



# A History of **Aboriginal People** of the Illawarra 1770 to 1970





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Some of the information in this book has been sourced from members of the Aboriginal Community who were willing to share knowledge regarding their culture and heritage. We hope that we have accurately retold this information and welcome additional information or comments for future editions of this publication. Please contact Julie Ravallion on (02) 9585 6903

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This publication contains photographs of people who have passed away.

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This book is based on a report by Kate Gahan (2004) prepared as part of the Illawarra Regional Aboriginal Heritage Study. It has been edited, added to and constructed by Sue Wesson.

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# Introduction

## Linking the past and present

### **History of the project**

This project is part of a larger study known as the Illawarra Regional Aboriginal Heritage Study (IRAHS). The IRAHS is a NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) initiative in accordance with its Cultural Heritage Conservation Policy (2002). Regional studies fill a critical gap in Aboriginal cultural heritage management in NSW. For the past 30 years virtually all the activity in NSW in off-park assessment and conservation of Aboriginal heritage places and landscapes has taken place in the context of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), in the form of localised impact assessment studies carried out by consultant archaeologists. The work of recording and assessing the significance of Aboriginal heritage places has thus taken place in piecemeal fashion. Regional studies constitute a key means for disseminating and grounding a holistic or multi-value approach to cultural heritage assessment and conservation.<sup>1</sup> Regional Aboriginal heritage studies serve not only to guide planning but also to encourage partnership with Aboriginal communities for environmental protection.

As a part of the IRAHS an Aboriginal Illawarra history has been created to compile and interpret oral histories, contemporary Aboriginal community knowledge and written material. This book is based on two reports into the history of the Illawarra Aboriginal people that were prepared as a part the IRAHS in 2002 (Bennett 2002) and 2004 (Gahan 2004).

A broad range of sources were used to compile the history including government files and reports, newspaper articles, original manuscripts, drawings, paintings, photographs, local histories, ethnohistories, journal articles and oral histories. This material has been drawn from local historical society records, archives, libraries and Illawarra and Dharawal Aboriginal people.<sup>2</sup>

The book consists of four chapters which provide a chronological history of Illawarra Aboriginal people from before the European

invasion through to the political movements of the 1960s. Chapter one outlines traditional Illawarra society, chapter two documents the first contact experiences, Aboriginal resistance and maintenance of custom, chapter three discusses the ways in which Aboriginal people coped with the changes demanded by the European invasion and chapter four examines the Illawarra people's struggle for human rights. Several maps have been created to provide the reader with graphic interpretations of Illawarra Aboriginal culture over two centuries. The book is also illustrated with etchings, paintings, photographs and with paintings created by a contemporary Illawarra Aboriginal artist.

## Illawarra landscape

The study region extends from Stanwell Park in the north to Bass Point in the south and comprises a spectacular landscape from the visually dominant escarpment and sandstone plateau in the west to the coastal plain which broadens in the south. Lake Illawarra is a significant large coastal lake, one of many on the south coast. The area supports a great diversity of vegetation communities<sup>3</sup> typically including eucalypt forests and woodlands on the plateau, subtropical rainforest on the escarpment and grassy woodland, swamps, grasslands and scrubs on the coastal plain. Estuaries and coastal wetlands have been heavily modified by infilling, drainage, altered river systems, artificial streams and diversions. Areas in the coastal plain have been modified first by agriculture and more recently for housing developments. However, the Illawarra region retains pockets of beautiful



Figure 1: The IRAHS study area

natural environments, particularly the broad sandy beaches and protected areas of the plateau including Royal National Park, Dharawal State Conservation Area and the catchment areas on the plateau above Wollongong.

- 1 Harrison, R. 2003 Western Sydney Regional Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study Draft Documents, DEC.
- 2 A more detailed account of the source material is provided as an introduction to the bibliography.
- 3 The CADU vegetation assessment (August 2002) has identified 55 vegetation communities for the Wollongong LGA.





# Chapter one

## Belonging to the land; the cabbage tree palm people

The Wodi Wodi<sup>1</sup> are the Aboriginal custodians of the Illawarra who spoke a variant of the Dharawal language. Dharawal speakers lived and live in the country from Botany Bay and Campbelltown in the north through the Nepean, Wollondilly, Georges, and Cataract water catchments<sup>2</sup>, west to Moss Vale (*Illillawatta*) and south to the Shoalhaven River and Jervis Bay. Dharawal people are distinguished as fresh water, bitter water or salt water people depending on whether they occupied the coastal regions, the swamps or the plateaus and inland river valleys. Traditional stories tell of their arrival at the mouth of Lake Illawarra in canoes when the Ancestors were animals. They brought the Dharawal or cabbage tree palm with them from the north and are named for this sacred tree.

The Arrernte word Awelye, from Central Australia, describes the interrelationship of everything; plant, animal, earth and language. Aboriginal knowledge about: plants, animals, non-living things, spirit, economy, aesthetics, kin, responsibility, and journeying bind categories of information with one another. In other words nothing can be considered in isolation. By contrast, non-indigenous knowledge structures involve the separation of information into ever smaller parts for detailed examination. Aboriginal knowledge stems from the practical experience of natural resources. Like all people that live with and close to the land they have developed an understanding of the interrelationships between ecological functions and broader patterns in climate and geophysical features. Understanding and learning the signals of change are indicative of the depth of knowledge that Aboriginal people have achieved.

### Totems

Totems are a significant symbol of Aboriginal people's inextricable link to land. Aboriginal people gave recognition to the power of the plant and animal spirits by wearing skins and masks of ceremonial paint, and



by mimicking, singing praise and dedicating prayers to specific plants and animals. They painted and engraved them in caves, rock overhangs, on rock platforms, on bark and burial trees and asked Baiame to guide them to plant and animal foods and to bless the spirit of the plant or animal that was killed. These acts allowed people to remain linked to the plant and animal guides and to accept the power they offer in lessons, in life, and in death. It reminded people that all animals are our sisters, brothers, and cousins and most importantly our teachers and our friends.

Baiame is a sky-hero<sup>3</sup> who led the tribe to its present habitat and made the natural features as they are today. He also gave people their social laws and initiation rites.<sup>4</sup>

As Phil Sullivan, a Ngiyampaa man explained recently;

*'Having a 'totem' is much deeper: it's about looking after everything. Everything that's associated with the animal, like the yellowbelly, I have to look after the fish, the water, the reeds – everything to do with that fish' (Sullivan 2003).<sup>5</sup>*

Totems of the Illawarra include the Australian Magpie (*Gymnorhina tibicen*); calboonya or Superb Lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*); kurungabaa or Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*); bumbiang or Satin Bowerbird (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*); koondyeri<sup>6</sup> or Pacific Black Duck (*Anas superciliosa*); bibburdugang or hawk, jugurawa or kingfisher, moondaar or red-bellied black snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*) and jindaola or Lace Monitor (*goanna*) (*Varanus varius*). Mooloone; the waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) is valued in ceremony and as an indicator for the timing of ceremonies and is the subject of many stories of country. Aboriginal people do not eat their personal totem plant or animal but care for it by conducting

increase ceremonies to ensure its good health and reproduction. Sometimes, however, they are obliged to kill their totem to feed their family members and others in their group. Increase ceremonies were and are conducted by people who are of the totem animal or plant and enact historical travels and deeds of the ancestral totemic heroes, especially at places where they rested or were transformed.<sup>7</sup>

Many animals and birds feature in traditional stories for the Illawarra and adjacent regions. These stories are still being used to teach younger people about principles and history by the direct descendants of Ellen Anderson.<sup>8</sup> These stories are very important to the maintenance of cultural identity in the face of massive and rapid change. A list of the stories and their sources can be found in Appendix 2.

- 
- 1 Wodi Wodi can also be spelled Wadi Wadi. It should not be confused with a group on the Murray River bordering New South Wales and Victoria having a name with the same spelling and pronunciation.
  - 2 'History of the D'harawal people (Frances Bodkinrbgsyd.gov.au/mount\_annan\_botanic\_garden)
  - 3 In other places Baiame is called Daramalun (far south coast NSW), Nurunderi, Bunjil, Goin or Biral.
  - 4 Elkin 1954: 212-3.
  - 5 This responsibility also includes the bird that eats the fish (Mason 2004).
  - 6 Wombarra is the Dhurga word for the black duck, the language of the people occupying the country from the Bega River to Lake Conjola (Wesson 2000: 158).
  - 7 Elkin 1954: 148-9.
  - 8 Mason, R. (2004) Personal communication, Jindabyne.

Dharawal people moved throughout their territories and to a lesser extent those of neighbours (Gundangurra, Darug, Dhurga, Awabakal and Wiradjuri) subject to season and purpose (see Figure 2). They had favoured travel routes running north-south (Princes Highway route, Meryla Pass, Kangaroo River route) and east-west (Bulli Pass, Bong Bong route, Cordeaux River), but travelled widely caring for the country in ceremony and practice and harvesting only what was immediately required. People from other language groups including Gundangurra and Wiradjuri travelled from the inland to the coast to exchange foods, raw materials and artefacts. The fish, oysters, water-fowl and grubs of the Illawarra were particularly valued by inland people. Dharawal and Awabakal shared ceremonies including the ceremony for the brown snake and the shark.<sup>9</sup>

Aboriginal peoples' association with the Illawarra has a history that began thousands of years before European colonisation. The landscape had been transformed by ice ages, the deposition of sand dunes approximately 6,500 years ago and the inundation of once dry land to create Lake Illawarra 6,000 years ago.<sup>10</sup> Aboriginal people have survived and adapted to the impact of European colonisation and kept their connection to the land through the maintenance of customs and stories and the responsibility for country.

*Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun. People talk about Country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, feel sorry for Country and long for Country. People say that Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy.<sup>11</sup>*

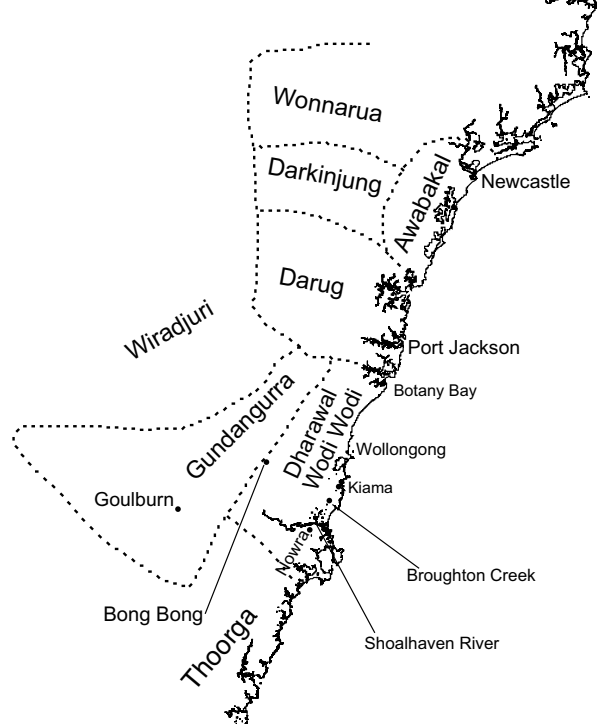


Figure 2: The Dharawal and their neighbours

## The land as guide, teacher and provider

In common with all Australian Aboriginal cultures the landscape, or Country, was central to Illawarra peoples' culture. They not only harnessed the land's natural resources to nourish and protect themselves but, maintained a respectful spiritual relationship with the land. The features and forms of the land were understood to embody the Dreaming ancestors whose being and action were visible in the landscape which they created. Through their embodiment in the environment, the Dreaming Ancestors were the providers of the plants and animals the people utilised for food and protection.<sup>12</sup>

The understanding that Country both embodied the people's ancestors and provided for them, also involved the responsibility of caring for Country. Developing and keeping knowledge about the landscape was an important aspect of maintaining

both the tradition and innovation of culture. They had a detailed understanding of the plants and animals that were of practical use and named each feature of the landscape and the spirit ancestors that were its creators. It was understood that speaking about Country was tantamount to knowing the Country, and that knowing the Country perpetuated the connectivity of people, country and spirit.

The Illawarra people developed a number of ways to record and remember knowledge including holding and passing on traditional stories allowing it to be conveniently remembered and the repetitive re-telling of stories ensured that the knowledge about the country was not forgotten. All places and features in the landscape were connected through story.

People structured their daily round through extended kin relationships which ensured that knowledge was maintained, as close family bonds provided the sturdy inter-generation links on which oral tradition relied. The passing on of landscape stories occurred in many contexts, including during journeys, when collecting or hunting, or when families gathered.<sup>13</sup>

Gender and age also played an important role in determining the continuity of knowledge. Stages in the maturation of men and women were associated with rites of knowledge. Initiation signified the relationship between knowledge of Country and age. In a ceremonial context, stories of country were presented as dance, song or narrative.

Caring for Country also involved the sharing of knowledge with neighbours in larger ceremonial gatherings where stories and songs were performed. Aboriginal people often travelled large distances, along customary travel routes to share stories.<sup>14</sup> Knowledge of Country was also held in artworks in caves, shelters, engravings and stone arrangements.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 4: Windang Island (Illawarra Images)

Custodians of cultural knowledge for the Illawarra struggled to retain and recover this knowledge as colonisation fragmented families and broke the inter-generational links which maintained knowledge. However, many stories survived this process and are referenced in Appendix 2. One of the most important stories tells of the arrival of the Dharawal at the mouth of Lake Illawarra in the Whale and the Starfish story, (see Figure 3: folded map). This story explains the evolution of Windang Island (Figure 4) and the Five Islands, why whales travel north and return, why the koala has strong arms and keeps to the trees and why the starfish hides on the sea floor. A number of stories describing the formation of mounts Keira and Kembla exist. One involves a tidal wave and a second the West Wind and his daughters.

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9 *Ibid.*

10 Fuller 1980: 7.

11 Rose, D.B. (1996) *Nourishing terrains: Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness*, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra.

12 Timberly, J. (2002: 3), Organ, M. and Speechley, C. (1997:11).

13 Organ & Speechly, op. cit., p. 15.

14 The Diary of the Rev W. B. Clarke, in Organ, M. (1990: 251).

15 *Ibid.*, p. 16; McCarthy, F. (1961:97-103). McCarthy's article provides an interpretation of the function of Aboriginal art.



Caring for Country included the development and practice of the conservation of the animals and plants on which the people relied. This of course was of less concern in areas where there was a year round abundance of some food sources, such as fish and shell-fish in Lake Illawarra.<sup>16</sup>

Having affiliation with Country restricted, or made conditional, others' use of Country, including passing through or harnessing the resources it provided. Serious breaches of codes relating to territory carried severe punishments and limited the extent to which animals and plants were harvested from the environment. The responsibility for Country continued into death as burying the bodies of family and other tribal members freed their spirit to return to the earth.

The Illawarra environment provided a wide variety of plants and animals which had uses ranging from artefact manufacture through to medicines, jewellery, toys, ceremonial items and food (Figures 5).

It has been documented, that hunting and gathering of fish and crustacea occurred in the many creeks, that emanate from the escarpment and flow east across the plain into coastal lakes or into the sea. The narrowness of these creeks allowed the people to use traps and nets made from plant fibre to catch fish and eels.<sup>17</sup> Pictorial evidence shows Illawarra people at East Corrimal harvesting from a shallow creek using large open weave baskets (see Figure 6). Early European travellers to the Illawarra observed Aboriginal people stunning fish with poison made from bruised bark and luring fish with torchlight.<sup>18</sup>

Illawarra Lake, Tom Thumb Lagoon and Coomaditchy Lagoon were important fishing sites (see Figure 7) where crustacea, fish, roots, tortoise and water birds would have been gathered. Archaeological information gleaned from many midden and artefact sites, scattered



*Figures 5: Illawarra foods (© DEC & Narawan Williams)*

along the shores, points and Islands of Lake Illawarra reveal that the food it provided was both varied and abundant.<sup>19</sup> Fishing in these larger bodies of water was typically practised using specially constructed spears having bone or stone points (see Figure 8), or with lines and bone hooks and from bark canoes.<sup>20</sup>

The Minnamurra River in the southern Illawarra was also harvested for fish and other shellfish over millenia as evidenced by the many middens that line the river's banks. Swamplands adjacent to the Minnamurra River were home to a range of birds<sup>21</sup>, as were the creeks, lakes, and lagoons to the north.<sup>22</sup>

Beaches and rock-pools provided other resources.<sup>23</sup> The shores, points and islands around and on Lake Illawarra including Bellambi, Red Point, Coomaditchy,





Figure 6: Fishing at East Corrimal. ('Condon's Creek', Captain Robert Westmacott, circa 1846, Illawarra Images)



Figure 7: Spear fishing at Tom Thumb lagoon. ('Tom Thumb Lagoon' John Skinner Prout 1840-1850, State Library of NSW)

Windang and Bass Point are covered with artefact scatters and middens, providing evidence of fish and shellfish feasts that took place over thousands of years.<sup>24</sup> Middens reveal that sea mammals such as whales and seals, were also eaten.<sup>25</sup>

16 Navin, K.T. (1987).

17 See for example, 'About the Aborigines', *South Coast Times*, September 19, 1919, [reminiscences from the early 1800s], transcribed in Organ, M. (1993: 233-234); Jeffcoat, K. (1970: 24-27).

18 McFarland, Alfred, in *Illawarra and Monaro*, Maddock, Sydney 1872, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 334.



Figures 8: Fish spears, bone hook, woven basket and spear thrower. (Etchings from Brough Smyth 1878)

19 Navin, K.T. (1987).

20 For information regarding the abundance and variety of shell fish taken from Lake Illawarra see Navin, *op. cit.* For information regarding the use of bone and stone points, as well as, bone hooks see Bowdler, S. (1970).

21 Griffin, B. (1985: 4).

22 Navin, *op. cit.*

23 McFarland, *op. cit.*

24 Dallas and Sullivan, *op. cit.*, Navin, *op. cit.* Bowdler, S. (1970); 'Tribal Relics Found at Bass Point', *Illawarra Mercury*, September 10, 1980; Sefton, A., 'The Geography and History of Illawarra', *Illawarra Mercury*, March 31, 1988; 'Bellambi was Aborigines Area', *Illawarra Mercury*, September 14, 1972; Sefton, C. and Donlon, D. (1988).

25 Bowdler, *op. cit.*



*Figure 9: Illawarra camp circa 1843 ('Native encampment Illawarra 1843' John Skinner Prout, State library of NSW)*

Archaeological and ethnological records provide less information about the ways in which Illawarra Aboriginal people used land resources. However, contemporary Aboriginal community knowledge reveals that their forebears utilised the coastal headlands and plain, the forested hinterland and parts of the escarpment to hunt and gather food.<sup>26</sup> Coastal areas and hinterland forests provided important food sources, including wallabies, which were hunted using spears, pit traps and snares.<sup>27</sup> Possums, which were also found in these localities, were more usually smoked out of a hole in a tree, or from inside a hollow log. Wild honey, stored by the native bee was also found in the hollows of trees. In areas where the forests were open, as well as on the escarpment tops, other animals including reptiles were hunted.

The Illawarra environment also provided resources that allowed Aboriginal people to hunt and gather

their food efficiently. Spears, waddies, boomerangs and digging sticks were manufactured from the plants and animals that grew both in the forests and on the escarpment. Forests were the source of bark used to construct and mould canoes, shelter (Figure 9), string, fish poison, dye and paint.<sup>28</sup> The sea provided the abalone and turban shell from which fish-hooks were made. A number of quarry sites in the Illawarra also provided stone to make axes, spears, scrapers and grinding stones, used both in other tool making, or for preparing food.<sup>29</sup> A great number of plant fibres were also harvested from the coastal plain and the forest with which to weave the fish nets used in the creeks or the string bags that carried small food and medicine items procured from the land and water.

Resources provided by the coastal plain, the forests, and the escarpment, allowed Illawarra people to shelter from the elements and protect their bodies and their camps from insects.<sup>30</sup> Though there is much evidence to suggest that Illawarra people typically made open camps (Figure 10), they also made use of shelter in the rock overhangs and caves that dotted the escarpment.<sup>31</sup> The open forests provided a variety of timbers with which to make warming fires in the cold months, although fires were used throughout the year for cooking. Cloaks made from possum and wallaby skins were worn in the winter months. They effectively kept out the rain and were used to swaddle infant children.<sup>32</sup>

Illawarra Aboriginal people also shaped the environment to enhance the provision of resources. Through the regular use of fire they sought to promote access and reduce the likelihood of hot burns which now devastate forests when they occur.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, by encouraging the growth of grass along the coastal strip, Aboriginal people drew grazing of animals out of the forests making them easier prey.<sup>34</sup> It has been





Figure 10: Estuarine spear fishing in the Illawarra. ('Green Point and Five Islands Illawarra', pencil sketch by Capt, Robert Westmacott 1848, State Library of NSW)

suggested that Aboriginal people controlled the water level in Lake Illawarra during flood times to prevent the inundation of their camps which were situated close to the shorelines. Early Europeans observed Aboriginal people using sticks to make trenches in the sands that blocked the mouth of the lake to enable the water to flow out. This practice ensured that Lake Illawarra continued to provide resources throughout the year.<sup>35</sup>

The Illawarra people practiced trade with neighbouring cultures to maximise their access to a range of resources not available in the Illawarra environments. They manufactured and traded axes made from volcanic rock, at least with groups to the north-west.<sup>36</sup> The Illawarra people also traded 'ceremonial attire' with neighbouring groups.<sup>37</sup> These interactions complemented the Illawarra people's resources and ensured access to important additional goods.

The 30,000 year Aboriginal occupation of the Illawarra was impacted in a series of unprecedented events beginning with the appearance of the white sails of the Endeavour. It is reasonable to expect that no Aboriginal canoe had ever safely negotiated the waters so far out to sea. In April 1770 Captain Cook and his crew sailed north along the coast of the continent that the English named Terra Australis. It is thought that Aboriginal observers were frightened by the sudden appearance of the huge winged bird and the British sailors were curious about the dark figures and their fires that they observed near what is now Bass Point at Shellharbour and Hill 60 at Port Kembla.

26 Ibid.

27 Organ and Speechly *op. cit.*; London Missionary Society in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 268.

28 McCarthy, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

29 Griffin, *op. cit.*; McCarthy, F. (1944) ; Towle, C. C (1930).

30 Mason, R. (2004) Personal communication, Jindabyne.

31 Dallas & Sullivan, *op. cit.*

32 Smithson, M. (1992).

33 'Report on March Meeting', *Illawarra Historical Society*, Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin, April 1996, pp. 18-23. The article reported on a talk given to the Society by Andes Bofeldt, who then was a Technical officer with the Wollongong Shire Council, on vegetation in the Illawarra.

34 Ibid.

35 Navin, *op. cit.*, pp.35-36 especially, Bofeldt, *op. cit.* also mentions the sedentary nature of the Illawarra people that lived along the coast.

36 Griffin, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

37 Organ & Speechly, *op. cit.*, p. 13.



# Chapter Two

## Invasion: Europeans arrive and stay

The European invasion and settlement of the Illawarra has been destructive of Illawarra Aboriginal culture over two centuries, yet Aboriginal people have endeavoured to maintain meaningful relationships with their ancestral or adopted country. This process has been dynamic and complex as both Aboriginal and European societies adapted and evolved to the changing Australian Illawarra landscape.

### The competition for land and resources

Official European settlement of the Illawarra began in December 1816 once a Government land survey had been conducted. It is likely that Dr Charles Throsby moved cattle into the area in 1815 via the Bulli Pass with the assistance of stockman Joseph Wild<sup>1</sup> and two Aboriginal guides (possibly Bundle and Broughton). The first five land grants for the Illawarra were issued in late December 1817.

Year	Grantee	Area in acres	Place	Property name
1816	Cpt Richard Brooks	1300	Near Mullet Creek	Exmouth
1816	George Johnston snr.	1500	NW side Macquarie Rivulet	
1816	Andrew Allan	700	South side Macquarie Rivulet	
1816	Robert Jenkins	1000	NE end Lake Illawarra	Berkeley
1816	David Allan	2200	Red Point and Tom Thumb lagoon	





*Figure 11: Clearing at Berkeley and Dapto by 1867.  
('Lake Illawarra NSW' Eugene Von Guerard 1867, National Library of Australia)*

The granting of land to absentee landlords in the Illawarra marked the beginning of the official process of alienating Aboriginal people from their land. All grants fronted fresh water creeks or rivers which would have reduced Aboriginal people's access to fresh water and other resources in the vicinity of the rivers, creeks, lakes and beaches (see Figure 11). In addition the presence of cattle would have discouraged kangaroos and wallabies from their habitual grazing lands which were maintained by Aboriginal mosaic burns<sup>2</sup>. Settlement intensified in the 1820s when McBrien

surveyed a further 7000 acres of grants from Bulli to the Minnamurra River, the townships of Wollongong and Kiama were planned and Robert Jenkins extended his Illawarra holdings to 32,000 acres.<sup>3</sup>

- 
- 1 Possibly Ugo/Yewga alias Joe Wild of the Winjecarrabe/Berrima tribe and living at Mittagong in November 1836, wife Gralin alias Polly (Organ 1990: 211).
  - 2 Bennett, M. (2002: 3-4).
  - 3 Bennett, M. (2002: 6).



*Figure 12: Clearing of rainforest at American Creek (now the suburb of Figtree) 1860s. Species described for this forest in the caption accompanying the painting are 'the lofty bangalow palm, cabbage palm, the gigantic wild fig tree, the fire tree ..., the nettle tree, the rose-wood, the sassafras, the white-wood, the wild rose, numerous varieties of fern tree and parasites [vines] innumerable; the whole thing being woven into a dense and almost impenetrable mass of foliage'. ('American Creek Illawarra', Eugene Von Guerard 1867, National Library of Australia)*

European settlement had profound environmental impacts. The introduction of strange plants and animals impacted on existing vegetation and reduced access to fresh water and marine resources. These events challenged the finely balanced social order and distribution of resources among the Aboriginal groups across the colony. One outcome of this process was to put pressure on group borders and political alliances such that animosity between political and cultural affiliates increased. Historical accounts describe enmities between the Illawarra Dharawal speakers and the Bong Bong, Broughton Creek, Kiama and



Shoalhaven (see Figure 2: page 8) Dharawal speakers in the early contact period.

Not only did the European population increase but greater areas of the more fertile tracts of land back from the coast were cleared of natural vegetation to make way for mixed farming and, to the south west in particular, dairying. Coal mining in the region became a commercial enterprise resulting in an influx of non-farming Europeans to the Illawarra.<sup>4</sup> The greater concentration of Europeans occupying even larger areas of cleared land reduced the Illawarra Aboriginal people's capacity to traverse or occupy these areas in the manner they had previously done.

The Battle of Fairy Meadow (refer to Figure 3: folded map) occurred in 1830 following the abduction of a Bong Bong Dharawal woman by Dr Ellis, a Bong Bong man who was living in the Illawarra at the time. European observer Martin Lynch, who claimed to have witnessed the battle, reported that;

*The Bong Bong blacks came down the mountain range from their own country, making the descent opposite Dapto, to wage war with the Illawarra tribe, at whose hands they sustained defeat in the pitched battle as stated - the survivors returning again by the same route over the mountain to Bong Bong to tell their tales of blood and daring deeds by the way.*

The ensuing battle lasted for three days and nights with the warriors using their traditional weaponry of 'mostly spears, "nullah-nullahs", and "waddies" of one shape or another'. Both Bong Bong and Illawarra groups were reported as numbering 1500 with 100 deaths and many wounded, the dead being buried on Fairy Creek at 'the bottom of Townsend's paddock'.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 13: Breastplate of Geroone, Chief of Unanderaa (Engraved brass pre 1842, National Museum of Australia)

In 1842 the Illawarra was the scene of another battle involving Geroone alias Charley Hooka (see Figure 13 and Figure 3: folded map). It has been suggested that Hooker Creek and Kanahooka were named after Geroone, however, it is more likely that he was named for the land for which he was custodian or that he habitually camped on.<sup>6</sup> While a number of sources record that the battle ended in the death of Geroone theories about the means and reason for his death are various. The better known version is that Geroone was killed when the 'Broughton Creek tribe' came to the Illawarra to protest the invasion of white settlers.

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- 4 Cousins, Arthur, *The Garden of New South Wales: A history of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven Districts, 1770-1900*, Illawarra Historical Society, 1994.
  - 5 Martin Lynch to Archibald Campbell, published in the *Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin* and in *Organ* (a) *op. cit.*, p. 159.
  - 6 Examples from the south east include Manaroo Harry, Parramatta Tom, Bemboka Tommy and Bumarra Charley. This European naming system distinguished the many Toms, Jackeys, Jimmys and Charleys from one another for the benefit of European employers as the Aboriginal names were too difficult to distinguish and pronounce.

Geroone had become embroiled in battle with this group as he attempted to defend the European settlement because, according to European accounts, he had become '...a staunch ally and loyal friend to the white settlers...'.<sup>7</sup> The battle between the Hooka warriors and the 'Broughton Creek tribe' is said to have taken place at what is now Albion Park and that the Hooka were 'victorious':

*Early in the morning the tribes gave battle. All day long they fought and at night they retired south leaving the place in charge of the victorious Hooka tribe.*<sup>8</sup>

Geroone lost his life in the battle and was taken to the shores of Lake Illawarra by his supporters and buried at Kanahooka Point.<sup>9</sup>

## Resistance

By comparison with their Dharawal neighbours to the north and west, and the Thurumba and Thoorga speakers to the south, there is no record of the Illawarra people defending their country with broad scale violence.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps they were deterred by the 'barbarity' of Europeans who attacked and killed some of their Dharawal neighbours at Appin in 1816. However Dharawal people carried out some homicides and regular persistent disruptive practices such as theft and intimidation designed to deter Europeans from staying and occupying the land.

Europeans were killed when travelling but these instances were rare and confined to the first decade of European settlement in New South Wales. The killings were reputedly carried out not by Illawarra people but by a northern Dharawal man from Botany Bay named Dilba, while visiting his neighbours to the south.<sup>11</sup> But it

is unlikely that he acted in isolation as the Illawarra and Botany Bay Dharawal had close cultural and familial ties.

In 1797 the *Sydney Cove* was exploring the south coast of Australia and became wrecked at the Furneaux Islands in Bass Strait. Seventeen survivors boarded the ship's longboat and head for Sydney in search of help. The longboat was washed ashore at Twofold Bay (Eden) leaving the crew to walk to Sydney. By the time they reached Jervis Bay two months later only six men were alive, the others having perished from exhaustion and starvation. Upon nearing Mount Kembla, one of the survivors, the ship's mate, had become so fatigued that he suggested a rest. The ship's carpenter, concerned for the mate, agreed to stay with his fellow crew member to 'keep him company' while the others continued. Three months later Rev. Thomas Palmer recorded the story told to George Bass through an interpreter:

*The carpenter churlish as avaricious, and without sense or foresight, seized their fish, would give them nothing in return, and offended them so much, that the first mate, whom [the other crew members] were fond of, fell a victim of his folly and they both perished.*<sup>12</sup>

A number of other recorded challenges to European power by the Illawarra people involved the sabotage of European farming, which was carried out secretly so as to avoid punishment. The usual practice was to take crops and stock from Europeans. In 1822 the Seth Hawker Case, which involved the killing of an Illawarra woman for 'stealing', revealed that the 'theft' of corn and other produce from Europeans farmers was 'a big problem' and was widespread. William Neale, who with Seth Hawker had witnessed the taking of corn by the woman, also gave evidence suggesting that the taking



of '...corn and whatever they could get their hands on ... [was] ... so frequently repeated as to be a serious injury to the settler'.<sup>13</sup>

Historic court cases, such as the Seth Hawker case, exemplify the punitive actions of property overseers' attempts to prevent the stealing of corn and other crops. Hawker described shooting the thief several times before leaving her to be mauled by dogs and that he knew another Illawarra settler who '...had previously cut one of the Black natives hands off...' as a punishment for theft.<sup>14</sup>

In a second case in May 1833 at Minnamurra, it was reported that 'two blacks [were] found dead' following the spearing of a bullock. This echoed a third incident which took place further south at Murra Marang[sic] in 1832, where a number of 'blacks' were shot in retribution for the wounding of a dairy cow and the spearing of several head of cattle. European settlers at Minnamurra complained two years later (1834) of further stock losses and the theft of corn and potatoes.

*We, the Undersigned, have, for a long time past, suffered great and grievous losses from the depredations of the Black inhabitants of this quarter. We have not unfrequently, after our year's toil and anxiety, had the mortification of finding whole acres of our corn, swept away in one night by them, by them, we say, because the fact we can clearly ascertain by the peculiar prints of their feet. But although we have suffered much in the loss of all things out of the house, still we have suffered most in the loss of our pigs; of the two farm alone of Mr. Campbell and Mr. Hindmarsh, no less than twenty have been taken and destroyed in the last three months.*<sup>15</sup>

The Illawarra people used other forms of resistance to European power. Charles Throsby-Smith wrote that he cleared his land at Wollongong in the 1820s '... in defiance of the blacks, who at times were disposed to be very troublesome'.<sup>16</sup>

Another example of Aboriginal resistance to the European occupation of Illawarra land is given by Thomas Binskin when he gave evidence before the Seth Hawker case. He told the court that the stealing of corn was not the only way the 'natives' proved 'troublesome' and that without overt violence '... they have frequently threatened to kill me, to burn the wheat, and fire the house' and that '... about three months ago they forced me to dig up my potatoes for them, threatening to spear me if I did not. Yes I gave [potatoes] to them ....'<sup>17</sup>

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7 Mrs. E. Dollahan Papers, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 492, 494 & 496.

8 'Old Pioneer', *Illawarra Mercury*, quoted in *Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin*, October 1970, p. 5-6.

9 Ibid.

10 Conversely there is ample evidence of Europeans perpetrating violence against Aborigines. See for example, The O'Brien and Weston Case (1818) in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, pp. 101-103.

11 Matthew Flinders Account in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

12 Reverend Palmer's Letter, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 16.

13 The Deposition of John Neale, The Seth Hawker case, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 122.

14 The Deposition of Joseph Dansfield, Constable of the Five Islands, The Seth Hawker case, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 117.

15 'The Illawarra Blacks', *Sydney Monitor*, August 20, 1835, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 197.

16 Charles Throsby-Smith Reminiscences, *Illawarra Mercury*, October 3, 1876 transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 133.

17 Deposition of Thomas Binskin, The Seth Hawker case, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

In 1835 or 1836<sup>18</sup> the Illawarra Aboriginal inhabitants led a significant protest to save an 800 year old Moreton Bay fig tree on Byarong Creek (refer to Figure 3: folded map and Figure 14) from potential destruction.

*When the main South Coast Road was being built in the early 1800s the giant figtree was marked out for destruction. It was in the way of the proposed new road, and the overseer in charge of the gang of convicts building the road ordered it to be cut down. If any of them had any objection to destroying the tree, a refusal would have been in vain, and probably rewarded with a lash. So as the men sharpened their axes they were watched by scores of Aborigines camped in the vicinity. To them, the tree, probably a meeting place for hundreds of years was sacred. As the axes were sharpened the natives sharpened their spears. According to an account of the time, 'So desperate was their mood that the convict gang had to withdraw'. The road was diverted round the figtree leaving the giant to stand to give its name to the now expanding suburb of Figtree.<sup>19</sup>*

Both Aboriginal and European accounts tell of the protest to save the 'giant fig tree' which, Rev. Clarke recorded in 1839 as being venerated by the Aborigines as the place where Old Timbery<sup>20</sup> was born.

*...The fig tree for our family is known as the birthing tree. Great-great-grandfather [Old Timbery] was born under the fig-tree. And my family tell me that years ago families would travel along what is now the Princes Highway. Here and there were tracks on which they would travel from the Sydney area, travel up and down the coast. And this was one of the places that was used as a birthing tree because*



Figure 14: The ceremonial and birthing figtree at Figtree late 1800s, site of an 1835/36 environmental and cultural protest. (Illawarra Images)

*of its large size and the creek that's running beside it was useful for the family. Also I was told that there was a lot of food existing round [the fig tree site] as well.<sup>21</sup>*

The fig tree provided shelter to many homeless people during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the fires that were lit at its base during this time began significant scarring and ultimately fatal damage.<sup>22</sup> Cuttings of the original tree were taken in 1985 and nurtured by Wollongong Botanic Gardens so that when it was finally cut down in 1996 identical stock could replace the senescent tree. A small council park has been dedicated at the site of the original fig tree and the daughters of the tree have been planted out.<sup>23</sup>

## **Ongoing use of Illawarra environments**

Both historical and contemporary records confirm that the Illawarra people continued to assert the importance of the land to their culture following the arrival of Europeans. They harnessed the land's natural resources for both food and protection and maintained their spiritual connection with the land through ceremony and story.



The European observers who traversed the Illawarra from the late eighteenth century provide many accounts of Aboriginal people's use of the lakes, creeks and river systems. Bass and Flinders who 'explored' the Illawarra in 1796, noted that many 'natives' inhabited the Illawarra coast, especially at Lake Illawarra and Red Point. Near Red Point Bass fixed an oar with the help of several Aboriginal men and Flinders cut the beards of eleven or twelve elder men.<sup>24</sup> In 1823, Barron Field observed in detail the presence of Aboriginal people on the lake systems in the Illawarra.

*... this day we crossed the shallow entrance from the sea of Lake Illawarra – a large opening a little to the south of the Tom Thumb's Lagoon. The Lake was illustrated by natives in their canoes looking very characteristic and beautiful ...*<sup>25</sup>

Alexander Stewart who came to the Illawarra as a young convict in 1828 also recorded Aboriginal people's reliance on waterways as a means of providing their daily food requirements.

*The blacks were very numerous in the district at that time, especially about Tom Thumb Lagoon, Mullet Creek and the Lake [Illawarra], for they lived mostly on fish.*<sup>26</sup>

Another European account gives a more colourful description of how the Illawarra people continued to utilise Lake Illawarra and its islands in the early nineteenth century.

*In days gone by, though within the memory of the white men still living in the district, Charlie Hooka [the] King of Mullet Creek, used to hold his al fresco banquets there [Gooseberry Island], despite the jeering of the laughing jackass [kooaburra] that*

*looked down from the lofty branches of the exalted figtrees. Beneath the boughs of the Illawarra pine and the swampy oak King Jimmy, ruler of the Five Islands tribe, was entertained with his dusky followers by King Charlie and his black retinue and here Queen Polly was honored as an ethiopian Queen of Sheba. The salt water eels and the mullet from the lake, roasted in the wood ashes, were the delicacies with which Charlie placated his royal neighbours or won their affections, and the gins and piccaninnies, squatting under the huge nettle or tallow tree, came in for the unsucked fish bones that fell from the lordly fingers or royal jaws. Here King Charlie, sitting at the base of the only tamarind tree on the island (30 feet high and 8 inches through) used to view the corroborees and hold his powwows.*<sup>27</sup>

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18 'The Mount Keira Road and other coastal roads were laid out in 1835-1836 by convict labour'. [www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/localinfo/mtkeira/history.html](http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/library/localinfo/mtkeira/history.html)

19 *Illawarra Mercury* 8 July 1974.

20 'Old' Timbery was born circa 1782-4 and was father to Young Timbery born circa 1812.

21 Timbery, Jeff, *op. cit.*, p. 2

22 *Illawarra Mercury* 13 August 1996.

23 *Illawarra Mercury* 30 Jan 1998, 11 Feb 1998.

24 Bass and Flinders at Lake Illawarra, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11.

25 Field, Barron, 'Journal of an Excursion to the Five Islands and Shoalhaven', *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, John Murray, London, 1925, reproduced in Organ, M. (1990: 132)

26 Stewart, Alexander, 'Reminiscences', *Illawarra Mercury*, 1894, reproduced in Organ (a), *op. cit.* pp. 153-154.

27 "Boomerang", 'Lake Illawarra and its Islands', *Illawarra Newspaper Cuttings*, Vol. 78, Mitchell Library, Q981/N. It seems this account of the continued use of Gooseberry Island by the Illawarra people is somewhat embellished by the author who recorded these events many years later based on reminiscences.

The many small creeks throughout the Illawarra continued to be utilised. When reminiscing about 'early Illawarra' in the 1930s, Frank Wilkinson, remembered how the 'blacks were numerous on the south coast' and that '[t]he spear was a serviceable weapon, which brought to hand many a big fish in Mullett Creek'.<sup>28</sup> In 1848 Robert Westmacott published a sketch of 'Illawarra natives' fishing from Condon's Creek (Figure 6: page 11) using fish traps made from sticks and loosely woven fibre.

Artist John Skinner Prout painted an idyllic scene of an Illawarra family and fisherman at Tom Thumb's Lagoon in the early 1840s (Figure 7: page 11).<sup>29</sup> Aboriginal families continued to fish and camp at Tom Thumb Lagoon until at least 1914.<sup>30</sup> It was not until land in the vicinity of the lagoon was resumed by the Public Works Department in 1928 to make way for the development of Port Kembla Harbour that Aboriginal families left, albeit against their wishes.

The establishment of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB) in 1883, further modified the patterns of occupation. While the Board's rhetoric suggested that it sought to 'protect' Aboriginal people from the 'vices' of white society it also implied that Aboriginal people were inferior to Europeans due to the in which they used the land. Moreover, the APB suggested that Aboriginal people were 'a dying race' and that it must 'smooth the[i]r dying pillow' by offering small reserve areas where Aboriginal people could be supervised and were encouraged to become self-sufficient. This was to be achieved either by growing their own food in small garden plots or, as was the case in coastal areas, by fishing. APB policy makers believed that Aboriginal people benefited when the Board allocated reserves, and provided seed, gardening tools and, along the coast, fishing boats and nets.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 15: 1838 Wollongong Blanket Census camps (DEC)

In 1838 a census of Aborigines living in the Illawarra named 49 men, 25 women, 23 boys and 27 girls living in 19 different camps (Figure 15 and Table 2) and belonging to ten groups.<sup>32</sup> These were Wollongong (Woolungah), Kiama, Tom Thumb Lagoon (Tuckulung), Berawurra (now named Windang), Shellharbour (Wonwin), Bulli (Wangewarra), Dapto, Red Point (Djillawarra), Jamberoo and Taitpoly (place unknown), a total of 124. A south coast group usually numbered 70 or 80 (Hoben 1897). An analysis of this snapshot of the distribution of camps and their populations shows that the Thapma (Terry's Meadows near Albion Park) camp was largest with 20% of the Illawarra Aboriginal population at the time, followed by Mogumburra (Brownsville near Dapto) with 15% of the population and Kiama - Minnamurra with 11% and each of Illawarra (Red Point) and Berawurra (Windang) with 7%.



**Table 2:**  
**Age profile of groups in 1838 Wollongong Blanket Census (AO NSW 4/1133.3 in Organ 1990: 224-5)**

Name of Camp Age bracket (F and M)	Females						n.d.	Males						Total
	-14	-20	-30	-40	-50	-60		-14	-20	-30	-40	-50	-60	
1. Illawarra (Red Point)	2						2	2	1	2			2	11
2. Dabeta		2					2	1		2				7
3. Thapma (Terry's Meadows)	5		1	1			4	9	1	4		1	2	28
4. Hooker's Creek	1						2			2				5
5. Tuckulung (Tom Thumb Lagoon)							1			1				2
6. Juainbilliley (Stanwell Park)	1						1				1			3
7. Windang (Island)							1	2					1	4
8. Bawn (Mullet Ck)							1		1					2
9. Unanderra									2					2
10. Yallah							1		1	1				3
11. Corongang (Island)	1		1				1			1				4
12. Mogumburra (Brownsville)	5			2		2	4	3		3	1	1		21
13. Berawurra (Windang)	1		1				1	3	1	2		1	1	11
14. Kiama/Minnamurra	4				1		2	2	1	4		1		15
15. Wangewarra (Bulli)							1			2	1			4
16. Tongarra	1	1		1				2						5
17. Jamberoo	2	1		1										4
18. Wollongong	1	2		1				1	1					6
19. Lake Illawarra										1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>138</b>

28 Wilkinson, F. 'Reminiscences of Early Illawarra', *Illawarra Mercury*, February 8, 1935, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 380.

29 Sketch, Tom Thumb Lagoon, New South Wales in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 270.

30 Wakeman, *op. cit.*

31 See Aborigines Protection Board Annual Reports, 1880-1939.

32 This number may not reflect pre-European reality and is probably conservative. In 1829 E.D. Hoben noted 13 different groups between Kiama and Nowra (Hoben 1897).



*Figure 16: A group of Aborigines camped at Bass Point, Shellharbour, circa 1900 ('Australian Aborigines', Henry King collection, State library of NSW)*

There were three camps with only a couple (man and wife) or two men (Tuckulung, Bawn and Unanderra) and others with a couple and their single child or a couple and another man Juainbilliley (Stanwell Park alias Little Bulli) and Yallah. Another small camp (Corongang) consisted of one man two women and a daughter and the Bulli camp was made up of a married couple and two single men.<sup>33</sup> An analysis of the age distribution shows that there were relatively more children (36%) than any other age group, although the unnamed wives' ages are not given in the census which may add numbers to some of the other age brackets. Very few people (only 4%) were described as being in the 41 to 50 age group which could be explained by the susceptibility of children to small pox. This group would have been aged 1 to 8 years during the first epidemic of 1796. There were slightly more people in the 51 to 70 age bracket (6%) being

the knowledge holders of the community, people who had seen the first white people arrive and the changes brought to their land by cedar cutting, pastoralism and agriculture.

Sixty three years later the 1901 Commonwealth census gave a very different Aboriginal population distribution for the Illawarra. There were now only seven camps with populations based at Port Kembla (33), Minnamurra River (13), Dapto (8), Bombo (18), Gerringong (20), Jamberoo (3) and Kiama (3) making a total Illawarra Aboriginal population of 98.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the growth of European settlement into the late nineteenth century Aboriginal people continued to utilise the lakes, creeks and river systems. In the 1890s, when artist Francis Quafe visited the Illawarra he painted a watercolour of an Aboriginal group on the banks of Lake Illawarra. It is likely that the group he portrayed was, or was at least inspired by, the people that lived on a reserve set aside by the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) at Berawurra. The APB annual census for the Illawarra District fluctuated between 39 in 1891 and a peak of 71 in 1901.<sup>35</sup> But there were still 67 recorded for Port Kembla in 1914. The Protection Board established a reserve at Windang (Berawarrua) to accommodate Aboriginal people already living in the vicinity of its reserve. This group, reportedly 'headed by King Mickey', had also made application to the Aborigines Protection Board in 1883 for a boat so that they could continue to fish from the Lake.<sup>36</sup>

Aboriginal people also continued to live at the Minnamurra River into the twentieth century. The APB set aside the land on which they camped by the river in 1896.<sup>37</sup> However in 1898 the reserve was inundated by flood water and the APB's response was to revoke the reserve as it was perceived it to be of 'no use for the purpose for which it was set apart'.<sup>38</sup> The APB's

decision resulted in the movement of those Aboriginal people to nearby Kendall's Beach, at Kiama.<sup>39</sup> This move appears to have been temporary as the APB's records indicate that a number of Aborigines were back living at the Minnamurra River by 1899 and fishing from the boat it had provided.<sup>40</sup>

European accounts also record ongoing use of the sea, coastal shores, and rock platforms by Illawarra Aboriginal people. Bass and Flinders encountered 'natives' at Red Point in 1796 and 30 years later in 1823 Barron Field observed a group fishing.

*Went to see the natives fish by torchlight. They make torches of bundles of bark beaten and tied up and with the light of these scare the bream into motion that lie among the rocky shallows, when they either spear them with the fiz-gig, or drag them from under their hiding places with their hands, bite their heads, and throw them high and dry on the shore.<sup>41</sup>*

A London Missionary society delegation to the Illawarra in 1825 also found the Red Point area to be frequented by 'the natives' and noted in its report.

*One of the deputy-surveyors here informs us that the natives are, comparatively, numerous in the vicinity of the Five Islands ...<sup>42</sup>*

Other sources describe the use of other parts of the coastline for camping and fishing. For example, in 1838 Westmacott depicted Illawarra people along the coast including a camp at 'Bulli Bay' (see also Figure 15), hunters and their dwellings in the vicinity of Green Point near Coledale and two men '[on] the coast near Stanwell Park'.<sup>43</sup>

Reports from the 1850s onwards suggest that the Illawarra Aboriginal camps and much of their hunting became concentrated along the coast. This pattern was shaped by European settlement, which pushed Illawarra people to the fringes of their country where they occupied the land that was unsuitable for European farming; particularly the coast and swamps around Tom Thumb Lagoon.

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33 The men at this camp, Manggy (of Wangewarra or Bulli-Woonona) and Thomas Tommera (of Botany Bay), were both named as leaders of their groups in 1829.

34 44 females and 54 males (1901 Commonwealth Census).

35 Aboriginal families noted in the 1901 Commonwealth Census for Port Kembla were Ashmore, Bell, Duncan, Foster, Johnson, Judson, Longbottom, Phillips, Rowley, Sims. Families living at Bombo were Cummins, Matthews, Sutton and Walker. Families living at Coolangatta were Amatto, Ardler, Ferguson, Judson, Methven, Nipple and Steel. The Sutton family was at Kiama and the Campbell family at Dapto. Families at Roseby Park were Bundle and Carpenter (State Archives NSW).

36 Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, 'Boat to Aborigines, Illawarra', Letter 261, NSW State Records.

37 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, 1896, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1897*, (7 Vols.), Vol. VII, Government Printer, Sydney, 1897.

38 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, 1898, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1899*, (5 Vols.), Vol. V, Government Printer, Sydney, 1900.

39 'Old Kiama Boy', 'Reminiscences of Old Kiama', *Kiama Independent*, March 5, 1938.

40 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, 1899, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1900*, (6 Vols.), Vol. VI, Government Printer, Sydney, 1901.

41 Field, Barron, 'Journal of an Excursion to the Five Islands and Shoalhaven', *Geographical Memoirs on New South Wales*, John Murray, London, 1925, also reproduced in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 132.

42 Tyermann & Bennett, 'Information regarding the Aborigines of NSW - The Five Islands Tribes', in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 137.

43 Westmacott, *op. cit.*



Before the mid-nineteenth century, the Illawarra people continued to use the coastal plain and escarpment as they had always done and Europeans consistently relied on Dharawal knowledge of the hinterland. For example, when investigating plant species on the Illawarra escarpment botanist Allan Cunningham witnessed his guide kill a possum he 'espied' in a tree.<sup>44</sup> The London Missionary society in 1825 also noted how the 'natives' around the Five Islands utilised 'the woods'.

*When they discover a kangaroo feeding, one, expert at the practice, steals upon it by slow marches. The animal generally sits upon its haunches, but, when it feeds, stoops down with the head and short fore-legs to crop the grass. While in that position, the black man creeps gently towards the spot, and the moment the kangaroo raises its eye from the ground, he stands stock still. Appearing, probably, to the creature like a dark-coloured stump of a tree, of which there are many in the woods, it continues to feed, without fear – he always moving a few steps while it is looking down, and becoming motionless as soon as it looks up. He thus gradually approaches, and at length comes within the cast of a spear from his victim. It is fate is almost then inevitable.<sup>45</sup>*

In 1827, artist Augustus Earle depicted an Aboriginal group camped in forested Country in the Illawarra.<sup>46</sup> Alexander Stewart witnessed 'a tribal gathering' at Spring Hill, located west of Tom Thumb Lagoon.<sup>47</sup> The 'gins' Alexander Harris noted crossing Mullet Creek to the west of Lake Illawarra would also have visited the nearby forests to collect plant materials and fruit. In 1831 Henry Osbourne made a number of observations of a group of Illawarra people who



Figure 17: Breastplate of Joe Timbery, 'Chief of the Five Islands'. The breast plate was unearthed at the old Aboriginal Reserve, La Perouse (Australian Museum).

camped on even higher ground at Marshall Mount<sup>48</sup> as were the 'blacks' 'Mr. James' remembered camped at Mount Kembla on the 'banks of American Creek', and 'in considerable numbers'.<sup>49</sup> It was during this period that European 'pioneers' have recalled that Berkeley had been the 'domain' of 'old Joey Timbery', who, like a number of other Aboriginal elders, was given the title of 'King' (Figure 17).<sup>50</sup> Mr James, also recalled 'a big camp of blacks on the [Berkeley] Estate around 1840'.<sup>51</sup> Mr McMahon, reminiscing of days past in 1924, reportedly;

*ha[d] a clear memory of the blacks camped at Fairy [Para] Creek about 60 years ago [circa 1864]. The tribe consisted of about 50 people – adults, females and juveniles. They were nomadic in their habits and camped at different places on the Coast, their favourite camping places being Fairy Creek and at Corrimal, up in the mountain range, above Dr. Cox's residence. At the latter place they used to hunt for wallabies along the mountain range.<sup>52</sup>*

## Movement

The movement of Aboriginal people throughout the Illawarra and into neighbouring countries along traditional migratory routes for visits, trade, messages or gatherings continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Barron Field noted in 1823 that a group of the 'Five Island's tribe' were at Botany Bay to participate in 'a ceremony in which a number of Aboriginal men and women were publicly admonished and punished for the breaking of certain tribal laws'.<sup>53</sup> Further sources suggest that the close connection between the Illawarra and Gameygal (Botany Bay) Dharawal, evidenced by their shared ceremonial traditions, included trade, intermarriage and common language.<sup>54</sup>

The Illawarra and Gameygal connections were misunderstood by the APB when it was established in 1883. In 1882 the Protector of Aborigines reported that members of the La Perouse camp, 'were continually going to and from one camp to the other, and were occasionally visited by aboriginals from Wollongong, Georges River and Burragorang'.<sup>55</sup> In 1902 the APB complained of the continued presence of Aborigines from the Illawarra and other localities at the La Perouse settlement. It was suggested that the visitors only came to take advantage of the generous rations and other provisions provided to the La Perouse camp due to its proximity to Sydney.<sup>56</sup>

The Illawarra people also received visits from their neighbours to the north, south and west. Perhaps the London Missionary delegation in 1825 referred to the visits of the 'Hinterland Dharawal', when it recorded that, '[t]hey come from the interior, to the above mentioned quarter of the coast, to obtain fish,

oysters, water fowl and grubs, &c'.<sup>57</sup> Mrs. Dollahan, who had acquaintances that lived at Bulli between 1826 and 1833, recorded aspects of the journey of the 'mountain tribe' in greater detail describing a leg of the Dharawal's journey that routinely took approximately the route of the current Bulli Pass.

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44 Diary of Allan Cunningham, Reel 46 & 47, NSW State Records, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

45 London Missionary Society, *op. cit.*

46 'A Bivouac in New South Wales, daybreaking', Watercolour, cited in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 152.

47 Stewart, A., 'Reminiscences', Illawarra Mercury, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 153.

48 Osbourne, Henry, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 171.

49 Mr. James, 'Old Pioneer Series', Series No. 59, Illawarra Mercury, 22 November 1924, in Organ (a) *op. cit.* p. 375.

50 Environmental Heritage Committee, *Nudjia – A Link in Early Illawarra*, n.d., p. 13.

51 Mr. James, *op. cit.*

52 'Old Pioneer Series', Series No. 59, 22 November 1924, in Organ (a) *op. cit.* pp. 375-376.

53 Field, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

54 Illert, C., 'Section A, Traditional Tribal Boundaries within Illawarra's Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) area', Confidential Report, November 2003, p. 1.

55 Report of the Protector of Aborigines to 31 December, 1882, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1883*, Vol. III, Government Printer, 1883, p. 4.

56 Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, 1902, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1903*, (7 Vols.), Vol. II, Government Printer, Sydney, 1904, p. 4.

57 London Missionary Society in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, pp. 137-138.

*On their journey to the South Coast the tribe sent a runner to her [Mrs. Dollahan's acquaintance] father's house to notify him that they were coming as the home was on the path to the mountain top. The family on receiving the news from the runner of the tribe, would boil a burley pot of rice, adding brown sugar. The natives liked this dish and the old lady who told me said the tribe would yell and dance round the pot and lick it so clean it would shine.<sup>58</sup>*

The tradition of Aboriginal people from the Sydney region travelling to the Illawarra has been unbroken from the late eighteenth century to the present day. The people that Bass and Flinders met in 1796 when they came ashore at the Five Islands '... informed us they were not natives of this place, but of Broken and Botany Bays ...'.<sup>59</sup> Mrs Dollahan noted in the mid-nineteenth century that '[n]atives came from *up* [my italics] the coast and camped near Bulli Pass'.<sup>60</sup> More recent accounts of the Sydney people's visits to the Illawarra are given by Aboriginal people in their oral histories (for example Wakeman 1987 & Duren 1987).<sup>61</sup>

European recorders also describe shorter journeys made within Illawarra territory. For example, McMahon reminisced that the 'blacks [who] camped at Fairy [Para] Creek ... were nomadic in their habits and camped at different places on the coast ...'.<sup>62</sup> 'Old Kiama Boy' also wrote about camps at Minnamurra and that they 'frequently move from one place to another and then back again'.<sup>63</sup> Regular movement through their territory continued well into the twentieth century and stories of those journeys survive in the oral histories of contemporary Aboriginal people. For example, Joan Wakeman, great-granddaughter of Rosie and Mickey Johnson, has described the way her mother (Mary Kearney) moved frequently between Gerringong, (where she was born) and Port Kembla.

*Mum used to go walk-about in the area where the Steelworks are now.[She] used to have a walkabout tent, [and] never used to carry things with her. She had a tent here and a tent there, this was all the way down to Gerringong and back.<sup>64</sup>*

Jeff Timbery, great-great-grandson of Old Timbery, has been passed down the story about the travel route used by his grandfather between his camp at Mt Keira (Figure 18) and the beach at north Wollongong.

*My aunty tells me that Mt Keira was one of my grandfather's camping areas. It was up at Mt Keira and he travelled down when he wanted to go down to the [salt] waters, travelled down to Wollongong.<sup>65</sup>*



Figure 18: Mt Keira before the Princes Highway was sealed (Illawarra Images).

## Maintaining knowledge and customs

In addition to Aboriginal people's occupation and hunting techniques, Europeans also witnessed traditions that had developed in the thousands of years that Aborigines had lived in the Illawarra. Barron Field noted a number of ingenious uses of the cabbage tree palm: '[n]atives make their water buckets, by tying up each end [of the cabbage tree palm frond] like their



bark canoes... and of the leaves they make hats and thatch'.<sup>66</sup> They also straddled the long slender trunks across creeks to make bridges. 'The agility and ease with which the blacks trot across these cabbage tree bridges is quite astonishing; even the gins (women) with their piccanninnies on their backs seem to cross quite at ease'.<sup>67</sup> George French-Angas wrote of the way in which Aboriginal people climbed a cabbage tree palm near Dapto in 1845.

*There is a grove of cabbage tree palms on the margin of a small stream close to this spot, and it was amusing to witness the dexterity with which the natives climb the branchless and smooth trunks of these trees, by means of a notched stick, and occasionally with no other assistance than a piece of vine or supple jack, which they draw tight round the tree.*<sup>68</sup>

Backhouse's observations of the inhabitants of the Marshall Mount Camp in 1831 described women's hair ornaments made of kangaroo teeth and noted that they applied wax to their hair.<sup>69</sup> However, French-Angas saw the 'native' women at Dapto wearing waratah flowers.<sup>70</sup> Women collecting their annual issue of government blankets (usually in May) at Kiama were seen wearing their traditional possum skin cloaks, some with a baby enfolded.<sup>71</sup> Europeans also witnessed that it was women who made fish hooks from abalone or turban shells (Figure 8).

The division of labour between Aboriginal women's and men's work was witnessed but probably misunderstood. Some early observers assumed that women carried food and other items because their society was patriarchal and those tasks were 'menial' and therefore undesirable. However, Rev. Clarke learned in 1840 that collecting shell fish was



Figure 19: The annual distribution of blankets – place unknown, NSW – Kerry photo, Sydney.

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- 58 'Campbelltown to Coast Tribe', E. Dollahan Papers, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 495.
- 59 Bass and Flinders at Lake Illawarra, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 60 Dollahan, *op. cit.*
- 61 See for example, Wakeman, *op. cit.*; *Aboriginal Women's Heritage*, *op. cit.*; Duren, Lou, in *Noongaleek*, *op. cit.*, p. 25-33.
- 62 McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 376.
- 63 'Old Kiama Boy', *op. cit.*
- 64 Wakeman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 65 Timbery, Jeff, *op. cit.*
- 66 Field, *op. cit.*
- 67 Harris, Alexander, from *Settlers and Convicts*, in Organ (a), *op. cit.* p. 163.
- 68 French-Angas, 'Journey to Illawarra District – Liverpool – Campbelltown – Apen [sic] – Illawarra – Dapto – Wollongong', in *Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, Smith and Elder co. London, 1850.
- 69 Backhouse, in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 205.
- 70 French-Angas, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
- 71 'Old Kiama Boy', *op. cit.* One of these cloaks was made by Percy Mumbler of kangaroo skin and is held by the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.



Figure 20: Worromball alias Old Frying Pan of Thapma (Terry's Meadows) (1844 John Skinner Prout, British Museum of Natural History)

traditionally a woman's task after asking Frying Pan<sup>72</sup> (Figure 20) to 'catch me some Dildils – a huge prawn abounding here...'. Frying Pan responded 'angrily' saying, 'only women [take] them, men catch nothing but with the spear'.<sup>73</sup>

Aboriginal women who grew up in the Illawarra in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were taught the skills of shellfish harvesting from their mothers.<sup>74</sup> Joan Wakeman described her mother harvesting from Tom Thumb Lagoon even after the Aborigines were moved from this area to make way for the development of Port Kembla.

*... [M]um used to go in there and get cockles and mussels. She used to have long dresses in those days, she used to haul her dress up and go in there and get whatever we needed, fish, everything out of there.*<sup>75</sup>

Europeans also recorded the Illawarra people using soft bark to pad the ground and provide a waterproof and insulating layer.

*One species of Eucalyptus, stringy bark, is eminently suitable for this purpose. Its thick bark – 2 to 3 inches – is easy to peel off. The natives do this with great skill and speed. They begin by cutting a circle round the tree with diagonal cuts like these: VV using their Tomahawk, then they cut in a vertical straight line as high as they can reach and from there, by using small notches cut into the bark for their big toes, they climb whatever height they wish to peel the bark off the tree, cutting through the bark all the way then cutting a horizontal line round the tree, as lower down. To do this they swing their hatchet ... with a peculiar cross stroke above their heads.*<sup>76</sup>

Backhouse was surprised that his guide preferred to sleep under 'a couple of sheets of bark' than sleep in the shelter of a European hut.<sup>77</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century European accounts describe Illawarra ceremonies (Figure 21). In 1840 Rev. Clarke attended a 'Corrobery' 'called by the Sydney blacks' and attended by 'blacks' from Kiama, Wollongong, Liverpool, Brisbane Water (Gosford) and Newcastle. Among Clarke's many observations was the decorating of their bodies with clay.

*[D]aubing themselves over with white pipe clay, which they first chewed to make soft, and red ochre etc. [t]hey lay on their backs forming bands of white over their chests, arms and legs, and then they rubbed each others backs with red-ochre.*<sup>78</sup>

Clarke gave long descriptions of the chanting that occurred before a number of dances were performed: '... one at a time, they advanced, opened their legs, stood perfectly erect and stiff, and jerked the whole body by a violent muscular movement in and out by the knees'.<sup>79</sup> Mr. Turkington recalled how 'between



Figure 21: Nine men and five women. The men are in corroboree paint and include King Mickey Johnson (left with breast plate) and William Buthong alias Madbili (right with breastplate). Possibly taken in 1896 when Mickey received a breastplate from Archibald Campbell MLA. (Samuel Cock's Collection, UOW Archives)

the years 1829 and 1838 he [had] seen as many as 400 natives in a corroboree in Illawarra'.<sup>80</sup> As late as the 1870s, Frank Wilkinson witnessed a gathering of Illawarra Aboriginal people at Unanderra:

*Never will I forget their holding a corroboree ... In England ... I had been frightened of the gypsies, but those painted blacks, with their spears, boomerangs, woomera and paddy melon sticks, made me hide out.*<sup>81</sup>

72 Worromball alias Frying Pan of the Thapma (Terry's Meadows) group was born circa 1786-99 and had one wife in 1834-36. He was still alive in 1844 (Organ 1990: 185, 199, 223, 269).

73 Clarke, *op. cit.*

74 Wakeman, Joan, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Davis, Muriel, & Timbery-Bennett, Rita, in *Aboriginal Women's Heritage Wollongong*, *op. cit.*, p. 3 & 4 & p. 45.

75 Wakeman, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

76 Von Huegel, Baron, *Journal of a visit to New Holland 1833-34*, in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 84.

77 Backhouse in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 205.

78 Clarke, W.B. 1840 in Organ 1990: 251. Crinjila was named as a source of white pipeclay for body paint (Kiama Police 1899).

79 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

80 McCaffery, Francis, 'Notes on the Illawarra', located in University of Wollongong Archives, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 484.

81 Wilkinson, *op. cit.*



Ceremonial meetings involving the Illawarra people and their neighbours were not always peaceful. In 1828 Alexander Stewart described a gathering of 'blacks' at Spring Hill that was organised to administer punishment to 'one of their number' 'for taking away another man's gin':

*'[t]hey were all painted, after the fashion of savage warriors, with pipeclay, and they wore feathers and other things to give them a warlike look. On enquiry I found the culprit was to stand a certain number of spears being thrown at him. This was his punishment. The man whose gin was taken was the man who threw the spears. The culprit was allowed a shield behind which he could nearly hide himself.'*<sup>82</sup>

The 'culprit' was able to successfully defend himself from the 'dozen' spears thrown at him and '[w]hen the darkness came on they held a corroboree. The gins played on sticks and sang, and the blackfellows danced'.<sup>83</sup>

Contemporary custodians of Illawarra cultural knowledge have described their struggle to retain and recover knowledge as colonial processes eroded the inter-generational links on which the continuity of knowledge relied. While disease seems to have impacted considerably on Aboriginal family structures, the historic record suggests that the disruption caused to Aboriginal families by the APB was a major stress. The APB's endorsement of bureaucratic intervention in the lives of all Aboriginal families included the policy of the removal of children from their families to break the cultural knowledge cycle.

Despite resistance by Illawarra Aboriginal people to the policy of removing children<sup>84</sup> the task of maintaining culture was severely challenged. Their lives were so changed by the European occupation of their lands and the imposition of European culture, that there was

a need to adapt cultural practices and devise new ways of expressing Illawarra Dharawal culture.

Despite these challenges Illawarra people continued to pass on their cultural knowledge during the nineteenth century through song and dance in corroboree and by narrating stories not only to their own people but also to Europeans. In the mid-1850s 'Clio' reported the first hand narration of Billen Billen Island – otherwise known as *The Story of the Whale and the Starfish*.

*I used to listen with great interest to their curious legends of the past, handed down from generation to generation. In reading them they lose much of what is most interesting, for the blacks illustrate their tales by imitating the cries of animals and birds, and their peculiar habits. They would become also greatly excited, and their manner while telling their tales was most impressive.*<sup>85</sup>

In the late nineteenth century Andrew Mackenzie recorded a number of Illawarra stories including *The Spirit of the Fig Tree* and *The Story of Bundoola*. Several decades later, in the early twentieth century, Ellen Anderson narrated a number of stories to amateur writer C.W. Peck which he later published in *Australian Legends* (1925, 1933) (Appendix 2).

Many Illawarra traditional stories appear to emanate from European authors because culture was sustained through oral tradition and from the 1850s the notion that Aboriginal people were a 'dying race' began to take hold in the colony. In response, some Europeans moved to document Aboriginal culture believing that the language and customs would 'disappear'. Thus Europeans sought to locate authentic Aboriginal informants and interrogate them about their culture. The recording of traditional stories was particularly attractive to journalists and amateur ethnographers,

as they appealed to a broad colonial audience. The Illawarra people's proximity to Sydney and their remoteness from the 'contaminating influences' of city life, made them an attractive subject for study by ethnographers and linguists.

The collected word lists were another way of documenting Illawarra culture. For example, lists were published with English translations by Reverend Ridley and Miss. A. Brown in the late nineteenth century. They give some sense of the cultural knowledge Illawarra elders maintained in the face of increasing stress<sup>86</sup> and also reflect the reductionist framework in which late nineteenth century researchers worked when documenting other cultures. These lists do not reflect the strong relationship between language and landscape perceived by Andrew MacKenzie, a visiting geologist to the Illawarra, in the early 1870s.

*The proverb that "no stone is without a name", if true of any Country is especially so of Australia. Not a point or inlet, knoll or dell, glade or thicket, rock or rivulet, [is unknown] but was designated in the language, and faithfully delineated in the memory of the ancient inhabitants.*<sup>87</sup>

## Burials

Throughout the nineteenth century Illawarra people continued to bury their deceased kin in traditional places and manner. As noted above, in 1830 Martin Lynch had witnessed the burial of '[a]bout 70 men ... killed in the battle [of Fairy Meadow] ... [who] were buried in the Tea Tree Scrub between the site of the battle and the sea (between the two arms of Fairy Creek)'.<sup>88</sup> While, according to Lynch, the burial location was 'not the usual locality for internment by the blacks', it is consistent with other Illawarra burial localities in that 'the graves were dug along the bank

of [a] creek, which was somewhat sandy, the depth of each being about three or four feet'. Lynch recorded that burials were also placed along '[t]he sand banks, near Tom Thumb Lagoon, Bellambi and Towradgi'. His assertion, that '[a]s a rule they did not desire white people to know where they (the blacks) buried their dead, but after the district became somewhat settled their burials could not be kept secret', suggests that Europeans witnessed burials in these places.<sup>89</sup>

The graves of those killed at Fairy Meadow included the placing of objects in the grave and is typical of other Australian Aboriginal cultures.

*The blankets, tomahawks, "billy" cans and all other articles ... were buried with them, some wood also being placed on top of the corpse. The explanation given by the survivors was that the wood and other articles would be required by the departed "in another Country".*<sup>90</sup>

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82 Stewart, *op. cit.*

83 Stewart, *op. cit.*

84 The removal of children was supported by 1909 legislation in The Aborigines Protection Act which was later amended, broadening the powers of the APB.

85 Clio, Billen Billen Island, An Aboriginal Legend, original located in Mitchell Library, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 11. While the real author was almost certainly male, Clio is the Muse of History, who was a goddess, therefore I have referred to *she*.

86 Brown, Miss., A., 'Aboriginal Words and meanings', *Science of Man*, Vol. 2, no. 8, September 1899; Ridley, Reverend William, in Curr, *The Australian Race*, pp. 417-419.

87 Andrew MacKenzie to the Colonial Secretary, in Special Bundles, Reports from Rev. W. Ridley on Aboriginal language and customs, 1871-75, NSW State Records, 4/788.2.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

89 Martin Lynch to Archibald Campbell, *op. cit.*

90 *Ibid.*

During the mourning and burial activities at Fairy Creek, Lynch also noted distinctive outward signs of mourning: '[t]he blacks carrying out the burials and the deceased's relatives used to stripe their bodies and heads and necks and limbs with pipeclay, as marks of mourning for the departed.'<sup>91</sup> (Figure 22). Westmacott observed in 1848 that: 'When they mourn for one of their tribe or go to war, they smear their bodies with pipeclay and a yellow pigment they make from the bark of trees.'<sup>92</sup>

European accounts of the death of Geroone alias Charley Hooker suggest that he was given a traditional burial. The version of the story which suggests that he was killed at Albion park reveals that, '[u]nder the crown of ... a hillock of sand ... [o]n the opposite side of Hooka Creek to Dapto ... lies the remains of King Hooka'.<sup>93</sup> Reportedly Geroone had been brought to his resting place by his fellow warriors '[b]ack along the same bush track [that was taken to the battle.] the warriors marched on their return, bearing the almost lifeless body of their King. Their return was in silence, only the muffled sound of naked tramping feet signalled their return.'<sup>94</sup> Another version which states that Geroone was killed by two local men suggests that, '[t]he body was buried by the remnant of his tribe according to Aboriginal custom the place of the burial being Lang's Point, Illawarra Lake immediately opposite to the Hooka Islands...'<sup>95</sup>

In the 1920s E. H. Weston recalled other aspects of Illawarra burial traditions after witnessing the funeral of Tullimbar on the Macquarie Rivulet at Albion Park in the late nineteenth century.

*An Aboriginal funeral is a queer affair. They always shift their camp directly a member of the tribe dies; the body is then rolled in a sheet of bark and carried to the burial place. It takes them hours to go a short*

*distance, as they go forward, then back, then zig-zag, and turn round and round repeatedly ...*<sup>96</sup>

The *Illawarra Mercury* reported on the funeral of "Black Betsy" which took place '... on the banks of Berkeley Creek [and] that, her body was '... neatly lashed up in two sheets of bark by means of bands of stringy bark. Around the rude binding "sheets" and their contents, were placed at some distance a considerable quantity of logs &c.'. Betsy's possessions were placed in the grave beside her, 'The grave was then filled in carefully by alternate layers of clay and wood, the latter having been provided and cut in proper lengths for the occasion.'<sup>97</sup> Mr. James' recollection that she was buried at the Berkeley Estate, a place '... where some 200 blacks are buried', suggests that Betsy's interment on the Berkeley Creek marked a larger significant burial place.<sup>98</sup>

By 1835, the end of the second decade of European settlement in the Illawarra, Aboriginal people realised that the Europeans had come to stay. European migrants continued to arrive into all parts of the Dharawal countries, some of them in chains or as indentured servants to British or Scottish bosses. The strategies of guerilla war had failed to rid the country of the invaders and the Dharawal had incurred heavy loss of life through disease and fatal wounds. It was time to implement strategies for coping with the process of the colonisation of Dharawal lands.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>92</sup> Westmacott 1848 in Organ 1990: 221, 223.

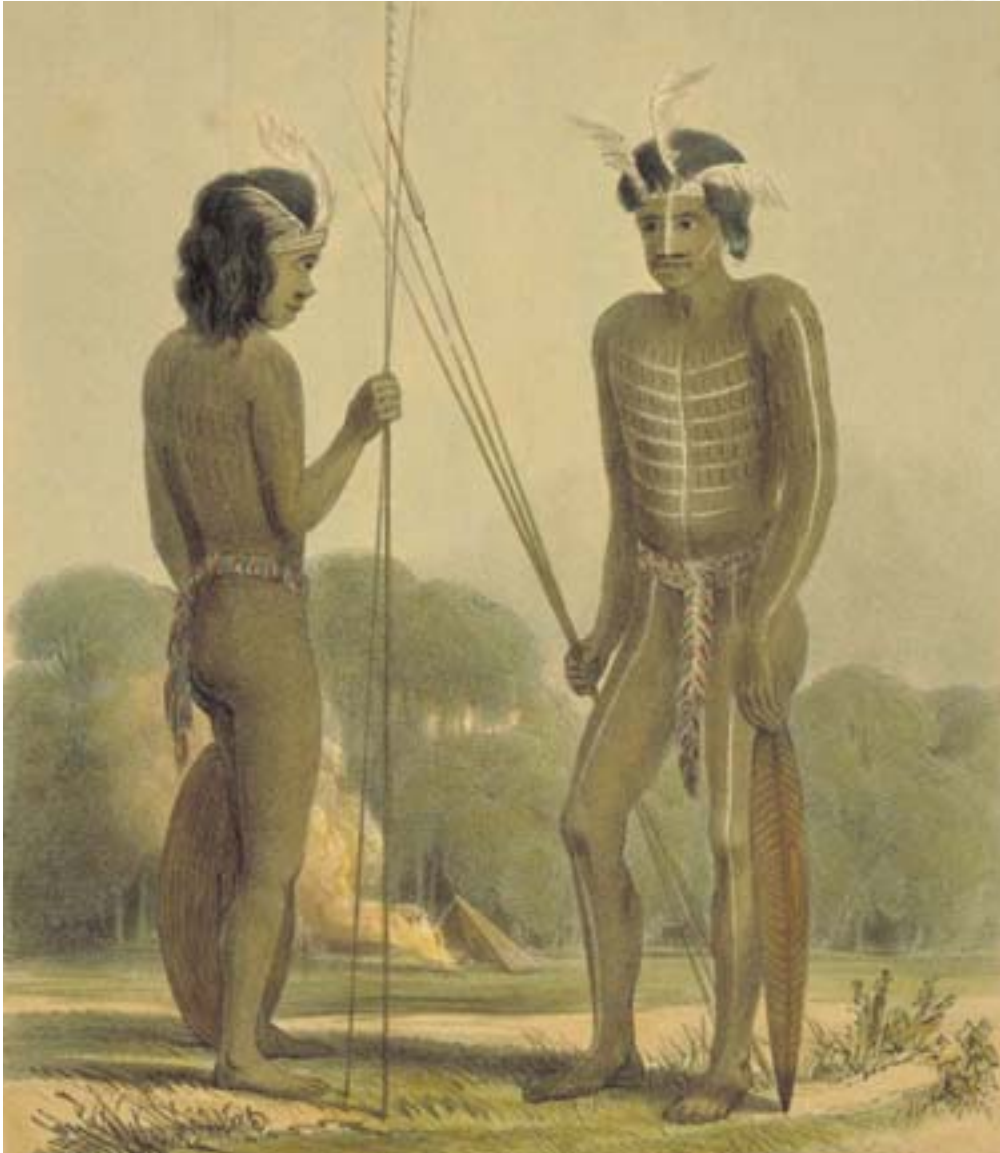
<sup>93</sup> 'Old Pioneer', (November 1970) *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> 'Old Pioneer', (October 1970) *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> 'Old Pioneer', (November 1970) *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>96</sup> Weston, E. H, *Reminiscences of an Australian Pioneer*, n.d., re-printed in *Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin*, July, 1976, p. 46.





97 'Report on an Aboriginal funeral at Berkeley Creek', *Illawarra Mercury*, August 4, 1871, transcribed in Organ(b), pp. 134-135.

98 For Mr. James' account see 'Reminiscences by Old Pioneer', in Organ (a), op. cit., p. 375.

Figure 22: Two men in mourning costume with battle shields and spears. ('Natives in deep mourning', Capt. Robert Westmacott circa 1848 National Library of Australia)



# Chapter Three

## Strategies for coping; taking on some European practices

### Employment

By participating in paid work, including work for the exchange of goods and cash, Illawarra people sought to share in the economic and social structures of the new European society as a way to keep or gain a place in that society – albeit an unequal one. They took on employment as guides and farm labourers as another way of retaining important family and place associations.<sup>1</sup>

Working as guides for cedar cutters and 'explorers' was one of the first employment roles the Illawarra men performed for Europeans in exchange for goods or money. Most of the men who worked as guides undertook work within the boundaries of their country, with some moving to areas just beyond. In 1812 Bundle accompanied Surveyor G. W. Evans on an overland trip from Jervis Bay to Appin.<sup>2</sup> Again in 1815, Bundle accompanied and supported Charles Throsby to the Illawarra from Cumberland bringing the first herd of cattle by land into the region. In 1818 Bundle also guided Charles Throsby and Surveyor James Meehan from Liverpool to Jervis Bay through Moss Vale, just skirting Dharawal territory. Alexander Harris in 1830 recorded that he '... strolled off one morning with the chief of a partly civilized tribe of aborigines as my guide' to 'explore' the coast around Stanwell Park and Coalcliff.<sup>3</sup> In 1833 Timothy<sup>4</sup> showed Europeans the route 'across the Mountain ... to assist in getting the harvest' out of the Illawarra to either Parramatta or Campbelltown. In the 1850s Dr. Ellis not only guided William Macarthur through the 'rainforest-brush' of the Illawarra escarpment near Jamberoo to view and record botanical specimens, but was also able to inform Macarthur of their corresponding 'aboriginal' names.<sup>5</sup>

Aboriginal guides provided valuable assistance to Europeans and without them expeditions were likely to have been less successful or to have failed altogether. Guiding enabled Aboriginal men to remain in or near their own country, and the men's knowledge of the country made them efficient and effective guides.



Not only did guiding work enable them to retain important place and family associations but also to gain the rewards that European cash or goods offered. In the colony at this time it was not common for Aboriginal men to be paid with tomahawks and tobacco but Illawarra men usually received blankets or clothing for services. These items were highly valued by Aboriginal people, especially in the early and mid-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Though guides were usually paid in goods, evidence suggests that by the 1830s, the Illawarra people regularly used and (understood the power of) European money.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Throsby rewarded Bundle for his services as a guide, with a blanket and 'slop clothing'. The Wollongong Police issued Timothy with a blanket as well as a pair of 'trowsers'.<sup>8</sup> Payment by Harris and Macarthur to their guides is unrecorded, but in 1860 the *Illawarra Mercury* noted that at the annual distribution of government blankets in Wollongong Dr. Ellis was wearing a 'gold-braided jacket' which may have been given to him for his services.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of blankets by colonial authorities and early European settlers has been considered symbolic of the paternalism and exploitation Aboriginal people faced at the hands of Europeans. Other analyses suggest that blankets had substantial value to Aboriginal people.<sup>10</sup> This was particularly the case for groups like the Dharawal, who traditionally relied on possum cloaks to protect them from the cold and rain. These cloaks were also an important item of exchange in traditional society. As European settlement expanded and forests were cleared, possum pelts became scarce. In the face of these changes European blankets not only fulfilled the utilitarian function possum cloaks served but also became an important exchange item.<sup>11</sup>

The blankets given to Aboriginal people were also of value to Europeans. A number of press reports that detailed the annual distribution of blankets note that they were sold to Europeans for money. The action taken by the government in the 1840s, suggests the selling of blankets was so widespread, that from 1848 the blankets were 'brand[ed]' to prevent their sale (see Figure 19: page 31). Aboriginal people responded by cutting away the section of blanket that was labelled and sold the remainder:

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- 1 See for Example, Morris, Barry, 'From Underemployment to Unemployment: The Changing role of Aborigines in a Rural Economy', *Mankind*, Vol. 13, No. 6, April 1983, pp. 499-516; Hodson, Sally, 'Nyungars and Work: Aboriginal Experiences in the Rural Economy of the Great Southern Region of Western Australia', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 17, Part. 1, 1993, pp. 73-92; May, Dawn, *Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994; Gahan, Kate, *Community is Strength: A history of the Working lives of Cabbage Tree Island Kooris Community under the controls of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board, 1909-1939*, Unpublished Hons. Thesis, UNE, 1996.
  - 2 Account of G. W. Evans' overland trip from Jervis Bay to Appin, 1812 in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 35. Thuromolong alias Bundle born circa 1808 was a Five Islands man whose father Wolmorry was named 'Chief of Wollongong in 1830. Thuromolong also had a brother Bundong in 1830 (blanket census records 1829-1844).
  - 3 Harris, *op. cit.*
  - 4 Gurrangong alias Timothy born circa 1810-17, country Brownsville/Dapto (Organ 1990:216).
  - 5 William Macarthur to Emily Macarthur, September 1, 1854, transcribed in Organ (a) *op. cit.*, p. 302.
  - 6 Smithson, *op. cit.*
  - 7 Clarke, Reverend, *op. cit.*
  - 8 'A Blanket for Timothy', in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 82.
  - 9 'Distribution of the Queen's Bounty to the Blacks', *Illawarra Mercury*, April 17, 1860, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 115.
  - 10 Smithson, *op. cit.*
  - 11 *Ibid.*





Figure 23: Worrall alias Jacky, Narang Jack or Bill ('Bill Worrall, Five Islands Tribe' circa 1836, State library of NSW)

*The aborigines have had their blankets given to them by the Government, and we observe with pleasure a wise preventative has been used against their selling them for drink, by branding them with large letters. It would, however, be better to brand them all over, instead of in one part, as that part might easily be cut out without spoiling the blanket, many of the blacks offered their blankets the very day they got them for sale. At from 3s to 5s and even less.<sup>12</sup>*

By contrast, clothing served the practical purpose of protecting the body and symbolised social standing, particularly in colonial society. For Aboriginal people clothing could provide a semblance of equality with Europeans by demonstrating their social standing.<sup>13</sup>

Illawarra men performed work other than guiding during the early colonial period. Frank McCaffrey noted that 'in the early days' 'Timber Junr.' and 'Broughton Junr.', 'were expert horse and cattlemen'.<sup>14</sup> Dr. William Elyard who owned Avondale farm (see Figure 3: folded map) west of Lake Illawarra recorded

in his 1829 diary that 'three blacks cut some bark for me' and tracked horses'.<sup>15</sup> The 1833 'Paulsgrove Diary', noted that a number of Aboriginal men worked as labourers on the Paulsgrove Estate near Wollongong husking corn, 'picking potatoes' and slaughtering livestock. Aboriginal men's work as stockmen and rural labourers, also gave them the opportunity to maintain links with their country and acquire goods that were of use and value.

Significantly, tomahawks were similar to traditional stone axes, but were more durable and efficient, being of tempered steel with a sharper blade than stone. Such was the attractiveness of these tools, that in some areas they arrived through trade before Europeans themselves. Food and tobacco were also highly valued by Aboriginal people. The Illawarra Aborigines' secret harvesting of crops and livestock from European farms from their creation in the 1820s indicates their readiness to supplement bush foods and was part of the resistance to invasion. Europeans' widespread use of tobacco for exchange with Aboriginal people in colonial society suggests that it rapidly gained appeal as both a pleasurable activity and an item to trade or gift.<sup>16</sup>

Aboriginal people also gained 'rewards' from Europeans by exchanging their bush skills and resources. Dr. Elyard's work diary from Avondale farm records that he frequently employed Aboriginal men to hunt game and other animals. 'On May 19, Manggy'<sup>17</sup> the black shot me two Blue Pigeons and a Wallaby'. On June 2, 1829 Manggy also shot 'three pheasants and two ducks'. Elyard also employed Aboriginal men to harvest the bark of the bangalay [*Eucalyptus botryoides*] to make containers to carry milk.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Aboriginal men working on the Paulsgrove Estate in the 1830s went hunting, caught fish and 'brought the black swan eggs' for Europeans. Thirty years later in 1858 Paddy

Burrangalong was noted to have assisted Europeans to hunt game in the Illawarra.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1830s it was noted that Illawarra Aborigines turned traditional skills into a cottage industry by selling cabbage tree palm brooms and boomerangs:

*The handle was a fairly straight stick from the bush, and the brush was like a very big mop. That consisted of dry fibre obtained from the head of the cabbage trees, and would be a foot long and six or seven inches in diameter. They were neatly bound up with string, but the brooms were cumbersome articles and were hawked round from house to house and the price was 1s 6d.*<sup>20</sup>

Illawarra women used their fishing skills to generate items for trade. Mrs. Jean Robertson, who was a girl in the late nineteenth century, records that she ate seafood brought to the house by 'the old gins' when visiting relatives in the Illawarra:

*Many is the time I came home to Yonga to find black gins waiting there with fish and lobsters for us. The first we might know was when we would see green lobsters alive scrambling around on the verandahs or covered way leading to the kitchen... Anyhow, business would be done, and beautiful big fish and lobsters would be traded in return for money or clothes and always a good feed for the gins thrown in.*<sup>21</sup>

Turning bush resources into profit also sustained Aboriginal families living at Hill 60 in the early decades of the twentieth century. Aborigines at Hill 60 sold fish from at least the early 1880s after William Saddler and George 'Trimmer' Timbery<sup>22</sup> requested a government-issue boat for the purpose of fishing.

Certainly, evidence suggests that some families made a livelihood from fishing from early 1890s<sup>23</sup> through to the late 1930s.<sup>24</sup> From the vantage point of Hill 60 Aboriginal fishermen and women would 'lookout' for schools of fish approaching their nets which were set out at Fishermans or Perkins beach and then would race down the hill to haul the nets in. Fishing in this way was a family enterprise:

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- 12 Report on the issue of blankets to Aborigines at Wollongong, and their subsequent re-sale, June 8, 1849, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 92.
  - 13 For a discussion of the wearing of uniforms by Aboriginal men in early colonial Victoria see Fels, Marie, *Good Men and True: the Aboriginal Police of the Port Phillip District 1837-1853*, Melbourne University Press, 1988, p. 84-85.
  - 14 McCaffrey, Frank, *The History of the Illawarra and its Pioneers*, John Sands, 1922, p. 21.
  - 15 Diary of Dr. William Elyard, (1771-1853), ML MS 115-117.
  - 16 Tobacco was introduced to Aboriginal people by Europeans in the early decades of contact.
  - 17 Manggy born circa 1810 country Wangewarra (Bulli-Woonona).
  - 18 Diary of Dr. William Elyard, *op. cit.*
  - 19 'Rara Avis – Rare Bird', *Illawarra Mercury*, August 19, 1858, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 105. Baningalong alas Paddy was listed for Wollongong in 1837, born circa 1819 (1837 Blanket Census)
  - 20 'Reminiscences of Old Kiama Boy', *op. cit.*
  - 21 Robertson, Jean, 'An octogenarian remembers', *Illawarra Historical Society Bulletin*, July 1978, p. 40.
  - 22 A trimmer is an apparatus for storing, arranging or shifting cargo (Macquarie Dictionary 1991: 1868).
  - 23 Aborigines Protection Board Report for the Year Ended 1890, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1890*, (8 Vols.), Vol. VII, Government Printer, Sydney, 1892. See also 'Petition for Conversion of Port Kembla School to full-time and for the provision of a new building', *op. cit.*
  - 24 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

*I remember when I was small, going down to the beach and helping my dad and grandfather haul for fish. We would sit on the sandhill, which was called the lookout, and watch for fish to swim past, then run down and push the boats into the water. When the nets were back on the beach we would put the fish into the wooden boxes. The men then took them and they were sold.<sup>25</sup>*

From the early 1900s through to the 1940s, Aboriginal men living at Hill 60 took up employment as coal trimmers and wharf labourers at nearby Port Kembla.<sup>26</sup> A number of Aboriginal women also worked as domestic helpers during these decades.<sup>27</sup> They sold souvenirs made from the shells they collected on Illawarra beaches:

*Our mothers used to get the muttonfish shell and make boomerang brooches. We used to have to glue the pin on the back and walk along and get the shell grit, and all the little shells that weren't broken. They used to make little shoes, and the Harbour Bridge and the milk jug covers. Mum used to put the shells on the milk jug covers. People used to come from out of town to buy them. She would get a saucer, cut out two layers of the mosquito net, then she'd crochet a little pattern around the outside, and then they'd hang the shells from them.<sup>28</sup>*

From the 1950s and during the 1960s, with the introduction of pea and bean growing on the far-south coast, many Illawarra Aboriginal families joined other Aborigines from up and down the coast to harvest these crops. While the seasonal employment of Kooris on the south coast in the 1950s and

1960s became, for many, the only reliable source of employment, they were also known to be attracted to this work because it allowed them to remain close to their country and community:

*We always travelled with Nan Henry. Dad's Mum and Dad (Cruse) just more or less stuck to the NSW coast. With Nan Henry we went all the way up to Bundaberg. Dad and all the men used to cut the cane, and then we'd go and pick peas or whatever was growing at the time, and then we'd come back down through NSW down and around Bodalla/Bega and do the peas and the beans. When we finished there we'd head off to Victoria down to Bairnsdale up to Robinvale, across to Mildura for the grapes, to Myponga off Adelaide, do the peas, back to Port Pirie, do some more peas and beans again and then it was time to head back to Bundaberg for the cane again. We spent the winter up there because it was warmer. Summers we'd come back down the coast and do the peas and beans at Bega and Bodalla.*

*We did all sorts of work. When we lived up at Dorrigo, we lived right in the bush. Dad was cutting corkwood up there ... He made our huts out of whatever he could get from the tip at the time. If there was tin, he'd make it out of tin. When we were picking potatoes, if the hessian bag was big, he'd cut that open and nail that to the frame he'd made. So it depends where we were and what was available. We had a dirt floor but they were hard as, because Dad would sweep it and sprinkle water over it and that stopped the dust. And if it was hot Dad used to wet all the bags and that kept it nice and cool inside like air conditioning.*



*When we used to travel there'd be trees burning when DMR [was] clearing. They'd bulldoze it into a big pile and then they'd set it alight. So Dad'd pull over there and we'd stay the night. Dad would cut down some long poles, he'd build us a lean-to and then he'd get all the leaves off those trees and throw them underneath and then he'd get the canvas and throw that on and tuck it under and make a mattress out of it. And we slept on that and all night we could smell the nice leaves. And that was our bed for the night. When we packed up from one area, Dad made sure it was all cleaned up. He pulled our camp down and the tins or whatever all went back to the tip so we left the area nice and clean for the next time we come back.<sup>29</sup>*

### **Breastplates; symbols of acceptance and power**

*One thing struck me forcibly. There was no person in the tribe who was looked upon as a chief. Every man was equal. I know it has been asserted that they had chiefs but I never saw such a person. There were Blacks who claimed the power of a chief but it had been put into his head by white men who had given him a brass plate and he was assuming enough to make a show of anything before them but in the camp he was an ordinary individual with no more to say than the next. The persons who did exert an influence were the Malamalang or medicine men.<sup>30</sup>*

The crescent shaped breast-plates presented by Europeans to Aboriginal people from the early colonial period were an attempt to quell conflict arising from invasion by symbolically acknowledging Aboriginal authority over particular 'territory'.<sup>31</sup> However, these



Figure 24: 'William Saddler, 24-11-1909, King of Illawarra', brass plate with emu and kangaroo engraving. (Illawarra Images)

items were often attributed other meanings by Aboriginal people. Of the five breastplates known to have been given to Illawarra men, too little is known of their lives to appreciate the meanings that they may have put on them. However King Mickey Johnson, who lived in the Illawarra for most of his life and married a local Aboriginal woman, viewed his title of 'King of the Illawarra' and his breast plate as a means to gain influence with Europeans.

25 Beryl Timbery-Beller, quoted in Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

26 Ecklund, Eric, *op. cit.*

27 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

28 Timbery-Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 42, see also Henry, Sue, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

29 Rhonda Cruse, October 2004, IAC, Wollongong.

30 Bulmer Papers, Box 11, Papers 2 and 3, Museum of Victoria.

31 It is understood that the reasons for the giving of breast-plates changed with time but it is not important to explain the dynamics of the process in this context. The practice was initially introduced by Governor Macquarie to quell conflict.

King Mickey, reputedly from the Clarence River, was brought to the Illawarra by E. H. Weston of Albion Park in the 1860s. As a boy and young man, Mickey went by the name of 'Tiger' and lived with Weston for ten years. According to Weston;

*'Tiger became a regular swell, and was most particular about his clothes, but eventually became very lazy and sulky, and finally went off and joined the local tribe of blacks in the Illawarra, and being a very strong and muscular chap soon took command, and as he did not like the name of Tiger he was known far and wide as King Mickey. He took for his queen a gin named "Rosey" and reared a large family.'*<sup>32</sup>

In 1891 Mickey Johnson was living with Rosie's family at Kangaroo Valley (NSW 1891 census) probably at the 370 acre Aboriginal Reserve on the Kangaroo River (R12445). At this time the APB reported, 'The Reserve at Kangaroo Valley is occupied by two Aboriginal families as a camping place' (Leg. Ass. NSW 1892) but eight years later the Reserve was revoked.

Mickey returned to the Illawarra where he made his home at Berawurra at the mouth of the Lake Illawarra, with Rosie's father Paddy Burrangalong. The area on which Mickey, Rosie and her family lived at Lake Illawarra was later allocated an 'Aborigines Reserve' by the APB in 1900. During their residence, Mickey and Rosie's family grew and together they 'improved' the reserve. In 1894 the APB reported on their efforts:

*The Aborigines have done and are still doing a lot of hard work on the reserve at the mouth of Lake Illawarra. They are well sheltered and have made improvements for their own comfort and convenience rarely found at an Aboriginal camp.'*<sup>33</sup>



Figures 25: Top: 'Jacky, King of the Illawarra', brass plate with emu and kangaroo engraving (Australian Museum), Below: Medangle alias William Darbey, 'King of Dabto', brass plate with emu and kangaroo engraving (Illawarra Historical Society).



During that year the Board further 'assisted' the Johnson family by providing 'rations, tools, tents, fishing tackle, fencing wire and seed' and a year later provided rations to '6 children and 4 adults', erected '2 huts' and provided a 'boat and [fishing] gear'.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the latter part of the 1890s the APB continued to provide rations to the adults and children at Lake Illawarra. In 1896 the Protection Board supplied Illawarra MLA Mr. Alexander Campbell, with 'a "half-moon" coronet with which Mickey is to be invested as a Royal Highness'.

Archibald Campbell and other 'gentlemen' from the Illawarra at the time were admirers of Mickey. They considered him to epitomise a past that was vanishing, particularly the world of the 'full-blood' Aborigines.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast, Mickey felt that his coronation gave him the authority to speak out and demand certain privileges of Europeans. He requested of Campbell, as his local member of Parliament, that he 'try to get him a brass shield setting forth that he was "the King"'. And his gratitude for his 'kingship' he publicly expressed at his coronation staged at the Wollongong Show in February 1896.

*Mickey was the "cynosure of all eyes", and when he stepped forward and Mrs. Beatson [Campbell's mother] affixed to his breast the shield proclaiming his kingship there was another burst of cheering. The newly crowned King proclaimed he was desirous of making a speech thanking all who had come to do him honour.*<sup>36</sup>

Mickey hoped that his coronation would entitle him to a number of privileges which included making demands of the people of Illawarra, the government and missionaries. Immediately after his crowning '[a]



Figure 26: Mickey Johnson's 1896 breastplate reception at the Wollongong Show ('Coronation of King Mickey, 30th January, 1896 at Wollongong', Illawarra Images)

subject of the King's [a fellow Illawarra Aborigine] with an eye on the crowd suggested the taking up of a collection' for Mickey.<sup>37</sup> The following year Mickey applied to the Colonial Secretary for a boat.<sup>38</sup> Again in 1898 Mickey made representation to the Colonial Secretary for a military uniform in keeping with his

32 Weston, E. H. 'Tiger – (Young King Mickey)', transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 318.

33 Annual Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, for the Year Ended 1894, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1894-5*, (6 Vols.) Vol. 5, Government Printer Sydney, 1895.

34 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board for the Year Ended 1895 &

35 That this view was also held in the Illawarra see for example, 'Passing of the Illawarra Aborigines' December 16, 1897, *Illawarra Mercury*, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175.

36 'Coronation of King Mickey – An interesting Ceremony', *Shoalhaven Telegraph*, February 8, 1896, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.



title of King.<sup>39</sup> In 1900, Mickey complained to the local press that the annual issue of blankets for Wollongong hadn't arrived before the onset of winter.<sup>40</sup> Later that year Mickey expressed dissatisfaction with the poor treatment he and others from the Lake Illawarra reserve had received from the missionaries at Port Kembla.

*King Mickey complained the day after attending a recent aborigines' evening mission meeting that neither tea nor any other refreshments had been provided for him or his people on the occasion. He pointed out that he had walked all the way from the Lake Illawarra encampment, near Shellharbour, to attend the meeting and take part in the proceedings; that they had to walk back again and had no money to buy food or friends to give them shelter of a room in the meanwhile.*<sup>41</sup>

During the same year, commenting to the press on the issue of Federation, Mickey noted that he considered himself to be entitled to the same salary as other royalty.

*King Mickey is strongly of the opinion that with the event of Federation he should receive a salary the same as any other monarch. Mickey admits that the honour is all very well, but contends that when he is crowned head of Illawarra he should be in receipt of salary the same as any other king and advances the practical argument that although he received £4 in the hat on the day of his coronation, that could not be expected to last forever. Mickey intends to lay his case before the proper authorities.*<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps King Mickey's disappointment in the Illawarra people and the government found its final expression in moving his family from the Berawurra (Windang) reserve, away from the gaze and control of the APB

and missionary staff, to an unsupervised 'camp' at Minnamurra where he died in 1906.<sup>43</sup>

## **Sport**

Sport in Australia has become one of the arenas in which people of all backgrounds meet and compete on common ground. However, racism has continued to challenge the right of Australian sports people to compete on equal terms. Colin Tatz, in his book *Obstacle Race*, has described the paucity of opportunities and facilities for Aboriginal sports people in 90 towns and communities across Australia. He found that not only did Aboriginal people rarely have access to sportsgrounds, but that racist players will avoid playing against Aboriginal players who excel in their fields.<sup>44</sup>

During the early 1930s the Wallaga Lake football team was a regular attraction in the Illawarra, on occasion playing against the Mt. Kembla and Unanderra teams. Contemporary newspaper accounts grudgingly acknowledge the victory of the Wallaga team on three consecutive occasions in 1931. The match which they played against Unanderra at the Figtree sports ground was followed by a boomerang throwing exhibition by one of the footballers. The play was described as 'Fast and close ... from the kick off to the finish. [and] The [Wallaga Lake team] won a game full of interest and excitement by 8-6'.<sup>45</sup>

'One of the pioneer Aboriginal sportsmen of the Illawarra was Yoonamyna better known as Roy Stewart, late of Gerringong. He began his Rugby League career at La Perouse playing in the South Sydney Junior League. Footballers are often given nicknames and Roy was known as the "Untouchable" because he was so fast. In 1964, aged 25, he gained selection for the Combined Country Seconds. For twelve years from 1965 he played for the Southern Division and was



Figure 27: Wallaga Lake Football Team at Figtree Sports Ground, August 30th, 1931 ('Grand Paramount Week Football match Celebrates the opening of Paramount week at the Crown Theatre, The Abos vs Unanderra at Figtree Sports Ground, Sunday August 30th at 3pm', *Illawarra Images*)

presented with a special blazer in 1977 for his services to the South Coast Group 7 Rugby League. He played in four Gerringong First Grade premiership teams in 1965, 68, 70 and 72. He played against Great Britain in 1970 and in 1974 was selected for the Australian Aboriginal team to tour England. Three years later he formed a team with sons Roy and Elliott as Captain Coach of the Mt Warrigal All Blacks. He also coached the Shoalhaven Heads All Blacks who went through

37 *Ibid.*

38 Aborigines Protection Board Minutes, September 16, 1897, Reel,

39 Colonial Secretary Correspondance, noted in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 176.

40 'King Mickey and Queen Rosie Blankets', *Illawarra Mercury*, May 10, 1900, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 180.

41 'King Mickey on Creature Comforts', *Illawarra Mercury*, Tuesday, July 3, 1900, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 181.

42 'The King of Illawarra', *Illawarra Mercury*, September 27, 1900, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 184.

43 'Death of King Mickey', *Illawarra Mercury*, November 6, 1906, transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 220.

44 Booth and Tatz 2000: 203.

45 *South Coast Times* 4th September 1931, *Illawarra Mercury* 4th September 1931.



Figure 28: Roy Stewart



Figure 29: Bruce Olive in Perth at Kings Park with the Under 18s A Grade Dapto team that he coached. (Bruce Olive Collection)

the 3rd grade competition level 7 undefeated in 1997. (sources: Fiona Stewart Feb 2005, Roy Stewart Feb 2005, *Kiama Independent* 19 Mar 1997, 4 Apr 2001).<sup>46</sup>

Another Aboriginal sportsman in the Illawarra, Bruce Olive, came from Casino to Wollongong in 1957 to play rugby league for Western Suburbs. He points out that

Aboriginal players were often denied opportunities to compete despite their sporting excellence but also that the Illawarra gave him 'a go'. His story outlines the importance of the multi-cultural mix of the Illawarra population to his acceptance and the continuing importance of sport through much of his life:

*In the country there's a lot of discrimination but I find down here [Wollongong] it was a lot better for me because it's a multi-cultural place. There were a lot of nationalities here and there still is now. I think [Aborigines are] more or less accepted down here. When I came down here from the bush I made the country [Australia] side, I made the [NSW] state side, [and] I nearly made the Australia side.*

*When I played for the country [NSW rugby league side], I went up to Queensland as far as Mackay. The following week I was over in Perth [Figure 29]. When I went back to Casino I was asked to open up a football carnival. But I had to leave [Casino] to go back and get recognised.<sup>47</sup>*

## Education

Records from Port Kembla Public School indicate that Illawarra Aboriginal families attended the school from at least 1900. At this time the Protection and Welfare boards and missionaries encouraged Aboriginal parents to send their children to school to promote Aboriginal assimilation. Other histories reveal that Aboriginal parents often chose to send their children to European schools in order to give them the skills needed to survive in European society.<sup>48</sup> The desire to educate their children in European schools is demonstrated by the 1900 signing of a petition to establish a permanent full-time school at Port Kembla. Port Kembla Infants School was opened in 1912.<sup>49</sup>





*Figure 30: Port Kembla Public School 1916-2000  
(Illawarra Images)*

*Figure 31: Aboriginal children at Port Kembla  
Infants School in First Class 1946.  
(Port Kembla Public School archives)*



46 *Kiama Independent*, 19th March 1997, 4th April 2001.

47 Bruce Olive interviewed on October 2004 at Brownsville, Wollongong.

48 Goodall, *op. cit.*

49 'Petition for conversion of School [to] Full time and necessity for a new building', October 15, 1900, Port Kembla School File, 1890-1913, 5/17372.5, NSW State Records.



# Chapter Four

## Fighting:

## the battle for human rights

### Land tenure

Illawarra Aboriginal people have been involved in protests about the allocation of land and resources from the early nineteenth century. In 1904 when Aboriginal families found that the Public Works Department wanted to develop the land they lived on at Port Kembla, they refused to leave the area.<sup>1</sup> The APB reported:

*In consequence of a complaint made by the Public Works Department as to the presence of a number of half-castes on the harbour works reserve at Port Kembla, Mr. Trenchard and the Secretary visited the camp with a view to enquiring into the matter, and if possible inducing the aborigines to remove to one of the Board's reserves. One family went to Roseby Park, but the others were unwilling to leave, as they were in constant employment in the locality.<sup>2</sup>*

Despite the APB's investigations it claimed to be unable to convince the Public Works Department that the Aborigines at Port Kembla were 'not to be interfered with'. The APB reports also suggest that Aborigines were removed from this area: '[T]he police were asked to see that as little hardship as possible was allowed to arise through the compulsory removal of these people from their camping place'. It seems that if the departure occurred, it was short-lived. In March 1914 the *Illawarra Mercury* reported that Aborigines were again being asked to move from Port Kembla to make way for the construction of the inner harbour (Figure 32).<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 The 1901 census showed that the Aboriginal families at Port Kembla were Ashmore, Bell, Duncan, Foster, Johnson, Judson, Longbottom, Phillips, Rowley and Sims (1901 Commonwealth Census).
  - 2 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board, for the Year Ended 1904, *Joint Volumes of Papers of the New South Wales Parliament*, 1906, (5 Vols.), Vol. 1, Government Printer, Sydney, 1907.
  - 3 For reference to construction of inner harbour only, Dallas, Mary, *Hill 60 Conservation Management Plan*, Vol. 1 Report, Report to Wollongong City Council and Department of Land and Water Conservation, October 2000, p. 33.



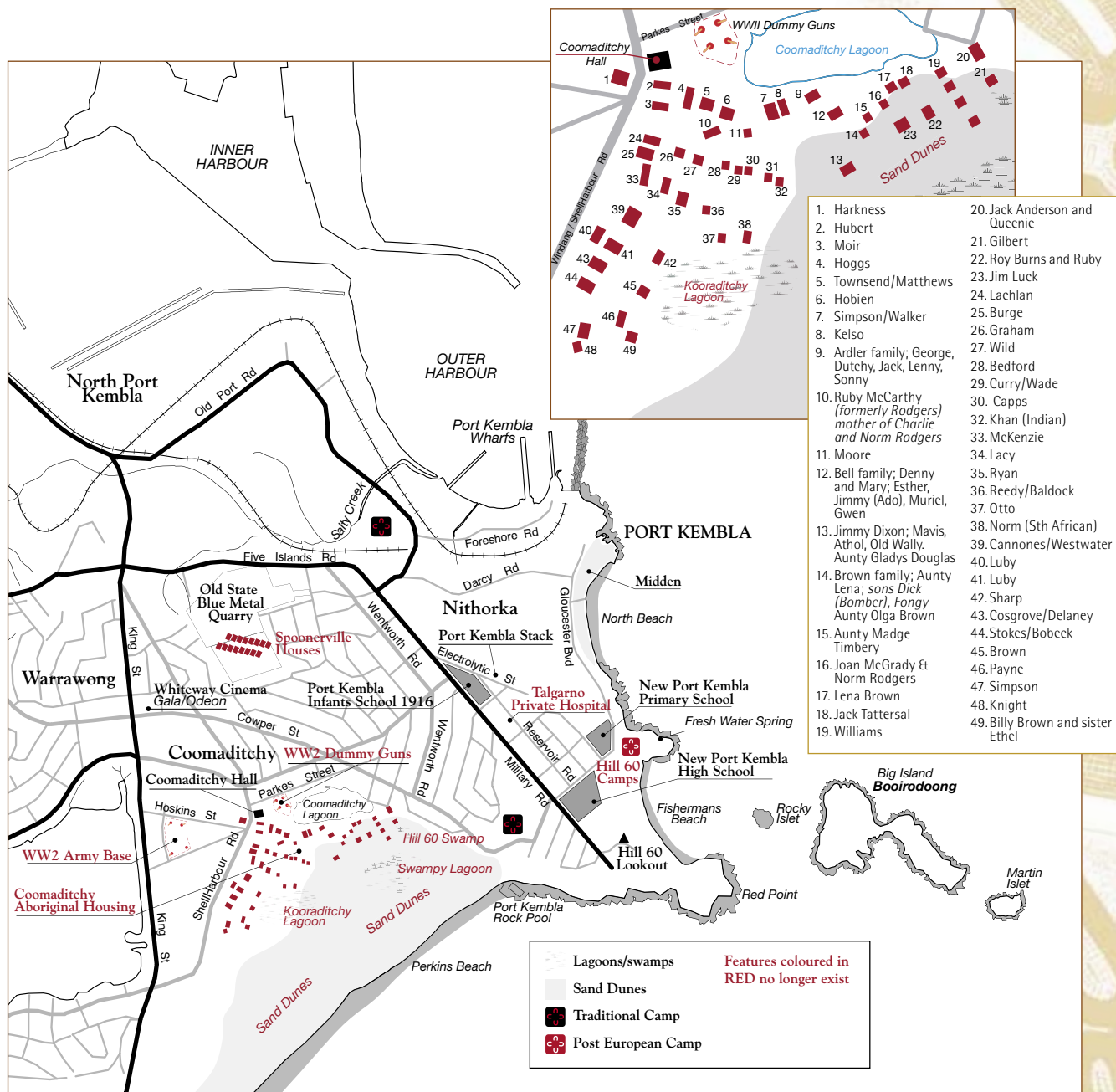


Figure 32: Significant features in the Port Kembla Landscape 1770 -1970 (DEC)  
 Inset: 'Aboriginal families of Coomaditchy 1940s and 1950s; originally known as the Official Camp from the late 1920s onward'  
 Source: Non-Aboriginal resident of Port Kembla involved with the Port Kembla Maritime Museum with Coral Pombo-Campbell





Figure 33: Hill 60 and Fishermans Beach, Port Kembla showing Aboriginal housing and fishing boats pre 1942 (Illawarra Images)

*A number of people living in humpies on crown lands between the two railway lines [near Salty Creek] received notice during the week to remove their humpies. Several moved their dwellings on Thursday and removed them to other parts.<sup>4</sup>*

Again the Aboriginal people refused to move, but this time they only managed to stay at Salty Creek for a further two months and in May 1914 the *Illawarra Mercury* reported that these families had been forcibly removed:

*For many years past the blacks have been privileged to live in humpies on Crown lands near Salty Creek, but owing to the new regulations they were given notice to quit and to move near Perkin's beach. The last of the humpies were removed during the week.<sup>5</sup>*

Joan Wakeman, the grand-daughter of Rosie Johnson, recalled that her mother occupied one of the dwellings that were removed from near Salty Creek. She explained that even after being removed from this area her mother continued to gather foodstuffs from around Tom Thumb Lagoon.

*My mother kept using this area even after the Steelworks were being developed. It was the closest. Port Kembla was one of the main areas the Aboriginals lived.<sup>6</sup>*

After their removal, the families living near Salty Creek moved closer to Hill 60 where other Illawarra families were living as they had always done. Figure 34 shows the layout of houses at Hill 60 and the families that are remembered to have been living there before the 1942 evacuation.

The Illawarra people's occupation of Hill 60 was threatened in the early 1920s when the Central Illawarra Council raised concern over who was responsible for the disposal of the occupant's human waste. The Public Works Department '...intimat[ed that the] matter was one for the Council's attention. While records don't make it absolutely clear, it is likely that the Council's complaint to the Public Works Department was instigated by concerns raised by nearby residents because from the 1920s 'urban expansion towards Hill 60' had begun.<sup>7</sup> As other studies in NSW have suggested, the issue of sanitation and Aboriginal communities was the subject of strong emotion among Europeans at this time.<sup>8</sup>

While in the short term Aborigines continued to occupy Hill 60, urban expansion continued to put pressure on the area. In 1923 a nine-hole golf course was built 'on the lower reaches of Hill 60 forcing Aboriginal families 'camped' 'right at the bottom' of

the hill to move 'higher up'.<sup>9</sup> At this time the Port Kembla area also received an influx of workers, including European migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. The people had come to work for the Australian Iron and Steel Company which had moved its operations from Lithgow to Port Kembla in the 1920s. These workers, like the local and migrant Aborigines, sought inexpensive accommodation close to the Steel Works at Port Kembla.

In June 1927, the Central Illawarra Council again reported that it had received complaints from nearby residents who called for the removal of Aboriginal people from Hill 60. Concerned at these accusations and the mounting threats to their residence at Port Kembla, Joseph Timbery responded to the Council asking for security of tenure at Hill 60. His written protest was representative of a broader trend across Aboriginal communities in NSW. It is indicative of an emerging literate generation of Aboriginal people who sought to challenge European power by adopting European forms of protest such as letters and or petitions to appropriate authorities.<sup>10</sup> While the Council responded to Joseph Timbery stating that 'his tenure is all right, and [he and his family] will not be required to remove residence', this promise was short-lived.<sup>11</sup>

Again in 1929, when the Port Kembla Golf Club sought to expand its course by adding nine holes, the Illawarra Aboriginal people's land tenure of Hill 60 was threatened. Perhaps tired of complaints from nearby residents '[e]lements within the Council wanted to evict [Aborigines] and declare it a public park'. Opposition from at least one Councillor, the Association for the Protection of Native Races and the APB to moving Aborigines away from Hill 60, was instrumental in the decision to remove the golf course

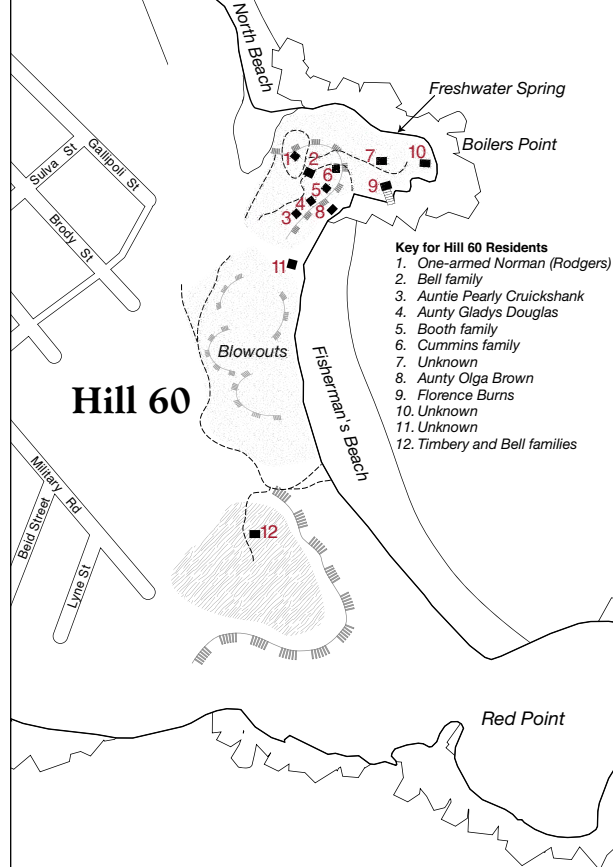


Figure 34: Hill 60 houses and families (DEC).

- 4 'Port Kembla, Notice to Quit', *Illawarra Mercury*, Friday March 13, 1914, and in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 228. Aboriginal man George Steel was noted to be living on the 'Railway Line' alone in the 1891 NSW Government census. See Figure 32 page 51.
- 5 'The Blacks' Camps', *Illawarra Mercury*, May 8, 1914, and in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, p. 228.
- 6 Wakeman, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 7 Ecklund, Eric, *Steel Town*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- 8 Goodall, Heather, *Invasion To Embassy*, Allen & Unwin, 1996
- 9 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.
- 10 Goodall, *op. cit.*
- 11 'Central Illawarra Council [Report]', *Illawarra Mercury*, June 10, 1927, and in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 234-235.



Figure 35: 1930s accommodation at the Port Kembla 'Official Camps' (Illawarra Images)

to Windang. The opposition of these bodies was informed by Aborigines' protests which were voiced when each body sent a delegation to Hill 60 to investigate the matter.<sup>12</sup> Aboriginal people at this time also informed the Department of Defence of their desire to stay at Hill 60:

*It is understood that a number of them [Aboriginal people] have lodged application with your department with a view to securing some title, and I now beg to ask that their application be, if possible, favourably considered.<sup>13</sup>*

Despite winning these short term battles, Aboriginal people's fight to remain at Hill 60 ended in 1942 following Department of Defence preparations to turn the site into a battery observation post 'together with provisions to accommodate the 13th Battalion'.

Apparently their occupation of Hill 60 was considered incompatible with Defence purposes. The Aboriginal residents of Hill 60 were moved to near Coomaditchy Lagoon to an area known as the Official Camps, though some families went further south along the coast.<sup>14</sup> The Official Camps area was a traditional camping area for Aboriginal people. Later, like Hill 60 it also housed non-Aboriginal families when gazetted in 1929 by the Council to serve as a camping area for the unemployed and it served other displaced people through into the 1930s depression.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the Aboriginal families from Hill 60 who went to live at Coomaditchy soon found themselves fighting a new battle over the tenure of their residency. Aboriginal families living at the Official Camps from the 1940s and through to the 1950s included migrant Aborigines. Pressure on coastal land on other parts of the south coast, where Aborigines had been pushed from the latter half of the nineteenth century, had climaxed in the 1940s and 1950s as local councils sought to capitalise on the burgeoning tourist industry.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the newly established Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB)(1940) announced a policy whereby it gave little or no support to Aboriginal people that it deemed not to be 'real Aborigines' and those people it described as 'mostly white'.<sup>17</sup> These changes left many Aboriginal people even more marginalised, especially given that mainstream 'white' opinion continued to reject the AWB's notion of 'equal treatment' of Aboriginal people. They were left with little choice but to persist on the increasingly restricted fringe of white townships.<sup>18</sup>

By the early 1950s the Official Camps had 'reverted to mainly Aboriginal use'<sup>19</sup> as south coast and Illawarra Aboriginal families returned and new families migrated into the area. This situation led to complaints from non-Aboriginal residents and brought the settlement



to the closer attention of the AWB who by 1957 was trying to force Aboriginal families into Commission housing against their wishes.<sup>20</sup> Aborigines argued that they wanted to stay in the area because of its historic importance to Illawarra culture, which included its status as a camping area, feasting and burial ground. Furthermore:

*The aboriginal people presented an unanswerable argument that their ancestors had been there since time immemorial, and that these families had lived there through the harshest parts of the depression and the war and that they were entitled to it.*<sup>21</sup>

As a means of aiding their fight against the AWB, who gave little time to Aboriginal opinion, Aborigines sought the support and championship of non-Aboriginal people through the Port Kembla Branch of the Waterside Worker's Federation (WWF), of which some Aboriginal men were members.<sup>22</sup> In turn the WWF 'alerted the South Coast Trades and Labour Council (SCTLC) to the plight of [Aboriginal] families living at [Coomaditchy] which then moved to lobby the Welfare Board for proper housing and sanitation at the Official Camps'.<sup>23</sup>

The SCTLC's involvement in lobbying the AWB for housing at Coomaditchy continued in association with Aboriginal people and through the formation of a south coast arm of the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) (see Figure 36). Fred Moore was one of the key members of the SCTLC involved in forming the AAL branch from Coomaditchy and explains the significance of its formation:



Figure 36: Coomaditchie Hall; site of the inaugural South Coast Branch of the Aboriginal Advancement League (DEC).

12 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 123; *Annual Report of the Association for the Protection of Native Races*, 1930, p. 7, Christian World Print, Bathurst St. Sydney, AIATSIS.

13 Ecklund, *op. cit.*

14 Davis, *op. cit.*

15 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

16 Goodall, *op. cit.*

17 Aborigines Welfare Board Annual Report, for the Year Ended 1940, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 1941, Government Printer, 1941.

18 Gahan, Kate, *Live Like Us: The Policy and Practice of the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board, 1940-1969*, forthcoming Ph.D. thesis, University of New England.

19 Dallas, Mary, *Hill 60, Port Kembla, Conservation Management Plan*, Vol. 1, Report to Wollongong City Council and Department of Land and Water Conservation, October 2000, p. 43.

20 For reference to placing Kooris in commission houses only see *Ibid.*

21 Moore, Fred, in *Noongaleek*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

22 Moore also argues that Kooris voices were not heard in the broader community.

23 Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

*We set up the Aboriginal Advancement League in this area ... and the committee was comprised of Mrs. Henry, Linda Davis, Mary Davis, Olga Booth, Gladys Douglas, they were the women. The policy of the Aboriginal Advancement League was always to have a person, an Aboriginal as the chairman ... to portray the voice of his or her people. Bob Davis became the first Aboriginal President of this area.*<sup>24</sup>

Part of a broader trend emerging in Aboriginal politics in New South Wales included seeking assistance from non-Aboriginal people to aid them in their struggle for rights. Spurred by a growing awareness of Aboriginal issues and the obvious inadequacies of the APB and AWB's policies from the late 1930s, non-Aboriginal people became involved in championing Aborigines' rights. While many co-operative efforts grew out of friendships, Aboriginal people also welcomed the support and influence of non-Aboriginal people who helped them to have their views heard. Some Aboriginal people at Coomaditchy had a long history of political affiliation with non-Aboriginal people stemming back to the early 1900s when Aboriginal men first began to work on the wharves at Port Kembla.<sup>25</sup> Over the years non-Aboriginal people had also supported the fight for Aboriginal workers to drink at the hotels around Port Kembla.<sup>26</sup> As a result of their working history many Aborigines have suggested that their relationship with Europeans in the past had mostly been favourable.<sup>27</sup> This cooperation continued when additional issues arose relating to the rights of Aboriginal people in the area.

Following pressure from the SCTL and the AAL the AWB agreed to house the Aborigines at Coomaditchy by building 13 new houses: 'The promised houses did not materialise and the Welfare Board stated in 1961 that it had only enough money to [build] six new

houses'. Then in order to deflect potential criticism for its inability to adequately house Aborigines in the Illawarra, the AWB publicly attacked the Aboriginality of the people at Coomaditchy stating that it was not responsible for providing houses to people who were not 'truly aborigine'.<sup>28</sup>

Aborigines also fought the Welfare Board over the positioning of their houses at Coomaditchy. Their arguments included that they were too far from the sea and from other areas, where they typically gathered marine and other resources:

*There was more confrontation, more arguments, because without consultation with the Aboriginal people the Welfare Board decided to build those houses along the front [roadway] to portray them as no-hopers, to the public. The Aboriginal people said they will not build the houses for our benefit, in the true sense. They're right where we don't want them, right along the front. We've lived over the back nearer the seaboard, and that's where we want to live, along that area where we don't want to come into contact with the main road, and every time we open our door there's someone looking in, we are not used to that.*<sup>29</sup>

Aboriginal people's arguments for positioning their new houses at 'the back' were not heeded by the AWB and were then taken to the Local Member of Parliament:

*Every Saturday we would arrive at Rex Connor's office, he got to know us all ... We kept going through Connor. He was [our] local member, State member, and Wickham was the town planner ... We used to just go in at this stage, drive in and*

*pick the people up and sometimes they picked us up cause one of them had a car. We had a good arrangement. But generally they had to make way with transport and we used to get there.*<sup>30</sup>

Despite the lengths to which Aboriginal people went to have their say in where and how they lived at Coomaditchy, the AWB built its six houses facing the street. Even after the houses were built, the arguments continued over the poor quality and manufacture of the houses.

### **Defending family life and identity**

From the late nineteenth century not only was Illawarra Aboriginal people's land tenure under increasing threat, but also family life and identity. With the introduction of the APB in 1883 the government began its policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families as a means of 'absorbing' or assimilating them into 'white' society. When the APB established statutory powers in 1909 that eroded the rights of Aboriginal parents to keep their children and set up institutions to 'train' Aboriginal children 'to live as whites' the threat of child removal increased. Furthermore, when the APB and its protection policies gave way to the AWB and assimilation policy in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the threat of child removal was heightened for some Aboriginal families. This was especially so for children of those deemed 'lighter caste' families, who were considered more 'easily assimilated' than darker skinned children.<sup>31</sup>

The identity of Aboriginal people in the Illawarra was further threatened by a belief that underscored the introduction of child removal policy in 1883, namely that Aboriginal people were a 'dying race'. This notion was premised on the view that Aboriginal people were biologically inferior to whites and that

this was made evident by their 'diminishing numbers', particularly of so-called 'full-blood' Aboriginal people, who were considered to be the 'true aborigines'. Aboriginal families, including the Illawarra families who lived at Hill 60, that were of mixed descent had their Aboriginality questioned by the APB, AWB and missionaries suggesting that they had 'lost' their 'tribal ways'.

A number of Illawarra elders who were children at Hill 60 and the Official Camps have described the ways in which their parents defended their families and identity. Some tell of the diligence with which their parents watched their movements to and from school, the beach and the cinema at Port Kembla from the vantage point of Hill 60. The care which their Elders took in guarding their children, was to prevent the APB from taking them.<sup>32</sup> No doubt the diligence of their parents was influenced by the removal of two girls from Port Kembla in 1918:

*Last week two black girls had been taken in charge by the police for the purpose of sending them to a home at Cootamundra [the Protection Board's Cootamundra Girls Home]. They were placed in the*

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24 Moore, Fred, in *Noongaleek*, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

25 Ecklund, *op. cit.*

26 Moore, *op. cit.* p. 55

27 Timbery-Bennett & Davis, *op. cit.*

28 'Aborigines may not get cottages at P. Kembla – MUST APPLY', *Illawarra Mercury*, September 6, 1962.

29 Moore, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

30 Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

31 Gahan (b), *op. cit.*

32 Timbery-Bennett and Davis, *op. cit.*



*yard at the police station awaiting a conveyance to take them to Wollongong. Whilst the back of the police officer was turned they scaled the fence and made off in the direction of the cokeworks. The police gave chase and after a run of over a mile the two girls were recaptured, and subsequently forwarded to the home.<sup>33</sup>*

Aboriginal families living at Port Kembla are likely to have witnessed and heard about the removal of other children. Indeed it seems that during the early decades of the twentieth century families at Port Kembla, and other south coast areas, were under additional surveillance from the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) which visited these 'camps' during this time. The APB's records reveal that in 1904 the UAM applied to the Board 'asking if there would be any objection to aboriginal girls being placed in suitable homes by the Mission'. While the Board did not grant the UAM absolute power to undertake the removal of children, it suggested that it 'would gladly welcome any assistance in this direction' by identifying children to be removed. The Board supplied the 'mission authorities ... with a number of application forms for this purpose'.<sup>34</sup>

When defending their children from removal Aboriginal parents not only acted out the strength of their parental love, but also a need to ensure the survival of their identity and culture. A number of Aboriginal people today relate that while growing up at Hill 60 and the Official Camps their parents and/or grandparents passed on their culture. This included important traditional skills that allowed continuation of cultural traditions including gathering of shellfish and plants for both food and medicine. Parents and grandparents at Hill 60 also passed on to children philosophies about the sharing of resources amongst family and community and knowledge of their custodianship of the Illawarra region:

### **Muriel Davis**

*We never went hungry. Our weekends would always consist of at least one walk to the beach and to the rocks to gather pippis and muttonfish, which was also known as abalone. We'd gather conks, periwinkles, crabs and any other small shellfish which could be used for bait. ... The older men would often dive for lobsters and they would walk or get a ride for many miles to prevent the continuous diving into one area which interferes with breeding [of fish] and jeopardises future food gathering.*

*...I can remember back when we'd go with the Elders, blackberrying. Of a Sunday, that was a special day to us because mum would make blackberry pies, custard, rice puddings, bread puddings and jelly and make a lovely big baked dinner.*

*... My mother used to practice traditional medicines. If we had a boil, mum would boil the inkweed and use the juice of the weed to bathe the area and then put the inkweed leaf on the boil and it would draw the muck out.<sup>35</sup>*

### **Alma Bell-Maskell**

*... We ate all the rainforest plants in the bush at Hill 60 too; lilly-pilly and blackberries. Mum used to make blackberry pie.<sup>36</sup>*

### **Thelma Brown-Henry**

*...We usually listened to the women talking. We used to listen to their stories. Pink flower (was a remedy) for Kidneys we'd hear them say. Our parents used to let it all dry up before they boiled it.<sup>37</sup>*

## Rita Timbery-Bennett

*... Our parents used to take us collecting and we learnt from them. Us kids used to walk up to the base of the escarpment to get the bush lemons and collect honey from the tiny native bees. We got gum off the trees and ate it as chewing gum. Blackberries were prolific. We got cobs off the trees and dug for the roots of yum yums. We ate pigface as well and wild berries. ... Big gropers were cut up into huge steaks and shared around to all the households.<sup>38</sup>*

The transmission of cultural knowledge by Illawarra Elders was not always easy. Not only did the encroaching development of European settlement inhibit the movement of Aboriginal people through their territory but also surveillance by the APB, AWB and missionaries made it difficult to practice and/or pass on their culture. The stories of certain places were told while travelling, therefore restrictions on the movement of Aboriginal people meant that stories associated with some places were never passed on. The speaking of traditional languages was frowned on by the APB, AWB and missionaries, as it was considered to be incompatible with their aims. Illawarra Elder, Muriel Davis, remembers the secrecy that surrounded her Elder's use of their language.

*My mother and grandfather, Jack Amatto would sit and talk the traditional language and I was told not to be there while they were speaking it. I don't think they wanted us kids to know the traditional language because they feared that we would be taken away.<sup>39</sup>*

Her family appropriately linked the speaking of Aboriginal language with child removal. The APB,

AWB and missionaries are known to have used child removal as a threat to inhibit the practice of traditional culture.<sup>40</sup>

In the face of change brought about by the growth of European settlement, the Aboriginal people who lived at Hill 60 and the Official Camps endeavoured to transfer traditional knowledge and skills that would enable them to survive in the new society.

By building permanent houses at Hill 60 the Illawarra people attempted to take advantage of schooling at the nearby Port Kembla Public School. The houses they built at Hill 60 had satisfied the Association for the Protection of Native Races when it investigated complaints made about Aboriginal residents in 1927. 'Mr Cooper, Mr Sullivan and Mr Morley, paid a surprise visit and inspected the homes which they found to be cleanly, and quite suitable to the needs of the people concerned'. Aboriginal people like many others living around Port Kembla at the time found it difficult to build adequate houses given the scarcity of building

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33 'Black Girls Escape', *Illawarra Mercury*, 22 February, 1918, and transcribed in Organ (b), *op. cit.*, pp. 231-232.

34 Report of the Aborigines Protection Board for the Year Ended 1904, *op. cit.*

35 Davis, Muriel, in *Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Wollongong*, *op. cit.*, p. 2, 3 & 5.

36 Maskell-Bell, Alma, in *Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Wollongong*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

37 Brown-Henry, Thelma, in *Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Wollongong*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

38 Timbery-Bennett, Rita, *Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Wollongong*, *op. cit.*, p. 45. This publication provides many further examples of the knowledge Wadi-Wadi elders passed on to their children during the decades at Hill 60 and Coomaditchy.

39 Davis, Muriel, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

40 Goodall, *op. cit.*

materials and money. The houses they built reflected their lack of access to money as well as their ability to improvise with what they had. When visiting Hill 60 the APNR also noted, '...they were certainly unsightly, were built of galvanised iron, kerosene tins, very cleverly put together, with sometimes an extension of canvas.'<sup>41</sup> Illawarra Aboriginal people have given their own accounts of the houses at Hill 60 and some of the ways in which their parents improvised with the material that was available;

*At night our parents would warm up bricks and rocks and wrap them in a rag to keep us warm in bed at night. They used to put a handle on the condensed milk tin for a cup. We had nothing much, but we were happy.<sup>42</sup>*



Figure 37: Hill 60 Trig, site of the Timbery/Bell house before the 1942 evacuation (DEC)



Figure 38: Wollongong 'Land Rights' protest march in the late 1960s (Illawarra Images)

## Joining the broader fight for Aboriginal Rights

The fight for land tenure did not end with Coomaditchy and the houses constructed by the AWB. Aboriginal people continued to fight for basic human rights by petitioning members of parliament and local councillors, using the power and participation of unions and developing Aboriginal rights organisations such as the Aborigines Advancement League which provided a focus for action and lobbying. For example, Mary Davis and her husband were involved with grass roots political action both in Wollongong and beyond:

*My husband was a wharfie which got him involved with the Trades and Labour Council in Wollongong. ... We did a lot of travelling to Canberra for rights: fishing rights, the right to walk into pubs, the right to even walk into shops, all of that. ... We'd have a May Day march in Sydney. We'd march down the street with all the Unions here in Wollongong. Our placards used to say 'Land Rights', 'Better Education', 'Housing', 'Health' and 'Employment'. About fifty Aboriginal people used to march; kids and all.<sup>43</sup>*



Illawarra Aborigines also staged annual marches for 'equal rights' in Wollongong after the introduction in 1957 of the National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NAD) which in 1991 became National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) day and then NAIDOC week. These events marked an important development in the way that Aborigines in the Illawarra staged their challenge to the power of European laws and institutions. The NAD marches involved important Aboriginal leaders from other parts of New South Wales including Percy Mumbler and Frank Roberts.<sup>44</sup>

### Europeans engage with Aboriginal culture

Access to land and resources were the issues that triggered many of the first challenges Aboriginal people made to European power throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Later concerns were focused on the European control of Aboriginal culture. The non-indigenous portrayal and control of Illawarra Aboriginal culture has become an issue in recent decades as a range of academic disciplines have depicted Aboriginal culture and history. The focus of present day debates tends to obscure the story of the challenges that Illawarra Aborigines faced in accessing European knowledge. Such challenges, especially in the nineteenth century, have gone largely unrecorded; but there are exceptions.

When Reverend Clarke and other Europeans were invited to observe a local corroboree in 1840 it was not intended that he was there only to witness, but also to learn. A song that told the story of the European invasion was presented:

*'On enquiry I find the burden of the song to be "that the white men came to Sydney in Ships and landed the horses in the salt water" '*



Figure 39: Members of the South Coast Aborigines Advancement league in Canberra on the Steps of Old Parliament House, Easter 1962. LtoR: Fred Moore, Aunty Olga Booth, Jock Delany, Aunty Elizabeth (Dolly) Henry, Aunty Mary and Uncle Bob Davis (private collection)

*'It is of such ridiculous subjects that the Blacks of New Holland make their songs – and any trifling [my emphasis] event is celebrated by a song.'*<sup>45</sup>

Clearly this lesson was lost on Clarke.

41 Quoted in Ecklund, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

42 Maskell-Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

43 Davis, Mary, in *Aboriginal Women's Heritage – Wollongong*, pp. 18–19.

44 'Pensioner Heads the Tribe – Natives Demand New Deal', *Illawarra Mercury*, July 15, 1972.

45 Clarke, Rev. W. B., *op. cit.*, p. 181.

Perhaps when Illawarra Elders, Ellen Anderson, Lizzy Malone and others, offered their knowledge as traditional stories and language to linguists and ethnographers in the late nineteenth century, they were addressing the broader issue of European misunderstandings of Illawarra culture. These Elders began to speak out at a time when their culture and identity was under increasing threat. The 'dying' or 'doomed race' ideology was evident in both newspapers and other publications on the Illawarra from the late 1850s:

*There is a marked falling off, during the last few years, in the number of the tribe. And we noticed that the complexion of nearly all of the children is a great deal less dark than that of the full grown [adults] forming the group; and that their features preserve not the form peculiar to the darkie of this Country. In a few years the native tribe belonging to this locality, though once numerous, will have become extinct.<sup>46</sup>*

*... Before reaching Kiama [at Minnamurra], a long row of huts in a field by the roadside denotes the camp of the aboriginals. They are a sickly looking set, and doubtless very different, both in physique and in the morale, from their ancestors. They are practically paupers, the government supplying them with blankets, flour, tea, sugar and sometimes boats.<sup>47</sup>*

By challenging European knowledge of Illawarra culture the Aboriginal elders were inviting Europeans to share in a different perspective of their culture. They strategically offered their knowledge to Europeans of influence in the hope that their European status and privilege would channel the Aboriginal knowledge to a broader audience.

## Conclusion

This history indicates that the Illawarra was a geographically distinct, varied and resource rich environment defined by the escarpment to the north and west and the mountainous region between Kiama and the Shoalhaven where Aboriginal people had ready access to a wide range of resources. Regular contact with neighbours to the south, west and north allowed them to share culture, trade for scarce items and resources and participate in ceremonies, dances, songs, poetry and knowledge. The Illawarra environment provided its Aboriginal inhabitants with the identity of fisher people particularly skilled in the knowledge of marine and estuarine resources.

However, the proximity of the Illawarra to the 1788 Port Jackson invasion determined the early impact of massive change brought about when Europeans annexed arable lands in the east. By 1815 Illawarra territories had been granted to European settlers and environmental modification on an unprecedented scale began. As Illawarra forests were cleared, Aborigines were increasingly marginalised and forced to camp and harvest at less favourable sites. Nevertheless, they kept their relationship with and knowledge of country through stories and practical application in resource use and regular travel (particularly north and south).

Work on pastoral and agricultural properties with stock and harvesting augmented the acquisition of European products such as flour, tea and tobacco which could be bartered for fish. Seasonal employment fitted with regular travel on the traditional routes north, south and west of the Illawarra and enabled Aboriginal people to maintain family networks and knowledge of country.

Today Aboriginal people in the Illawarra participate in all aspects of society, working in the service industries, as sports people, in education, justice and health. They work to foster an understanding of Aboriginal culture both within Aboriginal communities and in the wider social arena. There are dynamic art and craft cooperatives and bush regeneration teams. Ventures are in progress to provide Illawarra cultural tours for visitors and culture camps for all ages and groups. Culture is being maintained through the regular telling of traditional stories and histories, travel, family networks and practical knowledge of the landscape through the harvesting of resources.

Despite the invasion of Australia by Europeans, Aboriginal people have been able to maintain important aspects of their relationship with country, one another and the spirit world. Although their expressions of Aboriginality are dynamic, their sense of Aboriginality has never been lost.

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46 'Blacks Blanket Day', *Illawarra Mercury*, April, 1858, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 305.

47 Wise, A, 'The Illawarra District', in *Cassel's Picturesque Australia*, London 1889, Volume IV, p. 222, transcribed in Organ (a), *op. cit.*, p. 349. Contrast this account with the circa 1896 photograph figure s1.



# Appendix 1

## Significant Aboriginal sites identified in the IRAHP

The table below summarises the significance of Aboriginal heritage places in the Illawarra and has four fields. The first field indicates the name of the Aboriginal heritage place, the second identifies the heritage value according to which the place is deemed significant, the third refers to the theme under which greater discussion of significance is given in Gahan's report (Gahan 2004: 8-10).

### Key to NSW Heritage Office's criteria

Criterion (a) historic significance	An item is important in the course of pattern of cultural/natural history
Criterion (b) social significance	An item is important in relation to a person or group of significance
Criterion (c) aesthetic significance	An item is important in terms of aesthetic/technical/creative characteristics
Criterion (d) social significance	An item is important to a community/cultural group for social/spiritual/cultural reasons
Criterion (e) scientific significance	An item has potential to yield information that will contribute cultural/natural history
Criterion (f) aesthetic significance	An item possesses rare aspects of cultural/natural history
Criterion (g) historic significance	An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural/natural heritage items

Name of site	Significance criteria according to the Burra Charter and rank of significance	Themes	Themes from NSW Heritage Office	Level of significance
<b>1. Five Islands</b>	Historic Social High to exceptional	The Illawarra Landscape as Wadi-Wadi Country  Caring for Country  Knowledge of Country and culture	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local

Name of site	Significance criteria according to the Burra Charter and rank of significance	Themes	Themes from NSW Heritage Office	Level of significance
<b>2. Red Point/ Hill 60/ Djillawarra</b>	Historic Social Moderate to high	Country as Provider  Caring for Country  Using the lake, lagoons, creeks and rivers  The continued reliance on the sea and shoreline  Fighting for tenure at Tom Thumb Lagoon, Hill 60 and Coomaditchy  Defending family life and identity  Adopting European work practices	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local State
<b>3. Windang Island</b>	Historic, Social Scientific/ Archaeological High to exceptional	The Illawarra Landscape as Wadi-Wadi Country  Caring for Country	(a) historical significance, (d) social significance, (e) scientific significance	Local
<b>5. Gooseberry Island</b>	Historic Social Scientific/ Archeological Moderate to high	Using the lakes, lagoons creeks and rivers	(a) historical significance, (d) social significance, (e) scientific significance	Local

Name of site	Significance criteria according to the Burra Charter and rank of significance	Themes	Themes from NSW Heritage Office	Level of significance
<b>6. Hooka Island</b>	Historic Social Scientific/ Archeological Moderate to high	Using the lakes, lagoons, creeks and rivers  Battles with Charley Hooka	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local
<b>7. Mt Keira</b>	Historic Social Exceptional to high	The Illawarra Landscape as Wadi-Wadi Country  Caring for Country  Ongoing use of the escarpment and forests  Movement	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local
<b>8. Mt Kembla</b>	Historic Social Exceptional to high	The Illawarra Landscape as Wadi-Wadi Country  Caring for Country  Ongoing use of the escarpment and forests  Movement	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local



Name of site	Significance criteria according to the Burra Charter and rank of significance	Themes	Themes from NSW Heritage Office	Level of significance
<b>9. Coomaditchy</b>	Historic Social Scientific/ Archeological Exceptional to high	Country as provider  Using the lakes, lagoons, creeks and river systems  The continued reliance on the sea and the shoreline  Fighting for tenure at Tom Thumb Lagoon, Hill 60 and Coomaditchy  Defending family life and identity  Joining the broader fight for Aboriginal Rights  Adopting European work practices	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance, (e) scientific significance	Local
<b>10. Fig Tree Site</b>	Historic Social Exceptional to high	The Illawarra landscape as Wadi-Wadi Country  Continuing other historic cultural traditions	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance	Local State

Name of site	Significance criteria according to the Burra Charter and rank of significance	Themes	Themes from NSW Heritage Office	Level of significance
<b>11. Sandon Point</b>	Historic Social Scientific/ Archaeological Moderate to high	The Illawarra Landscape as Wad-Wadi Country  The continued reliance on the sea and the shoreline  Burials	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance, (e) scientific significance	Local
<b>12. Shores and swamps of and watercourse conjunctions with Lake Illawarra</b>	Historic Social Scientific/ Archaeological Exceptional to high	Country as provider  Using the lakes, lagoons, creeks and river systems  The continued reliance on the sea and the shoreline  Using other historic cultural traditions  Wearing Breast Plates	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance, (e) scientific significance	Local
<b>13. Bulli Pass</b>	Historic Social Exceptional to high	Caring for Country  Movement	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance,	Local
<b>14. Golf Links</b>	Historic Social Exceptional to high	Country as Provider  Using the lakes, lagoons' creeks and rivers  Fighting for tenure at Tom Thumb Lagoon, Hill 60 and Coomaditchy	(a) historic significance, (d) social significance,	Local

# Appendix 2

## Traditional stories of the Dharawal

STORY	LOCATION	INFORMANT	SOURCE
A Bird Legend	Illawarra	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 197-8.
Arrival of the Thurawal Tribe in Australia	Windang Island	Shoalhaven Aboriginal informant	Matthews 1899
At Low Tide/ Allambee and the Great White Spirit (the coming of the white man to Australia).	Bellambi	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 136-143
Baagoddah	Moruya		Langloh Parker 1930
Billen Billen Island	Illawarra		Clio n.d. in Organ 1993
Bundoola and the Birthplace of the South Coast Tribes	Beecroft Peninsula, Jervis Bay.	George Brown of Wreck Bay	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i> , July 7, 1990.
Gurambugang – The Lizard	Illawarra		Matthews 1904: 346.
Gurungaty – the water monster	Resides Dharawal and Gundangurra country		Mathews 1904: 345
How the White Waratah became red.	Sherbrooke (Bulli Tops) and Mittagong	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1925: 26-29.
Jerra Thurawaldtheri	Between Perry's Meadows and Kangaroo Valley		McKenzie 1874: 255
Kubbugang – the Bat	Illawarra		Matthews 1904: 346.
Mirrirul – the creator		Lizzy Malone	Ridley 1878: 265-6
Mulgani	Thirroul	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 208-214.
Mumuga – The Cave Monster	Illawarra	Told to Matthews late nineteenth century.	Matthews 1904: 345.



STORY	LOCATION	INFORMANT	SOURCE
Stone throwers	Georges River	Ellen Anderson	<i>Sydney Mail</i> , March 14, 1928.
The dianella berry	East coast	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 99-102
The erring maidens	Lake Illawarra	Ellen Anderson	<i>Sydney Mail</i> , February 15, 1928.
The first gynea or gigantic lily.	Glenfield-Minto area	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1925: 9-13.
The first Kangaroo.	South-eastern Australia	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1925: 38-42.
The legend of the lyrebird and the kookaburra	Illawarra and Shoalhaven		Langloh Parker 1930
The Lyrebird and the Kookaburra	Illawarra	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1925: 110-116.
The Lyrebird and the Kookaburra	Illawarra	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1925: 110-116.
The Mist and a Fringe Flower	Appin Creek, Georges River, Maddens Plains	Ellen Anderson	Peck, C. W., <i>Australian Legends</i> , 1933, pp. 204-207.
The Nut Gatherers	Bendthualaly (between 'Perry's Meadows' and Kangaroo Valley).		McKenzie 1874: 257.
The Pleiades – A Thurawal Story	Poolinjerunga, near Kaan	Narrated to McKenzie 1874.	McKenzie 1874: 260
The Song	Dharawal	Narrated to Mrs Neil McLean	McLean 1837
The Spirit of the Figtree	Illawarra	Shellharbour informant	MacKenzie 1874:250-1
The story of Bundoola (1 & 2)	Jamberoo, Kangaroo Ground	Bimmoon	McKenzie 1874: 257, 258-60

STORY	LOCATION	INFORMANT	SOURCE
The story of Bundoola (3)	Jamberoo, Kangaroo Ground	Thooritgal	McKenzie 1874: 257-8
The Tail-less Tortoise (or Why the Turtle has no Tail).	Illawarra	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 33-36.
The Yaroma [This is another version of the spirit of the fig tree]	Illawarra		Matthews 1904: 361-363.
Umbels and stamens of the eucalyptus blossom	Australia		Peck 1928 9/5/28
Vicious birds	Upper Shoalhaven		Peck 1928 23/5/28
What makes the waves?	Coalcliff	Ellen Anderson	Peck 1933: 108-121.
Why the waratah is firm	Georges River	Coomercudgkala alias Griffiths	Peck 1925: 52-5
Winged lomatia seeds	Upper Nepean River		Peck 1929 23/1/29
Woolungah	Wollongong	Billy Saddler	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i> 20 Nov 1894
Wynnghnawhra	Bulli-Woonona	Billy Saddler	<i>Illawarra Mercury</i> 20 Nov 1894

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Primary sources included government files and reports pertaining to the Colonial Secretary, the Surveyor General, the Aborigines Protection Board and Welfare Board and the Department of Public Instruction. Various newspaper and manuscript collections held at the Mitchell Library and manuscripts and local histories held by the Wollongong Central Library on behalf of the Illawarra Historical Society were also searched.

The above primary source material has provided important information to the IRAHS. The Colonial Secretary's Correspondence has been particularly important to documenting the history of the Illawarra Aboriginal people throughout the nineteenth century. These records have included census, blanket distribution data, petitions, language and traditional stories.

The files of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB), the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board (AWB) and the NSW Department of Public Instruction (DPI) primarily record the lives of Aboriginal people in NSW from the late nineteenth century up to the late 1960s. Although the APB, AWB and the DPI files reflect the attitudes of the periods in which they operated, they also include important qualitative evidence of Aboriginal history and heritage. These files include information of Aboriginal occupation (including details of the conditions in which Aboriginal families lived and how they lived), and white people's attitudes of the particular significance Aboriginal people associated with place.

The Annual Reports of the Aborigines Protection Board and Welfare Board indicate the numbers of Aboriginal

people in various locations and the movement of Aboriginal people from place to place. The Protection (1883-1940) and Welfare Board's (1940-1969) Annual Reports also note the types of work performed by Aboriginal people and the nature of their housing. The movement, work and housing experiences of Illawarra Aboriginal people have played an important role in determining the significance of various places in the Illawarra landscape.

Newspaper articles include the 'reminiscences' of white settlers and journalistic accounts of Aboriginal people's lives throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They discuss Aboriginal people's whereabouts and give details of 'customs and traditions' and interactions between Europeans and Aborigines. These sources are an important supplement to official records like the Colonial Secretary's files as they provide an alternative to the bureaucratic perspective and give a more detailed account of life in nineteenth century Illawarra.

Pictorial sources including photographs, drawings and paintings located at the Mitchell Library, the Wollongong Central Library and in published sources have also been useful in providing a number of insights for the IRAHP. Historic photographs in particular have been useful in gaining a visual perspective on past events and been important in stimulating the memories and stories of contemporary Aboriginal people. While drawings and paintings often are more revealing of the European creator than the Aboriginal subjects they too can be 'read' to reveal important insights and the artistic conventions of the period.



A wide range of Illawarra local histories and Dharawal ethnohistories have been used to guide the study. In addition, books and journal articles relating to the general history of Aboriginal peoples in NSW have provided a broader contextual framework in which to assess the significance of heritage places. Anthropological, ethnographic and archaeological secondary sources include academic journals such as *Oceania* and *Mankind* and archaeological reports.

Historians have often argued that oral history or testimony is important to telling the past to 'fill the gap' in the historic record. But more recently debate regarding Aboriginal oral histories for the Illawarra are not only important to supplement the documentary record, but also as an expression of history having unique meaning and purpose.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the interviews and other personal communication conducted as part of the IRAHS, other oral histories have been incorporated IRAHS. These interviews were conducted during IRAHS (Stage 1) in 2002, for the *Aboriginal Women's Heritage: Wollongong book* in 2003 and by the Aboriginal Education Consultative committee in 1987. In the early 1920s stories of country were narrated by Ellen Anderson<sup>2</sup> to C. W. Peck (see Appendix 2) and constitute an important part of the region's historical record.

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1 For discussion of Aboriginal History and the significance of oral history to Aboriginal history see for example. McGrath, Ann, 'What is 'Aboriginal History' in *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, 1995, pp.359-395.

2 Ellen Anderson was born on Lake Illawarra in 1855 and was the younger sister of Rosie Russell who married Mickey Johnston/Johnson.

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