NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 2nd General Meeting of the Society for 1984 will be held in the S.A. Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide on:

MONDAY 30TH APRIL 1984 at 8.00 pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of the previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous General meeting, held Monday 26th March 1984 to be confirmed. A copy of the minutes is attached.

3. New Members:
   The following new members were elected to the Society:
   - Dr Peter Sutton
   - Catherine Lyn McMahon

4. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals from other societies and organisations will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Business:

6. Speakers:
   The following speakers will address the meeting:
   - Mr Brian Kirk
   - Ms Mona Tur
   Both are engaged developing the Pitjantjatjara Language Teaching Course at the Aboriginal Studies and Teaching Centre at the Underdale Campus of the S.A.C.A.E.

   Brian Kirk: Aboriginal Language Teaching
   Mona Tur: Memories of the Oodnadatta area.

7. Supper will be served and a Trading Table held.

M.F. Nobbs
Hon. Secretary
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Rob. Graham - a past member of the Anthropological Council and now working as an anthropologist in the Kimberleys, sent this paper.

- KIMBERLEY ETHNO-ARCHAOLOGY -

Halls Creek is a small town in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. In both its present location and at "old town" (about 14 kilometres distant) it has long been a magnet to people of both races. White settlement began over 100 years ago, following favourable reports from explorers on good grazing land. Pastoralism was the initial attraction and remains the basis of the area's economy. A gold rush last century brought many diggers into the area for a short time. Today, minerals are again attracting attention throughout the region.

Many of the early pastoral properties have survived until today. On these stations the nomadic Aborigines became settled. Horror stories are told of how this came about. Disputes often arose over pastoralists' fears that Aborigines were spearing cattle. Early documents also talk of fighting due to the settlers kidnapping or mis-treating Aboriginal women. Often the settlers organized hunts and "punitive" raids. Throughout the East Kimberley, Aborigines can lead you to the places where killings occurred, complete with charred bones. The murdering of East Kimberley Aborigines became a local scandal early this century leading to a Royal Commission, 1927-28. Over a relatively short period all the nomads either settled down or died. The Djaru speaking people settled on such stations as Flora Valley, Gordon Downs and Sturt Creek. Gidja people, whose land is north-east of Halls Creek, settled on Alice Downs, Springvale and the reserve at Moola Bulla. This long period of station settlement contrasts sharply with the situation in Fitzroy Crossing, the next town west along the Great Northern Highway. In Fitzroy, most people speak Walmadjirri or Yulbarri, and many lived in the desert until the 1950's. B.M.R. geologists found recent traces of people living in the desert when they visited in 1956.1

Among Gidja and Djaru people, regular stone working must have ceased around the turn of the century. Not even the oldest people known to me have used stone. (Some of the desert people, mainly Walbirri, have moved into the region and did use stone in their youth). Although the use of stone ceased long ago, knowledge of it has remained. Aboriginal people are proud of how their culture enabled them to live in harsh conditions and, young or old, they discuss and share knowledge of it.

When people settled on the station, iron and steel became available in quantity. Its hardness and ability to keep a sharp edge doomed stone. In some tools, stone flakes were replaced by suitably sharpened pieces of iron. In the modified but more efficient form, some survived in common use until quite recently. The major uses of stone (and then iron) were said to be for woodworking and as spearheads. Wood was worked into boomerangs, still used as clapsticks and woven shields for protection and dancing; coolamon, still occasionally used as baby carriers; spears; woomeras; and many other artefacts. Spear and woomera were in regular use until the 1960's, when social security payments and equal wages ended the need to augment rations with hunting. It was this that had kept bushcraft alive among the station Aborigines. During the "wet" season some stations sent their workers "walkabout" to hunt and forage.

To work wood, the gum hafted stone adze was replaced by a piece of iron mounted with gum or wire to a traditional curved wooden handle. These can still be seen in use, although today a sharpened piece of auto spring is more common. These make an effective adze or chisel and have no mounting to come loose or break.

The manufacture of the famous biface points has never ceased though glass is now the preferred raw material. These were, and still are, made for sale to interested people. For hunting, iron spear tips became the norm, probably because of their greater strength over stone, glass or insulator. As mined, the fine-grained chert used to make spear points, is very tough and difficult to flake.

1. gum and stone
2. wire and steel
3. auto spring

Kimberly Adzes
To make this easier the stone is heated for several hours beneath hot coals. This causes the rock to flake with much less pressure and in a more regular manner. It also renders it rather brittle and liable to break upon impact with some solid objects such as a tree or rocks. A point which shatters upon impact with its target is desirable as it will cause a greater wound, but will only delay a hunt while repairs are made if it breaks on some other object. Station Aborigines readily adapted old horse shoes to serve as spear heads. These were cut to length, heated till red-hot, and beaten into a thin leaf shaped point. Along their edges they were sharpened with sandstone or metal files. These "shovel spears" proved most effective and continued in use until quite recently. One man still uses his occasionally and other men have them in their camps. Their sharp edges also made useful knives.

In addition to the adze, people traditionally used the ground edge axe to work wood. This was especially useful for cutting out native honey (or sugar bag) from hollow tree trunks. Stone axes were not, and cannot, be used in the same manner as steel ones. Unlike the usual motion of a steel axe, a stone one cannot be used to cut directly into timber. To do so would soon dislodge the axe head from its hafting of gum, sinew and human hair string. It had to be used at only a very shallow angle to the surface, "shaving" off a thin slice of wood with each cut. This would make the job of cutting down a tree a time consuming one, but would do less damage to the axe and save time on its repair.

Several stone tools previously unknown to me have been pointed out on old campsites. One, described as a "bush" spoon was used for scooping out a cooked yam. This was a unifacially chipped stone flake worked to a rounded leaf shape. All edges have steep and not sharp angles. It was held by its thin end and the broad end used to scrape the flesh of the yam and transfer it into a person’s mouth. The first one to me (Fig. 4) was picked up on a campsite near sandy flats thick with yam plants.

Ground seeds were an important part of the bush diet here as in other parts of Australia. For grinding the many varieties of edible seed, millstones were devised. The usual type is a heavy sandstone slab with one or more V-shaped grooves worn into it. These are long and relatively thin but often quite deep. Into these were placed the seeds. These were crushed with a special upper stone (Fig. 5). The triangular with each side possessing a curved edge which will fit into the groove in the lower mill. Any one of the three edges could have been used. Many of these can be seen on old campsites even when the lower stones are gone. One set of these stones (Fig. 5,6) was taken to Sturt Creek station long ago and was occasionally used to this day. On one old campsite I was shown a millstone of a different type entity. This is of the more usual kind with a roughly circular concave grinding surface. What is unusual about it is its size and the amount of work done to it on all its surfaces. It is rather small, 22x17.5 cms. across. On its underside it has also been ground, into a roughly convex shape. Around the edges it has been chipped and ground to remove as much of the rock as possible. The reason for all this work became clear when its use was explained. It is transportable, designed to be carried by a woman upon her head. As much rock as possible was removed to make it light and comfortable for the carrier. (The mill was balanced upside down with the concave grinding surface matching the curve of the skull). Any waterworn pebble picked up one of the numerous creek beds would have been used as the upper stone. In this way possibly at times when certain seeds were available, it could be carried from camp to camp exploiting the food as found. Carrying seed in a coolamon to a camp where a water source was permanently stored would risk the loss of seed to spillage or other accident.

This paper has outlined some of the information still to be gained from people who have lived in close contact with Europeans for about one hundred years. Pride and interest in their peoples' achievements are strong and will, I believe, continue as long as the people themselves.

Research for this paper was conducted under a Commonwealth Post graduate Research Award from the University of Adelaide. Thanks are due to the Sturt Creek, Ringers Soak and Chinamans Garden Communities.

ii. Lamond, W.H. writes: "The spear struck the bone, and it took six months' probing in the hospital to get all the small pieces of shattered flint out of the wound". "Five years in the Kimberley", Early Days 1971, Vol. 7 (3).
4. "Bush spoon" (10 × 4 cm)

5. Upper millstone

6. Lower millstone with two grinding grooves (½ nat. size)