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Down a town

KINGSTON

Digest



Kingston
Norfolk Island

Norfolk Island Community | Issue no. 07 | October 2026

What's Coming Up?

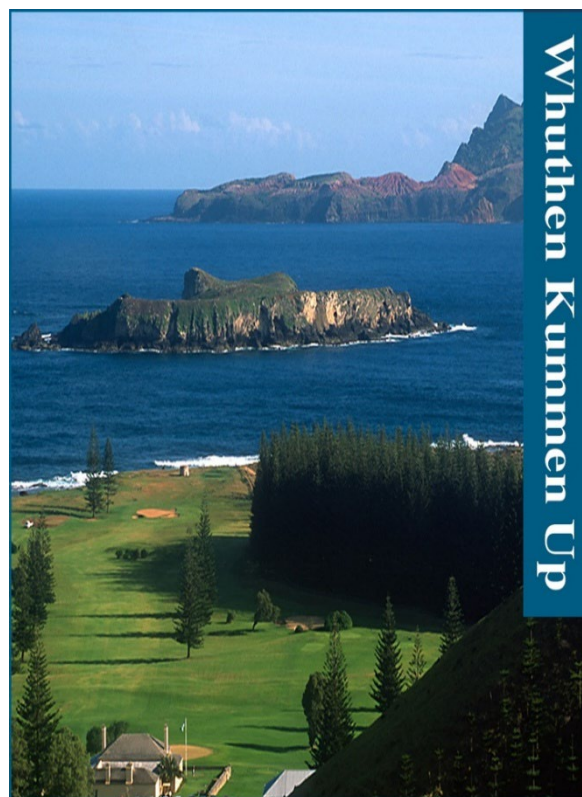
Nepean Island: One Small Island with a Big Story

Nepean Island might be a short distance offshore, but its story has long been connected to Kingston's own. Since the management plans for reserves in KAVHA and Nepean Island are up for review, the community has a timely opportunity to reflect on how this small island should be cared for into the future.

Evidence of quarrying from the early settlements still survives on Nepean, showing how its stone helped shape construction across Kingston. These marks of past industry remind us that Nepean Island has always played a quiet but important role in the life of Norfolk Island.

As the review continues, you're invited to think about how Nepean's natural and cultural values can be protected together — recognising its place not just as an islet offshore, but as a meaningful part of the wider Kingston landscape and island past. Community consultation will take place in the coming months.

***"The only economical use that Nepean Island is put to is obtaining from time to time stones for building the shafts of chimneys. Its limestone, which may almost be cut into shape, is remarkably well adapted; and a few quarrymen will in a week supply more than the boats can bring across in even a dozen trips."* — Captain Moconochie, 1844**



Whuthen Kummunen Up

Did You Know

Islanders vs. Pests – A Battle through time since 1788

Life was certainly not easy for Norfolk Island's first European settlers and sometimes it was the smallest challenges that caused the biggest headaches.

From the very beginning, they found themselves in a relentless battle with rats, grub worms and caterpillars.

In April 1788, only a month after Philip Gidley King arrived, he was already recording serious crop damage. Rats devoured newly sown wheat and barley overnight, grub worms attacked the roots below the soil, and caterpillars stripped the crops above it.

With no cats or poison available, settlers had to get creative. Empty bread casks became rat traps, and finely pounded glass was mixed with oatmeal in a desperate attempt to limit the damage.

By 1789, caterpillars were reportedly so thick on the wheat that they could be gathered by the handful.

These early records leave us with a wonderfully relatable reminder: islanders have been dealing with garden pests for a very long time, long before modern biosecurity and pest management arrived.

What's Been Happening?

Cruise Visitors Shine a Light on Kingston – Even During a Blackout

We recently welcomed many passengers off a cruise ship through Kingston and its museums. More than 800 passengers cruised through the Royal Engineers Office and museums in a busy day across Kingston. We had 75 passengers join a walking tour and many more choosing to explore the wider site themselves. When a power cut interrupted the day, the team simply adapted — and the unexpected darkness became part of the adventure, creating what felt like an authentic “night at the museum”.

Visitors took it all in their stride, proving that great stories and memorable experiences don't always need perfect conditions.

For our team, it was a great reminder that a warm welcome, a good story and being ready to adapt can make a lasting impression!

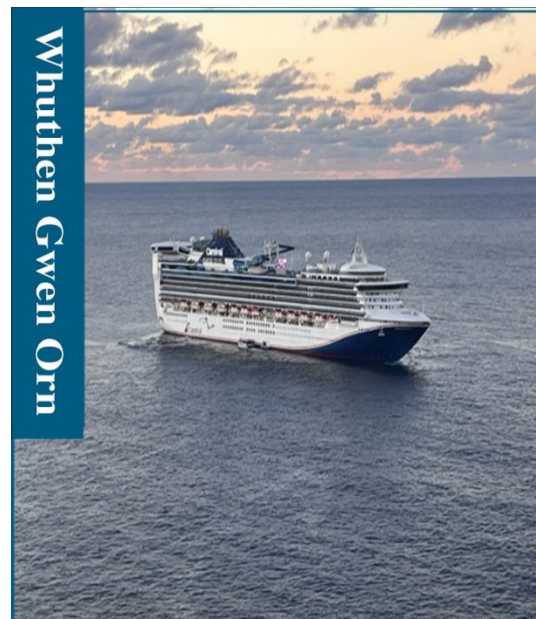
Heritage Skills on the Move: KAVHA and Port Arthur Join Forces

KAVHA Maintenance Team member Nic Parry recently packed his tools and headed to the Port Arthur Historic Site for a hands-on skills exchange. The visit brought together two of the 11 places that make up the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property, creating a valuable opportunity to share knowledge, experience and practical conservation skills.

Nic works across a range of traditional heritage trades, including lime rendering, plastering and stone repair. During the visit, he shared techniques developed through his work on Norfolk Island while also learning more about stone conservation, cemetery conservation and lime mortar techniques.

While every heritage place is unique, many of the challenges are shared. Spending time together gave the teams a chance to compare approaches, exchange ideas and learn from one another's experiences.

Initiated by the KAVHA Team and warmly supported by Port Arthur, the exchange is a wonderful example of how collaboration helps keep traditional skills alive. By sharing knowledge and building connections, we're helping ensure the special places in our care continue to be conserved and the stories continue to be told.



Restoring heritage: Projects Making a Big Difference

There's plenty happening around Kingston, with key conservation projects now under way.

No. 8 Quality Row — New Roof Works

A new roof is being installed at No. 8 Quality Row, one of Kingston's most recognisable historic homes. Roof projects may seem quiet from the outside, but they are vital to protecting the building's structure, preventing water damage and ensuring the home retains the character the community knows so well.

This work is part of a long-term effort to care for Kingston's heritage buildings — keeping them safe, weather-tight and ready to be enjoyed by future generations.

Bounty Street Bridge

Work on the Bounty Street Bridge has commenced, some curious questions have been coming through so we've created a FAQ sheet which answers a few questions already - see at the end of the newsletter.

For any further questions please contact the project officer via kingston@infrastructure.gov.au or call the office on 23315

SPOTLIGHT ON:

The Sundial That's Seen It All

Next time you pass the New Military Barracks, take a moment to look up. Perched on the South Eastern turret is a sundial, an easily missed detail that can even be spotted from the road once you know where to look.

After years of enduring Norfolk Island's weather, the original sundial became heavily worn. To help preserve it, it was carefully removed and placed in the museum, where visitors can now get a much closer look at this small but fascinating piece of Kingston's history.

In its place, the KAVHA team has placed a handcrafted replica sundial, allowing this distinctive feature to remain on display at the New Military Barracks while the original is preserved in the museum collection. Using photographs, measurements and specially sourced copper, the team carefully recreated the sundial under the guidance of an archaeologist.

If you'd like to see the original up close, pop into the Settlement Guardhouse near Kingston Pier, open daily 9am – 3pm, Sunday 11am – 3pm, and maybe grab an ice cream from the REO or Pier Store while you're there!



The original sundial before conservation



The newly crafted sundial in place

Honouring Kingston's Stories: Caring for historic headstones

Every headstone in Kingston tells a story about the people who lived, worked and shaped life on Norfolk Island.

Planning is now under way to conserve and preserve headstones from the first and second British settlements, helping these important links to the past endure.

The KAVHA Advisory Committee supports careful re-inscription where appropriate, recognising how much a readable name or inscription can mean to families, visitors and researchers.

Any work will balance that connection with accepted conservation practice, treating each headstone with respect while protecting its historic fabric to maintain the integrity of the stone.



Memorial Policy: Your Chance to Have a Say

Memorials help us honour loved ones, mark important events and keep our shared stories alive. They're woven into Kingston's cultural landscape, which is why many in our community care deeply about how they're placed, cared for and managed within KAVHA.

To make sure this work reflects both heritage responsibilities and community values, the KAVHA Advisory Committee has been reviewing the draft Memorial Policy. With final edits nearly complete, the policy will soon be released for public consultation.

This will give the community a chance to help shape the future of memorials in Kingston. Your input will help ensure memorials continue to reflect the heart of the community while respecting the heritage values of the site we care for together.



New Discoveries in Old Collections: Rare Birds Unearthed

Our museum collections are still full of surprises.

Last month, palaeontologist Julian Hume from the Natural History Museum (UK) and other researchers visited Norfolk Island and examined fossil material held in the Norfolk Island Museum collections.

Sorting through collections bags full of unidentified bones, Julian uncovered a remarkable range of birds, including the Norfolk Ground Dove, an undescribed rail, a gallinule, the Norfolk Island Pigeon and the Norfolk Island Kaka.

Perhaps most intriguing was his study of charred bird bones, which demonstrated that several species were cooked and eaten. These finds offer small but fascinating glimpses into Norfolk Island's past, helping researchers piece together how people lived and interacted with the island's environment.

The team hopes to return next year to continue the work. It's an exciting reminder of how much can still be learned from the collections already in our care. The remains will be featured in an upcoming exhibition at the Royal Engineers Office in November which will also feature stunning original artworks by Sorrel Wilby. Thanks to Julian and the team at the Natural History Museum UK for taking time to identify the collections bones and link them to Kingston's natural history.



Norfolk Ground Dove (*Pampusana norfolkensis*) illustrated around 1800 (Wikipedia)

A left femur of one of these doves was identified during the study.

Behind the Scenes: Protecting Our Museum Collections

Some of the most important museum work happens quietly behind the scenes, Norfolk Island Museums is undertaking an important project to improve the storage and accessibility of its collections.

The work will better protect fragile items, improve access to the KAVHA archaeological collection, and support future exhibitions, research and educational programs.

Guided by recommendations in the Kingston Site Master Plan, the project will ensure these significant collections are cared for to best-practice standards.



Fremantle Prison collections shelving – an example of what is to come

Any comments or questions please contact KAVHASecretariat@infrastructure.gov.au.

For urgent site maintenance out of hours, call 55177

BOUNTY STREET BRIDGE REPAIR & CONSERVATION WORKS

Community Frequently Asked Questions

Conserving a historic bridge, improving structural safety, and protecting the environment and the heritage values of Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area (KAVHA).

Why is the work needed?

This significant, heritage bridge has had long-standing concerns due to its progressive deterioration and the risk to its structural integrity. Identified as having a very high risk of failure if left unaddressed, the project seeks to secure the bridge's ongoing stability and public safety while conserving its historic fabric and contribution to KAVHA.

What is the main goal?

To reinforce and conserve the bridge so it can return to useful service, while safeguarding and preserving heritage values and minimising impacts on Watermill Creek, Emily Bay and the surrounding landscape.

What work will be carried out?

The main activities include:

- Installing upstream and downstream bulk-bag (white bags) coffer dams.
- Temporarily diverting creek flow around the work area.
- Controlled dewatering and limited excavation beneath the bridge.
- Cleaning and repairing historic stonework using heritage-compatible lime mortar and stone.
- Constructing reinforced foundations and a structural concrete arch beneath the existing bridge.
- Repairing bridge sides, reinstating the creek, and rehabilitating disturbed areas.
- Restoration of Bounty Street and re-opening the road to traffic

Why use a concrete support arch?

A concrete arch was selected to provide durable structural support while limiting intervention in the original stone bridge. A lime-based separation layer protects the historic fabric and helps keep the new work distinguishable and reversible.

How will the creek keep flowing?

Watermill Creek will be directed around the isolated work zone through a temporary diversion system. The coffer dams reduce water entering the work area so repairs can proceed in controlled, safer and drier conditions.

What environmental controls are in place?

Controls are based on the principles of minimising disturbance, isolating the work area, capturing sediment close to its source, monitoring water and sensitive environments, and restoring disturbed surfaces promptly.

- Fauna and biodiversity inspections and rescuing.
- Sediment fencing, silt barriers and downstream sediment traps or curtains.
- Controlled pumping to a stable vegetated discharge area.
- Contained and stabilised stockpiles, including management of potential acid sulfate material.
- Daily inspections and extra checks after rainfall or changes in creek flow.
- Progressive reinstatement of the creek bed, banks, and vegetation.

How is water quality being monitored?

Water quality is monitored daily before and during construction at locations in Watermill Creek, Town Creek and at the Emily Bay outlet. Monitoring includes turbidity, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and nitrate, together with visual checks for sediment plumes.

What happens if downstream water becomes muddy or sediment controls fail?

If there are any mitigation failures or downstream exceedances, the activity or pumping is stopped, the source is investigated, and controls are repaired or strengthened before work resumes. Incidents and corrective actions are recorded.

How is heritage being protected?

The works are guided by heritage impact assessment and KAVHA management requirements. Ground disturbance is minimised, heritage-compatible materials are used, and specialist heritage or archaeological oversight is provided for sensitive activities and unexpected finds.

Why is vegetation being removed?

Only vegetation needed for safe access, water management and construction is removed. Due to previous works, the scope has been reduced to minimise disturbance, protect potentially sensitive soils and retain vegetation wherever practicable. While the majority of vegetation is weed-like in nature, it still serves a beneficial environmental purpose of filtration, erosion and acidification minimisation, and habitat.

Will there be noise, machinery, or access restrictions?

Yes, at times. Construction plant, pumps and deliveries are required, and the fenced work zone is closed to the public for safety. Noise, dust, vehicle movements, and site housekeeping are managed through project controls and daily pre-start planning.

What happens when the work is finished?

Temporary dams, diversion materials and sediment controls will be removed progressively. Water levels will be equalised in a controlled way, the creek bed and banks will be stabilised, disturbed areas rehabilitated and construction materials removed.

How can I stay informed or raise concerns?

Please use the project contact details. If emailing about something specific, include the date, time, location, and a short description so we can respond as promptly as possible. We want to ensure this project is delivered in a manner that protects and preserves Norfolk Island's unique and sensitive environment, while preserving the cultural heritage of Kingston.

PROJECT CONTACT

Kingston@infrastructure.gov.au or 23315

PLEASE KEEP CLEAR

Do not enter the fenced work area