



# VIRTUSHERITAGE

## E-NEWSLETTER

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FEBRUARY 2020





## Welcome

by Dr Mary-Jean Sutton

Thanks for opening up the second edition of our 2019 newsletter. This comes a bit late at the start of 2020, but we were too busy with projects, awards, research projects and conference organising writing reports, running conference sessions, attending multiple award ceremonies to get the newsletter completed on time!

We had a huge year in 2019 welcoming several new team members; Kelly Kent (who is working closely with Mary-Jean and supporting our team’s administrative needs and community consultation co-ordination), Xan Jeffreys (who is our new creative and graphic design co-ordinator), Ameerah Devine (who is a research assistant, assisting developing children’s educational tool kits and heritage interpretation initiatives and has a strong child education background) and Gina Scheer (who is the Principal Archaeologist now forging growth in historical archaeology and built heritage) working closely with our existing team in Pottsville, Newcastle and New Zealand. Elle, Jac and Ameerah are our continued Newcastle-Hunter Valley team servicing clients in this area and forging and renewing existing relationships with Awabakal, Worimi, Wonnarua, Darkinjung and other local Aboriginal families and Traditional Owners.

Our newsletter provides precis of projects completed in 2019 and some ongoing in 2020 in Northern NSW, Newcastle-Hunter Valley and Northern Rivers of NSW, including our community partnerships of which I am very proud. I treasure the privilege to work on their country and heritage.

Our services section, written by our new Principal Archaeologist and Built Heritage Consultant, Gina Scheer, focuses on her development of the business in the fields of historical and built heritage and draws on her many years of experience as a consultant and in government working for the Heritage Division. The newsletter also includes a summary of recent achievements, publications, awards and general news on our comings and goings over the last twelve months. Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter, we are looking forward to a bright 2020.

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## Highlights

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**Winner of Excellence In Innovation Northern Rivers Regional Business Awards**



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**Quality Certification ISO9001:2015**



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**Projects**

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**Update on our 2018-2020 RAP**

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**Meet our new team members**

Principal Archaeologist and Built Heritage specialist, Gina Scheer; Head Administrator and Consultation Coordinator, Kelly Kent; Creative Director and Consultation Coordinator, Xan Jeffreys.





# Lower Hunter Flood Mitigation Scheme

Geomorphological Assessment and Landform Sensitivity Mapping, Archaeological Assessments, Oral History Project and Management Plan

By Elle Lillis

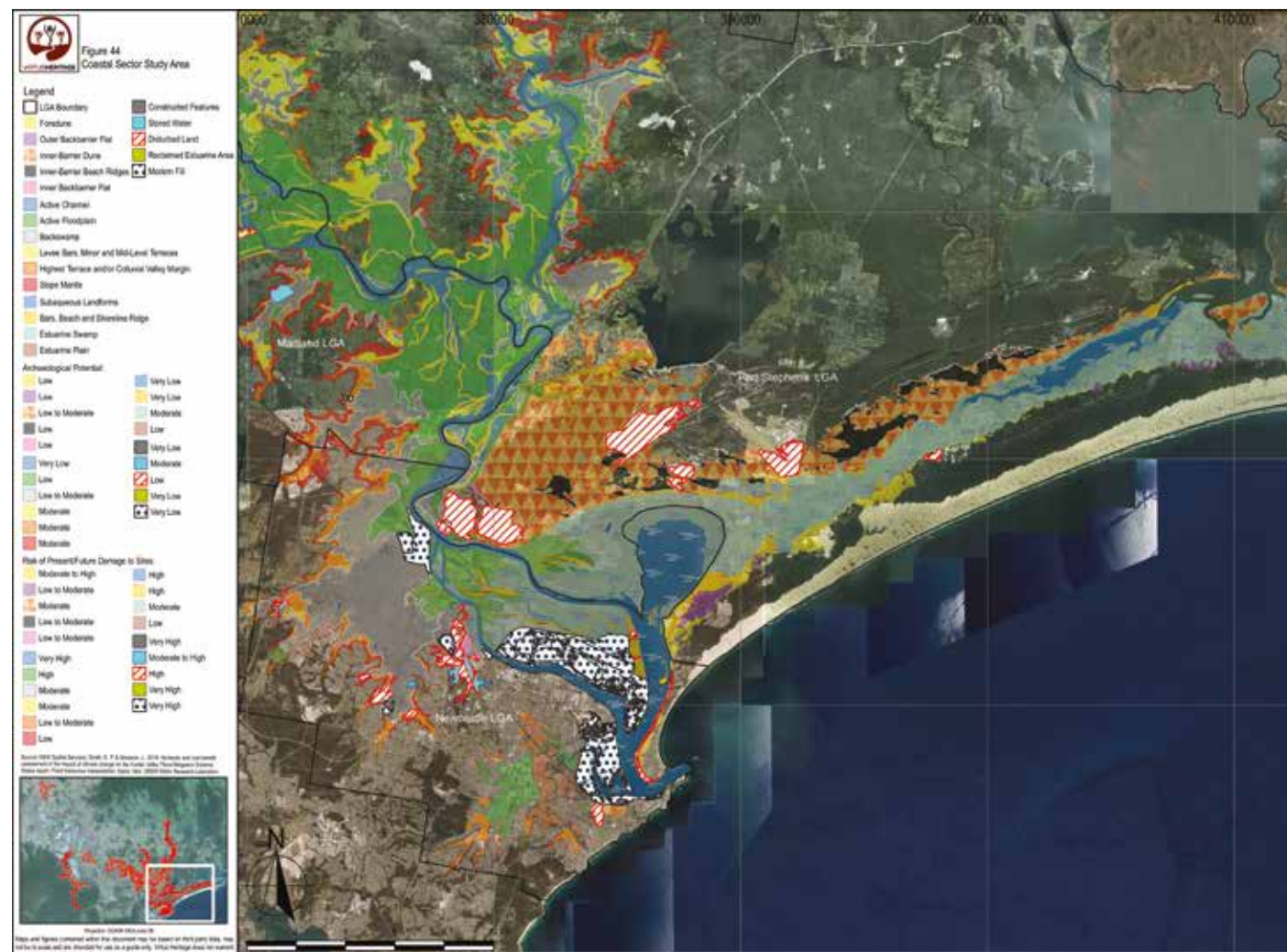
Virtus Heritage was engaged by the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment, Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme to undertake a number of projects throughout 2019.

The Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme (Scheme) comprises 1,045 pieces of infrastructure, such as levees, drains, spillways and floodgates (known as assets), located along the Hunter, Paterson and Williams Rivers, and is designed to reduce the risk to life and property by controlling the velocity, direction and depth of floodwaters.

The Scheme is located in the Newcastle, Port Stephens, Maitland, Singleton and Upper Hunter Local Government Areas and within the Awabakal, Mindaribba, Wanaruah and Worimi

Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries.

Dr. Peter Mitchell has prepared a desktop review of the geomorphology of the Scheme within the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) limits. The review identified landforms within the PMF as well as archaeological sensitivity and risk of future damage to archaeological sites within the defined landforms. Elle Lillis assisted with the development of geomorphology and archaeological sensitivity mapping for the review, incorporating geology, soils, land use and flood modelling spatial data as well as satellite imagery to map the identified landforms.



Newcastle, Maitland and Port Stephens area geomorphological and archaeological sensitivity map (Mitchell 2019)



# Paterson Grinding Grooves

In July and August site inspections of infrastructure within 250m of registered sites were undertaken to determine if Aboriginal sites or objects are extant at asset locations and whether they could be impacted by maintenance works. Representatives from Awabakal, Mindaribba, Wanaruah & Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Councils undertook survey and provided cultural information.

Management recommendations were developed for the surveyed locations to mitigate the potential impact of maintenance works on Aboriginal objects and sites and this work is ongoing. A large complex of grinding grooves on the Paterson River was identified as highly culturally significant by Mindaribba LALC representatives. Some of the grinding grooves are located

on unstable banks in the tidal zone of the river, and as such are at risk of being damaged. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment have been working with Virtus Heritage and Mindaribba LALC to develop a management strategy for this site, including considerations for conservation and detailed, 3D recording using photogrammetry.



Grinding Grooves recorded near the Paterson River 2019 (Elle Lillis)

Identification of cultural landscapes and site complexes is ongoing in consultation with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Aboriginal community. A review of the geomorphic and sensitivity mapping, oral history and survey results, as well as further background research, including historic and ethnographic reports and consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders, is currently assisting to develop an understanding of the cultural landscape and site complexes in the areas in which the Scheme is located.

The results of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage projects have assisted in the identification of cultural landscapes, site complexes and cultural values within the Scheme and the larger Hunter Valley region. This will assist in future management of the Scheme as well as understanding and conservation of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the Scheme and the wider region. These results are being used for the ongoing development of management strategies in consultation with Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the Aboriginal community.

**Oral history** interviews with local elders were conducted at locations on country, St Clair Mission and Redonberry (Redbournberry) Reserve, in the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment offices and at homes, as requested by Elders, where they shared their memories of living in the region, times of flooding, and talked about culturally significant places, both post contact and traditional. The Hunter River was named very significant culturally and was remembered by Elders as culturally significant for swimming, camping, food and cultural/spiritual significance. Rivers and stories about rivers and their cultural values were prominent, with the Paterson and Williams Rivers also identified as culturally important – there was a lot of discussion on landscape and importance to culture. The interviews were recorded and will be released in 2020 as a short video by the Department as part of a series of interviews with landholders and locals about floods in the Hunter Valley. *‘It gave us sustenance in the Dreaming, and it’s still giving us the sustenance today because so many people rely on the mighty Myan.’* James Wilson-Miller (Uncle Jimmy).



James Wilson-Miller (Wonnarua Elder) also known as Uncle Jimmy, showing his initials carved onto a sandstone on the Redonberry (Redbournberry) Bridge at Singleton. (Dr. Mary-Jean Sutton 2019 - with permission of James Wilson-Miller)



## Moonee Beach

### GPR Survey with Prof Larry Conyers

Two grids of ground-penetrating radar (GPR) data were collected near Moonee Beach within the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area, NSW on 10 December 2019 to search for and map buried artefacts and human-produced features on behalf of Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (CHDLALC). One area, just to the southwest of the beach near a playground within the Moonee Beach Reflections Holiday Park was chosen by CHDLALC, as a small beach cliff adjacent to the test site has produced a variety of artefacts, indicating buried cultural materials nearby. Those materials include quartz crystals and stone artefacts with abundant amounts of charcoal. CHDLALC identified this area as having important cultural sites and potential for human burials based on oral history and Elders knowledge. The area is located on an uplifted beach terrace capped by aeolian sand (wind-blown) and a top soil layer.

A second grid of GPR data was collected to the south in an area where shell middens could be seen in outcrop along the beach cliff nearby. Those shells were of whelk and oysters that were also found on the ground surface where the data was collected.

Moonee Beach is an important cultural landscape to Gumbaynggirr people, as it is the location of the place of creation for the northern Gumbaynggirr people, a mother place where all the clans began (Somerville and Perkins, 2010:207). Oral history, *Singing the Coast*, by Margaret Somerville and Tony Perkins (2010), *The history of the coastal strip known as "Look-at-me-now", Moonee Creek Settlement (100 years): the Skinner family and descendants* by Benjamin Holder (1984), archaeological studies by Prof. Isabel McBryde (1967), North (1964), and historical monographs such as *Footprints of the Ulitarra* (Hope and Bagawa Birra Murri Aboriginal Corporation and Gumbular Julipi Elders Council, 2008) and those by Rogers (1977), all demonstrate that there are documented cultural stories and knowledge about the study area, which includes Moonee Beach (within the first area and the playground where data was collected by GPR) and Look at Me Now Headland (which is the area near shell middens investigated for GPR). These accounts indicate the area has cultural, social and spiritual significance to Gumbaynggirr people and also archaeological research and documentation of bora grounds, axe making factories, middens, occupations sites and ceremonial sites.

A GSSI model SIR-3000 radar system was used for data collection, with 400 MHz radar antennas used for energy transmission and recording. The data was collected in transects separated by 50 cm. All reflections were recorded within a 40-nanosecond time window (two-way travel time), which were digitised and later processed to produce images.

All GPR profiles were computer processed in a batch to produce horizontal slices of all radar wave reflections in map view. In this process a three-dimensional analysis of the grid was produced, analogous to a MRI or CAT scan of the human body (Conyers 2013). The map shows the strongest reflections (highest in amplitude) as yellow and red, with weaker reflections in the "cooler" colors of the rainbow (Conyers 2012). These maps are extraordinarily complicated at Moonee Beach, because there are so many tree roots and other geological layers in this aeolian sand package. Each map contains a visual representation of the reflections in slices that are 60 cm thick.

Analysis of maps of this sort in complicated geological settings such as Moonee Beach was almost impossible (Conyers 2016). Reflections produced by a variety of materials in the

ground, and as the horizontal slices cross-cut geological boundaries (the aeolian sand units), all make for a dizzying array of reflections. However, from the analysis of individual two-dimensional profiles, a variety of features could be found. The potential human burial that was just barely visible in one of the amplitude maps was re gridded for higher resolution. It was "rendered" into a three-dimensional image so that it is visible without the other geological features. "It is without a doubt the shape of a human burial". Prof Conyers.







# Hill End

## Historic Site Projects for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

By Gina Scheer

### In November 2019

archaeological work took place inside Denmans Cottage, located at Reef Street in Hill End. The Hill End Historic Site is situated northwest of Bathurst in the NSW central west. It has been declared a State significant place of outstanding importance and is managed by the NSW NPWS. The State Heritage Register entry for Hill End notes that: Hill End retains a unique collection of buildings, relics, artefacts, structures, archaeological sites and landscape elements which are, individually and collectively, of outstanding architectural, aesthetic and research value from the principal development and residential period of the 1870s (second gold rush). [NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment SHR No. 00993; accessed at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5051460>].

Denmans Cottage is so named as the Denman family were long term residents, from the end of the 19th century up until the 1990s. The stone built house, unusual in Hill End where timber or pug and pole were more usual building materials, was first constructed and owned by Alexander Bishop in the early 1870s. He and his wife Anne had four children and ran a hotel nearby, the Waverley Hotel. Alexander Bishop passed away in 1881



View to NW across front of Denman's Cottage shows where the partially retained brick veranda floor was removed. (Gina Scheer 13.11.2019)

and his wife continued to run a different hotel in 1873. However, Anne and children disappear from the Hill End record before the end of the 19th century. The archaeological excavation inside the rooms and part of Denmans Cottage front veranda was completed over four days. The team involved one archaeologist working with NSW NPWS and the builder's team who removed floorboards in four rooms of the cottage prior to underfloor archaeological excavations taking place. Ground clearance also took place in rear rooms 8 and 10. Denmans Cottage, as a well-built stone structure of four rooms (with later rear additions) could have been one of the numerous

historical hotels noted for Reef Street. Reportedly, there were 51 registered licenced hotels operating in Hill End in 1873. The 1870s were the peak period of development due to significant gold finds, including the famous Holtermann nugget in 1872. The archaeological

programme sought to answer the question of hotel or house as part of the research design tailored to the site and to the works programme. The underfloor excavations uncovered finds supporting domestic life, rather than a hotel in operation. Small finds that slip beneath the



Room 3 fireplace area after underfloor archaeological excavation. The stone bearers and timber joists were retained to help identify room areas for later artefact analysis.

floorboards or behind the skirting boards, including hair pins, sewing pins, buttons and coins. Artefact analysis and the excavation report will be completed in 2020 and these questions will be explored further.



Coin, identified as 1868 penny located in Cottage 2 verandah underfloor deposit.

The Denmans Cottage works programme is part of an ongoing plan for specific buildings within the village, guided by NSW Heritage Council endorsed master plans to increase visitors and their time spent in Hill End. Similar works were completed in Lyle's Cottage / Sydney Hotel in 2017-2018. Lyle's cottage is a c.1872 timber building on Clarke Street with a separate two room structure behind it, identified as Cottage 2. The buildings had a fascinating past use including hotel, restaurant,



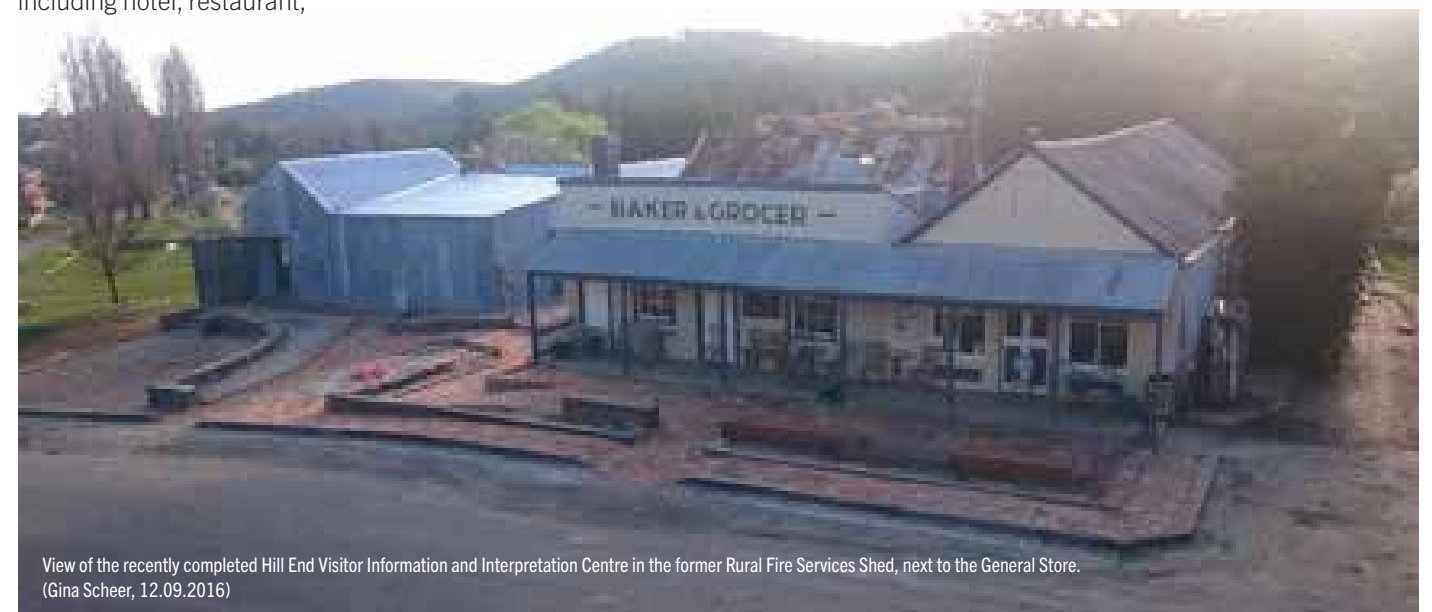
View to SE of the rear and N side of Denmans Cottage prior to the 2019 works. (Gina Scheer,

undertaker's office, shop and residence. Cottage 2 was thought to be a reused and relocated building operating as the kitchen for the short-lived Sydney Hotel, the building facing Clarke Street. Archaeological excavations and coin dating from the final 2018 excavation report showed that this was highly likely. The important finds and stories of the buildings will form part of the heritage interpretation displays in the buildings.

Earlier s.60 archaeological monitoring projects at Hill End as part of the Master Plan include the General Store,

former CWA Hall, former Rural Fire Services Shed, Hill End Post Office and the Pines cottage. The works at the rear of the General Store and at the adjacent former CWA Hall, both located on Beyers Avenue, focussed on the back-yard areas for these buildings. Archaeological works at the former Rural Fire Services Shed involved two separate phases. The corrugated metal structure on the main street, Beyers Avenue, was constructed as the Rural Fire Services HQ and is just west of the General Store. Built into the sheds was a two room cottage, with

its chimney and pitched roof visible as part of the overall structure. Works from the first phase identified the former main entry to the cottage and its front garden and garden beds and has formed part of the onsite interpretation. The former RFSS is now the Hill End Visitor and Interpretation Centre.



View of the recently completed Hill End Visitor Information and Interpretation Centre in the former Rural Fire Services Shed, next to the General Store. (Gina Scheer, 12.09.2016)





# Coffs Harbor ACHMD

## Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Document

By Mary-Jean Sutton

Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) / Virtus Heritage are pleased to announce that Stages 4 and 5 of Council's Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Planning and Assessment Toolkit project is underway. These stages of the project involve the preparation of an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Document (ACHMD). Earlier stages of this project including cultural mapping and consultation were completed in 2018 by Ian Fox and Associates and the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Biodiversity and Conservation Division (the Department) and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council (CHDLALC) working in partnership with CHCC.

Virtus Heritage and GHD are engaged by CHCC to progress consultation, the development of a thematic history and the planning stages of the ACHMD, working in close partnership

with the Department and the CHDLALC. We are working together identifying, protecting and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage as an important cultural responsibility for current generations of families across the Council's LGA through the development of these stages of the ACHMD. The development of an adequately informed and culturally appropriate ACHMD is integral to showing respect and acknowledging the cultural, social, spiritual, historical and scientific values of Aboriginal cultural heritage across the LGA. CHDLALC, CHCC and the Department look forward to sharing with community our journey as the ACHMD develops. We acknowledge the important role of the CHDLALC, their Elders (past, present and emerging) and Indigenous Knowledge Holders of Coffs Harbour region in developing the ACHMD to date and sharing their history, knowledge and cultural heritage in the ACHMD.





Virtus Heritage is currently working with Ballina Shire Council and registered Aboriginal parties on the Coastal Recreational Pathway and the Shared Path East, both intended to connect Ballina to Pat Morton Lookout at Lennox Head. Earlier works have been completed, and these remaining pathway sections are the final phases of the projects. Whilst these informal paths have been used by pedestrians for many years, Council is looking to formalize these pathways to improve safety and provide lookouts and vantage points which promote the

picturesque location. Past archaeological research within the area has indicated that there is evidence of Aboriginal occupation which has survived previous land use history within these project areas. The general location of the project areas would have been favorable places for Aboriginal occupation as Aboriginal people could have drawn on the food resources from the open beach, the Richmond River, the tidal estuary of North Creek, and the freshwater environments of Lake Ainsworth, with the temperate climate making it suitable

for year round habitation. The project areas are sites of high cultural significance within a broader landscape of high cultural sensitivity, and are surrounded by rich cultural sites including ceremony/dreaming sites, campsites, artefacts and shell middens.

Due to the known and potential presence of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the project areas, an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) is required from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment prior to the completion of these

pathways. Virtus Heritage has been working in consultation with registered Aboriginal parties to develop an appropriate Research Design and Methodology to mitigate impacts that may occur to Aboriginal cultural heritage during pathway completion, to accompany the AHIP. Future works with Council are being progressed in partnership with Registered Aboriginal Parties in the near future for salvage investigations.

# Ballina Coastal Pathway

Reconnecting Ballina & Lennox Head



# Bandjalang Cultural Heritage Training

By Mary-Jean Sutton

As part of one of our projects, the Department of Defence and Bandjalang Aboriginal Corporation worked together on country, bringing people together to learn about culture, history and heritage. Some activities included meetings to discuss the project at BAC's offices in Coraki and working together on site. One activity held in 28 May 2019 on the Evans Head Air Weapons Range included a site recording and stone artefact knapping training session with Defence and BAC facilitated by Virtus Heritage. This day on country included attempts to relocate an old midden site recorded on AHIMS and also exchanges between BAC and Defence on cultural knowledge and cultural perspectives for the greater region.



Fit Lt Jason Van Rysbergen and Afzal Khan making stone artefacts at the Evans Head Air Weapons Range as part of the stone artefact knapping workshop (Source: M. Sutton)



As a way to come together and show respect for the cultural values of country and acknowledge these values to BAC, Defence and BAC held a smoking ceremony with OPEC and project team members including Virtus Heritage and GHD prior to remediation beginning on site on 27 August, 2019. The smoking ceremony included words by Elder, Uncle Warren Williams and Uncle Tony Wilson.

BAC and Defence are looking forward to working together more actively on country to manage cultural heritage in the future.

BAC sites officer, Defence and Virtus Heritage undertaking a site survey to relocate Aboriginal objects at Evans Head Air Weapons Range (Source: M. Sutton)



The Team!



## CULTURAL (ABORIGINAL) HERITAGE

Our long standing service to the Aboriginal community is our fundamental objective throughout our projects. We aim to foster friendly and honest relationships with our clients and RAP community.

## BUILT HERITAGE

We have now expanded our services in to the field of Built Heritage which is explained in detail in the following article. See Pg 16.

## HISTORIC HERITAGE

Virtus Heritage now offer services within Historic Heritage provided by our new Principal Archaeologist Gina Scheer. Please read the following article for more information on this service. See Pg 17

## IMPACT ASSESSMENTS & SURVEYS

We excel at detailed and thorough historical research. Our team are trained in oral history interviewing and archival research for the preparation of histories, have worked for research institutions, government agencies and Aboriginal corporations to provide specialist archival research and to repatriate historical records back to families (particularly Indigenous families who experienced forced removal – the 'Stolen generations').

## EXCAVATIONS & MANAGEMENT

We have extensive experience in all facets of archaeological investigations and excavation.

Including : test excavation (test pitting), monitoring, machine excavation, manual salvage excavations, augering, geomorphological investigations, survey, rock shelter recording and monitoring, surface collection, wet and dry sieving and artefact analysis for Aboriginal and historical archaeology.

## CULTURAL MAPPING

Cultural mapping is a term used to describe how we spatially represent tangible and intangible Indigenous cultural heritage and has traditionally been used in Australia to describe mapping physical archaeological sites. Approaches to cultural mapping incorporating cultural knowledge, pre and post contact land use, environmental and landform data and site and landscape connectivity achieve better outcomes for accurately assessing and mapping scientific and cultural values across landscapes.

## GROUND PENETRATING RADAR (GPR)

Virtus Heritage has the capacity to conduct GPR surveys with specialization in grave and archaeological site mapping. This method is ideal for identifying and categorizing burials (both traditional internments and European-style graves) and can produce images of graves in three-dimensions within a variety of ground conditions and soil regimes.

The subsurface evaluation of burial places using GPR can also be facilitated by the use of low altitude drone images,



Professor Larry Conyers with our GPR machine

magnetic mapping and GPS surveying, all of which can be conducted within a GIS format suitable for client needs.

## DRONE PHOTOGRAPHY & GIS MAPPING

Virtus Heritage deploys drones to obtain current, high resolution photographs and video to assist in the recording of archaeological sites and heritage features. We are using this technology for GIS and to provide our clients with detailed overviews of archaeological sites where satellite imagery may be unavailable or of poor resolution, including mapping excavation test pits as they occur, to identify local geomorphology and also to record features on contaminated sites.

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

We believe that heritage assessments cannot be accurately undertaken without community consultation. We believe that Aboriginal people are the primary owners of their cultural heritage and it is our

privilege to work with them on country. Our approach to community consultation in our assessments and investigations is respectful and proactive based on the ethical standards of the Australian Archaeological Association.

## PERMITS

We have extensive experience preparing relevant Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permits for the Office of Environment Heritage and State Significant approvals for Department of Planning. We have approval for Section 140 and Section 60 permits and exemption and exception consents from NSW Heritage. We have experience in preparing referrals for heritage under the Commonwealth system and in other states and territories, including Queensland and Western Australia.





## Built Heritage

Expansion of our services

By Gina Scheer

**Virtus Heritage now offer built heritage and historical archaeology services to complement our existing cultural heritage expertise. Gina Scheer, [BA Hons Archaeology and M Heritage Conservation University of Sydney] has recently joined the company and adds her expertise in these roles to our consultancy.**

Assessments as part of heritage impact statements are the most sought after service. These are needed for any changes proposed for heritage items or buildings, parks or complexes which are located in a heritage conservation area. Most recently, upgrades to a WWII era bridge in Sydney which was listed on a Council Local Environmental Plan and listed on a Government body heritage register needed advice and an assessment to guide the changes. This takes the form of a written report, a statement of heritage impact. For larger or more complex places a conservation management strategy or plan is required. These documents not only provide a full set of descriptive information about the item and about the proposed change, they also identify what is of heritage significance and provide management advice and measures to guide the changes.

These documents ensure places can be adapted or upgraded while the heritage values are respected. They are often required as part of development consent or by government bodies who manage heritage assets or as part of a review of environmental factors (REF). As an example, disused railway stations and residences throughout rural NSW are a heritage asset that present many challenges because they are obsolete infrastructure. An assessment for specific railway stations including Raglan, Wallerawang, Tamworth and Mudgee to name just a few was provided for John Holland. The management report included necessary heritage information to guide advised actions which included sales, divestment or adaptive reuse of these historic buildings. For the fine Wallerawang Station seen below, the advice to retain, remediate and lease for commercial purposes has been followed.



View of the north east side of the Wallerawang railway station (c.1870) façade. (Gina Scheer, 08.06.2016)

**Virtus Heritage can guide your project from early in the design process through to completion. Recent successful projects managing change have also addressed the Lisarow Cemetery on the Central Coast of NSW, and the Kingscliff Community Hall on the Tweed Coast of NSW, which won a 2019 National Trust Award for conservation built heritage.**

## Historical Archaeology

Expansion of our services

Virtus Heritage can explain the complexities involved for archaeology, heritage and town planning and define terms such as s140 approvals, s60 approvals, exemptions and exceptions. Historical archaeology is often a two step process, with step one being an assessment of the archaeological potential and heritage significance of

a place and step two being the physical excavation, if impacts to a place of identified archaeological potential cannot be avoided. This occurs in historical places such as at Hill End, in central western NSW. Most of the village has been declared a State significant place. Any changes, such as recent upgrades proposed

by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (managers for Hill End) for the old bakery, required an assessment of the archaeological potential with recommended archaeological management followed by application to the NSW Heritage Council for approval for the works to take place. For the bakery, works to remove collected

rubbish and later changes in the former oven/storehouse at the rear of the building was monitored (watched) by the archaeologist in case historical relics were uncovered during the works. No finds were encountered in the space, which has been cleared for reuse as part of the bakery restoration.



The old bakery (c.1890s) behind the General Store in Hill End (Gina Scheer, 14.09.2016)

Part of the suite of built heritage and historical archaeology services are the provision of archival recordings and heritage interpretation plans. These heritage documents are often the next step in an assessment process where managing change is required. An archival photographic recording provides a digital and hard copy permanent record of a place prior to its change or removal. A copy is always provided to the relevant local council library.

A heritage interpretation plan provides information and advice to tell the important parts of a historical story for the public to appreciate. Heritage interpretation is usually a physical site based storyboard, often signage, but also pathways, markers, wall imagery or artwork. Heritage interpretation, similar to archival recordings, provides a record of a place for the public to appreciate and understand after its change or removal.



Heritage interpretation signage located at the former Sydney Hotel / Lyle's Cottage in Hill End.



**Pro bono  
Advice/Training/  
Assistance/Grants**

We have been assisting Tjungundji Aboriginal Corporation with advice regarding the burial mounds and other issues in Mapoon for over a decade. To date no research institution has been identified that can help and we are still looking for a university to assist.

We have been assisting numbers of Traditional Owners and Land Councils with grant applications and research projects. They are Coffs LALC, Bandjalang AC, Tjungundji AC, Awabakal Traditional Owners, Awabakal LALC, Tweed Byron LALC and Worimi LALC and Wonnarua Nation AC.

In partnership with Bandjalang AC, we successfully carried out cultural heritage sites training on Defence land at Evans Head. This workshop was run over two days by Mary-Jean and Jules as part of a cultural exchange. This training is important capacity building for Bandjalang AC.

## Lions Park

Last year Virtus Heritage completed its' first joint venture project with the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council. Lions Park on Kingscliff foreshore was undergoing refurbishment to improve the functionality of the park while also improving accessibility and recreation facilities for park users, as part of Tweed Shire Council's Kingscliff Foreshore Revitalisation Project. The park is within a registered AHIMS Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Story Place, listed for intangible values.

During trenching as part of park refurbishment works, an Aboriginal shell midden was encountered. As such, all works ceased and Tweed Shire Council engaged Virtus Heritage to prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, with an accompanying AHIP application to mitigate against harm to this Aboriginal resource.

The AHIP included a programme of auguring, monitoring of works with community collection, and salvage of identified cultural material, and was undertaken in partnership with the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council. eighteen artefacts and 5,828 whole/partial

shell specimens were recovered during these works. This site demonstrates that Aboriginal middens and occupation deposits are still being identified in contexts disturbed by European land use practices. The material recovered also provides tangible evidence of intensive Aboriginal occupation and activity in the Kingscliff area, in a place previously known only for intangible values. The site is of high cultural significance to the local Aboriginal community as a continued connection to country.

In consultation with, and participation of all registered Aboriginal parties, the salvaged material has been re-buried within the parkland, in an area adjacent to its' original location which will not incur any impacts in the future.

The success of this joint venture has led to Virtus Heritage and the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council partnering again to complete several projects this year.



## Educational Tool Kits

Mary-Jean, Kelly and Bernadette gave a presentation to 70 grade 2 children at a local Pottsville primary school about an excavation of an 1850's rubbish dump. This dump was associated with an historical inn, the St Aubins Arms, most artefacts recovered were glass alcohol bottles and ceramic dinnerware used by the lodgers at the inn. At the time the inn was operating, bushrangers frequented the area, and a historic shoot out had occurred at the inn. This seemed like the perfect project to catch the interest and imagination of children. The presentation included stories of bushrangers, and a collection of the historical artefacts for the children to look at. We also had prepared some games and

puzzles about bushrangers and the artefacts which we left with the teachers for the kids as well as an illustrated story book (created by a local Newcastle artist Gwynne Jones whom has a studio residence at Creator Incubator, Newcastle) for the children to keep. The feedback we received from the school was wonderful. The kids loved learning about the artefacts and the stories of the bushrangers. They said they would like to hear stories from their local area and be able to participate in a pretend dig to see how we excavate a site. The teachers also appreciated the presentation, and said it would also be a great presentation for the older grades.



Presentation to Pottsville school children of artefacts found at Historical Inn, St Aubins Arms

## Rocky Knob Aboriginal Place Nomination and Protecting our Places Grant Applications

**Virtus Heritage** have assisted Hunter Local Land Services in consultation with Awabakal Traditional Owners Corporation, Awabakal Descendants Traditional Owners Corporation, Awabakal LALC and the Department of Premier and Cabinet Heritage to submit a proposal for an Aboriginal Place nomination for Rocky Knob at Hexham Swamp, Newcastle, NSW. The proposal was submitted in August and it is expected that a decision will be made in the first half of 2020. Virtus Heritage will be developing a Management Plan for Hunter Local Land Services for Rocky Knob with input from Awabakal Traditional Owners Corporation, Awabakal Descendants Traditional Owners Corporation and Awabakal LALC early next year.

**Aboriginal Place declarations** are a conservation tool and advance the recognition, protection and understanding of Aboriginal cultural values throughout NSW through development of Aboriginal Place management plans. The development of management plans for declared Aboriginal Places;

- promotes long-term protection of the cultural values of places;
- enables Aboriginal communities to manage the cultural values of areas that hold special significance for them;

Aboriginal cultural landscapes in New South Wales

- contribute to healthier environments and communities
- develop the project management capabilities of Aboriginal groups
- encourage new collaborations and positive relationships with other organisations, government and stakeholders.



Check out our new website at [www.virtusheritage.com.au](http://www.virtusheritage.com.au)

With special thanks to Rémy Merain for his excellent web design talent!



## Welcoming our new team members - Xan, Kelly & Gina



From left: Xan, Kelly, Gina

### Xan Jeffreys

Creative Director & Consultation Coordinator

Xan is our Creative Director and Consultation Coordinator. Coming from a versed background in design and studying at London College of Art UK, she made her way to Australia where she is now a citizen.

Xan is managing our brand, graphic design, marketing and digital media amongst organizing events and assisting our archaeologists with their work. She has a passion for communication and the social sciences, particularly Psychology and Sociology which has propelled her towards a sound understanding of the diversity of culture and individuals. Xan has travelled extensively throughout Australia, visiting many places of cultural significance meeting with local community members and learning about a wide variety of cultural practices.

Her aim at Virtus Heritage is to ensure Aboriginal heritage and culture is expressed through relevant work in a true and clear fashion as directed from our Aboriginal affiliates. Xan works closely with communities and individuals to understand and share with consent, the local community's artwork and language, through the reports and material that we produce for our clients and as part of our mission as a whole.

### Kelly Kent

Head Administrator, Quality Assurance & Consultation Coordinator

Kelly joined Virtus Heritage in August 2019. She has well over 10 years experience as a legal secretary in Brisbane. Kelly is currently obtaining her Certificate IV in Bookkeeping and Accounting. Kelly is assisting in a wide range of Aboriginal cultural heritage and historical archaeological projects including as Consultation Co-ordinator and Head Administrator.

Kelly's great grandfather Edward Edwards was born in Goodooga, New South Wales and was part of the Muruwari tribe. She is passionate about working in this role and working with communities to assess, protect and manage their cultural heritage. As Consultation Co-ordinator, Kelly works with other team members to co-ordinate community consultation protocols and documents for our clients and Aboriginal parties and organisations.

In September 2019, Kelly helped Virtus Heritage obtain ISO9001:2015 Certification for the provision of archaeology, cultural heritage, history and geophysics business and consultancy services. Our Quality Management focuses on consistently meeting client requirements and enhancing their satisfaction aligned with the Virtus Heritage strategic direction, policies and procedures.

### Gina Scheer

Principal Archaeologist & Heritage Consultant

Gina has worked as an archaeologist and a heritage consultant since 2002. Her expertise includes project management, heritage management advice, built heritage assessments and impact statements, conservation management plans, heritage studies and archaeological reports, as well as artefact analysis, historical archaeological assessments and research design reports for State significant projects. Her fieldwork includes excavating and monitoring under Section 60 permit applications for State significant sites.

Her professional background includes managing numbers of cultural heritage and educational projects organised with the University of Sydney and participation in archaeological projects and landscape surveys in Greece and in Cyprus. Prior to commencing as a sub-consultant in 2002, Gina was an administrator at the University of Sydney, as well as with public health organisations and advertising agencies. Through her roles in these diverse agencies, she has gained invaluable experience with communications and with management. Gina has now consolidated a sound knowledge of relevant State and Commonwealth heritage and conservation legislation and guidelines. She has a demonstrated capacity to provide heritage advice and guidance for a range of private and public clients and to translate for them the complexities of planning and heritage legislation.

## Local Government Conference (LGNSW Warick Farm, Sydney

Virtus Heritage participated in the 2019 annual NSW Local Government conference held at Warwick Farm, south west of Sydney, where members from local government agencies across NSW gather to discuss and share ideas across a range of subjects for the betterment of their local community. The theme of the 2019 conference was innovation so Virtus Heritage used the opportunity to promote our use of ground penetrating radar (GPR) in the detection of sub-surface archaeological remains. This is a field in which we have received awards

for innovation at local and regional council business recognition ceremonies. GPR is a technique that uses radar antennas dragged along the ground, the energy produced by the antennas is reflected off objects and features beneath the surface, and we are able to get an idea of what is there.

GPR is non-invasive and non-destructive and can be used in sensitive areas, such as burial grounds and cemeteries, both historical and traditional. It can also be used as a means of getting an idea of where to target or avoid if archaeological areas are going to be impacted.

Our stall was well received and we had the opportunity to discuss GPR as well as the

range of heritage services Virtus Heritage could offer with many different local council representatives. As part of our stall, to help make it a welcoming environment, we had commissioned an Aboriginal catering company managed by Wonnarua women's owned Sister Catering to supply a range of sweet treats, tea's and cordials, all made from traditional Indigenous ingredients. People could come and sit for a chat and enjoy the refreshments.

We met many interesting people and received a variety of cultural heritage inquiries relating to both historical and Indigenous archaeology. We have stayed in touch with these people and look forward to working with them on their many interesting projects.

## Australian Archaeological Association (AAA) Conference, Gold Coast

With TBLALC's CEO, Leweena Williams and Rob Appo, Mary-Jean co-chaired a conference session on cultural mapping at the 2019 Australian Archaeological Association (AAA) conference. Similarly, Emma and Professor Lawrence Conyers co-chaired a session at the same conference with Jason Jia, Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers on use of scientific tools which are culturally appropriate for archaeology to Indigenous people. The conference sessions involved supporting Traditional Owners and Indigenous land managers across the country presenting on cultural heritage projects. Our collaborators and clients, including Simon Pearce, GHD and Roger Mehr of DPIE presented on their research and work. Elle Lillis also presented a poster on the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme research project on behalf of the DPIE HVFMS team.

Virtus Heritage and TBLALC assisted with financial sponsorship of several Indigenous presenters from Mapoon. We thank all of the presenters and participants in these sessions and hope to publish some of this work later in 2020.



## NSW Heritage Forum - Sydney

In early December 2019 the annual two day heritage forum was hosted by Heritage NSW and held in the upstairs rooms of the former Australian Workers Union building, Castlereagh Street in Sydney city. It was a terrific venue and the forum content was highly appropriate for heritage professional development. It was well attended by heritage professionals from private industry and councils across the State. The recent changes relating to both historical heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage were no doubt a strong incentive. Historical heritage and archaeology continue to be governed at the state level by Heritage NSW, which is now operating from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Aboriginal cultural heritage is governed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment. While this represents a split in responsibility, the heritage goal highlighted across the two day forum is to include and address cultural heritage as a whole.

There were many highlights, including the chance for networking with heritage professionals from across the state. Issues raised at this forum will be presented at the 2020 forum.



## AWARDS

2019 was a big year for Virtus Heritage and we were up for some big awards...

**WINNER** - Innovation for Cultural Heritage Services in Small Business Excellence Awards, Tweed Region (BEATS), 2019

**WINNER** - Innovation for Cultural Heritage Services for NSW Business Chamber, Northern NSW Regional Awards, 2019

**STATE FINALIST** - Innovation for Cultural Heritage Services for NSW Business Chamber

**NATIONAL FINALIST** - Small Business Champions Awards, 2019

### 2019 Business Excellence Awards (BEATS) - August 2019

Virtus Heritage was up for a Business Excellence Awards for our collaborative approach to heritage projects and for innovation in geophysical applications for heritage – particularly through the introduction and use of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technologies.

Virtus Heritage is currently one of only a few businesses in Australia offering specialist GPR technology in archaeology to identify, analyse and map burials, shell middens, historical foundations and other features and as such were up for an Excellence in Innovation Award – which we won and were then off to the Ballina Regionals!

### Ballina Regionals - October 2019

Virtus Heritage took out the award for Excellence in Innovation at a Regional level, and in doing so became a State Finalist.

### State Finals - November 2019

Virtus Heritage attended the State Business Awards in Sydney, in which we were a State Finalist for the Award of Excellence in Innovation. Cancer Aid came away with the win, but we were very proud of our Title of State Finalist.



Bernadette Allen & Dr Mary-Jean Sutton receiving 2019 BEATS award - Winner, Innovation for Cultural Heritage Services, Tweed Region.



Celebrating at the State Finals for NSW Business Chamber Awards, Sydney

## Quality Certification

In September 2019 Virtus Heritage obtained ISO9001:2015 Certification for the provision of archaeology, cultural heritage, history and geophysics business and consultancy services. This was a long-awaited journey for our business, and we are very proud of this achievement. We are one of only a handful of archaeology companies to have this certification - worldwide.

Virtus Heritage started the process to get our policies and procedures certified in March 2018 and in this time have had on-site audits, visits and interviews, reviews



of system documentation and observations of our implemented practice in order to validate and review our system.

Our Quality Management Manual and systems focuses on consistently meeting client requirements and enhancing their satisfaction aligned with the organisation's purpose, strategic direction, policies and procedures.

## Publications/ Presentations

We have now co-authored with Mapoon Traditional Owners five research publications on the Mapoon burial mounds. The latest research publication in Archaeology in Oceania to the right.

With Awabakal TOs and LALC, Mary-Jean co-presented a Hunter Environmental Institute seminar on the destruction of cultural heritage in Newcastle and has also assisted with peer review of two commercial projects pro bono.



## Reconciliation Action Plan Update

**As part of the Reconciliation journey**, we have been having deeper conversations with communities we work with and as a team about how we work as archaeologists and discussing ways to collaborate better on projects with some community partners and how to engage in more meaningful consultation.

### NAIDOC Week 2019

Fieldwork during that week was deliberately not scheduled in respect of NAIDOC week. Mary-Jean was in Uluru with her family. Bernadette assisted with BBQs in the Tweed Regions in partnership with Tweed's Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Donations to Tweed Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Coffs Harbour and District Local Aboriginal Land Council were made for NAIDOC week celebrations.

### National Reconciliation Week 2019

Virtus Heritage contributed \$500 sponsorship during NRW to the Wonnarua and Awabakal women's healing workshop at Dangar Island. Bernadette attended a quiz night on invitation from Tweed Shire Council with members of the local community and we donated a book as one of the prizes. All team members were involved in private/more personal dialogues and discussions about Reconciliation including books, discussions with community members about current or future projects and/or watched films.

### Pro bono Advice/Training/ Assistance/Grants

We have been assisting Tjungundji Aboriginal Corporation with advice regarding the burial mounds and other issues in Mapoon. To date no research institution

has been identified that can help and we are still looking for a university to assist. We have been assisting numbers of Traditional Owners and Land Councils with grant applications and research projects. They are Coffs LALC, Bandjalang AC, Tjungundji AC, Awabakal Traditional Owners, Awabakal LALC, Tweed Byron LALC and Worimi LALC and Wonnarua Nation AC.

### Partnership with Tweed Byron LALC

We have been incredibly privileged and very excited to be working in partnership as equal collaborators with Tweed Byron LALC on several projects. They include our first excavation together at Lions Park Kingscliff and as a subconsultant on Hastings Point ACHMP for the Headland as well as for a due diligence assessment on a shed. We have also

partnered with TBLALC on the future Coffs Harbour ACHMD, Mary-Jean and Leweena Williams will be working closely together to develop consultation workshops in 2020. We are looking forward to undertaking more partnership projects and have lots of big plans on the horizon.

In September 2019 Virtus Heritage attended the Fingal Surf Club along with the TBLALC for a cultural training/exchange celebration. Uncle Victor Slockee did a traditional owner's address about the significance of Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country, we had a celebration and lunch including cultural exchange and protocols and finished up with a lovely walk up to the Fingal Headland with the Williams family.



Virtus Heritage & Tweed Byron LALC