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.
EUROPEAN CONTACT AND CONFRONTATION

Pastoralist activity north of the Flinders Ranges began in earnest after 1860 and produced immediate effects on the ochre expeditions. There are no extant accounts of "first contacts" but a pattern quickly emerged, which at first conformed to the frontier situation elsewhere in Australia, but which quickly took on a different character.

Local groups in the Flinders Ranges area soon discovered the attraction of sheep and cattle as a new, convenient food source. Livestock disappeared singly or en masse and reprisals by shepherds, pastoralists and police followed. Counter reprisals by Aborigines led to the occasional murder of a white shepherd, and in retaliation larger numbers of Aborigines were slain. These killings were rarely reported in the press and it is difficult to measure their scale. This process of "pacification" has been documented elsewhere in Australia; its duration varied according to local factors, but generally not beyond five years.

The ochre expeditions introduced a new element into the usual pattern. In most other parts of Australia the tide of European settlement passed over established and relatively static Aboriginal territories. In the north-east of South Australia, the situation was reversed. White settlements were sparse, never more than outposts, and were confronted each year by large, roving expeditions of Aborigines from the north, travelling far from their own territories. These "saltwater blacks" as they were called, were travelling to a defined objective, the ochre deposit, along established and sacred paths. They had not been "pacified" and were quite prepared to raid stock and to take other risks which had become too great for local groups.

The evidence suggests that in the early 1860’s, with the inducements offered by unfenced mobs of sheep and cattle, untended shepherd’s huts and the good seasons, both the size and the frequency of ochre expeditions increased. During this period, as an observer wrote,

"a solitary shepherd would have been as safe as an unpopular land-agent in Tipperary during the good old times."

Matters came to a head in 1863, with settlers calling upon the Police Commissioner for protection. Julius Jeffreys wrote from Strangways Springs in June 1863 that

"...It is with much regret I have the honour to inform you that the Aborigines have now become really dangerous and unless immediate steps are taken by the government some frightful calamity will take place ..."

Calamities, when they did occur in the region, were Aboriginal, rather than European. The site of an Aboriginal massacre involving members of an ochre expedition in November 1863, is still known by local Aboriginal people today near Beltana. Estimates of the number of Aborigines killed vary widely; the event was significant enough for the local police corporal to claim that

the late affray at Beltana will be a check to their visits for a time to the sheep districts for the sake of plunder."
The settlers themselves were not so confident of a respite. A concerned individual wrote to the Adelaide Observer in July 1864 that:

It is not difficult for a person to conceive a frightful amount of outrage on lonely shepherds or their unprotected wives and families as likely to result from a hundred and fifty revengeful aborigines roaming about over the country, and with the disastrous results of their last year's campaign still fresh in their memories.

The events of 1863 and 1864 contain the clearest evidence for Aboriginal parties coming south for adventure and spoil rather than for ochre itself. In fact there is some evidence that a particular group led by a notorious individual named Pompey, made several forays within months. In January 1864 after robbing several huts and bailing up a shepherd's wife on Umberatana Station, Pompey was shot by Samuel Stuckey, the station manager. Stuckey was charged with Pompey's murder (a good measure of the attention which the affair had generated) and was brought to Adelaide for trial. He was eventually released from the charge by a motion brought in the House of Representatives. Pompey himself was described in the press as this Aboriginal celebrity, the only regular South Australian bushranger.

The unusual character of the conflict, in which a small and scattered white population was exposed to frighteningly large parties of hostile, armed and well organised "salt-water blacks", persisted well beyond the great drought of 1865, and into the 1870s. It provoked a crisis of confidence among the new settlers, and bewilderment within the Government and police force. At first the Government reacted in an extreme fashion by approving a consignment of rifles to the police station at Angipena at Corporal Wauhop's request in 1864:

Breech-looking rifles are the only weapons that would intimidate such a determined lot of natives, for they appear to take no notice of pistols.

The Police Commissioner, P.E. Warburton, did not support "such warlike preparations". He toured the area and reported to the Government on the nature and purpose of the ochre expeditions and the inevitability of conflict while shepherd's huts and stock remained unprotected along the route:

Red ochre is universally required by the blacks and they prudently continue to procure it - if whilst travelling south for this purpose they fall in with a hut which is unprotected no doubt they will take what they want out of it...

Warburton recommended increased vigilance by the pastoralists to prevent losses and advised that

if the owner does not like to take this precaution he ought to be prepared to part with a few head.

Parties of aborigines were to be advised not to venture near shepherds' huts but to go instead to the head stations, where they would be given rations. Violence was only to be a final resort.

Despite the good sense of this approach and its partial implementation, trouble continued, and in 1874 the Government reverted to a fine piece of lateral thinking first suggested by Warburton ten years earlier after the Beltana massacre.
Warburton's suggestion was to locate an accessible source of the ochre in the
north and to send a quantity of it to the Lake Hope region, thus removing the
need for future ochre expeditions.

Warburton's plan was received sceptically by the local police-officer, Corporal Wauhop, who stressed the wide significance of the Parachilna deposit. The Government could not find teamsters willing to cart the ochre from Parachilna and eventually supervised the mining of four tons of red ochre from the traditional mine of the Adelaide Kaurna people at Red Ochre Cove. The ochre was transported by bullock teams to Kopperamanna, east of Lake Eyre, for distribution by the German missionaries, at a cost of forty pounds per ton, in 1874.

The exact reaction of the "salt-water blacks" to such an abundance of culturally counterfeit material is not recorded. The Kopperamanna missionaries apparently did not reply to the Government's request for a description of the Aboriginal response. Writing nine years later, A. Masey observed that

... the natives would not use it. It did not give them that much-coveted shiny appearance that filled them with delight and admiration when contemplating their noble selves, and that also made them the pride of their lubras, and the envy of rival tribes.

The experiment was a failure; Aboriginal expeditions to the Flinders Ranges for ochre continued for as long as the demand for it remained.

COMPROMISES AND THE FINAL YEARS

Reprisals and "pacification" techniques by white settlers and police in the Far North eventually affected the ochre parties, modifying their behaviour. A loosely-observed code of conduct emerged, involving accommodation on both sides. The settlers generally allowed access to waterholes and passage through their properties, while the ochre parties themselves kept away from stock and visited the headstations instead for rations and handouts, particularly in drought years.

Reuther supplies a unique example of the operation of this code of conduct, from the Aboriginal viewpoint. He describes a particular occasion (probably in the 1880s) when an ochre party, comprising Dieri and Jauraworka men, reached the Flinders Ranges:

After they had brought their bukatu down from the ranges they withdrew to a local waterhole to rest and relax. Here a shepherd was watering his sheep. The Jauraworka suggested catching some sheep and killing them. The Dieri men (tried to) restrain them from doing so, for they knew what sort of consequences would follow.

Not allowing themselves to be convinced the former carried out (their intentions) in spite of it. The result was that they were soundly whipped for their theft and turned loose. Still undaunted, the Jauraworkas attempted once more to invade the herds. As frequently (happened) in other instances, so also here: the innocent had to suffer with the guilty. Two Dieri men were shot.

Reuther goes on to relate that when the survivors returned north, the Jauraworka men, not the whites, were held responsible. Reprisals and counter-reprisals between the Dieri and Jauraworka men then followed, until a balance was restored.
Such an "adjustment" to the new order by Aboriginal people as typified in this example meant that ochre expeditions to the Flinders Ranges continued with regularity beyond the turn of the century. This continuity was assisted by two factors.

In the first place the last three decades of the century were marked by a burgeoning increase in Government ration stations in remote areas. Ochre parties were able to rely on the ration stations at a time when overstocking by pastoralists was producing devastating effects on Aborigines' traditional food sources. There is evidence that some pastoralists made overt attempts to destroy these food sources so that local Aboriginal groups would leave their properties. One northern pastoralist was reputed to have issued his station managers with deerhound scent so that the kangaroo rat, formerly a reliable food source, could be hunted out.

The strain on ration depots at places such as Blinman and Beltana was greatly increased when ochre expeditions arrived, particularly in the drought years when local groups were also requiring more rations. In the worst years, when important waterholes along the ochre route had dried completely, it appears that ochre parties did not set out at all.

After 1884 the journey was made easier not only by the operation of ration stations but by a new factor - the opening of the Port Augusta to Marree railway line. Free travel on South Australia's railways was officially available to Aborigines by application to the Protector of Aborigines. This regulation did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of ochre parties for the novelty and convenience of a train ride to their destination. Luise Hercus has recorded a song composed by the father of her Arabana informant, Mick McLean, which describes the experience of seeing a steam train while on an ochre expedition. Another man, Jimmy Russell (Workanguru) spoke of the journey home from the ochre mine:

(On the way back) they go to the Commodore (railway) cottages, and then they go by train. The guard gives them a free ride. (Luise Hercus translation).

Ben Murray, an aged Wonkanguru speaker (whose Afghan father, Bejah Dervish, accompanied early exploration expeditions as camel-driver) maintains that the ochre parties often took the train both to and from the ochre mine. The stationmaster at Marree allowed the parties to travel in an empty truck, concealed under a tarpaulin.

There is evidence that the railway journey occasionally became an end in itself during the period before the First World War. E.J. Finn recounts that Aborigines who had inveigled a free ride from the Marree stationmaster by pleading the necessity for more red ochre apparently alighted at Commodore and waited for the next train to take them north again, without venturing into the Ranges. And Ben Murray speaks of the consternation caused among white passengers when a group of men who had visited the mine attempted to board the train through the passenger carriage, semi-naked and covered in red ochre.

In 1904, at the time of the Shanahan letter, Flinders Ranges red ochre was still a vital substance. A large Aboriginal population remained in the Lake Eyre Basin and their ceremonial life and trading networks were sufficiently intact to ensure a continuing demand for the ochre. This is made clear by Reuther and Aiston, as well as by Aboriginal people themselves.
It is hardly surprising therefore, that the alienation of the ochre mine site under a mining lease in 1904 brought an immediate Aboriginal reaction. Mr. A. Raeck, of Wakefield Street, Adelaide, proposed to prospect the site for iron ore and apparently intended to use the force necessary to prevent further Aboriginal access. He was also obtuse enough to name his new lease "Sacred Land".

The Aboriginal reaction to this affront is significant in at least two ways. The local guardian of the mine, the "King Harry" described by Shanahan (see above, Part I), was sufficiently familiar with English and with local politics to exert pressure directly on men like Shanahan and Matheson (the owner of Nilpena Station). King Harry was prepared to go much further than this however. As Shanahan wrote; in a letter to Hamilton, the Protector of Aborigines;

I have spoken to the recognised King of the local tribes (a native who speaks excellent English) and he considers if the rights of the tribe be denied them by the Government issuing a mineral lease to whites there will be a native feud waged, which will possibly extend to a reprisal on the white population in our far Northern centres.

Shanahan wrote that "yabber sticks" (message sticks) had been circulated in September 1904 to summon all interested Aboriginal groups from hundreds of miles around to a meeting in Brachina Gorge to discuss the crisis. Moreover, Shanahan wrote in the same letter that

the aforementioned King has informed me that he intends discussing at the projected conference the desirability of abolishing throughout the tribes the rite of circumcision and subincision in order that they may increase in numbers. [presumably so as to deal more effectively with future crises of this sort - P.J.]. To Ethnologists their fiat on such a question would be most interesting though it is almost futile to expect that they would be willing to jettison the main plank in their ceremonial rites...

Here is a striking example of a rather faddish scientific wisdom of the period (that subincision represented a primitive method of birth control) becoming transferred and entrenched in the Aboriginal world view. The example also serves to illustrate the adjustments or compromises which Aboriginal people in the area were prepared to make, to preserve access to a substance which was "of as much import", as Shanahan wrote, "as the Bible is to Christians".

The evidence which Shanahan supplies of a planned Aboriginal council of war followed by a guerilla campaign organised with a defined objective, is extremely rare in Australian Aboriginal contact history. It is even more remarkable considering the likelihood that King Harry's conference would probably have been attended by its delegates arriving from the north by rail.

The "projected conference" apparently did not eventuate. Instead, as a result of King Harry's initiative, Shanahan and Matheson, joined by Stirling, at the Museum in Adelaide, influenced the Government to take an interest in the matter. F.R. George, the Assistant Government Geologist, was sent to investigate and accompanied Shanahan and Matheson to the mine. (Their journey is described in the Shanahan letter, see Part I). His report, and the information sent by Shanahan to Stirling, reached the Government in late 1904. In January 1905 the mine site was removed from the operation of the Mining Act and was gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve.
Ochre expeditions continued to visit the mine with some regularity until the First World War. After this time the frequency of visits has not been established. However, ceremonial life in the north-east of South Australia did not persist for long after the First World War and visits to the mine became erratic during the 1920s. Mountford reports that Aborigines at Charleville in south-west Queensland were contemplating a trip to the mine as late as 1939.

Local Adnjamathanha people continued to use red ochre from the mine until the 1940s. For the last initiations in the region, at the Nepabunna mission in 1948, red ochre was taken from a site further north near the township of Copley. Nevertheless the main ochre site ("Bookartoo" as it is known locally) retains its significance today as a site of sacred importance.

CONCLUSION - NOTES ON RESEARCH

This paper is a summary of research in progress. Although the main elements have been brought together further work is needed before the picture is complete. In particular I hope to establish whether the "Bookartoo" site represented the only destination for ochre expeditions or whether another site or sites of equal significance existed. This has proven to be difficult because of the conflicting directions and names used to describe the general area of the mine (for example: Parachilna, Brachina, Red Ochre Hill, Aroona Cave, Beltana, Blinman).

I also hope to establish the extent of the trade in the particular ochre obtained from the mine by undertaking a spectographic analysis of museum artifacts which appear to be coated in the ochre. As mentioned, the ochre was noted for its particular sheen and greasy feel, probably caused by the presence of mica. It is significant that Wilga Mia, the Western Australian equivalent of the Flinders Ranges deposit, contains ochre with very similar properties.

ERRATA

In Part 1 of this paper, p8, para 1: Each man collected up to 35kg of red ochre, not 170kg as stated. On p9 in para 2, the weight stated should be 601b (28kg).

In Part 1, the S.A. Museum Archives number should be AA309, not AA298.
FOOTNOTES


2. Reynolds H. 1982. The Other Side of the Frontier Penguin, Ringwood, provides a selective coverage from across Australia. Writing of the Flinders Ranges, Hayward stated:
   Each petty tribe on all sides of Pekina, and these were a number, had to be terrified before their depredations ceased, and that pretty well lasted all my sojourn, say three and a half years. Hayward, Reminiscences, Ibid p89

3. Corporal James Wauhop wrote from Mt. Serle in 1864 that it is my opinion that the real object of the Lake Hope and Coopers Creek natives when they first came down through the sheep runs was to procure red ochre but having at first got easy access to unprotected huts on sheep runs made them come down in large numbers for the purpose of plunder as well as to get a supply of the red ochre.

   Wauhop to Hamilton (Chief Inspector of Police) 4.1.1864, S.A. Archives, G.R.G. 52/2/73/1864.


7. Wauhop to Hamilton, Ibid.


9. See for example S.A.A., G.R.G. 5/2/662/1858 for an account of an earlier raid involving Pompey.

10. Adelaide Observer 16.7.1864 p4, h.


14. Ibid.

15. If a hut properly guarded be attacked let the consequences fall upon the heads of the aggressors - they get shot; but when goods are taken from an unprotected hut and nobody knows who actually took them, the case is altogether different and so with the cattle - when the natives are on the move in a large body two or three active stockmen hanging on their flanks could clear the cattle off their line of march or at any rate prevent the beasts from being surrounded and mobbed to death .......
   
   Ibid.

In July 1864 Aborigines from a 100 strong ochre party asked for rations at Parachilna and were refused. They returned peacefully to their camp. This forbearance was repaid when the party started on their homeward trek, via Mt Deception on going up the plain Captain McKay shot a bullock for them that he purchased from Mr Burnett and from the manner that they commenced to eat it I think they were very hungry. On arriving at Mt Deception Head Station Captain McKay gave them five sheep and nearly two bags of flour and allowed them to spell a day, impressing on them that if they called at the Head Stations they would get flour etc and to keep away from the shepherds' huts which they seemed to understand. Police Trooper O'Reilly and I accompanied them as far as Leigh's Creek where Mr Smith, overseer at that Station gave them more flour ....

   The .... natives were from Lake Hope, Coopers Creek, and Mulligan and a good many of them could speak English. I believe that by seeing them through the sheep runs a few trips will tend greatly to prevent them robbing huts as they formerly did .......

Wauhop to Hamilton 12.7.1864.
S.A.A. G.R.G. 5/2/1299/1864

16/ So far as my information at present extends, it would appear that the large mobs of Natives coming down from Lake Hope and Coopers Creek Districts undertake the long journey if not solely - yet chiefly, for the purpose of procuring the red pigment - if this be the real state of the case, I should like the opinion of Corporal Wauhop as to whether it would not be a good plan to supply them with the required article nearer their homes?


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17. Apart from the Parachilna deposit which probably had not yet been visited by Europeans in 1863, two other localities were considered at this time; one at Mr Flint (South of Lake Gregory), another north of Finnis Springs and one at Mundowianie Springs. S.A.A., G.R.G. 52/2/1947/1863; G.R.G. 52/2/73/1864; G.R.G. 5/3/479/1863.

18. .... I am not aware where this article can be procured further north than Parychannala (sic) having made enquiry of the Natives in this neighbourhood and they all say that they get their supply of paint from the above place .... Wauhop to Hamilton 4.1.1864 S.A.A., G.R.G. 52/2/73/1864

19. Letter from Buttfield, Blinman S.A.A., G.R.G. 52/1/291/1874 ("Thirty nine pounds per ton for not less than four tons")


22. Ibid.

23. E.J. Finn, personal communication

24. Luise Hercus, pers. comm. Copy of tape held by A.I.A.S., Canberra.

25. I am indebted to Luise Hercus, A.N.U., Canberra for the use of her Fukardu manuscript


27. E.J. Finn, pers. comm.

28. Ben Murray personal communication. A similar incident, on the trip from Marree to Parachilna was also recalled by Jimmy and Leslie Russell (Wonkanguru), Luise Hercus, pers. comm.
29. For this point I rely upon a letter written by E.C. Stirling to a member of the South Australian Government, sighted by me in the S.A. Archives. Unlocated at time of publication.


32. Ibid

33. Ibid

34. Matheson wrote to Hamilton (Protector of Aborigines) on August 8, 1904:

...Lately the king of the tribe came to me saying he had heard that the whites were going to work these claims, and asking me to try and get the locality reserved for them. I think that this would be but just and right as the black man will be gone before long and the white man will have full opportunity. I should like to mention that during the course of the next three or four months there will be a great muster of blacks in Brachina Gorge and should you care to visit them there and hear what they have to say I shall be happy to drive you out to the spot. The king then can plead the natives' cause and act as interpreter ....


Stirling, who had connections of his own, wrote to the Premier (J.G. Jenkins) on September 29, 1904 in these terms;

.... To deprive the natives of this would in my opinion be a real act of unkindness towards them and I am therefore induced to ask if you will kindly look into the matter and see whether this place cannot be preserved for them. I know something about the natives and the value placed upon this article and this leads me to mention it to you ....


36. Interview with Ben Murray, Ibid; E.J. Finn; Claude DeMelle (initiated Adnjamathaha man) pers. comm.