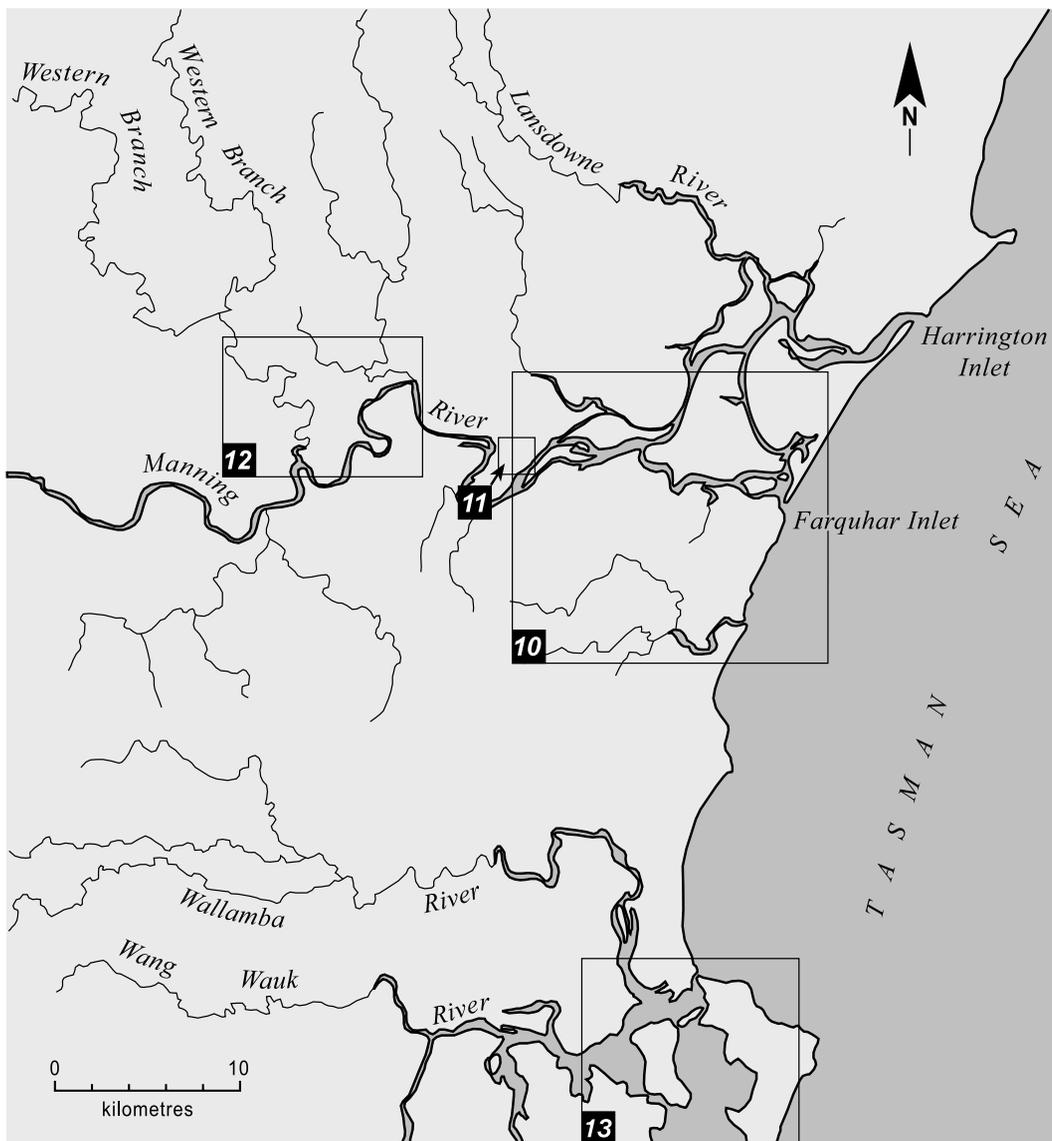
An aerial, black and white photograph of a wide river valley. A large dam with multiple piers spans across the river in the middle ground. The river flows from the background towards the foreground. The surrounding landscape is a patchwork of agricultural fields, some with distinct patterns, and scattered trees. In the far distance, rolling hills or mountains are visible under a clear sky. The text 'PART 2 Landscapes' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

PART 2 Landscapes



# 9 Aboriginal heritage landscapes

In Part 2 we present detailed studies of four parts of the study area. These landscapes have been the focus of Aboriginal settlement from the late nineteenth century until the present.

## Four detailed landscape studies

In the study area, Aboriginal settlement and/or activity has been concentrated in specific localities. We have identified four main centres, which we are calling Aboriginal heritage landscapes (see Figure 45).

They are:

- Purfleet & Saltwater
- Taree
- Killawarra & Dingo Creek
- Forster & Wallis Lake

While Aboriginal people have resided in specific places, such as on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, they made (and continue to make) considerable use of the landscape that surrounds their settlement. These surrounds are not simply the immediate perimeter of settlement, but often extend a substantial distance outwards from it. This phenomenon is discussed in detail in chapter 14. The term we coined to describe the landscape used by Aboriginal people surrounding a residential settlement is 'backyard' zone. The types of activities that take place in a settlement's backyard zone, and which we describe in the following landscape studies, include fishing, swimming, hunting, playing, camping, walking, visiting, gathering bush tucker, horse riding, socialising and working, among others.

Figure 45 shows the location and approximate extent of the four areas listed above, and their

relationship to each other. While we have identified four separate and seemingly discrete landscapes, it would be wrong to assume that they exist completely independently of each other. As our discussion in the following pages shows, there was (and continues to be) considerable interaction between them. They are all linked through kinship relationships, and these familial and other relationships are sustained through regular visits. There is also some degree of migration from one area to another.

It is important to note that the limits we have imposed on the extent of each landscape are only indicative. Many Aboriginal people who resided in any one of them regularly extended their range of movement beyond the boundaries suggested in the descriptions and the maps that we have provided. Equally, we make no claim to have been absolutely comprehensive in covering all aspects of Aboriginal life within the four landscapes.

## Landscapes, not sites

The four detailed landscape studies illustrate and reiterate a key theme in the book: that the concept of 'sites' is not sufficient for representing, reflecting and recording Aboriginal post-contact cultural heritage. In our view a landscape approach is more apt. We hope that by describing in considerable detail four core areas in the study area used and occupied by Aboriginal people, readers will appreciate that it is the landscapes themselves that ought to be considered heritage, rather than discrete and dispersed 'sites' within them. We demonstrate this most clearly by identifying how Aboriginal people moved across country. For instance, we trace how people walked, rode or drove from their homes to the creeks where they left their boats, or to their favourite spot on the riverbank where they fished, or to the end of the beach where they gathered shells and cooked dampers for the kids. Each of the four landscapes presented in this part of the book are cultural landscapes, not in the sense of being 'built' (like industrial estates) or 'designed' and/or 'cultivated' (like public gardens) but rather because they are thick with the significance inscribed by

*Left page* Fig. 45: Location of the four Aboriginal heritage landscapes in the study area  
10 Purfleet & Saltwater  
11 Taree  
12 Killawarra & Dingo Creek  
13 Forster & Wallis Lake

those who have lived in them and claimed them as their own.

## The bigger picture

While there are broad similarities between them all, the four landscapes were chosen for the way in which each possesses certain distinctive features, both geographical and historical. For instance, the Purfleet and Saltwater study presented in Chapter 10 is typical of an Aboriginal post-contact landscape in New South Wales constituted by a relatively large and quite permanent government-controlled settlement (surrounded by farms, bush and open country intensively visited by residents of the settlement) as well as its associated 'Christmas camp' at Saltwater, used for holidays. In contrast, Taree is an archetypal NSW country town, functioning on an unspoken but understood system of racial segregation that determines where and where it is not permissible for Aboriginal people to be. The Dingo Creek and Killawarra (Chapter 12) and the Forster and Wallis Lakes (Chapter 13) landscapes are different yet again.

By presenting four different Aboriginal cultural landscapes, we hope that heritage practitioners will recognise characteristics comparable to the contexts within which they work. To facilitate this, at the end of each landscape study we have provided a short discussion about how it corresponds with other parts of New South Wales.

## A note on sources

The four landscape studies presented in the following chapters are based on both archival (documentary) and oral sources. In terms of archival sources, the records of the NSW Aborigines' Protection Board (APB), which cover the period from about 1890 to 1939, and the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board (AWB), which begin in 1940 and end in 1969, are the most detailed concerning the Reserves under their respective control. We have made considerable use of these records for information about the Aboriginal Reserves in the study area, which include Purfleet (first gazetted 1900), Forster (first gazetted 1891), Dingo Creek (first gazetted 1906) and Killawarra (first gazetted 1894). In addition we have accessed NSW Lands Department records, particularly correspondence which spells out the effort of some white landowners to gain control of Aboriginal Reserves. These Lands Department records include Parish Plans, subdivision maps and other cadastral information, which we have included in the text

where appropriate. Other documentary sources drawn upon are local histories (both published and unpublished), tourist guides (especially for Forster) and local newspapers.

In addition to archival material, we have made considerable use of oral sources. During the research we recorded about thirty oral history interviews with Aboriginal people across the study area. We also draw on two excellent published accounts written by Aboriginal people, both of which rely greatly on memories: Ella Simon's *Through My Eyes* and Patricia Davis-Hurst's *Sunrise Station*.

In addition to archival and oral sources (that is, primary sources), we draw upon some exemplary scholarly historical studies, most notably Heather Goodall's *Invasion to Embassy*.

## A note on interpreting sources

An issue that all historians of the Aboriginal past face, especially those concerned with the period covered by living memory (i.e. the twentieth century), is how to combine archival and oral sources in their analysis, especially when there are obvious points of disagreement between the two. (For a detailed discussion of this dilemma, see Heather Goodall's article, 'Aboriginal History and the Politics of Information Control'.<sup>1</sup>) In the following chapters, where there is discord between oral and documentary sources, we have sought to present the different accounts, or interpretations, side by side, providing some comment on how they vary and why. Overall, though, we have used archival and oral sources for distinct and complementary purposes. For example, we have used archival material to reconstruct the history of how Aboriginal people ended up on particular pockets of land in the late nineteenth century, after dispossession from their traditional country was almost complete. These specific historical details are generally not the stuff of Aboriginal people's memories. In turn, we have used Aboriginal people's memories to 'map' terrain not included in official records. For instance, we draw heavily on oral testimony to establish how Aboriginal people used the landscape beyond the purview of the government manager, that is, outside the mission fence and at the local Christmas camp. In this respect, we use archival records and oral testimony in a similar way: as a reliable source of information about what happened in the past. We acknowledge that such an approach will not satisfy all historians, especially those who argue that documentary and memory sources differ from each other in significant respects and provide radically different types of historical 'truth'.

## The scope of Part 2

While Part 2 does make passing reference to the mid-nineteenth century, its main focus is on the hundred and twenty or so years from the closing decades of the nineteenth century until the present. The closing decades of the nineteenth century was a period in which government responses to Aboriginal people became more systematic and formalised (see Chapter 6). As already noted in Part 1, it was in this period that the APB was established. As part of this process, Aboriginal people became concentrated in particular areas, often on reserves that were considered to be an acceptable distance from the loci of white residence. During this period, some Aboriginal settlements became quite fixed in the landscape. Many of these late nineteenth-century Aboriginal settlements are known about today through the work of historians such as Heather Goodall, who has painstakingly documented them in her book, *Invasion to Embassy*. Some have endured to the present, often as a result of the tenacity of Aboriginal people themselves to hold onto these small pockets of reserved land. One of our aims in this part of the book is to broaden our understanding and appreciation of these Aboriginal settlements, especially in heritage terms. We are at pains to illustrate the relationship between those reserve settlements and the larger landscape.

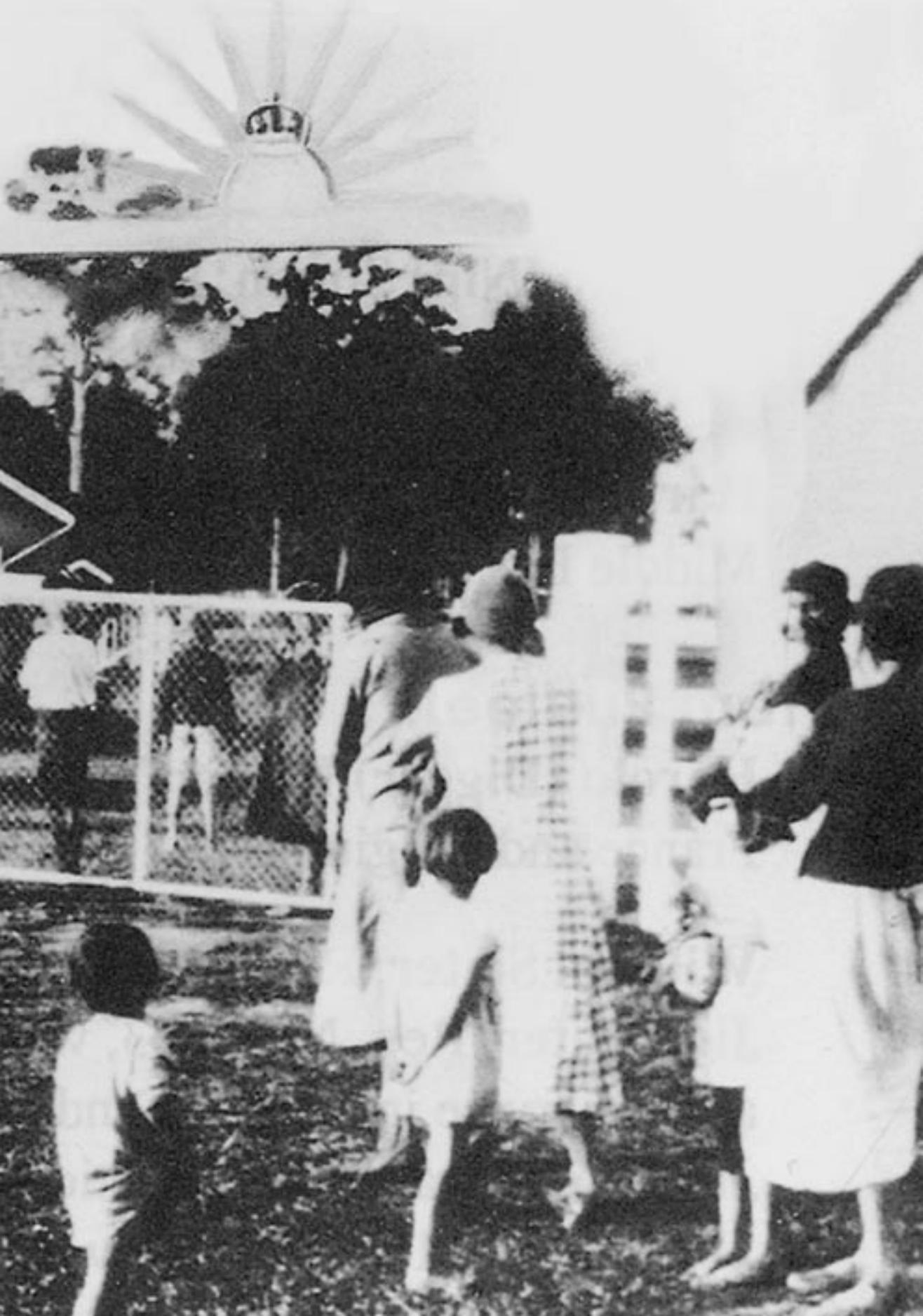
We seek to unsettle the notion that Aboriginal people in the twentieth century could only be found in easily identified 'Aboriginal spaces', and to suggest that they also had a presence in the landscape claimed by whites. This has important implications for mapping post-contact Aboriginal heritage in New South Wales, highlighting the concept of shared history/shared heritage.

## Historical themes

The key historical themes that shape Aboriginal people's experiences after the 1940s are assimilation, which was accompanied by a process of de-segregation and the gradual dismantling of discriminatory legislation, followed by a policy agenda of self-management (or 'self-determination') after the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board was disbanded in 1969.

Another important historical theme is identity: what it meant to be Aboriginal in this part of Australia where Aboriginal people had experienced colonisation over a long time. Of most relevance to our purposes is that during the twentieth century Aboriginal Reserve settlements were sites where Aboriginal identity, now commonly referred to as 'Aboriginality', was nurtured, strengthened and made anew.<sup>2</sup> A sense of shared identity among Aboriginal people in South-Eastern Australia was grounded in shared historical experiences (as colonised people) as well as in the continuation of cultural traditions from pre-contact times. To acknowledge the vital role that Aboriginal Reserves played in this process is to add a significant new layer of meaning to them as 'heritage places'.

In contrast to Part 1, where key historical themes (e.g., accommodation and resistance) provided the frame (or window) through which we examined how Aboriginal people occupied and used the post-contact landscape in the study area, here our window is the landscape itself. This means that key historical themes associated with the twentieth century (e.g., assimilation and self-management) are embedded within our discussion of specific cultural landscapes. Our approach to twentieth-century Aboriginal history is, therefore, explicitly 'spatial'. This is an original approach. Although numerous and impressive historical studies about Aboriginal people living in various parts of NSW during the twentieth century have been produced over the last thirty or so years,<sup>3</sup> this body of scholarship has been insufficiently spatial in its focus, making it only minimally useful to heritage practitioners. Our aim in the following pages is to demonstrate how twentieth-century Aboriginal history can be spatialised.



# 10 Purfleet & Saltwater

This chapter describes a landscape in which the main Aboriginal settlement is the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, a settlement surrounded by farms, bush and creeks that Aboriginal people used extensively. Along with Purfleet, the cherished Christmas camp at Saltwater on the coast is a key node in this cultural landscape.

## What's in a name?

Purfleet is a place associated, and indeed synonymous, with Aboriginal people in the Manning Valley at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth century, the name Purfleet referred to the southern side of the Manning River opposite the township of Taree but over time it was used only to denote the area occupied by the Aboriginal Reserve situated a few kilometres back from the river. The strip of land along the southern bank, once known as Purfleet, became Glenthorne, the name of the original estate surveyed in 1841. Using the name Purfleet exclusively for the area occupied by the Aboriginal Reserve reinforced a popular meaning it had gradually acquired. Ella Simon, an Aboriginal woman who was born in 1902 and spent most of her life on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, noted in her autobiography published in 1978: 'Oh, there was such a down on Purfleet in those days [c. 1930s/1940s]. If anyone came from Purfleet, they were "black" and that was it. Even the white missionaries who came there to live used to be called "black"'.<sup>4</sup>

*This page* Fig. 46: Tracing showing 'R31598 for use of Aborigines', gazetted in 1900. The tracing indicates the position of the Reserve in relation to the Manning River and Taree, and its location at the intersection of the road to Old Bar. NSW State Records, 3/2422.2  
*Left page* Detail from Fig. 55, page 84.

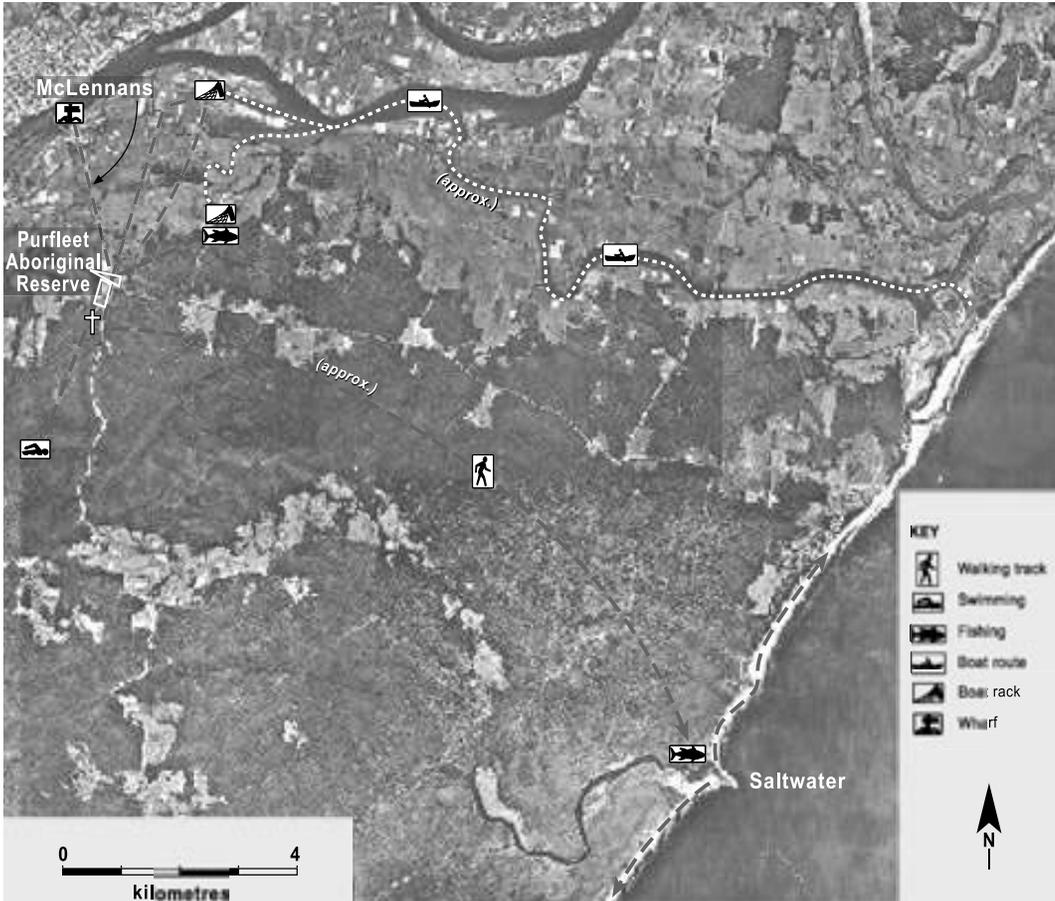
Purfleet had become intimately associated with the 'blacks' around the turn of the century when a small Aboriginal settlement was established there. There are two accounts about the origins of the Purfleet Aboriginal, one contained in government records and the other told by Aboriginal people. The accounts have some details in common, but also differ in significant ways.



## An Aboriginal Reserve at Purfleet

According to documentary sources, in October 1900 the NSW Aborigines Protection Board (APB) organised for an area of eighteen acres to be gazetted at Purfleet as a Reserve for Aborigines (see Figure 46).<sup>5</sup> The Reserve was situated 'at the intersection of the roads from Taree to Forster and from Tinonee to the Old Bar'.<sup>6</sup> This was one of a series of Aboriginal Reserves that the NSW Aborigines Protection Board was creating at the time.<sup>7</sup>

In her autobiography, Ella Simon provides her own account of the establishment of the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. In her version, greater emphasis is given to Aboriginal people's own initiative in moving



away from the camp they occupied at Browns Hill on the edge of Taree, and to the support they received from sympathetic whites. She explains:

*Way back, my mother's people were starting to overcrowd that camp of theirs on the fringe of the town [Browns Hill]. The problem was that the more they increased in numbers, the more the white people wanted them to keep out of town. In those days, my grandfather worked a lot for the local farmers. One day he talked about the terrible conditions that they had to put up with in that camp to a Scottish couple, the McLennans. They were so sympathetic that they offered him a little corner of their own land. It was only a little square that had two entrances because different families owned the paddocks on either side of it, but it was enough for Grandfather. He returned to the camp and managed to get three or four families to move out there with him. The rest just stayed where they were. That was the year I was born, 1902.<sup>8</sup>*

Ella's version gives precedence to her grandfather's role in the establishment of the Aboriginal settlement at Purfleet, as well as to the goodwill of some local white farmers, providing a different perspective from that gained from an exclusive reliance on government records.<sup>9</sup> In her account, the APB is somewhat invisible. Reiterating that the origin of the Purfleet settlement was the result of Aboriginal people's own actions, Ella concluded: 'That bit of land my grandfather built on was the beginning of the settlement that came to be called Purfleet [Aboriginal Reserve]'.<sup>10</sup>

This version of events concurs with Heather Goodall's argument that the Aboriginal Reserves established in the first two decades or so of the APB's existence reflect intense pressure from Aboriginal people for land.<sup>11</sup> Her research over many years has been important for highlighting Aboriginal people's determination in responding to the situation in which they found themselves, post-dispossession.



## Not wanted in town

The creation of the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, on the southern side of the Manning River, was also a product of the growing intolerance of whites to Aboriginal people living in towns.<sup>12</sup> By the late nineteenth century, there was a large settlement of Aboriginal people living at Browns Hill, behind the Taree Estate (the original town settlement) on the northern side of the Manning River. There was concern among the white community that this Aboriginal settlement was growing. Indeed, throughout this period in NSW there was general anxiety about the increasing 'half caste' population, many of whom were identifying as Aboriginal. One solution to this perceived problem was to

remove Aboriginal people from townships, and segregate them on reserves where they would not be interacting on a daily basis with white people and where they would be out of sight. It is in this context that the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve was established.

## Browns Hill camp endures

Even after the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve was formally gazetted in 1900, and some Aboriginal families had taken up residence on it, fringe camps of Aboriginal people remained around Taree. It was not simply the case that the entire Aboriginal population living about Taree came to be contained on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve upon its gazettal. Ella Simon noted that some families remained at Browns Hill even after her grandfather and other families relocated to Purfleet. Margaret Marr remembered that after spending a short while living on the government reserve at Purfleet in the early 1900s,<sup>13</sup> she moved back to Browns Hill with her family:

*Left page* Fig. 47: Aerial photograph with overlay illustrating how the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve is a settlement node in a larger landscape used by Aboriginal people. © Department of Lands

*This page* Fig. 48: Aboriginal people receiving government rations at the Taree Showground in the late 1800s. Courtesy Patricia Davis-Hurst



*It was all tea tree scrub and swamp. There was about 15-20 families living there at the time. Here we were happy. We did not need much, everyone lived off the land, plenty of kangaroos, rabbits, yams and wild honey. All we needed was flour to make bread and plenty of water. There were humpies and tin shacks all through the scrub, a great playground for kids.<sup>14</sup>*

Eventually, though, the Browns Hill camp was completely shut down, and its remaining residents forcibly removed to the government reserve at Purfleet. Margaret Marr recalled

*I don't know how long we stayed there [at Browns Hill]. It seemed a long time to kids. One day some men came with trucks, they said they had orders to take everyone to the reserve at Sunrise Station [Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve]. The men fought them off, then the police arrived. This time they gave in peacefully because they knew they could not win against the law. To fight the law meant going to jail for a long time. Finally everyone was transported to Sunrise Station and resettled.<sup>15</sup>*

It was, it seems, only after a struggle that the Browns Hill camp was permanently closed down. At least for a time, the 'authorised' government settlement at Purfleet and the 'unauthorised' fringe camp at Browns Hill coexisted, with some movement back and forward between the two places.

### **Purfleet becomes a visible site of Aboriginal dwelling**

And so it was that by the early twentieth century, Purfleet, on the opposite side of the Manning River from Taree, had become one of the main Aboriginal settlements in the Manning Valley. While Ella Simon's account (discussed above) suggests that the land under question was the corner of a farm, early maps show that prior to being gazetted

as an Aboriginal Reserve, the eighteen acres under question was Camping Reserve 89, first gazetted in 1880.<sup>16</sup> It is true, however, that it was bordered on two sides by paddocks (see Figure 50).

The Reserve was, in some respects, well situated, surrounded as it was by bush, where Aboriginal men continued to hunt for kangaroos and wallabies, and by farms, where they did a bit of casual work, although it was not well supplied with water.<sup>17</sup> The APB had initially favoured Tinonee as the site for the reserve, but according to its records, Aboriginal people would not agree to occupy the reserve set aside for them near that place, and the APB conceded there was less possibility of gaining work there.<sup>18</sup> Again this suggests that Aboriginal people had some say in the establishment of Reserves in this period.

### **From camping reserve to settlement**

Over time the former Camping Reserve-turned-Aboriginal Reserve was transformed into a small and fairly permanent settlement. Its transformation is evident in various ways, such as by the erection of huts, other buildings and fences and the planting of some crops. Ella Simon explains that her grandfather 'helped [other Aboriginal families] to build their own houses from the timber around there. He even cut shingles for the roofs'.<sup>19</sup> APB records indicate that material for ten bark shacks was provided. By 1903, missionaries had taken up residence on the Reserve and soon set about building a mission house and school. The latter opened in 1907.<sup>20</sup> (See Figure 51).

### **The land around the 'mission' becomes increasingly occupied**

By 1916, the large portion of land between the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve and the Manning River had been subdivided into wedge-shaped portions



with 100 feet river frontage each (see Figure 52). With this new subdivision, Aboriginal people's access to and along the Manning River presumably became more restricted, as they were required to navigate their way around a sea of farms. There was however a rough road from the reserve to the punt jetty at the river, which Aboriginal people used regularly.<sup>21</sup>

On their way along the road to the wharf, Aboriginal people passed a farm owned by the McLennan (or McClennan) family, the same family that Ella Simon referred to in her description about the foundation of the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve.<sup>22</sup> This farm, and the family who owned it, feature strongly in Aboriginal people's oral histories about the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

### McLennan's – a friendly farm

The McLennans are mostly remembered for a vegetable patch they grew especially for Aboriginal people from the 'mish'.<sup>23</sup> Describing the farm in the 1940s, Warner Saunders, an Aboriginal man from Purfleet, explained: 'Old Rory McLennan had this one big paddock, all vegetables just for this place here [Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve]. We used to go down to the river fishing after school, and then on our way home we'd go into that big yard and get vegetables to go with our fish. He grew that for this place'.<sup>24</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst, who is Margaret Marr's daughter and who lived most of her life on the Purfleet Reserve, recalled it in a similar way: 'We had one farmer – Reggie McLennan – just across the bridge there. The road used to go straight past his house. Every time he ploughed up his paddocks, he'd plough

one up for the Koories. "I'll put a patch in there for the blackfellas because I don't want them pinching my good stuff".<sup>25</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst interprets the McLennan's gesture of growing vegetables for the Purfleet people as a practical response to the problem of Aboriginal people pinching fruit and vegetables from local farms. According to Davis-Hurst: 'Well ... they used to knock off the corn or melons or whatever. ... If the white farmers saw them [at the creek] they kept an eye on them because they knew they was goin' to knick a melon or somethin'. And most of the times the boys did'.<sup>26</sup>

The practice of knicking fruit and vegetables might be explained in at least two ways. It was certainly the case that Aboriginal people did not have sufficient land themselves to grow enough crops to support the settlement, and so fruit and vegetables from local farms provided an essential supplement to the rations they received from the government. Alternatively (or additionally), taking fruit and vegetables might be interpreted as an act of defiance, a demonstration that, as the original owners, Aboriginal people believed they had pre-existing rights to the fruits of the land.

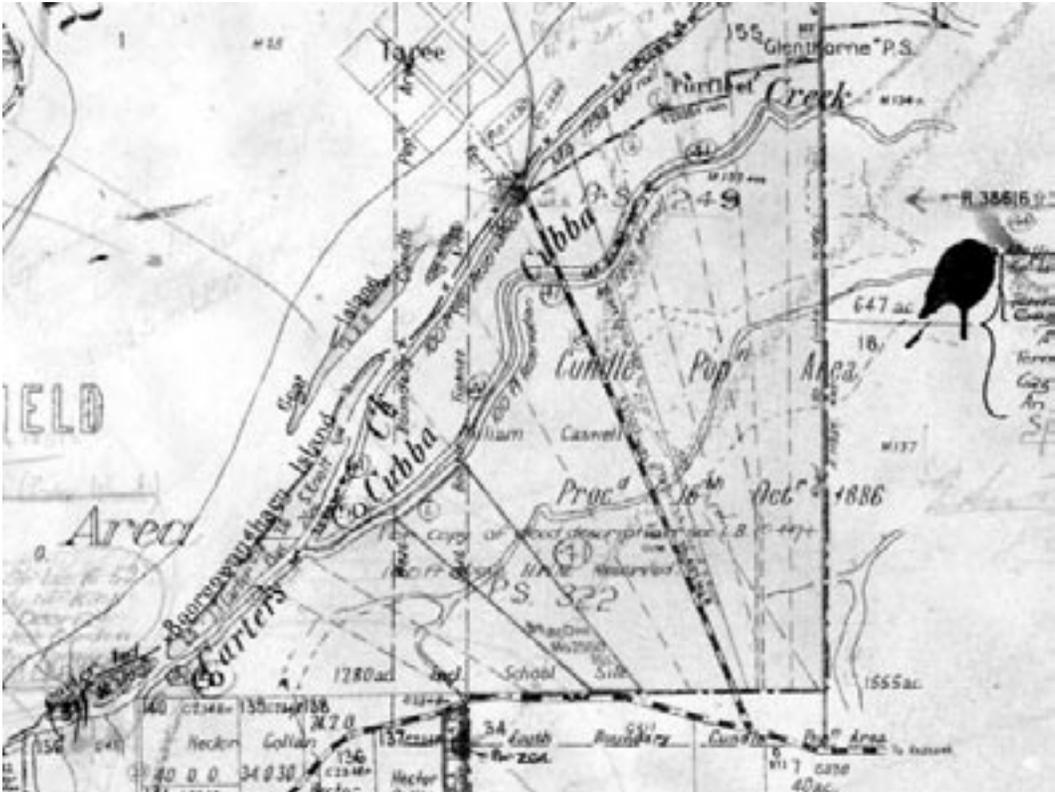
### Hostile farmers

While the McLennans seemed to have been allies (or 'friends') of the Aborigines, other local farmers were not. Many local farmers actively discouraged Aboriginal people from walking across their properties. Firing a shot above the 'trespassers' heads, or chasing them on horses and later motorcycles, were commonly used deterrents. This did not necessarily stop Aboriginal people from going onto farm land; it just meant that when they did so they would have an escape route worked out in advance, one that often involved darting into bush, usually along the creeks. Russell Saunders, who grew up on the Purfleet Reserve in the 1950s and 1960s, explained what was involved in general terms:

*Left page* Fig. 49: The Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, c.1930s. Courtesy NSW State Records. No 8842, 4/8567, Reel 2796.

*This page* Fig. 50: Detail from Parish Plan showing Camping Reserve 89, gazetted in 1880. © Department of Lands

Fig. 51: The school (building on the left) on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, c. 1930s. Courtesy NSW State Records. No 8841, 4/8567, Reel no. 2796.



*All the time you'd be looking over your shoulder, always alert. Because nine out of ten times you'd hear this bang – a shotgun going off. 'Ah you blackfellas, get out of there'. They'd come flying down on a horse, or a car would come flying through. ... We'd tear up through the bush.'*<sup>27</sup>

For Aboriginal boys especially, but also girls, the farms surrounding the Purfleet 'mission' were their playground.<sup>28</sup> A common pastime for those growing up in the 1950s through to the 1980s was to sneak onto a nearby farm owned by the Stitts family, situated on the Pacific Highway north of the Purfleet Mission, in order to swim in the dam and to raid the orchard.<sup>29</sup> They'd commonly get chased off if seen, but part of the fun was to try to enter that land without being detected.

## Spirits in the landscape

Unwelcoming farmers were not the only hostile presence that Aboriginal people took into account as they moved across the landscape. Bad spirits, such as the 'tusk woman' and the 'hairy man', who dwell in the land, influenced the routes that children, especially, would take. In the oral histories

we recorded, most people made reference to encounters, or near encounters, with ghosts. These spirits were both everywhere (i.e. omnipresent) and associated with specific places. For example, a 'tusk woman' was believed to live at a particular spot along the Pacific Highway between the Manning River and the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. This was the spirit of a woman who had been killed there. While spirits are by nature invisible, and are therefore intangible, they nonetheless give the landscape meaning, either through their dwelling places or through sites of 'encounter' between the living and the dead. For instance, Ray Saunders remembers being spooked as a child at the old scout hall along the Pacific Highway when he and his friends got stuck there one night in the rain:

*We got out there [on to the highway] and ... it started rainin'. So we got into the Scout Hall. There was no windows, they just lifted the flaps up. And we just climbed in. We got in there out of the rain. Darkness started to come on and we said, "Oh boy, we've got to get home before dark because we had to go past the gate (laughs) where the wild woman ... (laughter) where this woman was supposed to have been*

killed in an accident, and they said she was a tusk woman and “she was gonna get ya!” on the way home.

So we stayed out there and it started to get that dark, in the afternoon, that we started to panic. And one of the older boys, he looked through the crack in the wall and he said, “There’s a hairy man. He’s climbed up that tree and he’s lookin’ around to see where we are.”

Of course, we went racin’ over and we looked through the crack and it was one of those ants nests. (laughter) But with our eyes and what we were told, we turned it into a ‘hairy man’. (laughter) So some of the younger kids started cryin’. (laughter) “Boy, we’ve got to get out of here! If we don’t move fast we’re goin’ home in the dark, and the tusk woman will get us anyway.” (laughter)

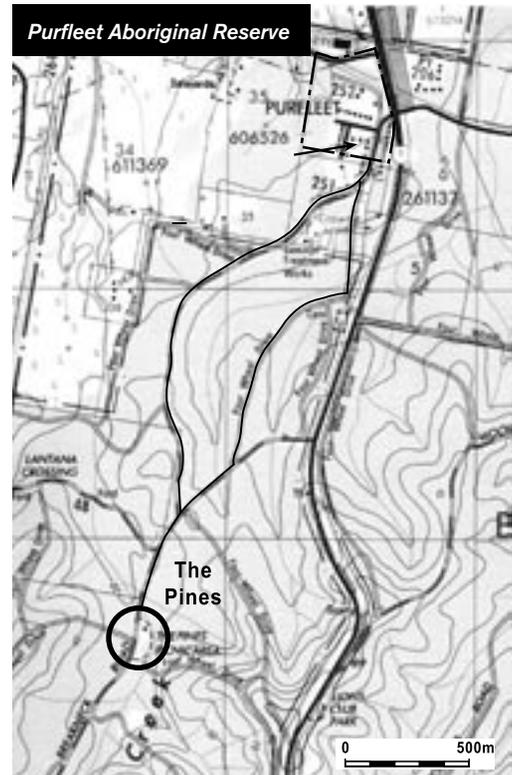
So we start movin’ out of this building and we were all bunched up in a heap headin’ towards the creek, and in the creek there were supposed to be hairy men and wild women there that were going to get us. So, off we’d go! Start runnin’.<sup>30</sup>

The belief that at night the landscape was home to spirits clearly influenced the way that young Aboriginal boys and girls moved across it. Faith Saunders (Ray and Russell’s mother) suggests that the stories told by parents to their children about the ‘tusk woman’ or the ‘hairy man’ were one way of impressing upon them the need to be home before dark.<sup>31</sup>

*The hairy man. He said you’re not to go into the bush late in the afternoon. You got to be careful. The old hairy man will get ya out there and he’ll put ya down a hole, and he’ll put frogs in your ears, and when he hears us comin’ lookin’ for ya, coming to get ya, he’ll run the other way. But there was a moral to the story. The frogs were, you know, what the [molester would] offer you, you know, to get you away. And the hairy man was the molester. Today, we still tell the stories to the little kids at school. That they’re not to get into any cars and they’re not to take lollies from men, old men.*<sup>32</sup>

## Hiding places

The fear of harassment from whites was real for many Aboriginal children growing up around Purfleet (and elsewhere in rural New South Wales) in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, just as it can be today.<sup>33</sup> The 1930s, especially, were a particularly low period in race relations in rural towns. Some white townfolk took it upon themselves to keep Aboriginal people out of town and off the streets, using direct confrontation or the threat of it. This was also a period in which



many Aboriginal children, now known as the ‘stolen generations’, were forcibly taken by the APB from their parents and placed in institutions.<sup>34</sup> Accounts about children being lured into the cars of government officials are common in Aboriginal oral histories. Reiterating the way that white men’s vehicles represented a potential threat to Aboriginal children, Faith Saunders recalled of the period:

*When we were walkin’ along the road, if a car came – and very few cars came in those days – we’d run into the bush! Frightened of cars, and frightened of cars stopping.*<sup>35</sup>

Running into the bush was a common response to threats of violence from white people, including the police.<sup>36</sup> It was often an effective escape. Russell Saunders told us that he remembered ‘this [white] fellow saying, “Once them blackfellows hit the bush, you may as well give up! Forget it! You won’t catch ‘em”’.

Left page Fig. 52: Detail from Parish Plan showing wedge-shaped subdivision of land between the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve and Manning River. © Department of Lands

This page Fig. 53: Location of Kiwarrak State Forest behind the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. The Pines is indicated. © Department of Lands



### Bush havens – The Kills, for instance

While Aboriginal people might have ‘jumped into the bush’ along the highway, or along the creek, as they needed to in the face of danger, there were also remnants of bushland that Aboriginal people used regularly for socialising together. The advantage of these bush places was that they were out of sight of whites. Sometimes these places were used for drinking alcohol, which was illegal for Aboriginal people until 1963. The forest reserve behind the Purfleet mission was a popular place for this type of activity.<sup>37</sup> (see Figure 53)

While the land to the north of the Aboriginal Reserve was a patchwork of farms, most land behind it was bush.<sup>38</sup> A Forest Reserve had been proclaimed in 1898, another in 1902, and finally the extensive Kiwarrak State Forest was established in 1917. Aboriginal people know this part of the landscape extremely well.



Generations have collected mushrooms and wild fruit, hunted kangaroos, wallabies and rabbits, and tracked and rode horses through there.

At least from the 1940s onwards, but possibly earlier, a well-known hangout was The Kills, a small picnic area within Kirrawak State Forest (see Figure 54). Aboriginal families from Purfleet would spend the day there, swimming in the creek, having a barbecue, and sitting around yarning, laughing and maybe drinking.<sup>39</sup> Closer to the mission, but in the same part of the bush, was another place known as The Pines. This was a place with good fruit trees, and blackberry and mushroom patches. In the 1940s, Patricia Davis-Hurst and her friends spent their afternoons after school tracking their horses through this bush, and then riding them up to the Pines, along the old Forster Road or the forestry tracks.

*We had horses. ... When school was finished for the day, we'd go tracking our horses. Everyone had a horse. They used to go down the blue well and feed around there. Or out the Kills way. ... Go out to the Kills .... There's plenty of fruit trees growing there wild. Beautiful creeks where'd we swim. Go for blackberries, pears, peaches, guavas. Bring them home.<sup>40</sup>*

### Water places

Patricia Davis-Hurst refers to the blue well, a natural spring used for drinking water. It was ‘beautiful clear drinking water’.<sup>41</sup> Horrie Saunders, Faith Saunders’ husband, recalled that ‘there was no tanks in those

days. ... When we wanted real good drinking water we used to walk down to the blue well, down a back bush track to a place where they'd sunk a shaft for clay to make bricks. Pure clean water there'.<sup>42</sup> According to Faith Saunders, 'to keep the kids away, they'd say that blue light would be there. So they wasn't game to swim in it'. 'Blue light' indicated the presence of bad spirits, or the devil.<sup>43</sup> The supply of fresh water was a constant issue at the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. Aboriginal people depended on wells like this one and nearby creeks. Ella Simon recalled that they'd walk a mile or so to Carles Creek to collect water.<sup>44</sup> Later, the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board (AWB) supplied water tanks but the Reserve was not connected to town water until 1967.

### The route to Taree

While explicitly and not so explicitly excluded from Taree in the first half of the twentieth century, nonetheless Aboriginal people had many reasons to go there, not the least of which was the demand for their labour (see also Chapter 11). This was certainly the case for Aboriginal women, many of whom worked as domestics for local white families.<sup>45</sup> Aboriginal people went to town to shop,<sup>46</sup> to buy grog on the sly,<sup>47</sup> to visit non-Aboriginal friends,<sup>48</sup> and for recreation, such as going to the picture theatre. So the road between the Aboriginal Reserve and where the punt crossed the Manning River to Taree was well traversed, and perhaps more importantly, layered with stories. The route taken to get to town was the old Forster road that came right past the mission and then on to the punt wharf. Like everybody else, Aboriginal people took the punt across the river to get to Taree, at least until the bridge was built.

### Aboriginal cemetery

As part of general practices of exclusion operating in rural Australian country towns in the first half of the twentieth century, Aboriginal people were rarely permitted to bury their dead in town cemeteries.<sup>49</sup> Under these circumstances, they set aside a corner of land on their own Reserve, or a piece of unoccupied and usually public land nearby, as a cemetery. These little burial grounds were not usually gazetted as cemeteries in any official way. The location of various Aboriginal cemeteries, in NSW is known either through scant documentary sources, through people's memories, or through Aboriginal people continuing to maintain those cemeteries despite, very often, having moved away from the missions where they were located.<sup>50</sup>



At the Purfleet Aboriginal settlement, the cemetery was situated in the bush at the back of the Reserve. Ella Simon described how, before cars, Aboriginal men used a handcart to transport a body from the Taree Hospital to the Purfleet cemetery, a distance of two miles. The 'mission' cemetery was used until 1965, by which time it was full. From then onwards, Aboriginal people were buried at the Redbank Cemetery along the Old Bar Road, despite some initial opposition from local whites.<sup>51</sup> Aboriginal people living at Purfleet and Taree today, remember driving down behind the hearse from the mission to the cemetery (see Figure 57).

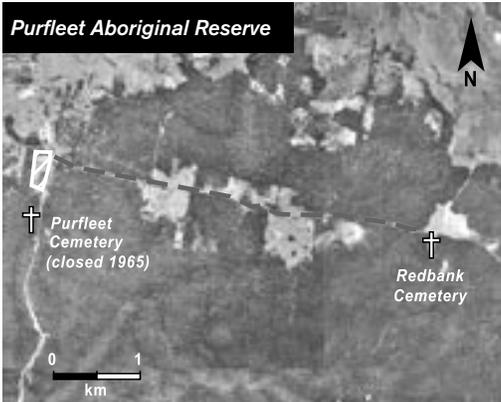
### The arrival of the mission manager

The Depression in the late 1920s and 1930s forced many Aboriginal people who had hitherto been living independently of government assistance onto Aboriginal Reserves which were under the control of the APB. At Purfleet, this movement of Aboriginal people onto the Reserve coincided with the appointment of the first resident manager in 1932. The arrival of the manager signalled a new era in the history of the Reserve, transforming it from an unsupervised settlement, where Aboriginal people enjoyed some degree of freedom, to a place where

*Right page* Fig. 54: The Kills, 2001

Fig. 55: The gate at the entrance to the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, when it was known as Sunrise Station, c. 1930s. Courtesy NSW State Records. No 9178, 4/8567, Reel 2796.

*This page* Fig. 56: Location of the cemetery behind the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. Highway 1 shown is now disused.  
© Department of Lands



Aboriginal people's lives were more constrained and controlled. This was a period in which, as Barry Morris argues in relation to Bellbrook, Aboriginal Reserves became 'total institutions'.<sup>52</sup> The appointment of the manager was symptomatic of the APB's shifting policy from segregation-protection to assimilation.<sup>53</sup>

In the 1930s, the APB became increasingly intent upon 'training' Aboriginal people for eventual assimilation into white society. Aboriginal Reserves were seen as sites where such training would take place. This process stalled with the Second World War, although was resumed immediately afterwards. In addition to the appointment of a resident manager, the tangible, material signs that the bureaucratic meaning of the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve (which, with the appointment of a resident manager, was re-classified as an Aboriginal Station) was changing included the erection of a large gate at the entrance and a manager's house nearby. The location of the manager's residence near the entrance to the settlement allowed him to monitor residents' comings and goings. By this stage, the mission had been renamed Sunrise Station, perhaps to symbolise a 'new era', and so the new gate boasted a rising sun (see Figure 55). During the Second World War the symbol was considered too 'Japanese', and the sign was taken down. The settlement reverted to its previous name, Purfleet.



### Living beyond the mission fence

While most Aboriginal families lived on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, a few managed to live just beyond its fence. For instance, the Bungie family (also sometimes spelt Bungay) had a house on the western perimeter of the Aboriginal Reserve, fronting the road to Tinonee. According to oral testimony, the family was able to buy the land and build the house after winning the lottery. 'George' Bungie (nee Yarnold), who owned the place with her husband Pat Bungie, was related to the Dingo Creek mob, a group of families who lived on a small reserve on the Dingo Creek near Wingham.<sup>54</sup> George's relations from Dingo Creek would regularly visit her at the Tinonee road house, often gathering there for dances and sing-alongs. For her grandchildren who later grew up in the house, the bush immediately around it was their playground. They and other kids from the mission would spend hours and hours after school and on the weekends playing in this bush. Directly opposite the house was a place they called Rum Jungle, a popular place for playing; and directly behind the house were the sale yards. On the weekends, local kids would sneak in there to swim in the dam.<sup>55</sup> The Bungie's house was sold in the 1960s, and the family living there then moved onto the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve.



*This page* Fig. 57: Overlay on aerial photograph showing the route from the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve to the Redbank Cemetery. © Department of Lands.

Fig. 58: George Morris and Lester Maher outside the Bungie's house on the Tinonee road, c. 1971. Courtesy Betty Bungie

Fig. 59: The former site of Bungie's house on Tinonee road, just beyond the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, 2001

*Right page* Fig. 60: Patricia Davis-Hurst's family having Christmas dinner under the trees at Saltwater in 1949. Courtesy Patricia Davis-Hurst



### The local Christmas camp

A description of the Purfleet Aboriginal heritage landscape is incomplete without reference to Saltwater. Saltwater is located on the coast, south-east of Purfleet (see Figure 62). It was the holiday destination of families from the Purfleet Reserve, and indeed from other pocket and fringe settlements in the Manning Valley. It was what is commonly called a 'Christmas camp', although it was frequently used at Easter time as well.

During the school holidays, families would pack up and de-camp to the coast. This was an opportunity to get away from the mission, and to have some time together without constant interference from the resident manager and his wife, the 'matron'. Aboriginal people's keenest memories of the daily indignities they experienced under the manager and the matron were of being required to report their comings and goings, and of the inspections of their houses without notice. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that the Christmas holidays at Saltwater were eagerly anticipated.

The set-up at Saltwater was organised around family groupings (see Figure 62). Each family had its own camping place, and different kin groups camped close to each other. For instance, the Russell, Marr

and Dumas families camped on the point, the Saunders a little further back, while the Bungies camped up near the beach. Even further along the beach from the Bungies was the Happy Valley mob, a group of families who lived just outside Taree at a place known popularly as Happy Valley. They were related to families at Dingo Creek, and thus also to the Bungies.<sup>56</sup>

### Saltwater – our place

In their oral testimonies, Aboriginal people describe Saltwater in ways quite different from how they talk about the 'mission'. Saltwater is commonly described as a place where people 'returned' to old (i.e. more 'traditional') ways of doing things and where they experienced a freedom usually absent in their daily lives on the mission and around Purfleet and Taree. This was one place in the local landscape that Aboriginal people felt belonged to them in a very deep sense. Russell Saunders explained: 'Yeah, well you knew that that was your place down there. You just knew every little nook and cranny'.<sup>57</sup>

Before the time when they owned cars (from about the 1960s and 1970s), Aboriginal people would walk down to Saltwater from the Purfleet Mission. Or else

they would take a horse and sulky, or sometimes they'd hire a local bus or truck. The route was just a dirt track in those days, going through the bush rather than following the Old Bar road as it does today.

## Saltwater becomes a reserve

Up until the late 1960s and 1970s, very few white people ever went to Saltwater, but it gradually became popular among surfers. In the 1970s, this place, which had once almost exclusively been used by Aboriginal people, was turned into a public reserve under the management of the local Taree Council. In the process, Aboriginal people were prohibited from using it the way they had for generations. This, combined with other changes, such as the dismantling of the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board (which had replaced the APB in 1939) and the departure of the resident manager in the late 1960s, meant that the tradition of camping at Saltwater each Christmas lapsed. It is, however, currently being revived.

## Fishing places

Many Aboriginal men from Purfleet who worked as fishermen in the 1940s and 1950s, and probably earlier, went to Saltwater and other nearby coastal fishing places throughout the year. For example, Ken Saunders (Warner Saunders' father) had a fishing spot he called Greenpoint, which was a little way up the lagoon from Saltwater. He would walk across country to this spot from the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, where he lived, through the forest reserves at the back of the Reserve. Ken Saunders and other Aboriginal fishermen left their boats and nets on creeks around Purfleet, such as at Trotters Creek and at Woollards Creek, east of the mission. (See also Chapter 19.) Later on, in the 1960s and 1970s, when he was making a living as a professional fisherman, Warner Saunders kept his own fishing gear at Glens Creek along the Glenthorne Road, near the Manning River. Horace Saunders and his sons still anchor their boats in the Manning River, just a little further north from Warner's spot.

These were places associated with professional fishermen, those who sought to make a living from fishing and who sold their catch through the local fish co-op. Many other Aboriginal people from Purfleet fished for pleasure and to feed their families. Betty Bungie, who moved to Purfleet from Nambucca in about 1950, loved fishing, and would go out every weekend with her husband and children. Her favourite places were Saltwater,



Redhead, Blackhead, Old Bar and Forster. She told us that she'd 'stay all day fishin'. Her husband, Johnny (Bungie), usually had an old truck or car, and so they'd drive to their fishing places.<sup>58</sup> If they didn't go to the coast, they'd go along the Manning River to the bridges at Coopernook and Cundletown and around Pampoolah.<sup>59</sup>

## Local workplaces

As already noted, many Aboriginal men worked casually on local farms, especially around Glenthorne, particularly from the turn of the century until about the 1940s. The farms they worked on included those owned by the Trotters, Muscios and McLennans. Later on, in the 1950s and 1960s, Aboriginal men, women and children engaged in pea and bean picking. Patricia Davis-Hurst remembers picking at Lambert's farm up around Burrell Creek. Betty Bungie recalls picking on Dyball's farm at the Taree Estate and on Oscar Watson's farm. The farmers would normally collect the pickers early in the morning, dropping them back later in the day. Unlike many other North Coast Aboriginal groups who travelled widely for pea picking, only a few people from Purfleet seemed to have ventured further afield, some going to Port Macquarie for the picking season.

*This page* Fig. 61: Betty Bungie fishing at Saltwater with her daughter Isabell, c. 1960. Courtesy Betty Bungie

*Right page* Fig. 62: Aerial photograph with overlay of the Christmas camp at Saltwater, showing the approximate locations of the various family campsites. We have not indicated which camp belongs to which family, although local Aboriginal people could no doubt identify to whom they belonged. The overlay indicates fishing and swimming places, freshwater wells and fig and black apple trees. © Department of Lands



By the 1960s and 1970s, the collecting of corkwood became a lucrative activity for Aboriginal people, many of whom owned trucks by then. They would drive out into the bush to collect corkwood, which was used in the manufacture of pharmaceuticals. They'd sell it to a factory on Mitchell Island (see Fig. 63). The trade declined suddenly in the 1970s.

### Travelling for work

Aboriginal men were often forced to leave the Aboriginal settlement at Purfleet to participate in paid employment. Some worked on the railways. Ella Simon recalled the tent cities along the Dawson River where men, including some of her uncles, lived while building the new North Coast line in about 1911 and 1912. She'd visit them with her grandmother and aunties. Later on, in the 1930s and 1940s, Aboriginal men worked as gangers or drivers for the railway. This usually involved being away from home for a week or so at a time, only coming back to Purfleet on weekends. Ken Saunders worked for some years as a train driver.

In the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, many young men left Purfleet to try to make some money on the boxing circuit.<sup>60</sup> They remembered this as a big adventure.

By the 1950s and 1960s some Aboriginal men from Purfleet were working on large construction projects around Newcastle and Sydney. For instance, when he was sixteen years old in the early 1950s, Warner Saunders and his slightly older brother worked on the construction of the Warragamba Dam.

### Forced removal from Purfleet

In a reversal of earlier segregationist policies, by the 1960s the AWB was intent on removing Aboriginal people from government reserves and relocating them in the wider community. This was part of its policy of assimilation, and was therefore the situation faced by Aboriginal people living on Aboriginal Reserves throughout New South Wales.<sup>61</sup> The AWB, in pursuit of its assimilationist agenda, had introduced rents on houses on the Reserves under its control, including at Purfleet. This was an insult to Aboriginal people who believed that they



were living on 'Aboriginal land'. That Aboriginal Reserves first gazetted in the late nineteenth century had been given to their Aboriginal residents in perpetuity was a strongly held belief in most Aboriginal communities across NSW.

At the same time as it introduced rents the AWB stopped maintaining the housing stock, which many Aboriginal people believed was part of its strategy to eventually close down Aboriginal Reserve settlements. As a result, by the 1960s, living conditions on the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve had declined considerably. Many Aboriginal people resisted the AWB's new regime and protested against it. One common form of protest used across NSW to highlight the terrible conditions under which they were forced to live was to refuse to pay rent. At Purfleet, Horrie Saunders was one who, by refusing to pay rent, made a stand against the appalling treatment that he and his family experienced daily at the hands of the AWB. He was supported in his action by the Newcastle Trades and Labor Council, but he was eventually forced off the reserve. He told Aboriginal author and poet, Kevin Gilbert, in the late 1970s:

*The Aborigines Welfare Board kicked me off the place. Because I was a stirrer. There was no*

This page Fig. 63: Factory on Mitchell Island where Aboriginal people would deliver corkwood.

*footpaths. If you wanted a footpath around your house you had to put it in yourself, at your own expense. Same with a bath. You had to go to the manager to get approval for it, then. Anything you done, you had to get his approval, even a nail in the wall. Fences, sinks, you had to do it all. They never had a sink in the house. They never had a bath in the house. All they had is a hand pump for a shower. And you had to supply your own roofing to boot. And they charged you rent for that.<sup>62</sup>*

After being evicted, Horrie and his family relocated to a condemned house in Tinonee. Later he moved back to the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve for a short time, living with his wife and children on the verandah of a house. Finally they were able to buy their own house in Taree, and were one of the first Aboriginal families to do so.<sup>63</sup>

### Moving off the 'mission'

By 1969 the AWB had been dismantled and a committee of residents assumed management of the Reserve, in a period in which Aboriginal self-management was a key aim in Aboriginal affairs. In this period, some Aboriginal families moved into Taree. The movement away from the old mission was partly the result of the government's efforts to

force Aboriginal people off government reserves and partly the result of Aboriginal people's desire to make their own way off the Reserves (see also Chapter 11). Many moved back to the Browns Hill area, which by this time had been developed into suburban housing. Nonetheless, the Purfleet Reserve remained an important site of Aboriginal residence in the Manning Valley.

### The representativeness of Purfleet

In many ways the significance of the landscape around the Purfleet Aboriginal settlement, in terms of its post-contact heritage, will be similar to the landscapes around other major Aboriginal reserve settlements elsewhere in NSW. The Purfleet Reserve was home to one of the larger Aboriginal communities in the days of the NSW Aborigines'

Protection Board (1883-1939) and the NSW Aborigines' Welfare Board (1940-1969). There were at least twenty such major reserve settlements in NSW, at various times all under APB-appointed managers. They include Angedool, Bellbrook, Brewarrina, Brungle, Burra Bee Dee, Cabbage Tree Island, Cowra, Moonaculla, Roseby Park, Warangesda, Wallaga Lake, and Woodenbong. Some of these reserves were revoked by the APB, and the Aboriginal residents were forced to move elsewhere. Purfleet is an example of those reserves where the community remains in continuous occupation and where they were able to gain ownership of the land after the passage of the NSW Land Rights Act in 1983 (with the land vested in the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Council).



KEY

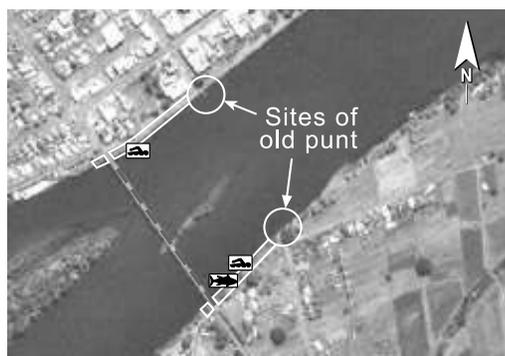
- 1. Taree swimming pool
- 2. Fotheringham's Hotel
- 3. Taree Public School
- 4. Boomerang Picture Theatre
- 5. Taree Hospital
- 6. Former Langley Hospital
- 7. Old wharf site and old road to Purfleet



0 200m

# 11 Taree

Here we ‘map’ Taree as a ‘segregated’ landscape as well as a site of Aboriginal employment.



## The heritage of segregation

Taree features strongly in the oral histories that we recorded with Aboriginal people from Purfleet (even though, in contrast, Aboriginal people do not feature strongly in most local histories of Taree). This prominence of Taree in Aboriginal people’s stories is somewhat surprising, especially given that they were actively prevented from residing in the township from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s. Throughout that period, the township was organised around formal and informal patterns of spatial segregation based on race. This is not unique to Taree, but rather is the case in many NSW country towns, as the ‘freedom ride’ in 1965 so clearly exposed.<sup>64</sup> It is precisely because Taree has been an unwelcoming place that it is deeply etched on Aboriginal people’s memories, particularly of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

*Left page* Fig. 64: Aerial photograph with overlay of the Taree Aboriginal heritage landscape, identifying places associated with racial segregation as well as places of employment for local Aboriginal people. © Department of Lands

*This page* Fig. 65: The Manning River functioned as a divide between black and white. © Department of Lands

Fig. 66: Aboriginal boy jumping into the Manning River on the Taree side, 2001

To operate effectively in any landscape from which one is excluded, or within which one’s movement is circumscribed, requires an intimate knowledge of the entire landscape. It was vital to know where one would be welcome and where not, which places to avoid and, if necessary, where to hide.<sup>66</sup> In such a landscape, one must also know how to move about undetected, or with such focused purpose that the possibility of humiliation is minimised. Paradoxically, exclusion and segregation – or absence – is what makes Taree especially significant in terms of Aboriginal post-contact cultural heritage. It ought also be a significant element in non-Aboriginal heritage terms given that racial segregation was a central element in the way in which many rural townships in NSW, like Taree, functioned. To ignore this is to present a false image of the past.

## The river as border

As noted in Chapter 10, the Browns Hill camp, one of the last Aboriginal fringe camps in the immediate Taree area, was gradually closed down over the final years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. In the process many Aboriginal people relocated (or were relocated) to



the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve on the southern side of the Manning River. The closure of the Browns Hill camp, and the dispersal of Aboriginal people from it, was symptomatic of the increasing imposition of a racial divide between black and white, one that was realised spatially. This was, as we have already noted, the period in which the exclusion of Aboriginal people from Taree became most explicit and most entrenched.

In this process, the Manning River became a type of dividing line between black and white, functioning as a border between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal living spaces.<sup>67</sup> A new layer of meaning had been added to it. And so, when Aboriginal people talk about their exclusion from Taree, they often do so through reference to the Manning River. For instance, when Warner Saunders explained that he rarely went into Taree as a child in the 1940s he described that as 'sticking to this side of the river'.

Mapping chronologically Aboriginal people's use of the Manning River in the immediate vicinity of Taree provides an index to how their relationship to the local township changed over time. For example, through the oral histories we recorded, as well as those recorded by other people, it is evident that between about 1900 and 1950 Aboriginal people's activity was concentrated upon the river's southern shore, especially in the area immediately around the punt wharf. This was at the end of the old road leading to the river from the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. Along this part of the river, Aboriginal people, adults and children alike, would go fishing, catch cobra (wood worm) and swim.

From about the mid-1950s onwards, a change is discernible. Aboriginal children and teenagers began to claim as their own parts of the northern riverbank, not far from the town centre. This coincided with Aboriginal children attending school in Taree, after de-segregation of public schools in the early 1950s. Hanging out at the river, after school and sometimes instead of attending school, became a common pastime for Aboriginal children from Purfleet. By this time, Martin's Bridge over the Manning River had been built, increasing access from Purfleet to Taree and making the punt redundant. The section of the northern bank of the river from the old punt wharf to the bridge became the focus of Aboriginal children's activities from the 1950s onwards, for swimming, jumping, diving and general skylarking. This part of the river, used extensively in the post-1950s period, is directly opposite that part of the river that earlier generations had used.<sup>68</sup> (see Figure 65)

## A witness to tragedy

Overlaying these everyday uses of the Manning River is its association with exceptional events, including tragic ones that encapsulate the enduring problem of race relations in the Manning Valley. For instance, when talking about the river many Aboriginal people from Purfleet refer to the drowning death of Cecil Bungie (which occurred in the 1950s).<sup>69</sup> Cecil drowned in the river after being chased out of Taree by police. Let Ella Simon tell the story:

*I remember young Cecil Bungie. He was a good little worker who was liked by everybody, his work-mates and the people who employed him, especially one of the fishermen with whom Cecil used to go out fishing. He was a very nice boy.*

*Well, I don't know how but in some way young Cecil got introduced to the drink. One night he went into town and asked somebody to buy a bottle for him. He got it and started walking down this street with it tucked under his arm and covered over with his coat. Just as he got into the lane, the police turned into it at the other end and started walking down it from the other direction. It was just a coincidence, but Cecil thought they were onto him. He knew that if they caught him with that bottle they'd throw him in gaol, and he'd lose his job and all that. So he panicked and turned around and made a dash for it. Of course, they started to chase him. He ran down to the river and jumped into the water. He had his overcoat on; he had his boots on; and he couldn't swim.*

*That boy was drowned. I will never forget that. His father walked for days along that river bank looking for that boy. They found his body caught under some weeds on the bottom of the river.<sup>70</sup>*

This incident captures poignantly and painfully the effects of constant surveillance of Aboriginal people by police, and the extreme consequences of the racially defined prohibitions Aboriginal people experienced on a daily basis during the twentieth century. The story of Cecil Bungie is so compelling because it signifies a much larger and messier history of race relations in Taree/Purfleet. The Manning River bears witness to him and, through him, to the bigger history his tragic death symbolises.

## Out by sundown

Up until the 1960s, Aboriginal people were expected to be out of Taree by nightfall, and it was generally the police who ensured that (informal) curfews were kept.<sup>71</sup> As Patricia Davis-Hurst



recalled: 'But the police always told the Aboriginals to get out of town by sundown'.<sup>72</sup> Warner Saunders told us the same thing: 'We used to have to be out of Taree before dark. We used to have to be home here before dark. Wasn't allowed on the other side of the bridge after dark'.<sup>73</sup>

## Going into Taree

When Aboriginal people went to Taree it was usually for a very specific purpose. They would not hang around unnecessarily because, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, they did not feel they were welcome there. In Russell Saunders' words: 'No. You got out of there then. ... Only the day Mum'd go to town and she'd go and buy her food, and then come straight home again. Yeah, you'd be in and out. Buy the necessary things that you needed'.<sup>74</sup> When we asked if she went to town often when growing up at Purfleet in the 1940s, Patricia Davis-Hurst told us:

*Well, not into Taree. Not that much really when I think of it. We came into the matinee every Saturday. Yeah, on the milk truck that used to come out and pick up the old cans from the manager's house. And we'd catch the truck back, but we'd walk home too. We walked home quite often.*

## Friendly and unfriendly shops

Aboriginal people went to some shops in Taree, but avoided others, depending upon the reception from the proprietors. According to Warner Saunders: 'There was only a couple of shops in Taree that you could go into'.<sup>75</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst remembers a fish and chip shop 'down from the old Boomerang Theatre' where you'd have to stand at the back waiting to get served, after all the white customers had been'. Buying clothes was especially difficult

because there was an unspoken rule that Aboriginal people could not try them on before buying: 'You couldn't try clothes on. Couldn't try clothes on at all. ... Hope it fitted, just had to hope it fits'.<sup>76</sup>

While Patricia Davis-Hurst remembers the shops that Aboriginal people studiously avoided, she also remembers the ones that were 'friendly' to Aboriginal people, and she explained this friendliness in terms of shared experiences of racism:

*There was the Dahdahs ... They were great friends to my mum and to the Aboriginals, yeah. Because they had to put up with a lot of discrimination themselves [because they were Lebanese]. ... They often said they know what it's like to be discriminated against, yeah. And Rex Solomon, he owns the big fruit store near the bridge. He was always called a "dago".<sup>77</sup>*

This suggests that one theme in heritage (and history) that has not been sufficiently examined is the nature of the relationship between Aboriginal people and 'migrants' (non-colonial). Ann Curthoys, in a recent article titled 'Immigration and Colonisation: New Histories', draws attention to this gap.<sup>78</sup> Separating Aboriginal and migrant histories from each other, and from the histories of 'whites', represents yet another type of segregation.

## Segregated at the cinema

While the exclusion from certain shops within Taree appears to have operated on a fairly ad hoc, informal basis, in other local establishments segregation was much more explicit. For instance, everyone knew where he or she stood (or sat) at the local cinema. The Boomerang Theatre features in most Aboriginal people's memories from the 1930s until about the 1950s. At the Boomerang, the first few rows were 'reserved' for Aboriginal people, forcing them to watch the movie with their necks craned. They were also required to enter the building via a side door, rather than through the main entrance. Russell Saunders evocatively explained the experience:

*The picture theatre was another case where you paid for the ticket, give them your money at the front office, then you walked around the side. And there was a doorway on either side and the first three or four rows, and there was a chain blocked across the corridor or hallway there. You sat in the first four rows with your head like this [demonstrates craned neck], and you watched the pictures. You looked behind you and there was people right up the back*

This page Fig. 67: Patricia Davis-Hurst, 2003



*up in other seats, and also the top balconies, that had a better view. Our view was like this [demonstrates again], looking up at the screen, and when it was finished you went out the side door. Not out the door where everybody else walked. And that was it. And there was a bus, a big red bus waiting for ya, the Forster bus, and [you] jumped on that and come home. That was your pictures. Your money was good enough, but your bodily presence wasn't.<sup>79</sup>*

In this respect, while Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people occupied the same place, even if only temporarily, they did so in ways aimed at minimising contact. The fact that whites and blacks shared the space of the cinema in the dark seems to have contributed to the management's efforts to keep black and white patrons apart (see Figure 68).

### Other sites of segregation

The pattern of racial segregation that characterised the local cinema is found repeated in other public spaces. For example, at the local Taree swimming pool strict rules aimed at making sure that Aboriginal children did not get too close to white people were regularly imposed (see also Chapter 21). Likewise, Aboriginal women's accounts about giving birth at the local Taree hospital usually

include reference to being placed in a ward away from white mothers.<sup>80</sup> As noted in Chapter 10, the local cemeteries were closed to Aboriginal people, forcing them to bury their kin in a cemetery at the back of the mission.<sup>81</sup> Through legislation, Aboriginal people were excluded from drinking in local hotels. Although some Aboriginal women worked in them they were kept out of sight of the white patrons. As already noted, local schools were no-go areas for Aboriginal children. They were 'educated' in the Aboriginal-only school on the 'mission', and this remained the case until 1952. This pattern of physical separation even occurred in private homes where local Aboriginal women worked. For instance, Ella Simon recalled that: 'I even came up against discrimination in homes that I was actually working in, if you can believe that. Some of those people would make me have my meals outside on a special old plate, and sterilise my knife and fork afterwards!<sup>82</sup>

### Workplaces

Ella Simon makes the observation that Aboriginal people were generally barred from holding 'public' positions, but not from cleaning up after white people. Throughout the twentieth century, Taree was a place of employment for many Aboriginal people,

particularly for Aboriginal women, but most of this work was menial. Their labour was by definition 'hidden', often carried out in private homes or 'out the back' of public establishments such as hotels, away from the public eye. They also often worked very early in the morning before the day began or after normal business hours.<sup>83</sup> Ella Simon explained:

*I wasn't allowed to take a government job. I couldn't be a nurse. There was even a law against us working for the Post Office, so it wasn't only the law in New South Wales. But oh, I could be a house cleaner all right. I could do other people's washing. I could be trusted with the keys to the house or flat when the owners were away, but actually doing what I wanted to do was out.*

*I was like all other Aborigines. I had black skin, and so was only good for menial kinds of jobs.<sup>84</sup>*

Ella Simon worked in Taree at different times during the 1920s, although she doesn't provide enough information to allow us to precisely locate her various workplaces. She tells her readers that she worked for a family who owned the local music shop, and for some teachers. Ella's mother had also worked for a white family in Taree. It was while she was working there that she became pregnant with Ella to the man for whom she worked. As Ella explained in her autobiography: 'My father told me later that it was a party at his place that led to me being born. As I said, my mother was actually working for him at the time. He was always very sorry that I had come into life that way'.<sup>85</sup> This would have been about 1901 or 1902. It is impossible to know which family her mother worked for because Ella withholds her father's identity from her readers (see Chapter 16).

Patricia Davis-Hurst's mother worked in Taree, along with some other Purfleet women, in the 1940s. According to Patricia: 'There was about three [Aboriginal women from Purfleet that] worked at the Fogg's (Fotheringham's) Hotel. Making beds and cleaning rooms and that sort of thing. ... My aunt, she was a domestic for quite a few well-to-do people'.<sup>86</sup> In the same period, Patricia and some of her friends, who were about thirteen or fourteen at the time, worked at the Langley Private Hospital in Taree on Saturdays. 'We used to scrub floors and all the menial things. We wanted to do it for pocket money for pictures, see. Our own money, yeah. All the girls used to do it. Every weekend. Every Saturday'.<sup>87</sup> (See Figure 64).

*Left page* Fig. 68: The Boomerang Picture Theatre showing Aboriginal people sitting in the front rows (on the left hand side of the image), c. 1923. Courtesy Patricia Davis-Hurst

## De-segregation begins

The 1950s marks the beginning of the period in which explicit (and legalised) forms of racial segregation in, or exclusion from, public institutions begins to be dismantled, although the pattern clearly lingers on in more tacit ways. As already noted, in 1952 Aboriginal children from Purfleet were admitted to schools in Taree for the first time. However, it was not until 1963 that Section 9 of the Aborigines Protection Act, prohibiting Aboriginal people from drinking alcohol and excluding them from hotels, was finally repealed.

## Resisting segregation

While memories of exclusion and segregation are common among Aboriginal people aged over about fifty, equally common are accounts about how those practices were resisted.<sup>88</sup> Some Aboriginal people told us about specific incidents in which they refused to accept the status quo. Their memories encapsulate the dehumanising effects of segregation, while at the same time reasserting their own agency in challenging unjust treatment. For instance, Patricia Davis-Hurst gives this account in her book, *Sunrise Station*, of how her mother opposed segregation at the local cinema:<sup>89</sup>

*Mum changed the policy at the local picture theatre. Their policy was that all Aborigines had to sit in the first five rows of the theatre, which was fenced off. She changed this one night by sitting in the back seats and refusing to move, thus making a stand for equality for all.<sup>90</sup>*

For the period from the late 1950s onwards, stories like this one about opposing, and transgressing, forms of spatial segregation become more common in Aboriginal people's oral testimonies.

The most candid accounts about resisting segregation in Taree come from a group of Aboriginal men now aged in their fifties. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when they were teenagers they began hanging around the streets of Taree with 'white' girls (for more detail, see Chapter 21). Today, they explain their actions as a type of rebellion against the forms of segregation that their parents and grandparents had endured. In fact, they began to call themselves the 'ice-breakers', a name highlighting their challenge to the unspoken rules that kept blacks and whites apart and their efforts to warm up relations between the two cultures (in the way that perhaps only adolescents can). Lawrence Bungie described how he and his mates in the 1960s 'sort of changed' the old forms of segregation that had hitherto existed, 'cos we used

to go around with the white sheilas, and we used to sit anywhere we wanted to sit [at the pictures]. They didn't like it but there was nothing they could do because we paid our money'.<sup>91</sup> Apart from the cinema, their favourite haunts were the riverbank near the town centre and a local café that had a jukebox. Or, they also simply walked the streets with their white girlfriends and their white mates.

## Border crossing

Going around the streets of Taree with 'white sheilas' was a visible and powerful act of 'transgression', or 'border crossing'. At the very heart of the elaborate forms of spatial segregation that defined Taree for the first half of the twentieth century was an anxiety about miscegenation, and concomitantly about the perceived problem of a growing 'half-caste' population. Despite the fact that 'mixed marriages' have been an enduring feature of Australian colonial life, there is plenty of evidence that they were frowned upon in the period between the 1930s and 1960s, on both sides. Certainly, Aboriginal boys experienced hostility from the parents of white girls they went out with, and at the same time they were discouraged from doing so by their own parents and grandparents. Warner Saunders told us that when he was growing up at Purfleet in the 1940s and 1950s he was encouraged by the older people to marry an Aboriginal woman, but from somewhere beyond the Manning Valley.

*Our ancestors, our old people used to be very strict. They'd say 'No, stay out of Taree. Don't mix with them people in Taree. ... I can't blame my people for their strict laws because that's as it always was. They had very strict law you know. You weren't allowed to marry a white woman. You had to marry your own colour.'*<sup>92</sup>

However, by the 1960s at least, mixed unions were becoming more common and more acceptable.

## Moving back to Browns Hill

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, some Aboriginal families began to move off the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. During this period the AWB was actively pursuing an 'assimilationist' agenda, which had at its core the expectation that Aboriginal people would behave and live like whites. Training Aboriginal people for citizenship became a key element in the government's Aboriginal program. In this context, the AWB was pursuing a housing program in which it 'encouraged' Aboriginal families to move away from Aboriginal Reserves and to take up residence in predominantly 'white' suburbs. In Taree, Aboriginal families were resettled in Housing Commission homes

concentrated in suburbs such as Chatham and Bushland. These suburbs, ironically, were situated around the old Browns Hill area from which Aboriginal people had been forcibly removed decades earlier. This meant that some Aboriginal families went back to the place where their ancestors had once lived. Previously excluded from this part of town, Aboriginal people were now expected to occupy it.

But the resistance from white people to Aboriginal people living in this part of town had not completely abated over the intervening decades. Patricia Davis-Hurst recalled that the initial resettlement of Aboriginal people into Taree was met with considerable opposition, including protests at an official government event marking the relocation of one Aboriginal family from Purfleet into a new house. 'Well a lot of people, they started moving into town. It must have been thirty years ago or more. I remember the first time the family moved in, they [local white residents] had a demonstration in the street because they didn't want "blacks" moving next door'. This was in Bays Hill, which was, according to Patricia, a 'posh' part of Taree.

Following this, there were other waves of resettlement from Purfleet to Taree (and indeed vice versa). Later waves were not the direct result of the AWB's housing scheme but a response to the period of self management of Aboriginal communities which followed the end of the AWB in 1969. For instance, Patricia Davis-Hurst moved into Taree in 1976, first to a house in Kanangra Drive, then to Cowper Street where she stayed for ten years, before moving into the house in Ronald Road that she and her husband presently occupy.<sup>93</sup> She told us that the decision to move was hard, but that she was unhappy with the way things were going on the old 'mish'. Yet, despite settling in town, she and the many other Aboriginal people who have made the same move still have strong ties with Purfleet.

## Sites of racial violence

While during the 1960s and 1970s the spatial divide between black and white had ostensibly all but broken down, hostilities had not completely disappeared. There was still evidence of a certain amount of racial tension between some sections of the black and white communities. The situation came to a head in 1979 when some Aboriginal children from Purfleet were harassed by a group of white men after leaving a disco at the sailing club in town. This was the impetus for a night of violence, described as a race riot. According to Anthony Kelly, in his thesis on Purfleet: 'On Friday, 17 August, 1979 a group of Aborigines from Purfleet

'went on a rampage', in the vicinity of the Vee Ess Sailing Club in Taree. This violence was attributed to an act of black recrimination for an incident on the bank of the Manning River involving Aboriginal children a week previously'.<sup>94</sup> Recalling it twenty years later, Lawrence Bungie described his participation in the so-called 'riot' as the worst thing that had ever happened to him.

Lawrence explained that as a response to the way their children and younger siblings and cousins had been treated they just 'sort of took over the town ... Got into the Wingham blokes, smashed the town, big riot'. Likewise, Patricia Davis-Hurst emphasises the retributive element involved: 'So the next Friday night all the men of the village retaliated, with a lot of the younger women of course, young mothers. They all went into the disco, loaded up their cars up with all sorts of little home made boondies and sticks and there was a *hell of a brawl. Hell of a brawl*'.<sup>95</sup>

In her book, Patricia Davis-Hurst explains the 'riot' through the spectre of a long history of colonisation.

*The fact that for almost 100 years Aboriginals have been confined to missions on the fringe of the town, and most likely they were put near a cemetery or a sewerage dump, out of sight and mind. All the choice land where they used to live near water or a green forest was taken over by the white man either for himself, or to sell for his own profit. ... Then in 1979, all the frustrations of those years and the latest incident involving their children came to a head, the town was sitting on a time bomb that was to explode in a race riot on a Friday night.*<sup>96</sup>

In this account, the incident is interpreted as the result of a hundred of years of frustration. The violence is explained as both a direct response to a racially motivated attack and a response to the enduring legacy of colonial violence.<sup>97</sup> The 'riots' are a reminder of how the colonial past lingers and constantly impinges on the present.

## Aboriginal people and the towns of NSW

Elements of the relationship of Aboriginal people to the town of Taree will be common to many other Aboriginal communities and towns in NSW. Many of the largest Aboriginal Reserves (with the largest populations of Aboriginal residents) were intentionally situated by the government close to country towns: close enough for the white townspeople to have access to the labour of Aboriginal women and men but far enough away to facilitate the segregation of Aboriginal people from the everyday life of the towns. Listed below is a selection of NSW Aboriginal Reserves (with large resident communities) in this category.<sup>98</sup>

- Bellwood (2km from Nambucca Heads)
- Bowraville (1km from Bowraville)
- Brewarrina (16 from Brewarrina town across the Barwon River)
- Burnt Bridge (3km from Kempsey)
- Erambie (3km from Cowra town across the Lachlan River)
- Forster (0.5km from Forster)
- Karuah (1.5km from Karuah)
- Moree (2.5km from Moree town)
- Walgett (11km from Walgett town across the Barwon River)
- Woodenbong (5km from Woodenbong town)

Some anthropologists and historians have closely examined the relationship of Aboriginal communities to rural towns and townspeople in NSW. For instance, in her book *Black, White and Brindle*, the anthropologist, Gillian Cowlshaw, gives a detailed account of the relationship of Aboriginal people to the town of Bourke.<sup>99</sup> Peter Read has written about Aboriginal fringe camps on the edge of NSW country towns and the efforts of the authorities to disperse the communities who lived in them.<sup>100</sup>

# TRACING

3307

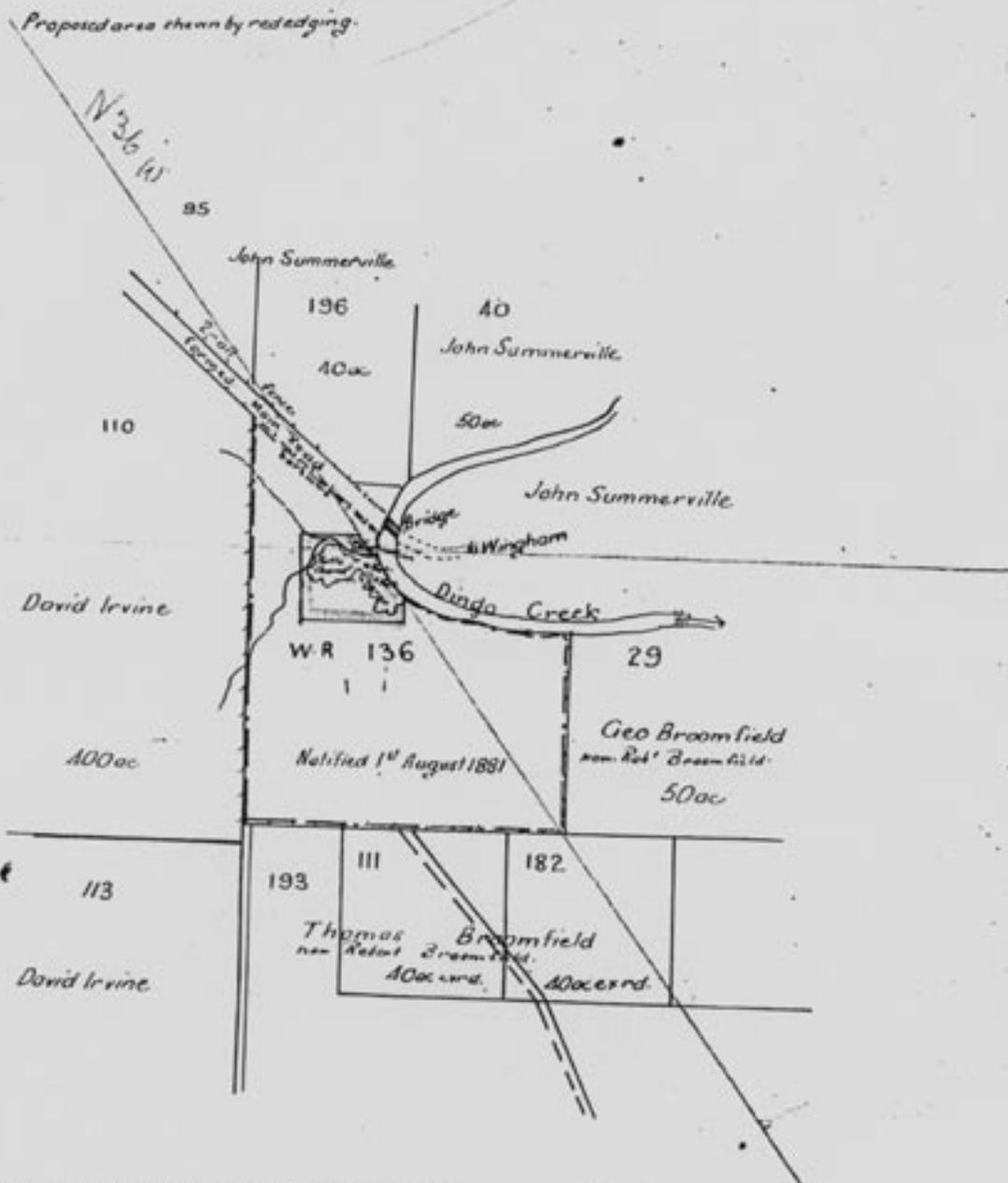
Shewing area proposed to be allotted for Reserve  
for Aborigines

Parish of Killawarra County of Macquarie

Within W.R 136 Not<sup>d</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> August 1881

Scale 20 chains to an Inch.

*Handwritten initials: W.B.*



To accompany my letter N<sup>o</sup> 131 dated 28<sup>th</sup> December 1905

*Frank M. Harris*  
Surveyor

# 12 Killawarra & Dingo Creek

This chapter describes a landscape in which gazetted Aboriginal Reserves were used somewhat intermittently rather than permanently, or as the residential base for only one or two families rather than many.

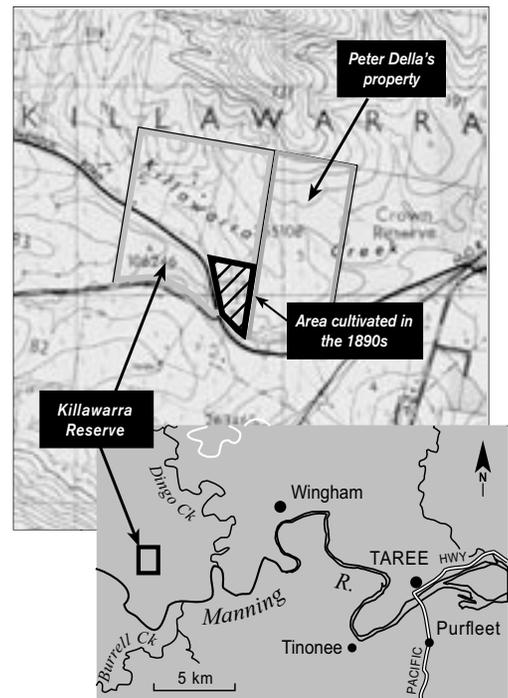
## The heritage of Aboriginal Reserves

Not all Aboriginal Reserves in New South Wales are the same, or have had the same history. Some (known officially as 'stations') were supervised by a resident manager; others were un-supervised, visited from time to time by the local policeman or an APB official. Some have been continuously occupied over many generations; others were settlements for only one or two generations. If the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve corresponds to the former model, then the Reserves at Killawarra and Dingo Creek belong to the latter. For much of their existence, the Killawarra and Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserves were used predominantly as seasonal camps. By the mid-twentieth century both had been revoked. This landscape study allows us to examine how and why this occurred. As we show, the factors were complex: a combination of Aboriginal people's own choices, changing governmental priorities and policies, 'whitefella' attitudes to local Aboriginal people and hunger for land. The revocation of the Reserves did not signal the end of an Aboriginal presence in the landscape. They could still be found living on local 'white' farms, or in 'unofficial' camps on the edge of towns.

## Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, at least two Aboriginal Reserves were gazetted and occupied by Aboriginal people west of Wingham (see Figure 71). One of these was at Killawarra. The first mention of this Reserve in the NSW Aborigines' Protection Board (APB) minutes was in 1893, where it was noted that Aboriginal

people occupying the land in question were keen to fence it, but were 'unable to obtain any lines on which to erect [a fence], the land never having been surveyed'.<sup>102</sup> The APB resolved to request the Department of Lands to 'mark off' a Reserve, which was formally gazetted in March 1894. The size of the Reserve was 112.75 acres (see Figure 70).



We have not located any documentary material concerning the Killawarra Aborigines' Reserve (Reserve No. 19861) for the period from its gazettal in 1894 to 1906. However, by 1906 it is the subject of considerable correspondence between the APB and the Lands Department, when a local landowner, Peter Della (who owned a property adjacent to

Left page Fig. 69: Tracing of the Dingo Creek (Ashlea) Aboriginal Reserve. Courtesy NSW State Records, 3/2422.2.

This page Fig. 70: Illustration showing the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve, indicating the area cultivated by William Rush in the 1890s and the location of Peter Della's property. © Department of Lands

the Reserve) made application to lease it. This correspondence provides detailed description of the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve, its use by Aboriginal people and its relationship to the wider landscape.

### An Aboriginal farm

By 1906, according to a NSW Lands Department surveyor, part of the Reserve had been cleared and fenced. William Rush, an Aboriginal man, lived in a hut on it and had apparently been there for about twelve years, that is, since the time of its original gazettal. Rush had cultivated a portion of the Reserve, and grazed his horses over the remainder. Rush belongs to that little-known group of Aboriginal farmers, who Heather Goodall discusses in her research into Aboriginal land use in New South Wales. While himself a farmer, he nonetheless made his livelihood primarily by working for local white farmers, despite 'becoming old'. He seems to have lived on the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve with his immediate family, although other Aboriginal people came to stay with him when they were passing through. A Lands Department official noted: 'It would appear that very few other aboriginals use any part of this with the exception of spending a day or two with Rush when passing'.<sup>103</sup>

### Killawarra as a refuge

By 1910, however, more Aboriginal families had settled on the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve. In one description from this time, the Reserve is depicted as a potential refuge for Aboriginal people who were reportedly 'hunted about like beasts when they camp on the roads'.<sup>104</sup> The surveyor who made this report had been told by those people living on the Killawarra Reserve that 'there were some 30 or 40 individuals including 14 children up to the age of 16 years who were quite without any fixed abode and they did not seem to understand that they were entitled to go onto the Reserve No. 19681 Ph Killawarra and establish themselves there'.<sup>105</sup>

This evidence concerning an Aboriginal presence beyond the official reserves is noteworthy because it is a reminder that the entire post-contact landscape potentially is associated with Aboriginal people, although the exact location of these temporary and unofficial camps is far more difficult to pinpoint than these formally gazetted Reserves. It also underscores how, for some Aboriginal people, Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve was just one node in a wider itinerary of places that they used and occupied.

*Right page* Fig. 71: Aerial photograph with overlay showing Wingham and the location of Aboriginal Reserves at Dingo Creek and Killawarra. © Department of Lands

### Killawarra as a stopover

Responding to the surveyor's report, the local policeman, while rejecting the claim that Aboriginal people were 'hunted about like beasts', described the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve as a regular stopping place for those moving up and down the Manning Valley. He reported: 'It is used principally as a camping ground for the Aborigines ... and is always occupied by one half caste and his wife named Yarnold'.<sup>106</sup> A few years later this policeman repeated his observation: 'There is nearly always one or two families on the Reserve, and when there are not it is handy to them when they are travelling about which they frequently do from the lower River to the Upper part of the Manning'. These reports make explicit the continuation of a type of seasonal movement by Aboriginal people around the landscape, one that may have had much in common with pre-contact patterns although it is impossible to tell. In fact, it is only with the increasing restrictions imposed upon Aboriginal people's movement (some enshrined in the Aborigines Protection Act (1909)) that this type of seasonal and intermittent use of Aboriginal Reserves declined and they were incrementally turned into 'settlements' as opposed to 'camps'.

### Dispersal at Killawarra

By the 1920s, the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve had apparently become disused. The local landowner, Peter Della, who had doggedly tried to secure it, reported in 1919 that 'one of the aboriginals told me that they did not care about the reserve, and did not want it'.<sup>107</sup> Whether or not this is true, in 1921 the APB did in fact make the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve available for lease, noting that 'in view of the fact that this reserve is never used by the Aborigines, same to be handed over to the Lands Department for disposal'.<sup>108</sup> It is difficult to determine from this snippet whether the alleged disuse had been voluntary or (more likely) forced. Without the residents' own testimony, it is hard to know exactly what led them to abandon the Reserve. But it is worth noting that the situation is by no means unique in NSW in this period: many Aboriginal people found themselves being pushed off land that they had occupied for some years. Heather Goodall argues that during the early part of the twentieth century, Aboriginal people in NSW experienced a second dispossession, 'brought about by the increasing pressure of white land hunger and the APB dispersal policies'.<sup>109</sup> In terms of the APB's 'dispersal policies', there was a shift in practice in

this period whereby rather than support Aboriginal people living in reserve settlements, pressure was being applied for them to move into the broader community and to fend for themselves.<sup>110</sup>

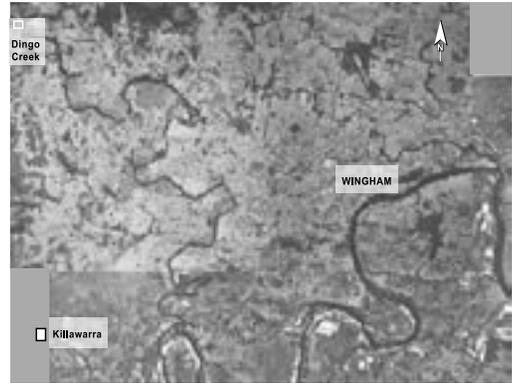
## Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve

It seems likely that some Aboriginal people who had been living on, or regularly camping at, the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve subsequently moved to the Dingo Creek Reserve, a short distance away.<sup>111</sup> Dingo Creek is the second of the two formally gazetted Aboriginal Reserves near Wingham. Like Killawarra, the Dingo Creek Reserve had functioned, initially at least, as a camping place used regularly but not permanently by Aboriginal people moving around the Manning Valley. But, when Killawarra was revoked in the 1920s, the size of the settlement on the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve grew and indeed became more permanent.

These two developments — the decline of Killawarra and the rise of Dingo Creek — are not simply coincidental but clearly interrelated.

While the Dingo Creek Reserve was not formally gazetted until 1906, there is some evidence of Aboriginal people living on and around it before this. One entry in the APB minutes refers to a local pastor ‘recommending the issue of rations to a number of destitute Aborigines at Ashlea’.<sup>112</sup> Ashlea is the name of the area immediately surrounding the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve, and indeed in much official correspondence the Reserve is referred to as Ashlea Flat.

The Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve, gazetted in 1906, was originally part of a Water Reserve, located on the edge of Dingo Creek, approximately five kilometres north-west of Wingham (see Figure 72). As a type of Crown Land reserve, the Water Reserve was probably where the ‘destitute Aborigines’, referred to above, had been living. The size of the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve was about ten acres, and it fronted the road to Nowendoc. Rather than a viable farm that could support a number of people, the relatively small Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve (compared with the 112 or so acres at Killawarra) seems to have been intended, and indeed functioned, as a residential base for Aboriginal families who survived as casual labourers on local farms,<sup>113</sup> or through trapping and shooting animals for subsistence. According to one report in 1911, while the local constable at Wingham had arranged for two huts to be built on the Aboriginal Reserve,



he had ‘trouble in keeping them occupied, as they [the Aboriginal people] are continually moving about o’possum trapping and shooting’.<sup>114</sup>

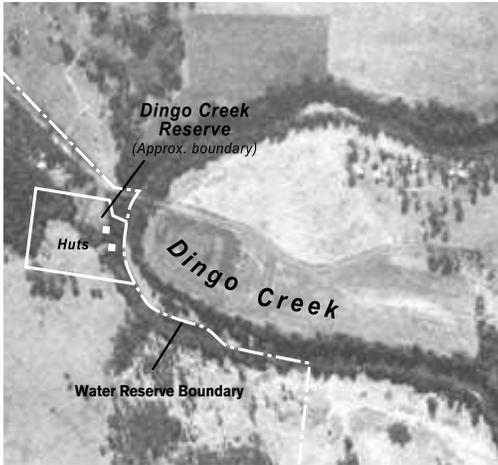
## Gazetting Dingo Creek

The extant correspondence between the local East Maitland Land Board Office and the APB provides some information about the history of the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve, including the factors contributing to its creation in 1906.<sup>115</sup> In his appeal to the NSW Lands Department to turn part of a Water Reserve at Dingo Creek into an Aboriginal Reserve, an APB official noted that the five families currently occupying the Water Reserve had been camped ‘in the vicinity for the past twenty years’ (i.e., since the late 1880s). It was on the basis of this observed continual residence in the area, on public land, that the APB thought it proper to officially gazette an Aboriginal Reserve. As noted above, the report made clear that the Reserve would function as a base from which those occupying it could provide casual, and presumably cheap, labour to local farmers:

*There is already an Aborigines Reserve some miles distant,<sup>116</sup> but it is not considered altogether suitable for the purpose, and the Aborigines find it too far away to obtain employment from the farmers.<sup>117</sup>*

But while these Aboriginal people were reportedly providing their labour to local farmers, not all neighbouring farmers were pleased with the proposed gazetting of the Aboriginal Reserve and, indeed, some opposed it. The proposed reserve was bordered on three sides by farms, and as a Lands Department surveyor noted in his report, two of the three neighbouring farmers did not want the Reserve:

*The reserve is surrounded by the holdings of three different owners, two of whom are strongly*



*opposed to the aboriginals being allowed to camp thereon stating as their reasons that they are a constant source of annoyance to them in so far as cutting their fences and putting horses into their paddocks of a night, also numerous other petty annoyances. The other owner – Robert Broomfield – on the contrary has directly opposite views and has never found them any annoyance but at times useful for casual employment.*<sup>118</sup>

On this occasion, the opposition of the two farmers was disregarded, and the small reserve gazetted. That neighbouring farmers could have such different views about Aboriginal people — annoying versus useful — reminds us of the fine calibrations in the nature of relations between blacks and whites at any one time and place. Such evidence exposes how an overly simplistic analysis of the colonial past, for example one framed baldly in terms of ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’ or ‘victors’ and ‘victims’, is poor history.

### A base and a stopover

As had previously been the case with the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve, the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve functioned not only as a base for some people who lived more or less permanently (or seasonally) on it, at least in between moving around the area for hunting and other purposes, but also as a stopover place for Aboriginal people who were just passing through. The NSW Lands Department surveyor noted: ‘other aboriginals pay periodical visits to the reserve and occasionally camp there’.<sup>119</sup> These other Aboriginal people who did not consider the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve a base might have had another ‘camp’ that served that function. Or else, they might have been continuously on the

move, never considering any one place a primary base for their activities.

### Hill country people

In 1911, an official of the APB suggested the transfer of the Aboriginal people living at the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve to the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve. But this was never feasible. The reports concerning the proposed scheme are illuminating nonetheless, particularly for the way they delineate differences between the people associated with the Dingo Creek Reserve and those on Purfleet. Most notably, the people living at the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve were consistently described as being oriented towards the sea, not the hill country. For example, in relation to the proposed transfer from Purfleet to Dingo Creek, the local surveyor stated: ‘I do not think it advisable to take these blacks inland farther from the sea’.<sup>120</sup> Likewise a local policeman reported to the NSW APB that ‘no doubt some trouble would be experienced in removing the Aboriginals from near Taree ... [because] they are within a few miles of the ocean, and it is said they frequently visit it’.<sup>121</sup>

These observations reflect pre-contact patterns of social organisation. For example, Collins and Morwood, referring to pre-contact times, claim that “‘hill country’ people operated within well-defined boundaries but also had access to the coastal ... group’, and further that ‘movement of hinterland people into the territory of coastal groups appears to have been closely controlled and there are no ethno-historical references to coastal people moving inland. There is, however, information to suggest that people from the hinterland travelled to the tableland in summer’.<sup>122</sup>

This seems consistent with practices in the early part of the twentieth century. Oral histories recorded with Aboriginal people who had lived on the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve, and with Aboriginal people from Purfleet who were well acquainted with it, suggest that these patterns of movement and of spatial/social organisation endured during the twentieth century.<sup>123</sup> By the 1930s, it is clear that the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve was predominantly occupied by people who originated from further up the mountain range, particularly from places such as Walcha.<sup>124</sup>

### Dingo Creek – a place of refuge

Certainly by the 1930s, during the Depression, the little Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve had become a place of refuge for Aboriginal families moving into the Manning Valley from the west. These diasporic



families presumably travelled down the 'old Oxley highway'<sup>125</sup> and joined kin eking out a living around Wingham and Dingo Creek. While in straitened circumstances, these families at least were managing to live independently of the APB, on a Reserve without a resident manager, which was not the situation at Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve where the first manager was appointed in 1932.<sup>126</sup>

Tom Craddock lived at Dingo Creek with his family for a short time in the late 1930s, after moving down there from Walcha (see Chapter 18). Although only a young boy at the time, when we spoke to him in 2000 he had clear memories of the place.<sup>127</sup> On a visit to the site of the old Reserve, he was able to identify the exact place where his young brother, Jim, had been born and the precise location of his family's little hut (see Figure 72).

While Tom Craddock only lived on the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve for a short time, it nevertheless remained a central spot in his childhood, which was lived in the landscape around Wingham. His family regularly visited people at Dingo Creek on weekends: 'we still went backwards and forwards. Have a weekend out there fishing. Then we come back home again'.<sup>128</sup> This pattern of visiting scattered Aboriginal settlements incorporated Purfleet as well. Tom told us: 'You know where the old swimming pool is in Taree. Well when we lived out the back of Cedar Party [Road], we used to travel in there with our horse and buggies, and we used to tie our horses up there. We'd have our

lunch there, and we'd get our groceries there. We used to go across to Purfleet on the other side [of the river]. We used to go by punt'. Similarly, the Purfleet people would sometimes visit the Dingo Creek community. Warner Saunders from Purfleet remembered that in the 1940s 'I used to go up [to Dingo Creek] a lot when I was a young fella, [to] Dingo Creek, [to] them people'.<sup>129</sup>

### Dingo Creek leased

In 1941 the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve was leased as a permissive occupancy for four years to W. H. Thorpe, and this lease was extended again in 1946. This change in tenure did not necessarily mark the end of Aboriginal people's association with this pocket of land. As Warner Saunders indicates it remained a part of a local Aboriginal itinerary of places. And oral testimonies, but not documentary records, indicate that the Thorpe family, the leaseholders in the 1940s, were Aboriginal.

### Renewing ties with Dingo Creek

More recently, the site of the old Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve has been reoccupied by Aboriginal people. Today tenure over a portion of the original reserve is held by the Purfleet-Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council. Cliff Cooke, an Aboriginal man, lives there in a house he built himself, not far from where Tom Craddock's family had its little shack decades earlier.

### Living on white farms

While the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve was a distinct Aboriginal community, it was also intimately connected with dispersed, often individual, family

*This page* Fig. 72: Aerial photograph with overlay showing section of the Water Reserve excised for Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve. © Department of Lands.

*Right page* Fig. 73: The present-day bridge over Dingo Creek, which runs directly past the site of the old Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve

settlements elsewhere around the Wingham area. Some of the families who had spent time on Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve in the 1930s moved off it in the 1940s, particularly as demand for labour increased during the Second World War. These Aboriginal families typically lived on 'white farms' in houses or in huts provided by the farmers. For example, after moving from Dingo Creek in the late 1930s, Tom Craddock's family lived in a series of houses on private properties around Wingham, including one on Young's Road and another off the Cedar Party Road. Throughout this period Tom's grandfather worked for local farmers.

Similarly, the Morris family was connected with the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve for many years, with Edna Morris being one of the last people to leave it.<sup>130</sup> Charlie Morris was well known around Wingham for his carved woodwork, some of which is now on display in the local museum.<sup>131</sup> After leaving Dingo Creek, he lived for a time in a house at Wallaby Joe Flat on the road between Wingham and Dingo Creek.<sup>132</sup> We learnt about these places when talking to local Aboriginal people. Without reference to living memory, it is, of course, difficult to predict where any of these individual sites of Aboriginal dwelling in the wider landscape might be. The important point, however, is that these places do exist in addition to, but intimately connected with, the settlements like the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve, or other Aboriginal communities in the larger landscape.

## The Happy Valley settlement

The Happy Valley settlement between Wingham and Taree is another place associated with Aboriginal people from the Wingham/Dingo Creek area. The Aboriginal families associated with the Happy Valley camp were the Farrells, Craddocks and Browns. All of these families had previously lived at the Dingo Creek Aboriginal Reserve. This settlement is probably best described as a Depression-era shantytown, similar to those found throughout Australia in the same period.<sup>133</sup> These places sprang up on unoccupied Crown land on the edges of towns, and some were occupied by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families who found themselves in the same economic boat because of worldwide recession. To date, an Aboriginal presence in these Depression-era camps has not been well documented; it is a matter deserving of research, especially given that these camps are exemplary sites of shared heritage/shared history.

Happy Valley was not only home to Aboriginal

families; it was also on the itinerary of places regularly visited by Aboriginal people from Purfleet. For instance, Warner Saunders recalled that as a boy in the 1940s, 'there used to be people out at Dingo Creek, and there used to be people at Happy Valley. We used to visit people at Happy Valley'.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, the Happy Valley people regularly visited people at Purfleet. Tom Craddock remembers that his grandparents would visit Pat and George Bungie in their house just outside the Purfleet Mission on the Tinonee Road. They'd also sometimes go down there for dances. Likewise, the Happy Valley people would join the Purfleet people at Saltwater each Christmas, although their camp was on the perimeter.

## Similar Aboriginal landscapes in NSW

The Dingo Creek and Killawarra settlements are representative of an important category of places in the Aboriginal history of NSW. They were situated on formally gazetted Aboriginal Reserves that were occupied by only one or a few families, with little or no supervision by the NSW APB. Such reserves were gazetted in quite large numbers in NSW in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, often as a result of individual Aboriginal people petitioning the government.<sup>135</sup> Some of them were suitable for Aboriginal people to farm, as was the case at the Killawarra Aboriginal Reserve, though they were mostly too small, or the land too marginal, to be a sole basis of support. Generally, the Aboriginal people living at these places worked on a casual basis on surrounding farms, picked up odd bits of work in local villages and towns, hunted rabbits for food and to sell the skins, and went after bush-tucker. The Dingo Creek and Killawarra settlements are also important because they are examples of Aboriginal Reserves that were eventually revoked, no longer set apart for the exclusive use of Aboriginal people. They were, as we have already noted, victims of the 'second dispossession' that occurred in the early part of the twentieth century. The communities that had established themselves on the Reserves were forced to either move to other Aboriginal Reserves or to set up new settlements on vacant Crown land or to take up residence in the 'white landscape', such as on white-owned farms. For some families, the option was to move into 'mixed' temporary settlements that emerged during the Depression in the 1920s and 1930s, like Happy Valley, on the edge of Taree. Similar Depression-era camps, occupied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families, can be found in other parts of NSW, including at Port Kembla (Hill 60), La Perouse (Hill 60 and Happy Valley) and around Newcastle.

The occupants of these various smaller settlements would normally have had kin living in the larger, more permanent Aboriginal settlements, like the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. People kept in touch by mutual visiting and by way of information flowing along the 'grapevine'. It was the existence of small settlements such as these, sometimes comprising only a single primary family camping or living more-or-less permanently on an Aboriginal

Reserve or other piece of available land, which gives validity to the idea of a broadly dispersed Aboriginal post-contact pattern of settlement in many of the landscapes of NSW. These patterns of dispersion were nowhere near as fine-grained as those of the white population. But they do mean that there were these smaller dots on the map of Aboriginal post-contact settlement in between the larger dots represented by the large Reserve communities.



# 13 Forster & Wallis Lake

This chapter is a study of the Forster and Wallis Lake landscape. As in the previous chapters, the focus is on the relationship between the loci of Aboriginal residence and the landscape surrounding and fanning out from them. A key theme in this study is Aboriginal people's use of local waterscapes, especially the sea coast and Wallis Lake.

## Nineteenth-century Aboriginal camps

The Forster Aboriginal Reserve, like the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve, was first gazetted in the late nineteenth century. Prior to the first official gazettal of land for the exclusive use of local Aboriginal people, there was already in existence a series of Aboriginal camps in and around Forster, probably including on the site of the first official Aboriginal Reserve. It is almost impossible, though, to pinpoint the exact location of these earlier nineteenth-century camps. This difficulty, which is fundamentally due to the absence of archival sources, was particularly evident when we attempted to locate old Coomba George's original campsite.

## Coomba George's camp

As an old man in the 1930s, Coomba George lived on the Forster Aboriginal Reserve in a shack behind his son Barney Simon's house.<sup>136</sup> He was apparently known as Coomba George because he was born at a place called Coomba. Ella Simon, who was married to another of his sons, Joe Simon, says that George was 'born at the head of the Wallamba River at a place called Coomba, so the people called him 'Coomba George'.<sup>137</sup> It is difficult to know exactly which place Ella is referring to. Present-day Coomba

is not, by any stretch of the imagination, at the head of the Wallamba River. Rather, it is situated on the southern shore of Wallis Lake. We do not know whether the Coomba that appears on today's maps is the same place from which Coomba George is believed to have come. Unfortunately, no one else alive today is completely sure where this nineteenth-century Aboriginal camp was situated.

Despite the lack of geographical specificity, Ella Simon's references to Coomba George in her autobiography *Through My Eyes* do indicate the known presence of Aboriginal camps around the Forster and Wallis Lake area prior to the formal gazettal of the Aboriginal Reserve in 1895 (discussed below). For instance, she explains that Coomba George grew up with her own grandfather and her grandfather's brothers 'at the Wallamba'.<sup>138</sup> Again, unfortunately the location is not specified, but clearly these were Aboriginal settlements that pre-dated the Forster Aboriginal Reserve.

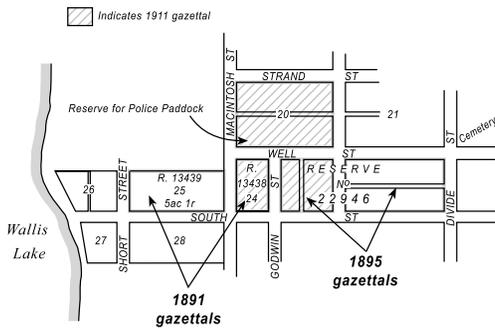
## The Forster Aboriginal Reserve

The land that is today vested in the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council under the *NSW Land Rights Act 1983* represents only a tiny portion of the land that had been gazetted as Aboriginal Reserves at Forster throughout the twentieth century. It constitutes the little piece which Aboriginal people managed to hold onto from about the 1920s onwards, after a series of revocations and re-gazettals. As is the case with many other NSW Aboriginal Reserves, we learn a lot about the Forster Aboriginal Reserve from official correspondence relating to the seemingly unrelenting competition over it.

### *The first gazettal*

In 1891, an area of seven and a half acres close to the foreshore of Wallis Lake was gazetted as a Reserve for the Use of Aborigines. This gazettal consisted of two portions: Reserve 13439 (Portion 25) facing South Street west of MacIntosh Street and Reserve 13438 (Portion 24) immediately east of

Left page Fig. 74: Barney Simon in his boat on Wallis Lake with his dog Boozer c.1950s. Courtesy Fay Pattison.



Derived from Plan of Reserves Nos 13438, 13439 and 22346, notified 21 February 1891 and 14 September 1895.

MacIntosh Street (see Figure 75). Given this block (comprising the two portions) was gazetted in 1891, it is likely that it was already occupied by Aboriginal people because the APB was in the habit of turning Crown Land occupied by Aboriginal people into Aboriginal Reserves during this period. It is indeed possible that the land in question had been occupied by Aboriginal people for some years.<sup>139</sup> Its location close to the lakeshore suggests that it was probably used either permanently or seasonally as a base for fishing.

### A second gazettal

In 1895, another portion of land was added to the Aboriginal Reserve at Forster: Reserve 22946 (Portions 22 & 23) which covered two blocks further up South Street away from the lake and immediately east of Reserve 13498. With this additional portion, a strip of land beginning a short distance from the lakeshore and extending eastwards up South Street had been set aside for the exclusive use of Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people occupying it managed to hold onto it until 1911, by which time it had become desirable to local white people.

The story about the original reserve, contained in the NSW APB and NSW Lands Department records, accords with oral testimony given in the 1970s by three, now deceased, Aboriginal women: Ella Simon, Daphne Ridgeway and Maude Cunningham.<sup>140</sup> These three women claimed that 'all [the] land from the lake in Little and [up] South Street over the hill' had once belonged to Aboriginal people.<sup>141</sup> Unlike



the account provided by the APB, however, their understanding was that the land had been a grant in perpetuity from Queen Victoria to their ancestors. In her testimony, Daphne Ridgeway stated:

*I arrived [in Forster] in 1925 and was married to Tom Ridgeway ... I have seen the government map of the reserve land, it had a queen victoria badge or seal on it and it showed the land that was given to the aborigines.*

This Aboriginal understanding of land gazetted as Aboriginal Reserves during Queen Victoria's reign (ending in 1901) is common throughout New South Wales. The historian, Heather Goodall, has suggested that it is a reinterpretation of the principles underpinning the reservation of land by the colonial government for the exclusive use of Aboriginal people in the late nineteenth century. That land was Crown Land, and thus, symbolically at least, held by the reigning British monarch. Goodall speculates that the agents of the NSW Department of Lands and the NSW APB explained the creation of Aboriginal Reserves to the Aboriginal people occupying them as being a gift to them from the British Crown (then Queen Victoria).<sup>142</sup>

### First signs of competition

In 1895, presumably as a response to the proposed expansion of the Forster Aboriginal Reserve, a local white man, Thomas Miles, wrote to the Aborigines Protection Board suggesting that the Aboriginal settlement be removed from Forster to an island in Wallis Lake.<sup>143</sup> The Miles family were prominent early settlers. Thomas Miles was born in 1855 and came with his family to Forster in 1869. By the late nineteenth century, with his brother Josiah, he owned a timber mill and by 1896 was also a partner in a tug building business.<sup>144</sup>

This page Fig. 75: The various portions of land comprising the Forster Aboriginal Reserve between 1891 and 1895.

This page Fig. 76: Detail from a Parish Plan showing the original Forster Aboriginal Reserve, c. 1900. © Department of Lands

Right page Fig. 77: Aerial photograph with overlay, showing the position of Forster Aboriginal Reserve at the centre of a larger landscape. © Department of Lands



It is impossible to tell from the existing records what Thomas Miles's reasons were for wanting Aboriginal people removed from Forster. However, as noted in Chapter 10, throughout this period there was a general push towards isolating Aboriginal people from white society. The late nineteenth century was the protection-segregation era, and it coincided with a desire on the part of whites to develop the township of Forster.<sup>145</sup> An Aboriginal settlement in Forster may have been perceived as a potential obstacle to its progress, but at the same time Thomas Miles might have thought his plan was in the Aboriginal people's 'best interest': that they would be better served living apart from white people.

### Opposing exclusion

However, this was not the view that local Aboriginal people held. They were vehemently opposed to the proposal that they be relocated to an island. Alick Russell, an Aboriginal man living on the Forster Aboriginal Reserve, appealed to the APB to not

remove him and his people from that place.<sup>146</sup> Fortunately, the APB was 'strongly of the opinion that these Aborigines should not be disturbed in the occupation of their reserve'.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, during this period the APB regularly decided these matters in favour of Aboriginal people, although as will be shown this was not the case in subsequent decades.

Miles's attempt was to be only the first in a series of efforts to remove Aboriginal people from Forster. In the decade that followed, those living at Forster were forced again to organise against their possible displacement when some local whites mounted another campaign, one to which this time the APB acceded.

### Making the reserve their own

When the Forster Aboriginal Reserve was first established in the 1890s, its residents actively 'improved' it in ways that mirrored non-Aboriginal modes of 'place-making'. They built houses, cleared

the land, planted gardens and erected fences. We know this through a report made by a local policeman in 1906, who was advocating on behalf of the Forster Aboriginals when the local Forster Progress Association lobbied for their removal to the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve near Taree. The policeman reported to the NSW APB:

*The Land was then [when first gazetted in 1891] a dense Scrub, and now the whole reserve is cleared and securely fenced. The whole of the work of clearing and fencing has been done by the Aborigines themselves. The Aborigines have built several very good cottages on this reserve, and fenced off nice gardens where they are now growing Lovely Potatoes, Cabbages, Etc.<sup>148</sup>*

What this suggests is a new order. By the post-dispossession period, old (traditional) ways had been radically altered under the weight of colonisation and most Aboriginal people had 'come in' to colonial society. In the process they had adopted new ways of using the land (e.g. cultivating it) and of dwelling in it (e.g. living in cottages in small, sedentary settlements). They had not, however, become 'white' people in 'black' skins. They retained their own cultural practices and their own forms of sociality. These continuities are in fact evident in the new settlements that on the surface looked 'white'. For instance, while the form of the cottages built by Aboriginal people mirrored colonial styles, the way in which they were positioned in relation to each other reflected kin relationships that had their basis in a different cultural milieu. The layout of Aboriginal settlements reflected particular Aboriginal 'life ways'. In this respect, Aboriginal Reserve communities are testament both to continuity and change, key themes in twentieth-century Aboriginal history.

### Losing part of the Aboriginal Reserve

During the opening years of the twentieth century, competition for the Forster Aboriginal Reserve increased. By this time, Aboriginal people, it seemed, had found themselves in a no-win situation: they had to prove themselves worthy of occupying land granted for their exclusive use by 'improving' it which in turn only seemed to make it more desirable to local white people, thus increasing pressure on them to relinquish it.

In 1910, the NSW Department of Lands requested that the NSW APB agree to exchange a section of the Forster Aboriginal Reserve for an adjacent portion of land. While the documentary records relating to this exchange lack precision and detail,

the final result was that a portion of the Reserve, highly valued by its residents because of a natural water spring located there, was alienated for a recreation ground.<sup>149</sup> In the process a new Reserve for Aborigines was notified in May 1911, in which some of the original reserve was retained, other sections added, and other parts lost. Most seriously, Portion 22 was lost. This had been used as an Aboriginal burial ground.<sup>150</sup>

The reserve gazetted in 1911 was poorly located compared with the original one gazetted in 1891. The 1891 reserve had been oriented toward Wallis Lake, where Aboriginal people fished, and collected shellfish and other natural resources. The new 1911 Reserve was back from the lake, on less desirable land. It bordered the local cemetery, a location that underscored its marginal position. This new portion had been previously gazetted as police paddocks. With this re-gazetted in place, Aboriginal people were forced to re-establish their homes and gardens. That the APB agreed to the exchange of viable land for unproductive land is symptomatic of a broader shift in its policy direction, and concomitantly, a shift in the meaning of Aboriginal Reserves. Whereas initially there had been an intention that the land set aside for 'Use by Aborigines' ought to potentially enable a degree of self-sufficiency, either through cultivation or through access to natural resources (including the sea), over time Aboriginal Reserves were increasingly thought about in terms of isolation. The quality of the land, therefore, became less important than its position. In this context, the more peripheral it was to white settlement the better. And it naturally followed that the more peripheral its location, the more useless the land.

### Beyond the Reserve fence

Like the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve discussed in Chapter 10, the Forster Aboriginal Reserve was (and is) a central node in a more expansive landscape traversed and known intimately by Aboriginal people. While by 1911 the Aboriginal Reserve no longer had either beach or lake frontage, Aboriginal people living there nonetheless appear to have spent most of their time in the littoral landscape. The land east of the Reserve was mostly unoccupied at this time, not becoming densely settled until the 1960s and 1970s. This meant Aboriginal people living on the Forster Reserve had relatively easy access to the seacoast. Before late twentieth-century suburban development in Forster, the land between the

*Right page* Fig.78: Aerial photograph of the Moors, indicating the swamp where Aboriginal children collected wildflowers to sell.  
© Department of Lands

Aboriginal Reserve and the beaches to the east was home to only a few white families, most of whom local Aboriginal people seemed to have known quite well.<sup>151</sup> There were also some farms south of the Reserve as well as large areas of Crown Land that were largely uncleared bush and swamps.

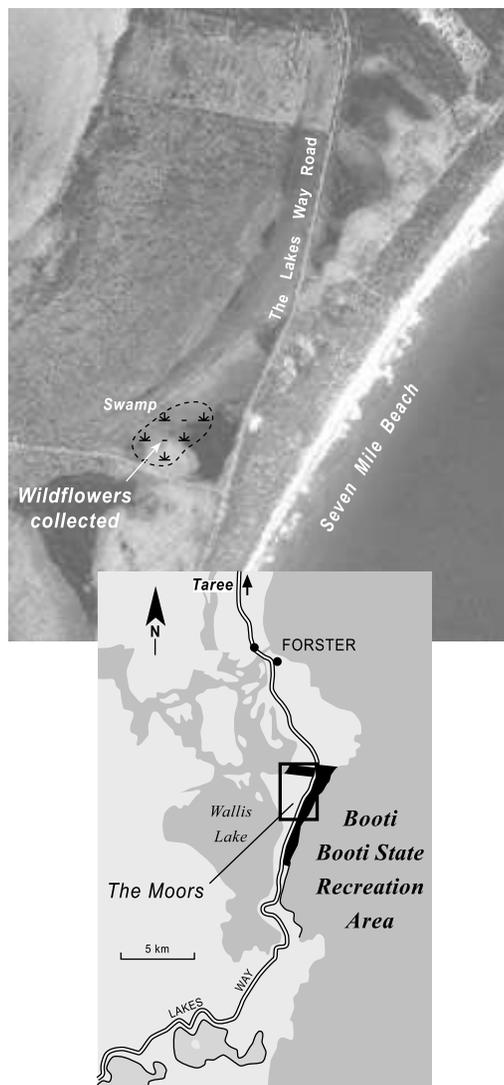
## Beaches

Aboriginal men used the beaches around Forster mostly for fishing, diving for lobsters and collecting beach worms for bait, while women's activities including taking children there to swim, to have picnics and to collect shells and shellfish. On Sundays, everyone – men, women and children – would go to the beach together for a day of relaxation 'away from the mission'.<sup>152</sup> The beaches closest to the Aboriginal Reserve, and thus most frequently used by Aboriginal people, were Pebbly Beach (also known as Little Beach) and One Mile Beach. For most of the twentieth century, these beaches were hardly used by white people who tended to congregate at the town beach.<sup>153</sup> (See Figure 77.)

## Walking

Aboriginal people walked to these beaches, using bush tracks or rough horse tracks.<sup>154</sup> Women favoured some tracks over others, particularly if they were taking children to the beach in prams. For example, Mae Simon remembered going to One Mile Beach by heading straight up South Street because this was an easier route to take with the old cane prams that they used in the 1950s. Others, such as young boys, tended to take the route from the bottom end of the mission, across the sandier and swamplier tracks where the Forster Golf course now is.

While rudimentary roads were sometimes followed, the tracks usually used were little more than animal tracks through the scrub and swamps. Joe Ridgeway, who walked these tracks from the 'mission' to the beaches regularly as a young boy in the 1950s, described them as 'bush tracks, either made by animals or people, going towards the seaside'.<sup>155</sup> He said, 'well, they were sandy tracks, most of them. Actually, every one of them was sandy tracks. A bloke with a horse and cart used to put a bit of gravel in the worst of them, the vehicle ones'.<sup>156</sup> (See Figure 77.)



## Being Aboriginal

Going to the beaches, especially on Sundays, was part of the process by which Aboriginal people were able to develop and maintain 'their sense of themselves, part of what it meant to be "Aboriginal" and "kin"'.<sup>157</sup> Intergenerational interactions were particularly important and highly valued. For example, older Aboriginal women are remembered as taking the young children from the mission to the beach for picnics. They would cook dampers in the sand and the children would swim or play around the rocks. Maude Cunningham is especially fondly remembered for this. In the same way, during the 1950s and 1960s, men in their thirties would take

young teenage boys, usually their nephews, on fishing and diving excursions to Burgess Beach. The older generation men in their fifties and sixties, would regularly go along too. These were important occasions for passing on cultural knowledge from one generation to the next.

The beaches also provided a refuge from white people. Here Aboriginal people could congregate together, often to do things they were not permitted to do by white society. For instance, Mae Simon recalled that during the prohibition days some of the men would drink out there. 'When I came here [about 1950] the men couldn't go to the pubs and have a drink. So they used to get their drink and take it out to the beach'.<sup>158</sup>

## The Moors

Behind Seven Mile Beach, along the Lakes Way road, was a large swampy area known as 'the Moors'. Here Aboriginal girls, especially, would pick wildflowers such as Christmas bells that they'd sell to people in town for their 'picture fares'.<sup>159</sup> Seven Mile Beach was also known as a good place for getting beach worms. Fay Pattison, who grew up on the Forster Reserve, recalled that her grandfather, Barney Simon, regularly went worming there: 'My grandfather used to go and get worms. And we used to sell them for 40 cents a packet with a dozen worms in. They get them off the beach. They must have walked out. They never had a car'.<sup>160</sup> The route to Seven Mile Beach was out along the old Lakes Way, and across an old race-course. (see Figure 78)

## A tourist landscape

The struggles over land occupied by Aboriginal people along the lakeshore between 1906 and 1911, described above, were a by-product of changes in land-use occurring in the early twentieth century as Forster developed into a tourist destination.<sup>161</sup> The visible signs of Forster's development as a tourist town included the construction of holiday cottages and guesthouses along Little Street and the enclosed ocean baths at the town beach. In the process, some of the existing homes of white people were turned into guesthouses. As further evidence of this development, from the late nineteenth century onwards, Forster was regularly publicised in tourist literature, promoted as an 'anglers' paradise'. While some of these developments date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Forster's tourist industry expanded mostly in the immediate post Second World War period. This was when mass

tourism developed along Australia's east coast, facilitated by increasing car ownership.

For Aboriginal people, tourism was both a positive and negative development. Throughout the twentieth century there was a constant tension between how the tourist industry was a source of employment or cash generation for Aboriginal people while at the same time it constantly jeopardised their continued relatively free use of the landscape and the natural resources upon which they had long depended.

## Working for the tourists

Aboriginal people positioned themselves within, or were incorporated into, the local tourism industry in various ways. Aboriginal men acted as guides, taking visitors to prime fishing spots. For example, Barney Simon regularly took tourists out fishing, leaving from the wharves at the bottom of South Street and going up the lake to places such as Hells Gate, between Yahoo and Wallis Islands. According to his granddaughter, Fay Pattison:

*My grandfather, and a lot of Aborigine men, the older men, used to take the tourists out fishing. ... Oh all the top city businessmen come up [to Forster]. They'd take them out fishing.*<sup>162</sup>

They'd take local white people out too. Madge Bolt, who grew up at Forster in the 1920s and 1930s and still lives there today, remembered that her father, Nip Simon, used to take the Elliotts, who owned a local bakery, out fishing on the lakes. '[He'd] take them up around the lakes. We used to go to Wallis Island. And we used to have lunch there. We'd hire a launch and go up there for a day. Cook the fish on the coals up there'.<sup>163</sup>

The tourism industry was a source of employment for local Aboriginal women. As was the case for women from Purfleet working in Taree (described in Chapter 11), Aboriginal women at Forster provided a (literally) hidden labour force, particularly as part of the local tourism industry, making possible visitors' pleasure and recreation. Many worked in the kitchens of tourist establishments, usually in the early hours of the morning.<sup>164</sup> Places of employment included the Lakes and Ocean Hotel on Little Street, Breeze's Guest House on the corner of South and Little Streets, and Zornda's café in the main street. According to Mae Simon, 'Breeze's Guest House used to be always filled up. About four or five Koori people used to work there'.<sup>165</sup>

*Right page* Fig. 79: Barney Simon taking a boatload of tourists out fishing on Wallis Lake. Courtesy Fay Pattison





Another was Haine's Guest House, also on South Street. Mae Simon worked there when she first moved to Forster in 1950. When Sydney businessmen came to Forster for holidays, they sometimes hired Aboriginal women to cook for them. For instance, a woman known as Auntie Dude regularly cooked for the Gordon & Gotch publishing company when it stayed at holiday cottages in Bruce Street, not far from the Aboriginal mission.<sup>166</sup> (see Figure 80)

Aboriginal boys and girls were the purveyors of commodities required by tourists. They sold mushrooms and blackberries, gathered from the bush between the 'mission' and the outer beaches, to the guest houses for the tourists' breakfasts. Fay Pattison remembers, as a young girl in the 1940s, getting up at 4.00 am to collect mushrooms for the tourists' breakfasts. She and the other children would also sell worms for bait, collected by themselves or their fathers, directly to the tourists.<sup>167</sup>

*I used to sell them [the worms] to the tourists because they used them for fishing. I had a bike. [I'd go] up the street, to the cottages on Little Street. They'd be waiting.*

These activities link places frequented by Aboriginal people, such as the Moors (along Seven Mile Beach), or the fishing places on the lake around Yahoo Island, to the tourist landscape. Drawing attention to these little known contributions to the local tourism industry has the effect of making more visible an Aboriginal presence in that industry and hence in a 'tourism landscape' that was fashioned explicitly for white people's recreation and pleasure and that is normally depicted as a purely white domain.<sup>168</sup>

## Fishing for themselves

Aboriginal men did not act only as guides for white anglers; they fished for their own subsistence. Many owned boats which they had built themselves and which they usually kept at the jetties near the end of South Street, close to the Little Baths. The Little Baths was a walled-off section of the lake<sup>169</sup> and a favourite swimming place of Aboriginal kids from the 'mish' and a popular fishing place with Aboriginal men.<sup>170</sup> (See Figure 81.)

*You know the old swimming baths, when my grandfather was alive he used to be up real early and he'd be down there fishing and they'd be fishing for blackfish. They'd all be around them baths, bumper to bumper. He'd be home about half past six with six big blackfish. Just throw them on the coals.<sup>171</sup>*

Near the Little Baths were boatsheds, where Aboriginal people would sometimes hire boats. Fay Pattison recalls that boat hire was cheap in the 1940s and 1950s.

*You know what we used to get boats for? When we was kids? Fifty cents and twenty-five cents! ... Yeah, we used to run home from school and straight out fishing. Because we loved fishing. We'd row out. We'd get about a hundred and eighty six mullet. Now you're lucky if you get twenty or forty now. Yeah, because they was thick then, you know.<sup>172</sup>*

This was also the location of one of the local ferry stops. Aboriginal people from Forster regularly took the ferry across to Tuncurry, where it would meet the Taree bus.<sup>173</sup> Visits to Taree were for shopping, medical treatment or to visit relatives. Women from Forster usually went to Taree Hospital to have their babies. Mae Simon describes catching the ferry from the South Street wharf across to Tuncurry on her way to Taree to give birth:

*In the night the ferry would be running across and if we didn't go by ferry we'd go by boat. The boat that used to take the ferry. The ambulance would be on the other side waiting to take us to Taree. If it was low tide we'd have to go right around near the breakwater. There was no hospital there at the time.<sup>174</sup>*

This small section of the lakeshore around the Little Baths and wharves at the end of South Street was thus a main access point between land and lake.<sup>175</sup> It was the portion of the lakeshore closest and most

*This page* Fig. 80: Aerial photograph with overlay showing places where Aboriginal people worked (1) Lakes and Ocean Hotel; (2) Breeze's Guest House (3) Forster Hospital  
© Department of Lands

*Right page* Fig. 81: The Little Baths on the foreshore of Wallis Lake, 2001



accessible to the Aboriginal Reserve. The route from the Reserve was straight through swamp and bush, now the site of the Cape Hawke Hospital. 'Opposite the hospital was all bush. We used to go straight through there on the way down to the baths'.<sup>176</sup> This stretch of land was the site of the original Aboriginal Reserve, as described above.

### Other fishing spots

In addition to the Little Baths, the breakwater at the lake's entrance to the ocean was a popular fishing place.<sup>177</sup> Aboriginal people used rods they made themselves and sometimes spears. The breakwater is associated with an old fishing tradition. Fay Pattison told us: 'Gladys Simon used to tell me that down at the breakwater Aborigines years ago used to talk to the porpoise in the lingo and tell them to round the fish up and they'd bring the fish in'.<sup>178</sup>

The lake's edge further south opposite Godwin Island, and around Tony's Point and Hadley's Island, was popular with Aboriginal boys for spearing, at least up until the 1960s.<sup>179</sup> Robert Yettica explained that he and his friends would line up with their homemade spears around the little inlets where the tide was coming in, or going out, and spear fish as they were moved along by the current. The spear poles were made from tea-tree, and the points from old twelve-gauge fencing wire. They'd bind the barb to the pole with wire and seal it with tar.<sup>180</sup> (see Figure 82)

### Up the Lake

When Aboriginal people took boats out on the lake to go fishing, they would head out to the sandbars behind Wallis Island, or to the water between Yahoo and Wallis Islands.<sup>181</sup> These were good fishing places. The edge of the islands, where there was a lot of cockle-weed, was good for bream.<sup>182</sup> While sometimes people would simply go out on the lake fishing from boats, at other times one or more of the islands in the Lake was the destination.

They'd go to the islands mostly to hunt, to trap rabbits, and to collect the natural materials (vines and cabbage tree palms) they needed to make cane chairs, which they produced for sale. As Fay Pattison recalled:

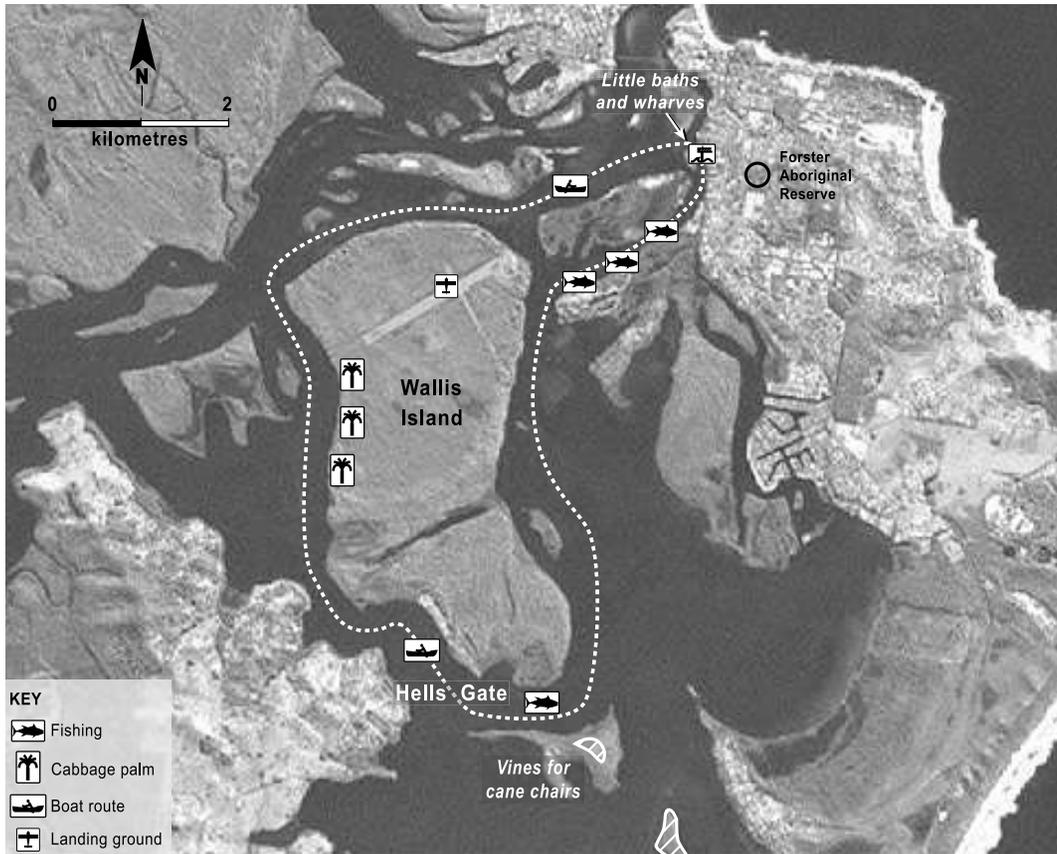
*We used to go up there and they'd [the men] get rabbits. And then other times my grandfather used to build cane chairs and sell them. They used to get them palm trees [cabbage tree palms], and then they'd have vines ... We used to go up [to the islands] – a heap of us. Some would be carrying palms, and some would be carrying vine, and others would have a wallaby over their shoulder. We used to just go up for the day to get that.*<sup>183</sup>

### Cane chairs – a cottage industry

The Forster Aboriginal community was well known for the cane chairs that local Aboriginal men made (see Figure 83). As Fay Pattison's recollections show, the main islands for the materials from which cane chairs were made were Wallis Island and Yahoo Island. Wallis was good for the palms that were used for the chairs' structure, and Yahoo for the vines used in binding the structure together. Mae Simon, whose husband was one of the craftsmen in the 1950s, remembers that on excursions to the islands to collect raw materials for the chairs the women would stay in the boats fishing while the men went onto to Wallis to get the palms or Yahoo to get the vines. The vines grew in the middle of the island, not along the edges.<sup>184</sup>

The manufacture of cane chairs is an example of a local Aboriginal cottage industry. The significance of these industries for Aboriginal post-contact heritage is that they entailed frequent excursions into the landscape surrounding an Aboriginal community to collect the raw materials from which the locally produced, handmade items were constructed.

Similar cottage industries found in other NSW Aboriginal communities include the manufacture of souvenirs, such as boomerangs or other 'traditional' wooden implements modified for a tourist market.



These local Aboriginal 'cottage' industries were an important source of cash, one that was sometimes vital to the community.<sup>185</sup>

As was the case with the cane chairs made at Forster, the objects produced in Aboriginal cottage industries elsewhere were invariably made from easily procurable natural resources. This meant that production costs were minimal. The only 'cost' was time and labour but this too was nominal, particularly given that Aboriginal people's labour in the broader economy was not often in high demand. Nor did it usually command high wages. And given that these enterprises were organised collectively, the labour required was spread across a number of people anyway, as Figure 83 illustrates.

This collective mode of working, and a production schedule organised around other responsibilities or activities (such as fishing), suited Aboriginal people better than the constraints of the 'white' labour market. It reflects, to some degree, the preference for and the continuation of specifically Aboriginal forms of sociality. Moreover, in terms of structure,

these industries tended to be sex segregated, mirroring pre-contact labour patterns. For instance, only men were engaged in the making of cane chairs. In other Aboriginal communities where souvenir production was a cottage industry, such as at La Perouse near Sydney, men and boys made boomerangs and other wooden implements while women and girls made tourist shellwork.<sup>186</sup>

The function of these enterprises is not simply economic, but also social and cultural. The excursions to collect materials, and the production workshops, were occasions for yarning: talking about the old days, about the old people, about the old ways. It was in this context that skills, some (such as woodworking) grounded in traditional practices, were passed from one generation to the next. The excursions into the landscape to collect materials are commonly remembered, particularly

*This page* Fig. 82: Aerial photograph with overlay showing the Wallis Lake landscape indicating fishing spots and boat routes.  
© Department of Lands

*Right page* Fig. 83: A workshop on the Forster Aboriginal Reserve where cane chairs were built, c. 1950s. Courtesy Fay Pattison



by the younger generation who had accompanied their parents and grandparents, as a learning experience, a time when they were told about the local environment and its meanings.

### Rabbiting and hunting

During the 1930s and 1940s, rabbits were in plentiful supply on the islands and so Aboriginal people would go up there rabbiting.

*We had hundreds of rabbit traps and they used to set them in the night-time. And we'd sell the rabbits. They'd set the traps around the islands. They'd sell the skins too. That's how they'd make their livings ... Sometimes shops'd buy them, guesthouses.<sup>187</sup>*

Sometimes Aboriginal people would go as far as Coomba Park, particularly if they were hunting for kangaroo or wallaby. Again, Robert Yettica told us, that as boys in the 1950s and 60s he and his friends would hire a boat and go down the lake to go hunting, using guns. They'd usually go if a party

was to be held on the 'mission', and a kangaroo was needed to feed the guests. Other times the boys would accompany the men hunting further down the lake, but on those occasions they'd rarely get 'a go of the gun'.

### Spirits in the landscape

As is common in other Aboriginal landscapes (see Chapter 10), particular places around Forster and Wallis Lake are associated with ghosts and other spirits. For instance, Madge Bolt told us that while she didn't camp on the islands, her grandfather, Coomba George, used to. She remembers this because he had told her there was a ghost on Wallis Island: 'He used to show us where the ghost scratched him. He had this mark down his back'. When we visited Wallis Island with Robert Yettica in 2001, he sensed spirits there, feeling a sensation in his knee. Some islands had been used as initiation grounds, with the last initiation apparently taking place in the late 1930s.<sup>188</sup> There is believed to be a bora ring on Shark or Little Shark Island.

## Workplaces

While the tourism industry provided a form of casual employment, as described above, some Aboriginal men had more permanent positions in the local economy. For instance, in the early part of the twentieth century some men, including Henry Cunningham and Nip Simon, worked at the Miles's and at the Wright's shipyards.<sup>189</sup>

As was the case for Aboriginal men at Purfleet, some of the Forster Aboriginal men worked as professional fishermen, alongside non-Aboriginal fishermen.<sup>190</sup> Along with other fishermen, they vied to have their catch transported to Sydney, or they sold it through the local co-op. They kept their boats at the Little Street wharves and mended their nets in sheds near their houses on the mission. At night they'd make nets in their home, often with the assistance of their grandchildren.<sup>191</sup>

In the late 1940s, an aerodrome was built on the middle of Wallis Island.<sup>192</sup> Robert Yettica's father worked on the construction of it and later as a maintenance worker there. As a child, Robert remembers going there with his father by boat, and playing around the island while his father worked. (see Figure 84).

Some Aboriginal women worked as cleaners, or kitchen maids, in and around Forster. For example, Madge Bolt worked for many years in the laundry at the local Forster Hospital, and later as a cleaner at the Commonwealth Bank in the main street. She also did cleaning work in private homes.

### *Moving away for work*

The seasonal nature of employment has meant that Aboriginal people, especially men, from Forster have often been required to move away for work, sometimes only returning to the Reserve on weekends or even less frequently. This was the case particularly for Aboriginal men working in the timber industry. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s some worked in timber camps behind Buladelah, sometimes taking their families with them.

Later on, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, Forster people became part of an itinerant Aboriginal labour force working on farms along the coast, picking beans and peas.<sup>193</sup> Many joined their relatives travelling down the Pacific Highway to the bean and pea picking centres on the South Coast, such as those around Bodalla. As Robert Yettica explained, this pattern of movement in pursuit of work contributed to the creation of new kinship



relationships and other ties between Aboriginal people all along the east coast. There were other farms, closer to home, out at Cape Hawke, that employed Aboriginal people from the Forster Aboriginal Reserve. Usually the farmers collected the Aboriginal workers each morning in trucks.

### *Going overseas*

During the First and Second World Wars, many Aboriginal men from Forster served as soldiers overseas. Nip Simon, for instance, went to the First World War and Toki Simon, among others, went to the Second World War.<sup>194</sup> These Aboriginal soldiers are commemorated on the town's war memorial.

## Living beyond the 'mission'

As in the case of Purfleet, not all Aboriginal people in Forster during the twentieth century lived on the Aboriginal Reserve. For instance, Madge Bolt's grandmother, Ginny Cunningham, had a house in the main street of Forster. Similarly, the Clarkes, who originally came from Gloucester, had a place in McIntosh Street, not far from the Forster Aboriginal Reserve. This was in the 1940s. And Keith Leon lived with his family in Wallis Street. These sites of 'independent' (or autonomous) Aboriginal dwelling are much more difficult to trace than the government reserves, particularly because there are few documentary records about them. They are, however, places preserved in Aboriginal people's memories. They are significant in Aboriginal heritage landscapes because they remind us that Aboriginal people's presence was not completely confined to the local Reserve. (See Figure 85)

In addition to houses around the town, one well known Aboriginal family, the McClymonts, owned a farm on the north shore of Wallis Lake (see Figure 86). Very little is known about the history of this farm, although its location is known. It is another



example their own right and not merely labourers on the farms of white people. Blue Dick McClymont is believed to be buried in the old Aboriginal cemetery on the hill behind the Forster Aboriginal Reserve. This old cemetery is now part of Tobwabba Park.

### The Forster Aboriginal Reserve today

As noted, the Forster Aboriginal Reserve is now vested in the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council. While many Aboriginal people still live on the old Reserve on South Street, many others live beyond it. In addition, the Land Council owns some local businesses, including an art workshop and gallery called Tobwabba.

### Similar landscapes in NSW

The story of the Aboriginal community at Forster resonates with the histories of other Aboriginal settlements along the NSW coast. Examples include the settlements at Cabbage Tree Island, Yamba, La Perouse, Orient Point, and Wallaga Lake. Brian Egloff's small book, *Wreck Bay: An Aboriginal Fishing Community*, provides a window onto the history of one such community.

Fishing was always a major activity at these settlements and boats had an important role in everyday life. The history of the Forster community well illustrates how the water, and the ability to travel over water, gave people reasonably easy access to a much larger landscape (e.g., the extensive peripheral foreshores and islands of Wallis Lake) than would have been the case if the settlement had been entirely surrounded by land. There is also the fact that, apart from oyster leases, the lakes and estuaries

were not privately owned (nor fenced) in the way that land was. There was, therefore, a freedom on the water that did not exist for Aboriginal people on the land. Bain Attwood, in his study of Aboriginal people in Victoria in the nineteenth century, observes that the activity of 'line fishing' in canoes provided an opportunity for Aboriginal women to escape the 'missionary order and [enter] into a realm of space and time which mirrored their traditional past'.<sup>195</sup> This observation can be extended to Aboriginal people more generally.

There are two further points of similarity between the Forster community and other Aboriginal settlements in NSW. The first is the practice of people from these settlements following seasonal picking routes, often far from home, a common practice for people at communities such as La Perouse, Wallaga Lake and Tweed Heads. *Travelling with Percy* is a book that includes Aboriginal people's memories of following the seasonal picking routes along the south coast of NSW. The second is the existence of lively local cottage industries at many NSW Aboriginal settlements, focusing on the manufacture of souvenirs, which parallel the cane chair industry at Forster. Industries based on making shellwork souvenirs are confined to coastal communities such as Wreck Bay, Roseby Park and La Perouse. The production of boomerangs, clapping sticks, carved emu eggs and, of course, paintings, takes place in Aboriginal communities across the state.

Left page Fig. 84: The aerodrome on Wallis Island, 2001

This page Fig. 85: Aerial photograph with overlay showing the location of houses occupied by Aboriginal families beyond Forster Aboriginal Reserve. © Department of Lands

Fig. 86: Blue Dick McClymont's farm, 2001



# 14 Recording

## Aboriginal heritage landscapes

The documentary and oral history records show very clearly that the camps and settlements in which Aboriginal people lived were surrounded by ‘circles’ of country that can almost be regarded as extensions of the camps and settlements themselves. These are what might be called the ‘backyard’ zones of Aboriginal post-contact life. They were areas thick with significance, full of pathways (beaten paths and memorized routes from A to B), and populated with stories and memories.

### Sites and lives

In the cultural heritage field there has been a strong tendency to record Aboriginal heritage places in isolation from the landscape around them. The ‘site’ tends to be thought of as being just that area covered by a stone artefact scatter, a shell midden, or other physical remains. There is no problem with defining sites in this way for management and conservation purposes providing we do not confuse the physical ‘site’ with the lives of people who occupied or used the site in the past. A shell midden, for instance, represents only one part of the activity involved in Aboriginal shellfishing and it is unlikely even to have been the focus of this activity, that focus being the shellfish beds or rock platforms. In the case of Aboriginal post-contact settlements, something similar applies – the lives and activities of the people living on the reserves or in the fringe camps flowed out into the surrounding landscape.

Left page Fig. 87: Aerial photograph and recording equipment used for oral history interviewing.

### Heritage myths

There is also an important difference between Aboriginal pre-contact heritage and Aboriginal post-contact heritage. We refer below to the way that, as white settlement spread across the post-1788 Australian landscape, Aboriginal people were pushed into smaller and smaller fragments of that landscape. Something similar has occurred in the heritage field. As local white historians, heritage practitioners, and volunteers have recorded increasing numbers of non-Indigenous heritage places in the form of old homesteads, banks, courthouses, woolsheds, fences, and other structures and sites, the impression is created that the post-1788 landscape was populated only by white people. Because there have been so very few post-contact Aboriginal places recorded the impression is created that Aboriginal history ceased in 1788 as white history took over.

But it is not just that few Aboriginal post-contact settlements (and other sites) have been recorded. Our concern also is in regard to a perception that Aboriginal people’s lives were confined to the few places that have been recorded (or that are at least known, if not recorded). The perception seems to be that Aboriginal people stayed on the Reserves and fringe camps while the rest of the landscape was ‘filled up’ with white people’s lives. This perception is evident in local histories written by white authors for our study area, an area where most references to Aboriginal people are to those at Purfleet and the fringe camps at Taree and Wingham. There are very few references to Aboriginal people out in the wider landscape.

The four landscape studies presented in the previous chapters show how wrong this perception is. We are not suggesting here that non-Indigenous people have not also had close attachments to the areas surrounding their settlements. The difference is that in their case such attachment is *assumed*, since the surrounding landscape, after all, is white-owned, just as the towns and villages are. The ‘backyard’ is owned by people of the ‘same’ culture<sup>196</sup>. In the case of Aboriginal settlements, the ‘backyard’

has, for most of the last 200 years, been owned by the white colonisers. This seems to have led to a perception that Aboriginal people would have had little or no presence in it. The pages that follow are intended to show how the 'backyard' concept can be incorporated into cultural heritage conservation practice.

## How to find them

For the purposes of heritage recording, the first question has to be, how do you find these post-contact Aboriginal 'backyards' zones? The obvious answer is that they can be found surrounding Aboriginal post-contact Reserves, fringe camps, and other settlements. But where are these Aboriginal Reserves and camps to be found? For any given area of NSW, local Aboriginal people will tend to know the location of many or most of them. This is particularly true of Aboriginal settlements that date to within the last seventy years or so. Part 3 of this book, as well as the landscape studies in Part 2, testify to the extent of such knowledge among Aboriginal people of our study area. Beyond that time, however, and especially for the nineteenth-century Aboriginal settlements, contemporary Aboriginal people may not know the locations.

The fact that so few Aboriginal post-contact places have been recorded on the heritage inventories (AHIMS,<sup>197</sup> the NSW State Heritage Inventory, The Register of the National Estate) suggests that heritage practitioners in NSW have very little knowledge of these places. The reasons for this have been reviewed elsewhere.<sup>198</sup> They include the fact that most Aboriginal heritage places recorded to date in NSW have been recorded by archaeologists whose training has been in prehistoric rather than historical archaeology.

Published lists of Aboriginal Reserves in NSW are available and these are an obvious first point of reference for anyone wanting to relocate and record these places. The Reserves were mostly created in the period from the 1860s and they were mostly situated in areas where the Aboriginal population had already come to be concentrated.

### *The process of concentration*

It is worth stepping back in time, to 1788 – the moment when British colonisation began – to ask what factors led to Aboriginal people being concentrated in these areas. The white invasion of Aboriginal country, beginning in NSW in 1788, naturally had a great influence on where Aboriginal settlements would be located during the subsequent

215 years. The Aboriginal hunter-gather economy was based on the use of wild foods from across all the environments of the group's country. As the invasion by white migrant farmers and pastoralists proceeded, they began grazing sheep and cattle on an increasing proportion of these environments, replacing kangaroos and other native animals with sheep and cattle that Aboriginal people could only kill and eat at the risk of deadly reprisals by armed settlers and the Native Police. It quickly became impossible for Aboriginal people to live by hunting and gathering alone. They had to begin drawing food from the white economy, either in the form of government rations or as payment in return for their labour, and this inevitably meant moving closer, or 'coming in',<sup>199</sup> to where white people had located themselves.

Ironically, in view of their frequent antagonism towards the 'race' that took their land, Aboriginal people often ended up concentrated into those parts of the overall landscape most densely settled by white people. In our own study area, these were the agricultural lands along the bottom of the Manning Valley and the environs of the small towns which began appearing from the 1830s. For the same reason, in semi-arid parts of Western NSW, Aboriginal people concentrated near pastoral station homesteads because the only way they could still survive in their country was by working for the white pastoralists whose stock were now grazing where the kangaroos and emus had previously been most plentiful. If you looked at a map showing the distribution of the white population across NSW in, say, 1900, you could surmise that the Aboriginal population was concentrated in the same areas as white people. This does not mean that Aboriginal people stopped visiting the forests, wetlands and the dune-fields along the coast, but it does mean their major camps and settlements were likely to be located close to agricultural areas and coastal ports.

We may have given the impression that this process of concentration was inevitable and that the white invasion simply rolled over Aboriginal country unopposed. In fact it was opposed. The process was a highly conflicted one in which many Aboriginal people and a much smaller number of white people died. The history of this conflict in our study area was discussed in Part 1. What we are concerned with here is describing the trends in Aboriginal post-1788 settlement in a way that may assist heritage practitioners to understand where the key Aboriginal cultural landscapes of the last 215 years are to be found.

*More specific factors*

The process of concentration described above explains why Aboriginal settlement in our study area came to be concentrated in the Manning Valley and around the present day town of Forster. But these in themselves are large areas of several hundred square kilometres. What determined the specific locations of their settlements inside those areas?

In the first place, most of the land in those areas was quickly 'taken up' (i.e., bought or leased) by white farmers and townspeople (see the sequence of maps in Figures 18, 22, 27). Aboriginal people no longer had the option of wandering at will through their country because increasingly large parts of that country came to be owned by white people – fences went up, guns (sometimes) came out, and Aboriginal people were pushed into smaller and smaller spaces. The only land left over was that which was in the form of Crown reserves. As we suggest in Part 1, one way of narrowing down the possibilities of where the focal areas of Aboriginal post-contact life were located in the landscape is to look to the Crown reserves scattered across the country. These have existed in the form of towns commons, road reserves, travelling stock routes, water reserves, land reserved for future villages – to name just a few (see Figure 26). In our study area these reserves were mostly set aside by government surveyors in the second half of the nineteenth century. These lands had not been reserved for Aboriginal use (the Aboriginal Reserves were the only areas that were) but because they were reserved from sale and private ownership they were unoccupied by white people in any primary sense. In many cases it was thus possible for Aboriginal people to access this land. Many Aboriginal fringe camps were located on Crown reserve land in and around villages and towns. This included land set aside as town commons and police paddocks (but rarely used for these purposes). Further from the towns, travelling stock routes and travelling stock reserves were often used by Aboriginal people as camp sites.

Other factors determining where Aboriginal people had their camps and more permanent settlements included the availability of casual work. This included stock work on farms, seasonal fruit and vegetable picking, and construction work on railways and roads. Sometimes white employers made areas of their own land available for their Aboriginal employees and their families to camp on.

*Concentrations inside concentrations*

To summarise, Aboriginal people came to be concentrated in the same parts of the landscape where white people were concentrated. In eastern NSW this meant the fertile valleys, particularly those where navigable rivers allowed access to coastal shipping. But Aboriginal people did not camp or settle just anywhere in these areas. Their camps and settlements were focused on available Crown reserve lands that represented gaps and openings in the pattern of privately owned 'white' land. The process of concentration should not be taken to mean Aboriginal people had no choice in the matter of where they lived. They did make choices – for instance, to live in one fringe camp rather than another – but they made these choices within certain constraints. The major constraint, of course, was the fact that most parcels of land across the landscape were privately owned by white people. By understanding the constraints on Aboriginal settlement we are in a much better position to know where to look for the heritage of Aboriginal post-1788 settlement.

*Historical documentation*

The major Aboriginal post-1788 settlements in any one region are likely to be featured in published accounts of Aboriginal post-contact history in NSW. Even if searches of the heritage inventories are unproductive it will thus still be possible to identify such places, prior to field survey, by consulting readily available state-wide or regional texts, such as Heather Goodall's (1996), *Invasion to Embassy*, or Peter Kabaila's (1995), *Wiradjuri Places*. Also, for most parts of NSW there are at least a few published local history books which sketch in the basic story of Aboriginal existence in the local area after white settlement occurred. In other words, then, such major Aboriginal settlements will have left a paper trail relatively easily accessible to archaeologists and other heritage practitioners undertaking background research prior to carrying out field surveys. Heritage practitioners working in the non-Indigenous heritage field routinely survey the historical literature before they conduct field surveys – this should also be routine practice for those working with historic period Aboriginal heritage.

**What happened there?**

To repeat the point made earlier, Aboriginal people in the historical period (the post-1788 period) did not live their lives confined to the Reserves, fringe camps, and other settlements – much of their daily life was spent in areas surrounding these places.

These are what we have termed ‘backyard’ zones. The four ‘landscape’ studies that make up the four preceding chapters illustrate the sort of things that went on in these backyards – a spectrum of activities that range from mooring fishing boats to swimming in dams.

### *No two the same*

No two Aboriginal settlements were the same and so the range of activities in and around them varied. The Purfleet Aboriginal settlement was surrounded on one side by forest and on the other by farms and creeks leading to the Manning River. People hunted in the forest, fished in the creeks and used the water reserves along some of the creeks to moor their fishing boats and dry their fishing nets. The people on the Forster Aboriginal Reserve, by contrast, had no easy access to forest but were within a couple of hundred metres of Wallis Lake with its swimming areas and its fishing grounds and islands.

In what follows we look at those past activities that can help heritage practitioners define or ‘map’ these ‘backyard’ zones in the course of their heritage surveys and studies.

### *Concentrations of heritage places*

From a heritage point of view, the usefulness of being able to define or map these ‘backyard’ zones on the ground is that they are likely to contain a greater concentration of heritage places than other parts of the larger landscape. This is certainly not to say that significant post-contact places will not be found outside these backyard zones (massacre sites are one significant example of places that will be outside them more often than not).

### *Sedentary but still mobile*

One of the most dramatic lifestyle changes forced on Aboriginal people by white invasion and colonisation was that of living in more-or-less permanent locations rather than in the frequently shifted camps of the hunter-gather. A nucleated settlement pattern thus came to replace a dispersed pattern. Another way of saying this is that people’s activities came to be organised around settled residences rather than the residences (hunter-gatherer camps) being organised around the activities (e.g., the seasonal hunter-gather ‘round’, the trade lines, or the ritual cycles). Even in the post-contact period, though, Aboriginal people seemed to be more mobile than most white people. As well as retaining a desire to move around their traditional country there were practical reasons for this mobility, including the

need to supplement government rations with wild foods (from hunting, fishing, and plant gathering) and the tendency for Aboriginal people to seek casual farm work on properties surrounding their camps and reserves.

### *Movement*

One of the strongest themes to come out of the landscape studies in Part 2 is that of movement. Movement is a constant theme in the documentary and especially the oral history sources for our study area. Any reading of Aboriginal histories elsewhere in NSW will show this to be true for the State as a whole. People walked and rode horses, used buggies, bicycles and, later, cars and trucks to move around their local landscapes. Up until the 1970s, walking remained the predominant mode of movement for Aboriginal people. Walking allowed them to go, legally or by ‘trespassing’, into most corners of the landscape surrounding their settlements. And walking, of course, meant pathways, both in the form of beaten tracks and pavements and in the form of peoples’ unmarked routes.

The emphasis placed on pathways and other routes in our landscape studies stems from a belief in their importance as cultural heritage. We know that the places we call ‘sites’ are often really just points on pathways (trajectories); they are ‘moments’ in a journey or trip across a landscape. However, because the heritage system is currently set up around the concept of the ‘site’, or heritage property, the points on the pathway have tended to dominate our thinking to the extent that the pathway itself is often lost sight of.

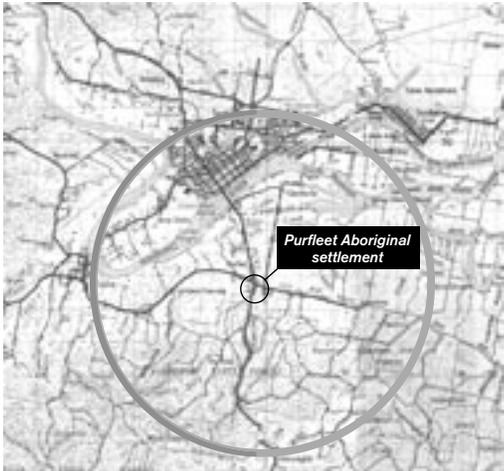
### *A heritage of walking*

Until cars came into common use in Aboriginal communities in the 1960s and 70s, people walked extensively through the areas surrounding their settlements. This heritage of walking emerges as a striking theme in Aboriginal oral histories recorded across NSW.<sup>200</sup> While most Aboriginal movement around the ‘backyard’ zones surrounding Aboriginal settlements will have been by foot, one should not discount the importance of horseback riding and buggies in Aboriginal communities in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.

### *Home and back in a day*

A very approximate way of defining the ‘backyard’ zone around an Aboriginal settlement is in terms of how far people could walk away from home and back in one day.<sup>201</sup> We suggest that a circle of radius five kilometres would encompass the great majority of daily movements by Aboriginal people around the settlements in our study area. People were certainly

Right page Fig. 88: Diagram indicating ‘backyard’ zone around Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. © Department of Lands



Source: 1:100 000 topographic maps, Wingham 9334 & Camden Haven 9434, RASC.

capable of walking much longer distances than this for particular reasons (e.g., to play in a cricket match) but most movements are likely to have been for purposes which were time consuming in themselves, such as fishing, picnicking, or visiting kin. For longer trips people often used horses, bicycles, buses and trains, or they hitch-hiked.

Obviously, the 'home and back in a day' definition is a gross measure of the extent of these focal areas and we do not suggest people adopt it as some kind of geohistorical reality. Rather, it is intended to draw attention to the historical importance of Aboriginal walking. We appreciate that white people also walked around the areas where they lived and that some white people probably walked more than some Aboriginal people<sup>202</sup> (for instance, there is the whole history of the white swagman which has yet to be addressed in NSW in heritage terms). Equally, in a later period (though commencing around the time of the Great Depression) white people walked long distances recreationally – the bushwalking movement had its origins here.<sup>203</sup> Our point, though, is that Aboriginal walking was culturally and historically specific and modulated.

### *Many variations*

The actual shape of the 'backyard' zone around an Aboriginal settlement will vary from place to place. For instance, where settlements are located along rivers (e.g., Cabbage Tree Island on the lower Richmond River), people's activities are likely to have been concentrated along the banks of the river more than inland. People would also be able to travel up and down river from the settlement by boat either to fish or to reach terrestrial destinations on either side. In this case the ideal 'circle' might be

skewed or 'stretched' to resemble something more elliptical (i.e., more like a rugby ball than a soccer ball). Where settlements were close to towns this also affected the spatiality of Aboriginal activities. For instance, women and girls from an Aboriginal settlement (e.g., Purfleet) were likely to work as 'domestics' in white households in towns (e.g., Taree). A 'backyard' zone might thus 'stretch out' to encompass a town ten or so kilometres away.

### *The larger web of connection*

While each of these 'backyard' zones was in many ways a world of its own, there were also many lines of connection between them and the larger world. In particular, there was often regular travel between Aboriginal settlements in any one region for the purposes of visiting kin,<sup>204</sup> attending weddings, funerals,<sup>205</sup> and other social events. There were also 'circuits' of Aboriginal movements based on fields of employment. There were shearing circuits followed by Aboriginal men which took them away from their home settlement to a 'round' of shearing sheds and eventually back home after the shearing season had finished. As we noted earlier, similar circuits existed for fruit and vegetable picking. This larger web of movement kept people on Aboriginal settlements remarkably well informed about events, kin, and friends over very extensive parts of NSW and beyond.

### *The spiritual 'backyard'*

The 'backyard' zones around Aboriginal settlements include the sites of encounters with ghosts and spirit beings as well as traditional sacred sites. Sometimes major sacred sites are located in the backyards of settlements – this is the case with the Wallaga Lake community on the South Coast who live in the very shadow of Gullaga, the sacred mountain on whose lower slopes the settlement stands. This community also has very strong links to Mumbulla Mountain (in Biamanga National Park), a sacred site which although it is situated some thirty kilometres southwest of the Wallaga Lake settlement is clearly considered by the community to be part of the settlement's spiritual 'backyard'.<sup>206</sup> Although it is outside the range of daily movement, on foot, from Wallaga Lake settlement it is quite visible on clear days from the settlement (and thus it might be said to be 'present' in the settlement).

## Regional studies

### *The syndrome of under-recording*

Because Aboriginal post-contact heritage has not enjoyed the attention that Aboriginal pre-contact heritage has received over the past decades it is

quite common for heritage practitioners to begin working in an area of the State without any prior knowledge of what Aboriginal post-contact places exist, or might exist, there. The practitioner's first step in such circumstances would probably be to search the heritage inventories (either AHIMS or the NSW State Heritage Inventory) for previously recorded places. So few of these places have been recorded, however, that inventory searches are unlikely, for most areas of the state, to provide the sort of background information the practitioner needs. The under-recording of post-contact heritage thus has a certain circularity about it: so little has been recorded that heritage workers are liable to go into the field with the expectation that very little post-contact heritage exists there. This expectation can only decrease the likelihood of them detecting post-contact heritage traces on the ground, an outcome that perpetuates the syndrome.

### *Regional studies*

Regional heritage studies have a role to play in breaking this cycle. Regional studies provide an overview of what heritage places are known to exist and likely to exist in any given region (e.g., a local government area or a bioregion). They look at the different natural environments in the region and the tenure (i.e., ownership status) of the land that heritage places are located on and they report on their state of preservation and the threats they face from natural processes (e.g., erosion, salinity) and human processes (e.g., vandalism, farming practices, urban development). They have a particular role to play in conservation planning – for instance, by alerting planners to particular landforms (e.g., coastal dunes containing shell middens) or site types (e.g., historic Aboriginal 'mission' buildings) which may have suffered severe attrition and which require special conservation measures. A regional study also provides a valuable contextual background for any EIA heritage project being carried out within the region.

Regional studies have at least three important functions in relation to Aboriginal post-contact heritage:

- 1 By overviewing historical documents and literature, they can indicate where Aboriginal post-contact heritage places are likely to occur in the regional landscape.
- 2 They alert planners, heritage practitioners and others to the fact that key 'places' (e.g., reserves and fringe camps) are likely to be surrounded by constellations of associated places (e.g., pathways, fishing places). These constellations make up what we are here calling 'backyard' zones. By drawing attention to such 'backyard' zones, regional studies can go a long way towards mapping the areas in the regional landscape that are likely to be of greatest 'sensitivity' in relation to Aboriginal post-contact heritage. Such areas of 'sensitivity' will then be the focus of concern in relation to proposed land developments which may impact heritage sites.
- 3 They are able to identify and describe major themes in Aboriginal post-contact history for a particular region. Examples of such themes would include frontier violence, Aboriginal employment in the pastoral industry, hunting and gathering, and flaked glass technology. This type of thematic history can be drawn upon by those recording post-contact heritage places in order to reconstruct the historic and social context of the places recorded.

### **Spatial patterning**

Each of the main types of prominent settlement (e.g., reserve, fringe camp, pastoral station camp) lies at the core of a distinctive pattern of movement and activity that 'revolved' around that settlement. This does not mean that Aboriginal activities revolving around one Aboriginal Reserve in NSW in the 1940s will be the same as those revolving around another. But it does mean we can expect that the general pattern of activity around Reserves in the 1940s is recognisably distinct from the pattern of activity around 1940s Aboriginal pastoral camps. The important thing here is that the existence of spatial patterning, and our ability to recognise it, opens the way for us to be proactive in the area of Aboriginal historic heritage conservation. It enables us to develop models for what the Aboriginal historic heritage record will look like in different parts of the NSW landscape. These models will of course always be subject to debate, modification, and fine-tuning as our knowledge improves.

### *Predictive value*

The recognition of spatial patterning can have significant predictive value. It was partly in order to provide a basis for such predictive modelling, for one part of the State, that Part 2 of the present book was written. There is no reason to think that Aboriginal settlements elsewhere in the State would be different from our own area in respect of being surrounded by 'backyard' zones. If this is the case then it would be possible for heritage planners to predict the presence of such 'backyard' zones around all or most post-contact settlements in NSW.

In other words, planners could zone such areas as having high potential for Aboriginal heritage significance even before field surveys or other investigations (e.g., oral history recording) have taken place there. The fact that so many Aboriginal post-contact heritage places are 'intangible' (i.e., they have left no obvious physical traces on the ground) adds to the importance of such predictive mapping or zoning. There is an obvious role for this approach in the heritage studies that have been undertaken by many NSW local governments.

The 'backyard' model that we are proposing here does not state or imply that all Aboriginal post-contact heritage places in any given landscape will be situated within the 'backyard' focal areas. What it proposes is that these areas will contain a relatively higher density of such places than other parts of the landscape. It would clearly be misguided for planners or others to assume that once the focal areas are identified they can forget about the rest of the landscape – for instance, by not taking account of post-contact heritage in the rest of the landscape when reviewing development applications.

Aboriginal people who participated in a recent regional Aboriginal heritage study at Coffs Harbour raised a similar issue.<sup>207</sup>

### *Predicting attachment*

Nor, it goes without saying, is predictive modelling a substitute for working with local Aboriginal knowledge holders. The reverse is in fact the case. Predictive modelling will alert planners and heritage practitioners to the likely existence of post-contact heritage places in areas where they are presently going unnoticed and unrecorded. The principle message in *Mapping Attachment* is that Aboriginal communities do have attachments to post-contact heritage places and, particularly for those places dating from the twentieth century, that they are the main sources of knowledge on these places. The sort of predictive modelling described here should logically create a heightened awareness of post-contact heritage in NSW. One of the key outcomes of this heightened awareness should be a more meaningful involvement of Aboriginal people in the recording and managing of their own heritage.

The 'backyard' zone is not simply an area with a high density of heritage places. It is also a part of the landscape that both present-day and former Aboriginal residents of a settlement are likely to have a particular attachment to. This attachment may partly be expressed in relation to particular places (e.g., on old fishing spot or picnic spot) but it is also likely to relate to the general landscape of the 'backyard' zone. These landscapes have in a very real sense been the 'site' of people's day-to-day lives.

- 1 *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no. 9, 1987.
- 2 See for example, Ian Keen (ed.), *Being Black: Aboriginal Cultures in 'Settled' Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988. Peggy Brock explores this theme in her study of three Aboriginal 'missions' in South Australia in *Outback Ghettos: Aborigines, Institutionalisation and Survival*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993.
- 3 See for example: Barry Morris, *Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Berg, New York, 1989; Individual Heritage Group, *La Perouse: The Place, the People and the Sea*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988; Patsy Cohen and Margaret Somerville, *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990; Peter Read (ed.), *Down there with me on the Cowra Mission: An Oral History of Erambie Aboriginal Reserve, Cowra, New South Wales*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1984.
- 4 Ella Simon, *Through My Eyes*, Seal Books, Sydney, 1978, p. 37.
- 5 NSW APB minutes, 18 October 1900.
- 6 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, Surveyor Hungerford to the District Surveyor at East Maitland ... 14 July 1911, NSW State Records, 3/2422.2
- 7 See Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in NSW, 1770-1970*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996; *Aboriginal Reserves in NSW*, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1983.
- 8 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 25. See also: NSWSR 8/2933, File 17113, for a history of the Taree Aboriginal Station, authored by an Aborigines Welfare Board manager, n.d. c. 1960s. The author notes that the first family was the Russells, which was Ella Simon's

grandfather's surname. He writes that 'George Russell had to crawl through acres of lantana to a spot which he considered suitable to live and which he cleared.'

- 9 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, argues that many of the Aboriginal reserves gazetted in the late nineteenth century were the direct result of Aboriginal people's requests for land to which they had an abiding attachment. The unpublished history written by the AWB manager (NSWSR 8/2933) referred to in footnote 8 concludes with: 'Many of the residents living today still maintain that the parcel of land where they first settled is rightfully theirs and not the property of the government. It was given to them by their say by people by the name of McClements'. The McClements are presumably the McLennans referred to by Ella Simon.
- 10 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 25. Margaret Maher (also spelt Marr), an Aboriginal woman from Purfleet, concurs with the view that the land had been given to Aboriginal people by a local white family. In an interview with Helen Hannah, she said: 'One of the farmers gave us a block of land up behind the shop in Purfleet, in Helen Hannah, *Voices: A Folk History of the Manning Valley*, Elands, 1988, p. 170.
- 11 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*.
- 12 See Ann Curthoys, 'Race and ethnicity: A study of the response of British Colonists to Aborigines and Chinese and non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881', PhD thesis, Macquarie University, 1973.
- 13 This was after 1905. Margaret's parents married in 1905, lived at Forster for a while, then moved to Purfleet, and then to Browns Hill. See Patricia Davis-Hurst, *Sunrise Station*, Sunbird Publications, Taree, 1996, p. 31

- 14 Patricia Davis-Hurst, *Sunrise Station*, p. 29.
- 15 *ibid*, p. 31.
- 16 Aboriginal reserves gazetted in the late nineteenth century had usually been unoccupied Crown land, such as camping, travelling stock or water reserves.
- 17 Simon, *Through My Eyes*.
- 18 NSW APB minutes, 3 May 1900.
- 19 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 25.
- 20 Jeremy Long, *Aboriginal Settlements: A Survey of Institutional Communities in Eastern Australia*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1970, p. 49. See also: NSW APB minutes and the *NSW Aborigines Advocate*.
- 21 Simon, *Through My Eyes*. Warner Saunders, oral history interview, P/T 4, 13/6/00; Patricia Davis-Hurst, oral history interview, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 22 This farm is mentioned Simon in *Through My Eyes*; Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01 and W. Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00. For an early reference to the McLennans, see W.F. Connors, *Pioneering Days Around Taree: A Factual History of Exploration and Earliest Settlement of the Manning River Valley*, Classic Printers, Taree, 1985, p. 44, where he notes: 'The next block was purchased by other Scottish migrants, Donald and Murdock McLennan. Donald was killed by a falling limb of a tree on the ridge at the back of the property a little west of the present highway, opposite Crescent Motors or the Hereford Motel. The early McLennans and several other family members were buried at the same ridge behind the present sight of Edsteins. This is about a half mile west of Gillwarrra Cemetery'. See also Connors, 1985, p. 47, where he describes the McLennans as early settlers at Purfleet in about the 1840s.
- 23 The 'mish' is an abbreviation of the 'mission'. Aboriginal people commonly referred to the government reserves they lived on as 'the mission' because many had resident missionaries on them.
- 24 W. Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00. Note that Warner Saunders refers to Rory McLennan, whereas Patricia Davis-Hurst refers to Reggie. It is unclear whether or not they are referring to the same person. Today, Warner Saunders and Patricia Davis-Hurst claim the McLennans are an Aboriginal family.
- 25 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 26 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 27 Russell Saunders, oral history interview, P/T 11, 12/12/00. In an unrecorded interview, Russell's brother, Ray Saunders, provided a more detailed account about pinching fruit.
- 28 We did not explicitly examine the gendered nature of the experience of landscapes, but acknowledge that it warrants attention. It is clear that there are differences between how men and women, boys and girls, used the local landscape.
- 29 See Lance Bungie, oral history interview, P/T 13, 13/12/00; Ray Saunders, oral history interview, P/T 10, 17/11/00.
- 30 Ray Saunders, P/T 10, 17/11/00.
- 31 See also Connors, *Pioneering Days Around Taree*, p. 88, who notes: 'The universal custom of threatening misbehaving children was not outside the Aborigine custom, a delinquent child was warned of the 'Goi-on', a mystic monster who would deal out punishment to the miscreant (sic). After white settlement the white man was given the role of the 'Goi-on'.
- 32 Ray Saunders, P/T 10, 17/11/00. See also: Margaret Maher in Hannah, *Voices: A Folk History of the Manning Valley*, p. 171: 'The elders kept law and order with all the children. They wasn't allowed out after dark even in the 17 to 18 age group. A certain time, say 9 o'clock there was to be no one allowed out on the street'.
- 33 See for example, Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp. 177-178.
- 34 Peter Read, *The Stolen Generations: The removal of Aboriginal children in New South Wales 1883 to 1969*, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Sydney, 1982.
- 35 Faith's son, Ray Saunders, remembered that white men from Taree would come cruising around the mission in cars looking for Aboriginal women. See Ray Saunders, P/T 10, 17/11/00.
- 36 In an oral history interview, Lance Bungie gave a detailed description of hiding in the bush to escape the police after they had been set up. Lance Bungie, P/T 13, 13/12/00.
- 37 See Margaret Maher in Hannah, *Voices: A Folk History of the Manning Valley*, 1988, p. 171, where she says that the old people would say: 'If you want to drink, go to the bush and have your drink and stay there till you're sober enough to come on to this place [Purfleet]!'.  
38 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
39 Unrecorded interview with Vienna Maslin.  
40 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
41 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
42 Horace Saunders in Kevin Gilbert, *Living Black*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1978, p. 33.  
43 See Ray Saunders, P/T 10, 17/11/00.  
44 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 135.  
45 *ibid*; Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
46 Russell Saunders, P/T 11, 12/12/00; Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
47 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 145.  
48 Warner Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00.  
49 Maria Nugent, 'A search of the archives of the Aborigines Protection Board and the Aborigines Welfare Board for material relating to burials and cemeteries', NSW NPWS, 1998, pp. 34-35.  
50 Heather Goodall, 'Mourning, remembrance and the politics of place: A study in the significance of Collarenebrri Aboriginal cemetery', *Public History Review*, 8, 2002, pp. 72-96.  
51 Nugent, 'A search of the archives of the Aborigines Protection Board...', pp. 34-35.  
52 Morris, *Domesticating Resistance*, 1989.  
53 See Peter Read, 'A double headed coin: Protection and assimilation in Yass 1900-1960', in B. Gammage and A. Markus (eds), *All that Dirt, Aborigines 1938*, History Project Incorporated, Canberra, 1982, pp. 9-28, in which he argues that the distinction between protection and assimilation is not clear-cut.  
54 Tom Craddock, oral history interview, W 3, 14/7/00.  
55 Russell Saunders, P/T 11, 12/12/00.  
56 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.  
57 Russell Saunders, P/T 11, 12/12/00.  
58 In an oral history interview, Betty Bungie described them as 'silly old cars', because they were regularly breaking down.  
59 Unrecorded oral history interview with Vienna Maslin.  
60 For information about Aboriginal boxing troupes, see Richard Broome with Alick Jackomos, *Sideshow Alley*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.  
61 See for example: Peter Read, 'A double headed coin', pp. 9-28.  
62 Gilbert, *Living Black*, p. 39.  
63 *ibid*, p. 39.  
64 See for example Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, pp. 173-178, where she explains this in relation to Moree and see Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2002.  
65 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01  
66 A local policeman in Taree provided a similar image of the Aboriginal kids' knowledge of town when they are scouting for places to steal from. He told the *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 2000: 'They walk through town in the day, take certain routes, get to know which garages and houses are unlocked, where the escape routes are, and then come back at 1am to knock them off'. For a comparison, see Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 23, where she cites Loren Miller Jr's reminiscences: "As teen-agers, we knew not to drive into Compton, to Inglewood, not to drive into Glendale, 'cause you would just be out, with your hands on top of the car, ... LAPD did the same thing. You got too far south on Western, they would stop you'.  
67 See Kendall Hill, 'Battle far from over 10 years down the road to reconciliation', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 2000, p. 3: 'To this day, the Manning River remains a palpable dividing line between two cultures, only now the rival tribes are white and black'.  
68 As more Aboriginal people move into Taree suburbs such as Chatham, the part of the river around the botanical gardens east of the bridge became a popular hang out. See Sean Maslin, P/T 14, 18/4/01.  
69 Cecil Bungie was one of Pat and George Bungie's five sons. The others were Robert, John, David, and Neville.  
70 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 145.  
71 It is unclear if such curfews had any legal basis. They may have

- been enshrined in local council ordinances, as was the case with the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the Moree swimming pool. Perhaps this well-known curfew could be policed; but equally likely it was an example of the insidiousness of colonial power.
- 72 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 73 Warner Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00.
- 74 Russell Saunders, P/T 11, 12/12/00.
- 75 Warner Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00.
- 76 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 77 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 78 Ann Curthoys, 'Immigration and colonisation: New histories', *UTS Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, May 2001, pp. 170-179.
- 79 Russell Saunders, P/T 11, 12/12/00.
- 80 Patricia Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 81 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 26.
- 82 *ibid.*, p. 183.
- 83 See Madge Bolt, oral history interview, F10, 29/11/00, who recalls cleaning the Commonwealth Bank in the main street of Forster, early in the morning, before the business day began.
- 84 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, pp. 187-188.
- 85 *ibid.*, p. 33.
- 86 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01 and P/T 16, 19/4/01. No one seems to remember which houses they worked in specifically. In heritage terms, Aboriginal women's labour is largely invisible particularly because it was performed in private homes. See Maria Nugent, *An Historical Overview of Women's Professionalism and Employment: Themes and Places*, Australian Heritage Commission, 2002.
- 87 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01 and P/T 16, 19/4/01. Langley Private Hospital was where K-mart is today.
- 88 Hayden, *The Power of Place*, p. 39, notes: 'It is possible to identify historic urban places that have special significance to certain populations fighting spatial segregation of different kinds'. These stories of resistance need to be tempered by some Aboriginal people's reticence in changing these 'internalised' patterns. For example, Simon, *Through My Eyes*, p. 187, referring to the man who ran the Forster picture theatre, stated: 'He told me that afterwards he had given instructions that Aboriginal people could sit where they liked and hang the regular customers. The odd thing was, he said, that they still seemed afraid that someone would say something and sat down the front anyway. Some of them still waited for the lights to go out before they went to their seats, in case something nasty was said to them. They had got so used to being treated like that that they couldn't get out of the habit!'
- 89 Some similar accounts were given for Forster. See, for example, Simon, *Through My Eyes*, and Madge Bolt, F10, 29/11/00.
- 90 Davis-Hurst, *Sunrise Station*, p. 44. We need to caution that this does not necessarily mean that the changes taking place were necessarily the direct outcome of individual actions. See Peter Read, 'Unearthing the past is not enough', *Island*, no. 52, 1992, where he detects in some Aboriginal historical scholarship a tendency to over-emphasise Aboriginal agency. He warns that a possible outcome of this approach would be a representation of the colonial past in which 'Aborigines survived primarily through their own efforts. Their refusal to be killed, separated, deculturated, protected, dispersed and assimilated explains, ultimately, where they are today ... Aborigines in the 1980s owe their survival as Aborigines to nobody but themselves, and the concept of Aborigines as initiators may well become a new platform for historiography'.
- 91 Lawrence Bungie, P/T 8, 27/9/00.
- 92 Warner Saunders, P/T 4 & 4a, 13/6/00.
- 93 Davis-Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01, explains that her reason for moving was that the 'mission' was deteriorating under 'self management'.
- 94 Anthony Kelly, 'Purfleet: An Alienated Community', Honours Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Newcastle, 1980, p. 1.
- 95 Davis Hurst, P/T 15, 19/4/01.
- 96 Davis-Hurst, *Sunrise Station*, p. 112.
- 97 See Barry Morris, 'Policing Racial Fantasy in the Far West of New South Wales', *Oceania* 71, March 2001, for a discussion about comparable riots in Brewarrina in the 1980s. He makes useful observations about how Aboriginal people's responses in the present are explained through years and years of dissatisfaction with how they have been treated by local whites and the police.
- 98 Distances have been calculated from the nearby towns as they were in c.1950. Some of these towns have since grown out to, and even beyond, the location of the Reserves (e.g. Forster).
- 99 Gillian Cowlshaw, *Black, White or Brindle*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- 100 Peter Read, "'Breaking up the camps entirely": the dispersal policy in Wiradjuri country 1909-1929', *Aboriginal History*, 8, 1, 1984, pp. 45-55; "'A rape of the soul so profound": some reflections on the dispersal policy in New South Wales', in Valerie Chapman and Peter Read (eds), *Terribly Hard Biscuits*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1996, pp. 202-14.
- 101 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 125.
- 102 NSW APB minutes, 18 May 1893, 8 June 1893, and 22 March 1894.
- 103 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, surveyor Frank N. Harris to the District Surveyor Maitland, December 28, 1905.
- 104 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, surveyor Hungerford to the District Surveyor at East Maitland reporting on an application to revoke part of Reserve 31598, July 14, 1911.
- 105 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, surveyor Hungerford to the District Surveyor at East Maitland reporting on an application to revoke part of Reserve 31598, July 14, 1911.
- 106 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, letter from Police Station, Wingam 'Re Mr Hungerford's Letter Re Aborigines', East Maitland Local Land Board, July 31st 1911.
- 107 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, letter to NSW Lands Department from Peter Della, East Maitland Land Board Office, 1919.
- 108 NSW APB minutes.
- 109 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 125.
- 110 For an analysis of this in another area of NSW, see Read, 'A double-headed coin', 1982.
- 111 According to Tom Craddock, the Yarnolds are also associated with Dingo Creek. A parish map shows Yarnold's as having a permissive occupancy lease on the Dingo Creek reserve.
- 112 NSW APB minutes, 19 December 1895.
- 113 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, letter to NSW Lands Department from NSW APB, East Maitland Land Board Office, 1919.
- 114 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, letter from Police Station, Wingam 'Re Mr Hungerford's Letter Re Aborigines', East Maitland Local Land Board, July 31st 1911.
- 115 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree 1906-1915.
- 116 This other reserve might have been Killawarra, but was more likely Purfleet.
- 117 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree.
- 118 The surveyor later notes in his report that 'careful enquiries tend to show that the annoyances referred to are somewhat exaggerated'.
- 119 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree.
- 120 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree, surveyor Hungerford to the District Surveyor at East Maitland reporting on an application to revoke part of Reserve 31598, July 14, 1911.
- 121 Papers re Aboriginal reserves in the vicinity of Taree.
- 122 Jacqueline Collins and Mark Morwood, Environment Impact Statement for the Wingham Management Area, 1992, p. 87.
- 123 For example, Davis-Hurst, P/T 15 & 16, 19/4/01, talks about the Dingo Creek mob coming to Saltwater in the summer time, but camping away from the main Purfleet families. She suggests some conflict between the Dingo Creek people and some of the Purfleet families. There was however a link, through marriage, between the Dingo Creek people and the Bungie family who lived on Bucketts Way. Likewise, the pattern of movement into the Dingo Creek settlement comes from the mountains (such as Glen Morris's family from Walcha) rather than from the coast.
- 124 See Tom Craddock, W 3, 14/7/00.
- 125 See Collins and Morwood, Environment Impact Statement for the Wingham Management Area.
- 126 It might have also been the case that they did not qualify for residence on the mission. For example, Tom Craddock's step-grandfather was Chinese, and this may have made them ineligible to live on the reserves even if they had wanted to.

- 127 We interviewed Tom Craddock three times in 2000. Sadly, he died in 2001.
- 128 Tom Craddock, W4, 14/7/00.
- 129 Warner Saunders, P/T4 and 4a, 13/6/00
- 130 Tom Craddock, W4, 14/7/00.
- 131 According to Warner Saunders, Reginald Morris was born in Wingham. The people that Warner identified as being from Wingham were the Morris, the Brown and the Thorpe families. See Warner Saunders, P/T 4 and 4a, 13/6/00.
- 132 Craddock, W 2, 10/6/00, W3 14/7/00 and W4, 14/7/00.
- 133 See Maria Nugent, 'Revisiting La Perouse: A Postcolonial History', PhD, UTS, Sydney, 2001, chapter 5, describing the Happy Valley unemployment camp at La Perouse in Sydney which was occupied by many Aboriginal families in the 1930s and 1940s.
- 134 Warner Saunders, P/T 4, 13/6/00.
- 135 See Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*.
- 136 Fay Pattison, oral history interview, F 9, 28/11/00; See also Simon, *Through My Eyes*, pp. 131-133.
- 137 Simon, *Through My Eyes*, pp. 131-132.
- 138 *ibid*, p. 133.
- 139 See for example, Police Report (CSIL, 5/6990, 08.943) which noted that: 'The Aborigines at Forster have been living on the reserve about 20 years and many of the tribe have lived about there for the last 50 years', cited in Heather Goodall, 'Land in our own country: The Aboriginal land rights movement in southeastern Australia, 1860-1914', in Valerie Chapman and Peter Read (eds), *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in Aboriginal History*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Aboriginal History Journal, Sydney, 1996, p. 191.
- 140 Unpublished transcript held by the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- 141 E.J. Oxley, Aboriginal Heritage Officer Project, p. 73. This became the subject of some controversy when the 6.9 hectares on which Aboriginal people were living was handed over to the Aboriginal Lands Trust in 1978. Some community people had thought they should have deeds to the land from the top of the hill (the burial site) to the lake. See Cabarita Aboriginal Corporation – Land Claim, photocopy held by the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- 142 See Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, esp. chapter 1.
- 143 NSW APB minutes, 16 May 1895. Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p. 2, notes that in the 1850s in Victoria when missionaries began to involve themselves in Aboriginal affairs looking for land upon which to 'settle' Aboriginal people, 'islands were the best locations'. For the use of islands as isolation sites in this period, see the discussion of leprosy islands in Alison Bashford and Maria Nugent, 'Leprosy and the management of race, sexuality and nation in tropical Australia', in Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker (eds), *Contagion: Epidemics, History and Culture from Smallpox to Anthrax*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 2002, pp. 106-128.
- 144 *The History of Forster*, pp. 63-64.
- 145 See Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. 118, where he says: 'The level of tolerance in European society declined further as it underwent profound changes. By the 1880s it was no longer raw, rural and predominantly male as it had been in the 1850s and 1860s; instead a community of family-oriented men and women who were proud of their 'pioneering achievements' and insistent on respectable standards of behaviour had grown up'.
- 146 NSW APB minutes, 16 May 1895.
- 147 NSW APB minutes, 16 May 1895.
- 148 Senior Sergeant Hogan, Taree, to Sub-Inspector Edwards, Kempsey, 29 November 1908, NSW State Records Office, CSIL, Box 5/6990, 08.943.
- 149 For descriptions of this portion, see Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00 & F10, 29/11/00; Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 150 This portion was not returned to Aboriginal people during the land claim made in the late 1970s, and this caused much grief. It is now Tobwabba Park. Blue Dick McClymont is believed to be buried there.
- 151 See Joe Ridgeway, oral history interview, F 4, nd [interviewed by Robert Paulson]; Robert Paulson, F 1 & 2, 21/7/99. See also Madge Bolt, F 7, 16/11/00, and F 10, 29/11/00. All give the names of local white people, and talk about visiting them. Robert Paulson (now Yettica) makes a distinction between 'touro' (tourist) and 'local'.
- 152 Robert Paulson (now Yettica), F 1 & 2, 21/7/99. Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. 79, referring to a different geographical region, observes: 'The landscape 'Tulaba' had moved over came to be known in quite different ways; those sites where he had once gathered food and performed tribal ceremony as a Brabiralung, and worked as a stockman called 'Billy Macleod', became for later generations places where they picked hops and holidayed together as 'Aborigines' from a particular mission. The meanings of these acts, performed more or less on the same land, had clearly changed, but for the later generation they were nonetheless integral to their sense of themselves, part of what it meant to be 'Aboriginal' and 'kin'.
- 153 See Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00: 'Everyone used to go to the beach at Peppy and there was hardly any white people. It was always the Koori people from up here. They wouldn't go and swim in the main beach'.
- 154 Joe Ridgeway, F 4, nd [interviewed by Robert Yettica].
- 155 Joe Ridgeway, F 4, nd [interviewed by Robert Yettica].
- 156 Joe Ridgeway, F 4, nd, [interviewed by Robert Yettica].
- 157 Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. 79.
- 158 Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00.
- 159 Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00.
- 160 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 161 For a history of coastal tourism, see Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000.
- 162 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 163 Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00.
- 164 For example, Madge Bolt's mother worked for many years in the kitchen at the Lakes and Ocean Hotel. Many Aboriginal women worked in guesthouses. Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 165 Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00.
- 166 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 167 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 168 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 72 and pp. 92-93, notes that while Aboriginal settlements were beyond towns, they were close enough to ensure that Aboriginal people, especially women, could provide domestic and sexual services. W. E. B. Du Bois, outlining the spatial distribution of 'blacks' in Philadelphia noted: 'Again, the occupations which the Negro follows, and which at present he is compelled to follow, are of a sort that makes it necessary for him to live near the best portions of the city: the mass of Negroes are, in the economic world, purveyors to the rich – working in private houses, in hotels, large stores, etc', cited in David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, Routledge, London & New York, 1995, p. 144. Sometimes, Aboriginal people themselves were the tourist spectacle. For instance, Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00, recalls Aboriginal men playing the gum leaf busking in the main street of Forster in the 1930s during the peak holiday season. Similarly, Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00, recalls that white people who had been taken out fishing were sometimes invited onto the Aboriginal reserve for entertainment.
- 169 The wall around the Little Baths has been taken down recently. There are now some wooden posts and nets. According to Vic Bramble in *Thoughts* (unpublished m/s), the walls were sandstone 'brought here as ballast in sailing ships', and the fish around the wall were as 'thick as the proverbial hairs on a cats (sic) back. These were the places to cast a rod and greenweed bait, for blackfish' (p. 6).
- 170 See Robert Yettica and Mick Leon, Forster 1 & 2, 21/7/99. Robert Yettica says he learnt to swim there. See also Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 171 See Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00. She talks about how it was a wonder they did not get their lines tangled there were so many sitting along the wall. Barney Simon's father, Coomba George, was known to swim down there each morning.
- 172 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 173 See Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00 and F 10, 29/11/00; Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00.
- 174 Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00.
- 175 It is important to remember that the original Aboriginal reserve was located around here. This reflects a continuing use of this part of the lake, despite the official relocation of the reserve away from the shore.

- 176 Robert Yettica, F 2, 21/7/99; Madge Bolt, F 8, 16/11/00.
- 177 See Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 178 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 179 This part of the landscape is much less accessible than it used to be now that Mr Lani has built a big 'compound' there. Personal communication with Robert Yettica, 24 July 2001.
- 180 Personal communication with Robert Yettica, 24 July 2001.
- 181 Madge Bolt, F 10, 29/11/00; Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 182 Personal communication with Robert Yettica, 24 July 2001.
- 183 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 184 Personal communication with Mae Simon, 25 July 2001. See also Mae Simon, F 7, 2/11/00.
- 185 An obvious comparison is the lively souvenir production at La Perouse, which involved men and boys making tourist boomerangs and women and girls making shellwork souvenirs. This cottage industry sustained some members of the community during the 1920s/1930s Depression. See Nugent, 'Revisiting La Perouse', chapter 4.
- 186 See for example Nugent, Revisiting La Perouse, chapter 4 and Individual Heritage Group, *La Perouse: The Place, the People and the Sea*, pp. 13, 39, 43 & 80.
- 187 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 188 Fay Pattison believes that the boys were put through 'the rules' by Coomba George.
- 189 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00: 'My grandfather worked in the sawmills and that. They worked on shipbuilding over at Wrights. He used to be good with Miles and he used to give him a lot of timber because he liked my grandfather'.
- 190 *All About the Lovely Lakes District*, published in 1909, p. 16, noted that: 'A number of aboriginals (sic) pursue line fishing, principally for flathead, which are eagerly purchased by local buyers for the Sydney market'. *Wallamba, Manning, Camden Haven & Hastings Rivers*, issued January 1919, noted that '50 men [were] employed [in fishing] working 2 steamers, 36 launches, 39 boats and 15 punts, valued with gear at 5400 (pounds), for an output of 14,864 baskets fish, 1903 dozen crayfish and 8 baskets crabs'.
- 191 Fay Pattison, F 9, 28/11/00.
- 192 The aerodrome was constructed between 1947 and 1952. It was bought by the Department of Civil Aviation in 1953.
- 193 For accounts of pea and bean picking on the NSW south coast, see *Travelling with Percy*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997; 'Nana Bella Simms', in *La Perouse: The Place, the People and the Sea*, p. 49; Robert Yettica, F 6, 21/7/99.
- 194 See 'Too Dark for the Lighthorse' touring exhibition, Australian War Memorial, which includes a photograph of Nip Simon in uniform.
- 195 Atwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, p. 67.
- 196 Our focus is on that part of the landscape of NSW, outside the major cities. This landscape has been heavily dominated by people of an Anglo-Celtic background. Minority non-Indigenous people, such as the Chinese, have also had a significant presence in the rural landscape of NSW – we assume their experience would be different from that of the Anglo-Celtic majority and from that of Aboriginal people.
- 197 The NSW Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System, which is maintained by the Cultural Heritage Division of the Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW.
- 198 Denis Byrne, 'The ethos of return: erasure and reinstatement of Aboriginal visibility in the Australian historical landscape', *Historical Archaeology*, 37, 1, 2003, pp. 73-86.
- 199 The expression 'coming in' has been widely used by white Australians, especially in frontier situations, to describe the phenomenon of Aboriginal people breaking the 'traditional' pattern of moving around their country in order to congregate near pastoral station homesteads, mission stations, and white settlements.
- 200 See, for example, Evelyn Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1993; Lee Chittick and Terry Fox, *Travelling with Percy: A South Coast Journey*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1997.
- 201 This approach borrows, somewhat loosely, from the methodology of 'site catchment analysis' developed by Claudio Vita-Finzi and Eric Higgs, 'Prehistoric economy in the Mount Carmel area of Palestine: site catchment analysis', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 36, 1970, pp. 1-37. See also Eric Higgs (ed.), *Papers in Economic Prehistory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972. They surmised that most resources used by hunter-gathers at any particular site would be with a two hour walk of the site (c.10km); for settled agriculturists they surmised a one-hour walking range (c.5km).
- 202 For references to walking by white people in the Manning Valley see oral histories recorded by Helen Hannah in *Voices: A Folk History of the Manning Valley*, self published, 1988.
- 203 See for instance Myles Dunphy, *Myles Dunphy: Selected Writings*, Ballagrin, Sydney, 1986.
- 204 For an account of how modern-day Aboriginal people in Western NSW follow recognised 'beats' as they visit kin who have dispersed to settlements strung out along the region's highways see Jeremy Beckett, 'Kinship, mobility and community in rural New South Wales', in Ian Keen (ed.), *Being Black*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, pp. 117-137.
- 205 For a discussion of the way Aboriginal people in NSW converge from over wide distances to attend funerals of loved ones see Denis Byrne, 'The ethos of return', pp. 73-86.
- 206 See Brian Egloff, 'Mumbulla Mountain: An Anthropological Investigation', NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sydney, 1979.
- 207 Megan Goulding, 'Cultural places, contested spaces: an approach to managing Aboriginal peoples' attachments to landscape', unpublished report to NPWS, October 2002.