NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The first General Meeting of the Society for 1982 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00PM MONDAY, 22 MARCH, 1982

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous General Meeting.
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held Monday, 26 October, 1981 to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members.
   The following new members have been elected to the Society:
   Richard N. WARD
   Christopher NOBBS
   David N. McGrath.

4. Papers and Journals.
   Papers and Journals from other Societies and Organizations will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Business.

6. Speaker.
   MRS. COLLEEN MORROW, Proprietor of the Sunray Gallery at Hahndorf, will present the Meeting with an address and exhibition of basketware from the Indonesian Islands, including Lombok and Borneo. Included in the exhibition will be basketware from the Sunray Gallery and some items from Mrs. Morrow's private collection. South Australian Museum slides of similar articles will be shown following this address.

7. Supper.

VERN TOLCHER,
Honorary Secretary,
213 Greenhill Road,
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PART 3 - BURIAL GROUNDS AND PRACTICES

There has been little information published which deals with Aboriginal burials on the Fleurieu Peninsula. Some articles have occasionally appeared in the Records of the South Australian Museum, South Australian Naturalist, Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia, local histories and newspapers, which describe or note the discovery of skeleton remains. These are listed at the conclusion of this article. In addition to written records, the South Australian Museum collections contain a painting by Gill of an "elevated" or "platform" burial, observed by him at Myponga. Similar platform burials from Encounter Bay are drawn in Woods' book on the areas Aborigines.

There are few large burial grounds on the Peninsula, like those which have been found along the Murray River and Coorong. The largest which we know of existed at Noarlunga, and the following description appeared in an early newspaper (1850 or 1851):

"A curious discovery has just been made in Noarlunga, to which our attention was drawn by Mr. Knipe, the medical practitioner. In the centre of the road, at the opposite end to the Horseshoe Inn, a burial place of the Aborigines has been discovered, by the wearing away of the crown of the road in the traffic. Whether this was the scene of a furious fight, or simply a place of internment, then quite private, but now perhaps the most public in Noarlunga, it would be curious to know. The grinding and scraping of the drays and vehicles has brought the bodies to view on the present surface, and in many cases in the perfect state of skeleton, to a considerable extent. They are doubled up, the knees nearly to the chins, and the whole complete forms are distinctly seen, as distinctly as if they had been drawn with white chalk on the roadway. It is believed that the bodies thus buried, or huddled in, go to some depth."

There appear to be no further references to this site and no information is available on the total number of individuals buried. In pre-colonial days the area would have made a good camping ground for bands of Aboriginals. On the seaward side of the Onkaparinga River the land was flat and probably lightly wooded. On the opposite bank of the river steep, high cliffs would have provided some measure of shelter in times of rainy or windy weather. Fish and shell fish are still found in the river and were most likely to have been in greater supply before European settlement.

The reference to skeletal material in this area may have some connection with skeletal material found in a loam pit at Noarlunga in 1971. This material has now been destroyed although the South Australian Museum keeps a record on its discovery.

Further along the coast other, smaller, burial sites have been located, usually by erosion. This has done considerable damage to the dunes along Pedlers Creek at Moana and exposed burials and campsites. One of these has been described by Tindale in the South Australian Naturalist. Other unpublished Museum documents also describe the erosion of human bone fragments and associated artifacts from these dunes. Much of this material is found in an old pre or early Holocene dune system of reddish coloured sand and can be assumed to be of considerable antiquity. (An idea consistent with the fragile and fragmentary nature of the bone and their association with pirri points and microliths.)
Several miles south on the cliff top at Maslins Beach, human skeletal material has also been found along with microliths, including a crescent found by the authors. This site was, in all likelihood, used when the sea was further out from its present position and was not so close to a wind swept and unsheltered cliff.

Inland from Maslins Beach, near Willunga, at a site known to the Aborigines as Waldelia (the Wallaby Place), campsite debris and burials have been found, one grave containing the disarticulated skeletal remains of three persons.

Further along the coast burials are known from Normanville, Cape Jervis, Tunkailijilla Beach, Parsons Beach, Waitpinga and Port Elliott (Commodore Point). The last three being clearly associated with Aboriginal campsites (hearth, stone tools and waste flakes).

**Burial Styles**

From the evidence available to us today, it is possible to begin to reconstruct the burial customs of the Aboriginal population of the Fleurieu Peninsula as they were at the time of contact. From the data available (considering the inferred ages of discovered burials), it would appear that these customs had existed for a considerable period before this time. Precise dates are of course, unavailable at this time. In addition to skeletal material and documentation in the South Australian Museum collection, this account also makes use of several historical accounts of actual burials among living Aboriginals.

When the available material is examined it appears that one particular style of burial was the most common. This common or 'typical' burial was one in which the body was buried in a shallow earth grave in what is a crouched position. This burial position is referred to as a flexed burial. In this position the knees are brought up towards the chest with the lower legs bent back. The arms from the shoulder follow the body till the elbows. From the elbow the arms bent upward again to allow the hands to rest in front of the chest near the knees. This position is easily seen in the following drawings. These examples are drawn from photographs taken during excavations. The skeleton on the left was excavated by N.B. Tindale at Moana, the centre by Hale at Memorial Drive and the skeleton on the right was found by the Anthropological Society at Willunga.

The place of burial itself also seems to have followed a pattern. Those burials with sufficient documentation to allow study, all conform to this pattern. The Aboriginals of the Fleurieu Peninsula appear to have buried their dead below their campsites. This is clearly shown by the number of skeletons found a short distance below known campsites. Some burials were found to be surrounded by camp debris which was used as 'fill' for the grave. Some examples will show this more clearly. There was an Aboriginal burial ground where Memorial Drive (Adelaide) now runs. This site was investigated by H.M. Hale shortly after its discovery. In a S.A. Naturalist article, Hale
reproduces a photograph showing how a camp fire was lit directly above a shallow grave. In the same article Hale describes a grave found at Croydon, also below a campsite. Reports documenting the skeletal material in the Human Biology collection sometimes describe the condition of the burial. The report which documents the material from Waldelia indicates that not only was the burial associated with a campsite but that the campsite was in use at the time of burial. N.B. Tindale remarked in part of this report that he considered the burial to be of equal age to the camp debris around it. The report documenting burials at Victor Harbour (Kent Reserve) also note that the skeletal material was surrounded by camp debris. A similar South Australian Museum report on the Hackham burials states that these burials were associated with lenses of ash and camp debris. The excavation of Kongarati Cave by Mountford and Tindale showed the cave to have been a popular camp site for Aboriginals. This cave would appear to have been in use at the time of first contact. This is indicated by the preservation of wood and string artifacts recovered by excavation. This excavation also revealed the recently buried body of an old woman located a short distance below the surface of a hearth. The body (whose state of preservation indicates it to be recent) has been sun or smoke dried in a flexed position prior to burial.

The following sites were found to contain burials of the common type. That is, they contained a body buried in a shallow earth grave; in a flexed position immediately below a campsite. At two of these sites skeletal material also occurred which does not follow this pattern. Apart from these two sites (which contained several types of burial) no sufficiently documented burials have been located with skeletal material not of the 'typical' type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commodore Point</td>
<td><em>Adelaide Observer</em>, 12-1-1884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croydon</td>
<td>H.M. Hale, 1926</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glenelg</td>
<td>Unpublished Photos South Australian Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hackham</td>
<td>Unpublished Report South Australian Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kongarati Cave</td>
<td>Mountford and Tindale, 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Drive</td>
<td>H.M. Hale, 1926</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noarlunga</td>
<td><em>Colonists Corn and Copper in the Colony of South Australia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moana</td>
<td>N.B. Tindale, 1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Reserve</td>
<td><em>Victor Harbour Times</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldelia</td>
<td>Unpublished Report South Australian Museum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The alignment of the body in its flexed position does not appear to follow any geographical pattern (that is, the body does not face the sunrise or sunset or the sea, etc.). An interesting suggestion has been put forward in relation to Aboriginal burials in Victoria which may be applicable here. This idea is that the dead person was buried facing his or her totem centre or some other place of religious significance. If this was the case it will be difficult, perhaps impossible to demonstrate now.

There is a published account of a burial of the 'common' type on the Peninsula. This account is found in Woods' book on the Aborigines of South Australia, published in 1878.

"When a man dies his legs are bent so that the knees are brought nearly close to the chin, and the arms are folded together in a similar manner."

"The place of burial being fixed upon, the earth or sand is loosened by the digging sticks and thrown out by the hands; the body is laid in the grave on side and the hole being filled up again is usually covered with branches and bark of trees."
The ages of these burials vary, with no carbon dates available. The burials at Waldelta, Kongarati Cave and Kent Reserve are comparatively recent while that at Pedlers Creek is much older. Further research may one day give a sufficiently large sample of dated burials to demonstrate the antiquity of the 'common' type of burial.

Disarticulated Burials

I have already mentioned two sites located on the Fleurieu Peninsula having burials which differ from the 'common' type. These burials were of skeletal material in a disarticulated state. In the 'common' type of burial the skeletal material is found in an articulated state unless it has been disturbed in some manner. The locating of disarticulated skeletons appears to be related to the custom of drying and elevating human remains on wooden platforms. After the flesh has decayed and the body fallen apart the now disarticulated skeleton was buried in the earth. It is possible that the body was only left in the open until dry and then stored or carried until it fell apart. This custom (common both along the Coorong and the Lakes area) explains the finding of up to three disarticulated skeletons in one grave. The two sites where skeletons in this state were present are Kent Reserve Victor Harbour (Pit C) and Waldelta. The South Australian Museum documentation referring to these sites tells us they contained the (estimated) remains of three individuals.

Several accounts describe how bodies were dried and prepared for burial. In addition, there are several drawings of the platforms upon which the dead were placed. There is also a reference to the reburial of the disarticulated material in the earth after an unspecified period. Such burials appear to have been much more common among the Aboriginal tribes east of the Mount Lofty Ranges than along the coastal plain.

A description of the burial process is recorded in the *Adelaide Observer*.

The process described is similar to that given elsewhere for the Encounter Bay tribe:

"The process was to strip the corpse and then truss it up in an attitude similar to that adopted by the old tailors. Next the body was raised upon forked saplings about five feet above the ground, and a smouldering fire was lit underneath....The smoking of the corpse was continued often for a fortnight, by the end of which the moisture and fat were dried out. The process completed, the remains weighing probably not more than twenty pounds were carefully wrapped in bags or cloths...."

These findings of disarticulated skeletons on the Fleurieu Peninsula on these two sites and possibly elsewhere not yet located would appear to indicate diffusion across tribal boundaries from the Aboriginal tribes to the east. This is a much more likely explanation than considering them to be evidence of a previous, now abandoned custom. Tribal boundaries like all cultural boundaries, are never as solid as lines on a map would indicate. Estimates have been made which indicate that as many as from ten to twenty percent of Aboriginal marriages were across tribal boundaries. The boundary for the coastal Adelaide tribe ran along the higher areas of the Mount Lofty Ranges. This boundary was ill defined and easily crossed. It would be reasonable to assume that small numbers of Aboriginals crossed this boundary for a variety of reasons in both directions. This was not an uncommon occurrence elsewhere in Australia and has wide documentation. In this manner, people crossing from the east could have introduced disarticulated burials on to the Adelaide plains. It may have been that this custom was gradually diffusing westwards towards the coast. This will require
the scientific investigation of many more burial sites as yet unlocated if it
is to be demonstrated, one way or another.

The finding of disarticulated skeletons at Kent Reserve, Victor Harbour,
is understandable when considering ethnographic evidence from the Encounter
Bay tribe. In this tribe platform burials were common. Early settlers saw
burial platforms along the lower Murray, Lake Alexandrina and on Hindmarsh
Island. In Woods' book the Rev. Taplin describes burial customs for the
"Narrinyerri" who inhabited the area between Cape Jervis and a spot approxi-
mately thirty miles upstream from the Murray's entrance to Lake
Alexandrina. According to this account, the corpse was dried and placed
in a hut until it collapsed, when its skull was taken by the family and the
remaining bones burnt "within the precincts of the family temple." (pp. 22)
This perhaps was a totem centre or some other place of ritual and religious
significance.

Aldinga

As the Anthropological Society Survey concentrated on the Aldinga area
care was taken to locate any skeletal material from this area in the South
Australian Museum. The collection contains only two registration numbers from
Aldinga. Both reached the collection by public donation in 1955 after being
purchased at a sale. No record exists as to the exact location of the find
except that the seller found them at Aldinga. There are no further references
located to date which refer to burials or skeletal material from the Aldinga
area.

Conclusion

The Fleurieu Peninsula was divided amongst several Aboriginal tribes. The
areas most relevant to the 1979 Anthropological Society Survey were the
coastal areas of the Adelaide Kaurna tribe and the Encounter Bay tribe, the
Raminjjeri. A typical burial of the Kaurna at contact was (a) a single (b)
flexed burial (c) in a shallow earth grave below a campsite. Amongst the
Raminjjeri contemporary accounts state that platform sun or smoke dried
burials were the norm. Numerous flexed earth burials have been found in this
area as well as disarticulated skeletons. Perhaps the custom had at some
period in the past been introduced from the north. In a similar manner
platform burials may have been starting to filter west onto the Adelaide
plains.
NOTES

The Kurna People of the Adelaide Plains.

"The Encounter Bay Tribe" in J.D. Wood's (ed) The Native Tribes of South Australia.

Colonists Copper and Corn in the Colony of South Australia 1850-1851.

"Native Burial at Peddlers Creek S.A." in South Australian Naturalist, 1926.


South Australian Naturalist, 1926.

"Some Aboriginal Graves at Adelaide, South Australia", South Australian Naturalist, 1926.

From photos collected by V. Campbell during 1979 Anthropological Society of S.A. Survey.

The Aborigines of South Eastern Australia as They Were, 1971. p. 7.

The Native Tribes of South Australia.


18.3.1916.

"Tribal and Inter-tribal Marriage among the Australian Aborigines" in Human Biology, 1953.

"Some Ecological Bases of Australian Tribal Boundaries" in N. Peterson (ed) Tribes and Boundaries in Australia.

LIST OF PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

The following list is not necessarily complete but care has been taken to locate as many sources as possible.

Books and Articles

Colonists Copper and Corn in the Colony of South Australia Reprinted newspaper articles 1850-1851.


Pretty, G.L. "Rescue Excavation of an Aboriginal Grave at Tailem Bend, South Australia." S.A. Naturalist, June 1967. Discusses multiple burials at Tailem Bend and Patowalunga and include photographs.

Tindale, N.B. "Native Burial at Peddlers Creek, South Australia." S.A. Naturalist, VIII, 1926. Includes photographs.

Tindale, N.B. and Mountford, C.P. "Results of the Excavation of Kongarati Cave near Second Valley, South Australia", Records of South Australian Museum, 1936. Includes diagrams and photographs.

Woods (ed) The Native Tribes of South Australia, 1879. Includes chapters on different tribes, and drawings of burial platforms.

Newspaper Articles
