

# Coal River Working Party Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2013 1:00pm – 3:00pm

University Council Board Room, IDC Building, University Drive

## Minutes

**Start: 1:00**

1. **Welcome to Country:** Acknowledgement to Country by Gionni di Gravio.

**Present:** Gionni di Gravio (chair), Ann Hardy (minute-taker), Vera Deacon, Sarah Cameron, Kerry Grant, Ron Barber, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Keith Parsons, Charles Martin, Brian Roach, Russell Rigby, Doug Lithgow, Jane Ison, Julianne Tilse, Marilla North, Ruth Cotton, Robert Watson, Howard Dick, Brian Walsh, Damien Egan, Lesley Gent, Damien Egan. (Sarah Cameron left meeting approximately 2.20pm after item 6 (d))

**Apologies:** Professor Maree Gleeson, Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Kerrie Brauer, Coralie Watson, Bob Jones, Tim Adams, John Waring, Margaret Henry.

3. **Confirmation of Previous Minutes:** The minutes for 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013 was adopted by Lesley Gent and seconded – Brian Roach. (After change from 'Seahampton' to 'Lady Smith')

4. **Business arising from previous minutes:**

- a) Kerry Grant advised that archaeological investigations at Macquarie Pier requires the correct paperwork before it can proceed. Public safety issues will need to be addressed to prevent dangerous situations occurring. Kerry advised a formal contract needs to be drawn up between City of Newcastle and RPS so that there is adequate insurance coverage. Tim Adams is also involved. **ACTION** Kerry Grant and Sarah Cameron to liaise regarding the contract so that further archaeological investigations can take place.

5. **Presentations-**

- a) **Computer Models of Coal River (Charles Martin)** – Charles updated the CRWP with a presentation of computer modelling of early Newcastle. Charles presented his latest interpretations of artworks of 'Nobbys on a stormy night', 'view from Stockton', 'view of inner harbour', 'Regents Beach', 'Newcastle Beach'. Thanks to EJE for printing out the book of the images. Brian Roach suggested that Charles Martin should nominate for NBN / Herald local heroes' award.
- a. **Presentation to Vera Deacon-** Marilla North with Vera Deacon have written a journal article 'Vera Deacon: A Pen Portrait Part I : 1926-1946' published in HECATE: Woman, Feminism & Environment 38. 1&2. 2012. Marilla spoke warmly about Vera's life and contribution to the community in the Hunter, and is documenting Vera's life in her PhD research. Gionni di Gravio and Charles Martin presented to Vera Deacon the book of digital images of early Newcastle. Vera was very gracious in her response, recollecting some memorable events and was pleased to see that the 'Vera Deacon History Fund' had helped employ many doing terrific work at the University. Funds have employed Charles Martin to undertake the 3D model. She spoke of her connection with Newcastle's history and thanked the work of the University of Newcastle and the CRWP.

## 6. Reports and Updates:

- a) **Updates-** (Gionni di Gravio) – Gionni advised of the recent post about the Ancient Aboriginal Corroboree ground at Wickham, it contains an interpretation of visual sources and overlays as well as written accounts about the area. An interesting account from former Wickham resident Mrs Farnham who recalled witnessing Corroborees during the 1850s was an exciting find, the story can be found at <http://coalriver.wordpress.com/2014/01/20/corroboree-wickham/>
- b) Another project underway is 'Voices of the Valley' project, a bus load of participants visited several sites around the Hunter Valley, the project will use new technology to interpret stories and places.
- c) **National Trust (Ann Hardy)** – Ann advised that The Hunter Regional Committee has organised a series of events for this year's National Trust Heritage Festival. Events include this train trip to historic Dungog, Shipwreck Walk : Stockton, Coal River to King Coal: Journey around Newcastle Harbour, Migrants and refugees tell the stories of their journeys to Australia, Heritage in the Suburbs: Bus and walking tour, A Journey in Time:

Past and present owners of heritage – listed Tanilba House, For further details see <http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/nsw/Heritage-Festival> Also during January ABC1233 'Local Treasures' story included some historic photographs of Newcastle in the early 1870s, members of the CRWP may be interested, see <http://nationaltrust-hunternewcastleregion.blogspot.com.au/> Ann has also submitted an abstract to present CRWP model at 'Cultural Heritage & Healthy Communities' conference in May 2014.

- d) **National Nomination (Ann Hardy)** – Ann advised that a meeting with Federal member Sharon Claydon about National Nomination took place late 2013. The nomination process was discussed and federal member is basically very supportive of nomination. Ann has written to Peter Wright, Director of Dept. Environment and Heritage to clarify the confusion around the nomination process and asking “when the Minister calls for future nominations, can another nomination for Coal River and Government Domain be submitted, can it be the same the nomination? The early letter (from the Dept. about the nomination not being successful), states “nomination for a place lapses if it has been excluded from two consecutive assessment lists” does this refer to the two year cycle whereby a single nomination is considered for the Priority Assessment List?”. There is a need for bureaucratic advice. Local Federal member is also clarifying the process. No response has yet been received from Dept. Environment and Heritage, however this may be due to the Xmas and holiday period. The nomination is a compelling well based archival and documentary evidence to show Coal River as a convict site, rich Aboriginal history. **RESOLVED** at meeting.

"Write to Sharon Claydon, Federal member for Newcastle to organise a delegation to meet with the Director of the Department of the Environment to discuss and give a presentation regarding the national nomination for Newcastle".

Moved- Sarah Cameron

Seconded- Howard Dick

(Sarah Cameron left the meeting after this item)

- e) **Heritage buildings at former BHP site (Keith Parsons)** – Keith Parsons discussed the three buildings at the former BHP site that have been proposed for demolition. These buildings are the Former medical centre, Master Mechanics Building, Pattern Store. The NSW Infrastructure SEPP is used to approve demolition of these buildings. Remediation

of the site has been carried out, however the three buildings had been retained and many were of the opinion that these heritage buildings would remain. Keith Parsons suggested the CRWP write urgently to local state member and minister for Heritage to call for a stop of demolition of three heritage buildings and explore how they may be able to be retained and recycled within a proposed redevelopment. Gionni di Gravio stated that he was of the understanding that remediation of the site costing \$110 million had already taken place. A lengthy discussion took place about whether the CRWP should write to relevant politicians in order to cease demolition. AH advised that the CRWP has not written submissions in the past or taken an advocacy role when cultural heritage issues have come up. Instead the CRWP has focused on historical research and heritage conservation principles when developing nominations for the State Heritage Register and National Heritage List. Groups such as the National Trust of Australia (NSW) and other community groups are in a better position to take an advocacy role and campaign on such issues. Outcome of discussion was that the CRWP would make available research documents associated with the BHP buildings that are public documents, not easily available on the web.

## **7. General Business**

- a) **Fort Scratchley- Ron Barber** from Fort Scratchley Historical Society informed that the QR code (Quick response code) is working well, the code has had 2000 hits and is going very well. Ron also indicated that there would be a major announcement made shortly, is very exciting and will be good for cultural tourism.

## **8. Close: 3:00**

**Date of next meeting: Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2014 in the IDC Building, 1-3pm.**