

Answers to W. H. Rott's questions by J. B. H.

1. Head stool. Labillardiere ii. 43 (quoted Jasmanianus p 122) mentions little pillows (roëré) covered with skin. His description is very imperfect. How did Prof Rätz manage to transform these into Head-stools.
2. <sup>Stone axes</sup> Any instances of stones with a handle may be safely referred to a time subsequent to intercourse with the Sydney blacks brought over by the English.
3. Mummifying dead persons. There is no authority for this. Very the body was burnt or deposited in a hollow tree. Very large hollow gum-trees (Eucalyptus) are exceedingly common in the bush. Some will accommodate quite a number of people. Bush fires often ~~cut~~ eat into the trunk and make the hollows. I can send you photos of such trees.
4. Eating fish. The authorities seem to agree that they did not eat scale fish. The reason can only be surmised. I have seen no trustworthy statement to the contrary. It is certain that they had neither nets nor fishhooks of any sort before the island was colonised. Brough Smyth ii. 392 is quite wrong. Lloyd describes them spearing sting-ray for sport. This is the only instance I know of.

See Cottons  
Notes

5 Canoes They certainly never had coracles covered with skins. This was quite beyond their art.

They The only canoes were those made of bundles of bark (Eucalyptus or Melaleuca). The bark of a common species of Eucalyptus (*E. obliqua*) known as 'stringy bark', is very thick and woolly. It can be peeled or stripped off in great thick sheets. It is often used for building and roofing bush huts & sheds.

Dave's description of the Canoes (quoted Tasmanians p 163, & copied by Brough Smyth) ~~is not~~ is confused. The Canoes he describes were probably made of the light cork-like bark of the Swamp tea tree (*Melaleuca* sp.).

They had no paddles properly so called, but merely used sticks to paddle with.

Catamarans. They certainly used logs at times in crossing rivers and narrow straits, & may occasionally have fastened two together. The Eucalyptus <sup>wood</sup> is too heavy to float, & few of our woods have sufficient buoyancy to serve for rafts unless very dry.

Jeffreys (quoted Tasmanians p 163 and copied by Brough Smyth ii. 401) is quite untrue & worthy. I very much doubt

the accuracy of his description of Catamarans.

The wicker work is a touch of imagination.

They had nothing so elaborate. They certainly did not make these clumsy logs "skinn with amazing rapidity" by the aid of their sticks. (See W. Cotton's notes)

6. Swimming & diving. I have always heard that in crossing a river they used a bundle of bark or a suitable log, if procurable.

The women swam certainly fairly well at times - of this there is evidence, but they do not seem to have had special skill. In diving for shell fish & crayfish (a favourite food as evidenced by the shell mounds thickly scattered all round the coasts) the women were very expert and persevering.

7. Religious ideas. Nest's remarks ii. 90 are very just. He may distrust all accounts of their ideas of a Supreme being or a future state. These were echoes of what they had been told by catechists & teachers.

"The 'jump up white man on an island in the Straits' is doubtless a late idea after white men had come to them from over the sea.

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