



The Yarning Circle

The design, development and importance of the Yarning Circle at the Kooparoona Niara Cultural Trail.

One of most utilized elements of the kooparooka niara cultural trail is the yarning circle.

The yarning circle and accompanying fire-pit has become the focal point for traditional ceremonies at cultural gatherings, especially for Meander Valley NAIDOC Week celebrations in July.

It is a place where individuals or groups can come to sit, ponder, 'yarn', laugh or meditate and it aims to assist communities to build stronger bonds.



The kooparooka niara yarning circle is ideally situated at the end of the cultural trail amid the lawn area overlooking the picturesque and tranquil Meander River.

The site enables visitors to access the area directly from caravan park and use the local swimming pool carpark. This has been very convenient for Aboriginal community events.

The Meander Valley Council can arrange use of the venue for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Please call (03) 6393 5300. The yarning circle is a community asset intended to be utilized by all.

THE STORY OF THE YARNING CIRCLE

The basic concept for the yarning circle was envisaged to contain outlying boulders with a central fire-pit.

This concept, as with many of the concepts proposed for the trail, has had its own evolution where the design, artwork and creation has come into being over time with the input and help of many people and fate lending a helpful hand.

Hank Horton, a local Aboriginal man and 'keeper of culture', has played a vital role in the development of many facets of the trail and has been an invaluable cultural advisor, sharer of stories and leader and organizer of cultural events in the Meander Valley area.

It was Hank's suggestion to contact SIBELCO lime works of Mole Creek for the acquisition of the boulders for the outer seating of the circle. His brother works at the site, and Hank has conducted 'Welcome' ceremonies for the company, so he had connections and contact details at the ready.

The Operations manager for SIBELCO, Leon Porter, was contacted and informed of the project, whereupon Leon generously agreed that SIBELCO donate the boulders and a site visit was arranged. In August 2016, steering committee members Neicy Brown and Martin Hay visited the lime-works site and donned protective gear to be shown the site by Brian How to select suitable boulders.



Twelve boulders of the approximate size of 900 mm (long) x 300 mm (wide) x 450-500 mm (high) were selected and marked with pink spray paint for identification.

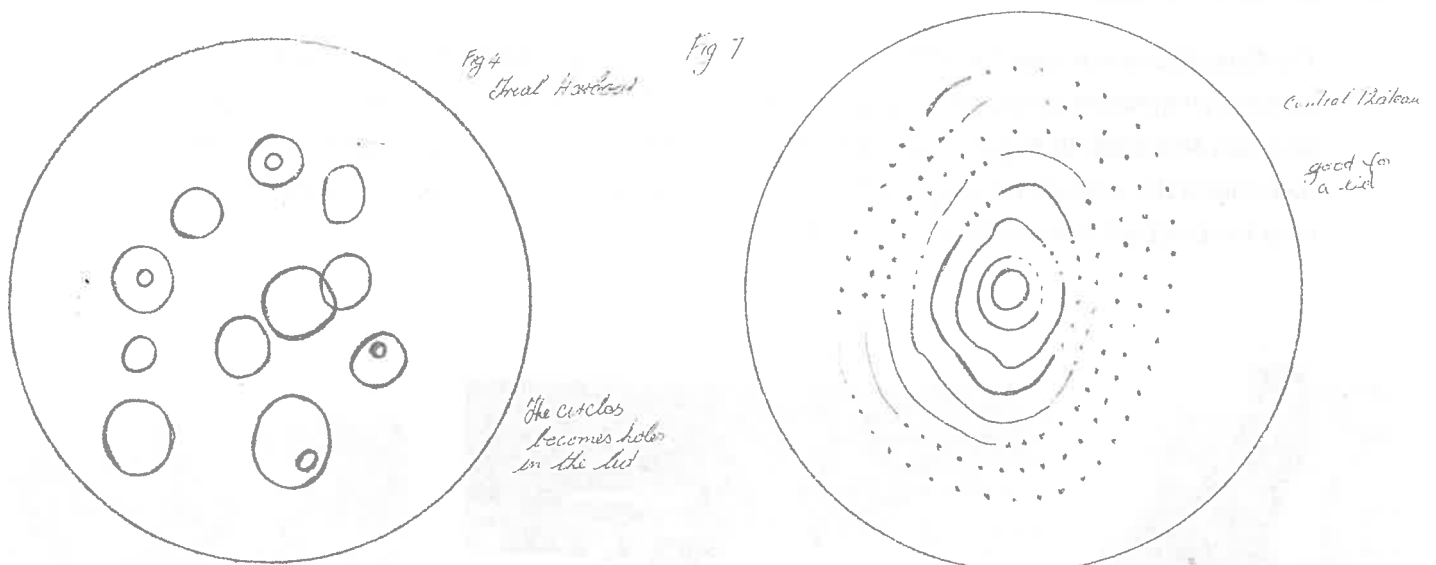
Brian arranged for his workers to gather the marked boulders, and in September a return visit was made to select the nine, most suitable ones. These were put aside till they could be collected for installation in November 2016.

Through dialogue with many enthusiastic supporters of the cultural trail, many obstacles and facets of the project have had a knack of working themselves out. And so, the yarning circle boulders were ticked off the list.

Another fortuitous connection with regards to the yarning circle came to be that a steering committee member knew of a local artist who worked in metal. One of the aims of the project was to use local skills where possible, so this link fitted perfectly.

An on-site meeting was held with Matthew 'Moby' Dick for the design of the central fire-pit. Through further consultation, a 1.2 metre diameter fire-pit with lockable lid cover was designed which was to bear an Aboriginal design.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal artist for the project Aunty Dawn Blazeley, provided two concept designs for the lid.



When Hank Horton visited to discuss several elements of the trail and was asked which of Aunty Dawn's designs he liked best, without missing a beat he said, "the Central Plateau one, as it relates to the people of the area, and I have a story about it". This design was immediately adopted for the lid.

Thus, through further community consultation, the design for the fire-pit lid was confirmed and Aunty Dawn and Moby contacted to include this most relevant Tasmanian Aboriginal motif into the design. On top of that, we had a great story that is Hank's 'Warners Track' to include in the signage for the yarning circle. Fate had again lent a hand.

Contractors started work on the circle in November, and it was agreed with Council to move the intended site a small distance to take advantage of a more agreeable slope away from the end of the pathway.



Before works begin



Shifting the boulders into place



Once the limestone boulders were in place, the fire-pit was sited and secured in the centre of the circle. The concept to place multi coloured river-stones and embed them in the infill with a 'wacker-packer' plate proved unsuccessful as the stones could still come loose and become a risk to the public and council machinery. Council advised that another more permanent, 'risk-free' option be investigated.

Again, as fate would have it, a project volunteer was a very talented stonemason. So, 'Steve the stonemason' was contracted to oversee the yarning circle floor-work.

Before work could begin on the stone floor-work, a Cultural Christmas BBQ and end of year gathering had been organized for December at the site of the yarning circle.

Aboriginal community members and members of C47 came together to hear speeches by Hank Horton, Greg Murray, David Gough and others to commemorate the opening of the yarning circle, with the 'first' lighting of the flame by three Elders, Aunty Lorraine Beeton, Aunty Dawn Blazeley and Uncle Viv Beeton.

The speeches were very emotional and there were many heartfelt moments as speakers relayed their pride in having Tasmanian Aboriginal people respected and represented in this way, having a place to bring their children to learn about culture and a place for the mob to

come together. A great day was rounded with a hearty meal and the application of ochre hand stencils by community members to the rail buttress at the start of the trail.

The Empire Hotel also exhibited a display on the paver component which was visited and appreciated by many of the community present.



A design was put forth from Martin to depict the migratory patterns of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Nations, with nations travelling to the coast (the outer stonework where it met the lawn area) as well as to the Central Plateau (the fire-pit lid/emblem). There were three meeting places incorporated into the design to depict places where several Nations would come together for gatherings, such as Tulampanga, a site near Mole Creek, also known as Alum Cliffs. Tulampanga is a sacred celebration place where many tribes in past times met for big corroborees. Most of the stonework was in place by Christmas. Stones were collected from the surrounding area and the first steps were to construct the inner circle of stones around the fire-pit, and the outer circle for the perimeter of the yarning circle.

YARNING, CIRCLE FLOOR/BASE



→ Stone Mosaic as per Toilet Block wall @ Frain Park

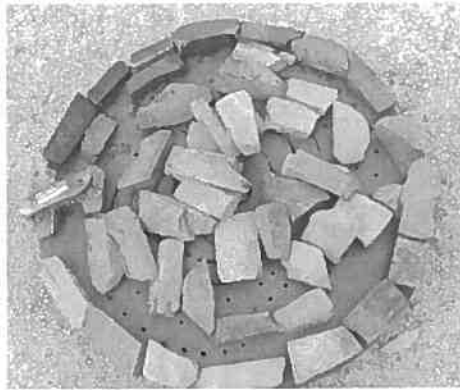
SYMBOLIZING
 ABORIGINAL NATION MIGRATION
 PATTERNS FROM "HOME" COUNTRY
 TO OTHER NATIONS LANDS.

* ⇒ DEPICTS THE "RECIPROCAL" NATURE
 OF TASHIWINNAN / AUST. ABORIGINAL CULTURE

* NOTE TO NIECY : QUITE SUBTLE !!

* Smaller ^{SMC} coloured pebbles removed from YC
 to be embedded in "wider" gap-line
 between base stones.

The design for floorwork



The stonework takes shape

After the new year, in 2017, the inlay of the intricate pebble-work began. Gaps were left between the larger stones which lead from the larger limestone boulders. Different coloured string was placed in the gaps to indicate the paths of the different coloured pebbles symbolizing a Tasmanian Aboriginal Nation's migration route.

Aboriginal community members were invited and came together to complete the pebble-work.



After all the channels were filled the yarning circle was complete and has enjoyed many cultural occasions and use by different community groups.

After

