

THE REPORT TO INFORM AN APOLOGY TO THE TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA

by Zoe Rimmer and Rebe Taylor

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CULTURAL WARNING

This paper contains information regarding Aboriginal Ancestral remains that may cause sadness, anger and distress to some people. This information is being shared in the spirit of truth-telling and with the understanding that with knowledge comes obligations. We ask that you treat the information in this paper with dignity and respect to Aboriginal Community members and their wishes about how these stories should be shared.

In 2017, the Royal Society of Tasmania (the Society) commissioned a report to inform an apology to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. Pakana woman and museum curator Zoe Rimmer and British-born historian Rebe Taylor co-researched and wrote the Report by early 2018. The Report detailed mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains and mistreatment and misrepresentation of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and people. The Society presented its Apology in February 2021 at an event at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG). The Society's Apology was preceded by a Preamble by Tasmania's Governor and was followed by a 'paired' Apology by TMAG. This paper includes all the findings and recommendations included in the original report and differs only in its formatting, style, and some very minor editing.

Key Words: Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, Apology, Royal Society of Tasmania, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Royal Society of Tasmania commissioned historian Rebe Taylor to write a report to inform a planned Apology to the Tasmanian Aboriginal (Pakana) Community. Due to Zoe Rimmer's comprehensive knowledge of the history and records pertaining to the removals and repatriations of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural artefacts and Ancestral remains, the Society agreed that the Report be co-authored by Rimmer and Taylor.

Rimmer and Taylor began by considering the Report's potential scope. They observed that historians Stefan Petrow (1997), Tom Wise (2003), Helen MacDonald (2005), Tom Lawson (2014) and Paul Turnbull (2017) had detailed variously the theft, mistreatment and trade of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains by Society members (and others) in the nineteenth century. Less examined, however, was the continued removal of Ancestral remains from Country during the twentieth century and the resistance to demands by the Aboriginal Community to repatriate Ancestors made from the 1970s (references in the below report). The authors also noted that there had been less historical research on the theft and mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal material culture relative to that of Ancestral remains through both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The Report was intended as an overview. The authors recognise that there exists more historical detail than can be included in a relatively short report. The below reproduction of our Report includes all the findings and recommendations included in its original form and differs

only in its formatting, style, and very minor editing (except for point three below, that has been reworked to explain the governance relationship between TMAG and the Society). The Report opens with six key points that preface and direct its findings followed by two main parts: the 'Mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains' and the 'Mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal material artefacts'. A short closing statement considers the misrepresentations of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture.

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Six key points preface and direct the findings of this Report.

First: From its inception in 1843, the Royal Society's members have included leaders in Tasmanian politics, law, education, church, and industry since its formation (Wise 2003). The members' social standing has legitimated and facilitated the mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and material culture from the mid nineteenth century. An apology by the Society should acknowledge its failure to lead their community with honourable and decent conduct.

Second: The Society's mistreatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal bodies and material culture followed the forced dispossession of Aboriginal lands and removal of Aboriginal children, Ancestral remains and cultural objects. An apology by the Society should recognise that their mistreatment of

Tasmanian Aboriginal bodies and material culture was part of the wider history of invasion and colonisation.

Third: The Royal Society Museum was established in 1846 by the Society. In 1885, the Society vested its collections, including Aboriginal Ancestral remains and cultural objects, in the new and public Tasmanian Museum (shortly thereafter the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery) by an Act of Parliament (*An Act to incorporate and endow the Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens No. 34 1885*, Tasmania). While formally separated by law, the Society and TMAG, remained 'united in aims and services' (Somerville 1944). The TMAG Board maintained a majority of Society Councillors through most of the twentieth century. Until 1993, the TMAG Director was also Secretary of the Society. In 2021, in accordance with the *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Act 2017*, the TMAG Board is appointed by the responsible State Government Minister who is 'to consult and seek nominations from the Royal Society of Tasmania'. The TMAG Director holds *ex-officio* membership of the Society's Council. The Society is located at TMAG and the two institutions continue occasionally to collaborate. However, the Society remains a non-government member-based organisation while TMAG reports to the Tasmanian State Government's Department of State Growth. In relation to Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains and cultural artefacts, the majority of acquisitions and the most serious mistreatments occurred when those collections were either managed by the Society Museum or by TMAG during the time the TMAG Board was dominated in numbers by Society members and the TMAG Director also held the role of Society Secretary. In the eyes of the Tasmanian public, including the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, there has been no clear distinction between the Society and Museum. An apology by the Society to Tasmanian Aborigines should incorporate TMAG. The authors therefore direct the following three points to the Society and to TMAG.

Fourth: Tasmanian Aboriginal human remains are people – or rather, in the eyes of Aboriginal Community members, Ancestors. They are not specimens. The desecration of burials and removal of Ancestral remains from Country by the Society and TMAG has caused continuing trauma for the Aboriginal Community. They have had to fight for and then manage the return of their Ancestors largely without support, while mourning their desecration. An apology by the Society to Tasmanian Aborigines should recognise that the deep hurt of mistreating Ancestral remains is ongoing.

Fifth: The collection, curation and display of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture by the Society and TMAG created and perpetuated many of the prevailing stereotypes and myths that continue to be destructive to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. An apology by the Society to Tasmanian Aboriginal people should recognise that the deep hurt caused by misrepresenting Aboriginal culture and people is ongoing.

Sixth: The apology by the Society for the mistreatment of Ancestral remains (among other actions) comes thirty years after their return. Although receiving funding to resource an active repatriation program since 2001, TMAG has also

never delivered a formal apology or act of restitution for its past treatment of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. An apology by the Society to Tasmanian Aborigines should recognise that it is belated.

PART ONE: MISTREATMENT OF TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL ANCESTRAL REMAINS

The acquisition and trade of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains by the Royal Society of Tasmania is almost as old as the society itself, with the first recorded acquisition in 1848 by Joseph Milligan. As Royal Society Secretary from 1851–59, Milligan became the most active donor of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains to British anatomical collections in the nineteenth century (Wise 2003, Turnbull 2017, p. 93; IS File 10891, TMAG: 'Specimens donated to Royal Society of Tasmanian Museum 1848–1886'). Through the remainder of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, members of the Royal Society (and from 1885 TMAG) continued to receive donations of Ancestral remains; send them to institutions and collectors; and actively remove remains from gravesites. The last noted removal and acquisition in the TMAG Trustees' Minutes was in 1970 by Colin Wendell-Smith (3 Sept, 1 Oct and 5 Nov 1970).

William Lanne

The mutilation of William Lanne was one of the most notorious and atrocious acts of mistreatment of a Tasmanian Aboriginal person by members of the Royal Society. In 1869, Society Councillor Morton Allport successfully sought permission from Tasmania's Premier, Richard Dry, to secure the skeleton of the recently deceased William Lanne, whom it was wrongly believed was the 'last' Tasmanian Aboriginal man. Before the Society gained possession of Lanne's skeleton, hospital surgeon William Crowther and his son, Bingham Crowther, removed Lanne's skull while he lay in the Hobart hospital morgue. After discovering this, Royal Society member and hospital surgeon George Stokell, in agreement with Allport, with the Society's Secretary, James Agnew, and with Royal Society Councillor John Graves, sawed off Lanne's hands and feet and took them to their museum before he was buried (Petrow 1997, MacDonald 2005, pp. 136–182). Historian Paul Turnbull (2017, pp. 143–148) is confident that it was Royal Society members who then robbed Lanne's grave and took his body to the Royal Society's Museum storerooms where Stokell cut out the remainder of Lanne's skeleton.

Despite the public outrage and official inquiry that followed, Allport tried to find Lanne's missing skull. He offered cash to Bingham Crowther and a complete Tasmanian Aboriginal skeleton to the Royal College of Surgeons, London, as an exchange. Allport also secretly exhumed skeletons from the cemeteries at Oyster Cove and Flinders Island and in the early 1870s sent them to the Royal College and to private collector, Joseph Barnard Davis (Turnbull 2017, pp. 146–148).

Trukanini

The exhumation, display and keeping of Trukanini's remains by the Society and TMAG from 1878–1975 went against the express requests of Trukanini, the Anglican Diocese in Tasmania and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, as recorded in newspapers: 'Her Last Wish'; 22 Feb 1932, *Examiner*; 'Story of Trukanini The Ghost of a Broken Promise', *The Age*, 20 Dec 1947; 'Dying Wish'; *Mercury*, 27 Apr 1949; 'Trukanini to get dying wish', *Advocate* 12 June 1953; 'Reburial Wanted'; *Canberra Times*, 29 March 1974; 'Boffins hang onto Trukanini', *Nation Review* 7–13 June 1974; 'Trukanini's Bones Row, Aborigines are angry', 1 Feb 1976; *Mercury*).

Trukanini was wrongly thought to be the 'last' 'full blood' member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal 'race', and for this reason there was intense interest in securing her body long before she died. Knowing this, Trukanini asked the Reverend Henry Atkinson to ensure she was buried at sea. But her death, on 8 May 1876, was attended by Royal Society member, Parliamentarian, and medical doctor Henry Butler who, with another medical doctor, moved her body to the Hobart hospital. The following day the Society formally requested Trukanini's body for their museum. Trukanini was instead given a Christian burial at the Cascade Female Factory, but it is likely her exhumation was always intended. The Society's second formal request to the Colonial Secretary to secure her body in July 1876 was refused because it was 'premature'; the third, in 1878, was granted (Ryan 1974; references letters 9 May and 12 July 1876 and 4 Dec 1878 in TSA. CSD 10/31/488. Copies also held in TMAG RICP RST Folder RSA/B/1 RSA/B/166). Historian Lyndall Ryan (1974) notes it is pertinent that many Tasmanian Parliamentarians were also Society members.

Ten years later, Trukanini's skeleton was placed on temporary display in the Melbourne Exhibition Building. This was contrary to the initial conditions under which her remains were entrusted by Parliament to the Royal Society: that her 'skeleton shall not be exposed to public view' (in Ryan 1974). Trukanini's skeleton returned to Melbourne in 1904, where it was articulated and casts of it made in preparation for its display in TMAG. She was exhibited in Hobart until 1947, when the son of Henry Atkinson, the Archdeacon Henry Brune Atkinson, began a public campaign to honour his father's broken promise. Consequently, TMAG placed Trukanini's remains in storage, but did not heed Atkinson's requests for a proper burial, even when they were taken up by Bishop Cranswick in 1953. The Royal Society Council agreed 'it was inadvisable that the skeleton should be lost to science' (TMAG folder, 'RICP – RST Archives', 10 Sept 1953). The Museum Trustees, and the Royal Society members, successfully sought the support of the wider scientific community to defend the keeping of Trukanini's remains. The Trustees ensured these letters were passed on to Tasmania's Chief Secretary who attended a special meeting of the Trustees. It was agreed to create a new 'Tasmanian Aboriginal Room at TMAG' with specially constructed

'memorials' to house 'skeletal remains' including those of Trukanini (Trustees' Minutes, 30 July, 3 Sept, 5 Nov, 1 Oct 1953). Nearly ten years later, Royal Society member Dr W.L. Crowther reminded the Trustees of their unfulfilled commitment to create this 'semi-mausoleum' (Trustees' Minutes, 12 April 1962).

From March 1970, the TMAG Trustees received requests to relinquish Trukanini's remains, including from Aboriginal law student, Harry Penrith. The Trustees responded that they had 'no power' to carry out this request, but they once again sought the support of the wider scientific community which uniformly agreed that 'under no circumstances should Trukanini's skeleton be destroyed'. The Trustees forwarded these letters, along with related acquisition records, to the Government. The Chief Secretary upheld the Trustees' wishes and reiterated the earlier promise of a memorial to house Ancestral remains (Trustees' Minutes, 12 April 1962). Months later, Tasmanian Aboriginal skeletal remains were found in sand dunes at Trial and Granville harbours on Tasmania's west coast. The bones were placed in TMAG's collections, and with University of Tasmania's Professor of Anatomy, Colin Wendell-Smith, further excavations were carried out (Trustees' Minutes, 3 Sept, 1 Oct and 5 Nov 1970). A letter from the University archivist Margaret Littlejohn to Mrs E.F. Cotton of Kelvedon dated 6 August 1971 confirmed that Wendell-Smith held historical collections of Tasmanian Aboriginal remains, including that of a baby (TMAG folder: 'RICP – Roy. Soc. Of Tas. Archives'). Wendell-Smith also supervised a medical student to carry out the only detailed and specific study of Trukanini's skeleton for an Honours thesis, submitted around 1973 (Meumann c.1973).

In 1974, the National Aboriginal Congress requested that Trukanini's skeleton be placed in its custody. TMAG's Trustees were advised by a solicitor that Trukanini's remains could only be divested by an Act of Parliament. The *Tasmanian Museum Act 1950* was amended in February 1975. Trukanini's remains were then placed in the vaults of the Reserve Bank in Hobart until 8 May 1976. On that day Tasmanian Aboriginal Community members cremated Trukanini and scattered her ashes in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

The Crowther Collection

The Crowther Collection was one of the largest single collections of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains formed by an individual. It was formed illegally from the early twentieth century by a leading member of the Royal Society of Tasmania. The TMAG Trustees resisted returning the collection to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community despite repeated requests. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (later Corporation (TAC)) began formally campaigning for repatriation in the 1970s and in the early 1980s took legal action against the TMAG. Although unsuccessful, this action and Community protests brought national and international attention to the Tasmanian Government (TAC 1997).

Sir William Edward Lodewyk Crowther (1887–1981) was a medical doctor; a member of the Royal Society of

Tasmania from 1911 (a Councillor from 1919–1958); a recipient of the Royal Society medal in 1940; elected a life member in 1962; and a Trustee of TMAG from 1919–1973 (von Oppeln 2007). Crowther was knighted in 1955. At his death in 1981, the TMAG Trustees stood in honour for a minute's silence (Trustees' Minutes, 3 June 1981).

Sir William was also the grandson of Dr William Crowther, who cut out William Lanne's skull in 1869, and the son of Edward Crowther, who owned land near Oyster Cove, close to the former Aboriginal Station. Sir William grew up hearing stories about 'the natives' and seeing 'several of their crania in the back surgery at [his] home' (Crowther 1949). In 1907, Crowther's University of Melbourne anatomy lecturer, Professor R.J.A Berry, urged his students to collect Aboriginal crania, especially those from Tasmania. As a result, in 1908, Crowther with Dr W. Robertson exhumed the remains of twelve Tasmanian Aborigines who were buried at the Oyster Cove cemetery in the 1840s–1860s (Turnbull 2017, p. 253). Crowther (1949) considered that the long bones were too soft to be of 'anatomical value' and packed them in two large crates (TMAG IS File 10891). The crania were in better condition. Two contained their cerebrum (brain) and were acquired by the University of Melbourne. Crowther (1949) described them as being so 'dried and shrunken ... as to resemble a small, shrivelled apple'. In 1982, the Tasmanian Solicitor-General's Department found that this exhumation had been illegal ('Draft Briefing notes for Premier for a meeting with TAC representatives, 1982, TMAG IS File 10891).

From 1919, Crowther continued to collect Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains from across Tasmania, often while he was removing Aboriginal stone artefacts with other locals including Robert W. Legge and R.H. Pulleine (Evans 2011). Most of the Ancestral remains removed were from Tasmania's northwest and from Eaglehawk Neck. They included both prehistoric and more recent burials, including an infant. Many of the skulls 'in better preservation' were acquired by institutions and collectors. By 1961, Crowther had housed his collection of three skeletons and thirty-four skulls in TMAG, and he formally presented them in 1963. Crowther (1949) studied and published on the collection and facilitated and urged such study by others.

From 1981, members of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community sought the return of the Crowther Collection. The TMAG Trustees offered to 'share' the responsibility of the collection with the Aboriginal Community but would not hand the remains over to them. They sought advice to defend this position legally and, with TMAG's staff anthropologist sought and received letters of support from leading scientists and scientific associations (correspondence 1982–1984, TMAG IS File 10892).

Other collections of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains

By the early 1980s TMAG was aware that it held about 100 Tasmanian Aboriginal crania or fragments of crania, three of which were from named individuals: Augustus,

Caroline and Waubedabar (Waubedema or Waubedimia). This number included the Crowther Collection, but mostly comprised of other acquisitions. Numerous acquisitions had been made to the Royal Society of Tasmania from 1848 to 1886, and to TMAG from 1886 to the late 1970s. Members of the Society actively collected Ancestral remains and published their findings in their Papers and Proceedings until the late 1970s. The TMAG Trustees also instigated the removal of Ancestral remains and accepted donations from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s. The following examples demonstrate TMAG's active effort to obtain Ancestral remains from the late nineteenth to late twentieth centuries:

The Bishop of Tasmania had on a visit to [Vansittart?] Island, formerly Gun Carriage Island, came across graves of seventeen Tasmanian Aborigines. The TMAG Curator was authorised to make necessary arrangements to secure 'the skulls and skeletons'. (Trustees' Minutes, 19 Sept 1899)

TMAG Director reported that 'he was hopeful of obtaining another Tas. Aboriginal skull for the Museum collection' and it was 'resolved that the Director be empowered to incur reasonable expenditure in order to secure same'. (Trustees' Minutes 30 Oct 1924)

See the example of Wendell-Smith's removal of Ancestral remains in 1970 previously.

In a landmark paper presented on behalf of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community to the Australian Archaeology Association conference held in Hobart in 1983, Rosalind Langford (1983) claimed that TMAG and its staff had deceived the Aboriginal Community in 1976 by 'concealing the fact that they held the remains of Aborigines other than those of Truganinni [Trukanini]'. From 1982, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community formally sought the return of 'all' the Tasmanian Ancestral remains held in TMAG. The TMAG Trustees remained determined that they should retain their collections, except for one Trustee. The Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 6 October 1982 record that one Trustee moved 'that all Tasmanian Aboriginal skeletal remains in TMAG be handed over to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people for appropriate disposal'. The motion 'lapsed for want of a seconder'. The Minutes of the Trustees of 2 February 1983 stated: 'It has been made abundantly clear on earlier occasions by the Trustees that they did not favour the removal [return] of the skeletal material.' The Tasmanian Aboriginal Community took legal action and carried out public protest and demonstration. In 1984, the TMAG (Aboriginal Remains) Act authorised the return of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains to the Community. On 13 August 1984, TMAG staff wrote to the Trustees 'strongly protesting' the government's decision and continued to seek the support of the wider scientific community (Trustees' Minutes 5 Sept 1984). In 1985, the Crowther Collection and the remains of the three named Aboriginal people were returned to the

Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. The remainder of the collections known to be Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains were returned in 1988.

Over many years several external researchers were encouraged and given access to the Ancestral remains collection (Berry & Robertson 1909, Crowther & Lord 1920, Crowther 1921, Abbie 1964). Researchers applied their own theories to the cataloguing and the physical storage of the Ancestral remains. The results of this intervention included separating the skeletal remains of a person and wrongly boxing remains belonging to different individuals together. Such poor curatorial practices have made recent provenance research to aid repatriation efforts nearly impossible. Due to this poor record keeping and questionable research practices as well as substandard storage and mismanaged repatriation processes of the past, in 2018, TMAG continues to hold a collection of poorly provenanced and unprovenanced Ancestral remains. Some of these remains include Ancestors from Indigenous Communities outside Tasmania. As Franchesca Cubillo (2010, pp. 30–36) notes, keeping other peoples' Ancestors trapped in collections weighs heavily on traditional owners working in those institutions. Currently the repatriation of other Indigenous peoples' Ancestral remains outside of Australia is unfunded and not covered by the Australian Government's Indigenous Repatriation Policy.

Return of Ancestral remains

Aboriginal people have lived on lutruwita, the Country now known as Tasmania, for more than 40 000 years. Aboriginal spiritual beliefs are that they 'have been here forever' and the connection to Country, Ancestors and kin are inalienable. As such, it is imperative that Ancestors are acknowledged, respected, and given the appropriate ceremony in death. Many Aboriginal people feel a profound responsibility to return Ancestors to Country. This is critical for honouring the Ancestors' dignity and to allow their spirit to finally rest, as well as allowing the Aboriginal Community today to mourn and heal.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Community have had to fight for recognition and for the return of their Ancestors through political and legal battles. As Cubillo (2010, p. 25) writes: 'Indigenous communities were not responsible for the problems associated with repatriation, and yet they have to carry the cultural, spiritual and financial burdens.' The struggle to return known people and the knowledge that many more 'unprovenanced' remains may never return causes ongoing distress to Aboriginal people who are responsible for their Ancestors' safe return home. The disrespect with which Ancestral remains have been collected, traded, stored and researched often means that little is known about the Ancestors who are returned to Community. This lack of knowledge adds further stress and complexity to the decisions regarding proper ceremony, burial practice and reburial place. The wounds caused by the desecration of burials, and the collection of Ancestral remains, are not historical; they are ongoing.

Collectors placed a high value on the remains of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in particular. The Society and TMAG played a major role in the 'scientific trade' of Tasmanian Aboriginal Ancestral remains and received the Ancestral remains of other Indigenous peoples in exchange for Tasmanian Aboriginal remains as well as collegial recognition. Ros Langford outlined this issue poignantly in 1983 (p. 2):

Science, including the science of archaeology, determined that Truganinni was the last of our people. It did so by using scientific principles based upon European values. The effect of this 'scientific fact' has been incalculable to the 4000 Tasmanian Aboriginals who reside in Tasmania ... Science got what it wanted – some bones to parade through Europe enhancing the reputation of white colonials, leaving us with the struggle lasting 100 years to defeat that view. And science did not assist us in that fight. But what has changed? It was the Aboriginal people who fought for the return of the grave-robbled skeletons known as the Crowther Collection. There was no agitation from within your discipline for their proper burial or cremation. Instead, there was opposition and obstruction to our demand for the return of the dead...

The return of Ancestral remains from TMAG to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community in the 1980s was inadequately managed. The research into the history of the collections in the 1980s was carried out in large part by TMAG's staff anthropologist who objected to their return (as noted above). More extensive and comprehensive research into the related records was not undertaken until 2002 when TMAG began receiving funding under the Australian Government's 'Return of Indigenous Cultural Property' project (in 2018 the Indigenous Repatriation Program, IRP). In the 1980s, there were neither sufficient related records and information given to the Aboriginal Community, nor adequate support given for the management of returned Ancestral remains, or for the ongoing trauma caused by their removal and return. An important instance of this mismanagement was the return of Waubedabar (Waubedema or Waubedimia) who was returned in 1985 and her remains cremated, only for it to be discovered in 2005 that half of her skeleton was still held in TMAG's zoological collections. Waubedabar's handing back, and cremation had to be done again in 2007, and the trauma and grief was experienced by the Community once more.

PART TWO: MISTREATMENT AND MISREPRESENTATION OF TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND PEOPLE

Removal of petroglyphs

In 1961, TMAG instigated the removal of rock engravings from Preminghana, or Mt Cameron West, on Tasmania's northwest coast. Tasmanian Aboriginal Community members and archaeologists regard this 'removal' as having been destructive to some of the most important petroglyphs (huge rock engravings) in the world and of a site of deep cultural significance (TAC 2015, Tiagarra 2018).

Then-Tasmanian Museum Director, Dr William Bryden, stated that TMAG should remove the Aboriginal stone carvings because they were 'being destroyed by erosion'. Permission to access the area was granted by the Van Diemen's Land Company manager, and a tractor, trailer and labourers were hired and paid for by TMAG. The Director and Mr R. Roth excavated Aboriginal middens in the region during the removal (Meston 1931, Trustees' Minutes 2 Feb and 5 Oct 1961).

The removal broke the carvings; one larger petroglyph was pieced together and mounted using concrete in the Tasmanian Museum and was on display by mid-1962 until 2005 (Trustees' Minutes 7 June 1962). Archaeologist Rhys Jones told fellow archaeologist and interviewer Mike Smith that when Australia's leading archaeologist, John Mulvaney, visited Tasmania's northwest coast in the 1960s, he was '*absolutely* shocked' by what he saw: 'they had sawn off the face of the carvings' and there 'were bits of carvings lying all around, all broken'. Moreover, Mulvaney understood that the reason TMAG had removed the petroglyphs was 'because Launceston [QVMAG] already had one... and there was a great rivalry' (Jones & Smith 1997).

Removal of Tasmanian Aboriginal stone artefacts

From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, collectors have removed tens of thousands of Tasmanian Aboriginal stone tools from sites across the island, including middens, quarries, and campsites. This has left a deficit of important cultural material and erased part of the record of earlier land use, occupation, and cultural practice for today's Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Some of these prodigious collectors were members of the Royal Society, including Sir William Crowther, Fritz Noetling and Robert Legge. These men formed large personal collections of stone tools from across Tasmania from the early twentieth century and deposited them in museums locally and overseas. Stone tools make up the largest part of the overseas Tasmanian Aboriginal collections. These collectors influenced leading scholars in Europe and beyond through their correspondence and publications in which they advanced the idea that Tasmanian Aborigines represented the earliest, or most primitive stage of human cultural evolution: the Old

Stone Age or Palaeolithic (Noetling 1907, Crowther 1949, Taylor 2017, p. 24, p. 64).

The correspondence of Henry Ling Roth and James Backhouse Walker

Henry Ling Roth's *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (1890) was the first anthropological account of the subject, and its second edition (1899) remained the most influential book on Tasmanian Aborigines until the late twentieth century. This book advanced and perpetuated the idea that Tasmanian Aborigines were 'extinct' and one of the most primitive 'races' on Earth.

Roth was inspired to rework his first edition after reading a claim in *Nature* magazine that Fanny Smith (or Fanny 'Cochrane' Smith) was a 'full blood' Aboriginal, not a 'half caste' as he had been led to believe (Roth 1889). Roth wrote to the Society to determine the veracity of his claim. Over the next ten years, a Royal Society Councillor James Backhouse Walker carried out research into Fanny Smith on Roth's behalf to determine this and other questions. Taylor (2016, 2017, pp. 91–105) gives an account of this correspondence and details its holdings in the University of Tasmania and the Manchester Museum. Walker was assisted by Hobart photographer J.W. Beattie, who was elected as a Fellow of the Society in 1890 and who helped establish the historical and geographical section of the Society in 1899 (Roe 1979).

The research and the conclusions drawn by Walker (and consequently by Roth) influenced how people understood Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their culture for most of the twentieth century. It was deeply insensitive and disrespectful to Fanny Smith, her family and to the wider Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. The research carried out for Roth, undertaken or organised by Walker included photographing Fanny Smith at her home in order to determine her 'racial status'; obtaining a sample of her hair; removing family photographs from the Smith family (and not returning them); and asking her friends about her 'mental' and 'physical details' including her ancestry and the shape of her teeth.

Walker, with other members of the Society recorded Fanny Smith singing in language in 1898, but they agreed that she did not have any other Aboriginal cultural information that was 'valuable' because she was, in their opinion, 'manifestly a half-caste' (Taylor 2017, p. 95).

Other research carried out by Walker for Roth included:

- attempting repeatedly to obtain six Tasmanian Aboriginal skulls kept by Edward Cotton of Kelvedon (Bishop Montgomery also tried);
- organising the study of nineteen Aboriginal skulls housed in TMAG in Hobart;
- trying to extract a piece of hair for study from an ochred lock that once belonged to Wurati (Worredy) or Manalakina (Mannalargenna);
- sending Roth a piece of hair belonging to Trukanini;
- sending Roth a shell necklace, but then claiming it was not 'genuine' as it was made by a 'half-caste' Islander (whom Walker stated 'are *not* Aborigines');

- compiling language lists, memories and other accounts from settlers that Walker regarded having more authority than the ‘half-caste’ Islanders, or Fanny Smith and her family.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: MISREPRESENTATIONS OF TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND CULTURE

As institutions of knowledge, expertise and authority, the Royal Society of Tasmania with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery helped construct and perpetuate myths through an ongoing process of colonisation. For many years, the Society (and from 1885 TMAG) have labelled, measured, categorised, and degraded Tasmanian Aboriginal people to suit European ideologies and racial theories. For 140 years, the collection and curation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture by TMAG was heavily informed by the ideas of ‘primitivism’ and ‘extinction’, that were used, as Langford (1983) puts it: to ‘soften the guilt of invasion and the destruction of a society’ (Burk 2015).

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