



## Season 2 - Episode 10

### The Mark's Murders

### The Aftermath

Greg: [00:04](#) From 'Today's Stories' - this is 'The Mark's Murders' – a story of murder and mayhem told one episode at a time by myself, Greg and by Peter.

If you haven't listened to this series from Episode 1, we suggest that you stop listening now and go back to the very beginning.

Also, a warning. This series of podcasts discusses the murders of indigenous and non-indigenous people. It contains the names of Aboriginal people who have died. Whilst quoting original historical material, this series also contains:

- racist language,
- some language that would be seen as inappropriate today, and
- historical ideas that are offensive.

Peter: [01:01](#) Previously on the "Mark's Murders".

It's 1847 – about 50 km north-west of modern-day Goondiwindi.

John Watts: [01:15](#) *"Marks was a splendid shot, and the blacks were very much afraid of him, and from information I obtained from the Beebo people, they had long been watching to kill him."*<sup>1</sup>

Richard Bligh: [01:27](#) *"The Blacks it appears took away both the boy and the sheep and upon search being made for them the upper half of the boy's body was discovered hanging among the branches of a tree. The lower portion of the body seems to have been carried away and has not yet been discovered."*<sup>2</sup>

Denise: [01:46](#) *Young described Marks's frenzied response, calling him 'a hater of all Aboriginals', 'shooting every native in sight'*<sup>3</sup>.

Jonathan Young: [01:58](#) *"I have been in great danger and alarm from the Natives ever since this outrage although I was formerly on the best possible terms. They are now spearing my cattle which they never did to my knowledge before."*<sup>4</sup>

Denise: [02:15](#) *“On the 9th June, a detachment of police, with the Commandant, Mr. Walker, went in pursuit of the Bubera mob, who had been committing great depredations on the cattle on the river for the previous month. The police came up with them three miles above Mr. Larnach's hut, and an attempt was made to capture Cranky (the black who some time since wounded Holmes, one of Mr. Yeomans's men,) and two others, when the police met with a desperate resistance ; several of the blacks were wounded, and Cranky was killed.”<sup>5</sup>*

Peter: [02:54](#) The murder of Mark's son and the related murders of Aboriginal people started in 1847, around the modern-day town of Goondiwindi. We know the bare bones of the story from the *Personal Reminiscences* of John Watts, an early squatter on the Darling Downs, and from other historical accounts. But these accounts don't provide any context as to why the murders occurred, what actually happened, and their aftermath. We want to tell the truth of what happened. In previous episodes, we have discussed the background to the people involved, the murders and, in the last two episodes, we discussed the law and order response. Commissioner Bligh tried a conventional legal approach, but this failed. Then, Frederick Walker and the Native Police were established, and they came to the McIntyre. Walker described the previous nine years as a war. Walker brought peace to the McIntyre, but peace means that there are winners and losers.

Greg: [03:58](#) Yes, the lack of convictions in the conventional legal process was very disappointing and the approach of Walker was fairly brutal but was effective from the viewpoint of the squatters.

Do we know what happened to the players in this drama after Walker's peace was established? What became of the Bigambul?

What happened to the Young family? Most importantly, was James Mark ever brought to justice?

Peter: [04:22](#) This story won't be complete without discussing the aftermath of this 18 months of mayhem around Goondiwindi triggered by the Mark's Murders. The first players that we should discuss are the Bigambul people. Just a brief recap – the Bigambul were the original inhabitants of their country which ranged north of the McIntyre River around Goondiwindi up to Inglewood, Tara and west to the Moonie River. This was their country for thousands of years. Many reports from early squatters described the Bigambul as particularly fierce<sup>6</sup> in their opposition to the squatters moving in to occupy their country. The Bigambul had learned from their southern neighbours, the Kamilaroi, that killing livestock was a significant deterrent to the squatters. Even Frederick Walker admits that they conducted a 9-year guerrilla war<sup>7</sup> against the squatters.

Greg: [05:16](#) Yeah, we say that Walker established peace on the McIntyre. What does it actually mean?

Peter: [05:20](#) With any war, there are victors and the defeated. Well – very clearly – the Bigambul were the defeated.

Greg: [05:28](#) How so?

Peter: [05:29](#) Between May and June 1849, Walker and the Native Police travelled throughout the McIntyre crushing Bigambul resistance<sup>8</sup>. Walker didn't record many specific details. He simply said that quote - "there had been some lives lost"<sup>9</sup> whilst attempting to apprehend some Aborigines quote - "charged with murder". The total number of Aboriginal lives lost will never be known. Walker stated that there could be no peace in the district until the Aboriginal warriors that had committed so many crimes were taken "alive or dead." There is very little evidence of Aborigines being "taken alive" and when this did occur they were invariably killed while "trying to escape."<sup>10</sup>

Presumably in response to complaints about the number of Bigambul killed, the Colonial Secretary wrote to Walker on 8 August cautioning him - quote- "*not to commit acts of aggressive warfare against the Aboriginal Natives, and that the Command of the Native Police had been entrusted to him for the maintenance of peace and order and not for the purpose of carrying warfare to an enemy country.*"<sup>11</sup>

As we noted in the previous episode, Walker claimed that the result of his actions on the MacIntyre was that "... a run which would not have fetched £100 in May, 1849 was disposed of in January for £500."<sup>12</sup> Walker's friend and Member of the Legislative Council, Augustus Morris attributed this newfound peace directly to the 'Battle of Carbucky'. Quote - "... a very favourable change has come over the hitherto hostile Aborigines. Since the engagement near *Carbucky*, they appear to think that they cannot carry on their former depredations with impunity."<sup>13</sup> Squatters like Morris, W.B. Tooth and Jonathan Young not only saw their run values improve but also saw a great reduction in the level of wages paid to employees. Tooth declared that before the force arrived on the MacIntyre, squatters were forced to pay employees double the wages paid elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> As time went on the wage bill dropped even more dramatically.

Greg: [08:02](#) Okay, so it's clear that the squatters were happy, but what about the Bigambul?

Peter: [08:06](#) Before the Europeans arrived, the population of the Bigambul is estimated to be about 2000<sup>15</sup> – but this is obviously quite a rough number. In our episodes, there are several references to groups of 100 to 300 Aboriginal men being engaged in actions against the squatters. For example:

Harry the Scrubber was surrounded by 300 men on *Bengalla*.<sup>16</sup>

George Harris and Scotchie were surrounded by 150 men near *Goodar*.<sup>17</sup>

And then, about 300 warriors combine together before the Battle of *Carbucky*.<sup>18</sup>

Obviously, the squatters involved here might be exaggerating a bit, but – assuming that, in addition to the warriors, there are women, children and old folk, - then a population of over 1000 is easy to believe in the area around modern-day Goondiwindi alone. But – after "peace" was attained, their numbers decline substantially.

Greg: [09:11](#) So how do we know that?

Peter: [09:13](#) Well, one of the roles of the Commissioners of Crown Lands was to write Annual Reports and to cover the status of the Aboriginal people in their district. In a

letter of 12 January 1856, Commissioner Bligh reports on condition of Aborigines of District of Gwydir during the year that had just elapsed.

He notes that quote – *“the same friendly relations between natives and settlers continue, in perhaps a somewhat more intimate form, as still continuing scarcity of labour renders the employer more considerate, and native servant more assured of reward of his exertions and therefore less indolent”*. He also notes that the spiritual condition of Aboriginal people was decidedly unaltered in any respect for the better, though renewed effort for their improvement in this direction has been recently made by the Rev William Ridley with as much success as might be expected from a very transient nature of his Mission. On the other hand, the introduction of taverns and quote” *the use of intoxicating drinks has been attended with marked injury to those Natives within reach of influence of these causes. Natives still suffer much from disease and from want of medical attendance”*.

Bligh gives a return of *Aboriginal Natives in District of Gwydir showing Estimated Number of Individuals in each Tribe according to best information now procurable*. For the Bigambul along the McIntyre, his estimate of their total number is 100.

I don't know how he made this count. I suspect that he was only counting Bigambul who were on squatter's stations. Bligh's report is often used to claim that the Bigambul were reduced to only 100 people. However, in 1855, the missionary, the Rev. William Ridley, who Bligh has just discussed, travelled through the area partly studying various languages and partly preaching. Of the Bigambul, he reported:<sup>19</sup>

William Ridley: [11:34](#) *“Also, at Calandoon, on the Macintyre, and for 60 miles along that river, and 80 miles up the Weir, some hundreds of Pikumbul-speaking blacks may be met with.”*

Peter: [11:46](#) So, Ridley is claiming that there are still hundreds of Bigambul on their country in 1855. But, as little as 80 years later, the Australian anthropologist, Norman Tindale,<sup>20</sup> recorded that a small number of Bigambul people were living at Toomelah Mission Station (close to Goondiwindi on the New South Wales side of the MacIntyre River). This appears to be the last remaining group of Bigambul people.

Greg: [12:14](#) So, the aftermath of the Mark's murders for the Bigambul was that their numbers were decimated and they were effectively “domesticated” onto squatter's stations. Very few remained in the bush.

Peter: [12:25](#) Yes. Bligh refers to Rev. William Ridley<sup>21</sup>, a Presbyterian missionary. Now, Ridley is an interesting character and he makes some telling observations about the fate of the Bigambul. As well as being a minister, he was also a competent linguist. From July to November 1855, Ridley undertook a long trek from Brisbane, through the Darling Downs, the McIntyre, the Namoi and the Liverpool Plains, studying the languages spoken by the various groups he encountered. In doing so, he obtained a better understanding of the lives of the Aboriginal people than the squatters or the Government officials ever did. He is one of the very few missionaries who recognised that the Aboriginal people had a strong spiritual life. He wrote a report about the trip. The following is a fairly long section taken from his report, but it is very important to the understanding the Bigambul people. He says:



*Return  
of Aboriginal Tribes in the District of Gwydir  
Showing the estimated Number of Individuals in each Tribe  
according to the best information which could at present be obtained*

<i>Name of Tribe</i>	<i>Number of Individuals</i>	<i>Locality frequented</i>	<i>Remarks.</i>
"Ualroy"	40	Reedy Creek Mosquito Creek and Northern Side of the Gwydir River near Manildra	All these Tribes with the exception of that of the "Mooni" may be considered as perfectly peaceable and harmless - The latter I believe to be rather a collection of quasi-cultures from various Tribes than a distinct tribe, consisting of natives who are said to come in to the Station on account of acquisitions formerly committed by them and of some few inimitable spirits who refuse all intercourse with the white man. There is no respectability in the habits of the other Tribes all being alike ready to perform the most arduous sort of labour for which alone they seem fitted.
"Guicubul"	25	Myale Creek and Gwydir River in its neighbourhood -	
"Ginnibul"	25		
"Mouaperi"	20		
"Peichamboul"	120	Macintyre River	
"Camileroy"	120	Lower Gwydir River Eastern bank of the Barrow and its tributary Creeks	
Mooni and Kwea Blacks	60	Scrubs between the Barrow and Mooni	
<i>Total.</i>	<i>410</i>		

*Comptrolers Office  
Gwydir - 28<sup>th</sup> January  
1851.*

*Richard Phipps  
Comptroller*

1851 Return of the Number of Aborigines in Gwydir District

William Ridley: [13:32](#) Before the occupation of this district by colonists the Aborigines could never have been at a loss for the necessaries of life. Except in the lowest part of the river there is water in the driest season; along the banks game abounded: waterfowl, emus, parrot tribes, kangaroo, and other animals might always, or almost always, be found. And if at any time these failed to supply food for the human tribe, the fish furnished a sure resource. But when the country was taken up, and herds of cattle introduced, not only did the cattle drive away the kangaroos, but those who had charge of the cattle found it necessary to keep the Aborigine away from the river, as their appearance frightened the cattle in all directions. In fact, it is said that while troops of Aborigines roam about the runs, and especially if they go near the cattle camps and watering places, it is impossible to keep a herd together.

William Ridley: [14:34](#) *After some fatal conflicts, in which some colonists and many Aborigines have been slain, the blacks have been awed into submission to the orders which forbid their access to the river. And what is the consequence? Blackfellows coming in from the west report that last summer very large numbers, afraid to visit the river, were crowded round a few scanty waterholes, within a day's walk of which it was impossible to get sufficient food; that during the hottest weather the great red ants in that dry locality were so formidable that neither men nor even opossums could rest night or day, except for an hour or so at noon; that owing to these combined hardships many died. This is only blackfellows' report; but when we know that people have been cut off from four-fifths of their usual supply of food, and reduced to a scanty supply of bad water, is it an incredible report that sickness and death have fallen upon them? As might be expected, partly from the pressure of real want, partly out of anger at the interference of the white man with their prosperity, they skulk about spearing cattle.*

William Ridley: [15:54](#) *How can such evils be prevented? The squatter has a license from the Crown to occupy the country with his cattle, and unless his cattle are secure from the visits of blacks they will not stay on the run. He argues thus: "The license entitles me to make sure of the benefit to be derived from depasturing the run; and the run is useless while blacks roam over it as they please, so that the license, if worth anything, includes the right to order them away from the river." The question then arises whether it is not the duty of the Government, on assuming the ownership of the land, by granting licenses to occupy it, to see that the human beings who have been wont to get their living off the land thus taken up, have at least a supply of food provided for them equal to that of which they are deprived. To those blacks who volunteer to become servants to the occupier of the station, liberal supplies of food and clothes are generally given. But where they are as numerous as they are on the Balun, it is impossible for more than a small proportion of them to be so employed; and whether they become servants to the colonists or not, surely the tribes who are deprived of their chief means of subsistence have a right to some compensation from the government which takes to itself the responsibility of owning the land, and lets it to others for purpose inconsistent with their accustomed free occupation of it.*

Greg: [17:30](#) Well - Ridley's getting to the crux of the matter here. Bigambul country had been occupied by squatters without any treaty, permission or compensation at all – it's *terra nullius* at work. As such, the biggest impact of the squatters was the loss of their whole way of life and their ability to even sustain life.

Peter: [17:49](#) Yes – the murders committed by James Mark and his gang, and then by Frederick Walker and the Native Police were tragic but the occupation of their land by the squatters had the greatest and long-lasting effect.

Greg: [18:04](#) The fate of the Bigambul is quite tragic. So, what about the other players? What about the Young family who were fairly sympathetic to the locals?

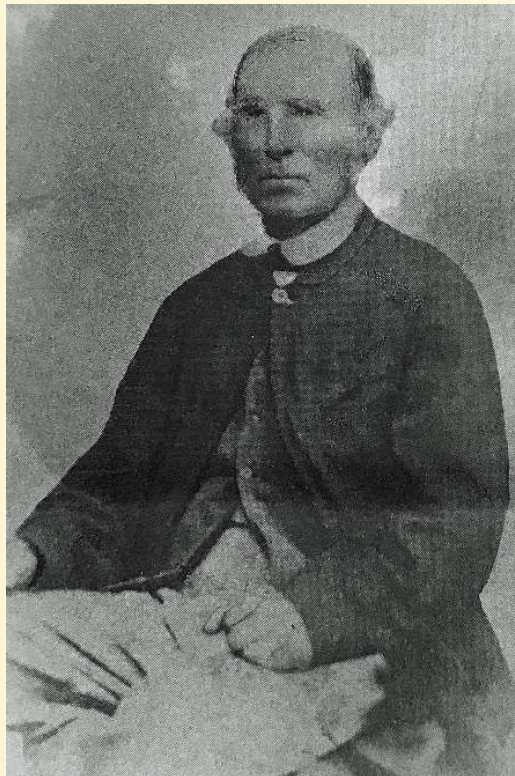
Peter: [18:12](#) Margaret Young<sup>22</sup> found the period of mayhem from their arrival in 1845 until 1849 when the Native Police moved on, very stressful. She says a number of times in her journal that she was the only European woman in the area for many years and she often feared for her life. However, after 1849, *Umbercollie* prospered. In 1854, ownership of *Umbercollie* was transferred from John Browne to Jonathan Young and then, in 1857, the Young family sold part of *Umbercollie* to Mr Dines of *Tulloona Station*

and the remainder to RP and S Marshall<sup>23</sup>. After 12 years at *Umbercollie*, they left the McIntyre in November 1857 with a good amount of money from the sale of *Umbercollie*.

Greg: [19:04](#) So, the Young family eventually left the district. Do we know how they fared afterwards?

Peter: [19:10](#) Yes. They returned to the Hunter Valley. Jonathon used the proceeds from the sale of *Umbercollie* to invest in various business around Maitland. He purchased a number of properties including the Hinton Hotel, the Morpeth Hotel, several cottages and several farms. In particular, he purchased *Loch Goyle*. Margaret and Jonathan had sixteen very happy years together at *Loch Goyle*, and all their daughters were married from there. Jonathon, who was 16 years older than Margaret, died suddenly in December 1873 aged 75, from a heart attack.<sup>24</sup> Margaret wrote:

*This left a terrible gap in my life, with the passing of so many cherished memories of a soldier, explorer, and intrepid pioneer.*



Jonathan Young

Margaret survived for a further 30 years. She passed peacefully away in January 1902, in her 89<sup>th</sup> year.<sup>25</sup>





*Photo of John and Mary Ann with their children taken 1890.  
 Back row left to right:— Beatrice Anne, Charles Young, Clare Elizabeth Margaret,  
 Elizabeth Davey, Jonathon Davey Young, Miriam Annette, Lucy Mary.  
 Centre row:—Lily Jane, Grandmother Margaret Young, John, Mary Ann.  
 Bottom row:—Harold John, Minie May, Pearl Irene.*

Margaret Young and family (1890)

Greg: [20:16](#) So, the aftermath of the Mark's Murders for the Young family was not so bad and Walker's peace brought prosperity for them. They left the district behind and prospered elsewhere. What about James Mark, the instigator of the murder spree?

Peter: [20:33](#) Well, before we discuss the fate of James Mark, there is an unintended consequence of the Mark's Murders that we need to discuss. It's the fate of the Native Police.

Greg: [20:44](#) So how did the Mark's Murders affect the fate of the Native Police. It seems that they did what was asked of them when they were on the McIntyre.

Peter: [20:52](#) Yes, they did – but with more brutality than was anticipated by the authorities that established the Native Police. We know what happened to their first Commandant – Frederick Walker – he was sacked<sup>26</sup> in 1854 due to his alcoholism and other misdemeanours<sup>27</sup> – but the Native Police, as an entity, continued under new commanders who were even more ruthless than Walker. Then, in 1859, Queensland became a separate colony and the new colony needed to decide what to do about the Native Police in Queensland. As Governments do, they held a Select Committee hearing into the Native Police.<sup>28</sup>

By this time, John Watts, who was a stockman working in the McIntyre in 1849 during the arrival of the Native Police there, had come up in the world. He was, by 1861, half-owner of the prestigious Eton Vale, a large sheep station on the Darling Downs. He was a magistrate and elected to be the member for Drayton and Toowoomba in the first



Queensland parliament<sup>29</sup>. John Watts sat on the 1861 Select Parliamentary Committee into the Native Police.

- Greg: [22:07](#) OK – but how does the Mark’s Murders affect the Native Police?
- Peter: [22:12](#) John Watts effectively uses James Mark and the murder of his son, as a reason for the continued need for the Native Police. At one stage, the Committee is taking evidence from Jacob Lowe<sup>30</sup>. Lowe was a squatter on Yarrillwanna which was a run west of Broomfield and Callandoon. Watts asks Lowe if he remembers the numerous murders of Europeans by the Bigambul. Oh, yes says Lowe. Do you remember the horrible murder of Mark’s son? Yes says Lowe. Did the Native Police stop the on-going murders of Europeans? Yes says Lowe.
- Greg: [22:50](#) Well, it’s clear that John Watts is using the murder of Mark’s son to justify, in part, the need for the Native Police?
- Peter: [22:56](#) Yes – and he is careful not to ask Jacob Lowe or any other witness if the Bigambul had a motive for the murder of Mark’s son. Watts only sees the Native Police as a necessary tool to achieve the development of inland Australia. We shouldn’t forget John Watts’s view on this as we gave it in our first episode.
- John Watts: [23:20](#) *“Some may say we had no business to take this country from the natives, and therefore it was natural they should try to drive us out of it. If that is so, then it was equally wrong of the Government to grant licenses to occupy, and then leave the settlers to protect themselves. I am one of those who think this fine country never was intended to be only occupied by a nomad race who made no use of it except going from place to place and living only on the wild animals and the small roots of the earth, and never in any way cultivating one single inch of ground.”*
- Peter: [24:03](#) Now his comment that it was wrong of the Government to grant licences-to-occupy and then leave the squatters to protect themselves is relevant to the Mark’s Murders. After the outcome of the Select Committee is presented and the Native Police is given the green light to continue, John Watts is questioned about this. He comments that, if the Native Police didn’t continue, then the squatters would defend themselves with a worse outcome for the Aboriginal people. I can’t help feeling that he was thinking of the actions of James Mark when he is suggesting that the Native Police was the lesser of two evils.
- Greg: [24:45](#) Yes. It does seem that the aftermath of James Mark’s murderous spree is more far reaching than we might have expected. In 1849, Mark’s murderous spree was initially used as part of the reason to establish the Native Police and to send them to the McIntyre – and then, in 1861, the gruesome murder of Mark’s son is partly used as justification for the continuation of the Native Police. So, there is clearly a link between James Mark and the Native Police in Queensland. But you still haven’t said what happened to James Mark and his family. What happened there?
- Peter: [25:21](#) Well, no historian really seems to know what happened to James Mark. But the story of what happened to James and his family is a long and complicated one and that will have to wait until our next episode.

Greg: [25:37](#) Well, it sounds very interesting. Now, we would like your views on this topic. Do you have a similar story in your family tree? If so, please contact us on email or comment on our Facebook - contact details are on our webpage – [www.todaysstories.com.au](http://www.todaysstories.com.au). Full details of this story are available on our website. Please remember to subscribe to our podcast.

For this podcast,

- Your hosts were Greg and Peter
- Research by Peter
- Voice actors were Mark, Denise and Mick
- Original music and Sound Engineering by Pete Hill
- IT solutions by Shelly

Thank you for listening.

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## **Citations**

<sup>1</sup> John Watts, *Personal Reminiscences*, Allendale, Wimborne, 1901. OM Box 10937, ACC 5823, John Oxley Library, Brisbane, p. 40.

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<sup>3</sup> Lydon, Jane, 1965- & Ryan, Lyndall, 1943- & EBSCOhost (2018). *Remembering the Myall Creek massacre*. Newsouth Publishing, Kensington, NSW, p.102.

<sup>4</sup> Enquiry touching the cause Macintyre River of Death of “Bootha” 26th August 1846 an Aboriginal Female of the “Tuchamboul” tribe Before Richard Bligh Esq. J.P. Acting Coroner, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sir William Dixson - documents relating to Aboriginal Australians, 1816-1853, Pages 167-177.

<sup>5</sup> THE NATIVE POLICE — THE BLACKS ON THE MACINTYRE RIVER. (1849, July 11). The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser (NSW: 1843 - 1893), p. 2. Retrieved August 31, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article701935> .

<sup>6</sup> A Journey along the Condamine, Barwan, and Namoi Rivers, By William Ridley, Missionary Report, (1855, December 14). The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954), p.3. Retrieved November 27, 2019, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article12977663>

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- <sup>28</sup> Queensland. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Select Committee on Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally (1861). Report from the Select Committee on the Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally together with the proceedings of the Committee and minutes of evidence. Fairfax and Belbridge, Brisbane. <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52862431/view?searchTerm=1861+Select+Committee+native+police&partId=nla.obj-103368650>
- <sup>29</sup> Queensland's first Parliament - Historical Background - <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/members/former/first-parliament>
- <sup>30</sup> Queensland. Parliament. Legislative Assembly. Select Committee on Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally (1861). p. 8.