



VIRTUSHERITAGE

E-NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

Welcome

by Dr Mary-Jean Sutton

Happy New Year!

2020 was one of our most challenging and successful years. We continue to grow as a company and I am proud of our team's many achievements and the completion of interesting community and commercial projects and conference, research presentations and publications. We thank our partners, clients, communities and collaborators for their support during 2020 and the opportunities that arose from this support. Our noticeboard features some of these achievements and news on upcoming projects for 2021.

We are excited to welcome two new team members, Clara Mundy Romero (Junior Administration Assistant) and Teleahsia Togo (Administration Assistant) to support our growing company. Teleahsia and Clara will be based in Northern NSW. Some information about Clara and Teleahsia and their perspectives on cultural heritage is featured.

We highlight heritage management projects in this newsletter, including the Coffs Harbour City Council's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Document, Cessnock City Council's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Strategy and cultural mapping and Shellharbour Council's Bass Point Conservation Management Plan. Training programs for cultural heritage for Landcare and Hunter Local Land Services are also featured. These programs were developed in partnership with Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Awabakal and Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs). Cultural sites officer training was also undertaken for Githabul Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and as always with these training programs, our team also learnt a deeper appreciation of cultural perspectives and experiences during these exchanges. We are also privileged to have undertaken some interesting partnership projects with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme and Awabakal, Worimi and Mindaribba LALCs, which highlight the use of boat and canoes to identify rare and significant cultural grinding groove complexes and other important cultural sites.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and look forward to working together in 2021.

Acknowledgement of Country

Virtus Heritage is committed to the spirit of reconciliation and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of the states and territories of Australia. We recognise the Traditional Owners of the lands we work within. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging in maintaining the culture, country and their spiritual and historical connections to the lands and waters.

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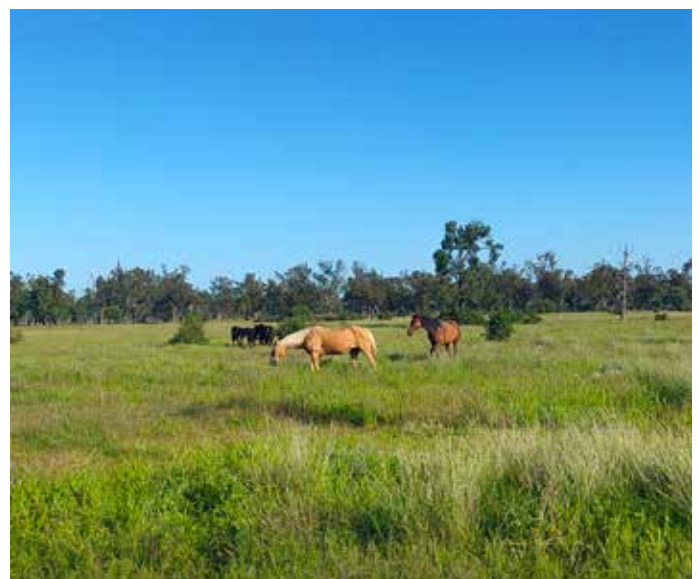
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Bass Point Conservation Management Plan

Gina Scheer

In early 2020, Shellharbour City Council (SCC) commissioned Virtus Heritage to undertake a conservation management plan (CMP) for one of their important heritage places – Bass Point Reserve. The CMP addresses all of the significance of the area, natural and cultural. The project was made possible by NSW government heritage funding to SCC.

The CMP process began in February 2020 and, despite the constraints of covid-19 restrictions on the original timeline for

this project, a two volume draft report was submitted to SCC in early December 2020. The CMP has collated a wealth of information, identified and confirmed areas of significance and has made management recommendations for SCC, including policies for managing change and conservation. The draft volumes are under review and this project will be finalised in 2021.

Bass Point Reserve is a place with significant natural and cultural heritage values. It is a headland of c.72 hectares

jutting into the ocean just south of Shellharbour village and north of Kiama. The headland has one of the few remaining littoral rainforest areas in the Illawarra and an extensive marine habitat that has resulted in the Bushrangers Bay area being listed as a NSW aquatic reserve. It has a large collection of significant Aboriginal sites, as well as historical European heritage sites comprising shipwrecks. It is the curious landforms across much of the headland which have contributed to retention of Aboriginal midden sites. The volcanic

bedrock formed during the Permian period and comprises basaltic deposits with circular pockets of explosive cavities on the rock shelves around the point.

Views and vistas from Bass Point Reserve are significant for their aesthetic, natural and cultural values. Views which link nearby Aboriginal cultural sites are historically and culturally significant with additional spiritual value. Bass Point Reserve warrants protection, understanding and good management for current and future generations.



As part of the CMP process Virtus Heritage undertook an inspection of Bass Point Reserve and met and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders before a second inspection of special landforms took place. There are so many people to thank for their time, for their interest and for sharing information. In particular, the services of Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council and geomorphologist Dr Peter Mitchell have been most valuable.



Bass Point Cultural Management Plan *continued*

Gina Scheer

Bass Point Reserve has been under SCC management since the late 1960s, when local environmental groups lobbied for the small peninsula to remain parkland as it was thought to be at risk. The Reserve is located immediately adjacent to a historic and currently active basalt quarry which is now operated by Hanson Quarries. The long narrow loading jetty located just outside of the Bass Point Reserve gates is an iconic feature for the area. The original loading jetty was constructed for the quarry in 1880 and collapsed in the 1950s. Numbers of historic shipwrecks add to the maritime cultural heritage of Bass Point Reserve. The most notable being the Cities Services Boston, which was wrecked during a massive storm at Bass Point in December 1943. The American vessel was engaged as an oil tanker during World War 2 supplying Australian and Allied forces with fuel. A rescue of all 62 crew members was successfully undertaken by the 6th Australian Machine Gun Battalion assisted by Shellharbour citizens. However, four Australian soldiers drowned in the rescue and only two bodies have been found. There are a number of memorials set up within the Reserve for commemoration, with remembrance services held regularly.

In 2013 the Reserve was listed on the State Heritage Register for its importance to

the people of NSW. It is SHR Item No 10896. The extent of the Bass Point Reserve heritage area is shown on our map below. Bass Point natural heritage values include the ancient and sensitive landforms which were attractive to Aboriginal communities for occupation and for gathering resources prior to as well as after arrival of Europeans. These natural and cultural values continue to be renewed by Dharawal people who regularly come for camping, fishing, gathering and visiting.

Bass Point is enjoyed by the local community and more and more visitors, including surfers, fisherfolk and many dive groups and divers, who are keen to experience, protect and in some cases document the marine flora and fauna.

The specific goal of a CMP is to identify, assess and

manage heritage. This was necessary for Bass Point Reserve largely due to its 2013 State heritage listing and what that entails for the managers of the place, SCC. They have been concerned about increasing numbers of visitors creating more pressure on the natural environment of the Reserve and increasing the demand for Council services such as maintenance, universal access and facilities. These aspects of the Reserve require planning consultation and management so that what is special about Bass Point will be protected.

The draft CMP has drawn together environmental and cultural heritage information and assessment, including maritime information. The importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage at Bass Point has been recognised for many years. The protection of



Bass Point Reserve in relation to its Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values has and continues to be a long term aspiration of the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council (ILALC) and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee of Shellharbour City Council.



PROJECTS



Cessnock Cultural Heritage Study

Elle Lillis



Throughout 2020 and into the New Year Virtus Heritage have been assisting Cessnock City Council to undertake Phase 2 of the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study (CHS). This phase of the project includes cultural mapping of the whole LGA working closely with the Cessnock Aboriginal community. The project commenced in March 2020 and was not immune to the challenges presented by COVID-19 throughout last year.

Cessnock LGA is located largely upon the Traditional Lands of the Wonnarua People as well as the Lands of the Awabakal and Darkinjung People. The relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) within the Cessnock LGA are Mindaribba, Awabakal, Biraban, Metropolitan and Wanaruah LALCs, and Darkinjung LALC boundary borders the LGA. Consultation with Aboriginal Stakeholders, including Elders, Traditional Custodians and knowledge-holders, to develop the methodology for and undertake the cultural mapping was integral to the project.

The initial stages of this project included the development of a draft strategy for survey and cultural mapping methodology

in collaboration with the Aboriginal community. This stage was planned to be undertaken in a series of face-to-face meetings to discuss the project aims and outcomes, however due to COVID-19 restrictions such gatherings were not appropriate. While we are all now familiar with the changes that 2020 has brought into our lives, the ubiquity of video calls and online meetings, restrictions on gatherings, sanitizers, masks and social distancing, these changes and challenges were new and unprecedented during the early stages of this project. In-lieu of face-to-face meetings, Virtus Heritage and Council worked together to develop mapping and information packages to send out to stakeholders, as well as organising Zoom meetings with presentations and interactive mapping. The resulting methodology for the project incorporated both desktop mapping workshops and field surveys with Elders and knowledge-holders to identify cultural heritage sites and values within the Cessnock LGA.

As restrictions eased, Virtus GIS specialists and archaeologists, Elle Lillis, Harry Rees Parkes, Mary-Jean Sutton and Jac Carr were able to undertake face-to-face cultural mapping workshops on country with Elders and



knowledge-holders, with COVID safety measures in place. During these workshops the Aboriginal communities identified cultural values, places and sites throughout the Cessnock LGA, including cultural landscapes, songlines and travel routes, archaeological sites, resource gathering areas, story places, significant landforms, places with both historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage values, post contact places including places for teaching and learning, family homes, cemeteries and institutions. The mapping workshops also informed the strategy for field surveys for the project, as the Aboriginal community identified areas where archaeological survey should occur.

Aboriginal sites officers, Elders and knowledge-holders and Virtus staff undertook field surveys throughout the Cessnock LGA in NSW National Parks, Council owned lands and private properties using digital recording, drone footage, pedestrian and vehicle surveys to identify and record archaeological and cultural sites and values. A number of areas requested for archaeological survey were located on private property. Council sent over 1200 letters to landholders with a factsheet on the project and a request to undertake an Aboriginal

cultural heritage survey on their property. The landholder response was overwhelmingly positive, with access granted to private properties throughout the LGA. Private landholders also accompanied the survey on their land if they wished, and some even provided the survey team with cuppas and cake! Due to some very wet weather conditions towards the end of the year, the final scheduled field surveys were delayed until the new year.

To date the final field survey days will need to be undertaken and draft mapping and survey results are being collated and inventoried to be presented to the Aboriginal community for review. However, the outcomes of the project have already included building relationships between Cessnock LGA Council, Aboriginal community and Traditional Custodians and private landholders, and increasing awareness about Aboriginal cultural heritage in the region. Virtus Heritage, Council and the Aboriginal community have shown resilience, flexibility and used innovation to deliver project outcomes during what was a difficult year for everyone.

Lower Hunter Riverbank Boat Survey

Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme

Elle Lillis



Between September and December 2020 our Newcastle-based team hung up their trowels and put on their life jackets to undertake survey of the lower Hunter, Paterson and Williams Rivers, Wallis Creek at Maitland, the Hunter River at Singleton and Aberdeen and Sandy Creek at Denman. The purpose of the survey was to identify Aboriginal grinding grooves sites in the river and creek banks which are often in the inter-tidal zone and not visible or accessible from the riverbanks. The aim of the

surveys was to identify Aboriginal sites at risk from erosion and bank collapse, and activities undertaken by the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme such as bank stabilisation and levee construction.

The project was developed with support from the Mindaribba, Worimi and Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Hunter Local Land Services and the Department of Planning,

Industry and Environment Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme. The Department engaged Virtus Heritage to undertake the project, sites officers from Mindaribba, Worimi and Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Councils to undertake the survey and provide cultural advice and Stok Marine to provide boats and crew. Specialist advice was provided to Virtus by geomorphologist Dr Peter Mitchell, and ecological and environmental advice from GHD.



Lower Hunter Riverbank Boat Survey *continued*

Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme

Elle Lillis



This project is innovative in approach, with a boat survey for grinding grooves on this scale having never been undertaken in this area. Due to the location of most of the survey area in the tidal zone, careful planning was required to schedule access for the lowest possible tides. This resulted in surveys occurring on very early mornings and late evenings, over weekends and occasionally in adverse weather. Where survey locations were inaccessible by Stok Marine boats, the team used kayaks or canoes for access. Digital recording was undertaken using iPads and a GoPro camera.

Aboriginal axe grinding grooves are grooves or hollows, most often found in

sandstone, where Aboriginal people have sharpened or manufactured stone axes and other implements on stone outcrops, and in some cases, ground food in the sandstone which formed 'bowls'. Hundreds of individual grinding grooves over ten new site locations were recorded on the Hunter, Paterson and Williams Rivers between Oakhampton, Paterson, Seaham and Raymond Terrace. These sites are in addition to known grinding groove sites previously recorded in the Hunter and Paterson Rivers. Prior to the survey no previously recorded grinding grooves sites were located in the Williams River downstream of Seaham.

While the presence of such sites in the survey area was not unexpected, initial analyses indicate that their actual positions and characteristics are unusual. The most remarkable thing about all of the grinding groove sites examined on the riverbanks downstream of the tide limits are that they are located within the tidal range and that less than half of them are accessible from the river bank. The remainder can only be easily reached by boat. Most sites are located on the margin of deep water where standing in the water whilst using the grooves would also not be a practical option. It is self-evident that the grooves would not have been used whilst underwater, and of those grooves located

at the low tide level their total daylight exposure time is less than one hour per day.

Assuming that the grinding grooves were created at a time when they were above the reach of the tide and that the tidal range has not changed substantially, then the sea level needs to have been at least 2m below its present level to ensure that the groove sites were not inundated. This means that the grinding grooves may have been formed at least 8,000 years ago (early Holocene) or at virtually any time before that in the total period of Aboriginal occupation of the Hunter Valley. Reporting and analysis for this project is ongoing.



Coffs Harbour ACHMD

Dr Emma St Pierre & Dr Mary-Jean Sutton

Over the past year Virtus Heritage, in partnership with GHD and through extensive consultation with Gumbaynggirr elders and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (CHDLALC), compiled an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Document (ACHMD) for the Coffs Harbour region, on behalf of the Coffs Harbour City Council. The document included updating cultural heritage mapping, the preparation of a thematic history, and management document. The management document aimed to establish a framework for the assessment and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in strategic planning and development activities; and policies that will facilitate best practice Aboriginal cultural heritage management in all aspects of Coffs Harbor Council's service delivery.

The ACHMD is one way in which the CHDLALC and broader Aboriginal community in Coffs Harbour are continuing cultural

practice and law by caring for country which is a critical cultural responsibility. The ACHMD and thematic history also demonstrates how historical Aboriginal Australians within the Coffs Harbour region share their connections and history of significant cultural heritage and places of belonging and attachment.

The ACHMD aims to promote and develop greater awareness, understanding, and respect of the cultural heritage significance of Gumbaynggirr country, including Aboriginal history, culture and heritage values. The ACHMD also aims to promote the recognition that cultural heritage is living and dynamic with the past interconnected to the present and future of Gumbaynggirr people who are the primary determinants of the significance of their cultural heritage and owners of their cultural knowledge.



“Possibly Aboriginal camps at the south side of Coffs Creek, Coffs Harbour, 1920s” believed to be 24 Orlando St, Coffs Harbour, taken very close to the beach. (Source: Coffs Harbour Regional Museum)

Through the course of preparing the ACHMD including cultural mapping workshops and preparation of the thematic history, we have had the privilege of working with Elders and members of the Coffs Harbour Aboriginal community including the CHDLALC. A main focus of the ACHMD is to renew and forge stronger relationships with the Aboriginal community and non-Aboriginal community on matters of Aboriginal cultural heritage.



Quartz pounder with flake scars from Moonee Beach

Aboriginal Archaeological Due Diligence Assessments of Proposed Solar Farms in NSW

SLR Consulting - Providence Asset Group

Elaine Lin

Providence Asset Group is developing an extensive program of 5MW community sized solar farms, with 23 locations secured across NSW to date. Providence's objective is to avoid and minimise impact on areas of cultural and ecological significance including sensitive landforms and areas likely to contain archaeological artefacts.

Since early 2020, Virtus Heritage has been engaged by KDC on behalf of Providence Asset Group to prepare Aboriginal archaeological due diligence assessments for proposed solar farm developments in regional NSW. These proposed projects are for solar PV farms which connect to the pre-existing grid, with four surveys completed for proposed solar farms at Warral, Boggabri, Glen Innes and Narrabri to date, and one project in West Wyalong in its preliminary phase of desktop analysis.

All site visits were undertaken by a Senior Archaeologist from Virtus, along with representatives from relevant Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) including Tamworth LALC (Warral Solar Farm), Red Chief LALC (Boggabri Solar Farm) and Narrabri LALC (Narrabri Solar Farm). Site officers from Glen Innes LALC were unable to attend the inspection but were able to assist remotely. We were also fortunate on a few occasions to be accompanied by curious equine colleagues, who even

walked numerous transects with us at the Warral and Narrabri properties.

All proposed solar farm areas surveyed had been impacted by clearing, intensive agriculture and other land use practices. These processes have heavily disturbed the original landscape and soils to varying degrees. No Aboriginal objects or sites were observed at Glen Innes or Narrabri, and both were deemed to have low potential for Aboriginal objects and sites, particularly given the lack of undisturbed soils or Potential Archaeological Deposits (PADs). A small area of potential sensitivity or possible creek terrace was recorded on the periphery of the project area in Glen Innes. KDC and Providence Asset Group have committed to completely avoiding this area. No further heritage assessments have been recommended for these two proposed solar farms prior to the commencement of works, which can now proceed with caution as per the Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in NSW.

The proposed solar farm site at Warral is on a property that has been completely cleared of forest and heavily impacted by intensive agriculture. During the site inspection, it was overgrown with numerous pasture species of long grass and exotic weeds, resulting in a lack of visibility of the ground surface. One Aboriginal site,

an open artefact scatter WSF-001, was recorded along an access track at the western periphery of the project area; three stone artefacts were recorded, though all showed signs of vehicle damage and were no longer in situ. KDC and Providence Asset Group have committed to completely avoiding this site, as well as re-routing access over a different track to minimise damage to any further Aboriginal objects present. Due to the presence of an Aboriginal site and the lack of visibility across the rest of the project area, the proposed Warral Solar Farm area has been deemed to have low to moderate potential for encountering Aboriginal objects and sites, with further archaeological assessment required along with an AHIP Application.

The proposed solar farm site at Boggabri was in a similar environment to those assessed earlier, though was bordered by an ephemeral creek line at the southern periphery of the project area with another parallel smaller overgrown creek line directly north of it. Their confluence is situated within the project area and was deemed a partially intact but highly sensitive landform. An area of PAD and a large artefact scatter (Boggabri Creekline 001) was identified along the banks of the larger southern creek, with numerous artefacts recorded including a long quartzite retouched flake and other cores and

flakes in a large variety of materials. Artefacts in the highest concentrated area of the scatter could not be recorded due to the presence of more visiting wildlife – two very large brown snakes mating in the grass. Nevertheless, a commitment has been made by KDC and Providence Asset Group to completely avoid the newly recorded site and associated PAD, as well as to steer clear of the sensitive creek lines and confluence. Due to the presence of sensitive landforms and a large Aboriginal site spanning approximately 400 metres in length, further archaeological assessment and an AHIP application for future works has been recommended for Boggabri Solar Farm.

We are currently in the process of planning follow up Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessments (ACHAs) with future AHIP applications for both Boggabri and Warral proposed solar developments. Virtus Heritage is pleased to be involved in these projects and look forward to the many more solar projects in the pipeline. It has been a pleasure to see first-hand the shift to renewables, and to hear the positive responses from members of regional communities. We would like to thank the representatives of the numerous Local Aboriginal Land Councils who have helped with our assessment, and who have provided cultural comments.



Quartzite flake from artefact scatter "Boggabri Creekline 001" at proposed solar farm site in Boggabri, NSW.



Horses assisting in field survey at proposed solar farm site in Narrabri, NSW.

Hunter Local Land Service and Landcare Cultural Heritage Training

Tocal College, Cattai Wetlands and Gundy

Dr Mary-Jean Sutton & Harrison Reese-Parkes

During November 2020, Virtus Heritage assisted Hunter Local Land Services and Hunter Landcare in Cultural Heritage Training Workshops at 3 locations in the Hunter: Tocal, Cattai Wetlands and Gundy. Whilst challenges with COVID-19 restrictions, postponed these workshops, Virtus and HLLS were able

to implement a COVID-Safe strategy to allow these workshops to proceed with online due diligence training for LLS for the Lower Hunter, Upper Hunter and Manning areas and with face to face workshops for Landcare later in November 2021. We co-presented these workshops with LALCs and Traditional Owners including

Peter Townsend, Cultural Sites Officer for Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council (co-presented the online training for Lower Hunter), Jodie Lawler, CEO of Purfleet Taree LALC (co-presented the online training for the Manning), Laurie Perry, CEO, Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation (co-presented the online training for Upper

Hunter) to present their cultural perspectives and knowledge. Derek Vale co-presented the Lower Hunter training in Tocal Agricultural College to represent Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council for the face to face training. Mary-Jean led a workshop for members of the Landcare groups, introducing the





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groups to heritage and archaeology within Australia (NSW), outlining the types of sites commonly found and how to proceed with care/management of these sites. The workshops also covered HLLS's responsibilities and requirements under the Due diligence code of practice (DECCW 2010), with interactive scenarios

presented to the groups. Jac led a stone knapping workshop, demonstrating the technique to making stone tools such as blades and scrapers from Tuff. Enough tuff, hammer stones and PPE was provided so all participants could try their hand at knapping, with some people showing a natural talent for it.

Jac then demonstrated with the participants, some field skills, such as orientated photos, GPS recording and methods of site inspection, Jac having spread some of the recently made stone tools in a marked out area, demonstrated with the group survey techniques in order to find the exposed "artefacts", all ten "artefacts

were found by the group. We thank Landcare and HLLS, particularly Toby Whaleboat, for the opportunity to undertake these local training sessions and for the LALCs and Traditional Owners for allowing us the privilege to talk about their cultural heritage.



Githabul Cultural Heritage & Site Recording Training

Border Ranges Contractors

Dr Mary-Jean Sutton

Jac, Mary-Jean and Elle delivered tailored cultural heritage and sites recording training over three days on Country for the Border Ranges Contractors.

Training included overview of international, national and local heritage legislation, site searches and basic mapping troubleshooting, particularly with AHIMS site searches and interpreting site card data and working through interpreting the Due Diligence Code of Practice (DECC 2010) as well as applying the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974 and 2010 ancillary provisions.

Jac did a stone knapping session working with the Rangers on stone tool attribute recognition and how to make basic tool types. Jac and Elle then spent two days out on Country, recording sites with Githabul Rangers and Elders as well as learning about their cultural heritage and history. We had a wonderful time during this training and are indebted to Charlie Ord for organising and funding these three days.



Interview with Afzal Khan

Business Manager, Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation

Xan Jeffreys

Virtus Heritage and Afzal Khan have been working together on some exciting projects over the years and we are grateful for the opportunity to get to know him a little more...

What did you get up to for Christmas and New Year?

I had the opportunity to take a month off from my business cultural obligations as the Business Manager of the Bandjalang Registered Native Title Prescribed Body Corporate otherwise referred to or known as governed by the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation (BAC). During the previous 2 years of applying my knowledge base with key stakeholders in working agreements with governments to achieving a baseline understanding towards a greater cultural relationship. I have only had 7 days off from work related business during that time.

I am a proud Bandjalang father of 3 beautiful children, Trey 23, Aaliyah 18, and Katana 16 years of age. Having time off during Christmas and New Year celebrations allowed me to embrace this time of season to be with family and friends. Our family upbringing acknowledged Christmas as a deep meaning and way of life. We embrace and celebrate this time as many other people do.

Tell us more about your journey with BAC and how it all began?

My journey started an exceptionally long time ago. As a Traditional Owner and Custodian of the 3-brother story and grandmother star lore connection to the dreaming story of the Rainbow serpent and Goanna story. This story is very evident as based in Evans Head at Goanna headland, as reserved by the Dirawong Reserve Trust.

Can you tell us more of your heritage and childhood?

I was born in Coraki meaning Meeting of 2 waters. I was raised by my mother people as Bandjalang. I grew up at Bora Ridge and the Box Ridge Aboriginal community. I remembered when I was sitting with my Nan Thelma James at the age of 16 years. I remembered seeing archaeologist and anthropologist being guided by elders to determine evidence-based material in initiating the Bandjalang 1 and 2 Claimant for registration. Effectively, being presented to the Federal Court of Australia to grant our Consent Determination.

Since that time, I have been committed being active in this process of applying our Native Title Rights and interest through land tenure over Bandjalang country. I have participated as a Board of Director and currently achieved status of Business Manager. We currently have pending a Bandjalang 3 and 4 Consent Determination to be granted in April 2021.

What have been some of the most prominent memories you have formed during your time with BAC?

Virtus Heritage and BAC have already completed some amazing projects in 2020 including a Cultural Heritage Training workshop with the Department of Defence..

Applying my knowledge base with key stakeholders such as Virtus Heritage, in working agreements with government aiming to achieving a baseline understanding towards a greater cultural relationship.

This means more opportunity and supporting avenues for employment and working management plans. Reconciliation and remediation are fundamentally core principals in healing components in Bandjalang customary practice. Basically, it means coming together and creating a realm where symbiotic relationships are forged on mutual and common values that are creative and supportive to innovation of our value systems.

What was your favourite thing to do with your family as a child?

My cultural heritage background stems from my father Afzal Khan (snr) who is of Pakistani bloodline descendant. My mother is also of Irish bloodline. My favourite place of growing up and being on Bandjalang Country provided a sacred and rare enriched diversity of experiences with people as a shared journey. We shared story's and defined meaning of true values by living and caring for country.

I currently, relive those memories and think about my ancestors, elders and engage with young generation today. The Australian Eastern Coastline of New South Wales, as known by the tribal groups of the Bundalung Nation is where I call home. As I grew up here with friends

and family we were influenced by the rich diversity of fauna and flora and beautiful landscapes of this region.

Where would you like to visit in Australia that you have not yet been to? Why?

I have been to many countries and visited various places and there is no other place I would want to live. I would love to be welcomed by the Traditional Owners and visit Uluru. Exploring my own back yard of Australia is a core objective I need to complete. I gather and collect inspiration from a variety of influences and sources from people's practice. Variety is a spice to life and having a balanced combination of food, culture and healthy environments are conducive of healthy people. This inspiration is driven by like-minded people and we all want to achieve a sustainable balance of environmental, political, and economic well-being through social inclusion.

Virtus Heritage are very excited to be working with Afzal and his team in the future.



NOTICEBOARD

International Riversymposium



Mary-Jean (Director, Virtus Heritage) with Andrew McIntyre (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme) and Tara Dever (CEO, Mindaribba LALC) presented collaboratively a paper entitled the “Managing the mighty Myan: Working towards better understandings of the cultural values of rivers of the Hunter Valley and their management” at the 23rd International Riversymposium. The NSW Government Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme (scheme) have been working with local Aboriginal Land Councils including Mindaribba LALC and Virtus Heritage to develop better understandings to manage cultural heritage places and sites within the scheme and respect cultural values. The Myan (Hunter River) is one of the main river systems within the scheme, subject to extensive disturbance from previous European land use which is still a critical life force interconnected to greater cultural landscape of deep antiquity and attachment to the Awabakal, Worimi and Wonnarua peoples. As the

scheme is within a modified cultural landscape and involves maintenance of infrastructure, from a statutory perspective, exemptions within NSW regulations associated the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974 could allow for a minimalist approach to cultural heritage management. However the scheme’s team and partners are committed to working together on meaningful ways to respect cultural values and manage the scheme infrastructure, including cultural mapping, geomorphological sensitivity mapping, oral history interviews, historical research and surveys on country to identify Aboriginal cultural heritage values within the scheme and support development of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Strategy. This presentation includes cultural, scientific and management perspectives on these approaches, the learnings from partnerships to date and aspirations and goals on future management of this important cultural landscape from project partners.

EIANZ Conference

Jac Carr (Senior Archaeologist, Virtus Heritage) with Afzal Khan (Business Manager, Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation) with contributions from Charlie Ord (Director, Githabul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation) presented a paper entitled “Impacts of the 2019 Bushfires on Cultural Heritage:

Assessing the Damage and Protecting Country Through Future Fire Seasons” at the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand annual conference held virtually in November 2020. The annual conference entitled “Recovering from Disaster 2020” focused on the themes of resilience and recovery from bushfires and other natural disasters. Jac and Afzal’s presentation (with contributions by Charlie Ord) focussed on cultural and archaeological perspectives on the post bushfire disaster recovery surveys on Bandjalang and Githabul traditional lands and the outcomes of these surveys. These surveys were engaged and undertaken in partnership with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, their Traditional Owner corporations and Virtus Heritage. Afzal articulated his corporation’s hopes for future management of country to prevent future disasters by better access to country for cultural burns and land management practices to Traditional Owners and for funding and engaging in future collaborations with NSW NPWS and other government agencies for increased survey of cultural sites and management of country.

Training

Kelly Kent our amazing Office Manager has been working tirelessly since she joined the team back in mid 2019. We sent her off for a day’s training with Creative Training Solutions up on the Gold Coast to further her skills with Adobe’s desktop publishing software, InDesign. She loved the training and enjoyed getting creative.

Xan Jeffreys our awesome Creative Consultant has been unremittingly plugging away at all things design within the company alongside assisting our Archaeologists on many

projects since she joined the team around the same time as Kelly. Xan’s work has propelled her in to the design world and she has greatly benefited from learning some extra skills. Xan went along to Creative Training Solutions late last year and completed Level 1 & 2 of their Adobe Illustrator course.

Virtus Heritage are committed to supporting our amazing team to develop their skills and interests. We have some exciting training opportunities coming up in 2021 so stay tuned!

Welcoming Martin Wright



Martin has worked as an archaeologist since 2017, undertaking indigenous investigations within New South Wales and working as a research assistant and laboratory manager with the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney. Martin's research interests have also led him to excavate in Macedonia, Spain, and Sri Lanka.

Martin is a specialist in archaeomalacology (the analysis of shellfish in

archaeological contexts), and has worked with materials from New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, the Northern Territory, and Sri Lanka. Martin's Honours thesis used shell midden material from far north Queensland to investigate how the concept of economic intensification can be used to identify population pressure. Martin will expand these ideas in his PhD research into Holocene midden sites across southern Sri Lanka.

At the University of Sydney, Martin worked with large collections of indigenous lithic material from New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria. As part of this work, he identified the types of artefacts and the raw materials from which they were composed, and for selected specimens, he undertook photogrammetry to produce 3D models.

Welcoming Teleahsia Togo



Teleahsia is one of our recently joined Virtus Heritage members. She has spent the last 3 years working within a local Aboriginal organisation teaching and sharing local cultural knowledge throughout the Northern NSW and Southern Gold Coast areas mainly delivering school based educational programs aiming to introduce local Aboriginal knowledge within our youths. Teleahsia will be

working alongside Kelly in administration and will also be working alongside Xan in our Creative team.

Teleahsia is a proud local Bundjalung and South Sea Islander women with links to Ambae, Santo and Paama Islands, Vanuatu. Her great grandmother being of Bundjalung descent though she was raised in Southport, QLD. Her great grandfather being of South Sea Island descent from Paama Island,

Vanuatu. Teleahsia is a part of one of the biggest South Sea Islander families here on the Tweed. She is passionate about her family's history, as her own family link in with many other local Aboriginal families. Teleahsia also has a strong connection to local community and is passionate about working with community in a supportive role alongside our team members.

Welcoming Clara Mundy Romero

"Hello, my name is Clara and I've recently started working at Virtus Heritage as a Junior Administrative Assistant in Pottsville NSW. I'm working 22 hours a week, Monday - Wednesday and will be receiving training for Microsoft Word and other software. I'm always determined to complete the work that is given to me and I'm enjoying talking to the other staff members who are training and helping me with jobs. I don't have any prior work experience of any kind, so this type of position is a good learning experience for me. I am a lot younger than most, so my experience and talent in this field are developing and will surely rise with more training. Studying a Cert 3 in Career Advancement at TAFE NSW has helped me gained some insight as to what it's like to be actively working and socializing. My personality is usually quiet and timid so I often feel shy. I am aiming to develop my confidence and skills so I can complete my work to the best of my ability."

NOTICEBOARD

Technology & Gadgets

We have some exciting additions to our team in the form of some fun and exciting gadgets & tech! These new members of the team are already nutting out some amazing work and assisting us to grow with the times and benefit from what they offer.

Drone

Virtus Heritage has acquired a new DJI Mavic Pro to use in the field. Elle, Jac and Harry have used the drone to take aerial images of sites and their surrounding area, which can be used to create detailed site mapping and remote assessments of landforms.

GoPro

The recent purchase of a GoPro Hero 8? Has been welcomed by those in the field, making documentation of site visits and field activities extremely easy. Jac has use the GoPro to time-lapse his kayak survey down the Hunter River, and Elle has filmed some amazing sunrise footage from the Paterson river boat surveys. The advantage of a water-proof and durable camera in the field has come in very handy in the past months.

Ipads

Our team utilizes GPS technology in the field, using Ipads to incorporate site photos, GPS location and site information into one file. The use of Ipads in the field has made site recording more efficient and accurate.

Google Meets

Due to the challenges of social distancing Covid-19 has raised, Virtus Heritage started incorporating online conferencing technology such as Microsoft Teams and Google Meets to join routine and impromptu meetings between staff, clients and the community. Meeting online rather than face-to-face has created a safe working environment for staff as well as reducing risk to the communities we work with.

Martin Davies Award Nomination

Virtus Heritage was nominated for the Martin Davies Award for the Best Public Archaeology Initiative for Australian Society for Historical Archaeology (see link - <http://www.asha.org.au/about-the-awards.html>) for developing a story book with Newcastle artist, Gwynneth Jones (based in Creator Incubator, Newcastle <https://www.facebook.com/GwynneJonesIllustrator/>) on the results of archaeological salvage of a nineteenth century bottle dump near the St Aubins Arms, Scone, NSW for the RMS Scone Bypass Project. Virtus Heritage were engaged by GHD on behalf of RMS to conduct the salvage working with Dan Tuck. The results of the salvage were interpreted into a story book targeted for school

children to tell a story about the historical event of the Jewboy Gang shooting at the St Aubins Arms and also to educate school children in an innovative way about the St Aubins Arms and early 19th century domestic and hotel life in Scone. Gwynneth's beautiful illustrations and the story provided was presented during National Archaeology Week in 2018. For copies of the school children's book and the tool kit we developed for this project, please get in touch with Mary-Jean at mj.sutton@virtusheritage.com.au. Creator Incubator are making art, jewellery, sculptures and street art with the non diagnostic ceramics and glass from the bottle dump and we are looking forward to share this work in the near future.

Maitland Aboriginal Heritage Study



In January we signed a contract with Maitland City Council to undertake their **MAITLAND ABORIGINAL AND RURAL HERITAGE STUDY**.

This is the first study combining historical and Aboriginal heritage and we are proud to be starting this in 2021. It's been made possible by grants

from the NSW Government, particularly Heritage NSW. We'll be meeting with Council, with community and interested groups and kick things off in February in earnest with mapping meetings, library and working group meetings and a preliminary view of the rather large area.

NOTICEBOARD

Dept. of Defence Indigenous Heritage Panel

Virtus Heritage is pleased to announce our pre-qualification as a provider of Indigenous Heritage services to the Australian Department of Defence as part of the 2020-2025 (DIP.EHE).

We are excited to be prequalified as a provider of Indigenous Heritage for the Defence Infrastructure Panel – Environment, Heritage and Estate Engineering Services to the Australian Department of Defence. It is always a privilege to work with Traditional Owners and Indigenous families on country. We look forward to opportunities under this Panel Agreement to assist Defence with assessing, managing and conserving cultural heritage while

maintaining operational and strategic capabilities. With our award winning capabilities in ground-penetrating radar and experience in management of unmarked graves, war graves, cemeteries and identifying sub-surface cultural features, as well as archaeology, history, anthropology and cultural heritage, we are well placed to assist with Indigenous Heritage services.

Virtus Heritage Internal Conference

All members of the Virtus Team gathered together for the first time since we have grown for a 3 day conference where we discussed business development, analysis and our visions for the future and where we want to focus our time moving forward amongst much more. Uncle Victor Slockee came along on the morning of day 1 to facilitate a Welcome to Country. On day 2 we all piled in to some kayaks and adventured through Simpson Creek (see photo). On day 3 we were up with the birds for a sunrise ceremony to grieve and say goodbye to our beloved Bernadette Allen who passed away very unexpectedly in September 2020.



Reconciliation Action Plan Update

We are looking forward to the release of our latest RAP document in the near future which will be available on our website.

New Caravan!

Mary-Jean bought a caravan so she can spend her time on the road in a tiny home away from home. We expect to see this gorgeous gal on the road near you soon! Suggestions for cute caravan names welcome ;)



NOTICEBOARD

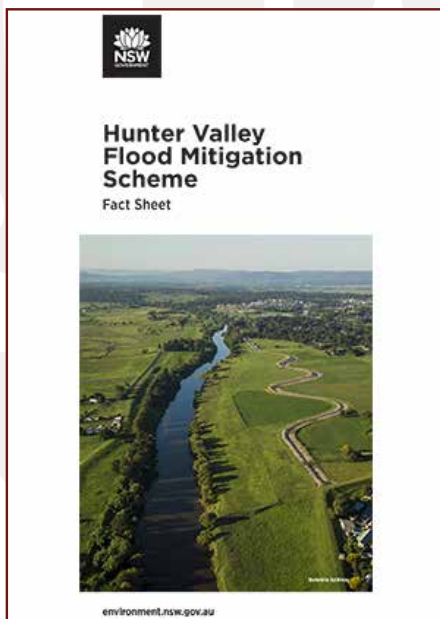
Aboriginal Storytelling of Flooding in the Hunter

Over the past two years, Mary-Jean assisted the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme with the facilitation of consultation and research for oral history interviews by Aboriginal peoples of the Hunter Valley on their memories of flooding. This link document's the Department's completed and edited footage. <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/floodplains/hunter-valley-flood-mitigation-scheme> as noted on the Department's website:

The Department recorded memories of flooding from Elders and Indigenous families in the Hunter Valley to better understand the future climate change impacts flooding may have in the locality, and to record flood knowledge from Elders.

This video capture stories from the Aboriginal community about previous flood events and impacts to their community.

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/floodplains/hunter-valley-flood-mitigation-scheme>



Sandstone 'beach' on the Hunter River at Redonberry (Redbourneberry) Hill, remembered as a place where families washed and did their washing, it was their source of water and fishing spot (Dr. Mary-Jean Sutton 2019)

We thank the Department, particularly Andrew McIntyre and Claire Turrell and for the opportunity to be involved in this project. We acknowledge the Mindaribba, Awabakal and Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation, the Anderson, Perry, Miller, Smith and Lilley families who were part of this project as well as their Elders, past, present and emerging. It was a privilege and honour to listen to the stories of Elders and assist with documenting their stories.

Black & white photograph courtesy of the Singleton Historical Society Redbourneberry bridge, Singleton during the 1955 flood.





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VIRTUSHERITAGE

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