

**Girrawah Park and Mulligans Flat
Aboriginal Stone Procurement Sites**

**Report on consultation with the
Representative Aboriginal Organisations
(RAOs)**

**Canberra Archaeological Society
and Aboriginal Archaeologists Australia**

for the National Trust of Australia (ACT)

This project was assisted through funding made available
by the ACT Government under the
ACT Heritage Grants Program

**Dave Johnston, Aboriginal Archaeologists Australia
and Helen Cooke, CAS**

10 June 2008



NATIONAL TRUST

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Dave and Helen wish to thank the Aboriginal representatives who supported, and were involved in, this project.

Signage such as developed here, goes towards fulfilling the shared aspiration, that the rich Aboriginal cultural landscape of the ACT is understood and appreciated by all.

Thanks also to the National Trust (ACT) for assistance in the completion of the signs.

Report on consultation with the Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs)

The ACT Heritage Unit advised on the organisations and contacts to be involved in consultation for this project. The representatives consulted were:

Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation.

Contact Person: Wally Bell

Consultative Body Aboriginal Corporation on Indigenous Land and Artefacts in the Ngunnawal Area

Contact Persons: Tina Brown for her father Carl Brown

Little Gudgenby River Tribal Council

Contact Person: Matilda House

Ngarigu Currawong Clan

Contact Person: Mr Tony Boyé (Chair)

Dave Johnston, Director of Aboriginal Archaeologists Australia, who has worked closely with the Aboriginal Representatives of the ACT and on their heritage for over 17 years, undertook the consultation with the four organisations on 5 June 2008.

Results

All RAO representatives agreed with the concept of the signage and recognition of these sites.

The groups also approved of the locations of the signs being in the general vicinity of the stone outcrops but not giving specific directions to the stone sources.

All groups were in favour of this type of positive educational project. They agreed that there should be more signs like this, which should direct people to the cultural landscape.

It was agreed not to use specific tribal names.

The earthy colours were acceptable – these ‘looked good’ for this type of sign.

There is general acknowledgement that the Girrawah Site is also significant because of the efforts made by many to protect the site.

Some modifications to the wording for the signs were agreed. The final text is at Appendix 1.

Girrawah Park

Girrawah Park (the name comes from the local language word for 'goanna') in particular is significant as a site which involved many people working hard to ensure recognition and protection. It was also the first big project undertaken between the Aboriginal representatives of Canberra and a major developer. The site was protected under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act 1991* and ACT officers assisted with the enforcement of the law and subsequent negotiations between all interested parties. The site area was extensively surveyed by Australian Archaeological Survey Consultants in 1993.

The Aboriginal people were deeply involved in the project and the final design and spirit of the Park is all their own.

A full history of the Girrawah Park site is at Appendix 2.

Copies of the records of this consultation are at Appendix 3.

Appendix 1: Wording for signs at stone procurement sites

Girrawah Park Aboriginal stone procurement site

The Aboriginal people of this area used stone of various types to make implements to use in finding food, preparing meat and vegetables for cooking and to help make tools, weapons, clothing and utensils from wood, bark and natural fibres.

One stone source called 'chert' or 'tuff' is a very hard volcanic rock. A reef of this stone runs under Gungahlin, coming to the surface at several places where evidence of Aboriginal people chipping off pieces to work into implements is found.

You are standing near one of these Aboriginal 'quarries' in Girrawah Park (another one is at Mulligans Flat).

As this stone is so hard, it would not have been easy to remove bits to work with. Aboriginal people across Australia knew how to heat the rocks by building fires close to them and then cooling them quickly by pouring on water, making smaller pieces crack off.

As well as quarrying the stone here, the Aboriginal people of this land camped nearby, cooking and eating, making new implements and mending old ones. They shared their very rich culture of laws and information about travel and resources, and enjoyed entertainment through dance and song.

Their descendants live nearby, enjoying the richness of their culture. They worked together to design and decorate this Park (*Girrawah* means goanna in the local language). If you want to find out more about them, please visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre at Yarramundi Reach.

Mulligans Flat Aboriginal stone procurement site

The Aboriginal people of this area used stone of various types to make implements to use in finding food, preparing meat and vegetables for cooking and to help make tools, weapons, clothing and utensils from wood, bark and natural fibres.

One stone source called 'chert' or 'tuff' is a very hard volcanic rock. A reef of this stone runs under Gungahlin, coming to the surface at several places where evidence of Aboriginal people chipping off pieces to work into implements is found.

You are standing near one of these Aboriginal 'quarries' at Mulligans Flat (another one is in Girrawah Park in the suburb of Ngunnawal).

As this stone is so hard, it would not have been easy to remove bits to work with. Aboriginal people across Australia knew how to heat the rocks by building fires close to them and then cooling them quickly by pouring on water, making smaller pieces crack off.

As well as quarrying the stone here, the Aboriginal people of this land camped nearby, cooking and eating, making new implements and mending old ones. They shared their very rich culture of laws and information about travel and resources, and enjoyed entertainment through dance and song.

Their descendants live nearby, enjoying the richness of their culture. If you want to find out more about them, please visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre at Yarramundi Reach.

Appendix 2: History of Girrawah Park

This stone procurement site in the proposed new town area of Gungahlin was first recorded in 1990 during a survey of the proposed major roads of the new town development. The report was by Access Archaeology; the site was located and described by Ken Heffernan.

All the sites in this report were named for Percival Hill, and two stone procurement sites on either side of a small gully were designated PH 12 and PH13. The stone type was originally described as *chert*, but there have been several studies on this type of stone in the ACT and it may now be classified as *metamorphic tuff*. Whatever the terminology, it is a very hard stone used by local Aboriginal people to make artefacts.

This stone forms a reef that runs through Gungahlin, outcropping at Mulligans Flat as well as these two sites. Sites PH 12 and PH 13 were fully recorded by Australian Archaeological Survey Consultants who carried out extensive consultations with the Ngunnawal people at the time and highlighted the Aboriginal communities' requirement of protecting the sites.

The areas of Gungahlin that were to become the suburbs were sold to individual developers or offered as joint ventures. The ACT Heritage Unit was required to include all cultural heritage requirements in the deeds of agreement of each suburb.

PH12 was identified in the new suburb of Nicholls and accordingly was planned into public open space. The park can be seen across the gully and Gungahlin Drive from Girrawah Park.

PH 13 was in the area of the proposed suburb of Ngunnawal, where there were also historic sites which had to be addressed. The area of Malton was lost in a road reserve but two old poplar trees remain. Tea Gardens homestead was to be left standing and adaptive reuse confirmed. The old site of TG1, the remains of an early pise building which had been part of Tea Gardens, was to be preserved under the front garden of a suburban block. The list of requirements on the deed was quite long and involved, including instructions on the conservation of PH13 in public open space.

One of the Parks and Conservation employees contacted the Heritage Unit in 1993 to report damage to PH13. Helen Cooke and an Enforcement Officer went to investigate and found a bulldozer scrape to mark a future road around the area just above the reef of chert. Work men were scarce but eventually the site manager appeared to discuss the matter.

The heads of the development firm apologised sincerely – there had been so many requirements on this lease that there had been some confusion about the location of the site and its protection. A meeting was arranged for the next day with Matilda House, at that time the only Ngunnawal representative to have advised the ACT government of interest in the heritage of the ACT. Matilda, in the interim, inspected the site with Helen and Dave Johnston, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, from the Australian Heritage Commission who at the time was also acting as the Ngunnawal appointed heritage expert.

The meeting was held in premises supplied by the developer's representatives, who were abject at having overlooked this site. They were advised that a prosecution

could be sought under the *Land (Planning and Environment) Act* 1991; however it would be difficult to prove that their intent had been to deliberately damage the site. Also any fines imposed would end up in the ACT Government's coffers and not be available to the Aboriginal people or to assist with presentation of the site.

Matilda and those assembled agreed that actual damage to the site had been minimal; the scrape had not been directly over the stone reef and was quite shallow. It was also agreed that the developers would erect a playground and art works on the site, which is now on Gamburra Street. Matilda wanted the site to be one that all children and families could enjoy and that would help them to understand something of Aboriginal culture in this area.

Matilda's organisation then worked directly with the developers on the design of the playground, the climbing statue of a goanna (called *girrawah* in the local language) and a wall with a mural. Locally indigenous plants were to be used in the landscape design of the park.

As the site was already on the ACT Heritage Register with a requirement not to disturb the ground surface, hole drilling was to be kept to a minimum and landscaping achieved through building up the site with local soil. The spoil from the few holes that were required to support the play equipment was sieved by Unit archaeologists but no stone artefacts were found.

The intention was to put a sign on the site to explain something of local Aboriginal culture, but it was decided to wait until the nearby houses were finished and their gardens established before advising of the location of interesting stones.

In 2007 CAS was asked by the Heritage Unit manager to submit a grant application to accomplish this sign. The application was made through the National Trust and the project completed.

The text and graphics for the sign were the subject of consultation with the four Registered Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) as advised by the Heritage Unit and carried out by Dave Johnston. The National Trust obtained funds to place a similar sign at the other occurrence of this stone reef and procurement site at Mulligans Flat. All RAO organisations agreed to the wording with minor changes.

The RAO's were also very pleased that signs were to go on these sites as reminders to all visitors of the past and present Aboriginal inhabitants of this area of the ACT. They are keen to see more such signs on sites in the ACT, naturally through proper consultations with their organisations.

Appendix 3: Records of consultation with four RAOs

FROM : AASC

FAX NO. : 0262478702

Jun. 08 2008 12:59PM P3

STONE PROCUREMENT SITES SIGNAGE

CONSULTATIONS WITH RAO'S

DATE: 5-6-08

RAO REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTED: Tony Boyé
Ngarigu Currawong Clan

RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS:

- * Object to Ngambri being used - Not a legal or valid entity. It is a political statement.
- * The rest (ngannawal ect) is ok.
- * Ngarrigo - should be Ngarigu - please change
- * Concept - are happy with - should be more-sig
- * Both locations are fine.

Do not want to generate something that has a doubt to it.

6/6/08 Tony phoned DS
* Tony Boyé & Elen Mundy - we should in future acknowledge the use of word - 'Namitch', as used in the early ethnohistorical records.
- mutting

SIGNATURE:

Boyé
5/6/08

**STONE PROCUREMENT SITES SIGNAGE
CONSULTATIONS WITH RAO'S**

DATE: 5-6-08

RAO REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTED: Wally Bell
Burru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation

RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS:

- * Concept - Wally is fine with having recognition of the sites.
- * Location of signage - ok for Mulligan's Flat at carpark. Question: Arrawatta Park - "it is not to close or points out the outcrop - where people could vandalise it?" - DJ said no it is up near playground. Comment ensure no specific directions are given to outcrop
- * use volcanic tuff instead of chert.
- * IF we can't have 'Ngunawal' alone we would like that sentence removed.
- use - IF you want to find out more... contact
- * Keep fairly generic - not specific tribal names
- * This signage should direct people to the cultural centre

SIGNATURE:

Wally Bell

**STONE PROCUREMENT SITES SIGNAGE
CONSULTATIONS WITH RAO'S**

DATE: 5-6-08

RAO REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTED: Tina Brown

Representing her father Carl Brown

(with his permission.) I phoned Carl twice to
organise this - on the 4 & 5th June 08)

"Consultative Body Aboriginal Corporation on Indigenous Hand & Artefacts
in the Ngarrawal Area."

RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS:

- * ~~Tina~~ Tina is pleased with concept.
- * Pleased that the names of mob's sentence is being cut out.
- * "Teachers can use this as an educational source."
- * "It is a site that fought hard for to protect."
- * Like to see more of these sites/signs occurring.
- * Like colours - colours of the earth look good.

SIGNATURE:

Tina Brown

STONE PROCUREMENT SITES SIGNAGE**CONSULTATIONS WITH RAO'S**

DATE: 5-6-08

RAO REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTED: Matilda House
Little Audgenby River - Clan

RECOMMENDATIONS/COMMENTS:

- * Not "owners" - ^{sweep with "people"} cut out. We are passing thru.
- * Comment: We got recognition of protecting & standing up for our heritage at this site. It is right - cut as well for this reason.
- * ~~big~~ cut out "eating their food" - just use eating
- Use: This site is also significant to the Ab community because it is ~~the~~ a site ^{whose protection} ~~that~~ was fought ~~for~~ very hard for. by many.
- * Concept: "Always support this type of positive" education.
- * Comment: "Ngambi - are the only group who were originally here".

SIGNATURE:

