



## Respecting the Difference: Aboriginal Cultural Training

### REVISITING HISTORY

(NOTE: The historical records show different versions of the spelling for Tharawal, Gandangara and Darug.)

#### ABORIGINAL HISTORY ACROSS THE DISTRICT<sup>i</sup>

In 1795 when Bass and Flinders first explored the Georges River before the colonisation of the region, the Darug, Tharawal and Gandangara tribes lived in the area. These three tribal groups were divided into smaller clans or bands – extended family units consisting of up to 60 people. Each of these clans was named after the area of land where they normally resided, and with which the people had traditional links. Evidence suggests they have been here for up to 40,000 years.

The main contact between groups was during ceremonial gatherings. There were linguistic and cultural differences, as well as economic ones. There was also a complicated system of kinship and totems, which prevented certain types of contact.

It is difficult to pinpoint exact language barriers as information came from early colonists, explorers and ethnographers trying to interpret Aboriginal languages. It is thought that the Tharawal language was spoken from south of Botany Bay to the area east of the Georges River (Holsworthy area) to as far south as Jervis Bay, and the Darug language on the western side of the Georges River, as well as in the area west of Sydney from the Hawkesbury River to Appin and Picton and as far west as the Blue Mountains. Gandangara is said to be the language of the mountain people from the Blue Mountains to the Nattai and Burragorang Valleys and as far south as Goulburn.

#### BANKSTOWN<sup>ii</sup>

For thousands of years before the arrival of the Europeans, the area now covered by the suburbs of Bankstown and Canterbury was the territory of the Gweagal, Bidjigal and a portion of the Dharug people. The Gweagal and Bidjigal were clans of the larger language group of the Dharawal.

The Gweagal were the people of the southern shores of Botany Bay but their territory (although not clearly defined) probably covered much of the Cronulla-Sutherland area and west towards Liverpool.

Bidjigal territory is believed to have been the Cooks River and Georges River area; however some sources believe it stretched to Parramatta. The Bidjigal have also been said to have occupied sites near present day Salt Pan Creek, Bankstown, Revesby, Georges Hall, Chester Hill, Chullora, Beverley Hills and Oatley.



These societies lived in a close association with their environment. The land provided kangaroo, emu, possum, wild honey, plants and roots. Botany Bay, the Cooks River and Georges River provided fish and shellfish. Reminders of their lifestyle, dating back 3000 years, can still be found along the Georges River and other areas, including rock and overhang paintings, stone scrapers, middens and axe grinding grooves.<sup>iii</sup>

Bass and Flinder's favourable reports pleased Governor Hunter. In 1797 he named the area Banks Town (after botanist Joseph Banks) and by 1799 he was awarding grants of land in the Holsworthy area and along the Cabramatta Creek.<sup>iv</sup>

Of the 23 suburbs that make up the Bankstown LGA, the names of five suburbs originate from the Bidjigal language<sup>v</sup>. They are:

- Birrong (star)
- Chullora (native flour – from seed ground between 2 rocks)
- Milperra (company)
- Panania (sun rising in the east and shining on the hills); and
- Yagoona (now or today)

### ***Resistance fighters<sup>vi</sup>***

Pemulwuy was a man of the Bidjigal clan from an area near what is Bankstown. He led resistance against the British in the Georges River area between 1797 and his death in 1802. Pemulwuy had survived so many serious wounds that many Aboriginal people believed that the white man's guns could not hurt him.

When Pemulwuy did die from gunshot wounds, his head was cut off, pickled in alcohol and sent to scientists in England. In a note that accompanied Pemulwuy's head to England, Governor King wrote "he was a brave and independent character". A small band led by his son Tedbury continued the resistance until Tedbury too was shot in 1810.

Others identified as leaders of the Aboriginal resistance in the area included Murrah, Myles, Wallah (Warren), Kurringy (Carbone Jack), Bunduck, Kongate, Woottan, Rachel and Yallaman.

## **BOWRAL**

The Bowral area during pre-colonial times was part of land that belonged to the Tharawal people. The name Bowral is believed to be derived from the Tharawal word 'bowrel', which loosely translates to the English word 'high'.<sup>vii</sup>



Little is known about the Aboriginal occupation of the Wingecaribee over a period of some 19,000 years. Although the Aboriginal people left records on trees most of this 'literature' has been cleared. By the time the Europeans came to make records the local Aboriginal people had been considerably disrupted. There are however many hundreds of former Aboriginal sites. A quarter of the 402 registered sites are camp sites under rock overhangs and in woodlands near water courses. There is evidence also of a track between the coast and inland via a settlement near Sutton Forest. Presumably this was used for trade and seasonal movement and it suggests some kind of permanent occupation.<sup>viii</sup>

The current name Wingecaribee was recorded in 1816 by the Oxley family, is said to mean 'a flight of birds' or 'waters to rest beside'.<sup>ix</sup>

## CAMDEN

The Gundungurra dialect was spoken in all the country between Burragorang and Picton, and as far as Goulburn, Crookwell and Yass. The Dharug dialect, very closely resembling the Gundungurra, was spoken at Campbelltown, Liverpool, Camden, Penrith and possibly as far east as Sydney. The Gundungurra and Dharug natives could converse together but with difficulty.<sup>x</sup>

The Tharawal, Darug and Gandangara peoples met on a regular basis to feast, celebrate and perform religious observances. They also traded a local valuable white clay (also known as ochre), which was widely used to decorate bodies and tools.<sup>xi</sup> The local Gundungurra people called the area around Camden *Benkennie* – meaning the dry land.<sup>xii</sup>

Another tribe or perhaps sub-group of Aboriginal people in the Camden or Cowpasture area was called the Cubbitch Barta, the name coming from words for the white pipe clay. Because the Camden area has few rock outcrops, it is to the surrounding bushland areas of Hawkesbury Sandstone that we must look for the rock engravings and cave paintings that the local Aboriginal people have left as their marks. Burragorang Valley and the area between Campbelltown and the coast have scattered Aboriginal relics.<sup>xiii</sup>

## CAMPBELLTOWN

In December 1820, Governor Lachlan Macquarie named Campbell-Town in honour of his wife, Elizabeth Campbell. The region has become known as Sydney's 'Living Heritage' precinct, being home to an impressive portfolio of heritage listed buildings, sites and pioneer cemeteries. There are Aboriginal heritage items, buildings dating back to the early 1800s and a fascinating war history.<sup>xiv</sup>

Diseases brought by the Europeans also depleted the Dharawal population. In 1845, the number of Aboriginal people in the Campbelltown Police District had dropped in 10 years from 20 to none. In



contradiction to this, the historical records state that during 1858, about 200 Aboriginal people attended the celebrations at Campbelltown marking the opening of the railway line.<sup>xv</sup>

### ***Broughton Pass Aboriginal Massacre Site, Appin<sup>xvi</sup>***

By July, 1813 Europeans had begun to encroach on Dharawal land, having established farms in the Appin area. While the Dharawal tried to continue to live peacefully, Aboriginal people from other areas were also in the vicinity, having been displaced from their traditional lands, placing pressure on food supplies and increasing tension. Governor Macquarie had endeavoured to abide by the British Government's instructions to ensure that British subjects attempt to live in 'amity and kindness' with the native population. However, between 1814 and 1816 relations between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the Appin area became hostile, perhaps exacerbated by a severe drought which further increased pressures on the scarce food supplies.

In May, 1814 three members of the militia fired on Aboriginal people on two farms at Appin, killing a boy. This led to retaliation by the Aboriginal people, followed by further violence by settlers. Over the next two years hostilities escalated and came to a head in March 1816, when members of the Gundangara attacked settlers, killing some and destroying property. It was in response to these attacks that Macquarie felt compelled to 'inflict terrible and exemplary punishments' on the Aborigines. He ordered three military detachments of the 46th Regiment, under the command of Captain Wallis to be dispatched to Windsor, Liverpool and the Cowpastures to deal with the 'Natives' by 'punishing and clearing the country of them entirely, and driving them across the mountains.'

Early one morning he and his men came across the Dharawal men's camp at Appin. They slaughtered the men and cut off the heads of fourteen elders to take back to Sydney. While Wallis returned to Sydney, civilians (including stockmen) remained and continued to hunt down the Dharawal. They found the camp where women and children were staying, shot or trampled them under their horses' hooves and drove them over the cliffs of Broughton Pass.

The massacre annihilated the Dharawal people destroying their way of life and social structure. Their numbers had already been decimated by disease and hostilities since European occupation but after the massacres of 1816 it is estimated that there were less than 30 remaining. Broughton Pass is located 5.5 km south west of Appin on the road to Picton.

### ***Wedderburn<sup>xvii</sup>***

Cubbitch Barta National Area and the O'Hares Creek National Estate Area have both been recognised for their rich Aboriginal heritage value. There is at least one scarred tree, which had its bark removed by indigenous Australians for the creation of bark canoes, shelters, shields and containers, such as coolamons. They are among the easiest-to-find archaeological sites in Australia (Source: Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarred\\_tree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarred_tree), site accessed 25/01/2018). It is unusual for such a tree to survive in the Sydney Basin, especially in an area where agriculture has been practised



for over one hundred years. Seven rock art caves, three grinding groove sites and one dwelling cave have been found.

#### ***Bull Cave, Minto Heights<sup>xviii</sup>***

Cave paintings here depict kangaroos, human figures and 11 mundoes (footprints) in red ochre, and a group of large mammals which resemble bulls. Researchers believe the paintings are genuinely Aboriginal, that they were drawn after 1788 and depict the progeny of cattle which escaped from the colony of Sydney in 1788. These cattle were found at Cow Pastures, which is close to Bulls Cave, by the first white settlers in the Macarthur district 15 years later after their escape. Sadly, the art in this and other overhangs in the area have been badly damaged by vandals.



#### ***Menangle Eel Farm<sup>xix</sup>***

Two hectares of systematic pondage on Lyre Bird Creek, a minor tributary of the Nepean, the Menangle eel farm was used for eel farming by the local Aborigines. It is a rare example of sustainable farming practised by Aboriginal people, as opposed to hunting and gathering activities, their normal practice, another example would include the site of the Brewarrina Fish Traps. The eel farm provided an essential food supply for the large cyclical population which took up extended residence in the area over 3 to 4 year cycles and is thus associated with the traditional way of life of the Aboriginal population and their occupation of the area. While the activity of eel farming is no longer practised, the site is important to descendants of the Dharawal because of its association with their ancestors and as evidence of their way of life and occupation of the land.

#### ***The Kurrajong and Dooligah Trees, Mt. Annan Botanic Gardens<sup>xx</sup>***

Two trees of significance to the Dharawal Aboriginal people are situated in the Yandel'ora area of Mt. Annan Botanic Garden. The trees formed a strong association with the way of life, customs, traditions and philosophies of the Aboriginal population of south-eastern Australia. The location of the trees within the traditional lawmaking area of Yandel'ora demonstrates their role in teaching children the laws of their group. Of particular interest is the Dooligah tree, which is estimated to be over 500 years old.

#### ***Lake Gilinganadum and Lake Nadungamba, Mt. Annan Botanic Gardens<sup>xxi</sup>***

Located in the north-west section of Mt. Annan Botanic Garden, these artificial lakes, created from dams remnant from the pastoral era and created in a creek and wetland system, have significance in local Aboriginal culture in that the site has deep associations with the lawmaking and dispute resolution practices of the Aboriginal peoples of south-eastern Australia. It was the only major inter-tribal lawmaking site in South-Eastern Australia and was a meeting place for Aboriginal groups from all over that region. The Aboriginal names of the lakes mean, 'lake of the frog' and 'lake of the child'



respectively. The area in which the lakes are located is known by the Dharawal people as Yandel'ora, meaning 'the Land of Peace between Peoples'.

### ***Namut (Gilbert) – Aboriginal Tracker<sup>xxii</sup>***

Namut was the first Aboriginal person employed by the police as a Tracker. After Campbelltown farmer Fred Fisher disappeared in 1826, Namut (from Liverpool) and the police were called in to investigate. Through his tracking skills, Namut played a role in solving the mystery of Fisher's murder from which the Fisher's Ghost legend grew, Australia's first and most famous ghost story.

### **FAIRFIELD<sup>xxiii</sup>**

The clan group around Fairfield was the Cabrogal clan of the Darug nation. The Cabrogal were named after the cohbra (or cahbra) grubs they harvested at the banks of the Georges River especially near Cabramatta Creek.

Evidence of an Aboriginal presence has been found in the Fairfield LGA, in particular the rural areas west of Wallgrove Road, upper Orphan School Creek, Clear Paddock Creek and around the Prospect Reservoir. Typical items that indicate an Aboriginal presence include shell middens (a deposit composed of the remains of edible shellfish and may also contain fish and animal bones, stone tools and charcoal from campfires), scar trees, campsites and stone artefacts.

Of the 27 suburbs that make up the Fairfield LGA, the names of three suburbs originate from the Darug language:

- Carramar<sup>xxiv</sup> - shade of trees
- Yennora<sup>xxv</sup> - walking or to stroll.
- Cabramatta<sup>xxvi</sup> - understood to have taken its name from the Cabrogal clan who occupied the land that Cabramatta sits on.

### **LIVERPOOL**

When Governor Macquarie first toured the district, he saw much of it in its natural state. The land near Liverpool was generally open forest, as was the country further west along Cabramatta Creek with eucalypts of medium height, which covered about 30% of the ground surface, with grasses beneath.

On 7 November 1810 Governor Lachlan Macquarie founded Liverpool and named it in honour of the Earl of Liverpool, then Secretary of State for the Colonies. Liverpool is the fourth oldest town following Sydney, Parramatta and Hobart and was the first free planned settlement in Australia.

In 1803 Thomas Moore was commissioned to take timber from the Georges River for shipbuilding. The river also provided water and for nearly two decades it was the primary means of transport back



to Sydney - a far cry from the peaceful river on which the Aboriginal people fished from their bark canoes or dug for yams and collected cohbra grubs near its banks. The creeks, rivers and natural corridors were widely used by the local Aboriginal people as a food source.

For his services to the colony Thomas Moore was granted large parcels of land around the area. One parcel of land is now where Liverpool Hospital is located, on the land of the Cabrogal clan of the Darug Nation.

While the Aboriginal economy was dependent on harvesting resources with only very little modification to the environment, the Europeans quickly set about clearing the land and planting crops which prevented the Aboriginal people from carrying out their traditional hunting of animals and gathering of plant foods.

By the late 1800s, the Georges River had become an open drain and sewer, and was poisoning the people of Liverpool – for both the Cabrogal and the British settlers. The smelly and toxic waste from all of Liverpool's industry, large and small, went straight into the river. Though this water carried disease, many townsfolk had no alternative but to drink it. In 1891, Council brought piped water into Liverpool<sup>xxvii</sup>.

A smallpox epidemic had swept through the Aboriginal population around Sydney in 1789 and 1790 killing thousands of people. The decline in the Aboriginal population in lots of areas meant that many clans were forced to join together to provide mutual protection and to maintain viable social and economic units.

### ***Christiana Brooks of Denham Court***<sup>xxviii</sup>

Mrs Brooks was a perceptive social observer who kept a diary for several years and wrote many letters. One of the topics she wrote about was the *sad state of Aboriginal people*, where she firmly believed that Aboriginal people should be compensated for the loss of their hunting grounds. The following was probably written in the mid-1800s:

*"It is a fact well-known that wherever our stockmen abide, the kangaroos and possums disappear, our dogs destroying them. The Aboriginal people have been driven from their land and deprived of their usual resources by the invasion of strangers.*

*The hostility on the part of the native will no doubt be found as it has ever been to originate in outrages committed on them by the stock-keepers, an ignorant and brutal race, who by their interference with the females of the Aborigines provoke to revenge".*



### **Maria Lock<sup>xxix</sup>**

Maria was a descendant of the Boorooberongal clan (of the Darug Nation). Her father was Yarramundi, to whom the British gave the title “Chief of the Richmond tribe”. She was the sister of Colebee, who in 1818, along with Nurragingy, received the first grant of land made by the British to Aboriginal people.

As a young girl, Maria was the first girl to be placed in care in the Native Institution at Parramatta when it opened in 1815.

Robert Lock was a convict carpenter who had worked on the construction of the Native Institution and other buildings in the areas known as ‘the Black Town’. When Maria married Robert at St Johns Church, Parramatta in 1824, she became the first Aboriginal woman to legally wed a European man. As a wedding gift Governor Lachlan Macquarie promised Maria a grant of land, which was finally approved by Governor Darling in 1831. Maria and Robert were officially allowed to occupy the land on 27 February 1833.

The irony of making ‘grants’ of land to selected Aboriginal individuals – in some instances the same land which the British had dispossessed them of – was apparently lost on Governor Macquarie.

Their plot totalled 40 acres, which they cultivated as a small farm. Twenty-two years after it was promised, Maria’s land was gazetted but with her husband Robert as the ‘grantee’. He was to keep the land ‘in trust’ for his wife.

Maria and Robert lived on the land for 11 years before moving back to Black Town in 1844, where they inherited Colebee and Nurragingy’s land grants. She continued living there until her death in 1878, aged 70. On their death, both Maria and Robert were buried at St Bartholemew’s Church, Prospect (near Blacktown).

The 10 Lock children inherited their parent’s land at both Black Town and Liverpool after Maria’s death. They were forced from the land in 1919 when the Aborigines Protection Board unjustly reclaimed the areas as government land.

Under the legitimacy of the newly passed *Aborigines Protection Act*, the Board attempted to remove all people of Aboriginal descent in NSW onto government run reserves. The result of these forced removals was that many families were widely dispersed across the state.

By the 1930s, the descendants of Maria and Robert Lock were found to be living across NSW – from the north coast at Kempsey, to the south coast at Nowra and Batemans Bay, as far inland as Katoomba, Lithgow, Sackville, Windsor, as well as La Pouse, Parramatta and Botany.



Most of Maria Lock's land is today taken up with the new construction of the Ambulance Super Station (on Hoxton Park Road), as well as a service station, a group of shops, a housing development, a portion of Flowerdale Road and a small easement owned by the NSW Transport Authority. The remainder of the grant area contains Brickmaker's Creek and its floodplain, which is situated just to the left of the Ambulance Super Station if you stand in front of the building face on (where the T-Way Bus Stop is located).

### ***Education for Aboriginal children in Liverpool: The Early Days<sup>xxx</sup>***

In the mid-1800s a school for Aboriginal children was established in Liverpool by Governor Lachlan Macquarie who, to keep costs down, limited the number of enrolments to twenty-four – twelve females and twelve males. As Macquarie reported to Earl Bathurst (sometime between 1819-1822):

"This institution has fully answered the purpose for which it was established, it having proved that the children of the natives have as good and ready an aptitude for learning as those of Europeans, and that they are also susceptible of being completely civilised."

In 1822 the Reverend Mr Hill in a report on schools wrote:

"Institution for the Children of Aborigines. Three girls have been married to native men. Ten acres with a hut and some common domestic articles and a cow given to each. Only fifteen are now in the school due to an intestinal disease killing many".

### ***Holsworthy Military Area<sup>xxxi</sup>***

The Holsworthy bushland retains many Aboriginal sites and has been referred to as "Sydney's Kakadu". There are more than 500 significant Tharawal sites in the area including campsites, tool making sites and rock art. The art is mostly engravings of hands, boomerangs and animals. The main difference between the Holsworthy art samples and others in the Sydney region is that red and white pigment appears to have been used equally for hand stencils while in other samples red clearly dominated. Charcoal, however, was the most commonly used pigment for artwork. The area also features a number of engraving sites. All of these are well preserved and appear to be telling a story.

The presence of the firing range since 1912 has restricted public access and urban development, resulting in most of the sites having been preserved in pristine condition. The majority of sites are located around the many watercourses which pass through the area, and were key travel routes for trade purposes between the Dharawal and the Darug. The sites recorded at Holsworthy include rock shelters, ochre stencils and carvings of animals and spirit figures. They are contained in 219 shelters with art and/or deposit, one shelter deposit, 69 axe grinding groove sites, five engraving sites, eleven grooves and engravings sites and one open site. Featured motifs include red and white stencilled hands, feet, boomerangs, wombats, macropods, fish, eels, turtles, bats, emus, birds, lizards and other animals.



The open campsite is where tools were made and exposes an Aboriginal industry with artefacts from the coast and up to the mountains having been found there. Of particular interest is an Aboriginal carving of a four-masted sailing ship, believed to depict James Cook's Endeavour, a rare record of exceptional interest relating to the earliest contact between the new arrivals and Aboriginal people.

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