

Appendix 2: Some Background on Aboriginal History

Description of cultural landscape – Palerang LGA – version 2

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An Aboriginal land tenure system has existed across Australia for many thousands of years. Whilst Aboriginal social organization across what is now the Palerang LGA can be described according to types of groupings including tribal, sub-tribal, clan and linguistic, religious and economic values determine how features of the natural world are utilised, valued and maintained.

According to local Aboriginal creation mythology *Daramulan* gave form to the land and waterways, created animals [including totems] and humans, gave power to ‘clever people’ and defined the overarching Aboriginal Lore [Rose, James, Watson 2003]. Sadlier recorded a mythological story about Wunbula the Bat and his two wives relating to the Monga area [see Organ 1990]. Another mythological story place in the study area is Dithol [Pigeon House Mt] as described by Mackenzie in 1874 [see Organ 1990]:

‘.....Men, or Kurrakurria [sort of little birds] were playing. The eel starts out of a hole. They ran down to spear him. Went all the way to Pundutba. Thence to Pulinjera. Thence all the way to Moruya, found the deep water. Then all the men and women went along the bank, all the way to Biriry and Yirikul. News went over then to Mirroo, where the two Jea [Fishing Hawk]. Then those two went thence up to the sky. Then those two saw the fish; then those two stuck the spear into him. Then went into the water, then up the beach, fetched out the eel. Men and women were glad, took the eel then and roasted him. They slept, the eel was burning. The pheasant came out and put him in the jukulu [bark off the excrescence of a tree, used as a vessel for holding honey or other food], took the eel out of the fire and carried it away to Didthul. The men and women got up. ‘Where’s that fish belonging to that pheasant?’ They fought for that fish. The pheasant cut off the eels head and stuck it up, then called it Didthul....’

The term ‘totem’ is used to describe the complex inter-relationship between people and the natural world, the two providing mutual benefits to each other through a spiritual, yet tangible inter-dependency. Although the term ‘totem’ is not widely used in this region, the relevant cultural practise does [Elkin 1938; Rose, James and Watson 2003; Donaldson 2012]. Totems can stand for or represent an aspect of the natural world as well as provide kinship links between the people or group whom identify with a particular totem, as well as kinship links to the natural world. Accordingly, totem species become part of a koori person’s extended family, a relationship develops between a person or group and a totemic species which allows for mutual protection and assistance through ongoing environmental interactions. Overarching each of these facets is the need to teach each generation the value of respect and obligation in relation to totems [Rose 2003]. Accordingly, cultural teaching places are integral components to the cultural landscape in relation to totem species and their habitat [Donaldson 2012].

On a linguistic level, the eastern extent of Palerang LGA is usually associated with the *Dhurga* [Thoorga/Durga] language region with Ngunawal across the west and Ngarigo across the south [Wesson 2000:118]. Tribal groups recorded as being associated with the area now comprising the Palerang LGA include the Ngunawal in the west, north west; the Walgalu in the central west; the Ngarigo in the south west; the Walbanga in the east; and the Wandandian in the north east [Tindale 1974; Series AA338/15].



Aboriginal tribal boundary map, south east detail. Tindale 1974.

Movement across the landscape was common for economic, ritual and social reasons; in the case of the tribal groups associate with Palerang LGA connectivity with the Snowy Mountains and South East coast was maintained. The coastal area was tribally affiliated with the *Yuin* (*Murring*) people recorded by Howitt in 1904 as extending from the Shoalhaven River in the north, to Cape Howe in the south and west to the Great Dividing Range. In 1844 Robinson and later Howitt [1904] and Mathews [1904], recorded a number of intermarrying groups across the south coast and nearby mountain ranges. They found that the Kudingal [Katungal] 'live by the sea coast by catching fish' and the Paiendra [paien = tomahawk] live in the forest and source food by climbing trees. The Paiendra were also called 'waddy men' by early settlers in reference to their practise of climbing trees in search of game for food [Howitt 1904]. The territory of this later group would have extended into what is now Palerang LGA, whilst the Katungal would have been their regular visitors.

A further exogamous division was recorded between Cape Howe and the Shoalhaven; the *Guyangal* [guya = south] occupying the southern area between Mallacoota and the Moruya River, and the *Kurrial* [[kurru = north] who occupied the northern area between the Shoalhaven and the Moruya Rivers, including the Braidwood district [Clark 2000].

A number of smaller named sub tribal or clan groups were recorded during the early contact period across what is now the Palerang LGA, as collated by Wesson [2000]; Arralooin [Flanagan 1883], Munkata [Sadleir 1841] associated with the Braidwood region, Jineroo [Elrington 1833] near Mt Elrington, Molongla [Elrington 1833] associated with the Molonglo River and Majors Creek, Nammitong [Robinson 1844] associated with the Murrumbidgee Limestone Plains, Mudbury [Ryrie 1834] associated with Curraduckbidy, Yarererlumler [Robinson 1844], Tugerrernong [Robinson 1844] and Currowan [Oldrey 1842]. Many of these terms have been adopted as place names today.

Whilst interactions between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the region began with Cook's 1770 observation of 5 Aboriginal men standing on the shore north of Batemans Bay, white settlement did not take hold until small portions of land were granted in the 1820. Andrew Badgery was guided to the Araluen area by an Aboriginal person and had established a cattle run by 1828 [Ellis 1983:48]. Wilson then established the Braidwood Farm in the 1830s and the 1850s gold rush drew newcomers into the Araluen River and its tributaries. This increase in

population put strain on the use of natural resources and gave new meaning to the landscape beyond Aboriginal religious values.

The term 'King', or 'Queen' was often bestowed along with a metal plaque known as a 'gorget', 'king', 'breast' or 'brass' plate in honour of Aboriginal people who were considered to be leaders by the non-Aboriginal population in Australia during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Today 'gorgets' represent both the effect of the European culture on the Australian Indigenous population, and a link to the land and history of specific Indigenous groups in Australia [Troy 1993]. A breast plate was made for 'Jack the Traveller, King of Bendora Bellevue and Jembicumbane', presumably in the late nineteenth century. Bendora Bellevue is likely to have been Bendora Station on the Shoalhaven River and Jembicumbane is what we know today as Jembaicumbene Creek [Troy 1993: 78 – 79]. A kangaroo is engraved on the right horn, and an emu on the left horn. A man holding a rifle is engraved in the centre of the plate [Edmund O Milne collection 1985.59.371].



Breast plate for 'Jack the Traveller, King of Bendora Bellevue and Jembicumbane', Edmund O Milne collection 1985.59.371 / NLA.

The life of 'Jack the Traveller' and the precise cause of death and subsequent burial of 80% of the Aboriginal population across the south east between in the late 1900s remains unknown.

Early records of tribal meetings also tell us about the importance of certain localities and the pathways linking them. In 1740 hundreds gathered at Bendethera from coastal and tribal lands; in the 1830s approximately 800 Aboriginal people from the south coast and Monaro met at Apple-Tree Flat near Araluen to resolve a dispute [Kennedy 1978:21]; in 1831 Lieutenant McAllister met a group of Aboriginal people at Jembaicumbene at discuss a dispute [Organ 1990:170]; in 1850 hundreds journeyed from across the region to Mumbler Mountain near Bega, including 279 from Queanbeyan and 205 people from Braidwood, 227 from the Shoalhaven and over 200 from Moruya and Broulee; in 1853 Aboriginal people from the south coast camped at Weedy Flat at Araluen and fought with the Monaro tribe [Kennedy 1978:21]; in 1859 a large gathering took place at Queanbeyan; in 1860 more than 200 Aboriginal people walked from Maneroo to the Clyde and met up with tribal people from the Murray River; and in 1872 a large corroboree was held on the Braidwood gold fields, with representations from Broulee, Shoalhaven and coastal districted attended [Wesson 2000: 163].

In 1840 the NSW Land and Emigration Commissioners concluded that 'moderate reserves' should be set-aside for Aboriginal people to 'enable them to live, not as hunter-gatherers, in which case no good would be done, but as cultivators of the soil'. The Land Act of 1842 enshrined these views and allowed Crown land to be reserved from sale for the use of Aboriginal people (Goodall 2008:52). This Act reflects a protectionist legacy of the NSW state government towards Aboriginal people from the 1840s until around the 1940s.

Following the passing of the 1861 Lands Act Aboriginal demands for secure land tenure increased, as supported by Church groups, and leading to the 1859 protests by the Aboriginal people of Cumeragunja on the VIC/NSW border and the establishment of 32 new reserves

across NSW between 1861 – 1884 (Goodall 2008:100). Similar demands were heard across all of NSW and in 1881 a Protector of Aborigines was appointed who recommended that land be reserved from sale throughout the state and that Aboriginal people should be encouraged to move to these ‘reserves’. In 1883 the Aborigines Protection Board was established to manage reserves and control the lives of Aboriginal people across New South Wales. By the 1940s there were over 180 Aboriginal reserves gazetted across New South Wales, and almost 300 by 1970. One such reserve was gazetted on the 15/4/1893 on Currawan Creek in the Parish of Currawan, County of St. Vincent. Records show that the 60 acre reserve was frequented by Aboriginal families and was revoked in on the 9/5/1956.

Other Aboriginal reserves established across the region during this era include one at Mongarlowe in 1879, one at Tomakin in 1884, two at Moruya between 1883 and 1885, a large one at Wallaga Lake in 1891 and one at Batemans Bay in 1902. As a result, many of the people associated with the Paiendra tribe, found themselves in Katungal country surviving ‘by the sea coast catching fish’. Over the years all of the reserves were revoked and reverted to other tenure types now under public and private ownership.

Other connections recorded between people and places across the region relate to conflict caused by grouping many tribes together and the subsequent Diaspora from the Braidwood/Majors Creek area. As described by Egloff et al [2004] Braidwood became a ‘melting pot of Aboriginal groups from Goulbourn, Bungonia, Jembaicumbene, the Shoalhaven and local people’. Either as a result of colonial upheaval or in accordance with routine tribal conflict resolution, an intertribal battle took place between the Braidwood and Moruya tribes in the 1830s in the Kiora area, on the Deua River [Goulding and Waters 2005] and in 1846 it was reported that many Braidwood ‘blacks’ were driven to the seacoast where they remain [Allan in Egloff 2004: 46].

The movement of people from the ranges to the coast occurred over a number of years. Jane Brown seems to have left Braidwood by 1835, Walloo alias Mr Hunt who was a ‘full blood initiated man who had his upper incisor removed’ was in Braidwood at least until 1834; in 1872 after being declined the gazettal of a reserve for Araluen Billy, Mondalie alias Jack Bond moved to Moruya; Mary O’Brien was born at the Majors Creek goldfield in 1860 remained in Braidwood until 1880 and Margaret Bryant was recorded as being at Mongarlowe Reserve in 1885. By 1890 there were only four Aboriginal women and two children remaining in Braidwood and by 1900 there were no Aboriginal people in the Braidwood although the Bond family returned to Majors Creek in 1881; and Mary Ann Willoughby was still at Mongarlowe with her children in 1902 before shifting to Majors Creek and Sydney, and the Thomas family lived at Jembaicumbene until at least 1909 [Egloff, Peterson and Wesson 2004].

Whilst a diversity of traditional, historical and contemporary cultural attachments across the region have developed in response to the specific historical context, the land, waters and people are connected through kinship, totemism, and the ingrained cultural responsibility of caring for country today as in the past.

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