

# The people in that picture



**W**hat is the real story behind this photograph? Taken on January 26, 1938, this famous 'still' captured a proud moment in Aboriginal history, the Day of Mourning protest. Held in defiance of the national sesquicentenary celebrations, the Day of Mourning is still a significant civil rights event in Australia.

In 1998, the site where the photograph was taken in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, was heritage listed and its register, based on its historical association with a unique event, made history again by becoming the first building to be recognised as an Aboriginal site.

Despite these achievements and recent popular growth of Aboriginal historical study, the woman to the right is often referred to as 'unknown, presumed to be Jack Patten's wife'. The City of Sydney's official website wrongly identifies the women as 'Helen Grosvenor and Selina Patten'. The children remain nameless.

There is no mistaking the men in the famous photograph. William Ferguson, Jack Kinchela and Jack Patten were all active campaigners and their names are synonymous with the early Aboriginal rights movement. But the women and children in this picture, who were to become instrumental in some of the most strident gains in Aboriginal affairs, have never been correctly identified.

Lately, this picture has become more widely known and it can be found reprinted as a potent symbol of Aboriginal resistance in the publications of many government bureaucracies, education institutions, newspapers, libraries and journals.

This now-famous photograph was in our family

photo album when I was growing up, next to mine and my brother's school class portraits and snaps of our favourite pets. The people in it played an enormous influence on my life and it's time to put their names on the public record.

They are (from left to right) William Ferguson, Jack Kinchela, Isaac Ingram, Dons Williams (Aunty Dorry), Esther Ingram (Aunty Esther), Arthur Williams jr (Uncle Nino), Phillip Ingram (Uncle Chocko), Louisa Agnes Ingram OAM (Nan) with daughter Olive Ingram (Aunty Ollie) and Jack Patten. Only the dark-haired person in the background to the right is unknown to me.

Of the women and children, only two are alive today. They are my aunts, Esther Carroll, 68, and Ollie Campbell, 66.

So what is the real story behind this photograph?

My Aunt Sylvia Scott, eldest child of the Ingram family, remembers January 26, 1938, as a typically hot summer day in Sydney.

"Mum needed my help with the litter kids, my younger brothers and sisters," recalls Sylvia, now 75. "But we were staying at La Perouse and I really wanted (Granny Lizzie to take me) to swim and play at the beach."

Which is how Sylvia ended up becoming the only Ingram child absent from the photo.

Aunty Esther recalls my grandfather, Lochio Ingram, coming to Sydney with the family in late 1937 to help his brother, Sousio, run his new business. Uncle Souse (who would later become better known as Evonne Goolagong's grandfather) had lost his leg in an accident and bought a store in Redfern with the settlement proceeds.

1938 was not a fashionable year to protest the treatment of Aboriginal

people. In the era of the Aborigines Protection Board, rallying a few hundred Aborigines and their supporters in downtown Sydney risked attracting the wrong kind of attention.

The Ingram family's presence on that day stems back to Cummeragunja, on the NSW/Victorian border, the home of Jack Patten and the place where my grandfather was born. The Cummeragunja mob were no strangers to protesting harsh conditions for Aboriginal people.

Grandfather organised the Irapaltin muster at the Day of Mourning conference, Uncle Souse hobbled around urging donations.

"Aunty Dorry (the lady to the left of the photograph) was with us - she was never far from her brothers," Esther says.

Aunty Dorry's mother, Melinda, died when Dorry was a baby and she was raised by her grandmother (my great-grandmother), Granny Lizzie.

She and Nan could usually be found together with the children and, with Sylvia at the beach, it was no surprise for her to be among them all at the Day of

Mourning protest.

The story behind this photograph has been told to me by the people who were there, people who battled against the harsh reality of their daily lives to effect extraordinary change in Australia.

For the Ingrams and our extended families, it was enough to know who the people in the photograph really are. But the names of the women and children in this historic image have been disputed or are absent, their involvement in that inspiring moment concealed.

The ultimate irony is that the Day of Mourning was intended for Australia to rethink its history.

But in the clamour to fill the gaps in our Indigenous history, it seems there are still omissions.

As the chubby-faced little girl in the photograph who has waited over six decades for her name to be included in the records, my aunt Esther hopes this new age of information technology can try to get it right the first time.

**SUZANNE INGRAM**  
Sydney, NSW



Esther Carroll and Ollie Campbell with a copy of the famous photograph.