



Mr Norman at the spot, bottom left, at Fingal Bay where Aboriginal bones were found about 50 years ago.

'Charlie' coming home to final resting place

By VERA BERTOLA,
Port Stephens Reporter

MR Jeff Bradford, of the Worimi Aboriginal Land Council at Nelson Bay, received a strange telephone call several months ago.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service in Sydney wanted to know if the council was interested in an Aboriginal skeleton found 13 years ago on the northern shores of Port Stephens.

'Perhaps they had pangs of conscience,' Mr Bradford said.

They believe they call the skeleton Charlie and he's in a bag in bits and pieces.

'They've been using him as an instruction piece.'

Mr Bradford said he believed the Kurrah Land Council had more claim to 'Charlie'

than Worimi, but if he were returned to the area he would be given a traditional Aboriginal burial.

Charlie's existence, in a safe in the National Parks and Wildlife Service offices in Sydney, was confirmed by the archaeologist who excavated him, Ms Lesley Maynard.

'He was excavated in 1973 and we are now talking to local Aborigines about reburying him,' Ms Maynard said.

Charlie was found when people using a beach path which was beginning to erode saw a human foot emerge.

Police were called and discovered a skeleton.

Ms Maynard was called. 'We couldn't cover him up again and there was no question of leaving him there,' she said.

So Charlie was relocated to Sydney, where he was used to demonstrate the differences between Aboriginal and European skulls.

'Initially I thought he was European,' Ms Maynard said. 'But his front tooth had been removed, presumably at a young age, so we gathered he was a traditional Aboriginal.'

'He had no fillings and his teeth were in a bad way. I'd say he'd grown up on a traditional diet then switched to flour, tea and sugar — a lot of sugar, it appeared.'

Charlie was about 30 or 40 and died late last century or early this century.

His death does not appear suspicious.

'When I first saw him he had buttons running up his torso and over his head,' Ms Maynard said.

'He was lying at a funny angle but we later realised he had died with his overcoat over his head.'

'It was probably bad weather and he died in the dunes without ever being buried.'

Mr Ray Norman, of Harbour-side Haven, Shoal Bay, remembers a big storm at Port Stephens about 50 years ago, in the aftermath of which Aboriginal skeletons and bones were found in the sandhills at Fingal Bay.

He said the area now had a road going through it and a subdivision.

'There were about three or four skeletons buried upright,' Mr Norman said.

People believed they were buried after a tribal fight because their skulls were smashed in.

3000 workers to return to jobs

MORE than 3000 car industry workers stood down during the Borg-Warner axle plant dispute will be back at work next week following yesterday's return to work by striking storemen and packers.

The Ford (Australia) company and Borg-Warner will reinstate a total of 1050 workers in Sydney today as axle production restarts at Borg-Warner's Fairfield plant.

Another 2000 workers stood down at the Ford assembly plant at Broadmeadows in Victoria will be reinstated next Wednesday.

High principles. Editorial, Page 2.

School bus crash

TEN schoolchildren and a bus driver were injured yesterday at Armidale on the NSW Northern Tablelands in the second school bus crash in two days.

Murphy payment

THE Government has paid out \$420,000 to help meet the legal costs of the late Mr Justice Lionel Murphy.

Assault charge

THE hearing of an assault charge was adjourned in Newcastle Court yesterday when the defendant's barrister indicated that the matter might be settled. Nicholas John Wolloughby, of Myall St, Warntah, has pleaded not guilty to an information by way of summons that he assaulted William Dermot Power, of Berice Crescent, Warntah West, at Mayfield on March 12 this year.

Nurses strike

MORE than 3000 Victorian public hospital nurses will stop work indefinitely from today over pay claims.