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nivus

23rd biennale of sydney



Image: 65 George Street, Four Minutes To Midnight, 2022

MAJOR GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



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MAJOR STRATEGIC PARTNER



Wellington Inn

– Listen here

Scripted by Julie Gough
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Hello
My name is Julie Gough.

I am speaking to you from far southern waters - Lutruwita
Tasmania [Van Diemens Land].

We, my maternal ancestors, the Trawlwoolway, have lived here
upwards of 60,000 years.

I come from a long line of women who were renowned for hunting seal, for deep diving for abalone with uniquely twined plant fibre collecting baskets, for making intricate iridescent shell necklaces – some of these cultural traditions continues - We are people of the waters, fresh and salt.

How might I connect with the waters of the Eora and the city of Sydney ?

Tentatively, but somehow, connections do always seem to surface. Stir the muddy waters, strain the silt.

This place - the Wellington Inn George Street Sydney was, as were all inns in the 1800s, the sites of inquests held upon the bodies of those publicly deceased.

Waterside inn inquests were most frequently held upon the bodies of the drowned.

Hold that thought.

From the 1790s British born men and their sons started arriving into our southern waters, to Bass strait, down from Sydney where they were employed by major sealing firms Kable and company, Underwood and company.

Bass strait become part of a network for sealers who traversed the oceans across to Aoteroa and west to St Paul's island and beyond for the lucrative oils and skins of seals, then sent onto the what was termed the China trade.

By around 1810 one such sealer George Briggs entered our lives to become an ancestor.



Briggs or his parents were apparently from Dunstable Bedfordshire, Briggs junior was possibly Parramatta born - just like John Batman who he was of an age with.

Since the British raised their flag at Risdon Cove - opposite current day Hobart (nipaluna) our story became afflicted to- feature dispossession, loss and absence - we are slowly trying to overcome the genocidal trauma enacted upon us by our colonisers

We, First People, were taken from Country and from each other.

Children and parents were separated, often by massacre. For the first 30 years post colonisation our women and girls were taken from our shores by marauding sealers, at least 100 were recounted from memory in 1830.

Woretemoeteyenner is one such woman and my ancestor.

By around 1810 she was taken by George Briggs from her Tebrikunna Country of Coastal north eastern Lutruwita and for 20 years subsequent she lived across Bass Strait islands and ventured on epic sealing sea journeys including an 1825 voyage with 4 other Aboriginal women their children and sealers, to Mauritius off Africa.

They miraculously returned in 1827 leaving in Port Louis a woman and child who had died, and another child - fate unknown.

In 1825 during their absence the governance of Van Diemen's Land was transferred from Sydney to Hobart Town. The invoice from the Mauritian government for the transport and food for the women and children on their return voyage passed between both towns and remains unpaid. Once they reached home, Launceston in northern Van Diemens Land, they were gaoled with their children and dogs, for their own protection from the colonists on their island.

A year earlier in 1824 another sealer, Johnn Boulton recorded in his diary from the ship SALLY in Bass Straits waters that ***"Some of them (the children of Aboriginal woman and sealers) have been sent to Sydney for the purpose of being educated at the Government school."*** Did they return home to Lutruwita ?

Perhaps children of Woretemoeteyenner were also sent north to Parramatta.

By this stage of her life, Woretemoeteyenner was estranged from George Briggs. Despite them having three daughters and a son together, Briggs had sold her to another sealer, John Thomas, for one guinea.

By 1833 two daughters, Jane and Mary Briggs had died, young women, destitute in Launceston.

The third daughter, Dalrymple Briggs born around 1810 had survived being shot by a couple, colonists she was in servitude to.

Her brother John Briggs survived to marry Louisa Strugnell, a Bunoronng woman, and moved across Bass Strait to raise a large family.

Their mother, Woretemoeteyenner, relinquished by Thomas, had been taken captive to Wybalenna Aboriginal establishment on Flinders Island in 1831, under the control of the colonial government.

She was then recorded as: Ware.mo.deen.ner (Bung); abducted by Briggs, by whom she had 3 children, all living. Also Woretemoeteyenner of Bung's Beach, Cape Barren Island also known as Margaret and Mrs Briggs.

Then, George Briggs evaporated, dissolved, disappeared for 17 years.

Until a Sydney morning herald newspaper report on **Wed 21 June 1848, p.3 that on 26 May 1848** *Yesterday morning (May 26), two men, named Vickery and Briggs, both sealers, came to the police-office (George Town) and reported the circumstances as follow:- On Sunday last Vickery and Briggs were pressed by the bushrangers on one of the Hunter's Islands at the westward.*

They came there with a man named Blythe and his wife, whom it appears they met on the main, and who, being glad to get rid of them, told them Vickery and Briggs had a superior boat to his, and knew the Straits better than he. So they took his advice: pressed them, and made them put to sea on that day.

By this date Woretemoeteyenner had returned to mainland Lutruwita following the successful petition to the Government in 1841 by her daughter Dalrymple for her release into her care. Woretemoeteyenner lived reunited with her daughter, son in law, and grandchildren for six years.

Meanwhile Briggss story subsided again, until an ultimate appearance, probably him – on 28 February 1854

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CORONER'S INQUEST- An inquest was held on Saturday last, at the Wellington Inn, South George-street, on view of the body of George Briggs, then lying dead in the Benevolent Asylum, when the following evidence was given :

The deceased was cook and steward on the brig Sarah; deceased, witness, and some other of the crew, went ashore about 7 o'clock on Friday evening last, and returned on board about 11 o'clock, all alone.

informed by a man who was employed as a sail maker on board the Sarah, that the dead body of the deceased was floating under the bows of the brig.

Dr. Rockcliffe Norris, surgeon, who examined the body, deposed that it bore no marks of outward violence; he believed, from the evidence, and the appearance of the body, that death was caused by suffocation from drowning—finding accordingly.

Woretemoeteyenner's final resting place is unknown, and her daughter Dalrymple and her husband's graves were washed out into the parnaple or river Mersey after their deaths.

Dalrymple's son William drowned, and it seems likely so did her much missing, and probably not much missed, father George, back in Sydney waters, where he started and where you now stand.

My mother lives beside the parnaple Mersey and watches the tides ebb and flow each day.

END