

# “Jerry Bailey”

For Gerry Moore

Peter Botsman

20 February, 2025

**Jernuual** (Hoppery Joe), Budden (Bob Budden) and Bunjerry (Bungarry) are listed as from Jeniwangalie in the 4 July 1836 return of Aborigines for Erowal (Organ 1990, 203-4) Rev. W. B. Clarke mentions a locality called Gennigalia in his diary of 1840 (Organ 1990, 254) and Jacky Jacky 18 and Jerouangla Bob 40 are mentioned as coming from Jerouangla in the Erowal census of 1840. In 1900 Buthring gives the name of Coolangatta as Jellumbagong. (Organ, 469)

Bangilee is thought to be the name for the Shoalhaven River.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the anglicised Jerry Bailey derives from Jeribalee, mouth of the river. Little Bulli was known as Jujinbelilley in Archibald Campbell's *Notes on Illawarra Aborigines*, (Organ, 463)

Each of the clans of the Tharawal, Eora, Yuin communities had their own dialects. Jeribalilee, Jeribali, Jeribagong, Jeriouangla, Jeriwangalie were probably all variations on the root word jer or jeri which was likely to have meant mouth or opening.

There was no Jerry Bailey. This was the anglicised version of the Wodi Wodi word for the mouth of the Shoalhaven River: most probably, Jeribalie.

If there had been a European person that Shoalhaven Heads was named for, it should have been Thom Davidson. Thom was one of the four survivors of *The Boyd* massacre at Whangaroa, New Zealand (1809)<sup>2</sup>. Davidson, the two year old Elizabeth Broughton and another child and woman were rescued by Alexander Berry whose vessel *City of Edinburgh* was en route to Norfolk Island and Hobart via New Zealand<sup>3</sup>.

Thirteen years later, Davidson joined Berry on his first voyage of exploration to the Shoalhaven River. Tragically the young man perished trying to take a boat over the breakers into the Shoalhaven River. Berry describes the incident as follows:

“After having procured a suitable little vessel [the *Blanch*] to commence the undertaking—a little cutter of fifteen tons—I proceeded to Shoalhaven with the first batch of convicts. This was in May 1822, and although it was winter in this part of the hemisphere, the weather was fine, and the water was smooth. But on arriving near the mouth of the Shoalhaven River I observed that, notwithstanding this smooth water outside, that there was a high surf and breakers across the entrance of the river. I had appointed as master of the vessel, a young man named Davidson, whose life I had saved at New Zealand, after the massacre, by natives, of the crew of the ship “Boyd.” Poor Davidson was over anxious for my interest, and insisted that the dangerous appearance of the mouth of the river was only caused by the glitter of the sun, and that there was no danger whatever. After much discussion, reluctantly I allowed him to take a boat to examine the entrance, and the boat was manned by Davidson, his mate, two white men, and one of the aborigines dCharcoal Will who was a good hand at an oar. After the boat set out, I ran up to the mast-head, whence I saw the danger more clearly, and immediately waved my hat for them to

---

1 Although Buthring called it Burray or Burreal. (Organ, p. 467-8)

2 On a voyage from Sydney to Cape Town, the *Boyd* anchored at Whangaroa to load kauri spars and allow Māori to disembark. During the voyage a Māori chief, Te Ara, had been mistreated by the ship's captain. In retaliation, a group of Māori boarded the ship, killed the captain, crew and passengers, and looted the vessel. When a barrel of gunpowder accidentally exploded, the ship burnt to the waterline. Only four of the 70 people aboard survived including cabin boy Thom Davidson.

3 Thom Davidson, the cabin boy was one of only four survivors that also included two year old Elizabeth Broughton, the future wife of Charles Throsby II. Their daughter Isabel married Alick Osbourne in 1861 and lived at Barrengarry House, Kangaroo Valley. Roxburgh, R. & D. Baglin. 1989. *Throsby Park : an account of the Throsby family in Australia 1802-1940*. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

return, and called on all the people on deck to do the same. They saw us, and heard our shouts, and put the boat about with her head to the vessel; but instead of returning, they held a discussion amongst themselves, and after some time again put the boat's head towards the breakers. I recollect that at this moment my mouth became dry, and my tongue clave to the roof. They escaped the first great breaker; but, alas! after the second, the next sight I got of the boat it was capsized, and the oars were in the air, and the men clinging to the bottom. When I next saw the boat there were only two men by her. I was told afterwards by the native black that after it was decided that they should go on, he stripped himself naked, and advised all the others to do the same, and be ready to swim, else they would certainly be drowned, but they did not take his advice, When the boat capsized the native black immediately left it, and swam to the shore, which he reached safely. Davidson and his mate immediately swam away from the boat and were never seen again. The two men who could not swim stuck to the boat, which was washed ashore by the surf on the beach between the entrance to the river and Crookhaven. I got two long oars and pulled the vessel into Shoalhaven, and despatched some cordials to the two men who had been washed ashore in a state of exhaustion. (Berry 1912, 194-5)

The Shoalhaven River was aptly named by the explorer George Bass who made his way down the coast in 1797. He traversed Seven Mile Beach and then encountered the shoals which, at the time, formed the entrance to the Shoalhaven River. Bass named the mouth of the river 'Shoals Haven'.

The day after Davidson and his friends drowned, Berry ordered the digging of a canal between the Crookhaven and Shoalhaven Rivers. This allowed a far safer passage around Comerong Island into the Shoalhaven River. This canal has been deepened and widened over time.

The name of the tiny settlement known as "Jerry Bailey" was changed to Shoalhaven Heads in 1955. The whole vicinity and particularly nearby Cullangutti mountain is sacred for the Aboriginal communities of the South Coast.

## Sources

Berry, A. 1912. *Reminiscences of Alexander Berry / Alexander Berry*. Sydney dN.S.W.n: Sydney N.S.W. : Angus & Robertson, 1912.

Organ, M. 1990. *Illawarra and South Coast Aborigines, 1770-1850*. M. Organ.

Roxburgh, R. & D. Baglin. 1989. *Throsby Park : an account of the Throsby family in Australia 1802-1940*. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.