



VIRTUS HERITAGE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT 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.



Dr Mary-Jean Sutton
Director

Commemoration and celebration are the themes of this biannual newsletter. We feature projects that focus on the investigation of cemeteries in Liverpool for Liverpool City Council to assist with the commemoration and management of graves, large surveys of fire access trails within the Gibraltar, Kwiambal and Bluff River National Parks, the investigation of middens within Forster for Mid Coast Council and celebrate other projects in historical archaeology and Aboriginal cultural heritage undertaken over the last six months.

We welcome a new Graduate Archaeologist, Lilith Malcolm to our Kingscliff office and Northern NSW team. Lilith is passionate about archaeology, and is already involved in many fieldwork projects as well as assisting our Admin team on many projects. Our noticeboard features updates on some of the recent changes in our team as well as the launch of the charity, The Cultural Collective, where we will be progressing future grant and research projects. The Collective is chaired by Dr Peter Mitchell and co-chaired by Peter Guivarra with First Nations Directors and research scientists/archaeologists.

Thanks for taking the time to read our newsletter.

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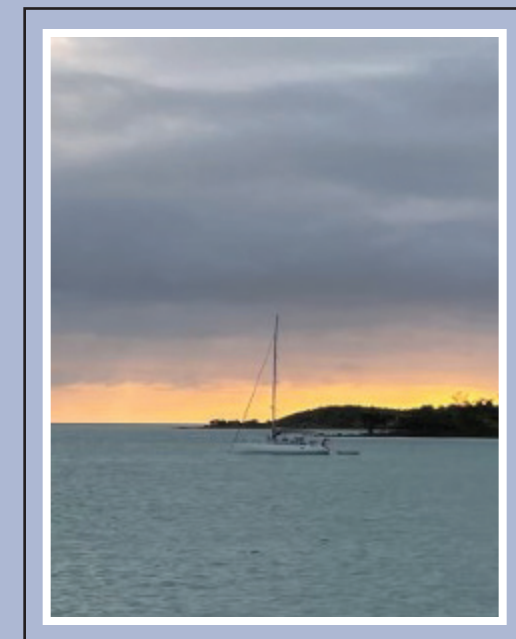
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NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Fire Access and Fire Trail

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessments

Martin Wright

Virtus Heritage was engaged by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) to conduct Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys across the Bluff River, Gibraltar and Kwiambal Management Units (MU) as part of the Fire Access and Fire Trails (FAFT) program to enhance the network of fire trails across NSW to ensure trails meet strict operational and safety requirements allowing firefighters and land managers to undertake fire response effectively and safely.

Over September and October 2022, an epic survey was undertaken which covered a total of 121 kms of roads and fire trails (33 in total) across six National Parks (NP), two Nature Reserves (NR), three State Forests (SF), one State Conservation Areas (SCA), and one Community Conservation Areas (CCA). These included Washpool NP, Curramore SF, Forest Land SF and Moogem SF within the Gibraltar MU; Bluff River NR, Timbarra NP, Basket Swamp NP, Capoompeta NP, Butterleaf NP and SCA, and Bolivia Hill NR within the Bluff River MU; and Kwiambal NP and CCA Zone 1 within the Kwiambal MU. Virtus Archaeologists were assisted in the surveys by NPWS Rangers or Field Officers and Sites Officers from Moombahlene LALC, Glen Innes LALC and Ashford LALCs. Toomelah LALC were unable to participate due to access issues from flood waters.



Billyrimba Trail, Forest Land State Forest



Billyrimba Trail, Washpool National

Across the survey areas only eight new sites were identified including seven artefact sites and one modified tree. Seven of these sites were located within the Gibraltar MU and an isolated find within the Kwiambal NP. This isolated find was located within a sensitive landform at the confluence of the MacIntyre and Severn Rivers, and an exclusion zone around this area was recommended. The relatively low number of sites identified across the survey area is likely due to the low visibility within the parks due to heavy vegetation from the recent rains, and the low sensitivity landforms (mainly slopes) that the roads and fire trails generally traverse. Sites that were previously recorded within the parks include artefact sites, scarred trees, Potential Archaeological Deposits (PAD), bora grounds, stone arrangements and ceremony and dreaming sites.



Isolated silcrete flake found on Junction Trail, near the confluence of the MacIntyre and Severn Rivers, in Kwiambal NP.



Visibility on Western Trail, in Capoompeta NP

In order to protect and manage these sites NPWS will avoid works in these areas where possible and undertake cultural heritage inductions with workers to ensure that sites or sensitive landforms are not impacted.



Location of isolated artefact on Billyrimba Trail

Excavations at Little Street, Forster for MidCoast Council Martin Wright



Virtus Heritage Archaeologists Garth Thompson and Clare Anderson undertaking augering at Little Street.

In September 2022, our teams undertook fieldwork for the community collection and salvage of sites for the Little Street Foreshore and GPT upgrade for MidCoast Council. These works were completed under an AHIP that was secured after an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment was undertaken and identified an AHIMS site including PAD, midden and stone

artefacts (at the site of the GPT, called Project Area A) and PAD with shell and bone material (Project Area B). Community collection of surface artefacts was undertaken prior to the salvage of 19 locations across the two project areas, comprising 10 mechanical and 8 manual augers as well as one 1mx1m pit that was mechanically excavated.



Sieving at Little Street



Sieve contents – rubble fill



Virtus Archaeologist Tyler Beebe checking the auger hole

Community collection salvaged 8 artefacts from Area A, and two small flakes and two pieces of debitage were recovered in the subsurface salvage within Project Area A (GPT) all from within 40cm of the surface. No artefacts were recovered from Project Area B and no intact midden material was identified across either of the project areas. The subsurface investigations demonstrated that both project areas are capped with introduced fill with natural deposits only occurring at depths greater than ~60cm in most areas. Registered Aboriginal Parties who participated in the community collection and salvage were satisfied that all areas of potential impact were investigated and there was low risk of harm to Aboriginal objects.

Cultural Values at Dirawong Reserve, Evans Head

Pauline Fowler



View South to Snapper Rocks

In our last newsletter, we discussed our collaboration with the Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) undertaking cultural sites survey at their spiritual lands within the Dirawong Reserve, Evans Head NSW. Many sites of cultural significance were identified and during the survey, Pauline and Harry undertook a drone flight over the area to assist with cultural mapping and management recommendations. We have now completed the cultural values study for BAC.



The report addresses the legislative, management and environmental contexts, as well as providing a background on heritage studies that have previously been undertaken. The results of the fieldwork, including a description of sites identified during both Women's and Men's surveys, were provided as well as an assessment of cultural significance in consultation with BAC.



Erosion Control near red ochre source site.

Tangible and intangible cultural values were described, and an implementation plan was developed for management of these values. Sites included artefact scatters and traditional camp sites, sensitive landforms for resource collection, ochre quarry and story places. Some of the sites are places with restricted knowledge.



View north of lighthouse ridge, with Broadwater in the distance.



An aerial view of Chinamens beach showing the contrasting colours of the landscape.



Creek at Northern End of Chinamens Beach



Screen capture of the 3-dimensional model / orthomosaic of the Red Hill Artefact site created using the RPA (Mavic 2 Pro), landform overview looking from the south-east.



View North to Red Hill.

We are grateful to BAC for engaging us to be involved in this important project.

PROJECTS

New Mapoon and Injinoo Cemeteries Projects, Cape York Peninsula

Mary-Jean Sutton

In December, we finalised two important research projects which were five years in the making and built on community aspirations and cultural responsibility to look after ancestral remains and their resting places. In partnership with Simon Pearce, GHD; Professor Lawrence B. Conyers and Dr Peter Mitchell, Virtus Heritage assisted New Mapoon Aboriginal Corporation (NMAC – funded by the Ely Trust) and Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation (IIAC – funded by the Ely Trust and Indigenous Advancement Strategy) with the identification of unmarked graves and management of cemeteries through ethno-historical research, and ground-penetrating radar (GPR) and environmental management investigations.

In late May – early June 2022, Mary-Jean, Elle, Emma and Harry from Virtus Heritage, Simon Pearce from GHD and Dr Peter Mitchell OAM, visited communities at New Mapoon and Injinoo to undertake the fieldwork and consultation for these projects. Our final trip by our team in September 2022, was made by Simon, Mary-Jean, Elle and Harry to discuss the draft reports and demarcate the unmarked graves with temporary markers. We would like to thank all the Elders, families and administrators who assisted us with these projects. Read some more about the projects [here!](#)

New Mapoon Cemetery and Unmarked Graves Project

New Mapoon, with a population of less than 400, is one of five small villages which make up the northernmost settlements on mainland Australia. New Mapoon was settled by people forcibly removed from (old) Mapoon Mission by the Australian government, in the early 1960s, to take control of their traditional country for mining expansion. The Mapoon Cemetery was established in at this time.



Elders and community of New Mapoon Aboriginal Corporation at New Mapoon Cemetery.

Using interviews with Elders, and archival records including old maps, photographs and other historical records such as death registers, we were able to identify individuals who were buried at the cemetery, but no longer had identifying markers. The hot and humid environment in Far North Queensland means that many of the old markers, especially those made of wood, which can be eaten by termites within a season, had decayed or become unreadable.

Elders also requested the use of ground-penetrating radar, and 18 unmarked graves that had been forgotten or lost over time were identified with this method. The use of drone imagery and 3D modelling was used to create detailed mapping of the cemetery and combined with the oral history and archival research an inventory for the cemetery was created. This inventory forms part of the management strategy for the cemetery along with an implementation plan for maintenance of the site.



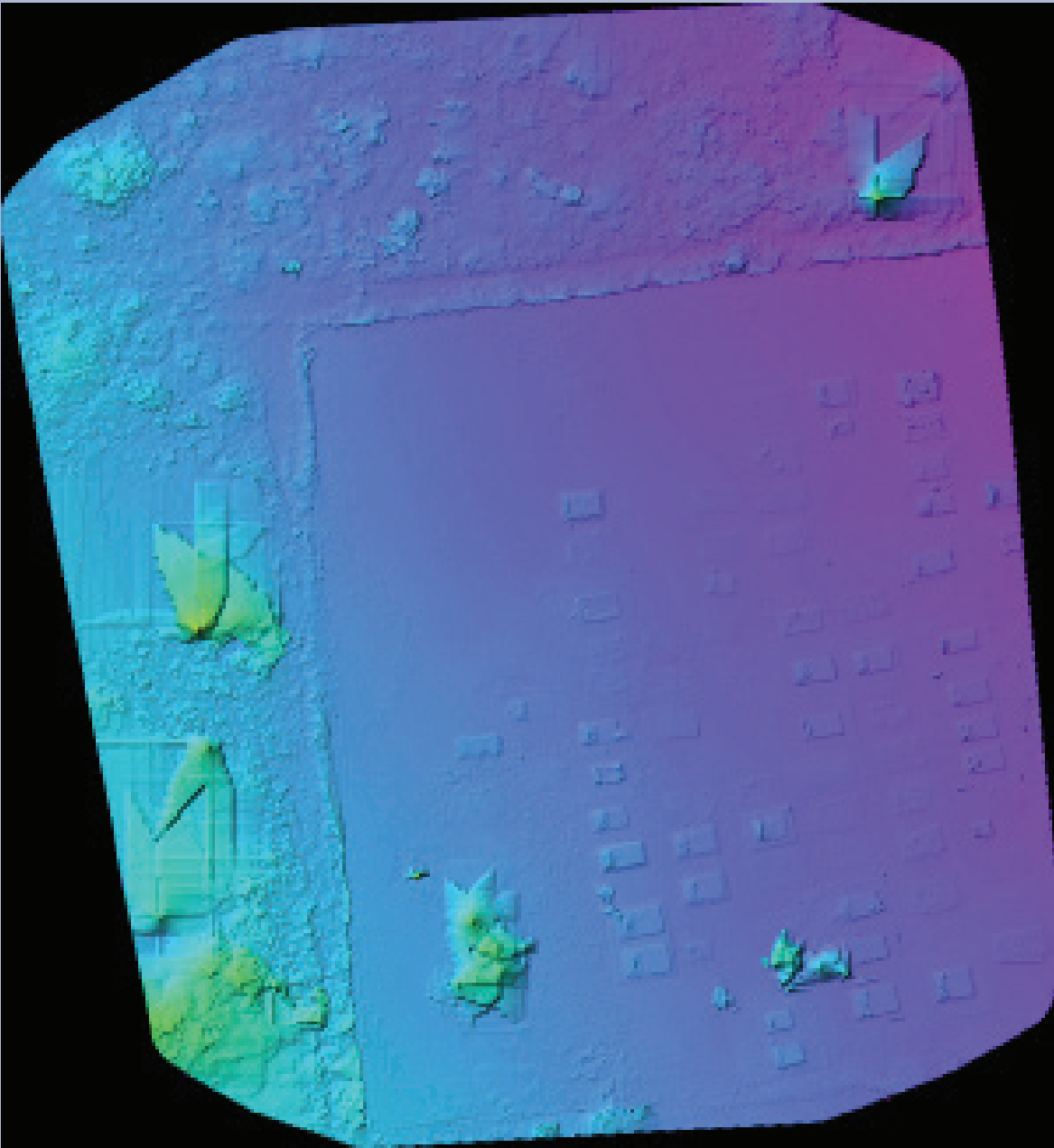
GPR survey at New Mapoon Cemetery.

Results were presented to Elders and the community in early September, with everyone relieved and happy to have the old graves identified and the resting places of family members identified once again. Elders were able to reconnect with their past by viewing old photographs and video footage that many had never seen before, having been stored in the State Archives for decades.



Timber Cross with degraded nameplate at New Mapoon Cemetery.

Digital Surface Model of New Mapoon Cemetery created with drone imagery.



Injinoo Cemetery and Unmarked Graves Project

Injinoo Cemetery is one of the northernmost burial grounds in mainland Australia. Situated on a narrow sand dune between the ocean waters of the Torres Strait and a swamp, the cemetery has been used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for well over a century. Elders were interviewed about their memories of the cemetery and recollections of where individuals were buried. Among these recollections were those of a mounded area within the cemetery where some victims of the 1918 influenza pandemic were buried. At least 110 people were thought to have died in the community, during the pandemic. The majority of these were children and the elderly.

Grave markers in the cemetery often didn't retain identifying information, but often show a personal connection, such as the use of diving helmets. Enamel plates, mugs and metal cutlery were left as offerings to the deceased. Glass bottles, inserted neck first into the sand were often used to outline graves and many of these were amber-coloured beer bottles from the 1940s. Other grave markers included white-painted stones, vases, baler and other shells, and wooden crosses that once had metal name plates, but have since decayed from termites and weathering.



Injinoo Cemetery C. 1923
(Source: AIATSIS collection MacFarlane)

The GPR survey of sections of the cemetery showed at least 18 graves that no longer had surface markers, most of these clustered at the eastern end of the cemetery. A detailed photographic inventory of the cemetery including mapping of individual graves was used to create an inventory of the cemetery and allow the Injinoo community to monitor and manage the site for decades to come. An implementation plan was developed for site management and to address impacts such as erosion from rising sea levels, storm surges, and invasive species, such as wild horses.



Injinoo Cemetery with individual graves marked with white painted stones and glass bottles



Elders and researchers at Injinoo Cemetery

The results of the research project and community report was presented during the trip in September 2022. There is much more research to be done in this region relating to unmarked graves and important cultural sites - so watch this space!



Elders and community of Ipima Ikaya Aboriginal Corporation at Injinoo Cemetery

Burial excavations at Liverpool Pioneer Memorial Park

Gina Scheer

Excavations at the Liverpool Pioneer Memorial Park, in western Sydney were undertaken by Virtus Archaeologists, Gina Scheer, Tyler Beebe, Garth Thompson and Bioarchaeologist Bonnie Clark, over 4 days in November 2022. The excavation program was designed to test ground-penetrating radar results that were provided to Liverpool City Council as part of an earlier assessment by another consultant for their proposed landscaping plans for the park. The area was dedicated as a park in 1970, with subsequent works in the area by Liverpool City Council and the park was officially opened in 1974.



Looking north in the northern section of the LPMP, Hume Highway at background behind the LCC created mound with palm trees. One of the five areas to be excavated in foreground.

1943 aerial photograph shows the former cemetery, indicated in red, and road alignments at that time. The Hume Highway continued on the eastern side of the cemetery / LPMP where Macquarie Street now lies (Source: Six maps, <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au/>).



Machine excavation of relevant areas was monitored by archaeologists and an LCC surveyor. Monitoring indicated that the GPR results for the northern section of the park did not correspond with grave cuts, but instead reflected other features such as sand lenses, concrete footings and services. Grave cuts were only identified in one of the five areas excavated, at a deeper level than anticipated. In that area, a row of five or six partial grave cuts were identified on an east to west alignment. The work and associated research is shedding light on the burial practices associated with the historical Roman Catholic section of the ‘paupers’ burial ground, which is where inhabitants of the Liverpool Destitute Mens Asylum and later Liverpool Lunatic Asylum were interred during the late 19th century. Analysis of the fieldwork results is currently being undertaken - so stay tuned for an update soon!



View to northwest of the same area after site work is completed, archaeologists Garth Thompson and Bonnie Clark finalising recording.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Northern Inland Branch Bushfire Recovery heritage assessment of historical huts

Gina Scheer

This year has been a stellar year for historical heritage work for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Six assessments were completed between August and December 2022 of seven huts/and yards, mainly located in stunning and rugged park areas. These include Musters Hut in Cataract National Park, Sloman's Hut and Franks Hut (collectively known as Stannum Huts) in Torrington State Conservation Area, the Pine Creek Complex (hut and yards) at Guy Fawkes River State Conservation Area, Adams

Hut in Nymboida National Park, Sawpit Creek Hut and Yards and Housewater Hut and Yards, both in Guy Fawkes River National Park. All these sites have been affected by bushfires over the years, particularly in the 2019 bushfires. During 2021, ICOMOS rapid assessment reports were completed by NSW NPWS for these sites, with HHIMS information available for some. There has been minimal disturbance of these places since the 2019 bushfires.



Aerial view of the remains of Adams Hut

The assessment of these sites included field inspections and recording of the extant features, including drone photography, investigation of their history including archival research and interviews with local landowners and interested parties, comparison to other similar structures, significance assessments and management recommendations. The completed heritage significance assessments will help NSW NPWS prioritise the sites requiring stabilisation and reconstruction.

Sawpit Creek and stockyards

The majority of the huts were built as temporary lodgings for pastoralists and drovers before the areas were dedicated as national parks. More recently some were built or repurposed for recreational activities such as 4WD clubs, horse riding and weekend family camping. The age of the huts and yards ranged from the 1930s (Sloman's Hut, and now destroyed Adams Hut which was rebuilt in the 1950s) to the 1980s (Musterers and Franks Huts). The huts were generally of simple construction using local timbers and corrugated metal sheeting, with some more recent ones using concrete floors. However, some of the huts have more substantial features such as stone chimneys (Sloman's Hut).



Photograph of the Housewater Hut taken in 1983. Horses are within yards (gate circled in red), with hut (now nearly completely destroyed) pictured in the background (source NPWS).



Drone footage of the side and rear of Musterers Hut



Pine Creek Hut in its original condition pre-fires circa 2018. Sandstone step, which survived the fires, shown in red (source, NPWS).



Sandstone step of Pine Creek Hut located amongst debris after fire destruction.



Franks Hut

Although most of the sites are in ruins, these places are still considered to retain important local heritage values that should be managed and protected. Management recommendations include the provision of boundary mapping, updating the heritage listing of sites where necessary, support for partial rebuilding, or replacement of some huts/features where appropriate, development of interpretation at sites for visitors, development of a monitoring program of sites and establishment of formal heritage curtilage of sites.



Another view of Franks Hut, eastern wall with granite stone fireplace



BENNELONG REVEALED NEW PODCAST SERIES

www.bennelongrevealed.com



Bennelong Revealed is a six-part podcast series about the life of Woollarawarre Bennelong. This series revisits the story Bennelong through the lens of Indigenous oral culture and leading historians who have written about and analysed the colonial history.

Woollarawarre Bennelong's (1764 - 1813 - Wangal Tribe) enigmatic life has at its heart, a story of origin and truth-telling. An individual embedded within ancestral traditional Lore, fated to play a key role amidst his Kin and those of the first British fleet. Bennelong's story is layered and complex narrative, offering us all the opportunity to reflect upon his legacy between two cultures, colliding within the pristine surroundings of (Warrane) Sydney Cove.

Professor Kate Fullagar said “Meeting this group who are so committed to renovating the public memory of Bennelong has been a joy, especially learning from Pauline about Indigenous memories and dreams about this great man's life”

The podcast consist of a Introduction, Early Life, Contact with the Colony, Impact, Voyage to London, New Tribe - Kissing Point. You will hear from Associate Professor Pauline Clague, Dr. Keith Vincent Smith, Dr. Peter Mitchell, and Professor Kate Fullagar, all people with particular knowledge of Bennelong and his times.

Dr Peter Mitchell - “In the year of the voice these podcasts have been an exercise in truth telling from an imperfect record. We hope they will challenge views and encourage listeners to consider the referendum seriously”

Assoc Professor Pauline Clague – “We recorded just before the first lock-down in early 2020, it was originally going to be one radio show, but with the wealth of knowledge and the importance of being able to sit and engage with the two histories of written and oral on a level playing field was so rewarding, we knew it was something bigger.”

Dr Keith Vincent Smith sadly passed away late in 2022 and we dedicate this series to his passion for the history of Sydney Cove and the people.



Supported by 2SER, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research @ UTS, and Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences @ ACU and the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant LP160101439: “Facing New Worlds: Comparative Histories of Australasia and North America, 1750-1850”

What does Woollarawarre Bennelong have to do with the Voice?

Dr Peter Mitchell

Everything, because Bennelong started a dialogue that we have yet to finish.

Most Australians know of Bennelong as the Wangal man who was taken to Britain by Governor Phillip to see the wonders of civilization and to meet the King. When he came home, he rejected civilization, returned to his savage ways, and became a stropky drunk that no-one wanted to know.

Well, that's the white fella's version and it's mostly wrong. A moment's thought will tell you that Bennelong did not go without approval of other elders, so what was the real agenda? We have yet to find an answer to that question, but firstly we need to revise the sloppy history and do some truth telling. These podcasts start the process through discussion between Virtus Heritage P/L advisor Dr Peter Mitchell and historians Dr Keith Vincent Smith, Prof Kate Fullager, and Assoc. Prof Pauline Clague as they begin to unravel the real story.

Recording began in 2020 but covid interfered and even though we would have liked another session to tidy up a few rough bits, that wasn't to be as fate took a hand and Keith passed away in November.

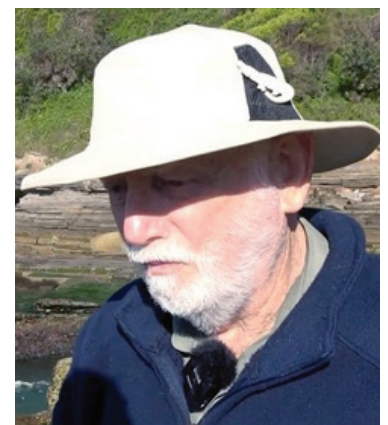
Keith came to academia after a career in journalism and made an extraordinary contribution to our knowledge of contact dynamics in Sydney, he found resources no-one else had ever seen - and there is yet more to find and other stories to correct. Some of these will come out about mid-year in a new history of Bennelong by Prof Fullager which has been accepted for publication. Watch out for this, as it will acknowledge Bennelong as the First Nations original political envoy who went to Britain with the encouragement of Phillip and perhaps, they even had the idea of a Treaty in their minds. That never happened in 1793/94, but it surely has to be on the agenda after the Voice in 2023.



Bennelong's portrait done in London
1793/4



Gov Arthur Phillip

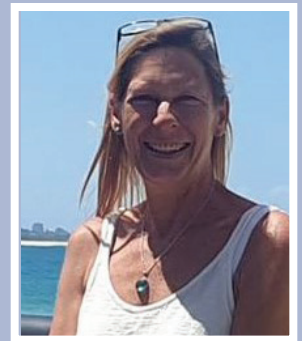


Dr Peter Mitchell

Welcoming new staff to the team

Nicky

We welcome Nicky Scott to our administration team in August 2022. Her role and support has become even more important now that our office manager Kelly Kent has welcomed twin daughters into the world! Kelly and Anthony have their hands full with their family and we look forward to welcoming Kelly back in a part time capacity later in 2023.



Lilith

In November 2022, we were proud to welcome another recent graduate to our team, Lilith Malcolm.

Lilith obtained her Bachelor of Arts majoring in Archaeology at the University of Sydney in 2021. She is locally based and grew up in Kingscliff. As an archaeologist, she has worked on post excavation tasks for several projects across NSW and is skilled in various aspects of post-excavation tasks including artefact processing, cataloguing and data entry into an artefact database, preparing and formatting archaeological excavation reports, and managing the photography of artefacts. Since joining Virtus Heritage, she has assisted Mary-Jean and Senior Archaeologists on projects working with TBLALC at Fingal and Norries Headland, Byrrill Creek, Mebbin NP and other NSW NPWS parks.



Dr Emma St Pierre's New Venture

In September this year our long-serving team member and former Principal Archaeologist and ground-penetrating radar (GPR) co-ordinator Dr Emma St Pierre, departed Virtus Heritage to start her own consultancy providing archaeological and geophysical services. Some of you may know that Emma moved to Aotearoa New Zealand at the beginning of 2020, a few weeks before the pandemic hit. She continued to work for Virtus remotely from Ōtepoti Dunedin for the past couple of years and is now relishing her new role providing services to New Zealand based clients for both contract and research projects. Emma is grateful for the opportunities she had at Virtus, and she continues to provide us with specialist support with peer review and research projects. Virtus Heritage continue to offer GPR work along with our suite of heritage services. Emma is also available to Australian clients for ground-penetrating radar services and her new contact details are:



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Annual Bake off

Last year, we did an impromptu Bake Off to support the Multiple Sclerosis Research Foundation (and to support one of our team who has this condition) using the Mabu Mabu Wattle Seed Pavlova and Damper Kits.

Nornie Bero is the head chef and business owner of Mabu Mabu. Originally from Mer Island in the Torres Strait, Nornie has been a professional chef for over 20 years. Nornie is on a mission to put Indigenous ingredients in kitchens across Australia. We chose to support Mabu Mabu last year following the numerous lockdowns in Victoria and will continue for our future bake offs.

We raised just shy of 1800 last year for the Kiss Goodbye MS foundation. We decided to make this an annual fundraiser. This year we set the challenge again going a little broader and asking partners and collaborators if they wanted to get involved in the Bake Off.

We set a date for our bake off and sent the baking kits to team members, partners and collaborators via a Zoom link we invited everyone participating to join in baking, decorating or chatting and eating their baked goods. Photos were shared around the following week of everyone's creations, some chose to stick to making a pavlova and damper whereas others made some delicious creations using the same ingredients.

We will continue to support MS research with our Annual bake off.



The Cultural Collective Foundation

In October of last year Virtus Heritage and a group of close collaborators joined together in the Hunter Valley to discuss a new not-for-profit venture.

Over two days, The Cultural Collective was born, the purpose of which is to address the historical legacy of intergenerational trauma often connected with archaeology and science by working with First Nations' communities on Cultural Heritage. The Collective will be involved in the identification, recording, conservation and management of sites, and help to promote reconciliation by creating continuing opportunities for sustaining heritage for future generations. Dr Peter Mitchell is the Chairperson of the Collective accompanied by Peter Guivarra as Deputy Chairperson and four other directors.

The Cultural Collective is in its final stages of preparation. Stay tuned for more information and the official launch - coming very soon.



Welcoming the Kent twins to the world

In November Kelly our admin manager gave birth to her beautiful twin girls Chelsea and Sienna. Arriving early, the twins were 1.2kgs and 1.5kgs and spent 6 weeks in hospital. Kelly, Anthony and big brothers Harrison and Lachlan got the best Christmas present of all bringing the girls home just in time for Christmas.



The twins big brothers Harrison and Lachlan are absolutely smitten with their little sisters as is the whole family. Kelly is currently on maternity leave and we look forward to welcoming her back in a part time capacity later in the year.



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