

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

1824 (190 years ago)—Formal European occupation of the area commenced in 1828 when William Brooks selected 1,280 acres encompassing the present day suburb of Speers Point. Brooks operated a coal mine on the western side of the hill (near present day Hopkins Street) from 1843 - c1856.

1870 (150 years ago)—William Speer, a Sydney businessman and timber merchant, acquired the property.

1880 (140 years ago)—Electrical age.

1897 (123 years ago) Cockle Creek Smelter opened, processing zinc and lead, later cement and superphosphate. Pasmenco formed in **1988**. Community expresses serious concerns about environmental impacts on soil and air quality.

1902 (117 years ago)—first subdivisions made around the Hill. Mrs Mersie Hardy acquired some of the remaining land. Although she subdivided some portions of land the hilly area remained undeveloped. This area was known as Hardy's Hill.

1911 (108 years ago (circa))—The hilly part of Mersie Hardy's land was acquired by A G Hawkins who established gravel quarries to support road building activities. During the war, gravel taken from this quarry was used in the construction of Williamtown Air Base. There was also cattle grazing across the ridges and stone fruit orchards on the eastern slopes.

1950s (65 years ago)—Anthropocene epoch beings. Human activity leads to changes of the atmosphere, ecosystems and biodiversity and depleting many of the Earth's resources.

1963 —The last major project for the quarry was in 1963, Speers Point Memorial Pool complex.

1977—12 December 1977, the hill is formerly named and gazetted as Munibung Hill.

1979—In May 1979 the first major dissent of residents via the Boolaroo-Speers Point Advisory Committee over the use of the quarry was reported in the newspapers. By November 1979 council was formulating plans to rehabilitate the quarry rather than open it to use.

1970 (50 years ago)—Digital age starts. www in 1989.

1986—Boral Resources PL operated a gravel quarry on the site.

2003—Pasmenco minerals processing plant ceases operations.

2014—The gravel quarry licence was formally surrendered. The zoning of Munibung Hill is amended to permit housing within the two disused quarries.

2017—Development Approval granted for housing subdivision.

2022—Management Plan for Munibung Hill adopted by LMCC, 12 April 2022.

Acknowledgement:

Selections from *Lake Macquarie Community History Department*.

TO GET THE HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS CULTURE INTO some kind of perspective requires a fundamental shift in thinking:

The discovery that Aboriginal people have lived in Australia at least 65,000 years, 18,000 years longer than was known previously, amazed archaeologists worldwide and challenged many previously held assumptions.

It's a big number. It's the equivalent of more than 2,500 generations ago. Look at it this way: if Aboriginal culture was 24 hours old, then the First Fleet arrived just five minutes and four seconds ago.

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Songlines:

the living narrative of our nation.

NAIDOC week 2016,
Artist: Lani Balzan

^ **Barayikuwa** (Earth Time) - see the MHCS website:
www.munibunghill.com

***Big History** is a field of human understanding that measures time according to the cosmos. Its principle author is [Professor David Christian](#) who established the [Big History Project](#) at Macquarie University (Sydney) with Bill Gates (Microsoft).

The **Long View** considers time within an intergenerational context, described in *The Good Ancestor, How to think long term in a short-term world*, Roman Krznaric.

The 'years ago' figures come off a base year of 2019.

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Munibung Hill / Kona-konaba

An overview of Indigenous and European history



Eagle hawk Image credit, HogarthArts

LONGEST LIVING CULTURE

THE STORY OF MUNIBUNG HILL GOES BACK MILLIONS of years. The land that comprises Munibung Hill, is part of the homelands of the Awabakal people. Over many generations they witnessed and adapted to significant ecological changes.

From a human cultural perspective, the Awabakal People's story is vastly different from the European story. One starts 62,000 years BCE, the other starts in 1788. The land the Awabakal people knew had undergone changes we would find difficult to fathom – from being buried in glacial ice and later as rainforest and eucalypt forests. There would have been healthy soil sustaining a vast array of plant life. Fresh growth, resulting from firestick land management techniques, would naturally flourish thus supporting an abundance of wildlife.

Munibung Hill provided features and resources such as rock shelters, food plants and animals, materials for implements (both stone and plant based), a source of ochre, fresh water (at several small springs), as well as having significant cultural values.

Eight Aboriginal archaeological sites have been described in the Munibung Hill Management Area.

Munibung Hill was, and continues to be, an important place to the Aboriginal community. It was once the location of a number of stone arrangements and traditional stories regarding their origin have been recorded.



Reverend Lancelot E. Threlkeld c. 1815
Biraban (John M'Gill) 1839
(Gunson (1974), The Reminiscences & Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Australian Aboriginal Studies, Canberra) page 65-66.

'On enquiry of my Black tutor, M'Gill [Biraban] he informed me that the tradition was, that the Eagle-Hawks brought these stones and placed them together in the form in which they were found'.

(Gunson (1974), The Reminiscences & Papers of L.E. Threlkeld, Australian Aboriginal Studies, Canberra) page 65-66.

Threlkeld (in Gunson 1974) reports that the Aboriginal name for the hill was 'Kona-konaba' and that it was a place where ochre was obtained.

MUNIBUNG HILL EXPLAINER NO. 1

INDIGENOUS HERITAGE IN EASTERN AUSTRALIA PRE-DATES the oldest known heritage preserved in France or Great Britain or Ireland. Many surviving heritage items including stone carvings and cave paintings are contemporaneous with World Heritage artefacts in western Europe.

Munibung Hill falls into this category, simply due to her deep past and the records of Rev. Lancelot Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society (LMS): Biraban's presence, a Bora or Ceremonial site, an Ochre quarry, Stone arrangements.

The majority of Munibung Hill is mapped as a Sensitive Aboriginal Cultural Landscape in the Lake Macquarie LEP 2014. (Ref: [Munibung Hill Management Plan](#), 2021)

Earth Time—Barayikuwa[^] - Bigger History*

- 13.8bya**—Big Bang, Universe came into existence
- 11bya**—Galaxies and supernovas formed
- 8bya**—Solar system and the Milky Way appear
- 4.6 to 4.4bya**—Earth comes into being, then the moon
- 2.4bya**—Oxygen fills the air
- 2bya**—Pangea the super-continent forms
- 936mya**—Origin of Algae and Plants
- 530mya**—First land animals
- 380mya**—First trees and forests
- 253mya**—'Munibung Hill' rose into being within the super-continent Pangea. After 70 million years, 180mya she broke away from Gondwanaland to form the continent we know as Australia. Fungi was already playing an important part in evolutionary history.
- 220mya**—First mammals and dinosaurs
- 130mya**—First flowering plants.
- 66mya**—'Munibung Hill' as a geological entity was around before and during the time of the Dinosaurs.
- 2.5mya**—Homo sapiens came on the scene.



Illustration: 8 ways of knowing in Aboriginal culture

65,000 years ago—

Aboriginal presence in Gondwanaland.

This part of country was integral to the Aboriginal community of the area. There was no Awaba—Lake Macquarie—in those times. Only a series of lagoons and swamps across the valley floor.

41,000 years ago—earliest painted cave art.

12,000 years ago—Last ice age ends. The hill was believed to be a place where Aborigines communicated between mountains, and the site of a dreamtime story where a serpent brought water into the (valley and lagoons) Lake (as it became). The top of Munibung Hill was a place where Aborigines watched Lake Macquarie fill with water across a period of time extending from 12,000 to 6,000 years ago.' Ownership of the area was held in common by the Awabakal community.

270 years ago (1750)—Industrial revolution begins.

190 years ago (1830)—Steam age kicks off. European settlement of the Munibung Hill area commenced the displacement of local indigenous people. It's high vantage point and 360 degree views of the surrounding area made it a significant location, and there were once a number of stone arrangements on the hill linked to traditional stories of the Awabakal tribe. Threlkeld recorded that the hill was named '**Kona-konaba**', and that it provided a source of ochre for the local people.

Reference: *Australian reminiscences & papers of L.E. Threlkeld, missionary to the Aborigines, 1824-1859* / edited by Niel Gunson



Art at John Hunter Hospital Blind School, by Saretta Art & Design. This artwork shares cultural narratives in traditional symbolism of the Land of Awabakal. Flowing across the design is songlines on country, reflective of Awabakal people, as people of the hills and plains.