



Lot 50–Kanyanyapilla, McLaren Vale
Bi-cultural Ecological and Cultural Regeneration
Newsletter No 15, December 2019

Hi Everyone

Quicker turn around on this issue and Part 2 on Uncle Bill.

News

Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board Visit

The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board, accompanied by Willunga district staff, visited L50K on Thursday 21 November as part of a tour of Willunga Basin projects and sites. A 45 minute walk and talk to the Sandhill Shelter gave an overview of L50K. The emphasis was on the ecological and cultural value of the Maslin Creek Swamp, the recent formation of the Swamp Group, and the likely need for future swamp wide financial support for remediation and other works. It will be long term but you just have to start somewhere.



NRM Board, staff & my brother Rob (RHS)

L50K Paper Published in *Australian Archaeology*

A paper has just been published on the post-contact archaeological research at L50K in *Australian Archaeology*.

Abstract

*Removal of olive trees along a closed public road at McLaren Vale inadvertently revealed a scatter of archaeological material. Subsequent investigation resulted in the identification of an Aboriginal historical camp site. The abundant worked glass associated with the site, and our analysis published here, provides evidence for intensive occupation from the late 1800s to the late 1940s, with overall site use spanning the 1860s to 1960s. This site, Kanyanyapilla camp (field site no. K50PoC1), provides the first detailed archaeological evidence from the greater Adelaide region of resistance by Aboriginal people against institutional inducement onto missions. Instead, a camp was established away from the immediate township now known as McLaren Vale and the occupants engaged in a range of economic activities in the region. Indeed, Aboriginal people occupying this camp site were engaged in 'hybrid economies' as well as utilising traditional practices, all of which defies the standard notion that Aboriginal people during the latter half of the 19th Century were induced, and later forced, onto missions. That some Aboriginal people may have avoided missions and instead retained a sense of autonomy outside the mission/government inspired nexus of welfare dependency now finds archaeological resonance in South Australia. (Walshe, Keryn; Malone, Gavin; Telfer, Karl & Gully, Grant (2019): Aboriginal Historical Archaeological Site, Kanyanyapilla Camp, McLaren Vale, South Australia, *Australian Archaeology*, Vol. 85)*

If you would like a copy please let me know and I will forward a download connection to you.

Treading Lightly

Nick and Jamie's carbon minimisation doco has been shortlisted in a couple of film festivals but still no broad take up or distribution which is disappointing. Are most film festivals just about the arty avant-garde??

At the Sydney Indie it did get nominations for best documentary, best editing and excellence of achievement; and was the winner in the last category. Congratulations.



Following on from the sell-out screenings at the Mercury there have been three other screenings for local environment-community groups. **There will be an outdoor screening at the Aldinga Arts Eco Village early in the new year.** I'll circulate details when available.

In November Nick and Jamie were also presented with the Carbon Neutral Adelaide 2019 *Low Carbon Lifestyle* award. Most deserving.

PS. Nick has continued to donate his fees for screening *Treading Lightly* to the L50K revegetation program.

Other Stuff

Branson Track Feral Free - Yippee

Pretty pleased with this one; the last of the feral olives and dog roses along the Branson Track have been consigned to history, well next winter's burn heap at least. Onkaparinga Council contractor Wirra Bush Regeneration, finished the job in December after a four year project. Bit of follow-up to be done with smallish reinfestation. But here's Dave and Kate finishing off the third last olive.



Dave & Kate, Wirra Bush Regeneration

Thanks to Jock Conlon and Ben Moulton at Council and Shaun Hadley and his team from Wirra who spent many hours on hands and knees removing the many feral olives and dog roses. Now it's a matter of managing the lush new weeds getting their turn in the sun along with bumping up the indigenous plantings to eventually suppress the weeds. The nature of things.

Birds at L50K

A bird survey was undertaken at L50K by Graham Carpenter, Ornithologist, on 17 June, 2016. Forty-six (now 49) species have been recorded on, above or near to L50K with eight species utilising the reed swamp. We are now undertaking further survey work, this time with technology as well.

NRM ecologist Elisa Sparrow installed two cameras in the swamp early December to monitor activity. Two Council staff Phil Barron and Tait Kowalick, who are also bird blokes, will be undertaking field monitoring for a period of time and possibly installing a sound recording unit. 22 species were recorded on a telephone app on their visit. The aim is to improve our baseline knowledge for the whole swamp but the cameras reveal undesirable critters as well.



Tait, Phil & Elisa on their first visit



Hmmm

Where's Jordan?



Spot volunteer weed puller extraordinaire Jordan knocking off the Mustard weed and Three corner jacks.

Jordan hand pulled or grubbed a guesstimated 2,500 Mustard Weeds (*Sinapis arvensis*) from the swamp and its edge and a few thousand more were mowed to limit seed production. This season's hand grubbing tally for Three corner jack (*Emex australis*) was about 4,000, down from 7,500 last year. A process of attrition.

Rainfall 2019

Still a few days left in the year but we are only a bit down on average receiving 74,400 tonnes of rainfall from the average of 80,000. We need about 100,000 tonnes to have a chance of having standing water in the swamp, getting 101,120 tonnes in 2016 with intermittent standing water in May, June & July. And for all you traditionalists for 2019 that's 465mm out of 500mm with 600mm needed for standing water with 632mm in 2016. And for the old-time traditionalists that's 18.6 inches out of 20 inches in 2019 and 25 inches received in 2016.

Happening in the Hood

Well this is down the road and around the corner but the inevitable eventually becomes a reality and for the McLaren Vale region it is a five star luxury hotel development. Now planned for Wirra Wirra, the \$30 million 'wellness resort' is by the same company, Greaton, which is building the 15 story hotel as part of Adelaide's General Post Office redevelopment. Never thought I'd see the day when the grand old post office would suffer such an intrusion; or humiliation if it was human.



Wirra Wirra proposal

There's was also a three storey tourist accommodation complex with 82 rooms and associated restaurant, function room, car parking etc. proposed for the centre of McLaren Vale (behind Coles) which included the removal of two significant trees. The Friends of Willunga Basin made a strong submission against this development, for a start it is a three story building in a one story zone. I also made a submission on cultural heritage grounds. The developer withdrew the application from the Council Assessment Panel agenda (12.12.2019) but it doesn't mean it is dead.



McLaren Vale proposal, Field Street

What other inevitables are eventually going to become a reality for the McLaren Vale region?

History Snippet (Part 2)

Colonel William Light 'Uncle Bill' (1786-1839)

His Ethnicity and Complexion

Light was part indigenous Malay. How that impacted on his life and attitudes can now only be speculative but he would have stood apart from his fellow military officers and then in 1836, his fellow settlers. Was he the only person of mixed race amongst the first wave of settlers?

Light was described as:

... of medium height, sallow complexion [unhealthy yellow or pale brown colour], alert and handsome, with face clean shaven excepting closely cut side whiskers, black curly hair, brown eyes, straight nose, small mouth, and shapely chin.

Mrs Margaret Bevis, an 1838 immigrant recollected:

Yes, I remember Colonel Light, a little dark very active clever man, who laid out Adelaide, and was always in hot water with Colonel Gawler.

There is also a story that Light had failed to gain employment in the East India Company because of his mixed racial origins which was expressed by Lady Jane Franklin, wife of Tasmanian Governor Sir John Franklin. She noted in her diary; *'Mr Light's son [William] had wished to enter East India Company's service, but he was refused on being half-caste – afterwards got into Reg. of the Line – on losing his fortune he applied for service to Pasha of Egypt and then out here.'* (Goldsworthy, 2011:258-59)



Light c1815



Light Self-portrait c1839 (on corner of another canvas)

Light's portraits may have been 'whitened' but with the one above showing a darker complexion.

His Relationship with Aboriginal People

His relationship seems to have varied between close collaboration and respect, and distant irritability when later suffering ill health and stress.

We had an interpreter, Wm. Cooper, and his native women, Doughboy and Sall, whose services were secured by Colonel Light as a go-between us and the native tribes (Hiram Mildred, SA Advertiser, 27.12.1886)

In a letter written at Rapid Valley, November 5, 1836, to George Kingston, Deputy-Surveyor-General, Light stated:

My dear Sir—I have sent two of our natives to you to establish a friendly understanding between your party and the tribe in your neighbourhood. You had better have the men divided into watches, so that one at least should be on the lookout. I think two hours each better than four. Don't let any straggle by themselves. I will thank you to give our two natives a little biscuit every day, and you will find them useful in many ways. I hope the country will suit all. Remember me to Gilbert. Believe me, yours very truly, WILLIAM LIGHT.

At his field camp at Rapid Bay, Light engaged Doughboy, Magalidi and Cooper to tender a new garden whilst he was away seeking the site for the capital. Away for over three weeks he returned to find a flourishing garden:

The natives we left in care of the garden have proved honest and are here to welcome our return and claim their reward. Our garden is looking well the seeds having nearly all come up.

"Even the wheat", added Light, "which, from the lateness of the season, I did not expect would thrive, is now, in one month, more than six inches out of the ground". (Schultz, forthcoming)

A few years later when tuberculosis was taking its toll and he had resigned his position as Surveyor-General in dismay he wrote:

I am often annoyed by them and I confess I feel no love whatever for them. I never saw less interesting people, they are exceedingly cruel to their women, and are certainly the dirtiest people I ever beheld. The tribe I first met with at Rapid Bay were very superior. I do not think they can be made much of until the colony becomes so populous that their very living be taken away except they work for it'.

This was after a group of Aborigines had thrown firebrands into the dry grass to windward of his cottage at Thebarton, lopped down and burnt his trees, tore down his garden palings and stole a sack of potatoes. Why would this occur? Firstly we cannot be sure who this group was, local or from further afield? And by then March, 1839, the Aboriginal people would have fully comprehended the intent of colonisation; their dispossession, loss of land and culture, and that they were expected to adopt the white man ways. Light was a leader amongst the colonisers and perhaps some anger therefore vented against him.

His Social Status

Light was both admired and held in deep affection and trust by many, or derided and caste aside by those who had personal agendas in the colonisation process.

Light was accompanied on the *Rapid* by his mistress Maria Gandy and lived openly with her, although she is sometimes referred to as his 'housekeeper'. His marriage in England to Mary Bennet had come to an end in 1832 but there was no official divorce.

When on his deathbed in October 1839 the Colonial Chaplain, Charles Howard, refused to visit him because of this de-facto relationship. Although a founding principle for the colony was religious freedom, the official chaplain was Anglican, the natural order of the British ruling class and a religious prejudice in South Australia that lasted well over a century.

The Site of Adelaide

'The reasons that led me to fix Adelaide where it is I do not expect to be generally understood or calmly judged of at present.

My enemies however, by disputing their validity in every particular, have done me the good service of fixing the whole of the responsibility upon me.

I am perfectly willing to bear it, and I leave it to posterity and not to them, to decide whether I am entitled to praise or to blame.'

Not much more to be said. Speculation about George Kingston, Light's deputy, having a greater role are that, speculation. Kingston was acting under Light's instructions; he could hardly tie his boot laces as a surveyor. Noted historian Douglas Pike proffers the following opinion of Kingston:

Contemptuous to his superiors, obnoxious to his equals and a petty tyrant to all below him. He was an indifferent surveyor of land and the land he selected for Rowland and Matthew Hill showed that he was a poor judge of value. (Manning, 2001)

A Lovely Thought. Did Light travel past or through L50K in June, 1837?

Light passed nearby or as a faint possibility, through L50K on 21st June, 1837 on route to Encounter Bay with Resident Commissioner Hurtle Fisher, James Hack and Kangaroo Islander William Cooper. The reed swamp, now called the Maslin Creek swamp, would likely have caught his eye. A swamp would have been of interest to the Surveyor-General as he was reconnoitring the countryside as part of his journey south. A quick view from one of the sandy hilltops along the northern edge of the swamp would not be out of order to ascertain its extent and any surface water.

Light and Fisher's party camped at the Onkaparinga on the 19th and 20th June, the exact location speculative i.e. at the Horseshoe or further seawards. They had to cross the river with a bullock cart and to do so at the Horseshoe ford and ascend the steep hill opposite would have been difficult, so it is likely they crossed further downstream along the river flats. Exactly where is speculative but in the vicinity of the present train bridge a possibility given the topography.

We can only guess the route from the river to the range but they likely crossed over near Mt Terrible or less likely Willunga, there being Kaurna tracks to both. One hearsay report (Bull, 1878) suggests the party travelled to the site of Willunga but this is unconfirmed. If it were the case the most direct route would have Light pass the eastern edge of L50K. If he followed the Kaurna track he would have been slightly further east, about a kilometre. Crossing at Mount Terrible would have him pass close to the western extremity of the swamp.

Of the Onkaparinga River Light had commented:

As the ford close to our camp was so bad for the bullock car, we determined on remaining one day here, and riding some distance up the river to see if any better could be found, not for our own convenience now, but for any future communication in this direction by carriages.

The river is, notwithstanding, nearly three miles from the sea a beautiful one, full hundred yards wide, and very often more, with deep water, and we found the water at ebb tide fresh to within a mile of the sea, and the country is not only beautifully picturesque, but rich in soil. I have seldom seen a place more inviting than this, and I have no doubt some future time will form a country town here of considerable consequence.

Noarlunga, now Old Noarlunga, was soon established and within a few years had several buildings.

Does His Route Matter?

Not really, but the details (and lessons) of history are often soon forgot and may have application today. And it's fun to imagine.

Unfortunately no official account of the journey was ever published so details are scant and collected from snippets here and there. And imaginations are only that. No matter, at some stage there will be a recognition of Colonel William Light, founding Surveyor-General, at L50K. What it will be and when are awaited.

References

Goldsworthy, Kerryn (2011) *Adelaide* NewSouth, Sydney

Manning, G H (2001) *A colonial experience, 1838-1910: a woman's story of life in Adelaide, the District of Kensington and Norwood together with reminiscences of colonial life* Gillingham Printers, Underdale

In closing for 2019

Well, that's a wrap for another year. All the best for the next one, a new decade even.

Thanks again to all who support and follow the L50K project.

Cheers Gavin

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Project Partners and Supporters



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