NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 8th General Meeting of the Society will be held at the Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield Street Adelaide on

MONDAY 22nd OCTOBER 1984 AT 8.00 PM.

AGENDA

1. Apologies

2. Minutes of Previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting held at the Conservation Centre on 24th September, to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members:
   No new members were elected to the Society for this month.

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

5. Business:

6. Speaker:
   Mr. Howard Groome will address the meeting and the title of his Address will be:

   "A Night with the Kaurna"

   The address will be accompanied by slides.

7. Supper will be served.

M. F. Nobbs,
Honorary Secretary,
c/o 213 Greenhill Road,
EASTWOOD. S.A. 5063.

Subscriptions to the Society for 1985 are due on 26 November, 1984.
In many ways the Presidency is the best of the offices in any organisation. One is generally spared the writing of letters, the sorting of libraries and the compilation of newsletters. However, the President has two major responsibilities:

The first is the chairing of Meetings - and on that score I haven't been conspicuous this year, although the reasons for my absences have always been impeccable.

The second responsibility is the delivery of the Presidential Address. I know of only one President who has been able to escape this task; and that doubtless is because of his extensive knowledge of the Public Service.

As I lack his advantages, I have been toying all year with possible topics with which to regale my audience on this occasion. My first impulse, back in March, when I was in an advanced state of pregnancy, was to tackle a subject that I find very interesting but one on which I have no expertise. The only safe way to put forward my ideas would be as a Presidential Address! The subject was Birth, Fertility and Death in Primitive Society. I would have needed considerable ingenuity, or failing that quite a lot of research, to stitch together the data that I have already accumulated for it ranges from the spacing of the birth dates of children amongst the Kung women of the Kalahari; findings relating to the age of skeletal material excavated in New Zealand to inconsistencies in European estimates of the age of Hawaiians in the eighteenth century! Even had I included such scientific data as the use of flowers in the Neandethal mortuary practices it seemed that even my ingenuity might be rather strained; and perhaps your credulity.

Further more, as the year progressed, and I resembled less and less a Palaeolithic Venus figurine, my enthusiasm for tackling that subject waned.

Moana was an obvious topic, and perhaps for that very reason I have discarded it also. The Society has had much on Moana and the Fluerieu Peninsula from me, and I felt that on this occasion I should spare members more of the same.

I am however an archaeologist. Unlike my colleagues in the possibly related field of history, (scholars are still searching for the missing link that proves their relationship) instead of working systematically forward on a subject from some distant point in time, I work backwards from the present to that point. With this slightly idiosyncratic view of the past I intend to take up the subject of my last Presidential Address where it began and press backwards into the dim recesses of times past.

For those whose memories are short, or whose membership is recent, on that occasion I traced the development of an unique cult: the Collectors of the S.A. Museum, Temple of the Acquirors. I spoke with particular reference to the archaeological section. Tonight I wish to go beyond this period in the twentieth century to the very origins of not only the cult but the very temple itself. By the twentieth century the cult and Temple were part the Establishment with a well organised hierarchy of priests officiating at complex rituals in large and well presented buildings. But this has not always been the case, as I shall discuss this evening.
The evidence of the beginnings of the Museum cult is sparse and can only be gained by considerable perseverance amongst the musty parchments held in the very inner sanctum of that kindred organization, the State Library, which incidentally shares a common origin with the Museum. Here in the irregular script of Waterhouse and the cramped hand of Haacke are revealed the early secrets of the present Temple of the Acquisitor.

The mantle of power fell first about the shoulders of Frederick George Waterhouse, a man whose vision of the future growth of the cult rarely shone through his monthly report titled 'Report on the Progress of the Museum for the month of...' He conscientiously listed specimens presented to the Museum, acquired by it or exchanged, and stuffed up - I mean, mounted by its taxidermists, Mr. Withers. But as in all liturgies the very repetition of form assumed a significance of its own so that the lists almost read like genealogies. In fact, that is what they are: genealogies of the collections of today. In these lists the antecedents of the bird, mineral, beetle, fish, animal and ethnological collections can all be traced. Their range and variety were assiduously pursued by Mr. Waterhouse, but there appears to have been no over-riding plan or goals concerning the acquisition of these collections. Then as now, the Temple took what it could get - preferably for nothing. Thus, from the very beginning the unshakeable precedent was set; that by the presentation of specimens - be they nine legged spiders or minerals from Burra - was a means of attaining grace and even absolution. Even selling items to the temple could count as a virtue if they were properly identified and labelled.

With an acquisitions policy of this kind, there were naturally some pretty curious donations. Let me name a few. There is a group of those revolting freaks of nature which can still be seen in country folk museums preserved in ghastly jars of formalin: a lamb with two heads, a chicken with four legs, 'a sheep's hoof with extraordinary growth', a 'singular spider' (we can be sure it was of a type which had no plural). Then there were some curious items of a historical character; 'a bottle of water from the spring near the tomb of Napoleon the Great, St. Helena'; or, presented by Mr. W. Gow of Blanchewater in December, 1878 a letter 'by the late Mr. John McKinley, buried at Cooper's Creek and dated December 7th, 1861, with only date and signature legible'.

Now there's the material history is made from!

Mr. Taplin of Point McLeay made some donations - but not generally the kind to set the heart of the ethnologist beating faster: the skin of a musk duck, the skull of a female Murray black, some small reptilla and four insects were among his first offerings on the altar of Science, in March, 1866. A snake followed in February 1866. Indeed, an arrangement was entered into to pay Aborigines at Point McLeay for items of scientific interest. But whether the incentive was not enough, or the Aborigines lacked the scientific spirit of inquiry, it does not seem to have resulted in a complete collection of the fauna of Lake Alexandrina. Either that, or only ten species lived there in the 1870's.

The sandwiching of the human skull between the musk duck and the small reptilla is typical of the approach of the first two celebrants of the Temple of Acquisitors: anything was desirable to fill their receptacles and crowd the temple, and those items relating to the original human inhabitants of the land were merely scientific curiosities undistinguished by any criterion from the random mass of collectibles. The occasional waddie was accepted with the same sang froid as 'the dress of Esquimaux made from the intestines of a whale.' Both things were probably regarded as being of sufficient interest to be displayed at the monthly meeting of the Royal Society, a distinction not extended, so far as I can tell, to the two-headed lamb or the singular spider.
The very range of the offerings to the Temple underline the nature of this sect 120 years ago: it existed for the worship of science generally - its priest was a disciple of science in its broadest sense: he had to be able to identify new species of fish, to recognise fossil sharks, classify birds and catalogue Roman coins. When his own learning failed he had to know where to turn for guidance. Waterhouse communicated regularly with Gould on the subject of birds, and with Leadbeater, presumably on the subject of possums. The discovery at Burra Burra in 1871 of large fossil bones called for consultation with Sir Richard Owens, the world famous authority on Palaeontology. For the next ten years Owens' services were required in identifying and classifying new fossil material from Salt Creek, Normanville and Lake Callabonna. By November, 1879 Waterhouse was able to report that bones sent to Owen included 'a very singular genus,' Procoptodon, 'and others new to science'. Already Diprotodon, giant wombat and giant kangaroo bones had graced the meetings of the Royal Society and strained the capacity of the single room at the Institute.

For the first priest of the temple these were fascinating cult objects and he made a pilgrimage to Normanville in September, 1879 to view the site of these awesome relics, and collected more. He could now add Bettong to his list of extinct fauna. These pilgrimages, however, were not seen as a significant part of his work, and an itinerant devotee, Mr. F. W. Andrews was sworn into the sect in 1864 and remained a loyal attendant for the next twenty years. His devotions took him many times into the wilderness, and we find records of his collecting reptiles at Point McLeay in 1866, then in 1869 at the Glenelg River, and later in the same year at Mount Gambier. A gruelling collecting trip to the Gawler Ranges in 1872 produced a mixed bag of offerings. Obviously this monk's star was rising for in 1874 he was described as 'Collector, Lake Eyre Exploration Expedition,' and his bird skins from Beltana were purchased. In November of the same year (1874) he provided a further 'five Jerboa rats in spirits, one Grammatotophera picala, and forty five Caolorpterus insects from Strangeways Springs.' Occasionally Andrews threw in an Aboriginal waddle or some such as part of his offerings but it is obvious that the scope of the cult was a very broad one, and there was no particular - or singular - interest in ethnography as such.

Mr. Andrews however, did make one real excursion into the realm of ethnography, and it is sufficient to set one to wishing for more of his letters and observations. In 1884 he wrote from Aldinga announcing

I shall have next week to send you, a block of red ochre which the natives get out of a cave they have made in the cliffs about three miles from here. They used to come once a year a long distance to get it and carry lumps of it on their heads for three or four days journey. They made themselves red all over with it when they turned a youth into a young man, circumcising him.

Sadly there is no record that the ochre was ever sent.

Andrews finally received recognition for his devotion to his calling when in 1882 he was initiated into the sect for the important rite of 'quarterly cleaning of the Museum and examination of specimens'. He was also to be paid for his services a 'Museum collector at the rate of eight pounds per month and travelling expenses.' He must have been a man of many parts for in the same year his advice was sought on methods of dust-proofing cabinets and on the purchase of an entomology collection.
Almost despite themselves the early priests appear to have gained some ethnographic objects. The Temple sent a large consignment of scientific items to the the Paris Exhibition in 1878. The preparation and organization of the consignment occupied Waterhouse for several months. Trying to trace the Kaurna artefacts which were never returned also took quite a bit of time, and earned the Priest who officiated at that sacrifice not a little criticism from his Board. On this occasion it would seem quite unjustly.

The 1870's were years of prosperity in the Australian colonies. A growing maturity and increasing erudition in the population rendered the idea of Scientific Exhibitions popular. Both Sydney and Melbourne mounted such displays that called for a large consignment of Objects of Scientific Interest from South Australia. To fill the ethnographic sections of these displays Waterhouse had to use considerable ingenuity. No collections appeared to be forthcoming from within the colony, and he finally met his quota by buying a collection of 184 items from Inspector Foelsche in the Northern Territory, and some items from Western Australia.

Ethnographic items were also in demand from overseas. In 1879 Dr. Haast of the Canterbury Museum in New Zealand, the Royal Museum in Berlin, and the New York Museum all requested Aboriginal articles in exchange for such diverse objects as moa bones, bird skins, and minerals. But even this example of international interest does not seem to have led to a special interest in ethnography at the Museum and the ritual of collection and storing such items did not mature until much later. There were some extensive inquiries regarding the origins of a large hunting net which was received on loan from the Gawler Institute, and Mr. Helling, who took up Cowarlie Station in 1882 forwarded pitcherie and fishing nets from the Cooper. He provided some detailed description of the use of the latter, thus qualifying as an honorary member of the cult.

Those early years were difficult ones in many ways for the first members of the sect. While there was no direct persecution there were subtle ways to frustrate its growth employed by a government which, although not hostile seemed indifferent to its needs. Money was a constant problem. For example, the price of specimen jars imported from England form the subject of many a cryptic hieroglyph. After much praying and supplication cedar fronted display cases were purchased for one hundred and four pounds in 1868. (At this time Mr. Noakes, a labourer was paid 7/6 per day - hours 8 am to 6 pm and no flextime.)

Waterhouse addressed himself to the problem of funds early in his career. His report for November 1863 notes that 'I have addressed and sent out 150 circulars soliciting subscriptions to the principal gentry of the colony...' The gentry must have felt their money to be better spent elsewhere for he continues '... but up to the present... subscriptions are few.' G. F. Angas distinguished himself by donating fifty pounds.

Some members of the public were not unaware of the sect's difficulties. One wrote to the Advertiser in.....

Among our Institutions there is not one more deserving of support... and none more neglected than the Museum... The visitor is struck with the pitiable accommodation for exhibiting the treasurers which are crammed into one small room. I am sure it must be very disheartening for any curator to be so hampered.
Not all correspondents were so sympathetic. Mr. Waterhouse was forced to address a special missive to the Board:

Gent'n,

In reply to Mr. Oscar Ziegler's eccentric letter to the 'Register' complaining of the state of the specimens in the Museum, I have the honor to state that the remarks made by that gentleman need but an inspection of the Museum for their refutation.

Mr. Waterhouse went on to admit that due to 'want of necessary convenience and assistance, some birds and animals have been attacked by insects. But he adds, 'this is the fate of all museums'. Further, 'For a long time past have instructed the taxidermist to be careful to use strong preservatives.' He added that chloroform for fumigation cost the Sydney Museum between thirty pounds and fifty pounds (per year). His budget did not run to such luxuries.

In this pitiful defence I see the origins of one of the more controversial rites conducted in the crypts of the Temple down to quite recent times. This is the rite during which objects are ceremoniously steeped in strong smelling white flakes and kept thus immersed for long periods. It is presumably a reaction to early penury that until recently, Museum staff were also steeped in the evil smelling white flakes.

Mr. Ziegler had also made caustic comments on the displays to which our priest could only respond 'I regret that the very limited space available will not admit systematic arrangement of any one branch of natural history.' But worse was to come. In June 1878 the sanctity of the temple was violated and 37 coins were stolen from Waterhouse's office. Criticism followed in the press about the security of these items, and the High priest found himself far from revered. Things did not improve. One can imagine the trepidation with which Mr. Waterhouse penned the following report on December 20, 1881, 'It is with much regret that I report to the Board that the rough specimens of Brazilian diamonds which were placed in one of the mineral cases are missing; the case evidently having been opened by somebody for the purpose of stealing them.'

Waterhouse resigned or retired in 1882 and in that year a special museum committee recommended that the advice of the Acting Curator Mr Haacke be followed, concerning 'the desirability of restraining the Museum employees from trafficking in or making private collections of specimens of natural history or Ethnology.' A notice to this effect was placed in the Crypt and sent to each staff member.

One cannot but think that after twenty two years of service the mantle may have been stripped somewhat unceremoniously from the founding father's shoulders, to be draped about those of his German successor, Dr. Wilhelm Haacke. Haacke's erudition is obvious from his reports, but he was obviously less concerned with his monthly reports and consequently much less can be discovered of the day to day running of the museum. Presumably it was smoother for it was now relocated in larger premises. Haacke engaged in active exchanges with many overseas museums, especially those of Germany. Hans Mincham writes of him as a "Zealous new Broom".

With Haacke's resignation after only two years it fell to Edward Charles Stirling to oversee museum activities from 1884 until 1914. (He was officially appointed Director in 1896). A man of considerable vision and breadth of learning, in Stirling can be discerned the conscious effort to establish the cult of the ethnographer. He obviously encouraged an active interest in ethnology, and contributions increased rapidly.
He wrote the section on anthropology for the Report of the Horn Expedition (his paper on the Aboriginal Burials at Swanport is a significant early contribution to the development of archaeology in Australia). Contributors to the Museum began accounting information regarding Aborigines. Auctions were attended where ethnographic items were purchased. Stirling emerges from his pages as a warm, approachable man, bringing his breadth of learning to cope with inquiries ranging from Quakers in Australia to aboriginal circumcision. He was also a systematic administrator. He answered his mail promptly and noted his response on the original letter. For example there was the occasion when he received a letter announcing that:

"I am sending by passenger train a strange animal (dead)".

Pencilled in the margin in Stirling's small, neat script was the comment "ferret".

But all was not perfect. In March (?) 1898 he received a letter from and an aggrieved Mr. Howchin accusing Zietz the preparator of breaking a bargain regarding the purchase of artefacts at an auction. 'I wanted the stones, and he wanted the wood implements', Howchin writes, 'but everything ended up at the Museum. And in April, 1897 an irate contractor, M. Flemming wrote complaining about the advanced putrefaction of offal to be removed from the Museum, and begging for a change in the system. Further he declined further services until these changes occurred! The outcome of this letter is not recorded.

On that somewhat noisome note the Temple of the Acquirors moved into the twentieth century! It had been in existence for forty years. For just over half that time Waterhouse had struggled to found a new order. Almost alone and unassisted he had amassed the items that formed the basis of the Temple's Relics and Paraphernalia. Hampered by limited funds, and even more limited space he had relied on donations and exchanges for most items, purchasing only exceptional objects, or particularly well presented collections. He does not emerge from the pages of his reports as a visionary, or as a great organiser; traits that one might expect in the founder of a new sect. Rather he appears to have been a nineteenth century man of science, knowing something of all its branches.

A certain cloud surrounds his departure from the Museum; there was certainly no ascension into Heaven in a cloud of glory.

The brief rule of Haacke was too short for this seemingly brusque and efficient man to change the directions that the Temple was destined to pursue. Up until his resignation in 1884 there was no emphasis on ethnography.

With Stirling's assumption of the robes of office this situation changed. It is during the office of this man that we can see the origins of the cult, whose established form I described in my last Address. Stirling actively encouraged worshippers of stone implements, cultivated devotees of the painted and incised rocks, and pressed for pilgrims to go in search of lost sites. Stirling was the corner-stone on which his successors, Hale and Tindale built and extended.

Acknowledgements

The data for this address was gathered whilst searching the early records and papers of the South Australian Museum, held in the Archives of S.A. for ethnographic material. In addition I have consulted Hans Mincham's "A Brief History of the South Australian Museum" FOSAH No.3, 1966.