AHIMS # 102243
REPORT.

Brief notes on Aboriginal burials found at

Thegoa Lagoon, Wentworth

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Background

In early October 2008 I was advised by a member of the public that a number of Aboriginal burials were visible in an area near the Wentworth airport. A field inspection of the area took place on the 10th October 2008. A 2nd inspection took place on the 14th November 2008 with Randelle Blair. NSW Police have also been advised on the location of the burials.

Land ownership

Inquires were made with the Wentworth Shire Council regarding ownership of the area, but the Council staff were not willing (due to Council policy) to provide any information on owner details or addresses. Inquires were then made through the NSW Department of Lands (Buronga) however this provided only limited information on the land tenure and lease and lot numbers. As a result a formal title search and company search was conducted through Department of Lands and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC). These searches revealed the property is owned by

THEGOA PASTORAL COMPANY PTY LTD ACN 001 563 533

The ASIC search revealed that the above company is owned by
Mr. J. Hall
Mcdougals Well Station (08) 8091 2586
Broken Hill NSW 2880

Site Location

Burials and campsite materials occur on the raised boundary of the lower and upper river floodplain. To the south the landscape is lower and is within the same Riverland landsystem, similar to Thegoa Lagoon, ie the active floodplain of the Murray River, consisting of channels, levees, vegetated by red gums, black box, river cooba and lignum. To the north the landscape is slightly elevated Wentworth landsystem: this is an ancient floodplain with relic channels, levees, etc. on cracking clay soils, scattered Black box and Chenopod rangelands. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.

The general area contains a widely dispersed scatter of hearthstones, with occasional in situ concentrations of material. The area features a scatter of horse hoof nails,

broken glass, one belt buckle. More glass and historic material is scattered to the east along the margin of the upper and lower floodplain.

Human remains
The human remains that occur on the site are as follows:

1. Fragmented cranium and part of left mandible with intact adult teeth, upper arm, femur and tibia. Laid out in extended fashion, head pointing 230 deg. A bike track passes immediately to the north of the burial and at times bikes may have ridden over the remains. Hearth material and artefacts are scattered nearby.
2. Two long bone shaft fragments, and a scatter of bone fragments over 2m x 1m
3. One long bone shaft, appears to be femur, in situ. Scatter of densely fragmented bone at the distal end of the femur.
4. Burial extended on back, with skull pointing towards NW (300 deg.). Part of hip faintly visible and 2 femur shafts, parallel to each other, merging towards the knees.
5. Adult lying on right hand side. Knees flexed and 2 femurs visible. Legs tightly flexed and lower legs under femurs. Fragments of left foot visible.
6. Scattered fragments over $1m^2$. Patella, long bone (arm fragments).
7. Two child teeth and 2 adult size molars with no wear, and small $1m^2$ scatter of small bone fragments.
8. About 20 very small bone fragments, max. size 3cm long over 1m x 1.5m.
9. 3m west of No. 8 is a 1m x 0.5m area containing small 10 bone fragments, including one skull fragment.

Summary
The site is subject to motor bike traffic occasionally. This does not appear to be through authorised use of the area, but rather occasional bikes using the area on the weekends etc. It needs to be fenced to exclude traffic from the area and the burials need to be recovered and buried. The area that should be fence and protected is small, and covers approximately 30m x 30m. A fence would exclude damaging impacts from the graves and would allow reburial works to proceed within a protected area.

Recommendation
It is recommended that Mr Hall be contacted to seek permission to protect the area and that the works take place as a matter of high priority.

Fig. 1. Location of the Theogoa Lagoon Burials site, shown by the small green triangles, just south of the Wentworth airport.

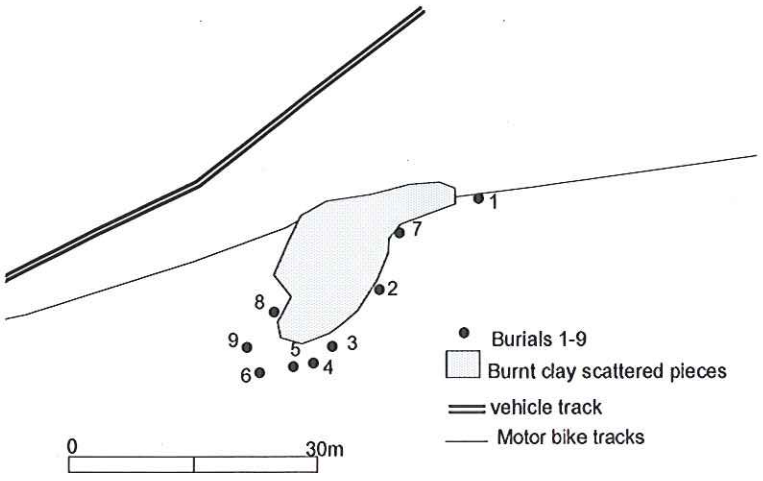
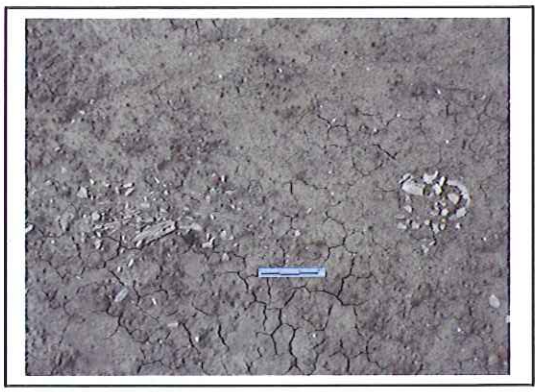


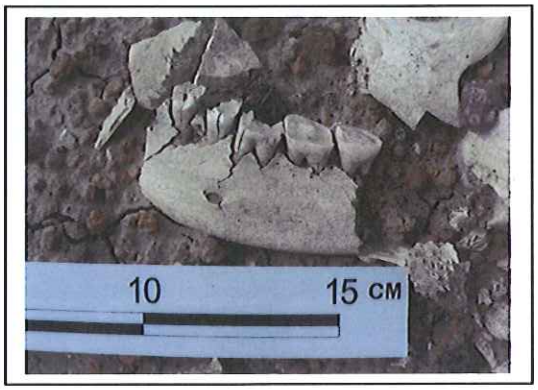
Figure 2. Sketch of the burials, tracks and burnt clay scatter, Thegoa lagoon burials.

Burial 1. Looking east over location



Burial 1. Cranium at right.

Burial 1. Close up of cranium.



Burial 1. Close up left mandible.

Burial 2. General area looking east.

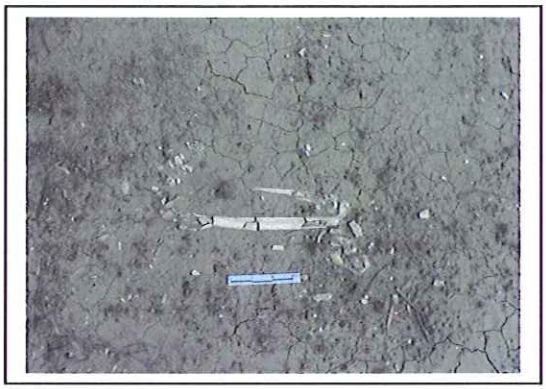
Burial 2. Close up bone scatter.

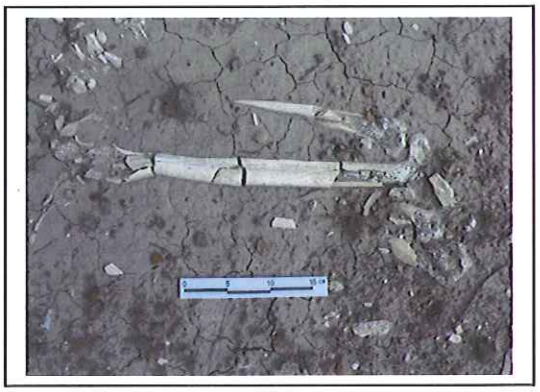
Burial 3. General image of scatter.

Burial 3. Close up femur in situ.

Burial 4. General image of scatter. Femurs on RHS. Cranial fragments LHS.

Burial 4. Parallel femurs in situ LHS.





Burial 5. General area, flexed legs.

Burial 5. Knees flexed on RHS.

Burials 3, 4 & 5. Looking Nth.

Burial 6. in foreground, looking NE.

Burial 6 close up of scatter.

Burial 7 general image of scatter.
Very small fragments and teeth

Burial 8. Close up of scatter

Burial 9. Close up of scatter

Burials 8 and 9. 9 to the front, 8 near saltbush.

Burial 6. View south over Burial