

KOOMPKINNING

The Pumphrey's Bridge Storybook



**"Noongars camped all around the bush here. Used to be our home."
– Noongar Elder Mervyn Abraham**



I feel at home.
I can feel the
presence of
my people.



Above: Near the place of my birth about 5km towards Wandering from Pumphrey's Bridge.

Above left: My dad Sam Abraham.

Left: I was born between two hills, behind this farm gate.

I'm Mervyn Abraham.

[In] 1938 I was born, under a tree. We was camped there, and dad – Sam Abraham – was working there. We only had horse and cart them days and they reckon it was too far to go to town, so I was born in the bush.

Most of my relations were born in the bush. Some of them were born at Pumphrey's Bridge.



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Kaya! (Hi!)

Uncle Mervyn Abraham was born 109 years after the life of **Noongars** (the Aboriginal people of south-west Western Australia) was changed forever by the coming of white people. Mervyn's stories about life at **Koompkinning** on the Hotham River give a glimpse of what life was like for many Noongars during the twentieth century.

Wheatbelt NRM respectfully thanks Uncle Merv for sharing **katadjin** (knowledge) and photos in this storybook. We also thank Gary Bennell and Alice Collard for their contributions. Noongar katadjin belongs to and remains the intellectual property of the Noongar communities who shared it.

Noongar language is used in this book. There are many different Noongar language groups and it was an oral language (not traditionally written down), so different words and spellings exist.

This storybook is one of a series that aims to inspire you to learn more about our unique **boodjar** (country) and Noongar culture, and help deepen respect, love and care for our **kwobidak** (beautiful) country.

Kerry Collard
Aboriginal NRM Project Facilitator
Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management Inc



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WARNING
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are advised that this book contains names and images of people who have passed away.

Ngala mia (our camp)



Standing next to the campsite where my Uncle Fred and Aunty Frances Little lived. The upright **Mangart** / Jam Tree / *Acacia acuminata* posts in these photos are the original tent posts.

Noongars camped all around the bush here. Used to be our home. My old Uncle Fred Little and Aunty Frances used to have a tent right here. In the front, outside the tent under a shelter, they had a kitchen where they cooked their meals. This is how we used to live. You could have a wash down the river there. Everything was pretty good. Oh, we used to be happy in them days, I know that. No hassles. No power bills, water bills or nothing. They lived there for quite a few years then they moved to Pingelly.



Above: Cyril Penny's tent at Donaldson's Pumphrey farm

Below: **Koolangka** (children) Rhonda Penny and Kenny Ugle sleeping inside the tent. The stones to the right of the lamp mysteriously fell there without leaving holes in the tent (see page 14). Photos: Weekend Mail, Saturday 23 March 1957



Right: Mrs Alma Ugle and her daughter Sandra, farmers Brian and Ian Donaldson and Mrs Lorna Penny with Rhonda inside the tent. Photo: Daily News, Wednesday 20 March 1957



Bilya (river)



Mangart / Jam Tree / *Acacia acuminata* Flowering (above), and cut (left), at Pumphrey's Bridge. 27 August 2015

Noongar	English
<i>Kornt</i> / <i>kaylap</i> / <i>karla-mia</i>	Camping / dwelling place
<i>Karla</i>	Fire
<i>Karl-boorn</i>	Firewood
<i>Burong</i> / <i>djart</i>	Rain
<i>Kep</i> / <i>koorliny</i>	Rain coming
<i>Bilya</i>	River
<i>Maar</i>	Cloud
<i>Mari</i> / <i>warabiny</i>	Rain cloud

The Noongar name for around Pumphrey's Bridge is **Koompkinning** — it means plenty of water. The water used to be fresh in those days. Fresh water for drinking, you could drink it, have a cup of tea out of it, wash in it. It's completely different now. It should be alright when it's raining, running water, it's pretty good. But when it stops, that's when the salinity comes into it. It's brackish now, gone all brackish.

Gary Bennell recalls: "We used to learn to swim in that river. We used to go from here in Pingelly out that way. That would have been in the fifties [1950's]."

The spring

The spring's next to the old bridge, on the north side. You get that fresh water all year around there.

We'd clean around it, get all the scrub and all the grass from around it, and you'd get the clear, fresh water.

Needs to be cleaned up and the water will come up again.

Gary Bennell remembers: "We had an uncle who had some mental issues. Uncle Jack Bennell. He was very quiet, you know. He was a big, tall man. He was in a mental institution in Perth.

He came home and Dad – Andy Bennell – used to take him out there on the weekends, to sit down and spend time with him.

Us boys would be down the bottom swimming and Dad would be up the top the other side near the spring. Sit down quiet and just yarn all day, you know.

When we did go near them we'd be very quiet. So Dad kind of brought him back into the community. Work his way back into the community. Like therapy, you know."



The spring is under this grass

Noongar	English
<i>Kep / kepa</i>	Water
<i>Djooly</i>	Dew
<i>Dudja / djindi</i>	Mist, fog
<i>Walken</i>	Rainbow
<i>Moorditj</i>	Strong
<i>Moorditjabiny</i>	Becoming strong

Corroboree ground



See the old corroboree ground here? Nothing grows. I was a bit young for it, but I remember them telling me Noongars come from everywhere. Miles around they'd come here for corroboree. 1942 was the last time they were here, I think.

Used to have a fire in the middle there, dancing around. I was a kid then. I was knee high to a grasshopper. I think my Grandfather Nabby Abraham was one of the dancers.

Nice and quiet. Away from the hustle and bustle of everybody.

Noongars came from Albany, Gnowangerup, Katanning, Wagin, Dumbleyung, Williams, Narrogin and other places. By horse and cart and walking. Take a couple of days to get here, a week or something like that.

Nice and peaceful out here, isn't it?

You can feel it. You can feel a presence of Noongar spirits.



Photo: Gary Bennell's collection

Gary Bennell's parents Alice Hill, daughter of Charlie and Rachel (nee Abraham), and Andy Bennell, son of Ned Bennell and Christine 'Kidjen' (nee Humphries).

Noongar	English
<i>Midar/kobori / corroboree</i>	Dance
<i>Dudjarak / yewoorl</i>	Song (ceremonial)
<i>Kedininy / warangka</i>	Sing
<i>Wilgi</i>	Red ochre (ceremonial)

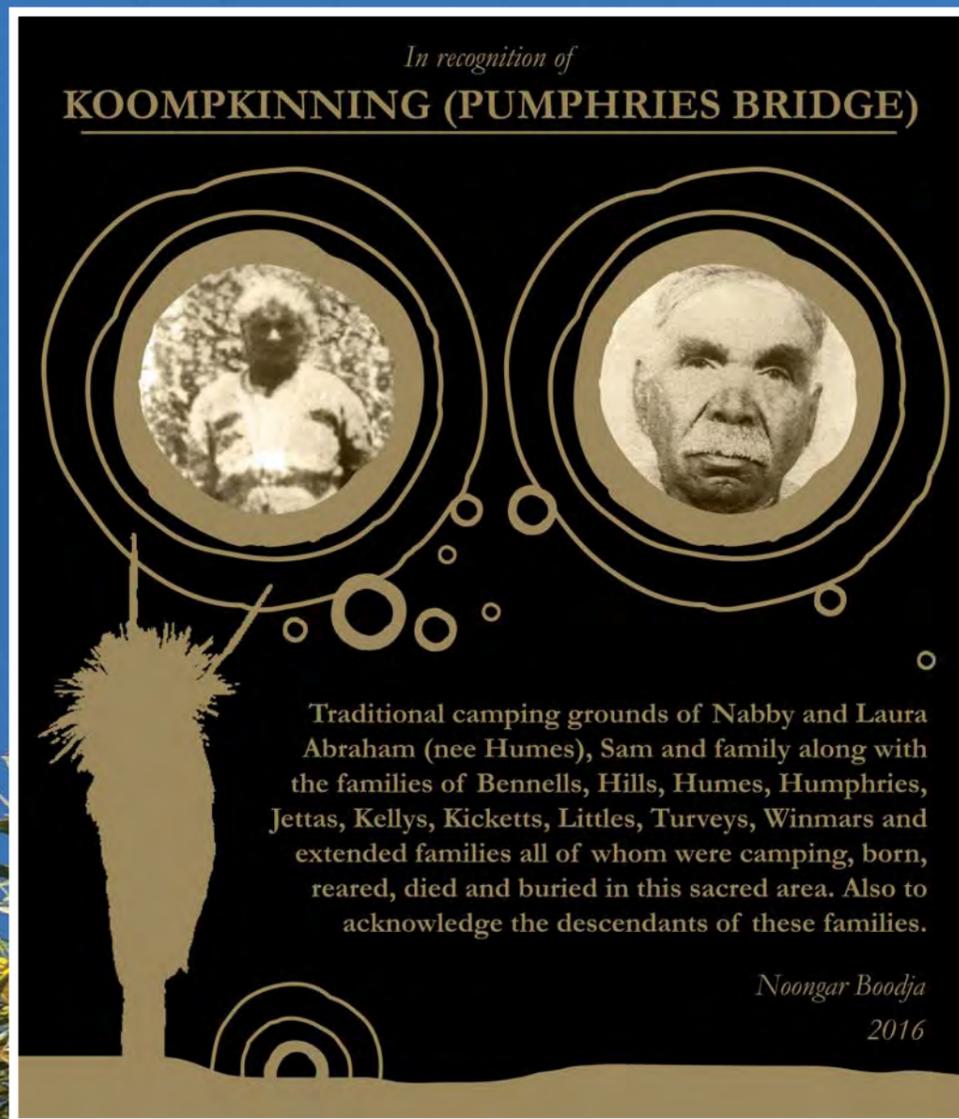
Gary Bennell says: "Dad used to dance there in the corroborees when he was a young fella. Grandfather Ned was working up there on the hill and Dad met Mum there. Dad used to dance there and camp across the road. Ned is Merv's grandfather too, and Christine is our grandmother. You feel all the spirits there. They're there."



Photo: Gary Bennell's collection

The Kidjen Dancers are named after Christine 'Kidjen'.

Moort (family)



Left image:
The plaque to be installed at **Koompkinning** Pumphrey's Bridge to commemorate the site as traditional camping grounds.

My Grandmother Laura sang all the old songs. Wish I had a tape recorder then. She sang old Noongar songs. I don't remember the songs.

Background photo: Flowering **Mangart** / Jam Tree / *Acacia acuminata* at Pumphrey's Bridge. 27 August 2015

Quite a few families camped around here, quite a few. There's Abrahams, Bennells, Winmars, Littles, Hills. You know the boys play footy in Dockers and Eagles? They're from the family around this area. They're all my relations, they are. Steve Hill's Dockers. Josh Hill's Eagles. Nicky Winmar's from here, it's his grandparent's place. Rosie Winmar was Nicky's aunty and Linda Winmar (nee Abraham) was Rosie's mum. Noongars camped here year round.

Gary Bennell says: "Merv and Jock Abraham were involved in organising the Pumphrey's Bridge Reunion in 2009. At the reunion they had fires going everywhere, the cover band Red Ochre, plenty of food. Noongars could get up and sing. Plenty of dust flying there. They were doing the jive and all this and that."

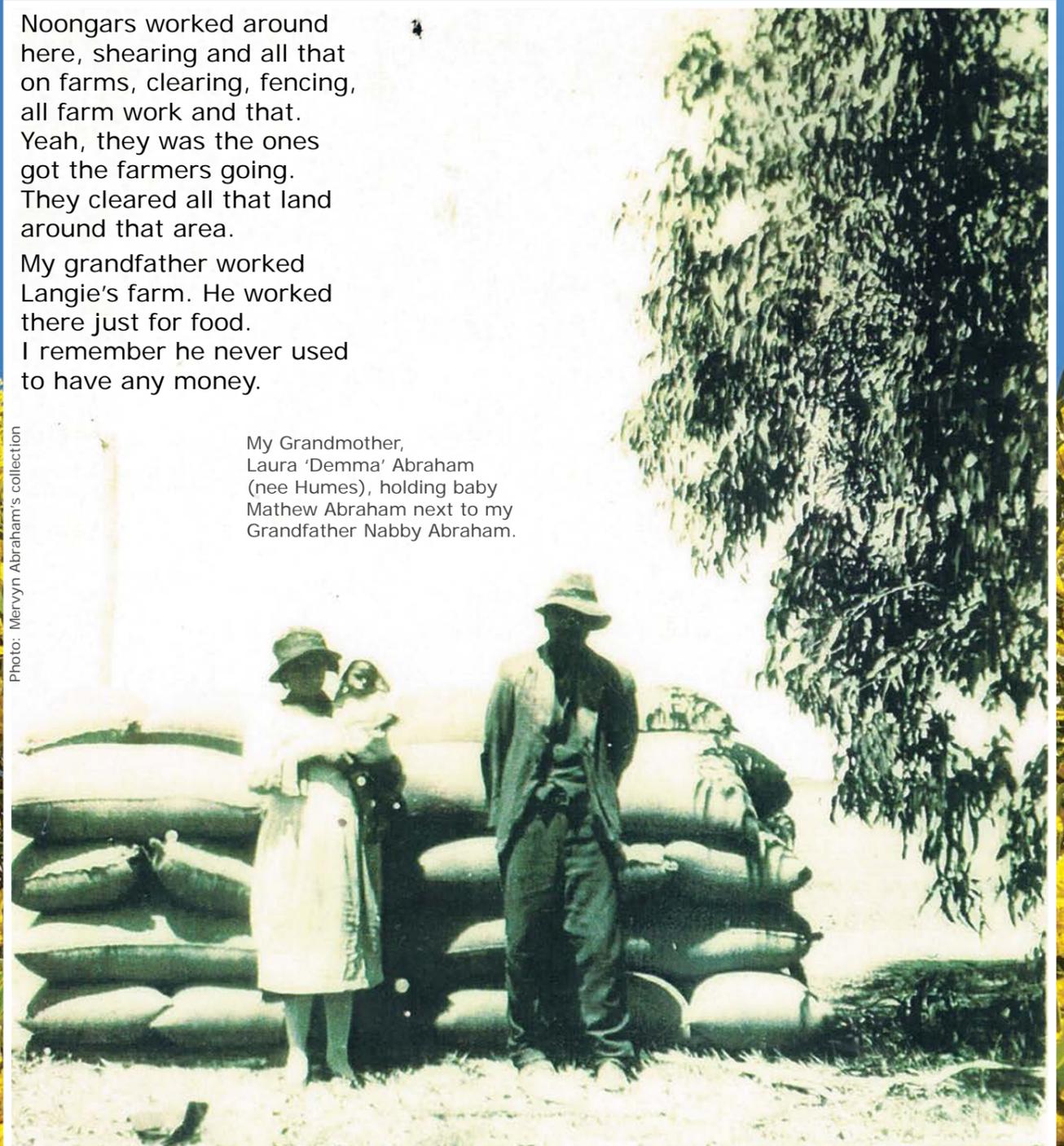
Work

Noongars worked around here, shearing and all that on farms, clearing, fencing, all farm work and that. Yeah, they was the ones got the farmers going. They cleared all that land around that area.

My grandfather worked Langie's farm. He worked there just for food. I remember he never used to have any money.

Photo: Mervyn Abraham's collection

My Grandmother, Laura 'Demma' Abraham (nee Humes), holding baby Mathew Abraham next to my Grandfather Nabby Abraham.



When I left school and started working, it was pretty good then.

Clearing land, cutting trees down. Cutting fence posts, jam tree fence posts. **Mangart** trees cut into fence posts. That's the main things farmers used to build fences.

I used to be a good axe man. I enjoyed it. Keep you fit.

Wherever there was work they camped. Some people camped on farmers' properties. On reserves around that area. Gypsies. Camp to camp.

You had no permanent home them days. Before European colonisation, Noongars travelled wherever there was food, you know. Hunting for food wherever there was plenty, you know, that's where they'd go.

Marany (food)

Smooth Marron

Cherax cainii
There's also a critically endangered Hairy Marron (*Cherax tenuimanus*) but it's only found in the Margaret River.



Djilgies, they were lovely. All year around. Dig them out of their hole. Get a basket. Same as you catch crayfish. Put some meat – kangaroo or rabbit, whatever meat was available – in the cage, put it in the water, come back and pull it out. Half a dozen or more in there. Same as catching **marron**.

Djilgi

Cherax quinquecarinatus
There's also another common freshwater crayfish species, the **koonac** (*Cherax preissii*).



Photos this page: © David Morgan

The pool there on the north side, clean all the sticks out of there and walk through there and muddy all the water. So that when the **djildjit** (fish) – perch and cobbler – couldn't breathe, [you] grab them, chuck them into a bucket, or a bag, or something.

Easy as that. Didn't have to fish for them, just grab them. We'd cook them on the fire, on the coals, or whatever. Some wrap them in a bit of brown paper, put them in the ashes. Beautiful. The last time I fished in that river was about fifty years ago.

Marron: Dark brown, black and even blue, marron are an iconic south-western Australian species. Growing up to 38cm long, marron are the largest freshwater crayfish in WA and the third largest on Earth. They have ten legs including large claws for grasping food, fighting and moving. They live in rivers and dams with permanent water, fallen trees and submerged leaves, especially rivers with well-vegetated catchments and banks. Marron eat living, dead and decaying plant and animal material on the river or dam bed and are important components of the aquatic ecosystems. Water rats, tortoises, birds, fish and bigger marron eat marron. Salinisation of many rivers such as the Hotham has reduced their range; marron are also threatened by habitat loss, climate change, reduced river flow, low oxygen, fishing and feral yabbies.

Djilgi: Light to black-brown coloured freshwater crayfish that grow up to 14cm long, djilgi are endemic to WA's south-west, occupying a wide range of environments including wetlands, streams and rivers. Similar to marron, they eat a wide range of living and decaying organic matter. Permaculture gardeners use djilgies in ponds and pools to help clean the water. Like **koonacs** (*Cherax preissii* and less common *Cherax glaber*), djilgi burrow down and become dormant to survive drought. While more tolerant than marron to low oxygen, they have also been impacted by salinity, habitat loss and introduced species.

Feral yabbies: Introduced to WA from eastern Australia in the 1930s, yabbies (*Cherax destructor*) grow fast, reproduce at a young age and can breed several times in one season, so they can out-compete WA native freshwater crayfish for food and habitat. They are an important aquaculture species for many farmers. However, if you catch a yabby in a river, don't put it back, eat it!

How to tell the difference: The WA Department of Fisheries Fact Sheet called **Identifying Freshwater Crayfish** shows you how.

Photo: © Phil Lewis



Moyitj

Common Bronzewing Pigeon
Phaps calcoptera



Photo: © Naomi Kelly
(Nabby & Laura Abraham's great granddaughter)

Yerderap

Pacific Black Duck



Photo: © Phil Lewis, Wyalkatchem WA, July 2011

Doornat

Twenty-eight Parrot
Barnardius zonarius



Yonga

Grey Kangaroo
Macropus fuliginosus

We ate kangaroo, rabbits, and all that.

There used to be plenty around in them days, rabbits. We used to go rabbit trapping when we were kids.

Sell rabbits to the rabbit buyers who'd come around. Sell them to shops and all that, supermarkets in Perth.

Ducks, twenty-eight parrots, pigeons. Used to be good eating, pigeon stew. Tastes like chicken. Pluck the twenty-eight parrots, gut them and cook them. Simple as that.

We used to catch them with shanghais (slingshots). To make a shanghai you get a stick and rubber tyre tube, cut two little strips out, put them on the stick, and BANG. Good life.

Take the rabbits or parrots in our belts. Carry them along. You put the rabbits' heads through the belt, same as the parrots too, and carry them along, rabbits and parrots hanging all around you. So instead of carrying them put them in the belt, have your hands free, get some more.

Used to get **bardi** (witchetty grubs) in the **mangart**. Bardi taste like cheezels when you cook them up, crunchy.

Only fungus you eat are mushrooms.



Witchetty grubs
Photo: wikicommons sputnikccc

The shop

This is what's left of the old shop.

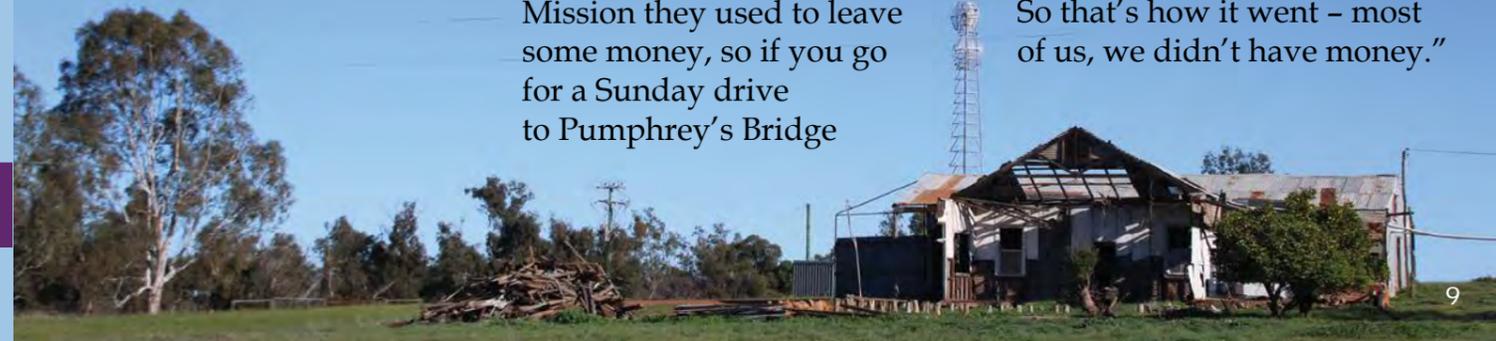
We bought flour, sugar, tea, all that, butter, tin food and all that. They were good people.

Alice Collard (nee Jones) recalls: "When the parents come to visit their children at the Wandering Mission they used to leave some money, so if you go for a Sunday drive to Pumphrey's Bridge

you could buy ice cream or whatever out of your own money. But if you didn't have none you didn't get none. So that's how it went – most of us, we didn't have money."



The shop was straight across the old bridge



Learn more about the native freshwater fishes, crayfishes and mussels of South-western Australia.
www.sercul.org.au/ffp.html

Sources: Stephen Beatty of Murdoch University & www.fish.wa.gov.au (19/10/2015)

Day trips from Wandering Mission



Alice Collard (nee Jones) remembers: "When we were put in the mission I was six years old.

I would have been seven or eight when we went down to Pumphrey's Bridge from Wandering Mission. That's where we used to go once a year to have our picnic, and have a swim for the day. We enjoyed it being away and swimming and that. We also enjoyed our little drink of cordial and a biscuit for the day which was really a lot for us at the time. We enjoyed ourselves while we were there and enjoyed going out for the day. It was really fantastic.

We all were loaded on the back of a truck, like a sheep

truck, that we had to all stand on. Girls up one end, boys up the other. Wherever we had to go, that's what we were taken in, a truck. They had the railings, so you'd stand and lean on the railing. When the truck was going around with all the kids on the back, I'd think it was going to go over sooner or later, but no it never. Where the old bridge is, that's where we used to go swimming there, and jumping off the rope from the tree into the water. Used to be a lot of water there. Cos otherwise you wouldn't be able to jump because of all the trees. They said to watch for the trees that's fallen into the water. You'd get stuck underneath.

We all went exploring up and down while we were there, having a look around to see what was there.

Always had Pumphrey's Bridge in my mind for years but never ever went back there until recently, just to have a look, see what was there. I went there pretty late then, didn't I? The new bridge has been built and the old one's gone."

Top: Wandering Mission building, summer 2014/2015.

Above: Alice in her confirmation dress at Wandering Mission, approx 1959.

Below: Aboriginal children at Wandering Mission in the late 1950s or early 1960s.

Photos: Alice Collard's collection



On the broken old Pumphrey's Bridge, 25 June 2015. You can see the new bridge in the background.

See that beam there? We'd jump off there. Sometimes we'd jump from up the top. Oh yeah, it's deep yeah. Used to have sand on the bottom there. You could see the bottom.



The old Pumphrey's Bridge before it fell down

Photo: wikimedia.org, January 2007



The old bridge, 25 June 2015

Noongar	English
<i>Koorl</i>	Go
<i>Barn</i>	Walk
<i>Wabiny</i>	Play
<i>Djabaly / djibal-djobaliny</i>	Swim
<i>Bardang</i>	Jump / fly / step
<i>Barlanginy</i>	Hopping
<i>Djabalariny</i>	Falling
<i>Dhabat</i>	Fall down

Sport



New Year's Day they used to have sports, running, high jump, and all that, broad jump and swimming. It used to be a big day down there. All sporting ground here.

Old footy oval still there. Pumphrey's Bridge had their own team then.

You know the Marsh brothers, the cricketers? Well, their grandfather used to play footy with us, old Ted Marsh. He had a farm about 10kms down the road, down the river. That's where the Marshes come from.

The Warburtons were farmers from around here. Good shearers and footy players. Quite a good family. Very friendly mob. I think they've still got farms around here somewhere.



Top: Trees have grown over the old sports ground on the south side of the river.

Above: Tree sapling growing on the footy oval. The bush in the background is where our camp was.



Left: The swimming area between the old and new bridges.

Below: The Warby Pavilion, named after the Warburtons, next to the footy oval.

Photos: 25 June 2015.



School

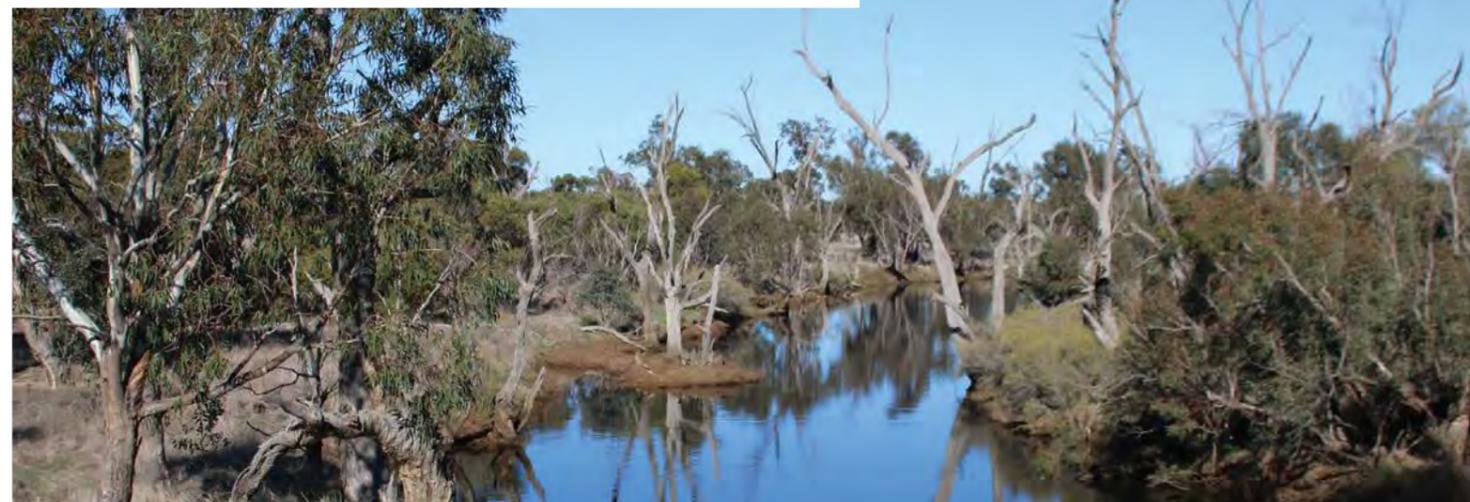
There was a school there five miles away at West Popanyinning. The bus came and pick us up. It was freezing. I was barefoot. Oh, my toes were blue. Didn't know what shoes were. We weren't allowed to go to the Pumphrey's Bridge School, because that was all for the white people. No Noongars were there, only **wadjalas** (white people).

Nine children from four families - Marshall, Donaldson, Watts and Mackwell - went there.*

They're the same age as me, them mob. We used to play with them but not at school. They came to Pingelly School after. The school bus used to come pick



At West Popanyinning. The plaque says, "Site of West Popanyinning School, church and tennis courts. School opened 1939. Closed 1946. Erected in memory of former students and teachers. Unveiled by former teacher Theresa Russel (Seeber) 11-9-88."



Noongar	English
<i>Katadjin</i>	Knowledge/learning
<i>Koorda</i>	Friends
<i>Koordidj</i>	Throw
<i>Daarlnyininy</i>	Running
<i>Dja-koori</i>	Run away
<i>Murdalang</i>	Chase

The Pumphrey's Bridge School, on the north side of the river (off the right of the photo above), operated from 2 February 1944, "until on the 20th July 1948, the children of the region were transported to Pingelly to which centre the small schools were consolidated."*

The building is still there: "A five-roomed farm house... constructed of mud-bats and with [a] verandah. The room suitable for the class room was 14ft x 14ft with an open fireplace and two windows. Board for the teacher [Miss Dorothy Falls, who was paid £229 p.a.], a separate room, was at the home of Mr L.S. Watts."*

*Wandering by Walter Gable

The falling stones

“Poltergeists have been blamed for the mysterious fallings at Pumphrey’s and Boyup Brook this week”, Sunday Times, 1955*

When I was 12 or 13, everyone was telling me about the stones. They were falling out the back of Pumphrey’s Bridge out at Donaldson’s farm. My Uncle Kevin Ugle and Auntie Alma lived in a tent there and stones came straight through the tent, leave no holes. They moved from there to a farmhouse verandah, stones are still coming through. Don’t know how that happened but people come from all over the world. People come there. Pick the stones up, stones were still warm to hot. So where they come from... even all the big shots didn’t know where they were coming from. Crikey.

I saw the stones, we went around and had a look. Picked the stone up. Some were golfball sized, some were a bit bigger than a golf ball. Leave no holes there, come straight through the tin or whatever it is. One hit you on the shoulder, bounce off, still warm. Unbelievable. And a couple of others, Cyril and Lorna Penny, a couple of days, they were gone. They left the place. They went to Narrogin. Yes, unbelievable. I can’t explain what happened. Nobody had any theories. All the science and that they did, where the stones were coming from, took them to a lab and analysed them. Very strange.

* Overview - Explanations for the ‘Falling Stones’ © Jag Films, for ABC Australia, 2005
The three news articles are part of this book thanks to sources listed in Tony Healy and Paul Cropper’s book *Australian Poltergeist* published in 2014 by Strange Nation.



DAILY NEWS COUNTRY

Vol. LXXV, No. 25,058 * * * Perth, WA, Wednesday, March 20, 1957 [Registered at the G.P.O. Perth for transmission by post as a newspaper.] Price 4d.

Native Flees Stones

By Jack Coulter

SUSPECTED “jinx” native Cyril Penny, centre of the Pumphrey stone mystery, left the Donaldson farm today.

“Please, boss, take me away. I am to blame for this trouble,” he said to farmer Alan Donaldson at 10 a.m. today.

Ten minutes before that three more stones had plopped softly on to the dry ground near the native camp at the rear of the homestead.

Now all on the farm are waiting and watching for stones from the air.

Will they stop as mysteriously as they started now that the 23-year-old, stockily-built caste native has shifted camp?

Is there any possibility that the showering pebbles will follow him, as they did when he camped overnight at Pumphrey Bridge on Monday night?

And lonely, frightened Cyril Penny? He will be dropped at Narrogin. There he intends to catch a train to Katanning and work his way over to his home town of Borden.

He will feel happier in his own district—and so will the other Pumphrey natives.

Two of them, Geoff Turvey (35) and Iva Jetta (25), quietly packed up their few belongings and walked off the Donaldson farm just before dark fell last night.

Many See Them

Just after the natives shifted camp, the stone phenomenon was witnessed by dozens of independent white witnesses.

Farmer Donaldson has preserved unruffled good humour throughout the invasion of his privacy once the story hit the headlines.

But, with last night’s invasion, he has called a stop to sightseeing.

At 5.30 p.m. yesterday, when he returned from a nearby stock sale, he found a crowd of people in a half-circle behind his house. Stones were falling. They were picking them up as fast as they fell.

The “pebbles-in-the-tent” show was on again last night.

This time, there were three white men crouched inside the small white canvas tent previously occupied by the natives.

A dozen heads poked through an opening in the tent flap. The new canvas was unholed, and rags were stuffed into the ridge-pole holes.

Yet, the witnesses swear that eight small stones dropped lightly on to the blankets.

No one saw them falling, no holes appeared in the tightly-stretched tent.

Any suggestion that the natives were flicking the stones can be discounted. Yesterday, at 2 p.m., an hour after four stones fell around me, staff photographer Max Holten had all the natives lined up.

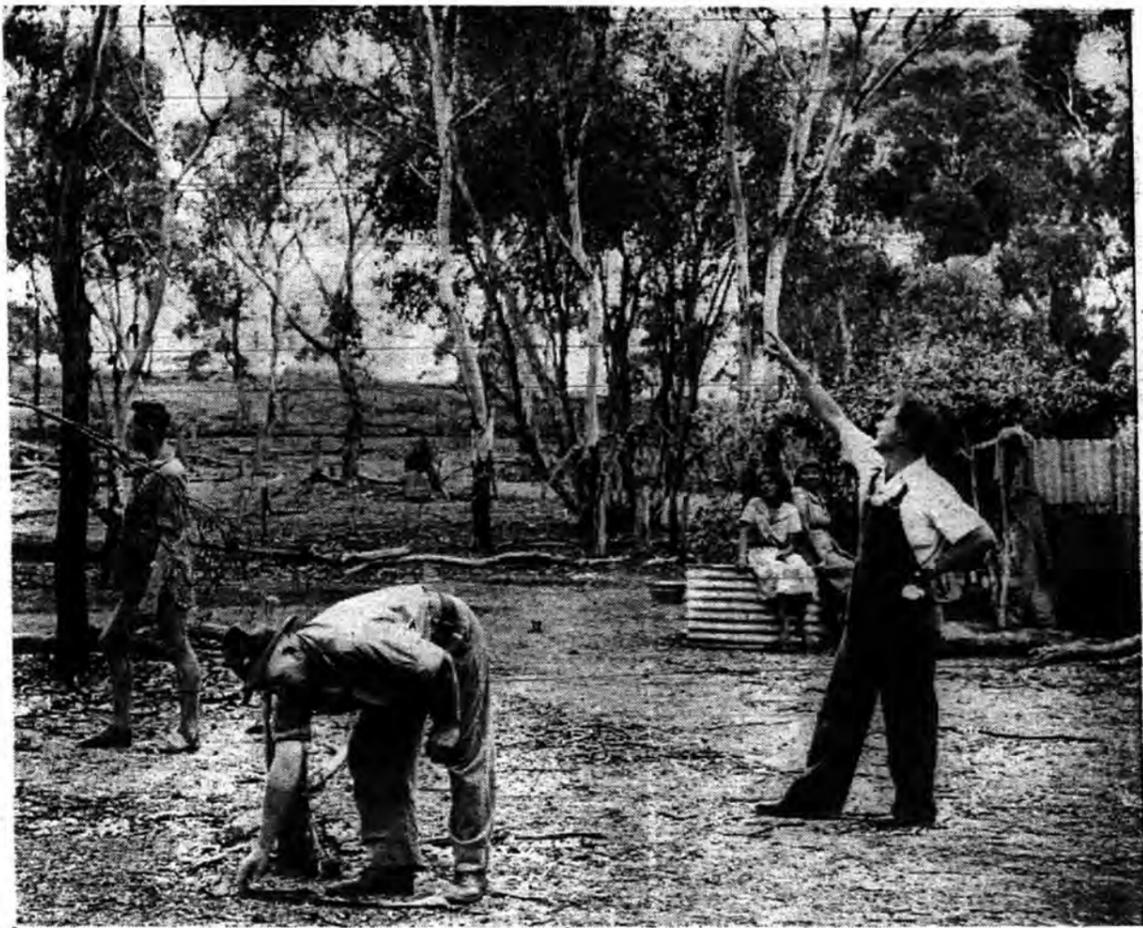
I was five yards away, talking face-to-face with the only other humans on the farm.

As Holten framed the natives in his camera sights, a stone dropped with a decided thump beside him.



◆ NAMED by other natives as the “jinx” in the Pumphrey stones mystery, Cyril Penny (22) packs to leave the district. With him are his wife Lorna (21) and daughter Rhonda (2).





• This is the native camp at Pumphrey, 20 miles from Popanyinning, which has been bombarded with mysterious stones falling from the sky. The picture shows how hard it would be for anyone throwing the stones to conceal himself from observation. The owner of the property, Mr. Alan Donaldson (64), bends down to pick up one of the stones, while one son, Brian (26), points in the air and another, Ian (20), keeps a sharp look out.

Stones Still Hot On The Natives' Trail

Yesterday, for the fifth consecutive day stones continued to plummet from the sky on to a native camp on the property of Mr. Alan Donaldson at Pumphrey, 20 miles from Popanyinning.

Even though the natives moved their camp ten miles on Monday night, the stones followed them. Stones showered around them when they went to a nearby creek for water a few minutes before dawn.

Shortly after dawn, Mr. Donaldson's son Ian (20) went to the new camp site. He, too, was greeted by a barrage.

When the natives arrived back at their original campsite later in the morning, stones began to rain down again.

How the stones are projected remains a mystery.

Yesterday afternoon, the Deputy Government Mineralogist (Mr. J. N. A. Grace) said that there was nothing unusual about the composition of the rocks. They were a laterite-type of stone composed mainly of iron-oxide, aluminium-oxide, and quartz and were quite common in the area.

The Donaldson family attended a stock sale during the day and returned with several people eager to see the stones. And still the barrage continued.

Mr. Ian Donaldson said

last night that the stones appeared to float down, hitting the ground with a dull thump.

While the wives of two of the natives were at the Donaldson home about 9.30 p.m. on Monday, some rocks fell on the roof of the house for the first time.

With his 26-year-old brother Brian and a neighbour, Mr. Donaldson crouched in a tent with natives early on Monday night. Gravel pebbles were seen to fall through the tent without holing it, he said.

Some of the natives had made a similar claim on Sunday, but the Donaldson family had not believed it.

The Southern Districts officer of the Native Affairs Branch (Mr. C. R. W. Webster) said last night that he was no longer sceptical about the falling stones.

Mr. Webster visited the camp yesterday and heard two fall within a few feet of him.

He said that he had been in India for many years and had heard of similar happenings there.

From page 1

A link with Mayanup, natives say

THERE'S no doubt in the minds of Pumphrey natives that this week's stone falling is connected with the falling stones at Mayanup, near Boyup Brook.

Many hours of careful investigation and observation at the Donaldson farm and in the Narragin-Pingelly area suggest that stones are falling on farmer A. K. Donaldson's property in identical circumstances with those at Mayanup.

When I visited the Donaldson property the mystery had begun to affect the native population over a wide area—including educated, highly-intelligent mixed-blood families.

Among these people, talk of the Mayanup case was by then spreading quickly in mumbled phrases and hushed whispers.

I talked to Navy Abraham (65), a wise-looking fullblood native. I asked him what he thought about the falling stones. He said:

"I never been to Mayanup."

I said: "But I didn't mention Mayanup. What made you say that?"

"That Mayanup business same thing as this. Ask young Penny. He

was at Mayanup." Later I watched Cyril Penny packing up to leave. He'd been named a "jinx" by other natives and halfcastes who'd been worried by the falling stones.

Penny, employed by the Donaldsons, had been camping with his wife and child on Donaldson's farm just one week when the stones started falling in the camping area.

I asked Penny: "Ever been to Mayanup?" I didn't mention the Mayanup stone mystery.

Penny, a well-educated halfcaste from a mixed-blood family respected in the Katanning area for generations—looked

troubled.

"Yes, I was there just after that first stone business in 1955. I didn't see any stones fall at Mayanup, though. I was over that way visiting my sister, Mrs. Reilly. "I don't know anything about those Mayanup stones. But I've got a feeling the stones are following me around. It's all my fault."

He wouldn't say why. "See old Hume and ask him about it. He was here. Ask him about Kyah."

We tracked one-legged halfcaste Alf Hume (65) down to a native camp in the bush near Narragin where he'd been living since Sunday night. He told us:

"I was staying out there with the Pennys and Ugles (another half-caste family) on Donaldson's farm on Friday night when the stones started falling. I didn't know what they were.

Dream warning?

"ON Saturday night they were falling again—pretty heavily. I wasn't sleeping too well with all this going on. But once I dozed and I had a dream about an aboriginal I'd seen when I was a boy down around the South-West. His name was Kyah and he was supposed to be a sort of medicine-man, a witch doctor.

"In my dream Kyah seemed to be telling me to clear out. Next day, Sunday, the stones were falling again. I got out.

"I don't remember much about Kyah. I only saw him once . . . just near Mayanup."

Back at the Donaldson farm Mrs. Alma Ugle (36), wife of another halfcaste employee at the Donaldsons, told us:

"If this was our own people tossing stones at us we'd know. We wouldn't lose a night's sleep over it. But the boys have looked all over this ground for tracks and there aren't any we don't know about. It's getting us down."

Well, I saw the falling stones. Our car was even dented by one. What's the solution?

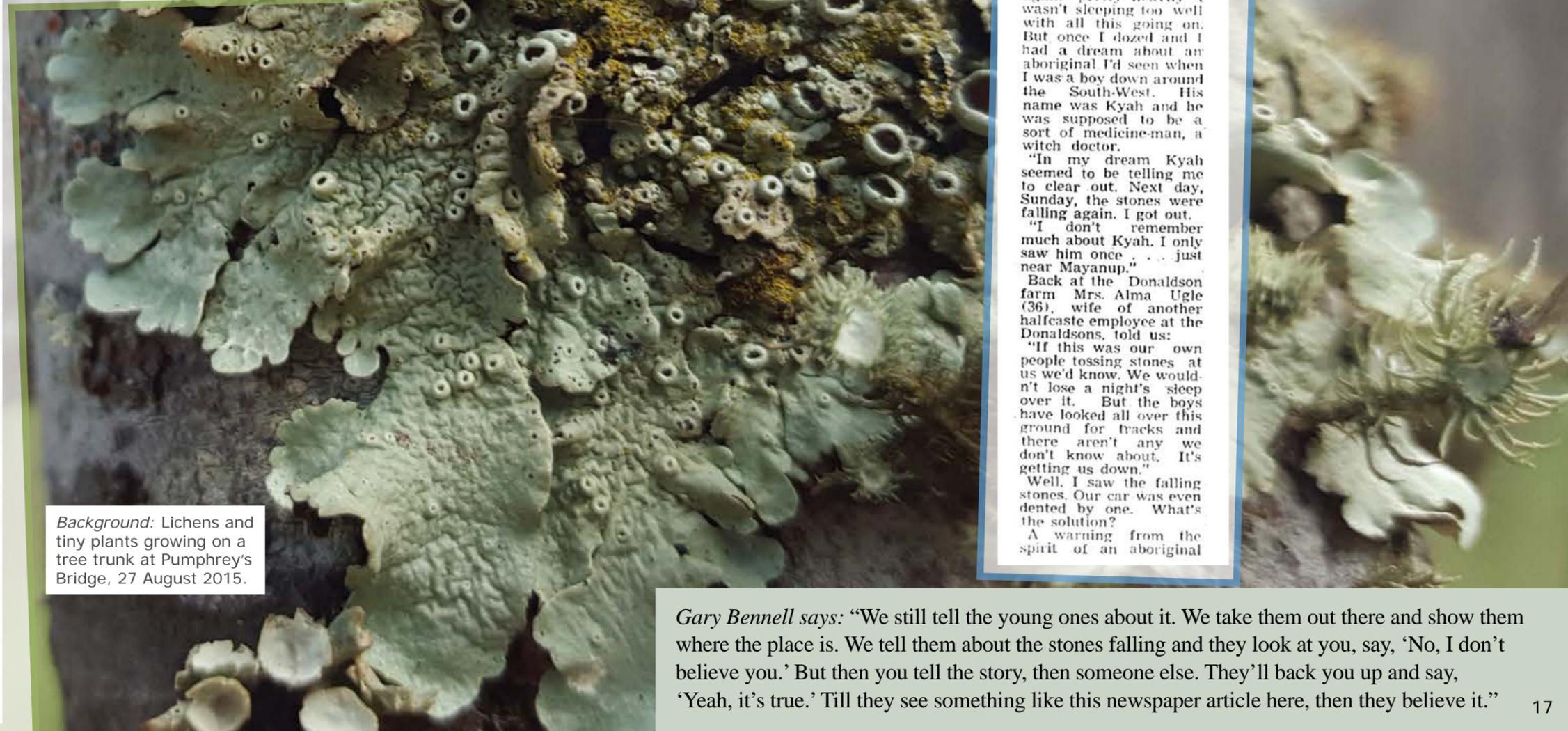
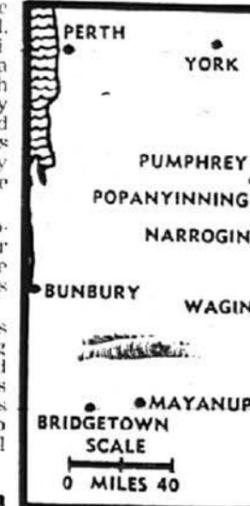
A warning from the spirit of an aboriginal

witch doctor long since dead . . . a geological, meteorological or electrical phenomenon . . . a crackpot prankster with the superhuman ability to throw stones and pebbles up to 400 yards with uncanny accuracy at a target he can't see . . . ?

Or are the stones propelled by some other means and for some other reason nobody has yet considered?

Only one thing seems sure . . . they're falling for a similar reason and by a similar method as those Mayanup stones which began falling two years ago—and are still falling.

—Bob Lenton



Background: Lichens and tiny plants growing on a tree trunk at Pumphrey's Bridge, 27 August 2015.

Gary Bennell says: "We still tell the young ones about it. We take them out there and show them where the place is. We tell them about the stones falling and they look at you, say, 'No, I don't believe you.' But then you tell the story, then someone else. They'll back you up and say, 'Yeah, it's true.' Till they see something like this newspaper article here, then they believe it."

Graves

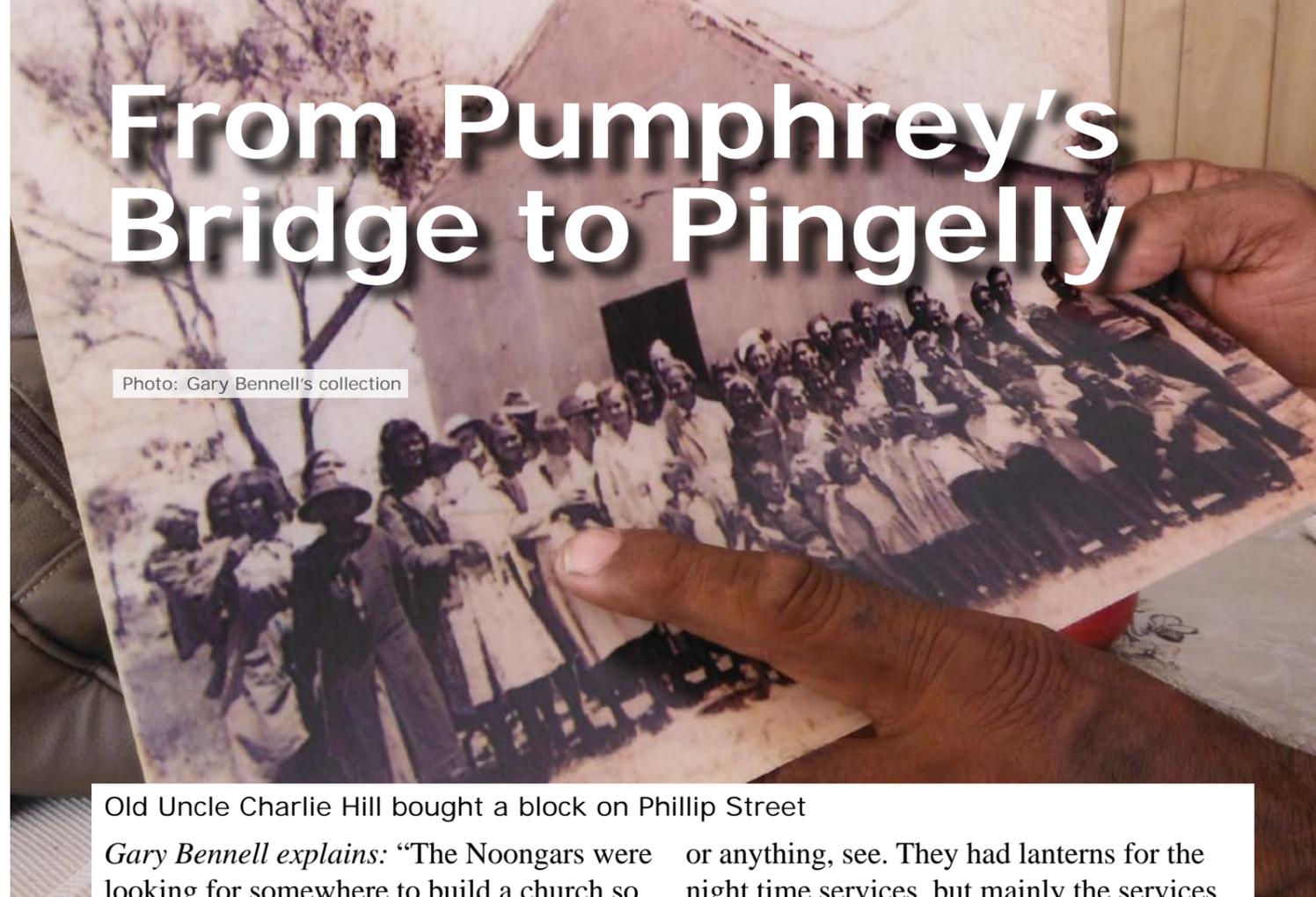
There's quite a few graves around. At Pumphrey's Bridge, where they camped just up the creek, there's a burial site there up the riverbank, but the farmers ploughed over it. My old Grandfather used to talk about all the graves there, but no one seemed to worry about it. They used to have sticks to mark the graves – they're all gone. All the markers are all gone. My Uncle Mervyn was born in 1911 and died of pneumonia in 1923. His grave (pictured) is on a nearby farm, where he passed away. My family was camping around there somewhere. We put stones on the grave up out there, about 30 – 40 years ago. This sign was only put up about five years ago. My Uncle Stuart Humes is going around doing all the graves and that, put crosses on them.



Noongar	English
<i>Djoorlu</i>	Deceased bones
<i>Mundung/moondoong</i>	Ghost / spirit
<i>Wirn</i>	Spirit
<i>Djin-djin</i>	Good spirit

From Pumphrey's Bridge to Pingelly

Photo: Gary Bennell's collection



Old Uncle Charlie Hill bought a block on Phillip Street

Gary Bennell explains: "The Noongars were looking for somewhere to build a church so my Grandfather Charlie Hill just donated his piece of land. They all built that. It's got hessian bags on the inside and I remember the gravel floors. The church lasted quite a few years. They didn't have any power

or anything, see. They had lanterns for the night time services, but mainly the services were done through the day. That's one of the first churches in this town. For the Noongars. I remember going to this church. I was only a little guy."

Years ago we used to camp around here on the corner of Phillip and Naylor Street in Pingelly. This was our reserve. Come on the weekends, camp around here. From country area. We had a few families living here all the time permanent – my aunties and uncles. They used to go work the farms, come back at night. Farmers pick them up and take them out, bring them back, or they had their own horse and cart to go out. Camps right through here, that whole area. Tents, patched up tin and all that, right through here. Old home. Happy memories.



We come back and watch a movie in town, walk back home, sleep. Next morning go to the bush again. On the weekends, couple of nights rest here, somewhere, and back to work on farms. I was about 12 [years old], 13, that age, 14, 15, 16. Clearing land. Still our land. Still our reserves.



Noongars gradually moved away from Pumphrey's to this reserve here in Pingelly.

Later, from here we moved to the other reserve on Phillip Street. Family moved there. Old tin houses there, concrete and tin.



See a possum scratch here? (*On the tree on the left.*) They climb, scratch, scratch, scratch. The way the old people used to trap possums: put a stick across there from the ground to a low fork in the tree, and little copper wire tied around there, near the top of the stick, and put a noose on it. Possum come down, get caught, strangled. Go next morning and pick all the possums up. That's when the possum skin trade was going a while back, years ago.

Koomal
Common Brushtail Possum
Trichosurus vulpecula



Photo: © Mike Griffiths, sensor camera at Boyagin, 3 July 2012

Koora, yey, kalyakoorl (Past, present, forever)



Photo: Gary Bennell's collection



Photo: Mervyn Abraham's collection

Pingelly Community 1950s



Photo: Mervyn Abraham's collection



Photos in the row above, and below: Gary Bennell's collection



Gary Bennell says: "We all get together and bring the young blokes and take them around the old tracks and tell them stories around the campfire."



Left: Dryandra Woodland
Dryandra Woodlands not that far from here. There used to be lots of kangaroos, tammars, numbats, possums there. Beautiful. There's not so many there now.

Below: cleared farmland near Pumphrey's Bridge, August 2015.



Before land clearing around here, it used to be like Dryandra.



All this land here. You had to burn for fire breaks, clean it up. That's what we're going to do with this project for the rangers – care for country, clean up. Rangers make fire breaks, clean up mess, replant trees and that. Get rid of feral cats and foxes and whatever, weeds, all that.

Left: Ricky Ugle and Tom Garlett planting trees in Quairading in Winter 2015 with an Aboriginal Ranger Program run by Wheatbelt NRM. It's a different ranger program than our one.

Noongar language sources used in this book include us storytellers and:

- **Nyungar Budjara Wangany: Nyungar NRM Wordlist & Language Collection Booklet of the Avon Catchment Region**, Wheatbelt NRM. Available at www.wheatbeltnrm.org.au
- **The Nyoongar Legacy: the naming of the land and the language of its people** by Bernard Rooney © Batchelor Press 2011
- **Noongar Waangkiny: a Learner's guide to Noongar** Batchelor Press 2014. Second Edition © Noongar Boodjar Language Centre 2015 available at www.noongarboodjar.com.au

Noongar	English
Kwadjet koorl	Go forward
Doyntj-doyntj	Together





Australian Government

National
Landcare
Programme



wheatbelt
natural resource
management

