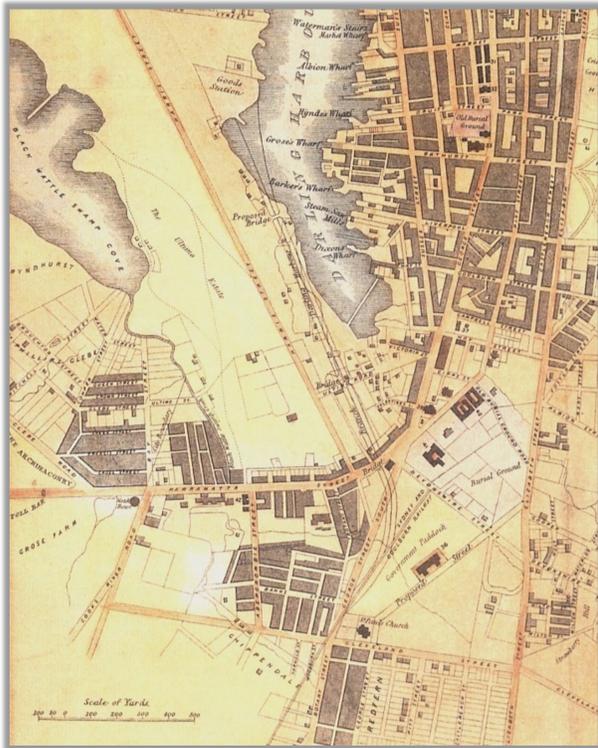


Aboriginal people and Blackwattle Bay



Blackwattle Creek in 1855 – closer to its natural state
Aboriginal people lived around Blackwattle Creek for thousands of years, using it as a freshwater source and fishing area.¹

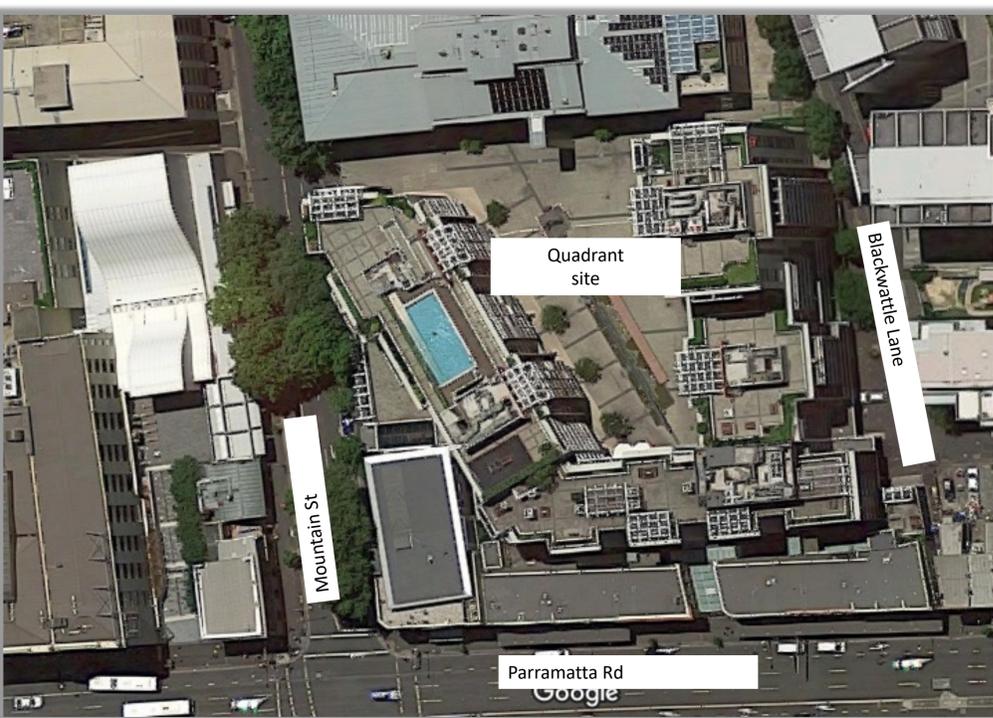
Prior to extensive interference, Blackwattle Creek and its tributaries arose in the Kangaroo Grounds and meandered down to Blackwattle Bay. Now they run in a heritage-listed sewer under Blackwattle Lane and Wentworth Park.²



The Victoria Park connection

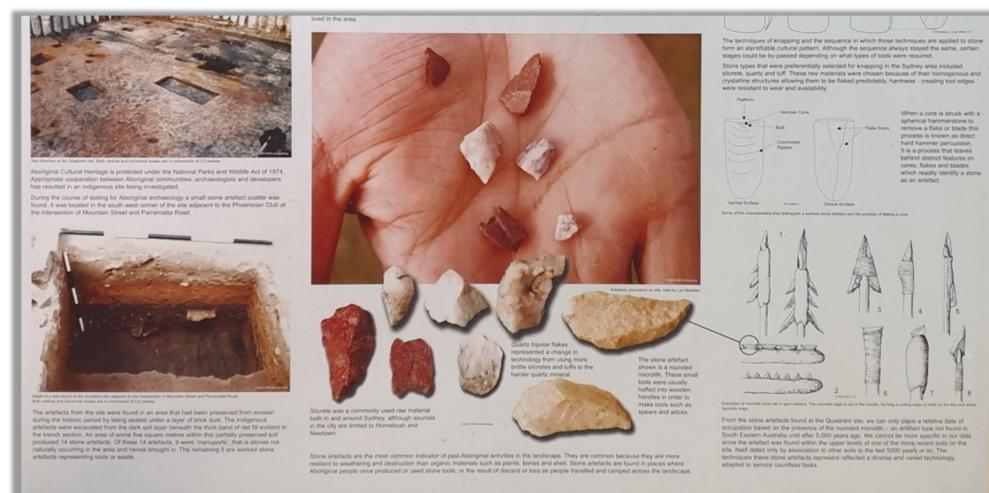
A tributary to Blackwattle Creek arose near what is now Lake Northam in Victoria Park. The stream joined the main branch of Blackwattle Creek near the corner of Blackwattle Lane and Kelly Street.⁷ The view in this painting of the University of Sydney in 1865 by Samuel Elyard is believed to be from Blackwattle Creek.⁸ This area was used by Aboriginal people; charcoal and native hops have been found in the area, suggesting that the land here has been fire farmed.⁹ The park is situated on the Kangaroo Ground which is known to have been fire farmed.

Victoria Park was the site of the Tent Embassy protest against the Sydney Olympics in 2000,¹⁰ and is the current site of the festival, Yabun, held on 26 January each year.¹¹



Quadrant archaeological site near Blackwattle Creek
Blackwattle Creek passes under Parramatta Rd at Ultimo. During excavations for development of the 'Quadrant' building at Mountain Street, archaeological work was undertaken.

Given the high level of disturbance of the environment of Glebe and surrounds, it is likely that much evidence of prior use by Aboriginal people has been destroyed. Despite this, physical evidence has been found to show past Aboriginal occupation of the area.³



The physical evidence

Around 20 stone artefacts were found. Archaeologists say that 'nature and distribution of the artefacts suggested casual visitation in the Blackwattle Bay area by Aboriginal people.'⁴ This image is a photo of interpretive signage at the Quadrant building.

City of Sydney's Barani website says that "the artefacts were probably discarded by Aboriginal people over time as waste material during stone tool manufacture or during activities such as hunting, butchering or the processing of plant foods. In other words, the site most likely represents occasional visits by Aboriginal people over time, rather than intense occupation, which makes sense as its location is not ideal, being in poorly drained low-lying swampy land."⁵

Also on the Quadrant site, tools made from glass were found; indicating that Aboriginal people were still in the area after white settlement.⁶



Aboriginal people lived and worked around the timber yards of Blackwattle Bay.¹²



What is left of Blackwattle Creek ...

This photo shows a drain from which Blackwattle Creek enters Blackwattle Bay in 2019.¹³

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- Photograph by Virginia Simpson-Young