



Aboriginal Heritage Office Yarnupings

July 2015
Issue 2

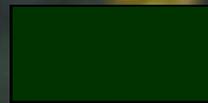
The polarities of winter...

The days are getting longer but the weather's getting colder. Winter is a season of stark contrasts; bitter cold mornings remedied with a steaming hot shower, frosty nights ended in a warm bed, short afternoons spent with hands wrapped around a warm mug; you can't enjoy the warmth without a little cold.

We hope that our second 2015 edition of the AHO newsletter will serve as a worthy companion during one of your winter warming coffee breaks (perhaps as kindling to start that fire). There's a few events that may spark your interest. There's also a farewell penned from our Volunteer Coordinator Gareth. Keeping with the theme of contrasts he's looking forward to adventures ahead but looking back with a nostalgic heart.

I've been moved by the wind upon the waters
And the shadows as the leaves are blown
When that old wind moans
On a weary winter Sunday
Like a friend that keeps on knocking on my home

Keve Carmody, *I've Been Moved* **Eulogy (for a black person)**



Things to do...

27th July to 8th August 2015.

Yellamundie: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playwriting Festival 2015.

CARRIAGEWORKS, 245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh NSW

The central aim of the Yellamundie Festival is to discover, develop and promote new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playwriting that displays potential for further creative development and/or production. Yellamundie provides both emerging and established playwrights with a meeting place to have their work developed within a supportive and nurturing artistic and cultural context, showcasing their skill and talent and gaining access and connection to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal theatre industry networks. Find out more:

<http://www.carriageworks.com.au/?page=Event&event=YELLAMUNDIE-23053>

Now until 15th November 2015.

Undiscovered: Photographic Works by Michael Cook.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM, Circular Quay NSW

An exhibition to mark NAIDOC week, Undiscovered provides a contemporary Indigenous perspective of European settlement in Australia, a land already populated by its original people. Cook's artworks shift roles and perspectives around the notion of European 'discovery' of Australia, reflecting upon our habitual ways of thinking and seeing our history.

The scene is set on the shoreline looking out to sea, the site that bought the first ships to Australia. The photos depict an Aboriginal man role-switching with his colonisers, at times he is dressed in full colonial style clothing, other times the colonial clothing is removed revealing the strength and resilience of Indigenous Australians before and after colonisation. Find out more:

<http://www.anmm.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/coming/michael-cook-undiscovered>





Gareth's Farewell...

Gareth Birch

Well it's with a heavy heart that I bid adieu to the AHO. Oh how things have changed!!! I started here in October 2012 as an intern that knew everything and I finish up some two and a half years later far more aware of my ignorance.

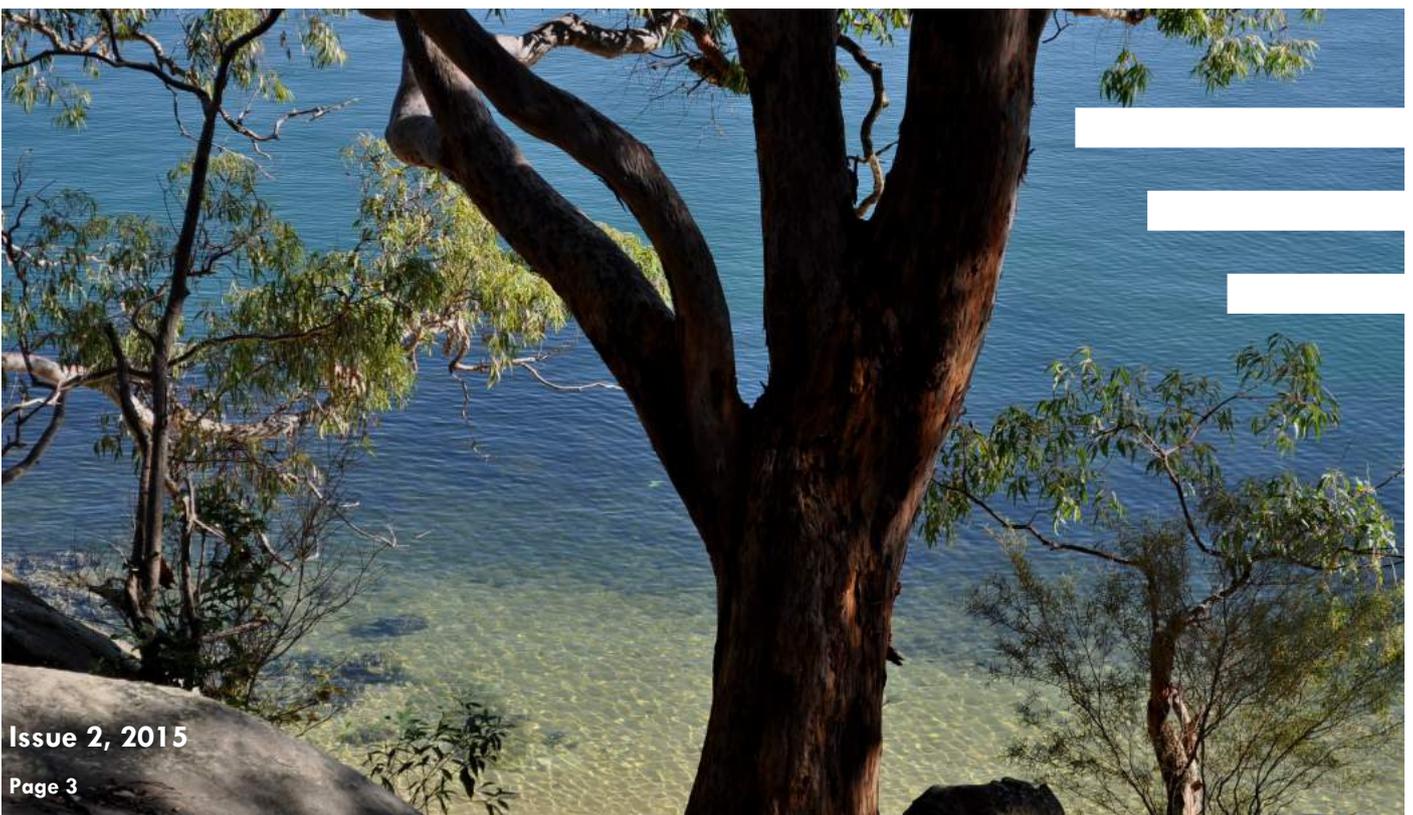
As some of you already know, I'll be spending the next year travelling around the world in an attempt to further my awareness of how little I'm aware of. My time at the AHO has been an equally exciting journey in its own way. Many of my early days were spent out in the field picking the brain of the infinitely wise Geoff. I think the best lunch breaks I'm likely to ever have were spent yarning with Geoff about the geomorphology of inhabitable areas of the Holocene and the resulting dental hygiene of our ancestors. These breaks were taken surrounded by bush and wildlife in between searching for some long lost (read poorly located) engraving or shelter just 'four chains Sou-South-West of Mr. Duff's tannery in the Hawkesbury Shire!'

If my lunch breaks weren't spent in the bushland wildness then they were likely spent in the philosophical wilderness of a conversation with Phil. Thanks to him I'm now far more aware of the interconnectedness of everything. Phil is also one of the amazing few who have managed to survive a career in the public service while still fighting the good fight as a Free Radical. He has shared with me great wisdom and most importantly, instilled a stubborn sense of hope for which I am deeply thankful for.

Working with Karen has been nothing but a joy. Ever the performer, she has shown me that all the skills that one picks up along their journey will someday come together in a way that makes one very good at what they do.

I'm not sure what it says about my professionalism but I think I've probably learnt far more from the AHO volunteers than they've learnt from me. It's been extremely rewarding to work with volunteers who commit their time and effort purely to contribute to something that is important to them. From them I've also learnt the value of a sense of community and the importance of contributing to it.

Most importantly I'd like to thank Dave. His extremely 'unconventional' means of imparting wisdom has proven to be one of the most rich and humbling sources of knowledge I'll ever know. Behind the grunts and feigned indifference there is an extremely determined and warm bloke (just be sure he's had a coffee and a smoke before you go looking for it). He's done more to protect Aboriginal heritage than most and has never sought praise nor privilege in return. All I can say to Dave, Phil, Karen, Geoff, Viki, the volunteers, interns and everyone else that is the AHO, is thank you.





Outer & inner heritage...

Phil Hunt

Tradition: *the handing down of beliefs, legends, customs, and information from one generation to the next, especially by word of mouth or by practice*

Heritage: *Valued objects and qualities such as cultural traditions, unspoiled countryside, and historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations*

When the terrible earthquake struck Nepal in April I was in transit on my way there. I spent the next month in different impact areas (with an animal rescue team). As an archaeologist I could not ignore the destruction of heritage all around. It was as if a giant hand had shaken the earth deliberately targeting the old and the precious. Beyond the immediate issues of loss of life, the fear of built structures, the need for shelter, food and water, the worry about employment and education, you could also see the pang of cultural loss in the eyes of the Nepalese. So much destruction. In order to put a positive spin on things I suggested to one despondent veterinary student from a devastated part of Kathmandu that while built heritage is important, the most important heritage is what is carried in the heart. But is this true?

We all have different ideas about what heritage is and which elements are the most important. Governments and institutions have generally leaned towards physical heritage as the primary thing to aim for as it is usually the easiest to independently identify and to defend in court. Yet many of the things that move us can be stories and memories that have little or no tangible evidence.

One day I was speaking with a Tibetan monk about cultural heritage. His English wasn't great and he asked me what I meant. I was completely at a loss to explain! He looked up his dictionary. Nodding in understanding he said: "Yes, yes. There is outer and inner cultural heritage." He then explained that for a Tibetan, buildings, costume, dances, rituals and so on would be outer heritage. Inner heritage would be mental attitudes, like non-violence (he gave the example of not swatting a mosquito as it would cause it harm). This kind of distinction is probably the reason why Tibetans can appear so cheerful despite the loss of so much of their built heritage (over 6,000 monasteries since 1949).

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Gareth Departs...

Head first or feet first, you have to go out the door at some point. Gareth has not only been the Volunteer Coordinator who has truly transformed the program, he was also the 'chai wallah', the Gofer, Mr Odd Jobs, the chef, the answerer of telephones, the cleaner, the removalist, and often the youngest available to inflict with 'I remember when' stories and to pour scorn on as a representative of anything 'youth'.

He was also our Newsletter editor and graphic designer. He left a page free and like a gas entering an empty chamber a void gets filled.



Festival Wrap:

Karen Smith

As the 15th Annual Guringai Festival draws to a close the AHO has been busier than ever. The AHO has been working in all our partnering Council areas and our Aboriginal Heritage and Culture walks and talks have been well attended and even overbooked with long waiting lists. The bush has been beautiful in these months and the cooler conditions ideal for walking. It is heart warming to share time with the walk attendees, to answer their questions, to hear their stories and to learn from them. I was delighted to have attendances from our Site Volunteers Program. On one walk the site volunteer was able to talk about her work with the site we were viewing. She explained to us that she has been a Volunteer for over 12 years and detailed how she reports on the site and what she looks for when she visits the site. For the walks and talks program Councils have been working to create a well rounded experience often supplying bush tuckers teas or, as in the Wild-flower Garden in St Ives, damper and a campfire. Schools and Community groups have also embraced the Festival.

I hope you are getting out to celebrate Aboriginal Culture and Heritage with the many NAIDOC Week events. The Theme "We All Stand On Sacred Ground - Learn Respect and Celebrate" is something that we can all take part in.

Outer and Inner Heritage *(continued from page 4)*

In Australia when the Europeans arrived they saw little in the way of outer heritage. No huge cathedrals, no ancient temples, no intricate field systems transforming the land. The art galleries seemed simple and of little consequence. In trying to communicate ideas they were stuck with the limited and often mistaken vocabulary familiar to tourists (but without the phrase book). The inner heritage that had developed over thousands of years was mostly invisible or ignored. Language, song, long-held and rigorously memorized stories and lore, the rich and complex glossary of symbols used on body, weapons, bark and stone, all largely a blur to the new arrivals.

As wider Australian society has changed so has an acceptance and appreciation of the outer heritage of this land, but is it still worth keeping? And what about the inner heritage? What has survived, what can be shared, and what are those elements that are relevant to a 21st century global world? As an archaeologist I would argue the tangible evidence is vitally important. There is no denying the power that objects have to connect us across time. A hand stencil, a stone tool, an engraved figure on rock made by someone not that unlike us. Laughing at their companions' attempt to mix up the ochre, frustrated that the tool could no longer be sharpened, relieved that the figure was finished at last are emotions we can imagine being expressed.

We are united over the years and across cultures by the physical items that have been left behind. It is a loss when they are lost. Yet isn't it their symbolism and the knowledge gained that is the true jewel to be nurtured? If so, the goal is not to preserve heritage like pickles in a jar left on the shelf but to enquire, investigate, debate about and learn from them. Then it is a question of determining what may be the meaning relevant to today's traditions. A *backed blade* may tell you about the tool kit of hunter-gatherers of 2000 years ago, but what inner heritage would those individual craftspeople offer to share with us today? If we lose the outer heritage, what inner heritage are we left with? Perhaps it is our common humanity over time and our dependence on this one earth that are good points from which to begin the analysis.

Quote of the day:

Here is my secret. It is very simple: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.

Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*