

[Manuscript received 16 October 1969]

## A NOTE ON ABORIGINAL PETROGLYPHS AT DEVONPORT, TASMANIA

By

PETER C. SIMS

*Devonport, Tasmania*

(Communicated by Dr W. Bryden)

(With one figure)

Over the years there have been various descriptions of Tasmanian aboriginal Rock Art. However this information is by no means complete and many of Tasmania's twelve known sites have not been fully investigated or documented with the exception of Mt Cameron West.

### Devonport Bluff

In 1931 the Royal Society of Tasmania published a paper together with plates by Mr A. L. Meston on the Devonport Rock Engravings. To date, many of the motifs described by Meston have not been located due to several factors; one being that no detailed description of the location of each motif has been recorded and secondly roads, weeds, natural regrowth and weathering have caused the temporary masking or in some cases the complete disappearance of many examples.

The most significant find to date is an example depicting the outline of an emu (see figure). This motif was not recorded by Meston but mention is made of other petroglyphs resembling a bird's head, and a coiled snake. Once these are located and recorded it should end the doubts held by some people on the authenticity of the Devonport Engravings.

The petroglyph depicting the emu, a bird now extinct in Tasmania, is engraved on a horizontal rock face in an area of exposed broken outcrops of rock slabs 20 feet x 55 feet. Other designs appear on adjacent rock faces and there have been twelve motifs located so far on this particular area. The position from the Lighthouse at the 'Bluff' which is a State Permanent Mark S.P.M. 2680 is 250 feet at 210° compass bearing.

The depth of the incision varies, the left leg of the emu is 12 mm deep, while the depth of other parts of the motif vary from 2 mm at the head to 5 mm for the right leg.

The overall dimensions of the motif are 37.5 cm x 15 cm.

The interesting figure below the emu motif is deliberate and this varies in depth from a general depression at the arrowhead representation to 12 mm at the deepest point. It is interesting to note that Meston reported that the motifs did not coincide with the natural cracks in the rocks and this fact is supported by the author.

In the meantime recording is continuing at Devonport's Bluff site which is very rich in the variety of petroglyphs. It is anticipated that a full account will be published later on the material examined.

