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ABORIGINAL PETROGLYPHS BETWEEN BEAUMONT AND
HAMLEY TRIGNOMETRICAL STATIONS, KURINGAI.

By R. ETHERIDGE, Junr., Curator.

(Plates xii. and xiii.)

My attention was recently drawn by Mr. W. S. O'Brien, Electrician to the Railway Commissioners at Hornsby Junction, on the Northern line, to an interesting group of aboriginal rock carvings at Kuringai Staff Station, about four-and-a-half miles north of the Junction. This group is not recorded by Mr. W. D. Campbell in his excellent "Aboriginal Carvings of Port Jackson and Broken Bay."¹ Mr. O'Brien was good enough to guide me to the spot and assist in noting the following particulars:—

The petroglyphs are immediately contiguous to the railway line, on its west side, opposite the Staff Station, and between the railway line and the Peat's Ferry Road. There are three prominent figures, a man, woman, and smaller figure of doubtful sex. They are lying in an east and west direction, side by side; the man's outline in the centre, the woman's on the left or north, and the nondescript's on the right or south. At right angles to this group, extending beyond the female outline, in a general direction of slightly east of north, is a series of huge foot outlines; these we traced for one hundred and seventy-six yards. Above the male outline, inclined in an oblique direction over the head, is a large boomerang, the lower point almost touching the outspread left hand. A few feet above the woman's head, but a little further to the left, are five fish outlines,² four in a line close together, and the fifth slightly removed from the others, all pointing in an easterly direction.

The Man.—This is a huge figure, ten feet two inches in height. The arms are outstretched above the head and the fingers expanded. The legs are normally placed, but with the view of displaying the toes, the dorsal surfaces of the feet are represented "full face," the figure standing on the inner edge of the right foot, and the outer edge of the left foot. The hands and feet are

¹ Mem. Geol. Surv. N.S. Wales, Eth. Series, i, 1899.

² These are not represented in the plate.

remarkable in that the former are six-fingered, and the latter seven-toed. No features are represented. The trunk is girt with the belt of manhood, and above it extending from axilla to axilla is a band with a series of more or less lanceolate incisions, nine on one side and five on the other, the centre being plain.

The Woman.—This outline is placed at a distance of three feet four inches from that of the man, on the left side. It is six feet high, and also with the arms outstretched and curved above the head. The fingers and toes, in this instance, are not represented, but the feet are normally placed; the mammæ are large, pendulous, and laterally situated.

The Nondescript Human Figure.—Immediately at the man's right side is the smaller human figure, without indication of sex; it is about four feet high. One arm, the right, is passed beneath the man's trunk, the other is extended on the opposite side, and the hand is four-fingered; again no features are visible. The legs are very indistinctly portrayed, curving away from the man, and the feet are ill-formed.

The Boomerang.—This is two feet eleven inches across the bend, and although not grasped in the man's left hand, extends from above it obliquely over the head.

The Feet Impressions.—We now come to one of the most interesting features in this group of petroglyphs, a line of huge feet impressions extending in a northerly to an east-north-east direction for a distance of one hundred and seventy-six yards, following round the Hawkesbury Sandstone escarpment. The two first form a pair, at ten feet seven inches from the female figure. Beyond the pair the impressions are single, thirty-six in all, more or less. Between the twentieth and twenty-first there seems to be a gap, and at one point a small fish-like figure is introduced, and at another is an oval incision of no particular meaning. The largest foot impression is two feet four inches long by one foot seven inches wide, and all are seven-toed. They are variable distances apart, but as a rule from four to ten feet. Immediately opposite the Staff Station, and on a sloping surface of rock within the westerly railway fence, is a single footmark at right angles to the long line already described, as if approaching the latter.

The all important points in this group of petroglyphs are the long line of tracks, the peculiar presentation of the man's feet, and the increase in number of the man's fingers and toes.

A long line of tracks accompanying other figures has already been recorded by Mr. W. D. Campbell in a few instances. In a group off the Manly to Pittwater Road, on Portion 64, Parish of Narrabeen, twenty-two impressions are visible, leading up to a

coroneted figure.³ One of the finest petroglyphs known is on a saddle between Wheeler and Middle Creeks, on Portion 906, Parish of Manly Cove. "The western part of the group represents two hunters; the foot-marks represent their tracks. The central portion appears to represent a combat between two natives, who exhibit plenty of energy in their attitudes; each has a boomerang in the right hand; the foot-marks show, apparently, the flight of the smaller individual and his chase;"⁴ there are an immense number of tracks here, and two of them exhibiting the toes are supplied with the correct number. On a ridge between Gunson Trigonometrical Station and Sugar Loaf Hill, in Portion 81, Parish of Narrabeen, is a large petroglyph, almost entirely composed of foot-imprints.⁵ Another fine exhibition of picture story work may be seen on a high ridge, forming the watershed between Middle and Narrabeen Creeks, on the road line, south side of Portions 107 and 110, Parish of Manly Cove.⁶ Here numerous foot-prints, with other well executed figures, are to be seen. These illustrations are sufficient to show how frequent and important an element the foot-imprint is in our East Coast petroglyphs.

The position of the feet in the male figure is almost unique. Feet are often represented as an integral portion of a figure, turned in opposite directions, right and left, but only in one instance⁷ am I acquainted with a similar representation approaching that of the Kuringai man. This occurs on the upper ledge of a large extent of rock on the northern side of a high flat-topped hill, north of Smith's Creek, Parish of Broken Bay. Another occurs in a group on the west side of Roach Trigonometrical Station, on a ledge of rock skirting the hill-side overlooking the south-west branch of Smith's Creek, Cowan, Parish of Broken Bay. Here is a male figure with the right foot turned in the proper direction, and the left half turned to correspond with it.⁸

Fingers and toes are occasionally depicted, either normal or less in number than there should be. A good illustration of the former is that of an elaborate male figure⁹ on the summit of a

³ Campbell—*Mem. Geol. Surv. N.S. Wales, Eth. Series, i., 1899, pl. viii., f. 16.*

⁴ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, p. 22, pl. x., f. 1.

⁵ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xiii., f. 1.

⁶ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xv., f. 2.

⁷ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xii., f. 12.

⁸ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xxi., f. 2.

⁹ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xii., f. 16.

ridge on the south side of Smith's Creek, near a rock pinnacle, Parish of Broken Bay. A similarly good representation of the latter is that already referred to as having the feet facing both in the same direction.¹⁰

The combined male and female figures are sometimes met with also. On the east side of French's Forest Road, near the crossing of the boundary of Manly Cove and Narrabeen Parishes, a decidedly erotic group occurs.¹¹ Again at the top of the ridge at Coal and Candle Creek, near Arden Trigonometrical Station, Parish of Broken Bay;¹² and on the west side of the road from Turramurra to Bobbin Head, near the Bobbin Trigonometrical Station, Parish of Gordon.¹³ In all three instances the female figure, and in the two first, those of the men have the arms upraised, as in the Staff Station Group, but that of the man in the third series exhibits the legs drawn up in the position known as the "corroboree jump," and is accompanied by five large *mundoe* foot-prints, as Mr. Campbell calls them.

An attempt to explain the meaning of many of these petroglyphs will be found in two papers by myself,¹⁴ in which the views of some of our best authorities are quoted.

It is questionable whether the less distinct figure at Kuringai is intended for that of a male or female. If the latter, I offer the following explanation. In the *Kuringai (Bora)* of the five tribal groups forming the Murring association, extending in southern New South Wales from Twofold Bay to Port Jackson, and west to the Lachlan River, about Hay, are performed two magic dances, those of *Daramulan* and *Ngalalbal*.¹⁵ The latter mythical being is a duality, the wives of *Daramulan*, and in the dance they are seen to glide from the forest and disappear in the gloom beyond.¹⁶ It is, therefore, possible that the Kuringai petroglyph may be intended to represent the dread spirit who presided over the initiation ceremonies, accompanied by his wives.

¹⁰ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xii., f. 12.

¹¹ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. viii., f. 15.

¹² Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xix., f. 9.

¹³ Campbell—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xxi., f. 4.

¹⁴ Etheridge—*Rec. Geol. Surv. N.S. Wales*, ii., 1, 1890, p. 34; iii., 3, 1893, p. 82.

¹⁵ Howitt—*Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xiii., 1884, p. 433.

¹⁶ Howitt—*Journ. Anthropol. Inst.*, xiii., 1884, p. 450.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII.

Locality map showing position of Kuringai Staff Station.

Scale :—One mile to one inch.

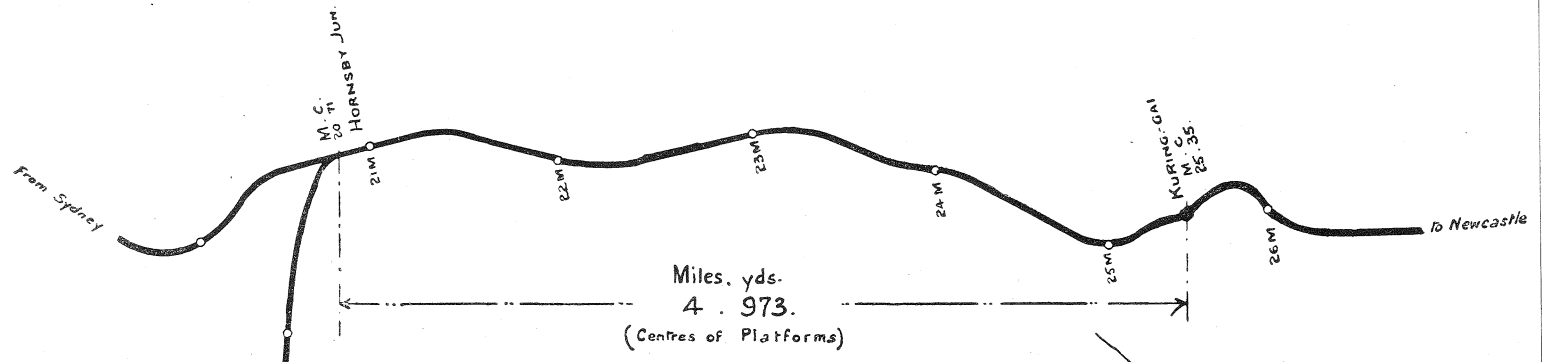
N . S . W . R .

NORTHERN LINE .

Tracing shewing Line between Hornsby Junct & Kuring-gai .

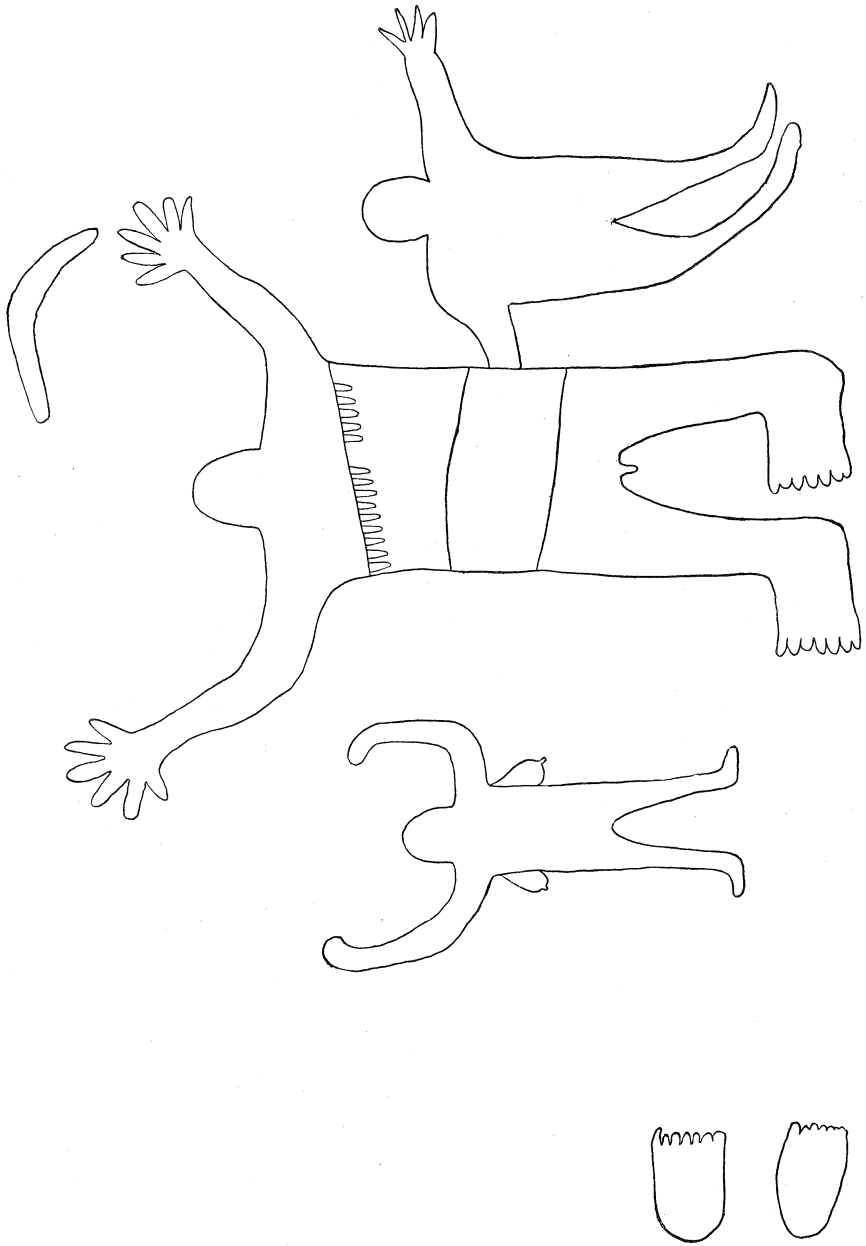
Scale. 1 Mile to 1 inch .

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII.

The greater portion of a group of petroglyphs at Kuringai Staff Station,
about four and a half miles from Hornsby Junction, Northern Railway line.
Scale:—About half-an-inch to one foot.



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