

A Childhood on Wonga

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**A PAST REFLECTION IN VERSE OF A
CHILDHOOD ON THE "WONGA"
THE ANCIENT ABORIGINAL
DREAMING PLACE ALONG
THE YARRA**

BY CHRIS ADNAM

A Childhood on Wonga

**IN MEMORY OF
WINNIE QUAGLIOTTI
WHOSE WORK WILL
LIVE ON FOREVER**

BY CHRIS ADNAM

Foreword

Christopher John Adnam was brought up among the apple orchards of The Wonga in North Ringwood.

He was born October 1, 1960 in the old Box Hill Hospital.

His parents lived in a humble two-room weather-board house on a farm set among 70 foot cypress trees and dilapidated chook-pens along the "Wonga" his home was built by an early settler William McKinlay for his daughter in 1911.

"The base camp" as it was known, offered a firm base for adventure in and around the district, spanning from Blue Tongue Bend to the base of Byron Street, from billycarts to billabongs.

Chris undertook the task of painter, poet, lawn mower, adventurer, salesman, disc jockey, dartboard sprayer, psychiatric orderly, milk bottle collector, petrol attendant and paperboy, all in an effort to ward off starvation.

This is his first book to be published.

His notable successes include:
The first comic to be published with advertising in Australia "*Trucking About with Wayne and Dino*" written by Allan Duffy, also being chosen for the prestigious Gold Coast Art Prize 1984 for his work "*Scozza's Annual Ball*".



A rascal at heart, Chris shares with us some pieces from his truly "Australian Childhood".

This book is a compilation of verse born on the banks of the Yarra in an area known as the "Wonga" Aboriginals have hunted and performed ceremonies in this area for the last 30,000 years. Some areas are still undisturbed and will hopefully be preserved for many generations to come.

Chris finds his spirit rekindled at these special places and hopes one day we may learn the wise ways of the Aboriginal people that have preserved this lost continent for so many years.



A Dedication

I dedicate this story to my childhood friend Virginia Johnston.

May you forever be fondly remembered in all our hearts

A person of Great Strength.
A child of Wonga.



*Kids of the Wonga
on the steps of Rosslyn*

Great thanks must also go to the Wurundjeri people, Rob Martin for his references, Tony and Robina Summers for the cover shot. Mick Woiwod, Norm and Bernice Jameison, and my sister Julie for the typesetting. Thanks to Linda Duffy and Alan for his sketches.

I must also mention that some stories published here will always belong to the Kulin Tribes of Victoria and I thank them for the inspiration.

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Introduction

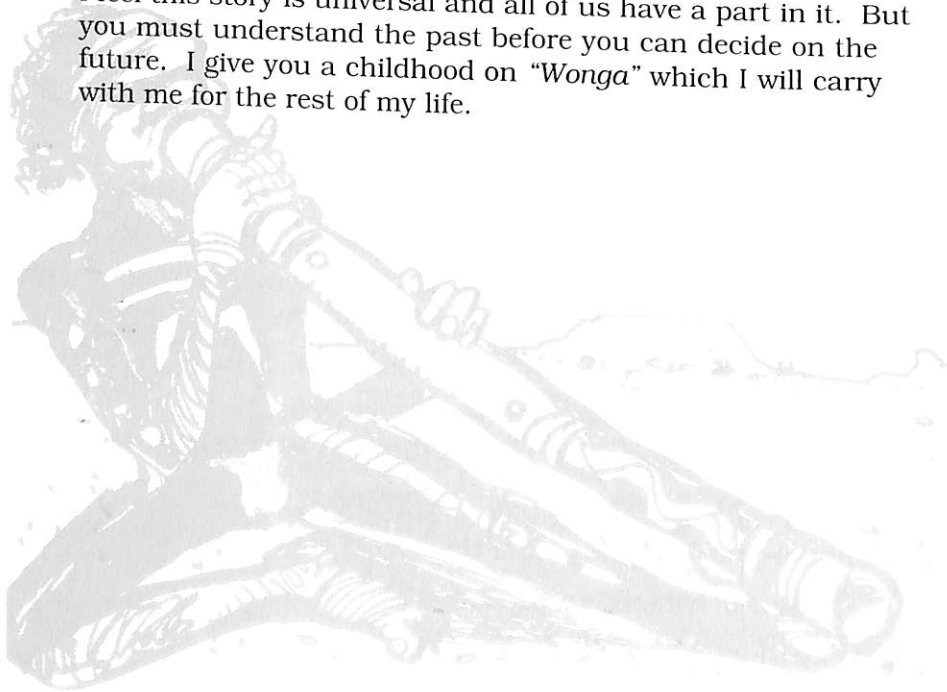
As a child builds up a perception of place through experience so these early memories assembled a richer and richer accumulation of perceptions of landscape and habitat.

Our landscape was critical in maintaining the Aboriginal children's physical mental and spiritual life, so it is embodied with all children.

These are my "sacred sites" around where I grew up. Some I discover, some I was shown by the keepers of "Wonga". Their forefathers were here long before white Europeans approximately, 30,000 years ago and the River was their blood. As chief Seattle quoted as an American Indian in 1853 "man did not weave the web of life he is merely a strand in it."

Whatever he does to the web he does to himself. So also Aboriginal elder Bill Neidje quoted in 1983 "My children will look after these places that's the law, no matter whether your a rich man or a king."

I feel this story is universal and all of us have a part in it. But you must understand the past before you can decide on the future. I give you a childhood on "Wonga" which I will carry with me for the rest of my life.



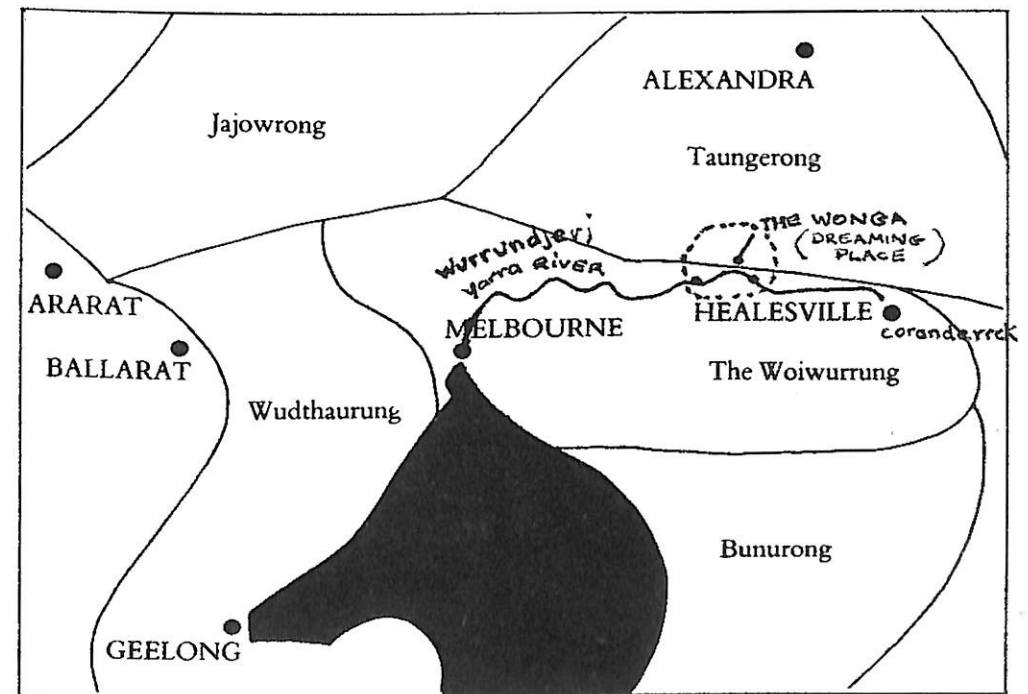
In The Beginning...

There were the river people.

The Wurundjeri a local Aboriginal tribe that lived and hunted on the banks of the Yarra. Their story about their habitat was passed down to their children in this way. It is a legend they carry with them.

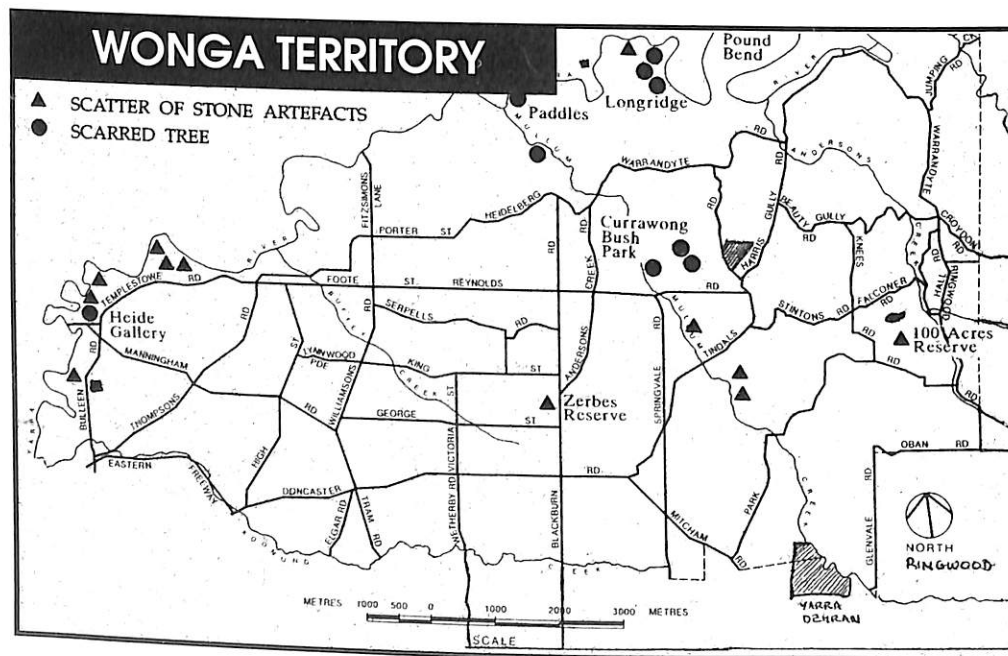
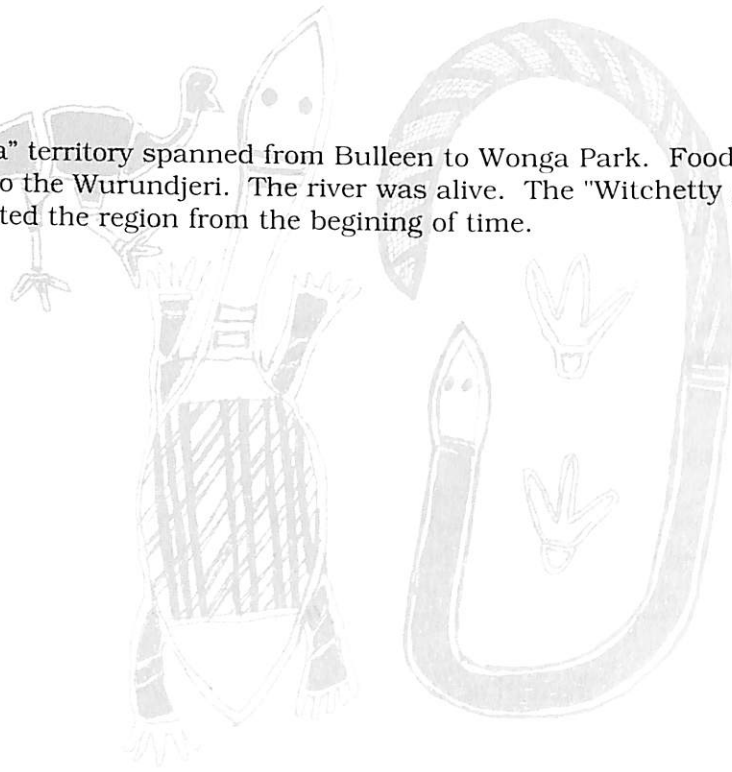
All the water was locked up in the Mountains a great leader chipped at the edges with a stone axe. And all the creeks flowed downhill and filled the "Wonga" at Yarra.

That was 40,000 years ago.



The "Wonga" from Bulleen to Wonga Park via the Yarra showing the existing tribes and their areas.

The "Wonga" territory spanned from Bulleen to Wonga Park. Food was abundant to the Wurundjeri. The river was alive. The "Witchetty grub" people hunted the region from the beginning of time.



The legend of the Witchetty Grub River People

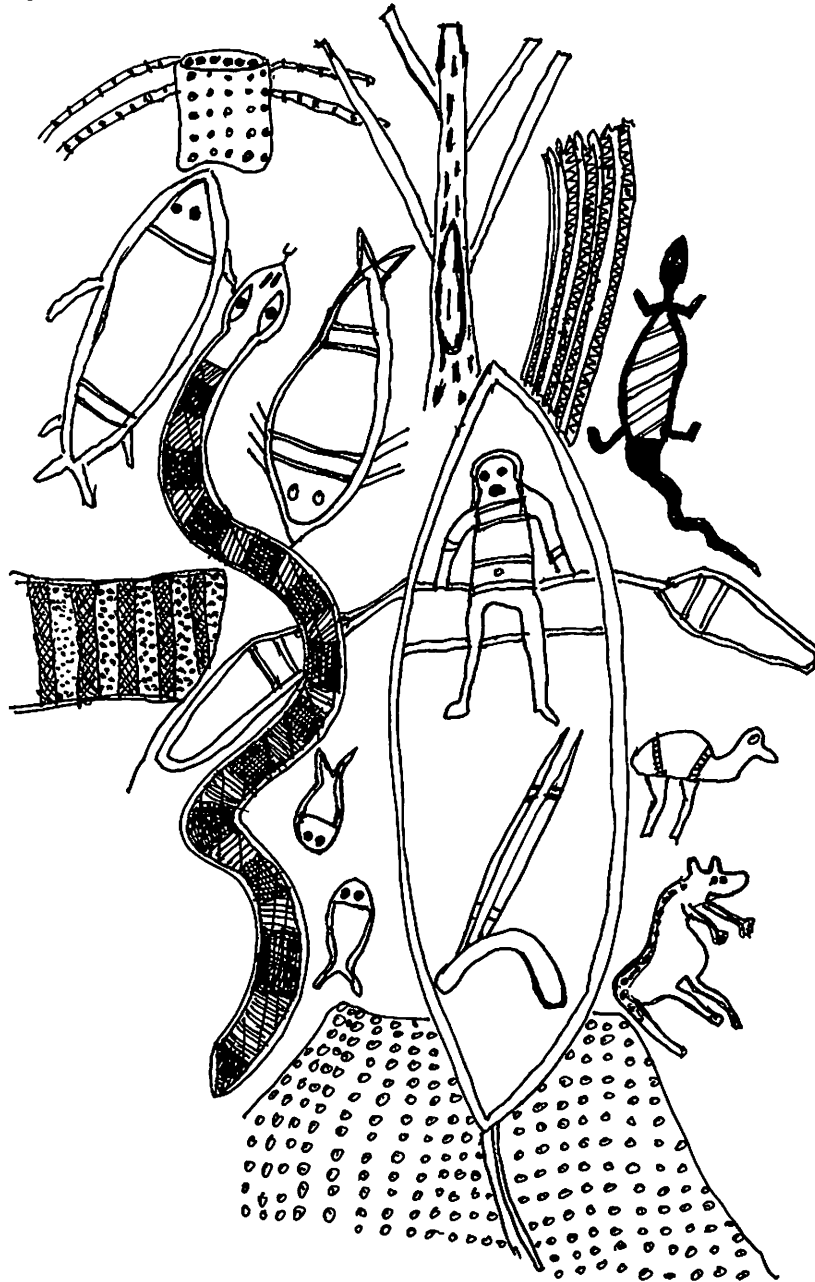
The Yarra's Water was locked up on the Mountain. The Woiwurrungs had little to hunt. Bunurongs had plenty and were always scouting along the banks to the Westernport front. Bar-wool was head of the Woiwurrungs and had control of the upper water so after hearing the sounds of the Yarra's song he filled it from creeks as he ought to.



YARRA RIVER TRIBESMAN



Once the people had access to the Yarra river it was then time to seek new hunting grounds.



Children of the river were told the story of "Yan Yans Hunt".

So a legend was born from the banks of their hunting ground.

Yan Yans Debut

Most mornings at paddles the bushland is singing
with squarks from an old scarred gum
come break o day new life is brimming
from a dawn on the river from the sun

Crests of pink wash with pales of grey
Forming Galahs that flock on a gum
They scour the creeklands for signs of prey
As they bathe in the morning sun

Below is the rush of the Murky Mullum
As she winds her narrow way
and further down meeting her end
in a subtle aquatic display

This was a place of a legend told prior
where Yan Yan made his debut
by heating some bark over his fire
he built a most impressive canoe

Now that Barwool had freed up the creeks
by digging them with his stone tool
Yan Yan hoped his craft developed no leaks
as Barwool would think him a fool

Placing his canoe into the river
he sailed out from its muddy bank
with a message from Barwool which he would deliver
But alas his canoe it just sank

Well the river it roared with so much force
that it moved and formed a bend
for Yan Yans spirit had altered its course
from his death and untimely end

So as you walk to Yan Yans spot
always look upon his tree
and you will note the bend in the River
where once it was as Straight as could be.

The Scarred Tree On The Currawong



Legends of the River continued and were passed on to the Children like the story of Bunjil the eagle who was to become a star.

Bunjil's Spirit

A "Wonga" totem was the eagle hawk
A leader they called Bunjil
and from the sky above where he would stalk
He formed every River and Hill.

After this he took the task and created man
Then taught him how to behave
throughout the yarra his spirit ran
till he nightly returned to his home in a cave

Bunjil he has two good wives
who bore a son named Binbeal.
Then one day a crow it changed their lives
whilst he searched the river for eel

Bellin Bellin the crow looked after the wind
in a bag which he carried beside
but one day on opening it he quietly grinned
as his storm wind uprooted the country side

Bunjil and his tribe were blown up in the sky
where they became the stars above.
and to this day that's where they'll stay
keeping a watch over the "Wonga" they love

After the Giant storm created by the crow the river children were christened with a ceremony called the "Wuduu".



Koori Commandment

When the children are taught the law of "Wuduu"
in a ceremony set around the fire
their parents teach them what to do
an old custom that will never tire

Elders who warm hands from heat of coal
touch the child in certain places
and from a fire their respect starts to foal
as the embers throw light on their faces.

By touching their forehead means to give
and a touching of nose don't go to others fire
you will follow this law its our way to live
you will follow this law its our ancient desire.

By touching their eyes you don't see evil things
or love up with some other stranger
by touching their mouth for it not only sings
but if you swear with it you'll be gravely in danger.

By touching their hands means to never steal
or they'll be cut with the spinifex grass
and the final law which starts from the heel
with a touching of feet means to never trespass.

For the walking on other peoples land
is the toughest of all tribal law
so although its all done from the palm of the hand
none of the Wuduu one must ever ignore.



From here the children of the river were given toys and a dreaming country (a hunting area) which they carried with them for the rest of their lives.

A Firelight Initiation

They would swing it around in circular motion
till they heard the wirr of the string
then injecting their own energetic potion
they made the bullroarer sing.

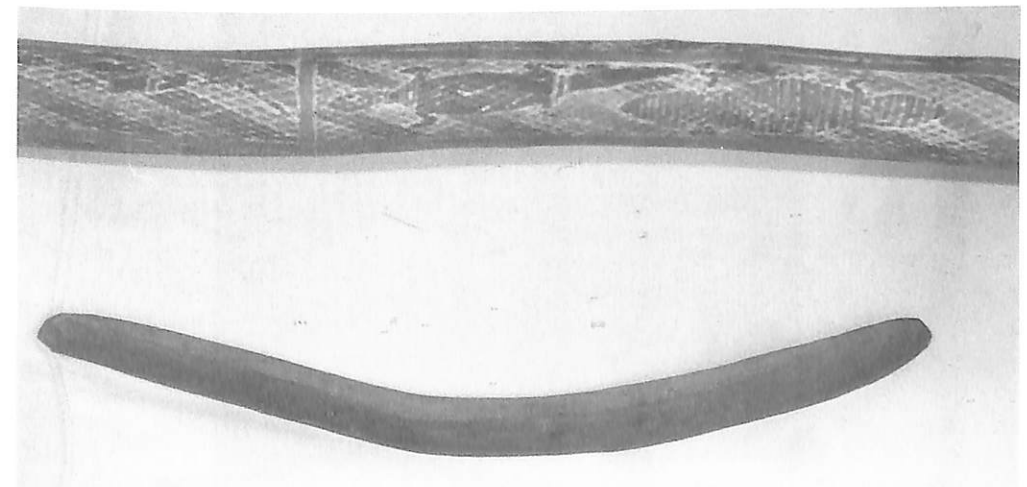
For their childhood was filled with wooden toys
carved from limbs of the redgum tree
but then life would change for the Koori boy
from a firelight that how it should be.

All up the river or out in the dry
the children were blessed with Wuduu
and from fiery coals a good spirit would spy
on the children when taught the didjeridu.

Once they were given a dreaming country
the boys were then taught to hunt
for they must know every animal and tree
and must walk behind their elder in front.

Then they are taught to never walk in the dark
around caves or water holes
for that's where bad spirits will most likely hark
never living near light of the coals.

After the ceremony the children swam in the river
and the parents hunted for food
it was almost an idealic lifestyle
then came European invasion.



This tells the story of John Batman who founded Melbourne, coming out to the "Wonga" and meeting William Barak tribal leader of the Woiwurrung on the banks of his camp at Brushy Creek

Barak On The Brushy

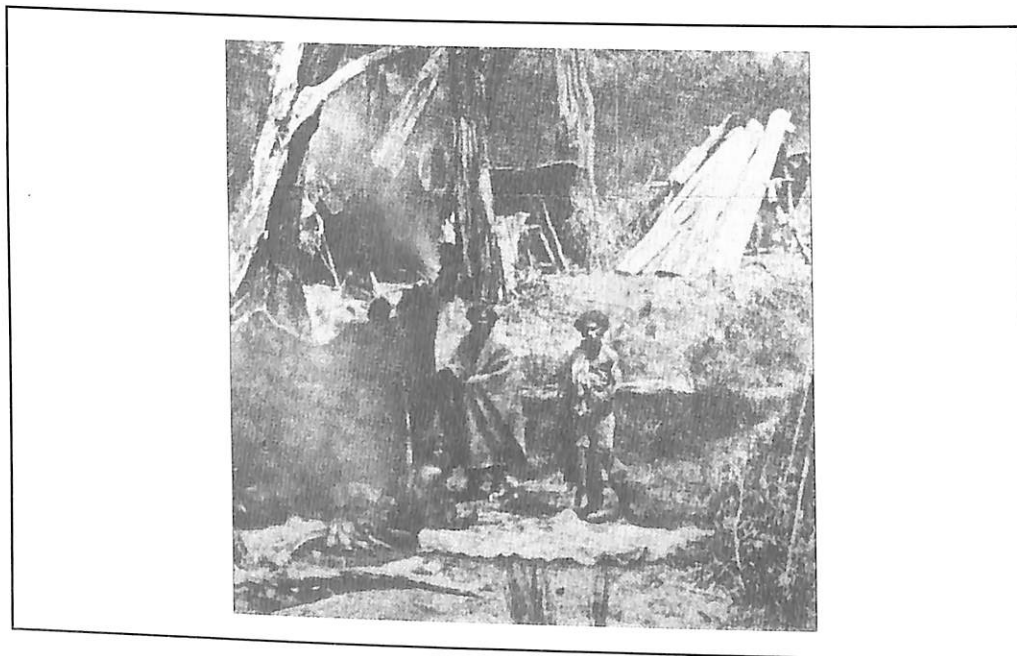
Batman met Barak on the banks of the Brushy
he then spoke to Bill Baraks tribe
To old men and woman he was not at all fussy
From the banks by brushycreeks side.

Baraks friend Buckley was on all white recruit
who had escaped from his term as a crook
so befriendng Barak on the Yarra
translated his story in a small leather book.

Buckley has blended into black community
and so was dubbed the "Wild White Man"
he was one of them as far as they could see
so with tribe he travelled throughout their land

Shedding his trousers for a possum skin rug
he then spoke their native words
and from an imprisoned life that he was to shrug
he then moved with the tribal heards.

So from here the Europeans would often share their camp-fires
with the Aboriginals of the "Wonga".
and so their stories were told from the dreaming.



This is the story of Kurburu the Koala. It is told to provide a lesson . Water must be conserved hoarding or wasting it will mean violence or death.

Kurburu The Koala

The tribe feasted on "Gurring" from out of the tree
which they mixed with water in tarnuk
it had come from the gum where Koalas roam free
so to find it took a fair bit of luck.

The tribe was gathered, as Kurburu came by
so the Koala asked the tribe for some
They told him his was lazy so he must try
to climb the tree to get his very own source of gum.

This made Kurburu extremely irate
so waiting till the tribe had gone
he stole what they had left in their plate
which he took up for a feast later on.

When the tribe returned their bowls weren't there
Then one of the tribe looked up to see
and there on the fork high in the air
was Kurburu at the top of the tree.

The tribe were angry and shouted where are our bowls
so demanding he give them back
Kurburu said nothing to relieve their souls
So they decided to go on attack.

One of the men took up his stone axe
placing Notches all up the tree
so he could take back the bowls to his fellow blacks
it seemed simple as far as he could see.

But half way up Kurburu replied
with a tarnuk full of water
which he threw down on the a man who fell and died
when the sun was in its last Quarter.

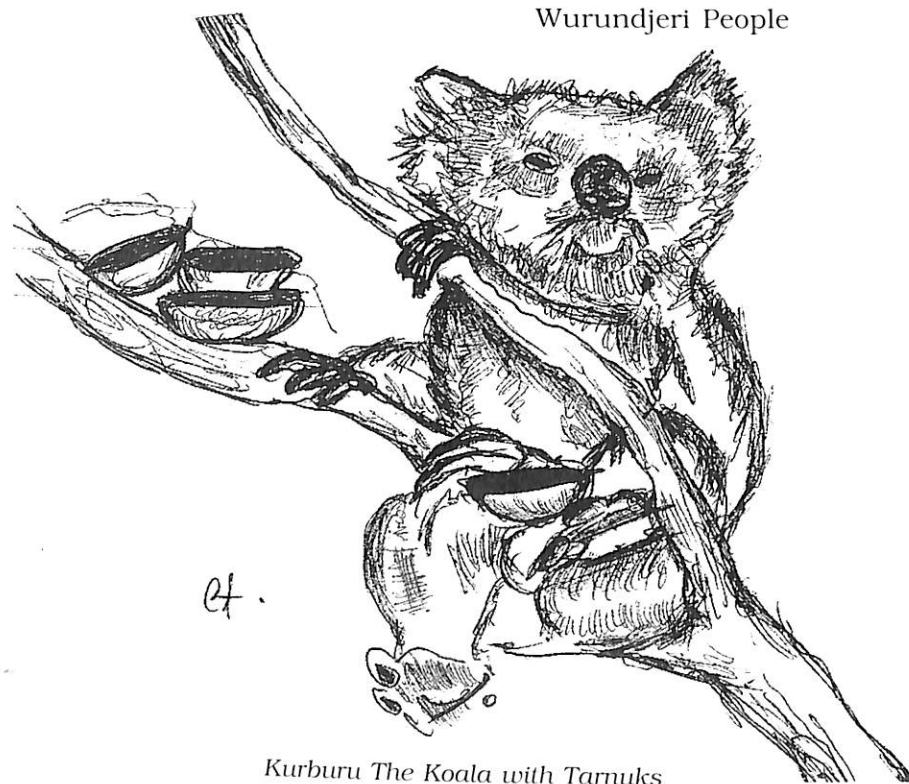
Several men followed and all of them tried
to reach Kurburu up in his fork
But one by one they all fell and died
so the tribe called the spirit of the Hawk.

Around the foot of the tree the tribe were mad
and so mourned the death of their men
then cutting their heads at being so sad
only wondered at what to do then.

A wind sprang up and blew the wreek of the dead
through the air to Bunjils Camp
he then took up his spears and with smell in his head
went to the base of the tree that was damp

The blood from the wattle had soaked the ground
Where the tribes stood round in mourning
Bunjil told his men to climb the trunk without sound
as Kurburu was given his last warning.

Dodging the water the men sent up spears
which brought Kurburu down from the tree
so as he lay on the ground the tribe shed no tears
as Bunjil had finally answered their plea.



- * Gurring is the sap from the wattle
- * Tarnuk is a wood bowl

When important tribal laws were made or gatherings were held. They would usually be conducted at the swamp. This is the oldest known Corroboree ground in Victoria.

The Sun Sets On Bolin Bolin

The spirits awakened on the Bolin swamp
dancing from trees all around
as the tribal warriors with all their pomp
sat cross legged upon the ground.

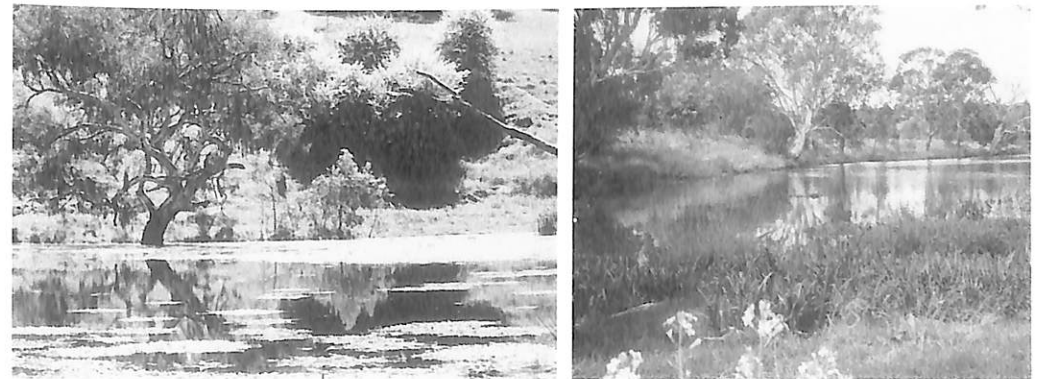
Leawill's were layed near the shade of the wattle
with the possums skins stacked in piles
bark paintings with all their ochre mottle
were being traded in various styles

The Bolin billabong and so they say
was the ancient place of trade
with song and food throughout the day
from a culture that sadly would fade

A warden remarked at Andersons creek
back in eighteen fifty eight
rarely do the blacks we keep
if sober, ... for heavens sake

"With our sly grog throughout the mines to supply
them with good rum
its no good us imposing a fine
on these people for theres not a lot to be done

And though the British introduced
new animals disease and food
the blacks on the Bolin were a major boost
as the British bush skills were crude.



This was the place of great importance to the Wurundjeri

Heartland

Our people have lived for thousands of years
in a land of green and gold
listening to stories passed on by our peers
from the dreaming that's what we were told

A land never bought where its heart never sold
its been beating here long before time
through the seasons that change from hot to cold
rolls the river, in our land of sunshine.



After scouting an area surrounding the Bolin swamp, the settled Europeans decided it would make an excellent farming area and promptly divided off into smaller farming lots.



Farewell

Nangy
Allinger yerra bamalla
yowama gumdinda iterra
Let me think...
the sun is setting
you bring it back
be quick



Yarra Gums



Beside the banks of the mighty Yarra
and winding through Bolin swamp
The giant river red gum though nothing like jarrah
seems to sprout grotesquely from stump.

With the decline in Aboriginal population there were those with vision that nurtured the skills of the Aboriginal of the "Wonga" to save their dwindling numbers, as their traditional tribal lands were invaded.



Quambee Jack

Theres an old slab hut near a flying fox
that belonged to old Quambee Jack
and they'd sent over his mail, in an old tin box
along a wire on the old river track.

Avoiding all persons he survived on his own
A hermit on the banks of longridge
And for many years it wasn't commonly known
he looked after local aboriginal kids.

The blacks they called him Quambee Jack
meaning large and healthy fern
And for the trade of food caught along his track
he would care for their sick in return.

And as night would fall on old Jacks hut
he would rock in his old bush chair
pat the head of his favourite mut
as the coachwhips song filled the air.



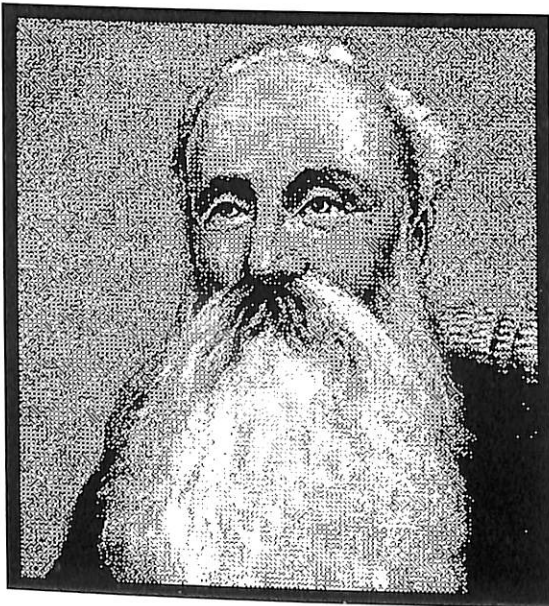
Jimmy Of Nillumbik

Jimmy Dawson was a man of the land
the lord of Warrandyte station
he tamed the scrub with a single hand
and received great admiration.

With thousands of acres down by the "creek"
were his cattle and cows would roam
the men who came with gold to seek
were mostly welcome at this home.

A friend of the blacks of Andersons Creek
and throughout the west of the state
they showed him their skills when times were bleak
he was one with no racial hate.

Allowing his neighbours to keep their cattle
upon his land free of cost
He was one that fought the racial battle
And eventually was one that lost.



This man was a landmark for those who followed.

Some landmarks will be here forever.

Burnt Bridge

The toll was high from the old log road
Built by the local blacks
And the Bullockies travelled with heavy load
to Walhalla along the tracks

A Bridge was built near Nelsons Hill
to cross the swampy ground
But trigger happy driver's out for a thrill
shot out the blacks that lived all around

So in retaliation they lit a fire
which burnt the old bridge down
and to this day many of us would inquire
How they named this place just of town.



Whites then began fighting and stealing from themselves in the quest for land.

Patsy's Cart On Wonga

A convoy of carts followed its course
Through sandy gully they rolled
As Patsy pointed to her leading horse
which recently the owner had sold

She re-told a story about its past
About a bushranger who once rode on its back
But though Morgan on horseback was reputedly fast
He was shot dead further down the old track

But as Patsy's cart rose over a crest
she was stopped by a boy standing tall
The lad pointed a pistol at Patsy's breast
so projecting his threatening call

"Give me your money or I'll take your life"
no one uttered a sound
But although Patsy had never incurred this strife
she gave the cart robber a pound

He then moved along without any haste
and stopped at the second dray
Though our robber had expensive taste
The second driver had nothing to pay

Angry and nervous he moved to the third
crying "empty your pockets or I'll shoot"
But one of the men he happened to herd
moved in close and kicked the gun with his boot

The bushranger boy shot himself in the chin
falling to the ground with a hell of a thump
Patsy then carried him to the doctors house
And swiftly left him outside on a stump

Then an hour or so later after the doc took out the lead
The boys in blue came around
they threw him in jail and gave him stale bread
alas it wasn't the best way to earn a pound.

But the bush boy had learnt a tough lesson that day
to never mess with our girl pat
and although he had a heavy price to pay
thank god that was the end of that.

Finally a Governor with vision allocated an area for the tribe for their ultimate protection. Here lay a final resting place, a site near Healsville which at last The Wurundjeri could call their own.

Corranderk

A station was formed for those who surrendered
their heir to nomadic ways
A permanent reserve called "Corranderk"
where Wurrundjeri could spend the rest of their days

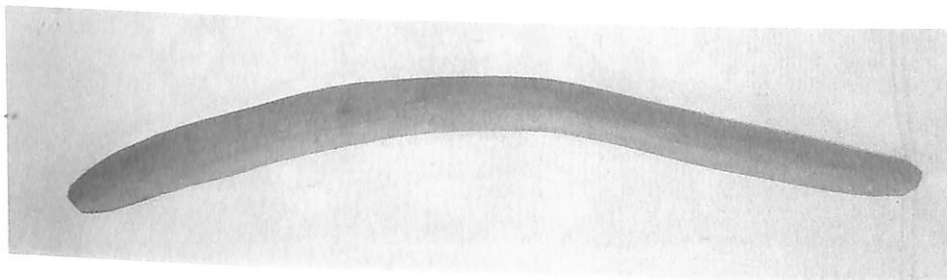
Inspectors searched camps to give them a choice
of protection for all of their race
For there was no understanding of their tribal voice
with many Europeans settling at such rapid pace.



Stories and mysteries of the Wonga were passed down through the years and so they will continue to be passed down to be etched in time forever.



The river so mighty it has no peers
as it winds its muddy course
and though I walk along its banks
I've yet to meet its source.



So as the majority of white settlers left the township as the gold "dried up", there were some old characters that left a legend that will live on.

Bristle Hair Jack

This is a story about old Bristle Hair Jack
who rode a horse t'was a brumby strong
they reckon he carried brushes upon his back
to paint all matter around the Currawong

The old town was tamed by Miners rites
so with jack having the fastest brush
whenever stores were built on greater heights
he'd been there as quick as a flash

But I've been told of a time he was painting one day
for a publican at the local watering hole
Jack left his paint pots and rode away
I think time for a nap is what he stole

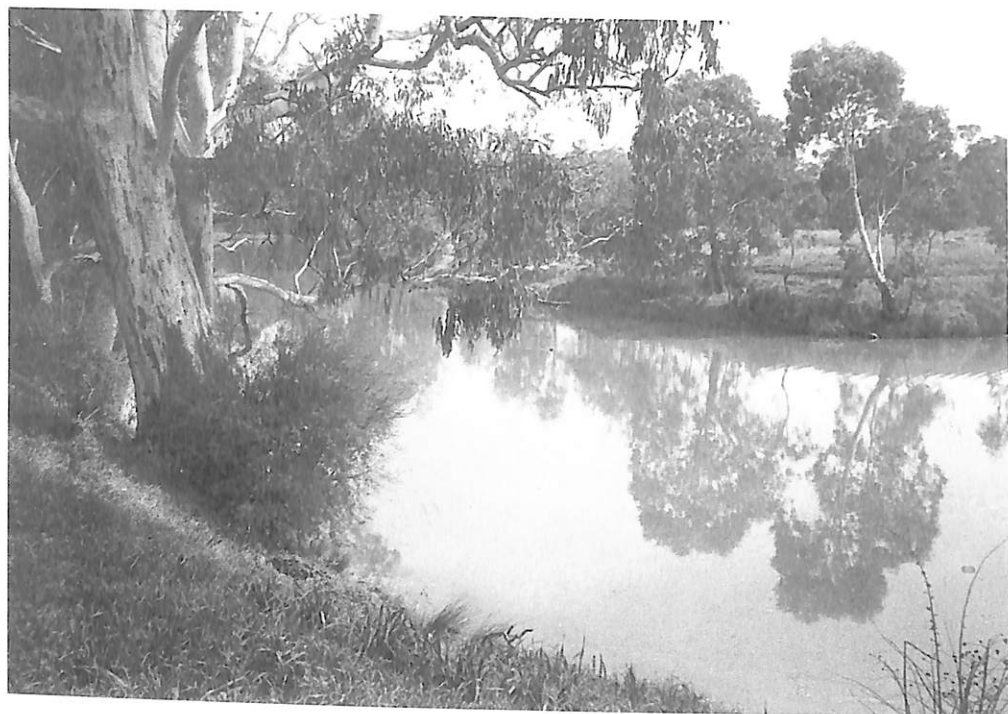
The cook at the pub then mistook Jacks brew
so mixing it in he started stirring
as part of the sauce to his wallaby stew
with no thought of patrons incurring

He then served it up to the hungry crowd
with hardly a word that day to be said
When seconds later they all roared aloud
As one by one all the patrons dropped dead.

The story goes the old cook ran away
when not much later old Jack returned
Warrantdyte was deserted from the very next day
with not a sole in site the old pub was burned

"Fever they cried" its been struck with the plague
good men there they say all went insane
poor Jack just stood there looking so vague
so sadly poor Bristle Hair never painted again.

And so lies a local remembrance standing tall at Ringwood (Sandy Gully).



Sandy Gully has a landmark its old clock tower.
It's circled yearly by floral wreath
Though I've still to hear it strike on the hour
as a reminder of past human grief.



So my remembrance continued as my childhood began.....

Life From The Base Camp

Born on the eastern side of town
chopping wood for a hearth of steal
in a two room tree lined tumble down
one fake chimney and moss appeal.

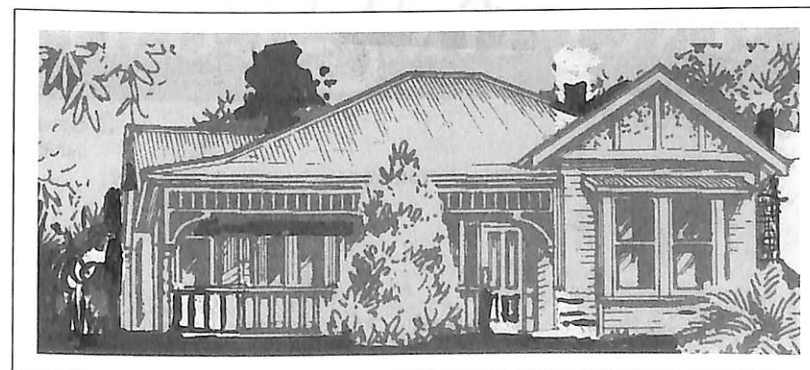
Old trees so tall it took four men
to circle their ancient girths
with cypress that were ten times older than us
planted long before our births

Winter would flee then spring would come
as your trod through a yard of mud
flowers on fruit trees life to some
with the old willow yet to bear its bud

Mother weeds with a mohair on
the cat lies curled on the mat
fresh chicken manure is smelling strong
and the old pickups battery is flat

A cowbells chime meant a meal to be had
and round the table often things got tense
although raised this way was good for a lad
it taught you the family art of defense

And so I began my childhood on "Wonga"
with all its special places
for this bush country my heart grew stronger
for the old river and its open spaces.



The Old Childs Chair

As a young Billy Lid I had my special seat
its purpose was plain to see
A structure of stature from where I would eat
and on my calling stood waiting for me.

Built very sturdy with its tapering legs
that were splattered from pudding and peas
The arms were scrolled and all covered in dregs
a fine collection from my lunches and teas.

My first meal of course was a different matter
which I would leave till late in the morn
for at the strike of five there was no noise or clatter
or from my body my limbs would be torn.

So I would then venture down to the back of the yard
to climb trees of enormous height
for most Aussie kids it was never too hard
but if you fell you got a hell of a fright.

I'd climb the old oaks with their trunks so sturdy
and then pilfer from my favourite nest
taking a choice from the eggs that I'd pick
The birds attacking as though I a pest.

My mother always sensed when I had disappeared
she would then quickly check my room
only to find I had slyly cleared
But somehow knowing where I would loom.

She would call me first then await reply
sharply scouring the likely scene
For mothers always have a scrutinous eye
and nearly always know just where you've been.

After realising then that I was near
she would so perform her favourite move
to drag me home by the lobe of my ear
it was not intended to gently sooth.

Back up the yard to the breakfast table
but I'll tell you here and now
I was neither very willing and hardly able
and felt milked like a dairy cow.

But the relief in sight was always there
as I was placed on my favorite seat
and quite often abruptly into wooden chair
So finally accepting my youthful defeat.



Mudgee's Pond

Across from the Base Camp was a prominent place
with a drive lined in floral splendour
it had a manicured lawn with a native embrace
and a rear fountain I would always remember.

Year after year they had an 'open day'
For fanatics from all round the shire
botanical lovers would go there in May
for Mudgee's arrangements where out to admire.

I remember one summer with the heat quickly rising
and of the need for a cool wash down
I thought then of Mudgee's and it wasn't surprising
as it was as close to a pool in the ground

Crawling under the fence I cut through the rear
dodging a dog with its ear piercing bark
I made sure my route was perfectly clear
as I headed straight for my watery mark.

Stripping off the trunks I dived in the pond
the frogs croaking as their home was disturbed
Though a memorable bath amongst lily and frond
with all this action my movements were heard.

Little did I know whilst attempting to swim
old Mudgee had spied me there
She was keeping a watchful eye from within
but politely refrained from tearing the roots from her hair.

She knew who I was and being a boy of two
Phoned my mother in a soft kindly way
For they had met and she knew just what to do
Asking could she pop over sometime throughout the day.

To please remove her son from her pond at the rear
Old Mudgee commented he's an adventurous tyke
thus confirming that she was a patient old dear
accepting it all as remarkable hike.

She then recommended if I was so fond
That I shouldn't enter the grounds from the rear
Through her manicured gardens and green lily pond
but come through the front door without any fear.

Puss In Boots At Wonga Hill

One day we were short of things to do
As I limped around with one sock wet
my sister of course had stolen my shoe
when our thoughts turned to our furry pet.

There was our cat sprawled out in the sun
so I then thought of the old English pram
and a way of course to create some fun
with the old relic that was saved from the dam.

I called on my sister there was no time to waste
On catching cat we then powdered its nose
after tying it up with out any haste
we adorned it in Baby clothes.

Suitably attired in coat with hood
we placed on nappy then slid in the pins
The poor cat tried escaping as best he could
but he was spread outwards from the tip of his shins.

When placed him in gumboots t'was hilarious sight
as we raced him off down the drive
The cat now less favourite for regular fight
He was so docile he seemed hardly alive.

On this day the folks held a barbecue
so all morning people streamed in the gate
old friends and neighbours armed with amber brew
arriving at "Wonga" fashionably late.

Then all of a sudden appeared a monstrous great dane
mouth frothing upset and irate
an uninvited guest, an unwelcome gain
that burst in through the old Base Camp gate.

Well the cat hissed and snarled t'was a viscous affair
with the dog at full pelt down the track
old puss left the pram and whilst arched in the air
Landed comfortably on great Danes back.

Taking off down yard it was rider and horse
Dane yelping as cat's dug in deep
O'l puss lapped the outskirts as if part of a course
whilst still saddled where landing from leap.

The Wonga Woodcart

Well the crowd packed tight round the barbie grill
with their sights on the winning post
they had backed the cat from "Wonga Hill"
so raising glasses made an appropriate toast.

O'l Puss rushed by then jumped up a tree
people cheered with exhuberant thrill
old Dane licked its wounds as far as we could see
Completing event with the upmost of skill.

So that was the end to a memorable day
at the races on "Wonga Hill"
Though the dog had a heavy price to pay
Our Puss got the finishing thrill.



Great trees lined O'l "Wonga" from fork of the road
it seemed then the sole reason they bought
with gums and tall cypress and no lawns to be mowed.
With an old homestead the type they had sought

it was the first months of marriage
my mother lost her ring
she claimed on the insurance
and saved the money she'd brought in.

With the old man out working
there was no set of wheels
beside the old pram of course
from where the tribe trailed her heels.

How she craved for her freedom
just a break from the chores
from the washing of soiled nappies
and the sweeping of old floors.

Then one day she gained her deserving fate
guided by rumour passed over the fence
an old guy on "Wonga" had an Austin eight
and he sold it for a few mere pence.

Mother rolled up and just in time
paying quickly for the old mans car
she arrived very early it was just after nine
the journey local she, didn't walk very far.

Towing it home it made terrible sounds
She was trusting of dads motoring skills
Buying an investment for a mere fifteen pounds
Thinking that it would provide him with all sorts of thrills.

Well time went past and the car was complete
I remember as it rolled out the drive
as mother was placed in the drivers seat
her face said thank god I'm out and alive.

With all of us squashed in like "cooks" first fleet
The only room was at rear in the boot
not even any space in the old dicky seat
as we took off on her chosen route.

Driving along it hummed a fine tone
over the Oban where "Wonga" had crossed
And by roadside were branches all on their own
in small piles had been scattered and tossed.

A thought struck my mother
how it just seemed such a waste
and that she must collect up and gather
all the firewood without haste.

So hurrying home she thought of this plan
and took off for the old compost heap
a sure fire addition to give her a hand
was our old trailer with wheels dug in deep.

She dragged up the trailer to rear of car
And with the help from my sister and I
attached it securely to the rear bumper bar
you could see of the plan she had in her eye.

Taking off for the wood heap,
we shunned no strike or twig
Though we old packed it in as tight as a drum
boughs of gum whether small or big.

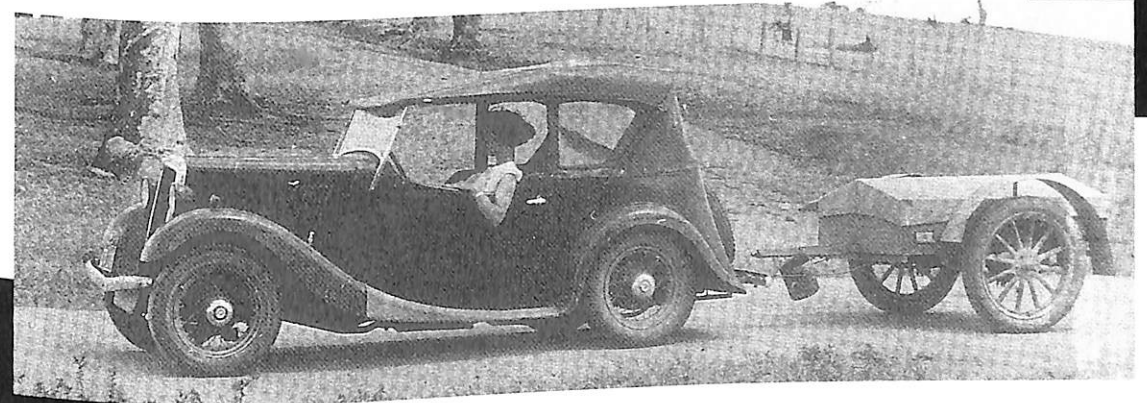
From that day on it was dubbed the O'l woodcart
as it journeyed from place to place
then one day it stopped just losing its heart
it had run its last woodpile race.

Just down from old schwerkoltz nearby the old creek
The wood cart she ran out of puff
from her innards she ran a rusty leak
yes the old girl had surely travelled enough.

After trying to crank her she uttered no sound
so we left her down by the creek
I guess she had returned us our fifteen pound
So we should accepted her untimely defeat.

So I hear a local fella towed the old car away
changed her tyres and cleaned her up
spent time on the motor and with not a cent to pay
raced the old woodcart and won a cup.

So the motto to this is keep your ear to the ground
for a chance to come your way
To purchase an Austin for fifteen pounds
then give the washing and sweeping away.



The Wonga Wobbler

I remember one day we sawed up a board
and built the best billycart seen
we added the wheels and nailed on a cord
tacked on a fruit box and painted it green

The "Wonga Wobbler" we built her for speed
then packed her with all our supplies
A pair of thongs and a piggy bank
even a toothbrush with the old man ties

It was now time to test this modern tank
so we headed south for the steepest hill
Old Byron Street from its grassy bank
had the decline that fitted the bill

Down we hurtled with wind in our hair
the old wobbler hit maximum speed
with nerves of steel it was the ultimate dare
to hang on was a miracle indeed

Alas losing control we then left the grass track
losing load we were thrown through the air
A large river rock had made us stack
we were powerless to my despair

My brother he was strapped into the box
the impact broke the cart in two
although he thought he was as smart as a fox
he was airborne not a lot he could do

Ejected from cart without parachute
he landed softly it was just his luck
whilst I unfortunately looked a real galoot
after landing in the fresh chicken muck

With Fowl manure the owners had laid
on a flower bed now completely smashed
our smiles they now they began to fade
oh hell if we'd only never crashed

Our dreams were shattered so we soldiered home
with limp and constant groan
and of this childhood memory
it will always stand in a place on its own.



The Rosslyn Racer

Amongst our tribe it was commonly known
that at ten you were mostly ready
for a brand new bike you would now proudly own
as a replacement for a moth eaten teddy.

It was part of a deal struck long ago
a birthday with an air of surprise
something to earn something to show
gleaming proudly in front of your eyes.

I remember the day I straddled the seat
circled the pear tree and settled in
it was an October morning in summer heat
on the gift from the next of kin.

I became very cocky after a week or two
and decided to set up a plank
as I lined up my course with the ultimate view
to jumping over an old water tank.



I worked it out with cunning precision
riding down the drive at breakneck speed
I had built up the courage and made my decision
after a warning from brother I didn't heed.

Hitting the ramp I then took to the air
watching the tank quickly fade from sight
I'd gained too much speed to my despair
not allowing for my angle of flight.

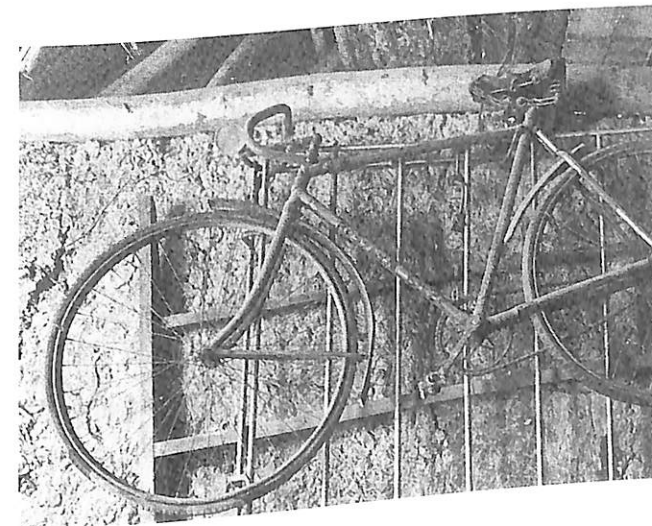
Landing upon the old garage roof
the pigeons flew in fear of their life
unable to stop I cried out "struth"
as I hung on now really in strife.

Nearing the end I was out of control
but to my relief right in front of me
was a pardon from death that I then stole
it was the crown of the old apple tree.

Leaving behind the gutter and spout
on the racer made strong as an ox
I new I'd be spared I had no doubt
with my pant's still tucked into my sox.

Down I hurtled through middle of tree
finally stopping with a hell of a thump
I'd come through branches and could hardly see
But landed graciously minus scratches or bump.

The chook's took off and I must relay
an old motto that was plain to see
my dream's of flight had ended that day
So stay on the road, just take it from me!!



A Paper Round On Horseback

Now I was ten I needed some cash
So after hearing of work at old man Greens
Thinking this solution I took off in a flash
to his paper shop like a kid full of beans.

The rumour was true Mr Green had a job
for a boy with a sturdy bike
I had the wheels, and so needing a bob
was given a round of no ordinary hike.

I was told to arrive at five o'clock
to grab a chaff bag from down at the store
then pack up my load of local paper stock
from the bundles left out side his store

I arrived at O'l Greens the very next morn
what I was told was no pleasant surprise
The sun was still rising it was a little after dawn
I was just beginning to open my eyes.

"Now you do the orchards" up to Knees road
you've go four hundred papers to put on
I'll send you with tommy who'll help with your load
Now I knew I was part of a con.

After an hour or so of delivering the papers
I'd lost Tom he taken a wrong turn
I felt my interest beginning to taper
as he knew short cuts which I was to learn.

When suddenly I was peddling along my course
with my energy starting to addle
I was confronted by a local runaway horse
complete with reins but no leather saddle.

I set down my load and coaxed the horse over
my thoughts turning to boyhood on bareback
it was tossing its head and chewing on clover
so I thought hard of my "method of attack".

Stashing my bike behind a tree
I settled him down now remembering the knack
With a most ingenious idea coming to me
I slipped my chaff bag over his back.

With papers each side where saddle would sit
the horse took to me like duck to water
On lifting myself up I adjusted her bit
I suppose its owner had properly taught her.

She seemed to know the manner of my round
although people stared along the way
But the horse and I were homeward bound
most comfortably if I must say.

The horse held its job and knew just what to do
as it trotted along the road
only once or twice eating a rose or two
as we neared the gate of my humble abode.

On arrival at "camp" was mother had hands on hips
shouting "where did you get that horse"
yelling my name she was spiting chips
So even I then started feeling remorse.

"I found it mum it came up to me"
She cried "if this is a joke I'll tan your hide"
no mum it was homeless couldn't you see
"alright son get down and come inside".

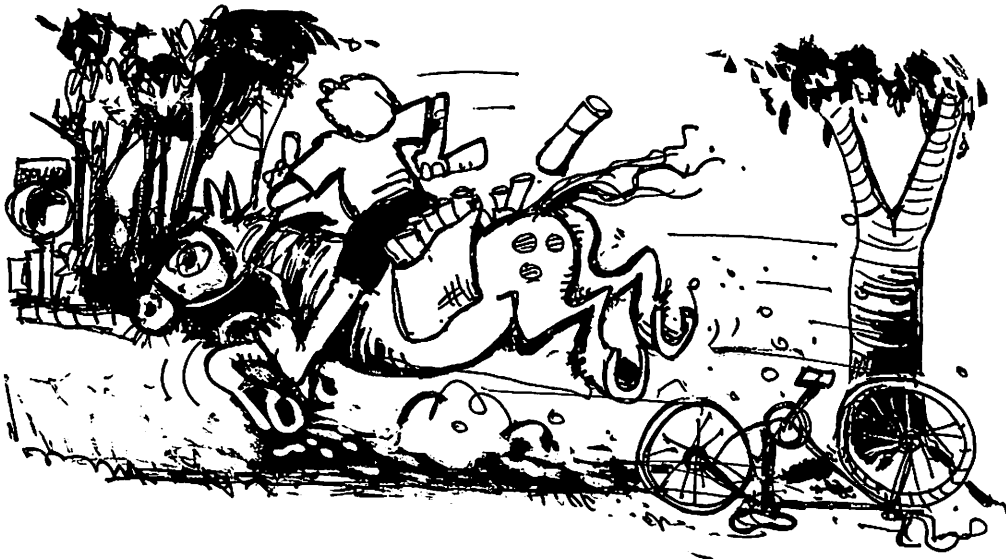
We made a few phone calls around the place
whilst the horse was left eating the lawn
in an effort to solve our mysterious case
of the way ward horse that was captured at dawn.

It was a local cop who then arrived at the house
with the owner who then kissed my neck
it was he who had found her by using his nouse
so she rewarded me with a thank you cheque.

Yabbing On The Orchard

The gift was presented for catching her beast
though I guess I should thank old man Green
but on five hundred bucks I would certainly feast
from a paper round that wasn't my scene.

But I'll tell you now, since my adventure that day
I've scoured high for the slightest sign
for a horse in the district that's possibly astray
for an hour or so that I can call mine!



Not far from camp just a little down the road
you find a crustacean that's sure to please
on the one hundred acres was its native abode
but it wasn't caught with the greatest of ease.

It's not at all like a common witchetty grub
so you'll need persistence and bushmans nose
for it hides under dams deep in the scrub
well camouflaged in his mud ridden house.

It's likened not to a river trout
though its cunning like a feral tabby
so often you need help from a couple of mates
to catch the famous Parkorchards yabbie.

After filling old nylon stockings
They'd be lowered till hitting the bottom
usually leftover mice or last nights stew
An old secret that was never forgotten.

After leaving it for five you would utter no sound
then wait patiently for a reasonable tug
whilst securing your feet in the muddy ground
You were then prepared for this oversized slug.

Then wrench up the line aim over your shoulder
hope it didn't fall short of your mark
for you'd try'n land your yabbie on the nearest boulder
Or you'd be chasing the bush prawn round the park.

But this was a story of a memorable day
we caught fifty or so from that spot
it was Johnno and I with the freshwater cray
That battled that summer and boy was it hot.

After packing our haul on the back of the bike
we took off home to lay down to rest
the ride from the orchards was no short hike
with our patience really put to the test.

After sharing our haul with those that were round
Johnno went off through a hole in the fence
we then buried the shells in a pit in the ground
The devouring of yabbie had been extremely intense.

So never was it recorded after that day
of a haul of such respectable size
but we've tried ever since to catch that old bush cray
but sadly come home with meagre supplies.



Blue Tongue Bend

As local kids joined the cycling craze
they would ride alongside rivers course
mostly on summers hottest days
they'd head for blue tongue in all their force.

Following old tracks along winding bends
that were towered by old river gums
The peddling convoy would climb and descend
as an army of cycling chums.

With most always panting along the way
there was none who dared to lag
for fearing the thought of being left there
and forever labelled a dag.

So with two of the lads from along the road
And others who dared to tag
A couple of us always carried the load
in two packs and a canvas bag.

Inside one was rope bound up with old wire
most important of items to bring
A box full of matches to start up a fire
with an inflatable black rubber ring.

Two steel wedges and the old mans mallet
were thrown in as par of course
a round of sangas to throw down the palate
with a bottle of Tom piper sauce.

It was then seven miles of an arduous ride
and for this we would so intend
to arrive at the 'tongue that morning
on the river just down from the bend.

Whilst the others routinely set up camp
I would be scaling the old river gum
for I had no fear of its dizzy height
often held by lack-lustre some.

After securing the wedges into their place
I'd then head for the tree tops crown
N'toss a rope round the fork or a likely brace
then slowly make my own way down.

It was then oldest to youngest that formed a line
to swing out from the muddy bank
and usually more often two lads at a time
would perform stunts of the highest of rank.

After an hour on the rope you'd collapse in a heap
cause from cold you'd start to shiver
with your spirits dulled from its icy deep
you take a rest from the hype of the river.

We'd then quickly light our old rock fire
and on coals we'd gently toast
several sangas made to our desire
chock a block full of last nights roast.

After this we'd all be homeward bound
our desires we carried no longer
with your tail in the air and head to the ground
it was then a race to be first at home on the "Wonga".

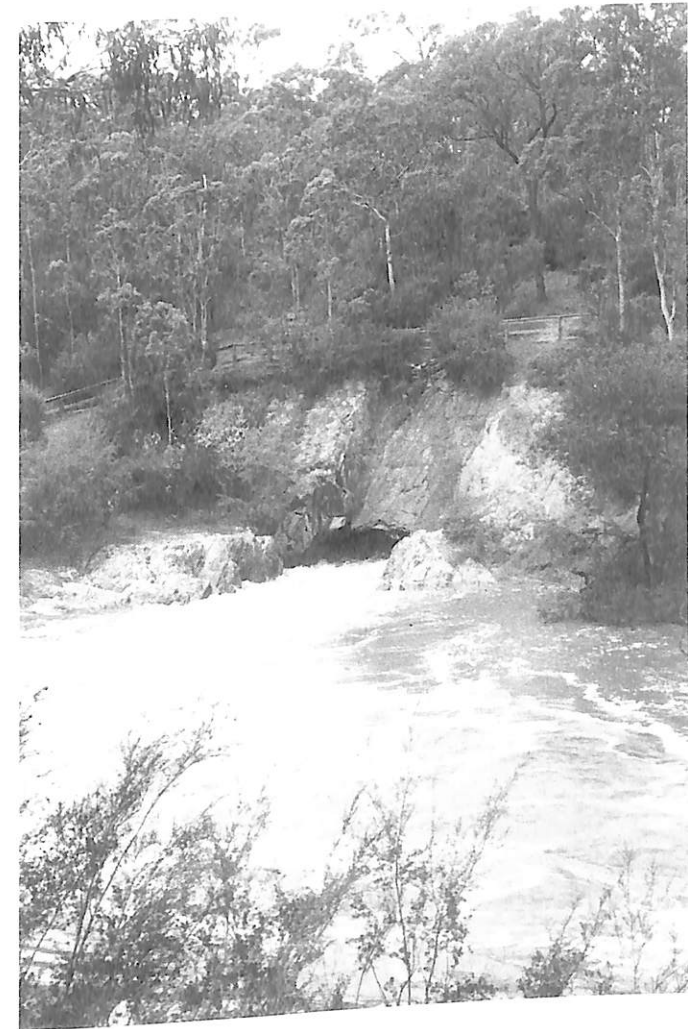
But by the time you'd reached the old dance hall
some riders were no where in sight
cause by then you could hardly move muscle at all
and you were only
halfway home on
the flight.

It was only on
arrival at the O'l
Grain store
that you had not the
slightest care
cause the arduous
journey was over
and you'd be thank-
ful you'd made it
from there.



Another favourite was rafting on the River...

So like Yan Yan we made our debut
on a raft at O'l Pound Bend.



The water divided from its course round a bend
flowing through a rock underground
you could leave from the edge at the tunnels end
returning rafting to the river at pound

The Old Church Bell

A land mark around "Wonga"
near by an old scout hall
would sound loud its siren
a christian signal for all

The siren chimed mostly
on the Sunday morn
as a local congregation
gathered on the church lawn

For seventy odd years
A brass bell was rung
by a man of the cloth
with a most biblical tongue

One frosty Autumn Sunday
the bell didn't sound
as the folks here on "Wonga"
had their ears to the ground

Around here it wasn't known
that on an evening before
A most famous bell
which all could adore

Was lowered from the fork
of the old gum tree
by a mate and myself
(Though we could hardly see)

It was the darkest of night
and with torch my mate shone
I then unsecured the old bell
and the damage was done

Though it weighed quite a lot
the old bell was intact
as it was lifted and lowered
straight on the bicycle rack

With a bush skill and cunning
we rode homeward that night
and made sure the old church bell
was well out of sight

After a couple of days
the old parson got wind
of the two likely culprits
that had knowingly sinned

I arrived home from Mullum
in my usual way
and I was confronted
quite abruptly if I must say

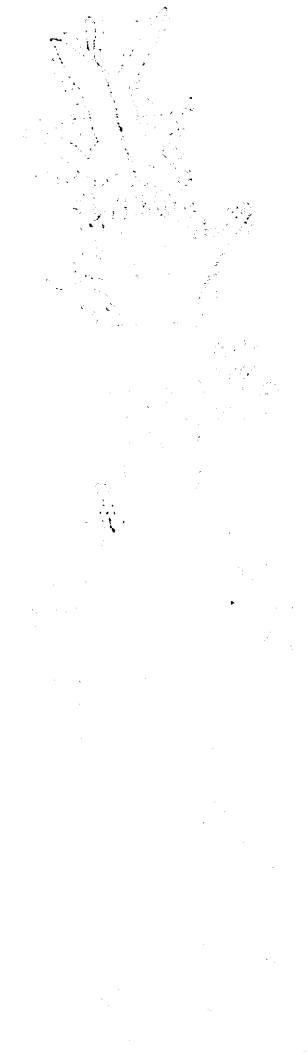
By parson with a frown
from ear to ear
and I thought to myself
... I'm out of here

My son I believe
you've got the church bell
a couple of your mates
I directed to tell

I've heard of your antics
around here for some time
You just return the old bell
and all will be fine

But I'll be asking you this
for the clearing o' the slate
come to sermon next Sunday
just you and your mate

We returned the bell
and of sermons we did tire
but what we did learn that day
is our old church had a spire....



Two Trams And A Dam

There's a story 'round here about an old homestead
"Chipping" by name is near by
it was built by old bill McKinley
Surrounded by bushland and blistering sky

They say his times were a trying
and things around then they were rough
but before old "Chipping" was erected
they say Bill and his wife did it
tough.

I was told when the old trams
were running
nearby on the old Burwood line
one day two of 'em gave up the
service
I guess they just ran out of
time.

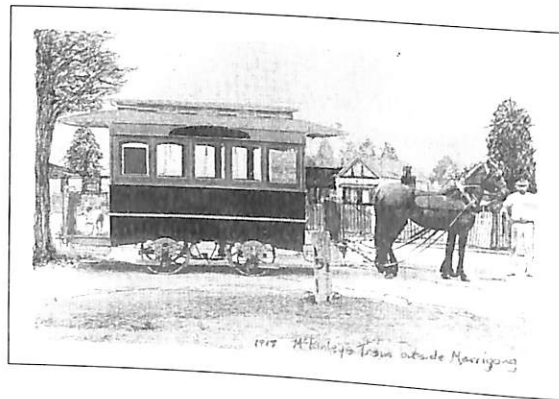
Well bill must have made them
an offer
to take the two tram cars away
'cause I was told they appeared on the "Wonga"
the afternoon of the very next day.

He placed them in piticturesque setting
down by the old "Chipping" dam
he must have been so proud of his effort
for he became a most infamous man

Whilst waiting to finish the homestead
the seats must have been the right type
for you'd see him at ease in the tram car
smoking baccy from his old clay pipe.

The birds they got used to them being there
and would nest amongst the cars inner trim
I think that as old Bill had predicted
not one deserved the old trams but him.

And as well-wishers and locals would pass by
and with words of greeting they'd fling
I'm told he'd pull twice on his Tram rope line
and the old brass bell above would then ring.



Hedge Cutter Jack

A fine form of fun over the fence at the back
was an old hedge of great density
it was guarded by old man hedgecutter jack
it was more challenging than your average tree

With my brother and I and a couple of mates
We one day took shears and cut an entrance in
Then placing inside a couple of crates
to sit on, It seemed an almighty sin.

From the centre of the thicket was made a special room
set in a manner to store our food
it was a good place to dodge mums wooden broom
were we devour lollies and quietly brood.

From the 'cubby' inside often we'd climb through the roof
were we'd run from end to end
although twelve feet above we were never aloof
though from weight the hedge sides would bend

But the thing we dreaded that worried us sick
was thrust upwards with hellish intent
it was guided by old Jack it was a sharpened stick
off his gardening rake that was skillfully sent.

Upwards came his rage you could here his cry
come down or I'll tan your hides
get out from my hedge or you'll surely die
with that we'd scuttle over the sides.

From there we would run to the back of his house
knock loudly upon his door
we'd then sneak away as quiet as a mouse
our blatant annoyance he could'nt ignore

O'l hedgecutters wife would then storm outside
we then take off over the road
back to the base camp were we'd safely hide
leaving them behind to swear and curse.

It was some months later when Old Jack bought a dog
we found this out on returning one day
it looked more like he'd bought an oversized hog
Our time of reckoning was here I must say.

The dog bailed us up and with fear we stood by
as Jack cried 'Boys' I think its all over
baring its teeth it was missing one eye
Jack put our lives in the hands of old Rover.

Jack then remarked 'boys repent your sins'
Then I feel we could made amends
if you'll rake up my lawn and take out the bins
we may become the most amicable of friends

Well we left that day after repenting our sins
we had paid back our debt to old Jack
I'm sure now with old rover the hedgecutter grins
as his prize thicket is beginning to grow back.



Guy Fawkes

It was a time of year along our road
when an event was hosted so
where people came to a chosen abode
whether neighbours friend or foe.

It was to be the event of the calender year
when one November they came to mine
the people coming from far and near
smartly dressed they formed a line

From front gate they bore offerings of wood
which they stacked in pyramid form
carrying old mattresses as best they could
which where thrown on all tattered and torn.

High on the stack supported by stalks
was a statue standing out as clear as a bell
it was our effigy of the great Guy Fawkes
standing above the now fiery hell.

With the scent of powder and burning of gum
happy faces around the fire light shone
whilst others brought bangers envied by some
The most fiendish of acts was done.

My brother and I quietly slipped away
to place our most deadly bait
armed with the crackers it was 'our show' today
so we placed them securely in a nearby crate.

With limited thought we weren't to know
that a neighbour had stashed their supply
in that same crate and were now watching the show
from a safe position that was just near by.

Lighting the wick off we tore
taking shelter behind a tree
with the skies breaking into an almighty roar
it was devastation as far as we could see.

Some birds were blown from out of their tree
our cat rose with claws outstretched
A black crow cried out it's final plea
plummeting down on my grandads chest.

The parson had his toupee removed
not a person was excluded that night
The power of the blast has certainly proved
what can happen when things don't go right.

As burning branches fell from the skies
the thick smoke was beginning to clear
people lay flat not opening their eyes
preparing to accept their worsening fear.

But luckily for those present that night
who'd all risen up off the sooty ground
They laughed aloud with all their might
amused at what they now found.

For standing tall neither tattered or torn
was our hero who never talks
The very reason this auspicious night was born
The straw hero our great Guy Fawkes.



Chooks On "Wonga"

If your keeping poultry all your life
conditions are never the best
you can lose good friends or end up in strife
if neighbours move in for their as good as a pest.

Well old man Roberts ran a chook farm on "Wonga"
so with ten thousand the noise could be heard
the neighbours couldn't stand the smell any longer
though living a mile from the 'clucking' bird.

So one day from advice he dulled their sound
with an idea of a clamp on their beak
he knew a solution just had to be found
but soon the hens began to freak.

Rattling his cages they pecked on the tin
so he needed another cunning device
although feeling he'd committed an almighty sin
he then made up a blind fold to cover their eyes.

Well it seemed the chooks had accepted his plight
for on the first days, the silence was eerie
As his ten thousand chooks must of thought it night
even the neighbours had not the slightest querie.

Till then truck after truck rolled in from his gate
for his chooks they were laying double
old man Roberts hadn't predicted his fate
with this much production he saw he had trouble.

The tins overflowed the noise it was gone
old Roberts stood with his hands in the air
and the chooks kept laying with their blind folds on
As the truckies were taking their share.

Well by now the neighbours protested strong
with so much noise their silence was torn
and outside there were trucks backed up a mile long
yelling and screaming and blasting their horn.

For he'd created a monster and the crowds were growing
so then finally cops arrived on his door
for the 'Chooks on Wonga' was a special showing
with even the cops not believing what they saw.

After succumbing to pressure and size of complaint
lifting blindfolds a compromise was sought
they placed the chook farm under restraint
and slowly then all of his chooks were caught

The story goes for a while after then
you could order the family size
From a selection on offer of roasted hen
put on display with blindfolded eyes



Huberts Bull

I remember the ride to aumanns orchards
it was once called stony point
and from hills 'n creeks our legs were tortured
from stretching every muscle 'n joint

bound by the border of harris gully
and running along Tindalls road
we'd borrow some apples which was a bit of a worry
if the Aummans had ever showed

It was then over the road to Huberts farm
where he kept an enormous bull
we'd stand by and watch Hubert shake his arm
as he swore at it when ever "full"

When sober he called the bull "little Browny"
when drunk he'd shout "Emily"
his theory was you never hit a bull
but should swear at it pleasantly

He still rode around on horse n' cart
and refused to accept the car
reckons more times tha not they would never start
and he'd be late for his seat at the bar

When they come to lay old Hubert down
from his eyes he could hardly see
but across his head was a prominent frown
as he shouted where the hell is "Emily".





If you are here up on the "Wonga"
 And have bathed in the Yarras wine
 But plan to stay round a little longer
 Don't marr the fruit of the vine.



The Bush Caretaker

On some weekends at the Base Camp
 it here was always to escape
 for in the past when I'd stayed around
 I'd be made to use the garden rake.

My choice was to head for the hundred acres
 on the cycle with no time to lose
 cause round ere the folks would demand partakers
 so before they new it I had laced up my shoes

Hurridly heading off not once I'd look back
 Till turning up the back of Ol' Knees
 knowing I'd kept my reputation in tact
 I stopped at the dam near shade of the trees

Whilst I sat there whittling with sharpened blade
 one day a man appeared from out of the blue
 then I witnessed mysterious sounds being made
 as he proceeded, intent to play his didjeridu.

At first I feared his darkened complexion
 as he remarked hey "fella are you lost"
 though his eyes they shone with friendly affection
 for a moment there the bloke had me tossed

"No way Mate" my reply was blunt
 "what do ya know fella" this bloke said to me
 cause I now this scrub from back to front
 "well then fella ya know of our scarred tree"?

I am Wurrundjeri and this is my home
 the trees they show our reign
 yes all through the currawong our people would roam
 for thirty thousand years we've lived on its grain.

I was born to bill Barak a woiwurrung man
 who moved from here to Brushy Creek Bend
 a great warrior who bore his roots from this land
 the preservation this was his sole intent

He eaked out a life around here to the creek
 with this he pointed to a gash in the tree
 till white fella came and sadly things got bleak
 he then showed me bark torn from where once it would be.

He told me the bark was heated o'er fire
and then shaped into their desired canoe
for it was this type of tree that they would require
to travel the River to hunting grounds new

With this he said I'll go fella may be I see you round
as he then positioned the wood to his chin
with that he then left me his droning sound
which then I felt was a likeable din.

And since that day I've been back once or twice
to that spot where he used to be
still I keep thinking his family must of paid a price
for being the bush caretakers 'The Wurundjeri'



A Boyhood On Bolin

Sitting on the bank at my billabong
with the swish of the rising trout
ignoring the world as it rolls along
the wurr of cicadars are all about.

A place of peace somewhere to think
with the silence of its magical dawn
For thousands of years an important link
scented heavily with the frost of the morn.

Unheard of for years by settled white man
with only cockatoo's squarking high from a tree
I feel I'm the first to stand on this land
and view the arena of wild life to see.

So for the price of progress and a hole in the ground
should we inherit the right to destroy
oh what a crime if it uttered no sound
as I have been coming here since I was a boy.



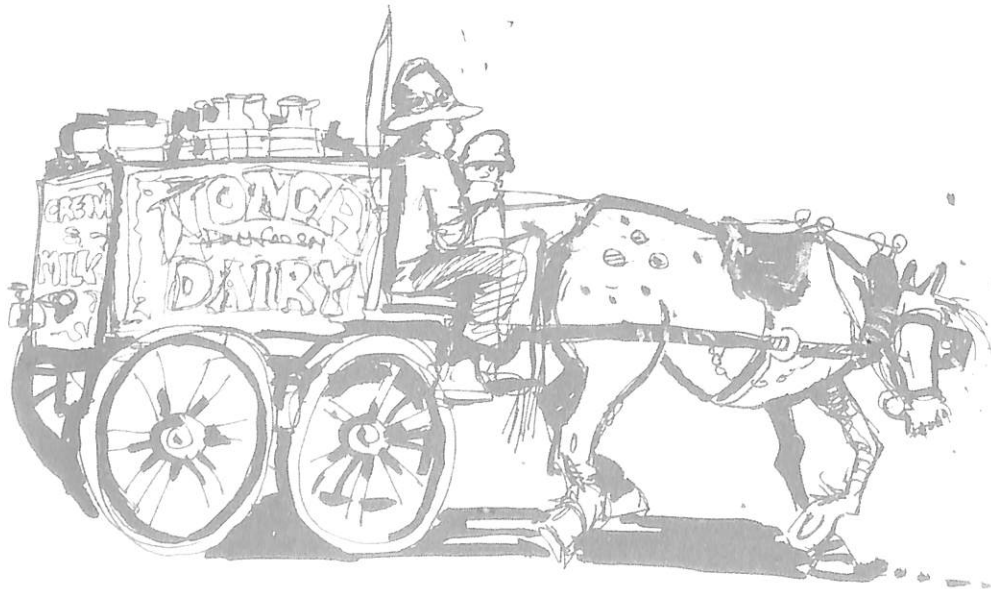
Prayer O' The Milky

A morning awakes the sun warming the trees
as the clydesdale and cart rolls on by
with the songs of the magpie throttling the breeze
the "Wonga" milky clears sleep from his eye.

He replaces the bottles from side to side
whistling tunes along the morning call
picking up the empties with traditional pride
whilst keeping close eye on his creamy haul.

His carwheels hum with achink of the reign
as hauling uphill from the Ringwood dairy
The horse masked with blinkers is showing the strain
from many pothole the clydesdale is wary.

But the milky knows as its been his life
and for he there is no other way
so without the O'l Milky we'd all be in strife
let us pray it doesn't happen today.



Cricket N' Crab Apples

A match was played one afternoon
amongst the apple trees
with well worn willow and leather ball
blowing a gentle summer breeze.

Two teams were formed from local lads
all eager to have a go
and the parson dropped in from his local rounds
deciding to stay for the show.

The match began and the field was set
with players all standing tall
and though the parson already placed his bet
he had enormous faith in us all.

In the first five minutes Johnno sat growling
because he was down on his luck
mackay had just toss'n bowled him
that arvo first ball for a duck.

Next it was me with eye of a hawk
though thinking I had marvelous skill
I hit the ball and was caught behind
left there standing still.

My batting had sadly failed me
but perhaps I might still be consoled
If some runs I could save by smart fielding
or one or two catches I could hold.

But alas as the match rolled onwards
I missed more than one easy catch
and the parson cried "entirely through you"
our fellows are losing the match.

Then our game it had started improving
and we had only just levelled the score
when out from the trees ran a stray dog
snatching the ball in its mouth, off it tore!

With eleven desperate lads out a search'n
the dog took off down a track
The lads just stood there shout'n
"come ere ya mut, bring it back".

With only one ball we possessed
it was the crucial hour in the game
so we needed to finish the innings
with something exactly the same.

Now the sun was well over yard arm
the ideas were running thin
when the Parson gave us a vision
that made all of us smile and grin.

Look up my sons,
look above you
to the fruit trees
standing tall
on most you'll find a
crab apple
that will bowl like a
leather ball.

Well the match we
finished that arvo
and the gang from
"Wonga" had won
so when the last of
the apples were
tossed
with all yelling and
cheering was done.



We retired to the shade of the garage
to talk of the highs of the day
and realised with our style of cricket
there was a hefty price to pay.

Cause from top to bottom we were aching
and not from the strain of the match
but from the apples striking the body
after most of us missed our catch.

So the end to this is quite simple
just make sure you bring a spare ball
then chain up the dog before starting
or don't bother playing cricket at all.

And like our predecessors we too had our special hut where you could get away from it all.

The "Wonga" Tree Humpy Home

Dad built a hut at the back of the yard
with a view through the tip of the trees
he found two gums to wedge it in hard
and built a trapdoor that opened with ease

He then pitched up the roof to keep out the rain
and though scrub we would no longer roam
cause now we had almost welcome gain
our New "Wonga" tree humpy home.



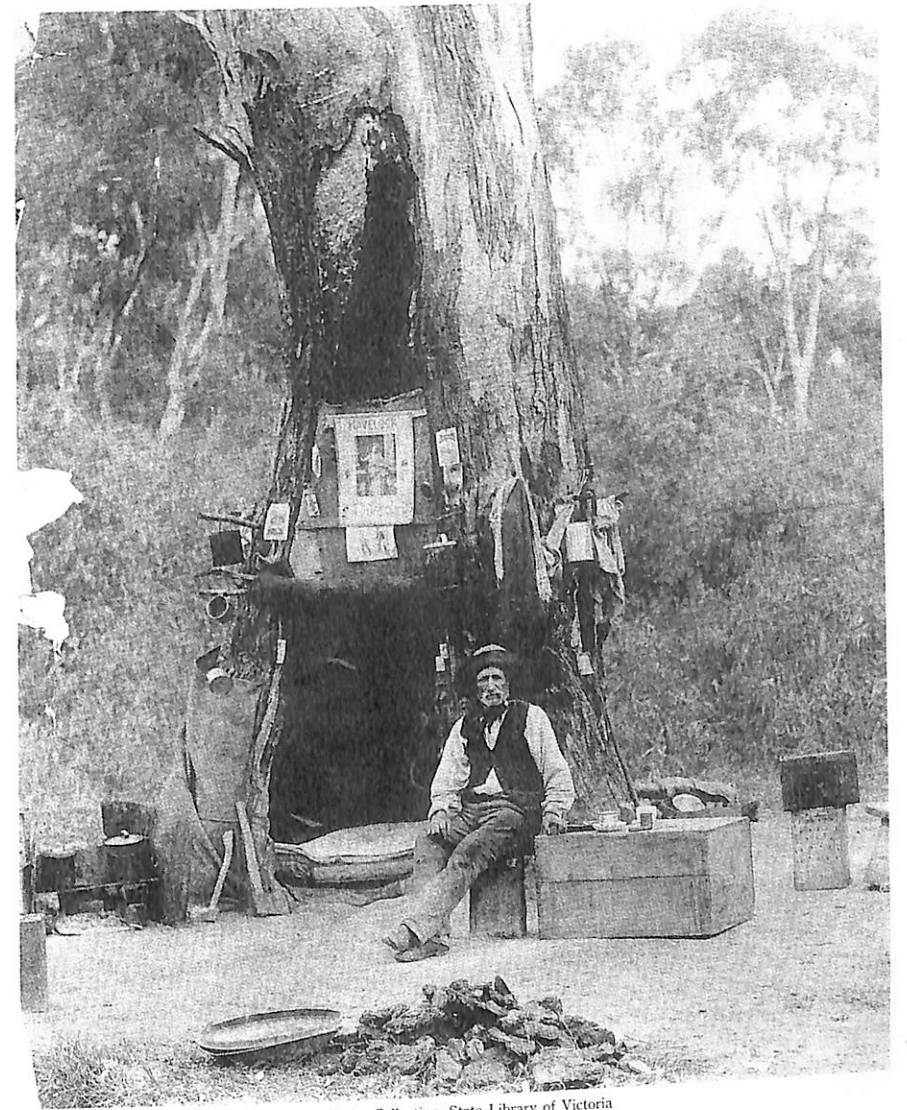
The Seasonal Cycle

The blue gum sways from side to side
as if dancing to classical song
shaking the leaves from its drought stricken hide
from a season of summer that was long.

A winters hail sweeps a blanket of rain
from the storm clouds that move overhead
as the banks are bursting from under the strain
from the mountain streams where river is fed

Flowers then bloom in clusters of colour
with billabongs bursting with life
it then moves from a season I consider the duller
to a time where new beginning is rife.

Waters then subside grasshoppers abound
cicadas whir in piercing song
so as willy willy's spin on parching ground
it indicates summers then coming along.



La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria

Some people have seen the old man of the river
who lives in the trunk of a tree
For his bush lifestyle they would never consider
but realise the old man is FREE

The Stars Of "Wonga"

Bunjil is said to be the star altair
beside him lies ganawarra and spirit
Ganawarra is a dreamtime black swan in the air
so should be regarded with the greatest of merit.

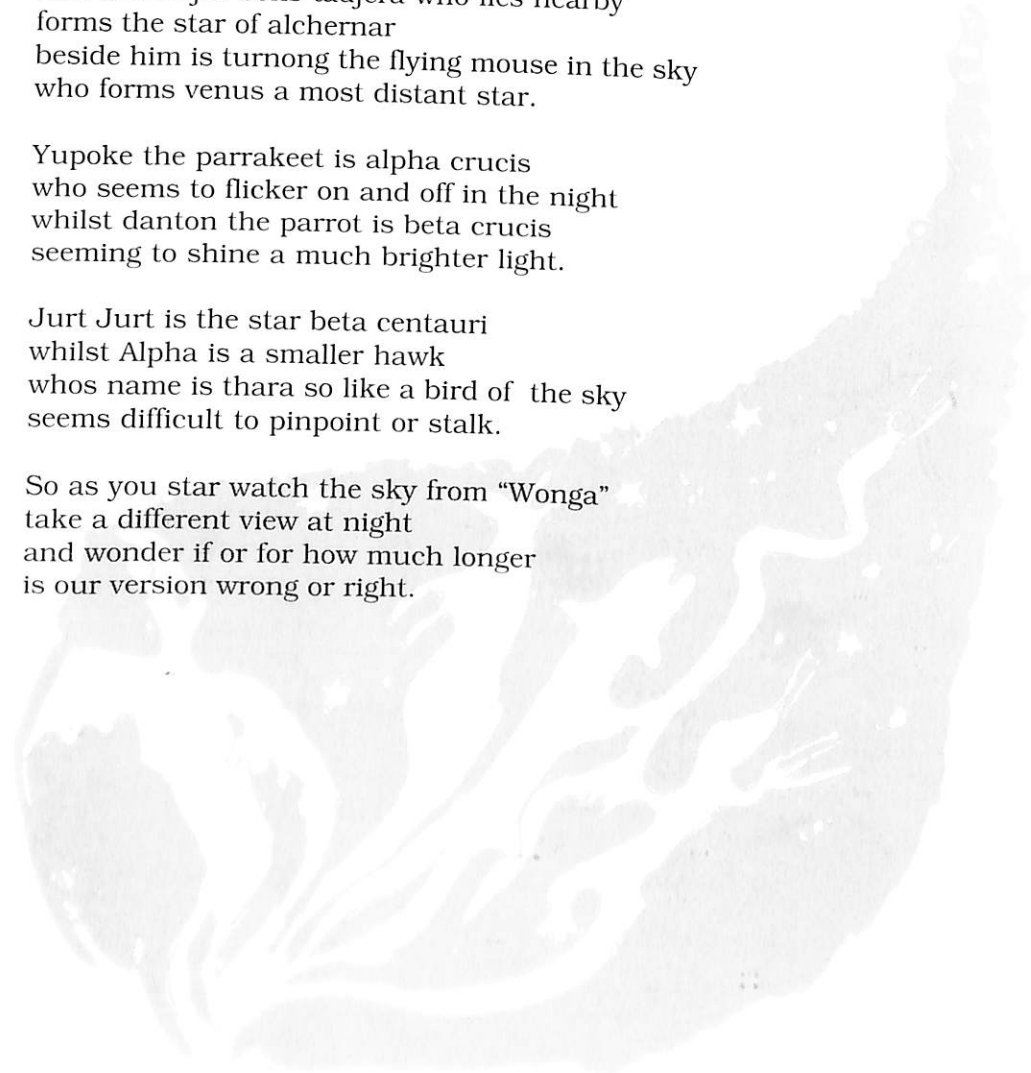
They were all blown to heaven from a big wind below
lying beside bunjils brother Nurong
who is the star Antares as we would know
so forming another in the Night sky long.

One of Bunjils sons tadjera who lies nearby
forms the star of alchernar
beside him is turnong the flying mouse in the sky
who forms venus a most distant star.

Yupoke the parrakeet is alpha crucis
who seems to flicker on and off in the night
whilst danton the parrot is beta crucis
seeming to shine a much brighter light.

Jurt Jurt is the star beta centauri
whilst Alpha is a smaller hawk
whos name is thara so like a bird of the sky
seems difficult to pinpoint or stalk.

So as you star watch the sky from "Wonga"
take a different view at night
and wonder if or for how much longer
is our version wrong or right.



The Mullum Mullum Lightning Tree

The currents pool in circular form
like snakes all trying to break free
around it ancient base where the bark is worn
from the Mullum Mullum lightning tree.

It appears like a serpent rising from deep
thrusting limbs out like hungry hands
as it lies half submerged in silent sleep
reaching outwards to Wurrudjeri lands.



Billys Hall

When the old bush dance was held at night
it had certain style
though held in a hall south of Warrandyte
local people lined up single file

The dance was run by Old Billy Kite
a man of fine repute
and he packed 'em in on Saturday night
with Akubra and leather boot.

The dog's they dozed around the front door
as the Jackass sung in the wind
while their masters danced across the floor
old Billy he quietly grinned.

Us local kids would sit round a fire
throwing yonnies at the dunny
thinking then it quite a funny joke
sadly for the man on the seat it wasn't funny.

But the week before a man went to pass
while sitting up on the seat
he was bitten on the top of his arse
and fell in a screaming heap.

So while fathers sipped on pints of beer
and mothers sipped on tea
That poor bloke yelled and screamed just near
forcing the redback to suddenly flee.

Then from time to time the local cop would call
but, not from any trouble
cause you wouldn't miss the dance at the Warrandyte hall
or, a glass of froth'n bubble.



Bush Flicks

An afternoon at the pictures
was every bush kids dream
with funny series of mixtures
before a main film on the screen.

We'd all then buy our jaffas
just to roll'em down the aisle
we'd toss em towards the front
where they'd collect in a sticky pile.

Then those of us who were braver
with their jaffas who held no need
would toss the lot straight down the boards
to cause a major stampede.

About half time at the screening
it was then called intermission
we'd pester mum for an ice cream block
forcing her into submission.

Then as the final curtain closed
you would rush towards the door
yes those old bush flicks at "Wonga" Hall
sadly flickered with life no more.



Heart Of The Dehran

A secluded place down an old muddy drive
on a track winding through to Schwerkoltz
the silent valley she comes alive
as I look to my favorite spots

The currawongs call and a the kookas laugh
as the Mullum Mullum winds her way
echoing on the old tribal path
on a creek with a vast array.

A blooming wattle I yearn to see
on the banks to the currawong
an old hunting ground of the Wurundjeri
with markings etched all along.

Bark from a trunk, a fallen log
a waterfall flows from a ledge
A mist is rising from a morning fog
forming a natural hedge.

Up from the bush flies a whiteneck heron
A magpie sings its carrillion
as it leaves its perch in the ancient heart
The heart of the Yarra Yarra Dehran.



Glynns Wetlands

An errie silence seems to steal
from the rush of the rivers flow
A flock is rising of chestnut teal
from the early morning wetlands glow.

Ageing gums lie twisted beside
a pondage of blue and green
the freshwater haven of static tide
one of natures great sites to be seen.

An ibis stalks a pond at Glynns
and searches the rim for frogs
it is here that all of nature wins
from the absence of barking dogs.



The Scrub Soloist

A god given species for all to see
it repeats the calls of endeavour
a mysterious bird that fascinates me
echoing all its incredibly clever.

A cluck, a hoot, a bell thats rung
amongst the fern its pure delight
on his forest floor his song is sung
usually solo to dawning light.

Staking its lair it scratches the ground
and records the history of men
deep in the "Wonga" is it's eerie sound
of the bird life that lives near its den.

But the lyrebirds dance is a mime thats sung
like a train thats running on rail
The crack of a whip or an axe thats swung
with fancy feathers on only the male.

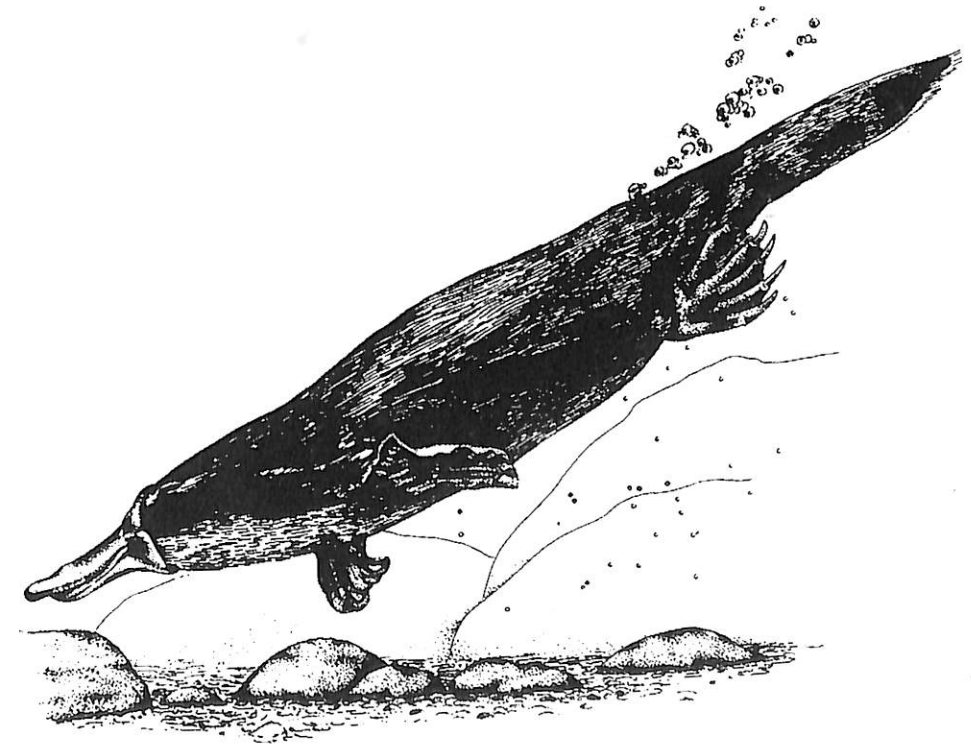
Though its sad to say of this soloist
that city people never hear his cry
for their life is surrounded in polluted mist
for their too busy working and waiting to die.



Monotremes

At home on the River is my Monotremes
furred and quite remarkable
although when disturbed it quietly flees
which creates for me quite a debarcle.

With one end a tail the other a bill
which devours all yabbie and bug
an odd looking mammal that is surely no dill
but who hides in a burrow its dug.



Cry Of The Cocky

Listen to the cry of the white cockatoo
to the call that he gives as he flies
as he skims though the trees above you
looking down from his home in the skies.

He circles around for a place to land
then vanishes out of sight
he cries again with his crest all fanned
he cries till dusk of night.

Its not that he's unhappy
or finds friends hard to keep
its just he doesn't sing the song
that helps the weary go to sleep.



The Great "Wonga" Dunny Budgie

Its not unlike a well fed moth
with its black and bulbous eyes
on several occasions incurred my wrath
most persistant for its meager size.

A common curse in summer time
on river and yabbie pond
though a safe haven I've tried to find
with a net over hat that I've donned.

No wonder we talk from the side of our mouth
blowing air down thru the nose
its the only way to "shoo" the pest of the south
quite bluntly I suppose.

Although it breeds around rubbish heaps
that are putrid and sometimes sludgy
it's an intregal part of everyday life
The great "Wonga" dunny budgie.



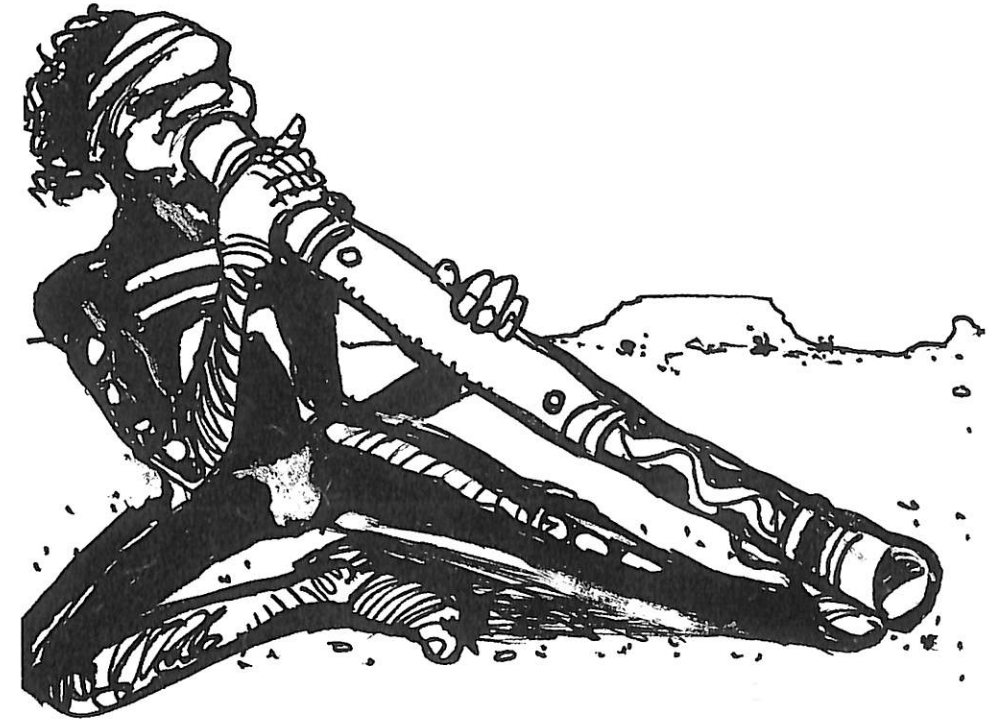
Gully Gold

The old track leads up whipstick gully
I'll walk my way to victory
with all the nuggets that I tally
no poorer shall I be.

This thought it oft occurred to me
while walking to third hill
of diggers that have paid their fee
though putting nothing in the till.

The workings here throughout the bush
in sandstone and in shale
and behind pick 'n shovel men would push
The warrandyte alluvial trail.

So although they've tamed the last wild mine
like an old bush brumby hack
maybe too late they have realised
they've wasted time upon this stack.



A voice is humming down a didgeridu
the song from an ancient heart
the song is sung of what to do
and of next of where to start.

Winnie Quagliottis Will

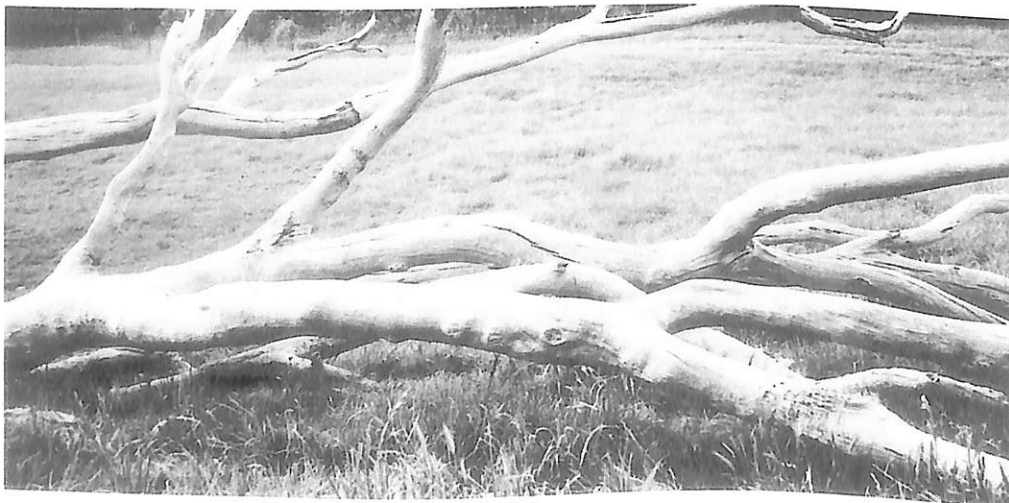
The wattle in bloom again eighty five years on
found the wurunjeri people in mourning
like her great uncle before her had gone
she dies in Spring without warning.

Winnie was swathed in golden wattle
possum skins lay on her casket
throughout her life she face unending battle
with white law though she'd tried to grasp it.

South from arnhem to old girl Alice
they travelled through old Pound Bend
a corteage to Coranderreck without any malice
the warrior woman had made a good friend.

During the period of her very last hours
whilst she lay down for a bit of a rest
she spoke of the law men in ivory towers
and of wurrundjeri sights to contest.

So all though her life and though halcyon days
she held fast to her culture and dreams
"Stick together for your rights my friends
until we return to our own tribal streams."



Willie MacInlays Will

A winters day fifty four years on
a councillors clan in mourning
his great father he had died
the same way without any warning.

Willie was buried in cedar coffin
with orchids on the top
He was one respected often
good friends with the local cop.

They travelled down to Anderson Creek
from Doncaster and from Ringwood
a procession of friends the clan would seek
to pay respect as best they could.

So over the period of his very last hours
as he lay down just to rest
he spoke of his friends ivory towers
local elections he had to contest.

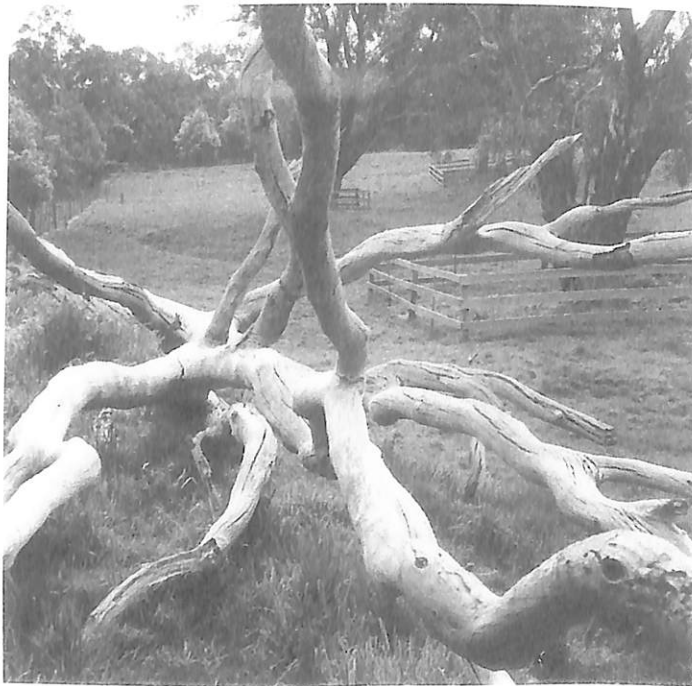
Since that day
when the fire rushed through
not a trace of any grave stood
so Bill is buried without a grave
but is remembered on a plaque as he should.

McAVOY RICHARD	16.10.1884
McAVOY THOMAS	20.1.1880
McCONOCHIE ISOBELLA	6.6.1903
★ McCULLOCH ALEXANDER	4.9.1909
McCULLOCH ELLEN	9.5.1875
McDONALD ALEXANDER	29.9.1885
McDONALD MARGARET	19.1.1914
McKENZIE EVA	26.5.1871
MacKINLAY CATHERINE	19.7.1867
MacKINLAY ELIZABETH	22.10.1933
MacKINLAY ROBERT	1.4.1867
MacKINLAY WILLIAM	23.12.1936
McLEOD MARY	22.10.1915



Wander North, up by the "Wonga"
get out of the regular flow
sit down on a log on the old Mullum Creek
let the sky start its picture show.

With its tall gums here up on the hills
all the fences have vanished far as
I can see its just Apple Orchards
and all of my neighbours are banished.



Finale

So as our cycle follows its course
our colours should be exactly the same
for all of us come from an identical source
it just seems strength is the name of the game.



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WONGA TERRITORY

- ▲ SCATTER OF STONE ARTEFACTS
- SCARRED TREE

