

THE HISTORY OF YERONGA PART 1 EARLY HISTORY

by Dr Michael Macklin

The human history of Yeronga started with the arrival of the Indigenous people in the area about 50,000 years ago.¹ However, it was probably abandoned during the Last Glacial Maximum or Ice Age which peaked about 21,000 years ago.² When the seas levels started to rise again and the now Moreton Bay was formed, the water levels in the coastal rivers subsequently rose on three sides and eventually brought the Yeronga area into existence some 7,000 years ago so that it could again be repopulated.³

The consensus seems to be that, at the time the British penal colony was established in 1824, the southern part of the now Brisbane area was occupied by the Yuggera people and that the Yerongpan clan lived in the lands around the now Oxley, Norman and Bulimba creeks. Given the extraordinary abundance of food and a mild climate, the population in this area would have been substantial.

The first Europeans to sight the area later called Yeronga were Thomas Pamphlet, Richard Parson and John Finnegan. Lost at sea out of Sydney, they were shipwrecked on Moreton Island where they were looked after by the locals who shown them the entrance to a large river flowing into Moreton Bay and took them along its banks across Yeronga and as far as the Oxley Creek.⁴

Meanwhile the Surveyor General, John Oxley, was looking for a site for a new penal colony. Oxley, sailing in the cutter "Mermaid" arrived in Moreton Bay and had a very lucky encounter for his survey as Barron Field recounts:

...we were all on the look-out when they approached; and to our surprise and satisfaction, when opposite the vessel, the man hailed us in English. The boat was immediately launched, and Messers, Oxley, Stirling and I went ashore in her. While approaching the beach the natives showed many signs of joy, dancing and embracing the white man, who was nearly as wild as they. He was perfectly naked, and covered all over with white and red paint, which the natives make use of. His named, it appeared, was Thomas Pamphlet.⁵

Oxley was shown the river and rowed past the area. He judiciously named the river Brisbane in honour of the governor who employed him. Oxley's Field Books on 2rd December 1823 recount:

At half-past five, resumed the examination of the river. Landed on high bank starboard shore. Station 1st 122 - North 178° three-quarter mile to a brush same side, opposite all brush land (now Yeronga).⁶

The upshot of Oxley's report to Governor Brisbane in Sydney was the establishment of the new Moreton Bay penal colony of which the Yeronga area became a part.

¹ Ray Tobler, Adam Rohrlach, Julien Soubrier, Pere Bover, Bastien Llamas, Jonathan Tuke, Nigel Bean, Ali Abdullah-Highfold, Shane Agius, Amy O'Donoghue, Isabel O'Loughlin, Peter Sutton, Fran Zilio, Keryn Walshe, Alan N. Williams, Chris S. M. Turney, Matthew Williams, Stephen M. Richards, Robert J. Mitchell, Emma Kowal, John R. Stephen, Lesley Williams, Wolfgang Haak & Alan Cooper, *Aboriginal mitogenomes reveal 50,000 years of regionalism in Australia*. *Nature*. Vol 544, August, 2017, pp.180-184.

² Alan N.Williams, Sean Ulm, Andrew R.Cook, Michelle C.Langley, Mark Collarde. *Human refugia in Australia during the Last Glacial Maximum and Terminal Pleistocene: a geospatial analysis of the 25–12 ka Australian archaeological record*: Journal of Archaeological Science Volume 40, Issue 12, December 2013, pp. 4612-4625.

³ Lewis, S.E., et al., "Post-glacial sea-level changes around the Australian margin: a review", Quaternary Science Reviews (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.quascirev.2012.09.006>.

⁴ 'Narrative of Thomas Pamphlett' as taken down by John Uniacke. Reproduced in Steele, J G, *The Explorers of the Moreton Bay district 1770-1830*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972: p.69.

⁵ Field, B. (ed.) 'Narrative of Mr. Oxley's Expedition to Survey Port Curtis and Moreton Bay' *Geographical Memoirs of New South Wales by Various Hands*. John Murray, London, 1825 p. 54.

⁶ 'Oxley's Field Books: 3rd December 1823'. Reproduced in Steele, J G, *The Explorers of the Moreton Bay district 1770-1830*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972: p.112