NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 6th General Meeting of the Society for 1987 will be held in:

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET ADELAIDE

on

MONDAY 24TH AUGUST 1987 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, 120 Wakefield Street, Adelaide on 27th July 1987, having been circulated in this journal, to be confirmed.

3. Paper and Journals:
   Papers and journals received from other societies and organisations, since the last general meeting will be tabled at the meeting.

4. Business:
   Details of the October Long Weekend Excursion to the Lakes and the Coorong, to be announced.

5. Speaker:
   Dr. Roger Leubers, Archaeologist, will address the Society Society and the subject of his address will be:

   "Cultural Diversity in the Lower Murray and Coorong. An Archaeologist's Point of View."

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

R. Allison
Hon. Secretary
120 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000.
Ancient prints found in Nullabor

What are thought to be only the second set of prehistoric footprints in the world of Homo sapiens sapiens (modern man), have been discovered by a team of ANU archaeologists in the south-west corner of South Australia.

The three prints, set in lithified stone (mud which has become stone), are estimated to be around six thousand years old and are located in an area of the Nullarbor Plain previously unsurveyed by archaeologists. Alongside the human footprints are several animal prints, including the giant emu, Genyornis newtoni, which until now was thought to have become extinct at least twenty-six thousand years ago.

The team leader, Dr Scott Cane, has described the region as 'incredibly rich in Aboriginal sites'.

The human prints are the first found in Australia and are believed to be the only ones ever discovered in surface rock. The only other known prints are in southern France. They were uncovered after deep excavation in the clay base of a cave. The French prints, at Le Tuc d'Audoubert, are estimated to be ten thousand years old and are preserved in a crystalline layer of lime.

Dr Cane is principal archaeologist with ANUTECH, the marketing company of ANU. His team included fellow archaeologists, Ms Marina Walkington, Mr Alan Lance and Mr Tom Gara, all from ANUTECH, and Mr Robert Paton, a Master of Arts student from the Department of Prehistory and Anthropology in The Faculties. They made their discovery in April, while carrying out preliminary research for a heritage study commissioned by the South Australian Department of Environment and Planning. The three year project is aimed at finding and recording sites of Aboriginal and archaeological significance in the South Australian section of the Nullarbor Plain.

Dr Cane says although he had suspected the area was interesting archaeologically, he and his team were amazed by the wealth of their discoveries. 'The Nullarbor Plain is the biggest stretch of limestone deposit anywhere in the presence of the 30 centimetre long giant emu prints is particularly significant. This larger, more robust version of the present day emu was thought to have been wiped out by hunters between twenty-six and thirty thousand years ago. Discovering prints only six thousand years old means the creature survived a lot longer and existed alongside the modern emu. Until now, we had thought the modern variety was a descendant of the giant emu. This also casts doubt on our theories about the impact Aboriginal hunting had on the megafauna, which were widespread between 20 and 30 thousand years ago.'

NYEERINA JINNA
The existence of footprints in the Nullarbor had been described by the famous Australian...
wora, and limestone, because of its high alkaline content, preserves things very well. Consequently, the area is likely to contain the oldest and best preserved Aboriginal sites in Australia. Much of the research involved climbing through narrow entrances into giant limestone caves which spread below the coastal section of the Nullarbor Plain. Many of them contained evidence of Aboriginal habitation, such as cave paintings, stone tools, old camp fires and food remains. The caves also contained old fire sticks, presumably left by Aboriginal people exploring the caves in the past.

Another important site found near Wilson's Bluff is a large flint quarry. "We believe this site is the only quarry within a one hundred thousand square kilometre area," Dr Cane told ANU Reporter. "From it, we hope to get an insight into Aboriginal technology and trade routes in the area."

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The whereabouts of the footprints are being kept secret until further examinations are carried out next summer. The stretch of coastline in which they are located is unusual, in that the desert goes right down to the water's edge. "The prints are on the floor of an old salt lake. They must have formed as people walked around the lake to get food and water while the lake bed was still soft. Very dry environmental conditions must have followed straight afterwards to ensure the prints were not obliterated," said Dr Cane.

"The first print we found [Ed: pictured] is thought to be that of a young man. It is about a size nine... too long for a woman's foot and the clear arch indicates that it belonged to a young person. The second print is a broad, short foot, probably an older woman's. Mud pushed up around the heel suggests that the person slipped slightly as she walked. We are not yet sure about the third print, which has partly worn away."

The nearby animal prints include those of

adventurer, Daisy Bates, who lived with the Aborigines of the area around the turn of the century. In her book, The Passing of the Aborigines, she wrote:

... on the limestone slabs that have formed, and that now lie exposed in some of these depressions near the coast, are numbers of footprints, called by the natives nyerina jinta, of humans, animals and birds which walked over the soft mud of long ago to get the oysters, mussels and other shell-fish whose fossils line the shallow banks girding them.

Apparantly no-one took her reference seriously and it was never checked by experts. It is not known if the prints she describes are the same as those discovered by Dr Cane's team.

The next stage of the research is a one month field trip during the summer break. "The discovery of the animal and human prints provides us with a window into life in the area at the time. They could reveal all sorts of information about the early part of the Holocene period. We are making up a joint inter-departmental team from the department of Prehistory in the Research School of Pacific Studies and the Prehistory and Anthropology Department in the Faculty of Arts. It is a great opportunity for a multi-disciplinary approach. Some people will work on the caves, others at the flint quarry. A third group will examine the footprints and search for others. It should be a real seedbed for ideas," Dr Cane said. Groups of prehistory undergraduate students will be invited to assist in the field research.

In this issue

| Environmental ethics | 2 |
| Crossword puzzle solution | 2 |
| Cost-savings from equation in pipeline | 3 |
| Comet and Supernova together | 3 |
| Artificial intelligence feature | 45 |
| Curtain up on ANU drama | 6 |
| V-C launches Crawford essay book | 6 |
| Classified/briefly etc. | 798 |