



**AIATSIS**  
Australian Institute of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

**Finding aid**

**BARKER\_J20**

**Sound recordings collected by  
Jimmie Barker, 1970**

Prepared March, 2021 by BS  
Last updated 16 September 2022

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## ACCESS

### Availability of copies

Listening copies are available. Contact the AIATSIS Audiovisual Access Unit by completing an [online enquiry form](#) or phone (02) 6261 4212 to arrange an appointment to listen to the recordings or to order copies.

### Restrictions on listening

The restricted elements of this collection may only be listened to by those who have obtained permission from Roy Barker. Refer to audition sheets below for more details.

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

**Date:** 1970

**Extent:** 1 audio tape reels (1 hrs. 5 min.) : analogue, mono ; 5 in. + field tape report sheets

### Production history

These recordings were made and collected in January 1970 by Jimmie Barker. They feature Mr Barker discussing his life story, as well as information on Muruwari language and cultural heritage.

The recording project was initiated by Janet Mathews, who obtained funding from the AIAS to provide recording equipment and consumables.

## RELATED MATERIAL

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For a complete listing of related material held by AIATSIS, consult our [online catalogue](#), Mura®. To conduct a search of available audio finding aids, please [click here](#).

## ARCHIVIST'S NOTE

This finding aid was compiled from information provided by Jimmie Barker, Roy Barker, Janet Mathews and audition sheets prepared by AIATSIS staff. Timing points may be slightly out depending on the technologies and procedures in place at the time the recordings were auditioned.

## ITEM LIST

<b>Archive number</b>	<b>Field recording number</b>	<b>Description</b>
008292	Field tape 1	'Letter tape' from Jimmie Barker to Janet Mathews recorded on 16 January 1970, featuring oral history and discussion with Jimmie Barker.

## ITEM DESCRIPTIONS

### 008292/Field tape 1

Performer/speaker(s):	Jimmie Barker
Personal subject(s):	Janet Mathews, Bert Barker, Charles Edmund Moorhouse, Jimmy Kerrigan, Frederick McCarthy, Jimmy Wellington, June Barker, Margaret Barker, Mary Barker, Hector Sediq, Jimmy Sediq, Jack O'Lantern, Merri Gill, Judy Trefry, Burt Gordon, Peter Flood, Tommy Wellington, Robin Campbell, Billy Campbell, Hector Kerrigan, Goodooga Billy, Billy Barker, Mrs Emily Horneville
Subject keywords:	Art, Art - Rock art, Archives and archiving – Sound, Language - Linguistics - Language elicitation, Weapons, Stories and motifs – Moon, Religions - Christianity – Missions, Death - Mortuary customs, Indigenous knowledge – Astronomy, Hunting, Politics and Government - National symbols and events - King plates, Race relations
Language/people:	English, D32: Muruwari, L25: Wangkumara
Places:	Brewarrina (N NSW SH55-06), Tibooburra (NW NSW SH54-07), Culgoa River N NSW SH55-06, Weilmoringle (N NSW SH55-06), Enngonia (N NSW SH55-06),
Recording quality:	Fair

Archive item number	Timing point	Description	Date	Place
BARKER_J20-008292	00:00:00	Jimmie Barker discusses Aboriginal art with reference to an article by Charles Edmund Moorhouse.	January 16 1970	Brewarrina, NSW
	00:05:47	Jimmie Barker discusses Aboriginal rock art and “sacred” drawings.		
	00:10:33	Jimmie Barker speaks about his collaboration with Janet Mathews on his autobiography and tries to clarify a “mystery” regarding tape recordings provided to AIAS.		
	00:18:15	Jimmie Barker speaks about his language elicitation of subjects (Hector Sediq and Jack O'Lantern) on behalf of Janet Mathews.		
	00:23:35	Jimmie Barker speaks about a set of miniature weapons he made for Janet Mathews' grandson.		
	00:26:42	Jimmie Barker speaks about the projected legacy of his Muruwari		

Archive item number	Timing point	Description	Date	Place
		language work.		
	00:32:46	Jimmie Barker speaks about the people from who he gained knowledge of traditional Muruwari language and cultural practices.		
	00:43:32	Jimmie Barker speaks about the social and legal factors that stripped Aboriginal people of their traditional names.		
	00:44:55	Jimmie Barker speaks about his relationship with Peter Flood and Peter's King Plate status.		
	00:47:28	Jimmie Barker speaks about discrimination and race relations in Australia.		
	00:51:17	Jimmie Barker speaks about his brother Billy.		
	00:57:31	Jimmie Barker speaks about aspects of his collaboration with Janet Mathews – the autobiography and Muruwari language work.		
	01:05:50	End of field tape 1 and end of BARKER_J20-008292.		

Timing point	Description
	<u>Jimmie Barker records a "letter tape" to Janet Mathews in response to a letter recently received from her.</u>
00:00:01	Archive announcement. Note this recording is described as a "letter tape to Janet Mathews."
00:00:12	Jimmie Barker begins with a greeting to Janet Mathews and an acknowledgement of receipt of her letter on Friday afternoon (dated January 3 <sup>rd</sup> ).
00:00:31	Jimmie Barker reports that he hasn't been to town for over a week and that there has been 3 inches of rainfall. Mention of Jimmie's son Bert travelling by boat to his work at the hospital.
00:01:20	Jimmie Barker responds to Janet's reports of her Christmas and reports on his own Christmas and his plan to make an audio recording of the event – the family were disinclined. Jimmie refers to a recording he'd made of the family Christmas three years prior.
00:02:31	Jimmie Barker speaks more broadly about the weather in Brewarrina – the heat, the sleeping conditions, the rain and the profusion of insects.
00:03:14	Jimmie Barker provides the date of recording – January 16 <sup>th</sup> (Sunday night) and

	explains that he decided to record rather than write, to better answer some of the questions Janet posed in her letter.
00:03:38	Jimmie Barker comments on an article he received from Janet Mathews <i>Some Aspects of Aboriginal Art</i> , (Charles Edmund Moorhouse, <i>Some aspects of Aboriginal art: a description in engineering terms</i> , 1971).
00:04:31	Jimmie Barker speaks about traditional Aboriginal approaches to illustration as an integrated element of storytelling, where certain elements and details were fully drawn whilst others were indicated by dots or (as in the case of human figures), verbally described. Mention of Jimmy Kerrigan.
00:05:47	Jimmie Barker speaks in praise of the article and the difficulty of knowing the truth in relation to “cave drawing and all that” (rock art). Jimmie mentions expressing this difficulty to Fred McCarthy in response to a letter he received from him. Jimmie reiterates that Aboriginal rock art is part of a narrative form incorporating spoken word storytelling. Therefore rock art represents an incomplete record of the original narrative.
00:07:24	Jimmie Barker suggests that “sacred” drawings were more ‘complete.’ Jimmie speaks about Jimmy Kerrigan, Hippai and Jimmie Wellington as sources of knowledge for traditional Aboriginal illustration. Discussion of Jimmie Barker’s relationship with Jimmy Kerrigan from the point of view of the transmission of cultural knowledge. Mention also of Kerrigan’s death in 1907. Jimmie Barker explains that it was forbidden in lore for younger (uninitiated) men to imitate or try and replicate the drawings of these older men.
00:09:23	Jimmie Barker again praises the Moorhouse article and thanks Janet Mathews for sending it.
00:09:41	Jimmie Barker reflects on the article and the pre-settlement environment that would have shaped and influenced traditional approaches to art and illustration.
00:10:33	Jimmie Barker states: “I guess you have quite a lot of work ... working out this story of mine.” It would seem that Jimmie is referring here to biographical work that Janet Mathews was undertaking, later published in 1977 as <i>The Two Worlds of Jimmie Barker</i> . Jimmie speaks about the difficulties associated with his part in this work. Making the recordings for <i>Days Night and Day</i> – the recorded form of his autobiography and consideration of grammar and the other aspects of the writing process.
00:11:19	Jimmie Barker expresses gratitude to Janet Mathews for the questions and corrections she has provided. Jimmie explains how they help to give structure and clarity to his writing process.
00:11:55	Jimmie Barker reads from Janet Mathews’ letter, a question regarding missing tapes dated June 1965. This discussion sheds light on the original handwritten manuscript of Jimmie’s autobiography – the date it was completed (1965), it’s lodgement at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS), and the recording process associated with its creation. Mention of an AIAS employee “Miss Harvey” in relation to this. Notably these recordings were made prior to 1968 – the date when Janet first began collaborating with Jimmie.
00:13:45	Jimmie Barker speaks about receiving the original audio tapes back from AIAS and lending tapes to a local man (unnamed) for a period of two days. The tapes were damaged and recorded over in places.
00:15:16	Jimmie Barker explains how the original manuscript of his autobiography was given to his daughter in law June Barker.
00:15:38	Jimmie Barker in summing up states that the discrepancy in the “one or two” of the tapes is a result of him trying to fill in the gaps in the story created when the tapes were leant. Jimmie explains that without being able to reference the original

	manuscript he would have worded these missing sections differently – hence the discrepancy.
00:15:57	Jimmie Barker explains that in “the original” recordings he didn’t ID the tapes as he came to later do. Reference to tape number 10 in relation to this.
00:16:37	Jimmie Barker refers again to how the tapes were damaged and determines not to lend material to this man unnamed again.
00:17:44	Jimmie Barker silently reads over the letter from Janet Mathews and then says “I’m glad Margaret got in touch with you” – A reference to Jimmie’s daughter. Mention of another of Jimmie’s daughters Mary. (Sorry if I’ve got this wrong Roy)
00:18:15	Jimmie Barker in response to another of Janet Mathews’ questions speaks about Hector Sediq and his Afghan heritage.
00:18:44	Short break in recording.
00:18:46	Tape cuts back in on Jimmie Barker speaking about “old” Jimmy Sediq (presumably Hector’s father), who was the son of an Afghan cameleer in the Tibooburra region.
00:19:02	Jimmie Barker speaks about Hector Sediq, his knowledge of local dialects, his musical interests and an invitation Jimmie extended to him to record some songs that was never taken up.
00:19:57	In answer to a question from Janet Mathews, Jimmie Barker speaks about the difficulty of getting Jack O’Lantern to record. Reference to a session Jimmie recorded with Jack O’Lantern in July 1971 (see collection item MATHEWS_J33-002171B /FT72B Side 1).
00:20:22	Jimmie Barker explains the circumstances around not being able to record Hector Sediq. It emerges that Jimmie was relying on Jack O’Lantern to bring Hector “over to record.” Jimmie expresses the frustration of the situation. Reference to payment made to Jack and/or Hector.
00:20:57	Jimmie Barker speaks about receiving a tape (presumably from Janet or the Institute) of Merri Gill eliciting Jack O’Lantern. Jimmie remarks “it’s not a very good recording somehow. I don’t think you could make anything out of it.” Jimmie questions Jack O’Lantern’s reliability as an informant – most likely due to his misunderstanding of English. Jimmie is dismissive of this work stating, “it’s a waste of time and it’s not right.”
00:21:50	Jimmie Barker speaks about his own elicitation of Jack O’Lantern, the inaccuracies and the need to correct him. Overall though Jimmie regards the session as successful.
00:22:52	Jimmie Barker pledges to “look up” Hector Sediq given his knowledge of the Wangkumara dialect and suggests that he would be a better subject than Jack O’Lantern, for Wangkumara language elicitation, as his knowledge of English is better.
00:23:35	Jimmie Barker again in response to Janet Mathews’ letter speaks about a set of weapons that he made for “Doug” (Janet’s grandson). Jimmie speaks about the unique aspect of this collection “they’re the only ones in Australia.” Jimmie explains that they are replicas of weapons he saw in his early days and promises to make “two or three” for the collection.
00:24:44	Jimmie Barker speaks about the little tomahawk from the collection explaining that he’d intended to give it to one of Bert’s children. Jimmie’s glad that they are safe with Janet Mathews as Bert’s children can’t be trusted to look after them. Mention of the wall mounting in which the weapons are displayed at Janet’s home.
00:25:34	Jimmie Barker again expresses his pleasure at Doug’s happiness in relation to this gift of weapons.
00:25:52	Jimmie Barker speaks about the naming of these weapons.
00:26:42	Jimmie Barker, again in response to a question posed in the letter from Janet

	Mathews, speaks about a book received from Judy Trefry. Jimmie refers to preliminary transcriptional work undertaken by Trefry in relation to his recordings based around single words.
00:27:18	Jimmie Barker speaks about how he has subsequently begun to “make sentences from these words.” Jimmie explains his vision of how others will be able to put his words together to make stories. Jimmie cites the <i>Gian</i> creation story as an example.
00:28:05	Jimmie Barker reiterates an underlying principle of the Muruwari language, where a multiplicity of meanings can be derived from one word depending on context or coupling with other words.
00:28:38	Jimmie Barker speaks about receiving a letter from Fred McCarthy enquiring about “cave drawings” and a Christmas card from the staff of the Institute.
00:29:08	Jimmie Barker addresses Janet Mathews’ question regarding the request to make “a film interview,” with him, on the occasion of her next visit. Jimmie expresses enthusiasm provided Janet is involved. Jimmie explains that he is shy in the presence of new people but muses at the thought of being “a personality.”
00:30:59	Jimmie Barker quotes from Janet Mathews’ letter and concurs that the location for this – somewhere he would feel at ease, was an important consideration.
00:31:46	Jimmie Barker addresses Janet Mathews’ request to visit the site where Brewarrina Mission Station once stood. Jimmie speaks about having considered suggesting this on Janet’s previous visit and agrees it would be good to do this on her next visit.
00:32:20	Jimmie Barker speaks about Bert Gordon the current lease holder of a 1000 (approx.) acre property where Brewarrina Mission Station was once situated. Jimmie explains that at that time the station included a 7000 acre property holding.
00:32:41	Archive end announcement.
00:32:46	Continuation of a discussion in which Jimmie Barker suggests that Janet Mathews spends “about half an hour” on the site of Brewarrina Mission station on her next visit.
00:33:24	Jimmie Barker responds to a question from Janet Mathews in regard to Jimmie’s autobiography and the apparent scarcity of friendships and associations between Jimmie and other Aboriginal people. In response Jimmie speaks about his close contact with the “old chaps” beginning in 1906. Jimmie lists Jimmie Kerrigan, Peter Flood, Hippai and Maria amongst this group. Mention of Hippai’s association with Milroy station. Mention of others who visited Jimmie, his mother Margaret and brother Billy at Mundiwa on the Culgoa.
00:35:12	Jimmie Barker explains that of all these people his closest association was with Jimmie Kerrigan.
00:35:18	Jimmie Barker speaks about Jimmy Wellington (known as “little Jimmy”) and points out that he was no relation to the Wellingtons, (Jimmy, Tommy and ?????) discussed elsewhere. Mention of Tommy Wellington’s death last August. Jimmie describes him as one of the last “full blooded Aboriginals” of the Muruwari tribe connected to the Culgoa (river). Jimmie describes this tribe or group as “the Culgoa Muruwaris” and defines the region as all the way from Weilmoringle down to the junction of the Culgoa River.
00:36:38	Jimmie Barker describes an Aboriginal family group of mixed heritage related to the Wellingtons. Mention of the recent death of a Mrs Whye (???) from this family group.
00:37:21	Jimmie Barker speaks about Robin Campbell as the only living “full blooded” member of the Muruwari tribe.
00:38:05	Jimmie Barker speaks fondly of little Jimmy Wellington, his knowledge of the Muruwari dialect and his death as a young man in 1914.
00:38:38	Jimmie Barker speaks about Billy Campbell, his mixed heritage and his knowledge of

	the Muruwari dialect.
00:38:52	Jimmie Barker speaks about Jimmie Kerrigan and Hippai (from 1908 at Milroy) as the primary sources of his knowledge of Muruwari language. Mention of Jimmie Kerrigan's death in 1907. Jimmie explains it was common practice for family groups to relocate following the death of a family member. Families including the Wellingtons, the Baileys and the Hamptons that were part of this dispersal. Mention of descendants of the Hamptons now living in Warren.
00:40:03	Jimmie Barker explains how following the death of Jimmie Kerrigan Hippai and Maria became his main source of traditional Muruwari knowledge.
00:40:19	Jimmie Barker speaks about learning the Muruwari from Peter Flood and about how certain aspects of his character were disagreeable to Jimmie as a child.
00:40:54	Jimmie Barker returns to the subject of his relationship with Jimmy Kerrigan and the transmission of traditional knowledge in the area of astronomy and hunting.
00:41:24	Jimmie Barker speaks about how Jimmy Kerrigan preferenced him over his brother Billy. Jimmie points out that Billy later became quite a competent Muruwari speaker.
00:41:41	Jimmie Barker speaks about another "old chap" who played a role in his induction into the traditional Muruwari ways. Jimmie is unable to recall his name.
00:42:05	Jimmie Barker speaks about Hector Kerrigan, Jimmy Kerrigan's son who was working on stations at the time – so often away.
00:42:22	Jimmie Barker speaks about the flow of people from Goodooga, his friendship with "Goodooga Billy" who visited Jimmie at Milroy station and "walked through the bush."
00:41:09	Jimmie Barker explains how Aboriginal people were often "nicknamed" according to their work assignments at that time. Mention of "Bangett Charlie" in the context of this discussion and "Ginghi Charlie" who worked at Ginghi station.
00:43:32	Jimmie Barker speaks more broadly about the naming of Aboriginal people according to "white" settler occupation of their traditional lands. In the case of Jimmy Kerrigan, the Kerrigan derives from the family who came to control large land holdings in Enngonia. Jimmie tries to recall Jimmy Kerrigan's traditional name and explains that it was forbidden in the post settler environment to use these names. Furthermore, he suggests that the widespread use of the term "uncle" was an adaptive reaction to the censure of traditional names. Jimmie provides the Muruwari word ( <i>Guthee</i> ????) for "uncle" and explains that he addressed Jimmy Kerrigan and Hippai this way. Mention also of the Muruwari word ( <i>Ngarboo</i> ????) for "aunty."
00:44:55	Jimmie Barker speaks about Peter Flood and his title as "father" ??????. Jimmie states that he was called "the father of lies" – Jimmie provides the Muruwari phrase (Midgin midgin ?????).
00:45:09	Jimmie Barker speaks about the roguish aspects of Peter Flood's personality, his pretence of literacy (English).
00:45:55	Jimmie Barker expresses mixed views with regard to Peter Flood's treatment of his own people describing him as "a no good in a way" in this respect. Jimmie states that whilst he had a good knowledge of lore, he didn't abide by it. Jimmie did respect his courage in "speaking up" and tells an anecdote about Peter requesting meat and when he was refused, threatening the Station manager that there'll be "a sheep missing." In response to this threat Peter Flood's dogs were shot by Police.
00:46:59	Jimmie Barker again reflects on the flow of Muruwari speakers in and out of the reserves where he was living. Jimmie recalls the Ngemba people that were part of this movement only spoke English.
00:47:28	Jimmie Barker addresses a question from Janet Mathews about how discrimination has affected him throughout his life. Jimmie responds emphatically that it hasn't and

	explains that he has welcomed those that have accepted him and dismissed those that had a discriminatory view of him due to his Aboriginal heritage.
00:48:27	Jimmie Barker speaks more generally about discrimination against Aboriginal people in Australia. Jimmie expresses the view that the situation is much improved and the best response, as an Aboriginal person is to “go ahead and prove what you can do.”
00:49:29	Jimmie Barker speaks about the distinction between “black” and “white” people and the desire of these two groups to live in different ways. Jimmie points to discrimination around opportunity for employment and remuneration as historically the worst form of discrimination against Aboriginal people. Jimmie suggests that opportunities and working conditions have improved markedly for Aboriginal people.
00:50:26	Jimmie Barker speaks about engineering as a field that is opening for Aboriginal people through their experience with farm machinery. Jimmie anticipates “this will take a while.”
00:50:51	Jimmie Barker speaks about a proportion of Aboriginal people who are reluctant to participate in the settler economy.
00:51:17	<i><b>RESTRICTED (Family Only)</b></i>
00:52:06	<i><b>RESTRICTED (Family Only)</b></i>
00:52:53	<i><b>RESTRICTED (Family Only)</b></i>
00:52:57	<i><b>RESTRICTED (Family Only)</b></i>
00:54:38	<i><b>RESTRICTED (Family Only)</b></i>
00:57:31	Jimmie Barker speaks about the effort involved in the recording process and reflects on the work involved for Janet with “transcription” and to “get it straightened out.”

00:58:02	Jimmie Barker speaks about the physical strain and the challenge of “grammar” associated with his recording work.
00:59:20	Jimmie Barker looks forward to Janet Mathews’ next visit suggesting they can go through recent recordings. Jimmie welcomes Janet’s questions stating again that they help him to structure his thoughts but also provide an opportunity to fill in gaps in first discussions of a subject or period of his life. This becomes a discussion of Jimmie’s conception of Janet’s working method and how he can contribute to her work on his autobiography.
01:02:22	Jimmie Barker reports to Janet Mathews that in the last month he has completed three reels of Muruwari elicitation, which he will send through. Jimmie pledges that he’ll keep endeavouring to arrange recording sessions with Jack O’Lantern and Hector Sediq.
01:03:06	Jimmie Barker speaks about the challenges he experienced eliciting Muruwari language from Mrs Emily Horneville, giving specific examples. This relates to an earlier discussion of the 'abbreviated' approach between Muruwari speakers – the practice of “dropping words.” Mention of Jack O’Lantern in relation to this discussion.
01:05:00	Jimmie Barker ‘signs off’ thanking Janet Mathews for her letter.
01:05:19	Archive end announcement.
01:05:25	Tape rolls on – no content.
01:05:50	End of 008292

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