

Bora grounds near Tamborine Village. Qd. Nat. 18:31.

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BORA GROUNDS NEAR TAMBORINE VILLAGE

In September 1910, Dr. John Shirley, a foundation member of the Queensland Naturalists' Club, read a paper to the Royal Society of Queensland on "A Bora Ring in the Albert Valley" (Shirley, 1911, *Proc. roy. Soc. Qd.* 23: 103-105). The following are excerpts from his description: "It is on the eastern bank of the Albert River, at Tamborine Village. . . The site is in sandy soil, on a flat ridge running 30-40 feet above the Albert River. The first ring is 80 feet in diameter, looking like an immense circus ring, with walls which are now two to three feet above the surrounding level, and almost uniformly five feet thick at the base. In this ring trees of nine inches in diameter are growing, showing that it has not been used for some years past. Leading out of the large ring at its southern side is a path, now partly overgrown with grass, and varying in width from 2 to 5 feet. This path is 400 yards long and is in a north and south direction. The path ends in a second ring, 30 feet in diameter, resembling the first, but with rather less solid earthen walls . . . from the southern end of the small ring the path continued for another 400 yards, where it ended in a third wall of earth, this time of an oval shape. This oval enclosure measures 80 feet long by 30 feet in its widest part. The long axis lies in the same direction as the paths, almost exactly north and south. . . Round the third or oval earthen rampart is a semi-circular track or path."

These bora grounds were visited by the Club on 14th November, 1965. The first ring (in the property "Albert Park") is still very well preserved, perhaps because its high banks and the numerous trees growing on it have discouraged man or livestock from making a track across it. Mr. S. L. Everist noted that, of the trees reported by Dr. Shirley, the Blue Gum is now 24 inches in diameter, a Quinine Berry has grown to 18 inches, and a Rusty Gum is now 17 inches in diameter at breast height. Conspicuous on the western bank of the ring is a miserable Quinine Berry, closely covered with Monkey Vine which is so leafy that the whole assembly looks like a beautiful spreading shady tree.

The path from the large ring to the second ring is now considerably flattened and partly obliterated but can be traced for most of its length. Mr. George Knight, Dr. Shirley's grandson, told us that in the nineteen-twenties this path was still very distinct. The banks of the second ring are almost flattened, and it has been further damaged quite recently by vehicles crossing it during installation of power-lines. A few yards south of this ring the ridge is transected by a cutting on the Beenleigh-Tamborine road.

A good deal of the track to the third ring has been obliterated, and it is also interrupted by a secondary road which crosses the ridge. The oval ring can still be found a few yards to the south of this road, on the western side of a track into the paddock from a gateway on top of the ridge. It is overgrown with trees and long grass, and without Dr. Shirley's description and sketch might be mistaken for an old borrow-pit; the semicircular track round it could not be distinguished. Mr. B. Geissmann, one of Dr. Shirley's original guides, kindly provided information which facilitated rediscovery of this third ring, whose existence was apparently no longer known to local residents familiar with the first two rings.

—E. N. MARKS.

My father and mother first heard the corroboree about the year 1872 when they came to the Albert River. The bora rings in "Albert Park" were about two miles above where they lived and, on a cool evening when the wind was favourable, the beating of the waddies and the singing could be heard quite plainly.

Part of the corroboree was the repetition of an eerie chant-like theme. This chant must have made a deep impression on my dad because he knew it quite well and would sometimes sing it to those who were interested, including myself. I heard it from him enough times to have it stored in my memory—a memorised version of my father's memory of what he heard 90 years ago.

Another sidelight on this recurring chant or theme is that my father brought an old milk cow from the Albert River up to Tamborine Mt. in those very early days and he would sometimes "take a rise" out of her by hiding behind a tree and giving a "recital" of the old chant, with an approximation of the blacks' words fitted to it. The old cow would immediately show signs of fear and nervousness by sniffing the air to try and locate where the black man was. My father felt sure she knew the smell of the aborigines and had contacted them in some way.

—W. G. CURTIS.