A guide to stone artefacts, wooden tools, weapons and implements used and traded by the Aboriginal people within the Border Rivers and Gwydir Catchments.

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Sticks and Stones: A guide to stone artefacts, wooden tools, weapons and implements used by the Aboriginal people within the Border Rivers and Gwydir Catchments.
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Welcome and Acknowledgement

The Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority (CMA) takes this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional owners and people from within the Kamilaroi, Anaiwan, Banbai and Ngarabal nations and the various tribes that live within those nations. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA also acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Aboriginal Elders from those nations.
Foreword

The Border Rivers -Gwydir Catchment Management Authority purpose is “to help people in our communities look after their land for future generations”. In adopting this purpose the CMA is continuing the tradition of the traditional custodians of the land who effectively looked after the land for millennia respecting the land, managing the land and passing the land on to the next generation in good condition.

Looking after land is not just about the physical care. It is about developing the ethos, the tradition, the need and the want to improve land condition in the short time for which we are the custodian’s. This culture, the culture of land management for the long term, the culture of the Aboriginal People, is the culture the CMA is encouraging current land managers to actively engage with and adopt to look after their land for future generations.

To understand land management and to understand how the Aboriginal People looked after their land for future generations we need to understand, and to the extent we can, share their culture.

This book “Sticks and Stones” provides details of the weapons, tools, and implements which were important for traditional life in the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment along with a listing of some sites of cultural significance. This combination assists our understanding of the interaction of Aboriginals with the land in a ceremonial sense as well as our understanding of the issues associated with practical day to day living and care for the land. This understanding is fundamental to understanding land management.

This book provides also an insight into the diverse use of materials within a given location and the need to sustainably manage so that these resources were available for future generations.

The book is a valuable compendium of information on the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment gathered from a wide range of sources. It will provide an enduring reference to enhance our understanding of traditional culture and way of life. I commend it to you as a valuable reference and an aid in looking after our land for future generations.

Dr Bob Crouch
Former Chair
Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
Disclaimer

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this publication may contain names of persons who have gone before us. We will always remember them, and we openly share what they have told us, so that future generations may benefit from their knowledge, and pass it on in their turn, as has been the case since traditional times.

2. Traditional names and usage of the artefacts, tools, weapons or implements identified were current at the date of production. In some cases, further consultation may be required with Aboriginal communities within the catchments to gain further local traditional knowledge.

3. Every attempt has been made to verify and include the name for each item in the appropriate dialect. In some cases, there is no known language record for an implement, even though there is a known traditional usage.

4. There may be several names for the same artefact, tool, weapon or implement, due to the existence of more than one dialect, particularly within the Gomeroi nation. Terms from the Banbai, Yukumbal (Jukumbal), Ngarabal and Nganyaywana languages, part of whose tribal areas are within the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments, have been included where applicable.

5. In some cases, the uses of some artefacts, tools, weapons and implements may not have been reported by Aboriginal communities within the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments. However their inclusion is presumed to be reasonable because of known use elsewhere. Use in one part of the catchment area may well be applicable to other parts of the catchment area.

6. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA agrees that all traditional ecological knowledge and cultural and spiritual knowledge remains the property of the Aboriginal knowledge holders. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA will only use this knowledge in the course of its operations when this is expressly agreed to by the traditional knowledge holders.

7. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA has compiled Sticks and Stones in good faith, exercising all due care and attention. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this publication is accurate at the time of publication. However, before making any decision based on this information, readers should obtain independent advice. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA does not accept responsibility for any inaccurate or incomplete information supplied by third parties. The Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA shall not be liable for any damage that may occur to any person or organisation taking action or refraining from taking action on the basis of this publication. Readers should seek appropriate advice when applying the information to their specific needs.

8. Persons are warned that the traditional information referred to within this publication is for information purposes only. The authors and producers accept no liability for the use of any of the information contained within it. Persons using information in this publication do so at their own risk.

9. Reference to NSW Government legislation in this book was current at the date of printing. Readers are advised to contact the Office of Environment and Heritage for current updates. (See page 7 for contact details).
Legislation

In NSW, Aboriginal sites are protected under various sections of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974* (NP&W Act). This Act is administered by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) which holds final responsibility for protecting and managing items of Aboriginal cultural heritage in NSW.

Section 86 of the NP&W Act states it is an offence to disturb any land for the purpose of discovering an Aboriginal object. This section is designed to protect the integrity of the potential scientific or archaeological values of a site.

Section 90 of the NP&W Act provides for the protection of all known Aboriginal sites. This section is designed to protect all sites and prohibits the disturbance of any site unless express permission is granted by the Director-General of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

The OEH also provides advice on best management practices. Due diligence should be used to identify whether Aboriginal objects are present in an area, and to determine whether a proposed activity will have an impact on Aboriginal sites or objects. A person acting with due diligence will take reasonable and practicable measures to determine whether any proposed actions will compromise any known or unknown Aboriginal sites and objects. The due diligence framework is outlined in the chart below.

**All enquiries relating to the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974 should be directed to the Office of Environment and Heritage.**

Further details about due diligence are available from:


It should be noted that there is no legislation in NSW, or the rest of Australia, that allows Aboriginal people to make any claim over private freehold land, even if that land contains Aboriginal sites and cultural values, or has high significance to the local Aboriginal community. In the majority of cases, having Aboriginal sites on a property will not affect ownership, or stop existing land use from continuing. Preserving Aboriginal sites can be a positive experience for people who feel they are helping to preserve Australia’s unique Aboriginal cultural history.

The existence of Aboriginal sites may enable the landholder to gain support from the Local Aboriginal Lands Council (LALC) and/or the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA to make improvements to their property to protect the sites.
About this Book

This book is not a definitive listing of all known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites in the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments. Nor is it an exhaustive account of all stone tools, wooden tools, implements and weapons within the catchment area. The aim is to profile the weapons, tools and implements, which were particularly important for traditional Aboriginal use, and which were commonly used in the region. Sites discussed in this book contain some of the physical items remaining in the landscape of the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments.

In the text, extracts from ethnographic records and explorers’ journals have been quoted to illustrate items of traditional Aboriginal cultural heritage. In these examples, the original spelling has been used where phonetic pronunciation will produce the same understanding of the word and text content.

Much of the information has been obtained from historical records, private libraries, and through the recorded knowledge of the Aboriginal people from the Gomeroi, Anaiwan, Ngarabal and Banbai nations in the public domain or from public libraries.

Whilst accuracy has been maintained wherever possible, some traditional knowledge may have been omitted due to loss of records, insufficient data or because of culturally sensitive issues. It should also be noted that in some cases, site type and landscape usage may vary between different tribes within the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments.

This book uses, and makes reference to traditional dialects which have been spoken within the catchment area. They include the Gamilaraay, Yuwalaraay and Yuwalayaay dialects as spoken by members of the Kamilaroi (Gomeroi) nation. The Nganyaywana language was spoken by members of the Anaiwan (or Eneewin) nation, whose land extends south from the border with the Banbai nation (in the Guyra area) towards Uralla and westward towards Tingha. Other notable languages within the area include Yukumbal (Jukumbal), from the Bundarra/Tingha/Inverell area, and Ngarabal, which was spoken around the Glen Innes area of the catchment. Words from these dialects are indicated by the use of brackets and italics, after an English word e.g. boomerangs (barran).

It is not intended for this book to be a language reference book, but the use of language names is included to educate, and help keep the traditional language alive. In some cases words from the various nations (and tribes) have not been included in a description as it has not been possible to collect detailed information on the relevant languages or dialects.
Introduction

The Border Rivers and Gwydir River catchments are located in northern New South Wales. The catchments are bounded by the Queensland border to the north, the Great Dividing Range in the east, the boundary with the Namoi catchment in the south, and the Barwon River at Collarenebri in the west.

Many Aboriginal tribes have used this area over thousands of years and many of their descendants still live in the area today. It stretches from the cold, high country tablelands of the Great Dividing Range in the east, to the hot, dry plains of the outback in the west. The catchments contain a great variety of ecosystems, including swamps, rivers (bagay), lakes, woodlands, forests, grasslands and heath, providing habitat for over 3,380 species of plants (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2012) and many thousands of animals including mammals, birds, reptiles and insects.

This book aims to raise awareness of the tools and implements that Aboriginal people used in their day-to-day lives, to provide food for their families and conduct important ceremonial activities, whilst maintaining a sustainable lifestyle.

The principal study area was traditional homeland of the Gomeroi (or Kamilaroi) people, which is also the principal Aboriginal nation within the Border Rivers and Gwydir catchments. The Kamilaroi nation is the second-largest nation in New South Wales. Other Aboriginal nations within the catchment area include the Banbai nation near Guyra in the east of the catchment, the Ngarabal nation of Glen Innes and the Anaiwan nation of the Armidale/Uralla districts.
The four Indigenous nations – the Kamilaroi (Gomeroi), Anaiwan, Ngarabal and Banbai – along with the many tribes that make up each nation, have strong connections with Aboriginal people that live in the Border Rivers-Gwydir catchment area. The location of boundaries of each nation and language group is subject to differing interpretations based on various historic records and local knowledge. The locations provided in this book should be used as a guide only.