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Through the mist on the Koo Wee Rup Longwarry swamp.

A submission to Yoorrook Justice.

01.08.23

I write this submission in two minds, should I leave the past behind, or does and will it always, sit uneasy with me that I have done nothing? I have had to think about this. I have a spiritual tie to the land and native flora and fauna and would like to tell some of my story.

I was born [REDACTED] from a heritage of a mix of English from settlement of relatives five generations from farmers in Sussex. On my father's side I come from English genetics and Aboriginal heritage.

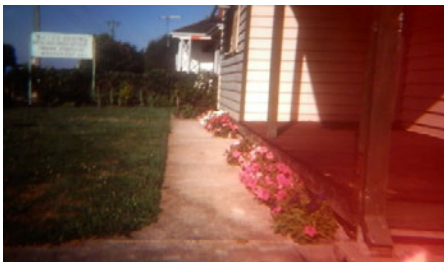


My father [REDACTED] A Water Borer, also known as a Well Driller. First Water Boring Machine, hand drilling. They drill a hole of various width and depth in the search of water for cattle, irrigation or domestic water. [REDACTED] loved nothing better than to be out on the land boring for water. He loved the farm and bush land. Photo is taken of [REDACTED] I understand to be Longwarry. The machine has [REDACTED] [REDACTED] trailer.

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Drilling rig. ([REDACTED] collection 1970's)



The Water Boring sign that [REDACTED] made and erected, he also built the modest weather board dwelling to the right. Rossiter Road. ([REDACTED] collection 1970's).



Diesel drilling rig with bushland to the background on the Swamp. ([REDACTED] collection 1970's)

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The family name came from the [REDACTED] of Scotland.

[REDACTED] was a tall man, black hair, almost black eyes and huge tough hands, my mother described his hands as the size of a large dinner plate. An incredibly powerful strong man who could carry casing for the bores that would weight about 80kg each, I cannot say that anyone ever knew my father. His mind was what I would call a 'secret eerie' I often wonder what caused that and have concluded there are several variables from his birth mothers' line, his conditions as a child, the fear of the siblings being removed from the home and relocated, loss of family, the poverty of the times, war at Tobruk and his war injuries from shrapnel metal in his body from a bomb.

[REDACTED] worked seven days a week to build our home himself. [REDACTED] could do anything; he could build and was competent horseman. He could make bridles, saddles and weave halters. I feel a lot of my father's isolation of self-came also from being in the War. Almost a post traumatic syndrome disorder. I think because he was so dark skinned he felt he stood out in the white English skin of the population at that time.

[REDACTED] could attend horses' feet, showing me how to trim them, shoe them and oil them. This was handy when I had horses growing up. I was lucky as a child to have horses and grew up going to pony club, swimming in the Bunyip River and riding a bike to visit an uncle that was a self-appointed Tip manager at Bayles. This is now a Fauna Park. My sister paid for the feed for the horses.

Later when [REDACTED] mother [REDACTED] remarried, he came back from Sale.

My father was a Tobruk Rat, 22nd 23rd Regiment, and was underage when he enlisted. He never spoke much about the War, but now and then he would remark something about the heat of the shrapnel when he was hit in the chest, that the particles were so hot that they 'burned all the way through his skin and then went cold'. Half the muscles on his forearm were shot out from the blast and his chest and arm was scarred. They lived in trenches during the war, much like rats. Food was scarce and conditions were harsh. He one time said there was sand in everything in the trenches, in their food and clothes and on the soldiers. There are several medals that he was awarded, he threw them all in the open fire one night and my sister rescued them all. Something upset him on the news about war and that they 'glorified war'. [REDACTED] was known to have a 'short fuse'.

Whilst in Tobruk his father, also [REDACTED] died. No one had any money to bury him, so they had to keep him until my father returned from active service to pay to have him buried. My paternal grandfather died of [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] Melbourne.

My father returned from the war with very little. He had to live with his mother [REDACTED]. After he married my mother, they bought a small block of land in [REDACTED] and lived in a shed for many years until the home could be built, by my father, as he had money come in from farm work. He then set up a Well Drilling business. [REDACTED] was a very honest man and hated anyone telling lies, or was lazy and would not work. One time an Italian farmer refused to pay him for an irrigation water bore and irrigation pump, and [REDACTED] took him to court threatening to pull the whole

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of the bore out of the ground and measure the length. The customer in court decided to pay.

Another person owed him money one time and [REDACTED] never forgave him. My father worked on farms, tending cattle, repairing fencing. The chap who owed him money was found 'shimmying' down the drain pipe at the local Koo Wee Rup Memorial Hospital after having an affair with the Matron at the time. They have since pulled down the old nurses home.



This is my father [REDACTED] diesel water boring plant. He is drilling a new bore at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] property. The windmill pumps water from the bore into the red brick tank which has water troughs to the bottom of it for the cattle. As a child I used to prepare the leather work saddles and bridles for her son [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] were heavily involved in the Hunt Club at Cranbourne and had eventing horses. [REDACTED] gave me one of her saddles which she said had won the Garryowen at Royal Melbourne Show one year. This land has an original War Airport on it with underground bunkers. This is the site where there has been several proposals for the second Airport for Melbourne. Planes would fly out over Westernport Bay.

I think my parents chose to live at [REDACTED] because my maternal side of the family lived at the original [REDACTED] and they were all born at [REDACTED] in a small bush hospital that no longer exists. They were all farmers. My father's relatives lived all over the swamp of [REDACTED]. I identify as [REDACTED].

My father enjoyed his own company and created a Well Drilling business that operated seven days a week 24 hours a day. If cattle were out of water when a water bore failed, he would go out any hour to fix it. He would put down bores for water for farmers. The water was for stock drinking water, dairy operations, or for irrigation of the crops on the Swamp. He would repair windmills and blast sand out of bores that had filled in over time. My father would leave home on daylight and not return until dark. He built a large sign out the front of our home that he made and painted himself, it did the job.

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As part of his business in later years he worked with the "Board of Works" what is now known as Melbourne Water. On an honorary basis mapping underground water and surface water for data for them on the Koo Wee Rup Swamp from Longwarry through to Cranbourne, Lang Lang through to the Bunyip hills. I went with him on many of his jobs and saw the depth of the water over the Swamp land including the artesian wells where water flows naturally out of the ground. There are many artesian wells around Longwarry. The water is close to the surface and has a sort of water table that has an ebb and flow as in a tide, depending on the season, rainfall and temperature.

The name Longwarry actually means "two waterholes" which rise from the north of the Town, the Tarago River and the Bunyip River. There are also rich underground water ways which are close to the surface. This causes some of the flooding, also the hills to the east where the water runs down the hills onto the Town and southern region of Longwarry. GHD (2020) have estimated an 18% increase in flooding to Longwarry in relation to the hills of the east and climate change, yet this has not been factored in with development.

████████ first Water Boring Plant was hand operated, extremely hard heavy work. The casing that goes down the bore is long, thick and heavy metal. The bore hole was dug by hand using a weighted pole that caught soil as it was dropped into the ground. The second Water Boring Plant was diesel which made things a bit easier to put the bore down, but still heavy dirty work. My father wore nothing more than overalls and a flannel shirt. He refused to wear under pants and my mother would say that the neighbours would all know he never wore underpants as there were never any hanging on the clothes line. My father smelt a lot like oil and diesel and I think he liked it that way. He lived his life for his work and that was just how it was. His gladstone bag was kept behind the kitchen door. He would carry his lunch with him in that, or any other important papers. When he went out to visit a few family members once a week, or going to a funeral, he would wash up and wear a crisp white shirt and pressed suit pants with black shoes polished up. He would slick his hair back with brylcreem and cut a dashing figure. He never wore deodorant and shaved with a cut throat razor. The soap of the day was Velvet which was used for everything. The tin bath had water heated from a 'copper' which had to have a fire lit under it to warm the water. My sister was caught in the fire as a young child and ██████████. She was in the Childrens hospital for over a year. ██████████

As part of the Water Boring business, I was taught to weld the metal frames to hold the heavy bore casing, and to drill the holes into the copper pipes, then solder the mesh onto the copper pipes to filter the sand from the water.

My mother is from English parent heritage. There is a twist to her father's line. My mother was petite, pale white skin with beautiful facial features. Clear blue eyes and had an unconditional love of family. Always cleaning, cooking and always home for us.

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██████████ on the left and his brother ██████████ on the right at Harker's Farm Yannathan could be 1930, on the Swamp. Like most of his siblings, they never married. ██████████ was the brother of my grandmother ██████████. ██████████ also worked in the Water boring business on the Swamp of Koo Wee Rup and Longwarry. They are installing a tank that water will be pumped into to gravity feed water into a dairy. ██████████ on the maternal side went back to the Charman's from Sussex who had farms around Cheltenham, Emerald and Bayles. Stephen Charman donated land for churches and a cometary at Beaumaris which was later built over by a developer. The Council have acknowledged that the cometary now has dwellings on it, over the top of some of the first pioneers.

The aboriginal chapter of the family was never talked about. My sister was very dark with brown eyes and black hair, yet my brother was pale white. One of my brothers was a cot death baby at six months of age, which my parents never got over. I am white, yet I have the dark eyes. I am the last child in the family which is a good and bad thing. I have some photos of the aboriginal side of the family, but do not have permission to show some of these.

My paternal Grandmother ██████████ carried the aboriginal heritage through her mother. ██████████ father ██████████ was a labourer, he was white. His genetics, ██████████, came from the powerful Scottish clan involved in the Scottish Independence and the Jacobite risings in which the clan fought for the British. I often wonder if the fighting for the British, may have been the reason they went to England? On the ██████████ side, they came from a powerful Scottish clan who controlled the border at Annandale for over 600 years, they were against the British.

It is the maternal line of ██████████ that I understand carried the aboriginal genetics of the ██████████

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██████████. The photo was taken on her ██████████ birthday. They lived in poor conditions in an old home. ██████████ had married for the second time and was allowed to live in the home till she passed. The children from her marriage to ██████████ had to move out when she passed as ██████████ had left the home to his two daughters from a first marriage.



It has been difficult to source the information on the aboriginal ancestry. My mother was the historian in the family and my paternal grandmother ██████████. Some years ago, I contacted AIATSIS Aboriginal Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. They said it was difficult to track family because no records were kept. I wish I had written down what the family told me.

I mentioned a photo of a black woman with a white man and lot of children that were multi coloured. I was always told that was the maid. The maid in fact was the mother of the multicoloured children. I was never allowed to mention the aboriginal heritage in the family. My father would fly into a rage.

It was my mother who knew the history. We were never allowed to have any photos of the family on the walls in the home. Anyone who had passed were never to be mentioned. We were not permitted to go to funerals as children, or have parties or anyone over.

We lived a frugal lifestyle. One light at a time in the home and open fire was only permitted between the hours of 1800 to 2000hr. It was a very simple life and I often wonder about how we have so much today.

My grandmother [REDACTED] adored my sister who was dark coloured. I was a white colour and I often now wonder was it the colour of the skin, or was it a personality thing. [REDACTED] would stay overnight with us, sleeping in the bedroom with my sister and I. Telling stories of the family. I wish I had listened more, or wrote down some of the things she said. My sister never got over the loss of her grandmother [REDACTED]

My grandmother [REDACTED] was found face down in the kitchen, taken out by an [REDACTED] something like 59 years of age. Her second husband [REDACTED] had passed before her. [REDACTED] had an interesting life; of German background he lived on French Island and drove the Ferry. [REDACTED] was a soldier. My mother thought [REDACTED] was one of the kindest people ever.

[REDACTED] did a lot of Salvation Army work on an honorary basis. [REDACTED] lived in an old weatherboard home on about an acre of land. That land now is home to many Units. For its time, the home was attractive and had timber flooring. [REDACTED] came from a family that were better financially stable.

I remember going into the home with my parents after the grandmother had passed, and there was nothing in there. Another Aunt had a habit of 'cleaning out' relatives' property when they passed. Whilst everyone was in mourning, she was quite active. I remember seeing all sorts of furniture and things in this aunt's garage and wondered why it was all there.

That particular Aunt (my father's sister) was very dark. Black hair, dark complexion and dark eyes. Her children are dark coloured.

In searching for [REDACTED] and the aboriginal connection I concluded that this is coming from the maternal line. Her father [REDACTED] of Scottish heritage was white.

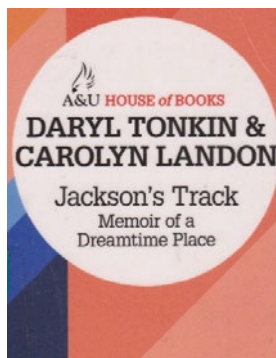
On the mother's side of [REDACTED], I understand there is a [REDACTED] and that is where the aboriginal ancestry comes from.

It is from [REDACTED] that I understand the stories of the aboriginal connection, also from my mother who was the story teller in the family.

- There was talk about aboriginals living on the coast at Koo Wee Rup. There are historical books that also talk about 300 aboriginals living there.
- There was talk about aboriginals at Venus Bay and many bones found in the sand.
- There was talk about two war grounds at Longwarry where the aggressive aboriginals of Gippsland fought with the Mornington aboriginals. I was always told the "bones lay in the ground" that there are no cemeteries and that they are "in the ground" some bones from loved ones were in dry hollow trees. My grandmother said that Kurdaitcha's walk the war grounds, because the bones are in the ground from unsettled tribes and retaliation.
- One of the war ground sites that I mentioned to the CEO Baw Baw Shire at the time, found her to say that there were no aboriginals in Longwarry. There is development on one of the sites of the war grounds. I was sent a letter from the Planning Manager at the time stating there were no issues with the site which is near to my property. I spoke about my grandmother what she had

said. I told the CEO that the developer had a 17-ton grader and was moving the earth around, infilling and shifting soil. Nothing was done. I asked about a Bunurong Elder to clear the site from any issue and was refused. I was told there were no aboriginals in Longwarry or the area. I mentioned Lionel Rose, who lived in the area, at Jacksons Track, and said how about, Daryl Tonkin, married to Euphemia Mullet Tonkin, an aboriginal woman. 150 aboriginal people lived on his land Jacksons Track, near Jindivick, the Council bulldozed all the bark huts of 150 aboriginal people and moved them onto bare land on the edge of Drouin. Put them in tents with no water, no heating. Made them live in the tents for a number of years. The heat of the Summers could be 40C and the frosts in Winter could be below zero. Monash University funded Carolyn Landon for her book on memoir of Daryl Tonkin and the injustice. His daughter Pauline Mullet was active in having Daryl's story told, "Jacksons Track" It is devastating to think how aboriginal people would have felt having their homes and children taken. Then put in a tent without water, heating or services. These were people who lived on the side of the Bunyip State Forest, their home. Their way of life – smashed.

I went for a drive to Jacksons Track. The air is crisp with the freshness of the massive gum trees. It is an incredible spiritual place and just a beautiful area. Difficult to find the road because the sign Tonkin Road was removed.

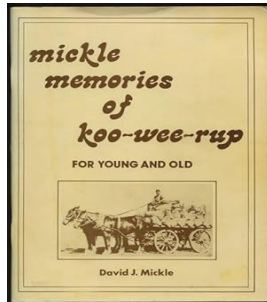


Some of the aboriginal peoples removed from Jacksons Track, Tonkin Road.

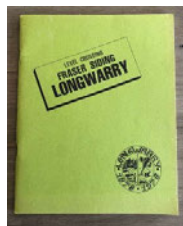
(Landon, Jacksons Track)

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It would be advantageous for this book to be considered to be mandatory reading in all schools. There is a second book with this. Commissioned by Monash University.



There are many books of the Swamp and they discuss aboriginal habitation. (Mickle, 1983) goes into some detail about the aboriginals of the swamp.



Joyce and Clarie McDermid (1978) wrote the back to Longwarry book, highlighting the Town.

- I wrote some time ago to one of the council researchers (Rural Land Use – Longwarry) on development and aboriginal people and noted some time later a carving of three of the “Jackson Track” women has been placed in Civic Park at Drouin. I think this is a way to healing from council. A token which I see as positive. There are links to the aboriginal woman when you put your phone to below the sculpture.

Regina Rose is the mother of the famous boxer Lionel Rose, lovely carving of Regina with the guitar. Dorothy Hood is shown with a bible. Euphemia Mullet Tonkin is shown with a washing basket, she was frightened to have any dirt, in case the government took the children.



One of the three aboriginal women in the sculpture. Euphemia Mullet Tonkin with the washing basket. Civic Park Drouin. Commissioner Kevin Bell (Yoorrook) visited this site to inspect the sculpture which is very important (2023), there was a newspaper write up. Daryl Tonkin her husband said this "I have lived with aboriginals for fifty years. They have been treated poorly by Government. I have seen how white people have taken over this country with no respect for nature or human rights" in Landon (1999) pg. xii

It is this fear that the aboriginal women would have felt with having the children taken, if they were not clean enough. I could not imagine the absolute distress and I have to think about how my fathers' siblings and their mother felt when all the children were taken. The systemic racism, the oppression, the policies at the time and the sheer powerlessness that the people would have felt.

There are no family photos of my father, his siblings and mother all together,



- My grandmother spoke about artefacts at the Longwarry football oval and Lye and Dixon Road, near Longwarry. She said the aboriginals lived around the swamp at Longwarry, fished out of the water, ate black fish and 'shells' she said the shells are in the ground on Lye and Dixon Road. That they are signs that the aboriginals lived there.
- [REDACTED] spoke about the scar trees in the hills of Bunyip and Longwarry, that they used the large tall trees with thick bark for boats to fish in the swamp.
- My mother spoke about the aboriginals in the family many years ago, that they lived around the swamp and camped on the higher ground. She spoke about them living in Mia Mia's and fishing from boats made from bark from the large gum trees leaving scars in the trunk of the gum trees at Longwarry and Bunyip North, Garfield, Koo Wee Rup and Bayles.
- There was discussion about the "hanging tree" at Lang Lang. I was told, there was a large gum tree with a branch that went out over the Lang Lang River

for a long way. This branch was used to hang the aboriginals out over the river until they were dead.

- A lot of the family history was kept in a wooden writing box that my father owned. At one time his sister took everything out of the box. I have the empty box. The documents from what I recall had all the births, deaths, photos and details of the family. These documents are now lost.

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]