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An archaeology of historical reality?: A case study of the recent past

Alistair Paterson

University of Western Australia

Nicholas Gill

University of Wollongong, ngill@uow.edu.au

M.J. Kennedy

Mungkarta Aboriginal Land Trust

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Keywords

case, archaeology, historical, reality, past, recent, study

Disciplines

Medicine and Health Sciences | Social and Behavioral Sciences

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An archaeology of historical reality? A case study of the recent past

Alistair Paterson¹, Nicholas Gill² and M. Kennedy^{3‡}

Abstract

An Aboriginal elder, an archaeologist and a geographer report on an interdisciplinary project about colonial-era settlement in the Murchison and Davenport ranges in the Northern Territory. Oral history, physical evidence and historical records reveal a distinct central Australian cultural landscape and show that archaeology can do more than merely exhume material to support historical 'realities'. This project provides new or improved understandings of (1) colonial technology in pastoral ventures, (2) continuity and change in Aboriginal life following European arrival, (3) social behaviour in colonial settings, and (4) alternatives to Eurocentric Australian histories.

Introduction

This paper introduces recent research into colonial-era settlement, predominantly 20th century, in the Murchison and Davenport ranges in the Northern Territory. The research forms part of a joint interdisciplinary project by an archaeologist (Paterson), a geographer (Gill) and a Warumungu elder (M. Kennedy). The project began in 1999 and aims to generate a history of the ranges with a cross-cultural regional perspective. We use evidence from material remains at archaeological sites, oral histories and archival documents to describe and interpret this 20th century cultural landscape. The ranges are in Warumungu (north) and Kaytej (south) country (Fig. 1), although events in the 20th century saw other Aboriginal people living and working in the ranges. These include Alyawarre, Anmatyerre and Warlpiri people. The two principal sites discussed in this paper are located in the northern part of the Murchison Range in Warapunja (fire) country, a part of Warumungu country.

Goals of the research

M. Kennedy, an Aboriginal elder and veteran of the pastoral industry, initiated the project. We three adopted an interdisciplinary approach to explore our common interests in pastoralism, work, landscape and central Australia, and developed a project where the material from archaeological sites is used with oral histories, biographical mapping and archival research to recreate individual and group work histories across this landscape. We initially intended to focus only on the Aboriginal involvement in cattle properties, but the project was broadened to include mining as well as other ethnicities, for example Chinese and Afghan residents of the ranges. This happened as most aspects of life in the ranges

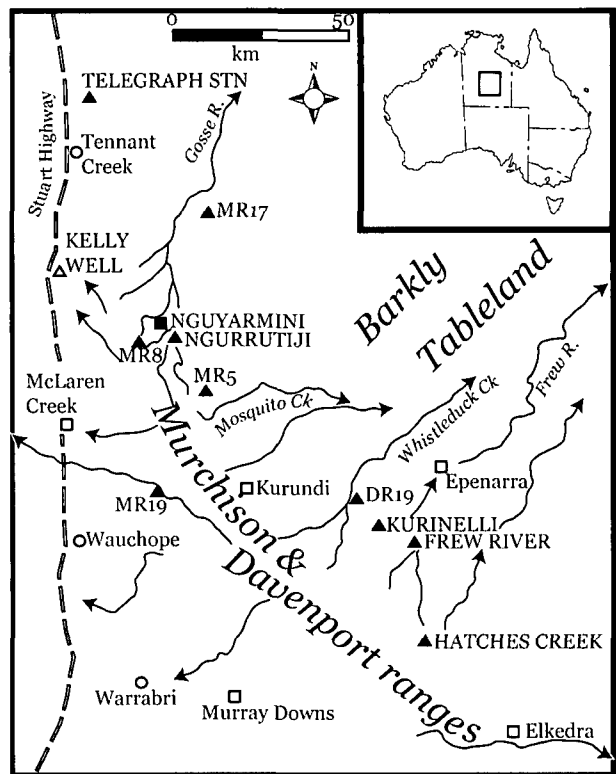


Figure 1 Location of sites in the Murchison and Davenport Ranges. Black in-filled symbols indicate archaeological sites recorded in this project and referred to here. Triangles indicate pastoral, mining or settlement uses; squares indicate pastoral head-stations; circles indicate large settlements.

are rarely the subject of historical writing and represent a hidden corner of the colonial world and a largely disenfranchised population. Fine-grained and localised insight into relationships between Aboriginal people and pastoralists and miners was generated, as well as some insight into the presence and roles of less permanent residents of the ranges, such as Chinese miners, visiting Patrol Officers, and cameleers.

A central aim was to record M. Kennedy's stories documenting his knowledge about the region and about the pastoral industry and its associated stock, horse and technical skills, many of which are today absent. Additionally, M. Kennedy's recollections provide an insight into an Aboriginal man's negotiations with people of other cultures, and the dramatic changes of the 20th century. His life is a micro-study that maps the ranges over time, a 'biography' of an historical landscape and social processes different to and comparable with other evidence. Oral accounts have proved valuable in understanding how the material objects were constructed and maintained, and the distribution of material evidence.

1 Centre for Archaeology, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia.

E-mail: paterson@arts.uwa.edu.au
2 School of Geosciences, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia. E-mail: ngill@vow.edu.au

3 Mungkarta Aboriginal Land Trust, c/o Central Land Council, Tennant Creek, NT 0860, Australia

‡ Deceased

Finally, we explore the notion of landscape, as it is central to geographical and archaeological research (Gill et al. in press). References to landscape occur within many academic disciplines and in broader public contexts: 'landscape' has multiple meanings. We are interested in how the term is employed by archaeologists, geographers, historians and anthropologists (Wagstaff 1987; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Bender 1993; Ingold 1993; Gosden and Head 1994; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995). We are presenting the results of this project in several 'landscape' formats, as biographies and thematic discussions linked to maps, and eventually accessible in GIS.

The pastoral industry is a significant economic pursuit and as such requires specific foundation studies to better understand the material culture associated with this major theme. We hope that our research project will be one such foundation study.

'Hidden' histories

Today, as in the historical past, the landscape of the ranges is divided by land tenure into categories such as Aboriginal reserves and land, water reserves, stock reserves, roadways, missions, pastoral leases, stock routes and national parks. The historiography of the ranges is also divided into compartments about white endeavours (e.g. Tuxworth 1978), Aboriginal people (e.g. Bell 1983) and, increasingly with a proposed national park in the ranges, the natural world. These spatial and thematic categories obscure the multiple ways the landscape and sites of the Murchison and Davenport ranges were inhabited and used in the 20th century (Gill et al. in press).

Archaeology provides a new understanding of people who were overlooked by written histories. For central Australia, this was the majority of people. Our analysis of documents suggests that Aboriginal people, many Europeans, and other groups such as the Chinese, rarely appear in documents, and rarely are described as individuals. This is not unusual, given that documents reflect power struggles characteristic of colonial contexts (Orser 1996:57).

This complexity provides many avenues for historical researchers (Little 1994). By analysing social phenomena such as gender, race, power and class, Paynter (2000:170) proposes that archaeologists can explore:

how power and resources are differentially distributed in stratified societies, how different identities emerge, and disappear within the vortices of power relations, how meaning and power interpenetrate, and how material culture is involved in the construction and destruction of relations of social inequality.

Thus, analysing colonial Australia requires being aware of people disenfranchised by colonial processes, and perhaps 'hidden' from historical interpretation. Historical archaeology can reveal histories described by Rose (1991), also working in the Northern Territory, as 'hidden histories.' These histories require research that highlights the cross-cultural character of colonial northern Australia and incorporate studies of multiple sites and human memory, rather than just documents (Rose and Lewis 1992). We argue that by investigating evidence for complex expressions of cultural interaction and human agency across a landscape through multiple forms of evidence, it becomes possible to generate a different understanding of one region. In this project we are attempting to tease apart binary oppositions

like 'Aboriginal' and 'European' to build on our respective research into central Australian society (Paterson 2000, 2002, 2003, in press a, in press b; Gill 2000, in press; Gill et al. 2002, in press). This contributes to recent Australian research into:

- (1) Pastoral properties as forums for cultural interaction between Aboriginal people and others (Smith and Smith 1999; Smith 2000; Godwin and L'Oste-Brown 2002; Harrison 2002; Smith 2002);
- (2) Aboriginal history replete with political and heritage implications (e.g. Murray and Nile 1992; Byrne 1996, 2002, 2003; Murray 1996, 2000; Birmingham 2000; Lilley 2000; Torrence and Clarke 2000; Beck and Sommerville 2002; Harrison and Williamson 2002; Lydon 2002); and
- (3) Methods to relate archaeological sites to oral histories or documents in order to interpret historical landscapes (e.g. Fullagar and Head 1997, 1999; McBryde 2000; English 2002).

Historical settlement in the ranges

The first Europeans in the region lived at the Overland Telegraph station (established 1872). The arrival of pastoralists in the late 1890s initiated a diffused settlement pattern at the edge of the Barkley Tableland. These early attempts failed in country of marginal pastoral value (Oliver 1919), yet pastoralists became more established from the 1920s. The Mitchell grass and grass-forb plains were suitable for relatively small pastoral ventures relying on rainwater in rockholes and creeks. The creeks and waterholes recall Aboriginal names (Goodinga, Yeeradgi, Kurundi), white men (Frew, Gosse), the environment (Whistleduck, Teatree) and hardships (Poison, Gastralobium, Mosquito). Land was made available for pastoralism via grazing licences and pastoral leases; however, like much of the Northern Territory, few improvements in the form of fencing, artesian bores and permanent yards were made in the early decades. Cattle ranged widely across these pastoral properties, rarely coming into contact with pastoral workers except perhaps during an annual muster. The pastoral homesteads remained isolated, central to a network of small camps used for mustering and droving.

In the northern Murchison Range small-time pastoralists lived in camps with a handful of workers. In this rugged country the pastoralists remained undisturbed, even when the police (often unsuccessfully) tried to locate them. Most were white men; in one exception, William Curtis, an Aboriginal man born at Undoolya station near Alice Springs, held grazing licences. His first attempt was at Ulyecka Waterhole (site MR19 in Fig. 1) from ca. 1914 to 1929 (also the site of the largest Aboriginal assemblage recorded in this project) in the rocky heart of the Murchison Range. He later occupied an area that became part of McLaren Creek Station. In a rare entry to the documentary history of these modest pastoral operations, Curtis's head-station was described as being less developed than neighbouring stations. The official report stated: 'Lessee is a half-caste. The premises resemble a camp' (Payne and Fletcher 1937).

The regional centre of Tennant Creek attracted national attention as the base for gold mining from the 1930s, yet mining in the ranges was intermittent and on a smaller scale. Wolfram and scheelite were mined at Hatches Creek and Wauchope during WWI (1914–1918) and later

(1930–1950s) by white, Chinese, Afghan and Aboriginal miners. Attempts to extract gold in the ranges were largely unsuccessful and frustrated prospectors throughout the 20th century.

The degree of white involvement with Aboriginal people varied according to individual attitudes and government policies. The spaces for Aboriginal people in the region became restricted, beginning in 1892 with regional resettlement to an Aboriginal Reserve at Tennant Creek Telegraph Station (Nash 1984). Pastoralism and mining in the ranges increasingly disrupted Aboriginal life from the 1920s (Meggett 1962). For most of the 20th century, Aboriginal people were wards of the state and programs of assimilation and welfare forced many into missions and onto reserves. Others lived on pastoral stations or in mining settlements, and were sources of cheap labour, a situation accepted grudgingly by officials in the absence of other labourers. Cheap labour characterised pastoralism from the start. In *The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry 1863-1910* (under the heading 'Hostile Natives'), Duncan (1967) states that 'by 1892 the majority of station employees were blacks' who 'were excellent stockmen and toiled not only cheerfully but for a remuneration which in many cases made all the difference [to the station owner] between working at a profit instead of a loss.'

This remained true until the last thirty years when some pastoral land in the region was purchased on behalf of the traditional Aboriginal owners. In the northern Murchison Range McLaren Station was handed back to Traditional Owners (Maurice 1991; Olney 1991). This area and adjacent Aboriginal land is particularly important for its watercourses, such as Gosse River and Bonney Creek. Rockholes in the ranges and soaks in rivers and creeks were a vital part of human occupation in the region.

Work to date

We have completed three years of fieldwork and archival research (1999–2002). The fieldwork in the ranges involved recording M. Kennedy's oral histories while visiting sites, although sometimes stories were recorded at his home at Ngyarmini Outstation (Fig. 1). We recorded 21 sites in the Murchison Range and 28 in the Davenport Range. These vary in scale from the material remains at Kelly Well (KW) which derive from a complex of yards, bores and tanks, and multiple occupation episodes, to site DR19, which has the remains of a log cabin built in the early 20th century that now has no above-ground component.

The project reveals the range of sites potentially available for archaeological research within the pastoral and mining domains in this region, e.g. campsites used by Aboriginal people; pastoral head-stations; small camps of non-pastoralists such as missionaries, miners, travellers and butchers to name some individuals once present in this landscape; ceremonial sites; religious places; yards for horses, cattle, pigs or goats; huts and small shelters used for overnight camps; tracks for droving cattle; camel pads; horse or donkey trails; motor vehicle tracks; trucking yards; cattle dips; and watering sites (rockholes, waterholes, rivers, wells, springs and bores).

Despite being from the last century only, the loss of material evidence is notable. Much material gets reused. For example, in the 1970s a shelter was built at Ngurrutji (site

MR11) using 19th century telegraph poles transported at least 50 km. The regular fires in the landscape produce further variability in the survival of material evidence. The brush yards at Ngurrutji (MR13) are totally destroyed, the nearby Ngyarmini block yards (MR2) barely survive, yet the Tjinjarra yards (MR5) are only partially burned.

Other extreme post-depositional processes acting on these sites become clear through the historical documents. The 'No.1 and No.2 Chinese Camps' at Hatches Creek housing almost 400 people were reportedly destroyed by police in 1943. This involved burning the residences, spraying piles of domestic refuse with oil before burning, and removing the remains with a bulldozer (Lamb and Elke 1943). Today, little survives of the camps (site DR15), yet the adobe walls of the police station still stand (DR13). This information assists planning future field research.

The archaeological sites, including artefact locations within them, were planned using offset tape or a Total Station survey. Electronic survey facilitated recording topographical and cultural features (no items were removed from the sites). Most sites are surface scatters suitable for total survey of all artefactual material. In a few instances stratified deposits have been identified, although most of the material recording has been of surface deposits. Where possible, digital images of all artefactual material and sites are taken. All site locations are recorded with GPS.

The material remains form a network of evidence in the landscape to be compared with historical and oral accounts. We have conducted documentary analysis in public archives and private collections; in fact, archival research has exceeded our time in the field and has been as expensive as field recording. The writer of a broad history of even a relatively small corner of Australia faces a vast amount of source material: Native Affairs Branch files, Welfare Branch records, Patrol Officer reports, Census data, Police records, Ration Statistic returns, land tenure records, mining records, and Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch files. Private records and photographs from the descendants of Centralians have also been obtained. Together these provide thick description, always with a focus toward the settlement history of the ranges, a historical landscape for which we now have fragmented demographic data; rare observations of the behaviour of pastoral station managers and miners; and sporadic descriptions of the movements of people, official policies to Aboriginal people and their implementation, work patterns and conditions, rationing, and environmental and economic conditions. The biographical and spatial information will be entered into a GIS designed to allow a representation of the data, and to track personal biographies in the ranges over time.

The analysis of this material is underway and represents several years' work before a broad critical synthetic presentation of this research is possible. Nevertheless, the following discussion of two key archaeological sites provides an insight into the project. Both are in the Murchison Range, and are mundane sites that exist at the fringes of cultural heritage and better-known historical processes. Kelly Well is located 300 m from the Stuart Highway, yet most locals and travellers would not know of its existence, despite it being a location for many past activities. Ngurrutji walk-off camp is a locale for one of the most significant social and political processes in Australia, yet it remains a remote site, largely unknown except by Aboriginal landowners.

Kelly Well (sites KW1–KW44)

Kelly Well was a soak (*Balgaldi*) used by Aboriginal people. This was one of the earliest wells in the region and between the 1930s and 1950s it was an important stage on the north-south droving route, with extensive cattle and sheep yards and a chemical dip to prevent the southern spread of cattle ticks. Some remains survive today (Pearce 1984), including an abandoned Aboriginal settlement with huts, fireplaces, tool making areas, and alcohol drinking sites. A diverse range of cultural materials indicates diet, the standard of living and timing of occupation. These include food remains, ochre, grinding tools, stone and glass tools, and trade items such as a decorated pearl shell pendant originating from the Kimberly coast. The settlement was adjacent to pig yards made from drums that we presume originally contained chemicals for the cattle dip (Fig. 2).

Based on material culture, the occupation of the Aboriginal settlement appears to have been greatest in the 1950s or 1960s, when prohibitions existed against unofficial Aboriginal settlements such as this. M. Kennedy knew little about the settlement of this period and was surprised when a pearl shell pendant with a non-Warumungu design was found, as this suggested site-use by groups he knew little about. His memory of Kelly Well focussed on earlier times when he drove cattle in from the ranges to meet Tennant Creek butchers. This is reflected in historical records, which indicate butchers leased the site from the 1930s onwards. The butchers (Fazal Deen, then Jimmy Traylen) would apparently bring alcohol, tobacco and food to the Kelly Well camp. The cattle were butchered on site; the rusted remains of Traylen's refrigerated truck evoke the practice. It seems the unwanted cattle parts were fed to pigs kept in the yards made of chemical drums. The people living at the settlement



Figure 2 The remains of pig-yards at Kelly Well.

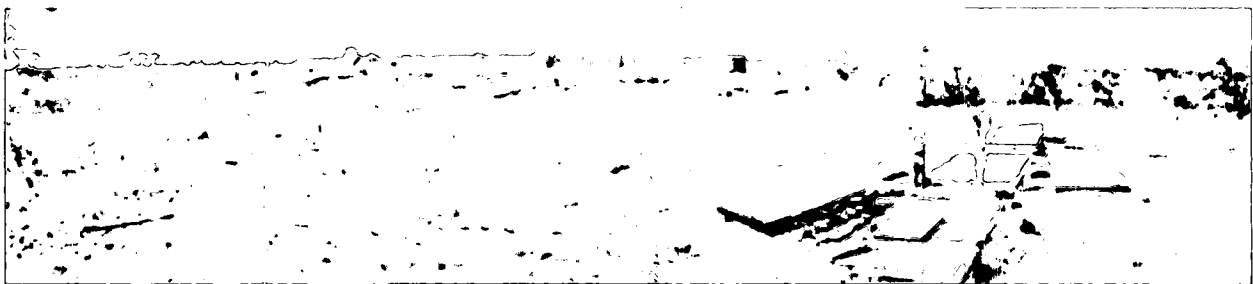


Figure 3 The remains of the settlement at Ngurrutiji walk-off camp.

might have assisted Traylen with this work, apparently in return for contraband and other goods.

Kelly Well provides a material record of the organization of a well and cattle dip, and of a nodal point where local small-scale pastoralists articulated with local markets and entered long-range droving networks. The society of Kelly Well becomes clearer through an analysis of the physical record, oral histories and documents, assisting our understanding of the many roles the site played over time.

Ngurrutiji walk-off camp (site MR14)

Ngurrutiji is a waterhole on the Gosse River significant in both pre-contact and historic times. It was a watering point on the track from Hatches Creek to Tennant Creek, particularly useful for camel trains carting wolfram ore. In the 1930s a visiting padre described the country as 'quite deserted' (Plowman 1937:97), yet it was used by those eking out a pastoral existence. For example, the pastoralist Boon, who occupied the area from the 1930s–1960s, set up some rude cattle yards of piled mulga, although these have long-since been burnt out. As a water reserve from c.1920s, it was separated from the surrounding pastoral land. In 1977 M. Kennedy and his siblings (now all deceased) walked off Kurundi Station in protest against working conditions, a process which saw the creation of an Aboriginal land trust at nearby Nguyarmini (Bell 1978). More recently the waterhole has been a mustering camp for Aboriginal people from Nguyarmini. Today Ngurrutiji has the remains of these different uses.

The spatial distribution of the two largest artefact assemblages of this site (MR14-1 and MR14-2) was recently analysed (Deacon 2002). Figures 3 and 4 show the spatial distribution of archaeological material in part of the site (MR14-1). Deacon's intuitive visual analysis compared the distribution of different artefacts (e.g. food or drink containers, household, structural, and auto/electrical artefacts). This research identified clear patterning according to a range of mundane daily activities, such as repair of small equipment (electrical equipment and inner tubes) and larger equipment (particularly automobiles); eating and drinking; sleeping and use of radios. The site provides a material expression of what was useful to the people of this community, what they ate and drank, and how they organised their daily activities. Deacon compared the distribution of artefacts at Ngurrutiji with ethno-archaeological research, particularly O'Connell's recording of nearby Alyawarre campsites (O'Connell 1987; cf. Gargett and Hayden 1991), to suggest areas where gender and age specific activities occurred. He found that MR14-2, a vehicle repair site dominated by two disassembled vehicles,

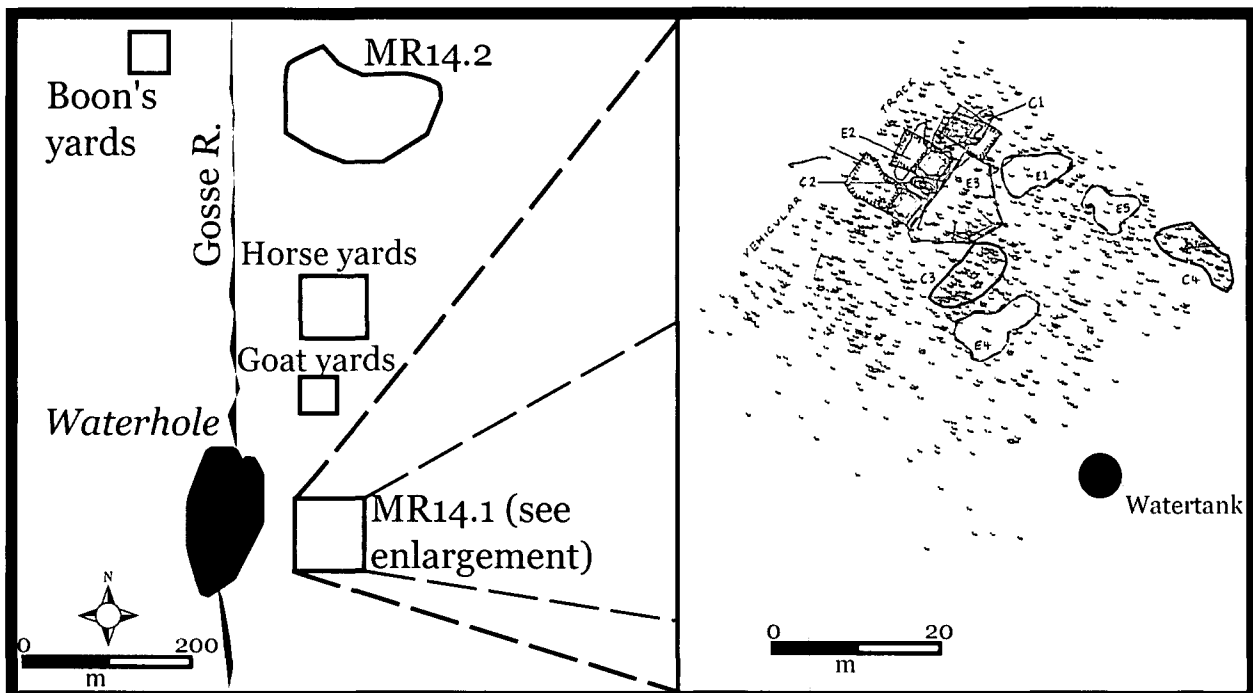


Figure 4 Site plan of Ngurrutiji walk-off camp, with inset showing the distribution of household artefacts based on Paterson and Gill (2001) and Deacon (2002).

had little material related to children or women and interpreted it as a place occupied by senior men. On the basis of structural material, the majority of households appeared to be at MR14-1, where early in the walk-off occupation three concrete slabs were laid for small houses (Bell 1978). According to Deacon, at the end of the use of this site, the huts were not occupied as residences, but mainly for repair and storage of equipment while people camped in the surrounding area, except perhaps in poor weather.

Deacon also analysed the extent of post-depositional forces acting on the site. He devised a 'scale of movability' to assist his spatial interpretation, using three arbitrary criteria: 'very likely', 'moderately likely' or 'unlikely' to move through forces such as scuffage or weather (wind and water). This was determined from the size, shape and weight of the artefact: coins dropped in sand tend not to move, soft drink cans do. By suggesting which artefacts potentially moved, this exercise supported field observations that small objects (in this study, coins, bottle glass, crown seals, tin lids) were useful indicators of the locale of activity areas. Our research at Ngurrutiji and other sites builds on Deacon's initial analysis. Additionally, this is an excellent site to explore the state of preservation of materials, as many objects (e.g. digging sticks or metal containers) are not well preserved in older sites.

The 20th-century: A research perspective

In this research archaeological material used in conjunction with other sources can make for richer histories and geographies of a 20th-century historical landscape. Our analysis is still in progress, but has the potential to provide new and improved understandings of (1) colonial technology in pastoral and mining ventures, (2) continuity and change in Aboriginal life following European arrival, (3) social behaviour in colonial settings, and (4) alternatives to Eurocentric Australian histories.

Firstly, pastoral expenditure in the ranges might have been backed by less investment than perhaps was enjoyed elsewhere in Australia. The degree of expenditure at historical pastoral stations varied dramatically between the larger stations and smaller stations, and this is reflected in their surviving technology, construction materials and spatial arrangement. More documentation survives for the larger stations, but for smaller stations we became more reliant on material remains to understand how much investment went into them. Material remains from many of the sites, such as those left by Boon, reflect small-time pastoralism. These small sites reflect minimal expenditure, use of locally available construction materials, reliance on a moveable Aboriginal community as workforce, and access to a network of locations in the ranges and on the plain. Boon is described in police records and by M. Kennedy as avoiding the police, in part to evade creditors and perhaps because he had an Aboriginal wife. Consequently his campsites are impossible to find within any affordable archaeological field survey, and we relied on M. Kennedy's oral testimony to reveal sites where Aboriginal people worked and lived with Boon. The several recorded yards and camps built by Boon are extremely rudimentary, using local materials and very small amounts of structural equipment. The design of yards for different animals (such as cattle, goats, pigs, horses, donkeys), for which we have recorded the material remains, can now be compared with accounts of how they were used at different times and, if any, historical images.

The technology and expenditure related to mining appear to relate to infrastructure, although the technology is more generic across Australia. Unlike the archaeology of pastoralism, foundation studies exist for the archaeology of mining that make the assessment of mining remains easier (e.g. Birmingham et al. 1979; Jack and Cremin 1994). Documentary evidence and M. Kennedy's oral testimony

can shed light on Aboriginal involvement in mining in the region. According to M. Kennedy, in the early 20th century Aboriginal women and children collected surface wolfram near Hatches Creek for the crushing plants. Across the landscape, the remains of wolfram and gold mining link into broader settlement histories of the ranges.

Secondly, the late 19th and 20th centuries in the Murchison and Davenport ranges offer insight into continuities and changes in Aboriginal life following European settlement. Our insight into Aboriginal continuity and change will be compared with existing Australian work into the archaeology of trans-cultural processes (see earlier references) and into working relationships between Aboriginal people and introduced domesticated animals (Paterson in press a, in press b).

Ethnographies (Meggitt 1962; Gillen 1968) indicating the continuance of Aboriginal belief and societal structure during the 20th century are supported by more recent accounts of Aboriginal people (Maurice 1991; Olney 1991). This period witnessed massive change, a topic suited to archaeological analyses. In our study of change we are using M. Kennedy's memories to create a map of his life which we will try to correlate with today's landscape and the material within it. One aspect of his life concerns obligations to family, ceremony and tradition, and we will attempt to build this into our settlement history. Other sites exist devoid of any oral or documentary accounts, and here we rely on archaeology. For example, at Kelly Well we have little oral testimony, but the material remains of life at a pig-butchery site and cattle dip provide a unique insight into life in the ranges during the 1950s. The site provides material evidence for Aboriginal resistance of official policies regarding relocation of Aboriginal people and the prohibition on the consumption of alcohol, Aboriginal negotiations with Afghan and other butchers, and the continuation of long-distance trade networks for West Australian pearl shell.

Thirdly, our research investigates social behaviour in colonial settings that many Europeans thought of as a 'frontier'. Yet this 'frontier' also has an Aboriginal history. Our aim is to write a shared colonial history with all historical actors represented. In this case the history is largely 20th century, an era for which archaeological research is less common. These sites sometimes seem to be easy to understand, as they are composed of items very familiar to us (car parts, D-cell batteries, food cans), and exist in an Australian landscape dominated by pastoral remains (fences, windmills, 4WD tracks). This familiarity can be a fog. The remains of past cultural systems, societies, economics and attitudes are essentially foreign to us. For example, M. Kennedy's name is taken from a white pastoral boss who used to beat him. His use of the name is complex, accommodating past violent acts. It is hoped this research indicates how 20th-century Australia worked, how social change (such as the walk-offs) occurred in the landscape, how violence and negative trans-cultural attitudes existed in a daily context alongside the satisfaction of working in the pastoral industry. Archaeological research focussing on disenfranchised people (Scham 2001) is perhaps a most effective topic for archaeological studies of the recent past (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001). Additionally, given the remoteness of the study area from centres of production, we hope to test access in central Australia to manufactured goods.

Our project provides an alternative to Eurocentric Australian histories. There are no accessible histories of this time or place which focus on cross-cultural processes, or follow individuals and groups moving within landscapes of work and welfare. This recent past articulates with the present and contributes to our understanding of how the colonial era developed into our modern era, an era which some term 'post-colonial'.

One benefit of doing the archaeology of this recent context is that the act of recording sites constituted of modern material culture makes this fairly immediate, but still largely unfamiliar, past a critical subject. Our approach makes it clear, for example, that past heritage surveys in the region (Pearce 1984) focussed on buildings—the more solid they were, the more likely they were to survive—while other simpler huts and yards were not the object of interpretation. This tends to secure a 'place in history' for larger stations and more successful ventures, but disenfranchises those for whom there are few physical remains (the Chinese at Hatches Creek were bulldozed out of history) and few written accounts.

This research is not so much about the discovery of unknown sites, although that occurs within the project, but about researching sites considered unimportant in a more traditional historical sense, or rendered invisible by local histories. In this way, it will provide a different, critical perspective on a past in which the physical record has an informative role to play.

Acknowledgments

M. Kennedy died in April 2003. His name is used here in accordance with his family's wishes. His knowledge and desire to tell his story of Aboriginal people, Europeans and pastoralism in the ranges were central to the inception of the research and critical to many of its subsequent directions. His work in the project was completed before his death. The research was funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and the University of Wollongong Small Grants scheme. Alistair Paterson acknowledges Peter White's keen observations during the 1990s in the University of Sydney seminar series and later at the Staff Club. We thank Val Attenbrow, Jim Specht and Rodney Harrison for their comments, and gratefully acknowledge the use of Joel Deacon's Honours research.

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