

CARING FOR THE ANCESTORS

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY, NSW.

Stage one: preliminary investigations



By

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For

Aboriginal people associated with Wallaga Lake Cemetery

Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council

Eurobodalla Shire Council

Final report February 2012

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CULTURAL WARNING

This document contains images, names and references to Aboriginal people who have passed away.

Community message

Aboriginal people with connections to the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery initiated this project. A preliminary list of burials and a draft map of where people are buried in the cemetery has been produced as part of this project. The authors wish to advise the community that the list and map are incomplete and may contain inaccuracies that require community input. Further archival research and community consultation is required before the list and map can be considered complete.

Disclaimer

Sue Feary and Susan Donaldson are not responsible for omissions and inconsistencies that result from information not available at the time of preparation of this report.

THIS PROJECT WAS JOINTLY FUNDED BY



AND MERRIMAN'S LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Acknowledgements and dedication

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Executive summary

The Wallaga Lake cemetery project began after members of the Wallaga Lake community raised concerns about the large number of unmarked graves in the cemetery and the potential for them to be accidentally disturbed by the digging of new graves. The Eurobodalla Aboriginal Heritage Study (EAHS) made recommendations to support the community in improving their management of their cemetery. Funds were subsequently received from the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Populations and Communities' Indigenous Heritage Program [as part of the *Connecting with Country* project] and from the Department of Corrective Services received by Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council [LALC].

Project aims were developed in collaboration with Wallaga Lake community members:

- To determine as completely and accurately as possible, the locations and names of all Aboriginal people buried in the cemetery at Wallaga Lake, using Ground Penetrating Radar, oral history and archival research.
- To prepare written records and maps, together with electronic records, for use by the Merrimans LALC in management of the cemetery.
- To consult with Aboriginal people regarding how they would like their ancestors in the cemetery to be recognised, protected and cared for.
- To prepare guidelines for the continued management of the cemetery grounds by the community.
- To recommend any additional investigation on who is buried within the cemetery and where they are buried, including elsewhere in the Wallaga Lake reserve.

A geophysicist was engaged by ESC to undertake the highly technical Ground penetrating Radar (GPR) investigation, which essentially finds out what is underneath the ground by using electromagnetic waves to detect variations in soil disturbance resulting from digging a grave. The GPR allows us to see what is under the ground without having to do any digging.

Consultations with the Wallaga Lake community and other interested people took place between 16th August 2011 and 7th February 2012. Community members participated in four community meetings, targeted oral history consultations and fieldwork. Community participants include Max Munroe, Lionel Mongta, Eric Naylor, Loraine Naylor, Alma Campbell nee Andy, Nicole Andy, Yuin Kelly, Markeeta Freeman, Clive Freeman, Shirley Foster, Ivan Thomas, Donna Campbell nee Thomas, Andrew Williams, Marleene Kelly, Tracey Foster, Marleene Dunn, Amanda Tighe, Geraldine Thomas, Mervyn Penrith, Kerry Parsons, Robert Ahoy, Alison Walker, Stephen Kelly, Ernie Harrison, Maria Harrison nee Thomas, Georgina Parsons, Loretta Parsley, Pam Flanders, Harriett Walker, Margo Darcy, Eddie Foster, Deanna Davison, Iris White, Trisha Ellis, Lyn Thomas, Clifford Thomas, Randall Mumbler, Warren Foster, Ken Campbell, Deanna Campbell, Albert Solomon, Patrick Colger, Rena Flanders, Betty Solomon, Bruce Craig, Stephen Foster, Glenn Campbell, George Campbell, Ashley Parsons, Marlene Dunn, Naomi Foster, Maxine Kelly, Betty Solomon and Robert Harrison.

Key support team members include Sue Feary, Susan Donaldson, Steven Picton, Vikki Parsley, Dean Freeman Mick Darcy and Anne Greenaway. The GPR operators were David Hunter, assisted by Shannon Hunter of Hunter Geophysics and Mads Toft and Cameron Young of MALA GPR Australia. Also involved or provided advice were Steven Halicki and Wayne Hutton [ESC], Harry Bate [Tilba District Cemetery Committee], John Wyman [Bega Funeral Services], Pierre Duparte [Shoalhaven Bereavement Services], Michelle Wesman [ESC Cemeteries], Paul Middleton [ESC GIS], Susan Carlton [NSW State Archives], Les Gould [NSW Registrar Births Deaths and Marriages], Laurelle Pacey [freelance journalist], Graham Moore [Sites Officer OEH] and Danny Chapman [DAA].

The GPR work was conducted on 5-6th September 2011. Extensive oral history and archival research was conducted before, during and after the GPR fieldwork. The GPR survey identified **166** graves/possible graves including a possible and a probable grave in the vicinity of where some community members believe Queen Narelle is buried. It also showed up three major areas of subsurface disturbance that may or may not be associated with burials; the GPR readings were not clear enough to be sure. The recent repatriation of ancient skeletal remains near the cemetery entrance and the 'bags of human bones' buried along the western fence line as documented from oral history research, appear to have been detected by GPR.

The oral and documented history research identified **207 names** of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake Cemetery. A large table has been compiled which includes all available information from the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) other written sources and oral history. GPR information has been added where relevant. Of these 207 possible burials:

91 [44%] were confirmed by the BDM records as being buried at Wallaga Lake of which 38 are known.

26/38	Marked on the ground and named [confirmed through oral history]
8/38	Unmarked but have been confirmed and named by combining oral history with GPR survey
4/38	Located through oral history but not confirmed with GPR.

96 [46.3%] are not recorded in BDM as being buried at Wallaga Lake. However, 55 have now been determined as being buried at Wallaga Lake.

41/55	Marked on the ground and confirmed through oral history
4/55	Unmarked but confirmed by combining oral history with GPR survey
10/ 55	Located through oral history but not confirmed with GPR.

➤ **19 have been confirmed to be buried elsewhere.**

The oral history research confirmed names for the 67 marked burials. Of these marked burials 50/67 were previously unnamed [eg slab of concrete with no identifiable personal marker] and 12/67 have names. There remain five marked unnamed graves with no matching records.

Of the 67 marked burials;

- 26/67 **are** registered with BDM
- 41/67 **are not** registered with BDM.

The combined oral history and archival research identified **207** burials in the cemetery. **91** of these people are registered as being buried Wallaga Lake / **96** not registered at all / **19** registered elsewhere.

Thus at this stage we have a total of **187** people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake. **91** or **48.6%** of the known burials are registered with BDM / **96** or **51.3 %** of known burials are not registered with BDM. Even some graves that are marked and named are not registered with BDM. **38/91** and **55 / 96** burials are known and marked and/or named.

Combining results from GPR survey, marked graves and oral history we now know the name and location of **107** burials at Wallaga Lake [registered and unregistered]. Of these only **67** are marked graves [not all with names], **12** are unmarked and confirmed through GPR survey whilst **14** are based on oral history without any other evidence.

Of the **12** GPR burial sites matching with oral history, 8 of these have been confirmed by BDM, with 4 unconfirmed at this stage. There are still **85** 'unknown graves' with no matching records. This includes three distinct groups in the northeast and southeast corners and associated with the 'disturbed area' towards the northwestern corner.

SECTION ONE: Introduction

This report presents the results of a recent study into the locations and names of Aboriginal people buried in the Aboriginal cemetery at Wallaga Lake, on the NSW south coast. Prior to this study, the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) did not have a list of people buried in the cemetery, nor did they have any maps of burial locations. The study was prompted in part by the accidental uncovering of older burials while digging graves for people recently deceased. The LALC want to ensure this does not happen again.

The study includes identification of named graves from historical records, locations of named graves based on oral history research carried out on-site, and a ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) of the cemetery, using two types of geophysics equipment. If the community wish, all currently available information about each gravesite can be recorded on individual recording forms, designed specifically for this project (see Appendix 2).

The results of the three different information sources have been brought together to provide comprehensive maps and a written record of the names and locations of the graves of people buried in the cemetery. Not all locations identified by oral history have been verified by the GPR work and ongoing consultation and oral history research is required to find out about every person buried in the cemetery.

This report also recommends a framework for the ongoing management of both the cemetery and the documents associated with it, as well as identifying the need for further investigation of historical and oral records and additional GPR survey for a potential cemetery extension.

Background to project

The Wallaga Lake cemetery project arose from the recommendations of the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Heritage Study (EAHS). This interagency - community partnership study comprised four stages was undertaken between 2005 and 2008. The study aimed to enhance current levels of understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Eurobodalla Shire by the local community and visitors and to develop better ways to manage, protect and acknowledge the heritage values within the local government planning framework. The first stage of the EAHS involved the compilation of historical text-based materials relating to the early contact period of the Eurobodalla region (Goulding and Waters 2005]. The second stage of the EAHS built on the historical data through Aboriginal participatory fieldwork and the recording of Aboriginal oral histories (Donaldson 2006). The third stage combined data from stages 1, 2 and 3 of the study (Donaldson 2007) and the fourth stage investigated ways to manage Aboriginal cultural places within the NSW planning framework (Barry and Donaldson 2008). The four-year EAHS resulted in the documentation of 336 places within the Eurobodalla Local Government Area [LGA] as containing special heritage value to Aboriginal people. Of these, 11 were mapped in more detail and incorporated in the draft Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan as Heritage Conservation Areas.

In 2009 the Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC) in partnership with the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Advisory Committee (EAAC) secured further funding from the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Community, for a project entitled *Connecting with Country* to implement some of the recommendations from the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Heritage Study. The project was completed in 2010 and includes detailed recording and assessment of twenty-two cultural places in the Eurobodalla Shire (Feary and Donaldson 2011).

Wallaga Lake cemetery was included in the list of places requiring detailed recording but it was realised that the task was considerably beyond the scope of

the *Connecting with Country* project. Following a meeting with Merrimans LALC, ESC sought approval from the funding body to vary the project brief to allow for a detailed investigation of the Wallaga Lake cemetery, including the possibility of Ground Penetrating Radar survey at a later date. The investigation was initially confined to preliminary oral history and archival research to identify names and locations of people in the cemetery as far as was possible.

At this time, the Merrimans LALC had also received funding for the cemetery from two separate sources. In 2008 the NSW Environmental Trust provided funding for repairs to and maintenance of the cemetery. NSW Corrective Services also provided funding to construct a stone commemorative wall, to present the names of everyone known to be buried in the cemetery. The wall building is aimed at providing employment for offenders being supervised in the community. It was agreed that outcomes of the three projects could best be achieved by combining them into a single project.

Subsequently, both the LALC and ESC were able to secure funding to include Ground Penetrating Radar investigation in the project. There were further discussions with the LALC and other Aboriginal people with connections to the cemetery, and a presentation on a GPR survey of the Brungle Aboriginal cemetery. The community decided to support the GPR work, as it did not disturb the ground in any way.

A geophysicist was engaged by ESC to undertake this highly technical investigation, which essentially finds out what is underneath the ground by using electromagnetic waves to detect variations in soil disturbance resulting from digging a grave. The GPR work was conducted on 5 and 6th September 2011. Preliminary oral history and baseline archival research was conducted before, during and after the GPR fieldwork.

Project aims

- To determine as completely and accurately as possible, the locations and names of all Aboriginal people buried in the cemetery at Wallaga Lake, using GPR, oral history and archival research.
- To prepare written records and maps, together with electronic records, for use by the Merrimans LALC in management of the cemetery.
- To consult with Aboriginal people regarding how they would like their ancestors in the cemetery to be recognised, protected and cared for.
- To prepare guidelines for the continued management of the cemetery grounds by the community.
- To recommend any additional investigation needed to determine who and where people are buried within the cemetery and elsewhere in the Wallaga Lake reserve.

What is Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)?

The Wallaga Lake project has used a technique called ground penetrating radar (GPR), to help locate unmarked graves in the cemetery. GPR is a geophysical method using highly technical equipment for showing what is underneath the ground without having to dig or disturb the ground in any way. Geophysics was developed originally to assist geologists in finding buried mineral deposits. GPR is commonly used to detect underground pipes and other infrastructure and in historical archaeology for finding buried structures and mass grave yards. It is becoming popular as a non-invasive technique for detecting unmarked Aboriginal graves.

The system produces short pulses of electromagnetic energy (radio waves) from a transmitting antenna and radiates it into the ground. When these waves strike features or layers of ground material with differing electrical properties, part of the wave is reflected back to the antenna and a picture is created. As the

transmitting and receiving antenna is moved along the ground surface, individual pulse recordings are collected and displayed side by side on a monitor, resulting in a cross sectional view called a radar profile.

A typical GPR system generally consists of a control unit (computer), pulse generator, transmitting and receiving antennae and a video monitor. The antennae are mounted on a mobile device which can be pushed along like a lawnmower. Different types of antenna are used depending on the depth of the survey and the resolution required. High frequency antennas give high resolution images and low frequency antennas give better penetration depth but lower resolution images. Usually the antenna frequency is a trade-off between the two. The machine is pushed along a grid of string lines, which have been precisely located using surveying equipment. This is to ensure that the machine goes in straight parallel lines, to give accurate readings for locating the unmarked graves.

The ability of a buried feature to reflect radio waves depends on its electrical conductivity, so, for example, a buried metal bar will give a strong signal. For the object to be detected there must also be an electrical contrast between the reflecting feature and the soil in which it is buried. If done properly and under the right conditions, GPR is sensitive enough to pick up the variation in conductivity between the disturbed soil within the grave and the soil outside the grave (i.e. the surrounding soil).

As with all technology, GPR has its limitations. The signal may be weak or difficult to interpret. This may happen if there is not much electrical contrast between the soils inside and outside the grave, for example, if the surrounding land has been disturbed as a result of other activities. Thus, although a subsurface disturbance may be identified from the signals, whether or not it represents a grave is not always obvious.

The type of soil also presents problems. For example, clay is a major barrier to penetration of the signal; however, sandy soils such as at Wallaga Lake cemetery

can expect to get good coverage to a depth of 5 metres. Furthermore, the process is relatively expensive and requires a very high degree of skill to interpret the graphs and maps produced by the electrical signals. In other words, they make little sense to anyone who is not experienced and trained in this type of technology. It is also time consuming, as the gridlines are only 25 cms apart. GPR work is therefore not usually done unless there is a high degree of certainty that graves exist in a specific area, such as in a cemetery.

It was very fortunate that David Hunter, the geophysicist was able to organise use of a more sophisticated, more accurate and faster machine to assist in the Wallaga lake cemetery survey. This machine is a new piece of GPR technology belonging to a Sydney based Swedish company called MALA and was made available on a trial basis. It can be towed behind a car for surveying larger areas and is much faster than the handcart, but it is limited where it can go because of the space needed to manoeuvre the towing vehicle.

The value of the GPR is best demonstrated when used in combination with oral history information. A GPR survey of the old cemetery on the Aboriginal Reserve at Brungle, near Tumut in NSW was able to confirm the presence of two unmarked graves, but the GPR showed their location to be actually two metres away from where people believed them to be (Yelf 2003). At Roseby Park on the NSW south coast the GPR survey identified 12 unmarked graves (Yelf 2004). In this case, names were not matched to the graves; instead the aim was to identify the locations of unmarked graves to ensure that they will not be disturbed during digging of modern graves.

Landscape setting

The Wallaga Lake cemetery is located at Cemetery Point, a prominent headland on the northern shores of Wallaga Lake on the NSW south coast. The cemetery was part of the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve and is now within the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal village, which is owned by the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land

Council. The village is embedded in a broader cultural landscape that includes the surrounding lake, Merrimans Island and the towering presence of Gulaga mountain in the background. The nearest township to the Wallaga Lake village is Bermagui, approximately 10 kms south of Cemetery Point by road and approximately 350 kms south of Sydney. The small villages of Beauty Point and Fairhaven and several caravan parks are located on the eastern side of the lake, while Akolele and Wallaga Lake Heights are situated close to the lake entrance, where the Bermagui Road crosses the lake via a low causeway (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Aerial photo showing location of cemetery at Wallaga Lake Aboriginal village [view to south west]

In addition to these settlements are a few pastoral properties on the western side of the lake; otherwise the catchment is predominantly covered in natural vegetation within State Forest and National Park.

With a surface area of nearly 8 square kilometres, and an average depth of 3.7 metres, Wallaga Lake is the largest and most southerly of numerous coastal lakes within Eurobodalla LGA, and its southern edge extends into Bega Valley Shire. The

lake was formed by the drowning of two river valleys at the end of the last ice age (6,000 to 10,000 years ago). The lake shores are steep, and consist of many small, sheltered bays with little or no beach structure. Estuarine wetlands have formed on the areas of accumulated alluvium and silt at the creek mouths (NPWS 1999). Three low islands occur within the lake; Honeysuckle Island, the culturally significant Merrimans Island and Snake Island on the western shores. The latter was formed by the creek cutting a channel through lake sediments and isolating a section of the headland to form an island.

The lake opens intermittently to the ocean during high seas and/or high rainfall in the catchment. It is also opened artificially from time to time, in accordance with an estuary management plan, to prevent flooding of adjacent low lying properties. The lake is high in species diversity including birds (over 60 species), several commercially important fish species, molluscs and crustaceans. It is a locally significant natural feature for its aesthetic, cultural and biological values (Bega Valley Shire Council and Eurobodalla Shire Council 2000).

Aboriginal history of the Wallaga Lake region

This region of the NSW far south coast is rich in archaeological sites, including middens, scarred trees, rock art, stone artefact scatters, bora grounds and axe grinding grooves, demonstrating an Aboriginal presence beginning around 5,000 – 6,000 years ago, when the sea level finished rising and created the rich resource zones of coastal lakes, estuaries, and wetlands. Large shell middens are recorded around the lake, including extensive deposits at Fairhaven Point.



Figure 2: shell midden on southern boundary of cemetery

At Murunna Point, on the southern side of the Wallaga lake entrance, several sites were recorded in 2003 (Webster and Kuskie 2003) and in July 2008, a section of the headland eroded away to expose the skeletal remains of a traditional Aboriginal burial (Feary 2009). The burial has been left *in situ* and Bega Valley Shire and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH)¹ have put erosion control measures in place to ensure its long-term protection.

The cemetery itself contains midden deposits along its southern boundary, composed of densely packed *bimbula* shells in a dark sandy soil matrix (Figure 2). It is likely that the shellfish were collected from the edges of the lake or in the creeks and brought up onto the headland to be processed and eaten. It is possible that traditional burials occur within the midden deposits underlying the present cemetery but these have not been identified or recorded as yet.

¹ Formerly Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water

Aboriginal people's links to the region, in the past as well as in the present, can be described according to a number of social groupings including tribal, sub-tribal, clan and linguistic. The *Yuin* [Djuwin] tribal area as recorded by Howitt in 1904 extends from the Shoalhaven River in the north to Cape Howe in the south and west into the Great Dividing Range. Howitt recorded another division with the Yuin tribal area; the *Guyangal* [guya = south] and *Kurial* [kuru = north] coastal subtribes, together known as *Katungal* [Katung = sea]². The linguistic affiliation of the Wallaga Lake area is Djirringanj, Dhurga coming into the area from the north.

Within the broader geographical area Aboriginal people of the south coast traveled throughout the coastal zone and west into the Monaro tablelands for a variety of reasons such as resource gathering and sharing (e.g. whale meat, fish flushes, bogong moths) and ceremonial purposes, including initiation and warfare (Goulding and Waters 2005).

The Wallaga Lake region was and still is a deeply spiritual landscape and is dominated by Gulaga Mountain, with storylines that connect the mountain with Najanuga (Little Dromedary) and Baranguba (Montague Island), 5 nautical miles off-shore at Narooma (Rose 1990). Merrimans Island (Umbarra), located in Wallaga Lake is the totemic centre for the Black Duck people and is of considerable cultural significance to the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community (Rose 1990). The importance of Umbarra has been described by Merv Penrith:

Merriman's totem was the black duck, Umbarra. Umbara – that's our totem too, the black duck totem. The Black duck is our bird. We see him around here, I seen one here today. The black duck goes wherever he wants; he lives here all right, he is part of the lake too you know. It is very hard to see these birds' nests. They nest in funny little places, lay their eggs in the weeds. They have nests everywhere, not just here. When we see a black duck, we knew he is one of us; we are not allowed to touch him. There might be a nest around here, if we found a nest we gotta leave him in peace, leave

² Howitt 1904 [1996] 82.

the bird and leave the eggs. If someone was visiting, they could have a feed of duck if we let em. If they hurt a black duck by accident, that would be ok, we'd forgive them. If someone hurt a duck because they tried to, then we'd have to punish them. These rules are thousands of years old, it is very important to abide by what we are telling them. The rules are old, really old rules, like Dreamtime old. The elders are connected to the Dreamtime so they can let people know what the rules are. The rules automatically come and they go through the elders. That's the rules of the Wallaga Lake people here. Without the black duck we've got nothing. Mervyn Penrith 17.11.2009.

Traditional Aboriginal society was severely impacted after the arrival of the British in 1788, although Bennett (2007) suggests that on the far south coast, Aboriginal people were able to maintain a fairly traditional lifestyle revolving around fishing until about the 1850s by integrating fishing and other traditional activities with seasonal work in the European economy, mostly on farms.

In the 1870s groups of Aboriginal people, including Umbarra (Merriman) lived around the shores of the lake and on Merrimans Island. Tobin describes Wallaga Lake at this time as 'a large camp for the old people'. They lived along the beach where there was plenty of thick shelter and down near the water near 'five different feeding grounds' (Tobin n.d.) Aboriginal people were fishing, and doing a small amount of farming and '*by the help of their boats they manage to earn money punting goods across the lake*' (Goulding and Waters 2005).

Merriman and others worked on the property of Henry Jefferson Bate who took up residence at Tilba Tilba in 1869 and had a great interest in the culture and living conditions of the local Aboriginal community. In return for their labour, he apparently gave land to the Aboriginal community, which was eventually to become part of the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve. Mr. Bate was later to be a key member of the local committee of the Aborigines Protection Board in the Tilba

Tilba area, advocating for improved living standards on the Reserve and his son, W.S. Bate became Reserve 'Guardian' in 1912.³

Aboriginal people quickly saw the value of a European education for their children but, while technically Aboriginal children were eligible to attend the Public Schools established in the 1880s, in practice the opposition of European parents frequently led to their exclusion. In response Aboriginal schools were established on reserves throughout New South Wales. Wives of local white farmers urged the establishment of an Aboriginal school at Wallaga Lake in 1877, 12 years prior to the formal creation of the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal reserve and the first Aboriginal school in NSW (Figure 3).

The population figures suggest that the presence of the school and later the Reserve were a strong attraction for Aboriginal people to reside close by or in the reserve. The first school inspector at Wallaga Lake school observed that the influx of people can be partly attributed to the 'attraction of schooling and the school rations' (Cameron 1987: 87). However, families continued to live in huts and gunyahs on farms in the district where some of the adults worked, which gave them the freedom to move around, compared to the Reserve.

³ <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/>



Aboriginal children (ca. 1895). The structure has been identified as the school building at the Wallaga Lake Mission. Corkhill, William Henry, 1846-1936. 1 photograph: glass negative. The William Henry Corkhill Tilba Tilba Collection. National Library of Australia PIC TT860 nla.pic-an2511554

Figure 3: Wallaga Lake school

The Aborigines Protection Board (APB) established the Wallaga Lake Reserve over 330 acres of land on 13 June 1891 (Figure 4). It was the first station established by the APB in New South Wales and was a managed station from the start. The APB was attempting to 'concentrate' the Aboriginal population of the south coast and Monaro regions at Wallaga Lake and a key element was the fact that the Station provided the only Aboriginal school for the South Coast from the 1890s to the 1960s (Long 1970).

During 1899 a local Board was established at Wallaga Lake and efforts to improve productivity and living standard were instituted. Forty acres of timber was felled and clearing of the land commenced, a small dam, boatsheds, cow bails and a stockyard were erected in addition to some simple cottages for the Aboriginal people and a residence for the manager (Egloff *et al* 2004).

Two much smaller Aboriginal reserves were also gazetted in Wallaga Lake; Snake Island and Merrimans Island in 1906 and 1909 respectively. Like many of the smaller reserves in the region, these were unmanaged and were intensively utilised at

times. The Snake Island reserve was used to grow food for the residents of Wallaga Lake Reserve; until it was revoked in 1954 (see Figure 4).

Merrimans Island was occupied by King Merriman and 22 people in the mid-1800s and may have been reserved to house Uncle Andy [Bond] and Aunty Butter who used to live in a bark hut over on what is now called Wallaga Lake Heights, after Andy came back from the [first world] war. According to Eileen Morgan, *'after a while the government took the land where he was living off him and they gave him Merrimans Island. Fancy giving him that, they never gave him a boat. How did they expect him to live over there: But he did move over there. That's where he built a slab hut. It had a tin roof and a square tank, to catch water'* (Goulding and Waters 2005). There is oral history of a battle on Merrimans Island, between Yuin people and Victorian tribes (Rose 1990).



Figure 4: Historical Aboriginal Reserves: Snake Island, Merrimans Island and Wallaga Lake.

The records kept by the various Reserve managers give a detailed picture of reserve life between 1890 until around the 1950s. A remarkable set of photographs taken by William Henry Corkhill document the funeral of Queen Narelle at Wallaga Lake in 1895 (Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 5: Queen Narelle's funeral 1895 from the Corkhill Collection held by the National Library of Australia 2511328.



Figure 6: Queen Narelle's funeral, Wallaga Lake 1895 from the Corkhill Collection held by the National Library of Australia 2438405.

The early years at the reserve appear to have been reasonably harmonious but the situation deteriorated over time, possibly as a result of influxes of people from elsewhere in NSW and Victoria. People were brought into the reserve from La Perouse in 1900 and in 1914 a large group came down from Batemans Bay. There was another influx in 1937, putting a strain on accommodation. The Wallaga Lake population fluctuated annually depending on the nature and extent of available work but between 1891 and 1904 was never less than 86 nor more than 177 (Wesson 2002).

Construction of buildings and provision of infrastructures was an ongoing activity and efforts were made to be self sustaining with goats, cattle, and wattlebark stripping, but it was never achieved. The Manager's report from 1900 gives a snapshot of life on the Reserve (from a white person's perspective).

'There has been no cultivation of crops on the Station, on account of there being no cleared land available. Forty acres have been felled and partly cleared, a small dam constructed, and two boat-sheds, stockyard, and cow-bails erected. Sufficient slabs and other timber for the erection of several houses have been obtained, also a large amount of fencing material. A very comfortable cottage of five rooms and kitchen has been built for the accommodation of the Manager. The health of the inmates of the Station has been very good during the six months, there being very few cases of sickness. During the last few months of the year there have been no cases of drunkenness reported'.

Since 1931 there have been several revocations and additions of land to the reserve. In 1949, the loss of 21 acres to make land available for non-Aboriginal people's holiday cottages (now part of Akolele) was of particular concern as the revoked land is believed to contain burials (Goodall 2008). Local elder Guboo Ted Thomas told NPWS staff in 1979 that King Merryman was buried at Akolele, within the area excised from the Aboriginal Reserve.⁴ Seventy-five acres were gazetted in 1949 and revoked in 1963.

Aboriginal employment levels were very high during the Second World War and the 1944 report of the Aborigines Welfare Board noted that of the population of 78, all able bodied people were employed in general farm work, saw milling, pea picking and road maintenance. Pam Flanders, Georgina Parsons and Marie Andy recalls these years:

People made their money in all sorts of ways. It was hard to get work in Bermagui. I use to work for the Hendrickson's at Wallaga when I was about 15. I did housework and mind the little fellas; take them for a walk. I was with them

⁴ Internal NPWS records

for a while, I even got dressed at their place for my wedding. We became good friends. Pam Flanders 8.9.2009

Clem was a sawmiller, so were all his brother's and his father. They travelled all the way to Victoria for millwork. The whole family followed them, kids and all. Most saw mills had good huts for the worker's families to stay. I remember living at the Dignams Creek mill, I had to have morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea ready for Clem and the others when they needed a break. Then I had to get dinner ready for when they finished. We all worked hard back then (Marie Ellen Andy 4.11.2009).

A lot of the Wallaga Lake people used to travel from Wallaga Lake down to Dignams Creek to pick. They [the NSW Forestry Commission]also started a mill at Dignams Creek there was the Andy family, old Ernie Andy and his family, and there was us. My father George, he taught a lot of the young men how to work in the mills, like me elder brothers Cyril and Bobby, even meself, I used to stack timber - not in Dignams Creek, but in Dignams Creek mill I used to sit and watch them how they used to work. I stacked the timbers at a spot mill near Hartley when we had a little spot mill, me and my old man, I even got behind the bench and started - but it started tailin out. Always used to be a family thing, see, well me brothers were all brought up in the mill and they knew what they were doin and brothers'd be breakin down the logs and the big saw, it was very interesting, and all the lads would never talk to one another, their hands were all the language, did all the body work, sign language with the body, that's the way they used to speak to one another (Georgina Parsons 25.11.2009).

New houses and facilities were built in 1950, in contrast to dwindling housing programmes on other reserves under the new assimilation policy of the government and attempts to move Aboriginal people off reserves. Lorraine Naylor and Ken Campbell have described life at Wallaga Lake under the assimilation policy:

I was born in Bega on the 25th October 1952. I came from Bega hospital to Wallaga Lake. I grew up here on Wallaga Lake and have lived here most of my life. I lived here with my mum. I've got one brother and two sisters here at Wallaga Lake, one brother at Cobargo, and one at Tanja. My mother was Cynthia Carter. Pam Flanders, Harriett Walker and I are related. The Managers had control over everyone – everyone had to keep a clean house, the houses would be inspected. We use to get rations, sugar flour, treacle, dripping, tobacco every week or so. I can't quite remember I was only young. Everyone comes and goes, if you've got family here, you'll always return (Loraine Naylor 15.9.2009)

Back in the 60s I went to see my Uncle Bill at Wallaga, and they told me I wasn't allowed into the mission. I went up the road and late in the afternoon I went around the lake, walked in to visit my uncle, then stayed a few years, we all had to hide from the manager. If he seen stranger, he'd make you get off. I could always go down to the lake and fish, no one could see you down there until they cut the trees down, so the manager could see what was going on. They always locked the gate that was near where the land council office is today. The land council office was the manager's residence. He knew what was going on. There were lots of different managers (Ken Campbell 8.9.2009).

There was a major bushfire in 1951, which destroyed the administration centre (and the all the records, including the cemetery records). Rebuilding occurred the following year. By this time, the station was being used to provide a home for several widows, deserted wives and other women from parts of the State as distant as Moree, Coonabarabran, and Taree (Long 1970: 63).

The Wallaga Lake Aboriginal School closed in December 1964 and the children transferred to local schools and the Wallaga Lake Station became part of the Nowra Welfare District. The Station Manager's position was abolished in 1969 after which the Reserve was overseen by a Welfare Officer. The Reserve was run by a committee of residents and in 1970 it had 16 houses managed by the Department of Child Welfare and Social Welfare.

In 1971 the Minister for Child Welfare and Social Welfare asked the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to inspect sacred sites within the Aboriginal reserve, including the cemetery, presumably because there were concerns about potential damage and desecration of sites as the future of the reserve was uncertain at the time. A number of important cultural places are recorded within the Wallaga Lake village, including bora grounds, a sacred tree and a red lightning tree. The significance of these sites was explained to NPWS archaeologist Sharon Sullivan by Ted Thomas. Aboriginal sites officer Ray Kelly made a further inspection in 1975 and made recommendations regarding protection of the sites, including the cemetery (Kelly 1975). At this time, in recognition of its cultural values, Merrimans Island was gazetted as an Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Protection of the other sacred sites under the NPW Act became unnecessary when in 1984, land title to what remained of the Reserve was handed over to the Merrimans LALC following passing of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*.

Aboriginal movement in the late 19th- early 20th century

One of the defining features of Aboriginal life on the Wallaga Lake reserve in the late 19th – early 20th Century was the very high degree of mobility of families and individuals. Sue Wesson, in her PhD research has shown that in 1890, of the eleven families on the reserve only two were local, others coming from Gippsland, the Monaro and other parts of the far south coast (Bodalla and north of the Moruya River and south of the Bega River). Ten years later the 1901 census showed that of the twelve families, only two were local; the others came from Eden (3), Ulladulla (1), Gundry-Bodalla (3), Jervis Bay (1) and Cootamundra-Yass (1). Furthermore, only two of the families were the same as those named in the 1891 census, which shows that people were constantly moving around, and that staffed reserves were initially used as stopovers of various lengths for journeys which mirrored traditional

movements. The advantage of staffed reserves over camping reserves was that rations were more reliably distributed and facilities were superior (Wesson 2002).⁵

Some Aboriginal Wallaga Lake and Twofold Bay families developed a particular seasonal round which involved spending the whaling season between June-July and October-November at Twofold Bay and the off-season at Wallaga Lake (Wesson 2002). By the 1900s there were 23 families who had an occasional association with Wallaga Lake. Ten of these families were associated with whaling and six were local Guyangal (Wesson 2002).

Wesson (2002) has reconstructed possible mission era short journeys at Wallaga Lake Aboriginal station (Figure 7). Its position adjacent to the Tilba townships ensured opportunities for regular employment in the houses, businesses and dairy properties. Rations would have been obtained from the ration depot positioned near the manager's house at the station.

⁵ Camping reserves were generally small land parcels set aside by the Government for the use of Aboriginal people. Many were rarely or never used.

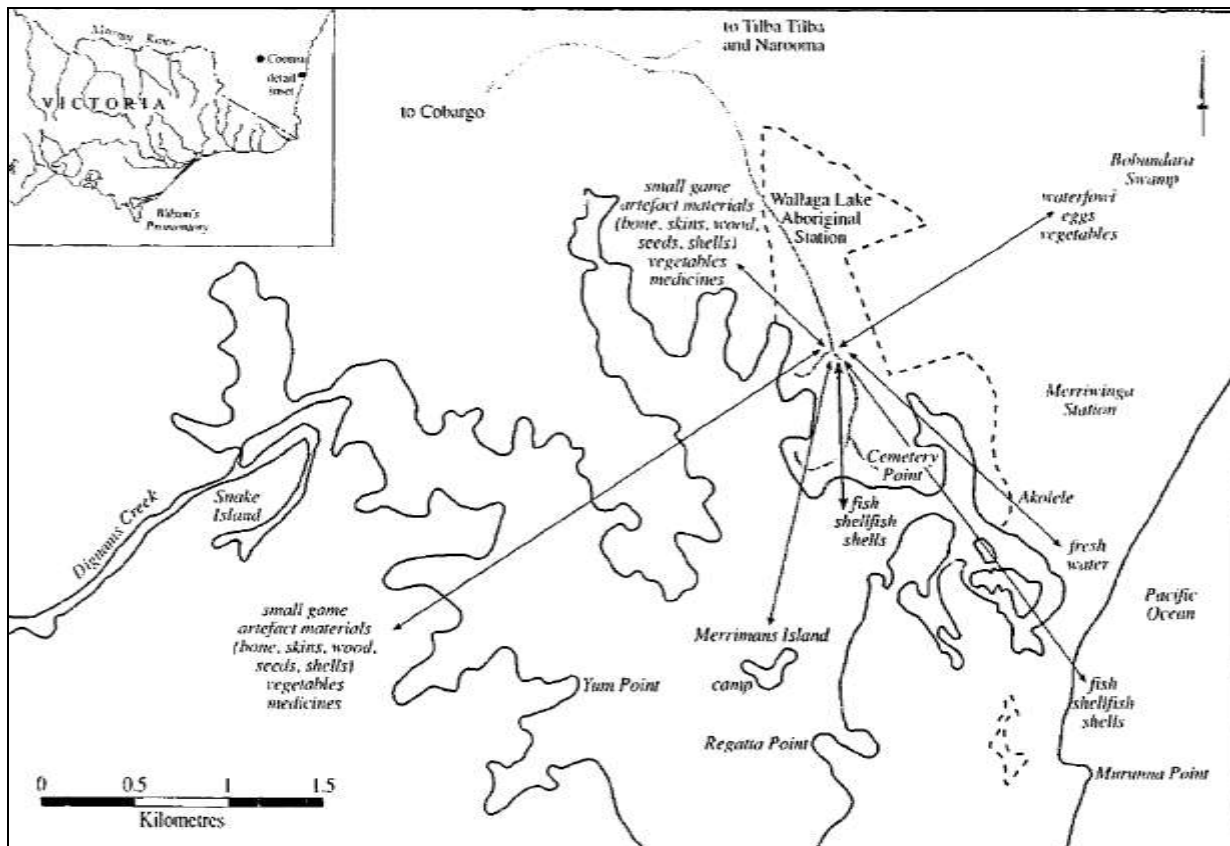


Figure 7: Wesson's possible mission era short journeys

Figure 8 shows a reconstruction of possible mission era medium journeys at Wallaga Lake Aboriginal station. Journeys of up to 15 km would have been made to seek large game including wombat, grey kangaroo and wallaby, and to gather materials, small game (possum, platypus, tortoise, lizards), medicines and vegetable foods, for work, and to barter oysters and fish. Aborigines are known to have worked at Tilba cheese factories and dairies and had long histories of working with the Bate and Hoyer families (Hoyer 1996 in Wesson 2002). The sacred mountain of Gulaga is also a medium journey from the reserve and is associated with creation stories. The station is positioned on a traditional travel route for north-south journeys to the Shoalhaven and the Victorian border (Wesson 2002).

Cameron (1987), in his investigation of far south coast Aboriginal history, also noted how people continued to move about after the establishment of Wallaga Lake, seeking medical treatment, to avoid epidemics, for employment and to visit relatives, and even after the occurrence of a death. In 1888 the Wallaga Lake

residents were reported to have sought medical treatment at Bega, Moruya and Sydney.

The Wallaga Lake cemetery can be expected to reflect the high degree of mobility in relation to short journeys but also longer journeys where people may have moved away for many months in search of work, after a death or to avoid conflict. Thus, even though people resided at Wallaga, they may be buried elsewhere. Also, people not resident at Wallaga may be buried in the cemetery because he/she was at Wallaga at the time of death or have been brought back from elsewhere to be buried.

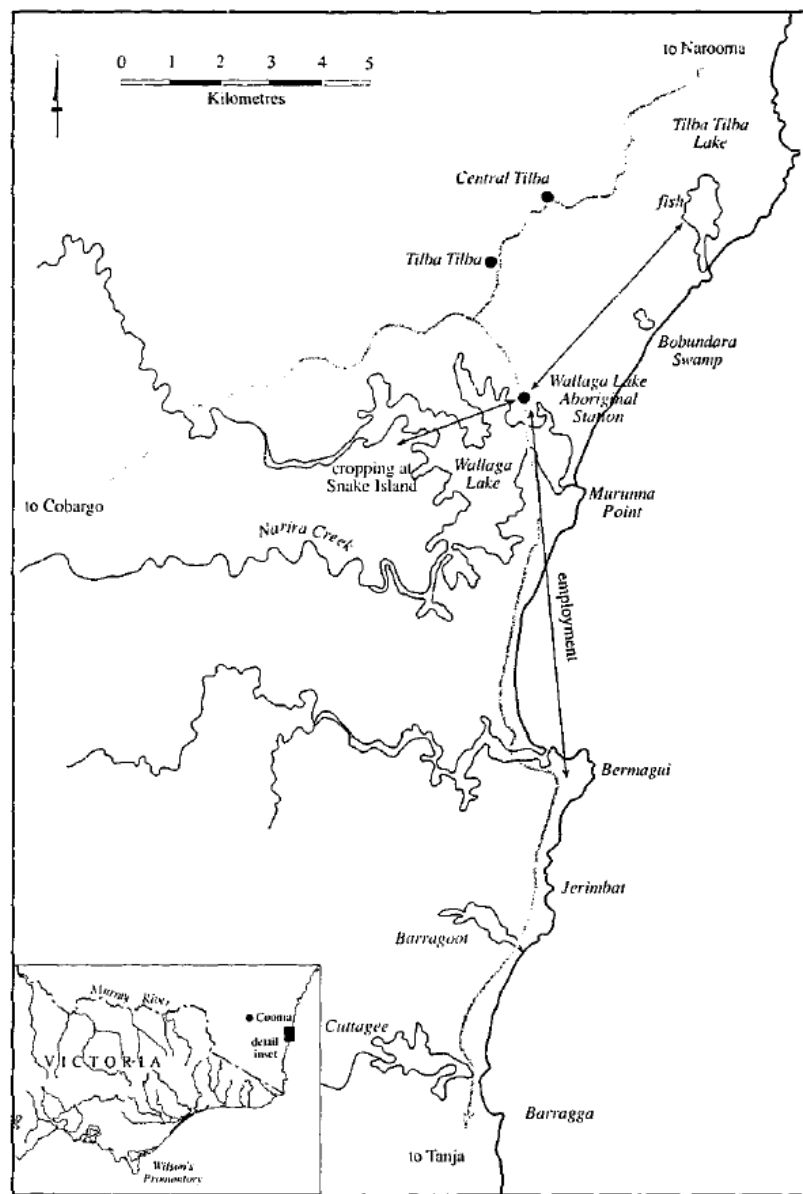


Figure 8: Medium distance journeys from Wallaga Lake Reserve (Wesson 2002)

Wallaga Lake Aboriginal village and cemetery today

Today, the Wallaga Lake Koori village houses between 130-140 residents, with a high percentage of children and around 20% of elders, many caring for their grandchildren. There are 32 houses, a pre-school, community hall, a multipurpose service centre, a cemetery, a large unused workshop, and a LALC office.

Most of the families living at Wallaga today include descendents of the people who were living on the Reserve in 1891 and earlier. Although the community is mainly functioning and healthy, it grapples with unemployment and the range of health and other problems facing marginalised indigenous people across the world, including disproportionately high death rates.

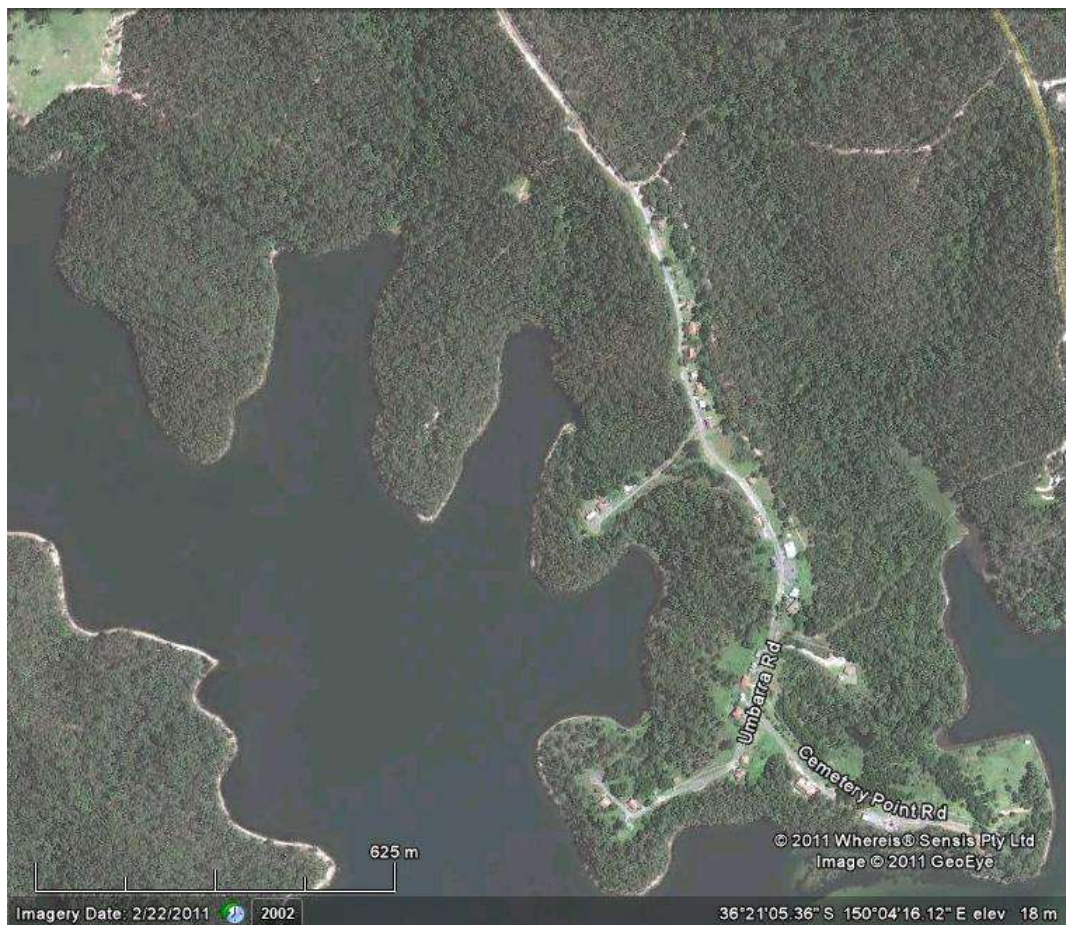


Figure 9: Wallaga Lake Aboriginal village today

The residences are located next to the road along the ridge top and at the end of small feeder roads that descend to the lake (Figure 9). The cemetery is located at the end of Cemetery Point Road past the new preschool. Much of the old Reserve is still naturally vegetated with small amounts of clearing for residences, and a large cleared area on Cemetery Point, north of the existing cemetery. The cemetery can be seen from the Bermagui Bridge; it has been described as 'a nice place to end up' [per comm. Harold Harrison].

Given the pre-contact history of the region and history of the reserve, and in particular the historical and contemporary movement of people across the region as described above, the Wallaga Lake cemetery remains highly significant to Aboriginal people today. The cultural and historical value of the Wallaga Lake cemetery is maintained by Aboriginal people with traditional as well as historical connections to the area. Accordingly people with connections to the cemetery presently reside in a multitude of locations including Wallaga Lake, the Eurobodalla and Bega Valley Shire areas and further a field including interstate.

The significance of the cemetery today, in the 2000s, has been described by Mervyn Penrith, Pam Flanders and Harold Harrison:

I was born in Berry in 1941. I would have been born in Nowra, but my mother, being black, was not permitted into the hospital there. Dad was Hector Stewart and my Mum was Ruby Penrith, she was born on Mosquito Point, here at Wallaga Lake. I was named after my mother's two brothers, Mervyn and Charles Penrith. Bert Penrith, my grandfather was born not far from Wallaga on the banks of Dignams Creek. He use to work for farmers around Tilba Tilba and is buried in the Wallaga Lake Cemetery. Mervyn Penrith 17.11.2009.

Mum and Dad reared me up at Wallaga. Dad was on the roads all the time; he worked for the DMR. We had to go to school. I went to school here at Wallaga; the schoolhouse was where Budda's house is now. The next school used to be where the pepper tree [was], where they are building the resource

centre. Valerie, my sister, used to take me to school. I found it easy to learn. They taught us white fella history, before we went into school; we knew that history and ours. A few of us got confirmed at the Wallaga Hall, they had church there. The church didn't stop the kooris from doing anything. Me and Eddie are still living at Wallaga with our grandsons. They go to the Wallaga Bridge for a swim like we did as kids. We will be buried here, down in that little resting place by the lake. Pam Flanders 8.9.2009

In the 1930's Uncle Jimmy and my father and other Wallaga Lake men in the Wallaga Lake gum leaf band visited Cummeragunja. That's when they met the McGee sisters. In those days people had to travel to find a wife, they did not want to marry in close. They brought their new wives to the coast, to Wallaga Lake They moved around a lot bean picking, they came down to Bega picking in the 1930s. My father was born at Quaama, in Dry River there and was rounded up and taken to Wallaga Lake. They had no say; it wasn't their fault. If they played up, their rations'd be restricted. Dad is buried at Wallaga Lake, I am not sure exactly where, we are probably walking right over it. I would like to see the old graves marked, so we know where all the family plots are. It use to be a place I looked forward to ending up to, along side dad, nice view, but the way it is now, I'm not sure anymore....' Harold Harrison 15.9.2009

Although separated from the primary part of Wallaga Lake village, at the end of a long ridgeline above the lake, the cemetery is a distinctively integral part of daily community life. Families tend the graves of their ancestors and some are visited on a regular basis. Family group association to the cemetery is tightly bound by the family based layout of the cemetery; that is burial locations are defined according to extended family group affiliations. The cemetery continues to be used to bury Aboriginal people who are from the Wallaga Lake or who have family associations with Wallaga Lake. As can be seen from the Birth, Deaths and Marriage records, the practise of bringing relatives who died outside of the cultural area 'home' to be buried at Wallaga Lake continued throughout the past century and remains common practise today.

The cemetery at Wallaga Lake is private, owned by the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council. Prior to about 1983, the Aboriginal reserve lands were held in trust by the NSW Lands Department. After the passing of the NSW *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* and the creation of land councils, ownership of the old reserve, including the cemetery was transferred to the Merrimans LALC. The Merrimans LALC has sole responsibility for maintaining and managing the cemetery as part of its broader management responsibilities. It appears that the cemetery is not a gazetted cemetery as it does not have a separate land title and is more correctly termed a 'burial ground'.

The cemetery is mostly cleared and grassed, with scattered large eucalyptus trees and some *Acacia* (mainly black wattle) regrowth. Over the last two years or so the cemetery has not been maintained. As a result when first visited for this project in August 2011, several graves were in a state of disrepair, the fence was collapsing in places and the grass was almost a metre high. The lack of lawn mowing was due in part to the cessation of the Commonwealth Development Employment Programme (CDEP), which used to fund a regular maintenance programme, through employment of community members. The previous Howard government disbanded CDEP and in the absence of a maintenance work crew, the grass has become very long to the extent that community members are reluctant to go into the cemetery to tend the graves for fear of snakes (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Long grass obscuring graves

The cemetery is fenced on three sides. The northern fence line was extended out to its current location c 1960 [just prior to the burial of Robert Walker date to be confirmed]. The southern fence line was being constructed in the 1980s as part of the CDEP program, but post-holes revealed the presence of shell midden material and the work was stopped (Mick Darcy pers. comm.). As part of the same 1980s CDEP fencing program, the western fence line was extended by 10 metres to its current location and the eastern fence line was extended by 5 metres. Just prior to the GPR survey, a burning off operation got out of control and burnt through the cemetery, destroying parts of the fence and some wooden grave markers and burning the grass.

The earliest registered burial at Wallaga Lake is that of Edward Walker, who died on the 4th February 1900. Edward was born in the Moruya district in 1815 and is known by his descendants as 'feather' [per comm. Deanna Davison and Iris White]. Presumably burials were occurring at Wallaga Lake Village cemetery since the establishment of the Aboriginal Reservation in 1891 but written records have not yet been found.

Currently there are 67 marked and/or named burials at Wallaga Lake cemetery (see Appendix 6). Some of the marked, named graves are inscribed with marble headstones, others are a simple cross or rock, with a name and a few have dates of birth and death inscribed (Figure 11). Most of the marked, unnamed graves are defined by a standard concrete slab, made sporadically by the community since 1950, whilst others are defined by the planting of a special tree or the placement of a stone or cross. Regardless of the marking features, some graves are regularly tended whereas others are in poor condition.

Over the past 50 years, the process of burying people at Wallaga Lake cemetery has involved the allocation of new plots by community members with oral knowledge of the cemetery layout. New plots are designated according to knowledge of the available space [i.e. void of existing burials] combined with the

wishes of the deceased and/or their family. The community member/s show the selected plot location to the backhoe driver, who prepares the grave. The local funeral director / minister oversees the funeral but the process of registration of the death/burial is unclear. This project has shown a low level of registration with Births, Deaths and Marriages and it may be everyone assumes someone else has registered the death and burial. Recently, the community have also insisted that a sites officer be present when the grave is being dug, as a way to monitor existing burial sites [pers. comm. Anne Greenaway].



Figure 11: Stone grave marker

There are also many features such as depressions or mounds or other physical features with no indication of who is buried there, apart from what is in people's memories. Finally, there are several locations with no discernable physical evidence, but where relatives are of the view that named people are buried there (Figure 12).

Several repatriations are known to have occurred in the cemetery. A 1979 NPWS site card refers to a burial from Bondi Lake (near Tathra) being brought to Wallaga Lake for re-burial under the supervision of Ted Thomas. NPWS cultural heritage staff refer to the repatriation of a human jawbone found at Cuttagee Lake in recent decades, although there is no documentation. Wallaga Lake community

members also speak of 'bags of human bones' being buried along the eastern fence line in the 1980s, after being found in a ditch somewhere on the south coast. Again, this has proved difficult to verify with written records.



Figure 12: Locations of possible unmarked graves

SECTION TWO: Approach to study

In this study, we have defined significance as the meaning attributed to something, whilst cultural significance encompasses the spiritual, historical and social meaning attributed to something by a group of people.⁶ We know that Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery is extremely culturally significant to Aboriginal people across southeastern Australia as a result of the complex social and historical formation of the site. Accordingly, there are many challenges associated with this kind of study and the approach taken needed to combine information from several sources.

Firstly were the results of the highly technical scientific data from the GPR machines. This information is mathematical and incomprehensible to the layperson and needs a geophysicist to interpret the graphs produced by the machines.

Secondly, finding the relevant historical records, such as Births, Deaths and Marriage registers and getting access to them is a difficult, expensive and time consuming task. It is also impossible to know if every single possible record has been found. One of the challenges of using the written records is that the same first name and surname have been used across several generations and it can be difficult to distinguish between generations from the records.

The third and most important information source is the memories of family members. These oral traditions can be based on direct observation of a burial or on information passed on from someone else, within or across generations. The association that community members have with the unmarked graves in the cemetery is based entirely on memory. Knowing where ancestors are buried is an important component of kinship relations, especially since there is sometimes a preference to not mark the grave with a name, a practise thought to reflect the

⁶ ICOMOS Burra Charter. See also NSW Department of Planning State Heritage Inventory Guidelines.

fact that the person is not confined to one area, but belongs to the whole landscape [pers. comm. Clive Freeman].

Each one of these methods of recording graves has its own limitations in terms of reliability and accuracy. The GPR does not detect skeletal material, but relies on measuring sub-surface soil disturbance, which may not always be the result of a grave being dug. The machine may not detect very old burials because the soil disturbance feature is not sufficiently well defined. The distinction between a probable and possible grave is somewhat subjective. No matter how careful the operator, even with lines only 25 cm apart, the machine may still miss small areas of ground. The machine cannot be used near electricity sources and cannot pick up a signal under large trees.

Records of burials are spread across numerous historical sources, and some sources may be missed, particularly if funds and time are limited, as in this case. Although most people believe that their family's burials have been entered into the BDM register, in actual fact, many are not. A note about the burial in a personal diary or letter may be the only written record in existence.

Oral histories can also be a flawed source of information, as people's memories are never perfect. The older the grave and the longer the story has been held in people's memories, the greater the likelihood of errors. One example was witnessed during the study when two young children were putting flowers on a grave they had been told belonged to a particular family member, when someone else informed them it was the wrong grave. Different families and relatives may have different recollections of when and where burials occurred, which needs to be resolved by the families.

It is acknowledged that the oral history research for this project has been quite narrow. Oral history recordings have taken place with a number of key senior people residing at Wallaga Lake village and elsewhere. However, there are likely

to be many other people, residing at Wallaga lake and elsewhere, who have relatives buried in the cemetery, who should be contacted for information. It is intended that this will occur in the next stage of the project.

The value of having the three sources of information is that they can be used to check the accuracy and validity of the records and also give a much more complete picture of who is buried where in the cemetery.

The steps taken in the study are shown in Figure 13. Community consultation and participation occurred at all steps.

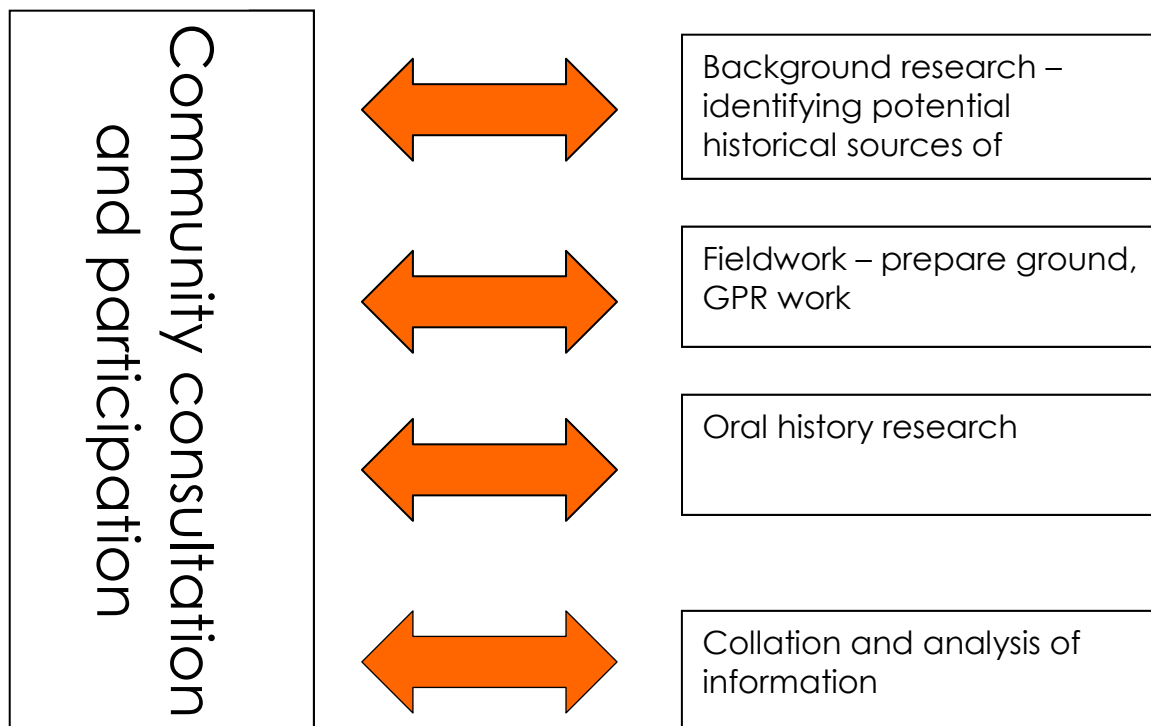


Figure 13: Stages of the project

Community consultation and participation

Initial community consultation

A meeting was held at Wallaga Lake village on 23 February 2011 to discuss approaches to recording the unmarked graves in the Wallaga lake cemetery as

part of the Connecting with Country project (Feary and Donaldson 2011). During the meeting it became clear that the project was large and complex and beyond the scope of the CWC study, because relatives of people buried in the cemetery lived all over NSW and Australia. It was also realised that lack of any written records or plans at the time made identification entirely reliant on people's memories and oral histories so that finding additional sources of information would be most desirable. The possibility of seeking funding to undertake GPR survey was raised briefly at the meeting and there was some interest in meeting with the Jerrinja LALC to discuss their experiences with GPR survey in their cemetery at Roseby Park (see Appendix 3 for minutes of this meeting).

Once ESC and Merrimans LALC advised that funds were available for a GPR survey, a further meeting was held at Wallaga Lake on 16 August 2011. The meeting discussed the GPR survey process in more detail and Dean Freeman gave a power point presentation on Brungle GPR and spoke of the community benefits.⁷ There was also some discussion with community members regarding the names of people to talk to regarding names and locations of people buried at the cemetery. It was agreed that some of the graves were associated with people who did not reside at Wallaga Lake and there should be advertising in the paper to raise awareness of the project and invite people to provide information (see Appendix 3 for minutes of this meeting).

The Merrimans LALC CEO asked the meeting for endorsement to proceed with the GPR survey. This was given and the meeting was advised that if acceptable to the community, the work could proceed on 5th September. The meeting agreed. It was also agreed that an email would be sent to all coastal LALCs, Wreck Bay and Cultural Heritage division of the Office of Environment and Heritage, and contact would be made with individuals not living at Wallaga Lake but known to have relatives buried there e.g. Lionel Mongta, Georgina Parsons. An advertisement/article would to be placed in the Koori Mail newspaper.

⁷ Dean Freeman was the NPWS Aboriginal sites officer based in Tumut.

Given the community's concern and interest in establishing who and who is not registered as being buried at the Wallaga Lake Cemetery and to gain an understanding of cemetery management during the early reserve years, the community endorsed the consultants and the Shire Council to access relevant information held by the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the NSW State Archives, for the purpose of the project (see Appendix 5).

As directed, the research team also met with senior community member Shirley Foster, to gain an initial understanding of who is buried at the cemetery [both marked and unmarked]. Shirley had prepared a preliminary list of known burials, which was used to initiate BDM searches and to guide oral history recordings.

Participatory fieldwork

On 5th September 2011, Wallaga Lake community members and several people from elsewhere on the south coast walked around the cemetery and were asked to name graves that did not have people's names on them (Figure 14). They were also asked to point out the location of where they believed people were buried, based on their memories. Some of these had no visible expression at all, whereas others had a depression or a small mound (see Figure 12). Depending on their particular needs, some people walked around on-site pointing to unmarked and marked unnamed burial locations, whilst others drew memory maps based on their recollections of where relatives were buried.



Figure 14: Community members identifying locations of unmarked and unnamed graves.

Susan Donaldson conducted oral history recordings, specifically about burial locations, with Shirley Foster, Ivan Thomas, Donna Campbell nee Thomas, Mick Darcy, Ernie Harrison, Maria Harrison nee Thomas, Eric Naylor and Loraine Naylor.

Each of these community participants, as well as those who participated in the days and weeks to follow, became an integral part of the research team, sharing memories about known burials, digging deep into childhood recollections when present at a kin's funeral, providing clear advice on management possibilities, and by giving general encouragement about the importance of the place and the people, the burials and the ancestors.

Dean Freeman was employed to assist the community with the clean up of the cemetery prior to survey. Mick Darcy was employed to assist the GPR team, clean up the grounds and participate in the identification of grave locations. Vikki Parsley was present as the Eurobodalla Shire Council's Aboriginal Project Officer and supported the team throughout the day.

The GPR survey began on the following day and oral history recordings continued, this time with Georgina Parsons, Loretta Parsley, Loraine Naylor, Eric Naylor, Lionel Mongta, Pam Flanders, Max Munroe, Harriett Walker, Margo Darcey and Eddie Foster.

Clive and Makita Freeman from Wreck Bay attended, as they will be undertaking a similar project at Wreck Bay. Also in attendance was Graham Moore from OEH.

Stephen Halicki and Wayne Hutton attended from ESC whilst Harry Bate of the Tilba District Cemetery Committee came to show support and offer cemetery management advice. Laurelle Pacey reported on the project for the Koori Mail newspaper, as requested (Appendix 1).

Feedback on progress report and preliminary analysis

Once the GPR report and map were received, the technical results needed to be interpreted so they could be conveyed to the community in a meaningful way. The huge task of matching notations and sketches done in the field with the results of the GPR survey was commenced and a large amount of analysis was undertaken.

A meeting was held at Wallaga Lake on 29th November 2011 to present the preliminary results of the analysis, including initial attempts to put names against unmarked graves, with the realisation that they were incomplete and needed validation by the community. Some additional information on the locations of family members in the cemetery was also obtained at this time. This session sought to gain further input from the Wallaga Lake community into the project, prior to meeting with the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Advisory Committee on 5th December 2011; it was about respect and protocol. Particular points raised by the community have been incorporated into the draft report. Generally speaking, advice from the community was clear; the project outcomes at this juncture are impressive and the need to complete the project is essential. In the words of one participant 'you have given us a wake up call, thanks'. For others, it was a shock to find out that the death and burial of their loved ones seem to not be registered at all.

Background Research

1. The first step was to find out whether the LALC files contained any information on the cemetery, and a day was spent searching through all the boxes of reports and filing cabinets in the office, but nothing was found. It is possible that any records of the cemetery were lost in a 1951 fire in which the office with all its records was burnt down. The first written evidence of names of people buried in the cemetery came from Shirley Foster. Shirley had spoken with community members to find information about people buried at the cemetery, to go on a commemorative wall as part of a Corrective Services project. Shirley compiled a list of names, although they were mostly surnames rather than identifying individuals.
2. The Moruya and District Historical Society have published an index of deaths in the Eurobodalla Shire from 1906-1945 and 1856-1905. The index was compiled from the list of deaths registered at the Moruya Courthouse for the Broulee and Moruya districts. The list includes burials in the 26 cemeteries in the LGA and also 66 lone burial sites. Wallaga Lake Aboriginal cemetery is included in the list as well as a lone burial at Wallaga Lake. The list is done in alphabetical order with surname first and burial places, as well as other details. This had the names of about 24 people buried in the Wallaga lake Aboriginal cemetery, mainly from the early 1900s (Clyde River, Batemans Bay and Moruya & District Historical Societies 1999;2001).
3. Many other historical sources were looked at, including DAWN and NEW DAWN magazines, South Coast Voices Collection, Sue Wesson's PhD thesis, the Biamanga-Gulaga report, Susan Donaldson's oral history recordings from the Eurobodalla Shire and Bega Valley Shire Council Heritage Studies and the Coastal Custodians newsletter series. Slowly, a list of people buried at the cemetery was put together. With the permission of the community, information was sought from the Aborigines Protection Board records. The NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs' Family Records Unit has recently

advised that the Aboriginal Welfare Board records do not contain any references to the names of people buried at Wallaga lake cemetery (see Appendix 5).

4. Once we had these names, we got permission from Merrimans LALC to approach the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages to obtain more details about registered burials and also to find out if names we had listed from oral history sources were registered for the Wallaga Lake cemetery. This process of checking names from oral history against written records has continued throughout the project and is very time consuming and difficult.
5. An initial table was compiled showing the status of all burials identified through historical research and oral history (Appendix 6).

Fieldwork

Prior to the GPR fieldwork, the ground was cleared of all obstacles and the grass was mowed very low. This was necessary because the machines need very clear, even ground with no holes or obstacles.

The fieldwork was done in conjunction with the bulk of the oral history research (see Section on Participatory Fieldwork).

All locations identified by oral history were marked with a stick with pink flagging tape around it. By the end of the first day it was obvious that the cemetery contained many unmarked graves clustered together in family groups. It was also clear that sections of the cemetery appeared to have no burials at all. For each grave, a photo was taken, a sketch was made and oral history was recorded.

Prior to commencing the GPR survey, all marked graves, unmarked graves and possible graves based on oral history were plotted onto a map using surveying

equipment. The sticks then had to be removed to allow the GPR machine to travel across the ground.

On 6th September 2011, because of the large size of the area, and the difficulty of getting into confined areas between graves, two GPR survey machines were used. One was the more familiar cart, which looks like a large lawn mower and is pushed along a marked grid of lines at 25 cm apart. This is very slow, so fortunately, we had access to another, more highly technical machine that could cover larger areas more quickly, pulled along behind a car. Figure 15 shows the handheld and vehicle based GPR machines used at Wallaga lake cemetery.



Figure 15: GPR machines used at cemetery

The two GPR machines covered a 50-metre by 90-metre area within the fenced area of the cemetery. The towed machine could not be used in some places due to interference from the power lines and the southern end could not be surveyed because of forest cover, or where marked graves were too close together to get between them. The machines went to a depth of 1.7 metres. By law the top of coffins must be 1.2 metres below the ground, so the GPR should have picked up all burials. Figure 16 shows the areas covered by the two machines.

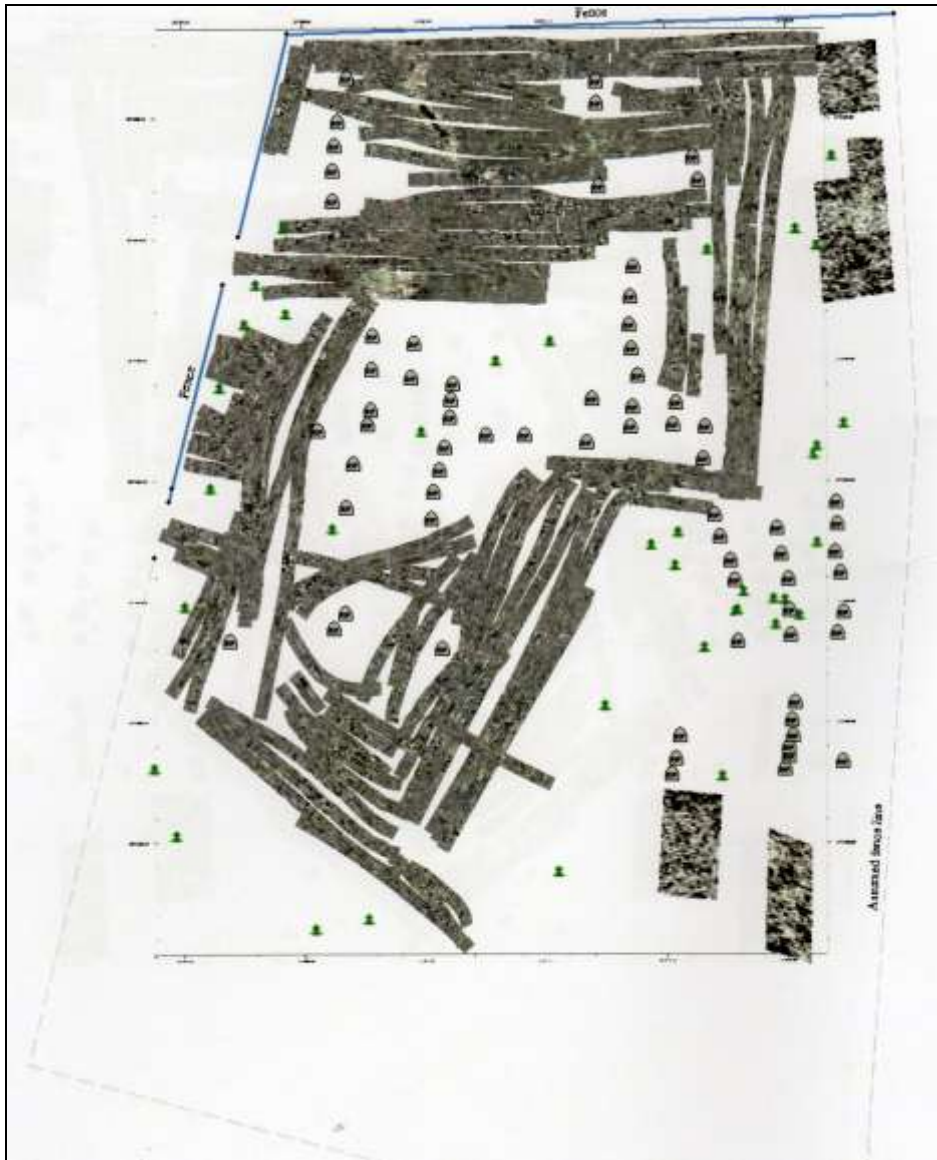


Figure 16: GPR coverage

The cart coverage included an area along the southern fence line, thought by some community members to be the grave site of Queen Narelle (based on historical photos of her funeral, see (Figures 5 and 6).

The GPR survey included a topographic survey and production of a map showing the location of the fences, major vegetation and all 'marked' graves, that is, graves with obvious surface features.

SECTION THREE: Results

This section presents the outcomes from the collection and analysis of the vast amount of information from GPR, historical records and oral history research.

What does the GPR map tell us?

Figure 17 is an aerial photograph of Cemetery Point, overlain by the boundaries of the cemetery and the results of the GPR and topographic surveys. Considerably more vegetation has been cleared since the aerial photo was taken. North is upward and the village is to the left of the picture. The black dots are marked graves and it can be clearly seen that they are grouped into family plots. The yellow and black shapes are possible and probable graves detected by the GPR machines. These also seem to show distinct groupings.



Figure 17: Results of GPR imposed on aerial photo of cemetery

The map drawn up from the GPR signals and the topographic survey shows 192 'features'. These are made up of 'marked', 'probable' and 'possible graves', as well as locations identified by oral history with no GPR signal. Major trees and the fence lines are also plotted on the map (Figure 18).⁸

The symbols shown on the map are as follows:-



Tree



Marked grave – physical feature on surface



Possible unmarked grave – pit-like feature, may be a grave



Probable unmarked grave – most probably a grave (includes graves where there has been a match between oral history and GPR)



Disturbed ground – probably not graves, cause unknown

- Unconfirmed grave – location identified by oral history but not confirmed by GPR.

The box below shows the breakdown of the 'types' of graves as identified by GPR survey.

70	Marked graves [a physical feature on the surface]
55	Probable unmarked graves, including those cross-referenced with oral sources
41	Possible unmarked graves, including those cross-referenced with oral sources
<u>26</u>	Unconfirmed [identified through oral sources, but no GPR signal]
192	TOTAL

The GPR shows up a possible and a probable grave in the vicinity of where some community members believe Queen Narelle to be buried near the southern boundary.

⁸ Larger copies of this map are available as separate documents

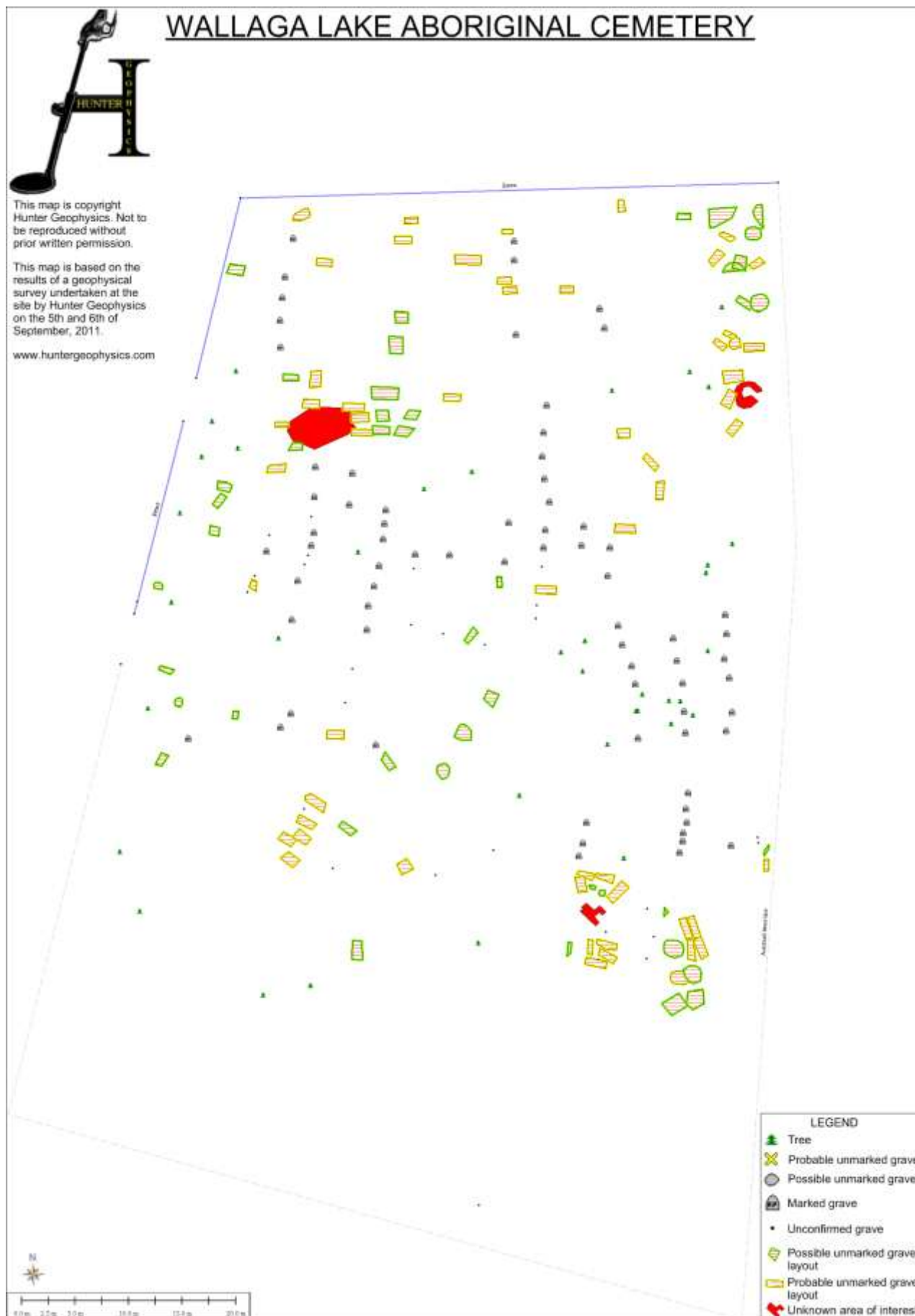


Figure 18: Map of graves identified through GPR and topographic survey.

The map also shows up three major areas of subsurface disturbance (in red on the map) that may or may not be associated with burials; the GPR readings were not clear enough to be sure. However, they all occur close to areas of possible or probably graves.

The recent repatriation of skeletal remains near the entrance appears to have been detected by GPR, and there is some GPR evidence for possible burials close to the previous fence line along the western boundary. These may represent the 'bags of human bones' buried along the fence line as documented in the oral history research.

What does the historical written record tell us?

The historical records researched so far have identified the names of 47 Aboriginal people buried at the Wallaga Lake cemetery.

The historical records associated with the Wallaga Lake Cemetery are few. A fire in 1951 apparently destroyed many important records. Some records may exist in the NSW State Archives, but at this stage we have not been able to access them. The Moruya Historical Society has collated Moruya court records for the periods 1856-1905 and 1906 – 1945. This index shows very few burial records specific to Wallaga Lake between 1906-1945; a period covered partially by this oral history research.

Another historical record to support this research project has been the DAWN and NEW DAWN series. A number of Wallaga Lake deaths and burials were noted in these publications.

What does oral history tell us?

Oral history research conducted for this project has so far identified the names and locations of 93 people buried in the Wallaga Lake cemetery. Oral history

complements other records and provides locational details, otherwise unknown. Oral history research is often the only way to match names to unmarked graves identified in the GPR and to identify marked graves with no names. Oral history also identified many names not found in the historical records.

Not unexpectedly, there are three grouped instances where the oral histories of different people have given differing opinions of the order of burials, e.g. five named people are present in a particular row, but their order in the row differs. This issue is unresolved at this stage and needs to be addressed through further community input.

Figure 19 is the result of a long and difficult process of matching names from oral history and historical sources to the graves identified by the GPR survey and the marked graves. This map is incomplete as there are still many graves with no names against them.⁹ As can be seen from the map, there are distinct groups of graves with no names against them.

Checking information with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Given the lack of primary historical documentation, checking the names of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake Cemetery with the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM), has been a very important step in the investigation. With permission from the community and with the cooperation from NSW BDM, we have been able to verify extensive name lists through this process.

⁹ Copies of this map are available as separate documents

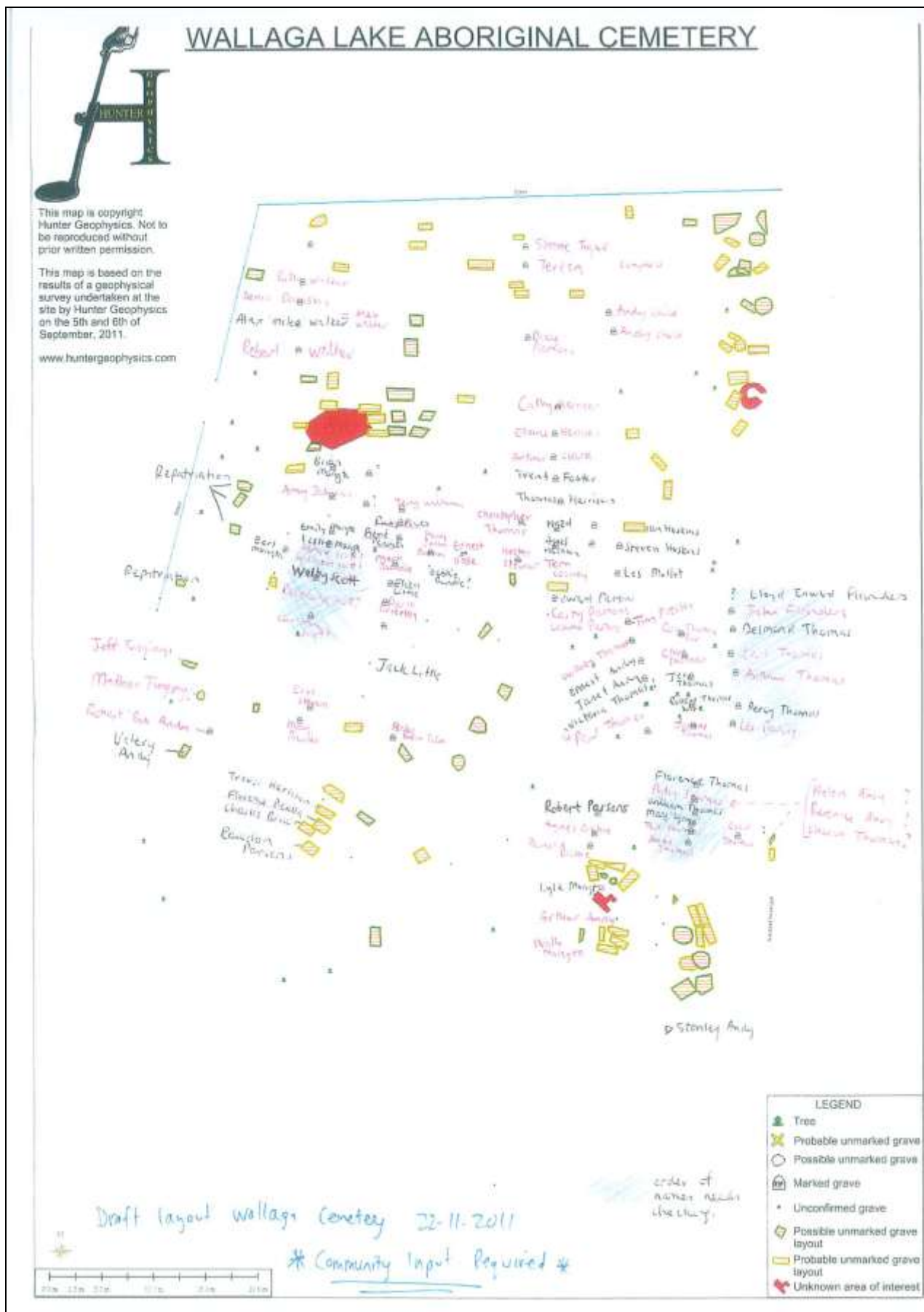


Figure 19: Preliminary oral history map, matched with GPR results

The Registrar is unable to search by place i.e. 'Wallaga Lake' and can only search by names provided to them [see community endorsement in Appendix 5]. By cross-referencing historical records, oral history research and existing marked named graves with the BDM records, we were able to clarify several key points:

- The registration of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake.
- The lack of registration of people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake.
- The burial details of people with the same name
- The burial details of people with more than one name
- The location of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake, but registered elsewhere.

For the purposes of this investigation, the BDM registration search process is incomplete because many burials are unregistered. Furthermore, the Registrar does not hold information relating to the position of a grave in a cemetery as this is usually done by the cemetery manager/owner. At this stage these details are only available through oral history recording and by mapping the positions of marked and named graves.

Regardless of these obstacles, the BDM records search of 207 names of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake from historical records and oral history research has revealed:

- 91/207 burials are registered at the Wallaga Lake Cemetery. The location of 38 of these has been confirmed (black on map at Figure 19).
- 96/207 burials are not registered anywhere, but known to be at Wallaga Lake. The location of 55 of these has been determined (red on map at Figure 19).
- 19/207 burials thought to be at Wallaga Lake, have been confirmed as being registered elsewhere.

The community were largely unaware of the high proportion of unregistered burials, although many of these have marked graves. The community assumed the funeral director was registering the deaths and visa versa. Some members of the community wish to retrospectively register the deaths of family members and have requested this project identify the relevant processes required to do this.

A table has been created as a way to sort and understand the different categories of burials associated with the project [see Appendix 6]. For the purposes of this draft report, which is to be broadly distributed, personal / private information has been removed from the table, as instructed. These details are available for family members, as requested.

Limitations of the information sources

GPR – technology is complex and highly scientific, requiring a high degree of expertise in using the machines and interpreting the data. The towed machine is excellent for large open areas, but cannot go under vegetation or under power lines as they interfere with the signal. The results can never be exact because of the nature of the signal and a reliance on the experience and skill of the operator to interpret the graphs and determine whether or not the feature is a grave, or some other form of soil disturbance.

ORAL – can be inaccurate due to memory failure over time, and can be unreliable in relation to exact names and exact locations of graves. Information can be unreliable if it is second-hand, that is, passed on from someone else, rather than based on eyewitness accounts of a burial.

HISTORICAL – invariably incomplete, as it relies on the burials having been recorded and/or registered. Historical records can be difficult to find and access to some records is restricted.

Analysis and discussion

This project came about because the Merrimans LALC had no records of who was buried in the cemetery, and no maps to show the locations of graves. The Wallaga Lake community identified a need to know more about the cemetery as a way to respect ancestors and undertake future burials in a more careful manner. It was fortunate that both ESC and Merrimans LALC were in a position to be able to fund the project to the extent that it could include the GPR survey, detailed searches of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and oral history research.

The project has produced a GPR map showing the location of possible, probable and marked burials, which together add up to 166 graves.¹⁰ The map is very important for showing where not to dig a new grave or where not to drive. In order to be very accurate, there is a set of four grid coordinates for each grave, which can be put into a GPS to be certain that an old grave is not being disturbed.

The project has also used historical records and oral history to show that 207 people are likely to be buried in the cemetery. Of the identified **207** burials, **91** are registered with BDM as being buried at Wallaga Lake; **96** are not registered at all and; **19** are registered elsewhere.

Thus at this stage we have a total of **187** people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake. 91 or **48.6%** of the known burials are registered with BDM and of these, 38 are known and marked and/or named. 96 or **51.3 %** of known burials are not registered with BDM and 55 are known and marked and/or named.

Combining GPR survey results, the number of marked graves and oral history we now know the name and location of **107** burials at Wallaga Lake [both registered and not registered]. Of these only **67** are marked graves [not all with names], **12**

¹⁰ Excludes the 26 'unconfirmed' points on the GPR map

are unmarked and confirmed through GPR survey whilst **14** are based on oral history without any other evidence.

Of the **12** GPR burial sites matching oral history, 8 of these have been confirmed by BDM with 4 still unconfirmed at this stage. There are still **85** 'unknown graves' with no matching records. This includes three distinct groups as shown on the map at Figure 19; the northeast and southeast corners and associated with the 'disturbed area' towards the northwestern corner.

In summary, the oral history research has identified the location of 38 registered and 55 non-registered [total 93] burials at Wallaga Lake. These previously unnamed and unmarked burials can now be considered named and marked. Of the 93 burials, 70 are marked on the ground; most without names and 12 are unmarked but confirmed through the GPR survey. There are a further 14 names located through oral history, but not confirmed with GPR.

The investigation has also revealed that there are 53 people registered as being buried at Wallaga Lake, for which we do not have a burial location, that is, they are not known to any of the people interviewed thus far. There is a further 41 people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake, but not registered, for which we do not have a burial location. In total there are 94 people buried at Wallaga Lake, with no known burial location. Interestingly, there are 85 gravesites located by the GPR survey, for which we do not have a name to match the location, which suggests there may be an eventual match between the two sets of information.

This project has used ground-penetrating radar, orally held knowledge and historical research to produce records of who is buried in the cemetery and where he/she is buried. Although incomplete, as there are still unnamed graves in the cemetery, it is an important first step in generating reliable cemetery records for future use. The project has demonstrated that each of the three sources of information have their limitations in terms of reliability. Together they have been an

immensely powerful tool for understanding the history of the cemetery. However, there are still 85 graves for which there are no written records and there is clearly more work to be done.

The project has shown a very low level of registration of burials in the cemetery, almost up to the present day. Non-registration of deaths is not uncommon among both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community but is still of some concern. Under section 41 of the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 1995* all deaths that occur in NSW must be registered within seven days of the burial or cremation. It is common practice for a funeral director to complete the death registration process. However, it is also possible for a next of kin or relative of the deceased to register the death. The reasons for the low level of registration are unknown at this stage, but it could be because family members were assuming that the funeral director was doing the paper work, and vice versa, hence nothing was submitted to the registry. A death certificate cannot be issued until a death has been registered.

Although the project has been intensely personal and challenging for many Aboriginal people, the community has lent its support and cooperation, to the extent of ensuring that the cemetery was cleaned up before the fieldwork, attending meetings and providing advice on people to talk to. The community have needed this project for many years, but given the obstacles, including lack of resources and know-how, have not approached it.

Each of these community participants became an integral part of the research team, sharing memories about known burials, digging deep into childhood recollections when present at a kin's funeral, providing clear advice on management possibilities, and by giving general encouragement about the importance of the place and the people, the burials and the ancestors; the project. Through out this investigation, the community has led us, supported us and offered protocol advice to ensure a stable and sustainable outcome.

The project has generated a greater sense of wanting to look after the cemetery, looking after the ancestors on an ongoing basis and shown the benefits of having information that will ensure old graves are not disturbed. During the project period, albeit brief, we have observed community based acts associated with grave identification, maintenance and information sharing, all important for the on going care and custodianship of the cultural heritage values. This project has enabled the community to overcome a number of difficult obstacles, paving the way for effective cemetery management in the future.

SECTION FOUR: The future

Reviewing project aims

By reviewing project aims, it is possible to identify what still needs to be done in order to ensure ongoing respect for those buried in the Wallaga Lake Cemetery.

AIM 1

To determine as completely and accurately as possible, the locations and names of all Aboriginal people buried in the cemetery at Wallaga lake.

The locations of 166 graves/possible graves have been identified. By using the map generated by the GPR work, it is possible to avoid existing graves when digging new graves and to avoid driving over or disturbing in any way, all existing graves.

This project has determined the burial location of 79 people either registered or known to be buried but not registered in the cemetery. However, there are entire sections of the cemetery containing possible and probable graves for which there are no associated names. The investigation has revealed that there are 53 people registered as being buried at Wallaga Lake, for which we do not have a burial location. There are a further 41 people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake, but not registered, for which we do not have a burial location. In total there are 94 people buried at Wallaga Lake, with no known burial location. Interestingly, there are 85 gravesites located by the GPR survey, for which we do not have a name to match the location.

There are also a number of locations of burials from oral sources for which there is no physical evidence or GPR evidence for graves. There are also unexplained areas of subsurface disturbance. Currently the match between names and graves is not high and there are a large number of unregistered deaths in the cemetery. The limited nature of the consultation may be responsible for the low level of correlation, because the appropriate people have not yet been consulted.

There are also areas outside the cemetery requiring GPR work to confirm the presence of graves, including an area to the north of the current cemetery, to be extended for future plots. It is not known whether or not this area contains historical gravesites.

AIM 2

To prepare written records and maps, together with electronic records, for use by the Merrimans LALC.

A table has been prepared which contains the names of people identified from all sources (Appendix 6). The table has been provided to the community in electronic and hard copy formats. Details associated with each burial include the individual's family name, maiden name, first name, plot location and marking if known, date of birth and death, next of kin and reference sources.

A primary concern for the community was to determine which Wallaga Lake burials were registered with the NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages and which ones were not. Accordingly, all the burials registered with BDM as being located at Wallaga Lake Cemetery appear in alphabetical order in the first part of the table. The second part of the table contains the names of people thought to be buried at Wallaga Lake, but not registered as such. The table also contains information about other burials within cemetery [eg repatriations] and burials outside the main cemetery [eg Queen Narrell].

A map of the locations of all features as identified by the GPR survey has been provided in electronic and hard copy format. Although grid coordinates for each grave are available, at this stage the information is yet to be incorporated into the table. Furthermore, it is proposed that information about individual graves will be compiled into individual reports, to make the information accessible for family members.

AIM 3

To consult with Aboriginal people regarding how they would like their ancestors in the cemetery to be recognised, protected and cared for.

Consultations have taken place with members of the Wallaga Lake community and others, which enabled the project to occur. The consultation process has provided a good understanding of community aspirations for recognition, protection and care of the Wallaga Lake cemetery.

Discussions were had with a number of people about how they would like to see their ancestors graves identified [marked] on the ground. While there is a collective desire for the cemetery to be properly managed on an ongoing basis; mowing fencing, tree lopping etc, the care and maintenance of individual graves is seen as a family responsibility; some people want shell to mark a burial, others a cross, others an engraved headstone.

To date, consultation has been quite limited, being confined mostly to the Wallaga Lake community members and a few other Aboriginal people known to have ancestors buried in the cemetery.

AIM 4

To prepare guidelines for the continued management by the community of the grounds within the cemetery

To date the project has developed a proposed framework and some preliminary guidelines for the continued management of the grounds within the cemetery [see Appendix 4]. Although these matters have been discussed, a comprehensive management plan has not been developed. The community were discussing the idea of establishing a community based management committee to address

cemetery related matters as they arise. Any new management guidelines should ensure that a sound and effective consultation process is in place.

AIM 5

To recommend any additional future work

This important community project has gone as far as is possible with the current funding and time frame. However there is still a considerable amount of research to be done to gain a more complete picture of the cemetery and also to ensure its long term maintenance and protection (see next section).

Unfinished business: Where to next?

Although Stage 1 of the project has achieved a great deal, primarily the development of a preliminary database and map of burials at Wallaga Lake cemetery, to date known, unmarked graves have not been marked on the ground, and a process for ongoing marking and grave recording has not been developed. Also, a clear understanding of how the information concerning graves in the cemetery should be stored, updated, distributed and generally managed has not been achieved. Although these matters have been discussed, nothing has been finalised.

Key recommendations presented below have been separated into immediate and long-term actions, based on their priority. Not all requiring additional funding.

Immediate High Priority Actions: What needs to be done now?

Following the establishment of a local community cemetery committee, a number of actions need to be addressed immediately:

- Mark known unmarked graves according to the wishes of descendants.
- Mark unmarked unknown graves according to community aspirations, with guidance of GPR map [Figure 15]¹¹.
- Determine areas to be available for new plots.
- New graves should not be dug without considering the location of gravesites [all should be marked]. Any digging in the area should involve a sites monitor.
- Determine vehicle access route in cemetery to avoid gravesites. Define route with low shrubs during revegetation project.
- Community members should take advantage of opportunities to ask elders visiting Wallaga Lake, about their knowledge of the cemetery, in particular the location of any unmarked graves and the identification of marked unknown graves. Any information should be marked directly on the ground at the time of yarning and noted on the map and database.
- Maintain the grounds, including mowing the lawns on a regular basis.

The actions listed above do not require additional funding, however they do require community participation and some government agency support.

Long Term High Priority Actions: What next?

There are five key areas requiring attention in the long term:

1/ There are still graves requiring identification and or clarification in regard to the names of people buried there.

¹¹ There are 94 unmarked graves requiring marking. The names of some of these are known, others, particularly in the north eastern corner of the cemetery, are unknown.

In order to complete the process of matching names to grave locations, the following process is recommended:

- Seek information about the cemetery from the broader Aboriginal community through expressions of interest or advertisement in Aboriginal and local newspapers.
- Undertake targeted consultation [oral history research] in the broader Aboriginal community.
- As an ongoing task, community members should take advantage of opportunities to ask elders visiting Wallaga Lake, about their knowledge of the cemetery, in particular the location of any unmarked graves and the identification of marked unnamed graves. Any information should be marked directly on the ground at the time of yarning and noted on the map and database.
- The preliminary data base developed in Stage 1 of the project contains 13 names to be checked with NSW BDM and 91 names of people whose deaths are not registered in NSW but could be registered in another state, there is a need to update the preliminary database by continuing searches with the NSW Births, Deaths and Marriage and by initiating similar searches in other states and territories.
- Investigate the Aboriginal Protection Board records and other historical sources as required.
- Give clarity to the draft map detailing named graves (Figure 19), possibly through the use of typed name labels.

2/ The project has produced and collated a mass of information that needs to be adequately stored and kept up to date.

- Build the capacity within the community to understand the value of the written records, both the maps and lists of names, as a tool for the ongoing

management and use of the cemetery. A workshop has been suggested by the community for determine how the information should be stored, maintained, and distributed. A data management training component may be included in the workshop.

- Establish a community-based system for the ongoing management of the information about the cemetery; including access protocols, file [electronic and paper] storage and updating/auditing of information as required. This process could be supported by local experts in the field such as members of the Tilba historical cemetery committee and Shire Council staff.
- Discuss the means by which the information generated by this project can be duplicated and stored at another safe location to ensure their safe keeping [off site].

3/ Stage 1 of the project has identified areas beyond the current cemetery fence line, thought to contain burials.

- Determine the locations of graves outside the cemetery towards the boat shed using GPR, prior to extending the cemetery in that area.
- Undertake further GPR survey work and consultations with community members, in relation to Queen Narrell's burial site.

4/ A management plan is required for the ongoing care and use of the cemetery grounds.

- The community based cemetery committee should oversee the development and endorsement of plan and for the ongoing management of the cemetery.
- Use the framework and guidelines [Appendix 4] as a basis for developing a management plan for the cemetery.
- A key area requiring family / community input is determining the process for the ongoing marking of new graves. A community engraving and cross making workshop has been suggested as a way to produce a supply of

grave markers according to family needs. A readily available supply of local rocks has also been suggested, to be used as interim or permanent grave markers.

5/ Registration of unregistered deaths with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The reason for the high number unregistered deaths requires further investigation and retrospective registration if possible. More than half of the people buried at Wallaga Lake have not had their deaths registered with the State.

- As part of ongoing research and community consultation, investigate the apparent low levels of registration with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
- Registration of past deaths can be done by contacting BDM. The Registry's Call Centre is open Monday to Friday (9.00am to 5.00pm). Tel: 1300 655 236. TTY: (02) 9354 1371 (for the hearing impaired). Regardless of where you are calling from in Australia, you will only be charged a local call. To register a past death / burial, evidence of the death must be provided, for instance, a funeral notice or an official date of death [from a doctor / hospital] [pers. comm. Les Gould NSW BDM]. Funerals undertaken during the past 10 years are listed on the local funeral directors database [pers. comm. John Wyman Bega Funerals], which may provide evidence for the registration process.
- It is recommended that, at the time of funerals, families should double check with funeral director exactly who is responsible for completing and lodging the death registration paperwork. It is a legal requirement to register deaths with the relevant state or territory.

Each of the five identified long-term high priority actions require additional funding, along with community participation and interagency support.

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- Yelf R 2004 Ground Penetrating Radar survey at Roseby park cemetery, Jerrinja Tribal Burial ground, Orient Point, NSW. Report to NPWS.

Wallaga Lake cemetery checks start

Story and photos by
LAURELLE PACEY



DETAILS about who is buried where in the cemetery at Wallaga Lake Koori Village on NSW's far south coast have largely been lost over time, so the community has called in the experts.

"It's all about respect," says Merimans Local Aboriginal Land Council CEO Anne Greenaway.

"The community wanted to be sure where past burials were so we don't try to bury someone else in the same place, and there is also concern people may be driving over graves even though they're not obvious."

"We think any cemetery records were lost when the village's administration building burnt down in the 1952 bushfire."

Merimans, through Eurobodalla Shire Council (ESC), commissioned archaeologist Sue Feary and anthropologist Susan Donaldson to help them. They brought in archaeological geophysicist David Hunter, of Hunter Geophysics. He organised the company MALA GPR to provide and operate sophisticated ground penetrating radar (GPR) machines.

"Wallaga Cemetery is a private cemetery, being on land council land, and officially probably dates back to when the land was first set aside as an Aboriginal Reserve in 1881," Ms Feary said.

"Many graves are unmarked and on the surface many are difficult to even identify as graves."

The project has several steps:

"First we've been trying to piece together who might be buried here using names given to us by the community and cross checking these with the official records in Births, Deaths and Marriages," Ms Donaldson said.

"So far we believe up to 100 people may be buried here. Other people around Australia may have more names, and we would love to hear from them."

Then work shifted to the cemetery itself.

"First the community cleared sticks and rubbish from the site to give the sophisticated ground penetrating radar machines clear access," Ms Feary said.



On site at Wallaga Lake ... Shane Patten of Wallaga Lake, ESC Aboriginal communities project officer Vikki Parsley and her daughter Nyraru Freeman, archaeologist Sue Feary, David Hunter of Hunter Geophysics, Mick Darcey of Wallaga Lake, Harry Bate of Tilba Tilba, Aunty Coupe Parsons, her niece Loretta Parsley, and anthropologist Susan Donaldson. MALA's GPR machine shown here was used in confined spaces.



This towed GPR machine was the main one used for mapping ground disturbance in Wallaga Cemetery which will be used by geophysicists to locate past burials.

"Then we walked through with community members to record where they thought various people were buried and fix those precisely with GPS. Including what we think may be Queen Narelie's site."

She was Merimans' wife and her burial was well documented by local photographer William Corkhill.

The next day, the geophysicists went over the site running their machines across the surface to detect past soil disturbance to a

depth of up to four metres.

Mr Hunter is now analysing the data collected from the GPR and will report back at the end of the month with a map of burial plots.

Information

"We will then take David's report and try to match it with information we have from the community," Ms Feary said.

Similar studies have been done in other cemeteries in NSW, including the cemetery at the Brungle Aboriginal Reserve near Tumut.

The Wallaga Lake cemetery project is part of a much larger Aboriginal heritage project sponsored by ESC which started in 2004 and is funded by grants from the Federal and NSW governments and from Merimans council.

Once the names have been collected and verified as much as is possible, the names will be put on a memorial wall to be constructed at the cemetery with funding from NSW Corrective Services.

Appendix 2: suggested grave recording form template

GRAVE RECORDING FORM: WALLAGA LAKE CEMETERY	
GRAVE ID No:	DATE RECORDED
Registered with NSW Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages: Y/N	
ID METHOD: [Tick 1 or more]	
GPR-----	
WRITTEN-----	
ORAL -----	
GRAVE LOCATION:	
GDA:	
Easting:..... Northing:.....	
NAME OF PERSON BURIED: -----	
Information source:	
[Tick 1 or more]	
ORAL-----	
WRITTEN-----	
LIVING RELATIVES:-----	
[names and contact details]	
GRAVE DESCRIPTION:	
INSCRIPTION:-----	
PHYSICAL FEATURES:-----	
DIMENSIONS:-----	
CONDITION:-----	
REFERENCES:	
ORAL: [INSERT ORAL HISTORY INFORMATION]	
WRITTEN [INSERT ARCHIVAL SOURCES]	
PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE FOR LOOKING AFTER GRAVE : -----	
Insert map and photos	

Appendix 3: Minutes of community meetings

Minutes of meeting #1 held 23.2.2011 at Wallaga Lake

Attendees: Max Munroe, Lionel Mongta, Eric Naylor, Loraine Naylor, Alma Campbell nee Andy, Nicole Andy, Anne Greenaway, Harold Harrison, Susan Donaldson and Sue Feary.

Meeting commenced 11.45 am.

SDD gave background to the project - Heritage Study, oral history, concerns about locations of unmarked graves in the cemetery. Acknowledge that it is a sensitive issue; we are here to listen to ideas about how to better manage the cemetery and find the locations of unmarked graves. Asked Anne to outline current projects associated with the cemetery.

AG: two projects started in 2008:

1. Cleaning up the cemetery, oral histories are being done by Shirley Foster to find out who and where people are buried.
2. Probationary and Parole (Dept Corrective Services), have offered to build a memorial sandstone wall, with a plaque for each individual buried in the cemetery.

LALC seems to have no records of burials and can't easily access the information from other sources.

Lionel talked about his family's role as undertakers at the cemetery. He also congratulated the LALC on their initiative in getting this work done. He suggested going to various churches – Church of England, Catholic, United (Ossie Cruse) and provided names of previous ministers of the church and pastors.

SDD asked for people's ideas about the cemetery.

There is no longer a CDEP, program which is a reason why cemetery is not being looked after. Harold Harrison's fathers and grandparents graves are there.

Lionel – has the death certificates for all his family. Protection Board records, Central Tilba cemetery? No maps of where people have been buried or of the location of the original cemetery. There are burials outside the current cemetery, in the gully, in 1930s, up past the pine trees.

Discussion about Ted Thomas being given (or collected) 20 bags of human bones which were very smelly and got scavenged by dogs/ 1980s?? Eric says he saw bullet holes in some skulls in the bags. Apparently some came from Mystery Bay, associated with the drowning of people coming back from Montague Island.[there is a discrepancy in dates with this information] A big long trench was dug in the present cemetery and the bones were put in it.

Location of Queen Narelle's grave unknown to people, but possible to work it out from the photograph. Uncertainty about whether Merriman is buried in the cemetery. Funding needed for ongoing maintenance, after the initial clean up.

One way of finding who is buried is to put a notice in the newspaper, asking for information. SDD pointed out that some outside people would want to see the graves and this would need to be managed.

Sue Feary talked about the possibility of using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to try and find the location of unmarked graves in the cemetery. This would not say who was buried; this would rely on oral history. The Jerrinja LALC has had GPR work done in their cemetery and there was discussion about the Wallaga lake community visiting the Jerrinja cemetery and discussing potential use of GPR.

Actions

1. Develop a list of known burials as a basis for further research and consultations
2. Draft project plan for research and management of the cemetery
3. SDD obtain and distribute DVD of 'Black Mans Houses' documentary - GPR work done at Wybalena cemetery on Flinders Island, Bass Strait, Tasmania for community consultation / educational purposes.

Minutes of community meeting #2 held 16.8.2011 Wallaga Lake Hall

Community participants: Loraine Naylor, Yuin Kelly, Andrew Williams, Maxine Kelly, Tracey Foster, Marlene Dunn, Amanda Tighe, Geraldine Thomas, Mervyn Penrith, Kerry Parsons, Robert Ahoy, Max Munroe, Alison Walker and Stephen Kelly.

Facilitators / presenters: Anne Greenaway [LALC CEO], Vikki Parsley [ESC Aboriginal Project Officer], Sue Feary [Consultant archaeologist], Dean Freeman [Heritage consultant] and Susan Donaldson [consultant anthropologist].

Introduction: Vikki: overview / background of project including research undertaken during the Eurobodalla Aboriginal Heritage Study > Connecting with Country project > funds to improve Wallaga Lake Cemetery.

GPR proposal: Sue F: described Ground Penetrating Radar [GPR] machine works and how it could be used to locate unmarked graves in the Wallaga Cemetery. No digging is required, however the ground would have to be free from rocks and sticks etc.

Presentation: Dean: Wiradjuri Brungle Aboriginal Cemetery presentation detailing community experiences identifying and managing graves in Tumut, NSW. Through fear of disrespecting / digging up ancestral remains the Wiradjuri embarked on a nine-year process of identifying and maintaining gravesites at the Brungle Cemetery. Their aim was to continue to use the cemetery in a manner that respected the existing graves. The process involved:

- Historical research in relation to the site was undertaken by the local historical society.
- Further information collected from community members living in the area. Family groups no longer living in the area were informed via family networks [not public advertisement].
- Prepare area for GPR work [ground needed to be free from rocks and sticks, with very short grass. A community working day was held to get the job done.

- GPR work undertaken with involvement from the community. This process does not involve digging. It is like an x-ray and produces a map of fuzzy patches indicating potential gravesites.
- Remains were repatriated to the site.
- Unmarked graves were boxed and a cross [with a name if known] placed on the site.
- As a precaution, when new plots are dug, an Aboriginal person is present in case remains are exposed.
- As hundreds of people attend funerals, the car parking area was improved.
- The cemetery is gazetted and the local council receive money to maintain it. However, through partnership development, the local CMA koori work crew are now involved in the regular maintenance of the cemetery, once a job undertaken by council.
- Positive feedback was given to the local community in regards to the good maintenance of the cemetery, particularly during funerals when people who have left the area return.

Dean was thanked for sharing his story and he offered to assist the community to clean up the site.

Community Consultations

Susan asked the group how they wished to inform the broad community about the project. Through family networks or broader advertising such as in the koori mail. Susan and Sue indicated that they are willing to be available as telephone contacts during the project period, but what about the long term? The LALC will discuss this at their next meeting.

Susan asked for direction concerning who should be interviewed [oral history] about their knowledge of the cemetery in order to locate more graves. The following names were raised: Merv Penrith, Ivan Thomas, Harriett Walker, Pam Flanders, Elaine Thomas, Kevin Parsons, Terry Fox [in relation to the burial of a non koori boy], Harold Harrison, Lyn Thomas, Dicko Thomas, Georgina Parsons, Lionel Mongta, members of the Brierly, Carriage, Stewart and Nye families and others.

Access Research Materials

Susan requested permission to access 1/ closed AWB records held at the NSW State Archives and 2/ burials at Wallaga Lake registered with the NSW Dept of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the purpose of developing a comprehensive list of people buried at Wallaga Lake. Finding a historical map is also a priority. The LALC will need to endorse this investigation. LALC to discuss at next meeting.

GPR – Yes Or No?

Given the funds are available now for GPR at Wallaga and the machine is available 5, 6, and 7th Sept, the community agreed to go ahead with the work.

A working bee will be required to clean up the area prior to the 5th September.

Vikki indicated that she could drive anyone with relatives buried at the cemetery to the community on the day.

Sue noted that work with the GPR operator is available for three days, 5th, 6th, and 7th September. Could be one person or part time work for a few people. LALC to discuss at next meeting.

Marking Grave Sites Once Located

Whilst the GPR work is being undertaken, potential gravesites will need to be marked. Does the community wish to make some temporary crosses? Some people disagreed with the use of crosses, some suggested rocks. It was agreed that people can determine their own marker, but during the work in September, Sue F will bring along standard pegs.

More permanent markers will be required for the long term, such as stone, ceramic. Possible community project.

Locating Queen Narrell's Grave

Images of Queen Narrell's funeral were provided to the meeting. It may be possible to locate the grave whilst the GPR machine is on site. In order for this to occur a target area needs to be identified. It was suggested that the direct descendants of Queen Narrell be involved in determining where the grave site is [i.e. close vicinity] using photos to assist. Anne was given the images.

Long Term Management Of The Cemetery

Susan informed the group that she had plans to liaise with Harry Bates from the Tilba District Cemetery committee about how they maintain their cemetery. The meeting endorsed Susan and felt it was a good idea if Harry came to a meeting.

Susan informed the group that the Tilba Cemetery was managed by a small group of local people. Perhaps Wallaga wished to set up group of their own? Everyone was in favour of this; the group will be determined at the next community meeting.

Summary of Actions

Merrimans LALC / Wallaga Community:

WORK: Determine who will work with the GPR operator 5th, 6th, and 7th September. Could be one person or part time work for a few people.

INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION? Decide how people with relatives buried at the Wallaga Cemetery are to be informed about the project? What about family groups no longer residing at Wallaga? Koori Mail etc....Who will be the contact person to collect information when people ring up / drop in to the community [during the project period Susan and or Sue are happy to be available via telephone, but what about the long term?]

ACCESSING RESEARCH MATERIALS: LALC to approve / deny researchers access to 1/ burial records for Wallaga Lake held by the register of Births, Deaths and Marriages and 2/ closed AWB records held at the NSW State Archives and for the purpose of developing a comprehensive list of people buried at Wallaga and locating a historical map.

SETTING UP A WALLAGA LAKE COMMUNITY CEMETERY COMMITTEE: A group of people are required to take responsibility for jobs during the project period and to support the ongoing maintenance of the cemetery. Presently, there are a few jobs needing to be done by this group including:

- The direct descendants of Queen Narrell to determine where her gravesite is [i.e. close vicinity] before 5th September. Anne has the images of her funeral to assist this process.
- Undertake a community working bee to clean up the cemetery area prior to the 5th September.
- Tell family members about the project and if people happen to be visiting the cemetery / community, ask them for any relevant information [names, burial location and dates].
- Making more permeant gravesite markers / collecting some stones ready for marking sites [not needed for 5th September].

SUSAN DONALDSON: Make contact with Tilba Cemetery committee, via Harry Bate, to discuss options for researching burials and ongoing management.

Susan to undertake oral history collection with Merv Penrith, Ivan Thomas, Harriett Walker, Pam Flanders, Elaine Thomas, Harold Harrison, Lyn Thomas, Dicko Thomas, Kevin Parsons, Terry Fox [in relation to the burial of a non koori boy] Georgina Parsons, Lionel Mongta, members of the Brierly, Carriage, Stewart and Nye families and others.

Susan to draft endorsement letters to LALC for research approval.

SUE FEARY: Sue to liaise with David Hunter, GPR expert.

Sue F to bring along standard pegs to mark potential graves during GPR work.

VIKKI PARSLEY: Drive anyone with relatives buried at the cemetery to Wallaga Lake when and if required during project period.

Minutes of community meeting #3 on 29TH NOVEMBER 2011

ATTENDANCE: Ken Campbell, Deanna Campbell, Stephen Kelly, Max Munro
Maria Harrison, Ernest Harrison, Albert Solomon, Pam Flanders, Patrick Colger, Rena Flanders, Betty Solomon, Bruce Craig, Stephen Foster, Eric Naylor, Lorraine Naylor, Tracey Foster, Glenn Campbell, George Campbell, Ashley Parsons, Marlene Dunn, Anne Greenaway, Naomi Foster, Amanda Tighe, Yuin Kelly, Maxine Kelly, Robert Harrison, Ivan Thomas, Geraldine Thomas, Anne Greenaway, Vikki Parsley, Susan Donaldson and Sue Feary.

AIM OF MEETING: To deliver progress report on the results of the WLC GPR and back ground research, to the Wallaga Lake community. Instructions from the community will be incorporated into the draft report, prior to presenting the information to Council / Eurobodalla Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

SD: acknowledged custodians of the land, past, present and future and noted the sensitivity of the material contained in the presentation, seeking permission to proceed with presentation. Susan noted that the results being presented were only preliminary, and that more community

input was required. Susan also noted that the community initiated the project, as carried out by Sue Feary and Susan Donaldson, with the assistance of Vikki Parsley and others.

SF: Showing the map of the GPR results, Sue outlined the associated data. The GPR survey identified 192 graves/possible graves/unconfirmed graves and three additional areas of subsurface disturbance due to unknown causes.

The combined oral history and archival research identified 207 burials in the cemetery. 91 of these people are registered as being buried Wallaga Lake / 96 not registered at all / 19 registered elsewhere.

Thus at this stage we have a total of 187 people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake. 91 or 48.6% of the known burials are registered with BDM / 96 or 51.3 % of known burials are not registered with BDM. Even some graves that are marked and named are not registered with BDM. 38/91 and 55 / 96 burials are known and marked and/or named.

Combining GPR survey results, the number of marked graves and oral history we now know the name and location of 107 burials at Wallaga Lake [both registered and not registered]. Of these only 67 are marked graves [not all with names], 12 are unmarked and confirmed through GPR survey whilst 14 are based on oral history without any other evidence.

Of the 12 GPR burial site matching oral history 8 of these have been confirmed by BDM / 4 unconfirmed at this stage. There are still 85 'unknown graves' with no matching records. This includes three distinct groups as shown on the 'Preliminary naming of plots at Wallaga Lake Cemetery' map; in the northeast and southeast corners and associated with the 'disturbed area' towards the north western corner.

QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY

1. How are deaths and burials registered currently and who does the paperwork? Why such low levels of registration now and in the past?
 - Community comment: the funeral director does the paper work.
2. Is the cemetery divided into areas for religious denominations?
 - Community comment: no
3. Feedback on work conducted so far?
 - Comment: 'You have opened our eyes to what is down there, thank you'.
4. Advice on what to do with unconfirmed GPR locations i.e. oral history locations not confirmed by GPR.
 - Comment: Nil comment at this stage.
5. Ongoing maintenance of cemetery – who is responsible?
 - Comment: Men's shed is working on this now.

WHAT NEXT?

1. Incorporate instructions from the community into report.
2. Present draft report to Eurobodalla Advisory Committee 5th December 2011
3. Review comments / recommendations with community and endorse final report. February 2012.
4. Apply for funding to undertake further work on the cemetery, including development of a management plan and further consultation, with Andy, Carriage, Nye, Scott, Stewart,

Thomas and Brierley families. Also, Lionel Mongta, Elaine Thomas, Lynno Thomas, and Kevin Parsons, and others to be consulted on site.

5. Use existing GPR map for determining where to dig new graves and allow vehicles to go.
6. Ensure that all future burials are registered with BDM.
7. Set up secure storage and filing arrangements for written and electronic records compiled by this project.
8. More BDM searches are needed to confirm a few outstanding matters.
9. Still waiting for State Archive Records [request is in].
10. Establish a cemetery committee to oversee and guide cemetery management to maintain the records.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY

A few errors on the named plot map were corrected following further site assessment with members of the Campbell family.

The community welcomed the distribution of the information, as a way to gather broad community input into the process.

Some people do not agree about the possible location of Queen Narelle, along the eastern fence line. More work to be done in regards to this.

Members of the community requested that we find out about the retrospective registration of deaths, as there are so many cases at Wallaga Lake Cemetery where deaths that were thought to be registered are not.

Minutes of meeting #4 held 7.2.2012 at Wallaga Lake

Attendees: Eric Naylor, Loraine Naylor, Ken Campbell, Steven Kelly, Yuin Kelly, Geraldine Thomas, Ivan Thomas, Tracey Foster, Betty Solomon, Anne Greenaway, Susan Donaldson and Sue Feary. Meeting commenced 1.30 pm.

Susan and Sue circulated maps of the site and sought comment on draft report. It was noted that even though the report will be finalised in line with the current funding allocation, the project will continue in accordance with community aspiration as outlined in report recommendations. Some recommendations require further funding others do not.

Summary of community comments / advice:

- A number of deaths occurred interstate / territory, thus searches outside NSW BDM is required in order to finalise the list of registered burial.
- Further community discussion needed before cemetery is to be extended to the north towards the boat shed.
- Current funding from additional sources will allow for the marking of unmarked graves as per GPR map. Rocks and crosses needed. Perhaps ESC / RTA have rocks available for this task.
- Current funding from additional sources will allow fencing / irrigation / planting. Members warned that sites exist beyond the bitumen towards the cemetery, so caution should be taken when digging in that area.

- All agree that further funding is required to a/ complete list of burials and b/ develop plan of management for cemetery.
- All agree that a community based cemetery committee is required, at this stage, Anne Greenaway LALC CEO to be contact.
- Memorial wall funding / project no time frame, thus can wait until list of burial is more complete.
- Need to advertise once more. Koori mail, Indigenous Times, Facebook, LALC networks, local / regional newspaper and Coastal Custodians.
- Need to locate Queen Narrell as a priority.

Susan and Sue highlighted the following matters:

- Highest priority is to mark the unmarked graves using the GPR map. Susan is available to assist the community in interpreting the GPR map in order to mark the unmarked graves.
- Most important to determine a/ vehicle route and b/ possible future burial sites.
- Before the cemetery is extended towards the boat shed, the community should seek funding to undertake a GPR survey to identify historical unmarked graves.
- Ensure all digging [in and around cemetery for burials and other project work] involves a sites monitor.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS:

Community to set up cemetery committee to manage all aspects of the cemetery. This group will initially be required to:

1. Over see and do clean up works
2. Co ordinate cross / stone making and subsequent marking of unmarked graves
3. Come to an agreement on what areas can be used for new burials and vehicle access routes.
4. Oversee that the revegetation project marks vehicle tracks with shrubbery / low plants.
5. Support further funding applications [research and plan of management].

RESEARCHER ACTIONS:

Susan to liaise with council / RTA regarding the availability of rocks of marking graves.

Susan / Sue to determine number of unmarked graves; add detail to report.

Susan and Sue to prepare project summary for press release. Liaise with Laurell Pacey.

Susan and Sue to finalise 'stage one' cemetery report. Vikki Parsley ESC to provide community with a copy of the report / maps in paper and e forms.

Appendix 4: Proposed management guidelines

To be developed in consultation with Merrimans LALC, Wallaga lake community and other Aboriginal people with relatives buried in the cemetery

AIM:

To respect the ancestors buried in the cemetery by maintaining the cemetery in good condition and keeping good records of past and future graves.

How to achieve this aim:

1. Mark all unmarked graves in a culturally appropriate manner.
2. Repair fences surrounding cemetery
3. Undertake repairs to existing grave markers by relatives
4. Identify vehicle access routes within the cemetery that will not impact on existing graves
5. Establish a regular maintenance programme of lawn mowing and slashing, tree lopping ,etc
6. Identify a community member responsible for updating and maintaining the written records, eg the map and the list including additions and addressing any errors.
7. Determine a suitable location for the commemorative wall.
8. Undertake research regarding graves outside the current cemetery boundary
9. Ensure all future burials are registered with the registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Appendix 5: Letters of community endorsement for archival research with BDM and DAA.

17.8.2011

Merrimans Local Aboriginal
Land Council
Wallaga Lake Koori Village, NSW.

Government Research Unit
NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages
GPO Box 30
SYDNEY NSW 2001
FAX 02 90356055

To whom it may concern;

RE: Requesting list of people registered as being buried at Wallaga Lake Cemetery, NSW.

The Wallaga Lake community / Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council endorse Vikki Parsley [Aboriginal Project Officer, Eurobodalla Shire Council] to apply to the Government Research Unit of the NSW Register of births, deaths and marriages requesting a list of people registered as being buried at Wallaga Lake Cemetery, NSW. The information will be used for the purpose of undertaking a project being undertaken by the community in partnership with the Eurobodalla Shire Council and heritage consultants Susan Donaldson and Sue Feary, to identify historical graves at the Wallaga Lake Cemetery, NSW, dating back to the 1890s.

To assist the search attached is a preliminary list of burials; the location of many of these is not known. Cross-referencing this information with historical documentation is required. Moreover, we believe there to be many more burials not listed here thus, information required from the government register includes historical maps or sketches of the cemetery and the names and dates of people buried at the cemetery [or who died at Wallaga Lake Mission].

For further information please contact Vikki Parsley at Eurobodalla Shire Council on 02 44741331.

Thank you,

Merrimans LALC / community endorsement signature:

17.8.2011

Merrimans Local Aboriginal
Land Council
Wallaga Lake Koori Village, NSW.

Anne Wright Archives Officer
Family Records Unit
Aboriginal Affairs
Level 13, Tower B, Centennial Plaza
208 Elizabeth Street
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

To whom it may concern;

RE: Requesting access to the close records of the AWB for the Wallaga Lake Cemetery Project

The Wallaga Lake community / Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council endorse Susan Donaldson [consultant anthropologist], Sue Feary [consultant archaeologist / heritage management] and Vikki Parsley [Aboriginal Project Officer, Eurobodalla Shire Council] to search the closed records of the AWB held by the State Archives of NSW in relation to Wallaga Lake Cemetery. The information will be used for the purpose of undertaking a project being undertaken by the community in partnership with the Eurobodalla Shire Council and heritage consultants, to identify historical graves at the Wallaga Lake Cemetery, NSW, dating back to the 1890s.

To assist the search attached is a preliminary list of burials; the location of many of these is not known. Cross-referencing this information with historical documentation is required. Moreover, we believe there to be many more burials not listed here thus, information required from the State Archives of NSW includes historical maps or sketches of the cemetery and the names and dates of people buried at the cemetery [or who died at Wallaga Lake Mission].

For further details please contact Susan Donaldson on 0405 183 751.

Thank you,

Merrimans LALC / community endorsement signature:

----- Original Message -----

From: Anne Wright

To: SUSAN DALE DONALDSON

Cc: Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council ; suefeary ; Vikki Parsley ; Danny Chapman ; Jason Ardler ; Newman, Sue

Sent: Friday, February 03, 2012 8:24 AM

Subject: RE: Researching burial records for Wallaga Lake Cemetery, NSW.

Dear Susan,

Firstly, I sincerely apologise in the delay in providing a response to your email request.

I have had an opportunity to spend some time looking into your request in more detail to access closed records of the Aborigines Welfare Board, namely the correspondence files which pertain personal and sensitive information of individual Aboriginal people for the purpose of locating information about individual or family member's burial plots at Wallaga Lake in the early to mid 1800 and 1900's.

As the qualified Aboriginal Archivist who has been working with this collection of records for many years I am confident in advising you that I have not come across any records in the AWB that has provided copies of details, maps or sketches of historical cemeteries. I have further discussed this matter yesterday afternoon with Sue Newman, Aboriginal Archivist at State Records and she confirms the same. We both agreed that the best advice we can provide you at this stage is to contact the following places who may have information relevant to your research:

- State Records to look through the Colonial Secretary records; the Lands Department records and historical maps;
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS);
- Mitchell Library in Sydney;
- NTS Corp Native Title Service in Strawberry Hills (Sydney);
- Regional Shire Councils including libraries and;
- Local historical and/or genealogical society on the south coast.

The Family Records Unit is more than happy to provide assistance to Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community for individual people to apply to access their personal and family histories by completing the required application form. We can provide an application form to interested person(s) upon their request or it can be downloaded from our website. Please be advised that the process of an application to be completed can take up to 6 months or more pending on the volume of applications received by our Unit.

I hope that this advice is very helpful for your research although it may not necessarily be the outcome you were expecting. If you have any concerns or questions relating to personal family history research applications, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9219 0715. I would also suggest you contact Mrs. Sue Newman, State Records on 8247 8609 to make arrangements to visit their facilities to access the suggested records collection.

We wish you the best of luck with your research for such a very significant project for the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community.

Regards

Anne Wright
Manager| Family Records Unit
Aboriginal Affairs NSW
Department of Education and Communities
Level 13, Tower B | Centennial Plaza | 280 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills NSW 2010
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Fax: (02) 9219 0790
Anne.Wright@dhs.nsw.gov.au