‘Looking back, there was a lot we missed’

An examination of how settler descendants from South Australia’s North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts know and understand the nineteenth-century colonial past

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, 2014
Abstract

Drawing primarily on a series of qualitative interviews and site visits, plus archival research, personal experience and a survey of local histories, this thesis examines how the occupation of land in the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts of South Australia in the nineteenth century is known, understood and articulated by settler descendants who continue to live on and/or have close connections with that land. In particular, this thesis seeks to understand the overwhelming absence of stories and knowledge about the traditional owners of these districts (the Ngadjuri and Nukunu) among this group of settler descendants, and the sense that the histories of Aboriginal people are separate or disconnected from their own (settler) histories.

Mid-northern settler descendants who have grown up on land occupied by their family for generations primarily draw on their own experiences and those of their forebears when making sense of the past. This thesis argues that while the past known through external sources such as local written histories, plaques or information boards orientates and shapes settler descendants’ historical consciousness, the past which is most powerfully known and readily related to has been absorbed through everyday life – through dwelling in place and among others with whom settler descendants share experiences, memories and histories.

Our experiences are mediated and articulated in accordance with the social world in which we belong and the cultural system in which we have grown up; our consciousness of the past is formed and shaped in socially, culturally, historically and geographically specific ways. In the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts, a dominant settler-colonial historical epistemology in which South Australia is understood as *terra nullius* at the time of British occupation and in which Aboriginal people are understood as ‘other’, as nomadic and primitive, continues to frame and orientate settler descendants’ understandings of the early colonial period. Stories of Aboriginal presence and settler–Aboriginal interaction which are decipherable in family stories, local histories, nomenclature and through country itself contain the potential to disrupt and unsettle this historical epistemology. This thesis examines how these alternative stories are received, interpreted and subsequently conveyed.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank all the people who so generously shared their time, memories, stories and knowledge with me, and who unhesitatingly agreed to the recording of our conversations. These people are too numerous to individually thank on this page. A list of everyone who met with me for recorded interviews appears in Appendix 1. Also listed are people who showed me around their homes (their houses and/or their properties) but whom I did not record for various reasons but primarily due to time constraints and a need to limit the scope of this project. To all, thank you for your warmth and hospitality, your openness and honesty. In particular I’d like to thank Julia Clarke, Ian Warnes and Heather Sizer for going well beyond the call of duty with help and assistance.

Several people I have spoken with during the course of this project have since died. I am deeply grateful for the chance to have met or reconnected with these people, to have recorded their memories, their reflections on life and their insights. For those in their eighties and nineties, whose grandparents and parents were alive in the nineteenth century, their knowledge of the colonial past is invaluable and irreplaceable. I feel extremely fortunate that I was able to speak with many people of this generation.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by an Australian Postgraduate Award. An additional grant was provided by the Australian Research Council for the ‘Social Memory and Historical Justice’ project, Discovery Project DP0877630. I also acknowledge and thank Mary-Jo O’Rourke, an Accredited Editor with the Institute of Professional Editors, for proofreading and copyediting this thesis.

To the staff at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research (the ISR) who sat on panels and listened to various presentations, read sections of chapters and provided constructive feedback, thank you for your unwavering enthusiasm and support for this project and your valuable insights and perspectives. Tom Gara has been typically generous in sharing his great historical knowledge of people and places. To my fellow postgrads at the ISR, what intelligent, warm and inspiring people you are! In particular I acknowledge the collegial support of Josefine Raasch, Kath Wilson, Jill Stockwell, Steffi Scherr, Michaela McCallahan, Annika Lems, Jasmina Kijevcanin and Christine Horn. I look forward to hearing where your passions lead you in the future. I would especially like to thank Christine Horn for providing the maps which appear in this thesis.
To my supervisors, Klaus Neumann and Ian McShane, thank you. To Klaus; for introducing me to scholars and ideas that have inspired and challenged me; for organising such brilliant workshops and residential seminars; for your ability to succinctly summarise the weaknesses of a chapter or paper in a few short sentences and your close attention to detail. To Ian; for your considered and pertinent insights, sound advice and easy-going personality.

To Nat Mulraney and Roxxy Bent, many thanks for your enduring and consistent interest in this project and for helping me debrief and problem-solve while either getting some much needed exercise and fresh air or during our shared writing days. Long may our catch-ups continue.

To the rest of my friends (if you ever read this) – thank you for your friendship, laughter and patience. Special thanks to all the people ‘from home’ – from Hallett in particular but the mid-north in general. You’ve been in my thoughts constantly over the past few years and the strong and enduring bonds I formed with you during my childhood years have influenced my research and thinking. Thank you to my brother George Krichauff and my childhood friend Amy Sullivan for hospitably suppling me with a bed and a base whenever I was in Melbourne for PhD related business.

To my immediate family: YES – it’s over! Thank you to Henry and Mary Krichauff for all you do, all the time. We are so lucky to have you. To Sam, Emily, Jemima and Hamish Crawford, thank you for being there and for being you.
This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference has been made in the text.

To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Much of the material used in this thesis comes from interviews which were conducted in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Swinburne University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee.

Skye Krichauff, August 2014
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Introduction: Cappeedee

I am driving up to Cappeedee, a sheep and wheat property situated in the Booborowie Valley, approximately two hundred kilometres north of the South Australian capital city of Adelaide, and seven kilometres north-west of the township of Hallett. Cappeedee has been the home of my mother’s family for five generations. I am returning to Cappeedee to interview my cousin and my uncle as part of my quest to understand how settler descendants who have grown up on and continue to have close connections with land that was occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century are conscious of the colonial past. I am interested in learning if and how Aboriginal people feature in the narratives and understandings of this group of people.

I grew up on Popperinghi, a property which neighbours Cappeedee to the north. When I was young, Cappeedee was the home of my cousins (who were close in age to my brother and me) and my uncle and aunt. As my mother's childhood home and a place which was part of our everyday lives, in many ways Cappeedee felt like our home too. We learned about our maternal family's connection with Cappeedee as we went about our lives – through playing in the house, gardens and sheds when we were younger, and through exploring the hills and creek-lines and helping our fathers with the sheep-work when we were older. We grew up absorbing stories and knowledge of Cappeedee through being in place and through listening to my mother’s, uncles', grandparents’ and great-aunts’ conversations. My maternal family’s consciousness of the colonial past and their deep attachment and sense of belonging to Cappeedee transferred to us.

My parents sold Popperinghi in the late 1990s. My uncle and aunt have semi-retired to Adelaide and their son, Angus, has moved into the big house. I haven’t been ‘home’, ‘back to Hallett’, for almost ten years. I drive up the Mt Bryan Valley, between the towns of Burra and Mt Bryan, past the properties Three Trees, Woollana and Mackerode. Massive windfarms now cover the bare hills on the
western side of the highway. Not long after my visit to Cappeedee, a South Australian Museum employee told me that Ngadjuri descendants had concerns over the positioning of the windfarms. Ngadjuri (which translates as ‘we men’) is the name currently used to refer to the original owners of a vast country which extends over much of the mid-north and incorporates the Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys.¹ No descendants of the original owners have lived in the North-Eastern Highlands for over a century (I discuss the historical absence of Ngadjuri from this district in chapter 8). In 1995, descendants of Barney Waria learned of their Ngadjuri connections through a historian working at the South Australian Museum.² Since then other families with Ngadjuri ancestry have been identified. Some Ngadjuri descendants have begun the process of connecting with the land of their forebears.³

Figure 1. The mid-north of South Australia.

¹ Ngadjuri territory extends from Freeling and Truro in the south to Koonamore and Plumbago in the north, from Booleroo and Gladstone in the west to Mannahill in the east. See Fred Warrior, Fran Knight, Sue Anderson, Adele Pring, Ngadjuri: Aboriginal People of the Mid North Region of South Australia (Adelaide: SASOSE Council Inc., 2005), 9.
² Warrior et al., Ngadjuri, 6.
³ Pat Waria-Read, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Adelaide, 26 November 2010; Vincent Branson, interview with Skye Krichauff, Elizabeth Grove, 1 June 2012.
After learning of some brutal murders that had occurred in the vicinity of Mt Bryan during the early colonial years, Ngadjuri descendants were worried the installation of the wind turbines would disturb what the museum employee referred to as a ‘massacre site’. These murders are not part of common knowledge among those who live in the area which, throughout this thesis, I refer to as the North-Eastern Highlands. I had come across references to the brutality of early pastoralist John Hallett’s overseer, William Carter Moore, several years earlier while working as a researcher assisting in the compilation of a register of frontier violence in South

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4 In her history of Hallett, Marlene Richards refers to the district between Burra and Peterborough as the North-Eastern Highlands, *Hallett: A History of Town and District* (Hallett: The author, 1977).

5 This term is not commonly used by local residents, but usefully describes a geographical area which incorporates the Hallett, Booborowie and Mt Bryan districts.
Australia and the Northern Territory. The murders had occurred in a district I knew well and which was relatively close to the place I grew up. I closely scrutinised every historical record I could find to learn all I could about the circumstances and those involved. The archival records are far from conclusive. Two hundred sheep from the flock of a shepherd named Charles Spratt were found in the possession of local Aboriginal people. The principal suspect, William Moore Carter, initially told the local Justice of the Peace that in recovering the sheep he had killed one man with a sword and set a dog on a pregnant woman and given the child to the dog to eat. This shocking detail is not readily forgotten; it haunted those investigating the case in 1844 and it continues to haunt me. Six weeks later, Carter changed his statement, saying he saw ‘no dead natives’ nor believed any had been killed. An alternative account was provided by witness Pari Kudnutya (alias Paddy). According to Pari Kudnutya, a man was wounded in four places with a sword and died three days later, a woman was wounded with a gun and died one day later, and two other men were wounded but recovered. The murdered man’s name was Nyunirra Bourka and the woman was referred to as Maryann. A bureaucratic trail of orders, statements and reports indicate that those in senior positions of authority – the Protector of Aborigines, the Governor and the Attorney General – took these murders seriously. Carter absconded, but Spratt and the other European shepherds who witnessed the murders were imprisoned while awaiting their Supreme Court trial.

While some museum staff, historians and Ngadjuri descendants may be aware of these deaths, they are not part of the social memory of current generations I spoke with who live in and/or who have grown up in the district, despite the inclusion of

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5 Protector Moorhouse to the Colonial Secretary, 7 October 1844, Government Record Group (hereafter GRG) 24/6/1844/1120.
6 GRG 24/6/1844/1120.
7 Protector Moorhouse to the Colonial Secretary, 6 December 1844, GRG 24/6/1844/1446.
8 The names Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann are given in the *South Australian Register*, 12 March 1845.
10 These men were William Smith, James Pritchard, John Iravaiskis and Charles Pritt; see GRG 24/6/1844/1467.
a description of Carter’s crime in a local written history which was published in 1985.¹¹ Unlike other areas in South Australia and across Australia, there are no local equivalents to Bluff Rock, Elliston or Coniston in the North-Eastern Highlands.¹² As a child, teenager and while researching this project, I never caught a whiff – from grandparents, neighbours, friends, pub talk or schoolyard gossip – of settler violence. No stories of poisonings, shootings or pushing off cliffs, no stories of Aboriginal ‘treachery’ – of shepherds’ heads in camp ovens, spearings, clubbings or dismemberings. Nor did I hear stories of nineteenth-century cross-cultural interaction and accommodation, of settler benevolence or ‘amusing’, ‘childlike’ or ‘loyal’ Aboriginal people.

In seeking to learn how widespread this lack of stories was and to further understand it, I have conducted a series of interviews and site visits with settler descendants with generational connections to land in the mid-north, southern Flinders Ranges and the Yorke and Eyre peninsulas and with people who identify as Ngadjuri, Nukunu or Narungga. Throughout this thesis, I refer to the non-Aboriginal people I interviewed as ‘settler descendants’. I recognise that the term ‘settler’ has ‘a deceptively benign and domesticated ring which masks the violence of colonial encounters’.¹³ I respect the political statement made by scholars who refer to all non-Aboriginal people who live in this land, regardless of how many generations their family has lived here, as ‘settlers’, ‘colonists’ or ‘invaders’ – terms which do not mask the politics or the power inherent in the occupation of another people’s land. However, indiscriminately and uniformly referring to diverse groups of people who have distinct histories, inhabit diverse geographical districts and have different lifestyles and occupations under homogenising terms such as ‘white Australians’, ‘settlers’ or ‘colonists’ inhibits nuanced and subtle analysis.

Without precision, distinctions between diverse groups of people, historical and current, are subsumed and lost. I perceive my interviewees’ forebears to be a specific type of colonist, namely colonists who occupied land for agriculture and who settled on the land. There is a time limit for which the application of the term ‘settler’ is relevant and useful – my interviewees, their parents and (for many) their grandparents did not settle but were/are settled. Throughout this thesis, I try to employ terms which are specific and appropriate to the people and actions being discussed. I do not use the term ‘settler descendant’ lightly or unthinkingly but because I perceive that it most succinctly describes the mindset, lifestyles, attitudes, ways of being and lived experiences of my interviewees. With regard to Nukunu and Ngadjuri, when I am referring to people known to identify with the country of those groups, I employ those terms. When quoting or referring to the sentiments of nineteenth century settlers and their descendants, I use the terms of reference used by those I am referring to.

I formally interviewed fifty people and I informally met and conversed with at least that many again. Interviews were semi-structured, qualitative interviews which lasted between one and four hours and were usually conducted in the interviewees’ homes. They generally began with people talking about their own experiences, beginning with their childhoods and progressing through their lives as I found that people quickly relaxed, increased in confidence and became more expansive and reflective when talking about their own lives. As the interview progressed, I asked about previous generations and the history of their family. Prior to meeting with potential interviewees, during preliminary telephone conversations and on the information sheet which was subsequently sent, I described my particular interest in hearing stories or information about Aboriginal people. Rarely during interviews did settler-descended interviewees refer to Aboriginal people without direct questioning or prompting. As such, at some stage I asked settler-descended interviewees if they remembered or had ever heard stories about Aboriginal people living or working on their property or in the district, if they had ever come across any signs of Aboriginal occupation and what they thought happened to the Aboriginal people of the district.

14 See Appendix 1 for a list of people formally interviewed.
In this thesis I focus my examination on a specific group of people's consciousness of the colonial past – namely mid-northern settler descendants who grew up on or near land which was occupied and purchased by their forebears in the colonial era and which has been continually owned and inhabited by their family. This includes cousins and siblings who did not necessarily grow up on or who no longer live on the family property. A consciousness of the past includes all the many ways through which the past is known, related to and articulated. An individual’s consciousness of the past may be explicitly voiced – it may be consciously narrated and physically expressed through verbal, textual and/or artistic means – but it may equally be implicitly understood and non-verbalised. A consciousness includes an awareness of one’s existence, of sensations and cognitions; it is ‘the thoughts and feelings, collectively, of an individual, or of an aggregate of the people’.\textsuperscript{15} In addition to interviews and site visits conducted with settler descendants, I have surveyed the public histories of fifteen mid-northern towns and over forty mid-northern written histories.\textsuperscript{16} As a mid-northern settler descendant who grew up next to land occupied by my forebears in the nineteenth century, I also draw on personal experience.

Through their oral narratives, settler descendants tell us what from the past lives on in memory. Oral narratives tell us what the speaker knows, what stories from the past he or she considers relevant and important in the present, how memories are retained and triggered. Through oral history we can learn of the concrete processes by which people make sense of their pasts, how they connect their lived experiences to socio-cultural contexts, how the past lives on in the present and is used to make sense of the world around them.\textsuperscript{17} Oral histories tell us the meaning of past events, the truth of an epoch or an era.\textsuperscript{18} During interviews and site visits, I

\textsuperscript{15} Macquarie Dictionary, eds A Delbridge, JRL Bernard, D Blair, P Peters, S Butler (Macquarie University: Macquarie Library, 1991 [Second Edition]). Raymond Williams states that the word consciousness ‘took on a general sense of awareness’ in the seventeenth century; Keywords (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983 [1976]), 320.

\textsuperscript{16} See Appendix 2 for a list of towns and Appendix 3 for a list of local written histories surveyed.

\textsuperscript{17} Michael Frisch, A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 188.

was alert to bodily gestures and postures, the volume and tone of voice, the confidence or hesitancy with which a story or memory was recalled. All indicate attitudes and emotions and tell us much about the different ways the past is known and related to and the sentiments and assumptions of the speaker.\(^{19}\)

It is a widely accepted understanding that nations, societies and individuals should look to the past when making sense of the present. And vice versa; various eminent and wise scholars have expounded on the ways present events and understandings influence interpretations and representations of the past.\(^{20}\) There is a dynamic, interactive relationship between past and present. While I recognise and demonstrate the ways and extents to which current events and circumstances have shaped my interviewees’ narratives of the past, I am equally interested in exploring how and to what extent past events and experiences shape current narratives. As such, I examine how the experiences of their forebears have shaped my interviewees’ attitudes, emotions and general consciousness of the colonial past.

My interviewees spent their formative years in and many continue to belong to geographically proximate communities which are orientated around the local town, where communication is largely through regular face-to-face interaction. Place and people are crucial to mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. In order to provide necessary context and detail for the stories I was told, I focus my findings on interviews conducted with mid-northern settler descendants connected with two specific geographical areas, namely the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts.


The Wirrabara district is in the heart of Nukunu country.\textsuperscript{21} While no Ngadjuri people have been present in the North-Eastern Highlands since the 1870s, Aboriginal people have not been physically present in the Wirrabara district since the 1920s. Nukunu man Fred Graham was born at Wirrabara in the 1890s.\textsuperscript{22} A proud group of Nukunu survivors have continually remained on parts of their ancestral land throughout the twentieth century up to the present, namely at Port

\textsuperscript{21} Conversation with Darcy Evans, Pt Augusta, 30 November 2010; Luise Hercus, \emph{A Nukunu Dictionary} (Canberra: Australian Institute Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1992), 9.
\textsuperscript{22} Hercus, \emph{A Nukunu Dictionary}, 12.
Germein and the nearby Baroota Reserve, and Port Augusta. These towns and places are on the western, coastal side of the Wirrabara Forest and the Southern Flinders Ranges. The Wirrabara district is on the inland side (the eastern side) of the ranges. The lengthy physical absence of traditional owners from both the Wirrabara and North-East Highland districts is a significant factor which needs to be taken into account when analysing the historical consciousness of settler descendants from these districts.

The historical consciousness of mid-northern settler descendants has not previously been the focus of academic study. Scholars who are interested in the memory of colonialism in other rural areas of Australia, and in white Australians’ historical consciousness in general, have focused their examination on social memory, public histories and foundation myths.23 However, while public histories and national myths reflect, inform and to some degree shape individuals’ consciousness of the past, I argue that they are neither the primary nor the most powerful way through which to further understanding into how and why specific groups of people know and relate to the colonial past. Scholars who are interested in how individuals and communities remember the past advocate a total immersion in specific histories in order to formulate meaningful questions about the changes and variations of remembrance, of its successive or alternating phases.24

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23 For scholarly work which investigates the social and cultural memory of colonialism South Australia, see Foster et al., Fatal collisions; Foster and Nettelbeck, Out of the Silence; Susan Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community: The Role and Uses of History in Four Rural Communities in South Australia’ (PhD thesis, Flinders University, 2002). For influential work which has investigated the social and cultural memory in other areas or across Australia, see Elizabeth Furniss, Timeline History and the Anzac Myth: Settler Narratives of History in a Northern Australian Town’ Oceania 71, (2001): 279‒297; Chris Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism: History as Social Memory (Cambridge; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), 1997; Chris Healy, Forgetting Aborigines (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008). For significant and influential scholarly investigations into white Australians’ historical consciousness, see Ann Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, Exodus and Exile in White Australian Historical Mythology’ in Imaginary Homelands, Journal of Australian Studies 23, no. 61, (1999): 1‒18; Andrew Lattas, ‘Aborigines and Contemporary Australian Nationalism’, in Race Matters: Indigenous Australians and ‘Our’ Society, eds Gillian Cowlishaw and Barry Morris (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997), 223‒255; Deborah Bird Rose, ‘Rupture and the Ethics of Care in Colonized Space’, in Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the Humanities and the Public Intellectual, eds Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1997), 190‒216.

My focus on the oral narratives of a specific group of settler descendants who are connected to a distinct geographical locality enables a detailed and nuanced investigation into the concrete workings of memory. I can hone in at the micro-level to trace how and why a particular consciousness of the colonial past emerged and is perpetuated – I can trace the historical and practical origins of my interviewees’ family stories. In order to provide relevant historical and geographical context and demonstrate the processes, events and circumstances which have influenced and shaped my interviewees’ historical consciousness, I have conducted archival research and I refer to the work of other historians. In the Wirrabara district I focus my analysis on six descendants of George Wauchope Cameron of Doughboy Creek, namely members of the Cameron, Sizer and Milne families. The Milne family property is White Park. In the North-Eastern Highland district I draw heavily on interviews conducted with Melva McInnes of Three Trees, three descendants of Gustav Gebhardt of Mackerode, two descendants of Billy Dare who occupied land at Piltimittiappa, Wallinga and Glen Dare, and five members of my maternal family of Cappeedee.

Many of the stories drawn on in this thesis, particularly those of Aboriginal–settler interaction, are unusual among the numerous people I interviewed as the majority of settler descendants I spoke with had no stories of Aboriginal people and appeared to have given little through to this aspect of the past. For differing reasons, the stories and narratives drawn on are particularly pertinent examples through which to illustrate and examine mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness. Giorgio Agamben argues that a paradigm can be understood as a single element within a set (or a group) made up of elements (people) who commonly adhere to a set of values and principles, the single element serves as a common example and ‘permits the formulation of a specific and coherent tradition of inquiry’.25 A paradigm can usefully establish and make


intelligible a broader historical problematic context. The stories referred to in this thesis are paradigmatic of the ways settler descendants know and understand the colonial past, they are a useful means through which to analyse mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the historical and enduring implications of colonialism.

Common among many settler descendants was a perception that their family were the first people to live on the land that became the family property, that their family were the ‘original owners’. In the North-Eastern Highlands, I have been asked if Aboriginal people ever lived in the district. This lack of recognition of prior Aboriginal ownership and occupation indicates that the nationwide myth of *terra nullius* continues to prevail among some people in some areas of Australia in the twenty-first century. Emerging with Captain Cook’s ‘discovery’ of the eastern coast of Australia in 1770, the myth of *terra nullius* – a legal term which was used to ‘to justify the occupation or possession of territories that were unoccupied or not occupied according to Western precepts of civilisation’ – is central to Australian settler-colonial ideology and continues to provide reasons and justifications for Aboriginal dispossession.

Myths can be understood as stories drawn from a society's history which symbolise that society's complexities and contradictions. As Richard Slotkin explains:

> myths are formulated as ways of explaining problems that arise in the course of historical experience. The most important and longest-lived of these formulations develop around areas of concern that persist over long periods of time.

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26 Agamben, *Signature of All Things*, 17.
The Australian myth of *terra nullius* demonstrates a selective interpretation of historic events. This partial truth is based on assumptions made by British navigators, imperialists and colonists in the late-eighteenth—early-nineteenth century which provided moral justification for the occupation of another people’s land. Although narratives of unutilised land and ‘immaculate origin’ are common among settler-colonial collectives, Australia’s foundation myth differs from other settler-colonial societies who have different histories.\(^{30}\) South Australia’s foundation myth likewise reflects historical contingencies which distinguish South Australia from other Australian states.

By the early 1830s when the establishment of the colony of South Australia was becoming a reality in the Colonial Office in London, an awareness of Aboriginal occupancy of and attachment to specific tracts of land was widespread and accepted enough among the British population for relevant government officials to ensure that ‘proper mechanisms for acquiring land from the Aborigines’ were clearly articulated in the Colony’s relevant founding documents.\(^{31}\) In February 1836, King William IV made it clear in the Letters Patent that Aboriginal people’s proprietary rights to land were to be respected. The King stated that the Colony of South Australia could be officially proclaimed:

> Provided always that nothing in those our Letters Patent contained shall affect or be construed to affect the rights of any Aboriginal Natives of the said Province to the actual occupation or enjoyment of their own Person or the Person of their descendants of any Lands therein now actually occupied or enjoyed by such natives.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) See for example Elizabeth Elbourne, ‘The Sin of the Settler: The 1835‒36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates Over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth-Century British White Empire’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 3 (Winter 2003); Sean Berg, ‘A fractured landscape: The effect on Aboriginal Title to Land by the establishment of the Province of South Australia,’ in *Coming to Terms: Aboriginal Title in South Australia*, ed. Sean Berg (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2010), 5.

When Governor Hindmarsh proclaimed the Colony on the shores of Holdfast Bay on 28 December 1836, he reiterated the provisions made by the King regarding the rights and protections of the colony's Aboriginal people. Although the word 'ownership' does not appear in the Letters Patent or other affiliated documents (Aboriginal people were understood as possessing lands 'in occupation and enjoyment'), observant Europeans soon became aware that Aboriginal people had a system of hereditary ownership and strict laws governing territorial rights. Five years after the establishment of the colony, a Select Committee of the House of Commons was presented with evidence that ‘every adult native possesses a district of land which he calls “his country”, and which he inherited from his father’.

There is a widespread understanding among South Australians that their state’s origins differ from those of other Australian states. Indeed, ‘this idea of “a sense of difference” is commonly perceived as emblematic of the state’s history’. South Australians have a collective awareness that the colony and state have a long history of being at the forefront of political and social reform. Some unique aspects of the colony’s foundation – such as the lack of convicts, lack of an established church, the Wakefield scheme’s principles of regulated land sales and assisted migration, and relative legislative independence – continue to endure in collective memory. However, the ground-breaking clause in the Letters Patent which recognised the rights of Aboriginal people and their descendants to continual occupation and enjoyment of their land has not been incorporated into South Australia’s foundation myth. Although a vague and self-congratulatory understanding that the founders and settlers of South Australia were less violent and more enlightened in their dealings with Aboriginal people exists, the sentiments and intentions expressed in the Letters Patent regarding the hereditary rights of Aboriginal people to their lands have not been remembered.

34 George Fife Angas, evidence given to the Select Committee of the House of Commons on South Australia, cited in Berg, Coming to Terms, 9.
A close analysis and comparison of Wirrabara and North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past highlights the diversity and complexity of historical and ongoing experiences of colonisation. The occupation of Australia varied from colony to colony, region to region, district to district. Factors including: the historical era in which each colony was established and the political implications of such timing; regional variations in geography, topography, vegetation, water and food resources; distinctions in the timing, speed and intensity with which districts were occupied and settled; differences in the type of colonist (squatter, pastoralist or freeholder, selector or labourer, place of origin, reasons for emigrating, education levels and previous experiences); distinctions between different Aboriginal groups and individuals; all introduce significant contingencies. Micro-studies allow such factors to be taken into account, just as they allow differences between interviewees (such as personality, life experience, gender, stage in life, socio-economic group) to be included in the analysis.

This detailed study complicates and provides nuance to the findings and assumptions of scholars working in a variety of fields. Scholars who are interested in settler identity and belonging have found that non-Aboriginal Australians are becoming increasingly anxious about their presence in Australia and insecure and uncertain regarding their right to belong.\textsuperscript{36} Mid-northern settler descendants have a firm sense of emplacement and belonging and I examine why this is so. Broad generalisations apparent in fields such as settler-colonial studies, the memory of frontier violence, cross-cultural history and the social memory of Australian colonialism which may be valid at the national level are not necessarily the most useful or accurate when furthering understandings at the micro-level. For example, I have noticed a tendency among some scholars to conflate and homogenise historical and current rural experiences by, for example: referring to all who occupied land in rural districts during the colonial period under the homogenous term ‘settlers’; understanding sparsely settled rural regions distant from the

capital cities in the colonial period as ‘the frontier’; assuming those who have
generational connections with rural districts are closer to the violence of the
frontier than other non-Aboriginal Australians; and assuming that people living in
rural areas are more likely to have contact with Aboriginal people than people
living in urban areas. The extent and calibre of cross-cultural relations varied
among nineteenth-century settlers and the remembrance of cross-cultural
relations varies among their descendants.

The disconnect
Scholars investigating the history and memory of settler–Aboriginal relations in
other areas of Australia have noted that Aboriginal people are frequently part of
the social memory of small rural communities. Indeed, remembering or referring
to the presence of Aboriginal people is ‘one more proof of the length of time that a
family has been in the area’. In some areas of the mid-north, settler descendants
recall Ngadjuri and Nukunu people’s presence in the nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries. In the early 1970s, local historian Nancy Robinson recorded
stories of Ngadjuri people travelling through or regularly visiting Mannanarie,
Hornsdale and Appila. Settler descendants with connections to Riverton and
Watervale told me similar stories. In the Wirrabara area, I was informed of and
shown sites where corroborees had been held and where a group had regularly
camped until the early 1920s. People from this area also spoke of ‘the Reserve’


38 For example Healy, *From the Ruins of Colonialism*, 120; Foster and Nettelbeck, *Out of the Silence*, 160.


41 I have been told stories of Aboriginal people walking through the hills near Riverton; Ian Hannaford, recorded conversation with Skye Krichauff, Bugle Ranges, 7 May 2013; and asking for food near Saddleworth; Meredith Satchell, conversation with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 8 June 2010.

42 Ron Sizer and Heather Sizer, interview with Skye Krichauff, Wirrabara, 5 July 2010; Peter Hollitt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burnside Farm, 7 July 2010; Colin Cameron, interview and site visit with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue and Doughboy Creek, 7 July 2010.
(the Baroota Reserve) over ‘the other side of the range’. Thus, although it was sparse and fragmentary, I did not find a uniform absence of stories about Aboriginal people in mid-northern settler descendants’ narratives of the colonial past. What I did find pervasive and widespread during preliminary telephone conversations and early in interviews was a sense that certain aspects of the colonial past – namely cross-cultural interaction (violent or friendly) and the dispossession of Aboriginal people – were not relevant to my interviewees’ lives or histories or the histories of their families or districts.

In 1968, anthropologist WEH Stanner highlighted the farcical nature of the assumption that the land of the Australian continent was disposable at the time of British occupation because as ‘waste and desert’ it was unowned. Stanner pointed out that this assumption, ‘so large, grand and remote from actuality’, is one of the ‘barely acknowledged elements of the real structure of Australia’. Referring to the fable of the Emperor’s new clothes, Stanner described non-Aboriginal Australian’s continuing lack of acknowledgement of this enormous, this ‘royal’, historical injustice of Aboriginal dispossession, as ‘the great Australian silence’. As with the complicit crowd who perpetuated the sham of the Emperor’s naked parade, Stanner argued that the widespread inattention given to Aboriginal people was not a matter of ‘absentmindedness’ but of ‘averting of one’s gaze’; ‘what may well have begun as a simple forgetting … turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale’. Stanner was optimistic that recent and forthcoming research would break non-Aboriginal Australians’ lack of acknowledgement and concern regarding the historical injustice of Aboriginal dispossession and the subsequent suffering of Aboriginal people.

Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010; Robert Milne, interview with Skye Krichauff, White Park, 20 March 2012; Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010. Baroota continues to be a place of significance for the Nukunu community; Jared Thomas, interview with Skye Krichauff, UniSA, 5 November 2010.


Stanner stated, ‘I hardly think that what I have called “the great Australian silence” will survive the research that is now in course’, ‘The Boyer Lectures’, 191.
Providing historical and scholarly context for Stanner’s much quoted and oft referred to Boyer lectures, Ann Curthoys and Mitchell Rolls point out that, at the time of Stanner’s lectures, numerous papers and books expressly concerned with Aboriginal people had been published and reissued, policies concerning Aboriginal people were being debated in parliament and the actions of Aboriginal advocacy groups and their non-Aboriginal supporters were being reported in the media through newspapers, journals, magazines and radio broadcasts.\(^{48}\) The visual and performing arts as well as ‘high’ and ‘middle’ brow literature contributed to the ‘crescendo’ of noise disturbing Stanner’s silence.\(^{49}\) Curthoys and Rolls make the point that, in 1968, it was not a lack of available information that kept Aboriginal people out of the consciousness of most Australians.

The same observation can be made today. The plethora of information which was widely available in the 1960s has dramatically increased and revisions to Australia’s history are widely and popularly accepted. However, despite ready access to these revised accounts, evident in popular films such as The Tracker and Rabbit Proof Fence, television documentaries such as The First Australians and novels such as The Secret River, in the early twenty-first century, Aboriginal people continue to fall outside the historical consciousness of many non-Aboriginal Australians.\(^{50}\) Linn Miller observes that despite ‘popular access to a revised socio-historical account’ few Australians have developed more honest or transparent accounts of their being in this land.\(^{51}\) Anthony Moran has found that ‘Aborigines still stand outside many people’s social worlds, both physically and imaginatively’.\(^{52}\) The interviews and site visits I conducted between 2010 and 2013 indicate that Aboriginal people stand outside mid-northern settler


\(^{49}\) Rolls, ‘Why Didn’t You Listen’, 11–33.

\(^{50}\) The Tracker, directed by Rolf de Heer, Ronin Films, 2002; Rabbit Proof Fence, directed by Phillip Noyce, Rumbalara Films, 2002; First Australians, produced by Rachel Perkins, Blackfella Films, SBS, 2008; Kate Grenville, The Secret River (Text Publishing: Melbourne, 2005).


descendants’ social imaginary and that revised socio-historical accounts have had little impact on their consciousness of the colonial past.

Some scholars understand this lack of reflection and concern as due to ignorance. Peter Read, for example, states that rural people who live ‘out West’ of Sydney have a ‘historical and contemporary ignorance of Aboriginality’.\(^{53}\) Other scholars such as Rolls interpret claims of ‘not knowing’ as illustrative of a ‘confected ignorance’.\(^{54}\) Chris Healy is representative of those who understand the absence of Aboriginal people in Australians’ consciousness – in their social and cultural memory – as a ‘forgetting’.\(^{55}\) Others, such as Lorenzo Veracini, perceive it as illustrative of disavowal and denial.\(^{56}\)

This turning away from, forgetting or ignoring of injustices committed by the perpetrator group to which you belong is not confined to Australian settler descendants. Gabriele Schwab, who grew up in post–World War Two Germany, draws attention to the link between the Holocaust and violent histories of Western colonialism and imperialism, and examines the complicated and diffuse ways the legacy of perpetrators is manifest in second generations.\(^{57}\) Schwab discredits the ‘infamous silencing of the Holocaust’ and makes the pertinent point that:

The facts were not hidden ... We received factual knowledge of the historical events. And yet ... the silence had not been broken. Silencing in Germany at that time was not a withholding of facts; it was caused by the absence of any kind of emotional engagement at both the personal and collective levels.\(^{58}\)

\(^{53}\) These people are represented by a group of young women whom Read refers to as the ‘Orley School girls’; Peter Read, *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (Cambridge, UK; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 77.


\(^{55}\) Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*.

\(^{56}\) Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 75–94.


In Australia, as in Germany, there was and is no shortage of information regarding the nation’s violent past.

What I found most telling during conversations, interviews and site visits was the variety of ways the topic of Aboriginal people was received and related to. If asked, during interviews and conversations with settler descendants, I would explain what I had learned about nineteenth-century Ngadjuri and Nukunu and their descendants. I tried to convey the complexity of Aboriginal–Europeans relations in the nineteenth century: how European and Aboriginal people accommodated and learned from each other, how there is much to be gleaned from the early years in addition to the violence and brutality. Responses to this information varied from genuine amazement and much interest to a general sense of disengagement and a lack of interest. Most commonly I gathered that, although people were not necessarily adverse to hearing about the Aboriginal people who had inhabited the area prior to their forebears’ arrival, the topic was perceived as not really relevant or connected to their families or their district – at best an interesting and colourful aside to (but somehow removed from) the ‘real’ history they had absorbed over the course of their lives. An initial general impression was conveyed that any injustices Aboriginal people may have suffered due to colonialism was unfortunate but inevitable, that it occurred long ago, had nothing to do with them and is now over and done with.

Like Schwab, I understand empathy to be a form of ‘intersubjective relationality – a gift of emotional connection’ from one to another.59 During initial conversations, what I found constant among the settler descendants with whom I spoke was a seeming lack of empathy for those who had been supplanted and their descendants. Regardless of the district in which they had grown up, regardless of whether they had lived all or the bulk of their lives on land occupied by their forebears or whether they had spent their adult lives in Adelaide or other cities, regions or states, regardless of whether they had knowledge and stories about nineteenth-century Aboriginal people, what was constant among the settler descendants I spoke with was the lack of connection made between their own

family’s occupation and ownership of land and the relatively privileged lifestyle this had enabled, and the dispossession, displacement and struggles of Aboriginal people, past and present. This sense of disconnection was apparent among settler descendants of both genders, of all ages (ranging in age from their late thirties to their late nineties), across a widespread geographical area, from Clare in the south to Buckleboo in the north, from east of Mt Bryan to the foot of the Yorke Peninsula in the west. Throughout this thesis I refer to settler descendants’ lack of empathetic connection with the victims of colonialism and perception of their histories as separate from the histories of Aboriginal people as the disconnect.

This disconnect is not peculiar to South Australian settler descendants and is apparent in districts where the violence of occupation is well known. In her probing and thoughtful study of the memory and narratives of a massacre of Aboriginal people in the district in which she grew up in New South Wales, Katrina Schlunke states that she had ‘always known that Aboriginal people were killed as a part of the taking of land in Australia’. Schlunke knew that everybody in her local community knew this too. However, Schlunke had never linked this knowledge with the Aboriginal people who were living in her community:

I made no connection – they were altogether other sorts of people ... I didn't know about the connections between massacre and stolen land and people. I didn't know that some of their land had become our farms.

Deborah Bird Rose argues that ‘the practice of separating the past from the present ... [is] at the heart of the colonising violence’ and ‘the elision of the present and the maintenance of relations based on a disassociation of privilege and pain are deep and persistent problems’. This thesis shows that while some aspects of the colonial past are separate from or unknown by mid-northern settler

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60 Schlunke, Bluff Rock, 11.
61 Schlunke, Bluff Rock, 12.
descendants in the present, other pasts live on. I provide a detailed analysis of my interviewees’ narratives, and consider the concrete workings of memory, to examine the selectivity of what from the past lives. Through my research I have come to realise lived experiences – the lived experience of both my interviewees and their forebears – greatly affect how the colonial past is known and remembered and how settler descendants connect the past with the present.

During interviews, it was not my intention to ‘teach’ interviewees a different version of the past, but if asked I would tell what I had learned about the districts’ traditional owners, colonial cross-cultural relations and contemporary Ngadjuri and Nukunu. For some interviewees, this triggered a ‘process of active discovery’. During interviews and site visits, some interviewees appeared more open than others to having their consciousness of the colonial past realigned and unsettled and to empathetically connect with those who had been dispossessed. For this reason, I perceive that it is not necessarily the remembrance or forgetfulness of particular aspects of the past that is the most relevant way to understand the colonising violence. The primary aim of this thesis is to examine how and why mid-northern settler descendants know, understand and relate to the colonial past in order to deepen understandings into this disconnect and, ultimately, to learn how settler descendants’ historical consciousness can be unsettled and realigned to connect with the victims of colonialism and their histories.

**Returning to Hallett and Cappeedee**

Driving between Mt Bryan and Hallett, I see abandoned workmen’s cottages and derelict gardens. My school friends and most of their parents have left the district. Farms are getting bigger and rural populations and services are decreasing. I stop when I reach Hallett – our local town; the hub and focus of the community to which I, my family, our neighbours and friends belonged; the place we went to

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63 Michael Frisch uses the phrase ‘a process of active discovery’ in *A Shared Authority*, 190.
school, for whom we played sport, where our mail was sent, where our mums did their ‘small’ shops and our dads had their Friday night drinks. I’m glad the shop and the post office and our famous pub, the Wildongoleche Hotel – ‘the Wild Dog’ – are still operating.

I park outside the Hallett Institute to see if anything has changed since I was last here. Three life-sized concrete statues of a merino ram, a merino ewe and a watchful sheepdog make me laugh. I think to myself that this is the Hallett community's more tasteful version of the Big Banana and wonder who came up with the idea of publicly commemorating the important role sheep and sheepdogs play in the lives of local residents. I notice a three-panelled information board to the side of the building. The first panel begins with an outline of the town's geographical position, climate and rainfall and refers to early pastoralists the Hallett brothers, who arrived in the district in 1842. The panel mentions the discovery of gold at Uooloo, the formation of the local council, the breeding of merino sheep and the growing of various crops. It ends with ‘world renowned polar explorer and adventurer’ Sir Hubert Wilkins, who was born in the drier country east of Hallett and Mt Bryan (referred to by locals as ‘Out-East’) in 1888. We heard little about Wilkins when I was a child, but since the 1990s his achievements have been increasingly recognised. The next panel, ‘Hallett and its environs’, provides a map – a ‘visitors guide to the Hallett area’ on which Cappeedee, Uooloo and a few other well-known homesteads are marked. The final panel chronologically lists various events of importance to the local community; beginning with Surveyor-General Frome’s exploration of the area in 1842 and John Hallett’s selection of one hundred square miles of land, it ends with the closure of the Hallett Council in 1997. I know the events listed for the 1970s and 1980s so well – the gifting of the Masonic lodge to the Catholic church, the refurbishment and rebuilding of the school, the closure of the railways.

Walking around the front of the Institute, I see the foundation stone laid by Lily (Lil) Melrose. Lil and her husband were friends of my grandparents, and my mother and her brothers regularly visited Uooloo for ‘chop picnics’. There’s the plaque commemorating the centenary of the Hallett Council which was unveiled by
Eric Ashby – ‘Pa Ashby’ – the Council’s Chairman and my friend Steph’s grandfather. I’m vividly reminded of the plaque’s unveiling and related events. The centenary celebrations were a highlight of our childhood years; they fuelled and confirmed our understandings of ‘the olden days’. A book about the district’s history, written by Marlene Richards, was published that year.\(^6\) Like most families in the district, we purchased a copy of Marlene’s book.

\(^6\) Richards, *Hallett*.  

Figure 4. Hallett Institute.
I drive out of Hallett towards Cappedee – past the closed, white wooden gates of Willogoleche and down Tommy’s Gap. Here’s the fence my cousin Sarah flew over when she crashed her car and broke her leg just days before her wedding. I notice the disintegrating dirt road we used to wind up every weekday morning in the school bus before the road was straightened and sealed. Driving through the Gap and seeing the valley laid out before me, the memories come flooding in. From this viewpoint, I know every house, road and landmark that I can see. Those who lived in this part of the Booborowie Valley orientated their everyday lives (outside the family property) around Hallett. Both the North-Eastern Highland and the Wirrabara districts have relatively stable (albeit gradually declining) populations in the low hundreds.66 In both districts, all who belong to the same local community are known identities.

66 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the 2011 Census, Hallett had a population of 231, Booborowie (which included Mt Bryan) 355 and the Wirrabara district (which included Appila and Wongyarra) 522. The Goyder Council district, which incorporates the towns and districts of Aberdeen, Apoinga, Australia Plains, Baldina, Baldry, Booborowie, Bower, Brady Creek, Braemar (Station), Bright, Brownlow, Buchanan, Bundey, Burra, Burra Eastern Districts, Burra North, Canowie, Canowie Belt, Collinsville, Copperhouse, Emu Downs, Eudunda, Farrell Flat, Franklyn, Frankton, Geranium Plains, Gum Creek, Hallelujah Hills, Hallett, Hampden, Hanson, Julia, Ketchowla, Koonoona, Kooringa, Leighton, Mallet (Reservoir), Mongolata, Mt Bryan, Neales Flat, Neath Vale, Ngapala, North Booborowie, Pandappa, Peep Hill, Point Pass, Porter Lagoon, Robertstown, Rocky Plain, Sutherlands, Terowie, Thistle Beds, Tracy, Ulooloo, Whyte-Yarcowie, Willalo, Worlds End, Worlds End Creek, Yarcowie and Yongala Vale, had a total population of 4162.
Driving down Tommy’s Gap, I think of the aptness of Edward Casey’s contention that place acts as a container for memory – that places both gather and keep animate and inanimate ‘things’ including histories, experiences, languages, thoughts and memories. Here’s the Cappeedeem mailbox where our mailbag was dropped every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. When Mum was having coffee or playing bridge with Aunty Rachel, we’d get off the bus here and walk or get a dinky on our cousins’ bikes back to Cappeedeem. Seeing the trees and the hills behind Cappeedeem, I am reminded of the times we used to spend outdoors playing, exploring, helping with the sheep. When I reach the stone entrance gate, the sense of familiarity, which has steadily increased with magnetic strength the nearer I got to Hallett, intensifies a notch or two. I am slightly apprehensive about returning to a place that I have such strong and fond memories of. On seeing the gracious sandstone homestead with its pretty bay windows and generous verandahs, a feeling of comfort and security washes over me; I feel a strong sense of belonging, of homecoming. I know this place; it feels like a part of me, it connects me with my childhood and adolescent years, with my mother, my grandparents and members of my maternal family, past and present.

How to describe this sense of home? For me it is intimate knowledge of people and place, a sanctuary from the wider world where you feel completely yourself; secure, comforted, at peace, where you are an integral part of the community, however large or small that community may be. Home is a place and a people among whom you feel a deep sense of belonging. Like the ripples of a stone thrown into water, I equate home with family, with a building, a piece of land, neighbours, a community, a district. When my friends and I went to school and university in Adelaide, we always called Hallett ‘home’. We’d check with each other who was

The Melrose Council district, which includes the towns and districts of Appila, Bangor, Baroota, Booleroo Centre, Booleroo Whim, Bruce, Charlton, Hammond, Mambray Creek, Melrose, Moockra, Murraytown, Nectar Brook, Port Flinders (colloquially Weeroona Island), Port Germein, Telowie, Terka, Willowie, Wilmington, Winninowie, Wirrabara, Wongyarra and Yandiah, had a population of 2951 in 2009.

going home for long weekends and holidays. At the pub we’d introduce our new uni friends to our childhood friends with the qualifier ‘he’s (or she’s) from home’. These few simple words were loaded with meaning and significance; through them we affirmed the length and depth of our own and our families’ friendship. Home meant the physical place and the people: the two were inseparable.

Figure 7. Cappeedee homestead.

I drive around the house and park near the back entrance. It’s a chilly autumn afternoon and when I get out of my heated car the cold cuts straight through my winter woollies. Feeling the chill of the air causes memories connected with this sensory experience to flood in. At the most physical, elemental level, the country itself – the air, the light, the colour, texture and smell of the earth, the temperature – is remembered by my body and subsequently my brain. My body feels at home here. As Casey puts it, ‘Human-beings … are ineluctably place-bound … we are placelings, and our very perceptual apparatus, our sensing body, reflects the kinds of places we inhabit’. Historian Susan Gilbert argues that the natural environment – the climate, topography and geography – is a crucial element which links people and place. When my body comes back to this place, when my skin absorbs the dryness and chill of the air, when my nose absorbs the smell of sheep and my lungs sense the fine red dust, when my eyes absorb the particular light and

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68 Casey, ‘How to get from Space to Place’, 19.
69 Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community’, 16.
the topography of this part of the earth, I am engulfed in memories that reinforce my sense of belonging and homecoming.

My cousin Angus is on the tractor. His father – Uncle Al, my mother’s brother – has come up from Adelaide to help Angus with the seeding and to speak with me. He too is out, moving machinery around. There is no one home except a couple of old sheepdogs who greet me enthusiastically. Dumping my bag in the spacious hallway, I notice that, in many ways, much is still the same. The entrance hall still has the large hall table with the ornately carved legs and inlaid top, the old lithographs still hang on the wall. The smoking room is still the family living room with the same bookshelves lining the back wall. Just as place acts as a container for memories, so do houses, furniture, other material objects. The solid stone walls of Cappeedee, the generously sized and well laid out interior, the embellishments such as the bay windows, indicate the homestead was built for comfort and prosperity, it was built to last. I grew up with a sense that the house had always been there. I think of the writings of scholars who are interested in tracing the intangible past. Ross Gibson, for example, asks how it is possible to construct a history of ‘undocumented circumstances’ and suggests that the traces might be detected ‘in landscapes, in bodies, family tales or personal memories.’ The traces can be also be detected in houses.

Different ways of knowing and relating to the past

I have described in some detail my return to Cappeedee as a concrete means through which to demonstrate the different ways mid-northern settler descendants know and relate to the past. When I drove down Tommy’s Gap and into Cappeedee, when I saw the valley, the driveway and homestead, when I felt the air and entered the house, my memories were potent; my embodied memories and memories of lived experiences in those places powerfully connected me to previous times and previous generations. At the Institute, when I saw Lily Melrose’s name, I recalled stories I had heard about Lil’s energetic and generous personality. Although we never met, I felt connected to Lil through her friendship with my family and the stories they told about her.

 Scholars who are interested in understanding the many intangible ways the past is transferred through the generations are aware of the power of family stories. Family stories contain dense nuggets – ‘primal pellets’ – of information through which attitudes, ways of thinking, sentiments and moral lessons are conveyed. Through family stories, settler descendants are connected with people, times, events and places that precede their own lifetimes. The centenary plaque prompted memories of the centenary celebrations and the re-enactments of the ‘olden-days’. The plaque didn’t prompt me to think about the ‘pioneers’ commemorated. Reading about the Hallett brothers on the information board meant little to me because I couldn’t connect what I had read with my lived experiences. I had not heard any stories about them. I knew nothing about their personalities or where they lived. I didn’t know any of their descendants. The past which is most real to me, which I most readily recall and most strongly relate to, is the past I have absorbed while living in place among others with whom I share histories and experiences.

Absorbing information about people, events and places through lived experience and knowing them through memory, through ‘the ordinary sense-making capacities we use to know most things’, differ from learning about people, events and places through reading about them on information boards or plaques or in books, or hearing about them in formal history lessons – i.e. as a result of ‘disciplined habit of the mind’. In distinguishing between different ways through which settler descendants know the colonial past, and more specifically connecting experience to memory, I draw on the work of scholars who are interested in the relationship between memory and history, social and cultural memory, and oral history.

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73 For example Geoffrey Cubitt, History and Memory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory (Oxford, UK: Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992); Irwin-Zarecka, Frames of Remembrance; Paul Connerton, How Societies Remember (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory, ed. and
Various scholars point out that memory and history tell of different relationships with the past. With memory, different times are juxtaposed and the past is brought into the present. Through history, time is understood as moving forwards along a linear time frame and being chronologically ordered. Human progress is equated with this forward movement through time and earlier times are understood as distant or separate from the present. This consciousness of the division between and evolutionary progression from past to present to future began to emerge in the eighteenth century and is an integral component of the worldview, experience and set of mentalities that can be broadly referred to as modernity. The opposition between past and present that is fundamental to ‘history’ – to historical work – is neither universal nor ‘natural’, but is a construction which is specific to certain people, certain societies, certain classes and certain cultures. The chronologically ordered information contained on Hallett’s information board is a concrete example of how the past is understood through history. History distances the past from the present. Throughout this thesis I am looking beyond a consciousness of the past that is explicitly stated, readily articulated or put on public display. The past that settler descendants know most intimately and relate to most closely is not necessarily explicitly articulated by them.


Criticising the popular overuse of the word ‘memory’, various scholars have warned that analyses are less poignant and consequently less useful when the vague and general term ‘memory’ is substituted for more specific and appropriate terms. For example, terms such as ‘myth’, ‘family story’ or ‘stereotype’ may be more precise and effective than ‘collective memory’ to describe different ways that collectives know the past. I understand experience to be a core component of memory. Thus memory is connected with the self, it is subjective. At the same time, the past is known and made meaningful through the social world (the people who surround and share life with the individual) in which the individual is enmeshed. I understand the past recalled through memory as a past which has been internalised, a past which is part of a person’s being. While experiences are always personal and subjective, this does not mean memory does not extend beyond the individual. Throughout this thesis, I use the word ‘memory’ to refer to the remembrance of something the individual, the person, the family, the closest social group, the local community and cross-generational inhabitants of place have in the past and/or continue in the present to actually experience.

I have found Pierre Nora’s distinction between the past known through living in milieux de mémoire (‘settings in which memory is a real part of experience’) and the past learned through history, through lieux de mémoire (sites consecrated to preserving and embodying our memories) particularly apt for conceptualising the different ways mid-northern settler descendants know and relate to the colonial past. Nora describes ‘true memory’ as memory which is experienced from within, which is social, collective and all-embracing and exists in gestures, habits, intimate

79 See Cubitt, History and Memory, 122.
physical knowledge, ingrained reminiscences and spontaneous reflexes. ‘Historicized memory’ or ‘memory grasped by history’ on the other hand is experienced from without; it is individual and subjective, wilful and deliberate:

Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting ... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.

The commemorative signs and monuments outside the Institute are classic examples of what Nora understands as ‘memory sites’. When I saw the sparse and selective information about people, events and occupations that I knew through lived experience – the brief reference to the 1970s and 1980s – the public display made those times seem less real and more abstract and caused a feeling of detachment.

I am aware that the history/memory binary is, in many ways, a misleading oversimplification. Different ways of knowing the past interact and are intimately connected; different ways of knowing the past shape and influence each other and exist in a dynamic and often complementary relationship, as I examine in chapter 6. Memory and history are not concrete ‘things’ but rather they are processes and concepts which explain and describe different ways through which the past is known and made sense of. Nonetheless, distinguishing between the past known through lived experience and/or absorbed through everyday life and the consciously reconstructed past which is learned through external, intellectual means is a useful analytical concept through which to recognise and investigate the many different ways mid-northern settler descendants know and relate to the past. Viewing the information board and the centenary plaque didn't affect my already

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83 Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 8.
84 Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 8.
85 Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 3.
86 Nora lists ‘Museums, archives, cemeteries, collections, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments sanctuaries, private associations’ as lieux de mémoire, ‘Between Memory and History’, 6.
87 See for example Cubitt, History and Memory, 4–5; LaCapra, History and Memory, 20, also 16, 22.
formed understanding of the colonial past. My consciousness of my family's connection to Cappeedee and to Hallett, and my consciousness of my family's occupation of land, came first and foremost from living in that place among others with similar histories and shared experiences. In place and among people, memories are retained and can be readily activated.

**The primacy of lived experience**

All of my interviewees have grown up on or near land occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century and which has been continually occupied by their family. All of my interviewees have had continued access to the family property throughout most of their lives (although for some, the family property had recently been sold). My interviewees grew up in places and among people with which connections with earlier times were a real part of everyday life. Their lifestyles and livelihoods, the places and houses in which they dwell and the objects and people that encompass them provide tangible evidence of continuity with earlier times and constantly bring the past into the present; my interviewees’ consciousness of the past was formed in settings in which memory was a real part of experience.

As children, settler descendants absorb knowledge about the colonial past as they grow up in houses built by their forebears in the nineteenth century, as they build cubbies or ‘forts’ in the trees which surrounded the homesteads, or as they muck around in sheds filled with relics from previous eras. The buggies, saddles, old tools and rusted-out harvesters become incorporated into their games and their consciousness of the past. As children help their fathers with the sheep – shifting them from paddock to paddock, rounding them up or moving them along the roads at shearing or crutching time, they absorb a lifestyle and occupation which connects them with their forebears.

Thomas Measham has observed the importance of experiential learning, namely learning which comes through action, observation and being in place. He has noted the special bond which develops between children and the places they come to know while playing and exploring and while accompanying parents and other elders as they go about their daily life. Measham refers to places known and
experienced in childhood as ‘primal landscapes’. He argues that childhood experiences of our primal landscapes ‘shap[e] the way we interact with our environment throughout our life’ and become part of our identity. The homestead, gardens, sheds, creek-lines, hills and other places on the family property are integral components of settler descendants’ primal landscape.

My interviewees’ consciousness of the past was formed as children and adolescents, when they spent significant periods on the family property, when they were living among their families and others with whom they shared histories and experiences and everyday life. Through researching this project I have learned that many mid-northern settler descendants continue to call the place of their childhood ‘home’ even though they may not have lived there for decades. Just as the knowledge gained through experiencing primal landscapes and the moral lessons learned through family stories (‘primal pellets’ of information) are continuously drawn on throughout a person’s life to make sense of new experiences, I argue that not only primal landscapes but also the formative experiences of growing up in a particular place among a close-knit community of people who live within close proximity remain with settler descendants throughout their lives and form part of their identity. The colonial past that mid-northern settler descendants become aware of as children is referred to and related to throughout their adult life when making sense of the past learned through other means; my interviewees most readily understand and most powerfully relate to the colonial past known through the sentiments, attitudes, sensations, stories and information absorbed initially in their formative years and which has continually been reinforced or has not been challenged or unsettled throughout their adult lives.

In the first part of this thesis (chapters 2 and 3) I examine the settings in which mid-northern settler descendants grow up and illustrate how, in these settings, ‘memory is a real part of experience’. I focus on the physical and social

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89 The quote comes from Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 1.
environments in which my interviewees spent their formative years, in which many continue to live, and in which and among whom their consciousness of the past is formed and perpetuated. In the second part of this thesis, I show how the past which mid-northern settler descendants primarily know through place and people is framed by the culture in which they live. When I saw the information board, although I did not connect with or relate to the information conveyed in the same way as I related to and understood information contained in the landscape of the Booborowie Valley, or the stones, hills or trees of Cappeedee, the information about the past on display at Hallett did not unsettle but confirmed what I knew. The chronologically ordered events, the creation of the historical moment, the emphasis on facts and figures, conformed with my understanding of how information about the past should be constructed, presented and understood – all confirmed my understanding of ‘history’.

**A settler-colonial historical epistemology**

The culture and society in which we grow up affects the way we view the world and how we know and relate to the past. Although living in settings in which continuities with the colonial past are part of everyday life, my interviewees live in a time, place and culture in which a historicised understanding of time and the past is naturalized. Mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past is framed by a particular historical epistemology, namely a ‘way of knowing about history that provides a certain set of rules and assumptions that guide how “truths” about the past, and by extension the present, are to be created, understood and conveyed’. For mid-northern settler descendants, this historical epistemology is closely intertwined with the myth of *terra nullius*, the myth of peaceful settlement of an unowned land. Elizabeth Furniss, an anthropologist who has conducted ethnographic research into the many ways colonial assumptions of history, identity and Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations continue to affect the lives of residents of British Columbia, Canada and Mt Isa, Australia, argues that a settler-colonial historical epistemology frames the way non-Aboriginal residents in both places make sense of the past.

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Mid-northern written and public histories provide a tangible, readily analysable means through which to investigate the repertoire of concepts and definitions available to mid-northern settler descendants when understanding and articulating their consciousness of the colonial past. Having surveyed all the mid-northern histories that I could find in the extensive collections held in the State Library of South Australia and the Barr-Smith Library (approximately fifty written histories) and the public histories – the plaques, monuments, information boards – of fifteen mid-northern towns, and having analysed the sentiments and understandings expressed during numerous interviews, I argue that a settler-colonial historical epistemology like that which Furniss found prevalent in Mt Isa and British Columbia likewise frames the way settler descendants from the mid-north of South Australia know, make sense of and articulate the past.

This settler-colonial historical epistemology conforms with but is a variation of the wider understanding of 'history' which emerged with modernity and prevails in Western thought. In the structure, narrative, content and form of these mid-northern histories, the past is conceptualised as consisting of a series of bounded markers and events which signal the ‘development’ and ‘progress’ of the district. Hallett’s information board illustrates in a concrete way the settler-colonial historical epistemology which is prevalent in mid-northern public and written histories. The Hallett brothers are the first people mentioned on the information board. The chronologically ordered events begin with Frome. The people whose land Frome ‘discovered’ and the Halletts invaded are not mentioned. The words ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Ngadjuri’ do not appear. Hallett’s public commemoratory space tangibly demonstrates Frantz Fanon’s powerful observation that, in colonial societies, settlers understand history to begin with them – ‘The settler makes history ... He is the absolute beginning: “This land was created by us”; he is the unceasing cause’.91 Elizabeth Furniss extends this insight: in settler-colonial societies, historical narrative themes of ‘discovery’ and ‘firsts’ make the past comprehensible by ordering events sequentially in a linear pattern of development.

and progress.\textsuperscript{92} By valourising ‘explorers’ such as Frome and ‘founding figures’ such as the Halletts, the prior history of Aboriginal people is erased, the implication being either that Aboriginal people did not exist or that their existence was irrelevant prior to the arrival of Europeans.\textsuperscript{93} Referring to the invasion of already inhabited lands as ‘discovery’ implies that prior to the presence of European explorers, the land was empty of people and devoid of history.\textsuperscript{94}

Furniss argues that ‘the framing of history through the themes of discovery and firsts is so deeply engrained in a Western historical sensibility that it may at times appear almost natural and inevitable’.\textsuperscript{95} The chronological ordering of events on Hallett’s information board did not challenge my understanding of how the past is known and understood. Rather, it aligned with my pre-existing assumptions and understandings. As part of the town’s public commemorative space, the board, plaque, stone are representative of the community’s official history and will be read by passers-by long into the future. They demonstrate the selectivity of history and the multiple and potential implications of what is, and what is not, deemed worthy of recording for perpetuity.

In the public spaces of other mid-northern towns I surveyed, few towns had information boards, but those that did similarly ordered the past chronologically and listed certain markers of significance and/or progress. All towns had centenary plaques commemorating the official founding of the district and/or town. Aboriginal people were mentioned in the public space of one town. The theme for Crystal Brook’s main street is ‘exploration’. As pedestrians progress down the wide, grassed and treed median strip, they pass through markers and information on various type of exploration, namely footsteps, ships, whale boats, horses, camels, motor vehicles and space. Aboriginal people are mentioned on the first marker under ‘footsteps’.

\textsuperscript{92} Furniss, ‘Timeline History’, 284.
\textsuperscript{93} Furniss, ‘Timeline History’, 283.
\textsuperscript{94} See Trouillot, \textit{Silencing the Past}, 114.
\textsuperscript{95} Furniss, ‘Timeline history’, 286.
The words ‘Ngadjuri’ and ‘Nukunu’ did not appear in any of the public spaces I surveyed. In written histories, Aboriginal people often appear as a precursor or a footnote to the main story. When they appear in the main text, it is during the pastoral years as a difficulty pastoralists had to contend with. In some mid-northern histories, Aboriginal people do not appear at all. Among the written histories, other than use of words such as ‘peaceful’ and ‘friendly’ or descriptions of violence, there is little reference and no discussion of cross-cultural interaction or of how Aboriginal people adapted to and survived the invasion of their land. In both written and public histories, no connection is made between the lives of Aboriginal people and the lives of settlers and the development of the local community. By depicting Europeans as the conduits of progress and development while simultaneously ignoring or anachronistically positioning Aboriginal people outside the main story, ‘the complexities of the historical processes of imperialism and colonialism’ are reduced and masked. The process of colonisation – the complexity, nuance, randomness, questioning, jostling, diversity and, most importantly, the morality of occupying another people’s land – is reduced to a simplistic and chronological narrative structured around markers of ‘development’.

In the culture in which my interviewees’ consciousness of the past was formed, and in which it is sustained and perpetuated, the land at the time of colonisation was perceived as unoccupied. Aboriginal people are either not mentioned, or are understood as wandering nomads who as primitive, uncivilised people did not own the land and did not play any role in the development of the local community. There is virtually no recognition of cross-cultural accommodation or friendship in the public and written histories I surveyed.


97 Furniss, ‘Timeline History’, 284.

‘Composure’ and the ‘cultural circuit’

Mid-northern settler descendants make sense of their lived experiences, family stories, local legends and public histories through the cultural norms and assumptions of the society to which they belong. Throughout this thesis I am alert to the ways memory is culturally framed. Distortions in memory and gaps and silences in remembering show how political and cultural ideologies become deeply entangled in everyday life and personal identity. Oral historians Alistair Thomson and Penny Summerfield have examined how the wartime experiences of individuals (Australian working-class soldiers and women active in Britain’s home defence respectively) fall outside popular myths and understandings. They investigate the dynamic relationship between locally told, individual life stories and wider culture.

Summerfield is interested in the relationship between her interviewees’ personal experiences and popular culture (such as television programs) while Thomson is interested in the relationship between personal experience and national myths (namely the Anzac myth). Both argue that individuals ‘compose’ or construct memories using the public language and meanings available to them in the culture in which they live and both recognise that this process is dynamic and interactive. While individual stories are picked up, developed and portrayed in generalised forms – the meaning of experiences become crystallised in general accounts – individuals not only draw on elements of this generalised form but can find it ‘difficult to speak outside’ this generalised form. Summerfield and Thomson conceptualised this two-way process as a ‘cultural circuit’. Throughout this thesis I utilise Summerfield’s and Thomson’s concepts of ‘cultural composure’

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100 Thomson, ‘Making the Most of Memories’, 292.


102 Summerfield, ‘Oral history as a research method’, 59.
and ‘cultural circuit’ when examining how individual and family memories and stories which fall outside the dominant cultural ideology and taken-for-granted understandings are articulated and made sense of in oral narratives and in local written histories.

Positioning

After putting on another jumper, I get back into my car. Driving past Popperinghi I notice a truck in the driveway. I stop, introduce myself to the man who bought our farm and ask if I can climb my favourite hill. He is friendly and keen for a chat. He tells me I am welcome to climb any hill I want. I trek through the paddocks. As an adult who now inhabits a completely different landscape, the country appears desolate, harsh, bare of life and vegetation. There are few trees and scarcely any wildlife. Because of the ‘death, damage and disorder’ caused by European colonisation, the valley is reminiscent of what Deborah Bird Rose refers to as ‘wounded space’.103 As children, however, we never knew anything else. This was our home and we loved it as it was. When I near the top of the hill, I turn and look back. The beauty of the valley startles me. The starkness of the hills is magnificent. I look down on the valley – I see the clusters of trees surrounding houses. I see ploughed-up paddocks, different shades of green and the silvery/grey colour of dry grass. I see our place, the Murrays’, the Rayners’, the Ashbys’ and, at the southeastern end of the valley, I can just make out the Sullivans’. Although I have never visited them, I know that the Hales, old Mrs Blight, Elsie and Bert Fahey, and the Messengers live in other houses I can see.

The rock cairn marking the top is exactly as I remember it. Admiring the view, I realise anew that ‘my’ hill sits in the middle of a much longer valley. The view extends northwards for miles. Looking north, I see a few clumps of trees, presumably around houses. I don’t know anything about the people who might live there. I don’t even know their names. The paddock the hill sits in was Popperinghi’s northern boundary; my brother and I lived the furthest north on the Hallett school-bus route. As a younger person, I understood the hill as marking the

end of the valley. The hill marked the end of the Hallett community to which I belonged. As a child and teenager, my attention was focused on the world I knew personally. In the sparsely populated rural communities of mid-northern South Australia, where residents number in the low hundreds, it is stories connected with those who were and are part of one’s social community that are known and remembered.

Realising how blinkered my view was when I used to sit up here – how I focused my gaze and directed my attention on the physical and social world that was known to me – I am reminded of the metaphor of a view from a window which WEH Stanner used to explain the absence of Aboriginal people in settler Australians’ consciousness.\(^{104}\) Stanner was optimistic that Aboriginal people would be incorporated into non-Aboriginal Australians’ consciousness if we repositioned

\(^{104}\) Stanner, ‘The Boyer Lectures’, 189.
the frame through which we view the world.\textsuperscript{105} Veronica Brady similarly uses the metaphor of a frame to describe non-Aboriginal Australians’ entrapment within an imperial view. Brady refers to Austrian philosopher Wittgenstein, who wrote about this kind of entrapment: ‘[Wittgenstein] remarked that when we pronounce “this is how it is”, we are merely “tracing round the frame through which we look at it”’.\textsuperscript{106} As stated above, I understand settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past to be framed by a settler-colonial epistemology. But I need to do more than illuminate and trace around this frame, do more than pronounce ‘this is how it is’. By focusing my examination on the lived experiences of mid-northern settler descendants, I show how and why the ideological and cultural frame that inhibits recognition and empathy for the injustices suffered by Aboriginal people emerged and endures among this group of people. I argue that one way through which we can further understandings regarding the longevity and perpetuity of the frame is to understand how specific groups of people most powerfully know and most readily relate to the colonial past.

There is and has always been information available regarding the historical and enduring violence of colonialism. The dismantling of or stepping outside of the frame will not first and foremost occur through access or exposure to revised accounts of the nation’s past, through political announcements or government policy, although these all play a role and are important. As I sat on top of the hill, as I recognised my perspective wasn’t just blinkered away from Aboriginal people, but also from those with histories and lives comparable to mine, people who lived only twenty or so kilometres north of our house but whom I had never met or known because they belonged to a different social network, the importance of place, people, and lived experience to how people know and make sense of their embodied lives, their pasts and their place here became clear. This insight is applicable beyond the individual. The people and stories that families and local communities remember best are those which are known through personal experience. By connecting settler descendants to the violence of colonialism

\textsuperscript{105} Stanner, ‘The Boyer Lectures’, 191.
through either their lived experiences or the places in which and the people among whom they dwell, they are more likely to make an intellectual and emotional connection with the Aboriginal victims of colonialism.

As I take in the 360° view, I see not only the Booborowie Valley. I see over the tops of the hills to the next range, and I see that the ranges link. Our valley is an integral part of a much greater whole. I get an inkling of how Ngadjuri must have moved through and made sense of their territory. I try to view the country through the eyes of someone who walks over the land, who is knowledgeable about all the geographical and topographical features, all the resources – animal, vegetable and mineral – that make up this country. I try to imagine what Creation Ancestors link this valley with neighbouring and more distant geographical features, connecting Ngadjuri with other groups.\textsuperscript{107} What characters and moral lessons explain the hills, the flats, the creek lines and rocky outcrops that I have spent a substantial amount of my life walking and riding over, playing in and exploring when I was oblivious to the fact that the land belonged to people, people who knew it and related to it in an entirely different way?

Trying to read and imagine the land through a culture that is not my own does not come naturally. I feel like a fraud; the gesture feels forced and wrong – an act of appropriation. Aboriginal ways of knowing and making sense country are abstract, intellectual concepts for me, something consciously learned rather than absorbed through everyday life, not a part of who I am. As a settler descendant whose formative years were spent around other settler descendants with similar backgrounds, I don’t believe I can ever fully grasp an Aboriginal descendant’s worldview. I accept the limits to my understanding; I know enough to be humbled by the richness and depth of Aboriginal culture, I know enough to accept and respect differences.

\textsuperscript{107} Namely, the Nukunu to the north-west, the Kaurna to the south-west, the Peramangk to the south, the Adnyamathanha to the north and the Ngaiawang, Danggali, Wilyakali to the west. See Warrior et al., \textit{Ngadjuri}, 8.
As a settler descendant who fulfils the prerequisites of my interviewees – as an insider – I need to be particularly conscious of my subjective positioning. I have found the work of Dominick LaCapra and Bain Attwood (Attwood applies LaCapra’s insights to the Australian case) helpful in thinking through my relationship with both the people and the topic of my research.\footnote{LaCapra, \textit{History and Memory after Auschwitz}; Dominick LaCapra, \textit{History in Transit} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Bain Attwood, ‘Unsettling Pasts: Reconciliation and History in Settler Australia’, \textit{Postcolonial Studies} 8, no. 3 (2005): 243–259; Bain Attwood, ‘The Australian Patient’, 170–183.} When working through troubled histories (such as the historical injustice of Australian colonialism) LaCapra and Attwood note that it is understandable and indeed necessary to feel empathetically connected to those who have suffered under a system to which you belong and in which you are implicated.\footnote{LaCapra, \textit{History and Memory}, 11–12; Attwood, ‘The Australian Patient’, 77.} However, they argue for the desirability of recognising and working through the limitations and prejudices inherent in such subjective positioning in order to reach a more comprehensive and fuller understanding.\footnote{LaCapra, \textit{History in Transit}, 234; LaCapra, \textit{History and Memory}, 41–42; Attwood, \textit{Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 180–182.}

Regarding my own political positioning, I understand Australian society in the twenty-first century (with its social, political, economic and agricultural systems and institutions and ways of thinking) as not yet post-colonial; numerous Aboriginal people continue to exist as colonised and subordinate subjects and the land, waters and all they contain and sustain continue to be conceptualised as objects to be exploited for economic gain by members of the colonising group. As Rose succinctly phrases it:

\begin{quote}
we have neither transcended nor left behind the world of our ancestors. We are now experiencing the effects of our colonizing actions (past and present), and to contend that we are somehow postcolonial obscures that we live in a world that is so effectively colonized that it is almost impossible to think beyond it. Here the culture and practice of conquest ...
\end{quote}
institutionalized in political and bureaucratic practices, that it is almost unnoticed.\footnote{Rose, ‘Rupture and the Ethics of Care’, 209.}


How current generations conceptualise and relate to the occupation of Australia is a moral issue which implicates numerous people, past and present, resident and non-resident of Australia. Tessa Morris-Suzuki powerfully defines implication:

“Implication” means the existence of a conscious connection to the past, but also the reality of being (in a legal sense) “an accessory after the fact”. It is the status of those who have not stolen land from others, but who live on stolen land; the status of those who have not participated in massacres, but have participated in the process by which the memory of those massacres has been obliterated; the status of those who have not injured others, but allow the consequences of past injury to go unaddressed. Implication means that the prejudices which sustained past acts of aggression live on into the present, and will lodge themselves in the minds of the present generation unless we make the effort to remove them. We who live in the present did not create the violence and hatred of the past. But the violence and hatred of the past, to some degree, created us. It formed the material world and the ideas with which we live, and will continue to do so unless we take active steps to unmake their consequences.\footnote{Tessa Morris-Suzuki, cited in Minoru Hokari, ‘Globalising Aboriginal Reconciliation: Indigenous Australians and Asian (Japanese) Migrants’, Cultural Studies Review 9, no. 2 (2003): 97-98. Hokari notes that the English version of Morris-Suzuki’s manuscript is unpublished and that Morris-Suzuki showed him the English version and allowed him to quote this passage. In July 2014 Morris-Suzuki informed me that this quote has not been published in English but is published in Japanese in Hihanteki Sozoryoku no tame ni: Gurobaruka jidai no Nihon (In Search of Critical Imagination: Japan}
Simply by being here, by treating the land as we do, by participating in a political and economic system which does not originate from, is not led by and does not benefit many Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people continue (albeit inadvertently and unintentionally) in their practices and their mindsets to be implicated in the colonial process. By acknowledging that most people who live in this country (Aboriginal people make up 3% of the population) are implicated in some shape or form, we may be less prone to judging others who may be perceived as more implicated than ourselves.

I do not focus on the historical consciousness of mid-northern settler descendants, the group to which I belong, because I perceive these people as more implicated in or knowledgeable about the historical or enduring violence of colonialism than other non-Aboriginal Australians. I do not focus on this group to condemn or judge them and thus distance myself. Nor do I focus on them to whitewash, deny, excuse, justify or condone the longevity of colonial violence and its multifaceted consequences. I focus on them because I want to understand; I want to understand how it is that the people I grew up among, people who are not essentially immoral or unethical people, can have a consciousness of the past which excludes Aboriginal people. As French historian Marc Bloch poetically and aptly pointed out:

“Understanding,” in all honesty, is a word pregnant with difficulties, but also with hope. Moreover, it is a friendly word. Even in action we are too prone to judge. It is so easy to denounce. We are never sufficiently understanding.

A deeper and more profound understanding of how and why this group of settler descendants knows and relates to the past can (ideally) aid communication and understanding between descendants of the invaders and descendants of the
people whose land was invaded. As Bernhard Schlink, who grew up in post–World War Two Germany, explains, reconciliation differs from condemnation and forgiveness in that it requires understanding; reconciliation requires a truth that can be understood.\textsuperscript{116}

It’s getting dark. The lights are on at Cappeedee and it’s time for dinner and my interview with Uncle Al.

**Chapter outline**

In chapter 2 I primarily draw on interviews conducted with fourth-generation settler descendant Andrew Gebhardt to illustrate how a consciousness of the colonial past comes through lived experiences of dwelling in place. I focus on the material traces of the past which are evident in the physical environment in which my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past is formed and (through continuity of access) perpetuated and bolstered. Tangible traces of the past are manifest in place – in the country itself, in landmarks which litter the country, the homesteads in which settler descendants live and the furniture and objects which are part of their everyday life. A consciousness is not necessarily explicitly expressed or readily articulated; I demonstrate how, through growing up in the places of their forebears, settler descendants’ sense of connection with earlier times is such a fundamental part of their lives that it is taken for granted and not necessarily readily verbalised or commonly reflected on.

The society in which we live is central to our lived experiences and to our understandings of the past. In chapter 3, I argue that it is among the people with whom social interaction is most frequent and regular that our consciousness of the past is formed. I utilise Linn Miller’s philosophical and anthropological conceptual apparatus of belonging to examine mid-northern settler descendants’ senses of belonging before referring to Ferdinand Tönnies’ conceptual distinction between community and society.\textsuperscript{117} Tönnies further distinguishes between different types

\textsuperscript{116} Bernhard Schlink, *Guilt about the Past* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009), 81.

of community and I adapt his findings to describe different social networks of regular face-to-face interaction which are part of mid-northern settler descendants’ everyday life. Through geographical proximity, kin and friendship networks, and shared habitation and occupation, the people I spoke with belong to a tight-knit social community made up of people with whom they share experiences, memories and histories. Continuity of place, people and lifestyle contributes to a strong and secure sense of belonging to the district in which they have spent their formative years and in which many of my interviewees continue to dwell.

While the past is primarily known through lived experience, it is made sense of through a dominant cultural frame which orientates and shapes this group of settler descendants’ historical consciousness. In chapter 4 and chapter 5, I analyse interviews conducted with settler descendants whose forebears are known to have interacted with Aboriginal people. These chapters draw together arguments made in the previous chapters and provide additional concrete examples to illustrate the relevance of personal experience, place and people to my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past and to demonstrate how these experiences are made sense of and articulated through a settler-colonial frame. In chapter 4, I draw on interviews conducted with two descendants of squatter/early pastoralist Billy Dare to compare oral stories both among family members and stories which circulate in the local community. I illustrate how settler descendants make sense of the past through their own lived experience and utilise the concept of a ‘cultural circuit’ to understand the dialectic and dynamic relationship between lived experiences and the cultural frame through which these experiences are understood and articulated.

In chapter 5, I analyse interviews conducted with three grandchildren of early settler George Wauchope Cameron. The variations in the stories of these members of the same family powerfully demonstrate the need to recognise and take into account the lived experiences of previous generations. Both historical and present experiences affect what from the past is known, remembered and referred to by current generations. The interviews drawn on in chapters 4 and 5 enable a
detailed examination of the concrete workings of memory. Observations made provide a useful corrective to broad understandings regarding settler Australians’ consciousness of the past. My interviewees’ sense of belonging and historical consciousness were orientated around their first forebear(s) to occupy land in the district. Contrary to understandings that the history begins when the settler arrives in the place he/she is to colonise, the people I spoke with have an awareness of their family’s history that extends beyond their forebears’ arrival; their family’s history and their own presence in place is historically and socially contextualised.

One of George Cameron’s grandchildren, Heather Sizer, is the author of two written histories. She was one of my interviewees and she told me stories of her grandfather’s long-standing and peaceful interaction with a group of Aboriginal people (stories which sit outside the dominant settler-colonial narrative). In chapter 6 I closely examine Heather’s written histories to see how local residents’ oral stories are incorporated into her written text. I subsequently investigate how these written histories are received and referred to by members of the Cameron family before discussing the relationship between the past known through everyday life – through stories, memories, and experienced gained through lived experience – and the past known through more abstract, intellectual means such as written histories. Through this micro-level investigation, I discuss the respective influence and authority of written and oral histories. I argue that if information contained in written histories resonates or connects in some way with the past known through everyday life and lived experience, it is more likely to be retained and to become incorporated into settler descendants’ historical consciousness. Understanding the influence, authority and prevalence of different ways of knowing and relating to the past has implications for the influence of wider revisionist histories and discourses.

The experiences of previous generations are transferred through the decades and differences in one’s forebears’ experiences and (of particular interest to this thesis) differences in the extent and calibre of one’s forebears’ experiences of relations with local Aboriginal people are crucial to furthering understandings of how and
why the colonial years are known and understood by current descendants. In chapter 7, I develop the argument that the lived experiences of previous generations need to be comprehensively taken into account if we are to more fully understand current generations’ historical consciousness. I build on the knowledge that interviewees’ consciousness of the past is orientated around their own family to examine how settler descendants from the North-Eastern Highlands conceptualise the prior presence of others on the land that became their family property. The chapter ends by demonstrating how many signs of Aboriginal presence are culturally intelligible to settler descendants.

In chapter 8, I apply my emphasis on the importance of recognising the historical lived experiences of previous generations to discuss the applicability and validity of the theory that a sense of victimhood prevails in white Australians’ historical consciousness. Several influential scholars draw on the theory of a pervasive victimological narrative to explain settler descendants’ lack of empathy for the victims of colonisation. Fundamental to the victimological theory is the understanding that it has its roots in Judeo-Christian myths of exile and expulsion and stems from a perception of Australia as an alien and inhospitable land. I argue that for the people and districts which are the focus of my study, there is no sense of victimhood nor struggle with the land – either historically or in more recent times. The stories that settler descendants tell reflect their own experiences and their forebears’ experiences. Understandings which assume that settlers were traumatised by the act of migration, the sense of displacement, the battle with the land and the violence of colonialism are also critiqued. Other explanations are required to understand mid-northern settler descendants’ sense of “disconnect”.

In the concluding chapter, I examine some of the different ways that settler descendants position themselves when they do make the connection between their own presence here and the violence of colonialism. I refer to an extraordinary story told to me by local historian Marlene Richards. Through this story, I illustrate the variety and complexity of positions occupied by settler descendants with regard to recognising the negative effects of colonialism on Aboriginal people and the endurance of historical injustices in the present. I conclude my thesis by
discussing concrete ways through which settler descendants’ sense of disconnect can be and has been unsettled and demonstrating how it is not necessarily difficult for the beginnings of empathetic connection to be established.
Chapter 2: ‘All the history is there in my mind’

I think the biggest sense is the generational thing. Just being in a – you know I could go around and say "oh my great-grandfather did that, my grandfather did that, my father did that and I did that". You know, you can see, I knew exactly who had done what – planting something or fixing something or, you know, why did he build the house here? I can see he built it here because of this that or the other. You know the things he [my great-grandfather] did were probably the biggest things but yet they are less obvious to see because they are so big, you think, well, he had nothing to do with it. But my grandfather’s time, you know, I can see where they trained the horses and where – you know it’s all changed now – but all the history is there in my mind. ¹

Andrew Gebhardt is describing his awareness of his family’s connection with Mackerode, the land his great-grandfather Gustav Gebhardt purchased from the colonial government in the 1860s. Mackerode is a sheep and crop property situated between Burra and Mt Bryan in the North-Eastern Highland district, 170 kilometres north of Adelaide in South Australia’s mid-north. During my conversation with Andrew, he explained that as he went about his everyday life, as he lived his life at Mackerode, which was both his home and workplace, the physical legacies of earlier generations – their imprints in and on the country – provided constant and enduring reminders of earlier times.

Andrew is a jovial, reflective, liberal-minded man who, like most of my interviewees, has lived a relatively privileged life. Andrew was sent to boarding school in Adelaide when he was ten years old and to agricultural college in Victoria after he left school.² While Andrew was at agricultural college, his father died unexpectedly. Andrew inherited Mackerode at an unusually early age. As such,

¹ Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
² Andrew went to Marcus Oldham College, Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
Andrew did not have the usual transition of working alongside and co-managing the family property with his father until his father retired.

Andrew had little detailed knowledge about his paternal family's history when he took over Mackerode, telling me, ‘I was twenty when I [took over] Mackerode and I didn’t think about the history much in those days’. Andrew told me that his great-grandfather Gustav came out from Hanover with two brothers and arrived in Burra ‘in the 1850s, I think it was 1858’ and that Gustav was a butcher by trade who ‘started up his own shop’ before purchasing land. Andrew then pointed to an original copy of *Pastoral Pioneers* (a compilation of biographies of well-known nineteenth-century pastoralists first published in 1925) and said, ‘Well, that’s what it says in that book, I don’t know how accurate it is, it’s probably right’.³ I asked Andrew if he had ever heard any information about Gustav which had been passed down through his family. Andrew definitively replied ‘no’, adding ‘that’s really all I know’.

Before his father’s death, Andrew had not decided if he wanted to come back on the land and had been considering a different career. He said that going to agricultural college was a compromise with his parents, and he wasn’t sure he wanted the responsibility of owning and running Mackerode. However, after his father's death he had to ‘come straight home’:

> And so – and I didn’t like it for a couple of years, and then the whole ambience of the place, you know, I could see it wasn’t just my parents, it was my grandparents, my great-grand parents, and, you know, there was a long history of stuff there and I really started to feel as if – the best way I can put it is I felt as if I was only a custodian for a period of time.⁵


⁴ Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.

⁵ Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
Through living and working on Mackerode, Andrew became increasingly aware and appreciative of his family’s long connections to the place:

When you go around a place for a long time, you know your ancestors have done this or that … you look at something and you think “now why is that there?” … And you think “well it’s there for a reason”.⁶

Through observation and by drawing on his own experiences, Andrew learned to read and interpret the traces left by previous generations of his family.

**Lived experience**

Immanuel Kant’s famous line ‘that all our knowledge begins with experience’ is applicable to knowledge of the past.⁷ EP Thompson also stresses the importance of experience in affecting the way people know and make sense of their world. He directs his readers’ attention to the necessity of distinguishing between ways of knowing which are implicitly – almost subconsciously – understood, and knowledge which is explicitly stated and consciously known. Thompson states that ‘experience is exactly what makes the junction between culture and not-culture, lying half within social being, half within social consciousness’ and suggests that scholars differentiate between what he terms ‘lived experience’ (‘experience 1’) and ‘perceived experience’ (‘experience 2’).⁸ In seeing ‘true’ memory in ‘gestures and habits, unspoken craft traditions, intimate physical knowledge, ingrained reminiscences, and spontaneous reflexes’, Pierre Nora too demonstrates his awareness that the past known through lived experience is not necessarily consciously voiced or mediated on.⁹ Michael Jackson advocates the study of lived experience and refers to Husserl’s notion of *Lebenswelt*, or ‘lifeworld’, which he describes as ‘the world of immediate experiences, of sociality, common sense and

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shared experience that exists for us independent of and prior to any reflection upon it.\textsuperscript{10} Referring to Merleau-Ponty’s view of bodily subjectivity, Jackson argues that meaning should not be reduced to that which can be thought or said, and that ‘meaning is not invariably given to activity by the conscious mind or in explicit verbal formulations’.\textsuperscript{11} Because meaning exists simply in being and doing, in everyday life and action, it is not necessarily abstractly observed, reflected on or commented on.

Andrew could not readily articulate how he came to appreciate his family’s historical connections with Mackerode, nor the affect this awareness had on his emotional attachment to Mackerode. He referred to ‘the whole ambience of the place’, ‘a long history of stuff there’, ‘the best way I can put it … custodian’. Other settler descendants I have interviewed similarly struggle to verbalise their sense of historical consciousness and emotional connection to place. Difficulties in expressing such sentiments is not because these attachments are not felt or sensed, but because they are such a fundamental part of my interviewees’ being that they are rarely articulated. In observing that all memories are transformed in the art of narration, Geoffrey Cubitt too points out that ‘memories, in their pure state, are … non-verbal’.\textsuperscript{12} Andrew sold Mackerode five years before I first interviewed him and his changed circumstances seemingly made him more conscious of what many interviewees who continue to live on or have access to the family property take for granted. Andrew’s experience of leaving not only the family land and homestead but also the district in which he had spent his formative years and lived most of his life, coupled with the non-presence of his father throughout Andrew’s adult life, made him a particularly informative interviewee through which to examine how settler descendants’ understand and relate to the colonial past known through lived experience.

\textsuperscript{10} Michael Jackson, \textit{Things as They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 16.
\textsuperscript{11} Jackson, \textit{Things as They Are}, 32.
\textsuperscript{12} Geoffrey Cubitt, \textit{Memory and History} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 97. Cubitt refers to Donald Spence when he makes this point.
In this chapter I draw on interviews conducted with Andrew to illustrate how, for people who have grown up on land occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century, the colonial past is known, understood and related to through the physical and material environment in which they live. As Michèle Dominy found for high-country sheep farmers in New Zealand, places in which rural settler descendants live are ‘deeply culturalized landscape[s]’; they are physical spaces invested with cultural meanings, sites of ‘intense cultural activity and imagination – of memory, of affectivity, of work, of sociality, of identity’.13 Tangible reminders of the past are an integral part of the everyday lives of mid-northern settler descendants. The homesteads in which they grow up, farm buildings such as implement and woolsheds, living and non-living markers in the landscape such as trees, ruins and fence posts and objects such as furniture and photos – all are culturally meaningful markers which provide powerful physical reminders of my interviewees’ historical connections to place.

People live in and make sense of their physical environment through the social and cultural milieu in which they are ensconced; the people with whom settler descendants interact while living their everyday lives are an integral and inseparable component of their dwelling in place, and I examine the social milieu which encompasses mid-northern settler descendants in the following chapter. In this chapter I describe the physical environment in which my interviewees live to illustrate how mid-northern settler descendants’ primary awareness of the colonial past comes through living in ‘settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience’.14 An individual’s memories of their lived experiences influence and inform their (subjective) versions of history.15 By understanding how settler descendants are aware of the past through lived experience, we can deepen our investigation into why members of this group have difficulty connecting their own and their family’s histories to those of the original owners and their descendants.

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13 Michèle Dominy, *Calling the Station Home* (Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, 2001), 3.
14 The quote is from Pierre Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 1.
The second time I interviewed Andrew, his daughter Amelia Gebhardt joined us. Andrew and Amelia’s mother separated when Amelia was seven. After this, Amelia and her sisters spent weekends and holidays with Andrew at Mackerode. Amelia told me that Mackerode ‘means a profound amount to all of us [Amelia and her two sisters]’. Trying to put into words her connection to Mackerode, Amelia described it as ‘a potent landscape’. When I asked Amelia if she could articulate what it was that made the landscape ‘potent’, among other things Amelia described:

All the little things like going for a walk through the hills and then you’d come to a gate and then you’d – this beautifully crafted little handmade thing that was crafted by one of the relatives. Just all these beautiful touches that you just don’t have that connection to when you [are living] in the city.

David Trigger draws on Thomas Measham’s concept of a ‘primal landscape’ to describe his sense of connection to the cultural landscape in which he grew up. Trigger defines ‘primal landscapes’ as places ‘replete with memories and nostalgic experiences of return’ and a ‘sense of emplacement printed on [one’s] mind from [one’s] youth’. The places and landscapes in which my interviewees spent their primal years connect my interviewees with previous generations. Referring to specific details such as recycled bricks, plants and door jambs which are part of the home his father built fifty years ago, Trigger notes that ‘it is in the minutiae of a place resided in for so long that my sentiments of connection are revealed’. Paul Connerton states that our recollections are conserved ‘by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us’. My interviewees’ primal landscapes abound with both the minutiae and the grand traces of not only their own lives but the lives of their parents, grand-parents and (for some) their great-grandparents.

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16 Amelia is a filmmaker who lives in Melbourne. I interviewed Amelia Gebhardt and Andrew Gebhardt at Carrickalinga on 15 March 2013.
17 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
19 Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 302.
Knowledge of the colonial past which mid-northern settler descendants absorb through everyday life is so personally and implicitly (almost sub-consciously) known that I will briefly describe some of the physical traces of the past which I now recognise as having informed my own consciousness of my historical connections to Cappeedee. As was the case for other interviewees referred to in this thesis, my mother and my uncles, my grandfather and his siblings, my cousins, my brother and I grew up surrounded by objects, lifestyles and ways of being that were a continuation of previous eras and generations. The physical traces of the past which were present at Cappeedee were all jumbled up, all mixed together. At Christmas time, we ate in the dining room under portraits of our severe-looking forebears. Although the décor changed over the generations, the table at which we ate and the sideboard from which food was served had been there at least since my grandfather’s era. We dressed up in our great-grandmother’s fur coats, felt hats and massive velvet dresses and played board games in one of the underground rooms where a safe installed by our great-grandfather, which had a brass hand as a handle, got our imaginations running. When in the dining room or my uncle’s study, we couldn’t help noticing the massive silver trophies, won in various agricultural shows in the 1800s, which dominated the mantelpieces.

The walls either side of the fireplace in the smoking room at Cappeedee were lined with shelves filled with books that had accumulated over the generations. The Billabong books bought for my mother sat alongside my great-aunts’ Ethel Turners and my cousins’ Enid Blytons. The sundial near the back entrance with its ancient way of measuring time felt like it had always been there. On summer days we would sit under the shade of the unusual tree planted by a bachelor uncle eons ago which grew on the front lawn. The tree was bare in winter; it had a massive, squat trunk with broad, horizontal branches and was perfect for small children to climb. At shearing and crutching time, the sheep of the Cappeedee bloodline bred by our forebears would be shorn in the stone woolshed built by the first Murrays to live at Cappeedee. It is worth pointing out that knowledge gained through lived experience is not learned in a passive way, but is ‘an affair of the whole body
sensing and moving’. Edward Casey describes this primary form of perception as synesthetic; ‘to perceive synesthetically is to be actively passive; it is to be absorptive yet constitutive, both at once’. Measham states that learning about place is experiential; it is strongly tied to being in place, to action and to observation. As we worked with the sheep, as we moved around the spacious rooms, as our senses were attuned to the places in which we lived, as words, phrases, snippets of stories and ways of being were conveyed, information about the past was absorbed and connections with earlier times and people were continually reaffirmed.

Over the decades things change; people move into and out of the community, advances in technology alter farming practices and changes are made to the physical environment. Successive generations revamp homesteads, acquire or sell a few paddocks, build new implement sheds and purchase new machinery. Nonetheless, in fundamental ways, through hereditary succession (farms pass from father to son with few exceptions) the continuity of place, and people in place, is maintained and perpetuated. The homestead, the gardens, furniture, sheds and even the sheep convey non-verbal and non-textual messages of the colonial past. Through place, landmarks and objects, settler descendants absorb messages of ways of living, of comfort and ease, of proprietorship, of undisputed ownership, permanence and security, authority and privilege. Rather than being told, children sense from the style and materials that certain things are old and of a certain quality and have been around for (what seems to them) a very long time or forever. The mid-northern settler descendants I spoke with who have grown up in such an environment have a consciousness of the colonial past which is integral to their very being. It is part of their identity, connecting them to others who share similar histories and enmeshing them in place. This consciousness is an implicit awareness, an assumed understanding.

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21 Edward Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time’, in Senses of Place, eds Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996), 18.
22 Casey, ‘How to get from Space to Place’, 18.
Ross Gibson gets close to describing this sense of knowing and relating to the past when describing the effect that a spatial art installation he created had on viewers. Gibson strove to provide a non-textual historiography of an undocumented (i.e. not textually documented) circumstance:

You feel something like a force of history buffeting your whole world. It’s real, this feeling; you get it inside yourself. The artwork produces it for you. It’s a feeling that makes a quandary and leads to an implicit kind of knowledge. It’s not an argument, this feeling, it’s not even a proposition; it is palpable and it makes you think about the presence of the past in ordinary time, and in you, and in the larger world which holds you ... Perhaps its better to call this an awareness, implicit as it is, rather than knowledge, which implies a proposition made explicit and verbally communicable.24

Unlike the viewers of Gibson’s art installation, settler descendants do not walk in and out of the physical and social environment through which they know the colonial past. Rather, they live it; for these settler descendants, there is no ‘getting it’ inside yourself, it is inside yourself. The knowledge of the past that settler descendants absorb through their lived environment has not been carefully or deliberately re-created to produce a certain effect. It is part of life, ‘just there’, continuous, everpresent, unquestioned. There is no argument, no proposition, no quandary – it is the way things are and the way things have always been. This presence of the past is palpable but, because it is all my interviewees have ever known, because it is part of them, it is rarely reflected on or discussed.

'They were just there'
Andrew Gebhardt didn’t have his father around to tell him details about his forebears’ lives when Andrew was at the stage of life that he was interested in learning about them. Over time, through living in place, he learned to read and interpret the signs himself. Other mid-northern settler descendants have told me

that their parents and grandparents did not speak about the past much. For such people, an awareness of their family's historical connections to place primarily comes from dwelling there. Over in the Wirrabara district, Alister Cameron told me both of his grandfathers were dead before he was born. He knew both of his grandmothers 'but they generally didn’t talk about the past much, that wasn’t the way of their generation'. 25 I asked my uncle, Andy Murray, if he knew much about the history of the Murrays. He replied:

I think it's a thing about this generation [Andy's parents and grandparents] of Murrays, they didn’t really talk about the history of the past. The person who was there [at Cappeedee] was it, and they were often there for a long period of time ... a long time, and that’s “forever”. So the history scarcely got a mention.26

Andy stated 'I think it depends on the family a bit, and I just think that this group of people [his parents and grandparents], for whatever reason, weren't really interested in it, were reticent'.27 I replied 'But that does seem common for the settler descendants I’ve been talking to, and what people know is often learned through books, genealogies'. Andy said:

Yes, well, they weren't orientated in that direction, maybe it wasn't uncommon so it really wasn’t talked about. Of course there were the big photographs of various rellies [relatives] in the dining room at Cappeedee. But we just sort of looked at them and thought how grim they looked, but we never really talked about them. They were just there. Yeah, they were just there.28

Andy succinctly conveys two relevant and related points in this quote. First, when Andy says 'it wasn’t uncommon so it really wasn’t talked about', he is referring to his family’s history of settlement in the district. For Andy’s grandparents and

25 Alister Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 21 March 2012.
27 Andy Murray, 1 May 2012.
28 Andy Murray, 1 May 2012.
parents, there was nothing special about the Murrays’ occupation of and continued presence on Cappeedee. Their story was common across the colony/state. After Andrew Gebhardt told me he knew about Gustav’s life through reading Pastoral Pioneers, he said:

He didn’t have diaries. If he did they were probably in German or something anyway. So you think “why didn’t these people keep diaries? Why didn’t they do it?” But I never do either … I don’t see my – anything I do – as being worth writing down.29

Andrew’s comment ‘I don’t see anything I do as being worth writing down’ is applicable to current and previous generations’ perceptions with regard to their presence on place and the history of their presence on place. For those in the thick of living life, their everyday activities, the settings in which they live and their reasons for being there are ordinary, they are not understood as unusual or interesting enough to write down or talk about.

Second, Andy said of the portraits in the dining room, ‘they were just there’. This sentiment can be extended to the furniture, the house itself, the land – all were ‘just there’ and ‘never really talked about’. Regarding collective memory, Irwin-Zarecka similarly notes:

If we were to take a snap shot of a particular collective memory, we would find a great deal of traces of the past that are dormant, as it were, left unattended. Books or buildings, exhibits or movies, these may all just be there, with only a few individuals giving them some thought … when our sense of the past becomes “activated,” memory becomes remembrance. At those times we do pay attention … we are engaged with the past.30

29 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
30 Irwin-Zarecka, Frames of Remembrance, 14.
For many settler descendants who continue to have access to the family property, their memories do not become activated throughout much of their lives. Often it is not until these memories and experiences are under threat – through old age, the loss of the family farm or because an inquisitive PhD student prompts certain reflections – that mid-northern settler descendants begin to reflect on their consciousness of the past and to put into words that which may have previously been unspoken.

Members of my maternal family understand it was their forebears’ skill with sheep breeding that distinguished them from other families, but again, this was never explicitly discussed. Successive generations became aware of the relevance of sheep to the family’s history through dwelling in place. Sheep were an integral component of everyday life; from the sheep grazing in the paddocks, the stud rams in the ram-shed and the trophies in the house to the age, size and style of the stone shearing shed, the importance of sheep did not need to be verbalised or taught. They too were ‘just there’.

This lack of explicit divulging of information is not confined to my grandparents’ generation. I asked my cousin, Angus, how he became aware of the history of Cappeedee. He paused before answering slowly and thoughtfully:

Um, just from reading brochures, the old brochures and the old news-clippings and stuff, the scrap books

Sk ye: *So they’d just be around in the house somewhere?*

Yeah, and from other people saying things to me, not so much Dad. Dad never taught me a lot about it. I’d have to ask questions to hear it from dad. But yeah, I don’t know really but I always loved the old trophies, and newspaper clippings and errh, realised there was a significant history to the farm.

*Sk ye: What about your grandfather, your dad’s dad, did he tell you much?*

No, he never said anything unless I asked.

*Sk ye: So Grandad and Uncle Al are the same like that?*
Yeah. Unless you asked they wouldn't, they'd never divulge anything basically.31

Angus’s comment that he had to ask to be told about his family’s history is important. For many mid-northern settler descendants, questions are prompted by being in place and through being observant. If you don’t ask, you don’t necessarily get told; certainly you don’t get told about things older people consider ordinary. The questions settler descendants think to ask are connected with their lived experiences and in accordance with the society and culture in which they live. I return to this point in chapter 8. Angus and I both noticed the trophies because they were unusually big and ornate – they stood out and caught our attention. When I asked Amelia Gebhardt how she became aware of the history of her family at Mackerode, she said ‘I used to pore over photos of Gustav … and that book [Pastoral Pioneers] … I was fascinated by this bearded German man’.32

Amelia’s, Angus’s and my own awareness of the past was confirmed and made more concrete through portable, datable material objects – trophies, newspaper articles, photographs. We never thought to ask about seemingly immutable, permanent objects such as the land itself or the house. Referring to his ‘first’ forebear, Andrew Gebhardt said ‘you know the things he did were probably the biggest things but yet they are less obvious to see because they are so big, you think, well, [he had] nothing to do with it’.33 The biggest things Gustav did were to acquire the land which became the family property and build the house that became the family home. When Andrew says ‘you think he had nothing to do with it’ he is indicating his difficulties in recognising Gustav’s agency in ‘the biggest things’. This seeming inability to recognise the agency of the first forebear – this sense of the inevitability and naturalness regarding their family’s presence on place – is evident in comments made by interviewees such as my Uncle Bill, who said ‘it felt like we [the Murrays] were the original owners and had been forever’.34

31 Angus Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 19 May 2010.
32 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
33 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
Country/place

The places in which we live are integral to our sense of self; places play a fundamental role in human beings’ lives and can be understood as providing ‘the nexus of existence’. While experience of place is inevitably and always culturally configured, as is emplacement, being in place is not something that people choose. In ontological terms, being in place – emplacement – is a condition of being which is fundamental to who and what we are. Being in place is a corporeal experience through which we know – become aware of – our very consciousness and sensuous presence in the world. Edward Relph defines a sense of place as ‘a synaesthetic faculty that combines sight, hearing, smell, movement, touch, imagination, purpose and anticipation’. Relph understands emplacement to be both individual and intersubjective, to be closely connected to community, personal memory and self. In my introductory chapter I described the sense of homecoming which swamped me when I got out of the car at Cappeedee. When I felt, smelled and breathed the air, memories connected with the cold came thick and fast. When I hiked through ploughed-up paddocks, my lungs immediately recognised the fineness of the dust.

A close and sensual view in which knowledge of place is gained through practice reminds us of the intimate relationship between embodiment and emplacement. In Casey’s words:

There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is not, then, subsequent to perception … but is an ingredient in perception itself. Such knowledge, genuinely local knowledge, is itself experiential …

38 Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, 19.
“lived experience,” rather than ... the already lapsed experience that is the object of analytical or abstract knowledge.41

This intimate familiarity and sensory knowledge of place is inherent in those who have spent their formative years and/or most of their lives in place. As with other experienced pasts, emplaced sensory experiences extend through the generations, going beyond our own childhoods and ‘beyond the limits of individual experience’.42

The mid-northerners I have focused my research on have grown up on the same country that has sustained their families for generations. Describing the country in which he has lived the bulk of his life, Andrew Gebhardt explained ‘You know when you are in – that’s the beauty about around Burra, Hallett – you’ve got these magnificent hills, you look out in the evening and the morning and the air’s fairly crisp up there ... and there is just something about them that gets life into perspective’.43 Andrew refers to the topography, the clarity and temperature of the air, and how this affects his perspective on life. Remembering ‘going for walks through the hills’, Amelia said ‘I just think its really beautiful, it’s a beautiful place, um, [pause] and just watching the light on those hills year after year it’s [pause, very softly and fading out] you get very close to it’.44 The natural environment – the climate, topography and geography – plays an important role in linking people and place and shaping the lives of its inhabitants.45 Trigger describes his feelings for the cultural landscape in which he grew up as ‘closest to what I could experience as autochthony – a sense of being fundamentally linked to the patches of earth over which I have spent many formative years’.46 Like Andrew and Amelia Gebhardt, other North-Eastern Highlander interviewees refer fondly to the bare rolling hills, the light and the air. For those who live around Wirrabara, the dominating

41 Casey, ‘How to Get from Space to Place’, 18.
43 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
44 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
45 See for example James Boyce, Van Diemen’s Land (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992), 113; Susan Gilbert, History, Memory, Community: The role and uses of history in four rural communities in South Australia (PhD thesis: Flinders University, 2002), 16.
46 Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 302.
presence of Mount Remarkable and the numerous creeks which descend from the mountain range feature in their reflections. Describing her connection to her family home and property, Heather Sizer explained ‘Although things have changed... it’s still got that feeling. You still look out and see the mount [Mount Remarkable] there’.47

Observing that all memories unfold within a spatial framework, Maurice Halbwachs states that it is to our physical surroundings – ‘the space we occupy, traverse, have continual access to, or can at any time reconstruct in thought and imagination’ – that we must turn if we are to recognise how memories endure.48 Halbwachs asserts:

> It is the spatial image alone that, by reason of its stability, gives us an illusion of not having changed through time and of retrieving the past in the present. But that’s how memory is defined. Space alone is stable enough to endure without growing old or losing any of its parts.49

European land-use practices – grazing and cropping – have dramatically altered the carefully and well-maintained pre-colonial Aboriginal landscape. Native vegetation is sparse, innumerable creatures are no longer present, and watercourses and water levels have been dramatically altered. However, at its most basic level, the spatial image has not changed since the arrival of my interviewees’ forebears. The constancy and stability of space and place in these districts is not an illusion, but concrete and real.

Recognising that place acts as a container for memories enables us to deepen our understanding of why some stories of the past endure and are perpetuated through the generations while others are forgotten. Casey refers to Aristotle to

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47 Heather Sizer, interview with Skye Krichauff, Wirrabara, 5 July 2010.
48 Halbwachs does not use ‘physical surroundings’ exactly as I have but from the full quote it is evident that Halbwachs uses ‘space’ as a means of referring to physical surroundings; Chapter 4 ‘Space and the Collective Memory’ in The Collective Memory, 7, web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/hawlbachsP space.pdf; accessed 24 March 2010.
49 Halbwachs, ‘Space and the Collective Memory’, 15.
reiterate the remarkable power of place, stating that place 'holds its own (in) memories':

Places are potentially receptive and preservative of memories which they hold to keep. As much as body or brain, mind or language, place is a keeper of memories – one of the main ways by which the past comes to be secured in the present, held in things before us and around us.50

Constancy of place ensures continuity of memory and the entanglement of temporalities. If, as Rosita Henry notes, 'Deprivation of place leads to a loss of self because it involves erasure of memory',51 the opposite is equally valid; continuity of place contributes significantly to a strong sense of self and supports and affirms the continuation of memory. My interviewees' primal landscape is the primal landscape of their parents and, often, their grandparents. Not only is the geographical area in which many of my interviewees live the place in which they are born, go to school, live, work and socialise, it is also the place where their forebears lived their lives. Continuity of place has been assured since their forebears first purchased land from the colonial government; for these settlers and their descendants, freehold title translates to unalienable land and all the associated long-term emotions and ways of understanding one's place and being in the world affiliated with the perception that that land is yours for perpetuity.

**Attachment to place**

Like other freeholder descendants I spoke with, Andrew and Amelia Gebhardts' most numerous and meaningful stories and knowledge of the past are connected with a very specific area of land, namely the family property on which they have grown up. Thomas Measham understands 'primal landscapes' as a concept which 'represents the special bond that develops between children and the environments they grow in and that become part of their identity'.52 The family property is the

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51 Rosita Henry, 'Practising Place, Performing Memory: Identity Politics in an Australian Town, the "Village in the Rainforest"' (PhD thesis, James Cook University, 1999), 41.
52 Measham, 'Learning about Environments', 431.
place where my interviewees spent the most time during their formative childhood years – it is the most potent and meaning-laden ‘primal landscape’ for my interviewees. Primal landscapes provide a sense of ‘being fundamentally linked to the patches of earth’ over and in which individuals have spent many formative years. Trigger conceptualises primal landscapes as imprinting a sense of emplacement on the individual’s mind. Although clearly having a strong attachment to place, it was obvious during interviews that mid-northern settler descendants are not used to verbalising this.

While researching the spiritual and cultural significance of forests, David Trigger and Jane Mulcock found that some of the non-Aboriginal people they spoke with ‘struggled to articulate the quality of their attachment to particular places’. These interviewees nevertheless expressed diverse emotions and experiences which Trigger and Mulcock interpreted as illustrative of their deep connection, or intimacy, with such places. From interviews with graziers in the black soil country of the northern Darling floodplain, Heather Goodall learned that although many graziers had strong emotional commitments to the land they worked, they did not readily or easily express these emotional connections. Goodall found that when working with non-Aboriginal people whose lives ‘have been embedded in and dependent on the surrounding land, but who have not consciously recognised this relationship’, to learn of their perceptions and relationships with the land it was not helpful to ask direct questions. Instead Goodall used life histories as a means to get people to reflect on and talk about places they considered important. I similarly found that mid-northern settler descendants were not used to reflecting on or verbalising their emotional connection to place and our recorded conversations tended to evolve as life histories. Getting people thinking and talking about their lives both relaxed them and increased their confidence regarding the value of their perspective and the worthiness of their knowledge and information. During interviews, I would ask interviewees if they had any favourite places in the

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53 Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 302.
district and on their property. The most common, immediate response was ‘all of it’, after which I would generally ask if they could be more specific.

When I asked Andrew if he had any favourite places on Mackerode, he said:

> Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Well it’s the ambience of the place, there were, I don’t know about favourite places but certainly – you know, those hills had a special meaning.57

Andrew also referred to making cubbies in ‘the bushes down the bottom … they were actually she-oaks, and they were very close together, but you could get in there and make little rooms, and stuff like that’.58 When I asked Amelia about favourite places, she said she ‘used to love going over the hill on my bike. There used to be ruins on the other side … And I used to love going into the triangle where Dad started to build up native trees’.59 Amelia referred to ‘another forest, a she-oak forest that we used to go to that was a bit eerie, you know how pine needles create that haunting atmosphere, we used to go down there and have tea-parties’.

![She-oak forest at Mackerode with the homestead in the background.](image)

Figure 9. She-oak forest at Mackerode with the homestead in the background.

57 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
58 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
59 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
From information conveyed during site-visits and interviews, settler descendants indicated that, like man-made objects, trees too serve as mnemonic devices. Trees are a living sign of continuity through the generations, and contribute to settler descendants’ sense of emplacement, historical permanence and generational rootedness. Andrew and Amelia also spoke of a mulberry tree. Amelia asked Andrew if he used to climb the tree because she and her sisters used to ‘spend a lot of time up there’. Andrew replied ‘Yeah, we used to climb up there eating mulberries’. Fruit trees that were planted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries continue to grow near most homesteads and (if it is not the same site) near the place of the first forebears’ first dwelling, and many settler descendants I spoke with similarly referred to fruit trees.

In the Wirrabara district, trees line the creeks. Interviewees in their eighties recalled that the creeks ran constantly in their youth. The following generation remembered the creeks flowing annually and waterholes lasting throughout the year. They spoke of catching yabbies and swimming in the creeks and/or waterholes throughout their childhoods. Interviewees from the Booborowie Valley spoke of exploring in the hills, catching rabbits and getting mushrooms. As children, my friends, cousins, brother and I would explore our properties on foot, bike and motorbike. We would find interesting or pleasant places to play or rest. When we got older we would help our fathers with the sheep work, we would shift sheep from paddock to paddock or along the roads. Measham found that learning about place through childhood experiences overlaps with learning about place through accompanying family and elders when going about daily life such as through running the farm. In his study of primal landscapes, Measham found that observation – both in childhood and beyond – is an important component to learning about place which overlaps with childhood experiences of place. Mid-northern settler descendants know the past through their experiences in place and through observation, both of which are inseparable.

60 Andrew Gebhardt and Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
61 Mary Krichauff, interview with Skye Krichauff, Hazelwood Park, 18 March 2010; Angus Murray, 19 May 2010; Bill Murray, 14 May 2010.
In addition, Measham deduced that continuity of connection to a place throughout adulthood was not so much a way of learning as a means of triggering renewed learning – a means of building on pre-existing knowledge of place. Continuity may be through spending long periods of time in a place or through repeated visits.63 While absent at school and college, Andrew knew that he could and would return to regularly to Mackerode. Discussing how after her parents separated she lived with her mother in Adelaide during the school week, Amelia said:

I think it was really traumatic leaving, I think it’s – to a certain degree – a scarification on childhood, leaving … But, yeah, I would love to go up there as often as I could. And just even in the city, knowing that Mackerode was there, was a huge safety valve emotionally.64

Knowledge of continued access and constant return extends to other family members. Family ties and social events ensure that siblings and cousins continue to return to and maintain their connection with the house and property long after they may have left home. Andrew told me:

We used to have Gebhardt family reunion parties there [at Mackerode] and people from all over Australia come for this, and they used to love it. And you think “God, I'm selling it”. You know those people will never be able to do that again.65

Many siblings I interviewed who had left the farm up to fifty years ago told me they continue to think of the family property as home, whether they return regularly or not.66 Simply knowing that the family home remains in the family and that return is possible at any time contributes to settler descendants’ deep sense of security and stability.

64 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
65 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
66 Mary Krichauff, 18 March 2010; Bill Murray, 14 May 2010; Daphne Murdoch, interview with Skye Krichauff, Gilberton, 30 March 2010; Heather Sizer, 5 July 2020.
When specifying favourite places on their properties, interviewees refer to hills, creeks and areas with trees. Both Andrew and Amelia Gebhardt spoke of the hills behind Mackerode, and Julia Clarke (née Gebhardt) mentioned the hills on the other side of the valley, closer to her home, Woollana.\(^67\) My mother, her brothers and my cousins referred to the hills behind the Cappeede homestead and the creek near the homestead.\(^68\) Although lightly grazed, the hills lining the Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys have never been cleared. They are relatively well vegetated. Several years ago a pygmy blue-tongue lizard, thought to be extinct, was found in the hills behind Cappeede. In the Wirrabara district, Alister Cameron told me that his favourite places on Doughboy Creek are ‘the creek lines ... and the highest places where you can see the furthest’.\(^69\)

Anthropologist John Gray conducted ethnographic fieldwork among shepherds in the Scottish borders. Gray points out that ‘the space created by capitalist motivated action is above all governed by principles of utility and rationality’ and that modern capitalist landscapes are ‘dehumanized and, by implication, impoverished of meaning’ because they have been excessively shaped and planned to maximize economic efficiency.\(^70\) Gray found that because hills in this area can’t be easily fenced, driven over or cleared, they are less suitable than the flats for agricultural production for the capitalist market. Because of this, the hills have an enhanced potential for the cultural production of meaning.\(^71\) Gray’s observations are applicable to the ploughed and cropped paddocks of the mid-north, where people enjoy spending time in the hills. Through being in touch with the natural world, a powerful sense of place is gained.\(^72\)

\(^{67}\) Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010; Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013; Julia Clarke, interview with Skye Krichauff, Woollana, 23 March 2012.

\(^{68}\) Mary Krichauff, 18 March 2010; Bill Murray, 14 May 2010, Andy Murray, 29 March 2010.

\(^{69}\) Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.


\(^{71}\) Gray, ‘Open Spaces and Dwelling Places’, 445.

Walking in the hills is often done alone – it is almost private. It was not until Mackerode was being sold that father and daughter Andrew and Amelia realised that they both visited the same ‘cut-out’ in the hills behind Mackerode. When I first interviewed Andrew, he spoke of occasionally visiting some ‘extraordinary’ ‘cut-outs up in the hills’. When I reinterviewed him nearly three years later, Andrew said to Amelia in a thoughtful and relatively quiet voice, as though thinking through what he was going to say while he was saying it:

And I’ll tell you something else that I find interesting, and, um, I might get this wrong, tell me if it is [to Amelia]. But you [Amelia] were saying about places on Mackerode. And up in the back of the hills there’s a sharp valley [pause] and it’s got a bit of a [pause] quarry next to it – not, not big enough for our houses or anything and I’m not quite sure why it’s there. And there’s this creek that runs through with reeds and stuff in it. And it was always – I always found it special and [to Amelia] you did too [questioning, with incredulity]? And I didn’t even know that you did.

Andrew asked Amelia ‘Is that right? Remember that place in the hills where we took those photographs that day’? In a voice filled with emotion Amelia answered ‘There was a very palpable energy there’. Andrew continued ‘There is a huge energy there. So independently, we both thought this place – ’.

Growing up on the same country as one’s forebears contributes to the powerful and deep sense of emplacement formed during childhood years. The primal landscapes in which people grow up in become part of their identity. Affection for place and the significance of generational connections which deepen one’s affection for place are not necessarily readily communicated. Because place, the container for memories, is so ‘big’ – so secure, so important, so fundamental to my

\[ \text{Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010; Andrew Gebhardt and Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.} \]
\[ \text{Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.} \]
\[ \text{Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.} \]
\[ \text{Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.} \]
\[ \text{Measham, ‘Learning about Environments’, 431.} \]
interviewees' lives – it is invisible in the sense that its permanence and stability are assumed, taken as a given and rarely reflected on.

**Homesteads**

Among North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants, the homestead is an integral component of the property and of a landowning rural lifestyle; the homestead and the property are inseparable in settler descendants' lives, narratives and memories – they are synonymous. An illustration of the coherence of the two is the fact that the same word (the same name) denotes both the homestead and the property. When members of Andrew's family refer to Mackerode, they are referring to either the house or the land or (most often) both indiscriminately. Homesteads can be understood as historical monuments that concretely link the past to a place; homesteads link the past to the people who dwell in them as they move through their lives. Andrew Gebhardt grew up in the house built by his great-grandfather and the home of his father and grandfather. Although he spent time in different dwellings when at boarding school and agricultural college, Andrew had lived most of his life in the one house. Because the homestead is a home, it is loved and its characteristics and peculiarities are well known. Andrew knows the same drafts, the same layout of rooms, the same sense of spaciousness and the same peculiarities of the house as those who preceded him.

With its solid stone walls, spacious rooms, generous windows and wide verandahs, Mackerode is typical of nineteenth-century mid-northern stone homesteads which were built when my interviewees’ forebears had prospered enough to build a permanent, relatively luxurious home. According to David Lowenthal, simply knowing that structures are durable may give residents a sense of being rooted in

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78 For example, Cappeedee, The Bluff, Three Trees, Woollana. The exception is the Cameron family's house Bellevue which differs from the property's name Doughboy Creek.

79 Andrew Lass discusses how historical monuments tie the past to a place and people in ‘From Memory to History: The Events of November 17 Dis/membered’, in *Memory, History and Opposition*, ed. Rubie S Watson (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1994), 89.

80 Future heirs to the property do not usually live in the main homestead while baching, or during the early years of marriage while waiting for their parents to move into a smaller house. Often parents move into a smaller house which is on the family property.
Tangible traces of the past, such as homesteads, provide a sense of continuity through time and a stable support and frame of reference for settler descendants’ memories. Living or spending substantial amounts of time in the same dwelling as earlier generations is a powerful, living demonstration of continuity through time.

Figure 10. Mackerode.

My interviewees readily understand objects and buildings as part of ‘history’. All know the era the family home was built and many know the exact year. Melva McInnes told me that her great-grandparents were the first to live at her home, Three Trees, and that they ‘built the first part of the house in 1856’. Max Rayner said that his grandfather ‘built the first stone cottage on the Bluff in 1868’ and that his Uncle Fred ‘built a new house on the main property’ which is now the main homestead and has been added onto twice. My mother and two of her brothers thought the Cappeedee homestead was built in the 1870s, Angus and Uncle Al said it was built in 1874.

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83 Melva McInnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Three Trees, 7 June 2010.
84 Max Rayner, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 18 May 2010.
Changes made to the homestead over the years are tangible and datable. When viewing alterations, current descendants are reminded of those who made them. Andrew knew Gustav ‘built the Mackerode homestead in 1871’ and that Mackerode in 1871 is ‘not like it is today’:

The main part, he [Gustav] built a home probably with, I don’t know, perhaps ten rooms upstairs and 4–5 downstairs ... They didn’t like the heat much in those days so they used to build these rooms underneath ... we recarpeted all the rooms and found these trapdoors ... we found these stairways, there was all this stuff down there, papers, bottles, documents ... [The rooms] had bells in them for the staff, would have slept down there. I think my grandfather in the early 1900s built on the billiard room and another bedroom.85

Speaking of the cellars, Andrew said ‘I can still smell down there now... and it was only in that cellar ... had a papery [smell]’.86 Uncle Al provided me with a detailed description of changes his parents and he and his wife made to Cappeedee. Like Andrew, Al was aware of the lives of previous generations through the architecture and fittings of the house. Al spoke of ‘a servery window in the dining room, in the kitchen where there are shelves in the wall’ where the maids used to hand food through and ‘a bell that would hang down over the table’. His parents never used this bell. Al thought it must have been for his grandparents. The wiring for the bell ‘is still up there in the ceiling’.87 Through living in the same house as their forebears and drawing upon their lived experiences, Andrew and Al are provided with an additional means through which to know of and make sense of their forebears’ lives.

Both Nora and Cubitt argue that memory accommodates only those facts that suit it and that memory may consist of either clear and precise or vague and uncertain images and sensations.88 Lowenthal points out that cultural prejudice affects what

85 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
86 Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
87 Alistair Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 18 May 2010.
88 Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 3 and Cubitt, Memory and History, 97.
is preserved, what is left to disintegrate or erode and what is deliberately
destroyed. Mid-northern settler descendants are proud of their family home
which they continuously maintain and care for. Homesteads concretely anchor
families in place in a way which is culturally recognisable to the colonising
population. While knowledge of and affection for country may be too vague and
not a culturally appropriate or recognisable means of knowing and articulating
long-term connections, through the homestead a specific, tangible past is evident –
in the solid stone walls, the number, size and layout of the rooms, the shape and
orientation of the windows.

While place acts as a container for memory, that which is held in place acts as a
prompt for memory. As Casey phrases it:

> It is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences
> that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability. An alert
> and alive memory connects spontaneously with place, finding in it
> features that favour and parallel its own activities.\(^90\)

Features that are favoured in settler descendants’ memory are those with which
they have a personal connection. In addition to homesteads, numerous landmarks
dating back to the nineteenth century litter the landscape in which my
interviewees dwell. During site visits and while travelling with settler descendants,
I heard stories about fence posts, trees, troughs, shearing sheds, ruins, chimneys
and holes in the ground, some of which I refer to in subsequent chapters. Like the
homesteads, these landmarks obviously exist because of human activity and, more
precisely and tellingly, because of European activity. They trigger the
remembrance of people, events, lifestyles and ways of being that belong to earlier
eras. Both homesteads and landmarks which are culturally intelligible and
meaningful to settler descendants provide solid evidence of settler durability
through time. Through these features, settler descendants can readily read and
interpret their family’s generational presence in place.

\(^{89}\) Lowenthal, ‘Past Time, Present Place’, 31.
\(^{90}\) Edward Casey, *Remembering*, 186.
The lack of sense of individual ownership

When Andrew inherited Mackerode, he took over paintings, photographs, cutlery and furniture which had accumulated over the generations. When Uncle Al took over Cappeedee, he took over items of furniture which 'belonged with the house'. Referring to two large lithographs that hung in the front hall, Uncle Andy remembered his PhD supervisor coming up to Cappeedee and asking Andy's parents about them:

I'm fairly sure that Mum and Dad said they didn't know where they came from. They must have come from an ancestor or something because Mum and Dad would never have bought them.91

Andy said 'the pictures that were there, the photographs or whatever they were, had been there forever'.92 I too grew up with a sense that the dining room furniture, the trophies, the old portraits, the sundial and other objects in the house had 'been there forever'. Lowenthal makes the pertinent observation that ‘the durability of many artefacts and other traces of the past … engender a feeling of accretion. The addition is cumulative: each year, each generation, contributes more to the scene’.93

For the settler descendants I have been speaking with, this feeling of accretion is manifest in the objects which remain permanently with the house and property. The continuity of material objects ensures that memories and knowledge of previous lives and times are relatively unlaboriously conserved and recollected. The presence of various objects which are thought of as ‘belonging' with the house and the property bolsters and confirms descendants’ sense of permanence and rootedness in place.

According to Lowenthal, 'portable symbols of the past aid continuity'.94 Items from the past such as furniture, photographs and jewellery are present in many people’s

91 Andy Murray, 1 May 2012.
92 Andy Murray, 1 May 2012.
93 Lowenthal, 'Past Time, Present Place', 10.
94 Lowenthal, 'Past Time, Present Place', 9.
homes, but where the transition from one generation to the next is predictable and constant, where continuity of house and land is assured, where the layout of rooms changes little and where furniture and photos may occupy the same position for decades, there is not only a strong sense that these things have been there forever, but also that they do not belong to any particular person or generation but with the place. As an example, when I borrowed what had once been my great-aunts’ and my mother’s books from Cappeedee, I did not feel I was borrowing them from my uncle or my cousins but from Cappeedee. There was a sense among most of my maternal grandfather’s children and grandchildren that the furniture and other objects that remained with Cappeedee over successive generations belonged with the house and were there for all family members to appreciate and utilise. As Uncle Andy put it ‘they belong to the place … a lot of the stuff that I can remember that Al and Rachel took over from Mum and Dad, they took it over because it was in the house, and they just went on living with them … that actually represents the history of the place’.  

Andrew sold Mackerode several years before I interviewed him and the feeling that the furniture, paintings, cutlery, crockery and rugs that had surrounded him throughout his own, his father’s and his grandfather’s lives ‘went with the house’ was so strong that, rather than take these items with him or distribute them among his family, he left them with the house for the new owner. Andrew let his daughters pick one item from Mackerode as a keepsake. Amelia said her sister asked for ‘the old washing stick that had worn out over time’. Andrew commented ‘who knows how long that was there for but it was shaped by the water and time’. Amelia said wistfully that deciding what to take was ‘so hard’. During our interview, Andrew seemed incredulous about his stance and asked Amelia ‘But I did say to you only one thing, didn’t I? It should have been more than that.’ Amelia replied ‘You did speak about how, um, you felt this kind of connectivity of the history of those objects needing to stay with the history of the place’. Andrew responded ‘I did, I did, yeah. Because they fitted into that place’.  

95 Andy Murray, 1 May 2012.  
96 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.  
97 Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
reinterviewed Colin and Val Cameron after they had retired and moved to Adelaide. Colin said he left the portraits of ‘my great grandmother Long, my grandmother, my grandfather, my parents’ at Bellevue because ‘they are part of the house’.98

This sense of family continuity in place is further illustrated by current owners’ sense that they are not separate and distinct ‘owners’ of the place so much as the next of a line of custodians. As Andrew phrased it:

The best way I can put it is I felt as if I was only a custodian for a period of time. I didn’t feel I owned it. That was what was getting me, I didn’t want to own something like this. But as I felt like a custodian I began to want to and I began to enjoy it, and I did enjoy it.99

Angus told me that he wanted to take over Cappeedee ‘because it’s where I was brought up, it's where I grew up, the history of the farm. I wanted to continue that on, and it was just my home. I’ve always considered it my home and I wanted to stay here and continue on with it’.100 Colin Cameron told me ‘I felt that I’ve been more of a caretaker than an owner [of Doughboy Creek]. I’ve always felt that I had an obligation to look after it, improve it’.101 Alistair Cameron, who during the time of my research has taken over from his father Colin and his mother Val in running Doughboy Creek, told me ‘You don’t see [the property] as being, um, your own per se, you just see it as being um there, and that it’s your duty, your obligation, to maintain it. And hopefully to try and improve it’.102

98 Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Belair, 7 March 2012.
99 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
100 Angus Murray, 19 May 2010.
101 Colin Cameron, 7 March 2012.
102 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
Conclusion

Mid-northern settler descendants who have grown up on land which has been continually occupied by their family since the nineteenth century are not primarily aware of their historical connections to place through hearing about them from older family members. Many older people do not tell stories unless they are specifically asked, or unless there is a reason to, prompted by people or place. An awareness of previous times is absorbed through everyday life and may be more consciously made sense of through the observations, experiences and questions of individual family members. Understanding the lived experiences of mid-northern settler descendants is crucial to any examination of their consciousness of the colonial past. The settler descendants I have been speaking with do not primarily know the colonial past through history books or through visiting, studying or observing sites or shrines of memory. Instead, the most powerful and deepest way that the past is known is through everyday life, through living in settings among others with whom settler descendants share experiences and histories, in which and among whom accumulated traces of the past are ever present.

In this chapter I have examined the country, landscape, landmarks, houses and numerous material objects which can be understood as comprising settler descendants’ ‘primal landscapes’. In his study of primal landscapes, Measham found that experiencing places through play, action and observation during the formative years of childhood and adolescence not only creates deep and long-lasting ties to those places but influences how other landscapes and places are experienced. The physical environment in which they have spent their formative years and in which many continue to live is crucial to mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. This environment is culturally configured; my interviewees’ knowledge of place and the past is framed by the culture in which they have grown up and in which they belong. My interviewees’ consciousness of the past, formed through growing up on and in places occupied by their forebears, experiences which have been strengthened by constant and continual return, are an integral component of my interviewees’ identity which remains with them throughout their lives. The settings in which people live and in

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which their consciousness of the past is formed and reaffirmed consist of more than the physical and material surrounds. The settings in which people live are also social. In the following chapter I examine the people and social networks among whom settler descendants live their everyday lives.
Chapter 3: ‘A great feeling of belonging’

Eighty-five year old Melva McInnes lives at Three Trees, which was built by her great-grandparents Mary and Josiah and is just off the main road between Burra and Mt Bryan, a few kilometres south of Mackerode. Melva told me that during secondary school, she used to stay in Burra with her grandmother who was called Mavis. Mavis was Mary and Josiah’s daughter, she was ‘the one who used to ride out everywhere’. She married Alexander John Reid and lived in Burra. Frances Mary Maude was the daughter of the one who stayed at Three Trees, she used to ride out everywhere too. She married Cornelius Wesley Gare. They had Glen View, then [Melva’s] father took it over and they moved into Burra’. Melva also had an aunt called Mavis who was Frances’ sister. ‘They had Wandilla, east of Burra’. Josiah and Mary also had a son, Henry, for whom they built The Pines, which neighbours Three Trees.

I struggled to keep up with the connections between people, places and eras which Melva spoke of with such ease and familiarity. While I found Melva’s ready and confidently stated explanations confusing and complicated, to Melva this information was clear and obvious. Melva has lived her whole life in the district in which her forebears settled in the 1850s. As she travels around the district, places remind her of her family’s long connections in the area. People and place are inseparably linked; people remind Melva of places, and places remind Melva of people. These may be people currently living, or people who died many decades ago. Commenting that Melva has relatives all around her, I asked Melva if she could put into words her feelings for the district and Three Trees. Melva paused for a long time before saying slowly and thoughtfully ‘Oh, well, [pause] I have a great feeling of belonging. I think if it went out of the family, I would be devastated’.²

Just as Andrew Gebhardt could not easily articulate his conscious of his family’s historical connection to Mackerode and what that meant to him, Melva was not

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¹ Melva McInnes, interviewed by Skye Krichauff, Three Trees, 7 June 2010.
² Melva McInnes, 7 June 2010.
used to reflecting on and verbalising her feelings for Three Trees, the district and her sense of belonging. As philosopher Linn Miller argues, proper belonging is ontological, it is something ‘fundamental to who and what we are ... belonging is in some way part of what constitutes our identity, whether we are explicitly aware of it or not’.  

I asked Melva if she could expand on that sense of belonging. After another long pause, Melva answered softly in a voice filled with emotion:

I can’t really explain [pause]. I just know that I love every bit about it ... I think too, my grandparents used to talk to me a lot about things, and also their housekeeper ... she stayed with them all her life. She knew about everything in the family ... she would be telling me stories about everyone.

Melva’s grandparents’ housekeeper was called Essie. Melva told me Essie was the illegitimate daughter of a well-known pastoralist who lived in the district. Melva’s grandparents looked after Essie well and provided her with a house to live in after their deaths and Melva considered Essie a member of the family. Through growing up hearing ‘stories about everyone’ Melva learned about her forebears and their lives in the place in which she continues to live in an organic, informal way. While some of my interviewees (usually men) say their grandparents and parents never told them much, others (usually women) say their older relatives told them stories about the past. Regarding if and what stories are told and to whom, I suggest much depends on the personalities and interests of the individuals concerned. My grandparents told me stories, but I had lots of questions.

While place serves as a container of memories and while buildings, landmarks and objects prompt memories, equally significant is the society in which memories are formed and shaped, and among whom they are reiterated and perpetuated. Melva’s sense of belonging is inseparable from her knowledge of place and people. Drawing on the insights of Maurice Halbwachs, Paul Connerton argues that:

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Groups provide individuals with frameworks within which their memories are localized ... We situate what we recollect within the mental spaces provided by the group. But these mental spaces ... always receive support from and refer back to the material spaces that particular social groups occupy.

In line with Connerton’s observations, I found that when trying to explain their sense of attachment to place and their consciousness of their family’s history in place, like Melva, other mid-northern settler descendants similarly linked people, place and the past. Referring to Cappeedee, Uncle Andy said ‘our parents were there, and before them there were the old group that were there, I knew them all, of course. I think there’s a bit of continuity there, of history, and it would be a great shame, if it were broken. That’s the emotional bit of it’. Andy’s brother Bill stated ‘it’s a whole history of people there’. Describing his connections with Mackerode, Andrew Gebhardt reflected ‘it wasn’t just my parents, it was my grandparents, my great-grand parents and, you know, there was a long history of stuff there’. By referring to a particular group of people, a specific place and ‘history’ within the same brief sentence, these mid-northern settler descendants demonstrate the inseparability of people and place to their consciousness of the past and their sense of belonging.

**Belonging**

When put on the spot, Melva paused before saying in a voice filled with emotion that her awareness of her family's history in the district provided her with a ‘great sense of belonging’. During interviews and site visits, other mid-northern settler descendants who have grown up on the land of their forebears implicitly articulated their strong and secure sense of belonging to the place and community in which they grew up. Heather Sizer’s forebears settled in the Wirrabara district in which she continues to live in the 1850s and 1860s. When I asked Heather how important it was to her to know her family’s long connection to this area, she

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7 Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
replied ‘Well I suppose it gives stability, or something. And you know where your roots are, you know who you are, where you’ve come from’. Thinking about my own experience, I asked Heather if she knew ‘all the people from around the place’ to which Heather replied ‘Yes, that’s right. And their families, and their backgrounds’.

In my introductory chapter I attempted to convey the deep sense of home and belonging I felt when returning to Hallett, the Booborowie Valley and Cappeedee. Settler descendants with rural backgrounds from other areas similarly convey a strong sense of belonging. In his exploration of non-Aboriginal senses of belonging in Australia, Peter Read interviewed young adults from country New South Wales at their private-school boarding house in Sydney. Read refers to these young women as the ‘Orley School Girls’. He was surprised at their ‘passionate articulation of their own senses of belonging’ and describes them as ‘at home in their land, confident, articulate, physical, sensual’ and ‘more secure, more certain of their values than any other young Australians that [he had] met – except for a few young Aboriginals!’ Reflecting on her upbringing in the district in which her maternal family settled in the 1800s, Katrina Schlunke states ‘I had a notion of perfect belonging’.

Various rural settler descendants provide a corrective to observations that in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, settler Australians are becoming increasingly anxious about their sense of emplacement and their right to belong. Certain scholars have observed that revisions to Australian history and increasing public awareness of the multifaceted, negative implications of European invasion on Aboriginal people have fuelled a sense of self-consciousness and uncertainty regarding their right to belong among some sectors of the Australian population. Writing at the close of the twentieth century, Anthony Moran argues that ‘settler

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8 Heather Sizer, interview with Skye Krichauff, Wirrabara, 5 July 2010.
9 Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
10 Peter Read, Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership (Cambridge, UK; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69.
11 Read, Belonging, 63, 62.
Australians have entered a period of uncertainty in which the issues of home, place and belonging have become problematic'.

Lorenzo Veracini sees ‘stubborn and lingering anxieties over settler legitimacy and belonging’ in settler collectives.

Some intellectuals, particularly those who are acutely aware of the violence of colonisation through knowing and/or working with Aboriginal people, have come to question the legitimacy of their own presence in Australia. Reflecting upon this stance, Miller and David Trigger are two scholars who have observed that, in early twenty-first century Australia, it has become ‘sexy’, ‘popular’ and ‘politically correct’ to suggest that non-Aboriginal Australians can never truly belong, that true belonging is a state of being that only Aboriginal Australians can possess and authentically claim.

Peter Read is one influential and highly-regarded scholar who has written extensively on non-Aboriginal Australians’ belonging. As is indicated by the title _Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership_, Aboriginal knowledge of and attachment to land are the yardsticks by which Read examines and understands non-Aboriginal Australians’ senses of emplacement and belonging.

Both Miller and Trigger draw attention to the need to closely scrutinise Read’s seemingly unproblematic acceptance that non-Aboriginal people’s belonging is ‘morally inferior compared with the emplacement of people asserting an “Indigenous” identity’. Perceiving Read’s position as ceding ‘a monopoly on proper belonging to Aborigines’, Miller asks:

> Are non-indigenous Australians so dependent on their Aboriginal counterparts for their belonging? Are we ultimately reliant on sharing

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14 Lorenzo Veracini, _Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview_ (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 77.


16 Read, _Belonging._


the histories and identities of “other” peoples to establish our own place in the world?\(^{20}\)

Trigger refers to Michèle Dominy’s ethnographic work conducted among high-country sheep farmers in the South Island of Aotearoa–New Zealand, which he describes as having broken ‘the nexus between “indigeneity” and an exclusively aboriginal identity’.\(^{21}\) Dominy examines ‘social spatialization’ – namely the sociocultural construction of place – to explore what it means to belong in place.\(^{22}\) Dominy stresses the need for scholars ‘not to render unauthentic’ the processes by which settlers and their descendants create a sense of belonging.\(^{23}\) In different ways, Dominy, Trigger and Miller interrogate concepts of indigeneity and belonging; they draw attention to the ambiguities inherent in discourses surrounding setter-descendant identity and the desirability of recognising the complexity and diversity of non-Indigenous people’s experiences of place, identity and belonging.

Dominy makes clear her understanding that Anglo-Celtic settler descendants’ connection to land and sense of belonging differs from but is not necessarily inferior to Maori indigeneity. Like Read, Trigger has worked extensively with Aboriginal people and has examined Aboriginal people’s connection with nature and landscape. Trigger’s work with Aboriginal people led him to research place awareness among other groups of Australians. In summarising his findings, Trigger states ‘in attempting the complex research task of understanding with empathy a wide variety of Australian senses of place, across urban, rural and remote locations, I have found as much emplacement as displacement’.\(^{24}\) Drawing on personal experience, anecdotal evidence and scholarly research, Trigger points out

\(^{20}\) Miller, ‘Longing for Belonging’, 412.
\(^{21}\) Trigger, ‘Place, belonging and nativeness’, 306.
\(^{24}\) Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 305.
that there are multiple cultures of belonging in Australia and that non-Aboriginal Australians can be ‘richly emplaced’ in Australia.²⁵

In suggesting that all Australians can indeed ‘belong’, neither Miller nor Trigger are shying away from the need for non-Aboriginal Australians to recognise and act on the injustice of colonisation. Integral to Miller’s concept of ‘proper belonging’ is the need to exist in ‘correct relation’ to one’s self and others. When we are in correct relation we are ‘fully ourselves’; correct relation involves knowing and being a certain way – with transparency and authenticity.²⁶ According to Miller’s reading of Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, ‘correct relation’ involves living in a more ethical relation to one’s self and others.²⁷ Due to many settler Australians’ lack of transparency with regard to the history of colonialism, Miller notes ‘there is probably due cause to question claims by settler Australians that they belong’.²⁸ In stating his belief that ‘the matters of positive emplacement, sentiments of attachment and identity construction … need more systematic and empathetic analytical attention than is currently given’, Trigger makes it clear that he does not ‘intend this as any displacement of the moral rights of Aboriginal people to justice in relation to historical dispossession’.²⁹

Read recognises that the Orley school girls’ sense of belonging is ‘in body and mind’ but provides no further explanation other than noting that their belonging derives from ‘the land and the rural lifestyle’ and a ‘historical and contemporary ignorance of Aboriginality’.³⁰ Miller is critical of the conceptual framework employed by Read in Belonging and argues that ‘the only theory of belonging that he offers is one that describes belonging as defined by an emotional attachment to place’.³¹ Instead, Miller offers a philosophical anthropological approach to further understandings into how and why people belong to a place and a community, and argues that her ‘conceptual apparatus’ will ‘help improve understanding of what it

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²⁵ Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 308.
²⁹ Trigger, ‘Place, Belonging and Nativeness’, 308.
³⁰ Read, Belonging, 77.
³¹ Miller, ‘Longing For Belonging’, 410.
means to belong to and in Australia'.\textsuperscript{32} According to Miller, there are three apparent senses of belonging, namely: social connections (a sense of belonging that connects us with a particular community of people); historical connections (a sense of connection to our past or a particular tradition); and geographical connections (a sense of connection to a particular location or dwelling place).\textsuperscript{33} She states ‘belonging is a state of being in which we relate to the world in any one or more of these senses’.\textsuperscript{34}

The settler descendants I spoke with experience belonging in each of these three senses, all of which (for them) are closely connected and difficult to separate. Miller states that, at a minimum, all people belong because we all exist in some sort of relationship with our histories, our communities, and the geographical places in which we live. However, the question is whether we feel we correctly belong; there are different types of relations, and relations which are fitting, correct or right ‘make us feel good about our being and our being-in-the-world’.\textsuperscript{35} My interviewees’ strong sense of belonging and deep attachment to place suggest they feel they are in correct relation with their histories, communities and geographical places.

Read suggests that the Orley schoolgirls’ ignorance of Aboriginality meant their sense of belonging was not unsettled. This is a relevant point which is applicable to many of my interviewees. Another relevant and related factor is the physical absence of Aboriginal people in the places and among the people in which they dwell. In addition, I would add the qualifier that for my interviewees, it is not so much an ignorance of Aboriginality as a sense that the histories of their family, community and place have no connection with Aboriginal people that contributes to their unquestioned sense of belonging. I return to Miller’s concept of correct relation and the question of whether my interviewees’ sense of ‘correct relation’ is flawed (because their sense of belonging does not take into account the history of dispossession) towards the end of this chapter. At this point, suffice to say that the people I have spoken with have strong connections in all three senses outlined by

\textsuperscript{32} Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 215.
\textsuperscript{33} Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 217.
\textsuperscript{34} Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 217.
\textsuperscript{35} Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 218.
Miller and that their experiences and perceptions of belonging are rooted in connections developed during their formative years which have remained with them and been continually confirmed throughout their lives.

**Different types of community**

In the previous chapter I described the tangible reminders of the past which are contained in place – in the country, landscape, houses and other physical objects in and among which my interviewees dwell. I examined the physical world in which my interviewees’ consciousness of the past was formed. I demonstrated how mid-northern settler descendants have strong connections to place and in particular to the family property, thus indicating their sense of correct relation to a particular location and dwelling place i.e. their connections to a geographical location. Throughout this thesis, I examine how and why mid-northern settler descendants understand and relate to their histories. In this chapter I begin by focusing on the social communities to which my interviewees belong before illustrating how my interviewees dwell in place through the occupation and lifestyle of farming. I conclude the chapter by providing some examples which illustrate my interviewees’ deep attachment and strong sense of belonging to place.

In his study into the concepts and ideas which ‘inform the processes Australian settlers have undertaken to install themselves as “local” or “original”, thereby displacing Aborigines’, Rob Garbutt demonstrates the intersections of the global and the national on the local. Garbutt points out that ‘locals and the local place are always involved in social relations with so-called larger-than-local actors, events, scales’. My interviewees belong to various social networks which include groups, associations and collectives which extend well beyond people whom they personally know and with whom they have regular face-to-face interaction. Most have spent their secondary school years in Adelaide and many have travelled overseas and interstate, have children who live in different regions or states and are members of various state and national groups and organisations (agricultural,
religious, political). My interviewees’ sense of place and connection with others extends beyond the geographical area in which they live; their emplacement in the wider society affects their understanding of themselves, the place in which they live and their perception of history.

Writing in the early twenty-first century, Edward Relph observes how a sense of place varies over time. Relph contrasts people who lived in rural areas in the eighteenth century (and, in some places, up until the early twentieth century) who ‘met only a few hundred people in their lifetime, communicated by talking and walking, and rarely travelled more than a few miles from where they were born’ with his own experience of place which is ‘spread-eagled across the world’. Relph suggests that living a geographically focussed life, having a deep association with place and being familiar with and knowing by name every person, custom, house, field and road is ‘a pre-modern experience’ which, in the twenty-first century, can only be found in ‘remote areas and nostalgic beliefs’. The mid-north is not remote and people living there do not live a ‘pre-modern’ life. Nonetheless, local residents have a sense of emplacement which continues to be grounded in their geographic locality. Current generations of local residents continue to know every road, every person, house and paddock in the vicinity of their neighbourhood.

As Raymond Williams points out in *Keywords*, ‘community’ in the late twentieth (and indeed the early twenty-first) century is understood as referring to relations which are ‘more direct, more total and therefore more significant’ than the ‘more formal, more abstract and more instrumental relationships of state or society in its modern sense’. Williams refers to the work of Ferdinand Tönnies, who was influential in formalising differences in the social relations which are inherent in ‘community’ and ‘society’. Tönnies made a conceptual distinction between social ties which stem from personal face-to-face interactions among one’s everyday ‘community’ (*Gemeinschaft*) and the more abstract and indirect social ties which

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link people who may not have met or may be geographically distant but who can be understood as belonging to the same ‘society’ (Gesellschaft). Tönnies understood ‘community’ relations as real and authentic, as organically arising in a (typically) rural place or town and stemming from personal social interactions.\footnote{42}{Garbutt, \textit{The Locals}, 71.} In contrast, ‘societal’ relations are indirect relations with others which are not place-based and do not meet the total life needs of a person.\footnote{43}{Garbutt, \textit{The Locals}, 71.} Tönnies’ differentiation between social ties reflects the shift since the seventeenth century, but more prominently from the nineteenth century, from ‘predominantly face to face or high presence availability social relations to increasingly distant relations’.\footnote{44}{Williams, \textit{Keywords}, 75‒76.}

Scholars who are interested in understanding the concrete workings of memory imply that the people who significantly affect an individual’s memories are those with whom one shares the most experiences and with whom one is in a position to recall these experiences.\footnote{45}{See for example Paul Connerton, \textit{How Societies Remember} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37; Geoffrey Cubitt, \textit{History and Memory} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 132; Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, \textit{Frames of Remembrance} (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 59.} In their formative childhood years, the people with whom mid-northern settler descendants share the most experiences are people who live within close geographical proximity and are part of their everyday lives. Tönnies’ distinction between ‘authentic’ face-to-face relations and indirect relations with others living in distant places is useful for distinguishing between degrees of social relations and, consequently, degrees of shared memory. Although recognising that my interviewees’ sense of emplacement and their social networks extend well beyond the district in which they spent their formative years, the aim of my thesis is to further understandings into how and why settler descendants are conscious of the colonial past. Although making it clear that daily lives may be simultaneously local and larger-than-local, Garbutt nevertheless concludes that ‘while the local scale cannot claim experience and daily life exclusively, it is those types of relations that predominate in the local’.\footnote{46}{Garbutt, \textit{The Locals}, 44.} Although shaped by the cultural norms, geographical district and historical period in which he wrote, the concepts
Tönnies utilised to identify different interrelated communities to which people belong through daily life are relevant to my interviewees.⁴⁷

Tönnies identified three different types of social ties which fall under the umbrella of ‘community’, each of which can be usefully adapted to describe different communities of face-to-face interaction which are part of mid-northern settler descendants’ everyday life. These are: the community of relations which stem from place (proximity of dwellings); the ‘blood’ community, which Tönnies conceptualised in terms of kinship but which, for my interviewees, describes the community of family and family friends; and the community of the ‘mind’ – or mental life – which is conditioned by similarity of work and intellectual attitude, which for my interviewees is the occupation and lifestyle of farming.⁴⁸ For my interviewees, all three forms of community are closely interrelated.

**Communities of geographical proximity**

Tönnies stresses the relevance of physical proximity to ‘community’– ‘the proximity of dwellings ... [and] contiguity of holdings necessitates many contacts of human beings and cause inurement to and intimate knowledge of one another’.⁴⁹

Living within the same geographical area fosters a ‘community of physical life’ and communities stemming from place can be conceptualised as ‘neighbourhood’.⁵⁰ Those who live in the mid-north most closely identify themselves and their district by the nearest local town which, traditionally, was the town that they orientated their shopping, schooling, sporting, religious and (as far as possible) commercial lives (shopping, post office, paying bills) around. Louise Appleton defines ‘local scale’ as:

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⁴⁷ Some aspects of life referred to by Tönnies (for example the ‘communal fields’ and ‘common supplication for grace and mercy to the gods and spirits’) are not relevant to rural South Australian society. In addition, some of Tönnies’ theorizing could easily be interpreted as offensive, for example his understanding of the natural division between the sexes due to women being ‘weaker by nature’. See for example Tönnies, *Community and Society*, 43 and 38.

⁴⁸ Tönnies, *Community and Society*, 42–43.

⁴⁹ Tönnies, *Community and Society*, 43.

⁵⁰ Tönnies, *Community and Society*, 42. Tönnies understood this as being most likely to occur in a rural area or a village. Twentieth-century rural Australia differs from nineteenth-century rural Schleswig; in Australia, those farming the land do not hold the land in common and the size of holdings and distances between dwellings is much greater than in European rural areas.
a collective expression of places that connote territory, people and emotional ties. The local scale has close associations with “community”, as a geographical, sociological and psychological space that is geographically limited and confined by face-to-face experiences.51

As populations decrease and services are reduced, the closest town may no longer offer these services and mid-northerners travel further to shop, go to school and conduct their regular activities. As such, the geographical area comprising the community extends and people from increasingly wider geographical districts become part of mid-northern settler descendants’ local community. Nonetheless, Appleton’s definition of a community at the local scale as ‘an aggregate of people who share a common interest in a particular locality’ is applicable to the people who make up the communities of the North-Eastern Highland and Wirrabara districts despite the ‘particular locality’ slowly increasing in geographical size.52

In her study of four rural communities in South Australia, Susan Gilbert noted the strong connection between place, people and memory which is apparent among long-term residents of Australian towns:

Feelings of belonging to a particular physical environment, and to close-knit kin and friendship networks help to cement links between people and the place where they were born, or where they have lived most of their lives. The feeling for place heavily influences the construction of social memory in communities.53

My own research and personal experience echo Gilbert’s findings; place is crucial to the establishment and perpetuity of social networks in mid-northern South Australia. Knowledge of and connections with people and place are intertwined

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52 Appleton, ‘Distillations of Something Larger’, 422.
53 Susan Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community: The Role and Uses of History in Four Rural Communities in South Australia’ (PhD thesis, Flinders University, 2002), 160.
and difficult to separate. The relationship between history, place and social ties can be understood as co-constitutive. As Gilbert points out, ‘the history of the location has a place for the individual and the groups to which they belong, and memory is social’. Interestingly, Gilbert’s and my findings regarding the crucial role place plays in orientating rural South Australian’s social ties contrast with those of Heather Goodall, who worked with non-Aboriginal residents of the Black Soil Country of inland eastern Australia. Goodall found that it is social networks, rather than the natural physical environment, which ‘supplied their means of orientation’.

Gilbert’s finding that the social network of rural South Australians is a ‘tightly woven space’ where each person is a known identity is apt for my interviewees. The local community is comprised of people of different religions, classes, backgrounds. Because of the relative geographic isolation and the small population, people mix frequently and everyone is welcome and expected at numerous community events. In the public spaces of the town and during community events, class distinctions are blurred. However, there are varying degrees of association and connection among mid-northerners who belong to the same local community. Outside community events and outside the everyday activities of school, sport, shopping and going to the pub, the people with whom my interviewees tended to socialise privately were those who can be understood as belonging to the same class as them (namely landowning, Liberal voters who completed their secondary schooling at boarding school in Adelaide).

**Family and friends**

The second community distinguished by Tönnies is that of kin-based relations. It is among the family, the people whom the settler descendant knows and lives with most intimately during his or her formative years and with whom he or she has strong emotional ties, that a consciousness of the past is initially and most

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54 Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community’, 17.
56 Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community’, 20, 17.
powerfully formed. As Maurice Halbwachs states, ‘in addition to regulations that are common to a whole society, there exist customs and modes of thinking within each particular family that equally impose – and even more forcibly – their form on the opinions and feelings of their members’. Immediate and extended kin have had similar upbringings and were exposed to similar values and ways of being in and making sense of the world. Family members share not only experiences of everyday life but also the experiences – in the form of family stories – of previous generations. Researching working-class childhood memories in London, Sally Alexander found:

Memory and experience did not begin with birth … family stories predate the birth of the child, place her or him in a family history, and make of the self a “company of many”. Parents’ and grandparents’ wishes and thoughts – “ancestral voices” – printed themselves in the child’s mind

Alexander observes that family stories act like moral compasses, subtly guiding the understandings of future generations. These insights are applicable to mid-northern settler descendants. Through growing up in a family and hearing family stories, absorbing ways of being and thinking about the world, and being in the place of one’s forebears, the experiences of previous generations are transferred through the ages.

Proximity of habitation and the low population ensure that social interaction between neighbouring families is easy and frequent. The length of time many families have lived in the district, the small population and the frequency of interaction mean that bonds between families who are not necessarily related through blood or marriage are strong and, in many ways, indiscernible from extended kinship ties. Neighbouring children grow up together; family friends

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57 Claudia Lenz and Helle Bjerg, “‘To be honest I don't think she has much to say...”: Gender and Authority in Memories of the Second World War in Denmark and Germany’, *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 34.
know each other's personalities – strengths, weaknesses, quirky ways, likes and dislikes – from regular, first-hand experience. They know each other’s siblings, parents, grandparents, pets, houses, bikes, motor-bikes. Family friends share experiences and memories almost as intimately as those of the family. Heather Sizer’s nephew, Alister Cameron, described his knowledge and connections with other, non-family, members of the local community; ‘I suppose I knew a lot of people and I didn’t really regard the people of the district as any different to my direct family. It wasn’t that I identified only with the family or saw them as particularly special, but it was more that – a lot of people you know in the area’.60

Having sold Mackerode and living in the seaside town of Carrickalinga, Andrew Gebhardt told me:

I miss my friends, um, because, it’s funny when you leave somewhere, errrh, you move, and you get a whole new lot of friends, and it makes you realise how transient life is, and how hard it is to keep in touch with your old friends. I mean we ... see a few people. But it’s terribly hard to keep in touch with everyone.61

Andrew’s experience of moving to a place where he had no pre-existing social or historical connections made him ‘realise how transient life’ was, implying that before moving he had a sense of social durability, stability and continuity. Andrew’s comment ‘it’s terribly hard to keep in touch’ indicates the effort required to keep in contact with people who don’t live nearby and aren’t part of everyday life. When living in a rural community with a small population you see people in the shop, on the road, at community events, in the pub. Meetings with other members of the local community are not necessarily planned but inevitable as you go about your life:

Yeah, you might see [friends] here or there or at the dadada, if you go to a function or whatever ... you know there might be a community

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60 Alister Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 21 March 2012.
61 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
thing, you all support and you all go there and have a good time. I miss all that a lot. And I miss the tradition of the people, you know like the old families up there ... I do miss it. I enjoy down here and I enjoy the new people but I really miss that ... It goes back to your childhood ... I mean, people down here, you're only going back to the other day.62

Although new families move into the area and old families leave, in both the Wirrabara and North-East Highland districts the links between many families are generations deep. It is common for school-age children to be friends with the children of their parents’ friends, and with the grandchildren of their grandparents’ friends. This contributes to a strong sense of social continuity and cohesion which is integral to my interviewees’ sense of emplacement and belonging. Andrew refers to this in the above quote.

As such, I suggest there is a fourth form of – or perhaps an extra dimension to – the communities of social relations outlined by Tönnies. Through continuity of living in place and among people with whom they share experiences and histories, my interviewees belong to communities of memory and shared history. Linn Miller asserts that belonging is not:

something that is given as a right or bestowed as a privilege. Nor is belonging something that is tied in anyway to land ownership or length of residency. It is not inherited or accumulated ... Rather, it is an existential opportunity – an opportunity that presents itself ... to all Australians.63

While I agree with the sentiments and the political implications inherent in this statement and while I understand that belonging is ontological, I nevertheless suggest there is a different sense of belonging – a different way or a different depth of belonging – for people who dwell in a place and among a community of people that they know intimately through length of residence, shared histories and

inherited stories. Just as ‘ancestral voices’ imprint themselves on a child’s mind through family stories, previous generations’ senses of belonging extend beyond the individual and are transferred through the generations. While not a prerequisite or requirement of belonging, length of residence can influence the degree or depth to which successive generations feel emplaced. I also argue there is a different sense or type of belonging when you perceive that the place to which you feel you belong is the place of your forebears and when you understand that it cannot be alienated from you.

The powerful sense of belonging formed during the primal years is often articulated as a sense of ‘home’ and stays with many mid-northern settler descendants throughout their lives. Miller points out that belonging is fundamental to who and what we are and is ‘part of what constitutes our identity’.64 I have previously referred to Thomas Measham’s concept of a ‘primal landscape’ and his findings that people form a base understanding of their childhood environment which constitutes a point of comparison for future learning about places and underpins learning later in life and becomes part of their identity.65 I have utilised Eva Hoffman’s potent understanding of family stories heard in the formative childhood years as conveyors of ‘primal pellets of information’ in which much information is contained and ‘in which so much later thought and inquiry is condensed’.66 In different contexts, Measham, Hoffman and Sally Alexander recognise the importance of childhood experiences in shaping the way people experience and make sense of the world throughout their lives.

I argue that the primal experiences of belonging and community experienced by my interviewees remains with them throughout their lives, becomes part of their identity. My mother described Cappeedee as ‘a sanctuary’, ‘a place of security, a haven, of good times, and um, yes, it was just home’.67 My Uncle Bill, who has not lived at Cappeedee for over fifty years, told me he still thinks of Cappeedee as

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64 Miller, Belonging to Country’, 217.
home. Andrew Gebhardt told me his cousin told him “you know, Mum actually never left Mackerode, it was in her for the rest of her life”. Andrew said to me ‘and it’s a bit the same for us I think’. Amelia Gebhardt said that even though she no longer resided permanently at Mackerode:

knowing that Mackerode was there was a huge safety valve emotionally, and when that wasn’t there anymore, it was, it was stifling. I used to – I was living in Sydney at the time Mackerode was sold and I remember, doing a film shoot in the country, and I used to keep, my brain hadn’t adjusted yet and I always would think “I’m just going to go back to Mackerode just for a couple of” – it was a shock [realising it wasn’t there] because it was a sanctuary.

Amelia said her ‘fierce sense of belonging [to Mackerode] … doesn’t go away, no matter how distant [she] was from the place’.

Settler descendants’ experiences of growing up on land occupied by their forebears are shared with people of different generations – these experiences are not confined to a particular chronological time. While my friends and I shared the same physical experience of living in the same place – of experiencing the same valley and hills, the same chill and breathing in the same dust – as preceding generations, we also shared many of the same social experiences with our parents and grandparents which are inseparable from place, for example picnics held Out-East, Christmas drinks at Cappeedee, attending the local primary school, Saturday sport at neighbouring towns. Across South Australia, people belonging to different generations and different geographical districts share experiences of belonging to a tight-knit rural community. However, there are different ‘degrees’ or ‘intensities’ with which experiences, and consequently memories, are shared. Although I share the memories of growing up in the mid-north of South Australia in the 1970s and

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68 Bill Murray, 14 May 2010.
69 Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
70 Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
71 Amelia Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2013.
72 Amelia Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
1980s with all of my contemporaries who likewise grew up in that place at that time, I share these memories more intensely with those who lived in the same geographical area as me and more intensely again with those with whom I socialised outside community events.

Social and historical continuities extend beyond those who live in geographical proximity. It is common for the children of landowners to be sent to boarding school in Adelaide, for boys to attend the same school as their fathers and girls the same school as their mothers or aunts. At boarding school, adolescents experience life in a city and have the opportunity to befriend adolescents from non-farming backgrounds. While boarding, during the formative experience of living together during adolescence, teenagers from vastly distant geographical areas become close and lifelong friends. Through these friendships, they come to know families across the state with backgrounds comparable to their own. During my adolescent years and those of my older interviewees, when boarders caught the train home for weekend exes they extended their social network beyond their own school and local community to those who lived in the same regional area but different districts. After leaving school, social networks continue to be extended through involvement in farming and political organisations (for example the Farmers Federation, Wheat Board meetings, the Liberal Party). Shared life experiences and social knowledge create a sense of familiarity when meeting new people of a similar background and reinforce the ‘naturalness’ or typicality of one’s own situation. I grew up with a strong sense that, throughout rural South Australia, ‘everyone knows everyone’. The sense of ease and familiarity when meeting new people with similar backgrounds and upbringings reinforces and contributes to settler descendants’ sense of security and belonging. Through these networks, rural settler descendants’ sense of social continuity is confirmed and reinforced.

People not familiar with this world may feel I am exaggerating the extensiveness and strength of such social networks, but for those who inhabit such a world they

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73 Many of my interviewees referred to the fun they had and the people they befriended on train rides home, for example Andrew Gebhardt, all of my uncles and my mother, Ryves Hawker, Geoff Dare, Peter Reilly.
are part of life, taken for granted and rarely reflected on. This observation was frequently confirmed while researching this project. When describing my project to people who do not live in South Australia or who don’t have historical connections with or experience of living in a rural area (for example, people from Melbourne or Sydney with urban backgrounds or people whose families have only relatively recently migrated to Australia) I was often asked how I would find enough people to interview. Such people appear sceptical of the existence of large numbers of settler-descended people who have continued to maintain connections with land occupied by their forebears. In contrast, when speaking with settler-descended people (at comparable events) who have themselves or whose parents have grown up in a rural area, the most common and immediate response is for that person to tell me of their family’s historical connection to a particular town or district or to give me the names of people they recommend I talk with.

The close connection between families who share a similar history as well as social experiences, social norms and expectations, lifestyles and values means that there is little diversity when it comes to political views, lifestyle choices or taste. Belonging to a rural community of regular face-to-face contact, where everyone seems to know everything about you, can feel restrictive and claustrophobic. Commenting on the high-country families among whom she conducted fieldwork in New Zealand, Dominy succinctly articulates a sense of stiflement and provinciality which she personally experienced and which was expressed by siblings and children who have grown up in and left such places:74

This is a world where social structures are clearly defined. Women and men marry, have children, and grand-children. Their work lives are defined by the regular demands of the agricultural cycle … Lack of awareness and of comprehension of difference yield a formulaic homogeneity in dress, social habits, assumptions, outlook, and language that are hard to defy.75

74 Dominy, Calling the Station Home, 268–269.
75 Dominy, Calling the Station Home, 268.
Dominy observes that it is her informants’ affinity to place and their sense of security which enable the ‘stigmatized quality of formulaic patterns of social life’. Drawing on my own experiences and the experiences and comments of many of my friends, I would say that this intimate knowledge of and constant interaction with others with very similar backgrounds and upbringings provide a deep sense of familiarity, belonging and security, while simultaneously entrenching conventional and restrictive social views and conservative political views.

**The occupation and lifestyle of farming**

The third community identified by Tönnies is one in which people are linked through ‘similarity of work and intellectual attitude’ and which comes into existence most easily ‘when crafts or callings are the same or of similar nature’. The ‘craft’ or ‘calling’ of farming orientates and shapes the lives of mid-northern settler descendants who continue to live on land occupied by their forebears. Stephen Feld and Keith Basso invite colleagues to ‘explore in close detail cultural processes and practices through which places are rendered meaningful – through which, one might say, places are actively sensed’. In her ethnography Dominy demonstrated how high-country sheep farmers in New Zealand inhabit a landscape which is loaded with cultural meanings which stem from their occupations and lifestyles. Mid-northern farmers likewise know the country through the occupation of farming. They know the topography intimately; they know every road and track, every creek and hill on their property. They know the soils, the rainfall, the depths of the water table and the quality of the bore water. They know how to read the weather and their days and months, their holidays and their intensive work periods, revolve around stock and crops and vary with the seasons. Through residing in place, through socialising in place and through making their living and orientating their lives around farming in place, those I have been speaking with can be said to *dwell* in place.

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76 Dominy, *Calling the Station Home*, 269.
77 Tönnies, *Community and Society*, 43.
For Feld and Basso, dwelling ‘is not just living in space but also encompasses ways of fusing setting to situation, locality to life-world’. Anthropologist John Gray provides a succinct summary of what it is to ‘dwell’ in place:

"Dwelling” refers to the creation of meaningful places that together form a surrounding world ... It entails people's relationship to the world, motivated by concern and consequent involvement. “Dwelling” thus privileges the practical and the spatial in the constitution of knowledge and meaning ... Acts of dwelling have implications for the organization of space and definition of place.

A concept of dwelling links individuals to the world of immediate experiences, of sociality, common sense and shared experience. For those with whom I have been speaking and among those with whom I grew up, knowledge of place is inseparable from knowledge of farming. Male interviewees are fonts of information when it comes to sheep and crops; they know when and what crops their neighbours are planting, what machinery, fertilisers and sprays are being used. They know when and where sheep are lambing, what rams are in with what ewes, who in the district is shearing, crutching, drenching, who is late with tailing their lambs. Landowners’ knowledge of and interest in sheep and crops is shared with other local residents such as shearers, workmen and crop contractors. In the past, some workmen may have been employed by the same family for decades and thus had a detailed knowledge of that family's property. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, workforces are transient and the number of workmen on properties greatly reduced.

There are different ways of dwelling in place. Years of inhabiting and working on the same piece of land and drawing on the accumulated knowledge of previous

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79 Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*, 8.
82 For example, Laurie Anderson worked for my grandfather at Cappledyke for over forty years and had a detailed knowledge of the property.
generations provide landowners with an intimate knowledge of their particular property. Continuity of ownership enables a particular lifestyle. Like their father, grandfather and great-grandfather, the heirs to the property are ‘their own boss’; they are self-employed and employers whose livelihood is dependent on their own farming, management and business skills. Although it is becoming increasingly common for farmers to go to agricultural college or to gain tertiary qualifications, knowledge about sheep breeding and wool growing is first and foremost absorbed while going about one’s life. This knowledge is gained through synthesis – it is both absorbed and constitutive at the same time. Unlike the cropping side of farming, children and wives actively help with sheep work. When they are old enough, children and teenagers rouseabout at shearing and crutching time, round up and shift sheep from paddock to paddock on motorbikes, and help with the drenching and lamb tailing. Learning how to use the sides of your hands to part the wool on a sheep’s back to check its density and condition, where to position yourself in the yards, roads or paddocks when moving sheep, the pitch and volume sheep best respond to when shouting at them in the drafting pen – these things are picked up by children as they help their parents.

Seeding and harvesting are busy times of the year; tractors and ‘headers’ (harvesters) continuously rotate around the paddocks and load after load of wheat, oats or barley is trucked in to silos in nearby towns. Despite the importance of agriculture to family economy, many of those I spoke with stated their preference for ‘sheep work’ over the comparatively monotonous ‘tractor work’. Max Rayner told me that he liked the lifestyle of farming, saying ‘I don’t know why, I always had a liking for sheep … And errr I think it was as the love of the sheep, and the love of the land, and the love of the outdoors. I couldn’t envisage myself living in a city all the time with people all around me’. Uncle Al told me he always knew he wanted to be a farmer, that he likes sheep and doesn’t like tractors much. Andrew Gebhardt told me that, for him, farming ‘was actually an attraction because it really was a way of life … being outside … [working] with the animals, and stuff like that,”

83 Edward Casey, ‘How to get From Space to Place’, in Senses of Place, eds Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1996), 18.
84 Max Rayner, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 18 May 2010.
85 Alistair Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 18 May 2010.
that was good ... [it's] has all changed now, it's more like a factory these days".\(^{86}\) Andrew preferred earlier times when ‘farming was very simple ... it's very complicated these days, you've got to sell everything internationally ... dollar values and currency issues and that sort of stuff".\(^{87}\)

It is interesting to compare these mid-northern farmers’ love of sheep work and dislike of machinery with the non-Aboriginal people Heather Goodall interviewed, who perceive increasingly sophisticated computer-controlled machinery as signs of status and progress.\(^{88}\) As in the northern Darling floodplains, in South Australia's mid-north machinery is getting bigger and more and more expensive and farming is getting more technical. Landowners now employ fewer people than their fathers did and smaller property owners are less able to afford new machinery, resulting in farms being sold and families moving out of the district. None of the people I interviewed spoke of the changes positively or recognised them as progress.

When I was growing up and continuing into the present, farms in the Wirrabara and North-East Highland districts tended to be large enough to purchase their own equipment and to provide and pay for their own labour. There is not a culture of sharing labour or equipment with neighbouring farmers except between members of the extended family. Dad and Uncle Al shared the ownership of the harvester, wide-line cultivator and sprayer, with Cappeedee owning two-thirds of each and Popperinghi one-third. For the smaller holding, labour was/is largely provided by family members, with contractors brought in for shearing and crutching and (less often) for harvesting and seeding. If it was a smaller farm, only one generation tended to remain on the farm. Larger farms may have several generations living contiguously on the farm and may additionally employ one or two workmen. In cases where two generations co-share the running of the farm, the workload may be relatively equally divided between current and future heirs; alternatively, the oldest (usually male) family member may continue to run the property, or the

\(^{86}\) Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.  
\(^{87}\) Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.  
\(^{88}\) Goodall, ‘Telling Country’, 171.
management and running of the farm may have passed to the next generation. When, where and how the preceding generation relinquishes their hold over the running and management of the family farm is a complex issue and there are no hard or fast rules. Arrangements vary between families and depend on individual personalities, interests and skills, on the economic viability of the farm and (to a lesser degree) on what is customary for that family.

Despite changes over the decades, through the occupation of farming, a way of life and practical connections with earlier generations are maintained. For example, the Booborowie district has a long history of sheep grazing and breeding. The first pastoralists brought sheep to the district in 1842 and the area has been well known for its stud merinos since the 1870s. Among my maternal family, knowledge of sheep breeding has been orally passed down through the generations, most particularly from father to son or grandson. Discussing the Cappeedee sheep, Angus told me they were always ‘plain-bodied, large-framed, medium to strong wool, aimed at pastoral country’. Angus said the Murrays didn't just breed for wool quality, but also for the tough conditions of the pastoral country. Cappeedee was ‘a closed stud for over 100 years, they didn't use outside sheep’ and the sheep weren't inbred because the Murrays swapped rams between various Murray properties. Tangible reminders of the family’s long success with sheep breeding are evident in the landscape. Members of my mother’s family refer fondly to the functional and aesthetically pleasing woolshed. Angus told me ‘Oh I love the woolshed, it’s a beautiful building, I love the timbers, I love the history of it, the big jarrah timbers that they shipped down from Western Australia ... [got built] in 1886, about 10 years after the house’. The ram-shed built by my great-grandfather in the 1930s sat surrounded by lush paddocks of lucerne grown for the stud rams. As already mentioned, trophies won in various agricultural shows sat on the mantelpieces of Cappeedee’s study and dining room. Throughout my childhood, every September we would go to the Adelaide show where the sheep judging and the ram sales would be closely observed by our parents, grandparents,
neighbours’ and friends’ parents and grandparents. At the annual Field Days, like other studs in the district, Cappeedee’s ram shed was open to buyers from across the country. Stud sheep receive diligent and constant care and attention. Running a stud is labour-intensive and a total way of life. As Angus and Uncle Al attended to the rams, as they moved sheep to the woolshed for shearing, as they classed the wool, they simultaneously dwelled in place and followed the footsteps of their forebears. Through constancy of place, buildings, lifestyle and occupation, certain aspects of the colonial past are continually present in their everyday lives.

**Emotions versus rationality**

In the prevailing era of economic rationalism, the land and all it sustains is widely portrayed as an object for economic exploitation. Settler descendants who continue to live on the family property are dependent on it for their livelihood. At the same time, they and members of their immediate and extended family are emotionally attached to the property and would like it to stay in the family for future generations. Knowing of their family’s long connection to the property and hoping to pass the property on to the next generation affects business decisions. Several of my interviewees explained how economic prerogative can clash with sentimental and emotional ties. One man who sold the family farm much to his father’s angst told me ‘emotions tend to drive too many people to stay in an unfinancial situation’.\(^92\) Interviewees have articulated their awareness that inheriting the family property can lock the inheritor into a way of life and occupation not necessarily of his (or, more rarely, her) choosing. While many current owners do not wish to put pressure on succeeding generations, it is an unstated but well known fact that family members do not like the family property to be sold.

Melva McInnes said that if Three Trees was to go ‘out of the family, [she] would be devastated’.\(^93\) Andy Murray told me he thought it would be ‘a great shame’ if the ‘continuity, the history’ of the Murray family at Cappeedee were broken, saying:

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\(^92\) Geoff Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Hove, 14 May 2010.  
\(^93\) Melva McInnes, 7 June 2010.
That’s the emotional bit of it. The logical side kicks in and you say, “OK, the world changes and people have different priorities and want to make their lives in a way that suits them”, and so you can’t argue against that.94

When I asked Colin and Val Cameron if they thought Doughboy Creek would remain in the family and who would come back to Doughboy Creek, Val said ‘Who knows? That’s sad. Sad’. I asked if they thought their children would keep the property, or whether there was the possibility of Doughboy Creek not being there for their children and grandchildren one day. Val replied ‘they wouldn’t hurt our feelings. They’ll wait until we’re dead’.95 Younger generations are equally attached to the family property. When I met with Val’s and Colin’s son Alister, he had taken over the running of Doughboy Creek. Alister told me that his two daughters, his brothers and sister would ‘like to see Doughboy Creek maintained in the family’. Alister said that without the historical ties to the property, he didn’t think ‘there’d be anywhere near the level of, um, of feeling of attachment to it. That’s probably not rational, but that’s the way it is’.96 Alister was also working as a computer consultant to supplement the income from the farm. He travels widely across the state and has the stress of running two businesses.

Alister clearly articulated the dilemma of economic viability versus emotional attachment, saying ‘when it comes right down to it it’s a very beautiful spot, but it’s err, in terms of farming it’s a very high-cost operation to farm’. Doughboy Creek is on hilly country and has particularly abrasive soil (a combination of the stones and the particles in the soil) which causes combine shears to wear out extremely quickly.97 In dry conditions, shears could wear out within 7‒8 hours, whereas the same shears on Yorke Peninsula might last 7‒8 years.98 While the banks put in by Colin have stopped erosion, they have increased the cost of working the land by 30% to 40%. Alister said that if Doughboy Creek were to be permanently grazed,

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94 Andrew Murray, 29 March 2010.
95 Val Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
96 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
97 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
98 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
rather than cropped, the soil would ‘set down hard’ with the added disadvantage that ‘the cost of establishing pasture is quite high ... if you have a series of years of false starts, it is quite expensive’. I said to Alister ‘so, you are not keeping [Doughboy Creek] because of its financial – ’ to which he cut in ‘No, not at all’. Alister told me that his daughter Holly would like to come back to Doughboy Creek but that he and his wife have encouraged her to qualify for a different career so she will not be dependent on the farm for an income. Alister doesn’t want Doughboy Creek ‘to become a burden’ to his children.

When speaking with Robert Milne, I asked him how important his historical connections to White Park were to him. Robert replied ‘Yeah, at a certain age I think it is’. When I asked Robert if he’d ever consider selling White Park, he replied firmly:

No. You’d buy other land, whatever, but you wouldn’t sell it, that’s just – ridiculous. Subsequently, you get older and you’ve got three boys and you’re trying to make a living and trying to guide them, or, hopefully, and I kept saying to them “just because we’ve got White Park, doesn’t mean you have to stay here, there are other things in life, and do what you want to do. Um, if, it sort of, it’s, don’t think it’s a millstone around your neck, do what you want to do, not me. I’ve done what I want to do, you do it too”. So this has sort of gone on for years and errh, Andrew the second one who’s working here with me ... is now of the opinion that this, this never gets sold. And I suppose it’s like I was.99

Robert concluded confidently and definitively ‘It’s not for sale ... as far as he’s [Andrew’s] concerned, and the other boys are similar without having to say it I think’.100

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100 Robert Milne, 20 March 2012.
Andrew Gebhardt has three daughters, none of whom wanted to manage Mackerode. Andrew had been thinking of selling for a few years prior to selling Mackerode:

I'd been ... wondering what's going to happen if my kids don't go there. And I also thought I don't want to be having to deal with this when I'm too old.

It really came to a head when I realised that I couldn't do much more than I'd done ... I just thought I'm getting too old for this. I haven't got the energy to do it and none of my kids want to do it so I really haven't got any alternative.101

Andrew’s daughters ‘didn’t want the place to be sold but they weren’t happy to come back and run it so it was a no brainer. They can’t have their cake and eat it’.102 According to Andrew, selling Mackerode ‘shook them [his daughters] up a bit’, and his sister Trina:

loved Mackerode too and that was another consideration. She didn’t like it being sold either any more than I did or my kids for that matter. But you’ve got to, you know, things change.

Oh that’s what I was going to say. The other thing that came to me was that after four or five generations... it starts to become a bit of an institution if you are not careful and you could end up with somebody being there because they should keep the family tradition up rather than wanting to be there. And I would never wish that on anybody. So, I thought it’s my job to clean up this thing. Five generations, and four generations and lets call it quits. It sounds a bit harsh, but – 103

101 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
102 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
103 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
If Andrew had had a child who was keen to go back on the land, it would have been ‘completely different. Completely different’. Andrew’s strong sense of attachment to Mackerode and his linking of people and place were not severed simply by the act of selling or no longer inhabiting Mackerode. Andrew told me ‘I still dream about it [Mackerode] all the time, even after five years and I had a dream about it the other night. I think it’s going to go on forever’. When I asked Andrew what he dreams about, he replied:

I end up being back in Mackerode. This is a little bit private but I errh ... I end up being back in Mackerode and all of a sudden [the current owner] walks in and I think “Oh God, I’m not meant to be here” [laughs] ... One minute I’m quite happy there doing what I, and all the family there and all the rest of them and then all of a sudden. And it’s not very pleasant.104

In his dreams, Andrew, his immediate and extended family and his forebears are ‘quite happy’ at Mackerode. People, place, the past, all are inseparable and fundamental to Andrew’s sense of being, identity and belonging.

One of the most telling indicators of where a person feels they most deeply belong and/or where they have the fondest memories is the place they wish to be buried or to have their ashes scattered. Robert Milne told me that when his father Ian was getting elderly and frail, Robert suggested he build a house in Wirrabara where he would be closer to the shops and the pub and wouldn’t have to worry about driving. However, Ian ‘just looked at [Robert] and said “I’d rather be dead at White Park than alive anywhere else”. So that solved that’.105 Ian’s two brothers died in Europe fighting in World War Two and were buried in France. Robert said that when Ian was nearing the end of his life he:

decided to go back to Europe, and er, he went down to the fruit garden with a couple of plastic vials, and he got some sand from the garden.

104 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
And er, when he went to each of his brothers [his brothers’ graves] he just gave a bit of White Park [to them]. So, errh, it obviously meant a fair bit to him ... I guess he would know, or presume, that they thought a lot of White Park, “so here’s a bit for yourself”.

A stone taken from the hills behind Mackerode is carefully positioned in the garden near the Mackerode homestead. On it are the names of members of the Gebhardt family who wished their ashes to be scattered on Mackerode. Andrew told me that he too wanted his ashes to be scattered on Mackerode. My grandparents’ ashes were scattered on Cappeedee and a plaque with their name on it is sited under a gum tree not far from the homestead.

Conclusion
In this chapter I have shown how mid-northern settler descendants who grow up on land first occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century are enmeshed in a web of social connections which are not one-dimensional but multilayered and generations deep. Settler descendants are firmly ensconced within their local
community – through kinship and friendship ties, through geographical proximity, through shared occupations and lifestyles. The metaphor of a web conveys the interlaced ties between the individual, the family and the geographically proximate social group which encompass this group of settler descendants as they grow up and go about their daily lives. The metaphor of a web also describes the interconnection of the individual with others of different generations and wider geographical areas. From their historical connections with place and people, from continuous generational succession of the family property, settler descendants grow up with a sense of permanence, security and emplacement. Contrary to the findings of various scholars from a range of disciplines who are interested in Australians’ senses of belonging and who have found many non-Aboriginal Australians to be insecure and anxious about their place in Australia, mid-northern settler descendants have a strong sense of belonging.

Linn Miller’s conceptual apparatus has furthered my understanding regarding my interviewees’ powerful connections to places, people and the histories in which they are ensconced. In introducing this chapter, I noted that Miller provides an additional qualification for belonging. Miller states that central to our sense of belonging is the sort of relation in which we ourselves are implicated – is the relationship fitting, right or correct?; ‘to be a self that belongs is … to be a self that is correctly related to the world in which it dwells’. Belonging is a state from which wellbeing is derived. Opposite to standing in correct relation is to stand in misrelation to ourselves and others. Miller refers to Kierkegaard when she defines the opposite of ‘correct relation’, namely ‘despair’. She defines ‘despair’ as ‘not wanting to be who one is’. According to Miller, there are two types of despair, namely ‘conscious despair’ which refers to an awakening to the truth of one’s condition’, and ‘unconscious despair’ which refers to ‘a lack of awareness of one’s self as misrelated’. Miller argues that many Australians exist in a state of unconscious despair because they have not come to terms with their history and they stand in misrelation to Aboriginal people.

The absence of Aboriginal people in my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past – or more specifically my interviewees’ sense that their histories are separate from those of the violence of colonialism – could be interpreted as signalling that they exist in a state of unconscious despair. However, my interviewees’ strong sense of belonging, their strong sense of their social, geographical and historical connections, means they know who they are. Unlike other Australians who are anxious about their place and their right to belong in Australia, my interviewees do not refer to Aboriginal people’s belonging (either positively or negatively) as a yardstick through which to evaluate or legitimise their own place here. My interviewees are proud of who they are; they are not ashamed of their forebears and they do not want to be someone else.

Crucial to Miller’s understanding of correct relation is knowing oneself and acting in a way which is true to oneself. Miller refers to Kierkegaard when she stresses that this is not the subjective truth of general epistemological relativism – for example, if you believe something to be true, then it’s true for you – but that ‘truth is actualised only when it is immersed in personal experience’. Miller asserts that ‘truth is disclosed always and only through the knowing and being of the embodied subject’. When reconciling the related issues of mid-northern settler descendants’ disconnect from revised socio-historical accounts of Australia’s past and their firm and unquestioned sense of belonging, several interconnected factors are worth taking into account. First, the significance of the physical absence of Aboriginal people in the districts in which my interviewees live. Second, the related absence of Aboriginal people in the social imaginary. According to the subjective lived experiences of mid-northern settler descendants, when we take into account the reality of their embodied lives, they are standing in correct relation to their communities, localities and historical traditions. The physical absence of traditional owners in the district and the absence of Aboriginal people in the social imaginary mean that my interviewees have not had their sense of belonging or emplacement unsettled. A third factor is my interviewees’ and their

forebears’ freehold title to land. Unlike those among whom Dominy conducted fieldwork, whose leases were under native title claim, mid-northern freeholder settler descendants’ ownership of the family property is secure. There have been and currently can be no Native Title claims to freehold land in the Wirrabara or North-Eastern Highland districts. My interviewees have not had to think about or articulate their sense of belonging; they have no ‘other’ to compare or compete with. Each of these three factors means my interviewees have never at any time doubted or questioned their ownership of land. They have had no need to anxiously or insecurely voice their sense of belonging or lack of belonging or their attachment to place.

Settler descendants who have grown up on land first occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century primarily know of and make sense of the colonial past through their lived experience. In this and the previous chapter I have examined the physical settings and social communities in which and among whom my interviewees spent their formative years and in which their consciousness of the colonial past was formed. The social communities and geographical places in which my interviewees live their everyday lives do not provide a social or cultural context that is readily conducive to questioning the morality of European occupation or looking critically at their own presence on place. According to the subjective lived experiences of mid-northern settler descendants, when we take into account the reality of their embodied lives, they are standing in correct relation to their communities, localities and historical traditions. Revised socio-historical accounts of Australia’s history which are apparent in the media, literature and political debates do not disrupt or unsettle the world they know through everyday life or their consciousness of the past, which is orientated around people and place known through lived experience. These are key factors to consider when reconciling why my interviewees provide narratives and act in ways which indicate they have a transparent and authentic sense of their own belonging while not yet having ‘develop[ed] transparency with more honest accounts of their being in this land’.

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In the following two chapters, I draw on interviews to further demonstrate the importance of place and people to settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past and to illustrate how knowledge of the past is culturally configured. The places in which we live and the social groups to which we belong are known, related to and made sense of through the cultural system to which we belong.
Every year our family would travel to the comparatively remote and dramatically different country ‘Out-East’ (east of Mt Bryan and Hallett) to picnic with other families. To get to the picnic spot we had to drive down a very steep hill called Dare’s Hill. During our descent, while experiencing the sharp decline, Mum would tell us a story about Billy Dare and his wives. Apparently, Billy had had several wives. Each time he wanted a new wife, he would get rid of his current wife. At least one wife was killed while going down Dare’s Hill. According to Mum’s story, Billy would loosen the wheel bolts of his buggy before heading home from Burra. Arriving at the top of the hill, just before the descent, Billy would get out of the buggy and send the horses, buggy and unsuspecting wife on their way. When the buggy was travelling at a rapid pace, the wheels would fall off and the buggy would crash, killing Billy’s wife and horses.

Mum told the story as though she had heard it from a reliable source. Neither she nor any other member of our family thought to question the details or the general thrust of the story. At the bottom of the hill, at ‘Pilti’, we looked out for the ruins of Billy’s house and the slate slabs which marked the graves of Billy’s wives. The graves and the ruins provided physical evidence which validated Mum’s story. It was the hill that prompted Mum to tell the story, which she had heard when she too was a child descending Dare’s Hill on the way to picnics Out-East. Edward Casey argues that places ‘furnish convenient points of attachment for memories’ and ‘provide situations in which remembered actions can deploy themselves’.1 Physically experiencing the steep descent brought the story to life for us; we readily imagined the buggy gathering speed and careening out of control. To this day I cannot hear the name Dare’s Hill or go down the hill without being reminded of the deaths of Billy’s wives and horses. The hill, the story and the name Dare are indelibly melded together in my memory. The horses and buggy, the stone ruins,

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the seeming remoteness and dryness of the country – all contributed to our sense that that this story was set in the far distant past.

Figure 12. View from Dare’s Hill, looking south.

Figure 13. Ruins, Pilmittiappa.
In this chapter I focus on interviews conducted with two of Billy Dare’s descendants, both of whom have grown up and spent the bulk of their lives on land occupied by Billy in the nineteenth century. Drawing on observations and arguments made in previous chapters regarding the importance of place, people and lived experience on my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past, I argue that these Dare descendants’ understandings and narratives of their forebear’s experiences are framed and made sense of through a settler-colonial historical epistemology. I illustrate the selectivity of what from the past is remembered by individuals, families and local communities.

**Billy Dare’s interaction with Aboriginal people**

In *Hallett: A History of Town and District*, author Marlene Richards lists the ‘pioneering pastoralists’ who leased land in the area. Richards notes ‘Of these pastoralists, only one family – the Dare – still remains with the District, an unbroken line of five generations born in the locality’. In her history of the Terowie district, Roma Mattey states that descendants of William Dare still hold land in the Hundred of Wonna and that they are ‘the only direct descendants bearing the name of a pastoral pioneer to hold land in any one of the seven

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hundreds recorded in this history’. Throughout my youth, I did not know or think to distinguish between the Dares and other families whom I was aware had been around for ages. I was, however, vividly aware that the Dare family had been in the district for a long time because of Dare’s Hill and the story that went with it.

Alternative stories about Billy Dare can be learned through reading relevant local histories. Richards states that William Dare was a friend to the Aboriginal people and at one stage had a camp of thirty or more Aboriginal people living near him and working for him. Aboriginal friends led Billy and his friends, Chewings and Hiles, to permanent water. Mattey similarly mentions that Chewings and Hiles ‘roamed with the Blacks for the express purpose of discovering the natural springs located in that area’. Their efforts were rewarded with the discovery of what became known as Wookongarie springs near Ulooloo. In *Razorback Country: A History of the Settlement and Development of Mt Bryan District*, author Ruth Stolte states that on ‘realising the natives’ great love and understanding of country’, Dare, Chewings and Hiles ‘moved with them at times, learning of the land and the seasons, the watering places, the signs of good and bad times ahead’. These written histories suggest Aboriginal people taught Dare, Chewings and Hiles how to live in the ‘rough country’ which they subsequently squatted on, leased and eventually purchased and made their home.

Numerous South Australian local historians who include a section in their books on the pastoral years drew heavily on Rodney Cockburn’s *Pastoral Pioneers* when referring to the early pastoralists. Both Mattey and Richards uncritically accept *Pastoral Pioneers* as an authoritative source. Neither Richards nor Mattey directly

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4 Richards, *Hallett*, 16.
5 Richards, *Hallett*, 16.
references Cockburn and in some passages Mattey repeats Cockburn word for word with neither quotation marks nor references.¹¹ In his biography of William Dare, Cockburn states that he spoke with William Dare’s son and the widow of one of William Dare’s pastoral partners.¹² Marlene Richards told me that while compiling her history of Hallett, she spoke with William Dare’s grandson (Charlie Dare) and great-grandson (Len Dare). While compiling her written history, Marlene perceived historical written records and information contained in sources such as Pastoral Pioneers as more correct and ‘genuine’ than many of the oral histories told to her.¹³ The unquestioned acceptance of Cockburn’s information was powerfully demonstrated to me during an interview when Marlene held up a copy of Pastoral Pioneers and said with a tone of great certainty ‘But see, this is genuine, the stuff that they write in here is genuine because they’re – this is a hundred, over one hundred, [checking publication dates] well, nearly one hundred years old’.¹⁴ Neither Richards, Mattey, Stolten nor Cockburn mention William Dare’s four wives or their early deaths in their published accounts.

Because their continuous links to the district extend back to the squatting era and because William Dare is recorded as having befriended and lived with Aboriginal people, I was particularly keen to interview some of William Dare’s descendants. I wanted to learn if and how information about Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people had been transferred through the generations. Much can be gleaned from oral narratives, which differ in fundamental ways from written narratives. As numerous scholars have explicated in various ways, rather than being neatly ordered and arranged, critical and argument-based, oral stories are ‘made up of vivid dialogue’ which is often figurative and expressive and which ‘primarily reveals appraisals and feelings, not a neutral configuration of events’.¹⁵ Michael

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¹¹ For example, in her section on the Browne brothers, Mattey states ‘No names stand higher on the roll of South Australian pioneer pastoralists than those of the two medical brothers Drs William James and John Harris Browne’, Deceptive Lands, 19. This is taken word for word from Pastoral Pioneers, 32.

¹² Cockburn spoke with Billy’s 71-year-old son, William, at his home in Norwood, Adelaide, and Billy’s partner’s wife, Mrs Mundy. Cockburn, Pastoral Pioneers, 58–59.

¹³ Richards, 3 October 2013.

¹⁴ Richards, 3 October 2013.

Frisch perfectly captures the usefulness of oral narratives and memory when he writes that oral history is:

a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.\(^\text{16}\)

In contrast to Marlene Richards, I was interested in hearing Billy Dare's descendants' oral stories because I wanted to uncover the 'rich evidence about the subjective or personal meanings of past events'.\(^\text{17}\) I had expectations of finally hearing from someone from the (wider) North-East Highland district stories of cross-cultural interaction. I was half-hoping to hear stories of Billy's (and his descendants') respect and gratitude towards the people who had led Billy to their waterholes, helped him with his sheep and seemingly played an important role in his establishment as a pastoralist.

**Rollo and Geoff Dare**

Rollo Dare was born in 1920. He is William Dare’s great-grandson. Rollo was ninety when I first interviewed him and his wife Joan at the nursing home in Booleroo. Unlike his brother Len, Rollo was not sent to boarding school in Adelaide but to high school in Burra. Rollo referred to his ‘old man’ as ‘a tight bastard’.\(^\text{18}\) Joan said that Rollo ‘always resented’ not going to school in Adelaide and that this was ‘very unfair’.\(^\text{19}\) Rollo joined the Light Horse and travelled to Palestine and Syria during World War Two, during which time he lost a leg. Other than during the war and until moving into a nursing home in 1999, Rollo had lived his whole life in the district occupied by his great-grandfather.

\(^{16}\) Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 188.
\(^{18}\) Rollo Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Centre, 10 July 2010.
\(^{19}\) Joan Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Centre, 10 July 2010.
Prior to meeting Rollo and Joan, I interviewed their son Geoff, who similarly had grown up and lived the bulk of his life Out-East of Mt Bryan. Geoff attended high school in Adelaide but, unlike most teenagers of mid-northern settler-descended land-owning families, Geoff did not board at a private school but with a family while he attended Urbrrae High School. Geoff missed out on the experience of boarding and bonding with other children from rural areas and remembers he was lonely in Adelaide. After leaving school Geoff went on a rural exchange to America where he met many people from diverse cultures and expanded his horizons. When he came back to the family farm, Geoff felt like he didn’t belong. Geoff said he felt somewhat of an outsider:

That American experience ... was a catalyst for me, always being, looking, outside the small community of Mt Bryan, Mt Bryan-East, the mid-north of South Australia, all of that. Um, it was a wonderful experience but very unsettling and I didn't settle down very well, and errh, I was never content just doing everything my family did or my father did, and I didn't meet their expectations very much at all really.20

Rollo and Geoff have very different personalities. Rollo is fiercely independent and speaks his mind. He is a practical, hands-on person who loves the farming life and being outdoors. Geoff ‘never liked sport’ and is more interested in reading, politics, religion and spirituality; he is reflective and thoughtful. Both men made it clear during interviews that they didn't get on particularly well. Both said that Geoff never wanted to go back on the land; Rollo said 'I probably made him'. Fifteen years ago, much to the angst of his father, Geoff sold the family property. When I met Rollo, he was clearly still annoyed with Geoff for doing so.

When I met with Geoff, he told me his father had had a stroke. He warned me Rollo was difficult to understand, didn’t open up much and tended to reply to questions with one-syllable answers. As such, when I met with Rollo and Joan, I initially directed my questions to Joan. However, within five minutes of beginning our

20 Geoff Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Hove, 14 May 2010.
conversation, Rollo was the primary respondent. When Joan spoke, it was usually to reiterate a viewpoint or correct a detail expressed by Rollo. Joan’s acquiescence or echoing of Rollo’s narrative could be interpreted as illustrative of ‘a gender-system where men are assigned greater authority in narrating and ascribing meaning to the past’. However, at various times during our conversation Joan readily corrected or disagreed with Rollo. With regard to discernable differences in settler descendants’ narratives and understandings attributable to gender, while I found that women’s and men’s emphases differed – women’s narratives tended to focus more on family connections and the domestic sphere of the homestead and family life while men’s narratives were more focused on the property and the occupation of farming – this distinction was not rigid but blurred. Women were knowledgeable about the property and farming, and men were knowledgeable about people and the domestic realm. Of significance to this thesis is that I found no indication that my interviewees’ general consciousness of the colonial past, in particular the sense of “disconnect”, differed due to gender. Throughout this chapter, Rollo’s and Geoff’s understandings and responses are the primary focus of analysis rather than Joan’s, firstly because Rollo and Geoff spent their formative years in the district and are descended from Billy while Joan moved into the district and learned of Billy’s life after marrying into the family, and secondly for the practical and simple reason that Joan did not speak much during the interview.

Both Rollo and Geoff are direct descendants of William Dare and both grew up on land occupied by their forefather in the 1850s. They belong to the same nuclear family. Claudia Lenz and Helle Bjerg point out that ‘Family memories do not consist of a well-defined fund of stories passed on from the eyewitness generation in a completed and fixed form’:

> Individual family members can maintain different versions of the “family story” as long as their interpretations of history fit into a common normative frame of reference for other family members. The

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21 Claudia Lenz and Helle Bjerg, “‘To be honest I don't think she has much to say...’: Gender and Authority in Memories of the Second World War in Denmark and Germany’, *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 40.
tradition of memories should therefore not be understood as fixed stories passed on to following generations, but as an active, ongoing, and mutual construction of these memories through speech (and/or silence). The fact that memories are mostly fragmentary and full of gaps creates spaces which listeners can fill with their own individual interpretations of the past.\(^{22}\)

Despite differences in personality, experience, and generation, there are convergences and commonalities between Geoff’s and Rollo’s narratives and understandings of their family history. Similarities and constancies illustrate not only continuities in family stories but also the power of the cultural frame through which these stories are interpreted and related to. Both Rollo and Geoff frame their narratives and make sense of their forebear’s experiences through the same settler-colonial historical epistemology.

Information provided by Billy’s son is included in Cockburn’s account of William Dare, and the written reminiscences of Billy’s great-grandson, Rollo’s brother Len, are included in Richards’ history of _Hallett_.\(^{23}\) Memory scholars argue that, when critically analysing living memory, scholars must ‘go back in time’ and ‘examine all the stages of elaboration, conservation and emergence of the recollection’.\(^{24}\) Through comparing interviews conducted in 2010, reminiscences which were written in the 1970s and stories which were told in the 1920s, it is possible to trace the story of Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people.

**Rollo’s narrative**

As is common for mid-northerners who have generational connections to the area in which they have grown up, Rollo’s understanding of his family’s presence in the wider North-Eastern Highland district was orientated around the first (male) member of his family to arrive in the district in which he settled. Rollo knew much

\(^{22}\) Lenz and Bjerg, ‘To be honest’, 35.

\(^{23}\) Richards, _Hallett_, 201–203.

about his first forebear. As is also common among mid-northern settler descendants, Rollo’s information about his forebear preceded Billy’s arrival in the district. During our conversation, Rollo told me, not in this particular order, that ‘William Dare was about seven or eight when he came over to South Australia on the boat’. He came with two brothers; ‘one went to live in Sydney, one went over to New Zealand, only William stayed in South Australia’. William ‘started off digging the trees on the streets of Adelaide’. Rollo thought Billy would have been twelve or thirteen when he came up to Burra where he ‘used to drive a bullock dray on the Burra mines’. Rollo said that ‘Chewings and Hiles came out on the same boat, I don’t know if they were all from the same area in England’ and that ‘the three mates [Dare, Chewings and Hiles] that came over in the boat from England decided they’d all work together to buy each other a place – Ulooloo, Piltimittiappa and Petherton and also some Yarcowie country’. Rollo is referring to a vast area covering tens if not hundreds of square miles of country. When I commented ‘they must have had a huge area’, Rollo replied ‘But you see, it didn’t cost them anything to buy land, it was all by rental’.

In addition to knowing the places Billy and his friends eventually purchased, Rollo confidently referred to numerous places Billy, Chewings and Hiles squatted on and leased. This included (what was historically known as) McVitties Flat in the Booborowie Valley to the west and land around Terowie and Yarcowie in the north. McVitties Flat was later purchased by my forebear, John Murray, and renamed Cappedee. Regarding land Out-East, Rollo said ‘William Dare took Piltimittiappa, the northern country, the whole Out-East area has got Dare blocks all over it’. Rollo knew of his great-grandfather’s connections to a vast territory of which he spoke with familiarity. When the leases were resumed, William purchased Glen Dare, which remained in the family until Geoff sold it.

Rollo did not refer to Glen Dare more often than he referred to other places Billy squatted on and leased. Numerous places outside the family property had

25 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
26 Richards, Hallett, 25.
27 William Dare leased Piltimittiappa from the early 1850s to the late 1800s; Richards, Hallett, 20–22.
historical significance for Rollo. For example Piltimittapp, or Pilti as Joan, Rollo and Geoff refer to it, is significant for the Dare family, as the ruins of the Pilti homestead and various sheds and outhouses are positioned at the bottom of Dare's Hill near the grave of Billy’s wife, Anna. Rollo, Joan and Geoff also referred to Wallinga. Rollo told me ‘Wallinga is where the old Dare bloke is buried. We built him ... a little cairn there. So it’s not quite as rough as it was’. Joan added ‘It’s a much nicer resting place for him’. Rollo continued ‘The place has since been burned down, the grave would still be there. He had a pretty wild idea, he didn’t like Hallett – it was too cold. And he didn’t like Burra because there were too many cousin Jacks there’. Interestingly, the words used by Rollo appear almost word for word in Hallett. Richards states that William Dare ‘said that Hallett was too cold for him and Burra had too many “cousin Jacks” for him’. As these words or sentiments do not appear in Pastoral Pioneers, I gather they have been verbally passed down through the family, as Richards spoke with Rollo’s brother and father while researching Hallett. Like his parents, Geoff too referred to Wallinga, saying Billy ‘lived at Wallinga which is otherwise known as Walltellawelinga, just east of Mt Bryan-East’; ‘he lived there, he bought Glen Dare from there, this is William we are talking about’.

In contrast with freeholder descendants I have interviewed who orientate and centre their family’s historical presence in the district on the land that their forebear purchased and on which they continue to live, Rollo had historical knowledge and spoke with confidence and familiarity about a much larger area of land which includes places his forebear squatted on, occupied and leased prior to the land being subdivided and sold (i.e. during the pastoral era). Similarly, Rollo’s knowledge of people extends back to those who were present in his great-grandfather’s squatting days. Rollo told me that when Billy and his wife lived on McVitties Flat they ‘had a depot sort of there when he was a shepherd, all the yards are there, used to water the sheep over at Ulooloo or where Broad is, over at

28 In a letter written by Louisa Dare, dated 11 April 1894, published in Richards, Hallett, 196, Louisa Dare uses the spelling ‘Wallinga’ which I have consequently adopted.
29 Richards, Hallett, 22. As stated earlier, Richards’ sources were Pastoral Pioneers and William’s grandson, Charlie Dare, and great-grandson, Len Dare.
30 Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.
Booborowie. So this is about the time the Browne brothers came’. Rollo also referred to the Halletts; he told me where the original Hallett homestead is. The Brownes and Halletts arrived in the district in the early 1840s and Rollo is the only person I met with who spontaneously referred to and connected these early pastoralists with specific places.

At one point, the mention of Ulooloo caused Joan to remember Lil Owen-Smith (née Melrose). This prompted Rollo to comment ‘Don’t know when they [the Melroses] got to Ulooloo, must have bought it from one of those boys [Chewings, Hiles or Dare]’. Rollo spoke with relative familiarity about people who were around in his great-grandfather’s squatting/pastoral days. In addition to the squatters, he referred to people who were originally shopkeepers or butchers in Burra who arrived prior to the freeholders and whose descendants continue to live in the district. For example, early in the conversation when I mentioned that I had been speaking with Melva McInnes, Rollo said that his mother ‘was a Gare who married a Dare. The Gares and the Dares were up that way [around Mt Bryan and Burra] very early’. Rollo referred to the Gebhardts, telling me the Halletts’ place was ‘not Mackerode – that was a Gebhardt place’. Later, Rollo mentioned the Gares again, saying they arrived ‘a few years after the state started’; ‘all that crowd [i.e. the Dares and the Gares] have been around pretty much since the start of the state’. Rollo thought ‘they got to Mt Bryan within ten years’ and mentioned ‘that the 1850s were the gold rush’.

No one else I spoke with mentioned the gold rush. Rollo’s knowledge and awareness of the exodus of men to the Victorian goldfields is not abstract or disconnected from his family history but integral to the story of how Billy and his two buddies, Chewings and Hiles, were able to purchase land. Rollo said that William:

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31 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
32 According to Richards, Sir John Melrose (as distinct from George Melrose, who purchased Willogoleeeche and North Booborowie Station) purchased ulooloo in 1883. In Hallett, 20 and 26.
33 Rollo’s mother’s brother is Melva McInnes’s father.
went over there [to the gold rush] and came back with £600, quite a bit then ... It was before they moved Out-East, he didn’t have any dough before he came back, and then he bought 16 square miles of Out-Eastern country. He, Chewings and Hiles began by helping each other and working together.

People, places and events relating to squatting and pastoral days morphed into the arrival of freeholders and rolled off Rollo’s tongue without a second thought. People were connected with place – Ulooloo with the Melroses, the Broads’ place with the Brownes, the Riggs’ place with the Halletts, the Gebhardtts with Mackerode. Later in our interview I showed Rollo a Country Fire Service (CFS) map I had brought with me which had contour lines, ruins and the names of roads, stations, creeks, ranges and hills marked on it. The detailed map brought forth a stream of memories and stories which jumped across the decades and the generations, across geographical areas and subjects, as Rollo recognised the names of places and as he connected people and events with those places. Stories and information dating back to the squatting days were jumbled up with stories and information about people and places in the present. Rollo was sure of his knowledge and displayed no hesitation or doubt about the information he conveyed.

The deep familiarity and unwavering confidence with which Rollo spoke of people and places come from living most of his life in a district which has been the home of his family for five generations, and through learning about and making sense of the past through his own lived experiences. As well as being a font of information about other families with generational connections with the district, Rollo had a vast and intimate knowledge of the country and the environment. Because of Rollo’s health, it was not possible for me to travel to these places with him, but the map prompted stories. Rollo spoke of ‘Civilisation Gate’ which was ‘just behind Dad’s house’ where ‘the land changes from farming/agricultural into the mallee –

station/pastoral land.’ Rollo said there was ‘a noticeable difference there’. He pointed out a range of hills; ‘when you are out on the top of those hills, you can see three points, three hills together, and that’s where he [Rollo’s father] used to have land’. Rollo told me that he can stand at the top of Mt Bryan and see where the water is; he can tell by looking at the land and the green creeks. His knowledge of and affection for the country was obvious. Joan said Rollo found it ‘very tough’ when he found out Geoff was selling the family farm and that he buys lottery tickets hoping to buy it back for his grandson.

Rollo told me about the deaths of two of Billy’s wives. Within the first fifteen minutes of our interview, after telling me he had only recently become interested in his family history, Rollo said ‘I don’t know if this is right’, but that William and ‘Mrs Dare’:

> used to get on the grog a bit in those days … and to have a horse and buggy – a pair of half-trained horses, and they weren’t very docile – and get into Burra … they would get on the grog a bit and go home, well, they’d start the way and the horses would go the rest of the way … Anyway, this old girl – Dare’s Hill, I don’t know if you know it? Is very steep – she evidently was as full as a bull, and coming home with a couple of wild horses, the inclination you’ve got there, and errh [indistinct] she fell down the buggy on the way down the hill.35

Joan said she had heard the same story ‘over the years’. I told Joan and Rollo that ‘as children we used to hear the story of the wife dying going down Dare’s Hill, when we used to go for picnics Out-East’. Joan commented on the ‘grave of Anna Dare down at Pilti’. Rollo expressed his annoyance that ‘one of the Burra Collinsville shearers pinched the stone from the grave … put it in his backyard – took the stone that was on top of the grave’. Later, after stating that William went over to the Victorian gold rush, Rollo said:

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35 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
His [William's] wife was left in the hut while he went. She was killed or died of arsenic poison. They used that for dipping their sheep. They used to get scabs or something and they used that for the sheep. Nobody knows how she did that, it was while he was away.\textsuperscript{36}

When I asked Rollo how he knew these stories about his great-grandfather, Rollo replied 'Oh, I just picked up bits of talk, really'.

**Geoff's stories**

When I spoke with Geoff at his home in a seaside suburb of Adelaide, Geoff told me that William was a Cockney, that he first worked as a shepherd for Anstey and Giles, that his mother was related to the Giles and that John Chewings and George Hiles were buddies of William's. Geoff said that William had four wives and that the second wife, Anna, ‘is the mother of our line’. On hearing Anna’s name, I began to ask Geoff about the wife who died going down Dare’s Hill, to which Geoff cut in, in a tone that suggested the topic was familiar to him, ‘Falling out of the buggy? Yes, she was drunk. She was the third wife’.\textsuperscript{37} Like Rollo, Geoff mentioned that ‘vandals’ had stolen some of the slate from Anna’s grave ‘down the bottom of the hill’.

Geoff's information about Billy and the places he lived was not as vivid or detailed as Rollo's; it came across as a pared-down and more basic version. Geoffrey Cubitt points out that over time, oral transmission has a tendency to modify what it communicates and that ‘stories that survive from generation to generation tend to be refined and simplified’.\textsuperscript{38} While clearly the places Out-East (in the district in which Geoff lived for fifty or so years of his life) were well known to him (such as Pilti, Glen Dare, Wallinga), during our interview Geoff did not refer to other places that Billy squatted on or leased that were distant from Out-East such as McVitties Flat and Yarcowie.

\textsuperscript{36} Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
\textsuperscript{37} Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.
\textsuperscript{38} Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 187.
Geoff sold the farm and moved out of the district when he was in his early fifties. Rollo remained in the district until his early eighties. Rollo told me that it was not until he was reaching the end of his life that he became interested in his family’s history, saying ‘it’s when you’re nearly dead and gone that you start to think about it [William’s life and family history]’.³⁹ Andrew Gebhardt told me ‘I was twenty when I [took over] Mackerode and I didn’t think about the history much in those days’.⁴⁰ Other settler descendants I interviewed similarly told me they were not interested in the history of their family when they were younger.⁴¹ During a conversation with my uncle, Andy Murray, we discussed how people are not interested in their family history until they are older, and Andy said ‘One of the things I regret, as much as almost anything I think, is, in his later life, not getting together with Dad and just taking some sort of a history of what he can remember’.⁴² Over at Wirrabara, when talking about stories he had heard from his father, Harold Gigney said he ‘should have found out more from him [Harold’s father] but these things go by and you don’t really do anything about it and in later years you wish you had done something about it’.⁴³

Mark McKenna states that many people are ‘happy to live without history, reflecting on the past as little as possible, preferring not to know, a fact that reminds us that the need to acknowledge history is one historians are often too keen to ascribe to others’.⁴⁴ While I agree with McKenna’s reminder that historians need to remember they are often more fixated with the past than many people, I disagree with the tenor of McKenna’s assertion. Rather than simply ascribing a lack of interest in history as illustrative of a preference ‘not to know’, people’s stage in the life cycle and their previous experiences need to be taken into account. As children or teenagers or when caught up with raising a family and paying the bills, people have less inclination, less time and less of a past to draw on when contemplating and reflecting on previous times and the history of their family and

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³⁹ Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
⁴⁰ Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
⁴¹ Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
district. This is one practical explanation for why information about times outside one’s own lifespan can ‘disappear’. Amelia Gebhardt said to her father, Andrew, and me that ‘it was a great tragedy not to have ever met John (Andrew’s father) and hear first-hand his experiences about being on the land there’. Andrew replied ‘it is the life span that is the problem with a lot of these things, because they didn’t get passed on, lots of them – you need a writer in the family!’

Differences between Geoff’s and Rollo’s narratives and memories can be explained as due to personality, life experiences, length of residence in a district and the era in which each grew up. In addition, Rollo and Geoff don’t communicate with each other well. Geoff, as a less practical and less outdoor type, was seemingly less familiar with the wider district and did not appear to have the same degree of practical knowledge as Rollo to draw on when furthering his understanding of where and why Billy squatted, leased and purchased land. Geoff may have left the district before he became particularly interested in learning the details or drawing on his accumulated knowledge and experience to piece together information and make further sense of his forebear’s life. When I asked Geoff how he knew about Billy, he said that most of what he knew was from books. He showed me *Hallett* and *Deceptive Lands*, and said that different books provide different information. Geoff said he thought Marlene Richards got her information about Billy from *Pastoral Pioneers* which he can no longer refer to because his son has the family’s copy.

**References to Aboriginal people**

Equally enlightening as the differences in Rollo’s and Geoff’s understanding and knowledge of the nineteenth-century past and the life of William Dare are the similarities. Much of what Rollo and Geoff told me about Billy’s life is similar, but not identical, to information provided in *Pastoral Pioneers*, *Hallett*, *Razorback Range Country* and *Deceptive Lands*. Throughout our conversation, I waited expectantly for Rollo to mention Aboriginal people and their presence in the squatting and pastoral years. Rollo was not forthcoming on the topic. It wasn’t until

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45 Amelia Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2013.
46 Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2013.
over half an hour into our conversation, long after Rollo had told me much of what he knew about Billy’s early years in the district, that the word ‘Aboriginal’ was mentioned. In answer to my question of whether Rollo had any favourite places on the property, Rollo replied saying he had no favourite places before referring to ‘an old Aboriginal camp on the – Dad’s block, up the creek from his house – there was an old well’. I asked Rollo how he knew it was an Aboriginal camp. He replied ‘there was bones and things all around the place’. Rollo was not sure if they were human or animal bones; ‘might have been both, I wouldn’t have known the difference’. Seizing on this reference to prior Aboriginal occupation, I asked Rollo if he had found other traces of Aboriginal people around the place. Rollo said that they (his family) hadn’t, but ‘over the next row of hills, in Dearlove’s country, there was Aboriginal drawings in some sort of hollowed out places or something’. Rollo was referring to the rock engravings at Ketchowla. Neither Rollo nor Joan had seen these engravings; they knew they were there ‘by word of mouth’.

I began asking Rollo if he had ever heard ‘any stories about the Aboriginal people from when William, your great-grandfather – ’ when Rollo interrupted me, saying ‘No. He went and lived with them for a while to find out where their waterholes and things were. I don’t know how many years but I know he lived with them’.47 The discussion subsequently jumped to William’s age on arrival and his work as a bullock dray driver at the Burra mines. When discussing the young age of Billy and his mates when they arrived in South Australia without parents, Rollo said ‘Oh yeah, well, they were pretty tough, must have been bloody terrible in England ... just reading a book now ... they used to shoot the bloody Aborigines, knock ‘em over and cut their bloody heads off with the sabres, the soldiers, they didn’t treat them well.48 Rollo indicated that I should go into the adjoining room (Joan’s and Rollo’s bedroom) to see the book. It was Kingdom for the Brave, written by Tamara McKinley. Published in 2008, the blurb on the back reads:

CONFLICT: Surviving a vicious massacre, the Aboriginal boy, Mandawuy is the last of his tribe. He will face the ultimate choice – to

47 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
48 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
join with the white man, or to rebel alongside the warriors who are waging a war against them, pitting their stone-age weapons against guns.49

Reading the blurb prompted me to ask Rollo if he ever thought about ‘how the settlers took over the land?’

My question remained unanswered because Rollo started speaking about the painting which hung over his bed. It was a copy of an ST Gill painting, under which were the words ‘Dare’s shepherds hut, McVitties Flat’. ST Gill was commissioned

Figure 15. Copy of ST Gill painting, captioned ‘Dare’s Hut, McVitties Flat’.

49 Tamara McKinley, Kingdom for the Brave (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2008), backcover.
to produce watercolours of the Burra copper mines in 1847 and it is highly likely that Gill painted Dare’s Hut while travelling in the district.\textsuperscript{50} Rollo told me that the Popperinghi homestead, my childhood home, is built on the site of the hut painted by Gill. I noticed a sketch of the ruins at Piti which also hung in Joan’s and Rollo’s bedroom. Neither Joan nor Rollo had ever lived at or owned these places. That out of all the material objects accumulated over the course of a lifetime, Rollo and Joan should select these two pictures of Billy’s earliest dwelling places to hang on the walls of their two-roomed nursing home indicates the importance of place and family history to Rollo’s and Joan’s identities and consciousness of the past.

I tried to return to the topic of Billy and Aboriginal people, saying suggestively ‘So, it sounds like William Dare ... lived with the Aboriginal people for a while?’ Rollo and Joan replied in unison; Rollo said ‘he lived with them for a while, got the water out of them’ while Joan stated ‘to learn from them’. I asked how they knew that. Rollo replied ‘Oh, that’s what talk we picked up’. Joan said ‘handed down’. I then

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\textsuperscript{50} Jane Hylton, \textit{South Australia Illustrated: Colonial Painting in the Land of Promise} (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2012), 259.
asked if they had ever heard any Aboriginal words that Billy might have picked up. Rollo answered:

No words, probably he knew some words. I don’t think he ever, well, I don’t know, but I don’t think he could ever talk any of their language.

Skye: And once he got set up do you know if any Aboriginal people still stayed near him?
No. He stayed as a shepherd and then the gold rush started.

At this point Rollo moved on to the death of Billy’s wife through arsenic poisoning.

I can see three interrelated explanations regarding Rollo’s lack of expansiveness with regard to his forebear’s connection with Aboriginal people and his emphasis on other aspects of Billy’s early years. First, Aboriginal people are not part of Rollo’s current social world or the social world in which his consciousness of the past was formed. Memory scholars have observed that the past is a social construction which is largely shaped by the concerns of the present. Maurice Halbwachs, for example, has argued that ‘the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape various views of the past’.51 David Lowenthal similarly has shown how memory ‘not only conserves the past but adjusts recall to current needs. Instead of remembering exactly what was, we make the past intelligible in the light of present circumstances’.52 In Rollo’s current circumstances, the presence of Aboriginal people in his forebears’ life is of little interest to him. Second, as is so powerfully conveyed in Rebe Taylor’s book Unearthed, in the conservative world of late nineteenth–mid-twentieth century South Australian settler society, Aboriginal people were socially stigmatised.53 In his verbal narratives, Rollo may have been reflecting his awareness of this racial and social hierarchy and perhaps did not want to associate his forebear with Aboriginal people. Third, and relatedly, the settler-colonial historical epistemology through

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which Rollo and Geoff frame their understandings of the colonial past, through which they make sense of their forebear’s experiences, makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to be understood as active, present and interacting with settler descendants. In researching the gendered construction of memories of civilian involvement in military defence in Britain during World War Two, Penny Summerfield found that memories or stories which fall outside public discourse can be difficult to sustain; without ‘a cultural frame of reference, telling was fragmented and deflected within the interview context, in spite of a sympathetic and interested audience’. Rollo’s seeming lack of stories and/or lack of imagination with regard to Billy’s connections with Aboriginal people demonstrate difficulties Rollo has remembering, perceiving or imagining a past in which Europeans and Aboriginal people interact, communicate and become friends.

During my conversation with them, neither Rollo nor Joan appeared interested in the significance or meaning of the Aboriginal names that they spoke of so readily and pronounced so easily. I asked Rollo ‘what about the Aboriginal names – what does Piltimittiappa mean?’ Rollo replied ‘God knows’ and laughed ‘it’s probably “dry hole”’. I asked about Ketchowla, to which Rollo said ‘Oh, it’s probably an Aboriginal name. See, Walltellawerlinga is where the old Dare bloke [William] is buried’. At this point Rollo and Joan proceeded to tell me about the cairn they had built for Billy there. By jokingly highlighting the (perceived) lack of water and by immediately moving the topic on to their own historical connection to the places referred to, Rollo and Joan indicated that they have difficulties in contemplating or reflecting upon the implications inherent in these places having Aboriginal names. Their tones of voice and attitudes suggested a seeming incapacity to connect these places to Aboriginal people.

Like Rollo, Geoff was not forthcoming with stories of Billy communicating and living with Aboriginal people. During my conversation with Geoff, I asked him if he had ever heard stories of Aboriginal people when he was growing up. Geoff

55 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
answered, 'No, only that it was thought that Billy was kind to the Aboriginals because he felt they were useful to him and that sounds pretty much right'.\textsuperscript{56} Having read a 'little bit of interesting information' that appeared in the local newspaper during the inquest into the death of one of Billy's wives, Geoff was of the opinion that Billy 'would have been a typical English person with a strong sense of strata and place and people who were employers were better'.\textsuperscript{57} Geoff immediately qualified this, however, by stating that 'some of the people who gave evidence, especially like the stockmen, were – they said favourable things because they knew it was in their interests to'.

In his written reminiscences, Rollo's brother Len makes it clear that his information comes not from written records but from oral stories. He begins with the qualifier that 'no guarantee can be given of the exact accuracy of this account' because it is 'compiled only from memories of stories heard in the manner of folklore over the last 55 years'. Len writes that in 1840, the only inhabitants of the area were 'a tribe blacks' numbering between 50–200, to whom Mt Bryan East 'must have been a land of plenty' with 'kangaroos, emus, birds, lizards, dingoes and grubs in plenty and permanent springs every few miles'.\textsuperscript{58} 'Into their primitive paradise about 1845, in company with a walkabout bunch of Aborigines from the Adelaide Plains' came Billy Dare, aged about twenty.\textsuperscript{59} Len opens his reminiscences with the recognition that the land was already inhabited and by referring to Aboriginal people accompanying Billy. In this, and in perceiving the places Billy occupied as being a plentiful 'paradise', Len provides an account which contrasts with Rollo's.

Unlike Billy's friendship with Chewings and Hiles, unlike his travels to the gold fields, neither Rollo nor Geoff raised the topic of Billy's contact with Aboriginal people during interviews. When I raised the topic, both appeared dismissive of this aspect of Billy's life; my questions were answered quickly and simply before the respondent immediately moved on to a different subject. If I hadn't read Cockburn's, Richard's, Mattey's and Stolte's books, if I hadn't read that Billy had

\textsuperscript{56} Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.  
\textsuperscript{57} Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.  
\textsuperscript{58} Richards, Hallett, 201.  
\textsuperscript{59} Richards, Hallett, 201.
lived with Aboriginal people, I wouldn't have known to persist with the topic and I wouldn't have heard from Rollo, Geoff or Joan of his interaction with Aboriginal people.

The concepts of ‘subjective composure’ and ‘cultural composure’ defined by Summerfield are useful for further understanding Geoff's and Rollo's narratives. During interviews, Geoff and Rollo delivered a narrative; they were, in a sense, performing to me, their audience. The double meaning of the word ‘composure’ describes the dual process at work in an interview; ‘Composure refers to both the composition of the story that the interviewee tells, and to the achievement of personal composure or psychic equilibrium through the process of telling’. In telling stories about their lives, my interviewees engaged both in the cultural activity of constructing narratives about themselves and in the psychic one of striving to orientate themselves within the social relations of the world in which they live; aspects of their lives which were more firmly embedded in, or in accord with, the cultural representations were more easily and readily shared. As Summerfield phrases it:

Ordinary people who have memories that do not fit publicly available accounts have difficulty finding words and concepts with which to compose their memories, whether in anecdotal snapshots or extended narratives. If they cannot draw on an appropriate public account, their response is to seek to justify their deviation, or to press their memories into alternate frameworks, or to be able to express their stories only in fragmentary and deflected accounts.

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Stories of settler–Aboriginal interaction, communication and cooperation are non-existent in the social world in which Rollo, Geoff and Joan live. From the culture in which they belong, they have developed particular ideas about Aboriginal people and settler–Aboriginal interaction. During their conversations with me, Rollo, Geoff and Joan understood Billy’s contact with Aboriginal people as having been purely for utilitarian reasons.

Rollo’s, Geoff’s and Joan’s understandings contrasted with my interpretation of the written records. I question whether in Billy’s younger years, when he was not an established landowner but an adolescent full of adventure and when he was ‘accompanied by natives’, he would have been ‘a typical English person with a strong sense of strata’. Billy was an uneducated Cockney who arrived in South Australia as a child without family or money. He and his friends supported and were dependent on each other in their quest for financial independence. They gained employment in readily available labouring jobs which did not require social connections or literacy. Billy spent time with Aboriginal people in his teenage years. Billy’s son and Billy’s business partner’s wife informed Cockburn that Billy ‘used to treat the natives with great consideration’ and had ‘as many as thirty living and working on his station’.64 Among the hundreds of stories contained in Pastoral Pioneers and despite the assistance Aboriginal people gave to numerous pastoralists during the nineteenth century, Cockburn rarely refers to Aboriginal people and even more rarely in a positive way. Rather than being guided by Aboriginal people – the usual explanation for Aboriginal–settler co-presence – in the 1970s Len Dare writes that Billy arrived in the district ‘in company with … Aborigines’.65 In 1985, Ruth Stolte wrote ‘some of the early pioneers lived amongst the tribes, learning a little of their customs’ and that, because of the good relations that existed between some of the pioneers and Aboriginal people, the existence of sacred sites would have been known to some early settlers.66 The subtle but not insignificant details provided by Cockburn and Len Dare are rare in Cockburn’s

64 Cockburn, Pastoral Pioneers, 59.
65 Richards, Hallett, 201.
66 Stolte, Razorback Range Country, 7.
biographies and North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants’ written reminiscences, as is Stolte’s understanding of cross-cultural communication. This suggests Billy remembered and spoke to others of the significance of Aboriginal people leading him to water and living with him.

During interviews, neither Rollo, Geoff nor Joan appeared able to imagine a past in which their forebear chose to interact with Aboriginal people because he enjoyed their company. None reflected on the significance of Billy and his friends being led to water. Nor did they comment on Billy’s apparent ‘kindness’ to Aboriginal people. During my conversations with them, all came across as uninterested in this aspect of Billy’s life. The silences and inconsistencies among these descendants of Billy Dare with regard to Billy's connection with Aboriginal people, when read in conjunction with their easy and ready reiteration of other aspects of Billy's early life, reflect and demonstrate the influence of social and cultural norms through which settler descendants’ frame and make sense of the past. The dominant settler-colonial historical epistemology constructs Aboriginal people as either not present or difficult and treacherous, or childlike and dependent. To imagine Billy Dare communicating with Aboriginal people for anything other than utilitarian purposes, to imagine a world of mutual support, cooperation and friendship, requires a significant leap of imagination for these squatter descendants, despite written records and (seemingly) oral stories to the contrary. Stories of companionship and friendship sit outside and unsettle the dominant cultural frame.

Like his parents, Geoff didn’t know the meaning of names such as Piltimittiappa, Panamattie, Paratoo, Wallinga. However, when stating this, rather than laughing and quickly changing the subject, he became thoughtful. When I asked him about signs of Aboriginal occupation, he could not recollect seeing ‘any sites at all that would have been significant [to Aboriginal people]’ although he qualified this by saying he was ‘sure there were many’.\(^{67}\) Geoff thought the ‘sort of places they would have had encampments would have been close to the creeks’ and because of this, ‘all of it [sites] would have been destroyed’. Geoff recognised that he was ‘not

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\(^{67}\) Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.
experienced enough to recognise those sorts of locations’. I noticed that Geoff became increasingly reflective and thoughtful as our interview progressed. As Geoffrey Cubitt has observed, ‘experiencing, remembering and narrating are not separate and consecutive, but simultaneous and interconnected … aspects of consciousness that unfold together, penetrating each other, nourishing each other and modifying each other’.69

My questions seemed to prompt memories of long-ago experiences which Geoff gave the impression of not having spoken about for a long time. Geoff described a trip to Wilcannia he went on with an Indian exchange student who accused Geoff of ‘being representative of one of the oppressors’. Travelling with this woman – an activist who was well aware of the multitudinous forms of racism and discrimination and the enduring effects of colonialism – made a lasting impression on Geoff. He saw Aboriginal people’s position in Australia through new eyes. Geoff told me ‘Of course I couldn’t argue, of course I’m a white person and they’re dark, and that hellish place’. Geoff recognised that colonisation was not necessarily beneficial for Aboriginal people; he considered the ethical implications and the complexity of colonisation. Towards the end of our conversation, Geoff told me that when he was a child, his mother had had Aboriginal girls from the home at Blackwood (the Colebrook Home at Quorn) to help her with her three children. Geoff remembered that one young woman was called Pam Hunter and she ‘could play the piano beautifully’; another woman was called Violet O’Donoghue and ‘she was Lois’s sister’. Geoff remembered meeting Lois, ‘so whenever I hear of her I prick up my ears’.70 He could not recall the name of the third woman. Geoff said each woman stayed with his family for about a year. He recalled ‘his mother was kind to them’. Geoff said ‘Dad would have been somewhat patronising. He’s very um, phobic, xenophobic’.

68 Geoff Dare, 14 May 2010.
69 Cubitt, History and Memory, 96.
70 Geoff is referring to Lowitja O’Donoghue, a well-known, highly regarded campaigner for Aboriginal rights who was born in the northwest of South Australia and whose mother was of the Yankunytjataara group. Lowitja was christened Lois. Her contributions to Australian public life have been acknowledged through numerous national and state honours and awards.
Stereotypes

I brought up the topic of Aboriginal people in the district with Rollo and Joan one more time. I asked Rollo if, when he was younger, he had ever seen any Aboriginal people around the district. Rollo replied ‘No, no, I’ve never seen one’. ‘No’ echoed Joan. Rollo continued ‘The only time you might see one was at show time, in somebody’s fighting tents’. Joan wondered aloud ‘not sure where they’d be living’. Knowing that Rollo and Joan were aware that Aboriginal people had led Billy to water, and that Rollo was reading a novel which graphically conveyed the violence of European occupation, and that they had employed three Aboriginal women as domestic helpers, the following comments from Rollo and Joan startled me. Rollo went on; ‘Nobody really wanted to see them [Aboriginal people] anyway’. I asked him ‘why?’ to which Rollo replied ‘It might sound pretty tough but I’m not sympathetic with them at all’.

Skye: *Yeah? In what ways? Because?*

Joan: They’re lazy.

Rollo: They’re not good workers. They take everything and give nothing back. [All] the buggers all around the town and the reserves and things and get their grog and their tucker for nothing and pay for nothing, do nothing but, except fighting.

Joan: Expect government handouts.

Skye: *So did you see that or that’s just what you’ve heard?*

Rollo: Well, you can see them down there if you go to Adelaide – anywhere you like. If you go up to Alice Springs you can see better, probably a bit better type.

Joan: But there are some better – you know, some are trying to work out, to do, jobs

Rollo: But they haven’t any inclinations to do it.

Skye: *Mmm. How much do you think what happened in the past has affected them now?*

Rollo: Oh yes, they reckon they are hard done by but they’ve been bloody been looked after like, well, don’t know what they’ve been looked after like [pause].
There are several interesting observations to be made from this conversation and my disconcertion. First, regarding my disconcertion, tensions or moments of disruption are often enlightening – they are an important aspect of qualitative interviews. The semi-structured nature of my qualitative interviews meant they were dynamic and dialogical in nature. Rather than being a one-way process of questions and answers, my interviews were instead a dialogue between two (or more) interested and engaged parties in which I, as the interviewer, was attuned to the sentiments and information expressed and adjusted my questions accordingly and in which my questions – my research frame – influenced the direction and depth of my interviewees’ narratives.\(^{71}\) To varying extents, both interviewee and interviewer are guided by the other; while some of my questions took my interviewees by surprise, some of the answers they gave and the tangents taken surprised me. By the tone and volume of their voices, the speed or hesitation, the depth of emotion or the blaséness with which they spoke, I was aware when my interviewees were reiterating previously rehearsed stories or articulating ideas and thoughts which were new to them.

Second, regarding the strong emotion with which Rollo and Joan expressed their blunt comments regarding ‘lazy’ Aboriginal people, encounters with the human voice can traverse history and convey in oblique ways that are not necessarily the factual truth but ‘the more subtle and indispensable truth of an epoch and an experience’.\(^{72}\) The emotions which are often readily apparent in oral narratives allow researchers to burn through the ‘cold-storage of history’\(^{73}\) and can provide a more vivid and richer account of the past than that gleaned from historical written records.\(^{74}\) Third, Rollo and Joan expressed stereotypical understandings of what it is to be Aboriginal. While more outdated and expressed more strongly than others, Rollo’s and Joan’s attitudes and perspectives were implied by several other settler descendants I met with. Rollo’s and Joan’s stereotypical understanding of ‘lazy’ and

\(^{71}\) See Summerfield, ‘Oral History as a Research Method’, 53; Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the Subject’, 95.


\(^{73}\) This powerful phrase is used by Wieviorka, ‘The Witness in History’, 390.

‘fighting’ Aboriginal people cannot be understood as typical; they are nevertheless an extreme example which can be interpreted as highlighting the sentiments and attitudes of the era and place of Joan’s and Rollo’s formative childhood, adolescent and working years. Fourth, and closely related to the previous point, as I will now discuss, the few Aboriginal people Rollo knew through face-to-face interaction fell outside his stereotypical understandings of what it was to be Aboriginal. Rather than changing his views on what it was to be Aboriginal, Rollo struggled to recognise these people as Aboriginal.

Prior to interviewing Rollo and Joan, members of my family and other people from the district had told me about two Aboriginal families who had lived in Hallett in the 1950s and 1960s. I asked Rollo and Joan if they remembered the people who had worked in Hallett, the Wanganeens and the Warriors. Joan replied ‘yes, we remember them’ and Rollo began talking about the Port Adelaide Football Club. Keith Warrior’s football skills were legendary throughout the district among those who lived there at that time. The Port Adelaide Football Club is a state club that has a long history of Aboriginal involvement. Noting that even involuntary, personal memory is always mediated, memory scholar Susannah Radstone has drawn attention to the ‘apparently natural and uncontrolled ebbings and flowings of personal memory’ which are ‘complex constructions in which present experience melds with images that are associated with past experiences’.75 Mention of the Warriors prompted Rollo to think of Aboriginal footballers, which in turn prompted him to refer to the Port Adelaide Football Club.

Radstone argues that both memory research and oral history seek to ‘understand how experience is lived and remembered – and how that remembering contributes to the formation of senses of self, or of identity, which in turn give shape to the broader contours of influential narratives of events and of nations.76 As Summerfield observers, ‘Memory interacts with experience and with ideological and cultural representations of both the present and the past, so that accounts of

76 Radstone, ‘Reconceiving the Binaries’, 139.
the past are never “pure recall” of life as it was. Radstone’s and Summerfield’s insights can usefully be applied to an examination of Rollo’s and Joan’s oral narratives. I tried again, and asked Rollo and Joan if they had ever had any Aboriginal people working for them. Rollo again said ‘no’ before proceeding to tell me about a ‘very good mate’ of his, Fred Fenn – who ‘was a half-caste though’. Rollo then proceeded to speak highly of Fred Fenn; he described Fenn’s work ethic and various people Fenn had worked for in the district and recalled having ‘great times’ with him. On two occasions, neither Rollo nor Joan mentioned the women from Colebrook Home when I asked them if they had ever had Aboriginal people working for them.

Rollo’s and Joan’s accounts of their experiences are filtered through the language, concepts, ideologies and discourses that are part of our society. Mistaken memories provide vital clues to understanding the meanings of events, both as they happened and as they live on in memory. Karen Hughes has analysed her grandmother’s silences regarding her childhood cross-cultural experiences with the community of Ngarrindjeri. Hughes found ‘it was only with prompting’ that her grandmother could remember these cross-cultural experiences and argues that this was because her grandmother’s experiences fell outside the ‘the larger narrative that indexed and validated personal events’. Rollo and Joan had previously displayed stereotypical understandings of what it was to be Aboriginal – Aboriginal people were lazy and fought. As hard-working, trustworthy and good people, the women from Colebrook Home, the Warriors, Wanganeens and Fred Fenn did not fit with Rollo’s and Joan’s stereotypical understandings of what it is/was to be Aboriginal. In his investigation into the concepts, ideas and processes by which settler Australians install themselves as ‘original’ and thereby displace Aboriginal people, Rob Garbutt argues that absences (such as those of Aboriginal people) from the face-to-face local may be physical (which is the case for Ngadjuri

79 Thomson, ‘Making the Most of Memories’, 292. Thomson draws on the work of Alessandro Portelli when making this remark.
and Nukunu people in the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts respectively) or absences may be because the social imaginary of the dominant group does not recognise certain marginalised groups.81

Several people aged over eighty from the Mt Bryan district remembered Fred Fenn. Fred lived with Melva McInnes’s family and Melva had fond memories of him, referring to him as ‘lovely’ and telling me that at the Mt Bryan East school reunion, held only ‘a few years ago’, she and Fred were inseparable and spent a wonderful afternoon reminiscing and walking around together with linked arms.82 Numerous interviewees aged in their late sixties and seventies referred to the Warriors and the Wanganeens with affection and respect. These people did not fit the stereotypes of either traditional Aboriginal people living a ‘stone age’ existence or the drunk, lazy, fighting Aboriginal. These people were first and foremost remembered for their personalities and their particular skills and talents.

I asked Uncle Andy he if had any memories of Aboriginal people working on Cappeedee. He answered ‘I don’t have any recollection of Aboriginal people wandering around the property other than in an employed situation. I just don’t have any, or in Hallett either’.83 I asked Andy if he could remember the Wanganeens, to which he replied ‘Oh yeah, yeah, sure. But they lived in the town’. Andy ‘absolutely’ remembered them, but didn’t ‘regard them as sort of Aboriginal in a sense because they were just town people’. When I asked if their children went to the school, Andy replied:

I can’t remember. I guess they did but I wouldn’t have as a kid – they were just kids – I wouldn’t have thought they were Aboriginal or anything like that. No, and I don’t think anybody did. But when they were adult, I guess people did. Although the Wanganeens – people

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82 Melva McInnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Three Trees, 7 June 2010.
liked them. I don’t know, I don’t think there was prejudice, I think people liked them, they were just people.\textsuperscript{84}

The Aboriginality of Fred Fenn, the Warrior and the Wanganeen families and the women from Colebrook Home was not at the forefront of Melva’s, Andy’s, Rollo’s or Joan’s minds. As far as Melva and Uncle Andy were concerned, they were no different from other members of the community. When I spoke with Keith Warrior’s son, Brian, to learn how he remembered his time at Hallett, he told me the people of Hallett were wonderful, that his family never experienced any racism, that he went to the local school which was good, and his father won the trophy for best and fairest football player twice and jointly with another player once. Brian remembered his family’s years at Hallett as very good times with lots of family coming to stay.\textsuperscript{85}

Melva knew Fred Fenn from her home, when she was a child. Uncle Andrew went to boarding school when he was eleven and never lived in the district as an adult. Neither had cause to distinguish Fred Fenn or Fred Warrior’s children respectively from their other childhood friends and acquaintances. Others I spoke with who lived in the district as adults and played football with Keith Warrior had experiences which brought home to them the fact that Keith was Aboriginal.\textsuperscript{86} Uncle Al said:

\begin{quote}
It was very sad. He’d always be best man on the ground, or nearly always. Then we’d go to the pub afterwards and Keith would have to park his car outside the door and we’d take beer out to him. He wasn’t allowed in the pub of course. So … we’d stay out and have a drink with him. They weren’t allowed through the door. That was the law.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{84} Andy Murray, 29 March 2010.
\textsuperscript{85} Field notes from conversation with Brian Warrior, Salisbury Plains, 23 November 2010.
\textsuperscript{86} Uncle Al said he was ‘good mates with Keith’ who came to Cappeedee to visit Al ‘a few years ago’. Al also referred to the ‘little Warriors … Brian and Trevor [Keith’s children]’, Gill Abdullah (Keith’s father-in-law) and Ted Wanganeen. Al played football with Keith and Ted. He knew Keith the best because he was at Hallett the longest but said they were ‘all good, good blokes’. Alistair [Al] Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 18 May 2010.
Al said ‘we thought it was awful’ but ‘it was the law and so we just took it for granted I suppose, I don’t know’. Another fellow football player, Peter Reilly (who played for Burra), remembered Keith as ‘one of the best football players I’ve ever seen’ and that ‘Teddy [Wanganeen] was handy too’. Peter remembered a dinner at Jamestown at which:

The Lord Mayor got up and told a story about Sambo, Keith Warrior got up and went right off. And it took a couple of blokes to hold him down, to settle him down. And this bloke – this Lord Mayor – he still went on with the joke, he thought it was funny. Instead of shutting up. See those days too, I don’t reckon a blackfellow was allowed to drink in a public place, in a bar area or whatever. But it didn’t worry us, because he was such a good bloke. He’d be in the school [the drinks round] there was no hassles about that what-so-ever. But the policemen knew what was going on and they turned a blind eye.

Both Al and Peter remembered Keith with affection and displayed a sense of unease when remembering how the law discriminated against him. They also told stories which can be interpreted as conforming with the stereotype of the ‘lazy’ Aboriginal but which were not told with malice but affection and which, reading between the lines, illustrate Keith’s ingenuity in taking advantage of his talents. Peter remembered a game of football when ‘Burra played Hallett and it was freezing cold and Burra won the game because Keith and Teddy couldn’t get into the game, it was too cold’. This prompted Peter to remember that ‘Eric Ashby and others looked after them pretty well. Rumour had it that if Warrior wasn’t playing a good game there might be 10 quid put in his sock and off he’d go [laugh]’. Uncle Al remembered ‘Art Collins used to give him half a sheep every Saturday morning to make sure he got there’. *What, to get to the footy?* ‘To get to the footy’.

*After saying he didn’t know where Fred Fenn came from, Rollo surprised Joan and me by saying ‘There’s some Aboriginal Dares over, I don’t know, over at Kadina or

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87 Peter Reilly, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 8 June 2010.
88 Peter Reilly, 8 June 2010.
something’. Neither Joan nor I had ever heard of an Aboriginal family whose surname was Dare.89 We both sought confirmation that we had heard Rollo correctly; ‘called Dare?’ (Skye); ‘Did you say Aboriginals called Dare?’ (Joan). I asked Rollo if he knew how they got their name. In a firm and dismissive tone, Rollo said ‘no’. I then asked Rollo again about Billy’s contact with Aboriginal people. Rollo and Joan answered in synchrony that William spent time with Aboriginal people ‘to find out where the water was’ (Rollo), ‘they would have shown him where Pilti was, and the streams’ (Joan). Rollo finished Joan’s sentence ‘and the water further on the ranges there’. Rollo startled me again when he said ‘we were amazed, or I was, that Bryan died when he couldn’t find any water’. Both Rollo and Joan then said in unison ‘Mt Bryan’, conveying to me that they were talking about the young Englishman after whom Mt Bryan is named.

I was surprised, first at the speed with which the subject seemed to change, and second because both Joan and Rollo referred to Bryan, who had got lost in the bush and died in the vicinity of Mt Bryan in 1839 (prior to the arrival of any squatters or pastoralists), as though he was well known to them and his death was part of general knowledge. When I asked why they were amazed that Bryan had died, Rollo replied:

He was a young pommy. He couldn't find water but damn it all, I could stand on the top of Mt Bryan myself and I could tell him a dozen places where there is water within two or three miles of it ... underground water and springs ... you can tell by the look of the country and the green creeks and see the bloody water.

This reference to Bryan is intriguing and informative on many levels. It illustrates how Rollo jumped from era to era within the space of two sentences and how Rollo quickly moved the topic away from Billy's interaction with Aboriginal people. It shows how Rollo connects Aboriginal people with knowledge of water and how he

89 An Aboriginal family with the surname Dare identify as Kokatha and Bangala. They come from the Eyre Peninsula. See Cissy Sultan and Kathy Bradley, Cissy's Story (Whyalla, SA: The Author, 2013).
himself has knowledge of finding water. Rollo draws on his own experience to make sense of Bryan's death. While Rollo criticises Bryan's inability to find water, I am undecided as to whether Rollo is inadvertently criticising his forebear for having to rely on Aboriginal people to find water or whether he is implying that Aboriginal people did not play a crucial role and as such are not ‘owed’ anything; maybe Rollo is doing both at once. This passage also demonstrates how Rollo uses knowledge he has gained through lived experience to make sense of anecdotes and stories which relate to Billy's early years in the district. In the following three chapters, I further discuss how mid-northern settler descendants draw on their own experiences to make sense of the colonial past.

**Unutilised memories**

I am especially interested in learning how and why Aboriginal people feature in mid-northern settler descendants’ oral narratives. After conducting numerous interviews, it became apparent that most of my interviewees were not familiar with discussing Aboriginal people in connection with their own or their forebears’ lives. Although some people I spoke with, when asked in a variety of ways and when given adequate time to reflect and think back, did have stories of Aboriginal people, it seemed to me that if I hadn’t directly and deliberately prompted my interviewees, if I hadn’t chased up leads and persisted in trying to flesh out and revive various fragmented titbits, those I was speaking with either would have not remembered significant details or would have not connected their memories and stories with Aboriginal people. In this chapter, I have argued that these descendants of Billy Dare did not have the cultural context through which to interpret and understand information about the forebear's interaction with Aboriginal people. There is an addition, related factor; during interviews I sensed that stories about and experiences involving Aboriginal people or the Aboriginal past had not been remembered for a long time. It was as though, through lack of use, these stories and memories had almost been forgotten and required some effort and the right conditions to be brought to the surface of people’s memories.

This was strikingly apparent among my mother and her three brothers. Fifty minutes into my first interview with my uncle, Andy Murray, after describing what
he recalled of the personalities and physical traits of his three paternal aunts (two of whom married station owners from the Broken Hill district), Andy said 'There were three girls and Dad, and the hierarchy said that Dad got the place':

I think that Esther felt that she would have like to have stayed at Cappeedee, so I think she was the one whose nose was really put out of joint by the whole exercise. And I think also that, when they left, I suspect it was Esther but I don’t have any evidence for it, they took a lot of stuff.

Do you know that in the cellar of Cappeedee was a room right at the back that was absolutely full of Aboriginal artefacts, absolutely choc-a-bloc full, must have been collected by my [pause] grandfather, I guess. I don’t know where from but it must have been local. Spears, boomerangs, waddies, everything, not just weapons ... grinding stones, the whole bit. It all went. And I’m sure that you would find it somewhere around Broken Hill now.90

This startling information came not during preliminary conversations when I informed Andy of my interest in learning about the Aboriginal people whose land our forebears occupied, but in the context of a discussion about his father’s and aunt’s inheritance.

I told Andy I had never heard of this cellar full of artefacts, and checked that Andy understood it was his grandfather who was responsible for the collection. Andy replied:

Well, I think it was probably my grandfather. I don’t know why I think that. Maybe something I vaguely remember people talking about ... I don’t know how he acquired them, I don’t know, because lots of people did acquire collections at that time, obviously they did, and I don’t know how they got them. I mean, it may have been just picking

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90 Andy Murray, 29 March 2010.
them up, or it may have been more devious, I mean, for all I know they
got them from tribal people, Aboriginal people. But then you see, they
had no intrinsic value. I guess if he got them, I suppose he got them
because he was interested in it at some level. Umm and so he would
have talked I suppose to whoever, Aboriginal people ... I don’t know, I
really don’t know how they acquired them. But it was an absolute, we
would go down there as kids – does Mary remember this?

Skye: No, she hasn’t mentioned this at all.

Um, there was, it was quite a substantial room. It would be almost this
size, I would think [the size of Andy’s living room], and it was just
filled with things. Filled. You could only just get out the door.

I have no memories of my mother, grandparents, uncles or great-aunts referring to
or discussing these artefacts. I have checked with my cousins and brother who
likewise have no recollection of hearing about these Aboriginal artefacts.

Having learned about the cellar filled with artefacts, when I interviewed my Uncle
Bill I waited expectantly for him to speak about them. At one point he stated ‘I
remember my aunts brought back – probably very valuable – Aztec bows and
arrows and things from South America ... we used to play with those. We just
raided the cellar, it was great fun ... we played with them’. Bill then described his
unruly cousins’ visits to Cappeedee. Eventually I asked Bill about the cellars at
Cappeedee. He replied ‘there were three of them’. I asked him if he ever played
down there to which he answered ‘We used to often go down there but we didn’t –
only to knick the bows and arrows, that’s where they were stored’. I prompted
‘What was stored down there?’ Bill spoke of ‘keep-eggs’ (preserved eggs) and fruit
preserves before shifting the topic to his maternal grandmother’s expertise in
preserving fruit. While Bill recollected the exotic and ‘valuable’ South American
weapons, he made no mention of spears, waddies or boomerangs. It seems these
Aboriginal objects were outside his cultural imaginary.

Of all the numerous experiences and happenings in one's life, some are recalled more readily than others. Andrew never forgot the cellar full of artefacts, but clearly he had not discussed this with his siblings, or at least not for a very long time. He recalled his excitement upon discovering these objects, and his shock and disappointment on coming home for a weekend exeat and learning of their disappearance. He never knew what happened to them. My mother and Uncle Al were much younger when the artefacts were taken away. They were around five and seven years old respectively. But Bill, the oldest sibling, made no reference to these Aboriginal objects.

**Conclusion**

There are informative parallels between my family’s narratives regarding the artefacts in the cellar and Rollo’s and Geoff's narratives regarding Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people. Among all, I sensed that these stories which connected them with the Aboriginal past had not been often or recently recalled. All my interviewees were aware of my interest in hearing stories and information concerning Aboriginal people. While Rollo and Geoff Dare did know of their forebear’s interaction with Aboriginal people, these stories were not referred to without my prompting and leading questions. These stories were not at the forefront of their minds. Regarding the artefacts in the cellar, only Andy spoke of them unprompted. His siblings did not recall them without prompting and they had not discussed the artefacts in the cellar among themselves.

It seemed that, through lack of use, memories of these stories and objects had been buried. It took external prompting to bring to them to the surface. There are several factors to be considered when understanding this seeming lack of ready articulation of stories involving Aboriginal people, places or things. First is the wider lack of interest in things Aboriginal among the social groups to which my interviewees belong. Second, and relatedly, is the lack of cultural context through which my interviewees could make sense of the knowledge/information they did have and to perceive information and stories about Aboriginal people as significant and worthy of reiteration. Third are the contingencies of what gets passed down through the generations. Andy had a clearer recollection of the artefacts because
he was older than my mother and Al at the time and because he was particularly interested in them. My brother, cousins and I had no knowledge of these artefacts. They were not part of our experiences. Fourth is the initial “disconnect” apparent in the Dare and Murray descendants’ attitudes and narratives. Regarding my own family, when recalling or learning of the artefacts in the cellar, the most immediate response or concern was that their aunts had taken the objects. While I was interested in learning how my great-grandfather came to have these artefacts, and while I was interested in the artefacts as valuable ethnographic objects which could be restored in some way to Ngadjuri descendants and could add to the scanty information known about Ngadjuri people, the rest of my family were more interested in the artefacts as interesting novelties which belonged to and had been wrongfully taken from Cappeedee.

In many ways, Rollo is the paradigm of settler – or in this case, squatter – “disconnect”. While Rollo was scathing about Aboriginal people as a whole, he spoke respectfully and with great fondness of Fred Fenn. Although, according to Geoff, three Aboriginal women had worked for Joan and Rollo as domestic helpers, Rollo said (and Joan did not correct him) that they had never had any Aboriginal people working for them. Despite reading a novel about the brutal treatment of Aboriginal people, Rollo did not seem to connect this with current generations’ grievances and problems. While these contradictions are not unique to Rollo – few settler descendants I spoke with connected European occupation and continued possession of land with Aboriginal disadvantage – they were more pronounced in Rollo’s narratives.

There are many indications that Billy’s relationship with Aboriginal people was significant and not short-lived. Written and oral records state that Billy lived with Aboriginal people, treated the Aboriginal people he spent time with ‘with consideration’ and ‘kindness’. Billy chose to be buried not at Glen Dare or Piltimittiappa (places he had purchased and built houses on and lived for much of his life) but at Wallinga, the place he lived when he was younger and presumably in the company of Aboriginal people. Contemporary Aboriginal people have the surname Dare. None of this appeared to be of interest to Rollo or Geoff. As Rollo
neared the end of his life, he was preoccupied with one particular legacy of Billy Dare. Within five minutes of meeting with Rollo, Rollo told me he’d recently been ‘trying to find out about how Mrs Dare died out there’. Geoff had previously told me that Rollo had instructed him to go to the library and search the records to find out about the death of Billy’s wife. Referring to the information Geoff had found in the *Burra Record*, Rollo said ‘I haven’t found out what I want to know. I want to know whether he left her there or if he came back in the morning’.

There are some final points to be made in concluding this chapter. My mother and grandfather never mentioned Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people, his kindness or his debt to them. Instead, the untimely and questionable deaths of Billy’s wives are remembered by current generations. The story of Billy Dare’s legacy illustrates the selectivity inherent in both family stories and written histories. It shows the importance of the culture in which we live, which frames the way we make sense of our own experiences and the experiences of those who preceded us. This story also shows that different ways of learning about the past carry with them different ways of remembering and relating to the past, and the importance of place as a prompter of stories of the past. As a child I learned of Billy’s wives’ deaths. I heard these stories when we went down Dare’s Hill and saw the ruins at Pilti. The story of Billy’s wives was well known among families who had lived in the district for generations. I did not learn about this aspect of Billy’s life through reading the local history books. In contrast, I did not know of Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people until, as an adult interested in Aboriginal–settler interaction, I read *Pastoral Pioneers* and *Hallett*. We, like most families in our district, had a copy of *Hallett* on our bookshelves. Although all in the community could learn about Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people through reading about it in the local history book, this aspect of Billy’s life was never referred to during interviews and is not part of the North-East Highland community's social memory.

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92 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
Chapter 5: ‘The Black’s Camp’

Although George Wauchope Cameron arrived in theWirrabara district in the 1850s, it was not until the 1860s that he set up camp on the banks of Doughboy Creek in the eastern foothills of the southern Flinders Ranges. Doughboy Creek is situated approximately 270 kilometres north of Adelaide on the outskirts of present-day Murray Town, approximately 50 kilometres north of the larger town ofWirrabara. By 1875, George Cameron had secured freehold title to this section of land and the property, Doughboy Creek, has been owned and occupied by members of the Cameron family ever since.

In this chapter, I draw on interviews, conversations and site visits conducted with three of George Cameron’s grandchildren and three of his great-grandchildren. All of the Cameron descendants I spoke with readily told me stories of George Cameron’s interaction with Aboriginal people who regularly camped on Doughboy Creek for over fifty years. In the previous chapter, I illustrated how Rollo’s, Geoff’s and Joan Dare’s lived experiences and a settler-colonial historical epistemology affected their understandings of Billy Dare’s interaction with Aboriginal people. In this chapter, I compare stories told to me by different members of the Cameron family to further analyse the concrete workings of memory. George Cameron descendants’ stories illustrate the importance of place, and more particularly continuity of people in place, to the perpetuation of stories and knowledge about the colonial past. Differences in stories told by family members show how both their own experiences and the experiences of previous generations affect their consciousness of the colonial past; the lived experiences of the people from whom the story originates and successive conveyers of the story need to be taken into account.
In July 2010 I conducted interviews with George Cameron’s grandchildren, siblings Heather Sizer and Colin Cameron, and their cousin Kath Milne. Colin’s and Heather’s father, Alan, inherited Doughboy Creek from his father, George. Colin inherited Doughboy Creek from Alan. Kath’s mother, Nell, was Alan’s younger sister. Heather and Colin grew up on Doughboy Creek in Bellevue (the house built by George). Both George and Alan married late, thus despite occupying the land since the 1860s, Colin’s is only the third generation to own the house and land. Colin and Heather were in their mid-eighties and Kath was ninety-eight when I first met with them. Kath, Colin and Heather are of a similar generation; they are closely related and all three have spent most of their lives in the district. All completed their secondary schooling in Adelaide. Colin moved his family to Adelaide for his children to attend secondary school, after which he returned to Doughboy Creek. Kath and Heather married local men, both of whose families had
settled in the district in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{1} As descendants of freehold settlers, with similar upbringings and socio-economic positions, they can be understood as belonging to the same class, the same district and the same historical era. Heather is the author of a history of the Wirrabara district and the editor of a history of the Murray Town district.\textsuperscript{2} As such, it is interesting to see how stories of the Cameron family’s interaction with Aboriginal people appear in Heather's written histories, and I return to this in the following chapter.

In 2012 I re-interviewed Heather, Colin and Kath, and visited and re-visited various sites with Heather and her son, Kevin Sizer, and Kath. In addition, I interviewed Colin’s son, Alister Cameron, at Bellevue and Kath’s son, Robert Milne, at the Milne family property, White Park.\textsuperscript{3} Although all are directly descended from George Cameron, different family members have different connections to Doughboy Creek. While variations in their historical narratives reveal differences in personality, age and interests, variations also reveal how stories differ within the same family or clan. Analysis of the similarities and differences between George Cameron’s descendants enables us to further understand the concrete workings of memory; place, material objects, individual experience and generational and relational proximity to original narrator of the story conveyed are important factors which contribute to variations between members of the same family's stories. A recognition of the relevance and influence of these factors can be extended to examine variations in the historical consciousness of members of the local community, the wider geographical district and beyond.

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Like Rollo and Geoff Dare, Andrew Gebhardt and Melva McInnes, Heather Sizer's, Colin Cameron's and Kath Milne’s information about the colonial past is orientated around their own family. All three told me that George Cameron arrived in the Wirrabara district twenty years before purchasing freehold title to Doughboy

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[3] White Park is situated between Wirrabara and Murray Town to the east.
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Creek. He married Annie Long, who had arrived in the district in the 1850s with her father, Tom Long, her mother, Jane Long and her sister. Heather said:

Grandfather was called George Wauchope Cameron. He took up this land in the 1870s, he probably worked for A B Murray for twenty years before that ... can't think exactly when he was married. He married Annie Long. Thomas Long came to this area when the White brothers still had the station, about 1852 ... Grandfather bought two sections called Doughboy Creek in 1875. The land that was cut up for agriculture, it was part of the Wirrabara station before that. In 1875 Grandfather took out a credit agreement ... He and his brother were bush carpenters. They came to Australia when they were eighteen and sixteen, we can't trace the ship or the year, but the early 1850s.  

Although arriving in the district prior to the freeholders, unlike Billy Dare George Cameron was not a squatter or pastoralist but an employee of the early pastoralists.

When I interviewed Heather’s brother Colin at his home Bellevue, Colin said:

Yeah my Grandfather got here at about the age of eighteen in 1853. And he worked for Alexander Borthwick Murray as a hut builder and type building. This is the Cameron, his father-in-law was Tom Long. He was a stonemason. He built the house at Stone Hut and the chimney at Charlton ... he was sixty-four when he came here ... he had two daughters, one of them married my grandfather.

Tom Long’s chimney and the stone house at Stone Hut (from which the hamlet takes its name) are landmarks in the district. Colin said George Cameron was:

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4 Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
5 Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
6 This hut, the ‘Stone Hut’, is not easily viewable from the main road, but Heather described its exact location.
Based down the old creek. He bought a section of freehold land. At that stage it was possible for pastoralists to freehold ... my grandfather bought a freehold section back there on the creek ... [there is] a depression in the ground where the cellar must have been. And a few stones, so obviously they had a stone chimney. He lived there until Christmas time in 1881 and most of the children were born there, so they must have had more than a little hut. My grandfather had this house built and they moved in here at Christmas 1881 and my father was born in May 1882.7

Bellevue has constantly been lived in by successive generations of George and Annie Cameron’s descendants. Colin and Val showed me portraits of George and Annie which hang in the hall. When driving me around Doughboy Creek Colin and Val showed me a rock hard, sun bleached wooden trough, a gnarled and stunted fig tree and a depression in the ground (the old cellar) which mark the site of George Cameron’s first dwelling on the banks of Doughboy Creek. While there, Colin said ‘my grandmother and her sister were real keen horsewomen, rode side saddle, never opened a gate. They lived over there; there’s the remains of a stone house and a dairy’.8 Colin pointed in the direction of Tom Long’s dairy and place of residence, which was just a few miles away, over the hills.

Heather took me to Tom Long’s dairy at Yellowman Creek. On the way we passed the chimney Tom had built for the Charlton mine. Just as landmarks and places constantly remind Andrew Gebhardt, Melva McInnes and Rollo Dare of their historical connections to the North-East Highland district, when driving past the chimney and through Stone Hut Tom Long’s descendants are continually reminded of Tom Long and their historical connections to the Wirrabara district. From other interviews and site visits, I have learned that stories about the origins of landmarks are best known by those who have some personal connection with the landmark. For example, when driving around the Wirrabara district with Harold Gigney (whose forebears likewise settled in the Wirrabara district in the

7 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
8 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
nineteenth century) and local resident Mabel Mahood, we passed the Charlton chimney. When I asked them about the chimney, neither mentioned Tom Long or his Cameron descendants. Instead, Mabel and Harold spoke of a round chimney built by the Cornish and a square one built by the Welsh.⁹

While Rollo Dare, Andrew Gebhardt and indeed most settler descendants I spoke with tended to orientate their narratives and knowledge of the colonial past around one person (namely the forebear who was first to arrive in the district and ‘take up’ land), for Colin and Heather, there was not one original forebear but several – Tom Long, Annie Cameron (née Long) and George Cameron were all referred to. Their cousin, Kath Milne, has connections with the wider Wirrabara district which extend back to the nineteenth century on both her paternal and maternal sides and through her husband’s paternal side, and Kath spoke of numerous forebears accordingly.

⁹ Site visit/tour with Mabel Mahood and Harold Gigney, district of Wirrabara, 21 March 2012.
Kath began our interview by speaking about White Park, the place she has lived for over sixty years since marrying Ian Milne. Referring to the early pastoral family, the Whites, after whom White Park is named, Kath said ‘One of the Mr Whites of that family used to come from England every so often, he and his wife, and always came and spent a day with us, up at White Park’. The Milnes bought White Park in 1910. Kath’s husband’s grandfather was James Milne, a farmer who came from Scotland with his elder brother and two sisters and first lived at Saddleworth. The Milnes came to Wirrabara in the 1870s ‘when the land was gazetted’. Kath’s paternal great-grandfather took up land around the Booleroo area (which neighbours Murray Town) when the land was first gazetted in the 1870s; ‘his name was George Fuller. He came from Truro in England, to Tasmania and from Tassie then to South Australia’. Kath wasn’t sure how old he had been when he married in South Australia, saying she needed to ‘look it up’ as she ‘might make a mistake’. George Fuller ‘had the hotel out from Kapunda’ and came out here when land

10 Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.
11 Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.
around Booleroo was gazetted in 1875. She told me her mother was Colin's father's young sister.

Typically, Kath’s, Heather’s and Colin’s knowledge of their forebears extends beyond their forebears’ arrival in the district in which they eventually settled. Colin told me that when George came to South Australia, he came with John, his sixteen-year-old brother. His father was dead and ‘shortly afterwards the mother and sisters came out too … One of the sisters came up here’.12 Andrew Gebhardt knew Gustav came from Hanover and that he worked in Burra as a butcher before purchasing Mackerode. Rollo and Geoff Dare referred to Billy’s Cockney heritage and his work shepherding and clearing trees in the Adelaide district. Members of my maternal family speak of their Scottish ancestry; some have visited the area in Scotland that the Murrays originated from. All know that prior to purchasing and moving to Cappeedee, the Murrays lived in Eden Valley.

My interviewees’ knowledge of their forebears’ previous lives (i.e. their lives before their arrival in the district in which they were to settle) provides a corrective to broad assumptions that settler descendants understand their history as beginning with their forebears’ arrival in Australia. What Lorenzo Veracini perceives as a recurring trope in settler colonial formations, namely a people without history arriving in a place without history, requires qualification.13 While current generations of settler descendants certainly have a strong sense of a founding moment or a ‘beginning’ (namely the arrival of their first forebears in the district), their sense of history does not begin at this moment. Rather, their sense of the past extends back to their forebears’ place of origin and includes their journey towards their final destination. Importantly, the history of occupation is understood through this one person (this forebear from whom the narrator is directly descended). Although place – the land their forebear occupied and with

12 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
13 Veracini refers to Tocqueville's Democracy in America to argue that a typical settler-colonial political formation is the ‘unique combination between a land that is unframed by social relations (a “wilderness” waiting to be cultivated) and a settler collective (which is assumed to be divested of any prior social determination) … a people without history in a place without history, a recurring trope in many settler colonial formations’. Lorenzo Veracini, Settler Colonialism (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 79.
which they are still connected – is integral to settler descendants’ understandings and awareness of the colonial past, their knowledge of the history of this place originates with and is orientated around people. In accord with the local written histories in which the history of the district begins with European arrival, in settler descendants’ oral narratives place is devoid of history prior to European occupation.

As David Trigger has noted, contemporary citizens of Australia (including settler descendants) demonstrate a wide range of continuing links to migrant homelands that they or their ancestors have left. This does not necessarily detract from their senses of belonging or emplacement in Australia. Catherine Nash argues that settler descendants who conduct genealogical searches in the land of their forebears are not necessarily demonstrating signs of insecurity or anxiety regarding their sense of belonging in the ‘new’ land but a desire for more critical, contextualised, interconnected and complex histories. An interest in family roots ‘is not incompatible with multi-national forms of identification’ and, from emotive appeals to ancestry, a ‘critical sense of social and historical location can emerge’. Trigger argues that, in order to understand ‘senses of place and identification with environs appropriately’, it is necessary to recognise ‘a wide range of continuing links to migrant homelands’. Senses of place can be emplaced and linked to locations outside Australia. My interviewees’ awareness of their forebears’ place of origin and reasons for leaving does not detract from their sense of belonging or original ownership.

‘The blacks’ camp’

When speaking of their forebears, Heather, Colin and Kath spoke in lively and confident tones, as though telling me relatively immediate and firsthand accounts. During separate interviews, all three told me that Aboriginal people regularly

15 Catherine Nash, ‘Setting Roots in Motion: Genealogy, Geography and Identity’, in Disputed Territories, eds D Trigger and G Griffiths (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 44–45.
16 Nash, ‘Setting roots in motion’, 45–46, 47.
17 Trigger, ‘Place, belonging and nativeness, 302.
18 Trigger, ‘Place, belonging and nativeness, 308.
campaigned on Doughboy Creek. During a conversation in which Heather was telling me about the life of her maternal grandmother at Pekina Creek and Hookina, I asked her if her grandmother had any stories about Aboriginal people.19 Heather replied:

No, not really, not Grandmother. She didn’t. But I remember that the tribe, the Nukunu I suppose they were, used to come to Bellevue quite regularly when Grandfather [George Cameron] was there. My mum was married and moved there in 1922 and she said that they … used to come and have BBQs [laugh] yeah BBQs! Corroborees and um Grandfather would kill a sheep for them.20

Heather was the only settler descendant I spoke with who used the word ‘Nukunu’. When compiling her written histories, Heather drew on Norman Tindale’s ethnographic work and referred to ‘the Nukunu tribe’.21 According to Heather, the group used to camp ‘down here on the corner on the flat … just in amongst the scrub really. The “Home Paddock” we always called that section because it wasn’t ploughed or anything, and that’s where the horses and cattle went. And down in the corner, they [Heather’s parents] said’.22

When I asked Kath if she had ever heard any stories of Aboriginal people in the district, Kath thought for a bit before saying that her mother:

used to talk of, yes, the Abo people. Colin might have told you. They camped just down from the house. Were you at Colin’s house? Down past the sheds, in the corner of where the road going out from Murray Town meets the one from Melrose. In that corner was the – she always called it “the blacks’ camp” and up on a bit of a rise was where they built their house … Bellevue.23

19 Pekina Creek is approximately 50 kilometres east of Wirrabara.
20 Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
21 Sizer, Yet Still They Live, 12, 36, 45; Sizer, Run North Wild Dog, 23.
22 Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
23 Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.
When I asked Kath how long Aboriginal people would camp there, she replied ‘Oh it seemed to me they would, I don’t know when they left, but all her childhood I would – had to be. And when she – oh I don’t know whether they were still there when she got married but she married in 1911’. Colin told me that Aboriginal people used to camp down ‘on the flat, near the cross-roads’. Colin confirmed that his grandfather – ‘the original settler’ – used to give the group a sheep when they came for corroborees. Colin said ‘I know that they used to come every year ... for a week or two’.24 Later, Colin and Val showed me the site. Their son, Alister, and Heather’s son, Kevin, also knew the site of the camp and that their great-grandfather gave Aboriginal people food while they camped there.25

Figure 21. ‘The blacks’ camp’, Doughboy Creek.

To the outside observer, there is nothing to distinguish this site from any other paddocks or clumps of trees in the district. However, for these descendants of George Cameron, this patch of ground is forever known as ‘the blacks’ camp’ which illustrates the importance of place as a container and prompter of memory. The site where Aboriginal people camped is not far from the Camerons’ house. Just as I

24 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
25 Alister Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 21 March 2012; Kevin Sizer, recorded conversation with Skye Krichauff, Tom Long’s dairy, Yellowman Creek, 21 March 2012.
think of Billy Dare’s wives whenever I go down or hear the name Dare’s Hill, in the same way, driving past this patch of ground or hearing the word ‘Aboriginal’ reminds George Cameron’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren of stories their parents told them about the people who used to camp on this site. The place, the people and the stories are inseparably intertwined in their memories and narratives. When telling stories connected with this site, George Cameron’s descendants displayed no doubt or hesitation; the stories were clearly and confidently delivered, they were part of the Cameron family’s heritage. Constancy of place – i.e. constancy of ownership within the Cameron family – and continuous access to place have kept knowledge of ‘the blacks’ camp’ and stories connected with the camp alive for George Cameron’s descendants.

Colin’s, Heather’s and Kath’s stories

On learning from Heather that I was particularly interested in Aboriginal–settlement history, Colin was eager to meet with me. Unlike Geoff and Rollo Dare, neither Kath, Heather nor Colin displayed any reluctance or dismissiveness when telling me stories of George Cameron’s interaction with Aboriginal people. Within minutes of beginning our formal interview, after Colin had told me where the Aboriginal people camped, Val began another story:

This always amuses me because they used to come up here to the house to get some food, I think the Camerons were always fairly generous. They gave this old fellow a plate of porridge. And he decided to take it home to Mary.26

Colin continued the story; ‘tipped it in his pocket [Val laughs loudly]. He was wearing an old suit coat someone had given him – ‘I take it home to Mary’”.27 Attempting to mimic the Aboriginal man, Colin spoke with an accent when he said “I take it home to Mary" and we all laughed. I asked Colin if his father had told him that story, to which he answered ‘yes’. Later, I asked Colin if he knew the name of the Aboriginal man. Colin replied ‘All I can remember is that he said he was going

26 Val Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
27 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
to take the porridge back to Mary. Mary, I think, being a sort of – I think any Aboriginal woman was Mary’.  

From the expression, tone and expectant pauses I sensed the story of the porridge in the pocket was told as a joke reasonably often by Colin and Val. As Cubitt observes, ‘most memory narratives that are told to oral historians … will incorporate elements that have a significant history of previous rehearsal’. I found that stories that had been passed down verbally were often accompanied by physical gesticulations and tonal inflections which remained constant through each telling. Colin's accent is an example of a detail – the ‘specific symbolic details’ of memory which can be precise and clear – which is strongly transmitted through each telling and through the generations.

Colin’s son, Alister, said that he understood that ‘when this house [Bellevue] was built there were still Aboriginals around’. Alister knew this:

because of the stories that I’ve been told. There was one who used to come occasionally to get a bit of a handout of food if he could – you’ve probably heard the story about the leather coat and the porridge, no doubt? That story always appealed to me when I was a child.

Alister laughed when he recalled this story and confirmed that his dad spoke with an accent when he told it. Alister’s cousin, Kevin Sizer, had also heard the story of the porridge in the pocket. Kevin told me:

They used to hold corroborees on Bellevue and one day one of the Elders came up wanting something to eat for his family, so – I don’t know – whether it was um Nanna Cameron or [indistinct] gave him porridge and he couldn’t carry it, so he put it in his coat pocket, then

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28 Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
31 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
he had a pocket full of porridge [laughs]… and gave him a boomerang in return, as far as I know.\textsuperscript{32}

What imagery is conjured up, what sentiments invoked and what information is contained in this family story? These family stories, these ‘primal pellets of information’, contain succinct but expansive amounts of information about attitudes, sentiments and perceptions of cross-cultural relations, power and authority. When analysing these stories, the current and the original storyteller’s connection with Doughboy Creek is of importance. Colin’s story of the porridge in the pocket came from his father. Colin’s wife, his son (the future heir) and his nephew had heard this story. Although it is not told with malice, through this story the heirs of Doughboy Creek ridicule the Aboriginal man’s (and consequently the group’s) logic and thus intelligence. Alister uses the word ‘hand-out’ and Val refers to the Camerons as ‘generous’. Such a story provides justification for the family’s occupation of Aboriginal land. Elizabeth Furniss argues:

The subtle images of the paternal benevolence of the colonizers and settlers, and those of the savage primitiveness or childishness of Aboriginal people, implicitly affirm the legitimacy of European expansion and settlement … these understandings … persist at the level of taken-for-granted convictions about the morality of the colonial process.\textsuperscript{33}

The story of the porridge in the pocket caused all who heard it to laugh. The story powerfully deflects attention away from ethical questions regarding the group’s continued return to a specific place on Doughboy Creek. When I asked Colin how many people came, if it was men, women and children, Colin wasn’t sure. He replied ‘it was long before my time’ and:

there wasn’t many of them. Apparently most of them had died out through diseases, they had no resistance to things like scarlet fever,

\textsuperscript{32} Kevin Sizer, 21 March 2012.
\textsuperscript{33} Elizabeth Furniss, \textit{Burden of History} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 69.
measles or small pox, pneumonia, TB. Yeah and I think there were only about half a dozen of them in the group. But my father could remember.³⁴

Colin then showed me a boomerang which hangs in his front porch. It is an extraordinary and (to my mind) beautiful object. Carved out of the timber in Europeanised form are animals – a boobook (mopoke), a yabby and a goanna – which were abundant (and which still exist) in the Wirrabara/Mt Remarkable area.

![Boomerang](image)

Figure 22. Boomerang given to George Cameron.

Typed onto a paper label which has been glued onto the back of the boomerang are the words:

**CEREMONIAL BOOMERANG**

Used by an old man of the Aboriginal tribe whose tribal territories were centred about Wongyara near Melrose, SA and given by him to the late George Wauchope Cameron as a token of friendship about 1870.

³⁴ Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
The person responsible for the label recognised and respected the fact that the ‘old man’ had tribal land and that he and George Cameron were friends.

![Figure 23. Underside of boomerang given to George Cameron.](image)

Alister and Heather were familiar with this boomerang. Heather said it used to hang in the billiard room at Bellevue. Kevin told me he had seen the boomerang ‘only once’ and that it was ‘the story [of the porridge in the pocket] that’s stuck’. Neither Kath Milne nor her son Robert knew of the boomerang. Alister Cameron told me what he knew of the ‘story around’ the boomerang, namely:

> that it was given to my predecessors because of the esteem they were held in by the Aboriginals because a lot of people didn’t treat them terribly well. That was sort of, um, a way of saying thank you – that was my understanding.

I was moved when I saw the boomerang. I thought the native animal figures which were depicted in a form which was readily recognisable to Europeans could be

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35 Heather Sizer, recorded conversation with Skye Krichauff, site visit to Tom Long’s dairy, 21 March 2012.
36 Kevin Sizer, 21 March 2012.
37 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
interpreted as symbolising the fusion of the two cultures and that the object, as a gift, could be viewed as symbolising reciprocity, accommodation and friendship. At the same time, I also think that the possession of the boomerang by the Cameron family symbolises the power of the coloniser. When told in conjunction with stories of George and Annie Cameron giving food to the group and allowing them to camp on Doughboy Creek, the implication – or perhaps the interpretation by members of the colonising group – is that it is the Camerons who were generous. While in no way wishing to detract from George Cameron’s decency – and it is a sobering fact that George Cameron appears to have been exceptional in allowing Nukunu to camp near his house and supplying the group with food – we need to additionally ask why these Nukunu needed food? Why was and is it considered ‘generous’ to allow Nukunu onto land which they had nurtured and maintained and which had sustained them for millennia? Isn’t it the Nukunu man who is generous? While Colin, the heir of Doughboy Creek, and his children continue to possess both the land and the boomerang, no Nukunu descendants live in the Wirrabara district, have seen the boomerang or have heard the stories.

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Heather had a story which hints at an additional reason for the disappearance of Aboriginal people from the area:

But Mum said that in 1923 was the last time they came. She said she didn’t know what happened, but she went out on the verandah and Grandfather was talking to one of them and stamped his stick on the verandah and said more or less “get lost”, and they didn’t come back again. So Mum didn’t know what happened.  

When Heather said her grandfather stamped his stick on the verandah, she startled me by stomping on the ground with her foot. When she said ‘get lost’ she raised her voice. These powerful dramatic effects appeared a crucial part of the story and I could imagine the impact they would have had on Heather as a child. Heather’s

38 Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
voice reflected her mother’s puzzlement as to why the tribe had been sent away. None of the other descendants of George Cameron whom I spoke with mentioned this story. When I asked Colin about it, he replied ‘don’t know that one’ and Val quietly wondered aloud ‘what had they been doing?’

Heather stated that her story came from her mother and Colin made it clear that he had heard the porridge story from his father. Kath told me that her mother:

always spoke well of them, I’m quite sure that she used to say they were never any problem to the Europeans and she used to speak of, well in the fruit season for instance, they had a fruit garden next to their house, and they used to be sent down with an apricot pie or something or other to give to them, and while they were there, one of them did die. Yes ... I don’t know what was the matter or why. He just – as you’ve read of, something goes wrong and they just stop eating, stop doing whatever, just [fall down] and wait til they die, and that is what happened to this one. I always remember her saying that.

I asked Kath if she ever heard ‘any stories from around the Fullers’ place?’ Kath replied ‘not really, except what she told me ... And of course, she knew them you see, as a child, she was a child. She seemed to think they were no problem’. I began to ask ‘What do you think happened to them, where do you think they’ when Kath interrupted me, saying in a thoughtful but surprised tone ‘Well, I don’t know where they went [pause]. But you see by that time Wirrabara station had been cut up and sold and there were people moving in and starting to make a living and so on and so forth’.39 I got the sense that Kath had not remembered these stories of her mother’s experiences for some time and that she had not previously thought about the fate of the people who were dispossessed by the Europeans.

Kath told me that she herself did not remember any Aboriginal people in the district. As such, Kath could not draw on personal experiences of interacting with

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39 Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.
Aboriginal people when making sense of her mother’s story. Interestingly, Kath used the word ‘problem’ twice when referring to her mother’s positive experiences with the Aboriginal group. Kath’s consciousness of the past, and in particular of settler–Aboriginal relations, is formed amongst and the social group to which she belongs. As Paul Connerton succinctly points out:

> Every recollection, however personal it may be, even that of events of which we alone were the witness, even that of thoughts and sentiments that remain unexpressed, exists in relationship with a whole ensemble of notions which many others possess: with persons, places, dates, words, forms of language, that is to say with the whole material and moral life of the societies of which we are a part or of which we have been part.\(^{40}\)

Although stressing that the group were not a problem, Kath’s narrative is framed by a prevailing cultural understanding of Aboriginal people as troublesome. The concept of a ‘cultural circuit’ is useful for analysing Kath’s narrative. Penny Summerfield’s findings states that ‘Personal narratives draw on the generalised subject available in discourse to construct the particular personal subject. They may contest as well as accept the public rendering, but must relate to it and negotiate it’.\(^{41}\) Having no alternative to draw on (such as understandings of accommodation and friendship), Kath relayed her mother’s positive experiences through cultural understandings of negative interactions which prevail in the society in which she is enmeshed.

Kath’s son, Robert, had heard Kath’s stories of the Camerons taking pies down to the group. Speaking with me about Kath’s vast historical knowledge, Robert said ‘well, she’s old enough to remember a camp of Aborigines just to the west of Murray Town. That’s where her mother came from, a place called Bellevue’:

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They’d [the Aborigines] go out there when she [Kath] was a little girl and she said she’d take down – probably with others, whether it was kids or adults – they’d take down a meat pie or an apple pie down to the camp.\(^{42}\)

Robert’s narrative indicates that he could not envisage Kath visiting the camp on her own. He also deleted or amalgamated a generation. Checking I had not misheard him, I asked ‘So your mum remembers that or your grandmother?’ He replied ‘Mum, she was a kid, so if she was ten it would have been in 1920 … as far as I remember, errh, any of the stories, there was no antagonism, they were [sic] coexisted because they got on better, both lots, the white settlers and the Aboriginals, they got on better by helping each other’.\(^{43}\)

During my interview with Robert, he told me that both he and his grandfather had had positive experiences working with Aboriginal people up north in 1965 and 1914 respectively. Robert had ‘thoroughly enjoyed’ his time up north. Robert also said that his father, Ian, had conducted historical research into the early (European) history of the district. Significantly, Kath’s house and Robert’s childhood home on White Park is sited next to the ruins of the original homestead of the earliest pastoralists in the district, the Whites. Although the Whites sold their leases and freehold land between 1859 and 1863 and returned to England to live, descendants returned and visited the Milnes throughout the twentieth century. Early in my interview with Robert, he told me how the Whites had come from Port Lincoln where they had ‘had strife … a bit of a flare-up with the Aborigines’. Moving to what became known as White Park, they ‘built a stone homestead and they put bars in the windows with loops for the rifles. So they perceived a threat but nothing ever happened’.\(^{44}\) Robert continued ‘but interesting enough they had some Aboriginals that they had become friendly with’:

John Horrocks – the explorer bloke – he came through here, or to White Park and, um, he was going north and west, he thought, and the

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\(^{43}\) Robert Milne, 20 March 2012.

\(^{44}\) Robert Milne, 20 March 2012.
Aboriginal bloke here said “well, there's a quick way”, down through Port Germein gorge … he went down that way and then he came back, and he, and the same Aboriginal man went with him, and they came back through Horrocks's Pass as it's known now.45

Robert's father had told Robert this story when Robert was young. Although Robert knew of the Whites' and Horrocks's cooperative relations with Aboriginal people, he had little information about his maternal forebears' interactions with Aboriginal people on Doughboy Creek.

Robert told me a story of Mrs Wilson, a woman he had worked for up north who grew up on Wirrealpa station on the east side of the Flinders Ranges in the 1920s. Robert said:

She grew up as young girl with no other white little girls on Wirrealpa, and her, all her friends were Aboriginals, and so that's the way she grew up, and subsequently later in life she realised that she wasn't sort of – [Skye: an Aboriginal?] That's right.

And Johnny McKenzie [an Adnynamathanha man] was a childhood mate that, together they were quite close, like brother and sister, but if anyone else was there, she’d realise she had to be a little more distant. And Johnny knew that … she was the station owner's wife and so she lived up on the hill … If she came down to the shearing shed … she’d be down there, she’d be talking to him and they’d be leaning on the rail having a laugh, but if I went down she’d move off. They were childhood mates but had to be, as adults, yeah, she's the boss so they had to be – yeah, it was interesting.46

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I showed Robert a newspaper article in which George Cameron’s daughter, Jessie, provides the meaning of the Aboriginal names in the district.\textsuperscript{47} I told Robert that when I had suggested to Colin that Jessie Cameron knew the Aboriginal names from her interaction with the group when they had camped on Doughboy Creek, Colin didn’t seem to think they would have been able to communicate that well.\textsuperscript{48} Like Rollo, Joan and Geoff, it seemed Colin could not readily imagine George Cameron and his descendants conversing with the Aboriginal group.\textsuperscript{49} 

I asked Robert if he had ever heard about or seen the boomerang. Robert said he hadn’t. I described the boomerang and the label on the back saying that the boomerang was given in friendship by an Aboriginal leader in the 1870s. Robert replied:

\begin{quote}
That’s sort of what I would have expected. Um, a lot of those George Cameron era type people, they had to get on with the natives, one way or another. Otherwise, murder. Simple. There were too many of them. If you were not sort of doing the right thing within reason, and the leader of perhaps the Aborigines up there, he decided these people that have come here can help us, and between us we can all be better. And so in friendship, as a peace-pipe, yeah.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

After working out that there were at least fifty years of regular visits to Doughboy Creek, Robert concluded ‘so obviously there was peaceful co-existence’. When making sense of his Cameron forebears’ interaction with Aboriginal people, Robert drew on his own experiences and the experiences of his grandfather and historical research conducted by his father. Like Rollo and Geoff Dare, Robert understood that cross-cultural interaction would have been for utilitarian reasons, although Robert could imagine this as being a mutual, two-way process.

\textsuperscript{47} Register, 27 May 1908, 7. 
\textsuperscript{48} Robert Milne, 20 March 2012. 
\textsuperscript{49} Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Belair, 7 March 2012. 
\textsuperscript{50} Robert Milne, 20 March 2012.
Drawing on one’s own experiences

Individuals draw on their own experiences to make sense of the past. As Geoffrey Cubitt phrases it, ‘a sense of the past means little if people have no way of finding it relevantly connected to their own lived experience’. Or, as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka observes, ‘individual memories of directly lived experience matter a great deal’ to how subjective versions of history come to be. Just as Andrew Gebhardt drew on his experiences of living and working on Mackerode to make sense of the lives of his predecessors, so did Robert draw on his own experiences and understandings to make sense of his recently acquired knowledge of his great-grandfather’s interaction with Aboriginal people.

During interviews, while Robert seemed to readily imagine cross-cultural cooperation, this appeared to be something Kath had not previously contemplated. When I told Kath about the boomerang and the story connected with the boomerang, she was surprised, saying ‘oh’ and ‘oh for goodness sake!’ She immediately followed this by saying how her mother ‘always spoke well of them’ and ‘she used to say they were never any problem’. Kath did not have her own experiences of interacting with Aboriginal people to draw on when making sense of her mother’s story. She drew on her membership of the social group to which she belongs. Of George Cameron’s descendants, it seems only Robert had direct experiences of working with and befriending Aboriginal people to draw on when making sense of George Cameron’s relationship with the people who had camped near Bellevue. Other family members either puzzled over stories of cross-cultural friendship or tried to make sense of them through stereotypical understandings and/or through the dominant cultural ideology in which Aboriginal people are childish or troublesome.

Iwona Irwin-Zarecka observes that families are very active in preserving memories of times and people long past, and family members often act on

51 Cubitt, Memory and History, 122.
53 Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.
principles embedded in shared stories rather than constantly retelling them. What principles are embedded in these family stories? What imagery is conjured up, what sentiments are portrayed and what information is contained? Despite the dominant frame of reference, a sense of affection and peaceful coexistence was transferred through Kath’s mother to Kath. Kath’s mother’s empathy comes through in Kath’s account; ‘she always spoke well of them’ and ‘she knew them you see, as a child, she was a child’. This sense of unproblematic coexistence is also apparent in Kath’s son Robert’s narratives. Robert draws on his own experiences and the stories he has from his father and grandfather. Kath’s puzzlement at their culture, a culture in which a man decides he is going to die and lies down and does so, also comes through in her story, the message being that Aboriginal people are different to ‘us’; they have different cultures and customs, and consequently different ways of being on land (they don’t ‘own’ it like ‘we’ do). Robert too understands Aboriginal people as ‘different’, as belonging to a different social order. He accepts rather than challenges the hierarchical separation of Aboriginal people and station owners in most social situations. Despite having ‘thoroughly enjoyed’ the time he spent with Aboriginal people, Robert did not comment on or question the reasons Aboriginal people had to work for food, or why Mrs Wilson’s and Johnny McKenzie’s friendship had to be hidden from wider society.

**Conclusion**

Despite belonging to the same family and having similar (if not identical) upbringings, their stories relating to George Cameron’s interaction with Aboriginal people differed between Kath, Heather and Colin. The site of the ‘blacks’ camp’ and the regularity of visits were constant. All mention giving food, although what was given varied for each narrator (sheep for Heather, porridge for Colin and apricot pies for Kath). This referral to George Cameron giving food could be interpreted as illustrating perceptions of settler benevolence, but the gift of food was not the point for any of George Cameron’s grandchildren. Rather, food was mentioned to explain why the Camerons were in contact with this group, to explain why Aboriginal people came to Doughboy Creek. This is telling, as regular visits for other reasons are seemingly less easy to imagine. Kath and Heather did not tell me

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54 Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*, 56.
their mothers’ stories of the man’s death or the man’s exile from Doughboy Creek flippantly or humorously; in both of their narratives, the gravity of the situation was conveyed. Neither Colin, Heather, Kath nor Alister spoke of any meaningful interactions they had had with Aboriginal people over the course of their lives. Their interpretation of the stories they heard was primarily through the dominant cultural frame in which Aboriginal people are depicted as childish or trouble. Of the six descendants of George Cameron that I spoke with, Robert Milne seemed best able to imagine cross-cultural interaction and peaceful coexistence.

An examination of the stories George Cameron’s descendants told of their forebear’s interaction with Aboriginal people illustrates the contingency and particularity of knowledge of the past which is verbally transmitted. Six general observations can be made from a close analysis of these stories of ‘the blacks’ camp’. First is the importance of place as a prompter and retainer of memories and stories. Each descendant knew the exact site of the camp. The proximity of the site to the house is also significant, as social occasions for extended family members and friends would have been held in or near the house and thus within view of the site of the camp. The second observation is closely connected to the first, namely the significance of continuity of people in place. Third is the contingency of which stories and what information about the past were passed down through the generations. Each of George Cameron’s grandchildren had a different story to tell. Each had heard their story from a parent and each parent had conveyed a story about events they had personally experienced. Cubitt makes the important point that ‘individual memory is crucially involved in generating the information that passes through the generations’; nothing will be transmitted ‘unless someone or other has at some time remembered it on the basis of personal experience and communicated this memory to others’.55 The stories that get passed on are of events that have actually happened (although the details may get distorted and exaggerated) and their remembrance is contingent on the people who were present at the event telling someone else. The relationship between people (in this case, between family members) is relevant. Fourth, while all the Cameron descendants I spoke with knew of the camping site, it was stories of unusual, one-

55 Cubitt, History and Memory, 121.
off incidents which were conveyed, not stories of everyday coexistence. Stories passed down the generations are of memorable incidents which made an impact on those who were present at the time. Kath’s story was not centred around her mother’s visits to the camp or the giving of the pies, but the death of the Aboriginal man. It seems Kath’s mother never forgot this dramatic event. Heather Sizer’s mother’s fright at her father-in-law’s anger continues to come through in Heather’s telling of the story of George Cameron stamping his stick and shouting at the Aboriginal man, as does Colin’s father’s surprise at porridge being tipped into a coat pocket. It is the unusual that we are more likely to remember – not the ordinary, the petty, the banal – but the exceptional, the great, unbelievable, ridiculous.\textsuperscript{56} Fifth, each narrator draws on their own experiences to make sense (or not) of their forebears’ relations with Aboriginal people. Sixth, with each generation, details get lost and/or distorted. Robert said nothing about the man dying, Kevin did not know about the group being sent away. George’s Cameron’s grandchildren’s stories of ‘the blacks’ camp’ were more precise and detailed than his great-grandchildren’s stories. Finally is the lack of communication between George Cameron’s grandchildren with regard to their stories of ‘the blacks’ camp’.

As the principal author of Wirrabara’s and Murray Town’s centenary histories, Heather must have spoken with her cousin and brother about her research and writing. She drew on Kath’s connections with the White family in England to correspond with them herself and referred to Kath as a wonderful source of knowledge of the history of the district. When I spoke with Heather, Kath and Colin, each told me of their relationship to the others. Heather recommended that I speak with Colin and Kath. Excepting stories relating to ‘the blacks’ camp’, all told me very similar stories about George and Annie Cameron and Tom Long. All vividly and readily recalled the various stories they had heard about the Aboriginal group when speaking with me. However, like my mother and her brothers regarding the artefacts in the cellar, siblings Colin and Heather and cousin Kath do not appear to have discussed these stories among themselves. Neither Heather, Kath nor Robert had heard the story of the porridge in the pocket. Neither Kath nor Robert had seen

or heard of the boomerang or their grandfather’s long friendship with the Aboriginal group. Colin had never heard the story of his father telling the Aboriginal man to leave. Despite the continuous and powerful physical reminder of the site of ‘the blacks’ camp”, despite the tangible and enduring presence of the boomerang, George Cameron’s grandchildren do not appear to have shared or discussed their stories of their grandfather’s regular interaction and friendship with the Nukunu group with each other, even during the lead-up to the centenary years when interest in the past was high and ever-present.

Colin has now heard the story of the Aboriginal group’s exile. And maybe this spurred his memory and led him to expand on the story of the porridge. When Colin actually showed me the site ‘where the Abos camped’, he recalled they must have come ‘in the winter time ... I’m sure it was because I can remember my father saying that they really appreciated the porridge to eat because it was so cold ... Every day they used to come for it’. I suggested they may have wanted to be reasonably close to the house for that reason. In a tone that was no longer jovial, but which was thoughtful and considered, Colin replied ‘I think this was just a traditional spot’.

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57 When I described the boomerang to Kath, it was clear she had neither heard of nor seen the boomerang and her tone, verbal expressions (‘oh’ and ‘oh, for goodness sake’) and facial expressions conveyed her great astonishment. Kath Milne, 10 July 2010.

58 Colin Cameron and Val Cameron, 7 July 2010.
Chapter 6: ‘I read about it and then I forget’

Heather Sizer has grown up on land first occupied by her forebears in the nineteenth century. Heather is one of my interviewees. She is also the author of Yet Still They Live: Wirrabara’s story (hereafter YSTL) and the editor of Run North Wild Dog: A history of the Murray Town District (hereafter RNWD) to which she contributed the first three chapters which provide a history of early European settlement in the Murray Town district.¹ In this chapter, I focus my examination on Heather’s written histories and my interviews and site visits with Heather, to demonstrate the different ways through which Heather knows, makes sense of and relates to the past. The relationship between knowledge of the past learned through texts and knowledge of the past absorbed through lived experience is interactive and dynamic – stories about the past which Heather absorbed through dwelling in place may be incorporated into Heather’s written texts while information learned through historical research may become part of Heather’s memory and taken-for-granted knowledge. I focus my examination on how stories of Aboriginal people are incorporated into Heather’s written histories.

The dynamic process through which personal experience is picked up and becomes part of the wider culture and through which the wider culture shapes and orientates personal experience can be conceptualised as a ‘cultural circuit’. In previous chapters I have examined how mid-northern settler descendants interpret and articulate their own experiences and family stories through the dominant settler colonial historical epistemology. In the first section of this chapter, I examine how Heather incorporates local residents’ oral stories and written reminiscences regarding Aboriginal people into her written histories in a way which conforms with the dominant cultural ideology and epistemology. In the

¹ Heather Sizer, Yet Still They Live: Wirrabara’s Story (hereafter YSTL) (Wirrabara, SA: Wirrabara District Council Centenary Committee, 1974); Heather Sizer (ed.), Run North Wild Dog: A History of the Murray Town District (hereafter RNWD) (Murray Town, SA: Murray Town Centenary Committee, 1985). The first three chapters of RNWD contain sections which were largely extracted from Yet Still They Live with minor (but informative) additions and variations. Heather co-authored Chapter Four ‘Getting Down To Business: Town Development from 1885’ with Pat Fimmel and authored the final chapter, Chapter 10 ‘Looking Ahead’.
second section of this chapter, I draw on interviews conducted with members of Heather’s extended family to examine how, when and why mid-northern settler descendants refer to local written histories. After examining how Heather’s histories were received at the local level and when they were referred to during interviews, I discuss the respective influence and authority of written histories and oral narratives on mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. In the third and final section of this chapter, I show how the findings of this micro-level investigation can provide insights into how and why wider histories are incorporated into settler descendants’ historical consciousness.

**Oral to text**

As a settler descendant who has spent her life in the district, Heather had ready access to personal and private oral histories, historical records and sites when compiling her written histories. These are part of her everyday, taken-for-granted world. Heather spoke with numerous people and those who assisted her with her research were fellow residents with comparable ties to the district. Written reminiscences and oral histories gathered from settler descendants are interwoven with archival and other historical records throughout her written narratives.\(^2\) While researching *YSTL* and *RNWD*, Heather and the centenary committees she was a part of had access to Josiah Hollitt’s records. Hollitt was a Wirrabara resident who, between 1936 and the early 1940s, ‘went from farm to farm and talked to the people and got their family histories, wrote it all down long hand’.\(^3\) Hollitt’s manuscript, *History of some of the Early Settlers and Pioneers of South Australia* (hereafter *HESP*), was eventually published in pamphlet form in 1985.\(^4\) Many extracts from Hollitt’s ‘reviews’ (mostly those people whose descendants continue to live in the district) are incorporated into *YSTL*. *HESP* and *YSTL* are the only existing published histories which focus on the Wirrabara

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\(^2\) For example, explaining where she had learned about the White brothers, who left the district in the 1860s and returned to England, Heather told me she corresponded with a White descendant in England who ‘told me all he knew – it’s all woven in with this [Yet Still They Live]’. Heather Sizer, interview with Skye Krichauff, Wirrabara, 5 July 2010.

\(^3\) Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010. Heather told me that just after Josiah Hollitt died, a traveller (Peter Bladen) arrived in the district and spent two weeks typing up the records.

\(^4\) Josiah Hollitt, *History of some of the Early Settlers and Pioneers of South Australia* (Crystal Brook: Crystal Press, 1985).
district and *RNWD* is the only existing published history which focuses on the Murray Town district.

*YSTL* and *RNWD* are representative of the hundreds of local histories that were published in South Australia in the 1970s and 1980s to commemorate the centenaries of various towns, districts and hundreds. As Elizabeth Furniss makes clear, one means through which colonial power is expressed is through the cultural ideologies, practices and texts of settler populations. Ideas of history, identity, society and indigenous ‘difference’ that permeate such practices and texts are central to the very process of establishing and perpetuating colonial relationships.⁵ An analysis of how the occupation of land is represented and if, how and where Aboriginal people are included in *YSTL* and *RNWD* is a useful means through which to further our examination of mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. In closely examining Heather’s written histories, I am not criticising her as an author; I recognise and am personally grateful for the huge amount of work done by Heather and indeed all historians who researched and compiled written histories of numerous rural districts across South Australia – this work is invaluable to successive researchers. Rather, I am drawing on Heather’s histories as a concrete means of demonstrating how Heather inadvertently followed or conformed with certain culturally configured rules for understanding and reconstructing knowledge about the past; I am focusing on Heather’s written histories to further illuminate the cultural frame through which my interviewees refer to and orientate their narratives of their own and their forebears’ experiences.

The structure, content and narrative of *YSTL* and *RNWD* are typical of mid-northern centenary histories.⁶ All of the mid-northern written histories I surveyed were published in the twentieth century. These texts illustrate in a concrete way the rules and taken-for-granted understandings regarding how the past is known and understood through the dominant settler-colonial historical epistemology. They illustrate a timeline approach where the narrative begins with the

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⁶ See Appendix 3 for a list of these histories.
'discovery', arrival and settlement of the district by Europeans and the past is ordered chronologically by what are perceived to be various stages and signs of 'development'. YSTL and RNWD are filled with 'firsts', two of which the Cameron family personally claim: Annie Long, her mother and her sister were 'the first white women to disembark at Port Pirie' and George Cameron grew 'the first successful [wheat] crop'. These family 'firsts' were mentioned by both Colin and Heather during their conversations with me.

Aboriginal people appear ten times in YSTL and three times in RNWD. They do not appear as precursors or epilogues to the main story, as is common for many mid-northern histories, but in brief stories which are scattered throughout the texts. Aboriginal people appear first as a difficulty that early colonists had to contend with. Words which appear in conjunction with Aboriginal people in these pages are ‘hostile’, ‘troublesome’, ‘lawbreakers’, ‘massacre’, ‘attack’. Cross-cultural conflict occurs because the ‘natives … found sheep much easier to catch than the native game’. This is typical in mid-northern written histories, where violence is depicted as a ‘clash of cultures’ – the ‘clash’ primarily being interpreted as arising from different cultural understandings of resources, property and women. Depicting disputes as arising over stock or women, although not invalid, provides a selective, superficial and relatively non-confrontational explanation for cross-cultural violence. The notion that Aboriginal people were hostile and aggressive because their land was being unlawfully occupied is rarely explicated. By failing to recognise that Europeans were breaking innumerable laws such as trespassing, desecrating sites and killing totems, the diverse effects of colonisation on local

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7 YSTL, 28 and RNWD, 22.
8 In YSTL, 9 and RNWD, 11–12, the White brothers’ tribulations in the Port Lincoln district and the murder of their cousin Rolles Biddle are referred to; presumably because Heather was corresponding with White descendants in England, she decided it was relevant to the Wirrabara story.
9 YSTL, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21–22; RNWD, 11–12.
10 RNWD, 22–23; YSTL, 21.
Aboriginal people are not promulgated. Clashes are portrayed as regrettable but ultimately inevitable and the legitimacy of occupying another people’s land remains unquestioned.

In both *RNWD* and *YSTL*, the largest chunk of writing devoted to Aboriginal people is a short ethnographic description which flows from an explanation of how Wirrabara got its name.\(^\text{12}\) This ethnographic description is one page long (ten paragraphs) in *YSTL* and one quarter of a page (three paragraphs) in *RNWD*. Heather states that the name of the ‘small tribe … which inhabited a territory 30 miles by 30 miles when the Whites first got here’ was ‘Dura’ who ‘seem to have been a clan of the larger Nukunu’.\(^\text{13}\) This is followed by a description of the language, customs and ‘very primitive’ tools of the ‘small tribe’ who ‘seem’ to have ‘wandered the ranges’ and camped near Bangor.\(^\text{14}\) With regard to ‘the blacks’ camp’ on Doughboy Creek and other campsites in the district, Heather states:

> Other campsites in use till [sic] the turn of the century were at Glenorchy, at “Bellevue”, north-west of Murray Town, and several spots in the Wirrabara forest area. These camps were used for a few weeks at a time, then left vacant for sun, wind and rain to refresh them for future use by members of the neighbouring tribes as well as the Dura or Nukunu.\(^\text{15}\)

Virtually the same account is repeated in *RNWD* with the addition ‘until the early 1920s the tribe camped regularly on the corner of section 184 near GW Cameron’s “Bellevue” homestead’.\(^\text{16}\) This projection onto Aboriginal people of an enhanced degree of mobility and unsettlement is common in mid-northern histories.\(^\text{17}\) It is

\(^{12}\) At the beginning of chapter 2, *YSTL*, 35‒36, and towards the end of chapter 1, *RNWD*, 22‒23.

\(^{13}\) *YSTL*, 35‒36; *RNWD*, 22‒23.

\(^{14}\) *YSTL*, 36.

\(^{15}\) *YSTL*, 36.

\(^{16}\) *RNWD*, 23.

an integral component of the myth of *terra nullius* and a typical political tradition of settlers.\(^{18}\)

Understanding the original inhabitants as nomadic and their culture as primitive and orientated around a continual quest for food justifies, or makes more palatable, the colonists’ occupation of land. Implying that Aboriginal people rarely spent time in local areas enables the absence of Aboriginal people to be understood not as a consequence of European presence. So too does understanding the dramatic decrease in Aboriginal populations as unpreventable and outside the colonists’ control. In both *YSTL* and *RNWD*, Heather’s ethnographic section concludes ‘when the White brothers first settled here they found several of the Dura clan scarred by “mingi” (smallpox) and by 1880 there seem to have only been three men and five women remaining. Most of the deaths were attributed to tuberculosis’.\(^{19}\) In *RNWD* the comment ‘they did not benefit from contact with Europeans’ is added to this paragraph.\(^{20}\) As with other local histories, *YSTL* and *RNWD* lack footnotes and reference details. The bibliographies indicate that information for the ethnographic sections came from Norman Tindale and from JC Valentine.\(^{21}\) Valentine was an informant of EM Curr, who edited *The Australian Race*, published in 1886. Curr states that Valentine got his information secondhand.\(^{22}\) Information provided by these non-resident ethnographers is presented as authoritative and factual.

By examining how local residents’ stories are incorporated into the written histories we can explore and deepen our awareness of the subtle and not so subtle ways through which a settler-colonial cultural ideology frames and infiltrates settler descendants’ narratives of their own and their forebears’ lived experiences and thus of how a settler-colonial historical consciousness is practised, maintained and perpetuated. Information provided in the ethnographic section contradicts

\(^{19}\) *YSTL*, 36. A very similar version appears in *RNWD*, 23.
\(^{20}\) *RNWD*, 23.
\(^{21}\) *YSTL*, 180; *RNWD*, 146.
information provided by local residents which appears later in the text. In the late 1930s Hollitt interviewed ‘timber getter’ Edward Dansie who was one of the earliest Europeans to live in the Wirrabara forest. Hollitt recorded Edward Dansie as saying:

The natives were plentiful in those days ... there would be anything up to one hundred camped there for weeks at a time. They would spend their time hunting in the Flinders Range ... The blacks derived their names according to where they came from, such as “Baroota Jack” ... the women had only one name such as Fanny, Maria and so on.  

In YSTL, Heather drew on Hollitt’s manuscript and stories told by Edward Dansie’s son, Bill Dansie, to state ‘reports indicate that there were large numbers of natives camped throughout the Forest area’ and that ‘camps of one or two hundred were a common sight’.  

Both Edward and Bill Dansie remembered large numbers of Aboriginal people who were friendly and resided in the district for lengthy periods of time. These stories contrast with information provided earlier in YSTL which implied Aboriginal people were troublesome, aggressive and inevitably dying out. Heather notes that Bill Dansie’s account contradicts information provided by the informant of JC Valentine, who stated that ‘the Dura clan had dwindled away to a mere handful’. In reconciling the two accounts, Heather states:

It seems that though the smaller Dura clan died out, the Nukunu were not so affected by the white man’s presence. They carried on their tribal life, moving between the ranges and the sea. The children of the natives and early settlers played happily together and remained friends as they grew up. 

23 Hollitt, HESP, 77.
24 YSTL, 45.
25 YSTL, 45.
Heather inadvertently employed a variety of techniques which subtly subordinate the local, potentially unsettling and controversial information with information provided by the absentee ethnographer whose historical written account fits more smoothly and readily within a settler-colonial historical consciousness. Heather states that the Aboriginal people of the Wirrabara district – and thus those most entitled to the land – were the Dura clan who, by 1880, had virtually died out. However, the larger group – the Nukunu – whose home territory is by implication not the Wirrabara district, continue a wandering, nomadic lifestyle by moving between the ranges and the sea. Neither freehold title nor pastoral lease are available for the coast or much of the forest and these places are accessible to all. In the neutral area of the forest, settler and Aboriginal children ‘played happily together and remained friends’. In this place and among children, conflict didn’t exist. We do not hear what happened to the Aboriginal children when they grew up.

Heather draws on Hollitt’s personal written reminiscences in YSTL. Hollitt arrived in the district in 1874 as a child when the land ‘from Stone Hut northwards was still occupied by the squatters’. Hollitt states that when he, his father and his brother arrived to settle section 330 and 331 in the Hundred of Appila:

Blacks were then living on section 330. – Quite a lot of them – all ages and sizes from piccaninnies to the aged men and women. Their wurleys were well made and covered with boughs, bark and porcupine. They were snug and warm. Most of the wurleys were open to the south east for them to go in and out. The blacks did not remain long in this locality after the farmers settled here. With their piccaninnies on their backs, dogs, boomerangs, spears and belongings soon left homes behind and travelled northwards to make new homes.

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26 As a Wirrabara resident, Hollitt’s account was not relevant for the Murray Town history RNWD.
27 Hollitt, HESP, 7.
28 Hollitt, HESP, 7.
Hollitt recalls that emus, kangaroos, and numerous other birds were ‘in large numbers’ but ‘they, like the blacks, soon made themselves scarce’.\textsuperscript{29} Hollitt’s account of the snug, warm, well-made wurleys (bark huts) suggests these structures were relatively enduring and that they were occupied for reasonably lengthy periods, which contradicts what the reader has learned previously, namely that the tribe ‘wandered the ranges’ and used their camps for ‘a few weeks at a time’, abandoning them for ‘the sun, wind and rain to refresh them’.\textsuperscript{30} Hollitt’s statement that when he arrived in the district ‘blacks were then living on Sections 330 – Quite a lot of them – all ages and sizes’ (emphasis added) becomes ‘when the Hollitts arrived at Wirrabara there was an aborigine camp on Section 330’ (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{31} Hollitt’s description of wurleys does not appear in the authoritative ethnographic section, but appears nineteen pages later under a sub-heading ‘Agricultural and Town Settlement’ in a one-and-a-half page section devoted to the Hollitt family. As important as the positioning of Hollitt’s recollections in the overall narrative is the subtle but significant amendments made to Hollitt’s recollections. Substituting the word ‘camp’ for ‘living’, deleting of ‘quite a lot of them – all ages and sizes’ and positioning Hollitt’s observations separately from the authoritative and conclusive ethnographic section minimalises the significance of the well-constructed Aboriginal huts. Hollitt’s first-hand observations are subtly altered to accord with a cultural frame which does not recognise Aboriginal people as owners of the land.

In Edward Dansie’s written reminiscences and the oral stories told by Bill Dansie and George Cameron’s descendants, Aboriginal people are not only included, but they are present, coexisting and interacting with settlers well beyond the pastoral years. These stories challenge taken-for-granted understandings; they contain the potential to disrupt the myth of terra nullius, simplistic narratives of Aboriginal nomadism and understandings of Aboriginal people as treacherous, docile and/or childish. While Heather’s and Colin’s spoken stories of Tom Long and George Cameron’s arrival, occupation and places of residence were very similar to the

\textsuperscript{29} Hollitt, \textit{HESP}, 7.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{YSTL}, 36.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{YSTL}, 55.
stories included in *YSTL* and *RNWD*, this is not the case for Heather's and Colin's stories of 'the blacks' camp'. While in the written histories the reader learns Tom Long was the builder of the Stone Hut and the Charlton chimney, of Long's daughters' skill in horse riding, the dairy at Yellowman Creek, George Cameron’s acquisition of Doughboy Creek and his first wheat crop, Heather makes minimal mention of Aboriginal people camping on Doughboy Creek. No mention is made of George and Annie Cameron giving these people food, or George Cameron being gifted a boomerang as a token of friendship or of the two groups’ regular co-existence on Doughboy Creek for over half a century. This is not because Heather doubts the veracity of these stories. Is it instead because they were not considered important, relevant or interesting enough to include? Heather's written histories demonstrate how stories of Aboriginal–settler interaction are modified and shaped by the dominant settler-colonial historical epistemology.

It is interesting to compare the disjuncture between Heather's oral stories and her written histories with regard to 'the blacks' camp' with the disjuncture between Marlene Richards' written information about Billy Dare and Rollo's and Geoff's general lack of interest and lack of verbal stories regarding Billy's interaction with Aboriginal people. The oral stories of George Cameron's descendants and the written stories of Billy Dare contain the potential to disrupt or provide an alternative understanding of historical cross-cultural relations. In the Camerons' case, oral stories do not make it into written histories; in Billy Dare's case, written information does not affect oral narratives or social memory. In both cases, stories of Aboriginal–settler friendship during the nineteenth century is not (and does not become) part of the wider collective memory. In both cases, the potential to disrupt or unsettle settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past is not reached.

**The relationship between oral stories and written histories**

The past known, related to and related through ‘history’ – and here I am examining written histories – differs from the past known, related to and related through ‘memory’ (as articulated in oral narratives during interviews and site visits). Bain Attwood succinctly spells out the various ways in which the writing and
conceptualisation of history rest on a constructed polarity between past and present which has the effect of putting things at a distance. Attwood notes that this is done by: exaggerating the difference between a particular past and our current world; conceiving of time as lineal and progressive (particularly ‘the modern’ world as distinct from the ‘unmodern’); assuming that history is objective and emphasising the idea of historical detachment; examining events in terms of causes rather than legacies; and subordinating experience (affect, emotion etc.) by prioritising instead the abstract, conceptual and analytic.\(^\text{32}\)

Comparing Heather’s oral stories with her written histories illustrates two different ways through which Heather knows, relates to and articulates stories of the past. As Greg Dening tells us, people make sense of the past in all sorts of ways:

> We find different ways to make sense of what has happened according to the different occasions of our telling and the different audiences to which we tell it ... The ways we make sense of the past are almost innumerable, but we are culturally astute in knowing how these different ways are to be interpreted, how what is true for one occasion is not true for another.\(^\text{33}\)

Oral narratives differ in fundamental ways from written narratives. Rather than being neatly ordered and arranged, critical and argument-based, oral history is ‘made up of vivid dialogue; quite often it is figurative, expressive and it primarily reveals appraisals and feelings, not a neutral configuration of events’.\(^\text{34}\) When I spoke with Heather in her kitchen or while driving around the district, she told stories of her forebears’ connections with the group who resided at ‘the blacks’ camp’ in an animated, lively way. These stories were not told in chronological order. Through her spoken narrative, Heather demonstrated the interlacing of


different temporalities and her emotional and subjective attachment to her forebears’ experiences – each of which is characteristic of the past known through memory. When writing about Nukunu camping on Doughboy Creek, Heather provided ‘factual’ information about the geographical siting of the camp and dated the time Aboriginal people ceased to come. The minimal information provided was presented in a way which distanced the Cameron family from the Nukunu people’s presence.

I am examining settler descendants’ historical consciousness in order to better understand what I refer to as a disconnect between mid-northern settler descendants’ understanding of their own, their family’s and their community’s histories and the histories of Aboriginal people. The differences Nora, LaCapra, Cubitt and numerous others have noted between the past known through memory (which is subjective, emotional and juxtaposes temporalities) and the past known through history (which is objective, detached and distances previous times from the present) can further understandings into numerous Australians’ sense of disconnect regarding the suffering of Aboriginal victims of colonialism. What is of interest to me is whether mid-northern settler descendants’ knowledge of and relationship to the colonial past vary according to how that past has come to be known. Do some ways of knowing the past impact more powerfully on settler descendants’ historical consciousness than other ways?

**The influence and/or authority of written histories versus oral histories**

Scholars who are interested in Australian settler-colonial memory have raised the question of whether local and wider written histories (and other forms of public history) are more influential or authoritative than orally transmitted, private narratives. Their conclusions provide a useful point of departure from which to analyse the respective authority and influence of mid-northern written histories and oral narratives. Elizabeth Furniss explains that her focus on ‘public sites of history’ in the mining town of Mt Isa was because they ‘take on an official quality and have a potential influence that is lacking from the more private, less widely
circulated forms of history such as settlers’ life stories’.\textsuperscript{35} Regarding the social memory of residents of rural South Australian towns, Susan Gilbert found that ‘narrative [written] histories of locality have a profound effect in shaping ideas about local identity’ and that ‘whatever their limitations, they become authoritative, often because they are the main source of information easily accessible to outsiders’.\textsuperscript{36} Discussing ‘the small but growing collection’ of local histories in Central Australia which are ‘often celebratory of pioneer settlement’, NJ Gill, A Paterson and M Kennedy found:

These local histories constitute a significant means by which the past and its attendant social and political arrangements and relations are revalidated. To a contemporary audience they reaffirm the actions and values of non-indigenous people in the [district's] past.\textsuperscript{37}

Usually the only history of the district, the centenary histories written between thirty and fifty years ago continue to be valued by mid-northern settler descendants today. During preliminary telephone conversations and interviews, people I spoke with commonly referred to (and recommended I read) the local history book and often the book had been pulled out of the bookcase in anticipation of our forthcoming interview. In recommending and referring to the local written histories, mid-northern settler descendants demonstrated their respect for the work of the local historians and the regard in which these histories are held.

In contrast to my findings, Tom Griffiths observes that, in small communities, ‘oral sources are often regarded as the pre-eminent means of access to the local past’

\textsuperscript{36} Susan Gilbert, ‘History, Memory, Community: The Role and Uses of History in Four Rural Communities in South Australia’ (PhD thesis, Flinders University, 2002), 89.
\textsuperscript{37} NJ Gill, A Paterson and M Kennedy, ““Murphy, do you want to delete this?”: Hidden Histories and Hidden Landscapes in the Murchison and Davenport Ranges, Northern Territory, Australia’, \textit{Faculty of Science Papers}, University of Wollongong (2005), 1.
and that while academic history 'has often viewed oral history with distrust ... on the local scene, the tables are turned'. Mark McKenna similarly notes:

The intimate and personal delivery of oral history gives it a more authentic and truthful ring. The teller is strangely free of the need for verification, yet somehow, as the custodians of folklore, even more authoritative as a result. Today this is true of narratives which seek to acknowledge frontier violence as well as those which seek to deny or marginalise it.

My research indicates that mid-northern historians did not necessarily consider oral histories to be authoritative. When speaking with Marlene Richards about the sources she used when compiling her history, Marlene verbalised her distrust of oral histories, saying 'people give you information, like somebody gave me on a sheet of paper, I mean, where did it come from? How could I verify it?' At another point Marlene said that 'some of them [local residents] gave us information that was difficult to check'. While verbally transmitted information, particularly about the pastoral era, was treated with a high degree of scepticism by Marlene, she uncritically accepted the information contained in Pastoral Pioneers. When compiling her written histories, Heather prioritised third-hand information about the Nukunu published in 1886 over the memories of local residents and her own family stories. Both authors demonstrate an assumption commonly held by local historians and residents that historical written records are 'true'.

Contrary to Griffith's and McKenna's findings, I have found no evidence that mid-northern settler descendants distrust written histories, whether local or wider histories. Instead, I found mid-northern settler descendants to be respectful of the methods of historical investigation. As Val Cameron put it, Heather ‘did spend a fair bit of time and energy tracking everything down ... She was very good, very very

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40 Marlene Richards, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Elliot, 3 October 2013.
good – that was marvellous’.\textsuperscript{41} Alister Cameron said ‘Heather did lots of work about the area in the book she wrote, it contains a lot of information. I believe she checked the sources of that information before she wrote it, so I believe that to be accurate’.\textsuperscript{42}

My experiences while researching this project lead me to conclude that before evaluating the authority, authenticity or influence of written histories over oral narratives or vice versa in mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness, various factors need to be taken into account. Much depends on the interviewees’ age, life experiences and connection with the district. Interviewees in their nineties (such as Kath Milne, Rollo Dare and Max Rayner) made no reference whatsoever to the local written histories. Outside the private family group and over the years, published local histories take on an authority and legitimacy. As certain stories die out with older generations or as families move away from the district, written histories become an increasingly important and, for some people, almost sole reference about the past. For people with no ties to the district, written histories may be their only source of information. For long-time residents and/or people with generational ties to the district, the written history may be recognised as authoritative but little referred to (and thus not influential). In addition, much depends on the topic and information required. I was interested in my interviewees’ own stories and family histories. As such, during interviews the book that had been pulled out in anticipation usually remained unopened because interviewees had no need to refer to history books when discussing their forebears’ lives. I found that settler descendants referred to the written histories when uncertain about specific dates or names, namely of people and events concerning the wider community.

Information learned through written sources or histories can become part of memory. Before speaking confidently and knowledgeably about his great-great-grandfather Gustav’s start as a butcher in Burra, Andrew Gebhardt said ‘it’s all in

\textsuperscript{41} Val Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
\textsuperscript{42} Alister Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 21 March 2012.
this book here’ and pointed to his copy of *Pastoral Pioneers*. At the end of the story, Andrew said ‘well, that’s what it says in that book. I don’t know how accurate it is, it’s probably right’. Information about Gustav that was learned from *Pastoral Pioneers* was readily amalgamated into Andrew’s memory. Andrew’s daughter and his cousin’s daughter made no reference to *Pastoral Pioneers* when they told me their pared-down versions of Gustav’s history. Colin Cameron told me that most of what he knows about his forebears has been passed down through the family. When telling me about Tom Long, Colin said ‘he had two daughters, but when they landed here – the shipping register shows three girls but we haven’t been able to trace her. She didn’t come up here’.

Different ways of knowing about the past interconnect and overlap; knowledge of the past learned through external means can be incorporated into settler descendants’ historical consciousness. In Colin’s and Andrew’s cases, the two ways of knowing about their forebears (through oral stories and through written histories) intertwined and were mutually enforcing. However, Colin was looking at shipping records to bolster and confirm pre-existing knowledge and understandings which he had learned through family stories and from living at Bellevue on Doughboy Creek. It was not from reading *Pastoral Pioneers* that Andrew’s consciousness of his historical connections to Mackerode was formed, and what Andrew learnt from *Pastoral Pioneers* provided missing details to enrich his pre-existing knowledge – knowledge which was gained through dwelling in place and from his lived experiences.

**The authority of information learned through external means**

I asked Alister if he had heard any stories ‘about the really early years’ and if what he had just told me (about his great-grandfather George Cameron’s early life) had been passed on through the family or if it had been learned through Heather’s books. Alister replied:

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43 Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
44 Amelia Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2012; Julia Clarke (née Gebhardt), interview with Skye Krichauff, Woollana, 23 March 2012.
45 Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
No, most of it has been passed on to me. In terms of dates, I haven’t got a very wonderful memory for dates. I can remember voices and faces but I’m hopeless with dates and names. But that sort of confirmed some of the dates, in that particular book [*Run North Wild Dog*].

Colin Cameron told me that ninety percent cent of what Heather wrote about his forebears in *YSTL* and *RNWD* he already knew from stories his father had told him. I asked him ‘when would you look at those books or do you look at those books?’ Colin answered ‘oh, occasionally I [pause] if something comes up that I’m not sure about, or something I haven’t heard about, I will check it out and see if there is anything in it’. When uncertain of incidents or precise dates or names, members of Heather’s family, including Heather, say ‘it’s all in the book’ or ‘you’ll have to look it up’.

Information contained in Heather’s histories is perceived by Colin, Alister and Val (and settler descendants in general) as more comprehensive and ‘accurate’ than information known through other means. This is an important point as, over time, as families move away from the district or as people die, oral stories triggered by place and people in place will not be remembered or will lose their relevance and poignancy. It is stories which have made it into the written histories (and which inevitably conform with the dominant settler-colonial historical epistemology), stories that are considered factual, accurate and therefore ‘true’, that will live on in the future. Because local histories remain an important point of reference for verification of details or information which are not personally known, the representation and exclusion of stories about Aboriginal people in mid-northern histories have important consequences. As demonstrated in *YSTL* and *RNWD*, oral stories of Aboriginal–settler interaction are minimised in mid-northern written histories. Tellingly, of the mid-northern histories I have surveyed, the two books which included settler reminiscences of positive experiences of settler– Aboriginal interactions.

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46 Alister Cameron, 21 March 2012.
47 Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Belair, 7 March 2012.
48 For example, discussing when Tom Long ‘got land’ (at Yellowman Creek) Colin said ‘can’t remember when, look it up in *Yet Still They Live*’. Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010. Uncertain of the Christian name of one of the White brothers, Heather Sizer told me ‘You’ll find that anyway in here’ and gestured to *Run North Wild Dog* and *Yet Still They Live*. Heather Sizer, 5 July 2010.
interaction beyond the pastoral years were *Burra Burra: Reminiscences of the Burra Mine and Its Townships* and *Folk Tales from Mannanarie*; both books were published after the editors had published ‘official’ histories of Burra and Mannanarie.⁴⁹

Stories not included in written histories, or stories which are not recorded and made accessible to people outside the family, have a higher chance of being lost or known to only a select few. Thus, the work of historians, linguists, geographers, archaeologists and local authors who research and record stories of Aboriginal people is a crucial means through which hegemonic understandings can be disrupted and future generations can learn of Aboriginal presence after European invasion. This point is powerfully demonstrated in the mid-northern written histories. Local historians often preface their section on the districts’ Aboriginal people with a statement that little is known about the original occupants. There is valid reason for this which highlights the contingencies and selectivity of what is recorded from the past and made available to future generations. These authors did not have anthropological knowledge of traditional or contemporary Aboriginal society and were forced to rely on scant recorded information, much of which was written by nineteenth-century pastoralists and their employees, whose observations reflect their cultural and historical positioning. The work of anthropologist Norman Tindale (whether or not he is directly referred to in the texts) is heavily relied on as a source of archaeological and ethnographic information.⁵⁰ In 1937, the prolific and conscientious Tindale stated that ‘it is

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⁴⁹ William Copley remembers ‘blackfellows were very plentiful around the Burra during my school-days, and the boys of both colours used to mix freely and play the same games together’, in Ian Auhl (ed.), *Burra Burra: Reminiscences of the Burra Mine and Its Townships* (Hawthorndene, South Australia: Investigator Press, 1983), 20–21. The reminiscences of several elderly residents of Mannanarie who recall their interactions with Ngadjuri people are included in Nancy Robinson (ed.), *Folk Tales from Mannanarie* (Blackwood, SA: Lynton Publications, 1974), 23, 31, 37, 42, 49, 56, 80‒81.

⁵⁰ Some historians make it clear that Tindale received his information from ‘the last Ngadjuri speaker’ (namely Barney Warrior) in the 1940s; see for example the Gladstone Centenary Committee, *Gladstone*, 193. See Norman Tindale, ‘Two Legends of the Ngadjuri Tribe from the middle north of South Australia’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia* 61 (1937): 149‒53. Also quoted are: RM Berndt and T Vogelsang, ‘Comparative Vocabularies of the Ngadjuri and Dieri Tribes, South Australia’, *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 65, no. 1 (1941): 3–10; J Harris Browne, ‘Anthropological notes relating to the Aborigines of the Lower North of South Australia’, *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia* 21, no. 2 (1897): 72–73.
probable that less has been written about this tribe [Ngadjuri] than about any other tribe in South Australia'.

With regard to the Nukunu, in a dictionary published in 1992, author Luise Hercus lists the available historical written records which contain information about the Nukunu. Hercus’s statement that ‘unfortunately very little was written about the language in the early days’ can be extended to include written records of other aspects of traditional Nukunu life.

The work of local historian Nancy Robinson powerfully demonstrates the impact one person can have in perpetuating stories of Aboriginal presence. In the late 1960s, Robinson tried hard to include the stories of the descendants of the original owners in her histories. Robinson was definitively informed by staff at the South Australian Museum (at the time the key state institution with regard to knowledge of tribal boundaries, genealogies and current descendants) that the tribe was ‘extinct’. When collecting oral histories, Nancy made a point of asking her elderly interviewees if they had any memories or stories about Aboriginal people and published these accounts in the aforementioned Folk Tales from Mannanarie. As a result, future generations have been able to learn of settler–Ngadjuri interaction in the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries in the Mannanarie/Hornsdale district. This is unique among the mid-northern histories written in that era and was built on by Teresa Donnellan in her history of Hornsdale published in 1995.

The influence of the past learned through history

While information contained in local histories may be generally considered by mid-northern settler descendants to be ‘accurate’ and ‘true’, and thus while local histories (and, by implication, wider histories) may have greater authority than oral stories, local histories do not necessarily have greater influence on settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. What is contained in local history

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51 Theresa Donnellan, Home of the East Wind, 10.
52 Luise Hercus, A Nukunu Dictionary (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1992), 9.
54 Nancy Robinson Flannery, interview with Skye Krichauff, Erindale, 11 November 2010.
55 Robinson, Folk Tales From Mannanarie. At Robinson’s instigation, Ambrose Travers published a book in which he describes his affection for the Aboriginal people who used to pass by and stay near his home; Ambrose Travers, Coothidie, ed. Nancy Robinson (Adelaide: Lynton, 1973), 58–61.
56 Donnellan, Home of the East Wind, 10.
books is not necessarily read or remembered. After telling me about how her own family ‘didn’t talk much’ about their family history, Val Cameron said ‘but then one of my cousins wrote a history’. Val remarked ‘but I read it and then I forget. You know you ask me what year or something and I can’t remember’. When I asked Colin how Doughboy Creek (the creek after which his property was named) got its name, Colin said:

My father said that what his father told him was that when the surveyors were surveying land all around the place for the stations – for the pastoralists – the survey party went through here and they camped, or they had lunch down at the creek down there because there used to be water in the creek, and sometime later when they’d gone on further north and someone said something about where they camped, and someone said, oh you know that place where we had the doughboys for lunch.\(^\text{58}\)

Colin then said ‘But I’ve heard other stories about how it was named’. When I asked Colin about these other stories, he replied ‘um [long pause], oh gee, I can’t remember now. But you’ll find it in Yet Still They Live. I think there’s one account there, a different account there, about how it got its name’.\(^\text{59}\) During interviews with Heather Sizer and Marlene Richards, both historians referred me to their written histories when they could not remember particular names or dates.

Although they refer to books or family genealogies to provide specific details such as dates and full names, this does not mean that settler descendants are more conscious of or prioritise this source of information when compared with the past known through everyday life, through family stories or memory. Rather, it indicates the complementary role of history. Among the settler descendants I have been speaking with, history – the family genealogies and local history books – are drawn on to confirm pre-existing, implicitly understood knowledge. The external

\(^{57}\) Val Cameron, 7 July 2010.  
^{58}\) Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.  
^{59}\) Colin Cameron, 7 July 2010.
sources which are most readily absorbed into their consciousness – that is, which have the most impact and which are not forgotten or discarded – are records (such as family histories, archival records, history books and genealogies) in which the relationship between what is already understood through everyday life and what is externally learned is mutually reinforcing.

James Fentress and Chris Wickham point out that a narrative is primarily a story in words and that ‘a story is a sort of natural container for memory; a way of sequencing a set of images, through logical and semantic connections, into a shape which is, itself, easy to retain in memory. A story is thus a large scale aide-mémoire’.60 Heather Sizer’s methods of constructing and compiling her written histories are typical of the authors of other mid-northern histories, all of which illustrate rules and taken-for-granted understandings regarding how the past is known and understood through a dominant setter-colonial historical epistemology. Local histories contain numerous detailed stories and cover a variety of topics over a relatively long chronological time span. The majority of settler descendants I spoke with gave no indication that they remember specific stories or details contained in the local history books. Instead, they have absorbed the general gist of the total story – they have remembered the general impression of the chronologically ordered narrative which begins with Europeans’ ‘discovery’ of an ‘empty’ land and the arrival of freeholders who settled the land and brought with them ‘civilisation’ and from whom the community was born. Instead of specific details (such as Billy Dare’s or the Dansies’ interaction with Aboriginal people or the numerous people living in well-made wurleys), what is absorbed and taken away from these written histories is that which is already understood, that which conforms with the cultural ideologies through which my interviewees know and make sense of the world. It is the depiction of Aboriginal people as primitive, their culture as ahistorical and their presence as separate from the Europeans that is subconsciously absorbed and retained.

60 James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1992), 50.
When information about the past learned through written histories does not correlate with or enrich information about the past known through everyday life (such as the dates and names Alister can’t remember or the written history of Val’s family who arrived in and settled in a place where she did not grow up, or information about the early pastoral years), it is not readily remembered. Where information is not recalled without reference to the external source, where it does not become part of memory, this knowledge of the past remains ‘history’ and is not readily passed on verbally through the family or wider community. In these cases, written histories do not have greater influence on settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. The story of Billy Dare’s wives does not appear in any written histories but is part of social memory in the North-Eastern Highlands. Billy’s interaction with Aboriginal people is included in written histories but is not part of social memory. George Cameron’s descendants’ stories of ‘the blacks’ camp’ are part of their family history, but these stories are not included in Heather’s written histories. I argue that, at the individual, family and community levels, stories and ways of knowing the past absorbed through everyday life are more influential than stories learned through written histories.

**Conclusion**

My research leads me to conclude that, for mid-northern settler descendants who have grown up on land first occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century, written histories are not necessarily given more weight than memory, but they are considered authoritative when the subject or topic is not known – when it is not part of experience. While settler descendants know of and refer to written histories, while written histories are highly regarded and the information contained is not disputed, they are neither the primary nor the most powerful way through which settler descendants know or relate to the colonial past. The findings from this micro-level investigation have implications regarding the incorporation of wider histories into mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness. While there is an abundance of widely available information regarding the historical and enduring violence of colonialism, this information has had little impact on a significant proportion of the Australian population. Some scholars see this as ignorance, others as confected ignorance and still others as symptomatic of
disavowal, denial and repression.\textsuperscript{61} I understand this as an emotional and intellectual \textit{disconnect}. In understanding this disconnect I argue for the need to recognise, investigate and take into account the importance of lived experience to settler descendants’ historical consciousness, which consequently enables us to better analyse how externally learned knowledge of the colonial past is incorporated into settler descendants’ historical consciousness.

Mitchell Rolls asks ‘How does one reconcile experience – an awareness of Aboriginal deprivation and dispossession’ that comes from the availability of an extensive range of literature, creative work and media coverage with Australian’s ‘systematic refusal to seek or trace the causal trajectory’?\textsuperscript{62} I see a need to distinguish between different types of experience: the physical and social experience of face-to-face interaction and first-hand observation differs fundamentally from ‘an awareness’ of an issue gained through external sources such as the media, literature or creative arts. As Anthony Moran found, the lack of awareness of Indigenous issues in the lives of ‘settler Australians’ can be partly explained by a lack of everyday experiences with Aboriginal communities and individuals.\textsuperscript{63} Moran’s findings that ‘Aborigines still stand outside many people’s social worlds both physically and imaginatively’ and for many ‘thinking of Aboriginal issues involved a difficult imaginative leap’ are applicable to my interviewees.\textsuperscript{64}

For the settler descendants I have spoken with, the long physical absence of the traditional owners in the districts in which they dwell means that the enduring violence of colonialism on Aboriginal people is not part of their lived experience, their everyday world or their embodied subjectivity. The past which is most real, which is least abstract, is that which is known and confirmed through everyday life. The abundant and popularly available information which depicts an


\textsuperscript{64} Moran, ‘What Settler Australians Talk About’, 789.
alternative history is not necessarily absorbed into settler descendants’ historical consciousness. To varying extents, mid-northern settler descendants are exposed to information provided in wider histories, the media and the creative arts. However, the same observations regarding the influence and authority of local histories can be applied to wider histories and other sources. Although not disputed but respected and often highly regarded, information derived from the media, films and literature is not necessarily retained – ‘I read about it and then I forget it’ – because these sources are neither the primary nor the most influential way through which mid-northern settler descendants are conscious of the past and because the information conveyed does not connect or resonate with knowledge of the past known through lived experience. Revisionist accounts of Australia’s history, for example, are not necessarily part of everyday life or a topic widely discussed among mid-northern settler descendants. In her research into the social memory of rural towns, Susan Gilbert notes that events historians may regard as signifiers of progress and change (and revisions to Australian history can be regarded as one such signifier of progress) may ‘have a muted and/or delayed impact on daily life within a small, isolated and rural community’; the community, and to an even greater extent the individual, may not invest events with the same significance that they have for historians.65

Gabriele Schwab notes the ethical differences between remembering events from the past through emotional and personal engagement, and learning about events from the past through scholarly means which objectify and thus provide a cold, pseudo-objective distance and which consequently sever ties between people and their histories and cultures.66 Discussing how people grieve over the ‘ghosts of past violence which live on in the present’, including the 300,000 Australian Aboriginal victims of British colonialism, Tessa Morris-Suzuki makes the point that in order for grieving to occur (rather than shock or numbness), a connection needs to be established between ourselves and the victims, and that this is more likely to occur

not only when individual victims can be recognised and connected to, but when we recognise connections between these individuals and ourselves.\textsuperscript{67}

Although different ways of knowing the past intertwine and overlap, reinforce and perpetuate each other, I argue that, for mid-northern settler descendants, the past absorbed through lived experience acts as a reference point for information about the past subsequently learned through other means. Knowledge about the past which was not initially absorbed during formative years and/or which is not based on direct experience but which is learned from external sources (for example, a text or document such as a family genealogy or family history, or some other material object which conveys factual information about the past) can, to varying degrees, connect and/or resonate with experience. It is the connection with experience that is crucial in understanding the extent to which this ‘external’ knowledge is absorbed and remembered. In \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard draw on studies of cognitive processes to affirm that:

New information is received and assimilated, that is, becomes appropriable and memorizable, only when the person acquiring it succeeds in putting it into \textit{his or her own form}, in making it his or her own by inserting it … into the coherencies that structure his or her previous knowledge. Failing to pass through this stage, new information will remain fragile and at any moment likely to be forgotten, distorted or contradicted.\textsuperscript{68}

Discussing ‘primal landscapes’, Thomas Measham found childhood experiences shape the way we interact with our environment throughout our lives.\textsuperscript{69} Iwona Irwin-Zarecka makes it clear that members of a group ‘need not actively attend to

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their formative past for that past to live on.\textsuperscript{70} Eva Hoffman and Sally Alexander recognise that the abundant information packed into family stories heard in childhood contains a multitude of messages which remain with and are drawn upon by adults throughout their lives.\textsuperscript{71} When external information about the colonial past connects with – relates to or enriches – that which is already understood through lived experience it is more readily incorporated. In previous chapters I have shown how mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the past is inseparable from people and place. Thus by connecting Aboriginal people (past and/or present) with the people and places which settler descendants know through everyday life, settler descendants are more likely, or more readily able, to intellectually and emotionally connect their own histories with those of the victims of colonialism.

\textsuperscript{70} Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, \textit{Frames of Remembrance} (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 56.

Chapter 7: Historical contingency and human experience

In the case of living memory ... critical examination cannot be reduced to a fragmented analysis, and ... [the historian] must examine all the stages of elaboration, conservation and emergence of the recollection. Criticism must go back in time, from the present moment of the account to the time when the recollection was created, passing through all the intermediate stages.¹

In previous chapters, I have examined how my interviewees’ consciousness of the nineteenth century past is primarily formed through living in places where culturally recognisable and personally meaningful traces of the past are tangibly present, and from living among people with whom my interviewees share memories and histories. I have shown how knowledge and information about the past is framed by the social and cultural systems in which my interviewees are entrenched and I have argued that my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past is made sense of through their lived experiences. In this chapter, I continue to stress the importance of lived experience, but I concentrate my examination on the lived experiences of my interviewees’ nineteenth-century forebears.

Differing stories of ‘the blacks’ camp’ told by George Cameron’s descendants illustrate Geoffrey Cubitt’s observation that ‘individual memory is crucially involved in generating the information that passes between generations’; nothing will be transmitted ‘unless someone or other has at some time remembered it on the basis of personal experience and communicated this memory to others’.² Scholars who are interested in how the past is recollected through social, collective and individual memory have stressed the important link between experience and memory. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka argues for the need to keep in view the ‘experiential

² Geoffrey Cubitt, History and Memory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 121.
bases on which collective memory rests’. Klaus Neumann has found that the histories which are told in specific places are ‘closely related to very specific experiences’. Richard Slotkin demonstrates how myths arise in the course of human experience, how they have human/historical sources and are created and recreated in the midst of historical contingency. As these scholars are aware, collective memory is not ‘a terrain where anything goes’. In this chapter, I draw on archival research and the work of other historians in my examination of the historical circumstances and experiences – in particular experiences of encounters with Aboriginal people – of North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants’ forebears. Historical research enables us to trace and better understand the lapses, distortions, silences and exaggerations in both verbal narratives and written histories.

Through historical research we are able to trace the origins of settler descendants’ narratives and, consequently, better understand settler descendants’ historical consciousness. As Dominick LaCapra makes clear, ‘history serves to question and test memory in critical fashion and to specify what in it is empirically accurate or has a different, but possibly still significant, status’. I argue that my interviewees’ forebears’ experiences transfer through the generations and affect their descendants’ historical narratives and understandings of the past; I argue that my interviewees’ understandings and narratives of the colonial past are based on aspects of reality (past and present) experienced by their forebears and are specific to the era, area, invaders and inhabitants of the land occupied.

**Variations in myths of settlement and the quality of linear time**

That historical contingencies affect what is remembered is evident in variations in foundation myths and qualities of linear time. Although South Australia’s foundation myth of peaceful settlement of an unoccupied land is a variant of the national myth of *terra nullius*, there is a widespread understanding among South

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Australians that their state’s origins differ from those of other Australian states. Indeed, ‘this idea of “a sense of difference” is commonly perceived as emblematic of the state’s history’.

Some unique aspects of the colony's foundation – such as the lack of convicts, lack of an established church, the Wakefield scheme’s principles of regulated land sales and assisted migration, and relative legislative independence – continue to endure in collective memory. The myth of a free society based on social and political reform reflects the historical (albeit selective) reality of the colony's foundation.

Variations in historical experience also lead to different qualities of linear time. Deborah Bird Rose conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the far-northern pastoral districts of the Northern Territory in the late twentieth century. Rose understands linear time in that district to be liminal and transitive due to settlers’ uncertainty of the permanence of European settlement. This uncertainty was linked to conditions of the pastoral economy such as drought, environmental degradation and the insecurity of pastoral leases which, Rose argues, trapped settlers in a never-ending ‘Year Zero’.

In contrast, Elizabeth Furniss found linear time in the mining town of Mt Isa – a town that has enjoyed great wealth and prosperity since the 1940s – to be ‘brash, confident and aggressive’. In Mt Isa, there is ‘a strong sense that European colonization is an achieved fact, and that all residents will share together in a stable, prosperous future’.

I perceive the quality of linear time in South Australia's mid-north to be assured, confident and unpretentious. In these districts, the evocation of firsts – the ‘discoverers’ Eyre and Frome, the squatters/pastoralists who were the ‘first’ to occupy the districts, the arrival of settlers and all the (so-called) markers of progress that are part of the process of establishing a community – is not (as Rose

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11 Furniss, ‘Timeline History’, 293.
suggests is the case for northern Australian pastoral histories) to nervously and self-consciously break the transitive moment. Nor is the evocation of firsts to conspicuously celebrate the arrival of industry, prosperity and civilisation as Furniss suggests for Mt Isa. In the mid-north of South Australia, rather than European occupation being regularly or spectacularly commemorated, the ‘centenary celebrations’ were one-off events and the centenary written histories were exceptional publications which provided a timely opportunity for members of the community to collectively remember, reflect on and celebrate the historical achievements of the community. In chapter 3, I argued that mid-northern settler descendants are secure and confident of their historical connections to place, that they belong to tight-knit social networks and have a strong sense of belonging. Firmly settled and prosperous by the late nineteenth century, the transitive moment is long past and the quality of linear time assured in South Australia’s mid-north.

**Differences between squatters/pastoralists and freeholders**

Just as there are differences in the quality of linear time between regions – differences which reflect the assuredness or insecurity of European occupation and the economic prosperity and environmental sustainability of the region – a micro-level investigation reveals differences in the colonial consciousness of settler descendants who live in districts which are geographically close and have similar histories of European occupation, settlement and prosperity. Both the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts were occupied by pastoralists in the early 1840s and by freeholders in the early 1870s. Interviewees in neither district referred to the ‘explorers’ or ‘discoverers’ of the area. Interviewees from both districts had a consciousness of the colonial past which was orientated around their forebear(s) who first arrived in the district and occupied land that was to become the family property. In both districts, although interviewees had some knowledge of the previous life of this forebear – his place of origin, reasons for leaving, whom he came to Australia with – settler descendants’ sense of the history of the district began with their forebears’ arrival in the district. People not perceived as having relevant connections with this ‘original’ forebear were rarely
mentioned. However, despite these similarities, there were subtle variations between Wirrabara district settler descendants’ and North-East Highland district settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past.

My interviewees’ forebears’ experiences varied depending on the timing of their arrival and the district in which they settled. There exists a general understanding in the mid-north that it was those who were the first to purchase rather than lease land who are the legitimate founders of the district. This understanding is reflected in public histories – in plaques, monuments and written histories – and settler descendants’ spoken narratives. In their structure and content, numerous written histories imply that settlement began once the land had been surveyed, subdivided and sold by the colonial government. The words ‘Centenary District Council of Hallett 1877–1977 in Memory of our Pioneers’ which appear on Hallett’s centenary plaque are typical of the centenary plaques of numerous mid-northern towns which imply that ‘the pioneers’ arrived when the district, council, town or hundred was declared. In some cases, the word ‘settlement’ replaces the word ‘pioneer’, for example ‘Hornsdale settled in 1878’ and Laura ‘First settled in 1871’. When freeholder-descended interviewees told me they thought their forebear was the ‘original owner’ and their family the first to live there, they were not only failing to acknowledge Aboriginal occupation. They were articulating a widespread ignorance of the pastoral years and a common understanding that settlement began with their freeholder forebears.

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12 Colin Cameron referred to his grandfather, George Wauchope Cameron, as ‘the original settler’, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010.
14 For example, the town of Redhill’s centenary plaque is ‘Dedicated to the Pioneers of Redhill on the occasion of the centenary celebrations 1969’, the plaque at Snowtown reads ‘A tribute to the Pioneers, Snowtown and District 1878–1978’. See Figures 24 and 25.
Among the North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants I interviewed, I noticed a general lack of stories and information about the pastoral years. Broadly speaking, there were three types of squatters-come-pastoralists. There were those like Billy Dare who had limited funds, resided on their leases (referred to as ‘runs’) and suffered the privations of squatting life while building up their flocks and fortunes. There were those like the Whites at Wirrabara who had a (limited) private income which they used to employ a few shepherds and erect various ‘improvements’, including a relatively comfortable hut or house in which they resided. Finally, there were those like the Hallett brothers who had access to substantial amounts of capital, leased vast tracts of country and employed numerous men as shepherds, hutkeepers and stock-keepers. These men could afford to stock their enormous leases and to employ overseers to manage their runs while they resided in Adelaide or on country estates closer to Adelaide whose freehold titles they had purchased.

The Macquarie Dictionary defines ‘settler’ as ‘1. one who or that which settles. 2. one who settles in a new country, esp. one who is freeborn and who takes up
portions of the land for agriculture’. Most of the squatters-cum-pastoralists did not cultivate the land but were graziers. Unlike Billy Dare and his friends Chewings and Hiles, few early pastoralists settled permanently in the districts they had occupied after their leases were resumed. Occupation and pastoral lease holders knew their leases could be resumed at any time and the wealthier, absentee pastoralists constantly looked out for new runs. Many early pastoralists made vast sums of money and returned to England to live. Referring to these transient colonists as ‘settlers’ is misleading. In contrast, most freeholders arrived in their chosen districts intending to put down roots. Freeholders bought the land either outright or through credit agreements. They resided on their property and were involved in working, or at least overseeing, the management of the land and stock themselves. Freeholders came intending to stay; they had future generations in mind when stocking and farming the land and when designing and building their houses, sheds, yards and fences. As such, the term ‘settler’ is appropriate for them.

As indicated by the primary sources local historians drew on for their histories of the pastoral years, Aboriginal people were very present in the mid-north during the squatting/early-pastoral years. As Rose found for the pastoral district in which she conducted field work, I argue that the pastoral years of the mid-north were a liminal and transitive time and space of dynamic cross-cultural interaction, of European insecurity and Aboriginal accommodation. While Aboriginal people continued to confidently assume and assert their ownership of land, squatters-cum-pastoralists and their employees were unsure of the durability or morality of their tenure. Uncertainty and nervousness led to overreaction and violence and, while these turbulent years were a time of cross-cultural fusion and interaction, they were also (initially at least) a time of brutality. The squatters/early pastoralists and their employees are better understood as ‘frontier men’ rather than settlers.

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15 Along with the Dares, in the mid-northern district, the Hawker family of Bungaree and the Hughes family of Booyooloo are the notable exceptions.
Just as there is a usefulness in being specific about the type of colonist being referred to under the term settler, so too is there an associated need to be specific about the era, place, people and relations that are being referred to under the often ubiquitous heading of ‘the frontier’. I understand the frontier as a dynamic zone of cultural interaction and fusion, with both positive and negative implications for Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{17} The frontier is not necessarily distant geographically or temporally. Instead, the frontier can be conceptualised as places of Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal encounters. In introducing \textit{Dislocating the Frontier}, a monograph which explores and critiques concepts of the Australian frontier, Deborah Bird Rose and Richard Davies argue that the frontier should be understood as ‘a site of productive assertions and dilemmas, and of unexpected engagements towards change. It is ... a continuing site of cultural action’.\textsuperscript{18} Understanding the frontier as existing in the here-and-now drives home the continuing political implications inherent in non-Aboriginal people’s occupation and colonisation of this land. So too does extending the meeting of different ‘others’ to include human contact and interaction with the plants, animals and natural environment encountered.

I am a proponent of this more complex and extensive conceptualising of the frontier. Ngadjuri descendants have begun connecting with the land of their forebears; as such, some districts of the mid-north can be conceptualised as new frontiers. Some parts of the Wirrabara district (such as Doughboy Creek) can be understood as frontier zones well into the twentieth century. However, as I will now explain, with regard to human-to-human interaction, by the time the freeholders arrived, it is problematic to understand the North-East Highland district as a frontier zone. While Aboriginal people are present in both the primary sources and, consequently, the local written histories during the transitive period of pastoral occupation, this is not the case once the freeholders arrived, after which


time Aboriginal people largely disappear from both primary and secondary written sources and the oral histories of both Aboriginal and settler descendants.

A recognition of differences between the timing of pastoralists’ and freeholders’ arrival in the district, and variations in the extent and calibre of pastoralists’ and freeholders’ relations with Aboriginal people, are crucial when seeking to analyse the absence of Aboriginal people in mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness. As Lorenzo Veracini correctly observes, ‘first encounters between indigenous people and settlers ... are actually quite rare’.\(^\text{19}\) In the mid-north of South Australia, the pastoralists and their shepherds, hutkeepers and stock-keepers (a wide range of men with diverse backgrounds) were the first Europeans to invade Aboriginal land, and to meet and establish relations with local people.

**Learning from the historical records**

Much of the country in the North-East Highland district, including but not limited to the Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys, was leased by two sets of brothers. John and William Browne originated from Wiltshire, both with medical degrees from Edinburgh University. The Brownes occupied 160 square miles of country known as the Booborowie/Canowie lease in the early 1840 and purchased the freehold of 46,978 acres of the Booborowie run in 1863.\(^\text{20}\) This run contained ‘some of the best Merino sheep country in Australia’.\(^\text{21}\) In 1866 they dissolved their partnership and returned to England to live, after which their estate was controlled by trustees.\(^\text{22}\) In 1897, three years after William Browne’s death, the Brownes’ Booborowie station was sold and subdivided. The historical records indicate that neither brother

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\(^{19}\) Veracini, *Settler Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 84.


\(^{22}\) Prior to 1869 Canowie was sold to the Brownes’ manager and close friend Henry Price, who subsequently sold it to RB James, JF Hayward and A Scott; Cockburn, *Pastoral Pioneers Vol. 2*, 40. Price’s daughter married William Browne’s son, Leonard, see *Pastoral Pioneers Vol. 2*, 41. After 1866 (the date is not specified) ‘Dutton and Melrose’ purchased the North Booborowie run which was subsequently purchased by the government and subdivided in 1911. By this time the Booborowie run was ‘a mere twenty eight square miles’, Richards, *Hallett*, 18.
resided permanently on their Booborowie/Canowie run. The Brownes had enormous landholdings across the colony. William Browne preferred to reside at Moorak in the south-east, while John chose to live at Buckland Park in the lower-north.\(^{23}\)

In the early 1840s, John Hallett and his brother Alfred were granted ‘Lease no. 10’ – ‘Willogoleche’ – which stretched 20 miles north to south, consisted of about 200 square miles and included the mountain (named by Governor Gawler) Mt Bryan, the Razorback Range and the areas on which the future townships of Hallett and Mt Bryan were built.\(^{24}\) The southern part of the Willogoleche run was known as Wandillah. Sometime between 1844 and the early 1850s, the Hallett brothers sold the northern half of the run (which retained the name Willogoleche) to the Brownes’ brother-in-law, Joseph Gilbert.\(^{25}\) Gilbert was likewise an entrepreneurial pastoralist who leased and purchased vast tracts of land throughout the colony. His place of residence was Pewsey Vale in the Barossa Valley. In 1851 an Occupation Licence containing 156 square miles was issued to Gilbert for a run (which became known as Mt Bryan station) between the Halletts’ and the Brownes’ runs.\(^{26}\) He purchased the freehold of 10 square miles of the Mt Bryan run in 1881 before selling it to Edmund and Charles Bowman in 1883. The Halletts retained 14,000 acres of the southern section and leased ‘outside country’ to the east of Wandillah.\(^{27}\) After John’s death in 1868, Alfred continued running the properties. The properties were sold at public auction after Alfred’s death in 1877.

\(^{23}\) The Browne brothers also owned Koppia and leased Nilpena, Arkaba and Leigh Creek in the north, Calca and Talia on the west coast and Ponora and Yarainda runs the Gawler Ranges, *Pastoral Pioneers Vol. 1*, 33.

\(^{24}\) Cockburn states that the ‘Willogoleeche [sic] run, near Mt Bryan, was taken up by John Hallett in 1840 ... Alfred joined his brother in 1842’, in *Pastoral Pioneers*, 53. Richards states that John Hallett ‘selected the run known as Willogoleche in 1842’, in *Hallett*, 17.

\(^{25}\) Gilbert married the Browne brothers’ sister, Anna, in 1847.

\(^{26}\) Mt Bryan Branch of the Country Women’s Association, *Mt Bryan: An Informal History* (Mt Bryan, SA: Mt Bryan Branch of the Country Women’s Association, 1951), 6–7. Confusingly, in *Pastoral Pioneers Vol. 1*, on page 37, Cockburn states that Gilbert purchased from the Halletts ‘a portion of Willogoleche’ in 1855. On page 53 however, Cockburn states ‘Alfred joined his brother John in 1842. Two years later the partners sold Willogoleche, and the sheep, to Mr Joseph Gilbert’. On page 25, Cockburn states ‘Mr Gilbert [secured more country] at Mt Bryan and McVitties Flat, the latter now being known as Cappedee. He obtained a lease from the government and afterwards purchased 32,000 acres’.

There are no known first-hand accounts (no diaries or letters) or reminiscences written by the Joseph Gilbert, the Browne or Hallett brothers or any of their employees concerning life on the Willogoleche, Wandillah, Mt Bryan and Booborowie/Canowie runs. An analysis of histories written for other mid-northern districts indicates that many of the authors of these histories drew heavily on the few primary sources that were known and available to them at the time of compiling their histories. Extracts taken from the reminiscences of early pastoralists and overseers in other mid-northern districts provide chilling accounts of the violence of pastoral occupation during the squatting/early-pastoral era. With no known reminiscences, diaries or letters, and no oral histories among Ngadjuri or settler descendants, the only available historical records relating specifically to the North-East Highland district are government records such as police correspondence and the reports of the Protector of Aborigines.

Although needing to be interpreted with a degree of skepticism, the relevant historical records for the North-Eastern Highland district indicate that physical violence in this district was minimal and short-lived. The only records of settler violence in the North-Eastern Highlands appear in 1843 when Sub-Protector of Aborigines, Edward Eyre, reported that Aboriginal people from the Mt Bryan district had informed him that a man named Pootawamimka had been murdered 90 miles north of the River Light, and the murders of Maryann and Nyunirra Bourka by Hallett’s overseer, William Moore Carter on the Halletts’ station in July 1844. The lack of reports of frontier violence may be due to: pastoralists and their employers keeping the murder of Aboriginal people from officials; the relatively small size of the Ngadjuri population and the vastness of their territory; the temperament of the pastoralists and their employees; the temperament of members of the Ngadjuri group; the relatively close proximity to Adelaide.


29 See Government Record Group [GRG] 26/6/1843/32, 446 and 468.
(compared to equally fertile but more distant areas such as Port Lincoln and Mount Gambier, where the violence was more extensive and enduring); and the opening up of copper mines at Burra which provided alternative employment for Ngadjuri people and led to the establishment of several townships. The relative lack of primary sources relevant to the North-Eastern Highlands during the early pastoral years translates to a gap in our knowledge of those years in that place, as reflected in the histories written for Hallett and Mt Bryan in the 1970s which refer to the Aboriginal people as ‘peaceful’ and ‘helpful’.\textsuperscript{30} It is reasonable to assume that the 1840s–1860s – the years of the Browne and Hallett brothers, Joseph Gilbert, Billy Dare and other squatters/pastoralists – were a frontier time and space of contact, negotiation, accommodation and conflict between the pastoralists, their employees and the Ngadjuri.

A comprehensive analysis of the available historical records and oral histories indicates that by the time the freeholders arrived in the North-East Highland district in the 1870s, the Ngadjuri population had dramatically decreased. There are no written records or oral stories (from either settler or Ngadjuri descendants) of the district’s traditional owners working in towns or on any properties, or of camping in or passing through the Booborowie or Mt Bryan valleys.\textsuperscript{31} A census taken in April 1871 records that groups of Aboriginal people living in the vast mid-north had populations in their tens or less.\textsuperscript{32} In the North-Eastern Highlands, one

\textsuperscript{30} Richards, Hallett; Ruth Stolte, \textit{Razorback Range Country: A History of the Settlement and Development of Mt Bryan District} (Mt Bryan, SA: Mt Bryan Book Committee, 1985). Stolte provides a relatively detailed account of Carter’s crime yet states that relations were ‘generally good, except for one area – sheep stealing’ due to Aboriginal people finding in sheep ‘a new and plentiful supply of food’, 16–18.

\textsuperscript{31} There are scanty records of Ngadjuri continuing to return to areas not too far distant from Hallett/Booborowie – namely Mannanarie and Out-East of Mt Bryan. See Nancy Robinson, \textit{Folk Tales of Mannanarie}, 23, 31, 37, 42, 49, 56, 80–81. In an ‘autobiographical recount’ of the life of Hubert Wilkins, who grew up in the drier and sparsely settled country near Mt Bryan East (Out-East of Hallett and Mt Bryan) between 1888–1902, Wilkins recounts that ‘there were always a few families [of the Australian natives] wandering about’. Wilkins states ‘they were nomads, shifting from place to place along the borders of settled land’. Wilkins recalls that ‘for their tribal festivities they assembled in great numbers’. See Lowell Thomas, \textit{Sir Hubert Wilkins: His World of Adventure} (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1962), 9–10.

\textsuperscript{32} GRG 52/1/1871/168. Aboriginal populations in the mid-north and southern Flinders Ranges were recorded as follows; Mt Bryant [sic]: 1 female and 1 male; Bungaree: 1 male, 3 females; Booyoolee: 5 males, 8 females; Beetaloo: 6 males, 4 females; Crystal Brook: 6 males, 5 females; Bundaleer: 20 males, 18 females; Mannanaree [sic]: 1 male, 1 female; Oladdie: 1 male, 1 female; Pekina: 10 males, 13 females; Melrose: 13 males, 22 females; Wirrabarra [sic]: 15 males, 17 females. The total number includes ‘heathy’ and ‘sick and infirm’ adults as well as children.
man and one woman were recorded as living near Mt Bryan in 1871. By the time the 1891 census was collected, no Aboriginal people were recorded as living in the Burra County, an area which includes Mt Bryan, Hallett and Booborowie. In providing a general summary of the historical consciousness of settlers from numerous settler-colonial states, Veracini states that settler perceptions of emptiness and representations and recollections that depopulate the country of indigenous people border ‘on wishful thinking’. Unfortunately, the decline in numbers and absence of Ngadjuri people between 1836 and the early 1870s are not ‘wishful thinking’ on the part of mid-northern settler descendants but a terrible fact which is recognised and expressed by the authors of Ngadjuri and verified by contemporary Ngadjuri descendants.

Although physical violence undoubtedly played a role, it seems more likely that the dramatic decimation of the Ngadjuri population in this area was largely due to introduced disease. Mid-northern histories and the Ngadjuri book state that, within the first few decades of European invasion, the population of Ngadjuri had dramatically declined, largely due to introduced diseases. As Alan Pope notes, ‘either smallpox or venereal disease on its own would have been devastating enough for Aboriginal groups with no acquired immunity. Coming together, in the space of a generation, their effect was catastrophic’. Rose powerfully refers to ‘sex of the bullet’, noting that venereal disease wrought the greatest havoc of all introduced diseases in the pastoral world of Australia. Reporting on his tour of Yorke Peninsula in 1851, the Protector of Aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse, stated that ‘the native women were in a fearful state of disease’ and that ‘three fourths of both men and women have become affected by it’. It is reasonable to assume that statistics were similar in the neighbouring mid-north. While smallpox and other

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33 Fred Warrior, Fran Knight, Sue Anderson and Adele Pring, Ngadjuri: Aboriginal People of the Mid North Region of South Australia (Adelaide: SASOSE Council Inc., 2005), 91.
34 Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 82.
35 As part of educational activities in Ngadjuri the Ngadjuri people from Hallett are represented as having ‘moved away’ by 1865; Warrior et al., Ngadjuri, 129. Pat Waria-Read, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Adelaide, 26 November 2010; Vincent Branson, interview with Skye Krichauff, Elizabeth Grove, 1 June 2012.
36 Alan Pope, Resistance and Retaliation, (Bridgewater: Heritage Action, 1989), 41.
38 Government Gazette, 17 April 1851, 264–265.
diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, whooping cough and typhus affected people of all ages, venereal diseases (such as syphilis and gonorrhoea) greatly reduced the birthrate and left females infertile.\(^{39}\)

In other parts of Australia, anthropologists working with people who have maintained traditional lifestyles and beliefs have observed a close connection between individual identity and the ill treatment of the land. Ill treatment of land can result in death or illness for that area’s custodians and vice versa – when people die, the land can become dangerous or barren.\(^{40}\) The invaders committed ‘biocide’; in the mid-north of South Australia, native predators which threatened introduced stock were slaughtered in huge numbers.\(^{41}\) Billy Dare killed over two hundred eagles in one year and in January 1864 two hundred quolls (referred to by settlers as ‘wild cats’) were killed in one night on the Brownes’ Canowie run.\(^{42}\) The dramatic decrease in numbers of native animals would have been devastating, even more so for those who had a totemic connection with those animals. Restricted access to favourite hunting grounds and camping sites and increasingly limited resources (unlike their Nukunu neighbours, the Ngadjuri could not fall back on resources from the ocean) forced surviving Ngadjuri to join neighbouring groups to the north and east with whom they had kinship, ceremonial and trade connections and whose drier, stonier and/or more mountainous land was less desirable for Europeans.

Any Ngadjuri who may have been encountered by incoming freeholders in the North-East Highland district in the 1870s would have had three decades of experience in dealing with Europeans. Survivors of the pastoral years would have become, while not resigned to, familiar with the invasion of their land and the occupation and destruction of their country. Unlike the pastoralists who had

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\(^{41}\) John Docker uses the term ‘biocide’ in ‘Epistemological vertigo and allegory: thoughts on massacres, actual, surrogate, and averted – Beersheba, Wake in Fright, Australia, in *Passionate Histories*, eds Frances Peters-Little, Ann Curthoys, John Docker (Canberra: ANU E Press and Aboriginal History Inc., 2010), 54.

\(^{42}\) Richards, *Hallett*, 20; Dr Davies Diary, State Library D 7380 (L), 206.
invaded several decades earlier, the North-East Highland freeholders did not enter a ‘pure’ Aboriginal landscape but one which had been dramatically altered by pastoralists and their employees and, most significantly, by their sheep and cattle.\textsuperscript{43} The ‘shock troops of Empire’, cattle and sheep can be understood as non-human members of conquering societies who were ‘agents of colonization in their own right’.\textsuperscript{44} Introduced stock damaged and destroyed in a few years grasses and soils which had been nurtured by Aboriginal people for thousands of years.\textsuperscript{45} By the 1870s, favourite places, reliable waterholes and prime hunting grounds had become sites for shepherds’ huts, yards, homesteads. However, for those who knew how to read the landscape in a way which was alert to and knowledgeable about Aboriginal culture, there would have been abundant evidence of Aboriginal occupation of country when the freeholders arrived

Veracini understands settlers’ understandings and representations which depopulate districts of indigenous people as bordering ‘on wishful thinking’ and that ‘the disavowal of both a founding violence and of indigenous presence systematically informs settler perception’ and ‘enables a comprehensive disavowal’.\textsuperscript{46} Various authors of mid-northern written histories did not silence or minimalise the brutality of the pastoral years. They were not selective in the historical sources they drew on, nor did they censor these texts to provide a soothing narrative of peaceful occupation. For this reason, scholars who have a particular interest in frontier conflict are able to make the valid observation that, while there may be little engagement with the place of Aboriginal people in the national story, ‘regional histories of the mid twentieth century much more visibly engaged the stories of frontier encounter, just as memoirs and reminiscences of the nineteenth century had done’.\textsuperscript{47} Theories regarding settler disavowal, amnesia and the defensive mechanisms of nostalgia or condemnation require qualification

\textsuperscript{43} According to Richards, the Hallett brothers had sheep on their northern Willogoleche run and cattle on their southern Wandillah run, \textit{Hallett}, 17.
\textsuperscript{44} Rose, \textit{Reports from a Wild Country}, 85. Rose refers to Eric Rolls, \textit{A Million Wild Acres} (Melbourne, Penguin Books, 1984), 84.
\textsuperscript{46} Veracini, \textit{Settler Colonialism}, 84, 82.
and vary among settler Australians. Written histories which convey the violence and brutality of colonialism are not rejected by mid-northern settler descendants and the work of their authors is respected. This does not mean, however, that local residents understand these accounts of violence as relevant or connected to their own or their community’s history.

Historical records and oral narratives suggest that the years of freehold settlement in the North-Eastern Highlands were years of neither violent cross-cultural conflict nor cross-cultural accommodation and exchange. In previous chapters, I have examined the concrete workings of mid-northern settler descendants’ memory to demonstrated that: an event needs to be experienced to be remembered; it is the unusual and the dramatic incidents that are recalled; stories about the past are not necessarily conveyed to successive generations unless individuals express interest and/or ask questions; questions asked and deductions made by settler descendants are spurred by observations made sense of through lived experience; and people draw on their own experiences to make sense of the stories and histories they may learn.

Veracini provides a theoretical overview of the historical consciousness of settler-colonialists across the globe. Veracini acknowledges that ‘while the literature on colonial encounters is large and sophisticated ... exploring the settler colonial encounter and dealing with both disavowal and infrequency, has been especially complex’. Having traced the historical experiences of my interviewees’ forebears and understanding that at the individual level one’s consciousness of the nineteenth-century past is orientated around one’s own family, and taking into account the importance of lived experiences in shaping current generations’ understandings and narratives of the past, I suggest that the lack of oral stories about Aboriginal people among this group of people is not adequately explained as being symptomatic of disavowal, repression or denial. While in no sense condoning the decrease in Aboriginal numbers, I nevertheless argue for the need to ask how

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48 Veracini states that settler colonial societies ‘must’ disavow their violent foundation, that the “settler archive of the European imagination” has a tendency to operate by way of disavowal and repression, Settler Colonialism, 76, 77.

49 Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 84, original emphasis.
much of the invisibility of Aboriginal people in mid-northern settler descendants’ oral narratives is due to the concrete workings of memory. The oral and historical records indicate that, in the North-East Highland district during and after the 1870s, cross-cultural encounters were (as they continue to be) infrequent or non-existent.

**Generational transference of intangible traces of the past**

After reminding her readers that only the personally experienced past can be understood as memory, descendant of Holocaust survivors Eva Hoffman suggests that what is transferred to subsequent generations, at times with great directness, is ‘the emotional sequelae of our elders’ experiences, the acid-etched traces of what they had endured’; ‘This, perhaps is the way one generation’s legacy is actually passed on to the next – through the imprint of various personal and historical experiences, as these are traced on individual psyches and sensibilities’.50 Ross Gibson persuasively argues that the experiences of earlier generations – the ‘shape of the past’ – ‘pushes into the present of colonial societies’.51 Gibson sees the determined, dogged attitude to life and work, the obsession with boundaries (literal and philosophical), the inscrutable facial expressions and the tough but brittle character of far-north Queenslanders as reflecting the experiences of their land-grabbing forebears. These ‘pioneers’ witnessed brutality and violence, and they could not help but be aware that they were occupying another people’s land. They nervously bunkered down, wrapping themselves in cloaks of silence and secrecy. Gibson perceives the violence they had seen as having ‘disturbed them to their soul’ and persisted in memory.52 He sees this history today in the faces and attitudes of people he grew up with and those he encounters in bus-stations and other public places. Gibson interprets this ‘regional neurosis’ as having its origins in the history of colonisation in northern Queensland; it persists in the bodies and minds of current generations of settler descendants.

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Gibson’s land-grabbers’ experiences parallel those of the mid-northern squatters/early pastoralists and their employees whose brutality is so graphically described in the extracts of letters and diaries published in the local histories.\(^{53}\) The forebears of the majority of mid-northern settler descendants I spoke with were of freeholder descent and did not witness the initial take-over of Aboriginal land; they were not exposed to or involved in physically violent acts against fellow humans. Other than Billy Dare (who by all accounts got on well with Aboriginal people), the forebears of the North-Eastern Highlanders I interviewed did not search for a decent patch of land and then squat on it, legalising their find in due course. They purchased surveyed land from the colonial government. In their eyes and the eyes of the culture and society to which they belonged, this land was legitimately acquired. In this sense, nineteenth-century freeholders are no more land-grabbers than any non-Aboriginal people who acquired land in Australia in accord with British and later Australian law.

Mid-northern settler descendants are not embarrassed about their family’s acquisition of land, nor are they sensitive – defensive, hostile, guilty, ashamed – regarding the plight of Aboriginal people. Rather than wrapping themselves in cloaks of secrecy, my interviewees are open and honest; they have an expectation of reciprocity and fair treatment. The attitudes and sentiments expressed by my interviewees, when read in conjunction with the timing of their forebears’ arrival in the district, indicate that their forebears were not shocked; they did not have to keep quiet about or try to forget inhumane acts. They neither witnessed first-hand the violence of dispossession nor witnessed or participated in cross-cultural accommodation and friendship. These people did not feel vulnerable, threatened or insecure – they were not about to have their landholdings resumed, they were not vulnerable to attack by Aboriginal groups. There are no protected courtyards or rifle slits in the walls in any homesteads built by freeholders – or by the Halletts or the Brownes for that matter.\(^{54}\) My interviewees’ forebears played active roles in

\(^{53}\) See chapter 3.
the establishment of various community institutions such as churches and sporting clubs. Their descendants are quietly proud of their history and happy to pass on their knowledge and understanding of the early years. They are not defensive or hostile but candid and transparent when answering or thinking about a variety of questions relating to settler-Aboriginal relations.

**Knowledge of pastoralists: variations between districts**

Freeholder-descended interviewees from the North-Eastern Highlands have scant knowledge about the early pastoralists who occupied land in the Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys. I found that the few people who were aware of the Browne brothers were in their nineties. Significantly one of them, Rollo Dare, was of squatter/early pastoralist descent. Rollo off-handedly relayed the sites of the Brownes’ and Hallett’s homesteads. While discussing water with Max Rayner, Max remarked ‘well I’ve heard my father say that Canowie station – which was, I think, about 90,000 acres, but that varies because the Brownes owned other land – but that was watered by springs and three wells’. Later I asked Max if he had ‘ever heard anything’ about the Brownes. Max replied:

> Not really. I only knew that there was two brothers, I think they were both doctors, they owned Canowie and Booborowie. That’s why you get a discrepancy in the amount of land they held, why some people say 92,000 acres of Canowie; they also had Canowie on the south side.

Max had previously made a clear distinction between pastoralists and freeholders, saying in the ‘very very early days, before that land was surveyed, squatters had possession of the land, they didn’t own it, so they were just called squatters. No one else had the land, so they would pasture their sheep there’.

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55 Max Rayner, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 18 May 2010.
56 Max Rayner, 18 May 2010.
57 Max Rayner, 18 May 2010. Max Rayner and Rollo Dare were the only people I spoke with who referred to McVitties Flat.
The third person who was familiar with the name Browne was Jean Holmes, whose grandparents built a pug-and-pine home when the Brownes’ station was first subdivided in the 1890s. Jean's grandparents’ home was sited approximately one kilometre north of the Booborowie homestead and shearing shed. Jean's childhood home was metres away from her grandparents’ home. Jean showed me the original Booborowie homestead, which is set back from the road and looks no different to other nineteenth-century mid-northern homesteads. She told me that the massive woolshed, sited approximately two hundred metres north of the homestead and obvious from the road, was the original Booborowie station woolshed. Although familiar with the name Browne, Jean had no stories or knowledge of these early pastoralists other than the site of their homestead and woolshed.

The original Browne and Hallett homesteads are still lived in and I was shown around both by their current owners. Colin and May Broad are in their nineties. They are aware that their home is the original Booborowie homestead. A sign on their gate says ‘Homestead, C Broad, 1842’. Colin told me his family purchased the property in 1936–1937, that the Warnes had it before that and the Bevans before that. Colin couldn’t think who had it before the Bevans. May thought they had the information written down somewhere, but didn’t know where it would be. While we were looking around the house, I unselfconsciously introduced the name Browne when I said ‘So, this is the original living quarters for the Browne brothers and their staff?’ Like Max, Colin made a clear distinction between pastoralists and freeholders. He told me twice that the Browne brothers had never lived here, that they had only occupied the land and, because they only had a pastoral lease, they never owned the land. Later on, May commented again that it was a shame there was nothing written down about the people who had built the homestead.

58 Colin Broad, recorded conversation with Skye Krichauff, Booborowie homestead, 22 March 2012.
59 May Broad, recorded conversation with Skye Krichauff, Booborowie homestead, 22 March 2012.
The Riggs family are the current owners of the Halletts’ homestead, which they purchased several decades ago. Richard Riggs told me he thought the homestead was built by the Bowmans. The Bowmans initially leased and later purchased vast tracts of land from the Halletts and Joseph Gilbert in the 1870s and 1880s. The Bowmans remained in the locality until the early twentieth century. Several years ago an archaeologist from Sydney came to look at the house. He showed Richard how to distinguish between the original building and the Bowmans’ more recent additions. Richard thus knew the house was very old. He nevertheless continued to connect the house solely with the Bowmans, of whom he had stories. Richard showed me the two-storey addition which the Bowmans had made to the original
homestead in order to host large weekend parties and the creek that had been altered to run in front of the house to create a picturesque atmosphere for the Bowmans’ houseguests.\(^{60}\)

Of all the people I spoke with, Jean, Rollo, Max and the Broads were the only people to mention or connect the name Browne with the early pastoral years.\(^{61}\) No-one I spoke with mentioned Joseph Gilbert. Although interviewees recognise the name Hallett because of the town, when I asked if they knew anything about the Halletts or the Brownes, the majority of interviewees answered ‘no’. Eighty-five-year-old Melva McInnes’s response was common. When I first asked Melva if she had ever heard ‘any stories of the Brownes or Mr Hallett’, Melva replied ‘no, only what I have read’.\(^{62}\) The second time I interviewed Melva I asked her if she had ever, ‘when [she] was growing up or throughout [her] life ... heard stories about the first pastoralists, like the Halletts?’ Melva replied ‘no. Not at all. There were the Melroses – George Melrose lived near Hallett’. George Melrose purchased Willogoleche in the late 1800s after it had gone through several changes in owner and retained ownership until 1954.\(^{63}\)

With each subsequent generation, the little that is known about the early pastoralists seems to shrink. Some people in their sixties and seventies vaguely recognised the name Browne while others seemed unfamiliar with it. For example, when speaking with Andrew Gebhardt about his forebear's acquisition of land, Andrew did not mention any early pastoralists; he knew that Gustav had acquired land through ‘land grants and some previous owners'. When I asked Andrew if he thought Gustav had got it from the Halletts and Brownes, Andrew showed no recognition of either name and simply said conclusively ‘it wasn't freehold before that, a bit like pastoral lease’.\(^{64}\)

\(^{60}\) Site visit with Richard Riggs, 1 December 2013.
\(^{61}\) None of my interviewees mentioned the Gilbert family.
\(^{62}\) Melva McInnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Three Trees, 7 June 2010.
\(^{63}\) Willogoleche passed from the Halletts to Joseph Gilbert to the Warwick brothers who purchased the property after 1881. See Richards, *Hallett*, 26.
\(^{64}\) Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
The second time I interviewed Andrew, his daughter Amelia was with him. Early in the interview, Amelia asked her father who would have lived in the ruins on the other side of the hills behind Mackerode. Andrew thought before answering ‘be over by the Browns’.65 The conversation shifted to items Amelia had found in the ruins. Half an hour later I asked Andrew ‘so did you ever hear any stories about the early pastoralists?’ Andrew replied uninterestedly ‘Not really, only what I’ve read since’.66 I persisted – ‘So the names Browne and Hallett, they never really cropped up much?’ Andrew answered:

Brownes did, Brownes were the people behind us. And old man Browne used to bring his horse and cart and wool over the hill at Mackerode and he used to leave the gates open. And my – err – must have been my great-grandfather I suppose, got a bit cross with him and put bolts on the gates, so he just knocked the posts over.67

I could not imagine either of the wealthy and educated doctors Browne being referred to as ‘old man Browne’ or driving their own horse and cart to transport the wool. The Brownes employed teams of people and did not reside at their Booborowie station. Puzzled, I said to Andrew ‘but that, umm, he couldn’t have been, ‘cos the original Brownes were two doctors that made an absolute fortune from all their pastoral properties … moved back to England in the 1860s, took their families back there’. Andrew replied ‘Did they? Well, this fellow was a Browne so he couldn’t have been – he might have been a relation’. We discussed how it was relatively common for those who could afford it to employ family members and friends from ‘home’. When I informed Andrew and Amelia that the Brownes had Booborowie Station while Mr Hallett had Willogoleche and land Out-East, this was clearly new information for both of them. Andrew said excitedly:

Well, you see, actually that might, that might, um, tally up a bit because Booborowie, see, the railway line was always – there was a station at

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65 Andrew Gebhardt and Amelia Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2013.
Burra, and at Mt Bryan and Hallett. And this land, perhaps at Booborowie north, this was where they brought the wool through perhaps. It might not have been Mr Browne actually driving the cart, it might have been Mr Browne’s – I don’t know, but it was always referred to as “old Mr Browne’s knocked these posts over” and it used to infuriate my grandfather.\(^{68}\)

I said to Andrew that would make sense, as the Brownes by that stage probably felt a sense of entitlement to the land they had occupied for twenty or so years prior to Gustav’s purchase of it and they may have resented newcomers erecting fences and gates on land they had grown used to thinking of as theirs.

I explained where the Brownes’ original homestead is. In common with other North-Eastern Highlanders, Andrew knew nothing about the original homestead and, on learning of its existence, quickly connected it with the huge woolshed which is obvious from the road. Andrew asked ‘that [the woolshed] would have been part of the Brownes’, wouldn’t it?’ I then told Andrew other information about the early pastoralists, and said that what I knew I had learnt through research I’d done because we never heard any stories about the Brownes or the Halletts when I was growing up. At this point Andrew said:

\begin{quote}
No. Well that’s the only Browne story I can remember, those posts. But it would have been those Brownes actually, when I think about it, because of the railway line. I always imagined old Mr Browne used to come and do it but [he] might have said if they’re locked go straight through.
\end{quote}

Andrew drew on his pre-existing knowledge to make sense of the newly acquired information and piece this with the fragmentary information contained in his family story. Typically, his knowledge and understanding of the nineteenth-century past was orientated around his own family.

\(^{68}\) Andrew Gebhardt, 15 March 2013.
Ruins and paddock names

Settler descendants commonly know where their forebears first dwelled when they arrived in the district. Andrew said Gustav ‘lived in Burra to begin with’ and ‘the house is still there’. He described the house and explained where it was sited. Melva McInnes told me that, before they built the house she currently lives in, her great-grandparents ‘lived in that row of rooms that you walk past to get to the house’. Max Rayner told me that when ‘Grandfather took up the land in 1867’ he ‘first lived in an iron shed’. By 1868 his grandfather had built ‘the original house’ which ‘is closer to the sheds. [It was] built out of stone from The Bluff quarry’. Billy Dare’s descendants well know the sites of Billy’s residences. They built a cairn for Billy at Wallinga and pictures of Dare’s Hut on McVittie’s flat and the ruins of Piltimittiappa hang on the walls of Rollo’s and Joan’s bedroom. Members of my mother’s family know that the stone cottage near the shearing shed predates the Cappeedee homestead; they assume this cottage was lived in while the homestead was being built. Like the row of rooms next to Melva McInnes’s house and Gustav’s first house in Burra, the original cottage at Cappeedee is still in use. As David Lowenthal succinctly points out, ‘cultural prejudice affects what is preserved [and] what is suffered to vanish’; these first dwellings of my interviewees’ forebears are well known and meaningful to their descendants. Like the homesteads, these cottages are recalled with pride and many have been continuously maintained over the decades.

In contrast, freeholder descendants have scanty or no knowledge about the people who lived in the numerous ruins which litter their paddocks. When I interviewed Angus at Cappeedee, he was seeding a paddock called North McDonalds. I told him that I had recently learned that the McDonalds were among the earliest Europeans to settle in the Booborowie Valley. Angus immediately replied:

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69 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
70 Melva McInnes, 23 March 2012.
71 Max Rayner, 18 May 2010, Burra.
Well, they probably could have been in this area because you’ve got “North McDonalds” and “South McDonalds” and there’s an old house – see just over there to your left, there’s a few mounds of dirt in the paddock. There’s the ruins of an old house and a well, and water, and sheds out the back and stuff.73

Similarly, when I spoke with Uncle Al and told him I’d learned that the ‘McDonalds were here before the Murrays’, Al referred to the ruins in McDonalds and said ‘that’s probably where they lived then’.74 Although it seems neither Angus nor Al had previously thought themselves or asked their fathers or grandfathers about the ruins in the paddock or the origins of the paddock name, both readily connected the surname, the paddock name and the ruins.

At Popperinghi we had a paddock called Mclnnes's which had a tin cottage in the middle of it. The name of the paddock meant nothing to me. When I met Melva, she told me her husband’s parents used to own that paddock and the cottage had been their home. The ruin was meaningful to Melva because she knew the people who used to live there. As families move away from the district, if the original occupants are unknown to current land owners, paddock names (when named after those who used to live there) become meaningless, distant and abstract, significant only to those who know or knew of the previous occupants. Over the generations, information about earlier people is lost if no descendants live in the vicinity.

When I asked Geoff Dare about the names of paddocks on his farm, Geoff said ‘some of them had names but I think as we bought land we’d name paddocks to suit ourselves. We didn’t really use the names that were there’.75 Rollo said the paddocks were ‘named after people there – Brices used to live there, there was the Pines, Glen View was named because the Gares used to live there and there was a Glen, the Polner place. Not so much shepherds but mostly landholders’.76Rollo not only displayed his knowledge of previous occupants, but also his awareness that

73 Angus Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 19 May 2010.
74 Alistair Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 18 May 2010.
75 Geoff Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Hove, 14 May 2010.
76 Rollo Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Centre, 10 July 2010.
some paddocks might be named after the shepherds who predated the freeholders (the ‘landholders’). Tellingly, Billy started out as a shepherd and shepherds, squatters, pastoralists and freeholders are incorporated into Rollo’s historical consciousness.

In contrast with Rollo, freeholder descendants struggle to recognise and incorporate people who lived in the district and who were present and vital during the pastoral years into their historical consciousness. Andrew Gebhardt told me:

When I was first at Mackerode there were lots of places out in the hills where there were stone ruins and I reckon they must have been huts. But me being who I was at the time, I shifted all the stones and put them elsewhere so we could cultivate the land ... And I got rid of them ... I don't know what came over me to do it, but I was only twenty something at the time ... and I didn’t think about the history much in those days ... but these people would have been shepherds before the fences were built and these little huts all around the place and that’s why they, you know, some of the paddocks were named after the shepherds. ‘Cos I’ve always wondered why that paddock was called so and so.77

I asked ‘so what are some of the names of the paddocks on Mackerode?’ He replied ‘oh they are people's names like Griffiths, Summerville’.78 While it was easy for squatter descendant Rollo Dare to remember the presence of shepherds, it took freeholder descendant Andrew Gebhardt much contemplation and a leap of imagination to incorporate shepherds, and by association the pastoral era, into his understanding of the past. When I asked Andrew Gebhardt if he thought the shepherds’ huts he referred to were there ‘when Gustav took over the land’ or if he thought they ‘would have been there for his own shepherds’, Andrew replied ‘I’d say for his own shepherds’.79

77 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
78 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
79 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
Uncle Al similarly demonstrated difficulties in imagining connections with the pre-Murray, pastoral era when I asked him about the names of Cappeedee’s paddocks:

Oh I think they must have been people who worked here most of them. Tivers, McDonalds, Hughes ... Annies Hill, Browns Hill ... there’s a ruin at Wombat ... paddock’s called Wombat [because] there’s an old wombat warren there. And there’s more ruins at Gill’s Creek ... Someone told me that’s because TS [sic] Gill came up here painting. But I don’t think it was, I think it’s because the Gills from Spalding, I think their grandfather used to work here.80

Rollo and Joan Dare’s picture of Dare’s Hut at McVitties Flat was painted by ST Gill in the late 1840s. The naming of the creek after the renowned painter of numerous colonial landscapes and scenes is more than plausible, yet Al thought it more likely that the name was bestowed when his forebears were in the district. When I asked Al if he thought Browns Hill was named after ‘the Booborowie doctors’ (i.e. the pastoralists) or after different Browns, he replied uninterestedly ‘don’t know. The Hughes, the Hughes have been around for a while, and Martins’. He said he didn’t know the era the Hughes were in the district and thought the paddock names ‘evolved over the years’.81

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Rollo’s, Andrew’s, Angus’s and Al’s consciousness of the tangible traces of the past – the ruins and paddock names – was made sense of through an awareness of their own family’s arrival in the district. Discussing her sources for the pastoral section of Hallett, Marlene Richards told me that information on pastoralists ‘was all secondary sources’ and ‘a lot’ of the information came from Pastoral Pioneers.82 I asked ‘so there wasn’t a lot of oral stories, a lot of memory, amongst the people that you spoke with, about the pastoralists?’ Marlene replied ‘no, no’. The Brownes, Halletts and Gilbert had numerous pastoral holdings across the state and did not

80 Alistair Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 18 May 2010.
81 Alistair Murray, 18 May 2010.
82 Marlene Richards, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Elliot, 3 October 2013.
permanently reside in the North-Eastern Highlands. The pastoralists who are remembered are those who purchased land and resided in the district in the late nineteenth century and beyond – Melva remembered the Melroses who purchased North Booborowie and Willogoleche, which they retained until 1954. The Riggs family spoke of the Bowmans, who purchased and leased land from the Halletts in the 1880s and extended the homestead in the early twentieth century.83 All in the district know Billy Dare was a pastoralist Out-East. The continued presence of Billy’s descendants in the district prompts and perpetuates this pre-existing knowledge. In the Booborowie Valley in which I grew up, there was no overlap, no combined history of the first pastoralists and freeholders.

The Wirrabara district

Brothers Frederick, Samuel and Edwin White arrived in the Wirrabara district in late 1843. By 1854 they had taken out occupation licences for an area totalling 269 square miles.84 Freehold sections were purchased in 1845 and 1855 but by 1861 the Whites had sold their leases and freehold sections and moved back to England.85 The leases for Wirrabara station went through several changes of absentee ownership between 1861 and 1867. Alexander Borthwick Murray purchased a share of Wirrabara station in 1867 and became sole owner in 1870. He purchased large portions of the freehold land when the pastoral leases were subdivided and put up for sale in the 1870s. AB Murray did not reside in the Wirrabara district himself but three of his sons consecutively managed the station, each dying unexpectedly at a relatively young age. The Murray family retained Wirrabara station until 1910. In the 1850s and 1860s, numerous timber cutters, carters, sawyers and teamsters arrived in the Wirrabara district to work in the Wirrabara forest, and numerous shepherds, hut builders and other stationhands arrived to work on the station. Descendants of these people continue to live in the district today.86

83 Richards, Hallett, 26.
84 Heather Sizer, Yet Still They Live, 18.
85 Sizer, Yet Still They Live, 26, 31, 33, 35.
86 Sizer, Yet Still They Live, 38-47.
Figure 28. Remains of the original White homestead, White Park.

Figure 29. Fence post and dam, site of Malcolm Murray's suicide, Avonmore.
I reiterate that both the timing of their forebears’ arrival in the district and an awareness of their forebears’ experiences are relevant when analysing settler descendants’ historical consciousness and oral narratives. Many people who live in the Wirrabara district have forebears who arrived before the widespread subdivision of pastoral leases into freehold blocks. In this district, stories of the past date back to the pastoral years and the Murray family remains part of social memory. Numerous people told me and some showed me the memorial erected by the community for AB Murray’s eldest son, who was held in high regard by local residents. I was told of the suicide of AB Murray’s third son, Malcolm, and shown the dam in which he cut his throat and the fencepost where he hung up his coat before doing so. Some people who spoke of the Murrays had forebears who had worked for them and another lived in Avonmore, the house built by Alexander

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87 Site visit with Harold Gigney and Denis Smart, Avonmore, 6 July 2010.
Kath Milne remembers Malcolm Murray’s wife, and spoke of visiting Mrs Murray in Adelaide when she was a child. The first pastoralists, the Whites, were referred to by Heather Sizer, Kath Milne and Robert Milne. The Milnes’ family property is White Park. The ruins of the original homestead are metres away from Kath’s house. In addition, White descendants have corresponded with the Milnes and visited White Park several times since Kath has lived there. Heather corresponded with these White descendants while compiling her written history.

Several observations can be made by comparing the narratives of Wirrabara and of North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants. The pastoralists who are remembered and referred to in both districts are those who lived in the district. Pastoralists who preceded their forebears’ arrival and who did not live in or remain in the district are not referred to unless interviewees have some tangible link with them (such as the Milnes at White Park or the Broads or Jean Holme at Booborowie). For most current residents, the early pastoralists are abstract historical figures, distant in time and space, with no concrete places, objects or stories to make them ‘real’. In the North-Eastern Highlands, where all except the Dares are descended from freeholders who arrived in the 1870s, it takes a significant amount of imagination for interviewees to connect people from the early pastoral years to the places which they are so used to thinking of as always having been ‘theirs’ (i.e. their own family’s). In the Wirrabara district, residents who are descended from people who arrived prior to the subdivision of pastoral leases have a consciousness of the past that predates the 1870s. This further illustrates how the timing of one’s forebear’s arrival and one’s forebear’s experiences after arriving in the district are crucial to understanding mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past.

Most interviewees’ stories concern their own family; the pastoral stories from the nineteenth century that are remembered outside the family are the dramatic, traumatic ones which are connected to a specific place – Billy Dare’s wives’

88 Heather Sizer, interview with Skye Krichauff, Wirrabara, 5 July 2010; Colin Cameron, interview with Skye Krichauff, Bellevue, 7 July 2010; Peter Hollitt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burnside Farm, 7 July 2010; site visit with Denis Smart and Harold Gigney, Avonmore, 6 July 2010; site visit with Tuck Cockburn, Wirrabara station woolshed, 6 July 2010.
89 Kath Milne, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Hospital, 10 July 2010.
suspicious deaths, Malcolm Murray’s suicide, the Nukunu man who ‘lay down and died’ or the man who tipped porridge into his pocket. These micro-scale observations are useful when assessing the absence of Aboriginal people in settler descendants’ historical consciousness. Is the absence of early pastoralists in North-Eastern Highlander settler descendants’ narratives best understood as an act of disavowal, of repression? By failing to acknowledge the pastoral years, are settler descendants demonstrating a form of ‘screen memory’? I argue that the absence of pastoralists reflects the concrete workings of memory and the reality of human experience – the experiences of previous and current generations. This insight can be extended to the absence of Aboriginal people. The lack of information about Aboriginal–European encounters, violent or otherwise, could well be a sign that nothing ‘dramatic’ (according to European perceptions) occurred when the interviewees’ forebear arrived in the district. By 1871 only two Aboriginal people were recorded as living in the North-East Highland district. Freeholders’ contact with Aboriginal people would have been either non-existent or unremarkable. When considering the absence of Aboriginal people in North-East Highlander settler descendants’ historical consciousness, the physical absence of Ngadjuri people in this district by the 1870s is a crucial factor.

In the Wirrabara district, while the pastoralists who resided in the district from 1867 until the early twentieth century are remembered, so are Nukunu people. I was told of and shown two sites where corroborees were held in and near Wirrabara. The Cameron family have stories of a group camping on Doughboy Creek near Murray Town. Interviewees from this district referred to ‘the reserve’ – Baroota Reserve – on the other side of the ranges near Port Germein. Some spoke of Aboriginal people working as shearers or domestic servants for friends and relatives who lived near Port Germein.

**Cultural context and lived experience**

To recognise the role of historical contingency and human experience in myth-making is not to disregard the selectivity or the politics inherent in settler descendants’ historical narratives. Instead, it is to acknowledge that a range of

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90 Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 89-90.
factors need to be taken into account to provide a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the ways settlers and their descendants know and relate to their forebears’ occupation of another people’s land. In this section, I demonstrate the need to take into account the cultural frame through which mid-northern settler descendants interpret the colonial past. The settler-colonial culture in which they are entrenched affects what traces from the past are recognised, understood and remembered. That which is unrecognised is ignored and remains outside settler descendants’ consciousness.

While Aboriginal people have been physically absent for perhaps 130 years in the North-Eastern Highlands, traces of their presence live on. In the district in which I grew up, much of the nomenclature is of Aboriginal origin. Terowie, Booborowie, Baldina, Yarcowie, Piltimittiappa, Ulooloo, Willalo, Canowie, Willogoleche – these words are well known to anyone who has spent time in this district. Many local written histories report on the Aboriginal origins of various placenames. However, just as information about the pastoralists contained in these histories is not recalled during interviews, in everyday life the significance or meaning of Aboriginal place names is not contemplated or acknowledged. Take Booborowie for example; after learning that the first squatters in the district were the Browne brothers, that they named their run Booborowie and that the town took its name from the Brownes’ station, I was particularly interested in discovering the meaning of ‘Booborowie’. I therefore made a point of asking many interviewees if they knew what ‘Booborowie’ meant. Over and over again, people I spoke with appeared somewhat bemused by this question. Some gave the impression that they were surprised, firstly that they didn’t know and secondly that they hadn’t thought to investigate the meaning of the word themselves. Once I had learnt the meaning of Booborowie, I brought it up at relevant times and it was clear that the people I was speaking with had not heard this information before. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that mid-northern settler descendants do not readily reflect on town names of European origin either.

While town names are disconnected from settler descendants’ own family and personal experience, the names of paddocks are more personally relevant and
settler descendants are more likely to think about how or why a paddock on their property received its name. Freeholder descendants’ consciousness of the past is orientated around their own family. This is one key reason many of my interviewees have difficulties recognising that others (both European and Aboriginal) lived on that land prior to their family’s arrival. Paddock names are understood as being derived from the time in which their forebears were present in the district. Linking names of paddocks with ruins and previous occupants takes contemplation and imagination if the lives and stories of those people are no longer remembered because current residents have no connection with those people.

I asked Max Rayner how the paddocks on The Bluff got their names. Max answered ‘I’ve often wondered that myself. One in front of the house we’ve always called Pulparra. I don’t know why’. Max immediately followed this with ‘another one [paddock] was the One Tree, easy because there was one tree on it’ before seamlessly moving on to the topic of vegetation clearance.91 After telling me how he worked out that some of the paddocks on Mackerode were named after shepherds, Andrew Gebhardt named these paddocks, saying ‘Griffiths, Summerville, Wildotta – there’s a fellow called Wildotta and he probably looked after the area’.92 Andrew did not change his tone of voice when he said Wildotta. I reflected aloud ‘Wildotta – that almost sounds Aboriginal’ to which Andrew replied enthusiastically ‘yes, it does in a way’ and concluding ‘so that’s how [they got their names]’. Wanting to understand more about Wildotta’s and the other shepherds’ lives, I asked if the ruins were near soaks or creeks. Andrew replied in the affirmative before telling me about a paddock called The Swamp which he ‘discovered’ by ‘reading through some older records’ that ‘it was a swamp, it was actually a swamp’.93

Both Geoff and Rollo, somewhat hesitatingly, recognised that ‘Piltimittiappa’ and ‘Ketchowla’ were Aboriginal words. Max and Andrew did not appear to have

91 Max Rayner, 18 May 2010.
92 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
93 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
contemplated the Aboriginal origins of the words ‘Pul-parra’ or ‘Wildotta’. When prompted or provided with an opportunity to comment or muse on the significance or meaning of these words and places, all quickly moved onto different topics. Is this lack of perception and reflection regarding the Aboriginal origins and meanings of places – which, when extended to the numerous town names of Aboriginal origin, is broadly applicable across the district – symptomatic, as Mitchell Rolls would suggest, of a confected ignorance, an averted gaze?94

In understanding this disconnect, the physical absence of traditional owners living in the North-Eastern Highlands throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries needs to be considered, as does the culture through which settler descendants read and interpret the world. Neither memory nor a consciousness of the past are independent of cultural influences but are shaped by them. Penny Summerfield argues that ‘understanding is integral to memory and, like any other knowledge, it is constructed from the language and concepts available to the person remembering’.95 Differences in language, religion, worldviews, ways of being – all are of significance when considering settler descendants’ seeming difficulties in connecting their known world and traditional Aboriginal life. The Ngadjuri language, little known among Ngadjuri descendants, linguists and anthropologists, is unknown among mid-northern settler descendants. In addition to the linguistic unintelligibility, there is a vast gulf between nineteenth-century European/contemporary mainstream Australian culture and traditional and nineteenth-century Aboriginal culture. Al, Max, Andrew and Angus can make sense of paddock names such as Swamp Paddock, One Tree, Wombat, or names such as Griffiths or McDonalds, or town names such as Laura or Gladstone, first, because they understand the meaning of these English words, and second, because these names can be made sense of within their cultural frame.

Although it took a leap of imagination for Andrew Gebhardt and Uncle Al to connect paddock names with people who may have lived in the district prior to the

arrival of their forebears, this was nevertheless a possibility, as the naming of paddocks after their European occupants falls within their cultural and social understandings. Settler descendants can make sense of these European words and they can imagine European people’s presence there. The language of words such as ‘Pul-parra’ and ‘Wildotta’ is unknown to settler descendants; there is no starting point with which to interpret the meaning of these placenames.

In addition, when the meaning of an Aboriginal word *is* known (and perhaps half of the people I spoke were aware that owie means ‘water’), European land-use practices have altered the country so that in many places there is now little conjuncture between the name and the place. The waterholes or soaks which initially attracted European settlement and provided the names for towns and settlements are no longer recognisable due to falling water-tables, ploughed over watercourses and the construction of dams. *If* the meanings of these Aboriginal placenames are known, the meanings rarely accord with current day reality. The name therefore remains abstract and meaningless.

In making sense of the past, settler descendants draw on their own experiences and understand the environment as it would have been prior to European invasion. Few of my interviewees can imagine places on their properties as sites of Aboriginal occupation. When directly asked, most settler descendants say they can’t think of any. My cousin Angus asked me if Aboriginal people ever lived in the valley. Max Rayner said there were ‘no springs on the Bluff’ and ‘I think down on that open flat country it would be too jolly cold, I think, in the winter time and they’d be back in the scrub country’.⁹⁶ Lived experiences of the Booborowie Valley as dry and cold and lacking in native vegetation and wildlife are projected onto understandings of the pre-colonial past and used to explain or justify the perception that the valley would not have been a popular place for Aboriginal people to reside before European invasion.

During my first interview with Andrew Gebhardt, he told me that he knew Aboriginal people were around when the colonists arrived because ST Gill painted

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⁹⁶ Max Rayner, 18 May 2010.
Aboriginal people in his watercolours of the district, and several prints of these paintings hung on the walls at Mackerode. When I asked Andrew if he had ‘ever [found] any indications of Aboriginal people’ on Mackerode, he replied: ‘no, no’ before referring to the aforementioned cut-out in the hills, where he could imagine people living ‘because it’s like a sort of cave … sheltered and there is water down below’. Andrew then stated ‘whenever I’m in Australian countryside I always imagine Aboriginals living there’ because:

When I was a kid, about 15, some mates of mine from school, and we went on a camping trip up north, near to the Flinders and I’ll never forget coming to these cross roads. We looked up and there was an Aboriginal standing on a – a bit like these kangaroos – on the horizon, with a spear and one leg up, and I have never forgotten ever since and I thought “that person lives here”. That was a long time ago, but – and it wouldn’t have been for much longer because they were all gone. But I’ll never forget it. And since that day I’ve always imagined where people would have lived, where would they have done their paintings.97

Andrew said ‘Out-East of Burra to Baldina Creek you’ll see a lot of Aboriginal carvings … Just out of Burra, near Baldina Creek’. There are ‘turtles and tortoises, emus and stuff, just carved into the rocks. So they definitely lived out there. Well, that would have been permanent water too’. These carvings and the Gill paintings provided Andrew with tangible and culturally intelligible evidence that Aboriginal people resided in those areas. Andrew continued ‘And there might be some carvings somewhere else but I’ve never seen them on Mackerode. But I’ve never really hunted around, but it doesn’t lend itself, the creeks aren’t –’.

Andrew and Max drew on their experiences of a lack of water on their properties which they project onto the pre-colonial past to understand the lack of signs of Aboriginal occupation. James Fentress and Chris Wickham point out that the embedding of memory in present experience ‘can also be at the root of its

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97 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
weakness as a source of knowledge of the past’. 98 David Lowenthal poignantly states that ‘we selectively perceive what we are accustomed to seeing; features and patterns in the landscape make sense to us because we share a history with them ... previous experience suffuses all present perception’. 99 Although Andrew had ‘discovered’ through looking at historical records that the paddock he has always known as Swamp Paddock ‘actually was a swamp’ and despite tentatively imagining Aboriginal people spending time in the cut-out in the hills, Andrew didn’t think Mackerode ‘lent itself’ as a place for Aboriginal people to spend time on. 100 Andrew’s lived experience outweighed what he had more recently learned or what he imagined.

Rollo Dare, Max Rayner and Andrew Gebhardt appeared unable to imagine a world in which paddocks or places would take their names from either pre-existing place names or from Aboriginal people who were part of pastoral life. During interviews, these squatter and freeholder descendants indicated that they had difficulties perceiving a world of Aboriginal–settler communication, accommodation and cooperation, a world in which Aboriginal people were employed as shepherds and their assistance acknowledged by their employees just as European shepherds and other residents were acknowledged.

The need for cultural context, the need to recognise the connection between culture and memory, extends beyond nomenclature to physical signs of Aboriginal occupation. To the knowledgeable person who is familiar with and knows how to read the signs, the mid-north may be littered with traces of Aboriginal occupation. However, most mid-northern settler descendants do not see, or rather do not know how to interpret and make sense of, these traces, because they are unfamiliar with traditional Aboriginal culture. In Hallett, Marlene Richards refers to Aboriginal ovens Out-East of Mt Bryan. When I asked him, Geoff Dare said he never came across any ovens although he recognised he was ‘not experienced

100 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
enough to recognise those sorts of locations’. 101 Max Rayner, Angus and others told me they saw no signs of Aboriginal occupation on their properties. During discussions with both Melva and Angus we talked about Ketchowla where rocks along the creek-line are covered with Aboriginal engravings. Angus said he never noticed the engravings. Melva said she ‘used to go out to Ketchowla and [she] saw the engravings but didn’t know what they were’. 102

When arguing that cultural prejudice affects what is preserved, Lowenthal makes the point that features in the landscape which reflect shame may be deliberately ignored or expunged. It is worth pointing out that these signs of Aboriginal occupation in the North-Eastern Highlands, while not recognised or understood by many settler descendants today, have not been deliberately damaged or destroyed by previous generations of settler descendants. At the time of writing Hallett, Richards notes that these Aboriginal ovens were still obvious in the landscape. When speaking of the engravings at Ketchowla, Rollo Dare told me that the Dearloves (the owners of the property on which the engravings are sited) kept quiet about the engravings because they didn’t want ‘bloody hooligans’ going out there and vandalising the site or writing their names on the rocks. 103 The Aboriginal paintings near the Burra Creek are been valued and preserved through generations of European occupation.

Once we are taught how to see and read them, signs of Aboriginal occupation may become apparent in unexpected places. During a site visit to a property Out-East of Burra in the presence of archaeologist Keryn Walshe, our host Ian Warnes took us to a vast swamp which neighboured his property Woolgangi. Keryn’s attention was immediately drawn to a glass bottleneck which lay in the dirt under a stunted tree. Had Keryn not told me otherwise, I would have assumed the broken bottle was a sign of European presence and paid no more attention to this piece. Keryn recognised the bottleneck as a deliberately shaped tool used for planing spears. This knowledge enabled me to readily imagine a Ngadjuri man sitting under the

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101 Geoff Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Hove, 14 May 2010.
102 Angus Murray, 19 May 2010.
103 Rollo Dare, 10 July 2010.
tree, refining his hunting weapons, well into the pastoral era. This image made me aware of the short distance between Aboriginal presence and absence. However, I had to be taught to recognise the significance of the glass bottleneck.

Figure 31. Bottleneck lying under a tree, station neighbouring Woolgangi.
Figure 32. Close-up of bottleneck.

The recognition of Chinese gardens

The importance of one’s own experience, combined with the experiences of one’s forebears and the cultural context through which physical traces of the past are remembered, was highlighted when I heard mid-northern settler descendants’ stories of Chinese gardeners. While Aboriginal people and Aboriginal presence are scarcely remembered or referred to in the Booborowie district, several people commented on the historical presence of Chinese gardeners.104 Jean Holmes spoke of a Chinese gardener who ‘grew the vegetables for the station [Booborowie station] – Mum said he lived in Schwarz’s house, across the road from where we lived.105 Jean showed me the site of the garden.

Andrew Gebhardt recalled a Chinese garden at both Mackerode and Woollana. He recalled that when his cousins came from Woollana over to Mackerode for school (with the governess), the Chinese gardener would come with them on the bike.

104 Jean Holmes, 7 June 2010.
105 Jean Holmes, 7 June 2010.
Andrew also spoke of 'a Chinese garden just out of Burra, the walls and waterways were still there'. Julia Clarke (née Gebhardt) used to go to this place with her mother and siblings for picnics. In December 2012, Julia and I visited the site. There was stagnant water in the creek and various stunted fruit trees which were still living, but we had to use our imaginations to see where the walls of the extensive garden once stood. If we hadn't known – if we hadn't been told – we would never have known this place was once a productive market garden tended by a Chinese man.

Figure 33. Chinese garden, east of Woollana.

Eighty-seven-year-old Wirrabara resident Peter Hollitt also spoke of Chinese gardeners. He told me that, at his farm (Burnside Farm), in the nineteenth century, there used to be:

nineteen Chinamen gardening – just 400 yards up the creek ... They lived out on the flat where they used to garden, they used to have – they used to lease it of o’ Grandfather ... They had a joss house, they used to 106

Andrew didn’t ‘remember the gardener or the garden’ but thought that the presence of Chinese gardeners at that time ‘might be something to do with the war, lots of people had Italian gardeners who were prisoners of war’, 14 June 2010.
call it, it was their own church and living quarters. They used to pump water out of the creek up here with an old steam engine. In 1899 they bought an oil engine.¹⁰⁷

The steam engine is now on display in Booleroo Centre. Peter spoke of ‘an old oven that they used to cook in’; ‘the oven was built up above the ground. [The Chinese] would heat it up with a fire from underneath, they reckon they could fit a full pig in there and cook it ... it would have been [gestures with his hands] about so deep’.¹⁰⁸ At some stage during Peter’s working life, a foal fell into the oven and ‘we had to wreck half of it [the oven] getting it out’. His father was ‘about ten’ years old when the Chinese men left. Peter’s stories of the Chinese men were vivid. He told me about the vegetables they grew, where they sold their produce, about their drinking and gambling and why they left the district. When Peter took me for a drive, he showed me the remains of the oven, the pipe in the creek which used to connect to the pump and the contours of the garden. While in that paddock, Peter was reminded of stories his father told him about the Chinese gardeners. While in the paddock, we also saw numerous magnificent gums which had been burnt out by Nukunu centuries ago to serve as shelters with openings to the south-east.

During our interview, before telling me about the Chinese gardeners and before taking me to the paddock where the Chinese men lived, I asked Peter if he ‘ever heard any stories of Aboriginal people in the area’. Peter replied ‘no, there was never – or very few Aboriginal people – were ever around here that I know of’. He corrected himself by stating ‘but they would have been here, of course, because up at the Chinamans Flat ... there’s a – all the trees are burnt out where they used to live’.¹⁰⁹ Later, after hearing about the Chinese men, I asked Peter if he had any stories he could remember about the early years. Peter replied in the negative, after which I told him that I thought the Chinese market gardeners were interesting and brought up the burnt-out Aboriginal trees. In the Wirrabara district I had noticed not only shelter trees but trees which had had their bark removed for

¹⁰⁷ Peter Hollitt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burnside Farm, 7 July 2010.
¹⁰⁸ Peter Hollitt, 7 July 2010.
¹⁰⁹ Peter Hollitt, 7 July 2010.
shields, woomeras and coolamons (known as ‘culturally modified trees’). This prompted me to ask Peter if he ‘had seen any scar trees, trees from which things like shields had been cut out’. Peter said ‘no, never seen anything like that up there’ and that he’d ‘never heard his father talk about Aboriginal people’. Peter said they must have been here ‘originally, before they [the Europeans] sort of settled here’ and they must have ‘just moved when the white people came’, because ‘they are wanderers’ and there ‘might not have been any animals for them to eat and that sort of thing’.  

![Figure 34. Remains of Chinese oven, Burnside Farm, Wirrabara.](image)

Peter had detailed stories of Chinese people’s life in the district. Peter’s father had told him these stories, which dated back to the 1890s. He had no stories of the Nukunu. While there is tangible evidence of both Chinese and Nukunu people’s historical presence in the same paddock on Burnside Farm, Peter had to think twice before remembering that Aboriginal people must have lived in the district at some point. There are several interconnected observations to make regarding Peter’s stories and knowledge of Chinese people and lack of stories and knowledge.

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110 Peter Hollitt, 7 July 2010.
of Aboriginal people. Peter’s relative, Josiah Hollitt, said that the Aboriginal people packed up and left in 1874 (before Peter’s father was born). In his written reminiscences, Josiah Hollitt did not mention the Nukunu returning to camp on the Hollitts’ place. It seems likely that neither Peter’s father nor his grandfather had any meaningful or enduring first-hand relations with the Nukunu. In contrast, the Chinese men lived permanently in close proximity to the Hollitts for over a decade. As the stories of George Cameron’s descendants poignantly demonstrate, the lived experiences of one’s forebears are crucial to the stories and knowledge that are passed down through the generations.

![Figure 35. Culturally modified shelter tree, Burnside Farm, Wirrabara.](image1)

![Figure 36. Remains of culturally modified shelter tree, Burnside Farm.](image2)

In addition, signs of Chinese occupation are culturally intelligible to Europeans and their descendants. The oven was built of dressed and carefully laid stones and both the labour involved and the shape of the oven were readily recognisable. The Chinese used pumps, one of which could still be viewed at Booleroo Centre. Their gardening and marketing skills, their gambling, all are culturally recognisable as signs of habitation, occupation and everyday life for people of a European background. In contrast, tangible traces of Aboriginal occupation (abundant in the

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Wirrabara district) fall outside this cultural logic – trees are not houses, scars on
trees are ‘natural’, people who do not farm the land or labour to build permanent
dwellings do not own the land. This cultural disjunction, coupled with a dominant
settler-colonial historical epistemology which constructs Aboriginal people as
absent, wandering, uncivilised and primitive, makes conceptualising Aboriginal
people as residents and owners difficult for many (particularly older) settler
descendants.

When I was speaking with Robert Milne, he spoke of ‘a lone tree, he’s a bigger tree’
which stands ‘out on the paddock to your right’ as you drive up the drive-way to
the White Park homestead. I had already noticed this tree and taken some
photographs of it. Robert said:

And in the early 1900s when Wirrabara was settled, someone used to
write a little paper, Wirrabara Tribune, or Wirrabara Chronicle or
whatever. And in the middle of the front page up the top there’s a gum
tree and that’s that gum tree, and you can put it [i.e. the newspaper]
there [i.e. next to the tree] and sort of look at it, and well, that limb’s
fallen off but all the rest are still there. And so, that’s one hundred
years again, and so if it hasn’t changed in that hundred years, well
what about the hundred years before that, and before that.  

Although Robert was aware that this tree dated back centuries before European
occupation and although aware of my interest in the Aboriginal people who lived
in the district on European arrival, and despite its massive hollowed out trunk,
during our conversation Robert made no reference to Aboriginal people or gave
any indication that he could imagine or comprehend the tree’s significance for
Aboriginal people. Like other settler descendants I spoke with, the numerous signs
and traces of the past which are significant to Robert are those which are culturally
intelligible and which are connected with people whose culture he knows how to
read and with which he can identify.

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Writing about north-west NSW, Heather Goodall notes that ‘local-history museums and local-history publications ‘never record the land in terms of its Aboriginal significance or stories’. Goodall understands that it is ‘uneasiness about the lack of attachment of white stories, history, culture and ownership on to the land’ which has led ‘amateur historians, archaeologists and nationalists to try to fix white history to the earth’. I suggest that for settler descendants who live in the Wirrabara district and the North-Eastern Highlands, the numerous stories

connected with markers of European occupation, the ready reference to Chinese occupation and the lack of stories about Aboriginal occupation are not best understood as an ‘uneasiness’ over ‘white’ attachment to place. Rather, it is the lived experiences of both nineteenth-century settlers and their descendants, coupled with the cultural frame through which they (past and present) view and make sense of the world, that provide a one-sided and limited understanding of the stories inherent in land.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that the experiences of nineteenth-century settlers need to be taken into account when examining their descendants' consciousness of the colonial past. Mid-northern settler descendants' knowledge and awareness of the colonial past is orientated around their first forebear to arrive in the district. Settler descendants' lack of recognition that ruins in paddocks and paddock names may predate their family's presence in the district illustrates this point. Generally, it is stories of one's own forebears that are transferred down the generations. As such, an awareness of the timing in which the 'first forebear' arrived and historical research regarding the extent and calibre of his interactions with Aboriginal people can further understandings into the absence of Aboriginal people in settler descendants' historical consciousness. The rapid and dramatic decline of the Aboriginal population in both the North-East Highlands and the Wirrabara district needs to be taken into account. By closely examining if and what stories of the squatters/early pastoralists are told and juxtaposing this with the stories that are told about Aboriginal people, and by taking into account the concrete workings of memory, we are better placed to understand settler descendants' *disconnect*. In addition, the cultural disjuncture between Aboriginal and European society and the transformation or destruction of natural features and waters inhibit many settler descendants' recognition that the land was previously owned and occupied by Aboriginal people. Settler descendants are culturally illiterate when it comes to hearing and seeing traces of Aboriginal habitation.
Chapter 8: ‘I had a very lucky childhood’

When speaking with my mother about her formative years at Cappeedee, she reflected ‘I had a very lucky childhood’. Other members of my mother’s family expressed similar sentiments – my cousin Angus said ‘I had a very lucky and lovely upbringing’ and my Uncle Andy recalled ‘it was a great life, very enjoyable ... a very pleasant, great existence’. My maternal family’s childhood memories are grounded in and inseparably linked to Cappeedee. Aware of the importance of place to their ‘lucky’ lives, my relatives do not take for granted their forebears’ ability to prosper in the new colony and consequently acquire the land which become the family property. My mother’s family understand that it was our forebears’ skill at sheep breeding which enabled John Murray and his sons to purchase various properties which included Cappeedee. As Angus put it:

They [the Murrays] used to make a lot of money selling rams, all the money they made, every property they bought, was all from selling rams. It wasn’t from the wool cut or anything like that, it was from selling rams ... The first one that came out, John Murray, must have been an amazing man. He’s the one that set up the foundations for the following generations ... He applied more science to his breeding than a lot of people do nowadays.

John Murray’s descendants’ personal sense of good fortune incorporates an awareness of how their forebears came to acquire land and how they were able to have their ‘lovely’ and ‘lucky’ childhoods. Maybe their sense of their forebears’ good fortune has influenced their own sense of luck or vice versa. That is, because my interviewees have had fortunate lives, they project their sense of good fortune onto their forebears and/or because their forebears have had fortunate lives, my interviewees have grown up listening to stories and absorbing ways of being that focus on their own good fortune (rather than hardships suffered). Paul Connerton

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117 Angus Murray, 19 May 2010.
recognises and describes the dialectic relationship between knowledge of the past and experience of the present:

Concerning memory as such, we may note that our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in a context which is causally connected with past events and objects, and hence with reference to events and objects which we are not experiencing when we are experiencing the present. And we will experience our present differently in accordance with the different pasts to which we are able to connect that present. Hence the difficulty of extracting our past from our present: not simply because present factors tend to influence — some might want to say distort — our recollections of the past, but also because past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experience of the present.\footnote{Paul Connerton, \textit{How Societies Remember} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.}

Regardless which direction this sense of historical consciousness flows — from past to present or present to past, or in both directions simultaneously — common among the settler descendants I have spoken with is a sense that a combination of their forebears’ determined and enterprising personality and a series of fortunate events enabled them to prosper.

Max Rayner told me how his grandfather ‘came over here [South Australia] with a sovereign and then ended up owning The Bluff’:

He was evidently a good athlete. In those days, the very early days, I’ve heard my father saying that athletics meetings were quite common, they were held everywhere … he got a start with making money running. And he, Dad said, he, one day in particular, he won lots of bets and match-races and the like and got a start with some bullocks, to form a bullock team. And, errh, an Englishman came out — a settler — and some of the people there who knew about Rayner said “Well, we’ve got a man here who might blow your colours today”. And this
Englishman, he was a noted runner, and that was his sport I suppose. And he looked at this bullocky with his boots on and clothes ... they had four or five races, in the finish he gave the Englishman several yards start to beat him and, um, he made £50 that day. Which bought him a pair of bullocks. He bought two bullocks from the days running ... I didn't think he did too badly to start with a sovereign and in sixty odd years get to own The Bluff.\(^{119}\)

Max understands that it was his grandfather’s athletic skills that gave him the break and enabled him to build up funds and purchase The Bluff.

For Gustav Gebhardt’s descendants, Gustav’s personality and the loyalty of town residents gave him his break. Andrew Gebhardt told me:

Gustav went up to Burra because that’s where the mine was. He was a butcher by trade ... he went up there because there was work there and he worked for a butcher. One day he bought some cattle for the butcher but he wasn’t given authority to do it and the butcher wasn’t too happy so he decided to leave, or he got sacked, or something happened and he started up his own shop. After a while the butcher he was working for got his cart and cut all the wheels off and threw them in the creek. When the people of Burra heard about that, they went to my great-grandfather’s butcher shop instead of the other, and so away he went.\(^{120}\)

When Andrew says ‘and so away he went’, he is referring to Gustav’s acquisition of thousands of acres of land across South Australia. For Rollo and Geoff Dare, Billy Dare’s partnership with his friends Chewings and Hiles and his success on the Victorian gold fields enabled Billy to acquire land. Rollo told me that Billy ‘didn’t have any dough before he came back [from the gold diggings], and then he bought 16 square miles of Out-Eastern country. He, Chewings and Hiles began by helping

\(^{119}\) Max Rayner, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 18 May 2010.
\(^{120}\) Andrew Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 14 June 2010.
each other and working together’. As illustrated in previous chapters, family stories convey loaded messages about family identity and the legacies of previous generations’ experiences. My interviewees’ foundation stories were of enterprise, special skills, talent and being in the right place at the right time. They were stories of good fortune.

The settler as victim

This perception of good fortune contrasts starkly with what is perceived by various influential scholars as a pervading sense of victimhood in white Australian historical consciousness. The original proponent of the Australian ‘victimological’ theory, Ann Curthoys, argues ‘there is a special charge associated with the status of victim in Australian historical consciousness’. According to Curthoys, ‘non-Aboriginal Australians’ are notably ‘good’ at ‘memorialising their own suffering’ and ‘the attraction to failure and defeat’ is a powerful part of Australian historical consciousness. Curthoys understands that ‘the emphasis in white Australian popular historical mythology on the settler as victim works against substantial acknowledgement and understanding of a colonial past’. Curthoys’ thesis has been widely accepted by scholars working in a variety of fields. For example, Lorenzo Veracini refers to Curthoys when he notes that to redescribe ‘one’s intellectual state of mind from victimised to victimiser’ would be ‘difficult’ due to the persistent power of a settler ideology. John Docker draws on Curthoys’ evocation of ‘the power of victimology in white Australian popular historical consciousness’ to explore the ‘epistemological vertigo’ of Australian’s who find it difficult to regard themselves as the victimisers of others. As the originator of the ‘victimological’ theory, an examination of Curthoys’ argument can shed light on

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121 Rollo Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Centre, 10 July 2010.
123 Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, Exodus and Exile’, 3, original emphasis.
the disjuncture between her findings regarding white Australian historical consciousness and my findings regarding the historical consciousness of mid-northern settler descendants.

I reiterate my argument that the experiences of previous and current generations affect mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past. Richard Slotkin, Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, Geoffrey Cubitt and Klaus Neumann are among scholars who, in different ways and with different interests, argue that myth and memory are based on events which have actually been experienced. Historical research enables us to better understand the applicability or irrelevance of certain myths for different groups. The colonial experience was and is diverse. Not all myths – or theories based on these myths – are necessarily applicable to all ‘white Australians’ or ‘settler Australians’. To better understand Australians’ historical consciousness and foundation myths, we need to investigate the actual experiences of both current and previous generations. In chapters 2 and 3, I examined my interviewees’ lived experiences. In the previous chapter (chapter 7), I provided historical context to differentiate between squatters/pastoralists’ and freeholders’ experiences of cross-cultural interactions. In this chapter, I focus on my interviewees’ forebears’ encounters with the natural environment.

In her analysis of Australian foundation narratives, Curthoys extends John Hirst’s investigation into the mythologisation of the early settlers and Deborah Bird Rose’s investigation into Australian foundation myths which, Rose argues, draw on Judeo-Christian myths of expulsion and exile. In tracing the origins of ‘The Pioneer Legend’ in Australia, Hirst noted that, by the 1890s, the term ‘pioneer’ had come to be applied to the people who first settled and worked the land, whether as pastoralists or farmers. Hirst provides a history of how, why and when the term ‘pioneer’ came into being and makes it clear that ‘pioneers as settlers and national heroes were the creation of poets and writers’. Curthoys defines pioneers as ‘free migrants drawn mainly from Britain and Ireland’ and ‘a loose general

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category of early settlers, noted for their difficult victory in the task of settlement’. Both Curthoys and Hirst reiterate how the legend is used for nationalistic purposes.

As free migrants and agriculturalists who were among the first to purchase land from the colonial government, the forebears of the people I have been speaking with readily fall into the category of ‘pioneers’. Throughout the mid-north, the word ‘pioneer’ regularly appears on monuments, plaques and signs which pay tribute to those who were present when towns and districts were established. In such cases, the term ‘pioneer’ stands collectively for all who were present in the district in the early years of its official founding. Several local history books refer to nineteenth-century settlers as ‘pioneers’; however, the general tendency in these written histories is to distinguish between different types of settlers, such as ‘squatter’, ‘pastoralist’, ‘freeholder’, ‘farmer’ or ‘townspeople’. In everyday life and during interviews and informal conversations, settler descendants do not use the word ‘pioneer’ when referring to their forebears.

Although they speak of their forebears’ enterprise and hard work, in fundamental ways my interviewees’ perception of their forebears and their forebears’ acquisition of land does not accord with the legendary ‘pioneer’ outlined by Hirst and drawn on by Curthoys. My research indicates that, by remaining on place and among others with shared histories, my interviewees’ historical consciousness is primarily grounded in their own and their forebears’ lived experiences, family stories, the places in which they live and the social networks in which they are ensconced. Similarly, in his close examination and comparison of the historical consciousness of residents of two towns, Klaus Neumann found that the histories of these towns were ‘marked by the emergence and refashioning of local rather than national identities’. I have found that national foundation myths and discourses – the creations of nationalistic poets and writers, politicians and journalists – are influential among mid-northern settler descendants in as far as

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these narratives and discourses accord with their personal experiences and those of their forebears.

**Struggle with the land**

Curthoys and Rose argue that Judeo-Christian themes of exile, expulsion and exodus are present in Australian foundation myths. They draw attention to the parallels between the original exodus in which Israelites, fleeing their oppressors in Egypt, conquered and occupied the promised land of Canaan and the colonisation of Australia. Curthoys states:

> The earlier victimhood warrants the later aggression. The biblical narrative of Exodus rests on a rhetoric of victimisation. A persecuted past is invoked to legitimate present policy. Conquest is justified by the injustices of the past and a new society and people is created through the displacement and destruction of another people.\(^{132}\)

Rose and Veracini state that it is common for settler-colonial societies to evoke, reproduce and engage with the exodus story.\(^{133}\) As such, they suggest there is a collective unconscious or grammar of tropes and archetypes which determine the structure of all myth/ideological expressions and which are universally applicable to diverse societies and cultures with different geographies and histories.\(^{134}\)

Recognising variations in national foundation myths and nationalist discourses, Curthoys, Rose and Veracini argue that it is Australia’s unique environment and convict origins which differentiate Australian foundation myths and the historical consciousness of the Australian population from those of other settler-colonial countries. Because of the climate and environs and because of the nation’s convict origins, Rose understands the myth of expulsion as more relevant to Australia’s

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foundation than myths or dreams of liberation implied by any exodus myth. Rose argues that while Americans believed they were migrating to the promised land, ‘Australia, in contrast, was from the first conceived as hell on earth’.135 Endorsing Rose’s interpretation of Australia as being perceived as an alien and inhospitable land, Curthoys draws on the writings of literary critic Peter Otto:

The popular narrative of horror in the desert, of the land and the landscape as the malignant unknown, is not innocent, or transparent. Rather, it offers a colonial society a way of displacing the conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples onto a more acceptable narrative of a direct conflict between the settler and the land itself. The land and the indigenous people become merged, the former foregrounded, the latter denied a place in history at all.136

Curthoys qualifies Rose’s argument, stating that in the Australian case the story of exile sits together with the story of exodus.137 Curthoys argues that ‘notions of exile and exodus permeate some key figures in Australian history, the convicts and the pioneers’.138 She links Hirst’s thesis regarding depictions of the pioneers as overcoming ‘difficulties in the task of settlement’ with theories which understand settlers as perceiving the Australian environment as hostile and alienating:

The victimological narrative, protean, durable and endlessly resurrected, involves, as well as the convicts, the free immigrants drawn mainly from Britain and Ireland … the “pioneers”, a loose general category of early settlers, noted for their difficult victory in their task of settlement … thought to have endured the harshest continent on earth … to carve out a living from an often unforgiving land.139

135 Rose, ‘Rupture and the Ethics of Care, 205.
137 Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, Exodus and Exile’, 5.
Andrew Lattas likewise refers to the ‘pervasive’ and ‘officially sanctioned’ discourse of ‘white Australians’ as alienated from and suffering due to the environment. Lattas states that this ‘national theme of self-alienation’ is ‘made to haunt them [Australians]. It is something they haunt themselves with. It is a ghost that is perpetually circulated’. According to Lattas, in Australian nationalist discourse, the pioneers’, the artists’ and the explorers’ alienation from the land takes on the ‘epic proportions of a pilgrimage that redeems and heals the nation’. In conservative political discourse, the suffering of pioneers and explorers ‘becomes white settler society’s right of ownership to the land’. Each of these scholars (Rose, Curthoys and Lattas) indicate their understanding that myths of settlers battling an inhospitable land are relevant among ‘white Australians’ across the nation.

However, while the lack of acknowledgement of the suffering that Aboriginal people have endured under colonialism may be widespread and seemingly universal among non-Aboriginal Australians, the reasons for and the origins of this disconnect vary. I argue that mid-northern settler descendants do not draw on myths of settlers’ struggles with a hostile land, that their consciousness of the colonial past is not shaped by nationalist discourses of settlers as ‘alienated’ from their environment and they are not haunted by such a theme. My interviewees have no sense of their forebears as victims – it is not a victimological narrative that inhibits their empathy for Aboriginal people or their recognition of the injustice of colonisation. For three reasons, the arguments put forward and conclusions drawn by Curthoys, Rose and Lattas are not necessarily applicable for the mid-northern settler descendants I spoke with. These are the broadness of their categories, the sources on which their analyses are based and the lack of accord between the myths they draw on and the historical experiences of nineteenth-century mid-northern settlers.

The inapplicability of homogenising theories

Lattas refers to ‘white Australians’, Cuthoys to ‘Australian historical consciousness’, Rose to ‘white Australian understandings’. By implying that their theories are valid for a homogenous and wide-ranging group of non-Aboriginal Australians, these scholars do not recognise the either the diversity of the colonial experience or, relatedly, variations in Australian’s historical consciousness. References to myths of exile and expulsion indicate a perception that the convict foundations of various states are widely applicable and relevant across Australia; this emphasis on the penal origins of ‘white Australia’ exemplifies the homogenisation of the settler-colonial experience. South Australia was not a convict state and analyses which draw on myths of expulsion and exile are not useful for furthering understandings into South Australians’ historical consciousness. Exile implies compulsory departure and little hope of return – at least for a set period of time. Rather than being expelled from their place of origin, those who came to South Australia made a conscious decision to establish a new life in the new colony. Nor were their ties to home necessarily severed. Historical records indicate that literate and semi-literate people communicated regularly with friends and relatives in Britain and Europe and that some migrants returned to their place of origin.144

While notions of exile and expulsion may usefully be applied to deepen understandings of the foundation myths of states with convict origins, such as New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land, they are not relevant for South Australian foundation myths. A more accurate understanding of the colonial experience can be gained by recognising differences in the timing and motivation for each colony’s establishment, and differences in the social and natural environments that colonists encountered and occupied. The environment played a crucial role in shaping and affecting newcomers’ experiences and, consequently, determining

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144 See for example the letters of: Thomas Newman, free emigrant, labourer, to his mother in London, 22 April 1837; Robert and Jane Bristow, to family in Holborn, 4 June 1837; Robert Rankine, former ploughman, Angus station No. 1, Adelaide, South Australia, to Kirkman Flinlay, Esq, Castle Toward, 17 August 1838. The above letters are published in Theodore Scott, Description of South Australia: With Sketches of New South Wales, Port Phillip and New Zealand, (Glasgow: Duncan Campbell, 1839). See also Colin Kerr, A Exelent Coliney: The Practical Idealists of 1836-1846 (Rigby: Adelaide, 1978).
foundation myths. In addition, forced migration does not necessarily transfer into hardships suffered on arrival. In *Van Diemen's Land* James Boyce notes that the convicts sent to Van Diemen’s Land did not necessarily view their new environment, their circumstances or the emerging society negatively and that the ‘hardships endured in Sydney were a local rather than a universal experience’.145

In evaluating ‘white Australians’ historical consciousness and perceptions of and relations with the land, Curthoys, Rose and Lattas appear to draw on secondary sources and public discourses rather than interviews, site visits and fieldwork conducted with real people who fall under the category ‘white Australians’. Investigating ‘the Australian historical consciousness’, Curthoys examines ‘histories, novels, feature journalism, painting, film and television, poetry, theatre, popular song and … public political debate’ and draws heavily on the insights of literary critic Peter Otto.146 Lattas’s analysis of the theme of white settler alienation from their environment focuses on the discursive strategies articulated in diverse forms such as ‘art criticism, literary criticism, Christian theology, conservationism and political commentary’.147 In her critique of Australian foundation myths, Rose refers to the insights and scholarly work of Ross Gibson, Russel Ward and Andrew Lattas and the views of the ‘father of federation’, English migrant Henry Parkes.148 Rose dismisses the views of the ‘upper and middle classes’ because they are ‘so well represented in public discourse they need not be reviewed’.149

Undoubtedly scholars, writers and artists see things that others do not; literature and art are transformational in that each ‘inscribes what we do not yet know of our lived historical relation to events of our times’.150 At the same time, it is worth bearing in mind that poets, artists, scholars and writers create and make traditions as well as reflecting them.151 I base my investigation into mid-northern settler

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descendants’ historical consciousness on interviews, conversations, fieldwork and site visits conducted with real people, situated in specific places, at a specific time.

There is a third key reason for the disjuncture between my understandings of mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness and the understandings of scholars who argue that a victimological narrative pervades Australian’s historical consciousness. Central to the victimological theory is the assumption that the myth of settlers’ battle with an inhospitable and alienating land is universally known and drawn on by the majority of white Australians. When Curthoys states that ‘Australian pioneers’ are ‘thought to have endured the harshest continent on earth’, that they are celebrated for managing to ‘carve a living from an often unforgiving land’\textsuperscript{152} and when Lattas notes that the ‘construction of white Australians as alienated from their environment’ has become a ‘pervasive’ and ‘officially sanctioned’ discourse\textsuperscript{153} and that the national theme of self-alienation (the theme of white settler Australians as alienated from their environment) is ‘a theme which haunts Australians’,\textsuperscript{154} both scholars imply these discourses and perceptions are widespread. When Rose states ‘since the first, Australia was perceived as hell on earth’, she implies that all newcomers to Australia perceived Australia as hell on earth and that this perception has continued. Heather Goodall reiterates this theme when she outlines what she perceives as two established accounts of what it is to be ‘rural’ in Australia. The first account is one in which English settlers acquired a pristine, \textit{harsh} environment and managed to make it productive. The second account is one of heroic \textit{failure} against an \textit{unrelenting} land.\textsuperscript{155}

I recognise that these scholars are not saying that newcomers actually occupied a harsh continent or that newcomers \textit{thought} they occupied a harsh continent. I understand these scholars to be saying that in nationalist discourse, popular

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\textsuperscript{152} Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, Exodus and Exile’, 6.
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mythology and Australian historical consciousness, these early colonists are perceived as having occupied a harsh continent and to have suffered because of this, and that it is this perception of early colonists’ suffering through their conquest of the land that has contributed to a prevailing sense of victimhood among current generations of Australian settlers. However, none of the sentiments apparent in these seemingly established accounts and dominant discourses were conveyed during my interviews and site visits with mid-northern settler descendants.

While my interviewees’ perception of their forebears as hardworking and enterprising aligned with the ‘pioneer’ of the pioneer legend outlined by Hirst, at no stage did my interviewees convey the impression that they perceived their forebears (pioneers by all definitions) as having occupied a harsh environment or as having suffered in their taming of the land or of themselves as feeling alienated from the land.156 Mid-northern settler descendants’ oral narratives, coupled with historical research into the lives of their forebears, call for a re-examination of the seemingly uncritical and unproblematic acceptance of the influence and validity of the myth of Australian settlers’ battles with an inhospitable land. The associated argument, that settlers and their descendants have drawn on perceptions of hardships suffered during their taming or conquest of the land as a means of conferring legitimacy of ownership, is not applicable to all ‘white Australians’.

**Recognising the lived experiences of nineteenth-century colonists**

Numerous scholars point out the correlation between lived experience, historical contingencies, history and myth. As Richard Slotkin states, myth has a human/historical rather than a natural or transcendent source and myth is continually modified by human experience and labour.157 Nathan Wachtel makes the pertinent observation that, when examining memory (or historical consciousness), criticism must ‘go back in time’ from the present moment to the

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156 Interviewees who lived Out-East (i.e. in pastoral rather than agricultural country) referred to a lack of water but conveyed no sense that their forebears suffered or had to battle with the land. Les Warnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 8 June 2010; Rollo Dare, interview with Skye Krichauff, Booleroo Centre, 10 July 2010.

time when the recollection was created.\textsuperscript{158} There is a correlation between the lived experiences of nineteenth-century mid-northern settlers and the narratives of their descendants. In order to closely analyse and more fully understand settler descendants’ (and indeed other white Australian’s) historical consciousness, the historical experiences of their forebears need to be taken into account. Not all (or even most) newcomers to this continent perceived the land they encountered as ‘hell on earth’ or ‘wilderness’.\textsuperscript{159} Environmental differences between colonies, regions and districts were (and are) extreme, as were (and are) the experiences and perceptions of newcomers and their descendants. By taking into account the specifics of place and the diversity of the colonial experience, by recognising variations in the historical consciousness of ‘white Australians’ and the reasons for these variations, we are better placed to understand how and why ‘white Australians’ know and relate to the colonial past. Historical records, nomenclature, contemporary narratives and understandings and the work of Bill Gammage indicate that, rather than being perceived as a wilderness in need of taming, much of the continent was historically perceived by the colonial invaders as a paradise.

Letters and reports written by eyewitnesses during the earliest years of the establishment of the colony of South Australia indicate the pleasure with which the country, fauna and flora were viewed.\textsuperscript{160} Vast areas were perceived as ideal grazing or cropping country, as simply requiring the addition of stock or the application of the plough to make these places productive. In 1838 newly arrived emigrant Stephen Hack described land on or near the Adelaide Plains as having ‘a large extent ... of first rate soil, black as ink, and a great deal without a tree upon it, and fit to plough up without any preparation, not a root or a stump in the way’.\textsuperscript{161} Writing from the shores of Glenelg, Stephen’s brother John described his appreciation for the natural resources:

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\textsuperscript{161} Henry Watson, \textit{A Lecture on South Australia including letters from JB Hack Esq. and other Emigrants} (London: J Gliddon, 1838), 18.
The best meat I ever tasted is kangaroo; it resembles hare more than anything I know, but we all pronounced it superior ... The harbour abounds with some of the finest fish in the world, particularly one as large as a cod, but far superior in flavour, called a snapper; then there are wild ducks, quails and pigeons in abundance, so no fear of our starving.\textsuperscript{162}

New arrivals were delighted to find acre after acre of rich farming land. In 1839 John Morphett described the country from Cape Jervis to the Adelaide Plains as ‘very picturesque, and generally well timbered, but in the disposition of the trees, more like an English park than what we could have imagined to be the character of untrodden wilds; it is, therefore, well suited for depasturing sheep, and in many places, under present circumstances, quite open enough for the plough’.\textsuperscript{163} In the same year, Theodore Scott stated that ‘the more inland parts of the country receive the highest recommendation for beauty and fertility. Wherever the foot of the explorer has yet been, we universally hear of the richness of the soil, the luxuriance of the grasses’.\textsuperscript{164}

Gammage comprehensively demonstrates how, through an elaborate fire regime which developed and was fine-tuned over millennia, Aboriginal people created templates which catered for the preferences of plants and animals – they constructed a landscape mosaic which offered ‘abundance, predictability, continuity and choice’.\textsuperscript{165} Areas which so pleased the colonists were created and skilfully maintained by Aboriginal people (as was all country throughout the continent). The European invaders did not (and indeed do not) recognise Aboriginal input when they viewed the land. In 1849 Snell Chauncy described the Barossa region in glowing terms, stating ‘here we were in the midst of an immense district, almost fresh from its Maker’s hands: man had scarcely interfered with it;

\textsuperscript{162} Watson, \textit{A Lecture on South Australia}, 12.
\textsuperscript{163} Scott provides an extract from a letter written by John Morphett, ‘whose information can be completely relied upon’, as Morphett was entrusted with managing various Englishmen’s colonial property (while they remained in England). This letter also referred to by the Colonisation Commissioners in their second annual report to the House of Commons. Scott, \textit{Description of South Australia}, 11.
\textsuperscript{164} Scott, \textit{Descriptions of South Australia}, 12.
\textsuperscript{165} Gammage, \textit{Biggest Estate on Earth}, 211–238, quote taken from 211.
and yet in beauty, and fertility, and grandeur, it exceeded anything I had ever seen
in our own lovely isle. This well maintained country was understood as
‘naturally’ domesticated.

The most fertile, most hospitable (to European eyes) land was rapidly occupied
within the first decade of the colony’s establishment; the Adelaide plains, Fleurieu
Peninsula, Adelaide Hills, Barossa, Clare and Gilbert Valleys, and the southern
Flinders Ranges (including the Wirrabara district) had abundant water,
magnificent gums and acre after acre of grassy plains. Names given to these places
– Eden Valley, Beautiful Valley, Meadows, Chain of Ponds, Crystal Brook – speak
volumes about the colonists’ perceptions of the land they rapidly invaded.

A map published in 1842 names the Booborowie Valley as ‘rich valley’. The
Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys had few trees, permanent springs, a high water-
table and rich grassland. According to Gammage ‘much grass and few trees was
a valuable and extensive association’ for Aboriginal people. The Mt Bryan Valley
contained a vast swamp. In inland areas ‘swamps were [pre-colonial Australia’s]
richest resource … they supplied fish, shellfish, birds, eggs, frogs, snakes, bulrush,
reeds, and nardoo, a staple harvested from wet alluvial soils for flour’. Prior to
the arrival of pastoralists, numerous creatures would have been attracted to these
valleys with their grassy plains, high water tables, diverse forms of life and reliable
and abundant water. It is highly likely that, over countless centuries, Aboriginal

167 ‘South Australia: Shewing the division into Counties of the Settled Portions of the Province From
the surveys of Captain Frome Surveyor General of the Colony 1842’, British Parliamentary Papers:
Papers Relating to Colonisation and other affairs of Australia 1842–1844 (Irish University Press:
168 In 1863, before the arrival of the freeholders who would be expected to clear the land for
agricultural purposes, a traveller through the valley remarked that the ‘only tree’ he had seen ‘for
miles’ grew at the base of ‘The Bluff’. Dr Davies’ diary, State Library of South Australia, D7380 (L),
173.
169 Gammage, Biggest Estate on Earth, 192.
170 Andrew Gebhardt told me of a paddock on Mackerode named The Swamp which still has reeds
growing along the fence line; Andrew Gebhardt, June 14 2010. Max Rayner understood that the Mt
Bryan Valley road leading to the north went through the east of Mt Bryan and Hallett because the
valley was too boggy in places. Max said ‘Now, Mt Bryan East was opened up a little bit earlier. I
think the main reason was that as they were coming northwards, north of Mt Bryan, an area which
they used to call Boggy Flat, very difficult to get their wagons on and on their way through, so they
went out Mt Bryan East, out past the Razor Back and afterwards they got up to Hallett. But that’s
why Mt Bryan East was settled before Hallett’; Max Rayner, 18 May 2010.
171 Gammage, Biggest Estate on Earth, 226.
people created and fastidiously maintained the extensive, richly grassed and treeless plains and hills. This district would have been extremely valuable and much appreciated by its Ngadjuri custodians; this country was cared for to an extent that is and was unfathomable for many non-Aboriginal people. Historical records and commonsense indicate that early pastoralists preferred luxuriant flats that did not have to be cleared for grazing and which were capable of feeding large numbers of sheep.\textsuperscript{172} It is telling that, in the early 1840s, out of their hundred-mile-square runs, both the Browne and Hallett brothers chose to establish their head stations less than fifteen miles apart in the Booborowie Valley and Mt Bryan Valley respectively.\textsuperscript{173}

In South Australia, what may be perceived as hostile land in need of conquest is the drier pastoral land which lies outside Goyder's Line, the well-known qualitative demarcation of pastoral and agricultural areas drawn by Surveyor-General Goyder in 1865. Goyder's Line marks the line of rainfall between districts prone to drought and those with reliable rainfalls.\textsuperscript{174} As you travel Out-East of Hallett, Mt Bryan and Burra, the vegetation and topography dramatically alter. Names such as Hell's Gates and Civilization Road indicate that settlers did not look favourably on this country. It was in this poorer country that young and unfinanced Billy Dare first leased land. However, those who invaded the Booborowie and Mt Bryan valleys – the financially secure absentee pastoralists, the Brownes and the Halletts, and their successors, the freeholders – did not arrive in a wilderness in need of conquest.\textsuperscript{175}

My interviewees’ narratives of good fortune accord with the sentiments of numerous nineteenth-century settlers. While working on other projects and

\textsuperscript{172} See Gammage, \textit{Biggest Estate on Earth}, 188. Other areas of South Australia as the swampy south-east, and the dry mallee scrub of Yorke Peninsula and the Murray flats were less inviting for settlers and were not invaded so quickly.

\textsuperscript{173} In a report dated 7 October 1844, Protector of Aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse states that the Brownes’ head station at Booborowie is fourteen miles from Mt Bryan and that Mr Hallett’s station is at Mt Bryan; GRG 26/6/1844/1120. The White brothers applied for an occupation licence for the more mountainous, well-treed and well-watered Wirrabara district in March 1844. Heather Sizer, \textit{Yet Still They Live: Wirrabara’s Story} (Wirrabara, SA: Wirrabara District Centenary Committee, 1974), 18.


\textsuperscript{175} This observation equally applies to squatters/pastoralists who rapidly invaded many other areas of South Australia and, more generally, Australia.
searching through numerous reminiscences, diaries and letters held in the State Library of South Australia, I have noticed a prevailing sentiment of good fortune in many of the diaries and written reminiscences of the early colonists. Colonists describe, often with a touch of incredulity and boastfulness, the moderate climate, the abundant meat, the light and the space, the advantages of a life spent largely outdoors in a comparatively dry and sunny environment. There is a sense of pride and achievement in the progress they are making as individuals and as a new society. The extent of this differs depending on the personality and experiences of the writer, but many settlers convey a sense of excitement and joy at the novelty of living a new life in a new land and a sense of liberation from casting off the shackles of a hierarchical, established society. Migrants encouraged friends, neighbours, tenants, nephews, nieces, cousins, parents and other family members to move to the colony. Many of these colonists came from overcrowded agricultural districts where land was in short supply, the weather miserable and the sanitation poor. As succinctly stated by a recent arrival in 1837, ‘who would live in cold, damp, dripping England?’

Understanding that the forebears of the people I spoke with did not have to ‘battle’ with the land or have to suffer to become owners of the land is important. Their experiences are reflected in their descendants’ narratives and understandings. For mid-northern settler descendants, rather than a pervading sense of victimhood, rather than legitimacy of ownership being conferred through labour and suffering,

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176 Between 2004‒2008 I worked as a research assistant on a project compiling a register of ‘frontier violence’ throughout South Australia.

177 For example, Robert and Jane Bristow, writing to family in Holborn, 4 June 1837: ‘dear brother and sister, there is every prospect of doing well, if you come out, as you and your children need not be out of work one hour’; Peter and Anne Cooke, to Mr Norris, London, 7 November 1837: ‘I am so well satisfied with everything, I wish all my friends and relations would come to us, they would do so much better here than it is possible to do in England’, in Scott, Description of South Australia, 30–32; letter addressed to Mr Wilson, Baker, Midhurst, 6 May 1837: ‘Dear Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters ... I have a quarter of an acre of town land which cost me £2 10s. My love to all, farewell. Remember me to brother Charles, and tell him and Harry to come out here. God Bless’, in Watson, A Lecture on South Australia, 19.


179 Stephen Hack, May 1837, in Watson, A Lecture on South Australia, 19.
other explanations are required to understand their lack of empathy for the suffering of Aboriginal people; it is not a perception of themselves or their forebears as victims that prevents my interviewees from recognising the hardship and suffering of Aboriginal people.

A sense of ‘luck’ or good fortune is one way of understanding the occupation of another people’s land. It is just as selective and deceiving as the alleged victimological narrative. While there are stories of how their forebears came to have the funds to purchase the land, little or no thought is given as to why so much land was available in the first place or how it was affordable for these migrants, who started with little or no money. There is a lack of reflection regarding the conditions and circumstances that enabled their forebears and subsequent generations to flourish. Amelia Gebhardt was unusually reflective regarding her great-great-grandfather’s acquisition of vast tracts of country, stating:

He came over as a butcher, he started a butchers, that’s what I know. ... But I don’t know how he started to just accumulate property. Whether he just went out and sat there like I’ve learnt in the ‘The Secret River’, if you just sit there long enough it becomes yours. Or whether he bought it or what.180

Amelia’s viewing of the play The Secret River, an adaption of Kate Grenville’s novel of the same name, caused her to think seriously about Gustav’s acquisition of land.181 Amelia’s father, Andrew, was less contemplative. He laughingly responded ‘he would have had to buy it’, to which Amelia asked ‘from the Crown?’ By purchasing land from the government, settlers and their descendants are one step removed from the guilt and immorality of Aboriginal dispossession. Rather than having illegally grabbed and squatted on land, freeholder descendants understand their forebears as legitimate purchasers who, through their skills, talents and good

180 Amelia Gebhardt, interview with Skye Krichauff, Carrickalinga, 15 March 2013.
181 Before beginning our formal interview Amelia told me she had been to see Andrew Bovell’s stage adaption of Grenville’s novel. The Sydney Theatre Company produced the play which opened in Sydney on 8 January 2013 and was also performed in Canberra and Perth.
fortune, were able to accumulate the funds that enabled them to legally acquire square mile after square mile of Aboriginal land.

**Trauma**

Curthoys concludes her article with the powerful and persuasive words:

> And so it is that in Australia, as in other settler societies, the trauma of expulsion, exodus, and exile obscures empathetic recognition of indigenous perspectives, of the trauma of invasion, institutionalisation, and dispersal. The self-chosen white victim finds it extremely difficult to recognise what he or she has done to others. The legacy of the colonial past is a continuing fear of illegitimacy, and an inability to develop the kind of pluralistic inclusive account of the past that might form the basis for a coherent national community.\(^{182}\)

Above, I have argued that not all people who came to Australia should be understood as ‘exiled’ or ‘expelled’ from their homeland, that the legacy of the colonial past for some settler descendants is not ‘a continuing fear of illegitimacy’ and that settler descendants do not have to perceive themselves as victims to fail to recognise the injustices suffered by Aboriginal people. Here, I focus on the use of the concept of ‘trauma’. I draw on the South Australian case to critique an oft-repeated assumption that settler descendants are ‘traumatised’ by acts of migration and the violence of colonialism.

Curthoys is not alone in understanding settlers and settler societies as traumatised by the experience of migrating to an unknown country. In his discussion of New Zealand settler descendants’ relationship to the colonial past, Stephen Turner states ‘settlement is traumatic, a form of exile'; settlers’ rejection of the past returns as the 'melancholy condition of the settler'.\(^{183}\) Turner argues that the anxiety of settlement is a product of insecurity of place which is manifested as

\(^{182}\) Curthoys, ‘Expulsion, Exodus and Exile’, 18

reactive forgetting. Veracini understands settler societies as traumatised societies par excellence. Primarily concerned with the trauma of Indigenous genocide and dislocation, Veracini also refers to the traumatic experiences of a ‘concentrationarian’ past and the dislocation of migration. Understanding settler descendants as ‘traumatised’ by the act of migration and the violence of colonialism enables scholars to apply psychoanalytic theories to their investigations. Such theories can provide useful insights regarding ways to work through troubled pasts. Scholars who draw on psychoanalytical theories understand the absence of Aboriginal people in settler descendants’ historical consciousness as illustrative of repression, disavowal, screen-memory or amnesia. I return to the trauma of Indigenous genocide and dislocation shortly, but begin by critiquing notions of the trauma of a ‘concentrationarian’ past and ‘dislocation’.

The notion of ‘trauma’ is not necessarily the most apt or useful concept to draw on when attempting to further understand my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past. Drawing analogies between theories of individual trauma and social or collective trauma is problematic. As Klaus Neumann bluntly states, there is no conclusive evidence to support the assumption that ‘societies have a collective consciousness that could be likened to that of individuals, and that the conclusions Sigmund Freud drew from treating individual patients are easily transferrable to collectives’. Noting that ‘psychoanalysis is itself a theory concerned with the psychical life of individuals’, Susannah Radstone suggests ‘it might not be best suited to an analysis of processes of recognition and articulation that seek to discern the micro-workings of power and meaning-making in the processes of memory’s articulation’. David Lloyd argues that ‘in the case of colonialism ... the relation to the past is strictly not a relation to one’s own past but to a social history... and is in no simple way a matter of internal psychic dynamics ... it is not

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185 Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 77.
self-evident that there is any necessary relation between the psychological and the social that is not already ideological’.\footnote{David Lloyd, ‘Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery’, \textit{Interventions} 2, no. 2 (2000): 212.}

Lloyd defines trauma as entailing ‘violent intrusion and a sense of utter objectification that annihilates the person as a subject or agent’,\footnote{Lloyd, ‘Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery’, 214.} While nineteenth-century Aboriginal people and many of their descendants were and continue to be deeply traumatised by colonisation (as Lloyd points out, it ‘would seem we can map the psychological effects of trauma onto the cultures that undergo colonization’),\footnote{Lloyd, ‘Colonial Trauma/Postcolonial Recovery’, 214.} the word ‘trauma’ should not be used as a substitute for settlers’ and their descendants’ anxiety, unsettlement, discomfort or uncertainty. Drawing on her experiences as a child of Holocaust survivors, Eva Hoffman recommends care when referring to processes or communications that have come to be referred to as ‘the transmission of trauma’ or ‘traumatic memory’. Hoffman states ‘as with “trauma” itself, I think caution is advisable in the use of these phrases and their implicit reification of tenuous, intricate, and – yes – rich internal experiences’.\footnote{Eva Hoffman, ‘The Long Afterlife of Loss’, in \textit{Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates}, eds Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 408.} Drawing on my interviews with settler descendants and my own experience of growing up in the mid-north, I cannot perceive the people I interviewed and grew up among as having been ‘traumatised’ by either their forebears’ act of migration or their forebears’ occupation of another people’s land. I am troubled by analyses that freely apply Freud’s concept of ‘trauma’ to the experiences of freeholders and their descendants, who were not violently intruded upon themselves and who neither participated in nor witnessed the initial invasion of land and the subjection of Aboriginal people.

I see three questions which require answering before applying the word and the concept of ‘trauma’ to my interviewees and their forebears. First, can the historical experience of leaving home and settling in a ‘new’ land validly or usefully be understood as traumatic? Second, were nineteenth-century South Australian colonists’ experiences of migration dramatic and unsettling enough to be have
been transferred to subsequent generations? By answering these questions, we can better answer a third question, namely, how traumatised by their forebears’ act of migration are subsequent generations? The same questions and the same process of working through these questions can be applied to settlers’ alleged traumatisation regarding Indigenous dispossession and genocide.

Is the act and process of migration best understood as a traumatic experience? The notion that ‘settlers’ were ‘traumatised’ by the act of migration homogenises the diverse experiences of many different people. The ‘anxiety’ and alleged ‘trauma’ of settlement is not historically uniform among nineteenth-century Australian settlers or their descendants. As expounded on above, the forebears of those I have been speaking with were not fleeing persecution, they did not perceive themselves as arriving at ‘hell on earth’, nor did they have to ‘struggle with’ or ‘conquer’ an alienating land. While all newcomers to Australia left their homeland and occupied another people’s land, when we look closely at nineteenth-century colonists’ experiences and their descendants’ narratives, attitudes and sentiments, the argument that these people were or are ‘traumatised’ is difficult to sustain.

I agree with psychoanalytic psychotherapist Amanda Dowd that for the first settlers – namely those ‘experiencing first contact with the Australian land (i.e. as it would have been prior to European invasion) – the space that they encountered would have, for them, been ‘devoid of meaning, memory and meaningful objects’.\(^{192}\) I recognise that entering such a void may well have generated personal, spiritual, cultural and ecological anxieties.\(^{193}\) Indeed, this sense of void experienced on arrival is succinctly summed up in the reflections penned by E Lloyd, an Englishman who began a two-year visit to South Australia in the long, hot summer of 1843–1844 when ‘every vestige of vegetation was scorched from the surface of the ground’.\(^{194}\) Lloyd’s first impressions of Adelaide were of ‘a long straggling street, very red, very sandy, and very hot’:

\(^{192}\) Dowd, ‘The passion of the country’, 68.
It would be easy to enumerate many more appearances in which this country and its people differ from an old community. Everything is new. The whole affair is an experiment. It is completely, to the emigrant just arrived, devoid of association; and to analyse his first emotions, on separating from them the excitement of novelty, little that is satisfactory can remain.195

However, as the historical records and oral narratives of settler descendants indicate and as scholars writing about more recent migrants have found, newcomers create meaning in newly adopted lands and bring meaningful social and cultural networks and ties with them.196 Lloyd continues:

But behind this feeling there is the motive to which every man possesses ... a determination to make the best of it. If he be wise, he will immediately set himself at work to form new associations, to create new objects of pleasure around him, to engraft himself into the society of the place ... he will at once adopt his course, and ... he reconciles all the seeming discrepancies.197

South Australian colonists made a deliberate choice to migrate to the new colony and establish new lives. This decision was not taken lightly; it involved financial investment and risk and meant leaving behind loved ones and all that was familiar.198 Land was not given away in order to encourage migration; those who could afford it paid to come, while poorer emigrants went through a rigorous application process to gain assisted passage.199

199 Before the colony was officially proclaimed, one land order cost £80. See Brian Dickey and Peter Howell eds, *South Australia’s Foundation: Select Documents* (Netley, SA: Wakefield Press, 1986), 55–58, 71–73.
While migrants may have missed home, homesickness is not necessarily best understood as traumatic. Nor did their affection for the places from which they came prevent them forming attachments to their new country. Several years after settling in Adelaide in 1839, feminist and social reformer Catherine Helen Spence stated ‘as we grew to love South Australia, we felt that we were in an expanding society, still feeling the bond to the motherland, but eager to develop a perfect society in the land of our adoption’.\textsuperscript{200} Writing home to Scotland in 1838 (less than two years after the colony of South Australia was officially established), former ploughman Mr Rankine informed his family of his and his wife’s new circumstances:

Now, Bell and I consider we have made a good change by coming here. Bell is still in hopes of getting back to see you all, and I do not doubt that, if we be careful, we may both take another voyage to see old Scotia’s shores. However, if we remain here a few years, your winter will be too cold for us … Bell says, if her father and mother and some of her relations were here, she would never ask to go a mile from where she is, for she likes the place so well. She is mistress of the dairy, and making as much noise, or more than ever, and thinks herself quite happy … Now, if any person considers himself well enough where he is, I would not advise him to shift; but I know that any man who is able and willing to work, will do far better here than in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{201}

Perhaps those who did not experience migration to South Australia projected their own fears onto others, expected the worst and could not imagine a better life than that they knew. In a letter written on 11 May 1837, John Hack chastised his family in England; ‘what a gloomy view you take of our suffering and privations; and no wonder; you could never anticipate the comfort and independence that flourish around us; and while you are fancying us suffering all manner of distresses you

\textsuperscript{200} Extract from letter written by Spence cited in Cowan, ‘Contributing Caledonian Culture’, 90.
\textsuperscript{201} Extract from letter dated 17 August 1838, in Scott, Description of South Australia, 33.
cannot define, here we are enjoying the comfort, and freshness, and independence, of a new colony’. Several weeks later, Hack wrote:

You must tell all who enquire about us that we have found this country far to exceed our expectations, and have not a wish to return. There will, no doubt, be accounts from grumblers reaching England, from people who would grumble anywhere; but I assure you we are not singular in our opinion, all our acquaintances here are as fond of the country as ourselves.

The historical records and oral histories indicate that while some settlers undoubtedly experienced anxiety on arriving in and settling in South Australia, it is inappropriate to universally refer to and understand the anxiety and unsettlement inherent in the act of migration as ‘traumatic’. Anxieties were short-lived and neither dramatic nor enduring enough to pass onto their offspring. Among those with whom I spoke, it is positive, rather than negative, experiences which are reflected in their narratives, sentiments and historical consciousness.

I turn now to the question of whether nineteenth-century South Australian colonists’ experience of Aboriginal dispossession and loss of life can or should be considered traumatic enough to be transferred to subsequent generations. Implicit in understanding current generations of settler descendants as ‘traumatised’ by the violence of colonialism and the dispossession of Aboriginal people is the assumption that they are aware of and haunted by the past through the intergenerational transmission of trauma. In chapter 8, I argued that the historical evidence and oral narratives indicate that the forebears of my freeholder-descended interviewees arrived not in zones of violent cross-cultural contact but in a world in which European occupation was firmly established and encounters with Aboriginal people were minimal and not transformational. Freeholders arrived in a landscape and social world that had been dramatically transformed by

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202 John Hack, 11 May 1830 in Henry Watson, A Lecture on South Australia including letters from JB Hack Esq. and other Emigrants (London: J Gliddon, 1838), 14
203 John Hack, 31 May 1837 in Watson, A Lecture on South Australia, 15–16.
pastoralists and their sheep, cattle and employees. None of the descendants of stationhands, hut-builders or forest workers with whom I spoke whose forebears arrived in the Wirrabara district prior to the freeholders referred to any conflict with Aboriginal people or conquest of nature.

Supposing mid-northern settler descendants did have stories which connected them, through their forebears, with violent acts perpetrated on the Ngadjuri or Nukunu, historical research into other areas of South Australia suggests the violence would have occurred in the early pastoral years, between 1836 and the early 1860s, over 150 years ago. The bulk of literature into intergenerational transmission of trauma is based on traumatic events which occurred within living memory (for example the Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, Serbian–Bosnian violence, i.e. traumas that are one, two or at the most three, generations old). Most studies focus on the victim group. Research on the memory of the Armenian genocide of 1918 among members of the victim group suggests that trauma weakens with each successive generation. Eva Hoffman draws on personal experience when she poetically states:

Loss leaves a long trail in its wake. Sometimes, if the loss is large enough, the trail seeps and winds like invisible psychic ink through individual lives, decades and generations. When the losses are as enormous as those that followed from the Holocaust – when what was lost was not only individuals but a world – the disappearances and the absences may haunt us into the third generation.

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Hoffman, a member of the victim group, carefully qualifies her remarks by saying that if the loss is large enough it may haunt third generations. The trauma of colonialism can be understood as ongoing, as never having ended for the victims (which includes the country and all it sustains). I have no doubt that current generations of Aboriginal people are haunted by the loss of a world, of land, people, animals and plants, to an extent that is unfathomable to many non-Aboriginal people. However, I do not see my settler-descended interviewees’ forebears as having experienced a comparable loss which is large enough to haunt their descendants.

Studies investigating the transmission of perpetrator trauma are few and far between. Gabriele Schwab grew up in post-Nazi West Germany under French occupation. A second-generation descendant of the perpetrator group, Schwab points out that it is more difficult to work through one’s historical legacy if it belongs to earlier generations because this legacy has ‘been passed down in complicated, subliminal, and, to a large extent, entirely unconscious ways’.207 The legacy of trauma is more complicated and diffuse again if those who belong to the perpetrator group are at least third, and more likely fourth or fifth generation removed; if their forebears’ act of occupying land and their own continuing presence on that land are not condemned but instead condoned and legitimised by the state and the dominant society; if their forebears and they themselves have continuously believed in the lawfulness of British colonisation; and if their forebears did not physically participate in or witnesses violence.

Veracini argues that ‘settlers fear revenge’ and that ‘ongoing concerns with existential threats and a paranoid fear of ultimate decolonisation’ are ‘a constituent feature of the settler colonial situation’.208 My interviewees don’t fear revenge, they are not paranoid about decolonisation, do not understand their presence in South Australia as immoral, are not riddled with insecurity regarding their right to belong, do not feel illegitimate, have no fear of being cast out and do not perceive

208 Veracini, Settler Colonialism, 81.
themselves as alienated from their environment. To the contrary, their consciousness of the past – their awareness of their family’s generational occupation of the same district – contributes significantly to their firm and secure sense of belonging. It seems to me inappropriate, morally misguided and unproductive to understand all or even most nineteenth-century settlers and their descendants as traumatised by either the act of migration or their forebears’ historical and their own current implication in the dispossession of Aboriginal people.

**Conclusion**

Understanding a prevailing sense of victimhood derived from the trauma of occupying another people’s land as prohibiting empathy for and the inclusion of Aboriginal people in mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness obscures or ignores other reasons for the *disconnect*. Taking into account the concrete workings of memory which is grounded in the lived experiences of current and previous generations, more relevant factors are: the physical absence of Aboriginal people in the districts in which my interviewees live; the dramatic decline in the Ngadjuri and Nukunu populations between 1836 and 1871 and the subsequent physical absence of Aboriginal people at the time of most of my interviewees’ forebears’ arrival; the dominance of a settler-colonial ideology and historical epistemology which minimalises the presence of Aboriginal people in the social imaginary; and an ignorance of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultures and related inability to recognise signs of Aboriginal presence.

My argument that the people with whom I have been speaking and among whom I have grown up are not traumatised by colonisation may be interpreted as a defensive mechanism, as confected ignorance or as not digging deep enough. Drawing on LaCapra’s theoretical understanding of ‘positioning’, my argument may be viewed as my not having coming to terms with my own implication in the complex grid of participant-positions, as my not having worked out a complex position that does not identify with one or another participant-position. I may be perceived as excusing or empathising with members of the perpetrator group – the
beneficiaries – of colonialism.209 I would say in response that I am well aware of the historical and enduring injustice of European occupation, I know of the violence and the brutality, and the insidious and multifaceted ways that that violence continues in the present. I recognise, acknowledge, am sorry, saddened and ashamed that the violence happened in the past and endures in the present. I am aware that my forebears and I are implicated in the colonial process and that I have benefited from the dispossession of Aboriginal people. I am not shying away from, denying or minimalising the ongoing implications of the historical injustice of Australian colonialism.

In critiquing the applicability of the concept of trauma and in questioning the extent to which a sense of victimhood pervades settler-descended Australians’ historical consciousness, I am not minimising what happened to Aboriginal people or valourising settlers or their descendants. Rather, I am arguing for the value of recognising the diversity of historical and contemporary colonial experiences and, consequently, the diversity of Australians’ historical consciousness. Recognising differences enables us to better understand the lack of empathy. By better understanding the origins of the pervading sense of disconnect between settler descendants and the fate of Aboriginal people, we are better placed to correct, or break down this disconnect.

Chapter 9: ‘Looking back, there was a lot we missed’

This thesis has been propelled by a desire to understand why it is that people who have grown up on or near land first occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century in the mid-north of South Australia see themselves and their histories as separate or disconnected from the violence of colonialism and the suffering of Aboriginal people. In order to understand this disconnect, I have examined mid-northern settler descendants’ historical consciousness. In understanding how members of this group know, understand and relate to the colonial past, I have examined the relationship between knowledge of the past acquired through external means (through history) and knowledge of the past which is known internally and which has been acquired through everyday life, through family stories and dwelling in place. I have argued that the past which mid-northern settler descendants most powerfully know and most readily relate to is the past absorbed and understood through lived experience. To understand settler descendants’ lived experiences, I have examined the places in which and the people among whom they dwell.

I have argued that settler descendants who have grown up on or near land occupied by their forebears in the nineteenth century live in settings in which memory is part of everyday life. I have contended that my interviewees’ consciousness of the colonial past was primarily formed during childhood years when living on or near the family property. Like primal landscapes and the information contained in family stories, children’s active absorption of the colonial past during their formative years remains an indelible component of their historical consciousness and identity which is continually drawn on throughout their lives when learning or making sense of newly acquired information. People, place and ‘history’ (a sense of the past) are interconnected and inseparable to mid-northern settler descendants’ sense of emplacement and identity. A consciousness of their historical connections to place is so fundamental to and so much a part of my interviewees’ sense of self that it is implicitly understood, taken for granted and rarely reflected on or verbalised.
Focusing on a specific and small group of settler descendants has enabled a detailed investigation into the concrete ways the colonial past is known and related to. Through interviews, site visits, a survey of mid-northern public and written histories, historical research and personal experience I have made the following observations: mid-northern settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past is orientated around their first forebear to arrive in the district and occupy land that was to become the family property; mid-northern settler descendants’ sense of history predates their forebear’s arrival in the district (for example, settler descendants know their forebear’s place of origin, reasons for leaving, who accompanied him on his voyage out) but, because orientated around this ‘foundation’ forebear, their sense of the history of the district begins with their forebear’s arrival; many mid-northern settler descendants are not interested in their family’s history or the history of their district and community until they are older; older family members do not necessarily speak about the past unless they are specifically asked; it is stories of dramatic and unusual events that are recalled and passed down through the generations and not information about taken-for-granted everyday life; an event has to be personally experienced by someone and communicated to others in order to be remembered; and when making sense of the past, mid-northern settler descendants draw on their own experiences and knowledge.

I have highlighted the value of taking into account the lived experiences of settler descendants’ nineteenth-century forebears and argued for the need to distinguish between squatters/early pastoralists and freeholders and to take into account the timing of different colonists’ arrival in the district. I have conducted historical research and drawn on the work of other historians to describe the environment (socio-cultural and natural) entered by different nineteenth-century colonists. I have shown how other factors such as the district and era in which one grew up, education, family dynamics, personality and life experiences are factors which need to be taken into account when examining how and why settler-descended interviewees know and relate to the colonial past. Throughout this thesis, I have illustrated how my interviewees’ lived experiences are culturally configured and
how their awareness of the past, which is absorbed through being in place and through their lived experiences, is made sense of through a settler-colonial historical epistemology.

In chapter 3, I argued that the settler descendants I spoke with have a strong sense of belonging. I drew on Linn Miller's understanding that there are three ways people sense their belonging – through a sense of connection to a particular community of people, a particular locality or dwelling place and a particular past or tradition.\(^1\) I argued that all three senses of connection are present, interconnected and inseparable for the mid-northern settler descendants I interviewed. I referred to Miller's argument that belonging is more than perceiving these three senses of connections; belonging is a matter of standing in 'correct relation' to oneself and, by implication, the world in which one dwells.\(^2\)

Correct relation involves both knowing and being a certain way, namely having transparency (i.e. knowing oneself; ‘transparency is self-knowledge’) and being authentic (which relates to subjective truth).\(^3\) Miller emphasises that subjective truth ‘is actualised only when it is immersed in personal experience’; ‘truth is disclosed always and only through the knowing and being of the embodied subject. Truth is not merely something to be believed. It is something to be lived’\(^4\).

In chapters 2 and 3, I demonstrated how, through their lived experiences, through their embodied subjectivity, my interviewees understand themselves as standing in correct relation to their community, their history and their locality. This perception of correct relation is indicated by their powerful but implicitly understood sense of emplacement and belonging. However, during preliminary phone conversations, first meetings and early in interviews my interviewees indicated that they did not recognise the violence of colonialism or empathise with Aboriginal victims of colonialism. While my interviewees understand themselves as standing in correct relation to their histories, their sense of the past does not

\(^2\) Miller, 'Belonging to Country', 219.
\(^3\) Miller, 'Belonging to Country', 219.
\(^4\) Miller, 'Belonging to Country', 219.
incorporate Aboriginal people. I have referred to this lack of empathy and sense that Aboriginal people’s histories are separate from their own histories as a 
*disconnect*. Because of this disconnect, mid-northern settler descendants’ transparency with regard to their histories can be understood as limited.

Miller states that ‘the ideal self of correct relation is a self that has integrity’. Integrity involves integrating various parts of yourself into one harmonious whole and acting in a way that reflects who you are, acting in accordance with values and interests that are ‘most deeply your own’ and having a moral purpose (i.e. living in a more ethical relationship to yourself and others).\(^5\) I suggest that the people I have been speaking with have (to varying degrees) the first two types of integrity – they have integrated parts of themselves into a harmonious whole and act in a way that accurately reflects who they are. While my interviewees have a moral purpose with regard to the social community in which they live, this has not extended to living in a more ethical relationship with Aboriginal people.

I have argued that the physical absence of Aboriginal people in the everyday life of most mid-northern settler descendants is an important factor which needs to be considered when examining this group of settler descendants’ non-incorporation of Aboriginal people and the violence of colonialism into their consciousness of the colonial past. In their personal experiences, in their embodied lives, settler descendants from the North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts have not had their consciousness of their family’s, community’s or district’s history challenged by the physical presence of Aboriginal people. The security of freehold title means they have had no cause to question or to have had challenged their sense of belonging. Also of relevance when seeking to further understand the disconnect are the historical absence of Aboriginal people in the later decades of the nineteenth century, when many of my interviewees’ forebears arrived, and the dominant settler-colonial cultural epistemology and ideology through which those who do have stories of Aboriginal people and settler–Aboriginal interaction interpret and articulate those stories. The lived experiences, the embodied lives, of mid-northern settler descendants who grew up in the twentieth century were not

\(^{5}\) Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 218.
conducive to realigning their sense of correct relation to incorporate Aboriginal histories or people.

However, Ngadjuri descendants are now coming back to the land of their forebears and Nukunu people are returning to places of great significance in the Mt Remarkable district. Some areas of the mid-north have, and will continue to, become places of return, cross-cultural fusion, interaction and accommodation. Mid-northern settler descendants will have increased opportunities to act with integrity and authenticity in their relations with Ngadjuri and Nukunu descendants.

In closing this thesis, I illustrate how, just as lived experiences are important when understanding settler descendants’ consciousness of the past, so are lived experiences important when understanding why settler descendants have not yet developed greater transparency with regard to their histories. Bringing Ngadjuri and Nukunu people into settler descendants’ consciousness is not necessarily difficult if done in a way which resonates with settler descendants’ lived experiences. My interviewees’ consciousness of the past is inseparable from place and people. When revised socio-historical accounts are related to places and/or people which are part of mid-northern settler descendants’ lived experience, numerous interviewees have indicated that they can readily incorporate Aboriginal people into their consciousness of the colonial past. In the remainder of this thesis, I demonstrate how settler descendants’ sense of disconnect can be unsettled and realigned. I will illustrate this through an extraordinary story that exemplifies three positions taken by settler descendants who, on learning a revised account of their family history, have had their consciousness of the past unsettled and have begun to come to terms with their family’s implication in the colonial process. This story also illustrates subtle details which can only be learned through immersion in specific histories and conversations with individuals.
Marlene Richards, Charlie Spratt, Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann

In chapter 8, I argued that the bulk of my North-Eastern Highlander interviewees’ forebears were not present during the early pastoral era and thus did not arrive in a frontier zone or witness or participate in the murder of Aboriginal people. In chapters 1 and 8, I referred to the murder of Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann by the Hallett brothers’ shepherd, William Moore Carter, in 1844. As previously stated, interviews, site visits, and personal experience demonstrate there was no social memory of these murders among local residents throughout most of the twentieth century. A relatively detailed account of the case appeared in a local written history which was published in 1985. Archival written records were the source of the information provided and the story provided in the local history did not become part of the local community’s collective knowledge. I came to know of these murders over twenty years after the book was published, while conducting archival research for another project.

The murders of Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann were not mentioned in local histories published before 1985. Writing in 1977, Marlene Richards simply states ‘the only references to be found to the Aboriginals in this district deal mainly with the ways in which they helped the early pastoralists’. Academics unfamiliar with the limited brief, time, funds and circumstances of local historians might interpret Marlene’s lack of reference to Nyunirra Bourka’s and Maryann’s murders as a selective inclusion of historical events and demonstrative of settler amnesia, disavowal and/or repression.

Marlene has now retired with her husband to the seaside town of Port Elliot. Late in 2013, I rang Marlene to ask her about the sources she drew on when writing of Billy Dare’s interactions with Aboriginal people in her history of Hallett. Within minutes of me explaining my research project, Marlene interrupted me excitedly, saying she thought I would be interested in a story she had found since her book was published. With no segue or introduction, Marlene spoke of having been to a

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place that made her hair stand on end and of having found out a story that concerned her great-grandfather and two shepherds that were employed by the Bowmans. Marlene said her great-grandfather had worked on Willogoleche for £15 per year plus keep. She told me she had given all the information she had to her cousin, who typed up an anaemic version for the family history. Initially bewildered, I soon gathered Marlene was referring to the murder of Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann. Marlene began reading over the phone an extract from this family history before breaking off and saying she would fax it to me.

Incredibly, Marlene's great-grandfather on her father's side, Charlie Spratt, was one of the first white men to reside on land around the Razorback Range. Spratt was employed as a shepherd for the Hallett brothers and it was sheep under his charge that were taken by the Aboriginal group. When recovering these sheep, Carter murdered Nyunirra Bourka and Maryann. Spratt and four other Europeans witnessed these murders. While Carter absconded, Spratt and the other shepherds were imprisoned. In the late 1880s, the Bowmans purchased what was originally the Hallett brothers' southern section of Willogoleche. Informatively, despite having researched and written the Hallett history book, while talking to me Marlene said that her great-grandfather was an employee of the Bowmans who were present in the district from the 1880s, rather than early pastoralists the Halletts. As argued in chapter 8, early, absentee pastoralists such as the Halletts, Brownes and Joseph Gilbert are not part of collective memory. In her unprepared and excited state, Marlene mixed up the early pastoralists, the Halletts, with the later pastoralists, the Bowmans. Marlene's 'mistake' powerfully demonstrates the absence of early pastoralists in local residents' historical consciousness and the persistent power of information learned through oral stories rather than archival records.

When I interviewed Marlene, she told me that she learned of this crime while she was researching her great-grandfather's life:

I think I wanted to see what boat he came over on, and that's how it started. And then I wanted to know what had happened to him, and then I found out.
And when I saw that entry [an entry referring to Spratt serving time in prison] I thought “now how did he get there?” And vaguely I could remember my father saying [pause] that his father never talked about it but his father had been in trouble with something to do with the Aborigines. And of course my father was a very law-abiding German, so ... he would have been ashamed for me – to know that I am sitting here talking to you about it. But for me that’s part of knowledge.9

As Gabriele Schwab insightfully notes, processes of taking responsibility and of working through guilt and shame operate across generations. The dynamics of the process change if the acts of perpetration belong to earlier generations because it is easier to face one’s historical legacy if it is not a personal legacy.9 Schwab’s insights make sense at both the collective and the individual levels; the revisionist histories of the late 1960s onwards can be understood as a collective recognition, desire and ability to confront non-Aboriginal Australia’s shameful past, which is made possible (or easier) because of the significant length of time that has passed. As LaCapra states, one could even contend that ‘history may legitimately have a ritual component as it ... engages, at least discursively, in its own variant of the form of memory-work and working-through that is embodied in mourning’.10 But while the passing of time may make acknowledgement and recognition of past injustices possible, so do other factors.

Spratt did not return to the North-Eastern Highlands on his release. Marlene grew up in eastern South Australia at Lameroo. By some strange twist of fate, over a century later she came to live very close to the place where her great-grandfather had worked as a shepherd. Marlene said her grandfather and, to a lesser extent, her father had some knowledge of her great-grandfather’s crime but did not pass this information onto her. Marlene interpreted their silence as not due to a lack of

8 Marlene Richards, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Elliot, 3 October 2013.
sympathy for Aboriginal people and not because they were in denial about what happened but because, as ardent church-going Lutherans, as god-fearing people with a firm sense of right and wrong, they were deeply ashamed.

**Not standing in ‘correct relation’**

Members of Marlene’s family reacted differently on learning of their great-grandfather’s involvement in the murders – they were affected by this information in diverse ways. When I asked Marlene how her family took the news, she replied ‘my oldest brother wasn’t that excited’. Marlene said he saw the murder as very ‘black and white’, she explained that he did not understand the complexities or extent of frontier violence. Marlene’s brother judged his great-grandfather negatively and had little sympathy for him. Marlene’s brother’s reaction conforms with Veracini’s understanding of revisions in Australian historiography as being an act of condemnation, and therefore another ‘defensive mechanism’. Marlene’s brother’s stance can be understood as what has become widely known as the ‘black armband’ view of history – namely sympathy and identification with nineteenth century Aboriginal people and general condemnation of those who participated in, were accomplices to or witnessed colonial violence. This is a common response of settler descended Australians and is reflected in the work of many revisionist historians. Referring to historians’ subjective positioning when researching and writing politically charged histories, LaCapra makes the poignant inference that, for people who were not present at the time and whose position has not been tested, it is easy to occupy a position of moral outrage and superiority, but that such a position is not necessarily earned.

In 2005, Bain Attwood argued that in much current revisionist Australian historiography, the current plight of Aboriginal people is viewed as result of the past, of history, rather than as ‘some kind of continuation of it’ and that ‘too few settler histories show satisfactorily how the colonial past is still present’. Attwood drew on the insights of Gillian Cowlishaw who, in 1992, argued that

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12 LaCapra, *History and Memory*, 41.
revisionist histories which document and draw attention to the violence of colonialism (the atrocities, the brutality, the genocides) work to distance this unpalatable and disturbing past from the present. Cowlishaw warned that:

The call to examine the colonial past is in danger of foundering on the complacency of an imagined distance from the spectacle of blood and violence. Continuity with the past is easily severed and the cultural source of these events is lost. Our disgust and horror at the violence and abusive racism means we are absolved.\textsuperscript{14}

Cowlishaw queried how it is, in reading these histories, that we ‘position ourselves on the sides of the Aborigines and identify our forebears as the enemy?’ She pointed out the hypocrisy of this imagined distancing and that our forebears – ‘our grandfathers’ – may well be the violent and racist men depicted in revisionist histories, and that subsequent generations were left something from these men, ‘if not the land they took or the wealth they made from it, then the culture they were developing.’\textsuperscript{15}

While revisionist histories such as Marlene’s story about her great-grandfather (in this case, histories which show the violence of occupation) can be seen as the first step towards connecting with and working through the past, they can also work as screen-memories – they can distance current generations from the past. By distancing the past from the present, by distancing his own position from the actions of previous generations, Marlene’s brother demonstrates the state of misrelation or ‘despair’ which I referred to in chapter 3. I drew on Miller’s concept of ‘despair’ as that which is the opposite of ‘correct relation’: despair is a ‘state of being in which the individual is not properly connected to others or themselves’, a state ‘of not wanting to be who one is’.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{15} Cowlishaw, ‘Studying Aborigines’, 27.

\textsuperscript{16} Miller, ‘Belonging to Country’, 220–221.
On the other hand, Marlene’s cousin, the author of the family history, demonstrated a desire to repress or disavow his great-grandfather’s actions, displaying what can crudely be equated with a ‘whitewash’ view of history. Marlene told me he ‘has anaesthetised, not anaesthetised but sanitised’ the story of Spratt’s involvement in the murders in his written family history. While Marlene’s brother can be understood as having judged and thus distanced himself from his great-grandfather, her cousin can be understood as having distorted and minimised his great-grandfather’s involvement in the murders, equally distancing his great-grandfather, and thus himself, from the crime. Ultimately, these positions are two sides of the one coin; both display limited empathy and understanding – one for his great-grandfather and the other for Maryann and Nyunirra Bourka.

Marlene’s brother and cousin demonstrate two positions of misrelation that are commonly taken by settler descendants when confronted with accounts of the past which unsettle their previous understandings and which connect them with the injustice and violence of occupation and Aboriginal dispossession. Both display a position of ‘despair’, of not being properly connected to themselves or others; neither stand in correct relation to their histories.

**Standing in ‘correct relation’**

Marlene’s actions and sentiments illustrate another way of incorporating revised socio-historical accounts into one’s consciousness of the colonial past. Marlene told me ‘once I started [investigating Spratt’s history] I couldn’t leave it alone’. I asked Marlene how she felt when she learned of her great-grandfather’s crime. She said:

> Oh, very interested, because I’d lived in that locality where that had happened. And I remembered – after I found that – I remembered my father, and he said it was somewhere near Hallett. It didn’t, I mean, he might have known so much more than he actually told me, when I went to live in Hallett. See, if I’d had that knowledge then, then it would have been more meaningful, the whole thing.  

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17 Marlene Richards, 3 October 2013.
For Marlene, rather than distancing her from the past, knowledge of her grandfather’s connection with a crime against Aboriginal people connected her personally to the colonial past. I began to ask ‘if you’d known about that before you were writing the history –’ when Marlene cut in ‘I would have included it. Because look at how blasé I was, how naïve. I just wrote “there were no” – and yet there were recorded incidents … But we didn’t know’.

Critiquing settler-colonial society and histories, Veracini argues that ‘an awareness of compromises between repressed elements and defensive mechanisms ... should be an essential part of the interpretation and reinterpretation of settler colonial sources and their historiographies’.\(^{18}\) To an uninformed observer, with the benefits of relatively recent archival research and the hindsight of almost fifty years of revisionist histories to draw on, the exclusion of Carter’s murders in Marlene’s history of Hallett could be judged as a selective use of sources and an act of denial and disavowal. However, a closer investigation demonstrates that the absence of Aboriginal people in the written histories and historical consciousness of mid-northern settler descendants is much more complicated. Regarding her lack of knowledge about the pastoral era, Marlene said ‘it was really difficult, because, even in those days, when we did that [researched and wrote the Hallett history], there was difficulty. I mean now it is so much easier access to your records in Adelaide, so little of that was tabulated then’.\(^{19}\)

It was difficult to access the archives. Marlene’s brief did not include researching the Aboriginal past. Marlene told me Nancy Robinson (who had published several mid-northern histories in the 1970s) shared her information on Aboriginal people with her.\(^{20}\) In the late 1960s, Nancy tried hard to include the stories of the descendants of the original owners in her histories and was informed by staff at the South Australian Museum that the tribe was ‘extinct’.\(^{21}\)

\(^{18}\) Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 91.

\(^{19}\) Marlene Richards, 3 October 2013.


\(^{21}\) Nancy Robinson, interview with Skye Krichauff, Erindale, 11 November 2010.
other authors did not have anthropological knowledge of traditional or contemporary Aboriginal society and were forced to rely largely on scant recorded information, much of which was written by nineteenth-century pastoralists and their employees with their historical and cultural bias. Marlene said that she and her co-researcher ‘never really investigated’ the Aboriginal people; ‘the thing was the hundred years of the Hallett Council and leading up to it’.

The non-inclusion of Maryann’s and Nyunira Bourka’s murders in *Hallett* is not best understood as an act of denial or repression. When I rang Marlene, having not spoken to her for over twenty years, this was the first thing she told me about after hearing of my research. When I visited her, she showed me and wanted to copy for me all the notes she had taken when investigating Spratt’s involvement in the crime. Marlene told me that if she had known about the murders, and in particular Spratt’s involvement in the murders, writing and researching the history of Hallett would have ‘been more meaningful’. Her recently acquired knowledge powerfully brought the ethics of colonialism into the present for Marlene. Now aware of her previous ignorance, Marlene would have included the information about Maryann’s and Nyunira Bourka’s murders and her great-grandfather’s involvement in their deaths in her written history had she known it at the time. Marlene would like to have shared her experience of having her consciousness of the past unsettled with others. Marlene and I then discussed the extensiveness of frontier violence throughout the colony and the fact that while Spratt was justifiably punished for his presence at the crime, his employers (the Halletts) who knew well what the occupation of ‘new’ land entailed, never paid – or suffered – for the crime and Carter, the actual murderer, absconded.

On learning of her great-grandfather’s crime, Marlene did not repress this information which so poignantly and personally connected her family with colonial violence. Marlene did not seek to keep this knowledge quiet or to distance herself from her great-grandfather. Rather, she sought to make sense of what she had learned; she wanted to know more, she wanted to *understand*. Marlene knew Charlie ‘wasn’t very old’ when he arrived in the colony:
He came over in a boat and there was a lot of them and it was a long voyage, and they got into a bit of mischief and I don’t think he landed here with the best credentials from the boat voyage [laugh] … they had to get work so they had to take what was on offer. And I think it would just be so desolate for them, going up into where, no fences, they had to make the sheep folds and bring the sheep in, and of course the Aboriginals thought … they didn’t want these [people coming in], they didn’t want them … but see, I didn’t know enough about the errrh, where the Aboriginal people actually had their permanent camping places around Mt Bryan itself and around the Razorback.22

In saying ‘I didn't know enough’, Marlene is recognising her earlier ignorance and, as such, acting with transparency. Many mid-northern settler descendants are ignorant about the culture and lives of nineteenth century Aboriginal people. Recognising this ignorance is an important step towards disturbing the disconnect and incorporating Aboriginal people into their consciousness of the past.

Coming to terms with learning of her great-grandfather’s involvement in the killing of Aboriginal people, Marlene reflected ‘I mean, fourteen hundred ewes, trying to keep them under control’. She said ‘I read in one of these books, it says that the pastoralists actually poisoned the waterholes. And you compare that with – and I’m not condoning what my great-grandfather did – but you compare that with cold blooded, premeditated [murder].’ It took a personal connection – to her great-grandfather and a particular place – for Marlene to really take note of and absorb the account of colonial violence provided in ‘one of these books’. In stating ‘they [the pastoralists] were taking the land that was traditionally the Aboriginals’, from people who didn’t understand that’, Marlene indicates her growing awareness of the injustice of colonialism. In relating the past to the present, in seeking to understand her great-grandfather’s actions rather than distancing herself from him, Marlene demonstrated transparency and authenticity; she demonstrated a position of standing in correct relation to herself and her family’s history.

22 Marlene Richards, 3 October 2013.
Although revisions to Australian history have been around for many years, it took Marlene’s great-grandfather’s involvement in a crime against Aboriginal people for her to connect her history and the history of Hallett with revised socio-historical accounts. It was the personal connection – to her great-grandfather and to the place she has spent much of her life and knows intimately – that made this history meaningful, that made Marlene connect with the history of colonialism and dispossession. As stated in the introduction, it is not that my interviewees do not have access to revised histories; it is that they do not connect their own or their district’s histories with these revised accounts which are abstract, distant and disconnected from their everyday lives. Tessa Morris-Suzuki has argued that, in order for white Australians to mourn the 300,000 Aboriginal victims of European colonisation, they need to be able to personally connect; she argues that mourning depends ‘not only on the recognition of an individual face, but also on a recognition that this face is in some sense connected to ourselves’.23

This anecdote of Marlene’s family’s varied responses to learning of Charlie Spratt’s crime illustrates how settler descendants respond to learning of past injustices committed against Aboriginal people in different ways. Marlene’s great-grandfather could have been any one of my interviewees’ forebears. How do we make sense of our forebears’ occupation of and our continued presence on this land? Do we (i.e. as settler descendants, scholars, members of our local community) condemn our predecessors, do we excuse them or do we seek to better understand them? Do we distance ourselves from our histories, deny who we are and where we have come from and thus not be true to ourselves? Do we recognise our implication in the colonial process in the present and seek to extend our empathic connection to all – to members of both cultural groups, past and present, in order to more fully understand our presence here and to better stand in correct relation to our histories and our communities?

In order to belong, we must stand in correct relation to ourselves and to the world in which we live. Standing in correct relation involves accepting who you are,

including your history, and not wanting to be someone else. Because of their strong sense of emplacement, their strong connections to place and people, the settler descendants I spoke with know who they are and they do not want to be someone else. None of my interviewees distanced themselves from their forebears’ acts of occupying land. Amelia Gebhardt came closest to this when she asked her father if her great-great-grandfather’s acquisition of land was similar to what she had learned in the play *The Secret River*.

Like Marlene, the majority of my interviewees needed some way of personally connecting their own lives, places or histories with revised socio-historical accounts to make them ‘real’ and, consequently, to begin seriously contemplating the negative implications of colonialism and begin empathetically connecting with Aboriginal people. When making sense of and relating to the past, they draw on their own experiences and what they know of their forebears’ lives. Drawing on one’s own experiences to make sense of the past is common and understandable. Mid-northern settler descendants’ lack of knowledge about Aboriginal people in the colonial past is not deliberate, it is not malicious and it is certainly not unalterable. Here I qualify my previous comments regarding settler descendants’ sense of *disconnect*. When I first contacted people about my project, I was initially nervous that people would be hostile to my interest in the fate of Aboriginal people. On the information sheet posted out with the consent form, I expressed my interest in learning more about the ‘enduring repercussions of colonialism’ and stated ‘after the British established the colony of South Australia in 1836, pastoralists and then farmers occupied the country of the Ngadjuri, Nukunu ... While very few Aboriginal people remain on land occupied by their forebears, the opposite is true for many settler descendants’. Knowing that I was particularly interested in learning about any stories of Aboriginal–settler relations that might have been passed down through their families, I found the overwhelming majority of people I contacted to be generous with their time and eager to assist me. The people I contacted were neither defensive nor hostile when it came to assisting with a project aimed at increasing current generations’ understandings of the
enduring legacies of colonialism. During interviews, when I described how all the land was owned and occupied by Aboriginal people, I never got the sense that Gabrielle Schwab did when she asked questions about the Holocaust, namely that I was considered a ‘bird that soils its own nest’. To the contrary, after learning of my particular interest in learning more about the histories of the district’s Aboriginal people, several people became noticeably more interested in my research and mentioned it to others who contacted me themselves. In this regard my experience was more aligned with that of Kate Grenville, who expected anger and resistance to *The Secret River* but didn’t encounter that at all. However, where Grenville found a ‘huge hunger to know’ more about the ‘stolen gift [the land] our forebears have made to us’ I encountered a general sense from my interviewees that while the history of Aboriginal people may be interesting and while they would help me as much as they could, this history was disconnected to their own family’s history.

This sense of disconnect was noticeable initially – during the preliminary phone calls, on first meetings and early in first interviews. However, as our recorded conversations progressed, as mutual rapport and trust were established, when I (if asked) explained what I knew about the original owners, their culture, their dispossession – as I outlined my understandings – I found many interviewees open to learning about the Aboriginal past. Researching this thesis, I have learned that it does not necessarily take much for settler descendants to begin to connect their own lives and histories with the dispossession of Aboriginal people. Simply being asked poignant questions about particular subjects in the right setting can prompt settler descendants to revive alternative memories and stories and consequently make people conscious of and begin to question previously unreflected-on assumptions. Semi-structured, qualitative interviews conducted in intimate settings can be a powerful means through which a ‘process of active

24 Of all the settler descendants I contacted, only one person, although happy to meet with me and show me around his home – his house and property – did not wish to be recorded or quoted in my thesis.  
discovery’ – for both interviewer and interviewee – can begin.\textsuperscript{27} During interviews, through the acts of remembering and narrating, through listening, hearing and consciously thinking through what is already known and what has recently been learned, the imaginative process can be liberated.

What I found promising among many of the people I interviewed was their seeming openness – their willingness and their ability – to listen to different stories, stories that included Aboriginal people, and to have their consciousness of the past unsettled and, ultimately, realigned. This openness to imagining a different past, one which incorporates traditional owners, is not a new phenomenon for mid-northern settler descendants. Marlene told me that Nancy Robinson shared ethnographic information with her. As mentioned previously, while conducting historical research in the late 1960s–early 1970s, Nancy had tried hard to track down Ngadjuri descendants to include their stories in her histories. Nancy had also gone to great effort to officially name a prominent mountain in the district in which she lived ‘Nadjuri Mountain’. This time-consuming process involved gaining local residents’ approval and overcoming numerous bureaucratic hurdles. Initially, Nancy had not been sure how local residents would interpret and receive her idea. When I asked her how it was received by the community, Nancy said ‘Incredibly well’.\textsuperscript{28} Nancy said the idea of holding a naming ceremony on the mountain was not hers and that when people saw the proof for her book (in which she refers to the traditional owners), they said:

“well, why don’t we have a naming ceremony?” So that hadn’t been in my, wasn’t my concept. And then it just wonderfully grew. And the way that concept was accepted totally took me by surprise.\textsuperscript{29}

The event, which took place on the top of the mountain, is vividly remembered by those who attended.\textsuperscript{30} It touched a chord with this group of mid-northern settler descendants. Nancy described it as ‘a most moving experience’. She had

\textsuperscript{27} Michael Frisch, \textit{A Shared Authority} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 190.
\textsuperscript{28} Nancy Robinson, interview with Skye Krichauff, Erindale, 11 November 2010.
\textsuperscript{29} Nancy Robinson, 11 November 2010.
\textsuperscript{30} Conversations with Ruth Robinson and Michael Noonan, Jamestown, 29 November 2010.
goosebumps, some people cried and even children seemed to realise the gravity and importance of the occasion.\footnote{Nancy Robinson, interview with Skye Krichauff, 11 November 2010.} Years later, after learning of their heritage, Ngadjuri descendants heard of Nancy’s efforts to rename the mountain. They were touched and appreciative.\footnote{Nancy Robinson, 11 November 2010; Pat Waria-Read, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Adelaide, 26 November 2010.} Nancy’s work has had a dramatic effect on settler descendants’ consciousness of the colonial past in that district. In the Jamestown/Mannanarie region, Ngadjuri descendants are asked to participate in important events; they are now present in the consciousness of local residents.

Two of my interviewees were father and son, Les and Ian Warnes, whose property, Woolgangi, has been occupied by the Warnes family since the late nineteenth century. Woolgangi lies outside Goyder’s Line in the arid pastoral country. When I first met Les, he told me he didn’t think Aboriginal people would have spent much time in that district as it is too dry and too tough.\footnote{Les Warnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 8 June 2010.} Les told me Ian had taken the stock off and was allowing Woolgangi to revegetate itself. When I visited Woolgangi with Les, Ian showed me how the native vegetation – the black oak, sandalwood, blue bush, salt bush, geranium – was all coming back. A few months later, Ian blocked off the dams which allowed the natural watercourses to flow for the first time in over a century. Due to an exceptionally wet spring, a large, lagoon-like body of water formed in a shallow depression which had not previously been noticeable as a depression. While walking along the shore of the lagoon, Ian and his wife Sue noticed a proliferation of stone artefacts lying along the shoreline which no member of his family had either noticed or paid attention to before.

When Ian rang me excitedly to tell me about the artefacts, I asked if I could bring an archaeologist and Ngadjuri descendants with me when I came up to look at them. Ian said he had ‘no problem’ with that. I first saw the multitudinous artefacts in the company of Ian and archaeologist Keryn Walshe, who told us that the range and quantity of artefacts indicated that this was a significant site that would have been well visited and utilised by large numbers of people for reasonably lengthy

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31 Nancy Robinson, interview with Skye Krichauff, 11 November 2010.
32 Nancy Robinson, 11 November 2010; Pat Waria-Read, interview with Skye Krichauff, Port Adelaide, 26 November 2010.
33 Les Warnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Burra, 8 June 2010.
periods of time.\textsuperscript{34} The next time I visited, Ian welcomed three Ngadjuri Elders, Vincent Branson, Quenten Agius and Carlo Sansbury, onto Woolgangi.\textsuperscript{35} During this visit, a rapport was established and the Ngadjuri men planned to return to Woolgangi in the future. Ian and the Ngadjuri Elders spoke of sharing their histories. In their attitudes, they indicated their openness to communicating with and accommodating each other.

![Image](image.jpg)

\textbf{Figure 38. From left to right, Carlo Sansbury, Ian Warnes, Vincent Branson and Quenten Agius, Woolgangi, March 2012.}

During interviews and site visits, I have noticed how many settler descendants draw on their own experience, knowledge and perspectives, how they act with integrity and authenticity, to begin to incorporate Aboriginal people into their historical consciousness. When exposed to other stories, when encouraged to think in a different way, many of the settler descendants I spoke with showed signs of extending their empathy to those for whom the experience of colonisation was not one of ‘luck’ or good fortune. I have heard the surprise in my interviewees’ voices when thinking aloud in answering questions they have never been asked before, or which they have not previously thought to ask themselves, or when thinking about

\textsuperscript{34} Site visit to Woolgangi with Keryn Walshe, 3 March 2011.
\textsuperscript{35} Site visit to Woolgangi with Vincent Branson, Quenten Agius, Carlo Sansbury, Kylie Lower (archaeologist), 30 March 2012.
issues or perspectives they have not previously considered. One tertiary-educated business woman whose family property is at Riverton and who has lived most of her adult life in Sydney and Adelaide told me, in a voice filled with wonder, that it had ‘never occurred’ to her (before our conversation) ‘that Aboriginal people were here before us’.36 Kath Milne seemed surprised that she ‘didn’t know where they [the Nukunu] went’, Geoff Dare was thoughtfully aware of the significance of his response that he didn’t know the meaning of Piltimittiappa.

After my cousin Angus listened carefully to my answer to his questions ‘were there ever Aboriginal people’ on Cappeedee and ‘what happened to them,’ I asked him how he would feel about people who had learned of their Ngadjuri ancestry ‘coming and walking over the land [at Cappeedee]’. Angus replied immediately ‘It wouldn’t worry me at all. It wouldn’t worry me whatsoever at all, I’d love them to’.37 Having initially glibly told me the story of the porridge in the pocket, when we went and saw the site of ‘the blacks’ camp’, Colin Cameron was contemplative and serious when he remembered his father telling him the group appreciated the porridge because it was cold. He was subdued when he said he thought the camping site was a traditional spot. Telling Andrew Gebhardt about the fragments of information I was learning about Ngadjuri in the North-Eastern Highland district, Andrew said with expression and emotion ‘because I, I don’t understand the whole thing. I cannot understand how we all just ... how we’ve just ignored all this stuff’.38

When Melva McInnes was telling me that she didn’t know the meaning of any Aboriginal placenames, and that she didn’t know what the rock engravings at Ketchowla were, she was contemplative when she said ‘looking back, there was a lot we missed’.39 The realisation ‘there was a lot we missed’ is a step towards correcting the historical injustice of colonisation. This phrase indicates an awareness among these settler descendants, these beneficiaries of colonialism and Aboriginal dispossession, that there are things to miss, that it is we – i.e. settler

36 Kay Hannaford, interview with Skye Krichauff, Kings Beach, 16 May 2010.
37 Angus Murray, interview with Skye Krichauff, Cappeedee, 19 May 2010.
38 Andrew Gebhardt, 14 June 2010.
39 Melva McInnes, interview with Skye Krichauff, Three Trees, 7 June 2010.
descendants – that have missed these things and that the missing of these things is our problem, our fault. By recognising their lack of knowledge about Aboriginal culture and the Aboriginal past, settler descendants are taking a step towards connecting that past with their own histories and their own lives. By recognising and beginning to reflect upon the limitations and cultural prejudices inherent in their consciousness of the colonial past, mid-northern settler descendants’ sense of disconnect is unsettled, making it possible for this sense of disconnect to be realigned and for new connections to be established.

Figure 38. Engravings, Ketchowla.
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Films
Appendix 1: Interviewees

Vincent Branson    Melva McInness
Alister Cameron    Kathleen Milne
Colin Cameron      Robert Milne
Val Cameron        Daphne Murdoch
Thomas Case        Alan Murdock
Julia Clarke       Alistair (Al) Murray
Geoffrey Dare      Andrew (Andy) Murray
Joan Dare          Angus Murray
Rollo Dare         William (Bill) Murray
Nancy Robinson Flannery    Kevin O'Loughlin
Andrew Gebhardt    Max Rayner
Amelia Gebhardt    Peter Reilly
Harold Gigney      Marlene Richards
John H Giles       Heather Sizer
Colin Goldsworthy  Claudia Smith
Ian Hannaford      Denis Taheny
Kay Hannaford      Darryl Thomas
Vera Hannaford     Jared Thomas
Ryves Hawker       Lindsay Thomas
Tom Hawker         Adelaide Susan Wall
Peter Hollitt      Patricia Waria-Read
Jean Holmes        Ian Warnes
Mary Krichauff     Les Warnes
Mabel Mahood       Arthur Whyte
Kathleen Matic     Mary Woollcott
Additional people who showed me around their properties and/or homesteads but were not formally recorded

May and Colin Broad
Tuck Cockburn
Michael Noonan
Richard Riggs and Tom Riggs
Ruth Robinson
Penny Rowe
Rob Saint and Tom Saint
Dennis Smart
Appendix 2: Towns/settlements whose public spaces were surveyed

Booborowie
Burra
Caltowie
Clare
Crystal Brook
Gladstone
Gulnare
Hallett
Hornsdale
Jamestown
Laura
Manoora
Mount Bryan
Mount Bryan-East
Peterborough
Redhill
Riverton
Saddleworth
Snowtown
Stone Hut
Terowie
Whyte Yarcowie
Appendix 3: list of mid-northern written histories surveyed


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To: Prof Klaus Neumann/Ms Skye Krichauff, FLSS
cc Dr Ian McShane, ISR

Dear Klaus and Skye

SUHREC Project 2009/177 Indigenous-settler histories in South Australia

Prof Klaus Neumann, FLSS; Ms Skye Krichauff

Approved Duration: 01/01/2010 To 30/06/2012

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). Your responses to the review, as emailed on 8 September 2009 with attachments, were put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project may commence as proposed by you on 1 January 2010 in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator.supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. A copy of this clearance email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.
Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith Wilkins

Secretary, SUHREC

Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122

To: Prof Klaus Neumann/Ms Skye Krichauff, FLSS

Dear Klaus and Skye

SUHREC Project 2009/177 Indigenous-settler histories in South Australia

Prof Klaus Neumann, FLSS; Ms Skye Krichauff

Approved Duration Extended to: 30/09/2013

Thank you for the progress report received on 30 November 2012 which included a request to extend ethics clearance for the above project. The report/request was put to the Acting Chair of SUHREC for noting/approval.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, ethics clearance for the project has been extended to end of September 2013 to complete the human research activity. Standard on-going ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below still hold.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office is you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the continuing project.

Yours sincerely

Keith

Keith Wilkins

Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Ms Skye Krichauff

cc Prof Klaus Neumann, SISR/FHAD

Dear Skye

**SUHREC Project 2009/177 Indigenous-settler histories in South Australia**

**Revised Project Title: Looking Back, there was a lot we missed: An examination of how settler descendants from South Australia’s North-East Highland and Wirrabara districts know and understand the colonial past**

Prof Klaus Neumann, FLSS; Ms Skye Krichauff

I confirm receipt of progress reports on the human research activity conducted for the above project in line with ethics clearance conditions issued. This was noted by Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) at its recent meeting held 25 July 2014.

Best wishes for your higher degree submission.

Yours sincerely

Keith

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