

DYARUBBIN



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This publication accompanies the State Library of NSW's *Dyarubbin* exhibition.

The State Library's exhibitions onsite, online and on tour connects audiences across NSW and beyond to our collections and the stories they tell.

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CULTURAL WARNING

Members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are respectfully advised that this exhibition and related materials contain mention of historical violence and the names and images of people who have passed away.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The State Library of New South Wales acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the Library stands and the land on which the *Dyarubbin* exhibition was created. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to other First Nations people. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, languages and stories across NSW.



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INTRODUCTION

Dyarubbin, the Hawkesbury River, begins at the confluence of the Grose and Nepean rivers and ends at Broken Bay. This long, winding and ancient river has been home to the Darug people for millennia and is a vital and sustaining resource. Darug culture, spirituality and sense of being are all intrinsically connected to the river. Its bends and features are encoded with meaning.

Dyarubbin's fertile flood plains became prized agricultural land which was needed to support the early colony. 1794 marks the beginning of a period of devastation and loss for Darug people as settlers took land along the river, ultimately culminating in brutal warfare as Darug warriors fought to defend their lands and livelihoods.

The landscape of the river, the people who live there and the way it is used have changed, but Darug people still live, and thrive, on Dyarubbin. Darug knowledge-holders, artists and educators Leanne Watson, Jasmine Seymour, Erin Wilkins and Rhiannon Wright share their culture and stories of special sites along Dyarubbin as shared custodians of this beautiful and haunting place.

This exhibition showcases research established by Professor Grace Karskens in 'The Real Secret River, Dyarubbin', a collaborative project with Leanne, Jasmine, Erin and Rhiannon which won the 2018-2019 Coral Thomas Fellowship.

Marika Duczynski (Gamilaraay)

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Warami

I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders — past, present and emerging.

We are Darug, born of this land, born of the spirit. We have walked this land since the Dreaming.

Darug clan lands embrace the land, rivers and seas. From the Blue Mountains to the ocean, from Hawkesbury in the north and down as far as Appin in the south.

Our ancestors' voices are echoed in our own as we still live in these changed but beautiful places.

This land has seen the Darug people gather here for thousands of years, to hunt and feast, to sing and dance in ceremony. It is a land rich in Dreaming. Ancient spirits of the Earth Creator live here and we are privileged to be custodians of this heritage.

Our mothers and grandmothers are our teachers, they teach us of the Dreaming, our language and our culture as their mothers before taught them. Our bodies and minds carry the seeds of their wisdom, the memories of a different past.

We may not look the way our ancestors did, we may not live the way they did but we are still here, we are still strong and we have more than sixty thousand years of culture in our blood and in our hearts. So tread softly on this ancient land, because our Dreamtime is still happening, our Dreamtime is forever.

Rhiannon Wright (Darug)



Left to right: Lyra, Rhiannon Wright, Aunty Edna Watson and Leanne Watson, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Tiati murra Daruga pemel
koi murra ya pemel ngalaringi bubbuna
ban nye yenma wurra nang
nye dice gai dyi ya nangami dyarralang
ngalaringi tiati ngalaringi nangami gai
gu-ya willy angara gu-nu-gal da gu-nu-gal
da la-loey moogoo cot-ballie nangami
dice la-loey gnia tarimi gu-nu-gal
jam ya tiati gnalaringi eorah jumna
mittigar gurrung burruk.

This is Darug land
it is the land of our ancestors
their spirits still walk among us
spirits that have been here since the Dreaming
our language and our culture has been
passed down from generation to generation
to continue an unbroken culture that has
extended for thousands of years
in the language of our people
We welcome you to Darug lands.

Didyarigura.

Aunty Edna Watson, Leanne Watson and Lyra (Darug)

YELLOMUNDEE

Shaws Creek Aboriginal Place in Yellomundee Regional Park is a significant site for Darug people. It was a traditional river pathway to the Blue Mountains and a plentiful source of food. Aboriginal women fished along the river's length and collected mussels until at least 1948, according to some oral histories. Today, Aboriginal people still meet and gather here, maintaining their connection to Country as custodians through firestick farming (cultural burning), cultural practice and dance. Gumin (casuarina trees) line the entire length of the river and traditionally have indicated where water can be found. Erin tells the story of how, if Darug children get lost, they are told to find and sit under gumin as snakes won't come near the needles underneath the tree. They are told to hold one of gumin's puckered seeds, known as 'worry seeds', and roll it around in their hands to take their worries away until their parents can find them. The worry seeds are then placed in the sun which soaks up the last of their fears.



Above: Dogwood, winged broom pea (*Jacksonia scoparia*), photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Opposite: Shaws Creek Aboriginal Place, Yellomundee Regional Park, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Pages 14–15: *Yellamundi* by Aunty Edna Watson, acrylic on canvas, c 2010



YARRAMUNDI

Yarramundi Reserve is at the intersection of three major rivers and was an important meeting place for neighbouring nation groups. The Gandangara travelled along the Nepean, the Darkinjung through the Grose and the Darug through Dyarubbin to come together for ceremony, trade, food and resources. Erin says that people would collect pebbles from the riverbed and sit along its banks to make stone axes, spears and tools. Yarramundi Reserve is also known as the site where Yarramundi (also recorded as Yellomundee) and Gombeere, who were both guradyi (clever man or doctor) met Governor Arthur Phillip in 1791, but the actual location was closer to Bardonarang Creek. This meeting nonetheless marked the beginning of rapid, violent and irreversible change for Aboriginal people of the area. Erin recounts that just downstream there is a massacre site, and that much of the fiercest resistance was fought nearby as Aboriginal people defended their sovereignty and land.



Above: Erin Wilkins at Yarramundi, still image from video by Bill Code, 2020

Opposite: Yarramundi Reserve, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020



BULYAYURANG

Dyarubbin flowed through the agricultural heartland of the early colony which was crucial to its survival, but the taking of land for farming and settlement came at great cost to Darug people. One of the largest and wealthiest landowners was Andrew Thompson, a convict who became a chief constable and magistrate at Bulyayurang (Windsor). Thompson is remembered as a hero for saving settlers from drowning in the floods of 1806 and 1809. But for Leanne, Rhiannon and Jasmine, his legacy is deeply contested. Thompson also led a party of settlers that massacred Darug people at a camp at Yarramundi in 1805. In this reprisal for the killing of three settlers, seven, eight, or possibly more Darug ancestors were killed, including leader and cross-cultural spokesman Yaraguwayi. That Thompson would have overseen, facilitated or been aware of other violent crimes against Darug people as chief constable and magistrate further complicates how he might be remembered. Leanne, Rhiannon and Jasmine believe that the veneration of Andrew Thompson and the failure to confront the darkest aspects of colonial history in this region contributes to the continued erasure of Darug people who have lived at Bulyayurang, and along this part of Dyarubbin, for millennia.



Above: Windsor Toll House, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Opposite: 'Native names of places on the Hawkesbury', Reverend John McGarvie papers

Bulyayorang	-	Windsor.
Dal cirrie	-	S. Creek
Marengorra	-	Richmond
Colomalla	-	Blue mountains
Curry jong	-	Curryjong Brook.
Mareh - Mareh	-	Large Lagoon at Pitt
		Up the lower Branch.
Bandibandi	-	Joseph Smiths Farm
Ny.erring	-	Jack Baillies upper
Buryan billas	-	Ludds farm
wa'ackee	-	Halls do.
Kole butba	-	next mountain to Thomsons
Taoura	-	Large Lagoon there



MARION

CATTAI

Cattai is dugga (brush forest) Country. In pockets here today, Jasmine and Leanne tell us that plentiful resources for Darug people can still be found, including bush foods, tools and medicines. Spinach-like warrigal greens, native raspberry and wombat berry vine all grow in the area, as well as sandpaper fig used to sharpen tools, and native geranium, used as a poultice for arthritis. Jasmine and Leanne believe that Cattai marks the beginning of the Great Eel story. It is here that the landscape changes from sand to sandstone. Rock engravings can be found on the biggest bends of the river, each telling the story of the Great Eel as you pass through Darug Country. Sadly, some of those engravings are said to have been destroyed, and the places where these foods and resources can be found have been neglected. Jasmine and Leanne call this wirri nura: bad Country, sick Country. The resilience of the plants, which continue to grow despite this, is remarkable.



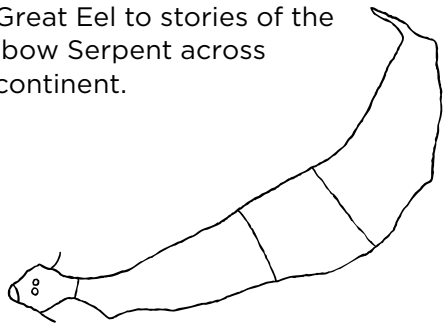
Above: Sandpaper fig leaf (*Ficus coronata*), photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Opposite: Dugga (brush forest), Cattai, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020



GURANGATTY STORY

A place of enormous spiritual significance for Darug people is one of the resting sites of Gurangatty, the Great Eel ancestor spirit, in one of the deepest parts of Dyarubbin. Jasmine, Leanne, Rhiannon and Erin say that the swirling on the water's surface here is symbolic of the Great Eel, who is connected to water, whirlpools and flood power. Further downstream is Durumbuluwa, a placename which means 'zone of the rainbow' or 'path of the rainbow'. Further still, at Wuwami, Gurangatty is said to keep watch from a steep rock shelf. ('Waway' means 'serpent spirit' and mii is 'eye' according to Professor Grace Karskens and linguist Dr Jim Wafer). Jasmine says Wuwami connects the Great Eel to stories of the Rainbow Serpent across the continent.



Above top: Line drawing of Great Eel engraving, still image from video by Bill Code, 2020

Above: Tool-sharpening grooves near Great Eel rock engraving, Cattai area (Lyra, great-granddaughter of Darug Elder Aunty Edna Watson, playing in rock pool), photo by Joy Lai, 2020

Opposite: Gurangatty (the Great Eel) rock engraving, still image from video by Bill Code, 2020



SACKVILLE ABORIGINAL RESERVE

The old Sackville Aboriginal Reserve was established formally in 1889 by the Aborigines Protection Board and is a small portion of land on the banks of Dyarubbin at Cumberland Reach. Jasmine, a descendant of the Morley family who had lived on the reserve, compares the land to a wet, sunless prison — narrowly wedged on a ‘dog’s leg’ between the river and the base of a sheer cliff face. Far from prime agricultural land, Aboriginal people’s ability to thrive, grow food or hunt there was seriously inhibited. At least the river location provided a connection to the traditional way of life. Jasmine says that Aboriginal people living on the reserve were treated as a curiosity, often taken away to perform in gumleaf musical performances for the local colony. It is remembered as a sad place by some descendants today.



Above: Family group at the Sackville Aboriginal Reserve, 1890s, Geoff Ford collection, courtesy of Grace Karskens

Opposite: Sackville Aboriginal Reserve, photograph by Joy Lai, 2019



CANOELANDS

Marramarra National Park is rich in Darug cultural heritage. Situated within the park, the Canoelands rock art cave is filled with ochre and charcoal paintings of echidnas, turtles, tiger quolls, ancestor beings and more, which suggests that the cave was not an ordinary place of shelter but a significant and special site. Above the cave, a series of waterholes can be found and on the lip of the highest one there are axe grinding grooves. Jasmine, Leanne and Rhiannon believe that the circular motif seen on the interior cave walls, joined by one continuous line, may represent the surrounding water holes — plentiful across the whole area — which then connect with creeks lined with yet more special sites. This abundance and interconnectedness is reflected in the name of nearby Maroota, meaning 'the place of many springs'. Keeping the waterholes and creeks healthy and flowing in such hot and dry Country would have been of the utmost importance to the ancestors taking care of this place.



Above (left to right): Rhiannon Wright, Leanne Watson and Jasmine Seymour in the rock art shelter, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020

Opposite: Rock art shelter, Canoelands, Marramarra National Park, photograph by Joy Lai, 2019



ITEM LIST

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Aunty Edna Watson, Leanne Watson, Rhiannon Wright, Lyra
filmed at Bulyayurang (Windsor)
by Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury River)
October 2020

YELLOMUNDEE

Yellamundi, c 2010
by Aunty Edna Watson
acrylic on canvas
lent by Leanne Watson

Yellomundee story

Erin Wilkins
filmed at Shaws Creek Aboriginal Place,
Yellomundee
November 2020

Dogwood, winged broom pea

(*Jacksonia scoparia*)
photograph by Joy Lai
2020

YARRAMUNDI

Yarramundi story

Erin Wilkins
filmed at Yarramundi Reserve
November 2020

View of part of Hawkesbury River at 1st fall and connection with Grose River NS Wales, 1809

by George William Evans
watercolour
SV/123

Grose River logs, Yarramundi Reserve

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

DYARUBBIN

Sackville Reach, Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury River)

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

BULYAYURANG

Windsor story

Leanne Watson, Rhiannon Wright
and Jasmine Seymour
filmed at Windsor Toll House
October 2020

Bulyayurang – Windsor

in 'Native names of places on the
Hawkesbury', 1825–35
Reverend John McGarvie papers
A 1613 p26a

Bobby Nirgengay, South Creek – Windsor, c 1844

by Charles Rodius
charcoal sketch
PXA 1005 f5

The Settlement on the Green Hills, Hawksburgh [Hawkesbury] River NS Wales, 1809

by George William Evans
watercolour
PXD 388 vol 3 f7

Sketch of the inundation in the neighborhood [sic] of Windsor taken on Sunday the 2nd of June 1816

by an unknown artist
watercolour
PX'D 264

CATTAI

Scarred melaleuca tree, Cattai

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Melaleuca trees, Cattai

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Scarred melaleuca tree – late afternoon, Cattai

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Cattai story

Leanne Watson and Jasmine Seymour
filmed at Cattai
October 2020

Dugga (brush forest), Cattai

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Bula guni (two yam digging sticks) and paddle

Hawkesbury Historical Society Collection,
courtesy of Hawkesbury Regional Museum

GURANGATTY STORY

Sackville Reach, Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury River)

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Durumbuluwa, Wuwami

in 'Native names of places on the
Hawkesbury', 1825–35
Reverend John McGarvie papers
A 1613 p 25

Gurangatty (the Great Eel) story

Jasmine Seymour, Leanne Watson,
Erin Wilkins and Rhiannon Wright
filmed at Charles Kemp Recreational Reserve
November 2020

SACKVILLE ABORIGINAL RESERVE

Letter from Rachel Trooper to Mrs Long, 17 April 1907

Australian Indigenous Ministries
correspondence
MLMSS 7895/ Box 1

Letter from Clara J Anderson to Mrs Long, 13 May 1907

Australian Indigenous Ministries
correspondence
MLMSS 7895/ Box 1

Family group at the Sackville Aboriginal Reserve

Geoff Ford collection
courtesy of Grace Karskens

Ration lists from Sackville Aboriginal Reserve, 1866–84

Matthew Smith Hall papers
MLMSS 842

Sackville Aboriginal Reserve story

Jasmine Seymour, Leanne Watson and
Rhiannon Wright
filmed at Cumberland Reach
October 2020

CANOELANDS

Rock art shelter, Canoelands, Marramra National Park

photograph by Joy Lai
2019

Tool-sharpening grooves beside spring-fed rock pool, Canoelands

photograph by Joy Lai
2020

Canoelands story

Jasmine Seymour, Leanne Watson
and Rhiannon Wright
filmed at Canoelands,
Marramra National Park
October 2020

Below: Wuwami rock shelf, Sackville Reach, Dyarubbin, photograph by Joy Lai, 2020



AFTERWORD

The 'mighty Hawkesbury', as Trollope famously called it, binds together some of the most beautiful country in Australia. It has been central to the European stories I grew up with. I now live on the banks of the Macdonald River – whose ancient name 'Gunanday' has only lately been rediscovered. Dyarubbin has been at the heart for me personally of a developing understanding of Country in a deeper sense still. I grew up with the belief that land was something people owned. The idea that Country owns you is a radically liberating one for a non-Aboriginal person. In this case, every bend in the river is part of an ancient network of stories and traditions. Behind it all lies an obligation to see that Country can be looked after with all possible care by those who belong to it.

The Darug women who have chosen (with great courage) to share their land and spirit with us in this exhibition are in fact extending to us an exceptionally generous invitation to find out more about the ways in which Country contains, protects the past, present and future of its people. They are inviting us to consider with them how we might not only acknowledge but also learn from their Country and its memories more effectively than we do now. The richness, power and authority of their voices is hard for us to grasp. Always was, always will be.

Dr John Vallance FAHA
State Librarian

A free exhibition at the State Library of NSW.

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