

THE LAPSTONE CREEK EXCAVATION: TWO CULTURE PERIODS REVEALED IN EASTERN NEW SOUTH WALES.

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(Figures 1-131.)

(Figures 95-131 are contained in Plates I-IV.)

This paper is an account of the results of the excavation of a rock-shelter situated (Figure 1) on the southern side of a gully a few hundred yards north of the bridge over which the Great Western Road crosses the Western Railway Line. This gully is on the eastern slope of the Blue Mountains, and the rock-shelter, which faces northward, is at its lower end. Lapstone Creek flows down the gully to the river half a mile to the east. From various vantage points above the rock-shelter the aborigines had a wide view of the lowlands towards the river. Before the railway was constructed there was easy access from this gully to the Nepean River and Emu Plains. Nowadays a high railway embankment runs across the gully and shuts off completely the old way of access.

The deposit was first noticed by a local resident, Mr. G. E. Bunyan, who found some flakes just below the surface in 1936. Soon afterwards, unfortunately, the whole of the occupational deposit at the western end of the rock-shelter was dug out by several private collectors, whose main interest was the acquisition of specimens, and they made no records of their work or of the specimens recovered. A small trench was dug by them at the eastern end, but otherwise the deposit excavated by us was undisturbed. Mr. Bunyan kindly invited a party to excavate the latter portion of the deposit, and in December, 1936, the task was undertaken by the late Mr. C. C. Towle and Messrs. G. Bunyan, C. Towle, Sr., G. A. Williams and the author. The late C. C. Towle and the author wrote a preliminary account of the work, most of which is included in the present report; to it I have added sections ii to vi.

This rock-shelter is one of a type which occurs commonly in the Hawkesbury Sandstone formation in the central coastal district of New South Wales. It is a deep rock-shelter (Figure 95) in which perfect protection is given in wet and cold weather. It measures 10 metres across the entrance, 3 metres from the front to the back wall in the middle, and 1.4 metres from the undisturbed floor to the ceiling which is smoke-blackened as a result of long occupation.

Prior to the occupation of the rock-shelter by the aborigines, some very large blocks of sandstone had fallen from the outer edge of the roof, and these, together with other rocks, formed a somewhat irregular platform across the entrance (Figures 97-98). This platform was approximately 8 metres in length, and its surface was 1.4 metres above the rock-floor of the cave. Some of the blocks on the outer side of the platform sloped steeply towards the bottom of the gully.

On their arrival at the site, the aborigines apparently found the rock-floor comparatively free of debris. The platform of rocks formed a natural barrier across the entrance and confined the hearth deposit, which, as it accumulated, spread to the limits of the cave. Eventually the deposit increased to such a height that it spread out over the rocky platform, and before we commenced our excavation only the tops of three of the larger blocks of sandstone were visible.

Within the cave conditions were favourable to the steady and undisturbed growth of the midden, and the work carried out by us revealed a homogeneous deposit 1.4