NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 7th General Meeting of the Society for 1985 will be held in the
CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE
ON
MONDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 1985

AGENDA

1. Apologies:

2. Minutes of the previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held in the Conservation
   Centre on Monday 26th August 1985, having been circulated in this
   Journal, to be confirmed.

3. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals received since the last meeting, from other
   societies and organisations, will be tabled at the meeting.

4. Business:

5. Speaker:
   Head of the Discipline of Visual Arts, Flinders University of
   South Australia, will address the Society. The title of his
   address will be:

   CONFRONTATION AND CO-OPERATION:
   The 1983 Rescue Excavations of Adelaide's Destitute Asylum.

6. Supper will be served.

R. Allison,
Hon. Secretary
c/o The Conservation Centre
120 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
The past few years have seen a growing interest in the Aboriginal people who occupied the Adelaide area prior to European colonisation. Many secondary schools now include a study of the Kaurna in their curriculum. There is an increasing demand for excursions to visit the archaeological sites relating to this culture, at all levels of education.

The most recent manifestation of this interest has come in the form of the move by the Department of Sports and Recreation to create a walking trail along the coast, that takes in the sites of the mythical hero, Tjilbruke. It is proposed to mark these sites in an appropriate manner and it has been suggested that the trail should bear the hero's name.

The story of Tjilbruke is one of the few legends for the Adelaide south coast, that have been preserved. Most people are familiar with the account of the death of Kulultuwí, Tjilbruke's nephew, as a result of his transgressing a food tabu. The legend describes the smoking of Kulultuwí's body amidst ritual attended by many people. Then the mourning Tjilbruke took up the body of his nephew and travelled southward along the coast, towards his own hunting territory at Rapid Bay. As he was overwhelmed with grief, periodically, he wept, his tears calling forth a spring of fresh water wherever they fell. These springs remain to this day - or at least to fifteen years ago. Finally Tjilbruke placed his nephew in a cave near Rapid Bay, and himself was transformed into the ibis known as Tjilbruke to the Aboriginal people.

The legend was recorded by Dr Norman Tindale from Karloa, an Aboriginal from the Lake Alexandrina area (Jarildakald) and was included in an account of an unusual burial Tindale and Mountford had excavated south of Normanville. In explaining its inclusion he wrote:

It is quoted here because of its reference to the use of caves as burial grounds, and its setting within the district under discussion.

1 Tindale and Mountford, 1936: 500-501.
Subsequently the legend has been assumed to be one belonging to the Kaurna, the people in whose territory the sites mentioned occur. In Robert Edward's booklet The Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains the Tjilbruke account is referred to as "a local legend" and it is mentioned in more recent productions, The Kaurna and Aboriginal and Historic Places around Metropolitan Adelaide and the South Coast.

Yet I question whether it is, in fact, a Kaurna legend. My reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, the actual report of the legend is not from a Kaurna informant, but from a Lake Alexandrina man. Nowhere does Tindale suggest that the legend is part of Kaurna tradition.

Secondly, the account of the burial preparations and traditions are quite contradictory to those recorded by the early ethnographers for the "Adelaide tribes": Teichelmann and Schürmann provide the earliest account.

Wadnawadna as in wadnawadna warra. By this term the natives understand the inquest held upon almost every deceased person when the cause of death is not very apparent. The body is carried about on a bier (tirkatti or kuinyowinji) on localities where the deceased had lately been living. One person is asking: "Has any person killed you where you have been sleeping? Do you know him?" If the corpse deny it then they go no farther; does it give an affirmative answer, the inquest is continued at that place. The negative answer is believed to be given, when the bier does not move round; the affirmative, when the bier is moved round, which motion the corpse itself is said to produce, influenced by Kuinyowinji, who is hovering over the bier. If the murderer is present, then the bier spears him, i.e. goes against him, and a fight ensues.

1 Edwards, u.d. :12.
3 Ross, 1984: 7
4 Teichelmann and Schürmann, 1840: 51.
Cawthorne is the most respected of later ethnographers, having spent much of his youth in the native encampment near the River Torrens. He provides the following description of the Kaurna observation of death.

Amongst the Adelaide tribe, as soon as a person dies there is a general lamentation consisting of a loud cry made by the relatives and friends. The body is immediately wrapped up in the skins or clothing worn during life. In the course of a day or two it is placed upon the viralli, or bier, which is made of branches crossed so as to form radii of a circle, and an examination entered upon as to the cause of death. The bier is carried on the shoulders of five or six. One asks, "What person has killed you? Do you know him?" If the corpse says "No one," the inquest ceases, and the body is taken from the bier and buried in a grave six feet deep.

This later description follows Teichelmann so closely that it seems possible that it is, in part derivative, but it does add some significant additional details. Both accounts indicate that primary interment is standard practice.

Wyatt follows Cawthorne's account closely. Stephen's recollection of the funeral of the "queen" of the Adelaide tribe gives no suggestion of a period of mummification prior to the ceremony. Stephen gives detailed description of the preparation of the grave and the associated ritual before the bearers of the bier,

...marched straight to the open grave. After a short pause—not a word was spoken by any—a few pieces of bark and some leaves were placed on the bottom of the grave; the body was then gently lowered, leaves and bark were placed gently on it, and then the grave was filled with earth. With bark and boughs they built a little wurley over the newly-made grave, with its open side towards the east. The mourners camped that night not far distant. Next morning the eastern sun... [Kissed] the newly-made grave... a sign that she had reached the land of light and the rising sun.

1 Cawthorne, 1925: 73. From notes dated 1844.
2 Woods, 1879: 164.
3 Stephens, 1890: 495-6.
A much later account appears to contradict these much earlier reports. It is recorded by Tindale, when discussing the nature of Aboriginal campsites he mentions a

... site of the Kaurna people at Morphett Vale some miles south of Adelaide and the last place inhabited by them before final disruption, following the death of the father of Ivaritji, the last woman survivor of the tribe. It was here that her father's body was trussed, rubbed with red ochre, and smoked over a fire.

Having no other details it is difficult to analyse this evidence. Unlike the earlier accounts this related to the final phases of dislocation, and the Kaurna may already have come under influence from the of the more southerly and eastern people, which I will discuss shortly.

There is limited archaeological evidence that can be brought to bear on the question. Reports of Aboriginal burials are mostly brief, and almost always lack details of stratigraphy and associated cultural material. This is because, with the exception of Konaratti Cave, the burials have been uncovered by chance, during building or quarrying activities. On of the earliest reports of "burial places of the Aborigines" reports how

The grinding and scraping of the drays and vehicles has brought the bodies /ie. skeletal material/ to view on the present surface, and in many cases in a perfect state of skeleton...

They girdled up, the knees nearly to the chin.

Tindale's account of the burial at Pedler's Creek is the most complete published account.

On removing the sand it was seen that the remains, probably those of a male of middle age, lay on the right side with the knees and arms doubled up to the chin, so that the fingers were in front of the face.

In 1960 Tindale uncovered another burial, this time at an inland site known as Wadeila. Again it was a flexed burial with the hands close to the face.

1 Tindale, 1974: 55.
2 Colonists, Copper and Corn in the Colony of South Australia: 33
3 Tindale, 1926: 10.
4 Tindale, 1960, 2.
Three years later G.L. Pretty conducted a rescue excavation of skeletal material disturbed during quarrying on a hillside at Hackham. One flexed burial was excavated from a horizon of grey sand overlying red.

All other recorded burials have been disturbed, and partial, but the similarity of the above accounts is striking and argues for uniform burial practices over the area in question. In all cases enough disturbance had already occurred to make it difficult to know whether the burials were primary, as the early ethnographic account suggest, or secondary interrements following a period of mummification. The final disposition of the corpse appears to have been the same.

One fact that the reports of burial finds do make clear is that burials are located over a very wide area and do not seem to be concentrated in cemeteries. Nor are they confined to one type of landform. Thus we have the 1850 report of material at Noarlunga on the river flat, and many reported from the sandy beaches, Glenelg producing the largest number (thirteen) generally collected in the first thirty years of this century. Maslin's Beach, the Normanville Sandhills, Myponga, Aldinga Beach, Sellicks Beach and Rapid Bay have all produced fragmentary material. The Pedler's Creek burial already described comes from what is known today as Moana, and according to local informants was not the only burial amongst the sandhills there.

Because of the heavy clay, hilltops are not likely places for burials but there are reports of five burials at Maslins Beach Headland, and in 1915 a burial was reported at Haycock Point. These sites may be very early burials dating to the period of occupation often called the Kartan, which predates the formation of the present dunes. 1

Whilst there is fairly restricted support for the smoking of Kaurna bodies, prior to burial, which makes the Tjilbruke account seem somewhat anomolous, this is not the case for the Aboriginal tribes of the lower Murray and the Coorong. In these areas this distinctive mode of burial is frequently remarked upon, and forms the subject of early illustrations.

1 Much of the work in compiling the section on burial records is based on work done by Chris Whipp and Rob Graham in 1979.
There are only two pieces of solid evidence of the Kaurna practicing the smoking ritual. The most reliable is from the Kongaratti burial itself; Tindale is definite in stating that the body had been smoked prior to burial,¹ and like Kulultuwi, it had been carefully placed in a cave.

The second piece of evidence is S.T. Gill's illustration of an "Elevated Tomb" at Myponga. Here a low platform is shown draped with reeds, adjacent to a watercourse. Whilst smoking is not shown, the platform resembles those illustrated for this purpose further east. Whilst artists are at times guilty of artistic licence, we should see, in this picture, further strength to the argument that smoking was not entirely unused by the Kaurna.

The fact that both examples occur at the extreme range of the Kaurna territory is telling. The people in this area would be much more likely to be influenced by the Lakes and Coorong tribes than those further to the north. The adoption of this mode of burial of the dead would be a prime example of such influence.

Tindale records,

A southern horde /of the Kaurna/ spoke a slight dialect at Rapid Bay.²

The development of linguistic differences is a strong indicator that the southern group was no longer identical to their northern kinsmen. It may not be without significance that Tjilbruke, himself, came from Rapid Bay.

If the theory I have put forward is correct, there remains the question: why would the almost hostile tribes of the Lakes area have a legend relating to the detailed geography of Kaurna territory? The springs occur fifteen to twenty-five kilometres apart: perhaps a day's journey for a travelling man. Could the legend be a travel guide for Lakes traders? Milerum, Tindale's Wandegald informant, spoke of travelling to Adelaide from the Coorong, with his family, so such journeys became feasible after the disruption of traditional Kaurna organisation.

The arguments against the Tjilbruke legend being a genuine Kaurna legend are not entirely water-tight, but there are certainly enough problems with the legend to warrant a very close look at it.

¹Tindale, 1966: 498.
²Tindale, 1974: 213.
REFERENCES:


Teichelmann, C.G. and Schurmann, C.W., 1840, Outlines of a Grammar, Vocabulary, and Phraseology of the Aboriginal Language of South Australia, Spoken by the Natives in and for some distance around Adelaide. Adelaide.


Unpublished Items:

Graham, R., Untitled Paper on Burials Located on the Fleurieu Peninsula.


Tindale, N.B., 1955. "Campsite at Section 185, H.of Willunga at Native Place called Waldeila "Wallaby Place."" unpublished field notes, S.A. Mus Arch Documents.