

Summary of the search for identity to date

In 1873 German photographer John William Lindt took a series of Aboriginal portraits in his studio in Prince Street, Grafton. The photos were taken in a studio rather than outdoors because photographic technology was very limited at the time and the lighting needed to be regulated. The long exposure times meant that the people in the photos had to remain still for about a minute while Lindt took each portrait.

The photographs are unique artistic *interpretations* of how Aboriginals of the region might be living, when away from the townships. Lindt went to great efforts to include Aboriginal gunyahs, tools, weapons, clothing and adornments in the photographs, however, he did not make sure that they were being used in a culturally appropriate manner, such as depicting women wearing what we believe was a male-only head dress. The photographs are in the prevailing style of elaborately staged portraiture prevalent amongst the middle classes.

By the 1870s the people in these photographs were living far more westernised lives than are depicted in the majority of these photos. They were wearing western clothing around town and drifted between Aboriginal camps that were situated on the fringe of Grafton, and camps located on European properties. While some hunting was still practiced, the men worked as farm labourers and stockmen, and the women worked as house maids and nannies.

The Colonial Office purchased a number of these photo albums and gifted them to major museum collections around the world, including Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The photographs were also displayed at exhibitions worldwide and Lindt acquired international acclaim for them. Throughout Lindt's career the people in the photos remained largely anonymous to anyone outside of the Grafton area. Two newspaper articles dating to 1873 and 1874 gave the first names of some of the people in the photos, but they did not elaborate who they were or how they related to one another, either tribally or as family groups.

Two other photos were given names which were attributed to them by a woman from the Bawden family who was friendly with the Aboriginals and had written names on the backs of two of the photos. As you can see she has given the name 'Louis' to the man who the newspaper named 'Snowy'. Perhaps 'Snowy' was a local nickname, because there is no record for an Aboriginal named Snowy in NSW at the time. Apparently these Aboriginals camped on the Bawden property "Trefusis" located on the banks of the Clarence River in Grafton at the eastern end of Victoria Street.

In the late 1990s artist, Ken Orchard, did some research on the photos and identified King Charlie of the McLachlan property at Ulmarra and King Harry of Small property at Swan Creek through other photographs of them wearing their breast plates. He also discovered a photo in the State Library of NSW of a young woman with the name "Mary Ann of Ulmarra" written in pencil on the back. It was not known who wrote the inscription or when, so it was very difficult to prove definitely if that was her name.

In 2004 Sam and Janet Cullen of Sydney read in the Sydney Morning Herald that a near-complete album of Lindt's *Australian Aboriginals* series was up for auction in London. They were distressed at the idea of these significant photos being sold overseas and may be to a private collector. They purchased the collection of 36 photographs and generously gifted them back to the people of the Clarence Valley, via the Grafton Regional Gallery. This kind deed sparked a renewed interest in the Lindt photographs especially in finding the identities of the Aboriginal people portrayed in the photographs.



Elders Ron Heron and Robyne Bancroft at Schaeffer House Museum, Grafton

In 2005 the first meeting of the Lindt Research Group was held. The group of local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members with a shared interest in finding the identities of the men and women in the Lindt photos has guided this search for identity. The group included Robyne Bancroft, George Burkitt, Sam and Janet Cullen, Irene Daley, Jannay Daley, Pam Fysh, Pauline Gordon, Maxine Hegedus, Ron Heron, Nola Mackey, Deborah Taylor, Frank Mack and Ken Orchard.

In 2010 the Clarence Valley Council provided funds for the Lindt Research Group to engage local historian, Nola Mackey, to carry out a pilot research project to establish if it is possible to identify the people in the photographs. Whilst Nola's research did not specifically identify any new identities, it did create several very promising leads that required further investigation, in particular identifying descendants of a Mary Ann Cowan, who was suggested as a possible candidate for Mary Ann of Ulmarra. Mary Ann Cowan's descendants believed that their ancestor, Harold Arthur Cowan, bore a resemblance to the young woman in the Lindt photo. Nola and Ken's research also matched some of the Lindt photos to the descriptions in the newspaper articles, but no further information about these people, of whom we only had first names and some places of origin, was known. Nola's research became the foundation the next research project, *Breimba: Looking for you*, in 2014.

On 6 July 2012 *Dreaming the Past: The Lindt Story* was published to tell the story of the search. The book was launched at the opening of an exhibition of the same name. It tells of the dedication and passion of the Lindt Research Group in their search.

Meantime on 6 February 2013 *Light of Day* produced by Jennifer Feller, ABC TV Australian Story, was broadcast. Jennifer Feller had been following the search for identity since 2008. The episode told the story of the search. It renewed the public's interest. Many people contacted the ABC from across Australia offering suggestions about who some of the people might be. A public meeting was held a month later at the Grafton Regional Gallery to continue capturing this interest and information.

The need for further research was evident and money was required. The Foundation of the Grafton Regional Gallery in partnership with the Royal Australian Historical Society presented *Lindt at History House*, in the society's headquarters in Macquarie Street Sydney. This three day event held a fundraising opening of the exhibition of the Lindt photographs, presented a talk by historian and author Dr Nicola Teffer and presented a viewing of the Australian Story *Light of Day* and a forum with producer Jennifer Feller. The event aimed to seek connections between people in the Sydney area to the Clarence Valley, specifically to the people in the Lindt photographs.

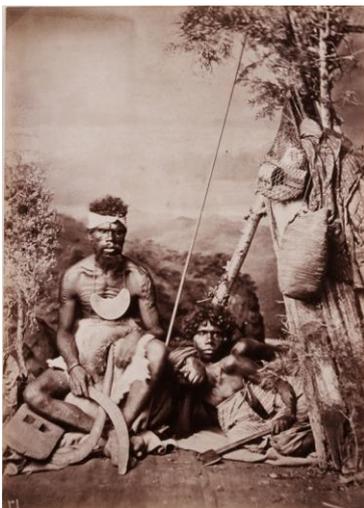
In 2013 the University of New England offered to support the search with significant funds and research support. The Lindt Research Group began their second research project. The project was administered by Jude McBean, Director of the Grafton Regional Gallery. The historian, Dr Eliza Kent, from the University of New England, headed up the research team, with Annika Korsgaard as the lead researcher, and Roberta Skinner, the research assistant.

This new phase of research was aptly titled *Breimba – looking for you: Lindt Research Project*. Breimba was the Aboriginal name for the Clarence River, and this was deemed a fitting title for an investigation about the Aboriginal people who lived on or near the Clarence River. This phase of the research commenced in October 2014 and had its official closing ceremony at the Grafton Regional Gallery on 26 May 2015.

Breimba – looking for you continued the search for the identities of the Aboriginals in the Lindt photographs that were gifted to the Grafton Regional Gallery. The project created a digital archive of all the research materials collected and significantly confirmed the identity of four of the Aboriginal people in the photographs.

The digital archive and the research materials were placed in the Sir Earl Page Library & Education Centre, Grafton, to give easy access for the continued search for identity and for Aboriginal family and local history research.

Two public presentations were made by the researcher Annika Korsgaard, one in Maclean and one in Grafton on 17 April 2015. Annika presented the following outcome of her research for the identities.



King Charley of Ulmarra with his wife and sister

A Gumbaynggirr man, Charlie Whitton, is a very strong contender for the title of 'King Charley of Ulmarra'.

The persuasive evidence is as follows:

- Colin McLachlan remembers his grandfather, Duncan McLachlan, talking about King Charley and Nancy, who lived on the property in the 1870s when his grandfather ran it. Charley would warn trespassers off the property, saying it belonged to him and Duncan.
- Nancy Whitton's death certificate shows she was 10 years older than her husband Charlie, which would account for a visible age difference in the photo, and the possibility that the newspaper mistook her for Charlie's mother instead of wife.
- The young woman could be Lucy Larrigo (nee Whitton), Charley's sister. Lucy was born around 1850, making her about 23 at the time of the Lindt photo, which appears to be the right age for the young woman.

- Colin McLachlan remembers an older woman, Maggie, living on the family property at Ulmarra in the 1930s. This may have been Maggie Whitton, Charlie and Nancy's daughter. Maggie was born ca. 1868, making her in her 70 years of age in 1938, so she fits Colin's description of an 'older' woman.

If this is the Whitton family, and the Maggie Colin speaks of was Charlie's daughter, then that would show an excellent example of semi-continued occupation of the site by a single family group. This also reaffirms that the McLachlan property was a safe-haven for Aboriginals, even during the depression.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS, and Lindt's interesting photographic studies in ethnology." The pictures spoken of were taken by Mr Lindt during his residence in Grafton. Although but a few years ago when this was done, many of those whose features and characteristics Mr Lindt has thus preserved, have one by one passed away, one of the last, if we mistake not, being 'Larrigo.' For exhibitions and museums these pictures were enlarged to 18 inch plates, and copies grace the collections of many continental museums. The next generation will probably also have to depend on Mr Lindt's happy thought while among us, to show then what the aboriginals of the Clarence were like. In due time, no doubt, Mr Lindt's work

Clarence and Richmond River Examiner and New England Advertiser, 30 June 1883



Jessie Larrigo, daughter of John Larrigo and Lucy Whitton.

Photo courtesy of Matthew Smith

This article on page 3 of the *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner and New England Advertiser*, 30 June 1883, names 'Larrigo' as one of the men in the collection, and says he is one of the last surviving people who posed for Lindt. Many references were found in news articles to Larrigo and it is likely that he is one of the men because he was well known around Grafton and the article is proof that he was in the photos. Unfortunately it is not known which man he is. Further future research might reveal this. Larrigo or his son married Lucy Whitton, daughter of Charlie Whitton and Nancy, and their daughter Jessie worked as a Nanny on the Bawden property.



J W Lindt – King Harry



L. to R. Rear: Mrs. Neville, Maud
Front: "King" Harry Neville, Maud
Photo courtesy Mrs. Kath Bolton.

From *A History of Coutts Crossing Districts Vol.3*



State Library of Victoria

A photograph courtesy of Mrs Kath Bolton taken ca. 1900 and printed in *A History of Coutts Crossing Districts Vol.3* shows a resemblance to King Harry of Swan Creek. This same resemblance is seen in a photograph in the State Library of Victoria which depicts a man wearing an illegible breastplate. This photograph was taken in the 1890s and looks like Harry Neville. Harry Neville married Lizzie MacDonald, who was thirty years younger than him, at Nymboida in a Christian ceremony in 1909. Harry's and Lizzie's marriage certificates state they were both born in Nymboida. Harry Neville had at least one son, Eric Neville, whom Harry petitioned to have educated in Nymboida. Harry died in

1915, age 90, making him approximately 48 in 1873/4. This makes Harry Neville the right age to be King Harry of Swan Creek.



J W Lindt – Two men



Detail

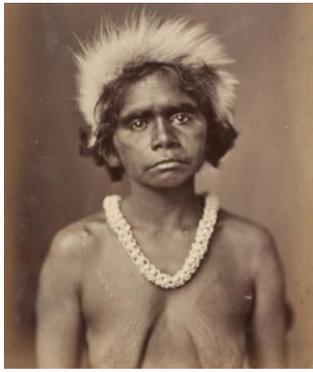


Darlinghurst Gaol photograph 1877 when Arthur Devlin was 23

Arthur Devlin is believed to be the figure lying down in the Lindt photo. The prison photograph of Arthur Devlin was taken in 1877 three years after the Lindt photo was taken. There are numerous news articles about Arthur Devlin. He was imprisoned for attempted rape twice, once at Ulmarra, and once at Swan Creek. This puts him in the right area for where many of the people in the photographs were living. He was noted as a known menace by locals in Ulmarra, suggesting that he lived there or close by. Arthur died from tuberculosis in Darlinghurst Gaol in 1883, age 29. He does not appear to have been married, had children, or have any known family or descendants. There was a white man called James Devlin who was the manager of the Small property at Swan Creek, so it is a possibility that Arthur lived or worked on the small property and may have taken his boss's name, as was commonly done.



Annika Korsgaard found a copy of two Lindt photos paired together for the German market. It has the inscription "Australisches Brautpaar aus der Gegend von Almarra" which translates to "Australian newlyweds from around Almarra". On the reverse in pencil it says in German "Bushman and his bride from the area of Almarra". There is the possibility that Lindt took creative license and called them newlyweds to make them more romantic. Annika believes that they were married because of the inclusion of the specific detail of them coming from Ulmarra, which would mean nothing to people in Europe. The Germans were quite meticulous record keepers, so it stands to reason that they are married, either in the Aboriginal or European tradition.



J W Lindt - Mary Ann of Ulmarra



Mary Ann Williams (nee Cowan)

Jo-Anne Clarke of Sydney contacted Annika Korsgaard and confirmed the identity of Mary Ann of Ulmarra as Mary Ann Williams (nee Cowan). Jo-Anne is the great granddaughter of Mary Ann Cowan.

Mary Ann Cowan may have had a traditional Aboriginal wedding to the man in the previous photo. We know that at the time of the Lindt photos she was a mother to a one year old son, Herbert. The title of the photo suggests that she lived on the McLachlan property in Ulmarra at that point. We know nothing further of her life until she married a non-Aboriginal, Leonard Williams, in 1877, and together they had another four children and many grandchildren.

Mary Ann Cowan lived from 1877 through to her death in 1935 aged 86 at 51 Fitzroy Street, Grafton, where Shopping World now sits.

The Lindt photos are a starting point from which other conversations can be had about topics such as how colonialism dramatically altered the lives of the local Aboriginal people, through land alienation, massacres, and the dissolution of tribal law, to name a few, and all the social and cultural problems that arose from these events. These struggles and social problems can be detected in the lives of some of the people in the Lindt photos, as discovered through this research. Therefore these photos are no longer simply static, romanticised images of Australian Aborigines. By knowing something of the history of the people in the photographs the photos themselves become a narrative of the hardships, struggles and confusion that the Aboriginal people of the mid-late 1800s, and beyond, had to endure.

The research indicated that further identification was possible so the search continues. In late 2015 the Lindt Research Group commissioned historian and writer Kate Gahan to write and coordinate a new Lindt catalogue for The Clarence Valley photographs of John William Lindt Collection.

The catalogue will collate the information relevant to each photograph, contextualise the photographs with an essay by Kate Gahan on the history of the Aboriginal people in the Clarence Valley since the mid 1800s and present an essay by Ken Orchard on John William Lindt, the photographer. It is proposed that the catalogue will be launched in late 2017.

Collated by Jude McBean June 2016

With thanks and acknowledgement to Annika Korsgaard's 2015 Community Lecture and Nola Mackey's pilot research notes.

