

NEWS

Ngaku and Ngamba's the early Hastings residents

This week's historical photograph run with the help of Hastings District Historical Society features Aborigines from the early settling days.

Before the coming of John Oxley's party of explorers in 1818 and the subsequent settlement at Port Macquarie a few years later, the only human occupants of the area were two tribes of aborigines, the Ngaku and Ngamba.

The Ngaku's territory was roughly from the lower Manning to a line running through Rolland's Plains to Point Plomer.

The Ngamba lived further north in the Macleay district.

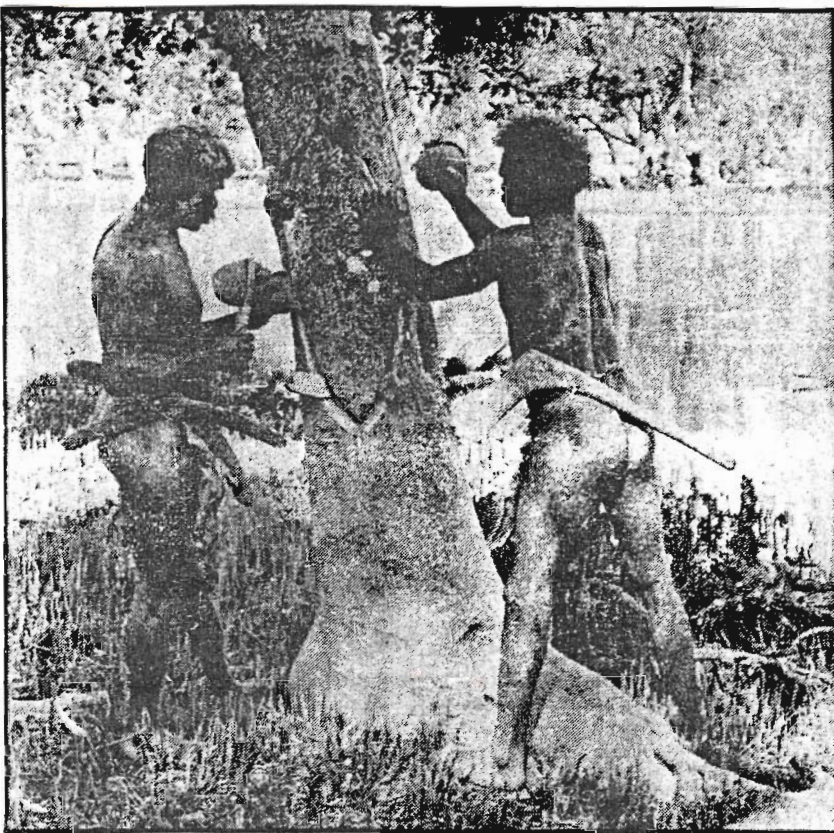
While boundaries were unmarked, they were strictly defined by the tribes and woe betide any one caught straying out of his tribal area.

These people lived entirely off the land, hunting, fishing and gathering many kinds of plants for food.

They fashioned their own tools and weapons from stone and wood, while they used skins and bark for canoes, shields, baskets, etc.

Aborigines had no permanent buildings, but they did construct shelters, called gunuals, of branches and bark.

When the white set-



Our historical photograph shows aborigines removing bark from a tree.

tlers began to take over their tribal lands after 1821, the aborigines showed some hostility.

They had little idea of planned attack, or of one tribe of warriors joining with other tribes to form an overwhelming force, under chosen leaders.

The picture shows two men cutting and removing bark from a man-grove tree for a shield or

basket, using only primitive tools.

This would need a great deal of skill, patience and time. The many scars left on trees have all but disappeared now, with clearing, bushfires and the passage of time.

This picture is one of many taken by Thomas Dick at the beginning of this century. By this time the local aborigines were

wearing clothes, so they had to be persuaded to pose specially for the photographer.

It is fortunate some of them had retained their old special skills.

While only a few of almost 150 photographs in this collection are on display, all of them can be inspected on Monday and Wednesday mornings on request.