

**Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission****From: John Milton Karlake****Dated: 4 November 2024****Submission:**

My submission is sourced from personal comments made to myself and others almost sixty years ago by a Wurundjeri elder, named Bill Onus. I believe, hopefully that Bill shared his story with many others, so my submission of the story he told may well be simply reiterate that which has already been submitted by others. Bill clearly stated that this story was one told to him by his grandparents whom believed were young teenagers at the time.

The story concerns a day of terror for the Wurundjeri People. Bill gave no year date of the event, I assume that because the event involved a "round up" and confinement of Wurundjeri people the year could be circa 1849. Bill described; The White man started early one morning riding through the country side by side. They had bullwhips guns and dogs, as they rode through country they made a large noise occasionally firing their guns. This commotion made the Wurundjeri people move away in fear for their lives.

He described that the progress of the riders had commenced to ride in easterly direction from Mount Waverley. Additional riders made their way from the north, somewhere near Canterbury Road, and travelled south. An additional group pushed in a northerly direction from an unspecified southern location. The people, young, old, sick or healthy were by this means forced to flee before the approaching riders with their whips, dogs, and guns.

Eventually by mid afternoon, all the people in the area west of Springvale Road and south of Canterbury Road and an unspecified area to south, were assembled on a creek flat. Bill identified the creek flat as an area which is now to the west of the junction of Glenfern Road, Lysterfield road and Napoleon Road, and which is dissected by the eastern end of Napoleon Road. the western end of this assembly area was the foot of a low hill to the south the creek. Bill described that almost all of the creek flat was occupied by the assembled Wurundjeri people.

There were he said "so many that many had to stand as there was so little room for all to sit comfortably while remaining respectfully separated". Bill said he had visited the site several times with elders and relatives who also knew the story. While viewing the area from a nearby hillside they had compared notes. He estimated the numbers assembled there to number from 2- 3.5 thousand.

He described that the boss of the white men had situated himself at the eastern end of the creek flat on the lower part of the hillside, just uphill from the junction of the three roads identified earlier. Riders on horse back encircled the entire area of creek flat, to restrict anyone who attempted to leave the area. Bill described that after some time a number of men and some women became argumentative with the white boss, and they were subdued with violence and threats. A number of men, with the white boss, and they were subdued with violence and threats. A number of men, Bill's number given was sixteen, were chained and separated from the assembly.

The women were "sent" back to their children. The leader of the white men then told everyone they had to go with the white men where they would be able to live in new place. He made it clear the people had no choice in the matter. As the last of those being removed left the creek flat they saw the sixteen chained men being led away over a hill to the North east of what is now the road junction. Bill said no one ever saw these men again. Bill identified that the location people were removed to was Police Paddocks reserve. I pass this story on as much as, and as faithfully, i can recall that was passed to me from Bill.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all involved in making the Yoorook truth and Justice Commission possible. Because of your work I can pass this story on and fulfil my promise to Bill.

**END**