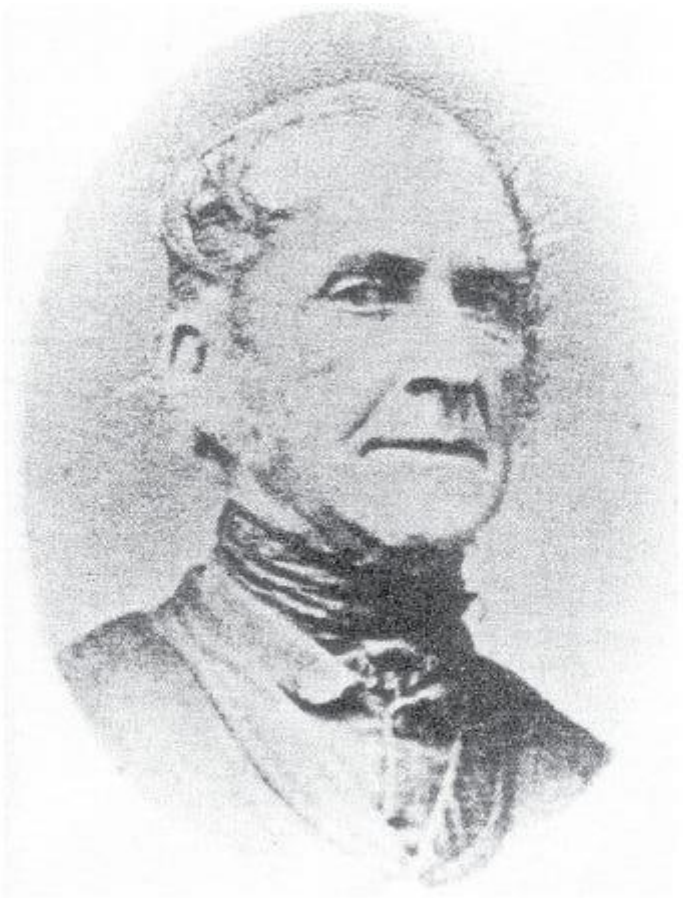


George Langhorne. Photographed in later life by T.F. Chuck. La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria

George LANGHORNE (c1810–1897) (Wesleyan Methodist)

My great great great grandfather, the Reverend George Langhorne (1811- 1897) was a missionary in Australia in the early decades of the 19th century, first to Aboriginal prisoners on the Goat Island prison in Sydney and then in what is now Melbourne. Prior to this he had been a missionary in South Africa and had travelled there from England in the early 1830s. George Langhorne was accepted for training as a lay missionary by the Sydney auxillary of the Church Missionary Society in 1832. He took up his first appointment on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour in 1836, where he missionized to Aboriginal prisoners confined there (Thompson 1995 p. 64).

Governor Bourke [Governor of New South Wales from 1831 to 1837] exiled Monkey and his kinsmen to Goat Island just off the coast of Sydney. Wesleyan Methodist catechist George Langhorne, with prior missionary experience at the Cape Colony, was hired for £100 per annum to teach those incarcerated on the prison hulk Phoenix as well as the 'eight Aboriginal black natives … — Lego'me, Toby, Whip-em-up, Currinbong Jemmy, Tom Jones, Little Freeman, Monkey, Little Dick and Charley Muscle — …..placed on Goat Island under a sentence … for outrages committed on some of the Colonists of the district of Brisbane Water'. He was expected to teach the Aboriginal convicts 'elements of the Christian Religion' and the English language. (Harman, Aboriginal Convicts)

Their harsh existence took its toll on the Aboriginal convicts. During their first year of captivity, several died. The missionary Langhorne speculated that one of these men was 'perhaps among the first…of the New Holland Tribes gathered in to the Kingdom of God' (George Langhorne to the Colonial Secretary, 30 August 1835). Aboriginal convicts generally exhibited a high mortality rate in colonial custody, being 10 times more likely to die than non-Aboriginal male convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land in the early 1840s. (Harman, The Art of Cutting Stone p127)

As far as I can work out, while doing the Lord's work he was also participating in an act of genocide. He seems to have been relatively humane in his direct treatment of Indigenous Australians (he did not approve of people shooting them like hunted animals), but at the same time he did not hesitate to threaten them and he actively worked on destroying their material, spiritual and cultural lives. He

established a mission in what today is Prahran in Melbourne (he named the area from Pur-ra-ran, a compound of two words meaning 'land partially surrounded by water'.), and was one of the first Europeans to live there in the late 1830s. He worked closely with the dreaded Native Police, even leading them in 1838, and seems to have been committed to destroying Indigenous society in the name of Jesus and taking control of the land, as his letters indicate:

"I contended that the only likely mode under God of effecting the desired object, would be to promote with some degree of compulsion if necessary, the partial migration of the Natives from one district to another so distant as to leave faint hopes of return and thus oblige them to have recourse to their white friends for protection, and render them more available, to the Missionary or Instructors, who should be placed among them." — Letter to Charles Joseph La Trobe, CB superintendent of the Port Phillip District , written 15th October 1839 at Melbourne Port Phillip.

Langhorne also proposed to only supply food to hungry Indigenous people if they had their children baptised and attending church. The Indigenous people could no longer obtain food by traditional means due to the enclosure of land under pastoral leases by colonisers. With the destruction of the yam fields that abounded in the Yarra basin prior to colonisation, Aboriginals were forced to claim potatoes and sheep or cattle from settlers. This most often resulted in violence and death and there are many recorded incidents from the original source documents.

The 1838 escape from the gaol on Batman's Hill in Port Phillip of two Aboriginals named Tullamarine and Jin Jin, who had been arrested for digging up potatoes. Painting by W. F. E Liardet (Wilbraham Frederick Evelyn), 1799–1878, [ca. 1875]

In 1835, Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of New South Wales who appointed George Langhorne to his work in Prahran issued a proclamation through the Colonial Office, implementing the doctrine of *terra nullius* by proclaiming that Indigenous Australians could not sell or assign land, nor could an individual Indigenous person acquire it.

The Rev. Langhorne aimed to 'civilise' the local Aboriginal people using a 'carrot and stick' approach; the promise of food and the restriction of freedom of movement. While all who attended the mission were provided with rations of food and clothing, adults were encouraged to work a few hours a day in exchange for additional rations. It was believed that this would teach them the value of earning food and clothing through their labour. Children were encouraged to stay at the mission and attend school classes for three

meals a day. Langhorne's assessment of the mission was that the ultimate goal of the plan he was given was "the intermixture by marriage of the Aborigines among the lower order of our countrymen as the only likely means of raising the former from their present degraded and benighted state".

The Colonial Secretary's instructions to Langhorne emphasised that he 'will have a better chance of succeeding in instructing the children of those tribes than the adults, and the younger the children the greater the chance of success.' Langhorne was therefore encouraged 'to induce the attendance of the children by presents to the parents and by all other suitable means.' Bourke approved of this system of bribery but warned Langhorne that he should not force the children to stay or the parents to give them up:

Thus, Melbourne's very first school commenced in May 1837, in a rough building erected by Woi Wurrong tribesman paid a quarter-pound of bread per hour. Langhorne reported in August that keeping children at the mission was succeeding beyond his expectations, probably because he had made it a rule to deny meals to any child who left the mission-house without permission. Enrolment rose to twenty male students, until, Langhorne reported late in 1839 that the 'blacks of the Waworong tribe removed their children from school upon every frivolous pretext…until at length the school was entirely neglected and deserted.' Consequently, the school closed. (Barry)

Native Police of Port Phillip, 1850

In October 1837, Christian Ludolph Johannes de Villiers was appointed to command the first official Native Police troopers from their station at Nerre Nerre Warren. It was disbanded briefly in January 1838 but reorganised in April of the same year with their new headquarters in Jolimont where the MCG carpark is now situated. Due to funding problems, the force was again dissolved in 1839. These issues delayed reformation of the corps until Superintendent Charles La Trobe indicated he was willing to underwrite the costs in 1842. A significant factor in the restoration of the force was the successful capture of five Tasmanian Aboriginal people near Westernport in 1840 by local Aboriginal men who were attached to a party of Border Police and soldiers. But Langhorne believed de Villiers was unsuited to the role of leading the Native

Police and campaigned against him. When de Villiers resigned under the pressure in 1838, Langhorne became leader of the Native Police for a short time; he stepped down when it was deemed inappropriate for a missionary to hold the position.

The main duty of the Native Police was to be deployed to areas around the Port Phillip region where Aboriginal resistance to British occupation was unable to be neutralised by armed settlers. Once in these areas, the troopers and their officers were placed under the command of the local Commissioner for Crown Lands, who would then seek out and capture or destroy the dissident groups and individuals. In addition to Native Police, the Commissioner also had the troopers of the Border Police and NSW Mounted Police as well as armed volunteer settlers at his disposal to conduct punitive raids on Aboriginal people.

George Langhorne claimed that at least 700 indigenous men, women and children lived within a 30-mile radius of Melbourne's Flagstaff Gardens in 1837. A year later Assistant Protector Thomas identified "124 Warwoorong, with a covering note that there were perhaps twenty more whose names he had not included, plus eighty-three Bunerong" (Thomas is notoriously bad with recording tribal names) lived in the same area. A total of 227 indigenous men, women and children. Therefore, four or five hundred Indigenous people had disappeared in a span of 12 months.

The Rev George Langhorne, as a gentleman farmer and keeper of maps, later in life when he had the farm near Dandenong.

The disappearance of these people may not have been done through murder, as ethnic cleansing of entire regions by relocation was a

common practice under the colonial occupation at the time. It could have been that the mission was used to move Indigenous people away from their homelands, as George Langhorne wrote in 1839:

Your Honour

I believe is already acquainted with the nature of my instructions as received from Sir Richard Bourke. It is therefore unnecessary for me to dwell upon them further than to remark that Sir Richard's ultimate view appeared to be the intermixture by marriage of the Aborigines among the lower order of our countrymen as the only likely means of raising the former from their present degraded and benighted state. Utopian as this scheme now appears to me, I must confess I was sanguine enough to contemplate in prospect the final realization of such hopes, with this difference, that whilst the Governor forbade the slightest restraint to be placed upon the movements of the natives, the children not excepted, I contended that the only likely mode under God of effecting the desired object would be to promote with some degree of compulsion (if necessary) the partial migration of the natives from one district to another so distant as to leave faint hopes of return, and thus oblige them to have recourse to their white friends for protection, and render them more available to the missionary or instructors who should be placed among them (Cannon 1983: 507–8).

The Yarra Mission ended after only 3 years, ostensibly because of the lack of financial support from the government and conflicts between those leading the colonial project. There was also clear opposition

from the Aboriginal community for the school, as it was seen as a threat to their own culture. However, its aims had been achieved if one considers Governor of New South Wales Sir Richard Bourke's desire expressed in 1836 to pacify the Indigenous people of the region in order for agricultural settlement to be advanced in ways consistent with the greater colonial project. While Langhorne blamed how "the 'blacks of the Waworong tribe removed their children from school upon every frivolous pretext" as the reason for the mission not being attended, there were power struggles and acts of violence going on all around the Port Phillip area as settlers, police and pastoralists developed a stronger and stronger grip on the land. From this disintegration of the Aboriginal society and culture under the weight of colonial occupation there emerged a complete state apparatus in a matter of 5 years.

The Yarra Mission 1836–1839

From 1836, as the new settlement on the Yarra known as Melbourne town began, there were many conflicts between the often illegal settlers and the *Woi wurrung* and *Boon wurrung* peoples. In response to the conflicts, Sir Richard Bourke, Governor of New South Wales, requested that William Lonsdale, Police Magistrate for the settlement, was to assist and support George Langhorne with establishing the first Government Aboriginal Mission at the present day Botanic Gardens, South Yarra (Cannon 1982: 153, 157–168; Presland 2001: 90–92). The Mission site was 362 hectares of land south of the Yarra River near a swamp and a hill where corroborees were known to have taken place (Presland 2001: 90–92). Colonel William Lonsdale had arrived in Port Phillip on 1st October 1836 aboard HMS Rattlesnake to take up his appointment as Police

Magistrate at 'Bearbrass on Yarro Yarro', the early name of the settlement that would become the City of Melbourne. At that time, it consisted of 43 dwellings, 224 European inhabitants and pastures accommodating 40,000 sheep. Within five years the colony had grown in size to 5,000 people and land speculation was rife.

While all who attended Langhorne's mission were provided with rations of food and clothing, adults were encouraged to work a few hours a day in exchange for additional rations, believing that this would teach them the value of earning food and clothing through their labour. Children were encouraged to stay at the mission and be educated in European classes for three meals a day. This attempt was more successful on the children as it was difficult to stop adults leaving to continue traditional movement through country (Cannon 1982: 153, 157–168; Presland 2001: 90–92). Influences from the settlers, particularly the rowdier undesirables, included the encouragement of Aboriginal people to drink alcohol and fight each other (Presland 2001: 93), an element of Contact that Langhorne could not control. As a result, and because of ongoing conflict between squatters and Aboriginal people throughout the settled areas of Port Phillip, it was decided that a Native Police Corps needed to be formed.

Inspired by the Sepoy model in colonial India, examples of the successful use of Native Police such as that by G.A. Robinson in Van Diemens Land, led to the suggestion that a similar enlisting of Aboriginal people in Port Phillip be undertaken. At the same time as Captain Alexander Maconochie suggested the idea to Sir John Franklin, Christian De Villiers, who had worked with a similar native

police force in South Africa, suggested the idea to Captain William Lonsdale. In 1837, after the establishment of Native Police at Port Phillip was officially sanctioned, De Villiers was appointed by Lonsdale to run the first Native Police Corps (Cannon 1982: 237–239, 244). Lonsdale, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary dated 25 October 1837, wrote of the Native Police:

"The men shall be chosen from one tribe and a position will be chosen in their own country to be approved of by themselves, but which must not exceed a days walk from the town". (William Lonsdale to Colonial Secretary 25 October 1837 in Cannon 1982: 245).

Three days later Lonsdale again wrote to the Colonial Secretary, stating that:

"as further proof of their [the Native Police] willingness to agree to our [the Colonial Government] desire, they on the first evening of being embodied, broke unsolicited their spears and other native weapons saying they would no longer be blackfellows" (William Lonsdale to Colonial Secretary 28 October 1837 in Cannon 1982: 245).

Twenty miles from Melbourne, 3840 acres along Dandenong Creek at Narre Narre Warren were selected as the site for the Native Police Reserve (Clark 1996a in Clark 1998: 80; Caldere and Goff 1991: 3). The site was approved by the Colonial Secretary and a large area was secured so that squatters were prevented from having land nearby and was secured as a reserve in early 1838 (SA Perry to R. Hoddle 10

January 1838 in Cannon 1982: 256). The men could work in the gardens, hunt and fish under supervision, but were to give up many traditional activities with the exception of tracking a necessary skill for police work. Another condition of joining up was that members of the Native Police were to distance themselves from Aboriginal people that did not belong to the Native Police as well as the lowest classes of white society that might have sought to corrupt them (William Lonsdale to Colonial Secretary 25 October 1837 in Cannon 1982: 245).

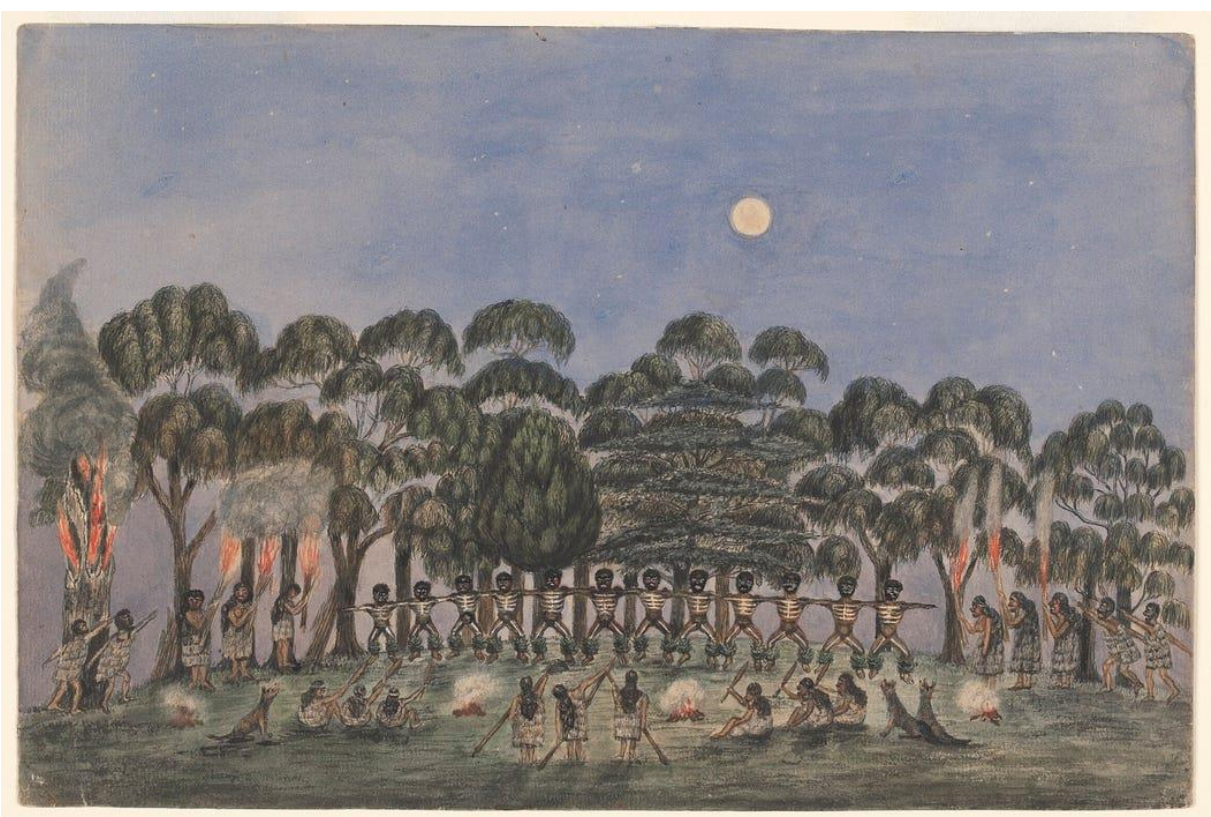
Langhorne opposed the Native Police under De Villiers, whom he believed as "being totally unfit for the responsible duties entrusted to him" (Langhorne to Lonsdale 20 December 1838 in Cannon 1982: 257). Langhorne collected testimonials against De Villiers, claiming use of foul language, from surrounding pastoralists, including his own brother Alfred Langhorne and Robert Allan, a squatter who De Villiers had to remove from the reserve site with support from Lonsdale. Langhorne proposed himself as De Villiers replacement, and for a short time in 1838 after De Villiers resigned due to this pressure, Langhorne was granted leadership of the Native Police. Before long the Governor sent a memo in which he stated that it was inappropriate for a preacher or missionary to lead the Native Police. De Villiers requested reinstatement in April 1838 but was again subjected to Langhorne's complaints and resigned in 1839. After De Villiers second resignation, the Acting Governor passed charge of Aboriginal people in Port Phillip to the newly formed Aboriginal Protectorate, led by Chief Protector, G.A. Robinson (Cannon 1982: 251–252; 257–260, 263–264, 268; Presland 2001: 93–95).

The second attempt at forming the Native Police, under Henry Edward Pultney Dana was more successful than the first and lasted from 1842 to its disbandment in 1853 after Dana's death in 1852 (Bride 1969: 438). The headquarters were again situated at the Native Police Reserve at Narre Narre Warren. The Colonial Government saw the objectives of the Native Police as twofold. Firstly, to check and prevent Aboriginal aggression directed at European settlers and secondly, to 'civilise' young Aboriginal men. Dana's efforts were commended by La Trobe who noted in his correspondence that under Dana the Native Police organised and aided in friendly relations between Aboriginal people and European settlers (C.J. La Trobe to Sir J. Pakington 22 January 1853 in Bride 1969: 439–440).

Langhorne's Mission and the Native Police Corps implemented the Aboriginal Protectorate system as an alternative to the previous attempts to deal with Aboriginal people in Melbourne. This was achieved through a two part system of missionary work and legal discipline; it resulted in dispossession and dependency. It was believed that the Protectorate could begin a process of conciliation between the settlers and Aborigines in the Port Phillip District and that Robinson could encourage the Aboriginal people away from the settlement on the Yarra, as he had done in Van Diemens Land (Presland 2001: 96).

Prahran was so named on Robert Hoddle's map after his official visit in the autumn of 1837 to George Langhorne. The natives called the district "Pur-ra-ran" (signifying land almost surrounded by water, i.e. the river and swamps). Hoddle sought native names for

Melbourne's arising suburbs and offered several suggestions to Governor Bourke. The Prahran — Windsor area (in the early days part of St. Kilda) was first called Pasley (sometimes mis-spelt Paisley) on plans and title deeds, after Captain Charles Pasley, an engineer engaged by the Government who was quite a conspicuous figure in the district. For many years Prahran was a storm centre among municipalities. Reported Council meetings there of old times were notable for the fiery epithets and scorching insults hurled by councillors at councillors, apparently without legal or physical reaction. Frequent appeals to successive governments for financial aid were necessary to drain the abounding swamps, hence the derisive titles of "Poor Ann" and "Swampy Poor Ann" once levelled at this city.



A Corroboree on Emerald Hill in 1840' by W. F. E. Liardet. CREDIT: STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Possibly the first record of the *sale* of possums in Victoria comes from the Melbourne area. John Pascoe Fawkner, the first European to occupy land in the vicinity, recorded in February 1836:

Mr Henry Batman sent blacks out to get parrots, got [William] Buckley to abuse William Watkins for buying squirrel skins for me and l find him forbidding the natives to sell us any skins or birds. He wants them all himself.[30]

Several months later Fawkner repeated his complaints about Batman trying to gain exclusive rights to the possum skin trade: 'both Buckley and himself [Henry Batman] ordered the blacks not to sell us any squirrels or baskets'.[31] It is of interest that Fawkner used the terms 'buy' and 'sell' when discussing locally manufactured items as it suggests a very early use of money in transactions with the Aboriginal people on the Port Phillip frontier.

George Langhorne also noted that a substantial monetary trade was well established in 1838:

A considerable number of the blacks obtain food and clothing for themselves by shooting the Menura pheasant or Bullun-Bullun for the sake of the tails, which they sell to the whites.[32]

Langhorne was convinced that the Kulin people (a confederation of at least five language groups) frequenting Melbourne were intrinsically involved in the colonial monetary system: 'Money they obtain readily in the town in return for the trifling services they

perform, and the bakers in Melbourne assure me they are their best customers'. Moreover, one of the reasons Langhorne submitted to the Colonial Secretary to explain the mission's failure was the Kulin people's disdain for charity and their rapid acculturation of the principles of buying and selling. Conflicts between Langhorne and the Police Magistrate Lonsdale were another significant cause of the closure of the mission. Following acts of violence, "Langhorne challenged the efficacy and appropriateness of Lonsdale's actions, and from June 1838 ceased to report to him directly. Most of the Aboriginal residents of the mission left after shots were fired, which further angered Langhorne. Lonsdale subsequently sought to replace Langhorne" (Clarke and Heydon 15).

Langhorne lamented that on account of the Kulins so readily earning money from a labour-exchange relationship with the Europeans he was unable to attract them to the mission:

The blacks might earn a comfortable subsistence in the town [Melbourne], were it only as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and indeed some few who were constantly working here are now employed in Melbourne, having attached themselves to individuals there from whom they obtain money in part payment for their services. On this account they generally refuse to labour here...[34]

George Langhorne led the region's first church service in April 1836 under a group of trees upon the slope of Batman's Hill. Langhorne's missionary station was established on the site of the present Botanical Gardens, and Mr. John Thomas Smith acted as his

assistant. In Arden's pamphlet some authentic particulars are given of the appearance of the beginning of Melbourne at this date:

"In the six months which had elapsed since the close of the preceding year (1835), the settlement had assumed the appearance of a village, several buildings, although of rude construction, having been erected; of these many had their plot of ground attached. A blacksmith's forge was at work; soil fit for the manufacture of bricks had been discovered and experimentally tried, and upwards of fifty acres of rich light black loam had been brought into general cultivation."

A public-house erected and occupied by Fawkner in Collins Street west, near the corner of what is now Market Street, may be regarded as the core and centre of the infant settlement, which spread thence in an easterly direction. The cottages, constructed for the most part of wattle-and-dab, were few and far between, the thoroughfares were mere bush tracks, and the rising ground eastward of Swanston Street was a sylvan wilderness. During the rainy season, a turbulent creek flowed down the valley, separating the two divisions of the present city, and the blacks came in and camped and held corroborrees upon sites now occupied by some of the most important buildings in Melbourne. (Smith)

Langhorne mentioned that tribes of the Western Port had the 'occasional affray' with sealers and he believed that this early contact had greatly reduced their numbers. One of the most famous students to attend Langhorne's mission was William Barak (1824–1903),

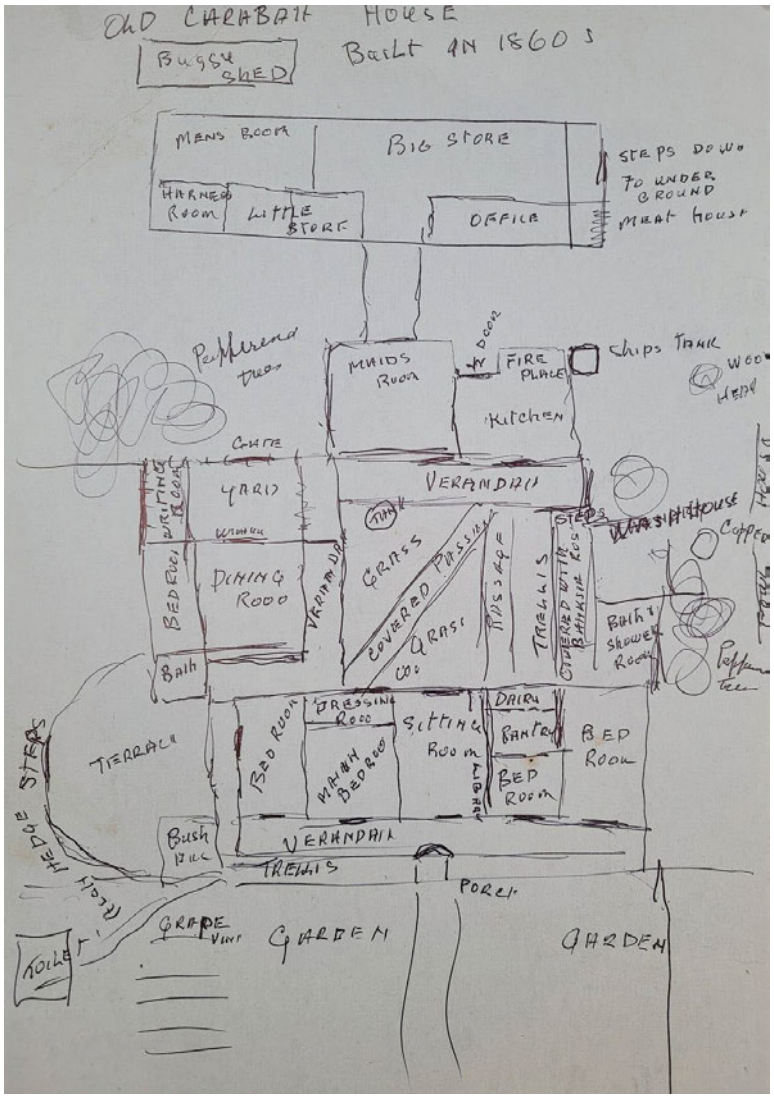
Aboriginal spokesman, variously called ‘King William, last chief of the Yarra Yarra tribe’ or ‘Beruk (white grub in gum tree) belonging to the Wurundjeri Willum horde whose country lay along the Yarra and Plenty Rivers’, was the son of Bebejern and great-nephew of prominent Victorian tribal leaders Billi belleri, Captain Turnbull and Jakki Jakki. Barak died on the reserve in East Gippsland, with the lands of the Wurundjeri far away and occupied by the growing metropolis of Melbourne, with faint hopes of return. The country along the Yarra and Plenty Rivers was firmly in the hands of the occupiers. It remains so today.

Collins Street Melbourne in 1903, the year William Barak died.

By 1839 the Rev. George Langhorne had left the church and owned a large farm near Dandenong, where he remained until his death in 1897. In 1837 George married “Mary, daughter of Robert Cartwright (formerly colonial chaplain at Liverpool and Sydney)” (from The Selected Letters of James Backhouse). George and Mary were the parents of my great great grandfather George Cartwright Langhorne (born 1840), along with their other sons William, Edward and Alfred.

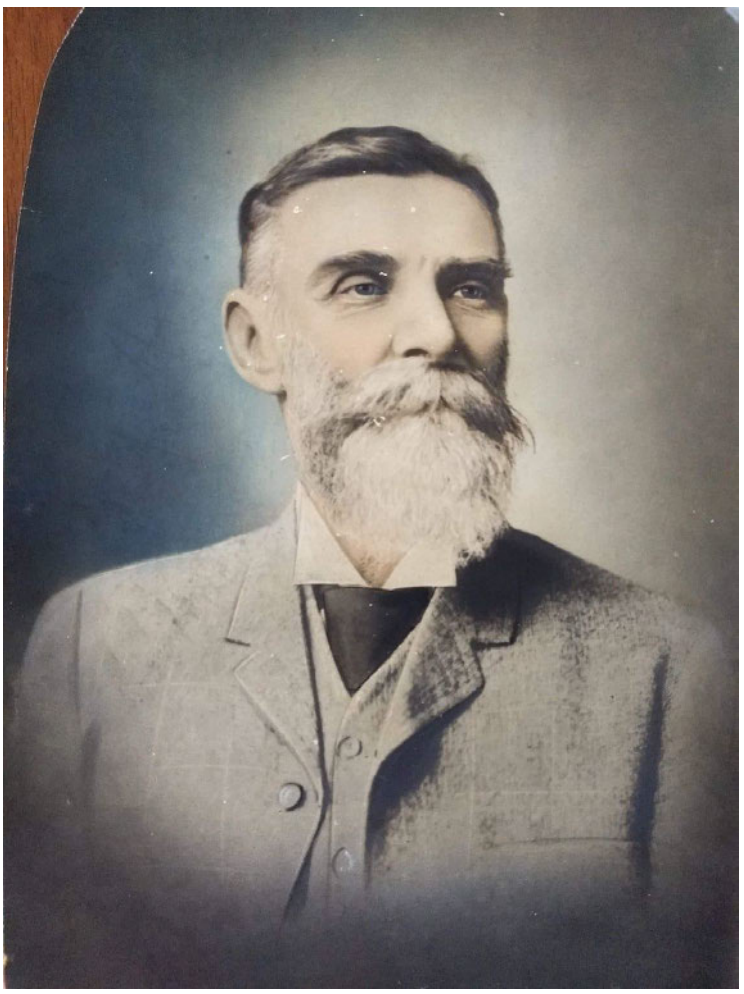
Old Taroom Homestead, now Carraba. The late Mr. G. C. Langhorne and his daughter in the garden.

George C. Langhorne (son of the Reverend) in 1885 in the garden of Carrabah (a map of the house, drawn by my grandmother below)



My grandmother's map of the house at Carrabah Station

My great great grandfather George C. Langhorne took up the 90,000-acre run Taroom Station (renamed Carrabah) on the Dawson River in central Queensland in 1881, after having prior managed it for the Queensland National Bank after it was placed in receivership. George C. Langhorne could speak the Woiwurrung language and once tracked a man from Taroom to the South Australian border, a distance of over 1000 kms. His daughter was my great grandmother, Lucy Gordon.



My great great grandfather George C. Langhorne, son of the Rev. George Langhorne

James Gordon Barrett
Stockholm 4 May 2023

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Reminiscenses of James Buckley who lived for thirty years among the Wallawarro or Watourong tribes at Geelong Port Phillip, communicated by him to George Langhorne, Written in 1837 and first published in the Age, Melbourne, 29 July, 1911

Smith, James (1820–1910) Historical sketch of Victoria. Sydney: Ure Smith, 1974

Reminiscences of James Buckley who lived for Thirty Years among the Wallawarro or Watourong Tribes at Geelong Port Phillip communicated by him to George Langhorne (1837)

On inquiring somewhat respecting the early years of this Individual, the account he gave me was somewhat confused and as follows.

"I remember very little of my early years — I was born at Tiverton in _____ where my uncle Buckley resided when I left England but my Parents had removed sometime previous to my departure. I was apprenticed to a Bricklayer from whom I ran away and enlisted into the Regiment of foot but changed into the fourth or Kings own Regiment when that Regiment was ordered to Holland, in 1799 — with the Troops under the command of the Duke of York — On my return I met with the misfortune which occasioned my being sent out a prisoner to New South Wales. One day crossing the Barrack Yard where our Regiment was quartered a woman whom I did not know requested me to carry a piece of cloth to a woman of the Garrison to be made up. I was stopped with it in my possession, the property had been stolen I was considered the thief and though innocent sentenced to transportation for life — In the year 1804 I believe, I arrived here in the Calcutta where it was proposed [I believe] to form a colony upon some part of the coast though this design was afterwards abandoned. dissatisfied with my condition as a prisoner of the Crown and finding that the ship was about to sail for Van Diemans Land I resolved to make my escape — and if possible find my way overland to Port Jackson.

I made known my plan to two other prisoners and we all three succeeded in cutting away a boat and making our escape in her to the shore — where we left her to her fate and ran up the country — we pursued our way up the Port — as far as the Yarra River until near were Melbourne now stands and having by this time consumed [all] the small stock of Provisions we brought with us we left a tea kettle and other articles behind us on the Bank and struck into the Bush. I wished to direct our course to the Northward in hopes by so doing to reach Sydney which I believed was not far off — here we differed and my two companions taking one direction I took the other — when however I had gone some little distance my heart failed me and in a desponding frame of mind I again directed my steps towards the sea and at length reached the Heads of the Bay in a state of considerable exhaustion for afraid as yet to eat all the wild berries that came in my way not being acquainted with their properties and supposing some of them poisonous — I subsisted principally on crawfish — suffering much from thirst — on reaching the coast I in vain looked for the Ship it had probably been gone some time — up to this period I had not seen any of the natives but at length I fell in with an Old Black — fishing near the sea with his wife and a large family of children — by this savage I was treated with the greatest kindness partook of their food and laboured with them. I gradually [illegible word] became capable of expressing my wants in their language. I left this old man and wandered further into the Country — and then fell in with several more families of Blacks — our meeting took place thus — I was sitting under a tree near a lagoon not far from the River Barwin dispirited and almost worn out with my sad condition when some Black women made their appearance. I learnt afterwards that they had come hither to gather the gum from the mimosa Tree which

forms a favourite article of food [they] I had been I believe about two months resident in the country but I do not think they had heard of me — on seeing me they retired and informed their companions who were nigh at hand — these came up and viewing me for some time with evident astonishment at length made signs to me to follow them. I immediately did so although I despaired of my life as my impression was that they intended to kill me they took me to their encampment one black holding one of my hands and one the other. On reaching a hut or 'Willum' near which was a Waterhole I made signs that I was thirsty and they gave me some water and without being asked offered me some gum beat up and prepared after their manner. They then all sat down and a general howling was set up around me the women crying and sobbing and tearing their faces and foreheads with their nails (a token of excessive grief — I learnt afterwards that they believed me to be a black who had died some time since and who had come again to them in the shape of a white man — In the evening a great dance took place, I believe in honor of my arrival — and from this time I was to them an object of the utmost care and solicitude — they never allowed me to walk any distance unattended — and if I happened to leave them for a little Blacks were immediately sent in search of me — when tears were often shed on my reappearance — I lived as they lived and was careful not to give them offence in the smallest thing — yielding to them at all times — and sharing with them whatever I took fishing or in the chase they gave me a black woman for a wife but observing that this occasioned jealousy among others of them I relinquished her to the native — and contented myself with being single — this seemed to please the men much — and I was no longer apprehensive of danger from them — I had lived about six months with them when

I fell in with one of my companions whom I found living with some blacks on the sea coast — He then came and lived with me — but from his faithless [and]conduct to the Blacks — and dissolute behavior towards their women — I was so apprehensive of danger to us both that I resolved to part from him — and I therefore told him that it was necessary for our mutual [the] safety [of both] that one must leave the Tribe — he left and I never heard of him more except by a vague report that he had been killed by the Blacks — this fate I felt assured from his imprudent conduct awaited him — my other companion I never heard of after parting from him at the Yarra it is probable he met the same fate as the former and perhaps on the same account — I now made up my mind to continue with the Tribe (Watourongs) and principally lived about the River Barwin, my favourite place of abode being the part now called Buckley falls — I soon lost all reckoning of time — I think after I had been about 2 Years in the country — I soon after was enabled to express myself in the Blacks language pretty well — so as readily to make known my wants and after a few years residence among the natives I could speak the language quite well — when I had attained this knowledge of their Tongue I found I was fast losing my own — my situation however was now less irksome as I was able to converse with them respecting themselves & their connection with the different Tribes.

The subject of Religion I was careful not to introduce as I was afraid that they would kill me if I meddled with their customs or superstitions — I have frequently entertained them when sitting round the camp fires with accounts of the English People Houses Ships — great Guns &c. — to which accounts they would listen with great attention — and express [illegible word] much astonishment —

The affection of the Tribe for me always remained the same if I hinted at the probability of some day or other rejoining my own countrymen they manifested grief and shed tears. As I always kept up at night the best fire and had the best Miam Miam in the camp — the blacks notwithstanding cold being often too lazy to attend to their fires) the children would often prefer to sleep with me and I was a great favourite among them. On one occasion feeling uncomfortable from the dirty state in which I was it was soon after I had joined them — I repaired to the Lagoon before mentioned to wash myself — thinking I had run away from them as I had not mentioned my intention they were presently engaged in searching for me — an Old Man named Bow_____t on discovering me among the reeds took me out by the hand and immediately burst into tears — they appeared overjoyed at having found me and ever afraid lest I should again leave them — When engaged in their fights which were very frequent when first I came among them I was always obliged to accompany them but never compelled to take a part they would arm me with a spear and place me aside in some bush or other concealment but if discovered by the opposing party I was never disturbed or attacked — the wars [being] between the Waworong and Watourongs have been numerous and bloody I have accompanied the latter in their night expedns against the former when falling suddenly upon their camp they have destroyed without mercy men women & children I have sometimes succeeded in parting them when about to fight — I became as expert as any of them in spearing the Kangaroo and taking fish — and with regard to the latter was generally more successful [than any of them] when fishing alone and successful — my practise was to light a fire as a signal to the Blacks in the neighbourhood to come and partake of my

spoils which they never failed to do — Besides the Kangaroo, Opossum, Bandicoot & Sugar Squirrelthey seek with great eagerness for the Hedgehog or porcupine which forms a delicious article of food — in order to obtain it from its hiding place they put in to the hole a young child with its [hands] legs foremost who feels how and where the animal is situated and reports accordingly in what part he is to be obtained by digging into the earth as the holes run under and parrellel with the surfice for some distance — their method of dressing it when obtained is this. They enclose it entire in a piece of Bark and thus roast it — then taking off the skin again apply the body to the fire — thus dressed it is considered a great treat — I have noticed at least four different Tribes who speak as many different dialects — the family or portion of a Tribe with whom I spent the greatest part of my time was called the Wattiwarre — in their wars I observed one circumstance worthy of notice — should they happen to lose their spears they make afterwards but faint efforts and appear to give all up for lost — It is true they are cannibals — I have seen them eat small portions of the flesh of their adversaries slain in Battle — they appeared to do this not from any particular partiality for human flesh — but from the impression that that by eating their enemies they would themselves become more able warriors — many of them are disgusted with this ceremony and refusing to eat, merely rub their bodies with a small portion of fat as a charm equally efficient — they eat also of the flesh of their own children to whom they have been much attached should they die a natural death — when a child dies they place the body in an upright position in a hollow tree and allow it to remain there until perfectly dry when they will carry it about with them — on the subject of Religion as I said before I never conversed with them I do not believe that they possess

any distinct notion of a Supreme Being — or of the Soul or Spirit — I have heard them warn their children not to frequent the neighbourhood of a grave otherwise I have not observed that they have any superstitious dread of particular places. There are however two imaginary Beings whom they treat with a certain degree of respect. One of these is supposed to reside in a certain marsh and to be the author of all the songs which he makes known to them through his sons. The other is supposed to have charge of the Pole or Piller by which the sky is propped — Just before the Europeans came to Port Phillip this personage was the subject of general conversation it was reported among them that he had sent a message to the Tribes to send a certain number of Tomahawks to enable him to prepare a new prop for the Sky as the other had become rotten and their destruction was inevitable should the sky fall on them to prevent this and to supply as great a number of Iron Tomahawks as possible — some of the Blacks repaired to Western Port and stole the Iron work from the wheels of the Sealers cart — It is about 25 years since I first saw an European Tomahawk among them — on enquiring where they obtained it — they informed me that while I was absent some distance in the interior some white men had rowed up the Barwin in a Boat and had left the Tomahawk at the place where they landed on visiting the spot I observed the place where the Strangers had dug to procure water. The Natives Tomahawks [are] (merang) are made of talc shaped in an oval form and placed in a bent stick the two ends of which are firmly bound together — a syphylis disorder is very prevalent among them — attacking not only the adults but the children. Promiscuous intercourse of the sexes is not uncommon and in certain festivals is enjoined — at certain times the Women are lent to the Young Men who have not wives — the women in other

respects are faithful to their husbands Sometimes a Black will go to a Willam or miam miam to entice a woman away Should the husband be within he will give permission to her to follow him and on her return will probably snatch a fire brand from the fire and beat her severely -

During [After] 30 years residence among the natives I had become so reconciled to my singular lot — that although opportunities offered, and I sometimes thought of going to the Europeans I had heard were at Western Port I never could make up my mind to leave the party to whom I had become attached — when therefore I heard of the arrival of Mr Batman and his party it was some time before I would go down as I never supposed I should be comfortable among my own country men again -

Orginal Manuscript Reminiscenses of James Buckley who lived for Thirty Years among the Wallawarro or Watourong Tribes at Geelong Port Phillip communicated by him to George Langhorne (1837)

Reminiscences

of

James Buckley

who lived for Thirty Years among the Yattavarro or Yatourong Tribes

at Geelong

Port Phillip

communicated by him

to

[illegible]

Reminiscences of James Buckley for thirty
Years resident among the Watourong Blacks
at Port Phillip, taken verbatim nearly, from
himself by Wm Layhome

On inquiring somewhat respecting the early years
of this individual, the account he gave me
was somewhat confused and as follows.

"I remember very little of my early years. I was
born at Coventry in _____ where my uncle Buckley
resided when I left England but my Parents had
removed sometime previous to my departure. I was
apprenticed to a Bricklayer from whom I ran
away and enlisted into the (1st Royal Dragoons) Regiment of
foot but changed into the fourth or Kingsown Regiment
when that Regiment was ordered to Holland in
1799 with the Troops under the Command of the
Duke of York. On my return I met with the misfortune
which occasioned my being sent out a prisoner to
New South Wales. The day crossing the Barrack Yard
where our Regiment was quartered a woman whom
I did not know requested me to carry a piece of Cloth
to a woman of the Garrison to be made up. I was stopped
with it in my possession, the property had been stolen
I was considered the thief and though innocent
sentenced to transportation for life. In the year 1804
I believe, I arrived here in the Calcutta where it was
proposed ~~I believe~~ to form a colony upon some part
of the coast though this design was afterwards abandoned.
dissatisfied with my condition as a Prisoner of the Crown
and finding that the ship was about to sail for Van
diemans Land I resolved to make my escape and
if possible find my way overland to Port Jackson.

I made known my plan to two other prisoners and we all three succeeded in cutting away a boat and making our escape in her to the shore - where we left her to her fate and now up the country - we pursued our way up the ~~Stockman~~ Port - so far as the Sarra River until we were welcomed with stands and having by this time consumed all the small stock of provisions we brought with us we left a bottle and other articles behind us in the Bush and struck into the Bush. I wished to direct our course to the Northward in hopes by so doing to reach Sydney which I believed was not far off - here we differed and my two companions taking one direction I took the other: when however I had gone some little distance my heart failed me and in a desponding frame of mind I again directed my steps towards the sea and at length reached. the heads of the Bay in a state of considerable exhaustion for afraid as yet to eat all the wild berries that came in my way not being acquainted with their properties and supposing some of them poisonous - I subsisted principally on crawfish - suffering much from thirst - on reaching the coast I in vain looked for the ship it had probably been gone some time - up to this period I had not seen any of the natives but at length I fell in with an Old Black - fishing near the sea with his wife and a large family of children - by this savage I was treated with the greatest kindness partook of their food and laboured with them. I gradually ~~mad~~ became capable of expressing my wants to their language - I left this Old man and wandered further into the Country - and then fell in with the ~~two~~ several more families of Blacks - our mode

both place thus – I was sitting under a tree near a
Lagoon not far from the River Barwin disheartened and
and almost worn out with my sad condition when
some Black women made their appearance I learnt afterwards
that they had come hither to gather the gum from
the mimosa Tree which forms a favourite article of food
they I been I believe about two months resident in the
Country but I do not think they had heard of me – on
seeing me they retired and informed their companions who
were nigh at hand – these came up and viewing me
for some time with evident astonishment at length made
signs to me to follow them. I immediately did so although
I despaired of my life as my impression was that
they intended to kill me they took me to their encampment
the black holding one of my hands and me the other
in reaching a hut or 'Wellum' near which was a Waterhole
I made signs that I was thirsty and they gave me some water
and what they asked offered me some gum heat up and
prepared after their manner. they then all sat down and
a general howling was set up around me the women
crying and sobbing and tearing their faces and forehead
with their nails (a token of excessive grief – I learnt
afterwards that they believed me to be a black woman
had died some time since and who had come again
to them in the shape of a white man – In the evening
a great dance took place. I believe in honor of my
arrival – and from this time I was to them an object
of the utmost care and solicitude – they never allowed
me to walk any distance unattended – and if I
happened to lose them for a little Blacks were
immediately sent in search of me – when tears were
often shed on my reappearance – I lived as they lived
and was careful not to give them offence in the smallest
thing – Yielding to them at all times – and sharing

with them whatever I took fishing or in the chase they gave me a black woman for a wife but observing that this caused jealousy among others of them I relinquished her to her native – and contented myself with being single – this seemed to please the men much – and I was no longer apprehensive of danger from them – I had lived about six months with them when I fell in with one of my companions whom I found living with some blacks in the sea coast – he then came and lived with me – but from his partiality and conduct to the Blacks – and absolute behaviour towards their women – I was so apprehensive of danger to us both that I resolved to part from him – and I therefore told him that it was necessary for our mutual safety that we must leave the Tribe – he left and I never heard of him more except by a vague report that he had been killed by the Blacks – his fate I felt assured from his imprudent conduct rather to him – of any other companion I never heard of after parting from him at the Sierra it is probable he met the same fate as the former and perhaps on the same account – I now made up my mind to continue with the Tribe (Watourongs) and principally lived about the River Barwin, my favourite place of abode being the part now called Buckley's Falls – I soon lost all reckoning of time – I think after I had been about 2 years in the country – I soon after was enabled to express myself in the Blacks language pretty well – so as readily to make known my wants and after a few years residence among the natives I could speak the language quite well – when I had attained this knowledge of their Langue I found I was fast losing my own – My situation however was now less irksome

as I was able to converse with them respecting
themselves & their connection with the different Tribes,
the subject of Religion I was careful not to introduce
as I was afraid that they would kill me if I
meddled with their customs or superstitions. I was
frequently entertained them when sitting round the
Camp fires with accounts of the English People
Houses Ships - great Guns &c - to which accounts
they would listen with great attention - and express
much astonishment. - Their affection for the Tribe
for me always remained the same & I hesitated
at the probability of some day or other beginning my
own Countrymen they manifested grief and shed tears
As I always kept up at night the best fire and had
the best Mimi Mimi in the camp - the Blacks (who shake
cold being often too lazy to attend to their fires) the
Children would then prefer to sleep with me & I was
a great favourite among them. On one occasion feeling
uncomfortable from the dirty state in which I was it
said soon after I had joined them - I repaired
to the Lagoon before mentioned to wash myself - thinking
I had ran away from them as I had not mentioned
my intention they were greatly engaged in searching
for me - an Old Man named Bunt in discovering
me among the reeds took me out by the hand and
immediately burst into tears. They appeared overjoyed
at having found me, and ever afraid lest I should
again leave them - often engaged in their fights which
were very frequent when first I came among them
I was always obliged to accompany them but
never compelled to take a part they would arm

me with a shove and place me aside in some bush or other concealment but if discovered by the opposing party I was never disturbed or attacked – the wars ~~being~~ between the Warworung and Watworung have been numerous and bloody I have accompanied the latter in their nightly expeditions against the former when falling suddenly upon their camp they have destroyed without mercy men women & children I have sometimes succeeded in parting them when about to fight – I became as expert as any of them in spearing the Kangaroo and taking fish – and with respect to the latter was generally more successful ~~than any of them~~ when fishing alone and successful – my practice was to light a fire as a signal to the Blacks in the neighbourhood to come and partake of my spoils which they never failed to do – Besides the kangaroo, Opossum, Bandicoot & sugar squirrel they seek with great eagerness for the Ant eater or porcupine which forms a delicious article of food – in order to obtain it from its hiding place they put in to the hole a young child with its ~~head~~ legs foremost who feels how and where the animal is situated and reports accordingly in what part he is to be obtained by digging into the earth as the holes run under and barrelled both the surface for some distance – their method of dressing it when obtained is thus They enclose it entire in a piece of Bark and thus roast it – then taking off the skin again apply the body to the fire – thus dressed it is considered a great treat – I have noticed at least four different tribes who speak as many different dialects – the family or partition

of a Tribe with whom I spent the greatest part of my time was
called the Matteiraco - in their wars I observed no circumstance
worthy of notice - should they happen to lose their chiefs
they make afterwards but faint efforts and appear to give
all up for lost. It is true they are cannibals - I have seen
them eat small portions of the flesh of their adversaries
slain in Battle - they appeared to do this not from any particular
partiality for human flesh - but from the impression that
by eating their enemies they would themselves become more
able warriors - many of them are disgusted with this ceremony
and refusing to eat, merely rub their bodies with a small portion
of fat as a charm equally efficient - they eat also the
flesh of their own children to whom they have been much
attached should they die a natural death - when a chief
dies they place the body in an upright position in a hollow
tree and allow it to remain there until perfectly dry
when they will carry it about with them - on the subject
of Religion as I said before I never conversed with them
I do not believe that they possess any distinct notion
of a Supreme Being - or of the Soul or Spirit - I have heard
them warn their children not to frequent the neighbourhood
of a grave otherwise I have not observed that they
have any superstition about of particular places. There
are however two imaginary Beings whom they treat with
a certain degree of respect. One of these is supposed to reside
in a certain marsh and to be the author of all the
evils which he makes known to them through his dreams
The other is supposed to have charge of the Pole or Pillar
by which the Sky is propped - Just before the Company
came to Port Phillip this personage was the subject of
general conversation it was reported among them that

he had sent a message to the Sioux to send a certain number of Tomahawks to enable him to prepare a new Prop for the Sky as the other had become rotten and their destruction was inevitable should the Sky fall on them ~~to procure his end to satisfy~~ as great a number of Iron Tomahawks as possibly - some of the Blacks repaired to Western Port and stole the Iron work from the wheels of the Sealers Cart - It is about 25 years since I first saw an Indian Tomahawk among them - on enquiring where they obtained it - they informed me that while I was absent some distance in the interior some white men had rowed up the Darwin in a Boat and had left the Tomahawk at the place where they landed on visiting the spot I observed the place where the Strangers had dug to procure water The Natives Tomahawks ~~are~~ Meerangs are made of ~~and shaped~~ in an oval form and placed in a bent stick ~~pointed~~ the two ends of which are firmly bound together - a syphylitic disorder is very prevalent among them - attacking not only the adults but the Children promiscuous intercourse of the sexes is not uncommon and in certain festivals is enjoined - at certain times the Women are lent to the Gay men who have not arises - the women in other respects are faithful to their husbands sometimes a Black will go to a Willam or Moramurram to entice a woman away Should the husband be within he will give permission to her to follow him and on her return will probably snatch a firebrand from the fire and beat her severely -

During ~~After~~ 30 years residence among the Natives I had become so reconciled to my singular lot - that although opportunities offered, and I sometimes thought of going to the Europeans I had heard were at Wellington Bay

I never could make up my mind to leave the [illegible]
to which I had become attached – when therefore
I heard of the arrival of Mr Batman and his party
it was some time before I would go down as I dread
apprehended I should be compelled to [illegible] my own
men again –

Barclay
A.