



CARING FOR THE ANCESTORS

Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery

MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015 – 2020

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AUTHORSHIP: This plan was written by Susan Dale Donaldson and Sue Feary in consultation with the Merrimans LALC, members of the Aboriginal community and Eurobodalla Shire Council.

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DISCLAIMER: The authors have made every effort to ensure that the plan and the associated documents are as correct and as comprehensive as possible. We apologise for any omissions or errors.

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: William Murdoch caring for the grave of his great aunt, Florence Picalla, who was buried at Wallaga Lake as a baby in 1955. Her grave was rediscovered through oral history, archival research and Ground Penetrating Radar [GPR] survey, undertaken as part of this project. Florence’s sisters saw her grave for the first time in their lives, soon after the GPR results were pegged onto the ground in December 2014, more than half a century later.

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CULTURAL WARNING: This plan contains reference to deceased people.

Introduction	6
PART ONE: Understanding the cemetery.....	10
1 Management planning	10
1.1. Why have a management plan?	10
1.2. Background to the plan	10
2. Preparing the plan.....	12
2.1 Steps in developing the plan	12
2.2 Community participation.....	13
3. About the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery.....	15
3.1 Location	15
3.2 History	17
3.3 Cultural context	22
4 The cemetery today	24
4.1 Current management	24
4.2 Who is buried in the cemetery?	26
4.3 Graves	27
4.4 Memorial Wall	29
4.5 Geology and vegetation	31
4.6. Fences	32
4.7. Access and roads	32
5. Legal framework	34
5.1 NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983	34
5.2 Eurobodalla Local Environmental Plan (LEP).....	34
5.3 Heritage registers	34
5.5 Cemeteries and Crematorium Act 2013	35

PART TWO: Management Plan for the Wallaga Lake Cemetery.....	38
1 Vision for the future	38
2 Values of the cemetery to Aboriginal people.....	40
3 Threats to the values	41
4 Objectives for achieving vision.....	44
Objective 1: Maintain cemetery grounds and infrastructure in good condition ...	44
Objective 2: Individual graves are maintained and cared for	44
Objective 3: Establish workable systems for updating, storing and accessing cemetery records	44
Objective 4: The cemetery is managed as a peaceful, spiritual and historical place, connected to the surrounding environment.....	45
Objective 5: All existing known graves and possible graves (identified by GPR) are protected and acknowledged	45
Objective 6: Cemetery is managed sustainably by the community for ongoing use as a cemetery	45
Objective 7: Continue to improve knowledge about the history of the cemetery and who is buried there	45
Objective 8: Cemetery is managed according to all legal requirements	45
Objective 9: Cemetery approach and entrance area is redesigned and upgraded	45
5. Actions	46
6. Review of plan	53
References.....	55
Appendix 1: Burial and death registration check lists.....	56

Figure 1 Cemetery Point, Wallaga Lake, NSW	7	Figure 22 Memorial wall - built 2014	29
Figure 2 David Hunter undertaking the Ground Penetration Radar Survey November 2014	11	Figure 23 Cemetery survey plan showing all graves and possible graves Source: Healey (2015) [MAP INSERT]	30
Figure 3 Steps in developing the plan	12	Figure 24 Vegetated headland, Cemetery Point	31
Figure 4 Community involvement	13	Figure 25 Native Blue Bell across cemetery	31
Figure 5 Location of Wallaga Lake Aboriginal cemetery	15	Figure 26 Northern fence line	32
Figure 6 Cemetery Point showing Wallaga Lake Cemetery	15	Figure 27 Western fence line	32
Figure 7 Overlay of cemetery on aerial photo. Black dots are visible graves; yellow dotted areas are GPR graves.	16	Figure 28 Extract from survey plan showing western side of cemetery with tracks and extent of midden	33
Figure 8 Portion of survey plan showing location of midden material in cemetery	17	Figure 29 Excerpt from Eurobodalla Shire LEP 2012	34
Figure 9 Extract of parish map #1034901 showing reserve gazettals	19	Figure 30 Caring for the Ancestors	39
Figure 10: Community submission to NSW government 1978	20	Figure 31 Fallen tree limb 2014	41
Figure 11 'Queen Narelle's funeral ca 1895' William Corkhill Collection NLA # 2511328	20	Figure 32 Burial sites affected by an escaped fire 2014	41
Figure 12 'Queen Narelle's funeral ca 1895' William Corkhill Collection NLA # 2462264	20	Figure 33 Long grass across cemetery grounds 2012	41
Figure 13 Cemetery Point, Wallaga Lake and Gulaga Mountain	22	Figure 34 Rotten fallen crosses 2013	41
Figure 14 Graves decorated with local shells	23	Figure 35 Old unmarked graves get forgotten over time if not recorded and marked	42
Figure 15 Umbarra - the black duck totem	24	Figure 36 Cemetery car park on midden material 2015	43
Figure 16 Grave numbering system	25		
Figure 17 Extract from the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery Burial Register 2015	26		
Figure 18 Typical grave outlined with rocks	27		
Figure 19 Graves marked with concrete slabs and wooden crosses 2012	28		
Figure 20 Unmarked graves covered with grass 2012	28		
Figure 21 Permanent markers for the graves where oral history and GPR results matched	29		

Introduction

Wallaga Lake Aboriginal cemetery on the NSW far south coast is one of the oldest and largest of its type in NSW and is still in operation. This culturally significant cemetery is located on Cemetery Point, Wallaga Lake, and is privately owned by Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council [MLALC]. It was part of the original Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve. Some graves are marked in some way and in some cases there is a name on the grave. Many graves are noticeable by ground disturbance such as a mound, depression or a planted tree, while others have become invisible over time, covered by grass or earth and not known to the current Aboriginal community.

Uncertainty over exactly where people have been buried and the possibility of disturbance from digging new graves has concerned the Merrimans LALC and the wider Aboriginal community for decades. It was this, together with a general concern about the poor condition of the cemetery and lack of records that prompted the Merrimans LALC and Eurobodalla Shire Council [ESC] to seek funding for a project.

Extensive historical, archival and oral history research since 2011 has identified the names of 182 people buried in the Wallaga Lake Cemetery between 1895 and 2015. We know the grave location of 96 of these named people. Therefore there are 86 named people who are buried in

the cemetery but we don't know where. The Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and field surveys identified a total of 240 graves and possible graves inside and outside the current fenced cemetery. Given we know where 96 named people are buried, there remains 144 unnamed graves/possible graves. Over time it is hoped that the remaining 86 named ancestors can be matched to some of the 144 unnamed graves.

The project has involved a large number of Aboriginal people who have a strong wish for the cemetery to be more actively managed to ensure that their ancestors are given the respect and care that they are due. This management plan has been prepared for the Wallaga Lake cemetery to set out a clear pathway for achieving the twin goals of caring for the ancestors and managing the cemetery for present and future generations of Aboriginal people.

This plan is set out in two parts. Part one provides relevant background and contextual information. Part two is the plan itself – the vision for the future and how it will be achieved. A number of critical management actions outlined in the plan have already commenced, including permanently numbering all the graves in the cemetery. Family marking of graves is occurring on an ongoing basis.



Figure 1 Cemetery Point, Wallaga Lake, NSW

PART ONE

Understanding the cemetery

PART ONE: Understanding the cemetery

1 Management planning

1.1. WHY HAVE A MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A management plan is a written document that gives guidance and direction for looking after something that is valuable to a society or a part of society. The management plan for Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery describes what is important about the cemetery and identifies what things may threaten these values. It states a long-term vision and sets out a rational process for reaching the vision, through forming objectives and priorities. Having a management plan can be helpful when applying for funding from external agencies. It also explains to people what you are doing and why you are doing it.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE PLAN

This management plan for Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery had its beginnings in Stage 1 of an Aboriginal heritage study undertaken in the Eurobodalla Shire in 2005. This study recommended research into the locations of Aboriginal burials in the Eurobodalla Shire as a high priority (Goulding & Waters, 2005). The cultural and historical significance of the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal reserve and surrounding areas was identified during Stage 2 of the project, when a number of Aboriginal people voiced concerns about the possibility of accidental damage to unmarked graves in the cemetery (Donaldson, 2006).

One of the recommendations arising from Stage 3 of the same study was 'mapping of places in Eurobodalla Aboriginal heritage study through the DECC AHIMS database/ESC heritage protocols' (Donaldson, 2007). Commonwealth Indigenous Heritage Programme (IHP) funding was obtained for this project, called 'Connecting with Country', which identified 36 places for further recording and assessment (Feary & Donaldson, 2011). One of these places was the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery.

A community meeting held in 2011 revealed the depth of community concern about unmarked graves and cemetery management more generally, and the possibility of doing a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey to identify unmarked graves was discussed.

The Eurobodalla Shire Council reallocated project funding to enable a GPR survey of the cemetery, as well as extensive research into the history of the cemetery, including a search of Births, Deaths and Marriage records (BDM) and additional oral history research (Donaldson & Feary, 2012a). This component of the project identified 102 possible graves through the GPR survey and developed a burial register containing 187 names sought through detailed oral history and archival research (Donaldson & Feary, 2012a).

Donaldson and Feary made a number of recommendations including -

- additional GPR survey over proposed cemetery extension areas to the north and west of the current cemetery;
- preparation of a management plan to guide long term management of the cemetery and its records;
- continued research into naming and locating burials and;
- developing a comprehensive register of burials that could be maintained and updated;
- prepare an accurate survey plan showing all graves, including the GPR results with allocated numbers and other features such as trees, tracks and fence lines.

More Indigenous Heritage Program (IHP) funding received in 2014, and additional funds from the Eurobodalla Shire Council and Merrimans LALC made it possible to carry out these recommendations.

Considerable background research was carried out in developing the plan. This included looking at management plans prepared for other cemeteries, eg, the Waikumete Cemetery in Auckland, NZ (Waitakere City Council, 2001) and various guidelines for managing cemeteries produced by heritage agencies, eg, National Trust [The National Trust of Australia (NSW), 2009] and the Victorian government [Department of Health, Victorian Government, 2014].

The Aboriginal community participated in all aspects of the planning process [figures 3 and 4]. A valuable insight into local cemetery management was provided by Lisa Videion, the Eurobodalla Shire Council officer overseeing the management of cemeteries. She shared her knowledge about how cemetery records are updated and maintained at a community workshop at Wallaga Lake in 2014.

A second GPR survey to the north and west of the present day fence line was conducted in 2014, which identified an additional 41 possible graves (Hunter, 2014; see figure 2). Accurate and detailed survey plans covering the cemetery and its proposed extensions have been prepared, showing the location of all graves and possible GPR graves (with their associated numbers) and other cemetery features such as trees, fence lines and contours at 0.2 metre intervals (John Healey and Associates PL, 2015 March).



Figure 2 David Hunter undertaking the Ground Penetration Radar Survey November 2014

2. Preparing the plan

2.1 STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN



Figure 3 Steps in developing the plan

2.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Figure 4 Community involvement



Community start up meeting August 2014

Community members associated with the cemetery guided and advised heritage consultants about the best way to undertake the project.



Community planning workshops October 2014 and March 2015

Community members participated in planning workshops that identified community values, concerns and ideas for management. The overall vision, objectives and key actions were also identified in small focus group sessions.



Oral history recording August 2014 to March 2015

Senior members from all family groups shared their knowledge about who is buried where.





Community members and organisations consider draft plan July to September 2015

Merrimans LALC board provide direction November 2014, March 2015 and September 2015



Community working bee July 2015

Community members prepared the site for the GPR survey and survey plans.



Community marking workshop December 2014

Community members made numbered grave markers and permanently marked all graves. Some known family graves were also individually marked.

3. About the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery

3.1 LOCATION

The Wallaga Lake cemetery is located on the southern side of Cemetery Point, a prominent headland on the northern shores of Wallaga Lake on the New South Wales far south coast. The nearest township is Bermagui, approximately 10 kms south of Cemetery Point by road. The small villages of Beauty Point and Fairhaven and several caravan parks are located on the eastern side of the lake. Akolele and Wallaga Lake Heights are situated close to the lake entrance, where the Bermagui Road crosses the lake via a low causeway. In addition to these settlements there are a few pastoral properties on the western side of the lake; otherwise the catchment is predominantly covered in natural vegetation within the State Forest and National Park (Figure 5).

The cemetery was once part of the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve and is now on land owned by Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council. The cemetery is at the end of Cemetery Point Road which comes off Umbarra Road (Figure 6). The cemetery consists of a parcel of flat to gently sloping land with a currently fenced in area of about 5,600 square metres. The headland drops off steeply to the lake on its southern side, with more gentle slopes descending on the eastern and northern sides, where an oyster shed is located on the water's edge. Figure 7 shows how the cemetery is oriented on the headland.

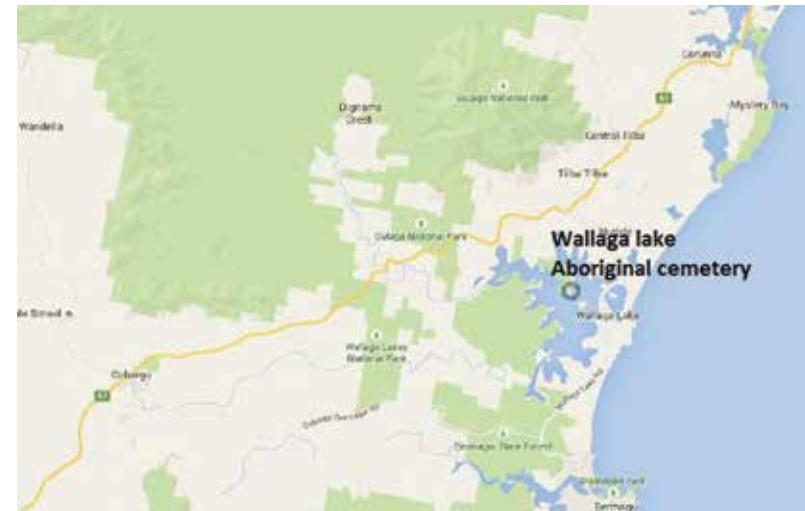


Figure 5 Location of Wallaga Lake Aboriginal cemetery



Figure 6 Cemetery Point showing Wallaga Lake Cemetery

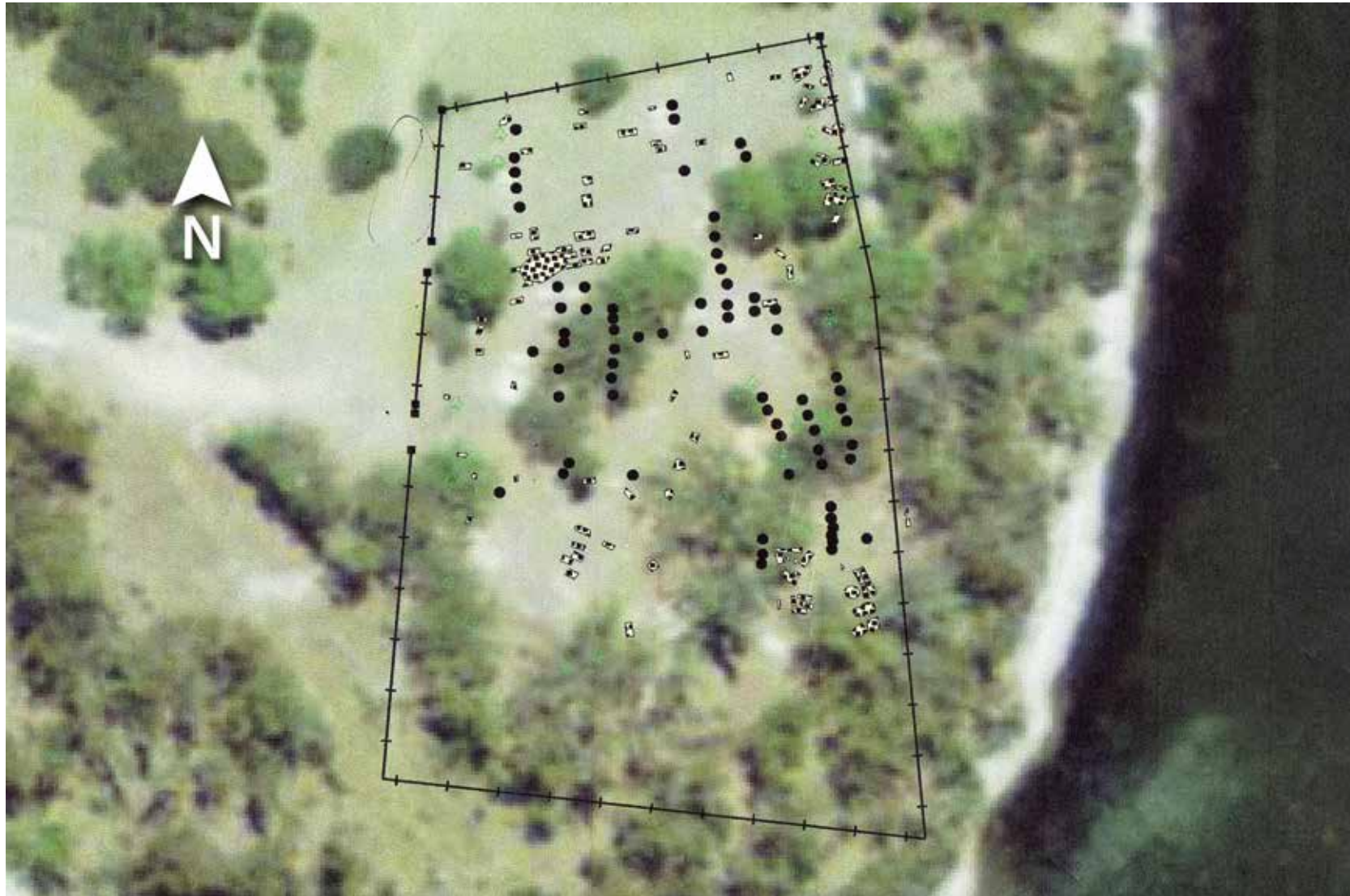


Figure 7 Overlay of cemetery on aerial photo. Black dots are visible graves; yellow dotted areas are GPR graves.

3.2 HISTORY

It is evident from archaeological records that Aboriginal people have occupied the Wallaga Lake area for thousands of years. Several Aboriginal shell middens within the cemetery and in the car park show that bimbulas (Koori word for Sydney Cockle, *Anadara Trapezia*) were collected from the

lake and brought up to the headland for processing and eating (Figure 8 and 28).

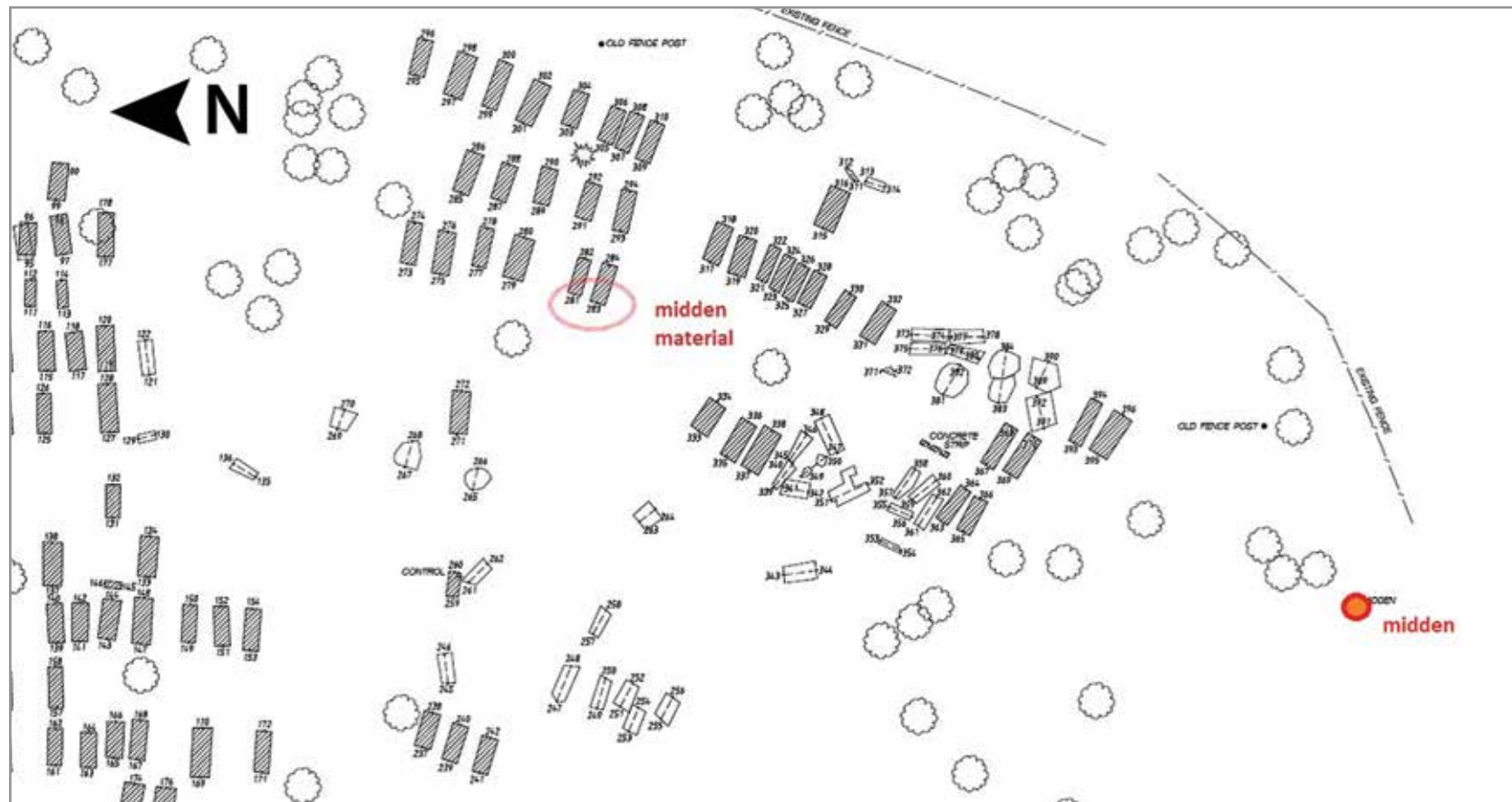


Figure 8 Portion of survey plan showing location of midden material in cemetery

People would have lived on the headland in long before first European contact and they may have buried people there, although no evidence has been found. There is a burial at Murunna Point, on the headland above where the lake opens to the sea (Feary, 2009). In the 1870s groups of Aboriginal people, including Umbarra (Merriman) lived around the shores of Wallaga 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 by 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 took 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 (APB) in the Tilba Tilba area, who advocated for improved living standards on the Reserve. Aboriginal people quickly saw the value of a European education for their children. However, while Aboriginal children were eligible to attend the public schools established in the 1880s, in practice they rarely went because of opposition from non-Aboriginal families. 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 1887, four years prior to establishment of the Wallaga Lake

Aboriginal reserve and the first Aboriginal school in NSW, (Donaldson and Feary 2012b).

The presence of the school and later the Reserve attracted Aboriginal people to reside close by or in the Reserve. The first school inspector at Wallaga Lake School observed that the influx of people could 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 more freedom to move around than the stringent conditions of the Reserve.

The APB established the Wallaga Lake Reserve over 330 acres of land on 13 June 1891 (Reserve #13939) (Figure 9). It was the first station established by the APB in New South Wales and because it had a white manager it was classified as a 'station'. The Crown retained title over the land. In 1892 the Moruya Land Board leased the station reserve to the neighbouring Hobbes family as pasture for sheep. This move angered many in Tilba Tilba Progress Committee because of the disruption it caused to Aboriginal residents. Some members resigned in protest. An article in the Sydney Morning Herald objected to this 'incursion' by the neighbour. These objections resulted in another gazettal over the same area on the 28th May 1892 (Reserve #15718) [Figure 9].

A further 75 acres was gazetted on the 16 September 1949 (Reserve #73304) adding Portions 17 and 361 to the north east side of the reserve. On the 22 December 1963, these portions (21 acres) were revoked to make land available for non-Aboriginal people's holiday cottages (now



Figure 9 Extract of parish map #1034901 showing reserve gazettals

part of Akolele). This 1963 revocation was of particular concern to the Aboriginal community, as the revoked land is believed to contain burials (Goodall 2008). Local elder Guboo Ted Thomas told National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff in 1979 that King Merriman was buried at Akolele, within the area excised from the Aboriginal Reserve. Aboriginal oral histories reveal that this land continues to have high cultural heritage value.

In the early 1970s Aboriginal Elders spoke extensively with NPWS about sacred sites in the Aboriginal Reserve, including the cemetery. At the request of the local community, NPWS looked for ways to ensure protection of the sites and local culture, should the reserve be closed. All the sites were listed on the NPWS Aboriginal sites register, including the cemetery (Kelly, 1975). The NPWS site card (62-7-0029) describes the cemetery in 1972 as having at least 20 graves, marked with white crosses and decorated with shells.

At the same time, Gubbo Ted Thomas and others were also lobbying the government hard to have their land returned. In his 1978 submission to then NSW Premier Neville Wran he wrote that almost all of the land on which generations of Aboriginal people had lived had been taken from them, leaving them only a few acres of which they did not even have title (Figure 10). "We must always live in fear and insecurity, worrying if even the little we have will be taken away from us," he wrote. He pointed to a section that was once part of the reserve, now the coastal suburb of Akolele that in 1949;

'...was taken away from us and given to white people for their holiday homes.' 'This bit of land was very important to us because it contains one of our sacred burial grounds. "The claim asked that the title deeds to the remaining reserve, as well as Merriman Island and adjacent Crown Lands, be handed over to the Yuin people in perpetuity." This land is part of us and we are part of it. It has always been so in the past and it will always be so in the future. We and the land are one.'

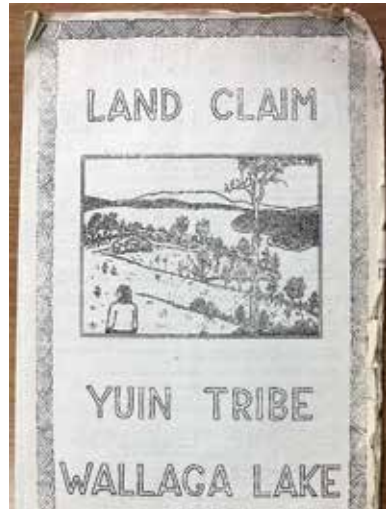


Figure 10: Community submission to NSW government 1978

Passing of the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 1983 opened the way for the land title to what was left of the old reserve to be handed back to the Merrimans LALC, including the cemetery.

The date that the cemetery was first established is not known; it may have been used from 1887 when the school started. No burial records have been found for the first decade of the station, although there is one birth, that of Mary Carpenter in 1894. The oldest

recorded 'Christian' burial at Wallaga Lake is that of Sarah Carter or 'Queen Narelle' around 1895, although she may not have been buried within the confines of the current cemetery and her death is not registered with the NSW Department of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Figures 11 and 12 detail an Aboriginal funeral at Wallaga Lake. The images are described as being the funeral of Queen Narrelle in 1895, but this seems unlikely given Mr Hockey features in the photos and he was the manager between 1899 and 1906 (L Pacey 2015, pers. comm., 9 October).

There may be older burials but written evidence has not been found and no oral traditions go back further than 1932. The oral history record suggests another five cemeteries in and nearby the Wallaga Lake community, historically used for the burial of Aboriginal people.



Figure 11 'Queen Narelle's funeral ca 1895' William Corkhill Collection NLA # 2511328



Figure 12 'Queen Narelle's funeral ca 1895' William Corkhill Collection NLA # 2462264

One close to the community dam; one on the 'Newtown' headland; one behind the Wallaga Lake Preschool; one at 'Granny's Point' [where Granny Tungai is thought to be buried]; and another one at 'The Cricketing Ground'. It is unknown if these other cemeteries are lone burials or substantial cemeteries organised by the Reserve managers.

The newly developed Wallaga Lake cemetery burial register [see figure 17] echoes the devastating impact of colonisation on a society who had developed a complex and unique way of life. A number of the ancestors buried at Wallaga Lake were born at a time when their traditional society was still largely intact, including:

Edward Walker born 1815 in the Moruya District, buried Wallaga Lake in 1900, aged 85.

A male known as 'Andy' born 1825 in Ulladulla, buried Wallaga Lake aged in 1905, aged 80.

Elizabeth Piety born 1831 in the Dry River, Quaama, was buried at Wallaga Lake in 1921, aged 90.

Charlie Adgerie born 1835 in Eden, was buried at Wallaga Lake in 1905, aged 70.

Minna Wyno born 1851 in Dignams Creek, buried Wallaga Lake 1904, aged 53.

(Source: Moruya Courthouse records; NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages)

The descendants of these early ancestors continue to live in the area. According to NSW Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the oldest registered grave in the cemetery is dated 1900 and belongs to Edward Walker. There were 34 burials recorded in the decade 1900 to 1910, just over 3 burials each year; a similar rate to today. The location of these early burials has not been determined. The oldest burial for which a location has been identified is 1948, baby Trevor Harrison.

A careful search by the consultants of all records in the LALC office, historical societies, State Archives and other institutions, failed to find documentation relating to the historical use of the cemetery. Apparently a fire in the 1950s destroyed the Reserve's administration office and all its contents, but it appears no records were kept after this date either. APB annual reports by station managers refer to numbers of deaths and sometimes reasons, but do not give dates or names, or specific grave locations. 'Closed / restricted' APB reports were not made available to the consultants, despite a letter of support from the community.

Oral history accounts describe a period of time when the cemetery was closed, following concerns raised by the Church of England in Cobargo. The closure period is said to be from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s. An article in a 1972 issue of New Dawn magazine also suggests a closure; 'today the people of Wallaga Lake are seeking to have the area registered so that again they can bury their dead alongside their forefathers' (New Dawn 1972).

A 1971 NPWS report also notes that the cemetery was not registered at the time and no burials could take place (Kelly, 1975). This correlates

with an absence of burial records between 1965 and 1976, when burials were most likely to have taken place in Bega. The mechanisms by which the cemetery was closed/deregistered is uncertain, as most Aboriginal cemeteries were never gazetted in the first place, possibly because the APB thought the Aboriginal people to be a 'dying race' with nobody left to care for the cemeteries in the future (NPWS, 1998).

Whilst the Wallaga Lake cemetery contains the graves of Aboriginal people who have died after white contact and have been given a Christian burial, the burial and mourning rituals are interwoven with Aboriginal cultural traditions. The cemetery is clearly arranged according to family groupings; the Andy family area, the Thomas family area, the Walker family area, the Campbell family area, the Penrith family area and so on. Multiple generations of kin are grouped together in clustered rows predominantly facing the rising sun and ocean. Successive generations of family members share the same name, forming bonds that stretch from the past to the present. References to religious denomination in Births, Deaths and Marriages records suggest there are sections designated for people affiliated with the Roman Catholic and Church of England denominations. While there is some correlation between religious affiliation and areas within the cemetery, it is not consistent.

3.3 CULTURAL CONTEXT

According to Yuin religious belief Daramulan gave form and meaning to the waterways, landforms, plants, birds and animals. He then created people, the first two being Toonku and Ngardi, the spiritual ancestors of the present day Aboriginal Owners, whose enduring spiritual presence remains at Gulaga Mountain. Toonku and Ngardi were given languages,



Figure 13 Cemetery Point, Wallaga Lake and Gulaga Mountain

totems, tribal boundaries and special powers. They designed the overarching law about how people are to relate to and care for each other and their surroundings. Events which occur on and around the Mountain, including at the nearby Wallaga Lake Cemetery, are understood as Daramulan's continuing force in the world, whilst the sustenance of life in the forests, creeks and rainfall is understood as being the continuing activity of Gulaga's spirit (Rose 1990).

Religious practices continue today reinforcing and sustaining the sacredness of Gulaga and the surrounding landscape. The spiritual connection between the Mountain and people is maintained throughout the cycle of one's life. When approaching death local Yuin people feel

drawn to the Mountain their spiritual resting place and return to Wallaga Lake to be buried. If they happen to die in a distant country, it is common for family to bring their body back to Wallaga to be buried, so that their spirit can easily return to Gulaga, entering the land, the trees, the wind, forever being part of the Mountain. Accordingly, Gulaga and Wallaga Lake Cemetery are integral to local cultural identity and concepts of the past, the present and the future. The often quoted sentiment 'the mountain calls me back', is an expression of their cultural connections in life and in nearing death.

The Wallaga Lake Cemetery is embedded in a broader cultural landscape of significant places that includes Wallaga Lake and Gulaga [Mount Dromedary] (Figure 13), as well as Najanuka [Little Dromedary Mountain], Biamanga [Mumbulla Mountain], Baranguba [Montague Island], Umbarra [Merrimans Island], Mystery Bay and 'The Cricketing Ground', an Aboriginal

camping place at Wallaga Beach. Cultural links to these places are maintained by the local community and are highly valued.

Wallaga Lake is the largest and most southerly of numerous coastal lakes in the region. Three low islands occur within the lake; Honeysuckle Island, Merrimans Island and Snake Island on the western shores. 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 (Bega Valley Shire Council and Eurobodalla Shire Council 2000).



Figure 14 Graves decorated with local shells

Ongoing consumption of natural resources collected in and around Wallaga Lake and Wallaga Beach is another way the local community maintain cultural connections to the area. In many cases shells collected from Wallaga Lake and Beach are used to decorate graves within the cemetery (Figure 14).

Aboriginal people's links to the region, in the past as well as in the present, have also been described according to tribes, sub-tribes, clans, languages and totems. The Yuin tribal area was recorded by Howitt as extending from the Shoalhaven River in the north to Cape Howe in the south and west into the Great Dividing Range (Howitt, 1904). Yuin tribal subgroups with traditional links to the Wallaga Lake area include the Walbanga and Djiringanj. Howitt recorded another division within the Yuin tribal area; the Guyangal [guya = south] and Kurial [kuru = north] coastal subtribes, together known as Katungal [Katung = sea].

Aboriginal clan groups and or place names recorded in the early settlement period include Bowdally [Bodalla], Wondeller [Wandella], Wokoonga [Wagonga], Noorama [Narooma], Tolbedilbo [Tilba Tilba], Wallurga [Wallaga], Mogareka [Mogareeka], Windilla [Wandella], and Biggah [Bega]. On a linguistic level, the Wallaga Lake area is primarily affiliated with the Jeringan [Dyirringan] language with Dhurga [Thoorga] influences from the north and Thauaira [Thawa] from the south (Wesson 2000).

Wallaga Lake is habitat for the Pacific Black Duck, Umbarra; a totemic species for local Aboriginal people. The concept of totemism interlinks the traditional cosmological belief system with the sustainable use of the natural environment. Umbarra, in particular, continues to be an integral



Figure 15 Umbarra - the black duck totem

component of Aboriginal people's cultural identity across south east New South Wales (Figure 15) [Donaldson 2012; Rose et al 2003]. The cycle of life and death, and the handing down of totems through the generations is expressed in many special ways, including through death and burial rites at Wallaga Lake Cemetery.

4 The cemetery today

4.1 CURRENT MANAGEMENT

The Wallaga Lake Cemetery is a private cemetery, owned by the Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council [MLALC]. It is the responsibility of the MLALC to manage the cemetery as part of its broader obligations to manage land and protect cultural heritage under the New South Wales

Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. While managing the cemetery grounds falls to the MLALC, family members and relatives are responsible for the care and maintenance of the graves of their loved ones. The cemetery is not consecrated or registered in New South Wales.

Today, the cemetery has an average of three new burials each year. When someone passes away, family members point out the proposed burial location to the excavator driver who digs the grave in accordance with regulations of the Public Health Act. Usually, the hearse pulls up at the cemetery entrance and the coffin is carried by pall bearers to the burial location. As a rule, vehicles do not go into the cemetery unless family members are infirm and need to be transported. After the funeral, family members manually cover the grave. The recently completed survey map can also be used to identify a suitable burial site that will not impact on any existing graves/possible graves. Up until now, the MLALC has not kept

a record of burials in the cemetery.

The MLALC does not receive any specific funding for the cemetery and does not charge burial fees. In previous years the Commonwealth Development Employment Program [CDEP] provided funds to enable regular cemetery maintenance, such as grass cutting and fence repair. Once CDEP ended, cemetery maintenance has been irregular due to lack of funds, tools or an identified caretaker. Over time the grass has got long, tree branches have fallen down, crosses have rotted, fences have collapsed and the cemetery looked neglected. Whilst lack of maintenance is a disincentive for some people to attend to the graves of their relatives, many families continue to maintain and visit their relative's graves.



Figure 16 Grave numbering system

4.2 WHO IS BURIED IN THE CEMETERY?

For the first time, it has been possible to compile a detailed register containing all the relevant information about the people known to be buried in the cemetery (see Figure 17). Based on research up until 2015, there are 182 named people known to be buried at Wallaga Lake Cemetery. The grave locations of 96 of these named people are known, 86 are unknown. Most graves are not named on the ground.

The Burial Register is an Excel spreadsheet that can be added to and amended when there is a new burial, or when corrections need to be made to existing information as a result of further research.

Importantly, each entry in the register has a unique number which corresponds to a number on every grave. This number is engraved onto

a metal plate and glued to a brick that is vertically concreted into the ground at the western end of each grave [Figure 16]. This numbering system in a non-obtrusive way to permanently identify each grave. This is particularly important given many families choose not to mark and name graves. Moreover the gentle ambiance of the place is not adversely impacted by the low lying markers.

There are also an additional 144 graves and possible graves identified through GPR and field survey in the cemetery and extension areas for which names have not been found these have also been marked/ numbered on the ground.

Burials in the cemetery include Aboriginal people who passed away at the Wallaga Lake community over the last 115 years, as well those who may

FAMILY NAME	FIRST NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH	GRAVE NUMBER	GRAVE DESCRIPTION	REGISTERED?	SOURCES
Adgerie	Charlie	1.1. 1835	8.01.1905	location unknown	-	YES NSW	Moruya Courthouse records. NSW BDM.
Ahoy	Peter Errol Charles	21.09.1992	12.06.1993	111	white brick edging	YES NSW	NSW BDM.
Andy		1.1.1904	24.04.1907	location unknown	-	YES NSW	NSW BDM. Veronica Andy Beryl Brierley 2014, Arthur Andy 2015.
Andy	Reginald Dennis J	1.05.1945	2.07.1945	location unknown	-	YES NSW	Moruya Courthouse records. NSW BDM. Veronica Andy, Beryl Brierley 2014.
Andy	Male known as 'Andy'	1.1.1825	25.04.1905	location unknown	-	YES NSW	NSW BDM. Moruya Courthouse records.
Andy	Martha	-	24.08.2003	229	white cross, dirt mound	YES NSW	Shirley Foster 2011. Lionel Mongta. Barry Kelly 2015. NSW BDM
Andy	Stanley James 'Dasha'	28.11.1943	7.08.2002	395	wooden box	YES NSW	NSW BDM. . Ivan Thomas 2011. Lionel Mongta 2011. Arthur Andy 2015. Anne Gill 2015. Barry Kelly

Figure 17 Extract from the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery Burial Register 2015

have died elsewhere in Australia and been brought back home to Wallaga Lake to be buried.

Whilst Wallaga Lake cemetery is known as an 'Aboriginal' cemetery, there are several non-Aboriginal burials in the cemetery; a Maori man and woman, two non-Aboriginal babies, and one non-Aboriginal man.

4.3 GRAVES

There are 240 graves and possible graves in the Wallaga Lake Cemetery. As noted above, we know the names of 182 people buried in the cemetery between 1895 and 2015. As at 2015, we know where 96 of these named people are buried. Over time it is hoped that the remaining 86 named ancestors can be matched to some of the 144 unnamed graves.

Across the cemetery there are distinct groupings of graves based on kinship associations. Family grave plots tend to occur in lines, reflecting a wish to be buried close to a relative, sometimes a specific relative. Whilst most of the more recent graves are orientated east west, said to be facing the ocean and rising sun, the older unnamed graves seem randomly placed. Some graves are well tended and cared for, while others are neglected and have deteriorated. Most graves are not named. Some of the graves are very visible, being marked with crosses, a tree, a cement slab and/or various types of monuments, some elaborate, some simple (Figures 18, 19). Other graves are less obvious, being just depressions or mounds. Whilst it is mainly the less obvious graves that remain unnamed, the identity of the people buried in 11 of the more obvious graves [ie, concrete slab] remains unknown.



Figure 18 Typical grave outlined with rocks

Most of the graves in Wallaga Lake Cemetery became invisible over time, now appearing as even, grassed slopes [figure 20]. With the use of GPR technology, these graves have been rediscovered. The GPR surveys have been valuable for detecting possible graves beneath the surface without having to dig and disturb the burials. 143 graves and possible graves were detected with the use of the GPR across the current cemetery and the proposed extensions. It is not possible to be 100% certain that the GPR signal represents a grave but a rectangular shape appearing on the graphs is a good indicator that a grave is present.

So far, only 6 of the 143 GPR graves correspond with people's memories of where people were buried. These graves have now been permanently marked and numbered (Figure 21) and belong to Trevor Gregory Harrison



Figure 19 Graves marked with concrete slabs and wooden crosses 2012



Figure 20 Unmarked graves covered with grass 2012

[deceased 1948], John Mumbulla [deceased 1952], Charles Brown [deceased 1952], Edward Hoskins [deceased 1954], Rawdon Parsons [deceased 1955] and Florence June Pickalla [deceased 1956]. It is hoped that further archival research and oral history recording may identify the names for more graves. They may be too old for people to remember. This is especially true for the group of GPR sites in the north east corner of the cemetery; no one alive today knew this area contained graves.

The GPR map shows some disturbed areas, where the cause of the disturbance is unknown. Also a few small areas inside the cemetery were not surveyed due to logistical or technical constraints. Five particular areas within the current fenced cemetery not covered by the GPR survey were identified through oral history consultations as being the graves of certain individuals; the graves of Welby James Scott and Albert 'Soldier Boy' Scott are thought to be side by side between graves 169 and 197, and the graves of Edward 'Eddie' Parsons, Lawrence 'Laurie' Parsons and Costin 'Costy' Parsons are thought to be side by side south east of grave 177. These five burials are included in the 86 burials for which a location is not known and the five names will appear on the memorial wall [see section 4.4]. Until further GPR survey work is carried out over these particular areas where these men are believed to be buried, the areas have been declared 'no dig' zones.

The cemetery also contains a number of repatriations of human skeletal remains from ancient archaeological sites, which have been returned from museums, or were found elsewhere. Information about the repatriations is mostly anecdotal, the only documentation being for a burial found at Bondi Lake near Merimbula in the 1970s. GPR survey has picked up signals



Figure 21 Permanent markers for the graves where oral history and GPR results matched

inside and outside the current entrance which may represent repatriations which would correlate with the anecdotal information.

Figure 23 [see map insert] is the survey plan of the existing cemetery and proposed extensions, showing the locations of the 240 graves and possible graves. Each grave has been allocated two consecutive numbers that mark each end of the grave and show its orientation. The odd number of the pair is inscribed on the metal plate marking the grave on the ground, typically at the western end.



Figure 22 Memorial wall - built 2014

4.4 MEMORIAL WALL

The memorial wall is seen by the community as very important for acknowledging ancestors whose whereabouts in the cemetery is unknown (Figure 22). The intention of the memorial wall is to display the names of the 86 people buried in the cemetery between 1895 and 1993, for which a grave location has not been identified. Also included on the wall are the names of people whose grave locations are uncertain or the subject of dispute.



NORTH

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**PLAN OF
 WALLAGA LAKE CEMETERY**

REDUCTION RATIO: 1:200	OUR REF: DWG6040C
DATUM: -----	CONTOUR INTERVAL: -----
DATE: MARCH 2015	SHEET 1 OF 2 SHEETS



Figure 24 *Vegetated headland, Cemetery Point*

4.5 GEOLOGY AND VEGETATION

The bedrock geology consists of tightly folded Ordovician sediments which have undergone varying degrees of metamorphism. These formations consist of thinly bedded slates, phyllites, schists, quartzite and meta sandstone, with some cherts and tuffs (Hanslow 1992). The rocks are often characterised by quartz veins of up to 10 cm thickness (Geology Survey of NSW 1975). Topsoil is generally thin and highly compacted and digging for graves is difficult without use of machinery.

More than half the cemetery has been cleared of original forest, with a number of mature eucalypts remaining throughout the cemetery. The eastern and southern boundaries are still covered in native forest while the north side is cleared down to the water's edge, except for fringing



Figure 25 *Native Blue Bell across cemetery*

Casuarinas. Thus, the cemetery is shielded from the public eye from most directions (Figure 24).

Much of the vegetation must be regrowth because photographs from the early 1970s show a largely cleared landscape. Several plantings mark graves and there is considerable *Acacia Melanoxly* (black wattle) regrowth. The understory consists of native (*Themeda* sp) and introduced grasses and scattered flowering shrubs (Figure 25).

4.6. FENCES

Fences surrounding the cemetery have been moved a number of times in the last decade or so. The northern fence is wire and is complete [figure 26]. The western fence has the main entrance and an ancillary entrance to the north, which used to be the main entrance [figure 27]. The western fence line is marked by vertical posts only, as the horizontal posts were removed in 2014. A sandstone memorial wall was built in 2014, embedded in a row of newly planted small trees, marking the new western edge of the cemetery.

The eastern fence line was moved to its current position in the 1980s and post holes of the earlier fence line are clearly visible. The southern boundary is not defined; there is no fence, although posts and post holes marking the earlier fence line are visible. Guy ropes extend into the



Figure 26 Northern fence line



Figure 27 Western fence line

cemetery from an electricity pole in the southwest corner, where there is also a large pile of excavated sediment.

4.7. ACCESS AND ROADS

From where the sealed road ends, a rough unsealed vehicle track continues across a partially grassed mound and divides into two (Figure 28). Vehicles going into the cemetery drive along the dirt track and enter through the main western entrance. Parking tends to occur all over the mounded area. A poorly maintained fence along the northern side separates forest from the grassed area. The northern dirt track extends in a northerly direction down to the oyster shed with another track turning east and passing through the cemetery extension down to fishing spots on the lakeshore. These tracks are currently impacting several GPR graves.

Highly disturbed and fragmented shell midden material can be seen in patches on the dirt tracks. These exposures and the possible extent of the midden is shown in Figure 28. Anecdotal evidence from community elders indicates that when the sealed road was being built, it was terminated at its current location to avoid this midden.

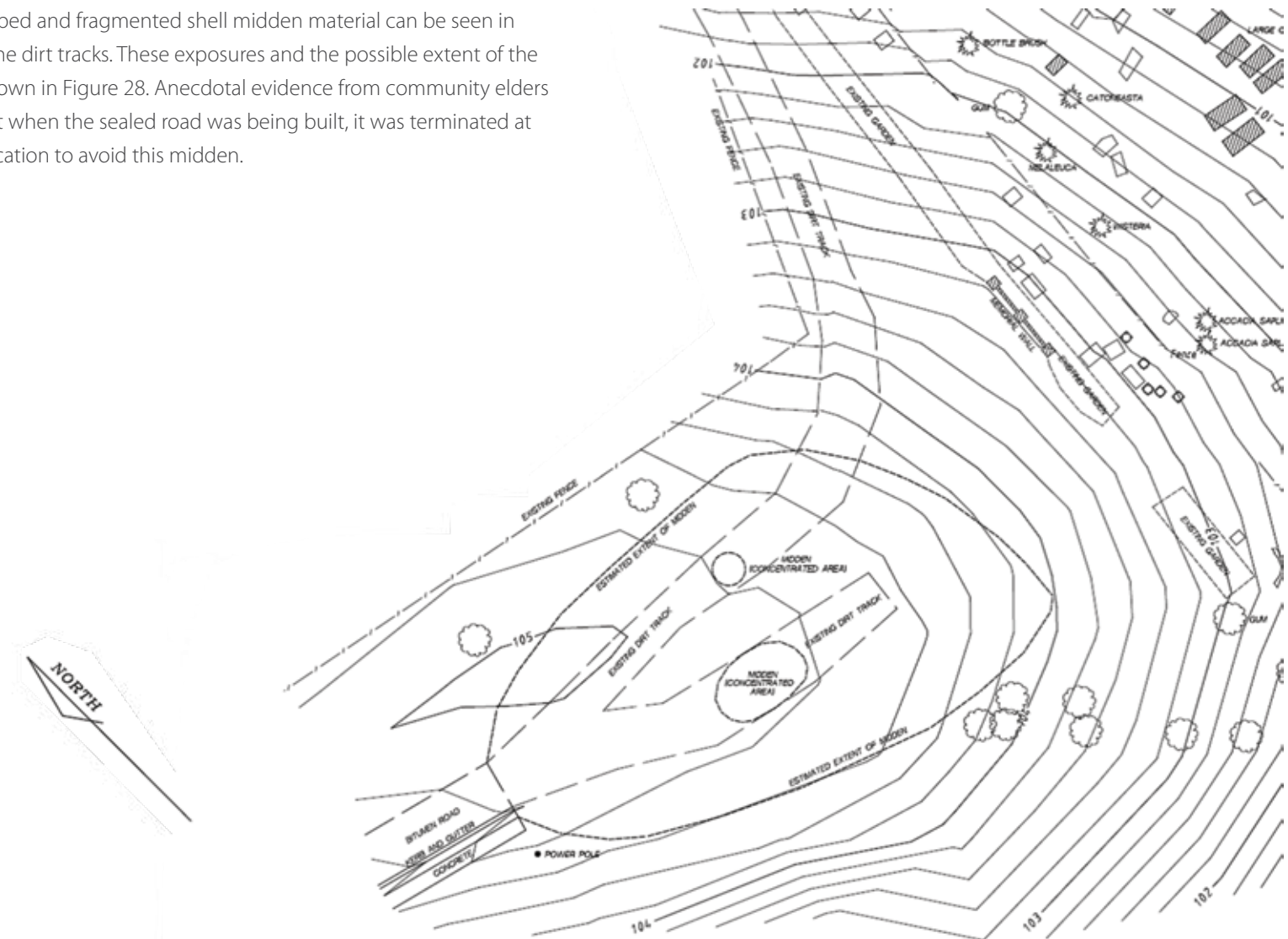


Figure 28 Extract from survey plan showing western side of cemetery with tracks and extent of midden

5. Legal framework

Several pieces of NSW legislation are relevant to the Wallaga Lake cemetery.

5.1 NSW ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS ACT 1983

The passing of the NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act in 1983 enabled a portion of the former Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Reserve, including the cemetery, to be transferred to the newly formed Merrimans LALC in 1984. Under this Act, the MLALC has a legal responsibility for managing the property and its associated Aboriginal cultural heritage, with funding allocations from the State Aboriginal Land Council.

5.2 EUROBODALLA LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (LEP)

The zoning on the Eurobodalla LEP determines what is and is not permissible on lands owned by the Merrimans LALC, such as certain activities or certain types of buildings or structures. It also determines which developments require a permit. The land, including the cemetery is currently zoned 1(a) – Rural, under the Eurobodalla Rural LEP 1987 (Figure 29). The cemetery does not have a separate listing as a heritage item under the Eurobodalla LEP 2012.

5.3 HERITAGE REGISTERS

The cemetery is not listed on any State or National heritage registers.

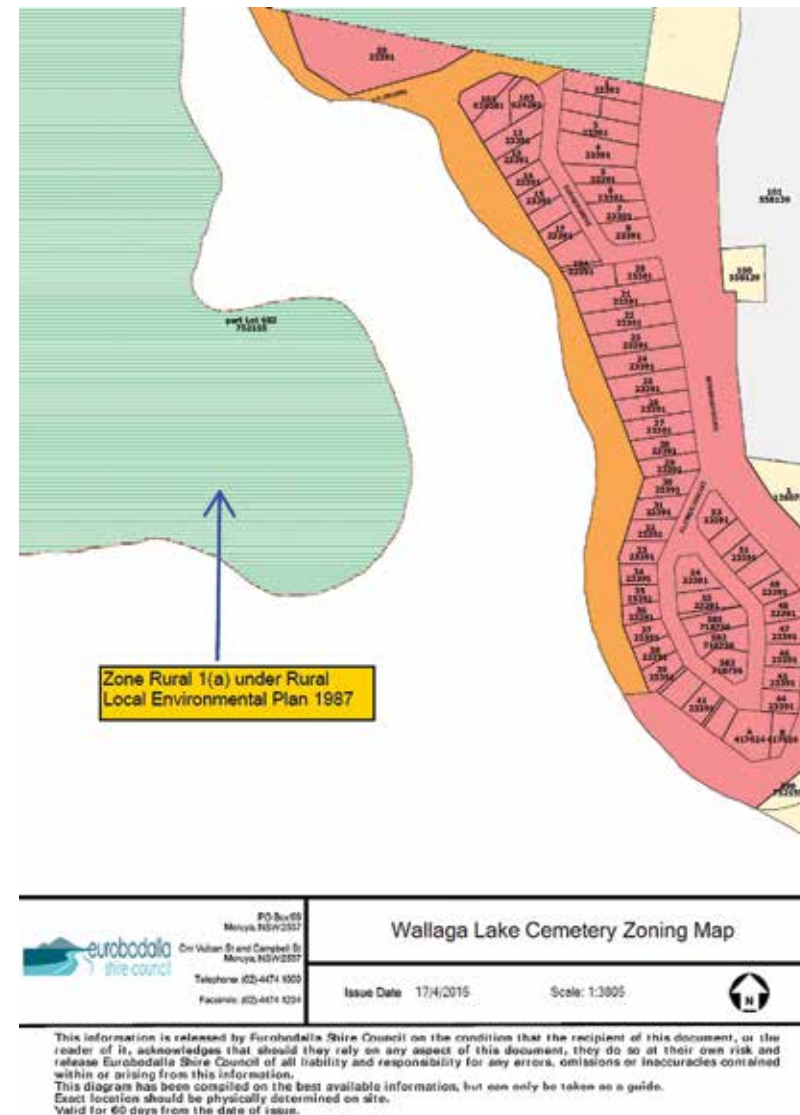


Figure 29 Excerpt from Eurobodalla Shire LEP 2012

5.4 NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE ACT 1974

This Act is currently administered by the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage. It gives legal protection to all Aboriginal objects in New South Wales, relating to past Aboriginal occupation and use of the land, through to the contact period. The cemetery was first recorded by NPWS in the early 1970s and is listed on the OEH database of sites [Aboriginal Heritage Information System (AHIMS)].

The cemetery also contains Aboriginal shell midden material which has been disturbed by the digging of graves over many decades and more recently by digging holes to put in grave numbers. Technically this is an offence under the NPW Act and advice is required from OEH in relation to ongoing use of the cemetery.

The community is considering seeking a listing of the cemetery as an Aboriginal Place under Section 86 of the NPW Act. An Aboriginal Place is normally used to recognise places of spiritual or cultural significance that don't necessarily show physical evidence of Aboriginal use or occupation. It is uncertain what constraints an Aboriginal Place declaration would have on continuing use of the area as a cemetery.

5.5 CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM ACT 2013

This is the main legislation governing cemetery management in NSW and regulates all three areas of the interment sector – Crown, private and local, through establishment of Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW (CCNSW), a government agency with regulatory oversight of the industry and responsibility for administering the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013. The CCNSW maintains a register of all cemeteries in NSW; the Wallaga Lake cemetery is not listed, but neither are most Aboriginal cemeteries.

A "Cemetery" as defined by the Act includes the following places:

- (a) a reserve or part of a reserve dedicated or reserved as a public cemetery under the *Crown Lands Act 1989*

- (b) a private cemetery or other place approved for that purpose by a local government authority, subject to the requirements of the Public Health Regulation 2012, which arises from the *Public Health (Disposal of Bodies) Regulation 2002*. The regulation covers such matters as how deep the grave must be, forms that must be completed at death, and the keeping of a register of burials. It is the legal responsibility of the Funeral Director to register each death. Local funeral directors liaise with the family and arrange for each death to be registered with the New South Wales or Victoria Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The Wallaga Lake Cemetery does not appear to comply with this new legislation. It also appears that local government can have an involvement as an approving authority for the cemetery.

PART TWO

*Management Plan for the
Wallaga Lake Cemetery*

PART TWO: Management Plan for the Wallaga Lake Cemetery

1 Vision for the future

COMMUNITY VISION



To care for the ancestors buried in the cemetery and to ensure ongoing use of the cemetery for future generations





Figure 30 Caring for the Ancestors

2 Values of the cemetery to Aboriginal people

Discussions at the planning workshops have shown that the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Cemetery is very important for the following reasons.

Aboriginal ownership – it is important for the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community that they hold the freehold title to the land on which the cemetery is located. It is also important that they retain community based management of the site, on behalf of Aboriginal families across the region.

Ancestors' resting place – the cemetery is valued and respected as the resting place for all burials over the past 120 years regardless of whether or not they are known. The oldest graves are associated with the original inhabitants of the region born into a traditional lifestyle. The cemetery is also valued as a safe place to repatriate the remains of people who were associated with the south coast region in pre-contact times.

A place to remember – the cemetery is associated with stories about family members, community people and past events. The very existence of the place is associated with the history of segregation when Aboriginal people weren't allowed to live or be buried in nearby town cemeteries. Land was first set aside in 1880 and the Aboriginal Reserve was gazetted in 1891; many early deaths and burials were recorded just one decade later, from 1901. The memorial wall is a community initiative giving recognition to those buried at unknown locations within the cemetery.

Spiritual connections – the cemetery is seen as a place where people return to the spiritual realm, return to country, return to the Dreaming, return to Gulaga. Nearing death people are known to return to the region to ensure their burial at Wallaga Lake and more specifically close to Gulaga Mountain.

Family connections – the cemetery is an important place for family groups to express their genealogical identity and cultural connectedness with their country. Families who have moved or were forcibly moved off their traditional lands and onto the reserve also value the cemetery as a place to bury their kin and retain their historical familial connections to the area.

On-going use as a cemetery – it is vitally important for the members of the Wallaga Lake Community and the broader Aboriginal community to continue to bury loved ones at Wallaga Lake, rather than in nearby public cemeteries. The Wallaga Lake Cemetery is intertwined with Aboriginal cultural identity and is a key element of the broader cultural landscape.

Archaeological sites – it is important that the shell middens recorded in the cemetery and in the car park area are properly recorded and protected.

3 Threats to the values

Aboriginal community members are worried that the cemetery's values are being threatened in the following ways.

Disturbance to burials – community concerns over disturbance to burials was one of the main reasons for doing research on where people are buried in the cemetery. The GPR work and the permanent marking and numbering of all graves has considerably reduced this threat. However, disturbance to graves can still be caused if new graves are dug without first checking the ground and map for the location of graves. Disturbance and damage can also occur from vandalism through inappropriate behaviour; falling tree limbs [figure 31]; fire [figure 32]; tree roots; motor bikes and vehicles driving through or around the cemetery. Soil erosion from heavy rain can also damage graves.



Figure 31 Fallen tree limb 2014

Figure 32 Burial sites affected by an escaped fire 2014

Lack of community / MLALC capacity to manage the cemetery – certain skills and resources are required to maintain the cemetery records and to implement a regular maintenance program. The MLALC and community currently do not have all the necessary skills or experience. Furthermore, the materials, equipment, machinery and storage space required for good management are not adequate or are absent altogether.

Lack of maintenance of cemetery grounds – this has been identified as the major threat to the cemetery. If activities such as lawn mowing, rubbish removal, fence repairs, checking condition of numbers and markers or tree pruning are not undertaken on a regular basis, the cemetery quickly looks neglected and shows disrespect to ancestors (Figure 33 and 34). Long grass also discourages people accessing the site due to concerns about snakes and potential injury. Numbered pavers may also get hidden in the long grass. Uncontrolled growth of shrubs and small trees may take up potential future grave space.



Figure 33 Long grass across cemetery grounds 2012

Figure 34 Rotten fallen crosses 2013

Lack of maintenance of individual named graves – family members are responsible for the care of their ancestors' graves. This means repairing any damage, keeping the grave neat and tidy and replacing lost or damaged items. Many of the graves in the cemetery are not regularly visited or looked after by family members, which adds to the general air of neglect and can be distressing [figure 34]. In some cases there is family disagreement over the location of graves which could lead to lack of regular maintenance and the grave location not being acknowledged or marked.

Lack of funding to maintain cemetery grounds and unnamed individual graves – the cemetery grounds, including fences, unknown graves, GPR sites, vegetation and entrance way, are the responsibility of the MLALC who are often not adequately funded to undertake the regular tasks needed to keep the cemetery in good order.

Losing Aboriginal control over management of cemetery – some community members are worried that the cemetery might be closed like it was in the 1970s, because it does not comply with certain rules and regulations. They are also concerned that another agency such as the Eurobodalla Shire Council may take over management.

Negative impacts on the feel of the place – this refers to the cemetery entrance area and the approach along Cemetery Point Road which contains abandoned vehicles, rubbish and has unkempt road verges. The cemetery entrance has no formal car parking areas and there are no controls over noisy trail bikes driving through the cemetery to the oyster shed. All these factors affect the look of the place. People's emotional experience at the cemetery can be negatively affected by what they see.

Lack of registration of burials – currently 20% of burials at Wallaga Lake cemetery are not registered with New South Wales Births, Deaths and Marriages. This is the responsibility of the funeral director but families must check that it has happened. Not only is it illegal to not register a death, without a record family members will have to rely on their memories about who was buried and when they were buried and also why they died. Without the records, the history of the cemetery will be lost over time.

The locations of new graves will not be properly recorded – if new graves are not marked on the ground with their allocated numbers and not added to the map and burial register, their locations and the names of the people buried there may be forgotten over time [figure 35].



Figure 35 Old unmarked graves get forgotten over time if not recorded and marked

Lack of records associated with repatriations – generally there is poor documentation of repatriations at the cemetery and as a result, there is uncertainty about the location of repatriated remains, making them vulnerable to disturbance.

Lack of information about unnamed graves – the 144 unnamed graves are not currently linked to any particular family, and are therefore vulnerable to neglect. As GPR did not cover 100% of the cemetery, there may still be graves to be found.

Disturbance to archaeological sites – digging graves has disturbed middens in the past and the midden in the car park is very disturbed by vehicles and erosion [figure 36]. Other unrecorded archaeological sites may be disturbed in the future.



Figure 36 Cemetery car park on midden material 2015

4 Objectives for achieving vision

The values and threats identified by the community have been analysed in terms of what is needed to minimise the threats and ensure protection of the values. A series of objectives and associated actions have been generated to capture all the values and threats. The two overriding values of the cemetery are as a historical place of great cultural significance and as a resting place for current and future generations. Many of the threats arise from the community's current limited capacity to protect these values. These two major values and the desire of the community to improve their capacity to protect these values provide the framework for the objectives.

OBJECTIVE 1: Maintain cemetery grounds and infrastructure in good condition

- To facilitate access by family.
- For the continuing function as a cemetery.
- To show respect to ancestors and express community pride.

OBJECTIVE 2: Individual graves are maintained and cared for

- As a source of family pride.
- To show respect to family members who have passed away.
- To contribute to the overall appearance of the cemetery and therefore community pride.

OBJECTIVE 3: Establish workable systems for updating, storing and accessing cemetery records

- There is currently no mechanism for updating and storing records including for repatriations.
- Accessing records is important for families seeking information about their loved ones who have passed away.
- Marking the position of graves on maps and on the ground will prevent accidental disturbance to existing graves.
- Keeping records will minimise any future uncertainty about where or when people were buried.

OBJECTIVE 4: The cemetery is managed as a peaceful, spiritual and historical place, connected to the surrounding environment

- As the ancestors' resting place.
- As an important part of the broader Aboriginal history of the area.
- As a place where Aboriginal people can reflect on the past.
- As a place for appropriate community activities.

OBJECTIVE 5: All existing known graves and possible graves (identified by GPR) are protected and acknowledged

- Graves are part of individual and community cultural heritage.
- Disturbance is distressing to the community.
- Further research may identify unnamed graves.

OBJECTIVE 6: Cemetery is managed sustainably by the community for ongoing use as a cemetery

- One of only a few functioning Aboriginal cemeteries on NSW south coast/far south coast.
- Family members want to bury relatives close to those already in the cemetery.
- Important resting place for Aboriginal people from a wide area.
- Enables people to be buried at a place that is significant to them – part of country and/or historical associations.
- Important to keep community control over management.

OBJECTIVE 7: Continue to improve knowledge about the history of the cemetery and who is buried there

- There are still 144 unnamed graves and 86 named people buried in the cemetery for which a grave location is not known.
- Information on the history of the cemetery is still lacking.
- Information about repatriations is still very incomplete.

OBJECTIVE 8: Cemetery is managed according to all legal requirements

- Protect archaeological sites such as shell middens, scarred trees and stone artefacts.
- Protect endangered plant species.
- Register all deaths with NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages.
- Comply with Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013.

OBJECTIVE 9: Cemetery approach and entrance area is redesigned and upgraded

- To improve the feel and appearance of the cemetery approach.
- To regulate car parking.
- To cater for elders with a toilet and shelter area.
- To protect the midden in the car park.
- To protect GPR graves in northern and western cemetery extension areas by preventing vehicle access.

5. Actions

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020			
NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
1	Maintain cemetery grounds and infrastructure in good condition	New cemetery committee to draw up and implement a regular maintenance program (see Objective 5). Allocate tasks and seek volunteers or identify paid positions. Identify machinery, tools and labour required for rubbish removal, lawn mowing, whipper snipping, trimming vegetation and checking condition of graves.	VERY HIGH
		Identify suitable location for, and erect, a storage shed.	HIGH
		Build new fences to define the extended cemetery on the northern and western sides, in accordance with landscape plan (see Objective 3)	HIGH
		Identify and remove any problem trees. Trim trees and lop branches in accordance with the landscape plan (see Objective 3).	MEDIUM
		Purchase machinery, tools and equipment, as required.	MEDIUM
		Repair or replace existing fences in accordance with landscape plan (see Objective 3).	LOW
		Protection of the cemetery from fire (wild or lit) is to be included in any future fire management plan for the village or surrounding region.	ONGOING

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
2	Individual graves are maintained and cared for	Ensure suitable materials and appropriate tools are available for families to mark graves.	MEDIUM
		Develop protocols for MLALC to inform families if work is needed on a grave.	MEDIUM
		Ensure that the wider south coast Aboriginal community is aware they have ancestors buried in the cemetery.	ONGOING
		Unnamed or GPR graves will be maintained through the regular maintenance program as they have no known relatives to care for them.	ONGOING
3	The cemetery is managed as a peaceful, spiritual and historical place	Prepare a landscape plan in consultation with the community which addresses key elements of the cemetery – privacy, pedestrian paths, vehicle access, seats, no-dig zones, plantings, tree management and fencing style and materials.	VERY HIGH
		Arborist to assess existing forest surrounding the cemetery and provide advice on conditions of trees and recommend actions in regard to safety, potential damage to graves, retaining privacy, shade and ambience.	VERY HIGH
		Prepare an implementation plan for landscaping activities, to involve community or family groups. Undertake activities as funding and resources allow.	MEDIUM

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
4	All existing known and GPR graves are protected and acknowledged	Landscape plan to show: - all GPR graves (individual graves/groups of graves) as no-dig areas with a suitable buffer.	HIGH
		No-dig areas to be suitably identified on the grounds by installing large rocks and using strategic planting of vegetation; - where vehicles can go; - where new fences can be built.	HIGH
		Move the current entrance to minimise the need to drive over possible burials identified around the existing entrance by GPR survey.	HIGH
		Protocols to be developed for showing excavator driver where to go, this will include referring to the map of grave locations.	HIGH
		Reroute tracks to oyster shed and fishing spots beside lake to avoid GPR graves (see Objective 9).	HIGH
		Seek funding to produce an information sign outside cemetery entrance showing the survey map with numbered graves.	MEDIUM
		Engrave names for memorial wall plaques based on revised register [see listing].	MEDIUM
		Activities requiring ground disturbance (apart from grave digging), such as digging postholes for a new fence, to be monitored in case burials are encountered.	ONGOING

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
5	Cemetery is sustainably managed by the community for ongoing use as a cemetery	Establish a cemetery committee with representatives from key families and the Merrimans LALC board.	VERY HIGH
		Seek recurrent funding from NSW Aboriginal Land Council and/or other sources to implement the cemetery maintenance program.	HIGH
		Develop a system for family members to inform Merrimans LALC of any concerns they have regarding cemetery management and maintenance, and vice versa.	MEDIUM
		Consider gazettal as an Aboriginal Place, or listing on local and/or national heritage as a possible way of attracting funding and to give greater recognition to the cultural significance of the cemetery.	LOW
		All new graves are to be marked and numbered on the ground as soon as possible after the funeral and the map is to be updated. Obtain new number, mark grave with number and desired grave marker.	ONGOING
		Undertake regular reviews of the maintenance program.	ONGOING
		Use standard registration forms when there is a burial so that the MLALC can update burial register and survey map. See Appendix 1 for burial registration forms.	ONGOING

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
6	Establish workable systems for updating, storing and accessing cemetery records	Develop a protocol for community access to burial register.	HIGH
		Governance, maintaining cemetery records.	MEDIUM
		Establish an arrangement with surveyor John Healey to have hard copy and electronic copies of his survey maps updated and re-printed on an as needs basis or at least annually.	MEDIUM
		Lodge a copy of the 2015 management plan, associated research reports, burial register and survey plan with Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, local historical societies, Eurobodalla Shire Council [including libraries], National Library and NSW Office of Environment and Heritage [AHIMS].	MEDIUM
		Hard copies of burial register [or relevant sections of] to be made available to extended next of kin upon request, until an access protocol is developed by the cemetery committee.	ONGOING
		The burial register is to be updated by MLALC CEO for every new burial and for any new information. This is to be done electronically and by hard copy on the Excel spreadsheet.	ONGOING
		Excel spreadsheet of burial register to be backed up on a regular basis by MLALC CEO.	ONGOING

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
7	Continue to improve knowledge about the history of the cemetery and who is buried there	Conduct further analysis of Aboriginal Protection Board records to expand knowledge on the early history of the cemetery.	HIGH
		Undertake more GPR in targeted areas to identify graves which may be those of Welby James Scott and Albert 'Soldierboy' Scott [thought to be buried side by side between graves 169 and 197] and Edward 'Eddie' Parsons, Lawrence 'Laurie' Parsons and Costin 'Costy' Parsons [thought to be buried side by side south east of grave 177].	MEDIUM
		Ongoing research to include asking family members visiting the cemetery for information about burial names and grave locations.	LOW
		Investigate Colin Pardoe's records held by Adelaide Museum, and reports by Dennis Byrne for the National Parks and Wildlife Service Cemetery publication.	LOW
		Conduct further research into the location of "Queen Narelle's" grave.	LOW
8	Cemetery is managed according to all legal requirements	Conduct heritage and environmental assessment as necessary for all new developments with potential impacts on the natural and cultural environments, eg, new roads to comply with Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and National Parks and Wildlife Act.	ONGOING
		All deaths are registered with Births, Deaths and Marriages [this is the responsibility of funeral director – family to ensure the funeral director has the required information].	ONGOING
		Archaeological sites and endangered species of fauna and flora are protected. Appropriate permits are obtained, where required.	ONGOING
		Any shell midden material observed while digging new graves or putting in permanent numbers is to be recorded and marked on the survey map.	ONGOING
		Requirements of Public Health Act and Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2013 are met, eg, Register cemetery with Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW.	ONGOING

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY MANAGEMENT ACTIONS 2015 – 2020

NO	OBJECTIVE	ACTION	PRIORITY
9	Cemetery approach and entrance area is redesigned and upgraded	Relocate current cemetery entrance to facilitate vehicle access that avoids GPR sites (see Objective 4).	HIGH
		Design a turning area for the hearse to back in through entrance to unload coffins.	HIGH
		Construct a formal access road for the hearse along the southern existing dirt track extension of Cemetery Point Road [note: this may require an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit from Office of Environment and Heritage to allow harm to the midden exposed on the track].	HIGH
		A new car parking area to be developed adjacent to where the tar seal ends.	HIGH
		Close current informal tracks to oyster shed and lake shore to avoid all GPR graves.	HIGH
		Remove rubbish along Cemetery Point Road and mow verges on a regular basis.	HIGH
		Explore feasibility of a new access track from the new car park along a previous, now closed access route.	MEDIUM
		Install an information sign at entrance and/or in car park (see Objective 4).	MEDIUM
		Vehicle access will be confined to formalised roads and the car parking area. Vehicles will not be permitted anywhere else.	ONGOING
		To protect the remainder of the shell midden, stabilise, rehabilitate and revegetate the entire mounded area [note: this may require an AHIP].	MEDIUM
Investigate feasibility of installing a toilet and shelter at the new car park.	MEDIUM		

6. Review of plan

This plan is to be reviewed by the cemetery committee every five years, to check whether objectives are still appropriate and to assess the effects of any legislation changes etc.

The implementation of the plan should be reviewed annually to determine which actions have been carried out.



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Appendix 1: Burial and death registration check lists

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY

BURIAL CHECK LIST – family members

BEFORE THE FUNERAL

- Have you looked at the survey plan to check for any unmarked graves in the area you want to dig? Check with the land council that you are looking at the latest map, confirm burial location with land council.
.....
- Have you looked on the ground for numbered pavers in the area you want to dig? Each of these mark the western side of potential graves and should be avoided.
.....
- Are you aware that there may be graves even if they are not marked on map or on ground? Take extra care when digging.
.....
- Is a double grave required at this site in the future? Depth to be double and note allowance on register.
.....
- Does the burial require an existing grave to be reopened [for ashes to be added or for a double burial]? Have all direct family members been notified? Consider the requirements of the Public Health Act?
.....
- Has the excavator seen the landscape plan to check vehicle access and no dig zones?
.....

AFTER THE FUNERAL

- Have you requested or received a grave number from the land council?
.....
- Have you filled out the Wallaga Lake Cemetery Burial Registration form? Fill out and give to the land council.
.....
- Have you received confirmation from the NSW Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages, that the death has been registered? This is the responsibility of funeral director.
.....

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY

BURIAL REGISTRATION FORM – family members

This information will be placed on the Wallaga Lake Cemetery burial register.

Full name of deceased:

Other names [nick names]:

Date of birth:

Date of death:

Parents:

Next of kin and contact details [person/ people responsible for looking after grave]:

Burial location [eg, next to grave #...]:

Grave marker [head stone, rocks, shells...]:

Grave identification number:

Other requests [eg, instructions for double burials]

IMPORTANT: Have you received confirmation from the NSW Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages that the death has been registered? *Follow this up with the funeral director.*

WALLAGA LAKE ABORIGINAL CEMETERY

CHECK LIST FOR NEW BURIAL

Maintaining cemetery records - MLALC

IMMEDIATELY AFTER FUNERAL

- Has the grave been drawn onto the survey plan?
If not, do this in consultation with family.

- Has the grave been allocated a number? *If not, do this by checking what the last allocated number was [see the burial register].*

- Has the new allocated number paver been stamped and concreted into the ground at the head of the grave?

- Have you updated cemetery register? *Use details from the burial registration form or get details from family.*

- Did the community receive any new information about the cemetery [burial locations, historical details]? *Add to register.*

ANNUAL JOBS

- Have you updated, saved and renamed the next version of the register?

- Have you arranged for any new burials to be added to the survey plan? *Contact surveyor to plot in new burials and produce an updated map.*

- Have you saved the updated documents off site for back up?
Save to icloud.

- Have you checked with the MLALC board / community members that the current management plan of the cemetery is good / working?

- Have you checked the condition of the cemetery?
Is maintenance needed to trim trees, fix graves, cut grass, fix fences. Report to MLALC board.



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