



Aboriginal Heritage Office Yarnupings



Site Monitoring:

A letter found in a shelter by Volunteer Monitor. Photo courtesy Ron Aitken

"Dear Cave Resident,
I know how it feels to be at the lowest point in your life. This cave was home to me in my darkest days. I can't promise that things will get better, but I do know that once you've hit rock bottom, the only direction left to go is up. I hope things improve for you. It's not the end of the world... yet."

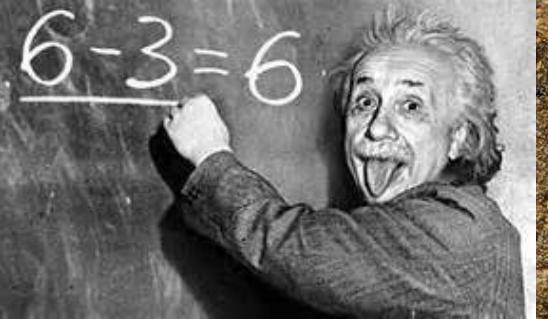
In this Edition:

P2: Volunteer P3: From the Intern

P4: Location, Location, Location! P5: Spring

P6: Where's Gareth P7 God and Smartphones

P8 Film Review & Recipe of the Month



Don't believe everything you think!



By Viki Gordon

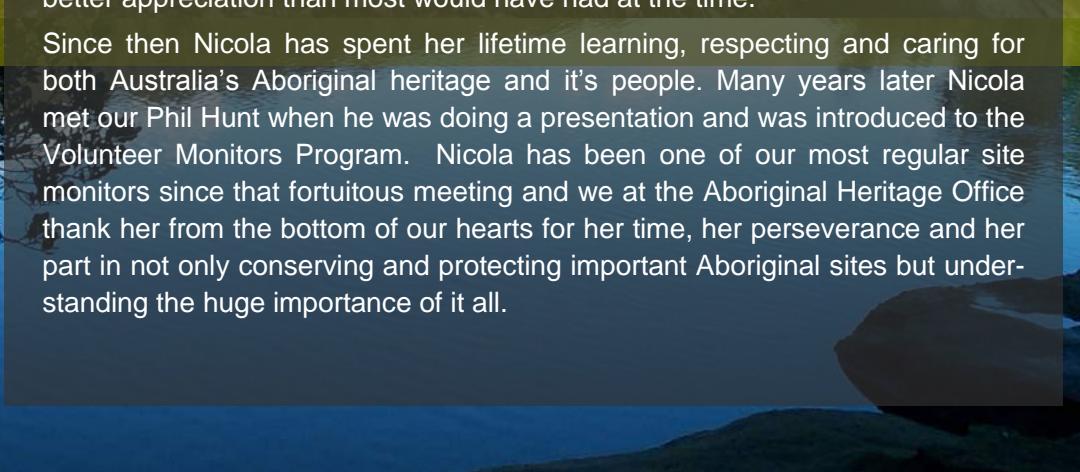
In May 2008, Nicola Hanson joined the AHO Volunteers Monitor Group and I thought I would take the time to have a chat with one of our first monitors.

Nicola and I, accompanied by our current intern the wonderful Helene, met up at one of the sites Nicola monitors which is in a beautiful part of northern Sydney overlooking the crystal clear waters of Middle Harbour. The day was one of those glorious days that lets you know that Spring is winning the battle over Winter. The sun was shining, birds were singing, water was lapping nearby and the peace of the bush lulled us all into a near state of perfect contentment. It was a lovely afternoon.

My main question for Nicola was how did she get interested in Aboriginal heritage and I found the answer to this question to be fascinating. Can you recall the first time you actually really thought about Australia's ancient Aboriginal heritage and culture? Nicola recounted how as a very young girl an Aboriginal elder and artist from a remote community in Arnhem Land came and visited her primary school on the northern beaches. Not only did the elder visit her school but he was being accommodated next door to her. Nicola remembers that his name sounded melodious to her young ears even though she could not understand his language. In accordance with traditional belief systems and practices in Arnhem Land once a person has left us his name is no longer used, so for the purposes of this article we shall just call him 'the artist fella that went to Sydney'. Often deceased Aboriginal people are not referred to by name but by how they were known or, more specifically, how you knew them. How 'the artist fella that went to Sydney' ended up here is not known. However, for all those of my vintage (i.e. lets just say eligible to have teenage grandchildren), this was certainly an unusual thing to have happened given how little Aboriginal heritage and culture was incorporated into the education curriculum. I know that when I was at school there was no discussion of Aboriginal anything.

During his visit 'the artist fella that went to Sydney' despite, or maybe because of, the language barriers, spent quite a bit of time with Nicola just playing and showing her things in his own way. He was particularly good at small wooden carved canoes. Nicola remembers that she could not understand anything he said but that his voice seemed so melodic. This friendship between the old and young would have been a wonderful thing to see. Obviously it gave Nicola a very early insight into the presence of the First Australians and left her with a better appreciation than most would have had at the time.

Since then Nicola has spent her lifetime learning, respecting and caring for both Australia's Aboriginal heritage and its people. Many years later Nicola met our Phil Hunt when he was doing a presentation and was introduced to the Volunteer Monitors Program. Nicola has been one of our most regular site monitors since that fortuitous meeting and we at the Aboriginal Heritage Office thank her from the bottom of our hearts for her time, her perseverance and her part in not only conserving and protecting important Aboriginal sites but understanding the huge importance of it all.



Turning to the Intern:

Helene Clemmensen

My name is Helene and I'm from Denmark. In 2010 I started studying business, it took me 3 years, and finally I graduated! I then decided that I would look for jobs. I applied at the municipality in Denmark, and was so lucky to get a job as an office student, specializing in Administration. My work at the municipality gave me a great opportunity to get an internship abroad. I have always wanted to come to Australia, so it was easy for me to decide which country I would travel to!



I spoke to David, the Manager, by Skype and then he offered me an internship at the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO). I am travelling with two other girls from Denmark, and we decided that we would stay with a family while we are here in Australia, because we believe that you will get faster into conversations with the locals, and you can get help from the family every time you have questions. So I live with the family in Cremorne. This is not far from Manly where the AHO is, so I just take one bus. It's pretty easy for me to come to work.

And here I am. I arrived in Australia, Friday 31 July, and started my internship on Monday 3 August.

I was really excited the day before I started, because of a new city, new people and different language. But I think I really quickly got into the routines and the people here at the AHO are so nice! Now I have been at the AHO for about 7 weeks, and time just flies.

I have worked on many Administration tasks in the office. I have been out to schools, community groups and bushwalks assisting Karen the Education Officer to give presentations. I have been out with Viki the Volunteer Coordinator and Phil the archaeologist to visit sites, and take some pictures of these areas. I think it's very interesting, because you see what's behind the history. I think it's very exciting because you can see different places where Aboriginal people lived and resided. You also get the opportunity to see the archaeologist's process. Phil showed me how to use a GPS, a compass and how to take photos of the sites. The archaeologist locates, assesses and records the sites and by watching and assisting them I got a better understanding of what they do.



What did I do?

Location, location, location!

By Phil Hunt.

That is the answer to one of our training questions: '*What is the most important thing to note when recording a site?*'

It is 2015 and we all know how easy it is to find a digital remedy to finding yourself. How do you use a modern GPS to find a previously recorded site? Your only chance is if the previous recording is recent and was properly recorded, or the older recording has been audited and updated. Here is a tale of one such site which will give you an insight into what the AHO and its volunteers get up to.

[see *Yarnupings Aug 2014 Issue 3* for a short history of the site recording system]

2007 - the AHO site monitoring team is looking for recorded sites in new partner Ku-ring-gai Council. We decide on an easy site. A rock engraving visited by an archaeologist as 'recently' as 1993 when Council's last Aboriginal Heritage Study was done. We find the outcrops but not a single engraving. There is undergrowth, leaf litter, the day is cloudy and conditions aren't the best. The site is put on the list for future searches. A couple more attempts are made and nothing is found.

2009 – a review of site cards shows some to have duplicate information. Things are really mixed up.

2012 - a different team goes out to try and find this site. How can it be so difficult? One card describes the site being 262 paces from the end of one lot. But it talks about a 4wd track that no longer exists and a 'rock which it crosses', of which there are many. '*The engravings are on this rock, at the left*' (?!).

This particular site actually consists of many rock engravings scattered across quite a large area, but none of the nearly twenty pages of records seem to make sense with each other. There is a small history just in this one card:

1940s - recorded by Fred McCarthy (of the Australian Museum). 1973 and 1978 – inspected by NPWS rangers. 1981 – inspected by a local recorder of sites. 1988 and 1993 – inspected by archaeologist for Council's heritage studies.

The first recording gives the location as being in a valley. The second location says 'See Diagram B', which is a photocopy of a map covering most of Ku-ring-gai Council. The 1981 card provides coordinates in three different systems but the most useful coordinate is not included in the usual place but hidden in the site description section.

Double Trouble - adding to this confusion comes another classic NSW site recording phenomenon. There is a duplicate recording. Someone else has recorded one of the engravings and this has attracted its own history. The first recording is obscure with no date or author. The next is in 1981 by an archaeologist for the Department of Main Roads (DMR). There are detailed recordings but the location information details how far engravings are from each rather than their relationship to any recognisable landscape feature visible today. If you find one engraving, you may find others. If you find none, the rest are hidden too! The next update is by an archaeological team again for the DMR. Their coordinates have a typo that puts the location 300m further east.

In January 1988 another archaeologist reviews the sites. At the end her hand written note says, "Sorting it all out will take time I haven't got. Good luck!"

The AHO team finds an area of sandstone that seems to match some of the descriptions but it was quite obscured with scrub, leaf litter and sediment. No engravings found.

2014 – a brave volunteer monitor took up the challenge to try and find this and some other long-lost sites. He was rewarded with that inner feeling of satisfaction you get when scrub-bashing in search of something elusive. No engravings found.

Continued page 6

*Sorting it all out will take time I haven't got.
Good luck!*

Spring

By Karen Smith

The European season of spring is here but the Aboriginal seasonal calendar is different, especially in mild Sydney where native plants have already been flowering and fruiting from winter.

How rich the bush looks with all this rain. The flowering of tea trees, *Banksias*, *Grevilleas*, *Dianella* and the list goes on. This is a wonderful season for food. I have already seen *Lomandra longifolia* seeds hardening, young *Sarsparilla*-vine leaves ready for chewing and Warrigal Greens abounding in their salty environment. Enjoy this cool season for walking and exploring the joys of your local bush land, but beware!

This is also nesting season for the birds. It is time to watch out for those clacking beaks of the magpie and butcher birds. The magpie is a beautiful bird to listen to and is often used on the soundtrack of Australian films. The magpies song can move over 4 octaves with the most intricate of melodies. Magpie families stay in the same area and live to up to 20 years of age. So if you have lived in the same area for a long period of time you are living with the descendants of the original magpie. Something we often don't realise is that magpies are able to recognise us as well.

But at this time of the year the magpie is loaded with testosterone and becomes like a missile. He is only being fiercely territorial and protecting the chicks in the nest. So play it safe and follow safety directions when you know there are swooping Magpies and Butcher Birds because they can hurt. Remember that they are only protecting their chicks in the nest and do not do this when chicks are out of the nest.

At this time of the year the eel begins its journey through the city to the ocean to mate. Ocean fish are beginning to return to the warming waters. The fishers are catching luderick, salmon, trevally, and mulloway, tailor and king fish. In the rivers our fishers are finding mullet, jewfish, silver brim and tailor.

What a dramatic time of year. Cold, warm, hot, cold again! Listen to the sounds of seasonal change and the song of Country, smell the change in the winds and the new scents of the bush and remember 'Country owns us, we do not own Country'.



Where is Gareth?

Former AHO Volunteer Coordinator Gareth Birth dropped us a line:

Hello to All!!!

Just got on to some internet here in Cape Town after three weeks camping through Botswana. Was amazing-we camped out in the Kalahari Desert, the Okavango Delta and finished up in the Tuli Block which is strangely like outback Aus minus some rather large, trunked mammals.

Was very cool to find some artefacts made using similar techniques found in Aus. One of them even had either usage wear or retouching marks (I'm no expert ;)

[Looks like both. Good to see he learned a few things at the AHO! Editors]. We also just went hiking for a few days in the Cederburg Mountains just north of Cape Town. Incredibly dry sandstone country that looks just like the Flinders Rangers. We went to Stadstaal Cave and checked out some of the rock art by the San People (aka the Bushmen).

Please send on a warm thank you for all the well wishes from the volunteers.

Gareth



Continued from page 4 (Location, location, location!)

2015 - the AHO has another go. Each site card was pulled apart and the information compiled, compared and interrogated. More sketch plans and mud maps were drawn, more coordinates laid out and tested on the GIS, more synapses were encouraged to push through the grey matter. The picture began to clarify in places. Yes, there were definitely duplicate site cards. Yes, there were at least five separate groups of engravings included. Yes, some were destroyed by road works. Yes, some were definitely found in the 1990s.

Fully kitted up with data and equipment we went through scrub and up boulders to every outcrop of sandstone we could find, hallucinating grooves where only nature and dozers had left a mark. At last! We found a patch of sandstone that could conceivably match the 1993 photos. More searching and a definite engraved line was found, followed by a figure, followed by some poorly constructed site protection works from the 1970s.

Most of the figures are covered with leaf litter. The area itself is obscured by scrub. But at last we had one set of engravings confirmed. Now we could update the records to match what is actually on the ground. Firstly, the AHIMS (the NSW Government's Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System) coordinates that put both site cards hundreds of metres out (590m and 960m respectively). Secondly, two new site cards to match two separate engraving recordings (not found but reasonably clear from the old records).

So much work just to find a site that has already been inspected, viewed, surveyed, mapped and commented on many times in the past. The next task is to try and find the remaining figures, and look at site conservation options to ensure the engravings are protected for the future. The AHO has around 800 recorded sites in its area to help find, monitor and care for. The easy ones you can see from your car. The difficult ones are still out there to find.

God and Smart Phones:

Imagine the conversation the creator might have with St. Francis about smart phones:

"Frank, things were getting pretty bad there for awhile but it now seems everyone is praying. I see people's heads down in prayer everywhere. Standing at street corners, in cars, buses, trains, in the theatre, at sporting events, at picnics and even at restaurants. It seems people are praying more than ever, but I just don't seem to be receiving any more prayers than usual. What's happened?"

"It is true, Lord, that people are spending more time than ever with their heads bowed."

"That's great, but why aren't I getting the prayers? Is it something to do with the reception? Prayers from churches still get to me, and hospitals, casinos, you know, the usual places."

"Actually the reception is better than ever. They call it 4G."

"For G? That would be 'For God', but I'm not getting them."

"Well, they aren't really praying to you, Lord"

"What?! But they look exactly like people in prayer. It really has impressed me, what with all the scandals and mismanagement, I thought the institutions of the church were finished. Yet here are all these devout people. Some of them seem completely oblivious to what's going around them, such is their devotion. Yet you say they aren't praying?"

"They are actually looking at their mobile telephones."

"OK, I think you'll have to explain yourself. I remember a conversation before where you talked about telephones. Weren't those designed to help people communicate, yet everyone ended up spending less and less time with each other and only passed messages through 'Answering Machines'?"

"Yes, but these are Smart Phones."

"That people look at?"

"Yes, Lord."

"Do people talk to each other with them?"

"Not so much..."

"What about the facility of language, the incredible precision of tongue, throat and palate to create voice, and the facial expressions, hand movements, all the features that make communication at an advanced level so easy? This was a stroke of genius, if I say so myself."

"They prefer to look at their phones."

"And what are they looking at?"

"Often it is Social Media."

"What is that?"

"It is a way to interact with your friends and even strangers from around the world."

"But I thought they didn't want to interact with others? They stand together ignoring one another looking at their phones. Yet you say they are communicating?"

"Yes, with FaceBook. They also send Tweets"

"To the birds?"

"No, to each other. Texts and emails and posts and other messages".

"They do all this, all day, to communicate with each other rather than talking on the phone or to the person next to them?"

"Yes, it would appear so, Lord."

"I don't get it. Why do they do this?"

"To save time. They have busy lives."

"Look at the solar system – I gave the Earth particular attention. 24 hours, a mix of sunlight and darkness, a perfect combination throughout the year to get everything done and time for rest and play, yet they are on those phones all the time!"

"They also watch TV and movies on them."

"Instead of watching the shows *ON* television and *AT* the movies?"

"Yes. Although sometimes they use their phones while doing those things too."

"OK. I've heard enough."

"What's that you have, Lord?"

"Hmm, hmm. Sorry, what did you say? Oh, this? Hmm, hmm. This is a new Heavenly Device. The angels gave it to me. A Smite Phone. Hmm, hmmm, hmm."

"What is it for?"

"Hmm, hmm. '*Select all*'. Hmm, hmm. '*Are you sure you want to delete all?*' Tempting...very tempting."

Film Review:

By Helene Clemmensen, Intern.

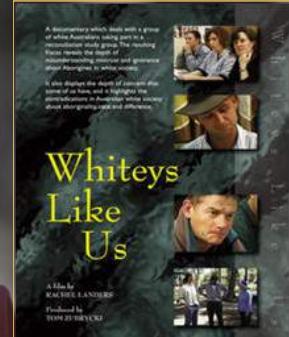
Whiteys Like Us

Whiteys Like Us is a documentary from 1999 filmed on the Northern Beaches region of Sydney. It follows 15 non-Indigenous Australians participating in an eight-week course on Aboriginal learning. The documentary was written and directed by Rachel Landers. All over Australia, groups of people came together to participate in reconciliation study circles, which were formed to improve the relationship between Aboriginal and other Australians and this documentary follows one of those study circles.

What do I think and what are my opinion?

My opinion is that this documentary is a great one! It shows how other people look at Aboriginal people before they know anything about them. It shows many different sides of what people think. At the meetings there were many different personalities and beliefs, and therefore you see different viewpoints, which I think made the movie more interesting to watch. Some of the people in the meetings feel angry and they think that Aboriginal people have the same opportunity to make a choice, just like them. Some of the people think that it's the Aboriginal people's fault because 'we all have the same opportunities'. In their fifth meeting, the group discusses stereotypes. One of the people from the class wants to define what an Aboriginal person is, and then expresses a strong resentment towards the benefits offered to Aboriginal people. He thinks that an Aboriginal person gets more than other people do. I personally think it's a selfish way to look at things. If you're not an Aboriginal person and you really don't know what happened in history, then you can't say something that you don't know enough about.

David Watts and Phil Hunt, before the Aboriginal Heritage Office existed, arranged a field-meeting with the class where they wanted to show an Aboriginal site. They split the class into two - 'Aboriginal people' and 'non-Aboriginal people', and the 'Aboriginal people' wore armbands. They told them they are not allowed to speak together. After they have seen the site and heard about the history from Aboriginal times they separate the 'non-Aboriginal people' and the 'Aboriginal people' and ask them to find reconciliation. It's really interesting and confrontational what happened between the groups with this request.



Warrigal Green Recipe

Ingredients:

- 5 cups Warrigal Green (*Tetragonia tetragonoides*) leaves
- 1/2 to 1 cup pine nuts
- 1/4-1/2 cup Garlic or Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup tofu or sour cream

Method:

Wash thoroughly and blanch or steam the Warrigal Green leaves. Blend all ingredients together and serve with your favourite bread or cracker.