

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN NATURALIST

Vol. 8

JULY 31, 1961

No. 1

SOME ABORIGINAL SITES IN THE MURCHISON DISTRICT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By S. J. J. F. DAVIES

INTRODUCTION

In the course of bird investigations on behalf of the C.S.I.R.O. from 1959 to 1961 the writer visited a number of aboriginal sites in the Murchison district of Western Australia. The Anthropological Society of Western Australia, in a report on Aboriginal Sites issued in 1960, mentions some sites from the area, but the seven reported here appear to be unrecorded. This article locates and briefly describes these sites, and is complemented by a fully illustrated ms. deposited in the Western Australian Museum, containing all available photographs.

The place names used are from the Western Australian Lands and Surveys Department ten miles to the inch maps of the relevant areas, supplemented by names currently used by local inhabitants. The grid reference given after each site may be read from both Army series and Lands Department maps.

THE SITES

Anketell North Breakaways (180530)

Anketell Station is immediately east of the No. 1 Vermin Proof fence on the Mt. Magnet-Sandstone road. The site, the southern crest of a breakaway, can most easily be located by turning north at the cattle grid on the Mt. Magnet-Sandstone road, where it cuts the vermin fence, and following this fence north about ten miles, until it emerges from the mulga scrub onto a saltbush flat, with a north-south breakaway scarp to the east. The scarp turns east at this point and the site is about a mile east from the fence on the top of the southern, east-west scarp. Two gnamma holes, about 100 yards apart, are associated with stone arrangements, but it is possible that other such holes occur elsewhere along the edge of the scarp. The stones (Fig. 1) are in walls similar to those described from Canna by Serventy and White (1958), and the arrangements are still in good order. A sketch map of these has been placed in the museum, together with photographs. I am grateful to Mr. Paddy Hinds of Anketell Station for showing me the site.

Yarrameedie Gallery (523751)

Yarrameedie gallery is a rocky granite hill beside the Cue-Beringarra road, at the north end of Mileura Station. The road

runs through a pass in the Yarrameedie Range about three miles north of Poonthoon Pool on Whela (Bindabarr) Creek. Where the road enters the range it turns sharply west for about half a mile



Fig. 1.—Portion of the Ankletall rock arrangements, looking south towards the edge of the breakaway



Fig. 2.—The cross-shaped figure at Yarrameedie Gallery; note also the emu track and cartwheel-like figure at the lower right

before continuing north, and passes between a long hill to the south and the main range to the north. The whole of the southern hill is covered with rock carvings, mostly in outline, but some solid figures. The designs are remarkably varied. Emu and kangaroo tracks mingle with horseshoe and cartwheel-like designs (Fig. 2), simple circles and groups of concentric circles, complete and incomplete. The three most striking are a pair of goannas, a large cross-shaped figure, some four feet by eight feet (Fig. 2), and a lengthy symbolic mural about ten feet long. The carvings appear to be of great age, since some are buried at least six inches in soil washed from the hill, and no indication of their meaning can be obtained from local aborigines.

Yarrameedie gallery is certainly the most extensive and varied of the pictorial sites visited in the district, and possibly ranks as the one most worthy of detailed study.

Ngumartra Rock Hole (535721)

The rock hole lies in Eajah breakaways on Mileura Station, just north of the Mileura-Nookawarra road and close to the boundary between the two stations. It is in a small valley in the northern face of a breakaway, about half a mile south-west of a prominent and aptly named breakaway relic, Windsor Castle. Both carvings and paintings occur in two rock shelters on either side of the rock hole. The paintings are all hands, stencilled in red ochre, but the carvings are more varied. As well as emu tracks there are extensive areas of outline, dotted with small holes, and considered by the present aborigines to represent a map of the area, showing the



Fig. 3.—A series of concentric semi-circles at Ngumartra

rock holes (information from Miss Juiitha Walsh). There are also a number of symbolic figures and an excellent set of concentric half-circles (Fig. 3) possibly representing the rock hole itself. The carvings are subject to considerable wear by the local euro population, but are still very clear. A few other stencilled hands have been found by Mr. Eric Lindgren on the southern face of the same breakaway.

Tehing Rock Holes (500700)

The Tehing rock holes, on a westward facing granite in the Tehing Range, Nookawarra Station, are well-known to pastoralists of the area. They are some seven miles north of the south boundary of the station and two miles north-east of Nookawarra's number six mill. Large numbers of carvings have been executed along the base of the granite both north and south of the rock holes, but particularly immediately south of the largest hole system. Although there are some concentric and symbolic designs, most of the carvings are of animal tracks, emu, kangaroo and human; some are very neatly made and in a good state of preservation.

Tehing Rock Paintings (503690)

The site may be that referred to by Davidson (1952) and quoted in Appendix D: pictographic 23, in the Anthropological Society's report. The paintings, two stencilled hands, a stencilled boomerang and an elaborate, and earlier, outline drawing in red ochre, have been made on the roof of a granite rock shelter at the base of the west side of a granite hill half a mile north of the Nookawarra-Boolarly boundary and three miles east of Tehing mill. The shelter is merely a large slab of granite, some 25 feet long, supported at one end by a large granite boulder. No other sites were found on this hill, but it is probable that others occur in the Tehing Ranges.

Mellayalba Rock Holes and Breakaways (550650)

The Weld Range, on the Glen Station, 36 miles north-west of Cue contains the famous ochre mine of Wilgi-Mia. West of the range, along the boundaries of Madoonga, Glen and Noonde Stations the country is broken up by numerous breakaways, the overhangs of many of which are decorated with stencilled hands. The Mellayalba rock holes are on the Glen-Noonde boundary, north of the claypans where bull-bull grows, a chenopod the seeds of which the aborigines used to collect and grind to flour. The claypans are themselves about two miles north of the Glen-Kalli road, and the whole area is well known to local pastoralists. In the breakaways north of Mellayalba and also on the boundary fence, there are stencilled hands, a few symbolic paintings in red ochre and an extensive workshop site, where many worked flakes and cores lie on the talus immediately below the breakaway. Some of the hands are large and others small, apparently the hands of children; many are still well preserved. I am grateful to Mr. Leslie (Finn) Ryan of the Glen Station for showing me these sites.

Cheangwa Hill (440540)

The granite dome of Cheangwa is a conspicuous landmark on Mungoo Station, via Yalgoo, some ten miles south of the homestead. The road no longer runs past the hill, as shown on the Lands Department ten miles to the inch map, but four miles to the west of it. However, the hill can still be seen from the road. About ten yards east-south-east of the summit cairn is a small series of rock carvings, interesting because they appear to be very weathered and old, and because several of them are horseshoe figures exactly comparable to those of Yarrameedie gallery. Another, a symbolic outline, is too weathered to be readily recorded. The carvings are unknown to the station people.

CONCLUSION

Many more sites undoubtedly remain to be found and described, but it is hoped that the few reported here will show the variety of well-preserved examples of aboriginal art that typify the area. Little mention has been made of artefacts, but grinding stones and chipped tools of various sizes are commonly associated with the major sites, and often found elsewhere, for example around waterholes, and would be a rewarding field of study.

I am particularly grateful to Miss Juiitha Walsh for her help in compiling this record, both in the field and in subsequent discussion, and to Messrs. Timothy Scott, Eric Lindgren and Neil MacLaughlan for their company and help in some of the field work.

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A CENSUS OF AQUATIC PLANTS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By G. G. SMITH, Botany Department, University of Western Australia, and N. G. MARCHANT, State Herbarium, Western Australia.

The aquatic vascular plants of Western Australia have received little attention from collectors and taxonomists since the publication of Bentham's *Flora Australiensis*. Apart from the work of Ostenfeld (1916) on the western sea-grasses, they have not been surveyed as an ecological grouping. Distribution records of western aquatics given in *Flora Australiensis* are fragmentary and there are few other published records of their distribution. This census