

D5 CARVED TREE SITE 2 (NPWS #37-6-56)

D5.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

A carved tree site was recorded by Australian Museum staff Anderson, Thorpe and Clutten in 1918, following information given to them by Mr A.N. Eather of Bulga. The site was thought to have been located in the south-eastern part of the Wambo study area, but only an approximate AMG grid reference was available, and the precise location of the site is now uncertain. Research to learn more about the site and to locate it has been carried out by Dr Helen Brayshaw and is detailed in Attachment D-1. It is concluded that the site is probably located on the boundary between Wambo Coal's mining lease and the neighbouring Warkworth Mine's mining lease. It is located in portion 17 east of the north-north-west easement which runs through the western half of this portion. Proposed underground mining has been pulled back from this location and is now about 400m north of the northern end of the probable site location.

It should be noted that the ceremonial site listed in the NPWS Site Register as #37-6-55 is the same site, according to the original informant. The following description of Site 2 (NPWS #37-6-56) is based on details collected by Dr Brayshaw and the NPWS site form for the site.

It appears that the trees have been destroyed since the site was recorded. In 1918 the trees were dead, and the NPWS site form indicates that there had been several bushfires since that time and the site had been destroyed. In the 1930s Mr Jim Eather visited the site and at that time only one stump remained, though several earth mounds apparently still survived (see Attachment D-1).

This site consisted, in 1918, of about 12 carved trees, clearing and intact mounds, and was described as a bora ground. The site was located in "open forest country on a slight eminence or plateau" and it was noted that "the ground is exceptionally level and sandy". A map sketched by Museum staff from memory shows it just east of a "stock route" and just north of a creek, which flows into Wollombi Brook to the west (Figure D-7). This stock route approximates the location of a surveyed easement shown on the 1912 Parish map (which would have been current in 1918) (Figure D-8).

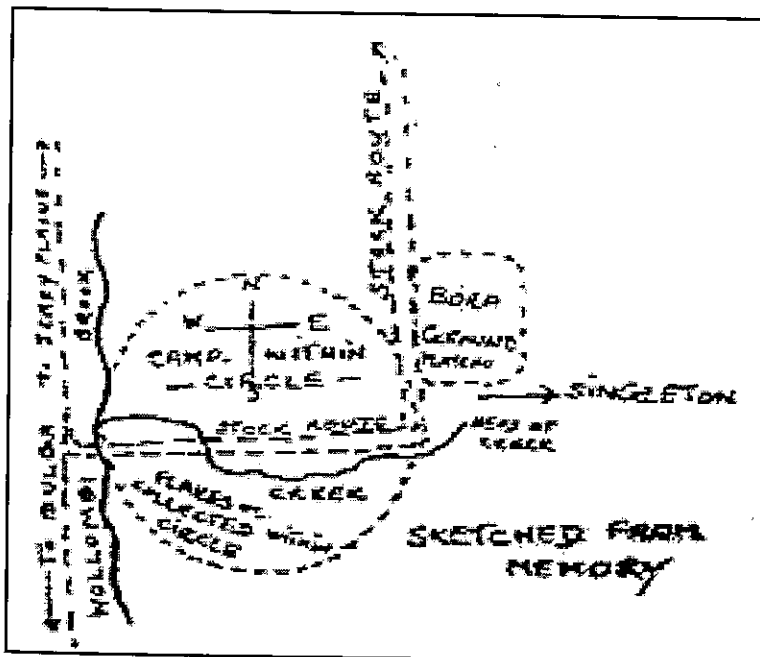


Figure D-7
Sketch Map Drawn by W. W. Thorpe Showing the Location of Site 2 (NPWS #37-6-56)

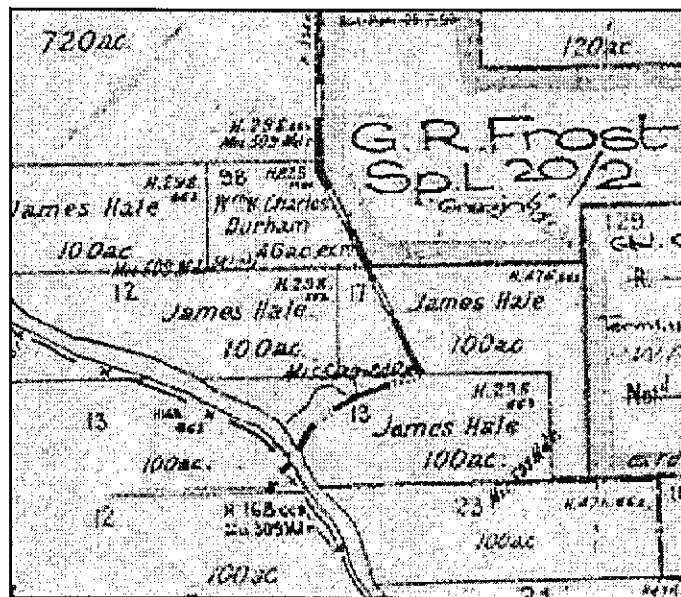


Figure D-8
Section of 1912 Parish Map

The carved trees were red gum and apple. The carvings had reportedly been made into the bark, but in 1918 marks in the sap wood were still clear, although they were drawn over in chalk to aid photography (Figures D-9 to D15). Four of the carved trees were photographed. Mounds of heaped earth were present amongst the trees, along with a crescent-shaped mound about 60cm (2 feet) high and 5m (15 feet) long.

At the time it was thought that the carvings had been carried out about 60 years earlier, dating the site to the late 1850s. An extract of an article written by Mr Alex Eather of Bulga and published in the December 1993 issue of the *Singleton Times Newsletter* states that

This Bora ceremony was held in the year 1852, and on reliable authority of residents of the locality was attended by between 500 and 600 aborigines from various tribes from as far as Mudgee and Goulburn.

The Museum recording also notes the presence of a large "campsite" (see Figure D-7), and the sketch map made by Museum staff shows it on both sides of the creek, between the carved tree site and Wollombi Brook. Some 47 stone artefacts were collected from this site by W. W. Thorpe in 1918, including a small stone mortar and flakes with secondary chipping (tools). During the present survey several artefact locations (Sites 3-8) and an axe grinding groove site⁶ (Site 4) are found within the approximate area shown as this campsite.

The general area of the carved tree site now appears secluded, being located in thick scrub 2 km west of Wallaby Scrub Road, and accessible only through locked gates. However, the surveyed easement which runs between the carved tree site and the camp ground is present on the earliest available Parish map (on the Land and Property Information web site as Image 10870501) and is linked to Wollombi Brook and places to the west by a track. Mr Stewart Mitchell of Bulga (local amateur historian) has indicated (personal communication) that this route has had a long history of use. The Eather family apparently used it as a stock route. If the ceremony which made use of the carved trees was held in the 1850s the general area of the ceremony may have been more accessible than it is now.

⁶ A flake from an axe is also present on site 4 perhaps indicating flaking as well as grinding to sharpen axes.

Figure D-9
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918

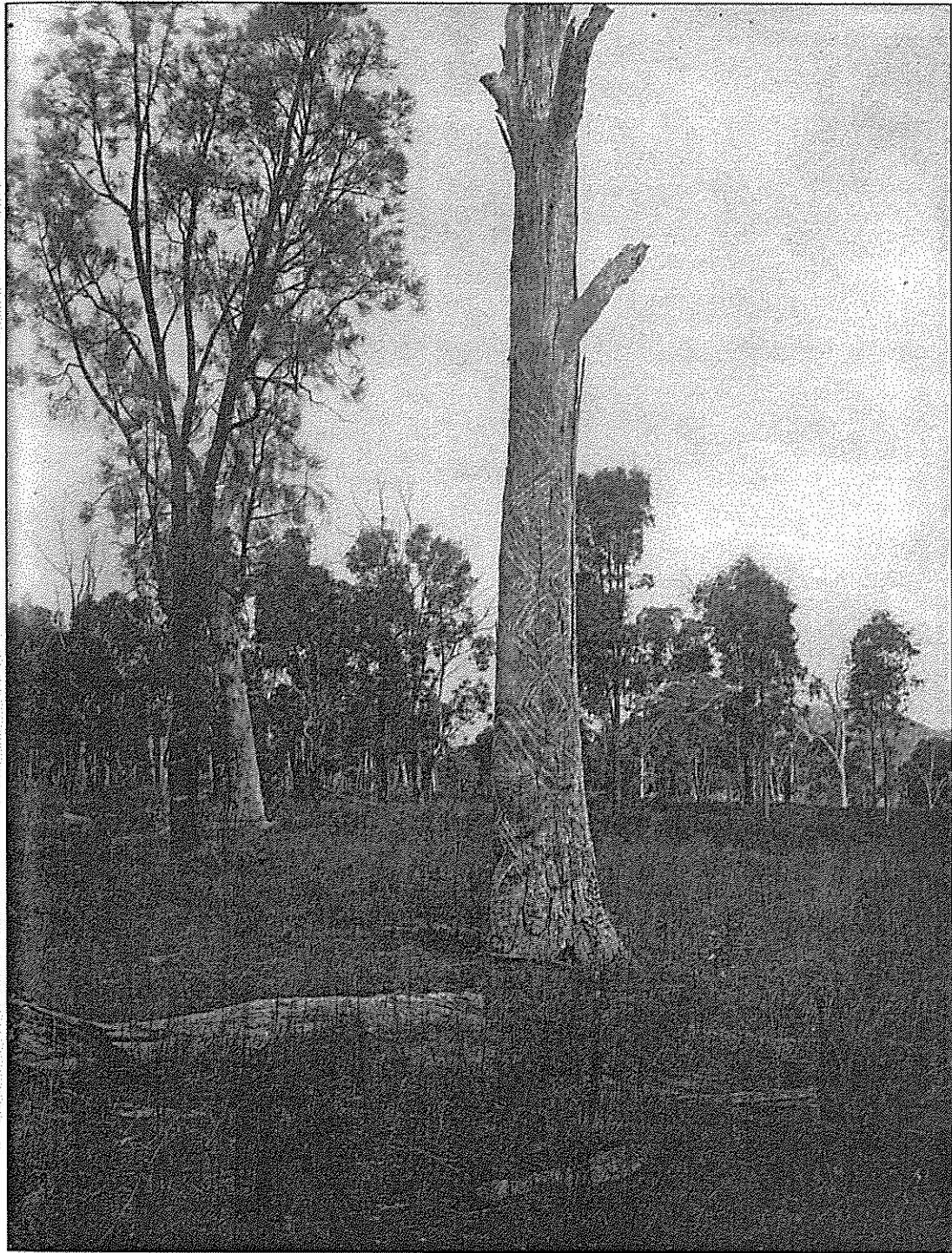


Figure D-10
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918

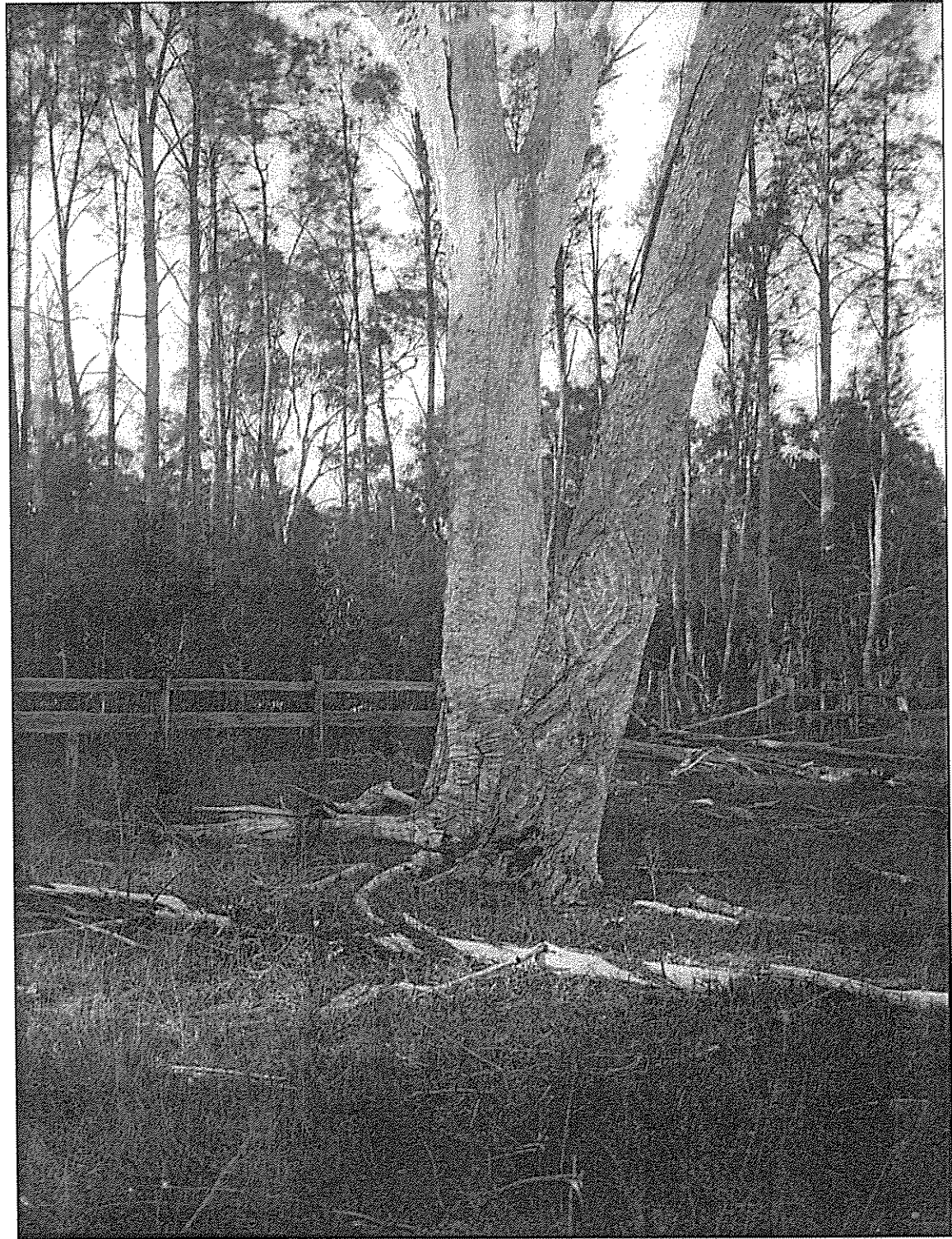


Figure D-11
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918



Figure D-12
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918

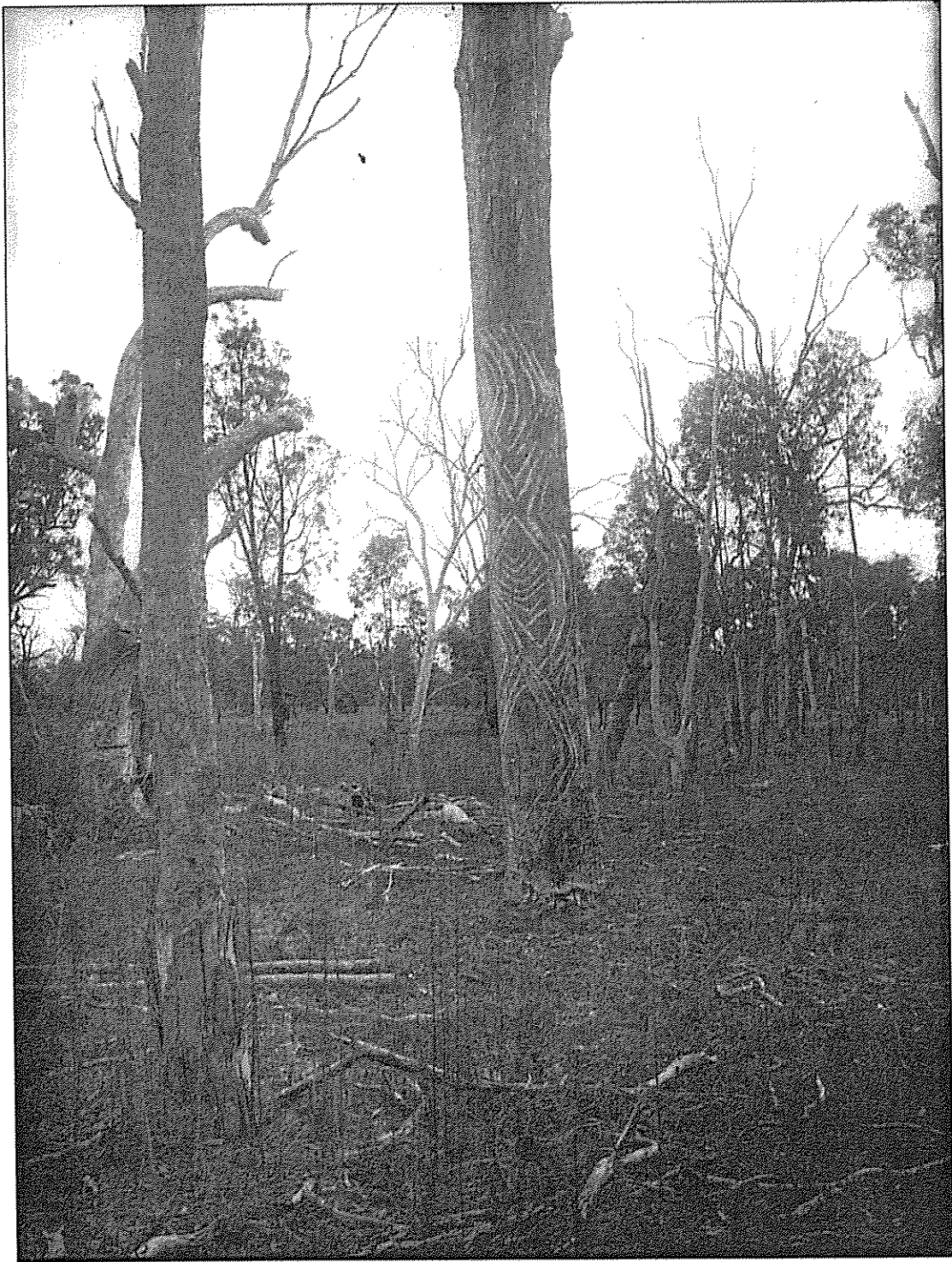


Figure D-13
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918



Figure D-14
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918

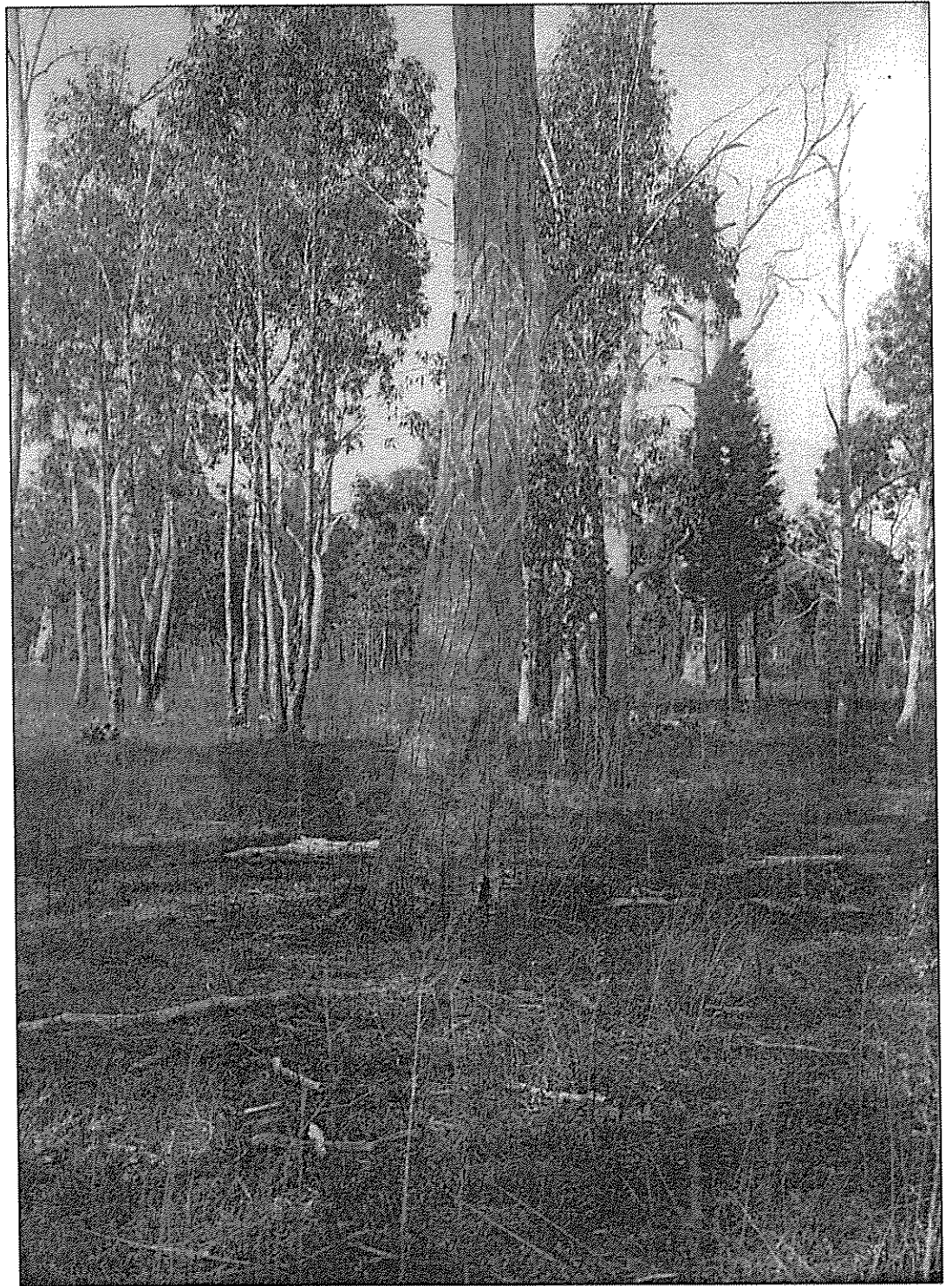


Figure D-15
Photo of Carved Tree, Taken by Australian Museum Staff in 1918



ATTACHMENT D-1
BORA GROUND REPORT

**LOOKING FOR THE BORA GROUND
IN THE WALLABY SCRUB
NEAR BULGA NSW**

Helen Brayshaw

March 2003

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Contents

Introduction	1
Initial Enquiries.....	1
Records of the Australian Museum	2
The Stock Route.....	5
Eathers and Aborigines Return to Bulga	6
Conclusions.....	10
References.....	11

Figures

1	Extract from Australian Museum Register of Ethnology E8/1918	4
2	Extract from 1912 Warkworth Parish Map [Image 1087031 www.lpi.nsw.gov.au]	6
3	Thorpe's sketch map made from memory [Figure 1] overlain on the Singleton/Bulga 1:25,000 topographic maps [9312-IV-N and 9312-IV-S First Edition].	6
4	Sketch by Jim Eather 18/12/2002	8
5	Location of tree stump on edge of vegetation change, with increased depth of sand occurring to the north and east	10
6	Reconstructed Site Plan	10

Plates

1	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5313 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 1 from due North.
2	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5314 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 5 from W., 29° South.
3	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5315 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 9 from E., 37° South.
4	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5316 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 9 from due East.
5	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5317 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 10 from E., 18° North.
6	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5318 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Tree No 10 from W., 40° South.
7	Australian Museum Photograph Archives V5319 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer. Carved Trees Nos 9 & 10 Due E from No 1.
8	Carved Tree and Don Roser, taken by Les Mitchell early 1920s. Photograph supplied by Stewart Mitchell of Bulga.
9	Post of post and rail fence near north western corner of Portion 17, camera facing south east.
10	Alan, Bruce, Marjorie, Jim and David Eather [L to R] on the stock route near the north western corner of Portion 17, camera facing south.

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Looking for the Bora Ground in the Wallaby Scrub near Bulga NSW

Helen Brayshaw

Introduction

The former presence of a Bora Ground with carved trees, somewhere between Wollombi Brook and Wallaby Scrub Road in the Hunter Valley, is mentioned in heritage reports and local history publications, and was to be investigated as part of my continued research into Hunter Valley post-contact Aboriginal history. What evidence there was indicated the site to be similar to another higher up the valley, of which I had recently made a study [Brayshaw in prep]. The investigation relating to the Bora Ground in the Wallaby Scrub became more urgent as it appeared that its suggested location of this site, which was likely to be of considerable significance to the Aboriginal community, could be affected by proposed expansion of mining at Wambo Mine. This paper describes an attempt to augment the available documentation and locate the site as accurately as possible, even though it was understood that no physical evidence of it remained.

The Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System maintained by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service [NPWS] contained site forms relating to two sites of interest indicated to be present within the Wambo mining lease. These were NPWS sites #37-6-55, listed as a Ceremonial Ground, and #37-6-56, listed as Carved Trees and a Ceremonial Ground. The former noted the source as oral information from D. Eather of 'Milgarra', Bunnan, but contained no other information. The site forms had been completed around 1980 as part of a NPWS project relating to carved trees [Bell 1982].

The #37-6-56 site form stated that information from local residents was that the site had been destroyed, although its exact location could not be determined. There had been about four trees, but the area had been the scene of at least three bushfires in recent memory. The site form contained copies of photographs of four carved trees taken by staff of the Australian Museum in 1918 [Plates 1-7]. The tentative grid reference given for the site, AMG 140 900, was within Portion 12 of the Parish of Warkworth, on the eastern side of Wollombi Brook, about two kilometres south east of the Wambo Creek junction and within 300 metres of the Brook. The NPWS site form quoted Ian Eather of Bulga and David Eather of Bunnan as local sources of information, Ian Eather indicating that the site was used for one of the last ceremonies in the Hunter Valley.

Initial Enquiries

A telephone call to David Eather [31.10.02] revealed that there was only one site, that as described on the #37-6-56 site form, known as the Bora Ground, in the Wallaby Scrub area. It was concluded that #37-6-55 was the same site, erroneously suggested to be two kilometres further south. David had not seen the Bora Ground, though he had looked for it in vain with his brother Jim in the early 1980s. His brother Jim had seen it many years ago, and said when he saw it the bark was removed from the trees and the marks cut into the wood. The trees were probably red gum. As far as David could remember it was on the eastern side of the stock route, and he placed it on a map 1.4km north of the NPWS position, about 300 metres from Wollombi Brook, in Portion 3030-20. He said that his uncle Alex [A.N.] Eather [died 1956] had taken a museum party to the site and that photographs had been taken. Alex had lived at Bulga, the Eather family being the first Europeans to settle in the area in the early 19th century. David, Jim and Ian had been brought up there, and David had been living at Bunnan since 1944.

Prior to the field investigation at Wambo Mine, enquiries had been made regarding sources of information about post contact Aboriginal history in the Wambo area. Barry Anderson, of the Lower Wonnarua Tribal Council, suggested Stewart Mitchell of Bulga as a possible source of information, because of his family's long residence there and his current involvement in the compilation of a local history.

I contacted Stewart Mitchell and information exchanges took place on two occasions in the 'Cockfighters Tavern' at Bulga. Stewart had never seen the site himself, but his late father Les Mitchell had. Stewart provided a copy of a photo [Plate 8] taken by his father of one of the trees [apparently not one of those photographed by the Australian Museum]. He believed that the photo was taken in the early 1920s because of the age of Don Roser, who was in the photo and about the same age as his father, who was born about 1902. Stewart believed the site to be about 450 metres north of the NPWS location, in Portion 98.

Ian Eather, now living near Maitland, said that he had not seen the site [26.11.02]. He remembered that his uncle had said that a lot of the trees had fallen over. The implication of this was that there may have been more than the five trees now known to have been photographed. As to the location of the site - 'Uncle never said it was right on the Brook, just in the sandy area between Wallaby Scrub Road and Wollombi Brook'.

Jim Eather, also living near Bunnan, said he saw the site in the late 1930s [2.12.02]. At that time there were only the remnants of one stump 4-5 feet high with carvings made into the wood. There was no bark on the stump. There were several earth mounds up to about a foot high, and the soil was very sandy. There was a post and rail fence on the northern side of the site. The site was 150-200 yards from the stock route, on the eastern side of it. It was not especially close to the Cockfighters [Wollombi Brook].

Alex Eather of Bulga, uncle to Jim, David and Ian, who asked the Museum to send someone to record the Bora Ground, wrote various short pieces under the title 'A History of Bulga'. An extract from this, entitled 'The last great Bora Ceremony in the Hunter Valley', was published in the December 1993 issue of the *Singleton Times Newsletter*, the journal of the Singleton Historical Society. Local Aboriginal place names are listed, and 'beautifully made stone implements' described.

Here also is to be seen the remains of an ancient Bora ground with its sacred circles still defined by small mounds of earth and a ring of carved trees still bearing the curious emblematical devices which marked this strange and mystical ceremony of initiation of the young men of the tribe to tribal rites.

This Bora ceremony was held in the year 1852, and on reliable authority of residents of the locality was attended by between 500 and 600 aborigines from various tribes from as far as Mudgee and Goulburn.

Beneath the extract is a photograph of Aboriginal people standing with spears by earth figures on the ground. Jennifer Scholes of the Singleton Historical Society indicated [27/11/02] that she had included the photograph as a general illustration, but that it was unrelated to the site and not from the Hunter region.

Records of the Australian Museum

Parallel to these enquiries, Jan Brazier, archivist at the Australian Museum, was asked if she could look for any information in the Museum records which might indicate the location of the site. Also, Phil Gordon, Manager of the Aboriginal Heritage Unit at the Museum, and Acting Head of the Anthropology Division, was asked to check whether any of the trees had been retrieved and taken to the Museum after the 1918 visit.

The outcomes of these enquiries were that no trees from the site were in the Museum collections, but Museum records of the visit did provide some detail about the site, and an important clue to its location.

A Minute Paper indicates that A.N. Eather called in to see Ethnologist W.W. Thorpe, Assistant Curator, with an additional parcel of Aboriginal siliceous flakes on the morning of April 13, 1918. 'He mentioned that he had located an old Bora-ground, 17 miles from Singleton, with Carved Trees, clearing and mounds still intact'. He offered to conduct any visitors from the Museum to the site, and offered to accommodate them at his home, 2 miles from the site. The Museum Director and Curator of Ethnology, Robert Etheridge, strongly supported the proposed expedition and its estimated cost of £8. 'It is most desirable to obtain a plan & serial photos of the carved trees at this Bora ground, which from description appears to be practically intact. I only know of one published illustration of a Bora ground, in any way appertaining to accuracy – that near Glo'ster'. He recommended that a party of three go, two 'to make a compass and tape survey', the other 'to photo the Ground and surroundings'.

On May 2, 1918, Etheridge received a letter from A.N. Eather of 'Meerea', Bulga, discussing aspects of the proposed expedition, and in response to the question asked by Mr Thorpe, 'How many trees are there in the grove?' replying 'there are about a dozen marked trees' [Letters Received 1889-1926 Series 9, E8/1918]. The party was to travel to Singleton on May 13th, stay the night and visit the site on the morning of the 14th, and stay the next night at 'Meerea' if required.

Thorpe's report of the endeavour to Etheridge [18/5/1918] is at once informative and tantalising.

Sir,

I have the honour to report as follows:-

The party was duly conducted to the Bora Ground, the position of which will be fixed later, as the site [is] possibly in another Parish other than that of the map provided. Observations and measurements were made, showing the position of each tree. This will be diagrammatically portrayed by Dr Anderson.

The trees, [Red Gum & Apple], were carved in the bark, with a short bladed tomahawk sixty years ago, and the bark being absent it was necessary to reconstruct the different patterns of the carvings in chalk, from well-defined scars made on the sapwood. None of the trees are worthy of removal.

Associated with the trees and intercalated more or less regularly with the same, are a number of mounds of heaped earth. These will also be shown on the plan. There is also, in the north-eastern corner of the Bora Ground, a crescentic mound 2 feet high by 15 feet greatest length. Two of the smaller variety and the crescentic mound were cut through and bottomed on sandstone at a depth of about four feet. They contained nothing of an aboriginal character. The site is in open forest country on a slight eminence or plateau. Four of the trees were photographed; those carved all around were taken from different views. The ground is exceptionally level and sandy.

On Thursday, Dr Anderson and Clutton proceeded in another direction to photograph some rock paintings, which I believe are exceptionally fine. I spent the day collecting flakes and other implements at the camp site in the Bora Ground vicinity.

In conclusion I would like to place on record the hospitality afforded us by Mrs Eather and her family, a fact which we will always remember with pleasure and mention with gratitude.

Yours respectfully
W.W. Thorpe
Ethnologist

A note was added by Etheridge to the effect that the above was tabled at a committee 'in anticipation of a full Report'. The Australian Museum Annual Report 1917-18 [Appendix 1 p10] noted that it was 'intended, as soon as circumstances permit, to publish an illustrated description and plan of this initiation ground'.

The Register of Ethnology lists 47 stone artefacts collected by Thorpe. The provenance is described as 'On stock Route [Site of Aboriginal Camp, associated with Bora Ground] out along Creek East of Wollombi Brook Pa. Warkworth, Bulga Dist., New Sth. Wales'. Beside this description of the location is a map drawn from memory, and measuring 4 x 3 centimetres, reproduced [and enlarged] below.

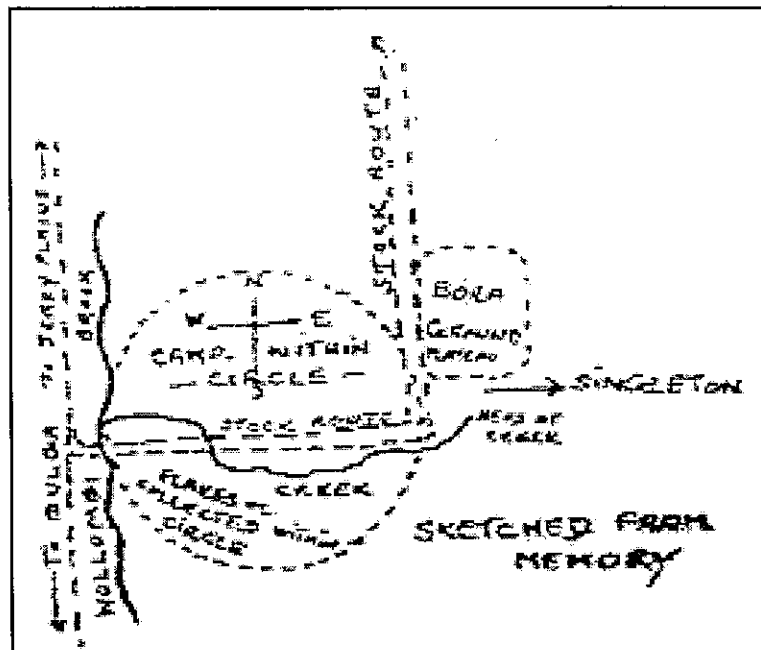


Figure 1: Extract from Australian Museum Register of Ethnology E8/1918

As the Museum records suggested that a detailed report and site plan were to be completed, a further check was made of archival material. Museum correspondence for 1918, the Curator's and Assistant Curator's Reports for 1918 and the General Reports for 1918 were all searched, but nothing further was found. Nor has any published document relating to the Bora Ground been found.

Etheridge's monograph 'The dendroglyphs or carved trees of New South Wales' came out in *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of New South Wales Ethnological Series No 3* during 1918, but it contains no reference to the Wallaby Scrub Bora Ground. It can only be concluded that the information came too late for it to be included. His monograph does contain [Plate XVIII] an 1878 illustration of carved trees at a Bora Ground near the junction of the Page and the Isis Rivers which appear to have patterns very similar to those in the Museum photographs. Earth mounds or figures also occur at this site and another on the Hunter River near the junction of the Page [McDonald 1878]. Such similarity suggests cultural continuity between the central and upper Hunter Valley at that time and it has been argued that these common elements at Bora Grounds were a reflection of the cultural influence of the Kamilaroi Aborigines [Mathews 1896:322, Brayshaw in prep].

The Stock Route

The location of the Bora Ground seemed to be tied to the stock route. Jim and David Eather had said it was east of the stock route, which was confirmed by Thorpe's map. On seeing this map, Jim Eather reiterated that he thought the site was 150-200 yards east of the stock route, and he remembered young apple trees in the area [16/12/02]. He also thought he might have looked too far north when trying to relocate the site with his brother David. He was keen to look again.

There was a road easement indicated on the Singleton 1:25,000 map, and it was thought that this might have been the stock route. Enquiries were made of the Manager of Stock Routes at the State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Board in Orange. No evidence of a stock route was found, but the Hunter office of the RLPB at Singleton was recommended as the best source of information. Jerrod McGloughlin, the Ranger responsible for managing stock routes in the district, pursued the matter, and responded that the easement marked on the map may have been an old crown road, but there was never a formal travelling stock route [TSR] there.

The 1912 Warkworth Parish Map [Image 1087031 www.lpi.nsw.gov.au] indicated the easement to be a surveyed road. At the Plan Room of the Land & Information Office the original road plan [394A 1603 Sheet 2] was examined, and the road revealed to have been surveyed in 1864. The road may have been along a route already in use as a travel and stock route. Certainly the Eather family used the route to transfer their stock between their holdings at Bulga and at Bunnan. The formal status of the thoroughfare may have been that of a road, but its identity in the minds of the Eathers, and therefore of Museum Ethnologist Thorpe, was that of a stock route.

Thorpe's map indicates the stock route to run due east from Wollombi Brook and then turn a right angle to the north. On the 1912 Parish Map the surveyed road has a right angle, although it is not exactly east-west or north-south. However, as indicated below, its relation to the creek east of Wollombi Brook is clearly similar to that depicted from memory by Thorpe.

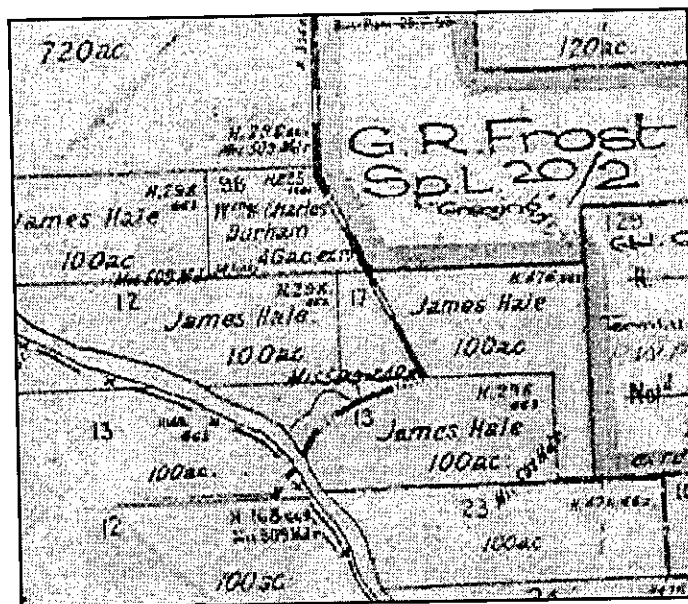


Figure 2: Extract from 1912 Warkworth Parish Map
[Image 1087031 www.lpi.nsw.gov.au]

In Figure 3 Thorpe's sketch map made from memory [Figure 1] was enlarged and overlain to scale on the Singleton/Bulga 1:25,000 topographic maps. From this it can be concluded that the Bora Ground was east of the road/stock route, and probably within Portion 17. The post and rail fence north of the tree stump that Jim Eather saw, and which is shown in Plate 2, was most likely along the northern boundary of Portion 17.

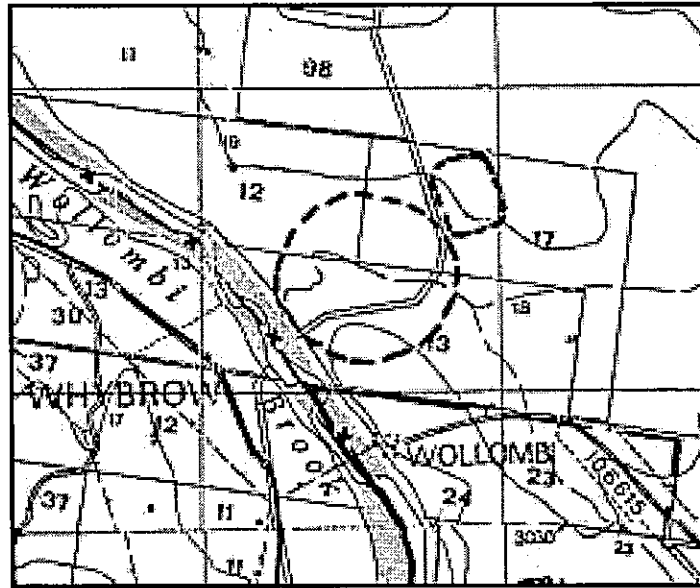


Figure 3: Thorpe's sketch map made from memory [Figure 1] overlain on the Singleton/Bulga 1:25,000 topographic maps [9312-IV-N and 9312-IV-S First Edition].

The original annotated Plans for Portions 11, 12 and 17 in the Parish of Warkworth were examined to see if there was any reference to carved trees. Reference on these plans is made to Field Book 448. George Boyle White surveyed some of these portions in 1836 and others, including Portion 17, in February 1838. Field Book 448 [SR 2/5065 CGS 13889] and associated letters received by the Surveyor General from surveyors [SR 21590A Reel 3096] were examined, but George White made no reference to carved trees in either the field book or his correspondence. The carving on the tree in Plate 2 faced away [south west] from the portion boundary and fence line, so it may be that the tree was there and not seen by George White, or it may be that the tree carving was carried out after 1838, ie especially for the ceremony which was held in 1852.

Eathers and Aborigines Return to Bulga

Jim Eather appeared to be the only living person who had actually seen the carved tree site, so an approach was made to get him back to the area and see if he remembered anything of the place. I wrote to Coal & Allied requesting them to allow him onto their land for this purpose, and that it be done soon in view of his age. They responded promptly, and the visit was arranged for Thursday 20th February, which as it turned out was very timely, since the following Monday Jim was to go into hospital for surgery on his ankle which was expected to put him out of action for an extended period.

On the appointed day Jim Eather, his wife Marjorie, two of his sons, Alan and Bruce, and his brother David drove down from Bunnan for this purpose [Plate 9]. Coal & Allied personnel present were Sarah Fish, Mick Lovely, Dianne Markham and Adam Schultz. Helen Brayshaw was accompanied by archaeologist Dr Laila Haglund, who had been involved in two investigations in the area where the location of the Bora Ground had been an issue, and had been party to some of the discussions with Stewart Mitchell.

Access to the stock route was via Wallaby Scrub Road. There is presently a wire fence along the northern boundary of Portion 17, and a vehicle track along the northern side of the fence. Along the western side of Portion 17 is the remnant of a wire fence which would have been the eastern side of the stock route, and there is a parallel wire fence on the western side of the stock route.

At the north western corner of Portion 17 a remnant post from a post and rail fence along the northern boundary was still standing [Plate 9]. There are two or three other similar posts lying beside it on the ground. This was seen as an important clue, as Jim Eather remembered a post and rail fence north of the tree stump that he saw, and the Museum photograph V5314, taken from the south west of tree No 5, showed a post and rail fence in the background, which would place the tree just south of this fence – about 20 metres, estimating from the photograph [Plate 2]. A possible anomaly is that the post and rail fence in the photograph seems to have had two horizontal rails while the remnant posts had three. The third hole in the existing posts may have related to reinforcing, since they are located at the section. Fencing with three rails generally predates the use of two, and Jim Eather commented that two rails were sufficient for horses and cattle [Connah 1988:88-89, Birmingham *et al* 1979].

In order to familiarise himself with the area, Jim went down around the corner of the stock route to the creek, and then came back north, up the stock route. He was comfortable that the burnt stump of the carved tree he had seen was no further north, but adjacent to the portion 17 boundary.

A search was made within Portion 17, extending some 300 metres south of the fence and up to 400 metres east of the stock route. About 200 metres east of the stock route were features which accorded with Jim's memory, level sandy ground, rough barked apples [*Angophora floribunda*], blady grass [*Imperata cylindrica*] and bracken [*Pteridium esculentum*]. There were also Black Pine trees [*Callitris* sp] to the east of this point. Such a tree is visible in Plate 6.

On March 7th another opportunity to visit the site arose, this time with members of the local Aboriginal community. Representatives of several groups were present, the Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council, the Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation, the Lower Wonnarua Tribal Council, the Combined Council of Hunter Valley Traditional Owners, and the Upper Hunter Wonnarua Council, who also represented the Wonnarua Nations Aboriginal Corporation. Also present were representatives of both Wambo Mine and Coal & Allied, since the site appeared to straddle the boundary between two mining leases, and Elizabeth White, who directed the associated archaeological assessment at Wambo Mine.

Down to Detail

This second visit enabled a closer inspection of the area and comparison with Museum information and the Museum photographs.

Thorpe mentioned mounds of heaped sandy earth amongst the trees some of which were dug into and found to be about four feet deep. No earth mounds show up in any of the Museum photographs, but disturbed exposures of deep sand were visible close to the northern boundary of Portion 17 [314030E 6389730N - estimated from nearby hand held GPS reading]. With his letter of December 18, 2002, Jim Eather had provided a sketch of the carved tree stump and low sandy earth mounds which he had seen in the late 1930s. The mounds were about a foot high, one to two metres long, and indistinct by then. The tree which he saw was probably No 5, since he remembered the post and rail fence just to the north of it.

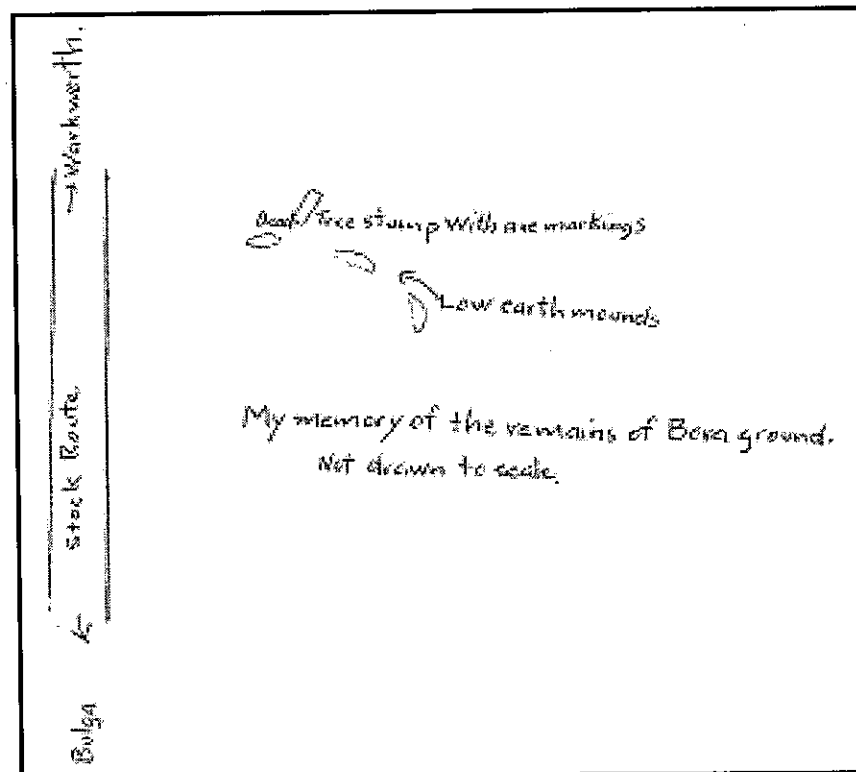


Figure 4: Sketch by Jim Eather 18/12/2002

The Museum photographs were studied very closely to see if they gave any clues which would enable the location to be pinpointed. To this end images were obtained direct from the Museum to maximise visible detail.

There appear to be some discrepancies in the Museum information in relation to the photographs. First, the markings on tree No 9 are shown in V3515, V3516 and in V3519 [Plates 3, 4 and 7]. The image V3519 received from the Museum for this project, corrected here [as in NPWS site form #37-6-56], was in reverse, as indicated by the visible part of the image number at bottom left. Then, looking at the markings and the trees in the background, it is apparent that V3519, which the notation in the Register of Negatives says was taken due east from No 1, must in fact be *from* due east.

The notation in the Register of Negatives also indicates that V3519 [Plate 7] is of 'Aboriginal Carved Trees Nos 1, 8, 9 & 10 (Due E. from No 1)'. If the picture is taken due east [or in reality west] from No 1, it is unlikely to include No 1. Tree No 8 could be in the picture, but in the background, or it could be a dead tree to the left of and behind Tree No 9, or a tree nearby lying on the ground, since Ian Eather mentioned his uncle Alex had said some of the trees had fallen over. In his report of 18th May 1918 W.W.Thorpe noted that 'four of the trees were photographed', ie 1, 5, 9 and 10.

Thorpe also noted that, as the bark was absent from the trees, 'it was necessary to reconstruct the different patterns of the carvings in chalk, from well-defined scars made on the sapwood'. Only on one tree [Plate 2] are the scars really clear. Chalking has obviously also been done in the photo taken by Les Stewart [Plate 8]. It could be noted here that the photographs show all of the carved trees to have been dead in 1918. Other dead trees in the photograph have been ringbarked, but none of the carved trees. Two of the photographs show mountains in the background, V3513 [Plate 1], towards the south, and V3517 [Plate 5], towards the west. At present there are too many trees to get a good view of the mountains in either direction, although they clearly conform to the horizons shown in the photographs.

The Museum description referred to the site being on a slight plateau or eminence, and exceptionally level. The locally highest point in the landscape is at 313904E 6389609N [hand held GPS reading] but a shallow hollow formed in the ground surface by a fallen tree showed the soil to be stony with only a few centimetres [eg - up to 5cm] of sand on top. Also the vegetation is largely casuarina and ironbark, without the bracken, rough-barked apple and *Callitris* sp shown in the photos of the carved trees taken in 1918. To the south west of this high point the land begins to slope quite steeply. The area just east of the high point has the correct array of tree species as well as blady grass and bracken, and is sandy as described by Thorpe in 1918.

The change in vegetation between ironbark – casuarina and the more mixed community was recorded near a tree stump at AMG 56 313969E 6389673 [reading - High Accuracy NTV2 method provided by Nic Gardner, Survey Projects Manager, Co-Resources Pty Ltd]. The combined factors of depth of sand and vegetation composition suggest that the carved trees can have been no further west than this. About 70 metres east of this point *Callitris* begin to appear, and there is a very large, dead, rough barked apple just to the south east. The exposures of deep sand observed on the day of the Eathers' visit, which could have been near tree No 5 as sketched by Jim Eather [Figure 4], were about 90 metres north east of the stump. On the basis of all the available evidence therefore, it seems most probable that the carved trees were east of the stump, north of the apple and south of the northern boundary of Portion 17. This places the trees at the north eastern edge of the area as described by Thorpe [Figure 5].

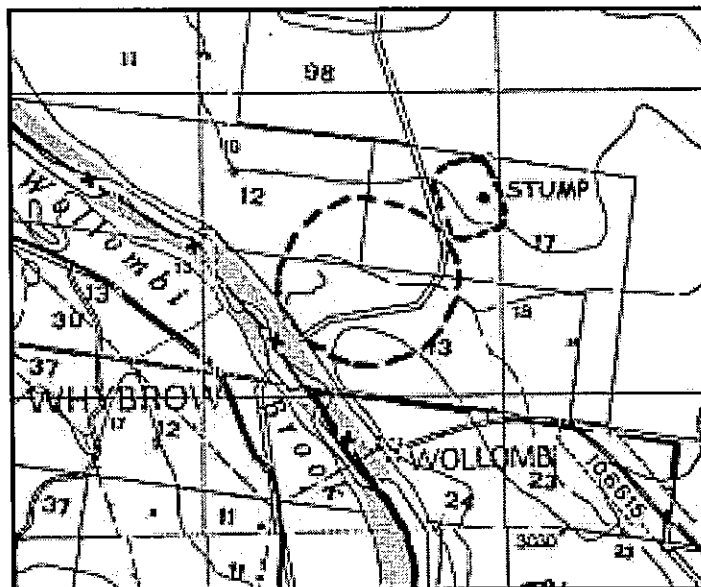


Figure 5: Location of tree stump on edge of vegetation change, with increased depth of sand occurring to the north and east.

Based on a study of the Museum photographs a reconstruction of the relative position of the trees has been attempted [Figure 6]. The position of trees No 5 and No 1 in relation to each other, including the distance between them, is unknown. The distances between tree Nos 1, 9 and 10, and between tree No 5 and the fence has been estimated from the photographs. The approximate angles of each photograph is indicated. The fact that the trees are referred to by number clearly indicates that a plan was drawn.

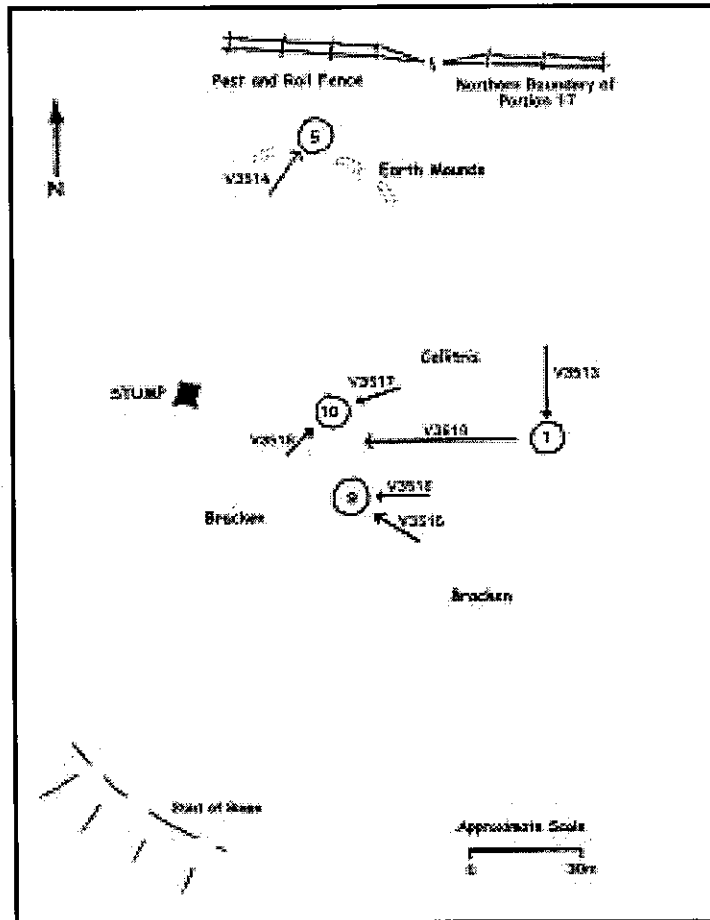


Figure 6: Reconstructed Site Plan

Conclusions

Thorpe's map sketched from memory establishes beyond doubt that the Bora Ground is located in the vicinity as indicated on Figure 3. He reported Alex Eather as saying that his home, 'Meerea', was 2 miles from the site. The location of the carved trees, as suggested in Figures 5 and 6, is 3.25 kilometres or 2.03 miles from 'Meerea'. There is no other association of creek and stock route with Wollombi Brook, as described, for which it could be mistaken.

Jim Eather's memory has been vital in pinpointing the location more closely and placing some of the earth mounds. The Museum photographs were helpful in locating the site, but changes in vegetation over time made it impossible to be precise. What a difference Dr Anderson's diagrammatic portrayal would have made. Nevertheless, with the evidence available and Jim Eather's assistance, it has been possible to locate and to some degree characterise the Bora Ground in the Wallaby Scrub.

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Plates

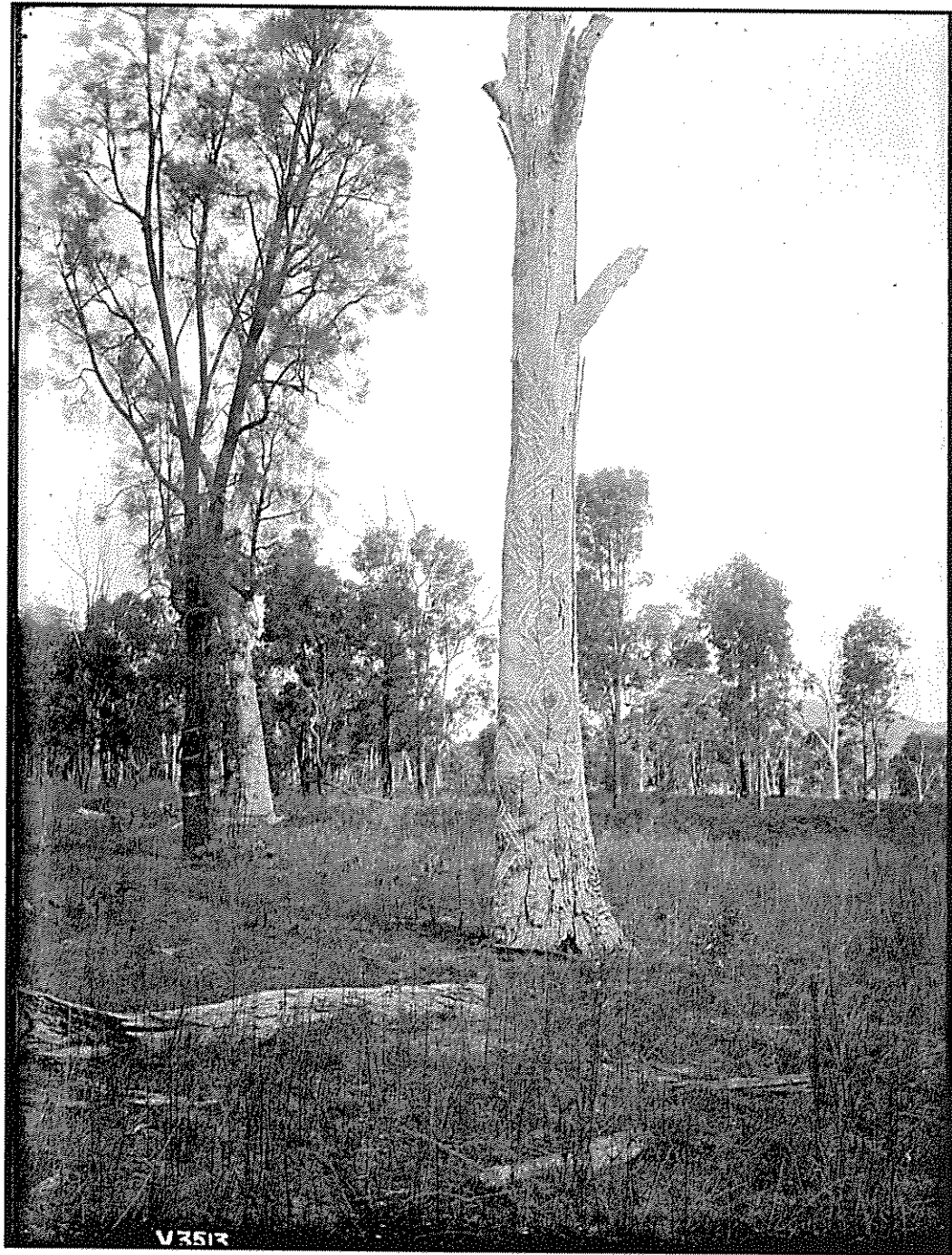


Plate 1: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5313 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 1 from due North.

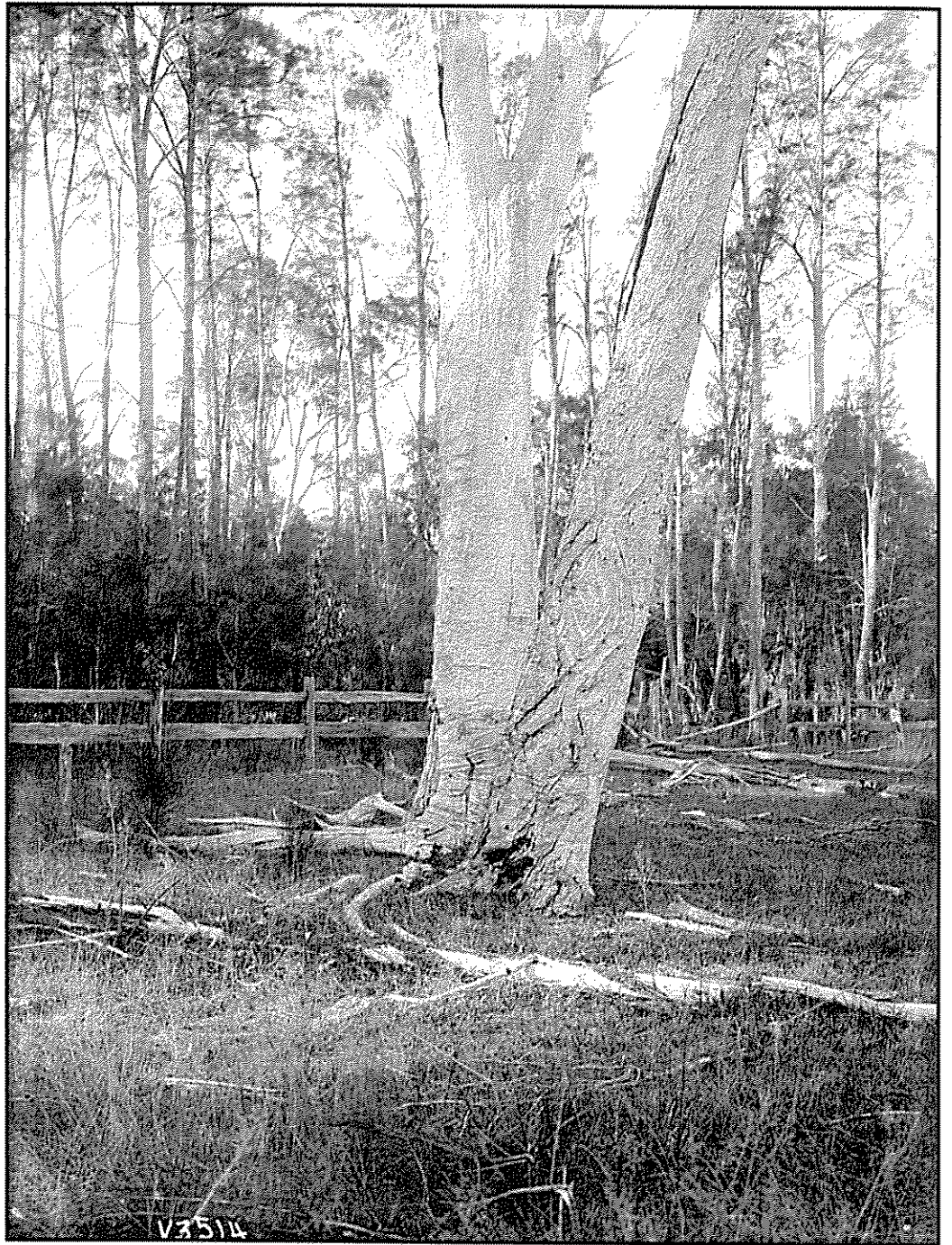


Plate 2: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5314 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 5 from W., 29° South



Plate 3: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5315 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 9 from E., 37° South



Plate 4: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5316 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 9 from due East



Plate 5: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5317 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 10 from E., 18° North

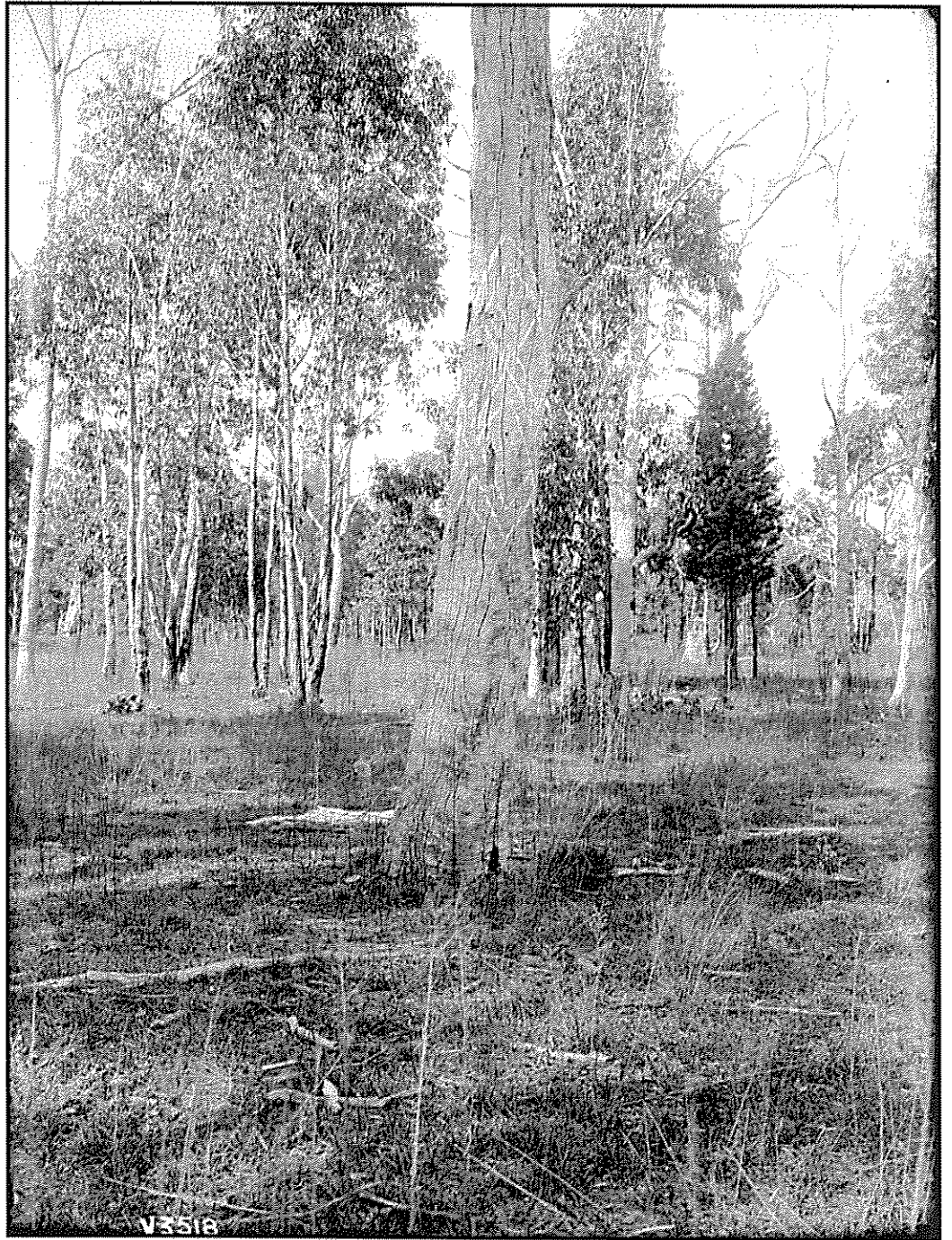


Plate 6: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5318 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Tree No 10 from W., 40° South



Plate 7: Australian Museum Photograph Archives
V5319 - May 1918. C. Clutton Photographer
Aboriginal Carved Trees Nos 9 & 10 From due E. of No 1.
Caption modified from Museum notation of
'Aboriginal Carved Trees Nos 1, 8, 9 & 10 (Due E. from No 1)'.

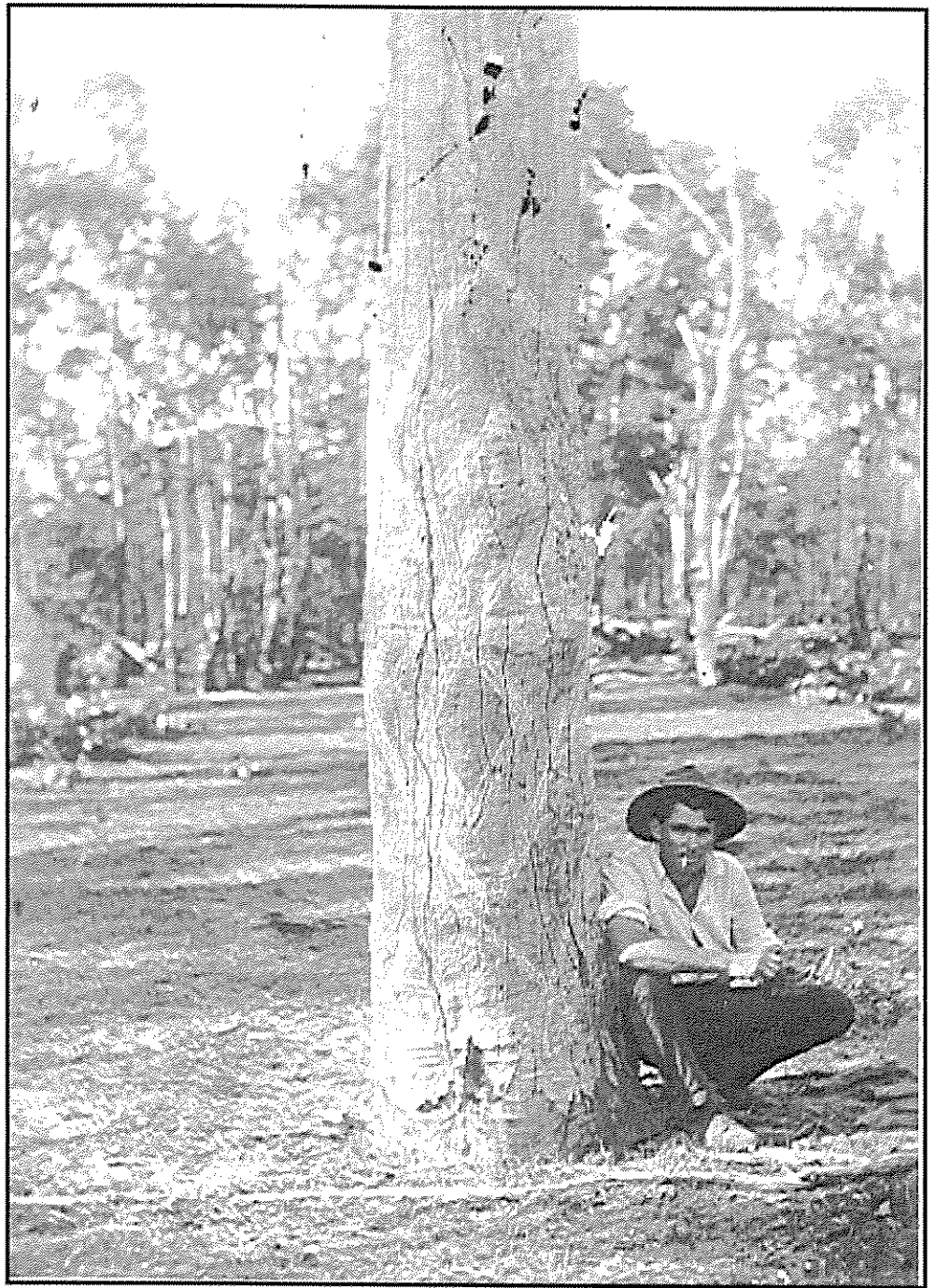


Plate 8: Carved Tree and Don Roser, taken by Les Mitchell early 1920s
Photograph supplied by Stewart Mitchell of Bulga



Plate 9: Post of post and rail fence [arrowed] near north western corner of Portion 17, camera facing south east.



Plate 10: Alan, Bruce, Marjorie, Jim and David Eather [L to R] on the stock route near the north western corner of Portion 17, camera facing south.