Henty family rejects massacre claims

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Henty family rejects massacre claims

CLAIMS of massacres are just not based on facts – they are the product of "misuse of historical evidence".

This is the finding of the Victorian Heritage Council in 2007. (Ref: 'Convincing Ground – an invented massacre' Michael Connor)

One massacre claimed is when a shepherd on Merino Downs who suffered an unprovoked clubbing attack, supposedly defended himself with a firearm.

A good case of self-protection – not a massacre!

A person who is claiming Henty heritage whose descendants had no direct involvement in the management of the Western District farming enterprises, is making hysterical claims and demands which the commission is promoting.

The Henty families of the Western District have no knowledge of this person.

The Lovett family seems to show their emotional bias against the Hentys, with stories that are just so fanciful it is sad.

Travis Lovett is one of the commissioners.

The commission is promoting such testimony.

A statement in the Portland Observer, on the 5th April, that there was an organised approach toward 'ethnic cleansing', with Henty involvement is unjustified, downright mischievous and libellous.

When the CEO of the Yoorrook Justice Commission states to the Henty family that he believes all the claims about massacres are true, then it puts in question the impartiality of the taxpayers $50-plus million commission circus.

The contributors of stories to the commission seem to be all promoting the minority of first nations people twisted views.

The Henty family have requested a hearing in front of the five commissioners, but they have not been notified if their request is going to be granted.

Really – since when can a government funded body condemn a group of living citizens, racially degrade them, accuse them of wicked wrongdoing and even state claims on their assets and not hear from them.

The Henty family gave a lot of documents to the state that are now housed in the State Library, but still retain a lot in private collections.

People telling tales are making assumptions and coming to conclusions when they are not of an era nor have connection to the verbal stories handed down through the generations, or connection to the land – the very point that first nation people make when explaining their culture.

People of the Western District – you have all been touched by the Henty legacy, many of you know, or have known members of the Henty family of whom all have served your community.

They are not the people who could have ancestors who are guilty of these atrocities.

These atrocities that have been proven to be invented.

Marnie Bassett wrote her book on The Hentys in 1954, based on the personal interviews and collections with members of the family and members of the Western District.

It is a book that provides the truth about the Henty family.

We will maintain our dignity and not judge or degrade first nations people because of actions or words from a few.

This has always been the policy of the Hentys, but when spurious claims are made we will defend our honourable heritage.

When objects such as plaques, monuments and other memorabilia of a bygone era, paid for by Western District communities, are being defaced and vandalised in the name of 'feelings' then we all need to say 'ENOUGH!'.

The Hentys have always recognised and supported the greater majority of first nations peoples – they do not support minority groups that muddy the reputation of the greater majority through emotive and mischievous deeds.

These minorities need to be recognised for who they are. I look forward to presenting an essay on behalf of the family, to the five commissioners in the near future if granted the 'right' to do so.

GRENVILLE HENTY SILVESTER,
Great, Great Grandson of both Stephen George Henty and Francis Henty

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TERESA MURPHY

UNTIL a month ago, 53-year-old John Rappard had no idea he was dying.

February 28 was the fateful day: motor neurone disease was the stark diagnosis.

"I was in shock. I couldn't believe it," he said this week from his Horsham Pilt home.

In just a matter of weeks, the rapidly advancing disease has upended every aspect of his life: unable to walk, shower and dress himself, even sit alone. His speech is slurred and his hands are crippled by rheumatoid arthritis, for which his medication has been stopped for fear it will exacerbate the MND.

His partner, Jane Hereford, helps him with everything.

"We believed COVID-wheeled the diagnosis," Mr Rappard said. "I was in isolation in hospital and Jane was told over the phone. She was all by herself."

As they adjust to an uncertain future filled with medical appointments, they are treasuring each and every day.

There is no cure for MND. It is an uncommon disease that affects nerves and the brain. There are treatments that can reduce its impact on daily life, and some people can live with the disease for years, such as former AFL footballer Neale Daniher who was diagnosed in 2013. He and his family founded Fight MND, which has raised millions for MND research.

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JOHN Rappard (centre) at Portland Bowling Club's MND fundraiser last week with bowling mates Andrew Smart (left) and Michael Jennings. Picture: MARK WILKINS, SPECTATOR

Henty descendant: move or destroy monuments

TERESA MURPHY

A HENTY descendant has told the Yoorrook Justice Commission that pioneering ancestors who did not understand the evils of ethnic cleansing and enslavement had family kin committed against Australia's First Peoples.

Suzannah Henty is a ninth-generation descendant of Dutton Henty (1808-1882), one of the Henty brothers and first colonisers of Gunditjmara country. She teaches art history at Melbourne University and is completing a PhD focusing on colonialism and decolonial contemporary art.

Ms Henty appeared at the Yoorrook hearing room in Collingwood on Wednesday last week.

Ms Henty told the hearing that Henty monuments in Portland should be moved to a museum or park for fallen monuments, or ceremonially destroyed.

Yoorrook is investigating injustice against First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation, looking into land, sky and waters, health, housing and education, and economic prosperity. Yoorrook will deliver its final report in 2025.

Public hearings are being held, mainly in Melbourne, until April 29. Witnesses will include chief Premier Jacinta Allan, government ministers, senior bureaucrats, organisations and associations, Traditional Owners and Ms Henty as a descendant of a coloniser.

Ms Henty told the hearing that the Henty legacy was rarely discussed in her family. "Newcomers would recognise my name and I understand my family to be part of the state's history. Only when I want to unexpectedly did it begin to challenge and question my family's legacy," she said.

"As an undergraduate student a Gunditjmara man gave a lecture in which he explained his family lived peacefully until my family settled along."

Ms Henty then began her own research into her family's involvement in processes during the early years of colonisation.

"I was never told while I was growing up that the Henty family were involved in an organised ethnic cleansing of First Nations peoples. Yet, if needed, I was encouraged to distance myself from the Henty legacy.

"Without permission from British authorities, the family illegally squatted on the Gunditjmara homelands, where they stole and damaged tens of thousands of acres of First Nations peoples, skin settlement was a crime."

She said Edward Henty's arrival on November 19, 1834, marked the beginning of the harm that continues to be inflicted on Gunditjmara peoples and their country at the hands of the Henty family, the city of Victoria and the settler colony of Australia. This dispossession of Gunditjmara peoples from their land and the accompanying process of colonial agency, she said.

"The Henty's brought with them sheep, cattle and machinery. They established a sheep run called Merino Downs and built a homestead and outstations, where Aboriginal people were enclosed.

"The process of establishing Victoria's first settlement was war."

Ms Henty said an Aboriginal man was killed by a bushranger on Merino Downs in June 1836; in the October three more Aboriginal men were killed, and in March 1840 a bushranger killed a fifth Aboriginal man.

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Treaty 'within sight'

TERESA MURPHY

A TREATY between the Victorian Government and First Peoples will be struck within 18 months, a local Traditional Owner believes.

Gunditjmara Dreadful man Uncle Michael Chinkuiyer Bell, of Heywood, said this week he was confident that a form of treaty would be signed within this current term of government.

"This term will have a foundation treaty within 18 months, that's where we're at," he said.

Mr Bell is a member of the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria, which aims to negotiate treaties with the Victorian Government. He was co-elected for the Heywood Mt Bell will be on Gadung for a statewide treaty gathering, hosted by the Assembly.

It's been a busy time for Mr Bell, who spoke at the ceremonial hearing of the Yoorrook Justice Commission at Eae Bak Aquacultural Centre on March 25.

He made opening remarks along with Aunty Dianne Wright and Commissioner Travis Lovett.

Mr Bell said having the ceremony in Tae Bak was "really celebrating" given its strong cultural significance to the Traditional Owners.

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HENTY family descendents, born and raised in the Western District, dispute claims made by art historian, Suzannah Henty, of massacres of Aboriginal Australians, carried out by Henty ancestors. The author of the letter, published here, said no-one in the Western District-based family had ever heard of Ms Henty before her submission to the Yoorook Justice Commission, as published in the Portland Observer.

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