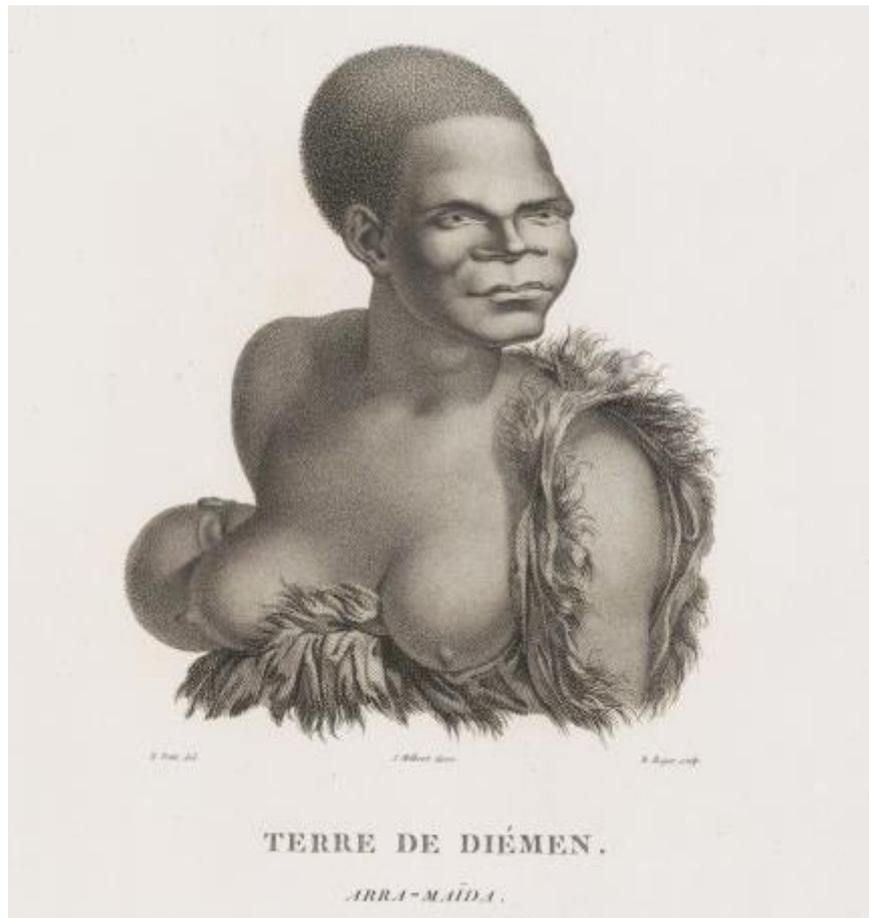


**ABORIGINAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE
OF
KELLY'S POINT AND CAPE DE LA SORTIE,
DENNES POINT**



STATEMENTS BY

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ABORIGINAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF KELLY'S POINT (DENNES POINT), BRUNY ISLAND

From a scientific (archaeological) perspective, the Kelly's Point (Dennes Point) area is a place of great Aboriginal heritage significance. There are three main reasons for this:

1. The Point, as well as the Dennes Point Township, contains early Aboriginal shell middens which date close to the time when Bruny Island was formed.
2. The Point was a location where the great French scientific expedition of 1802, led by Captain Baudin, met and described the Bruny Island Aborigines.
3. The Point is the location of Captain James Kelly's farmstead, the earliest on Bruny Island, where substantial interaction with the local Aboriginal band occurred.

1. The Point, as well as nearby Dennes Point Township, contains early Aboriginal shell middens which date close to the time when Bruny Island was formed.

Aborigines have lived in Tasmania for 35,000 years, some 1500 generations. During that period they survived through the last ice age when temperatures were on average 6 °C lower than today and rainfall was c. 50% of today's values. At that time the sea was 120 metres lower than today and the coastline was c. 20 kilometres southeast of Tasmans Head. The lower Derwent was then a shallow river meandering across coastal plains on what is now the bottom of Storm Bay. The area around the present-day Point would have been rolling hills flanking a small creek which flowed as a tributary down to the Derwent River. Kelly's Point and Tinderbox opposite would have been covered in grasslands, across which Aborigines likely hunted and gathered on their way from the sea into southwest Tasmania.

After the ice age, the temperatures rose to present day values and the sea level rose dramatically, up to a metre a century, until the Channel between Kelly's Point and Tinderbox was flooded. Bruny Island split from Tinderbox about 8000 years ago and the present day sea level was attained around 6,000 years ago. Grassy woodlands became predominant and the island became an estate for an Aboriginal band approximately 40 strong. The Tasmanian Aborigines had experienced and survived climate change far in excess of what we are experiencing today.

An Aboriginal midden on Kelly's Point dates from 6050 years ago, contemporaneous with the stabilisation of the sea. It is the earliest site yet known on Bruny Island. Another midden in the Dennes Point Township dates from 5235 years ago. It is likely that hidden beneath the vegetation and ground surface of the Point are numerous Aboriginal artefacts, testament to a continuity of a traditional lifeway over six millennia.

2. The Point was a location where the great French scientific expedition of 1802, led by Captain Baudin, met and described the Bruny Island Aborigines.

In 1802, scientists from Captain Nicolas Baudin's expedition landed at the Point and over a number of days met and interacted there with the Bruny Island Aborigines. It is one of the few places in Tasmania, indeed Australia, where an important meeting took place over a number of days between Aborigines and explorers who were trained scientists. A number of descriptions of these meetings, as well as observations on the Aborigines and their culture were made. These descriptions form a major contribution to the ethnographic literature on Tasmanian Aborigines, leaving us with some of the greatest and most extensive early accounts of Aborigines and their lifestyles.

In addition, at least one painting of a named Aborigine (Arra-Maïda) and her child was made by a French artist at the Point.

The French (including the earlier D'Entrecasteaux expedition) were the first Europeans to chart and sound the Channel. Baudin's party is believed to have set up an astronomical station on the

Point in order to define its latitude and longitude. Because of headwinds making it difficult to exit the Channel for some days they named the area around and including Kelly's Point - Cap de la Sortie (Cape Exit).

3. The Point is the location of Captain James Kelly's farmstead where substantial contact with the local Aboriginal band occurred.

At the settlement of Hobart in 1804, North Bruny was quickly used by the British to hunt over for desperately needed fresh meat. It was also used for collecting wood for fuel and construction purposes. Shell from Aboriginal middens was also collected and burnt to make lime.

The first farm on Bruny Island was established by James Kelly in 1819 on the point which became known after the owner. Kelly, who was mainly an absentee land owner at this time, encountered many problems here as his farm was often raided by cattle duffers, wood hookers and stealers of fodder.

Also, Kelly had inadvertently placed his farm opposite the shortest distance between the Channel and the Mainland (1400 metres). Aborigines swam and canoed across these shorter routes and it is likely that his farm was placed across a major Aboriginal communication route. Because of this, his farm became a focus of interaction with the local Aborigines and was raided by them. His potato crop was stolen and his cattle speared, and a gun and domestic items taken from his house.

Aborigines also camped on the farm, attracted to the tea, sugar, tobacco and alcohol that was readily available.

George Augustus Robinson visited in 1829 on his way to set up the Aboriginal Mission on Bruny Island. He nearly lost his life off the Point. And he was 'inhospitably received' by Kelly probably because he complained so much about how badly Kelly's convict servants were treating the Aborigines.

The Point was a major area of interaction between Aborigines and the British. Physical evidence has yet to be found on the Point because these 'contact' sites likely survive below the ground surface. These 'contact' sites are rare in Tasmania and highly significant.

Conclusion

Kelly's Point is a place of great scientific and cultural importance. At least one midden is known on the Point and it is highly probable there are more sub-surface sites and artefacts of some antiquity in the area. There are also likely to be 'contact' sites containing, for instance, Aboriginal artefacts made from bottle glass. The Point is also a place of intangible Aboriginal heritage such as stories, descriptions and a place where an early painting was created.

Don Ransom
December 2015

Don worked for many years as Senior Archaeologist at the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, before moving to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. He has been researching the Aboriginal history of Bruny Island for the past 10 years. He has recently commenced PhD research at the University of Tasmania, concentrating on the Bruny Island Frontier and the 1829 Mission.

More Than A Dwelling Place

Kelly's Point and the Cape de la Sortie Reserve referred to hereafter as Dennes Point.

Dennes Point and the immediate landscape are characteristically significant to Aboriginal people because of a combination of features:

- a. geographical significance as a place of transition between distinctly different places (North Bruny Island and Tinderbox). This location was used by the Traditional Owners as a departure and arrival point for travelling across the channel. It is a distinct feature - effectively a boulder spit - that provides shelter from weather and swells to the adjacent beach and was a natural place for congregation and use for a variety of purposes by Tasmanian Aboriginal people;
- b. ceremonial significance as a place of ritual and cultural practice. Gathering of the several clans of Neunone, together with members of other tribes and nations either arriving or departing the island required complex and obligatory ceremony to ensure the continuation of peaceful and respectful relations. As tribal Tasmanian Aboriginal people were exogamous, these rituals necessarily related to marriage and maintenance of extended family social networks. Ceremony also related to economic relations flowing from trade of valuable materials including craft items, ochre, shells and high quality stone for tool making. Story-telling was, and continues to be another important item of exchange necessary for social well-being and cohesion;
- c. ontological significance as a landscape implicitly linked to mythological beings responsible for creation of people, plants, animals and other aspects of the physical and cosmological world. In Tasmanian Aboriginal culture, hills, promontories, mountains, rivers are generally manifestations of the earthly presence of mythological beings – heads, shoulders, breasts, buttocks, etc. These manifestations give the land intrinsic sacredness and govern practice and social behavior in any given place. Dennes Point, because of its unique and highly characteristic shape and composition sets it apart from the surrounding physical

landscape as a place of particular stories. While these are not well-documented, fragments of traditional knowledge do survive and are of the highest significance to today's Aboriginal communities. Ongoing processes of research, recovery and re-enlivening of cultural knowledge mean that any significant landscape impact on places such as Dennes Point have the potential to deny the Aboriginal community the opportunity to properly acknowledge and respect places such as this.

The extent of existing (and often irreversible) impact on similar places in Tasmania makes Dennes Point especially important to preserve in as close as possible state to its original qualities;

d. cultural significance as a location rich in resources valued to Aboriginal people, including fresh water, waterbirds and eggs, nesting shore birds and eggs, as well as a diverse range of plant and other animal resources including crayfish, crabs and shellfish. It is notable that the wetland and lagoon is now subject to a restriction of its natural flow. This currently diminishes these cultural resources and values. However, reinstatement of seasonal flow would relatively quickly restore these cultural and biodiversity values.

e. intercultural significance as one of the places where several French expeditions made extensive contact and records of Tasmanian Aboriginal people before the major impact of British colonisation. This legacy is well-documented and celebrated. Places such as Dennes Point, where particular events, interaction, journal and visual records were made are of lasting significance – not only to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and other Tasmanians, but to the world. This was evidenced clearly by the groundswell of support for the preservation of Recherche Bay. Dennes Point, because of the significant events there, including Baudin's record of Arra Maida's singing and portrait, is of similar importance.

Greg Lehman

March 2016

This statement drawn from my long period of professional involvement in Aboriginal heritage research, management and protection in Tasmania and nationally. I was instrumental in establishing the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council in 1991, the

organisation that established the role of Aboriginal Heritage Officers in Tasmania, carried out training and accreditation for these officers, as well as developing and delivering training programs to the Parks and Wildlife Service in Aboriginal heritage management. In 2007-8, I worked as Major Projects Officer for the Aboriginal Heritage Office of the Tasmanian Government. I have conducted numerous Aboriginal heritage studies over more than 25 years, including a number of statewide Aboriginal heritage management and interpretation strategies for the Tasmanian Government and the City of Hobart, and contributed to townscape planning for St Helens and Bicheno. I have a Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences and Geography, and a Graduate Diploma with Honours in Environmental Studies

I am also a Tasmanian Aboriginal person, and well-respected for my cultural and historical expertise.

Greg Lehman