

# PRELIMINARY NOTES ON A ROCK SHELTER IN EASTERN TASMANIA.

By

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The cave or shelter occurs in the cliff walls of the gorge of a small rivulet that is one of the tributaries of the Little Swanport River.

The creek-bed varies greatly; sometimes running through open country, and then turning abruptly and passing between freestone cliffs 80 to 100 feet high. In fact, the stream, though normally a small rivulet, appears in places to cut across the natural features of the country-side.

The shelter in question occurs just before the rivulet leaves one of the gorge sections of its course to meander through a wide, flat valley bottom of deep black soil. This valley probably fed many kangaroo when the aborigines were wandering there. The natives did pass along it, because the writer has found many implements at the lower end of the valley, as well as along its course and far beyond the rock shelter.

It is improbable that they used the gorge section of the river-bed as a thoroughfare. At the present time it is very rough in places, and, from various indications, would then probably be choked with scrub and trees. At this day it is easy to short-circuit this rocky section, and it appears likely that the natives did this. If this is true, then it is clear why so few artefacts were found in the sand of the shelter floor.

The cave was not generally used by the aborigines, nor was it on the main road or travel-line of the tribe. From its position it might almost have been a refuge or hiding-place—at any rate, from white settlers. It appears to have been ideal for such a purpose. At the point where the stream emerges on to the black-soiled valley bottom before mentioned the rocky gorge is running approximately north and south. If one stands on the flat facing into the opening and up the stream, he is faced with these features: on the

right a very steep, cliff-crowned hill, perhaps 150 feet high; on the left is a similar hill, but lower; these extend, respectively, roughly east and west, and are clothed with gums, wattle, and other scrub. Probably the distance across the gorge at the top of the talus-like slopes and at the base of the cliffs would be 60 to 70 yards.

Almost at the entrance the gorge is blocked by the trunks of old fallen trees and a steep rocky face, over which the stream forms a waterfall.

The shelter occurs perhaps 70 or 80 yards from the entrance and in the cliff portion of the eastern side. At this point the creek runs closer to the western bank, and there is a steep earth and rock slope from its bed up to the foot of the cliff on the eastern side; this slope is covered with scrub and tall trees.

The shelter is in the face of the eastern cliff, and thus looks west, but must have been well protected before the fires of settlers penetrated and burnt the bush.

The floor of the shelter is at varying heights from the base of the cliff, the earth sloping from north to south, and at the highest point must be 9 or 10 feet below the cave floor, whilst at the northern end the height is only 3 or 4 feet.

The shelter is naturally divided into two parts. At one end the shelf that forms the floor is about 5 feet 6 inches wide; but here there is practically no ceiling; the rock slopes from the back of the floor at a steep angle till it nearly reaches the top of the cliff. The length of this part of the cave would be 8 or 9 feet.

The portion of shelter further north has a species of ceiling, and is more in the nature of a cave. One may stand up at the outer edge of the floor, which might be 3 feet 6 inches wide. This part of the cave is about 7 or 8 feet long. The floor slopes upward from the south to the north, and leads naturally towards the cliff-top at the east side of the entrance to the gorge. At this point there is a natural lookout, giving a view through the tree-tops over the wide valley bottom mentioned before.

Returning to the shelter. There is evidence of fires having been built on the floor, for in both portions the freestone back has two clearly marked spots, where fires frequently lit have left their mark, in the shape of a change of colour in the freestone from yellow to red. Of course the erosion of the winds and damp of years have removed any trace of soot.

When the writer entered, the sand on the floor was even and smooth, except for the track of some animal, and under a little projecting ledge of rock was an abandoned nest of small sticks, &c., whilst near-by were a few whitened bones of a small animal.

On the outer edge of the part of shelter furthest north were three or four artefacts, lying as though they had been left there by the last user—one was nearly falling from the edge of the floor into the bush below. The sand of the floor at this point yielded several more—one or two buried 6 or 7 inches deep. Fine black dust and a few old pieces of burnt bone are mixed all through the sand.

Behind where the fire must have been was a small flattish stone, sized roughly 9 inches by 7 inches, and placed level and parallel with the back of the shelter. This was remarkable because of the absence of other large stones.

The artefacts are all rather small and comparatively neatly formed. Other scrapers found in the neighbourhood are much bolder in design.

The implements are interesting, as affording examples of most of the ordinary types found in Tasmania. They are as follows:—

1. Side scrapers,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, worked full length of one side.
2. End scraper,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, worked at point (approximates to Aurignacian type).
3. Awl, worked to good point. One side may have been of service as concave scraper  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches long.
4. Stone similar to oval "oyster" or thumb stone types, though not finished on one side.
5. Roughly heart-shaped stone, top edge concave.
6. Broadened end scraper—a good edge, well chipped, rest of stone roughly shaped.
7. Nondescript stone, very thin, but with delicate chip-pings on edge.

## OBSERVATIONS ON SOME TASMANIAN FISHES, WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF NEW SPECIES.

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Plates VI.-VIII.; and Two Text Figures.

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### SCOPE.

The present paper deals with material that has come under observation in the course of Museum routine. It falls into three sections—

(a) Some general observations; species mentioned being *Regilophotes güntheri*, *Phyllopteryx foliatus*, *Cephaloscyllium isabella*, *Urolophus viridis*, *Anguilla reinhardtii*, *Solegnathus fasciatus*, *Galaxias affinis*. In view of the scant attention our Tasmanian fishes, except in so far as they come within the purview of general Australian ichthyology, are at present receiving, it has seemed worth while to record these notes, and, though their incidental nature is fully realised, to give them in enough detail to render them reasonably self-sufficient memoranda, available when the need for them arises.

(b) Additions to the Tasmanian list: *Exonantes cribrosus*, *Solegnathus robustus*.

(c) Descriptions of a new species of *Galaxias*, and a new species of *Agrostichthys*, the latter, incidentally, constituting the first Australian record of the family Agrostichthyidae.

Except where otherwise stated, the registration numbers are those of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, Tasmania.

### REGILOPHOTES GÜNTHERI (Johnston).

*Lophotes güntheri* Johnston, Pap. and Proc. Roy. Soc. Tas., 1882 (1883), pp. xlv., 142, and 176.

*Regilophotes güntheri* (Johnston), Whitley, Rec. Aus. Mus., XIX., I., Aug., 1933, p. 72.

Johnston's type of *Lophotes güntheri* was obtained "near Emu Bay," North-Western Tasmania. A contemporary news-