

ROCK ENGRAVINGS OF THE SYDNEY-HAWKESBURY DISTRICT

Part 2 : Some Important Ritual Groups in the County of Cumberland

by

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(Plates 23-26. Figs. 1-7.)

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The groups at Mt. Kuring-gai and Maroota, Nos. 1, 4 and 5, comprise some of the outstanding series of rock engravings known in the Sydney-Hawkesbury district, and every effort should be made to protect them from vandalism. The Mt. Kuring-gai group was reported to the Australian Museum over fifty years ago when Etheridge (1904) published a brief description of the principal figures. The Devil's Rock group at Maroota has been known for an equally long time but the other groups described herein were not reported until the last decade.

Mt. KURING-GAI

[Group 1]

Etheridge (1904) did not mention the fish, kangaroo tracks and basket, and his diagram of the anthropomorphic trio is inaccurate. This group is unique in its composition, and a complete re-description and plan of it is necessary for permanent record. It is a remarkable omission from Campbell's 1899 memoir in which other groups in this area are described and illustrated.

The group is situated on the western side of a high ridge, the main one connecting Port Jackson to the Hawkesbury River. The site now lies between the railway and highway to the north, at a spot where they are only thirty yards apart, about half a mile north of the railway station. The ridge is midway between Berowra Creek and Cowan Creek; from it is to be seen a commanding view westward to the valley of Calina Creek into which a number of small tributaries converge to flow into Berowra Waters at Crosslands. To the eastward of the site the ridge rises slightly to block out the view into a gorge leading down into Cowan Creek.

The figures are engraved on a long and narrow ledge of rock which runs north-to-south across the slope of the ridge. They begin with a single human foot track or *mundoe* on a rock on top of a knoll; 68 ft southward is another rock bearing the next five *mundoes*, and then 73 ft further on, the next eight occur on separate rock surfaces almost at ground level, running down the slope of the knoll and then up a very slight slope to the end of the main continuous ledge of rock. The main ledge is narrow at its northern end, widens in the middle, and narrows again to a few feet until it joins the main rock surface which is 55 ft x 12 ft in area. A growth of heath in shallow soil projects into the middle of this area. The ledge narrows again at the southern end and on it is engraved a single small *mundoe*. There are no *mundoes* on a higher ledge or on lower rock surfaces outside the line of these tracks at the northern end. There is a drop of from 6 to 12 ft to the ground below the main ledge but no occupational deposit is present.

The continuous line of forty-five *mundoes* runs for a distance of just over a furlong from north to south, and 50 ft further on is the single one mentioned above. The *mundoes* are mostly from 1 ft 6 in to 7 ft apart; others are from 8 to 15 ft apart. There is a gap of 48 ft between them on an area of rock on the main ledge across which water flows and seeps and on which tracks were either never engraved or have been completely weathered away. There are other gaps of 18, 20, 25, 52, 68 and 73 ft. These *mundoes* are from two to three times natural size, and are both the longest series and largest individually, yet recorded. Examples of their size (in inches) include 12 x 5, 15 x 10, 19 x 12, 20 x 14, 22 x 6, 22 x 12, 22 x 17, 23 x 7, 23 x 17, 24 x 3, 24 x 14, 27 x 12, 29 x 18, and 30 x 18. They thus correspond in the main to those of the culture here, whose feet are 25 x 14 in and 22 x 13 in and are intended to represent his tracks, not those of his wives.

The shape of the *mundoes* is generally oval, some being irregular and others half-ovals. Some are either narrow or broad in relation to their length. The toes indicated vary from two to eleven, six being the commonest number. On two of the *mundoes* the toes are large round or oval pits, but