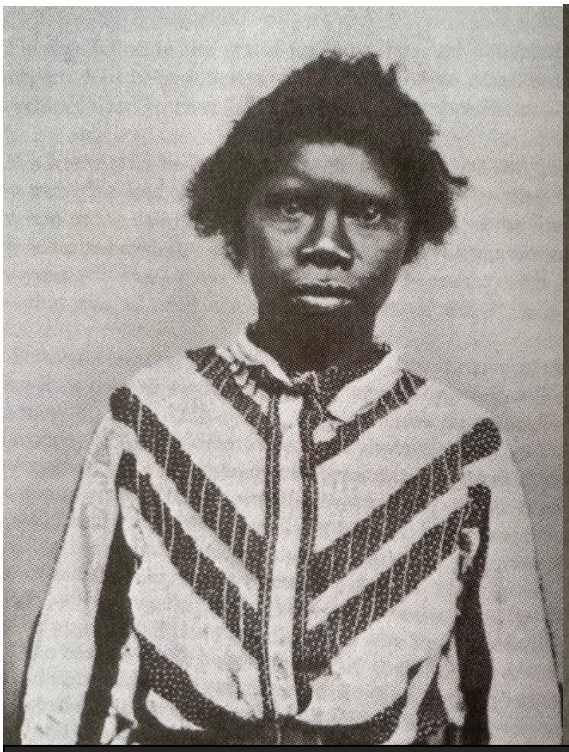
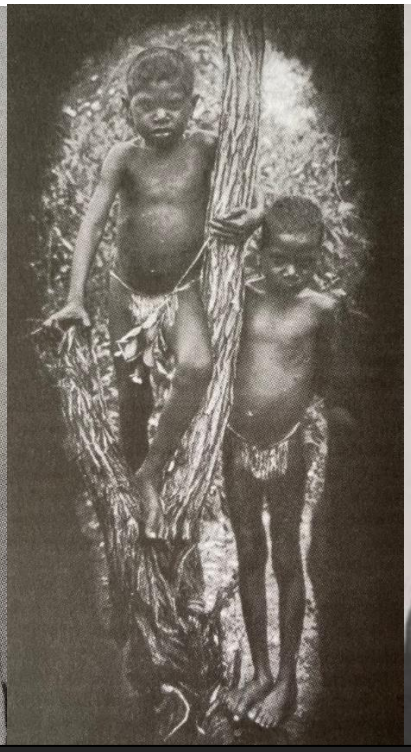
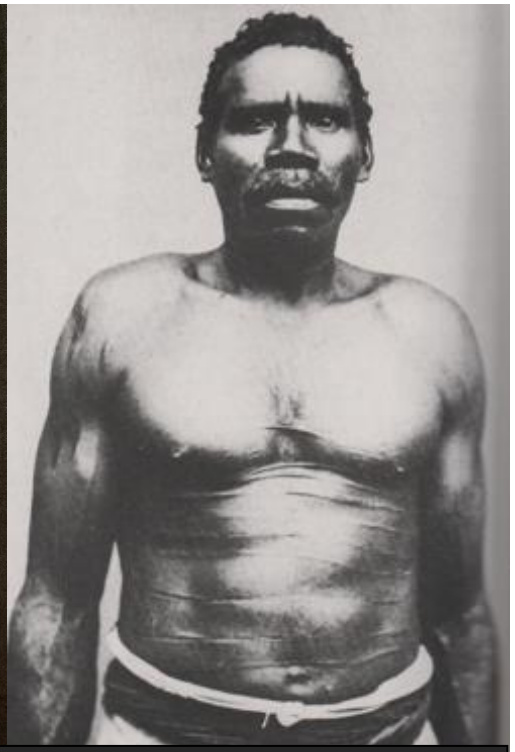
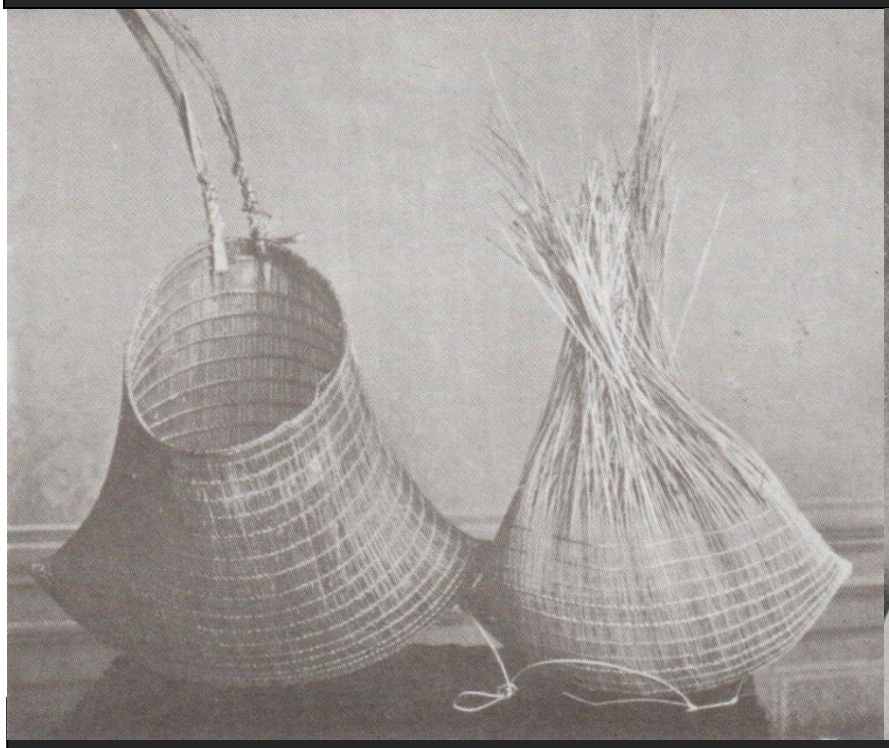
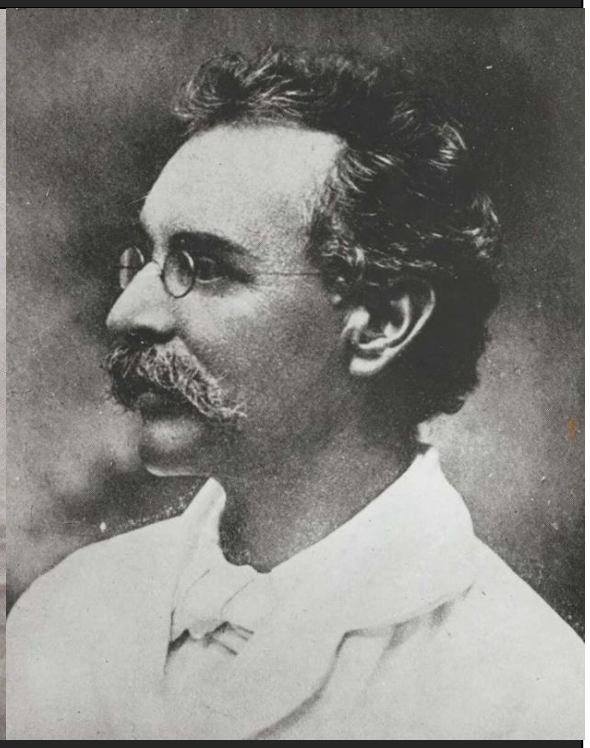




ACCORDING TO BANFIELD

ABORIGINAL LIFE ON THE TROPICAL COAST

By HELEN PEDLEY

With FOREWORD and AFTERWORD by LEONARD ANDY,
DJIRU TRADITIONAL OWNER

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The text and opinions expressed in this book are those of the author and of the people interviewed by the author and do not reflect the views of the Mission Beach Historical Society or its members.

The histories published by the Mission Beach Historical Society are as accurate as we can make them. Few accounts of history are 100% correct and there are going to be more errors when we recall events of many years ago. We always welcome suggested edits and additions or deletions and where possible we will edit where we find we are in error. However, the oral histories we record are the words of the people we interview, and we can only alter those with the authorisations of the people we interviewed.

Cover Images

Upper images Left to Right: Nellie, "District picaninnies", Tom.
Lower images Left: from E.J. Banfield's "Confessions of a Beachcomber", Dilly Bags. Right: Edmund Banfield, 1901, aged forty-nine, National Library of Australia, 22946128.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The words *Aboriginal people* and *Aborigines* are used with no intended disrespect. These names are based on the Latin, *ab origine* "from the beginning". Similarly, "Old People" (past traditional owners, especially of pre-colonial times) is a term of respect which their descendants often also use.

Occasionally, derogatory terminology is to be found in this work, in quotations from writers of the past. The terminology of the nineteenth century writers is not appropriate today. It has only been retained in direct quotations where they are useful. The thinking of the times is recognised; terminology is a reminder of this.

E.J. Banfield, in 1922

Ted Banfield 1886, the year before he went to Dunk.

FOREWORD
by LEONARD ANDY
DJIRU TRADITIONAL OWNER

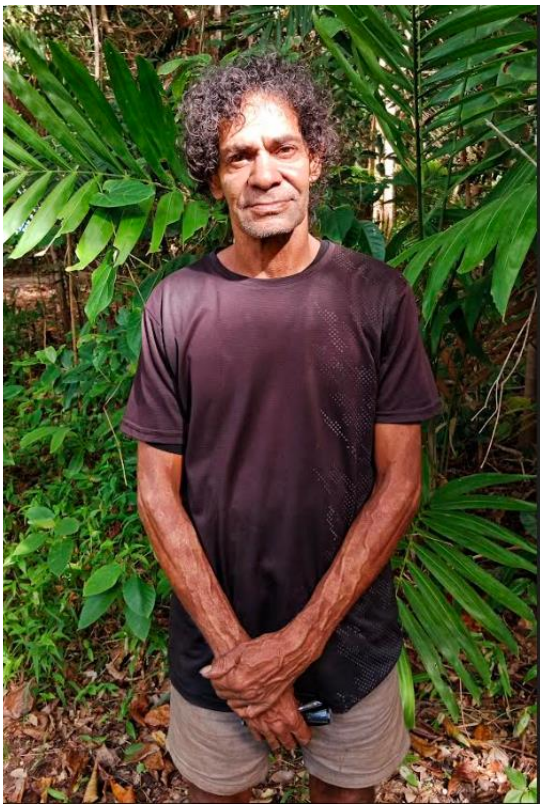
It is called shared history, but there are two different stories and only one interpretation.

Statements of former authors are very seldom questioned and are being used and re-used over and over. Aboriginal people are a minority. The dominant majority doesn't need to recognise that people have the right to question that authority. They never had rights and why should they? What was written 100 years ago is still used today. It hasn't been questioned and why is it starting today? Banfield, for example, made many assumptions, which were never verified. Around that time, there was no way to argue with white men.

Often not speaking, nor agreeing with white people's perceived views was a way to protect traditional knowledge.

Many other Indigenous peoples were brought to the area. The information recorded was given by Indigenous peoples who were not from the area and kept being used without verification.

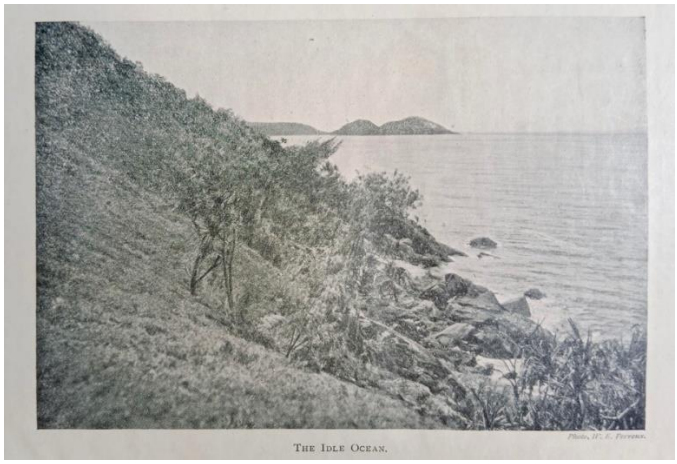
Being forcibly removed from our country and families, also discouraged from speaking our traditional language, deeply affected the retention of traditional knowledge.



Leonard Andy, Djiru Traditional Owner, 2024.

THE NORTH QUEENSLAND TROPICAL COAST

Between Cairns and Townsville in Far North Queensland, lies a region where the tropical rainforests of the mainland and offshore islands meet tropical inshore waters. This ecologically rich environment includes the traditional home of the Djiru people, comprising coastal land and adjacent sea between Maria Creek to the north and Hull River to the south and extending inland westwards to the canefields of El Arish. Now known as the Mission Beach area, with islands such as Dunk and the Family Islands off the coast, it is located in the humid wet tropics of North Queensland and lies some 120 kilometres south of Cairns. This beautiful part of North Queensland saw the Aboriginal inhabitants dispossessed of their land by colonial settlers within a few decades during the second half of the nineteenth century[1].



Dunk Island coast – from E.J. Banfield's "Tropic Days", 1918.

One who observed some of this cultural depredation in later years was Edmund Banfield, a journalist who lived on Dunk Island from 1897 until his death in 1923. He recorded his observations in journals and wrote many articles that appeared in newspapers and books, throughout his life on the island. Calling himself the "Beachcomber", he was especially interested in the natural world around him, and also took special note of the skills displayed and information given to him by the Aboriginal people who worked for him or visited the island.

His records of Aboriginal culture and life as he observed it are of interest as they describe aspects of the lifestyle and knowledge of the First People who lived in the region at that point in time. His books and articles were widely read and popular in his day and continue to be re-printed and digitally available today. However, it is not useful to accept his writing about Aboriginal people without looking carefully at underlying premises and historical context.

Badtjala woman, Fiona Foley, observed: "the power of history written down can be both lethal and deceptive… history recounted by non-aboriginal people can be fraught through the use of repetitive historical inaccuracies that are a whitewashed or sanitised version of events"[2].

Deeper examination of Banfield's work can to some extent limit the dangers of unquestioning acceptance of the assumptions he made in a context of patronising colonialism. The dispossessed people Banfield observed were adapting their lifestyle in order to survive and had been doing so for many years.

[1] See Pedley (2024)
[2] Foley (2020:1,14)

EDMUND J. BANFIELD

Edmund James (Ted) Banfield was born in England in 1852 but grew up in Australia where he came with his family at the age of two. He became a journalist like his father and worked on newspapers in Melbourne and Sydney before moving to North Queensland to work on the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* in 1882. Due to illness, he sought a quiet life on an island retreat, so he and his wife, Bertha, took up a lease on Dunk Island in 1897 after visiting the island and adjacent coast the previous year.

Some fifteen years later he described Dunk as, "this delicious Isle, this unkempt, unrestrained garden where the centuries gaze upon perpetual summer!... set in the fountain of time-defying youth… it typifies all that is tranquil, quiet, easeful, dreamlike…"[3]

On Dunk, he continued to write articles for newspapers including the *North Queensland Register* and the *Northern Miner* as well as the *Townsville Daily Bulletin*. Some of these appeared under the name of "Beachcomber" or as "Rural Homilies". Subsequently, he published three books recounting the life on this tropical island, his most famous work being "The Confessions of a Beachcomber" published in 1908. A fourth book, "Last Leaves from Dunk Island", compiled from several of his articles, was published after his death. While a number of his newspaper articles are reprinted in his books, many are only to be found in their original newspaper format, largely available today through digitised newspapers on the National Library of Australia website, *Trove*. His four books are now also accessible online.

Writer and Observer

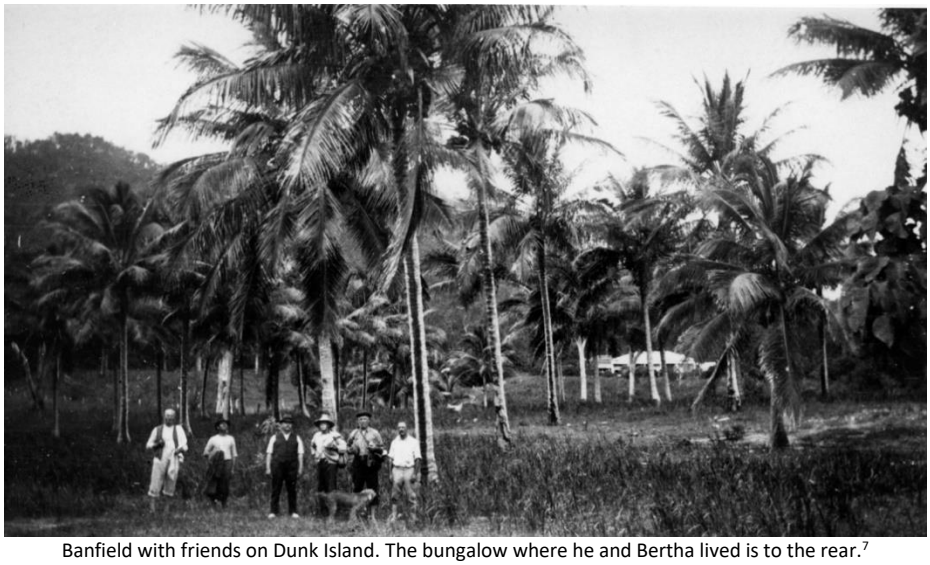
Banfield was a diligent observer of the world around him on Dunk Island and the nearby mainland and recorded detailed information. He was a prolific professional writer as well as a diary-keeper. He was not academically trained but had a very broad knowledge as a naturalist and continued to receive learned, literary and scientific journals and magazines brought by the mail steamers that also brought his supplies and the occasional visitor. He had a friend at one of the shipping companies and soon after he took up residence, he made arrangements for a steamer to call at Dunk once a week. The steamer would whistle, and Ted would row out to pick up the mail and goods[4].

By 1907, when Banfield wrote "Within the Barrier: a tourists' guide to the North Queensland Coast", the A.U.S.N Co. Ltd. had twelve fast and modern passenger steamers that provided a twice weekly service from Townsville to Port Douglas, calling at Lucinda, Cardwell, Tully River, Dunk Island, Clump Point, Cowley, Mourilyan, Geraldton and Cairns. He described various points along the route. The "country at the back of Cardwell and the coast to the north has witnessed many deeds of bloodshed and cannibalism in days that are no more... Clump Point… leads on to one of the largest orchards for tropical fruits and the very largest coffee plantation in Australia" [the Cutten Brothers' enterprise].

He knew and corresponded with many colleagues. In one publication he records his "joyful indebtedness to Mr F. Manson Bailey, F.L.S, for encouragement in my amateurish investigations into the botany of the Island by the ready identification of specimens"[5]. Bailey was Colonial Botanist for many years, based in Brisbane; he was highly respected and his knowledge of Queensland's flora was formidable. Hamlyn-

[3] Banfield (1925: xvii)
[4] Noonan (1983:153)
[5] Noonan (1989:97)

Harris, Director of the Queensland Museum in the 1890s and 1900s was an avid collector of Aboriginal artefacts. Banfield was one of his "most prolific correspondents"[6].



Banfield with friends on Dunk Island. The bungalow where he and Bertha lived is to the rear.[7]

Officials visiting the region generally called on Banfield since Dunk Island was a significant landing point for this area. Banfield spoke of meeting the Chief Protector of Aboriginals on his yacht, *Melbidir*[8]. He knew Protector W E Roth personally and was well aware of his ethnographic publications. Banfield also knew and met with Roth's successor, Protector Howard, on his visits to assess where the site for the new Government Settlement for Aboriginals should be located. Howard took notice of Banfield's local knowledge when he selected the Hull River site (now South Mission Beach), and Banfield accompanied him in 1912 when he walked to the proposed site twice, once through floodwaters[9]. Banfield loved solitude but was not a recluse.

He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1899. He has been called a conservationist ahead of his time. The Aboriginal people he came to know led him to evolve the philosophy that "individuals must 'develop a sense of fellowship with animated and inanimate things' within their country, drawing on the complete spiritual, material, emotional, sensual and intellectual composition of one's being. Dunk Island was not just a habitat or environment, it was a fusion of nature and culture: a heartland, a Dreaming"[10].

Nevertheless, Banfield was a product of his era and he wrote in florid Victorian style which was then much enjoyed by his readers. He wrote at a time, in the early 1900s, when the British Empire was a triumphant colonial power, and some might say his work was from a colonially tainted perspective. The Aboriginal people were considered to be a dying race and the White Australia policy was ascendant. To some extent, Banfield looked on the Aboriginal people as wayward children.

"It was common to welcome 'the passing of the Aborigines' as an indicator of colonial progress, a measure of achievement". The late nineteenth century interest in ethnography was nurtured by the expectation that the tribes were dying out and losing their culture. "The unique Stone Age culture was important because it was archaic, doomed and far removed from contemporary civilisation"[11].

[6] Burden (2017:64)
[7] State Library of Queensland
[8] Banfield (1918:331)
[9] Howard (1912)
[10] McCalman (2015:210)
[11] Reynolds (2001:177-178)

Banfield's books were popular. He became an established author of world renown. In 'Confessions of a Beachcomber' he expressed "as few men before him ever had done, a great love for [the Aboriginal people] and a delight in their humour, whims, fancies and their wildly imaginative explanations for such phenomena as the presence of the stars in the sky"[12]. His apparent "insight into the Aborigines" was "one of the main appeals of his books, and one of their greatest achievements"[13].

His works include observations of "Stone Age" folks, the "dwindling race", "uncouth savages" and "barbarians". He wrote that in "Tropic Days," "again an attempt is made to describe – not as ethnological specimens, but as men and women – types of a crude race in ordinary habit as they live, though not without a tint of imagination to embolden better truths"[14].

While Banfield thought the people were "generally unprogressive and uninventive,"[15] he also lamented their adoption of wire for fishhooks instead of continuing to craft pearl shell hooks as they had in the past. Yet he gained some insight into Aboriginal culture, philosophy and knowledge through his personal interaction with those he met on Dunk.

As pointed out above by Djiru Traditional Owner, Leonard Andy, Banfield's observations are limited.

By Banfield's time, the ravages of colonisation had decimated the local Djiru population. During Banfield's residence on the island, the Government Aboriginal Settlement at Hull River was established in 1914 as a result of the 1897 "Aboriginals Protection" Act. This Act ensured the control, segregation and punishment of First Nations People, and led to Aboriginal people from many other places also being forcibly brought there, and later taken to Palm Island. The loss of traditional knowledge, language and culture continued to be devastating.

The picture available from Banfield's work is not that of how society would have looked before 1788, but rather impressions of how a few people had coped with untenable brutality.

A casual reader might assume, incorrectly, that Banfield's writings about traditional life here are definitive. He himself only claimed "the present purpose…is merely to relate commonplace incidents and the humours of today"[16]. He offered "a few side-shows and character sketches… in the attempt to interest and entertain"[17].

Not all of his snippets are from Dunk Island or the mainland Aboriginal people who came to Dunk. But he generally makes it clear where his information is from when it is not based on his own direct observation.

Banfield died of appendicitis in 1923 and was buried in his garden on Dunk Island. Bertha, who had supported him throughout his life on the island, ceased to live there, but after she died some years later, her ashes were interred at his grave.

A biography by Noonan (1983) tells Banfield's life story[18].

[12] Noonan (1983:180)
[13] Noonan (1983:181)
[14] Banfield (1918:intro)
[15] Banfield (1908:239)
[16] Banfield (1908:237)
[17] Banfield (1908:239)
[18] See also Gray (2022b)

ABORIGINAL FRIENDS

A journalist, Banfield was not only a keen observer of every aspect of the natural world around him, but also had an awareness and interest in the activities and traditional skills of his Aboriginal workers on the island, and the stories they told. His diaries reveal the Banfields depended on a succession of male and female Aboriginal workers to clear the scrub for their home and garden, chop wood, and provide food by collecting shellfish, harpooning fish, dugong and turtle[19].

While Banfield had a benign curiosity about Aboriginal life, he was also a colonial product of his time. His impressions "could not help but be 'tinged' by the decidedly racist attitudes prevailing in Australian society at the turn of the century"[20]. In the 'Confessions' he headed the final chapters, "Stone Age Folks": a sure insight into his assessment of their culture. He wrote of their implements as "relics of a remote past elsewhere are here in everyday use and application. The Stone Age still exists"[21]. He described some of the toys the people made under the heading "young barbarians at play"[22].

To an extent, his comments re-invested their material culture with European meanings. In presenting the people as "stone age" or primitive, he not only blurred the real conditions of their existence, but also effectively justified contemporary government policies of paternalistic regulation, where "Protectors", white men who were their legal and moral guardians, were tasked with controlling native behaviour and life by force as required[23].

Banfield wrote that Tom was "but little blemished by contact with white civilization"[24], which might lead a casual reader to expect all Banfield wrote of Tom's knowledge and skills to be so-called pristine ethnographic data. More careful reading reveals this is not correct.

From Banfield's writings, a picture can be gleaned of cultural knowledge retained by certain Aboriginal people despite years of destructive white contact. Much of this picture came from Tom, who Banfield also says, was "as much at home on top of a bloodwood tree cutting a 'bee nest' as in a frail bark canoe fishing… All the ways and habits of fish, and their favourite feeding-grounds, are to him an open book"[25].

Like many curious observers of his day, Ted Banfield tended to record specific artefacts, techniques and knowledge based on his own European classification of the surroundings, although he felt he also came to understand the aboriginal philosophy of 'fellowship' with nature. He was especially interested in canoe-making, fishing means and methods, and knowledge of plants and birds, including plant use. Banfield often provides the scientific name (Linnean binomial) for plant species. Over the years since his time, re-classification of species by scientists has frequently taken place. In the extracts quoted, Banfield's species names have been retained rather than being replaced by current nomenclature.

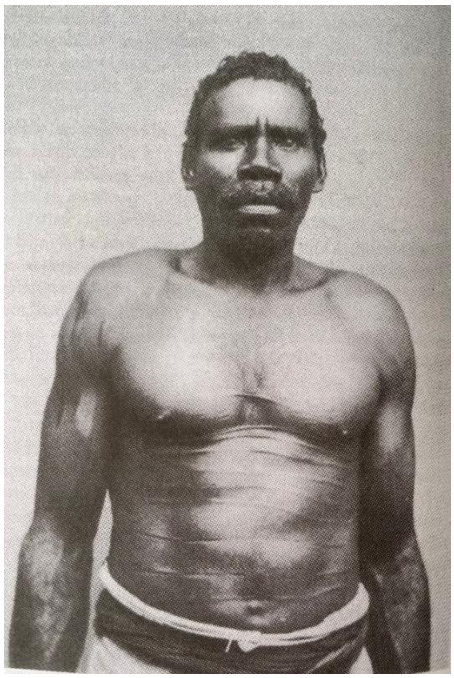
[19] McCalman (2015:204)
[20] Porter in Banfield (1983:ix)
[21] Banfield (1908:237)
[22] Banfield (1911:209)
[23] See Dixon, R. (2021:117)
[24] *Northern Miner* (11.10.1910)
[25] Banfield (1908:204-5)

TOM AND NELLIE

Tom was, according to Banfield, "one of the few survivors of the native population of the island," while his wife, Nellie, was from the mainland. He had lived on the mainland for some years prior to the Banfields' arrival, but he returned to Dunk to work for them[26].

Banfield believed that for several years prior to their arrival, no Aboriginal people had been resident on the Island; the visits of the descendants of the original owners had been irregular and brief. "Therefore… most of the evidences of the characteristics of the race had, in the course of nature, been obliterated. A few frescoes adorning remote rock shelters, a few pearl shell fishhooks, stone axes and hammers, a rude mortar or two... Shells on the site of camps, scars of stone axes on a few trees – those were the only relics of the departed race"[27].

However, later, Ted also remarked that "a few of the original inhabitants preserved their uncontaminated ways"[28].



Tom, from E.J. Banfield's "Confessions of a Beachcomber".

Tom met Banfield and his wife on their very first visit. The Banfields and friends from Townsville carried out an expedition to the coast and islands near Tam O'Shanter Point, where Banfield's friend Thomas Hollis Hopkins had property. They were in search of a suitable isolated retreat. They had set up camp on a beach at Dunk Island when Tom arrived, paddling a frail bark canoe, after detecting their presence from the mainland[29].

The following year, when Ted and Bertha returned to take up their lease, Tom, with his wife, child and mother-in-law, again arrived to assist and be of service, after "overhearing a casual reference to [our plans]" and "paddling from island to island"[30].

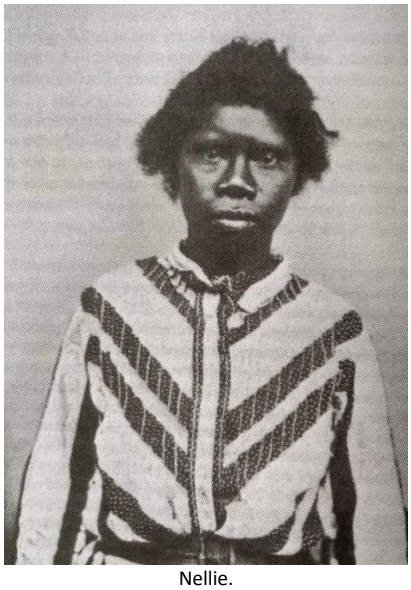
[26] Tom's Country associations are discussed further below.
[27] Banfield (1911:43)
[28] Banfield (1918:6)
[29] Noonan (1983:97), Noonan had access to Banfield's, at that time, "privately held" diaries. These are now at State Library of Queensland.
[30] Banfield (1908:6)

Tom was of the "Kitalbarra" "totem", which was derived from a splinter of a rock on an islet South East of Dunk[31]. On the same topic, later Banfield says Tom's name was adapted from "Kittalberra", a sea-worn, oyster-roughened rock not far from his birth place[32]. Tom also gave Banfield to understand his grandfather had lived on the island. One particular scrub-hen nest mound that Tom showed Ted, had been in use when he was a boy, and also "Tom's grandfather got eggs when he was a boy – that is to say if Tom's legends are to be credited"[33].

Tom told Banfield how his father was "king of this realm". He often pointed to a spot where a huge green turtle harpooned by his father had been "kummoaried" on the sand[34]. Banfield noted that Nellie, Tom's wife, was from a mainland tribe. Nellie was of the "oongle-bi" "totem". Nellie's country bordered the beach of the mainland opposite Dunk. "Oongle-bi" was a rock on the summit of a hill on the mainland not far from her birthplace[35].

The photograph of Tom that appears in Banfield's first book clearly shows he has the "marks" on his chest of an initiated man. Roth called these marks cicatrices and described them for the Malanbarra (lower Tully River Gulngay people) as follows. An incision was made with a sharp flaked flint, then rubbed with a white mud to prevent the edges mending early. Women could have similar scars on the arms, back and buttocks. The young men's initiation ceremonies took place in association with a "corroboree"[36].

A photo of Nellie also appears in "Confessions of a Beachcomber" (and below). While the camera in the first years of contact was a tool of the dominant society, and the posed groups of people appear uncomfortable and resentful, Nellie looks like a person who has lived through enormous changes[37].

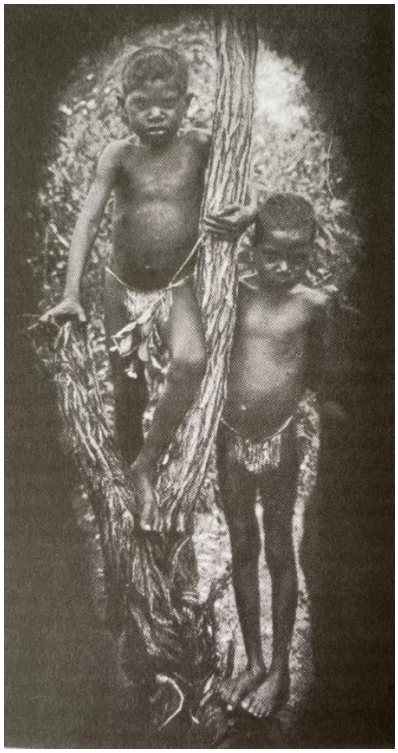


Nellie.

Banfield mentions that Yab-oo-ragoo, otherwise Mickie, marked his bride Jinny "Penti-byer" "with a studied array of cicatrices, each three inches long and half an inch wide on her arms and shoulders"[38]. It is noted that Mickie said he was an Irishman and a native of Palm Island, but "his bushcraft, his

[31] Banfield (1908:200)
[32] *Northern Miner* (11.10.1910)
[33] *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (30.07.1912)
[34] Banfield (1983b:82). Kummoaried refers to the process of cooking in a ground oven, described elsewhere.
[35] Banfield (1908:200). Interestingly, "ungulbay" was the name Mamu speaker, George Watson gave to me for the mountain now called Bartle Frere, in 1977.]
[36] Roth (1900:51)
[37] See Aird (1993)
[38] Banfield (1908:198)

knowledge of the habits of birds and insects and the ways of fish, is enviable" so he was clearly more than familiar with the locale of Dunk Island and the tropical coast.



"District picaninnies" from E.J. Banfield's "Confessions of a Beachcomber", 1908.

Banfield was saddened when Tom, during his absences from Dunk Island, took up activities detrimental to his health. Banfield found Tom on the mainland near Mourilyan Harbour, where he had succumbed to a combination of rum and opium, the "intruders' evils" but did not wish to return with Banfield. A few months later, in a drunken quarrel with a half-brother, Tom suffered a spear wound. Inspector Galbraith visited Clump Point and district at this time and heard about Tom from Mr Unsworth, who gave him "a splendid character" and informed him Tom lived with the Cuttens' Aboriginal people but did not work for the Cuttens. Rather, he gained a living by catching and selling turtles but had been speared in "a fair fight" over a woman. Galbraith found Tom lying down in his "humpy", very ill, and had him carried on board the steamer and taken to Townsville for medical treatment, but he died in Townsville. Both Tom and Nellie, his spouse, had informed Galbraith that Cutten gave their people plenty of rum[39].

When Tom died, Banfield wrote of him: "a citizen impossible to replace… a true lover of the sea, his knowledge of the plant life of the coast was remarkable. He was an Australian of the purest lineage and birth… a man of brains, a student of Nature, who had stored his mind with first-hand knowledge unprinted... a hunter of renown... by the flowering of trees and shrubs so he noted the time of the year"[40].

[39] *The Worker* (27.10.1910)
[40] Banfield (1911:283)

TOM'S KNOWLEDGE

By the time Banfield was observing and talking with the Aboriginal people who came to Dunk, Cardwell had been settled for over 35 years. A troop of Native Police had patrolled the area for a similar time, carrying out reprisals and "dispersals" of Aboriginal people as they deemed appropriate after various confrontations. The Cuttens had been in residence for some 15 years, running their plantation at Bingil Bay. The Cuttens, the Porters and others used local Aboriginal labour allowing camps on their properties. The lifestyle of the local people had been totally disrupted and numbers decimated[41].

Banfield's work could never be a full picture even had that been the intent. Perhaps it was too little, too late, yet treasures of knowledge can be found. To some extent Banfield failed to clarify what information pertained only to Dunk Island people and what pertained to mainland Djiru or other people, but by his time, the people had adapted to the incursions of the white intruders and inter-tribal marriages as well as residence outside of personal country was a more frequent and necessary occurrence than in traditional times, although interaction and socialising between tribal groups of the region regularly did take place in pre-contact days. Tom had spent a lot of time on the mainland and knew the ways of mainlanders. He had a mainlander wife, Nellie, as well as having knowledge of Dunk itself.

While the mainland adjacent to Dunk is indisputably Djiru country, Tom was himself a Warrgamay man (Leonard Andy, Djiru Traditional Owner).

Banfield was given to understand that Tom and Nellie spoke different languages, and he collected a list of words from each of them for some common English words that seem to illustrate this (see Appendix). Linguist, Bob Dixon, studied both Dyirbal, from the 1960s on, and southern neighbouring language, Warrgamay, interviewing remaining speakers of the latter in 1981. He concluded that the people of Hinchinbrook Island, the Bandjin people, spoke the Biyay dialect of Warrgamay. While he was able to record passages and vocabulary from several people, he concluded the material he could provide on Warrgamay was "rather slim"[42].

Dixon wrote: "Banfield's narrative freely mixes words from Biyay and from dialects of Dyirbal." "Whereas the words from Nellie [in Banfield's comparative list] are recognisable as a dialect of Dyirbal, those given by Tom appear to be Hinchinbrook Biyay. However, "the majority of the commonest nouns and verbs Banfield quotes… belong to Djiru or other dialects of Dyirbal"[43]. In addition, overall, Dixon found that Girramay and Warrgamay (adjacent languages) have 48% common vocabulary. It could be surmised that Djiru might share a similar percentage with Biyay Warrgamay.

Banfield wrote in 1908: "Five or six individuals with their sparse offspring represent the remnant of the considerable population which inhabited Hinchinbrook Island, the Brook Group, Goold Island, the Family Group and Dunk Island, and this deplorable loss has taken place within thirty years. As far as my knowledge goes, only one death of a Dunk island native has occurred within the last ten years"[44].

Tom had spent a lot of time on the mainland with Djiru and other Dyirbal dialect speakers and would have known several dialects. It is also known that neighbouring people all understood each other's

[41] See Pedley (2024]. Also note Cardwell Police Letterbook, 08.01.1919: list of aboriginals, deserters from Hull River, required for removal to Palm Island, includes Old Billy, Mary, Kitty, Ginnie, Flora and Jack from Porters, Clump Point.
[42] Dixon (1984:307) and see Appendix for Dixon's use of Dyirbal for the language name comprising the several linguistically distinct dialects that include Djiru, Girramay, Gulngay and Jirrbal.
[43] Dixon (1981:9-10)
[44] *Queenslander* (04.07.1908)

dialects. They travelled to *brun* (ceremonial gatherings) in neighbouring country regularly from a young age and continued to hold *brun* when they could after the white incursions. Even white man James Morrill, who was shipwrecked and spent 16 years with the Cleveland Bay Aboriginal people in the 1850s, claimed to speak eight or nine dialects. Vocabulary varied between dialects of neighbouring people, but grammatical structures were similar. If Tom was one of the last Dunk Island residents, with few other traditional owners to talk with, his memories of the stories and places of significance on the island would have slowly been fading over the years. As my Jirrbal teachers told me, if you don't talk it, it's easy to forget it.

It is not impossible that Tom might have helpfully contrasted his words with those of Nellie to emphasise his knowledge. Banfield does not give us the context of how he collected the lists – were Tom and Nellie both present, and did he ask them separately, for example.

Tom provided Banfield with much cultural information and examples of activities. However, Banfield's diaries list other Aboriginal Informants: Nellie, Jinny, Mickie, Toby, Sambo, Willie, Charlie and others. Banfield praised the knowledge of these practitioners: their bushcraft, knowledge of habits of birds, insects and the ways of fish were enviable[45]. Occasionally, there were as many as four Aboriginals "about the place. They come and go from the mainland, some influenced by the wish for a diet of oysters for a time"[46]. In "My Tropic Isle", Banfield mentions that George was chief assistant during one of Tom's absences. George was considered a "stranger" to Dunk, who brought traditions from elsewhere; he had been a police trooper in the Cooktown area before he became one of Banfield's helpers. George constructed a weir in a tidal stream to trap mullet, using saplings, mangrove branches and beach-trailers, with traditional techniques and skills. As Banfield wrote in his usual florid style: "Its design was evolved ages upon ages ago by black students of hydrostatics and fish. George had imbibed the principles of its construction with his mother's milk." It is unclear where George's Country was specifically, but he may have gone to Palm Island later[47].

It is thus important to keep in mind that some of the cultural information Banfield documents is not necessarily from Djiru people but may be from people with a heritage from elsewhere on the tropical coast.

[45] McCalman (2015:209)
[46] Banfield (1908:27)
[47] Banfield (1911: 213, 382)

BANFIELD and the HULL RIVER SETTLEMENT

Banfield also watched when Aboriginal people were taken against their will to the Hull River Settlement from 1914 on. This Queensland Government Settlement was established subsequent to the 1897 Act which purported to "protect" Aboriginal people and prohibit the sale of opium[48].

Banfield had assisted Government officers with the choice of site for the settlement, which was supposed to bring protection and benefit to the Aboriginal people. He wrote that when the settlement was definitely known to be proceeding, "most of the blacks in the immediate neighbourhood disappeared". They had dreadful past experiences of measures by "big fella Gubberment" and heard rumours that it would be a prison (put about by the Chinese and others). Also, rum and opium would not be allowed at the settlement. A resident on the Tully River "calculated about 60 blacks fled, including picaninnies"[49].

Clearing commenced for the settlement in 1914. From the Annual Report of the Chief Protector.

Land access to the site was very difficult, with mangrove swamps and creeks subject to seasonal inundation along the coast and thick rainforest predominant inland backed by the rugged slopes of Mount Mackay. The Aboriginal people were shipped to the settlement from Cardwell via Dunk, and "it upset Ted deeply to see them coming ashore from ketches and steamers to be herded on the sand-spit before being taken across by smaller boats to the home none of them seemed to want" at the new settlement on the mainland across from Dunk[50].

On the other hand, Banfield subscribed very much to the theory of "smoothing the pillow of a dying race." As the "original lords of the soil have been badly treated by usurping and arbitrary whites, the establishment of an institution where the few remnants of local blacks and others from distant districts will be assembled for their own good and benefit seems an act of belated justice." The settlement, he thought, "may be said to represent a sort of chapel of ease wherein the public conscience is appeased by acts of consideration to a relic of a race soon to pass away"[51].

[48] See Pedley (2024)
[49] *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (24.07.1914)
[50] Noonan (1983:185)
[51] *Northern Miner* (27.01.1915)

In 1916 he wrote, "I have been a fairly frequent visitor to the settlement since its inauguration… and the Superintendent [Kenny] comes to the Island for here is his port, twice a week. The blacks are often here fishing and hunting turtle… I have known many of them for years". Problems arose when outsiders tried to serve their own ends, he noted[52].

People at the Hull River Settlement before the cyclone of 1918 (Annual Report of the Chief Protector, c.1916).

Nellie, Tom's spouse, was sent to the Hull River Settlement, having been "found under the protection of a coloured alien, sadly degenerated and saturated with opium. For her own salvation she was transported to the settlement" but this was not her country, so she determined to run away. She trudged and clambered through the jungle for miles until "B'mbi catch'm Liberfool Crik [Liverpool Creek]. Plenty fella sit down. He bin sing out, 'Hello! You come back from that place?' Me bin say, 'Yes, that country no good belongs me…'". A month or so after, Nellie was again found in the service of a coloured alien, tugging away with another weak gin at what she calls a "two-fella saw." For her task of sleeper-cutting her reward would probably be a handful of rice and a dose of opium per day"[53].

Banfield survived the devastating cyclone of March 1918 at his island home and was one of the first to attend the Hull River Settlement which also suffered destruction from the cyclonic winds and accompanying storm surge. His article "The Storm Wind"[54] was "an attempt to describe a few of the details of the unforgettable hours, when a terrifying tumult, the wind and the seas seemed bent upon tearing the land to its very bones." He had evidently talked to the white survivors and described the events of the terrible night as well as reporting on how the few white settlers on the mainland had fared. Some of the young Aboriginal people living in the single quarters, and some married people from the camp on the beach tried to shelter in the officials' houses in the "intensity of the storm" but when the houses began to collapse there was panic. Two Aboriginal people who sought refuge under Mr Hazeldene's house [on the settlement] were "crushed to death as the building settled on the ground, the

[52] *Northern Miner* (03.07.1916)
[53] Banfield (1918:108)
[54] *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (27.03.1918)

bodies remaining undiscovered until Monday afternoon when some boys were picking up loose sheets of iron to make temporary humpies".

The camp on the beach where most people lived was destroyed. "Before dark, huge seas began to sweep over the frontal ridge and before long raced with terrific fury four hundred yards to the foot of the hill on which the residence [of the Superintendent] stood. Nearly the whole of the huts and humpies were demolished, the blacks waist deep, being hustled by the surges until they struck sound and rising ground. One boy was at this stage of the cyclone drowned; one woman was swept to and fro, being carried almost to safety, and then back to the beach over the site of the burial place. The graves were scooped out or sunken, and the terrified shrieks of the living could be heard by those whose houses were falling about their ears mingling with the savage outcries of the storm. Several of the blacks were cut and bruised during this period… and all spent the night in hopeless misery and dejection".

From E.J. Banfield's "Last Leaves from Dunk Island". Image by Spenser Hopkins, close friend of the Banfields.

In fact, we do not know how many people lost their lives in the cyclone here: official records differ. Banfield's account lists five; there were probably many more[55].

Two days after the storm, Banfield wrote, "most of them seemed to have recovered from the shock … in a casual aimless sort of way [they] repaired their humpies or sat idle in the sun or gathered in groups to talk… It was evident that the exposure had not done the denizens of the Settlement any great harm".

On the other hand, perhaps he did not perceive how the people were already thoroughly demoralised and so alienated by their past and recent history and experiences that this stoical front was the only response available to them.

[55] See Pedley (1998:44). The Chief Protector reported "twelve persons died either during or as a result of the cyclone". Peter Prior was a boy at the Settlement at the time. They sheltered all night under some logs in a ditch. When daylight came "along the beach and all around the camp were dead bodies of men, women and children" (Prior 1993:8).

OBSERVATIONS RECORDED

Some information gathered by Banfield from Aboriginal people can be found in Pedley 2024. The information listed here is an additional selection[56].

Fishing

Fishing techniques were fascinating to Banfield and his article "Blacks as Fishermen" provides many details. Fishing was an enjoyable and important occupation that required specific local knowledge of fish habitats, fishing techniques and knowledge of how to make various types of equipment ranging from fish hooks to spears to string for nets and lines, all from bush materials. The Aboriginal workers on Dunk often supplied fish and shellfish to the Banfields.

"When, at low spring tides, the coral reef is uncovered, small rock-cod, slim eels, parrot-fish, perch, soles, the lovely blue-spotted sting-ray, catfish, flathead, etc., are poked out unceremoniously with spears or sharp-pointed sticks from labyrinthine mazes, or from the concealment afforded by the flabby folds and fringes of the skeleton-less coral (Alcyonaria), or from among the weeds and stones - a kind of additional sense leading the black to the discovery of fish in places that a white man would never dream of investigating. At this opportune time, too, huge, defiantly armed and brilliantly coloured crayfish are exposed to capture"[57]. The spear Tom preferred for fishing had a heavy shaft and barbed point.

Banfield also discusses "wild dynamite", or the use of specific plant parts to stupefy fish. For Dunk, he lists the bark of "Raroo" (*Careya australis)* and also "Baggarra" (*Derris scandens* and *Derris uliginosa),* which trail over the rocks just above highwater. The leaves, branches and flowers of "baggarra" were torn up, bundled together, dipped into a pool and smashed with a nulla-nulla. Fish surfaced and died but were "quite wholesome as food"[58].

For *Faradaya splendida*, a complicated process is described for "the extraction of the noxious principle residing in the plant known as "Koie-yan". (This is one of the most rampant and ambitious of the many vines of the jungle) … Portions of the vine are cut into foot lengths; the outer layer of bark is removed and rejected; the middle layer alone being preserved. This is carefully scraped off and made up into shapely little piles on fresh green leaves... When a sufficiency is obtained, it is rubbed on to stones previously heated by fire. The stones then being thrown into a creek or a little lagoon left by the receding tide, the poison becomes disseminated, with fatal effect to all fish and other marine animals"[59].

He also noted that floods brought variations in catches. With rains and floods, George remarked: "We catch plenty big fella mullet", and "began to construct a pre-eminently practical wall… Its design was evolved ages upon ages ago by black students of hydrostatics and fish"[60]. However, as noted, George was considered a "stranger" to Dunk, as Banfield knew. Mullet, according to local tradition, were instead speared among the mangroves at high-tide[61].

A spider, *Nephila sp.*, which Macgillivray "discovered" on Dunk in 1848, was "used on some rivers as a lure." The fisherman "takes a light, thin switch and entangles one end in the web, which, by dexterous

[56] Although as discussed, it should be understood the information is not necessarily from Djiru traditional owners.
[57] Banfield (1909:50)
[58] Banfield (1909:54)
[59] Banfield (1909:56)
[60] Banfield (1911:163)
[61] Banfield (1909:59)

waving action, is converted (without being touched with the fingers) into a strand about two feet long. The spider is secured and squashed, and the end of the line moistened in the juices of the body, some of the fragments of which are reserved for bait, and also to be thrown into the water as a preliminary charm. These buoyant titbits attract shoals of small fish, among which the line, with its extract of spider, is delicately trailed; a fish rises to the lure, the gossamer becomes entangled in its teeth, and it is landed by a brisk yet easy movement of the wrist"[62].

They occasionally used *Hibiscus tiliaceus* to make ropes and lines, but it was considered less durable than string made from the inner bark of fig trees[63].

Canoe-making and Fishing at Sea

"The canoe is constructed of a single sheet of bark, preferably of "Gulgong" (*Eucalyptus robusta*) or "Carr-lee" (*Acacia aulacocarpa*), or "Wee-ree" (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) brought neatly together at the ends, which are sewn with strips of lawyer cane. Pieces of lawyer cane are sometimes also stitched in to represent stem and stern posts, and the chaffing pieces also are of cane, though occasionally thin pliant saplings are strapped and sewn on. Across the bow and the stern are stays of cane, with generally a stronger thwart midships. When new, and the stitches of yellow cane regular and bright, the canoe represents about the neatest and nattiest of the few constructive efforts of the blacks and is as buoyant as a duck. The seams are caulked with a resinous gum, "Tambarang," of the jungle tree known as "Arral" (*Evodia accedens*)"[64].

In the canoe, three or four harpoons were carried. Three species of turtle are found in these waters: the loggerhead, the hawksbill and the green, which is plentiful. Both of the latter are herbivorous and edible and are preferred as food to the fish- and mollusc-eating loggerhead, which has stronger flesh but is not shunned[65]. Dugong were also harpooned. The people were familiar with their life-history, the strength and trend of currents and the locality of their favoured feeding grounds and approached these shy creatures with stealth and struck when they surfaced to breath[66].

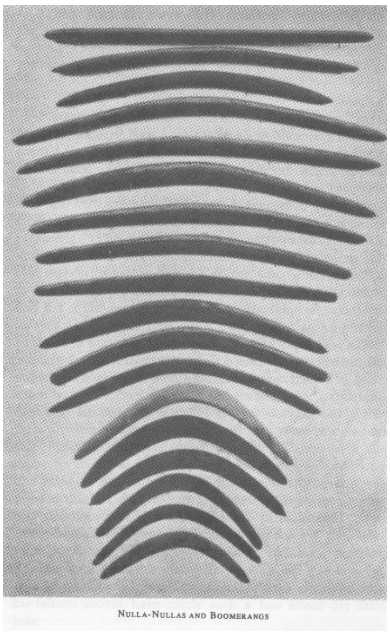
An unrivalled maker of canoes, an old man Banfield knew as "Cassowary," lived alone in his bark dwelling at a camp near his favourite beach. Banfield describes how he made perfect canoes. "By instinct he seemed to be guided to the best trees for bark, generally selecting "gulgong," though others were equally pliant in his hands. Raw from the tree, he would soak the single sheet in water, and while sodden steam it over a smoky fire, and, as it softened, mould it with hand and knee. Bringing the edges of the end designed for the stem into apposition, using a device on the principle of the harness-maker's clamp, he sewed them together with strips of freshly cut cane. Two stretchers gave to the craft beam, and the necessary sheer and thwart-ship stays of twisted cane stiffness. Gunwales of cane were sewn on, the stitches being cemented with gum made plastic by frequent renderings over the fire on a flat stone, and then the canoe was complete save for the hand-paddles, spoon-bowl-shaped pieces of bark"[67].

Banfield's books include a number of illustrations of artefacts made by Aboriginal people. However, he does not name the individual crafts-persons nor give details of provenance. This was not unusual for his day; a time when amateur collectors were encouraged to supply museums such as the Queensland Museum with artefacts. Banfield supplied message sticks from Dunk Island and advised Director

[62] Banfield (1909:62)
[63] Banfield (1909:50)
[64] Banfield (1908 on-line:375)
[65] Banfield (1908:101)
[66] Banfield (1908:107)
[67] Banfield (1918:101)

Hamlyn-Harris, "when one listens to any black expounding such things there is little room for doubt that he is exercising his inventiveness to suit his audience"[68].

Such collectors perceived an "inferior" culture and judged artefacts accordingly. Banfield called them relics of a Stone Age. The Museum preferred artefacts "uncontaminated" by European influence. On sending certain objects in 1916, Banfield wrote: "I am handing them to you exactly in the condition I received them, that is with all the adherent taints of civilization – witness the string and the staples"[69]. Aboriginal culture was perceived as static and incapable of change by observers from the dominant European culture, and where change clearly had occurred, this was judged culturally inauthentic.



From E.J. Banfield's "Confessions of a Beachcomber", 1908.

Crocodiles

As a means of transport, "the scrub blacks use log-rafts, the coastal ones bark canoes"[70]. However, the people were very cautious of crocodiles and knew where individual crocodiles lived and were very careful crossing creeks; Maria Creek was well-known for crocodiles[71]. The people there constructed rafts of logs strapped together with lawyer vine to cross creeks. Banfield says he knew this happened frequently because "these rafts are continually drifting across to the island, proving how general are their use."

Seasons

"Ordinarily food was abundant… it only had to be picked up and cooked." In very rainy times food was less easy to find, but oysters were always plentiful. Occasionally, "the whole population would paddle away to the mainland or to one or other of the adjacent islands, even to as far away as Hinchinbrook Island. Turtle do not lay eggs on Dunk, but the Aborigines knew which island beaches they favoured, and would visit them at the right time"[72]. Of course, he was speaking of a much smaller "whole population" than would have been here in pre-contact times.

[68] Although perhaps he was exercising his right to not share knowledge.
[69] Burdon (2017:78, 151)
[70] Roth (1900:96)
[71] Banfield (1908:190)
[72] Banfield 1908:168)

Food

The echidna, "Coon-bee-yan" was the largest and heaviest four-footed creature on Dunk. For the Aborigines, it was "on the very top of the list of those dainties which the crafty old men reserve for themselves under awe-inspiring penalties"[73].

The eggs of the scrub hen were dug from the mounds that the hens scratched together. On one occasion, Tom investigated a crevice between two slabs of granite, saying, "might be hegg belong scrub hen sit down". There was no mound, but he dug down fourteen inches to reveal a warm egg[74].

Banfield provides a list of preferred foods in the "Confessions", where the core information, including local names, is couched in an imaginary "dinner-party of the bygone days". Commencing with three or four varieties of oysters, a selection of many fish and real turtle soup in the original shell, he continues with a long list of animal and vegetable foods[75].

They had no fear of sharks, although "many blacks refuse to eat shark because of totemic restrictions"[76]. In addition to fish, the mangrove swamps were also the source of edible crabs, "oysters seal themselves to the roots" of the mangroves and various shellfish gather here[77].

Cooking

The black bean tree *Castanospermum australe* was the "provider of the principle food of the blacks"[78]. The manucode, ("Calloo-calloo") which comes to the Island in September is thought to "cause the bean-tree – the source of a much-esteemed food – to grow more quickly". Banfield observed that shortly after this bird's first fluty notes were heard, the bean tree blossoms[79].

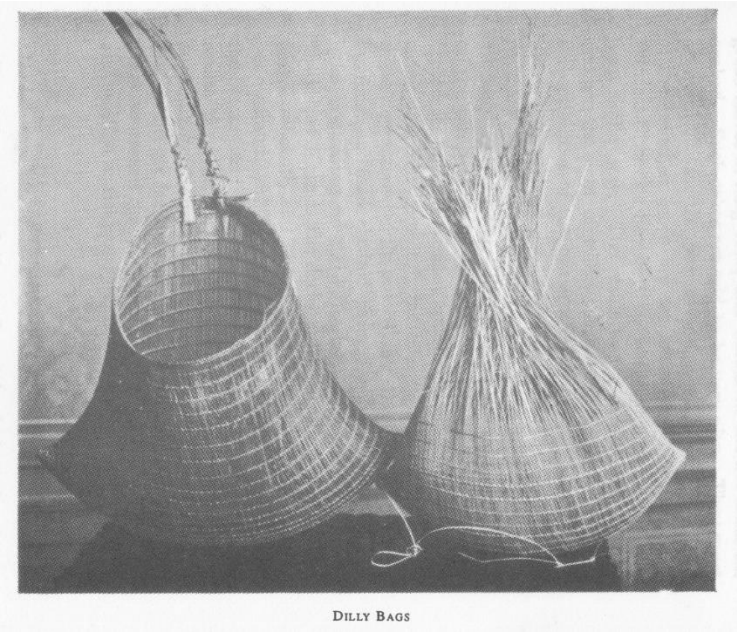
Banfield mentions methods used for in the cooking of the beans elsewhere, but continues, "Our blacks have a more ingenious method of preparation, and employ a specially formed culinary implement, which is used for no other purpose. They take the commonest of the land shells - "kurra-dju" (*Xanthomelon pachystyla*) - and breaking away the apex grind down the back on a stone until but little more than half its bulk remains. The upper edges being carefully worked to a fine edge, the only housewifery implement that the blacks possess is perfect. With the implement in the right hand, between the thumb and the second finger - the sharp edge resting on the thumb-nail - the beans are planed, the operator being able to regulate the thickness of the shaving to a nicety."

"It is women's work to collect the beans, make the shell-planes, and do the shredding. In the first place the beans are cooked, the oven consisting of hot stones covered with leaves. In three or four hours they are taken out and planed, a dillybag (basket made of narrow strips of lawyer cane or grass) full of the shavings is immersed in running water for two or three days, the food being then ready for consumption without further preparation. In appearance it resembles coarse tapioca, and it has no particular flavour… "an absolutely perfect method of converting a poisonous substance into a valuable and sustaining, if tasteless, food"[80].

[73] Banfield (1983b:146)
[74] Banfield (1983b:117)
[75] See tables in Appendix
[76] Banfield (1911:235)
[77] Banfield (1908:135)
[78] Noonan (1989:95)
[79] Banfield (1911:219)
[80] Banfield (1908:175)

The name Banfield provides for *C. australe* is "tinda-burra" and he describes in detail the complicated process by which the women rendered the toxic beans edible. It was an important food source for Aboriginal people wherever it occurred. However, no other instance of it being called "tinda-burra" has been found in the literature or from Aboriginal people. Jirrbal people called it *mirrany* in *guwal* (everyday language) and *dirraba* in *jalnguy*, the long unused avoidance language Dixon last recorded in the 1960s that was used as an avoidance language in the presence of certain kin one must avoid, such as one's mother-in-law[81]. Using an avoidance language is "an expression of deep respect, particularly of sons-in-law to their mothers-in-law"[82]. Djiru people called it *mirrany*. Girramay people called it *ganyjur* and Roth recorded that Gulngay people called it *meran* (his transcription of *mirrany*). Warrgamay people named it *wanga.*

Girramay (G) and Jirrbal (J) people also had different words for this important food at different stages of processing. Young, green *mirrany* not ready to eat was *burrbiyam* (J) or *jigi* (G). *Mirrany* sliced up, ready to put into the water was *walgil* (J) or *giri* (G). When it was half done but not ready to eat, it was *ngugi* (J) and when it was ready to eat, it was *julmur* (JG). However, none of these match "tinda-burra"[83].



"Dilly bags", bi-cornual baskets woven from lawyer cane. Banfield, E.J. 'Confessions of a Beachcomber', 1908.

Another plant food requiring careful detoxification was the cycad. Banfield describes the process. "The fresh nuts of the plant (*Cycas media*) known as "Kim-alo" were roasted, and while hot bruised between two stones, the upper ("Ookara") a sphere flattened at the poles into which the use of ages wore thumb and finger indentations, the nether ("Diban") flat with a saucer-like depression. Fragments of the husks were carefully eliminated. The coarse meal was put into a dillybag and placed in running water below a slight fall, from the lip of which fluming, improvised from the leaf of native ginger, conducted a gentle stream. Two days were sufficient to leach the poisonous principle; but if the initial process of roasting the nuts was omitted - as in some districts - the meal was submitted to the purification of water for as long as two months, when it would be tasteless. It was then ground on the nether stone by the "Moo-ki" (almost a perfect sphere), used with a rotary action, until reduced to flour-like fineness, when it was made

[81] Dixon (2019:63)
[82] Langton & Corn (2023:75)
[83] Of these, *dirraba* is the closest to Banfield's "tinda-burra". Perhaps Tom's mother-in-law was present when Ted asked Tom the name of it.

into flat or sausage-shaped cakes, wrapped in green leaves and baked"[84]. Traditional Owner, Leonard Andy confirmed the zamiad *banginyu* was harvested and processed in Djiru country[85].

Banfield describes the accomplishments a young Aboriginal girl would develop: "She will in time be able to recognise at a glance the particular kind of decayed timber in which the delicious white grub resides, will know that the nut of the cycad has to be immersed in a running stream before it is "good fella," and how to grind the kernel into flour, and how to mould the dough into a German sausage-shaped damper; she will be able to walk about the reef, picking up black-lip oysters and clams, without lacerating the soles of her feet, and to make a dilly-bag…"[86].

Rock Art

Banfield was told about examples of rock art and writes of two art galleries that he visited on Dunk; he also heard of a third but never located it[87].

The first was found after a steep ascent from a small cove, where a granite boulder with an overhang was decorated. Of five paintings, two were weathered away to blotches and faint streaks of red earth. Those which survived: "two apparently represent lizards and the third seems to portray… a human being with a rudimentary tail."

Of quite a different order was the second site, which lay closer to the "back-bone" of the island in the heart of the jungle. His Aboriginal colleagues had told him approximately where to look, although they themselves preferred not to visit "places where twilight always reigns" and after three expeditions, accompanied by one attendant, the art was finally located beneath a great granite rock. Charred sticks and a pearl shell lay at the entrance to the "cave". The rock had been slightly smoothed, and the subject was "the representation of the animals and of weapons of his age" worked in dull red. "Animated nature and still life have been studied and reproduced. The turtle is true, and the most conspicuous".

Rain-making

A process to encourage rain was practiced by Tom. He cut a piece of bark from a "wee-ree" tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), shaped it to a point at each end, anchored it with bush-string to a root or the bank, allowing it to sink into the water. Tom explained: "Subpose I bin put that "milgar" in water deep, too much rain altogether". A modern variation was also added by Tom: an arch of the vine *Flagellaria indica* with an empty bottle hung upon it[88].

Stories

The Aboriginal people knew many stories about their country and the spirit beings that created features long ago. Banfield recorded some that he was told.

One story relates to Bedarra Island and it's "rocky satellite", "Peerahmah". Banfield was told the story belonging to this place was that of two women who were left on Coonanglebah (Dunk) while the other

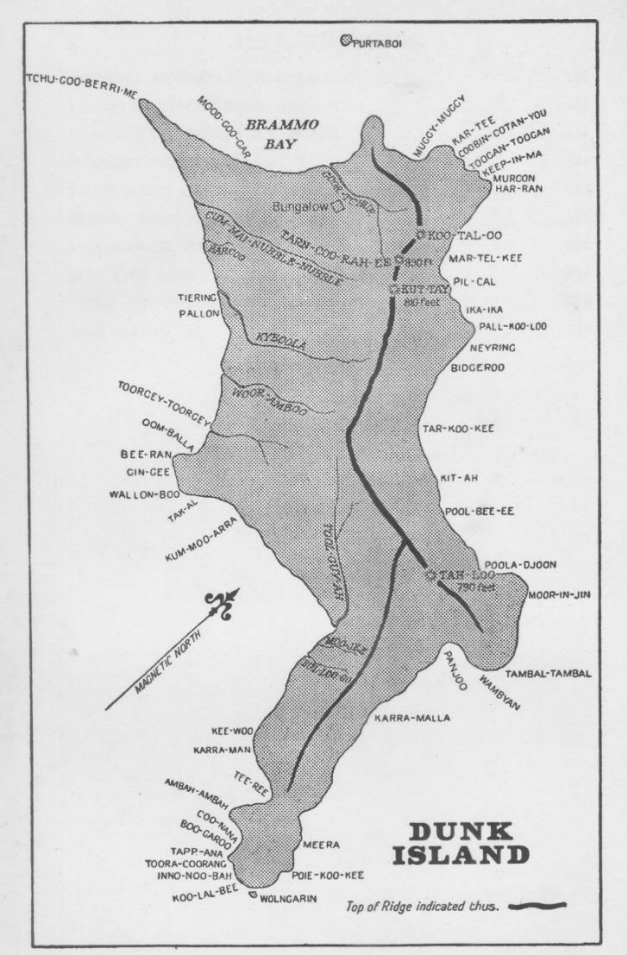
[84] Banfield (1918:325)
[85] See Pedley 1992, 1993, for recent recordings of preparing black bean (*mirrany*), cycad (*gimaru, gajira)* and zamia (*banginyu)* by Girramay and Jirrbal people.
[86] Banfield (1908:198)
[87] Banfield (1908:170 *et seq.*). Note: Chris Wildsoet also said he had been shown three caves by Dunk Island residents when a boy in the 1880s or early 1890s (Woolston & Colliver, 1975).
[88] Banfield (1908:60)

Aboriginal people all went to Hinchinbrook Island. The women decided to swim there. After swimming to Bedarra they were exhausted and were changed into the stone island "Peerahmah"[89].

The story of the restless stone is told in "Tropic Days". A particular large tree "stands at the spot where generation after generation of the original owners of the soil has crossed the creek, wearing a waving path upon which ferns ever encroach and which every flood amends. In a recess in its massive roots, reposes "Kidjo-bang," the restless stone - a boulder, man's-head size, stained with a rim of sober brown. This is its accustomed scat. It roves the locality, returning, swallow-like, to the close-fitting hollow of the root.

"The embraces of the root are sometimes so strong that the dingy stone may not be moved. But the floods of the wet season maintain an unceasing cataract to its dislodgment, and then, according to the legends of the blacks, it begins to "walk about." It may rest a month just out of reach of the disturbing water among the ferns. It has been known to appear mysteriously on the sandy beach two hundred yards away, to which spot it is said to travel by way of the grass lands, avoiding the slur of the muddy creek… the round white stone returns, independent of the agency of man", to the sanctuary of the tree.

"Kidj-o-bang" is still associated with the ceremonies of the bestowal of totemic names on the children of a certain father"[90].



From E.J. Banfield's "Last Leaves from Dunk Island", 1925.

[89] Banfield (1983a:70)
[90] Banfield (1918:252)

DISAPPEARANCES

Banfield was aware that the numbers of Aboriginal people had greatly declined: "less than a couple of decades past they swarmed on the mainland opposite Dunk Island. Now the numbers are few." He also knew why.

"Within sight of Brammo Bay is the scene of an official "dispersal" of those alleged to have been responsible for the murder of some of the crew of a wrecked vessel, who drifted ashore on a raft. One boy bears to this day the mark of a bullet on his cheek, received when his mother fled for her life, and vainly, with an infant perched on her shoulders."[91].

It was not only the Native Police and their white officers who accounted for diminishing numbers. Some white settlers had other methods.

"In those days 'troublesome' blacks were disposed of with scant ceremony. An incident has been repeated to me several times. A mob of 'myalls' (wild blacks) – they were all myalls then – was employed by a selector to clear the jungle from his land. They worked but did not get the anticipated recompense, and thereupon helped themselves, spearing and eating a bullock, and disappeared. After a time, the selector professed forgiveness, and the fears of the blacks of punishment having been allayed, set to work again. One day a bucket of milk was brought to the camp at dinner-time and served out with pannikins. The milk had been poisoned. "One fella feel 'em here," said my informant, clasping his stomach. "Run away; tumble down; finish. 'Nother boy run away; finish. Just now plenty dead everywhere…"

Banfield mentioned it "as an instance from the bad old days when both blacks and whites were offhand in their relations with each other". Ever hopeful, he wrote that "such episodes are of the past. The present is the age of official protection, with perhaps a trifle too much interference and meddlesomeness."

However, he went on to cite two other cases. "Two blacks of the district confessed upon their trial that they had killed their master for so slight an offence as refusal to give them part of his own dinner of meat." An instance of the callousness of the white man is then noted. "In a fit of the sulks one of the boys of the camp threw down some blankets he was carrying and made off into the scrub. It was considered necessary to impress the others… a strange and perfectly innocent boy appeared on the opposite bank of the creek. The 'boss' was a noted shot, and as the boy sauntered along he deliberately fired at him. The body fell into the water and drifted downstream. One of the boys for whose discipline the wanton murder was committed related the incident to me."[92].

In addition, Banfield connected another factor to the demise of the Aboriginal people. "Many have been hastened away from the world by a new and seductive vice. Chinese cultivators of bananas found the blacks useful and rewarded them with the ashes from their opium-pipes… its effects were terrible. The fiery liquors of mean whites, and diseases contracted from the depraved, killed off many of the original lords of the soil. Opium was supplying the finishing touches…"[93]

"No doubt during the last ten or twelve years, the population has absolutely decreased – the increase of the Chinese corresponding with serious diminution on the part of the blacks. Where now one sees 3 or 4 blacks – all working for the Chinese – were scores of more or less happily fishing in their native state.

[91] 'Dispersal' was the official term for the action by which Native Police shot Aboriginal people and burned their camps. (See Pedley 2024).
[92] Banfield (1908:191-2)
[93] Banfield (1908 (1994 ed.):304)

The poor remnants – dull and depraved – are significant examples of the desolation of the race by contact with the Chinese"[94].

Other notes

The last battle on Timana Island was recounted by the last female native of Dunk, who died in 1900. She took part in it as a child. There was a great gathering from neighbouring islands and the mainland, during which they rounded up all the wallabies on the island, chasing them into the seas and onto the rocks. They killed and ate them at a huge feast. The Aborigines have no stories of wallabies, kangaroo rats or bandicoots on Dunk[95].

Banfield supplies a list of children's games and information on a number of children's toys and how they were made, including "Djawn" a rattle made from a tiny spherical basket of strips of cane encasing seeds of the *Caesalpinia bondicella*[96].

According to the local people, the koel cuckoo, which they call "calloo-calloo", detects carpet snakes and sings out "calloo-calloo" when it sees one. When the people hear this, they look for the snake, which they kill, cook and eat. For this reason, they never kill the koel cuckoo, it is "tabu"[97].

[94] *Northern Miner* (22.12.1909)
[95] Banfield (1908:51)
[96] Banfield (1911:257 *et seq.*) These items are listed in the Appendix.
[97] Banfield (1911: 221)

THE BEACHCOMBER

Banfield could be thought of as ahead of his time in his advocation of preserving and conserving the unique environment in which he lived. He could be considered a colonialist intruder. He was certainly a keen observer and recorder of nature and of humankind at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Banfield's works were widely read at the time and continue to be available. While in circulation they must have been somewhat effective in nurturing a certain view of indigenous lifestyle with white readers over the years. Yet with Dixon, it could be said: "that in reading colonial texts, it is a mistake only to read against them, denouncing their racism and misogyny from the high moral ground of the present". From such works we can also recover other things: the sense of 'captivity', sense of wonder, fascination and enchantment"[98]. Banfield's descriptions of his island "paradise" certainly do this.

He and Bertha came to Dunk Island a number of years after the Aboriginal populations of the islands and of the mainland of this tropical coast had been decimated by the diseases brought by white people and by the ruthless actions of the Native Police and others. They had been forced off their traditional country by the spread of white settlers, losing access to traditional foods, resources and their spiritual homelands and social networks. They had been driven to seek work with the interlopers as a survival strategy, although addiction to opium and alcohol then became another abhorrent factor in their demise.

Nevertheless, the treasures of information Banfield recorded are an indication of the vast store of knowledge and expertise that was the heritage of the Aboriginal people of the tropical coast. Despite their sad past, Banfield provides his personal snapshot at one point in time when the survivors struggled to maintain a determined resilience. It is an indication of a culture that had thrived and adapted for thousands of years.

[98] Dixon, Robert, (2021:123)

AFTERWORD
by LEONARD ANDY
DJIRU TRADITIONAL OWNER

Information gathered in the past being used over the years without ever checking the facts is a potential source of error and bias in many fields and domains.

Collecting data is the first step and anyone needs to ensure the accuracy of the information. Inaccurate data can have far-reaching negative consequences.

People like Banfield are dangerous for our cultural security. The information he recorded and published is not questioned. He did it for himself, to show how he would be perceived in the Mother Land. He didn't do it for the Aboriginals, or for the environment.

It is so important to review and verify any information collected. In doing so, mistakes and misunderstandings can be avoided.

Information from multiple sources and perspectives need to be compared and experiments or tests need to be conducted to validate hypotheses or assumptions. Any information needs to get evaluated for accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and credibility.

A culture of truth and evidence must be supported and promoted.

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THE AUTHOR

Helen Pedley was born in Nottingham, England and first came to Tully in 1976. Here she met her future husband and stayed.

Prior to coming to Australia, she graduated from University College London in 1974 with a BSc Hons (First Class) in Cultural Geography and in 1974/75, she studied Geography and Anthropology at the University of Michigan with a Fulbright travel scholarship. Later, she completed an MA from James Cook University with a thesis on plant food detoxification by the Jirrbal and Girramay people of Jumbun.

Helen was Shire Librarian for Cardwell Shire Council and then Library Services Administrator and Museum Curator for the Cassowary Coast Regional Council at Tully until she retired after 24 years. She has published several books and monographs including local histories such as *Tully Street Names: Signs of History* (2010), *Streets by the Sea: a Cardwell chronicle* (2014) and *A Brief History of Mission Beach* (2021, online). Helen has also researched and worked with local Traditional Owners and published books and reports about Indigenous culture such as *Aboriginal Tools of the Rainforest*, *Aboriginal Life in the Rainforest* (1992), *Storykeeping: Davey Lawrence remembered* (2019) and many other works, some being commissioned and unpublished.

In 2024, Helen Pedley worked with the Mission Beach Historical Society to publish two Djiru history volumes online, this one and another: *According to Banfield: Aboriginal Life on the Tropical Coast*. Her contribution to the community and the culture of the Cassowary Coast Region has been both enduring and immense. Mission Beach Historical Society is grateful that Helen chose to create and publish these histories and thanks her for such diligent research and well-balanced accounts. Our historical collections are greatly enriched by these important works.

APPENDIX: WORDS and PLACENAMES

While Banfield was a careful observer, he was not a trained linguist, and there are many reservations that could be made about his recording of Aboriginal words. For example, did he hear subtle differences in sounds correctly and did he write down the sounds he heard in a consistent manner? Did he make his informants understand what he was asking when he questioned them? Was a placename he recorded actually a placename as Europeans understand as such, or was it a name (or just a word) according to the culturally different indigenous system? The Yucatan peninsula is located in Mexico. Yucatan means "what?" or "what are you saying?", which is what the local native people replied to the Spanish Conquistadors who asked the name of it[99]. The classic example of language misunderstanding is where a "native" name for a specific river, is actually the local word for water. In Britain, we see this with the River Avon, where "avon" is the Celtic word for river, still used in Welsh: *afon*. Locally, we find "Carmoo Creek" where "carmoo" is the Girramay word for water, usually now transcribed *as gamu*.

The information Banfield collected from Tom, Nellie and other Aboriginal people who came to Dunk from time to time is very valuable as it may be all we have for that era, but it can well be examined in a little detail, and perhaps appreciated more.

Indigenous Placenames: an Overview

For many Indigenous people, placenames are a legacy from the Old People, and restoring those names (the proper names) honours them. Today, indigenous placenames are being increasingly esteemed by people in general, and in some cases, being restored. Students of Aboriginal placenames in Australia, and those seeking to name and re-name the Australian landscape, point to the contrast between the traditional system of toponymy (naming places) of indigenous societies, and the Anglo-Australian nomenclature that has been overlaid on the landscape since colonisation. In this respect, 'intercultural transmission' (the transfer across linguistic and cultural barriers) and also 'historical transmission' (transference through time) are important and need to be explored when seeking to understand placenames collected from traditional owners in the past[100].

Also, the continuing role of knowledge and use of place names by traditional owners must be acknowledged. Historical documentary sources are sometimes the only resources available to those wishing to use the traditional name for a place today but these should be interpreted carefully. In other places, traditional owners are able to provide direct information. In addition, more recently, the significance of the role of placenames to traditional owners is becoming better understood by non-indigenous people. Changing or over-riding the name of a place, as was often done in the past, "completely changed and confused the identity of the location"[101]. Occasionally this is recognised officially, as in the renaming of Girringun National Park (formerly Lumholtz National Park), for example[102].

Aboriginal placenames must be considered within their appropriate linguistic structure, rather than only as we would regard English names. They may be simple common nouns; or compounded nouns with or without affixation (a syllable added to the noun). They may be names with a locative suffix (an ending

[99] Bryson (1990:206)
[100] Koch (2009:116)
[101] Page (2021:15)
[102] see Pedley (2019:33)

syllable added to indicate 'at' or 'in' or 'on'); they may be a descriptive clause (such as 'where the turtle went in'). They may be none of these.

The goal may be to understand the names from the point of view of the traditional culture from which they were taken. The questions asked include: what is the ordinary language meaning of the name? what is the story behind the name? and what is the appropriate spelling and pronunciation?

Dunk Island Places

In one sense the Dunk Island placenames are straightforward in that there is a single source: Banfield's informants, along with Banfield's credentials of careful note-taking, and deep interest, albeit from a colonialist, paternalistic outlook. However, he seems to have consulted several local people besides Tom and never specifies exactly who told him any particular name. Also, when the linguistic setting is considered, interesting issues arise.

Banfield recorded many place names that the Aboriginal people told him. He also wrote his own opinion on how they selected names. "Many of the geographical titles of the blacks are without meaning, being used merely to indicate a locality. Others were bestowed because of a particular tree or plant or a remarkable rock. Some commemorate incidents. Two places on Dunk Island perpetuate the names of females… Few names for any part of the island away from the beach seem to have existed, although the sites of camps along the edge of the jungle and even in gullies… remote from the sea, are even now apparent"[103].

"Camps were not honoured by titles, but all the creeks and watercourses and other places where water was obtained were so invariably, and camps were generally, though not always, made near water." This is logical because camps would have moved from time to time as sanitation and other considerations demanded, whereas a general area name, especially for a water source, would remain.

Taking a converse view, and from observations made during a site inventory with Elders from Jumbun including Davey Lawrence in Jirrbal and Girramay country,[104] an area such as a tract along a river, or a place where springs were found, would have a name which may or may not relate to a *jujaba* (creation) story, but there was also a wet weather camp there in "the early day". The name place was not just the camp itself.

Creeks and rivers are convenient lines on our maps for boundaries. However, when walking with Elders Davey Lawrence and Molly Grant through Girramay and Jirrbal country, they made it clear that rivers and river banks were seen holistically, with story places often being a certain length of the creek, rather than just a spot on the right bank or left bank. On the North Murray River: "*Ngulinyu*, all this stretch of the river belongs to the barramundi (*jubar*)" (Davey Lawrence). Similarly, on the South Murray River: "the next stretch of the river is *Girga*. There was a wet weather camp on that [left] bank, people camped here for fishing and hunting. This place goes all the way upstream to *Gaban*" (Molly Grant). Boundaries they mentioned, usually referring to family group country areas, occasionally included: "it follows the range".

[103] Banfield & Porter (1983a:68)
[104] Pedley (1994)

As well as presenting in list form the indigenous names Banfield collected (below), included are some comparative words as collected by personal research, or as listed in Dixon's thesaurus of Dyirbal words[105]. These pertain to the neighbouring languages, or dialects of Dyirbal, as Dixon defines it.

Languages, Nation (Tribal) Groups and Orthography

In exploring the meaning of traditional placenames, several aspects of Djiru (and other dialects spoken by Banfield's informants) and English must be considered. Specifics will then be discussed[106].

No two languages have the same set of sounds[107] and Djiru and English exemplify this. There are variations in the pronunciation of phonemes in the Aboriginal language that are unfamiliar to English speakers. Thus, b and p, for example, can be interchanged without altering the meaning of a word. There are also unfamiliar phonemes which are variously perceived by English speakers and recorded in varying ways. Similarly, there are unfamiliar sequences of sounds, such as ng at the beginning of words, and the distinction between r and rr. English also allows varying spellings to represent the same sound. These general concerns can be considered further.

The Djiru people spoke their language, Djiru, in pre-contact and recent times. In academic linguistic terms, Djiru has been identified as one of several dialects of a single language, the main other ones being Jirrbal, Girramay, Gulngay, Wari, Mamu and Ngadjan[108]. Although the speakers themselves did not have, or need, a name for the single language, it has been designated "Dyirbal" by Dixon, the linguist who commenced studying these dialects in the 1960s, because Jirrbal had the most speakers at that time. These dialects use the same phonology and have about 80-90% vocabulary in common with their neighbours. Dixon recognised that "speakers are not particularly happy about what they consider to be a number of different "languages" being lumped together in this way"[109]. Speakers see other dialects in relation to their own language/dialect. Thus, Gulngay speaker Joe Kinjun could say "Cardwell mob - they are Girramay but they are all Gulngay" and make perfect sense. However, Dixon's use of "Dyirbal" will be adhered to for the present purposes.

Orthography refers to how languages are written down. Dyirbal culture has an oral not a written tradition. How their words were written down by writers such as Banfield and Roth was not important to the Dyirbal people at the time. Neither was there a standard way of recording Dyirbal words and names, and there still is not. However, Dixon has provided a linguistically accurate way to record, which is also suited to non-linguists in general and this will be adopted here as in my previous work with Dyirbal people.

It should be noted, however, that while consistency is useful for academic purposes, it is not the intention to impose particular spelling on Traditional Owners. Dictating how they should spell their own language is another form of colonialization to be avoided.

According to Dixon, each of the five thousand languages in the world uses a slightly different set of sounds and each language must have an alphabet if it is to be written down[110]. Linguistically speaking,

[105] Dixon *et al* (2017)
[106] Djiru is used in the following discussion for ease of reference but it is noted that not all Banfield's informants provided Djiru words. Some recorded words were other dialects of Dyirbal or Warrgamay.
[107] Dixon (2019:74)
[108] See Dixon (2019:12)
[109] Dixon (1982:44)
[110] Dixon (1978)

"Dyirbal has three vowel phonemes (a, i, u) and thirteen consonants (bilabial b, m; apico-aveolar d, n, l; lamino-palatal j, ny; dorso velar g, ng; trilled rhotic rr, semi-retroflex rhotic r; and semi-vowels w, y.)"[111].

For the non-linguist, for practical purposes, the Dyirbal alphabet has 16 letters only:

a, b, d, g, i, j, l, m, n, ny (also written ñ), ng, r, rr, u, w, y.

In pronouncing words, p may be said for b, t for d, k for g, or ch for j, without changing the meaning of the word. Thus, Kirrama is a good attempt at writing down Girramay. Simplicity is the key.

There are some forty sounds in English, "but more than two hundred ways of spelling them"[112]. Some spellings are also pronounced differently, as with through, tough, dough, bough, cough, etc. Whereas English sounds can be written in different ways (wood, would; chemist, kettle, etc.), it is perhaps better to use a single way of writing each sound in Dyirbal. There is no need for repeating letters such as dd; g covers the sounds of k and ck, while j covers dj, dg, and d covers th. Thus, the Jirrbal word for stone, *diban* can be pronounced tiban, dipan, tipan or tiban, and still mean stone.

However, r and rr are different; for example, *yara* (with a flat r) means man, while *yarra* (with a rolled r) means fishing line. The distinction is tricky for English speakers as we do not distinguish these in our language and are not used to listening for the difference. The rr has occasionally been transcribed as dd (as in Jiddabull for Dyirbal).

Three vowels combine with y to make all vowel sounds, thus e is covered by i, while ee is iy, oo is covered by u, and so forth. Generally, there is no need to hyphenate phrases, emphasis is on the first and third syllables, although Dixon hyphenates suffixes in some transcriptions.

A language is not just words (it's lexicon); as well there is an intricate set of rules of grammar and to a non-speaker it also is a maze of unfamiliar concepts. Nowhere does Banfield claim to speak Tom's language. He is not immune to the perils of inconsistent spelling, as can be seen in the tables below where he records more than one possible spelling for a single word/thing.

Grammatically there may be hidden problems for recorders of names that do not speak the language due to the characteristics of the language or dialect. Semantically, Dyirbal speakers were specific with information, particularly with places in their country. Vagueness and generality were not encouraged. When I asked if a certain fruit was *gumalam,* which is a general word for edible fruit, I was told I could call it that, but it's "really name" was a word specific to that fruit. Similarly, for example, a river or creek did not have a single name throughout its flow, rather place names were attached to bends, to certain rocks, crossings, tracks, old trees.

Also, the name of a place was usually tied to the story belonging firstly to that place, and also to the family and perhaps a single individual. In this context, Banfield's work can be appreciated when he wrote that "Tom's totemic title, "Kitalbarra", is derived from a splinter of rock off an islet to the south-east of Dunk Island"[113]. The ending "-*barra*" means "person from" thus, *Malanbarra* are people of the sandbanks (*malan*). Banfield also captured this when, for example, he noted "pall-koo-loo" was a group of isolated rocks perpetuating a legend of a man who came across from the mainland for a fight.

[111] Dixon (1984:209), see also Dixon (2022) for an updated grammar of Dyirbal.
[112] Bryson (1990:111)
[113] Banfield (1908:200)

Linguistic structure is also important. Dyirbal grammar required suffixes (endings) to be added to nouns (stems) to show the case. For example, *buni* means fire, but *buninga* means at or on the fire. There are many different endings with grammatical rules of application[114]. The locative is of particular interest because it signifies an "at", "on" or "in" meaning, with a suffix, of which Dixon identifies four possibilities depending on the stem[115]. In English we use prepositions to indicate the same thing. In Dyirbal other suffixes include *-gu* (dative and allative case), *-mi* (general genitive case), *-ngunu* (ablative case), while *-lu* can have several meanings.

The people were also specific with detail about plants and parts of plants, types of spears, and so forth. Every species of rainforest plant had a name, largely equivalent to scientific species names, but parts of trees, especially where parts were used for artefacts or were edible, sometimes had different names. For example, Banfield recorded "kirrie-cue" was the tree *Eupomatia laurina*[116]. In Dixon's orthography, this would be "girrigu". The Girramay and Jirrbal for this species of tree is *muja* but their word for the young shoot of *muja* used to make a spear is *girin;* add an ending *-gu* and we see the difficulty of working with data we don't know all the background to.

Many Aboriginal societies had placenames that referred to a "story" in varying lexical complexity[117]. Thus, there may be a need to know the creation story as well as the word. Banfield occasionally provides this.

Language is a social phenomenon. The meaning and function of a word depends on the situation in which something is said. The cultural heritage of the people Banfield worked with, as well as their recent contact history affected how they saw and classified the world, what they recalled of legends, stories and culture. Conversely, Banfield's own inherent assumptions as an English speaker with his own culture and expectations and perceptions, affected how he heard and recorded information. He heard the Aboriginal words in terms of the English sounds he was familiar with, wrote them down according to English spelling (which is notoriously variable) and sometimes expected they held meaning in the context of how English places were named.

Finally, while it may suit certain people to encourage consistency in spelling, this must not become another means of subversive colonialization. Having damaged an oral tradition and forced the learning of both speaking English and spelling English, how Traditional Owners choose to write down and spell their own language is their choice.

Language Lists

The following lists include many of the words Banfield was given by Tom and others, which he included in his writings over the years. I have attempted to add Jirrbal, Girramay or other dialect words, to amplify Banfield's work. These are from either my own personal research, or from Dixon's thesaurus. There are problems and limitations in comparing vocabularies. Available vocabulary is only a fraction of what Djiru speakers would have had when the language was spoken fully.

Not all placenames are transparent. Koch suggests an expectation of 50% placenames at best to be related to original vocabulary[118]. Informed guesses about pronunciation and meaning do have limitations.

[114] see Dixon (1972)
[115] Dixon (1972:42)
[116] Banfield (1908:100), Banfield (1925:31)
[117] Koch (2019:118)
[118] Koch (2009:147)

Dixon's thesaurus of Dyirbal words across all dialects uses the following key, most of which I have also used (approximate areas indicated):

U = Gulngay, spoken by the Malanbarra and others of the Tully River. A list of these words was also provided by Roth (1900).

Y = Djiru, spoken by the Djirrubagala of Clump Point and the coast and westward.

L = Walmal (Roth) spoken on the coastline area from the Tully River to the Murray River.

G = Girramay, spoken from the Murray River to Cardwell and west to Kirrama.

J = Jabunbarra Jirrbal, spoken on the north side of the Murray River and Davidson Creek area.

In addition, I have added a few words of:

W = Warrgamay, spoken south of Cardwell and along the Herbert River[119].

M = Mamu.

In general, the other dialects which Dixon provides have not been included, which are:

A = Gambilbarra Jirrbal of Ravenshoe and the Tablelands.

N = Ngajan of the Malanda area.

W = Waribarra Mamu of the North Johnstone River area.

M = Dulgubarra Mamu of the South Johnstone River area.

P = Mourilyan / Palmerston's list, probably Jirribarra Mamu.

Placename Meanings According to Banfield

While Banfield recorded names supplied by Tom, such as Coonanglebah (Dunk Island), he also admitted to adding the name Brammo Bay himself[120]. At this place he saw many butterflies where a stream emerged from the forest and emptied into the bay. He knew Tom's word for butterfly was "Cookee-Cookee" but this seemed "an anti-climax as well as a trivial though endearing play on the name of the discoverer of the Island" [James Cook]. He borrowed a term from the Palm Island people, "with a slight amendment of pronunciation as a concession to brevity. "Brammo Bay" accordingly stands for butterfly." By his own admission, he here interfered with traditional names; it can be assumed all other names he uses were as given.

Banfield gives a more detailed record of his interest in names in a newspaper article in 1913 in which he refers to Wong-aling Creek, lying two miles south of Clump Point. "In one of the many dialects of the district, 'Wong-aling' signifies the black-lip pearl shell", a mollusc which does not favour salt water creeks but prefers coral reefs. I found several dead specimens a mile from the beach and far out of the reach of the tide, so humans must have transported them but the reason for this is unknown. The "resident blacks

[119] from Dixon (1981)
[120] Noonan (1986:98)

are now reduced to a single and very small family", they wouldn't now know the reason for naming this creek after the mollusc[121].

In 1965 Cardwell Shire Council wrote to the Queensland Place Names Board informing them they wished to name the beach from South Mission Beach to the shire border "Wongaling Beach" which was the name of the creek there and it was the Aboriginal word for "pigeon". Recently it has been confirmed that *wongaling* means the pigeon's nest, not the pigeon itself (Leonard Andy 2022).

In many cases, Banfield has added the meaning of the word, thus "Moor-in-jin" (murinjin), a place on Dunk, he says, means the spangled drongo. The Jirrbal, Girramay and Djiru word for the spangled drongo is *bajinjila.* Perhaps murinjin is the Warrgamay word for this bird. Perhaps the place referred to was called murinjin but was a "story place" of the spangled drongo. It is simpler, however, to take Banfield's list as of great interest regardless of the technicalities only the people of his day could have explained. And, of course, a place name may not necessarily be a noun or a word with a meaning other than this place, as Banfield also realised.

To illustrate with an example, in neighbouring Girramay country is the place *murrgul*, which was a camping place near a perpetual stream and a *buya* (gathering place) near Gillespie Creek. Its name was *murrgul* but it belonged to the white-tailed rat, *gurgija*, "this spring is his water story" (Ida Henry).

Elders from oral cultures across the world have an extraordinary ability to memorise vast amounts of information[122]. To do this they may use a range of memory aids including landscape features, skyscapes and handheld objects. Neale shows how, for Aboriginal people, Country represents a network of knowledge on a grand scale. Stories linked to places are a system of retention and transmission of knowledge, some of which has been remembered for millennia[123]. Food sources, techniques for hunting and fishing, complicated kinship systems, rules for foraging that will ensure sustainability, and much more are encoded in songlines or stories that are one with the landscape and the people it sustains, and who care for it.

Place names are part of this archiving of knowledge within the landscape.

If nothing else, the above discussion has demonstrated some of the complications involved in cross-cultural, let alone cross-time zone (historical) studies, with concrete examples from a specific place.

At this time, we cannot know if a word is: just a word for that place *or* a specific item at that place *or* a story or story-being that belongs to that place. Perhaps what matters is that we do have Banfield's record, and all things considered, we can be content that he gave us his information. In a way, maintaining Banfield's spelling of a place name would be preserving another layer of history (albeit colonial whitefella history).

[121] *Townsville Daily Bulletin* (11.10.1913)
[122] Kelly (2016:34)
[123] Neale (2020:16)

The Lists

The lists show some variations and some similarities, but this would be expected where dialects share a percentage of vocabulary.

In the tables, Banfield's references are identified by his work (abbreviated), followed by the page number.

CB Confessions of a Beachcomber.

MTI My Tropic Isle.

TD Tropic Days.

LL Last Leaves from Dunk Island.

BP Beachcomber's Paradise (Banfield & Porter 1983b).

GAB Gentle Art of Beachcombing (Banfield & Noonan 1989).

BAF Blacks as Fishermen.

FCB Further Confessions of a Beachcomber (Banfield & Porter 1983a).

DD A Different Drummer (Noonan 1983).

Newspaper articles are cited by newspaper title and date of published article.

TDB *Townsville Daily Bulletin*

NM *Northern Miner*

Banfield's comparison of Tom's and Nellie's words

English	*Tom*	*Nellie*	*Dyirbal*	*Warrgamay*
Sun	Wee-yee	Carrie	garri PJUYG	wi:
Moon	Yil-can	Car-cal-oon	gagalum PY gagara UJG	yilgan
Sky	Aln-pun	Moogah-car-boon	jurra JG	jura
Mainland	Yungl-man	Mungl-un	mungan (mountain) JG	mungan = mountain
Island	Cul-qua-yah	Moan-mitte	midi = little JG	gunyin = coast
Sea	Mutta	Yoo-moo	yuramu = main river JG warangan = sea JGU	waguny, banjin
Fire	Wam-pui	Poon-nee	buni PJUY, yugu G	wambuy, wagon, mayba
Water	Cam-moo	Pan-nahr	gamu G, bana PJUY	gamu
Rain	Yukan	Yukan	yugan G (gambal JU)	yugan
Man	Mah-al	Yer-rah	yara JGU	ma:l
Woman	Rit-tee	Ee-bee	yibi M, gumbul G, jugumbil J riji = mosquito JG, gajin U wigi = old person JG	wijiyan = white woman
Baby	Eee-bee	Koo-jal	jaja JGU, gujarra JG	yibi = child, jaja, daman = baby
Head	Poo-you	Oom-poo	wumbun (skull) JGU, dingal J and mugal G = head	buyu
Foot	Pin-kin	Chin-nah	jina JU	bingany
Leg	Waka	Too-joo	dujul JG (lower leg)	waga = shin bone
Hand	Man-dee	Mul-lah	mala JGU	mandi
Fish	Tar-boo	Koo-yah	guya GPUYL, jabu J	da:bu
Bird	Poong-an	Toon-doo	dundu JUYG	ji:ji

Animals

Banfield's transcription	***Reference***	***English***	***Other information (Banfield)***	***Dyirbal and Warrgamay***
coom-bee-yan	CB52, CB167	echidna	Only old men could eat	gumbiyan JUGW
padgegal	CB168, BP181	turtle		bajigal = sea turtle JGW,
palungul	CB168, BP181	dugong		balangal = porpoise JG = dugong W
tambun	CB168, BP181	grub [edible]		jambun JGW
book-gruin	CB170, BP182	larvae of green tree ants made into a drink		bugan-bugan = black sugar ant JG
kurra-dju	CB176	a snail	*Xanthomelon pachystyla*	gajiri JGU
cookee-cookee	GAB88	butterfly		gugi gugi WG, gugi = flying fox JG
oo-boo-boo	MTI183 LL86	tarantula spider long-legged wolf spider		gulbu gulbu = St Andrew's cross spider W
pun-nul	MTI265	march fly		bunul JGW
karan-jamara	TD164, BAF61	*Nephila* spider		garmjamara = *Nephila maculate* JGU
wat-tam	TD198, LL19			wadam = all snakes except pythons JGU
yam-boo	LL87	praying mantis		yambu JG

Birds

Banfield's transcription	*Reference*	*English*	*Other information (Banfield)*	*Dyirbal and Warrgamay*
go-bidger-roo	CB60	varied honeyeater		
tee-algon	CB62	shining starling		jiyil JGW
moor-giddy	CB74, TD198	shrike-thrush		
too-dring	TD198	shrike-thrush (also)		
wung-go-bah	CB74, GAB81	noisy pitta		wangawa JG
wee-loo	CB74	stone plover (stone curlew)		
coo-roo	CB74	tranquil dove		gurugu JW
piln-piln	CB74	large-billed shore plover (beach stone curlew)		bi:ibi:l = pee wee W biyilbiyil = pee-wee JYG
kim-bum-broo	CB74	mangrove honey eater		
calloo-calloo	CB75	manucode		
calloo-calloo	MTI185	koel cuckoo		
coo-tahl-oo	GAB90	osprey	name of a place on Dunk	
oo-goo-ju	TD62	Torres Strait pigeon, nutmeg pigeon		ruguju JGUY
kee-rowan	CB58	scrub hen		giruwan W, jarrugan JUYG

Plants

Banfield's transcription	*Reference*	*English (Banfield)*	*Other information (Banfield)*	*Dyirbal and Warrgamay*
gin-gee	CB10, CB11, LL31		*Diplanthera tetrathera*	jinyji JG = *Deplanchea tetraphylla* JG
bin-gum	CB11, TD62		*Erythrina indica*	
kirrie-cue	CB14, CB184, TD162		*Eupomatia laurina*	muja JG, girin = young shoot of muja used for spears
koie-yan	BAF56		*Faradaya splendida* bark for fish poison	bugu U, janginy JG
ahm-moo	CB138	Qld upas-tree [bird-lime tree]	*Pisonia brunoniana*	*P umbellifera* = binjin, bird-lime tree [JK]
tee-doo	CB144, DF158	paper-bark or tea tree	*Melaleuca leucadendron*	jidu = *Halfordia sclerophylla*
pun-dinoo	CB169, BP182	sweet yam		bundu = edible root of vine WD
koobin-karra	CB169, BP182	Alexandra palm heart		gubungara JGW
moo-nah	CB169, BP182	rhizome used	*Bowenia spectabilis*	muna, milbir JG
kala-jo	CB169, BP182	tree fern core		galaju = *Cyathea cooperi* JG
harpee	CB169, BP182	root used	*Curculigo ensifolia*	*Curculigo capitulata* = yiri JG
kum-moo-roo	CB169, BP182	white mangrove bean		
tinda-burra	CB169, BP182, CB175	bean tree (shredded, soaked)		mirrany = *Castanospermum australe* JG wanga W
pim-nar	CB169, BP182		*Pandanus odoratissimus*	bimar = *Pandanus sp.* JGU
bed-yew-rie	CB169, BP182		*Ximenia americana*	
top-kie	CB169, BP182	Herbert River cherry		dabugay = *Syzygium wilsonii* JGW, Herbert R. cherry = muyginy JG
pool-boo-nong	CB169, BP182, LL107		*Rhodomyrtus macrocarpa*	yarany = *R. macrocarpa* JG
panga-panga	CB169, BP182	raspberry	*Rubus rosaefolius*	banyjabanyja JG
koo-bag-aroo	CB169, BP182	Leichhardt tree	*Sarcocephalus cordatus*	buruburu JGU
muri-kue-kee	CB169, BP182		*Eugenia suborbicularis*	
raroo	CB169, BP182, BAF56, CB207	medicine	*Careya australis*	
raroo	TD44	Cockatoo apple tree		majal = cocky apple, *Planchonia careya* JGW
boo-gar-oo	CB170, BP182	banana	*Musa banksia*	gurbala = *M banksia* W
moo-jee	CB170, BP182		*Terminalia melanocarpa*	muja = *Eupomatia laurina* JG
can-kee	CB170, BP182		*Pandanus aquaticus*	
toogan-toogan	RH11;16	for light fish spears	*Macaranga sp.*	dugun dugun = *M involucrata* JG
bungoonno	RH11;16	creeper for crude fish net	*Cassytha filiformis*	
gallan-jarrah	RH11;16	beach vine, yellow flowers		
tee-bee	RH11;16	shrub, pink fruit eaten in stress		

Fish, Shellfish

Banfield's transcription	*Reference*	*English (Banfield)*	*Other information (Banfield)*	*Dyirbal and Warrgamay*
tan-goor-ah	CB76	bonito		
mee-hee	CB89	stone-fish (saltwater)		mu:ba W
burra-ree	CB91	balloon fish	*Tetraodon ocellatus*	
ping-ah	CB93	bailer shell	*Cymbium oethiopicum*	
curram-ill	CB98	skipper fish	*Zylosurus sp.*	
oo-ril-ee	CB101	parrot fish	*scaroid* family	
cum-mai	CB160	sucker fish	*Echenis naucrates*	
too-lac	CB169, BP182	crayfish		jular = saltwater crayfish JG
kierbang	CB169, BP182	echinus		
manning-tsang [Tom's name]	CB201	big-eyed walking fish of mangroves	*Periophthalmus koelreuteri*	manyinggal = a river turtle JG
mourn [Nellie's name]	CB201	big-eyed walking fish of mangroves	*Periophthalmus koelreuteri*	
pootah-pootah	MTI128	giant anemone	*Discoma haddoni*	
intel-intel	MTI128	a fish	*Amphiprion percula*	
kroo-ghar	MTI263	cuttle fish		
oon-gnahr	TD152	sprats		
oon-gnala	BAF48	sprats	*Harengula stereolops*	[yungarr = herd of animals G]

Artefacts

Banfield's transcription	*Reference*	*English (Banfield)*	*Other information (Banfield)*	*Dyirbal and Warrgamay*
mand-jar	CB162	fibre string	*Hibiscus tiliaceus*	manja G ma:nyja W
toon-coo	CB162	gum		bilga = resin JG
boo-bah	CB162	fig for bark string	*Ficus fasciculata*	
djawn	MTI257	rattle	of woven cane and seed of *Caesalpinia bonducella*	jawun = woven cane basket
wee-bah	MTI258	toy dart	of bladey grass	wirga = small nulla nulla W
piar-piar	MTI261	toy boomerang	of *Pandanus pedunculatus*	
wungle	MTI261	boomerang	local but not Dunk I.	wangal JUY, warrginy GW
birra-birra-gu	MTI262	cross boomerang (toy)	Pandanus	birrbu-birrbu JGW
par-gir-ah	MTI262	plaited toy	Pandanus	balngira W
gulgong	TD101	bark for toy canoe		galgarr = Red stringybark, *Eucalyptus pellita*, used for canoes JG
moogroo	TD157	fishing net		mugarru JGUYL
moogaroo	BAF52	net to catch eels by "coastal blacks"		mugarru JGUYL
pattel-pattel	BAF59	fish hook of vine tendril	*Hugonia jenkinsii*	badi = to hook fish W
ookara	TD205	upper grinding stone		wugar = stone hafted axe YLU
diban	TD205	flat stone (anvil stone)		diban = stone, rock JUY
moo-ki	TD205	upper stone, sphere		mugay = grinding stone JGUW
yellamun	TD150, BAF46	woomera		jumala JG
mil-gar	MTI278	bark put into water	to make rain	milga JGU

Other

Banfield's transcription	*Reference*	*English (Banfield)*	*Other information (Banfield)*	*Dyirbal and Warrgamay*
bingie, bingey	CB90, CB206	belly, stomach		bamba J, juju G
panjoo	CB123	nice place		
coo-bee-co-tan-you	CB186	falling star hole	story place cave on Dunk I.	
kitalbarra	CB200	Tom's totemic title [story place, name place]	splitter [sic] of a rock off islet SE of Dunk	-barra = someone from a place
oongle-bi	CB201	Nellie's affinity [story place]	rock on summit of a hill on the mainland	ungulbayi = Bartle Frere M
toola-un-guy	CB201	name of a person		
yacki-muggie	CB201	name of a person	named for a sand-spit on one of the Brook Islands	
muhr-amalee	CB210	rainbow		yamani = rainbow JGW
milgar (and see artefacts, above)	MTI278, LL127	rain		milga = rain-making artefact JG
pal-bi	MTI278	hailstones		balbay JG
am-an-ee	MTI279	rainbow		yamani JUG
yungi	MTI283	one (counting)		yungul JGUY
bli	MTI283	two (counting)		bulay JGUY
yacka	MTI283	more than two, many		garbu = 3, mundi = 4, gaday = many JG
mooty	TD96	crafty, medicine man		
ky-ee-rah	TD120	evening star		gayira W
pad-oo-byer	TD120	personal name		
karrie badgin	TD122			garri = sun JG
tee-go-binah	TD147	meteor		jigabina = legendary person JG
carrie-wy-in-gin	TD235	sunrise		garri = sun JG
piln-goi	TD253	boy's name		
yano-lee	TD254	we go this way		yanu = to go, -li = a word ending (motion)
poo-nee-imba	TD255	no fire		buni = fire, yimba = no, nothing JG
Billy Too-gal	LL82	name	Billy of the Leg	dujul = bone in leg (tibia) JG
bidg-eroo	LL84, LL127	malignant debil-debil		bijurru = sneaking about JG
you-an-linga	LL85	girl's name		
ba-bah	LL86	cranky		baba = to pierce, spear W

Places

Banfield provides maps of many of the place names he recorded, and an English equivalent in many cases, and these are the best source (CBxxii, LLviii-ix). His general works also include place names and these are included also. The following is a list with suggestions for transcription to Dixon's (linguistically preferred) orthography. Where English names are known they are included. Where a similar Jirrbal, Girramay or Warrgamay word is known, it is also included in the table. These are only suggestions. See notes for language collection difficulties, including Jirrbal endings.

Coonanglebah	Dunk Island		CBxxii map	gunangulba
Tool-ghar	Coombe Island		CBxxii map	julga. Julga = ridge, spur of mountain JG
Coomboo	a Family Island		CBxxii map, CB23	gumbu. Gumbu = mother's mother JGUL (and reciprocal
Kum-boo	Wheeler Island		GAB101	gumbu. Gumbu = mother's mother JGUL (and reciprocal
Budge-joo	a Family Island		CBxxii map	buju. Yabuju = son W
bud-joo			CB23	buju. Yabuju = son W
bud-joo	Smith Island		GAB101	buju. Yabuju = son W
Kurrambah	a Family Island		CBxxii map, CB23	guramba. Gurimbarr = grey plover, red-kneed dotterel JG
Kuram-bah	Bowden Island		GAB101	guramba. Gurimbarr = grey plover, red-kneed dotterel JG
Pee-rahm-ah	Rock off Bedarra	Story of this rock	CBxxii map, CB24	birama
Tchu-goo-birrimmie or	Place on Dunk -		CBxxii map, LLxiii	jugubirrimi
Tch-goo-berri-me	NW headland	Swarm of bees	CBxii map, LLxii, xiii	jugubirrimi
Coolah	a Family Island		CBxxii map, CB23	gula. Gula = boat, bark L
Koolah	Island	Hodson Island	GAB101	gula. Gula = boat, bark L
Kyboola	Place on Dunk		CBxii map	gaybula. Gaybula = Scaley Ash JG *Ganophyllum falcatum*
Oomballa	Place on Dunk		CBxxii map	wumbala, rumbala, yumbala
Oom-balla	*et seq*.	Fish (yellow tail)	LLxii map, xiii list	wumbala, rumbala, yumbala
Tool-guy-ah	Creek on Dunk Island	Eel	CBxxii map, LLxii map, xiii list	dulgaya
Goonan	Place on Dunk Island		CBxxii map	gunan
Coo-nana	*et seq*.	a bulky rock, isolated	LLxii map, xiii list	gunana
Kool-abee			CBxxii map	gulabi
Koo-lal-bee		Black cockatoo	LLxii map, xiii list	gulalbi. Gidila = black cockatoo JG
Wooln-garin	Island off Dunk Is.		CBxxii map	wulngarin

Wolngarin		Palm with coconut-like fronds	LLxii map, xiii list	wulngarin
Panjoo	Place on Dunk Island	nice place	CBxxii map, LLxii map, xiii list	banju
Moody-in-ing	*et seq.*		CBxxii map	mudiyining
Paul-koo-loo			CBxxii map	bulgulu. Bulgu = wife JG
Pall-koo-loo		Group of isolated rocks perpetuating a legend of men who came across from mainland to fight	LLxxii map, xiii list	bulgulu
Toogun -toogun		*Macaranga tanara*, shrub providing fish spears, twine for lines, and a cement	CBxxii map, LLxiii map, xiii list	dugundugun. Dugundugun = a tree (3 species named) JG
Mung-um-gnackum	Island off Dunk Island		CBxxii, CB19	mungumngagum. Ngagum = shark JG
Kumboola	Island off Dunk Island		CBxxii, CB19	gumbula. Gumbul = woman G, gumburra = mist on mountains JG
Goor-tchur	Creek on Dunk Island	Trumpet shell	LLxii, xiii	gujur
Mood-goo-gar	Place on Brammo Bay	Fish resembling trevalley	LLxii, xiii	mujuga. Mujugara = big or mud crab JG or W
Cum-mai-nubble-nubble	Creek on Dunk Island	Creek in which a big sucker fish was tethered	LLxii, xiii	gumaynubalnubal
Barcoo	Creek on Dunk Island	Blue pike	LLxii, xiii	bagu
Kyboola	Creek on Dunk Island	Looking-glass tree *Heritiera litoralis*	LLxii, xiii	gaybula
Tiering	Place in Dunk island	Round, smooth nut	LLxii, xiii	diyaring
Pallon	*et seq.*	Name of a woman	LLxii, xiii	balun
Woor-amboo	Creek on Dunk island	Camp of man of this name	LLxii, xiii	wurambu
Toorgey-toorgey	Place on Dunk island	Pinna shell	LLxii, xiii	durgidurgi
Bee-ran	*et seq.*	Tree *Barringtonia speciosa*	LLxii, xiii	biran. Birran = grass tree stem JG
Gin-gee		Sunflower tree (*Diplanthera tetraphylla)*	LLxii, xiii	gingi
Tak-kal		Block of dead coral	LLxii, xiii	dagal
Wallon-boo		Half-tide rocks	LLxii, xiii	walanbu
Kum-moo-arra		Alexandrian laurel *Calophyllum inophylum*	LLxii, xiii	gumuwarra
Moo-jee	Creek on Dunk Island	*Terminalia melanocarpa*	LLxii, xiii	muji. Muji = *Eupomatia laurina* JG
Boo-loo-gu	Creek on Dunk	Stone fish	LLxii, xiii	bulugu

Kee-woo	Place on Dunk Island	Yellow plum, *Ximenia Americana* also known as Bedyewrie	LLxii, xiii	giwu
Karra-man	*et seq.*	Red snapper	LLxii, xiii	garraman
Ambah-ambah		Big wind	LLxii, xiii	yambayamba
Coo-nana		A bulky rock, isolated	LLxii, xiii	gunana
Boo-garoo		Native banana	LLxii, xiii	bugaru
Tapp-ana		Resort of turtle	LLxii, xiii	dabana
Toora-coorang		Small fish frequenting rock crevices	LLxii, xiii	duragurang
Inno-noo-bah		Black palm	LLxii, xiii	rinunuba
Koo-lal-bee		Black cockatoo	LLxii, xiii	gulalbi
Wolngarin	Small island off south coast	Palm with coconut-like fronds	LLxii, xiii	wulngarin
Poie-koo-kee	Place on Dunk island	Booby (brown gannet)	LLxii, xiii	buygugi
Meera	*et seq.*	Stone knife quarry	LLxii, xiii	mira
Karra-malla		Sea urchin	LLxii, xiii	garamala
Panjoo		Nice place	LLxii, xiii	banju
Wambyan		Burial place of man so named	LLxii, xiii	wambiyan
Tambal-tambal		Mainsail fish	LLxii, xiii	dambaldambal
Moor-in-jin		Spangled drongo	LLxii, xiii	murinjin
Pool-bee-ee		Thunderstone	LLxii, xiii	bulbiyi
Poola-djoon			LLxii	bulajun
Kit-ah		Fish spear tree	LLxii, xiii	gida. Jidu = *Halfordia scleroxyla* JG
Tar-koo-kee		Name of man who died on the spot a long time ago, and haunts it	LLxii, xiii	dagugi
Bidgeroo		"debil debil" that kills fish with a stone-pointed spear	LLxii, xiii	bijeru. Bijurru = sneaking about JG
Neyring		Native taro *Colocasia esculenta*	LLxii, xiii	nayring
Ika-ika		Round-headed, half-tide rock, supposed to have been rolled down the mountain by a "debil debil"	LLxii, xiii	yigayiga. Yigara = crayfish JG
Pil-cal		Favourite camp of man so-named	LLxii, xiii	bilgal
Mar-tel-kee		Fish like a catfish seen in fine weather in clear water	LLxii, xiii	madalgi

Har-ran		Coral patch awash at low water	LLxii, xiii	yarran
Murgon		Quandong (*Elaeocarpus grandis)*	LLxii, xiii	murgan. Murgan = quandong JG
Keep-in-ma			LLxii	gibinma
Coobin-cotan-you		Falling star cave	LLxii, xiii	gubingudanyu
Kar-tee		Coral rock	LLxii, xiii	gardi
Muggy-muggy		Coral mushroom where crayfish lurk	LLxii, xiii	mugimugi
Jin-dagi	South Barnard Island	bladey grass	GAB65	jindagi. Jindarigan = a reed grass JG
Mand-jah	North Barnard Island	*Hibiscus tiliaceus,* Cotton tree	GAB65	manja. Manyja = *H.tiliaceus* JGU
Coo-tah-loo, Koo-tal-loo	Peak, Dunk Is.	Osprey	GAB65, LLxii	gudalu
Tarn-coo-rah-ghee	Peak, 890ft., Dunk Is.	Edible yam	GAB90, LLxii	danguraji
Kut-tay, Cut-tay	Peak, 810ft, Dunk Is.	Spear, yamstick	GAB90, LLxii	guday
Tahl-oo	Peak, 790ft, Dunk Is.	Fishing or harpoon line	GAB90, LLxii	dalu
Gill-gill	Place on Dunk Island	Lawyer vine	GAB90	gilgil
Pun-nul	a bay		TD234	bunul. Bunul = march fly JGUL
Oo-nang-mugil	Place on Dunk Island	Debil debil pace, a certain stone	TD235	wunang mugil
Kidjo-bang	Place on dunk island	A restless stone	TD252	gijubang
Yacka Eebah	A string of islets		FCB102 (TD)	yagayiba
Bli	Islet		FCB102 (TD)	bulay
Coobie	Islet		FCB192 (TD)	gubi
Coomul	Beach on Bedarra		DFI58	gumul
Doorila	Bay of Bedarra		DFI29	durila
Timana	Thorpe Is.		GAB101	dimana
Bedarra	Richards Is.		GAB101	bidarra
Purtaboi	Mound Is.		GAB101	burdabuya