11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the *Heritage Act 2018* and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 2.1 Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants
- 3.4.3 Mining
- 5.1 Working in harsh conditions
- 7.6.8 Administering Indigenous Affairs

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 102 Aboriginal occupation
- 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
- 110 Resource exploitation and depletion
- 303 Mining (including mineral processing)

11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue demonstrates two distinct cultural layers, the original Aboriginal occupation and mining of red ochre from the site and the later 20th century non-indigenous mining of ochre, each layer demonstrating differing techniques, technologies and lifestyles.

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue demonstrates the effect of changing British attitudes and legal controls over the lives of Aboriginal groups, the impact of 20th century non-indigenous mining activity to the site being encouraged or restricted depending on the views of the time.

11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is a rare example of a red ochre mine, with such deposits being rare across the state and country; the place is rare as an Aboriginal mine; rare as a 20th century remnant mine site and is exceptionally rare as an ochre mine demonstrating both Aboriginal and 20th century non-indigenous mining techniques.

11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue demonstrates two cultural groups, mining technologies and artefact groupings, and as such is a significant research site with the potential to shed light on the lives and industry of Aboriginal people living in the Weld Ranges area as well as small-scale commercial mining techniques.

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue was involved in the trade of red ochre for ceremonial purposes for thousands of years, which was traded to distant parts of the country; as such the place is a significant research site to develop an understanding of Aboriginal trade and cultural networks.

11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue demonstrates representative characteristics of Aboriginal life and industry before British colonisation, including food processing, tool manufacture and mining techniques.

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is representative of how Aboriginal groups and places were controlled by the government and legal system, with access to the site being encouraged or restricted depending on the different views of the day.

11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is significant to the Aboriginal groups of the region both as an industrial site where red ochre was mined for trade and ceremonial use, and as part of a sacred story of the Marlu Dreaming ancestor that culturally links the place to the larger landscape.

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is significant to the Aboriginal groups of the region as a ritually 'open' site accessible by men, women and children, which gives the site a distinct sense of place in the cultural life of these people.

11(f)[1] Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is an industrial site set at the southern end of the Weld Range, overlooking flat plains to the south and the softly rolling hills to the north; the small stone hill is a distinctive landmark within the otherwise flat landscape.

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1 CONDITION

Generally the place is in a ruinous but stable condition. The Aboriginal artefacts of the site are unlikely to further deteriorate, however the remnants of 20th century non-indigenous mining may continue to break down.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

The place has high integrity. While much of the original fabric is fragmentary or ruined, there has been very little impact to the site once 20th century non-indigenous mining had ceased.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

The place has high authenticity. The physical functions of the site are still apparent in the landscape, and while these functions are unlikely to be reinstated in their traditional sense the remote location of the site makes it unlikely that further impact will occur. Culturally, the place is still part of the traditional Dreamtime story linking this place to the larger Weld Ranges, and is likely to continue to remain so into the future.

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1 For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present,* Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate,* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.
Please note that HERCON factors with no corresponding value are not listed in this document.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the physical evidence completed by the State Heritage Office in April 2017, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is a mining and activity area where natural seams of red ochre have been mined by Aboriginal people for use in trade and traditional Aboriginal ceremony and later by 20th century non-indigenous miners. The development of the place is associated with traditional Aboriginal lifestyles, spiritual beliefs and cultural connections with the land, as well as later post-colonial relationships with Aboriginal people and the expansion of a commercial mining economy in the area.

It is unknown exactly when Aboriginal groups arrived in the Mid West region of Western Australia, however excavations of Yalibirri Mindi Rock shelter at the Weld Ranges indicates on ongoing physical and cultural presence stretching back at least 30,000 years.[2] The traditional lifestyle of the Aboriginal people of this region, currently known as the Wajarri Yamatji, can be broadly characterised by small scattered family groups living a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle, culturally bound by the shared knowledge of the ancestral beings who transformed the landscape, created life and imparted the traditional lore governing social behaviour, kinship relations and respect for the land itself.[3] Natural resources utilised by these people included macropods, smaller marsupials, birds and reptiles. They also gathered and processed seeds, yams, fruits and nuts.[4] The artefacts used by the Aboriginal groups of the Weld Range can be summarised as wooden tools, as well as flaked tools utilising banded iron formation, quartz and chalcedony, grinding tools of dolerite, mostly sourced from local stone outcrops or creek beds.[5] A particular cultural feature of the Wajarri people has been the trade of red ochre mined in the Weld Ranges, particularly from P6580 Wilgie Mia and *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*.[6]

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is a mine site that has been used by both Wajarri (Aboriginal) and non-Aboriginal people for the purpose of extracting red ochre.[7] Weld Range Traditional Owners describe *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* as the first

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2 V Winton, V Brown, M Leopold, B D'Ovidio, E Yushiherni, A Carson & C Hamlett, 'The first radiometric Pleistocene dates for Aboriginal occupation at Weld Range, inland Mid West, Western Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, vol 82, 2016

3 R Tonkinson, 'The Desert Experience', *Aboriginies of the West: Their Past and their Present*, R M & C H Berndt (eds.), pp. 140-141, Alternate spellings include Wadjarri and Wadjari. More information can be found in *Wajarri Yamatji Research Report Bibliography*, National Native Title Tribunal, accessed 8 May 2017, http://www.nntt.gov.au/Information%20Publications/Wajarri%20Yamatji.pdf

4 F Bordes, C Dorth, C Thibault, J P Raynal, P Bindon, 'Walga Rock and Billibong Spring: Two archaeological sequences from the Murchison Basin, Western Australia', *Australian Archaeology*, 1983, pp. 1-3

5 Summarised for brevity. A comprehensive discussion of the tools and material culture of the Wajarri people can be found in V Brown, *Tool-Stone Resource Management in the Weld Range, Midwest Region, Western Australia*, Masters Thesis, UWA School of Social Sciences, 2015.

6 J Flood, *Archaeology of the Dreamtime*, Angus and Robertson, 1999, pp. 271-273; R Tonkinson *et al.*, *op cit.*, p. 3; M Smith, *The Archaeology of Australia's Deserts*, Cambridge Universirty Press, 2013, pp. 278-280

7 Seams of yellow and orange ochre are also present, and may have been mined as well, however red ochre is the predominant resource at the place.

ochre mine in the area, before the nearby Wilgie Mia ochre mine was known.[8] *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* forms part of the oral history traditions that describe how the red ochre deposits were formed and their importance in past Wajarri lifeways.[9]

Historical accounts in late nineteenth century oral histories, and recent accounts from traditional owners, record that both *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* and the larger adjacent mines at the cultural and industrial complex P6580 Wilgie Mia are associated with the creation story relating to the blood of the great marlu Dreaming Ancestor, a red kangaroo.[10] A version of the story, as reported in 1893, is that Mondong, an evil spirit, killed the red kangaroo.[11] The kangaroo in its death throes landed at Wilgie Mia and the red, yellow and green represent his blood, liver, fat and gall.[12] Wilgie Mia is the burial place of the kangaroo and continues to be a major sacred and ceremonial site. Little Wilgie continues to be a sacred place as this is where the spiritual ancestor rested before continuing on to Wilgie Mia.[13] The red ochre from both places was, and continues to be, used in Aboriginal initiation ceremonies and for other purposes, linking current cultural practices to an ancestral past.[14]

Despite the similarities of the mineral resource, both the historical and modern accounts note that the Wajarri consider the two sites to be quite different. *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* was an open access site for men, women and children, whilst access to Wilgie Mia was restricted to initiated men of a certain status and responsibility.[15]

Studies of the early trade networks between Aboriginal tribal groups in Western Australia suggest that red ochre from Wilgie Mia, and possibly *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue,* travelled great distances across the state prior to and after the period of early contact between European settlers and Aboriginal people in Australia.[16]

The first historical accounts of European exploration of the Murchison region relate to Captain George Grey's expeditions in the late 1830s.[17] The discovery of coal by

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8 Little Wilgie Aboriginal Ochre Mine — Nomination Documentation: Little Wilgie Wajarri Place of Critical Significance Site Description; p. 3.

9 ibid.

10 *The Argus*, 7 April 1945, 'The Mysterious Wilgie Mia: WA Ochre Mine may be continuous link with Man's beginnings in Australia', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/1101126, Accessed 20 March 2015.; Little Wilgie Aboriginal Ochre Mine — Nomination Documentation: Little Wilgie Wajarri Place of Critical Significance Site Description; p. 5.

11 *The Argus*, 7 April 1945, 'The Mysterious Wilgie Mia: WA Ochre Mine may be continuous link with Man's beginnings in Australia', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/1101126, Accessed 20 March 2015.

12 Davidson, D.S., 1952, 'Notes on the Pictographs and Petroglyphs of Western Australia and a Discussion of Their Affinities with Appearances Elsewhere on the Continent', Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol 96, No. 1, p. 82; *The West Australian*, 2 August 1952, 'Deemed by Aborigines A Most Sacred Spot. The Monster Kangaroo Leapt on Wilgi Mia', http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49044590, Accessed 25 March 2015.

13 *The West Australian*, 2 August 1952, 'Deemed by Aborigines A Most Sacred Spot. The Monster Kangaroo Leapt on Wilgi Mia', http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49044590, Accessed 25 March 2015. Note that this report refers to Wilgie Mia, where the spiritual ancestor came to rest and died.

14 Little Wilgie Aboriginal Ochre Mine — Nomination Documentation: Little Wilgie Wajarri Place of Critical Significance Site Description; p. 5.

15 Colin Hamlett 2015, pers. comm., 7 April; Scadding, Winton, & Brown, op cit., p. 301.

16 Department of Environment, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, *Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine — National Heritage List database entry*, Source: http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/wilgie-mia, Accessed 20 March 2015.

17 Nixon, M and Lefroy, R, 1997, *Road to the Murchison, An Illustrated Story of the District and its*

the Irwin River in 1846 soon led to the establishment of several small mining operations to exploit both this newly discovered resource, as well as lead.[18] Geological and surveying expeditions to the east of the townships of Geraldton and Northampton, established in the 1850s, began to extend Colonial knowledge and interest in the land.[19] The establishment of a sheep station in Yuin in 1865 marked the first pastoral venture in the region.[20]

The Weld Range was so named during a survey undertaken by Government geologist H Brown in 1871.[21] By the late 1870s, thousands of acres in this area had been claimed as pastoral leases.[22] Wool produced from sheep stations in the Murchison region rapidly gained popularity in the London markets due to its high quality.[23]

Some pastoralists employed local Wajarri people as shepherds on the large stations.[24] Several Wajarri groups adapted to living around station homesteads, while others continued to live in remote pockets of land, separate to the pastoral settlements.[25]

Gold was soon discovered in the area that would become the township of Cue, and Western Australia experienced a rapid population increase with the influx of miners to Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie and other goldfields towns. Small mining settlements such as Mindoola (or Mindoolah) were also established in the Weld Range.[26] By the late nineteenth century, the Weld Range was recognised as 'one of the largest iron lodes in the world, consisting almost entirely of hematite'.[27] Calculations by the Geological Survey Department in 1909 indicated the quantity of iron ore at Wilgie Mia was as much as 26.5 million tonnes.[28]

As early as 1893, Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine was also recognised by geologists and others as an ore resource of impressive size and quality, as well as a site of great antiquity.[29]

People, Shire of Murchison, Perth, p. 35.

18 Nixon & Lefroy, op cit., p. 35.

19 Nixon & Lefroy, op cit., p. 35.

20 ibid., p. 36.

21 ibid., p. 36.

22 ibid., p. 37.

23 ibid., p. 8.

24 ibid., p. 8.

25 ibid., p. 31.

26 *The Western Mail* (Daisy M. Bates, F.R.A.S.), Saturday 3 April 1909, 'Dooarreebarloo. The Weld Range Hematite Mine. Where the Aboriginal gets Pure Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/3450003, Accessed 19 March 2015.

27 *The Western Mail*, 29 April 1893, 'The Murchison Goldfield — The Government Geologist's Report', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/33080571/3743395, Accessed 25 March 2015; *The Western Mail* (Daisy M. Bates, F.R.A.S.), Saturday 3 April 1909, 'Dooarreebarloo. The Weld Range Hematite Mine. Where the Aboriginal gets Pure Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/3450003, Accessed 19 March 2015.

28 *The Western Mail* (Daisy M. Bates, F.R.A.S.), Saturday 3 April 1909, 'Dooarreebarloo. The Weld Range Hematite Mine. Where the Aboriginal gets Pure Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/3450003, Accessed 19 March 2015.

29 Davidson, op cit., p. 84; *Geological Survey of Western Australia* (compiled by M Elias), 1982, '1:250 000 Geological Series — Explanatory Notes: Belele, Western Australia, Sheet SG50-11 International Index', Perth, Western Australia, pp. 19-20; *The Western Mail*, 29 April 1893, 'The Murchison Goldfield — The Government Geologist's Report', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/33080571/3743395, Accessed 25 March 2015; Woodward, H.P., 1914, The Weld Range Lease, Bulletin/Geological Survey of Western Australia 57, p. 73.

Wilgie Mia was considered to be of particular interest, due to the evidence of not only large open cut pits, excavated caverns and underground galleries, but also pole scaffolding with wooden platforms erected to provide access to red ochre at different levels in the rock face. This evidence of scaffolding has not been recorded at other traditional Aboriginal mines and is considered a rare and unusual example of Aboriginal technology. [30]

> *In contemplating this pit, one is struck by the vastness of the work, and when we consider the small quantity of Wilgie that can be required, it must have been worked for centuries. Of course it was worked on a much larger scale before the white invasion of Western Australia, and was probably traded great distances. As far as the lode itself is concerned it is a most magnificent iron ore, and considering its size, will without doubt, be of great value in the future.* [31]

In the early twentieth century there was considerable enthusiasm for the exploitation of the resources available at Wilgie Mia and the surrounding region, as demonstrated by Daisy Bates' description below.

> *There remains but the discovery of a good coal mine somewhere in the vicinity, or within easy conveyance by rail, for excellent water can be easily obtained in the hollows between the hills, and, as I said before, we have sufficient material in the Weld Range alone to supply the world's demand for iron ore.*
>
> *Besides its stored up mineral wealth, the red loamy flats round Mindoola and between Mindoola and Cue are well suited for both pastoral and agricultural purposes.* [32]

However the Commissioner of Native Affairs, A. O. Neville, considered that the two mines should remain the property of the Aboriginal people. Rather than allowing mining to be undertaken in the vicinity of either Wilgie Mia or *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue,* 10,500 acres of the land surrounding the red ochre deposits was gazetted in 1917 as an Aboriginal reserve under the *Lands Act 1898*.[33] Two years later, on the discovery of Aboriginal artefacts which provided further evidence of the 'secret and sacred nature of Wilgie Mia', Wilgie Mia was gazetted as 'Nookawarra Reserve', a special reserve for Aboriginal use under s.10 of the *Aborigines Act 1905*, a move which did not include the related place *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue.*[34] The creation of the reserve occurred during a period in which the government sought to segregate Aboriginal groups through the creation of reserves. While there were a number of factors leading to the creation of the 1905 Act, in particular the disastrous control over the education and placement of Aboriginal children in government or religious institutions, there was also a view

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30 Department of Environment, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, *Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine —National Heritage List database entry*, Source: http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/wilgie-mia, Accessed 20 March 2015; p. 5.

31 *The Western Mail*, 29 April 1893, 'The Murchison Goldfield — The Government Geologist's Report', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/33080571/3743395, Accessed 25 March 2015.

32 *The Western Mail* (Daisy M. Bates, F.R.A.S.), Saturday 3 April 1909, 'Dooarreebarloo. The Weld Range Hematite Mine. Where the Aboriginal gets Pure Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/3450003, Accessed 19 March 2015.

33 National Native Title Tribunal Application No. WF10/26 Future Act Determination; p. 36.

34 ibid.

among some commentators that Aboriginal reserves would preserve Aboriginal people and tradition.[35]

While a mining lease for *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* was present in 1921, protection was provided to the place when the Kyarra Reserve No. 21805 was established as an Aboriginal reserve in February 1938 with 'Little Wilgie Cave' in its centre, reducing Pastoral Lease 394/1100.[36] However, in April 1944 the Nookawarra Reserve area, comprising the 'Wilgi Mia cave', was reduced by proclamation to comprise approximately one acre with the cave at the centre.[37] Commercial exploitation of the Wilgie Mia ochre mine by non-Aboriginal miners began in 1944.[38] Permission was granted on the basis that Aboriginal people maintained their free access to the site, and that the cave's 'features and values must be preserved'.[39] Similarly, despite its location within the Kyarra Aboriginal Reserve, commercial removal of ochre from *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* began in 1944.[40] This change is reflected on a broader scale by the shift of government views from a segregationist attitude to one based on the assimilation of Aboriginal people. But it was also likely a financial response to the post-war economy.[41]

For a period of approximately thirty years, red pigment was mined from *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* for local, Eastern states and international markets.[42]

A 1948 news article notes that 'red and yellow ochres are among the most important minerals in the State from paint manufacturer's point of view'.[43] Red ochre in particular was utilised in the colouring of a wide range of wares, including linoleum, commercial paints, paper, cement, plaster and camouflage paint.[44] Dry pigments, such as red or yellow ochre, but also oxides of manganese, iron or copper, were sold in hardware stores and could be used colouring cement or in the production of homemade paints.[45]

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35 'Native Customs Respected', *The Moora Herlad and Midland Districts* Advocate, 9 February 1923, p. 2; *The WA Record*, 18 February 1905, p. 21; *The West Australian*, 8 March 1909, p. 7; *Western Aurgus* 21 March 1922, p. 7; *See* also A Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragment Indigenous Families 1800-2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000, pp. 220-221, 258-262

36 *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara* Gazette, 8 July 1921, p. 2; Government Gazette of Western Australia, February 1938, p.165

37 Government Gazette of Western Australia, April 28 1944, p. 343.

38 Department of Environment, Commonwealth of Australia, 2015, *Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine — National Heritage List database entry*, Source: http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/wilgie-mia, Accessed 20 March 2015; p. 9; *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara* Gazette, 28 July 1944, p. 3

39 *The Daily News*, 3 November 1948, 'Aboriginal 'Paint Box' Leased for Red Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/80802012, Accessed 15 October 2015.

40 *Daily Telegraph and North Murchison and Pilbara* Gazette, 28 July 1944, p. 3

41 Haebich *op cit.*, pp. 527; G D SNooks, 'Development in Adversity', *A New History of Western Australia*, C T Stannage (eds.), UWA Press, 1981, pp. 259-263

42 *Geological Survey of Western Australia* (compiled by M Elias), 1982, '1:250 000 Geological Series — Explanatory Notes: Belele, Western Australia, Sheet SG50-11 International Index', Perth, Western Australia, p. 20; *The Daily News,* 26 June 1950, 'A Lead from our Natives', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/84459280, Accessed 15 October 2015.

43 *The Daily News*, 3 November 1948, 'Aboriginal 'Paint Box' Leased for Red Ochre', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/80802012, Accessed 15 October 2015.

44 *The Daily News,* 26 June 1950, 'A Lead from our Natives', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/84459280, Accessed 15 October 2015.

45 Sunday Times, 26 April 1931, 'Colour Concrete, Proportions of Cement and Pigment', Source: http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article58646301; *Western Mail*, 4 May 1939, 'Colouring Cement Bricks, The addition of Pigments', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/38403429, *Western Mail*, 21 September 1944,

In 1952, an article penned by the Commissioner of Native Affairs, S. G. Middleton, noted that both Wilgie Mia and Little Wilgie were significant sites for the local Aboriginal people.[46] The article noted that the two sites and the surrounding 10,500 acres had originally been protected by the Native Affairs Department from mining applications.

> *But vandals destroyed the evidences of antiquity and economic interests and political expediency prevailed over native welfare and scientific values. The main portion of the reserve was leased to a pastoralist and mineral claims were granted on the tiny special reserve which contained the caves.*
>
> *The special reserve was originally five acres, but was eventually reduced to one acre (to a depth of 50 feet below the floor of the cave); then a further concession as made to allow the removal of ochre from the floor of the cave on certain conditions.*
>
> *That those conditions have been honoured more in the breach than the observance is clearly manifested by a report, supported by photographs, submitted recently by an officer of the Native Affairs Department. The photographs clearly indicate that the original features of the caves have been totally destroyed.*[47]

In 1978, it was estimated 9,131 tonnes had been extracted from *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* over the course of commercial mining at the site.[48] The original Little Wilgie cave was described in historical sources as a cavity approximately seven feet long and four feet wide, extending five feet in depth. There is now no evidence of this cavity.

In 2011, Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine was listed on the National Heritage List under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cmwlth). The listing covers an area of approximately 2,000 hectares, and includes *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*.

Throughout the commercial mining of *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*, Weld Range Traditional Owners continued to remove red ochre from the place in conjunction with Wilgie Mia for use in Law, ceremony, healing and art, and that use has continued to the present.[49] Ochre is no longer removed from *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* by the Weld Range Traditional Owners.[50] *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* was registered under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* in 2020.

Although the physical impact of the commercial mining on *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* has been extensive, the site nevertheless continues to be important to the Weld Range Traditional Owners as a sacred site, and as one with social, spiritual, physical and archaeological links to their ancestors. Archaeologists and anthropologists involved in the Weld Range Web of Knowledge project consider

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'Roofing Paint', Source: http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/38562155; *Western Mail*, 1 May 1952, 'Making Paint of Red Ochre', Source: http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article39350618, Accessed 15 October 2015.

46 *The West Australian*, 2 August 1952, 'Deemed by Aborigines A Most Sacred Spot. The Monster Kangaroo Leapt on Wilgi Mia', http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/49044590, Accessed 25 March 2015.

47 ibid.

48 *Geological Survey of Western Australia* (compiled by M Elias), 1982, '1:250 000 Geological Series — Explanatory Notes: Belele, Western Australia, Sheet SG50-11 International Index', Perth, Western Australia, p. 20.

49 ibid.

50 Colin Hamlett 2015, pers. comm., 7 April.

that the different rules for access and usage of the two ochre mines has the potential to provide important insight into Wajarri culture and trade.[51]

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is a former red ochre mine site in the state's interior that includes an Aboriginal artefact scatter, rock shelters, caches and ochre mine, as well as later European artefacts, survey markers, mine shafts and introduced plants. The physical remains of the place demonstrate two different lifestyles and mining methods targeting the same ochre source.

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue lies approximately 40 km northwest of Cue, and approximately 2.5 km northwest of the Wilgie Mia Road. The site incorporates a high stone outcrop that lies isolated at the southern edge of Weld Range, and southeast from the larger Aboriginal site complex P6580 Wilgie Mia.[52] The landscape presents as a single stone hill, with an almost featureless flat plain to the south and a series of rolling hills to the north and east. *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* is further divided from the other hills by a shallow creek bed along the northern boundary of the site, with the landscape bisected by a number of similar ephemeral watercourses. Local vegetation consists of tussock grasses, low *Acacia sp.* shrubs and trees along watercourses and an open *Acacia sp.* woodland outside of this.[53]

The site itself presents as a steep stone hill, with angular bedrock eroding from the summit, which has a distinct bowl-shaped depression on its northeast face that slopes down towards the ephemeral waterway. The summit of the hill is dotted with small rock shelters that offer protection from the sun.

The largest cultural feature of *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* is an extensive artefact scatter characterised by flaked stone tools composed of local banded iron formation, chalcedony, quartz and smaller proportions of chert. The tool types observed are mostly stone flakes with knapping debris and core fragments also present. The artefact densities were generally low across the entire area, however higher densities were observed on the northwest face of the hill as it slopes down towards the ephemeral water line, and clusters of stone artefacts were noted within the bowl-like depression at the centre of the site. Other Aboriginal tools noted were groups of grindstone fragments, as well as isolated stone pestles. The grindstones were made from local granitic and banded iron formation stones, and show the distinctive polished surface caused by the grinding of phytoliths (microscopic silicaceous structures found in plants).[54] The pestles appear utilised appear to be dolerite pebbles that would have been sourced from local waterways.

A rare and distinctive set of Aboriginal artefacts, comprising a number of caches, were found in a rock shelter along the southeast face of the hill, consisting of local mud, twigs and hardened gum that plugged up naturally occurring holes and crevices in the rock shelter roughly 15 cm by 20 cm in size. Traditional Owners

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51 Little Wilgie Aboriginal Ochre Mine — Nomination.

52 For more information see Register of Aboriginal sites #11132 Wilgie Mia, accessed 8 May 2017, https://maps.dia.wa.gov.au/AHIS2/; Australian National Heritage Places NHL 106044 Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre Mine, accessed 8 May 2017 http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/wilgie-mia

53 'Vegetation Map of Western Australia', DPAW website, accessed 19 April 2017, https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/about/science/cswa/articles/PreEuropeanVegMap_Jun_14.pdf

54 for an explanation of phytolith polish see R Fullagar 'Usewear and phytoliths on bedrock grinding patches, Pilbara, north-western Australia*', Artefact*, vol 35, 2012, pp. 75-87

monitoring the site survey noted that the gum may have been processed from local Turpentine trees.[55] Fragments of a grindstone were noted in one of the caches where the plug had fallen away. It is not known what these caches contain.

The most significant trace of Aboriginal activity on the site relates to the quarrying of chert, which presents as a distinctive seam of pink-red mineral trapped beneath a layer of yellow and red banded iron formation at the back of a rock shelter. The shelter recedes backward into this seam, indicating that the seam of material had been targeted and removed. Nodules of soft pinkish-red ochre were also observed within the rock shelters of the site. A fragment of a burnt digging stick was also observed in a nearby rock shelter.

The physical remains of Aboriginal activity at the site have been overlain and impacted by later 20th century non-indigenous mining activities. The major features of this are two remnant mine shafts. The first is located near the base of the northeast depression, and measures approximately 3 m wide by 6 m long. Little is left of the structure, save for a recognisable depression in the ground, the remnants of bush timber poles and two sheets of galvanised iron. One of the sheets is noted as ripple iron, a shallower corrugation sheet that was historically mostly used for interiors.[56] The second non-aboriginal ochre mine at the site consists of a deep shaft near the southern summit of the depression area, dug directly into one of the eroding bedrock faces. Given the erosion at the top of the shaft, it is difficult to determine a true size of the workings, however the deepest observable point of the shaft is approximately 5 m by 5 m in size. A number of dressed jarrah beams and metal tubular poles are present within the shaft, bolted together as props and struts, and the walls of the shaft appear to show the pinkish-red ochre as opposed to the harder red and black banded iron formation observed on the rock outcrops. The depth of the mine shaft is unknown, but is estimated as 5-10 m. Adjacent to the shaft is an area of debris approximately 3 m by 3 m, consisting of broken timber beams and bush timber posts, as well as corrugated iron and ripple iron. The placement of the bush timbers and galvanised metal indicates that this was a timber framed structure, possibly a shelter, work area or one roomed shack, which has likely been overlain with debris removed from the adjacent mine shaft.

A sparse scatter of non-Aboriginal artefacts were observed through the northeast depression where the two mine shafts were observed. This includes industrial debris, including petrol drums, a fragment of a crow bar, and sheets of corrugated iron. Other artefacts include fragments of brown bottle glass, including a partial WAGM mark. The machine-made seals observed on the heels of the bottle fragments indicate a date post c.1895-1905.[57]

Three post-contact survey points were observed at the site. The first consists of a bush timber post, cut into a point at its apex, set into a thick cairn of banded iron formation rocks at the highest point of the hill. It is likely that this mark was created

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55 pers. comm. Brendan and Carl Hamlett, Wadjarri representatives, 11 April 2017. The bush is likely *Eremohila fraseri*, the Turpentine bush or tree that grows up to 3 m, see D Miller, *Trees and Shrubs in the Wiluna Region*, http://www.wiluna.wa.gov.au/Assets/Documents/Wiluna_Trees_and_Shrubs.pdf

56 *Coolgardie Miner* 4 June 1904, p. 3; *Coolgardie Miner* 2 May 1908, p. 2; *Geraldton Guardian and Express* 22 February 1943, p. 6; see also P291 *Chinatown Conservation Area* (RHP) and P290 *Matso's Store & Captain Gregory's House (fmr)* (RHP).

57 J Boow, *Early Australian Commercial Glass: Manufacturing Processes*, Heritage Council of NSW, 1995, p. 93-95

during the survey of the Weld Ranges by Brown in 1871.[58] Adjacent to this is a smaller survey point, consisting of a star picket set into a much smaller base of banded iron formation rocks, which bears a diamond metal tag that identifies the mark as 'WELD38' that was erected on 2 September 2005. The third consists of a bush timber pole that is set into a line of banded iron formation rocks near the base of the hill, and was noted by Traditional Owners as a former mining survey marker for a Yilgarn mining company that had previously incorporated a black plastic cross.[59]

An introduced plant was noted near the largest mine shaft at the site, a small green melon vine that is either Paddy melon (*Cucumis myriocarpus*) or Afghan melon (*Citrullus lanatus*). Both these species were introduced into Australia in the mid 1800s, but were likely introduced to *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* in the nineteenth century.[60]

13. 3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Aboriginal mine site

A search of the Historic Heritage database for places with the keyword "Aboriginal" combined with the use "Mining" returns 37 places, of which 6 are listed on the Register of Heritage Places (RHP). However, on closer investigation none of these places are comparable to *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*. The most obvious associated place is P6580 Wilgie Mia, however one other place noted within the database with an association for Aboriginal culture and ochre use is:

- P23958 Springdale Beach, Denmark: the place is listed on the Denmark Municipal Inventory with the alternative name of Ochre Source and Stone Arrangement. The site was and continues to be an important ceremonial and spiritual area for Noongar people.

A search of the Register of Aboriginal sites was considered more appropriate for *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*, however this is performed with some difficulty as the online Register does not support custom searches. A search for all Registered Aboriginal sites with the word 'Ochre' in the name returns 12 places:

- 1635 Stokes Inlet Ochre Quarry
- 2538 Thistle Cover Ochre Source
- 3148 Red Ochre Hill
- 3372 Ochre Hill
- 3433 Herne Hill Ochre
- 5934 Karara Ochre Quarry
- 11235 Ochre Mill, Opthalmia Range
- 15776 Checker North Ochre Source
- 17447 Pap Hill Ochre
- 18795 Ochre Source

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58 It is observed that Weld's map of his expedition notes a cairn built on top of 'Mt Challoner,' however it is unknown if this is *Little Wilgie Ochre Site*. Battye Library, *Sketch map of a geological exploration north east from Champion Bay, W.A.*, accessed 8 May 2017, http://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b1770968_1

59 pers. comm. Brendan and Carl Hamlett, Wadjarri representatives, 11 April 2017.

60 'Summer Weeds', Departmnet of Agriculture and Food website, accessed 8 May 2017, https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/postharvest/summer-weeds?page=0%2C2; 'Identification of the invasive weeds, camel melon, prickly paddy melon and colocynth in Australia – a morphological and molecular approach', *Eighteenth Australasian Weeds Conference*, 2012, pp. 73-77

- 22527 Albany Noongar Centre Ochre Site
- 36935 Kepwari Dreaming (KPNW_003 Ochre Source)

It is noted that this list does not include P6580 Wilgie Mia (Register of Aboriginal sites 11132), so this list is incomplete. These places are scattered throughout the state, with no one particular region associated with the practice.

It is noted that ochre deposits of sufficient size to warrant commercial mining are considered very rare in Australia, with the largest deposits being recognised as the Brockman deposits and the Weld Ranges.[61]

Non-Aboriginal mine site

A search of the Historic Heritage database for places with the use "Mining" returns 419 places, of which 24 are listed on the on the State RHP. Refining this search to mining sites constructed after 1944 returns 43 entries, including townsites, mine shafts, batteries and mining offices. Of the 43 places, two are mine related site listed on the State Register of Heritage Places, and one is on the HCWA Assessment Program:

- P5114 *Northampton State Battery* (RHP): a lead battery complex consisting of crushing mill, offices, workshop, manger's house, weighbridge and a large gravity dam constructed in 1954.
- P15263 *Cole's Shaft (fmr)* (RHP): a remnant vertical mineshaft, this place is the oldest extant non-Aboriginal mine shaft in the state, sunk in 1846 by the Western Australian Mining Company.
- P16639 Wittenoom Asbestos Mine Settlement (Assessment Program): group comprising single-storey corrugated iron office, Lang Hancock's House, and VIP guest house, which were used as a base for mineral exploration in the north west.

Although it is likely that archaeological material may be present at these places, this has not been explicitly noted in the information available on the database.

This information does not take into account the large-scale iron ore mines established in the post-war economy, notably the mining booms of the 1960s and 200s, however thematically the open-cut mines established by multi-national corporations are considered thematically different group than the small scale shafts observed at *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue*.

Post Contact relationships between Aboriginal and British groups

A search of the Historic Heritage database for places with themes "Aboriginal People" or "Aboriginal Occupation" returns 282 places, of which 62 are listed on the RHP. These places cover a variety of contexts and thus a variety of relationships between Aboriginal and British groups in the contact period. A small number of examples are provided:

- Aboriginal places overlain by later British activity:
  - P114 *Walcliffe House & Landscape* (RHP)
  - P556 *Gnarlbine Soaks (Well No.22)* (RHP)
  - P3540 *Moir Homestead Ruins* (RHP)

61 'Rare Earth Elements', *Industrial mineral opportunities in New South* Wales, New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, 2007, pp. 83-85

    - P8705 *Robertson Park and Archaeological Sites* (RHP)
- Places where British groups utilised Aboriginal labour:
    - P115 *Ellensbrook* (RHP)
    - P3241 *Halls Creek Tracker's Hut* (RHP)
    - P3376 *Cooya Pooya Station* (RHP)
    - P4004 *Mundabullangana Station* (RHP)
- Places representing the legal or institutional control of Aboriginal families by British groups:
    - P690 *Lombadina Mission* (RHP)
    - P696 *Fitzroy Crossing Police Group* (RHP)
    - P896 *Round House and Arthur Head Reserve* (RHP)
    - P2980 *Bungarun (Leprosarium), Derby* (RHP)
- Places representing conflict between Aboriginal and British groups:
    - P424 *Wonnerup Precinct* (RHP)
    - P3691 *Lillimilura Ruins and Grotto* (RHP)
    - P3957 *Pinjarra Massacre Site* (RHP)

Other places on the State Heritage Register represent the activities of Aboriginal groups within the post-contact period that are representative of independence and self-determination of Aboriginal culture in since British settlement:

- P1531 *Bundi Club* (RHP)
- P10709 Mallee Aboriginal Group Community Venue
- P17670 Aboriginal Evangelical Church, Katanning
- P25172 Karalundi Aboriginal Education Community Inc

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is a place that therefore crosses some of these themes, as a place where early Aboriginal material has been overlain and impacted by later British activity, and as a place where British legal control of the place affected how both Aboriginal people and British people interacted with the site. Places representative of Aboriginal material culture are rare on the RHP as this has been the purview of the Register of Aboriginal sites, however *Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue* is considered a rare example of a place demonstrating both Aboriginal culture overlain by later British activity, and while it is not particularly rare as a place demonstrating British legal control of Aboriginal people, it is a good representative example given the long legal control of the place (1917 onwards).

Conclusions

Little Wilgie Ochre Mine, Cue is considered to be rare as an example of an Aboriginal red ochre mine, and rare as a place where observable Aboriginal activity has been overlain by later commercial activity. The place is also representative of how the lives of Aboriginal people were impacted by government control.

While the place is not considered rare as an example of a commercial mine, it is rare as a small 20th century non-indigenous mine. The role of the place as a commercial ochre mine appears to be generally rare.

Overall, the place is considered exceptionally rare as a mine site demonstrating both Aboriginal and European mining techniques.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

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13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
