

**Something Old, Something New: Further Notes
on the Aborigines of the Sydney District
as Represented by Their Surviving Artefacts, and
as Depicted in Some Early European Representations**

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ABSTRACT. An up-dated list of surviving pre-circa 1820 Aboriginal ethnographic material from, or claimed to be from, the Botany Bay-Port Jackson area is followed by discussion of a number of late 18th/early 19th century depictions of Aborigines, some hitherto unpublished. This material is examined in the light of a number of recent surveys of the art, archaeology and ethnography of the Sydney district at the beginning of the period of European settlement.

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The *rite de passage* conjured up by the title to this brief tribute to Fred McCarthy, selfless supporter over the years of many younger and more ignorant scholars than himself, is offered in the aftermath of the bi-centennial of European settlement in south-eastern Australia. While my sub-title smacks somewhat of the antiquarian, it may also perhaps be considered to mark an intellectual coming of age after a period of rugged individualism (Megaw, 1966a) and, as such, to represent a true marriage of the disciplines of archaeology, the history of art and anthropology. In this context, I may be forgiven a few semi-autobiographical remarks at the outset.

There has been much progress in all three of the areas of study just listed since the time when, more than 25 years ago, as a fledgling Lecturer in European Archaeology at the University of Sydney, I was first

encouraged by our honorand, then first Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, to undertake a series of excavations of coastal and estuarine sites in the South Sydney district. These excavations, like so many of those carried out in Australia in the last two decades, and unlike Fred McCarthy's own impeccable record of publication, alas largely remain at best inadequately reported in the literature (e.g., Megaw, 1965; 1966b, 1969a, 1969b, 1974; Megaw & Wright, 1966).

At the same time, and mindful of my own undergraduate training in fine arts as well as prehistoric archaeology, I became interested, as others before me, in the surviving iconographic and ethnographic evidence for the initial period of European culture-contact history in south-east Australia. In 1966 I began a preliminary study of early New South Wales ethnographic material