

Coal River Working Party Meeting

2nd February, 2015 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 .
- 2. Present:** Gionni di Gravio (chair), Ann Hardy, Keith Parsons, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Robert Watson, Ron Barber, Ken Thornton, Julianne Tilse, Peter Bergin, Doug Lithgow, Marilla North, Rob Jones, Suzanne Martin, Bronwyn Law, Anne Creevey, Keith Parsons, Sarah Cameron, Tim Adams, Jude Conway, Charles Martin.

Apologies: Helen Denzin, Zbygniew Szyda, Ruth Cotton, Russell Rigby, Lesley Gent, Kim Ostinga, Kerry Grant, Emeritus Professor Maree Gleeson, Member for Wallsend Sonia Hornery, John Waring, Sonia Limeburner, Peter Leven, Jane Ison, Brian Roach,

Visitors: Nil

- 3. Confirmation of Previous Minutes:** The minutes for 1st December 2014 was confirmed after minor alterations, these included John Fryer advice to include in the Annual Report a note about Dual Naming submission for Newcastle, and Ann Hardy suggested adding that the CRWP had sent a submission in response to the Commonwealth Governments Review of National Heritage. These additions were confirmed by Robert Watson and seconded – Ron Barber.
- 4. Business arising from previous minutes:**
- 5. Presentations-** nil

6. Reports and Updates:

a) Updates- (Gionni di Gravio) –

Gionni advised that Russell Rigby has been unwell, and spending many weeks in a Sydney hospital after surgery. However is now making good progress the last few weeks and will be transferred to Newcastle shortly. We wish Russell a speedy recovery. A Get Well card was circulated for members to sign.

In September 2014 thirteen (13) 16mm film reels were rescued from disposal by Peter Smith and donated to the University of Newcastle's Cultural Collections. The films depict a variety of subjects including rare colour footage of the Maitland Floods of 1949 and 1955. In November 2014 twelve of the thirteen were successfully digitised to digital film preservation formats, these Maitland Flood films (1955) are now on-line ready for 50 year Anniversary in late February. Newcastle Herald are doing a story on the Maitland floods. See link, "Maitland Flood Films 1949 and 1955 in Colour"

<https://uoncc.wordpress.com/2015/02/02/maitland-flood-films-1949-and-1955-in-colour/>

Helen English Senior Lecturer at the University of Newcastle's School of Creative Arts has been researching the history of music making in the Newcastle of the 1870s. She came across a piece of music written by Franz Becker around 1876 for a "Myrtle Villa" that sat somewhere on Newcastle's Hill. We think we've located the site of Myrtle Villa on the Hill. Built by W. K. Lochhead Esq. in the mid-1800s, it sat of the corner of Bingle St. and Terrace Rd on the Hill, and an overlay on Google Earth with an 1886 survey. The house was later occupied by Captain Corlette, thus name 'Corlette Cottage'. The blog post can be found here "Myrtle Villa Rediscovered"

<https://coalriver.wordpress.com/2015/01/29/myrtle-villa/>

Gionni interviewed Mr Ian Eather in 2008, after his son, Garth contacted Cultural Collections about a manuscript, offering some corrections to its description and contents. The description states that the last combined Bora ceremony was held on the family property in 1852, but according to Ian Eather, nephew and adopted son of the manuscript's author, Alexander Nicholas Eather, the Bora site was not located on the Meerea property but at another location nearby. Meerea was a land grant to Thomas Eather in 1826. The Eather interview is on-line describing the history of Bulga. See link

“The Eather Manuscript – The History of Bulga 1820 – 1921 by A.N. Eather (1921)”

<https://coalriver.wordpress.com/2015/01/30/eather/>

Gionni passed around a large sheet of paper for members to write down their thoughts about the CRWP tasks and functioning could be improved. A list of the CRWP goals were also circulated. Peter Bergin suggested that the CRWP could promote and communicate the work that they do via Newcastle Council, tourism and visitor centres. There is a rich history in terms of Aboriginal heritage, Convicts, coal industry and rail transport that this is not always understood by the wider community. He also suggested there are many people in the community with a variety of skills who could contribute to the CRWP. Peter also emphasised the importance of getting information out in the public arena about achievements of the group, possibly taking advantage of Heritage Week to plan exhibitions, talks etc. Ideas will be considered and discussed at future meetings.

Robert Watson also agreed that the CRWP needed better communicate work that it does, and suggested a Communication Plan be formulated. **ACTION:** Robert will talk with Communications staff at the UON for possibility of students to undertake a plan for the group.

b) Update- National Trust (Ann Hardy) – Robert Evans and Ann Hardy met with garden historian John Adams from Wellington, New Zealand. He has written about Public Domains in NZ, and very interested in the work of landscape architect Alfred Sharpe who later came to Newcastle and won a design competition for King Edward Park. John has forwarded several articles and would be pleased to collaborate with other garden historians in the region. Contact Ann if you would his contact.

Ann also gave feedback regarding the situation at the James Fletcher Hospital site whereby excavation works had started prior to permits being issued by Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH). All works ceased in November 2014 for a Heritage Impact Statement and archaeological investigations to be undertaken. The public were given a period of 28 days to write submissions to Katrina Stankowski at OEH. Submission period closed late December the Heritage Branch will do a comprehensive report based on the public submissions, which will go to a delegated authority, either at the NSW Heritage Council or the Delegate of the Heritage Council for determination. Once the application has been determined the Applicant and Local Council will be notified in writing

of the decision. The National Trust did a comprehensive submission (circulated at meeting) and copies sent to the Australian War Memorial, Australian Army History Unit and Fort Scratchley Historical Society.

Ann advised that many OEH matters may be able to be addressed more directly as there is now a Newcastle representative based in Newcastle, Sonia Limeburner will be attending the March meeting.

c) Update – Newcastle Council (Sarah Cameron) – Sarah advised that Rachel McConkey from Infrastructure Services at Council had engaged an artist for interpretation work at Bathers Way at Nobbys. There is a lot of information and resources available on the CRWP website that could be interpreted, and Sarah has suggested this to her colleagues. Sarah also advised that she had received positive feedback from a colleague regarding the recent article in the Star written by Keith Parsons from Hunter National Trust about cultural heritage of the city. The article took a constructive and positive approach to urban planning and Sarah encouraged more of this approach. Gionni agreed that there should be better communication regarding planning, stating that over the years there has been inconsistencies in planning regulations, often resulting in confusing decisions being made and no overarching strategic planning (using the Murray Dwyer site as an example). Others suggested that the general public have lost interest in history and heritage, however Sarah Cameron reminded the group that a recent survey carried out by Newcastle Council about Heritage Conservation Areas showed an overwhelming majority of residence were in support of retaining heritage character of suburbs and opposed to demolition of heritage items.

Gionni raised the issue with Sarah about the repairs needed at the Bogey Hole, and whether Newcastle Council is involved in fixing it, however Anne Creevey advised she had visited the site last week and repairs had been made to the Bogey Hole and is now open to the public.

7. Advocacy

8. General Business-

- a)** Ken Shilling from Newcastle Family History Society advised that they were very appreciative of the research material of the late Elizabeth Guildfords that was offered to

them. The records are very well organised and contain a catalogued collection of 11,000 entries relating to convicts of the Hunter.

- b)** Bronwyn Law gave an overview of her 'Face to a Name' WWI Project, about the home front and the social history of those who remained at home during WWI. She is looking to have the resources she has compiled made into an e-book. Bronwyn has the funds to pay a design student/scholar to undertake the work to design and convert resources to electronic media. Ron Barber advised that he will explore funding opportunities through Fort Scratchley Historical Society. Ann Hardy also suggested that there may be an Industry Scholar available at the UON who is available to take up some paid work.

- c)** Julianne Tilse advised that she has an upcoming exhibition at the National Trust property Brough House in Maitland, she also has her PhD exhibition at the University Gallery in March. Ann Hardy will forward further details about the PhD exhibition.

9. Close: 3.00 PM

Date of next meeting will be Monday, 2nd March, 2015 in the IDC Building, 1-3pm.