

## Introduction

### R.H. Mathews and the Gundungurra

Robert Hamilton Mathews' childhood was spent at Narellan and Breadalbane.<sup>1</sup> Both areas are in or near Gundungurra territory. Some of the Aboriginal children he played with in the 1840s could well have spoken the Gundungurra language. His first two published papers on Aboriginal language, stimulated by his contact with Mary Everitt, were on Gundungurra.<sup>2</sup>

Although he published some 70 accounts of Dreamtime stories and mythological beliefs, Mathews' only attempt to provide a broad overview of the Dreamtime material of a single language group was for the Gundungurra.<sup>3</sup> Their Gurangatch and Mirragan story is the longest legend collected by Mathews and one of the few detailed published epics of the travels of the Rainbow Serpent in south east Australia.<sup>4</sup>

The shorter stories in this book provide a small primer on aspects of Gundungurra life. Topics covered include Aboriginal astronomy, the role of women in daily life, food, mother in law and incest taboos and the travels of the Bullen gods when they eliminated cannibalism in the Dreamtime. Beliefs such as the dangers of treading on tree buttresses are not mentioned in any other ethnographic accounts for south-east Australia. However the real "stars" of these stories are the animals and birds that the Gundungurra knew so well.

Mathews, in the introduction to a collection of legends published in 1899, said: "I have omitted many portions of the stories as told to me by the natives, owing in some cases to their obscene character, and in others for want of space."<sup>5</sup> Presumably the stories in this book have been similarly censored and shortened. It should be mentioned that The Gundungurra Tribal Council's Native Title claim covers a larger area than that described by Mathews as "the territory of the Gundungurra Tribe".<sup>6</sup> Many communities of indigenous Australians do not identify with the generic term of "Aborigines" preferring such terms from their own languages as Koori and Muri. Although many of the language groups adjacent to the Gundungurra had koori as the

word for man, the Gundungurra used muri a word normally associated with the languages of northern New South Wales and Queensland. Gundungurra people could be called Muri but this term is not inclusive of both sexes.<sup>7</sup>

### Mathews' informants

A regrettable aspect of most of Mathews' anthropological writing is his failure to acknowledge and name his Aboriginal informants. For the source of this collection of stories Mathews says only that they were "collected by me from the remnants of the Gundungurra tribe residing in Burragorang on the Wollondilly River". This is a similar acknowledgement to that for the informants for the Gundungurra language in the joint 1900 paper he wrote with Mary Everitt.<sup>8</sup> In this latter paper only two Gundungurra speakers are mentioned by name, Bessie Sims and Billy Russell. Bessie Sims of La Perouse was Everitt's informant.<sup>9</sup> Mathews' independent study of the Gundungurra language involved interviews with Christina Milligan, Fanny and Joseph Lynch and Billy Russell.<sup>10</sup> Of these, only Russell is known to have been a member of the Wollondilly River community.<sup>11</sup>

This community was established in 1875 when George Reilly, Sammy Hassall, Charley Jellick and Billy Russell selected 100 acre [40.5 ha.] lots under the conditional purchase provisions of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1861.<sup>12</sup> The first three selected adjacent lots on Byrnes Creek, near its junction with the Wollondilly. Russell chose land a little to the north of these portions. The land was not registered in their names, as it would have been for white selectors. Trustees were appointed to manage the land for "the use of the whole body of aborigines".<sup>13</sup> The three adjacent portions

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that indigenous people and others who use these terms Anglicise them in the plural as Koories, or Murris. The Gundungurra plural of man, murrin, is murruindyaragang or murruindyar as Mathews shortens it in this book. Mathews 1901(a), *op. cit.*, p.142.

<sup>8</sup> R. Mathews and M. Everitt, 'The Organisation, Language and Initiation Ceremonies of the Aborigines of the South-East coast of N.S. Wales', *J.R.S.N.S.W.*, vol.34, 1900, pp.262-281.

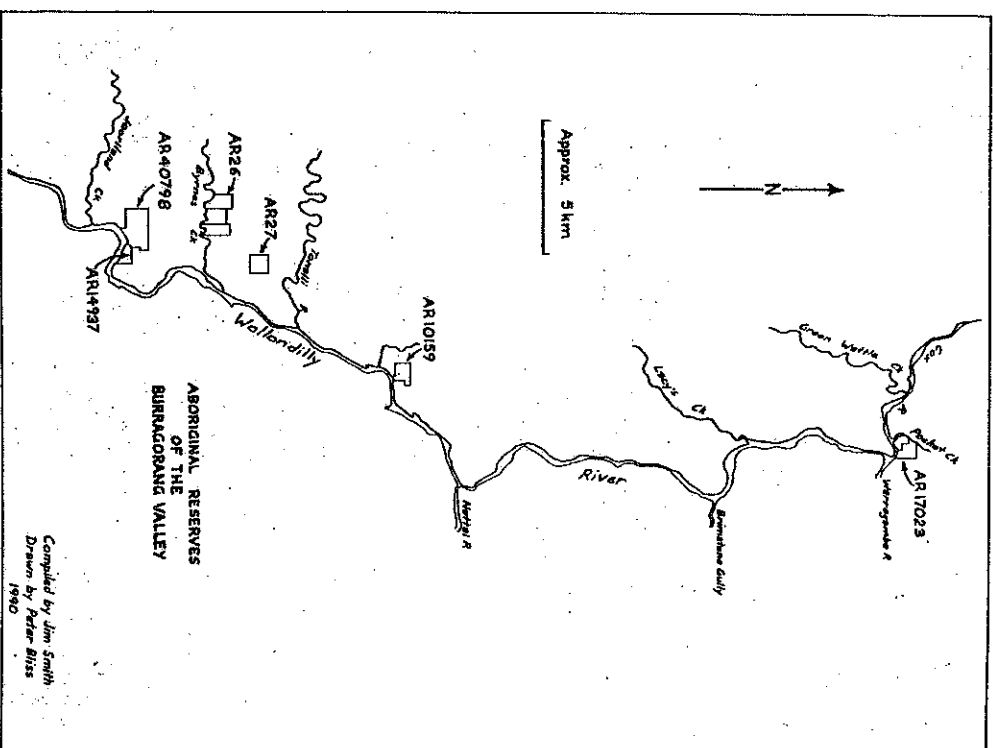
<sup>9</sup> M. Everitt, 'Gundungurra Grammar', undated MS note attached to Everitt's copy of paper noted above, PMS2672, ALATSIIS (Catalogued under Sims).

<sup>10</sup> R. H. Mathews, Notebooks, Mathews Papers, NLA MS8006, Volume 2, pp.45-47, Volume 5, pp.107, 132-34, 154-55, Volume 7, pp.2-3, 34, 35-36, 65, 67. Mathews also mentions talking to the Gundungurra speakers James Lynch and Gilbert "Godrey" [Gaudrey] in about 1901 (Volume 7, p.25). Gilbert was probably a brother of Alice Cooper, *see* Gaudrey (c.1850-1924).

<sup>11</sup> The Milligans lived at La Perouse and Megalong. Fanny Lynch at Plumpion, Joseph Lynch in Megalong.

<sup>12</sup> J. Smith, *Aborigines of the Burragorang Valley*, Den Fenella Press, Wentworth Falls, 1991, pp.14, 33-36.

<sup>13</sup> Survey Plan for Portion 50, Parish of the Peaks, Surveyed 17 May 1875, Lands Department Plan 847-1502.



Aboriginal Reserve 26 is the "Nulla Nulla" camp. Reserve 27 is Billy Russell's selection. Reserve 17023 is adjacent to St Josephs Farm. Branches of the Riley family lived at St Joseph's Farm and Reserves 40798 and 14937. The Rileys called their property at AR14937 "Gungahook" after the waterhole adjacent to their farm which was one of the resting places of Gungahook during his pursuit by Murrumbidgee in the Dreamtime. The Sherrits also lived on Reserves 10159 and 14937.

were gazetted as Aboriginal Reserve No.26 and Russell's portion as A.R. No.27 in December 1878.<sup>14</sup> Hassall and Jellicock did not appear to maintain a long association with the land but Reilly and Russell built huts on the reserves. They were joined later by the widow Annie Sherritt, who also erected a home with her children.<sup>15</sup>

On the night of the 1901 census, the "Nulla Nulla" community, as it was known by the local settlers, consisted of three households: Annie Sherritt's with two males and two females; Frank Locke's with four males and three females and George Reilly's with four males and four females.<sup>16</sup> The total of 19 agrees with the estimate of the journalist who visited the camp in 1899 and said there were "about 20" there.<sup>17</sup> Frank Locke or Lock (1867-1915) was from a Dharug family. He married the Dharug woman Ada Saunders in 1892.<sup>18</sup> The Saunders clan were associated in the early 1890s with the St Joseph's Farm community at the junction of the Wollondilly and Cox Rivers, where George Reilly's family also lived at the time.<sup>19</sup> Russell did not seem to be residing in any of his usual haunts on census night.<sup>20</sup> He was a wanderer who travelled regularly between the Southern Highlands and the Upper Cox River.

Although he had a hut on A.R.27, the land was poor and had no water. Russell probably spent little time there. As Mathews specifically says he obtained the stories from the Wollondilly community we can say that his principal informants were likely to have been George Reilly, Annie Sherritt and Billy Russell. Reilly, aged about 70 around the turn of the century, was the senior Gundungurra man permanently resident in the Nulla Nulla camp. Mathews is known to have interviewed George Reilly as he is acknowledged as the informant regarding the rock carving in the bed of Byrnes Creek.<sup>21</sup> Russell told Gundungurra dreamtime stories to Alfred Bennett.<sup>22</sup> As these are all completely different stories to those collected by Mathews we could surmise that the stories in this book came from the Reillys and Sherritts. The one point of similarity between the stories collected by Bennett and Mathews is that some of them describe the travels of the Bullen gods as they seek out and destroy evil characters. Interestingly, Russell's stories describe the Bullans traveling as far as Tamboraora,

<sup>14</sup> N.S.W. Government Gazette, 9 December 1878.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 1991, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>16</sup> S&C Robinson, 1901 *Census Camden N.S.W.*, Camden Area Family History Society, Camden, 2000, p.96. There are many variants of the spelling of Reilly's name.

<sup>17</sup> Anon., 'A Visit to the Peaks', Silver Mines Burroughs, *Darug Link and Blacktown and District Historical Society*, Blacktown, 1993, p.182.

<sup>18</sup> 1891 Census, Census District No.3, Sub District 15, County of Westmoreland, Cox's River Burroughs, State Records N.S.W.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, 2000, *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> R. Mathews, 'Some Rock Engravings of the Aborigines of N.S.W.', J.R.S.N.S.W., Vol.44, 1910, p.405.

<sup>21</sup> Private Collection.

west of Hill End, in their quest whereas those provided by Mathews' informants cover travels in the localised area of the lower Burrigorang Valley.

## Nulla Nulla Community - Byrnes Creek - 1901

### Sherritt household

Annie Sherritt (nee Waters) (c1838-1903) m. Charles, widowed 1876.

Stephen Sherritt (c1863-1923).

Peter Sherritt (c1873-1942).

Cecilia Sherritt (c1876- ).

### Riley household

George Thomas Riley (1820s-1906) m. Ellen.

Ellen Riley (nee Clayton) (1820s-1910).

Walter Thomas Riley (1870-1926) m. Annie.

Annie Theresa Riley (nee Hilton) (1872-1933).

Margaret Riley (1881-1904).

And 2 other males.

### Lock(e) household

Frank Lock (1867-1915) m. Ada.

Ada Lock (nee Saunders) (1867- ).

And 3 other males and 2 other females.

### Russell household

William Russell (1830s-1914).

## The Manuscript

Two versions of the manuscript of this book are in the R.H. Mathews papers in the National Library of Australia.<sup>23</sup> Neither is dated. The first includes the stories in this book plus the legend of Gurangatch and Mirragan. There is an index of the legends written on the back of an invitation to a meeting of the Royal Society of NSW for 2 September 1903. Mathews' introduction to this collection refers to one of his papers published in 1904. After sending the Gurangatch and Mirragan story to Germany in July 1907 Mathews rewrote the manuscript of the other stories. This indicates that Mathews was still hopeful of having the booklet published in 1907. It is from the second manuscript that this book has been prepared.

I have attempted to reproduce Mathews' system of diacritics as accurately as possible from the manuscript even when these seem inconsistent. As a further guide to the pronunciation of the Gundungurra words in the manuscript Mathews' 1904 paper can be consulted.<sup>24</sup> It appears to have been Mathews' intention to print each new Gundungurra term with diacritics and hyphenation and then as a single unadorned word each time it was used thereafter, although he was not totally consistent with this. Capitalisation and underlining (which has been removed from this edition) is also inconsistent. In a few instances Mathews gives two different spellings of a Gundungurra word and these have been reproduced as written.

## Footnotes

Mathews' manuscript contains thirteen footnotes, seven of which refer to his previous publications. These are indicated with [M]. In addition I have provided many new footnotes, mainly attempting to identify the species of flora and fauna referred to.<sup>25</sup> Mathews made no great efforts to accurately describe these.<sup>26</sup> However there is often sufficient descriptive detail on their appearance and habits to assign animals and plants to a particular species, bearing in mind the common names in use in the Burrigorang Valley area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the known distributions of species in Gundungurra territory. Mathews also provides no details for locating two places mentioned in the stories.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, there is no ambiguity in Mathews'

<sup>23</sup> R.H. Mathews Papers NLA, MS8006, Series 5, Folder 10.

<sup>24</sup> R. Mathews, 'Ethnological Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of NSW and Victoria', J.R.S.N.S.W., Vol.38, pp.205-207. Also see Mathews 1901 (a) *op.cit.*, pp.140-142. For a comparison with Everett's system of pronunciation see item in Note 9.

<sup>25</sup> Common names used by me are those in J & P Smith, *Fauna of the Blue Mountains*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> In contrast Mathews' son Gregory is now regarded by ornithologists as having been excessively pedantic in his desire to describe every possible variety and sub species of Australian birds in his twelve volume work *The Birds of Australia* (1910-1927). See A.D.B. Volume 10, pp.441-442.

<sup>27</sup> "Hell Hole" and Thumbrivurrin.

identification of astronomical features, an area in which he had a particular interest and technical training.<sup>28</sup> Some references are made to unpublished research by Alfred Bennett. Bennett collected Gundungurra dreamtime stories and language material from Billy Russell or Werriberrie in the years before Russell's death in 1914. This material is still held by a descendant of Bennett.

## Some Mythology and Folklore of the Gundungurra Tribe

By R.H. Mathews L.S.

The territory of the Gundungurra tribe included Burratorang, Katoomba, Hartley, Pictou, Bettina, Taralga and Goulburn, with the intervening country. On the east they were met by the Dharuk speaking people,<sup>29</sup> on the south east by the Thurawal,<sup>30</sup> on the southwest by the Ngunawal,<sup>31</sup> and on the west by the Wiradyuri tribes.<sup>32</sup> On the north of the Gundungurra was the country of the Darkinjung.<sup>33</sup> The initiation ceremonies of the Gundungurra are the same as those of the Dharuk, Thurawal, Thoorga, and other tribes who occupied the coastal districts from Sydney to Twofold Bay, and have been fully described by me in earlier treatises.<sup>34</sup> The Gundungurra language has also received attention in connection with the Thurawal and Dharuk.<sup>35</sup> In the present article are submitted some beliefs and folklore collected by me from the remnants of the Gundungurra tribe now residing in Burratorang on the Wollondilly river.

The natives believe that in the far past times, which they call the Gunyung-ga-lung, all the present animals were men. They are spoken of as the Burringilling, in contradistinction to the present race, who are called Muriñdyar. It would appear however, that the Burringilling folk were much cleverer than the people of our time. They could make rivers and other geographical features, cleave rocks, and perform many similar Herculean labours.

<sup>29</sup> [M] Journ. Roy. Soc. N.S.Wales, XXXV, 155-160 (1901).

<sup>30</sup> [M] Op.cit., XXXV, 127-150

<sup>31</sup> [M] Journ. Roy. Anthropol. Inst. London, XXXIV, 294-305 (1904).

<sup>32</sup> [M] Op.cit., XXXIV, 284-291

<sup>33</sup> [M] Proc. Roy. Soc. Victoria, X, N.S., 1-12. (1897), Journ. Roy. Anthropol. Inst. XXXIII, 271-281, (1903).

<sup>34</sup> [M] American Anthropologist, IX, 327-334, with Plate, (1896).

<sup>35</sup> [M] Journ. Roy. Soc. XXXV, 151-160. Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc. Phila, XL, 140-148, (1901).

<sup>28</sup> Mathews, 1904, *op.cit.*, p.204.

## The Crow, Kingfisher and Thrush

Wagulin the crow had two wives who were Kingfishers, Bindhiradhurak.<sup>36</sup> They had a young brother, a mere lad, who lived with them. He had a bad attack of the mange, bid-dyee-dyee, and his sisters oiled him with opossum fat for the purpose of healing him. Although the boy was young and had this complaint, Wagulin used to make him carry all the fire-wood and all the water. Always when Wagulin came home in the afternoon from his hunting, he found fault with the lad and said he was doing nothing. In order to pick a quarrel he would say to his wives, "Where is the fat I keep for greasing my hunting weapons?" They answered, "We used some of it to lubricate your brother-in-law," upon which Wagulin would say petulantly, "Is not he cured yet."

When they were all lying in the camp at night, Wagulin would get up to poke the fire, making hot coals and sparks fly out on the boy, as if by accident, until he was considerably burnt. At other times when the poor lad was crying with pain and itchiness caused by his disease, Wagulin would pretend to try and pacify him by scratching the sore places long and vigorously with his nails, till they were raw and bleeding, especially about the chest where the mange was the worst.<sup>37</sup> This grieved the boy's sisters exceedingly and they persuaded him to say he was going away to shift for himself. They made a camp for him a little distance up the creek and used to take him food when Wagulin was out hunting.

Wagulin suspected his wives of helping their brother and came home one evening and pretended that game was getting so scarce that he and the two women would have to shift camp to another place. Knowing that their brother was not yet strong enough to procure his own food, one of the women pretended she was weak in the legs and was not able to move from where they were. She pretended she had passed through a scrubby place when out getting yams and had trodden on the butt of a gumghlang, a haunted tree, before she had a chance of seeing it. Her assumed lameness lasted long enough until her little brother had so far recovered that he was able to take care of

<sup>36</sup> True Crows do not occur in Gundungarra territory. The common Crow-like birds within their country, called Crows by the early settlers, are Australian Ravens. In the later section of this booklet entitled 'Some Mythical Beliefs' Mathews notes that the Raven became the centre star in 'Orion's belt'. The Kingfisher of Gundungarra land which has a reddish breast colouration (from its Dreantime bleeding) combined with white patches (from its Dreantime burning) is the Azure Kingfisher. Mathews says later that the Kingfishers became the outer stars in 'Orion's belt'. In one of his language papers Mathews notes that *dhuruk* is a suffix denoting a female of the species, so presumably a male kingfisher would be *Bindhiragumban* (R. Mathews, 'The Gundungarra Language', Appendix to 'The Thuraual Language', in *J.R.S.N.S.W.*, Vol. 35, 1901, p. 151.

<sup>37</sup> [M] Owing to the injury to the skin, the Bindhiradhurak has a white patch on its breast now. A burn always leaves a whitish patch on any blackfellow. [This footnote is in the first draft of the manuscript only].

himself. He then advised his sisters to go away with Wagulin, and so prevent the quarreling on his account.

Young Bindhiradhurak started off in another direction and got into good country where game and other foods were abundant. In the course of some years he grew up and developed into a fine, strong young man. Then he thought he would like to go and visit his sisters and perchance punish old Wagulin for all his cruelty and bad treatment. Accordingly he decorated himself in full war paint and upon getting close to his sisters' camp called out to them and sat down. They did not know who he was at first, but in a little time they recognized him and went over to where he was.

Bindhiradhurak had a long chat with his sisters, exchanging experiences since they parted.

Towards sun-down Wagulin came home and commenced scolding his wives for having a man camping near them. They became vexed and answered, "That is your brother-in-law, you had better go and see him, as he wishes to have some satisfaction, now that he is able to take his own part." Wagulin replied "I never did him any harm, it was you two sisters who ill treated him, but I was always good to him. It is you two who should try to make peace with him, not I." After waiting some time and Wagulin failing to come to him, Bindhiradhurak went over to Wagulin's camp and challenged him to fight, but he would not stand out. Bindhiradhurak then walked right into Wagulin's camp and attacked him, but he ran behind his wives and asked them to parry the blows. They refused to screen him and Bindhiradhurak gave him a great beating. While he was lying on the ground half dead, Bindhiradhurak threw hot coals and ashes over his face, which burnt his eyes so much that there is a white streak round the eyes of all crows ever since.

Bindhiradhurak then took his two sisters out of the camp leaving Wagulin so badly injured and burnt about the eyes that he was not able to stand on his feet or see anything. The young fellow took his sisters away with him to a different place, where they became the wives of another man, *Dyoo'-rut'-gang*, the thrush.<sup>38</sup> After a while Wagulin recovered from his cuts and burns and went in quest of his wives. When he came to the place where they were camping, he called to them to come and make a fire for him, as he was cold, tired and hungry. They answered that they had another husband to look after and did not want to have anything more to do with him. He then commenced abusing them for leaving him and said that the other man would have to fight him before he could claim them.

<sup>38</sup> The Thrush, also represented in the constellation of Orion, is probably the Grey Starke-thrush, rather than the Ground (also known as White's or Baasian) Thrush. "Dyoorut" is a reasonable rendering of one of its calls.

Dyoorutgang was sitting in his own camp between his two wives, when Wagulin took up a crooked spear<sup>39</sup> and threw it in another direction, as if spearing some animal which he saw, so as to take the attention of Dyoorutgang off what he was doing. The crooked spear deviated from the direction in which it was thrown and came round, striking Dyoorutgang in the chest and he fell backward seriously wounded calling out Dyoorutgang. Wagulin then ran up and commenced thrashing him with his boondi or club, till his bones were all broken. Still he kept on calling out Dyoorut! Dyoorut! but was not able to complete his name in full.<sup>40</sup> Wagulin then beat him still more, smashing his head into pulp, but he continued to repeat the front part of his name as before so that Wagulin was puzzled to know where the speech came from. He resumed the beating, going over all the bones of the body again, until he was quite worn and perspiring with so much exercise; but the repetition of the name continued. At last Wagulin happened to strike the man on the penis a heavy blow, with his boondi, just as the word was in the course of utterance, and the last syllable died away as Dyoo-ru-u-u-t, and was heard no more. Then Wagulin said, "If I had only known at the first where to hit him, I would have saved myself all this hard, hot job."

After that Wagulin took possession of his wives again and went back to his own country.

<sup>39</sup> [M] In several aboriginal stories, Wagulin the crow is said to have always carried a crooked spear, greased and charmed, which would swerve round and strike the desired object, no matter in what direction it had been thrown. It would also get into any tortuous crevice in a rock and kill whatever might be hiding there.

<sup>40</sup> [M] It may be explained that when one kills a thrush, it keeps on making faint noises for a little while after it is apparently dead, if the body be moved. The same remarks apply to a native bear and some other animals.

## The Origin of Fire

Dyir-ira-wity the black snake and Mung-ga-dang the sleepy or blue-tongued lizard, were the only people who had fire.<sup>41</sup> They were always fat and sleek looking and had their implements nicely bound with waxed string, much better finished than those of the rest of the people. These two old women always went away hunting by themselves. They kept the fire planted in an ants' nest – one of those high heaps which are found in the bush where a big hollow tree has been eaten down by white ants. A place was scooped out on one side of the clay right to the centre of the heap and the fire kept there. As soon as they caught a few animals, or the men gave them some flesh, they went away to the bush next day and cooked it in their hidden oven. The other people wondered how their meat was always so tender and sweet and asked them how they managed to make it so. They replied, "We cook it in the sun the same as you do." These women always went to the same ants' nest; it was their own property recognized by their fellow tribes people. Sometimes, to disarm suspicion, they would start away from the camp in the opposite direction, travel round to their fire, and then come back by the same way they had gone out. Another piece of artfulness was to cook some of their meal in the sun and give it to their friends, pretending that this was the way they cooked their own.

The other people were not satisfied with the conduct of these women and were always on the lookout in the hope of discovering the secret. One day Mullum, the eaglehawk,<sup>42</sup> who was in the habit of going out hunting by himself and standing on high rocks or trees to gaze around him, was in sight of the ants' nest and saw a flicker rising from the top of it, such as we often see on the ground in front of us on a hot summer day. There was no sign of such flicker on other ants' nests in range of his vision, so he concluded there must be some reason for it. A consultation was then held at the main camp, and Bimburang, a small lizard, was chosen to go out and watch the women and inspect their ants' nest.<sup>43</sup> He was selected because he was a little chap and was less likely to be observed than a larger person. Besides, he had often been previously deputed to steal on in the lead of a party of hunters to make signs to them with his hands, in regard to the position and movements of game.

Next day Bimburang followed Dyirawity and Munggadang [sic] and saw them going to the ants' nest, where they stopped for some time and then went to a shady tree not

<sup>41</sup> Dyirawity is the Red-bellied Black Snake, the colour of its ventral surface being explained in this story. The common Blue-tongue of Gundungarra land is the Eastern Blue-tongue, although they would have been familiar with the Blotched Blue-tongue in the upper Blue Mountains.

<sup>42</sup> Mullum is the Wedge-tailed Eagle.

<sup>43</sup> Bimburang, by the behaviour described in the last paragraph of this story belongs to the Dragon group of lizards. The common small Dragon of Gundungarra land is the Mountain Dragon.

far off, where they began to eat whatever animal they had cooked. After the meal was over, one of them commenced to search the head of her companion for lice and was so engrossed in the occupation that Bunburang stole up through the long grass to the ants' nest and found the opening in the side, which they had closed up again. He was carrying a grass tree spear in his hand and poked the end of it into the oven, whereupon it soon began to blaze. He then ran away with it and the long grass growing all about soon caught fire, spreading in every direction. Bunburang was obliged to climb up a Dhurumbee, or water gum tree out of the reach of the fire.<sup>44</sup> He got on the top side of one of the upper branches, where he shut his eyes and closed his nostrils to keep the stifling smoke out. The fire spread through the country and everybody got a share of it. The conflagration was so sudden and rapid that it overtook the two old women and scorched them badly before they could get away. That is why the bellies of both these animals, the Dyr-ra-wily and Mug-ga-dang, have the appearance of having been burnt.

When the lizards, Bunburang, are lying on a log watching for flies, they shut their eyes and contract their nostrils, a habit they acquired from their ancestor in the Dhurumbee tree. They also have a habit of making two or three passes with their fore foot before putting it down, indicative of the signs they used to make to their comrades when out hunting in the Gunyunggalung or far past times.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The trees commonly referred to as "Water Gums" are *Tristanopsis laurina* and *Tristania nerifolia*. The former grows much taller and Bunburang would have been able to climb higher away from the smoke on one of them. However Alfred Bennett, in 1911, sent samples of "Water Gum" from Cox's River and The Oaks to the Technological Museum, Sydney. The samples were labelled Darumbi, almost certainly on the authority of Bennett's friend Billy Russell. Richard Baker of the Museum identified the samples as *Eucalyptus sclerina* or Sydney Blue Gum. While stands of Blue Gum are often found on alluvial flats, this species is not nearly as confined to river and creek banks as the Water Gums. I have not seen any record of the Blue Gum being referred to by the common name of Dhurumbee. Bennett's sample was possibly mislabelled and we should assume for the time being that Dhurumbee is a *Tristanopsis* or *Tristania* species.

<sup>45</sup> Dragon lizards "freeze" and close their eyes as part of their camouflage behaviour. The beautiful cryptic patterns extend on to the closed eyelids. They cannot close their nostrils but their nostril holes are minute and blend in well with the pattern of spots on the head. The rotation of the forearm is called circumduction and is part of their social activity, where Dragons communicate during courtship and territorial displays. However, the behaviour has also been observed in single Dragons with no others of its species present. Some herpetologists have been able to elicit Dragon lizards' territorial display movements by mimicking them. It is possible that the Gundungarra were able to "communicate" with Dragon lizards in this way. One of my Gundungarra friends, Trevor Maranda, told me that he believes he was warned of danger by a Mountain Dragon that waved his arm at him shortly before a bushfire flare up near Lithgow that killed his two companions on 2 December 1997.

The south coast Aboriginal storyteller Percy Mumbulla said "Every blackfellow has a *moodlingari*, it is given to him before he is born. It is his power, his spirit, which looks after him and warns him of danger. My *moodlingari* is the mail bird, the owl. If there is danger coming, that owl will sing out in the night to me." R. Robinson, *Black-fellow, White-fellow*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1958, p.111.

## The Moon, Jays and Eaglehawk

Kubbadang the moon used to follow the Dyrirang, black magpies or jays,<sup>46</sup> a family of young women, when they were out searching for yams kumnee-ook<sup>47</sup> and other foods waiting one of them to marry him, but they did not care about his attention. His camp was not far from theirs, and one day they told him they were going out in quest of grubs and invited him to join them. They had previously been out and put some evil magic upon the grubs in a certain tree. When they all got out into the bush, they pointed out this tree to Kubbadang as being a good one for grubs and took some other trees for themselves. When they had caught a sufficient quantity of grubs they cooked them. Kubbadang cooked his grubs at his own fire and all of them had a good meal. The girls went back to their camp and Kubbadang returned to his. Soon afterwards, however, he felt very ill and his stomach puffed up to a prodigious size, so that his body was quite round and he commenced groaning loudly. His friend Mulleum, the eaglehawk, was passing along a ridge near the place and hearing the awful groans, went to see what was the matter. Kubbadang told him of the day's proceedings and said he blamed the Dyrirang women for working some spell upon his food. Mulleum at once set about counteracting the magic of the sisters and being a very clever sorcerer, succeeded in making Kubbadang well again, and he went up into the sky where he still remains. When the moon is full it represents the time when Kubbadang was swelled up, and the new moon shows him after he was cured by Mulleum.

<sup>46</sup> The jays are White-winged Choughs which play a number of interesting roles in local Aboriginal mythology. See Jim Kohlen, 'The White-winged Chough in the Dreaming of the Aboriginal People near Sydney', *Australian Birds*, Vol.26(1), pp.17-19.

<sup>47</sup> Jim Kohlen ('Aboriginal Use of Plants on the Western Cumberland Plain', *Sydney Basin Naturalist*, No.1, 1992, p.7) records 46 species of plants for the Cumberland Plain with edible underground parts, 30 of these have edible tubers or "yams". In the later story ('The Origin of the Pleiades') Kumnee-ook is described as: "an edible bulb which grows at the base of a kind of sedge growing on the margins of watercourses". The most likely candidate would be the Spike-rush *Eleocharis spheculata*. In a later story Dyrirahan is given as a name for yams. This may be a descriptive term for yams in general or another species. Jim Kohlen has pointed out that Dyrirahan is very similar to Deerubin, the Dharang name for the Hawkesbury River (personal communication). The Dharang may have named the Hawkesbury after the yams growing along its banks.

## Origin of Water

Ngud'-dyan-ngud'-dyan, the bat had the monopoly of the water.<sup>48</sup> The other people had to satisfy their thirst with the dew, and whatever moisture they could obtain from roots and vines. The water was in a deep hole in a gully in the bush. Murroo-in-bil, the pee-wee, was a mate of the bat's and he sometimes gave him a drink out of a biggulma or koolamin,<sup>50</sup> but he did not show where the water hole was.

These two men always went out hunting together, unaccompanied by any one else and went in the same direction everyday, or perhaps they stayed away two or three days at a time. If any of the other people wished to go with them they used to say: "There is scarcely any game out in that direction - only enough for us two." If the game in other directions was very scarce and some of the other hunters insisted upon going into the tract of the bat and the pee-wee, they would say: "We sometimes see a kubba<sup>51</sup> out there, but we are clever enough to keep him away from us, but he would be certain to attack strangers."

One very dry time, Nguddyan-nguddyan was so niggardly with the water that he would not even give his mate a fair share.

One hot day Murrooinbil was separated from his comrade and was hunting by himself. He became extremely thirsty and lay down quite exhausted and almost dead. His dog was searching about for something to quench his thirst and came across the secret spring. He rushed into it and had a short drink, but was in too great a hurry to satisfy himself and hastened back to rejoin his master. When he got alongside of him he shook himself, after the manner of dogs who have been bathing, and squirted drops of water into the face and upon the body of Murrooin-bil. This roused him up and upon looking at the dog he saw he had been in water somewhere. He watched the animal

<sup>48</sup> Nguddyan-nguddyan could be any of the small Vespertilioned bats, of which the most abundant in the Gundungarra country is the Common Bent-wing Bat.

<sup>49</sup> The pee-wee is more formally known as the Australian Magpie-lark. It is also featured in the later story 'The Pee-wee and his Dogs', where its call is rendered as Kurreelak! which was also a Gundungarra nickname for the bird. The Murrumbidgee Range is a spur of the Great Dividing Range that begins near Mt Werrong. The range is partly followed by the Oberon Stock Route and includes Mt Shivering - formerly known as Mt Murrumbidgee. Murrumbidgee flows to the south of the Murrumbidgee to join the Wollondilly near the former Post Office location of Barrallier. The family of Mirragan the Native Cat camped near here during his epic pursuit of Gurangatch in the Dreamtime. Perhaps the Murrumbidgee country could be called the "Place of the Pee-wees" although Feld (*Science of Man*, Vol.3(6) 1900, p.99), said "The place Named Merroo-in means a mountain standing alone".

<sup>50</sup> Coolamon is the Kamilaroi word for a wooden or bark basin or dish, which became established in Australian English usage.

<sup>51</sup> [M] Kubba is one of the evil disposed half spirit, half men, creatures so common in aboriginal folk tales.

for some time and then it started away again, upon which Murrooinbil got up and followed and soon came upon a small waterhole. After having a good drink he went and stripped a large big-gulma from an adjacent tree, in which he got as much water as he could carry and started back to the main camp and divided it with everybody there. He told them all how badly Nguddyan-nguddyan had treated him and promised that he would show them where he had got the water if they would punish his greedy companion.

A meeting was held and it was decided to watch Nguddyan-nguddyan when he went to drink and give him his deserts. Gundhareen the black duck<sup>52</sup> who was left handed and Wobbangang the bronze wing pigeon,<sup>53</sup> a right handed man, were chosen to carry out the edict of the people. Each of these two was armed with a magic boomerang, and they planted themselves close to the spring. Boo-go-rang, a medium sized squirrel also accompanied them.<sup>54</sup>

By and by Nguddyan-nguddyan approached the water, looking carefully around him. Then he stooped down on his knees and dipped his mouth into the water to take a draught. At that moment Gundhareen threw a boomerang with his left hand, while Wobbangang threw another with his right. The two weapons met just in the rear of Nguddyan-nguddyan, and cut off his buttocks, leaving him almost dead. This is why the bat has not a rump like other mammals, but is remarkably short in the hind quarters. The two boomerangs then whizzed round and round the spring, tearing up the earth and rocks, liberating the water, which flowed out in torrents into all the hollow places throughout the country. Boogorang waded out knee deep and urinated into the stream, a fact which accounts for salt or brackish water being found in some places. The squirrel, boogorang, is still addicted to urinating down out of a tree when he first comes out of his hole in the evening.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Gundhareen is also a character in the legend of Gurangatch and Mirragan, originally part of this collection of stories but published separately.

<sup>53</sup> The Common Bronze-wing.

<sup>54</sup> Boogorang is described in a later story as a glider. The smallest local glider is the Feather-tail and the Greater and Yellow-bellied species are the largest. The Sugar Glider would be accurately described as the medium sized glider within this size range and is common within Gundungarra territory.

<sup>55</sup> I have not been able to find any published information on the urination habits of gliders. Greater Gliders have been known to leave their hollows in the daytime to urinate (Wyn Jones, personal communication). The time when gliders and possums first emerge from their hollows at dusk was probably the best time for Gundungarra hunters to kill them. No doubt the urination habit described in the story was well known to Aborigines who may have waited for this moment to strike with spear, boondoe or boomerang.



## The Locust and the Birds

Gulan-gulan, the locust,<sup>56</sup> was a cannibal who lived with his family in his own hunting grounds. The Budyan, or bird people,<sup>57</sup> occupied an adjoining patch of country and would throw spears at Gulan-gulan if he attempted to trespass. One day a young man of the Budyan mob strayed over the boundary and climbed a tree after opossums. While he was so engaged, old Gulan-gulan, happened to come along and upon seeing him pretended to sing for joy at meeting him. He told the youth he was his uncle and that he had not seen him since he was a little boy. He invited the lad to come with him to his camp, on arriving at which his wife also sang for joy, pretending she was his aunt. This married pair had a couple of daughters and told the youth he could camp with the girls for the night. All this was a studied piece of deception on the part of Gulan-gulan, and his wife, as he intended to kill the boy in the morning and have him for breakfast.

During the night the two young women took quite a fancy to the stranger and said they would like to be his wives. They showed him a heap of bones of his fellow tribesmen, lying in a hole at the back of the camp. At the first streak of daylight the three of them started quietly away and went into the youth's country. When old Gulan-gulan woke up he was very angry at losing his intended feast and started on the tracks of the fugitives. He was so intent upon watching the footprints that he did not notice he had inadvertently crossed his boundary, until the Budyan surrounded him and tore pieces out of his body with the points of their spears. He tried to hide under bushes and crawl under logs out of their way, but they dragged him out and made a meal of him. Ever since that time the birds will peck at and kill locusts wherever they find them.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> "Locust" was the common name for cicadas. The commonest cicada of Gundungarra territory is the "Greengroat", *Cyclochila australis*.

<sup>57</sup> Budyan (or boodyan) is the word for birds in general.

<sup>58</sup> Currantwings gorge on cicadas after they emerge but other species that indulge are Kookaburras, Kites, Kestrels, Falcons and Ravens. There are a number of smaller species of cicadas that would be prey for many of the medium sized insectivorous birds such as the Grey Shrike-thrush.

## Bullat-burogang and Wam-bu-rang

Bullat-burogang is a little brown bird with a long tail and a small yellow patch on each side of his head.<sup>59</sup> He was the son of Goodanang the turtle<sup>60</sup> and was a badly behaved lad - a spoilt child - frequently breaking through the native rules of conduct. Like Amnon,<sup>61</sup> he became enamoured of his sister and was always trying to get an opportunity of being alone with her. He pretended he was very sick and wanted a drink of water. His mother went out to a pool close by and brought him some water. She returned so quickly that he had not an opportunity to have any improper familiarity with his sister. When he heard his mother returning he pretended to be asleep and she placed the water vessel alongside of him, so that he could get a drink when he awoke. After a while he awoke from his feigned sleep and threw out his arms as if stretching himself, and upset the water vessel, making believe it was done accidentally. While he was lying apparently asleep, he was trying to devise some scheme for delaying his mother when she went to the waterhole. So he began crying and asked her to get him a drink of nice cool water, by dipping the vessel down as far as she could under the surface.

She went away again, but came back with the cool water before anything happened. He took one mouthful of the liquid and spat it out, saying it was quite warm. He then besought his mother to go and dive down to the very bottom of the deepest part of the pool and bring up a vessel full of real cold water. Always anxious to please her pet boy she did as he requested which of course occupied a much longer time than before, and enabled him to accomplish his purpose.

He used to go out hunting with an older and bigger boy named Wam-bu-rang, the black crested cockatoo.<sup>62</sup> One day they found a nest of emu eggs, which are forbidden as food to young people. Bullat-burogang, however, was determined to learn what they tasted like, so they took a couple away and cooked them in the ashes. Bullat-burogang, in his usual tricky way, put a small yellow dab of the yolk on the side of

<sup>59</sup> The behaviour of Bullat-burogang, described in the second last paragraph of this story, of jumping repeatedly into the air suggests the hawking behaviour of honeyeaters when hunting flying insects.

The Fuscous, Brown, Yellow-faced and Lewin's Honeyeaters could fit the description of Bullat-burogang. The loud calls and conspicuous communal flights of honeyeaters suggest the boastful and cheeky behaviour of the bird in the story. The most likely candidate for Bullat-burogang would be the Yellow-faced Honeyeater, a common species of Burrangarang's woodlands.

<sup>60</sup> The Eastern Long-necked Tortoise is the common "turtle" of Gundungarra rivers.

<sup>61</sup> The Second Book of Samuel, Chapter 13, describes the incestuous relationship of Amnon with his sister. While it is possible that Mathews' informants were familiar with the Old Testament, it is more likely that Mathews inserted this analogy into the story himself. The Catholic priests of Burrangarang, like most missionaries to Aborigines, concentrated on the New Testament.

<sup>62</sup> Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo.

each temple and suggested that he should paint Wam-bu-rang in the same fashion. He consented and Bullat-burogang put a large patch on each side of his head - much larger than his own marks.<sup>63</sup>

By the time they had finished their repast, and laughed and joked about their painted heads, it was getting late and they turned homeward. It was after dark when they got to their camp [fire] and it was quite dead. Bullat-burogang was deputed to go to one of the other camps which were in sight, and bring back a fire-stick. His comrade, Wam-bu-rang, cautioned him to be careful not to tell the other people what they had been doing in the bush, and he promised to be very reserved.

When he reached the other camp and asked for the fire, he sat down with his hands to the sides of his head to hide the paint, and thought he would let them see what a clever chap he was, in short his vanity overcame his discretion. So he commenced to chuckle and said: "None of you can guess what Wam-bu-rang and I had for dinner", thinking it impossible for them to solve his riddle. Some guessed one thing and some another, but he shook his head negatively to every one. The guessing lasted a long time, until nearly every animal and plant in the bush had been mentioned. Bullat-burogang was giggling to think what a good conundrum he had propounded. Wam-bu-rang, who was sitting in his camp waiting for the fire-stick, became more and more uneasy, because he feared his garrulous friend would let out something that would betray them.

When the people had guessed all the likely foods they could think of, there was a lull. At last a woman said in a low tone, scarcely audible, "Perhaps it was an emu egg." Bullat-burogang cocked his ear suddenly and ceased giggling, although only a few persons heard what was said. A woman is not allowed to speak in a loud tone about anything which is forbidden to the men, so her husband called out distinctly, "Was it an emu egg?" Bullat-burogang did not answer, but picked up his fire-stick and ran away as hard as he could back to his mate and told him what had happened. Wam-bu-rang then said "All our friends will come and kill us," and both of them lay down by their fire.

All the men mustered and held a consultation to decide what punishment should be awarded, and next morning at daylight they proceeded armed with spears to the camp of the two offenders. They speared Wam-bu-rang easily, because he was awkward and slow in his movements, but Bullat-burogang was an agile fellow and jumped high in the air, so that the weapons passed under him.<sup>64</sup> Some of the dexterous throwers then estimated the height of his jump and aimed their spears accordingly, which

<sup>63</sup> [M] Both these birds still have a patch of yellow feathers on each side of the head.

<sup>64</sup> The flights of honeyeaters vertically into the air, to catch insects, can be readily observed in the Blue Mountains. New Holland Honeyeaters repeatedly fly vertically from the tops of heathland shrubs in the way described for Bullat-burogang particularly during winter but they have white patches on the sides of their heads and only the juveniles could be described as brown.

brought Bullat-burogang to the ground wounded. All the men then rushed upon the two culprits and beat them severely, flattening the heads of both, in consequence of which the heads of these birds are flat to the present day.

Having punished them sufficiently, the old medicine men commenced bracing them up again, because they knew that if either of these men died, they would have to answer for his blood. Wam-bu-rang soon came round under their treatment, but Bullat-burogang was harder to deal with. One after another of their most skilful magicians tried to resuscitate him, employing every method they could think of, but he still lay stretched out apparently dead. By this time the day was far spent and the doctors were at their wit's end. At last some one suggested that his sister should be brought to try what she could do for him. After rubbing and pulling him about for a little while she noticed signs of breathing and his limbs began to move. She then put her arms around him and he slowly revived.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> It is interesting that Bullat-burogang's sister revives her brother. Perhaps this implies complicity in or ambivalence towards her sexual relations with him, in contrast to Ammon's rape of his sister.

## Origin of the *Meiades*

Dyirrang is the black magpie or jay, which builds a mud nest on the upper side of the branch of a tree. There was once a family of daughters, about half a dozen or more.<sup>65</sup> This group of sisters used to go out into the bush digging for yams and other herbs. Karrungang, the samnon or black and white magpie,<sup>67</sup> was always dodging about after them, in the hope of making one of them his wife.<sup>68</sup> It chanced on a day that one of the girls was digging for Kunneecook, an edible bulb which grows at the base of a kind of sedge growing on the margins of watercourses.<sup>69</sup> She slipped out into the deep water and in her struggles became entangled in the weeds which impeded her swimming and she was drowning. Karrungang saw her danger and ran to her assistance, thus saving her life. For this gallant rescue she became his wife and the other girls came to live alongside of her camp. Karrungang was a lazy fellow and made the women do all the work. They often tried to steal away from him, but he always followed their tracks and brought them back.

After some time, a storm was coming up one day and the women asked Karrungang to strip some bark to make a shelter from the rain, but he refused. His wife then began to strip a sheet of bark from a tall tree<sup>70</sup> and got it off at the bottom in the usual native fashion. She then pulled it upward, separating it from the side of the bole, whilst her sisters sang a *goor-ree-ai-lain*, or charm song, to make her work effective, and also to cause the tree to grow higher and higher. She continued pulling and the bark kept stripping off as she climbed up after it. The other girls then hastened to her assistance and all of them kept holding on and stripping the bark right up to the sky, where they have remained ever since as the well known constellation of the *Pleiades*.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>65</sup> White-winged Chameys usually feed in small flocks of 6 to 10 birds.

<sup>67</sup> Mixed species feeding flocks of insectivorous birds are a common feature of the Australian bush. Karrungangs [Australian Magpies] could find it advantageous to feed in association with a flock of Choughs as their activity would disturb and make conspicuous more ground insects than the Magpie could discover alone. However none of the experienced bird watchers I have spoken to have observed this association. The story could just be acknowledging that Choughs and Magpies share similar habits.

<sup>68</sup> [M] When we see a cluster of black magpies or jays in the bush, there is generally a black and white or common magpie somewhere near them.

<sup>69</sup> See note 47. Kunneecook is possibly the Spike-rush.

<sup>70</sup> Probably a *Stringybark* tree, the local species with the most waterproof bark which can be removed in large sheets.

<sup>71</sup> Diane Johnson (*Eight States of Aboriginal Australia*, University of Sydney, 1998, pp. 54-55), says that many Aboriginal myths of the *Pleiades* or Seven Sisters involve the flight of a group of women from men, usually to escape unwanted sexual advances. It has recently been revealed that one of the Gundungarra women's stories of the Three Sisters at Katoomba is also a story concerning the *Pleiades*. (See my book *Legends of the Blue Mountains Valleys*, Den Fenella Press, Wentworth Falls, 2003, pp. 105-108).

## The Eaglehawk and Willy-wagtail

Mulleum the eaglehawk married Dyirri-dyir-ratch the willy-wagtail. His wife's mother – his yubbiabang – became enamoured of Mulleum and one day she came up and spoke to him. This action was so entirely contrary to the laws of aboriginal society that he struck her on the head with his boondoe and killed her. A willy-wagtail has a white spot on its head to the present day, being the mark left by the wound received in the gunyunggalung.

## The Sleepy Lizard and the Crow

Muggadhang the sleepy lizard used to come and steal roasted flesh and run away with it into a cleft in a rock. The cleft did not trend straight back, but turned first to right and then to left. Nearly every man in the camp threw a spear into the rock after Muggadhang, but none of them could reach him. The people asked Wagulin the crow to throw, but he said his spear was warped and bent in the sun and was no good. However, they persuaded him to have a shot and his crooked spear followed the sinuosities of the cliff killing Muggadhang in his hiding place.

## The Peewee and his Dogs

Murribil the peewee had a lot of hunting dogs comprising different swift and voracious animals. One day they left him and went away chasing game on their own account, which made him very angry. Murribil painted himself with large patches of pipe clay and also intensified the colour of his body by rubbing charcoal mixed with grease upon various places. When his dogs came back to the camp, he suddenly jumped up on a bush and commenced flapping his arms up and down, shouting, "Kur-ree-lak! kur-ree-lak!" without intermission. This so terrified his dogs that they ran away into the scrubs to hide themselves and became warrigals, or the present wild native dogs. The peewee still has the habit of moving its wings up and down for a little while after it alights on any perch and at the same time calls out Kur-reelak! a name by which it is often called by the natives, but Murribil is the most correct name of the bird.

## Dilloonatch the Song-maker

Dilboonatch, the native lark<sup>72</sup> was a great song-maker of the traditional times of the past. He used to climb up on rocks and other high places, where he sang for some time and then jumped down.

<sup>72</sup> Either the Rufous Songlark or Singing Bushlark. From the behaviour described of singing from high perches, it is more likely to be the former. The rhythm of the Gundungarra Lark song conveys to

The following was his principal song, which he is still supposed to sing:

*Gurrunggi, gurrunggi,  
Kumirigama warangga  
Parrntoo wullingai  
Dhulburriir ween-ween gammunna  
Wikee dgoor-oo-ga woogga  
Burko gammogagalana  
Wilinggai munna, wilinggai munna  
Mulloran muri-dyar  
Karroogoon muri-dyar  
Migirni migirnidyo  
Bero bero kur-ka-dyee  
Wilko dyo-ko dyar-ra-go  
Murkee-dyoggee dyag-geela  
Thurumburgala yelbana  
Thurrai mid-dyar mid-dyar*

me more of the essence of the loud, varied and emphatic calls of the Rufous Songlark than the gentle melody of the Singing Bushlark. Matthews does not attempt to translate the song or explain (as did Mary Everitt) that the Gundungurra Lark song (like many Aboriginal songs) is in a language not understood by those who are singing it.

### Walga the Sparrow-hawk

A lot of natives were out in the bush searching for wallabies and came to a place on top of a large rock, where they all stood together, gazing about them. A round piece of the rock suddenly gave way under their feet and nearly all of them fell down into a narrow cavity. The rock then closed again above them and shut them in. Various people went and tried to rescue them from their imprisonment, but without success. At last Walga, the sparrow hawk,<sup>73</sup> struck the rock with a large boondee, splitting it from top to bottom, so that all the men escaped from the trap. This rock is called "The Devil's Coach-house" by the white people.<sup>74</sup>

### The Bullun Warriors

In the gun-yung-ga-lung, or legendary times, there were two young men, named Bullun, great magicians as well as warriors, who roamed about Burratorang, on the Lower Wollondilly and Cox rivers. They were either brothers or very near relations and always went together as comrades or mudyaula. Some of their exploits are briefly described in the following notes.

Several of their fellow tribesmen were missed from time to time and their friends were puzzled to know what had become of them. The Bulluns tracked the missing people to a certain spot in the hills, where Wug-ga-ra, the white crested cockatoo<sup>75</sup> had her camp. She was what the Gundungurra natives called a kub-ba'-dhai, that is a person who murders people for the purpose of eating their flesh. When anyone came to see Wuggara, she invited them to stay all night at her camp and eat some of her dyirrabai or yams,<sup>76</sup> pretending that she never eat flesh. Next morning on starting away she told them to go forward through a gorge or opening in the rocks alongside the camp, and they would soon find some game. This narrow pass was a cleft or worn out place between two large rocks and extended back some distance, resembling a gorge more than the entrance to a cavern, so that strangers were easily persuaded to go into it.

<sup>73</sup> Collared Sparrowhawk.

<sup>74</sup> The Devil's Coach House at Jenolan Caves does not present the appearance of having been split from top to bottom. Perhaps Walga's boondee instead made the holes in either end and on the top of the Devil's Coach House.

<sup>75</sup> What we call the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo was often called by the common name of the White Cockatoo (Matthews does not hyphenate the name as White-crested). The species is the White Cockatoo with a crest i.e., the Sulphur-crested. This collection of stories contains almost the only information we have about Gundungurra food taboos of the sexes. It is also of interest that the Bulluns spend so much time punishing cannibals. These stories are clear warnings against the practice of cannibalism.

<sup>76</sup> Dyirrabai is either a general word for yams or a different species to the yam-bearing sedge Kunneecook.

As soon as her visitors, whether one or more went through this narrow pass, Wuggara caused the rock at the entrance to close up and shut them in. A spell then fell upon them and they became quite helpless, so that Wuggara went in and killed one of them any time she was in need of meat. When the Bulluns got close to Wuggara's camp they approached it very carefully and were continually on the look out for foul play of some sort. Upon asking her if she had seen such and such people she said they had been there, but had gone on through the gorge to the other side of the mountain, and invited the young men to start away after them. Unknown to Wuggara the Bulluns had sent Dhuil'-mang-a, the scrub possum, <sup>77</sup> into the pass to explore it, and bring them back an account of it. He was a little fellow and a great climber, examining all the rocks and corners at the same time. He returned and reported that the place was strewn with the bones of the missing people. The Bulluns then killed Wuggara and cast her body into the cavern with the rest.

2. Another time Mud-dya-wait, the death adder, <sup>78</sup> who camped by herself at a place now called "Hell Hole", <sup>79</sup> used to kill and eat black fellows. One day the Bulluns were out there hunting and when Muddyawait saw them in the distance she commenced calling her dogs to bring strangers to her camp. On their coming up to her she said she had a very severe pain in the back and had nobody to help her. She requested the younger Bullun to press one of his feet on her back to give her relief. He placed his foot on her shoulders, but she said, "Put it lower down my back". He moved his foot to near the middle of her body and she said, "Lower still". He had only partially complied with her request when the elder Bullun, who was watching her suspiciously all the while, observed that she was preparing to spring backwards and bite his brother. They then killed Muddyawait with their clubs, leaving her body lying on the ground, where it can still be seen as an out crop of rock bearing some resemblance to a death adder. <sup>80</sup>

3. On another occasion the Bulluns were on an expedition in quest of some of their friends who had gone out hunting and not returned. They came upon a little boy sitting on a rock and spoke to him, but he would not answer them and began to cry. They thought to pacify him and offered him first one thing and then another, but he

<sup>77</sup> The Common Ringtail Possum, favouring as it does areas with thick undergrowth or "scrub" is a more likely candidate than the Brush-tailed Possum.

<sup>78</sup> This story would help to warn children not to step on the backs of the Common Death Adder. <sup>79</sup> Early bushwalkers such as Myles Murphy used the descriptive term "Hell" to describe areas that were very difficult to access such as Hell's Gates on the Jenolan River. I cannot locate any reference to Hell Hole as a place name in use in the early twentieth century in the nominated area of the Lower Wollondilly and Cox Rivers. The inaccessible canyon section of the Cox River known as Kill's Dellie was somewhat similar to Murphy's Hell's Gates and may have had a similar appellation amongst some locals.

<sup>80</sup> It would be difficult to locate Muddyawait's rock formation in the locality of the Lower Wollondilly and Cox Rivers as it is probably under the waters of Lake Burrungorang.

shook his head every time. At last the elder Bullun put his hand on the fleshy part of his own thigh and being a conjurer he pulled off a piece of flesh which he offered to the lad, who at once changed his tune from crying to smiling, and accepted the piece of human flesh as something he was evidently quite accustomed to. He immediately got on his feet and ran away towards a hole in an immense rock about 100 yards off, into which he jumped and disappeared. The Bulluns at once concluded that he belonged to the people who had been killing and eating their fellow tribesmen. They walked all round the rock and found several other holes which had been used for purposes of ingress and egress. Every hole was then stopped up with a heap of dry wood, bark and other combustible materials. They now lighted each of these inflammable heaps, until they were a seething mass of flame, and hurried back to the hole into which the young cannibal had jumped. The cavern was soon full of a dense smoke and the inmates were beginning to suffocate. Presently they came running to the only exit available and rushed out one after another, but were at once knocked on the head and killed by the Bulluns, one of whom stood on either side. Only one of the gang escaped and he flew away right up to the sky, where he became a bright star called Ga-ran'-dha-lang, the aboriginal name for the planet Venus.

4. The Bulluns were out hunting one day and came to a deserted camp. They called out, but no one appeared. They lighted a fire and repaired the bough shelter, to make believe some one was inside of it. Then they climbed a tree and hid themselves among the foliage. By and by they noticed a large, round boulder rolling down the hill, as if it had just slipped away from an escarpment near the top. When it came to the camp it rolled on top of the bough shelter crushing it down flat and came to a stand. The Bulluns, becoming still more suspicious, descended from their hiding place and tapped the boulder with their tomahawks, upon which it gave out a hollow ring. On examining the rock more closely they found a small hole leading right in towards the centre. The elder Bullun got one of his magical spears and thrusting it into the hole wrenched it with all his might. This burst the boulder into two halves revealing Kubba who was planted there with a lot of boondees and other paraphernalia for murdering people. <sup>81</sup> The Bulluns killed him, cut him up, and carried portions of his body up the hill to where they noticed a cave, in which his wife and children were sitting. The warriors threw several pieces of flesh into the cave, without letting themselves be seen, and the children commenced feasting, because they had been used to human flesh. Their mother tasted it and said, "I think that is your father's flesh you are eating", and came out to look around. The Bullun cast her back into the cave, against the mouth of which they then piled a stack of dry wood and burnt all the occupants.

<sup>81</sup> Billy Russell told a similar story to Alfred Bennett about a Gubba enclosed in a hard impervious shell with one point of weakness.

5. The Bulluns went on to a place where they saw a little boy chopping into a tree after a grub, and he appeared to be greatly distressed because he could not get the creature out. They told him to make a dyu-ree-wait, a little twig with a hook on the end of it, with which he could draw the grub out of its hole. The Bulluns asked the lad where his brothers and other relations were. He pointed south and said, "some are over there", next he pointed east, west, north – all round the horizon – saying he had brothers at all the places he pointed to. This made the Bulluns suspicious that he belonged to some of their enemies and therefore, while he was away cutting the dyureewait, they put some deadly magic substance on the grub, so that when the boy ate it, he sickened and died.

The father of the lad was Murarrang, a large black spider.<sup>82</sup> When the boy died, his mother said to Murarrang, "The Bulluns must have worked a spell on the lad that day when they spoke to him in the bush." Murarrang, accompanied by his big dog and another of his sons started out in quest of the Bulluns and eventually found them sitting up in the branches of a shady tree, a common practice of theirs when they were looking out for their enemies. Murarrang threw a boondee at them with great vigour, but it glanced off the tree and killed his own dog. Then he cast the boondee again at the men in the tree, but it rebounded and killed his son, whereupon he became frightened and ran away. The Bulluns came down out of the tree and went in pursuit, overtaking him at a recess in a large rock where they shoved his own boondee down his throat, which choked him. A rough representation of a man with part of a boondee projecting from his mouth is still pointed out at a rock called Thumbir-wurriñ, from thumbir, the mouth and wurroongoo, into.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> The Funnelweb spider immediately comes to mind, but Bennett recorded Yamma as the name for this species. Murarrang could be any of the large black spiders of the Trapdoor, Huntsman, Wolf or Mouse spider groups.

<sup>83</sup> No place name remotely resembling Thumbirwurriñ appears to have been recorded. It is quite possibly now under Lake Burragorang.

## Some Mythical Beliefs

In conclusion some items of superstitious belief obtaining among the Gundungurra will perhaps be interesting. The following are a few out of a large number noted down by me from the aborigines during my visits to Burragorang. The importance of collecting primitive beliefs such as these before they die out is obvious.

Bu-go-rang, a medium sized squirrel,<sup>84</sup> which flies from tree to tree, is the friend of all men. If a man be lying in his camp at night and an enemy be stealing upon him, Bugorang will call out. A clever old man or doctor can determine the name of the would be assailant from the call of this squirrel, as well as the country he belongs to. Dir-rang, a little night owl<sup>85</sup> which stays in hollow spouts during the day time, is a friend of all womankind, and the men are forbidden to injure or kill it. The call of this bird in the night makes little children grow, but they must keep silent when they hear it, or its efficacy would be frustrated. When Dirrang calls more than usual, it is generally a friendly warning to the women to prepare shelters for themselves against approaching rain.

In the old legendary times the people were without any distinction of sex, until a small dark coloured, shiny skinned lizard<sup>86</sup> differentiated them by means of a surgical operation with a stone knife. The lizard is now called mood-dyee by the men and mudhdan by the women.

A tree with a large, spreading butt or yoombee was inhabited by a spirit called Gurugoo-lung, and a tree of this kind was generally called by the same name.<sup>87</sup> If an uninitiated youth, or any woman, stepped or sat down upon such a butt, his legs would become weak so that he could not walk, or he might even sicken and die. Gurugoo-lung trees were generally associated with certain old men of the tribe, who made use of them for magical purposes.

<sup>84</sup> Sugar Glider

<sup>85</sup> The Owllet-nightjar is the bird which lives in the "spouts" or hollow broken branches of gum trees. Mathews said in a 1904 paper (Ethnological Notes on the Aboriginal Tribes of New South Wales and Victoria, J.R.S.N.S.W., Vol.38, pp.339,355), that the Nightjar "is the friend...of all the women" in "every part of Australia which I have visited".

<sup>86</sup> "Shiny skinned" suggests a skink. There are many small dark skink species in Gundungurra territory. *Leiopisma conventryi* is a common typical lizard that would fit the description.

<sup>87</sup> "Large spreading butt" suggests the buttresses found on tropical rainforest trees or the local Port Jackson Fig. The most common buttressed tree of Gundungurra territory is the River Oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*). Bennett recorded Bellang for the River Oak and Gurru-woore for one of the Fig trees from "Woolondilly Shire". As the sound "gurru" is common to both the latter and Mathews' Gurugoolung, we can tentatively identify this species as the Port Jackson Fig.