

SOME AUSTRALIAN INCISED STONES.

By ELSIE BRAMELL, M.A.

(Plate iii.)

In the last few years some unusual stone objects have been added to the Australian Museum collection. They are of two main types—stones bearing longitudinal and criss-cross incisions, and stones, generally waterworn pebbles, upon which is engraved a design or figure.

Four (Pl. iii, figs. 1 to 4) are pieces of sandstone of varied colouring, and scored across with parallel or converging incisions, such as might be made in sharpening pointed implements. They were found upon a coastal midden at Boat Harbour, near Sydney, by Mr. J. Ashley. Photographs were taken and coloured replicas made of the specimens, as the original pieces remain in the possession of the finder.

A yellow sandstone artifact (Pl. iii, fig. 1), scored on three surfaces by 10, 5 and 15 lines respectively. The dimensions are 13·8 cm. long, 10·2 cm. wide, and 4·5 cm. at the thickest part. A light grey sandstone (Pl. iii, fig. 2) with roughly parallel scorings, 7 on one surface and 6 on the other. It is 13·2 cm. long, 9·2 cm. wide, and 3·75 cm. thick, and appears to be portion of a larger specimen. Pale yellow sandstone (Pl. iii, fig. 3) with 2 deep incisions on one surface only. The length is 14 cm., width 13 cm., and thickness 2·7 cm. A reddish ferruginous sandstone (Pl. iii, fig. 4), irregular in shape, and marked on one surface only by 7 grooves. It is 14·9 cm. long, 11·8 cm. wide, and 3·2 cm. thick.

A piece of sandstone (E 35254) 15·2 cm. long, 7·6 cm. wide, and 2·5 cm. thick, showing 2 converging incisions, said to be portion of a circular slab, was found at Tonkley Point, Tuggerah Lake, N.S.W., by Mr. Roy Mackenzie. This type of grooving is reminiscent of that found over wide surfaces of rock engravings on a large scale, such as those at Delamere, Northern Territory.

A piece of stone (E 45302, Pl. iii, fig. 5) from Dubbo, presented by Mr. John Baird, measures 13·35 cm. by 5·1 cm. by 1·3 cm. The grooves number 10 on one surface, and 5 on the other. These latter grooves are shallow, broad depressions, and are considered by geological opinion to be of natural origin. It is most likely that the more numerous grooves on the opposite surface have been added by human hands, because it was picked up on an abandoned camp site, and was said by a native to have been used for sharpening bone points; one end of the stone has been worn smooth.

In the Cairns district of Queensland slabs of slate crossed with many incisions are used as grindstones, called "*morah*". The function of the grooves is said to be to drain away the poisonous juices from the seeds; these are crushed with the aid of a pestle or topstone and water into a paste, which is then dried and rubbed into flour. One of these *morah* and its accompanying topstone were described and figured by Dr. R. Hamlyn-Harris (1916, pl. vi, figs. 1-2) together with notes on three specimens in the Australian Museum. A pestle collected with one of the latter specimens (E 10100-1) appears to have been part only of the original slab; it is scored on both surfaces, which, in addition, are hollowed with use. Dr. Hamlyn-Harris declares that their distribution was limited to the district round Cairns. Rubbings of three additional *morah* in the Queensland Museum are now in our possession and indicate the range of size of these grindstones. One measures approximately 17·75 by 10 cm., another