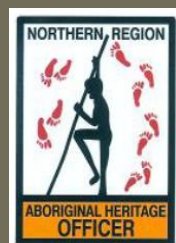


ABORIGINAL HERITAGE AND HISTORY WITHIN THE KU-RING-GAI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA



An extract of the Ku-ring-gai Council Aboriginal Site Management Report 2015, prepared for Council by the Aboriginal Heritage Office.

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“Today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation’s history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia’s history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.”

An extract from Kevin Rudd’s ‘Apology’ 13 February 2008

History

Firstly, when discussing any historical information regarding the Sydney area it is important to be mindful of the grave impact that European settlement had on the Aboriginal people living here. Within a very short period estimates of up to 80-90% of Sydney's Aboriginal population perished. The causes for this were mainly the smallpox epidemic and subsequent diseases, war and reprisals, and dispossession of land and access to resources. It would be hard to imagine the full extent of the devastating impact such a rapid loss of life would have on culture. With language, stories and an entire way of life based on being handed down orally, this extremely rapid loss within the Aboriginal community at that time has left the northern Sydney area somewhat sparse in terms of local cultural knowledge. This vacuum has not only left us unable to answer many of the question pertaining to the area's Aboriginal history, but with an increasing demand for detailed information sometimes erroneous information emerges that is not subject to adequate scrutiny and becomes a new and incorrect history. The Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) would rather see the lack of information told as the reliable history rather than lean towards inference or invention, which tends to make a confused record more confusing.

Aboriginal history has been handed down in ways of stories, dances, myths and legends. The dreaming is history. A history of how the world, which was featureless was transformed into mountains, hills, valleys and waterways. The dreaming tells about how the stars were formed and how the sun came to be. Unfortunately the continuous link of oral history has been broken in many places.

Since the European invasion of Australia in 1788, Aboriginal people have been oppressed into a world unnatural to their prior existence, which had continued for thousands of years. First came the influx of the strangers who carried with them diseases, which decimated the immediate population of the Sydney tribes. It is estimated that over 750,000 Aboriginal people inhabited the island continent in 1788. The colonists were led to believe that the land was *terra nullius* ('no one's land'), as declared by Lt James Cook in 1770 during his voyage around the coast of Australia.

“... they were so ignorant they thought there was only one race on the earth and that was the white race. So when Captain Cook first came, when Lieutenant James Cook first set foot on Wangal land over at Kundul which is now called Kurnell, he said oh lets put a flag up somewhere, because these people are illiterate, they've got no fences. They didn't understand that we didn't need fences ... that we stayed here for six to eight weeks, then moved somewhere else where there was plenty of tucker and bush medicine and we kept moving and then come back in twelve months time when the food was all refreshed ... the late Aunty Beryl Timbery Beller”

Currie, 2008.

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the Island continent was owned by over 400 different nations at the time of this claim by Cook. When the first fleet arrived in Sydney Cove it is said that Captain Philip was astounded with the theory of Cook's *terra nullius* and saying

"Sailing up into Sydney Cove we could see natives lining the shore shaking spears and yelling".

The Occupants of the Land

For thousands of years the Ku-ring-gai area was home to the Durrumurragali people. Aboriginal people fished and hunted in the waters and hinterlands of the area, and all clans harvested food from their surrounding bush. Self-sufficient and with strong connections to neighbouring clans, they had no need to travel far from their lands, since the resources about them were so abundant, and trade with other tribal groups was well established. Moving throughout their country in accordance with the seasons, they spent perhaps only 4-5 hours per day working to ensure their survival. With such a large amount of leisure time available, they developed a rich and complex ritual life through their language, customs, spirituality, and law at the very heart of which was their continued connection to land.

European Discovery and Arrival

The arrival of Lt James Cook in 1770 marked the beginning of the end for this ancient way of life. Cook's voyage of exploration had sailed under instructions to take possession of the Southern Continent if it was uninhabited, or with the consent of the natives if it was occupied. Either way, it was to be taken. Upon his arrival, Lt Cook declared the land he called New South Wales to be the property of Britain's King George III, and ignored the inconvenient fact that the land was already well populated. His failure to even attempt to gain the consent of the natives began the legal fiction that Australia was a wasteland and unoccupied.

Cook was followed soon enough by the arrival of the First Fleet in January of 1788 under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, whose mission was to establish a penal colony and take control of *Terra australis* for settlement.

"We found the natives tolerably numerous as we advanced up the river, and even at the harbour's mouth we had reason to conclude the country more populous than Mr Cook thought it. For on the Supply's arrival in the [Botany] bay on the 18th of the month they assembled on the beach of the south shore to the number of not less than forty persons, shouting and making many uncouth signs and gestures. This appearance whetted curiosity to its utmost, but as prudence forbade a few people to venture wantonly among so great a number, and a party of only six men was observed on the north shore, the governor immediately proceeded to land on that side in order to take possession of this new territory and bring about an intercourse between its new and old masters."

Watkin Tench, January 1788

The first act of land ownership by Europeans came within four days of arrival when a group of men from the HMS *Sirius* went ashore to clear land to gain access to fresh water. By 26

January, the First Fleet had found their way to Sydney Cove and landed there on the harbour.

Aboriginal Life through European Eyes

The early Europeans took a dim view of the Aboriginal way of life when first they encountered it. This excerpt is taken from the diary of George Worgan, a surgeon in the First Fleet:

“It does not appear that these poor creatures have any fixed habitation; sometimes sleeping in a cavern of rock, which they make as warm as a oven by lighting a fire in the middle of it, they will take up their abode here, for one night perhaps, then in another the next night.

At other times (and we believe mostly in summer) they take up their lodgings for a day or two in a miserable wigwam, which they made from the bark of a tree.

These are dispersed about the woods near the water, 2, 3, 4 together; some oyster, cockle and muscle (sic) Shells lie about the Entrance of them, but not in any quantity to indicate they make these huts their constant habitation. We met with some that seemed entirely deserted indeed it seems pretty evident that their habitation, whether caverns or wigwams, are common to all, and alternatively inhabited by different Tribes.”

George Worgan, 1788

Kinship with the Land

For the clans living on the shores of Sydney harbour nothing could have been further from the truth. What the early colonists never understood, and perhaps what many Australians are only now beginning to grasp, was that the Aboriginal lifestyle was based on total kinship with the natural environment. Wisdom and skills obtained over millennia enabled them to use their environment for maximum benefit. For the Aboriginal people, acts such as killing animals for food or building a shelter were steeped in ritual and spirituality, and carried out in balance with their surroundings.

“... from time immemorial, we believe as Aboriginal people, Australia has been here from the first sunrise, our people have been here along with the continent, with the first sunrise. We know our land was given to us by Baiami, we have a sacred duty to protect that land, we have a sacred duty to protect all the animals that we have an affiliation with through our totem system ...”

Jenny Munro, Wiradjuri nation

Food was abundant, as was fresh water and shelter. Everything needed for a fruitful, healthy life was readily available. It was not to remain so. The British arrival brought armed conflict and a lack of understanding, which heralded the demise of all of the Sydney clans. Food

shortages soon became a problem. The large white population depleted the fish by netting huge catches, reduced the kangaroo population with unsustainable hunting, cleared the land, and polluted the water. As a result, the Aboriginal people throughout the Sydney Basin were soon close to starvation.

Disease and Devastation

Disease struck a fatal and extensive blow to the Aboriginal people, who until that point had been isolated for thousands of years from the diseases that had raged through Europe and Asia. They had no resistance to the deadly viruses carried by the sailors and convicts such as smallpox, syphilis and influenza. In less than a year, over half the indigenous population living in the Sydney Basin had died from smallpox. The region, once alive with a vibrant mix of Aboriginal clans, now fell silent.

“Every boat that went down the harbour found them lying dead on the beaches and in the caverns of the rocks... They were generally found with the remains of a small fire on each side of them and some water left within their reach.”

Lieutenant Fowell, 1789

The colonists had destroyed within six months a way of life that had outlasted British history by tens of thousands of years, and the people soon realised that the trespassers were committed to nothing less than total occupation of the land. To most settlers, the Aboriginal people were considered akin to kangaroos, dingoes and emus, strange fauna to be eradicated to make way for the development of farming and grazing.

“I have myself heard a man, educated, and a large proprietor of sheep and cattle, maintain, that there was no more harm in shooting a native, than in shooting a wild dog. I have heard it maintained by others that it is the course of Providence, that blacks should disappear before the white, and the sooner the process was carried out the better, for all parties. I fear such opinions prevail to a great extent.

Very recently in the presence of two clergymen, a man of education narrated, as a good thing, that he had been one of a party who had pursued the blacks, in consequence of cattle being rushed by them, and that he was sure that they shot upwards of a hundred. When expostulated with, he maintained that there was nothing wrong in it that it was preposterous to suppose they had souls. In this opinion he was joined by another educated person present.”

Bishop Polding, 1845

And though a guerrilla war had been mounted against the British during the early years of the colony, the eradication, for the most part, had been easy. Smallpox had destroyed over half

the population and those not ravaged by disease were displaced when land was cleared for settlements and farms. Dispossessed of the land that had nourished them for so long, the Aboriginal people became dependent on white food and clothing. Alcohol, used as a means of trade by the British, served to further shatter traditional social and family structures.

Rediscovering History

European civilisation devastated in what amounts to the blink of an eye an incomparable and ancient people. Conflicts between the Europeans and Aboriginal communities across Sydney together with the smallpox epidemic of 1790 resulted in the decimation of traditional clan structures across Sydney. Those not lost completely were altered as survivors gathered into new groups. Much of what we do know about Sydney's clans must be gleaned from archaeological remains. Middens, shelters, engravings, and art remnants of Indigenous life are prolific throughout the region, but while there are some families who have identified links to original Sydney clans-people, very few traditional stories remain about the sites and landscapes of the Ku-ring-gai area.

Rewriting History

As the new Sydney colony expanded Aboriginal people were largely pushed to the margins and their presence was increasingly ignored. Periodically individuals would try to learn more about the 'artists of the sandstone' who had left behind spectacular and intriguing rock engravings around the region. As the nineteenth century proceeded it was more difficult to find Indigenous people willing or able to share stories about these places and some researchers felt inclined to 'fill in the gaps' on occasion where insufficient information existed. When reviewing historical accounts of Sydney it is important to consider where the information has come from. The name Guringai, for example, was invented by a John Fraser in 1892.

The First Fleet officers made efforts to record and understand the language of the Aboriginal people they encountered as they began to set up the new colony on the lands they took over. The officers soon realised that there was not one uniform language and that the vocabulary was diverse and complex. Communications proved difficult and there were many potential misconceptions and misunderstandings in the interactions that took place and inevitably these ended up in the written record. These records document a society structured into 'tribal' groups – the officers recorded names for these 'tribes' and the area they were associated with but it is not always clear that the name was the name of the 'tribe'. They recognised a distinction in language or dialect between the Aboriginal people of the coast and those inland and those further north at Broken Bay. There is no record of the word 'Kuringgai' in the early accounts.

Anthropologists of the later nineteenth century using these early records, and the testimony of Aboriginal people still living in the areas, attempted a more definitive description of the language and structure of the Aboriginal society they believed was vanishing. Tribes without

appropriate names were allocated names and links between tribes were established based on the customs and linguistic evidence as it was then known. John Fraser published the term 'Kuring-gai' in 1892 for a 'tribe' that he claimed stretched from the Macleay River to south of Sydney, possibly influenced by the name of the Gringai tribe of the Hunter River district and 'Kuri' for men. Kuringgai proved popular to those developing the northern areas of Sydney.

In the twentieth century revisions of the previous anthropological literature were made with new rigour and new tribal and language maps were produced using some of the names that were coined in the nineteenth century, including Kuringgai. 'Eora' a word for 'the men' was also adopted to name the language/tribe of the Sydney region.

By the twenty-first century linguistic research into Aboriginal languages produced a new understanding of the interrelationships of language and dialect in the region. Language boundaries were redefined and the term Kuringgai increasingly discouraged given its origin and previous associations. Other groups and the local community had in the meantime adopted 'Guringai' to define their own Aboriginal connections or identity.

What has survived?

In the metropolitan area of Sydney there are close to 6,500 Aboriginal sites. These sites are under threat every day from development, vandalism and natural erosion. The sites cannot be replaced and once they are destroyed, they are gone forever. Some of the sites that are located in Ku-ring-gai Council are still in remarkable condition but all still definitely hold an important part of our history.

All Aboriginal sites are significant to Aboriginal people because they are evidence of the past Aboriginal occupation of Australia. They are an important and valuable link to their traditional culture. An emphasis is placed on the scientific investigation into stone technology for a great deal of insight is obtained by studying the manufacture techniques and animals associated with them that tells us about daily traditional life. Clues to what these sites were used for can also be surmised by talking with Elders from other parts of Australia where traditional knowledge has not been lost to the same degree.

While much of northern Sydney's Aboriginal history has been lost, many people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, residents and visitors, are working hard to learn more about the Aboriginal heritage of the area, to find lost voices and uncover lost evidence, and exploring ways to protect what has survived for those who come after. If nothing else, Aboriginal history is a remarkable story of survival against the odds.

Ku-ring-gai Aboriginal-European contacts

The area of Ku-ring-gai Council is the site of a number of historical notations relating to the early contact between the encroaching Europeans and local Aboriginal people.

In 1788 an exploration party led by Governor Phillip carried out a reconnaissance of land north of Port Jackson, including parts of Middle Creek. They did not meet with any Aboriginal people but "We saw however, some proof of their ingenuity in various figures cut on the smooth surface of some large stones. They consisted chiefly of representations of themselves in different attitudes, of their canoes, of several sorts of fish and animals (White 1790: 141).

On a journey up the Lane Cove River in 1790, Lt. Clark met a small group of Aboriginal people and mentions that smallpox had killed the wife of one of these Aborigines and infected his son (Thorne 1968:8). During the journey Clark mentioned that the Aborigines roasted "shells (rnuscles-[sic]) on a fire. On the following day he reported seeing "a native on the shore with two Spears and a throwing stick In his hand" (Cobley 1962:148).

The Pymble family, settlers in the area, provide a limited record of their contact with local clans. Robert Pymble recalled that Aboriginal people brought him fresh fish and oysters (Halstead 1982). He also refers to Aboriginal people travelling from Cowan Creek (Bobbin Head), camping on the hill above his orchard near the present. reservoir (Thorne 1968:105) and then continuing their Journey along the ridge to the west across the area now occupied by the Presbyterian Ladies College.

A corroboree was apparently held on the hill at Turramurra (Halstead 1982).

Robert Pymble notes that by 1856 most Aboriginal people of the area had 'faded out', having, in his opinion, fallen to the ravages of smallpox (Thorne 1968: 39).

Suburbs that apparently have Aboriginal names include (the meaning in brackets):

- Killara (permanent, always here)
- Warrawee (stop here)
- Turramurra or Turraburra (big hill)
- Wahroonga (our home).

Tribes and Clans

For the northern coastal area of Sydney it was long considered to be 'Guringai' country, whereas land west of the Lane Cove River was commonly known as 'Darug' lands. The coastal areas were traditional lands of coastal clans who probably spoke a different dialect and had different customs to those of the 'hinterland'. There is still debate as to whether coastal people in northern Sydney spoke a similar language as those in the west. We may

never know. Australian Museum archaeologist, Dr Val Attenbrow, has done extensive research on this matter over many years and notes:

“... because of the history of events that has taken place in the Sydney region, the present composition of the groups using the language names and the boundaries within which they operate are, in some places, quite different to those of the past”

Attenbrow, 2010.

As mentioned above, the term Guringai was invented by a researcher in 1892. While the term has entered the local vocabulary, the AHO considers it to be inauthentic and ideally it should not be used in place of more appropriate Indigenous words. Its use as a descriptor for Ku-ring-gai Council or locations need not be changed as the context is not seen as describing an Indigenous group or particular Indigenous location.

The clan names are in some regards less contentious for some areas. The Ku-ring-gai Council area is commonly accepted to be Darramurra-gal country. Darramurra (various spellings) is the name of the area and the suffix ‘gal’ means something like ‘belonging to’.

Aboriginal Sites

Aboriginal sites are a very important factor in Aboriginal culture today, and just as important to many in the broader community. There are a significant number of sites within Ku-ring-gai Council’s boundaries and while some of these sites have been recorded, there are likely to be many more that have yet to be identified. All Aboriginal sites have legal protection under both state and federal law.

Areas of potential Aboriginal heritage are important because they do, more often than not, actually contain unrecorded sites.

Occupation Sites

Aboriginal occupation sites are places that show that Aboriginal people lived in an area. Evidence of human occupation, which includes food remains, stone tools, baked clay, fire-blackened and fire-cracked stones and charcoal, is found in a range of sites known collectively as occupation sites. These sites are not commonly found on the ground surface in the Ku-ring-gai area.

Shell middens

These sites are found on the coastline and along the edges of rivers and lakes. Middens are shell mounds built up over hundreds of years as a result of countless meals of shellfish. They are found along ocean coasts, estuaries, rivers and inland lakes, and primarily contain mature specimens of edible shellfish species. They may also contain pieces of clay, bird, fish

and animal teeth and bones, campfire charcoal, stone flakes and the remains of tools. Less commonly found in middens are remains from human burials. Middens differ immensely in shape and size, from a few shells scattered on the surface, to deposits that are metres thick and buried beneath vegetation. Middens are the most common and most visible Aboriginal site along the Australian coast. Natural shell deposits can be differentiated from middens because they consist of mature and immature, edible and inedible shellfish, and would contain no large amounts of charcoal or stone tools. Wave action would also have sifted the shells into layers, with the larger ones at the top and the smaller ones at the bottom.



Rock shelters with archaeological deposit

In rock outcrops such as sandstone and granite, overhangs sometimes form creating useable shelters. Sediments from fires, roof fall, discarded stone tools and food remains form a deposit protected within the shelter and this deposit can be excavated by archaeologists to study patterns of Aboriginal life.

Open campsites

These sites are mostly surface and associated sub-surface scatters of stone artefacts, sometimes with fireplaces. They exist throughout the landscape and are the most common site type in rural areas. While found in all environmental locations larger and denser sites tend to be found on river banks and lower slopes facing water courses, as well as ridgelines and other areas that offer movement routes. The study of open sites can assist in understanding patterns of Aboriginal land uses.

Shelter with Art

Shelters with art are present in the Ku-ring-gai area. These sites are clearly defined by either stencil art or charcoal. Stencils are produced by mixing ochre in the mouth into a wet paste, then spraying it over the object to be stencilled onto the wall of the shelter. This method was used throughout Australia, and if the shelter is protected from the elements, then the artwork will still be visible. Other forms of artwork include ochre paintings, as well as charcoal drawings and etchings, although stencil art was the most common method.



Rock Paintings

Aboriginal paintings are found on the ceilings and walls of rock shelters, which occur wherever suitable rock surfaces and outcrops exist. Figures include humans, kangaroos, emus, echidnas, grid patterns, animal tracks, boomerangs, axes, hand stencils and other motifs. Paintings are drawn with white, red, yellow and black pigments and charcoal drawings are also common.

Isolated Find

A single artefact depicts an isolated find. These can be verified by identifying the stone and sourcing its origin, or verifying the manufacturing scars on the artefact. The isolated find can be a flaked stone, core or any finished implement. Raw materials most commonly used are chert, silcrete, and mudstones, while larger axe heads are usually made from river rocks or iron stone materials. Although isolated finds are generally artefacts found on their own, they often imply other artefacts will be present in associated deposit nearby.



Axe Grinding Grooves

These are grooves resulting from the production or sharpening and maintenance of an edge ground tool. These sites are generally located near creeks or rock pools. There are a number of grinding grooves located in the general Sydney area.



Bora or Ceremonial Ground

Bora grounds are Aboriginal ceremonial places. These are where initiation ceremonies are performed and are often meeting places as well. A bora ground most commonly consists of two circles marked by raised earth banks, and connected by a pathway. One of the rings would have been for everyone -- uninitiated men, women and children. The second ring would have been for initiated men and the young men about to be initiated. Occasionally, one ring can be found that would have been used for corroborees and for the rare fight.

Bora grounds are a reminder of the spiritual beliefs and ceremonial life of the Aboriginal people. They are most at risk from natural processes. The circles flatten over time and become overgrown with vegetation similar to the surrounding area. However, because the soil has been compacted, there will be slight changes in the vegetation, and these differences can often be detected from an aerial view.

Burials

Aboriginal people feel equally as respectful about prehistoric burials as modern cemeteries. As Aboriginal people have lived in Australia for well over 50 000 years burials are seen as part of a continuing culture and tradition as well as offering valuable archaeological information. The dead were sometimes cremated, sometimes placed in trees or rock ledges and sometimes buried. Burials exist throughout New South Wales and can be accidentally uncovered in construction work or become exposed through erosion. It is important that if a skeleton is found it be reported to the police, to a representative of the Office of Environment and Heritage and to the Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Burials are found where soft soils are located. Burials can be found throughout the Sydney area, and a number have been found over the past years in middens and within shelters. Traditional burial practices for the Guringai people are unclear, however, it is known that traditional practices gave way when disease from the European invasion ravaged the groups throughout Sydney. Burials are an important part of Aboriginal culture, and contemporary practice is to recover what remains have been excavated and rebury them in a secure place at the location of origin. This practice is the consensus of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Rock Engraving

Engravings are relatively uncommon in the Ku-ring-gai area compared with other northern Sydney areas. Indeed, around Sydney in the Hawkesbury Sandstone geology there are probably more than 2000 engraving sites, only half of which have been accurately recorded (*Stanbury & Clegg, 1990*). Rock engravings are usually located on highly elevated, smooth, flat surfaces, but in some instances can be found on large vertical rocks. They were made by drilling a series of holes in turn were then connected to form a line. In the local area, designs include fish, animals, humans, wooden artefacts, and mythological beings.

The precise meanings behind the engravings are not known. Interpretations of what the engravings meant to their makers are sketchy, but the most accepted understanding is that they are products of sacred ceremonies, which were periodically re-engraved as part of ongoing rituals. Because there are no initiated descendants of the people who made the engravings, no one is able to re-engrave them in a culturally appropriate way. They are therefore eroding away from natural causes, human foot traffic, and the ever-increasing use of remnant bushland.

Engravings occur usually where there is a suitable exposure of fairly flat, soft rock or in rock overhangs. People, animal shapes and tracks are common as well as non-figurative designs such as circles.



Scarred Tree

Scarred trees sites are evidence of bark and wood being removed for shields, shelters, coolamons and canoes. Rare in the Sydney area, none are known within the Ku-ring-gai area. The trees can be divided into three groups:

- Bark removal for use eg. Coolamons
- Wood removal for use eg. boomerangs
- Evidence of climbing footholds eg. hunting possum

The tree was not killed by these methods and therefore scarring is evident.



Carved Tree

Carved trees have complex patterns cut into the tree, where a piece of bark is removed and the underlying wood is carved. When a carved tree is found next to a grave, it is usually a sign of family ties or the totem of the deceased person.

The designs are often intricate spirals, diamonds and circles, and were carved using a stone hatchet or, more recently, a steel axe. Carved trees are important because of the ceremonial meaning to Aboriginal people. They are probably the most naturally threatened site because of bush fires, environmental deterioration, and tree regrowth. They are also at risk from clearing. There are no carved trees surviving in the Sydney area.

Stone Quarry

A stone quarry is a site in which Aboriginal people collected suitable types of stone for the manufacturing of tools, ceremonial and sacred items. Some types of stone taken from quarries include silcrete, chert and some fine volcanics. Most of the fine stone flakes and

tools found in the Ku-ring-gai area would have been traded in from other areas such as the north coast, Hunter Valley, and the Nepean River.



Ochre Quarry

An ochre quarry is a place Aboriginal people gathered the materials used for painting. Ochre was used for a wide range of purposes, such as ceremonial body decoration, and paint for art works and stencilling. Different colours were used for different purposes. In the Ku-ring-gai area, red and white ochres are common within rock shelters.

Fish Trap

Fish traps are rocks placed side by side to form a circle in water. Traps found in any single area can number from one up to a dozen. When the tide is high, fish swim into these pools, but are trapped when the tide lowers. Aboriginal people would then come along and remove the caught fish. Fish traps are found on the Australian coast in tidal areas, as well as along inland creeks and rivers

Stone Arrangement

Stone arrangements are areas where stones are placed in a certain way to form circles, semi-circles, lines and routes. Smaller stones were used to keep the larger ones in place. The arrangements sometimes identified ceremonial grounds and tribal boundaries, as well as other sorts of ownership boundaries. Stone arrangements are at risk from logging, fire burn-off, rearrangement, and the removal of bush-rock for use in suburban gardens. There are very few stone arrangements left in the Sydney area. Care should always be taken when using stone from any bush area, since apart from being sacred to all Aboriginal people, stone arrangements often form homes to wildlife.

Water Hole

Water holes in the Ku-ring-gai area were used by the Guringai for sharpening tools and possibly as a source of fresh drinking water. These may have been constructed by cutting out the sandstone with axe heads to form a dish shape.



Seed Grinding Patches

Seed grinding patches are areas of rock worn smooth by Aboriginal women grinding seeds. The women removed the husks, then placed the seeds (eg. acacia, grass, kurrajong and wattle) between a large flat rock and a smaller round rock. The seeds were then ground into flour, which was mixed with water to form a dough. The dough was then kneaded and cooked to make a type of damper, which was an essential part of the Aboriginal diet. Grinding stones / dishes and patches are commonly found in arid areas, but can be found

anywhere. Grooves are located on flat rock exposures close to a stream or water hole. They vary in size but are generally long (about 30-40cm in length) and elliptical in shape.

Recommendations

In recent times there has been an increasing interest in Aboriginal history and heritage in Australia. Even a small amount of knowledge can help reduce negative attitudes and stereotyping of Aboriginal people and lead to an increase in the appreciation of Aboriginal heritage and culture. This has a flow-on effect to the protection of Aboriginal sites. This is why the Aboriginal Heritage Manager and the Aboriginal Heritage Office has always emphasised education and training to staff and the local community. It is therefore recommended that education and training, including the inclusion of the kind of information provided in this report, be given to all staff and also be provided to the local community.

Include Aboriginal History

- It is recommended that Council include appropriate references to its Aboriginal history and heritage in documents, staff and community education information and training
- It is recommended that only reliable sources of information are used to avoid inaccurate or unsubstantiated information being given greater legitimacy than can currently be attributed. It is part of the story of northern Sydney that much Aboriginal history has been lost due to the effects of the invasion.
- It is recommended that the use of the word Guringai (or its derivations) for the purposes of describing the language and tribal name of the area be discontinued and replaced with the clan name or a generic term for the time being. The term 'Ku-ring-gai' used in the context of the Council name or a location is not included in this recommendation.

Legislation and Aboriginal Heritage

New South Wales legislation requires that Aboriginal heritage be considered as part of the environmental impact assessment process. All Aboriginal sites (or „objects“) in NSW are protected under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, regardless of land tenure. Council's role as a determining authority is important in ensuring Aboriginal heritage is considered and properly assessed in the development planning process. Council is also a land owner and manager and therefore has responsibilities to protect Aboriginal sites.

Aboriginal sites that have not yet been recorded still have legal protection, therefore it is important that Council has a system in place whereby land with potential to contain Aboriginal sites is properly assessed prior to any development or activity that may illegally destroy sites. Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* Councils, corporations and individual must demonstrate that they have followed a **due diligence** process to ensure that they protect Aboriginal heritage and, thus, have a defence against prosecution if a site is damaged in some way.

Predictive model for aboriginal sites

A predictive model for Aboriginal heritage potential has been generated for the Sydney area over a number of decades. As Ku-ring-gai LGA is within the Hawkesbury Sandstone belt, this is a primary determinate of what landscapes will exist and, subsequently, what range of sites is likely to be present. The formation of cliff lines below ridgelines and of overhangs caused by cavernous weathering are smaller scale features of this landscape. Other important influences in Ku-ring-gai include the environmental zones associated with Middle Cove in the east, Lane Cove River in the west and the high elevated shale soils through the central part of the local government area. The landscape history of Ku-ring-gai is influenced by prior development, particularly adjacent the rail line and Pacific Highway, which reduces the potential for sites where development has been most intensive. However, even areas that today seem at first glance to be highly disturbed landscapes can still reveal Aboriginal sites, such as artefact scatters, shelters and engravings.

Taking these factors into account, the **predictive model** for Ku-ring-gai LGA is as follows:

Common Hawkesbury Sandstone sites will be found wherever sandstone is outcropping, in particular:

- engraving sites on ridge tops, on flat surfaces above cliffs and scarps and on isolated outcrops and boulders;
- rock shelters (with midden and/or art and/or archaeological deposit) on slopes below ridges, cliffs and scarps, and beneath or part of fallen boulders or isolated boulders;
- grinding grooves on fairly level rock surfaces in creeks, swampy areas or isolated areas adjacent a water source or associated with other sites.

Shell midden sites will be found in sandstone rock shelters throughout the area, in foreshore areas and in level areas near to the harbour, lagoon or creek lines.

Archaeological deposit, including artefact scatters, will be found within rock shelters and middens as well as level areas near to the harbour, or creek lines, and in smaller scatters in level areas throughout the LGA. Artefact densities will generally be low (compared with the Cumberland Plain, for example), except within and adjacent shelters where densities will increase.

Burials will be found in middens, shelter deposits, archaeological deposits and places where the ground is soft, such as sandy banks. It is unlikely that there will be any visible signs of a burial unless there is active and deep erosion to a deposit.

Other sites, such as scarred trees and fish traps, will be present in areas of minimal previous disturbance and would be very rare. Misidentification of an early colonial or more recent non-Aboriginal activity as an Aboriginal site is possible.

Generally speaking, sites will be relatively common in bushland areas, with the condition of sites improving with distance from walking tracks and more accessible areas. Sites will decrease in frequency in cleared parks and reserves and surviving sites will be more disturbed. In urban areas, sites will be more common where properties adjoin bushland and where sandstone cliffs contain overhangs, and less common where the land has been more heavily modified. Commercial areas where land disturbance has been most intensive will have the lowest frequency of sites.

Note: This is a predictive model which is effective at a general level. Individual and location specific features allow for the presence of sites in places that would otherwise seem quite unlikely. Sites such as shelters, middens and engravings are recorded throughout Sydney in residential yards, next to driveways, beside footpaths and picnic tables, on walking tracks, beneath boat storage areas, and so on. The importance of considering specific developments in their environmental context cannot be overemphasised.

Education & Training

Training and education of staff and the local community are important elements in the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage. Ignorance is the main cause for the destruction or damage of Aboriginal sites. People are either unaware that there are sites present, or unaware of their value to the community. Training courses, education strategies and community awareness programs are therefore very important in helping to protect Aboriginal sites and cultural heritage. Council and the AHO have run many courses and activities for a range of user groups over the years. Council staff, volunteer bush regenerators, community groups, local residents, and school, university and TAFE students have all undertaken courses through the AHO. AHO presentations are tailor-made to suit each audience and are free to groups within a partner Council area. The AHO has also produced a wide range of information brochures, there is a website covering a variety of subjects, and the AHO has a museum and education centre that is open to the public.

More information:

Near by Ku-Ring-Gai Chase national park offers excellent examples of local aboriginal heritage with a variety of different sites. The Aboriginal Heritage walk, on West Head, offers visitors a unique look into past culture over a 2.5 hr loop trail
<http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/walking-tracks/aboriginal-heritage-walk>.