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 dated with the discovery of Patrick's Plains in March, 1819, Bulga being the first place reached by Howe, Singleton, Thorley and others leaving the ranges. The explorers descended from a spur in William Walsh's Inlet on the Millbrodale Estate, near or on the property owned by Mr. Lodges.

After its original discovery, its first pioneers, of whom there is an authentic record, were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ether, sen, Mr. William McAlpine, sen, Mr. McAlpine being then a boy of 16. The journey was made from Richmond, through Colo, Putty and Howe's Valley, being undertaken on foot, a bullock being used in lieu of a pack horse. In the same year - 1826 - Mr. Ether returned with his wife and eldest child - the late Mr. Thomas Ether, who was then a babe in arms. For a number of years the original settler (Mr. Thomas Ether) 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 remained until his death in 1902.

Settlement quickly followed as the route taken by the pioneers was used as the main thoroughfare for travelling stock from the Northern districts of NSW to Sydney. The first settlement was on the fertile land adjoining the Cockfighter Creek.

The principal landholders were Rev. Mr. Hill, who founded the Millbrodale Estate; Mr. Williams, Mr. Farnell, Mr. Eaton, Mr. McAlpine, Mr. Joseph Orms and his two sons (William and Joseph).

The description given of Bulga by the early settlers is of open, well-grassed 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 the bush fires which regularly swept the countryside during the dry season.

The Cockfighter Creek presented a very different appearance to the early settlers to its present state, being 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 blacks (aboriginals) were to be seen on the sites of their old camps. The stone implements of this strange race are found to-day; the mute evidence of a bygone age when the savage roamed at will, hunted and fought, and lived his life unhampered by white man. The impress of the savage is still to be seen in the names of certain geographical landmarks. Thus "Meerea" is the nearest aboriginal name of one of the Bulga mountains. "Doolirwing" is the name of a big waterhole near the present residence of Messrs. Alexander Brothers on the Mount Leonard Estate. "By-yong" is the name of a lagoon in the vicinity of "Doolirwing", also on the Mount Leonard Estate, where the savages hunted wild fowl, and known today as the "Horse Shoe". "Girali" is the name of a gully flowing into the Cockfighter near the residence of Mr. Samuel Patridge.

From an ethnological standpoint, Bulga is an intensely interesting locality, for many beautifully-made stone implements are found today, throwing considerable light on the everyday life of the early savage.

Here also is seen the remains of an ancient "Bora" ground, with its sacred circle still defined by small mounds of earth, and a ring of carved trees, still bearing the cicadas-- curious emblematical devices which marked this strange and mystical ceremony of initiation to tribal rights. This "Bora" ceremony was held in the year 1852. On reliable authority of residents of the locality it was attended by between 500 and 600 blacks from the various tribes as far away as Mudgee and Goulburn. It is also interesting to note that during the months this Bora was being held no record is in existence that can be traced of a single crime or outrage being perpetrated on any of the white settlers, though they must have been completely at the mercy had the blacks proved hostile. The white settlers were rigidly
nor would a single aboriginal divulge what transpired. In later years, however, considerable scientific light has been thrown on the matter, and it is thought to have been the last muster of the various tribes who attended this particular ceremony before the advance of white. It is strange also how strong was the power of this Bora on the aboriginals, all feuds 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 W. Woods. (1941)

The early life of the settlement of white people at Bulga was indeed strenuous; all the courage, enterprise and resourcefulness of a strong character were necessary to make life a success, so far removed from the centres of civilisation. Some idea of the hardships experienced can be gathered from the fact that all the necessities of life required from the outside world had at that time to be conveyed a distance of about 100 miles. The greater part of this distance was over rough, broken mountain ranges; the only means of transport being a pack horse of bullock, with only a track to mark the way. In later years, however, supplies were obtained from the settlement in the Lower Hunter. 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. Maize and wheat were grown for food. These were ground in small mills and in stores by the settlers themselves. Meat was fairly plentiful, except in times of drought. Pigs were also raised for pork and ham. Considerable trouble was experienced in raising them; however, the country swarming with dingoes from which they had to be carefully guarded.

The most terrible drought experienced by Bulga was between the years 1848-1851. On authentic authority the whole of the Cockfighter Creek at Bulga and even long stretches of the Hunter River were dry. Wells were sunk in the bed of the Cockfighter to water stock; in places the water being ten feet under the surface. Round these wells at night famished cattle roared for water. The settlers for the most part obtained their drinking water from the hole previously mentioned as "Doolirw". This is a spring which has never been known to fail. People came to this water from near Wambo miles away on the one side and Parsons Creek district miles on the other.

Those fortunate enough to have working bullocks alive drew their water casks on slides; those less fortunate rolled them to their homes.

Most of the stock were removed to "Darkey" in the Howe's Valley district and turned loose where rough feed was procurable. A considerable number, however, died. What cattle could be found of the survivors were mustered and brought back to Bulga when the drought broke in 1851. Bushes and kangaroo grass cut on the mountain shelves were used to keep alive stock retained by the settlers. Sheaves of this kangaroo grass were also sold at Singleton for fodder for starving stock. During 1857 very little rain fell, the whole countryside being little more than a desolate waste. The wheat crops so urgently needed for human food in fortunate cases grew about a foot high. This was carefully gathered, threshed with a flail, ground for flour, mixed with what little maize meal was procurable and baked for bread.

The education of children was a problem which earnestly engaged the attention of settlers. With their usual enterprise and resourcefulness, however, this was overcome to allow the children a limited education. The services of Mr John Wagstaff, an old English gentleman, employed as tutor in the family of Mr John Eaton, 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 Eaton's family, some of the neighbours' children were also taught.

This was the year about 1850. 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 Cockfighter Creek, just below where the Bulga bridge now stands. This was the first village school at Bulga. A movement was set amongst the progressive members of the community to erect a church and school room. An acre of land was donated by Mr John Eaton for church and school land and a cemetery. Previous to this the dead were buried where fancy dictated, a number near the "Horse Shoe."
Mr William McAlpine sen--known in his honoured old age as the grandfather 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 of shingle roof. The timber was drawn to the site of St Marks Church of England, Bulga, about the year 1896, and served the combined purpose of church and school. In the year 1879 the present public school was erected and St Marks Church in 1882. 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 Alaton who was in turn followed by Miss Clark--the first teacher under the Public Service Act. In rotation followed Miss Maxwell, Mr Favcett, Mr Mitchell, Mr Deane, Mr Moore, Mr Read, Mr Watts, Mr Campbell, Mr Barrett, Mr Graham.

The Patricks Plains Shire was established in 1904, Bulga 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 and progressive village, enjoying the blessings of civilisation. It seems hard to realise that such complete changes could be wrought on the face of the land in the space of a century. Proud is indeed the record of the pioneers who dared all and suffered patiently to form the new settlement so far removed then from their old homes. Proud is indeed Bulga of the Memorial Gates, of its recreation ground, paid for by public subscription and erected voluntarily by Mr George Patridge--a resident of the district in 1920—-as a monument to the memory of so many of its brave men who fought and died in the Great War. For the most part they were descendants of its settlers, men who made good, who were not one whit inferior in courage, enterprise, resourcefulness, and nobility of character to the brave, undaunted men who turned their backs to their old homes to wrestle with the wilderness.

THE BORA

In Australia boys and girls reach maturity at a somewhat earlier age than in the colder latitudes of Europe and America. But to a black lad maturity is a period of much anticipation; for then he lays aside his state of pupilage as his mother's boy, and enters the tribe, but only through certain ceremonies of initiation which "make a man" of him, and thereby give him the qualification and the right to act as a member of the tribe. These ceremonies are in this part of Australia called gora; and, as that name has been used in English books since the earliest settlements in this land, it has established a prescription right to recognition, and is understood everywhere. It seems, therefore, unnecessary to use any other name for it merely noting that in various places it has various other names. But with some minor differences in the mode of administration the Bora exists 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 for he knows that his growing manhood has brought him to the threshold of ceremonies of mysterious import, through which he has to be formally received into the tribe, and therefore to acquire the dignity of a man. The rites of initiation are important, numerous and prolonged; and as his admission does not concern himself and his family merely but the whole tribe, these observances call together large assemblages, and are occasions of general rejoicing.

This assembly—the most solemn 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,
Bulga four

Therefore, instead of a separate narrative for each tribe, it will be endeavoured to present a full view of the Bora, taking one tribal mode as the basis of description, but introducing from the other tribes such features as appear to be needed to complete the significance of the ceremonies.

The chiefs of a tribe know that some boys are of an age to be initiated; they accordingly summon to them the public messengers or heralds and bid him 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 him away to invite the neighbouring 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 novices' tribe. They select a suitable piece of ground, near a waterhole if possible, and level for convenience in sitting or lying on. Two circular enclosures are then formed and cleared of all timber, even of every blade of grass—a larger and a smaller, with a straight track connecting them. The smaller or sacred circle is about a quarter of a mile up the ridge, and well out of the sight of the other; and in those that have since been examined the path or track between the two circles is due east and west, or nearly so. The trees that grow around the smaller circle they carve, 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 emu 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 50 years ago, and the older blacks would come to use and ask us to allow these lads off for a time to be made 'boombat'. Sometimes the boys would be away for 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 for the Bora, that the other blacks were slow in coming up, 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 where ever 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 of assembly."

A large concourse is there. The men stand with their bodies painted in stripes of colour, 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 covered all over with rugs and cloaks.

The boys, painted red all over— I say boys, 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 a possum rug. Such of the old men who have been appointed masters of the ceremonies now begin to throw him into a state of fear and awe by sounding an instrument called "tirrikoty" 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 to have been used in the mysteries of Ancient Greece. In Australia the men use "tirrikoty" on all occasions they wish to frighten women and the boys, who cower with fear whenever they hear it.

"One on occasion," said a friend. "A number of blacks were working in a cornfield near the Barrington Bora, a little boy began to sound his toy bull-roarer. The blacks all took to their heels. A few, however, rushed up to him and said: 'Baal (no!) you do that; that's one of our Gods.' It is not lawful for anyone to handle it except those who have been initiated in the Bora. It is made of a thin piece of wood or bark of a tree. It is nine to twelve inches long and it is sometimes shaped and marked as to make it look like a fish. The roaring sound is supposed to be the voice of a dreaded evil spirit, who prowls..."
about the camp at night and carries off and devours those blacks he can seize.

When the performers think that the "boombit" (as they called the novice) has been sufficiently impressed "tirrikoty" ceases to speak. They then raise the boy from the ground 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, breaths strongly in his face, and makes him cast his eyes on the ground, for in this humble attitude he must continue for several days.

Two other 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 Murraygarri tribe, on our south-east coast, placed along this track or path some figures, moulded in earth, of various animals (totems) and one of Dharamulan, a spirit God whom they reverence. Before each of these figures the devotees have a dance; and a karagi, medicine man or doctor, brings up through his mouth, apparently from his stomach, the "jocai", or magic of the totem before which they then stand. For the porcupine he shows stuff like chalk, for 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 and around it, and is told to look up for a moment at the carvings on them, which he does so; and while he does so the old men raise a shout. When he comes to know all the carvings sufficiently the men give him a new name, which must not be revealed to the un-initiated and they hand him a little bag containing one or more stones of crystal quartz.

This bag he will always carry about on his person, and the stones must not be shown to the uninitiated on the pain of death. This concludes the first part of the performance.

A fire is kept constantly in the centre of this upper ring. The boy is made to lay within the ring prone on the ground for weeks; he may be getting only a very little food and water now and then. When he wishes to go outside the old men 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 almost Xmas.

When the men in charge of the sacred circle at last bade him to 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 there lay flat, covered up with possum cloaks, sheets of bark and the like, and dare not look up; that the "boombit" is among them, painted all over with ruddles; that a black man keeps running around the circle sounding "tirrikoty"; that the "boombit" 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 "boombit" keeps his eyes cast on the ground and must not look up. On approaching the sacred circle he was told now to look up at the marked trees and then look down again.

My informant said: "When I was put within the ring I was made lie down, covered over, and kept lying there on the ground for three months. Several times I tried to peep out, but nearly lost my life for it, for they threatened to kill me with spears."

Other 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 corroborating the information I got from other quarters, for a considerable portion of what I now tell about the Bora is new and comes from my own investigations.

The "boombit" 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 is eaten 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 other than that it is important for the boy to know it. These songs, they say, were given to them by "Buyemai", the
great creator. At night, during this period, the "boombat" is set alone in seclusion and darksome places, and all around him the men make hideous 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.

(Inset of Ridley quotation check).

Another conspicuous part of the inner Bora customs is the knocking out of one or more of the upper front teeth of the "boombat." This is effected by a smart blow with a wooden punch applied to the teeth. But the older and more correct seems to have been for one of the older men of the tribe 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 to us from the Bora. I observed that his tooth was not out and I asked him why.

"Oh," he said. "Old Boney no good; he tried three times and nearly broke his own tooth, and so he gave it up."

As to the tooth itself; one account says that it is given to the lad's mother and she afterwards burns it. Another says it is conveyed from one sub-tribe to another until it has made the circuit of the whole of the tribe, and on its return it is either given to its owner or kept by the head man. This tooth-breaking, however, is not practised by some of the larger tribes; but, instead, there is circumcision or cutting of the hair.

All these formalities being now completed the "boombat" probation is at an end. They now proceed, all of them together, to a large water-hole and jumping in, men and boys, they wash off the colouring matter from their bodies amid much glee and noise and merriment, and when they 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 on the ground and their bodies covered as at first. The two old men who were the original initiators bring the boy at a run towards the fire, followed by all the others, with voices indeed silent, but making a noise by beating their "bumerangs" together. The men join hands and form a ring around the fire, and one old man runs inside the ring beating a shield. A woman, usually the boy's own mother, then steps within the ring, and carrying him under the arms lifts him from the ground once, sets him down and then retires. Every man present, the boy included, now jumps on the decaying embers until the fire is extinguished.

In corroboration of all this, I give the following statement made to me by a friend who from his boyhood was familiar with the Kurring-gai tribe and its habits:

"After the ceremonies at the upper circle are completed, the men remove off to a flat piece of ground a long way off. Here a fire has been kindled at a distance of perhaps 500 yards from a deep watercourse, in which a considerable number of blacks can hide. The "boombat," that is, the newly-initiated lad, is carried to this spot blindfolded, and he is persuaded to believe he gets there by flying through the air; but said one to me, 'I looked out from under my bandage and saw that I was not flying.'

The fire on the flat is a large one; it has been kindled since early in the morning. The "jins" seat themselves on an elevated slope nearby as spectators of what is to follow. A favoured few of their white friends may also sit among them. After a while, a party of men, painted red, white and yellow, emerge from concealment in the ravine, and run into view from one quarter and advance towards the fire. All the while, each man beats together two weapons in rhythm, two "bumerangs" or a spear and a "bumerang," or a spear of a club, and so on. They come in single file to the sound of this music and when near the fire they move in and in till they form a complete circle around it. They then face inwards, making a loud crashing noise simultaneously--and disperse. Upon this, another band from another quarter similarly come in
and do likewise. When all the bands have thus encompassed the fire in succession the "jina" arise, descend from the heights and lay themselves down in a circle around the fire and are carefully covered up with cloaks, blankets and the like. They do not look up, for several blacks with spears in their hands are running outside the circle of prostrate women, ready to kill them if they dare to look. A white woman, when on one occasion had come with her black servant to see the sights was compelled to go and lie down also.

When all the women are properly placed, a band of blacks, perhaps a hundred in number, with the "boombits" with them, suddenly come out of the ravine. The "boombits" have had their hair cut short and thus can be recognised. All the men in this band have weapons in their two hands and strike them together as before, but their weapons, their bodies and their hair are all painted white. They, too, approach the fire, shouting "boom, boom, boom", and moving their bodies to and fro, as in a "karabari" dance. When they have formed themselves into a complete circle, they moved around the fire two or three times after joining hands. The women are still lying on the ground between the circle and the fire. They now rise up at command, and with their head bent they pass outwards under the outstretched arms. When the men in white—"white as cockatoos"—take hold of the "boombits" and 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 stamped out.

The men in white now take the "boombits" back to the ravine and leave them in the charge of two or three relatives. The men in white return to their post, and the previous performers with the party-coloured bodies, rush in upon the white men, a general conflict ensues—apparently a real fight; for "bumerangs" and other weapons are thrown about—but this does not last long.

After this is all over, the two men—the father and the uncle perhaps—to whom the "boombits" were committed, take them away into the thick forest and keep them there for many weeks, training them and testing their fitness for tribal occupations. When the young man at least is allowed to join his kindred, he is addressed as "boombat" and does not get his tribal name until some time afterwards.

Thus end the ceremonies of the Bora. The youth becomes a man, for his initiation and instruction are over. But although these are formalities observed in admitting a youth into the tribe, yet in the Bora, as in Freemasonry, the novice does not become a full member at once, but must pass through several grades, and these are obtained by attending a certain number of Bora.

Now when I cast my eye over the Bora and its regulated forms, I feel myself constrained to ask: "What does all this mean?" I cannot believe that the Bora, with all its solemnities—for the rites were sacred—and the initiated were bound not to divulge what they had seen and done—is a meaningless, self-developed thing.

I prefer to see it as symbolism covering ancestral beliefs, a symbolism intelligible enough to the Bushite race at first, but now little understood, and yet superstitiously observed by their Australian descendants.
Bulga is an ancient aboriginal name signifying mountain or mountainous, given long ago—long before the white man wandered over the ranges. It was thus the peaceful prosperous little village lying under the shelter of the Bulga ranges derived its name. Its original discoverer dates back to the discovery of Pat's Plains in March, 1829, Bulga being the first place reached by Roe, Singleton, The Explorer and others. Off leaving the ranges, the explorers descended from a spur in a valley on the Bilbulbrooke Estate, near or on the property owned by Mr. L. McAlpine.

After its original discoverer its first pioneers, of whom there is authentic record, are Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ether son and Mr. William McAlpine senior, Mr. McAlpine then being a boy of 16. The journey was made from Richmond through Colo, Fatty a Novo's Valley, being undertaken on foot. A bullock was used in lieu of a pack horse.

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Mr. McAlpine also returned in the year 1842 with his wife and eldest child—William McAlpine—saw up residence at Bulga, where he remained until his death in 1902.

Settlement quickly followed, since the route taken by the pioneers was used as the main thoroughfare for travelling stock from the north districts of NSW to Sydney. The first settlement was on fertile land adjoining the Cockfighter Creek. The principal landholders were Mr. W. Allis, who found the Bilbulbrooke Estate; Mr. W. Parcell, Mr. Eaton, Mr. McAlpine, and Mr. Joseph Gaus and his two sons (William and Joseph).

The description given of Bulga by the early settlers is of open well-grassed land 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 countryside during the dry summers.

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 resident.

In its vicinity wandering tribes of blacks (aboriginals) were to be seen on the sites of their old camps. The stone implements of these strange races are found today: the mute evidence of a bygone age when the savage roamed at will, hunted and fought, and lived his life untrammeled by white man. The impress of the savage is still to be seen in the names of certain geographical landmarks. Thus "Meeres" is the original aboriginal name of one of the Bulga mountains.

"Dooli-wing" is the name of a big waterhole near the present residence of Messrs Alexander Brothers on the Mount Leonard Estate. "Bygyong" is the name of a lagoon in the vicinity of "Dooli-wing", also on the Mount Leonard Estate, where the savages hunted wild fowl and known today as the "Horse Shoe". "Wirali" is the name of a gully flowing into the Cockfighter near the residence of Mr. Samuel Hatz Partridge.

From an ethnological viewpoint Bulga is an 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 seen the remains of an ancient Bora ground with its sacred circle still defined by small mounds of earth and a ring of carved trees still bearing the curious emblematical devices which marked this strange and mystical ceremony of initiation of tribal rights. This Bora ceremony was held in the year 1852. One reliable authority said (of residents of the locality) it was attended by between 500 and 600 blacks as far away as Wagga and Goulburn. It is also interesting to note that during the months the Bora (this one) was being held no record is in existence that can be traced of a single crime or outrage being perpetrated on any of the white settlers, though they must have been completely at their mercy had the blacks proved hostile.
The white settlers were rigidly excluded from the Bora, nor would a single native divulge what had transpired. In later years, however, considerable scientific light has been thrown on the matter, and it is thought to have been the last muster of the various tribes whom attended this ceremony before the advance of white man. It is strange also how strong was the power of this Bora on the aborigines; all feuds were laid aside for the time being. It is definitely known that some time before that in a tribal fight two blacks were killed near the present residence of Mr. W. Woods.

The early life of the settlement of Bulga was indeed strenuous; all the courage, enterprise and resourcefulness of a strong dominant character were necessary to make life a success so far removed from the gentler race of civilisation. Some idea of the hardships experienced can be gathered from the fact that all the necessaries of life required from the outside world had at that time to be conveyed a distance of about 100 miles. The greater part of the distance was over rough broken mountain ranges, and the only means of transport being a pack horse of bullock, with only a track to mark the way. In later years supplies were obtained from the settlements in the Lower Hunter. Then the real progress of Bulga commenced.

The stock brought to Bulga did remarkably well and were driven back to Richmond and Windsor on occasion demanded. Intercourse was thus kept up and new settlers arrived and acquired land. Maize and wheat were grown for food. There were ground in small mills and on stones 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 them, however, the country swarming with dingoes from which they had to be carefully guarded.

The most terrible drought in the history of Bulga was experienced between the years 1848 and 1851. One authentic authority said the whole of the Cockfighter Creek at Bulga and even long stretches of the Hunter River were dry. Wells were sunk in the bed of the Cockfighter to water stock; in places the water was found ten feet beneath the surface. Round these wells at night wild furnished cattle roared for water. The settlers for most part obtained their water (drinking) from the hole "Dooliving." This is a spring which has never been known to fail. People came to this water from near Wambo miles away on one side, and Parsons Creek district miles on the other. Those who were fortunate to have working bullocks alive drew their water casks on slides; those less fortunate relied them to their homes.

Most of the stock were removed to "Darkey" in the Howes Valley district and turned loose where rough feed was procurable. However, a considerable number died. What cattle could be found of the survivors were mustered and brought back to Bulga when the drought broke in 1851. Bushes and kangaroo grass cut on the mountain shelves were used to keep alive the stock retained by the settlers. Sheaves of this kangaroo grass were also sold at Singleton as fodder for starving stock. During 1857 very little rain fell, the whole countryside being little more than a desolate waste. The wheat crops so urgently needed for human use in fortunate cases grew almost a foot high. This was carefully gathered, threshed with a flail, ground for flour, mixed with what little maize meal was procurable and baked for bread.

The education of the children was a problem which earnestly engaged the attention of the settlers. With their usual enterprise and resourcefulness, this problem was overcome to allow the children a limited education. The services of Mr. John Magaff, an old English gentleman employed as tutor in the family of Mr. John Eaton, were engaged. His schoolroom was a hut standing on the bank of the lagoon "By-yong" and now known as the "Horse Shoe." Besides the members of Mr. Eaton's family some of the neighbours' children were also taught. This was about the year 1850. As the children of settlers increased, the school was removed a few years later, to an old building situated where some acacia trees are still growing on the eastern bank of the Cockfighter, just below where the Bulga Bridge now stands. This was the first village school at Bulga. A movement was set astir amongst the progressive members of the community to erect a church and a school room. One acre of land was donated by Mr. John Eaton for this purpose. The building was erected with the aid of local labour and materials. The building was paid for by public subscription, all other labour in connection with it being voluntary.
Aboriginal representatives should preferably be mother-tongue speaking, and if possible initiated persons.

Also, persons could be coopted, such as a female aboriginal who is mother-tongue speaking and knows tribal history and lore. (Several are available.)

Perhaps one of the most important benefits to accrue from such a development would be making sacred and other sites available to students and possibly the public. There would also be, I hope, a concerted effort to preserve paintings and carvings (these could become a great tourist attraction at selected areas).

Such sites would require guardians, and thus people of aboriginal descent could for the first time be given opportunity to guard and explain facets of their culture. I am sure such reasons would respond to an invitation as for this type of participation; this would also indicate that white people share their pride of ancient expression.

I mentioned the need to preserve. This particularly applies to rock carvings in exposed locations. The National Parks and Wildlife Service, I understand, has undertaken preliminary research into this project.

Professor B Nashar, head of the Department of Geology, Newcastle University, has indicated a willingness to engage in initial research on surface preservation of sandstone carvings, which in the Lower Hunter region are scattered over a wide area. She has suggested experiments with silicone.

Briefly, these observations constitute argument to teach aboriginal history in schools. There could be further argument in support, as also their could be views in opposition.

As a historian (mostly dealing with the NSW scene), and having spent years examining regional aboriginal languages, I submit there is indeed a strong and valid case to learn more about aborigines and thus acquire a more intimate glimpse of what life is all about.

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Bulga history:

This covered a period 1820-1921 and was compiled by Alexander Nicholas Eather, a member of a first settler family at Bulga. The first settler was Thomas Eather in 1826. A photostat copy of Eather's handwritten account is in the University archives.

The property has remained unchanged in the family. Mr. Ian Eather, owner, said that Alexander took a great interest in aboriginal history. He wrote.....

"The Cockfighter Creek presented a very different appearance to the early settlers to its present state, being deep and narrow with alternate stretches of deep water and sand. The creek was the main water supply for residents.

"In its vicinity wandering tribes of blacks were to be seen on the sites of their old camps. The stone implements of this strange race are still found today (1921). They are mute evidence of a bygone age when the savage roamed at will, hunted and fought, and lived his life untramelled by white man. The impression of the savage is still to be seen in the names of certain geographic landmarks. Thus 'Meerea' is the original name for one of the Bulga Mountains.

"'Doolirwing' is the name of a big waterhole near the present residence of Messrs Alexander Brothers on the Mount Leonard Estate. 'Bywong' is the name of a lagoon in the vicinity of 'Doolirwing', and it, too, is on the same estate, where the savages hunted wild fowl and is known today as the 'Horse Shoe'. 'Girali' is the name of a gully flowing into the Cockfighter near the residence of Mr. Samuel Partridge, as seen the...

"Here also remains of an ancient Bora ground with its sacred circle still defined by small mounds of earth and a ring of carved trees still bearing the curious emblematical devices which marked this strange and mystic ceremony of initiation of tribal rights.

"This Bora ceremony was held in the year 1852. One reliable authority said it was attended by between 500 and 600 blacks as far away as Mudgee and Goulburn.

"It is also interesting to note that during the months this Bora was held no record is in existence that can be traced of a single crime or outrage being perpetrated against white settlers, though they must have been completely at their mercy had the blacks proved hostile."

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Bora Ceremonies (Wally Carter):

The Goombang-geer (also spelt Kumbaingerie) had one belief probably related to the fire ceremony: that as soon as all aborigines were dead the world would pass through a great fire, after which the world would be re-peopled with a resurrected aboriginal race. Complex patterns of body, arm and shoulder cicatrices indicated ability by the wearer, man or woman, to participate in certain taboos, ritual and tribal prohibitions. The culture included shelter paintings and carvings, which only the second and third initiates could view.

The Bundjalung tribe, adjoining the Goombang-geer to the north, women practised medicine as well as the men, using herbs and drugs prepared from Indigenous plants. The wise or clever men were revered, since it was believed they could capture rainbows. The sacred stones of quartz could prism-refract a shaft of sunlight into the colour of a rainbow. These stones were wrapped in ti-tree bark and cradled in a dilly bag of human hair. Both male and female initiates were similar to those of the Goombang-geer, except that rock or arrangements in the shape of totemic fauna were used to form ceremonial areas while carved trees occurred in Goombang-geer territory. The diamond cut tree was regarded as a very sacred place. This type of tree was also used in and about Port Macquarie—the territory of the Ngamba tribe.

The Jukembal Tribe, which had eastern boundaries with both the Goombang-geer and Bundjalung, were a loosely-knit people, with a number of clans and hordes depending on the availability of women. Climatic conditions required extensive use of possum cloaks and rugs. Young girls were taught how to prepare hides and skins to make shelters and to provide clothes for snowy weather conditions.

Some major earth arrangements made for youth initiations still exist. The tribe did not practise circumcision or tooth evulsion. The initiates were taught medicine at these earth arrangements by old doctors and warriors. Selected initiates received incisions across the side and abdomen. A stone was inserted behind the skin to form a pocket to accommodate the sacred stone or message sticks for these future tribal elders. The severity of the cruel and vigorous rituals of higher initiation often proved fatal. Both sexes wore cicatrices on the face, chest, back and buttocks in designs according to tribal law.

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Reference: National Parks leaflet ; source R Paine's recording.
Bridge is an ancient aboriginal (bomber) name signifying 'thunder or rainstorms', given to it long ago. Long before white man's homestead were the range. Here lies a beautiful, historic little village lying east of Bellevue at Bridge being deemed its name. The unique discovery dates back to discovery of flintshire. In March 1809, Bridge was the first village named by Howe, Chapman, Banks and others in leaving the ranges. The inflow described from a report in Welbeck's Quest on all the aboriginal places remaining. In manner by Dr. Dodd.

After its original discovery of first persons, when it is authentic records were the Mr. Thomas, Seale, the and William Muskegna, Mr. Muskegna being the c. 1826.

The journey to make for Rockdale then Cool, Potty a Hawkes Valley, being undertaken on foot, a blizzard they met in her on this course. A day later Mr. Seale returned to his wife and eldest child - the late Thomas Seale, who in the c. taken in arms. In a number of years + augmented child (Mr. Thomas, Seale sen) returned at Bridge by request of joint a land for 7 years.

Muskegna were set out to ye R. In his wife + eldest child. Mr. William Muskegna - to take up position at Bridge, where the family lived until his death in 1902.

Rendement quickly followed as to rents later by having in hand to make known, Mr. Muskegna at Bridge, a man of factor. 8 19 to Ender.

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untouched - impress

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Dooliv wing whole. (Mr. Edmund Sible)

By - Yong Logan c. Doolivms. (old)

GIRAFFE (Hume thru' titles)

fully into Cottonwood, new name

Signed: March 195.
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