



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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AUSTRALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE
VALLA PARK, 25-27 NOVEMBER 1985

Eleanor Crosby
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 Queensland, 4211

Ex-patriate New Zealander and former Auckland student, Eleanor Crosby, writes,

"Herewith a report from the A.A.A.'s recent conference at Valla. I was struck with the sudden appearance of residue studies both from the N.Z.A.A. Newsletter 28(3) and the Australian conference, and it occurred to me that we might really be half the world apart, whereas Auckland is considerably closer to Sydney than is Perth. So in the interests of all of us I thought that the Newsletter might consider a summary of what is happening in Australia a matter of some usefulness. Australian Archaeology (editor J. Hope, Dept of Prehistory, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, P.O. Box 4, Canberra 2600) would welcome a similar summary of the N.Z.A.A. annual conference."

The 1985 Australian Archaeological Association conference was held at Valla Park on the New South Wales north coast. Attendance figures of about 200 from the total membership of just over 500 indicate the strength of support, especially as some delegates travelled several thousand kilometres. A major feature and most welcome development was the number of Aboriginal delegates and the several papers given by them.

Four major symposia, a 'pot pourri' of papers, a well-supported poster session, together with the AGM of the Association filled three full days. Brief notes follow.

Monday began with eight papers on aspects of cultural resource management (CRM), chaired by Annie Ross of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. Topics covered included the Federal heritage legislation which is due for revision. Sharon Sullivan reported on this legislation which allows Aborigines to request intervention in matters of heritage importance. Of a number of such requests, none has so far resulted in the actual termination of a project. Five papers dealt with problems involving negotiation and communication of results. Kate Sullivan discussed the success of utilising 'win-win' strategies from an official National Parks and Wildlife Service stance. Jo McDonald reported on work on a Bicentennial project requiring large amounts of negotiation with not only

Aboriginal but other interested parties such as architects, local authorities, etc., although these were but hinted at in her paper. Allan Lance's paper discussed implications of an Aboriginal initiated site survey which succeeded in extending a smaller protected area. Carmelia Corowa and Evelyn Crawford reported from Aboriginal viewpoints on the continuing need for communication of survey and research results in terms that Aborigines and other laymen can readily comprehend. More extensive use of tapes and videos were suggested along with personal visits of explanation. Roger Luebbers discussed management problems in the Coorong (the sand peninsula of the Murray River mouth) where upwards of 6000 sites have been recorded.

Monday afternoon was devoted to "25 years of Tasmanian archaeology", opened by one of Rhys Jones's entertaining talks, adorned by slides commemorating what must by now be considered the efflorescent phase of this research, and closed by John Mulvaney, retiring foundation professor of Prehistory, Australian National University. Jones, Richard Wright and Judith Feathney presented a multivariate analysis of Jones's Rocky Cape stone material, Stephen Sutton reported on a technological analysis of a central Tasmanian assemblage, Don Ranson reported on the discovery of a spongilite quarry, a source for which had long been a mystery, and Richard Cosgrove on early Holocene occupation in the lake bordering dune (lunette) at Rushy Lagoon in north-east Tasmania. Jim Allen discussed the results from Kutikina Cave, placing its occupation during the period 22,000- 12,500 B.P. Climatic amelioration at the end of this period is likely to have led to the establishment of the now characteristic heavy rain forest, which in turn would have rendered the previous massive exploitation of red wallabies from the alpine grasslands impossible. Sandra Bowdler spoke of the difficult political situation and its (usually adverse) effects on cultural resource management in Tasmania, a theme echoed very strongly by Mulvaney. Bowdler also commented on and supported an alteration in CRM strategies toward more research oriented projects which aim at providing a better predictive framework.

Tuesday opened with a symposium on work in western NSW, chaired by Jeanette Hope. Harvey Johnston and Hope discussed sampling strategies for collecting on Pleistocene and early Holocene lunette dunes, particularly at a site where Diprotodon bones and artefacts are deflating from the dune, but where preservation conditions of the bone precludes conventional excavation. Jane Balme discussed structural difference between Pleistocene and early and late Holocene shell middens along the Darling River. Brenda Jacobs presented comparisons of a century of river heights, rainfall records, drought indices, and plant growth information which indicated that the region has neither regular seasons nor regular longer cycles. Keryn

Kofous examined vegetation communities for the likelihood that they might be profitably subjected to a control firing regime. Colin Pardoe analysed mortuary practises and concluded that along the Darling these were very different from along the Murray. Peter Thompson discussed the archaeological surveys along the seismic survey lines around Wilcannia, noting some resistance from local graziers. With Badger Bates and Dan Witter, Anne Clarke raised questions of the implications raised by the survey, and the manner in which it came about, of the Winbar block, and Hope, for Scott Cane, expressed some of the uncertainties surrounding the proposal for an army base at Cobar, which may threaten the Cobar art sites (including Mt Grenfell). She then spoke about the Regional Environmental Plan for the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area (i.e. Lake Mungo). William Bates concluded the morning with a brief description of the work of the Western Regional Land Council and the Aboriginal Heritage.

Wednesday morning was devoted to a symposium on Aboriginal art, chaired by Mike Morwood. Luke Taylor discussed a contemporary Arnhemland bark painting group, pointing out the various levels of outside and inside meaning encapsulated in the panels. Daisy Utemarra, with Molly Wandjalín and Pat Vinnicombe, discussed the sociology of rock art in the Kimberleys in terms of the cycle of stories associated with the sites, and in one of the most moving moments of the conference sang several traditional songs with the eager support of all the Aboriginal participants at the conference. Darrell Lewis discussed the art of the Victoria River Downs area of the Northern Territory, noting that while the paintings agreed with the Aboriginal interpretations of the sites, engravings at the same places seemed to indicate a different (earlier) meaning. Percy Trezise showed slides and scale drawings of some of the more recently discovered painted sites in the Laura area of Cape York, and Jo Flood discussed preliminary results of the excavation and recording of sites in the Koolburra Plateau north of Laura. Paul Tacon examined Dorset Eskimo and western Arnhemland art in an attempt at establishing how they illustrate dynamic processes in the archaeological record. Benn Gunn discussed spatial patterns in the art of the Cobar area, and Jo McDonald the patterning of engraving and painted sites in the Sydney Basin. Both this and the succeeding two papers drew heavily on the work of Lesley Maynard. Natalie Franklin discussed the value of stochastic and emblematic methods of style analysis and Kelvin Officer the problem of how simple is figurative. John Clegg analysed the pictures in a suburban area to examine the value of Conkey's analytical methods.

The final session comprised six diverse papers. Neale Draper reported finding Kartan implements in situ at Cape

de Couedic, Kangaroo Island, dating to 7,500 B.P. David Trigger, Richard Robins and Paul Memmott discussed implications of the finding that, in the Wellesley Island, and adjacent coastal area of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the mainland is considered to begin inland of the salt pans behind the mangrove belt. Jim Rhoads presented a multivariate analysis of some Papuan axe blades. Su Solomon discussed some taphonomic results of feeding macropods to dingos in her usual entertaining fashion. Peter Hiscock produced a relative chronology for the Hunter Valley based on changes in the technology of flake manufacture, a technique which has interesting wider implications. Finally Graeme Pretty and R.R. Robinson discussed uranium fluorimetry sequencing results from Roonka. Forty-five per cent of the burials have now been dated, ranging from 20,000 B.P. to near present.

In summary, the symposium format coupled with posters and the final pot pourri of papers made this one of the most successful conferences of recent years. New analytical methods have appeared in several fields - rock art, stone technology and CRM in particular - and the grouping of papers into tight symposia allowed those not immediately involved with the aspect to get a real 'feel' for it. The setting at Valla with the beach, pool, cabins, and not least bar, contributed much reinforcement to both archaeology and to the 'group consciousness' of archaeologists.

Further information about any of these papers can be obtained by writing to the secretary of Australian Archaeological Association, Tim Murray, Dept of Prehistory, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria 3083. He will gladly forward the current addresses of the authors. Needless to say the notes here should not be quoted as they are designed to give but the briefest impression of highlights only.

It may also be of interest to have a brief summary of the AGM which was held on Tuesday afternoon. Reflecting the general concerns touched on in many of the papers, much of the business concerned Aboriginal skeletal remains and, either what had happened during the year or, the Association position with regard to this sensitive issue. Another reflected theme was the necessity for good relations with Aborigines and with acquainting historical archaeologists in particular with the statutory requirements involving Aboriginal sites. Concern was expressed about the passing of overriding legislation allowing the Darling Harbour Redevelopment to ignore heritage legislation in Sydney, and again about the situation in Tasmania. The meeting resolved by acclamation to bestow Honorary Life Membership of the Association on Professor John Mulvaney.

The 1986 executive will be based at La Trobe University (address above). President: Denise Gaughwin, Secretary: Tim Murray, Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Chris Gosden.

The 1986 conference will be held in or near Melbourne about the last week in November. Organiser: David Frankel, Dept of Prehistory, La Trobe.