

Early local Aborigines

Country Wauchape Historical Society

12-7c

ABORIGINES.

- Ulitarra** Means "The Good Sprit" in the area of the Mid-North Coast of N.S.W.
- Ngamba** Is the name of the Tribe, occupying land from the Manning to Rollands Plains.
- Birrpi** Is the language of the Hastings tribe.
- Kerri** Means "there! "place! , similar to our North, South etc

Food..... By Thomas Bawden, from "the land of Ulitarra". by J.S.Ryan.

"A nomadic race, they shifted camp when the game became exhausted in the vicinity, and by a process of ~~circumvention~~ circumvention they repeatedly gave turns to the tribal territory .

Their men covered a wide range and almost anything in the shape of life did not come amiss to the palate of the aboriginal. Perhaps the opossum was the favourite animal for a meal, and much dexterity was exercised to capture these frequenters of hollow tree trunks and limbs. Then there was the kangaroo, paddymelon, bandicoot, wallaby fish obtained by spearing, wild fowl of every description, the cobra or toredo, Native bees hords..... The carpet snake was a luxury, and a ~~clean white~~ ~~appearance~~ and the flesh when roasted, aboriginal fashion on the embers had a clean white appearance resembling fish. Frequently the aboriginal on leaving his camp in the afternoon had no positive idea where his nutrition for the day was to come from, but Micawber-like he waited for something to turn up, which it invariably did. The late Jas Bain wrote.

" a large camp of aboriginals near the school in Campbell Street, Wauchape. There was a constant supply of fresh water from a spring nearby, which turns into a small creek near the High School. It has never been known to run dry. Some 200 aboriginals would be in camp at any time, with as many more being on walk-about. I have seen them catching paddy-melons which were in abundance on the Yeppon Creek. The blacks would form a circle, each carrying a nulla made from the root of a tree. Yelling and jumping they moved in ever decreasing circles until the animals were ~~seen~~ surrounded when they were easily clubbed to death. These animals thrived and ~~were~~ increased all the time the aboriginals lived there. They fished with spears made from the Kurrajong trees which grew in profusion along the banks of Yeppon Creek. This wood was light and would come to the surface and float with a fish on the end of the spear. It was so light I have seen fish swim half a mile up the creek after being speared - with the blackfellow in pursuit along the bank.

ABORIGINES.

The women of the tribe pulled the bark from the rotten logs on the bank to expose the toredo or cobra worm. They shook the worms into the water, the fish would spring to the surface to feed and would be easily captured. The cobra worm was a great delicacy in the diet of the aborigine.

Witchetty grub This is a large white grub which lives in the bark of the trees. Especially willow and wattle. It can be found quite easily by the sawdust it deposits under the trees. These can be eaten raw, but are better cooked. In 1971 a class of schoolchildren came to my farm for a breakfast hike. Many of the children cooked these grubs and ate them. One young chap tried his raw and received a nasty bite in the throat. The nippers should first be removed before eating them uncooked.

Mrs Elsie Marr, of Purfleet wrote: M.R.T. 1972.

"You will find the wood oyster or cobra, in logs in the river. Cooked and eaten it is not only nutrititious, but a medicine for the sick and a cure for the sleepless. Pull a log out of the water, and if it has little holes in it, that's the cobra. It is a worm like creature, and looks just like Spaghetti when cooked. You can boil them or curry them. People take it when they are sick. My sister-in-law was very sick in hospital. She called for some cobra and ate it in front of the doctor. She was better the next day and came home." Mrs Marr said "There is a lot of cobra in the river around Taree. It will make you sleep well. "

Camps. By D.McFarlane "The Land of Ulitarra."

"Their camps were merely low lean-to or arched protection of bark supported on slender brushwood rods of twigs, just sufficient to accomodate a few occupants from the rigors of the ~~night~~ weather. The roofing was generally the light outer bark of the small leafed ti-tree, quite rainproof, and texture akin to delicate paper." These were very primitive and after the arrival of the white men the camps improved. The ones I remember being quite solidly constructed of bark walls and bark roofs. Beds were made of bags stretched between poles and pushed into the bare ground. Apart from the hordes of dogs these areas were quite clean. Cooking was done outdoors. Brooms were made of twigs and the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ surrounding area swept clean. In the 1880's two camps are mentioned. One near Port Macquarie cemetery called Morcom and another reserve at Rollands Plains. In the Wauchope area the surroundings around the Wauchope Showground were dotted with camps. Each family having their own special part. The Murray family in the showground itself. The Morcoms across the Beechwood road. The Buggs closer in to Wauchope. Billy Foot and his wife Violet lived on our farm in a big hollow log. They had a small boy who died of pneumonia after which they deserted the camp. My father built them a substantial weatherboard

ABORIGINES.

room with an iron roof when they had another son, but they did not stay long in it. Leaving it they moved out into the bush. Thus they lost three little sons from the effects of the elements.

A legend written on Oct 22, 1900 to the Editor of 'Science of Man' by Mr G.R. Brown, Port Macquarie.

X "There is a strange place near the Wilson River. Here there are about thirteen erections, each large enough for a man to get in, being built of loose stone; these stones erections are about two feet across and three feet high. One near the crown of a hill, at about the north east slope, and from which you can see Trial Bay and the buildings near it, is a larger receptacle which may have been intended for the king or orator to stand in. There were many more about which had quite fallen down, havind no adhesive material with which to keep them together. Many of the thirteen which were standing had partly fallen to pieces. Mr. G.Wilson, Of Wilson River, who showed them to me, did not know for what purpose they had been erected, nor could he find out: even the old blacks did not know. If I should find out I will let you know. These stone edifices are on an aboriginal reserve, W.R. 63, Parish of Tinebank, County of Macquarie."

X The Keeparra or Kippara.

A special place was set aside for a Bora Ground for the purpose of initiating the young men of the tribe. One near Wauchope is at the Brombin turn-off on the Pappinbarra road. (See Mrs Betsy Bradford's History in the Wauchope Museum).

A circle was marked and cleared, some thirty feet in diameter. The boys are separated from the tribe for some weeks. They are subjected to various forms of violence and ordeals of endurance. Afterwards the initiates are presented with a spear leather pouch and the sacred stones. If these are ever seen by a woman or an uninitiated man the owner is in danger of his life.

The Late Jas Bain wrote

The Keeparra stones are sacred. They were given to the young men at their initiation cemerony, and a man could not marry until he had received the stones. They were of white quartz.

About 1890 my brother Hack and myself found some stones on our farm near the Wauchope football ground. we were come upon by the king of the Hastings River Blacks, Bunyah Jimmy. He was very angry and afraid and we were very frightened.

ABORIGINES.

He grabbed them from us. These stones belonged to a young chap called Barrabi. He was killed by the Macleay blacks a short time after we discovered them.

"The land of Ulitarra".....Professor Enright. 1935.

"... the following da I was at Nulla Nulla, near Bellbrook, on the Macleay river, where I met seven initiates who still assist in carrying out the initiation ceremonies called.....Kiparra. Apart from Professor A.P.Elkin, no one else was present but a little girl no more than seven years of age. On opening my bag containing the two stones, the aborigines immediately stood shoulder to shoulder, forming a wall screening the objects from the view of the little girl. They convinced me that the stones were sacred. The smaller one I was informed, was shown to the youths who had been through the ceremony of the Kiparra and they were told that at one time there was no moon and a great boomerang thrower threw his boomerang into the sky, where it remained and was thereafter the moon. The stone illustrated the story....."

"The Land of Ulitarra".....Bawden writes 1886.

"The corroboree was another pastime of the aborigines, and the dances were performed in a group encircled by wood fires, The men exhibiting much energy and vivacity in their salutatory evolutions. The wives beat logs of wood as an orchestra to the exuberant dancers, as they with shivering muscles leapt feet high on the green sward, to the accompaniment of whooping, in additions to the beating of the timbers around." In 1973 I attended a corroboree at Mica Beach near Darwin. A group of aboriginals performed five dances. Each depicting an animal in flight or an animal being hunted. Each movement was done in unison as a well trained ballet might dance. It was quite easy to pick out which animal was being depicted in each dance.