

University of Newcastle Coal River Working Party 2008 Annual Report

Website: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/coalriver>

Blog: <http://coalriver.wordpress.com/>

Our overall objective for the year has been to actively research and promote Newcastle's history, assist in the preparatory celebrations of the 2009 Sesquicentenary of the formation of the Borough of Newcastle on 7 June 2009 and support the Newcastle City Council's unanimously adopted Coal River Heritage Precinct Interpretation plan (Pizzey Report).

With the farewell of the founder of the Coal River Working Party, Dr Erik Eklund, who left the University to accept a Professorship at Monash University late last year, the CRWP appointed Mr Gianni Di Gravio, Archivist as its new Chair.

The Chair hereby lists the CRWP's achievements for the year 2008 in line with the University of Newcastle's Building Distinction Strategic Plan 2007-2011: University Strategic Priority: (3) Indigenous Collaboration and (4) Community Partnerships and Engagement and Vice Chancellor's Your Voice Staff Climate Survey Action Plan 2008: Key Action: Cross University Co-operation.

1. Membership and Administrative Support

We were very fortunate to secure representatives from the Awabakal Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Newcastle City Council and the Newcastle East Residents Group to join the CRWP. We were also able to secure an Administrative support person (2 days a month), Mrs Brenda Sullivan, and a meeting room in the library. Thanks to DVC (Academic) Professor McConkey and Mr Greg Anderson University Librarian who made this possible. Parking permits for our community members were kindly supplied by the Admin Team at Facilities Management.

2. Barrallier Handover and Launch of Vera Deacon Regional History Fund

On the 1st February 2008 framed copies of the rediscovered complete 1801 survey of the Hunter Region by Ensign Barrallier were presented by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO Governor of New South Wales to the community delegates of the Aboriginal, Stockton, University and Newcastle Council. Her Excellency also launched the Vera Deacon Regional History Fund. Thanks to the Kelter Hartley Bequest Committee and the Office of the DV C (Academic).

3. Coal River Research Press Publications

In February we posted two surveying reports by the University's Emeritus Professor John Fryer on our Coal River Working Party and Aboriginal Sourcebook sites. Both reports pinpoint important locations in

the region's history including the site of the Reverend Threlkeld's mission house at Belmont and the location of Barrallier's camp site during the early survey mission in 1801. This led to the establishment of a Coal River Research Press Publications design team involving Allan Morse's Design Students (Honours) which developed design templates and mockups for future publications. An editorial committee has been formed led by Professor Fryer and he and Peter Sherlock (Director of Monteath & Powys) will seek corporate sponsorship in 2009. Thanks to Allan Morse and Tom Hislop (Honours Students Convenor)

4. Back to the City – Breath of Life Art Installation

In January members of the CRWP took part in the collaborative Breath of Life Art Installation as part of Professor Steffen Lehmann's Back to the City Event, to erect windmills on the historic Obelisk Hill site. The Breath of Life Installation went on to be one of two joint winners of the Back to the City Project awards. The Installation will feature in the soon to be launched 'Back to the City: Strategies for Informal Urban Interventions' Edited by Steffen Lehmann and published by Hatje Cantz Stuttgart/Berlin in 2009.

5. Heritage Week 2008 – Interpretations Exhibition and Heritage Walks Launch

Heritage Week 2008 was officially launched on April 3 2008 at the John Paynter Gallery, the lockup Museum with the magnificent Interpretations exhibition that featured the works of 25 local artists that were inspired by Newcastle's historic Coal River Precinct. They created an exciting display of paintings, prints, photography, sculpture, ceramics and mixed media. The Exhibition was launched by Chair of the CRWP who took the opportunity to launch the Coal River Heritage Precinct walking tours at the function. Thanks to Ann Hardy, Dr Erik Eklund, Antoinette Eklund and Brenda Sullivan.

6. History Week 2008 – Newcastle on the Edge Open Air Exhibition

In September we created the stunning 'Newcastle on the Edge - Panoramic Visions of Newcastle on the Coquun Hunter River' outdoor exhibition of seven (7) panoramas of Newcastle dating from the 1812 to the present. It was a collaborative event involving the University's School of Humanities and Social Science, the Maritime Centre and the History Council of New South Wales. Thanks to Associate Professor Allan Chawner, Professor John Germov and the History Week Committee.

The Panoramas have been now incorporated into the Maritime Centre's permanent displays as have been Coal River 2D Time displays from the CRWP's Russell Rigby and Caribe Tawara (Final Year Surveying Student).

7. Time Team Submission

A submission to the popular BBC Time Team show to investigate important archaeological sites in the Coal River Precinct was prepared by the CRWP and sent off on 21 August 2008, the 207th anniversary of Governor King's announcement to Sir Joseph Banks of the fledgling Colony's first return of 2 pounds 5 shillings from a cauldron of coal from Coal River. Thanks to Professor Fryer, Cynthia Hunter, Roz Kerr, Russell Rigby and Liz Farquhar news editor at ABC 1233.

8. 1828 Mitchell Field Book and Dual Naming Application to GNB

In October /November Professor John Fryer submitted an application for dual naming for Nobbys/Whibayganba to the Geographical Names Board (GNB). The application was accompanied with a letter of support from the Aboriginal representatives on the CRWP, the Awabakal Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. Professor Fryer is Emeritus Professor of Surveying and Photogrammetry at the University of Newcastle. This application was inspired by a recent rediscovery of an original 1828 survey book by surveyor Sir Thomas Mitchell that contains the first recorded mention of Nobbys' Aboriginal name. The original manuscript has been digitised and is freely available to the Newcastle community on the Coal River Working Party's blog: <http://coalriver.wordpress.com/2008/10/23/mitchells-1828-field-book/> . At the November meeting of the CRWP Professor Fryer informed us that he had received acknowledgment thanking him for his application. The GNB will be in consultation with Newcastle City Council and the local Aboriginal Community, a process which we understand will take a number of years.

9. National Nomination Coal River Heritage Precinct

Work has also proceeded on a revamped National Nomination for the Coal River Heritage Precinct that is synthesized with five key stories within the Newcastle City Council's Coal River Heritage Precinct Interpretation plan (Pizzey Report). Thank you to Ann Hardy, Barbara Heaton, Dene Hawken and Doug Lithgow.

10. Coal River Time Machine

A series of meetings and discussions have taken place in order to forward the proposal for a 3D Digital terrain model of early Newcastle. 2D presentation has been prepared by Russell Rigby and Caribe Tawara. Mr. Richard Allen and his advanced 3D modeling TAFE students are currently working on this goal utilizing early maps, plans and paintings supplied by the CRWP.

11. Pizzey Report (Coal River Precinct Conservation and Cultural Tourism Management Plan)

The CRWP actively assisted and supported the Newcastle City Council's unanimously adopted Coal River Heritage Precinct Interpretation plan (also known as the Pizzey Plan). It involves the celebration of Newcastle's historic Precinct with light cannon sculptures and oral sound garden. A feasibility study is currently under way by NCC's Barbara Heaton.

12. Community Inspirations

We have seen quite a renaissance in enthusiasm this year in the Coal River Working Party's work.

We have been invited to speak at the Australian Institute of Mine Surveyors (AIMS) Sydney Conference, Australian Society of Archivists Perth Conference, Reference, Access and Public Programs (RAPPISIG), Mine Subsidence Board, the John Turner Memorial Lecture, Newcastle Club, Enterprise Rotary Club (Mayfield), Association of Independent Retirees Merewether, and the Merewether Ladies Probus Club.

We have also created a Facebook Group and Twitter (thanks to Robert McLardy), posted news broadcasts and videos on You Tube, and continue to expand our online blog resources, and had many news high profile stories in the Newcastle Herald and local radio stations that have followed our progress during the year.

On the 10 November 2008 a select audience was treated to a splendid performance piece 'Where the Coal Meets the Sea'. Created by David Witchard and his fellow Dram1020 colleagues 'Where the Coal Meets the Sea' was a University of Newcastle Drama 1020 production of a Historic Walking Tour (with a twist) around Newcastle's historic Coal River Heritage Precinct located in Newcastle East. The team hopes to be able to again present the performance during the Heritage Festival in April next year. Thanks to their lecturers and mentors Dr David Watt and Dr Gillian Arrighi.

We have been also invited to participate in the Macquarie 2010 committee convened by Member for Newcastle the Hon. Jodie McKay, and have been actively working toward s an event for next year's Heritage Festival (Our Place in Space Under the Southern Cross) in 2009 as well as assisting where we can with NCC's Pride of Place Committee's sesquicentenary celebrations.

A new symphonic piece is being prepared for Newcastle by the Conservatorium's Colin Spiers. We also have an Awabakal musical piece entitled 'Dreaming Endeavour' by a post graduate student and Awabakal representative Dene Hawken which we hope can be performed as well during the sesquicentenary celebrations.

I wish to thank everyone for their outstanding work this year and wish you all a very happy Christmas and share with you all my excitement as we enter a new year of rich and exciting discoveries and opportunities.

I Remain,
Your most obedient and humble Servant,

Gionni Di Gravio

University Archivist and Chair – Coal River Working Party
29 November 2008