

Things Past

Newsletter 38

April 2011

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

ANZAC Day Dawn Service: Monday 25 April, 5.45am RSL Club Rooms, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

History Group business meeting: Thursday 28 April, 7.30pm Old Community Link.

'Coranderrk: we will show the country': Friday 6 May, 7.30pm Melba Hall, University of Melbourne, bookings www.trybooking.com/NKY (RSVP code 1881), or tel. 9347 6948.

Yarra Ranges Regional Museum opens Saturday 14 May.

Melba's 150th birthday celebrations, Thursday 19 May, contact Lilydale & District HS.

'Cave Hill' talk by Sue Thompson: Saturday 28 May, 1-4pm Mt Evelyn Station House.

Victoria's oldest family tree?

As part of the research for updating our booklet on Aboriginal history, Paula and Karen set to work compiling a family tree of pre-contact Wurrundjeri leaders and their descendants (please refer to page 3).

The earliest tribal chiefs or *ngurungaeta* we know of are Billi-belleri's father, (one of the principal custodians of the greenstone axehead quarry at Mt William), and Poers-roen-gy, who was Bebejern's father and William Barak's grandfather. Barla, wife of Poers-roen-gy, was a sister of one of Billi-belleri's wives and also sister of Ningularbul, a leader from the Mt Macedon area closely associated with the Mt William quarry.

Entrepreneur John Batman recorded in his diary that, of the eight chiefs who signed his 'treaty' near the future site of Melbourne in 1835, three were brothers who all called themselves 'Jaga jaga'. One was Billi-belleri (c.1799-1846), the pre-eminent chief of the Wurrundjeri at the time. The brothers may have been Berberry and Bor-on-up-ton. Bebejern was also present; his 'spokesman', Bungarie, may have signed on his behalf. Barak, too, was present as a boy.

After Billi-belleri's death, the leadership of the tribe passed to his eldest son, Simon Wonga. Wonga had one son, also called Simon, who died young. When Wonga died (c.1875), the leadership passed to his maternal cousin, Barak. Most of the surviving Wurrundjeri were by that time living at Coranderrk Station, Healesville.



Witchetty grub, emblem of the Wurrundjeri-balluk – 'people who live in the manna gum country and include the grub of that tree in their diet' (McGivern). Photo Kevin Phillips.

Backtracking now to the 1850s, Arnold Deschamps tells a strange story about the founder of the Wandin family in 'Lilydale and its first generation' (1931).

There have been three generations of a family known as Wandin. The original Wandin was the first half-caste of the Yarra Yarra tribe, which in the early period meant extermination to any but a full caste. When Wandin was found to be a hybrid, he was escorted by a body of blacks to the Wandin Creek, where he was thrown in. Robert Brierty, by some means, was able to rescue him and brought the child up in infancy, and returning him, as a man, to the tribe long afterwards, when the blacks had advanced in civilisation.

Robert Wandoon was born at Steele's Flat, Robert Brierty's run. One of the earliest settlers in the Upper Yarra Valley, Brierty took up Steele's Flat in 1840 and built his home on the property Violet Vale at the confluence of the Wandin Yallock and Woori Yallock creeks. He was on good terms with the Aborigines and learned their language. Descendant Ross Brierty accepts the story of Robert Brierty rescuing the baby Wandoon from the creek in 1855 and caring for him in infancy.

'It has always fascinated me how Robert Wandoon received his first name', Ross wrote. 'It is my understanding that he was probably christened with this name by Robert Brierty after he was saved from drowning in the Wandin Yallock Creek, which runs through Violet Vale not far from the Brierty Homestead.' Adding poignancy to the story, Robert Brierty's fourth son, Edwin, had drowned on the property four years earlier.

Evidence of a connection between Wandoon and the Briertys is provided by a box of hair owned by Robert Brierty's wife, Violet. Kylie Brierty wrote, 'There are strands of straight black coarse hair (Robert Wandin?) with other snippets of blonde hair (Brierty boys?)'.

Deschamps' claim that the tribe rejected the 'half-caste' is less believable. 'The Kulin themselves made no distinction: the "half-castes" were their children, born of their women on their land.... Any child born to a Kulin wife was her husband's child – which of course was English law also' (Barwick).

The infant, Wandoon, was the son of Barak's younger sister, Anne Borat (also spelt Borate, Boorat or Boorrot). Borat was born on the Plenty River about 1834-1836, i.e. right at the the beginning of white settlement in Victoria.

In a 'sister exchange' negotiated by their brother Parrpun, Borat was married to Andrew Pondy-yaweet of the Kurnai Brataualung tribe of Gippsland in exchange for Lizzie, Barak's first wife. Marriage partners were always chosen from another tribe of the opposite moiety – *Bunjil* (Eaglehawk) tribes married into *Waa* (Crow) tribes and vice versa – but the usual practice was to marry within the Kulin confederacy of tribes. To intermarry with their traditional enemies, the Kurnai tribes of Gippsland, marked a departure. Evidently the tribal leaders decided it was in their common

interest to sink their old hostility, when all were under pressure from European settlement.

While the Briertys may have raised Wandoon in early childhood, he was apparently living with Borat, Pondy-yaweet and their infant son at Port Albert by the early 1860s. The family settled at Coranderrk Station when it was first established and lived out the remainder of their lives there. Pondy-yaweet died in 1868. Borat married Adam Clarke, a Wathaurong man from Bacchus Marsh, in 1870. Both are thought to have died c.1870-71.

By the time of William Barak's death in 1903, the Wurrundjeri had all but disappeared. There were no living descendants of Billi-belleri or any of his brothers, nor of Bebejern's children Harry, Mary and Parrpun. Barak's children all pre-deceased him. The only child of Borat to survive to adulthood was Wandoon. Barak told ethnographer Alfred Howitt: 'When I go, I shall leave the word that my sister's son shall be *ngurungaeta*, with him two others...' He named Wandoon as his successor as chief of the Wurrundjeri, with two others as 'speakers'.

'Bobby Wandon' (Robert Wandoon, 21) married Jemima Burns (19) at Coranderrk on 29 January 1875. They had 10 children, who grew up to have large families of their own. Robert died in 1908 and was buried in Coranderrk cemetery. The 1909 Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines noted that the loss of his leadership was a severe blow to the community. Jemima, who lived till 1944, was Coranderrk's last resident.

The current Wurrundjeri Wandoon elders are grandchildren of Robert and Jemima.

The interlinked family trees descending from Billi-belleri's father and Poers-roen-gy (both possibly born around 1770) may well be the oldest still traceable within what is now Victoria.

Principal sources: 'Mission Voices', Auntie Joy Murphy Wandin interview by Lou Bennett; Auntie Doreen Garvey Wandin in 'Serious Women's Business'; Dianne Barwick, *Rebellion at Coranderrk*; Aldo Massola, *Coranderrk, a history of the Aboriginal station*. Charles Walter's 1866 photos of Coranderrk residents in the State Library can be viewed online on <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/>.

Our full list of sources is too long to include here but is available to members on request.

Text Karen Phillips, family tree Paula Herlihy.

Poers-roen-gy (Jakki Jakki?)
& Barla (Sr of Ningularbul & sr of Billibelleri's wife)

Bebejern/Bebejan (Jerum Jerum) (- 1835)
& Tooterie/Tooterie/Tootoorie (- Approx 1855)

William Barak (1824 - 15 Aug 1903)
& Lizzie (- 1864)

2 unnamed, died in infancy (maybe Anne's Barak)

William Barak (1824 - 15 Aug 1903)
& Anne (Approx 1846 - 8 Jul 1881)

David Barak (Approx 1867 - Approx 1881)

Annie Barak

William Barak (1824 - 15 Aug 1903)
& Sarah Wood (Approx 1844 - 18 May 1894)

Borat/Annie Borate (Boorat) (1834/1836 - 1870/1871)
& Unknown

Wandoon/Robert Wandin aka Bobby Wander (1854 - 21 Jan 1908)
& Jemima Burns (- 1944)

Joseph (Joe) Wandin (13 Aug 1885 -)

Frank Wandin (21 Feb 1888 -)
& UNNAMED

William Wandin (1891 -)

Jemima Jessie Shaw Wandin (12 Sep 1893 -)

James Henry (Jim, Jarlo) Wandin/Wandoon (16 Mar 1896 - 1957)
& Olive Morgan Wright (- 2006)

Custodian greenstone quarry of Poers-roen-gy's gen
& Unknown

Billibelleri/Billi-billeri/Billibellary Jakki Jakki (Approx 1799 - 10 Aug 1846)
& One of two wives Sr of Ningularbul & Barla

Simon Wonga (1824 - 1874/1875)
& Maria

Simon Wonga

Culpendurra (Kul-pen-dure)

Susannah

Tommy Munnering (1835 -)

Berbery (Jacki Jacki?)

Burrenupton/Bor-run-upton (Jacki-Jacki?)

Martha Louisa Wandin (1898 -)

Mary Wandin

Ellen Wandin

Robert Wandin

Nina Wandin

Borat/Annie Borate (Boorat) (1834/1836 - 1870/1871)
& Andrew Pondy Yaweeet

Mary Yaweeet (1864 -)

unnamed

Parrpun

Harry (Old Harry) Jellyabrook/Jellabyock (Approx 1820 - 8 Oct 1891)
& Annie

Mary

Tuat/Jack Weatherley

Family of Bebejern, Barak and Wandin
Inset: family of Billi-belleri and Wonga
Billi-belleri's and Poers-roen-gy's wives
were sisters.

Borat/Annie Borate (Boorat) (1834/1836 - 1870/1871)
& Adam Clarke (- 1870)

? Frank Clarke

? Johnny Clarke

Present generations not included

Water Race Trail cleared

Congratulations to Ben Ellis and the Friends of Water Race and Quinn Reserve on their successful removal of rusting 1950s and 1960s car bodies from the Water Race Trail at Borang Avenue. The rubbish removal project was supported by Councillor Tim Heenan and the Shire's Environment Department, with assistance from Steve of No Fuss Scrap Metal Removal in Wandin.

'At 12.45 pm today [21 March] the Borang Avenue cars disappeared on the back of Steve's truck', Ben emailed triumphantly. 'Total removal and loading time was 3¼ hours... We had a couple of old Fiats, a Morris Minor and a Standard Vanguard. All gone now. All we need to do now is plant a few small shrubs and/or erect a sign to prevent it being filled up with rubbish again!'



Relics of the Fabulous Fifties rusting on the Water Race Trail prior to removal. Photo courtesy Ben Ellis.

Questions of the month

1. We have an enquiry from Ingrid Birchall (nee Romijn, pronounced 'Romain'), seeking proof for a legal settlement that she and her brothers Peter and Andrew and sister Marja were at Mt Evelyn in 1959-60. They moved a lot, as her father was a teacher and lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church. Ingrid was born in 1951, so would have been in Grade 5 or so at the time. She remembers a teacher, Mr Hansen, a student Gary Cooper and another called Margaret. Paula put her in touch with Willie Koole and Mary Golds. Can anyone help? Tel. 03 5283 1423.

2. Lyn Roy (nee Griggs) has found a badge among her late father Bert's possessions that says 'MTERR' and 'PASS', and she wonders if we have any idea what it might be. 'Mt Evelyn RR'? - Railway? Tel. 9737 0200.

Open Day

The History Group held a successful Open Day on Saturday 26 March. We set up our stall and display on the verandah of the Old Link. Our new banner (created by David Monks) worked brilliantly and was easily readable from across the street. A number of members rocked up, making for a pleasant get-together.

A steady stream of visitors came through and expressed interest in our 'Then and Now' display. We made some sales and signed up a new member. Many people asked questions about the historic trails of Mt Evelyn (memo to selves: have brochures of all the trails available at these events in future!)

From Kev's rain gauge

We are now in the season of *Waring* (wombats), April-July. During *Waring* season, wombats emerge to graze in the sunshine. *Buln buln* (Superb lyrebird) males perform their courtship displays. The heart of the *Kombadik* (soft tree fern) is a major food item.

Based on 'Seven Seasons of the Kulin People': <http://museumvictoria.com.au/forest/climate/kulin.html>

Rainfall for March 2011 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Evelyn	Melb	Melb Av
65.5mm	30.4mm	50.4mm

Mt Evelyn cumulative totals for first quarter **2011:364.8mm 2010: 176.3mm 2009: 51.4mm**

March was dryer than last March (87.3mm) but overall we've had more than double for the same time last year. Drought still broken.

Kevin Phillips

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Opinions expressed in *Things Past* are those of the writers, not necessarily those of Mount Evelyn History Group.