

# **DRAFT Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place Assessment Report**



**North East Region  
Heritage Division**

**January 2016**



## Disclaimer:

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has compiled the Browns Hill *Aboriginal Place Assessment Report* in good faith, exercising all due care and attention. OEH does not accept responsibility for any inaccurate or incomplete information supplied by third parties. No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability of the information in this publication for any particular purpose. OEH shall not be liable for any damage which may occur to any person or organisation taking action or not on the basis of this publication. Readers should seek appropriate advice when applying the information to their specific needs.

© 2016 State of NSW and Office of Environment and Heritage

With the exception of photographs, the State of NSW and the Office of Environment and Heritage are pleased to allow this material to be reproduced for educational or non-commercial purposes in whole or in part, provided the meaning is unchanged and its source, publisher and authorship are acknowledged. Specific permission is required for the reproduction of photographs and images.

## Report prepared by:

Staff of the North East Listings Sub Region

Heritage Division

Office of Environment and Heritage

59-61 Goulburn Street, Sydney, NSW 2000

PO Box A290, Sydney South, NSW 1232

Ph: (02) 9995 5000 (switchboard)

Ph: 131 555 (environment information and publications requests)

Ph: 1300 361 967 (national parks, climate change and energy efficiency information and publications requests)

Fax: (02) 9995 5999

TTY: (02) phone 133 677 then ask for 131 555

Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 131 555

Email: [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)

Website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

Report pollution and environmental incidents

Environment line: 131 555 (NSW only) or [info@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@environment.nsw.gov.au)

## Contents

1.1 Introduction .....	4
1.2 Statement of Significance .....	4
1.3 Recommendation .....	5
2.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	5
3.0 BACKGROUND .....	5
3.1 Aboriginal Places .....	5
3.2 Legislation and Policy .....	6
3.3 Assessment Process .....	7
3.4 Effect of Gazettal .....	7
4.0 NOMINATION .....	8
4.1 Nomination of Browns Hill Fringe Camp .....	8
4.2 Introduction to Stakeholders .....	8
4.3 State or Local Heritage Listing .....	9
5.0 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT .....	9
5.1 Location of Proposed Aboriginal Place .....	9
5.2 Current Land Tenure and Land Use .....	10
5.3 Physical Description of Browns Hill Fringe Camp .....	11
6.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BROWNS HILL FRINGE CAMP .....	12
6.1 Background History .....	12
6.2 Archaeology .....	15
7.0 LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL AND ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTATION .....	15
7.1 Methodology .....	15
7.2 Historical Records .....	16
7.3 Oral History .....	18
8.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION .....	19
8.1 Community Aspirations .....	20
9.0 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES .....	20
10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS .....	21
11.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	211
12.0 APPENDICES .....	23
12.1 Appendix 1 – Nomination Form .....	23
12.2 Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Support Letters .....	329
12.3 Appendix 3 – Landowner Support Letter .....	36

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1.1 Introduction

Under the provisions of section 84 of the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* the Minister for the Environment can, through an order published in the NSW Government Gazette, declare an area of land within NSW that is or was of special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture an Aboriginal Place.

The former Browns Hill Fringe Camp is located approximately 500metres north of Browns Creek within the Greater Taree City Council local government area and consists of Lot 51 DP 1164075, zoned as a Public Reserve and commonly known as Ruprecht Park.

Browns Hill Fringe Camp (now the site of Ruprecht Park) was nominated for declaration as an Aboriginal Place by the Sunrise Historical Society Aboriginal Corporation for its special significance to Aboriginal culture.

Fringe camps were used in the historical period by displaced Aboriginal people from numerous Aboriginal nations throughout New South Wales. Browns Hill Fringe Camp was located on the northern side of the Manning River, within Biripi Country and was established by displaced Aboriginal people from the Biripi and Worimi (southern side of the Manning River) nations in the 1850s.

Ruprecht Park is the only portion of undeveloped land within the original boundary of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp and is recognised by the local Aboriginal community, non-Aboriginal community and descendants of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp as being a significant Aboriginal Place.

This assessment report highlights the cultural, social, and historic significance of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp and provides a recommendation for its declaration as an Aboriginal Place.

### 1.2 Statement of Significance

The proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place is a place of special significance to the local Aboriginal people within the greater Taree area as well as Aboriginal people living in other parts of Australia for its historic, social, and cultural values.

The Aboriginal cultural values of the place include the occupation of the place in the post contact period and the resistance shown by its occupants to the government policies and social norms of the time as well as the imbued cultural values of the place that 'link' people today with their ancestors and with their culture.

The site of Browns Hill Fringe Camp holds social significance for many local Aboriginal people and is considered to be a 'homeland' for the descendants of the former residents of the camp, a place where the local Biripi and other Aboriginal people resisted government policies and fought to maintain their freedom.



**Photo 1: Proposed Aboriginal Place Browns Hill Fringe Camp**  
(Photo taken from Marjorie Street facing south)

### 1.3 Recommendation

Following consideration of the evidence contained in this Assessment Report, and following consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Heritage Division of the Office of Environment and Heritage is satisfied that Browns Hill Fringe Camp meets the requirements for declaration as an Aboriginal Place under Section 84 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

## 2.0 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

---

The Heritage Division, North East region would like to thank the following people for their support of the nomination and for the research and knowledge provided for the Aboriginal Place assessment: the Greater Taree City Council, Ray Hurst (Nominee), Krystal Hurst (Nominee and descendant of Browns Hill Fringe Camp resident), Natasha Davis (Saltwater Tribal Council and descendant of Browns Hill Fringe Camp resident), and John Clarke (CEO Taree Indigenous Development and Employment, TIDE).

## 3.0 BACKGROUND

---

### 3.1 Aboriginal Places

Under the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, any land in NSW may be declared an Aboriginal Place if the area is or was of special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture. The declaration of an Aboriginal Place provides a formal means for the NSW Government to recognise and provide legal protection to areas of land with special significance (value) to Aboriginal culture.

Aboriginal Places protect a range of areas with strong cultural values, including former Aboriginal reserves and missions; land containing Aboriginal burials; important meeting places and Corroboree sites; places of important post-contact historical events, such as massacres and birthplaces of notable Aboriginal people; places with dreaming stories and other spiritual significance; and places with Aboriginal artefacts requiring special recognition and protection.

Anyone may nominate that an area be declared as an Aboriginal Place. Nominations are particularly sought from Aboriginal communities and individuals, who can identify places or areas of cultural significance worthy of declaration as an Aboriginal Place. After receiving a nomination consultation occurs with all relevant Aboriginal community groups, and with landowners and other government agencies and other stakeholders who may have an interest in the lands.

Before a nominated area can be declared an Aboriginal Place, the Minister for the Environment must be of the opinion that the place is or was of special significance to Aboriginal culture. The definition of what is or was of special significance to Aboriginal culture is most appropriately determined by Aboriginal people. The primary purpose of the Assessment Report is to record the views of Aboriginal people about the special significance of the nominated area.

The declaration of an Aboriginal Place does not prevent future development of the area covered by the declaration. However, it does set in place a process of assessment and review to ensure that any development that occurs is compatible with and does not harm or desecrate the cultural significance of the Place.

The declaration of an Aboriginal Place can provide tangible benefits to landholders, such as:

- A worthwhile contribution to conserving the unique cultural heritage of New South Wales for future generations.
- Sharing knowledge of their land and a way to learn more about the values of the land.
- Protection in perpetuity of the Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.
- Access to specialist advice on the management of the Aboriginal Place.
- Access to external funding grants for conservation and protection works.
- Signage which may deter trespassers from the property and provide interpretation of the cultural heritage values.

### **3.2 Legislation and Policy**

The Minister for the Environment may, by an order published in the NSW Government Gazette, declare an area of land to be an Aboriginal Place. Such an order confirms the Minister's decision, made under section 84 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 that an area of land "is or was of special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture". It should be noted that declaration is the legal process and publication in the NSW Government Gazette is an administrative process.

Legal processes require the values (or significance) of a proposed Aboriginal Place to be expressed and recorded resulting in a physical record such as electronic record and a paper

record on file. This record, or Assessment Report, is prepared by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and provides the basis of evidence upon which the OEH provides its advice to the Minister.

Administrative process requires the *order* be published in the NSW Government gazette. The order is prepared by the OEH and describes the place and its special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture.

Full details of the OEH Aboriginal Place policy may be accessed through the following link:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/conservation/110608Abplacespolicy.pdf>

### 3.3 Assessment Process

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) on receiving a nomination undertakes an investigation which produces an Assessment Report that contains a record of the values which express the evidence gathered in support of the special significance of the nominated place to Aboriginal culture. Based on the evidence gathered the OEH provides the Minister with a written statement of values and an advice as to whether or not the nominated area meets the requirements for declaration as an Aboriginal place under the NPW Act and OEH policy.

The statement of values seeks to provide sufficient information for the Minister to determine that an area *“is or was of special significance with respect to Aboriginal culture”*. Values can be tangible i.e. objects, evidence of former or current use or occupation by Aboriginal people, or non-tangible i.e. stories, ceremonial, mythological/dreaming, spiritual, historical, social. Significance can be traditional (pre-contact and post-contact), historical (post-contact) or contemporary (current), or a combination of two or all of these.

To determine ‘special significance’ the Minister considers the Assessment report, the record of the values, the specifics or description of the place, and the OEH advice. If the Minister forms the opinion that the proposed Aboriginal place, for the purposes of the NPW Act, has special significance the *order* is signed.

### 3.4 Effect of Gazettal

The declaration of an Aboriginal Place provides a formal means for the NSW Government to recognise the significance of an area to Aboriginal culture and to help provide appropriate protection to ensure that the significance of declared Aboriginal Places is not harmed or desecrated.

The declaration of an Aboriginal Place does not change the status of the land or affect ownership rights. However, a person must not harm or desecrate an Aboriginal Place without the consent of the Chief Executive, Office of Environment and Heritage.

Aboriginal Places provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to celebrate practice and renew their culture through improved access to, and participation in caring for their country.

The process also provides an important opportunity for greater community participation in the Government’s Aboriginal heritage conservation initiatives and encourages closer working relationships between local Aboriginal communities and the landholders.



Through supporting the meaningful engagement of Aboriginal people in the process, the investigation and declaration of an Aboriginal place also creates a permanent documented record of the values and significance of the place for the benefit of current and future generations of Aboriginal people.

## 4.0 NOMINATION

---

### 4.1 Nomination of Browns Hill Fringe Camp

The former Browns Hill Fringe Camp was nominated by the Sunrise Historical Society Aboriginal Corporation in December 2014, for assessment as an Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, due to the sites significance being its strong cultural, social, and historical values.

The Aboriginal Place nomination covers the area commonly known as Ruprecht Park on land owned and managed by the Greater Taree City Council, it is located approximately 500 metres north of Browns Creek, in Taree.

The Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place nomination is located within Biripi Country, and is believed to include the only remaining undeveloped section of land once utilised for the Browns Hill Fringe Camp.

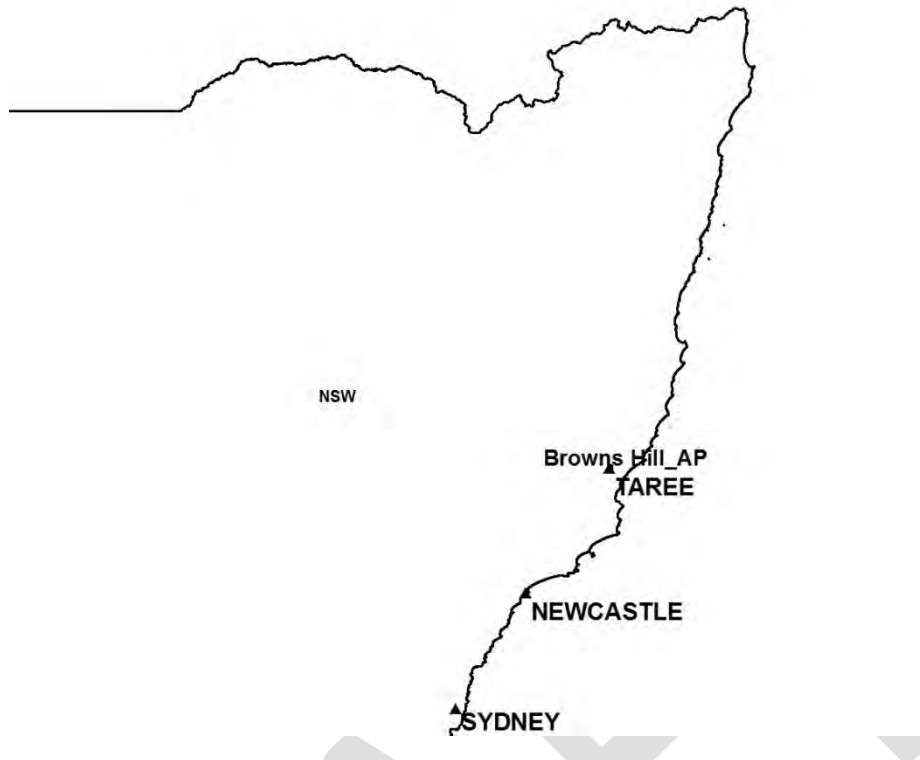
### 4.2 Introduction to Stakeholders

Browns Hill Fringe Camp is an important link within the history of the Biripi people and for many other Aboriginal people within the Taree area. The Browns Hill Fringe Camp is a place that represents the resilience and determination of Aboriginal people during the post-contact period generally and in the Taree area specifically.

Some of the key stakeholders identified during the assessment of Browns Hill Fringe Camp include, but are not limited to:

- The current landowners being the Greater Taree City Council, who have given their 'in principle' support of the Aboriginal Place nomination.
- The Sunrise Historical Society Aboriginal Corporation, represented by Ray Hurst and Krystal Hurst who nominated Browns Hill Fringe Camp for consideration as an Aboriginal Place, due to the sites significant cultural values. Krystal Hurst is a direct descendant of one of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp.





**Figure 1: Regional Map of Browns Hill Fringe Camp**

#### **4.3 State or Local Heritage Listing**

Browns Hill Fringe Camp is currently not listed on any state or local heritage listing. It is currently being assessed for declaration as an Aboriginal Place under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

## **5.0 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT**

---

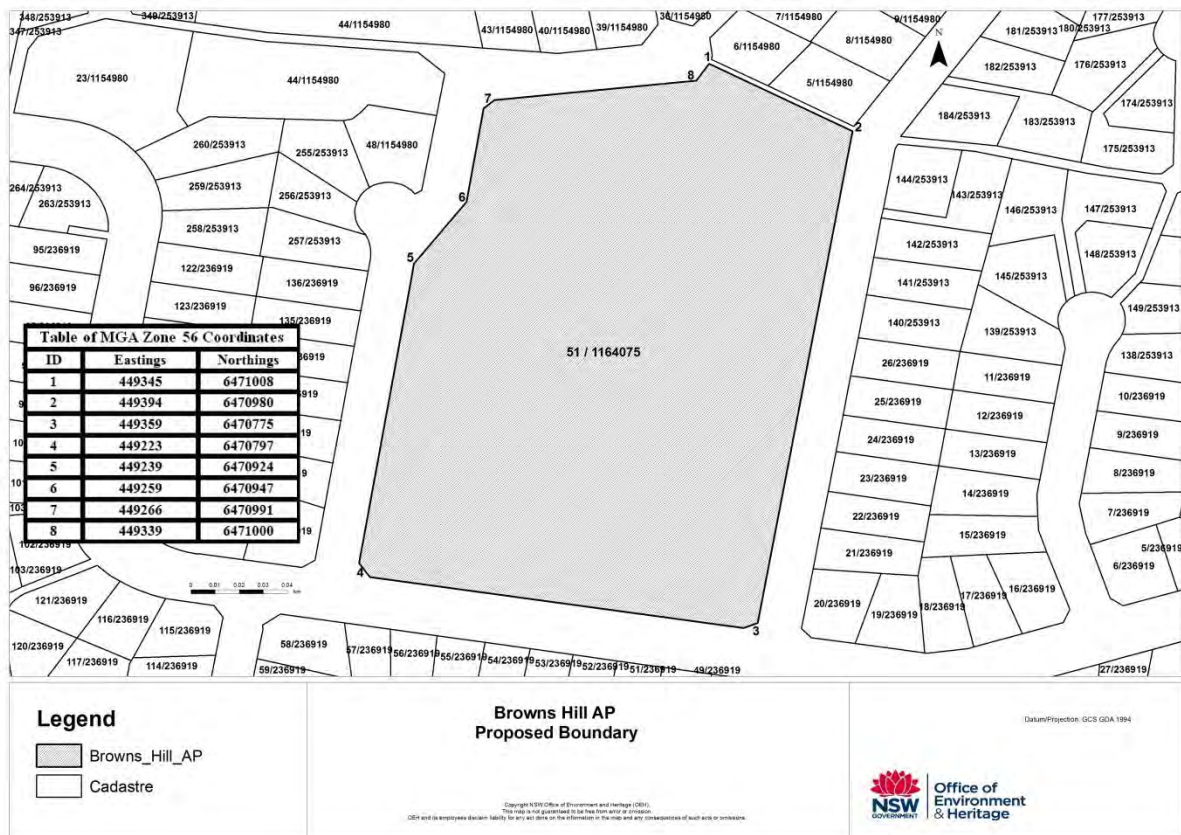
### **5.1 Location of Proposed Aboriginal Place**

The proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place would apply to the current boundary of Ruprecht Park which consists of Lot 51 DP 1164075, approximately 500 metres north of Browns Creek, within the Parish of Taree, County of Macquarie within the Greater Taree City Council local government area. Ruprecht Park is owned and managed by the Greater Taree City Council as a suburban park.

The original extent of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp is unknown and residential development during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century covers much of what is believed to have been the location of the camp. One of only two areas remaining of undeveloped land within the fringe camp area is the Public Reserve, Ruprecht Park, the other believed to be the sporting fields of Omaru Park on Muldoon Street.

The proposed boundary for the Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place is consistent with that of Ruprecht Park and is bordered by three sealed roads; to the east (Valerie Street), south

(Ronald Road) and west (Marjorie Street) with residential buildings bordering part of the northern side.



**Figure 2: Proposed Aboriginal Place Boundary**

## 5.2 Current Land Tenure and Land Use

Ruprecht Park is a Public Reserve owned and managed by the Greater Taree City Council, consisting of Lot 51 DP 1164075, within the Parish of Taree, County of Macquarie, in the local government area of Greater Taree City Council. Ruprecht Park is an area of open space approximately 2.9 hectares in size and is utilised predominantly by the local residents for recreational purposes.

Ruprecht Park was included in the Greater Taree City Council's draft Open Space Improvement Plan that was placed on public exhibition in late 2014. The Aboriginal Place nomination was made in response to uncertainties about the future use of the park. The local community surrounding Ruprecht Park, many of whom are the descendants of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp residents, feared that the open space may be lost and with it the communities ability to maintain their cultural connection with the place.



**Photo 2: Proposed Aboriginal Place Browns Hill Fringe Camp**

(Photo taken from the north end of Marjorie Street facing in a south-easterly direction)

### 5.3 Physical Description of Browns Hill Fringe Camp

The Browns Hill Fringe Camp site is currently an open space, used primarily for recreational purposes by the local residents. It is an area of 2.9 hectares and is covered in mown grassland with scattered perimeter trees, a small playground on the eastern side of the site, with the entire park being surrounded by residential infrastructure.

Ruprecht Park is believed to be one of the last remaining undeveloped portions of land remaining within the original Browns Hill Fringe Camp boundary, as most of the surrounding land was utilised for residential purposes during the 1960's and 1970's, predominantly in the creation of public housing for the Aboriginal community. Through recorded oral histories it is possible to gain an insight into the original condition of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp during the post-contact occupation of the site.

As recorded by Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM.

Patricia Davis-Hurst records her mother's (Margaret Maher) memory of the camp around 1900: *'Mum packed our things and we all went to Browns Hill. It was all tea tree scrub and swamp. There was about 15-20 families living there at the time. Here we were happy. We did not need much; everyone lived off the land, plenty of kangaroos, rabbits, yams and wild honey. All we needed was flour to make bread and plenty of water. There were humpies and tin shacks all through the scrub, a great playground for kids'*.<sup>1</sup>

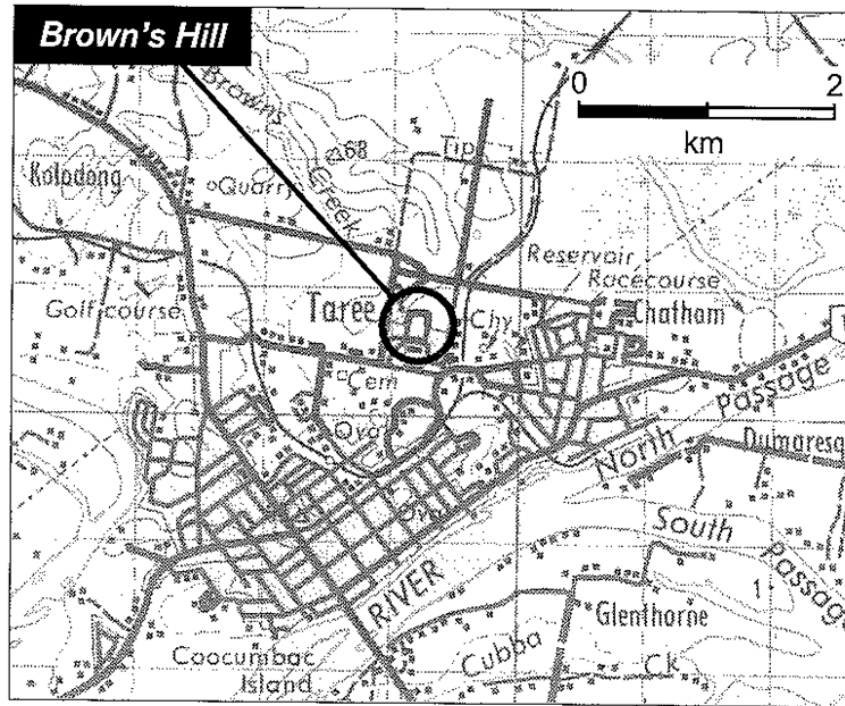
Ella Simon records *'I was born in a tent on the edge of Taree. My mother's people were living there. On the fringe of town, that was as close as the white people wanted to come'. 'Way back, my mother's people were starting to overcrowd that camp of theirs on the fringe of the*

---

<sup>1</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM. *Sunrise Station Revisited*

town (Browns Hill). The problem was that the more they increased in numbers, the more the white people wanted them to keep out of town'.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the suburb of Browns Hill is considered as having one of the highest populations of Aboriginal people throughout the Taree area, with many of the descendants of the original residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp continuing to live in and around the area.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 3: Location map of Browns Hill Fringe Camp**  
(Photo courtesy of Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent OEH)

## 6.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BROWNS HILL FRINGE CAMP

### 6.1 Background History

Oral histories indicate that the Browns Hill area was initially occupied by Aboriginal people pre-contact and utilised as a traditional Aboriginal camping area, although due to the lack of written evidence and archaeological and anthropological studies of the area, this statement cannot be confirmed nor denied.

The Taree area was settled by William Wynter in 1829, having been granted a land grant on the northern side of the Manning River comprising of 2560 acres, being gazetted in 1831,

<sup>2</sup> Ella Simon; *Through My Eyes*

<sup>3</sup> Denis Bryne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*

which he called the 'Taree' estate<sup>4</sup>, commencing the displacement of the local Aboriginal people from their traditional lands, inevitably resulting in fringe camps being established on the outskirts of towns.

Fringe camps were the preferred post-contact places of settlement for Aboriginal people following their displacement, as they had the ability to maintain some level of independence, as opposed to the government managed stations and reserves where the resident's movements were monitored.

As a result of the increasing European settlement of the area, the Aboriginal people on either side of the Manning River were forcibly removed from their traditional lands to accommodate the European settlers who were acquiring land grants and leases.<sup>5</sup> Increasing numbers of Aboriginal people were being displaced and forced away from the newly established town and surrounding properties, this resulted in the Aboriginal people settling in areas on the outskirts of the town called fringe camps.

Browns Hill Fringe Camp was established within 20 years of colonial contact in the Taree area and became a place where displaced Aboriginal people could freely settle and live without the same constraints, rules and regulations of the government managed missions and reserves. The earliest written evidence indicates that Browns Hill was first established as a post-contact camp in the 1850's on privately owned land, "Scotland born and subsequent land owner Henry Flett wrote to the Aboriginal protection Board in the 1850s requesting blankets for the Browns Hill residents".<sup>6</sup>

Henry Flett acquired the 'Taree' estate from his father-in-law William Wynter in 1853, and decided to subdivide and sell town allotments of the 'Taree' estate in 1854 creating the private township of Taree. The smaller allotments dramatically increased the clearing of the native flora and fauna, decimating the natural resources available for the local Aboriginal people.<sup>7</sup>

Other fringe camps and Aboriginal Reserves became established throughout the Manning and around the Taree and Wingham areas with some residents permanently occupying the one camp while others travelled between camps, which included Browns Hill (1850s-1911), Wingham Common (1860s-1920s), Taree showground (late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century), Mills Creek Taree (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), Taree House on the eastern side of Taree, Happy Valley beside the Taree-Wingham Road (1930's) and Tinonee (1871- early 20<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>8</sup>

Over time the population of displaced Aboriginal people grew and subsequently fringe camps increased in size and population. Some of the fringe camps continued to operate successfully while others were forcibly closed, and the residents made to resettle in government managed stations/missions, such as the Sunrise Station/Purfleet Mission.<sup>9</sup>

Living at the Browns Hill Fringe Camp enabled the residents to live relatively independently of government restrictions for more than 60 years post contact until in 1911 the government forcibly removed the last remaining residents from the camp and forced them to resettle at the

<sup>4</sup> John Ramsland; *Custodians of the Soil*

<sup>5</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*

<sup>6</sup> Krystal Hurst and Ray Hurst; *Browns Hill Aboriginal Camp* December 2014

<sup>7</sup> John Ramsland; *Custodians of the Soil*

<sup>8</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*

<sup>9</sup> OEH *Living on Aboriginal Reserves and Stations*

government run Sunrise Station/Purfleet Mission, on the southern side of the Manning River.<sup>10</sup> It is believed that this was due to the non-Aboriginal community's ongoing pressure and protests regarding the increasing Aboriginal population and expanding size of the camp.<sup>11</sup>

The site of Browns Hill Fringe Camp continues to hold strong social, cultural, and historic significance for the Biripi people and the descendants of the Aboriginal residents who once resided within the camp.

Oral histories by Ella Simon, Patricia Davis-Hurst and Les Ridgeway record life on Browns Hill Fringe Camp and the day the Camp was closed to Aboriginal people in 1911, and made to resettle on the government managed station.

*Margaret Maher, "One day some men came with trucks, they said they had orders to take everyone to the reserve at Sunrise Station (Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve). The men fought them off, and then the police arrived. This time they gave in peacefully because they knew they could not win against the law. To fight the law meant going to jail; for a long time. Finally everyone was transported to Sunrise Station and resettled".<sup>12</sup>*

The site was then leased to the Ruprecht family who managed a cattle farm on the land<sup>13</sup> before it was developed for residential purposes in the 1960's and 1970's coinciding with the abolishment of the Aborigines Protection Board and the new Aborigines Welfare Board's 'assimilation' agenda, encouraging Aboriginal families to integrate into white society.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1960s, 50 years after Aboriginal families were forcibly removed from the Browns Hill Fringe Camp, the government encouraged Aboriginal families to return and take up residence back in the Browns Hill area. Aboriginal families were resettled in newly constructed Housing Commission homes; these form the majority of the houses which now surround Ruprecht Park.<sup>15</sup>

Today many of the same families who moved from Purfleet Reserve to Browns Hill continue to occupy the area, as do some of the descendants of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp who continue to maintain a social and cultural connection with the land.

---

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst; *Sunrise Station Revisited*

<sup>11</sup> Trove; *The Manning River Times and Advocate* 9<sup>th</sup> June 1900

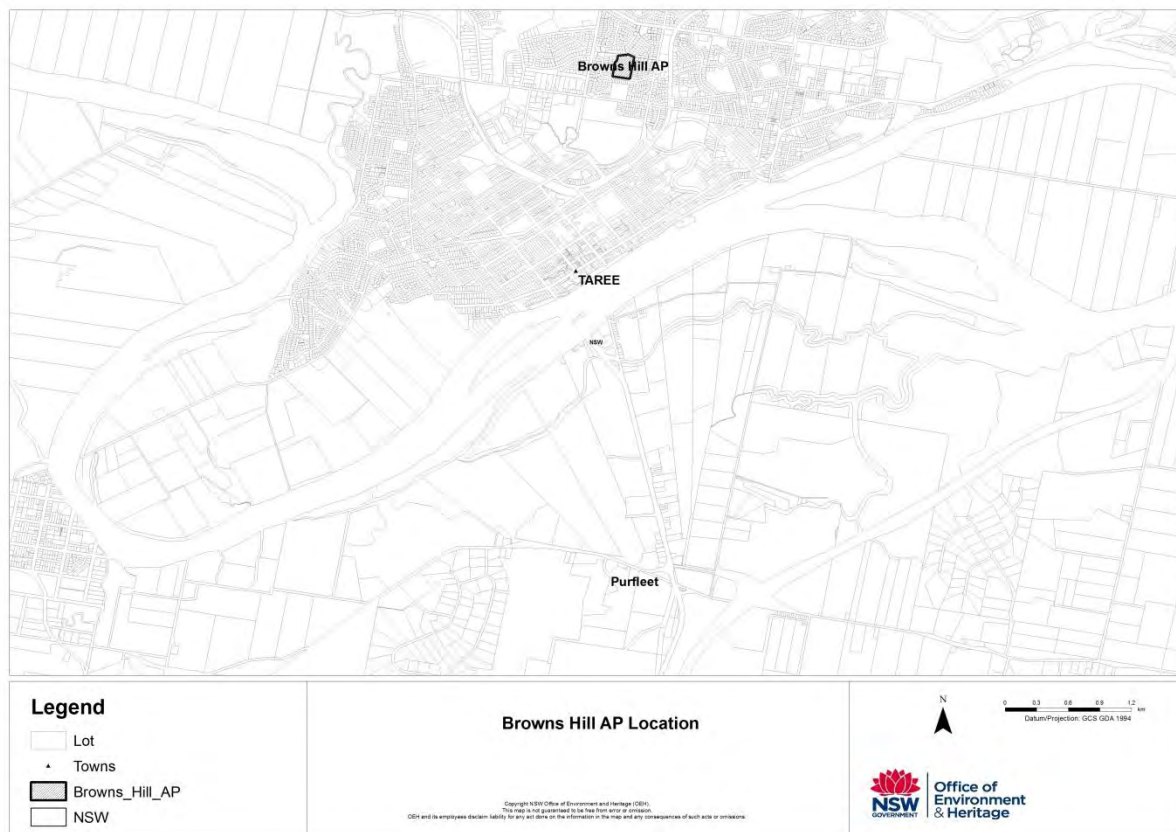
<sup>12</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst; *Sunrise Station Revisited*

<sup>13</sup> Krystal Hurst and Ray Hurst; *Browns Hill Aboriginal Camp* December 2014

<sup>14</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*

<sup>15</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*





**Figure 4: Map showing the former Sunrise/Purfleet Aboriginal Mission and its geographical relationship to the proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place**

## 6.2 Archaeology

Browns Hill Fringe Camp is recognised as a significant site by Biripi people, the wider Aboriginal community of the Taree area and by the descendants of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp, who continue to maintain a close association with the site, where they have the ability to visit and reconnect with their ancestors whilst sharing oral histories and memories handed down to them throughout the generations.

Browns Hill Fringe Camp has had no known archaeological or anthropological investigations conducted within the sites boundary or within the area immediately surrounding the site. Although due to the sites cultural, social and historical significance, there is high potential for the proposed Aboriginal Place and immediate surrounds to yield archaeological evidence associated with pre-contact and post-contact occupation of the site.

## 7.0 LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL AND ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTATION

### 7.1 Methodology

As part of the overall assessment of the suitability for Browns Hill Fringe Camp to be declared as an Aboriginal Place under section 84 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, officers of the Heritage Division of the Office of the Environment and Heritage researched the historical



information available from a range of sources on the land use of the site (traditional and contemporary), Aboriginal occupation of the area (pre-contact and post-contact), and oral histories associated with Browns Hill Fringe Camp. Assistance was sought from community groups, knowledge holders and online resources.

Officers of the Heritage Division subsequently undertook further investigations and community consultations and produced this assessment report to inform the Minister's decision regarding the special significance of the site.

Oral histories were collected from a range of sources including the Sunrise Historical Society Aboriginal Corporation, Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE), Saltwater Tribal Council and the published works of Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM and Ella Simon.

## 7.2 Historical Records

Due to the lack of records kept regarding Aboriginal people during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are minimal historical records regarding the Browns Hill Fringe Camp as it was an unofficial settlement not managed by the government, and by 1911 all of the residents residing at the Browns Hill Fringe Camp had been forcibly resettled at the nearby government managed Sunrise Station (Purfleet Reserve/Mission).

The majority of evidence regarding the Browns Hill Fringe Camp has been compiled from oral histories recorded by residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp, by their descendants or by local Aboriginal knowledge holders.

According to the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board in;<sup>16</sup>

- 1899 - 34 adults and 26 children were residing in 'small bark humpies' at Browns Hill
- 1900 – 70 residents were occupying 11 huts at Browns Hill

This historical record indicates that the Browns Hill Fringe Camp was well established by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and that there was a steady increase in the population of Aboriginal residents at the camp by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which led the government to forcibly close the fringe camp 10 years later.<sup>17</sup> Browns Hill being one of several Aboriginal fringe camps and reserves located around the Wingham and Taree areas during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>18</sup>

An extract from the *Australian Town and Country Journal* dated Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1899 entitled the 'Condition of the Blacks' states:

*'...Some time ago the municipal council of Taree wrote to the Minister for Works on the subject, and pointed out that if those people had been properly housed, the deaths among them would be much fewer, and they suggested the erection of a number of small cottages as shelter for them. The Minister forwarded the letter to the Aborigines Board, and that body caused a report to be furnished them by local police. The report stated that there were 34 adult aborigines (18 full-bloods and 16 half castes) and 26 children (13 full-bloods and 13 half castes) at Taree and that they were camped on private property-no reserve having been set apart for their use-and were housed in small bark humpies. It stated that 14 huts would require to be erected,*

<sup>16</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage

<sup>17</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage

<sup>18</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage

*and gave particulars of cost, which was estimated to be about £35, or £2 10s for each hut. Inspector baker recommended that £25 be allowed for the purchase of material, and that application be made to the Lands Department for portion of camping reserve No. 89, at Taree, for the use of the aborigines. The Inspectors recommendation was approved.*<sup>19</sup>

Another extract from The Manning River Times and Advocate dated Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1900 entitled 'Blackfellow dies from Phthisis'(lung disease) states that:

*'On Tuesday evening last a report gained currency in Taree that an Aboriginal named... about 40 years, who had been living at the blacks' camp about three months, near Brown's Creek, just outside the town boundary, was found to be suffering from symptoms resembling those of the plague.....'*<sup>20</sup>

According to the 'Taree', (report by Miss Mary Delves, a voluntary missionary) *New South Wales Aborigines Advocate*, 31 June 1902, "Miss Delves conducted an open air service to the Aborigines at Brown's Hill where there was another encampment of Aborigines".<sup>21</sup>

Extract from *Custodians of the Soil* by John Ramsland:

*'It was 1901 that the New South Wales Government had granted about twelve acres of land as Reserve at Purfleet. By the end of 1903 several small houses had been built there and Aborigines were gathered from Brown's Hill and other places to reside at Purfleet.'*

Due to the conditions of the fringe camp and the increasing and continual concerns by the non-Aboriginal population of Taree, Browns Hill Fringe Camp was forcibly closed within 10 years and the last remaining residents forcibly removed from the camp by 1911, after approximately 60 years of continual occupation.<sup>22</sup>

The site of the camp then became a cattle farm owned and managed by the Ruprecht family, prior to being developed for residential purposes in the late 1960's or early 1970's.

With the abolishment of the Aborigines Protection Board and the uprising of Aboriginal people fighting for their right for freedom and equality during the 1960's and early 1970's Aboriginal families began to freely move off the Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. Coinciding with this movement the government was actively pursuing an 'assimilation' agenda which expected Aboriginal people to integrate into the white community. Aboriginal families were encouraged to move away from the reserves and were resettled into Housing Commission homes.<sup>23</sup>

In the Taree area Aboriginal families were resettled in homes surrounding the original Browns Hill Fringe Camp where only 50 years earlier they had been forcibly removed.

---

<sup>19</sup> Trove *Australian Town and Country Journal* Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 1899

<sup>20</sup> Trove *The Manning River Times and Advocate* Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1900

<sup>21</sup> John Ramsland; *Custodians of the Soil*

<sup>22</sup> Trove *The Manning River Times and Advocate* Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1900

<sup>23</sup> Krystal Hurst and Ray Hurst; *Browns Hill Aboriginal Camp* December 2014



46. Rations doled out to Aboriginals living at Brown's Hill.  
 Back row: Jack Lobban, Ned Marlow, Lizzie Smith, Arbie Smith, Ted Lobban, Georgina Russell,  
 Centre: Billy Bungay, Anne Russell, Hellen Lobban, Mrs Fields, Rachel Bugg,  
 Front: Ivy and Sylvia McKinnon, Charlie Smith, Fanny Smith and Enerst McKinnon.

**Photo 3: Aboriginal residents from Browns Hill Fringe Camp receiving rations at Taree Showground, dated late 19<sup>th</sup> century**

(Photo Courtesy of *Sunrise Station Revisited* Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM.)

### 7.3 Oral History

Oral histories were gathered from numerous sources during the assessment of the proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place and provide an insight into the life of a resident at the camp during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Margaret Maher (Patricia Davis-Hurst's Mother) remembered that after spending a short while living on the reserve at Purfleet in the early 1900's she moved back to Browns Hill with her family, and after many years living at the Browns Hill Fringe Camp was moved again to the Purfleet Reserve.<sup>24</sup>

As Margaret Maher recalls *"I don't know how long we stayed there (Browns Hill). It seemed a long time to kids. One day some men came with trucks, they said they had orders to take everyone to the reserve at Sunrise Station (Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve). The men fought them off, and then the police arrived. This time they gave in peacefully because they knew they could not win against the law. To fight the law meant going to jail for a long time. Finally everyone was transported to Sunrise Station and resettled"*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> John Ramsland; *Custodians of the Soil*

<sup>25</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage*

*“The children from Brown’s Hill on the other side of the Taree, walked all the way to the school at the Sunrise Station and home again. It was quite a long walk to come to the mission school, because they were not allowed in the white schools”.<sup>26</sup>*

*“The late Margaret Marr’s family had a vegetable and flower garden when they lived at Browns Hill in the twentieth century. Aboriginal people were removed from the Browns Hill camp to Purfleet over a period of several years in the early 1900s”.<sup>27</sup>*

In an interview conducted by Professor John Maynard with Worimi Elder Les Ridgeway in September 2000, Les Ridgeway recalls stories told by local Aboriginal people;

*“I had the privilege of growing up with these old people and they were able to talk to me and tell me many stories of what had happened and apparently the group of people who existed at that time at Purfleet originally. Some were of the Biripi clan who came from the northern side of the Manning and have lived in the Browns Creek area...they were forced off their land and eventually finished up over the back of the township of Taree at a place called Brown’s Creek and some were living at Dingo Creek...off the Wingham Road and there are other little reserves out in that area where they lived off. So they were all gathered up eventually and brought over the river two miles south of Taree and a reserve was created for them in Worimi Nation land”.<sup>28</sup>*

## 8.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

There were several key stakeholder groups identified during the assessment of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place nomination:

- The current landowners, the Greater Taree City Council – Richard Pamplin, Senior Leader Planning and Environmental Services; Tanya Cross, Team Leader Environmental Services; and Tracey Anderson, Aboriginal Community Officer. Several representatives met at an onsite meeting and discussed the nomination for the site in February 2015. Further correspondence was exchanged between the landowner and OEH and Council staff have been very supportive of the nomination.
- Ray Hurst, President of The Sunrise Historical Society Aboriginal Corporation is the nominee for the proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place
- Taree Indigenous Development and Employment Ltd (TIDE), CEO John Clark
- Saltwater Tribal Council, Natasha Davis (descendant of Browns Hill Fringe Camp resident).

Correspondence was made with the Purfleet/Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Biripi Elders Council, the Manning Aboriginal Community Working Party and Gangga Marrang.

- In addition in September 2015, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), with the assistance of staff from the Greater Taree City Council, held a community meeting with approximately 16 representatives from key Aboriginal organisation and groups from

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM; Sunrise Station Revisited

<sup>27</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage

<sup>28</sup> John Ramsland; *Custodians of the Soil*

the Taree area to discuss the Browns Hill Aboriginal Place nomination and to seek the support of the community. Those present include:

- Manning Aboriginal Community Working Party
- Biripi Elders Council Group
- Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE)
- Biripi APMC – Aged Care
- Gangga Marrang
- Purfleet / Taree Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Sunrise Historical Society
- Other Aboriginal community members
- All present confirmed the significance of the Browns Hill area in representing the history of local fringe camps, and of the settlement of Aboriginal people in the Taree area. Attendees were able to provide additional information and confirmation of the locality of the former fringe camp as being consistent with the location of Ruprecht Park.
- Further consultation has also been undertaken since this meeting with Aunty Helen Coulis (10<sup>th</sup> November 2015) and with Councillor Kathryn Bell (16<sup>th</sup> October 2015), both of whom, are supportive of the Aboriginal Place nomination.

### **8.1 Community Aspirations**

The various stakeholder groups identified and the current landowners are interested in preserving such a significant site to:

- Continue to maintain the cultural, social and historical significance the site provides for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.
- Potentially use the site for educational purposes to teach the wider community and the younger generations about the history of the former fringe camp.
- Increase the sites use by constructing more recreational facilities including; picnic seats and footpaths.
- Erect a plaque and interpretation sign to recognise the sites importance to the local Biripi people to explain to the wider community the history of the site
- Increase the sites aesthetically by planting appropriate native trees to provide shade and possibly bush tucker.

The Taree Indigenous Development and Employment Ltd (TIDE) have suggested future plans for the management for Browns Hill Fringe Camp (Ruprecht Park) if the Aboriginal Place nomination is successful, which would include local Aboriginal people maintaining the site.

## **9.0 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES**

---

The proposed Browns Hill Fringe Camp Aboriginal Place is a place of special significance to Biripi people, the Aboriginal community of the Taree area, and the descendants of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp. The Aboriginal cultural values for which Browns Hill Fringe Camp is significant to Aboriginal culture includes, but is not limited to;

- The Browns Hill Fringe Camp site is a significant historical site signifying the resilience and determination of Biripi people throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in a time when discriminative policies and views were increasingly prevalent.
- Browns Hill Fringe Camp was one of the first Aboriginal fringe camps established in the Taree area during the 1850s and was one of the longest running fringe camps, spanning over 60 years until its forced closure in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Aboriginal people from the Biripi nation fought to establish the Browns Hill Fringe Camp, providing them with a place they could freely settle and live a relatively independent lifestyle whilst continuing to maintain their freedom, traditions and customs.<sup>29</sup>
- The local Aboriginal community and the descendants of the residents of the Browns Hill Fringe Camp continue to maintain a strong, social, and cultural connection with the site, being the one of two remaining undeveloped parcels of land within the original Browns Hill Fringe Camp boundary.
- There is high potential for the site to yield pre-contact and post-contact archaeological evidence, providing further cultural and scientific analysis of the site and its significance to the Biripi people and surrounding Aboriginal communities.

## 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

---

- Browns Hill Fringe Camp be recognised as a place of 'special significance' to the Aboriginal community and be declared as an Aboriginal Place.
- A Plan of Management to be developed in full consultation with the landowners and Aboriginal community to help facilitate the future management of the site.
- Support and advice to be provided to the landowner and to stakeholders by the Heritage Division, OEH.

## 11.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

### 11.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Byrne, Denis & Nugent, Maria 2004 *Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage* Department of Environment and Conservation

Davis-Hurst, Patricia AO.AM. 1996 *Sunrise Station Revisited* Patricia Davis-Hurst and Ray Hurst

Hurst, Krystal and Hurst, Ray December 2014 *Browns Hill Aboriginal Camp*

Marr, Narelle 1993 Revised 1995 *Aboriginal History of the Great Lakes District*

Ramsland, John 2001 *Custodians of the Soul* Greater Taree City Council

Simon, Ella 1987 *Through My Eyes* Harper Collins

### WEBSITES

---

<sup>29</sup> Denis Byrne & Maria Nugent; Mapping Attachment, A spatial approach to Aboriginal post-contact heritage

Manning Valley Historical Society *A Manning Valley Timeline*

<http://www.manninghistorical.org/P&E1.htm>

New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

Trove Newspaper Articles <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

## **MAPS**

Regional Map of Browns Hill Fringe Camp – OEH North East Listings

Proposed Aboriginal Place Boundary Map – OEH North East Listings

Location Map of Browns Hill Fringe Camp – Courtesy of Denis Byrne & Maria

## **ORAL HISTORIES**

Ella Simon 1987 *Through My Eyes* Harper Collins

Les Ridgeway 2000 *Interview with Professor John Maynard*; John Ramsland 2001 *Custodians of the Soul* Greater Taree City Council

Margaret Maher 1996 *Sunrise Station Revisited* Patricia Davis-Hurst and Ray Hurst

Patricia Davis-Hurst AO.AM. 1996 *Sunrise Station Revisited* Patricia Davis-Hurst and Ray Hurst

## **PHOTOS**

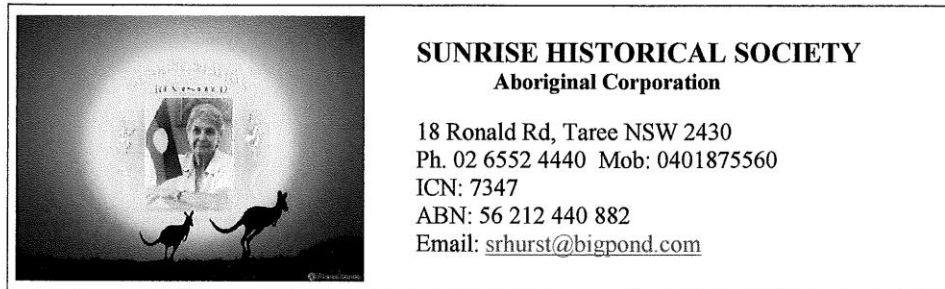
All photos taken by the Heritage Division North East Listings Staff, unless otherwise stated



## 12.0 APPENDICES

---

### 12.1 Appendix 1 – Nomination Form



Central Region  
Manager Central Region CCHD  
Level 7  
43 Bridge Street  
Hurstville NSW 2200  
P: (02) 95856546

Friday, 26 December 2014

**Aboriginal Place Nomination- Ruprecht Park (Browns Hill)Taree**

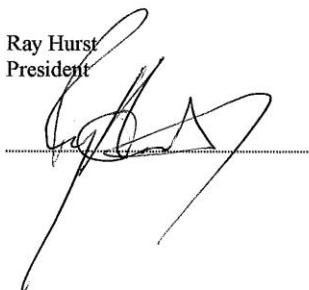
Dear Sir/ Madam,

The Sunrise Historical Society wishes to nominate Ruprecht Park at Taree New South Wales, formally known as the Browns Hill Aboriginal Fringe Camp as an Aboriginal Place. We have enclosed the relevant documentation demonstrating that Browns Hill meets the criterion to be declared an Aboriginal place.

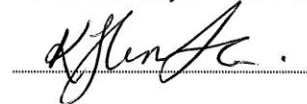
We look forward to hearing from you about our nomination as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Hurst  
President



Krystal Hurst  
Assistant Secretary & Researcher



(Internal Use Only: OEH County, Culture and Heritage Division Ref. No: \_\_\_\_\_)

To nominate an area for assessment as an Aboriginal Place, either fill in this nomination form and post it to OEH, or write a letter to the OEH Country, Culture and Heritage Division Regional Manager in your local region. The letter should contain the information requested on this nomination form. Contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Date: 26/12/2014**Place name information:**Current name of nominated place: Ruprecht ParkFormer or other names: Browns HillApproximate area of place in hectares: 3.2 Hectares**Details of person making the nomination:**Name: Krystal HurstOrganisation (if relevant): Sunrise Historical Society, Aboriginal CorporationPosition (if relevant): Assistant Secretary & ResearcherAddress: 18 Ronald RoadSuburb/town: Taree NSWPostcode: 2430Phone: (02) 65524440 Fax: \_\_\_\_\_Email: Krystal.hurst@gmail.com**List useful contacts or other people who may be interested in the nomination (individuals and organisations):**

Contact name	Address	Phone/fax/email
Ray Hurst	as above	(02) 65524440
Natasha Davis	as above	srhurst@bigpond.com 0409163241 N.davis@tide.org.au

**Name of land holder/agency/manager and property (if known)**

Name of property: Greater Taree City Council; Ruprecht Park  
 Address and postcode: 2 Pultney street  
Taree 2430 NSW.  
 Phone: (02) 65925399 Fax: (02) 65925311 Email: tareecouncil@gtcc.nsw.gov.au

**Provide details of the location of the place:**

Attach a hand drawn basic map showing the location of the area and the boundary of the proposed place.  
 Mark important areas and locations if relevant.

**Is the nominated place under any threat? Yes or No (please indicate)**

If yes, list your concerns

Please see attached documentation.

**Aboriginal cultural significance**

What is the cultural significance of this place for your community?

Provide as much detail as possible. Attach more information if necessary.

Please see attached documentation.

***Is the nominated place under any threat? Yes***

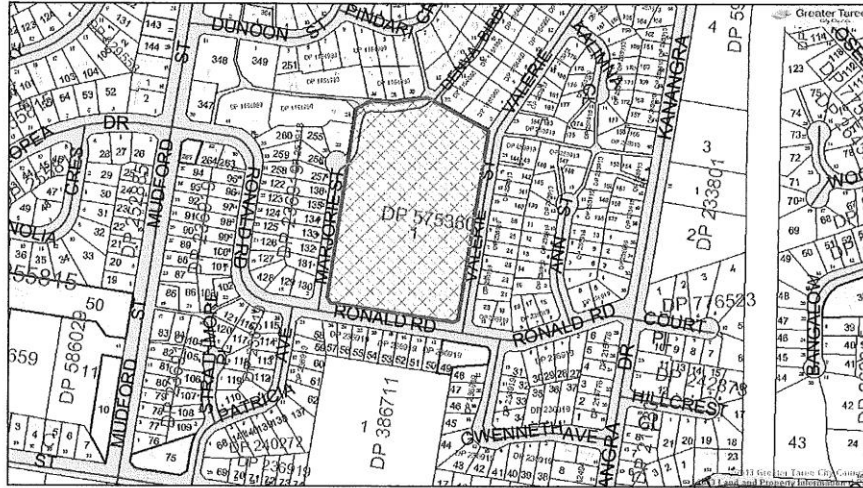
The Greater Taree City Council has recently identified Ruprecht Park, the entire area of Browns Hill Aboriginal fringe camp to be sold and developed upon.

The physical fabric of Browns Hill is currently undertreat by local governments proposal, who claim that many of Taree's parks and reserves are 'not frequently used' by the public.

As outlined in the *Draft Open Space Improvement Plan 2014*, many areas have been identified for redevelopment or for purchase to raise revenue, including Ruprecht Park.

Whilst other parks have been identified to be 'embellished' with improvements, the plan for Ruprecht Park (Browns Hill) to be sold for redevelopment has taken place without any community consultation with the Aboriginal community. Nor has any cultural heritage assessments been conducted to investigate the cultural heritage values of Ruprecht Park (Browns Hill).

### 3.4 Ruprecht Park



**Property Details:** Marjorie Street, Taree (Lot 1 DP575360)

**Total Area:** 3.2 hectares

**Zoning:** RE1 Public Recreation

**Classification:** Community – Sporting Parks - Medium Profile

**Constraints:** None - mown grassland with scattered perimeter trees.

**Development Opportunities:** Dedicate land to Housing NSW

**Recommendation:** Reclassify to Operational  
Rezone to Residential  
Dedicate to Housing NSW



## Browns Hill Aboriginal Camp

**Background: Browns Hill**

Browns Hill was an Aboriginal fringe camp established by the Biripi and Worimi families at Taree during the 1800s and early 1900s (Figure 1). Located on the northern side of the Manning River, it is one of the original fringe camps dating back to the 1850s and possibly earlier. Many families settled and re-settled to live a semi-independent lifestyle within the camp, years after recorded massacres between the 1830s and 1840s.



**Figure 1. Aerial map showing Ruprecht Park, originally the Browns Hill fringe camp. The area where many Biripi and Worimi families lived.**

Within Taree the pressure of settler-colonial expansion impacted on Aboriginal lives, causing widespread displacement driving Aboriginal communities further out of the township onto smaller encampments such as Browns Hill and Killawarra. Between 15 and 20 families lived at Browns Hill and utilised what nature provided. The area was abundant with natural resources such as tea tree, kangaroo, yams, wild honey and introduced species such as rabbits. Many bark humpies (Gunyas) and tin shacks were carefully arranged to accommodate the increasing number of residents.

Scotland born and subsequent land owner Henry Flett wrote to the Aboriginal Protection Board in the 1850s requesting blankets for the Browns Hill residents. Many families walked only hundreds of metres from their homes at various times to receive their rations at the Taree Show Ground near Browns Creek. The only known photograph of the Browns Hill residents was taken during the 1880s at one of the reoccurring ration days (Figure2).

Whilst the traditional Biripi name remains unknown, Browns Hill was later renamed Ruprecht Park, and was utilised as a cattle farm by the Ruprecht Family. Today, Browns Hill remains the area in which the local Aboriginal community memorialise as a place where their ancestor's demonstrated resilience, perseverance and resistance against colonial interference.

### *Who lived there?*

Many families birthed and raised children at the camp in which highly respected and influential community members came. Prominent Elders and leaders either lived or visited Browns Hill such as Worimi Elder Margaret 'Majorie' Maher who lived at Browns Hill for a considerable length of time. Her grandfather was Charles Dumas who joined the first Aboriginal cricket team to tour England in 1886.

In addition, her daughter the late Worimi Elder, Dr Patricia Davis-Hurst AO AM Hon Dletts [Newcastle] was also the author of 'Sunrise Station' and 'Sunrise Station: Revisited'. She was a highly influential woman within the Taree district.

Well known Elder Ella Simon was the author of 'Through my Eyes' and lived most of her life on Purfleet Aboriginal Reserve. The late Senior Les Ridgeway author of 'Rainbow Beach Man' also spent time at Brown's Hill. My great, great, great, great grandfather George Russell and his wife Susan Jane Russell birthed their youngest son Arthur John Russell at Browns Hill in the late 1890s, along with their elder 11 children. Other families included the Bungay's, Lobban's, Bugg's, McKinnon's, Smiths and more.



Figure 2. Rations given out to Aboriginal residents living at Browns Hill during the mid-1850s, 30 years after European incursion at the Manning Valley. From the left back row: Jack Lobban, Alex Smith, Ned Marlow, Constable Thomas Wells, Lizzie Smith with her son, Arbie, Ted Lobban, Georgina Russell. Second row: Billy Bungay, Anne Russell, Helen Lobban, -- Fields, Rachel Bugg. Front row: Ivy McKinnon, Sylvia McKinnon, Charlie Smith, Fanny Smith and Ernest McKinnon.



***Time to move on: A place of dispossession***

By 1900 approximately 70 Aboriginal people were living at Browns hill and its reputation soon circulated the community. The increasing number of residents was noticeable by the white community, who sought to solve this 'problem' by removing residents from Browns Hill to the newly established Aboriginal reserve called Sunrise Station (renamed Purfleet Mission in 1942).

Sunrise Station opened the same year with the purpose of protection, segregation, and later assimilation. Despite the *Aborigines Protection Board 1883* and the *Aboriginal Protection Act 1909*, Aboriginal families were still able to move freely, to a degree, between the reserves to live and stay with relatives. As the enforcements became stricter the regular movements became confined and controlled.

Browns Hill is the area where many families were forcibly removed under the NSW Aboriginal Protection Act. Over a period of seven years, the Biripi and Worimi were removed from their homes at Browns Hill to Sunrise Station. Margaret 'Majorie' Maher, Worimi Elder recalls her experience of being removed from her home as a child:

*I don't know how long we stayed there, it seemed a long time to us kids. Then one day some men came with trucks, they said they had orders to take everyone to the reserve at Sunrise Station. The men fought them off until the police arrived. This time they gave in peacefully, because they knew they could not win against the law. To fight the law meant going to jail for a long time. Finally everyone was transported to Sunrise Station and resettled.*

(Margaret 'Majorie' Maher, Worimi Elder, 1996).

***Memories of Browns Hill***

Worimi and Biripi Elders of the region recall their association with Browns Hill. During an interview with Marjorie Maher she calls her experience of walking to school with other Koori children. The children walked approximately 7 kms from Browns Hill to Sunrise Station Mission School each day. The walk took about 1 hour 30 minutes and possibly longer with the additional ferry ride over the Manning River. Marjorie Maher recalls her experience of living at Browns Hill:

*There was about 15-20 families living there at the times. Here we were happy. We didn't need much everyone lived off the land. Plenty of kangaroos, rabbits, yams and wild honey. All we needed was*

*flour to make bread and plenty of water....There were humpies and tin shacks all through the scrub, a great playground for kids.*

(Margaret 'Majorie' Maher, Worimi Elder, 1996).

In an interview conducted by Professor John Maynard with Worimi Elder Les Ridgeway in September 2000, Les recalls stories told by local Aboriginal people:

*I had the privilege of growing up with these old people and they were able to talk to me and tell me many stories of what had happened and apparently the group of people who existed at that time at Purfleet originally. Some were of the Biripi clan who came from the northern side of the Manning [Worimi country on the southern side] and have lived in the Browns Creek area .... they were forced off their land and eventually they finished up over the back of the township of Taree at a place called Brown's Creek [Browns Hill].*

(Senior Elder Les Ridgeway, 2000).

### **Reconnecting with Browns Hill**

In 1969 and the 1970s, the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board was abolished and saw many Aboriginal families moving freely and relocating to areas they pleased. One of the areas the Biripi and Worimi moved back to was Browns Hill, Chatham and Bushland. Due to the development of public housing commission homes it drew many families back in this area and many were expected to 'integrate' into white society.

Despite being removed from their homes decades earlier, the black community was met with hostility and opposition. Many white residents took the streets in protest at an official opening marking the occasion for the relocation. In 1974 Patricia Davis-Hurst moved from Purfleet Mission to Browns Hill, and recalls such protests:

*I remember the first time the family moved in, they [the local white residents] had demonstrations in the streets because they didn't want "blacks" moving next door.*

Today Browns Hills and the surrounds remain the highest population density of Taree's Aboriginal residents.

***Why is Browns Hill a significant Aboriginal place?***

Brown's Hill is culturally significant to the Biripi and Worimi community because it is a place of cultural survival, independence and forced dispossession. What occurred at Browns Hill not only lies in the memory of the descendants but survives through oral transference. The remaining area of Browns Hill is indicative of the history of the Manning Valley and the brutality towards the Biripi and Worimi.

Browns Hill is of historical and cultural importance to Aboriginal cultural history because it is one of the largest original camps dating back to the 1850s and even earlier, where families lived autonomously in the Manning Valley region. Many Worimi and Biripi were born and raised at the camp and was the place where instrumental Elders and community members have lived and derive from. It is the place where many families faced discrimination and dispossession by the enactment of the NSW Aboriginal Protection Act. Long after, it is the place where many families reconnected after segregation and assimilation.

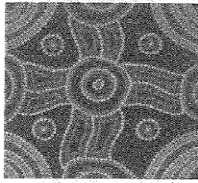
Brown's hill was specifically chosen as a campsite for its position in the landscape. An elevated area connecting to Kananga drive was occupied by Aboriginal families as a vantage point, allowing to see white fellas approaching. Equally, within the top area of the park a series of fresh waterholes still exist today. It was the main source of fresh water to our ancestors and to the families living in this area. Not many Taree residents know about the existence of these waterholes, as it endures within oral histories and families stories.

We believe that Browns Hill should be recognised as an Aboriginal Place to ensure our heritage and the memory of the Biripi and Worimi are preserved. Browns Hill (Ruprecht Park) is the only remaining area that is visible and accessible to the public. My current family home, where my family have lived for the past 22 years is situated only metres away from where my family had lived all those years ago. It was more than a campsite; it was a way of life. It was home.

Prepared by Krystal Hurst and Ray Hurst December 2014

## 12.2 Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Support Letters

---



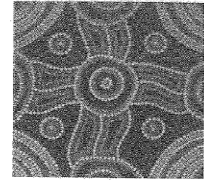
**Taree Indigenous Development & Employment Ltd**

**P.O. Box 22, 33 Pulteney Street, Taree, NSW 2430**

**Phone: 02 6552 3652 Fax: 02 6552 3642 Email: [info@tide.org.au](mailto:info@tide.org.au)**

**ABN: 80 129 896 671**

*Logo by Serge Morcome (Gangga Marrang Art Group)*



Sonia Limeburner Senior Team Leader,

North East Listings (Aboriginal Places and State Heritage Register)

Dear Sonia

I, on behalf of TIDE we give our full support for Browns Hill [ Ruprecht Park] being declared an Aboriginal Place.

TIDE has many MOU's with various organisation across the Mid North Coast with which we do environmental work for. This is carried out by our team of Environmental Rangers.

When Browns Hill is an Aboriginal Place we would be in a position to apply for funds to upgrade the park free of charge. We would be willing to work with other groups or persons who may want to assist in beautifying the Park.

Yours sincerely

John Clark

CEO TIDE



**SALTWATER TRIBAL COUNCIL**  
*[Aboriginal Corporation]*  
**18 Ronald Rd Taree NSW 2430**  
**Ph 02 6552 4440**  
**Email: srhurst@bigpond.com**  
**ICN: 2531**  
**ABN: 63 243 389 598**

---

Sonia Limeburner (Mon-Thurs)  
Senior Team Leader, North East Listings (Aboriginal Places and State Heritage Register)  
Northern Region  
Heritage Division  
Office of Environment and Heritage  
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet  
Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle  
Locked Bag 1002, Dangar, NSW, 2309

22/04/15

Dear Sonia

Saltwater Tribal Council welcomes the application for Browns Hill (Ruprecht Park) being declared an Aboriginal Place.

The Saltwater Tribal Council has a membership of 84 members and they are all related to the original people that camped on Browns Hill so many years ago.

Some descendants of Browns Hill were the people that had Saltwater reserve declared an Aboriginal place in 1986.

Since then it has been declared a National Park with whom we have an MOU to look after the reserve.

We are willing to work with any organisation to improve Browns Hill once it is been declared an Aboriginal place.

If you require any further information please contact me on 0409 163 241.

Yours truly

  
Natasha Davis  
Secretary

## Ray Hurst

18 Ronald Rd, Taree. NSW 2430

Ph. 02 6552 4440 Mob.0401875560

Email: srhurst@bigpond.com



To: Sonia Limeburner

Dept of Environment

### Letter of support for Brown's Hill

Dear Sonia

I have live on Brown's Hill with my late wife Dr Patricia Davis-Hurst AO, AM Hon. Dletts [Newcastle] [who passed away in 2013] for the past 23 years.

Patricia was born at Sunrise Station on the ground in a Humpy in 1933. Patricia's mother Marjorie Maher was also born there and at the age of 4 years her family move to Brown's Hill. About a year later [ [we are not sure of the time she spent there] But Patricia's Mum was there when the Police arrived with trucks and forcibly move all the Aboriginals into the trucks and took them to Sunrise Station now called Purfleet.

History tells us that Aboriginals had been living on Brown's Hill in the early 1800's, not long after white settlement when they were forced from their traditional lands and they stayed there until the early 1900's. Brown's Hill. This means Aboriginals had lived on Brown's Hill for around 100 years, before they were again forcibly removed!

These old Elders that lived here for all those years should be honoured by preserving Brown's Hill as an Aboriginal Place.

Yours sincerely

Ray Hurst

20/03/2015 12:54 PM

### 12.3 Appendix 3 – Landowner Support Letter

DRAFT