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Changing Perspectives
in Australian Archaeology

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Changing Perspectives in Australian Archaeology, Part III

Hidden in Plain View—the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project

PAUL IRISH

PhD Candidate, School of History, Australian National University,
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia

paulirish@optusnet.com.au

ABSTRACT. Post-contact Aboriginal archaeology is a relatively new but growing discipline in Australia, though most work has been focussed on non-urban areas. A scoping study initiated in 2006 sought to determine the viability of an historical and archaeological research project in Sydney, Australia's oldest and largest urban centre. Such research has not been previously attempted in a systematic way, due to the assumed high impact of European settlement on the region's post contact Aboriginal archaeology. The study has shown this not to be the case, combining the records of previous archaeological and historical research to create a spatial database of 280 post-contact Aboriginal places within the Sydney region. Preliminary analysis of this data has shown some interesting trends in the location and nature of these places, which suggest further research could be of significant value to the interpretation of post-contact Aboriginal history and the nature of cross-cultural interactions in urban centres, as well as pre-contact archaeology and traditional Aboriginal life in the region. The Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project has been formed to progress this research in conjunction with local Aboriginal communities in the Sydney region.

A number of post-contact Aboriginal places in Sydney are easily visible if you know what to look for. Some are remembered and still used by Aboriginal people today and a few are relatively well-known amongst the interested public (e.g., Hinkson, 2010). The vast majority, however, feature only as a brief historical reference or as an archaeological site record in a government archive. Growing interest in the post-contact Aboriginal history of Sydney reflects a realization that such research is essential to for a better understanding of the development of Sydney as a city and as the largest and oldest urban centre in Australia, and follows a more general trend to incorporate Aboriginal history into broader historical narratives (Curthoys, 2008). Although archaeological data can provide an important spatial and physical aspect to that history, they have largely been ignored. Historical Aboriginal places warrant further investigation on these grounds alone,

but can also answer questions about pre-contact archaeology and the nature of traditional Aboriginal culture in the region. They are also valued by Aboriginal people as tangible proof of the survival of Aboriginal people through several centuries of European occupation, and deserve the same protection as pre-contact Aboriginal archaeological "sites", which also require research.

Despite these things, most Aboriginal historical places have not been investigated due to the difficulty of collating the disparate source material as well as the nature of archaeological training and heritage management practice in Australia. More so than in more remote areas, post-contact archaeology in urban centres requires the disciplines of history and archaeology; however, most archaeologists are not trained or experienced in both disciplines. Hence, few have attempted, or been capable of, integrating the historical

and archaeological records (though see Hinkson, 2010, 2002). Indeed, most historians have focussed only on initial contact or the early post-contact period in Sydney (e.g., Stanner, 1977; Willey, 1979; McBryde, 2000; Smith, 2004, 2008; Karskens, 2009), though this is beginning to change (Nugent, 2005; Goodall & Cadzow, 2009). The situation is no more promising for archaeologists, who tend to train and specialize either in pre-contact (and occasionally early or "first" contact) Aboriginal archaeology or historical (i.e. "non-Aboriginal") archaeology, though both are clearly needed to successfully undertake post-contact research of this kind. This arbitrary distinction has been formalized for decades by separate "Aboriginal" and "historic" heritage legislation, policy and government regulators (Harrison, 2004a: 39) such that it can be argued that Aboriginal heritage practitioners have become conditioned to think only in terms of pre-contact archaeology (Byrne, 2003).

Seeking amongst other things to rectify this, post-contact Aboriginal archaeology has developed in recent years in Australia to be a healthy sub-discipline incorporating many data sources and practical and theoretical approaches (e.g., Torrence & Clark, 2000a; Harrison & Williamson, 2004; Harrison, 2005: 16–18), and with applications outside archaeology, such as Native Title (Fullagar & Head, 2000; Harrison, 2005; Veth & O'Connor, 2005). Most studies have been of a research nature, rather than development impact assessment driven, but have occurred in non-urban areas with a heavy focus on archaeological evidence and, often, Aboriginal oral testimony (Kabaila, 1995-1998; Colley, 2000; Harrison, 2002, 2004b; Smith & Beck, 2003; Williamson, 2004; Gibbs & Harrison, 2008). This reflects the general lack of a comprehensive historical record in many of these areas (but see Byrne & Nugent, 2004).

The reasons for this non-urban bias are unspecified, but are likely to relate to an assumption of historically early, rapid and comprehensive impact to Aboriginal people in urban areas like Sydney, coupled with greater subsequent physical impacts from development, resulting in a perceived lack of archaeological material to investigate. It also clearly reflects the archaeological background and interest of the majority of researchers, with few willing or able to attempt the detailed and complex archival research required in urban areas before archaeological survey or recording can be carried out. This is evident in the limited work which has occurred in the Sydney region, where the focus has been on relatively well documented places with a known location like the Blacktown Native Institution or the Gully Mission at Katoomba (Bickford, 1981; Attenbrow, 1993; Godden Mackay Logan, 2004; Lydon, 2005), or archaeological sites such as contact art (e.g., McDonald, 2008) where historical research was not "required" (though see below).

The importance of historical Aboriginal places in general has been recognized for some time in heritage management studies (Rhoads & Dunnett, 1985: 14; Martin, 1986: 60) and many development related projects have unearthed fragments of historical information about a number of them or recorded potential archaeological evidence of post-contact Aboriginal use (such as possible flaked glass). More detailed archival research is beyond the scope of most heritage management projects (Byrne, 2004: 142), and unlikely given the aforementioned legislative split. Government heritage regulators are themselves a product of this split and also have limited capacity to undertake research. The best attempt to date has been the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) "Living Places Project" (2002–2005), an historical and archaeological research project of post-contact Aboriginal places around New South Wales

(DECCW, 2009). In the Sydney (Central) region, research was restricted to an archival search and did not consider "archaeological" places like rock engravings (Curby, 2003: 4). Follow-up archaeological survey was initially proposed but not undertaken.

Considering these factors it is clear why comprehensive post-contact Aboriginal archaeological research in the Sydney region has not been, and is unlikely to be, undertaken by government agencies, archaeological consultants or academic archaeologists with a "non-urban" focus. Indeed, the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project grew from a long-standing interest in the "hidden" Aboriginal history of my city of Sydney rather than my professional archaeological background. This interest was sparked by meeting Dharawal man Dr Shayne Williams in the late 1990s, who shared his family associations with the Salt Pan Creek Aboriginal camp which was in use in suburban Sydney until the 1940s (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988; Ardler, 1991; Goodall & Cadzow, 2009). Intrigued, further reading revealed that similar camps had existed around Sydney. Consequently, I began to compile records of such places and became aware that, as with pre-contact Aboriginal archaeology, post-contact Aboriginal places had survived in the Sydney region despite over two centuries of urban development. Furthermore, it was clear that this has also led to the creation of a relatively rich historical record of Aboriginal Sydney, precisely because of the greater number of early non-Aboriginal residents and visitors recording their experiences than in more remote areas.

The value of this rich historical record has been recognized for some time and the main descriptions of post-contact Aboriginal places initially encountered were in historical overviews collating some of these early observations (e.g., Bickford, 1988; Kohen, 1993; Goodall, 1996). These studies, however, rarely attempted to determine the exact location of specific places and did not consider the possibility of surviving physical remnants. Similarly, although historical records have been used to document the other side of the historical frontier since Reynold's (1981) groundbreaking study, archaeological information has been underutilized or ignored by historians, despite its obvious benefits (Torrence & Clarke, 2000b: 6).

The work of Val Attenbrow has been a major influence in the framing of the project. It was a chance encounter with her *Darling Mill State Forest 2* rockshelter excavation on a bushwalk near my home towards the end of my schooling that inspired me to take archaeology at university. It was the scope and attention to detail of her *Port Jackson Archaeological Project* and *Sydney's Aboriginal Past* book that developed my thinking about regional archaeologies and the ability of historical sources to inform archaeological research. And it has been her constant encouragement to undertake research which has led directly to this scoping project and current doctoral research.

The project is also inspired by the theoretical and practical work of Denis Byrne, who argues that documenting physical traces of post-contact Aboriginal life in places like Sydney makes the continued presence of Aboriginal people throughout this period undeniable (Byrne, 1996: 102, 2003: 74, 2004: 144–145). This broader philosophical and social justice agenda is an important aspect of the project, in addition to its specific archaeological and historical aims.

The Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project was initially devised by the author in 2006 as a scoping study to determine whether a larger historical and archaeological research project was viable, and could contribute useful results as an adjunct to Aboriginal history, and as archaeological data in their own right. The scoping study resulted in the
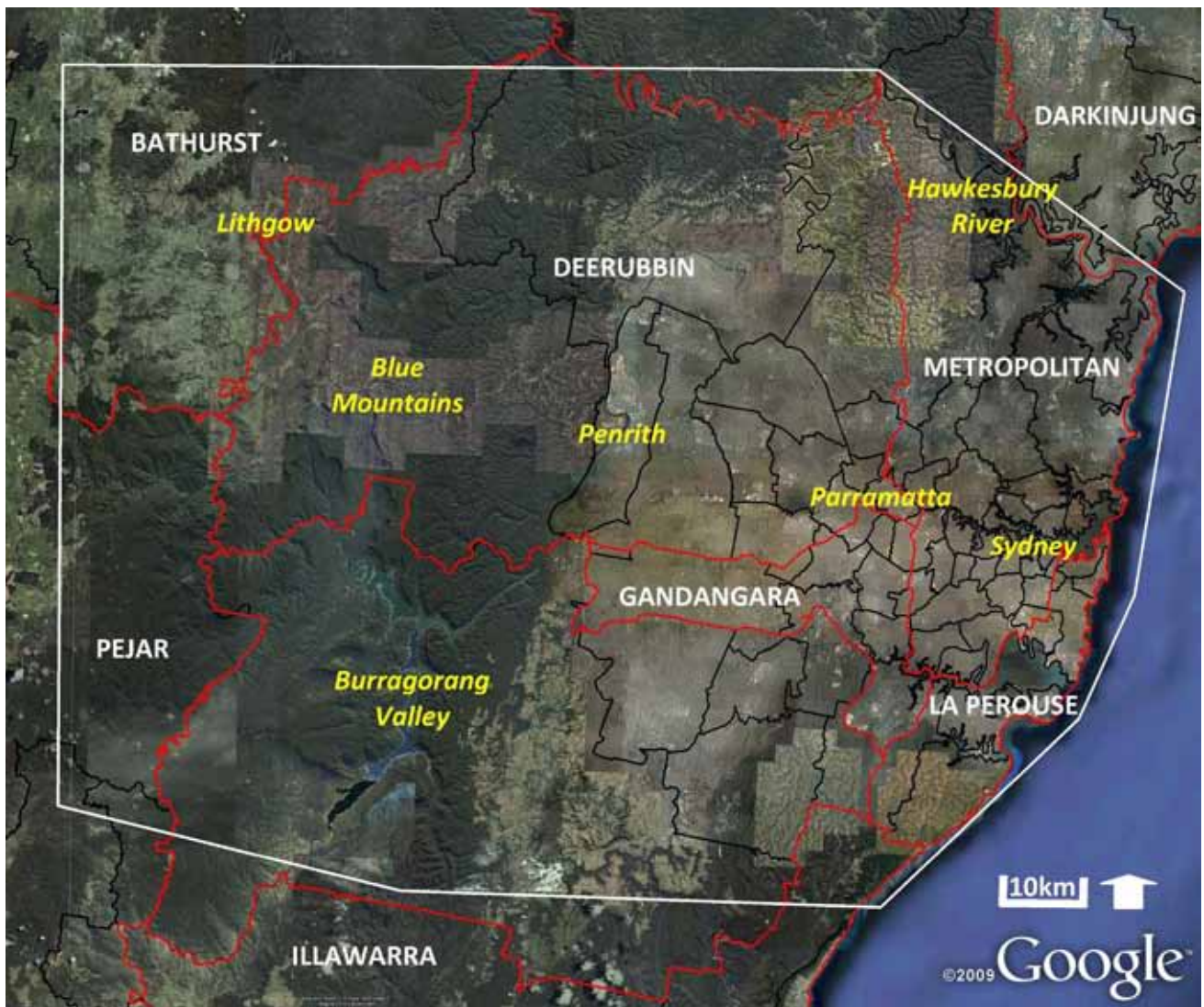
Figure 1. The study area showing Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries (red) and local government boundaries (black).

compilation of a spatial database comprising records for 280 places, a preliminary analysis of which is discussed below. To provide a context for these results it is first necessary to outline the parameters of the project and the collation of the data. This also helps to illustrate the considerable methodological issues surrounding urban post-contact archaeological research, and the limitations of the data.

Parameters of the scoping study

The study area. The study area includes lands south of the Hawkesbury/Nepean River, west to Katoomba and the Megalong Valley, south to beyond the Burragorang Valley and Picton and east to the coast within Royal National Park (Fig. 1). This spatial boundary is somewhat arbitrary but based on a mixture of topographical features and historically interrelated places. For example, it includes the Burragorang Valley on the very edge of Sydney, as Aboriginal people lived at several places in this area before moving north to Katoomba and east to Salt Pan Creek and La Perouse (e.g., Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988; Ardler, 1991). It covers portions of the areas in which several Aboriginal languages were spoken, including Darug, Darkinjung, Dharawal and Gundungurra.

Time and types of places. Due to the archaeological and spatial approach of the study, it was necessary to restrict research to a defined range of place "types" and a particular time period. The vast majority of places considered in the study date to between 1790 and the early twentieth century (though some were clearly also used in pre-contact times and others are still in use today). Places of first or early European contact (where poorly spatially described) were not included. Similarly, although the historical origin and original location of some existing Aboriginal communities (e.g., La Perouse, Redfern) has been considered, their recent social history and "archaeology" has not. This is not to deny their significance or the potential for an archaeological approach to their study, but acknowledges that histories of these places are being recorded (e.g., Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1988; Museum of Sydney, 1996; Nugent, 2001, 2005; Cowlishaw, 2009; Redfern Oral History, 2010), and that there is a more pressing need to document those places from the more distant past, where historical and archaeological data are likely to be the main source of information.

It was also clearly not possible to individually document every place visited or used by Aboriginal people in Sydney for the last 220 years, or even in the period specified above. The principle used in selecting places for inclusion in the

study was that they could have generated a potentially enduring archaeological signature, regardless of whether or not this has survived. Hence, focus was on places used repeatedly as living or gathering places and/or for a period, generally by groups of people (e.g., camps, farms, reserves, missions), or where physical evidence was known to exist (e.g., rock engravings, scatters of post-contact artefacts like flaked glass and, in some cases, historical burials). In practical terms, most places considered by the study can be said to have retained some degree of spatial distance and/or cultural autonomy or distinctiveness from the broader non-Aboriginal landscape.

The study took these places as starting points and examined the people who used them, including the other places within and outside of the study area that these people visited and used for work, family reasons, etc. In this way, many other places are drawn into the research but are not the main focus of historical and archaeological recording. Studies of these other places would be worthy of projects in their own right, such as the "adopted" Aboriginal children housed across early colonial Sydney, or later domestic Aboriginal servitude in Sydney as a result of government child removal and apprenticeship policies. Similarly, a demographic and social historical study of the location and composition of Aboriginal households in mid to late twentieth century would be instructive.

Compiling the data. As noted above, one of the main reasons why comprehensive research of this nature is rarely attempted in urban areas, at least on a regional scale, is the range of data types (archaeological, historical, oral historical) which are required to be reviewed and merged. Another reason is the fragmented and hidden nature of much of the historical source data, accessible only to those with ample time and persistence (which is beyond the time or budgetary constraints of most commercial or academic research projects). Hence, a range of other researchers have been interested in post-contact Aboriginal Sydney, but they have generally restricted their research to a particular area or type of place.

It was clear that the scoping study had to allow sufficient time to compile an "historical Aboriginal place" database including as much previous research and documentation as could be located. At the time of commencement, the largest data set concerning historical Aboriginal places in Sydney was the records of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) "Living Places Project", comprising around 100 places within the study area, and this was adapted to form the nucleus of the study database. Information was also sourced from heritage registers including the DECCW Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System and Historic Heritage Information Management System Registers (the "AHIMS Register" and "HHIMS Register" respectively), the State Heritage Register and Australian Heritage Database.

The AHIMS Register is the central repository for records of registered Aboriginal places (or "objects") in New South Wales but is a complex archive which has evolved over several decades and has numerous associated errors and shortcomings (Brown, 2005: 26–40). Although several places within the study area are listed explicitly as post-contact (under the categories "Contact, Mission" or "Historic Place"), there is no systematic way to determine whether most registered sites contain evidence of post-contact use. For example, no distinction is made on the AHIMS Register between pre- and post-contact rock engravings, or pre-contact middens and those that include post-contact

items. Furthermore, since 2002, sites have been registered using site feature terminology, which provides no specific category for post-contact places. Due to these shortcomings, the scoping study primarily utilized the AHIMS Register to search particular areas where places were suspected to be located, checking all original site recordings in these areas. Currently the only way to be certain that all post-contact places on the AHIMS Register have been found would be to systematically examine the original site recordings for each of the more than 5,000 Aboriginal sites registered to date within the study area. Not surprisingly, this is yet to be undertaken!

Other datasets included in the database were recent research by Jo McDonald (2008) on contact art, descriptions of a range of post-contact camps compiled by Attenbrow (n.d.), a database of post-contact Aboriginal burials compiled by Byrne (1997), a summary of Aboriginal burials in the Sydney region by Donlon (1995), places mentioned by Bickford (1988) based on research undertaken for the then NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service in the late 1970s (for which no records appear to remain), records of the Sydney Olympic Park Aboriginal History and Connections Program (Irish, 2005) and other previous research undertaken by the author.

In addition, approximately 500 additional sources were searched for further information, including archaeological/ heritage management reports and manuscripts, local histories (books and journal articles) and a range of other archival material, around half of which contained relevant information. Research was conducted at the NSW State Library, Fisher Library (University of Sydney), Australian Museum Research Library, AIATSIS Library, National Library, NSW State Records, and a range of local libraries across Sydney.

Museum collection records are yet to be systematically searched, though it is considered unlikely that there are many post-contact Aboriginal objects in collections which have a precise provenance or association with named individuals. Some provenanced artefacts do exist however, such as a wooden club with inserted horseshoe nails said to derive from the Salt Pan Creek camp and held at the St George Regional Museum (Irish, 2010), and a range of commercially manufactured artefacts from La Perouse (Taçon *et al.*, 2003). There is also evidence of Aboriginal implements being adopted and adapted by Europeans in Sydney (Jones, 2008: 9–49).

The database. The database contains records of 280 places within the study area (Fig. 2). Each record consists of a range of spatial, historical and administrative data (Fig. 3). The main fields indicate the place name/s, any official registers on which it currently appears (whether for its Aboriginal associations or not), spatial data (coordinates and location descriptions), historical sources, known knowledge holders, the possible period of use, an assessment of archaeological potential, and a description of the place. In addition, each place is further described using classificatory schema developed for various types of historical places (e.g., Byrne, 1997; Byrne & Nugent, 2004; Brown, 2005: 63–64).

Historical documents pertaining to each place have been scanned and cross-referenced to the relevant database record. Each relevant source has a unique reference code, which also links to an annotated bibliography of all consulted sources, in order to prevent future duplication of research. Though very time consuming, this systematic approach is important to meet future aims of the project in creating "biographies" of individual people by documenting their family relationships, historical activities and links to specific places.
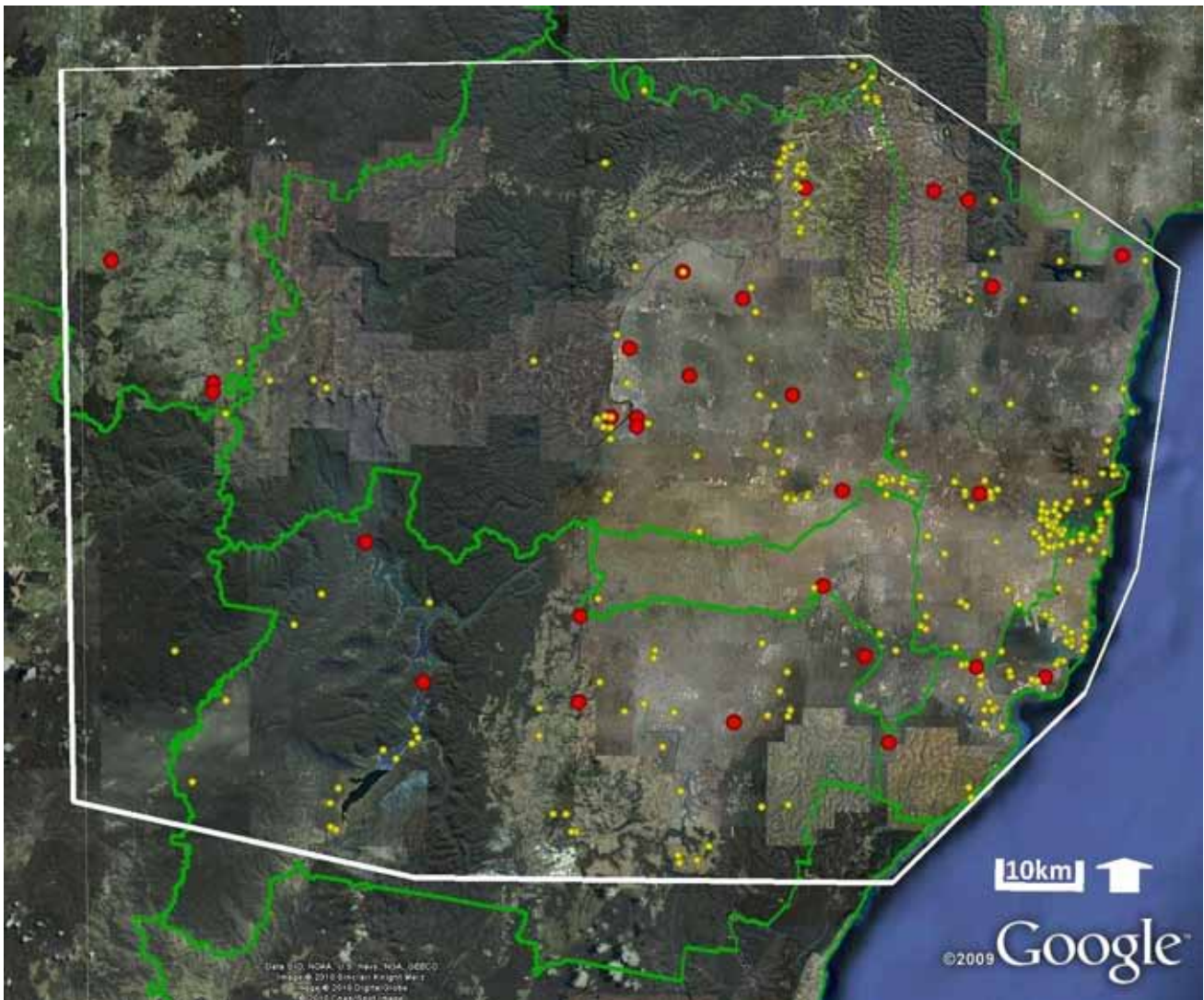
Figure 2. Approximate location of places on the current database. Those represented by red dots have an accuracy radius of 2–20 km and should be ignored for the purposes of considering spatial location.

Data limitations. The quantity and quality of data is highly variable between places at this stage, reflecting the nature of the source material, and this limits the conclusions and extrapolations which can be made. The main limitation is in relation to the accuracy of place locations. Some places are described only vaguely as an Aboriginal camp somewhere on a large rural holding, whereas others are described in detail, sometimes even with site plans (Fig. 4). To balance this reality against the need to spatially represent all places on the database, each place has a central coordinate as well as a maximum radius within which the place is located. The location of 65% of places on the database (n = 182) has been documented to a 500 m radius, which is generally amenable to archaeological survey, and a further 25% (n = 68) are described to a 500—2000 m radius. These can be fairly accurately mapped at the scale presented in Fig. 2. The remaining 10% (n = 30) of places, however, have a possible location radius of between 2 km and 20 km which makes mapping them at this stage potentially misleading, as noted in Fig. 2. Further research will refine many place locations, but at present this suggests a cautious approach should be taken to interpreting spatial distribution. There is not yet sufficient data to be able to sort places by their period of use, so the distribution of places should also not be interpreted as indicating contemporaneity.

Results of the scoping study

Distribution of places. Despite accuracy concerns, it is possible to note some broad trends in distribution of places across the study area (Fig. 2). Their uneven distribution is evident, particularly the absence of places across much of the northwest of the study area (between Parramatta and the Hawkesbury River). This trend is even more extensive, covering most of northern Sydney, if post-contact art sites (which most likely date only to the early contact period) are discounted (Fig. 5).

Conversely, it is also apparent that there is some clustering of places. This may simply be due to better or more extensive historical documentation, such as around Sydney Cove and the harbour in the early decades of the colony. However, it is interesting to note that these clusters (for example around the Hawkesbury River north of Windsor) contain a range of place types (Fig. 5), sometimes covering a long span of time from early contact to the highly government-controlled periods of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is not yet possible to determine whether this is related to the cultural significance of these areas, but this is clearly worthy of further investigation. So, too, is the apparent strong correlation of place location with major bodies of salt and fresh water. As discussed below, place location may relate in part to pre-contact patterns or cultural preference.

SAHPP Database Fields	Sample Record
SAHP Number	P011
Place Name	St Joseph's Farm
Alternate Names	Burragorang, AR17023, Pocket Creek
LPP Number	Living Places Study # 11 & 122
Register Number	Not currently registered on AHIMS or HHIMS
Type of Place (DEC LPP)	Opportunistic camp, Reserve and Family Farm
Year of First Use	1871
Year of Last Use	1929
Certainty of Dates	Approx based on official records
Likely Used At Other Times?	Probably
Source of Information	DEC LPP; PKI
References	SAHP0015:42-48, SAHP0016
Copy of relevant refs held?	Yes
Aboriginal Knowledge Holders	Gloria Ardler?
Other Researchers	Jim Smith
LALC	Tharawal LALC
Descendants/TOs	Unknown
Suburb	Burragorang Valley
LGA	Wollondilly
Parish	Cooba
Address/Lot DP	Portions 25 & 10? Portion 70?
Cadastral information	Aboriginal Reserve and land grant
LPP Locational Confidence	4
Detailed location	Pocket Creek Junction, incl. reserve 17023......
Easting	262500
Northing	6241200
Coordinate System	AMG
Location Accuracy (M radius)	500
Description of Place	Aboriginal settlement from 1870s........
Physical Remains Present	Maybe
Reason for Assessment	Although now underwater, some remnants......
Attachment Theme 1	Living Places
Theme 1 Place Type	Camp
Attachment Theme 2	Work
Theme 2 Place Type	Manual
Attachment Theme 3	Education
Theme 3 Place Type	Schools

Figure 3. Example of a project database entry for St Joseph's farm in the Burragorang Valley.

Types of places. There is a range of "types" of place represented across the study area, though scant details for many preclude meaningful analysis of the places at this stage using the classificatory schema noted above. However, places can be grouped into broader categories which give an important initial illustration of their range and distribution (Fig. 5). The vast majority of places are some form of camp or settlement (71%, n = 200), though this encompasses a wide range of situations from Aboriginal owned farms to government reserves to semi-traditional living in rock shelters. Other "types" include art sites (10%, n = 28), gazetted reserves or missions (6%, n = 16), burial places (6%, n = 17), medical/penal/educational institutions (2%, n = 5), visited places (2%, n = 5), ceremonial places (2%, n = 5) and conflict places (1%, n = 4).

Several of these categories require some further explanation, based on the parameters of the study described above. For example, it is not suggested that there are only four places of documented conflict within the Sydney region, but rather these represent documented massacres (such as at Appin in 1816) or specific areas of repeated or prolonged conflict (such as the Prospect area in the early 1790s). Burial places include those of named individuals generally associated with other places on the database or exhumed remains shown definitely to be individuals from the historic period. Both of these types of places are obviously culturally significant and sensitive, and the nature of further research of these places, if indeed it occurs, will be devised in consultation with local Aboriginal communities.

Historical versus archaeological research

The distinction between "historical" and "archaeological" research and data is clear when the type of documentation of each place is considered. Of the 280 places on the database, the majority are known only from historical (documentary) sources (67%, n = 188). Whether they will prove to be associated with archaeological remains is yet to be established. The majority of these date to the nineteenth century, with limited, if any, associated oral history, and provide a strong contrast to the typically twentieth century pastoral or rural camps often described in post-contact studies outside urban centres. Around 23% (n = 63) are documented archaeological sites with no accompanying historical documentary evidence. The vast majority of these are rock art sites, scatters of glass artefacts, and some burials.

Only 10% of the places (n = 29) have both documentary and physical evidence recorded so far. One of these serves to illustrate the gulf between historical and archaeological research in which many post-contact places have languished. This is a rock engraving near the Hawkesbury River engraved by an Aboriginal man named "Hiram", around the 1850s (Fig. 6). The engraving was shown to surveyor and anthropologist R.H. Mathews in the 1890s by Andrew Barber, a resident of the nearby Sackville Aboriginal Reserve, who had witnessed Hiram creating it (Mathews, 1896; Thomas, 2007: 46–47).

Since that time, this engraving (a registered Aboriginal site) does not appear to have been of any great interest to archaeological researchers. Scholarship of post-contact rock art has in reality been focussed on "contact" art, being images of traditional style and execution most likely made at or immediately after contact (e.g., Clegg & Ghantous, 2003; McDonald, 2008). Engravings made with metal tools and/ or in a non-traditional style, even if by Aboriginal people, have generally not been considered, and it is almost accepted wisdom that the tradition of engraving and pigment art died out early in the colonial era and that knowledge of rock art amongst Sydney's Aboriginal people was all but gone by the 1840s (McDonald, 2008: 98–101, 110).

Although more post-contact rock art sites may yet be found, it is undisputed that few appear to have been created through the nineteenth century, though knowledge of technique and meaning has been much more enduring. Knowledge was held by Dharawal woman Biddy Giles in southern Sydney until her death in the late nineteenth century (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009: 97–98), and her descendents live in the La Perouse area today. R.H. Mathews describes meeting Charlie Clark at Sackville Reserve in the 1890s, who was said to have made hand stencils near the Hawkesbury (Thomas, 2007: 46), and Andrew Barber (who witnessed Hiram's engraving) died in 1943. Engravings were also created at La Perouse in 1931 by named individuals to commemorate the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (Site card for AHIMS #45-6-0873), and more knowledge is no doubt held in Aboriginal communities.

Whilst there is insufficient evidence to suggest that rock art survived as an active cultural tradition in Sydney into the twentieth century, the point here is that despite over a century of research into Sydney's Aboriginal rock art, archaeologists do not appear to have thought that anything applicable to the interpretation of pre-contact art could be learned from a deeper study of later post-contact art. For example, it appears that no-one has tried to find out who Hiram was to understand the context of his art and its link with pre-contact tradition. Initial research for this project has shown that his death was recorded at Windsor in 1879 and it is likely that further records of his life exist.
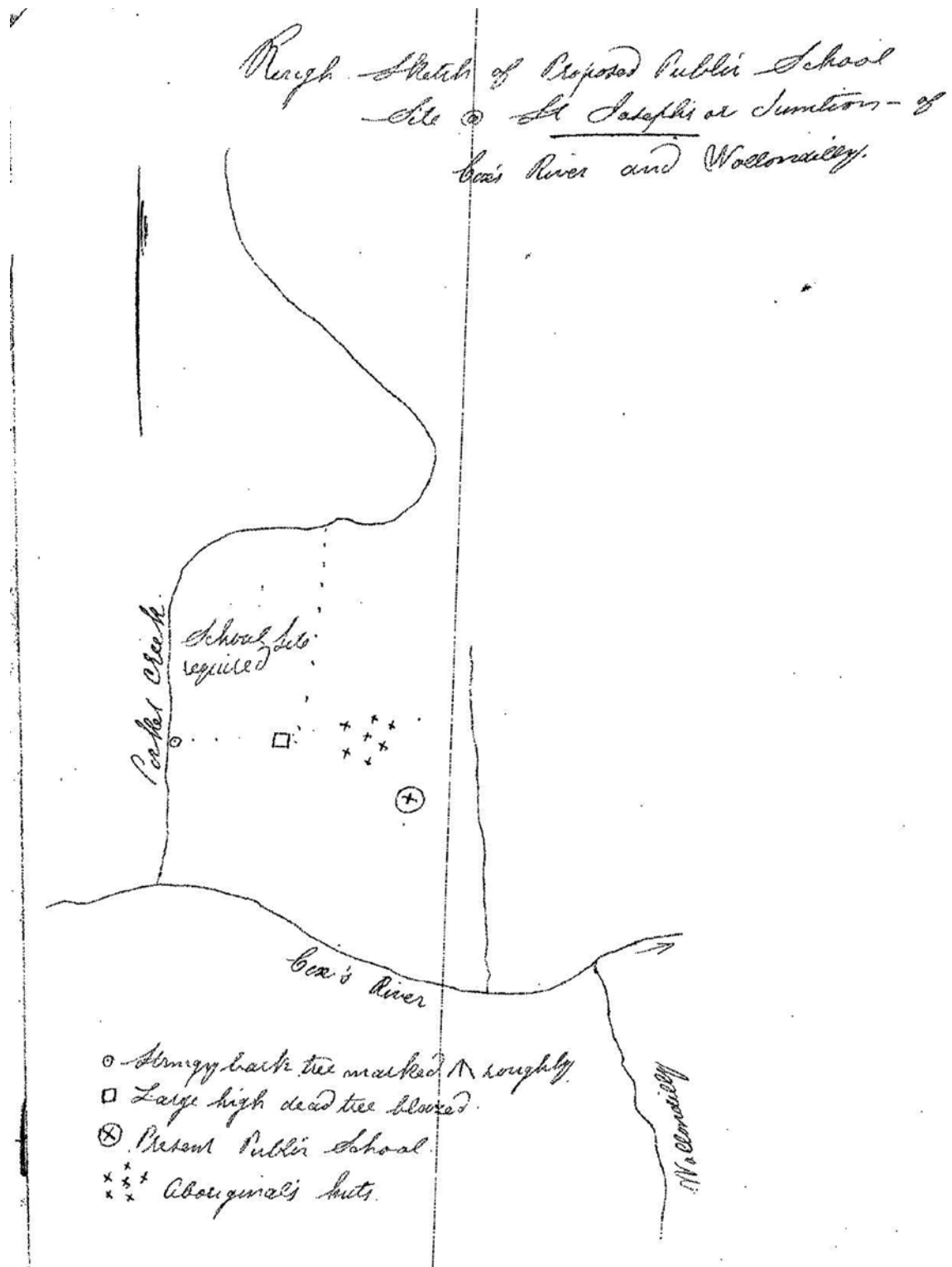
Figure 4. Sketch plan of the layout of St Joseph's farm in the Burragorang Valley. Source: St Joseph's School File (5/17572.2).

It is also salient to note that the engraving appears only to be known to archaeologists. Several people have written about the history of the Sackville Aboriginal Reserve and its social context, most notably Brook (1999). However the engraving site, located in close proximity to the reserve, is not mentioned. Consideration of the engraving is clearly important to a fuller understanding of the social history of the reserve and its inhabitants, which included Hiram, Charlie Clark and Andrew Barber.

Researching people

As with Hiram's engraving, many other post-contact places are associated with named individuals. Clearly these places would be better understood through researching these people, some of whom are currently only documented historically through their relationship to a particular place. The following examples describing Aboriginal people at Bondi beach in the 1870s are typical of many reproduced in local histories around the Sydney region, and are also of archaeological interest as stone artefacts were obtained from them by a collector in the 1870s (Liversidge, 1894):
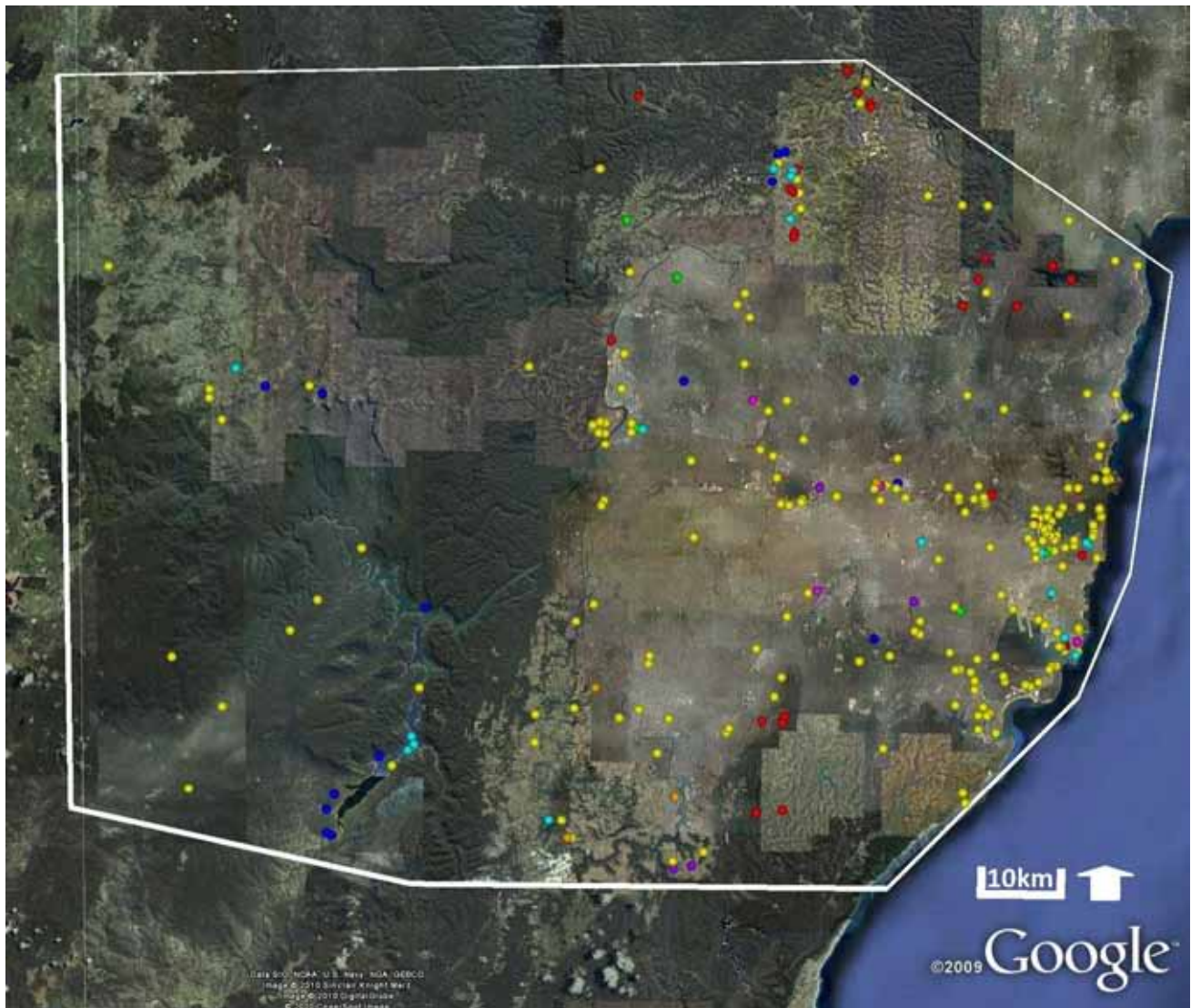
Figure 5. Broad "types" of historical Aboriginal places within the study area, including camp/settlement (yellow), art site (red), reserve/ mission (blue), burial place (light blue), medical/penal/educational institution (pink), visited place (orange), ceremonial place (green) and conflict place (purple).

Constable Stapleton, stationed at Waverley, deposed that at half-past 12 o'clock on Saturday last he was going along Waverley Street, near Bondi Beach, when one of the aborigines camped there, named James Friday, reported that he had seen the body of a man floating in the water at Bondi… Johnny Boswick, an aboriginal native of the colony, forming one of the party camped at Bondi, said that some time ago, about a week since, he saw the deceased fishing off the rocks at Bondi close to their camp… (Sydney Morning Herald, 16 December 1873: 6).

A later observer recorded the following account:

Yes it was about 50 years ago [1874] on a bright summers day that a party of we boys, stood on Bondi Beach watching the Blacks who were camped at Ben Buckler, enjoying the ocean waves, with their wives and children. Bankey, Timmy, Sandfly, Tilly, Rachael and others. And how we made them laugh when we said we would join in a corroboree with them… (R.J. Stone in Dowd, 1959: 138).

Who were these people? How did they live and what was their association with the area? It is highly likely that further information exists in official documents, residents' reminiscences or the accounts of visitors and in most instances it is simply the case that nobody has looked, or looked hard enough. In not doing so, these people and the

places in which they lived have remained just words on a page, and this has made it easy to issue statements about the lack of post-contact archaeology in the area (e.g., Jack, 1984: 5).

Interestingly, several individuals noted so far are associated with a number of different places. This makes it possible to create "biographies" of individual Aboriginal people showing how they navigated around the historical Sydney landscape, aiding a better understanding of how individual places functioned in a broader Aboriginal social and cultural landscape. This personal history aspect of post-contact archaeological research is usually only documented through oral history, but it is encouraging that some sense of this can also be gained beyond the scope of oral history by examining historical records with an archaeological and spatially focussed eye.

The historical movements of individuals, and trends of movement and association noted for a number of individuals may also be describing a pre-contact reality. For example, several people with Botany Bay and/or Illawarra connections appear to have moved between these areas and the harbour throughout their lives in the nineteenth century. This trend requires more investigation, but suggests that movement was at least partly a continuation of tradition and not purely

explained by the "drawcard" factor of the early colony at Sydney Cove. This appears to be supported by a number of well documented ceremonial occasions in the early colony attended by people from the Illawarra (see descriptions in Attenbrow, 2002 and Karskens, 2009).

Further support for this is the number of named Aboriginal people who have one parent from Botany Bay and the other from the Illawarra, which would suggest that these links were in existence prior to the establishment of the colony. This is also suggested by the fact that the two areas shared a common language and rock art style (Attenbrow, 2002: 149–150). In addition, many of the large quantities of stone artefacts recorded on the raw material-starved Kurnell Peninsula on southern shore of Botany Bay may have been sourced from outcrops to the south (Dickson, 1968; Brayshaw *et al*., 1992: 2), though this requires further examination.

Methodological and management issues

Interpreting the archaeology. One of the key difficulties in post-contact Aboriginal heritage research is locating and identifying archaeological evidence (Godwin & L'Oste-Brown, 2004: 197), and being able to distinguish this from the remains left by non-Aboriginal people (Harrison, 2005: 24–25). Several studies have described the types of evidence which could be expected (e.g., Byrne & Nugent, 2004: 61–68; Harrison, 2004b: 107–109), though it is also becoming clear that there are regional differences in the types of introduced materials incorporated into post-contact Aboriginal places, the ways in which these materials were used (e.g., Harrison, 2000b, 2002), and their temporal and spatial distribution (Veth & O'Connor, 2005: 5). A detailed consideration of context has been shown to be useful in determining archaeological remains to have an Aboriginal cultural origin (Williamson, 2004; Allen, 2008: 87; Gibbs & Harrison, 2008) as have objective field and laboratory analysis criteria, particularly in relation to flaked glass (Bolton, 1999; Harrison, 2000a: 45; Williamson, 2004: 86; Veth & O'Connor, 2005: 8; Allen, 2008: 79–88). Unfortunately, these criteria are yet to find their way into practical field manuals and regulatory guidelines, meaning regrettably (but realistically) that many of the people recording archaeological places in Sydney will not be aware of them.

At present, with the exclusion of post-contact art, the archaeological evidence of historical Aboriginal places recorded in the study area is relatively scant. Through its consideration of a large number and range of place "types", further research may ultimately lead to the development of a region-specific guide to the types of archaeological evidence which may be expected and their likely temporal restrictions. A more pressing issue, however, is to determine whether post-contact archaeological evidence so far recorded in the region is in fact of Aboriginal origin. This is of particular concern in Sydney, where the bulk of new place recordings are undertaken by archaeologists largely inexperienced in the application of distinguishing criteria such as those mentioned above. It also contrasts with many other post-contact studies, where places are only recorded as a result of a research project or excavation with a clear focus on post-contact Aboriginal archaeology and adequate experience.

As with "possible" scarred trees (Irish, 2004), there has been a tendency to record and register scatters of possibly flaked glass as Aboriginal sites without expert analysis of the artefacts. For example, a conspicuous cluster of flaked glass scatters has been recorded around the southern edge
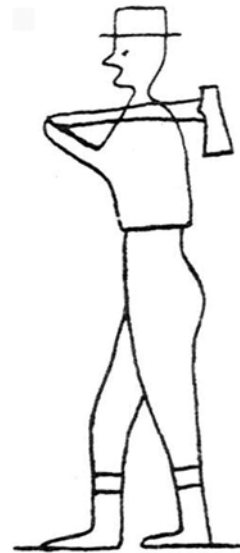
Scale 2 feet to an Inch

R.H.Mathews delt

Figure 6. Rock engraving by Aboriginal man Hiram in the 1860s as recorded by Mathews. Source: Mathews, 1896: pl. 8.

of Prospect Reservoir, west of Parramatta. On the face of it, this suggests that the area may have had a local tradition of glass flaking. Closer inspection of the records though demonstrates that these recordings were all triggered by an awareness of the initial recording of one such site in the area, hence there was a heightened tendency to interpret any fractured glass as flaked and to register them as Aboriginal sites. Unfortunately, the initial recording which inspired these others (also registered as an Aboriginal site) only describes the glass as "possibly flaked" and "requiring further examination" (Smith, 1989). Recent examination of the site context and content by the author confirms the need for more detailed recorded and assessment, and suggests that it may be unrelated to Aboriginal activity (Fig. 7). Following from this, there is a reasonable chance that most, if not all, of the glass artefact scatters in the area do not, in fact, contain evidence of historical Aboriginal use.

Where possible flaked glass artefacts from the Sydney region have been critically assessed, many do not stand up to scrutiny (Richardson, 2004; Irish, 2011: 83). Further study of the Prospect glass assemblages (and the others recorded around Sydney) is therefore clearly needed. Although the use of flaked glass and metal implements was clearly documented historically in the Sydney region (McBryde, 2000: 250; Attenbrow, 2002:124–125), further study should help to clarify how widespread and long lasting their use was.

Historical and archaeological evidence of post-contact Aboriginal places may also be relevant to interpreting pre-contact Aboriginal life. Despite sensible calls not to quarry or cherry pick historical observations (McBryde, 1979), it is uncontested that early historical observations of Aboriginal life in Sydney have provided a useful complement to archaeological data, despite the general lack of historical descriptions of archaeologically recorded artefacts and phenomena (as excellently illustrated in Attenbrow, 2002;

Figure 7. Scatter of glass and ceramic fragments at Prospect. Historical Aboriginal place or European rubbish dump? Photo by P. Irish.

Karskens, 2009). There is less agreement about the "validity" of observations after about 1820 in recreating pre-contact life and interpreting its archaeology. Nonetheless, as with the evidence of social organization and movement and engraved art discussed above, it is possible that pre-contact camp location and layout may be informed by a close consideration of this later historical evidence through an archaeological lens. This is well illustrated by a recent nationwide compilation of studies on Aboriginal architecture, though the example provided from Sydney (Memmott, 2007: 186–187) is at odds with all known historical and archaeological evidence from this area and should be disregarded.

Managing the places

The precise location of many places on the database is not yet established, complicating their management and protection. Only about 30% (n = 87) of places on the project database are included on a heritage register, almost entirely on the AHIMS Register. These are generally "archaeological sites" such as rock art or finds of glass artefacts or other European materials in archaeological contexts such as middens. The DECCW has undertaken research into places of cultural or historical significance such as reserves and missions throughout non-urban NSW (e.g., Rich, 1990; Kijas, 2005), resulting in the registration of many. Similar places are known to exist in the Sydney region and could immediately (and consistent with other parts of NSW) be registered, if considered appropriate by the local Aboriginal community. However, registration on AHIMS as Aboriginal sites ("objects" under the act) is not necessarily the most appropriate for historical Aboriginal places, particularly if they represent spatially large areas (e.g., reserves) and/or have ongoing significance and associations to Aboriginal people. In such cases, Aboriginal Place designation may be more suitable, though the process for this to occur can take a number of years, as in the case of the recently designated Gully Mission at West Katoomba (Attenbrow, 1993; Johnson & Colless, 2000; Johnson, 2007).

A number of historically significant houses and other buildings are currently listed on the NSW State Heritage Register for their European heritage values only, but they also have important Aboriginal associations. The lack of documentation (and hence awareness) of these associations has direct implications for management of these places and adjacent areas. For example, recent archaeological excavations in Parramatta which retrieved possible post-contact Aboriginal archaeological remains (Jo McDonald Cultural Heritage Management, 2005) were apparently undertaken unaware of the clearly relevant post-contact Aboriginal associations with an adjacent heritage listed house, which would have been obvious had these Aboriginal connections been documented on the register listing for the house.

Some well-known places, such as the Blacktown Native Institution, have been thoroughly researched and are well protected and managed (e.g., Godden Mackay Logan, 2004;

Lydon, 2005), but only within a defined cadastral boundary. Outside this area, the adjacent, closely related and highly significant land grants to Aboriginal men Colebee and Nurragingy, which formed part of the overall "Black Town" settlement, have not, until very recently, been similarly managed or protected.

Other highly significant historical places still remain effectively unprotected from even inadvertent impacts. For example, the Salt Pan Creek Aboriginal camp described above was the hub of early land and civil rights activity in the 1920s and 1930s, including Joe Anderson's moving plea for these rights which was filmed at the camp, and ceremony was also practised there into the twentieth century (National Museum of Australia, 2009). Although recent research has made the place and its location much better known (Goodall & Cadzow, 2009), there is currently no local recognition of this place, and no heritage listing to trigger impact assessment in relation to future development proposals.

Doing post-contact archaeology in an urban context

It is clear from the discussions above that the results of the study contrast in some respects with those from non-urban contexts. The longer historical period and commensurate greater number of people and places considered is complicated, but offset by the greater quantity and diversity of historical documentation. It is not argued that non-urban studies do not consider historical sources, but in general, the range of sources available is of an order of magnitude less than within the Sydney region (and other urban contexts). It is trawling through and locating those references, necessarily preceding a similar archaeological search in the field, which is the most time consuming aspect of post-contact heritage work in urban areas such as Sydney. However, it is also a key aspect of post-contact archaeological projects that this research should be undertaken with an archaeologist's eye for the physical and spatial, as this has led to connections and perspectives not apparent from a purely "historical" reading of these sources.

Whilst it has been correctly argued that pre-contact archaeology provides essential context and time-depth to the interpretation of post-contact history and archaeology (Harrison, 2000a: 49–50; Torrence, 2000: 107), the current study also shows that the reverse can also be true. This is likely to prove a valuable adjunct to the numerous early contact references to Aboriginal people in Sydney (Attenbrow, 2002), as the early results already demonstrate.

Relatively high levels of historical documentation also provide scope to map the movements of Aboriginal people through the region and between places. It can also allow the mapping of shifting settlement patterns throughout the historic period such as documented for the Hauraki Plains in New Zealand (Phillips, 2000). Post-contact evidence has the advantage of being temporally well defined, in contrast to trying to unravel thousands of years of occupation from the largely undated stone artefact scatters across Sydney that form much of the region's pre-contact archaeology. Although occupation patterns and strategies clearly altered in the historic period, detailing the movement of people throughout the landscape at this time could potentially, and validly, inform the interpretation of pre-contact movement on a regional scale.

Future directions—the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project

The scoping study has clearly demonstrated that post-contact Aboriginal heritage research in urban areas is possible, combining archaeological and historical data. Furthermore, this research promises to yield useful results in the interpretation of post-contact Aboriginal history as well as pre-contact Aboriginal archaeology. The Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project has consequently been formulated as a long-term research project, with the scoping study forming the first stage. Stage 2 of the project involves more intensive archival research to better document places and to refine their location. Where possible field survey to be undertaken (Stage 3) to document any physical remains, guided by useful methodologies from past studies (e.g., Harrison, 2000a: 38, 2004b: 56, 166–196; Smith & Beck, 2003).

Stage 2 work is now being undertaken in conjunction with local Aboriginal people, with a strong focus on community knowledge and training in aspects of archival research, in other words mutual learning (Irish & Ingrey, In prep.). The southeastern Sydney area forms part of current doctoral research. It is intended that other areas will be investigated through a series of local research projects, each guided in form and extent by the wishes and capabilities of local Aboriginal communities, who have a vested interest in the documentation and management of these places.

In addition to the basic but useful and essential collation of historical data, the project seeks to answer important questions such as what determines place location and individual and group patterns of movement. It also aims to document the ways in which individual places functioned, through historical descriptions and archaeological evidence. The extent to which these represent continuity of, or adaptation from, pre-contact traditional life will be explored, as it is already clear that aspects of Aboriginal culture survived well into the nineteenth century.

The approach of the project will result in a better understanding of how Aboriginal people viewed and used the historical Sydney landscape, utilizing largely ignored sources of information about cross-cultural experiences in Australia. It treats investigated places as anchor points in the landscape to facilitate a consideration of larger questions of social history and cultural adaptation, rather than as the end point of research. An appreciation of the actual location, landscape and communities in which people lived provides context to what are often tantalising glimpses into social life and cultural tradition, such as a song composed by Aboriginal people in southwestern Sydney to document the building of a road through their country (Meredith, 1989: 18–19).

The need for a more coherent and consistent management approach to these places from discovery and recording to registration is already apparent from the number of unregistered places on the database and the dubious Aboriginal cultural origin of some that are registered. This will only become more acute as the size and accuracy of the database grows. The need for appropriate management is particularly important in urban areas where places are more vulnerable (through lack of recognition) to impact from development (McBryde, 2000: 270; Byrne, 2004: 143–144). Unfortunately, recent reviews of both Aboriginal and historical heritage legislation and regulations have not addressed the issue of how to consistently manage post-contact Aboriginal places, so non-legislative solutions will need to be developed. The protection of historical Aboriginal places is paramount, especially due to their relative rarity,

and at all times the benefits of promotion and interpretation of places must be balanced against the risk of vandalism, as has lamentably occurred at the unique and highly significant Bull Cave rock art site in southwestern Sydney (Karskens, 2009: 547).

Importantly, the project will also give local Aboriginal communities the opportunity to determine how best to manage, protect and promote these places, mindful of the risks of promotion outlined above. Thousands of Sydneysiders observe some of these places every day without knowing of their significance. In fact, until recently, accessible descriptions of post-contact Aboriginal cultural adaptation in the Sydney area were left to the realm of historical fiction (Willmot, 1987; Martin, 2001; Grenville, 2005). Ignorance, wilful denial or forgetting of Aboriginal history has been made even easier by the seeming lack of tangible Aboriginal remains from the post-contact period. The decisions made by Aboriginal communities based on collaborative research for the Sydney Aboriginal Historical Places Project will hopefully mean that at least some historical Aboriginal places in Sydney will cease to be hidden in plain view but will become clear, obvious and celebrated reminders of the continuous presence of Aboriginal people in the oldest and largest urban centre in Australia.

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