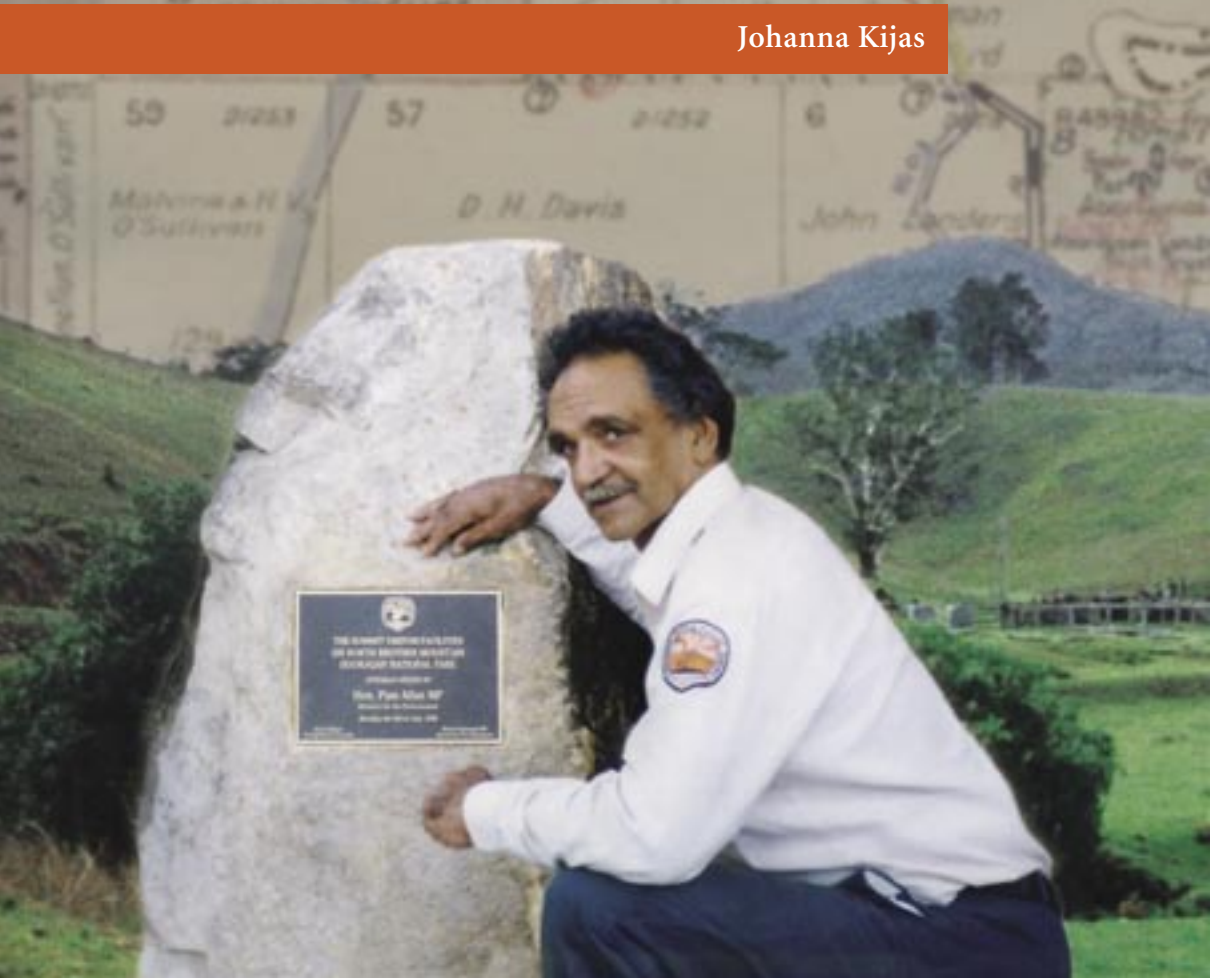


Revival, Renewal & Return

Ray Kelly

& the NSW Sites of Significance Survey

Johanna Kijas



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CULTURAL IMPORTANCE.
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Wm. Fairbairn in 1840
and is one of the oldest
trading facilities in the
Sydney Harbour area.

Revival, Renewal & Return

Ray Kelly

& the NSW Sites of Significance Survey

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Johanna Kijas



Department of
Environment and Conservation (NSW)

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Aboriginal readers are warned that this book contains the names and images of some Aboriginal people who are deceased.

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Left: Detail from photo showing Ray's last boxing match, Armidale 1966 aged 28.
Centre: The Kelly family at Grafton, 1979.
Right: Len and Ethel De Silva at the football in Sydney, 1960s.

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Aboriginal readers are warned that this book contains the names and images of some Aboriginal people who are now deceased.

Foreword

Since the establishment of the National Parks & Wildlife Service in 1967 the management and conservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales has developed and changed significantly. This publication, *Revival, Renewal & Return, Ray Kelly and the NSW Sites of Significance Survey*, traces something of the extraordinary beginnings of this process.

It's easy to forget how far we have travelled and this book is a salient reminder of the remarkable journey that has and continues to characterise our role in the protection of Aboriginal culture in New South Wales. Just over thirty years ago, little was known about the breadth, depth or complexity of the contemporary connections of Aboriginal people to heritage landscapes and significant sites throughout NSW. The NSW Sites of Significance Survey, and in particular the work of Ray Kelly and other members of the survey team, wrought immense change in our management, conservation and knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The survey team pioneered a methodology for recording Aboriginal heritage in NSW that was based solidly on the value that this heritage has to Aboriginal people themselves. We are still learning and the job of recording and protecting places significant to Aboriginal people continues today, supported by a statewide network of skilled Aboriginal cultural heritage staff.

The legacy of the Sites of Significance Survey should not be underestimated. Ray and the survey team's work continues to inform DEC's work. The main themes of this book — revival, renewal and return — underpin our key Aboriginal cultural heritage programs, including the Aboriginal Place and the Repatriation programs, and are evident in DEC's ongoing support of culture camps and co-management of conservation reserves.

As the work of Aboriginal cultural heritage conservation enters the twenty-first century it is timely to reflect on our beginnings and the achievements of Ray Kelly and a team of passionate and dedicated individuals who shared his enthusiasm and commitment. It gives us great satisfaction to be able to chronicle this ambitious and challenging chapter in our corporate history.

Jason Ardler

*Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Division,
Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW)*

Acknowledgements

My work in Australian race relations history and Aboriginal cultural heritage meant that I had long heard of Ray Kelly and the pioneering work of the New South Wales Sites of Significance Survey team. I therefore eagerly accepted the opportunity to work with the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) to write a publication focusing on the life and work of Ray Kelly and the survey.

I have only met Ray once, in May 2004 at an event hosted by the DEC celebrating thirty years since the survey team began their work. Therefore, what I have come to learn about Ray is through his own writings and more importantly through the family, friends and colleagues represented in this book. It has been my great privilege to meet and work with all those interviewed, and I thank them for generously sharing their stories and reflections on Ray and aspects of his life with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Many thanks to the Kelly siblings for their hospitality and warm working relationship in producing the family chapter: to John, Tina, Thelma and their families in Kempsey; Ray Jnr in Sydney; Laurel, their mother Alice, Leah, John Boy, Tina and their families in Batemans Bay; and Alan and his family in Tamworth. It is through the whole family's determination that their father's work be honoured that this book was initiated.

I greatly enjoyed meeting members of the original survey team, Harry Creamer, and Glen Morris, and thank them for their insights into the different social and political world of the 1970s and early 1980s. Sharon Sullivan, John Delaney, Ned Icton, Ted Fields, and Neville Buchanan were all generous in their time and insights into Ray's world. Thanks also to Laurel Vale for her memories of her handsome teenage brother, and Leanora Morris for insights into the family pressures of living with men whose hearts lay with their work for NPWS.

Dee Murphy and Cheryl Brown's 2002/03 interviews with Ray provided further assistance in understanding Ray's early life. Special thanks to Gary Currey who enabled the book to be completed by reading the chapters to Ray while he was hospitalised and working with him on the Afterword. Particular thanks to Laurel McKenzie for her co-ordination and liaison between family members and the DEC, and her genial working relationship with me. James Drown has carefully edited the book you have before you, and Gabrielle Tydd from Jelly Design has produced the book's compelling and engaging design. Sharon Veale, research historian for the DEC, has been the dedicated project manager for this book. She has always been generous with her time, and has critically read and provided

feedback on all chapters. I have appreciated her deep knowledge of the history of the organisation.

Jo Kijas, March 2005

Introduction: working with a passion

Jo Kijas

Ray (Shoonkley, Tiger) Kelly began his career with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in late May 1973 as the Aboriginal research officer on the Sites of Significance Survey. He was the first Aboriginal person employed by NPWS, and the survey was a bold step taken towards the systematic documentation of Aboriginal heritage across New South Wales. For Ray, the survey and his work with NPWS was never just a job but a passionate way of life. This book acknowledges, and reflects on, Ray's pioneering work with the NPWS, especially during the formative decade of the survey, from 1973 to 1983.

Ray began work alongside the other initial recruit to the survey, anthropologist Howard (Harry) Creamer. Together, they started what became an extraordinary journey recording significant sites for Aboriginal people across New South Wales – a journey that took Ray deep into a 'mind-boggling' landscape of enduring philosophical questions and ideas regarding Aboriginal culture, contemporary politics and government bureaucracies.

Ray is a Dughutti man from the Macleay region of the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. He was born in January 1938, and spent the first sixteen years of his life on isolated Bellbrook Mission near Kempsey. Ray says this experience endowed him with a knowledge of and life-long interest in his Aboriginal life-ways and culture which eventually brought him to the survey and a career with the NPWS that would span 22 years.¹

The NSW Sites of Significance Survey commenced in 1973 and concluded in 1987. In his unpublished 1984 report on the survey, *A Gift and a Dreaming*, Howard Creamer wrote that its work:

has proved a watershed in cultural resource management. Where previously it was thought that [NSW] Aboriginal people had lost contact with their sites and could never regain it, it has now been demonstrated that both these assumptions are incorrect. The corollary of this is that eventually a way must be found for the primary responsibility for sites to be returned to Aboriginal communities.

The survey team pioneered a process of site recording and assessment in NSW that recognised cultural continuity through stories and landscape, and contributed to a process of cultural revival in Aboriginal communities throughout the 1970s and 1980s that continues to inform Aboriginal cultural heritage work today.

Ray began work with the NPWS during a time of momentous social and political

change for Aboriginal Australians. Only just emerging from the smothering effects of assimilation on Aboriginal cultural expression, the 1970s held a new sense of promise for Aboriginal control over their own cultural, social and political lives. With this came a great sense of urgency to record the cultural knowledge of the old people before they died, taking their precious information with them to the grave. Ray's son Allan expressed this sense of his father's urgency:

I honestly believe that he believed he had to do this thing for the Aboriginal people. Because it was coming up to 200 years of white people living in Australia. The Aboriginal culture was going very fast. The generation before my father's – I think they were aware of it but had no control over it. So when my father come of age and found out he could capture some of this history, I believe he thought he would grab it at all costs, because it was so important, not just for our family but the Aboriginal race.



Chapter One of this book sketches that period of the 1970s and early 1980s, providing an historical overview of the survey and an insight into the time when Ray and the team were working. As the team's boss Sharon Sullivan remarked in her chapter, 'it was a different world'. Chapter Two provides some of Ray's own reflections on his early life that set the seeds of passion for understanding his cultural heritage, and it provides extracts from his written work from 1975 to trace the central themes that drove his work on the survey. The following chapters in the book comprise other people's reflections of Ray's career with the NPWS, especially his central role in the survey, and the interrelationships between his working life, family and culture.

ABOVE Map of Aboriginal sites recorded by Ray Kelly in NSW.

Chapters Three to Five are grouped under 'Family and Friends' beginning with 'A National Parks Family', a chapter which is drawn from interviews with Ray's children and their mother Alice. I met separately with family members across New South Wales and everyone was surprised to find how similar their views were, despite rarely having talked together about their feelings. Central to all of Ray's family is a deep pride and respect for their father and his work in Aboriginal cultural heritage. However they also expressed a profound sense of loss for Ray once his work with the NPWS began. With the rest of the team he travelled extensively, taking him away from the family for weeks at a time. But more than the physical separation, they felt their loss as Ray became entirely consumed with the urgency of his work for conserving Aboriginal heritage at a time when few were interested in or supported such an endeavour.

The following two chapters in this section come from Ned Icton and Ted Fields, both of whom had a significant impact on Ray's life from early adulthood. Ned was a new lecturer at the University of New England, Armidale, when he met Ray in the late 1960s. Through a series of social development workshops for Aboriginal men that Ned ran, he introduced Ray to strategies for individual empowerment that have remained central to Ray's philosophy on life. Ned remembers Ray saying that 'this experience has lit a light in me that will never go out'.

At the first of those workshops they met Ted Fields, a Ualarai language-speaker who had come from a life of stock work and the Aboriginal camps of north-western New South Wales. In his chapter, Ted tells of the enormous challenges that confronted him and Ray, and how from these workshops they cemented a life-long friendship. Throughout the survey, Ted introduced Ray to elders from his region. In turn, Ted says of Ray that he 'strengthened my conviction about reviving my culture and language. There was no one else around that was doing that'.

'On the Job', Chapters Six to Nine, reflect on the survey and Ray's work with the NPWS. The first of these reflections comes from Sharon Sullivan, who was responsible for establishing the NSW survey through her role as the archaeologist/historian for NPWS (later head of Aboriginal and Historic Resources). She remembers encouraging Ray to apply for the research officer's job because he had the unique attributes at that time of being in touch with his community as well as being able to work within a white bureaucracy. In her chapter she outlines some of the challenges confronting both the new Aboriginal employees and the white institution of NPWS. Through that cultural collision, Sharon and Ray had a turbulent relationship. She remembers Ray as a 'really deep thinker' who constantly wrestled with the new concepts facing them all around contemporary Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Harry Creamer's chapter follows, where he discusses the exhilarating years of the survey as he, Ray and the team sought the best ways to collect and help revitalise Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales. He says he realised early on in their relationship that something in Ray's background had always been pointing him in a direction of making a long-term contribution to Aboriginal cultural identity and heritage. From his own perspective, Harry concluded that in his over thirty years in the NPWS 'there's nothing subsequent that comes close to the



pioneering work [of the survey], the sense of adventure and excitement, and the unique achievement which we created as a team and as individuals in those years’.

Glen Morris was the third member of the survey team, recruited in late 1974 as a trainee Aboriginal Sites Officer. In Chapter Eight he describes the tensions within the survey team because of their different experiences and goals, but also how it ‘gelled’ because of these very differences. He also describes Ray and his frustrations with the shift away from collecting the stories of the old people, as the pressure from development and the new push for Environmental Impact Statements from the early 1980s increasingly drove their work. For Glen, Ray’s legacy lies in ‘awakening’ and reviving Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales.

The final chapter in this section comes from John (Danny) Delaney, a ‘brother’ to Ray from their early years at Burnt Bridge near Kempsey. At the same time as Ray joined the NPWS, John began work in Aboriginal employment issues at the state and then federal level. Together they fought to increase the openings for Aboriginal employees, and he regards Ray’s central achievements as his successes in gaining more Aboriginal employment throughout the NPWS and his ongoing determination that Aboriginal cultural heritage should be returned to their communities.

Chapter Ten comes from Neville Buchanan whose father, Harry Buchanan, was one of Ray’s most important consultants in the field during the survey. Neville recalls that his father always praised Ray, Harry and the rest of the team, saying ‘My boy, if they don’t do these things, you fellas never ever going to learn anything’. He thinks Ray was a role model for his people, where he put words into action,

and got out and achieved things: 'My dad left something behind. Ray – he done something for my dad. He knows I'm proud of him.'

The last chapter of the book appropriately comes from current DEC Aboriginal staff. Their words of thanks to Ray are reflected by Lisa Appo: 'If not for Unc, Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW National Parks would not have the recognition or staff it does today. We have a lot to thank you for Uncle Ray.'

In the time in which this book was developed, Ray's health deteriorated. For this reason Gary Currey, long-time friend and NPWS colleague, transcribed Ray's words into the Afterword for the book, where Ray continues to argue that Aboriginal communities and individuals must be the ones who make the decisions about their cultural heritage.

With the exception of the first two chapters, this book is filled with people's memories and stories of Ray and the survey. Memory is a powerful tool in the construction of knowledge and history-making. While people's memories and stories may often be a poor source of accurate dates, times, names and numbers, they are powerful bearers of individual and community feeling. Therefore, over the following pages, one will read similar as well as contradictory perceptions of the same people and places, and different observations of the same events.

Ray is a controversial character. His passion and single-mindedness in pursuing his goals for Aboriginal self-determination, and his confrontational manner, brought him both respect and adversaries. Family members agree with Ray Jnr when he says 'he never tolerated bullshit. Never! He always dealt with it in one way – he'd fight you – he'd take no prisoners. He either fought you verbally or physically.' The stories in this book reflect a small part of the complexity of the real world where no one set of meanings can ever cover the diversity of people's genuine understandings of an individual and the past.

The Cultural Heritage Division of the DEC, and previously of the NPWS, worked closely with the Kelly family in choosing the participants to be interviewed for this book. The idea for the book came in 2002 after an Aboriginal Staff Network meeting at which John Kelly (known to many as Neville McKenzie) asked the NPWS to consider publishing a book on his father's work. The project was commenced with a series of interviews with Ray by Dee Murphy and Cheryl Brown from the Jalumbo Cultural Heritage and Research Unit. In the second phase, I interviewed family members and a number of people who have been associated with Ray in various capacities during his career.

Each of the interviewee's stories has been shaped into a narrative. This was achieved in at least two ways. Firstly, as the editor of these stories, I have been integral to this process. Most interviews were originally between 10 000 and 13 000 words long. I have edited them down to around 3000 words to form a narrative joining themes that were dispersed, returned to and circled around. This has been a collaborative process with all participants, where they have each had a role in final editing where they felt their stories needed greater or less emphasis on particular issues. Secondly, each of these reflective stories was well thought through before I ever came to speak to people. Oral stories, especially delivered through interviews, are rarely careless ramblings, but more often thoroughly analysed and refined

over months and years through thinking, reminiscing, talking, political lobbying, grievance and debate.

In providing this reflective account of Ray's life and work with the NPWS, a vital element of the history of Aboriginal cultural heritage conservation in New South Wales will be available for a wide public readership. This will help improve awareness of a range of the issues that confronted NPWS staff in such challenging and demanding work. More importantly perhaps, this publication reveals some of the poignant intellectual conundrums and rewards that staff, committed to the revival, renewal and return of Aboriginal heritage across the state, had to address when they pioneered a way to record and conserve what was, and still is, a dynamic and vital culture.

RIGHT Part of Bellbrook Aboriginal township looking towards Burrel Bullai in the background, May 2004.



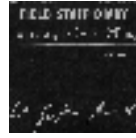
Revival, Renewal & Return





Name: Roy Kelly Week ending: 13-3-76 Days Rostered for Duty:

DATE		DETAILS
Sunday	On: 3 PM	
12	Off: 3 AM 12 PM	departed Gosford for Sydney ^{at AM} stayed at: Sydney (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Monday	On: 8 8:30	Talks with Sharon Sullivan at Head Office discuss new vehicle to Ranger Roy Morgan
13	Off: 11 PM	stayed at: Beega (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Tuesday	On: 8 AM	Depart Beega for other complete exchanging of vehicle also interviewing Collier Walker and Cedric Butler about Aboriginal sites in the area
14	Off: 5 PM	stayed at: Beega (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Wednesday	On: 8 AM	Interviewed Cecil Carter and Fred Division about Aboriginal sites in Beega
15	Off: 5 PM	also travelled to Baluga Lake to discuss Aboriginal sites in Fire Forest area with Fred Johnson
		stayed at: Beemagui (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Thursday	On: 8 AM	Beemagui to Baluga Lake and joined Fred Johnson then travel to other visit Little River tribal burial
16	Off: 5:30	stayed at: Coler (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Friday	On: 7:30	Record Aboriginal sites on Mumbulla mountains with consultant Fred Johnson.
17	Off: 10:30	Return to Baluga Lake to brief T Tompkins significance of sites recorded
		stayed at: Daffo (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Saturday	On: 9 AM	Depart Daffo for Sydney talks with Sharon Sullivan on field undertaken in Fire Forest area



1 The survey: an historical overview

Jo Kijas

The Sites of Significance Survey was established at a time in Australian history when the Aboriginal people of settled Australia were still generally regarded as having ‘lost’ their culture. The survey, or the Sacred Sites Survey as it was often called, became a significant vehicle through which Ray Kelly, Harry Creamer and others contributed to the cultural revival amongst New South Wales Aboriginal people during the 1970s and 1980s. This chapter provides an historical background by introducing the survey, outlining its establishment, and setting it within the social and political context of the time.

A new agenda: surveying Aboriginal sites

The New South Wales Aboriginal Sites Survey was established as part of a larger national survey. By the early 1970s, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) had obtained federal funding to conduct a national survey through those individual states regarded as having traditional Aboriginal populations. In New South Wales, Aboriginal cultural heritage had recently come under the auspices of NPWS. Sharon Sullivan was appointed by NPWS in 1969 as the archaeologist/historian to coincide with the proposed amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1967) which included provisions for the protection of Aboriginal ‘relics’. The amendments formally established the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee. The committee’s statutory role was to advise and report to the Director of the NPWS and the Minister on matters relating to conservation, excavation, removal and custody of relics or Aboriginal places. It included representation from the NPWS, the Australian Museum, the National Trust, the Anthropological Society of NSW, the Mines Department, a NSW university and two members appointed by the minister.² Sharon championed the idea of seeking funding from the AIAS for a survey of Aboriginal heritage across New South Wales.

As Sharon Sullivan recounts in her interview for this book:

It was the time where there was the first argument in the north and the west of Australia about mining. So Bob Edwards [of the AIAS] managed to persuade the Liberal government, with the assistance of really significant politicians like Billy Wentworth, Bob Hasluck and a whole lot of people who were interested in Aboriginal issues, that they needed to do surveys — that is, to go out and talk to Aboriginal people and to find out where the places were before the mining. He said confidently — and I’m sure even at the time he was totally

aware that this was a furphy — that if we had a quarter of a million dollars a year for five years, then we could basically find the sites, everybody would know where they were mining and could avoid them, and everyone would be happy. So the government gave the Institute of Aboriginal Studies what was then a very princely grant ... and really this program was the beginning of the setting up of Aboriginal Sites Authorities in the states. Because although legislation was being gradually passed in each state, there was nobody and a dog to run these things. And basically for the first five years most of the money for our survey came from this federally funded Aboriginal Sites of Significance Survey work and the Institute.

**Members at the inaugural meeting of the
Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee, 20 April 1970**

- ▶ Assoc Prof Isabel McBryde, *prehistorian, University of New England*
- ▶ S Sullivan, *archaeologist/Aboriginal Relics Officer NPWS*
- ▶ R Lampert, *archaeologist, Australian National University*
- ▶ A Thorne, *anatomist, University of Sydney*
- ▶ R Wright, *prehistorian, University of Sydney*
- ▶ D Moore, *curator of anthropology, Australian Museum Sydney*
- ▶ D Carr, *National Trust (NSW)*
- ▶ T Rose, *director of the Geological Survey, Department of Mines (NSW)*

At the time, as Sharon explains in her chapter, living Aboriginal people in New South Wales were not acknowledged in the NPWS Act, represented on the Relics Committee, or understood to have any interest in these ‘relics’. The impetus for legislative protection came from a belief that Aboriginal prehistoric objects and sites needed protection from the public because of their value for archaeological research and their universal value to ‘mankind’. This reflected the broader view that Aboriginal people of settled Australia had no interest or knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage and that the past of Australia belonged, like the land, to the new settlers.³

While states like Western Australia and South Australia were regarded as warranting the full five-year funding for surveys from the Institute because of their traditionally oriented Aboriginal populations, Sharon struggled to convince the AIAS that New South Wales had any Aboriginal culture worth surveying. While she was able to persuade the Institute to fund them, NPWS only received its funding in yearly increments, having to argue its case again each year.

A survey for New South Wales

The Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee confirmed Sharon’s push to gain funding for a New South Wales survey after discussions about the appropriate positions required. They agreed that it would be ‘most effectively carried out by an anthropologist and an Aboriginal assistant’. The word ‘jointly’ was hand written later into the typed minutes of the 19 March meeting, and ‘assistant’ crossed out and signed by the chair.



The survey team was initially made up of Harry Creamer (then known as Howard), newly arrived from Cambridge University in England, and Ray Kelly, a Dunghutti man from the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. Harry was interviewed one week before Ray, and their positions endorsed together at the committee meeting on 16 April 1973. They began work on the survey in early June 1973 with a brief visit to north-western NSW. Harry remembers meeting Ray for the first time at a Sydney pub where Ray said ‘Well mate, I hope we get on well together’. ‘Yes Raymond, I hope so too’, and off they went in the car to their base in Armidale.⁴

An early official response to Ray and Harry’s work was recorded in the minutes of the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee’s meeting on 21 June 1973, alongside an important change of name:

The Committee was pleased to meet Mr R Kelly and Mr H Creamer. It resolved to change the title ‘Sacred Sites Survey’ to ‘Survey of Sites of Significance’. The Committee discussed Mr Creamer’s and Mr Kelly’s brief survey of the North West of the State, and it was found that this area proved quite promising. It was decided that a similar survey of the North Coast area should be made before making a final decision regarding the area in which a detailed survey of sites will commence.

Ray and Harry’s salaries were paid from the Institute funding, while the NPWS later provided cars and support in the field. After two years, two further positions were funded from the Institute money. In 1974 Glen Morris joined the survey team as a ‘trainee’ Aboriginal Sites Officer. Terry Donovan was also appointed at that time. He left in 1977 and was replaced by Trevor Donnelly. Through to 1977 Harry and the Sites Officers all lived in Armidale and when they weren’t away in the field they were still constantly in each other’s company. Glen’s wife Leonora said, ‘They became like part of the furniture. You could move it, but then you’d look and someone would put it back there the next day.’

ABOVE LEFT Glen Morris, Harry Creamer and Ray Kelly, May 2000 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).
 ABOVE RIGHT Survey team Aboriginal Sites Officers Bob Walford, Claude Livermore and Jolanda Gonda (Nyuta) at the Clarence River axe grooves, c 1984 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

Members of the survey team

Ray Kelly	1973	Sabu Dunn	1980
Howard Creamer	1973	Jolanda Gonda (Nyuta)	1980
Glen Morris	1974	Claude Livermore	1980
Terry Donovan	1975	Bob Walford	1980
Trevor Donnelly	1979	Wayne Cook	1980

A different world: social and political context of the times

The team felt a great sense of urgency to record the stories of the old people before it was too late. The decade of the 1970s which sparked this process was a dynamic period in Aboriginal Australian history. The nation was emerging from a long period of assimilation, which had overtly discouraged the retention of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, to one of a new political rhetoric of Aboriginal self-determination. The all-consuming energy that Ray and the survey team brought to their work must be understood within this historical context.

The political and social shift away from the goal of assimilation was a very recent one which was felt in Ray's own history. In 1966, after living in Armidale for a number of years, Ray was chosen to go on a trip to New Zealand to discuss Indigenous issues. The trip was organised by the Armidale Association for Aborigines (AAA), which had tellingly changed its name the previous year from the Armidale Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines.

At the time of the trip, Ray felt that he didn't have 'a great deal to offer' as he was 'very introverted'. However it was eye-opening for him to see how far 'in advance' the Maori people were in their social and political situation compared to Aboriginal people, and his continuing connections with the AAA set him on a more political path.⁶

Less than a year later, the passing of the 1967 Referendum — for which Aboriginal advancement leagues had been fighting for over a decade — changed the Constitution so that Aboriginal people would be counted for the first time in the national census, and Commonwealth law would prevail over state law. In this renewed climate of optimism about gaining greater rights for Aboriginal people, government policy began to shift away from assimilation towards integration.⁷

Through all the regional, social and cultural diversity which characterises Indigenous politics, the 1970s brought with it an increasing confidence among Aboriginal people to demand a better deal. This was fostered not only by outside influences, such as the civil rights movement and Black Power from America, but by generations of Indigenous struggle, with some non-Indigenous support, for equal rights. As highly successful and visible actions such as the 1972 Tent Embassy and the modern land rights campaigns were launched, the hidden history of Aboriginal Australians started to be publicly told.

A new political agenda for Aboriginal affairs emerged after 1972 with Whitlam's Labor government in power. It opened the way for a greater political consensus between the major parties which was confirmed when the Liberals come to power in 1975 and continued a number of Labor's initiatives. For example, the

Liberals supported the Woodward Royal Commission's Report into land rights, the establishment of regional land councils, and they passed the first land rights act in 1976 along with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

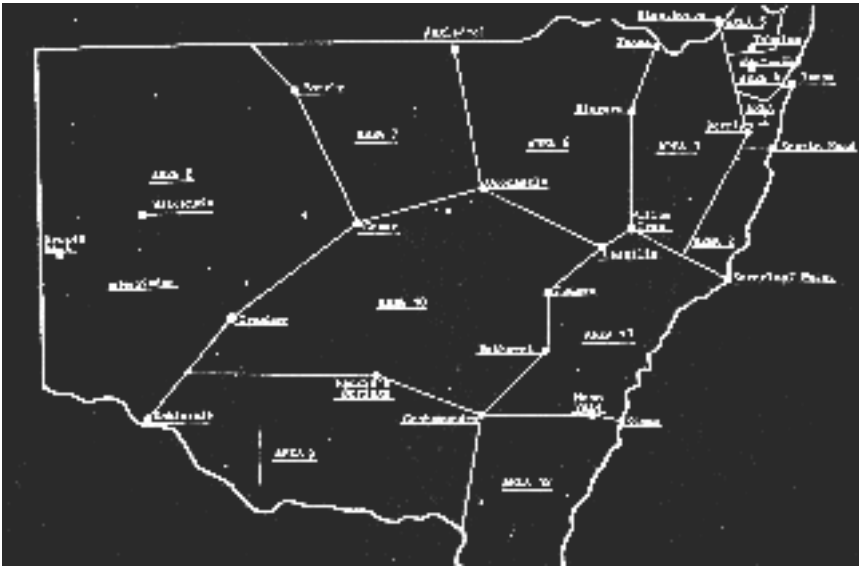
Renewed Aboriginal activism emerged in many areas after the stifling effect of assimilation. Some of the people who joined the Tent Embassy were from country New South Wales, like Laurel Vale, Ray's adopted sister. Laurel still carries a scar which she says came from a police baton in the scrum outside the embassy. But for other conservative rural Aboriginal communities, the renewed Aboriginal activism seemed dangerous and foreign – 'urban blacks' creating havoc.⁸ As Ray and the team journeyed out into rural and outback New South Wales, working for the government and a generally unknown entity called *National Parks*, they had to overcome suspicion in communities as well as work within white bureaucracies ignorant of their new Aboriginal employees. These dual issues are discussed in a number of the following chapters.

Working on the survey

The survey is often said to have run for a decade, between 1973 and 1983. The year in which the survey officially ceased according to Harry Creamer, however, is when he left his position of anthropologist in 1987. Despite this, he and others agree that by 1983 the period of its greatest research output was concluding. With the passage of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* in 1979 came new requirements for the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) before development. This altered the work and began to shift the focus of the Aboriginal Sites Officers employed by NPWS, directing their attention away from recording place-based stories with knowledgeable Aboriginal people to archaeological site recording, survey work and impact assessment. The decade of the survey's most intensive work is thus remembered by many as a brief period which concentrated on contemporary Aboriginal concerns, but which was sandwiched in time between the persistent legislative emphasis in Aboriginal cultural heritage on prehistoric sites and artefacts in the realm of archaeological research.⁹

The central, unwritten research brief of the survey was to discover and record what 'remained' of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW, or in Harry's word's, to find 'what was out there'. Harry's major report *A Gift and a Dreaming* tracks the team's unfolding understanding of what cultural heritage meant in contemporary Australia, from a static anthropological ideal of pre-invasion traditions to the innovative cultural practices of a living, modern-day heritage.

Harry's report outlines the aims, intent, methodologies and recommendations of the survey over its decade of most intensive work. Its focus was on sites within the landscape, in keeping with its place in a land management organisation like NPWS. To do this the team had to seek out the Aboriginal elders across the state, and record the old people's stories of significant places. One example is Ray's report on the Yuin people's sites of significance on the South Coast, which included transcripts of his interviews with one of the survey's key informants, Aboriginal elder Ted Thomas.¹⁰



While Ray's demand that such information be fed back to the communities from which it came was endorsed by Harry, there developed a tension within the team about how to manage the survey information, where it should reside, and to what ends it should be put. This is discussed throughout the following chapters and still resonates with DEC staff and Aboriginal communities today. As Glen relates in his chapter, it was indeed the combination of bureaucratic push from Sharon, Harry's anthropological focus and Ray's passion for cultural revival within communities, which provided the ultimate momentum and success of the survey.

Beyond their site recording work, the team assisted in training NPWS rangers on Aboriginal issues; laboured in the field doing fencing and other site-protection work; were active in negotiations with landowners, local councils, local Aboriginal land councils and developers; and by the early 1980s ran a series of Aboriginal Sites Schools for communities to help educate and support people's burgeoning interest in protecting their cultural heritage.

The survey work required extensive travel across New South Wales and the urgency they felt for their work took the men away from their families for long periods of time, placing a considerable strain on relationships and family life. As the Kelly children relate in their chapter, when *National Parks* came in the door that was the time in their lives when they feel Ray went out of it. Glen's wife Leonora remembers life in the early years of the survey bringing up their children:

We lived in Armidale. We were down at the Pembroke Caravan Park at the time and he used to do a lot of travelling. Sometimes it was for two or three weeks

at a time. I mean I didn't hear from him most of the time when he left home so it was just – 'See you when I see you' – that was it. I mean, it was really hard with the children because I was with them most of the time by myself. I'd get in to such a routine with them and Glen'd come home for a week and blow that routine right out the door ... I mean he was there in body and name but his heart was never there. It was with National Parks.

In 1977 the survey team members and their wives attended a workshop run by Ned Icton. The workshop was convened at a point of great tension not only amongst the team members but also within their families. Leonora remembered:

Well they didn't understand how we as wives felt about it. You know these guys are going on the road for days on end and the money wasn't so great and yeah we struggled. And it caused problems. That was the best thing that Ned Icton ever did as far as involving the wives in that workshop, we felt like he was a real lifesaver. Because to him it was like – these wives are the ones that are really feeling the brunt of all these things too, and with their young families ... Ray's wife actually ... I think she felt it more because they had a lot of little ones. And after that workshop it got better because sometimes we were able to go with them which was a real eye-opener to exactly what they were doing. And I mean some of the places they went! It made me understand more of exactly what he was doing when he was on the road.

Revival and control: Ray's driving goals

As shown in Chapter Two, one of Ray's driving concerns was to feed the knowledge gained from the survey back to Aboriginal communities to stimulate a process of cultural revival. As Harry has pointed out, this was not the first time a deliberate effort at 'cultural renewal' had occurred in the state. In the 1930s, initiation ceremonies fed that movement on the Mid-North Coast.¹¹ Ray's father, Ray Senior, was one of the initiates at the 1935 ceremony at Bellbrook.¹²

Amongst his own Dunghutti people, Ray hoped that the cultural renaissance he envisaged could be achieved partly through the revival of male initiation ceremonies. He maintained a strong focus on male cultural values throughout his work on the survey, holding firm to a belief in separate gender spheres. His daughters remember being left in the car while Ray and the boys would troop off to visit a site, and Tina recounted having to shut her eyes during the long slide nights after Ray's return from the field, when secret men's sites or objects were on the screen.

The male composition of the survey team for most of its life meant that women's sites and stories were under-represented. Sharon Sullivan notes in her chapter the struggle to get funding from the AIAS to provide a female sites officer to seek information from women. This reflected a view held by the Institute, and more widely, that Aboriginal women's business was of less significance to that of the men, an issue which was only just starting to be discussed in the 1970s when the survey began.¹³

Ray's focus on reviving initiations did not meet universal approval in the communities, in part due to the secret nature of information about initiation. Harry points out in his chapter that those who were suspicious of the survey, and did not wish to divulge information, did not speak to the survey team. In Chapter Two, Ray outlines how they overcame that suspicion with some of the initiated men early in the survey.

As pointed out by anthropologist Barry Morris, who worked in the Macleay River area through the 1980s, there was also a concern about the power of the knowledge being collected for the survey:

For some, it was felt better to 'leave it alone'. However this concern was not so much determined by a desire to forget or turn away from the past, but a recognition that one is dealing with dangerous mystical forces ... In this respect, the capacity and the expertise of those in authority was a major point of discussion – that is, their capacity and expertise to manipulate and constrain such forces for the safety of those involved and perhaps the community in general.¹⁴

In Chapter Two, Ray outlines his path to being put through the rules in 1973. When he was diagnosed with cancer in 1980 and given two years to live, some in the community regarded this as a sign that he was working on sites too powerful for him.¹⁵ On the other hand, Ray believes it was the power of traditional healing, especially from his auntie and initiator, that enabled his remarkable recovery.

Throughout the decade relating to the survey, Aboriginal demands for custodianship and control of their cultural material increased, leading to policy and structural change in the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Service. In the 1974 amendments to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*, a provision for the gazettal of 'Aboriginal Places' was included. This marked the growing awareness of the inadequacy of the relic's provision in the Act, and that to adequately conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage much more than just archaeology required protection. At the same time, however, a proposal to include statutory Aboriginal representation on the Relics Committee was rejected by the Minister.¹⁶

Despite this set-back, it was increasingly apparent that revision to the committee structure was necessary, and in 1979 the members voluntarily disbanded the Relics Committee to make way for the Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee (IASC) in 1980.¹⁷ Reflecting the increasing need for Aboriginal involvement, its membership consisted of eight Aboriginal representatives from different regions of NSW and another Aboriginal member nominated by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The other members were three archaeologists, a representative from the Australian Museum, one from NPWS, and an anthropologist. The Aboriginal and archaeological members met separately as sub-groups every two months. Carmelia Corowa, one of the original Aboriginal committee members, commented on the general feelings of Aboriginal members in an August 1982 meeting:

Many Aboriginal people regard the current Aboriginal members of the IASC as being little more than 'rubber stamps' for the non-Aboriginal bureaucrats

... However, this appraisal of Aboriginal members did not carry much weight. Aboriginal members were acutely aware of their responsibilities to the Aboriginal people of NSW, therefore, no decision/recommendation contrary to the known wishes of the majority of Aboriginal people would be endorsed.

**Inaugural meeting of the Interim Aboriginal Sites Advisory Committee,
8 December 1980**

Aboriginal members in attendance:

Mrs A Kelly	Mr T Fields	Ms C Corowa	Mr T Williams
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Non-Aboriginal members in attendance:

Assoc Prof I McBryde	Mr K Cavanagh	Ms S Sullivan	Dr R Lampert
Mrs G Poiner	Dr S Bowlder	Mr G Reid	

Others present:

Hon EL Bedford, Minister for Planning & Environment	Mrs L Love, Minister's private secretary	Mr DA Johnstone, Director NPWS	Mr H Creamer Mr R Kelly
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Promises unfulfilled

Optimism pervaded the 1970s and early 1980s across a range of Aboriginal issues, and the survey was caught up in this mood, which helped refuel expectations of a better deal. While much was accomplished during the decade of the survey, as in other areas of Aboriginal politics, many promises and expectations were left unfulfilled. For example, the protection of sites was an issue of much disquiet. By January 1979, only two sites (Merriman Island and Toolom Falls) had received statutory protection as Aboriginal Places resulting from the survey investigations. In an urgent memo to the NPWS, Harry declared 'This fact damages the credibility of the Survey team and reflects badly on the Service's ability to cope with the important task of legally protecting Aboriginal sites of significance.'¹⁸

It took a further decade for Burrell Bulai or Mount Anderson (Sugar Loaf Mountain), which looms above Bellbrook and holds significant initiation sites so important to Ray's cultural education, to be declared. The low levels of funding in NPWS enabling the protection of Aboriginal sites was a larger issue. According to Sharon Sullivan, writing in 1983:

despite comparatively strong legislation to protect them, Aboriginal sites have never effectively been regarded as part of the Australian heritage ... This is indicated by the comparatively low level of funding and management generally accorded Aboriginal sites as part of the national estate. A large proportion of funding goes to research aimed at extracting information from sites, comparatively little to conserving them.¹⁹

A further ironic legacy of the survey, in contradiction to the desires and objectives of the team in fostering cultural continuity, is that the very recording of sites and stories has in part tended to 'fix' them. For example, in the current environment of Native Title claims where legal redress is often contingent on

Aboriginal places gazetted up to the declaration of Burrell Bulai in September 1989

<i>Aboriginal place</i>	<i>Site no</i>	<i>Land district</i>	<i>Area declared (ha)</i>	<i>Date</i>
Merriman Island	62-7-0009	Bega	2.00	25 Nov 1977
Toolum Falls	03-6-0001	Casino	3.70	16 Dec 1977
Nymboida	12-6-0061	Grafton	16.03	6 Apr 1979
Two Sisters	62-7-0021	Moruya	32.37	12 Oct 1979
Long Gully	21-6-0015	Kempsey	40.00	14 Dec 1979
Devil's Chimney	21-2-0005	Armidale	145.00	8 Aug 1980
Stony Creek		Inverell	6.25	10 Jul 1981
Casino Bora Ground	04-4-0025	Casino	32.38	24 Jul 1981
Pulbah Island	45-7-0088	Gosford	68.80	26 Mar 1982
Boobera Lagoon	02-4-0022	Warialda	151.00	10 Feb 1984
Biamanga	62-3-0504	Bega	7508.00	1 Jun 1984
Jack's Lookout	32-6-0002	Western Division	200.00	22 Nov 1985
Surveyor's Lake Rocks	32-6-0001	Western Division	100.00	22 Nov 1985
Saltwater	38-3-0259	Taree	13.00	18 Apr 1986
Carraí Waterholes	21-5-0005	Kempsey	4.50	7 Nov 1986
Cocked Hat Rocks	21-5-0005	Lismore	0.15	6 Mar 1987
Northcote Bora Ring	01-6-0002	Moree	6.70	11 Mar 1988
Burrell Bulai	21-6-0168	Kempsey	871.00	22 Sept 1989

written evidence of cultural attachment, those whose stories were not recorded by the survey team have potentially been disadvantaged.

Thirty years on and into the future

On 13 May 2004, a convention was held to celebrate the achievements of the survey team, and discuss the state of play over thirty years later. Ray, Harry, Glen and Sharon shared the panel to reflect on the pioneering work of the survey, reiterated in their chapters in this book. The organisers of the day, the DEC's Cultural Heritage Division, noted:

The work of the Sites of Significance Survey Team is increasingly relevant today as its work confirms the direction that DEC is taking with the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The body of work painstakingly gathered by team members continues to inform priority work around Aboriginal places, Repatriation and site conservation. It confirms the importance of post-contact contemporary places to Aboriginal communities, an area that has often been neglected when a literal interpretation is taken of the relics provision in Part 6 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The work of the team emphasises the importance of working closely with Aboriginal communities and gaining their trust in identifying and then managing important places in partnership. Most importantly the Cultural Heritage Division takes an increasing pride in the work carried out by their colleagues 30 years ago. The work of the Survey Team provides DEC with inspiration for work on Aboriginal cultural heritage into the future.²⁰



Archaeologist, Isabel McBryde, who sat on both the Relics Committee and the Interim Committee, commented at the 2004 convention that the survey was a world first in terms of bureaucratic legislation working with Indigenous people, around which its own mythology has been constructed. For Glen, it was time to go back out and do it again, to find the new stories and new places of significance to NSW Aboriginal communities, alongside the ones they had recorded thirty years before.²¹

ABOVE John Kelly and Ray Kelly in front of Burrell Bulai (photo courtesy of the Kelly Family).





2 'Before it's too late': the survey and early life

Extracts from the written and oral texts of Ray Kelly

Ray's voice is recorded in this chapter in diverse forms – from his oral testimony, published articles, official reports and work correspondence. In this way, the chapter sketches the evolving philosophies that drove Ray's work over his time on the Sites of Significance Survey, and provides some background to his early life. The chapter begins with an early report that Ray wrote in June 1975 'A revival of the Aboriginal culture: We, the Aboriginal people, need this to achieve our identity'. It is a report on the importance of the survey as he saw it, outlining a number of the themes and philosophies which would continue throughout his work with National Parks.

Introduction

Two years ago, when our Survey had first begun, many white experts had given us the impression that there were no living sites – or very few – in the State of New South Wales. However, because of the strategy which my colleague [Howard Creamer] and I have adopted, we have revealed that this is not the case. One of the main reasons for this success is having an Aboriginal researcher in this field.

In the first instance, our ambition was to get an overall picture of those areas that were more worthwhile as areas to begin working on. To be fair to all the Aboriginal people in NSW we felt that a whistle-stop tour was necessary first. This proved quite fruitful for both researchers, as we found many areas that were more important than others.

The area that we felt needed most urgent attention was the mid-north coast and far north coast of NSW. These were the places in the State which most recently had seen the tribal initiations. The old men are still alive but not likely to live long. Because these men had been exploited for free, or paid very little by researchers in the past, we sometimes found them reluctant to pass on significant information without being paid an informant's wage. The only case we could make to them was that the information that we received would be used for our own Aboriginal people rather than for the benefit of whites. Because they have been misled by false promises in the past, we felt we would have to give them a short-term result [fencing the Bellbrook Mission

LEFT Ray Kelly, c 1980. This photo is special to all members of the family, most of whom have a copy on a wall in their houses (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

cemetery] in the way of feedback and protection. Luckily our strategy worked, and then they began to participate in a trusting way.

Some difficulties

However, they – or some of their relatives – have been more political, and the result is that more pressure is being put on us in the survey team for more protection of Aboriginal sites. More Aboriginal people are asking for this than those who have information to give us – and they often ask for it even where there is actually no real tribal significance in what they want protected. This can make it difficult for us, and takes up time that we would otherwise spend on actual site-recording.

My own feeling is that we have to make a genuine effort to respond to these demands so that the work will be able to continue. I am hopeful that when we begin systematic work for the revival of the culture for our people – for which funds should be readily available – that the unreasonable and tribally ill-informed demands now being made on us will be gradually reduced. I also hope that criticisms now directed at me for playing an ‘Uncle Tom’ role will be shown to be unfair and wrong. What I want to see very desperately is for our people to have a chance to build a modern Aboriginal culture out of our tribal traditions. It has to be done in a face-to-face way before our resource people die.

How to achieve a ‘revival’ of the culture

As far as I am concerned, I think we should try to establish a history for our people: we have needed a history all these 200 years since Cook arrived. The meaning of our history in particular is that we have to go through a phase of re-establishing our idea of our own humanity in our own eyes, after the damage done to us by white beliefs about us. It is not that things have to be proven against whites so much as proven about our own humanity.

All the migrants have a history and culture of their own which they value, even if the majority white society doesn’t. We, the true Australians, are regarded as beggars in our own country when it comes to culture and history, as well as everything else. I believe some of us have been unconsciously waiting for the opportunity to link our tribal culture with the western man’s culture, something whites didn’t think about. They were far too concerned with pressuring us into absorbing a culture which was destined to fail us. Now that some of us are aware of what we have lost, there seems to be an urgent need to restore whatever is left of our culture. To do this successfully we must involve many more Aborigines in the recording and protection programme. I am sure the time is right now if we want to make the Survey a success for both Aborigines and whites. I am certain 1976 will be too late then all will be lost forever.

Establishing the true meaning of culture

My fears are that if these sites are only recorded for academic values, and not protected for Aboriginal values, then again the Aboriginal values will be cast aside. This is an issue so important to me that I would have to reconsider what

I am really in this job for if I am pressed on this issue. One thing that I am certain of is that I am not in it for the academic values if these want to cast the Aboriginal values aside.

If we only receive the message of our culture through a book in academic words it will be meaningless to us: it will only be a western academic's interpretation of our Aboriginal values in life: it won't be what I wanted it to be or what I believe we Aboriginal people want it to be. I believe it can be a light for us. It can give us an understanding of knowing who we were and where we came from. Knowing this can give us a foundation for achieving things in life. Where the tradition of you whites – the convict system and so on – could never be a source of spiritual comfort to you, *our* traditions could be a real help to us. Speaking honestly, I would have to say that Australia's first white settlers put the Aboriginal people down from the beginning when they failed to look at the culture of our people in the right way. The right way, I feel, would have been for the Aboriginal people to be treated as human beings. Most of white society has neglected to do this until recently when Aboriginal people have begun to absorb the western education and become politically minded, like whites.

The future

For me, I see the role of the Sacred Sites Survey team, the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a linked one. It is to encourage the Aboriginal people to become involved in a rebuilding of the Aboriginal culture. To achieve this though, we must first find a way to involve the Aboriginal people, and not cut them off whenever they want to participate. In fact, in my experience, active encouragement to participate is essential.

This involvement of our people is necessary in my way of seeing it because we have to learn again to have respect for ourselves as human beings after what has happened to us. We almost believe what whites believed about us. The Sacred Sites Survey and my own involvement with tribal men has had a very special meaning for me that I believe all of us need.

Aboriginal people generally have good reasons in history for not trusting white people. The destruction your forbears have caused to our culture and our humanity has been very nearly complete. What we need is a chance now to do something for ourselves. I am taking the risk that my own trust in the human intentions of the white society in 1975 will, for a change, be justified.²²

Early years

Ray was born on 8 January 1938. He spent most of his early life in the isolated Mid-North Coast mountain country of Bellbrook Aboriginal Reserve, 55 kilometres west of Kempsey. An only child, he had a half-sister Phyllis and has an adopted sister Laurel. He moved to Burnt Bridge Reserve with his family when he was sixteen, and spent twelve months in Sydney working for the railways. By then he was boxing in the tents of Jim Sharman and others. In 1957 he moved to Armidale where he met Alice McKenzie, and soon after they started their family. The following interviews with Ray were conducted by Dee Murphy and her team.

Childhood

I was born in Kempsey, raised in Bellbrook.

Did you have other brothers and sisters?

I always laugh at this one, when people ask me that. My old dad took one look at me and said: 'No, if that's the best I can do, I'll give the game away!' I was the only one. I learnt later in life that I had a step-sister – Phyllis – she was my half-sister.

What was your mum's name?

Margaret Adelaide Campbell.

And your dad's name?

Here's something that you're going to find hard to understand. His name was Raymond Chevrot Kelly. One of me grandson's got the name Chevrot.

Is that a language word?

No, it's Mexican. I was always known as Ramos. Ramos is Mexican for Raymond. I don't know where it come from. But Dad always had the name of Pedro.

And your nickname – Choonkley?

Well, it's now spelt Shoonkley, but it really should be Choonkley. ['In Bellbrook you'll find a lot of Gumbaynggir. Take my name Choonkley – you'll find it in Gumbaynggir, means to be carried over someone's shoulder.' – Tape 5] And how I got that nickname was I used to always be running behind me grandfather, singing, calling out, 'Choonkle me, Grandfather, choonkle me'. So he finished up calling me Choonkley. And how it all turned out, he used to sing the song to me 'You're my little Piccaninny'. Instead of him saying 'You're my little Piccaninny', he used to say 'You're my little Choonkley'. [Tape 1]

I spent a lot of time in Taylors Arm when I was a young boy. We always had plenty of fish to eat because me old dad – he was something special with a spear. He'd get 'em from under the logs. Sometimes he'd only have a one-pronged spear, most times he'd have a three pronged spear. The one-pronged one is when you put it down amongst the roots of the tree. When you spear your fish you dive down and get it. Three-pronged – we used to use it off a bridge. That's where I got all my expertise from. I was quite good with a spear.

One of the first traditional things I was shown was by the old chap named Donald Wagga Thompson, and his wife Ivy Long.²³ We were up at a place called Towell Creek. The three of us were after porcupine [echidna] – he was trying to whistle em up. You whistle to a porcupine and it'll whistle back. How old Donald Thompson used to get the possum out of the trees – he'd cut a hole in the butt of the tree, and then start the fire up and smoke 'em. They'd go down to the bottom and go to sleep ... There are two kinds of education – the English education and there's knowledge. Knowledge is probably better than being able to manipulate a computer.

My schooling days, we had two English teachers. One was a real bastard and he was an air pilot in the Second World War. And the other old bloke was George Freysher. English. You'd swear he was one of the Queen's guards! He was



a good teacher – a lot of us used to respond to him where we couldn't respond to the other buggler. He [the ex-pilot] used to call us clots and boofheads, and didn't give us any encouragement whatsoever. I can remember him hitting me on the arm one day with a cane. And the cane was split and when he hit me it opened up and tore the skin off me. He was scared to ride his horse home 'cause my mother was ready to fight this teacher. George was more interested in nature study. We used to all excel ourselves, because we all knew the different plants and we would get good marks. He made us feel a bit more important. So that's how my education started.

When Lew Ellem first come to Bellbrook, I was in first class at eleven or twelve years of age. I can remember he said, 'If you concentrate, you'll go to High School' ... I think it was in the early '80s – I went round to see Mr Ellem, he was living next to the Bowling Club there in Grafton. And when I told him I was working for National Parks and Wildlife Service, he said to me, 'I knew you'd be able to do something like that, Ray'. But I never had any faith in myself as an educated person, but as he said to me, 'You're a quick learner'. But that's why I still play with these words: 'Intrigue my mind, capture my positive imagination, let's mingle together and stop meddling'. And I think there's a lot of merit in that.

So he had me ready for High School in about two or three years, but I didn't wish to go, because we inherited five of the Thompson family, three of the Murray kids and there was my sister, Laurel Cohen. And when I got this job I was the only breadwinner ... That was in the early 'fifties. The day I turned fifteen, I left school on the Friday and took a job on Saturday, and

ABOVE Ray's last boxing match, Armidale 1966 aged 28, where he fought Peter Leaney (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

I was getting 12 pound 10 a week. I used to push a bloody wheelbarrow full of concrete. The first concrete bridge to be built up-river, coming down the hill from Bellbrook. The first day's work I had there, we started at 6 o'clock in the morning and knocked off at 10 that night. It was just as well that the contractor drove us. I was asleep before I got home! We worked for probably six months, and built the bridge up there and at another place out here, going towards South West Rocks, called Polo Creek. It was good money, but I never saved any because it all went on food. I've always had good jobs because I wasn't afraid to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. And I think that's where the honesty comes out of me. [Tape 2]

Boxing

I was in Bellbrook when I had my first fight.

How old where you?

Fifteen. I got that many bloody hidings it wasn't funny. I used to get sick and tired of hidings because my old man – he used to give me a hiding because I didn't fight back!

So you learnt to fight.

I had to. Me first professional fight I had in Kempsey here. I won that. Bloke by the name of Dick Lackey. I beat him the first fight, and he beat me the second fight. I had no food on the second fight. I used to go fishing with my old uncle, bloke by the name of Harold Davis. And when I come down to fight I was training on lemon sandwiches. Sometimes we had a bit of fish with it.

So what did you win when you boxed?

Pound a round. That's what we won in those days. Then I used to go to Port Macquarie and do me boxing over there. There were times, with a bit of luck, you could fight ten nights in a row. Open-air boxing ring – where the town green is now – just behind the Post Office there. There was times when I looked like getting out, my old man used to throw the towel in.

He was your trainer?

Yes. That's why I never finished up punch drunk.

I think my best performance ever was when I went to Armidale. I was out of the boxing ring for 18 months because of the big car smash in Sydney – see all me eyes got cut. I went to Armidale and I was working out at a place called 'Dianbarena', big cattle station. My dad was out there and we were grubbing timber. And I come into town and was interested in going to watch the boxing. And the trainer, bloke called Mickey Bower, said 'Do you want to come to the fights on Saturday night at Guyra – come for a ride'. When I got up there the boxer who was supposed to fight the main fighter didn't turn up, and they asked me whether I'd like to take this bloke on.

And you beat him!

He went into the quarter-finals for the Olympic Games. I knocked him out in 45 seconds! [Tape 2]

Twenty-eight when I finished boxing. That photo up there [points to photo on wall]. I give it away because I didn't want to fight any more. That very day. I fought the heavy-weight champion of Australia. I knocked him out. Three rounds. [Tape 4]

I had it in my nature – it was embedded there because of the pessimism people made me go through – the pessimistic lifestyle I had to go through. I became very, very bitter inside, and it has taken me a long time to get over it, but that bitterness was the main ingredient of my being a fighter.²⁴

Armidale Association for Aborigines

In 1966 Ray was chosen, along with another local Aboriginal man, Jim Smith, to accompany the AAA representative, Ned Icton, on an educational trip to New Zealand. The conference marked a turning point in Ray's life, opening his eyes to new political possibilities, and embarking on his own psychological and philosophical journey through his friendship and trust of Ned.

In 1966 I became involved purely by accident. I didn't belong to the Association at that time and I found out about what the Association was doing in other fields when my ex-mother-in-law, Ethel McKenzie, told me about a trip people were going on to New Zealand. I didn't feel I had a great deal to offer at that time ... My name was mentioned along with a number of others without any voting or anything and I was chosen to go.

I was very introverted at that time – I didn't do a great deal of talking and I didn't do a great deal of talking in New Zealand either. For the first four days I said nothing. Other Aboriginal participants had been able to get up and thank the speakers and so forth but when it came to my turn I added nothing. Jim Smith was most constructive in his attempt to show the plight of our people.

We were looking at Maoris at least fifty years in advance of us ... It gave me a look at what could occur for Aboriginal people ... We had to get involved in becoming assimilated and associating with Western civilisation. That was a bit of a drag. I felt that if you were an Aboriginal you should be concentrating on Aboriginal stuff. We had to meet their standards of living, and that was rather confusing.

I regard Ned as one of the great mentors in my life. He helped me speak more freely. When we went to the Human Relations Workshops in 1970 he helped me to understand that there was another 'being' inside me. I had always looked at the being on the outside without understanding the being on the inside.²⁵

The NSW Sites of Significance Survey

In the early 1970s, after years of labouring work around Armidale, Ray joined the outreach tutoring program for Aboriginal students run by the Department of Continuing Education at the University of New England. From there he found out about the Aboriginal researcher position on the survey. He began work on 29 May 1973. Ray's NPWS field dairies clearly show that his work on the survey constantly

took him away from home for long stretches of time. His field diaries reveal that his travels often took him to Sydney for meetings, to western or southern NSW, many visits the length and breadth of the north coast, and sometimes interstate. He was the primary recorder of 193 sites now listed in the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS), and participated in the recording of many more.

In the early years of the survey, Ray, Harry Creamer and Glen Morris recorded sites across New South Wales. Ray and his family lived for a time at Mutawintji near Broken Hill to look after that site. In 1977, the Kelly family moved from Armidale to the new regional NPWS office at Grafton. In 1980 he was diagnosed with cancer and given two years to live. Later back in Grafton, as more Aboriginal Sites Officers were employed within their local areas, Ray concentrated on the North Coast as well as taking up duties for a short time in Sydney. After the survey had finished, he relocated to the Port Macquarie office while living at 'the farm' at Clybucca. His written reports concentrate mostly on the North Coast, particularly in the Dunghutti and Gumbaynggir areas of the Mid-North Coast.²⁶

Neville Crewe was my boss at Armidale. Neville had this application about the site officer's position and he said, 'What do you reckon about applying for this job?' So I applied for it and I got it. There was an old bloke by the name of Victor Shepherd, who if he had got the job I would have had no grief whatsoever. Howard had his interview a week before me. I'm told how I got the job. Tom Lewis [the Minister for Lands responsible for National Parks] got this letter from either Sharon Sullivan or Lesley Maynard which said we'd like to employ Howard Creamer and his colleague Ray Kelly. So he didn't question whether I had a degree or not, 'cause Howard Creamer had his degree. And I got in. 29th of May '73.

I did most of my training with Howard. He was a pretty good tutor you know. I had a lot of admiration for Howard, even though I had my bloody rough times with him. There was times when we had to fly from Sydney all the way out to Tibooburra. I had some shocking experiences with Howard and his flying! We flew in '74, from Armidale across to Cobar and we stayed overnight, and next day took off for Wilcannia. Just above the trees we were flying, cause it was too foggy. It was a shocking experience for me 'cause when we got to Wilcannia, we landed in the wet sand. At the time I was fuming! But that's where my philosophical understanding was starting to creep on me. Because we had that experience but we come out of it all right. So I started to accept that kind of thing. A couple of days after we flew from Wilcannia to Cowra, and we couldn't find the airport. I gotta give him credit for it because he found this little hole and we shot through it. And we come out near the airport. It was a frightening experience I can tell you. [Tape 4]

In the interviews conducted with Ray by Dee Murphy, Cheryl Brown and others during 2002 and 2003, Ray began by outlining his own cultural credentials and the significance of his mentors in preparing him for his work on the survey:

The words I used [were] 'ginookin', 'djutu', 'meeling'. 'Djutu' means backside and 'ginookin' means wet arse. That's the way the old fellows used to explain



that word. Wet arse – ‘He’d tell you anything, and go and believe it himself’. I know I’m not a ginookin because I had two of probably the greatest mentors you could ever wish to have, namely Len De Silva and Harry Buchanan. Gumbaynggir men.

There was a period when the Dunghutti and Gumbaynggir tribal people had gone through where it was almost taboo to teach anyone anything. I was very fortunate to have him [Len De Silva] as my step-father-in-law. In [1973] he demanded that either I leave the job [on the survey] or go through the initiation. There were two things he was protecting. Me, and to make sure that I didn’t divulge any of the really secret sacred information. [Tape 1]

In a report in December 1976, Ray wrote about the male initiation ceremonies of the Mid-North Coast (called the keepara):

I did not have the privilege to attend any of these Keepara’s as they were last held in the late 1930s. That Keepara was held by the Dunghutti people at Bellbrook near the Aboriginal Reserve. There were 60 people present both as initiators and young initiates. My father Ray Kelly Senior who is now deceased, had on that occasion gone through ...

Although I missed out on the last group initiation held in this State I was fortunate to absorb part of the stage of the Thilkil Keepara. I was put through these rules in Armidale on the 5th August, 1973. My initiators were Frank Archibald and Len De Silva. Both Frank and Len are initiated men ... The ceremony I attended was rather short ... However I saw this ceremony as serving two purposes. Firstly, assuring me I was now safe to visit their sacred

ABOVE Ray Kelly and a significant consultant to the survey: the late Guboo Ted Thomas at Wallaga Lakes, c 1974 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

sites and secondly binding me to a commitment that I would withhold all sacred information I know from any documentation I intend to write.²⁷

Later in the same interview, Ray said:

Fundamentally, there's a sign that Old Leonard showed me. He said, 'That's like your entry'. Well when I went to Harry Buchanan, in 1974, and I said to him, 'Can you take me and show me the carved tree?' And he said, 'It's only for initiated men'. And I said, 'I went through the initiation'. And he said, 'No you never, not my initiation'. Then I said, 'Well what does this mean?' I showed him the sign and he said, 'I know who put you through the rules'. It was so significant so that only initiated men knew it. If you hadn't been through the initiation, you would've never known it.

Fundamentally enough, I was shown a very similar sign when I was given my totem when I was a little boy. I distinctly remember that as though it was yesterday. But what makes it so memorable is the fact that my initiation sign was almost the same sign. [Tape 1]

See, the old fellows, one day, they philosophically asked me, they knew that one day I'm going to have to be talking about all this stuff. 'Mayra Gaya' [means] *leader*. My interpretation of it – I think it's a Gumbaynggir word that come from Oban [Baanbai], from the Oban tribe. [Tape 7]

Throughout his years working on the survey, Ray wrote many reports and published two articles in academic proceedings. As a number of interviewees in the following chapters tell, the process of writing was for Ray a great struggle because of his limited and poor formal education. However the passion for his work meant he persevered, forming his own inimitable style. Ray's reports not only show the type of work the survey team accomplished, but also adds to his own history telling:

'I was more clear minded then. When I used to get really emotional, I'd write a lot.' [Tape 7]

One of the early places Ray and Harry visited as part of the survey was Bellbrook Mission. Ray wrote a report on their visit in April 1974:

When we first visited Bellbrook, in August 1973, we found the fully initiated men reluctant to speak to us about significant sites in the area. Because I had lived on the Mission for the first sixteen years of my life, I had some knowledge of where the sites were. I have roamed the area with my father who pointed out some of the old initiation grounds without passing on any significant information to me. Having the knowledge of where the sites were and knowing these men had been initiated confirmed to me that they were withholding information from us.

We then talked about the Mission cemetery which seemed more important to them. The old men spoke freely about this site and who was buried there. We were hoping to find a way of getting 'on-side' with the old men. Because they showed more concern for the cemetery we then told them there might be a possibility of the NSW Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee agreeing

17 NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FIELD STAFF DIARY

Received on: _____ Date: _____ Received for: _____

		OFFICE
On:	7 AM	Return to Gordon by light aircraft with Howard Creamer arrived Gordon
Off:	4:30 PM	Office duties in Gordon Office in the afternoon
		stayed at: (CAMP/HOTEL/S.A.)
On:	8 AM	
Off:		as above

to allow us to fence it. The fencing of this site would also make possible some publicity ... We were sure this would be the only way of breaking down their barrier of fear and distrust in our intentions.

The cemetery is very important to the old men, because all of their people were buried there. Some of the really powerful men are buried in the cemetery ... Both my grandmother, Margaret Kelly, and my great grandmother are also buried there ...

The Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee agreed last year to our submission for the fencing of the site. ... On Wednesday [20 March 1973] I was very pleased by the number of people who had offered their assistance for free.

Ray records that a number of problems arose in getting the fencing material. Eventually it was procured in Armidale and then transported to Bellbrook. Ray, Harry and others worked over a weekend and into the next week to build the fence. His older boys remember helping with the work.

The report Ray wrote on Bellbrook goes on to detail the preparation for the Thilkil stage of initiation and to describe the initiation grounds they learnt about in the Bellbrook area. He concludes:

This is all that I know at the moment but when we have looked further at the Bellbrook sites it will be possible to write a Report on all the stages of initiation and the boora grounds where they were held. We are happy that our strategy seems to be working very well.²⁸

In another report on a follow-up trip to Bellbrook in July 1974, Ray explained the positive

shift in attitude a number of the older people demonstrated towards the survey team.²⁹ Despite their successes, however, there were always people who wished to have nothing to do with Ray or the survey. Rays remembers:

Ted Ballangarry – a knowledgeable fellow there, and he would not tell me one solitary thing. He knew a lot about the Dunghutti side of it over at Bowraville, but he wasn't interested in talking at all. See a lot of people who go through the initiation withhold information. [Tape 7]

In December 1976, Ray reported on a field trip to visit Harry Buchanan and the Nambucca area of the Mid-North Coast. This was conducted with his colleague Terry Donovan, who had joined the survey team just over twelve months before. The extract below provides some insight into Ray's aims for the information gleaned from the survey:

My research in this area concerns sites which give some idea of the Gambangarr, Ngumbar and Thungutti tribal area, their beliefs and way of life. However, these sites may not have been put into practice since they were visited by the last Ngooloongar man around the turn of the century. I don't think many of these sites warrant physical protection ... Therefore this report is intended to fulfill our research commitments far more than our protection commitments.

However, I hope the information compiled in this report meets the needs of the Service and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and will later on assist Aborigines in our endeavour to rebuild the Aboriginal culture to its rightful place.³⁰

Cultural revival

Ray articulated his concerns for Aboriginal cultural heritage early in his working life with NPWS and the survey. They included his desire to use the information the team was collecting to bring about a 'revival' or 'renaissance' of Aboriginal culture in New South Wales; a demand that all researchers return or 'feed back' information to their Aboriginal informants and their communities; and that Aboriginal people take back control of their cultural heritage material. One of Ray's central focuses in his published writing and reports was on male initiation – a practice through which he hoped to reintroduce traditional and contemporary culture more widely into NSW Aboriginal communities. These excerpts come from a 1975 article:

I feel we need to get all our people to become knowledgeable about Aboriginal history and culture – things that only a few of us seem to be interested in at present. To get them interested and knowledgeable, we have to make sure first that the knowledge is preserved in its Aboriginal meaning and then fed back into the people generally. I see this as the task of the Sacred Sites Survey which we are undertaking in NSW ...

The first problem blocking the way towards this at the present is to encourage white anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists in their 'ivory towers' to give direct feedback to the people they have obtained their material from ...

The next block to overcome is the white education system, which has not



accepted the need for Aboriginal kids to be educated in their own history and the significance of those less-sacred sites which it is proper they should know about ...

Another group who already feel the lack of their own knowledge are men aged 30–60 who have shown signs of wanting to absorb the rules of the traditional system in a somewhat modernised form. We have plans on the Survey to feedback the results of our research to this group by involving them in projects to protect the sites and also, maybe, by a revival of the initiations.

A whole new education and 'feedback' system will have to be gradually built up, using all the old knowledge as a basis, together with a lot of new ideas coming from our thrashing out together the present-day realities that our people have to cope with. How to get this to happen? Maybe I'll be able to tell you in a few years from now, after I've graduated further in my own initiation!³¹

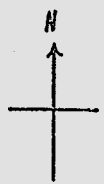
In another report just over a decade on in 1986, Ray wrote:

For the past 12 years I have been trying to bring about a reintroduction of the tribal initiation amongst the Thungutti elders on the Macleay River ... The situation was, that the old initiators were slowly passing on and little or no effort was being made by them to engage themselves in this, our Keeperah, or reawakening.

In December 1985, the elderly men at long last, led by the mentor Mr Len De Silva ... voiced his encouragement to lead the Keeperah ... With the funds being made available [from NPWS], the ball was in the hands of we Aboriginal people.

ABOVE Vital consultants to the early success of the survey: John Quinlan, Victor Shepherd and Les Smith talking to Ray Kelly at Bellbrook, c 1976 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

Sketch Map of the
 Mid-North Coast
 of N.S.W. Showing
 Location of sites.



Towns

▲ Aboriginal Sites



Woogoolah

CUMBANGARRA

Coffs Harbour

Bellingen

Urunga

Bouraville

CUMBANGARRA

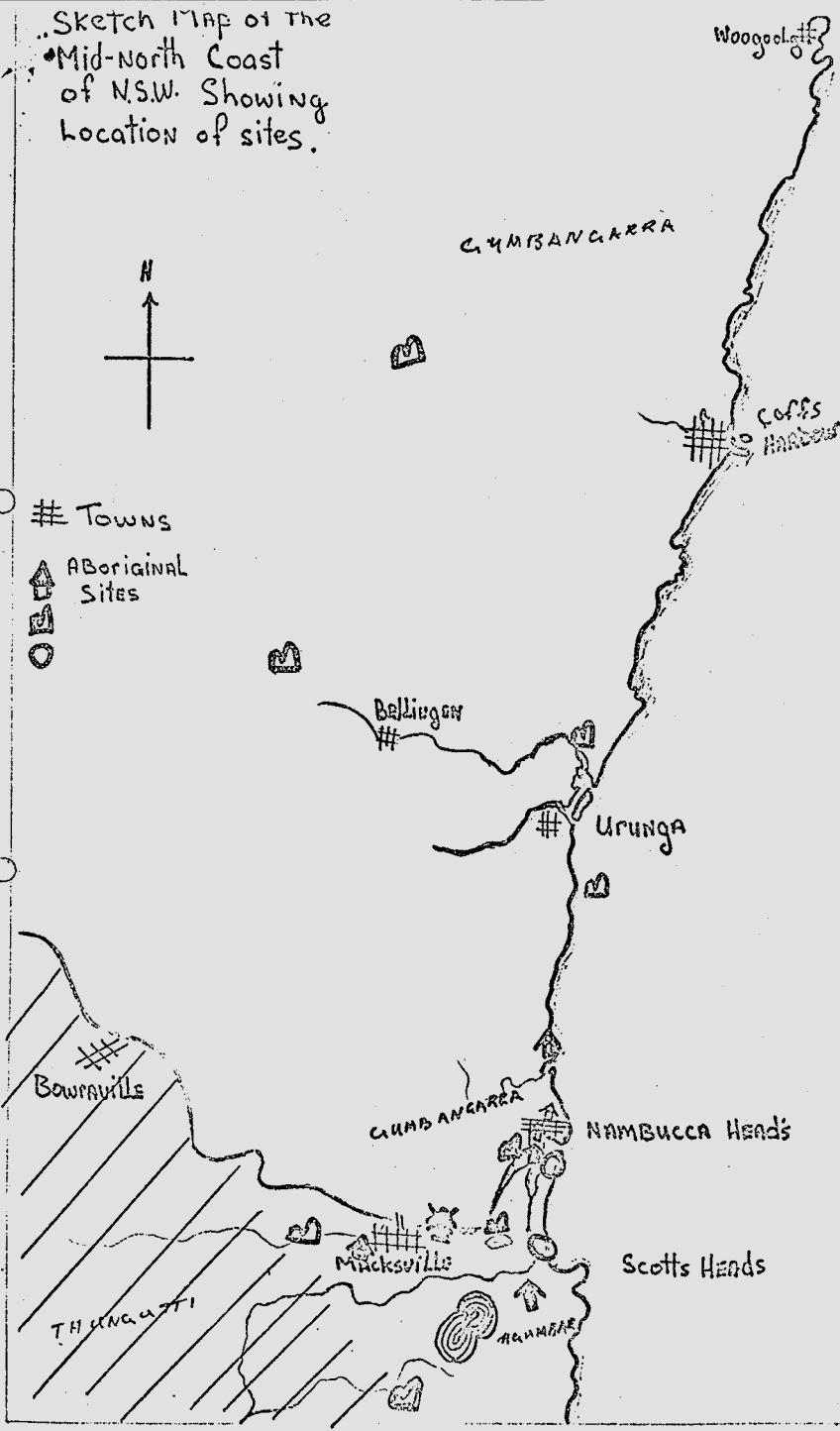
NAMBUECA Head's

Macksville

Scotts Heads

THUNGATTI

AGUMBA



... I am not able to disclose any of the rituals that happened at this Keeperah, however I can say that the three other initiates showed their delight in having witnessed their initial entry into Aboriginal adult manhood ... I am sure the interested Aboriginal society is now ready to take a stance to bring back a part of their culture they unwillingly let fall by the way side.³²

The hoped-for full initiation ceremony, however, did not happen in Ray's time at National Parks. By the mid-1980s, his frustration and anger with the white bureaucratic system, and also with elements of Aboriginal politics both within and outside the Service, was increasingly apparent. In an 'open letter to my Aboriginal colleagues' regarding the process of their Aboriginal Network Meetings, he implored them to act on the philosophical lessons he had been learning since he attended the first Human Relations Workshops with Ned Icteton in the early 1970s:

From my own personal point of view we all are to blame for the lack of effectiveness of our past meeting. I have concluded that [it is] because we don't appear to have any ideas of where we are going at this point in time. Nor do we have strong cohesive ideas of what we want to achieve. I wonder if we are all subconsciously bogged down in suspicion about each other? If that is true, then we must all work towards finding a better human understanding of each other ... By this method we may [begin] to crystallise and analyse, then make positive plans for the future. I maintain we are all adult minded people and I feel sure that should we begin to work on each others adult intellect we, I am sure, can find harmony and unity amongst our colleagues.³³

Conclusion

In 2003, when Dee Murphy interviewed him, Ray returned to his belief in the need for 'human understanding'. He also indicated the ongoing need to record the old people's stories. Referring to the Ngimboy men of the Bellbrook area he told Dee:

They were the rulers of the mountain, little hairy men. There's a place called Budgaree Corner. An Aboriginal name. Down in Budgaree Corner is where the little Ngimboy used to live. Believe it or not, you go there anytime and if you know what you're looking for, you'll find the imprints of a little Ngimboy man's feet in the sandstone.

I was a little bit confused about where Budgaree Corner was. So I asked Auntie Cinder Calligan if she'd show me where it was. She told me her father used to blow the gum leaf, and he'd go down to Budgaree Corner to the little Ngimboy men and they'd come out and make friends with him.

I wrote an article in the paper about the little Ngimboy men and our connection with them. In the *Argus*, quite some years ago. One of the academics – I never knew him – responded to my paper. He said how would you know, because the little Ngimboy men would have died out four thousand years ago.

ABOVE 'Sketch Map of the Mid-North Coast of NSW showing Location of sites'. The survey team drew maps of sites for their reports by hand. This is an example of one of Ray's (Ray Kelly and Terry Donovan, Sites Report 16th December 1976, Aboriginal Sites Register Reports Catalogue 484).

That was his academic interpretation.

See, I think all we need to do is a re-memorabilia with all the able Aboriginal people and a lot of this stuff would surface. What we need to do is work out what the mysticism is. And you'll never be able to do that and come to an educated conclusion until you start getting people together, mingling together and not meddling, and simply pondering the ideas. [Tape 7]

RIGHT The Kelly family at Grafton, 1979. Back row from left: Allan, John Boy and Ray Sr. Middle: Alice holding Laurel's daughter Suana, Ray Jr and John. Front: Thelma, Leah holding Peter Combo and Tina. By this time Laurel was living in Sydney, often with the Delaneys, and the older boys were about to leave home. (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

Family and Friends







3 A National Parks family

Reflections from the Kelly family

The Kelly siblings are united on a number of issues about their father and NPWS. When NPWS came in the door in 1973, they feel their father went out that door, and they continue to share a sense of loss for their father from that time. Yet they also believe his work for the cultural continuity of Indigenous people has been pivotal to cultural survival today. And they believe that Ray and Alice made them the strong and successful people they have become. The Kelly children are Laurel, Trevor, Rose (who died of pneumonia as a baby), Raymond (Ray Junior), John (Neville), Allan, Karina (Tina), Leah, Thelma and John (John Boy). This chapter comes from interviews with Alice, Ray's children and extended family in Kempsey, Sydney, Bateman's Bay and Tamworth.

Early lives: Ray and Alice

Alice: When I first met Ray in Armidale he'd just come up from Kempsey. I think I was 15. When he first came up he was a very quiet fella. He didn't speak to anybody as he had a quiet nature – he was a real gentleman. Ray was brought up by his father because his mum died when he was only young. Then I was told – even then – that he worked and gave everything he had to everybody else.

And I used to always think that Ray was trying to fit in somewhere. And he didn't fit in anywhere because he was an only child. Shoonk got his love and caring from Auntie May Kelly and Uncle Clive Kelly. They took him under their wing. But he was forever spearing fish, bringing it back to Bellbrook and giving it all to these relations.

In later years when he took up fighting he became a real big man. Him and I were together then and he worked hard. He still did the same thing on Armidale mission with the truck as he did at Bellbrook, going out and bringing all the timber back for these people to build their houses. And he was the only man who had a car on the place. Any time anybody wanted to go anywhere he used to take them. He had two jobs. He worked all the time you know and he just gave it all away.

And if we went anywhere he'd fill our car up with other kids because he loved kids. And I think it was because both him and myself – I was

given away when I was very young – I think I was seven when my mother left me. I came back when I was 15 and I met Ray. We met in town at my grandmother's place. Sarah Archibald. He was standing outside the house. He didn't know anybody and I didn't know who he was. I asked him what his name was and asked him would he like to come in and have a cup of tea.

We both wanted the same kind of things. We felt sorry for kids and we gave a lot to kids. We never said, 'No kids, you can't come in here, we've only got enough to feed our own kids.' All those kids were welcome in our house. Ray and I were the foster parents of eight to nine other children and we reared all these kids in a three-bedroom house in Armidale.

Laurel: And it goes back to us kids too. We always had a lot of kids so we were quite willing to move over and make room for someone else.

'The Kelly Wreckers': life on the mission

John: We were family people. If we got in trouble you could guarantee that if one of the boys wasn't there, one of the girls would be there before the boys. The Kelly Wreckers – that was a good name for us to be known as.

Our oldest sister, Laurel – she was the boss when we were young. She used to help us get to school. Mum and Dad were both working. Mum worked at the university as a cook. Dad worked at the pole yard at that time – saw mill.

That was the days of the Board – in Armidale – where the Aboriginal [Welfare] Board was there running the way Aboriginal people lived back then. We were on the reserve – related to all of those people through our McKenzie side, Archibald side. But we were different compared to most people on the reserve because we stuck together.

Tina: You know, Dad made sure we didn't go without, because he's an only child so he wanted to give us the best. I was just little and it was me birthday and Dad was in New Zealand. And Ned Icton came in and said 'I've got a present for you'. It was one of them New Zealand dolls. That's a good memory – all the way over there in New Zealand and he's sending home presents to the old mission. And you get real proud of someone who's done all that, going over there.

Laurel: Dad would always say that if you want something then you've got to earn it. And we all learnt that as a group. I remember every Christmas holidays we would go to Wee Waa chipping cotton and we came to a group decision that we would give half of our earnings to Dad to keep for our holidays. So we would work for half of the holidays and then the other half we would spend on the coast. And that way we always had plenty of money for all of us to have a really good holiday.

And I want to tell you a story about one of our many travels because it gives an example of how he respected other people's ideas. You see Dad will tell you he doesn't believe in religion. But anyway we got this bird from Lower Creek. It had a broken wing, and we were on our way back home to Armidale when the



bird died. And we were real upset so we made Dad pull up and we held a service for the bird. It was really raining but still he found a spot just outside of Dorrigo along by the pine trees. We dug the grave and made the cross and he came and stood with us while we all stood around in the rain saying little prayers. See he never stopped us doing something just because he didn't believe in it.

Alice: The white people of Armidale talk about Shoonk with respect. *Laurel:* Old John Cannon, aye, he owned Cannon Ford.

Leah: That's right, where Dad got his first car.

Laurel: Well Shoonky used to be like his repossessor. Shoonk, being the big man that he was, him and John Cannon used to be what they call blood brothers. And John used to say, 'Look Ray, so-and-so is behind in payments, do you want to go out?' And he'd go and get the car for him and bring it back.

Leah: Yeah, to just sort of stop the static you know. Even though it might have been an Aboriginal man, Dad thought it might be better if an Aboriginal man would go and collect it. He had quite some arguments!

So Alice, can you tell us a bit more about what Ray and you were doing in those early days in Armidale?

Mummy [Ethel De Silva, née McKenzie] and Lenny had a place there so when we had Laurel we decided we'd move in with them. And I think it all started with Ned Icton and Joan. They wanted to help the Aboriginal people. And Margaret Franklin and Dick. And Mummy was always in on all these

ABOVE All the Kelly family at the 30th anniversary of Ray's employment with NPWS. Top row from left: Trevor, Raymond, John, Allan, Laurel, Alice and Leah. Front row from left: John Robert (John Boy), Ray, Thelma and Tina (reproduced courtesy of the *Koori Mail*).



committees. We used to go to women's day – teaching our Aboriginal people how to sew and do all kinds of things like that. Mummy was one of the leaders. There were a lot of Aboriginal people around but nobody had any interest. Shoonk and I used to go. That's when he started getting involved. Mummy nominated him one night at a meeting to get up and talk. Well ever since then he's always been there.

Joe Carriage (Laurel's partner): And he's never stopped talking, aye?

Laurel: And Grandfather [Len De Silva] came along with all the teachings about the Aboriginal culture.

Alice: That was going on because the old men were starting to die off. There was Leighton Smith, there was Mr Shepherd in Bellbrook, the one in Nambucca – the old man, Harry Buchanan – Lenny Silva and Grandfather Archibald. Now I don't know about all this stuff about initiation and everything, but this is where it was all starting. It had nothing to do with National Parks and Wildlife Service. They didn't know anything about it. This was in the community group itself. All these old men, they must have been talking about it, saying, 'Oh, we've got to pick somebody, we've got to look for someone'. And they picked him, picked Shoonk. And that's how he came to be in there.

Well they started taking him around to meet all these old men and he spent hours and hours talking to them. He used to go travelling with them. They'd take him out to the bush and goodness knows what used to go on. But that's where he first started, from these old men. And that's when National Parks and Wildlife came in, after this.

ABOVE Len and Ethel De Silva at the football in Sydney, 1960s (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

Raymond: Now Howard [Creamer] and Dad were truly the odd couple! It has to be remembered that Howard played an enormous part in it all. Here was a highly educated man, from England, sophisticated. I remember a tall, white and skinny man with a flame-red beard picking up an Aboriginal man in Armidale in the 1970s. Surely if a man ever looked out-of-place it had to be Howard in a NPWS vehicle picking up Shoonk to go to another job. Early in their working relationship he would simply wait in the car and we kids would talk to him. He seemed so organised, neat and tidy, and always presented himself in a calm and pleasant manner. And yet



Shoonk was completely the opposite to Howard. He was big, strong, frustrated and black. Man, what a combination for a car ride! Our family eventually became close to Howard. We liked him and still do.

Allan: I think Mum enjoyed it all, before National Parks. We were a very bonding type family. We would go out of a Saturday and we'd go and pick mushrooms or we'd go up to the back of the reserve and buy our chooks. It wasn't uncommon to see the whole family in the only Chinese restaurant in town. But that was before National Parks.

'National Parks came and lived in our house'

Raymond: Dad became completely absorbed with his work at National Parks and the family became pass-engers. We were left very isolated. He was never there. We were fringe people. On the mission at Armidale all the reserve was isolated from white society, but we also became isolated from other Aboriginal people because of the prominence he gained. And when we left the mission to go to Grafton for the National Parks work we became fringe people amongst both white and black.

Alice: It was a good long journey with Shoonk because, I can remember watching him fight, sitting in the ring and watching, being so proud of him. He never had a mean bone in his body then. And he was real quiet and he used to just fight and when the fighting was finished, he'd shake hands and he knew everybody as a friend. He never drank or never smoked. But when he got in with National

Parks and Wildlife it was the finish of him. He started drinking, he started fighting, being aggressive and everything and he never came home. Kids didn't know him no more and he never had any time for us any more.

Tina: Sunday, when he *was* home, we'd have slide night. You'd sit there and you're watching slide night, *all* sites. So you all got to sit there, turn the TV off and he'd tell us every site he went to and he'd show us slides. National Parks came and lived in our house. They lived with us. I resented National Parks ...

John: ... because they took him away from us. The culture took him away. The job took him away from us.

What was it that drove him so much?

Tina: Dad's culture. His family history, all that. I remember him saying 'What I'm doing, no one else is doing at the moment for our culture'. So often we had to wait. Then he'd come home and he'd go 'Let's all go camping'. We'd say, 'Are you finished working?' and we'd go down the Georges Creek.

John: But he wouldn't *be* finished working.

Tina: I remember we went to those middens out at Clybucca. He'd said, 'Let's all go and get oysters'. Though actually we weren't getting oysters, we were doing a site check! So our camp, our little holiday, National Parks still came with us. We could be driving along Dorrigo, Bellbrook, where ever, and he sees something out the corner of his eye and we'd got to get out of the car and wait on the side of the road while he walks up the mountain to check a rock out or a tree out. Mum would go 'Oh my god, not again!'

Laurel: When Dad started working for National Parks he became tired a lot and we didn't understand his mood swings. All he wanted to do was stay home. He was cranky all the time because, you see, he travelled a lot with this new job.

What I'd also say about National Parks is that it's got nothing to do about them and Dad. It's me as a daughter – what I felt I lost when Dad started working for National Parks. I mean, fair enough when somebody works for a position they don't get involved with people's personal stuff. But when you take on a project with that kind of magnitude and commitment that it required at that time – nobody thought about the wife and these kids back home on the mission. You know, we battled! We were so *proud* of him and what he was doing. But we were being *strangled* out there. And then in the end you know our parents divorced. I felt we didn't deserve that end result because we suffered it back then, we deserved a happier ending.

Thelma: I think Dad lived for National Parks, the family, and that's all he lived for.

Trevor: Dad took me to work with him when I was about 16 years old. He was working for National Parks. We put a fence around the Aboriginal gravesites on Bellbrook Reserve.

Tina: Thelma could tell you when he went away to Kakadu. He was away for a month or two. She was just little.



Thelma: Yeah. Dad went away see and I wasn't there at the time, I was at one of my mate's places around the corner. When I come back the girls said, 'Oh Dad went away' and I said, 'Oh yeah'. And I only knew Dad as in the green suit – National Parks clothes. But he come back in normal clothes. And I'm watching down the road and I see this big man walking and I'm looking and I'm seeing him and he's waving for me to come down. I'm looking at him, 'You're not my Daddy' and I run away! And I was that tiny I could fit into any position so I got into the hall cupboard.

Tina: He'd come back and had a beard out here and Thelma didn't know who the buggery he was.

Liz (Allan's wife): I know most times Ray's family suffered as the job became more demanding and urgent. When he was home he tried to make up for his absence, but then his role in the community would intervene. He kind of railroaded me into taking the position of typist with the National Parks. Ray, Howard and Sharon were all my bosses. Their personalities and cultures were all different and sometimes situations were very trying. What most people don't realise about Ray is he is a very soft-hearted person and a perfectionist! I don't know how many times I had to do his reports again – and they could be ten to sixty pages long! He and I would very often have conflicts about Aboriginal issues and we both would end up compromising with one another. But being of Aboriginal descent and not knowing a lot about culture, Ray kind of nurtured me while I slowly picked it up. He opened up my eyes to education and my own culture.

ABOVE Ray Kelly and other NPWS officers celebrating fifteen years of employment (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

Allan: When National Parks first came along I wasn't real old. I was only about ten years of age and I didn't pay too much attention. We just kept getting these brand new cars coming in and I thought it was excellent. But that's when a lot of our lifestyle changed. And it changed within the first year because I remember very well. We were going to Bellbrook for Christmas and I remember because it was the last time that he ever shot a kangaroo. And he said, 'This is the last time I'll be ever doing it' because it just wasn't the right thing to do. It wouldn't have looked right for a National Parks worker to be killing the wildlife.

So as an Aboriginal child it went out the back door. Then I missed it because it was a bonding that our family had. We would go out and we'd gather our – like traditional, modern-day Aboriginals in the '70s – we'd go out and gather our food. And it just stopped straight away. So he was dead serious about National Parks. I think as an Aboriginal person it was something that was lost that we shouldn't have really lost.

I think then he became a different person. I don't know if it was because he had sugar [diabetes] or the stress or just the times. But he had definitely a change. He became less interactive with us because of his job, maybe because he was getting tired, but he wasn't home a hell of a lot. I don't know if it was because we were becoming more modern, like white culture, or because he was mixing a lot more with white people, but we were coming more up-to-date with the average person and losing a lot of our Aboriginal ways. I personally, I think it was a terrible loss to us. It probably consumed him for ten years maybe, but by the time he come out of it we were all nearly gone.

Horses, cars, hitchhikers and camping

John: He loved the geegees. We'd always know when he was betting.

Tina: We'd pull up on the highway, we'd go to one town, we'd be sitting at the TAB for half an hour. I think the first thing I learned to spell was T-A-B – TAB. 'Now kids. How do you spell the TAB?' 'Tee Aaay Beee', we'd go!

Allan: The backyard was full of cars. He was a car collector. I reckon we could have had at least 100 cars.

Melissa (John Boy's wife): He was forever looking at cars on the side of the road. Every time he saw a car for sale he'd pull up. He was a car freak.

Alice: He'd pick up hitchhikers anywhere along the road, ay.

Laurel: And they'd live with us for two or three years!

Allan: I think he made himself look hard because he was so soft inside. Like he would not drive past anybody and whether they be white or black he'd bring 'em home like a stray dog. I remember one time when we were moving to Grafton – had three mattresses and all these parts of the bed in the back of this station wagon – and this white bloke was standing out at Nambucca Heads and it was pouring rain. Me and Ray and John looked at each other and we just started climbing over the back seat before he even pulled up ... They didn't stay, they lived, they didn't bother going.



John: And he could make us feel good all the time and he would sing to us. He had the best voice, and we'd all lie in the back of the car and listen.

John Boy: We'd all be in the car but he still couldn't drive past 'em. He'd say, 'Move over, squeeze over'. We had a hitchhiker – his car had broken down. We had him for two weeks. Dad fixed his car for him and saved him thousands of dollars – pulled the motor apart. He went to go – he burst out in tears! We fed him and everything – he couldn't believe it. I think he was Tongan or something. Dad filled the car up with petrol – he was ages from where he had to get to. You know – that was just the things Dad'd do.

Becky (Tina's daughter): There was one time when we were at Pop's farm, on the highway, and there was a hitchhiker standing there. That's when Laurel Ann (Becky's sister) was sleeping up there. And he'd been standing out there for hours and it started raining, and Pop made Laurel cook him a feed and we had to take it out to him.

Trevor: Dad and myself didn't mind a few sips in Armidale. We used to go fishing too. Dad would stand in the water and this one time he caught a big mullet and as he was coming back he slipped in the water, lost the fish and come out swearing.

Toni (John's wife): When I first met you all it was a bit scary. I'd heard so much of how you all stuck together, so I didn't want to just move in. Dad [Ray] was a bit scary at first 'cause I didn't know how to take him. But really he's a big pussycat! We were camping down on the river and everything had to be run

by the ship – he was the captain of the ship. We were camping at Tarooka. He loved having all his family together – every single one of them. And there wasn't allowed to be one missing.

John: We all ate so well. We'd have steak, ice cream jelly – on the river!

Tina: We didn't camp like normal people. He'd go to the Salvos and buy up half of Salvos!

John: He'd be bringing beds out, lounges. He would make sure we were accommodated!

'Dad has made us strong'

Thelma: Dad and Mum were very strict about name-calling and judging other people. Because if we judge them then they can judge us. And we didn't like that, so we wasn't allowed to judge them. Dad knew that the world was changing and we'd have to be up to the standards of what was coming towards us. And we had fun about it, that was what was good about it. But we had hard times 'cos we had to learn the hard way. For example we didn't have a car and say – quick just run up to the shop. We had to walk, we had to earn our jobs and earn our pocket money.

Tina: Dad wanted us to mix with different cultures. Integrate – put it that way. He'd say, 'Be yourself and proud of where you come from and people will treat you with respect'. And that's how I am today.

Leah: He saw the potential in all of us. When we were in Grafton, especially on the weekends when he was home, we'd be having breakfast, he'd be sitting at the end of the table and he'd say; 'Right oh, who's going to read the newspaper today?' And he'd pass the newspaper around – 'Your turn today'. And if you couldn't spell it properly or read it properly he'd say, 'Well you come around here'. And while he's still eating his breakfast he'd break it down for us – say words like 'oblivion', 'hypothetically' – he'd show us how to do it.

Laurel: When we had to go to the dentist he'd make an appointment for the whole lot of us and we'd all go to the dentist at the same time.

Voices: And needles together!

Laurel: Dad used to do all that. He was a very generous man. He bought each and everyone of us our first car and his love for his children didn't stop when we all became of age. Many a times he helped us financially, emotionally and physically.

Melissa: He's more of a father than me own father was. He's done everything for us.

John Boy: He used to have these stones in the car. When we were flat out trying to get a car, he gave us his Ford Fairmont and these stones where in it. He said, 'Don't touch them stones, leave 'em in it, they'll guide you, they'll look after you'.

What do you want to come out about your Dad?

John: Dad's honesty – he's got a heart like nobody. Dad can be the hardest. He can be the softest. He taught us to respect our culture and our family, teach our family, and to have a go at something yourself and then if you need to count on one another, count on one another.

Tina: One of his favourite sayings is 'You can be your own mentor or tormentor'.

Thelma: And he's saying that you can have life as good as you want it, or you can have it as hard as you make it. Do the best you can and accept what you can't.

Laurel: He said to us one time, 'You girls should have been the boys because you are my boxers'.

Leah: Most kids used to get flogged for fighting but he used to praise us. 'I'm glad you stood up for yourself', and he'd always say it.

Fighting for his culture

Do you think Ray would be surprised to hear the extent to which you all felt that once he was in National Parks life changed so dramatically?

Allan: I wouldn't be surprised if he's not aware of it. But I honestly believe that he believed he had to do this thing for the Aboriginal people. Because it was coming up to two hundred years of white people living in Australia. The Aboriginal culture was going very fast. The generation before me father's, I think they were aware of it but had no control over it. So when me father come of age and found out he could capture some of this history, I believe he thought he would grab at it at all costs, because it was so important, not just for our family but the Aboriginal race.

And I think he believed he was doing the best that he could with our family. But we were just falling backwards and, you know, losing contact with our own family chain. But I take me hat off to him today for being one of the early fighters for the preservation of our culture.

Raymond: The types of changes he wanted to see were about Aboriginal self-determination in controlling their own sites, and in the re-birth, the renaissance of Aboriginal culture. But it wasn't going to happen quickly enough for him – getting Aboriginal people solely in control. Well it hasn't happened yet – you look at Aboriginal people today and we are still back in colonial times.

The enormous push for them on the survey was to get the information before the passing of the people with that knowledge. It was the driving force for them all. But it also came to be about cultural renaissance. They came to recognise that the cultural knowledge had evolved and changed, and they came to understand that culture isn't static: that it's about *re*-remembering, *re*-telling. That was really important. I came to understand that Dad and the survey team – and other National Park people, black and white – they would discover sites like these massacre sites, and other places, and they couldn't get people *interested* in them. It was an enormous burden that carried a great pain.

A statement from the Kelly sons, son-in-laws, grandsons and great grand-sons about Ray Kelly Senior

A new age of thinking was emerging following the 1967 Referendum. Were there any sites of significance left in NSW, and if there were, were there any Aboriginal people left with the cultural knowledge pertaining to the sites? A very challenging question.

Before Ray joined the Service there was almost no understanding of the importance that heritage places had for living Aboriginal people in NSW. Of himself, Ray would speak of nothing but his Aboriginal culture. As he underwent lore ceremony it was revealed to him the innermost secrets of the tribe. Some he recorded, others he kept a secret in honour of his initiators and his tribe. His meeting at Bellbrook with the last of the remaining initiated men had finally taken place and he was able to walk away with the approval of these men's records.

Through Ray's commitment to work with the various elders of NSW communities, to record their sites, their history, we finally get a picture of Aboriginal society in NSW. The work of the sites survey team clearly pointed out that Aboriginal people are a more advanced civilisation than once thought. All Australians, in particular NPWS and anthropologists, are indebted to Ray for his contribution towards the regeneration of Aboriginal culture and heritage.

The only way DEC can gain respect in the eyes of the Elders and their own self respect, is to fully, properly and generously take up the challenge of helping the rebirth of Aboriginal culture and heritage, as well as handing all cultural materials back to their owners, as they are now doing via the Repatriation Program.

When Ray joined the Service he also brought Aboriginal culture and heritage out of the shadows where it had been neglected. He helped to place it in its rightful place at the beginning of Australian history.

Both black and white people are more enriched by his willingness to pass on and share his culture. Yes, it's hard when you're standing in the shadow of a very famous man.

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Alice: Nothing ever beat him you know, he was that kind of man. He had his good parts and his bad parts. But when I look back now, 'cos we've been divorced for eighteen years, I always think about the good times now. I always overlook the bad times you know, because it all ended up good.

Raymond: Not many people saw his softer side, but he did have one. And he could be very humorous, very funny. But he never tolerated bullshit [laughs]. Never! He always dealt with it in one way – he'd fight you – he'd take no prisoners. He either fought you verbally or physically. It's what it took at the time. I didn't always respect what he had to say, but I always respected his right to say it – which is what he'd say to me. He was a hard man before his stroke. He comes from a hard time.

Leah: Dad had this role in National Parks and he had people looking up to him. But they don't realise the sacrifice he had to make. He left his children and his wife to be there for his people, to make sure that there's something in the future for the generations to come. Save our culture, and teach our kids. If I've got any ounce of that in me I'm going to do the same – in a little way – not as drastic.





4 Lighting the Light

Reflections from Ned Icton

Ned Icton met Ray shortly after arriving in Armidale in the late 1960s as the new community development lecturer in the Department of Continuing Education, University of New England (UNE). It was a period on the cusp of change where those who believed the only solution to the 'Aboriginal problem' was their cultural disappearance through assimilation were beginning to be challenged by a new generation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal political activism. Through these heady years Ned and Ray formed what would become a life-long friendship. It was also through Ned's week-long, live-in 'Human Relations Workshops' that Ray sought to find his 'inner voice' to better understand himself and how to advance the situation for Aboriginal people.

In this chapter, Ned traces his memories of Ray from the silent young man he met in 1966, through the lighting of a fire in Ray to work for his culture, to his later years of frustration in achieving his goals.

Launching the relationship

I came to the University of New England in May 1966 as lecturer in community development, and the job given me included that of establishing relationships with Aboriginal people. I was to work with the Armidale Association for Aborigines who actually had a committee to meet me and vet me before I got appointed.

Very soon they had this idea that I should organise to take a couple of Aboriginal people to New Zealand on a study tour of the Maori. And they already knew they wanted Jim Smith to come with me – a chap who lived in town and did attend their committee meetings periodically, as pretty well the only Aboriginal person who did. Occasionally they had another person attend who was Ethel McKenzie, Ray Kelly's mother-in-law. And when I investigated who we would take from the reserve I wanted the reserve folk collectively to nominate somebody, but I don't think participatory democracy was functioning! It was really Ethel's decision to choose Ray.

So the three of us went to New Zealand and we were there for about ten days. We toured around the islands and had Maori lecturers from the university in

LEFT Ned Icton and his wife Joan, Armidale, 1982. John Kelly remembers spending Sundays at the Ictons when the Kelly's were living at the mission. Tina remembers the Ictons and the Franklins 'educating' the children on the world. (photo courtesy of Ned Icton).

Wellington – it was a very interesting time. There were other Aboriginal people from other places who came. And that launched us on the relationship, you could say. ‘I’ve been away together with these gubs and I’ve actually enjoyed it!’ Ray said.

Human Relations Workshops

See that was 1966. In the meantime I had these experiences with Human Relations Workshops that were run by a psychologist at UNE. I decided that this was the kind of thing we would need, because my experience in those first four years was that the women were more intact as persons than the men. It seemed as though the men had had their political role and their social role, breadwinner role and so forth, destroyed by white occupation. But the women’s role as child-bearers and child-rearers had continued and they were less destroyed. So that when we set out to foster community organisation, which was part of my job as a community developer, I could mobilise some women but there were never any men, you see.

So by the time of 1970, I decided that we needed to get the men together on their own and do something to free them up to be able to participate in something that might be developmental for them. In 1970 I ran the first Aboriginal Human Relations Workshop, and I had a young local Aboriginal chap, Terry Widders, who’s now at Macquarie University, assist me. I’d known him from the age of 18. Anyway I had him operate as ‘bell-wether’ in the group to talk about the problems that he faced as an Aboriginal in society generally, and to start the discussion about what it was like being Aboriginal in society back then in 1970. And so Ray was one of those people and Ted Fields was one of those people. I came to see that an approach of personal emotional honesty and equality as persons was clearly the only basis for effective cross-cultural relationships.

And what do you think led Ray to come to the workshop in the first place?

He came because of me. In other words he came because I talked about it and he trusted that I would tell him something that he ought to be interested in.

I think there were only eight of us. It became a very intense and powerful experience for all of them. We started to talk about the daily things that upset people and what action they might be able to take. Then we’d rehearse what we needed to do – eg, ask people like the City Council manager for help – and then we would talk through what had to be said and who was going to say it, and then we’d agree who’d go, and who’d speak, and they’d go and do it. It was a pretty powerful experience and at the end of it – seven days long, I think – Ray Kelly said, ‘This experience has lit a light in me that will never go out’.

And in a sense that’s the way it’s been. He’s never let go of the idea of doing what he can in terms of the advancement of people. And his mother-in-law lived at that time with a chap called Len De Silva, who was an initiated man who was powerful as a person. He later initiated Ray in an early stage of the initiation to what they call Thilkil, so that he could do the work in the National



Parks when he later came to that job. So he was influenced in that way by feeling that it's important to develop who we are, with an awareness of where we're coming from.

Early days

So the young Ray that you met – what had his life been?

Well he'd been a boxer and then I guess he got out before he was severely damaged and he got into various other jobs. I think it had been his decision to come to Armidale from Kempsey where the opportunities for Aboriginal people were very limited. Racism was pretty rampant and Armidale seemed like a better place. He was only young so he would have been early twenties or mid-twenties at this time.

At the time of the first workshop in 1970 I think he may have worked with the City Council. Later on he worked with a company who were the people who did the telegraph treatment with creosoting and arsenic. And of course later Ray got a very serious dose of pharyngeal cancer which was almost certainly caused by the fact that he was required to go in and shift the poles inside this heat-treatment chamber where the creosoting arsenic was put in under pressure. And so that was a big crisis in his life where we – my wife and I – were very important emotionally and psychologically in supporting him to get through that and cope with all the treatments that he had to go through.

He had almost no schooling, as none of the people had who came from down there at Bellbrook – off the mission at Bellbrook. Their teacher was one of the staff running the place who was not very literate himself, I think. Initially

Ray was, under any circumstances, hardly able to say anything. And when we came back from New Zealand the [Armidale] association wanted him to do a report on what he'd learned, and that was too much.

He had no practise ever in stringing ideas and impressions together – because he wasn't literate enough to do that. And we probably forget how important our literacy is to getting our ideas in order. It's clear that literacy produced a great advance in thinking when it became widespread.

So I was used to spending a lot of time helping Ray with his literacy. We would be talking and there was a whole lot of vocabulary that he didn't have. I ended up giving him a dictionary at one stage – a Macquarie dictionary it probably was. And he would ring me up and say 'I can't find "curious" under Q, so spell it'. And then he would also invent words because he got the hang of that. He was saying such-and-such is 'disconstructive' – which was a perfectly good verb.

Then out of the Aboriginal Human Relations Workshops which we ran I launched a newsletter. The content consisted of Aboriginal people talking about things. And the way to do it was simply to interview them, as you're interviewing me, and get them to think about such-and-such and give me an answer and have another question – and we'd go on and we'd get a story in that way. But for them to do it on their own – they couldn't, Ray couldn't. Whereas Jim Smith was always able to. Jim had sort of nous and capacity for holding his end up in a slightly aggressive way. Ray wasn't able to do that and he'd been a boxer – up to then his only way of dealing with things was, 'Bang'. He scared a lot of people including this psychiatrist friend of mine whom I'd brought in to help me with the Aboriginal Human Relations Workshops. But he never scared me, somehow, because I knew he'd never hurt me.

So Ray's intelligence was less an articulateness but it was more – more a sense of an intuitive big picture, and there was some sort of emotional intelligence – so that he never got lost in his drinking or gambling for example for any length of time. He said, 'the experience of the workshop lit the light in me' and so forth – but I think in some ways he must have always had it. He must have just said, 'I recognise something about myself'. His discovery of himself in that first workshop obviously affected him and almost certainly did affect why he was interested in getting into National Parks, I'd say. Because that's the track we were on in the workshops.

'His full horizon': the survey and National Parks

Tell me a bit about what you understand about Ray's commitment to the Sacred Sites Survey and finding out about Aboriginal knowledge. What did he want to do with it?

Well I mean he was always talking about 'It's got to go back to the people', and 'It's not just to be held in an archive somewhere'. At some stage we had the idea of running a new version of initiation that would involve a reinvention of the initiation in terms of all sorts of contemporary things plus the guts of the traditional things that people felt were needed. So we were into discussing that.

Then there was this old chap named Victor Shepherd who was part of that, one of the older initiated chaps. Unfortunately he died so we never actually got into doing this.³⁴ But that's the sort of use that we probably would have put a lot of the sacred sites material to – as input to kids going through an initiation experience for a contemporary Australian Aboriginal life.

And as John, Ray's son, was saying when he saw me in the Mall today – make sure the people understand that the reason this change occurred was the old fellas were willing to start talking about all these things, and their awareness that it was going to be gone. They were all going to be dead pretty soon and the whole thing would be lost and there'd be nothing left over for the people in the future. So the pressure was there, and there was a sudden change from the traditional cultural taboo in terms of talking about these things – to an awareness that there are some people we must tell about it. And so Ray was obviously one of the first of those.

What impact do you think those years had on his family

Well my guess would be the family were always a bit off to one side. But they couldn't fail to be caught up – this stuff was important so they would all feel that it was important. Ray would be talking about the thing the whole time. It would have been his full horizon – he was filled with it all the time. So the family had no option except to be caught in it, no doubt about that. And that wouldn't have been easy for them, I imagine.

What about his writing and coming from his educational background to NPWS?

Without that burning need to do it, to learn to write as he did, he couldn't have done it. That's the reality of it. I would get these scribbled bits and when I first knew him he was unable to write anything. And then he forced himself to learn to write so that he could write these papers that he did. He would send them to me and I would edit them in various ways by putting paragraphs in, perhaps sub-headings sometimes and putting in a verb where one was missing, something like that – but it wasn't more than that. He really had to work hard to write his stuff. But it was so important to him because these were his really heartfelt feelings about the importance of things that he was writing about. And I'm sure that by doing this he did have influence that he couldn't have had otherwise.

We ran one Human Relations Workshop for National Parks – with staff in the Sacred Sites Survey. I was only enabled to do that because National Parks approached the university to ask for me to be released to do it.³⁵

What was that workshop about?

It was basically empowerment issues. Yes, it was about who we are, what we're trying to do and what difficulties we're running into, and what are the possible ways in which we might do better than what we're doing so far – that sort of stuff. I don't remember the details of it but the dynamics were very interesting.

Howard Creamer was there, and Harry had always had problems dealing with Ray in particular. Ray had trouble with the anthropologists generally because

they had an intellectual interest in the work, whereas the Aboriginal interest is not just what are the symbols and all that stuff, but what's the *meaning* of it. That was the importance to Ray always and he felt the anthropologists weren't sufficiently interested in recording that part of it, from his point of view.

And what were you able to accomplish in that?

Well we talked through a lot of things. We did a life-script analysis for Harry I think I remember. That helped to enable other people to see where he comes from, why he's like he is – it was a team-building sort of thing. Its main outcome would have been a bonding thing, an expansion of the overlap of our understanding of what we're about, because we're all individuals. We all have our own particular take on reality and to function effectively as a team you need to have an appreciation and acceptance of where other people are coming from.

I've heard the survey years referred to as Ray's 'heyday'. Would you describe it in that way?

Yes, I think there was an early period when it was very exciting, going around to all the places, talking with the old chaps, getting the information out of them and recording it all. I think that was a wonderful experience. But then later it got cut off and it wasn't flowing in the way that he would have hoped, and he couldn't shift it. And later, when those things might have been resolved a bit, then his own people weren't appreciating the effort he'd put into it.

The years of frustration

Can you tell us a bit about the transition that you saw in him?

Well I mean he became more confident knowing what he knew. He became clearer about what he wanted to say. He became especially clear about the disadvantages of the bureaucratic system when you were trying to advance a value system. I think he became clear about the few people within the system who were real people as well as cogs in the system – they were very important to him.

He was also always having agonies over the arguments that arose about protection of sites. I mean there were always councils wanting to bulldoze this away and build a golf course or whatever, so he was actually doing a lot of negotiating with councils and had some great successes in cases where they took him seriously – then he had a good feeling. But there were lots of other situations where it was just unsatisfactory and he was overridden and the National Parks Service, I suppose, would intervene across these things with local government or whatever else. So there was sometimes a powerlessness about those things.

But then I think the final hurt was that he wasn't able to help the Aboriginal people that he wanted to be helping – to transcend their pettinesses, to be fair to each other instead of struggling over resources. And he couldn't persuade them to listen to the culturally important things that he thought he had to

offer, when they wanted to play the role of being elders and would just invent it instead of listening to what he actually knew.

And how did he deal with all these things?

Basically, ultimately he had a stroke, I mean that's really what happened. It made his blood boil so much that all this was happening after all the effort. I would have needed to get him into a meditation program or something or other to work through and control his hypertension and his diabetes and so on. So that was the sad end to it.

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So if you wanted to summarise him, what sort of person do you think he is?

Well he's a person with a completely genuine altruistic commitment to Aboriginal people. Even his fighting – he would sometimes feel, if that was all he could do – if he could beat up somebody who had done somebody wrong – he would feel that was better than nothing. But then later on, of course, one of his big growth things was – he would always have people picking a fight with him because he was supposed to be a fighter – and then the only way he could cope constructively with that was to actually walk away – go out, walk away to avoid getting sucked into fighting.

He's had that deep commitment. He was filled with all sorts of inhibitions and a sense of inadequacy and there were a lot of problems that were left over from his childhood – the details of which I don't know – how he came to have those things. He had this absolute honesty you see, which was very important to me. So it was an important relationship in my life and it was important in his life.





5 'At last, someone else who understands'

Reflections from Ted Fields

Ted and Ray met as young men in Armidale, embarking at the same time on careers within white institutions and cross-cultural politics. Ted's early years were spent on Bangate Station, Angeldool and Brewarrina Mission in north-west NSW. Stock work took him throughout southern Queensland and across western NSW. He has lived in the Walgett area for the past forty years, and is the last Ualarai language speaker. He has been active in recording sites of significance to north-western NSW Aboriginal groups, and worked voluntarily with NPWS on the Sites of Significance Survey. He was also a member of the first Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee in 1980.

In this chapter, Ted reflects on his life, and Ray's life, and their work in protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage at a time when few others were interested.

Kindred spirits

When I first met Ray it was at a Human Relations Workshop at Armidale back in the early '70s I think, I didn't know Ray then. I didn't know anyone. Went up and after the first day I think we recognised some sort of kindred spirit there between us. He was having trouble in the workshop and so was I, because after the first couple of days it got a bit intense and you know, my armour started to weaken. I think Ray felt the same.

Your armour?

Yeah, putting up – been living a lie all my life – in terms of how to survive. And I think Ray was doing the same.

I think Ray and I were the only two of the original ones who went back for seconds. We felt the need for it and were scared at the same time. We supported each other through that. And we went out to have a few beers after it and could laugh about it and with a tough exterior you know, didn't let it get to us. And then I went to Armidale after to work there at the university, running a tutorial scheme. I consolidated my friendship with Ray there.

Was Ray also working there?

He did after, yes, after I left.

That was a hair-raising thing for me, working at the university. I'd only lived in the camp and had no education. I think I had Ned [Iceton] fooled up 'til then – that I had a bit of an education. And that's saying a lot of Ned! But

anyhow Ray and I got on well from there. I stayed there about two and a half years, and came back. It was getting too stressful for me see.

So you came back to Walgett?

Yes, went back bush again. Then when Ray was with the National Parks he came out here and they picked me up in a voluntary capacity. I went and worked with him, showing him sites around here. That's when I got to know Ray further and over the years we kept in touch. It's only the last few years we haven't, because his health and my health's turned and we just couldn't.

I was always a second-class citizen, which I still am. I'll always be that way – I'll never feel any different. I've learnt to live with it now. But you know I accepted that and Ray was able to help me, see. I could be myself with him, whereas with others I couldn't, even with other Aboriginals.

What was it about Ray that allowed you to?

I don't know [laughs]. It was just his knockabout way and, as I say, we were kindred spirits and he had something that I didn't have.

Which was what?

Him living in the city, at Armidale, and his connections with different groups – upper-class people.

So he didn't have that same feeling of being inferior?

Inferiority, no, not to the extent that I had. He did have it I think. But he'd got over it by then, or a lot of it. He'd mastered it, or learned how to live with it more successfully than I did.

But we'd have our arguments all right, in the pub or in town. Then we'd go out bush – we wouldn't resolve it in the pub – we'd resolve it out there. That was, you know, a different sort of relationship. Different sort of need for each other. I mean what he could give me and what I could give him, support, to be needed by each other. He could understand what I needed without putting it into words and vice versa. When you've got to sit down and explain everything in terms of black and white, well, there's not much support in that.

He expanded fast

So did you see a change in him over the years?

Yes, a big change. When I first met him he hadn't conquered the inferiority yet, but he was on his way – he was doing something about it. It was after the workshops that I saw the difference in him. Even on the reserve at East Armidale, Silver City they called it, he grew there, he expanded there. And he was having trouble then with his in-laws and others, and that came out at the workshop – he copped it.

See, he just expanded too quickly. He was talking a different language, he was more forthright. Well he was *always* forthright, no doubt about that, but not in such a positive way. He was more forthright in a positive way now. And he saw the need then, as with me – I mean I saw the need to try to sound like I had an education. Ray had no education – we wanted to *sound* like we had



education. I think we saw that in each other too. But we couldn't fool each other! So we had to be on good terms!

I was wondering what Aboriginal people would have been thinking of his development?

Well, they didn't think much. They don't think much when you start drifting away, although he didn't drift away. But they see it as that. He started talking different, saying different words, big words, putting in jaw-breakers and that was threatening. He was getting away from them and people didn't like that.

And so what happened to Ray?

Hmm, what happened to Ray? Ray grew into the person he became, but also he grew faster, and he became – not frustrated but – I don't know the word for it. But he went past an achievement, what he wanted to achieve and he found nowhere to go then. He sort of went down, then. I think that was part of the deterioration of his physical health. He lost meaning for things. He'd achieved something which then he lost, there was no meaning. That's the feeling I got from him. Even towards the end of the survey he was getting a bit – again in hindsight I can see this, but I didn't see it at the time – he was getting frustrated with even his workmates – they had blues all the time. That's why it did him good to escape from that and get out here.

The trouble with hierarchies

He had a problem with the hierarchies when we were out bush here. Because we knew what we were doing, we knew when to do it. You know in our mind

we didn't want the likes of Howard or Sharon Sullivan telling us what to do or how to do it. So when we got together, we covered a lot of good ground, him, and Sabu Dunn was another one. We covered a lot of good ground when we were on our own. When he had the others there with timetables and this sort of thing, we didn't do as much then. See *circumstances* dictated when we'd go out, not us. You couldn't tell this to the hierarchy. What's going on out there like the shearing and lambing – you can only go at certain times. I knew this but they didn't. I could only tell them but they had to go by a timetable. But in future Ray'd just drop in and we'd do what we could when we could and that's it.

But in that way we were able to get more done you see, we worked – flowed with the wind. We didn't have timetables. That helped me a lot here too because up 'til then I was doing work, checking on sites and monitoring sites – but *not* in a concentrated way. But as a result of that, I'm able now, with the exception of one property, I can go to any property without any notice. I *don't* go without notice, but I could if I rang up and no-one was there, I could go anyhow.

And so working with Ray actually helped that? Or was it because Ray worked for National Parks?

No, no, it had nothing to do with National Parks. It was because the cockies found out we weren't going to go into the paddock with the lambing ewes and disturb them or you know, come in the middle of the shearing, something like that. They knew, and so we got that way that we could go anywhere.

And they weren't worried about this notion of you looking for sites?

No, they didn't. Well I told them that we were just going to look after them. At times then we might put a little fence around there, again just enough, and we did on a few properties. We made it quite clear that we weren't after Native Title – oh well, not then – with the land rights then.

So what did the survey mean to you?

Well it meant quite a bit for me. I mean – I have the difficulty of expressing – the emotional significance and the anxiety I was feeling. I'm feeling anxiety about a lot of things now. I haven't got enough time left to do them all. But I suppose we've all got that. There are things – just *showing* the sites – well that's not enough, see. That's where Ray could feel it, he had this feeling too, because with his sites, he's got the same in his area and he understood about my feeling. And so I was able to get that across. At last – there's not just me, there's someone else.

Once Ray started with National Parks I understand that really became very central to his life.

Yes, you know he took the job on and he did it well. He put everything he had into it and of course he had fights all the way which is natural, unavoidable if you're going to do the job properly.

Who did he have fights with?

With the administration. That was unavoidable, inevitable, because of the approach that Ray had to the job. He wanted to get it done. He wanted to get it done yesterday, but he knew that he couldn't. He knew that he had to go softly.

He knew he couldn't do it through the National Parks – but he knew he needed them as backstop. He needed the administrative support or the academic support or whatever. But he also needed people like me, in the field. So he had to try and work between the two of us and do his job at the same time. It was a way of life to him, not just a job.

Because like you, he felt that anxiety?

We were feeling that way that we'd need to get it done, and quickly done, but we had to go softly about it because not everyone would tell us everything. Some people, it takes a while to get their confidence.

The old people – did they take a while to think that they'd want to tell you anything?

Well with Ray, he'd come around sometimes with shorts and no shoes on. He'd just plop down and have a feed with us in the camp – we were living in the camps then, not in the houses. That didn't bother him. He didn't turn up with a suit or with a book in his hand and asking questions. He sat down, had a cup of tea or something. So the people accepted him more readily than they did others. He didn't jump straight in with a tape recorder, the camera or notebook. He just wanted to know the people, know what's going on here. I think by the end of that fifth or sixth visit here – when he used to come here he was staying for a week at a time you know – I think there wasn't much held back then. Sometimes he'd meet in the pub and play pool while we'd be having a beer. He'd talk to them there about things, or down in the camp, on the streets, anywhere.

And he was in with the administrating and he was learning how to get this across to them and I couldn't. I was still getting frustrated with them, see. He was there in the office, I was out here in the field. And if I didn't have access to an office, well nothing would have got through. But I was too frustrated with these administratives, academics. But he was there in the office fighting to get it down – or translating. I think he was translating. And he was having a lot of trouble and I think that sort of didn't help matters with his family life and his health.

Battling some of the same issues

So that's the period between '73 and '83. How was he dealing with his life at that stage?

He was fluctuating. Sometimes he'd – ahhh, on reflection – there were some things I think he wanted to discuss with me but he wasn't able to because of circumstances – because family problems and administration and this sort of thing giving him a hard time. Particularly archaeologists, they got up his bloody nose. But because we never got the opportunity when we should have had it, to talk, I think we could have helped each other about things we hadn't been able to speak about at all.

Are you talking about personal, emotional things or are you talking about Aboriginal cultural things?

No – personal, emotional, family things, and that was affecting his work too. I was having family troubles at the same time, yet we never got the opportunity to support each other because we had these other interfering insensitive people around us, you know. All they wanted to do was get the bloody job of the sites. To hell with the sites, we've got something more important right now. If we could have said that, you know, and got away on our own, a week, a fortnight in the bush, we could have been right. Might have saved our family. Might not have too.

So he was really concerned about the problems with his family?

Yeah, yeah.

Because I think the family often feel that really he just went off and did that work and didn't really remember them.

No, no. He was aware of them. I was aware of my family too. They go first. But as I say, we didn't have the time to do anything about it. Weren't given the time. I mean we could have punched a few heads in and knocked them out of the way and got on with the job, we might have done it and done our job too at the same time, took our family with us on the job, that would have been better. But they didn't do those sort of things, it wasn't done.

We had two battles – we couldn't win both. Keeping the bosses happy and recording the sites, and then keeping our family together. It was just too much. Only two black fellas from the camps you know! Ned wasn't around then to give us what you call it, the social development mob wasn't around then to help us.

And so for Ray, and you too, the family side of things fairly much collapsed – is that a fair way of putting it?

Yeah, yeah. And then of course he got cancer. Yeah, and I finished up here [Walgett Hospital].

So what was it that was driving you both?

Well it was a combination of several things. We saw the overriding need [regarding family], but, since we couldn't do that you know, because we had this other mob, we needed to record our sites, that was important too. But the overriding thing was with our family, I think, in the beginning. But then we were convinced that it would come good later – that it will sort itself out – this is more important. I think they knew that we were having family problems. When I say 'they' I mean the administration, the powers that be, that employed Ray. They were endorsing our thoughts that our families would be all right.

You obviously had, still, that urgency yourselves about getting the stories.

Yeah, yeah.

And do you think, looking back, that the urgency was indeed there?

The urgency was there, but in hindsight we could have done both. We could



have done both. We did everything wrong, in the sense that we went one way. Could have done both, we could have taken our families along with us. We didn't. But that's in hindsight. We're all clever in hindsight.

From across the mountains

And so in the bigger scheme of helping to conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales, what place do you think Ray has had?

See, we've got an Aboriginal cousin here. In my language, a term around here is *ubie ubie*. Things happen far away, things whizzing round about, and *ubie ubie* is the only link we had. I think we unconsciously saw Ray as the *ubie ubie* – the link with over the mountains, over the other side. He was a cousin to us. He saw things differently, but had the same emotional feeling. We're the same people only using different words. So that's what I thought and I think a few others too as well, some old people like Arthur Dodd, Charlie Dodd, Ted Mervyn. They'd ask me about him. Each time he came back, once they learned a bit more, he was more accepted. He was a very important link between the city and bush, or coast and inland. Hell – he was the *only one*. I don't know of any other – not just in cultural business – but anything.

He strengthened my conviction about reviving my culture and language. There was no one else around that was doing that. Just generally he was a big support to me. And through that he was a big support here, because we've got people now, we've got a language class going and people coming from all over. We have conferences, we have a network now of language revival. That all goes back to then you see.

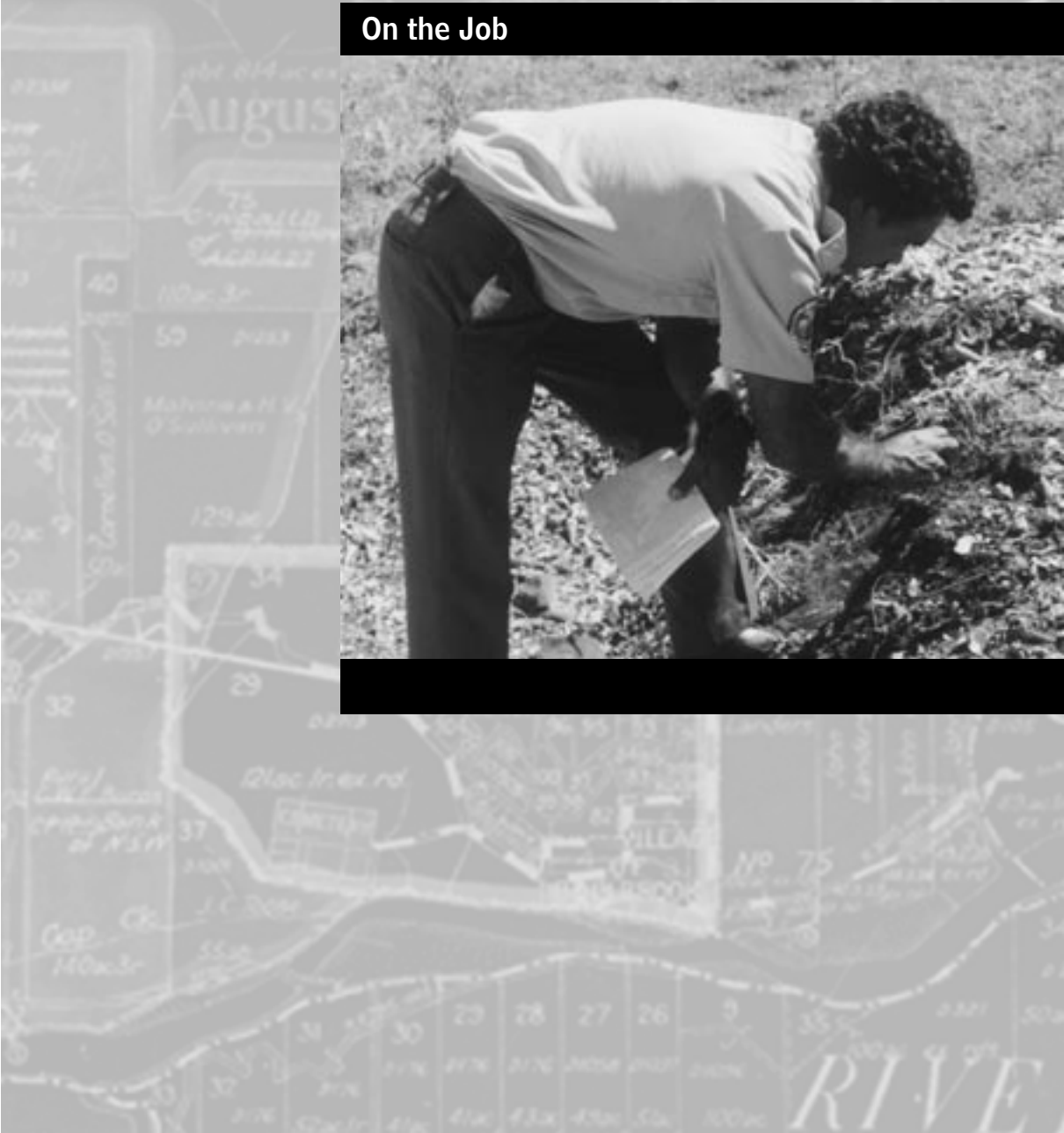
I'd lost most of the language, or thought I'd lost it. But then Ray came along and revived it in me. I had to realise that I had to recover a lot of this because I'd forgotten about it for so long. Well a lot of it was *taken*. When I went to the mission I learned *not to speak my language* at any cost, under threat of punishment. When I first came to Walgett I'd talk to people, people who were only around about my age, were taught not to speak. And they'd say 'Shame, shame' – they'd run away from you. Made me feel inferior. Didn't do me that much good!

And so he came along. I wouldn't have been working to the degree I am now, or wouldn't have put the same effort in, if he hadn't come along. I just might have thought – what bloody use is it, it's gone anyway – or I might have just wandered around, a voice in the wilderness. But then you see someone who has achieved something, you know that he's up there doing that to the people in administration, getting into it, putting it down properly – it gives you confidence to carry on then. So that's what he did. I couldn't do the work he did – the bureaucracy – fights he had with Kate and Sharon Sullivan. I don't think there was anyone in the office he didn't have fights with were there? Him, the archaeologists and the family! But you know – that gave me the resolve to carry on.

RIGHT Ray Kelly working at a shell midden site at South West Rocks, Mid-North Coast NSW, c 1985
(photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).



On the Job







6 It was a different world

Reflections from Sharon Sullivan

In 1969, Sharon Sullivan was an honours graduate in history with a background in Australian archaeology when she was successful in gaining the first position of archaeologist/historian in the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The position was created under the auspices of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1967 with its new amendments to protect Aboriginal ‘relics’ which were passed in 1969. Under Sharon’s management, the Aboriginal Sites of Significance Survey in NSW was established with funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. The first two employees on the survey were recruited – Howard Creamer and Ray Kelly.

This chapter focuses on explaining the development of the survey within the social and political context of the time. During this period, Sharon remembers Ray and Howard as a dynamic partnership, where the Aboriginal Sites Officers employed in the NPWS confronted an alien organisation, itself struggling to come to grips with a new era of Aboriginal politics.

Sharon

I come from New England. I went to university in 1961 and did history at the University of New England. One of the people who was very influential there was Isabel McBryde – she was just beginning archaeology at New England. So I did quite a lot of archaeology as one of Isabel’s volunteer students.

Isabel was very influential in my career because she took me down the Clarence excavating and looking for sites. She used a lot of local people in the Clarence River Valley – field naturalists and others. But it’s also the first time that I ever met and talked to Aboriginal people, because Isabel said it was worth talking to Aboriginal people about sites. So when the first job at National Parks came up when the legislation was brought in to protect archaeological sites and historic sites, I applied for the job as the first archaeologist/historian. I got that job.

Myself and then Lesley Maynard were the first archaeologists/historians that were employed by the Service, and we were considered to be pretty mad. There weren’t all that many women in those days and there were things, like you weren’t allowed to go out on a field trip with a man by yourself – that was because the wives objected. And you weren’t allowed to wear slacks in the office. The Service went through one stage of saying you couldn’t have women

TOP LEFT Sharon Sullivan (standing on the right) with Monica LeFebre (on the left) and Isabel McBryde on the far right, 1966. BOTTOM LEFT Sharon Sullivan (right) with Jo Woolmington. (Photos courtesy of Helen Brayshaw).

rangers because of ‘insurmountable physical obstacles’ – which we instantly had made into T-shirts. I really was considered to be a bit of a wild child.

But in the beginning I was very ignorant about what Aboriginal culture in the twentieth century really consisted of – still having a very anthropological/archaeologist model.

Give me a sense of the political and social times.

It was, it was – a different world. People were very unfamiliar with Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal people. People were really looking for the remnants of the ‘pristine’ ‘untouched’ ‘uncontaminated’ culture. And that arises very much from the whole eighteenth-century view of the noble savage and the idea that if you could just look at Aboriginal society as it was, you would find out something about the development of human society.

From relics to contemporary significance: a background context to the survey

The legislation [1969 amendments to the NPWS Act] was brought in specifically because of the lobbying of archaeologists and such people. What they were really worried about in those days was not so much development, but the activities of amateur collectors who were, to some extent, going around exploiting sites and trading in stone artefacts and such things. But the one thing to be aware of with the Act is that there is absolutely no connection with Aboriginal people. If you look at the legislation you’ll see there’s not a single mention of Aboriginal people in it.

And so the first Aboriginal Sites Committee – the Aboriginal Relics Committee it was called – consisted mainly of archaeologists. Their main job was initially seen to be making sure that archaeologists and other people got permits to excavate. These were pretty heady days because this was when [Lake] Mungo was being discovered. So all of this was going on at the same time – the late ‘60s early ‘70s.

At this time the Federal government gave the Institute of Aboriginal Studies what was then a very princely grant and the idea was that surveyors would be appointed in each state to go out and look for Aboriginal sites. But the problem we encountered immediately was that the powers that be, the council of the Institute, and anthropologists including those who worked in New South Wales, said that they believed there was very little left in New South Wales – that really there wasn’t anything to find. It was thought that there was basically no connection between Aboriginal people living in New South Wales and Aboriginal sites.

Establishing the survey

So we had the big problem of people saying, ‘Well we’re not going to waste money on New South Wales’. Settled Australia was considered not to be really relevant. But we applied for a grant to get two people on board. We pushed it

and we got money for a year and the Institute said, 'Well you can have money for a year and see what you can find'. So we advertised the job and we thought, we need an Aboriginal person obviously, but we also probably need an anthropologist because we need to turn this into anthropology.

We got very few applications and in fact we got an application from Howard who had literally just stepped off the boat or a plane or something from England. But he was a Cambridge anthropologist so we thought – they don't come along every day! He seemed enthusiastic etc. And so that was all right.

Then we started looking for an Aboriginal bloke and we did find a very elderly man called Victor Shepherd who lived near Armidale and he was very interested. He was found for us by Ray Kelly, who at that time was working at the University of New England. Basically when I met Ray I thought – actually Ray is the person that we want. Victor would be a terrific informant, but he was more than 70 at the time and a traditional Aboriginal man, so I persuaded Ray to apply for the job himself, with some help from a few friends who knew him. So that's how that got going.

It wasn't easy in those days. You needed somebody who had the requisite connections with the community, but who also had the requisite skills to be able to work with the sites and with bureaucracy. I mean the things we asked the Aboriginal site officers to do in those days were quite extraordinary really – because this was their first experience of bureaucracy. But it was also bureaucracy's first experience of Aboriginal culture, and there were some really interesting times as a result of that!

So we employed Howard and Ray. We had salaries for them, we had a small travel allowance – all from the Institute. At the beginning we had a Commonwealth vehicle – and they went off to look for sites. And I think the original idea – Howard's idea, Ray's idea, my idea really – was that what we were looking for was remnants of the pure Aboriginal culture that had been there before 1788. So we were looking for the 'good stuff' – the sacred sites, the totemic places, the last initiation places, all of those places. And when they went out the first time they didn't get much. I sent them around again – they only had a year and we had to prove something. But when they went out what they got was not really what we had expected. What we got was people talking



ABOVE Sharon Sullivan, 2004 (photo courtesy of Sharon Sullivan).

about mission stations, old European cemeteries, some massacre sites, etc. So not what an archaeologist/anthropologist would be interested in if you think what you're looking for is the pristine culture before it gets contaminated in some way.

So the model was really – we need to go back and see what we can find of the pristine culture – not looking at the fabulous adaptation; not looking at the change over 200 years; not looking at the ways Aboriginal people have lived in a landscape since 1788; not looking at the fact that the culture hasn't disappeared, that it's just adapted like our culture has. I know that seems really simple-minded now and it's very hard – when I talk, particularly to young Aboriginal site officers or young Aboriginal people working in the field – it is practically impossible for them to understand that, at that time, there was no recognised connection at an official level between Aborigines and Aboriginal sites. It just wasn't there!

Of course after that first layer of mission cemeteries and so on, they began to get a lot of the traditional stuff as well, there's no doubt about that. But we said: any places that had evidence of Aboriginal occupation, that is basically archaeological sites, have a contemporary value to Aboriginal people and they must be consulted. I don't know where this came from because it really was a New South Wales thing. That was, I suppose, the really radical thing. Because we said to all the archaeologists – you have to go and consult before we will give you a permit. Howard and Ray were very important in this as well and then Glen [Morris] in particular.

And who was 'we' at this stage?

Well National Parks with the Sites Committee [previously the Aboriginal Relics Committee]. I gradually put Aboriginal people on the Sites Committee and I got the archaeologists on the Sites Committee involved and I said we must do this. But there's nothing in the legislation to this day. But I said we will not give a permit to excavate or destroy or damage a site without Aboriginal agreement or discussion.

Therefore we had this situation where I said to all the archaeologists, 'Show us the evidence that you've talked to people'. That was really tough, and mad, for both archaeologists and Aboriginals, because archaeologists didn't know who to talk to. They certainly didn't have the common touch! They didn't know where to start or who to talk to because it was before the Land Councils, before political Aboriginal organisations. So, we encouraged them to go to the reserves, try to find out where the old people were in the community. Of course all the Aboriginals knew that you actually had to penetrate that. Then they'd go to the reserves and reserves in those days were sort of like wandering through a refugee camp after World War Two. Asking people about their traditional life ways – in a way it was the last thing! And it wasn't just their traditional life ways, it was, 'Do you have any views about these stone tools?' I mean!

We started to take on more Aboriginal site officers – their jobs were two-fold really. They were to go out and find sites that Aboriginal people wanted

recorded and protected. But also they were right in the middle of all that – ie consultation with Aboriginal communities by archaeologists. They had to assist in that process. They had to get the developers to make sure they were talking to Aboriginal people; they had to help the archaeologist; they had to help the communities.

It was mad in a way. But the most extraordinary thing that came out of it was that Aboriginal people began to be asked. That made a really important difference in the sense that they really did feel some sense of importance.

This was before the days of the EIS's [Environmental Impact Statements] etc. It's really before anything. It was a help I suppose to have no-one at National Parks paying any attention because if they had, they would have known we were going so far beyond the legislative base in saying, 'It'll be a policy now. Nobody will get a permit unless Aboriginal people clear it.' But nobody at a higher level than the Sites Committee ever agreed to it.

I mean the thing we were trying to do with Aboriginal people, and women working on it, was absolutely at the margins of the [National] Parks culture. It was out there – that weird thing people did. Everybody knew the *real* job was kangaroos, plants and things. This was the thing that had got tacked on to the Act and it was seen as completely separate. It's one of the things that has always been a problem, and to some extent still is in National Parks, that is breaking through the separateness and putting cultural stuff into the natural stuff.

We had to make sure we kept the money from the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. By then Peter Uko had turned up as the very dynamic chairman of the Institute. Peter and various other people at the Institute clearly thought that the level of recording and analysis and so on was not rigorous enough. We were always having to defend it – that's what it seems like now.

When did you get Aboriginal Sites Officers who were women?

Many of Ray and Howard's informants were women and they were more than happy to give most of their information to men. But we were aware fairly early that we needed a female Aboriginal sites officer, but I didn't have a position for an Aboriginal woman. So I employed Jenny Carroll, who's now called Jenny Crew, as my typist – a very interesting woman from south-western New South Wales. I couldn't at that stage get money from the Institute to employ a woman



ABOVE Lesley Maynard and Jenny Crew, c 1984. (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

sites officer – because it just wasn't seen as a priority. I mean you have to realise that as well it was the men who, it was thought in those days, had the *real goods* – the *real* information. Therefore we had to find this position of a typist and that's the way we got Jenny. By then we had a formidable list of Aboriginal contacts – Aboriginal women – and Jenny went and talked to them and got some other really interesting information.

So the significance of the survey, do you think it was partly about the idea of cultural revitalisation?

I think so, I think Ray would think that too. I think he in particular, because of being an Aboriginal and being able to say, 'I'm from the government, the government is interested in protecting your sites' and being able to do something about it. We never could do what everyone asked. But still, on the other hand we did a lot of stuff that people saw. Like we fenced cemeteries and just simple things, put up signs and things like that, ran courses.

I think that it was very important for Aboriginal people in getting some recognition. That, along with making sure that archaeologists consulted them, did give Aboriginal people – it was growing of course, political awareness by Aboriginal people, it wasn't just the Sacred Sites Survey Team – but I think that was part of that process of people becoming empowered.

As well as taking some of that stuff back. I mean for a long while Aboriginal people had been encouraged, even by progressive Aboriginal people, to forget their heritage. This was the period of assimilation – in the '60s and '70s you get rather more of that flavour of assimilation. I think that was what Ray and Howard were able to provoke to some extent – that interest in not just being assimilated but in going back and saying to older people, 'It's OK to talk about this stuff'. And that's very powerful. It really does just need a bit of a push, and that's what Ray and Howard provided.

Strangers in a strange land: the partnership of Ray and Howard on the survey

It was very much a partnership.

I think Ray recognised very early the importance of people's historic memories, and also Ray recognised the importance of the old people and the importance of the right channels of consultation and the right things to do. So I think that was a very important thing. Also Ray was very aware of the intricacies of Aboriginal politics. Aboriginal politics is very complex and tough and it's not all sweetness and light – and just to have some reality about what was happening was important.

Howard could put in the anthropological knowledge and the know-how and could write it up in a way that was really acceptable to the Institute of Aboriginal Studies and basically turn it into anthropology. That's why they were such a good pair – because we needed both of those things.

Howard and Ray as anyone will tell you – I mean the great miracle of them is they are like chalk and cheese and they're completely opposite. Howard's an



extremely, absolutely, one might say a totally organised Cambridge graduate who did everything very carefully and by the book and planned to the last moment. You could be waiting in an airport anywhere in New South Wales for Howard and Ray to come in – and Howard would be flying in. You would know it was Howard's plane because it would be the only one in Australia that would go around the airport in a square twice before it came in to land, because that's the way he was taught. All the other Australian pilots just go *zoop, zoop*. [Sharon waved a finger around once in a circle then shot her finger straight down into the imaginary airfield.] He was also extremely enthusiastic and had very high standards, but he was also not an Australian. So not versed in the culture of western New South Wales, let alone the Aboriginal culture of New South Wales – so really a stranger in a strange land.

Ray was a stranger in a strange land in a sense of being unused to bureaucracy or deadlines or getting there on time, depending on what was happening in his family the night before. So a whole lot of these things just came slap up like that.

We had some very rough times. We also had, I'd have to say, some times of great forbearance and endurance on the part of both of them in dealing with this.

What do you think allowed it to stick?

Undoubtedly they were both absolutely dedicated to what they were doing. I mean that's what made it work. They both loved doing what they were doing.

ABOVE Sharon Sullivan (seated, middle) with members of the survey team and community members at an Aboriginal Sites School at Scotts Head, 1983 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

New to all: the survey, the Service and Aboriginal employees

I'm sure that Ray could tell you many stories of the frustration of trying to work with the Parks Service and me. Us just not understanding things and doing the wrong thing – unknowingly doing the wrong thing.

Culturally as well as individually?

Yes I think culturally maybe, individually in a sense that I think Ray often felt that things were not moving fast enough; that things were not getting done. On the other hand it was sometimes difficult to get across the problems about getting things done bureaucratically because of a complicated mad system from another culture's point of view. That sort of difficulty on both sides I think is a really key thing.

The sort of expectations we had! The things we expected that the Aboriginal Sites Officers would know which were culturally quite different. The way in which we really impinged on their obligations which we really didn't know about, particularly their family and kin obligations which we just didn't understand. For us there's this thing that work comes first – that was certainly the case then. But when you do that to an Aboriginal person you really do encourage an enormous strain on what their obligations are. On the other hand, the Aboriginal kinship system was really crucial for the work of the Sacred Sites Survey Team.

It was difficult for Aboriginal people, and it was difficult for the Service working with Aboriginal people. One of the major problems was getting people leave to go to funerals. Because you know they would say, 'Look here it says in the regulation – is this Glen's mother or father or sister or brother?' 'No, no this is an uncle.' 'Well he can't go because it's an uncle.' 'You don't understand!' We could find ways around that by saying there's fieldwork.

It was also very difficult to be an Aboriginal person and operate in a position of some authority. Often if Ray was driving around in a Service car, or a Commonwealth car, so many people would say to him, 'What are you doing in this car?' There were very simple things like I remember Howard and Ray were going somewhere in a relative hurry. So I said to Ray, 'Nick down and see if you can book a car for early next week from the car pool'. So he went down and came back and said, 'There aren't any'. I said, 'Oh bugger, I'm sure there are some', so I said to Mike Pearson who was our historian, 'Mike could you go down and book a car for next week'. Down he went, came back and he said, 'I booked the car'. So then I went down and talked to the bloke and said, 'Look what's going on here, because Ray came down and he said there weren't any cars and then Mike went down and you gave him one?' He said, 'But Sharon, I can't go giving cars to Aborigines!' He said, 'People kick the tyres and do all sorts of things if they see Aborigines in them'. So we had to sort that out. You don't know this is happening.

You know, I just don't think we would have done it – the survey – if we'd known what we were doing. I now know what we could have done a great deal better I suppose, but it is very difficult for people to understand the mores at the time.

'Mind-boggling': about Ray

And about Ray? Could you introduce Ray a bit as you saw him?

Very straightforward. Serious, very serious. Ray can be very funny but very serious and very dedicated. Sometimes, I think, because of what he was trying to achieve, he was also inclined to be depressed and sometimes angry about what he was doing. But on the other hand he could be very entertaining and cheerful, a very good story-teller, very good company. He used to have this joke that he'd do in pubs. A hush would fall in the pub because Ray would stand up and say, 'I'm now going to sing you some of the songs of my ancestors' – and then he'd sing, 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling'.

Ray would give us all a hard time at times, because he rapidly became the senior Aboriginal spokesman within the Service and he didn't feel often that things were moving fast enough; that Aborigines were being empowered enough; that enough was being done. There was usually me and the section that would get this from Ray when he was really frustrated or upset. So he'd tend to come to a site officer's meeting and sort of really go off his nana about various things – and that was frustration and really an inability to see how to get things done.

One of the things – Ray and Howard had to get these reports written because we had to have this stuff to go to the Institute. Ray has a very interesting and lively style of writing and if you read his stuff it's fabulous. But he used to have the greatest production troubles. I remember I went up to Armidale once – Howard met me at the airport and I said, 'How are you Howard, how is Ray?' And he said, 'He's locked in his room.' 'What, is he sulking?' and Howard said, 'No, I locked him in his room.' 'You what?!' He said, 'No, he asked me to. I'm not allowed to let him out for three hours or until he's finished this report, because he's been trying to write it for days and he keeps getting distracted, so he's locked in his room.'

If you look at an article like the one that Ray wrote about the Keeparra and the cultural bind – I mean the 'cultural bind' is Ray's expressional hook, his way of saying what is happening – quite a deep intellectual understanding of what's happening and what needs to be done.

I think the Sacred Sites Survey was always heading in the direction of continuing to find and connect things, and to bring Aboriginal people into contact with their own culture. It was about a much more holistic understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture as it was in the mid-20th to late 20th century. I don't think that Ray necessarily articulated that as such. But it was basically from him that we got that overpowering view of what it was like to be an Aboriginal and to live in that world and to have those beliefs in the late 20th century. And that is really important because if you got that, then you could move forward with your policy and take it in such a way that perhaps it is of some use.

I think Ray is a really deep thinker. Things often puzzled and confused him, and one of his most famous expressions which he used to me many times –

especially when he couldn't understand what I was talking about – he'd say, 'it's mind boggling'. And you could actually see this in his head – you could actually see how difficult it was to try to fit all of these different concepts in. And yet he did. It's not something I think that people sometimes recognise – but Ray really wrestled with these concepts day and night.

Which concepts?

Well – how the whole thing fitted together. What should we be recording; what's our role; how should we facilitate this? But also – what is the nature of this Aboriginal culture? How far does it go; what should we be; what is authentic? How do I take what people say and turn it into something that will fit into the whole National Parks bureaucratic framework or what my bosses at one level are expecting of me? How do I do this thing? Yes – very interesting.





7 Pioneering work

Reflections from Harry (Howard) Creamer

Harry Creamer, previously known and published as Howard, arrived in Australia as a young man recently graduated in anthropology from Cambridge University, England. Within a short time of his arrival he began work on the Aboriginal sites survey in NSW as the anthropologist in a two-man team with Ray. In 1984 he wrote the substantive report on the survey: A Gift and a Dreaming: The New South Wales Survey of Aboriginal Sacred and Significant Sites 1973–1983.

In this chapter Harry reflects on his, Ray's and the survey team's work throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, after which he believes the process of site recording declined. He remembers the first decade of the survey as an exhilarating, rewarding and pioneering era in the conservation of Aboriginal heritage of New South Wales.

Appointing Harry and Ray to the survey

Tell me a bit about your background Harry.

I have to take this story back to the '60s and point out that I grew up in England and I went to the University of Cambridge. I was very lucky to be accepted there to study anthropology. At the end of that time I found myself two-thirds of the way to Australia, then arriving in Sydney in November 1972 – the day that Gough Whitlam launched his campaign for the '72 Federal Election with the immortal words, 'Men and women of Australia, it's time for a change!'

It's very interesting because in a completely different place, at the same time, the people who were responsible for managing Aboriginal heritage also thought that it was time for a change – in the sense of looking at what Aboriginal people in New South Wales might do now about sites. Specifically sites of the cultural landscape.

Sharon Sullivan and the members of the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee had spent some time, of course, on the archaeological resource and they decided, though, that there was a gap in their knowledge. So they applied to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, as it was then, for a grant. Initially a one-year grant because they weren't at all sure what they might find. But there would be enough information to keep it going for more than a year. So I arrived on the scene and applied for the job which was advertised and in the fullness of time I was told that I would be appointed.

What was the job?

It was 'Anthropologist to locate and record sites of significance to the Aboriginal community of New South Wales' – based with the National Parks and Wildlife Service but resourced financially through the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Now in the time it took them to appoint me they made a significant change in their thinking, and decided to appoint an Aboriginal person to work with me. They found somebody called Ray Kelly, and they found him because he was already positioned in the university system. He was the tutorial liaison officer at the University of New England, so he had already made that big step from council worker or whatever into, in this case, the academic fraternity. And so contacts led one thing to another and he was appointed about the same time as I was appointed – so we started off in May 1973.

The early years: we kept pushing the pace

We had some amazing trips particularly in the early stages of the sites survey because there were only the two of us and we both needed to get going quickly and understand what was happening. I was very aware of the fact that we were looking all over New South Wales and that New South Wales was an enormous place, and that I knew very little about it. We had these long trips – to the Far North Coast just after the Nimbin Festival in 1973 – to Moree and Collarenebri, Bourke and such places. Both very excited, full of anticipation for what the project could deliver.

To me it was an adventure. It was my first job at the tender age of 22. It couldn't have been better for me – the possibility of flying to these places, four-wheel driving. I mean it was a *work* adventure, so very quickly I began to think about systems, organisational systems that would make sense of what we were doing.

For Ray, I'm fairly certain in saying that, this was a kind of an evolutionary thing for Ray. If you look at Ray's life, born on the mission, at Bellbrook, he grew up there. Then he did council work. I'm not sure what exactly he did before he went to the university but clearly something was heading him in a direction of making more of a contribution in the long term to Aboriginal cultural identity and heritage.

I could see this in the conversations that we had. The conversations we had in the car were very enlivened – endless conversations mile after mile, how we were going to save the world through the Aboriginal Sites Survey. He expressed a great optimism on what this survey would give Aboriginal communities – it would lead to cultural revival.

There was this very strong sense of getting the job done in good time. I mean we were always working against time. I have to use the old anthropology term of 'salvaging' what remained before it was too late. We couldn't have done the work today in 2004 because between 1973 and 2004 a lot of old people died. I mean we all know things about all sorts of things. But if you're talking



about traditional knowledge – uniquely Aboriginal knowledge – then every time an elder died, it would dilute.

We kept pushing the pace. We didn't slow down really for one minute and this enabled us to work, to live through the personal difficulties that we may well have had. We were two very different people. I was a graduate and Ray was – I think Ray's about ten years older than I am. He had a set of ideas about – well obviously there was a culture of difficult race relations in Australia in the years since Ray was born. And sometimes I would have come across as a bit of a pushy young white fellow. You'd see him at times, he'd try and size me up and say, 'Where's this fellow coming from?!'

He had his own idiosyncrasies too. I mean he was quite determined in many ways and I could see this fairly early on – it was quite strong and he was obviously physically strong and he was quite mentally strong too. In fact you had two strong wills together. I stood my ground in many ways and I gave, in many ways, as good as I got in terms of the articulation of ideas, the forcefulness of the endeavour. We certainly complemented each other. I mean he would have recognised that he didn't have the degree or the organisational skills and he was happy for me to drive that. I realised that I didn't have the entrée into the community.

Really that sets the early scene – both based at Armidale. The University of New England gave us an office space from which we planned these field trips all over the state until we had a better picture. Even in the early stages the cultural landscape hot spots were becoming known to us. Clearly one was the North Coast of New South Wales. Then a bit of a gap over the Tablelands,

ABOVE The carefully maintained Aboriginal graves at the Collarenebri cemetery (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

perhaps because of the history of contact. Then getting out to the west, the western rivers and then that started to tap into the far western area – and come down the Darling to Wilcannia. Then the Murray River as well and the South Coast. That left a kind of a large hole in the centre of New South Wales which we really didn't achieve much success with. It seemed that the dislocation, the movements of people, the stolen generation, had all taken its toll. At that stage we were just gradually filling in pieces of the jigsaw.

You asked me about the trips that I remember – either in the government car, or a four-wheel drive or in the aeroplane. I had a pilot's licence. Towards the end of the first year of research we flew from Sydney in a Cessna 182 over the range, out onto the North-West Slopes, across the Western Plains and we arrived in Bourke. Just Ray and myself. The idea was to link up with Lorna Dixon who was moved from Tibooburra in '38; get in the plane again and go with Lorna to Tibooburra where we'd be met by a ranger and we'd record these sites. It happened, and it was quite amazing really. It was like the flying doctor. But this was the flying anthropologist and the flying Aboriginal site officer!

Did you have any slightly hairy trips – I think Ray might remember some?

Very subjective isn't it – flying. Look, yes. We were flying light aircraft! In those days it rained a lot in Australia, before global warming set in, and certainly '74, '75 were very wet years. I can remember dodging storms as one had to in a light aircraft. Ray was very good about that. I commend him because it was a big challenge. I really am grateful for him saying, 'Yes, I'll grit my teeth, I'll get in and hold on', which he did. But it did bring another element to the field. It did extend our reach incredibly. The name of the game was fieldwork. It could only have happened in those early days, those pioneering days, when the whole of National Parks was operating on a trial and error, 'let's see how it works out' basis, and they were prepared to give us this opportunity.

Having recently arrived in Australia, I was a *tabula rasa* in terms of Australian Aboriginal culture. Ray had a very good opportunity to educate me. He would tell me a lot. I was an anthropologist and he was my main 'informant' for most of the time really, in those early years. I got a lot of information from him. I remember being very impressed with, not only his bush tucker knowledge and what he would tell me about that, but also when we were on a familiarisation trip for the committee from Sydney on the itinerary, he was to go back to his home place at Bellbrook and he showed people how they cut and cure and make a spear which was pretty interesting too. Doubtless used for fishing more than actual hunting.

What were you expecting to find on the survey as an anthropologist?

Having been schooled in the more traditional British school of anthropology, I was looking for the Dreamtime sites, the ceremonial grounds, the burial sites and so on, the traditional burials and the story places and so on. I had to change my thinking on this because increasingly we were shown sites which were not traditional sites.

Progressives and conservatives: the Aboriginal knowledge-holders

Now a very interesting line of inquiry is to say: How did it affect the Aboriginal people that knew about us and then we worked with? It was very interesting in the first few months of the survey, particularly from Ray's point of view, because I said that the types of sites that I would be most interested in were the high ceremonial ones. And they seemed to have anticipated this, particularly a group of the elders around Armidale and Bellbrook. Ray himself was taken aside and actually the values that he was given over a couple of days by Len De Silva and the Quinlan brothers and a few of the others there. Before



we started the work, he was initiated to a certain level, and there were different levels of initiation. I had to wait a little bit later and purely serendipitously I went through a very low level of initiations, through circumstances in the bush. But at first they were a little bit apprehensive about what this was all going to mean.

They'd had researchers – of course every Aboriginal community has had their researchers before. I came across this, 'Are you going to be a oncer – just come here once?' But they never actually had anybody really specifically talking about sites and landscape and also rules, the initiations and things like that previously. So it caused a bit of a stir and then for several years there was a group of the conservatives for example who would say – 'No, you can't go there. You can't do this.'

I suppose conservatives and progressives is actually quite an interesting way to characterise the people we worked with. The progressives, I'd say, were very open-hearted, open-minded and really enjoyed taking us to these places, of course, and spoke with a great deal of pride about these places, that were so special to them. I'm talking about some of the old men and the old women, very proud, and they were the experts and they were telling their story. Then they were relieved that this story had been recorded – there were many instances of that situation.

I suppose I have to look further because they weren't all old people. There was more a sense of equality and maybe challenging us a bit more with the younger people – the political leaders and so on. Even the younger people, the

sons and daughters of these leaders, would then ask us to go out with them and record things because they knew that that was a good way of getting the landscape recorded and sites protected.

Those people that possibly did have a grudge and didn't want to work with a white fellow, even with Ray, well they would simply not turn up and I wouldn't get to know them. In a way we just kept making progress – but there would have always been a certain amount of suspicion and caution and conservatism towards the work that we were doing that expressed most typically in something like, 'No, these places should be kept secret'.

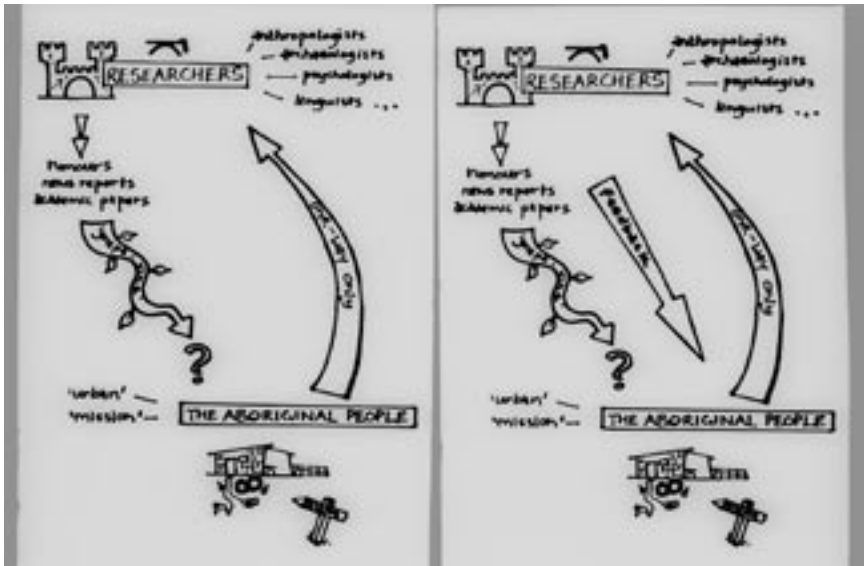
The younger people, who had a little bit of knowledge, knew where we were coming from. They had a bit of their own knowledge but not much, and they were much thirstier for knowledge. That's where the cultural revival came in. That's the benefit, I think, of the experience that they would have taken away with them.

'Cultural renaissance' and 'feeding back' to communities: Ray's concepts

Ray expressed a great optimism that the survey would give something to Aboriginal communities – would lead to cultural revival. It would record and protect the physical places, the sites and stories of Aboriginal culture and it would lead to a tremendous cultural 'renaissance' – that's the word he used time and again. If there is any debate today about this concept of cultural revival – that it can't have been happening because nothing's been lost – let me say quite clearly Ray was very keen on this idea of a cultural renaissance. He could see that so much was being lost and that through our work we would document it and we would protect it and conserve it for the future.

We would find a way of feeding it back to the people. That's another concept that he had. He got me to do up a kind of a diagram in the days before PowerPoint, where we would have the researchers going out from their ivory towers to the Aboriginal community and that was slide one, where all the knowledge went one way to the ivory tower. Then for slide two he got me to put in a great big arrow which fed back the information into the Aboriginal people. Simple graphics and I think that worked very well. That actually reinforced what was in fact only good fieldwork methodology and that is that we had to keep going back to the communities to gain trust. We found ways of taking information back and sharing information in those early days, on a fairly simple sort of level – sharing photographs or tapes or reports or whatever, or just being there and talking about what we were doing.

Of course it was wider than the survey, this whole cultural revival. It actually drew on a number of different sources. The survey contributed – it put fuel on the fire. We were well known to a lot of communities. Now I stress again, we didn't get to every community and early on we realised that we would find more benefit in revisiting some communities and working in some communities rather than other communities. But by the late '70s, early '80s we were well known and we were contributing to the cultural revival in this



regard. People knew we were recording documents, sites and culture and we had tape recordings of old people, we had films, video, not a lot, but that kind of thing. The team were giving back the reports to the community.

Of course we were holding Aboriginal Sites Schools. I haven't actually mentioned these but part of the natural evolution of the survey was that, in the 1980s we held a series of Aboriginal Site Schools. They were very good for cultural revival because it was actually a formal setting [for] talking about culture, where one had permission to, and that's the whole purpose of coming together to talk about sites and the landscape and culture.

Recording sites: 'We wanted to know everything'

It has to be said, the survey was first and foremost a practical, on-the-ground effort aimed at producing site reports.

I had these site reports and a system for getting them filled in and everybody did it – they filled in their site reports and they submitted them to me and I submitted them to the Institute and to the Service duly stamped on the way and recorded. We had to assess the significance. That might be reflected in what we were proposing for protection, although there would have other factors – land status and the degree of threat and so on.

I tell you what. We didn't really get bogged down into the question of how significant the site was. We wanted to know everything. We wanted to get everything that people would be good enough to tell us, and we wanted it documented. So it did vary between magnificent mountains, strips of coastline or islands or whatever, right the way down to small rocks (I'm still talking

ABOVE The importance of feedback (reproduction of the diagram Harry developed under Ray's instruction, c 1974: slide courtesy of Harry Creamer).

about Dreamtime sites), to single graves, to a scarred tree that may or may not have been a canoe tree, to a single stone. We didn't get too bogged down into sacred categories and restrictions. That would have muddied the waters – that would have slowed us down. We were in top gear by this time producing a lot of site reports.

As the survey evolved

The members of the team had increased to four – myself and Ray and we had two new Aboriginal Sites Officers. Glen Morris was appointed around 1975 with Terry Donovan. Terry Donovan – he was only with us for a couple of years and he was replaced by Trevor Donnelly. By that time Ray had moved from Armidale to Grafton – seemed to make quite a lot of sense. There was a National Parks office set up in Grafton in 1975 with the establishment of the NPWS Northern Region – the first of the regions under Geoff Martin as the regional superintendent. And Geoff offered Ray office space in Grafton, so the team actually split up then. I was with Glen in Armidale and Ray was with, first of all, Terry Donovan and then Trevor Donnelly in Grafton. But we used to communicate a lot, telephone or faxes and in those days we used to see each other a lot. We used to drive between Armidale and Grafton, and the momentum of the survey was maintained.

The category of Aboriginal Site Officers was proving effective. The National Parks could see that it was a good way to increase the team. This in itself is quite interesting – that they didn't keep us as a small research team – we were generating a lot of work and it was a way of rolling out the Service's engagement with Aboriginal cultural heritage on the ground. So the team was now providing a solid enough foundation and context in which to employ up to another half a dozen Aboriginal Sites Officers around New South Wales. At one stage there were ten of us. I was the only white person on that team – nine Aboriginal Sites Officers and me.

Part of the natural evolution of the survey was the Aboriginal Site Schools. No more than half a dozen over five years, something like that.

Why were they so important?

Well I suppose, there are two levels to answer that question on. It strikes me that they were very important to the survey team and to the Service because it marked a sort of coming of age, a maturing in the job, that we were then able to teach it. But also it was fulfilling that kind of insistence that Ray had in the early stages about feeding back information. They were a practical way in which we could do that. In fact the survey had evolved, it evolved into that and it was just so obvious that we had to do it, and we wanted to as a team.

I'm not quite sure where to go in talking about the '80s. Suffice to say we were still powering along and we were increasingly part of the NPWS and they were taking on site management so our proposals were being acted on at head office level. Aboriginal place declarations for example were being enacted. So these natural landscape features were beginning to get legal protection. Fencing was being done and other management things.



But of course the Service had a massive job all the time apart from the survey. I mean the survey was really, in terms of the big picture, a very small section of it. I'm just not quite sure what to say except in the '80s I was conscious of things becoming less focused and less imbued with that initial energy and direction and commitment and focus and so on. There was still commitment – I mean it was our job – but things did change.

The survey was evolving, and the question had to be faced sometime during the '80s – What happens now? Now they were making Aboriginal Sites Officers permanent in the units of the Service one by one. Ray and I had been made permanent but we still answered to head office. Different Aboriginal Sites Officers were being attached to Districts and being made permanent, so that even that fact of Sites Officers being made permanent in Districts dissipated the energy of the survey.³⁶ Really it was a de facto kind of handing over of a lot of the effort. It was saying, 'Well you've pioneered it, you've said what direction we should be heading, now these people will go off and do that in their own units'. Having said that, we still kept the banner of the survey, we still kept the site recording going right up until I left in 1987.

Well, what happened in '83 though, that some people see that as a cut off?

Well it's a neat decade of ten years. I wrote the *Gift and a Dreaming* about then, aware that it was winding up. As I say, people were getting increasingly embedded in the local district National Parks units. It was certainly winding down but I was still the anthropologist and I was still recording sites. So to me there's every reason to say that 1987 is the end of the survey. But then of course Ray went on doing the work after that.

ABOVE Harry Creamer and Ray Kelly on the Long Gully initiation ground, Bellbrook, c 1976 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

But I maintain, and my records will show, that the emphasis on site recording was never the same again. Sure the whole thing had evolved into doing other things – into consultation and interpretation and protection, and that's the way it should be. But I can't get it out of my head that there were still elders around, but it was never captured and boxed up as we did in the survey years. Certainly the rate of original site recording declined dramatically. There was a lot of on-site consultations, looking at archaeological EIS reports and things like that. But sitting down and talking with the elders and going into the field to record sites – it's my impression that it really did quite quickly slow down.

Could you say a bit more about what role you think Ray had in that decade '73 to '83 in Aboriginal heritage. What role did he have in the survey?

Well first and foremost he was a strong character, he was strong willed and determined and energetic and tenacious in that period of time. That counts for a lot if you are in an organisation and you are doing project work because it gives the message that this is serious, this is here to stay, this is worthwhile. He was made permanent and he became part of the organisation and he was accepted.

Now he sometimes felt – look, all of them, all of the Aboriginal Sites Officers – I haven't mentioned they felt ambivalent about being located in a white bureaucracy. I often saw them as having a foot in both camps to use a very simple metaphor. So there's this big community commitment and doing the right thing by the Aboriginal community versus the pressure that was on them to do the right thing by the organisation. This tension, this conflict was apparent every day, almost every day. I understand – it's not nice to live with that kind of structural conflict in your life. But they did.

Now Ray – I don't think he ever successfully resolved it by the way. I don't know whether there is a successful resolution to these kinds of complexities. On the one hand there was always the commitment to the work and we'll keep at it and we'll keep researching and so on. On the other hand, it was that National Parks were not doing the right thing, the job was not being done right. This was particularly later, after about 1985, when those early inspired years, so full of direction, were behind us.

After that he remained, certainly in terms of gerontocracy, the leader of the team. But of course, as happens to a lot of people in the public service, he had been overtaken by brighter managers who just – you see them going by in a trail of dust and they're there and they're in a high position. That happened to Ray. Certain events have overtaken me too with the Aboriginal Sites Survey. I left it in '87 and I believe events began to overtake Ray as well as his career went on. The days, weeks and months went into years.

I've nearly been 31 years in the Service – yet I can say there's nothing subsequent that comes close to the pioneering work, the sense of adventure and excitement, and the unique achievement which we created as a team and as individuals in those years.





8 Stones, bones and memories

Reflections from Glen Morris

Glen Morris started work on the survey in November 1974, becoming the third member of the survey team with Ray and Harry. He was employed as a labourer for the Armidale Shire Council when Ray encouraged him to apply for the Sites Officer's position, which he was subsequently offered, marking the beginning of a steep learning curve within a white bureaucracy. He remains with the DEC.

In this chapter, Glen reflects on the approach taken by Ray and the survey team in gaining Aboriginal cultural knowledge, and some of the consequences of the shift of Aboriginal cultural heritage work into the mainstream of the agency by the 1980s.

Coming on board the survey team

Well, I knew Ray for quite a long time before I joined the survey team – as a child at Burnt Bridge Reserve at Kempsey. He used to stay with my parents and so when we moved to Armidale, Ray used to look after us a bit. I went to high school in Newcastle, on the Lake Macquarie there – a fourth year intermediate certificate when I left. Then I wandered around into Sydney, ended up back in Armidale and I was working on the Shire Council.

So I was putting in some footpath and Ray come up and said, 'Do you want a job?' And I said, 'I got one'. And he said, 'No, do you want an interesting job, working with me?' And I said, 'Oh yeah, if it's permanent', and he said, 'Well it's a five-year program we've got and it's five years not six months on the Shire Council'. So I went for the interview – the people on the panel didn't want me. Ray fought to get me in and he wouldn't budge and he says, 'No, I want him'.

Maybe he saw something in me that I would do things or go places and be honest with the approach to community. So I ended up getting in. I was the third member and then we had a fourth member, Terry Donovan, from the Nambucca area and it sort of escalated from there. The original members of the survey team – you had Harry as the anthropologist, Ray as the research officer, and they decided to call us, the next two members, 'Site Officers' because we were recording sites.

When I first started it was like a big learning process! You go to school and you write essays – your thoughts and that. But it's totally different to writing up the information about your own people, our culture and heritage, and how

then to protect all those sites and the information that was given to you by the old people. It was difficult because I was learning all about how to write letters, especially to the community, to other government departments, landowners, and writing reports. I was copying Ray's and Harry's reports in setting them out and it helped me a lot because it took me a while then to write my own style. They were a great help to me – the learning for me.

Sharon, Harry and Ray: three different directions

Harry was a mentor to me and also Ray because I got on with both of them. Harry and Ray didn't get on with each other for some reason – probably because they had different ideas of where the project was going and how it would end up. Totally two different cultures – different ideas, different views!

I think Sharon was looking state-wide – where do we go, how do we protect these places, and how do we get cultural heritage onto the government agenda and look at conservation, protection and management? Whereas Harry looked at it as a project – an anthropological project learning about new cultures. Where Ray's view was that it's a living culture, Harry's view was maybe – if we record it all, then it's a dead culture.

What, because he thought it was headed that way?

Headed that way – that if once we get the information from community groups and elders – [then] there's nothing else to obtain or to gather. Whereas Ray looked at it as being a living culture and that the information to be obtained from the elders would, in some form, be passed back to the communities and to the children. The next generation, and instill that into 'em and to sort of revive culture.

It was in the 1970s and '80s when we worked in the survey team and the community groups didn't know much about traditional knowledge or their own culture. It wasn't sort of taught by some of the elders – some places it was. So it was totally three different views when you look at Sharon and Harry and Ray.

How did the anthropological approach differ from Ray's approach?

Well the approach by Harry was – because he was an anthropologist – his was more obtaining information from the communities, then put that into some form of writing and then to archive it more or less. Where Ray's view was – we'll get this information – how do we get it back to communities to then be spoken about and to be transferred and passed on to the next generation – not in booklet form but in the oral history that Aboriginals have.

See Ray was always the aggressor. He used aggression not as a means of carrying it out but sort of to make people aware. A lot of people may have seen that as Ray being the violent person. But on the other side, if you look at Ray, he had a very mild side to him, very caring side. I think Ray, because of the frustration within the bureaucracy or the department – you've got a lot of frustration coming out. One time Ray had had an argument with Harry and



he was going to chuck Harry out the window – because Harry was a pilot and all the Aboriginal staff there thought it was a joke because we saw Harry as the Red Baron flying out the window. Then Sharon said, ‘You will not speak to my staff like that Ray’. ‘You’re the next one going out the window, Sharon’, he said very aggressively. Then he settled down and got on with business. But Ray was just making a point about an issue and Ray’s always done that – uses aggression to make a point.

The survey team – it worked quite well I thought. There was Sharon pushing to secure funds, and getting government to put it on their agenda. And even though Harry and Ray didn’t see eye to eye, the work that they done gelled together and it was that gelling together that made the survey team work quite well to make a team that got a lot done.

Approaching communities: you get something, you give something back

Me and Ray worked quite well together with the communities because we had that affiliation with our own culture. We were working well with Harry because he had that anthropological background. He had his own certain knowledge too that he contributed as part of the team when working for the communities.

What do you think the survey accomplished?

I think it accomplished a lot because the linguists and anthropologists in those early years, the ’70s and ’80s, thought that they’d recorded all the traditional

knowledge from the communities and that there was nothing left out there. Ray knew because of his uncles, his grandparents and his aunties and his father, that there was a wealth of information out there that needed to be obtained.

It was a struggle for the survey team because we were from different tribal areas. These old people – they were sort of researched, researched and researched about their culture and knowledge but nothing went back to the community. So they were reluctant to give information. Our view was – well we know it's there, they don't want to talk to us, but we'll persist in gaining their trust.

Some of the first sites we recorded were the old cemeteries. We said, that's an important site – it's the old mission cemetery. So we got together with some of the community, we cleaned it up and started to gain their trust. Otherwise they were so used to people, anthropologists and others, coming in to research and not giving anything back in return. So the survey team's view was if we get something, we've got to give something back. I think that's the only reason why we got the trust of the old people, the old men and women, to be able to record all this.

It was sort of physical, it was visual – we had signs made up saying 'Sacred sites', 'Aboriginal burial' and 'Aboriginal sites protected under the Act'. These signs were very visual and the old people were saying, 'Well there, if they destroy this they get prosecuted – there is an Act to prosecute'. They saw something positive with us – saw what we were doing to protect their heritage and their culture.

We had reports written up. They were written up by Harry and Ray and later by myself. These reports were taken back to communities saying, 'Is this right? Does it need to be changed?' Copies were left with some of the old people and some of the tapes were of the old people.

So you'd check it?

Check it and make sure that the sites, the information we obtained from them was right, correct it and then give that story, information, back to the community or to the old people we obtained it from.

We'd target a community and we knew the information was there and we'd go back and back. They'd say, 'Oh no, we've got no sites' – the old elders – 'No, we don't know nothing'. So we'd come back and we'd go again and say, 'What about your old mission cemetery?' – 'Oh yeah, they're important, yeah.' Once we started working with community to protect some of the sites, even though they were sort of the old mission cemeteries and that, then it started, 'Oh we've got this other site here', and it'd be a story site about a hill or a mountain, a river, a creek.

They started slowly, not giving too much information out, but little, small amounts of information. Then we'd go to another community and build the relationships up with the tribal groups and communities throughout New South Wales. It was a slow process but it was gaining trust and giving stuff back, information back to them and protecting their culture and heritage.

Stones, bones and memories: joining the mainstream

What sort of support did you get from the agency in what sounds like quite a slow process?

Well we didn't get a lot of support because we were using the grant from the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. It was quite easy because we weren't tied to the bureaucracy. It was later that we did end up getting uniforms – but that was after 1980 when we became the mainstream. I think it was mainly Sharon Sullivan that was securing funding for the project, making sure that it was continuous each year. Once we became mainstream within the National Parks and Wildlife Service the tradition of recording stuff sort of ceased after 1980, because we were then looking at the archaeological side of it in terms of developments [ie, land development proposals]. We were trying to protect the archaeological sites due to continuous developments in New South Wales – the escalation of developments.

What was your feeling about that?

Me and Ray were always of the opinion that we didn't gather all of the information from the communities and there is still a lot of knowledge out there. Ray was always persisting in doing the oral history stuff and obtaining information. I got into the mainstream which sometimes meant recording a few sites that community's had given, like burials or ceremonial grounds, but mainly looking at the archaeological stuff in terms of development.

I moved down to Sydney actually, I got tired of doing the archaeological stuff – because it wasn't me and Ray's field. We thought that, you know, this whole history is more important than what Ray called the 'stones and bones'. Like the stone material lasts forever but people's memories won't. That's what we were obtaining on the survey, getting information out of these memories to take them back to your country, take them back to places to trigger the memory of what was important. So it all changed right around ...

Once we came into the mainstream – the 1980s – into the Service fully employed as Sites Officers, we were put into different areas. Ray was in Grafton, I was in Armidale and we had Sabu at Dubbo and we had a batch of people then at Broken Hill – Badger Bates. So we tried to get a place for the Site Officer in their own area, in their own country to record for their own communities. And at the same time we had to deal with the developments mainly and try to fit in what oral history we could.

It was difficult because – six or seven Site Officers in the 1980s there to cover the state was ridiculous! We had to look at its protection and management. So we was caught up in the mainstream. Ended up – it took away the recording of oral histories and working with the old people in communities. Hopefully we'll get back and try to start the oral histories again to try and gather what information we can. But from 1980, say 1985 through to the present, a lot of traditional knowledge has been lost because of what didn't continue. Now that's what frustrated Ray 'cos everything has changed from oral history recording to recording archaeological material into protecting and managing that material against developments.



Ray always had the foresight of looking ahead and he thought, if we can't do something constructive with the oral history, let's look at some constructive stuff to increase Aboriginal employment in the Service – to try and protect a lot of the history stuff, the archaeology. Ray was hoping that at some stage, that if we got more Sites Officers in – some younger people in to record and to deal with the archaeological stuff – that would free him up to do a lot of the oral history with the old people in the community.

There was very little support when we got into the Service. Like some of the administrators we had, we worked with, they saw us as doing mundane things. Like they'd say, 'Oh can you inspect this site and record it? Can you write a letter to this developer, to that government?' and that was a basis of site recording. It was ridiculous that they didn't recognise that we did have skills and knowledge to write submissions or, they didn't want to advance us to the stage of writing submissions, writing plans of management and reporting – that came a hell of a lot later. I understand why it was frustrating Ray to get stuck in the rut of mainstream. Not being allowed to work with your knowledge – with your culture that you're brought up with.

It was hard to get them to understand that *we* were the experts in terms of dealing with a cultural issue in a community and that we became the experts, not the anthropologists or the archaeologists. We were brought up with culture, and Ray said so. 'We are the experts', he said to Harry. 'You're not the expert. You may be an anthropologist but you're not an expert. Our people are the experts. We are the experts and we know what's best for our culture and how to protect it.'

It was trying to get the department then to properly fund it, for us to be able to do the work. That's what frustrated Ray a lot, too, the amount of funds that were spent on cultural heritage throughout each region. That was in the early '90s, mid-'90s, that Ray found out that the Northern Region had spent something like \$98 for a year on the protection and management of cultural heritage. Which then prompted us, in 1996, to take out a grievance against the Service to try and get cultural heritage to be at the forefront of the government department – to say that cultural heritage is a high priority because we deal right across the State with developments – to protect and manage it.

Ray at some stage was sick of banging his head against a brick wall, like me, to try and get the proper funding, the proper staffing, and vehicles to cover the area we had to cover. So I think Ray was getting frustrated over the years that even though we got more staff, we got more people on in the Service to deal with different issues, funding still wasn't there, which led Ray to take, sort of take an early retirement, because of the frustration he had been trying to fight.

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Ray's central legacy is that, along with Harry and Sharon Sullivan, he's revived cultural heritage in New South Wales. And he'll always say that it wasn't dead, it was just dormant and asleep and it had been awakened. I think Ray had awakened – and revived – his people's culture in New South Wales. That's his legacy. I mean his other legacies were getting Aboriginal people employed in the Service in all parts of mainstream, not just with cultural heritage but in other parts of administrative functions of the Service. He developed the first original trainee ranger plan. I mean that took off later but at least it was instilled in the Service to say, 'Hey, this is what we were doing'.

It wasn't just a job. He lived for it. Even from the comments made by his children, his wife, there was nothing too difficult to deal with when he was doing cultural heritage. Of course his family suffered because of that passion.

You know, it's great that they're looking at this book. What we dedicate to Ray is part of the history of the Service, of cultural heritage – where all this first started.





9 A brother's perspective on Tiger Kelly

Reflections from John Delaney

John regards Ray – Tiger or Shoonkley as he refers to him – as a brother. They became firm friends from the mid-1950s and later worked together in securing Aboriginal employment in state and federal government sectors throughout the 1970s and 1980s. John believes that Ray has left his mark on the National Parks and Wildlife Service in two central ways: in his fight to get more Aboriginal people employed in the Service; and in his demand that the ownership of Aboriginal heritage should remain in Aboriginal hands.

John is a Kamilaroi man from Burra Bee Dee Mission outside Coonabarabran. He is currently chairperson of the Aboriginal Heritage Advisory Panel of the New South Wales Heritage Council. He has spent most of his working life in government departments establishing Aboriginal employment initiatives.

I met Tiger in early 1956 in Burnt Bridge Mission at Kempsey. We were both playing rugby league football with Central Kempsey at the time, although he was playing in the under 18s and I was in the first grade side. I think I'm about five years older than Tiger. But I first met him there and we became brothers very quickly and we both had similar slants on life, being black and disadvantaged in one of the most racist towns at the time, which was Kempsey. Both of us have turned that around a little bit in our professional lives since.

When he was a young fella and old Uncle Tiger, Ray's father, was still alive, Shoonkley and Uncle Tiger spoke about the heritage values of not just the Dughutti people but up over the mountain in the New England area and that's Kamilaroi country. They spoke about the importance of some of the remnants that were being destroyed as a result of the white invasion and I guess, not so much deliberately, but through the ignorance of the non-Aboriginal people of what might be a sacred site. That was back when Tiger was still a teenager. I guess he was instilled with this enthusiasm, and so was I, from Uncle Tiger, because he was a man of great strength. I believe that some of the lessons he gave us when we were young men – I've seen later in life that it certainly had a profound effect on young Tiger, Shoonkley.

We never lost contact with each other. I'd come back to Sydney to bring my young family. I think we both got into the political arena in our particular

LEFT John Delaney met Ray (left) a year after this photo was taken of Cid (Cedrick Button) and Ray Kelly aged 17 at Burnt Bridge (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

professions by probably mid-1973. When he first started with the Service he was in Sydney quite regularly and he used to come over and spend a bit of time with us. In fact he introduced me to the Aboriginal employment section of the Department of Labour and National Service, whatever we were in those days. So we [John and Ray] were developing strategies for recruitment of Aboriginal people right across the employment scene.

I think it was when he was working in Grafton – he lived up near the racecourse – and we used to spend many hours there either on a weekend or in the middle of the night. I don't know how Alice put up with us at times. But we yarned and rowed and put our own points of view and he's certainly a very strong individual verbally and we had some good yarns.

Aboriginal employment

Emanating from this was the fact that he was the only black fella working for National Parks and he was trying desperately to do something about that. When his views coincided with my views about Aboriginal employment we went through a process of dealing with the department. We were able to get, through Tiger's resourcefulness and initiatives, different people put on under the old, what they called the National Employment Strategy for Aborigines. We started, in New South Wales, the park ranger training and among other people in the first intake (I think there was seven) was Senator Aiden Ridgeway. Tiger was absolutely solely responsible for the development of that.

What Tiger was saying was that we don't just train Aboriginal people as park rangers, rather than cleaners and looker-afterers in parks, but we need them up front. We need them explicitly local, Aboriginal people whichever part of the State it's in, local Aboriginal people who are descendants of the original nations of that place.

We worked on the plain rules that the white bureaucracy set down for us and it was Tiger's insistence on utilising and learning the rules of the game and playing the game their way and putting a very strong element of Aboriginality into that. I certainly agree. When I was over in Hurstville at the celebration of his thirty years of employment – that nearly brought tears to my eyes, of thinking that the Cultural Heritage Division exemplified the dreams and the efforts of Tiger Kelly. I congratulated Jason Ardler, Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Division many, many times, but I lay the accolades at the feet of Tiger Kelly. If it wasn't for Tiger and his efforts – and his efforts to buck the system and rowing and certainly showing some of them. Ah, to be able to tell you some of the donnybrooks they had at different times!

What were those battles about?

The battles were about the lack of support for, and the dearth of Aboriginal people employed in the Service. Everyone who got a job, or is working for the National Parks, I think that they need to give old Tiger a ring and tell him, 'Thanks very much Uncle Tiger'. Without him I don't think it would be at the magnitude it is today.

It was, number one, his focus on there not being enough black fellas working in the Service, and also the misinterpretation by the academically qualified people.

He's a big fella and I've seen him cry at times because of the futility of not being able to make people understand. He'd say, 'I can't get these fellas to understand!' That's where his association with Howard was a very unique and very important part of the whole operation of the place. I don't know how Tiger perceives that these days – but in those days you could see, after he'd been either at a session at the office with Howard, or away on a trip with him – there used to be a bit of relief there, you'd see he was relieved.

Why was he relieved?

Because it must have got interpreted the right way by Howard, a process. How do you do this? And that's why he's such a good doctor of words now. He said, 'These white bastards – they don't understand what I'm saying'. Now fortunately we've got the black fellas there led by Jason [Ardler] to be able to put together more professionally a document that we need to express exactly what this site or this aspect of this place is all about. I guess that he'd have had to be lonely at times in a department with academically qualified people saying, 'This fella don't know what he's talking about'.

Ownership: the crunch

Ray talked about cultural, what was the word, 'renaissance' – a cultural renaissance. Did you talk about that with him?

Trust Tiger to think about those big words that we can't get our mouth around. But yes – I guess when we look at just a few years ago the dilapidated state that heritage protection was in. But I think the main thing about this is the ownership of the thing – it was the ownership that really was the crunch of what Tiger was all about. I think he's still a bit peeved about that.

I think it fits a bit more comfortably now, but at least we know that the interpretation there is solid Aboriginal interpretation. I guess when Tiger uses those big words like 'renaissance', that the old perception of the efforts made by Parks and Wildlife Service in the past without compassion to absolutely ensure that Aboriginal ownership remains intact – now I guess what's happened out of Hurstville is not exactly what he wanted. But it's probably the best we're going to get out of a bureaucratic system and it comes closest to it.

But I think the answer to that sort of issue is that the people working in the Service now, the black people working in the Service now, are the key to ensuring that the pathways set by Tiger Kelly in the first instance and later on Glen Morris and Evelyn Crawford, former manager, Aboriginal Heritage Division, will ensure that this ownership question is maintained within the bureaucracy somewhere. But we need to get more community ownership, more traditional ownership, and that's what Tiger was on about. He wasn't one about storing all of this magnificent heritage information and cultural and the protective stuff in a bureaucracy that's run by non-Aboriginal people.

From my perspective I think the battle that Tiger set out upon seems about half finished. The white fellas haven't done a very good job over the years and I guess Tiger was very, very peeved about protecting these places and not just about establishing, identifying. There's plenty of stuff left for us to do. So I guess it's the ownership situation that he's on about as well as having Aboriginal people employed in the Service.

Articulating Aboriginal heritage and culture

Let me tell you the most important thing he did. White fellas couldn't do it before, and I don't think they still can do it now, and that is articulate the issues of Aboriginal heritage and culture to the landowners. A typical example is a place just outside of Kempsey on the Crescent Head Road. There's a property and there was a sacred bora site, and we couldn't get there. Tiger went up there – I remember one day this fella was really cranky and I was there with Tiger. He went up there and had a yarn with this fella and said, 'Look brother, we're not after your land but come with us'. The lad came with us and we said, 'Look at this place' and it was still untouched. It was out in the bush a little bit and there was no sign of stock rampaging through there and no sign of any overbearing presence there. Tiger sat down and showed him what was there and he accepted, and he felt very proud that it was on what he considered to be his property. From that day forward we never had a problem with that owner. So that's the barrier that Tiger broke down.

So I guess that's the most important thing that I saw Tiger break down which non-Aboriginal people couldn't, because they couldn't actually articulate the importance of these places, giving any true sense to one of their fellows. But I guess hearing it from a black fella first-hand, a fella from that country, that Dunghutti country, that that was understood and appreciated much more.

I think that was one of the strengths of Tiger. Wherever he went he was able to articulate, represent. He always took a local fella with him. I mean if he went out to western New South Wales then we always had to get connection with the local community. If Tiger was talking to someone, and I guess Howard was with him on many of these excursions, they would take a local fella with them and he'd introduce them to the landowner and tell him what they were on about.

I don't think Tiger got – well he got a little bit of resistance from what he told me – but I don't think he got too much resistance because I guess a lot of those 'landowners', as in inverted commas, obviously understood and appreciated the importance of heritage and culture. They've got their own type of issues to protect within their own heritage and their religious beliefs and that's the same as us.

We are, Tiger and myself are terribly religious, maybe not as Christians, but as religious as any person in this place. But that's the big ticket item. I enjoyed watching, witnessing him do this communicating stuff with the landowners in a quiet and honest and very amiable way without causing any – well people



used to get pissed off sometimes – ‘What are you doing here, you black?’ – and these things happen today, but Tiger was able to break down those barriers. Besides being a ‘big prop’ fella at times, he was an absolute gentleman and that’s the way he carried himself in most of his operations particularly with landowners.

The survey years

What impact do you think the survey had on the ways that people across New South Wales have been able to conserve their heritage?

I guess that’d be a difficult question for me to answer, although I could probably relate that in certain places. At Burra Bee Dee we weren’t quite sure what this heritage protection was at the time! National Parks and Wildlife had got their stamp just about all over the place and some of us – well we weren’t all conducive to that sort of process. We didn’t know too much about National Parks and Wildlife at the time. But I think the enjoyment and the satisfaction we got out of that is when Tiger and Howard came back and did the write-ups.

I’ve got to say that from a little mission school, attended like myself, that Tiger was probably one of the most complete writers, and no doubt with Howard’s help. I used to see some of the stuff he wrote and you’d think that this wasn’t Tiger. But then when we were back up at Grafton in his place just outside Kempsey, I’d sit there and watch him writing this stuff and I said, ‘Bullshit! I thought Howard did all this for you.’ He said, ‘No, he don’t know what to write’. So it’s amazing. I got the kick out of having almost an academically produced

ABOVE John Delaney and Ray Kelly seated in front of John Kelly’s painting at the 30th anniversary celebrating Ray’s employment with the NPWS (reproduced courtesy of the *Koori Mail*).



document that's done so explicitly appropriate to the place and to the nation, that the place is written about here by a black fella who's an education drop-out like myself.

I can pick up books written by extreme academics, by archaeologists, by professional people, and they just can't describe an Aboriginal site in the same fashion, in the same type of words that represents what that place is all about. You know it's like telling a story and then getting someone, some white fella, word doctor, to interpret that for you and let it go out unseen. But yeah, my big brother was pretty good at that and that was astonishing.

Of what importance was his job to his life?

Well I think, you could talk to Alice about it, I think eventually – and we're all only human – eventually I think it caused the break-down in his marriage. I think the kids used to love to see him coming home because they never saw him that often. I guess it was his absolute passion for it. Being not just the sole Aboriginal person but being the leader of the group he had to have hands-on activities with whatever was going. Because there was no-one – until we got people like Evelyn Crawford in the place – Tiger was the only fellow that could really relate to issues both from the community black or white perspective. Well Glen was working in the Service there but at a very junior level then, so Tiger was it.

And he'd just go! Grafton was the first time I saw it happen. We were home doing the appropriate macho thing of having a yarn about things and having a couple of beers, and I said, 'When are you coming back to Sydney next?' He said, 'Oh I'll probably be there in a couple of months time'. We went down to the Grafton office the next day and away he had to go! He just said some little idiosyncrasy had happened, some interpretation thing had happened here in Sydney, and he was up and gone. He was in Sydney for about two days. Then he had to go to western New South Wales. You know about a fortnight later he trundles back home to the place at Grafton. Mind you, we only left home to go to work at Grafton! That was the nature of it. It was like that old thing we used to see during the Second World War – his country called, he answered.

I've got to reiterate in a few words what I've been saying. I think that the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Aboriginal heritage and protection and culture is much richer in New South Wales for the efforts put in by Shoonkley Tiger Ray. I don't think that at the time, because of the uniqueness of it, and the lack of understanding of people in the Service, that it would have occurred without his diligence and passion and persistence.

I appreciated the differences we had about different things back then, because we've all got our own views. But I think with Tiger, if he wasn't there then, we wouldn't be where we are now. Yeah, Tiger Kelly is unique and I'm glad that I experienced him in my lifetime because it's been a pleasure and privilege working with someone like him.

RIGHT Ray Kelly in front of John Kelly's painting at the 30th anniversary celebrating Ray's employment with the NPWS (reproduced courtesy of the *Koori Mail*).



Legacy







10 Listening to my father

Reflections from Neville Buchanan

Neville Buchanan is the son of Harry Tiger Buchanan. An initiated Gumbayngirr man and fluent in his language, Harry Buchanan was one of the most important consultants on the survey. Harry was born in 1898 in Valla and always lived in the Nambucca Valley on the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales, dying in 1980. Neville remains in his father's country and is custodian of his father's stories.

In this chapter Neville reflects on Ray's relationship with his father, and the ways that Ray continued to talk with Neville about what he learnt of Neville's father's knowledge and keeping the culture strong.

Introducing Neville and Harry

Neville, what was your understanding of the Sites of Significance Survey?

Well all Dad said was, Ray and my dad, that it's all very important and that they are very sacred sites. Ray always come up and spent time with me, or spent time with my dad when my dad was alive. Then when my dad passed on Ray still come and talked to me, he still asked me things. I'm really grateful that he still cares about everything. He's keeping me alive. He's keeping me awake by telling me my culture and by waking me up and telling me all these sites and he's keeping me alive. See I just finished an RTA [Roads and Traffic Authority] thing that Ray rang and told me about.

Every time we sit down and talk now, Ray and me, we always laugh about Dad. Ray always says, 'You know, your father was a great man'. He said, 'The wonderful things he left behind'. Then Ray showed us the sites. He talked about the survey and he talked about the sites and that really means a lot to us.

Tell me a bit about your dad.

My dad was named Harry Tiger Buchanan. My dad, he lived on Bellwood Mission and then he came here [Macksville]. That's where he first met up with Ray. Ray was the first one to come to see Dad there and to speak to Dad there. Dad used to make a fire outside and tell his stories to Ray.

Why?

Because somehow I think he initiated Ray, he initiated him through the sites so that Ray could travel to all the sites. Dad always said to me, 'When you grow up



to be a young man', he said, 'I'm going to put you through the rules'. But I never ever got to that because my dad passed away on me. But I'm glad Raymond, or it is Ray to me, would come and help me.

My dad knew all about the sites from the North Coast. He was an initiated man from up in the mountain, Yarrapinni mountain to the Grafton River – the big boundary of the Gumbaynggir people. My dad always spoke about the sites and he always talked about the massacres that went on and he talked about other stories. He told a lot of stories about how the sea became the sea and he told Ray a lot of stories. Dad told Ray that in time coming, he said, we would like to have our own passed back to us – all these things.

I'm his oldest son and I'm still going, you know! He'd be passing back to me, and I've been telling the stories to the kids 'cos I do schools and all that. I'm very grateful for what my dad had done and Ray, 'cos Ray – he done a lot with Dad. It's only because of him I know all these stories, him and Howard Creamer. I appreciated Howard. Howard always had that laugh, he always enjoyed himself. He was somebody that my dad put a lot of trust in, Howard.

Ray and Howard was the main two because they always done things with my father. I still sit down with Ray. I still have that peace. I talk with Ray and we have a yarn up and we talk about the stories about Dad, about the old days. He used to laugh 'cos he was only a young man when he used to go travelling with my father.

I read some of Ray's writing where he says that a number of the older initiated men didn't want to talk to him. Why did your dad talk to him about the stories?

Well my dad knew that he was going to die. My dad knew that he was going to

leave something behind. So what he done, he got up and done something. I think these other older men didn't want to talk about things. But my dad sort of thought about things with Ray, 'Well if I die everything'd be lost and if I pass it on it'll stay, it'll be going on and on.'

He had a hard time, my dad. He had people knocking him. But now they're starting to realise where he was coming from. They're starting to understand that they're telling my dad's story, not me! That's why I'm very grateful for Ray, what Ray and them done, him and Howard Creamer. All these black people around here, all our Aboriginal people are telling my dad's stories.

Ray did a lot of tapes of my dad too, and Howard did a lot of tapes and I got those tapes too, you know. They've been passed back to me – these are stories that I want to pass on to the future.



Is that how Ray got information back to you?

Well me and Ray sat down and talked about it recently. Ray said to me, 'Did you know it's time for them to pass everything back to you and pass everything back to us. 'Cos we're the ones got the knowledge.'

I got a little dance group of my own and they get out there and they dance around, they do the spirit dance and we do the creation dance. 'Cos I always hear my dad talk about the gidgeon mira – that's the moon, but in the Aboriginal language they call it the gidgeon mira 'cos it is a creation, it feeds us, looks after us, it gives us all this energy and it looks after our land.

In a way I think Ray really wanted to know about the land and about these things, about the sites. So he just kept on going and he did things. You know a lot of people didn't like Ray. But I took to Ray because Ray looked at my dad and said, 'This man's got the knowledge, he's got the wisdom and this man, he wants to pass it on.'

What was it about Ray that people didn't like?

Ah. [laughs] There were a lot of things, you know, people just mouthing off saying they don't like him. But I'd say, 'Hang on, what did you do as a human being on this earth? Did you do something like Ray has done?' They said, 'Well, what's he done?' 'Well, I said, 'you know why that man put a uniform on, a

Parks and Wildlife uniform on? He asked my dad a lot of questions and he went with my father, he took him to the bush, they sat in the bush and they talked about the sites, and I said, 'and he got a lot of wisdom and a lot of knowledge from my dad'. I said, 'and he's the one man going to help me with the wisdom and the knowledge 'cos he's the fella who's going to pass it on to me too'. Every time I meet with Ray that's all me and Ray ever talk about. We talk about the sites and the culture and the land itself and the animals on this land.

How must it have been for Ray in those days when he put that uniform on?

A lot of them didn't like the uniform 'cos he worked for the white government and he was only one fella that went out there. I think it was just, he was meant to do it. I believe God worked in his life to show him, show him and teach him about the land and Ray knows a lot with the wisdom and the knowledge he got now.

He had to cope with both working for a place like National Parks and then also working with all of you. How did he do that do you think?

Well I don't know how Ray felt about it on that National Park side. But I know he felt comfortable on our side.

So he was a young man at the time. What sort of knowledge did he come with before he knew your dad?

Not much, but he learned so much. Also that's the thing that I look at. I look at people who want to share and pass on. We're not going to forget, our culture, our land. It's not our land but it's a land that's been given to us to be caretakers of it and to share, so we couldn't say we own the land, the land owns us. Not only for our future but all our futures coming into this world and we've got to keep on teaching them to pass that message on to look after our environment.

How did Ray find out the information? Tell me some stories of going out together.

Well when we used to go out, we used to sit down, the old man used to sit down and he used to make a fire and put the billy on. My dad used to sit there around a little fire and he used to tell the stories. He used to say, 'I'll tell you the story about the gidgeon mira'. He always talked about the gidgeon mira because it was like the creation. He'd tell us about these beautiful trees you get here, bush tucker here that feeds us. And he said, 'When I'm in the bush I've got that beautiful feeling'. He'd always say to Ray, 'How do you feel in the bush?' Ray used to say, 'Harry, I always feel the same as you. I feel so protected in this bush. I'm well looked after you know. It's something that I'm not afraid of being here. Coming here looking at our sites and you here telling the stories about the moon and how the sea becomes the sea and all this.'

So do you think that the survey that was done in the '70s and '80s is any help to you today?

Well there is some sites we could go and teach our kids, take em back to the way Aboriginal people used to do initiations, teach them about respect. At the moment they're wrong on history here and they have got no respect for

anybody, whether young or they're middle aged or they're old, they don't care. These young people they got to know about these things, we've got to take 'em back to the bush and teach 'em, use our laws, teach 'em our laws.

I reckon it's going to help me a lot by teaching my young people to realise that, gee, they got to stop and realise that we are going to walk together – let's help one another, let's share our culture with one another 'cos we all got different cultures. Don't matter which part of the world we come from. We all got to share that culture and we're one of the oldest cultures. That I believe in, because all these shell middens. Our shell midden – it runs from Stuart Point from the Fisherman's Reef right through to Clybucca – nineteen kilometres long, two kilometres deep and the history is there. I take children out to the Golden Hole and I say, 'Here – this is my history here. I could tell you about the history of Australia from here. The story, so many shells and stones and bones of human beings. They all laid in this here shell middens – this is the history of this land.' We all knew about the shell middens and that was the most important significant site because we could tell our stories. This is history that lays in that ground. I went out there with Howard and Ray.

.....■.....

My dad never ever sat down at the fire without talking about them mob – Ray and Howard and them. 'Cos my dad, he'd always praise 'em. He said, 'My boy, if they don't do these things, you fellas never ever going to learn anything'.

I think Ray was like a role model for everybody. He was a fella that was getting out there. A lot of people didn't understand it. A lot of people went, 'Oh we could do that, we're better than him'. But they never done it! They never put it into action.

He done it for both sides too you know. That's the wonderful thing about it. He brought the parties together. I can't say too much about it because of what he done and how he done it. I'm really proud. I can walk down this street with my head up high. My dad left something behind. Ray – he done something for my dad. You know these are people I can talk about, and Ray, he knows I'm proud of him.



you are cordially invited

to celebrate

the 30th Anniversary of the e
the first Aboriginal officer Ray K

10.30am Thursday 29 May 2003

Director General's Conference Room
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
Level 4 43 Bridge Street Hurstville

included will be the unveiling of
RSVP by Tuesday 27 May, 2003



11 Contributions from Aboriginal staff

For me, consulting with Uncle Ray about the sites in and around the Mid-North and Far North Coast and Tablelands, about special sites that are located in these areas – as you guys know, Uncle Ray has spoken with the elders that were still alive back in the '70s and '80s about sacred sites in these areas. Uncle Ray always talks of my Uncle Harry (Tiger) Buchanan who was a Gumbaynggir elder – Maroonga – initiation. We talk of the stories of these sites that he was shown back in those days by our elders and the significance of these sites. I have the utmost respect for Uncle Ray, as I know that I am carrying out his position as Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer for these areas. Uncle Ray has told me a lot about the significance of our local sites along the North Coast and I will always carry the respect that he had carried for my uncle Harry as I carry for him.

Vic Buchanan, Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer (Macleay).

Without fear of contradiction, I can honestly say, that Ray gave me an educated understanding of what culture really means. We both lived it, however Ray had his life experiences and knowledge, and I had government legislation and tenacity. When I reflect on the time Ray and I worked together, we had the same goals and passion of protecting and preserving cultural heritage values and sites, but we couldn't communicate to one another without losing our patience. If there's one thing that I learned from Ray during his time with the Northern Aboriginal Heritage Section, it's patience. Some days' phone calls would last for hours.

Hilton Naden, Manager, Northern Aboriginal Heritage Section (Coffs Harbour)

Uncle Ray was the first and most senior National Parks & Wildlife Service Aboriginal sites officer I met when appointed to my position in 1993. At that time there was only one other female sites officer in the State, I was the second. In those days Aboriginal women's heritage in National Parks and in some Aboriginal communities was underrated and it was sometimes difficult to justify its significance. Uncle Ray was a tower of strength in supporting us Aboriginal women and the significance of our heritage – even when times were tough and I myself had doubts about the directions that we were heading. In recognising his own limitations in the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage, he raised the profile of our women's heritage, our role in its protection and gave direction

to the pathway for us to move forward. Without his generous wisdom, strength and words of guidance I wouldn't be where I am, amongst my now many female colleagues, and women's heritage in National Parks would not have the profile it does now. If not for Uncle Ray, Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW National Parks would not have the recognition or staff it does today. We all have a lot to thank you for, Uncle Ray. Your cultural vision became our future. Thank you for the opportunity to work with, but more importantly, learn from you. I will always be grateful for the daily empowerment you gave me to stand strong and be proud of what I believe in.

Lisa Appo, Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer (Grafton)

I first met Uncle Ray at a Victorian archaeological summer school near Swan Hill in 1979, and from this encounter and a subsequent field trip to Narrandera, I was shown the vibrancy of our culture, and that was still there in other Aboriginal communities, all the stories passed down by our elders linking us to our heritage and spiritual places, and the footprints dotted across the landscape showing our movements over the land.

This inspirational period in my life led me to tap into my cultural identity and promote these values for my own well-being, as well as my community through the opportunities of working within the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.

In the intervening years the many opportunities talking with Uncle Ray have enriched my cultural understanding of our Aboriginal identity and the need to pull our communities to a level where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can sit down together and as Uncle Ray would always confide the need to truly share an educated understanding.

Rod Wellington, Aboriginal Heritage Conservation Officer (Nowra)

I met Uncle Ray about twelve years ago now, when I first joined NPWS. He scared the livin' daylight out of me at first, then I got to know Uncle Ray and I found him to be a very supportive 'elder' in the Service. Uncle Ray always provided encouragement and support and told me to stay in the job no matter how hard it got 'cause we need Aboriginal people in the Service to fight from the inside for our people on the outside. Thank you so much Uncle Ray for being the leader and a great teacher that you were and still are.

Juanita McCarthy, Ranger (Hunter Region)

I have known Ray for nearly twenty years. I first met and got to know Ray at a NPWS Aboriginal Network meeting in Coonabarabran in early 1986. Ray recounted his visits to Bourke during the sacred sites survey and meeting my grandfather Fred Leppert. This warmed my heart when he spoke of my grandfather and the places that they visited north of Bourke including Yantabulla and Fords Bridge. Ray knew my family before I knew him and that made our friendship even stronger. When I moved from Griffith to Port Macquarie that friendship grew even stronger. Often

I spent time at Ray's place on the Pacific Highway north of Kempsey, listening to the trucks that would cause the house to sway. During this time I became part of Ray's family. I knew that I had a place to go to if I needed to, and the times spent with Ray looking at sites and understanding the importance that he had for his country and his people will always remain a special part of me. There were many times that we would travel together, for meetings or just going for a drive, me driving in order to avoid the 'for sale' signs on the trucks and vehicles that we would pass! But no, Ray wouldn't let me do that. He would raise his eyebrows at the right time and say, 'Hey slow down there', and we would have to go back and have a look. We spent countless hours together talking about the future, the need for Aboriginal community engagement, the empowerment for communities to take control and make decisions about their heritage. I have met many Aboriginal people during my time with National Parks who have influenced the way I think and the respect that I have for Aboriginal cultural heritage. Ray is one of those people who has given me the support and confidence to achieve what I can. I thank you Ray for putting your trust and faith in me, I also thank you for believing in me. Finally, I thank you for letting me be a part of your life.

Gary Currey, Manager, Southern Aboriginal Heritage Section (Queanbeyan)

Afterword

Ray Kelly with Gary Currey, January 2005

I don't consider myself as being a special person, but the opportunities, experiences and the teachings that I have endured, I am extremely thankful for. I am also thankful for living a long and rewarding life. I have mixed it with the best of them: politicians, government department officials, local councils, and educators. But the most rewarding experiences have been the relationships built with Aboriginal communities across NSW, the teachings I have received from my elders, and the many young lives that I have influenced within the National Parks & Wildlife Service. I hope that this book will give continued inspiration and strength to anyone who may set high targets for himself or herself.

To me the Sacred Sites Survey was one of those targets. It was enlightening, in the sense that it proved that Aboriginal people did not rely upon being educated in the 'white men's system', but that they hold and continue to use cultural knowledge that has been passed on through many generations. The survey was also challenging. At the time it extended beyond the notion that Aboriginal sites were only for archaeologists and academics, but they held much more information and were, and continue to be, our Aboriginal learning centres in the landscape.

The survey was a means of capturing Aboriginal cultural information that was not gone. It should be used as a guide for every Aboriginal person to look within their own communities and to find out who they are and where they come from. It is up to our present and future generations to ensure that our culture will remain strong within the memories of our people.

The future of Aboriginal cultural heritage is bright. However, there is still a long way to go. It should be acknowledged that organisations such as the Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW) have done wonders for the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage, and have provided increased opportunity for Aboriginal people to become involved in managing their heritage. Aboriginal community development is still a major priority. We need Aboriginal land managers, Aboriginal rangers and educators to guide our communities, and play a key role in the cultural understanding of our land. All Aboriginal people have a responsibility for the continuation of our Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The challenges for the future will mean documenting and recording Aboriginal people's oral histories and values for places. It will be important to ensure that Aboriginal communities are provided with all the information so that they can have an educated understanding and be in a better position to make an informed



decision. It is not acceptable just to have representatives on various committees, Aboriginal people need to be given equal decision-making roles.

An investment in the Aboriginal future is a must. The trainee ranger (now cadet ranger) program has been a great success. Increased opportunities in park worker [Field Officer] positions have also been a major achievement. All of these opportunities come at a price. There will be many sacrifices to be made, but make sure that you appreciate and take hold of your opportunity and learning. Your communities are relying upon you to be a success and to pave the way for others behind you.

Notes

- 1 See Ray Kelly, 'Why we bother: Information gathered in Aboriginal site recording in New South Wales', in JR McKinlay and KL Jones (eds), *Archaeological Resource Management in Australia and Oceania*, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Wellington, 1979, pp 78-82; and Chapter 2 of this book.
- 2 See Sharon Sullivan, 'The Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee in NSW: Communication between archaeologists and Aborigines', in Moya Smith (ed), *Archaeology at ANZAAS 1983*, Western Australian Museum, Perth, 1983, pp 322-28.
- 3 Sharon Sullivan, 'Reflexions of 27 years', in Dean Ulm, Ian Lilley and Anne Ross (eds), *Australian Archaeology '95: Proceedings of the 1995 Australian Archaeological Association Annual Conference, Tempus*, vol 6, Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland, 1996, p 2.
- 4 Harry Creamer, 'Working with Aboriginal Communities in NSW: 30 years on', DEC seminar, Darlington Park Resort Arrawarra, 13 May 2003.
- 5 Margaret-Ann Franklin, *Assimilation in Action: The Armidale Story*, University of New England Press, 1995, p 41.
- 6 Ray Kelly in Franklin, *Assimilation in Action*, pp 108-109; and see Chapter 4.
- 7 For an overview of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, see David Hollinsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia*, Social Science Press, 1998; Ann McGrath (ed), *Contested Ground: Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*, Allen & Unwin, 1995. For a history of Aboriginal rights see Bain Attwood, *Rights For Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, 2003.
- 8 Ann Curthoys, *Freedom Ride: A Freedom rider Remembers*, Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- 9 See Chapter 8; and Denis Byrne, Helen Brayshaw and Tracy Ireland, *Social Significance: A Discussion Paper*, Research Unit, Cultural Heritage Division, NSW NPWS, June 2001.
- 10 Ray Kelly, 'Investigation of sites of significance to the descendants of the Yeuin tribal people in the area of the Five Forests on the South Coast of New South Wales', NPWS, May 1978, Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS), Reports catalogue 1438, DEC, Hurstville. In 1977, Harry recorded interviews with a total of 69 Aboriginal consultants who worked for the survey; 71% were male, and 80% over 55: see Howard Creamer, 'The Aboriginal Heritage In New South Wales and the role of the Sacred Sites Survey', NPWS, 13 May 1977, DEC, Hurstville, Harry Creamer Collection, series NS0045, report 23, Site reports 21-40, 1973-1987.
- 11 Howard Creamer, 'Aboriginality in New South Wales: Beyond the image of cultureless outcasts', in Jeremy Beckett (ed), *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, pp 45-62.
- 12 Ray Kelly, 'Why we bother'.
- 13 See for example Fay Gale (ed), *Women's Role in Aboriginal Society*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1970; Fay Gale (ed), *We Are Bosses Ourselves*, AIAS, Canberra, 1983; and Lisa Appo's comments in Chapter 11.
- 14 Barry Morris, 'The politics of identity: From Aborigines to the first Australian', in Jeremy Beckett (ed), *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, p 74.
- 15 Morris, 'The politics of identity', p 80.
- 16 Sullivan, 'The Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee in NSW', 1983.
- 17 Sullivan, 'The Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee in NSW', 1983. The first meeting of the Interim Aboriginal Sites Advisory Committee, opened by the Minister of Planning and Environment the Hon EL Bedford, was on 8 December 1980.
- 18 Howard Creamer, 'NSW Aboriginal Sites Survey: Priorities for the Legal Protection of Certain Sites Investigated by the Survey', 23 January 1979, NPWS Archives, North Coast Regional Office, container no 1, file NR2-3 'Site Officers and Other Aboriginal Employees Previously Known as Sacred Sites Survey Team', 23 April 1976-5 Dec 1985.
- 19 Sharon Sullivan, 'The custodianship of Aboriginal Sites in Southeastern Australia', in Isabel McBryde (ed), *Who Owns The Past*, Melbourne University Press, 1985, p 145.
- 20 DEC NSW, 'Background to the NPWS Sites of Significance Survey Team', nd [May 2004], pp 2-3.
- 21 Isabel McBryde and Glen Morris, 'Working with Aboriginal communities in NSW: 30 Years on', DEC seminar, Darlington Park Beach Resort Arrawarra, 13 May 2004.
- 22 Ray Kelly, 'A Revival of the Aboriginal Culture: We, the Aboriginal People, Need This to Achieve Our Identity'. NPWS June 4 1975, DEC Hurstville, Harry Creamer Collection, Series NS0045, Report 22, Site Reports 21-40, 1973-1987.
- 23 Throughout his first seven years he 'virtually lived' with Ivy, a Gumbaynggir woman, and Donald,

- a Dunghutti man. They spoke little English and he learnt both languages: see Ray Kelly, 'Report on Investigations of Aboriginal Sites in the Bellbrook Area of New South Wales', October 1974, DEC Hurstville, AHIMS, Site Cards 21-6-014; Margaret-Ann Franklin, *Assimilation in Action: The Armidale Story*, University of New England Press, Armidale, 1995.
- 24 Quoted in Franklin, *Assimilation in Action*, p 106.
- 25 Quoted in Franklin, *Assimilation in Action*, pp 108-109.
- 26 See AHIMS Register: Reports Catalogue, [22 December 1997], DEC, Hurstville.
- 27 Ray Kelly and Terry Donovan, 'Survey of Aboriginal Sacred Sites in New South Wales: Sites Recorded in this report have been compiled from fieldwork carried out in the Gumbayngirr, Thungutti and Ngumbar Tribal Areas', 16 December 1976, DEC, Hurstville, AHIMS, Reports catalogue 484, np.
- 28 Ray Kelly, 'Report on Bellbrook Mission Cemetery', April 1974, DEC Hurstville, Site Report 5, Harry Creamer Collection, series NS0045, Site reports 1973-1987 nos 1-20.
- 29 Ray Kelly, 'Report on Investigations of Aboriginal Sites in the Bellbrook Area', October 1974.
- 30 Ray Kelly, 'Survey of Aboriginal Sacred Sites in New South Wales', 16 December 1976.
- 31 Ray Kelly, 'From the "Keeparra" to the "Cultural Bind": An Analysis of the Aboriginal Situation', *Australian Archaeology*, vol 2, 1975, pp 16-17. In the article following Ray's, Howard Creamer continued in outlining the processes the team was working on for cultural revival through feedback of information to communities, the push to get Aboriginal rangers employed, and for the education of the wider community about Aboriginal heritage and its dynamic and contemporary form.
- 32 Ray Kelly, 'The reintroduction of the Keeparah', NPWS, 25 February 1986; see also Wayne Cook, Report, 13 January; and Lesley Maynard, Memo, 14 March 1986: NPWS Archives, North Coast Regional Office, container 1, file NR2-3 'Site Officers and Other Aboriginal Employees Previously Known as Sacred Sites Survey Team', 23 April 1976-5 Dec 1985.
- 33 Ray Kelly, 'The Future of Aboriginal Network Meetings: An Open Letter to my Aboriginal Colleagues', 2 October 1985, NPWS Archives, North Coast Regional Office, container 1, file NR2-3.
- 34 After attempts in 1977 and 1978, a group initiation was held for Aboriginal men predominantly within the NPWS in January 1986. Four participants were initiated by elders including Len De Silva: see Lesley Maynard's covering letter and reports by Ray Kelly and Wayne Cook, 14 March 1986, file NR2-3 'Sites Officers and Other Aboriginal Employees Previously Known as the Sacred Sites Survey Team', North Coast Regional Office, DEC.
- 35 The seven-day workshop was run in July 1977 at the Morrisett Hospital. In 1972 UNE had informed Ned that he was no longer to work with Aboriginal people in an official capacity because, Ned felt, he was seen to be stirring up trouble: see Franklin, *Assimilation in Action*, p 155.
- 36 Aboriginal Sites Officers were transferred from the Sites of Significance survey and given positions in the NPWS District Offices where their responsibilities were to liaise with Aboriginal communities and protect Aboriginal heritage places within the boundaries of the District.

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Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee and Interim Committee: see State Records NSW below

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— 'Investigation of sites of significance to the descendants of the Yuuin tribal people in the area of the Five Forests on the South Coast of New South Wales', May 1978, Aboriginal Sites Register, Reports catalogue 1438, DEC, Cultural Heritage Division, Hurstville.

— 'The future of Aboriginal Network Meetings: an open letter to my Aboriginal colleagues', 2 October 1985, container 1, file NR2-3, NPWS [DEC] Archives, North Coast Regional Office

— 'The reintroduction of the Keejarah', 25 February 1986, Site Officers and Other Aboriginal Employees Previously Known as Sacred Sites Survey Team 23 April 1976–5 Dec 1985, container 1, file NR2-3NPWS [DEC] Archives, North Coast Regional Office

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6 Dec 2002	Tape 1*	D Murphy, C Perkins [Brown], R Preece
12 Dec 2002	Tape 2	D Murphy, C Perkins [Brown], R Preece
12 Dec 2002	Tape 4	D Murphy, C Perkins [Brown], R Preece
13 Dec 2002	Tape 5	D Murphy, C Perkins [Brown], R Preece
7 Dec 2003	Tape 7	D Murphy, C Perkins [Brown], R Preece, K Roberts, K Kelly

(* Note that tape numbers refer to the cassette cases, not to the logged transcripts, as they may vary.)

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Buchanan, Neville	22 July 2004	Macksville	RKP 11
Creamer, Harry	22 Feb 2004	Woodburn	RKP 02
Delaney, John	24 Mar 2004	Sydney	RKP 03
Fields, Ted	27 July 2004	Walgett	RKP 13
Iceton, Ned	11 May 2004	Armidale	RKP 05
Kelly, Allan and Liz	26 July 2004	Tamworth	RKP 12
Kelly family: Laurel McKenzie, Alice McKenzie, Karina Kelly, Leah Kelly, John Boy Kelly, Joe Carriage et al	29 May 2004	Batemans Bay	RKP 10
Kelly family: John Kelly, Karina [Tina] Kelly, Thelma Kelly et al	15 May 2004	Kempsey	RKP 08
Kelly, Ray (Junior)	26 May 2004	Sydney	RKP 09
Morris, Glen	23 Mar 2004	Armidale	RKP 04
Morris, Leonora	13 May 2004	Coffs Harbour	RKP 07
Sullivan, Sharon	20 Feb 2004	Nymboida	RKP 01
Vale, Laurel	12 May 2004	Armidale	RKP 06

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Two years ago, when our Survey had first begun, many white experts had given us the impression that there were no living sites or very few in the State of New South Wales RAY KELLY, 1975

In the mid-1970s, at a time when white society believed there was little connection between Aboriginal people living in New South Wales and sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage value, a team of passionate and dedicated people embarked on a remarkable and challenging project that was to become known as the NSW Sites of Significance Survey.

Ray Kelly, was a key member of the survey team and in 1973 was the first Aboriginal Research Officer to be employed by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. *Revival, Renewal & Return* documents the exhilaration, as well as the keen sense of responsibility that exemplified Ray's experience during the most ambitious years of the survey from 1973 to 1983. Through his own words, and the memories of friends, family and colleagues, combined with perceptive analysis by the author, *Revival, Renewal & Return* provides an engaging account of the pioneering work of the survey, charting the adventures, ambitions and achievements of those involved, their lives and relationships and the political and social mores of the time.



Revival, Renewal and Return is a key contribution to our understanding of the history of Aboriginal cultural heritage protection in NSW. It will interest those working in cultural heritage as well as students and those readers keen to learn more about the growth of awareness of Aboriginal culture and heritage in Australia.

Dr Johanna Kijas is a consultant historian based on the north coast of NSW.



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