Welcome to the first issue of Yarnupings for 2020

The Aboriginal Heritage Office turns 20! There have been many stories and tales of adventures throughout the years and over the coming issues we will be sharing some of our treasured memories with you.

It has been an action packed beginning to 2020 so we’ve filled this newsletter with information that we think you’ll find interesting and relevant to the events happening across Australia. And if not, then you can always use it as toilet paper!

The AHO Team— Dave, Karen, Phil, Susan, and Samaka.

In this Issue...

- Cultural Burning ................................. 2
- Volunteer of the Month ........................ 3
- Museum Guided Cultural Tours ............. 3
- Schools Dig It Program ......................... 4
- Bush Regeneration ............................... 4
- Significant Days 2020 .......................... 5
- 20 Years of the AHO ............................ 7
- Year of Plant Health ............................ 9
- Guwiyang—Fire ................................. 11
- Crossword ........................................ 12
- Quiz ............................................. 13
- Bush Tucker Recipe ............................. 14
Cultural Burning

The experience many early Europeans had of ‘the bush’ is one of struggle, conflict and victory. The landscape was something to conquer. Early Australian history and exploration can read more like news from the Olympics. ‘Explorer X broke all records in finding a new way here’, ‘Explorer Y failed, broken at the last hurdle and was escorted from the track’. Farmers toiled, battling the plants, the animals, the soil, the sun, the unpredictable weather.

Meanwhile, Aboriginal people kept on doing their thing (where they hadn’t already been targeted as obstacles to the new games). With thousands of years of understanding, learning, experimentation, adaptation and fine-tuning on their side, this was not an Olympic struggle against nature but a long-standing deeply committed relationship, continually tested and reaffirmed with mutual respect and admiration (and of course a sprinkling of frustration, irritation and consternation).

Cultural burning comes from that knowledge and that respect. It is not a punishment on the land and animals for its extremes, or a defensive wall to protect us from our mistakes. The skill with which Aboriginal people carry out fire management has long been known, but not well understood. A visitor to colonial era Tasmania noted:

...in consequence of the transportation of the Natives [of Van Dieman’s Land] to Great or Flinders Island, and the consequent absence of extensive periodical fires, the bush has grown up thick to a most inconvenient degree... It is true that we might ourselves burn the bush but we could never do it with the same judgement and good effect of the Natives, who keep the fire within due bounds, only burning those parts they wish when the scrub becomes too thick or when they have any other object to gain by it *

As we all look for ways to prevent the firestorm of this summer reoccurring, we need to be very careful of how we use fire as a management tool. Most Australians of today have more experience with a BBQ on wheels than with a campfire and neither of those is a qualification for burning a landscape. Especially one filled with a complex mix of fragile and hardy species, as well as houses, sheds, heritage items and places of cherished memories. In a changing world where there are greater stresses to natural ecosystems and where the human population is increasingly separate from them, it is more important than ever to listen to those who have the most experience, whether carrying on an unbroken tradition or within existing management frameworks. Neither system can be expected to adequately deal with every situation we face now or that will come and new techniques will be developed. If the analogy of anger is fire, then its medicine might be patience and gentle rain. If our fire management system needs more of the cultural, then perhaps understanding what that might be is a good place to start.

“The tendency to aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man... it constitutes the powerful obstacle to culture”. Sigmund Freud

Volunteer Spotlight

Several years ago I saw an article in the local paper which talked about the work done by AHO volunteers in helping to protect Aboriginal sites.

As I was recently retired, and having long been interested in anthropology, archaeology and geology, it seemed a good idea to put my hand up and volunteer.

At the time, although I had seen many sites in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia, I was unaware of the large number of sites right here on our doorstep.

Previously a couple of middens I recognized on NSW shoreline walks were the only signs I had seen of past Indigenous activity. What a surprise it was when asked to monitor a site quite near to home and, subsequently, three more sites.

I am a member of the Australasian Mining History Association and understand the mining industry and Aboriginal heritage have not always been on the same page. With the significance of our country’s heritage being more widely accepted I feel things have improved.

Just as abandoned mining machinery will rust and infrastructure crumble, Aboriginal sites will erode. It is up to us to preserve what we have for as long as possible.

For those wishing to further their knowledge of Australia’s Aboriginal people I recommend First Footprints by Scott Cane. First published in 2013 it is truly illuminating.

I guess it will soon be time to do another round.

Jon Attwater

Museum Guided Cultural Tours

Australia has a rich and diverse native plant environment and none were more knowledgeable than the Indigenous Australians. Come and learn the uses of the plant life that you share your habitat with at the Aboriginal Heritage Office. The AHO’s museum is full of artefacts from all over Australia showing the diversity within Indigenous culture. We have many fun activities including interactive worksheets as well as dancing and storytelling mixed with music in the form of the yidiki (didgeridoo). When things return to normal, we are open Monday to Friday 9-4 and some Sundays. Please refer to our Instagram @aboriginalheritageoffice or the AHO website for updates.
School’s Dig It Program

The Schools Dig It program for 2020 kicked off with resounding success. Years 5 and 6 at Lindfield Public School were able to participate in the mock dig held by the Aboriginal Heritage Office. We ran four days of digs, three were hampered by the rain, but did that stop the budding archaeologists? Never! The students catalogued, measured, analysed and interpreted the artefacts and remains from their site. The interpretation was fantastic and there were a few kids whose work was so good, I would happily hire them!

The digs are free for schools in the partner Council areas. If you would like to learn more about the digs or book one for your school, email susan.whitby@northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au.

Bush Regeneration

2020 has seen an explosive and diverse set of weather events that have wreaked havoc on the lands. The aftermath of these events has revealed a beautiful, hope-filled display of regeneration. But how does the Australian bush regenerate?

There is diversity in the way plants regenerate, both across species and within species.

There are five main factors that effect the regeneration of a plant; seed storage, bark thickness, vegetative insulation, above ground re-sprouting and below-ground roots and underground stems.

Seed storage can either be at the crown of the plant or in the soil. Some smooth back eucalypt species store their seeds in capsules in the tree canopy. These seeds are released following fire and germinate when conditions become favourable.

Other species, such as wattles, have hard coated seeds which are stored in leaf litter and in the soil. Many of these seeds are burrowed into the ground by insects. The heat from the first cracks open the seed pods and triggers germination.

Bark thickness also helps to protect the tree during fires, by protecting the cambium (the tissue layer of undifferentiated cells for plant growth).

Underground roots and stems also help in the regeneration process. Soil is a good insulator, so underground buds are well protected. Many plants resprout from the base of the plant and also from the roots. Others have a special root adaptation called a lignotuber, which is a special swelling at the top of a plant’s root system (though mostly submerged).
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Significant Days 2020

13 February - Anniversary of the Apology (2008)
Anniversary of the formal apology made on 13 February 2008 by the government and the Parliament of Australia to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - in particular to the Stolen Generations.

19 March - National Close the Gap Day

26 May - National Sorry Day
National Sorry Day offers the community the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of the policies spanning more than 150 years of forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The first National Sorry Day was held on 26 May 1998 following the 1997 HREOC report Bringing Them Home which recommended that a national day of observance be declared.

27 May - Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum
In 1967, over 90% of Australians voted in a Referendum to remove clauses from the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Referendum also gave the Commonwealth Government the power to make laws on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

27 May–3 June - Reconciliation Week
National Reconciliation Week was initiated in 1996 to provide a special focus for nationwide activities. The week is a time to reflect on achievements so far and the things which must still be done to achieve reconciliation.

National Reconciliation Week offers people across Australia the opportunity to focus on reconciliation, to hear about the cultures and histories of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to explore new and better ways of meeting challenges in our communities.

The Week is timed to coincide with two significant dates in Australia’s history, which provide strong symbols of our hopes and aims for reconciliation: 27 May and 3 June.

3 June - Mabo Day
Mabo Day marks the anniversary of the High Court of Australia’s judgement in 1992 in the Mabo case. This is a day of particular significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians.
Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo’s name is synonymous with native title rights. His story began in May 1982 when he and fellow Murray (Mer) Islanders David Passi, Sam Passi, James Rice and Celuia Salee instituted a claim in the High Court for native title to the Murray (Mer) Islands in the Torres Strait.

The claim was made against the State of Queensland, which responded by seeking to legislate to extinguish retrospectively any native title on the Islands. This was challenged in the High Court on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act. The High Court, in an historical judgement delivered on 3 June 1992, accepted the claim by Eddie Mabo and the other claimants that their people (the Meriam people) had occupied the Islands of Mer for hundreds of years before the arrival of the British. The High Court found that the Meriam people were ‘entitled as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of lands in the Murray Islands.’ The decision overturned a legal fiction that Australia was terra nullius (a land belonging to no one) at the time of British colonisation.

1 July - Coming of the Light

This is a particular day of significance for Torres Strait Islander Australians. It marks the day the London Missionary Society first arrived in the Torres Strait. The missionaries landed at Erub Island on 1 July 1871. Religious and cultural ceremonies are held by Torres Strait Islander Christians across the Torres Strait and on the mainland to commemorate this day.

5 July-12 July 2019 - NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC Week is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contribution of Indigenous Australians in various fields.

For further information on NAIDOC, please visit the website www.naidoc.org.au

4 August - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day

Children's Day and the week leading up to it, is a time to for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to celebrate the strengths and culture of their children. The day is an opportunity for all Australians to show their support for Aboriginal children, as well as learn about the crucial impact that community, culture and family play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

9 August - International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples

The International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples is observed on August 9 each year to promote and protect the rights of the world’s indigenous population. This event also recognises the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection. It was first pronounced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1994, marking the day of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, in 1982.

6 September 2017 - Indigenous Literacy Day

Indigenous Literacy Day aims to help raise funds to raise literacy levels and improve the lives and opportunities of Indigenous Australians living in remote and isolated regions. We need your support to help raise funds to buy books and literacy resources for children in these communities.

13 September - Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly during its 61st session at UN Headquarters in New York City on 13 September 2007.
Perspective

A mental view or prospect; the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed; the capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance

The AHO is turning twenty. This is quite an achievement given most people involved in its inception had no particular thought of its long-term future. It is quite an achievement given the difficulties of getting the partnership started. It is quite an achievement given that it was the first of its kind at local government in Australia (or probably anywhere) and is still the only partnership like it. It is a particularly surprising achievement given how often organisations and government departments are restructured and re-named these days.

Twenty years is a long time in someone’s working life. It is a very long time for someone who has lived most of their life in the 21st century. It is a long time for any one program targeting Aboriginal heritage. So we can agree, twenty years is quite impressive.

When seen from a different perspective, perhaps it’s not such a big deal. A backed blade (stone tool) found on the Gadyan Track at Berry Island, Wollstonecraft, a few years ago is at least 1500 years old, and possibly several thousand. The youngest shell middens around the harbour estuaries are generally at least many hundreds of years old and into the thousands. That’s the young ones. The current coastline is ‘only’ a few thousand years old. Sites in older landscapes go back five, ten, twenty thousand years. Then there’s a few sites in the Sydney region older than 30,000 years.

Leaping back to more recent times, we know of course that the First Fleet arrived in 1788 (which was 232 years ago and 212 years before the AHO’s appearance). The rural District of Willoughby became the Municipality of North Willoughby in 1865, which included what is now Lane Cove and Willoughby Councils. The former Manly Council was incorporated in 1877. Strathfield was incorporated in 1885. North Sydney Council in 1890 with the merging of three boroughs. Ku-ring-gai and Warringah Shire Council came about in 1906. The colonies became a Federation and the continent became the nation of Australia only in 1901 (119 years ago).

Yes, most of the partner Councils of the AHO existed before the nation.

From another perspective, the AHO’s twenty years is the equivalent of:

- 1788 8.6% of time since invasion
- 1901 16.8% of time since Federation
- 1967 37.7% of time since the ‘Yes’ Referendum
- 1974 43.4% of time since Aboriginal heritage protection in NSW

Or less impressively:

- 1500BP 0.01% (at least) of time since the Berry Island backed blade was made
- And so on.

Those involved in the establishment of the AHO and its continuation should be justifiably proud. However, it is a reminder that even the nation isn’t that old in the scheme of things and all of it pales into insignificance over the millennia of Indigenous occupation. When we can point to a new tradition that will be beneficial to the people and the environment even in a few thousand years’ time, perhaps that is something we can say is impressive from all perspectives. In the meantime, let’s celebrate the unlikely milestone of the AHO.

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning”. Albert Einstein
TIMELINE of the Aboriginal Heritage Office

1999 David Watts, consultant and Regional Rep for MLALC, begins work at North Sydney Council on its heritage study, and designs a shared heritage officer position.

2000 four councils agree to share an Aboriginal Heritage manager position for 5 years. Nobody applies for the position. David Watts agrees to apply and do 12 months. He’s still here.

2001 role out of new heritage study format for each partner council.

2003 Phil Hunt, archaeologist, agrees to help with 4 projects. He is so impressed with the work, he makes a deal with his wife to put up with the irregular contracts and low income for two years. He’s still here.

2004 the MoU is re-signed for another 5 years. Potential area mapping of each council begins.

2005 Manly Council joins the partnership. The name ‘Aboriginal Heritage Office’ is given for the first time to better reflect the activities being carried out by a fluctuating but increasing number of people. A full-time Education Officer position is established.


2008 Willoughby Council provides an unused community space at Northbridge. Despite not having a single powerpoint, the empty rooms soon become a busy office and the setting for a new Museum & Education Centre.

To be continued...
The United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The year is once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty protect the environment, and boost economic development.

- **Plants are life**—Plants make up 80% of the food we eat and produce 98% of the oxygen we breathe.

- **Economic benefits**—The annual value of trade in agricultural products has grown almost three-fold over the past decade, largely in emerging economies and developing countries, reaching USD 1.7 trillion.

- **A growing demand**—FAO estimates that agricultural production must rise about 60% by 2050 in order to feed a larger and generally richer population.

- **Pest destruction**—Plant pests are responsible for losses of up to 40% percent of food crops globally, and for trade losses in agricultural products worth over USD 220 billion each year.

- **Climate Impacts**—Climate change threatens to reduce not only the quantity of crops, lowering yields, but also the nutrient value. Rising temperatures also mean that more plant pests are appearing earlier and in places where they were never seen before.

- **Beneficial Bugs**—Beneficial insects are vital for plant health— for pollination, pest control, soil health, nutrient recycling—and yet, insect abundance has fallen 80% in the last 25-30 years.

- **Hungry pests**—One million locusts can eat about one tonne of food a day, and the largest swarms can consume over 100 000 tonnes each day, or enough to feed tens of thousands of people for one year.
It is hard to write when my heart is broken due to the loss of Country and our animals, birds, insects, reptiles and freshwater/saltwater creatures. Many experts are saying that our biodiversity will never recover and we may lose entire species. I have watched the Corellas flocking to Northern Beaches escaping fire and smoke, loss of habitat and breeding grounds. We may find different birds or insects appearing in Sydney. Insects are essential for food pollination and there is so much more.

An estimated 5.22 million hectares of land has burned in NSW alone. At this stage 34 deaths have occurred and there may be more. Well over a billion animals are estimated killed to this date. This does not include insects, bats, frogs and other amphibious animals. Dr Howard Ralph at Southern Cross Wildlife Care is saving native wildlife, one burns victim at a time. Wild Lives Matter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OC0lBvj-04

In 2018, the AHO presented a YarnUp with Tjimpuna an Anangu woman from the Uluru APY lands. She spoke to us about ‘People Land Law. She told us when one of these are missing we become sick. Since Colonisation and dispossession Aboriginal people have been excluded from managing and caring for our land.

Aboriginal burning techniques please watch the following YouTube clips:

- Traditional Knowledge – Cool Burning
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZuV5js0qGY
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGY0__RelVk

“The knowledge around Indigenous fire management are layers and layers and layers of knowledge and so many different trees and so many different country types and so many different places and ecosystems that burn all differently at different times of year. It’s very technical, and there’s a lot of science. Understanding all your trees and knowing all the different animals and all the breeding and knowing all the different bush foods and bush medicines. All of that is part of fire management. What Indigenous fire represents is thousands of years of getting to know that landscape and it means connecting to that landscape. It means looking after that landscape and becoming part of that country again”. Victor Steffensen, Indigenous Fire Practitioner

https://youtu.be/RM72NTXxyLs

‘Indigenous fire methods protect land before and after the Tathra bushfire’, ABC News


Aboriginal people have always looked after Country. There has been much talk about the Aboriginal cultural burning. Gavin Brooks in Uladulla had his property burnt traditionally by Yuin man, Noel Webster. Despite being surrounded 360 degrees by fire, his property wasn’t destroyed. When all around him was.


Even when the First Fleet arrived in Australia, they thought the country a stately park. Phillip remarked that the trees grew 20-40 feet apart and there was no undergrowth. There are many quotes of carriages being able to be driven and horses ridden fast with no obstruction and the presence of no insects or few insects. Please read Bill Gammage ‘The Biggest Estate on Earth’ and Bruce Pascoe ‘Dark Emu’. See the AHO Reading List on our websites.

As well as the grief of the wider community, Aboriginal people are particularly affected. The fires have decimated bushfoods and we still have no idea of the destruction of our heritage sites. Animals linked to our totems and stories may be gone. Not only do we grieve for our communities and the people and homes lost but we also grieve for Country, the bush and the plants and animals. Continually being prevented from managing our lands compounds our grief as we experience more dispossession and destruction due to mismanagement of Country.
Crossword

Across
4. An indigenous plant you can make soap from
5. _____ Mc Bryde—a pioneer Australian female archaeologist
7. A type of tool made by repeatedly chipping away at a rock to shape it into a hand axe
9. Author of The Biggest Estate on Earth—Bill _______
10. Unsound: A newly released film featuring songs written by Christine ___
11. Type of wasps used to help date 108 rock art sites in the Kimberley
12. A form of agriculture that seeks to repair the impact on Australia’s ecosystems
15. _____ Creek, a massacre that took place southwest of Moree between 1837 and January 1838
16. Val ______- One of Australia’s most revered female archaeologists

Down
1. ______ Murray—The first female lecturer in archaeology in the U.K
2. A stone tool technology that smashes two rocks together to form a sharp flake
3. ____ grass— An Indigenous plant you make bread from
6. An indigenous fir practitioner—Victor ______
8. _____ paper fig— and local Indigenous plant with rough leaves
13. The Dharawal name for fire.
14. A tool used in archaeology
18. The name of the festival celebrating the Indigenous heritage of Parramatta.
### Quiz

1. Minijwarra is an archaeological site in the Kimberley’s next to which river? __________________________

2. What kind of art is Carnarvon Gorge famous for? _______________________________________________

3. *Dioscorea bulbifera* is featured in rock art sites in western Arnhem Land. What is *Dioscorea bulbifera* common name? _________________________________________________________________________

4. Lines on the growth plates of long bones that indicate nutritional deficiencies are known as? _________________________________________________________________________

5. Blak Comedy is on ABC on which week night? ________________________________________________

6. What is the Title of Bill Gammage’s book? ___________________________________________________

7. What is 2020 the year of? _________________________________________________________________________

8. When is National Sorry Day? ________________________________________________________________

9. Which rock is formed when surface sand and gravel are cemented by dissolved silica and is commonly sourced in western Sydney? _________________________________________________________________________

10. National Archaeology Week is in which month? _______________________________________________

11. The oil of this bark can be used as a type of antiseptic. _________________________________________________________________________

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### Ngumpie Weaving at the Museum

The AHO has collaborated with Ngumpie Weaving to create a space to teach and learn tradition and contemporary Indigenous weaving. Tegan Murdock a Barkindji/ Yorta-Yorta woman living on northern beaches runs the program and encourages every one of all ages to come and learn traditional methods of art.

The two-hour classes are a great opportunity to have a yarn, take in the bush tucker garden and chat with Samaka about the artefacts in the museum.

For details on upcoming events keep up to date on our Instagram or Ngumpie Weaving on Eventbrite.com.

**Issue 4 2019 Crossword Answers**

**Across:**


**Down:**

Warrigal Green and desert lime pesto with wholemeal pasta

Ingredients
500g wholemeal or spelt pasta
Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
Salt flakes and cracked black pepper
Shave parmesan, to serve
Pesto
250g warrigal greens, leaves picked, baby leaves to garnish
1 large handful sea parsley leaves and stalks, roughly chopped, a few leaves for garnish
Juice of 3 lemons
1 cup (250ml) extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra to cover
200g macadamias
About 30 desert limes, plus a few halved limes to garnish
4 cloves garlic, peeled
Salt flakes and cracked pepper
3/4 cup (60g) grated parmesan

Method
To make the pesto, blanch the warrigal greens in a large saucepan of boiling water for 1 minute, then rinse in cold water. Drain well and squeeze out excess liquid. Roughly chop the blanched greens and the sea parsley and place them in a food processor with the lemon juice and a little olive oil. Blend until the greens are roughly pureed.

Add the macadamias, limes and garlic and continue to blend until the mixture looks like crunchy peanut butter. Continue blending slowly while drizzling in the remaining olive oil until you have a coarse pesto, then season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the parmesan and pulse to blend through, then check the seasoning.

Transfer the pesto to sterilised jars. Let it settle to remove any air bubbles, then cover with olive oil. This makes about 750 of pesto. Store it in the fridge for up to 3 months. If you want to eat the pesto as a dip, add a little more oil to thin it down.

Cook the pasta in boiling salted water until al dente, then toss it in a little olive oil to prevent it from clumping together. Fold in 100g of pesto per serve, drizzle with olive oil and season with black pepper.

Make a salad of the reserved warrigal green baby leaves, sea parsley and desert limes. Season with salt to taste, then add a little olive oil and pepper.

Divide the pasta among bowls and garnish with the salad. Serve with shaved parmesan and a small bowl of extra pesto on the side, if you like.

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/australia-food-blog/2014/feb/02/bush-food-warrigal-greens