

Changing Perspectives in Australian Archaeology, Part V

Karremarter—Mid to Late Holocene Stone Artefact Production and Use in the Lower Southeast of South Australia

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ABSTRACT. Karremarter is a small limestone shelter in the Lower South-East of South Australia that was used from the mid-Holocene onward. This paper presents a characterization of the typological and technological attributes of the chipped stone artefacts recovered from this shelter. This provides the basis for assessing the relationship between access to and selection of raw materials, tool-making strategies and the spatial and temporal availability of subsistence resources.

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The mid-late Holocene assemblage of chipped stone artefacts from Karremarter in the lower southeast of South Australia provides a springboard for discussing two of the recurring themes of Val Attenbrow's research: the meaning of variation and change in composition and characteristics of artefact assemblages, and the information that stone technology can contribute to an understanding of past land use patterns.

Assemblage variation can be investigated at different scales, ranging from the short-term and local to the long-term and widespread, and may involve explanations that refer to season and scale of occupation, through to patterns of mobility or broad responses to changes to the environment (cf. Frankel, 1991a: 144–145; Bird & Frankel, 2001, 2005; Bailey, 2007). Over the past 20-plus years researchers have striven for a better understanding of the factors contributing to assemblage variation in different circumstances, stimulating considerable interest in the strategies used to make and maintain tools and in the way these relate to the strategies employed to acquire other critical resources and to maintain social networks (e.g., Torrence, 1983; Shott, 1986;

Kelly, 1988; Bamforth, 1991; Kuhn, 1992).

Kuhn (1994), for example, explored the relationship between the cost of transporting artefacts and their potential utility and found that if size did not constrain the effectiveness of a tool, the most economical strategy for a highly mobile forager would have been to carry many small tools with modest potential for reworking. However, if larger tools were required for effective performance of tasks, he suggests that it would have been more economical to carry tools with longer working edges and greater potential for re-working (Kuhn, 1994: 438). He also acknowledged a considerable body of evidence indicating that mobile foragers sometimes transported cores as part of their tool-kits, even though the mass of a core can never be converted in its entirety into tool blanks or tools.

Hiscock (2006) has built on these (and other) foundations to argue that in southeastern Australia changes in the relative abundance of backed artefacts and scrapers in Holocene artefact assemblages reflect different strategies for balancing the costs of tool manufacture and maintenance with the

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