

NANDERGOROKE (1811-1882)

Nandergoroke aka Elizabeth Maynard



Nandergoroke (aka Nan.Der.Gor.Oke, Nan Der Gor Oke, Betty, Elizabeth) was a Boonwurrung woman of the “Port Phillip Tribe” who was born in 1811. She married the Boonwurrung head clansman, Derrimut, who was born about 1810 and became an Arweet (head man) of the Yalukit-Willam clan of the Bunurong (Boonwurrung) tribe of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne.

The Yalukit-willam country was the coastal area at the head of Port Phillip Bay, from the Werribee River in the west and including Williamstown, then east to Port Melbourne, and around the bay to St Kilda and Prahran. They were one of six Boonwurrung clans whose territory stretched from the Werribee River in the west around the rim of Port Phillip Bay through to Wilsons Promontory in the east. Derrimut’s main domain would have been the Yalukit-willam country of his father, but he also had links with the Woiwurrung north of the Yarra River through his mother who had

Wirundjeri-willam heritage. Many inter-tribal gatherings between the Boonwurrung and the northern tribes of Woiwurrung and Daungwurrung occurred along the banks of the Yarra River where Melbourne is now situated.

Nandergoroke’s first child was born in the early 1830s, a daughter named Gin-Dock. Nandergoroke was pregnant with her second child in 1833 when she was with a group of women who were abducted by sealers at Point Nepean beach and taken to Cape Barren Island in Bass Strait; thus she was one of the first members of the stolen generation in Victoria. One story is that the group was at a sacred women’s birthing place, another version is that they were hunting with a group of men and became separated. A Tasmanian woman Pyterruner (aka Matilda) later stated that she had been used as a decoy by George Meredith and his crew of sealers who abducted the women. These captured women were used as slave labourers and concubines,¹ and were often traded or sold between the various sealer groups on the islands in Bass Strait. What happened to Nandergoroke immediately after her abduction is not known, nor what happened to her first child, Gin-Dock, or her unborn baby. Presumably during her first captivity she would have been forced to work for George Meredith.

In 1836 some of Melbourne’s colonists tried on behalf of Derrimut to rescue his wife and the other kidnapped women, but were unsuccessful. Apparently Eurernowel and Derrimut, with his younger brother War-de-len-ne-yoke and his sister’s son Dal-ler-gal-deth, were interviewed about their kidnapped wives, but “Buckley and Batman” dissuaded them from joining a rescue expedition.² Derrimut must have persevered as in October 1836 he and Betbenjee went with Fawkner to Hobart to inform Protector George Augustus Robinson that sealers had abducted their wives who were now living with the sealers in the straits.³ This meeting must have had an impact, because the Port Phillip Association wrote to Lieutenant Governor Arthur about the abduction of Aboriginal women:

“... some native women, I believe four in number, who have been forcibly taken from their husbands and families, from the southern coast of New Holland, by some men employed in sealing, and who frequent the islands in Bass Strait, and to request that His Excellency will be pleased to give the necessary instructions to the Commandant of Flinders Island to take measures for restoring these women to their families. Two of the native men who have been deprived of their wives are known to the Association, and others who have become residents at Port Phillip are on terms of friendly intercourse with them. Indeed one of them [Derrimut] has been civilized by Mr Fawkner, in whose family he has resided for several months past, and is at this time on a visit to this place.”⁴

¹ In the early stages of European colonialism, administrators often encouraged European men to practice concubinage to discourage them from paying prostitutes for sex (which could spread venereal disease) and from homosexuality. Administrators believed that having an intimate relationship with a native woman would enhance white men’s understanding of native culture and provide them with domestic labor, which meant white men did not need wives from the metropole, and thus did not require a family wage. Administrators later discouraged the practice when these liaisons resulted in offspring who threatened colonial rule by producing a mixed-race class. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concubinage>

² Aboriginal history article082.pdf

³ https://www.spiffa.org.au/uploads/2/6/7/5/2675656/i_succeeded_once.pdf

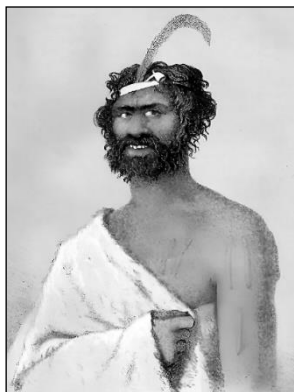
⁴ J H Wedge quoted in Indigenous History of Stonnington.pdf

George Robinson did subsequently visit the islands attempting to trace and bring back kidnapped women, but it was a lengthy and complex venture, including, it seems, some sociopolitical overtones; e.g. the well-connected John Batman had stolen an Aboriginal boy on the mainland and used him as a servant but refused to return him to his mother. Derrimut was never reunited with his wife.

In 1839, when George Augustus Robinson, the colony's new Protector of Aborigines, brought his entourage to Port Phillip, one of his assistants was Matilda, the Tasmanian woman who had helped kidnap Derrimut's wife. Matilda (or Pyterruner) was an Aboriginal woman who confirmed to Robinson that in 1833 she had been used as a decoy by George Meredith to entice several Boon Wurrung women into the hands of sealers:

"She pointed out the spot a few miles down the harbor at Point Nepean where she said George Meredith and his crew of sealers stole the native women ... That there was a tribe of Natives on the Point hunting kangaroo, that they the Sealer's Men went on Shore in their Boats and enticed the Natives, and told her to do the same. After fixing upon the best looking women and Girls did upon a pre-conceived time seize upon them and tie them with cords, and then conveyed them on board the Schooner."⁵

Yonki Yonka by H Hainsselein



In June 1841 the abduction details of Nandergoroke were further confirmed when Yonki Yonka, the son of Yalukit-Willam leader Benbow, returned to Port Phillip after seven years' absence. He was abducted as a child from Port Phillip in 1833 with eight Boon Wurrung women, and they were taken to Preservation Island, Bass Strait. Years later, he managed to get away and travelled by ship to Swan River where he worked before travelling to Adelaide and eventually came back to Port Phillip, a handsome man, speaking perfect English and dressed well in European clothes. Towards the end of 1841 Yonki Yonka rescued the European colonists William Johnson and Joseph Harper who were lost in the bush outside Melbourne. In February 1842 Yonki Yonka was one of twenty-three men who joined the Native Police Corps.⁶ He died in 1846.

According to one Ancestry website, Nandergoroke was married for a time to George Meredith before marrying Henry Richard Maynard in 1837 and becoming known as Elizabeth Maynard.

Richard aka Henry Maynard aka John Todd aka Bushby⁷ was born in 1794 in Kent, England, and in 1816 at age 22 he was in Tasmania as an apprentice sailor and absconded from his ship after committing a felony. A warrant was issued for his arrest but it is not known if he was charged. Apparently he was not a convict, *"but being fond of adventure, after passing through strange experiences, he found his way to these islands before the English had founded a settlement anywhere in Tasmania, and settled here for life."*⁸

Maynard must have settled his apprenticeship problems, as in 1819 he was the mate on the Young Lachlan schooner when it was stolen by convicts from the Derwent River and afterwards it was burnt to the wateredge upon an island on the coast of Java. Several of the convicts who survived were brought back to Tasmania and Maynard was a witness at their trial in 1821.⁹ Maynard had trained as a carpenter and boat builder before becoming a sealer.

Richard Maynard married Pollerwotteltelrunner (Margaret) in 1830 and they had two children: Janice Jane (1830-1886) and John 'Jack' (1833-1912). Pollerwotteltelrunner was born in 1806 in Pipers River, Tasmania, and was a daughter of Krimmina Bungauna, one of three brothers of the Bungauna family, and who were tribal chiefs in North East Tasmania. She died about 1833 in George Town, Tasmania.

⁵ Yalukit_William_by_M._Eidelson.pdf

https://www.spiffa.org.au/uploads/2/6/7/5/2675656/i_succeeded_once.pdf

⁶ <https://ia.anu.edu.au/biography/yonki-yonka-31119>

⁷ According to John Maynard, his father's real name was Bushby related to an English University man, and related to the great Bushby, of birch and scholastic fame. Daily Telegraph (Launceston) 29 January 1912 p7

⁸ Daily Telegraph (Launceston) 29 January 1912 p7

⁹ Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser 27 January 1821 p1

After Pollerwottelrunner's death, Maynard married Nandergoroke (aka Elizabeth, Betty) in c1837-1840 and their first child William was born in 1840. The 1840s appear to have introduced a period of stability in their lives as Nandergoroke and Maynard were together for about forty years and had eleven children: three daughters and eight sons, who were born between 1840 and 1862.

Nandergoroke appears to have raised thirteen children altogether, as Maynard's children Jane (1830) and John (1833) are included in the family tree and they may have been raised with their younger half-siblings after their mother died. (It was noted that the children of Tasmanian heritage had beautiful curly hair, while those from Betty had the straight hair characteristic of the Victorians.)

The children raised by Nandergoroke aka Betty Maynard included:

- Jane Janice 1830-1886.
- John snr 1833-1912 "Jack".
- William 1840-1915 "Billy the Whaler".
- Sarah Ann 1842-1882.
- Henry 1844-1920 "Lagger".
- Lydia 1846-1873.
- David James 1850-1905.
- Joseph 1852-1914 "Joe".
- Mary 1853-1865.
- Benjamin 1855-1924.
- James Armstrong 1858-1930 "Long Island Jim".
- Alexander 1861-1881 "Aleck".
- Richard 1862-1904.

Not much has been reported about the children's personal histories except for John 'Jack' Maynard, whose story illustrates that the children led productive lives. He married Frances aka Fanny Everett in 1853 and raised five sons and three daughters between 1855 and 1875. Frances Everett was born in Tasmania to James Everett (who was from Suffolk, England) and Wottecowidyer aka Harriet Palawa (from Mussel Roe, Tasmania). John's obituary mentioned that he was one of nature's gentlemen:

*"An artist in carving, etc., of no mean order, a first class boat builder, and what counts in the Straits, he was regarded as the best boatman that ever sailed a ketch or cutter. Some years ago life on the ... reserve became so bad as to be intolerable to one of his superior nature, so he went and selected land on Flinders, built one of the best houses then on that island, and remained there until his death. ... I knew John Maynard well, and was in his confidence, for upwards of twenty years. He was deeply religious, and had been a total abstainer from intoxicants for upwards of thirty years."*¹⁰

Nandergoroke aka Elizabeth Maynard



Henry Maynard (aka Richard Marnard aka John Todd aka Bushby) died at George Town, Tasmania, in 1874 at age 79. Nandergoroke died at George Town, Tasmania, in 1882 at age 71 and was buried on Cape Barren Island in Bass Strait, under the name of Elizabeth Maynard.¹¹ Her name has not been forgotten in Melbourne.

In 2015 during NAIDOC celebrations the CSIRO at Clayton named a Nandergoroke Room at their Ian Wark Laboratories in her honour and to recognize her significance in history. It features a plaque detailing her life, including her abduction. Senior elders of the Bunurong Community and direct descendants of Nandergoroke, Dyan Summers and Daniel Turnbull, were present at the naming celebration for the room where a plaque describing this history and a commissioned artwork of a local artist were put on display.¹²

¹⁰ E Stephens, Daily Telegraph (Launceston) 29 January 1912 p7

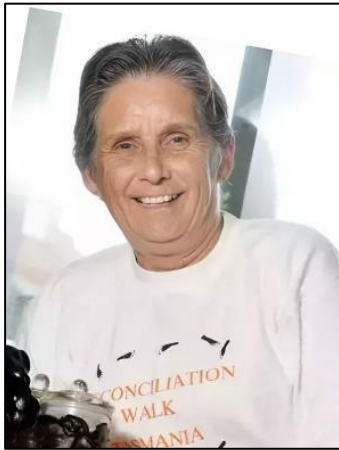
¹¹ <https://csiropedia.csiro.au/nandergoroke/>

¹² <https://csiropedia.csiro.au/nandergoroke/>

Several of Nandergoroke's descendants have held significant positions as Boonwurrung Elders living in Melbourne and have been active in community organisations, including Dyan Summers, Nanette Shaw, Fiona Newson, and Daniel Turnbull, so Nandergoroke's Boonwurrung heritage lives on.



Dyan Elizabeth Summers is a Bunurong Elder. Her apical ancestor was Nandergoroke/Elizabeth Maynard who was kidnapped from Point Nepean by sealers and taken to Bass Strait Islands. Dyan is an active Bunurong community member and has been Chairperson of Bunurong Land Council. Dyan's qualifications include a BA from the University of Tasmania, Train The Trainer from TAFE Tasmania, and Certificate V Business Management & Governance (Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations). She worked as an Aboriginal Teacher Aide, Manager/Administrator - Cape Barren Island Community Inc Legal Aid Field Officer Tutor - University of Tasmania Director (8 yrs) & Chairperson (6yrs) - Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation for Education Banking Customer Service Officer – WESTPAC. Her special responsibilities have included being Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Bunurong Land Council (Aboriginal Corporation), and Member of the Boundary Negotiating Team.



Nannette 'Netty' Shaw is a Tyereelore Elder from Tasmania, who also has ties to the Boonwurrung/Bunurong people of southern Victoria, being a member of the Bunurong Council and inaugural Member of the Bunurong Elders Circle. *"Shaw is a traditional kelp worker, basket weaver and shell stringer following the traditions of her ancestors. Born in 1953, from the age of three she lived on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait with her immediate and extended family. After living away for 30 years, Shaw returned to Tasmania and reconnected with her people and heritage while learning many cultural practices from Elders in her community. Shaw has developed her skills and knowledge about Tasmanian Aboriginal basket weaving and enjoys exploring Bull Kelp as a medium. In 2018 she won the Viva Energy 3D Award at the Koorie Art Show, Koorie Heritage Trust, and in the same year she was a finalist at the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. Shaw has exhibited in several major exhibitions*

*at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, and Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia."*¹³ In 2022 Nannette Shaw was appointed as a Director of The Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (Under Special Administration).

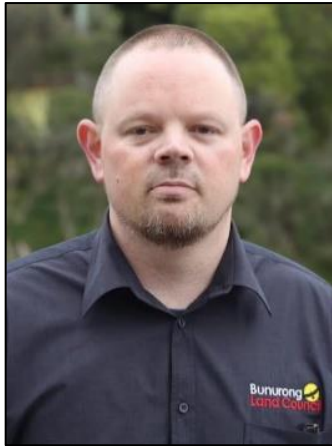


Fiona Newson was a fourth-generation descendent of Nandergoroke. Fiona's work on modern treaty negotiations was influenced by her work with archaeologists and historians to preserve the cultural sites left behind by the Mornington Peninsula's first inhabitants; she wanted to protect traditional ceremonial places rather than have them dug up. She died in February 2026 at age 46. Fiona was a proud and dedicated Bunurong woman and gave so much of herself to community and to the work of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. As the first appointed ORIC Chairperson, she led in times that required strength, steadiness, and vision. Over the years she carried many roles: Administrator, Cultural Heritage Officer, Treaty Community Engagement Officer, and Board Member. Her leadership helped Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation emerge from special administration in 2013–2014. She was a strong woman who believed in creating meaningful change for the generations and

leaders who will follow.¹⁴

¹³ <https://netsvictoria.org.au/artist/nanette-shaw/>

¹⁴ Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation oopsrtSedngf:ahi4e t66a1g015i2l4h1f2 8 8ta5br89r127u42yguiFh



Daniel 'Dan' Turnbull is a Bunurong/Palawa man whose qualifications include Certificate V Corporate Governance Training (ORIC), Organisation Governance Training (ORIC), and Traditional Owner Negotiations Workshop. He was the Chief Executive Officer of the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation from 2014 to 2022, overseeing its inception as a Registered Aboriginal Party in July 2017. He has extensive practical Cultural Heritage management and strategic experience, including co-chair of the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group, Director and Deputy Chair of the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations and interim Director and Company Secretary of the First People's Assembly of Victoria.¹⁵ His passion includes talking about caring for Country and protecting cultural heritage: *"Cultural Heritage is the legacy we inherited from our Ancestors. And it includes responsibilities to protect both the physical aspects – land, water, flora, fauna and today, archaeology – and the*

intangible aspects, our story, language, mythology and lore. See, our Ancestors understood that caring for Country allowed Country to care for them."¹⁶



Saltwater (Maribymong) River 1880s

Reference: Images of Nandergoroke (Elizabeth Maynard) from the collection of Dyan Elizabeth Summers <https://www.djambana.org.au/dy-summers-my-story/>

Article written by Joseph Ribarow 2026

¹⁵ <https://www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-heritage-council-members>

¹⁶ <https://www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/dan-turnbull-caring-country>