NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The 7th General Meeting for the Society for 1988 will be held in:-

THE CONSERVATION CENTRE, 120 WAKEFIELD STREET, ADELAIDE

ON

MONDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 1988 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 22nd August 1988, to be confirmed.
3. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and journals received from other societies and organizations since the last general meeting, will be tabled at this meeting.
4. A film meeting has been arranged. One of the films to be shown is one entitled:
   "Widmakara: Rock Art of Olary Province".
   This film has been filmed and produced by members of the Society.
5. Supper will be served at the close of the meeting.

R. Allison
Hon Secretary
120 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Aborigines of the Encounter Bay area: reminiscences of R. T. Sweetman

Robert Thomas Sweetman was born in Adelaide in 1846 and moved to Encounter Bay in 1854 where he lived until his death in the 1930s. In March 1928 when Mr. Sweetman was aged 82, the Register published a series of his reminiscences which provided a great deal of information on the early history of the Encounter Bay area and, in particular, on the former Aboriginal occupants of the area. Some extracts from these reminiscences are reprinted below.

Whaling days

Mr. Sweetman remembers when the saddle of the Bluff, now standing naked and austere against the skyline, was clothed in flowers, sheoak and teatree. The teatree, when in bloom, was a beautiful sight from a distance, the trees looked as though covered in a white cloth. Only one such teatree can be seen today in the district, and that grows on Granite Island. Those growing on the banks of the Hindmarsh and Inman are quite a different species, and not half so beautiful. The old Bluff, 333 feet above sea-level, standing stern and roughcast with granite boulders against the sky, was in 1837 the busy scene of the whaling industry. The whales watched for the whales from the summit of the Bluff, Granite Island and Port Elliot, and signalled with flags when a monster loomed in sight. The whale boat waiting for the signals, when hunting whales, was always followed by another boat called a “picker-up”. The largest whale caught at Encounter Bay measured 74 feet and weighed 50 tons. A large whale boat, costing £600, was wrecked half a mile from the Bluff, when the whalers attempted to catch the longest whale ever seen in these waters. Unfortunately, after harpooning the monster the men did not backwater fast enough. The whale, almost standing on his head in the water, crashed down with his tail against the boat; fortunately the pickup boat rescued the men, but six months afterwards the harpooner died, supposed to be from injuries to his hip received in the encounter with the whale... The natives did all the dirty work in connection with the whaling station, carting the reeking blubber to the pots, where the lubras boiled it into vats with huge ladles, the coopers fastening the vats down; their pay was gin and baccy.

Praise for native tribes

The old pioneer speaks with great affection of the native tribe in Encounter Bay. The Yerringeri were a fine and kindly race of people, easily taught and very good workers, especially in the handling of horses and the use of the sickle. With split reeds they make mats and baskets and round flat plates on which they spread their cooked food. Mr. Sweetman ate many a delicious meal of fish and duck cooked by the natives. Fish straight from the sea they cooked on hot coals, scraping the coals over the fish with their hands, sticks between each finger, forming prongs. Their barbed spears and waddles were made of mallee; to harden and darken the weapons, grease was rubbed into the wood, placed in hot ashes and afterwards highly polished. Each tribe had expert men for making weapons, and these men were never expected to hunt, or do menial tasks about the camp. As a boy Mr. Sweetman spent many hours watching the men at work and looked on at many a corroboree. Small twigs of gum leaves, dried in the wuleys to prevent the leaves becoming brittle, were bound to their legs by thongs of wild willow and formed part of the men's costume when taking part in their weird corroborees. The noise of the dried leaves from hundreds of dancing legs made an
accompaniment to their singing like a gale in the treetops. Some of the men wore two white cockatoo feathers through their noses. This ornament was a mark of distinction, either hunting, prowess in fighting or some other notable accomplishment. The pipeclay uset to ornament their bodies came from Cut Hill near Victor Harbour. An expert in several native languages, Mr. Sweetman could converse freely with the tribes in the south. He learnt their songs and can still sing them. In his diary is an interesting list of native names for places in the locality of Encounter Bay. The names are very musical, and it is a pity they were not retained; - Port Victor, native name Poltong; Granite Island, Nulcoowarra; Port Elliot, Kinjiman; Encounter Bay, Karraunda or Karrayunda; Encounter Bay tribe, Yerringera; Bluff, Kungkenguwa; Fishery, Wieramulla; Hindmarsh River, Yalladoola; Inman River, Moocola; Goolwa, Munoonpulla.

Natives and whalers

Mr. Sweetman advocated the cause of the native tribes and still does, with no uncertain tongue. He speaks with great indignation of the way they were treated by the whalers and some of the early settlers, noting several instances of cruelty that he has taken care to substantiate before entering them in his little book of memoirs.

Queen Victoria took a keen interest in the native tribes and, hoping to make them more friendly one with another, ordered the Government to invite members of each tribe to Adelaide to celebrate her birthday on May 24, where they were camped in the park and presented with tobacco and blankets. The Encounter Bay natives made for themselves a native pad, two feet wide, from Hindmarsh Valley in as straight a line as possible to Willunga. This pad was used by horsemen travelling to Adelaide and, later on, a coach could be taken from Willunga. A man at the whaling station (not a whaler but a hanger-on) was ill and the whalers put him in charge of Black Billy and his lubra to put him on the native pad at Hindmarsh Valley, so that he could find his way to the Willunga coach. On the way a violent quarrel, cause unknown, arose and the man struck Black Billy with a stick he carried. Billy tomahawked the man, killing him. He and the lubra burnt the body in the bush and returned - Black Billy to the camp on Mr. Sweetman's land and the lubra to the whaling station. Questioning the lubra as to whether she had put the man on the track, the whalers were not satisfied with her evasive answers. Her statement that Billy was tired and resting at the camp was an unusual procedure and so, going to the camp, they questioned Billy, who gave the same answers. Returning to the whaling station they accosted the lubra with "Billy him say that you kilum white feller" "No, not me kilum white feller. Billy him kilum white feller". Billy was arrested, stripped, and fastened into an oil cask. He was kept in the cask for three days and then taken out to sea and thrown overboard. A man named Meredith was murdered at Second Valley by a black boy. Meredith stole a lubra, Sal, and two boys and took them by boat to Second Valley for fishing purposes. He was tomahawked by one of the boys, who brough Sal back to her tribe by boat. The boy was not punished.

March of civilization

A story is told at Encounter Bay and Kangaroo Island of a half-caste lubra, Nellie, who married a farmer living on Kangaroo Island. The man lashed her with a bullock whip and Nellie, having tied her baby to her shoulders, swam Backstairs Passage to the mainland and rejoined her tribe. Settlers questioned her as to her rowed her over the strait but she always maintained that she swam across - a great achievement for a woman even by her husband's leave, and the feet of the thayas is no longer large enough to support the body, especially in winter, and that in stalling the sheep they can be entirely taken into their homes. In this event, he was not enough to gather the yard, but put up in the staten, were to their old habits of living, such as Inman, Yalladoola, and Livewell. In the meantime their camp and we knew, with a Stair, and the lubra's grave is a funeral ground. Only a few days ago, there were a number of people with a Stair and the lubra's grave is a funeral ground.
woman with a burden on her back. The early settlers, who considered the natives in every way, were most indignant at the wanton destruction of kangaroos and opossums by hunting parties, who with horses and dogs, destroyed hundreds of these animals, leaving them to rot in the scrub. The kangaroos soon became so wild that the native, on foot and with only a spear, found it very difficult to provide his people with the food they loved. In winter kangaroo and opossum skins kept out the cold, and when these became almost unprocurable, the Government blanket was a miserable cheap substitute. The natives soon learnt to steal and beg - a pitiful thing. They were especially fond of the little round potatoes, too small for domestic or seeding purposes and usually given to the pigs. When a little boy the old pioneer remembers three stalwart natives coming to his father's farm on their way home from a hunting expedition. They came begging for "im li'll pertater". Of course his father filled their cans, besides giving each man a great slice of the homemade bread well plastered with homemade butter. Themen sat on the woodheap devouring the bread and as each man finished he took the axe and cut a neat pile of wood, building in cris-cross fashion until enough wood was cut to last the housewife for several days - a courteous act of gratitude. The first half-caste girl born at the whaling station was Charlotte, brought up at the settlement. She married a full-blood black called Harry Trip. Charlotte entered domestic service at Poltalloch, the station of Mr. R. Bowman, and acted as nurse to Mrs. H. C. Cave and Mrs. C. Bray when they were children. When she became too old to work she returned to her native town, and lived in a wurley on the bank of the Inman near Port Victor. With rations and the sale of baskets and mats, she managed to live very happily, visited by the summer boarders. She did a brisk trade during holiday times and Mr. Sweetman was her banker. She would come to him if she required money, and never forgot how much her banker held in trust for her. She died at the age of 82, and was buried in Victor Harbour cemetery. Mr. Bowman, Mr. W. Neville of Wilkawatt Station, River Murray, and Mr. Sweetman were the only white people who attended her funeral.