

GUMMINGURRU – A community archaeology knowledge journey

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Abstract

The Gumingurru stone arrangement site complex on the Darling Downs of Queensland (Qld), Australia, was originally an initiation site attended by Aboriginal people from many parts of southeast Qld and northeast New South Wales en route to the triennial intergroup gatherings in the nearby Bunya Mountains. The activities at Gumingurru and the Bunya Mountains included knowledge sharing, alliance-making, trade and exchange. In recent times the journeys to and from Gumingurru have changed. Although knowledge sharing and alliance-making continue, there are new aspects to the journeys. In this paper we outline the contemporary social framework within which Gumingurru is situated, emphasising the community/researcher/student networks and educational outputs that have evolved over the life of this community-based collaborative research project and review the positive lessons learned by all participants in the knowledge journeys associated with the site and its cultural landscape.

Introduction

The Gumingurru Aboriginal stone arrangement site complex lies on the Darling Downs north of Toowoomba, close to the township of Meringandan, in inland southern Queensland (Qld) (Figure 1). The site is in the traditional country of the Jarowair people, who are one of the many Aboriginal groups associated with the Bunya Mountains (also known as *Boobarran Ngummin*) and the (usually) triennial feasts and ceremonies held there in pre- and early contact times (Jerome 2002; Morwood 1986, 1987; Petrie 1904; Rowlings-Jensen 2004; Sullivan 1977).

Before European settlement of the area in 1877 (Gilbert 1992:36), Aboriginal peoples travelling to the Bunya Mountains from southeastern Qld and northeastern New South Wales (NSW) would come to Gumingurru to participate in initiation ceremonies (i.e. what Sutton [1985], as cited in Bowdler [2005:132], called 'man-making ceremonies') to ensure that young men were able to take part in adult activities associated with the Bunya feasts. Other sites in the region, such as Maidenwell, Kogan and Challawong, were also visited as part of the journey to the Bunya festivals.

In Aboriginal Australia, initiation ceremonies involved not only the admission of young men into adulthood via body modification. Initiation also provided young men with important knowledge for their futures, including instruction in natural resources management, education regarding advanced law for the social group in which they lived, and the promotion

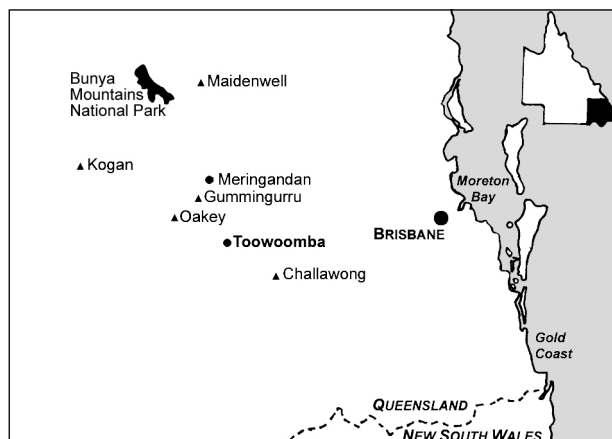


Figure 1 Location of places mentioned in text.

of vital political and social alliances (Bowdler 1999, 2005; Ross 2008). Consequently, places like Gumingurru were central locales of knowledge and journeys to such sites were essential in the education of a society.

The Gumingurru stone arrangement is part of a local cultural landscape that, according to Aboriginal custodians and local residents, includes men's and women's ceremonial places, campsites, art sites, scarred trees and at least one ochre quarry. It is also part of a much wider cultural 'memoryscape' (Lavers 2010) that contains the physical remains of memories of a range of important events linked to the Gumingurru site and the Bunya Mountains in the past. This cultural landscape contains evidence for many past journeys. Casey (1996) and Ingold (1993), among others (e.g. Byrne and Nugent 2004; Gorrington 2011; O'Brien et al. 2010), argued that heritage places incorporate the activities, cultural performances and memories associated with places. Such 'taskscape' (Ingold 1993) retain the knowledge of past performers, in the form of stories and remembered histories of and about the people who animated the cultural landscape. In the Gumingurru cultural landscape, many of the events associated with initiation were part of journeys, and in this paper we outline past and present journeys that have involved education and the sharing of knowledge—amongst traditional custodians, and also between traditional custodians (past and present) and others who are actors on the contemporary landscape.

The Gumingurru Stone Arrangement Site Complex

In the late nineteenth century Gumingurru was still being used for ceremony and male initiation (Gilbert 1992), but by the early twentieth century most of the traditional custodians had been removed to town camps in Dalby. In the 1950s and 1960s, most Jarowair people were removed from the Darling Downs entirely, and were sent to reserves and missions at Cherbourg, Palm Island and other Aboriginal settlements throughout Qld. Consequently, there is little specific remembered knowledge about the site held by Aboriginal peoples today.

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The first European settler in the area was James Benjamin Jinks, who in 1871 settled the land on which Gummingurru is located. Jinks' great-great-grandson, Ben Gilbert, took up the property in 1948. Most of the knowledge about the use of Gummingurru and interpretations of its motifs comes from Gilbert (1992). Until his death in 2009, Gilbert was regarded by many, including the current Jarowair traditional custodians, as being the knowledge custodian of the site because of his close friendship with 'Bunda' (also known as John Darlow or Henry Darlow), a Jarowair man who remained in the vicinity of Gummingurru even when others were removed to Cherbourg and Palm Island. Bunda was Brian Tobane's (the current Jarowair manager of the site) grandmother's brother. Before Bunda died in the early 1970s, he told Tobane that, as a boy of about seven (according to his death certificate Bunda was born in 1883), he (Bunda) had journeyed with his family to a campsite close to Gummingurru, and that his father and uncles had disappeared 'for weeks' to perform ceremony and undertake a range of associated activities at this men's site. This was possibly around 1890—the last time Gummingurru is thought to have been used for initiation (Thompson 2004).

Bunda was never initiated at Gummingurru himself, and was therefore never formally educated in the ways of adulthood for his people. Nevertheless, he clearly knew some of the traditional knowledge of this important place. In the 1960s Bunda told Gilbert the interpretation and meaning of those stone arrangements visible at that time (i.e. the motifs that survive today at the western end of the site); it is these interpretations and explanations that underpin current Jarowair understandings of the site. Some of the most easily interpreted motifs from this part of the site include an emu, a turtle, a bunya nut, several waterhole features, a circle (thought to be the bora ring—place of initiation—itsself) and a carpet snake.

In 1960, Gilbert arranged for the site to be recorded by the Qld Museum (Bartholomai and Breeden 1961; Gilbert 1992; see Figure 2), and then campaigned for the site's formal protection, first as an 'Aboriginal Site' under the *Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1967* (Qld) and later as a 'Designated Landscape Area' (DLA) under the *Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987* (Qld).

In September 2003 the property on which the stone arrangement complex is located was purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC—a national organisation funded by the Australian Commonwealth to buy land for Aboriginal peoples whose ownership of traditional land has been extinguished by freehold land acquisition). It was at this time that the traditional custodians returned to the site, with Brian Tobane renting the homestead on the property from the ILC. The land was formally returned to the Gummingurru Aboriginal Corporation (GAC) in 2008. The purchase of the land by the ILC, and the subsequent return of Gummingurru to GAC, have provided the traditional custodians with the opportunity to care for this important place in accordance with their traditions, as remembered on their behalf by Ben Gilbert. Revival of cultural knowledge about this place is at the forefront of management decisions about the site. GAC term members this cultural revival 'resurrection': an act of bringing the past cultural ways of their ancestors, which all but died when they were removed from their lands, back to life.

Resurrecting Knowledge at Gummingurru

Resurrection activities have involved the integration of local knowledge and scientific enquiry through archaeological investigation, archival research and oral history documentation. The first step of this journey was the recognition of the stone arrangements. In the 1960s this was done by Ben Gilbert and Bunda with assistance from Bartholomai and Breeden (1961). More recently, Brian Tobane has brought his own unique style to rediscovering lost stone arrangements. Using the original map of the site recorded by Bartholomai and Breeden (1961), traditional custodians—particularly Tobane—have spent the years since reoccupying the site by clearing grass, prodding the soil to locate stones buried in the soil and vegetation, and then lifting these buried stones onto the surface (Ross 2008, 2010). Jarowair custodians have interpreted the newly discovered motifs that have resulted from this activity using Bunda's knowledge given to Gilbert, and their own expectations and understandings of the place.

Since 2009 a team of archaeologists and students from The University of Queensland (UQ) has mapped the site, adding the newly revealed images to Bartholomai and Breeden's (1961) original mapped motifs (Ross and Ulm 2010). In all, a total of 9368 rocks have been plotted and numerous new motifs identified at Gummingurru (Figure 3).

Tobane has used this most recent mapping of the site to maintain some of the stone arrangements. In August 2009 Tobane rearranged the rocks of the 'Initiation Ring'. Having been distorted for over 100 years through the impacts of grazing, the stones in this motif now form an obvious circle, with clear entry and exit pathways (Figure 4).

Another part of the archaeological project involved excavation aimed at locating soils buried under stable motifs (such as the carpet snake, where rocks are buried deeply in the soil and therefore have not been moved for some considerable time), to recover samples for dating analysis. Although no datable materials were found, some important information about the carpet snake motif was learned. A large stone resting on bedrock was located directly underneath one of the rocks in the backbone of the carpet snake. This suggests that the carpet snake motif has occupied its current position ever since its initial construction.

The fact that other motifs, particularly the catfish, have been resurrected after having been buried deeply beneath the ground surface, with the motif still clearly identifiable once raised, suggests that most of the motifs may have always occupied a single, fixed position on the site.

Journeys of the Motifs

Despite their fixed location on the site over time, some of the motifs could be regarded as forming their own journey taskscape. According to Bunda, most of the motifs at Gummingurru are representations of 'yurees' (totems) assigned to initiates at the time of their initiation (Gaiarbau in Winterbotham 1959). Initiates are educated in the habits and habitats of the yurees for which they are to be responsible for the rest of their lives (Moreton and Ross 2011; Ross 2008).

Although yurees may be plants, animals or even landscape features (Cook and Armstrong 1998), the majority of those at Gummingurru are animals (turtle, emu, snake, fish etc.). Some of the motifs represent animals from environments other than

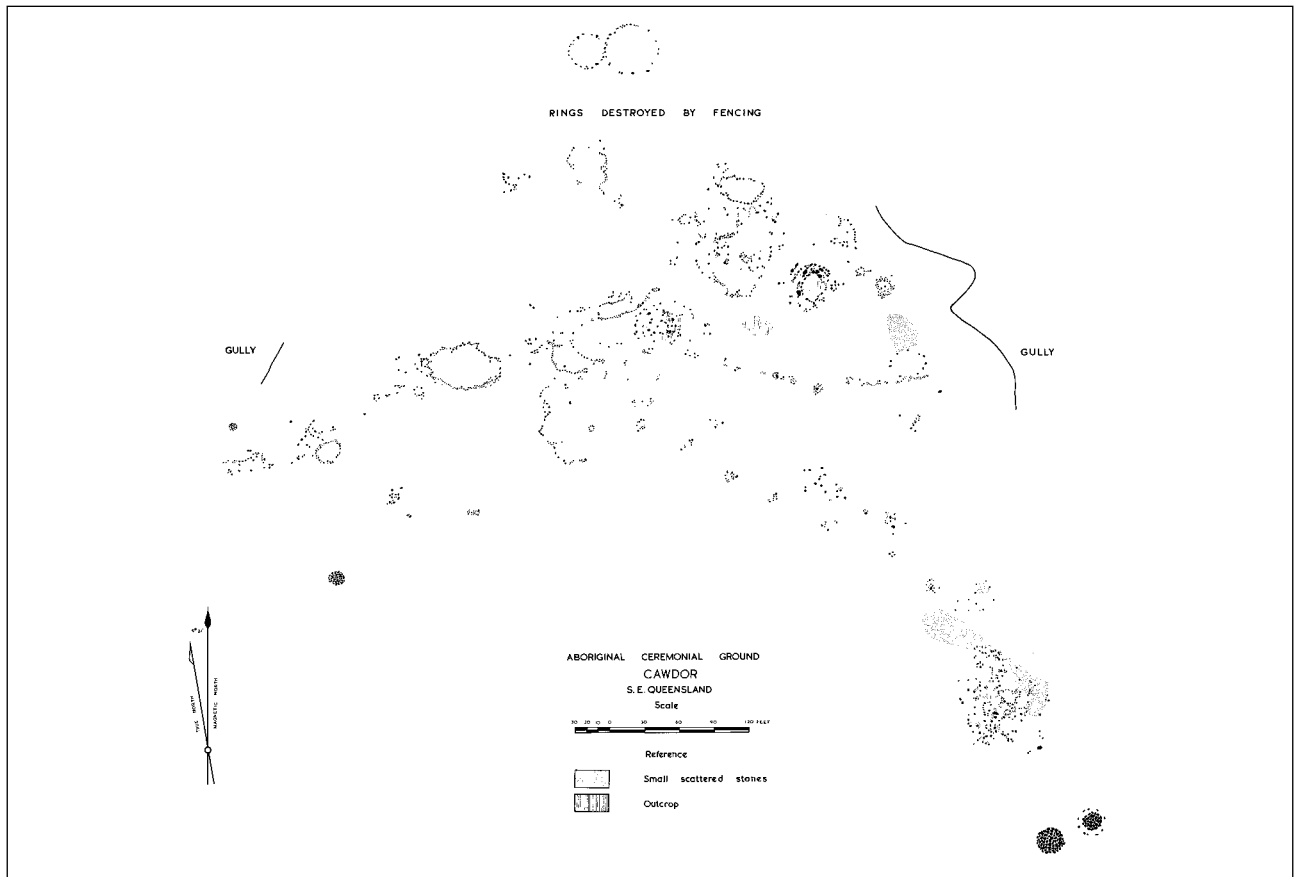


Figure 2 Original recording of the Gummingurru site by Bartholmai and Breeden (1961).

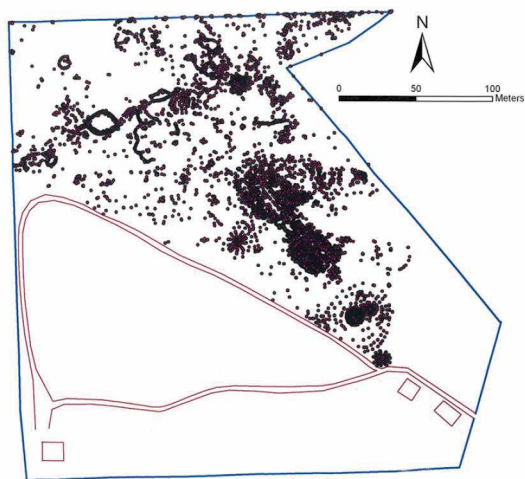


Figure 3 The full recording of the Gummingurru site, completed in 2010 (Ross and Ulm 2010).

the Darling Downs (the turtle and fish are most probably coastal yurees) and almost certainly represent the yurees assigned to initiates from saltwater Country, who journeyed to Gummingurru en route to the Bunya Mountains. So the stone arrangements themselves are part of the knowledge journey epitomised by the Gummingurru site.

Some of the motifs in themselves contain journey elements. The turtle, for example, is situated some 50 m east of a large waterhole (from which the carpet snake emerges). Between the waterhole and the turtle there are five piles of rocks which,

according to Bunda, represent the footprints of the turtle as it made its way out of the waterhole and up the slope to its assigned place on the site. The carpet snake is situated between the turtle's waterhole and the initiation ring. The snake has a large belly. According to the current custodians, and based on the memories passed to Ben Gilbert by Bunda, initiates would be 'swallowed' by the snake (symbolising the death of their childhood), and would sit in the belly until called to emerge from the snake to journey into adulthood in the initiation ring (Figure 5). The emu is another 'moving' figure, grazing with head down, situated around the western edge of the site.

Current Education Journeys at Gummingurru

Another resurrection endeavour at Gummingurru is the redevelopment of the site as a place of education and knowledge sharing. Today, education takes place both on the site itself and in the Visitors' Centre, constructed to the south using funds provided by the Condamine Alliance (the local natural resources management catchment group). The Visitors' Centre contains a range of resources, including copies of archival documents, educational games and activities, historical images, and hundreds of Aboriginal artefacts collected from the site and the local area. School groups come to the Visitors' Centre to commence their education journey through the site and into understanding about Aboriginal culture generally (see below).

Bora grounds were regularly used as places where young people were educated about their culture and their rights and responsibilities as adults (Bowdler 2005; Gaiarbau

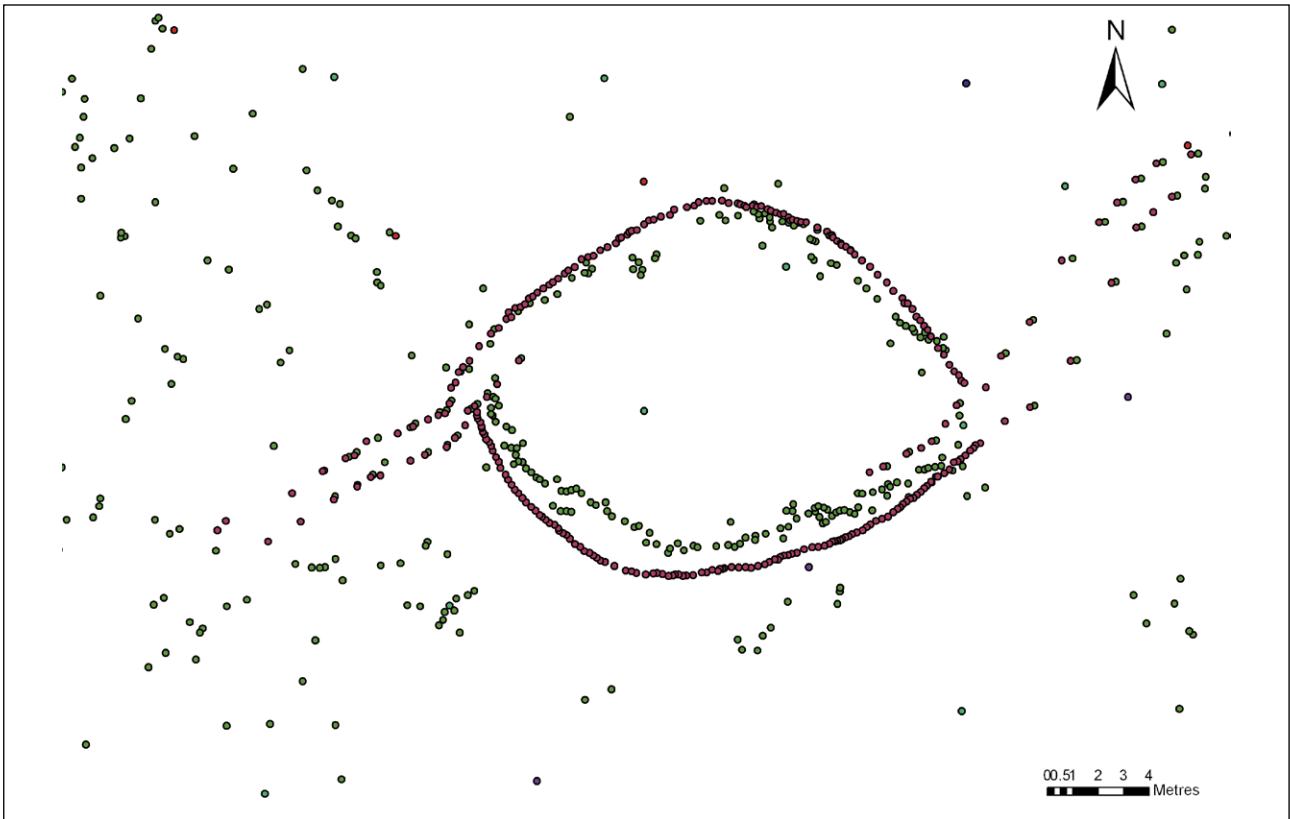


Figure 4 The rearranged stone circle. The rocks in green represent the arrangement before maintenance, while those in red show the location of the rocks after they were moved as part of the repair to the circle undertaken in 2009.



Figure 5 The Gumingurru yuree motifs.

in Winterbotham 1959), so the site’s role in providing an opportunity for cultural learning today is entirely in keeping with the ceremonial use of the place (Ross 2008). The difference is that today the educational opportunities at Gumingurru are not restricted to young men, as would have been the case traditionally, but instead are available to all Australians. Learning activities include:

- A journey through the site with a traditional custodian, viewing the original motifs as well as those that have been resurrected;
- Opportunities to view and handle stone artefacts found in the vicinity of the stone arrangements;
- Grinding ochre on large grinding stones;
- Making ground edge axes; and,

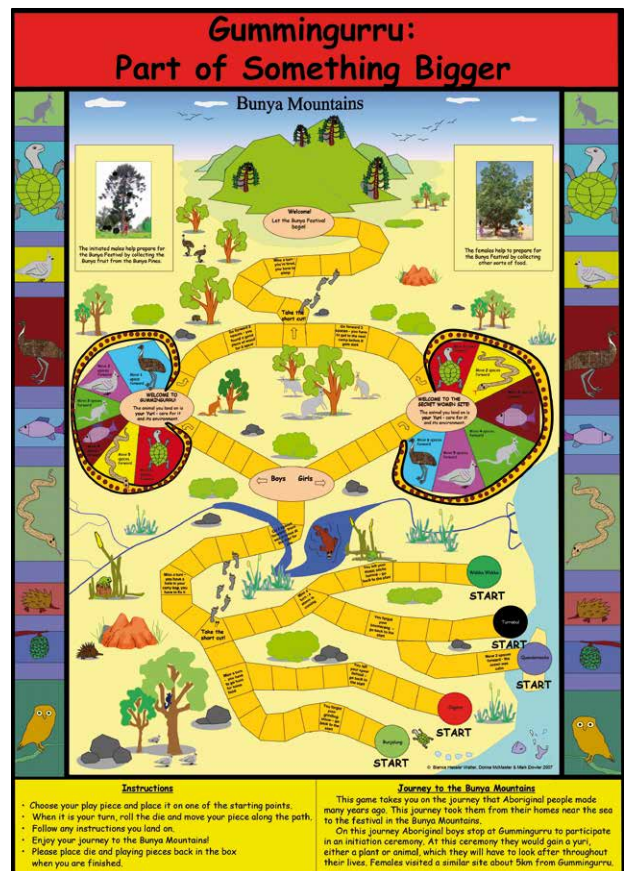


Figure 6 An educational board game designed to teach school children about journeys to the Gumingurru stone arrangement site in pre-contact times.

Guess the Grid Shapes (worksheet 6) – In the grid below, fill in each square (or range of squares) that matches the co-ordinates given for each shape. Once you've finished a set of co-ordinates, the filled-in squares should form a shape that is similar to those at Gummingurru. The first square for Shape 1 has been filled in for you. Have fun!

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

Shape 1

A9
B8, B9, B14 to B16
C7 to C15
D6, D14
E3 to E5, E15, E16
F2, F5, F16, F17
G3 to G5, G15, G16
H6, H14
I7 to I15
J8, J9, J14 to J16
K9

What is it?

Shape 2

8W, 8X
9W to 9Y
10W
11W
12W
13W
14R to 14W
15O to 15R, 15W
16N, 16O, 16V, 16W
17N, 17V
18N to 18P, 18U, 18V
19P to 19U
20R to 20T
21R, 21T
22R, 22T
23R, 23T
24R, 24T
25R, 25T
26R to 26T
27T, 27U

What is it?

Shape 3

A22, A25
C21, C23, C26,
E24, E28, E29
G22, G26, G30
I23, I24, I28
K26
M25 to M27
O27, O28
B21, B24, B26
D22, D25
F23, F27, F30
H22, H25, H29
J27
L25
N26 to 28

What is it?

Shape 4

Q1
3O, 3S
N5 to N9
10O, 10S
P11
2P, 2R
T5 to T9
O4
11Q
S4
R11

What is it?

If you can't guess this shape you will know what it is once you have been to Gummingurru.

Figure 7 A game using maths skills to discover knowledge about Gummingurru.

- Playing specially designed games that communicate important information about the site in ways that young children who are growing up in the twenty-first century can comprehend (Figures 6 and 7).

These learning activities are seen by GAC as significant reconciliation opportunities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people on the Darling Downs.

Gummingurru as a Site of Reconciliation and Education

The traditional journey to Gummingurru involved travel associated with the Bunya festivals, with people travelling to Gummingurru from the coast, staying for initiation and other social activities like trade and knowledge sharing, and then continuing on to the Bunya Mountains. The travellers were all Indigenous Australians, and all had a strong connection to the Bunya Mountains and their associated cultural landscapes.

Today, those travelling to Gummingurru come from a variety of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and come for a variety of purposes. These travellers include researchers—mainly archaeologists and anthropologists—desiring to learn more about the site in the past and in the present; government officials providing funding opportunities or seeking acquittal of grants; and visitors keen to learn more about the site. Many travellers are children or their teachers who come to share knowledge about Aboriginal culture generally and Gummingurru’s cultural history specifically. The emphasis of the modern journey to Gummingurru is education, at a variety of levels.

In 2000, when Jarowair people first returned to Gummingurru, very little was known about the site. Ten years later, following

a shared journey of discovery involving archaeological investigation, oral history documentation, archival research and the linking of memories to place and cultural landscapes, there is enough known about Gummingurru that the place can be interpreted. Once again Gummingurru is a place of cultural education, alliance formation and identity creation.

Eight middle primary (ages 8 to 12 years) and lower secondary school (ages 12 to 15 years) education kits have been developed and are hosted on the Gummingurru website (<www.gummingurru.com.au>). All materials have been developed in close consultation with Jarowair traditional custodians and with input from staff in Education Qld. Background information on various aspects of the site (including the role of yurees in management; the concept of living heritage; the notion of significance of place; and the cultural landscape setting for the place) have formed the basis of the development of a range of materials and activities suitable for the different age groups targeted in each kit. All education materials are linked to the Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) Syllabus issued by Education Qld (<http://education.qld.gov.au/curriculum/area/sose/index.html>), and several packages linked to the Australian National History Curriculum (Australian Government 2009) have also been developed.

Education kits comprise a range of educational materials, including:

- PowerPoint presentations that introduce the aspect of the site being presented;
- Teachers’ information packages that provide additional information about the site, demonstrate the connection to

educational documents, such as syllabus and curriculum criteria, and overview the activities students will undertake; and,

- A number of suggested activities, educational games and study materials for use by students.

The Gumingurru website also contains a background history of the site, learning activities and teachers' kits for school visits, fact sheets for other visitors, games, maps, photographs and academic papers, along with instructions on how to get to the site (Figure 8). Designing the school activities, fact sheets and games has been its own knowledge journey. Cultural heritage students from UQ have worked with the traditional custodians over many years, learning about the key events associated with Gumingurru and its wider cultural landscape, and developing the educational resources. In this way the knowledge about Gumingurru has been passed from traditional custodians to children using twenty-first century knowledge-sharing techniques and, at the same time, the UQ students have developed their own learning, both about the site and about cultural heritage management processes more generally.

More recently there have been other knowledge journeys associated with Gumingurru. Bunda's memories, corroborated by memories of the descendants of early European settlers, included the presence of a women's ceremonial site on a hilltop ca 3 km to the southeast of Gumingurru. Settler memories of this site include stories of conflict, and of Aboriginal women and children fleeing from their ceremonial place after being chased away from the hilltop to hide in the vegetation by the creek.

These memories of the immediate landscape of Gumingurru have recently been expanded by the incorporation of a range of other memories farther afield, including recollections of historical events, archival accounts of Aboriginal life on the Darling Downs generally, and oral histories of stories and actions of creator beings from across the Qld high country (Lavers 2010). These memories have been plotted onto the landscape via a journey from Gumingurru, undertaken in 2008. At this time Tobane led a team of UQ students through the landscape from Toowoomba in the east, to Dalby in the west, and north to the Bunya Mountains. In the process of undertaking this

journey, Tobane recalled a range of historical events, many of which were not, at first, obviously relevant to Gumingurru. But as the day progressed, and more memories of places and events were recalled, the complexity and extent of the impact of Gumingurru on this vast cultural landscape became more obvious (Lavers 2010). Tobane told Creation stories and more recent tales of historical events, identified locales of past activities and passed on knowledge he had gained from archival research and from his conversations with Bunda and Ben Gilbert. Although very little tangible evidence for this cultural landscape survives, the memories of ancient and more recent events throughout this landscape remain strong. The memories recounted on this journey have been reinforced by archival research, based largely on birth, death and marriage certificates, and photographs and accounts of people and places.

The triggering of memories from the Gumingurru cultural landscape has greatly enhanced our understanding of the stone arrangement and its original place in the Darling Downs landscape, but has also assisted GAC in their own knowledge resurrection. This is indeed what Casey (1996) meant by his analysis of place as 'event', and what Ingold (1993) called the 'taskscape'. Heritage is where things 'happen' (Smith 2006) and where people 'perform' their culture (Gorring 2011). Tangible and intangible heritage are mutually constituted in this site and its associated cultural landscape to form an overall understanding of an ancient yet present *place*. It is through the iterative dimensions of the work on the site—the ongoing resurrection of motifs and memories and the constant shared knowledge journeys—that the heritage of Gumingurru is being narrated in the present (Andrews and Buggy 2008); the site is an integral part of the Jarowair future.

Conclusion

The Gumingurru stone arrangement is a site complex that has been, and continues to be, part of a journey of learning and discovery for each individual who visits it. Jarowair people travelled to the site in the past to acquire and transmit adult knowledge. In historical times they were forced to journey away from the site and, as a consequence, knowledge was dulled and even lost. Since returning to the site, journeys in the landscape have triggered memories which, in turn, have supported the resurrection of knowledge about the site in the present.

The resurrected knowledge about the site has informed university student learning opportunities via involvement in the archaeological mapping and excavation of the site, participation in the journey through the wider memoryscape, and in the subsequent production of a research thesis (Lavers 2010). Other students have developed the teachers' kits and education packages that have been incorporated into the Gumingurru website and have designed games and on-site activities that fill the Visitors' Centre at the site. Knowledge is also informing school student learning, and the provision of teachers' kits and school learning activities will further enhance the education journey associated with the site.

Documenting the site on the internet allows for regular updates in knowledge to be incorporated into the knowledge journey. Once again Gumingurru is a place of cultural education, alliance formation and identity creation.

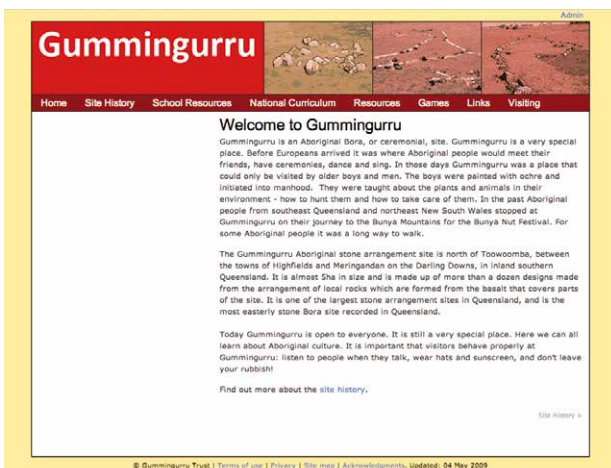


Figure 8 Screen capture of the home page of the Gumingurru website <www.gumingurru.com.au>.

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