

**NOTES TO THE LOGS AND TRANSCRIPTIONS IN THE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION IN THE
MITCHELL LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

A very important note:

The Library does not commission verbatim transcriptions of the interviews in its collection. Its policy is to provide a tape log which is a summary of the contents of the tape against the tape counter.

However, some interviews are received into the collection already transcribed. On occasion these are verbatim transcriptions, but more generally they are edited transcriptions. Any suspected discrepancies should be checked against the sound recording.

The Library urges researchers to listen to the sound recording as it is the original document.

To facilitate access to these sound recordings tape logs have been provided to allow researchers to find and listen to that part of the interview which might interest them.

The Library is indebted for most of the logs in these cabinets to a team of dedicated volunteers who have given their services generously and faithfully over the years since the Oral History Program was instituted in 1991.

The logs are divided into three parts –

1. The numbers given are those which appear on the tape counter as the cassette is spooling through.
2. The summary of the content of the tape appears against these numbers.
3. At the end of the individual sides of the tape (Side A or Side B) there is a list of **proper names**, being personal and place names, which are mentioned in the tape.

OR

When the dumb terminals in the Library were superseded by PCs it was possible to construct the logs in columns – the first column contains the tape counter number, the second presents the summary against the tape counter and the third lists the **proper names**, being personal and place names.

The names listed are proper names only – there are no indexed subject headings.

Readers of an oral history transcript or log should bear in mind that it is a record of the spoken word and reflects the informal conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources.

In the case of the log, the summary may be in the style of the particular volunteer who constructed the log. A move towards some standardisation of this process is in train.

The Mitchell Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview, nor for the views expressed therein. There will sometimes be uncorrected typographical errors and, occasionally, misspellings of names among the proper names mentioned by the interviewee. The Library apologises for these and would be glad to receive any information which would offer a corrected version.

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Interview with Warren Whitfield with Rosemary Block at the State Library of New South Wales on Friday 7 September 2001.

RB re Warren Whitfield and where he was born and grew up.

I've always been interested in family history. My mother never kept it a secret that we were Aboriginal.

RB

Always knew since we were little. But we didn't know what tribe we were from initially. Just knew we were Aboriginal and that we came from the central coast. That's all we knew. And then—so we started to do a bit of research—talking to the family mainly and that's where it all started because the family have always told stories of great - great grandmother Sophy and how she was raped—they've always known that story and that happened it 1823.

RB

What happened was that great-great-great grandmother Sophy was part of the Walkaloo clan which is now what they call Guring-gai tribe - Ku-ring-gai tribe? We pronounce it with a G. not with a K.

RB Name of clan?

Walkaloo . I mean—there's no real correct spelling for it. Walkaloo clan which is Brisbane Waters mob, you know. And in fact the town in Woy Woy was once called Webb's Flat and James Webb was the original settler there. He arrived there in 1823—he had a grant from the Governor but the—even going further back James Webb arrived on the Scarborough in 1790 and I had a look at only two days ago at Macquarie University I had a look at some of the records from Governor Grose from his records from the 1790s and it had him as being promoted to corporal in the New South Wales Corps in 1789. So that's the reason he came to Australia initially—he was on the ship the Scarborough. And he left the New South Wales Corps in I think 1794. He got a grant of 60 acres out at Windsor. He become a farmer and he grew corn and stuff like that for the colony but he was also a shipwright—a shipbuilder and he also built ships and that to carry the produce in to Sydney, and anyway, later on he got a property—a grant of a property of 530 acres at—now called Webb's Creek out near Wiseman's Ferry—well that was his property.

Then in 1823 he applied for a grant of land in Brisbane Waters because of the timber that was there. Because he was a shipbuilder he was interested in timber. And he got that grant in 1823 which made him the first white settler in Brisbane Waters - in that whole area in Broken Bay. That was the same year that Charlotte was conceived which is my great-great grandmother.

James Webb was 40 when he arrived on the Scarborough in 1790—he was 65 in the 1828 census which I happen to have here. And he was 60 when he raped my great-great (great) grandmother, Sophy, who was 11 or 12 at the time. I've also got her age in the 1835 census. And we've also got Charlotte's age in the marriage records—when she was married—I've also got the official document. She was married in 1845 at the age of 22 so that brings her conception back to 1823. Her name was Charlotte Webb. There was only one white fellow in Brisbane Waters at that time let alone only one Webb and that was James so he was the father.

But anyway, even without the records it's in our family oral history—we know that James Webb raped Sophy.

RB

We checked the facts through the archives. Members of the family did and I did later on.

RB

There always has been a big tradition of interest in family history—there always has been.

RB

Sophy was Bungaree's niece—and in fact we've got Sophie and Bungaree's son here together in the 1831 census and Bungaree's son, Little Dick, actually attacked James Webb's farm in retribution for the rape of Sophy and that's also borne out in the Court records of the time.

RB

Some of that search was done by Keith Vincent Smith so there's a lot of people actually been working on our clan in terms of looking at the history. Because there's little bits and pieces that are found in nooks and crannies in all sorts of documents that relate to them.

RB (where Bungaree's grave is) Was that family knowledge?

No. We knew that he (Bungaree) was buried somewhere—we knew the vicinity but we didn't know the actual spot—we found out later the actual spot where he was buried. I went looking for it a couple of years ago.

RB

Well, actually Keith Vincent Smith was the one who told me where the actual spot was because they did dig up his coffin and it had the newspaper clippings in the coffin and also apparently had the gorgets in there as well—they just put them back in the ground and covered it over.

RB

Goregets are the brass king plates.
RB As far as we know (back in the ground).

RB

I can mention the area (of the burial site). The area is Rose Bay in Sydney and of course he actually got a grant of land—he was one of the first Aborigines to get a grant of land over at Georges Head and he actually wanted to be buried facing his home. So that's where he's buried.

RB (What was the feeling of the family about Bungaree's connection with the white fellas of that day? Is there any record?)

That's hard to say—all the old people are dead now—long dead. I never met her (my great grandmother). My mother had told me stories of her. I didn't personally meet her.

RB

Bungaree - looking back he was a very important person—a very well known Aboriginal but also in terms of family we feel that he was ridiculed a lot. By people within sort of authority and by dressing him in sort of second hand, worn, hand-me-down mariner's uniform—of different creeds. I mean he wore a Russian jacket and, you know, British attire—a mixture of different attire and that was just all worn out stuff that was handed down to him. But he himself probably felt proud wearing it—it probably gave him a sense of authority or a sense of, I am someone special and it may be that other Aborigines at the time looked up to him and wished that they had those sort of garments. I am sure that they were given to him not to make him feel like that but to mock him in some sort of way.

RB

I believe he (Flinders) was very friendly towards Bungaree—but in general know.

RB

(In the family) We wouldn't know anything about Matthew Flinders.

RB

Nothing like that (a relationship with Matthew Flinders)—not as far as I know and if any people did have any knowledge they'd probably be dead by now.

RB

(Aboriginal history at school): There wasn't a lot presented to us as kids at school and later as teenagers at high school. We learned a lot about the early explorers and a lot about Captain Cook and Captain Phillip and all the rest of those people but as far as Aboriginal history was concerned there was very little.

RB

(Captain Flinders was a lesser figure) Philip was much less a figure.

RB

I don't remember hearing mention of him while I was at school (Captain Phillip Parker King with whom Bungaree also sailed). I've actually got his journal these days—I've got most of their journals now but that's for my own research.

RB

(Bungaree was never mentioned in school history. Even if we had known we would not have put up our hand to claim him). We knew we were Aboriginal, but didn't put up our hand and say that's our ancestors or that's our people. Because there was a stigma to being an Aboriginal in those days—it's popular now but it wasn't then. I mean in even the family even my great-grandmother denied being Aboriginal for a long time. But, of course, my grandmother and my uncles and that I mean they are very proud of their ancestry now and they openly tell you they are Aboriginal. But in them days no, they didn't.

RB

We spent an awful lot of time in the bush, and yes, we always knew—my family and that—always knew how to get bush food. My mother and father taught me that—cos my father's actually of Aboriginal descent as well. From a different area.

RB

(Family is) Walkaloo clan. It was once very large but now it's only family. It's our family—it's our family that we know about is probably several hundred but there's other descendents of other people from the same clan as well that probably don't even know that they're Aboriginal. So I don't know how big it can be. I know there's for example, there's something like 1200 descendents of the Durog and I'm actually partly Durog as well by the way through the Lees side of the family. But I don't know how many there are. But I am going to find out—what I'm going to do in the future is advertise in the Sydney Morning Herald for anyone who believes that they are descendents of the Walkaloo people and, you know, we'll just have to work through it and see if they are or not so we can make some sort of organisation.

RB

(Bungaree) It was probably about four years ago that we realised we were related but they didn't know how famous he was—he was just a name to me at that stage. We didn't learn about Bungaree in school at all and we heard the name of Bennelong but not Bungaree. I don't know why that is.

RB

I was actually told that there was a famous Aboriginal person by the name of Bungaree who came from Brisbane Waters—the same area that we came from—we knew where we came from—so I started to research then—this person would have to be related—if he came from the same clan he would have to be related. He would have to be a great uncle, or a cousin or a cousin's cousin or something but he'd have to be related if he came from the same clan—there's no doubt about that so we had to find out which way he was related.

RB (what do you think of Bungaree? What might his character be like to you now?)

He was a bit of a clown—he used to mimic different people and, I don't know, but he had a sort of a proud sort of a dominant proud person. A very great warrior. He demonstrated his skills in front of a lot of the early people in authority in the early days. It's in the journals. So we know he was a great warrior because he demonstrated his skills—he had a lot of war scars too. But—a great warrior, a bit of a clown but also—I think he had a lot of pride especially in the early days. I think he drank too much in the later days. And I think he was a bit ridiculed behind the scenes, you know what I mean. I think they were very gracious towards him in front of him, but then mocked him behind his back, you know what I mean.

I've got a few lithographs on my wall at home—of different people and they're all about that age. One of them is from Baudin's voyage by Nicholas Martin Petit, that's an original, the copper plate engraving. I've got another one from another French voyage, depicting the tree climbers with the Walkaloo clan who were tree climbers. And I've got another one depicting the tree climbers, a British lithograph which was a little bit less pleasing to look at. It made the Aborigines look a bit beastlike whereas the French ones were more lifelike. So I've got that just to show a bit of comparison, a bit of contrast. Round the same time it was—in the early 1800s.

RB

(treeclimbers?)

They used to climb trees to hunt. They would spear birds from the tops of trees. Especially the large angophoras and things like that. But they would also climb trees to smoke out possums, they did it for food. It wasn't their only way of gathering food of course because they were saltwater people. They relied heavily on shellfish and seafood and fish of other sorts, as well as whales being beached. They'd have a big feast if there were a beached whale and neighbouring clans would be invited.

RB: (Is there any way of knowing how Bungaree is regarded now and how he might be regarded in the future?)

My grandmother really doesn't say anything. She talks only when you ask her specific questions. She is a wonderful lady. But it is hard to get her to open up and talk about her Aboriginal past, her life at Bluegum Flat and stuff like that when she was younger. But other relatives to whom I have mentioned Bungaree spoke about him with pride because he is such a famous person and I suppose it's OK to be Aborigine these days or Aboriginal so it's OK to say loudly, I'm Aboriginal, and Bungaree is related to us and he is a very famous person and we're very proud to be related to him through our blood.

RB And it looks like that will persist into the future?

Oh absolutely. Once my sons, my eldest is 20 now and he's studying Aboriginal history and I'm sure he will come after me and he will talk very loudly about our people.

RB (Languages and interpretation skills)

As you know there is something like 700 different languages in Australia and they can't communicate with each other with oral language but they can with sign language and if you've ever read W.E. Ross who is the Protector of Aborigines in Queensland - he did a series of bulletins between 1897 and 1910 and he actually documented the sign language vocabulary of the Aborigines in great detail.

RB

Our particular language is pretty well lost and if documented in different places and in bits and pieces of it still remain. A lot of places have our language names as their place names and things like that and a lot of generic names for Aboriginal things come from our language, words like gunya, for example.

RB (Interpretation of sign language.) Are any of those sort of signs available to you as communication?

Not to me personally, too long ago. But it's the same with white society or any society, you can make gestures and they're understood even if you can't speak their language so it's similar but a little bit more complex than that.

RB (Scott's book on Matthew Flinders?)

I would like to read something on Matthew Flinders especially his voyage on the Investigator.

RB (Respect for Bungaree by Matthew Flinders)

Oh, absolutely. He did invite Bungaree on a second voyage, didn't he? He wouldn't have done that if they didn't have that mutual respect.

RB

The thing was that James Webb ended up being an entrepreneur. He had property in Cockle Bay which is Darling Harbour. He had property at Woy Woy which was then Webb's Flat, he had 300 acres there. He owned all of Woy Woy at one stage. He had property at Wiseman's Ferry, now Webb's Creek, he had 130 acres there. He had 60 acres at Windsor and when he died, his only offspring, he was actually married to Anne Peat(?) prior to the rape on Sophy.

RB

No, she was a white lady. George Peat from Peat's Ferry fame. It was his sister. He was married to her but it only lasted for five years and she left him and went to India.

RB.

No children at all, no, and his only offspring, his only heirs were Charlotte, and she was Aboriginal

RB Did he acknowledge her?

She got his name and was Charlotte Webb, so he acknowledged her in that way but that's about all and as I said he raped Sophy. And Sophy was only a little girl at that time and Sophy's cousins attacked the farm because of that, he was lucky he didn't get killed because not this particular family but other Aborigines have killed people who have raped members of their family before, that was common in them days.

RB (Peaceful after the attack?)

No, well Sophy and all Sophy's family were employed on, they worked on Webb's farm, but after the rape she went back to the Mission and she stayed with the rest of the family at the Mission. That's why she's in the census. At the Mission she's in the first census there or the blanket distribution of 1827 so that Charlotte would have only been about four years old then.

RB

Sophy never married, but the daughter, Charlotte Webb, married, a convict by the name of Joseph Ashby. Now I've actually got Joseph's original court conviction here and here he was convicted of larceny in Gloucester in England and he stole a basket of raisins and got fourteen years transportation for that, so I've actually got all the documents here to support that, I'll show you them in a moment. He arrived in Australia and he was under the employment of a Henry Donanson(?) who was a farmer in that area and he

actually applied for a ticket-of-leave to go to Brisbane Waters, I've got the ticket-of-leave here too and he got that and he met and married Charlotte in 1845 and she became Charlotte Ashby.

RB Children?

We do, I've actually got the Baptism Records here and the documents that show all of her children. She had five children and a few illegitimate children too. She had children to, but this was after Joseph died, he died early, he died quite young. It was a shame, he was a very nice man, nothing like James Webb.

RB How do we know this?

Because in some of the records it said that the only conviction he had was for stealing a watermelon and he was let off because he was a nice man. That's what it said in the records. So, plus, through family, he was a nice man, we know he was a nice man, a kind man.

RB Your family is through her legitimate children.

That's right . Her son was John Ashby and this is actually John Ashby's daughter - it's not very far away. It wasn't really in terms of how many generations there are. It wasn't long ago when our relatives were running around when there were no white people in Australia at all.

RB Anything more to add?

Oh yes. You see James Webb died around 1856 and when he died - he actually had a white family living on his property by the name of Cox. And he left in his will all the property to Cox, the property out at Webb's Creek, the property at Woy Woy and except the place at Cockle Bay - he sold that some time before. But anyway he left nothing at all to Charlotte, but it wouldn't have made any difference because in them days they weren't allowed to own land anyway so she wouldn't have got it anyway, but what he didn't leave to the Cox family went back to the state. So even though Charlotte was his daughter she got nothing out of it. She ended up living with Joseph Ashby until he died and then she ended up having children to a lot of other people. She had children to the son of the publican at East Gosford, Joseph Speirs (?). She had children to him. She had children to a smith in Bluegum Flat so she ended up (having) four or five - actually I have the baptism records of the illegitimate children here, so she had a few illegitimate children after that. Obviously her life after that was not a very happy one.

I suppose she was living pretty much in poverty (as) everyone lived in those days - they struggled.

RB Does your grandmother talk about your great-grandmother (Hannah Matilda, whose photograph is present)

She doesn't talk very nicely about her. Apparently she was very strict and actually this particular photograph - I already have this photograph at home - and I just went down to my grandmother's place at Ulladulla last Friday and she said you can have this photograph - I don't want this photograph in my house. They didn't quarrel. She just thought she was a very strict lady and she didn't like her much. Which is a shame because she looks like a nice lady!

RB How big is mother's family of siblings? (Shows family tree)

(Some details of who is still living - including mother, Joyce)

RB

It's a great honour for all of us to have his (Bungaree's) blood running through our veins, it's a great honour to have the clan's blood running through our veins. As well as Bungaree who was only one member of the clan.

RB re tattoo of Aboriginal flag with 'Guringai' on WW's forearm

I did that in honour of my great-great grandmother who suffered so much, so I did that just for her.