traditions, songs, habits and manners, institutions and laws.”

_Then numerous:_ In truth, Ridley found the Gamil’raay people of the Namoi basin already “much reduced”. Whereas earlier they had
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numbered in the thousands, by 1855 they numbered only in the hundreds. 325

“And the information in this little book, painstakingly complied from the aboriginals themselves while many of the Kamilaroi were still in their wild state, was one of those lucky finds. It has helped me to relieve slightly the “straight-out” story of old Bungaree, confined as it is mostly to jealousies, raids, fears, hunting and fighting.

I have also been glad to refer, for reasons of clarity upon several subjects, to several short articles luckily preserved from the pens of two old-timers, W A Squire[s] 326 and Rev C C Greenway.

Names of aboriginal characters mentioned are nearly all as given by Bungaree. Where he, or Stan Ewing who took down his story, missed out a name, I have taken an appropriate name from Ridley’s vocabulary of the Kamilaroi, strictly, in so far as I was able, fitting the name to the character’s totem.

Some of the names given by Bungaree are those of Jerrabri, war chief of the Gunn-e-darr tribe, Red Kangaroo’s uncle Tulumi, the warriors Buradella, Boobuk, and Kuribri, Red Kangaroo’s friend Giluram, the boys Gilwan and Tuki, the girls Weetah, Nareen and Naroo, Kulki of the Coonabarabran tribe, Ilpara of the Goonoo Goonoo, Mooti of the Manellae and Kibbi of the Bundarra.”

Tulumi and Giluram: These names do not occur in the documents available to me. Possibly Idriess found them in the other papers that have

325 Ridley 1855 in Lang 1864. See the discussion of population decline in my Kamilaroi Lands (O’Rourke 1997). Also the Chronology in the introduction to this book.

326 A copy of the booklet by Squire is held by the National Library of Australia (MO’R). For Ridley’s many works, see the Bibliography.
since been misplaced or lost. (‘Tulumi’ looks like *Dhuluumay*, meaning ‘thunder’.)

*Boys:* Gilwan was already married, so hardly a boy.

*Tuki:* More correctly Tukki, i.e. *Thagaay* or *Dhagaay*, meaning Yellowbelly Fish or Golden Perch, his totem name.

Totems were inherited from one’s mother. Thus the fact his sister’s totem was different (*Wiidhaa* or *Weetah*, ‘bowerbird’) would mean that they had different mothers but the same father.

“The accounts of the strength of tribes and of their losses in raids and fights are as given by Bungaree. The losses given here will surprise many people. In our very incomplete knowledge of the aboriginal, a straight-out fight is believed to mean a shower of spears until a man is killed or wounded, when the fight is over. In general, this is correct. But before the whites came, tribes here and there over the continent were again and again wiped out. The fighting and losses then must have been far more severe than has generally come to the later knowledge of the whites. In his story I have given Bungaree’s own figures. All through his long narrative he was explicit in figures, to every man, woman and child, and their ages, in a tribe. And his account of the various fightings and losses are exactly as he gave them to Sergeant Ewing and his sons.”

Wiped out: Certainly warfare between Aboriginal bands was sometimes severe.\(^{327}\)

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\(^{327}\) See for example Buckley/Morgan 1852; Warner 1937/1958; also Berndt & Berndt 1996: 358.
Deborah Rose has hypothesised that the intensity of warfare was related to regional population densities. Warfare was possibly more intense, she thinks, where the population was relatively dense, for instance in Arnhem Land and along the Murray River, but rare or even unknown in less populated areas such as the Western Desert. R G Kimber has taken a different view, proposing that major conflicts were by no means unknown in Central Australia. If small scale conflict was the norm in the arid regions, there are also reliable reports of large scale battles.

Either way, the historical record contains nothing to suggest that whole bands would frequently wipe each other out. Even Warner, who emphasises the occasional savagery of Aboriginal war, allows only for the rare wiping-out of a hearth-group or small band. When he says that “if a camp has been ambushed and the men all killed in a general tribal war, the women and children are taken by the conquerors”, it is clear that he means all the men in a small camp, and that such an event was not common.⁴³⁸

“Red Kangaroo’s speech before the chief, Jerrabri, and the tribe complaining of the injustices of the council of the elders, is practically as given in Bungaree’s own words, as also is his speech on his return with his captive girls, Naroo and Nareen. The capture and escape back to the tribe are told in Bungaree’s own words also. So is the duel with Jerrabri, and other duels.”

Council of the elders: In my opinion (there are contrary opinions), it was because the community deliberated as a group, and the older men spoke more than the rest, that it often appeared there was a (male) council of elders. In truth, I believe, there was no formal council with a fixed membership.

“The capture of the women and the use of the strangling cord were according to custom, and are set down as Bungaree described them. The spying by the girl Weetah, and her little brother Tuki, on the enemy scouts and the fighting along the Porcupine Ridges and the Wallaby Trap also follow Bungaree’s account. The Red Chief’s address to the discontented guards and the instructions to the lads who were to creep to the Secret Camp are in Bungaree’s own words.

The little love story of Giluram and Weetah is fact, though enlarged by me, the subject obviously being considered as of little account by Bungaree, except for convenient mention here and there. To many of us it would come as a surprise to be told that the [A]boriginal man and wife, young fellow and girl, can “love” more or less in the sense of the term as we use it.

The wild aboriginal man or woman can be as fiercely jealous, faithful or unfaithful, can ‘put up with it’ or simply ‘just not care’, as we can. In my wandering days in the far north I’ve known young couples in the ‘hot-house’ stage, who, in utter despair at the tribal laws that would hold them apart forever, made a run for it in the face of almost certain death just to snatch a few precious hours of love into eternity.

It may surprise some readers, too, that wild Australian aboriginals, among the last Stone Age men remaining upon earth, should put into words the sentiments “I love you” (“kurridu zinundun inda”) and “You are my love” (“Da zinda gulirdul”). In this case the actual aboriginal words used have been taken
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down from tribesmen of the Kamilaroi, in his translation of the language.”

**Actual Aboriginal words:** In fact the Z sound does not occur in Australian languages. Idriess failed to notice that Ridley (1873) used z simply as a convenient symbol for the ‘ng’ sound: the “velar nasal” consonant, as in English ‘sing’. Thus zinundun is actually nginundun or more probably nginunha ‘you, singular, objective case’. Likewise ‘zinda’ should be nginda (you, singular, ergative case).

**Translation:** Literally, the statement ‘da nginda gulirdul’ translates as “you [nginda] are somewhat spouse-like [guliirrhul: a little wife-like] (to me)” (Ridley 1875).

“Ideas of Baia-me, too, and of the Bora have been taken from this source. Although, in my experience, belief in the Great Spirit, and the meaning and action of the Bora ceremonies are practically the same all over Australia, here I have stuck to the conscientious though incomplete account of the man who put these beliefs of the Kamilaroi on paper, from the lips of the Kamilaroi themselves.”

**Baia-me:** The high god of Aboriginal NSW, whose voice was thunder. The name rhymes with English "high hummer". Pronounced with stress on the first syllable. Preferred spelling: Baayama.

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POSTSCRIPT [by Idriess]

As mentioned above, Stan Ewing and several of the old hands refer to the Red Chief’s skeleton and part of the carved burial tree as having been forwarded to the Museum in Sydney. My publishers and I were anxious to verify this [. . .]. We asked the Australian Museum to if it would be possible to make a search.

Under considerable difficulties a search was made, but unfortunately it yielded no trace of the skeleton of the Red Chief. But the officials got very close [. . .]. Here is an extract from the report the Australian Museum officials forwarded to my publishers:

“The tree mentioned by Mr Idriess is listed in a Memoir [by Etheridge on the carved trees of NSW as 48 in the Taphoglyphs [burial carvings], and the following quotation is given at p.50:

“[Tree number] 48. Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains. The ‘City of the Dry Plains’ or the ‘Home of the Fatherless and Motherless’ as the name is said to imply in the Kamilaroi dialect. [The author, Etheridge, then proceeds to quote from The Sydney Mail article as above.] [. . .] “

Etheridge did not illustrate this tree [i.e., the stump that marked Red Kangaroo’s grave] but he figured several others from the Gunnedah district in plate viii, fig.4 and pl. xxxvi, figs 2-3, and describes their situation on pages 49 and 50.” [Text ends.]

No trace of the skeleton: As noted elsewhere, nor does either of the two Sydney University museums hold the remains.
Appendix 1: Outline of Idriess’s Novella “The Red Chief” (1953)

Chapter 1. “The Warrior Lad”:
Red Kangaroo (RK hereafter) is introduced as a shrewd-thinking teenager. A warrior in training, he challenges anyone and everyone to fight him for practice. The self-serving chief Jerrabri responds, and deviously tries to kill RK but fails.

2. “An Uneasy Camp”:
RK gains a reputation for disagreeing with Jerrabri and the "tribal council", while at the same time becoming something of a hero to the rest of the Gunnedah community. Influenced by RK, the young men complain that there are no unmarried women left for them to marry.

3. “The Life of Stone Age Man”:
One morning, RK leads other youths out to Nobby Rock for look-out duty. The rest of the camp wakes and prepares to go on a day’s gathering and hunting. Burradella trains a group of boys aged 10-14. Nundoba the evil “witchdoctor” is introduced into the story.

4. “The Tribe Trains its Future Warriors”:
Burradella trains the boys including Gilwan. Gilwan kills some ducks.

5. “The Lone Look-Out”:
RK and the other boys reach Nobby Rock. Idriess explains the status of the Kamilaroi as the second most wide-spread tribal network in NSW, and imagines RK as wishing they would unite.

6. “Every Woman Teaches while She Hunts”:
The women, girls and younger boys head out in search of food. Weetah and her younger brother Tuki [sic: Thagaay] are introduced. Weetah teaches Tuki how to track possums. Despite the warnings about the danger
of enemy raiders, they fall behind. Nevertheless the whole party returns safely to camp at Gunnedah. A night’s dancing follows, in which RK and Giluram take the lead. Weetah tells Giluram she loves him.

RK reflects on how Jerrabri and the other elders have distorted the law. By taking all of the younger women as their wives, they have disadvantaged the community, which is shrinking. Burradella warns RK to be careful what he says.

RK examines his grandfather’s shield and discovers he can turn it into an offensive throat-cutting weapon by sharpening one end.

8. “Man Must Find Food to Live”:
Description of gunyahs and life in camp at Gunnedah. Weetah teaches Tuki/Thagaay and other younger children how to track animals.

By his kindness to all, RK becomes popular with everyone except the self-serving group of elders. He leaves for Tambar Springs to join up there with various friends, including Giluram, who are on a hunting expedition. At about the half-way mark, he sees three enemy raiders from Terry Hie Hie preparing to capture several young Gunnedah women. He kills two of the raiders using his new sharp-shield weapon. Having counted the tracks of 26 raiders from Terry Hie Hie, all the Gunnedah people retreat home. Fortunately the enemy fails to follow up and does not attack.

10. “The Troubles of Boobuk”:
RK spends a sleepless night worrying about Gunnedah’s vulnerability. The rest of the chapter deals humorously with how Boobuk is dominated by his harridan wife.

11. “The Deadly Black Snake”:
The Gunnedah people perform a newly composed corroboree. Burradella warns RK not to be outspoken, explaining that the true power behind Jerrabri’s group is the “witchdoctor” Nundoba [a name meaning ‘black snake’]. RK resolves to talk less and think more.

12. “The Vengeance Party”: Terry Hie Hie raiders attack a group of Gunnedah men, killing three. A vengeance party is selected, to be led by Burradella, which excludes RK. RK fears his friend has been chosen in the hope that he will be killed and so removed as a force opposing Jerrabri’s group. Burradella succeeds in punishing the Terry Hie Hie men. But he comes home wounded, a spear-head embedded in his thigh.

13. “The False Alarm”: The Gunnedah people face threats from neighbouring communities. They resolve that if trouble comes they will take refuge in their secret camp near Porcupine Ridge. Enemies set off a bushfire, but this turns out to be a false alarm. RK reflects on the fading strength of the Gunnedah people.

14. “The Cord”: RK weaves cords from human hair and possum fur for a special purpose only he knows. The next morning he is missing from the camp.

15. “He Treads Alone in Enemy Country”: RK is absent for seven nights. The camp fears he has been killed. In fact he has travelled to the Warrumbungles, where he spies on the camps of the Coonabarabran people.

16. “The Menace”: RK is watching a large camp of the Coonabarabran people. The women go along a creek fishing. When two young women fall behind, RK prepares to capture them.
17. "Woman and the Club":
As he watches, RK admires the beauty of the two young women. They are hunting for duck eggs. He waits. They converse, and we learn that one is named Nareen. Then RK strikes with his club. He ties and gags them and carries them to a nearby cave.

18. "The Master":
RK tells Nareen and Naroo “you are to be my wives”. He brings out the special cord. They refuse to cooperate, but secretly their anger pleases him (because it shows their strong spirit). He forces them to walk ahead. After proceeding some distance in the direction of Gunnedah, he takes them to another cave.

19. "Runaways in the Night":
They proceed onward, RK having to force the two women. RK briefly leaves them while he scouts back in search of pursuers, but finds no one.

20. "The Fight":
RK kills a wallaroo for them to eat. Suddenly smoke signals appear behind and in front of them. Nareen and Naroo ask RK to leave off their gags. Two Coonabarabran men appear. RK kills them both, the younger man with a spear and the older man with his sharp-ended shield.

21. "Red Kangaroo Returns Home":
They proceed to the Mullailey Plains. Nareen and Naroo explain that they did not cry out when seeing their tribesmen because they now accepted RK as their husband. They tell RK that the older man was Kulki, "best and bravest" of the Coonabarabran men. They reach Gunnedah.

22. The Challenge":
The elders summon RK. He accuses them of ignoring ancient law. This has forced him to seek elsewhere for wives. Jerrabri insists that RK take Jerrabri’s oldest wife
in return for Nareen. Nareen resists, and when Jerrabri physically threatens her, RK challenges him to a duel.

23. “The Duel”:
The whole Gunnedah community watches. The duel is hard-fought. Finally RK uses his sharp-edged shield to slashing Jerrabri’s throat, and the chief dies. RK gives the younger widows of Jerrabri to the young men aligned with him. RK is asked to become war-chief, but declines.

RK leads a night-hunt of wallabies on Porcupine Ridge. They catch them in a natural U-shaped clearing known as ‘the Wallaby Trap’.

After two years, RK becomes war-chief. He restores the former laws of marriage. Some 20 wives who are improperly married to older husbands are taken from them and given to younger men. He further proposes to build up the Gunnedah community by stealing wives from other groups.

The Gunnedah people grow in strength, and begin to prevail in fights with their neighbours. This will soon precipitate an emergency. For the present, however, the young men are complaining about having to guard women and children and not being allowed to go with RK on a hunting expedition. Their wives grumble too. RK rebukes them. The hunt proceeds on Breeza Plains.

27. “The Lost Dilly-Bag”:
The next morning the women and children go out gathering food under the strict guard of Burradella. In the afternoon, as they return, Weetah realises she has left behind her dilly-bag. Going back with her brother Tuki, she sees foreign warriors, raiders from Cassilis. Weetah hides, to spy on the raiders, and sends Tuki back to warn the Gunnedah guards.
28. “Abandon Camp”:
The Cassilis warriors find Weetah’s dilly-bag. Meanwhile Tuki reaches Burradella and warns him. Burradella sends a small party under Giluram to go to Weetah’s aid and orders that a smoke signal be sent up to warn RK. He tells the women and children to pretend they are headed east for the Mooki River but in fact to turn south and go to the secret camp.

29. “Danger Comes Fast”:
Weetah and Giluram reach the secret camp. A further signal is sent to RK. As sunset approaches, 60 Cassilis warriors appear, but they find the Gunnedah main-camp abandoned. Burradella is informed that a signal has been received saying RK is returning.

30. “The Tribe in Desperate Straits”:
Having seen the signals, RK decides to return. He signals in turn to the main party under Boobuk, far out on the Breeza Plains, telling them to follow behind. (As it turns out, they fail to see his signal, an accident that will have a happy result.) When RK reaches the secret camp he listens to Tuki and Weetah relate what has happened. Night falls. A number of Gunnedah boys are sent down to spy on the camp of Cassilis warriors.

RK worries that Boobuk may not have seen his signal. Without Boobuk’s party the Gunnedah men will not be strong enough to deal with the large number of Cassilis enemies. As morning dawns, the boys sent to scout on the Cassilis men report back. RK learns that the Cassilis men have dispatched their own scouts. Soon they will realise from foot-prints where the Gunnedah people are hidden and how weak in numbers they are. Giving thought to what might be done, RK thinks of luring the Cassilis men into the Wallaby Trap. They can be ambushed there like wallabies.

32. “The Trap is Baited”: 
They set up the ambush. The plan is to hide the men in the scrub on the edges of the clearing while a few women and children occupy the centre of the clearing as decoys. But there are only 35 Gunnedah men to face 60 Cassilis men. Or rather, 81, for the Gunnedah spies have reported that an extra 21 Cassilis warriors have arrived.

33. “The Death Trap”: Boobuk’s hunting party on Breeza Plains is heading back. They can see the faint light of fires at Gunnedah but do not know they are the camp fires of the enemy. Believing all is well, they decide to camp beside the Mooki, intending to go in to Gunnedah in the morning. Meanwhile the Cassilis scouts detect fire-lights within the Wallaby Trap and of course fail to realise it is a trap. As dawn breaks, the main force of Cassilis warriors (60 men) moves towards the mouth of the clearing. A smaller force (21 men) circles around to the rear to block any retreat by the Gunnedah people. The main force enters the clearing and is cut down by RK’s men. The surviving Cassilis men pull back to the site of the main Gunnedah camp only to be confronted and attacked by Boobuk’s men who have fortuitously arrived from the Mooki. Boobuk’s party kills several; the rest flee in the direction of Cassilis.

34. “Friends, My Tribal Lands, Farewell”: RK decides to pursue the survivors and to attack their home-base at Cassilis. The Gunnedah men catch up with the retreating enemy survivors near Black Jack Mountain and kill a further 11 men. A few escape, but RK decides to ignore them and marches straight to Cassilis. As he proceeds, it happens that the Gunnedah men catch up with this group and they kill a few more. Proceeding on to Cassilis, the Gunnedah men surprise and capture the enemy home-camp. They seize women and children and take them to Gunnedah to become members of the Gunnedah tribe.

35. “The Red Chief”: 440
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The final chapter sketches the future career of RK: how he will defeat other enemies and will build up the tribe of Gunnedah. The expedition into New England to fight the Kingstown-Bundarra men is briefly described. Later in life, RK dies and is buried at Gunnedah beneath a large box tree.
Appendix 2: The Age of Carved Trees

It is interesting to see whether estimates of the age of trees can shed any light on the stated date of Red Kangaroo’s interment.

1. Introduction

The carved burial tree beside Red Kangaroo’s grave was a species of box-tree, “box” meaning a sub-group of rough-barked trees within genus Eucalyptus. There are many such species, some of the better known being yellow box, *Eucalyptus melliodora*; bimble box, *E. populnea*; and white box, *E. albens*.

When Sam Turner saw it in 1865, the burial tree was reduced to a stump that “had weathered and blown down and [was] rotted and eaten to a shell by white ants. Some of the oldest residents remembered the box-tree stump when it was all of five feet higher. But [by 1865] it had rotted off or blown off in a windy time years ago”. The extent of the carved area was “20 ft [nearly seven metres] high when it was originally carved” (Document 3B, MS Page 2).

In other words, it seems that the tree died some time in the first half of the 1800s. Its age when it was carved is a question we will come to presently.

2. The Age of Specific Trees

John Oxley in 1817 was the first to report the existence of graves with carved trees in inland NSW. Travelling near the Lachlan River on 29 July 1817, his exploring party came upon a single grave located between two carved cypress trees (*Callitris* species).

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Yellow box can grow quite tall (30m) while white box and grey box may reach 25m (Boland et al. 1984). Bimble box (*E. populnea*) and grey box (*E. woollsiana*) were often found in association with *Dodonaea viscosa*, the “Giant Hop Bush” which grew profusely at Gunnedah.
The grave was “apparently of recent construction”. When the site was rediscovered or relocated in 1913, one tree survived in good condition. The other had decayed to a stump with only a fragment of the carving remaining.\textsuperscript{331}

In other words, in the course of a \textit{century}, some cypress trees would die and decay, while others would still survive.

Turning to box trees (\textit{Eucalyptus}), we find Etheridge quoting N W Thomas’s guesstimate of “at least 150 years old” for the age of a burial tree near Dubbo, based on “the growth of (its) sapwood”. In other words, Thomas was proposing that this tree had been carved in the mid 1700s, perhaps even before 1750.\textsuperscript{332}

3. \textbf{Stone versus Steel}

We know from the botanist Cunningham and the surveyor Mitchell that steel hatchets (“tomahawks”) were being traded into Aboriginal north-central NSW in the period 1827-31, ahead of the frontier of white settlement. Probably stone hatchets were still more common in 1831.\textsuperscript{333}

About two-thirds of the carved trees surveyed by Etheridge were carved with steel implements: only one-third had been shaped with stone implements. If we assume that steel hatchets were the preferred instrument by 1830, then it follows that a good number of the stone-carved trees recorded by Etheridge dated from before 1830.\textsuperscript{334} In other words, the trees carved with stone hatchets were probably all at least 88 years.

\textsuperscript{331} Etheridge 1918; Bell & Wakelin-King 1985: 304. The good tree was afterwards (after 1913) removed to the Australian Museum: McCarthy 1940: 161.

\textsuperscript{332} Etheridge 1918: 35.

\textsuperscript{333} Strictly speaking, a hatchet can be used in one hand, while an axe is a larger implement requiring two hands. But hatchets are frequently called “axes”. “Tomahawk” is also used, but inappropriately, because hatchets were tools, not weapons. Cunningham found \textit{both} stone \textit{and} steel hatchets in use near Boggabri in 1827. Mitchell noted trees felled with steel hatchets to the north-east of Narrabri in 1831.
old when Etheridge published his monograph in 1918, and we may surmise that quite a few were 100 years old or more.

It also follows that the 50 or more carved trees surviving in situ today - nearly all are box-trees cut with steel hatchets - could now be up to 170 years old (2004 less 1834 = 170). Of course they would have grown for tens of years before being carved, and 190 years old would be more correct. To be conservative, we might use a figure of (say) 150 years old.

In short, some box trees will have died after about 150-160 years, but some will survive beyond that age.

<table>
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<th>Source; comments</th>
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<td>Over 100 years old:</td>
<td>Seedling in 1780? – Oxley’s carved cypress tree: carved c.1817; died after 1913: longevity over 135 years.</td>
<td>Oxley. If we assume the tree was at least 27 years old when carved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150+ years:</td>
<td>Carved eucalypt near Dubbo.</td>
<td>Thomas’s guesstimate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>158-311 years:</td>
<td>“The ages of a limited number of very old (‘senescing’) trees in Damp Forest in one part of the study area were determined by counting tree rings. The oldest of these senescing trees was found to be</td>
<td>“What is Old Growth Forest and how is it being Managed in Victoria?” at <a href="http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenfor.nsf/childdocs">http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenfor.nsf/childdocs</a> [accessed July 2004].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etheridge 1918: 14. The carvings were often intricate and the work laborious. As the work was a prestigious task, it is almost certain that steel hatchets would have been used for carving burial trees as soon as they became available.

Fifty or more: a survey in 1979-80 found “78” trees surviving on their original sites in NSW (Bell & Wakelin-King 1985: 302). McCarthy 1940: 166 notes that altogether over 600 carved trees were recorded, and at that time the Australian Museum (Sydney) held over 50. In other words, over 400 have been lost due to natural and human factors - bushfires, land clearing and of course vandalism.
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between 236 and 311 years. Trees considered to be ‘mature’ but not senescing were aged between 158 and 171 years.”

Up to 200 years: A few trees with carvings made using stone tools that still survive in 2004. In central NSW steel tomahawks replaced stone hatchets during the 1830s.

200-400 years: Informal guesstimates for the maximum longevity of eucalypts in general. Curran and Benson (see footnotes).

275 years: “Oldest living tree in Victoria”. Informal guesstimate (see in footnotes).

400, 460 years: Informal estimates for certain very long-lived species of eucalypts. Tasmanian and coastal NSW eucalypts (see sources in footnotes).

4. Using the Age of Box Trees Generally

Unfortunately it seems that no studies have been done on the longevity of box trees in general. A major problem is that, because of rotting inner cores and fire damage, the counting of tree rings to deduce age (“dendrochronology”) usually fails with Eucalypts.336

As noted, Document 3D states that RK’s burial tree may have been only 20 feet (six metres) high when carved, which is to say, still quite young. Alternatively, Pers. comm. Tim Curran, University of New England, and John Benson Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 2002. The problem of rotted cores is also noted in Hickey et al. (1999), “Fire history [in Tasmania]”, Australian Forestry 62 (1), 66-71. Cf also Argent, R. M., McMahon, T. A., Bowler, J. M. & Finlayson, B. L. (2004), The Dendroecological Potential of Eucalyptus Camaldulensis Dehnhardt (River Red Gum) from the Barmah Forest, Victoria, Australian Geographical Studies 42 (1), 89-102.

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if 20 feet was just the length of the carved area, then its total height when the carving was done may have been over 40 feet (12+ metres). Yellow boxes can grow to 30 metres. So quite possibly the tree chosen for RK’s grave-maker was not especially large or especially old.

It had decayed by 1865, "leaving only a big stump four feet high and 20 inches [50 cm] in diameter and having a four inch diameter pipe in its centre going down to roots". A diameter of 50 cm would suggest that it grew to be reasonably large and old enough for a box tree.

A number of botanists I consulted hazarded the guess that Eucalypts "might" live for as long as 400 years at an extreme. Putting this into conservative terms, many Eucalypts will live for over 200 years and some to over 300 years.

If we suppose that RK's burial tree was alive for 200 years, then we have the following scenario: it was a seedling in 1640; grew for say 50 years before being carved at the time of RK's death (in say 1690); then lived for another 150 years before dying in say 1840; and 25 years later it was rotting and half fallen (1865). Alternatively, if we imagine the tree living for 300 years, we have: seedling in 1540, carved in 1590; lived on until 1840, and, after dying, had rotted by 1865.

5. Conclusion

It cannot be ruled out, then, that Red Kangaroo may have lived and died much earlier than the claimed date of "1745". But this tells us very little. That we cannot

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337 Boland et al. 1984.
338 Pers. comm. Curran and Benson 2002. The trees believed (absent dendrochronology) to be the oldest in Australia include: (1) a stand of Tasmanian eucalypt species up to "460" years old; (2) a specific Flooded Gum tree, *Eucalyptus grandis*, in Bulahdelah State Forest, NSW, considered the tallest extant tree in NSW and aged perhaps "400" years; and (3) one in Victoria, species not noted, said to be the oldest tree in NE Victoria, at about 275 years (www.rfa.gov.au and www.nre.vic.gov.au, accessed November 2002).
rule out this possibility is not positive evidence for an earlier date.

All that can be said is that the reporter’s (or Dr Haynes’) estimate of “1745” is not inconsistent with what we know about the life-spans of box-trees. But, if we had no other information, and were using only the supposed longevity of a typical large box tree, then we would probably place the time of RK’s death before 1700.
APPENDIX 3: MORE ON SEMI-EVERGREEN VINE THICKET

As noted in the commentary to Document 3B (see under MS Page 15), the canopy on parts of Porcupine Hill or Ridge was (and is) so dense as to justify being called ‘semi-evergreen vine thicket’ (‘SEVT’). There is a particularly dense - though very small - stand of SEVT on the eastern slopes immediately below a sandstone cave known locally as ‘Red Chief Cave’.

SEVT is sometimes, although not exclusively, found on generally fire-free sites, e.g. stony rises (such as the slopes of Porcupine and Black Hill). In the case of Porcupine Hill, the botanist Tim Curran tells me the largest surviving stand of SEVT occurs on the northern slope of the hill where there are many large rocks breaking up the understorey. A rocky outcrop runs down the eastern edge of the stand, similarly offering protection from fire.

We do not know how extensive this so-called “dry rainforest” was in pre-settlement days. At a guess, however, it covered much more of the hill than it does today. It is also likely that it extended down the foot-slopes, given that some large individuals of SEVT species can still be found at the base of the northern face. SEVT species also exists on several of the scattered knolls that run off the north-east slope of Porcupine Ridge. Furthermore, considerable patches of SEVT currently occupy such landscape positions (foot slope) to the north of Narrabri.

Nowadays the heavy thicket (SEVT) is patchily distributed on both the northern and eastern slopes of the ridge.

The main tree species found in the SEVT on Porcupine Hill are: *Notelaea microcarpa* (native olive), *Geijera parviflora* (wilga), *Ehretia membranifolia* (peach bush), and *Alphitonia excelsa* (red ash). As the name vine thicket implies, there are also vines: on Porcupine
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these include *Pandorea pandorana* (wonga wonga vine) and *Parsonsia eucalyptophylla* (gargaloo).\(^\text{339}\)

Appendix 4: Smoke Signals?

There is no agreement on how much or even whether Aborigines used smoke for signalling. At one extreme, it is denied that Aborigines used smoke for signalling. A less extreme position is that they used smoke to send pre-arranged messages. The third position is that there was a fixed code or vocabulary able to convey at least simple messages and perhaps quite complex statements.

Let us look at each of these propositions in turn.

1. No signals?

Donald Thomson (1956) argues, based on his experiences in Cape York Peninsula and Arnhem Land in the 1930s, that signalling with smoke was unknown in Aboriginal Australia.

It is a white man's myth, he proposes, that Aborigines used "a kind of morse code". He found that, although they could see the smoke from their compatriots' fires a long way off, his Aboriginal guides were quite unable to make contact by signalling. To rejoin their people they were forced to find their kinsmen's foot-tracks and follow them to their camps.

If so, there is the problem of explaining how Aborigines were so often able to know in some detail what was happening among their countrymen many kilometres distant. Thomson suggests that they were making simple deductions based on known seasonal and cultural patterns.

Knowing intimately the geographical conditions and natural history of her country, an Aborigine was able to "know" what her countrymen would be doing, because they tended to be doing similar things in certain similar places at a particular time. "They are hunting wallabies", she would say, knowing that if it was autumn in the hills then the people there were highly likely to be looking for wallabies. The accuracy of such a statement, confirmed later, so amazed the whites (says Thomson) that they attributed to Aborigines a
power of communicating with smoke. This was a natural conclusion, he proposes, because the whites were already deeply impressed by the ability of Aborigines to follow animal tracks where the whites could see nothing.

2. \textbf{Just confirmation?}

An intermediate position is that smoke was indeed used for signalling, but only if the two parties had already arranged what lighting a fire would mean. "If you see our smoke it will mean we have found kangaroos." Or perhaps they might agree to use two kinds of smoke, dark smoke (say) to mean "found" and light smoke to indicate "not found".

In the older literature on south-east Australia, A W Howitt proposes that messages were always pre-arranged. He cites Charles Naseby as asserting this was the case among the southern Kamilaroi. R A Gould reports the same for the Western Desert in the 1960s.

Writing generally of Australia, S A Würm has said that "the smoke signals do not appear to convey detailed messages in coded form but are [sic: used to be] used to attract attention for certain purposes and to serve \textit{as a guide}. For instance, visitors approaching a camp send smoke signals \textit{to betray} their presence and friendly intentions, hunters \textit{to direct} their family or local group to killed game, and men establishing a campsite \textit{to inform} food-gathering women of the camp. They are also used in ceremonial life and tribal gatherings \textit{to signal} the approach of groups, and to constitute \textit{a call} for groups in initiation ceremonies".\footnote{Howitt 1904: 720 ff; Gould 1971; and Würm 1983 in the Grolier Society’s \textit{Australian Encyclopaedia}, vol. 1, p.177, emphasis added.}

A possible instance of signalling to one’s kinsmen of the approach of outsiders is seen in Major Mitchell’s account of his first expedition into Kamilaroi country in 1831-32.

On the return journey, travelling back along a line from Mungindi to Narrabri, Mitchell made a radical
detour from his line of march. He wanted to find and inspect the site near Gurley [south-east of Moree] where earlier a Kamilaroi band had killed two members of a back-up party travelling behind the main party bringing extra supplies. This involved Mitchell turning north-east for a detour of some 30 kilometres.

Reaching Gurley, he found and buried the bodies. Then, as his party returned, they saw a series of smokes arise in a line along the base of the Nandewar Mountains:

a dense column of smoke arose from Mt Frazer [present-day Haystack Mountain] and subsequently other smokes arose extending in telegraphic line far to the south along the base of the mountains [south from his perspective: the western foothills of the Nandewars] ... communicating [as he supposed] to the natives who might be upon our route homeward, the tidings of our return.341

3. Simple semantic signals?

Others have argued that Aborigines assigned simple, standard meanings to a just few broad types of smoke: light versus dark smoke; straight-up plumes versus puffs or spirals; and so on.

There are reports, for example, of semantic systems being used in Central Australia. The Waramanga people are said to have used spiral coils of pale smoke to indicate “animal prey+come to me” (“All about, come quick, plenty of kangaroos”). Various techniques and instruments were used to produce a variety of smoke-shapes. For example: green or damp material for dark smoke; sheets of bark to direct the smoke; animals skins to create whirling shapes; animal-skin bags to capture puffs; and so on.

341 Mitchell 1839: 129; discussed in O’Rourke Raw Possum 1995: 44. Mitchell also reported his movements being monitored and apparently reported by smoke signals on the Darling River in 1835.
The Waramanga messages listed by A T Magarey were mostly informational, conveying good news or bad news. And they usually related to people, for example “strangers have been sighted” or “someone has died”. He cites relatively few messages concerned with action or requests, e.g. “come to me/don’t come to me/stay put”. \(^{342}\)

Magarey even claims that there were fixed signals signifying “we are bringing boys for initiation” or “we are travelling to an initiation ceremony”. This seems unlikely on first principles. After all, initiations were not held very frequently (only once every two or three years). One might guess that the message “we are bringing boys for initiation” was actually pre-arranged, serving to confirm a message that had previously been conveyed face-to-face.

Geoffrey Blainey, citing McLaren’s reports from Cape York Peninsula, proposes that signals were probably more sophisticated on the coast. McLaren claimed to have first heard of the outbreak of the First World War from Aborigines who said they had received the message by smoke signal.\(^ {343}\) [One wonders, however, how exactly “Germany” was rendered!]

4. Complex Messages?

On the evidence of the Ewing Papers, the Gunnedah people - and by extension other Kamilaroi groups, perhaps indeed all Aborigines in the Murray-Darling basin - were able to do much more than the Central Australians. It is claimed that the Kamilaroi could send messages bearing quite complex meanings. They used big balls of smoke, small balls, variously in black, white and bluish smoke. Dark smoke was produced with wetted grass (see Document 3C at MS Page 8).

If so, then the code or vocabulary might have been relatively complex. Consider for example the message “Enemies – Cassilis tribe – four been seen on river – looks like a war party is camped close” (Document 3C,

\(^{342}\) Magary 1893.

This contains a minimum of four elements or ideas: i. “Enemy or enemy war-party”; ii. “Cassilis”; iii. “Four men”; and iv. “Close/camped close” (“close” implying ‘on the river’). Or three elements, if “Cassilis” by definition meant “enemy”. Each idea or component would have needed its own distinct smoke-shape or smoke-type.

Conclusion

For Thomson to be right, the Aborigines in central Australia and NSW must have been lying. Or, more charitably, faced with white men fixed in an erroneous belief about what Aborigines could do, they chose to humour them (“leg pulling”). It may be significant that Thomson’s area of fieldwork, Arnhem Land and Cape York Peninsula, is in many places densely forested, while Central Australia and inland NSW are often flat country with open woodland or low shrubland.

On first principles, one might query whether smoke could convey the complex messages suggested in the text. Moreover, on a windy day, smoke would be of little use, preventing the deployment of big balls of smoke, small balls, variously in black, white and bluish smoke, etc.

Faced with some evidence in favour, and some evidence against, we can suggest an "on balance" conclusion, and I think that the evidence for some sort of signalling outweighs the evidence against.

We have seen how the arithmetical or computational capabilities of Aborigines have been wrongly underestimated. If they could count, then I think that Aborigines could also have devised at least a simple code of smoke messages. Indeed I am prepared to accept that the Kamilaroi were able (in the right weather conditions) to send a relatively large number of coded signals. But I doubt that the shape of smoke has enough potential variations for the Kamilaroi to have had a smoke-symbol for, say, many numerals (as in “four been seen on creek”).
Let us imagine, however, that there were as many as, say, 20-30 fixed meanings attached to different smoke-shapes. This would surely have included signifiers for “us” versus “them” (friends versus enemies); for “a long way off” versus “close/near me” (“near me” implying ‘on my river/the Namoi’); and for (say) the four cardinal directions (with “south” implying from Cassilis).

Thus, just a three-part signal would have been enough to convey “[i.] Enemies + [ii.] From south + [iii.] Near me”. This is close to the message given by Ewing: “Enemies - Cassilis tribe -seen on river - looks like a war party is camped close”.

Maps and Illustrations
Abbreviations, References and Further Reading

Abbreviations


AIATSIS: The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra. Website: www.aiatsis.gov.au.

APB: NSW Aborigines Protection Board.


CCL: Commissioner of Crown Lands.

Col. Sec.: The Colonial Secretary: the Governor's chief of staff.

DLWC: NSW Department of Lands and Water Conservation.

ed. editor, edited by.
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GN: Greenway number – as listed in John Greenway’s bibliography of 1963.


MS: Manuscript, i.e. an unpublished document, usually handwritten but sometimes typed with a typewriter.

MSS: Manuscripts.

NSW: New South Wales: Until the 1850s, the colony that covered the whole eastern third of New Holland/Australia. (It was reduced to its present-day boundaries in the 1850s with the separation of Victoria and then Queensland.)

pers. comm.: personal communications, i.e. usually via e-mails to the author.

RK: Red Kangaroo.

sic: Latin "thus". Used to mark words that are misspelt in the original text or incorrect grammar.

SMH: Sydney Morning Herald.

SRNSW: State Records of NSW; formerly the Archives Office.

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344 Pedants are asked not to write to the author pointing out that Van Diemens Land, South Australia and Port Phillip were established earlier. I am just summarising the position for non-Australian readers!
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tindale, N B, 1985:</td>
<td>Emu and brolga, a Kamilaroi myth [related by Harry Doolan], <em>Aboriginal History</em>, 9 (1), 8-21.</td>
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<td>---, 1876: 20.5.1876:</td>
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About the author

Michael O’Rourke was born in 1951 and grew up near Tambar Springs NSW, between Gunnedah and Coonabarabran. His parents were farmers and graziers. His father’s parents likewise were ‘on the land’. His paternal great-grand-parents before that ran one of the two pubs that graced the village of Tambar Springs in the 19th century.

Mr O’Rourke was schooled at Tambar Springs Primary School; De La Salle College, Armidale; and the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, and Cambridge UK; but of course he received his true education in the shadow of those fine institutions.

From 1990 to 2003 he worked for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canberra, and for a period was Secretary to the Federal Executive Council and Keeper of the Great Seal of Australia. He now works for the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination in the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

He is the author of Raw Possum and Salted Pork, 1995, a study of the northern expeditions of the explorer Major Mitchell; and The Kamilaroi Lands, 1997, a monograph on the pre-colonial Aboriginal culture of north-central NSW.
‘Red Kangaroo’ of Gunnedah