

Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number
4671012

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **Brachychiton Populneum-Kurrajong & Banks**

Location: **Mt. Annan**

Address:

Corner:

Suburb / Nearest Town: Mt. Annan

State: NSW

Local Govt Area: Local Government Area:
Camden

DUAP Region:
Illawarra & Macarthur

Historic region:
Sydney

Property Identifier:

Boundary:

Item Type: Landscape Group: Landscape - Natural Category: Other - Landscape - N

Owner:

Owner Codes:

Code 2:

Code 3:

Current Use: Botanic Gardens

Former Uses:

Assessed Significance:

Endorsed Significance:

Statement of Significance: The Dooligah and Kuritja Trees are significant because of their association with the way of life, customs, traditions and philosophies of the Aboriginal population of south-eastern Australia. The location of the trees within the traditional law-making area of Yandel'ora demonstrates their role in teaching children the laws of their group. The Dooligah tree is a particularly rare example because it is over 500 years old and demonstrates the survival of a story dating from long before European contact.

Historical Notes or Provenance: The two trees are associated with the Wattun Goori legend of the Dharawal people. The story was known to Aboriginal groups in south-eastern Australia and was used to teach children the law and to obey their parents (refer below for the text of this legend).

Wattun Goori
The Hairy Men

A very long time ago there lived in This Land two very different kinds of Peoples. There were the Keepers of This Land, the D'harawa'goori. And there were the Wattun Goori.

The D'harawa'goori are the People we know today as the D'harawals, the people who lived here when white man first came to This Land.

The Wattun Goori were hairy men, and, although they were all Goori, there were two different kinds.

The Dooligah were the giant hairy men, almost as big as trees, and the Kuritjah were little hairy men, about the same size as a milk carton, today.

Now, everybody lived together peacefully for a very long time. Sometimes, as they walked by, the D'harawals would wave to the Wattun 'goori, and the women would chatter and exchange gifts.

Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc

Date: 26/08/2001

Full Report

Page 1

Item Name: **Brachychiton Populneum-Kurrajong & Banks**

Location: **Mt. Annan**

And, on special occasions, they would all celebrate together with a big Bunya.

Of course, at these times, the poor little Kuritjah would have to be very careful to keep out of the way of the big dancing feet of the Dooligah.

But, there came a time when a terrible drought passed over This Land. The rivers and waterholes all dried up, many of the animals died, as did many of the plants and trees.

Because there was not water in the rivers or the creeks, all the fish died.

The little Kuritjah were fine, because they were so small, they could eat the nectar from the flowers. As everybody know, during drought time there are always plenty of flowers which produce nectar, but they do not produce fruit or seed.

The D'harawals, instead of eating seeds and fruit, ate the roots and tubers of the plants.

But the poor Dooligahs became very, very hungry. Because they were so large, they could not find enough food to fill their bellies, and they quickly became too weak to catch any poor kangaroo that did not have the sense to hide.

Then, one day, some Dooligahs were resting on the ground near their cave when a mob of D'harawals came by. The grownups were walking along, chattering away, and busily prodding the ground looking for juicy roots.

But some of the children of the clan, instead of paying attention to their parents' instructions, were straggling along behind, making lots of noise, chasing each other, or running off into the bushes to hide from their friends.

One of the Dooligahs watched the children playing, and as he watched his stomach began to rumble, and his mouth began to water.

He made a sign of silence to his companions, and soundlessly crept down to where some children were hiding from their friends.

The Dooligah grabbed the children, burying their faces in his long hair so that their screams could not be heard, and ran to his cave where he promptly ate the fattest one, and imprisoned the other two so he could fatten them up for later.

His companions decided that they, too, would join the feast, and followed the D'harawals until some more children straggled behind, grabbed them, and after eating one each, locked the others away in the save to fatten them up.

The D'harawals became very alarmed when they found that some of their children were missing, and although they searched high and low, they could not find them.

The only clue they could find, was the hair of a Wattun'goori hanging from a tree branch.

The D'harawals approached the Kuritjahs and asked them if they had seen their children. Of course, the Kuritjahs had not seen the children, but when they were shown the solitary hair, they began to suspect that it may have been their brothers, the Dooligahs who were

Item Name: **Brachychiton Populneum-Kurrajong & Banks**

Location: **Mt. Annan**

responsible.

The little Kuritjahs went to the Dooligah camp and waited until the giant hairy men had fallen asleep. Then they crept into the cave.

There they found the children and released them, escorting them back to their parents. The D'harawal clan were overjoyed at having at least some of their children back, and thanked the little Kuritjahs, giving them gifts of many flowers and honey.

Pretty soon, though, the children began to forget the lessons they had learned, and once again began to straggle behind the clan as they searched for food. Or they would run off into the bushes, hiding from their parents, trying to scare them.

And the Dooligahs were waiting for them, drooling with anticipation of a nice, juicy meal.

Then, as they passed by the D'harawal camp, the Kuritjahs saw the D'harawals putting on their war paint, painting their faces and their bodies, sharpening their spears and their killing sticks, and decorating their shields. The Kuritjahs knew that this could only result in war, and when there was war, many innocent people would be killed.

Now, in those days, all Kurrajong trees were hollow, and even during the most severe drought, the Kurrajong always bore plenty of seed high in its branches, and the roots always contained plenty of water.

The Kuritjahs met with the Dooligahs and told them of the wonderful Kurrajong tree which provided both food and shelter. The Dooligahs followed the little Kuritjahs to the Kurrajongs, where they greedily ate their fill, and drank the water from the roots and fell asleep deep in the hollow of the trunks.

While the Dooligahs slept the little Kuritjahs sealed up the trunks of the trees, leaving only a narrow crack for the Dooligahs to breathe. Their brothers were now safe, they could have all the food and water they would need, and war would be averted.

But the Kuritjahs were still worried. What would happen if a strong wind came and blew the trees down.

Or if lightning struck the trees and toppled them over.

Or maybe, some day, some foolish man would come along and cut the tree down. The Dooligahs would then be able to escape.

And they would be very, very angry.

So the little Kuritjahs climbed a nearby tree, and there they sit today, sitting only the branches, watching over the Kurrajong trees, making sure that the Dooligah trapped inside does not escape.

Now this story doesn't have an ending.....yet

The Dooligahs are waiting for an opportunity to escape. And the Kuritjahs are watching

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Item Name: **Brachychiton Populneum-Kurrajong & Banks****Location:** **Mt. Annan**

them.

But, just in case the Kuritjahs fall asleep, or some foolish man comes along and decides to cut the tree down, it is always a good idea to behave yourself in the bush, and to always do what your parents say.

Just in case.....

National Themes:

State Themes: Aboriginal pre-contact
Aboriginal post-contact
Environment

Study Themes:**Designer:****Maker / Builder:****Year Started:****Year Completed:****Circa:** No

Physical Description: Two trees situated in the Yandel'ora area of Mt. Annan Botanic Garden associated with the Watun Goori legend of the Dharawal people (refer notes / additional information). The Kurrajong is a tree over 500 years old on which can be seen the face of a captured Dooligah. The nearby Banksia is peopled with Kuritjas, represented by the Banksia cones (Personal Communication, Gavin Andrews and Frances Bodkin, to Sue Rosen, 4 September, 2000).

Physical Condition: Excellent**Modification Dates:****Recommended Management:****Further Comments:**

Historical Significance: (a) The Dooligah Tree is historically significant because of its age and the story surrounding it, which links it to the pre-invasion era. The physical appearance of the tree, with the Dooligah's face on it, and the fact that descendants of the Dharawal people know the legend today, demonstrates the continuity of some aspects of Aboriginal customs and traditions.

(b) Both trees are significant because of their association with the philosophy, customs and way of life of Aboriginal people from the south-east of Australia. The legends surrounding the trees are associated with the law-making traditions of the Dharawal people and the trees are located within the Yandel'ora law-making area.

Aesthetic Significance:

Social Significance: The trees are of social significance to the Dharawal people because of the stories associated with them, which represent a link to their ancestors. The fact that the Dooligah tree has survived for over 500 years provides an important link with the pre-invasion era.

Professional Historians Association (NSW) Inc

Date: 26/08/2001

Full Report

Page 4

Register of Historic Places and Objects

SHI Number

4671012

The PHA NSW Heritage Register

Item Name: **Brachychiton Populneum-Kurrajong & Banks**Location: **Mt. Annan****Technical / Research:****Representativeness:**

Rare Assessment: The Dooligah Tree is outstanding because of its age and location within the traditional law-making area. It is a rare and ancient example of Aboriginal culture surviving from before the European invasion.

Integrity / Intactness:

References:	Author:	Title:	Year:
	Andrews, Gavin & Bodkin, Frances	Wattun Goori or The Hairy Men legend as inherited by the Bodkin-Andrews family, of the D'harawal Nation Personal Communication to Sue Rosen	2000

Studies:**Listings:****Custom Field One:****Custom Field Two:** Rosemary Kerr of Sue Rosen & Associates, Heritage Assessment And History**Custom Field Three:** 11/09/2000**Custom Field Four:****Custom Field Five:****Custom Field Six:****Data Entry:** **Date First Entered:** 04/07/2001 **Date Updated:** 26/08/2001 **Status:** Completed