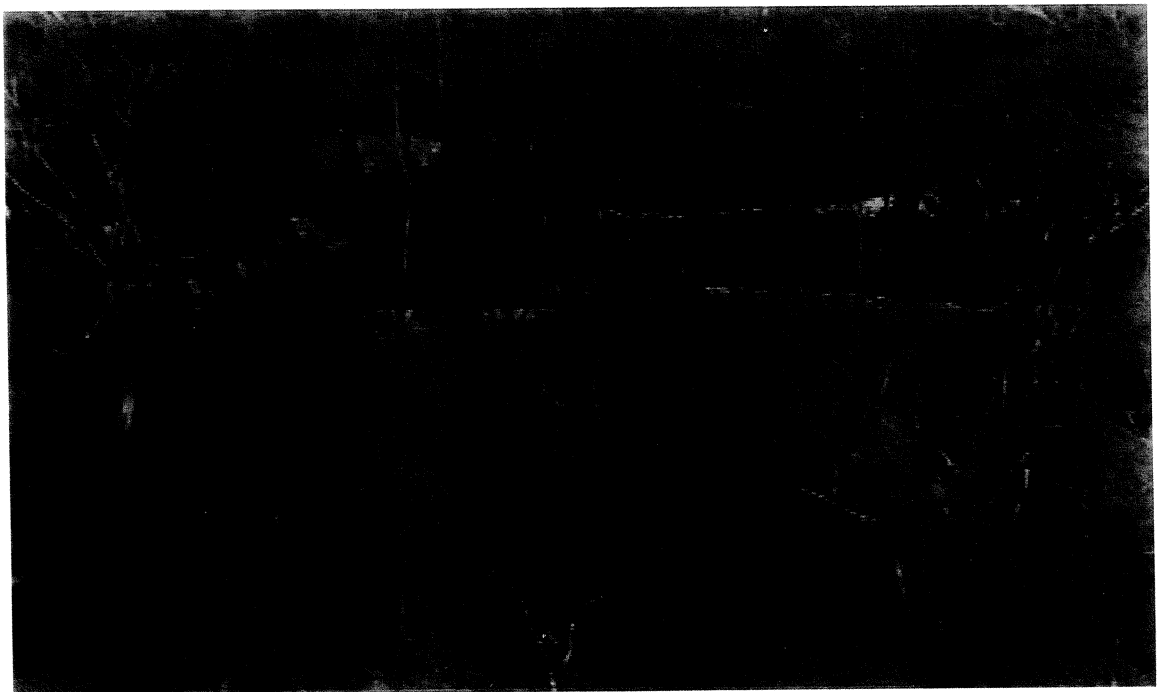




Frontispiece - At the top is an aerial view of Bulee Brook 2, the oldest known site in the NSW South Coast hinterland, seen from the north-east. The shelter lies at the base of the large sandstone outcrop on the right. Below is an aerial view of Bob's Cave, one of the largest rockshelters with archaeological deposit in the Budawang Ranges, and like Bulee Brook 2, a site that was first occupied during the Pleistocene. Both views are stills taken from video footage shot by Steve Barnes, Contact Television Productions.

**DIDTHUL, BHUNDOO, GULAGA AND WADBILLIGA:
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE ABORIGINALS OF THE NEW
SOUTH WALES SOUTH COAST HINTERLAND**

PHILIP GERARD BOOT

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of
The Australian National University**

December 2002

Except where otherwise acknowledged,
this thesis represents my own work, all
responsibility for any errors herein is mine.

Philip Boot

Philip Boot

VOLUME 1

To Anne, Amelia and James, for always being there.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many colleagues have assisted with the production of this thesis, in the field, laboratory and during many other occasions, however my greatest debt is to my family and friends, in particular Anne, Amelia and James.

I also wish to acknowledge my supervisors, Ian Farrington who originally introduced me to archaeology on the South Coast and who has guided me through it all, and Isabel McBryde who supported the original research proposal and has provided much needed advice.

Special thanks go to Bob Snedden, Tessa Raath, Peter Kuskie, Doug Williams, Sue Feary, Charlie Dearling and Steve Novak, all of whom have provided me with much assistance and companionship in the field and laboratory. Comments on various drafts were provided by Ian Farrington, Mac and Val Boot, Peter Kuskie, Doreen Bowdery, Charles Dearling, Johan Kamminga, Isabel McBryde, Tom Knight and Julie Dibden.

Many others have assisted in the field and laboratory. Without them this thesis would never have been completed. Their names are listed below, alongside the locations at which they worked.

Field crew AG15 Blue Gum Flat - C4 class 1993 including Kylie Anderson, Steven Avery, Iain Brady, Chris Carter, Ian Coates, Julie Dixon, Kathy Dunn, Ian Farrington, Deirdre Jones, Jan Klaver, Renée Kroupa, David Leigh, Ingereth MacFarlane, Mary-Jane Mountain, Stewart Muir, Stephen O'Shea, Liliana del Pozo, Liz Smith, Joan Tanton, Jenny Tracey, Mike Tracey, Doug Wonders. Isabel McBryde and Andrée Rosenfeld visited during the excavation. Field crew Gnatillia Creek 3 - Iain Brady, Julie Dibden, Chris Martin, Rebecca Robinson and Diane Rutherford. Burrill Shelter 2 field crew - Chris Carter, Peter White. PK20 Buckenbowra field crew - Iain Brady, Phil Hunt and Steve Free. The site was visited during the excavation by Geoff Bailey, Ian Farrington and Tessa Raath. Bourke's Road 2 field crew - Jane Dickins, Alistair Grinbergs, Paul Griffiths, Tom Knight, David Leigh, Willow McGregor, Jackie Taylor. Field crew Kangaroo Hill 4 - Iain Brady, Stuart Huys, Kate Lemann, Doug Wonders. Field crew Rock Pool Shelter - Doug Williams (excavation supervisor), Edwina Jans, Nicole Livermore, Tessa Raath. Stuart Cohen and Sue Feary, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) visited during excavation. PW1 Tianjara field crew - Amanda Hirschfeld, Tessa Raath. Bulee Brook 2 field crew - Peter Kuskie, Bob Snedden, Duncan Snedden. BB2 excavation crew - Sam Wickman. Bob's Cave field crew - Tony Bushell, Phil Hunt, Peter Kuskie, Tessa Raath, Sam Wickman, Doug Williams, Doug Wonders. Visitors to the Bob's Cave excavation - Sue Feary NPWS, Ruth Leahy, Alan Norman, Senior Ranger, NPWS Ulladulla Sub-district, Bob Snedden and Duncan Snedden.

The field survey program was carried out with the assistance of Marika Behr, Darren Curnoe, Charlie Dearling, Jane Dickins, Ben Evans, Ian Farrington, Sue Feary, Paul Griffiths, Alistair Grinbergs, Gina Howarth, Phil Hunt, Tom Knight, Peter Kuskie, David Leigh, Tessa Raath, Bob Snedden, Jackie Taylor, and Peter Wyche.

Artefact collections were made with help from Chris Carter, Charlie Dearling, Amanda Hirschfeld, Peter Kuskie, Tessa Raath, Peter White and Peter Wyche.

Laboratory sorting and analysis was conducted with the assistance of Kylie Anderson, Steven Avery, Isabelle Balzer, Annette Black, Iain Brady, Chris Carter, Irene Chapman, Omar Chen, Brenda Clarke, Marie Colvill, Stephen Cox, Darren Curnoe, Charlie Dearling, Julie Dibden, Julie Dixon, Kathy Dunn, Ben Evans, Ian Farrington, Mark Grist, Pam Hegarty, Gina Howarth, Greg Howatson, Deirdre Jones, Jan Klaver, Renée Kroupa, Jeremy Landrigan, David Leigh, Michael Merrony, Ricky Mullet, Mary-Jane Mountain, Stewart Muir, Steve Novak, Stephen O'Shea, Joh Pask, Liliana del Pozo, Tessa Raath, Rebecca Robinson, Diane Rutherford, Liz Smith, Kees Van Der Spek, Joan Tanton, Jenny Tracey, Mike Tracey, Nicole Walker, Keryn Walshe, Harry Webber, Doug Wonders, and Joanna Woodbury.

Specialist analysis of excavated material was carried out by Chris Carter, Charlie Dearling, Julie Dibden, Steve Novak, Joh Pask, Tessa Raath and Keryn Walshe.

Stuart Hay and Neil McCracken, Faculties Photography Service, ANU and Byam Wight, Research School of Chemistry, ANU produced the photographic prints. Garnett Znidaric, Centre for Networked Information and Publishing, ANU and Ben Lopez, ANU Graphics produced the colour images of Bob's Cave and Bulee Brook 2 from aerial video footage shot by Steve Barnes, Contact Television Productions and produced by Stuart Cohen, NPWS. David Lawton, CB Air piloted the helicopter.

Ink versions of site plans and stratigraphy diagrams drawn by me were produced by Charles Dearling and Peter Kuskie. Artefact drawings were produced by Winifred Mumford. All were produced with great skill.

Dr Mike Austin, CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology discussed environmental issues and provided access to unpublished environmental data. Ian Pulsford and Alissa Fallovolita, NPWS provided Geographic Information System maps. Mr Alf Sebire, State Forests of NSW (SFNSW) provided vegetation survey reports.

Additional advice and information were provided by J. Bassingthwaite, J. Dibden, I.S. Farrington, Maria Fisher, Quaternary Research Dating Centre, ANU, Chris 'Snappy' Griffiths, NSW NPWS Narooma, Simon Haberle, Department of Biogeography and Geomorphology, RSPacS, ANU, John Head, QRDC, ANU, Phillip Hughes, I. McBryde, Graham Moore, NPWS Merimbula, Tim Munson, Department of Geology, ANU, Kelvin Officer, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU and R. Snedden.

Fieldwork funds and other support were provided by the Faculties Postgraduate Research Fund and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology. Employment of research assistants, and one C14 date, were funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Graeme Ward facilitated the provision of those funds. All other C14 dating was funded by the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology and

the Quaternary Research Dating Centre, ANU. Photography and illustration costs were generously provided by my parents, Val and Mac Boot.

Ruth Leahy of Sassafras, John Bassingthwaite of Buckenbowra and Lester Walters of Meadow Grove generously provided access to their properties.

The Ulladulla, Bateman's Bay, Mogo and Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Councils provided approval for the survey and excavation work that was carried out within their boundaries. The Land Councils also assisted financially by waiving their usual fees. Particular thanks are due to Shane Carriage, Tom Towers, Fred Nye and Merv Penrith. Sue Feary and Rod Wellington, NPWS Southern Region assisted with the provision of permits and advice on consultation with Aboriginal communities. NPWS and SFNSW provided the permits required to carry out field survey and excavation work.

Access to artefact and documentary collections was provided by the Australian Museum, the Mitchell Library and the NSW Archives Office in Sydney. Chris Carter, Harold Crisp, Ian Farrington, Sue Feary, Freddy Hawke, Stuart Huys, Ruth Leahy and Bob Snedden also provided access to privately held documents and artefacts.

Considerable logistic and administrative support was provided by Kathy Callen Jan Lee, David McGregor and Helen Nichol of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU.

ABSTRACT

The hinterland of the NSW South Coast has long been considered a cultural heritage backwater in comparison to the adjacent coastal strip. While the coast has been a focus of intensive archaeological research for several decades, the forested hills, mountains and plateaux between the coastline and the tablelands have only been investigated by a small number of archaeologists. Paradoxically, many coastal researchers developed models of hinterland Aboriginal occupation without conducting any field research there. Before commencement of the research program described here, only two excavations had been completed in the South Coast hinterland, compared to over 20 on the adjacent coast. The research described in this thesis was developed to provide more balance between coastal and hinterland archaeological knowledge.

The research program included reviews of previous work, existing site distribution data and ethnohistoric records. An extensive fieldwork program of survey, excavation and artefact collection was also completed. The materials and data obtained in the field were subjected to a wide range of laboratory and computer analyses. An extensive radiocarbon dating program was also undertaken. The results discussed in the first nine chapters have been interpreted and synthesised in the final chapter to provide a preliminary prehistory of the South Coast hinterland.

Some of the major results have led to revision of many previously presented hypotheses, but others have withstood rigorous testing. The research has demonstrated that hinterland Aboriginal occupation was extensive and wide ranging, was probably not seasonal and has a late Pleistocene antiquity. The results also indicate that the intensity of hinterland occupation fluctuated geographically and temporally, possibly in relation to environmental change, local resource abundance, spiritual associations and as a result of Aboriginal economic and subsistence strategies.

The work has allowed the identification of preferred resource exploitation and inhabitation zones within the hinterland, which range from a Pleistocene preference for well watered and protected locations to a Holocene focus on highly biodiverse hinterland valley woodlands. The strategies used to exploit such environments have also been discussed. The research has shown that, although exchange networks were largely restricted to within the hinterland, the Aboriginal occupants had extensive social and ritual networks which linked them with coastal areas to the north, south and east and with the tablelands to the west.

Overall the research presented here indicates that Aboriginal people have successfully inhabited and exploited a diverse range of hinterland environments over many millennia. The descendants of those original inhabitants still maintain strong connections with the hinterland's unique cultural heritage.

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