

# GURANGATCH AND MIRRAGAN

**G**urangatch was a giant eel and Mirragan was a giant quoll and famous fisherman. Gurangatch liked to lie in the shallow water at the edge of the deep waterhole, *Murraural*.



One day Mirragan was out fishing when he saw Gurangatch's eye shining like a star in the waterhole so he threw his spear at it. Gurangatch dived deeper into the pool so Mirragan cut hickory bark from the trees and put them on the water to make Gurangatch sick. He did not have enough bark to complete the job so went looking for more bark.

While Mirragan was away, Gurangatch began to force his way up the valley and the water carried him with it, creating the first paths of Wollondilly River.

The slabs of bark turned into stone and can be still seen today around the waterhole as a reminder of the story.

## THE CHASE

Gurangatch then burrowed underground for several miles, and came out on the side of the valley by a high rocky ridge, which is now known as the Rocky Waterhole. When Gurangatch reached this lagoon, he raised his head and put out his tongue, which flashed like summer lightning across a stormy sky.



From this vantage place he saw Mirragan following swiftly in his trail. Gurangatch then returned along his burrow to the Wollondilly, and continued to make a channel for himself. When he arrived at the junction of the Guineacor River, he turned to the left and continued its course for a few miles.

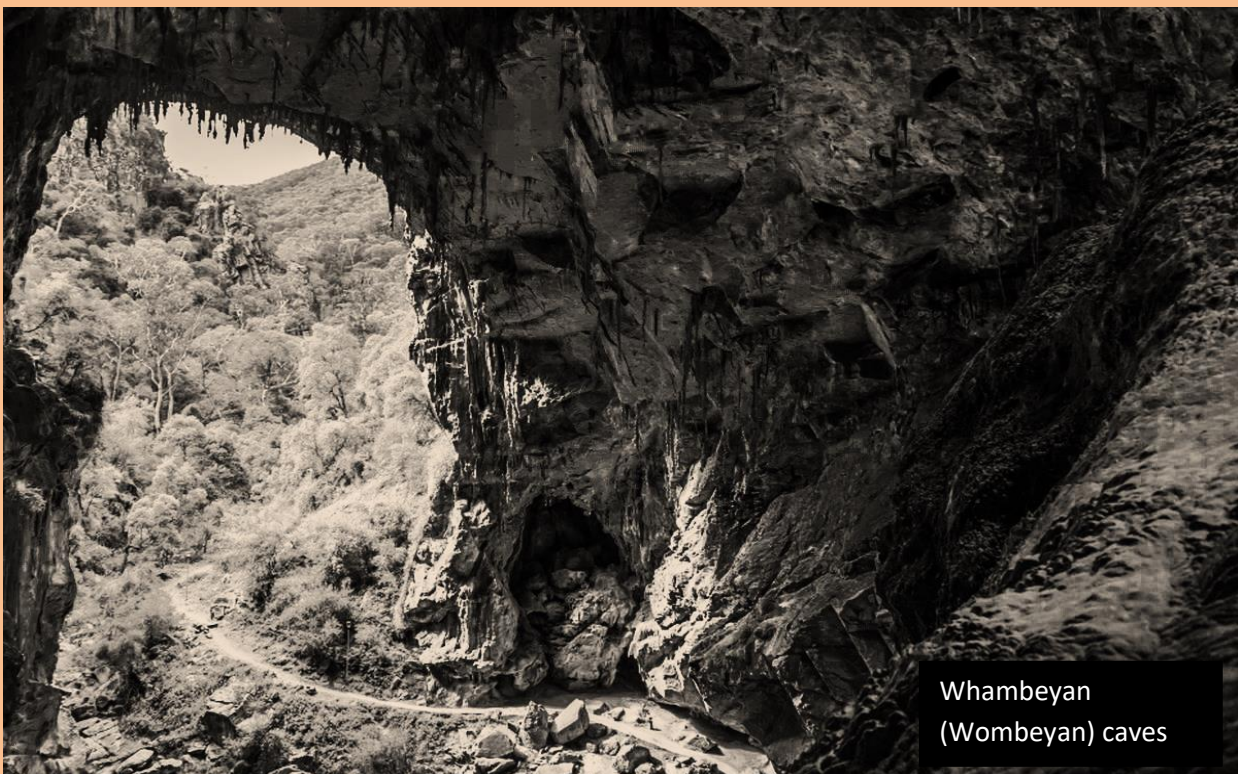


At last he arrived at a very rocky place, which was hard to burrow through. He therefore turned on his track and continued his former course, which is the long bend in the Wollondilly at this point. He then made Jock's Creek-which flows into the Wollondilly-and, on reaching its source, he

again burrowed deep beneath the mountain ranges, and came up inside the Whambeyan Caves.

## MIRRAGAN ARRIVES

When Mirragan arrived at the waterhole with the second load of bark, he saw that Gurangatch had escaped. He followed him many miles down the river, until he overtook him at the Whambeyan (Wombeyan) Caves. Mirragan was afraid to follow Gurangatch along the dark underground passages of the caves. He climbed on top of the rocks and dug a very deep hole, and then poked a pole down as far as it would reach in order to frighten Gurangatch out of his safe retreat. However, he did not succeed with the first hole, and so he made many of them. These holes still remain on the top of Whambeyan(Wombeyan) Caves.



One morning, at daybreak, Gurangatch escaped through his tunnel to the Wollondilly again.

Now, Mirragan's family lived a few miles down the river and, when they saw Gurangatch coming, with the water roaring and seething after him like a great river in flood, they were terrified, and ran up the side of the mountain for safety.

## MIRRAGAN IS RELENTLESS

At this time Mirragan appeared on the scene of trouble, and his wife upbraided him for disturbing Gurangatch, and begged him to leave his enemy in peace. Mirragan listened very patiently, but would not be dissuaded.

He again took up the relentless chase, and overtook Gurangatch at a place called Slippery Rock. Here they fought a desperate fight, until they made the rock quite smooth with their struggles. After fighting for some time, Gurangatch escaped and continued his course. The water flowed after him in a roaring torrent. Mirragan followed, and every time he overtook his enemy, he struck him with a heavy club, while Gurangatch retaliated by striking him with his tail.



Burraborang waterhole



Goodoomba

They fought up and down the hills and valleys and Gurangatch made deep waterholes to rest in. One in Reedy Creek another at Karrangatta on the Cox River and a deep spring on Meeoowun mountain.



Another battle was fought at Koonangoorwa on the Cox river before he found shelter in Binnoomur Caves (Jenolan) with his family who took him to a deep waterhole, Joolundoo, to rest.

## THE LAST WATERHOLE:

Mirragan found Gurangatch's tracks but felt too tired to try and fight him again. Instead he asked his friends to help him. To make sure Gurangatch could not escape again, he built a steep rock wall from the caves to the Joolundoo waterhole.

Then he returned to the waterhole where Gurangatch was hiding and asked his friends to try and catch him. The very best divers agreed to try; Billagoola the shag, Goolagwangwan, the diver, Gundhareen, black duck and Goonarring the wood duck.



The two ducks were the first to try and swim to the bottom of the waterhole, but it was too deep.



Goolagwangwan, the diver, stayed down for a long time but could only catch a small fish. Mirragan said it was too small so Billagoola dived in and swam deeper until he



found a huge fish that was stuck in a rock crevice. He tried to pull him out but only got a large piece of Gurangatch's back. He carried it to the surface and Mirragan was pleased and they made a great fire to cook up a great feast.

Then Mirragan and his family returned to their camps across the mountains and Gurangatch returned to Murraural waterhole along the rivers he had created.

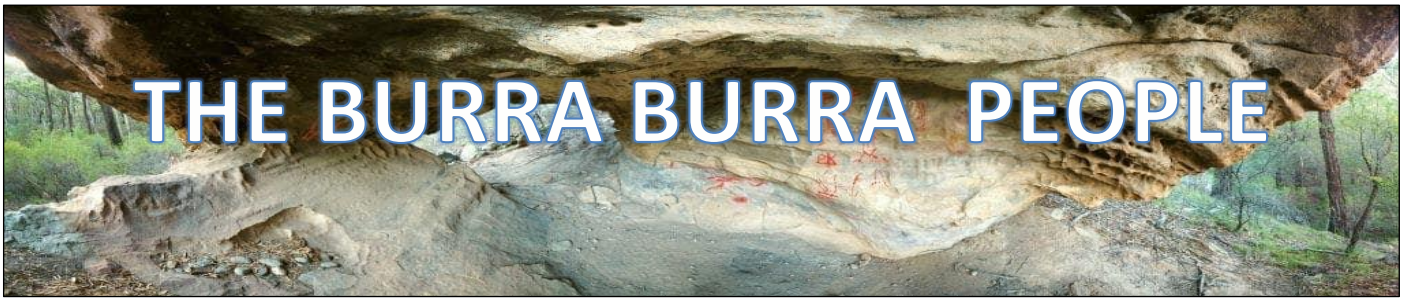


Grinding grooves on the Wollondilly River today

## GURANGATCH'S JOURNEY TODAY

In 1959/60 the Warragamba Dam was built and submerged most of the story of Gurangatch and Mirragan as the holes he dug were filled in by the dam, together with the surrounding valleys. Today the evidence of the story only remains in the waterhole at Gungarlook.





*The lands created by Gurangatch became occupied by First Nation people known as the Burra Burra who spoke the Gundungorra language. They travelled between O'Connell's Plains and Bathurst and into Wollondilly via Picton, The Oaks and Warragamba.*



Murrandah ©Camden Historical Society



Myangarlie

Drawn by Thomas Mitchel in "The Last Kooradgie" by John



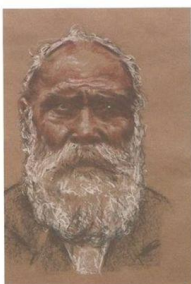
William Russell

Werriberrie

©TOHS



John and Margaret Riley and family



Billy Lynch

(source: Wikitree)

### **MURRANDAH (C1792-C1850) –**

He offered himself for election in the Legislative Council in Argyle in **1843** at the age of 60 years

### **MYANGARLIE (MOYENGULLY) (1792-1858)**

born on O'Connell's Plains was chief man in Burragorang Valley when he was sketched by surveyor Major Mitchell in 1828. He died in Picton and was buried on Rumker's island marked by carved trees

### **WONDUK (C1810-?)** mother of Werriberrie.

Wonduk, Myangarlie, Moroon, Mongang and Billy Omai all descended from same unknown ancestor

### **WERRIBERRIE (William Russell) (c1835-1914)**

born on the banks of Werriberri Creek in The Oaks. He was interviewed by A.L. Bennet who published his story in 1914 as "My Recollections"

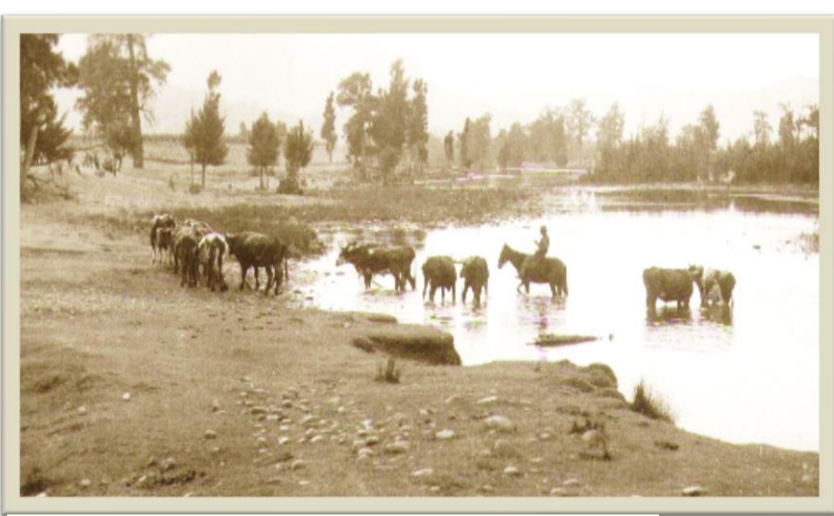
### **GEORGE RILEY (c1833-1906)**

He married Jenny (Jayong) son of Billy Omai and father of John Joseph Riley who farmed at Gungarlook near the site of one of Gurangatch's waterholes.

**WILLIAM (Billy) LYNCH: (c1836-1914)** was a well-known personality in Katoomba with his wife Caroline. He was born near Taralga at Bannaby.

From. *The Aboriginal People of Burragorang Valley* by Jim Smith

# TIMELINE .....1802- 1900



Mustering cattle on Wollondilly River, Burratorang Valley. From a postcard in the collection of Trish Hill

1802 – Lieutenant Barrallier attempts to find a way over the Blue Mountains bringing a cavalcade of soldiers, drays, horses and supplies and guided by Gogy from another Nation.

1814-1816 –A drought causes people travel down to the lowlands for traditional foods. Farmers defend their crops with weapons. Werriberrie’s grandfather is killed during the attacks and others are killed at Cataract Gorge, near Appin. The remaining Gundungorra return to the Valley.

1824-1830 – Pastoralists from the lowlands discover the Valley and surveyors begin to map out potential farms for settlers. A small pox epidemic has serious effects of the Gundungorra but still large gatherings continue in the Valley.

Archbishop Polding visits the Carlon family in Upper Burratorang to baptise their new baby, John Bede, and a new church is planned.

The government starts to distribute blankets to Aboriginal families.

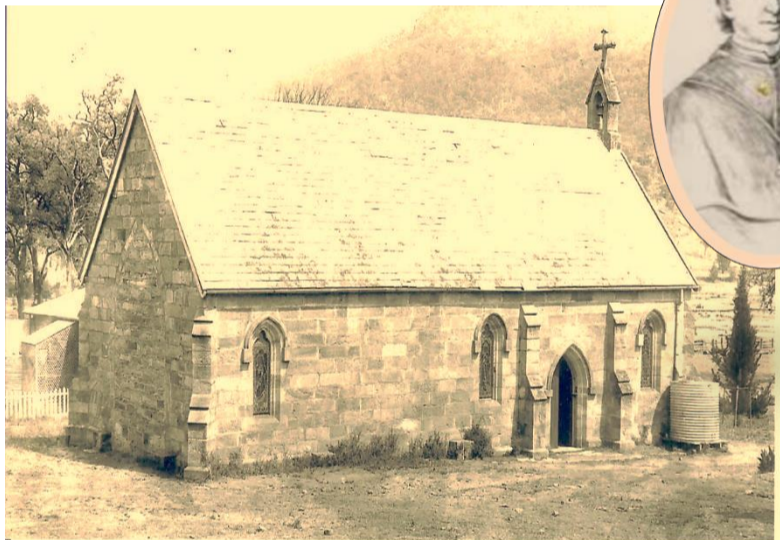
1860/70 – Pioneers begin settling on the fertile river flats. The government sets up Aboriginal Reserves.

1874- Archbishop Polding returns to consecrate St. Paulinus Church and John Riley reads a declaration to him and presents him with a possum skin cloak.

Gundungorra families begin working on local farms and friendships are made. They join with settlers to sign applications for schools and all children attend together. Several Aboriginal men join the cricket team. Father Dillon establishes St. Joseph’s Farm on Cox’s River for some Aboriginal families.

1896 –John Riley, William Russell, John Jingery and Annie Sherrit apply for their own land.

1900 – Surveyor R.H Mathews begins to document Gundungorra culture



St. Paulinus Church ©Trish Hill



The Shepherds celebrate a wedding in Yerranderie c1930s



The Red Hand cave documented by RH Mathews and Mary Everett