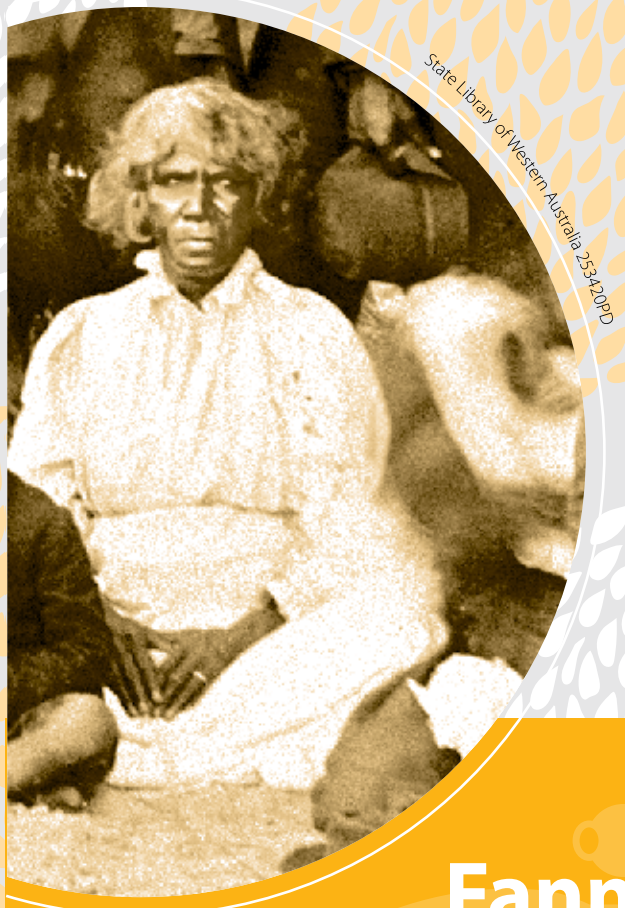
Fanny Balbuk Yooreel

Realising a Perth Resistance Fighter



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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Fanny Balbuk Yooreel: Realising a Perth Resistance Fighter

Walk the path of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel through the Perth landscape and connect to this unique city in new ways. A Whadjuk woman who experienced colonisation first-hand in the 19th century, Fanny Balbuk Yooreel was passionate about her country and 'raged and stormed' through her homelands as colonial Perth developed.

Guided by Whadjuk Elder women and their extended families, this map provides an experience informed by newly compiled research to mark the 110th anniversary of the death of arguably Perth's most important and uncelebrated Whadjuk woman.

The information in this map was compiled through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions and the National Trust of Western Australia in partnership with the City of Perth.

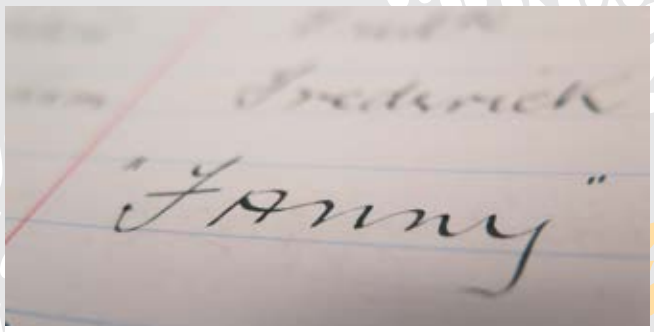
BELOW: Fanny Balbuk Yooreel spent the last years of her life at *Maamba*, the 'Welshpool Native Reserve' (State Library of Western Australia MN773 BA 1423 149)

She was a strong lady who had knowledge. She grew up knowing this is her country, this is her land. I'm proud to know she was a strong old lady who mixed with the white people.

Glenys Yarran | Whadjuk Ballardong Elder

She wasn't frightened to tackle the development of colonisation in this country when it happened especially here in Perth.

Beverley Port-Louis | Whadjuk Yued Elder



CULTURAL WARNING

The National Trust of Western Australia would like to advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers that this brochure contains historical photos, images, references or names of people who have passed away.

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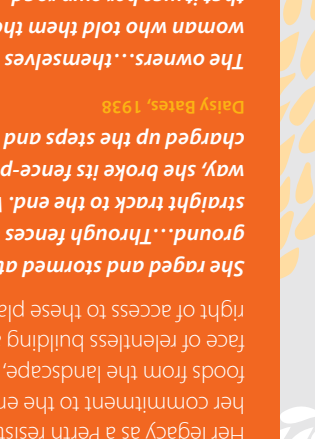


Fanny Balbuk Yooreel's extraordinary life awakens new ways of understanding Perth. Born around 1840, she is deeply connected to the Perth's original families. Granddaughter to Whadjuk Moorо leader Yellagonga and niece of warrior Yagan, Fanny Balbuk Yooreel had community connections on both sides of the *Derbarl Yerrigan*/Swan River. Her knowledge of Whadjuk country, recorded by Daisy Bates in the early 1900s, informed the Noongar Native Title claim of 2006, where it was upheld that Native Title rights existed in the Perth metropolitan area.

Getting to know this passionate Whadjuk *yorga* (woman) is not easy. Details of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel's life are often revealed by others within a context of conflicting priority and perspective. Colonisation descended onto her country, took the lives of her extended family and disenfranchised her community.

She lived through a time described as the most 'wretched chapter in the history of black-white relations in WA history.'

Her legacy as a Perth resistance fighter can be traced through her commitment to the environment, sourcing traditional foods from the landscape, her family and friendships. In the face of relentless building and expansion she demanded her right of access to these places throughout her life.

She raged and stormed at the usurping of her beloved home ground…Through fences and over them, Balbuk took the straight track to the end. When a house was built in the way, she broke its fence-palings with her digging stick and charged up the steps and through the rooms.

Daisy Bates, 1938

The owners…themselves were in awe of the fierce-eyed woman who told them they were on her home ground and that it was her own road.

Daisy Bates, Western Mail, Thursday 18 April, 1935, page 9

ABOVE: Perth Railway Station, 1881 (City of Perth History Centre Collection)

1 Perth Railway Station

Perth Railway Station, built in 1881, was constructed over wetlands that were a key source of food collected by Fanny Balbuk Yooreel. Known to the colonists as Lake Kingsford, the area was drained in the 1840s as part of a broader policy to alleviate flooding in the colony and as part of ongoing expansion and development. This is where Fanny gathered eggs and caught turtles and jilgies (freshwater crayfish).

Further south along St Georges Terrace she gathered the fruit of the zamia palm, which needed careful preparation to remove toxins. Noongar women sustained their families by gathering and preparing these foods and Fanny Balbuk Yooreel maintained her traditional rights in the midst of great change.

RIGHT: Liddelow Butcher, 1880s (City of Perth History Centre Collection)

2 Liddelow Butcher

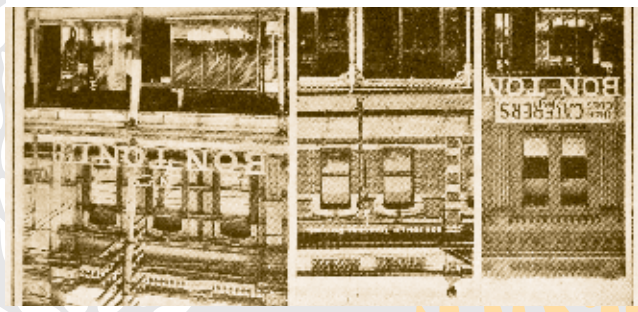
There are many newspaper accounts and court records of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel's arrests for disorderly behaviour. She was fined or imprisoned for her 'offences.' On one occasion Fanny asserts that Mr Liddelow, her employer, would pay her fine.

'Please allow me till twelve o'clock to get the fine. My master Mr Liddelow will pay it.' Fanny Balbuk Yooreel

West Australian, Wednesday 27 May, 1885, page 3

Liddelow Butcher was established by John Liddelow on the corner of Barrack and Murray Streets. He also had a slaughterhouse on the banks of the Canning River, not far from the location of *Maamba*, the 'Welshpool Native Reserve,' where Fanny was living in the early 1900s.

ABOVE: Bon Ton Cafés (The Cyclopedia of Western Australia)



3 Bon Ton Café

Irish-born Daisy Bates, working as a journalist and self-trained anthropologist in Perth in the early 20th century, met Fanny and began recording her knowledge of Noongar cultural places and language. Daisy took tea with Fanny at the Bon Ton Café during one of their walks through the city. 'The Dome' of its day, the Bon Ton Café had five premises: 580 Hay Street (the original café), nos. 4 and 104 William Street and 109 Barrack Street. Daisy recounts that she asked Fanny to stop for tea during a city walk and that Fanny responded:

'Nobody will let Balbuk come inside their white mias' Fanny Balbuk Yooreel

Western Mail, Thursday 18 April, 1935, page 9

They did take tea at the Bon Ton Café and two plates of cakes were consumed.

RIGHT: Balbuk's Country…Heirisson Island Looking East by Elizabeth Humphreys (WA Inspired Art Quilters)

4 City of Perth Library

WA Inspired Art Quilters created a range of superb quilts to recognise Whadjuk activist Fanny Balbuk Yooreel. The works represent aspects of Perth that we know and that Fanny in all-likelihood experienced. The quilts also include references to historic maps, records and locations. They depict riverscapes around *Matagarup* (Heirisson Island), flora and fauna, including bush tucker, an 1835 map of the Swan River and the muddy route across *Matagarup* used for eons by Noongar people.

ABOVE: 57 Murray St (G Bickford, Dessein)

5 57 Murray St

57 Murray Street was built in 1912 for the Public Health and Medical Department as a centre for government bureaucracy, policy and innovation.

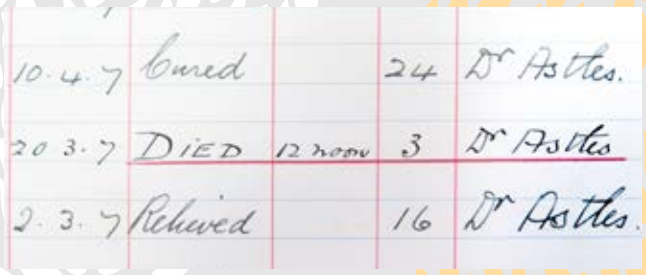
From this building the Chief Protector of Aborigines controlled the lives of Aboriginal people throughout Western Australia. The death and legacy of Fanny Balbuk's son, Joe Donnelly, in Onslow in 1925, was dealt with by this office.

A copy of a letter Fanny wrote to him begins 'Dear Son, I'm glad to know that you got my letter at last and to know you are alive and well' but she despairs that 'All our people are dead.'

6 Colonial Hospital, Perth

The Colonial Hospital was established on the corner of Murray St and Victoria Square in 1855. It was here that Fanny Balbuk Yooreel died on 20 March 1907. The cause of her death is recorded as cardiac failure. Her husband Doolby was by her side. She was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery on 21 March 1907 in an unmarked pauper's grave.

BELOW: From Colonial Hospital admissions records, 1907 (G Pickering, National Trust of Western Australia)



10.4.7	Cured		24	Dr Astles.
20.3.7	DIED	12 noon	3	Dr Astles
2.3.7	Relieved		16	Dr Astles.

ABOVE: Government House viewed from St Georges Terrace, 1862 (State Library of Western Australia 6293B.48)

7 Government House

The devastation and changes to Fanny Balbuk Yooreel's traditional landscape had great personal impact. Members of her family are buried close to prominent Perth landmarks along St Georges Terrace. Her great grandmother, Moojurngul, is buried in the grounds of Government House which is also registered as an Aboriginal site. Fanny would protest at the gates of Government House, cursing those within while a substantial fence kept her out.

One of her favourite annoyances was to stand at the gates of Government House, reviling all who dwelt within, because the stone gates guarded by a sentry enclosed her grandmother's burial ground.

Daisy Bates, 1938

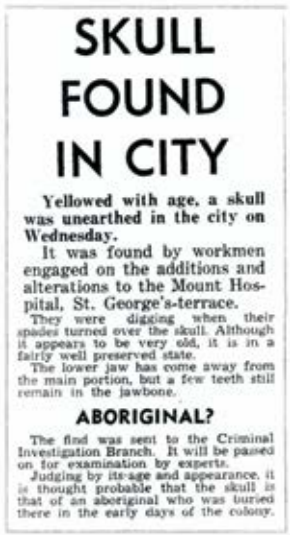
BELOW: Government House under construction, 1862 (State Library of Western Australia 6293B.14)

ABOVE: The Terrace Hotel on St George's Terrace is the former Bishop's Grove (G Pickering, National Trust of Western Australia)

8 Bishop's Grove

The western end of Perth's central business district is linked to the resting place of Fanny Balbuk Yooreel's grandmother, Yabben. A skull yellowed with age was discovered during building works in the vicinity in 1938.

RIGHT: News article (Daily News, 14 October 1938)



SKULL FOUND IN CITY

Yellowed with age, a skull was unearthed in the city on Wednesday.

It was found by workmen engaged on the additions and alterations to the Mount Hospital, St. George's-terrace.

They were digging when their spades turned over the skull. Although it appears to be very old, it is in a fairly well preserved state.

The lower jaw has come away from the main portion, but a few teeth still remain in the jawbone.

ABORIGINAL?

The find was sent to the Criminal Investigation Branch. It will be passed on for examination by experts.

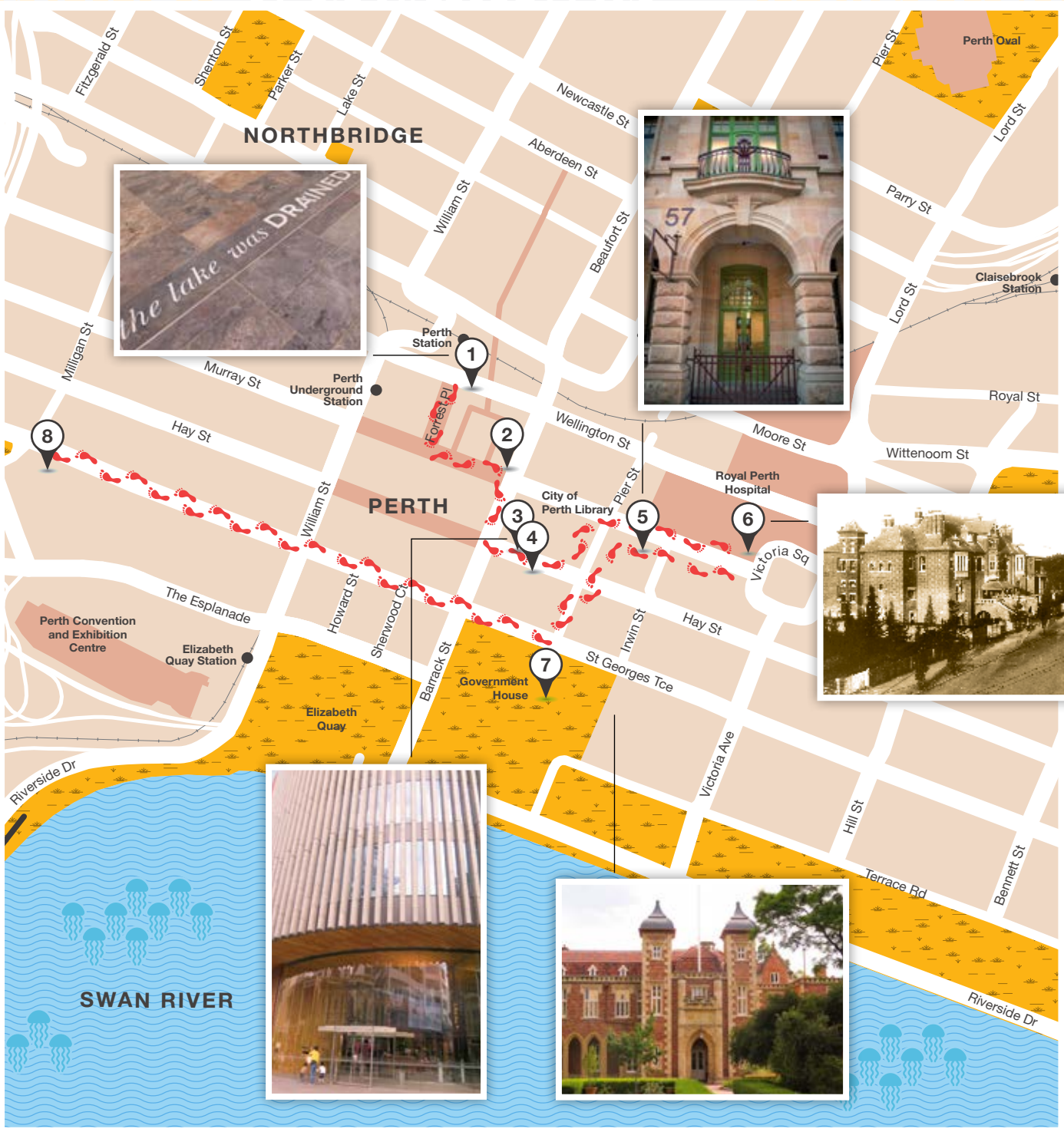
Judging by its age and appearance, it is thought probable that the skull is that of an aboriginal who was buried there in the early days of the colony.

'Judging by its age and appearance it is thought probable the skull is that of an Aboriginal who was buried there in the early days of the colony.'

Daily News, Friday 14 October, 1938

There is still the possibility many grave sites exist beneath the buildings and roads of Perth.

> *Fanny was an angry woman because everything in this life was taken from her family, her country, her lifestyle...especially her lifestyle, the way she wanted to live, was taken from her.*
>
> **Theresa Walley | Whadjuk Ballardong Elder**

ABOVE: Fanny Balbuk Yooreel (on right) (State Library of Western Australia 25341PD)

> *It makes me proud because a lot of our women were strong but she didn't take a step back, she always took a step forward in whatever she said or did.*
>
> **May McGuire | Whadjuk Yued Elder**