

# Huskisson Heritage Association Inc.

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This is a compilation of the comments made by members of HHA attached to DA 18/2102 on Dr Sue Feary's report, 'Proposed sale and redevelopment of Anglican Church grounds, Huskisson. Aboriginal cultural heritage due diligence assessment'. This was commissioned by developer Bartlett & Associates Pty Ltd, which hold the copyright in this report. It also refers to email exchanges between Dr Feary and Stephen Bartlett, also posted on the DA site.

Dear Dr Sue Feary

We are concerned that your report has been used and continues to be used as a primary document in validating the destruction of the Holy Trinity Church site in Huskisson by the proposed developer. To date no specific major development has been applied for, but all the documentation provided on DA18/2102 is written in anticipation of a major reuse of the site for multi-storey buildings (conference centre, hotel, accommodation, commercial uses.) At present six trees have been felled and more are expected to be cut down in the near future, including the one that locals believe is a marker for James Golding.

Your report contains a number of assertions which could be misconstrued to misrepresent currently known information. Further, there is new information found after you submitted your report in November 2018. This later information should give you cause to revisit your findings, and perhaps to retract or amend your claims, not only because they are misleading, and insufficient but because your role in this process is being used to the great pain of local Aboriginal people who are distressed by the experience that their post-colonial history is not respected and that the protection of graves of their ancestors continue to be at risk of desecration.

Your report is written with reference to the National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1974. We have difficulty in understanding why this is relevant as we have always understood that the significance of this church site lies in its post-invasion cultural heritage. The absence of middens, rock carvings and so on is in no way relevant to the arguments that have been posited for the significance of the place. While we understand that this is the work that you do, and that you hold a good reputation as an archaeologist, the 'nothing to see here' findings of your report are unhelpful. Even within these parameters, there are several indicators of traditional Aboriginal culture outlined in our notes below that would have benefited from your more careful consideration.

Our primary interest is in the preservation of this lovely site with its little wooden church, mature trees and unmarked graves. When we learned of the Aboriginal connections the significance became greatly deepened and over the past year we have come to understand more of its importance. Currently, this is

all slated for development involving large buildings and underground parking. Your report is contributing to distress among Aboriginal descendants and other Aboriginal people who see the proposed development as harmful to their people.

We appreciate that your report did recommend oral history to be undertaken and for consultation with Aboriginal people and family members, but this has not happened. We believe that the developer may claim to have consulted with the Jerrinja Local Aboriginal Land Council, but if he has, nothing has been communicated to the wider community and none of the Aboriginal people we know have been consulted, including none of the family members who are direct descendants of people known to be buried on the site. As you would appreciate, this burial ground and this missionary church was used by a range of Aboriginal people who had been removed from country by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is valued by more than just the Jerrinja people. Your report is being used to justify what will always be a profound act of disrespect to local Aboriginal families and the wider Aboriginal community.

Having been made aware of the depth of Indigenous feeling for this place, we ask you to look at the critique of sections of your report and new evidence outlined in the Appendix below and to consider revising your report. If this is not possible, we ask that at the very least you make more careful argument in any subsequent reports you may undertake in relation to this site.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Warren Public Officer

On behalf of Huskisson Heritage Association Inc

#### **Appendix:**

For brevity we mention 7 points where we find your report problematic.

- We struggle to understand why you continually understate the presence of James Golding's burial on the site. You state that 'there is **a possibility** that one of the graves is that of an Aboriginal man, James Golding' (p.6) and you write that 'a newspaper article **suggests** he may be interred in one of the graves. (p.3) You continue to refer to the 'possibility' of him being there, and record that the 'anti-church development group' – presumably the community members arguing for retention of church, graves and trees - **believes** that Jimmy Golding is buried there'. (p. 20). You use one image of Golding that provides no context (p. 19) while ignoring the readily available photograph that clearly places his camp on Shark Net Beach, next to the church lands.

You never quote the *Evening News* article, presumably because it makes the case for this burial so convincingly. It is the sixth article in a series 'In the Shoalhaven District,' and it is titled 'Jervis Bay' [*Evening News*, 22 July, 1905, p. 8] This article contains a photograph of James Golding and Mary Carpenter, taken by C S Moss of Nowra, and labelled "Royalty at Ease'. This photograph is referred to by the journalist, Mary Salmon, as a photograph of Jimmy, the old King of Jervis Bay, who died only a few weeks ago and his queen... the poor old widow was very proud that her man 'had a Christian burial with

a minister, in the churchyard whilst (and her satisfaction as accentuated thereby) Jacky, another black-fellow, 'only got buried like a dog out in the bush yonder'. Salmon is clearly and explicitly writing about Huskisson.

There can be no serious doubt about the veracity of this report and no plausible reason to suppose that it is not an accurate record of events. What possible reason could there be to relegate it to a 'possibility'? Mary Salmon, one of the few journalists of this time who was famous enough to be granted the courtesy of using her name as a by-line, is specific and careful, even to the point of using parentheses for what she recalled as Mary Carpenter's actual words.

- You claim that 'the cancellation' of the burial ground on the 1875 plan reproduced on p. 18 of your report suggests it was not being used or was not suitable as a burial ground.' This is clearly in contravention of many facts you already knew. It also conflicts with other statements in your own report.

As you would well know, the only thing this indicates is that the graveyard was not consecrated. There is firm evidence of multiple burials on the site, perhaps up to a dozen. The last record located is for Rebecca Golding, daughter of James Golding. Her official NSW death certificate states that she died of senile decay at St Georges Basin and was buried, with a religious minister officiating, in the 'Huskisson Cemetery' on Jan 4, 1935. You may not have known of this record at the time of writing, but now that you do, Rebecca can be added to the growing list of known burials on the site for which there are official or newspaper records. These include at least one known burial that pre-dates the granting of the land to the Anglican Church. When whaler Niclasson was buried in 1912, it was recorded that he was buried 'alongside the grave of a sailor interred there some 42 years before' i.e. c. 1870.

- You indicate that the practice of the church was to bury in a well-defined location, and that, if – if? – James Golding is buried there, he will most likely be one of the 7 graves identified in 2015. This is not where the descendants say he is buried, and it does not fit with reports that people were buried 'at the rear of the Union Church'.

Your report is written to imply that adequate GPR survey of the land has been made. Since then several more GPR surveys have been made. At the time of your report, the 2015 GPR survey had covered a mere 11% of the land, and a further portion was covered by the 2018 'Dial -before -you – dig' survey (Peter Ellsmore and Associates Pty Ltd.) There has been considerable public scorn about this survey, carried out with no expertise in locating graves and with a visible lack of rigour. The flaws in this survey methodology have been clearly argued by Dr Evan Christen, soil scientist, in his submission to the DA 18/2102. 'Overall it can be concluded that the survey by Peter Ellsmore and Associates Pty Ltd cannot be accepted as a credible assessment of the likelihood of further graves at the site.'

You may have been misled by the Graham Brooks Heritage report of Dr. Cameron Hartnell which endeavoured to discredit the likelihood of burials in the location of the 'rear of the Union Church' by claiming that this building once stood where the Blacket church was later sited. This would place the little clutch of graves identified in 2015 at the rear of the Union church. The Blacket Church was built in 1932. The original church was where the rectory now stands. Dr Hartnell based his claim for the early location of the original church on an entry on State Heritage Inventory, No. 2390385. He falsely claimed that this document 'asserts the original location was towards the southern end of the site.' What this

record actually says is the following: 'Land for the Anglican Church was set aside in 1876 and a Union Church was erected to serve the community c.1900 at the junction of Hawke and Bowen Streets. This Church was relocated to its present position to allow for the erection of the rector's house at the northern side of the block and is now the Anglican Church Hall.' [demolished a couple of weeks ago.]

There is no mention of the church being moved to make way for the Blacket Church. Clearly 'at the junction of Hawke and Bowen Streets is a reference to the church property in general, and the reference to the old church being moved relates to the well-established 1970s move to the south, just far enough to make way for the rectory at the northern side of the block, facing Hawke Street. It is unfortunate that GBA does not have the expertise to read this report for what it is. Their argument that the old church was on the site of the Blacket Church disappears. 'At the rear of the Union church' is a vague descriptor, and there is nothing to indicate the age of the burials located in 2015, but the likelihood of burials in the back yard of the rectory or on the land just west of this was reinforced by the PGR survey of April 2019. (GBG Aust, 13 April 2019)

- You did not have the benefit of the GPR survey of 2019. This found evidence of graves near the front of the Blacket Church, near the corner of Hawke and Bowen Streets. It also found anomalies in the rectory yard and behind it.

As there do not seem to be written records of the front- of - church graves near Bowen Street or any record of them being removed at the time the Blacket building was constructed in the 1930s, who knows what others there may be in the area, including under the church? Your unsubstantiated claim that the burials would all be tightly and neatly arranged where the 11% of land was surveyed in 2015 now appears to be very unconvincing and Mr. Bartlett's ongoing claim that he will 'fence the graves' is disingenuous. It ignores the possibility of grave in scattered locations, and it ignores various oral testimonies and living memories of graves along the Bowen Street perimeter, never surveyed and some possibly on Jerrinja land. You are right to say that the specific location of King Bud Billy's grave is not known, but you might also have commented that the specific burials of many others are not known also. Development will disturb graves.

- Frequent references to burials at Bilong and people living at Bilong are presumably used to obfuscate.

As far as we know there has never been any attempt to down-play the importance of this burial site. It is where Mary Carpenter is buried. However, we have been told by several Aboriginal people that in relation to burials at Bilong, this is a women's place. Your claim that Dan Carpenter is buried there is unsubstantiated. The close comings and goings between Bilong and Huskisson are well documented and in no way function to discredit the importance of the Church site for Aboriginal contact history.

- In relation to landscape features, you mention only that the site is 'within 200 meters of water.' You do not mention King Billy's camp site. Nor Jimmy Dann's along next to the Huskisson Hotel (where you do mention remains of a midden) You do not mention that the centre of the block, on its northern boundary, where family members say King Billy is buried, is on a ridge line at the highest point in Huskisson, with a clear site-line to Currambene Creek, even today.

- You rightly say that AHIMS has no Aboriginal objects recorded on the Anglican grounds, but several Indigenous men say that the marker tree where they say King Budd Billy was buried is a scar tree. Why wasn't this picked up, if only to record it as not being significant if that was your assessment? It looks like a scarred tree to us, but we are not the experts in this matter. This is being formally investigated.