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Mungo

1967 >



Willandra Lakes Region
World Heritage Area

mungo
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Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

The text in this booklet has been selectively extracted from three documents commissioned by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service that all tell important parts of the story of Mungo's cultural heritage since 1788. These documents are:

SHARED LANDSCAPES: ARCHAEOLOGIES OF ATTACHMENT AND THE PASTORAL INDUSTRY IN NEW SOUTH WALES. Studies in the Cultural Construction of Open Space. Rodney Harrison (2004). Sydney, Australia: UNSW Press.

WOMEN AND LANDSCAPE: NSW WESTERN PARKS PROJECT: AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF WOMEN AND OUTBACK LANDSCAPES for the Cultural Heritage Division of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Dr Johanna Kijas June 2003

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AND CULTURAL TOURISM PLAN , MUNGO NATIONAL PARK . Prepared for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, by Godden Mackay Logan March 2003

MUNGO NATIONAL PARK DIGITAL GUIDEBOOK: Ian Brown 2010

Photography: Ian Brown, Richard Delaney





SAYS A FRIEND OF THE ABORIGINES:

"Let's tell the world there's only one Australian, and his color doesn't matter at all"

By KAY KEAVNEY

"I wanted to understand," said Faith Bandler. "I wanted to know why a man should be an outcast in his own country just because his skin is black."



FAITH BANDLER with her Austrian-born husband, their daughter, Lilon, and Aboriginal foster-son, Peter.

FAITH had just been elected—at a packed meeting of Aborigines and whites—to direct the N.S.W. campaign for a Yes vote in the Aboriginal rights referendum on May 27.

She has fought all her life for what she sees as a question of human dignity. Her own skin is deep chocolate. She has not one drop of Aboriginal blood. Her father was Melanesian, from the New Hebrides. Her mother was part-Scott, part-Irish.

But she is colored, she knows what prejudice and poverty mean. She grew up, one of a family of eight, near Macquarie, N.S.W. The telephone begins ringing at about 8 a.m. and goes on all past midnight.

"I want to search a dinner or a cup of coffee," said Faith. "I have to put cushions over the phone."

Meanwhile, she cares for her family and deals with the household chores, along with her other honorary jobs as executive of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship and the Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. She also speaks to in-

numerable groups on the cause for which she fights.

There is nothing of the battle-axe about Faith. She is small and very attractive, with lively eyes, musical voice, and ready smile.

And she is singularly free from bitterness.

Formerly Faith Manning, she was the second last of the four boys and four girls of a struggling share-farmer.

"We were all Depression kids," she said. "We lived in an old place outside Macquarie. My father grew bananas, sharing the farm with a white man. We played with his family."

"Looking back, I had a happy childhood, though we were desperately poor."

"My father was a wonderful gardener — he grew all our fruit and vegetables — and, in fact, a remarkable man."

"You never knew anyone so independent! He would take absolutely nothing for nothing. And he'd never take an insult on account of his color. So we all grew up the same. We were all fiercely independent. We'd always have the last word, even if we had to fight for it."

"My mother was a very gracious person, with a beautiful speaking and singing voice. If she could afford to give us a present, it was always a book."

"She cared greatly about education, and taught us to care. We all wanted to go on at school, but when I was only six or seven my father died, and she was left with the right of us."

"So I had very little formal schooling. But I read. We all did. I've always read everything I could get my hands on. Music and books are my two great loves."

"My elder brothers immediately left school. They were magnificent horsemen, and could turn their hands to anything on a farm."

"But when it came to the girls' turn, finding work wasn't so easy. Because of our color, we couldn't work in any of the town restaurants, or, in fact, anywhere public."

"I joined the Land Army in 1941 and worked in the Irrigation Area and other places for three years."

"We girls worked very hard, and among us was a man who did very little but got twice the pay we did. That was when I began to feel angry about another

kind of discrimination — discrimination against women — and it's an anger I've never lost."

"I met absolutely no discrimination from the other Army girls. Eric Basson's daughter, Nancy, was with us, and she became a close friend."

"After the war I came to Sydney and lived in an attic in Woolloomooloo. That's when I made my first public speech on civil rights, on the same platform as the poet Roland Robinson."

"People like William Hallfield were in the audience, and somehow I found myself making many friends among writers."

"More and more I spoke publicly on the whole question of the dignity of dark people."

"I really wanted a musical career. I learned piano for a short time, and had my voice trained. But the other work made it impossible. Soon, helped by a sympathetic benefactor, I was giving it all my time."

"I met Hans at a concert. 'Being Jewish, he had known prejudice too. Only his brother in England is left of all his family. The Nazis killed the rest, and Hans himself was in Dachau.'"

"Fortunately, a wealthy and influential aunt got him out before World War II and he came here."

"Hans and I had so much in common, but my work took me abroad, studying

and lecturing. I spoke in many places about the problems of dark people. But I began to see that I wasn't very well informed."

"When I came back I was determined to learn, to understand why a man should be an outcast in his own country just because his skin is black."

"I went out among the Aborigines. I went to the stations, wherever they were, and talked to them. Especially I talked to the women."

"In June, 1952, Hans and I were married."

"For the next five years, on the weekends, we built our house at French's Forest practically with our own hands."

"Our daughter, Lilon Gerstl, was born in 1954. Lilon is a name from the

New Hebrides, and Gerstl is for Hans' Vienna."

"Lilon was born to the sound of the telephone ringing. It was just about this time that the Aboriginal-Australian Association was founded — in our flat."

"In 1952, a Federal body was formed, the Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders."

"That telephone has been ringing ever since."

"Faith is determined that her children will have an normal life as possible, and as good an education."

Young Lilon is in her first year at high school. She has often been a guest on "The Quiz Kids," the television program for brilliant children."

Ten-year-old Peter came to the Bandlers as a troubled little Aboriginal child of three."

"He'd had a terrible time," Faith told me. "Until the Welfare Department took him, this little baby had to fend for himself. His experience wasn't untypical of Aboriginal children of poor homes, living on the fringes of a prejudiced town. He'd never drunk anything but water, and the only food he knew was scraps of bread or sometimes lollies."

Peter is now happy and healthy, good at sport, loves school, and, like all the Bandlers, is an inveterate reader."

With warm pleasure, Faith said, "I've been instrumental in finding foster-homes for many Aboriginal children, and that includes white homes."

"I just don't believe one kind of person is inferior to another. All that is needed

is opportunity, and above all a sense of dignity."

"And a Yes vote on May 27 can open the doors for all the Australians who happen to be black."

"A Yes vote will mean that the Aboriginal people can come under Commonwealth law and derive all those benefits which only the Federal Government can give them."

"At the moment, for census purposes, they're not even counted as existing. A Yes vote will change that."

"Aborigines are the only Australians who live under six separate laws, one for each State."

"They need education, training. I should like to see money allocated by the Federal Government — if the Referendum empowers it to do so — for education, and that includes adult education."

"Especially I want help for Aboriginal mothers. And a bigger allocation for housing, because housing is at the heart of the matter."

"And I want to see Aborigines standing as candidates for Parliament. Of course, they'll need political training. But the fact is that Aboriginal leaders are already emerging. This campaign for a Yes vote is actually being led by them, with strong white support."

"The eyes of the world are on Australia and her handling of black Australians. Not only Asia is watching but Africa and the whole Western world."

"That one word 'Yes' on May 27 will open the door for real reform. It will tell the world at large that there is only one Australian, and his color doesn't matter at all."



Aboriginal rights and the 1967 referendum

Wattie Creek and equal wages

Although it occurred some 2000 kilometres to the north of NSW, the 1966 Gurindji strike at Wave Hill pastoral station in the Northern Territory was to have enormous repercussions for Aboriginal pastoral labourers across Australia.

Echoing developments in New South Wales of three to four decades earlier, in late 1965 Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Northern Territory were granted wages equal to their fellow non-indigenous pastoral workers under the federal industrial award.

However, on being informed that they would have to wait three years for this to take effect (giving the pastoral companies time to adjust to these new costs) by September 1966 the whole Aboriginal staff of Wave Hill station decided to strike. Removing themselves to a camp at Wattie Creek, they announced to the pastoral company Vestey's that they wanted their land returned.

Aboriginal people in New South Wales saw these demands as akin to their own calls to have their aspirations in land realised, and with new-found support from the 'new Left' in the wake of the 1967 referendum, Aboriginal farmers and pastoralists in New South Wales strengthened their demands for land justice.

Their situation was not as bad as in northern Australia, where, due to a reluctance or inability to pay equal wages, thousands of Aboriginal pastoral workers and their families were forcibly removed from pastoral stations where many of them had lived since birth.

Nevertheless, the Gurindji case contributed to a period during the 1960s in which Aboriginal people found their place in the New South Wales pastoral workforce contested.

In 1967, a federal referendum was held that stands today as a watershed in the recognition of Aboriginal rights in Australia.

By 1967, Aboriginal people had obtained both full citizenship and voting rights. The constitution however expressly prohibited the Federal Government from making special laws in relation to Aboriginal people or to count them in the national census.

Redressing this special separation of Aboriginal people from the rest of the Australian population was correctly seen as a pressing imperative in order to address indigenous rights.

Accordingly when nine out of ten voters endorsed the change it was seen as a clear community mandate for the Federal Government to implement policies to benefit Aboriginal people. The referendum result immediately took on a crucial symbolic meaning during a period of increasing Aboriginal self-confidence.

It was however some five years before any real change occurred as a result of the referendum. Federal legislation has since been enacted covering land rights, discriminatory practices, financial assistance and preservation of cultural heritage.

The other aspect of the constitutional change, enabling of Aborigines to be counted in population statistics, has led to clearer comparisons of the desperate state of Aboriginal health.



The National Parks and Wildlife Service logo owes much to the creation of Kinchega National Park in 1967.

While the inclusion of the lyrebird symbol was a given in order to link to the new organisation to the Fauna Protection Panel it replaced, the logo's background colour was initially planned to be green.

When the Service's first director – Samuel P. Weems (an American import for the occasion) – returned from a trip out to inspect the then proposed Kinchega National Park, he insisted the logo colour be changed to orange – just like the outback soils.

The logo also included an Aboriginal boomerang motif in the expectation that the NPWS would soon acquire responsibility for the protection of Aboriginal relics in NSW. This happened in 1969.

The photo below shows NPWS staff inspecting the Kinchega Woolshed in the 1970s.





1967 – enter the National Parks and Wildlife Service

1969 and the protection of Aboriginal heritage

While the NPWS gained some immediate connection with Aboriginal heritage protection when the Mootwingee Historic Site was created in 1967, it was a further two years before it became responsible for the protection of all the State's Aboriginal relics such as middens, stone implements, rock engravings, carved trees and bora rings.

In 1969, amendments to the NPW Act provided penalties for the destruction or damage of Aboriginal artefacts, irrespective of whether they occurred on private or NPWS land.

It also set up the Australian Museum as the legal custodian of all subsequently discovered, movable Aboriginal relics — hence prohibiting their sale or removal from the State.

In addition, the legislation formalised the role of the Aboriginal Relics Advisory Committee by establishing it on a statutory basis.

This committee's role was to advise the NPWS and the Minister on any matters relating to Aboriginal relic and site preservation. Included on this committee was the NPWS' newly appointed resident archaeologist, Sharon Sullivan, though significantly there were no Aboriginal representatives.

This very much represented the prevailing state of play whereby Aboriginal relic protection proceeded on a custodial, rather than on a cooperative basis.

It should, however, be remembered that at this time the ink had only recently dried on the constitutional changes passed by referendum in 1967 enabling Aboriginal people to be included in census counts of the Australian population.

The notion of actively involving Aboriginal people in the management of their own cultural heritage was one which was still some years away and one which the work of the NPWS would help to foster.

National parks were not a new idea for NSW by the time the National Parks and Wildlife Service was created in 1967.

Nature conservation reserves had by this time been established under various titles (including national park) across most areas of the state. Generally however, these reserves had been established over areas of vacant Crown land and as there was next to none of this in the state's Western Division no conservation reserves had been created here.

An opportunity to break this nexus came to the attention of the then Fauna Protection Panel around 1964 when they learnt that several leases covering large areas of land were coming up for renewal in the Western Division. They hence commenced investigating the nature conservation value of these areas.

Their timing in this was well nigh perfect as the start of this work met with a supportive Lands Department Minister, Tom Lewis, following the election of the Askin Government in April 1965.

Lewis vigorously embraced the concept of establishing national parks in the west of the State and under his impetus, the government was able to announce its plans for the establishment of Kinchega National Park on land around Menindee to the east of Broken Hill at the same time as the inaugural National Parks and Wildlife Bill was introduced into parliament on 6 December 1966.

The park was later gazetted when the revised legislation was eventually proclaimed on 1 October in the following year.

One interesting aspect of this decision to establish parks in the State's Western Division was the fact that Lewis was familiar with several of the graziers holding large pastoral leases in the area — leases which needed to be allowed to lapse in order to establish parks such as Kinchega.

He had in fact attended school in Adelaide with Gwynne Hughes whose family had farmed on the land around the Menindee Common for several generations. His decision to proceed with the establishment of national parks in the west of the State, thus cut rather close to home for Lewis and it is a measure of his determination to establish national parks in this region, that he pushed ahead with their gazettal.



APPEAL TO PRESERVE ANCIENT SITE

THE SANDHILLS WHERE

Scientists are excited by the discovery of a site, remote in the dry interior of New South Wales, where the earliest-known Australians once lived

Who was Mungo Woman, who lived and died where The Walls of China now stand? One of the world's most significant archaeological finds here in Australia provides the answer.

It is a discovery that has changed the thinking of scientists about the origin of mankind.

The Mungo Woman was a young adult Aboriginal and her bones were found on a pinnacle of sand and clay left bare by the hot westerly blowing on the shores of the dry bed of Lake Mungo, in south-west New South Wales.

The pinnacle is part of a crescent of sand dunes about 24 metres (80ft) high and 34km (21 miles) long, marked on old maps as The Walls of China, a name the dunes are said to have been given by Chinese working in the area a century ago.

The Mungo Woman was discovered by Dr Jim Bowler, of Canberra. Around her were clues that when she lived about 27,000 years ago, her dust-dry resting place was a lush green paradise.

The lakes were 10m deep in clear, fresh water, alive with Murray cod and other fish, with fat mussels clinging to the sandy bottom. Kangaroos three metres tall and ancestral relatives of the wombat as big as rhinos lived on the shores. The marsupial lion, looking something like a metre-long possum, padded through the tall grass.

Strangest of all, scientific tests disclosed that at that time the direction of the North and South poles varied about 90 degrees from what it is today.

The discovery of the Mungo Woman brought scientists from all over the world dropping in by light plane on the dusty little airstrip in the centre of Lake Mungo.

But many of the curious visitors are not scientists and there is a danger that vital relics may be lost forever unless a resident archaeologist can be appointed and more of the prehistoric sites can be bought.

For these reasons, the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation of NSW is conducting a state-wide Operation Noah doorknock appeal starting on February 26 in an attempt to raise \$450,000.

The Foundation is a community

organization set up to provide funds for the State's National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Mungo Woman led to the finding of the remains of two men, Mungo II and III. Mungo III, coated with red ochre, is the world's earliest known use of pigments in burial.

Other evidence uncovered showed that Aborigines had lived in the area from 40,000 years ago until 200 years ago. To get this sort of information, an archaeologist takes about two years excavating a six by three metre site, rebuilding the story of the past from



INSET ABOVE: Archaeologist Sharon Sullivan and Peter Pigott, of the Wildlife Foundation, examine Mungo fossils. BACKGROUND: Part of The Walls of China

dust particles swept up delicately with a small brush.

After the finding of Mungo Woman, the Barnes family, who had lived at Lake Mungo for three generations, sold their property to the Wildlife Service.

In a country where temperatures can reach above 42 deg C and a brief shower of rain can bog four-wheel-drive vehicles, sightseers literally took their lives in their hands driving out without drinking water or food on badly signposted roads.

One of the burdens on nearby landowners is finding those who have wandered off into the shimmering haze.

"Let's tell the world there's only one Australian, and his color doesn't matter at all". (1967, May 10). The Australian Women's Weekly (1932-1982), p. 7. Retrieved May 17, 2011, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article48078607>

We flew to Lake Mungo with Peter Pigott, chairman of the Projects Committee of the Wildlife Foundation, and Sharon Sullivan, senior archaeologist of the Wildlife Service and historian of the Aboriginal section (she has employed eight Aborigines in her department and wants an Aboriginal ranger installed at Mungo).

The Walls of China flashed under the wheels as we came in to land, an eerie waste of worn pinnacles and shifting sand-dunes.

The atmosphere was heavy with strange overtones of the unknown — a landscape that had fallen from an



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Paying for the parks: The National Parks and Wildlife Foundation



Left:

The National Parks and Wildlife Foundation was pivotal in raising the funds for the NPWS purchase of Mungo Station in 1978.

In the following year, the Foundation devoted its annual doorknock appeal to raising \$450,000 to both purchase properties adjacent to Mungo and also to employ a resident archaeologist.

This article in the Womens Weekly at that time was part of the pre doorknock promotion campaign.

The arrival of the new government department in the form of the NPWS was not one that brought joy to the hearts of many in the rural community in the early 1970s.

The seriousness with which the government took the planned program to expand the State's national park network had already been signalled with the establishment of Kinchega National Park.

By preferring to establish this park rather than renew the property's lease, the government effectively upped the ante on the issue of establishing conservation reserves in the west of the State. Would these actions be repeated in other areas of NSW? Would the NPWS' new powers to actually resume land areas be extensively used in a bid to expand the State's park system?

No one knew, and in the absence of any clear indication from the organisation as to what its land acquisition policies would be, speculation and worst case scenarios flourished.

The NPWS was probably the only government department ever to come into being that was interested in actually acquiring large tracts of land to the exclusion of most of the existing uses such as grazing and logging.

To counter this the NPWS set about a policy of downplaying the government's power to resume private lands for the purposes of conservation and to focus instead on purchasing key properties with nature conservation values in the west of the state as these became available.

This however was a problem as the new department's budget was very limited and its acquisition funds were miniscule. To counter this Tom Lewis created the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation in order to provide a means by which both companies and private individuals could contribute to nature conservation.

One of the Foundation's early endeavours was to hold an annual doorknock appeal to involve the general public in raising funds for the acquisition of land for national parks. The first such appeal held on 25 February 1973 raised over \$110 000.

Using the slogan 'National parks don't grow on trees' the annual appeal also provided an important means of generating public interest and commitment towards the expansion of the state's network of national parks and reserves.

Some idea of the significance of this money may be appreciated from the fact that by 1975, \$1.16 million raised from public donations had gone directly into the purchase of lands for inclusion within national parks and nature reserves. These included the establishment of Sturt National Park, Willandra National Park and Yathong Nature Reserve in the west of the State.



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In the same year as the new NPWS took over responsibility for the protection of the State's Aboriginal heritage –1969 – the first of two major discoveries was made in the Lake Mungo lunette that would forever change the future of the pastoral properties gathered around the shores of Lake Mungo.

Mungo Lady and Mungo Man have been dated to 42,000 years old – the oldest human remains in Australia and some of the oldest modern humans in the world outside Africa.





Mungo Lady

About 42,000 years ago, Mungo Lady lived around the shores of Lake Mungo.

A time of plenty was coming to an end at Willandra Lakes, when the basins were full of water and teeming with life.

The human population was at its peak, and Mungo Lady was the daughter of many mothers - the generations before her that had lived at Lake Mungo since the Dreamtime.

She collected bush tucker such as fish, shellfish, yabbies, wattle seeds and emu eggs, nourished her culture and taught her daughters the women's lore.

When Mungo Lady died, we know her family mourned for her. Her body was cremated, the remaining bones were crushed, burned again and then buried in the growing lunette.

In the 1960s a young geologist began to take an interest in the Willandra area.

Jim Bowler was looking for somewhere he could extend his studies into what happened to Australia's landscape and climate in the Pleistocene epoch (between 1.8 million and 10,000 years ago). From aerial photographs he recognised a large complex of fossil lakes in the now semi-arid plains of south-western New South Wales.

Bowler was particularly drawn to Lake Mungo because erosion of the lunette offered a chance to look into ancient layers of sediment. In 1967 Bowler investigated layers of windblown sand and clay piled up in the lunette.

He found freshwater mussel shells and what looked like stone tools deep down in ancient deposits. Returning in 1968 he saw what looked like burnt bones and decided to bring in some archaeologists.

A year later John Mulvaney and Rhys Jones probed the bones and turned over an unmistakable human jaw. Bowler described how they were confronted with "the very presence of humanity itself".

Caught by surprise, the archaeologists collected the bones in a leather suitcase that Mulvaney had with him and took both back to the Australian National University. The remains were labelled Lake Mungo I and later determined to be of an adult female. She became known as Mungo Woman, or Mungo Lady.



Mungo Man

About 42,000 years ago, Mungo Man lived around the shores of Lake Mungo with his family.

Mungo Man cared for his Country and kept safe the special men's knowledge. By his lore and ritual activity, he kept the land strong and his culture alive.

Mungo Man reached a good age for the hard life of a hunter-gatherer, and died when he was about 50.

His family mourned for him, and carefully buried him in the lunette, on his back with his hands crossed in his lap, and sprinkled with red ochre.

Mungo Man is the oldest known example in the world of such a ritual.

Late one afternoon in 1974, after some heavy rain, Jim Bowler was riding his motor bike around the Lake Mungo lunette, continuing his studies.

He spotted something he hadn't seen before – the gleam of a white object poking out of the soil. When he looked closer he realised it was a human cranium.

Bowler asked anthropologist Alan Thorne to help with the excavation. It revealed the almost complete skeleton of an adult male, who was designated Lake Mungo III.



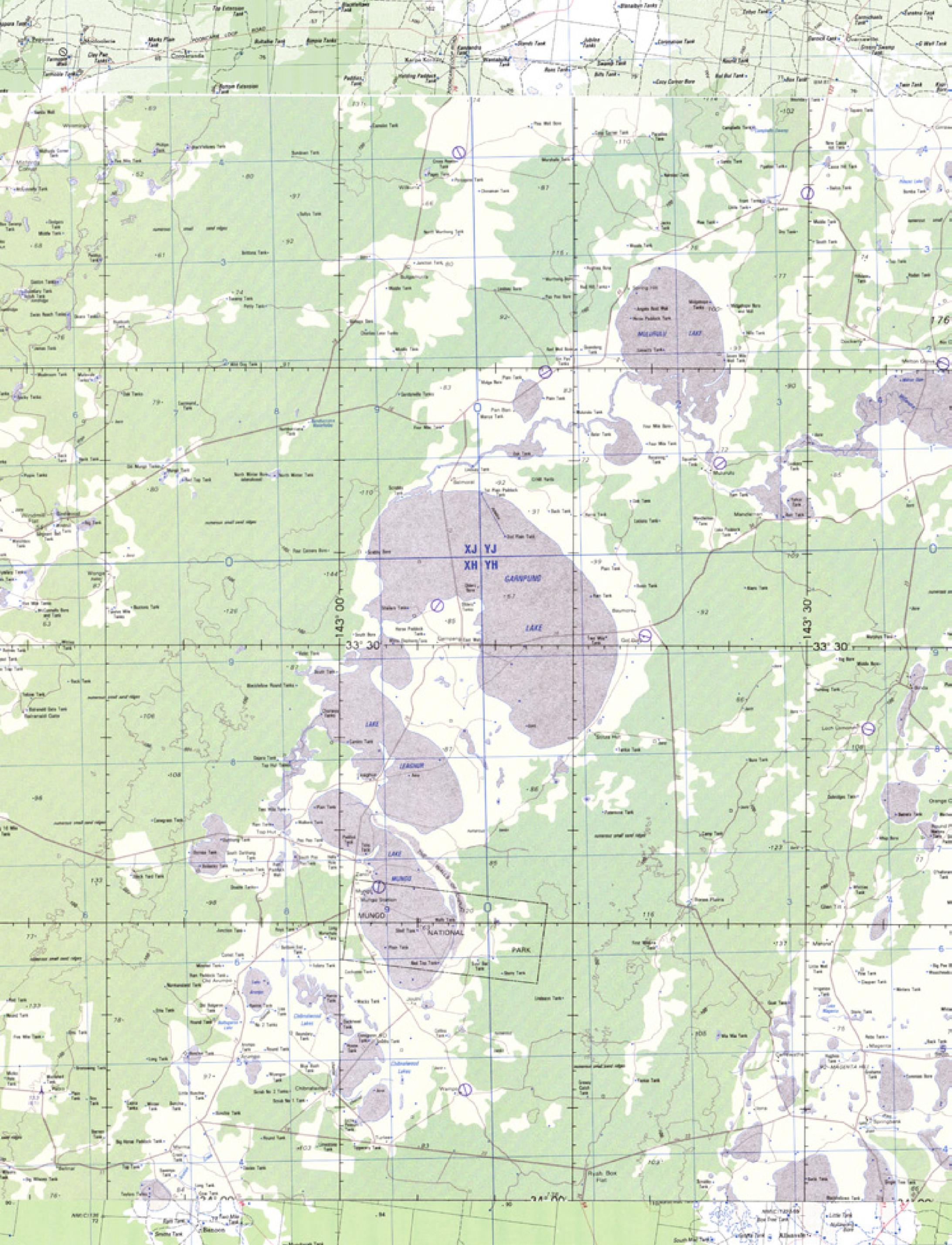


Photo courtesy Barnes family collection



Albert and Venda Barnes outside the Mungo woolshed in the sheep yards in 1975.

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Mungo National Park

Zanci Homestead c. 1983



When the NPWS took over the Zanci property in 1984 a number of buildings were demolished or removed including one of the two homesteads, several sheds and outbuildings and the shearers quarters.

This removal, on the basis of the poor condition and asbestos issues, probably also reflects the service's prevailing cultural philosophic view of the time, not always publicly articulated, that removing the buildings was part of the job of restoring nature.

Notwithstanding this bumpy start at Zanci, the service has been active in nature and cultural heritage conservation throughout Mungo National Park.

A research and recording program was established in 1979 by contract archaeologist Peter Clark and this included the recording of numerous Aboriginal sites.

In 1985 a Plan of Management was prepared for the Park. Several works programs have been undertaken on the Mungo and Zanci Woolsheds and the Stables at Zanci have been rethatched.

In 1984 a major initiative to interpret the heritage values of the Park was made with the construction of the Visitors Centre in the Mungo Station complex.

The move toward the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service ownership of Mungo and Zanci Stations began in 1971 with the visit to Mungo by a NPWS officer to investigate the Lake Mungo Aboriginal archaeological discoveries.

Publicity about the finds had led to both an increase in the number of visitors to the area and an increase in professional anxiety over the preservation and future management of the site.

By 1973 pressure was being put on the NPWS to implement some type of protection to the archaeological sites and the Walls of China. Researchers from the Australian National University had contacted NPWS to report on their excavations on site as well as to express concern over the number of tourists visiting the site, and the use of motorbikes and dune buggies on the Walls of China.

Concern had also been raised by Albert Barnes, who saw the tourist sideline as impacting on his management of the property.

In 1975 it was proposed that the area be considered by the Interim Committee of the National Estate for inclusion on its list.

Throughout 1976 Barnes', the NPWS, ANU and the Western Lands Commission were in constant contact over the future of the station and the management of the resources.

Included as an issue was that Albert and Venda Barnes had been on the land for 43 years and were beginning to consider leaving it altogether.

With this as an option, and with their consent, NPWS finally made a bid on the property, and in 1978 purchased the Mungo Station for \$116,000 from the Barnes family, with businessman Dick Smith acting to facilitate the arrangements.

The property was bought through the National Parks and Wildlife Foundation, a fund established in 1970 to raise money for the acquisition of land for national parks and for ongoing scientific research into conservation. In March 1979 the Mungo National Park was dedicated.

Subsequent additions to the park have since occurred through the purchase of the Zanci (1984), Garnpang, Leaghur, PanBan and Balmoral (1997) and Joulmie (2010) properties.



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1981: Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area



The global importance of the Willandra Lakes was recognised in 1981 when the region was added to the World Heritage List. It was one of the first Australian World Heritage sites.

By 2010 Australia had 17 world heritage places, but Willandra is one of only four that are listed for both their natural and their cultural values. The others are Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, the Tasmanian Wilderness and Kakadu National Park.

The World Heritage emblem represents the interdependence of the world's natural and cultural diversity. It is used to identify properties protected by the World Heritage Convention and inscribed on the official World Heritage List, and represents the universal values for which the Convention stands.

While the central square symbolizes the results of human skill and inspiration, the circle celebrates the gifts of nature.

The emblem is round, like the world, a symbol of global protection for the heritage of all humankind. Designed by Belgian artist Michel Olyff, the emblem was adopted as the official symbol of the World Heritage Convention in 1978.

The Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area covers 2,400 square kilometres and takes in all 19 lakes of the Willandra Lakes system.

It includes much of Mungo National Park and a larger area of leasehold grazing country. Parts of Mungo National Park which were added to the park after the 1981 listing are not included in the World Heritage area.

The Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area includes both national park and rural grazing properties.

The NPWS manages Mungo National Park and the leaseholders manage the grazing properties in a cooperative manner carefully considerate of the need to protect their world heritage values.

Overall management of World Heritage values across the area is supervised by a World Heritage Management Committee which is made up of representatives of NPWS, landholders, Aboriginal traditional tribal groups, scientists and other stakeholders.



Aboriginal people have not been able to live permanently around the Willandra Lakes since the lakes dried up during the last glacial period.

But archaeological evidence shows that people have maintained a seasonal presence, most likely when water was locally available.

In more recent years Aboriginal people have lived and worked on pastoral stations in the area.

Today, Ngiyampaa, Mutthi Mutthi and Paakantji people mostly live in towns around the region, such as Ivanhoe, Wilcannia, Pooncarie, Wentworth, Dareton, Mildura, Euston, Balranald and Hay.



For the three tribal groups Mungo is a meeting place, where three traditional territories come together.

The Ngiyampaa (pronounced nee-yam-par) are dryland people. Ngiyampaa Country takes in the plains and rocky hills east of the Darling River, extending north from Willandra Creek.

The Paakantji (pronounced par-kan-tgee, and also written Barkintji) are river people. Paakantji Country extends along the Darling River, and associated floodplains and waterways from north of Broken Hill and Wilcannia to the Victorian border.

The Mutthi Mutthi (pronounced mutty-mutty) people belong to the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan Rivers. Mutthi Mutthi Country extends east and south from Willandra Lakes.



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The three tribal groups



This painting represents spirit and place - the coming together of three tribes, the Mutthi Mutthi, Paakantji and Ngyiampaa. The centre spiral represents the middle of the Lake, the Walls of China and sacred sites.

The many captions of gold leaf on the black swirls signify special 'sites' - uncovered and swept away by the winds. Three white swirls signify ceremonial grounds and the various lines and squares represent man-made sites which have come and gone. The gold represents the richness of the land and strength of its peoples.

Today Three Tribal groups of Aboriginal people share this traditional Country while the care and management is in the control of the Two Traditional Tribal groups Paakantji and Ngyiampaa in the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area and Mungo National Park.

The Paakantji, Ngyiampaa and Mutthi Mutthi people walk here in the footsteps of their ancestors, ensuring their children grow strong in their culture. The tribal groups also seek to share their knowledge of Country with visitors to Mungo National Park.

The Paakantji and Ngyiampaa people jointly manage Mungo National Park with the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. People from all three tribal groups are employed in various positions in the park and run a program of Aboriginal Discovery Tours to share their heritage with visitors.

I know we go back a long time, and to me, the people that walk here, walk in a very spiritual place that means a great deal to me, and I can feel the spirits here when I come out and sit in special places I can just feel it and I love this land I walk on.

Warren Clark, Paakantji

Being involved with Lake Mungo in this past four years, it's been an absolute joyride for me, and I just want to keep it going. I want to keep it going for Mum and Dad, I want to keep it going for my people, I want to keep it going for my children.

Sharon Kennedy, Ngyiampaa

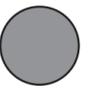
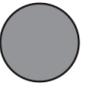
Over the years I got interested in working with the archaeologists, doing research work and various projects up at Lake Mungo... The best part of my job is I'm staying on Country and looking after Country... It's showing the continual link of our people with the area... I feel good. I'm doing what I want to do. I like working on Country, being in the bush. I've got the best job in the world.

Darryl Pappin, Mutthi Mutthi

Country, being in the bush. I've got the best job in the world.

Below: The Mungo Meeting Place was established in 2010 to assist the three tribal groups to share their culture with visitors to Mungo.







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Farming today and the Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Area

Today's farms are modern technological pastoral enterprises.

With about 60% of the Willandra lakes WHA falling within pastoral lands, landholders are also actively working to protect World Heritage values and are integral members of the WHA advisory and joint management committees.

Each landholder has implemented an Individual Property Plan to realign fences and change watering points to reduce grazing pressure on cultural sites and fragile landforms. They routinely work together with National Parks staff to control pest plants and animals.

Scientists are regular visitors to farming properties engaged in research activity in partnership with the Traditional owners. Willandra Landholders participate in annual NAIDOC activities as well as hosting the biennial Mungo Youth Festival.

This three day event brings school children together from across the region to celebrate 50,000 years of aboriginal cultural heritage.

World Heritage status has also provided some landholders with opportunities for diversifying into accommodation and tourism.

These and other mutually beneficial partnerships ensure the unique values for which the region has been listed continue to have meaningful part in people's lives.



