

## ***Facing the untold history of culture and multi culture***

### ***Pioneer Australians' secret life and heritage***

My father and mothers family had claimed mainly Scottish Heritage. They were early Pioneer settlers in Victoria. I was bewildered when my mother, a straightlaced Presbyterian, who had taught us tolerance to Aborigines had a breakdown because her first great grandson had an Aboriginal father.

He was my grandson-her first great grandson- so what had changed my mothers attitudes? Delving into family history, I found mothers' grandmother was probably Aboriginal too. It seems the secret had been with my mother all her life as my grandfather's mother had the notation "mother unknown" written for her date of birth.

My mothers fathers' occupation was another secret. Firstly a metallurgist, he had apparently moved into the more lucrative occupation of gambling becoming a "Bookie". After 60 years of not mentioning this fact, my mothers' answer to my question "Did you know he was part of Tattersalls?" was "Yes, I used to help him count his money there.." This grandfather died when my mum the eldest of 6 children was 15-although they lived comfortably on his money and other investments, his livelihood was never discussed.

In the fight for respectability in the frontier society, Aborigines were not classified as humans and having a gambler or alcoholic in the family was a fact that many families took great efforts to disguise or deny.

The accompanying taboos of this isolated newly planted European society left a legacy and cast a shadow over many families trying to gain respect by not having Aboriginal blood or a family that did not follow the rigid rules that the temperance society dictated.

Most so called successful pioneer families complied with the rules of the new society in word if not in deed. They had no trouble removing from memory the background that would not be accepted; they contived to reframe a new beginning that was readily accepted as fact or truth..

In fact, a conspiracy of silence about mixed liaisons and the denial of racial backgrounds persisted then and still persists today. In the first hundred years of Colonisation, despite mixing having been the norm as there were so few European women compared to men there was little discussion and much hiding of these relationships.

This rewriting history and the distortion of the reality still invades our cultural perspectives today and discussion of such issues is still taboo. That admitting that these facts in early settler families when confronted with such questions creates emotion and shame and is why, I believe, a country that wants to be tolerant has limited progress with First Nation peoples.

(1-Summary of the Population of Victoria, according to the Census taken on the 2nd

April, 1871. Population Males-Females Total-Exclusive of Chinese and Aborigines.

Males 329,016 compared to-Females 43,343



## *Woyan Min Uwamp Aak Ngulakana*

**OR**

## *Finding the Right Road Ahead*

### REFRAMING HISTORY FOR MORE ACCURACY

The Highland Clearances of Scotland U.K. brought a wave of settlers to Victoria looking for land. This is the background of the dispossessed Scottish settlers when they came to the western district..... and so with their legacy of dispossession, my fathers' family were part of this colonising group who later kept a blanket of silence on the violence that had helped them work and squat on their lands which helped them survive and become safe and prosperous in their new country.

However while Scottish Highlanders were forced to cross the globe, and found themselves working Black's lands, Aboriginal people throughout the western district found themselves equally displaced. As Black and other squatters like him took up more and more land, the original owners of those lands were dispossessed. It was a treatment they frequently rebelled against, resulting in the taking of livestock and violent conflict. There are many stories of intimidation by colonials of the Aborigines, of threats, poisonings, injury and killings yet these facts were never discussed in schools or history books in Victoria.

The Stewart Family 1905 were doing well. They were Early settlers the of 'Keilambete', & Glenormiston area

My gt gt grandmothe valued the eurocentric education that was the foundation of the new society. She was headmistress 1870-1894 -see school childrens photo below

James. E. Murdoch Presbyterian minister, father of Keith, grandfather of the Rupert Murdoch, was also from this group, but the old people great story tellers never mentioned the tragedy of the First Nation people from their district except to refer to a curse put on the Squatter, Neil Black's Family at Glenormiston and the tragedies that family suffered. Ironically, the Presbyterian church at the turn of the 20th century ran many of the Missions in Queensland. Weipa, Aurukun, Mornington Island and Mapoon were supported by the Scottish families in Victoria who had first dispossessed the Aborigines.- It seems away from their areas, they could now look at ways to avoid more massacres. They encouraged the separation of the original inhabitants from their new enterprises by enacting the so called Protection act.

Missions were mainly Eurocentric and strictly controlled isolated settlements. The only Cape York Missionaries to retain language and culture were the Mc Kenzies at Aurukun ( the Wik people and Wikmungken)

#### **Sir Walter Scott stated re the Scottish dispossession**

*"In but too many instances the Highlands have been drained, not of their superfluity of population, but of the whole mass of inhabitants, dispossessed by an unrelenting avarice which will be one day found to be short-sighted as it is unjust and selfish".*

While Scottish Highlanders were forced to cross the globe, and found themselves working Black's lands( Niel Black), Aboriginal people throughout the western district found themselves equally displaced. As Black and other squatters like him took up more and more land, the original owners of those lands were dispossessed.

**The new Colonisers stated-** *"The western district of Victoria which is covered by the Presbytery of Mortlake. It is a land which the Lord hath blessed, worthy of the name with which its discoverer joyfully greeted it, Australia Felix. Gently rolling pastures, subsiding inland into great sweeps of plain, the horizon broken with little volcanic cones, but further apart—Mount Elephant, Mount Leura, Mount Shadwell, Mount Warrnambool, and many others ; lakes in the craters or at the bases of some of these cones stony rises' where the lava outcrops, affording material for stone dykes suggestive of Home; toward the coast wooded ranges".*

**James Murdoch, Free Church of Scotland minister, and his wife Helen, née Garden ... and moderator-general of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in 1905-06 wrote this forward to Fifty Years of Presbyterianism in Mortlake, Victoria 1847 - 1897.**

Ministers, Elders, and Members of the Congregation, I send forth this slight historic

sketch with the hope that it may prove of some interest to friends and fellow-members of the Church

J. E. MURDOCH. "Rydal Cottage," 1847-1897

*"IT was a most fortunate thing for the Western District that "the early pioneer squatters were men of education and good family, and carried with them into their new surroundings a simple faith in God and a civilizing power for good, for which we, of a later day, owe them much. They were men of grit, these pathfinders. They thought little of the difficulties that beset them in exploring an unknown country, inhabited by naked savages. With cheery optimism they pushed their way through primeval forests and illimitable plains, in search of new homes under the Southern Cross."*

The first church was a long thatched house, with a door at either end, ... John M'Nair, James Murdoch, William John Murdoch, W. J. Porter, ... Wm. M'Nutt, B.A., Moderator; Dr. James Munce, clerk; Henry Bell, Robert H. Clarke.

**Ironically the Aboriginal Background and tragic dispossession was dismissed as**

**"inhabited by naked savages" and the massacres were not mentioned or highlighted.**

In fact, **the area was inhabited by the Kirrae, Buloke, Tjapwurrong and Gunditjmarra Aborigines were said to be first sighted by** Europeans in 1836 Noorat - in shire of Mortlake

"One of the worst massacres in the western district of Victoria allegedly occurred along Mount Emu Creek near Noorat in August 1839. near squatter Niel Black's pastoral station of Glenormiston .

Noorat is located approximately 240km west of Melbourne. Noorat derives its name from Mount Noorat, a dormant volcano named by Major Mitchell after a local Indigenous elder, Ngoora." The township is located at the base of Mount Noorat a dormant volcano.

Niel Black, a wealthy squatter highly regarded wielded much influence in the new Colony This is a reproduction of a handcoloured photographic portrait of Niel Black in full Scottish regalia, circa 1850. and his mansion built along aristocratic lines was a beautiful homestead.

When Niel Black first arrived in Victoria in 1839, he declared that it was `a Scotch

settlement, and the people are so far as I can judge altogether Scotch Scottish immigrants

formed almost one fifth of the population of the new colony. Born in Scotland in 1804, Niel arrived in Victoria in 1839 as an ambitious 35-year-old and an experienced farmer .

There are many other people entwined in Niel Black's story that were not so fortunate.

People who were forced to leave their homes, due to famine, oppression, disease, and

threat to their lives. From the late 18th century, an agricultural revolution was sweeping through Scotland.

In Port Phillip in the 1840s, settlers' letters and diaries recorded the mood of the frontier. In 1839 at the height of the troubles, Niel Black of the Western District said new pastoral stations could be won if 'the conscience of the party is sufficiently seared to enable him without remorse to slaughter natives right and left'

Frederick Taylor, MacKillop and Smith's manager at Strathdownie was allegedly responsible for one of the worst massacres in the western district of Victoria somewhere along Mount Emu Creek (once known as Taylor's River) near Noorat in August 1839. This was seemingly verified by Niel Black, who found a mass grave on the Glenormiston property Niel Black too had settled the land through violence seeing it was the only way to proceed.

Henry Meyrick, condemned frontier killing, especially of women and children, yet said he would shoot an Aboriginal man killing his sheep.[36] The frontier was an extraordinary place where British law and order struggled to assert itself, vainly at times.

As Richard Howitt the colonial commentator wrote: 'In colonies, men cast off their disguises. Consequently every kind of monstrosity and villainy display themselves in all their hideous nakedness colonially'.

In Robert Thomsons thesis we see him reflecting on the influence of Walter Scott on the ideology of the pioneer Scots of Victoria in their new homelands . Sir Walter Scott in the Western District, 1836-1851 began with the idea that a dominant ideology, or discourse, could be tracked through its informing of popular literary texts, from its genesis in early capitalist Britain to the early colonial settlement of my own local region of south-west Victoria.

Much work and discussion has occurred around the „imagining“ of Australian identity, with its roots in a defiantly egalitarian and democratic tradition of bush mateship, the birth of trade unions, and Bulletin-style nationalism.

THE Robert Thomsons Deakin University Doctorate thesis thus highlights the conflicts of ideology and actions of these early days. He asks the questions whether there is a significant discursive link during the early nineteenth century between the Scottish Highland Clearances, Sir Walter Scott's Waverley Novels, and Aboriginal Dispossession in the Western District of the Colony of Victoria?

As this is my family story too, I agree that too little discussion has been made about these early links and conflicts while an extraordinary discourse has occurred re GALLIPOLI

which again our family were also involved . Keith Murdoch through his writing as a journalist highlighted this blunder of Churchill . Murdoch was supported by the Scots and my grandfather who were traumatised by the massacre of our young spirited men, including his only brother. He as a respected Presbyterian Minister changed from promoting enlistment to a pacifist in world war 2 and had Bob Menzies in his congregation . He would question our reaction today of this campaign?

.Photo of some family members who had written of the Gallipoli disaster.

Our tragedy at Gallipoli

**We see Thomson stating** *"Sir Walter Scott in the Western district, 1836-1851 began with the idea that a dominant ideology, or discourse, could be tracked through its informing of popular literary texts, from its genesis in early capitalist Britain to the early colonial settlement of my own local region of south-west Victoria. Much work and discussion has occurred around the „imagining“ of Australian identity, with its roots in a defiantly Egalitarian and democratic tradition of bush mateship, the birth of trade unions, and Bulletin-style nationalism. An equally potent but less enthusiastically discussed foundation myth in Australian history is that of „private enterprise“, the ethos of individual competition, economic self-interest and „free market“ capitalism. In the historical context of British occupation of Australia from the 1830s and 1840s, this discourse was known as the Doctrine of Improvement, and its most prominent activists were called „squatters“; small-venture investors with mobs of sheep as their „capital“, who „squatted“ on Aboriginal land until their claims to its economic use were recognised by officers of the Crown."*

The Scottish Influence and success of the Western District immigrants, only 50 years after colonisation is shown by this exceptional grand TERANG Presbyterian church, in Barrabool and Wauran Ponds stone. It was designed by Reed, Smart & Tappin as a memorial to John Thomson, of 'Keilambete', who was killed in 1890.

It is one of Australia's finest and most striking country churches.

Elizabeth Stewart 1873-1894 headmistress of a school at 'Keilambete', shows how the Scottish prioritised education. However the silent fate of the dispossessed is eliminated from most historical discussion of highly regarded scholars of influence coming from this area of intellectual group of people.

We see Educated men like Rev. Samuel Fraser, of Terang, a man of the character and culture and steadfast devotion a rare boon to a community, a cumulative gift to a generation, a full light of day which leaves along and beautiful after-glow upon the countryside. He was very influential guiding his flock to become educated and good citizens following the leadership and ways of the Scottish forefathers.

He also influenced Noble prize winner McFarlane Burnett who completed his primary school education in Terang, Burnett was sent to Geelong College for four years. In his final year he gained scholarships enabling him a residential scholarship at Ormond College, in the University of Melbourne. This is the church in Terang which shows the effort made to equal the European grandeur in this isolated and belated continent.

Sir Frank Rollands another minister at Noorat became a missionary and his family supported a hospital. In 1908, Mr Rolland became parish minister at Noorat, Victoria, his only such charge, but his connection with the Inland was not broken. His opinion was still highly valued, and in 1910 the South Australian Assembly agreed to the erection at Oodnadatta of a hall, receiving ward and nurse's quarters, which was named the 'Rolland Home'. When the Rev. John Flynn was making his first call for extended services to the Inland, before the foundation of the Australian Inland Mission, Mr Rolland's advice was sought on operating conditions in the remote areas of South Australia. In 1911, the Home Mission Committee asked that Mr. Rolland be freed for one year to go to Broome, in the north of Western Australia, where there had been no Presbyterian activity for some years. Mr. Rolland accepted the challenge and took up residence in a hovel on the beach among men of the pearling fleet, in order the better to see life from their angle.

.In far North Queensland colonisation was spurred on by gold and the new arrivals followed a similar pattern of dispossession and warfare.

**The Cairns Post -published the following on 3 October 1891:**

**Missions to Blacks<sup>1</sup> to see the hypocrisy of a chaotic society**

He asks for bread and not for stones.

Some corner where to lay his bones.

We hunt him from the land instead.

And stones we give in place of bread.

And the fair land of Queensland free.

Shall teach the blacks the Litany.

Where now his happy hunting ground?

Those marked with murderous looking mounds?

And what, pray, are the dark contents

Of those sad lonely monuments?

Ah! Sometimes white and oft-time black.

The parsons well may cry, slack!

And the fair land of Queensland free

Resolve to teach the Litany.

He asks for bread sues for life,

And in return we 'nex his wife

A fair exchange for all his sins.

We give him rum, he gives us jins.

And then we prate of freedom tall

While he exclaims you've got 'myall'.

Revenge and murder come accursed

Troopers report 'The blacks dispersed'.

And the fair land of troopers free.

Have taught the blacks their Litany.

The remnant of the outlawed race.

With spindle shanks and monkey face.

Now take their gawdy fluery ease

In towns - in rot - in filth - disease

Followed by vermin stricken curs

Whose lot is happier than theirs.

The earth he cumpers - there's no room.

The white man has pronounced his doom.

And the fair land of Queensland free

To cheer him cross the silent sea

Shall teach the blacks the Litany.^

'GTB' is the author of this literary piece, and one wonders why he would have written JB

Gribble, who was attempting to establish a mission to the Aborigines in the Cairns district.

Gribble's association with Professors Rentoul and Drummond, and the subsequent publicity

given to 'public secrets in Cairns' that is, massacres, may well have been the factor that

influenced the negative view of the missionary, by bringing the district into disrepute within



the colony. Gribble nevertheless went on to establish his mission in 1892 at Cape Grafton.

#### **YARRABAH.GUNGGANDJI COUNTRY**

##### **Many records like the follow few describe the altercations**

a nother mission ylangi north of Mossman

WILLIAM WEBB- BATTLE CAMP As the diggers walked the trails towards the Palmer River near Cooktown at Cape York, the local Aboriginal people were warlike and determined to preserve their country from the intruders.

The diggers were just as determined to kill anyone who might get in their way. A terrible massacre of Indigenous Australians was the outcome : European settlement leading to missionary activity in [webjournals.ac.edu.au/.../chapter-one-european-settlement-leading.....](http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/.../chapter-one-european-settlement-leading.....) Residents of Cairns and Smithfield quickly heard about the new anchorage and came ... Jack Shewan was an early cedar getter in the area and many Aboriginal .... Meston (1896:10) noted the 1885 massacre in which "the Mossman blacks Developing the North

##### **In July 1901, the Mossman Central Mill Company changed its articles to prevent any Chinaman or Asiatic from acquiring shares:**

in the Company through mortgaging their deed of land. **By 1908, the White Australian policy was established, deporting many Chinese and Kanakas, and the Company deleted the clause from their articles.**

As restricted numbers of Italian labourers arrived to cut cane, the Bishop of North Queensland, George Frodsham spoke at the Church of England's 1906 Australian Congress in Melbourne.

*"We have an airy way of speaking about Australia being a white man's country. But Australia first of all was a black man's country and I have never heard that a black man invited us to take his property away from him".*

I believe Australia that voted 90 % in the referendum to let Aborigines vote still have difficulty admitting their inbuilt preferences . This reflects on our ability for honest discussion today- especially in our relationship with other cultures and races . Our beliefs cloud our thinking and have become the romantic fiction of our living history - we still have trouble untangling from this reality.

This romanticism helped the early colonising pioneering families and those who followed to survive & thrive . By rewriting the violence and racial mixing; by denying the what they have undeniably dismissed, sanitised and excused, they have erected a false fortress of factst they believe espouses a spirit of fairness but fails to fulfill the

idealistic vision & romanticism as it is based on the imaginary recollections - not reality.

