



BURIGON

RADICALS, RENEGADES & REVOLUTIONARIES

Burigon, also known as Long Jack, was a leader of the Awakabal people of the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie district. Much of what is known about Burigon comes from the accounts of colonial officials, in particular James Wallis (1785-1858), who was commandant of the penal settlement at Newcastle between 1816 and 1818. Wallis described Burigon as "the elder chieftain of his tribe, ... a keen, shrewd fellow, attached to me and to the Europeans generally from interested motives, for we often administered to his wants". Other accounts described Burigon as "a sensible and intelligent man" who was "very active in apprehending the runaways from the settlement". Unfortunately such co-operation led to his death in 1821, when he was stabbed by an absconding Newcastle convict whom he had attempted to recapture. The man who killed Burigon became the first European tried, convicted and executed under British law for the murder of an Aboriginal man in Australia.

It is believed that Burigon's friendships with Wallis and others led to the remarkable visual records of the Awakabal people created by convict artists Joseph Lycett and Walter Preston during this time. Burigon is thought to have accompanied the artists on their sketching trips, providing access to places that would ordinarily have been closed to non-Aboriginal people. This work, however, may be a depiction of a corroboree staged during Governor Macquarie's visit to Newcastle in August 1818.