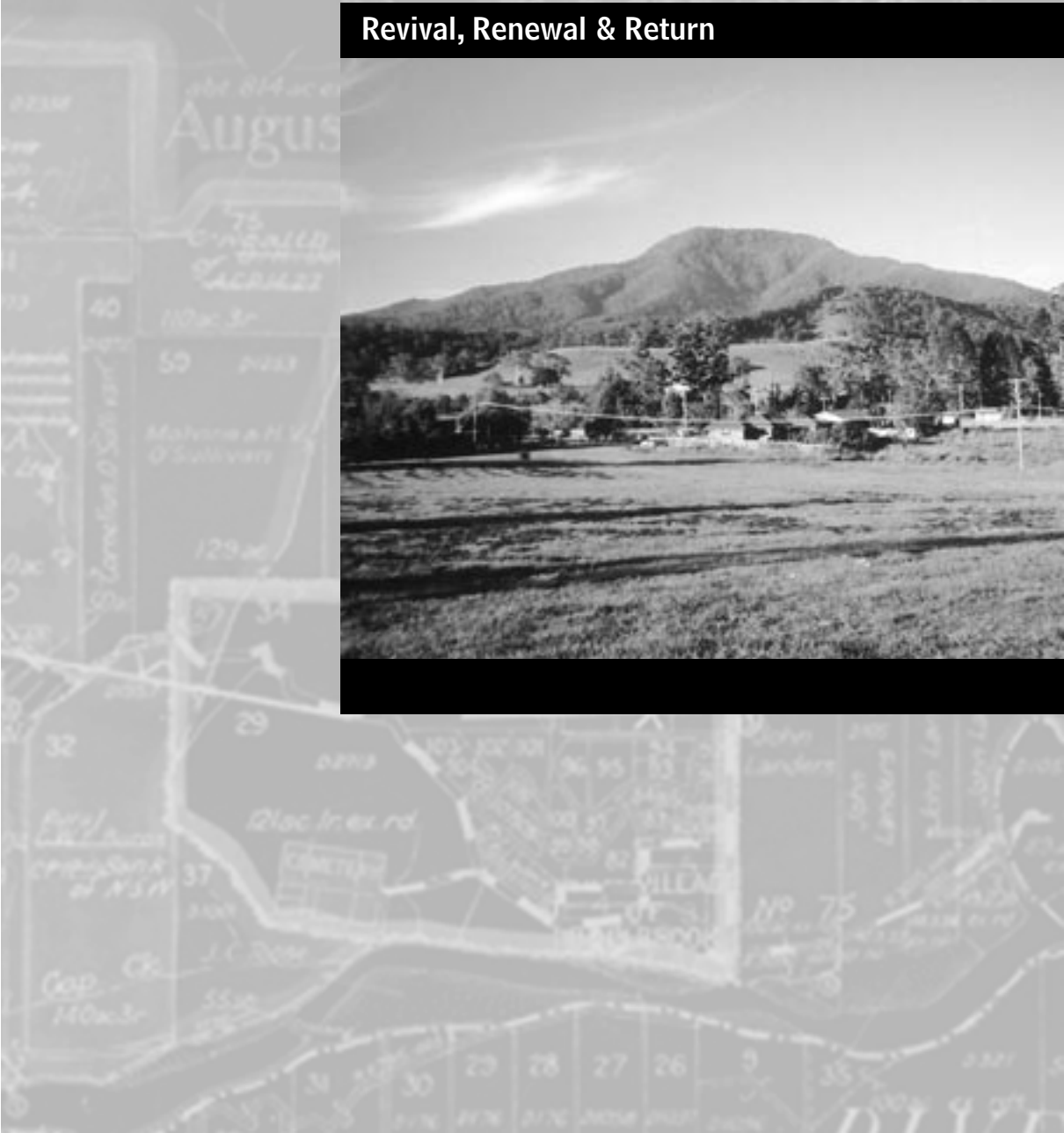




Revival, Renewal & Return





Name: Roy Kelly Week ending: 13-3-76 Days Rostered for Duty:

DATE		DETAILS
Sunday	On: 3 PM	
12	Off: 3 AM 12 PM	departed Gosford for Sydney ^{at AM} stayed at: Sydney (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Monday	On: 8 8:30	Talks with Sharon Sullivan at Head Office discuss new vehicle to Ranger Roy Morgan
13	Off: 11 PM	stayed at: Beega (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Tuesday	On: 8 AM	Depart Beega for other complete exchanging of vehicle also interviewing Collier Walker and Cedric Butler about Aboriginal sites in the area
14	Off: 5 PM	stayed at: Beega (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Wednesday	On: 8 AM	Interviewed Cecil Carter and Fred Division about Aboriginal sites in Beega
15	Off: 5 PM	also travelled to Balaga Lake to discuss Aboriginal sites in Fies Forest area with Fred Johnson stayed at: Beemagui (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Thursday	On: 8 AM	Beemagui to Balaga Lake and joined Fred Johnson then travel to Coler visit Little River tribal burial
16	Off: 5:30	stayed at: Coler (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Friday	On: 7:30	Record Aboriginal sites on Mumbulla mountains with consultant Fred Johnson.
17	Off: 10:30	Return to Balaga Lake to brief T Tompkins significance of sites recorded stayed at: Daffo (CAMP/HOTEL S.A.)
Saturday	On: 9 AM	Depart Daffo for Sydney talks with Sharon Sullivan on field undertaken in Fies Forest area



1 The survey: an historical overview

Jo Kijas

The Sites of Significance Survey was established at a time in Australian history when the Aboriginal people of settled Australia were still generally regarded as having ‘lost’ their culture. The survey, or the Sacred Sites Survey as it was often called, became a significant vehicle through which Ray Kelly, Harry Creamer and others contributed to the cultural revival amongst New South Wales Aboriginal people during the 1970s and 1980s. This chapter provides an historical background by introducing the survey, outlining its establishment, and setting it within the social and political context of the time.

A new agenda: surveying Aboriginal sites

The New South Wales Aboriginal Sites Survey was established as part of a larger national survey. By the early 1970s, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (AIAS) had obtained federal funding to conduct a national survey through those individual states regarded as having traditional Aboriginal populations. In New South Wales, Aboriginal cultural heritage had recently come under the auspices of NPWS. Sharon Sullivan was appointed by NPWS in 1969 as the archaeologist/historian to coincide with the proposed amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act (1967) which included provisions for the protection of Aboriginal ‘relics’. The amendments formally established the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee. The committee’s statutory role was to advise and report to the Director of the NPWS and the Minister on matters relating to conservation, excavation, removal and custody of relics or Aboriginal places. It included representation from the NPWS, the Australian Museum, the National Trust, the Anthropological Society of NSW, the Mines Department, a NSW university and two members appointed by the minister.² Sharon championed the idea of seeking funding from the AIAS for a survey of Aboriginal heritage across New South Wales.

As Sharon Sullivan recounts in her interview for this book:

It was the time where there was the first argument in the north and the west of Australia about mining. So Bob Edwards [of the AIAS] managed to persuade the Liberal government, with the assistance of really significant politicians like Billy Wentworth, Bob Hasluck and a whole lot of people who were interested in Aboriginal issues, that they needed to do surveys — that is, to go out and talk to Aboriginal people and to find out where the places were before the mining. He said confidently — and I’m sure even at the time he was totally

aware that this was a furphy — that if we had a quarter of a million dollars a year for five years, then we could basically find the sites, everybody would know where they were mining and could avoid them, and everyone would be happy. So the government gave the Institute of Aboriginal Studies what was then a very princely grant ... and really this program was the beginning of the setting up of Aboriginal Sites Authorities in the states. Because although legislation was being gradually passed in each state, there was nobody and a dog to run these things. And basically for the first five years most of the money for our survey came from this federally funded Aboriginal Sites of Significance Survey work and the Institute.

**Members at the inaugural meeting of the
Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee, 20 April 1970**

- ▶ Assoc Prof Isabel McBryde, *prehistorian, University of New England*
- ▶ S Sullivan, *archaeologist/Aboriginal Relics Officer NPWS*
- ▶ R Lampert, *archaeologist, Australian National University*
- ▶ A Thorne, *anatomist, University of Sydney*
- ▶ R Wright, *prehistorian, University of Sydney*
- ▶ D Moore, *curator of anthropology, Australian Museum Sydney*
- ▶ D Carr, *National Trust (NSW)*
- ▶ T Rose, *director of the Geological Survey, Department of Mines (NSW)*

At the time, as Sharon explains in her chapter, living Aboriginal people in New South Wales were not acknowledged in the NPWS Act, represented on the Relics Committee, or understood to have any interest in these ‘relics’. The impetus for legislative protection came from a belief that Aboriginal prehistoric objects and sites needed protection from the public because of their value for archaeological research and their universal value to ‘mankind’. This reflected the broader view that Aboriginal people of settled Australia had no interest or knowledge of Aboriginal cultural heritage and that the past of Australia belonged, like the land, to the new settlers.³

While states like Western Australia and South Australia were regarded as warranting the full five-year funding for surveys from the Institute because of their traditionally oriented Aboriginal populations, Sharon struggled to convince the AIAS that New South Wales had any Aboriginal culture worth surveying. While she was able to persuade the Institute to fund them, NPWS only received its funding in yearly increments, having to argue its case again each year.

A survey for New South Wales

The Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee confirmed Sharon’s push to gain funding for a New South Wales survey after discussions about the appropriate positions required. They agreed that it would be ‘most effectively carried out by an anthropologist and an Aboriginal assistant’. The word ‘jointly’ was hand written later into the typed minutes of the 19 March meeting, and ‘assistant’ crossed out and signed by the chair.



The survey team was initially made up of Harry Creamer (then known as Howard), newly arrived from Cambridge University in England, and Ray Kelly, a Dunghutti man from the Mid-North Coast of New South Wales. Harry was interviewed one week before Ray, and their positions endorsed together at the committee meeting on 16 April 1973. They began work on the survey in early June 1973 with a brief visit to north-western NSW. Harry remembers meeting Ray for the first time at a Sydney pub where Ray said ‘Well mate, I hope we get on well together’. ‘Yes Raymond, I hope so too’, and off they went in the car to their base in Armidale.⁴

An early official response to Ray and Harry’s work was recorded in the minutes of the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee’s meeting on 21 June 1973, alongside an important change of name:

The Committee was pleased to meet Mr R Kelly and Mr H Creamer. It resolved to change the title ‘Sacred Sites Survey’ to ‘Survey of Sites of Significance’. The Committee discussed Mr Creamer’s and Mr Kelly’s brief survey of the North West of the State, and it was found that this area proved quite promising. It was decided that a similar survey of the North Coast area should be made before making a final decision regarding the area in which a detailed survey of sites will commence.

Ray and Harry’s salaries were paid from the Institute funding, while the NPWS later provided cars and support in the field. After two years, two further positions were funded from the Institute money. In 1974 Glen Morris joined the survey team as a ‘trainee’ Aboriginal Sites Officer. Terry Donovan was also appointed at that time. He left in 1977 and was replaced by Trevor Donnelly. Through to 1977 Harry and the Sites Officers all lived in Armidale and when they weren’t away in the field they were still constantly in each other’s company. Glen’s wife Leonora said, ‘They became like part of the furniture. You could move it, but then you’d look and someone would put it back there the next day.’

ABOVE LEFT Glen Morris, Harry Creamer and Ray Kelly, May 2000 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).
 ABOVE RIGHT Survey team Aboriginal Sites Officers Bob Walford, Claude Livermore and Jolanda Gonda (Nyuta) at the Clarence River axe grooves, c 1984 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

Members of the survey team

Ray Kelly	1973	Sabu Dunn	1980
Howard Creamer	1973	Jolanda Gonda (Nyuta)	1980
Glen Morris	1974	Claude Livermore	1980
Terry Donovan	1975	Bob Walford	1980
Trevor Donnelly	1979	Wayne Cook	1980

A different world: social and political context of the times

The team felt a great sense of urgency to record the stories of the old people before it was too late. The decade of the 1970s which sparked this process was a dynamic period in Aboriginal Australian history. The nation was emerging from a long period of assimilation, which had overtly discouraged the retention of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, to one of a new political rhetoric of Aboriginal self-determination. The all-consuming energy that Ray and the survey team brought to their work must be understood within this historical context.

The political and social shift away from the goal of assimilation was a very recent one which was felt in Ray's own history. In 1966, after living in Armidale for a number of years, Ray was chosen to go on a trip to New Zealand to discuss Indigenous issues. The trip was organised by the Armidale Association for Aborigines (AAA), which had tellingly changed its name the previous year from the Armidale Association for the Assimilation of Aborigines.

At the time of the trip, Ray felt that he didn't have 'a great deal to offer' as he was 'very introverted'. However it was eye-opening for him to see how far 'in advance' the Maori people were in their social and political situation compared to Aboriginal people, and his continuing connections with the AAA set him on a more political path.⁶

Less than a year later, the passing of the 1967 Referendum — for which Aboriginal advancement leagues had been fighting for over a decade — changed the Constitution so that Aboriginal people would be counted for the first time in the national census, and Commonwealth law would prevail over state law. In this renewed climate of optimism about gaining greater rights for Aboriginal people, government policy began to shift away from assimilation towards integration.⁷

Through all the regional, social and cultural diversity which characterises Indigenous politics, the 1970s brought with it an increasing confidence among Aboriginal people to demand a better deal. This was fostered not only by outside influences, such as the civil rights movement and Black Power from America, but by generations of Indigenous struggle, with some non-Indigenous support, for equal rights. As highly successful and visible actions such as the 1972 Tent Embassy and the modern land rights campaigns were launched, the hidden history of Aboriginal Australians started to be publicly told.

A new political agenda for Aboriginal affairs emerged after 1972 with Whitlam's Labor government in power. It opened the way for a greater political consensus between the major parties which was confirmed when the Liberals come to power in 1975 and continued a number of Labor's initiatives. For example, the

Liberals supported the Woodward Royal Commission's Report into land rights, the establishment of regional land councils, and they passed the first land rights act in 1976 along with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

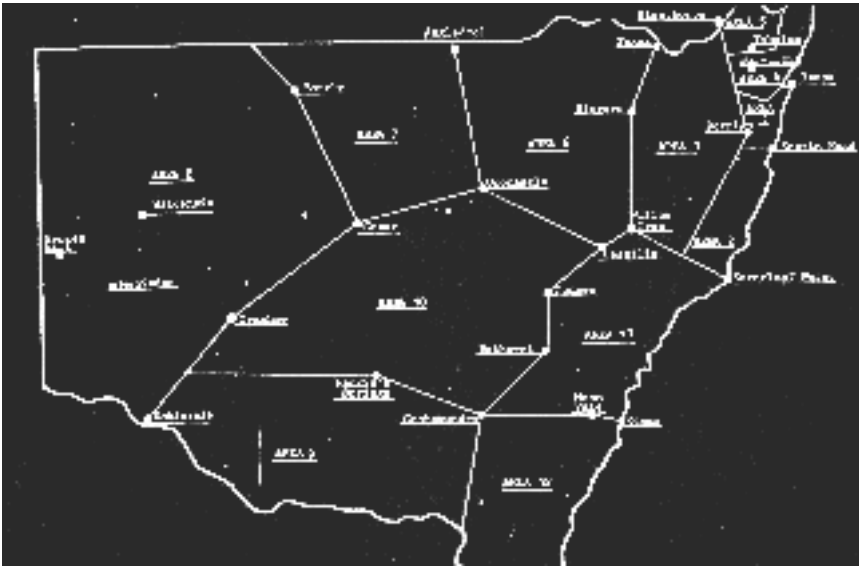
Renewed Aboriginal activism emerged in many areas after the stifling effect of assimilation. Some of the people who joined the Tent Embassy were from country New South Wales, like Laurel Vale, Ray's adopted sister. Laurel still carries a scar which she says came from a police baton in the scrum outside the embassy. But for other conservative rural Aboriginal communities, the renewed Aboriginal activism seemed dangerous and foreign – 'urban blacks' creating havoc.⁸ As Ray and the team journeyed out into rural and outback New South Wales, working for the government and a generally unknown entity called *National Parks*, they had to overcome suspicion in communities as well as work within white bureaucracies ignorant of their new Aboriginal employees. These dual issues are discussed in a number of the following chapters.

Working on the survey

The survey is often said to have run for a decade, between 1973 and 1983. The year in which the survey officially ceased according to Harry Creamer, however, is when he left his position of anthropologist in 1987. Despite this, he and others agree that by 1983 the period of its greatest research output was concluding. With the passage of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* in 1979 came new requirements for the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) before development. This altered the work and began to shift the focus of the Aboriginal Sites Officers employed by NPWS, directing their attention away from recording place-based stories with knowledgeable Aboriginal people to archaeological site recording, survey work and impact assessment. The decade of the survey's most intensive work is thus remembered by many as a brief period which concentrated on contemporary Aboriginal concerns, but which was sandwiched in time between the persistent legislative emphasis in Aboriginal cultural heritage on prehistoric sites and artefacts in the realm of archaeological research.⁹

The central, unwritten research brief of the survey was to discover and record what 'remained' of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW, or in Harry's word's, to find 'what was out there'. Harry's major report *A Gift and a Dreaming* tracks the team's unfolding understanding of what cultural heritage meant in contemporary Australia, from a static anthropological ideal of pre-invasion traditions to the innovative cultural practices of a living, modern-day heritage.

Harry's report outlines the aims, intent, methodologies and recommendations of the survey over its decade of most intensive work. Its focus was on sites within the landscape, in keeping with its place in a land management organisation like NPWS. To do this the team had to seek out the Aboriginal elders across the state, and record the old people's stories of significant places. One example is Ray's report on the Yuin people's sites of significance on the South Coast, which included transcripts of his interviews with one of the survey's key informants, Aboriginal elder Ted Thomas.¹⁰



While Ray's demand that such information be fed back to the communities from which it came was endorsed by Harry, there developed a tension within the team about how to manage the survey information, where it should reside, and to what ends it should be put. This is discussed throughout the following chapters and still resonates with DEC staff and Aboriginal communities today. As Glen relates in his chapter, it was indeed the combination of bureaucratic push from Sharon, Harry's anthropological focus and Ray's passion for cultural revival within communities, which provided the ultimate momentum and success of the survey.

Beyond their site recording work, the team assisted in training NPWS rangers on Aboriginal issues; laboured in the field doing fencing and other site-protection work; were active in negotiations with landowners, local councils, local Aboriginal land councils and developers; and by the early 1980s ran a series of Aboriginal Sites Schools for communities to help educate and support people's burgeoning interest in protecting their cultural heritage.

The survey work required extensive travel across New South Wales and the urgency they felt for their work took the men away from their families for long periods of time, placing a considerable strain on relationships and family life. As the Kelly children relate in their chapter, when *National Parks* came in the door that was the time in their lives when they feel Ray went out of it. Glen's wife Leonora remembers life in the early years of the survey bringing up their children:

We lived in Armidale. We were down at the Pembroke Caravan Park at the time and he used to do a lot of travelling. Sometimes it was for two or three weeks

at a time. I mean I didn't hear from him most of the time when he left home so it was just – 'See you when I see you' – that was it. I mean, it was really hard with the children because I was with them most of the time by myself. I'd get in to such a routine with them and Glen'd come home for a week and blow that routine right out the door ... I mean he was there in body and name but his heart was never there. It was with National Parks.

In 1977 the survey team members and their wives attended a workshop run by Ned Icton. The workshop was convened at a point of great tension not only amongst the team members but also within their families. Leonora remembered:

Well they didn't understand how we as wives felt about it. You know these guys are going on the road for days on end and the money wasn't so great and yeah we struggled. And it caused problems. That was the best thing that Ned Icton ever did as far as involving the wives in that workshop, we felt like he was a real lifesaver. Because to him it was like – these wives are the ones that are really feeling the brunt of all these things too, and with their young families ... Ray's wife actually ... I think she felt it more because they had a lot of little ones. And after that workshop it got better because sometimes we were able to go with them which was a real eye-opener to exactly what they were doing. And I mean some of the places they went! It made me understand more of exactly what he was doing when he was on the road.

Revival and control: Ray's driving goals

As shown in Chapter Two, one of Ray's driving concerns was to feed the knowledge gained from the survey back to Aboriginal communities to stimulate a process of cultural revival. As Harry has pointed out, this was not the first time a deliberate effort at 'cultural renewal' had occurred in the state. In the 1930s, initiation ceremonies fed that movement on the Mid-North Coast.¹¹ Ray's father, Ray Senior, was one of the initiates at the 1935 ceremony at Bellbrook.¹²

Amongst his own Dunghutti people, Ray hoped that the cultural renaissance he envisaged could be achieved partly through the revival of male initiation ceremonies. He maintained a strong focus on male cultural values throughout his work on the survey, holding firm to a belief in separate gender spheres. His daughters remember being left in the car while Ray and the boys would troop off to visit a site, and Tina recounted having to shut her eyes during the long slide nights after Ray's return from the field, when secret men's sites or objects were on the screen.

The male composition of the survey team for most of its life meant that women's sites and stories were under-represented. Sharon Sullivan notes in her chapter the struggle to get funding from the AIAS to provide a female sites officer to seek information from women. This reflected a view held by the Institute, and more widely, that Aboriginal women's business was of less significance to that of the men, an issue which was only just starting to be discussed in the 1970s when the survey began.¹³

Ray's focus on reviving initiations did not meet universal approval in the communities, in part due to the secret nature of information about initiation. Harry points out in his chapter that those who were suspicious of the survey, and did not wish to divulge information, did not speak to the survey team. In Chapter Two, Ray outlines how they overcame that suspicion with some of the initiated men early in the survey.

As pointed out by anthropologist Barry Morris, who worked in the Macleay River area through the 1980s, there was also a concern about the power of the knowledge being collected for the survey:

For some, it was felt better to 'leave it alone'. However this concern was not so much determined by a desire to forget or turn away from the past, but a recognition that one is dealing with dangerous mystical forces ... In this respect, the capacity and the expertise of those in authority was a major point of discussion – that is, their capacity and expertise to manipulate and constrain such forces for the safety of those involved and perhaps the community in general.¹⁴

In Chapter Two, Ray outlines his path to being put through the rules in 1973. When he was diagnosed with cancer in 1980 and given two years to live, some in the community regarded this as a sign that he was working on sites too powerful for him.¹⁵ On the other hand, Ray believes it was the power of traditional healing, especially from his auntie and initiator, that enabled his remarkable recovery.

Throughout the decade relating to the survey, Aboriginal demands for custodianship and control of their cultural material increased, leading to policy and structural change in the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Service. In the 1974 amendments to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*, a provision for the gazettal of 'Aboriginal Places' was included. This marked the growing awareness of the inadequacy of the relic's provision in the Act, and that to adequately conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage much more than just archaeology required protection. At the same time, however, a proposal to include statutory Aboriginal representation on the Relics Committee was rejected by the Minister.¹⁶

Despite this set-back, it was increasingly apparent that revision to the committee structure was necessary, and in 1979 the members voluntarily disbanded the Relics Committee to make way for the Interim Aboriginal Sites Committee (IASC) in 1980.¹⁷ Reflecting the increasing need for Aboriginal involvement, its membership consisted of eight Aboriginal representatives from different regions of NSW and another Aboriginal member nominated by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The other members were three archaeologists, a representative from the Australian Museum, one from NPWS, and an anthropologist. The Aboriginal and archaeological members met separately as sub-groups every two months. Carmelia Corowa, one of the original Aboriginal committee members, commented on the general feelings of Aboriginal members in an August 1982 meeting:

Many Aboriginal people regard the current Aboriginal members of the IASC as being little more than 'rubber stamps' for the non-Aboriginal bureaucrats

... However, this appraisal of Aboriginal members did not carry much weight. Aboriginal members were acutely aware of their responsibilities to the Aboriginal people of NSW, therefore, no decision/recommendation contrary to the known wishes of the majority of Aboriginal people would be endorsed.

**Inaugural meeting of the Interim Aboriginal Sites Advisory Committee,
8 December 1980**

Aboriginal members in attendance:

Mrs A Kelly	Mr T Fields	Ms C Corowa	Mr T Williams
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Non-Aboriginal members in attendance:

Assoc Prof I McBryde	Mr K Cavanagh	Ms S Sullivan	Dr R Lampert
Mrs G Poiner	Dr S Bowlder	Mr G Reid	

Others present:

Hon EL Bedford, Minister for Planning & Environment	Mrs L Love, Minister's private secretary	Mr DA Johnstone, Director NPWS	Mr H Creamer Mr R Kelly
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Promises unfulfilled

Optimism pervaded the 1970s and early 1980s across a range of Aboriginal issues, and the survey was caught up in this mood, which helped refuel expectations of a better deal. While much was accomplished during the decade of the survey, as in other areas of Aboriginal politics, many promises and expectations were left unfulfilled. For example, the protection of sites was an issue of much disquiet. By January 1979, only two sites (Merriman Island and Toolom Falls) had received statutory protection as Aboriginal Places resulting from the survey investigations. In an urgent memo to the NPWS, Harry declared 'This fact damages the credibility of the Survey team and reflects badly on the Service's ability to cope with the important task of legally protecting Aboriginal sites of significance.'¹⁸

It took a further decade for Burrell Bulai or Mount Anderson (Sugar Loaf Mountain), which looms above Bellbrook and holds significant initiation sites so important to Ray's cultural education, to be declared. The low levels of funding in NPWS enabling the protection of Aboriginal sites was a larger issue. According to Sharon Sullivan, writing in 1983:

despite comparatively strong legislation to protect them, Aboriginal sites have never effectively been regarded as part of the Australian heritage ... This is indicated by the comparatively low level of funding and management generally accorded Aboriginal sites as part of the national estate. A large proportion of funding goes to research aimed at extracting information from sites, comparatively little to conserving them.¹⁹

A further ironic legacy of the survey, in contradiction to the desires and objectives of the team in fostering cultural continuity, is that the very recording of sites and stories has in part tended to 'fix' them. For example, in the current environment of Native Title claims where legal redress is often contingent on

Aboriginal places gazetted up to the declaration of Burrell Bulai in September 1989

<i>Aboriginal place</i>	<i>Site no</i>	<i>Land district</i>	<i>Area declared (ha)</i>	<i>Date</i>
Merriman Island	62-7-0009	Bega	2.00	25 Nov 1977
Toolum Falls	03-6-0001	Casino	3.70	16 Dec 1977
Nymboida	12-6-0061	Grafton	16.03	6 Apr 1979
Two Sisters	62-7-0021	Moruya	32.37	12 Oct 1979
Long Gully	21-6-0015	Kempsey	40.00	14 Dec 1979
Devil's Chimney	21-2-0005	Armidale	145.00	8 Aug 1980
Stony Creek		Inverell	6.25	10 Jul 1981
Casino Bora Ground	04-4-0025	Casino	32.38	24 Jul 1981
Pulbah Island	45-7-0088	Gosford	68.80	26 Mar 1982
Boobera Lagoon	02-4-0022	Warialda	151.00	10 Feb 1984
Biamanga	62-3-0504	Bega	7508.00	1 Jun 1984
Jack's Lookout	32-6-0002	Western Division	200.00	22 Nov 1985
Surveyor's Lake Rocks	32-6-0001	Western Division	100.00	22 Nov 1985
Saltwater	38-3-0259	Taree	13.00	18 Apr 1986
Carraí Waterholes	21-5-0005	Kempsey	4.50	7 Nov 1986
Cocked Hat Rocks	21-5-0005	Lismore	0.15	6 Mar 1987
Northcote Bora Ring	01-6-0002	Moree	6.70	11 Mar 1988
Burrell Bulai	21-6-0168	Kempsey	871.00	22 Sept 1989

written evidence of cultural attachment, those whose stories were not recorded by the survey team have potentially been disadvantaged.

Thirty years on and into the future

On 13 May 2004, a convention was held to celebrate the achievements of the survey team, and discuss the state of play over thirty years later. Ray, Harry, Glen and Sharon shared the panel to reflect on the pioneering work of the survey, reiterated in their chapters in this book. The organisers of the day, the DEC's Cultural Heritage Division, noted:

The work of the Sites of Significance Survey Team is increasingly relevant today as its work confirms the direction that DEC is taking with the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The body of work painstakingly gathered by team members continues to inform priority work around Aboriginal places, Repatriation and site conservation. It confirms the importance of post-contact contemporary places to Aboriginal communities, an area that has often been neglected when a literal interpretation is taken of the relics provision in Part 6 of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The work of the team emphasises the importance of working closely with Aboriginal communities and gaining their trust in identifying and then managing important places in partnership. Most importantly the Cultural Heritage Division takes an increasing pride in the work carried out by their colleagues 30 years ago. The work of the Survey Team provides DEC with inspiration for work on Aboriginal cultural heritage into the future.²⁰



Archaeologist, Isabel McBryde, who sat on both the Relics Committee and the Interim Committee, commented at the 2004 convention that the survey was a world first in terms of bureaucratic legislation working with Indigenous people, around which its own mythology has been constructed. For Glen, it was time to go back out and do it again, to find the new stories and new places of significance to NSW Aboriginal communities, alongside the ones they had recorded thirty years before.²¹

ABOVE John Kelly and Ray Kelly in front of Burrell Bulai (photo courtesy of the Kelly Family).





2 'Before it's too late': the survey and early life

Extracts from the written and oral texts of Ray Kelly

Ray's voice is recorded in this chapter in diverse forms – from his oral testimony, published articles, official reports and work correspondence. In this way, the chapter sketches the evolving philosophies that drove Ray's work over his time on the Sites of Significance Survey, and provides some background to his early life. The chapter begins with an early report that Ray wrote in June 1975 'A revival of the Aboriginal culture: We, the Aboriginal people, need this to achieve our identity'. It is a report on the importance of the survey as he saw it, outlining a number of the themes and philosophies which would continue throughout his work with National Parks.

Introduction

Two years ago, when our Survey had first begun, many white experts had given us the impression that there were no living sites – or very few – in the State of New South Wales. However, because of the strategy which my colleague [Howard Creamer] and I have adopted, we have revealed that this is not the case. One of the main reasons for this success is having an Aboriginal researcher in this field.

In the first instance, our ambition was to get an overall picture of those areas that were more worthwhile as areas to begin working on. To be fair to all the Aboriginal people in NSW we felt that a whistle-stop tour was necessary first. This proved quite fruitful for both researchers, as we found many areas that were more important than others.

The area that we felt needed most urgent attention was the mid-north coast and far north coast of NSW. These were the places in the State which most recently had seen the tribal initiations. The old men are still alive but not likely to live long. Because these men had been exploited for free, or paid very little by researchers in the past, we sometimes found them reluctant to pass on significant information without being paid an informant's wage. The only case we could make to them was that the information that we received would be used for our own Aboriginal people rather than for the benefit of whites. Because they have been misled by false promises in the past, we felt we would have to give them a short-term result [fencing the Bellbrook Mission

LEFT Ray Kelly, c 1980. This photo is special to all members of the family, most of whom have a copy on a wall in their houses (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

cemetery] in the way of feedback and protection. Luckily our strategy worked, and then they began to participate in a trusting way.

Some difficulties

However, they – or some of their relatives – have been more political, and the result is that more pressure is being put on us in the survey team for more protection of Aboriginal sites. More Aboriginal people are asking for this than those who have information to give us – and they often ask for it even where there is actually no real tribal significance in what they want protected. This can make it difficult for us, and takes up time that we would otherwise spend on actual site-recording.

My own feeling is that we have to make a genuine effort to respond to these demands so that the work will be able to continue. I am hopeful that when we begin systematic work for the revival of the culture for our people – for which funds should be readily available – that the unreasonable and tribally ill-informed demands now being made on us will be gradually reduced. I also hope that criticisms now directed at me for playing an ‘Uncle Tom’ role will be shown to be unfair and wrong. What I want to see very desperately is for our people to have a chance to build a modern Aboriginal culture out of our tribal traditions. It has to be done in a face-to-face way before our resource people die.

How to achieve a ‘revival’ of the culture

As far as I am concerned, I think we should try to establish a history for our people: we have needed a history all these 200 years since Cook arrived. The meaning of our history in particular is that we have to go through a phase of re-establishing our idea of our own humanity in our own eyes, after the damage done to us by white beliefs about us. It is not that things have to be proven against whites so much as proven about our own humanity.

All the migrants have a history and culture of their own which they value, even if the majority white society doesn’t. We, the true Australians, are regarded as beggars in our own country when it comes to culture and history, as well as everything else. I believe some of us have been unconsciously waiting for the opportunity to link our tribal culture with the western man’s culture, something whites didn’t think about. They were far too concerned with pressuring us into absorbing a culture which was destined to fail us. Now that some of us are aware of what we have lost, there seems to be an urgent need to restore whatever is left of our culture. To do this successfully we must involve many more Aborigines in the recording and protection programme. I am sure the time is right now if we want to make the Survey a success for both Aborigines and whites. I am certain 1976 will be too late then all will be lost forever.

Establishing the true meaning of culture

My fears are that if these sites are only recorded for academic values, and not protected for Aboriginal values, then again the Aboriginal values will be cast aside. This is an issue so important to me that I would have to reconsider what

I am really in this job for if I am pressed on this issue. One thing that I am certain of is that I am not in it for the academic values if these want to cast the Aboriginal values aside.

If we only receive the message of our culture through a book in academic words it will be meaningless to us: it will only be a western academic's interpretation of our Aboriginal values in life: it won't be what I wanted it to be or what I believe we Aboriginal people want it to be. I believe it can be a light for us. It can give us an understanding of knowing who we were and where we came from. Knowing this can give us a foundation for achieving things in life. Where the tradition of you whites – the convict system and so on – could never be a source of spiritual comfort to you, *our* traditions could be a real help to us. Speaking honestly, I would have to say that Australia's first white settlers put the Aboriginal people down from the beginning when they failed to look at the culture of our people in the right way. The right way, I feel, would have been for the Aboriginal people to be treated as human beings. Most of white society has neglected to do this until recently when Aboriginal people have begun to absorb the western education and become politically minded, like whites.

The future

For me, I see the role of the Sacred Sites Survey team, the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a linked one. It is to encourage the Aboriginal people to become involved in a rebuilding of the Aboriginal culture. To achieve this though, we must first find a way to involve the Aboriginal people, and not cut them off whenever they want to participate. In fact, in my experience, active encouragement to participate is essential.

This involvement of our people is necessary in my way of seeing it because we have to learn again to have respect for ourselves as human beings after what has happened to us. We almost believe what whites believed about us. The Sacred Sites Survey and my own involvement with tribal men has had a very special meaning for me that I believe all of us need.

Aboriginal people generally have good reasons in history for not trusting white people. The destruction your forbears have caused to our culture and our humanity has been very nearly complete. What we need is a chance now to do something for ourselves. I am taking the risk that my own trust in the human intentions of the white society in 1975 will, for a change, be justified.²²

Early years

Ray was born on 8 January 1938. He spent most of his early life in the isolated Mid-North Coast mountain country of Bellbrook Aboriginal Reserve, 55 kilometres west of Kempsey. An only child, he had a half-sister Phyllis and has an adopted sister Laurel. He moved to Burnt Bridge Reserve with his family when he was sixteen, and spent twelve months in Sydney working for the railways. By then he was boxing in the tents of Jim Sharman and others. In 1957 he moved to Armidale where he met Alice McKenzie, and soon after they started their family. The following interviews with Ray were conducted by Dee Murphy and her team.

Childhood

I was born in Kempsey, raised in Bellbrook.

Did you have other brothers and sisters?

I always laugh at this one, when people ask me that. My old dad took one look at me and said: 'No, if that's the best I can do, I'll give the game away!' I was the only one. I learnt later in life that I had a step-sister – Phyllis – she was my half-sister.

What was your mum's name?

Margaret Adelaide Campbell.

And your dad's name?

Here's something that you're going to find hard to understand. His name was Raymond Chevrot Kelly. One of me grandson's got the name Chevrot.

Is that a language word?

No, it's Mexican. I was always known as Ramos. Ramos is Mexican for Raymond. I don't know where it come from. But Dad always had the name of Pedro.

And your nickname – Choonkley?

Well, it's now spelt Shoonkley, but it really should be Choonkley. ['In Bellbrook you'll find a lot of Gumbaynggir. Take my name Choonkley – you'll find it in Gumbaynggir, means to be carried over someone's shoulder.' – Tape 5] And how I got that nickname was I used to always be running behind me grandfather, singing, calling out, 'Choonkle me, Grandfather, choonkle me'. So he finished up calling me Choonkley. And how it all turned out, he used to sing the song to me 'You're my little Piccaninny'. Instead of him saying 'You're my little Piccaninny', he used to say 'You're my little Choonkley'. [Tape 1]

I spent a lot of time in Taylors Arm when I was a young boy. We always had plenty of fish to eat because me old dad – he was something special with a spear. He'd get 'em from under the logs. Sometimes he'd only have a one-pronged spear, most times he'd have a three pronged spear. The one-pronged one is when you put it down amongst the roots of the tree. When you spear your fish you dive down and get it. Three-pronged – we used to use it off a bridge. That's where I got all my expertise from. I was quite good with a spear.

One of the first traditional things I was shown was by the old chap named Donald Wagga Thompson, and his wife Ivy Long.²³ We were up at a place called Towell Creek. The three of us were after porcupine [echidna] – he was trying to whistle em up. You whistle to a porcupine and it'll whistle back. How old Donald Thompson used to get the possum out of the trees – he'd cut a hole in the butt of the tree, and then start the fire up and smoke 'em. They'd go down to the bottom and go to sleep ... There are two kinds of education – the English education and there's knowledge. Knowledge is probably better than being able to manipulate a computer.

My schooling days, we had two English teachers. One was a real bastard and he was an air pilot in the Second World War. And the other old bloke was George Freysher. English. You'd swear he was one of the Queen's guards! He was



a good teacher – a lot of us used to respond to him where we couldn't respond to the other bugger. He [the ex-pilot] used to call us clots and boofheads, and didn't give us any encouragement whatsoever. I can remember him hitting me on the arm one day with a cane. And the cane was split and when he hit me it opened up and tore the skin off me. He was scared to ride his horse home 'cause my mother was ready to fight this teacher. George was more interested in nature study. We used to all excel ourselves, because we all knew the different plants and we would get good marks. He made us feel a bit more important. So that's how my education started.

When Lew Ellem first come to Bellbrook, I was in first class at eleven or twelve years of age. I can remember he said, 'If you concentrate, you'll go to High School' ... I think it was in the early '80s – I went round to see Mr Ellem, he was living next to the Bowling Club there in Grafton. And when I told him I was working for National Parks and Wildlife Service, he said to me, 'I knew you'd be able to do something like that, Ray'. But I never had any faith in myself as an educated person, but as he said to me, 'You're a quick learner'. But that's why I still play with these words: 'Intrigue my mind, capture my positive imagination, let's mingle together and stop meddling'. And I think there's a lot of merit in that.

So he had me ready for High School in about two or three years, but I didn't wish to go, because we inherited five of the Thompson family, three of the Murray kids and there was my sister, Laurel Cohen. And when I got this job I was the only breadwinner ... That was in the early 'fifties. The day I turned fifteen, I left school on the Friday and took a job on Saturday, and

ABOVE Ray's last boxing match, Armidale 1966 aged 28, where he fought Peter Leaney (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).

I was getting 12 pound 10 a week. I used to push a bloody wheelbarrow full of concrete. The first concrete bridge to be built up-river, coming down the hill from Bellbrook. The first day's work I had there, we started at 6 o'clock in the morning and knocked off at 10 that night. It was just as well that the contractor drove us. I was asleep before I got home! We worked for probably six months, and built the bridge up there and at another place out here, going towards South West Rocks, called Polo Creek. It was good money, but I never saved any because it all went on food. I've always had good jobs because I wasn't afraid to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. And I think that's where the honesty comes out of me. [Tape 2]

Boxing

I was in Bellbrook when I had my first fight.

How old where you?

Fifteen. I got that many bloody hidings it wasn't funny. I used to get sick and tired of hidings because my old man – he used to give me a hiding because I didn't fight back!

So you learnt to fight.

I had to. Me first professional fight I had in Kempsey here. I won that. Bloke by the name of Dick Lackey. I beat him the first fight, and he beat me the second fight. I had no food on the second fight. I used to go fishing with my old uncle, bloke by the name of Harold Davis. And when I come down to fight I was training on lemon sandwiches. Sometimes we had a bit of fish with it.

So what did you win when you boxed?

Pound a round. That's what we won in those days. Then I used to go to Port Macquarie and do me boxing over there. There were times, with a bit of luck, you could fight ten nights in a row. Open-air boxing ring – where the town green is now – just behind the Post Office there. There was times when I looked like getting out, my old man used to throw the towel in.

He was your trainer?

Yes. That's why I never finished up punch drunk.

I think my best performance ever was when I went to Armidale. I was out of the boxing ring for 18 months because of the big car smash in Sydney – see all me eyes got cut. I went to Armidale and I was working out at a place called 'Dianbarena', big cattle station. My dad was out there and we were grubbing timber. And I come into town and was interested in going to watch the boxing. And the trainer, bloke called Mickey Bower, said 'Do you want to come to the fights on Saturday night at Guyra – come for a ride'. When I got up there the boxer who was supposed to fight the main fighter didn't turn up, and they asked me whether I'd like to take this bloke on.

And you beat him!

He went into the quarter-finals for the Olympic Games. I knocked him out in 45 seconds! [Tape 2]

Twenty-eight when I finished boxing. That photo up there [points to photo on wall]. I give it away because I didn't want to fight any more. That very day. I fought the heavy-weight champion of Australia. I knocked him out. Three rounds. [Tape 4]

I had it in my nature – it was embedded there because of the pessimism people made me go through – the pessimistic lifestyle I had to go through. I became very, very bitter inside, and it has taken me a long time to get over it, but that bitterness was the main ingredient of my being a fighter.²⁴

Armidale Association for Aborigines

In 1966 Ray was chosen, along with another local Aboriginal man, Jim Smith, to accompany the AAA representative, Ned Icton, on an educational trip to New Zealand. The conference marked a turning point in Ray's life, opening his eyes to new political possibilities, and embarking on his own psychological and philosophical journey through his friendship and trust of Ned.

In 1966 I became involved purely by accident. I didn't belong to the Association at that time and I found out about what the Association was doing in other fields when my ex-mother-in-law, Ethel McKenzie, told me about a trip people were going on to New Zealand. I didn't feel I had a great deal to offer at that time ... My name was mentioned along with a number of others without any voting or anything and I was chosen to go.

I was very introverted at that time – I didn't do a great deal of talking and I didn't do a great deal of talking in New Zealand either. For the first four days I said nothing. Other Aboriginal participants had been able to get up and thank the speakers and so forth but when it came to my turn I added nothing. Jim Smith was most constructive in his attempt to show the plight of our people.

We were looking at Maoris at least fifty years in advance of us ... It gave me a look at what could occur for Aboriginal people ... We had to get involved in becoming assimilated and associating with Western civilisation. That was a bit of a drag. I felt that if you were an Aboriginal you should be concentrating on Aboriginal stuff. We had to meet their standards of living, and that was rather confusing.

I regard Ned as one of the great mentors in my life. He helped me speak more freely. When we went to the Human Relations Workshops in 1970 he helped me to understand that there was another 'being' inside me. I had always looked at the being on the outside without understanding the being on the inside.²⁵

The NSW Sites of Significance Survey

In the early 1970s, after years of labouring work around Armidale, Ray joined the outreach tutoring program for Aboriginal students run by the Department of Continuing Education at the University of New England. From there he found out about the Aboriginal researcher position on the survey. He began work on 29 May 1973. Ray's NPWS field dairies clearly show that his work on the survey constantly

took him away from home for long stretches of time. His field diaries reveal that his travels often took him to Sydney for meetings, to western or southern NSW, many visits the length and breadth of the north coast, and sometimes interstate. He was the primary recorder of 193 sites now listed in the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS), and participated in the recording of many more.

In the early years of the survey, Ray, Harry Creamer and Glen Morris recorded sites across New South Wales. Ray and his family lived for a time at Mutawintji near Broken Hill to look after that site. In 1977, the Kelly family moved from Armidale to the new regional NPWS office at Grafton. In 1980 he was diagnosed with cancer and given two years to live. Later back in Grafton, as more Aboriginal Sites Officers were employed within their local areas, Ray concentrated on the North Coast as well as taking up duties for a short time in Sydney. After the survey had finished, he relocated to the Port Macquarie office while living at 'the farm' at Clybucca. His written reports concentrate mostly on the North Coast, particularly in the Dunghutti and Gumbaynggir areas of the Mid-North Coast.²⁶

Neville Crewe was my boss at Armidale. Neville had this application about the site officer's position and he said, 'What do you reckon about applying for this job?' So I applied for it and I got it. There was an old bloke by the name of Victor Shepherd, who if he had got the job I would have had no grief whatsoever. Howard had his interview a week before me. I'm told how I got the job. Tom Lewis [the Minister for Lands responsible for National Parks] got this letter from either Sharon Sullivan or Lesley Maynard which said we'd like to employ Howard Creamer and his colleague Ray Kelly. So he didn't question whether I had a degree or not, 'cause Howard Creamer had his degree. And I got in. 29th of May '73.

I did most of my training with Howard. He was a pretty good tutor you know. I had a lot of admiration for Howard, even though I had my bloody rough times with him. There was times when we had to fly from Sydney all the way out to Tibooburra. I had some shocking experiences with Howard and his flying! We flew in '74, from Armidale across to Cobar and we stayed overnight, and next day took off for Wilcannia. Just above the trees we were flying, cause it was too foggy. It was a shocking experience for me 'cause when we got to Wilcannia, we landed in the wet sand. At the time I was fuming! But that's where my philosophical understanding was starting to creep on me. Because we had that experience but we come out of it all right. So I started to accept that kind of thing. A couple of days after we flew from Wilcannia to Cowra, and we couldn't find the airport. I gotta give him credit for it because he found this little hole and we shot through it. And we come out near the airport. It was a frightening experience I can tell you. [Tape 4]

In the interviews conducted with Ray by Dee Murphy, Cheryl Brown and others during 2002 and 2003, Ray began by outlining his own cultural credentials and the significance of his mentors in preparing him for his work on the survey:

The words I used [were] 'ginookin', 'djutu', 'meeling'. 'Djutu' means backside and 'ginookin' means wet arse. That's the way the old fellows used to explain



that word. Wet arse – ‘He’d tell you anything, and go and believe it himself’. I know I’m not a ginookin because I had two of probably the greatest mentors you could ever wish to have, namely Len De Silva and Harry Buchanan. Gumbaynggir men.

There was a period when the Dunghutti and Gumbaynggir tribal people had gone through where it was almost taboo to teach anyone anything. I was very fortunate to have him [Len De Silva] as my step-father-in-law. In [1973] he demanded that either I leave the job [on the survey] or go through the initiation. There were two things he was protecting. Me, and to make sure that I didn’t divulge any of the really secret sacred information. [Tape 1]

In a report in December 1976, Ray wrote about the male initiation ceremonies of the Mid-North Coast (called the keepara):

I did not have the privilege to attend any of these Keepara’s as they were last held in the late 1930s. That Keepara was held by the Dunghutti people at Bellbrook near the Aboriginal Reserve. There were 60 people present both as initiators and young initiates. My father Ray Kelly Senior who is now deceased, had on that occasion gone through ...

Although I missed out on the last group initiation held in this State I was fortunate to absorb part of the stage of the Thilkil Keepara. I was put through these rules in Armidale on the 5th August, 1973. My initiators were Frank Archibald and Len De Silva. Both Frank and Len are initiated men ... The ceremony I attended was rather short ... However I saw this ceremony as serving two purposes. Firstly, assuring me I was now safe to visit their sacred

ABOVE Ray Kelly and a significant consultant to the survey: the late Guboo Ted Thomas at Wallaga Lakes, c 1974 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

sites and secondly binding me to a commitment that I would withhold all sacred information I know from any documentation I intend to write.²⁷

Later in the same interview, Ray said:

Fundamentally, there's a sign that Old Leonard showed me. He said, 'That's like your entry'. Well when I went to Harry Buchanan, in 1974, and I said to him, 'Can you take me and show me the carved tree?' And he said, 'It's only for initiated men'. And I said, 'I went through the initiation'. And he said, 'No you never, not my initiation'. Then I said, 'Well what does this mean?' I showed him the sign and he said, 'I know who put you through the rules'. It was so significant so that only initiated men knew it. If you hadn't been through the initiation, you would've never known it.

Fundamentally enough, I was shown a very similar sign when I was given my totem when I was a little boy. I distinctly remember that as though it was yesterday. But what makes it so memorable is the fact that my initiation sign was almost the same sign. [Tape 1]

See, the old fellows, one day, they philosophically asked me, they knew that one day I'm going to have to be talking about all this stuff. 'Mayra Gaya' [means] *leader*. My interpretation of it – I think it's a Gumbaynggir word that come from Oban [Baanbai], from the Oban tribe. [Tape 7]

Throughout his years working on the survey, Ray wrote many reports and published two articles in academic proceedings. As a number of interviewees in the following chapters tell, the process of writing was for Ray a great struggle because of his limited and poor formal education. However the passion for his work meant he persevered, forming his own inimitable style. Ray's reports not only show the type of work the survey team accomplished, but also adds to his own history telling:

'I was more clear minded then. When I used to get really emotional, I'd write a lot.' [Tape 7]

One of the early places Ray and Harry visited as part of the survey was Bellbrook Mission. Ray wrote a report on their visit in April 1974:

When we first visited Bellbrook, in August 1973, we found the fully initiated men reluctant to speak to us about significant sites in the area. Because I had lived on the Mission for the first sixteen years of my life, I had some knowledge of where the sites were. I have roamed the area with my father who pointed out some of the old initiation grounds without passing on any significant information to me. Having the knowledge of where the sites were and knowing these men had been initiated confirmed to me that they were withholding information from us.

We then talked about the Mission cemetery which seemed more important to them. The old men spoke freely about this site and who was buried there. We were hoping to find a way of getting 'on-side' with the old men. Because they showed more concern for the cemetery we then told them there might be a possibility of the NSW Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee agreeing

17 NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE FIELD STAFF DIARY

Received on: _____ Date: _____ Received for: _____

		UTCALL
On:	7 AM	Return to Gordon by light aircraft with Howard Creamer arrived Gordon
Off:	4:30 PM	Office duties in Gordon Office in the afternoon
		Stayed at: (CAMP/HOTEL/S.A.)
On:	8 AM	
Off:		as above

Memorandum

to allow us to fence it. The fencing of this site would also make possible some publicity ... We were sure this would be the only way of breaking down their barrier of fear and distrust in our intentions.

The cemetery is very important to the old men, because all of their people were buried there. Some of the really powerful men are buried in the cemetery ... Both my grandmother, Margaret Kelly, and my great grandmother are also buried there ...

The Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee agreed last year to our submission for the fencing of the site. ... On Wednesday [20 March 1973] I was very pleased by the number of people who had offered their assistance for free.

Ray records that a number of problems arose in getting the fencing material. Eventually it was procured in Armidale and then transported to Bellbrook. Ray, Harry and others worked over a weekend and into the next week to build the fence. His older boys remember helping with the work.

The report Ray wrote on Bellbrook goes on to detail the preparation for the Thilkil stage of initiation and to describe the initiation grounds they learnt about in the Bellbrook area. He concludes:

This is all that I know at the moment but when we have looked further at the Bellbrook sites it will be possible to write a Report on all the stages of initiation and the boora grounds where they were held. We are happy that our strategy seems to be working very well.²⁸

In another report on a follow-up trip to Bellbrook in July 1974, Ray explained the positive

shift in attitude a number of the older people demonstrated towards the survey team.²⁹ Despite their successes, however, there were always people who wished to have nothing to do with Ray or the survey. Rays remembers:

Ted Ballangarry – a knowledgeable fellow there, and he would not tell me one solitary thing. He knew a lot about the Dunghutti side of it over at Bowraville, but he wasn't interested in talking at all. See a lot of people who go through the initiation withhold information. [Tape 7]

In December 1976, Ray reported on a field trip to visit Harry Buchanan and the Nambucca area of the Mid-North Coast. This was conducted with his colleague Terry Donovan, who had joined the survey team just over twelve months before. The extract below provides some insight into Ray's aims for the information gleaned from the survey:

My research in this area concerns sites which give some idea of the Gambangarr, Ngumbar and Thungutti tribal area, their beliefs and way of life. However, these sites may not have been put into practice since they were visited by the last Ngooloongar man around the turn of the century. I don't think many of these sites warrant physical protection ... Therefore this report is intended to fulfill our research commitments far more than our protection commitments.

However, I hope the information compiled in this report meets the needs of the Service and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and will later on assist Aborigines in our endeavour to rebuild the Aboriginal culture to its rightful place.³⁰

Cultural revival

Ray articulated his concerns for Aboriginal cultural heritage early in his working life with NPWS and the survey. They included his desire to use the information the team was collecting to bring about a 'revival' or 'renaissance' of Aboriginal culture in New South Wales; a demand that all researchers return or 'feed back' information to their Aboriginal informants and their communities; and that Aboriginal people take back control of their cultural heritage material. One of Ray's central focuses in his published writing and reports was on male initiation – a practice through which he hoped to reintroduce traditional and contemporary culture more widely into NSW Aboriginal communities. These excerpts come from a 1975 article:

I feel we need to get all our people to become knowledgeable about Aboriginal history and culture – things that only a few of us seem to be interested in at present. To get them interested and knowledgeable, we have to make sure first that the knowledge is preserved in its Aboriginal meaning and then fed back into the people generally. I see this as the task of the Sacred Sites Survey which we are undertaking in NSW ...

The first problem blocking the way towards this at the present is to encourage white anthropologists, archaeologists and linguists in their 'ivory towers' to give direct feedback to the people they have obtained their material from ...

The next block to overcome is the white education system, which has not



accepted the need for Aboriginal kids to be educated in their own history and the significance of those less-sacred sites which it is proper they should know about ...

Another group who already feel the lack of their own knowledge are men aged 30–60 who have shown signs of wanting to absorb the rules of the traditional system in a somewhat modernised form. We have plans on the Survey to feedback the results of our research to this group by involving them in projects to protect the sites and also, maybe, by a revival of the initiations.

A whole new education and 'feedback' system will have to be gradually built up, using all the old knowledge as a basis, together with a lot of new ideas coming from our thrashing out together the present-day realities that our people have to cope with. How to get this to happen? Maybe I'll be able to tell you in a few years from now, after I've graduated further in my own initiation!³¹

In another report just over a decade on in 1986, Ray wrote:

For the past 12 years I have been trying to bring about a reintroduction of the tribal initiation amongst the Thungutti elders on the Macleay River ... The situation was, that the old initiators were slowly passing on and little or no effort was being made by them to engage themselves in this, our Keeperah, or reawakening.

In December 1985, the elderly men at long last, led by the mentor Mr Len De Silva ... voiced his encouragement to lead the Keeperah ... With the funds being made available [from NPWS], the ball was in the hands of we Aboriginal people.

ABOVE Vital consultants to the early success of the survey: John Quinlan, Victor Shepherd and Les Smith talking to Ray Kelly at Bellbrook, c 1976 (photo courtesy of Harry Creamer).

Sketch Map of the
 Mid-North Coast
 of N.S.W. Showing
 Location of sites.



Towns

▲ Aboriginal Sites



Woogoolah

CUMBANGARRA

Coffs Harbour

Bellingen

Urunga

Bouraville

CUMBANGARRA

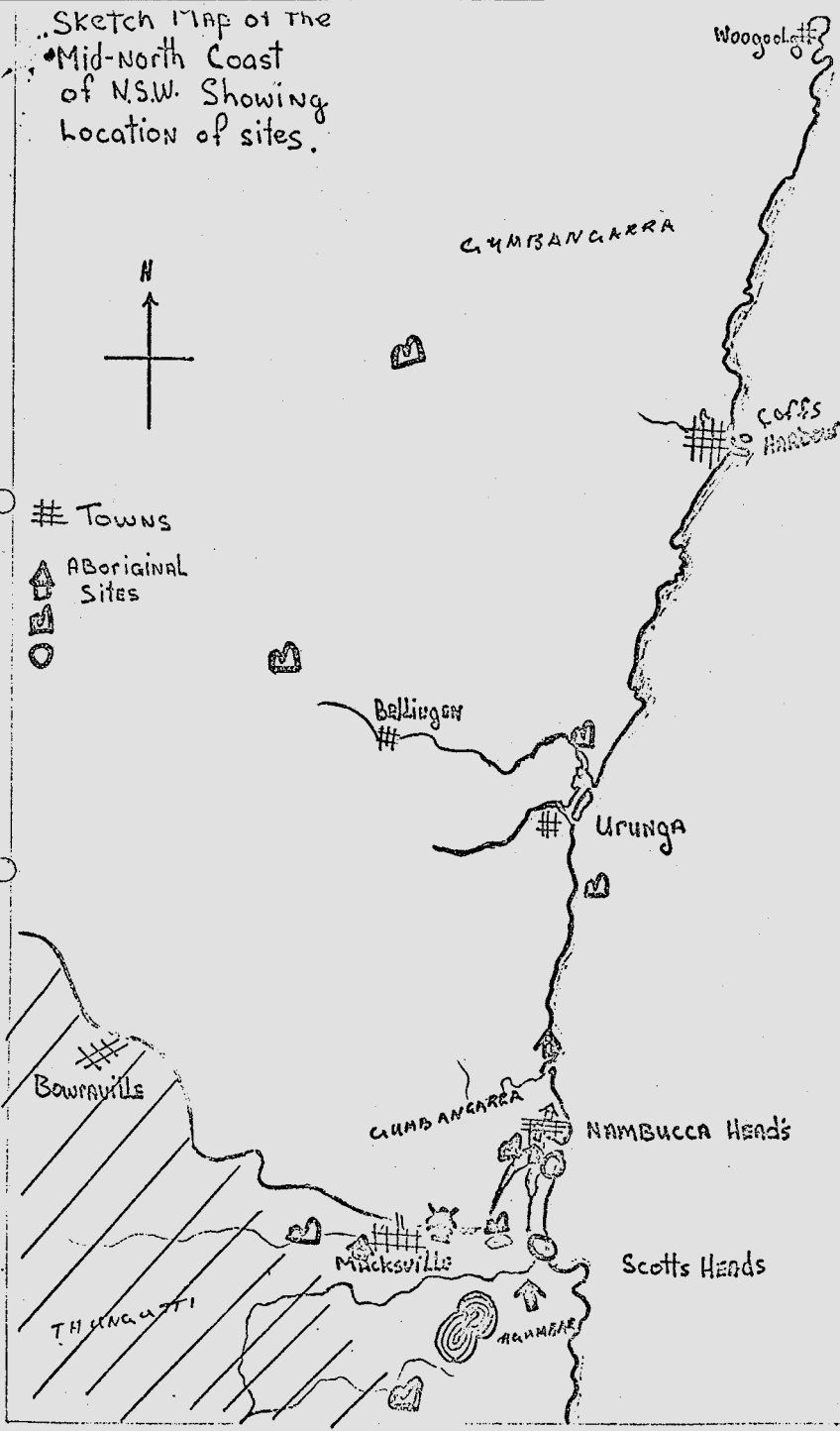
NAMBUECA Head's

Macksville

Scotts Heads

THUNGATTI

AGUMBA



... I am not able to disclose any of the rituals that happened at this Keeperah, however I can say that the three other initiates showed their delight in having witnessed their initial entry into Aboriginal adult manhood ... I am sure the interested Aboriginal society is now ready to take a stance to bring back a part of their culture they unwillingly let fall by the way side.³²

The hoped-for full initiation ceremony, however, did not happen in Ray's time at National Parks. By the mid-1980s, his frustration and anger with the white bureaucratic system, and also with elements of Aboriginal politics both within and outside the Service, was increasingly apparent. In an 'open letter to my Aboriginal colleagues' regarding the process of their Aboriginal Network Meetings, he implored them to act on the philosophical lessons he had been learning since he attended the first Human Relations Workshops with Ned Icteton in the early 1970s:

From my own personal point of view we all are to blame for the lack of effectiveness of our past meeting. I have concluded that [it is] because we don't appear to have any ideas of where we are going at this point in time. Nor do we have strong cohesive ideas of what we want to achieve. I wonder if we are all subconsciously bogged down in suspicion about each other? If that is true, then we must all work towards finding a better human understanding of each other ... By this method we may [begin] to crystallise and analyse, then make positive plans for the future. I maintain we are all adult minded people and I feel sure that should we begin to work on each others adult intellect we, I am sure, can find harmony and unity amongst our colleagues.³³

Conclusion

In 2003, when Dee Murphy interviewed him, Ray returned to his belief in the need for 'human understanding'. He also indicated the ongoing need to record the old people's stories. Referring to the Ngimboy men of the Bellbrook area he told Dee:

They were the rulers of the mountain, little hairy men. There's a place called Budgaree Corner. An Aboriginal name. Down in Budgaree Corner is where the little Ngimboy used to live. Believe it or not, you go there anytime and if you know what you're looking for, you'll find the imprints of a little Ngimboy man's feet in the sandstone.

I was a little bit confused about where Budgaree Corner was. So I asked Auntie Cinder Calligan if she'd show me where it was. She told me her father used to blow the gum leaf, and he'd go down to Budgaree Corner to the little Ngimboy men and they'd come out and make friends with him.

I wrote an article in the paper about the little Ngimboy men and our connection with them. In the *Argus*, quite some years ago. One of the academics – I never knew him – responded to my paper. He said how would you know, because the little Ngimboy men would have died out four thousand years ago.

ABOVE 'Sketch Map of the Mid-North Coast of NSW showing Location of sites'. The survey team drew maps of sites for their reports by hand. This is an example of one of Ray's (Ray Kelly and Terry Donovan, Sites Report 16th December 1976, Aboriginal Sites Register Reports Catalogue 484).

That was his academic interpretation.

See, I think all we need to do is a re-memorabilia with all the able Aboriginal people and a lot of this stuff would surface. What we need to do is work out what the mysticism is. And you'll never be able to do that and come to an educated conclusion until you start getting people together, mingling together and not meddling, and simply pondering the ideas. [Tape 7]

RIGHT The Kelly family at Grafton, 1979. Back row from left: Allan, John Boy and Ray Sr. Middle: Alice holding Laurel's daughter Suana, Ray Jr and John. Front: Thelma, Leah holding Peter Combo and Tina. By this time Laurel was living in Sydney, often with the Delaneys, and the older boys were about to leave home. (photo courtesy of the Kelly family).