

ABORIGINES

There were probably about twenty tribes in the Wimmera before settlement by white man. The particular tribe which occupied the Wedderburn area was known as the "Jajoweroung" or Loddon tribe. It has been suggested that those people were driven there by the fierce tribes of the Murray and Goulburn Rivers. Before the white man arrived the "Jajoweroung" tribe was said to number 1,000 - but twenty years later their numbers were diminished to less than a hundred. Within a further five years the tribe was practically extinct.

James Flett in his book, "Dunally" says "These natives from the beginning of the coming of the white man had had no major clashes with the whites, the Mission Station set up by Parker was a comparative success, most of the settlers on the Loddon suffered no depredations on the part of the blacks sufficient to warrant shootings such as occurred elsewhere, and reported them half-civilised and useful as servants in sheep-washing, stripping bark and digging potatoes. John Hunter Kerr, squatter at Fernihurst, near Mt. Korong, knew the Loddon tribes well. They were, despite the fact that he says naturally given to thieving, 'quite inoffensive neighbours'; and not altogether devoid of a certain sense of honor. They would, he said, arrive for a 'sit-down' at his station for weeks. Kerr was, in his capacity as Magistrate, called on to adjudicate in the case of Prince Jamie of Wedderburne, one time resident at the Parkers' Jim Crow Mission, and who had murdered his lubra. This dusky native, having tasted what was worse than death to the aboriginal, the white man's jail, walked proudly away on his release; but when apparently out of sight he took to his heels and ran for the bush."

In 1855 Mr. J.R. Gray recalled having frequently seen Aborigines visiting Wedderburn from the Avoca, Loddon and Murray Rivers. He also remembers having seen 300 engaged in full scale battle at the Wedderburn Racecourse. Mr. Gray praised the Aborigines, saying that he had never heard of cases where they were charged with stealing, and in fact knew of one who had been in the Police Force for five years. Mr. Gray was also aware of their liking for alcohol, but added that this was a vice learned from the white population. The Aborigines were quick to learn any useful occupation, provided they were given the same inducements and incentives as the average European. The employment mostly undertaken was acting as guides, working on stations or bringing their local knowledge to the aid of many men stranded in the bush.

Major Mitchell, in his diary, gave great praise to the Aborigines who assisted him whilst in the Wedderburn area. Mitchell says, ".... I cannot fairly say savage and civilised, for in most of our difficulties by flood and field, the intelligence and skill of our sable friends made the 'white fellows' appear rather stupid. They could read traces on the earth, climb trees, or dive into water, better than the ablest of us. In tracing lost cattle, speaking to the wild natives, hunting, or diving, Piper was the most accomplished man in the camp."

One of the few remaining reminders of the Aborigines in the Wedderburn area is the retention of Aboriginal place names. Some of these names are:

Kooreh	-	Old Male Kangaroo
Kooroc	-	Sand
Wehla	-	Opossum
Kurraça	-	Crestless White Cockatoo
Berrimal	-	Emu
Tchuterr	-	Shell Paroquet
Bealiba	-	Red Gum
Buchrabanyule	-	Middle Hill
Gowar	-	Hill
Kinypaniel	-	Head of the Hill
Moliagul	-	Wooded Hill
Kara Kara	-	Gold
Borong	-	Broad leafed Mallee

Another reminder, recently discovered, is a series of Aboriginal rock carvings on Mount Korong.