

Aboriginal Story

RE ORIGIN OF SUSSEX INLET

A number of years ago I was loafing about Wandandian and came in contact with a very old pure-blood aboriginal named Gidgee. Being keenly interested in our native blacks, their traditions and tribal stories, I bribed the old fellow with the promise of a pound of tobacco if he would tell me a story relative to his tribal territory or his people, and, to my keyed-up attention, the old fellow unburdened himself thus:—

Well, boss, I suppose you know that the name "Wandandian" in our language means "The Home of the Lost Lovers." The old men of our tribe used to tell us that a young blackfellow and his lubra, hunting on the eastern side of the Wambla Mountains, got lost, and eventually found themselves in this locality, where they decided to settle, and after a number of years developed into the powerful Wandandian tribe. Our territory was bounded on the north by a line running along a green flat now known as Sussex Inlet. It extended westward to Sassafra, and then in a southerly direction till intersected by a line along the north side of Conjola Lake to the foot of the Wambla Mountains. You see, then, our territory took in all the land from Sussex Inlet to Lake Conjola, and away back to the mountains on the west. We could fish and procure oysters, etc., on our side of the lake, but we daren't land on the other side or there would be war; and we weren't too eager to antagonise the Conjola tribe, for they were

nise the Conjola tribe, for they were big fellows and good fighters. Conjola Lake, boss, was a grand place for fish and oysters; plenty deep water. We often had skirmishes with Conjola and Tomerong tribes, when they did a bit of poaching, and a few of the contending parties would come back to camp with a few nullah lumps or spear scratches, but very rarely was anyone killed. It was good fun, boss.

In those old times long ago, boss, there wasn't any Sussex Inlet at all: just a beautiful green flat from Wandandian to the sea, over which the black men hunted wallabies, wallaroos, kangaroos, and even emus. My word, boss, them bin good old times of plenty right enough:

Bandicoot, possum, wallaby, kangaroo,

Wild duck, goanna, carpet snake, wallaroo;

Lubras all smiles, good looking, graceful and tall;

Piecaninnie so fat, no cryum at all.

Hey, Gidgee! You're waxing poetical, aren't you?

Wha's that you say about wax, boss? No wax in them days—at least nebber hear old men say so. But blackfellow plenty big and fat; teeth strong and white like dog's teeth. Plenty good tucker them days, boss. Tucker nowadays mak-um poor blackfellow's teeth rot all-a-same white man's.

But, Gidgee, I thought you were going to tell me something about Sussex Inlet. You say it wasn't there a long time ago. Please go on with the story.

Well, boss, one day our King, Goondi, hav-um "rain brave" (You mean "brain wave," don't you, Gidgee?). Yes, boss, tha's it, "brain wave." I bin hear-um white fella talk like that

bin hear-um white fella talk like that, but bin forget. Yes, Goondi hav um big "brain wave" right enough, and says he: "I'll root a furrow right down the green flat to the sea and see what happens." He told his artificer to set to work as he instructed, and in a few days, with the aid of stone tomahawks and fire, a plough was made much like the plough you see now, boss, only that it was all wood and a bit rough. When it was finished to his satisfaction, he chose 20 of the biggest men of the tribe, fixed up traces of wattle bark, and hitching them to his plough started off down the green flat. A number of lubras and nearly half the tribe ac-

companied the King and his black team, to carry weapons and to procure and cook food.

My word! boss, I bin think-it a plurry grand picnic.

First evening they got to within a couple of miles of the spot where now stands Mr. Jacob Ellmoos' tourist house. That night they held a grand corroboree; but early next morning Goondi ordered his artificer to make a new plough, as the point of the first had become so worn as to be no further serviceable. However, in a couple of days a new plough was made, and the furrow continued right to the sea. Next day they returned to Wandandian. There was great talk about the plough furrow. The lubras reckoned they had a "budgery" time, but some of the old men, and the medicine man in particular, thought Goondi had a rat. But they didn't say it out loud, boss; no fear! They were afraid of

boss; no fear! They were afraid of the King. And as it turned out, he showed the tribe that he knew a thing or two; for in a week after the ploughing, a terrible big old man flood came rushing down the green flat, cutting and tearing out the furrow, and the erosion was so stupendous that a channel 8 or 10 chains wide was torn out right to the sea. When the flood went down, the sea water rushed in, and made what you white fellas now call Sussex Inlet.

You see that big steamer punt, long-a Mr. Watt, go up and down Inlet? Well, I bin think-it he owe big vote of thanks to King Goondi.

Your story seems hard to believe, Gidgee.

Well, you ask Mr. Barney Tiernum, Nowra. He wise man; know a thing or two. Ought to be member ob—

"Parliament" you mean, don't you?

Yes, boss, tha's the word; too plurry big for poor black fella mouth. Tha's all, boss.

Well, Gidgee, here's your tobacco. I think you have earned it, and some other time you might tell me some more veracious (?) stories of your tribe.

F. McGEE.

Conjola.