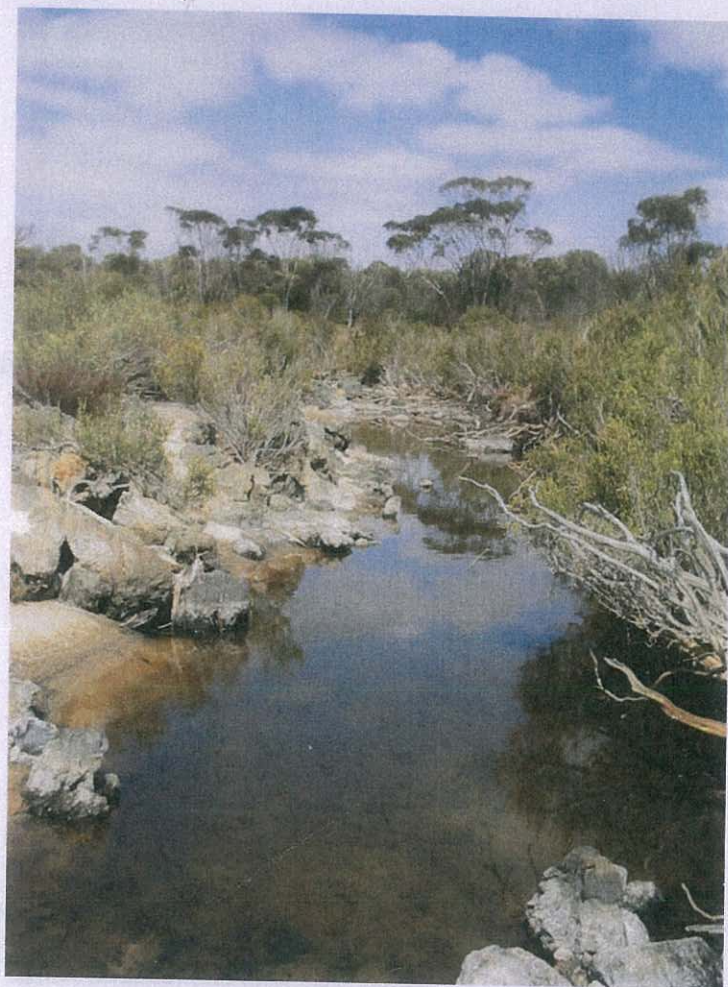


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KUKENARUP

TWO STORIES

Historical accounts of a Massacre site at
Cocanarup near Ravensthorpe. W.A



Ms Roni Gray Forrest
Yarramoup Aboriginal Corporation

January 2004
Funded by the
Department of Indigenous Affairs
Western Australia

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FOR

KUKENARUP – TWO STORIES
A Report on historical accounts of a Massacre
site
at Cocanarup near Ravensthorpe W.A.

**Names of Indigenous people have been changed to protect their
identities and stories.**

Disclaimer

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Furthermore the information does not reflect the views of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, Western Australia.

Roni Gray Forrest

C 2004

CONTENTS

1.	Foreword.....	3
2.	Acknowledgements.....	6
3.	Personal Perspective.....	7
4.	Methodology.....	9
5.	Introduction.....	12
6.	Ravensthorpe History.....	16
7.	Noongar History of the Region.....	17
8.	History of Cocanarup.....	19
9.	Non-Indigenous accounts of the death of John Dunn.	
9.1	Documentation of Research into Aboriginal Involvement in the Land in the South-west Region of Western Australia – Eades & Roberts	22
9.2	Trembling Horizons – Athol Thomas.....	24
9.3	The Dunn’s of Cocanarup - Marian Brockway.....	25
9.4	History of Aborigines along the South coast – Heather Gallant	
9.4.1.	Eliza Dunn.....	26
9.4.2	Bill Hassell.....	28
9.4.3	Tommy Daw.....	29
10.	Indigenous accounts of Cocanarup	
10.1	Yarramouup - Forrest & Crowe	32
10.1.1	Informant A.....	33
10.1.2	Informant B.....	34
10.1.3	Informant C.....	35
10.2	Bill Coleman in History of Aborigines along the South coast – Heather Gallant.....	35
10.3	Roma Carmody in History of Aborigines along the South coast – Heather Gallant.....	36
11.	Oral Histories of Cocanarup 2003.....	38
12.	Proposal for a Memorial.....	41
13.	Conclusions.....	43
14.	References.....	46

Foreword

In memory of Ngorap – born Kukunerap.

It is an honour to write the Foreword to this report.

The research for this report came to my attention after having read of it in the paper and I felt glad, as I knew the author and her family connections, a family of whom I have the deepest respect. My hand closed over my heart as I felt that at long last the Spirit of Ngorap will be blessed.

I felt pleased that a member of the younger generation wanted to research this history and especially someone who had the same spiritual connection and an appreciation of the history as I. My heart and spirit were singing!

I felt confident that Roni would be able to do the research and to be able to 'tell it from a Noongar perspective – to tell the Noongar story'. Therefore I felt confident that the report would be based on the actual and factual evidence that can be gathered.

I felt proud that I was being consulted about this story – it meant that I was being acknowledged as being from and of this country.

We have to acknowledge, that all our People from that time have gone, but the stories continue to be handed down and some facts may become vague, over the generations, but we must accept Peoples stories. This is what connects People to country and gives us the spiritual connection

and provides a place of belonging and identity. I can only tell you what I know – what my Granny told me.

I have a long traditional connection with Kukunerap¹ (Cocanarup), through a direct link of my great great great great grandfather, Ngorap, who was born at Kukunerap. My great great great great grandmother was Ngurinap and also known as Wurdin. For me, Kukunerap is a special place, by being part of my heritage – my roots – and my spiritual being because of my Family connections to the Ravensthorpe, Hopetoun and Fanny Cove areas. Ravensthorpe now, is the corner-stone of our Family branch as it spreads East, North and West as a direct result of that Cocanarup Massacre. I have always been aware of the story of the Cocanarup Massacre, through my Great Granny Alice William/Davidson. She would tell me the story of how her family survived the shootings, by walking west towards the Fitzgerald Ranges and then cutting down to the coast to Bremer Bay, where she was born. Other members of her Peoples family fled north to Norseman, onto the north Bremer Ranges, whilst others headed west to Jerramungup, where subsequent family members were born.

When the killings were carried out and the People fled, the main waterholes were poisoned to prevent the People coming back. But my People were more cunning and they avoided these places and got water at other known sources, such as those hidden in the hills and they avoided the main tracks.

¹ Kukenarup is the name of the locality of Cocanarup (Aden Eades 2003 Gray Forrest Collection)

In my growing years, mainly in the 1950's, I was always going back to Ravensthorpe. There was always something drawing me - a spiritual pull. I always felt a sense of belonging and always felt excited at going back. The feeling you get, when coming home after being away for a while - that feeling in your heart and tummy that you just cant explain or control. It always went back visiting - there was always that pull - drawing me in that direction. It did not matter from which end I approached Ravensthorpe, I still felt excited. Pictures would emerge from the mental images that I held, from Granny Alice's stories. I could sense and feel the Spirits of my Peoples. Ever conflicting was the story that we were not allowed to go back or stop there. I eventually traced and found family records, thankfully held by white people, which have supported my connections and my feelings - I belong to this country!

This Report is a healing process for black and white people - we cannot hold people of today responsible for what happened all those years ago, but we can and must honour the memories and the stories, and even if that means there are two stories.

I hope this Report will be a coming together of 'Two Peoples - Two Stories', so that all our Peoples Spirits - black and white - can be laid to rest and the true process of reconciliation can be celebrated".

Aden Eades
Ngorap's Boy

2004

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people in my quest to tell the story of Kukenarup (Cocanarup).

- My Father, for inspiring me to write the true story of what happened at Kukenarup and teaching me strength to overcome adversity from such an exercise.
- My family, especially my elder sister Olive. All have been an incredible source of inspiration and support for all my ideas I have initiated over the years. I have passionately believed, we, as Noongar people have to have our heritage recognised and acknowledged and we are the best people to tell the story. My family have always supported my endeavours to do this.
- My Husband Simon who gives me unconditional support and our daughter Kelsi, my inspiration for telling the truth.
- Aden Eades - I have always kept in contact with Aden over the years and when I have moved away from 'our country'. He has always been very supportive of any research I have undertaken 'at home.' He has always shown me the utmost respect as a researcher, work colleague, and most importantly as family. I thank you for all your support over the years and hope that I do justice to your cultural knowledge.
- And the Noongar people whose stories I have gathered and you have entrusted me with. I hope I have told your stories and done our history justice and our Old People can now rest.

WE HAVE SURVIVED – WE WILL TELL OUR STORIES.

3. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Indigenous history is about stories of where we come from and to know them is to know where we are going. To know your history is to foster pride and self esteem in your identity and makes you what you are today. Knowing about your past or your history ensures the way is paved for our children to nurture strong identities for the future.

I began to write this historical account of Cocanarup, because of the stories told to me by my father. My father was a non-Indigenous Australian and he lived with my Mother's Noongar people as a young man and became a respected and trusted member of the Noongar community until his death in 2000 aged 82. Such was the respect and acknowledgment that, Noongars when asked for stories of the area, would say "go talk to Uncle Colin, he knows about all them old places and stories"². My father told me about Cocanarup. He said my maternal grandfather Johnny Knapp, told him he "saw little bones and skulls sticking up out of the ground.... in the place that was where they murdered all the old people"³. My initial reaction was of shock, and of disbelief that this could have happened. But over the years whilst doing research of the area I have come across many similar stories. Stories where Noongar people still have emotional feelings about what happened at Cocanarup. Shocking stories of brutality. Stories where people still have bad feelings about the place. I have heard stories where people are supposed to wind up their car windows when passing through that area. I have seen and felt their sadness when talking about Ravensthorpe and other places in the southwest of Western Australia. I have also heard conflicting stories of the district when people have felt this was their country and they belonged to this to country. They certainly did not harbour ill feelings for the district of Ravensthorpe at all. It was after doing research for

² Aden Eades 1997 (Gray Forrest Collection)

³ C Gray 1979 (Gray Forrest Collection)

the report, *Yarramou: Place of the Tall Yate Trees*,⁴ that I realised the story of Cocanarup required more research and consultation and more importantly needed to be ‘told’.

I decided to bring together in written form, the Indigenous and Non Indigenous accounts of the events leading up to and after the killing of John Dunn on March 1880. What transpired has been described as a ‘massacre’ of the Noongar people who lived and worked there. According to the Macquarie Dictionary a massacre is *‘the unnecessary, indiscriminate killing of a number of human beings, as in barbarous warfare or persecution, or for the revenge or plunder. A general slaughter of human beings’*. (Macquarie Dictionary 1981).

In compiling these stories, I am hoping to recognise and acknowledge what happened and then spirits will rest and be at peace. In order to do this we have to talk about it. We as a community need to talk about what happened. It is not about blame, it’s about remembering and acknowledging what happened, and as a community, move on. These stories have a place in Ravensthorpe history. They have a place in Indigenous history and have a place in non-Indigenous history.

I want to write up these stories handed down to Noongar people. I wanted to tell OUR STORY. In doing this I have been personally attacked but have been able to justify my actions by my spiritual strength. I am not an historian, but like many other people who have written local histories, have an interest in historical events. I have endeavoured to be truthful to the past and have brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous versions of an unpleasant event in our past in an attempt to bring people closer together in the present.

⁴ Report “*Yarramou - Place of the Tall Yates Trees*” by R Forrest and S Crowe (1996).

4. METHODOLOGY

Conducting research with Aboriginal people can be very challenging. Sometimes meetings were set up and people had been called away to another place. I initially contacted several people who knew stories about Ravensthorpe or who had connections to the area. I made trips to Albany and Perth where many Noongar people are now located. I made contact with people by phone and then made subsequent visits. I ensured I sat together with people and generally 'yarned' with them about Ravensthorpe first and then gauged their reaction to events that happened at Cocanarup. Yarning with Aboriginal people is the most effective method of collecting stories as opposed to formal interview techniques.

Everyone I spoke to had a story to relate. There was always an emotional feeling of sadness when mentioning Cocanarup but seemed to change quite quickly when people knew that this research was being done and "*at last we can have it written in the history of the area*". When I spoke to people about the idea of a memorial, it was received with great happiness, as that too was an acknowledgement that their story would be told.

One issue I found was quite distressing, was, a feeling of community rivalry. People would say they were the 'right people' to speak for the area and not 'that family'. So to counteract this I tried to consult with a member from family groups from Esperance to Albany. People whom had contact with 'country' or had historical associations to the country but were living 'away from home'. My endeavours were to be as open and accountable to Noongar people as much as I could. There will still be stories out there, and this would require further research.

Archival research involved an examination of records and reports at the Department of Indigenous Affairs related to the 'incident', relevant

reports and oral histories of Ravensthorpe and viewing of the 1930 Laves Collection of Noongar stories held in the Albany Town Library and various other resources.

To visit the Cocanarup Station I sought permission from the Thomas family and the current leasees of the Homestead (Mrs Tim Elliott) who were happy for us to visit. When I decided to visit the grave site, I had arranged to meet with two senior Noongar people in Ravensthorpe. The male was not able to make it so I continued on with the female Elder knowing she came from the area and knew the place well. Her family had camped around the district when her father worked for the Dasborough family in the 1930's. It was around the 1930's when my grandfather saw skeletal bones in the riverbed.

We drove down the Old Ongerup Road This was, "*the track Dunn forged through the sandplain and virgin scrub bush*" linking up with the Jerramungup Track that was known as the Donkey Track. It is now known as the Old Ongerup Road. It is my belief that, when early "settlers" made their way around the country they followed Aboriginal tracks or 'pads', as the Noongar people called them. The Donkey track was the wagon track from Albany through to Jerramungup out to Cocanarup used by 'settlers' families.

We drove to Phillips River and decided to visit the Thomas family who lived nearby. They related a few stories to us and gave us directions to the grave site. Upon arriving at the site of John Dunn's grave, I was struck by the formality of the grave. It looked so out of place in amongst the jam thicket and bush. It was fenced in with a white picket fence which could have been in any formal European Cemetery. The place was very quiet except for sounds of birds and the whispering of the jam trees. We noticed many eagles flying over the bluff. They seemed to be keeping guard over the area. My feelings were of a deep sadness for what I imagined happened in this river

valley. One could only imagine the horror of what our people endured.

After visiting Cocanarup I felt energised and received a 'spiritual acknowledgment' that I was doing the right thing and began to embark on my research. I gathered all literacy evidence pertaining to the "settling" of Cocanarup district and the "alleged murder" and subsequent documentation of the district. I have compiled this report into published accounts of non-Indigenous and Indigenous people's version of events, and a section on Indigenous accounts of events of Cocanarup collated from this research.

Finally, I propose that a memorial be erected in the vicinity of the grave site to acknowledge and recognise this historical event with the 'blessing' of Noongar people and members of the Dunn family and community members of Ravensthorpe.



Grave of John Dunn at Cocanarup.

5. INTRODUCTION

"The true history of Australia is never read, as the Black man keeps it in his head⁵"

This quote was taken from a documentary made by John Pilger leading up to Australia's bicentennial celebrations in 1988. The documentary was called "A Secret Country" which was in reference to the one sided portrayal of Australian history - colonial history - from a colonial point of view. This portrayal of Australia's history pre and post 1788 was void of Aboriginal history even from a non-Aboriginal viewpoint. There was up until the 1990 virtually no portrayal of Aboriginal history from an Aboriginal point of view.

This secret history is supported by the work of historians such as Henry Reynolds whose publication "*Why weren't we told?*" also looks at the lack of portrayal of Aboriginal history.

The current debate about the "new" history of Australia which brings to the forefront accounts of the mistreatment of Aboriginal people by the colonisers over the last 200 years appears to be a debate how the Anglo - Australians interpret history. The Aboriginal interpretations of history (some of which is exemplified in this publication) are known and have always been known by our people. Our history including the last 200 years or so is an accumulation of knowledge that is at least 50,000 years old.

As the quote at the top of this page explains, whether it is out there in the public domain or not we know our history. The attempt of this publication is to bring some of that Aboriginal knowledge and history into the public domain, to cease to remain secretive about an unpleasant event in our recent past. To remain secretive is to not deal

⁵ Video "A Secret Country" (1988) narrated by John Pilger.

with it in a contemporary sense, in terms of living together as descendents of the victims and perpetrators as harmoniously as we can.

There are many documented accounts of the “killing” of John Dunn at Cocanarup in 1880. Whilst that is Wadgela⁶ history, there also exists Noongar history or interpretation of events.

Whilst collating information on the 1996 report *Yarramou: Place of the Yate Trees*, it became clear that there needed to be more consultation on Indigenous accounts of versions of the death at Cocanarup. I found people still knew the story. It was so alive in peoples minds even though it had occurred 124 years ago. The Indigenous story had been left out of the version of events. To hide the story is to hide the true history of the development of the station. One only has to look in local museums and libraries, which are overflowing with documented evidence of violence between “settlers” and Indigenous peoples. It is well documented that this country was not settled peacefully.

While conducting research for this report, I was shocked at some of the accounts I have read of “frontier violence”. The notion that it was seen as “teaching the blacks a lesson” when it took place. The “settlers” had complete hold over Indigenous people. People belonged to the stations and if they left the station they were arrested for “absconding” and sentenced to imprisonment far away from country to places such as Rottneest. Still they had no say over how the country was cleared or whether hunting grounds should be kept or waterholes should be kept exclusively for human consumption.

The contact history of Australia has, while being secret, at large, there are references to conflict that occurred at the time. Reynolds (2000)

⁶ Wadgela is a Noongar term for a non-Aboriginal person.

quotes from a book published in 1880 called *Kamilaroi and Kurnai* by L. Fison and A.W. Howitt. It states,

"It may be stated broadly that the advance of settlement has, upon the frontier at least, been marked by a line of blood. The actual conflict of the two races has varied in intensity and in duration, as the various native tribes have themselves in mental and physical character...But the tide of settlement has advanced along an ever widening line, breaking the tribes with its first wave and overwhelming their wreck with its flood"

The often violent cultural conflict between settlers and Aborigines is now well documented by writers such as Elder (1998) and Reynolds (2000).

Hollinsworth (1998) in his book *Race and Racism in Australia* states how the cultural conflict occurred.

"To the majority of settlers, Aboriginal people were simply an impediment to taking up land. They were often considered as part of flora and fauna, like dingoes and emus - something to be cleared from the land, to allow farming and grazing to develop in a safe tidy and profitable environment" (p 81).

As for the violent conflict that occurred at Cocanarup one wonders about the publicity of the case? Was it so common amongst early "settlers" treatment of Aboriginal people? Was it so acceptable to behave this way....'shoot blacks' and poison waterholes? Spears are definitely no match for guns.

There are a lot of people who believe books, documenting massacres and violence on the frontier, such as *Blood on the Wattle*, by Bruce

Elder, should have been written by Aboriginal historians. But as Elder states, “the problem with such arguments is that the events described here are, to my shame, as much a part of my history, as a white Australian, as they are a part of the history of any black Australian. To argue that the massacres of Aborigines are exclusively chapters in Aboriginal history is to ignore that fact that Europeans perpetrated these atrocities” (Elder: 6:1998). This account is written from an Aboriginal point of view and seeks to address that imbalance.

Writing the ‘secret history’ of an area can help in understanding each other. When these histories are put together it becomes a shared history and both are valuable and recognition is given to both histories. Noongar peoples accounts of Cocanarup have been excluded from the historical accounts of the area. We as, Indigenous Australians have a right to history. For too long Australia has denied our place in history.



Aboriginal Group of the Ravensthorpe District circa 1905

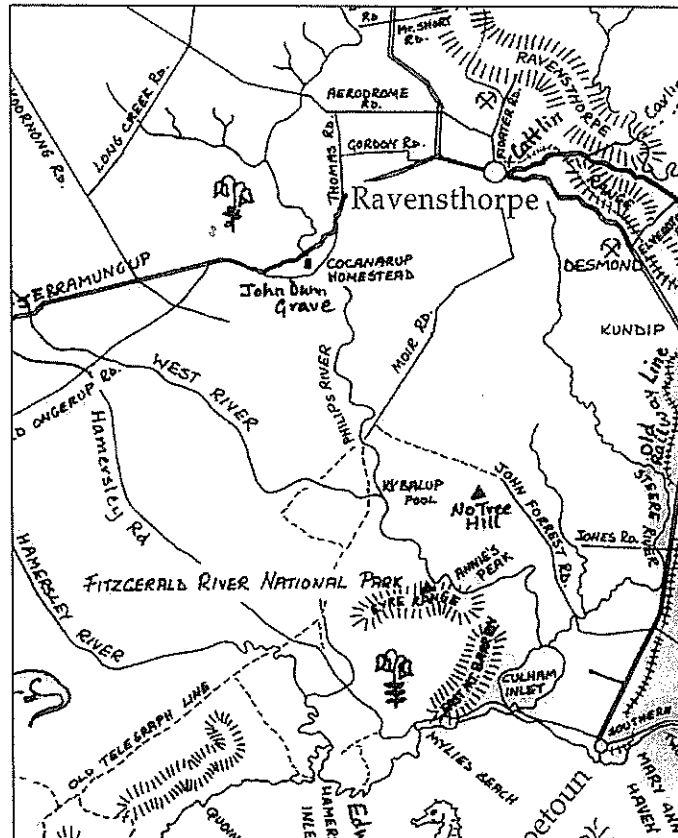
Source: And the Dingoes howled – Southern Scribes

6. RAVENSTHORPE HISTORY

Ravensthorpe is the name of the district where Cocanarup is located. The town of Ravensthorpe was gazetted in 1901. Ravensthorpe is located 539 km south east of Perth on the Esperance to Jerramungup Highway. It is now a small wheat and sheep farming community. The area was first surveyed by WA Surveyor General John Septimus Roe in 1848, who named the town after Ravensthorpe Parish, the old parish in England of the Bishop of South and Western Australia – Bishop Short.

(www.walkabout.com/au/locations/WARavensthorpe.html)

MAP OF THE DISTRICT OF RAVENSTHORPE AND THE PHILLIPS RIVER



Source: And the Dingoes Howled by Southern Scribes

7. NOONGAR HISTORY OF THE REGION

According to anthropologist Norman Tindale, the Aboriginal people who lived in the region were the WUDJARI. Their country was from near Gairdner River east to Point Malcolm; inland to Kent District, Ravensthorpe, Fanny Cove, Esperance, and Cape Arid. Western members of the Wudjari were moving toward Bremer Bay in earliest historical times; those members of the tribe were living east of Fanny Cove and Young River. These were known as the Bardonjunga or Bardoks. (Tindale Tribes Wudjara (WA))

An Aboriginal Elder from Albany says his family are the Bardocks.

"All the old people came from Fanny cove Young River way and they were the Barducks.

Another family who originate from the Jerramungup area call themselves the Wheelman people. Mr Roberts states:

" My father was born on Jerramungup Station and we are the Wheelman people and the Wudjari people come from Fanny Cove-Young River way. Our Noongar country stretches from Geraldton in the north down through to this side of Norseman on the plains side."

Research by Dr. Carl Von Brandenstein in 1988, states

"that a group of Aboriginal people called the "Shell people" lived along the south coast between Bremer Bay and Israelite Bay. These people were divided into two groups: the Wudjaarri in the west and the Nyungarra in the east. The Young River represented the border between the Wudjaarri and the Nyungarra people⁷.

⁷ C. von Brandenstein in Dept of Environmental-Young River)

Most family groups from the area between Esperance and Albany have relocated into the towns of Esperance, Gnowangerup, Borden and Albany.

“Many Nyungars today speak with deep feeling about this wild windswept country. They tell stories about the old folk they lost in the massacre and recall how their mothers warned them to stay out of that area. One man describes how Nyungars will roll up their car windows while passing through Ravensthorpe, and not even stop for food or petrol. The whole region has bad associations and an unwelcoming aura for them. It is a place for ghosts, not for the living people”.

These were the words taken from the Eades and Roberts report for the 1984 Seaman Land Enquiry. Since I have been doing this research and previous work I have found some families who have fond memories of the district. Their families located there when employment was sought, particularly seasonal work like shearing. Many families went there in search of gold and were prospecting.

An Elder who resides in Albany explains the dispersment of people,

A lot of people were thrown in jail in the old days and they were taken to Albany and then when they were let out they were thrown out in Albany and thus a lot of people never returned to their country. And this was how a lot of people were relocated”.

8. HISTORY OF COCANARUP

Cocanarup is the name of the Homestead and Farm situated approximately 20 miles west of the town of Ravensthorpe and originally owned by the Dunn Brothers.

The Aboriginal name for the district is Kukenarup. It has been suggested that the name "Cocanarup", which is derived from Kukenarup, means "place where water always stops". (Brockway, 1998:429) There was a "permanent bubbling spring along the Phillips River which continued to run despite many drought years". The Dunn family used this water for their sheep and there was a fresh water spring where they located their homestead. It would seem that this was the water hole the Aboriginal people used. As with the practice of most "colonisers" homes they were, for survival reasons built near Aboriginal water sources. That permanent fresh waterhole is now named Cocanarup Springs.

The land now known as Cocanarup, was first worked by John Dunn in 1868 and was granted to the Dunn family, in 1873. John Dunn "noting the abundance of sandalwood in the area commenced cutting the wood along the Phillips River in 1868". (Brockway1998:432) He lived there with his brothers until his death in March 1880.

The Thomas Family purchased Cocanarup in 1944 after it was abandoned for over 20 years. The buildings have now been classified by the National Trust and the farm is being developed as a tourist attraction and museum. (Thomas. n.d)

9. NON-INDIGENOUS DOCUMENTED ACCOUNTS OF THE DEATH OF JOHN DUNN

There are many differing versions of the events surrounding the killing of John Dunn. What is clear is that not many of the non-Indigenous accounts of the events acknowledge the issue of non-consensual sex which is at the heart of all the Indigenous stories. 'Gin-cuddling' as a non-Indigenous writer so eloquently puts it, was common practice with white 'settlers' and Aboriginal women. *"There was a degree of acceptance of the European intrusion; by the end of the century, the pastoralists were employing a number of mixed blood shepherds. A Ravensthorpe folklorist commented as late as 1986 that sexual relations with native women (called 'gin-cuddling') had much to do with the original friction. He put it succinctly: "Necessity is the mother of invention but the father of half-caste children."* (Thomas, 1989:28)

There is also the issue of the master-slave relationship. Aboriginal people were jailed for absconding from their employer. The relationship with white settlers and Indigenous people was very strained. Perhaps if there had been acknowledgment of country ownership and waterholes and places left for cultural activities, then relations may not reached boiling point. There have been oral stories handed down through today of cruelty inflicted by the white settlers.

Women were abused and men were overworked and treated cruelly. No agreement was given for land use and men were forced to show 'settlers' and explorers, waterholes and taken out of their country on 'expeditions'. All these events were contributing factors that led to tension between local Indigenous people and the settlers.

It was common practice amongst settlers to use violence "to keep the blacks in place". White "settlers" lorded over Indigenous men. They were responsible for their life and death. They treated them as servants and slaves, and the women were treated as domestic slaves.

The following are documented stories from Non-Aboriginal people on their views of the killing of John Dunn.

9.1 Report on Documentation of Research into Aboriginal Involvement in the Land in the South-west Region of Western Australia. Eades and Roberts.

Eades, A. and Roberts, P. (1984a) compiled report on community consultation for the 1984 Seaman Land Enquiry, which was to assess the needs for land in the south west of Western Australia. The following is an excerpt from that report.

“According to a transcribed oral version of the massacre reputedly comes directly from Jim Dunn. According to this account, which dates back from approximately 1920, the massacre did not take place until 1833. In that year Jim Dunn was said to be assaulted and injured by some Aborigines. His brother Walter was enraged by this, packed two horses and rode around the property shooting men women and children anything that was black and moved. Altogether he shot at least 17 people on the property itself. The local Nyungars took to the hills. They moved eastwards towards the Bremer Range and the Dundas Lakes, which, is very dry country. Walter Dunn pursued them and went as far as he could before his water supply ran low. On the way back he poisoned with strychnine all the water holes. The Nyungars on returning died agonising deaths after drinking the water and made signs on the ground so that others would not drink the water.

According to this version of the story, half the Aboriginal population of the area was wiped out by this one event. Thence the area became taboo and Nyungar's moved out never to return.

Another version of the massacre has it that following the murder of John Dunn, a police officer was sent out from Albany. He was empowered or took upon himself the power to declare what was known in the region as an "open season". The settlers had discussed the situation and decided to teach the blacks a lesson. For a month or so the police would agree to turn a blind eye to any violence. Dunn's Hassell's and Moir's were all involved and were more or less free to shot or punish any Aboriginal in any way they chose. This would indeed have been an open season.

In this story many Nyungars are said to have been killed, men, women and children. A vigilante group consisting of members and white employees of the three families is said to have pursued the remnants of the 'trouble-makers' out to the Dundas Lakes, north of Esperance, and killed them there. The Dunn's were known to have spoken about 'solving the native problem at the local level'. Such comments recur in the oral histories associated with the Dunn family and with the region in general. In fact such 'solutions' whereby law enforcers were to turn a blind eye to genocide on the frontier were canvassed by many settlers and parliamentarians in Western Australia during this era.

Another account of the murder, it is said that at the time of John Dunn's death most Nyungars were away doing station work at the coast or on other properties. In this respect, it is noted that the arrival of settlers rapidly

altered the traditional cyclical patterns of travel and religious pilgrimage. Nyungar men were indentured to each property owner and responsible for shearing, mustering, fencing and so on, at different times of the year. Nyungar women were more attached to a particular homestead for reason previously stated. To some extent Nyungars were able to adapt their previous patterns to this new system wherein their land and labour had been alienated.

This story suggests that when the men and boys were returning from their labours to the south of Cocanarup they were ambushed by a groups of settlers who included members of all three families. They were slaughtered in a place just south of the creek and their bodies thrown into a mass grave about 100 metres from Dunn's resting place. Other dead may have been dumped in a laterite cave south of the creek.

9.2 TREMBLING HORIZONS by Athol Thomas.

An excerpt from the book, *Trembling Horizons* by historian, Athol Thomas of Ravensthorpe.

The Hassell's, Dunn's and Moir's..... suffered at the hands of the dusky warriors. In April 1877 John Moir at Fanny's Cove, 120 kilometres east of Cocanarup, was stabbed to death in his house by two aborigines he had punished for alleged misconduct; and early in 1880 John Dunn was found dead seven kilometres from his Cocanarup homestead. Other attacks were made on James and Robert Dunn. Ednie Hassell, who was born in 1881 and would have known the Dunn's well, wrote: "the three brothers declared war on the natives, taking it in turns to go out shooting them while one was left at home

to protect the property, and their sister. A great many natives were shot”.

9.3 The Dunn's of Cocanarup – Marian Brockway

Marian Brockway gives a very extensively researched account of events leading up to and after the killing of John Dunn in 1880 and the subsequent arrest and trial of the Aboriginal men charged with his murder.

Several Aboriginal men were arrested for the murder and one was eventually charged. Ms Brockway writes,

“police correspondence April 1880, to January 1881, reveals the efforts made to identify the murderer of John Dunn. Contradictory allegations were made on every aspect of the case – the person who killed, the reason for the killing, and the weapon used. A name that came up frequently was that of Aborigine, Dartaban, also known as Jumbo, a man aged about fifty and whose son and daughter had allegedly been kept captive by the Dunn's, and Dartaban himself ‘ill used’. Two other Aboriginal men were implicated and eventually a man named Yangala, was charged.

The trial was held in the Supreme Court on 24 October 1881. The Aboriginal man, Yangala who was charged with his death was acquitted. Yangala was discharged and the Dunn's were stunned at the result and wrote letters of protest, to no avail.

Following the acquittal, relations worsened with the Dunn family and the Noongar people of the region. Ms Brockway writes, *“terrible stories abound, but cannot be verified, of the vengeance exacted by John's brothers on the Nyungars”.*

9.4 History of Aborigines along the South Coast of Western Australia by Heather Gallant.

Greenstone Resources of Ravensthorpe W.A funded a report to document the History of Aborigines along the South Coast of W.A. The report was a compilation of documented historical data and family genealogies of Aboriginal families from the south coast area and written by Ms Heather Gallant. The following are extracts from this report.

9.4.1 Miss Eliza H. Dunn (p.43-44)

(Memories of Early Ravensthorpe - extracts from a letter written by Miss Dunn. Original letter held in the Ravensthorpe District High School)

The natives and dingoes were very troublesome. The sheep had been shepherd, but the shepherds were not employed after the fencing was done. After fencing the house building was started. When this was nearly finished John was killed by the natives. He was dead for three days before he was found. The doctor was sent for and the body taken up for him to see.

The natives were killing the sheep. A policeman came up from Esperance and told us James must shadow them and when he caught them to send for him. Very helpful. Finally they robbed Hassells shepherd. The police were soon out then. John Wall was sent down from Mt Barker and he got Robert to help him. The natives passed Cocanarup on their way to Hassells and took sheep coming and going. A boy told us how they caught them. They passed on to Carlinup and robbed Moirs shepherd. He had just got a months supply of rations. They cut the lock out of the door. They went to Norseman where John Wall and Robert caught them. They had to be chained up as there was no lock up

at that time. I think there were seven of them. The police at Norseman had what they thought to be a wonderful and quite reliable native boy. During the night the prisoners all got away and they found out later that the reliable police native had given them the key. The policeman rushed down to the lake where the natives were camped. The dogs of course rushed out barking and he started firing at them. This warned the native and they started across the lake where a horse couldn't follow. This gave them such a start before John Wall and Robert got there that they were never caught and little Tommy lived to steal more sheep. Later John Wall got him and another native who nearly killed James. The second native was very surprised to see James alive as they left him thinking him dead. James was out horse hunting and met a native man and woman. The woman was digging grubs with a long pointed stick. James was talking to the man and laughing at him jumping about and acting the goat never thinking he meant to kill him. The woman came and stood by the mans side and he snatched the stick and struck James on the head and stunned him, as he fell he pulled his revolver and fired. He only grazed the natives thigh. He kept on battering at James head and broke his arm as well....., then left him or dead. After some time (no-one knows how long) he came to his senses and remembered his horse. This was a quite old pony and it hadn't gone far. James managed somehow with great difficulty owing to his broken arm to get back on his back. He had three gates to go through and eventually got home. Robert was there and stitched up his head wound and set his arm. He was a long time recovering from that.. Next day Robert took his rifle and went out to see what the natives were up to. He met a mob of them coming towards the house rejoicing that they had settled one white fellow. Robert knew enough of

their lingo to know what they were so pleased about. One fellow was behind a tree with a spear ready for Robert, but Robert was too quick for him and gave him a bullet, he wounded another and they all cleared out. The outback natives were very scared of firearms. For their misdeeds the natives used to be set to Rottnest for a few months, and then be sent back, when they would be worse than ever. We had one native who worked for us and he was a good fellow. After John was killed the natives did not come near the place for years. The native that killed John was not caught till twelve months after. He was given a few months on Rottnest and then given rations to go home to his own country. When I went to Cocanarup the natives had not been there for some years. I was hanging out the clothes one day and on looking round there was a native standing looking at me.

9.4.2 Mr Bill Hassell (p.45)

I don't know if I actually heard the history of the Dunn's from the Aborigines but of course I know the history of the Dunn's and Cocanarup. But I think it was passed down from my father because in those days my father and family were at Jerramungup. It wasn't my home it was my grandfathers. My father lived there and went down to where I was bought up. He was bought up there but I was never there.

Ravensthorpe was Jarnock country.it would be because the Dunn's shot the Aborigines. Anything that happened like that was always taboo...., they wouldn't go back there to the Ravensthorpe area. Ever since I've known them the Ravensthorpe area has been taboo to

them. I've always understood it's a result of the Dunn's shooting the Aborigines.

9.4.3 Mr Tommy Daw (p.46)

There were no natives here when our family came. I think those that had been out with the Dunn brothers there on the station out on the Phillips River. The story goes, well you knew that one of them had speared and killed one of the Dunn's. The other one was speared. There was a story going around when I was very young that the Dunn boys were fed up with having their sheep stolen and the danger of being swamped with the niggers. In fact their shearing shed, they had an open space up near the top where they could stay behind to combat the natives if they attacked. But there was never anything of that nature in my time. It must have been in the very early part. The Dunn's came out in about 1868 and they had a lot of trouble with the natives. The story went when I was very young that the Dunn's had rounded up the niggers and herded them up to Norseman . How much truth there was in that I don't know. I remember it was said that this happened. I have no evidence of it although Dad did mention it. I think that's highly unlikely because undoubtedly they were being harassed by the niggers. So much so that they killed one of them and speared another one. That's a good enough warning isn't it.

The following chapter are oral accounts of Aboriginal people who have stories they were told by their 'old people' on what happened after the death of John Dunn at Cocanarup in 1880.

10. INDIGENOUS ACCOUNTS OF THE DEATH OF JOHN DUNN

In the following chapter the identities of Informants have been changed to protect their identities.

“When I went back to Cocanarup, I walked around and quietly remembered the people who had been killed there. To my utter amazement we heard the amazing sound of boomerangs tapping. The sound seemed to come from the river bend over near the breakaways. We were not scared, it seemed it was a welcoming sound of peace. Almost a feeling of relief, for the work I was doing it seemed to me a message of laying their spirits at peace”.

“It must have been so frightening – imagine trying to desperately hide only to turn and find a strange man with a gun pointed at you”.

“Sometimes wadjela’s tell a lot of lies and you need to tell the proper story of what happened”.

“The only story I heard is that I heard Old Pa Abel say it was a very horrible, horrible thing that happened. It was too horrible to talk about in those days because there was little kids and women that got killed”.

“The old people weren’t allowed to talk about it. When they talked about Ravensthorpe, we were not allowed to listen, because it was so horrible what happened out at Ravensthorpe”.

“All I remember was being told stories of people running and hiding and being shot”.

These are some reflections of Indigenous people who today still recall stories about what happened at Ravensthorpe. When I was conducting research for the report, *Yarramou: Place of the Tall Yate Trees*, I was astounded that stories of the massacre were still alive in peoples memories. It is now 124 years ago. People still vividly recall

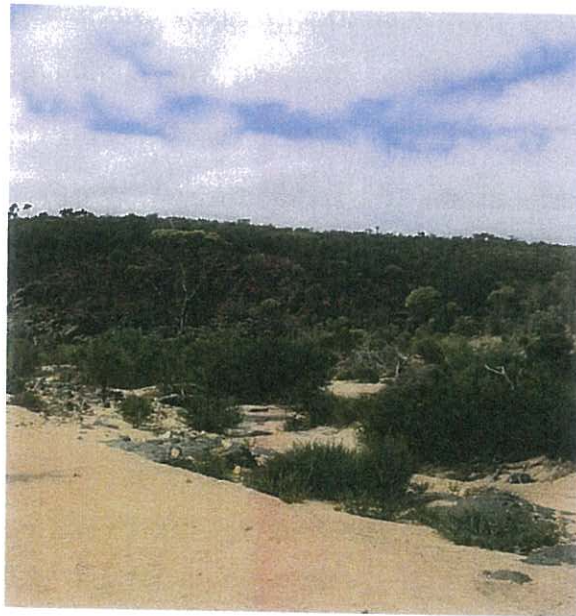
the pain and suffering of what their ancestor's went through after the killing of John Dunn.

After the killing of John Dunn, there was the same overreaction from 'settlers' and police, that developed after a 'white settler' had been killed. This seemed to be a common occurrence throughout the state of Western Australian. There have been documented events such as random shootings and floggings so 'blacks are taught a lesson'. Settlers developed a sense of fear and hatred to Aborigines all over the State. There are many examples of killings, floggings and massacres such as the Pinjarra massacre, throughout the State that still live on in the memories of Aboriginal people today. Writing about the "Pinjarra Battle", in his book, *A Cry in the Wind*, Tom Austen states, "It is doubtful if anyone will ever know exactly how many died. It is clear from Stirling's note to the Colonial Office that the massacre [Pinjarra] was a punishment. He said he told survivors the penalty had been inflicted because of the misconduct of the tribe. On this occasion the women and children had been spared but if any other person should be killed by them not one would remain alive". (Austen1998: 21)

The story the Indigenous people came to know of Cocanarup, is vastly different from the European accounts of the killing. Aboriginal people say the Dunn brothers were 'messing with the women in the camp' and the Aboriginal men did not like it. The men were being sent away shepherding sheep and while away, the Dunn's used the women for sexual purposes. This story is verified by various Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal accounts. Non-Aboriginal accounts say 'they got the wrong man' and interestingly I have met a few non-Aboriginal people from the district who would like 'it to come out in the open' about the truth of why John Dunn was killed.

What is known is there are some terribly sad and horrific stories that are still around of what happened after the murder and subsequent

trial. Many people have their stories and as Marian Brockway writes, “one story is that a number of Aborigines were killed and buried in a mass grave near John’s grave”. The rest of the Nyungars in the vicinity were chased eastward, the Dunn’s poisoning the waterholes on the way back, to prevent them from returning”. There are Noongar oral stories to verify this. Brockway writes, “relationships with Aborigines in the region were uneasy although they were no longer employed on the property”. (Brockway, 1998: 441)



Phillips River- Cocanarup

10.1 Yarramouup: Place of tall Yate trees – Forrest & Crowe

The report, Yarramouup: Place of the Tall Yate Trees was an attempt to document Noongar social history of the Jerramungup and surrounding region gathering material from the oral tradition and reviewing historical sources from a Noongar perspective. Some stories came to light regarding the ‘Ravensthorpe Massacre’. Informants recalled memories that were quite obviously very sensitive.

The following are the accounts from the Report.

10.1.1 78 year old male informant

Charles is a 78 year old man who has lived most of his life with his Aboriginal family around the Bremer Bay and Jerramungup district. He worked for the Hassell family at Jerramungup and Doubtful Island as a shepherd.

The Dunn men from Cocanarup were stealing the women from the camp and tying them up and using them as sex objects and releasing them back, some with diseases. The Noongar men tried to trick the Dunn's that were responsible, by telling them some Noongars were stealing their sheep. Only one of the Dunn men went with them and he was speared. The police were sent up from Albany. An ambush was set up and they totally massacred the whole family group of about 30-40 people. The thing the Dunn's did wrong was take the promised women (married) women and not the widowed women. There were apparently plenty of widowed women in the camp. When a baby girl is born they are already married. But somewhere along the way the man that was to be their husband could have been killed thus they became widowed.

These girls could have been very young and they were given to the nearest eldest relation to be cared for. They virtually inherited these women. The old Noongar men were very jealous of their wives so you could imagine the pain they would have suffered at the hands of the Dunn mob. It happened around the 1870's. An old man told me he remembers seeing small skulls, adult skulls and dog skulls sticking out of the ground on the Cocanarup station for years after that. After the massacre of the group at Phillips River in the 1880's people avoided Ravensthorpe

and its surrounds and even today not many Noongars will stop in Ravensthorpe...

10.1.2 75 year old female informant.

Helen is a 75 year old Noongar woman. Her father was born on Jerramungup station and she is descended from the Wheelman people. Her father who died in his 90's worked for the Hassell family.

The men were messing with around with the women. They used to send all the men off shepherding sheep, the whole lot of them. Granny said she searched for all the old people but they were tied up in the stables and locked up in the sheds so the Dunn's and company could have sex with the women. She hid in the stables and peeped through a crack in the wall and could see and hear them making noises. She ran and around the men and told them, who were away with the sheep. Some of the men left their spears behind and some had spears and they caught Dunn with a woman and they speared him in the back and fired a shot at him. One of the Dunn's got away and rode to Ravensthorpe and bought back the wadjela (white) farmers and two cops with guns and they galloped around and around and killed everyone there. Granny was hiding up a tree. They couldn't find here but she saw them shooting all the people and knocking little kids in the heads with boots and guns. She stayed there till dark and then decided to walk to Jerramungup where she knew people were living at Jacup and Jerramungup. She ran all the way and one of the Hassell's found here walking near Jacup. They took here to Jerramungup and Grandfather Perup took here fro his wife because he found her. She was only 13, and would have been

promised to a husband at Cocanarup. Charlie Bullfrog and Granny Mudda Dabb were the only two that survived that massacre. Charlie survived because he was sick and was being looked after in the house.

10.1.3 62 years old male informant

Albert is a 62 year old Noongar man who has lived most of his life around the Gnowangerup, Ongerup and Jerramungup area. He now resides in Albany.

We know what the Dunn's did. The Dunn's used to send the men out, way out, shepherding sheep. They used to do all sorts of things to the women while the men were away. One man seen it and told the other men. So they told John Dunn to come and see the sheep that was lost or something and they tricked him and he got speared in the neck. One white man ran and told the police and they hunted them all down and killed most of them. Some got away and went Esperance way and others went Bremer way. Those who got away they chased them right up to Peak Charles area.

10.2 Bill Coleman in History of Aborigines along the South Coast of Western Australia – Heather Gallant. (p.45-46)

John Dunn was in his twenties. When he arrived in 1868 to begin building Cocanarup which was to be his home until his death in 1880. The writer had no evidence that John Dunn had sexual relationships with Aboriginal women but it is acknowledged to day that many white men especially living without white women did. If John Dunn did have such relationships he would have been obliged to follow the Aboriginal law. Whether John Dunn knew about this law or the penalty for breaking it, is a matter of

conjecture, but it is doubtful whether the Dunn's would have known much of the Aboriginal language or culture.

John Dunn was working at the station with one of his workmen when the Aboriginal execution squad of four arrived. The Aborigines enticed John away into the bush where he was held down and the execution carried out. If this had been an Aboriginal uprising John Dunn together with his workman and any other men on the station would have been killed on the spot. The family of an Aboriginal so executed would have accepted the punishment but John's brothers Walter, Robert and James were naturally indignant about their brother's death. After the unsuccessful police search for John Dunn's executors, the three brothers were given permission from the authorities to shoot fifty Aborigines, be they men, women or children in retaliation for their brother's death.

The Dunn's loaded packhorses with supplies, returning to the station to load fresh supplies, when these were exhausted. Aboriginal watering-holes were the first areas where they searched. The remains of a human skull could be seen in the early part of the century at the Undarrupi watering-hole which is just over a kilometre north of the spongolite quarry on Moir's Road. When the killings began, the Aborigines fled and the Ravensthorpe area became a taboo country. Today there are no Aborigines living in the Ravensthorpe district.

10.3 Roma Carmody in History of Aborigines along the South Coast of Western Australia – Heather Gallant. (p.168-169)

Extracts from an interview of Roma Carmody by Jan Rodda.

...my mother was in that line – they were living in another station in the Ravensthorpe area, shepherding sheep white man servants, they were. They were termed slaves in

those days, too. Dasbrough's farm in Ravensthorpe. That was in the 20's and 30's. I'm talking my mothers and fathers generation. Even before turn of the century, always the tribe's been there forever, you know. What do they say, 40,000 years?

..she said shepherding was what her father was doing. He too had learned of the gold and came across to the Ravensthorpe area. He also worked for Dasbrough, and his name comes up again there, because he was a good Christian man apparently, the one who buried that tribe at Cocanarup that were shot.

Mr Dasbrough - Mum will confirm that - who was spoken of by the Aboriginal people as a very kind man and he loved God apparently, a Christian. He dared to go there afterwards and gathered up every last bone of them and dug a hole and buried them. It was a whole tribe that was wiped out in one instance, all because of killing one white man in relation for the harsh treatment that they had received.

In history you read about 'these savages' that dared to kill the Dunn's, but there was a reason behind it. The Dunn's caused the deaths of many Aboriginal people in their harsh treatment. They were responsible for many, and the atrocities for which anyone doing them now would get prison sentences. But they were prominent respected people in the community, and 'these savages' dared to kill him. It was a very sad time and of course it affected the Aboriginal people tremendously.



Bluff on the Phillips River

11. ORAL HISTORIES OF COCANARUP 2003

The following are a compilation of stories that were collected during this research phase.

Eileen is the daughter of a Noongar man who was adopted by the Roberts family of Jerramungup. Her father worked for the Hassell's as a shepherd.

I remember Dad whispering about the story of the massacre – almost like you were not allowed to talk about it – I remember hearing stories of people hiding in caves and of being smoked out and then shot. I heard of Noongar people running and trying to hide and again of being shot as they ran. I do not remember what it was all about but imagined this is what happened to all the Noongar people – white people were very cruel in those days.

I have fond memories of Ravensthorpe and remember going back there when Dad followed work such as farm fencing and salmon fishing. I don't hold to the suggestion that Noongar people think Ravensthorpe is taboo. "How many white people stop and wind their windows up".

Aileen is a 78 year old Noongar woman who resides in Albany. She is the daughter of one of the reputed 'survivors' of the Cocanarup Massacre. She was told her father was very young and bought up in Jerramungup by his adopted grandmother and grandfather. Her father worked for the Hassell's as a horse breaker. Her mother was taken away from her Yamaji⁸ people near Mingenew and bought up in Carrolup Mission⁹.

"Nobody was at the place by the time the police came. Some poor fulla's were hiding up a tree. My mother used to talk about it and the police was shooting up at the people in the trees. The people was so scared the shit was falling down out of the trees. Pure terror. They were terrified. My father must have been a survivor of the massacre. Someone told me a story of him up in the tree and that's what I heard and I don't know when or where I heard it from. People did not talk much about it as it was so bad. White people were very cruel in them days. They even used to shoot the dogs you had."

'We were not allowed to talk about Ravensthorpe because it was too horrible what happened out there. Our old people were not allowed to talk about it'.

⁸ Yamaji is the collective name for the Aboriginal people of the Mid west region of Western Australia.
⁹ Carrolup mission was located near Katanning W.A. It was a Government Institution for 'half castes'.

Celia is a 65 year old woman from Albany who lived most of her life around the Jerramungup and Bremer Bay area.

When we were little, we were not allowed to listen to the old people talking. All we know is that something really bad happened out there and all the people were killed.

Albert was interviewed again for this report.

All the old people come from Fanny's Cove Young River Ravensthorpe way. They were the Barducks who were a part of the Wilman people. There were tribes from Bremer, Qualup, Fitzgerald and Cocanarup. Years ago when we did some research on Cocanarup we were told the records were sent to Perth and when we looked, a whole chapter on Cocanarup was taken out of the journals.

There are some posts down there near what was assumed to be the mass grave. That is what the old fellas are saying. But after I been there and seen those lime pits what they used to make their house cement I reckon they threw most of the bodies down that pit".

Peter is now deceased and an elderly man who was living in Kalgoorlie at the time of this interview.

"All the Noongars that were at Cocanarup went to Norseman and Gnowangerup I think. The Elders were chained up and the Dunn's were using the women for sex. The woman was watching the keys and the padlocks were chained up and they pinched the keys and set them all free. They let some sheep go in the bush and told John Dunn to go and check the sheep that had got away in the bush. They were waiting for him and speared him. The other white people got their guns and they shot everybody all the men women and children.

*They left them to rot and their bones were exposed there
for years. All the Noongars that got away moved west.*
(Gray Forrest Collection 1995)

Such is the emotional feelings of the events that happened at Ravensthorpe that several Noongar people I spoke to did not want to talk about Cocanarup. They quietly whispered that they remember, and the stories seem to be the same, of people running and hiding and being shot.



Phillips River south of the Highway.

12. PROPOSAL FOR MEMORIAL

The Indigenous Community together with some members of the Dunn family and Ravensthorpe community would like to see a memorial set up for the Aboriginal people who lost their lives at Cocanarup, in the gesture of reconciliation. As the historian Henry Reynolds writes, "*at the heart of this [reconciliation] movement is the desire to face up to our history, to embrace the past in all its aspects, to cease trying to hide the violence, the dispossession, the deprivation. People now want to know the truth about the past and to come to terms with it*". As he states, "*this is an essential step along the way towards national maturity*". (Reynolds, 2000: xiii)

There are still some issues that need to be addressed. The exact location of the gravesite may never be known as was found during this research. There is a lot of speculation of the general area, but no exact location. Whilst the total number of people to have died is not known it has been suggested that a granite memorial stone erected near the site of John Dunn's grave and engraved. Furthermore, the road to the gravesite needs to be maintained and signage on the highway stating there is a memorial. There needs to be a tourist sign for the heritage homestead and pioneer grave and this area would be enhanced by the Aboriginal memorial site.

The memorial is not about blaming but acknowledging what took place and now we want to move forward. Noongar Elders have spoken with some members of the Dunn family, who have acknowledged it happened and they too would like to see some reconciliation regarding the deaths. They say, "*we would very happy to be a part of the reconciliation and will contribute to the ceremony, we could bury a time capsule with photos and documents about both sides of the story.*"

Other Noongar people say, *“The graves of those Nyungars (sic) or the places they were shot should belong to Nyungars. They should be fenced in and the story of their deaths should be spelled out so that future generations will know”*. (Eades and Roberts 1984b)

A elderly Noongar woman states she would like to be a part of a healing ceremony at Cocanarup *“I would like to a part of the healing ceremony at Cocanarup so that the true story can be told”*.

Another Noongar Elder has fond memories of Ravensthorpe and states, *“we cannot hold people of today responsible for what happened all those years ago, but we can and must honour the memories and the stories, and even if that means there are two stories.*

They reckon Ravensthorpe was considered taboo. I have great memories of the place. I think wadgelas perpetuated that story not Noongars.. I have always known Noongars to go out there. I believe the history is to be written how it happened and it should be recorded like it is. Over the years I have spoken with some family members of the Dunn family and they say they are ashamed of what happened.

He further states he would, *“would like a memorial set up at the Cocanarup so we can acknowledge what happened and move onward and get the story right. The Noongar story needs to be written about what happened down there and the reason Dunn was killed”*.

13. CONCLUSION

Oral history dramatically enriches our pictures of the past, by allowing those of us in historical events to speak for ourselves, through the stories that have been told and continue to be told by those passing on the tradition through the generations – this was a cultural obligation. However too many of our old Noongar Peoples are passing on and we are at risk of losing aspects of our valuable heritage, because opportunities are not so available, such as “story telling time” and the social environment is ever changing.

These stories are essentials in shaping our lives and provide a cultural learning pathway for our young people to find their way, their identity and their place in society. It is important that we acknowledge and honour these stories.

(C.Pettersen: 2003 pers. comm.)

The events of the massacre of Noongar people at Cocanarup are deeply rooted into the conscience of Noongar people. The memories remain vividly alive. What can be detracted from this report, is that many people connected to the country of Cocanarup, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal, would like to reconcile with each other as a way of acknowledging that the events surrounding the massacre, did indeed happen and then to move on. In order to do that, it has been suggested that a memorial be erected near the location of the John Dunn gravesite to acknowledge the people who lost their lives there.

The writing of this story has been an intensely personal journey and very challenging. I hope that I have done justice to the stories of the Noongar people who entrusted me with them. I hope they are seen to be a part of the history of the Ravensthorpe and indeed the wider Noongar regions. The events of Cocanarup shaped many Noongar people's lives. As a result of the unrest families moved away from their

country and it has taken almost over 100 years for people to return to their 'country'.

It is my view that there be many more of these stories written by Aboriginal people. Despite the lack of published accounts of Aboriginal histories of districts, there is a vast body of oral tradition held by many Noongar people today. Not only will it make inroads into the process of reconciliation, but also Noongar people will be given the respect and acknowledgement of prior ownership of country, which is our birthright. As historian Professor Henry Reynolds states, *"telling the truth is central to the Aboriginal agenda for reconciliation. They want to have truth told about numerous things – about the taking of the children, about the exploitation of labour, the systemic abuse of women. But above all is the matter of violence, the long history of frontier conflict. They want white Australia to own, to accept, to identify with a past they know only too well. Reconciliation means the reconciling of two stories about what happened when pioneer settlers met Indigenous people all around a vast, moving, ragged, frontier. They want us to talk about the line of blood. They want us to take it seriously and treat it with gravity, to recognise that violence was not just an aberration or an accident but rather that it was central to the creation of modern Australia. They would like us to admit that settlement grew out of a barrel of a gun. For how else can their loss of ancestral lands be understood and explained"*. (Reynolds, 2000:126) I hope this is what the telling of this historical story will do.



Cocanarup farm in the background.

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