Bulga 1820 – 1921

The Rather Manuscript.

(Description of lost workmen)

Born (money on family

property in 1852)
The History of Bulga near Singleton
N.S.W. June 1820 to 1821

Bulga is an ancient aboriginal name signifying mountain or mountainous, given to it long ago, long before the white man wandered over the range. It was thus the peaceful prosperous little village lying under the shelter of the Bulga mountains derived its name. Its original discovery dates with the discovery of Captain Flinders in March 1819. Bulga being the first place reached by Rowe, Singleton, Thorley and others on leaving the ranges. Its explorers descended from a spur in Wilbbe Inlet in the Shelliehale estate, near or on the property owned by Mr J. Dodds.

After its original discovery its first pioneers, of whom there is authentic record were Mr and Mrs Thomas Batters and Mr and Mrs William McAfferty. Mr McAfferty being
then a boy of 16. The journey was made via Richmond, through Cold, Ruby and Jones Valley, being undertaken on foot, a bullock being used in lieu of a pack horse. In the same year 1826 Mr Batey returned with his wife and eldest child - the late Mr Thomas Batey, who was then a babe in arms. For a number of years the original settler (Mr James Batey) resided at Bulga having acquired a grant of land from the Crown.

Mr McAlpine also returned in the year 1842 with his wife and eldest child - Mr William McAlpine - to take up his residence at Bulga where he resided until his death in 1802.

Settlers quickly followed on the route taken by the pioneers and used as the main thoroughfare for travelling stock from the Northern districts of N.S.W. to Sydney.
The first settlement was in the fertile land adjoining the Cockfighter’s Creek. The principal landholders were Rev. Mr. Hill, who founded the Millford Estate, Mr. Williams, Mr. Parmenter, Mr. Eaton, Mr. McAlpin, Mr. Joseph Anns, and his two sons, William and Joseph.

The description given of Bulga by the early settlers is of their well-wooded forest lands to the foot of the mountains. The timber was mostly large with almost an entire absence of scrub and undergrowth. This was accounted for by the Cockfighter’s Creek, which regularly moistens the country side during the dry seasons.

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The description given of Bolga by the early settlers is of pure well-forested forest lands to the foot of the mountains, the timber was mostly large with almost an entire absence of scrub and undergrowth. This was accounted for by the bush fires which regularly swept the country wide during the dry seasons.

The Cockfighter Creek presented a very different appearance to the early settlers to its present state, being then deep.
and narrow with alternate stretches
of deep water and sand. At that time
as at present the banks of the creek were
fringed with big shady oak trees. This
creek was the main water supply of
the residents.

In its vicinity wandering tribes of
Afrish (Chirripo) were to be seen in the
sites of their old camps. The stone
implements of this strange race are found
today; the mute evidence of a bygone
age when the savage roamed at will,
hunted and fought, and lived his life
untrembled by white man. The impress
of the savage is still to be seen in the
names of certain geographical landmarks.
Thus "Keecew" is the original aboriginal
name of one of the Baja mountains.
"Dooliervin" is the name of a big water-hole
near the present residence of Messrs. Alexander
Brothers in the Mount. Sammel Estate.
"By-yong" is the name of a lagoon in the vicinity of "Doullriving," also on the
Shast Semiahmoo strain, where the savages hunted
wild fowl, and known today as the "Honea Longo.
"Biriki" is the name of a gully flowing into
the Cockfighter near the residence of Mr.
Samuel Carriage.

From an ethnological stand point
Bulge is one intensely interesting locality.
For many beautifully made stone implements
are found today, throwing considerable
light on the life of the early savage.

Here also is the seat the remains of
an ancient "Bora" ground with its
sacred circle still defined by small
mounds of earth, and a ring of cedared
trees, still bearing the curious
emblematical devices which marked this
strange and mystical ceremony of
imitation to tribal rights. This "Bora"
ceremony was held in the year 1852. The reliable authority of residents of the locality it was attended by between 500 and 600 Irokes from the various tribes as far away as Sandwich and Oblique. It is also interesting to note that during the months this Iroquois being held no record is in existence that can be traced of a single crime or outrage being perpetrated upon any of the white settlers, though they must have been completely at their mercy had the Indians joined hostile. The white settlers were rigidly excluded from the Boro, nor could a single offspring indulge what transpired. In later years several considerable scientific light has been thrown on the matter, and it is thought to have been the last muster of the Iroquois tribes who attended this particular ceremony before the advance of the white man.
It is strange also how strong was the power of this Bow, the slingshots, all Joseph's bags being laid aside for the time being. It is definitely known that some time before in a tribal fight two blacks were killed near the present residence of Mr. H. Wood.

The early life of the settlement of white people at Bulga was indeed strenuous, all the courage, enterprise and resourcefulness of a strong, dominant character were necessary to make life a success for so far removed from the centres of civilization. Some idea of the hardships experienced can be gathered from the fact that all the necessaries of life required from the outside world had to be conveyed a distance of about 160 miles. The greatest part of this distance was over rough, broken mountain ranges, the only means of transport being a pack horse or a bullock.
only a trickle to mark the way. In later years however supplies were obtained from the settlement at the Three Ranges. Then the real progress of Bulga commenced.

The stock brought to Bulga did remarkably well, and were driven back to Richmond and Windsor as occasion demanded. Intercourse was thus kept up and new settlers arrived and acquired land. Byage and wheat were grown in ford. These were ground in small mills and in stoves by the settlers themselves. Meat was fairly plentiful, except in times of drought. Pigs were also raised for pork and bacon. Considerable trouble was experienced in raising sheep, the country being water deprived. From which they had to carefully watered.

The most terrible drought in the history of Bulga was experienced.
between the years 1848 and 1851. The authentic authority the whole of the Cockfight's Creek at Bulga and even long stretches of the Hunter River were dry. Wells were sunk in the bed of the Cockfight's Creek to supply the water being ten feet beneath the surface. Round these wells at night wild devastated cattle roared for water. The settlers in the most part obtained their drinking water from the hole previously mentioned as "booting". This is a spring which has never been known to fail. People came to this water from near twenty miles away on the one side and Parsons Creek distant miles on the other. Those who were fortunate enough to have working bullocks drew their water casks in sleds; those less fortunate rolled them to their homes. Most of the stock were removed.
to "Darby" in the Boree Valley District and turned loose where rough jeld was procurable. A considerable number became dead. Most cattle could be found of the survivors were mustered and brought back to Budge when the drought broke in 1851. Burro and kangaroo pass cut on the mountain shelves were used to keep alive the stock retained by the settlers. Beaks of these kangaroo pass were also sold at Enfield for fodder in starving state. During 1857 very little rain fell, the whole country side being little more than a saline waste. The wheat crops so urgently needed for human food in famine cases grew about a foot high. This was carefully gathered, threshed with a flail, ground in stone, mixed with what little maize meal was procurable and baked in bread.
The education of the children was a problem which earnestly engaged the attention of the settlers. With their usual enterprise, and resourcefulness, among this was welcome to allow the children a limited education. The services of Mr John Wapstrauff, an old English gentleman employed as tutor in the family of Mr John Laton were engaged. His schoolroom was a hut standing on the bank of the lagoon previously mentioned as "By-yong" and now known as "The Horse Shoe". Besides the members of Mr Laton's family some of the neighbors children were also taught. This was about the year 1750. As the children of the settlement increased the school was moved a few years later to an old building situated where some acacia trees are still growing on the eastern bank of the Cockshall, just below where the Bridge Bridge now stands. This was
the first village school at Bulga. A monument was set in foot amongst the
preserving members of the community.
Street a church and school room. An
acre of land was donated by Mr John
Salter for church and school land and
a cemetery. Hence the dead
were buried where James dictated, a
member near "The Race Track". Mr William
McAlpin’s son — known in his honoured old
age as the grandpa of Bulga — and
an old man in his employ named
Woodbury cut and split the timber for
the building which was of slab walls and
shingle roof. The timber was drawn
to the ground by Mr William Clarke but
the erection of the building was paid for
by public subscription, all other labour
in connection with it being voluntary.
It was erected near the site of St. Peter’s
Church of England, Bulga, about the year 1857
and served the combined purpose.
of church and school. In the year 1879
the present public school was erected and
the church church in 1887. The old
building was then demolished. School
was held by Mr. Wagstaff in the old
building for a number of years. On his
death, he was succeeded by Mr. Nettleton
who was in turn followed by Mr. Clark.

The first teachers under the Public Schools Act
in rotation followed Mrs. Maxwell, Mrs.
Tait, Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Dean,
Mr. Moore, Mr. Kende, Mr. Watts,
Mr. Campbell, Mr. Barrett and Mrs.

The Patrick Thomas Primary was established
in 1904, Bridg being included in "C" Riding.
Humble and brave as was the
beginning of Bulga as a settlement;
advancing slowly and painfully through
privation and hardship to a prosperous
progressive village enjoying the
blessings of civilization. It seems hard
to realise that such complete changes
could be wrought on the face of the
land in the space of a century.

Bulga is indeed the record of the
pioneers who shared all and suffered
patiently to form the new settlement so
far removed from their old homes.

Bulga is indeed Bulga of the Memorial
Bells, of the luncheon bountiful paid for by
public subscription and erected
voluntarily by its former inhabitants—a
vindication of the district in 1920—a
monument to the memory of so many
of its brave sons who fought and died
in the Great War. In the most part
they were the descendants of its settlers.
men who made good, who were not
over swept by inferiority in courage, enterprise
resourcefulness and stamina of character
who have undaunted men who turned
their backs on their old homes to wrestle
with the wilderness.
In Australia, boys and girls reach maturity at a somewhat earlier age than in the colder latitudes of Europe and America. But in a black lad, maturity is a period of much anticipation; for then the boy is in the state of purgation, as his mothers boy, and enters the tribe, but only through certain ceremonies of initiation which "make a man" of him, and thereby give him the qualifications and the right to act as a member of the tribe. These ceremonies are, in this part of Australia, called the Bora, and, as that name has been used in English books ever since the earliest settlements in this land, it has established a prescriptive right to recognition, and is understood everywhere. It seems, therefore unnecessary to use any other name for it, merely noting that in many places it has various other names. But, with some minor
differences in the mode of administration, the Bra meets everywhere throughout Australia; it can therefore be concluded that it belongs to the whole race, and is an essential attribute of its existence.

When a boy approaches the age of puberty, a feeling of restless anticipation spreads over his mind. In the known that his coming manhood has brought him to the threshold of ceremonies of mystic import, through which he has to formally receive into the tribe, and thereby to acquire the dignity of a man. The rites of initiation are important, numerous, and prolonged; and, as his admission does not concern himself, it his family merely but the whole tribe, these ceremonies call together large assemblages, and are the occasions of general rejoicing.

This assembly - the heart of the tribe and unique in the tribal life - is
called the Bora. The whole proceedings are essentially the same everywhere in their general features and teachings, but the details vary among the different tribes. Therefore instead of separate narratives for each tribe it will be underrum to present a full view of the Bora, taking one tribal mode as the basis of the description, but introducing from the other tribes such features as were the needed to complete the significance of the ceremonies.

The chiefs of a tribe know that some boys are of an age the initiated; they accordingly announce to them the public messenger or herald, and bid them inform the other sections of the tribe that a Bora will be held at a certain time and place, the time being near the full moon, and the place being usually a well-known Bora ground. They also send them away to invite
the neighboring tribes to attend. This invitation is readily accepted; for, although the tribes may be at variance with each other, universal brotherhood prevails among the blacks at such a time as that. The day appointed for the gathering is, perhaps, a month or two distant, and the intervening time is filled with busy preparations by the leading men of the natives' tribe. They select a suitable piece of ground, near water if possible, and level for convenience in sitting or lying on. Two circular enclosures are then formed and cleared of all timber, one of every blade of grass—larger and a smaller, with a straight track connecting them. The smaller is sacred circle is about a quarter farside up the rise, and well out of sight of the other, and in those that have since been examined, the path a little between the two circles is due east and west, a
nearly 20. The trees that grow around
the Smaller circle. They were, perhaps, up
to twenty feet from the ground with curious
emblematic devices and figures. The circuit
of each ring is defined by a slight mound
of earth laid around, and, in the centre
of the larger one, they fix a short pole
with a bunch of some feathers on the
top of it. When these arrangements
are completed the ceremonies should begin,
but there is often considerable delay.
The cause of such delay will appear
from the words of a friend of mine:
"We had some young blacks in our house,
jifty years ago, and the older blacks would
come to us, and ask us to allow these
lads off for a time to make
"boomahs", sometimes the boys would
be away in the best part of a year. Sometimes
the old men would bring back the boys in
a short time, saying that things were not
ready. In the Bones, that the other blacks
were slow in coming up, and so Jinta, and that the ceremonies could not go on then; but usually all the men, the lads, and the "jins" went off together to the appointed place of meeting. At night time wherever they camped, several of the men would go off in different directions and make frightsome noises all around, scaring the "jins" almost out of their wits, and awing the boys. Thus matters would go on until they reached the big camp. I suppose. A large enclosure is there. The men stand with their bodies painted in stripes of colors, chiefly red and white. The women, who are permitted to be present at the opening ceremony only, are lying prone on the ground all round the larger ring, and are crested all over with rags and cloaks.

The boy, painted red all over—
I say boy, but several boys may be
initiated at once — the boy is brought forward, and made to lie down in the middle of the ring, and covered with an opusum rug. Such of the old men as have been appointed masters of the ceremonies now begin to throw dust in a state of fear and awe by sounding an instrument called "terricchty" similar to what an English boy calls a "bull-roarer." In central Africa, a whistle is used similarly as a sacred instrument, and something similar seems also to have been used in the mysteries of ancient Greece. In Australia the men use "terricchty" on all occasions when they wish to frighten the women and the boys, who cover with fear whenever they hear it. "On one occasion," said a friend to me, "a number of blacks were working in a cornfield, near the Barrington line, a whistling boy began to sound his toy "bull-roarer." The blacks all took to their heels. A few,

...
however rushed up theru, and said
"Bad (no) you do that; that's one of our
boks". It is not lawful for any one
to handle it except those who have been
initiated in the Bow. It is made of a piece
of their wood, or bark of a tree. It is nine
to twelve inches long, and it is sometimes
shaped and marked so as to make it
look like a fish. The roaring sound
is supposed to be the voice of a
dreaded evil spirit, who roams about the
lamp of the blacks at night and carries
off and devours those he can seize. Man
The performers think that the "boombah"
(or they called the noise) has been
sufficiently impressed "terrifically" cease
to speak. They then seize the boy from the
grounds and set him in the middle of
the ring in such a manner that his
face is turned towards the cleared track
which leads to the circle of imagery.
Then an old man comes forward, strikes
chalk, in the kangaroo stuff like glass, and so on. Meanwhile the boy has been sitting in the smaller circle with downcast eyes. He is told to rise, and is led in succession to each of the carved trees around it, and is told to look up. In a moment at the carvings in them, and, while he does so, the old men raise a shout. Then he has come to know all the carvings sufficiently, the men give him a new name, which must not be revealed to the uninitiated, and they hand him a little bag containing one or more stones of crystal quality. This bag he will always carry about his person, and the stones must not be thrown to the uninitiated in pain of death. This concludes the first part of the performance.

A fire is kept constantly in the centre of this upper ring. The bag is made to lay within the ring, more or less ground for
strongly in his face, and makes him cast his eyes upon the ground; In this humble attitude he must continue for some days.

Two or three old men next take the boy by the arms and lead him along the track, and set him in the middle of the other enclosure. As soon as this is done the women rise from their prostrate position and begin to dance and sing. The Murringgari take, on our south-east coast, place along this track a path some figures, moulded in earth, of various animals (totems), and one of the Tharawal, a spirit to whom they reverence. Before each of these figures the devotes have a dance; and a Karaji, medicine man or tokin, brings up, through his mouth, apparently from his stomach, the "jade" or magic of the totem before which they then stand. In the percussive, he shows stuff like
weeks, it may be getting only a very little food and water now and then. Now he wishes to go outside, he old man carry him over the raised border of the ring. One black boy told me that, when he was initiated, he joined the assembled crowd in the month of August, and did not get away till about Xmas. Then the men in charge of the sacred circle at last made him rise from his recumbent position, he said he was so weak that he staggered and fell. He says he was kept two or three weeks among the women at the lower circle, because the other young men from the tribe were not ready, and had not come up; that the women then tie flat, covered up with guasumum clothes, sheets of bark, and the like, and did not look up; that the "boombat" is among them, painted all over with red and white, that a black man keeps running...
around the circle sounding "livelihood," that the "bombat" is then taken from the women into the centre of the circle and kept there a short time — perhaps a quarter of an hour — and is then led away to the upper circle, where the old men are. All this while the "bombat" keeps his eyes cast upon the ground, and must not look up. On approaching the sacred circle, he was told now to look up at each of the marked trees, and then look down again. My informant said: "When I was put within the ring I was made lie down, covered me, and kept lying there on the ground for three months; several times I tried to get out, but nearly lost my life for it, for they threatened to kill me with arrows. The boys are not kept so long as three months; the old men regulate the time according to the strength of the boy." All this is additional evidence connecting
The information I got from this quarter:
for a considerable portion of what I now
tell about the Bora is new, and comes
from my own investigations.
The "bommat" is next conveyed,
blindfolded to a large camp, at a
distance of several miles, no women
being near, and food is given to him,
which he eats, still with his eyes
cast down, here they keep him for
eight or ten days, and teach him their
tribal lore by showing him their dances
and their songs; these he learns,
especially one song, of which I can tell
nothing farther than that it is important
for the boy to know it. These songs, they
say, were given to them by "Bayemai,"
the great creator. At night, during
this period, the "bommat" is set alone
in seclusion and darkness places,
and all around him the men make
raucous noises, at which he must not
betray the least sign of fear. At some part of the ceremony a sacred wand is shown to him. Of this Mr. Ridley says:—

"This old man, Billy, told me, as a favour, what these objects had hitherto withheld as a mystery too sacred to be disclosed to a white man, that "Ahurumbulami", a stick or wand, is exhibited at the Bora, and that the sight of it inspires the initiated with manhood. This sacred wand was the gift of "Baiamai". The ground on which the Bora is celebrated is Baiamai's ground. Billy believes the Bora will be kept up always all over the country; such was the command of Baiamai."

Another conspicuous part of the inner Bora customs is the knocking out of one or more of the upper joint teeth of the "Boombet". This is effected by a smart blow on a wooden punch applied
to the teeth. But the older and more correct way seems to have been for one of the old men to apply his lower teeth to the upper front teeth of the young man; if that failed, the mallet and punch were used. On one occasion says my friend, "a black boy in our service came back from the Bush; I observed that his tooth was not out, and I asked him why? "Oh," said he, "Old Bony no good; he tried three times and nearly broke his own teeth; and so he gave it up." As to the tooth itself, one account says that it is given to the last mother, and the afterwards burns it; another says that it is conveyed from one sub-tribe to another until it has made the circuit of the whole tribe; on its return, it is given to the owner or kept by the head man. His tooth-biting, however, is not practiced by some of the larger tribes.
but, instead of it, there is circumcision
or the cutting of the hair.

All these formalities being now
completed, the "boomeko" partation is
at an end. They now proceed, all
of them together, to one large waterhole,
and, jumping in, men and boys, they work
off the coloring matter from their bodies,
and much glee and noise and
movement, and when they have come
out of the water they paint themselves
white.

Meanwhile, the women who have
been called to resume their attendance,
have kindled a large fire not far off,
and are lying around it, with their
faces in the ground and their bodies
covered as at first; the two old men
who were the original instigators bring
the boys at a run towards the fire,
followed by all the others, with voices
indeed silent, but making noise
by beating their "bumerangs" together.
The men join hands and form a ring round the fire, and one old man runs round the inside of the ring beating a shield. A woman, usually the boy's own mother, then steps within the ring, and, catching him under the arms, lifts him from the ground once, lets him down, and then repeats every man present, the boy included, now jumps upon the drowsing embers until the fire is extinguished.

In conclusion of all this, I give the following statement made some time by a friend who, from his boyhood, was familiar with the Kurrunggai tribe and its habits:

"After the ceremonies at the upper circle are completed the men remove to a spot some distance away where a fire has been kindled at a distance of perhaps 100 yards."
"I am a deep watercourse, in which a considerable number of blacks can hide. As "combat," that is, the newly initiated lad, is carried to this spot "blindfolded," and he is persuaded that he gets there by flying through the air; "but said one time," I looked out from under my bandage and saw I was not flying. The fire in the Jet is alight; it has been kindled early in the morning and the "jins" seat themselves on an elevated slope near by as spectators of what is to follow. A jagged jaw of their white friends, may also sit among them. After a while, a party of men, painted white, red, and yellow, emerge from their concealment in the ravine, and run into view from the quarter, and advance towards the fire, all the while each man holds together two weapons in rhythmic rhythm, two "bumerangs" a spear, and a
bumerang; a spear and a club, and so on. They come in in single file to the sound of this music, and when near the fire, they move in and out till they form a complete circle around it. Then face inwards, making a loud crashing noise simultaneously and disperse. Upon this, another band, from another quarter, similarly come in and do likewise. Then all the bands have thus encompassed the fire in succession. The “jins” arise, descend from the heights, and lay themselves prone in a circle round the fire, and are carefully covered up with cloaks, blankets and the like; they dare not look up. In several batches with spears in their hands are running round outside the circle of prostrate women, ready to kill them if they dare to look. A white woman, who, on one occasion, had come with her black servant to see the rights
was compelled to go and lie down also. Men, the women are all properly placed, in bands of blackers, perhaps a hundred in number, with the "bombati" among them, suddenly come out of the ravine. The "bombati" have had their hair cut short, and can be thus recognised. All them in this band have weapons in their two hands, and strike them together as before, but their weapons, their bodies, and their hair in all manner of white. They too approach the fire shouting, "boom", "boom", "boom", and move their bodies to and fro, as in a "karabari" dance. Then they have formed themselves into a complete circle, they join hands, and move round the fire two or three times. The women are still lying on the ground between the circle and the fire. They now rise up at command, and with head bent, they press outwards under the outstretched
arms. Then the men in white—"white as cockatoos"—take hold of the "boombats," rush in, all leap upon the fire, which, by this time, has died down considerably, raising a column of smoke and dust, until the fire is wholly stumped out. The men in white now take the "boombats" back to the ravine, and leave them there in charge of two or three relatives. The men in white return to their post, and the previous performers, with the party-colored bodies, rush in upon the white men, a general conflict ensues—apparently a real fight. In "koomangs" and other weapons are thrown about—but this does not last long.

After all this is over, the two men—
the father and the uncle perhaps—go about the "boombats" were committed take them away into the thick forest, and keep them there for many weeks, training
them, and testing their future tribal occupations. When the young man is at last allowed to join his kindred, he is addressed as "Bomkat," and does not get his tribal name till some time after.

This ends the ceremony of the Born. The youth becomes a man; for his initiation and his instruction are now. But, although these formalities observed in admitting a youth into the tribe, yet, in the Born, as in succession, the novice does not become a full member all at once, but must pass through several grades, and these are obtained by attending a certain number of Borns.

Now when I cast my eye over the Born and its reputed forms, I feel myself constrained to ask, "What does all this mean"? I, in one cannot.
where the Bowl, with all its solemnities — the rites were sacred, and the initiated were bound not to divulge what they had seen and done — is a meaningless, self-deceived thing.

One must see it a symbolism covering ancestral beliefs, a symbolism intelligible enough to the Kushtis at first, but now little understood and yet superstitiously observed by their Australian descendants.