

Warning: this material contains records of the reported words of ancestors

TRUTH TELLING: RECORDS RELEVANT TO THE BUNURONG* 1839-1840

Evidence of aboriginal people themselves, as recorded by colonisers

Source: 'I Succeeded Once' The Aboriginal Protectorate on the Mornington Peninsula, 1839-1840 by Marie Hansen Fels, 2011

1. YANKEE YANKEE AND DISPOSSESSION

Context: Assistant Protectorate Thomas tells Yankee Yankee that the 'Western Port Blacks' would do well to settle down and cultivate the ground'. In 1840 with land being rapidly taken by white settlers, the Bunurong had chosen Kulluck (now Coolart) as their preferred site. This was a special site for the Bunurong. The request was denied.

Words recorded: Yankee Yankee: 'Where set down? Black fellows want Kulluck and white man not let them have it'.

Words recorded by: William Thomas, Assistant Protectorate in his diary 3/9/1844

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:383

2. DERRIMUT AND LOSS OF COUNTRY AND EXISTENCE

Context: Magistrate William Hull testified that in 1842 he saw a procession of 20 or 30 blacks walking the boundaries of Melbourne. They were bewailing the occupation by the white man, singing low and plaintive songs. Hull reports his conversation with Derrimut.

Words recorded: 'You see, Mr Hull, Bank of Victoria, all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down'. Hull asks Derrimut if he has children. Derrimut replies 'Why me have lubra? Why me picanniny? You have all this place, no good have children, no good have lubra, me tumble down and die very soon now'.

Words recorded by: Testimony of Magistrate William Hull to the government inquiry into the Aborigines of 1858-59

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:25-26

3. BENBOW AND BEN BENDER AND LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD, COUNTRY AND WARNING OF DECIMATION

Context: La Trobe has taken land and guns. In April 1940, Billibellary protests. Then in September 1940, Thomas records Benbow and Ben Bender as protesting. Without land and kangaroos they will starve.

Words recorded: '..... Big one hungry. Black fellows by and by -no kangaroo-white man take away black Fellows Country now gun. By and by all dead poor blackfellow'.

'Now many white people come and turn Black fellows away-why you white man pilmularly (steal) ground?'

* spelt Bonurong in the source

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Words recorded by: William Thomas, 13/9/1840

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:24

4. QUANDOM AND THE ATTACKS / SHOOTINGS

Context: Thomas visited a young mother, Quondum who had given birth to a baby girl at Tuerong the previous week. He noticed a large scar on her arm and asked her about it. In 1836 there had been a shooting by a white/whites from a visiting ship's crew.

Words recorded: 'long time ago me Pickaniny-White Man plenty shoot me-all Black fellows pull away'.

Words recorded by: William Thomas 1840 (?)

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:60

Name: MATILDA /MARIA (TAS ABORIGINAL) AND THE ABDUCTION OF BUNURONG WOMEN

Context: In the second half of 1834, Matilda / Maria from Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) was in George Meredith's schooner when he went to Port Phillip. The vessel anchored under Pt Nepean, where there was a tribe of natives. She, Maria, was forced to entice some of the best-looking women and girls to the sealers, who seized and bound them, and took them on board the schooner. After a sealing voyage to King Island and the Hunter Islands, Meredith took the women to the Furneaux Islands and left them there.

Words recorded: Matilda /Maria's statement according to George Robinson: Says she has been for a long time with the Sealers. That she was in George Meredith's Schooner when he went to Port Phillip. That the Vessel anchored within the entrance of the Port under Point Nepean. That there was a tribe of Natives on the Point hunting kangaroo, that they the Sealer's Men went on Shore in their Boats and enticed the Natives and told her to do the same. After fixing upon the best looking women and girls did at a preconceived sign seize upon and tie them with cords, and then conveyed them on board the Schooner and proceeded on a Sealing Voyage to King's Island and the Hunter Islands and thence to the Furneaux Islands were [sic] they were left by Meredith.

Words recorded by: George Robinson Aboriginal Protectorate, to the VDL Colonial Secretary, 1837

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:334

5. BAREBUN (MARY) AND ASSAULT ATTEMPT

Context: Barebun was working as a housemaid to a Mrs Smith when she began to scream because a white man was beating her for trying to fend off his attack, arguably attempted rape. When he knocked her down and put his knee or foot on her breast she screamed.

Words recorded: 'Bullock driver put hand on mouth and hand on back, pulled me to ground. Me got hand away from mouth and plenty cry out.....make nose and mouth bleed..'. .

Words recorded by: William Thomas, 1839

Source: Hansen Fels, 2011:213