

EXTENT

**HERITAGE ADVISORS
TO AUSTRALIA AND
THE ASIA PACIFIC**
Incorporating AHMS and Futurepast

Alexandria Park Community School

-  Study Area
-  Water Bodies
-  Swamp Areas (after Sands 1877)

Drawn by: Laressa Berehowyj
Checked by: Alan Williams
Date: 17 October 2017
Projection: GDA 94 MGA Zone 56
Data sources: Extent, Nearmap, John Sands 1877,
ESRI and PSMA Australia Limited.



0 475 950 1,425 1,900
Meters

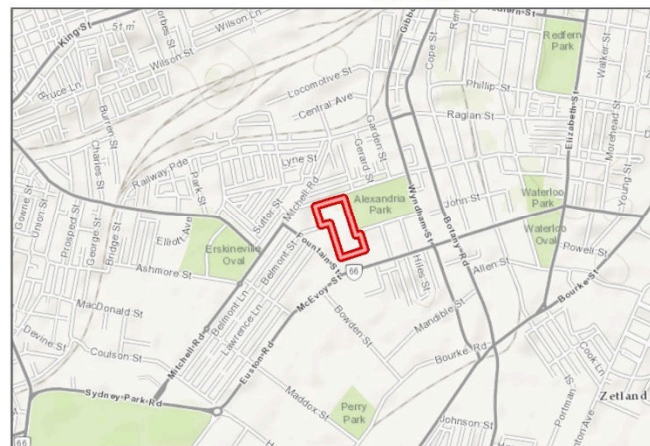
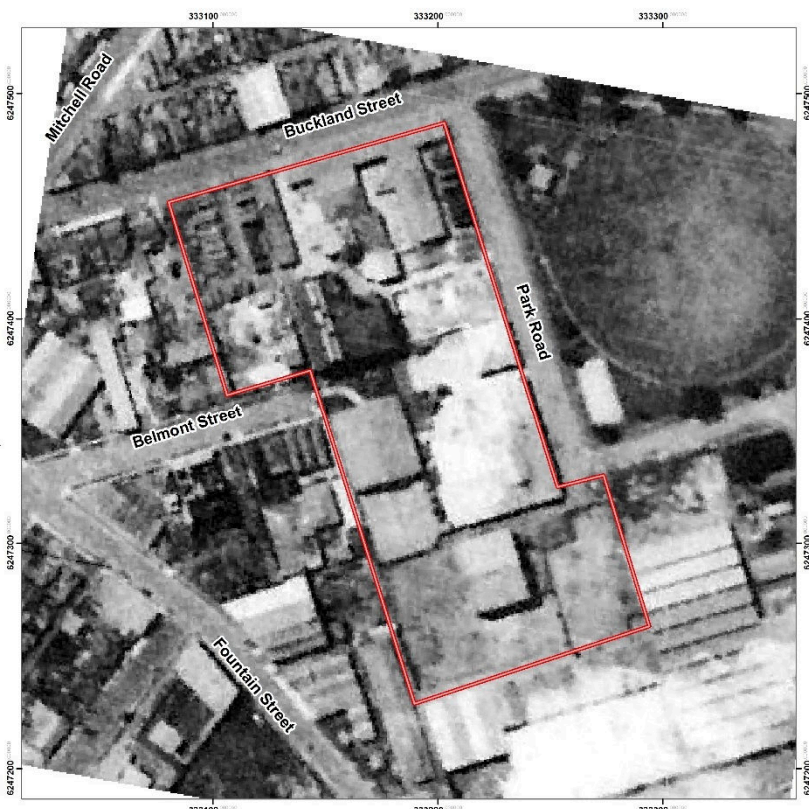


Figure 5. Waterbodies, creeks and swampy areas in the vicinity of the Site in the 1870s (Source: 'Six mile circuit map of the city and suburbs of Sydney 1876-1877' by John Sands, National Library of Australia, Bib ID3602706, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-231444908/view>).



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Data sources: Extent, ESRI, Nearthmap, City of Sydney.

This detailed map shows the proposed site for Alexandria Park Community School. The school's footprint is outlined in red, situated between Buckland Street to the north, Belmont Street to the west, and Fountain Street to the south. To the east of the site is Alexandria Park. Various commercial properties are labeled, including Murray Bros Furniture, Pioneer Welding Co Ltd, and others. A scale bar indicates distances up to 80 meters, and a north arrow is provided.

The inset map provides a regional context, showing the location of the study area (marked with a red square) within the greater Sydney metropolitan area, near the intersection of the M4 and M5 highways.

EXTENT HERITAGE / Alexandria Park Community School Preliminary Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment

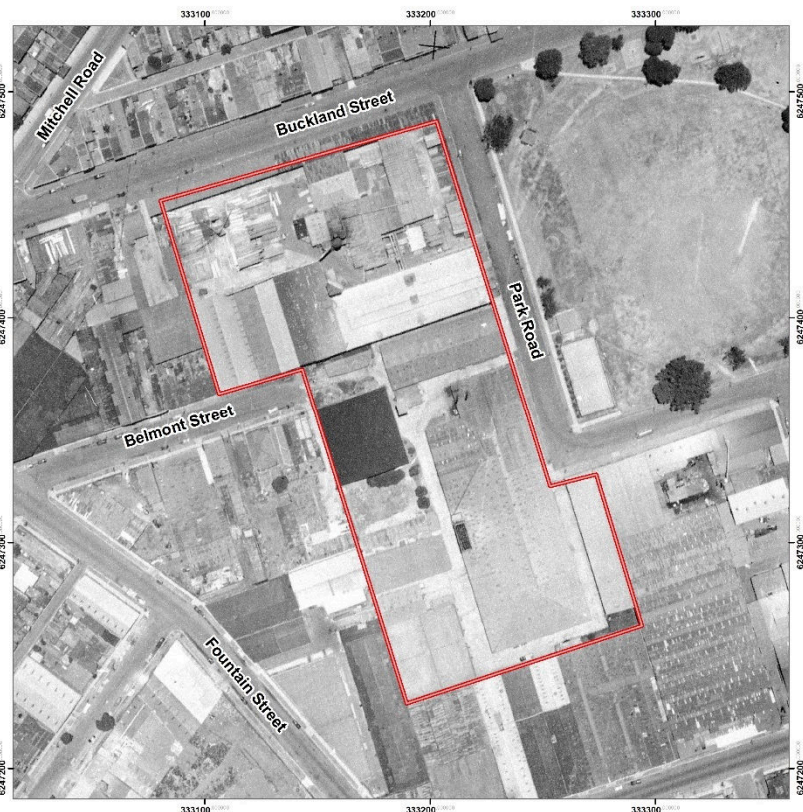
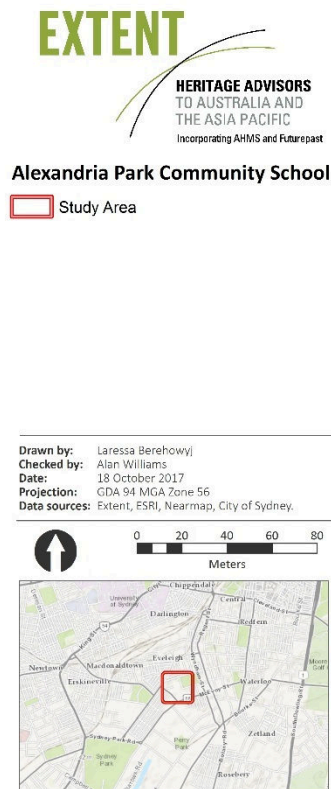


Figure 8. 1949 aerial of the Site (Source: City of Sydney Historical Atlas of Sydney, Aerial Photographic Survey, Run 8/4800 15.12.49).

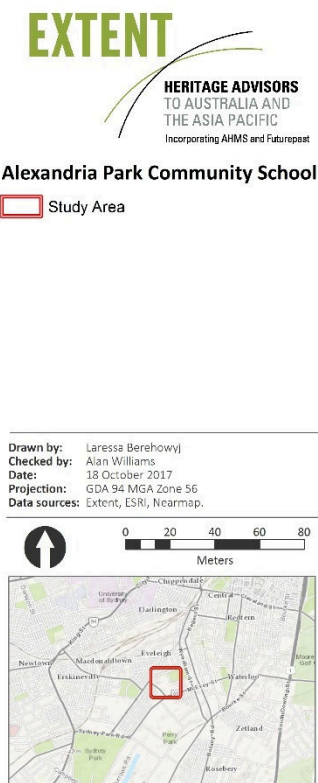


Figure 9. 2009 aerial of the Site (Source: Nearmap, 2017).

EXTENT




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 Study Area

Historic Structures

Phasing

-  Pre 1930s
-  1930s-1949
-  1970s-2009
-  2009-2017

Drawn by: Laressa Berehowy
Checked by: Alan Williams
Date: 18 October 2017
Projection: GDA 94 MGA Zone 56
Data sources: Extent, ESRI, Nearmap, Department of Finance,
City of Sydney.



0 20 40 60 80
Meters

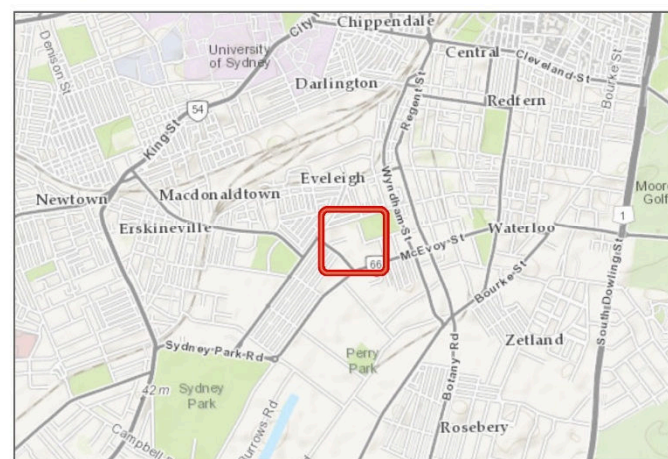


Figure 10. Summary of known historical development across the Site. Note that overall, historical disturbance is considered to be low due to the depth of the soil profile.

4 ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

4.1 Key Findings

- Aboriginal people of the Alexandria area were the Cadigal people, and spoke a coastal variant of the Darug language. Their traditional land encompassed southern Sydney; extending from the entrance of the Port Jackson Harbour to Cockle Bay, down south to South Head, and as far inland as Petersham.
- The Cooks River and its tributaries, estuaries and swampy lagoons of the Site formed critical resources for local Cadigal people, providing fresh water, fish, birds and terrestrial animals drawn to the water. A popular Aboriginal fishing method on the Cooks River included spear fishing with a *Galara* (four-pronged harpoon) in shallow waters – a practice that continued well into the historic period.
- Historical research has indicated the potential for intangible Aboriginal cultural values associated with the Site and its immediate surrounds, namely through the use of the site as a well-known employer of Aboriginal women (the Federal Match Company), and as a sports ground for the first Aboriginal football club matches (Redfern All Blacks).

4.2 Regional Information

The Sydney coastal region was occupied and used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years prior to European settlement. Within the Sydney region the coastline, rivers and creeks, sandy dune fields, floodplains, swamps and open forests provided Aboriginal people with rich and varied resource zones and occupation areas. Aboriginal sites across the Sydney region provide tangible evidence of an ongoing link with the long history of Aboriginal use and occupation in this area.

4.2.1 The Coastal Darug People

Over thirty separate Aboriginal groups populated the wider Sydney area in 1788, each with their own country, practices, diets, dress, and dialects. We now know of these groups as ‘clans’ and each identified with broader cultural-linguistic groups sometimes referred to as ‘tribes’ - Darug, Darkinjung, Gundungarra, Dharawal (Tharawal), Guringai, and Awabakal.

At the time of European settlement, the Aboriginal people of the Sydney coastal region spoke the Darug language. According to the Anthropologist Norman Tindale, the Darug occupied a vast area of 6,000km², from the NSW coastline to the mouth of the Hawkesbury River and inland to Mount Victoria, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Camden and Penrith (Tindale 2015 [1974]). However, it should be noted that Tindale’s descriptions of tribal boundaries were based on linguistic evidence that was gathered between 1884 and 1969, and on a conception of bounded territories that has since been questioned. Territories were clearly defined by physical places in the landscape, and boundary lines were indicated by natural features such as hills, watercourses and rock outcrops.

Darug people were distinguished as ‘fresh water’ or ‘saltwater’ people depending on whether they inhabited the coastal or inland areas of the Sydney region. According to the anthropologist and linguist RH Matthews, the Darug language closely resembled that of the Gundungarra, and had grammatical similarities with the neighbouring Tharawal and Ngunnawal tribes, but differed slightly in vocabulary (Matthews 1901:140).

Evidently, a shared language enabled the transmission of knowledge, customs, and lore as well as items and resources. Clans occasionally converged with other clans to trade, hunt, fight, feast, arrange marriages, resolve disputes, and share information. Examples of such meetings recorded in

documentary sources include details of a gathering of three clans on their way to Camden to learn a new song (Backhouse 1843), Burramattagal people venturing out to Manly to feast on a beached whale (Tench 1793), and groups of hunters near Carabeely cooperating on a large-scale kangaroo hunt (Barrallier 1802). There was often tension between neighbouring groups and the boundaries between territories were not lightly traversed (White 1788). On an expedition north-west of Parramatta, Watkin Tench records that his guides Colebee (Gadigal) and Ballederry (Burramattagal) quickly found themselves in 'county unknown' and that they described those who lived there as 'enemies'. When the party finally reached the Hawkesbury River, Tench (12th April, 1791 [1793]) surmised that 'Our natives had evidently never seen this river before'.

The landscape was criss-crossed with Aboriginal paths, many of which later became roads. Missionary James Backhouse was amazed by the speed and sophistication of communication between clans; on 23 October 1835, he encountered Aboriginal people in Richmond who knew of his brief visit to Wellington, over three hundred kilometres away: 'Our persons, costume, and many other particulars, including our manner of communicating religious instruction, had been minutely described' (Backhouse 1843:339).

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how many people occupied the Darug area prior to, let alone after European occupation. Governor Phillip estimated that there were at least 1,500 people living in the Botany Bay, Port Jackson and Broken Bay area in 1788. This figure was based on the people and camps he had observed on expeditions around Sydney Cove, the Parramatta River and Broken Bay (Phillip 15 May 1788 [1792]:133). A recent study of the western Cumberland Plain estimated the population at 500 to 1000 people within a 600km² area, with a minimum overall density of around 0.5 persons/km² (Kohen 1995:81). Using Norman Tindale's estimates of the size of the Darug language area, this equates to 3,000 people. This figure is broadly consistent with James Kohen's, Ronald John Lampert's and Isabel McBryde's estimate of between 2,000 and 3,000 people in the Sydney region (Kohen and Lampert 1987:345; McBryde 1989:171); and with James Kohen's estimate of between 4,000 to 8,000 people from the coast to the lower Blue Mountains (Kohen 1993:19; 1995:81).

The primary sources offer only glimpses of the ceremonial life of these Aboriginal clans. Europeans recorded some Aboriginal customs, such as the avulsed teeth and 'scarifications' of certain initiated men, and the kangaroo teeth necklaces and the missing little finger joints of 'mountaineer' and coastal women. But, due to the secrecy surrounding ceremonial events, there are serious limitations to even the most richly described accounts like the 'Yoo-long Erah-ba-diang' initiation ceremonies Collins records at the head of Farm Cove and in the 'middle harbour' (Collins 1798); the contests and dances conducted on 'a clear spot between the town and the brickfield' (Collins 1798); and the operation performed by Yellomundee, a 'caradyee', on Colebe's wound on the banks of the Hawkesbury (Tench 1793).

Fire was a constant presence in early Sydney, from the 'moving lights' seen on the harbour at night (Banks 1998: 243) to lone trees burning on the Cumberland Plain, 'the smoke issuing out of the top part as through a chimney' (White 1788: 26 April). 'In all the country thro' which I have passed,' wrote Arthur Phillip in May 1788, 'I have seldom gone a quarter of a mile without seeing trees which appear to have been destroyed by fire' (Phillip: 15 May 1788 [1792]). The first Australians became known as the fire-makers. They used fire to open paths and to clean country; to drive animals into the paths of hunters and then to cook the kill; to keep warm at night and to carry as a torch the next day; to treat wood, melt resin and crack stone for tools; to gather around and dance and share stories (**Figure 11**).

Early observations provide an insight into local burning regimes. On a hot dry day in September 1790, for example, David Collins observed Aboriginal people 'burning the grass on the north shore opposite to Sydney, in order to catch rats and other animals' (Hunter 1793 [1968]: 31 August 1791). Almost exactly twelve months later, on 31 August 1791, they were again 'firing the country' in the same place on a hot day ahead of heavy rains. While Collins regarded this to be another 'remarkable coincidence', it suggests a connection to the land and an understanding of the seasons which the

settlers could not fathom. This dismissive approach proved devastating during 1799 flood of the Hawkesbury. Settlers who ignored the flood warnings given by Aboriginal people were engulfed by a destructive torrent as the 'river swell'd to more than fifty feet perpendicular height above its common level' (Collins 1798: Appendix VI).

4.2.2 Utilising Natural Resources

The Cooks River and its tributaries, including Sheas Creek, played a pivotal role in Aboriginal life. It likely provided a reliable supply of water, as well as fish, eels; and terrestrial animals were likely drawn to the water and were hunted for food. Aboriginal fishing methods are known to have been many and varied and included line fishing from bark canoes, spear fishing with a *Galara* (four-pronged harpoon) in the shallow waters and utilising nets, traps and fish poisons (**Figure 12**). Fish, shellfish and birds such as black swans, redbills, sulphur crested cockatoos, brolgas and quails were also collected from resource rich swamps and lagoons (Attenbrow, 2010:85-90; City of Sydney n.d.:2). Important plants and animals were also found in wetlands, fertile floodplains and along estuaries and lagoons, providing medicines, fibres, vitamin and food sources.

Kangaroos, wallabies, possums, sugar gliders, bandicoots, wombats, echidnas, fruit bats (flying foxes) and other smaller mammals were amongst the wide range of land animals that inhabited the Sydney region and were available to both coastal and hinterland people. Most Australian land animals are not migratory and therefore their seasonal availability and abundance do not vary markedly (Attenbrow 2010:70). The diet also included honey produced by native bees, as well as ants and their eggs. Many foods were harvested by tree climbing. Colebe and Ballederry called these people the 'climbers of trees' after their practice of skilfully ascending gums in pursuit of animals, cutting footholds in the trunks with a stone axe. Birds and tree dwelling mammals could be captured, and bird eggs and honey could be collected in this way (Tench 1793:126).

Starchy tubers and roots, bush fruits and native seeds were also frequently consumed. Certain plant foods such as the blackbean and *cunjevoi* plants along with some varieties of wild yam (*Dioscorea* sp.) were unpalatable or toxic in their natural state and required complex processing before consumption. Watkin Tench described how 'a poor convict' had gotten violently ill trying to eat a poisonous yam. After having seen Darug people eating the same yam, he concluded that the people had a way of preparing them to render them an 'innocent food' (Tench 1793:83). To combat toxicity, these foods were roasted in ashes, open fires or earth ovens; pounded and baked into cakes; or grated, peeled or sliced using bone, stone and shell implements and leached for lengthy periods of time in water (Beck 1985:107, 211).

At times Aboriginal people stayed for several months in the one area: Joseph Banks (1771 [1998]) records finding 'a small village consisting of about 6 or 8 houses' on the south shore of Botany Bay in April 1770, and in December 1790, Watkin Tench (1793) describes a similar 'little village (if five huts deserve the name)' on the north side of the bay. Shelters were constructed using a frame of forked branches secured to the ground. Sheets of bark were placed against the frame, angled against the wind. The front of the shelter was generally left open, facing a small fire.