

# STONNINGTON'S INDIGENOUS HISTORY



— City of —  
STONNINGTON





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**STONNINGTON**

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The information provided in this document is derived  
from *An Indigenous History of Stonnington – A Report for  
the City of Stonnington (2006)* by Dr Ian Clark and Laura  
Kostanski, University of Ballarat.

The full report can be viewed on Council's website or at  
Council's Libraries.

*Warning*

*This document contains  
images of Indigenous  
people who are deceased*

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# A BRIEF HISTORY

1830-1847

## A BRIEF HISTORY

Throughout the mid to late 1830s, the Port Phillip settlement, later to become known as Melbourne, grew steadily on the back of pastoral expansion. Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung people continued to camp along the south bank of the Yarra River. The western end of Stonnington was a focus for government policy toward Aboriginal people of the Port Phillip district and a Native Police Corp was established in the late 1830s.

In December 1837 the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, decided to establish a Government Mission on a site south of the Yarra, just east of present day Anderson Street. George Langhorne was appointed in charge of the settlement. The settlement design was based on a European village with buildings clustered together and surrounded by fields for cultivation. The primary objective of the mission was to provide for the 'civilisation' of Aboriginal people. By 1838 the mission had become almost exclusively a domain of the Woiwurrung people with only a few Boonwurrung and Wathawurrung attending.



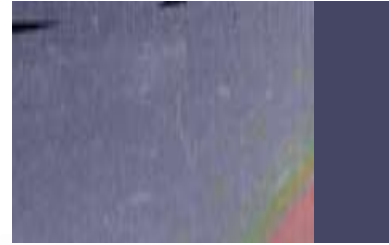


*Native encampment on the banks of the Yarra', Watercolour with graphite pencil and glazing medium, John Cotton, c. 1842*

*La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria,*

In 1839 George Augustus Robinson was appointed the Chief Protector of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. From 1839 - 1843 Robinson's office was based at Langhorne's establishment and his office became a regular focus for Aboriginal people. As Chief Protector, Robinson brought 16 people from the Flinders Island Aboriginal settlement to live with him in Melbourne, current day Stonnington, until many of them were repatriated to Tasmania in 1842. In 1847, Benbow, an eminent Yalukit-william clan head, was employed by Robinson as his Office Messenger.

The present day City of Stonnington falls within what was the Western Port or Melbourne District of the Aboriginal Protectorate, established 1838-39, and the responsibility of Assistant Protector William Thomas. In the early period of his administration he spent considerable time moving between the Aboriginal camps along the Yarra River, several of them at Tromgin (Botanic Gardens) and Toorak and for a period of time located himself at the former site of Langhorne's establishment.



1849-1950

## A BRIEF HISTORY

Early entries from Thomas's journal reveal that the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung had trouble obtaining game and plant foods in the vicinity of Melbourne after colonial settlement and were suffering from introduced diseases. When colonising the area, the Europeans objected to Aboriginal people hunting on the newly colonised lands and consequently they were forced to subsist by begging and cutting bark and firewood for the Europeans. During the late 1830s and early 1840s, Aboriginal camps continued to be broken up following complaints from Europeans. Aboriginal hardship was intensified because there was no bark left in the district and they were then compelled to build mud huts.

In 1849, a Select Committee on Aborigines and the Protectorate recommended the abolition of the Protectorate. The abolition heralded a decade of laissez-faire policy and neglect. William Thomas was retained as Protector of Aborigines for the whole Colony of Victoria, but concentrated his efforts in Melbourne. In 1852 Thomas secured a reserve for the Boonwurrung at Mordialloc and a reserve at Warrandyte for the Woiwurrung. The Boonwurrung, however, continued to visit Melbourne, camping at Fawkner Park and sites in the western end of Stonnington.

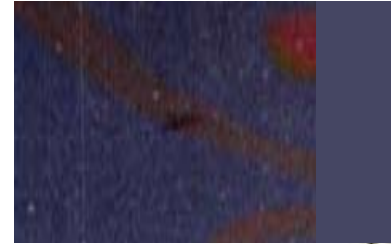


*Untitled drawing, Prahran Archives*



In 1863 a reserve was established at Coranderrk for east Kulin peoples. However, the Boonwurrung, at that time comprising of nine elderly men and women, remained near Mordialloc and Cranbourne. Derrimut, a prominent Yalukitwillam leader, died in 1864 and Jimmy Dunbar, the last of the nine, died in 1877.

From the 1930s, the Indigenous history of Stonnington focuses on the activism of pro-Indigenous white residents, especially Helen Baillie, who opened her house in Punt Road to Aboriginal people from across the state from the 1930s to the late 1950s. There is a continuum between Baillie's activism and that of later groups such as Action for Aboriginal Rights, the National Association for the Advancement of Native Race and Stonnington Citizens for Reconciliation.

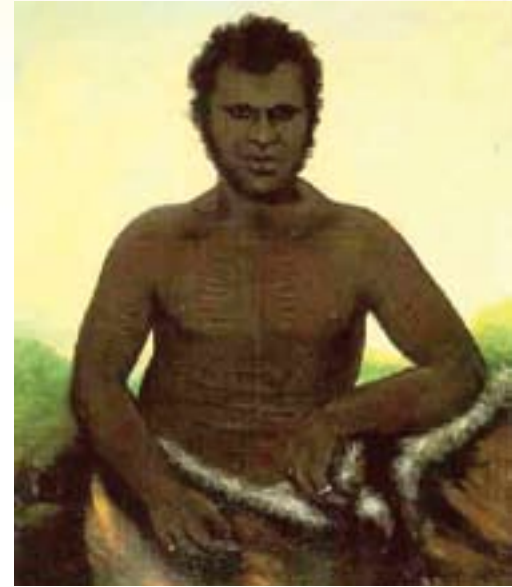


# DERRIMUT

## KEY PEOPLE

**D**errimut was a Yalukit-willam clan-head who belonged to the Boonwurrung language group. Derrimut's name is believed to mean 'to pursue' or 'to hunt'. The name Yalukit-willam properly means 'river camp' or 'river dwellers'. A second name, Buddy-barre, meaning 'salt water' or 'sea', was the name of Derrimut's tribe because his country was near the sea and may be an alternate to the language name, Boonwurrung. The Yalukit-willam were associated with the coastal tract at the head of Port Phillip Bay extending to the Werribee River and included the present-day sites of Williamstown, Port Melbourne, St Kilda and Prahran. The Yalukit-willam were one of six Boonwurrung clans.

Specific sites in the Yalukit-willam estate personally associated with Derrimut included the south bank of the Yarra River, from the punt at South Yarra to the Yarra wharf, where steamers moored. Derrimut also described the site of the Bank of Victoria, in Swanston Streets, between Collins and Flinders Streets, in Melbourne's central business district to Melbourne Magistrate William Hull in 1858 in the following terms: "You see, Mr. Hull, Bank of Victoria, all this mine, all along here Derrimut's once."



*Derrimut, Oil Painting, Benjamin Duterrau, 1837. Mitchell Library State Library of NSW.*



The Yalukit-willian clan developed a positive relationship with Europeans and this continued with the arrival of Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins and his party which first landed in Sorrento on the Mornington Peninsula in 1803. His party included convicts William Buckley and John Pascoe Fawkner, both of whom became prominent figures in the history of the Yalukit-willian clan.

Derrimut was closely associated with John Pascoe Fawkner and he often went hunting and fishing with Fawkner and was in his employ. In correspondence dated 10 April 1836, Fawkner noted that Derrimut 'a chief from whom with others I bought my land, live with me, and frequently go out and shoot kangaroos, snakes for me'. Derrimut and other Aboriginal men often formed a crew for Fawkner's boat *The Enterprise* and assisted to lighten the weight of the boat in bad weather to enable her to get over the bar at the entrance to the channel near Williamstown. The relationship between the two men was so significant that Derrimut warned Fawkner on two occasions of an impending Aboriginal attack on Fawkner's party. The first was a general warning of intention on 28 October 1835. The second, on 13 December 1835, was more specific. *'Derramuck came this day and told us that the natives intended to rush down upon us and plunder our goods and murder us, we cleaned our pieces and prepared for them ... I and two others chased the Blacks away some distance'*.

*Derrimut's warnings ensured that Fawkner's party were able to arm themselves in time to prevent the attack.*

Derrimut was also known to inform the Native Police Corps of names of Aboriginal people attacking sheep on pastoral lands around Melbourne. It is speculated that Derrimut was using the white men as unwitting agents in some longstanding matter of tribal justice.

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*Benjamin Duterrau painted his portrait when he was in Tasmania. It shows Derrimut naked except for a possum skin cloak around his waist. He shows the outward signs of initiation – rows of raised scars on his chest and arms. An interesting example of cultural adaptation is the two rings that adorn his fingers.*

# DERRIMUT

## KEY PEOPLE

He was never a member of the native Police Corp, and was critical of their provisions, 'the police only walk (ie drilled) and get plenty to eat and good clothes.'

In August 1836 Derrimut accompanied Fawcner to Van Diemen's Land in *The Enterprise*, where he was presented to Governor Arthur. Arthur presented Derrimut with a drummer's dress or uniform. Presumably these were the uniforms commonly worn by British units serving in Australia in the early 1800s comprising red serge fatigue, Kilmarnock (pork pie) forage cap and red trousers. Derrimut had a willingness to wear European clothing, to drink European alcohol and to use European weapons, carrying firearms from the time of his association with Fawcner. Giving uniforms, other items of clothing and gifts to leading indigenous people was a common practice in early settler colonies. Uniforms were often a source of pride amongst indigenous people and gorgets or breast-plates were also presented to leading figures.

Botanist and naturalist Daniel Bunce met Derrimut during his 1836 visit to Tasmania. It was the first of several meetings between the two men. Bunce recounted his visit to Tasmania:

... Tasmania was honored by the arrival of some distinguished visitors from Port Phillip, which had just been discovered by Mr. John Batman, in the persons of two of its princes, or chiefs: Derrimut, King of the Werriby District; and Betbenjee, of the adjoining district, two brothers .... Of the two native chiefs, a singular instance of the effects of strong drinks may be related. On their arrival, they both got extremely intoxicated, and they both felt the sickening effects the following morning. Poor Derrimut was induced to taste "a hair of the dog that bit him", and recommenced his debauch, and still continues a drunkard to this day.

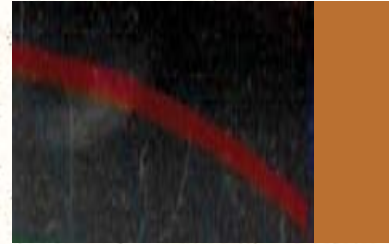
In the early years of the Aboriginal Protectorate, Derrimut and his family moved freely around Boonwurrung country. In July and October 1839, he visited the Wathawurrung people at Geelong. He visited Assistant Protector William Thomas' protectorate station at Tubberubberbil (Arthur's Seat) in June 1840 and often camped near the Yarra Falls and at Tromgin (Botanic Gardens).

In February 1839, Thomas and his wife Susannah cared for Derrimut and his family who were suffering from influenza. Mrs Thomas gave them a quart of tea and bread every morning until they recovered. Thomas noted that 'their gratitude was always evinced'. Derrimut's family included his mother Dindu, and his brother Tallar, also known as Tom. In March 1839, Derrimut was recorded by Robinson as not having any wives, however, by October 1845, Maywerer, also known as Maria, a Wathawurrung woman from Geelong had become his wife. His first wife, Nan.der.goroke, was abducted by sealers at Point Nepean in 1833 and taken to permanent sealing camps on one of the Bass Strait islands.

In place of the Aboriginal Protectorate, Thomas was appointed 'Guardian of Aborigines' for the Colony of Victoria. Thomas concentrated his efforts in the Melbourne district. By June 1852, he had secured 832 acres [367 ha] at Mordialloc, a favourite camping place of the Boonwurrung and 1,908 acres [772 ha] at Warrandyte for the Woiwurrung peoples. The reservations were the result of a bargain he made with La Trobe who wanted them kept out of Melbourne. Thomas was authorised to issue occasional supplies of food and clothing to the aged and ill.

In the early 1850s, Derrimut made another good friend named Horatio Wheelwright who was an English lawyer who became a professional game-shooter and lived near the Aboriginal camps at Mordialloc for several years. Wheelwright explained that when he camped at Mordialloc, he *'lived on very neighbourly terms'* with the Boonwurrung people, who *'generally had their miamies close to my hut; and as I never made too free with them, or gave them a promise I did not intend to keep, I was a bit of a favourite with them'*. It is also clear that Wheelwright had a very high opinion of Derrimut:

Some of our chaps I used to like very much; and when my old friend, King Dermot, is gathered to his fathers, I trust his prediction to me upon one occasion will be verified – that "When he tumbled down, he should go up long way and fly about, all same big one eagle-hawk"



# DERRIMUT

## KEY PEOPLE

In 1858, a Victorian Government Select Committee enquired into the condition of the Aboriginal people of Victoria. The Select Committee was told of Derrimut's despair as the immigrants built homes on his people's country. Magistrate Hull informed the committee of Derrimut's fatalism:

*...if this committee could get Derimut and examine him, I think he would give the committee a great deal of valuable information with respect to himself and his tribe, which would be very interesting; he speaks moderately good English, and I was told by a black a few days ago that he was still alive, and that he 'lay about in St. Kilda'. The last time I saw him was nearly opposite the Bank of Victoria, he stopped me and said "You give me shilling, Mr Hull". "No", I said, "I will not give you a shilling, I will go and give you some bread," and he held his hand out to me and said "Me plenty sulky you long time ago, you plenty sulky me; no sulky now, Derimut soon die," and then he pointed with a plaintive manner, which they can affect, to the Bank of Victoria, he said, "You see, Mr Hull, Bank of Victoria, all this mine, all along here Derimut's once; no matter now, me soon tumble down." I said, "Have you no children?" and he flew into a passion immediately, "Why me have lubra? Why me have picanninny? You have all this place, no good have children, no good have lubra, me tumble down and die very soon now."*

Thomas visited the Mordialloc reserve on 4 November 1862, taking with him an extra pair of blankets for Derrimut. At the reserve, Derrimut angrily asked why he 'let white man take away Mordialloc where black fellows always sit down'. The Lands Board had approved its sale and surveyors were already dividing it into allotments. The Boonwurrung feared they would soon see 'ploughs furrowing up the bones of their ancestors'. Thomas knew their dead had been buried there since 1839 and protested to the Central Board about the 'cruelty' of the Survey Department. These protestations came to nothing. On 31 December 1862, Thomas noted that Derrimut was still complaining about the surveyors.

On 25 January 1863, Thomas whilst on his rounds in Melbourne learned that an Aboriginal man had been taken to hospital '*early in morning found drunk, bruised, and very ill*'. Thomas went to the hospital and discovered that the '*Dr had ordered him immediately in a warm bath – found it King Deremut, the man had much trouble with him scrambling out of*





*Derrimut's tombstone,  
Melbourne General Cemetery*

*the bath till I pacified him and he went thro' the process'. Thomas visited Derrimut the following day, however by 28 January he had 'eloped from the hospital', Thomas noted that he was very anxious about Derrimut and went to see the police sergeant where he learned that by 3 o'clock Derrimut was seen drunk again.*

A number of ailments suffered by Derrimut are recorded and he was treated for partial blindness and a paralysed arm at the Melbourne Hospital in 1863 and 1864. Accounts note that his health deteriorated quickly and his lungs were very weak. In January 1864, Derrimut was the subject of a report into his mistreatment by two nurses. A committee met on 5 January to consider the charge. William Thomas attended the meeting and advocated that the two ward attendants not be discharged but removed to another ward; however he was over-ruled by the committee.

Derrimut was visited by a number of his friends such as Fawkner. However, it was the visits from his country-people that gave him the most joy. On 8 January 1864, three men and a women from Mordialloc were in Melbourne and anxious to see Derrimut. Thomas made 'them deposit their swags near the gate'. He recorded their meeting:

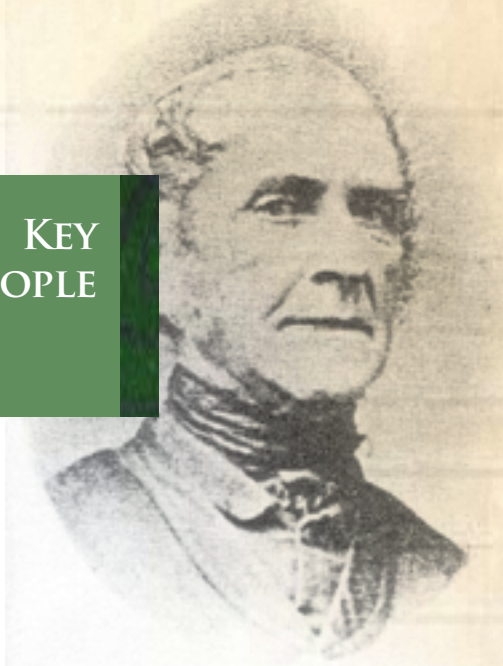
*'Poor Derremut cried & so did Mr Man who hung his head on the breast of Derremut like Esau & Jacob, I was forced at length to separate them.'*

Derrimut was moved to the Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne in March 1864. One of Derrimut's last visitors was Fawkner who came to the asylum the day before he died. Derrimut died in the afternoon of 26 April 1864, although his tombstone notes that date being the 28 May 1864. He was 54 years old.



# GEORGE LANGHORNE

## KEY PEOPLE



*George Langhorne. Photographed in later life by T.F. Chuck in the La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria*

Throughout the mid to late 1830s, as the Port Phillip settlement (present-day Melbourne) grew steadily on the back of pastoral expansion, many Aboriginal people continued to camp in the township's environs. Mostly, they were Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung clanspeople and their preferred camping places were along the south bank of the Yarra River, opposite the settlement and Government Paddocks (between present-day Prince's Bridge and Punt Road). Although the colonists had provided some food and other necessities from the mid-1830s, official attempts to 'civilise' Aboriginal people in Port Phillip began as discussions between the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke and Justice Burton of the Supreme Court.

In December 1837, Bourke decided to establish a Government Mission and placed George Langhorne in charge. Langhorne was an Episcopal missionary from Sydney and a nephew of Port Phillip Police Magistrate Captain William Lonsdale. In 1837 Langhorne, who had experience with Aboriginal prisoners on Goat Island in Sydney harbour, agreed with Captain Lonsdale on a site for the proposed mission. When Governor Bourke visited Port Phillip later in 1837, he officially approved the use of the

895-acre site south of the Yarra River, just to the east of present-day Anderson Street. Some wattle and daub huts were erected by convicts to serve as mission buildings.

There are several accounts of the Langhorne mission. In November 1837, two Quakers, George W. Walker and James Backhouse, spent a week visiting Melbourne which included a visit to Langhorne's Mission. Backhouse commented that:

*'The parents of the children come to see them at pleasure, and when they wish it, take them out to hunt; but for this the children do not seem much inclined, preferring to be fed on easier terms at the Institution. The parents are not encouraged to make long visits; they are furnished with but a few meals gratuitously, and if they choose to make longer stops, they have to earn their victuals at the rate of two hours' work for eight ounces of meat and twelve ounces of flour'.*

A report written by Langhorne during November 1837 confirmed that some 20 children and youths were resident in the Mission's premises, of which 14 were under daily instruction. The six elder boys were employed in working the boat. During the previous month between 60 and 80 Aboriginal people were resident. Some were engaged in building a large hut to serve as both a school-room and dormitory for children and by the end of December, 18 children were resident. Half an acre of land had been planted with vegetables and another half with potatoes. Most of the pupils were from Woiwurrung clans and received food rations and clothes for which they were responsible for mending. Non-resident parents visited the children regularly to check on their well being, but while parents were prepared to leave their boys at the mission to attend instruction, Langhorne had great difficulty engaging the girls in mission activity as their parents disallowed interaction between the girls and boys.

During 1838, Woiwurrung people, frequently removed their children from the mission to participate in cultural activities. When the Aboriginal children were present, the schoolmaster was engaged daily and servants were ordered to build fences and huts.



# GEORGE LANGHORNE

By April 1838, the mission had become almost exclusively a domain of the Woiwurrung, with only a few Boonwurrung and Wathawurrung individuals present.

The Mission was also affected by actions of some of the Aboriginal people on surrounding land, stealing potatoes and destruction of stock such as sheep. During one particular incident Langhorne was outraged by the brutality exhibited by Police Magistrate Lonsdale's party and was particularly upset at the firing of shots that alarmed those at the mission. The next day Langhorne challenged the efficacy and appropriateness of Lonsdale's actions and from June 1838 ceased to report to him directly. Most of the Aboriginal residents of the mission left after the shots were fired, which further angered Langhorne. Lonsdale subsequently sought to replace Langhorne and he was formally dismissed on 1 July 1839.

In correspondence dated 15 October 1839, Langhorne summarised his experience as the first missionary in Port Phillip. His assessment was that the ultimate goal of the plan he was given was 'the intermixture by marriage of the Aborigines among the lower order of our countrymen as the only likely means of raising the former from their present degraded and benighted state'. He considered that a central cause of failure was that a fixed establishment was diametrically opposed to 'their wandering and unsettled habits'.

The mission was closed in August 1839 and Lonsdale recommended that the reserve land of 895 acres be laid out in suburban allotments and sold. The land allocated to the reserve had become increasingly valuable and pressure grew to move the mission and have the land put up for sale or given over to a purpose more beneficial to the whites. On 21 December 1839, Assistant Protector Willam Thomas wrote to Governor Gipps requesting that the proceeds from the sale of the reserve land be used to establish an agricultural settlement for the Aboriginal people of his protectorate district. This petition came to nothing.

Langhorne went on to pastoral pursuits near Dandenong. He died in 1897.



## KEY PEOPLE





# GEORGE AUGUSTUS ROBINSON



In 1838 the Secretary of State, Lord Glenelg, proposed that five protectors would be appointed for the Port Phillip District. George Augustus Robinson (1788-1866), the Commandant of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement who had established certain notoriety for his role in the 'conciliation' of Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal people, was appointed the Chief Protector and with him four Assistant Protectors. The assistants were three Methodist schoolmasters and an Army officer. The four Assistant Protectors arrived at Port Phillip (present day Melbourne) in January 1839 and were directed to report to Police Magistrate Lonsdale and take instructions from him until Chief Protector Robinson arrived from Flinders Island.

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*George Augustus Robinson. Oil painting by Bernardino Giani, State Library of NSW.*

# GEORGE AUGUSTUS ROBINSON

## KEY PEOPLE

Robinson arrived in Melbourne in late February 1839. On 6 March 1839, Police Magistrate William Lonsdale offered Robinson the use of a small room in the Police Magistrate's paddock which he 'gladly accepted'. This hut was on the banks of the Yarra River in what is now Jolimont and had been formerly occupied by the 1838 Native Police Corps. Robinson lived and worked from this small one-roomed hut until his family joined him in April 1839.

On 3 May 1839, Robinson met with Robert Hoddle, the Chief Surveyor of Port Phillip District, and requested an allotment of land. Hoddle recommended Robinson move to the 'Aboriginal reserve', a reference to Langhorne's village mission, until he could get a station. Robinson had four, and possibly five, residences during his time in Melbourne. With the exception of his first residence, it would seem that Robinson lived in what is now the City of Stonnington from 1839 until he left Victoria and returned to England in 1852.

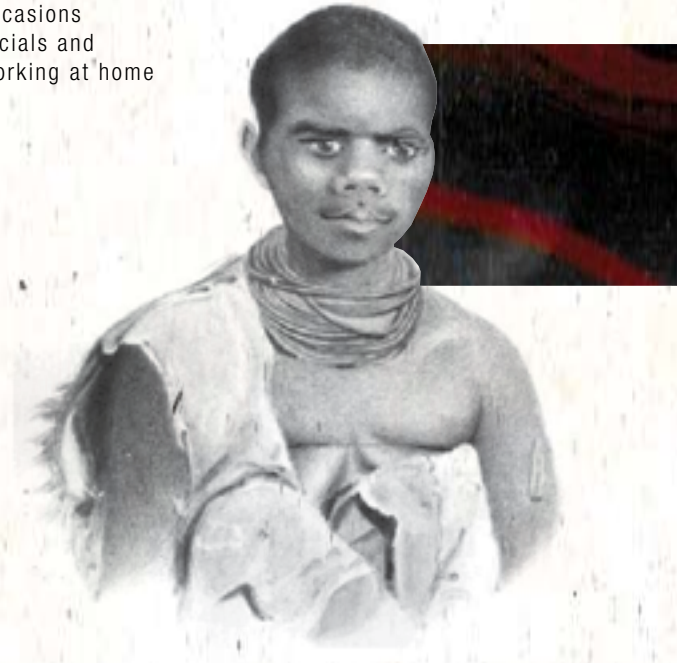
In his journal dated 25 December 1839, Robinson notes his intention to buy a piece of land for building a place for his family as he could not build on crown land. In late July 1840 Robinson purchased at auction, for £744, eight hectares at 43 South Bank of Yarra, a 15 minute ride from Melbourne. Robinson specifically stated the name 'South Bank of Yarra' was the 'name of suburban section No. 8 on Yarra Yarra, south side'. This location has also been described as 'on the hill at the bottom of Chapel Street'. The Aboriginal people told him the locality was known

*Walter George Arthur and Mary Ann Arthur, 1858, Beattie copy of F.R. Nixon photograph, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery Item Q13013.*



to them as 'Terneet'. Robinson used several names for his Prahran residence, including 'Claremont', 'Terneet', and 'Rivolia' (sometimes written as 'Tivolia', and 'Tivoli'). Robinson moved into Terneet on 14 October 1843. By all accounts Terneet was highly regarded in Melbourne society. Many Aboriginal people visited his home and on occasions camped near his private residence. Many protectorate officials and other public officers also often visited him when he was working at home to transact official business.

From 1839 until 1842 Robinson was responsible for the welfare of some 15 Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal people, and Charlotte, a South Australian woman who had been living with sealers in Bass Strait, who came to Port Phillip from the Flinders Island establishment. They were Walter George Arthur (Friday), Mary Ann Arthur, Lalla Rookh (Truganini), Matilda (Maria Matilda Natapolina/Maytepueminner), VDL Jack (Napoleon/Pevay/ Jack Napoleon Tarraparrura/Tunnerminnerwait), Wooreddy (Doctor/ Mutteellee), Fanny (Fanny Waterfordia/Planobeena), Timmy (Robert/Maulboyheener), Thomas Thompson, Isaac (Probelattener/Lackley), Johnny Franklin, Rebecca (Meeterlatteenner), Thomas Brune, David Brune (Myyungge/ Dowwringgi/Leati) and Peter Brune (Droleluni). Some of these people lived with and were cared for by Robinson and they are a part of the Indigenous history of Stonnington.



*'Trugemana', Beattie photograph of Thomas Bock watercolour c. 1840, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Item Q13009.*

# HELEN BAILLIE

## KEY PEOPLE

The Indigenous history of the City of Stonnington includes the activism of pro-Indigenous white residents, especially Helen Baillie. Baillie opened her house in Punt Road Toorak, as a hostel to Aboriginal people from across the State from the 1930s until the late 1950s. Baillie was active in promoting Aboriginal rights.

Helen Baillie was a descendent of the Baillie brothers who were early settlers in Victoria. Her ASIO file described her as a 'Christian Communist', a description she herself once used. Her beliefs led her to volunteer as a nurse for the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War and work for the Spanish Relief Committee in Melbourne. She travelled widely to learn more about Aboriginal matters and joined the Victorian Aboriginal Group and formed the Victorian Aboriginal Fellowship Group in 1932 an association for Christians interested in Aboriginal welfare.

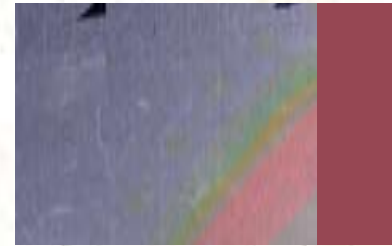


*Contemporary photograph of  
462 Punt Road, South Yarra, and former  
home of Helen Baillie  
(photographer Andrew Kostanski)*



She became a life member of the Australian Aborigines' League that formed in 1936 to fight for equal rights for Aboriginal people. She was also connected with the Association for the Protection of Native Races in Sydney and the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society in London. One associate has recalled that she was 'driven by a feeling of guilt that her ancestors had taken the land'. After 1951 she became a member of several activist groups including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Council for Aboriginal Rights.

Baillie acknowledged Aboriginal people as 'the original inhabitants' of our land. She argued that settler Australians had a duty to them and emphasised the 'almost uniformly bad ... history of Australia'. She encouraged women activists to seek professional employment in Aboriginal affairs: 'women with a real love for the Aborigines, with a vocation for the work and a liking for an adventurous and pioneering life, would do a work not only of great service to the Aborigines, but ... to the white settlers as well'.



# HELEN BAILLIE

## KEY PEOPLE

Writing in 1956, Helen Baillie described her circumstances:

*I am very hard up as I have had so many Aboriginal folk staying in my home. They came up from Framlingham (30km north east of Warrnambool) looking for work and I have been keeping them and paying fares while they were looking for work. They have very big appetites and I have a huge food bill ... I have only one boy who is doing well. He is in regular work as a builder's labourer and always pays his board regularly but many of the others are a problem. The boy who is doing well is Jimmie Berg, aged 18 from Nyora S. Gippsland ... and he is a cousin of the lads from Framlingham.*

Indigenous Elder Jim Berg was a boarder at Helen Baillie's home during the 1950s. In a recent interview, Berg commented that Baillie 'was a giver, she gave more than she received...everybody who came there looking for assistance one way or another, she gave...she gave them a roof over their head or money; she gave while she had it'. In relation to the rules of the house, Berg recalled that 'she had a set of rules and people respected the rules...people used to bring food in, go down the street and buy foods. It wasn't a completely handout mentality there, it was a two way thing. Berg noted that Baillie's place 'was a centre, in one sense, for one group of [Indigenous] people from the Western District'.



*Helen Baillie and Hills Hoist*

When Helen Baillie died in 1970, Elder Banjo Clarke expressed a desire for a memorial to be built to remember all the good she had done. He recalled his impression of Baillie:

*She could be strict with the blackfellahs living with her too. She would remind everyone of their Aboriginal principles and duties to each other, and once, when one of the blackfellahs was in hospital, she made all the blackfellahs that was staying with her go and sit on the lawn outside the hospital, the Aboriginal way, so that the sick person could feel their spirit. ... Miss Baillie did more than anyone I knew of at that time for Aboriginal people, never stopping to think about herself. And yet she has been so much forgotten.*

There is a continuum between Baillie's activism and that of later groups such as Action for Aboriginal Rights and Stonnington Citizens for Reconciliation. Their efforts have produced many significant achievements, including the City of Stonnington adopting a Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Australians in October 2002 and a Reconciliation Action Plan in August 2005.



*Helen Baillie (in centre) and some of her residents*



# JIM BERG

## KEY PEOPLE

Jim Berg came to Melbourne from Gippsland when he was 16 or 17 years old to find work. During this time he boarded with Helen Baillie at her home at Punt Road, South Yarra. He had previously worked in Framlingham as a woodcutter and in Upper Beaconsfield on the railways. In compiling Stonnington's Indigenous History, Jim Berg was interviewed in May 2006. The following are extracts from that interview.

*I was a brickie's labourer, rigger, scaffolder... My goodness probably 1956 Olympics, probably in the 50s. It is a bit hard [to remember] because when I left school at 14 I was only out of work for about two years in my 68 years. I used to have two to three jobs at a time, so I used to go away and clean bricks on the weekend and go to do other work.*

*Yeah I went down to Portland and became a slaughterman. In Portland I became a slaughterman off and on for 14½ years. With every other job in between like I used to work two or three jobs as a slaughterman on the weekends. And I reached a stage where it was 350 men working the mutton chains and I was one of three who can do every job on the chain.*



*Jim Berg's Grandmother Mary*



*And the young fellow lying down there is Rex Wright. I was a day older than Rex. He died in his mid 30s. Just lounging around in the sunshine. Very nice and that is on her [Helen Baillie's] front lawn.*

*Yes, there was my grandfather, my grandmother said you will get what you deserve, my pop says, always speak the truth, my uncle Banjo Clarke says if you haven't got principles then you are not a man and the other uncle says hard work will never do you any harm. So I stuck by those four principles and every time I saw my uncle and I said you cost me another friend uncle, he said he wasn't your friend in the first place.*

*Yeah, even as a kid walking down the Avenue with Fram cousins, I used to drop back and just sit in the gutter or the gully, where's Jim you know what he's like he is off on his own again. I am a great believer in people. I believe if you scratch my back I will scratch your back. No thanks I judge the issues. If I am at a meeting, like talking to you now, doesn't mean that I wouldn't talk to you outside if I had something that I disagree with I would ignore you completely but inside a meeting I would support your ideas if they were worthwhile. Everybody knew exactly where I stood. Fine in a meeting, but outside, who are you? So that is where the principles come in.*

Jim Berg is a founding member of the Koorie Heritage Trust and today sits on its board.



*Helen Baillie, Albert (Gunboat) Clarke & Jim's Mother, Henrietta Clarke*



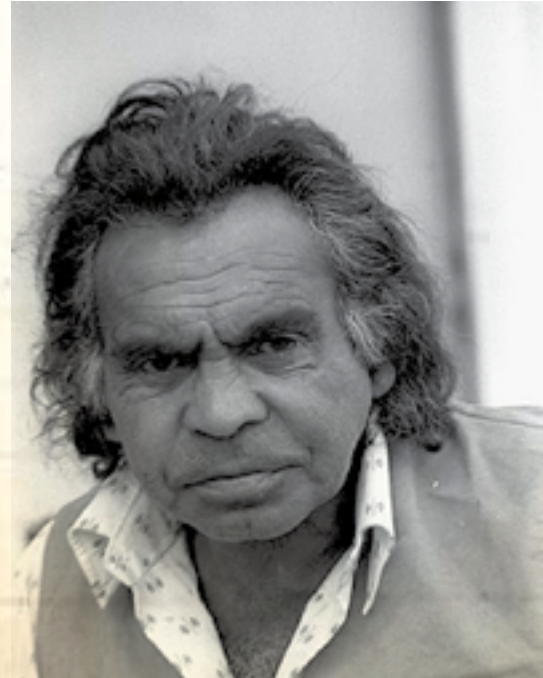
*Rex Wright, Jim Berg & Maisie Lorna Clarke*

# BANJO CLARKE

## KEY PEOPLE

**B**anjo (Henry) Clarke was born around 1922 on Framlingham Aboriginal mission, located near Warrnambool in South-Western Victoria. During the depression Banjo moved to Melbourne with his family to look for work.

Through the reminiscences of the late Banjo Clarke we learn of the Aboriginal activism of Helen Baillie and life in the 1940s and 1950s.



*At that time, one old Christian lady was a great help to us Aboriginals in any sort of trouble like that. Her name was Helen Baillie, but we always called her Miss Baillie. She was a nurse from a well-to-do family who had once been farmers in the Western District, and she devoted her life to helping Aboriginals in every way possible. I don't think her family really approved. She used to pay lawyers out of her own pension to act for us if we was in trouble with the law. If black children were sick, she'd take them to hospital. She even went as a delegate to a government convention in Canberra to speak up for better conditions for Aboriginal people. She was an unsung hero for us blackfellahs. She loved everyone.*

*Miss Baillie always kept her money in a little purse that was tied around her waist and hidden underneath her skirt. She always wore long, old-fashioned dresses that had been her mother's, and some of the blackfellahs would wonder how she managed to get her money in and out of that purse without getting undressed. Sometimes the drunks would try to get at her purse from underneath her skirts and she would slap their hands and say in her very educated way of talking, 'Don't you do that!' Sometimes she couldn't help laughing at them. She had a great sense of humour and when she laughed she'd always put her hand over her mouth. We often had a joke with her, especially whenever she drove us anywhere. She wasn't a very good driver and had some near misses in that car. So we weren't allowed to talk to her when she was driving because she had trouble concentrating. But she'd always drive all the blackfellahs to government elections and things like that, because although they couldn't vote she wanted them to have their say.*



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*Banjo Clarke, photograph by JB Ellis,  
University of Melbourne Archives,  
ID: UMA/1/194*



# COUNTRY – YALUKIT-WILLAM

## INDIGENOUS CLANS, COUNTRIES & LANGUAGES

The language of the Melbourne area is collectively known as ‘Kulin’ or ‘East Kulin’ recognising that there are more languages than those spoken around Melbourne. The ‘East Kulin’ language has three dialects, Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung and Daungwurrung. Linguists labelled these languages Kulin because this word is common to all the dialects and means ‘man’.

The current City of Stonnington formed part of the Boonwurrung language area. The northern boundary of the City of Stonnington, the Yarra River and Gardiner’s Creek, approximates the boundary between the Boonwurrung and their northern neighbour, the Woiwurrung. The Boonwurrung held a narrow strip that extended as far west as the Werribee River. The Yarra River and Gardiner’s Creek provided the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung with food including plants, eels, fish, mussels and waterfowl as well as being traditional camping places. There were inter-marriages between the Boonwurrung and their Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) neighbours.

The Yalukit-willam, whose name probably means “river camp” or “river dwellers”, were associated with the coastal tract at the head of Port Phillip Bay extending to the Werribee River and included Williamstown, Port Phillip, St Kilda and Prahran. The country of the Yalukit-willam clan covered all of the City of Stonnington with the exception of the small portion east of Gardiner’s Creek, which is Wurundjeri-balug (Woiwurrung)

In the 1830s the Yalukit-willam numbered at least 40 people. They were described as hunter-gatherers who moved around within the limits of their territory to take advantage of seasonal food resources. They had two clan heads, Derrimut and Ningerranaro.



# LANGUAGE – BOONWURRUNG



The Yalukit-willam people spoke the Boonwurrung language. Boon being their distinctive word for 'no', and wurrung meaning 'lips', 'mouth', and 'language'. 'Boonwurrung' is used rather than 'Bunwurrung' or 'Bunerong' so that we do not mispronounce the first vowel as the vowel of sun, pun, etc.

At the time of European settlement there was a long-standing enmity between the Boonwurrung and the Ganai peoples of Gippsland. The Ganai peoples of Gippsland called the Boonwurrung, thuring (tiger snakes) 'because they came sneaking about to kill us'. The Boonwurrung called the Ganai and other non-Kulin peoples, mainmait, or berbira, meaning 'no good', 'foreign' or 'wild men'. These differences were settled in the late 1840s.



*East Kulin language areas and clans  
(Source Clark 1990:364)*

# BOONWURRUNG NAMES FOR FLORA AND FAUNA

The language of the Melbourne area, with its three dialects, Daungwurrung, Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung, is collectively known as the Kulin or East Kulin group of languages.

## INDIGENOUS CLANS, COUNTRIES & LANGUAGES

fat-tailed dunnart	<i>barruth</i>	whale	<i>betayil</i>
native cat	<i>yurn</i>	flathead	<i>dalum</i>
ring-tailed possum	<i>bamun</i>	shark	<i>darrak</i>
grey kangaroo	<i>marram</i>	blackfish	<i>duat</i>
red kangaroo	<i>djimbanggurr</i>	ant	<i>burrun</i>
dingo	<i>yirrangin</i>	fly	<i>garragarrak</i>
sugar glider	<i>warran</i>	butterfly	<i>balam-balam</i>
bandicoot	<i>bung</i>	bee	<i>murnalong</i>
quail	<i>tre-bin</i>	frog	<i>ngarrert</i>
pelican	<i>wadjil</i>	tadpole	<i>poorneet</i>
emu	<i>barraimal</i>	she-oak	<i>tur-run</i>
water fowl	<i>kor-rung-un-un</i>	banksia, honeysuckle	<i>warrak</i>
ibis	<i>baibadjerruk</i>	yellow box	<i>dhagurn</i>
swan	<i>gunuwarra</i>	peppermint tree	<i>wiyal</i>
black duck	<i>dulum</i>	woolly tea-tree	<i>wulep</i>
nankeen kestrel	<i>gawarn</i>	sarsaparilla	<i>wadimalin</i>
black cockatoo	<i>yanggai</i>	clematis aristata	<i>minamberang</i>
peewee	<i>dit-dit</i>	wattle	<i>garrong</i>
eel	<i>yuk</i>	yellow box	<i>dhagurn</i>
oyster	<i>u.yoke</i>	buttercup	<i>gurm-burrut</i>
cockle	<i>mur-yoke</i>	yam daisy	<i>murna</i>
periwinkle	<i>pid-de-ron</i>		
stingray	<i>barbawor</i>		



# LANGUAGE HERITAGE IN STONNINGTON TODAY

**S**tonnington has numerous street names that have an Aboriginal origin. The following examples demonstrate the possible heritage of Aboriginal street names in the city.

**Carrum Street:** presumably derived from Carrum Carrum Swamp or Seaford Swamp, a Boonwurrung placename of unknown meaning.

**Dandenong Road:** the meaning of Dandenong is not certain, there are two translations 'going to eat' or 'frost-bitten feet'.

**Illawarra Crescent:** a Jardwadjali placename and forest name in the Northern Grampians; of uncertain meaning.

**Karbarook Avenue:** meaning and derivation is not known.

**Koornang Road:** presumably a variant of 'gurnung', the Kulin word for river creek.

**Kooyong Road:** may be derived from Kooyong-koot (Gardiner's Creek). Four meanings are given in the literature 'guyun' or 'fighting spear'; 'camp or resting place', 'the haunt of the waterfowl' and a 'fish spear'.

**Larnook Street:** a Kulin word, lar-ng-uk meaning 'his/her nest or camp'. Lar(ng) is seen elsewhere in Kulin placenames, such as Langi Ghiran, Langi Willi, Larnebarramul Lagoon, Langi Kal Kal, Langi Logan and Laharum.

**Mernda Road:** presumably named after a Woiwurrung placename in the City of Whittlesea, presumably meaning 'earth'.

**Monaro Close:** presumably named after the southern NSW Monaro region. The word has several meanings in the literature, including 'a plain' and 'the navel'.

**Monomeath Avenue:** presumably named after Monomeith, a Boonwurrung placename in the City of Cardinia, meaning 'pleasant, good, pure'.

**Moralla Road:** meaning and derivation is not known

**Orrong Road:** possibly a corruption of (W)urrung, meaning 'language, lips, mouth'.



## INDIGENOUS CLANS, COUNTRIES & LANGUAGES

*Aboriginal campsite  
William Thomas, in R Brough Smyth  
Papers, La Trobe Australasian  
Manuscripts Collection, State Library  
of Victoria (sourced from Ellender &  
Christiansen 2001: 52*



**Quamby Avenue:** presumably named after Dhauwurdwurrung placename in the Moyne Shire; quamby/guwambi is a Woiwurrung word meaning 'a sleeping place'.

**Toorak:** is a variant of Turrak, the widespread eastern Kulin word for 'reedy grass' or 'weed in lagoon'.

**Toorong Road:** believed to be an indigenous place name, however very little is known about its origins. Two meanings are recorded: 'new, not old, modern' and 'bulrush'.

**Trawalla Avenue:** presumably named after the Wathawurrung placename in the Pyrenees Shire meaning 'much rain, wild water, flood'.

**Tyalla Crescent:** possibly named after the western Kulin tjala/tjali equivalent to 'wurru', 'mouth, lips, language'.

**Warra Street:** possibly named after 'wurru' the Kulin word for 'mouth, lips, language'.

**Warrigal Road:** presumably named after Warrigal, the Dharuk (NSW) word for 'wild or savage/untamed, wild dog'.





# CULTURAL SITES IN THE CITY OF STONNINGTON

Stonnington contains many sites that are significant.

Site	Significance
Tromgin	Waterhole, important eeling site in the 1830s and 1840s; regular campsite during 1840s; site of cremations in 1840s; site of Protectorate operations; Walpole's station in 1840s, later site for the Royal Botanic Gardens
Prahran	895-acre site of Government Mission under supervision of George Langhorne, 1837-1839; site of numerous burials; temporary residence of Protectorate officials, 1839
Gardiner's station adjoining Government mission  (South of Yarra River, east of present day Anderson Street)	John Gardiner's station; Gardiner employed an Aboriginal youth from the Murrumbidgee, possibly a Wiradjuri speaker; station beside Government Mission was the site of conflict in April 1838, Aboriginal people raiding Gardiner's crops, especially potatoes, and subsequent capture of Tullamarine and Jin Jin
Terneet Tivoli	Residence and farm of Chief Protector, George Augustus Robinson (purchased in 1840, resident from late 1843 until mid 1852); also known as Tivoli; personally associated with Derrimut, significant Yalukit-willam leader; residence of many of the 15 Tasmanian Aboriginal people (1839-1842) who accompanied Robinson from Flinders Island; several Aboriginal people are buried at Terneet; many Woiwurrung, Boonwurrung, and Wathawurrung and others visited Robinson at his home
Turruk	Regular campsite during 1840s
Forest in northwest corner of Fawkner Park; and opposite Fawkner Hotel	Known camping site in late 1840s and 1850s; Aboriginal people used to meet there every month on the full moon and hold corroborees, late 1840s until 1851; camping place of Derrimut

## SIGNIFICANT SITES

## SIGNIFICANT SITES

Site	Significance
Forest, Chapel Street, Windsor	Known camping site in late 1840s and 1850s
Lake Como, Como Park near Williams Road	Favourite resort of the Aborigines, late 1840s and 1850s
Site of Toorak Hotel	Campsite of Murrey, the king of the Yarra Yarra tribe
Forest between Church of England Grammar School in Domain Road and Toorak Road	Campsite of Aborigines in late 1850s
Gully near junction of Toorak Road and Chapel Street	Aboriginal camp site in tea-tree scrub; used by Aboriginal people visiting from Gippsland
Chapel Street, between Commercial Road and Dandenong Road	Meeting place for staging corroborees
Mount Erica near corner of High Street and Williams Road	Corroboree site during early history of Prahran
High Street, near Malvern Town Hall	Meeting place and venue for staging corroborees
Banks of swamp at Yarra Street, now the site of the playground of Melbourne High School, alongside the South Yarra Railway Bridge	Campsite of Derrimut
South Yarra Depot, near Clara Street	Beruke, or Gellibrand, member of Native Police Corps, buried there on 14 January 1852
Southeast corner of Punt and Commercial Roads	Gathering of Aboriginal people to celebrate occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Wales 1863
Residence, 462 Punt Road	Former home of pro-Indigenous activist Helen Baillie 1940s-1970; became an important place of residence of Aboriginal people visiting Melbourne, particularly from the Framlingham community
Kooyong Park, Malvern	Some 1500 artifacts excavated from Kooyong Park 1975-78 by local resident Dennis Mayor





STONNINGTON'S  
INDIGENOUS  
HISTORY

THIS DOCUMENT IS A SUMMARY OF AN INDIGENOUS HISTORY OF STONNINGTON (2006)  
BY DR IAN CLARK AND LAURA KOSTANSKI, UNIVERSITY OF BALLARAT.

For more information visit [www.stonnington.vic.gov.au](http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au)  
or contact Council on 8290 1333

