

## **Miscellaneous Notes by J.M. Clifton**

Two exciting attempts made by the aborigines to slaughter the white people en masse are worth noting. Many years after its founding when Roebourne was a small settlement on the Hardin at the foot of Mt Welcome, the natives at Nicol Bay planned a general attack. They were to throw lighted fire sticks on the thatched roofs of the stone houses and then stand by ready to spear men, women and children as they rushed out in the general confusion.

Unfortunately for the black fiends a tender-hearted little native boy gave their plans away to the whites.

Another attempt was made on the DeGrey River. The invaders were invited by the natives to witness a grand koonoognoo (a corroboree). During the very spectacular performance a native fishing net was to be drawn surreptitiously around the admiring circle of whites. When the white fish were securely enmeshed they were to be speared. Again a native warned the squatter and his men and so averted a tragedy.

Samuel Lazenby, the brother-in-law of William Shakespeare Hall, was speared by natives when asleep. He had landed his pearling boat and was camped on the beach when it happened. Young Lazenby and his sister went north about the same time, she a bride of nineteen and he very little older.

These matters I heard talked of when a child. My father narrated the chief events of his life in such a graphic way as to grip our retentive young minds.

**Notes received from H.E. Hall, Cossack, June 13, 1928.**

The word *ching-I* means South. *Yabbaroo* or *Yaberroo*, North. *Yeranjoo*, East. *Woolajoo*, West. The native name for Andover is *Choo-che-kun-ga-ra* and Roebourne is *Yirramuckadoo*. These names are pronounced with a soft and short sound.

The natives had it all planned to come to Roebourne after they had murdered Glover the Police constable, and two white men (Bream and his mate) at Nicol Bay. They were to set fire to the thatch of John Withnell's house, and as the whites ran to put out the fire the natives would spear them. In place of the natives killing the whites in Roebourne a very strong party of whites was sent, all mounted and armed by the Government Resident, Mr R.A. Sholl, and they shot some native men in Nicol Bay. Our father was one of the party, he acting as guide.

I cannot give you the date of Uncle Sam's (Lazenby) [5/8/1871 handwritten in margin and initialled J. Clifton] murder. It would be in the police records in Perth. The main facts are these. Uncle Sam was pearling in the cutter *Venus* (of which our father was part owner). They were at anchor close to an island now known as Lazenby's Island. Uncle took a boat and boat's crew and went on shore at night to get turtle. They split his skull with an axe and also killed Joe Murray, a Roebourne native. The murderers were all North West Cape natives. The cause of Uncle's being killed was the natives could not account for Joe Murray (who they wanted to kill).

The next affair was the plan on the DeGrey to catch Nairn and his party at a corroboree. The nets were to be placed in a semicircle and when the whites came within the circle the nets were to be drawn around them and they were to be killed very quickly.

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**(Notes received from H. Aubrey Hall, Carnarvon, June 13, 1928)**

While Wellard's party under Dad at Andover and John Withnell's camp at Roebourne were without police protection, the worst trouble with natives that occurred was when a native assaulted a lad named Lewington, or at least Lewington and a native had a

scuffle on the Harding River, I think near McCourt's camp, and the native threw Lewington (a lad of sixteen or eighteen) into a pool. He was not seriously hurt.

After Sholl arrived, and many more settlers – I think subsequent to the Portland influx (because I think Alex McRae was a member of the punitive expedition) – two sailormen (foreigners, I fancy) were repairing a beachcombing craft on the beach in Nicol Bay when the natives attacked them at low water, on a moonlight night, chased them across the sand banks and speared both to death.

Sholl, R.M., having been sub editor of a paper in Perth, and being quite ignorant of natives and their 'habits' sent an equally raw constable and I think a tracker to arrest the murderers. The constable arrested and chained up the alleged ringleader, camped alongside the prisoner with a saddle for a pillow and his revolver under his saddle and went to sleep. The prisoner dug gently under the saddle, handed the revolver to his woman; and she handed him a spear with which is pinned the constable to the ground. I think there was a black tracker with the constable but whether he was killed or escaped back to Roebourne I am not sure. Then it was that the natives, hearing the settlers were intending to punish them, said that while the white men were attacking them in the vicinity of Nicol Bay a Party of natives would attack Withnell's camp, fire the thatched roof and spear the women (Mrs Withnell and Sophie Hancock) and the children.

The natives about this time tried to get the DeGrey party (Padbury's ) to attend a corroboree with intent to snare them with their dugong nets and spear them. But a native boy warned them and the plan failed.

Not long after a man named Shay and a half caste, who had pursued some runaway pearling natives from a craft, probably working off the Condon Banks off the north of the DeGrey, or near what is now Port Hedland, were bringing the run aways back (I think on a chain). They '.....' the Shaw River for water. While Shay was off his horse and with his head down in the soak, the natives pounced on him and killed him. The half caste would probably have effected a rescue as he drew his revolver promptly but it snapped and I think the natives pulled him off his horse and killed him too. In

comparatively recent years Shay's ring off his finger was picked up in this soak. Alex Edgar probably could have given full details of this latter, such as name of finder and ultimate fate of the ring. S.R.A. Corney, who is still living, I think possibly would know; or even such a late comer as Jack Stewart might have heard full details.

Samuel Lazenby was killed about 1870, I think. He had gone north to work in the Dad's business at Roebourne (purchased from Padbury after his nephews the Nairns had made a financial failure of it) but subsequently acquired the schooner Venus and went pearling. He procured his divers from between Fortescue and Onslow and N.W.C., and I suppose on account of being so wild and uncivilised, a Roebourne native Joe Murray, who was mother's house boy in Roebourne, and could speak a little English, was sent on the boat with Uncle Sam. The Western natives decided to kill Joe Murray but could not well do so on the boat. However an opportunity occurred. Uncle Sam, who was only about 20, I think, and of a kindly disposition decided to land on an island off shore, I think, from the mouth of the Fortescue, to get turtle for fresh meat for the natives. He sharpened a tomahawk for butchering the turtle; took a dinghy crew of natives on to the island, where they turned over a number of turtle, and all hands then turned in for the night, intending to return to the Venus in the morning.

Unfortunately Joe Murray, Uncle Sam's boy was of the party; to compass his death they first buried the tomahawk in Uncle Sam's skull, and then killed Joe Murray. Next morning the natives returned to the Venus and told the white man in charge that the dinghy had swamped coming off from the island, and uncle had lost his life. The man or man in charge weighed anchor and sailed in near the mainland to get a report to Roebourne, by some of the pearling craft, or else in their course en route for Cossack. Anyhow upon the first opportunity after nearing the land the natives ran away. A few days later other pearlers landing on the same island for turtle, found uncle's body, in his blanket, buried in a shallow grave, and the murder was out.

Charlie was the ringleader in the murder and over him Dad, I fancy, came into collision with the then Governor, because Dad, who soon after this also went pearling, pursued Charlie upon every available opportunity, the authorities having failed to apprehend him. After some time had elapsed the Governor pardoned Charlie, but Dad held he had

exceeded his powers, inasmuch, he argued, that the Crown could not pardon a man of an offence of which they had not proved him guilty. However Charlie was such a turbulent man even among his own people, that some of them waited one day for him, and when he went down into a deep native sand well for a drink they killed him. Uncle Sam is buried in Roebourne cemetery.

The native tribe occupying the country from the Peawah R. E, and the Maitland W. and up to the foot of the Tableland (roughly) called themselves and their language *Nga-loo-ma*. In this language *Ching-I* means *up river* and as all the Roebourne rivers run roughly south, the whites generally referred to the south or inland as *Chinghi* when talking to the natives. That is the only meaning the word has. *Chinghi* is not a place name. The abo name of Andover is *choo-che-kun--ga-ra*; of Roebourne, *Yirra-muck-a-doo* (sometimes spelt erroneously *Eramuc-adoo*).