Well before the words ‘Aboriginal Heritage Office’ were uttered there was just a bloke with a laptop. There was no template to follow, no ‘How To Create An Aboriginal Heritage Position At Local Government For The Complete Idiot’ guidebook to lean on, just a lot of aspirations and high hopes. All those who have helped to create the AHO and keep it going should feel rightly proud of its achievements.

It has long been recognised that local government has a key role to play in safeguarding Aboriginal sites and heritage. As land owner, approval body and community educator, local government has a much bigger day to day influence on this heritage than many would think. The AHO was established by forward thinking Councils in order to better manage the irreplaceable Aboriginal heritage within their jurisdictions. With over 800 recorded Aboriginal sites in the partner Councils, including art sites, engravings, burials, grinding grooves, extensive shell middens and places of important historical events, the previous practices of simply hoping nothing would go wrong could not be sustained.

The AHO’s threefold approach (site management, community education and awareness, and council support) seems to be working, although site damage that still occurs, deliberate or accidental, shows the job is not yet finished. To address the issues and the demand from the community for information this year alone the AHO has provided over 180 events to audiences totalling over 10,000 people, reviewed over 110 development applications, recorded 19 new sites, monitored over 130 sites, attended another 70 site meetings or inspections, and provided over 10 Aboriginal Sites Awareness training sessions. None of this could have taken place without the ongoing support of Councillors, Council staff, the local community and volunteers. So we can celebrate, as recommended by the NSW Premier in the foreword of the recently completed AHO 5 Year Review:

There are many things to celebrate in this milestone – the ongoing partnership of local councils in sharing staff and resources to help protect Aboriginal heritage, the direction and involvement of Aboriginal people in providing this service to the residents and community, and the innovative and collaborative award-winning programs being carried out. In a quiet yet determined manner the Aboriginal Heritage Office has not only achieved a first in Australia at local government level for the management and promotion of Aboriginal heritage, it has also put out a challenge to other councils to match its successes.

I look forward to hearing more about this successful partnership.

The Hon. Mike Baird-NSW Premier-Member for Manly.
The beauty of education is that even if you forget the facts and figures you know how to go about finding them again. When people question the figures you also know how to argue the basis of them. Conversely when information is quickly and easily available the temptation to take data retrieval as fact retrieval is strong. Take recording site locations as an example. In the old days it would take a significant amount of time and effort to stuff up the coordinates for your new recording. Firstly you would have to try and work out where you were on the map, then plot out the eastings and northings and write down the numbers. Putting them onto the official site card boxes would provide you with more opportunities to make mistakes. At Head Office, the registrar would transfer those numbers into a database increasing the odds for a typo. Nowadays you can take your smart phone out with its App and assume it’s got the right location and put the error straight into the system. For those with Faith, any site location must be true. For the Cynics, every site location is an opportunity to be tricked. The Faithful take their GPS or smart phone and morning tea. The Cynics take several devices, maps of different eras and supplies for a week.

At the AHO we deal with data errors all the time. Everyone makes them, but fewer people recognise how to spot them. Let’s take a wander down memory recording lane and see how the type of location error has changed over time...

**Like a Ball & Chain**
The golden era of site recording in northern Sydney was the 1890s when Government Surveyor William Dugald Campbell (Yarnups August 2013) used standard surveying equipment to measure the location of sites on newly surveyed land (literally a length of rope called a chain, being 60 feet long or about 20m). Campbell’s delightfully clear recordings of rock engravings provided great information.

**The Empire Strikes On**
The best topographic maps for many decades were the imperial 1:63,360 scale maps (1 inch to the mile). This was an era from when plastic was unheard of up until when the audio cassette was considered new technology. When you recorded a site you would give 3 digits for each axis, meaning the site location was a dot over a **hundred yards across**!!! To make matters worse, large areas of Sydney still had no annotations and many sites were given a name corresponding to the nearest word on the map. For example there are many sites called ‘Scotland Island’ that aren’t on the island!

**Metric & MINARK**
The introduction of metric began with 1:250,000 scale maps (not much better than the imperial) but for Sydney they were quickly improved to 1:25,000 (imaginable). They say the wheels of bureaucracy turn slowly, and for Aboriginal heritage site data management this was true. While the National Parks and Wildlife Service officers did their best with various map and memory methods, the introduction of a computer system made things both better and worse in a flash. One of the quirks of the system was the conversion of imperial coordinates into metric. As the imperial coordinates were to the nearest hundred yards, somehow MINARK (the system) used a formula that put most (all?) sites out by up to 500m in any direction. Unlike all newer recordings that gave the grid coordinate to the nearest 10m (let’s face it, you couldn’t use a ball point pen and ruler to estimate a location to the metre on the best scaled map), these figures were to the metre yet likely to be hundred of metres away! If someone received a printout of coordinates they would be forgiven for thinking the locations would be of use in finding the site. Picture following the coordinates for the Opera House and finding yourself at Kirribilli instead.

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**Dreamtime’s Almost Gone**  
Cast your spears on the wind, my sons,  
dance to the didgeridoo,  
sing the songs of the Old, my sons,  
for the Dreamtime’s almost gone.  
Sit beside the sacred sites, look deep into the hills,  
carry the knowledge in your hearts, my sons,  
For the Dreamtime’s almost gone.  
Hear the cries of the earth, my sons,  
as its back is scraped by harvest ploughs,  
and tractor wheels,  
For the Dreamtime’s almost gone.  
By Lorraine Mafi-Williams from *Spirit Song*
Even though the maps were available, NPWS didn’t switch over to this system for some years. In fact it wasn’t until the mid-1980s that metric coordinates were the preferred choice on site cards which means the problematic imperial – metric conversion continued.

OMG AMG

Just when people were becoming relaxed and comfortable through the 1990s with metric and a better NPWS register system the earth moved, the geographers wobbled and the cartographers went back to the drawing boards. The old Australian Map Grid aka the Australian Geodetic Datum (AMG aka AGD) was given a redundancy package and the Geocentric Datum of Australia (GDA) was promoted. This moved Australia 104m to the left and 190m down. The transition between different mapping scales provides fertile ground for geographically positioned bamboozlement. A site card may have the imperial coordinates but you have a metric map – no translation. A card may have the AMG figures but you have a nice GDA map (the site is here, minus 104m on this line, and here, minus 190, hang on, where was I?). Often the best maps for the urban area were street directories with a scale at 1:20,000 but the format was AMGs, not GDA. But wait, what light through yonder handheld device shines?

Geepers GPS

The arrival of digital gave hope where there was confusion. However with early GPS there was a whole new way to get lazy with site recording. Why struggle with maps, rulers, special transparent map measurers and so on, when there’s a button to press? The problem was when you got back to the office and tried to plot out the figures many were in the harbour or in someone’s driveway, no where near where you thought you were on the ground.

With technological progress comes a quickening and more detailed accumulation of information. Getting a site location is a mere touch of a button on your smartypants phone. Where once you would look at a poor quality map, close one eye and guestimate the nearest mm to where you thought you were, now your gadget will point out your location and the nearest hot beverage location for afters. When things become automated, there is no need to think (NNTT). Yet what happens if there is a glitch in the gadget? What happens if the satellites are sleeping, or the cliffs and trees block the signal? Where are you then? How can you survive the 21st century landscape without a guide to the next café?
"What’s so difficult?" you may ask...“Put a dot on the map and BOOM, X marks the spot!” Put your treasure map skills to the test with this little AMG quiz. Don’t forget, mE is the point along the Eastings axis and mN is the point along the Northing axis.

1. What nationality would I be likely to find at mE 342 255 mN 6279 500?
2. What’s interesting about my face at mE 342 500 mN 6278 500?
3. If I’m at mE 341 375 mN 6280 150 and can’t swim any further west, what am I?
4. What movie am I from at mE 341 650 mN 6280 150?
5. If I travelled from mE 343 750 mN 6279 250, to mE 343 000 mN 6280 250, then to mE 343 855 mN 6280 750 then finally staggered to mE 343 855 mN 6280 600, what have I done with my Saturday afternoon?
Ingredients:
- 1/2 kg chicken,
- 1 tbls smoked paprika,
- 3 garlic cloves,
- 1 tsp ground cumin seeds,
- Tabasco,
- 1 fresh chilli,
- 1 red onion,
- 2 mangos,
- 1 avocado,
- 1 capsicum,
- Small handful of both mint and coriander,
- 2 limes,
- 1 iceberg lettuce.

Classic winter recipes like lamb shanks or a beef roast are certainly one way to warm your cockles. We’ve gone for a different approach this season with a recipe that will transport you to a warmer place, a place with fine, white sand beaches, steel drums and pina coladas with little umbrellas on top. I introduce the Caribbean chicken salad with mango salsa.

For this dish you could use either chicken breasts sliced into 4 strips or smaller tenderloin fillets. For the marinade, thinly slice half the red onion, the garlic, chilli and mix together in a bowl with the paprika, Tabasco, ground cumin seeds, seasoning and a pinch of cayenne pepper if you like some heat! Mix in a few tbls of olive oil to make a paste, coat the chicken and set aside to marinade for a while.

For the salsa, roughly chop the mangos, avocado, capsicum, coriander, and mint all into a large mixing bowl. Add the juice of 1 lime, a few good lugs of olive oil, seasoning and a few drips of Tabasco and gently mix the lot together. Give it a taste; if it needs more kick give it a bit more lime and salt.

Get a fry pan nice and hot and fry off the chicken pieces with a bit of olive oil in small batches. Don’t worry if it takes on a bit of colour (read: burnt around the edges) as this will add to the smokey flavour.

To serve, find a nice big serving tray or bread board and cover with ripped up lettuce leaves. Scatter the salsa over the leaves and then rip up your chicken pieces and throw them on top. Squeeze over a nice bit of lime juice and olive oil and it can also be nice to serve this dish with a bit of lime aioli. If you’re vegetarianally inclined, despair not - this dish would be just as nice with some freshly grilled haloumi or you could swap for a firm tofu, marinading and cooking it just as you would the chicken.

Chuck the platter in the middle of your feeding circle and tuck in using the lettuce leaves like sun chow bow. Yarr mun!

Volunteers

What are the standings in the Council Cup the crowd cries out???
Well North Sydney Council has a commanding lead so far with the most site reports while 2nd place Willoughby is holding a precariously narrow lead over Warringah. In other news, we’re drumming up publicity for another round of volunteer training which is to be held on Thursday, 14th of August starting at 6.30pm and running for roughly 2 hrs. It will provide an interesting insight into what life was like before colonialism, the impact of European settlement, the various types of Aboriginal heritage sites and how to carry out the role of a volunteer site monitor. If yourself or anyone you know are interested in attending the training please don’t hesitate to contacting us. Last year we had several volunteers who had previously been part of the program attend to refresh their skills and knowledge. It was fantastic to have them along and we welcome any of our volunteers who may be interested in a catch up.

Quiz Answers

1. Portuguese.
2. You have a wonderfully large nose.
3. A hungry shark.
4. The Caste.
5. You’ve been out fishing, gone to the boat ramp, had a few beers at the RSL and had to call for a pick-up at the pay phone.
Track of the Month

Park Circuit Track, Manly Warringah War Memorial Park.

This park is one of those precious little pockets of bushland that makes you feel a million miles away and yet it’s situated in the heart of northern Sydney. The Park Circuit Track is one of the longer routes in the area, treating walkers with a wonderful range of ecologies and landscapes. The track passes through ridge tops, creek lines, waterfalls, wetlands and wildflower filled bushland (providing you’re there in the right season). There are many shorter loops and for those more interested in rest and relaxation you could opt to simply kick your feet up and enjoy a feed and a swim by the water at one of the many BBQ areas on the south west bank. You may have to book these facilities but there is plenty of space for a simple picnic also. There are several Aboriginal heritage sites recorded in the area. A recent bushland survey in the park found a previously unrecorded site so keep your eyes peeled! It’s also worth keeping your ears sharp less you may miss the plethora of birdlife or scurries of wildlife including wallabies, water dragons and goannas.

Main entrance and parking via King St.

Moderate walk, 7.3 km return, 3 hours.
Always take water, hat, swimmers and sun screen.

Walking Map