

3.0 Aboriginal Occupation Models – Ethnohistory

3.1 Background Information

Ethnohistory entails the use of historical literature as a source for constructing ethnographic analogies and models in the study of the prehistory and contact history of indigenous peoples (McBryde 1979). Although ethnohistoric accounts have been recognised as a valuable source for providing insights into the life-ways of prehistoric people, their application can be problematical. These problems relate primarily to the nature of the sources, their accuracy and / or validity.

Flood (1990) identifies three types of ethnohistoric observations:

- the first hand, eyewitness observations made at the time of first contact with Europeans,
- first hand observations made at a later stage when Aboriginal society had become ‘Europeanised’, and
- second-hand or generalised accounts of Aboriginal life.

Of these sources of information, the most valuable and reliable for the reconstruction of pre-contact Aboriginal life are the first-hand observations made at the time of first contact with Europeans. These include the accounts by explorers, surveyors and pioneer settlers. This does not necessarily mean that other forms of observations should be disregarded. However, caution must be exercised in their application.

3.2 Overview of Ethno-Historic Models

The following provides a brief overview of the nature of pre-contact Aboriginal groupings, Aboriginal concepts of land ownership, and the relationship of both these to pre-contact Aboriginal land use in Australia. While this section does not specifically relate to the study area it does provide a basic framework of understanding regarding Aboriginal social organisation, within which the archaeology of the study area may then be viewed. Such an understanding is an essential prerequisite to any archaeological research analysing the relationship between Aboriginal people and their environment.

The model of Aboriginal society being divided into a series of tribes, based on Tindale’s 1974 publication is now generally considered to be defunct. The tribe is described by the early ethnographers as having rights over a defined tract of land, that included control over entry to people from outside and the right to hunt and extract resources from within the bounds of that area (Keen 2010:46). Several researchers have argued that the concept of a tribe does not account for the complexities of social interaction and organisation found in Aboriginal society (e.g. Keen 2004). The tribal model was used for most of the twentieth century by anthropologists to describe the social organisation of Aboriginal groups and how this related to land ownership. There has been a shift to attempts to describe Aboriginal society as multi layered and to explore interconnected relationships that operated within broad social groups.

In Australia, the band is generally considered by anthropologists as the basic social and economic unit in pre-contact Australian Aboriginal society (Service 1966, Peterson 1976). The band is described as a small-scale population, comprised of between two to six extended family units, or about 14 – 33 people, which together cooperate in the food quest (Service 1966; Keen 2004:106). The composition of this group (in terms of numbers) was not rigid; group size fluctuated in response to factors such as the availability of resources and visiting kin (Peterson 1975).

Individual bands are seen to occupy and exploit a specific range (Service 1966). The concept of a band's 'range' is not easily defined, and is therefore somewhat problematical to delineate. The ideal method of defining range would be to identify the outermost points of an area used by a group to demonstrate the total area, or range, in which that band operated. Yet, as Peterson (1986) points out, the kind of evidence needed to achieve this, (details of daily movements over several years) is not available for any group within Australia. Nor is such evidence likely to be discernible in the archaeological record. The practical alternative, both from an archaeological and an anthropological perspective, is to identify the base camps used over a period by a group. This provides a rough equivalent of a band's "home range".

3.2.1 Environmental Determinants of Social Organisation

Ecology is, according to Peterson (2008:186) a 'crucial variable' when assessing estate, range and domain. Range normally encompassed the estate, although there were exceptions to this (Peterson 2008:186). In cultures across the world it is impossible to separate natural landscapes from cultural landscapes (White 2003:188). From an archaeological perspective, it is equally impossible to discuss economy and subsistence without reference to the environment.

As Sutton (2008:170) explains, WEH Stanner explored the connectedness of economy, environment and spirituality over forty years ago. Stanner's famous paper 'Aboriginal territorial organisation: estate, range, domain and regime' published in Oceania in 1965 was a benchmark as it provided a new framework within which to define and discuss Aboriginal land ownership (Peterson 2008:185). This framework separated concepts of land ownership from the land that people actually used. Peterson (2008:185) suggests that this was a fundamental shift that has influenced the last forty years of anthropological debate.

In coastal and riverine environments where a higher population density could be supported compared to desert environments, people could lead more sedentary lives (Keen 2004:103). In these situations, the social organisation of neighbouring groups could become more individualised; whereas in more arid climates people relied on being able to traverse vast tracts of land to access food and water, requiring closer social relations with neighbouring people (Keen 2004:103).

This argument reflects Louis Binford's model of 'foragers' and 'collector' societies. Foragers are highly mobile groups that move regularly and as a whole to new locations to exploit resources. In contrast, collector societies may move less often but rely on individual members of a society venturing out beyond the camp site location to provide the group with resources to continue residing at the location (Keen 2004:104). Keen (2004:104) suggests that most Australian Aboriginal societies fall within Binford's 'collectors' model – forming home bases and voyaging out from these bases to exploit resources from the surrounding area, which could be very large.

It was economically vital for Aboriginal people to be organised into bands, as this made groups more effective at surviving. Subsistence becomes more efficient and reliable if people are organised into groups that are larger than the nuclear family. This increases the number of 'producers' (people who can actively provide food for a group) and acts as a buffer against the sickness, injury or death of any one individual (Keen 2004:105). However, these groups will never become too large, as increased numbers reduce the mobility of the band, as well as potentially leading to broader social disintegration (Keen 2004:106).

The range of a band had to be capable of providing for the survival of the group for much of the year. Keen (2004) takes an economic view of range and presents a case for the range of a group to be determined by access to preferred food resources. As Keen (2004) argues, availability of foods, food preferences, production techniques and methods of transport all affect how Aboriginal people across Australia could access food resources at varying times of the year. These factors therefore greatly affected mobility; groups had to be able to mobilise and move to where the preferred, available and accessible foods were located (Keen 2004:23).

Keen (2004:126) suggests that seasonal mobility of a particular group is largely influenced by rainfall. In Gippsland where there are clearly defined seasons, but steady year-round rainfall people operated within a broad seasonal migration pattern. However, in the Western desert where rainfall was much less reliable, this was a weaker pattern of seasonal movement. Regular droughts brought on by the El Nino cycles and other more haphazard climatic events all influenced the seasonal movement based on food resources that Aboriginal people required (Keen 2004:79). These affected issues of range, ceremony and interactions with neighbouring groups (Keen 2004:79).

The factors that influence selection of a 'home base' are varied and illustrate the nature of pre-contact Aboriginal societies. Access to fresh water is probably the most fundamental requirement, and will be common to all home base sites. Distance to food resources is the next consideration. As Keen (2004:104) notes it may be that home sites are better located adjacent to less transportable resources, rather than in areas where there is the highest abundance of food items. The distance that an individual collector can travel within a single day forms an important scope of the range of the home base, and therefore the size of the resource pool available. Keen (2004:104) suggests that in hunter-gatherer societies around the world, 20-30km is considered the maximum foraging distance from a home base. People could then establish smaller temporary camps away from the central home site to enable longer foraging journeys (Keen 2004:105).

Despite the difficulties faced in defining ranges, Peterson (1986) believes there is good evidence for supposing that bands are localised and generally have bounded and exclusive ranges. The most significant evidence is ethnographic accounts recording the elaborate rites of entry accorded to visitors when entering a bands range (see Peterson 1986). However, it appears that the boundaries of a group's 'range' were not necessarily clearly demarcated lines. Trigger describes these overlapping boundaries as 'zones of transition' (Trigger 2010:155).

3.2.2 Aspects of Aboriginal Social Organisation

Individual bands or clans were by no means a social or cultural isolate, but rather interacted with each other in a variety of ways. Typically, these interactions involved visitations, marriage, ceremonies and trade. Through these interactions, links were established or re-affirmed between neighbouring bands. The result was the formation of a cluster of bands, wherein there was some sense of collective identity, often expressed in terms of possessing a common and distinctive language (White & Cane 1986). Most people in pre-contact Aboriginal society were multi-lingual and marriages outside of the language group were common (Keen 2004:134). Indeed, within some totemic groups several languages were spoken (Keen 2004:135).

Linguistic inheritance could be multi-layered. Trigger (1992:104) records how in some northern Australian societies most people were (a) multi-lingual and (b) adopted a primary linguistic label based on where their present circumstances were aligned.

This implies that linguistic affiliation was perhaps a less formal and more adaptive social mechanism. Trigger (1992:105) suggests that this undermines the concept of linguistic groups, which was a characteristic often used in the past to define tribal groups.

Similarly, Keen argues that a shared language did not necessarily indicate shared cosmic beliefs or social customs, nor did language or dialect clearly define social groups (Keen 2004:135). Rather, Keen suggests that broad social groups tended to define themselves more by location, with reference to the type of environment (coastal, hinterland etc.) or direction (northerners or southerners) (Keen 2004:135). Groups were also sometimes named after and therefore defined by, the name of the leader or a prominent person in that community (Keen 2004:135). Blundell (2003) discusses how the Wandjina rock art sites of the Kimberly formed the cultural and cosmic centres for the 'little countries' or 'dambina' which correlate with the concept of an estate as used by anthropologists (Blundell 2003:162).

Keen (2004:170) presents a model of the complexities of Aboriginal society, where an individual's identity depended largely on context. In some situations, Keen (2004) argues language was the defining factor, in another the broad region to which you claimed affinity, and in yet other circumstances it may be totemic identity that was important. Interestingly, Keen (2004:170) suggests that identity was 'most clearly defined' in areas rich in resources, such as coastal zones, while people in more arid environments had less strongly applied rules governing identity. This reflects the imperative for desert people to be on solid relationships with their neighbours. The following section discusses issues of Aboriginal connection to the land in more detail.

3.2.3 Concepts of Aboriginal Land Ownership

The band was in essence a land using group, but not a land-owning group. Land ownership was vested in 'the clan' or 'corporate group' which is defined as a broad group of people that shared social characteristics, and was often tied to having rights over certain tracts of land, known as an 'estate' (Keen 2004:134; Peterson 1986). It is uncertain whether clans within eastern Australia were strictly patrilineal (as is suggested in other parts of Australia), or whether membership was determined more on the basis of place of birth (White and Cane 1986). Keen (2004:136) argues that across Australia it was common for totems to be patrilineal, where a child took their father's totem, and that this was strongly tied to land ownership. The totem was an important feature of Aboriginal society and was used to define individuals, small groups and larger groups (Keen 2004:135). This was by no means the only form of land connection across Australia; in some parts, a person's place of birth determined which country they were tied to (Keen 2004:137).

Where matrilineal systems operated (where a totem was passed from mother to child) it tended to cause people of the same totemic identity to be dispersed among several land based groups. In this way, matrilineal relations become important when determining marriage and other social ceremonies, but were not generally connected to land ownership (Keen 2004:137).

The system of patrilineal transition of land ownership concepts is reflected in Patterson's 1811 account of Bennelong's sense of ownership of Goat Island (Keen 2010:45). Patterson wrote that Bennelong had 'inherited' Goat Island from his father and that he in turn had the right to pass it on to his companion By-gone (Keen 2010:45). This is supported by Eyre's 1845 observations about the hereditary transmission of Aboriginal land ownership (Keen 2010:46).

Ancestral law was the defining principle that controlled access to country and landmarks, including water sources (Keen 2004:299). Tied to this notion are concepts of cosmology, religion and the ongoing influence of the ancestors (Keen 2004:303). Keen suggests that: ‘ancestral significance integrated country, resources and technologies into the all-encompassing framework of ancestral law, not only as a mode of control, but as a way of being.’ (Keen 2004:303). Myers has also argued that ownership of territory was largely vested in knowledge of the ‘stories, objects, and ritual associated with the mythological ancestors of the dreaming at a particular place (in Peterson 2008:192).

Ethnographic and anthropological research provides a context within which to view the archaeological record. The overview presented here reveals the complexities of Aboriginal societies across Australia. It indicates the interrelated nature of the environment, religion and social structure in pre-contact Aboriginal societies and has implications for discussions of the archaeological record.

3.3 Aboriginal Social Organisation, Customs and Lifestyle in the ACT

According to Tindale (1974), the ACT was primarily occupied by the Ngunnawal (previously the Kambarri), whose country Tindale recorded as extending from Marulan and Goulburn to the Shoalhaven and Molonglo rivers, including Lake George and Queanbeyan, across to the Goodradigbee and Tumut rivers, north to Boorowa and back across to Goulburn. However, arguments have arisen suggesting that this boundary reflects the 20th century developments and not the territory of the Ngunnawal at the time European explorers first arrived at Lake George (see Jackson-Nakano 2001:21). According to Jackson-Nakano, the broader area now known as the ACT was originally occupied by a wide range of Aboriginal groups, including the Pajong, Wallagalooa and Yass Communities, the Kambarri and the Moolingoolah or Molonglo Plains community.

Within the earliest historical documents, the Aboriginal of the Canberra region were variously referred to as the ‘Kamberra’ tribe (William Davis Wright of Lanyon), the ‘Nganbra Pialligo’ tribe and the ‘Kgamburry’ tribe (William Philip Bluett) and the ‘Kembery’ tribe (Dr John Lhotsky) by the various early European explorers of the region (Gillespie 1984:2). Importantly, the tribal names used by early settlers and explorers rarely mimicked the correct tribal names; instead tribes were regularly referred to by their location with numerous references appearing in early records to the ‘Murrumbidgee blacks, the Lachlan blacks, the Limestone blacks, the Yass blacks and other similar appellations’ (Gillespie 1984:45). Nevertheless, these records provide the best documentation for what is currently known of the customs and lifestyle of the Canberra Aboriginal peoples prior to and at the time of European settlement.

3.3.1 Population

Whilst an accurate count of the Ngunnawal tribal numbers was never made, available records seem to indicate that at the time of settlement Ngunnawal people numbered between 400 and 800, with 500 as the most frequent estimate (Gillespie 1984:2). William Davis Wright of Lanyon wrote in 1923 ‘From many conversations I had with various members of the tribe I got to know them and their customs pretty well.... It was an ordinary sized tribe, between 400 and 500 at the time of first white settlement’, however subsequent reports suggest numbers of between 7 and 800 once existed (cited in Gillespie 1984:2).

More detailed records were made in 1938 by George Augustus Robinson, given his particular interest in Aboriginal people, who recorded a list of 48 Aboriginal people he encountered near Yarralumla. His list included Ong gong and several other members including Jemmy the Rover (Coolup).

Robinson described the Limestone natives as ‘a fine, sturdy, athletic race, men and women well-proportioned and finely finished’ (cited in Gillespie 1984:45).

Early explorers suggest that Aboriginal people generally lived in family groups or sub-groups, with gatherings of larger numbers only occurring on special occasions and involving the meeting of several tribes (Gillespie 1984).

Regardless of exact population counts, it is abundantly clear that Aboriginal people frequented the Canberra region in substantial numbers at the time of European settlement.

3.3.2 Hunting, Gathering and Settlement

The observations of early explorers indicate that, like most Aboriginal tribes, those of the Canberra region were hunter gatherers, with men taking the role of hunting and women gathering food (Gillespie 1984:45). Given the limited ability of tribes to transport and store large quantities of food, food procurement occurred on a daily basis.

Early observations by W.P Bluett indicate that the area surrounding the Limestone plains (prior to European settlement) abounded with bird and animal life including terrestrial animals around the open plains such as kangaroos, emus and brolgas, as well as resources related with the Queanbeyan, Molonglo and Murrumbidgee Rivers which provided excellent aquatic resources as well as scrubby growth and reeds which provided excellent cover and nesting places for aquatic birds. Smaller game included birds, lizards, opossums, native cats, squirrels, fish, birds’ eggs, yams, berries, grubs and seed (cited in Gillespie 1984:45). The ready plentiful availability of kangaroos, opossums and wombats meant they were highest on the list of Aboriginal diets, however the smaller game was equally important.

The availability of game and other resources was noted to largely determine the location of campsites. However, the weather and the corresponding seasonal availability of some resources or droughts would also cause Aboriginal people to move on to more favourable locations. The arrival of the Bogong moths in late spring each year was noted to be a dependable food source, resulting in an annual trek to the mountains (Gillespie 1984). Campsites were usually in areas that provided shelter from the wind, were near water sources.

John Gale, an early arrival in the area recorded the following method of capturing wombats:

‘A blackfellow enters the burrow, the roof of which he strikes as he progresses. His companions above ground listen for the sounds and by that means follow the direction of the burrow. When the animal is reached at the end of his burrow a certain signal is made, whereupon they dig down and effect a capture, the wombat being prevented from making his exit by the blackfellow who had pursued him’ (Cited in Gillespie 1984:45).

According to Gillespie, the Canberra Aboriginal peoples maximized all resources available to them ‘overlooking very little which was tasty and edible’ (1984:46).

3.3.3 Clothing

In 1834 Lhotsky encountered a group of 60 Aboriginal people near Gunning, recording that ‘They were all naked, excepting that the men wore a girdle with a small sort of apron formed of fringes before and behind.... A few of the strong young men wore a sort of armband upon their left

arms, made (as were also the girdles abovementioned) of the twisted hair of kangaroos and which was a sort of distinction for brave warriors' (Cited in Gillespie 1984:47)

Lhotsky later observed the preparation of opossum skins for cloaks and nets by women sitting in gunyahs, however it was noted that the wearing of cloaks was not for all members of the tribe, being reserved for the more privileged of the group.

3.3.4 Habitations

Most reports of the shelters created by Aboriginal people in the area suggest that they were simple structures. Bluett describes their 'gunyahs' as 'flimsy seasonal affairs' (cited in Gillespie 1984:47) constructed from green bushes with leaves sloping downwards against a low branch of a tree or against a pole set between two forks. He also noted furred skins for bedding, along with a few bark dishes vessels for holding water and food.

By comparison, Wright recorded that shelter types and complexity of construction varied with location, ranging between simply bough shelters sufficient to shield the rain to very good bark huts (cited in Gillespie 1984:47).

The Aboriginal people also made use of natural rock shelters wherever possible, with numerous rockshelters retaining rock art and cultural remains throughout the broader region.

3.3.5 Customs

Very few first-hand recordings exist of traditional Aboriginal customs. One exception is provided by German Naturalist Dr John Lotsky, who visited the area in 1834, who recorded the following information about a corroboree, which he overheard:

'Their strain was in 2-4 time, which they marked by beating crotchets and in moments of greater excitement, quavers.....The tones weakened by degrees, the tones died away and grand silence and ethereal clearness filled the plain and all the wilderness about my camp'
(Cited in Gillespie 1984:30).

4.0 Historic Context

4.1 European Settlement of the Limestone Plains

The Limestone Plains (named after the geology of the area) became available for settlement shortly after the arrival of Charles Throsby to the area in 1820. Land around the Molonglo Valley, on the northern side of the River (at Acton) was first settled by Joshua John Moore in 1824, who utilised the area for pastoral activities and established huts known as ‘Canberry Station’ near the current site of the National Museum. By 1826 Moore had purchased some 1000 acres, which he operated as an absentee landlord.

Moore was shortly followed by Robert Campbell (1825), a wealthy Scottish merchant who was granted 4000 acres as compensation for the loss of one of his ships. Campbell’s site was selected at Pialligo where he established ‘Duntroon’, with Blundells Cottage (c1860) on the few remaining stone workers dwellings from the original Duntroon Estate. The estate was run by James Ainslie. The richness of the area for pastoral activities encouraged settlers and squatters in search of pastoral wealth.

In the late 1820s John MacPherson occupied land on the northern side of the Molonglo called ‘Springbank’, by 1825 Robert Johnson had sheep grazing on the ‘Tuggeranong’ Plain as well as other early unauthorised sheep stations along the Murrumbidgee, including Hurst’s Hut which became the nucleus of Lanyon.

In 1826, botanist Allan Cunningham explored the Monaro plains, travelling west across the Queanbeyan River and camping at Mount Tennant.

Unauthorised occupants of the region were soon followed by those with official tickets of occupation or orders to select. In 1829 Thomas Macquoid acquired 2000 acres on the Murrumbidgee, granted previously to Peter Murdoch only two years prior. Six years later Macquoid bought the adjoining 2.500 acres from John Maclaren, establishing his station ‘Wanniassa’ (later Tuggeranong). Having displaced Hurst, John Lanyon and James Wright, were already living at Lanyon before lodging their formal applications for the land there in 1835. In 1841 Wright established Cuppacumablong as a ‘squatters run,’ but lived there for 12 years following his loss Lanyon (due to financial difficulty).

Small townships began to develop, with Queanbeyan established in 1838 and Hall in 1881. The first church in the territory was St John the Baptist, located in Reid and established in 1845. Early schools were positioned on pastoral stations or associated with churches, such as the schoolhouse at Reid, and others at Palmerville, Yarralumla and Ginninderra. Post offices were built at Michelago, Ginninderra, Williamsdale, Hall, Tharwa and Royalla. The first bridge in the district across the Murrumbidge River was the Tharwa Bridge, opened in 1895.

4.2 Brief History of Key Pioneer Families within Naas Valley

The first licensed property owner within the Naas Valley area was William Herbert, who’s Orroral Run was gazetted in 1836. Herbert was followed soon after by James Ritchie who claimed Bobeyan, which was later taken up by John Gray (1838).

By the late 1840s, all the land in the valley had been gazetted; while the Land Acts of the 1860s and the 1880s brought even greater numbers of people and stock to the region. Portions of the mountain valleys within the Naas Valley and Namadgi National Park have been farmed by the same families for generations (Corp 1992).

The broad region, incorporating what is now the Namadgi National Park, was historically an area utilised for pastoralism and heavily associated with the pioneer family McKeahnie's who collectively owned and occupied vast tracts of land throughout the area. Herbert's Orroral Run was transferred in 1864 to Charles McKeahnie, a bounty emigrant first employed by Joshua Moore at Canberry and then by John Gray at Boboyan. After Gray's bankruptcy, McKeahnie acquired Boboyan before becoming overseer/manager for Edward Severne at Gudgenby in 1845. McKeahnie purchased Gudgenby in 1853 and then acquired Booroomba in 1860 and finally Orroral Station in 1864 (Corp 1992).

The area was utilised for pastoralism, including Merino sheep and cattle breeding, with the McKeahnie family well known for their outstanding stud Herefords (Corp 1992).

The Oldfield family were likewise instrumental in the development of the region, with Joseph Matthew Oldfield working for James Wright at Lanyon and Cuppacumbalong after arriving to NSW as a convict in 1834. Joseph married Mary, who also worked for Wright and together had a family of eight children. Over time, the Oldfields came to lease or manage several properties in the region at various times, including Reedy Creek, The Old Place, Naas Homestead, Top Naas, Glenoe, Glenferrie, Glendale and Cotter Hut. Indeed half the extant stockmans huts in Namadgi were built by or for the Oldfields, who also had huts and snow leases in the now Kosciusko National Park (Kosciusko Huts Association <https://khuts.org/index.php/heritage/grazing-and-pastoral/473-max-and-bert-oldfields-history>).

Joseph and Mary's grandson Ted Oldfield purchased Naas Homestead along with other holdings in the early 20th century, including the Booth Range lease, some 7000 acres of timbered range. Tom Oldfield, also a grandson to Joseph and Mary, managed Orroral and Gudgenby for the Bootes family before acquiring a string of local properties and eventually becoming one of the biggest landowners in Namadgi.

From 1855, the De Salis family had procured Cuppacumbalong from Wright. Leopold De Salis established the Stations reputation for fine wool and exceptional draught-horses, as well as pioneering work with farm dams and irrigation systems source from the Murrumbidgee. De Salis exploited the Roberston Lands Act, by using family members or dummies to help acquire portions of more productive land along the river flats in their names, thereby securing extensive lands and access to arable land and water.

The village of Tharwa was the first township to be proclaimed in what is now the ACT. While unofficial villages were plenty, including Ginnanderra, Duntroon and Yarralumla, none were yet formalized. 'The village boundary covered 80 acres, comprised of six sections, each with ten half-acre blocks divided in half by a small lane, a section allowing for a reserve for public buildings along the Murrumbidgee River just south of the future bridge, as well as a large village reserve encompassing 640 acres' (ACT Heritage Tharwa Village Precinct:4). The Cuppacumbalong Homestead and surrounds were included within the town boundaries, with De Salis purchasing large chunks of available blocks when they came up for sale in 1862, eventually purchasing all the remaining blocks in the village. It was not until the opening of Tharwa Bridge in 1895 that the bounds of the township were extended and blocks were owned by anyone other than the De Salis family (ACT Heritage Tharwa Village Precinct:5).

The opening of the Tharwa Bridge brought new opportunities for Tharwa and properties on the western side of the Murrumbidgee; easing transport of stock to and from the region and allowing more land to be opened up within the village itself.

Land was reserved for a school site in 1900, with a local shop, community hall and telephone exchange established by 1920. Reticulated power arrived to the area in 1948 with reticulated water following by the 1950s.

4.3 The Contact Period

The accelerated increase of the non-Aboriginal population in the Queanbeyan and Monaro districts in the 1840s specifically affected Ngambri/Ngunawal families' use of the rivers –on the Murrumbidgee camping places and food sources were lost, with dramatic impact on everyday life and on ceremony (Marshall et al 2010).

Yet by almost all accounts, the contact period between Ngunnawal/Ngambri groups of the ACT region and the European settlers of the Tharwa/Naas Valley region was quite amicable. Despite frontiers of occupation being hazardous for both Aboriginal communities and settlers alike, in many cases the Ngambri/Ngunawal people found adaptive ways both to survive and to retain proximity to country and ceremony (Marshall et al 2010).

Both James Wright and subsequently Cunningham, who owned the Lanyon Estate, established excellent relationships with the Ngambri/Ngunnawal people. Wright was particularly impressed with their stockman skills and employed Aboriginal men for stock work and shepherding and women for domestic activities. Impressed with the skills of the Aboriginal black trackers, Wright sent his workers on more than one occasion to help police find bushrangers (Marshall et al 2010:75). Aboriginal people were also recorded as being present at the wedding of Elizabeth Bass and Alexander McKenzie at Lanyon in April 1942 (Avery and Besant 1995:37). Among the Aboriginal workers identified in records were Dick Lowe and his family, who worked for the Cunninghams as well as George de Salis from the 1880s (Marshall et al 2010:79-80).

Ngambri/Ngunawal people continued to work on Lanyon as well as its outstations at Naas, and other places on the western side of the river including Booroomba, and Cuppacumbalong (sold by the Wrights in 1856 to the de Salis family). In 1850, when he was nine years old, William Davis Wright recalled some 500 Aboriginal people living in this part of the country. By 1960 Ngambri/Ngunawal were still hosting large seasonal gatherings of others from the upper Shoalhaven and the south coast. In 1890 about 300 Ngambri/Ngunawal people continued to use their traditional camping place by the river at Tharwa, with elder Nellie Hamilton then the only person whose mother and father were both Ngambri/ Ngunawal (W D Wright, 'Reminiscences' Queanbeyan Observer, 29 March-18 October 1895; Lea-Scarlett 1968, pp. 20-21; Horsfield 2004. Cited in Marshall et al 2010: 70-71).

'In the 1890's Cunningham and Woodger established the 'Black and White Mine' in the hills above Lanyon and employed both Aboriginal people and Europeans' to extract lead carbonate from a deposit near Lanyon's east gate (Avery and Besant 1995:37). The Lowe family were amongst those listed as working at the mine and living at a large Ngambri/Ngunnawal encampment there (W D Wright, 'Reminiscences' Queanbeyan Observer, 29 March-18 October 1895; Lea-Scarlett 1968, pp. 20-21; Horsfield 2004. Cited in Marshall et al 2010: 70-71).

At the opening of Tharwa Bridge in 1895, the two oldest residents of the district were guests of honour - Elizabeth McKeahnie of Booroomba and Ngambri/Ngunawal elder Nelly Hamilton (Marshall et al. 2010).

Ngambri/Ngunawal people continued their associations with their country and with work at Lanyon, Cuppacumbalong and other stations within Naas Valley. Among other Aboriginal people working at Lanyon in the 1930s was famous shearer William 'Deucem' Smith, a Muruwari man from Bourke. (Canberra Times 19 June 2006; Queanbeyan Age 11 July 2005 cited in Marshall et al. 2010:92)

A handful of conflict between settlers and the Ngambir/Ngunawal have been recorded. One included the spearing of two stockmen at Inverary Station near Bungonia in reprisal at the mistreatment of Ngambri/Ngunawal women (Marshall et al. 2010). The second involved Onyong (Hong Yong), leader within the Kamberri group (Jackson-Nakano 2001:21), who resisted incursions on to traditional lands. Onyong was an impressive figure and was often the leader of raids on the settlers' stock. He died at Cuppacumbalong and his burial was witnessed by a young W.Davis Wright, who recorded that his grave was on the top of a rocky hill, about a quarter of a mile from Tharwa Bridge. The body was placed in a tunnel about six feet long, with his spears (broken in half), his shield, nulla nulla, boomerang, tomahawk, opossum rug, and other effects. The hole was filled in with stones and earth (Wright 1923: 84 cited in ACT Heritage 2017:3).

4.4 Historic Occupation of the Study Area

The current study area borders Block 32, Parish of Naas on the western side of the bridge and Blocks 53 and 54 of the Parish of Cuppacumbalong on the eastern side of Naas Bridge. Figures 6, 7 and 8 show the study area as mapped in 1912, 1914 and 1938. The maps show the area as being owned by William and Michael Herbert (father and son), with Naas Homestead being in place by 1914. By 1938, the property has no mapped owner, however newspapers record the owner as Mr EJ Oldfield by 1925 (The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), 5 November, p. 5.).

Earlier records exist however, indicating that a homestead of some form existed on the property well before 1912. William Herbert lived at Orroral until his death in 1857 when he was buried on the banks of Gudgenby River. The flooding of the River had made the crossing impossible at the time, leading to his burial on the property he and his son owned together and where it appears his son Michael lived (Block 53). Michael lost his first wife in 1860, with her death reported by a visitor to the area who called in for directions on their way through the area (*Northern Times (Newcastle, NSW : 1857 - 1918)*, 1860 14 March, p. 4.). In 1861, Michael was recorded in police court following the burglary of his home at Naas and theft of alcohol (*Goulburn Herald (NSW : 1860 - 1864)*, 14 August, p. 2.). He remarried again in 1862 with the newspaper recording the service occurring at his Naas Property (*Goulburn Herald (NSW : 1860 - 1864)*, 3 May, p. 2). In May of 1863, Michael Herbert was appointed as Magistrate of the Colony (*Goulburn Herald (NSW : 1860 - 1864)*, 27 May, p. 2). Michael Herbert died suddenly in 1865, just one day before that of his infant child Percy William Naas Herbert (2 years and 1 month old). Percy's death was considered suspicious but ultimately attributed to 'convulsions' (*Queanbeyan Age and General Advertiser (NSW : 1864 - 1867)*, 25 May, p. 2.).

It is unclear who owned the property between Herberts death in 1865 and its purchase by Oldfield in 1925, however the 1912 mapping of the property suggests it stayed in the Herbert family until its sale to Oldfield.

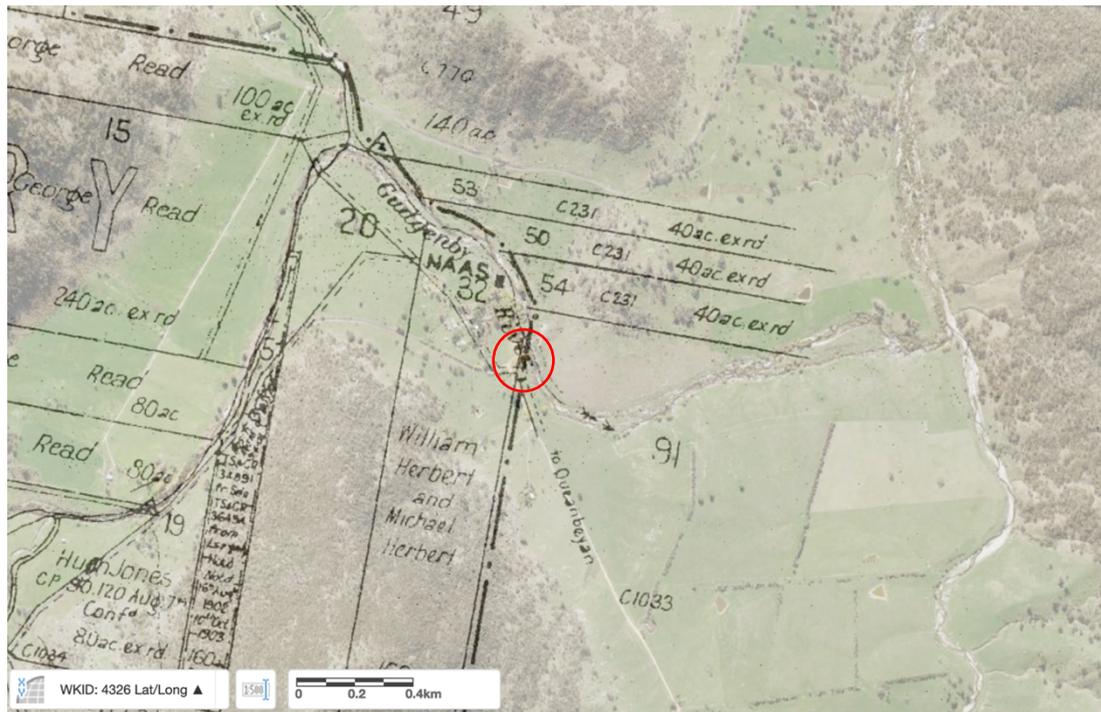


Figure 6. Study Area and surrounds as Mapped in 1912 (map modified from New South Wales. Department of Lands. 1912, *Parish of Naas, County of Cowley Land District of Queanbeyan, Commonwealth Territory, Yarrowlumla Shire* [Dept. of Lands], Sydney viewed 27 April 2020 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-233987101>)

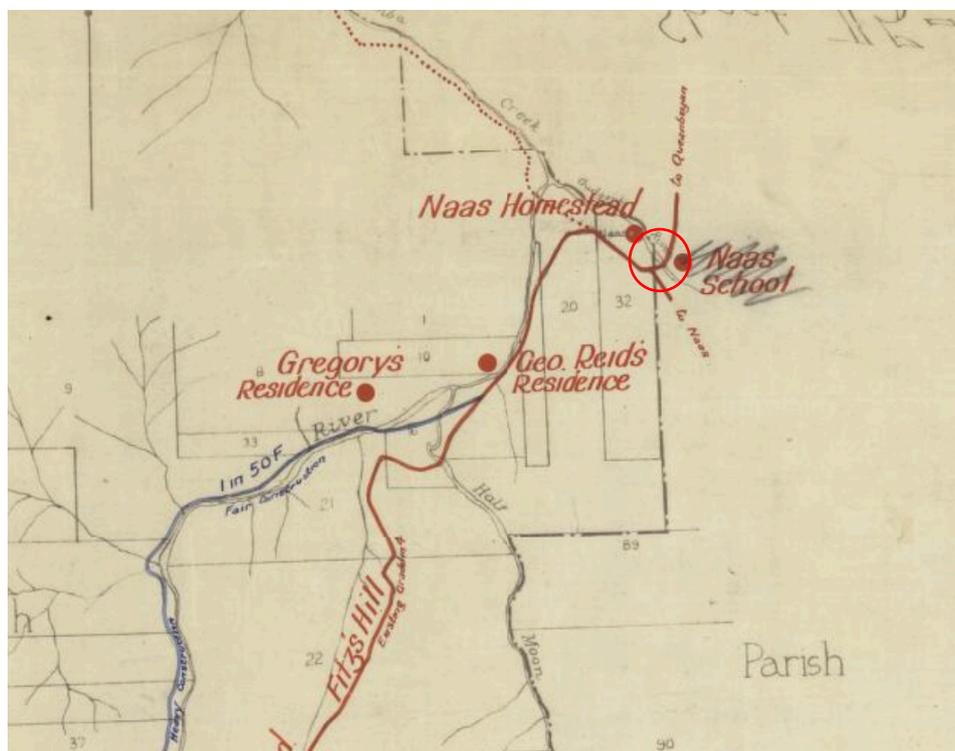


Figure 7. Study area relative to *Plan of proposed roads from Naas to Gudgenby*, [1914] by Reid, John Cecil Drury (viewed 27 April 2020 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-361635685>)

The property was passed in at Auction in 1955, at which point it was recorded as being more 100 years old (*The Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995)*, 5 November, p. 5.)

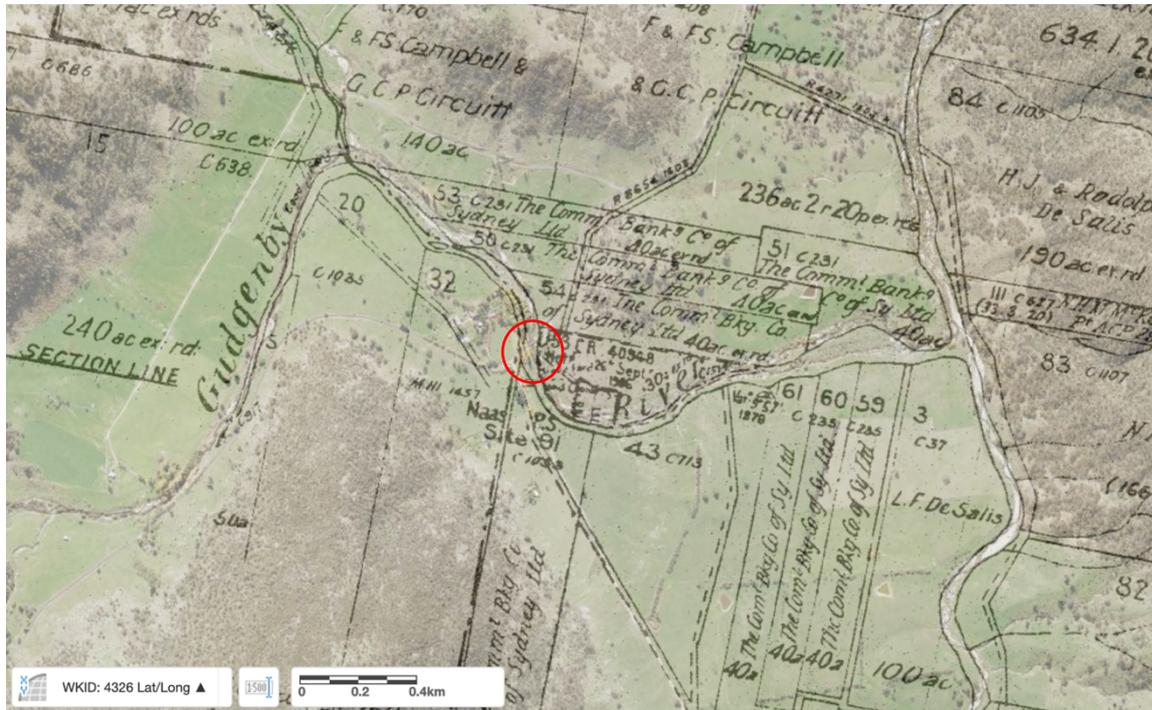


Figure 8. Study area and surrounds mapped in 1938 (New South Wales. Department of Lands. 1938, *Parish of Cuppacumbalong, County of Cowley Queanbeyan Land District, Yarrowlumla Shire, Eastern Division, N.S.W. and Australian Capital Territory Dept. of Lands, Sydney* viewed 27 April 2020 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-559022579>