

4. Boyd's Kanakas in New South Wales

The *Velocity* anchored off East Boyd in Twofold Bay on 9 April 1847. Oswald Brierly's diary recorded 65 male Kanakas on board, 'naked, wild and restless, their hair dressed in an extraordinary manner. They crowded around looking at us with the utmost surprise and feeling at the Texture of our clothes with their fingers. Everything appeared new and amazing to them and none spoke any English'. Brierly and Captain Nagle, both justices of the peace, advised Captain Kirsopp to keep the Kanakas on board while their indentures were recopied and signed to ensure their validity under the New South Wales Master and Servant Act. Brierly refused to endorse the indentures as he was an interested party, provoking a heated argument with William Moutry, Boyd Town's manager,¹

Next day the Kanakas, with the exception of three Lifuans being sent to Sydney, came ashore. On their first night in the Salt House they returned to the *Velocity* with the idea of going home. Bullockies had told them—through gestures—they were being fattened up for eating. Kirsopp somehow persuaded them that such fears were groundless and left them happily singing and dancing outside the Salt House. The bullockies returned to offer them liquor. 'This I very quickly put a stop to', Kirsopp noted, 'by telling them the immigrants had their war implements with them, and that should they be excited by spirits, I could not answer for the consequences'. He decided that the Kanakas should be sent to the interior as soon as possible.²

A drawing of the three Lifuans taken to Sydney on the *Velocity* featured on the cover of the *Heads of the People*, a short-lived illustrated weekly. An article described them as of 'a rich copper colour, quite unlike the dull, sickly yellow, concentrated bilious appearance of the New Zealanders. Their hair curls delightfully, and their faces are full of fun'. Etoisi was the brother of the king of Lifu; Panyella 'a conjurer, an office of great value among

¹ Entry, 9 April 1847, Brierly, Diary at Twofold Bay, A540, ML. Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer*, 129.

² Kirsopp to Boyd, 14 April 1847, *SMH*, 22 April 1847.

these superstitious people'; and Sabbathahoo a conjurer's servant. Ladies and gentlemen who inspected them were impressed by their athletic appearance, and were assured by Boyd that they were 'strong and active, good tempered and remarkably quick'.³

The Kanakas at Boyd Town set off for the interior on 14 April. Sixteen were bound for Mafra, a run in the Maneroo district managed by J. P. Robinson's brother George. They 'bolted' back to Boyd Town on the first day of the journey. One died early in May and was given a Christian burial at sundown. Attempts to put them to work in the Cultivation Paddock at Boyd Town and on the jetty were not successful. Some, 'crying to go back to Lefoo', made several trips to East Boyd to find a ship. Brierly gave them food and sent them back to Boyd Town. 'Stupid', he noted in his diary, 'and will not work'.

The Kanakas decided to set out for Sydney on their own. They stayed up all one night baking a hundredweight of flour into damper. At daybreak on 20 June, dressed in clothes recently given to them, they took the track north. Moutry consulted Brierly but they decided nothing could be done to stop them. Moutry wrote to George Robinson explaining that the Lifuans had run away and were making their way along the coast to Sydney. He asked Robinson to send their indentures back to Boyd Town so he could take them to Sydney on the steamer in case they arrived there.⁴

Early in July the Kanakas reached Broulee, a hamlet of four houses and twenty-two persons on the coast just north of the Moruya River eighty miles from Boyd Town. Mrs Pomfrey was astounded when fourteen—one appears to have died on the journey—tattered, nearly naked and wildly excited Lifuans emerged from the bush and asked for food and directions to Sydney. Flanagan, a justice of the peace, assumed responsibility for feeding them, and 'probably prevented them from having recourse to their disgusting

³ *Heads of the People*, 1, 8 May 1847. Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer*, 127 (illustration).

⁴ Entries 2, 28 May, 3, 20, 21 June 1847, Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay*, A450, ML. Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer*, 130.

propensity for Cannibalism'.⁵ What then transpired is not clear. One of Boyd's ships, or another coaster, may have taken them on board and brought them to Sydney.

The other 46 Kanakas began a 250-mile trek over the Australian Alps to Boyd's run on the saltbush plains of the Murrumbidgee squatting district. John Ross, son of the minister of the Pitt Street Congregational Church in Sydney, was in charge of the party. McAra, a cook by trade who was said to understand the languages and customs of the Pacific Islands, was paid £175 a year as an interpreter and overseer.⁶ On the second day of their journey a dray carrying food and other supplies slipped off the narrow track, killing two of the bullock team. During the next week travellers coming down from the Maneroo reported that the party was making slow progress along the steep, winding track up the thickly timbered Wanderer Range. After a week the Kanakas reached the top of the pass, about forty miles from Boyd Town.⁷ They then crossed the open grasslands of the Maneroo tableland, following the road through Nimmitry Bale (Nimmitabel) to Cooma Hut on Bridle Creek. Early in May Ross reported from Island Lake, a run ten miles west of Cooma Hut, that the Kanakas were happy, contented and getting plenty to eat.⁸ With winter closing in, they crossed the Australian Alps at the Kiandra Pass, turning south at Tumbarumba to follow the track to the upper reaches of the Murray River', and then walking along north bank to Albury, and reached Strathmerton late in June.⁹

⁵ *Weekly Dispatch*, 17 July 1847. Wells, *Geographical Dictionary*, 96.

⁶ Boyd to Daniels, 23 April 1847, *SMH*, 2 October 1847. *PPG*, 20 October 1847. *SMH*, 27 October 1847.

⁷ Entries 14, 15, 17, 21 April 1847, Brierly, *Diary at Twofold Bay*, A540 ML, Whittaker, *The Whittaker story*, I, pt 2, 28, MS 1182, ML.

⁸ *PPH*, 20 May 1847.

⁹ Surveyor General's office, map of the south eastern portion of New South Wales showing the position of Kiandra and the roads leading to it, September 1860, M3/81, 1860/1A, ML.

A neighbouring squatter later wrote that on Boyd's runs north of the Murray River that 'we could observe no sign of life or habitation; no track of any kind, excepting of the blacks; only an old deserted slab hut was visible on the river bank, with vast plains and open country covered with salt bush, extending far away south'.¹⁰ The Kanakas spent about three months on these runs. About 15 remained at Strathmerton, possibly to build stock yards while 32 were sent to Deniliquin (Sand Hills).¹¹

Boyd gave S. B. Daniels, the manager of Strathmerton, instructions on how to manage the Kanakas. For the present, they should remain together 'in bodies' to prevent them from pining or become dissatisfied, and to stop old hands from annoying them. Only those of good temper and conduct should be entrusted to shepherds. Overseers given charge of ten to twelve Kanakas were to receive an annual gratuity of £1 for each man for treating them kindly and teaching them the business of the station. Overseers who treated them well would have their numbers increased from time to time, thus earning increased allowances. Under no circumstances was a white servant to raise a hand against an Islander. Complaints against them were to be reported to Daniels to be dealt with at his discretion. Any man who ill-used them was to be discharged at once. They were to be fed well, given lots of potatoes of which they were exceedingly fond, but no tea or sugar. Similar instructions had been given to J. P. Robinson at Mafra. Each Kanaka shepherd was to be given a small flock of up to 300 sheep under the supervision of a competent overseer.¹²

The 32 Kanakas sent to Deniliquin were lodged in a slab and bark woolshed on the banks of the Edward River. John Phillips, who held an adjoining run, later wrote that they refused to work or move about except when they were together and armed with their

¹⁰ A Pioneer [John Phillips], *Reminiscences of Australian Early Life*, 61.

¹¹ Ross, 'Some of the Murray pioneers and their services to the state', 78.

¹² Boyd to Daniels, 23 April 1847, LC Robinson, LC, *SMH*, 2 October 1847. J. P. Robinson to George Robinson, 22 June 1847, Joseph Phelps Robinson, Letters received, Doc 1116, ML.

bows and arrows and clubs. They feared that, if they went alone and unarmed, they would be killed by Aborigines jealous of other 'black fellows' intruding on their country. Phillips described them as healthy looking, well proportioned, lighter in colour than the Australian natives, and wore their hair tied in a knot on the top of their heads. Cleanly in their habits, they continually dived and swam in the river.¹³

Correspondents at Albury and Seymour for the Sydney and Melbourne press sent in occasional reports on the Kanakas. 'The interesting savages have turned out to be unmanageable only working at pleasure', the *Argus* reported in mid-July, 'and in several instances have walked themselves off altogether'. Led by a chief, they kept together at all times, carrying their axes, clubs and bows. The Aborigines were said to have 'instinctive dread' of the Kanakas but two Kanakas were reported to have died in suspicious circumstances pointing to the Aborigines. The Kanakas refused to work, spending their days swimming in the river and wandering across the saltbush plains to other stations. Occasionally they marched the fifty miles to the nearest public house to enjoy a pipe and a pot. Nights were devoted to chanting and war dances. Their 'astounding appetites' made 'fearful appeals to the rations', resulting in several cases of obesity. All attempts by overseers to put them to work or restrain their wanderings were defeated by their passive resistance.¹⁴

The commissioner of Crown lands for the Murrumbidgee district wrote to the colonial secretary in mid-July that 40 'savages' recently arrived at Boyd's runs along the Edwards River were endangering the peace and safety of the local Aborigines and engendering bad feelings among white servants. The free men in the district resented the presence of labour from the South Seas and might 'incite the Aboriginal Natives to put them out of their way'. If they did, the police would not have enough men to prevent the unpleasant

¹³ A Pioneer [John Phillips], *Reminiscences of Australian Early Life*, 95-7.

¹⁴ *Argus*, 16 July, 28 September 1847. *PPG*, 16 October 1847.

consequences. The commissioner, stationed 160 miles away at Tumut, probably never sighted a Kanaka but appears to have used the ‘threat’ they posed to law and order to strengthen his case for more mounted police. The colonial secretary replied that no action should be taken until his fears actually transpired.¹⁵

After three months the Kanakas became tired of life on the saltbush plains and homesick for their tropical islands. Twenty-six set out for the coast to find a ship to take them home. Two had died since arriving at Deniliquin. A report reached Melbourne in December that the four who had stayed when the others left were ‘withering away fast, their bones rattle as they walk, and were long will be numbered with the other who have fallen victims to this accursed traffic in human flesh’.¹⁶

Twenty-six Kanakas reached Albury on the evening of 3 October after a 140-mile march along the banks of the Murray River. They had begged for food at stations along the way. On one occasion feasted on the carcass of a pig found on the side of the track. McAra and another overseer had followed them on horses, pleading with them to return, but did not attempt to impede their progress. The Kanakas camped for the night outside the Albury lockup. Next morning, splitting into two parties, they went round the twelve houses in the town to beg for food. They came away laden with joints of beef or mutton, much to the envy of Aborigines camped near the town. Albury’s 65 residents were excited by the arrival of the Kanakas, the bench informed the colonial secretary, but they did not welcome the prospect of feeding them for any time. McAra applied to the Albury bench for a warrant for their arrest but the magistrates refused. An amendment to the Master and Servant Act effective from 17 July 1847 voided contracts of service ‘with any native or uncivilized tribe inhabiting any Island or Country in the Pacific Ocean or elsewhere’. The

¹⁵ Bingham to colonial secretary, 18 July 1847; minute, 31 July 1847, 47/5895 in 4/2759, SARNSW.

¹⁶ PPP, 26 October 1847. *Argus*, 7 December 1847.

bench wrote to the colonial secretary asking if the Kanakas should be given government relief. The letter was passed to the attorney general. He appears to have advised that the police just 'keep an eye' on the Kanakas as they made their way to Melbourne or Sydney.¹⁷

After four days rest at Albury, the Kanakas resumed their journey, covering the 400 miles to Sydney in a month at an average of seventeen miles a day. Reports of their progress reached Sydney from Lower Murrumbidgee (Gundagai), Yass, Goulburn and Berrima. McAra and another overseer followed them all the way, asking the bench in each town to issue warrants for their arrest. On every occasion the benches refused. McAra was also unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade the Kanakas to go to Boyd Town rather than Sydney. They pressed on with great determination, chanting 'Missa Boyd! Missa Boyd!' and 'Sinna' to all who tried to speak to them along the road. They were dressed in tattered green or red shirts made of coarse wool. A few wore native cinctures around their loins but otherwise were naked from the waist down. Most carried clubs and axes, and one or two appear to have come into possession of firearms.

The Kanakas begged for food at stations along the road. Few refused them. Apart from their wild and alarming appearance, it was commonly assumed that unrequited hunger would encourage them to revert to cannibalism. Yet the Kanakas made no threats and not a single complaint was recorded against them for stealing or violence. Settlers who gave generously, such as Captain Edenborough at Goulburn, did so for humanitarian motives rather than fear of being killed and eaten. Those who saw the Kanakas on the road were moved by the miserable plight of these strong, intelligent-looking savages now reduced to filthy, half-naked, shivering vagrants begging for food. Some were so weak from the cold, fatigue and illness when they reached Goulburn they could scarcely walk. Their fortunes

¹⁷ [NSW] 11 Vic no 9, s 15. Lockhart to colonial secretary, 5 October 1847, 47/8172 in register 2415, SARNSW. *PPP*, 20 October 1847. *PPG*, 20 October 1847. *SMH*, 21 October 1847. *SMH*, 21 October 1847. *Argus*, 22 October 1847. *PPH*, 28 October 1847.

improved between Goulburn and Berrima after they fell in with bullock teams bringing wool to Sydney. Those unable to walk, together with their weapons and food, were put on the drays for the remainder of the journey. The Kanakas marched through Sydney to Boyd's office on Church Hill to on 30 October.¹⁸

Fifteen Kanakas reached Melbourne on 29 October. No details of their journey have survived but they probably came from Strathmerton, taking the road through Seymour. A crowd gathered when they reached Armand's Corner. Children swarmed over them, pinching legs and pulling ears and hair, and 'seemed to be ecstatic in their exclamations of surprise, e&, as if Wombell's menagerie had suddenly "opened" for their especial delight'. The police, instructed by the government to keep an eye on them, stood by without interfering. Eventually some sailors took them to the Retreat Inn at Pentridge to be sheltered for the night. They chopped wood for their bed and board. Next morning, Boyd's Melbourne agent, Fennell, 'claimed' them and put them on the steamer *Juno*.¹⁹ They were either landed at Boyd Town or brought to Sydney to join the others.

The *Portenia* reached Sydney on 24 September, the press reported, with 65 men and four women from 'Lefoo, Wear, Rotumah and De Peystris'. Lancaster gave their origins as Tana (18), Anatam (10), Rotch's Island (17) and Lifu (25). The Sydney press described them as 'a strong, healthy of men', copper-coloured with fine flaxen hair, who resembled the Chinese. Fourteen stayed on board the *Portenia* to be trained as deck hands for a trading a trading voyage to China at the end of October. The other 56 were taken to Boyd's headquarters at Church Hill in Sydney to be lodged in a warehouse until arrangements could be made for their employment. The four Lifuan women and two boys remained at Church Hill to be trained as domestic servants. Ten Rotch Islander's and five Lifuans were to be sent to Boyd Town or Port Phillip and then overland to Boyd's runs in

¹⁸ *SMH*, 22, 33, 27, 30 October, 1 November 1847. Attorney general to colonial secretary, 25 November 1847, CO 201/386, 269.

¹⁹ *PPP*, 26 October, 1 November 1847. *PPH*, 28 October 1847. *Argus*, 2 November 1847.

the Murrumbidgee squatting district but engine trouble and a labour dispute delayed their departure on the *Juno*. The remaining 35 men, 18 from Tana, 10 from Aneityum and seven from Rotch's Island, were sent to Parramatta by ferry and by then dray to Boyd's farm 23 miles west of Sydney.²⁰

The Kanakas reached Bungarrabee early on Sunday 9 October. The following Tuesday evening, 'Parramatta was thrown into considerable alarm and excitement' when 18 of 'Mr Boyd's blackfellows, with red hair' marched down the main street to the ferry wharf. Naked except for brief cinctures and carrying their native clubs, they emitted 'a most hideous shrieking' accompanied by 'violence of gesture'. The police kept a close watch, expecting that 'outrage of a most serious nature would be committed', but were given no cause to intervene. Captain Morris refused to allow the Kanakas to board the ferry *Emu* but he did give them a tarpaulin, under which they were sheltered by the portico of the military barracks. Next morning they set off for Sydney on foot. They had reached Fivedock when Captain Morris, touched by the miserable shrieks of 'Missa Boyd!' from the bank of the Parramatta River, stopped the *Emu* and took them on board.

The Kanakas remaining at Bungarrabee followed a few days later. Ten men from Aneityum passed through Parramatta on Thursday, closely followed by the police. They were guided to Boyd's boiling down works at Fivedock and later taken to Sydney. Seven Rotch's Island Kanakas reached Parramatta on Friday morning, just in time to catch the eleven o'clock ferry to Sydney. The *Port Phillip Herald* claimed that stockmen at Bungarrabee had assaulted the Kanakas 'in the most savage manner', an allegation not corroborated by any other source. Kirsopp blamed 'White People' for deliberately inciting discontent among them. Lancaster said they left Bungarrabee because they wanted to go

²⁰ *SMH*, 25 September, 11, 14, 16 October 1847. *Australian*, 28 September 1847, *PPP*, 1 October 1847. *Gleaner*, 2 October 1847. Lancaster's statement, 14, 15 October 1847, CO 201/386, 275.

home. All the refugees from Bungarrabee were taken to Church Hill.²¹

Boyd had announced in May that he would send 50 Kanakas to Moreton Bay, probably to find out if the northern squatters were willing to take some of those languishing in Sydney off his hands. Five arrived in Brisbane in mid-November 1847, leaving the ship with great reluctance. If any employers at Moreton Bay, after reading the press reports of the exodus of Kanakas from the Murrumbidgee and Bungarrabee, were still enthusiastic about labour from the Pacific Islands, their hopes were soon dashed. Boyd's agent apparently offered them to any employer willing to pay the cost of their passage to the colony. Three described as 'copper-coloured' were given tobacco and sugar as an inducement to go with their new 'owner' to his run. Two 'red men' stayed with Boyd's agent, smoking and drinking grog but refusing to work. The Brisbane press concluded that Island labour had been thoroughly condemned.²²

The *Velocity* reached Sydney on 19 October with 54 men and three women. Most were probably from Aneityum and Lifu, with a few from Tana and Uvea. Twenty males were transferred to the *Juno* off Watson's Bay to be taken to Boyd Town to help build a jetty. Fourteen were put to work on Boyd's wharf at Neutral Bay.²³ However, by early November most of the Kanakas were living in idleness at Sydney or Boyd Town. Exempt from the Master and Servant Act, they could not be compelled to work by Boyd or anyone else. Boyd refused to repatriate them but did not disown or neglect them. He gave them shelter, bedding, cooking utensils and food at their Church Hill and Neutral Bay camps. Most drifted in and out of the camps, working intermittently in warehouses and on

²¹ *SMH*, 11, 14, 16 October 1847. *PPH*, 28 October 1847. Lancaster's statement, 14, 15 October 1847; Kirsopp's statement, 20 October 1847; CO 201/386, 275; 282.

²² *MBC*, 15, 22 May, 23, 30 October, 20 November 1847. *SC*, 14 December 1847.

²³ *Australian*, 19, 22 October 1847. *SMH*, 20 October 1847, 25 January 1848. *PPP*, 28 October 1847. *SGSGTL*, 29 January 18, 29 January 1848.

wharves. Boyd conceded that ‘they work and play as best suits their humour’ but continued to hope that in time they might acquire the habit of steady labour.

A few Kanakas found jobs as domestic servants in Sydney homes. By the end of October, 14 were chopping wood, carrying water and digging gardens. Some found life in the colony congenial and became established in their new positions. One lady reported that her Kanaka servant was giving ‘the utmost satisfaction’ and was ‘learning to read with all the promise of a European subject’. Other Kanakas were described as less diligent and scholarly, often leaving their new jobs after a few days to search for a ship to take them home. Lifuan women may not have been ideal servants given their appearance and manners, the press reported, but they were not living in circumstances favourable to the cultivation of female charms. Boyd did not object to the Kanakas going into service as it kept them off the streets and he did not have to feed them.²⁴

Small bands of Kanakas wandered the streets of Sydney, doing odd jobs for food, a plug of tobacco or a tot of grog, but mostly they cadged money at houses, shops and public houses. Residents were often disconcerted when a small band of almost naked ‘savages’ wandered in through an open door and demanded food in their few words of broken English. Eight Kanakas entered a shop at Rose Bay run by the wife of constable Lawless and helped themselves to bread and other food on the counter. Lawless set out in pursuit, arrested the leader and lodged him in the watch house. The others followed loyally and camped outside waiting for their leader to be released. When no charges were laid, the police magistrate discharged them into the care of Captain Lancaster.²⁵

Complaints were made of Kanakas ‘prowling about Sydney half naked . . . objects of terror

²⁴ *Australian*, 29 October 1847, 26 April, 5 May 1848. Boyd, *SMH*, 6 November 1847. ‘W—’, *SMH*, 18 December 1847.

²⁵ *Atlas*, 18 September 1847. *SC*, 16, 19 October 1847. *SMH*, 18 October 1847. *Bell’s Life in Sydney*, 20 November 1847.

and disgust to very respectable female'.²⁶ Some were accused of acting indecently in public but it seems that just two or three had been seen bathing naked.²⁷

Prowess at swimming—a rare accomplishment among white colonists at this time—earned the Kanakas occasional but unpredictable rewards. Kanakas who saved six 'fancy men' from drowning when the boat bringing them back from a prize fight capsized were given sevenpence ha'penny. On another occasion, they received 10 shillings for rescuing 12 people from drowning with workmen on Boyd's wharf, not those saved, raising the money. Recovering the bodies of persons drowned could also be lucrative. The government gave some Kanakas five shillings to recover the body of a woman drowned in the harbour. When they dived for the body of a boatman drowned off Balmain, a local resident suggested they be presented with a brass plate, as was sometimes done with the Aborigines, to show them that merit does not go unrewarded.

The Kanakas soon grasped the monetary value placed on good deeds the civilised world. After carrying home a drunk injured in a fall, they did not wait for a government payment or private subscription but pressed for an immediate reward. A relative of the injured drunk took offence and attacked them. Several people, including a publican, were injured before the police and Boyd's overseers arrived to restore the peace. No charges were preferred against the Kanakas as they had been provoked and acted in self-defence.²⁸

Some newspapers reported that the Kanakas an 'instinctive dread' of the Aborigines, keeping a respectful distance and refusing to engage in 'mortal combat'. Blacks were said

²⁶ SC, 2 May 1848.

²⁷ Robinson, LC, *SMH*, 2 October 1847.

²⁸ *Australian*, 28 January, 25 February 1848. *SMH*, 24 February 1848. Mark Boyd, *The Times*, 23 August 1848.

to have killed a few Islanders in the Murrumbidgee district and two at Moreton Bay.²⁹ Others reported that the Kanakas expressed their contempt for Aborigines who ‘exhibited the most ludicrous at the sight of them’, and avoided them in the interior and when they reached in Melbourne. A Kanaka chief invited Aborigines to join him in mortal combat which they declined.³⁰ The good folks of Sydney were treated to a number of clashes between Aborigines and Kanakas. A ‘ludicrously painted’ New Hebridean fought an Aborigine in George Street. Lifuans did battle with Aborigines on Church Hill.³¹ A few days before Christmas a crowd of ‘nobs’ and ‘snobs’ watched a ‘grand pugilistic’ encounter between a ‘savage’ and a ‘cannibal’ opposite the General Washington Hotel in George Street. The crowd seemed

highly delighted in the dust kicked up by the two sable belligerents, and every attention was paid to them when knocked down by each other, or by the crowd, to bring them to ‘scratch’ again. One, apparently, carrying the heaviest metal, was a New Hebridean, the other an aboriginal of this country. The former was ludicrously painted, something after the fashion of a clown, but did not appear quite so fascinating; the other appeared in his national colour. The number of rounds could not be well reckoned, but if they had carried on the contest till now, we do not think they would have been disturbed by any of the detective_force.³²

²⁹ *Argus*, 28 September 1847. *PPG*, 20 October 1847. *MBC*, 23 October 1837. [Phillips], *Reminiscences of Australian Early Life*, 95-7.

³⁰ *PPP*, 1 November 1847.

³¹ *Australian*, 21 December 1847. Fairfax, ‘Some recollections of old Sydney’, 8.

³² *SC*, 21 December 1847.

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* Yass correspondent reported that the 'New Hebridean savages' were 'not a bit better looking race than our own savages'. The correspondent at Albury described the Murray River blacks as superior 'in form, mien and activity' to those of the cannibal islands but little different in 'mental capacity'.³³ The *Australian* cautioned that savages should not be brought from the New Hebrides when our infant community was struggling with our own Aboriginal savages.³⁴

Repatriation of the Kanakas began November 1847 and proceeded intermittently until March 1849. The overriding concern of the Kanakas from the moment they landed in New South Wales was to find a ship to take them home. They spent much of their time roaming the Sydney waterfront in the hope of finding a ship bound for the South Seas. The 15 fifteen Lifuans 'deckhands' on the *Portenia* when it sailed for Sydney on 31 October on a trading voyage to China were to be landed on Lifu on the outward or return but whether this happened is not known. As the *Portenia* sailed down the harbour, a number of Kanakas jumped off Boyd's wharf at Neutral Bay and swam out to her. When Captain Lancaster would not allow them to come on board, they swam back, a total distance of two miles. One Kanaka drowned and his body was washed ashore at Fort Macquarie the following day.³⁵

A few Kanakas signed on as deckhands on sandalwood traders on the understanding that they would eventually be landed on their islands. By the end of 1847 only eight Kanakas had found passages on trading ships sailing from Sydney: one on the *Alfred* bound for Aneityum; one on the *Sarah* for Lifu or Eromanga; two on the *Henry* for New

³³ *SMH*, 21, 27 October 1847.

³⁴ *Australian*, 2 November 1847.

³⁵ *SMH*, 1 November 1847, *SGSGTL*, 6 November 1847.

Caledonia; and four on the *Castlereagh* for the 'South Seas'.³⁶ The *Castlereagh* was wrecked off Lifu in a storm on 13 February 1848 but without loss of life. The Kanakas on board apparently lived with the natives for a month before being rescued by the *Eleanor*.³⁷

Boyd sent 12 Kanakas to Boyd Town on the *Velocity* in January 1848.³⁸ Over the next six months eight ships left Sydney with 77 Kanakas: two on the *Avenger*, three on the *Marian Watson*, four each on the *William*, the *Terror*, and the *Lucy Ann*.³⁹ The *Lynher* commanded by Captain Strachan sailed from Sydney on 18 April for the New Hebrides with Cannibal Charley listed as the 'trading master', and 18 'passengers', most of them apparently Kanakas.⁴⁰ Two days later the *Statesman* sailed for Lifu with 12 Kanakas. Towns instructed Captain Dewar to 'land as many of the natives as belong there, and wish to go ashore'. Towns also asked Dewar to make arrangements with the chiefs to have the Lifuans cut and clean sandalwood while the *Statesman* searched the nearby islands for the *Elizabeth* and *Avon*.⁴¹

The *Societies de L'Oeanie* purchased the *Arche d' Alliance* in 1846 to bring Marist Fathers to establish a mission on Uvea in the Loyalty Islands.⁴² When the ship docked at Sydney on 20 April 1848, Kanakas in a 'miserable, ragged condition' came on board each day and begged to be taken home. Boyd accused Captain Marceau of luring them on board 'with the aid of a plentiful supply of cocoa-nuts', and of inciting them to steal

³⁶ *SMH*, 9, 20 November, 2, 20, 27 December 1847. *SGSGTL*, 13 November, 20 November, 4, 27 December 1847.

³⁷ *SGSGTL*, 1 April 1848.

³⁸ *SMH*, 25 January 1848. *Australian*, 28 January 1848. *SGSGTL*, 29 January 1848.

³⁹ *SMH*, 3, 6 March, 5 May 1848. *SGSGTL*, 4 March, 6 May 1848. *Australian*, 12 May 1848.

⁴⁰ *SMH*, 19 April 1848. *SGSGTL*, 22 April 1848. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 369. Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, Appendix 1.

⁴¹ Towns to Dewar, 19 April 1848, TP 307/114, 116. *SMH*, 21 April 1848. *SGSGTL*, 22 April 1848.

⁴² Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians*, 12-14. Howe, *The Loyalty Islands*, 12.

bedding, cooking utensils and clothes from his stores. When Marceau finally agreed to take them home, Boyd applied to the Water Police Magistrate to have them detained. Boyd also asked the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney to intervene but he and the magistrate both refused. The *Arche d'Alliance* sailed on 2 May 1848 with 30 Kanakas. Boyd claimed that they had abandoned the comforts earned through hard work when their chiefs, who never worked, forced them to return to an 'abject state of slavery' on their native islands.⁴³ Hostile natives on the southern end of Uvea forced the Marist Fathers to abandon their plans for a mission on Uvea.⁴⁴

The *Lynher* left Sydney on 12 November 1848 bound for Newcastle and Launceston with Cannibal Charlie and two natives of the South Seas on board who were probably deckhands and not Boyd's Kanakas. Captain Strachan later told Captain Erskine that he had brought 36 Kanakas back to Uvea early in 1849. No Kanakas were listed as passengers when the *Lynher* departed Sydney in March but they could have been embarked at Boyd Town on the outward voyage.⁴⁵

Of the 192 Kanakas landed in New South Wales during 1847, five are known to have died in the colony. About two-thirds had left by the end of 1849. How many actually returned to their native islands is uncertain. The missionaries Turner and Nibet, after visiting the New Hebrides on the *John Williams* in July 1848, wrote in the *Samoan Reporter* that some of the men from Tana had come home but many were still absent and would never return. The wives of men from Aneityum who had died or for other reasons did not return would be strangled according to the local 'heathen custom'.⁴⁶ Captain

⁴³ *SMH*, 3 May 1848. *Australian*, 28 April, 5 May 1848. *SGSGTL*, 22 April 1848. *SC*, 2 May 1848. Murphy (agent for the *Arche d'Alliance*), *SMH*, 3 May 1848. 'A Friend of Captain Marceau's', *AC*, 2 May 1848.

⁴⁴ Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 342.

⁴⁵ *SGSGTL*, 3 February, 10 March 1949.

⁴⁶ *Samoan Reporter*, September 1848.

Erskine spoke with men who had come back from their 'forced trip' to New South Wales when HMS *Havannah* called at Lifu in 1850. He recorded that recollections of their treatment in the country of the English strangers had left them with no desire to return. 'Too much work at Sydney', one explained, 'too little to eat'. Erskine reported that one was a domestic servant at Balmain early in the 1850s.⁴⁷ John Inglis, a passenger on HMS *Havannah*, spoke to men on Aneityum who had walked from Boyd's run to Melbourne and then been put on a ship for Sydney.⁴⁸

Little is known about the handful of Kanakas who stayed in Sydney. Some worked as labourers or domestic servants, and may have made occasional trips back to their islands as deckhands on trading ships. Neither Boyd nor the government asked sandalwood traders or missionaries to repatriate any of the Kanakas. Towns directed his captains to take Kanakas back to their islands, apparently surmising that returning these long-lost men back to their families would foster goodwill among the chiefs, thereby advancing his trading interests. Captain Marceau probably hoped that repatriating the Kanakas might pave the way for the Jesuits to establish a mission in the Loyalty Islands but they did not succeed in this endeavour for another decade.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 366-7.

⁴⁸ Inglis, *In the New Hebrides*, 199.

⁴⁹ *SMH*, 21 April, 1848. *SC*, 22 April 1848. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 342-3. Howe, *Loyalty Islands*, 46-52.