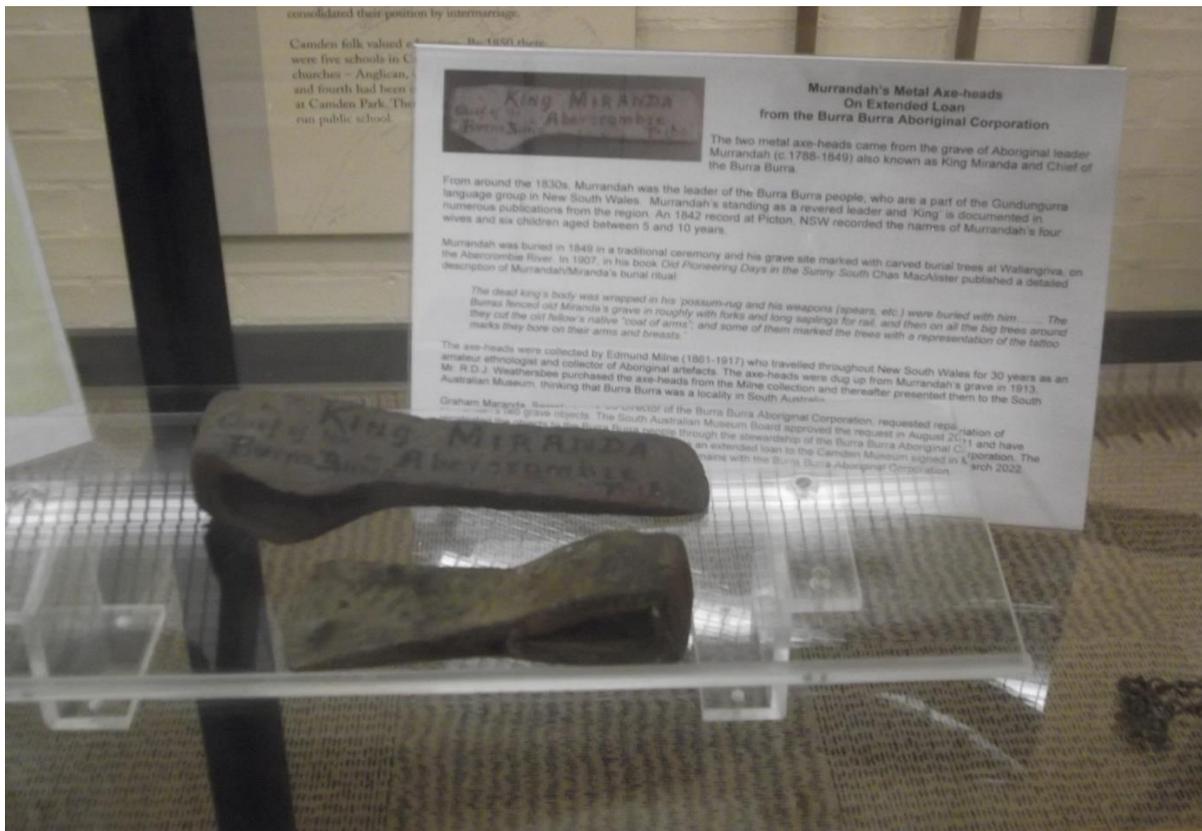


## Celebrating the Repatriation of the Murrandah Axe-heads By Julie Wrigley

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2022 John Wrigley, Vice-President of the Camden Historical Society, welcomed about 70 people to an historic event at the Camden Museum. John welcomed the visitors including the State Member for Camden Peter Sidgreaves, the Mayor of Camden Theresa Fedeli, Cr. Eva Campbell, Cr. Peter McLean, Cr. Cindy Cagney, Cr. Usha Dommaraju, members of the Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation, distinguished historian and author Dr Jim Smith, Aboriginal Heritage and Repatriation Manager of South Australia Museum Anna Russo, and members and friends of the Camden Historical Society. John thanked Taylor Clarke for her Welcome to Country.



The 2 Axe-Heads on Display alongside Murrandah's Breastplate.

The event was celebrating the repatriation of two metal axe-heads which came from the grave of Aboriginal leader Murrandah (c.1788-1849). From the 1830s, Murrandah was a warrior and leader of the Burra Burra group, who were a part of the Gundungurra people. His tribal territory extended from the Abercrombie Range and Taralga area near the Burra Burra Lagoon to Burraborang and Camden Park.

The axe-heads were collected by Edmund Milne (1861-1917) who travelled throughout New South Wales for 30 years as an amateur collector of Aboriginal artefacts. One axe-head has a painted inscription on one side, *King Miranda Chief of the Burra Burra or Abercrombie Tribe* and on the other side *Died 1849*.

*His weapons were buried with him. This axe was dug up in 1913.* The other axe-head has no inscription, but both are highly symbolic in honouring Murrandah.

Mr. R.D.J. Weathersbee purchased the axe-heads from the Milne collection and thereafter presented them to the South Australian Museum, thinking that Burra Burra was a locality in South Australia.

Graham Maranda, Secretary and Co-Director of the Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation, requested repatriation of Murrandah's two grave objects. The South Australian Museum Board approved the request in August 2021 and have repatriated the objects to the Burra Burra people through the stewardship of the Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation. The Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation has entered into an extended loan to the Camden Museum signed in March 2022. Ownership of the two metal Murrandah axe-heads remains with the Burra Burra Aboriginal Corporation.

On the morning of 18<sup>th</sup> June Anna Russo, Repatriation Manager of the South Australia Museum, flew from Adelaide to Sydney, and Graham Maranda brought Anna with the axe-heads from Sydney to Camden. At the moving ceremony Anna gave a short speech saying how pleased she was to repatriate the items in such a personal way to the descendants of Murrandah.

Graham Maranda, a direct descendant of Murrandah, gave a short speech accepting the axe-heads and explaining the long process in their repatriation. He said, "The axe heads are in remarkably good condition and bear the inscription of Murrandah identifying them as definitely belonging to him. It was crucial we returned the axe heads to family and I would like to acknowledge and thank the contribution of everyone involved in making this happen. Murrandah's story is an amazing and inspirational one and having his collection displayed proudly at Camden Museum helps us spread his story to many more people who can share in the remarkable life of this great warrior and leader."

John Wrigley thanked the South Australia Museum for their program of finding opportunities to find appropriate keeping places for such items. He assured them that the Camden Museum is honoured to have been asked to provide a secure keeping place where the items can be appreciated by all our visitors.

John said, "We are delighted that the axe-heads will be on display beside Murrandah's brass breastplate given to him in the 1820s or 1830s. One suggestion is that the Macarthurs may have arranged for the breastplate to be given to Murrandah. The Macarthur property was called Burra Burra until it was named Richlands. The breastplate is cast or engraved *Murrandah, Chief of Burra Burra Tribe*. We know the Macarthurs were granted land near Burra Burra Lake in the 1820s and the museum has an original land grant dated 1835 to Edward Macarthur.

On the back of the breastplate the following inscription is handwritten by Mrs. Faith Lloyd-Phillips, daughter of Brigadier General George and Mrs Violet Macarthur-Onslow of 'Murrandah', South Camden. Mrs Lloyd-Phillips told me that she had hand-written and glued the note on the back of the plate: *The Burra Burra Tribe of Aborigines came from the Burragorang Valley. They used to visit the high ground near the Nepean River on Camden Park Estate where the house called Murrandah stands.*

*When my grandmother, Elizabeth Macarthur, later Mrs. Onslow, was about twelve years of age, Murrandah's brother went to Camden Park House and asked to see Missy, and handed this breastplate to her saying Murrandah go long way off. He asked me to give you this. For many years it hung in the Library at Camden Park. Then one day when my Aunt Enid was having a clean out of 'heathen things'. I rode over and asked my uncle to give me the breastplate, which he did.*

John said, "When Faith married in the 1940s she took it overseas. I first saw the breastplate about 1997 on a fireplace in a house in Oxford, England. Faith indicated that it was her wish that it be returned to Camden. After Faith died, her son donated the breastplate to the Camden Museum in 2008, where it has been on exhibition here since then."

John said the axe-heads will be in the same cabinet as a copy of a sketch of Murrandah by English artist, Thomas Woolner, completed about 1853. The original is held at Camden Park House. John also mentioned the outstanding book by Dr Jim Smith, *The Aboriginal People of the Burraborang Valley*, which is on sale in the shop.

Lastly John thanked Camden Council for providing the afternoon tea as a special cultural event.