



ABORIGINAL  
LAND SERVICES

TERRA ROSA  
CONSULTING

# The Cultural Landscape of GOOLGOIL / RED HILL

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Goolgoil (Red Hill) is located in the Perth Hills, on the outskirts of the Perth metropolitan area (Figure 1). Archaeological and ethnographic assessments, primarily driven by development requirements, have previously identified Aboriginal artefacts and cultural heritage values, but there remains a need to understand the cultural landscape as a whole.

In 2022, Noongar Custodian Kay Walley approached Aboriginal Land Services (ALS) for assistance with assessing and recording the cultural landscape of Goolgoil. A significant standing stone called *Boyay Gogomat*/Owl Stone—an important feature of this landscape—is currently at threat from a range of conflicted urban and industrial land uses. By researching and recording this cultural landscape, and educating more people about its value, we aim to provide more protection of our ancient Noongar cultural heritage values for future generations.

## METHODS

Over the past three years, led by Noongar Custodian Kay Walley, and other Senior Noongar cultural custodians, ALS has surveyed, researched, and recorded areas within this landscape through pedestrian surveys with the local Noongar Custodians. A total of four surveys have been completed, including two field schools in collaboration with Terra Rosa Consulting staff. All artefacts, features, and stories from these surveys were documented and mapped (Figure 1).



Figure 2: Flakes identified during fieldwork (scale = 10 cm)

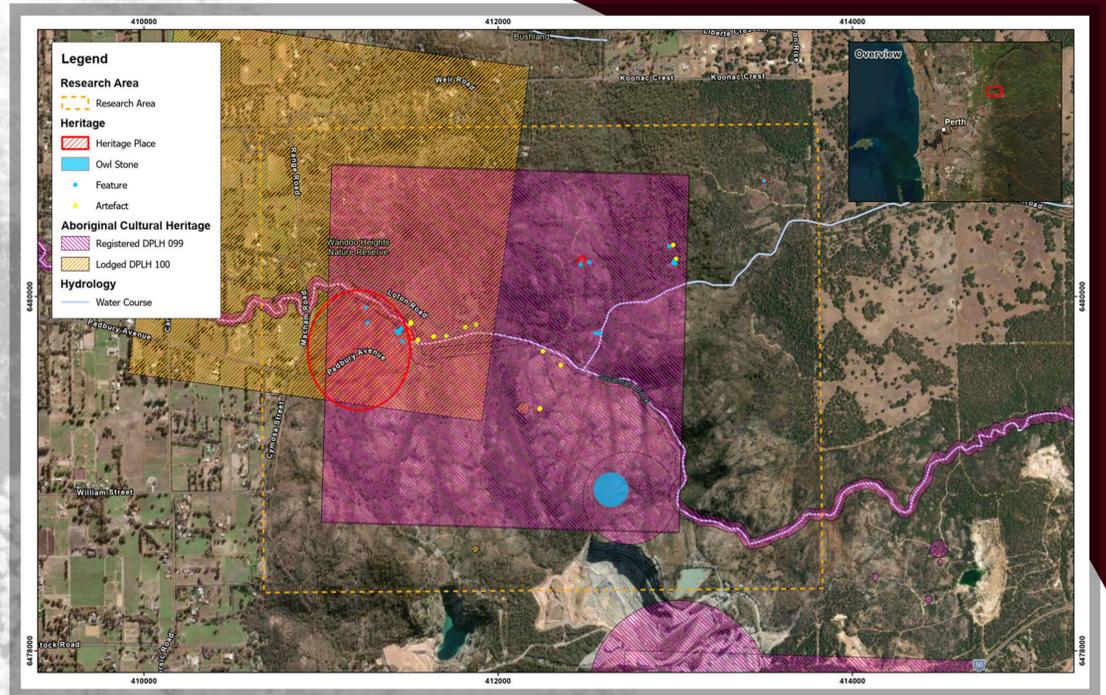


Figure 1: Map of Goolgoil/Red Hill with artefact and feature locations.

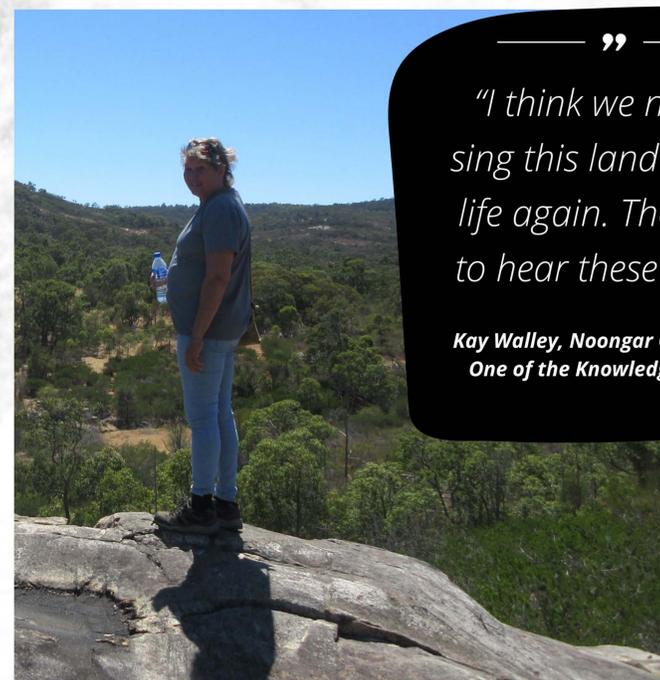
“As Noongar people, we often take part in heritage surveys centred around the cultural, heritage and environmental values of our Boodja that are driven by the priorities of proponents. Projects like this one at Red Hill – undertaken on a voluntary basis by Noongar community members, ALS staff and Terra Rosa staff in collaboration, and most importantly, led by Noongar community at the grassroots – allow Traditional Owners to truly drive the agenda for cultural heritage protection, map the values of the cultural landscape and to actively contribute to our ongoing traditional right and responsibility to care for Country.”

**Bill Bennell, ALS Principal Director and proud Whadjuk Ballardong Noongar man.**

## HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The historical record for the Red Hill cultural landscape is sparse. The primary reference is a mention in George Fletcher Moore’s diary, on the 3rd May 1832, of *old huts of several natives, 11 in one place, 7 in another – bones, feathers and fur strewn all about*, at the headwaters of Colonel Latour’s Brook. (Cameron 2006:113). A letter by James Drummond to the *Perth Gazette* on the 11th June 1836 notes a place named *‘Goolgoil’* at the head of Colonel Latour’s Brook (later Susannah Brook). This appears to be the Noongar name for the study area.

Ken Macintyre and Barbara Dobson, in their blog ‘Anthropology from the Shed’, translate this as ‘owl’, or ‘googoo’, which may link it to the Owl Stone. An image from the Western Mail of 3 December 1911 shows the Owl Stone. Further research at the State Records Office of Western Australia may reveal more information.



“I think we need to sing this land back to life again. They need to hear these stories”

**Kay Walley, Noongar Custodian & One of the Knowledge Holders**

Figure 5: Noongar Custodian & Knowledge Holder Kay Walley at Goolgoil/Red Hill

## RESULTS

Fieldwork with the Noongar Custodians has revealed a rich landscape of archaeological and ethnographic features. Cultural material found includes flakes, cores, mullers, and grindstones, predominantly found in the immediate vicinity of Susannah Brook. However, scarred trees, a lizard trap, rockshelters, a fireplace, and a grindstone were located on the slopes of the hills above the Brook. It is anticipated that future investigation will reveal more cultural features, artefacts, and stories, revealing more about the people who have lived in and cared for Country for thousands of years.

### BOYAY GOGOMAT/OWL STONE

Ethnographic information shared by the Noongar Custodians describes a rich intangible landscape associated with *Boyay Gogomat*. This stone formation sits in a prominent location above the valley and is associated with the Owl Chicks stones nearby. Other ethnographic sites include a gender sensitive women’s place, a pool associated with the *Waugal*, and *Weepa’s* camp. The Custodians describe Goolgoil as an important meeting place given its location on a travel pathway between language groups, inland, and the sea.



Figure 3: A view of the Boyay Gogomat/Owl Stone from the south.



Figure 4: A basalt muller found near the Owl Chicks stones.

## RESEARCH POTENTIAL

As this project is ongoing, there is potential for further information to be revealed by both fieldwork and archival research.

Under the direction of Kay Walley and the local Noongar Custodians, future fieldwork will help to identify key cultural sites, through pedestrian surveys of the area adjacent to and above Susannah Brook, taking advantage of increased ground surface visibility resulting from a 2024 bushfire.

Archival research aims to identify Noongar individuals associated with the area during the period of early European contact, as well as additional information about the Owl Stone.

## REFERENCES

Cameron, J.M.R. (ed) 2006 The Millendon Memoirs: George Fletcher Moore’s Western Australian Diaries and Letters, 1830-1841. Victoria Park: Hesperian Press.  
Macintyre, K. and B. Dobson (n.d.). Report on the “Owl stone” Aboriginal site at Red Hill, northeast of Perth. <<https://www.anthropologyfromtheshed.com/report-owl-stone-aboriginal-site-red-hill-northeast-perth>>.