PAST AND PRESENT STATUS OF ABORIGINAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA: COLLECTING, EXCAVATING, RECORDING AND COLLECTIONS SINCE 1880

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Collecting, Excavating, Recording

Collecting
The history of collecting Aboriginal archaeology objects in South Australia (SA) is closely reflected in the history of the Aboriginal collections held at the South Australian Museum (SAM) and the founding members of the Anthropological Society of South Australia (ASSA). The SAM was established by legislation in 1856 (although not open to the public for another 6 years as the South Australian Institute Museum) and the latter in 1926 as a Museum affiliate.

Collecting Aboriginal material within SA appears to have been of little interest to the SAM until after the Paris Exhibition in 1878 (Jones 1996). A modest collection had been sent to the Exhibition which sparked much interest and inspired the SAM to rigorously commence its own collection. By 1880 it was apparent to the SAM that Adelaide objects were noticeably scarce and the recognition of a lost opportunity continues to haunt the collection today.

The collecting of stone tools managed to gather some momentum following the appointment of Walter Howchin in 1881. Howchin was a geologist with a long-standing interest in ancient stone tools and flint. He arrived from Britain expecting an early death from tuberculosis but instead defied his medical prognosis and lived out a long and energetic life in SA. Howchin made a significant intellectual contribution through his prodigious work in geology and also made a substantial contribution to the lithics collection. Howchin commenced by
investigating eroding sand dunes at Fulham in 1882. For the next 30 years he recorded geological and archaeological features of the dune system and made extensive collections of different tool types. In 1934, two years before his death and aged 90, he finally published the results of his many years of research in the Adelaide region (Howchin 1934). Howchin had been influenced by Sir John Evans, author of the British classic *The Ancient Stone Implements, Weapons and Ornaments of Great Britain* published in 1872 but had been earlier enthused by his friend and mentor the Reverend Greenwell, who held “a world-wide reputation in Prehistoric Archaeology and was a most zealous collector” (Howchin 1934:iii). Howchin’s publication was only the second work published in Australia dedicated to stone tools, the first having been produced by Aiston in 1928. Howchin provided geological descriptions of sites, tool types and raw materials and drew on ethnological observations to hypothesise on tool use. This work provided the foundation for archaeology in SA and a stimulus for understanding stone tool succession.

Howchin concentrated on acquiring a range of type specimens from different environmental regions to address spatial rather than temporal variation. It was the general consensus in the 1800s that Australian landscapes had changed little over time and similarly Aboriginal people had been culturally static, although it is unlikely that Howchin ascribed to this view. This adherence to environmental and cultural stasis was later exemplified in the much-quoted comment by Robert Pulliene in 1928 about an “unchanging culture in an unchanging environment”. Pulliene was the first President of ASSA and followed the belief that Aboriginal people had inhabited this continent for only a short time prior to European arrival. This belief was firmly entrenched in the dominant paradigm until two significant events took place in Australian archaeology – the first stratigraphic excavation in 1929 (Hale and Tindale 1930) and the first application of radiocarbon dating methods in the 1960s (Mulvaney and Joyce 1965) to obtain an occupation date firmly within the Pleistocene.
Howchin’s collection of type specimens from the Fulham and Adelaide regions formally established the SAM lithic collection. Howchin is also recognised for providing the first evidence of Aboriginal occupation on Kangaroo Island. Although the island had first been occupied by Europeans by at least 1800 during the whaling and sealing era, it was not until almost one hundred years later that stone tools were identified. Howchin made his findings first known in a rarely cited report of 1898 (Howchin 1898) and confirmed his finds in his better-known paper of 1903 (Howchin 1903). Matthew Flinders did not observe Indigenous people on the island and the belief that Indigenous people had never occupied the island became entrenched over the following century. Norman Tindale, entomologist and ethnologist, undertook many collecting trips across the island from the late 1920s, and he quickly corroborated Howchin’s finds. Tindale also put forward the hypothesis that a typological difference existed amongst the lithics of Kangaroo Island, sufficient to suggest a cultural succession that preceded the Adelaide region types. Tindale named this succession the ‘Kartan’ (Tindale 1937, 1957).

Norman Tindale contributed extensively to the SAM archaeology collection during his career as full-time ethnologist from 1928 and his resignation from the SAM in 1974. Prior to Tindale’s arrival, Howchin remained the only systematic collector. Other objects arrived at the SAM but these were largely opportunistic finds during expeditions of exploration across SA and relied on the interest of the explorer. Apart from Howchin’s Fulham collection commencing in 1882, the earliest entries into the register for lithics date to 1902. One entry is for a collection of flaked stone made by Rupert Maurice, whilst on his journey north west and the other entry is for a pecked pebble collected in the Adelaide district by Alfred Zeitz. The SAM archaeology collection advanced slowly and inconsistently until other SAM scientists took an interest in lithics and the establishment of field trips by ASSA.

Thomas Draper Campbell, a practicing dentist, held an honorary curatorship with the SAM from 1924 and was keenly interested in physical and cultural anthropology. He was also a founding member of ASSA. Campbell played a major role alongside Tindale and later Harold Cooper in making a substantial contribution not only to the collection but also to
archaeological knowledge. Campbell explored much of SA and published his findings with various colleagues. Campbell and Walsh’s paper (1947) on the sites of Yorke Peninsula stands as the single publication for that region. Similarly Campbell and Noone’s (1943) paper on the Woakwine Ranges of the south east of SA remains one of the few archaeological publications for that area.

Harold Cooper, wireless operator, pursued his keen interest in stone tools during the 1930s and eventually joined the SAM as assistant ethnologist to Tindale in 1941. He concentrated on collecting in areas previously hunted over by Howchin but eventually extended the boundaries and collected extensively from Kangaroo Island, the southern Fleurieu, upper Yorke Peninsula to Port Augusta and into the Flinders Ranges. Cooper published numerous papers and articles on stone tools of SA, making a considerable contribution to Tindale’s reflections on cultural succession (Cooper 1943, 1960). Cooper was in the end responsible for over 10% of the registered entries into archaeology – twice that of Tindale.

The surge in surface collecting in the 1930s can be attributed to some extent to SAM officers and associates but it was also largely propelled by ASSA enthusiasts. Between 1930 and 1970 notable ASSA collectors who made substantial contributions include Ron Bartlett, Peter J. Davis, Ron Hewitt, J.E. Johnson, Percival Stapleton and Ron Weathersbee. Ron Hewitt was stationed at Woomera for some years and inspired by Walter MacDougall (a well-known Native Patrol Officer) pursued his interest in lithics around Arcoona. Hewitt certainly collected but he also recorded some remarkable and interesting surface deposits during his years as described in his various published works (Hewitt 1976, 1978). Hewitt has left a vast collection worthy of further research and his accumulated knowledge of lithics was so impressive that Graeme Pretty (SAM employee 1962-1994) engaged him to describe numerous lithics excavated from Roonka. Recent research by John Hayward (2010) on the cache reported by Hewitt (1976) has demonstrated the value in returning to collections made by ‘amateurs’.
Other members also spent many hours of their leisure time collecting lithics, assisting in excavations and surveys. If not for their dedication and hard work much of the material in the collection would have been graded to make way for housing and other large-scale developments during the hectic time of post WWII urban growth. In all, ASSA members covered the ground across all peninsulas, through the mid north and into the Flinders Ranges, down into the south east, onto Kangaroo Island and over to the west, filling many gaps where SAM officers were unable to go. Ron Weathersbee spelt out the stages traveled by the typical amateur collector and their need to reach as quickly as possible the final stage – that of the objective and precise collector. Weathersbee himself made complete records of their finds, complimented with photographs and was the ideal contributor to museum collections (Weathersbee 1967).

The nature of collecting changed significantly during the 1980s. Excavations were more prevalent and were a preferred means of collecting due to stratigraphic control and following the introduction of the Aboriginal Heritage Act (SA) in 1988 it was no longer permissible to collect artefacts without permission from the relevant Minister. Instead of clubs and societies undertaking leisurely weekend activities collecting various objects of interest for the Museum, collecting became a management process defined by the Act. As such collecting became part of a broader cultural heritage investigation for research or work area clearance purposes. The latter is reflected markedly in the SAM collection with the arrival of one of the largest ground surface collections of the 1980s. This collection was acquired from Philip Hughes and colleagues salvaging site material from the Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam development ventures (see Hughes et al. this volume).

Excavating
The first formal archaeological excavation in Australia was undertaken in 1929 in SA by SAM staff members Norman Tindale and Herbert Hale (Hale and Tindale 1930). Although it could be argued that a much earlier excavation in 1893 announced the arrival of archaeological principles into Australia, when Samuel A. White investigated stone tools at depth along the River Torrens. White, a world-renowned ornithologist, lived near the former Fulham reed beds and noticed some unusual
stones sitting on beach sands at quite a depth below the surface. He retrieved the rocks and drew the exposed profile. Howchin later confirmed the stones to be Aboriginal stone tools and both men published independent reports on the finds (Howchin 1919; White 1919).

Harold Sheard, an enthusiastic founding member of ASSA, identified Aboriginal art in a rock shelter on the River Murray in 1927. He put in a trench along the floor of the shelter, known then as Devon Downs and now better known as Ngaut Ngaut (see Nichalas et al. in press; Roberts et al. 2010), but did not find anything of note. In 1929 Tindale and Hale set a trench a little further in from the back wall of the shelter and hit a major occupation layer. Hale and Tindale also excavated at another site known as Tartanga and these excavations became the benchmark in the history of Australian archaeology by applying stratigraphic control. As Mulvaney (1961) later noted, as early as 1778 Europeans were ‘digging’ into Australia’s past, curious about ancient Aboriginal customs and skeletons, but these were literally digs in similar fashion to earlier palaeontological investigations.

Hale and Tindale adapted field methods more applicable to foreign contexts, to suit Australian contexts. In doing so they paved the way for Australian field investigations and their excavations became benchmarks in the identifying and recording of stratigraphic layers and the recording and analysis of stone and bone tools. These excavations also identified cultural succession via the stone tool assemblage. As Mulvaney (1961:65) pointed out, few recognised the significance of this fieldwork in 1929. The statement on cultural succession came less than a year after Pulleine’s famous statement about “an unchanging people in an unchanging environment”. Tindale announced the successive phases of occupation as reflected in the stone tool assemblage to be; Murudian, Mudukian and Pirian. Following field work on Kangaroo Island, he added to this list, the ‘Kartan’.

A little further downstream from Devon Downs and Tartanga is Fromm’s Landing (also known as Tungawa – see Roberts et al. 2010), where another series of overhangs offer numerous shelters. Fromm’s Landing shelters were assessed for their scientific potential in the 1940s by staff from Sydney Museum who noted Indigenous occupation material on the
surface. This was followed up in the 1950s by John Mulvaney who had been exploring and excavating occupation sites in Queensland (see also Roberts 1998 for more detail about the history of archaeological work at Tungawa). It was Mulvaney’s work at Kenniff Cave in Queensland that gave archaeology in Australia an international profile by providing the first absolute evidence for Aboriginal occupation beyond the Holocene boundary of 10,000 years before present. Mulvaney made use of the recently introduced technique of radiocarbon analysis to date samples from Kenniff Cave and the analysis revealed that occupation commenced around 19,000 years ago (Mulvaney and Joyce 1965), well into the Pleistocene. Fromm’s Landing did not reveal Pleistocene dates for occupation but was important for the discovery of a complete dingo skeleton, later securely dated to circa 3000 years old (Mulvaney 1960; Mulvaney et al. 1964).

The excavation provided convincing evidence that dingoes were a relatively late importation into Australia. In line with other emerging Pleistocene occupation sites around Australia, it became clear that no dingo remains were found in layers older than the 3000 year old find at Fromm’s Landing. Clearly, Aborigines and dingoes had not arrived together in Australia as once posited by Frederick Wood Jones (1923) who stated that this animal arrived “in company with his master the Australian Aboriginal” (Wood Jones 1968:23).

With radiocarbon dating becoming more available, a series of carbon samples from occupation layers in Devon Downs (Ngaut Ngaut), Tartanga and Fromm’s Landing (Tungawa) were submitted for analysis and all were found to fall within a similar time frame of around 4,000-5,000 years ago. The 1960s were a ground-breaking time for Australian archaeology.

In 1961, the Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies – AIATSIS) was established, providing resources for archaeological investigation and a point of contact for the growing number of archaeologists working in Australia. However, the teaching of archaeology appropriate to Australian contexts was still lagging behind and the few trained archaeologists were based in Canberra and Sydney (Megaw 1966). Most were graduates from the University of Sydney having majored in anthropology, history and classical archaeology. In 1965 one such graduate, Graeme Pretty, was
appointed as Curator for Archaeology with the SAM. This was the first and only time that a Curator for Archaeology was appointed to the SAM and Graeme held the position (apart from a few years as Curator for Anthropology and Archaeology) until his retirement in 1996. Graeme undertook numerous excavations and surveys across SA but is best known for his long-standing work at Roonka, just north of Blanchetown, on the River Murray.

Roonka Flat had been a place of interest to SAM officers for some 20 years due to the considerable amount of human skeletal remains and stone tools eroding from a series of sand dunes on the low side of the River Murray. The 1956 flood exacerbated the situation and unfortunately the site was prone to continuous souveniring by the public. Finally, in late 1968, the SAM sent the recently appointed Curator for Archaeology, Graeme Pretty, to formulate a salvage strategy, thereby insuring the long term security of the material. The exercise proved to be far from brief and for the next 20 years Pretty devoted much of his working life to Roonka (Walshe 2009). Pretty opened up the largest excavation trench ever undertaken in Australia. This trench was remarkable for its extent of finds and for the degree of exactitude behind the archaeological field techniques employed by Pretty, at a time when Australian archaeology was truly in its infancy. The site captured public imagination in the 1980s when a richly ornamented burial was revealed. Roonka is one of only three archaeological sites in Australia that have revealed drilled teeth worn as necklaces or chaplets. Indeed, very few sites across the country have revealed ornaments of any kind. Roonka remains the richest, most diverse and most enigmatic of the SAM’s archaeology collections.

Away from the River Murray, the Nullarbor Plain became a focus for excavation from the mid 1950s. Alexander (Sandor) Gallus was trained in archaeology in France and immigrated to Australia post 1950. Gallus had investigated caves across western Europe and was very familiar with Neanderthal sites and early cave art. He was convinced that Aboriginal people had inhabited Australia for longer than the ‘late stone age’ and were not culturally static. He focused his attention on Koonalda Cave, on the Nullarbor Plain of South Australia, following reports by speleologists of subterranean lithics. Gallus excavated at various intervals commencing in 1956 and ending in 1978. He collected
charcoal associated with activity levels and returned dates as old as 31,600 years. Gallus identified and described artwork in the form of finger flutings and ancient flint mining (Gallus 1972) and published his findings to mixed reactions, largely due to his use of European terminology on the lithics.

There was little dispute that the evidence, particularly the art, mining and the dates were of great interest but Gallus’ approach to interpreting the lithics and his identification of naturally occurring limestone nodules as stelae proved too much for some in the discipline. In 1968, another team of excavators, led by Richard Wright, were sent to work alongside the ‘Gallus team’ and an extraordinary situation arose, yet to be repeated in Australian archaeology. It would appear that the two teams were polite and collegial, but separate findings were made resulting in a single but two-part manuscript published in 1971 (Wright 1971). Contention lay not only in the identification of certain finds, but also in the dating of charcoal. Gallus reported a final date of 31,600 years old for carbon associated with activity layers. Richard Wright, leading the alternative team, reported dates to about 20,000 years. As the older date gained by Gallus related to a chronological anomaly in the sequence, it was discounted by Wright and the site is generally accepted as dating to 20,000 years (Wright 1971).

Gallus is responsible for two thirds of the Western Desert collection held by the SAM and although he suffered ridicule during his lifetime, he has left a significant legacy about a site that we still do not fully understand. Finger fluting has also been identified in caves around the south east of SA and in some cases is also associated with flint mining (Bednarik 2007).

During the 1960s archaeologist, Ljubomir Marun, undertook excavations at Allen’s Cave, a short distance south west of Koonalda. Allan’s Cave is an open rockshelter, without art or mining and although it revealed numerous flint objects, much of the assemblage had been derived from decomposed owl pellets (Marun 1974; Walshe 1994). Marun’s excavation revealed occupation to the same approximate time as that accepted for Koonalda, about 20,000 years old. However, it was later dated through OSL techniques to almost 40,000 years old (Roberts et al. 1994).
In 1970 John Mulvaney took up the foundation Chair of Prehistory in the teaching faculty at the Australian National University in Canberra and the teaching of archaeology with techniques suited to Australian field conditions began in earnest. After 1970 a significant advance was made on an archaeological front. Whereas the excavations of the 1950s-1960s were concentrated on the River Murray and Nullabor, the 1970s witnessed diverse investigations across much of SA.

As part of his doctoral research in the lower south east and Coorong regions and later for the Lower Murray Lakes Archaeological Project Roger Luebbers (1978, 1982a) carried out extensive excavations at Hells Gate, Abyssinia Bay, Cameron Rock, Canunda Rock, Domachensz, Mt Burr, Nora Creina and Wyrie Swamp during the 1970s-80s. Luebbers also catalogued SAM ethnological and archaeological objects from the same region and produced resource management reports for SA government departments (Luebbers 1982b). Through his extensive field work Roger Luebbers has made a substantial and significant contribution to our understanding of coastal and wetland occupation in the south east of SA. Probably his most stunning find was the series of wooden implements excavated from Wyrie Swamp and dated to about 7,000 years old (Luebbers 1975).

Ron Lampert undertook field work on Kangaroo Island, excavating at Seton Rockshelter and various large open sites for his doctoral research (Lampert 1981). Seton Rockshelter was the first deep excavation on the island and provided evidence for Indigenous occupation between about 18,000 and 10,000 years ago. His open site excavations revealed dates between 7,000 and 5,000 years old. His work supported the theory that the island was first occupied during the last glacial maximum when sea levels were lower and was abandoned mid Holocene when sea levels had risen to their current height. Lampert also excavated extensively at Hawker Lagoon (in the Flinders Ranges) providing the first evidence for Pleistocene occupation in this region. In many ways Lampert was following Cooper’s path, but brought to it an archaeological sharpness and rigour.
Valerie Campbell, a key member of ASSA and post graduate candidate, in the 1980s focused on mid-Fleurieu coastal midden sites, excavating at Moana and nearby dunes. Tindale had collected extensively at Moana from 1930 but Campbell undertook the first controlled excavations (Campbell 1980). Campbell excavated 12 hearth sites at Moana which yielded a significant amount of stone tools, faunal material (including dingo remains) and placed coastal occupation from approximately 6,340 years ago to contact (Campbell 1979, 1980, 1981a, 1981b). Moana has some of the last remaining dune systems along the Fleurieu coast and the excavation assemblages investigated by Campbell provide a significant resource for future analysis. Her work is best summarised in Ross (1984).

Neale Draper commenced field work from the mid-1980s in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island at various sites including his best known work at Cape Du Coedid. This cave site on the exposed south-western end of the island became the focus for his doctoral research and yielded occupation dates of around 6,000-7,000 years. His research has also focused on the ‘Kartan’ succession offered by Tindale and presents a new context for considering this key assemblage (Draper 1987, 1991, 1999).

‘Anutech’, a consultancy arm of Australian National University, undertook significant excavations in the south east around Port MacDonnell. This project, titled ‘Finger Point Archaeological Project’ investigated a series of middens and lithic sites along Finger Point prior to impact works (Egloff et al. 1989). Dates were obtained from three of the twelve sites investigated and these ranged from about 1,000 to 3,000 years old, during which time the archaeologists noted a change in the stone tool technology (Egloff et al. 1989).

Scott Cane and colleagues undertook a major assessment of the heritage values of the SA Nullarbor in the late 1980s. This project, largely funded by the former Commonwealth National Estate Program, carried out site survey and recording of the archaeology and ethnology of numerous cave and open sites (Gara and Cane 1988; Cane and Gara 1989). The project recorded a timely focus on Indigenous connection to sites that had been previously identified by archaeological or speleological exploration (Davey and Frank 1984). A major excavation was undertaken at Allen’s Cave in 1988-1989 by Rhys Jones, Scott
Cane and Annie Nicholson (Walshe 1994). This project led to further investigations in 1989-1990, focusing on the west coast of the Eyre Peninsula. The first stage of this investigation focused on recording fish traps (Martin 1988) and the second stage proposed a major site survey and excavation of middens along Anxious Bay, Eyre Peninsula (Nicholson 1991, 1994). The survey failed to identify stratified middens and excavation did not take place, however the results of the surface recording and analysis remain the singular comprehensive investigation for this region.

**Recording - Rock Art**
The recording of rock has a long history in SA and precedes formal excavation. Basedow described pecked rock in the Olary region in 1914 (Basedow 1914). This foundational work was followed by research on various styles of rock art throughout the north eastern part of SA principally by Charles Mountford and Norman Tindale in the 1930s-1960s and Robert Edwards in the 1960s-1970s. In the 1980s Margaret Nobbs undertook a comprehensive survey of petroglyphs in the Olary region of mid north SA. Nobbs discussed relationships between the art, the rock type and availability of water and examined technique and patination (Nobbs 1982, 1984, 2000). Nobbs generated single-handedly the largest body of rock art recording in SA. Although the recording of rock art does not physically contribute to the SAM collections in similar fashion to lithics, rock art recording is essential for appreciating the cultural landscape in which lithics sit.

**The SAM Archaeology Collection**
Prior to 1988, the SAM oversaw the recording of sites, collecting of objects and excavation of Aboriginal sites as part of its interest in accumulating knowledge on Indigenous cultures. Collecting was fairly eclectic, as Jones (1996) has pointed out and it was not until the arrival of Edward Stirling in 1911 that a systematic approach was taken. In 1911 an effort was made to commence a new means of recording finds, according to category rather than the previous 'lists' which simply listed each object as it appeared through the Museum door. Categories of collections were made, reflected in separate collections. Aboriginal objects were identified by an ‘A’ followed by a serial number inked onto each
object and hand written into a leather bound folio sized volume. At this time there was no further separation of ‘archaeology’ objects or of human biology. All three components were registered into ‘Anthropology’. Under Tindale, however, a SAM site card register for finds was established and these cards included information on the location and physical setting of the site.

Objects generally come into the SAM via public donation, gift, research expedition, field days by clubs or associations or purchase. Prior to 1988, all finds of Aboriginal objects including burials were brought to the attention of the SAM. Tindale, Campbell, Cooper and particularly Pretty whose appointment in 1965 coincided with an era of rapid growth in Adelaide’s outer suburbs spent much time salvaging archaeology and burials from disturbed land. The nature of donations of objects unfortunately results in little or no information on the provenance, date of collection and source for many objects. The absence of contextual information is one of the most serious issues that confront all archaeology collections. Undertaking systematic collection and excavation since the 1960s has provided some balance against the unprovenanced donations.

The hand-written volumes were transferred onto an electronic database in the late 1980s. This step enabled a separation of the super category of Aboriginal objects into ethnology, archaeology and human biology, each with its own database.

Currently there are about 18,600 entries on the archaeology database covering 15 regions in SA. The geographic regions were identified by Tindale and Cooper to allow regional trends to be recognised within the collection. The regions are listed in Table 1 below along with the number of entries per region and the acquisition span.
Table 1 Breakdown of the SAM archaeology database.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Acquisition Span</th>
<th>Entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>1902-1990s</td>
<td>2,870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central lakes</td>
<td>1921-1960s</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyre Peninsula</td>
<td>1923-1960s</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flinders ranges</td>
<td>1924-1980s</td>
<td>1,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangaroo Island</td>
<td>1930-1990s</td>
<td>1,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Eyre</td>
<td>1931-1960s</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Frome</td>
<td>1954-1960s</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakes and Coorong</td>
<td>1928-1980s</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid North</td>
<td>1926-1960s</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Mallee</td>
<td>1906-1950s</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>1934-1960s</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Ranges</td>
<td>1917-1960s</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Murray</td>
<td>1932-1970s</td>
<td>1,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>1917-1980s</td>
<td>3,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Desert</td>
<td>1902-1980s</td>
<td>955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorke Peninsula</td>
<td>1929-1970s</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA no location</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>18,640</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The earlier date of acquisition is the first date that an object for that region appears on the register but most collections in all regions were made during the 1930s-1960s. Each entry relates to a registered object or to a lot number. A lot is a box of objects, numbering anything from a few to a few hundred objects from the one site or region. Thus, the entries do not represent a numerical quantity. For example, an excavation may be entered under ten lot numbers but the bulk of material may be greater than a region with 100 entries of single objects. Entries can for this reason be quite deceiving and it is important to investigate a collection in order to understand it. The number of entries at around 18,600 is not a reliable indication of the number of artefacts held in the archaeology collection. The actual quantity numerically, is closer to, and probably many more than 2 million objects. Some collections have retained independent status, such as Roonka and Koonalda and not all of this material is entered onto the database.

Regionally the database suggests an emphasis on the south east, lakes and Coorong and the River Murray. This is not surprising considering that most burials have also come from this region and it was often burial finds that sparked archaeological interest in the 1930-1960s. In all, most regions of
SA are reflected evenly by quantity in the collection except for the Eyre Peninsula where far fewer collections have come into the SAM.

Until 1988, the SAM was the unquestioned repository for all Aboriginal finds – lithics, occupation assemblages, art, burials and ethnography. It was also in 1988 that SA witnessed the passing of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, designed to offer robust protection of sites and greater acknowledgement and inclusion of traditional owners. This legislation did not designate the SAM as a mandatory repository for finds and excavation assemblages since 1988 have been dispersed to the SAM, Aboriginal Affairs, an Indigenous cultural centre or a university. Around this same time the Archaeology Department, headed by Vincent Megaw, at Flinders University, began to establish itself as a dynamic teaching and research centre. The University of South Australia also taught components of Aboriginal archaeology, under Keith McConnochie, but despite this surge of energy and perhaps against expectation, the SAM lost traction on archaeological pursuits. During the 1990s, as Graeme Pretty headed toward retirement, the SAM became increasingly the store-house of an existing collection rather than finding synergy with university led research.

The collecting, recording and excavating of Indigenous archaeology sites continued apace with numerous research theses generated by post graduate candidates. Research focused on the regions that had long held archaeological interest (Mid Murray, southern Fleurieu, Kangaroo Island) with some critical revisions of existing assemblages, but research also took new pathways. The latter part of the 20th Century saw archaeology find its place in cultural resource management (or work area clearances) and at the turn of the 21st Century it found itself within the new arena of native title processes. This truly new archaeology has confronted the dynamics of Indigenous self-determination.

Since the 1988 legislative change, the SAM has become a member of the national program ‘Repatriation of Indigenous Culture Property’ (RICP). The program oversees the return of skeletal remains and secret sacred property to the relevant Indigenous communities. The management of this program has been a key focus for the SAM over the last 15 years, with many returns now made and many more in process. But the SAM is
also keen to revisit the archaeology collection and invigorate research programs in a collaborative, partnership role with Indigenous communities and other institutions.

The time interval since archaeology at the SAM was last active has in some ways proven advantageous. Techniques for dating archaeological materials and field and laboratory methods have changed dramatically. Of greatest consequence for an existing collection is the ability to date directly from bone and shell. Considering much of the collection has no associated charcoal or questionable association of charcoal, this is a significant step forward. The SAM is currently undertaking research on two of its key collections – Gilman and Koonalda. These projects received funding through AIATSIS and the Indigenous Heritage Program respectively, in the 2010 round. Research is also focusing on the upper Yorke Peninsula examining the archaeological and dreaming intersection of lake, river and high ranges. The Roonka assemblage is also part of a program to reconnect Indigenous people with the material and its research potential. All of these projects are being driven by Indigenous input and collaboration. The Archaeology Department at Flinders University and the SAM have worked towards a Memorandum of Understanding which will drive future collaborative research, teaching and Indigenous partnerships.

**Conclusion**

Archaeology in SA since 1880 has followed an energetic and inspired path as new discoveries led to new thoughts and directions. However, those earlier years were notably exclusive of Indigenous input except on an ethnological level. After the introduction of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act*, SA (1988), the SAM saw a dramatic change to its inclusion in the archaeological process. This, and the introduction of work area clearances, native title processes and the RICP as well as the dominance of universities in leading archaeological research have led to a revision of methodology. Archaeology research is now one of partnership and collaboration at all levels. It is hoped that this revitalisation leads to an even better understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture in the past – for the future.
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