

Uninnocent Landscapes

Following George Augustus Robinson's Big River Mission



On any given day, in any given place, you can guarantee that most if not all colonisers have no idea whose land they are walking, working or talking on, such is their way of being in the world. And, the thing is, they really need not know for them to exist in this place.

Chelsea Watego, Another Day in the Colony

The uninnocence of landscapes, and the memories they carry, the traces they record, an archive of history's dark and light, is what is there throughout.

Robert Macfarlane, *Underland*



Image: Allport Library
and Museum of Fine
Arts, Tasmanian Archive
and Heritage Office

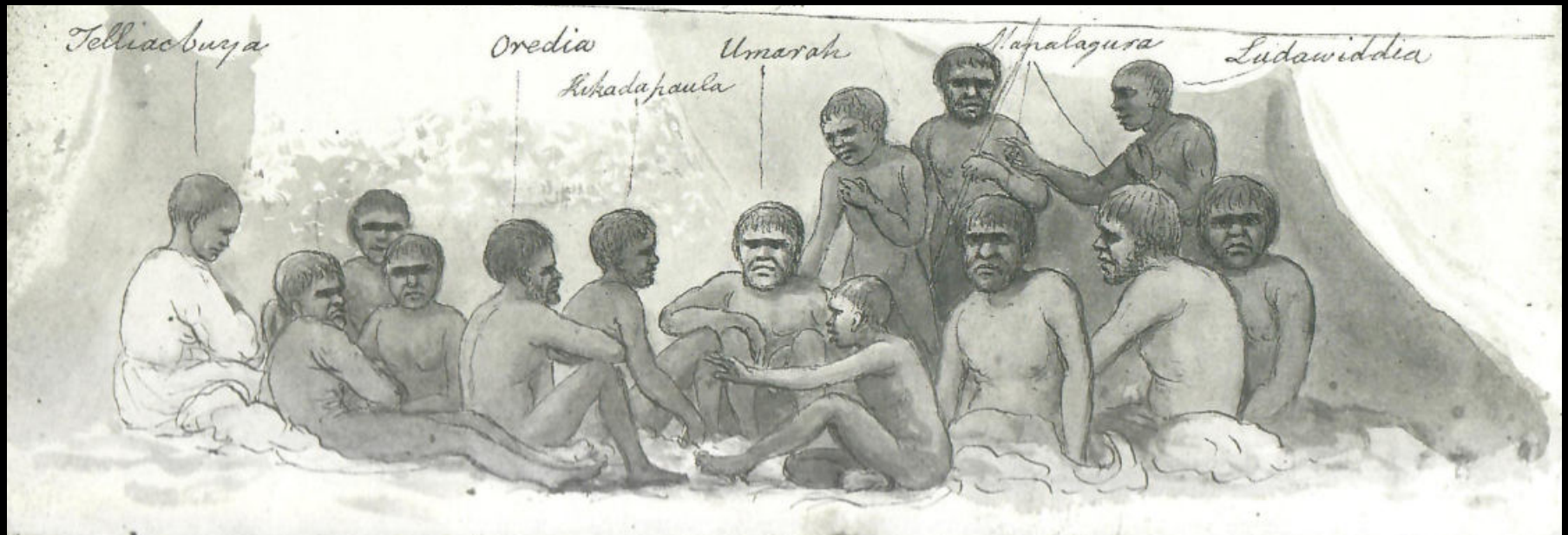
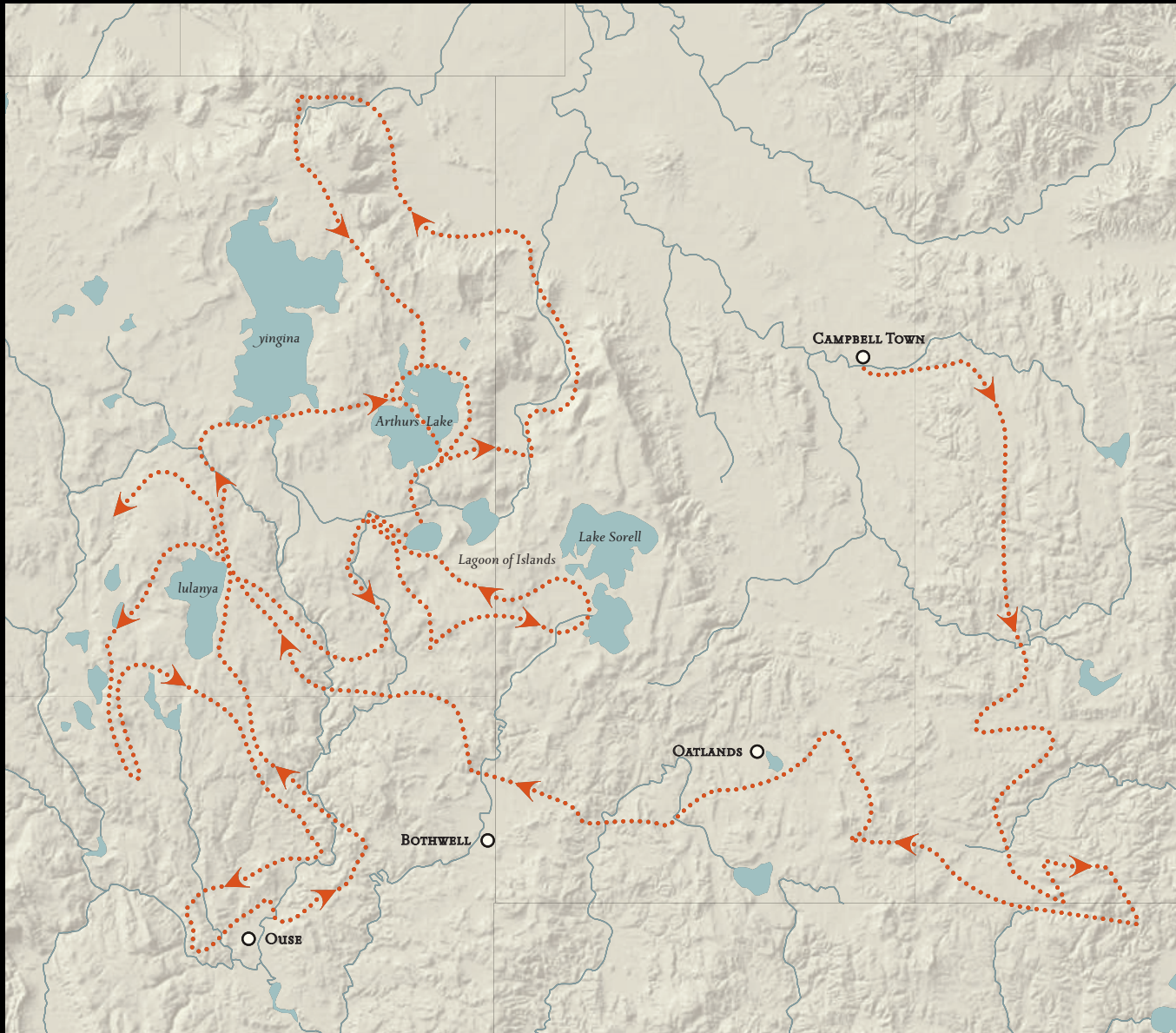
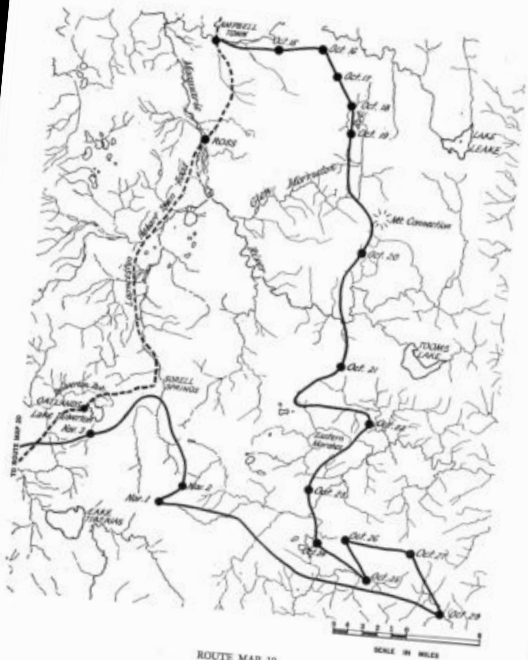


Image: John Glover, Dixson Galleries, State Library of NSW

Robinson's Palawa guides were:

Dick, Kikatapula, Lacklay, Manalakina, Maulboyheenner, Robert, Tanleboneyer, Tuererningher, Tanganutara, Trukanini, Tunnerminnerwait, Umarrah, Woolaytopinneyer and Wurati





ROUTE MAP 19.

4 November

Pleasant weather throughout. Pe themselves. It might appear ludicrous with a thick substance of ochre and grease anoint their heads. I have not custom, but it is evidently a custom done with a view to distinguish their

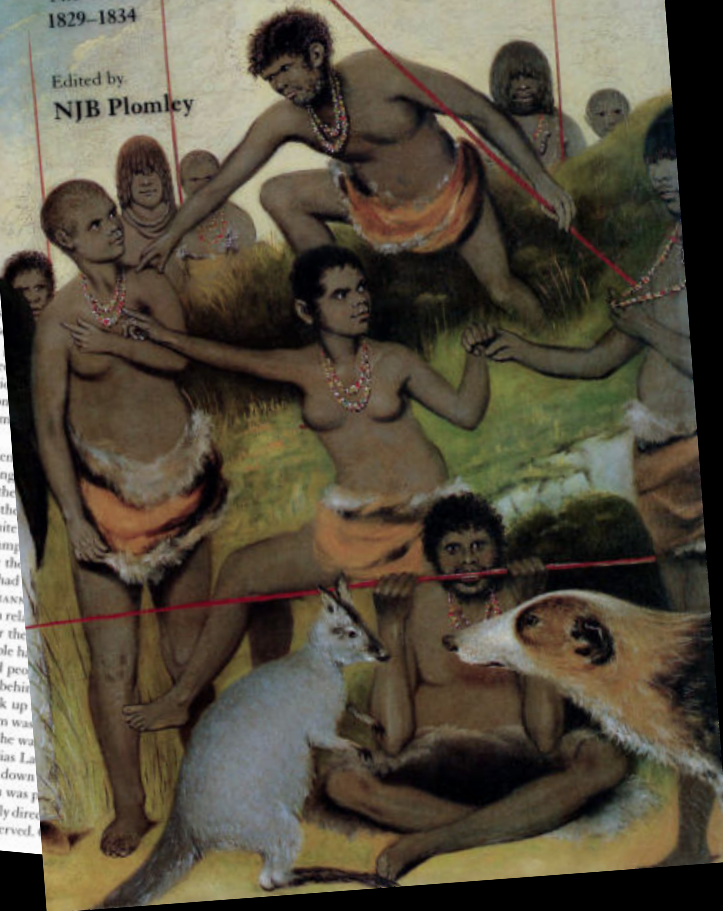
Proceeded in a westerly direction, cultivated land was seen in various directions range was before us and I purposed passing about 11 am crossed the Launceston or F much surprise the fragments of stones w some beautiful farms as we passed and m by them although we passed in sight of the hills. (The natives in their peregrinations crossing the Hobarton road, passed over a valley and as we was descending for this small plain below us whither we was proceeding about a mile further and as the natives con them some tea. They procured in a short time hearty meal.

Though great danger was to be apprehended passing through the settled districts more dangerous people, as their usual practice of attacking the firing upon them at their encampment. So if they not observe me or my son and the other white three whites) they might attack us at our encampment us and destroy us all. Whilst sojourning here the the circumstance of a native, a big man, who had then was and who had been placed in a tree. MANN Oyster Bay tribe had killed this man. Tom then related that it was MANN, NELE, LAR, GEN, NER'S or the that they had met and that the Oyster Bay people had of them were to talk with the beforementioned people doing other of the Oyster Bay people was to go behind. This was fully carried into effect, and Tom took up and shewed me the way they did it (probably Tom was the man was speared he run and cried, and that he was soon despatched him. Tom said FARWAKATAR alias La would have killed him also but that he got away down back that way he would shew me where this man was present. After refreshing ourselves proceeded in a westerly direction of hills in sight of several farms but was unobserved.

Friendly Mission

The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson
1829-1834

Edited by
NJB Plomley





9 October 1831 - Arrived at Campbell Town from Launceston at 5pm.
The people encamped on the other side of the river



15 October 1831 – left Campbell Town ... in an easterly direction accompanied by thirteen natives of VDL.... This they assured me was the road the natives used to take.



15 October 1831 – Encamped for the night on the tier of hills near to a stream of water. Saw two white men with guns. Umarrah said that at this spot himself and a tribe of natives had been attacked by some white men and that two natives had been shot and that the rest had taken to flight.



17 October 1831 – The country about Campbell Town was formerly a favourite place of resort for the natives. Near to where I had encamped there was evident indications that natives had at one time made this their rendezvous ...



17 October 1831 – The whole of this country is peculiarly adapted for natives, consisting of thickly wooded hills and small open plains of grassy land which are surrounded with forest.



19 October 1831 – The country or pass where I am camped is called by Umarrah, Peeretter.



20 October 1831 – The country through which I travelled this day consisted of a succession of hills of various altitudes and differently covered with forest: some were steep and rugged and covered with thick forest to their summits ... the others low hills covered with open forest.



21 October 1831 – Halted at the Macquarie River – called by the natives Tinamirakuna ... The scenery of this place had a romantic appearance and there was a waterfall.



21 October 1831 – Crossed a branch of the Macquarie River and pursued a south-westerly route till we came in sight of the smokes of white men burning off, supposed about Presnell's farm.



24 October 1831 – Came to some large lagoons and encamped for the night. The country around these lagoons is a place of great resort for the natives. There are abundance of eels in these lagoons.



3 November 1831 – I found it most prudent to encamp the night near to a small lagoon south of the township... The natives showed me a skull. Doubtless the white people had attacked the natives in this place and had shot them, and this skull might have belonged to one of the unfortunate victims.



6 November 1831 – The country from Capt Clark's is a tolerable level country, covered with open forest. In a few years a chief part of these plains will be clear of trees as they are fast falling to decay.



6 November 1831 – The tops of these lofty tiers are quite level and are covered with herbage. The scenery is very fine, and the whole of these hills to their summit is covered with herbage ... the chief part is thinly wooded and in many parts is clear of trees.



6 November 1831 – The scenery was truly romantic... this evening the conversation run upon the circumstances of the murder of the Brune native, Boomer Jack, which happened close by... The soldiers did not use him well and interfered with his wife ... he run into the river, they fired at him and he dived, they waited for him to come up and fired, when at last they shot him through the head.



8 November 1831 – The stock-keeper at Espie's Bashan Plains said the natives had attacked his place in August last and had burnt down one hut, and that they had shot one black ... The man the whites shot was placed in a tree opposite to where we then was.



7 November 1831 – It was agreed by the natives that I should first proceed to Lake Echo and the country beyond it as likely the natives would be found there.



8 November 1831 – on ascending a small eminence came abruptly to Lake Echo. Such an expanse of water I had not seen before in the colony as a lake. The whole surface is clear ... it is said to be thirty miles in circumference, the banks steep and well wooded all round.



10 November 1831 – The whole of this country has been frequently burnt by the natives and is fine hunting ground for them. There is excellent land and good feed for cattle: open plains of good land free from timber bounded by grassy hills. It is delightful country.



11 November 1831 – This open marsh is skirted by an open forest of stringy bark, gum and peppermint trees, and was of considerable extent... met with numerous native huts and remains of native villages. At one of these huts they had been eating emu...



17 November 1831 – Came to some fertile and grassy hills, and encamped for the night. This was a pleasant situation – hills clear of wood and covered with excellent verdure, and their green appearance rendered the scenery delightfully pleasant.



20 November 1831 – Encamped for the night a quarter of a mile below the fall of the Derwent. The evening was fine and my encampment on the bank of the Derwent near to the water. The beautiful stream glided swiftly along.



21 November 1831 – I had arrived near to the farm ... not wishing to disturb the settlement and which I should have done had we been seen, as it is more than probable the stock keeper would suppose the people wild natives.



27 November 1831 – Strong wind throughout this day... By a reference to the map judged that I was close upon Lake Echo... the trees along the verge of the forest in all parts had once been stripped of their bark by the natives for the purpose of constructing their huts.



2 December 1831 – Came to that part of the Ouse where the natives usually cross. Found the river to be so swollen by reason of the late rain that it was impossible to cross. Saw that I had to cross from one fragment of stone to another and with caution lest I might fall between the interstices.



4 December 1831 – I could not help remarking the goodness of Providence in the weather – it cleared up and was fine when I had to proceed. Set forward on my journey to the Great Lake.



4 December 1831 – On the borders of this marsh the mellifluent cider tree had planted itself in the foreground or front of the forest. I have met with them in the highest mountains.



6 December 1831 – Strong westerly wind with rain and snow. ... Halted for the night on the west side of the northernmost lake ... The country around those lakes consists of extensive plains, and the scenery is very picturesque.



6 December 1831 – On the surface of this lake swans and ducks were seen swimming along and shags was flying about over the waters.



7 December 1831 – I could no longer suppress my feelings at the careless and utter indifference manifested by these people, and rather too freely gave vent to to that just indignation which such ungrateful conduct is sure to call forth and which is so justly deserved, and reprehended them in severe terms for their shameful proceedings, to all of which reproof they appeared utterly indifferent, and what still added to my mortification was that savage grin of satisfaction which sat on their countenances.



8 December 1831 – The afternoon was serene and which added to the prospect. The natives hunted kangaroo and wanted to prolong their stay.



8 December 1831 – Forded the Lake River middle deep and crossed the tier by the pass and halted for the night.



10 December 1831 – Our way today was a succession of grassy hills at the foot of the tier. The grass consisted principally of that kind called Kangaroo and grew most luxuriantly.



12 December 1831 – Strong westerly winds with showers of rain, hail and snow on this day. At 7am set forward on my journey. The course which the natives was taking was northwest, keeping to the eastward of Quamby's Bluff.



12 December 1831 – Proceeded to ascend the western mountains. Myself and people now set forward on our journey, climbing up the mountain, which had now become so steep ... the mountain consisted of one mass of fragments of rocks, so that we had to step and hop from one to the another until we reached the summit.



15 December 1831 – Rain and snow this day, with strong wind. The snow fell in large flakes and the fog was so dense we could scarcely see across the lake at times.



17 December 1831 – came to large lagoon which I recognised as the Lagoon of Islands. It had a singular appearance; the whole face of the lagoon was studded with small islands covered with bush. It looked like a graveyard with the graves banked up.



17 December 1831 – Passed to the westward of Lagoon of Islands over some very stony hills covered with wood.



21 December 1831 – Passed the Clyde River at its source with the Crescent Lake. The stream at this part is small; crossed it by stepping from one rock to another. This river is called by the Lairmairrener natives Loegenermenanyer.



21 December 1831 – Proceeded and encamped for the night on the south side of Lake Sorell, about a mile from Kemp's hut.



23 December 1831 – Passed through a succession of exceedingly wet marshes and anon over stony hills and through some fine open forest of stringy bark trees of large growth.



24 December 1831 – Set off early this morning ... The road I have travelled is what the natives travel and is called by the woman of the Big River tribe Luketter Markomemenyer.



28 December 1831 – Proceeded over some high rocky and woody hills about which the kangaroo was browsing in great numbers..



30 December 1831 – Crossed over a high rocky tier of about five miles in extent and arrived at some extensive open plains [that] reach to the west side of the Great Lake.



31 December 1831 – When I first saw the natives I was not more than 100 yards from them. The country was thickly wooded and scrubby. I went up to the chiefs and shook hands with them. I then explained in the aborigines' dialect the purport of my visit amongst them.



Image: Benjamin Duterrau, *The Conciliation*,
courtesy Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery



31 December 1831 – The chiefs assigned as a reason for their outrages ... that they and their forefathers had been cruelly abused, that their country had been taken from them, their wives and daughters had been violated and taken away and that they had experienced a multitude of wrongs from a variety of sources. They were willing, however, to accept the offers of the government and they placed themselves under my protection accordingly.



4 January 1832 – Alexander Reid saw them dance a corroboree before John Vincent's inn.



14 January 1832 – On Saturday last the twenty-six Aborigines captured by Mr. Robinson, marched into town. The number of blacks amounted to forty, all of whom were arrayed in battle order, each male carrying three spears of twelve to fifteen feet long in the left hand, and only one in the right. As they continued advancing they shrieked their war song ... if report says true, the view with which they were induced to accompany Mr Robinson that they should seek redress from the Governor.



Sailed on the 17th inst. the *Tamar*, Capt. Bateman,
for Great Island, with stores, and 40 of the Aborigines.

The Courier, 21 January 1832



On their way to the Straits they suffered much from sea-sickness. The captain of the vessel assured me that it was pitiable to witness their distress. Their moaning was sad indeed. They appeared to feel themselves forsaken and helpless, and abandoned themselves to despair.

James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*