

Biyal Biyal

People Bennelong



Bicentennial marker for Bennelong's burial site, Putney, Sydney

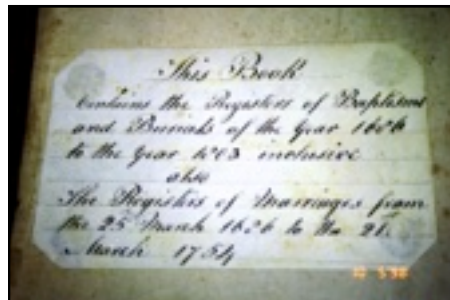
Bennelong, along with Coleby, was captured at the behest of Governor Arthur Phillip on 25 November 1789. It was necessary for the colonists to make contact with the local people, and to be able to communicate with them. Coleby, aged about 30, escaped on 12 December 1789. Bennelong, about 26, escaped on 3 May 1790, but continued to have a cordial relationship with Phillip—except for playing a part in Phillip's revenge spearing on 7 September that year, in the Manly area.

Yemmerawannie

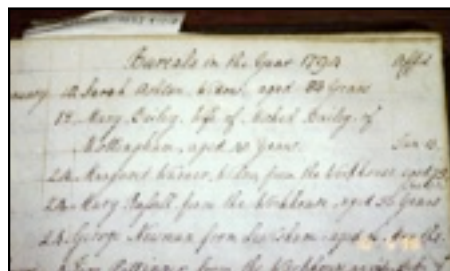
Phillip left Sydney in poor health on the *Atlantic*, his governorship coming to an end. He took with him two of the Aboriginal people, Bennelong and Yemmerawannie then aged about 18. On their arrival in England quite a fuss was made of these two as curiosity-celebrities. Bennelong was to survive and to return to Sydney on 7 September 1795 with the new governor, Captain John Hunter. Yemmerawannie, however, died, and was buried at St John's church in Eltham.



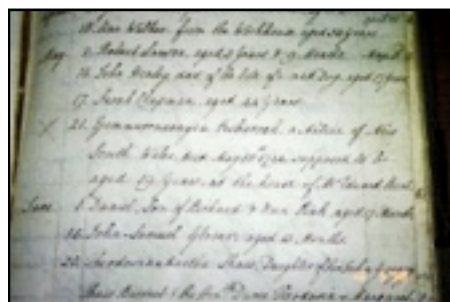
St Johns Church, Eltham, then in Kent



Register of births, baptisms and burials, St Johns Church, Eltham



Burials, St Johns Church, Eltham, for 1794



Entry for 21 May 1794: Yemmurawonyea Kebarrah, a Native of New South Wales



St Johns Church, Eltham: Yemmerawannie's gravestone

William Dawes

Dawes was a 2nd lieutenant of the Marines and came out on the First Fleet, age 26. He was educated, especially in the sciences, and was familiar with Latin and French. His official duty was to be in charge of the artillery, the heavy guns on board. His other duties included supervision of the time keeper, an invaluable clock used to determine longitude. With a private interest in astronomy, which had been noted, he had also been provided with books, telescopes and a portable observatory by the British Astronomer Royal (Neville Maskelyne), and asked to watch out, on arrival, for an expected comet. Once in Sydney he set up the observatory at what the Aboriginal people called Dara (as he later found out) but which place he himself named

Maskelyne Point. That name did not stick and it is now known as Dawes Point.



William Dawes (by Tsurui-Rinn Uhle)

Dawes was required to set up a battery for the defence of the settlement, and he did so next to the observatory. Today a replica cannon marks the spot where the first of six cannons stood.



Dawes Battery: Replica cannon aimed down the harbour



Another view of the cannon



Cannon barrels on a lower battery, Dawes Point

The Aboriginal people at first kept well away from the settlement in Sydney Cove. But in November 1790, for some reason, Watkin Tench, captain of the Marines, had cause to write:

"With the natives we are hand and glove. They throng the camp every day, and sometimes by their clamour and importunity for bread and meat (of which they now all eat greedily) are become very troublesome. God knows, we have little enough for ourselves!"

This change in behaviour on the part of the local indigenous population was to present Dawes with a remarkable opportunity. He met many of them at his his observatory home, both adults setting about paddling from there to the shore opposite (right under where the modern Harbour Bridge that takes the shortest route northwards, and children about to go for a swim. He not only wrote down various words they used, but also what sentences he could catch. He began making a record of the rudiments of a grammar, and set out tenses of a couple of dozen verbs. This he did in notebooks that by good fortune were preserved, and are now to be found in a London university library:



Dawes's notebooks, two bound together on the right, with an 'anon' notebook on the left, in the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London

Dawes left Sydney on 18 December 1791 with his fellow marines, on the *Gorgon*. It was Sydney's, and the nation's, loss that he was never to return.

Signs

Today, at first sight, there is little obvious trace of the Aboriginal people of Sydney. But evidence of them is to be found everywhere. Here is some:



Yemmerawannie's name on a lawn edging in Farm Cove, along with the names of many of his contemporaries



Yurong Street in Woolloomooloo

'Yurong' was part of the name of the initiation ceremony at which young lads became men. This was at the head of Farm Cove, next to Sydney Cove. *Woolloomooloo*, too, is a place-name from the time of the European upheaval.



Kurraba Road in Mosman

“Kurraba’ or *garaba* was the name of a multi-pronged fishing spear used in Mosman and all round the harbour, by the men. The woman caught fish from lines, in canoes.

Numerous of the suburbs of Sydney, as do places around the State and over most of the nation, have Aboriginal names. Many people probably do not realised that that is what they are:



Turramurra: it might have meant ‘trees’



Street names in Turramurra: ‘warigal’ means ‘dog’, as does dingo



ngala ngala: a special club



A ngala ngala and a hatchet



wonga wonga: a pigeon



Woy Woy railway station sign: probably originally pronounced wayi wayi

Wayi wayi might have meant a body of water, as at Woy Woy, or the waters of the Harbour. Near Kirribilli there is a *Weye-Weye Point*, with *-eye* pronounced as in the word ‘eye’.

Signs elsewhere



Threlkeld, in the Lake District, England

‘Threlkeld’ is not an Aboriginal word, but the Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld was a missionary who in the years following 1825 made a study of the language spoken north of the Hawkesbury River. He compiled extensive words lists, published the first detailed grammar on an Australian language, which came to be known as Awabakal. He also translated some of the Gospels.



Awaba, a railway station between Hawkesbury and Newcastle

Awaba means a flat place, and the flat place referred to is the big Lake Macquarie. Threlkeld set up his mission station at two different points on this lake. There he was helped in his language studies by one Aboriginal in particular, **Biraban**, whose

name meant ‘wedge-tailed eagle’ — or perhaps any big bird.



Biraban Reserve

Near Threlkeld’s mission station on the west side of the lake is Biraban Reserve, in honour of his informant. Not many today notice this small park, but many more people, especially its pupils, notice this primary school:



Biraban Public School, Toronto, Lake Macquarie



Bicentennial marker: Biraban Reserve

Threlkeld’s mission was at Ebenezer, a finger of land projecting into the lake. There is coal all the way from Newcastle to Wollongong, and to make ends meet, Threlkeld mined coal, as the above marker indicates.



Awabakal Avenue, Blacksmiths, Lake Macquarie

There is not much locally to mark Threlkeld’s pioneering work with the Aboriginals and Australian languages. However, there is this street sign of the name of the people and their language. Likewise, tucked away in another suburb of the lake, Threlkeld himself is remembered, though it is likely none of the residents of the street concerned have any idea as to why their address is so named.



Threlkeld Drive, Bolton Point



Threlkeld in Toronto

In the pretty hamlet of Toronto there is another easy-to-miss Bicentennial marker to record where Threlkeld had his house. This was presumably the headquarters of his Ebenezer landholding, the locality where the coal mine was, and where Biraban Reserve is today.

Sign: middle of nowhere

There is not much of a central business district in Nurina featured below; indeed not much of anything. This is another Aboriginal name, but far far away.



Nurina, Nullabor Plain, in Western Australia

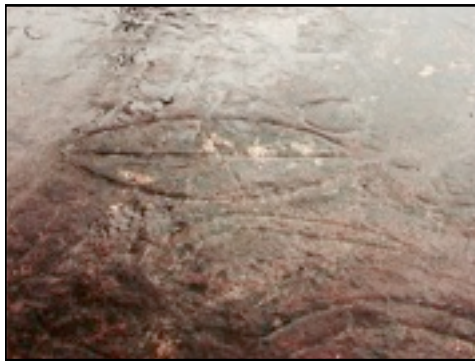
Engravings

Signs, suburb names and monuments are the most obvious evidence of the people who were the custodians of the Australian lands for millennia. But if you know where to look, or take the trouble to enquire, there is much more round about that is eerily evocative of those past days. Many of the sites featured below may have been connected with initiation ceremonies. Garigal National Park is an extensive area in Sydney’s north between Ku-ring-gai Chase and the Harbour. It includes a remarkable rock engraving site lying somewhere between the Wakehurst Parkway and the northern end of **Bantry Bay**—which is the name given to the site here. Here are a few of the artworks there:

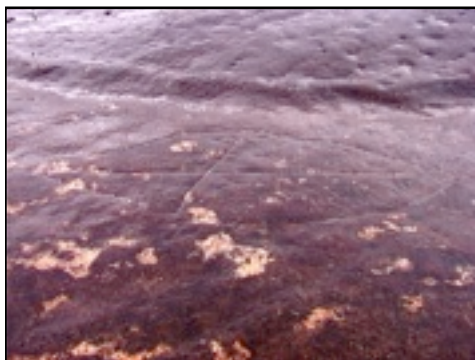
Garigal Park: Bantry Bay



Bantry Bay: two shields and boomerangs



Bantry Bay: The same as above



Bantry Bay: Shield with simple cross



Bantry Bay: Another simple cross shield



Bantry Bay: Shield with 1 vertical and 2 horizontals



Bantry Bay: Shield with 1 vertical and 2 horizontals



Bantry Bay: Three fish



Bantry Bay: More fish



Bantry Bay: Shark



Bantry Bay: The same shark

Garigal National Park: Allambie Heights



Allambie Heights: Human figure

Ku-ring-gai Chase: Elvina Track

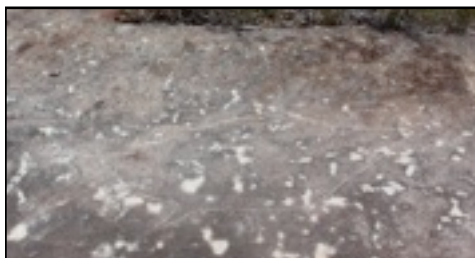


Elvina Track: Two shields 1 x 2

Ku-ring-gai Chase: The Basin



The Basin: Fishes and something else



Elvina Track: Fish, probably a shark



The Basin: Two human figures



Elvina Track: Fish, probably an emu



The Basin: More human figures



Elvina Track: Kangaroos



Ku-ring-gai Chase: West head

Terrey Hills



Terrey Hills: Male



Terrey Hills: Male (upside down)



Terrey Hills: Female

Brisbane Water



Brisbane Water: Male



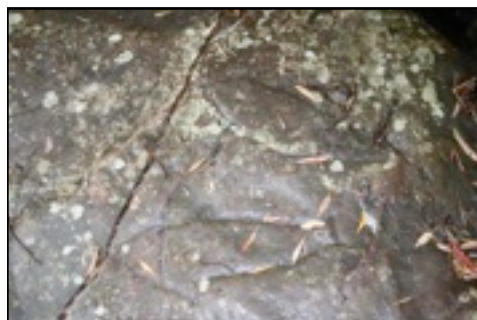
Brisbane Water: Shield: 1 x 2

Muogamarra Nature Reserve



Muogamarra: Koala man

Berowra Creek



Berowra Creek: Fish

Bundeena



Bundeena: Possibly kangaroo

Mundowie



Mount Kuring-gai: Mundowie



Bobbin Head Track: Mundowie

Mundowie are 'footprints' engraved in the rock, possibly to lead to the focus of the initiation ground. At Mt Kuringgai there are at least half a dozen, at 2–3 m intervals. The Sydney Language word for 'foot' was *manawi*.

Grinding grooves

Hours must have been spent sharpening axeheads at the Terramungamine Reserve. This is on the Macquarie River, near Dubbo. And there is a good deal more there than this one view:



Terramungamine: Axe grinding grooves



Terramungamine: Information board

Artefacts



Kurnell Visitor Centre: Fishhook display

The arrows on this display show the stages in making an Aboriginal fishhook. This process begins with a shell. This is rubbed down to form first a ring, then a crescent. To this is attached a line. The iridescent

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colours make this a lure to attract the fish.

No bait is added.