

## How did

# NARRABRI

## get its Name ?

Yet another interpretation of the name Narrabri has come to hand, this time supplied by an 85-year-old resident of Narrabri, who as a lad worked with aborigines on station properties in the north-west and in fact can still speak their language fluently.

He is Mr. W. J. Quinn, of Mooloobar Street, Narrabri West. Mr. Quinn is certain his interpretation is the right one.

He has an interesting story to tell about the very early days in Narrabri. In yarns and discussions around camp fires in the early days, Mr. Quinn learnt a lot.

For instance, he was told that way back natives spoke different dialects.

They were bound by districts. One district extended from Narrabri to Gilligal; another from Gunnedah towards the coast; one from Wee Waa to Walgett; the other near Mungindi.

Phonetically, the dialects were called: Narrabri area, Gunilari; Gunnedah, Wilbraberray; Wee Waa to Walgett, Whalemon, and Mungindi district, Goongara.

The story the blacks told Mr. Quinn stated:

Long ago, blacks in the Namoi region decided to fight blacks in the Castlereagh area.

### The Borah

The Namoi group held a meeting and appointed one representative to go to the Borah.

The Borah, it seems, was a sort of native instruction and ritual centre. Only men who belonged to the Gubberri group could attend. That meant men with a good head (presumably good brains) and good hearing.

The nominee attended the Borah for three moons—or three months. In that time he was instructed in the arts of fighting, leadership and gathering and making weapons of war. On his return he was classed as a "Man of Voice"—one who could command and be obeyed.

To prove he had attained the high office, the leader had three slashes across his chest, the weals staying with him to the end.

"The Blacks told me that what the 'Man of Voice' said was law," added Mr. Quinn. "Weapons had to be made for the great fight that was pending. The head man, in the course of amassing equipment, which included spears, nullas, shields and boomerangs, told some of his warriors to 'go into the bush and get him a good stick with a knot in it, from which he could make a hefty nulla nullas'."

Apparently the timber growing around this district at that stage contained a good sprinkling of brigalow, and it was used for construction of weapons.

The word "knot" in aboriginal language was Naree; the sounding bri means "with", so interpreted, Narrabri means knotted stick.

Mr. Quinn is positive the name used for the town can mean nothing else.

Mr. Quinn has had a varied career in his 85 years. Born at Doyle's Gap in December, 1873, his father was an Irishman from Tipperary, his mother of Syrian origin, whose mother was an Indian from Calcutta.

Mr. Quinn at a very early age ran away from his father, whom he described as "a very cruel man."

### Escape to Freedom

To make his escape, the lad crawled underneath the tarpaulin on a coach. He knew how many bugle calls would be made before arriving at his destination, and duly counted the blasts, apparently made by the coachman to announce his arrival.

His sister at the time was working for Mr. Robert Eckford, of Glencoe station. However, the runaway was located by the police while asleep in his bunk and taken back to Narrabri.

Later he worked for the famous Captain Moseley, being bound over to him for five years.

It was while with Moseley that the famous channel was cut in the river.

At that time large numbers of blacks were in the district. He frequently joined them in the course of his work.

For some years he worked with Mr. McGee, who was a forest ranger, and looked after the horses.

At Tarriaro he was employed by Mr. A. Brown for five years, and from then on worked about the district.

He now lives in retirement at Narrabri West.



Meet Rex Clarke and Olive Handley, of Walgett