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# 31

## Under sentence of death, Melbourne Jail

Edward Ryan  
*La Trobe University*

### 1. Introduction

A frontier clash, one among many at the time, occurred on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1846 at Piangil in the north west of the district of Port Phillip, resulting initially in the death of a young pastoralist Andrew Beveridge at the hands of a group of Aboriginal men. The colonial press predictably labelled the killing an outrage and numerous articles to that effect were written as subsequent events played out. Beveridge, as a young man 24 years old and holding a Master of Arts degree, was depicted as an educated and cultured gentleman, cut down by savages. Three Aboriginal men were soon apprehended, charged and lodged in Melbourne Jail, before being tried and executed. An interrogation of the official documents of the case can provide a broader understanding of such events. In this particular case though, there also exist the personal papers and journals of William Thomas, Assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate, whose duties included visiting and supporting Aborigines imprisoned in Melbourne. The English language material in these papers questions, as we shall see, the official narrative of judicial response to the Beveridge killing, while the material in Aboriginal languages gives us a rare view of an intimacy between Europeans and Aborigines different from the usual frontier intimacies of sex and violence. Text and context are standard tropes of historical writing. Texts in Aboriginal languages can act to deepen our understanding of particular events such as the killing of Andrew Beveridge and the events around it, thereby extending historical understanding.

### 2. Trial Recorded

We know the date of Andrew Beveridge's death through a range of official sources, particularly the papers drawn up when the three Aboriginal men were brought to the Melbourne Police Office on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1846, together with

witnesses to the event who gave accounts which formed part of the Criminal Trial Brief the prosecution used in their trial on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1847 (VPRS 30.1-3-15). Previous trials of Aboriginal people had proved difficult, as they were found not to understand the English language proceedings and lack of interpreters led to repeated remands, and on some occasions cases collapsed. The three Aboriginal men Bobby, Ptolemy and Bulleteye were assessed by William Thomas, who found he could not understand them, as well as by Assistant Protector Edward Parker of the Loddon Protectorate Station in central Victoria who found the men also could not understand the Djadjawurrung language of his area. In mid-December 1846 a Mr. Lacey approached the authorities with an offer to translate and on meeting the men found he could not understand Ptolemy and Bulleteye but that he could communicate with Bobby, though he 'could understand the Goulburn tribe better' and had seen Bobby there. At the same time, one of Edward Parker's sons stated that he could interpret for the men with the assistance of Warrigle Jemmy, a prisoner from the Lower Loddon, also in Melbourne Jail. While these preparations proceeded, calls came from the Melbourne press for the government to bring the case on. The pressure for a speedy trial derived partly from the fact that *Koort Kirrup*, an Aboriginal man from south west Victoria, had been freed for want of an interpreter, even though charged with murder and attempted murder. The trial of the alleged killers of Andrew Beveridge occurred on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1847. The judge appeared at ten o'clock, the jury gave their verdict at a quarter to two.

It was a sudden end to a slow process, but not surprising given that the workmen who had been with Andrew Beveridge at the time of his death identified Ptolemy as having thrown a reed spear into Beveridge's breast, and Bobby as having thrown a jag spear into his side. They also spoke of hostility from men called Watty, Bonaparte and Wellington and aid from 'black Beveridge'. Bulleteye was merely referred to as being present. The killing was presented as being due to an argument over the killing of sheep. The Aboriginal defence legal counsel Redmond Barry insisted Bulleteye had no case to answer and as there was no premeditation the others should only be guilty of manslaughter. Intriguingly the claim of lack of premeditation appears to have been made on the basis that the Aboriginal men were 'dressed naked' and were not anointed with paint, as they would have been if they had set out for war. Compelling evidence of individual guilt may not have been necessary as the Resident Judge had transported Wimmera man *Yanem Goona* for sheep stealing in 1845 on the basis that 'any member of a community' whose members were involved in the act was equally guilty (Harman 2012: 111). In this instance, on a point of law the judge insisted the verdict must be 'murder or nothing at all' and without leaving the box the jury found Bulleteye not guilty and Bobby and Ptolemy guilty. When asked via their interpreter why they should not be put to death they replied that 'Mr. Beveridge was murdered by three black fellows named Wellington, Bonaparte and Henry and that they had nothing to do with it.' The judge advised the men that others would explain to them his decisions and their released friend Bulleteye would take home news of the 'inevitable fate' of others who committed such acts and noted to the pastoralists in attendance that

there was no need to take the law into their own hands given the actions of the court. He then ‘most impressively sentenced them to be hanged at such time and place as his Excellency the Governor might think fit to appoint’ (*The Argus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1847).

### 3. Trial Examined

The conduct of the trial and its verdict ran with the press campaigns against ‘black depredations’ in a predictable fashion, but at first glance seems to have enacted some measure of due process: further examination strips that veneer from the event. When the prisoners were first brought to Melbourne on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1846 the criminal brief prepared contained witness statements from Beveridge’s workmen, John Kelly and John Ryan, who would appear again in the court case. On this earlier occasion Kelly stated he initially saw four Aboriginal men including Bobby and Ptolemy surrounding Andrew Beveridge with spears raised. He was attacked himself by Ptolemy but saved initially by Bobby’s brother and then again by another Aboriginal named Charley. He last saw Andrew Beveridge leaning for support on an Aborigine named Beveridge. Kelly stated he did not see any spears thrown and had seen Bulleteye, but he had taken no part in the violence. Ryan said the action started with an argument over sheep stealing with a man named Watty but that Beveridge had been speared by Ptolemy and then Bobby. He did not see Bulleteye at all on the station. Sergeant William Johnson of the Border Police described decoying a group of Aboriginal men said by neighbouring pastoralists to be involved in the killing to the south side of the river and capturing Bobby for whom they had a warrant and the two other prisoners by throwing nooses around their necks. The next morning the hut where the capture occurred was attacked by a party of Aborigines who unsuccessfully tried to free the men. One Aboriginal man was killed and a number wounded.

While taking the prisoners to Melbourne, Johnson met Kelly and Ryan and brought them on as witnesses. The warrant Johnson held for the arrest of Bobby was given on the basis of yet earlier witness statements by Ryan, the day after the killing of Andrew Beveridge. In those statements Ryan mentioned only three blacks pointing spears at Beveridge and identified Bobby and Wellington and believed the third was *Tungee*, King of the Bura Bura blacks. He stated the first spear was thrown by *Tungee* and second by Bobby. No mention at all was made of Ptolemy or Bulleteye. Working forward chronologically then we find in the immediate description the day after the event, *Tungee* and Bobby threw the spears and Wellington had a spear raised. In trial brief statements made on 20<sup>th</sup> November Ryan claimed to have seen Beveridge speared by Ptolemy and Bobby and Kelly claimed to have seen them with spears raised and both said Bulleteye was on the scene without involvement. Then in the trial itself on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1847 Kelly again identified Ptolemy and Bobby as having spears raised while introducing Wellington and Bonaparte with spears, and Ryan again named Ptolemy and Bobby as having speared Beveridge. Clearly Bobby is an active presence in all three accounts but *Tungee* and Wellington appear as actors in the first before

*Tungee's* role is taken by Ptolemy in the second and third accounts. Wellington is a major actor in the first account, disappears from the second and then reappears as a secondary actor in the third, along with Bonaparte. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ptolemy and Bulleteye, after being taken with Bobby, had a part in the violent death of Andrew Beveridge constructed for them regardless of the evidence. Their fate in being taken with Bobby proved traumatic for Bulleteye and fatal for Ptolemy (VPRS 19/89/400).

## 4.1 The context of frontier conflict – administration and policing

The killing of Andrew Beveridge was part of the regional expression of colonial expansion and the violence that followed, but only one part. The regional dynamic and the impact the Beveridge killing might have on it was revealed in a letter that Crown Lands Commissioner Frederick Powlett, the most senior government figure responsible for the area and director of its Border Police force, wrote to Port Phillip Superintendent Charles Joseph La Trobe on receiving news of the capture of the three Aboriginal men. Powlett reminded La Trobe that he had refused Andrew Beveridge Senior's application for a Depasturing Licence for three reasons:

- that part of the Lower Murray applied for was not in his district;
- his instructions barred him from granting licences when there was no protection for settlers and 'collisions' were likely with Aboriginal people; and
- that he had recommended the area occupied by the Beveridges be reserved for the Aborigines.

He further stated that a strong force of Border and Native Police should be sent to apprehend the suspects and remove other unauthorised settlers to prevent 'most serious collisions' between them and the Aborigines. He concluded by saying that if a reserve for protection and improvement was still to be formed, no other location was better suited than the Murray frontage below Swan Hill. Powlett was measured in this response and it demonstrates the pressure that the Beveridge family were under in illegally occupying crown lands despite direction to remove themselves from the area and where, furthermore, they could not be protected. Powlett also had oversight of many functions in his district however, including that of the Border Police which had by the time of the killing at Piangil been involved in many clashes with Aboriginal people. On a number of occasions prior to the apprehension of the suspects in the Beveridge killing, they had been led by the same Sergeant William Johnson who had directed that capture. Johnson had also led the capture further up the Murray of *Warrigle Jemmy*, who Assistant Protector Parker recommended as a translator for Bobby, Ptolemy and Bulleteye (VPRS 30/5/1-28-8).

## 4.2 The context of frontier conflict – administration and protection

Pressure from the colonial administration may have been felt earlier by the Beveridge family when George Augustus Robinson, the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Port Phillip district, had visited them at Tyntynder in late April 1846. Robinson's journal gives quite a different view of his interaction with the Beveridges. It also gives a surprisingly positive view of their relations with the local Aboriginal people three months before the fatal clash. Robinson recorded two Beveridge brothers and two Kirby brothers as being in the hut at the developing station. He noted: 'Beveridge on friendly terms with the natives, spoke in highest terms of the natives'. He would have been referring to Andrew as the older and more educated brother of George who was with him during Robinson's visit but would remain at Tyntynder when Andrew was killed downstream at Piangil in August. Andrew Beveridge asked Robinson if he 'would be removed', which indicated to Robinson that he had no licence. Licences were not under Robinson's remit however and he left after meeting and recording names of local people, including their 'chief man' *Toyer-wurn* on whom he conferred his own name, Mr. Robinson. He also saw to it that a bullock was killed for the people, though at government expense (Clark, 1990: 25). None of those listed by Robinson as being at Tyntynder would appear in the various lists of suspects in the killing of Andrew Beveridge; the presence of women and children further confirms a lack of tension. As Tyntynder was twenty miles from Piangil but in the area of a friendly group, Robinson's visit clearly demonstrates that the presence alone of the Beveridges did not trigger hostilities, given that such amicable relations existed just three months before the killing. What then did trigger that outburst of violence and who was responsible?

We have seen that the judicial process following the killing was fraught with conflicting and partial testimony, but another source of information in the form of the private papers of Assistant Protector William Thomas exists with testimony given by the Aboriginal people themselves. As a significant portion of this material consists of a written record of dialogue attempted with Bulleteye, Ptolemy and Bobby in their own language – or at least a language they could understand – it provides a very rare example of linguistic and personal intimacy across the colonial divide.

## 5. William Thomas as Protector

William Thomas had come to Melbourne from England in 1838 to become an Assistant Protector of Aborigines under the direction of George Augustus Robinson in the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate. He had had a secondary education and it is clear from his writings that he was extremely diligent in attempting to learn the languages of the Aboriginal people for whom he was responsible (see Blake, this volume). His observations on language and the people he worked with, as well as the personal information he gained from them, all act to provide human context to the plight of Bobby and Ptolemy and Bulleteye: they also act to demonstrate Thomas' own humanity which he

actively demonstrated in his work with all Aboriginal people, generally seven days a week for thirty years. Immediately following the conviction of Bobby and Ptolemy, Thomas went to the jail to comfort them and sought out the freed Bulleteye to ensure that the Aboriginal people around Melbourne would not kill him as a ‘wild black’ – a man of an unknown or hostile tribe. After a tense couple of days, Bulleteye was seen off to Parker’s Protectorate station on his return to the north-west, and Thomas returned home to find himself unable to move at all for days before slowly recovering his ability to walk over the next week. Thomas had previously avoided seeing off *Yanem Goona* when he had been transported to Van Diemen’s Land in 1845 as he had been left ‘prostrate’ after farewelling Jackia, another Aboriginal convict transported some time before (Thomas 1838-1868, MS 214.21). This trial had clearly affected him emotionally and physically in a similar way. While he was not privy to the changing testimony of the witnesses in earlier pre-trial documents, it is clear from Thomas’ papers that he still felt a need to establish if the men were guilty as charged and it seems that Superintendent La Trobe, himself a committed Christian, had a similar feeling and encouraged him in this.

## 5.1 William Thomas as chronicler – ‘confession by proxy’

Prior to their trial, Thomas had been working with *Warrigle Jemmy* to comfort the accused men while Parker had employed Jemmy to gain knowledge of the Barapa language so that he could translate for them in court. Jemmy’s preferred Aboriginal name was *Kitternin*, Bobby’s was *Tingan* and Ptolemy’s *Kerkerinan* though he had given the alternative name *Takkin Bulla Towook* to Parker and Parker had further learned that of Bulleteye, namely (*Ng)oongooringdurnin* (VPRS 19/89/400). After the trial, as Thomas cared for the men while they sought mitigation of the sentence, he gained the information that he sought to clarify events surrounding the killing of Andrew Beveridge. Scrawled in the margins of Thomas’ notebook we find: ‘2 blacks who put cloak over Mr. Beveridge – *Mulligromen* and *Worree* alias Mr. Beveridge’. As official documentation lists ‘Warry’ as a hostile actor and a separate figure from ‘Black Mr. Beveridge’, Thomas’ notes lead to further questioning of the official account of events. On the next page ‘*Woollundun*, *Yenneereee*, *Buonaparte* alias *Bumbaranin*, *Tarenanin*, *Karunno*, *Worrie* & *Kanniwatting*’ are listed as ‘*factors in the scene*’. On the same page we find:

That the shepherds entice lubras into the huts & made the men in the [illegible] go away & because they wanted to take the women to miams, they shot 2 blacks; 1 afterwards died. That after they had done it they were all forced lubras to go. And burn their [illegible]’. And then ‘Bobby alias Tingan was the black who speared Mr. Beveridge in the leg. Tollome alias Kerkerinun was the black who waddied Mr. Beveridge about the head. Henry was the black who thrust spear in Mr. Beveridge’s side Mynk was the black who speared Mr. Beveridge in the side.

These four statements are followed by ‘stated by’ – but no source is given (Thomas 1838-1868, MS 214.21). In another notebook lies an extraordinary document titled ‘*Confession by proxy*’ which records:

*Wool-lun-dun*                      *spear in the breast & first set the blacks on*  
*Henry*                                *speared in left side*  
*Tollomee*                            *waddied Mr. Beveridge*  
*Bambaranin or Bonaparte*  
*Bobby*                                *spear in leg*

*Warrie alias Mr. Beveridge & Kan-ni watting - Warrie they describe as endeavouring to keep the Blacks from spearing Mr. Beveridge & after he was dead cried over him and he and Kanniwatting wrapt him up after the blacks were gone. They state that some time before the murder of Mr. Beveridge the Blacks stole some sheep and that Mr. Beveridge, 3 White men, Warrie & Kanniwatting each went out with a gun and that 3 Blacks were killed, not killed immediately but died a few days afterwards.*

*Signed before me in Melbourne this 1<sup>st</sup> day of May 1847, Wm Thomas JP*

*Kitternine alias Warrigle Jemmy                      X                      his mark.*

In assessing this material there is an obvious discrepancy between the official witness statements and the ‘Confession’ over what role Worrie/Warry played and what was the Aboriginal name of ‘Black Mr. Beveridge’. Clearly the ‘Confession’ would have been a relief to both Thomas and La Trobe providing as it does evidence, though untested, of who had been involved in the killing of Andrew Beveridge. If as the ‘Confession’ puts forth, Bobby was not the first and main assailant and Ptolemy was guilty of a lesser assault, they would still have been judged parties to a common act of murder, as others would have in their place. The existence of a rational basis for the act in a dispute over sheep and subsequent loss of Aboriginal life would also have appealed to both men, though they clearly would not have wanted to dwell on the inference of sexual abuse of Aboriginal women, and this is not mentioned in their correspondence. The intimacy of violence could be mediated through the distancing process of the judicial system. The intimacy of sexual abuse would be harder to process and thus best ignored.

### 5.3 William Thomas as translator

Regardless of the merits of official evidence and unofficial ‘Confessions’, Thomas stepped up his work with Bobby and Ptolemy after their conviction. He had two concerns in these endeavours. He wished to make them ‘morally sensible of their fate’ by bringing them to an understanding of Christianity and its promise of redemption. He also sought to make them aware of the administrative imperatives of their fate – an appeal to the Governor for clemency and if that was unsuccessful to explain to them the method of their execution. The potential



success of his endeavours is best gauged by a more intense assessment of the language material he developed in his work with these men.

It is clear that unlike his colleague Edward Parker, Thomas never considered that Barapa Barapa was the actual language of the 'Murray Men' as he referred to them in his writings, as he clearly distinguished between the 'dialect' of Warrigle Jemmy and theirs, often recording wordlists in separate columns. Thomas' focus here is lexical which is unfortunate as the related Western Kulin languages can exhibit a marked degree of common vocabulary while other features such as divergent pronouns and possessive markers provide clearer delineation between tongues (Blake et al. 2011). The most noticeable marker of difference of the Mathi sub-group of Western Kulin languages spoken in the district from Swan Hill to Kulkyne is the addition to simple nominal forms of *-i* to consonant stems and *-ngi* to vocalic stems and those ending in *r*. Unfortunately, Thomas' comparative vocabularies contain only one such noun, with the rest having pronominal suffixes. In such cases we would expect to see pronominal suffixes ending in *-uk* from Warrigle Jemmy as opposed to *-u* if Bobby and Ptolemy gave tokens from the Mathi sub-group of languages. A considerable number of *-u* final tokens exist in the Murray men's vocabulary but we also see many *-uk* final pronouns, and while it is likely that these resulted from one of the men repeating Warrigle Jemmy's contributions, we can only say from the linguistic evidence as written that at least one of the men spoke a language from the Mathi sub-group as a first language. Given that Thomas' record of prison visits found them speaking 'their own dialect' when they were not with Warrigle Jemmy, it is clear that they had at least one language in common besides Jemmy's Barapa Barapa. They may well have both been speakers of Mathi type languages, but this cannot be confirmed from the writings of William Thomas. The Thomas Papers also do not show us why Bobby used a separate translator, particularly one associated with the Goulburn River country. It is possible that he may have had links to that country through his mother or grandmother. He would not have been safe among the Aboriginal people of the Lower Murray at this time though, if that was his primary identity, given the *inter se* killing rampant at that period. His role in the Beveridge killing makes this highly unlikely and the presence of his brother at the scene acts to confirm his local status (VPRS 30//1-331-15).

William Thomas' dual aims of bringing Bobby and Ptolemy to a Christian conscience and an understanding of their fate as condemned men depended primarily on his linguistic abilities: unfortunately these were limited. Beyond English, Thomas may have had some knowledge of Spanish, having spent nearly a year in Spain as a younger man (Mulvaney, 1967). As both English and Spanish have a Subject-Verb-Object sentence order, knowledge of Spanish would not have assisted him with the grammar of the Western Kulin languages spoken by the prisoners with their Verb-Subject-Object sentence order. This can be seen in the sentences he wrote out in his papers to convey more important ideas to his charges in which he used English word order. He also employed pronominal forms such as *mimberne* for 'me' and *tarndenbool* for 'you' that are not valid. He further made use of what he regarded as independent possessive pronouns in the form of *yerrie* for 'my' and *nindee* for 'your' at the same time as apparently

legitimate possessive suffixes. At times this may have conveyed much of what he intended, at times it clearly would not. He noted *yerrie kutminnook* and *yerrie barbak* glossed as ‘my brother’ and ‘my mother’. *Yerrie*, corrected as *Yirri*, is an intensive adverb equivalent to ‘very’ while *kutminnook* and *barbak* clearly represent ‘my deceased brother’ and ‘my mother’ so could have been understood by Bobby and Ptolemy as emphatic phrases. Similarly, in the following phrases a redundant final *-n* on the negative *baraba* would not cloud the meaning when the future marker *-in* is clearly added to the stems for ‘cry’ *numila*, ‘fear’ *pamba* and ‘ill’ *tyileka*:

No more cry	<i>barbun</i>	<i>mummelin</i>
No more frightened	<i>barbun</i>	<i>barmbin</i>
No more ill	<i>barbun</i>	<i>gillegin</i>

Other simple phrases noted by Thomas would have been understandable to his charges but tragically the more complex sentences he would most have wished to have understood would not have been intelligible. They can clarify a little of Thomas’ confusion though. He noted the phrase *Jesus Christ marnum moorup tarndenbool* and glossed it ‘Jesus Christ hold your soul’ which is partly analysable as follows:

<i>Jesus Christ marnam</i>	<i>murrup</i>	<i>tarnd-iny-bul</i>
Jesus Christ [?]	soul	touch-FUT-3DL

Unfortunately Thomas took from this rendering that the word *tarndenbool* meant ‘you’ and used it as such throughout his longer sentences, which touching on the hereafter may have meant much to himself and Bobby and Ptolemy if they were able to understand each other.

There were practical matters that also needed to be addressed and Thomas recorded phrases he used to convey the process of seeking clemency from Sydney. Importantly they show the vitality of these Aboriginal languages in a time of intense stress, as they include a form *ber-gen-ner* meaning ‘to write’ which is clearly a new form or at least a fresh usage of an existing word. Thomas also conveyed in direct phrases the alternative to clemency, as in *Ber-bern-weakinner* glossed as ‘hanged till dead’. *Perrapa* being the verb ‘to climb’ may be the base of the first word while *wika* ‘to starve, die’ is clearly the base form of *weakinner* which may mean ‘to make dead, kill’. Clearly this is a phrase the men would have understood. Thomas also recorded *Year-kun-der*, glossed as ‘poor fellow’, and as such the honorific used to refer to a person after their death, again a term that would have been understood by the men. More generally, their understanding must have come from the Aboriginal men around Melbourne who Thomas brought to see them. He did this as an exemplary warning to the Melbourne men and to further the translation process, utilizing the locals’ better English. These speakers of East Kulin languages though told Thomas he should let *Warrigle Jemmy* ‘go to his country’ and ‘hang the other two’, seeing them as ‘wild-blacks’ regardless of their circumstance. Jemmy they regarded with some fear as a man possessed of a measure of supernatural power (Thomas 1838-1868: 214/3). After Bobby and Ptolemy’s sentence was confirmed however, their friend, protector and translator

*Warrigle Jemmy* was no longer needed by the administration and was transported to Van Diemen's Land to face the life sentence to which he had been condemned. Thomas recorded the younger men clinging to him and weeping bitterly the night before he was taken from them and transported.

## 6. Ending: *Baraban lumelum* – 'all gone cry'

Thomas' journal entries following the confirmation of sentence add even more pathos to his language notes. We realise that his exposition of 'one moon, two moons' must have been written in conjunction with the chart he had scratched on the prison wall of how many months and days the men had left. He urged upon them redemption and while they seemed at times interested, they asked to be buried in their possum rugs and implored Thomas to keep the grass from growing on their graves. It is doubtful the first request was complied with though we may hope the second one was. On the night before their execution it was their friend William Thomas that Bobby and Ptolemy clung to while again the three men wept. The next morning Ptolemy stepped calmly through the trap and died instantly. Bobby, fighting to the end, reached the platform floor with his foot but in doing so plummeted headfirst through the trap to be left bouncing and writhing for many minutes: another scene where William Thomas' powers of description failed him, this time through grief.

## 7. Aftermath

Away from the confusion and terror in the Melbourne Jail, things continued as they had been on the Lower Murray. Prior to the trial, Edward Parker had received a report from pastoralist Archibald M. Campbell of Gannawarra at the junction of the Loddon and Murray Rivers that 'two of the actual murderers of the late Mr. Beveridge' had 'been recently shot on the north side of the Murray' (VPRS 19/89/400). Campbell maintained good relations with the local Aboriginal people throughout the years of conflict and though he did report instances of the killing of Europeans and *inter se* killings by Aboriginal people, he consistently refused to name the perpetrators as he believed that would result in indiscriminate revenge killings on the part of both the Native and Border Police, rather than a legitimate judicial response. Such killings as Campbell feared continued to occur with pastoralist George Hobler being shown two fresh graves of men shot as suspected 'accomplices or participants' halfway between Piangil and Tyntynder in June of 1848 (Hobler 1830-1851). In a memoir written in the 1890s, James Kirby who had been with the Beveridges at the time of the killing of Andrew Beveridge implied widespread killing of Aboriginal people occurred (Kirby 1896:48-53). There is no way of knowing if any of these killings were targeted or all were indiscriminate, as the victims are not named.

Not all those listed as 'factors in the scene' of the Beveridge killing suffered a violent death. Bonaparte, though reported in 1850, for spearing and wounding pastoralist John Rae in another dispute over sheep, lived on and died at

Piangil in 1862, a year after his wife (VDC 1861:10208 & VDC 1862:2940). ‘Black Mr. Beveridge’ received a name plate as reward for his actions and was welcomed on surrounding stations, though based at Tyntynder. *Toyer-wurn* alias Mr. Robinson the ‘chief man’ at Tyntynder also lived on there, and it is likely that Bulleteye was left unmolested as he died at Tyntynder in 1862 though buried at Piangil (*The Riverine Herald*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1870, VDC 1862:5588). Ptolemy’s wife Caroline was not harmed either, as she died at Tyntynder in 1859 with their child *Cooramin* still living (VDC 1859:3864). Violent conflict continued as a regular feature of life in the region until the mid-1850s though the killings sparked by that of Andrew Beveridge may have petered out a little earlier. Andrew’s brother Peter alluded to the probable cause in his literary exploration of the frontier ‘John Fairfield, Overlander’, when the eponymous hero declared himself ‘tired of the slaughter’. Despite all the slaughter, the Beveridge brothers, Peter in particular, left in their writings an extraordinary guide to the languages and lifestyle of the Aboriginal people with whom they lived (Beveridge 1850-1885).

The brothers did not live continually at peace with each other either, and after a dispute over finances Peter and John were forced from the family partnership and runs by their father and brothers. In a further echo of the conflicted intimacy of the Beveridges and local people on the Lower Murray, controversy arose at Ebenezer Mission to the south in 1881 when a young ‘half-caste’ woman named Rebecca Beveridge eloped with her young man of choice. The resultant marriage certificate listed the father as ‘Peter Beveridge’ in a hint that Andrew was not the only Beveridge brother to have forged a more personal intimacy with local Aboriginal women (SAMC 1881 127:343).

Upon reaching Van Diemen’s Land *Warrigle Jemmy*, who had played such a role as a translator, was assessed as ‘unable to speak English’. William Thomas had rehearsed dialogues with him so he would ‘be good’ when he reached those shores and his record was clear until 1848 when he absconded with another Aboriginal convict and an Englishman. He was sent to Port Arthur on bread and water as further punishment and escaped briefly from there as well before settling in work assignments and receiving a ticket of leave, then a pardon, in 1855. He died six days later (AOT, no date CON37/3p.912, CON 16/3p376). His friend William Thomas kept the faith and continued to petition for the release of *Warrigle Jemmy* and four other transported Aboriginal men until they all had died in Van Diemen’s Land. He continued to serve Aboriginal people until he died of exhaustion in 1868. Through his advocacy in a time of great stress he had served them well and through his writings he continues to serve us all.

For *Year-kun-ner Kitternin*, *Year-kun-ner Tingan*, *Year-kun-ner Kerkerinan*, *Warrigle Jemmy*, Bobby and Ptolemy and their friend William Thomas, poorfellows all, we might close with the last dialogue in William Thomas’ trial writings:

*Mer-met-un-woon weakon* –                    *Kur-kul-lär mimberne mun-der-ner*  
when me die    love me.

While it is inadequate as a translation, it will stand as an epitaph.

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