Yarn Ups are back!

The Aboriginal Heritage Office’s community Yarn Up program is back on the agenda. A forum for informal community meetings, the AHO Yarn Up is also an opportunity to have guest speakers giving insights into their area of work or expertise. The AHO hopes to roll out a series of regular Yarn Ups in the next financial year. Stay tuned!

“Before I speak, I have something important to say.”
Groucho Marx

“Let the winter dew fall on that grave
Let me see the night sky blaze
See the Moon in the winter wane
Knifin’ through that Cosmic maze
Give me water, give me fire
Don’t give me monuments of stone
Give me rainbows in the sky
Give back my land in which to lie.”
Kev Carmody, Eulogy

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Recently the AHO has been fortunate to relocate a couple of sites that it had not previously been able to verify due to difficult location information. One site hadn’t had any updated information added since 1972! These days we all have access to incredibly helpful mapping information. Let’s cast our minds back a few decades when recording a site was a bit more adventure.

Imagine you found a site at the top of a hill and, using the best map available at the time, recorded it at the following coordinates: 296.326. Can you find it? Yes, the top of the hill marked 368’. This map is ‘One Inch to a Mile’ or 1:63,360.

Many people would know the 1:100,000 scale maps that show larger areas. Compared to the imperial map above, this one is actually a worse scale for plotting maps, and now you can’t see the hill for the houses!

The introduction of 1:25,000 metric maps was a huge improvement for site recording work. However, your previous coordinates become quite ‘blunt’ on this map. How do you convert 296.326 to metric? This 3 digit coordinate means ‘600 yards east of the 29th grid and 600 yards north of the 32nd grid’. That means you’re not getting to the nearest yard but the nearest 100!

Taking into account the original margin for error in giving the coordinates plus the 100 by 100 yard fuzziness, there’s a very good chance your translation to metric is going to go askew.

“Who can map out the various forces at play in one soul? Man is a great depth, O Lord. The hairs of his head are easier by far to count than his feeling, the movements of his heart.” Saint Augustine
With the introduction of street directories some of them included metric grid coordinates and with an improved scale of 1:20,000 you could actually get a better recording this way. How is that spot on the hill going? Is the site at the north end? The south? In a back yard? Is it now under a road or a house?

At the AHO we almost cried with delight when we first installed a GIS system in 2007 with aerial imagery and cadastral information. At last we could have site data overlaying other mapping. We could zoom in and see individual rock outcrops and plan where we could try to access areas (if the tree canopy didn’t hide it). We could see how inaccurate our handheld GPS devices were, with one regularly giving readings 20m from where we could now verify a site to be.

Going back to the site on the hill, you don’t even need a GIS of your own, just a computer or phone with internet connection. Easy! Well, not so easy if your original site coordinates are as vague as ever. You can pull up 1943 images and try to determine where the feature might be, then come back to the current era.

If there was a site recorded on this hill (and there’s not) and all you had were some coordinates and basic information from the old days, chances are it will still take you years to find!
The AHO’s Volunteer Monitor Program, still on hold, may seem quite ephemeral but its roots run deeper than you may think. We’ve put together a brief history.

1998 - a plan was hatched by the then Regional Representative of Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) David Watts and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Sydney Zone Archaeologist Phil Hunt to get volunteers to help monitor Aboriginal sites.

1999 - A pilot study was set up and run in North Sydney Council (NSC). David Watts, now Aboriginal Heritage Officer with North Sydney Council, ran the project with assistance from the rest of the pilot steering committee of Penny Barker, NSC Bushland Coordinator, Phil Hunt, NPWS, Allen Madden, MLALC and Geoff Bakewell, Bush Regenerator and Trainer. A group of volunteer bush regenerators was selected. Volunteers received training and a field kit, sites for monitoring, supervision and special volunteer events were run. It is interesting to see some of the conclusions of the site care proposal document in relation to today:

“Although many Aboriginal places are not immediately threatened by development most are exposed to repetitive and small scale impacts through visitation (walking or riding across engravings and middens, visiting and disturbing rock shelters, etc), graffiti and vandalism (spray painting shelters and art, chalk-making engraving etc), and neglect (build up of rubbish, weeds, and the erosion of deposit)…

Most Councils have made some attempt to better manage the Aboriginal heritage in their Local Government Area, however, a combination of a lack of in-house expertise and awareness with resourcing problems has resulted in a general low level of active Aboriginal site protection works and initiatives…most recommendations for the management of individual sites have never been implemented.

It seems unlikely that the MLALC, the NPWS or Local Councils will receive sufficient and on-going funding for Aboriginal heritage to allow place-by-place management. It is suggested that a similar approach be taken for Aboriginal places as has been taken with bush regeneration. What has been recognised as inevitable by communities who support voluntary bush care needs to be considered for the care of Aboriginal places”. (1999, NPWS)

2000 – The pilot study dwindles to a halt. David Watt’s temporary position with NSC had finished and his new role working for the new partnership of four councils resulted in insufficient time to maintain the volunteer program. The old steering committee was providing minimal support and the volunteers themselves appeared to be less interested in the monitoring work than their main passion of bush regeneration.

2005 – the Aboriginal Heritage Unit (as the AHO was briefly known then) began discussions with the NSW Heritage Office to carry out a series of funded projects over a five year period, including a monitor program. In 2006 the five year program was approved but the monitor program was dropped as the final funding agreement was less than originally proposed.

“Citizenship consists in the service of the country.” Jawaharlal Nehru
2007 – the AHO was successful in receiving a grant from the federal government to train volunteers and run a monitor program. Local residents signed up to help, training was given at the AHO’s new Northbridge office location, special t-shirts and recording kits were given out and in 2008 each volunteer was issued a site near to where they lived or were happy to travel to. Limits of 10 volunteers per Council had to be put in so as not to overwhelm the coordinators. The program was more popular than expected and also more time intensive.

2009 – Further funding was given to help the AHO meet the demand for new volunteers, carry out more training, expand the number of sites being monitored and develop a more streamlined system to receive and process monitor reports. A website reporting hub was created which improved management but a high turnover of AHO consultants hampered coordination and volunteer support. Most monitor reports indicated no particular changes although littering was an ongoing issue and some monitors noticed new graffiti or erosion.

Key recommendation 6.5 of The Northern Sydney Aboriginal Social Plan (2011: p46) suggested that: “Northern Sydney Councils promote the value of Aboriginal culture and heritage to all community members and prioritise protection, care and ongoing maintenance as a measure of value to the whole community.” (Pinckham, 2011)

2013 – the AHO kept the program going as well as possible with existing staff and consultants, such as Viki Gordon, but with the addition of new funding from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and the attention of former intern turned Volunteer Coordinator, Gareth Birch, the project really took off. There was a huge increase in the number of volunteers, sites being monitored and monitor reports being submitted, despite complications and delays untangling work, health and safety (WHS) administration in line with new legislation (a volunteer program spread over 7 Councils with no template to follow). In 2012 the program also won the first of more than half a dozen awards.

2014 – despite ongoing WHS complications, Gareth managed to keep people’s enthusiasm and more records were broken in terms of sites monitored and reports submitted.

2015 – the AHO was experiencing a loss of external funding opportunities and the ripple effect meant the Volunteer Coordinator position was reduced. Gareth left to go travelling. Viki Gordon returned but only 1-2 days a week.

2016 – a change of administration and the need to revise WHS agreements, Council amalgamations and the continued loss of

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“It is easier to find men who will volunteer to die, than to find those who are willing to endure pain with patience.” Julius Caesar
The 2017 **Guringai Festival** is an annual celebration of Indigenous culture and heritage, starting in May with National Sorry Day and running until the end of NAIDOC Week in July. Welcome to another year of celebrating First Australian culture and heritage in the northern Sydney region!

Pick up a program at your local library or download one over the internet to join us in the many and varied events that are happening. [http://www.guringaifestival.com.au/](http://www.guringaifestival.com.au/)

Manly Environment Centre (MEC) and the Aboriginal Heritage Office (AHO) would like to invite schools to join our:-

**Event:** Guringai Festival 5 week Program  
**Stage:** Primary Schools, Stage 2  
**When:** Tuesdays: 23rd May – 20th June  
**Time:** 9.30am – 10.15am or 11.30am – 12.15pm  
**Free for Primary Schools**

Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and Heritage, at your primary school. The AHO and MEC are running a 5 week Video Conferencing event designed to educate and engage primary school students on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Communities, through histories and cultures, Country and People and Place.

Students will learn about the importance of Caring for Country through the eyes of Aboriginal people.

The importance, resilience and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages will be the focus of national celebrations marking NAIDOC Week with the theme 'Our Languages Matter'.

**Week 1** – Connection to Country, Sorry Day, Dance & Language;  
**Week 2** - Reconciliation Week, Mabo Week, Dance & Language  
**Week 3** - Caring for Country – Use of Fire, Heritage & Culture, Dance & Language  
**Week 4** – NAIDOC Week, Totems, Dance & Language  
**Week 5** – Revision from all sessions; Quiz and dance presentations by students

The most benefit for students will be attending all 5 sessions.

**Book online** for Guringai Festival live video conference sessions.  

**Excursion Keywords:** Manly Environment, Guringai Festival, Sorry Day, NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day, Caring for Country  
**Provider:** Manly Environment Centre  
**Enquiries:** Robynne Millward 9976 1426, Robynne.Millward@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au

"Despite the enormous role that local government plays in our daily lives, the constitution makes not one mention of it". Anthony Albanese
Constitutional:

- relating to, inherent in, or affecting the constitution of body or mind
- of, relating to, or entering into the fundamental makeup of something: ESSENTIAL
- being in accordance with or authorized by the constitution of a state or society, eg a constitutional government

The talk of constitutional change is in the air and many commentators refer back to the 1967 referendum in tones that give it an almost magical, inevitable air of destiny.

That referendum did come out well for the Yes vote. The outcome makes us all look good, as if Australia had always supported Aboriginal people and had just been a bit ignorant about their circumstances. Yet the lead up to the referendum was a hard slog against powerful mistrust and stubborn disinterest. The harbingers of change threatened to stir up the status quo. The forecast of inconvenience and people acting above their station was too much for many at first. Yet history is filled with the impossible achieved by the improbable.

It is early 1957 and Faith Bandler is at home in Sydney:

"It was a lovely warm Saturday morning, the day still stretching far ahead. I was planning to work in the garden, put a bit of manure around, weed a few spots in preparation for some plants... My life was orderly...The phone rang."¹

Lady Jessie Street, fellow founding member of Aboriginal – Australian Fellowship (AAF) along with Faith and Pearl Gibbs, asked her to come into the city for a meeting. Faith thought of her gardening, but agreed to meet her. Bert Groves, President of the AAF and friend of long-time activist Bill Ferguson (see Yarnupings 2014:1) was also there.

The meeting:

"[Bert] sat forward, opened the paper [he held in his hands] and said, more to me than to the others, that this was what we needed – this change to the Australian Constitution! The Constitution – well, I’d heard of it. I sat puzzled. Slowly it began to dawn on me that we were here to discuss changing the whole law of the land. Ha-ha, I thought, it’s hardly likely the politicians are going to let a straggly bunch like us change the law by which they run the entire country!"¹

The churches with all their influence had tried previously and failed.

“Our small organisation, the AAF, only just founded, was without funds then and for almost all of its existence. We were actually asking members to supply us with a few stamps for our letters, and to contribute to the rent of our tiny office and telephone. How could we now ask every member of the voting population of the country to go to the polls and vote for a change to the Constitution? The whole idea, to me, was unthinkable!"¹

The motivation:

“We all sat there quietly, the reality of the harshness of the lives of Aboriginal people filling us with gloom. Shut away on reserves, deprived of freedom, their existence controlled by boards of whites, Aborigines were a separate and separated people. Only a handful had somehow made it

"A Constitution should be short and obscure".
Napoleon Bonaparte

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Crossword:

Across
1. A mountain in South Dakota with 4 presidents’ faces on it
2. Most popular political figure in America; Democratic run-ner-up for the 2016 presidential election
3. Abe Lincoln is thought to live in the White House as one of these
4. Official term for a “no” vote in US congress
5. Name for the US Navy’s special forces
6. One of two major parties in the US; conservative
7. Famous for beating GW Bush in the popular vote in 2000, but not in the Electoral College
8. One of the most well-known Native American tribes
9. Acronym for US government organization in charge of environmental regulations
10. One of the 5 Great lakes in the North-eastern US
11. How Americans measure their speed when driving
12. Nickname for President Andrew Jackson; current symbol for the Democratic Party
13. First and only American president born outside the continental US
14. One of two major parties in the US; conservative
15. Acronym for the federal department in charge of farms and rural areas
16. Extreme weather that occurs in the US more than any other country; 1,200 occur per year on average
17. The _________College is what chooses the POTUS
18. Hawaiian party, usually with dancing and whole roast pigs; plural

Down
1. 40th president, considered father of American Conservatism
2. Cartoon character featured in the “Peanuts” cartoons
3. General James “Mad Dog” _______; Current Secretary of Defense
4. Betsy _____ is said to have sewn the first American flag
5. Acronym for the federal department in charge of farms and rural areas
6. Extreme weather that occurs in the US more than any other country; 1,200 occur per year on average
7. The _________College is what chooses the POTUS
8. Two presidents carried this name; one was the 26th president and the other was the 32nd
9. Name for the legislative body of the government; contains the House of Representatives and the Senate
10. A canal built by the US that only recently was given back to the country of the same name
11. Name for the legislative body of the government; contains the House of Representatives and the Senate
12. Hawaiian party, usually with dancing and whole roast pigs; plural

The United States of America has one of the oldest governments in the world! While countries like England have been around longer, their current form of government is much younger. Only San Marino, a tiny country inside of Italy, has had it’s constitution in place for longer!
Q1. When Governor Phillip was speared, in which part of Sydney was he?

Q2. What is the local word for ‘friend’, also given to TAFE’s Northern Sydney Aboriginal Education & Training Unit?
   A: turramurra       B: gamarada   C: guni       D: bara

Q3 Name three site types associated with Hawkesbury sandstone?

Q4. Who said “Every time we are lured into the light, we are mugged by the darkness of this country's history”?

Q5. The 27th of May 1967 is the anniversary of what important event?

Q6. Which Indigenous Australian singers have performed at Eurovision?
   A: Jessica Mauboy   B: Ernie Dingo   C: Isaiah Firebrace   D: Christine Anu

Q7. Shell fish hooks were used across Australia. True or False?

Q8. If you find a backed blade/ Bondi point, how old is the site?
   A: any era       B: from invasion to 800 years    C: at least 1500 years

Q9. Which mob is the person in Q4 from?
   A: Wiradjuri   B: Kalkadunga   C: Anmatyere    D: Kamilaroi

Q10. A meeting of Indigenous leaders in May 2017 is being held where?

“Every Indian outbreak that I have ever known has resulted from broken promises and broken treaties by the government”. Buffalo Bill
external funding meant the program could no longer be maintained with existing staff and was put on hold.

Has the Program Been Useful?
The purpose of the volunteer monitor program has always been two-fold. To help protect the Aboriginal heritage of the region by identifying potential problems as quickly as possible, and promoting awareness of the rich Aboriginal heritage of the area. Through the network of volunteers the AHO has been able to respond to reports in order to better protect sites, such as facilitating the removal of rubbish that was damaging rock engravings or stacked weeds that could potentially damage rock art, or organising for the careful removal of graffiti to reduce repeat attacks or climbing bolts to deter illegal climbing on fragile art sites, or simply to visit and take more photographs of sites subject to seemingly unstoppable coastal erosion. The program has been instrumental in the AHO and partner Councils receiving eight awards.

The kind voluntary assistance given to helping protect the Aboriginal heritage of the region has always been gratefully received at the AHO. We hope the program can be refreshed and revamped and we will let you all know.

"It will fall not just to us Indigenous people, but more fundamentally to you, who are the overwhelming majority, to fix it." Rachel Perkins
to the cities, and like Pearl Gibbs and Bert Groves, been able to talk about their plight.”¹

Pearl Gibbs the year before had pawned her wedding ring so as to travel to visit Faith Bandler to ask her to join her in founding the AAF, an organisation ‘free from party politics, church influences and charity.’

Facing the obstacles:

Already on the watch list as potential communists they were very aware of the obstacles that would come their way:

“Our telephones were tapped, our letters opened. Other good men and women, the free thinkers of Australia, were also being spied on by security police, and stood in danger of losing their livelihoods. Without a free atmosphere for the exchange of ideas, it seemed a less than ideal time to launch a project of such a highly political nature. Yet, as I sat there, I realised we had no choice. If not now, when? And if not us, who? Could Aboriginal people wait for the ideal time and the ideal people? They were suffering and dying as we sat around talking about it.”¹

It is perhaps the realisation of every small group of people who have felt motivated to change things for the better against a larger group who would resist at every opportunity:

“If not now, when? And if not us, who?”

“So we got the petition going and I started to take this petition around - calling on the government to... well, hold a referendum to give the Indigenous people equal rights. …We only had a little handful. There would have been no more than 9 or 10. Every day for 10 years, except for the weekends, I took that petition around.”³

While the numbers were always small, the determination of individuals inspired others, like Joyce Clague:

“One of the things [FCAATSI member Jack Horner] sort of said to us, ‘Okay, if you are not counted in the census you also haven't got a voice. And that's really what you gotta do is get a voice’. So, I suppose this is where I took on the political side to make sure that our people had a voice in this whole thing”.²

The result:

“The benefits of the referendum were manifold. Acknowledgement of Aboriginal citizenship and the rights inherent in this status as well as funding from the Commonwealth government, removed many of the barriers which previously had kept Aborigines ‘out of sight, out of mind’ for mainstream Australia, shattering the image of Australia as a ‘lucky country’ for all its inhabitants. These were positive achievements. A wider awareness of the problems faced by the original inhabitants began to grow in the general population.”¹*
Why Did Some American Come All This Way to Intern With the AHO?

To answer that question simply, I can only say “why not?” My final year in high school was taxing and when the idea of a “gap year” was brought up, I believed the year-long break from school would be necessary for me to succeed in college. For the first half of the year, I spent time working for a non-profit, non-partisan political organization due to my love of politics. While I learned a lot there and appreciated the valuable résumé booster, I spent almost three months during Autumn and Winter in the Montana wilderness; the nearest town was a 45 minute drive away, and by the time I would be able to get to it, the only thing open was the bar… that an 18 year old cannot get into.

For the second half of the year, starting right after the holidays ended, I decided to do the exact opposite of live in the middle of nowhere, America. Instead I decided to live in two of the most heavily populated cities in the world: Auckland, New Zealand and Sydney, Australia. The program I enrolled in was “Intern Down Under,” and, thanks to founder Dave Adams, I’m experiencing a month and a half each in two incredible countries. In Auckland I opted out of participating in a traditional internship, and instead decided (with the help and supervision of Dave) to build my own blog/website as well as write content for it. While interesting and useful, the internship did not require me to leave my apartment, and I needed that to change for my Sydney internship. When I reviewed my choices, none peaked my interest except one. Due to my love of history, I chose the Aboriginal Heritage Office.

Growing up in America, I learned little about the rest of the world. I assumed that the Native Americans were one of the most horrific cases of discrimination against Indigenous peoples, merely because I didn’t know of many other cases. Unfortunately, I was wrong. The Indigenous Australians have been horribly treated by the Australian government from the moment of First Contact up until very recently. Even now, they still have abhorrently disproportionate cases of easily preventable diseases compared to white Australians.

While I wasn’t planning on slacking during my short time as an intern, this new information inspired me to take the job far more seriously. I myself have some Leni Lenape (a Native American tribe) heritage, and although I’m not involved with tribal affairs, I couldn’t help but empathize with the unfair treatment of a group of people who originally owned the land.

As my time here comes to an end, I am, despite being thrilled to go back home to my family and friends, sad to leave such a supportive, hardworking, and excellent group of people. They need all the help they can get, and I’m sad to leave them when they have so much more important work to do. I wish them all the best of luck in their endeavours!

Shhhh. The next page is for listening. We invite you to set aside at least 28 seconds and give the land a chance to speak.
As more people are learning the benefits of bush tucker plants, spare a thought for the original knowledge holders. Most have seen little economic advantage from their heritage while non-Indigenous people are usually in a better position to profit from it. Supporting Indigenous businesses can be one way to help redress this imbalance.

No speaking, no commenting, only listening
Walk of the Month

Little Blue Gum Creek Track

This short walk is a cracker! Beautiful 30m high Sydney Blue Gums (*Eucalyptus saligna*) rise majestically from the valley floor surrounding Little Blue Gum Creek. Even though Lady Game Drive is close, the sounds of traffic melt away when you take in the grandeur of these trees and begin to tune in to the chorus of birds.

Only a short one-way walk, but wheelchair access makes it a good option for those less agile. For the more adventurous, you can continue up an informal track to Edenborough Oval, with some steep steps and a narrow creek crossing (subject to rising water in heavy rain). From the oval it is a walkable 1.3km to Lindfield Railway Station.

For more info:
http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/Services_facilities/Basics/Bushwalking_tracks/Little_Blue_Gum_Creek_Track

Answers: From our last edition (December 2016)! - see if you remember the clues!!

Crossword
Across: 1 Summer. 6 Echidna. 10 Lantana. 11 Ant. 13 On. 15 Eve. 16 Club. 18 Christmas. 20 Gal. 21 Mosaic. 23 LOL. 24 Serpentine. 26 No. 28 He. 29 Gunyah. 31 Problem.

Down: 1 Solstice. 2 Moth. 3 Renovations. 4 Tick. 5 Tan. 7 Cane. 8 Nail. 12 Tablecloth. 14 Surfer. 17 Camping. 19 So. 20 Gal. 22 Ion. 24 Slop. 25 Pleb. 27 Eye. 28 Ho. 30 Up.

Quizerama 1
1 Coolamon. 2 Hand. 3 False. 4 Kevin Rudd. 5 Has never been. 6 Jessica Mauboy. 7 Joint managed - True. 8 By Trade. 9 Parliament House, Canberra. 10 *Homo sapiens sapiens*. 