
A Former Aboriginal Camp-site on the Sturt River at Marion, South Australia

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SUMMARY

This paper records a collection of stone implements from a camp-site by the Sturt River at Marion, South Australia. Aborigines were known to have lived by this river at the time the first Europeans settled in South Australia.

The closer settlement and development of the district, in recent years, has obliterated the camp-site on which the implements were found. A map has been prepared to show its former situation.

Among the implements recovered from over a wide area were a number of large trimmed cores and flakes. These finds add to the localities where these particular implement types have been found. Typical examples are figured and compared with parallels from elsewhere in South Australia.

INTRODUCTION

As the Sturt River emerges from the Mount Lofty Ranges on to the Adelaide Plains, it meanders through deep alluvial soil, finally discharging its waters into the Patawalonga Creek at Glenelg. This small stream was named after the explorer Sturt by Captain Collet Barker, who discovered it in April, 1831, during his exploration of the Adelaide Plains (Sturt, 1834).

A further examination of the river and adjoining country was made in November, 1836 (Williams, 1919), and its suitability for settlement became apparent. Section 79 was one of the first to be settled and it was here that the camp-site described in this paper was situated. Originally a sheep station (at one time owned by the South Australian Company), it became in turn a dairy farm, a vineyard and then a market garden. More recently, with the cutting of drainage channels for housing estates and industrial settlement, the former rural appearance of the Marion area has disappeared.

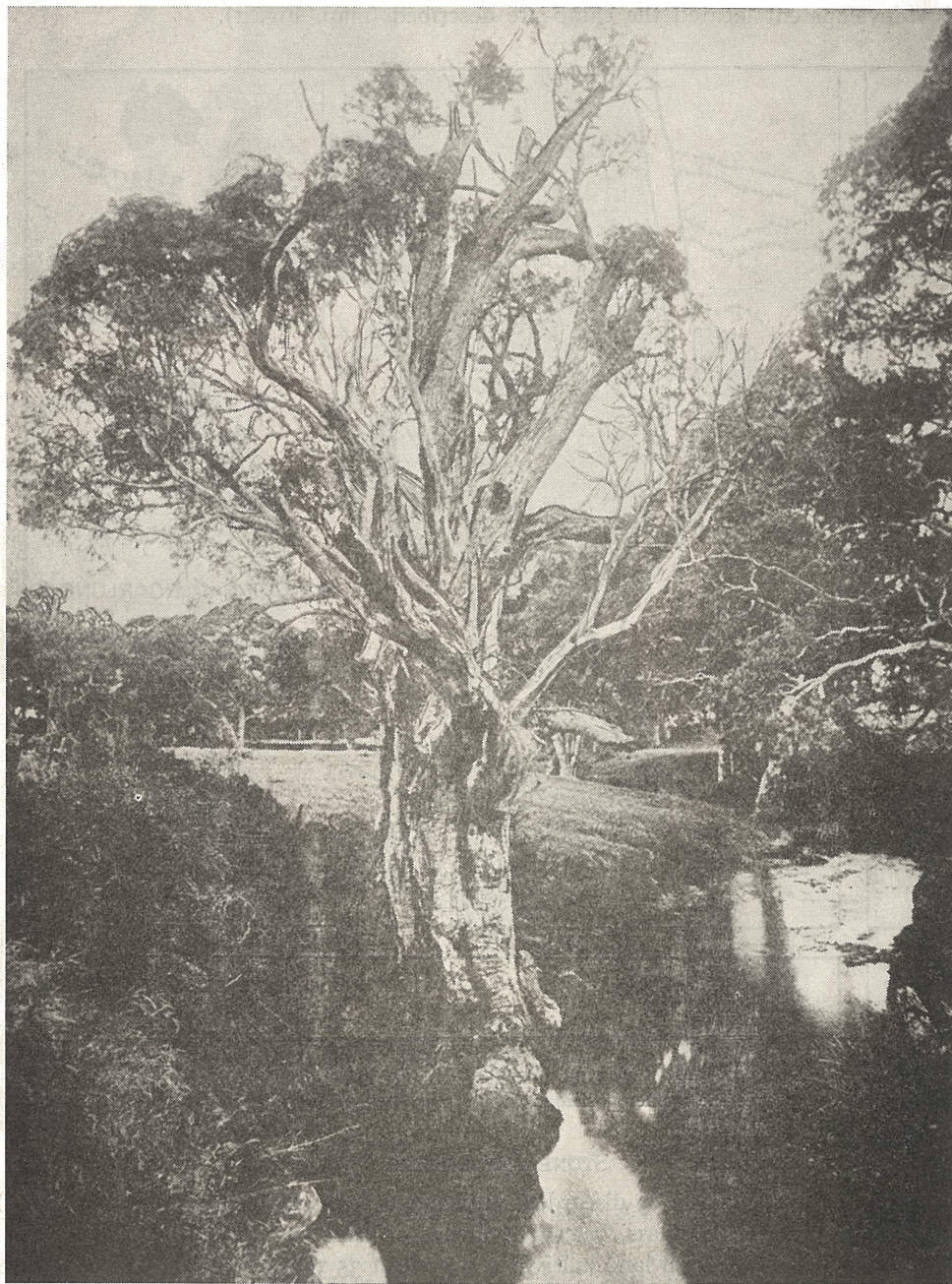
ABORIGINAL OCCUPATION

To-day the Sturt River becomes dry in summer, but old residents recall it as a permanent stream fed by springs and containing fish and yabbies, while opossums, ducks, lizards, snakes, bees and other wild life were plentiful along its banks. Kangaroos and emus were reported to have been numerous in the area at the time of its first settlement.

With permanent water and an adequate food supply, the gravelly and well-drained elevated banks made this part of the Sturt eminently suitable for aboriginal camping places. Teichelmann and Schürmann (1840) record the aboriginal name of the Sturt River as Warri-parri, while Cooper (1949) gives Warreparinga, "meaning a windy place by a creek," as the name for the Sturt River District. Cooper suggests this may refer to the strong gully winds which sweep across the area at night during certain times of the year.

Mr. J. C. Duncan, who still resides on portion of the section, uncovered an aboriginal burial ground (see map, Fig. 1) when the land was first used for intensive agriculture in 1925.

**A FORMER ABORIGINAL CAMP-SITE ON THE STURT RIVER AT
MARION, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.**



The Sturt River at Marion looking East (Photo 1906).
The fire-scarred red gum in the centre foreground is believed to have been burnt by the Aborigines and was only removed in 1961.
The camp-site lies beyond the line of gums bordering the creek in the background of the photograph,

Mr. Duncan recalls the accounts of older relatives who remembered the natives who camped there on their visits to Adelaide to collect Government rations.

The writer lived in the Marion District for a number of years, and prior to its more recent intensive development located the camp-site described (map, Fig. 1).

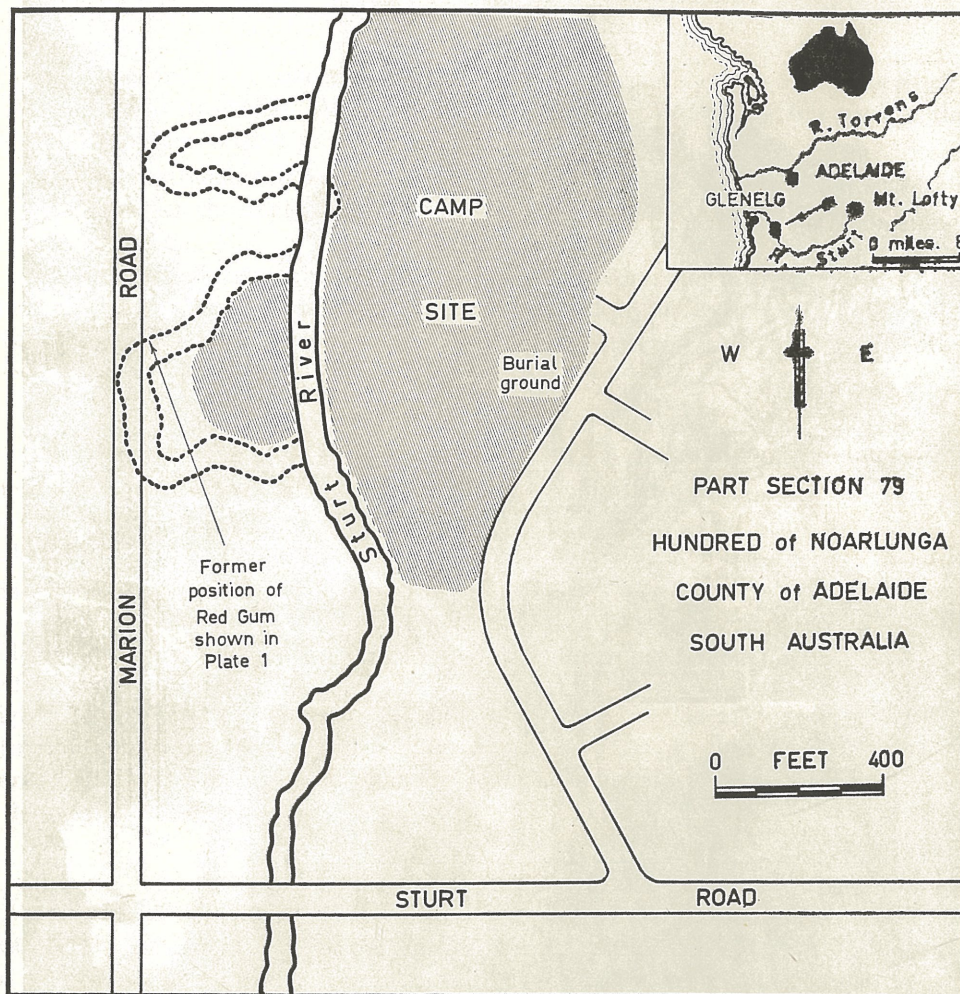
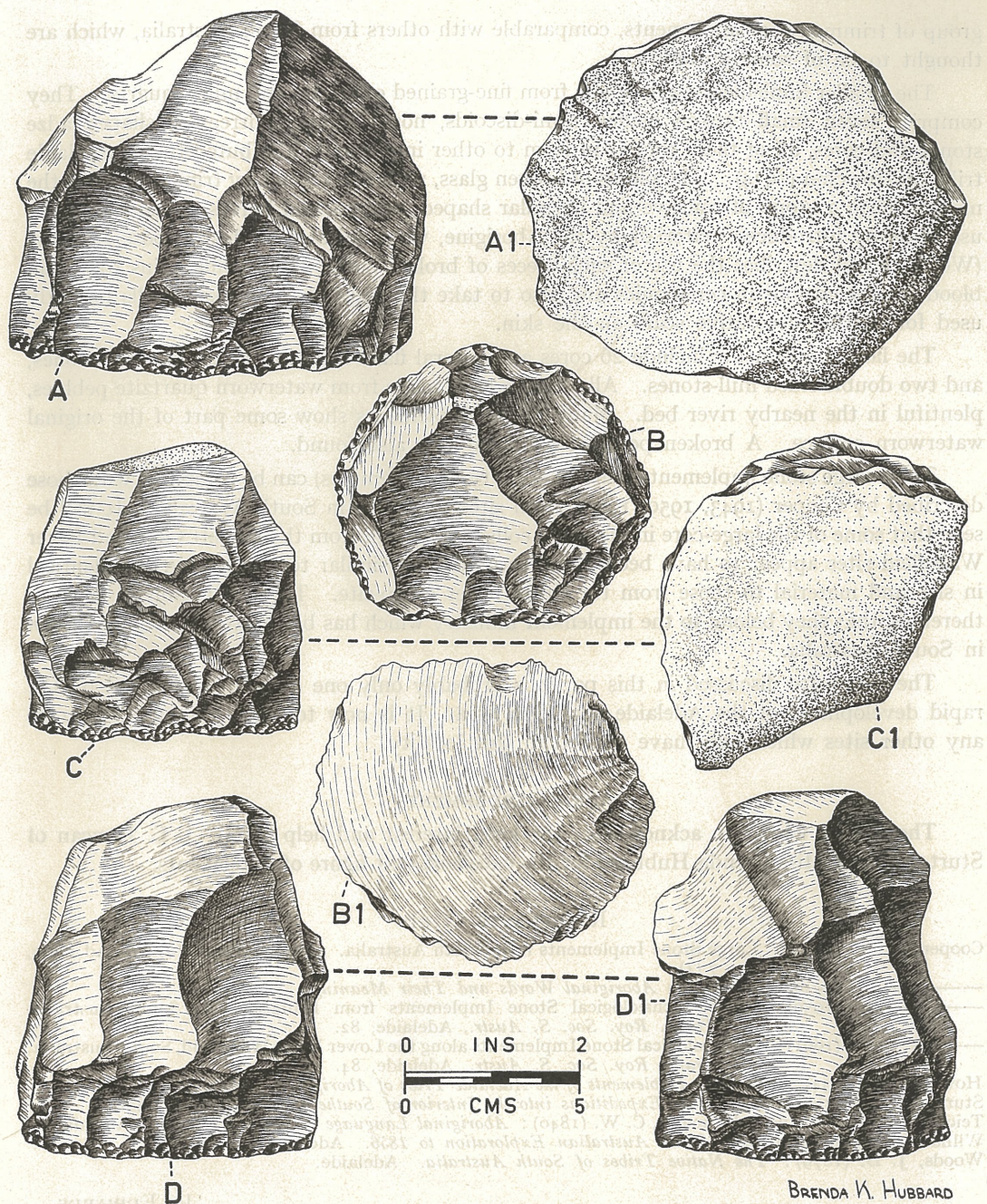


Fig. 1.—Map showing Location of Sturt River Camp-site.

The broken line indicates the former position of the stream-bed prior to excavation of new channel.

STONE IMPLEMENTS

A total of 76 artifacts and 82 discarded, untrimmed flakes have been collected from the site. A number of pieces of glass, bearing evidence of trimming, were also found. All of these pieces were collected from land cultivated for about 35 years, thus precluding archaeological analysis. The collection is not a large one, but is of special interest as it contains a



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Fig. 2.—Examples of the large Chopping Implements recovered from the Sturt River Camp-site, Marion, South Australia.

- A-A1 Core implement manufactured from a large block of quartzite.
 B-B1 Small trimmed uniface implement, *arapia* in form, manufactured from a flake.
 C-C1 Waterworn angular block, step-trimmed to form a semi-circular functional chopping edge.
 D-D1 Typical horsehoof-shaped core chopping implement with step-trimmed working edge around the entire base of the implement.

group of trimmed core implements, comparable with others from South Australia, which are thought to be of some antiquity.

The smaller implements were made from fine-grained quartzite and milky quartz. They comprise seven small broken blades, semi-discoids, nosed scrapers, irregular shaped adze stones and cores, all of them similar in form to other implements attributed to the Adelaide tribe by Howchin (1934). The pieces of broken glass, with fine secondary trimming along the margin, form a group of concave and irregular shaped scrapers and knives. They show the use of newly introduced materials by the Aborigine, when suitable for his purpose. Wyatt (Woods, 1879) describes the use of such pieces of broken bottle for opening veins to obtain blood for decorations in ceremonies and also to take the place of the broken shells formerly used for cutting decorative scars on the skin.

The large implements include 26 cores and several flake implements, 20 hammer-stones, and two double-sided mill-stones. All of these were made from waterworn quartzite pebbles, plentiful in the nearby river bed. Many of the implements show some part of the original waterworn surface. A broken polished axe-head was also found.

These large stone implements (see Fig. 2 for typical examples) can be compared with those described by Cooper (1943, 1959, 1961), from sites elsewhere in South Australia. It will be seen that some of the large-core implements collected by him from the Hallett Cove and River Wakefield sites appear to have been manufactured by a similar technique and are identical in size and material to those from the Sturt River camp-site. There is reason to suggest, therefore, that they belong to the implement industry which has been given the name *Kartan* in South Australia.

The camp-site discussed in this paper is probably only one of many destroyed by the rapid development of the Adelaide suburban area. It is now too late, therefore, to trace any other sites which may have existed in this locality.

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