

Paddington

A history

Greg Young, Editor

The Paddington Society



NEWSOUTH



THE PADDINGTON SOCIETY Inc
For Community and Heritage
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Robert Griffin

Robert Griffin is a heritage consultant with expertise in the architectural history of Sydney. He has lectured and published widely on the history and design of Sydney houses, on historic interiors and the conservation of historic buildings. Robert has also curated exhibitions on Australian colonial architecture, social history and decorative arts and has been responsible for the conservation and interpretation of some of Sydney's most significant sites including Elizabeth Bay House, Government House, Sydney and The Sydney Mint.

Sandra Hall

Sandra Hall is a film critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She is also the author of two novels, *Beyond the Break* and *A Thousand Small Wishes*, as well as *Tabloid Man*, a biography of the press tycoon, Ezra Norton, and two books on the history of Australian television: *Supertoy: 20 years of Australian television* and *Turning On: Turning Off: Australian television in the eighties*. In 1994, she won the Pascall Prize for film criticism.

Dr Paul Irish

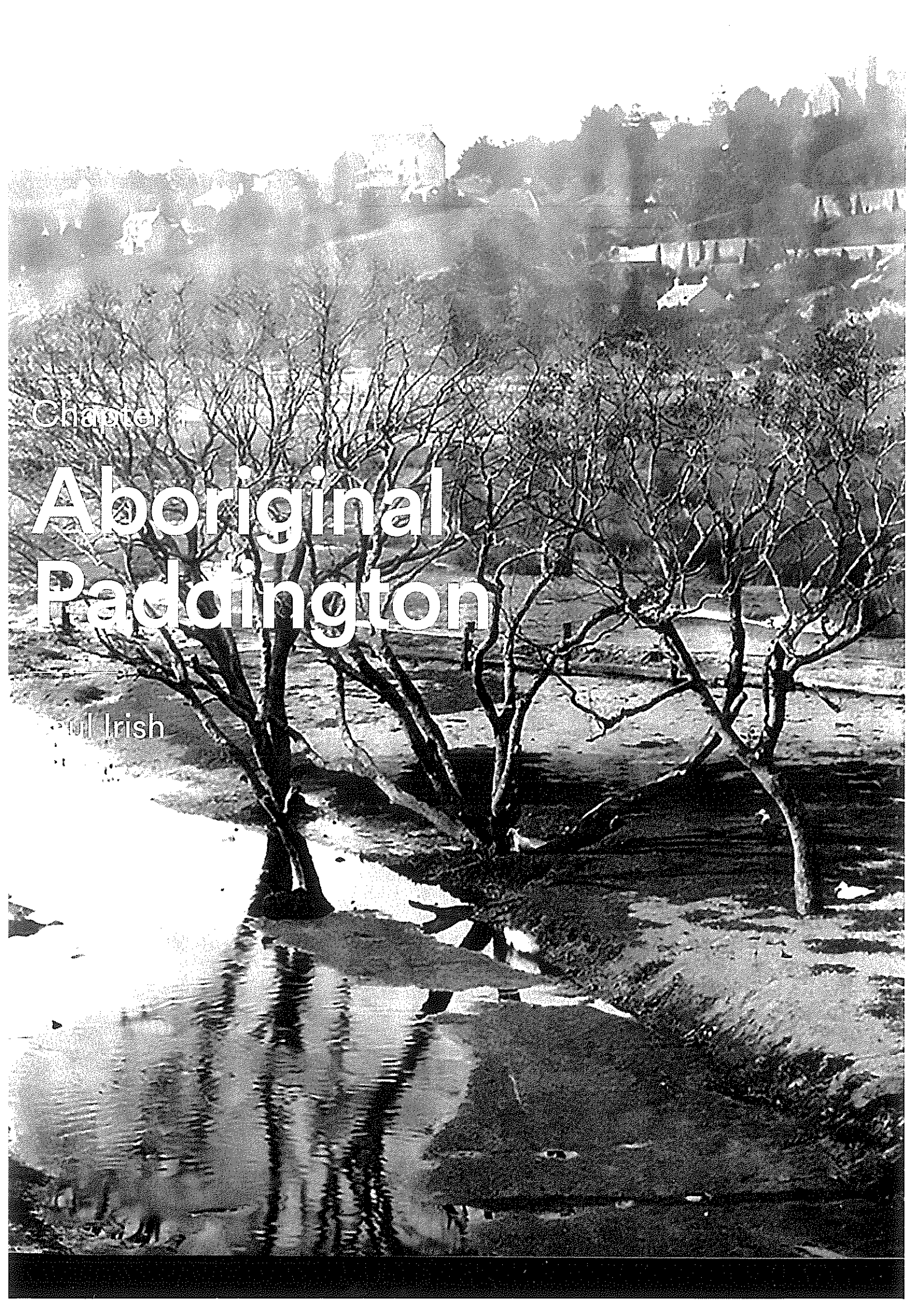
Dr Paul Irish is a historian and archaeologist with heritage consultancy MDCA, and has a long-standing interest in the Aboriginal history of Sydney. He has recently published the book *Hidden in Plain View: The Aboriginal people of coastal Sydney* and regularly holds public talks. As the recipient of the 2015 NSW History Fellowship he prepared the touring exhibition *This Is Where They Travelled: Historical Aboriginal lives in Sydney* in collaboration with researchers from the La Perouse Aboriginal community.

Dr Peter McNeil

Dr Peter McNeil is distinguished professor of Design History at the University of Technology Sydney and Finland distinguished professor at Aalto University. An award-winning author, he is a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities where he is section head for the Arts. He publishes and lectures internationally across design, fashion, textiles, interiors, architecture and the urban condition. His publications on Sydney designers circa 1920–30 have been widely reprinted. He has lived happily in or beside Paddington for 25 years.

Bill Morrison

Bill Morrison is an architect and urban designer and director of Conybeare Morrison Architects and Context Landscape Design. He has lived in Paddington for over 40 years and has served on The Paddington Society Committee in excess of 25 years, recently being awarded life membership for his contribution to the conservation of Paddington and work on the public domain. Bill's interest in the urban morphology of cities gave rise to detailed studies of Paddington, including the original mapping sequence in this book.



Chapter 4

Aboriginal Paddington

Paul Irish

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When Europeans first arrived in the area we know today as Paddington, they saw several creeks winding their way through the scrub of what was later called the Lacrozia Valley towards the mudflats of Rushcutters Bay and into Sydney Harbour. Aboriginal people had known the Paddington area for much longer; since before the bay they knew as Kogerah or the harbour even existed. They had witnessed their creation and the evolution of the local landscape.

Twenty thousand years ago the Paddington area was bound up in a global ice age. Though there were no glaciers in Sydney, the climate was cooler and sea levels were much lower. The harbour headlands looked down over a forested valley to a river that meandered its way along what is now Sydney Harbour to the ocean many kilometres east of today's coast.¹ Rushcutters Creek flowed down into that river between the ridges of Darling Point and Darlinghurst, passing between the hilltops of



Figure 1.1: Distant View of Sydney and the Harbour, Captain Piper's Naval Villa at Eliza Point on the Left, in the Foreground a Family of Aborigines, by Joseph Lycett in 1817 shows a view up Sydney Harbour towards Circular Quay from Vaucluse. During the last ice age,

Rushcutters Creek was one of many that flowed into a deep valley that was later flooded by rising seas to become Sydney Harbour. Garden Island (pictured far centre) was a hill joined to the mainland to the west of Rushcutters Creek. National Library of Australia.

Clark Island and Garden Island along the way (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).

We do not know much about how Aboriginal people lived in this ancient landscape, but we know they were there. Archaeological remains elsewhere in the Sydney region show this, but much of the evidence closest to Paddington now sits beneath the waves. Around 18,000 years ago the sea began to rise as ice sheets elsewhere in the world began to melt. Over the next 10,000 years, hundreds of generations of coastal Sydney people watched the water slowly encroach across the coastal plain to fill the valley of Sydney Harbour. The rising waters consumed up to two metres of shoreline each year and may have caused the realignment of some coastal groups as their lands were flooded. But the end result was the creation of a harbour and bays that teemed with fish and shellfish; a fishing paradise that Aboriginal people expertly exploited.²

Living in Kogarah

For the last few thousand years, Paddington and Rushcutters Bay looked more or less as they did when the first Europeans arrived. We tend to view how Aboriginal people used this landscape through the rich record of pictures and words created by these wide-eyed strangers, but their snapshots have given us a misleading sense that this way of life was unchanging. Archaeological records tell another story, showing how Aboriginal people honed their toolkit to exploit the harbour's resources; for example, adding shell fish hooks around a thousand years ago to the fishing spears they used.³ We do not have any archaeological evidence from Paddington or the surrounding suburbs because much was destroyed by urban development long before anyone thought to look (though, some things

may yet be discovered in parks or backyards).

However the rich archaeological and historical record of the harbour allows us to recreate something of how Aboriginal people used Kogarah – as they called Rushcutters Bay – and its Paddington hinterland in the centuries before Europeans arrived.⁴

Sydney's Aboriginal people were divided into clan groups of 25 to 60 people, who traced their lineage through their fathers back to a common ancestor, shared totems and had primary rights to their clan estate. The estate that covered Paddington was known as *Cadi*, and extended west along the southern side of the harbour to around Darling Harbour, and covered most of today's Eastern Suburbs. The clan with rights to that estate were known as the *Cadigal*, meaning the people of



Figure 1.2: The Cascade (or the waterfall), by G Roberts from *Views mainly of the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, 1859–1863*, shows one of several freshwater streams

that flowed into Rushcutters Bay. During the last ice age, the upper catchment creeks were relatively similar to their present course. *State Library of New South Wales.*

Cadi, but their social and cultural world extended far beyond this relatively small area. Women married outside the clan, binding the Cadigal to neighbouring clans such as the Wanngal to the west along the Parramatta River and the Gameygal to the south around Botany Bay, and also to groups much further afield. Clans held ancestral identity, but on a daily basis Aboriginal people lived in what we call bands, comprising the men and unmarried women from the clan and women married in from other clans. Sometimes they lived as a large group, while at other times they fragmented into smaller family units.⁵ Aboriginal people were custodians of their clan lands, but also had links to other areas through the clans of their spouses, parents and grandparents and through life events that occurred in different places (such as births, deaths and marriages). In this way, the Aboriginal people who lived around Paddington were linked to areas far beyond the Cadi estate, and they travelled around other coastal clan estates to maintain these links, sometimes beyond Sydney.⁶

The clans fished their way around the harbour by day, often in flotillas of bark canoes, and sometimes continued fishing into the night by torchlight. Women used canoes as mobile fishing factories, gathering shellfish from the shallows, opening them over small fires on clay pads in the canoe, spraying the chewed meat into the water as burley, and luring fish back onto the same fires via their pearly shell fish hooks – often nursing babies as they went (see Figure 1.3).⁷ Men mainly fished with pronged spears, wielded with great dexterity from rocky headlands, from canoes or standing in the water off the beach (see Figure 1.4). From historical records and the archaeological evidence of coastal campsites known as shell middens, we know that they consumed a wide range of seafood,

including oysters, cockles and other shellfish, as well as a modern angler's dream of a broad diversity of fish species.

Though fishing was a central part of Cadigal life, they also used the hinterland areas upstream along Rushcutters Creek, and further to the south over the ridge of today's Oxford Street, where an extensive wetland system drained into Botany Bay. Swamps across this landscape teemed with waterbirds, fish, eels, and tortoises while the surrounding scrub on both sides of the ridge contained a range of animals such as kangaroos, possums, lizards and snakes and a range of plant foods including fruits and berries, tubers, seeds and nectar.⁸ These provided Aboriginal people with sustenance as well as raw materials such as sinew for thread, shell for fish hooks and cutting tools and fibre for fishing lines. What they could not gather locally, such as stone for spear points and axes, was obtained through trade extending across the Sydney region and beyond.⁹

Aboriginal people lived in sandstone overhangs and bark shelters around the harbour and its hinterland, often near freshwater streams, swamps or springs. They stayed in these camps for varying lengths of time, moving according to a complex and shifting calendar of family obligations, food availability and ceremonial duties. In the 1790s we know that male initiations were carried out in what is now the Royal Botanic Gardens and ritual 'payback' combats were fought at Rose Bay, though we do not know if these areas had always been used for this purpose. The presence of engraved images on the sandstone of the Eastern Suburbs also suggests that many other places held deep cultural significance to Aboriginal people.

As early Europeans noted, Aboriginal people maintained a network of pathways across the Eastern Suburbs, often following ridges and spurs

but also crossing creek valleys. Some early colonial roads were based on existing Aboriginal tracks or used routes shown by Aboriginal guides, but the link was not always so direct, as Europeans were also motivated by a desire to find the easiest path through the landscape. Some pathways continued

to be used as foot tracks by early Europeans, who retained the Aboriginal term 'maroo' (or *mu*). One of these *maroo* went from the ridge of Oxford Street at Darlinghurst Gaol down through Darlinghurst to Rushcutters Bay, crossing Rushcutters Creek around Bayswater Road.¹⁰

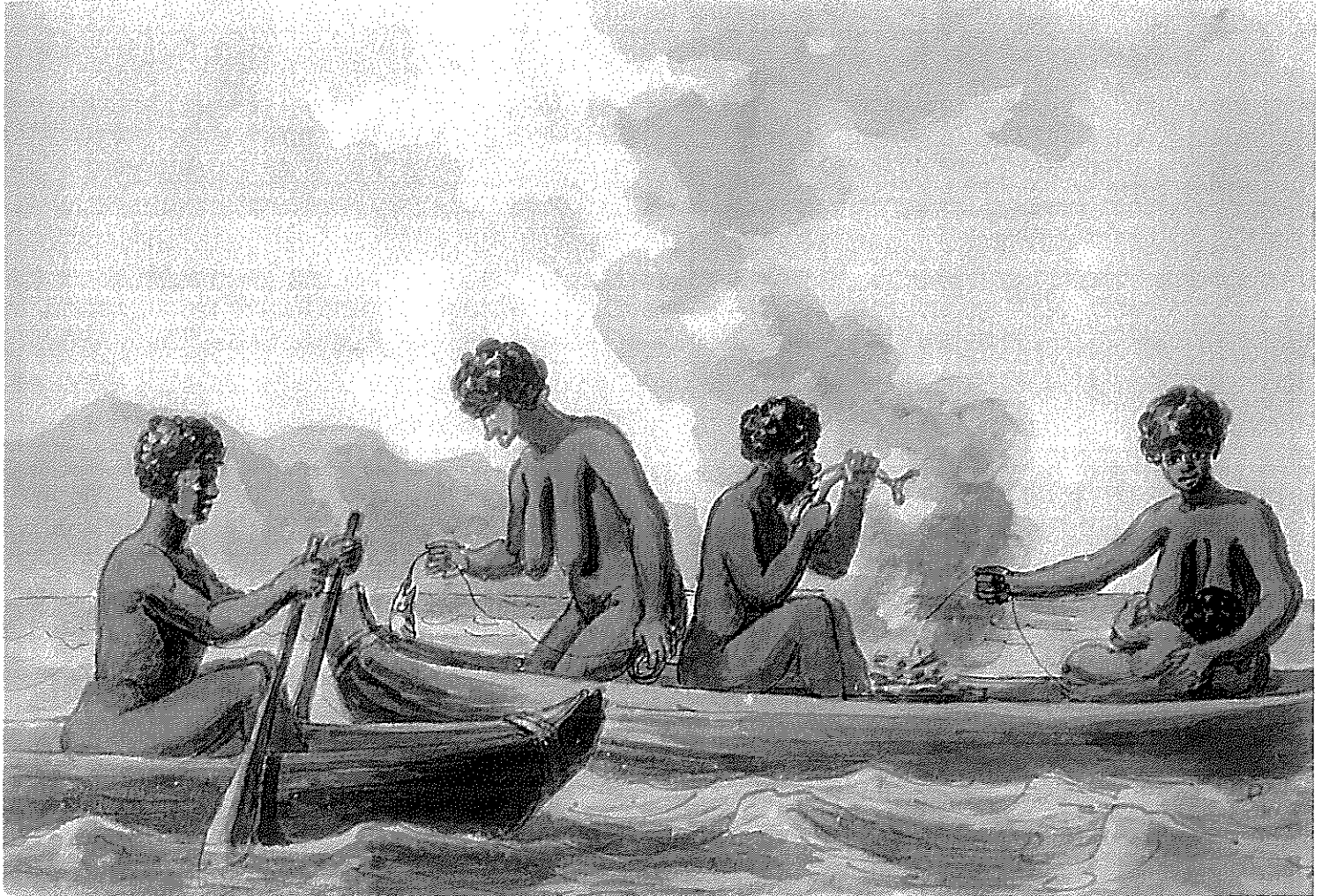


Figure 1.3: Watercolour illustration of a group of Aborigines fishing ca 1790s, attributed to PG King. State Library of New South Wales, Banks Papers Series 36a, image 5.

Impact of the colony

From an Aboriginal perspective, the arrival of Europeans in January 1788 was a flagrant unauthorised occupation of a portion of the Cadi estate at Sydney Cove. As convicts and colonists explored and gathered food and resources around the harbour, they soon came into contact and conflict with Aboriginal people. The local mythology of Rushcutters Bay links the origins of its name to the first documented killings of Europeans in Sydney by Aboriginal people in May 1788, when two convicts were speared and clubbed to death while gathering reeds for thatching roofs. The story was first told by long-term Paddington resident Obed West (1807–1891), and although the bay was a place of reed gathering and unrecorded violent incidents may well have happened there, this attack did not. Contemporary accounts show that it took place 'up the harbour' (west of Sydney Cove), and there is no evidence to link it, or another similar attack several months before, to Rushcutters Bay.¹¹

Violent encounters, the relentless theft of Aboriginal implements, and the expanding and unsanctioned use of Aboriginal lands and resources were an unprecedented assault on the lives of the Cadigal and neighbouring clans, but worse was soon to come. In April 1789, a smallpox epidemic swept rapidly around the harbour like a tsunami of death, killing hundreds of Aboriginal adults and children. There were few survivors of the Cadigal, not enough even to bury the dead.¹² The impact was catastrophic, shattering families and breaking social structures. Many have linked this devastation to a broader colonial fable that Aboriginal people were being forced to the margins of Sydney in subsequent decades, eking out a desperate existence on its fringes. The reality though, was very different.¹³

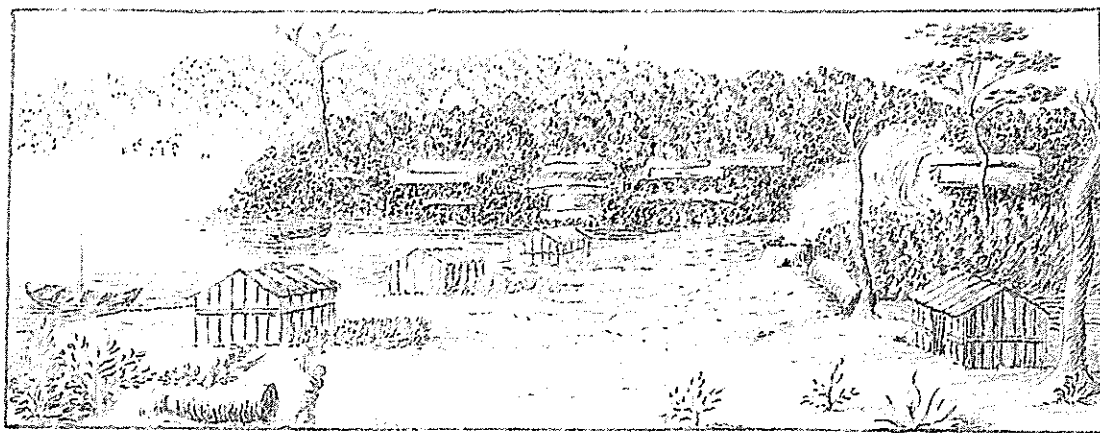
The surviving coastal Sydney people regrouped. They formed new bands along old lines, drawing on their extended family connections up and down the coast. The people who continued to live around the Eastern Suburbs included the surviving Cadigal men and women, and others linked to the area through parents, grandparents, marriage or life events. Their cycle of movements became wider than before to take in these new far flung connections, but they still lived at times in Sydney. By the early 19th century these regrouped bands were known to Europeans as the Sydney tribe, Botany tribe, Liverpool tribe and so on, reflecting their affiliation with particular areas (but masking their complex and further reaching connections). They were far fewer in number than before. There were around 50 to 100 people living around the harbour and Botany Bay throughout the 19th century, rarely in groups of more than about 20 in any one place at a time; but they were still there.¹⁴

From the 1810s, Governor Lachlan Macquarie developed a series of initiatives to try to Europeanise the survivors and persuade them to abandon their cycles of movement. In 1815 he tried to entice a group led by early colonial Aboriginal identity Bungaree (1770s–1830) who were living on the northern side of the harbour to settle into a life of farming and fishing by giving them land and a boat at Georges Head.¹⁵ Although this was fairly unsuccessful, Macquarie tried again a few years later on the southern side of the harbour with the 'Sydney tribe'. In 1820 he and his family rowed from Sydney town to Elizabeth Bay with three boats full of local Aboriginal people to select a site for an Aboriginal village, which is partly contained in today's Beare Park (Elizabeth Bay).¹⁶ The choice of this bay (known to Aboriginal people as Gurrakin) was not random. Europeans acknowledged that it

was 'a place much frequented and delighted in by the Sydney blacks, to a family of whom indeed it belonged', and a number of historically documented burials in the area also demonstrate this.¹⁷ As the illustration of the Aboriginal fishing village (Figure 1.5) shows, the village (referred to as Elizabeth Town or Blacktown) consisted of a number of timber huts along the shore, and it was supplied with a fishing boat and tackle.

The fluctuating population of up to several dozen people at Elizabeth Town, were locally connected, including a later leader of the Sydney tribe Thomas Tamara (1800s–60s) and Botany Bay man Mahroot (1790s–1850), whose father had been buried up the road at Rushcutters Bay several years before.¹⁸ Macquarie had hoped that they would settle into a life of fishing and farming, but the idea of staying in one place did not fit with the Aboriginal imperative to maintain their family connections

through movement.¹⁹ Consequently, within a few years the village was abandoned, and was soon after taken over by colonial secretary Alexander Macleay as part of his Elizabeth Bay estate. As colonial secretary, Macleay attended the annual feasts held throughout the 1820s for Aboriginal people in Parramatta, where he met people like Bungaree. In 1830, when Bungaree became ill, Macleay arranged for him to be admitted to the General Hospital on Macquarie Street, but he died soon afterwards at Garden Island and was buried at Rose Bay near his first wife Matora (1770s–c 1828).²⁰ Few Aboriginal people appear to have used the Elizabeth Bay area after this time, but they did not abandon the harbour. Instead they lived in a number of autonomous Aboriginal settlements across the Eastern Suburbs, some of which remained occupied throughout the 19th century.



Elizabeth Bay, Sydney,
With the bark & Huts for the Natives.

Figure 1.5: Elizabeth Bay, Sydney / With the bark Huts for the Natives, by E Mason (1821–23) from his *Views of Sydney and Surrounding District*. State Library of New South Wales, PXC 459, f.42.

Co-existing

Since the earliest days of the colony, Aboriginal people had come to know who was who among Europeans. Sometimes friendships formed, particularly between some Aboriginal children and the first generation of locally born children of convicts. By the 1830s and 1840s, those European children were adults, and some had become the wealthy and influential owners of large estates which nestled in the bushland of the Eastern Suburbs. They were still in contact with local Aboriginal people and were sympathetic to their desire to continue living around the harbour. Aboriginal people found that they could continue to set up camp on these estates, or on public lands.²¹ At different times throughout the 19th century, Aboriginal settlements existed in most of the bays of the Eastern Suburbs.²²

This pattern can be seen in Paddington through the Aboriginal use of the Barcom Glen property on the western slopes of Rushcutters Creek (see Figure 1.6). Barcom Glen was owned by convict Thomas West, whose son Obed West (1807–91) managed and lived on the property throughout most of his life, and wrote in his later years about his relationships with local Aboriginal people. As a child he had played with Aboriginal children, picking up some local language and learning about bush foods. He observed Rushcutters Bay as women fished with hook and line and men with their pronged spears.²³ Based on his enduring relationships with local people, Barcom Glen became one of several places in the area where Aboriginal people lived in the mid-19th century, though we know little more about it.

We have more information about another Aboriginal settlement that existed throughout the 19th century downstream from Barcom Glen on

public lands at Rushcutters Bay.²⁴ Records show that it was in use from the 1850s (probably much earlier), and had a variable population of a few people to dozens on occasion. It shifted location around Rushcutters Bay and Edgecliff at different times, but one of the more popular sites was on the eastern side of the creek to the north of the New South Head Road tollgate in what is now Rushcutters Bay Park (see Figures 1.7 and 1.8). In the 1890s Aboriginal people at the settlement lived in several shelters they had constructed from wooden slabs and iron sheeting, clustered around a central campfire, but other types of shelter were probably also used.²⁵ Residents caught fish and gathered shellfish, exchanged some of their catch with visiting Aboriginal kin for birds and honey, and made and sold shell encrusted ornaments and wooden implements in Sydney to obtain the other things they needed. Women from the settlement also hailed passing traffic to ask for money or gifts for their children.

The Rushcutters Bay settlement was not a randomly selected place, but one which continued to have meaning to Aboriginal people, despite the encroaching roads and houses. Ceremonies continued to take place there until at least the 1870s, and it was part of a network of settlements around Sydney Harbour and Botany Bay. Most of the people who lived there were linked to the area. They included Jack Harris (1810s–63), whose connections were known and recognised by Europeans in Sydney. If he was ever hassled, he was renowned for his emphatic response 'this is my country'.²⁶ Like one of his contemporaries William Warrell (1790s–1863), who lived down the road at Rose Bay from the late-1840s, Harris was regarded as one of the 'last of his tribe', and when both men died within a few months of each other in 1863, it was assumed that

'authentic' Aboriginal Sydney died within them.²⁷ This overlooks the many other Aboriginal people who continued to live at places like Rushcutters Bay and Rose Bay and were connected to Sydney, but also had more diverse links that took them on broader rounds of movement across coastal Sydney and up and down the coast.

The enduring presence of a settlement like Rushcutters Bay among suburban Sydney challenges the assumption that Aboriginal people were automatically pushed out of the way by the growth of the city. Their presence was accepted by local residents, despite some clashes with local youths, and there are no known records prior to

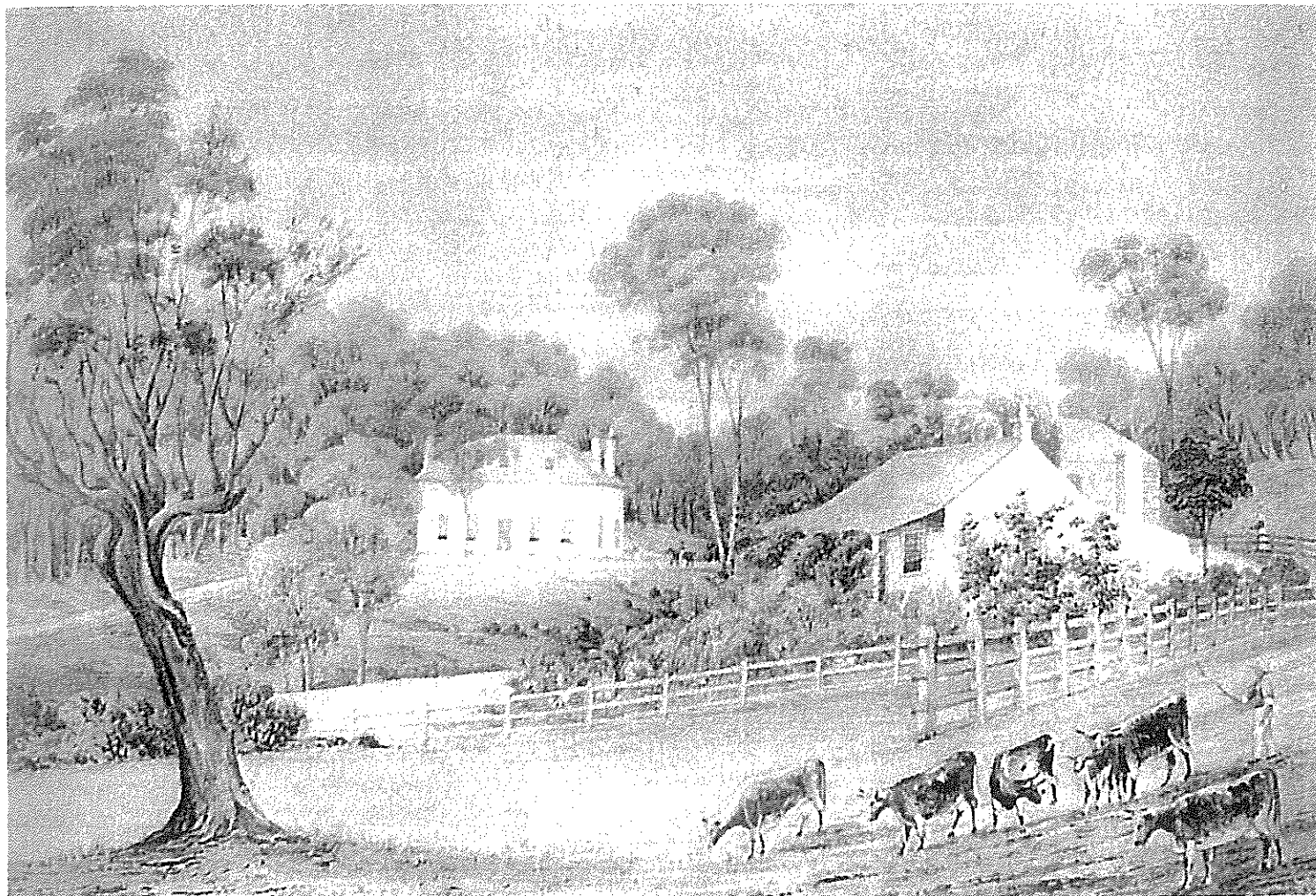


Figure 1.6: Barcom Glen house in the 19th century, when Aboriginal people were living on the property. Artist Unknown. Frontispiece in *EW Marriott, Thomas West of Barcom Glen*, Barcom Press, Sydney, 1982.

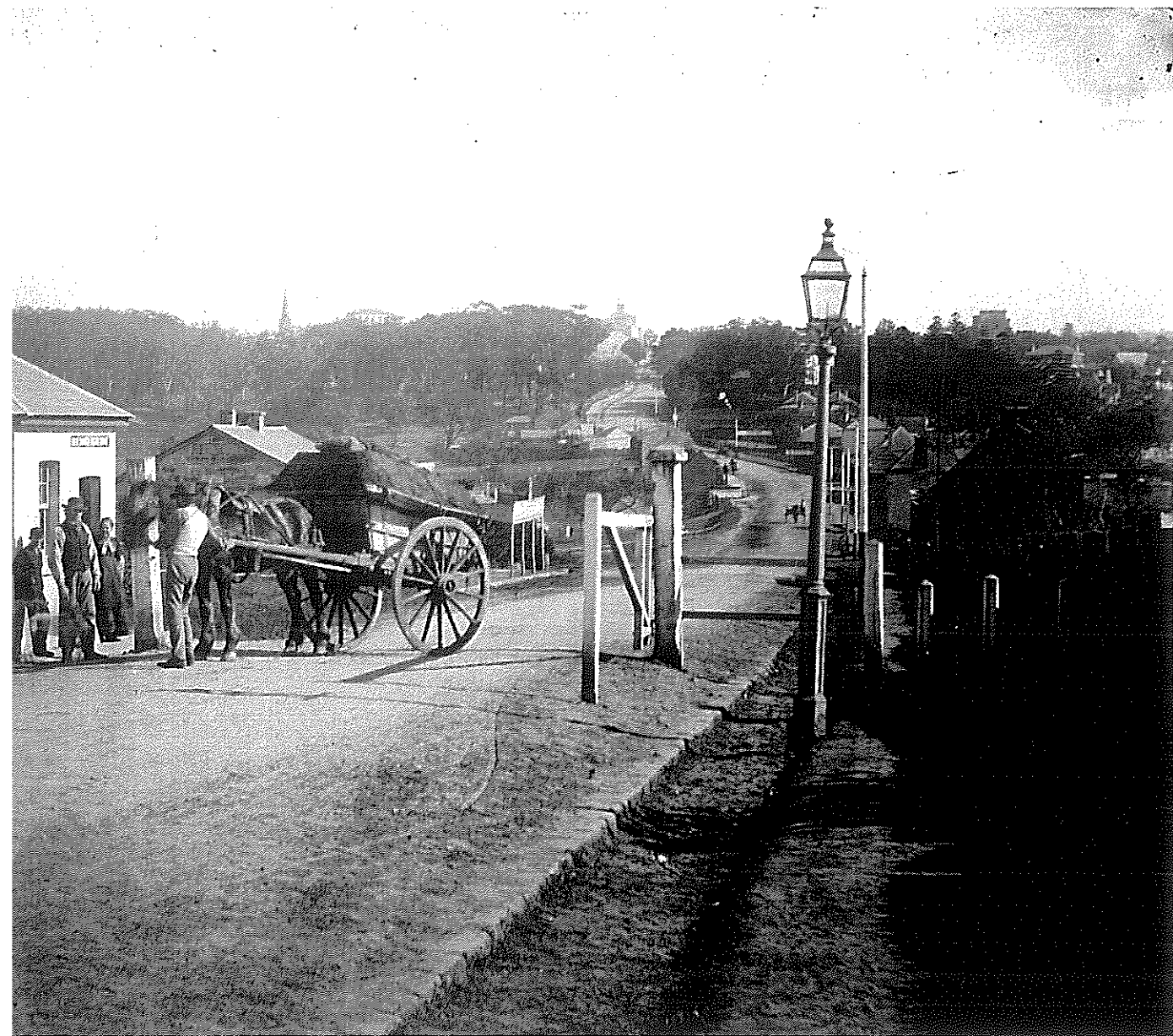


Figure 1.7: Horse and cart at the tollgate, New South Head Road, Rushcutters Bay, American & Australasian Photographic Company 1870-75. The photo looks east along New South Head Road

past the tollgate and cottage. The Rushcutters Bay Aboriginal settlement was somewhere behind the cottage. *State Library of New South Wales, ON 4 Box 13 No 38.*

the end of the 19th century of attempts by locals or government officials to move them away. In part, this was enabled by the lack of interest by government in local Aboriginal affairs throughout most of the 19th century. Aboriginal and European Sydneysiders were more or less left to work things out for themselves, and a number of those Sydneysiders across the Eastern Suburbs such as Obed West at Paddington and Daniel Cooper, WC Wentworth and others further east around Rose Bay and Vaucluse, were sympathetic to the Aboriginal desire to continue to fish and hunt across their properties and the water reserves and commons. In the late 1880s for example, when a group of local teenagers visited an Aboriginal family who were living in gunyahs and a tent at Centennial Park in the late 1880s, they joined them playing cards around the campfire and noted that the group's tent had been donated by another sympathetic Sydneysider Richard Hill.²⁸ Aboriginal people were still camping at Moore Park in the 1890s.²⁹

We should be careful though not to blindly laud this as an era of racial tolerance, or to assume that all Aboriginal people were well-treated. Life was still very tough. Aboriginal people continued to die young of preventable diseases, they were attacked and harassed by some Europeans, and most had few opportunities for work due to a lack of European education. Their lands had been taken without consent, and though they retained access to some areas, it was a far cry from the unfettered movement enjoyed by their parents and grandparents. Their continued access to the harbour was also dependent on factors largely out of their control, and these began to unravel towards the end of the 19th century.

Taking over

In the closing decades of the 19th century the rise of government and religious intervention in Aboriginal affairs combined to cause most Aboriginal people to leave their long-standing settlements around the harbour, and Paddington was bound up in these developments. In the late 1870s, missionaries became actively involved in Aboriginal welfare at several locations in regional New South Wales after decades of inaction. Through their Aborigines Protection Association, they lobbied politicians and other influential Sydneysiders to support their work, providing practical and religious assistance to any Aboriginal people in need through their missions and on the streets of Sydney. The result was that parliament began to consider ways to engage with Aboriginal welfare (having had no official policy in this area for nearly half a century).³⁰

Member of parliament George Thornton (1819–1901) proved pivotal to how this unfolded. In the 1850s Thornton had assisted with the annual distribution of government blankets to Aboriginal people in Sydney, and he was often visited by them at his Darling Point home in the 1860s and 1870s.³¹ But he was increasingly of the view that Aboriginal people should only be given assistance in their home district, and because he believed there were no local Sydney people, he felt that Aboriginal people should be discouraged from entering Sydney. By 1881 Thornton could see that the government was primed to establish an official approach to the distribution of Aboriginal welfare, and he did not want it to be the indiscriminate charity advocated by the Aborigines Protection Association. He used the presence of a group of Aboriginal people living in the government boatshed at Circular Quay and receiving

government rations, to press the case to establish himself as the government's official 'Protector of Aborigines'. Thornton portrayed the boatshed residents as being from outside of Sydney and therefore as having no reason to be there other than to receive government charity, but in reality most were locally connected people. They included

residents of the Rushcutters Bay camp who had shifted there for a few weeks to visit the city and sell their shell encrusted ornaments.³²

Thornton's lobbying caused the government to close the boatshed settlement down in 1881 and make the La Perouse Aboriginal fishing settlement, quite some distance from town, the main place



Figure 1.8: Looking from creek in Rushcutters Bay (later in the Park) to Darling Point with St Mark's Church (upper right), American & Australasian Photographic Company

1870-75, shows the creek and mudflats at a time when Aboriginal people were still fishing and living nearby. State Library of New South Wales, ON 4 Box 56 No 253.

where its assistance could be obtained. He was also made the first NSW Protector of Aborigines in 1881, a role which was expanded in 1883 to become the Aborigines Protection Board (not to be confused with the missionary based Aborigines Protection Association). The board was initially a small group of volunteers who met once a week to approve requests for government assistance and had no legal powers over Aboriginal people. It did not try to shut other settlements down and as a result Rushcutters Bay continued to be frequented by Aboriginal people.

By the 1890s though, the board and police were monitoring Aboriginal people and the public were increasingly aware that there was now an organisation to contact if they were concerned about the presence of Aboriginal people in their neighbourhood, and that there was a conveniently out of the way place (La Perouse) where they could be sent.³³ It was in this context that the first recorded complaint was made about the Rushcutters Bay settlement in 1895. Police came to try to move Aboriginal people away but they refused, and nothing more was done.³⁴

Records show that this settlement was used for several more years, but at the same time another key development was unfolding in the home of Harriet Baker (1860–1951) in Paddington that would eventually lead to its closure. Harriet was governess to the children of the Mona Estate at Darling Point, next to the Rushcutters Bay Aboriginal settlement, and residents would sometimes camp in the property's stone coach house.³⁵ She was also involved in the evangelical Christian Endeavour movement, which had established a mission church at La Perouse together with some of the Aboriginal people there. In a time of increasing police and public scrutiny,

and when recent land reclamation had destroyed the adjacent wetlands, it seems that these people helped Harriet to persuade the Aboriginal residents at Rushcutters Bay to move to La Perouse, and by 1900, one of the last settlements around the harbour had been abandoned.

This final takeover of harbour lands was accompanied by an appropriation of Aboriginal knowledge. Well into the 20th century, Aboriginal people at La Perouse retained knowledge of former settlements like Rushcutters Bay, and the cross-cultural relationships that sustained them, but these memories did not find their way into history books.³⁶ In the mid-19th century, Europeans interested in Aboriginal culture obtained information directly from Aboriginal people. Paddington resident Reverend William Ridley (1819–78) for example, wrote a number of papers on different Aboriginal languages around New South Wales in the 1870s, based on personal research.³⁷ But as the century drew to a close, it was believed that the surviving Aboriginal people around Sydney had lost their 'authenticity' and retained no traditional knowledge. Instead, interested Europeans took over as the 'experts' in local language and culture (at least in the eyes of other Europeans).³⁸ In the 1890s, while living on Leinster Street in Paddington, William Campbell asked local European residents where to find rock engravings as he compiled a detailed book on the subject, but did not think to ask the Aboriginal residents of the Rushcutters Bay settlement just down the hill what they knew.³⁹ In any case, people like Campbell were not interested in the contemporary history of Aboriginal people, but in the 'authentic' traces of their former lives, ensuring that the history of Aboriginal endurance across the Eastern Suburbs remained hidden until relatively recently.

View from the inside

The abandonment of the Rushcutters Bay

settlement by 1900 appears to have ended the era of locally connected Aboriginal people living independently in the Paddington area and across the Eastern Suburbs. There were still Aboriginal people living in Paddington after this time, but they were mainly individuals living in European houses, and most were not locals. Since the late 19th century, Aboriginal people had been entering Sydney in increasing numbers from areas far afield. Some moved to nearby Woolloomooloo and Darlinghurst, but we know little about their lives.⁴⁰ The majority of Aboriginal people who lived in Paddington in this period though were not migrants, but instead were bound up in the world of child apprenticeship and domestic service.

From the mid-19th century (and probably earlier) Aboriginal children had been working as domestic servants in Paddington. Most were from outside of Sydney and had been taken in or abducted from the violence of the frontier. From the occasional historical fragments that have survived, it is clear that their lives were often hard and short. Lucy from Queensland for example was taken as an infant (her parents were apparently still alive) into a European household in Queensland in the 1870s, and by the age of eight had moved with the family to Sydney. She ran away and for several years was in and out of emergency care after being placed with others who abused her, before being assigned to a Mrs Kernaghan of Paddington in 1886. By the following year she had been moved again, this time to the Maloga Aboriginal Mission on the Murray River where she grew sick and died at just 17 years of age.⁴¹ Around the same time another Aboriginal servant in Paddington, a 12-year-old boy named Mogal absconded, hopefully into better circumstances.⁴²

Paddington was not just the occasional end point for apprenticed domestic servants, but was central to the system through the child welfare operations at Ormond House, the former residence of early Paddington identity and gin distiller Robert Cooper (Figure 1.9). Since the early years of the colony, Sydney's poor and orphaned children had been placed in training schools and other institutions, and in the 1850s Ormond House functioned as a destitute children's asylum. Aboriginal children were most likely among the hundreds housed there before a new and larger asylum was built at Randwick in 1858. By the 1880s the government approach to child welfare shifted away from these institutions to a 'boarding out' (foster care) system administered by the State Children's Relief Board. Ormond House came into use once more as the central processing point for destitute children before they were sent into private care.⁴³ Aboriginal children were among the many who passed through Ormond House each month. When 15-year-old Herbert was apprehended by police after absconding from his 'guardian' at Redfern in 1891 for example, he was sent to Ormond House.⁴⁴

In the late 19th century, there was no specific or different welfare policy for Aboriginal children, but they were often sent to the Maloga and Warengesda missions in western New South Wales. In the early 20th century, the Aborigines Protection Board instigated a child removal policy on an industrial scale after the passage of laws in 1909 and 1915 giving it widespread powers over Aboriginal people. Aboriginal girls and boys homes were set up at Cootamundra and Kinchela respectively, where children were trained to serve as domestic servants and farm hands. By the 1920s, hundreds of Aboriginal girls, some as young

as 12, were working as domestic servants across Sydney, and this almost certainly included Paddington.⁴⁵ Though most Aboriginal domestic servants in Paddington would have been girls from outside the area, at least one had local connections. Lena Bungary (c 1907–1968) was from the La Perouse Aboriginal Mission but from the 1930s until her death she worked for, and often lived with, the Stephen family at Paddington. Elders from La Perouse recalled visiting Lena at the house on Jersey Road, and this remains a recognised link to the Paddington area in the community.⁴⁶

Post-war years

In the decades following World War 2 Aboriginal people migrated into Sydney from country areas in large numbers, and many gravitated to places like Redfern, where an Aboriginal community had been forming for several decades.⁴⁷ Paddington did not have a pre-existing community to draw people in and consequently, while some did come to live there, it was not a focal point or community hub for Aboriginal people.⁴⁸ This was no doubt also due in part to the gentrification of the suburb, and a lack of social housing that saw an Aboriginal community develop

The seven debutantes were presented to Mr E. A. Willis, Chief Secretary, by matron of honour Mrs Walker. Shown here (left to right) are Pat Brown, Faye Groves, Norma Ingram, Mrs Walker, Mr Willis, Professor Geddes (chairman of the Foundation), Denise Dunne, Enid Flanders, Robyn Stewart and Vivian Bell



Figure 1.10: Aboriginal debutantes at Paddington Town Hall in 1966. *Dawn Magazine*, May 1966, 15(5), p 5.

for example in nearby Woolloomooloo. For this reason, the post-war Aboriginal history of Paddington is more notable for events that have linked the area to broader developments in Sydney and elsewhere.

From the 1960s, Aboriginal people in Sydney began to set up services to meet their particular needs. The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs was the first and most influential, offering employment, housing and education services to Aboriginal people at its George Street Sydney premises from 1964. It also organised events such as dances, both as social occasions and as fundraising for the foundation's other activities.⁴⁹ In 1966 the foundation decided to host the first Aboriginal debutante ball in Sydney as a way to foster pride among young women and their families, and Paddington Town Hall was chosen as the venue. At this time, the hall was a well-used social venue in Sydney, and was managed by the City of Sydney Council, which included councillors supportive of the foundation's activities. The ball took place on Friday 1 April and involved the presentation of seven young Aboriginal women to the NSW chief secretary, amid a crowd of 200 Aboriginal people and another 100 non-Aboriginal attendees (Figure 1.10).⁵⁰ It was a great success and was run again two years later, this time at Sydney Town Hall and in the presence of Prime Minister John Gorton.⁵¹

During the mid-1960s a growing Aboriginal civil rights movement sought to highlight the deplorable conditions in which many Aboriginal people still lived. One of the first Aboriginal students at the University of Sydney, Charles Perkins (1936–2000), helped form the group 'Student Action for Aborigines' in 1964. The most famous action of the group was its 'Freedom Ride' bus tour of regional New South Wales in 1965, which brought the racism and segregation of country towns to public

attention.⁵² In preparation for the Freedom Ride, the group held fundraising events, which included a folk concert at Paddington Town Hall the month before. The concert featured an Aboriginal folk singer Jenny Bush, who was originally from Darwin and was working as a nurse at Marrickville Hospital alongside her twin sister.⁵³

As explored in Chapter 9 the suburb has been a major centre for Sydney's art galleries since the 1960s. In 1976, Hogarth Galleries was at the forefront of promoting Aboriginal art as a modern and collectable art form, and since the 1980s the gallery along with Cooe Art Gallery and a number of others have hosted exhibitions of many Aboriginal artists from across Australia, including contemporary urban Aboriginal artists.⁵⁴ Through these exhibitions many Aboriginal artists and their families have come to visit Paddington, while many non-Aboriginal residents and visitors have caught a glimpse into the richness of Aboriginal Australia.

In a similar way, Paddington's Aboriginal history points to many broader Aboriginal themes. The ongoing local Aboriginal presence throughout the 19th century shows the tenacity and adaptability of Aboriginal people in the midst of a colonial city, while later developments link the area to a much broader story of administrative brutality and indifference, and the counter-efforts of Aboriginal people to break free of government control and manage their own destinies. There have been Aboriginal people present in Paddington throughout its European history. In recent decades the suburb has had a fluctuating Aboriginal population of up to several dozen people according to census figures, and these people, along with future residents and visitors will write the next chapters in Paddington's Aboriginal history.⁵⁵

Endnotes by chapter

Paddington: An Introduction

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- 13 Patricia Thompson, *Accidental Chords*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1988, p. 237.
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- 24 Susan Borham, 'Sale recalls days of dubious dealings', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1993, p. 2.
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- 28 Robert Shiller, 'How tales of "flippers" led to a housing bubble', *New York Times*, 18 May 2017.
- 29 Andrew Starr and Jan Morice, *Paddington Stories*, Andrew Starr and Associates, Paddington, 2000, p. 205.
- 30 M. Barnard Eldershaw, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, Virago Press, London, 1983, p. 10.

Chapter 1 Aboriginal Paddington

- 1 Valerie Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past: Investigating the archaeological and historical records*, 2nd ed, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 38–39.
- 2 Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past*, pp. 38–39, 55–56.
- 3 Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past*, pp. 102–03, 117–19.
- 4 Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past* provides the most comprehensive and accessible account of this information.
- 5 Attenbrow, *Sydney's Aboriginal Past*, pp. 22–30, 57–58. As Attenbrow discusses, while debates exist about clan boundaries, there is no doubt that Paddington was on the estate of the Cadigal. The suffix '-gal' in Cadigal refers to the men of the clan and 'galleon' refers to the women, but the term Cadigal is commonly used to represent the clan as a whole.
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- 17 For prior Aboriginal attachment see Edward Hall, 'Mr ES Hall to Sir George Murray 26 November 1828', *Historical Records of Australia*, vol. 28, 1828, pp. 596–97. For burials see for example Richard Hill and George Thornton, *Notes on the Aborigines of New South Wales: With personal reminiscences of the tribes formerly living the neighbourhood of Sydney and the surrounding districts*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1892, p. 7.
- 18 Hill and Thornton, *Notes on the Aborigines of New South Wales*, p. 7; Obed West, "'Old and New Sydney": To the editor of the Herald', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 May 1882, p. 3.
- 19 Karskens, *The Colony*, pp. 526–27.
- 20 Smith, *King Bungaree*, pp. 143–44, 147.
- 21 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, Ch. 4.
- 22 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, pp. 52–56; Ch. 2, Ch. 4.
- 23 Marriott, *Thomas West of Barcom Glen*, p. 194.
- 24 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, pp. 72–73, 123.
- 25 'Native nuisances. A black camp in a church. Old St Mark's, Darling Point', *Evening News*, 22 February 1895, p. 3.
- 26 'Death of a well known Sydney character', *Empire*, 11 February 1863, p. 4.

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- 32 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, pp 111–15.
- 33 For Thornton and early board see Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, pp 115–23.
- 34 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, p 127.
- 35 Irish, *Hidden in Plain View*, pp 127–128. The reference to the use of the coach house (previously a chapel), is most likely what a later resident was referring to when she described Aboriginal people living in 'small stone cottages'. See Violet Potter, 'Re Old Double Bay Memories', Paddington Society Archives, Woollahra Local History Centre, LH PS 711.4099441 PAD/43 Correspondence File #43.
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Chapter 2: Mapping Paddington

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