

Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number
4671006

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **Broughton Pass Aboriginal Massacre Site**

Location: **Appin**

Address:

Corner:

Suburb / Nearest Town: Appin

State: NSW

Local Govt Area: Local Government Area:
Wollondilly

DUAP Region:
Illawarra & Macarthur

Historic region:
Sydney

Property Identifier:

Boundary:

Item Type: Landscape

Group: Aboriginal

Category: Post-contact Site

Owner: Sydney Water

Owner Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Water Catchment

Former Uses:

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: The site is significant as the location of the 1816 massacre of the Dharawal people, in which women and children were driven over a cliff. The site is associated with a sequence of events over two years of conflict in the area after a lengthy period of peaceful coexistence between the Dharawal and Europeans. It represents an unusual aspect of our history because the massacre was the culmination of a formally sanctioned military action against indigenous people. The massacre caused the destruction of the existing social structure and way of life of the Dharawal. Ironically, the site is also significant for its association with the Dharawal's creation beliefs.

Historical Notes or Provenance: The Dharawal or Tharawal Aboriginal people were the original inhabitants of the Appin area. They occupied the east coast of New South Wales between the southern shores of Botany Bay, the northern shores of Jervis Bay, from the sea to the mountains. The Dharawal believe that the Spirit Woman raised this land from the sea. To ease her loneliness, Spirit Woman created two sisters, Wurrata and Wiritjiribin, then, after some time, returned to her home in the sky. The two sisters were lonely and bereft, so Spirit Woman caused two men to come to their land, and thus began the Dharawal people. During the Dreaming a great fire swept through the land. Wiritjiribin led the people to sanctuary in a cool green gully which had been missed by the fire, under the rocky cliffs of a gorge south of Appin. Those who had perished in the fire were reincarnated as animals and Wiritjiribin appeared as a lyrebird, which became the clan's totem, a symbol of peace and caretaker of the Land of Gawaigl, an area which became a meeting place for Peoples from all over the east coast of Australia; a place where fighting was forbidden (Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, "The D'haraua the People of This Land," Year Ten History Assignment, n.d., pp.1-9.; Ruth McGill, Essay on Appin Massacre for B. A. (Hons.), University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, 1994, n.p.).

By July, 1813 Europeans had begun to encroach on Dharawal land, having established farms in the area. While the Dharawal tried to continue to live in peace with these people, Aborigines from other areas were also in the vicinity, having been displaced from their traditional lands, placing pressure on food supplies and increasing tension (McGill, 1994.).

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Governor Macquarie had endeavoured to abide by the British Government's instructions to ensure that British subjects attempt to live in 'amity and kindness' with the indigenous population. However, between 1814 and 1816 relations between Aborigines and Europeans in the Appin area became hostile, perhaps exacerbated by a severe drought which further increased pressures on the scarce food supplies. In May, 1814 three members of the militia fired on Aborigines on two farms at Appin, killing a boy. This led to retaliation by the remaining Aborigines, followed by further violence by whites. Over the next two years hostilities escalated until in March 1816, members of the Gundangara attacked settlers, killing some and destroying property (McGill, 1994.).

It was in response to these attacks that Macquarie felt compelled to 'inflict terrible and exemplary punishments' on the Aborigines. He ordered three military detachments of the 46th Regiment, under the command of Capt. Shaw, Capt. Wallis and Lieut. Dawe to be dispatched to Windsor, Liverpool and the Cowpastures to deal with the 'Natives' by 'punishing and clearing the country of them entirely, and driving them across the mountains.' (Lachlan Macquarie, Diary, 10 April, 1816 - 1 July 1818, cited in McGill, 1994.).

Wallis was assigned to the Airs and Appin areas. Early one morning he and his men came across the Dharawal men's camp at Appin. They slaughtered the men and cut off the heads of fourteen elders to take back to Sydney. While Wallis returned to Sydney, civilians, including stockmen, remained and continued to hunt down the Dharawal. They found the camp where women and children were staying, shooting or trampling them under their horses' hooves and driving them over the cliffs of Broughton Pass (Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, "Genocide," n.d., 14-17.).

The massacre at Appin differed from subsequent massacres in that it was initiated by British troops, rather than by police or private citizens. The massacre annihilated the Dharawal people, whose numbers had already been decimated by disease, to less than three thousand. After the massacres of 1816 there were perhaps less than five remaining (Bodkin-Andrews, "Genocide," 17, 18, 21.).

National Themes:

State Themes: Aboriginal post-contact

Death

Events

Aboriginal pre-contact

Study Themes:

Designer:

Maker / Builder:

Year Started:

Year Completed:

Circa: No

Physical Description:

Physical Condition:

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Management:****Further Comments:**

Historical Significance: (b) This site is significant because it is associated with the massacre of members of the Dharawal Aboriginal People, which occurred in 1816. This was the culmination of a period of hostilities between Aboriginals and Europeans, but is especially significant in that the massacre of the Dharawal women and children was undertaken by civilians after officially sanctioned military action carried out by the Government militia against the Dharawal men. The event destroyed the Dharawal's way of life and social structure, almost completing the process of decimation of their society caused by disease and hostilities since European occupation of the colony.

The landscape itself is historically significant because of its association with the creation beliefs of the Dharawal people. It was the site at which the people found sanctuary after fire swept through the land, and resulted in the reincarnation of one of the original Dharawal women, Wirijiribin, as the Lyrebird, the Dharawal's totem.

Aesthetic Significance:

Social Significance: The site has profound spiritual significance for descendants of the Dharawal people as the site at which many of their ancestors were murdered and as the site associated with their creation story.

Technical / Research:

Representativeness: The site is representative of sites at which atrocities have been committed against the Aboriginal population since European occupation.

Rare Assessment: The site is unique in that the massacre which occurred there developed from official government orders to clear that part of the country of its indigenous inhabitants.

Integrity / Intactness:

References:	Author:	Title:	Year:
	Bodkin-Andrews, Gawaian	Genocide	
	Bodkin-Andrews, Gawaian	The D'haraua the People of This Land (Year Ten History Assignment)	
	McGill, Ruth	Essay on Appin Massacre for B. A. (Hons.), University of Western Sydney, Macarthur	1994

Studies:**Listings:****Custom Field One:**

Custom Field Two: Rosemary Kerr of Sue Rosen & Associates, Heritage Assessment And History

Custom Field Three: 8/09/2000

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Item Name: **Broughton Pass Aboriginal Massacre Site**

Location: **Appin**

Custom Field Four:

Custom Field Five:

Custom Field Six:

Data Entry:

Date First Entered: 04/07/2001

Date Updated: 26/08/2001

Status: Completed