NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 2nd General Meeting of the Society for 1986 will be held in

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET ADELAIDE

ON

MONDAY 28TH APRIL 1986 AT 8.00 PM

AGENDA

1. Apologies:

2. Minutes of the previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held in the Conservation Centre on Monday 25th March 1986, to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. New Members:
   The following new member has been elected to the Society: -
   
   Mr. A.M. ROBINS

4. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals received from other societies and organizations will be tabled at this meeting.

5. Business:

6. Speaker:
   Dr. Fay Gale, Professor of Geography at University of Adelaide will address the Society. The subject of her address will be her recent work on the impact of tourism on Kakadoo National Park and Ayres Rock.

7. Supper will be served at the close of the meeting.

R.Allison
Hon. Secretary
c/o 120 Wakefield St.
ADELAIDE SA 5000
TWO ABORIGINAL ENGRAVING SITES IN THE MOUNT LOFTY RANGES
Tom Gara & Jan Turner

Introduction
This paper describes two rockshelters containing both engraved and painted motifs, one on the Marne River and the other on Mount Barker Creek. Although numerous painting sites are known to occur in the Mount Lofty Ranges, engravings have not previously been reported in this area. The two sites were located during surveys along the proposed route of an E.T.S.A. transmission line from Port Augusta to Cherry Gardens.

Art sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges
Aboriginal sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges were first reported in the early years of this century when Stirling (1902) described painted designs on the walls of two rockshelters near the South Para River. Numerous other sites have been located since then. Hossfeld (1926) found three painted shelters on the Marne River, near Springton, and also described a number of campsites along Sanders Creek. Tindale and Sheard (1927) revisited the sites found by Stirling and located another two paintings nearby. Mountford (1957) reported paintings at Kanmantoo, Tungkillo and Mt Pleasant and later described another site at Macclesfield (1960). Teusner (1963) found a fourth painted shelter on the Marne River and four sites near Palmer were reported by Preiss (1964).

As the area was known to be rich in sites, when plans were announced, in the early 1970s, by the South Australian Government to establish a new township at Monarto on the plains west of Murray Bridge, the necessity for a survey for Aboriginal sites was recognized. A survey covering the area bounded by the towns of Tungkillo, Callington, Murray Bridge and Mannum, was undertaken by members of the Anthropological Society of S.A. This survey resulted in the location of a large number of new sites, including paintings, campsites, occupied shelters and scarred trees. The previously reported sites within that area were also re-visited and recorded in detail (Ross & Ellis 1974). More recently, Gunn (1981) has made a detailed examination of nine of the sites and produced a preliminary analysis of the motif styles, techniques and other aspects of the art.

There are at present approximately 30 painting sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges registered with the Aboriginal Heritage Branch. Except for the South Para River sites, all the paintings occur in rockshelters and overhangs on the eastern side of the ranges between Eden Valley in the north and Macclesfield in the south. From our own visits to some of these sites and an examination of the published sources it appears that human figures are the most commonly occurring recognizable motifs. Non-figurative designs such as dots, lines and circles are also common and lizards, snakes, kangaroos, birds and animals and bird tracks are occasionally depicted. The most commonly used colours are red and white but yellow and black motifs appear at some sites. Most of the sites are situated close to deep pools in creeks or rivers. Stone artefacts, faunal remains and ash are sometimes found within the shelters and campsites and scarred trees often occur closebly.

It is interesting to note that although engravings have not previously been recorded in the eastern ranges, they may occur at two sites in the western foothills near Adelaide. Recently a number of engraved grooves were found on a rock surface at Waterfall Gully but it is not certain whether these are of Aboriginal or European origin. In addition to this site, Museum site records from the 1960s indicate that another engraving occurs somewhere near Brownhill Creek.

Marne River Engraving/Painting Site
This site is in a rockshelter in a schist outcrop on the northern bank of the Marne River. It is about ten kilometres east of the township of Eden Valley and three kilometres downstream from the sites reported by Hossfeld (1926) and Teusner (1963). The surrounding steep, grassy hills are dotted with outcrops of schist. Most of the native vegetation has been cleared and the land now supports sheep and cattle. The river is lined with redgums, bluegums, casuarinas and reeds.
The shelter is at the base of a steep hillside about 5m from a deep pool in a bend of the river. It has a south-easterly aspect and the entrance is about 4m wide and 2.5m high. At floor level the shelter extends back into the hillside for about 4m but available space within is restricted by a large bedrock protrusion. The banded schist walls have generally smooth and rounded walls and present a range of colours from black to light brown and red. Cobwebs and nests of the Fairy Martin (Petrochelidon ariel) occur on some of the surfaces inside the shelter. Near the entrance the walls are subject to water runoff and the subsequent growth of lichen and mosses.

The engraved rock face is on the western wall near the entrance of the shelter, a smooth vertical surface formed by the exfoliation of a layer of schist 5cms thick from the rock wall. The exfoliation has been confined by natural fracture planes to a discrete area measuring 37 x 20cms. The rock surface is dark brown with streaks of red and light brown, caused by water runoff. The lowest point of the motif is 1.95m above the floor but an outcrop of schist 50cms high provided a convenient place to stand while photographing and tracing the design. Presumably this step was also used by the original artist.

The engraved motif consists of an abraded, infilled figure with incised lines extending out from either side (see Fig. 1). It is 29cms long and 15.5cms across at the widest point and thus utilizes most of the available rock surface. The abraded portion of the motif is an elongated figure with joined limbs and a waisted penis or tail but with no forelimbs or obvious head. It has been produced by shallow abrasion, the entire rock surface being removed except for in the area of the penis/tail where removal of the rock cortex has not been as complete. The figure is basin-shaped in cross section, characteristic of a surface altered by repeated rubbing or grinding. Incised lines, “V”-shaped in cross section and apparently produced by scoring the rock with a sharp implement, radiate out from the left hand side of the abraded figure and, on the upper right, form a series of loops. The incised lines have been carefully executed and meet at precise points of intersection. One incised line runs vertically down the centre of the abraded figure from the upper body to the penis/tail and at least two of the lines on the left hand side extend beneath the abraded body to meet up with the central line. It appears that the figure has been abraded over the more deeply incised lines.

The motif as a whole displays little colour contrast and is best viewed from an oblique angle. Water run-off has affected both the left and the upper right hand side of the rock surface and has made some of the incised lines difficult to delineate. Only those lines clearly visible are shown in the accompanying figure.

Paintings occur on the same wall as the engraving. About one metre to the right there are several faint red lines and, nearby, a group of at least six short parallel lines averaging 25cms in length. The latter group has apparently been scratched onto the wall with a soft, light-coloured stone used like a crayon. Similar “scratched” motifs have been recorded at other sites in the ranges (Hossfeld 1926; Preiss 1964; Ross & Ellis 1974). On the rear wall of the shelter there is a painted red stick human figure with legs apart and feet pointing upwards in a similar fashion to that of the engraving. The torso is slightly curved and the arms are outstretched upwards, giving the impression of movement. There is no discernable head. The figure is 30cms tall and 17cms across from one outstretched arm-tip to the other.

No cultural material was visible on the floor of the shelter. During surveys of the river for approximately one kilometre upstream and downstream from the site, several other rockshelters were investigated but no evidence of Aboriginal occupation or art was found. About 150m downstream from the engraving two scarred trees were recorded near the river bank and another scarred tree was recorded a further 500m downstream. All three were redgums (Eucalyptus camaldulensis) and bore small scars a metre long or less, probably resulting from Aborigines removing sections of bark to make shields or carrying dishes.
Figure 1. Marne River Engraving. The central elongated figure (dotted) is abraded, the lines extending on either side are incised.
Mount Barker Creek Engraving/Painting Site

This site is located on the southern side of the creek about 6 kms east of the township of Mount Barker. The creek has cut a steep gorge through the hills in the vicinity of the site; river red gums and blue gums line the creek and the deeper pools are fringed with reeds. The surrounding hills are an open parkland dotted with schist and sandstone outcrops. Three painting sites have previously been found about four kilometres downstream from the engraving site and a cluster of campsites and a scarred tree occur a further three kilometres downstream.

The art occurs in a small shelter in a sandstone outcrop, about 20m from the bank of the creek on a steep slope. The shelter faces west and is of insufficient size to permit occupation, being only about 3m long and 1.5m high. The surfaces of the walls, brown in colour, are rough and weathered. Patches of lichen and moss occur on the walls and some wasp nests were also noted.

The engravings are on a near-vertical surface along the lower edge of a boulder forming part of the roof and extend to the underside of the same boulder. They are confined to an area of approximately 100 x 40cms and consist of numerous abraded, cris-crossing lines forming an intricate pattern. In some sections the pattern appears to represent interconnected human stick figures (see Photo 1). There are at least 100 lines, most of them less than 10cms in length but some are longer, extending for 20-30 cms across both rock faces. They range in width between 5 - 10mm. Although the majority of the lines are abraded, a few of those on the underside of the boulder appear to have been pecked. Nearer to the entrance the boulder is more exposed to the weather and the engravings there are faded and difficult to delineate whereas inside the shelter the engravings are relatively distinct, contrasting well with the dark brown rock surface. Patches of lichen obscure portions of the engravings.

The painted motifs occur on the same boulder as the engravings. Immediately above the engraved motifs on the near-vertical rockface, there are at least seven red human stick figures with arms and legs outstretched. These figures are 20cms high and cover an area of 40 x 20cms. Only the upper portions of these figures are clearly visible. A single red painted line zig-zags around the edge of the engraved motifs on the underside of the boulder.

A possible Aboriginal scarred tree was recorded about 150m upstream from the engraving and several rockshelters upstream from the site contained fragments of charcoal and small animal bones.

Discussion

Although painted art is relatively common in the Mount Lofty Ranges, engravings have not previously been recorded in this area. Engravings have been found at many sites in the western and northern parts of this state (see, for example, Hale & Tindale 1925; Mountford 1939; Cooper 1931; Hall 1951; Edwards 1965). Few of these sites have been systematically recorded but an examination of the literature and the site records of the Aboriginal Heritage Branch shows that the majority of the engravings are pecked. Incised or abraded lines and grooves occur at some sites but actual motifs produced by either of these two techniques are rare, if not entirely absent.

The most southerly rock engravings occur at a number of sites near Burra in the Mid-North and on the Murray River. The Burra engravings occur on bedrock slabs in creekbeds; the motifs are all pecked and consist mainly of circular and oval-shaped designs (Biddle 1925; Campbell 1925). The engravings along the Murray River occur in rockshelters in the cliffs. Sheard (1927a, 1927b, 1928) described these engravings as having been scratched into the fossiliferous limestone walls with a hard implement. A wide variety of motifs occurs at these sites, including circles with radiating lines, human stick figures, bird-tracks, fern-frond designs and meandering lines.

The engravings at the two sites discussed in this paper are the first to be recorded in the Mount Lofty Ranges and are therefore of some archaeological significance. In addition, their methods of engraving, one abraded/incised and the other mainly abraded, are unusual in a state where
the great majority of motifs are pecked. The engraved and painted motifs at Mount Barker Creek show some similarities in design to incised criss-crossing lines/stick human figures at sites along the Murray River and to groups of painted human figures in the ranges, suggesting that the site has affinities with other local art traditions. In contrast, the Marne River motif has no obvious parallels at other nearby sites or, indeed, elsewhere in the state. The fact that paintings occurred with the engravings at both sites, and in apparent direct association at Mount Barker Creek, suggests that there may be some connection between engraved and painted art. However, it is possible that their juxtaposition at the two sites is fortuitous.

In areas such as the Mount Lofty Ranges where painted art sites are known to be relatively common — and where engraved art was previously unknown — the attention of archaeological investigators tends to focus upon the dry inner reaches of rockshelters and overhangs where paintings are more likely to be preserved. Although both the Marne River and Mount Barker Creek engravings occur in rockshelters, they are on relatively exposed surfaces which might not normally be examined for paintings. Further investigations may show that engravings are not restricted to rockshelters but also occur on exposed surfaces of rock outcrops. The discovery of two engraving sites along a narrow easement through the ranges suggests that it is very likely that other sites of this type will be found.

Photo 1. Mount Barker Creek Art Site. The painted motifs are to the left of the scale; the engravings are visible along the lower edge of the boulder (scale is 5cms).

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PROPOSED EXCURSION

In 1979 and 1981 the Society carried out detailed surveys of the coastal areas of Fleurieu Peninsula. Council of the Society is considering the feasibility of organising surveys of several riverine areas of the Peninsula with a view to determining the existence of prehistoric sites. These surveys will probably take place later this year.
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