



Day of Mourning and Protest

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Recently we passed another Australia Day, celebrated or commemorated by people across the continent. The Aboriginal tradition of marking the occasion has changed over the years and it is becoming a more powerful event to celebrate the Indigenous footprint on this landscape.

One event is worth revisiting each year – the first national meeting of Aboriginal people to protest the treatment of Indigenous people by the wider community and governments. It is considered to be the beginning of the contemporary Aboriginal civil rights movement and led to the first deputation received by an Australian Prime Minister. It was the 'Day of Mourning and Protest' held on the 150th anniversary of the landing by the First Fleet at Sydney Cove. At a time when most of Australia had nothing but celebrations in mind it is useful to reflect on the choice of wording and their significance. A day of mourning and protest.

The Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) organised about one hundred Aboriginal people to gather outside the Australian Hall in Sydney to protest against the terrible living conditions that most Aboriginal people endured. Participants came from as far as Melbourne, Nowra and Bateman's Bay, the north coast of NSW, and Dubbo. Two journalists and two police officers standing at the back of the hall were the only non-Aboriginal people permitted inside during the meeting. Jack Patten read out the resolution of the meeting:

"We, representing the Aborigines of Australia, assembled in conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the Whiteman's seizure of our country, hereby make protest against the callous treatment of our people by the whitemen during the past 150 years, and we appeal to the Australian nation of today to

make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to full citizen status and equality within the community."

It was the first meeting of its kind at a national level and aimed to unite all Aboriginal people to demonstrate to white Australians the support that they had. This was obviously a radically new direction in the history of Aboriginal Australia. The news of the meeting passed through Aboriginal communities by word of mouth and via the new Aboriginal journal, *Australian Abo Call*, which reached people in remote areas as far as Queensland and the Northern Territory. By Phil Hunt



Some of those in attendance on that momentous day.





There is a difference between apathy and action. The former allows one to rest, to ignore, to neglect. The latter gives rise to purpose, to deeds, to making change. Motivation is the key ingredient that changes the mind from apathy to action. Motivation can be triggered by many things and education or learning is primary. Once you learn something and it makes an impression, motivation lights the fire.

We can all think of an occasion when we learned something and this motivated us to change something in our lives, or to try to change something in the environment where we live. For example, if you did a bush regeneration course you may see that the beautiful green bush around you is actually full of damaging weeds. Knowing how harmful the weeds can be on native plants and animals, you may 'tool up' and head into the nearest bush reserve and start weeding. However, in your training you would have been told how unrestrained and unstrategic weeding can lead to the loss of the native seed bank, to more weed infestation, to damage from new informal tracks, to loss of animal habitat and to local extinctions and so on.

It is the same with Aboriginal heritage. Initially when we begin to see Aboriginal heritage in the familiar places where we visit, we are excited to see so much evidence around. Shell middens on bush tracks, rock shelters and rock engravings, axe sharpening grooves and water holes. The landscape becomes richer through our learning and our observations. However, as we look we will notice the degradation. Graffiti in shelters, bike tracks over engravings, erosion of middens. The engravings are often difficult to see as the grooves wear away.

Where once we saw little or cared little, now we understand more and want to protect more. What to do? The motivation is to help protect and the answers seems simple. If the rock engravings are fading, just re-groove them. If the graffiti spoils a rock shelter, just remove or cover it.

What happens if the re-grooving destroys the original groove, as it must to become deeper? What if some of the line is no longer visible, do you just fill in the gaps? What if the figure you see in available light is less complex than the one visible in better lighting conditions when you're not there? Is that line part of the figure or a natural feature of the rock – is linking the two with a re-groove an issue?

Rock art is similar. Removing the graffiti with the wrong technique will remove any underlying rock art. Putting mud or other materials over graffiti can damage rock art under and on the periphery of the 'cover up'. Much rock art in this area is not immediately noticeable and some is really now only visible through special digital analysis, but it is there.

There have always been calls to re-groove the rock engravings, to tidy up rock shelters and save sites from natural and human deterioration. The motivation to act is warranted. The need to do careful evaluation and assessment is essential. Not only do we need to respect the decisions of the broader Aboriginal community and of Aboriginal experts in heritage management, we also need to respect the laws (which are up to \$275,000 for harming a site).

Is 'doing nothing' apathy or action? It would depend on the motivation and the manner in which the doing of nothing takes place. A site can be damaged by vandals or become faint through time and still be there. A site damaged or destroyed through 'protection' may not have provided any better safeguard and may lead to more damage. The physical fabric of sites does not regenerate, yet the marks of poor protection works can last lifetimes. 🐨

By Phil Hunt

Thought of the Month

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"We want goose, we want fish.
Other men want money.
Him can make million dollars,
But only last one year.
Next year him want another million.
Forever and ever him make million dollars.

Him die.
Million no good for us.
We need this earth to live because
We'll be dead,
We'll become earth."
Exert from *Gagudju Man* by Bill Neidjie.

Ingredients:

- Half a pumpkin or butternut
- Olive oil
- Balsamic or red wine vinegar
- 2 cups cous cous
- 2 capsicums
- 1 medium eggplant
- 5 zucchinis
- 1 jar of artichokes
- About 200g feta
- Handful of chopped parsley

This dish is a winner for endless reasons. It's good on the wallet, lasts in the fridge for a week of guilt free snacking and side meals and is one of those great vegetarian meals that packs plenty of hearty flavour and fills you right up.

Preheat your oven to 180°C and put the kettle on to boil. Slice up your pumpkin or butternut into 1-2 cm slices, rub with a bit of olive oil, season and throw into the oven on a baking paper lined tray. Pour the cous cous into a reasonably deep baking dish, add 2 tbs of olive oil and just quickly rub it through the cous cous. Pour some boiling water over until just before it covers the cous cous, making sure that there are no dry patches. Quickly cover with cling wrap and set aside for about 5-10 mins. In the meantime you can roughly chop the caps, zucchini, and eggplant. Get your pan smoking hot, add a few good glugs of olive oil and fry the veges off in batches until they are nicely coloured. Not to worry if you burn a few edges—a slightly charcoal, smoky flavour goes really well with this dish. Once that's done you can 'fluff up' the cous cous by using a fork to whisk up the chunks. Once the pumpkin is soft and slightly coloured, rip it into chunks, add it to the cous cous along with your beautifully coloured veges, some lovely, fresh parsley, rip up the artichokes and plenty of feta or even some freshly grilled haloumi. You can eat the salad just like this but to take it up a notch you can dress the cous cous just as you would a leaf salad— simply give it quite a few good lugs of olive oil, about a third as much balsamic or red wine vinegar, some salt and pepper, give it a good toss and let it sit for a while.

By Gareth Birch. 🐾



James Gets an Experience

The AHO was lucky enough to have James Crotty join us for a week of work experience. Here's what he had to say...

While on work experience at the Aboriginal Heritage Office I have learnt a lot about Australia's history and Aboriginal culture. I have really enjoyed being able to explore the bush looking for new and existing sites that are hundreds and even possibly thousands of years old.

On my second day working in the field after only about half an hour of exploring the bush, my supervisor and I were lucky enough to come across a new Aboriginal heritage site. This was the highlight of the week for me as I got to see firsthand the start of the process undertaken to confirm and register the site and then document it so that it will eventually become officially recognised as an Aboriginal heritage site by the state government.

I was, however, very sad to see the destruction caused by pollution and human impact on the environment. On my first day we went to look at an ancient Aboriginal midden that could well be over 1000 years old and is slowly being eroded by the ocean. While we were there an old man came off the walking track and started bushbashing his way to the shore only about 5 meters away from the site completely oblivious to what was there.

Experiences like this have really opened my eyes to the lack of awareness and education being put out there to help people understand the importance and significance of these sites. If this doesn't happen then many of these places might not be there for future generations to see, and all the history that goes along with them could be lost.

Working in the office has also been interesting. I was able to use some of the software to better identify the new heritage site. The staff there are friendly and the office environment is very relaxed. The Museum at the front also allowed me to take a look at some of the stone tools used by Aboriginal people and also helped me to gain an understanding of what life would have been like before European settlement.

Doing work experience at the AHO has proven to be a rewarding experience and I look forward to learning more about Aboriginal culture and heritage both for the rest of my time doing work experience as well as in the future. 🐾

Late last year Karen, our education officer, penned this article, taking time to reflect on some vital teachings...

I want to thank the Councils and their employees for their support of the Aboriginal Heritage Office and our Education programs. Travelling within our Council areas and visiting schools and community groups I have been welcomed kindly and have met interested and inquisitive children and adults. The questions I am asked, the wide eyes and the embarrassment of 'not knowing' Australia's Aboriginal heritage have made all that we do humbling and gratifying. The AHO can see that these education programs make a difference and the receptiveness of schools and community show this.

I would like to share with you some enjoyable comments from a Year 3 class. These 'stories' were sent to me by their teacher who had followed up my visit by asking the children to write down their favourite memory from the presentation; They all started with "Thank you Ranger Karen."

"I found your speech and powerpoint very interesting, I like the weapons the most. I learnt about the Aboriginals."
"Thank you for teaching us so much. I learnt 68 lines of information. I counted them."

"I heard not to mess up the painting because we cannot redo them and I like how they painted it, it looks cool...I learnt a lot."

"Thank you for coming to talk to us I found all of it very interesting. It blew my mind."

The connection with Country is so hard to achieve in our urban lives. What is this term Country and what does it mean to us?

Deborah Rose Bird, spent time listening to Aboriginal people and working with us. She had this to say about the Aboriginal connection to Country. "Aboriginal people talk about Country the same way 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 Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, is sorry or happy...Country is a living entity with a yesterday, today and tomorrow, with a consciousness, and a will towards life. Because of this richness, Country is home and peace: nourishment for body, mind and spirit, hearts ease."

"The land is my backbone...I only stand straight, happy, proud and not ashamed of my colour because I still have land....I think of land as the history of my nation." Galarrwuy Yunipingu, Dr Yunipingu's brother.

"This is the land of dreamings, a land of wide horizons and secret places. The first people, our ancestors, created this country in the culture that binds us to it." Hetti Perkins.

"This is another world to the ones most Australians know. It was explained by my father once that it's like a blanket on the ground. We, the uninitiated, only see the blanket. Lift it up and that's what our elders... see – the real thing – a world most of us will never know or understand. Through their paintings, artists... offer us a glimpse of the world of dreams where the past, present and the future link." Hetti Perkins, of Aboriginal Art.

"Right from our early beginnings we were taught of the sanctity of the total life around us... The Aboriginal way is that everything is created equal and sacred: that the soil, the clay, the rocks are all sacred; and that all have a personality...I had the strength of knowing that my creator is not above me somewhere, but is always with me; that, whatever the substance around me, that creation flows to me, through me, within me; that the universe is part of me, as I am part of it... there is complete belonging, and life and death is just a constant flowing... a continual renewing." Kevin Gilbert, The Search for Meaning Collection, Caroline Jones.

"The name Yunupingu means 'rock - rock that stands against time'. The name Yunupingu belonged to my granddad, like he was a hero in his time. It was passed down through the generations to my Father. It's a name that makes us understand who we are, where we're coming from and what our connections are to mother earth and the universe." Dr Yunupingu.

"White people need to understand Aboriginal law and that Tjukurpa is in the land. People need to not just talk mining, money, cars and cattle. They need to open their hearts, let the wind that blows across my country talk to them. Understand that *anangu maru* are alive and living on our land, looking after it as our grandmothers and grandfathers did, following the law." Nganyinytja Woman's Council, Pitjantjatjara.

"We cannot own the land. We are but the custodians of the land." Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal (Kath Walker).

"We gotta look after the whitefellas in this country." Vincent Lingiari.

By Karen Smith. 

It's Just a Shell...

Rich hued hand stencils, elaborate and narrative like engravings and haunting burial sites tend to be some of the common notions of what an Aboriginal heritage site may be. However there are many other artefacts that can tell us a great deal about how people used to live off the land in the Sydney area. Shells had a multitude of uses, particularly in the Sydney coastal region where they could be found in abundance. The use of shell may have also been widespread due to the difficulty in finding stone suitable for tool making in the Sydney sandstone basin.

Probably one of the simplest uses for shell was for the purpose of scraping and cutting things like meat and hide. Shells were also put to incredibly good use when fastened to one end of a womera (spear thrower). A piece of shell could be secured in a crack at the end of a womera and fastened using plant sap. Settler accounts describe local Aboriginals using this latter day Swiss Army knife for seemingly endless purposes. Shell used in this manner would be

used to lever stubborn shellfish off rocks, chiselling wood to make sharpened spear tips or coolamons and even butchering a catch.

Interestingly, when it came to fishing, shell was used differently by women as it was by men. Men would often use spears to hunt for fish from the shoreline. Stone flakes were often used for spear barbs by woodland clans whereas coastal groups were more likely to use oyster flakes for the barbs of their hunting spears. While fishing has become somewhat of a 'blokes' pastime, hook and line fishing from bark canoes was traditionally done by women. A curved hook fashioned from shell and tied to twine was used for this sort of fishing, but not quite as we would expect. A burley of chewed mussels and other sea-food was spat into the water and the curious fish would

be snared with the hook that was actually used without any bait.

In a sense, shells are still of great value when it comes Aboriginal heritage in that they have so much to tell us about what life used to be like in Sydney. Shell middens provide us with a rich record of which species of shellfish were eaten as well as giving some indication of the quantities consumed. Deposited shell also make for a fairly alkaline environment, helping to preserve other organic material that is invaluable to archaeological research such as the bones of various species of fish, birds, land prey, twine, hide and even human remains. Most importantly, shell middens provide a signpost; an enduring reminder that a particular section of foreshore that today is probably strewn with rubbish, was once a place where Aboriginal families would congregate to share a feed together. One can't help but reflect on how much things have changed and begin to question whether or not all of our scientific knowledge and modern technologies are leading to change for the better. By Gareth Birch.





Passing Time

Track of the Month

Tambourine Bay to Warraroon Reserve

The lovely area of Lane Cove has been some-what neglected by our track of the month segment of late. While many residents are probably already aware of this walk, it is a good showcase for the Lane Cove foreshore.

This parcel of bushland boasts a wide variety of environments with respective bush tucker plants and habitats, as well as different types of Aboriginal heritage sites throughout the walk. Over the years the AHO has worked alongside Lane Cove Council to improve track routes and conditions, ensuring damage to sites is avoided.

The track is usually used as a one-way walk, using roadways to return to your car. However I think that 'back-tracking' gets a particularly bad wrap and would recommend walking back in the opposite direction, spending more time on the foreshore and less time on the seldom eventful tarmac.

Parking at the southern end of Tambourine Bay Rd, follow the track south-east down towards the foreshore before travelling west to east. Eventually you'll begin heading north up the creek line. Keep a close eye out for sites along this track. If you enjoy the walk and would like some motivation to do it more often, you could always become a volunteer and have a site in the area allocated to you for ongoing monitoring...just a thought. By Gareth Birch.



Medium difficulty walk, 1 hour.

Always take water, hat, swimmers and sun screen.



Movie Review

White House Down (2013)

'White House Down', the new movie from Roland Emmerich, came out in June 2013. It is an action movie starring Channing Tatum as a U.S. Capital Police officer and Jamie Foxx as President of the United States of America. The story is about a terrorist group that wants to take over the White House and get revenge. Channing Tatum and Jamie Foxx find themselves fighting together to avoid this at all cost.

It has a lot of well made action scenes as well as some funny moments, which is refreshing. Sometimes the story is fairly unrealistic but as a viewer you do not notice this first time. After the movie you start asking yourself: 'Could that be possible?' The effects and sounds of the movie are great. I really enjoyed watching 'White House Down' and would definitely recommend it. Reviewed by Jill Hofmann.



Volunteers

We hope all of our volunteers had a fantastic time over Christmas and New Years. Monitoring conditions have been hot and sunny for much of the summer period. The bright and direct sunlight of summer makes for less than ideal monitoring conditions for engraving sites. However the cooler coastal breezes and the possibility of a refreshing dip may allure some towards a bit of 'midden monitoring'.

For our volunteers that have been unable to monitor their sites due to insurance issues, thank you for your patience. You should have by now received a package of forms via the post. The cover letter and a recently sent email should provide adequate guidance on how to fill out the forms. If you have any queries regarding this process please feel free to give Gareth a call on 9936 8263. Once we've received these forms, we'll give you a quick phone call and you are good to go. We can also use this as an opportunity to allocate volunteers with 'fresh' sites. By Gareth Birch.



Test Your Smarts

Question: Mary's father has 5 daughters – Nana, Nene, Nini, Nono. What is the fifth daughters name?

Answer: If you answered Nunu, you are wrong. It's Mary!