

DISCOVERIES - Goondicum Mine



SunWater has constructed a 35 kilometre water pipeline near Monto, Burnett region, southeast Queensland. The pipeline will carry water from an artesian bore to a proposed mineral extraction mine in Goondicum Crater, an extinct volcanic feature in the Burnett Range.

SunWater encouraged a best practice involvement in the project, providing technical advice through Turnstone Archaeology for the relevant Aboriginal groups whose overlapping claims cover the project area.

These groups include the Gayndah and Eidsvold Wakka Wakka people and representatives of the Gooreng Gooreng and Gurang people in the Port Curtis Coral Coast claim. The Aboriginal participants asked for Turnstone Archaeology to undertake the project, citing their long involvement with Michael Strong.

Of particular value is the voluntary participation of local landowners, who have come forward with information about Aboriginal heritage sites on their properties. This has resulted in the identification of major artefact scatters, scarred trees, camping places, burial sites and axe grinding grooves that would otherwise not have been identified.

While some landowners are often reluctant to inform Aboriginal communities about cultural heritage sites on their land, a new spirit of reconciliation and cooperation has emerged in the Goondicum Mine project, one that is immensely rewarding in establishing a bridge between landowners and Aboriginal people.



GOONDICUM MINE MITIGATION PROGRAM




Representatives of Wakka Wakka (northern) People and Gooreng Gooreng members of the Port Curtis Coral Coast claim have concluded a major mitigation program for the Goondicum Mine Project. More than 150 Aboriginal people were involved in the recording, mapping, excavation, collection and analysis of several significant sites in association with Turnstone Archaeology.



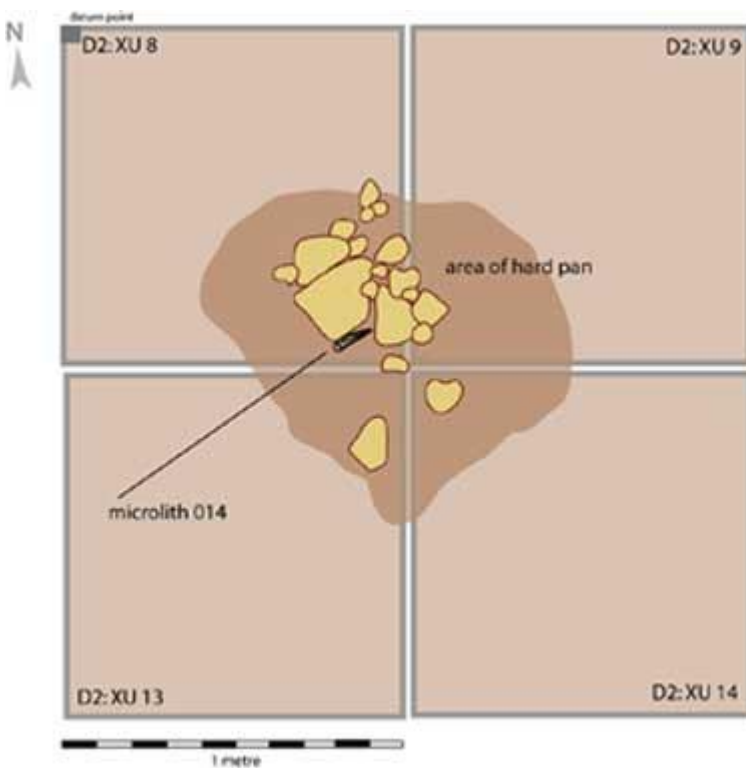
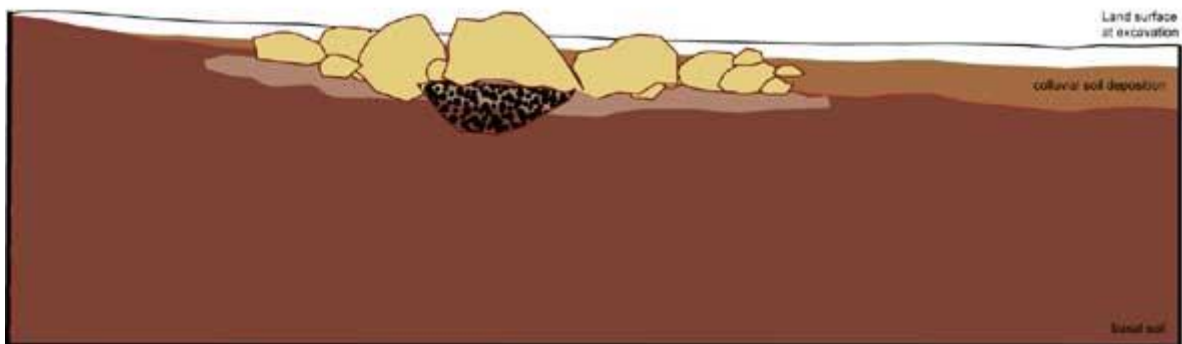
Turnstone Archaeology excavated a number of residual hearth sites where Aboriginal people cooked food. Carbon dating in New Zealand of charcoal from one of these hearths (SAA 12, H2) has produced a date of between 850-750 years old, roughly the time of the Crusades, the signing of Magna Carta and the Mongol invasions.

The excavations have proved that these ephemeral sites are cultural. Because of the difficulty in positively identifying hearths in the field, it was valuable to find numerous artefacts, including chert microliths, located in the baked clay around the cooking area.

Excavation of one hearth established that a shallow hole was dug in the ground, filled with hot coals and the animal to be cooked laid in the coals, then covered with clay and earth and a fire built over the top. This is consistent with historical accounts provided by early explorers, such as Roth and Lumholtz, in northern Queensland. The baked clay is brick hard and survives ploughing and land clearing often as the only indication of the former presence of a campsite.

-  charcoal from below baked clay base
-  hardened clay from fire
-  baked clay fragments from cooking

SAA 12
 Cross section of Hearth 2
 RP 132 YL 597 (R & J Hampson)
 Yarrol Road,
 Splinter Creek
 MONTO



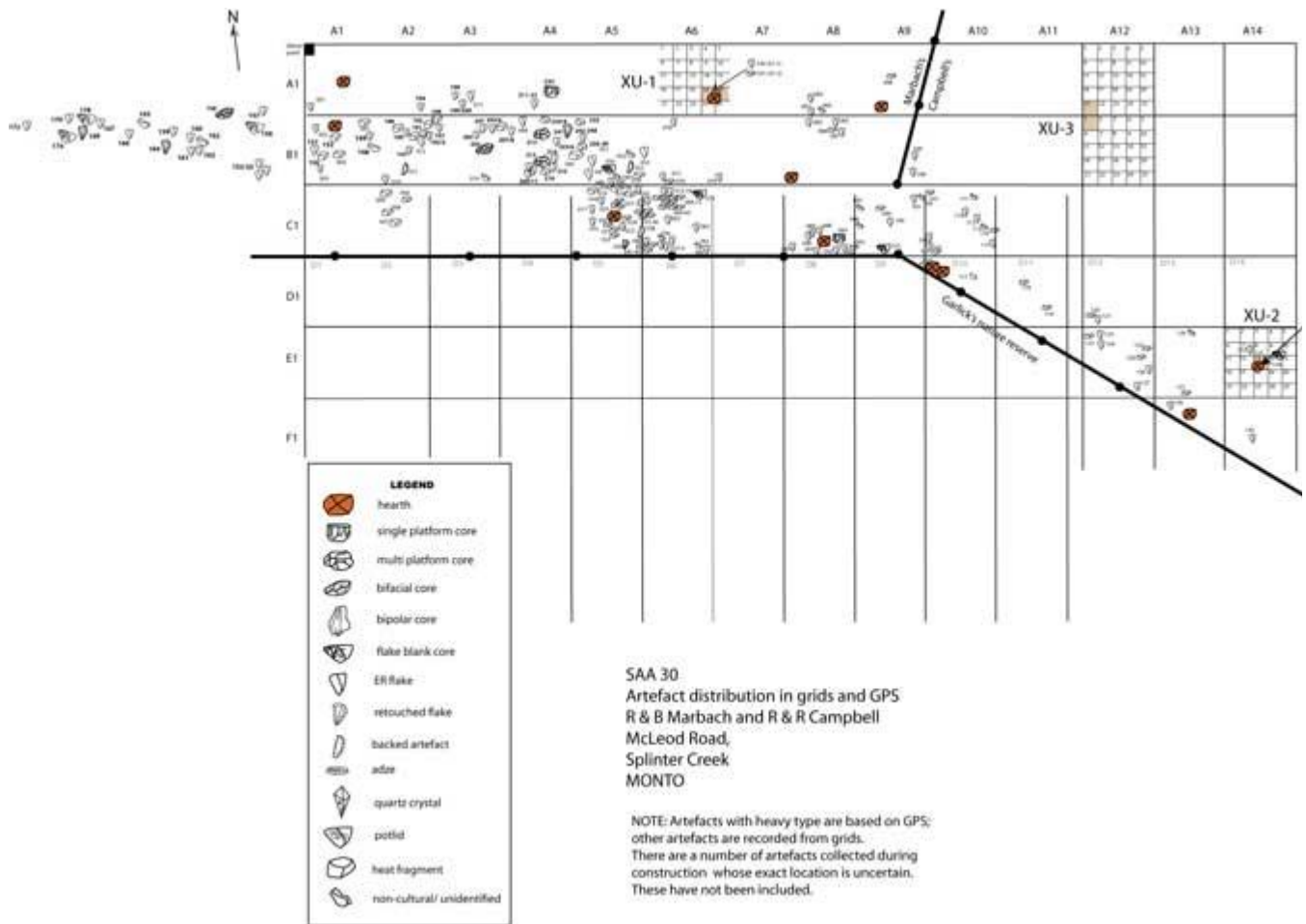
SAA 12
 Aerial view of Hearth 2
 Grid D2: XU 8,9, 13 & 14
 RP 132 YL 597 (R & J Hampson)
 Yarrol Road, Splinter Creek
 MONTO

Over 1000 artefacts have been collected under scientific conditions. These have been subject to a detailed analysis by Dr Mark Moore, University of New England, NSW.

The study identified a range of stone tools, including adzes, burren adzes, retouched flakes, eloueras, pecked and flaked edge-ground axes, a new form of right-angle blade core, single and multi platform cores, bipolar cores and tablet cores. Two examples of small grooved grindstones were located. Primary materials being utilised were fine-grained silcrete, mudstone and chert.



Aboriginal people have a long history in the Monto area, at least 20,000 years at Cania Gorge about 20 km from the study area. The study has shown that Aboriginal people in the Monto area were moving along the Splinter Creek/Herring Gully catchment via the Yarrol Road corridor and up over a steep ridge separating the western creeks catchment from the Burnett River catchment. They accessed the big scrubs for possums, brush turkey eggs, pigeons, figs and plums. The wealth of sites located during the study indicate various land uses, including camp sites where heat treated silcrete (possibly not intentional) predominates in the archaeological record, to highly mobile scatters dominated by retouched artefacts, such as adzes.



The artefact collection will be kept at Monto and the traditional owners are working with Monto Council to arrange a permanent home for this significant archaeological collection.

The project has allowed a large number of Aboriginal people to have a hands-on experience of archaeological best practice. The community is grateful to SunWater and Monto Minerals for making this possible. Several landowners have come forward since a presentation to Monto Council by Turnstone and Aboriginal coordinators with information about cultural sites on their properties.

