Notes on Tasmanian Aborigines

Mr. Edward O'Cotton, Keloedon nearamoosha East Coast of Tasmania informs me that many years ago, an old settler showed him the Aborigines method of obtaining fire by friction. He first found a dry log or dead branch of the oak (Casuarina) which had longitudinal cracks in the hard dry wood. He then collected from a gum (Eucalyptus) or wattle (Humata) a quantity of the dry dust fine dust contained in the bores of grubs often found in these trees. This finely powdered wood dust he filled up a crack in the log. He then clave a dry stick, shaped it a little at one end until it roughly fitted the crack. Inserting the stick in the crack, he rubbed it firmly vigorously up and down for some time. After continuing this process perseveringly, the dust began to smoke and eventually took fire.

Mr. Cotton says that when the blacks wanted to go over to Maria Island distant 20 miles from the main land, they chose a day when the wind was blowing towards the island. They then launched themselves on dry logs of the Oyster Bay pine, sitting themselves on these, holding up a branchy way of sail, so were drifted across the channel.

He confirms the account of the blacks spearing stingarees (Sting-ray) on the mud flats, but does not know of their ever eating fish.

Flints found by Anderson French in baskets were probably early hatchets.