NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 8th General Meeting of the Society for 1987 will be held in:

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE

on

MONDAY 26TH OCTOBER 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 28th September 1987, having been circulated in this journal, to be confirmed.

3. New Members:
   The following new member has joined the Society:

      Dr H.M. DEAN

      Mrs A.H. CLELAND

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

5. Business.

6. Speaker:

   Richard Baker, Geographer, will address the Society.
   The subject of his address will be:

   "Contact History: Borroloola, Northern Territory, Macassan to Dr Who."

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

R. Allison
Hon. Secretary
120 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
October Long-Weekend Excursion 1987

by Steve Hemming

Thirteen people attended the October Long-Weekend excursion to the Lower Murray, Coorong and Adelaide's south coast. Despite low numbers, the trip proved to be very successful and this success was due particularly to the efforts of the Aboriginal people who organised most of the programme and provided us with an excellent insight into their history, culture and society today. From the responses of those who attended a better knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history was an important result of the weekend’s experience.

George Trevorrow, Tom Trevorrow and Rodney Rigney organised the Coorong/Meningie part of the trip. Tom Trevorrow and Rodney Rigney are two of the four trainee Aboriginal Rangers for the south-east of the state. They are based at the Noonamooana Ranger Station during their period of training. George Trevorrow is an Aboriginal Education advisor who is establishing a cultural camp complex on the Coorong. It will be used by the Education Department as a means of educating both Aboriginal and white children about Aboriginal culture. Groups such as our Society will also be able to use its facilities and it will have accommodation and all facilities provided. A large area of untouched scrub is adjacent to the main complex of buildings and this area is also Aboriginal owned. It will be used to teach about Aboriginal use and knowledge of the environment. Other Aboriginal people involved in this part of the trip were Ellen Trevorrow and Glenda Rigney. They demonstrated the Ngarrindjeri crafts of basketry and feather flowers making and Shirley Trevorrow also helped with the organisation of the activities.

At Point McLeay, Henry and Jean Rankine spent time talking with our group. Henry Rankine chose our camping spot and set up a windbreak for the fire. He also gave us permission to use the shower and toilet facilities in the old hospital. The remainder of the weekend was spent looking at Aboriginal Dreaming sites and archaeological and historic sites.

The trip began in the car-park of the Burnside Town Hall and the first stop was the summit of Mt Barker. Here we looked at the unique flora of the area and the archaeological sites present. Mt Barker was an important Aboriginal quarry site for quartz. The view of the area that we were going to be travelling through was also particularly useful as a starting point for the trip. Finally, the appearance of Mt Barker in the Tjilbruke Dreaming and its significance to Ngarrindjeri people provided other reasons for stopping at this site.¹

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After our stop at Mt Barker we travelled through Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend and well into Ngarrindjeri territory. On the road to Meningie and just past Wellington, we stopped at a Ngarrindjeri site called Murungung. At this spot we looked at the ruins of George Mason's hut. He was the first Sub-protector of Aborigines in the area. George French Angas the famous painter stayed with Mason and painted a famous view of the entrance of the Murray River into Lake Alexandrina. This area was an important camp for the Ngarrindjeri and the land is owned today by Val Power, a Ngarrindjeri person and member of one of the key families associated with the area.

When we arrived in Meningie we were met by George and Tom Trevorrow and Rodney Rigney, the Ngarrindjeri people who would be taking us on a tour of the Aboriginal history of the area. First stop was one of the old fringe camps called 'One Mile', situated just outside of Meningie. This camp was still being used in the 1960s. As we stood on the site of the old camp, the problems facing Aboriginal people particularly prior to the 1960s were explained and life in the fringe camps was described from the personal experience of the Ngarrindjeri people present.

The next stop was the local caravan park where the last intact burial ground, within the precincts of the city of Meningie, is located. This site has been protected through the efforts of the local Aboriginal community and with help from the Aboriginal Heritage Unit of the Department of Environment and Planning. According to George, it took lengthy negotiations with the local Council to explain the significance of the site and eventually reach a decision to protect it. His argument is that this site is also very important historically to the general public and that it should be preserved for all Australians. The location of the site was kept secret by the Aboriginal community until it was under direct threat. This was done to protect it from destruction from the often too interested locals.

Our next stop was the local Aboriginal church, established by the George Trevorrow, Tom Trevorrow and others in the Aboriginal community. It does not follow any one denomination, but has visitors from all religious faiths. During this stop, something of the present day situation of the local Aboriginal community was explained. We then travelled to the Coorong and to Noonameena Ranger Station. Here we were given a description of the Aboriginal Ranger Trainee programme and a tour of the facilities of the training centre. Maps of the Coorong area and of the Aboriginal owned land in the area were shown.

The Ranger's station is located on a very spectacular part of the
Coorong and from here we continued along its shore to Bonney Reserve, an Aboriginal owned area of natural scrub. We stopped at the last remaining house from the era when it was a major camp for the Coorong people. George and the others lived here before moving into Meningie in the early 1970s. At each stop we were given a summary of the history and significance of the location. We had a brief look at the old Needles homestead, which is surrounded by the scrub of Bonney's Reserve. This place was built in the mid 1800s and was for a time a ration depot and outstation for the Point McLeay Mission. It then became an Aboriginal owned farm. Alfred Cameron, a Coorong Aboriginal, ran this property so effectively that he was able to purchase another property, near the present day Noonameena Ranger station, called Trunkeena - the European spelling of the Aboriginal word for the place. This farm is still owned by a member of the Cameron family and with the Needles was part of the clan land of Alfred Cameron's Aboriginal forebears.

With the day's activities at an end, George Trevorrow suggested a good camping spot for the night and we set up camp in the scrub of Bonney Reserve, not far from the shores of the Coorong. The site was well sheltered from the weather and must have presented an ideal winter campsite. We had the usual open fire discussion that evening and everyone had a good sleep. Even Philip Clarke in his swag by the fire seemed to sleep soundly, or at least loudly.

The following morning was very still, but raining and so we decided not to try and cross to the other side of the Coorong. Instead, our hosts organised a video session. Several films were shown. The first being 'The Secret Country', a film about the Aboriginal history that has been left out of the history books in the past. It was not light entertainment, but the group appeared to find it very interesting and there was a good discussion with George, Tom and Rodney after the film. The second film was called 'Barbikaria', and it presented a complete reversal of the situation in Australia today, with the Aboriginal people preparing to celebrate 200 years of 'settlement' of a previously White Australia. When the First Fleet arrived the whites were seen on the shore cooking their food over primitive open fires (barbeques). The Aboriginal invaders asked the local inhabitants what the name of this place was and they were told that this was a barbikaria and so this was the name adopted for the country. The film had everything from a Minister for White Affairs to a fascist Aboriginal police chief. Everyone in our group found the film very effective and several people said that they thought it should be shown on the main television stations.

I took the opportunity to show the group the Museum's recently
completed film of the Ngurunderi Dreaming, which will be used as
an introduction to the coming exhibition featuring the Dreaming
of Ngurunderi and the culture of the Ngarrindjeri people. This
gave people a good idea of the Dreaming significance of some of
the sites we would be looking at and a glimpse of the pre-
European culture of the Ngarrindjeri people.

After the video show we were treated to a demonstration of the
Ngarrindjeri crafts of basketry and feather flower making. Ellen
Trevorrow showed the basket making and Glenda Rigney demonstrated
the feather flowers. The basketry tradition has survived the last
150 years and the style is still the same. The sedge, Cyperus
gymnocaulos, is used today and through examination of the South
Australian Museum's early basketry collection from this area, it
appears that this sedge was the preferred material for baskets at
the time of white contact. The basketry is a coiled bundle style
with a simple loop stitch. The feather flowers are made from
pelican feathers. This craft was probably introduced at Point
Mcleay Mission around the turn of the century. The use of
feathers in traditional Ngarrindjeri ornamentation was probably
adapted to the making of feather flowers.

Lunch was a combined effort with our hosts providing some very
tasty Coorong Mullet cooked over the coals. Tom provided me with
some information about the sites to see further south along the
Coorong and after lunch we left George, Tom and the others for
the direction of 42 Mile Crossing on the Coorong. This section of
the trip had been very worthwhile and everyone thanked our
Ngarrindjeri hosts for their excellent tour.

After a scenic drive along the Coorong, we arrived at 42 Mile
Crossing. Here we were faced with a hard walk through the
sandhills to the ocean beach to obtain a look at the Southern
Ocean and some of the middens in the area. Everyone survived the
walk and the cold wind blowing off the Southern Ocean made it an
exhilarating experience.

There was unfortunately no time for further stops along the
Coorong and so we headed straight to Point McLeay for the night.
We were met there by Henry Rankine, the Chairman of the
Community. He had kindly consented to our stay and he helped us
to choose a camping site and set up a windbreak for our fire. As
usual it was Philip Clarke and his swag that took full advantage
of this facility. We camped right on the shores of Lake
Alexandrina, with a view in one direction towards Goolwa and the
Murray Mouth and in the other across the Lake to Mt Barker. We
had dinner with the accompaniment of a spectacular Point McLeay
sunset.
Point McLeay was established in 1859 by George Taplin as a Mission for the Aborigines. The community today still has several buildings from this period and all the stone-mason work was done by local Aboriginal people.

After dinner we were invited up to Henry and Jean Rankine's house for a cup of tea and a chat. We had a look at some of the Rankine's old photographs of Point McLeay and Henry, in his best story telling style, entertained and educated our group with stories and information relating to Ngarrindjeri history and the beliefs of Ngarrindjeri people today. In the morning, after another good night's sleep, we had a look at some of the older buildings at Point McLeay while Henry showed the Ngarunderi film to some of the Ngarrindjeri people who were yet to see it.

After thanking Henry and Jean for their help, we left Point McLeay and crossed the punt at Narrung, en route for the Wellington punt. We stopped briefly to look at the site of Roger Luebber's recent excavations on the shore of Lake Alexandrina. We then crossed the punt at Wellington and headed for Port Elliot and Commodore Point. At Commodore Point, we stopped and looked at the extensive midden sites in the area. We also looked at the rock and blowhole associated with the Ngarunderi Dreaming. Ngarunderi killed a seal with a giant square rock and the rock and the sound of the dying seal can be found at this site today. I also pointed out the stained rocks on Pullen's Island that were Ngarunderi's net in the Dreaming story.

After lunch we decided to go directly to Port Willunga to look at the freshwater spring on the beach. This spring was created in the Dreaming story of Tjilbruke. It was the tears shed by Tjilbruke grieving for his dead nephew. To get to the spring, you need to take a pleasant stroll along the beach for about 400 metres south from the old jetty, to a point near the high tide mark. Here, in the sand, you will find the freshwater bubbling to the surface and running into the sea.

The final stopping place was Red Ochre Cove and it took us two tries to find it. At our first attempt, we discovered Maslin's Beach. However, Philip Clarke soon discovered our mistake. Sometime later, with Philip back in the vehicle, we managed to find the walking track to Red Ochre Cove. This was the main source of ochre for Aboriginal people from the Adelaide plains and some have suggested that it was traded to the Ngarrindjeri area. From here the group said goodbye and a very interesting trip was completed.

The most important experience of the trip was the opportunity to
meet Aboriginal people in their own homes and in their own area and learn at first hand about their history and culture. This Aboriginal perspective is something not everyone has the opportunity to experience and projects like George Trevorrow's Camp Coorong will provide the opportunity for this to happen more often. The Museum will be working with George Trevorrow and others from the Ngarrindjeri community next year, on a project designed to help record the social history of camps like the 'One Mile' and preserve this unwritten aspect of Ngarrindjeri history.

Notes:

1. One of the connections that the Ngarrindjeri people have with Mt Barker is the belief that their bringer of the news of death, the Mingka bird, lives in a cave at Mt Barker. I have recorded this information from two people in particular, Ron Bonney of Kingston and Mrs. Jean Gollan of Pt. McLeay. Notebook to be lodged in South Australian Museum Archives.