AN UNSTEADY STATE 1895-1921

R. Strahan

Having held the position in an acting capacity, Etheridge experienced no difficulty in assuming the full-time position of curator on 1 January 1895. He had, of course, to relinquish his half-time post in the Geological Survey but, as consulting palaeontologist to the Survey, he retained a foot in each camp and continued to publish under the aegis of both institutions.

His scientific staff consisted of six men. Whitelegge was still active in his researches on marine invertebrates and was engaged in testing the efficiency of formalin as a preservative. North continued his studies on birds, but somewhat less actively since, to free Brazier for work on his long-delayed catalogue, he had been made responsible also for the ethnological, numismatic and historical collections.

Conchology was now in the hands of Charles Hedley, first appointed in 1891 on a temporary basis to handle the routine matters of this department and to leave Brazier more time for his catalogue. Born in England, Hedley came to Australia at the age of twenty to seek relief from asthma and after a short period working on an oyster lease on Stradbroke Island, turned to fruit growing at Boyne Island. When a badly fractured left arm rendered him unfit for heavy work, he moved to Brisbane where, in 1889, he obtained a position on the staff of the Queensland Museum and developed an interest in shells. Finding that the collections and library of that institution were inadequate for his needs, he moved to Sydney and, within a few months, was recruited to the Museum at the age of thirty. Unlike the other scientific assistants, he had an independent income from which he could finance his own expeditions and buy rare or expensive books, many of which he donated to the Museum Library.

Olliff, the first entomologist, had resigned in 1889 and was replaced by Frederick Arthur Skuse (1863-96) who, in sharp contrast to Hedley, was so plagued with financial problems arising from ill health that he became insolvent. Insufficiency of funds being a serious matter in the eyes of the board, he was required to 'show cause why his services should not be dispensed with' but a few years before his sudden death in 1896 he was able to settle all his debts to the recorded satisfaction of the trustees. Skuse was not a very productive scientist: the few papers and notes that he published were short and by no means outstanding. Of his handling of the collection, Etheridge commented that 'its condition, for reasons unnecessary to mention, caused me much anxiety'.[1]

Ogilby left the formal employ of the Museum in 1890, his place being taken in 1893 by Edgar Ravenswood Waite (1866-1928), a graduate of the Victoria University of Manchester who had served for five years as sub-curator and curator of the Leeds Museum. His primary interest was in birds but this area of study was already occupied by North and Ramsay: the terms of his appointment, in any case, required him to work on other vertebrate groups. He published on snakes but his interests turned more and more to fishes where his researches were remarkably sound and

PRESIDENTS, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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CUSTODIANS

R. Etheridge	Curator	1895-1917
	Director and Curator	1917-18
	Director	1918-19
S. Sinclair	Secretary	1882-1917

fruitful. In 1906 he left the Australian Museum to become curator of the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, New Zealand and was subsequently director of the South Australian Museum.

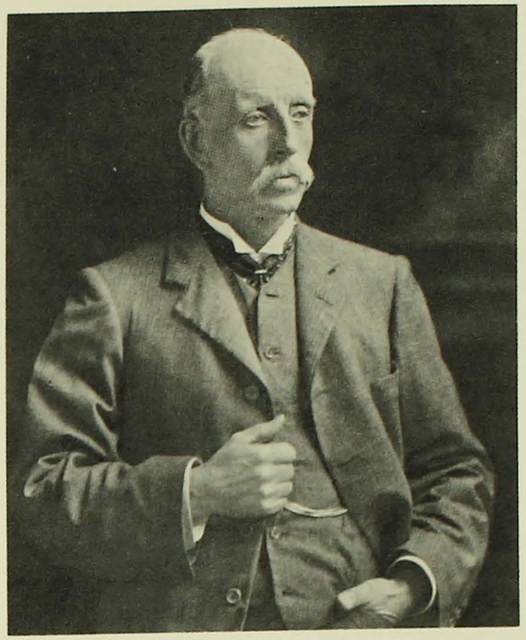
The newest of Etheridge's scientists, Thomas Cooksey (1864-1945), replaced Ratte as mineralogist in 1892. Born in England, he obtained his B.Sc. there before proceeding to Germany, the mecca of chemists, to take a doctorate. It was thus as an unusually well qualified man that he took up his appointment in the Museum at the age of twenty-eight. He might well have sought more appropriate employment in Britain had he not, four years earlier, contracted Bright's disease and been advised that he had but a short while to live if he remained in England—and slightly longer if he emigrated to Australia. He confounded his advisers by surviving to more than eighty years of age. His brilliance in analytical chemistry was little employed in the Museum, although he developed an interest in meteorites and conducted several analyses of their metallic composition. His resignation to take up the position of Assistant Government Analyst returned him to his vocation and subsequently to a brilliant career as Government Analyst.

William Joseph Rainbow (1856-1919) joined the staff in the year following Etheridge's appointment to the curatorship. A Yorkshireman, he emigrated with his parents to New Zealand at the age of seventeen where he joined the literary staff of the *Wanganui Herald.* Ten years later he moved to Sydney where he worked for several newspapers and in the Government Printing Office until 1896. Since his scientific reputation rested on five short descriptive papers on spiders, all published between 1893 and 1895, his appointment to take charge of a large collection of insects involved some risk. In fact, he remained essentially a caretaker of the insect collection and concentrated on spiders, coming to be regarded as the Australian authority on this group. He was still in the service of the Museum when he died at the age of sixty-three. One of his sons, William Alfred Rainbow (1879-1958), joined the Museum as a youth and was eventually made librarian.

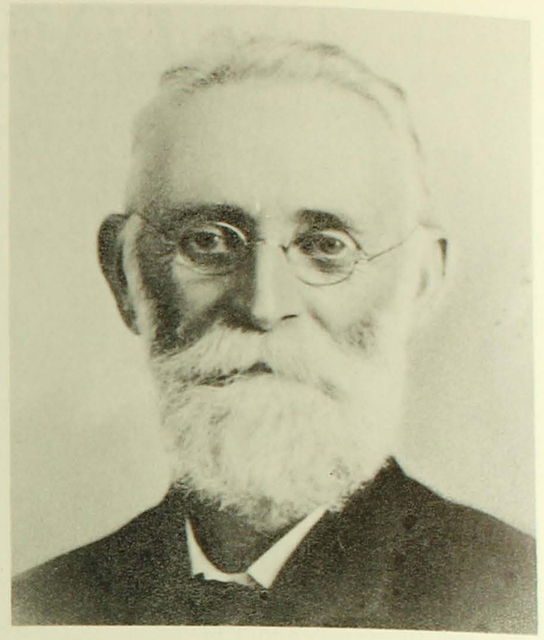
While Etheridge had reason to be content, even proud, of the scientific staff recruited during Ramsay's curatorship, he derived no pleasure from his inheritance of the secretary, Sutherland Sinclair (1851-1917): relations between the two were icily formal. Etheridge was author of the official obituary of Sinclair and managed so to compose it that almost no mention was made of his having been employed in the Museum.[2]

After the previous secretary, Buckland, had absconded in 1882, the trustees were determined to select a safe successor and found this in Sinclair, a worthy member of the Presbyterian Church. A native of Greenock, Scotland, he had been superintendent of the local Sabbath School and on coming to Sydney to take up a business position, also took over a Sunday School in North Sydney, from which base he organised the first Boy's Brigade in Australia. He was, as the trustees described him in their *Annual Report* for 1882, 'a gentleman of considerable attainments and undoubted integrity' (such integrity being prudently reinforced by a fidelity bond of £1000). He subsequently occupied high positions in the Young People's Scripture Union, the Bible Society, the Sydney City Mission and the New Hebridean Mission, through which he was able to obtain many anthropological items for the Museum.

It is pertinent here to review the history of the secretaryship. Subsequent to the demise of the Colonial Zoologist, Holmes (who is more properly to be regarded as a public servant than an employee of the Museum), Bennett was appointed as secretary and curator with general responsibility for the collections. On Bennett's resignation



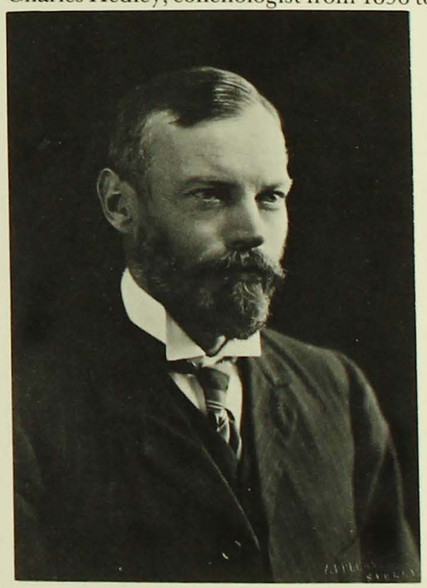
Robert Etheridge Jnr, curator (later director) of the Museum 1895-1919.



Sutherland Sinclair, secretary of the Museum, 1882-1917. His official obituary, written by Etheridge, made almost no mention of his having been employed in the Museum.

W. W. Thorpe. Appointed as a labourer and watchman in 1899, he rose to the position of ethnologist in 1906, a position which he held until 1932.

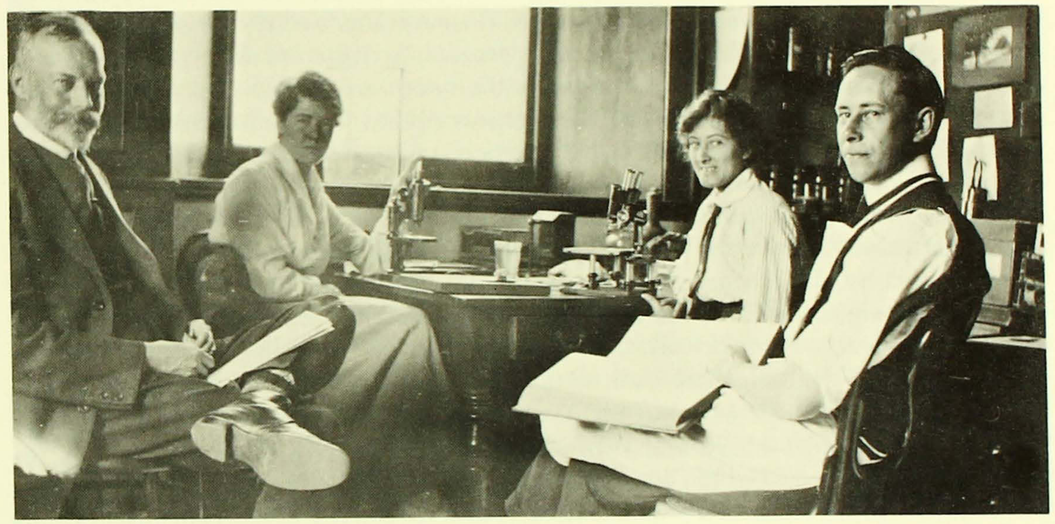
Charles Hedley, conchologist from 1896 to 1923.



Staff of the Museum in 1920. Etheridge had died in 1919 but the trustees were fiercely divided on the question of his successor. Hedley was in charge in an acting capacity but the directorship eventually went to Anderson. Front row, left to right: Rainbow, Woodhead, Lucas, Mrs Fraser, Miss Clarke, Anderson, Hedley, Miss Allan, Musgrave, Kinghorn, Troughton, McNeill, Cronin. Second row: Clutton, Long, Livingstone, McCarthy, Kingsley, Fletcher, Bretnall, Henson, Barnes, Hill, Massey, Welsh, Rochfort. Third row: Wright, Jackson, Grant, Murphy, Trimble, Watson, McKay(?).

Middle: Conchological staff of the Museum, about 1914. Left to right: C. Hedley, P. Clarke, J. Allan, R. Bretnall.

Below: Museum attendants, about 1912.



in 1841, Clarke was appointed to the same positions and with the same responsibilities (although he was inactive as curator). From Clarke's retirement in December 1843 until Lieutenant Lynd assumed his position in an honorary capacity in September 1845, the committee had no secretary but Wall had grown into the position of curator.

The arrangement whereby an honorary secretary, himself a committee member, conducted the correspondence and conveyed the committee's instructions to the curator appears to have been quite satisfactory during Lynd's term of office and those of his successors, Turner (1847-53) and Witt (part of 1853).

Although Angas was employed as secretary, we have seen that he was regarded as senior to the curator, Wall—and was paid a higher salary—but it was only in his last year of office that his position was defined as being 'in general charge of the Institution'.

This distinction ceased to be relevant when, in 1860, Pittard was appointed curator *and* secretary. After Pittard's death, Krefft succeeded to the two positions and it is interesting to note that, at the termination of his career, he was separately divested of these, being first suspended from duties as secretary and later from those of curator.

Both positions were rapidly filled; the curatorship by Ramsay and the (acting) secretaryship by Charles Robinson. Robinson took leave from March 1876 to June 1877, his place being taken by Edward G. W. Palmer, a senior civil servant and founding secretary of the Linnean Society of New South Wales. On Robinson's return, Palmer managed to remain in part-time employment by offering to make an official catalogue of the Museum's collections, working two days a week for one guinea a day. He continued until May 1880 when, on grounds of economy, his services were dispensed with; a committee of trustees having calculated that he had catalogued some 6000 specimens at a cost of £172 4s, or 7d per specimen. Known as *Palmer's Register,* his uncompleted catalogue is still in frequent use.

A turning point in Etheridge's contest with Sinclair for executive control of the institution came in 1908. Until then, the secretary had effective control of all correspondence and, in the absence of the director, assumed charge of the Museum. Under a revised scheme, the secretary continued to open all letters but was required to 'submit the same for the information and action of the Curator'.[3] The position of assistant

curator was re-established, this person to take charge of the Museum in the director's absence, and to remove the long-standing ambiguity a note was inserted in the regulations: ' "To supervise the staff" comprises the superintendence and oversight of the whole of the Employees of the Trustees'.[4]

Sinclair's death in 1917 permitted Etheridge to make a final coup when, as the trustees reported in 1918, 'The duties [of the Secretary] were undertaken by the Curator, whose official title was at the same time changed to that of Director and Curator, bringing the Institution into line with modern usage and securing an unquestionable directorate'.[5] This was not, as might be thought, the end of the story. The pendulum was to swing again, but an account of these oscillations will be deferred until the appropriate part of the narrative.

Etheridge's first responsibility was to supervise the completion of extensions which had been commenced in Ramsay's last years as director. The new Geological Hall was opened but there were so few attendants following the cutback of funds in 1893 that it could be opened to the public only on alternate weeks. The rest of the Museum was so overcrowded that no space could be found for any additional specimens.

Some storage was provided in 1897 when a single storey (basement) south wing was built along the boundary between the Museum and Sydney Grammar School. This also provided workshops for the taxidermists, articulators and carpenters, and continues to be used for these purposes. In the courtyard, a two-storey, stone Spirit House was constructed. Contrary to the image conjured up of a haven for the ghosts attached to the ethnological relics, this was a repository for specimens preserved in alcohol. (In 1974 this building was gutted and a third floor added to create the present Education Centre.) These developments temporarily relieved the strain on storage of surplus animal specimens but the galleries remained congested. Additional space was provided by the erection of two storeys over the workshop wing, bringing this to the same height as the rest of the buildings but leaving it strangely isolated from these. A temporary enclosed walkway over the roof of the workshops connected it via the (condemned) Ethnological Hall to the southern end of the Main Hall.

Although Etheridge came to his position in the Museum with a distinguished reputation in palaeontology and continued to add to this throughout his life, his appointment to the staff of the Museum led him into productive studies in ethnology. The sequence of his published papers indicates that his interest arose from observations of cave paintings and carvings in the course of his expeditions, and from his palaeontological investigations of Aboriginal middens, but it was not long before his interest expanded to include Aboriginal artifacts and customs. Over the period from 1890 to 1920, approximately one-third of his publications were in this field and he let it be known that he regarded the ethnological galleries as the most appropriate monument to his endeavours in the Museum.

Few heads of the Museum would admit that their period in office was an easy one but Etheridge faced more difficulties than most incumbents of the position. The depression of 1893 led to savage cuts in funds from which the institution was slow to recover. From 1881 to 1891 it was receiving £7000 to £8000 per annum, rising to a peak of £11 000 in 1892. In 1893 this was cut to less than £4000 and nearly ten years elapsed before the annual grant returned to the average of the previous decade. Not until 1909 did the grant again reach £11 000. In the decade to 1893 the staff of the growing institution had increased from twenty-three to thirty-four but in 1894 returned to twenty-three. Over the next fourteen years the staff increased to thirty-two but it was not until the expansive year of 1909 that it exceeded the 1894 establishment.

Etheridge was faced with the almost impossible position of refitting and servicing an expanding building with reduced staff and reduced operating funds. In 1896 he complained, with some justification:

> The Museum still remains much under-manned—a fact brought under your notice in previous Reports . . . A Curator's Mechanical Assistant would be a decided advantage for it must be remembered that I am endeavouring (I cannot say I have satisfactorily succeeded) to discharge a dual duty—that of Curator and an Assistant (Palaeontologist). As a result the palaeontological work does not progress in the same ratio as with the other sections. I regard the position of Curator of such an institution as this, as one carrying with it the necessity of engaging in original research. As matters are at present constituted this is an impossibility.[6]

He was never to receive assistance in his palaeontological researches but in 1901 William Walford Thorpe (1879-1932), an attendant, was promoted to assist him in his ethnological work.

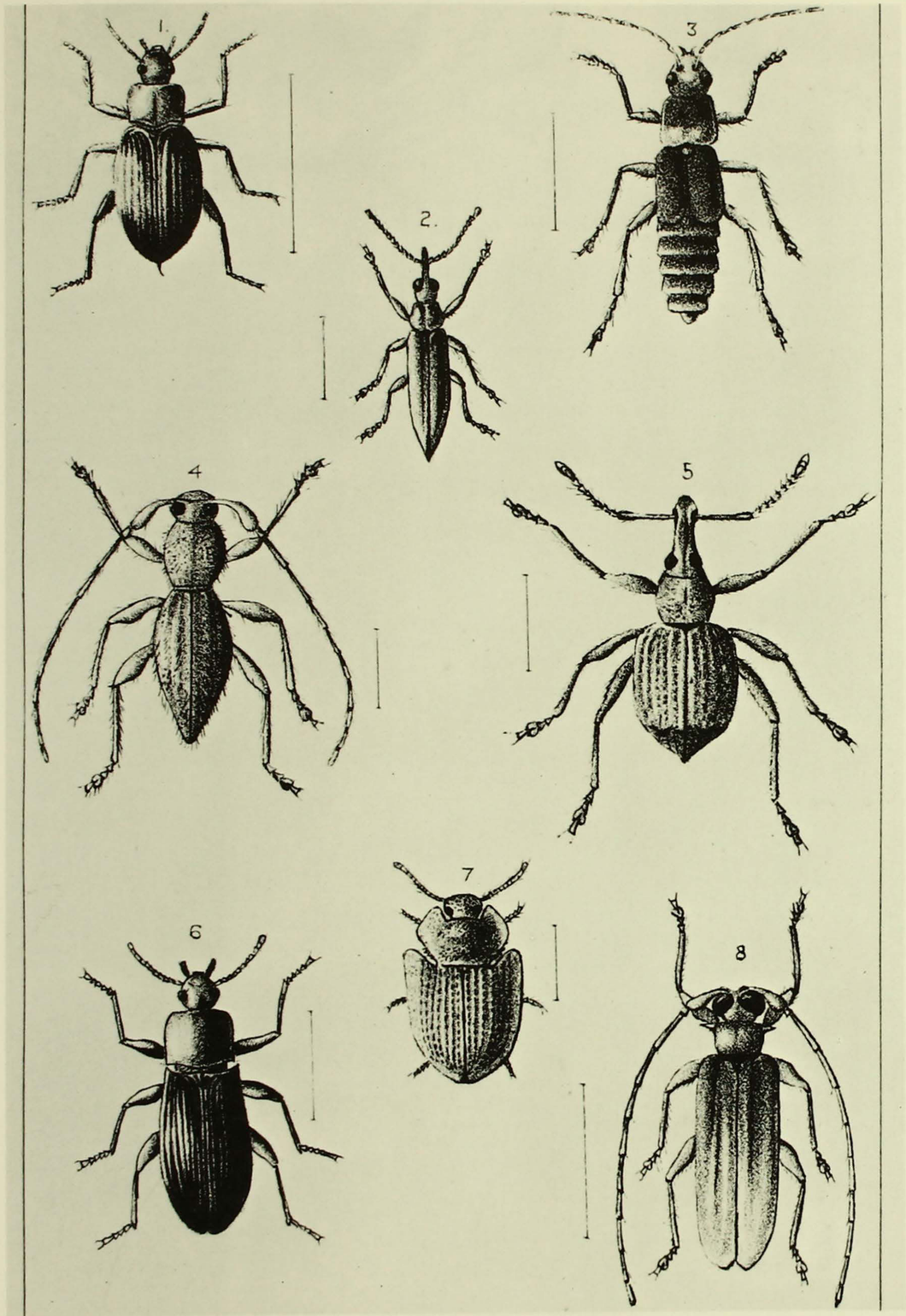
Yet another unfortunate outcome of the 1893 cuts was a reduction in the salaries of those staff who escaped retrenchment. In his report Etheridge also drew attention to the lack of the Museum's recovery from what had been a quite temporary dip in the fortunes of New South Wales.

> I earnestly desire to call your attention to the inadequate scale of remuneration received by the Staff individually, in comparison with that prevailing in some of the Service Departments. Taking the Department of Public Instruction, with which we are affiliated, for example, we see that whilst only four of my professional assistants are in receipt of £245 per annum, there are in the Ministerial office of the Department . . . no less than twelve ordinary clerks with salaries ranging from £250 to £350 per annum. It must not be overlooked that the Scientific Assistants are, by educational, status and scientific attainment entitled to rank as professional men, and yet there exists a glaring anomaly.

Notwithstanding Etheridge's complaint, reiterated in subsequent years, it was not until 1900 that the maximum salary for a scientist reached £275 and even by 1915, at £325, it was less than some 'ordinary' clerks had been receiving twenty years previously.

It would be natural to assume that an unsympathetic government was responsible for the parsimonious payment of the staff and a reader of the annual reports would find support for such a belief. However, perusal of the minutes of the trustees reveals their remarkable inactivity. Not until 1899 did they recommend, via the annual estimates submitted to the New South Wales government, that the maximum salary of a scientist be raised to £275 and this request was immediately granted. No further rise was recommended until 1908 when, again, the submission for a maximum salary of £300 was granted without demur. Shortage of labour during World War I led to overall wage increases, a proportion of which filtered through to the Museum. Shortly afterwards the growth of the Public Service Association led to regular negotiations and the establishment of salaries by State awards. Nevertheless, possibly due to a poor position on the starting line, salaries of Museum scientists have remained generally below those of comparably qualified officers in other branches of government and teaching institutions.

By the turn of the century, the Geological Hall was in a finished condition and work was proceeding well on the first half of the south wing. Unfortunately, 1900 also marks the beginning of a long gap in the records of the Museum's scientific acitivities. For reasons that are not on record but which doubtless reflect a victory by the



Beetles from Lord Howe Island, described by A. S. Olliff in the second *Memoir of the Australian Museum* (1889).

secretary in his contest with the curator for executive power, the curator's component was dropped from the annual report and did not reappear until 1917, the year of Sinclair's death. It is thus difficult to trace the scientific activities over this period except by reference to lists of publications and reports of expeditions.

Hedley had proved to be a valuable addition to the staff. His work on molluscs continued to form the basis of his researches but these led him into the wider problems of coral reef formation and zoogeography, particularly the question of Australian connections, via Antarctica, with other continents. The other scientific staff found him to be a source of knowledge and inspiration and, in contrast to Etheridge, an approachable, warm-hearted man with whom they could discuss their troubles. The gentle Whitelegge was engaged in systematic studies of Crustacea and North was compiling his voluminous *Nests and Eggs,* while publishing numerous short notes on various ornithological topics. Ramsay, now consulting ornithologist and paid at the rate of a scientific assistant, was pursuing his systematic studies on birds. Rainbow was profitably involved with his spiders and the young Waite was busy with fishes and reptiles. Cooksey had resigned in 1899 to become Assistant Government Analyst.

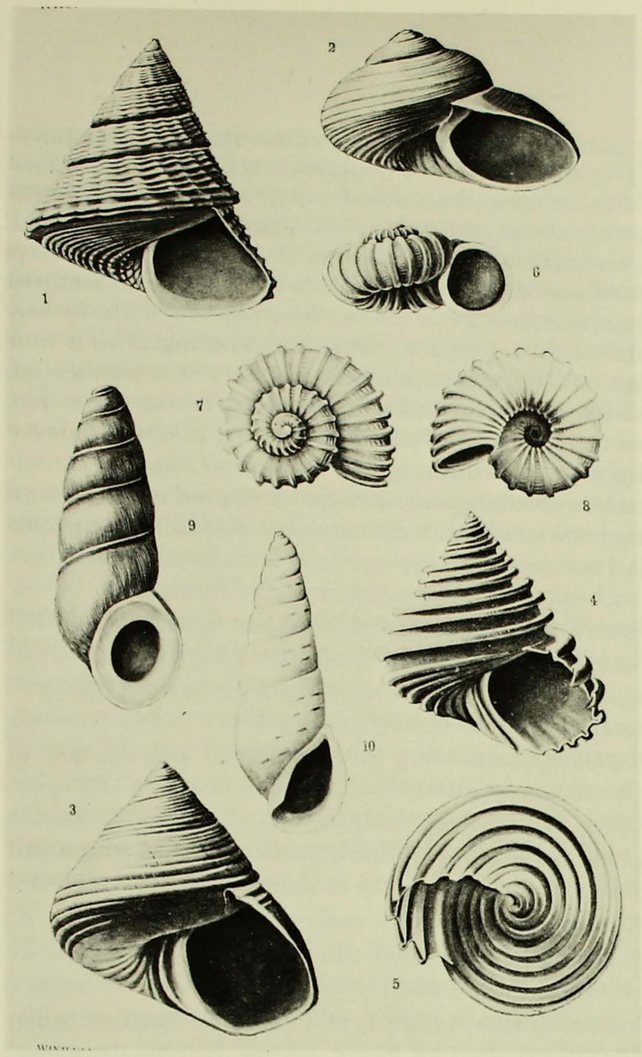
In 1901 the vacant position of mineralogist was filled by Charles Anderson (1876-1944) a native of the Orkney Islands and Master of Arts (a junior degree) of the University of Edinburgh. Qualified in the physical sciences and geology, he was primarily interested in crystallography but found his first appointment in astronomy as director of the Ben Nevis Observatory, vacating this position to join the staff of the Australian Museum. Here he employed himself in systematic crystallography, publishing a series of 'Mineralogical Notes', for which research he was granted the degree of D.Sc. of the University of Edinburgh in 1908. Thereafter, his research output in mineralogy declined rapidly to insignificance: it was as though, having completed a set task, he put it aside forever.

When Waite moved to the Canterbury Museum in 1906, he was replaced by Allan McCullough (1885-1925) who was a product of the Museum 'volunteer' system whereby youths worked for an indeterminate period without remuneration while awaiting the possibility of paid positions. Joining at the age of thirteen, he served for three years before being appointed mechanical assistant to Waite, who introduced him to the methodology of fish systematics and, together with Hedley, encouraged the development of his obvious artistic talent (later refined by tuition under Sydney's leading art teacher, Julian Ashton).

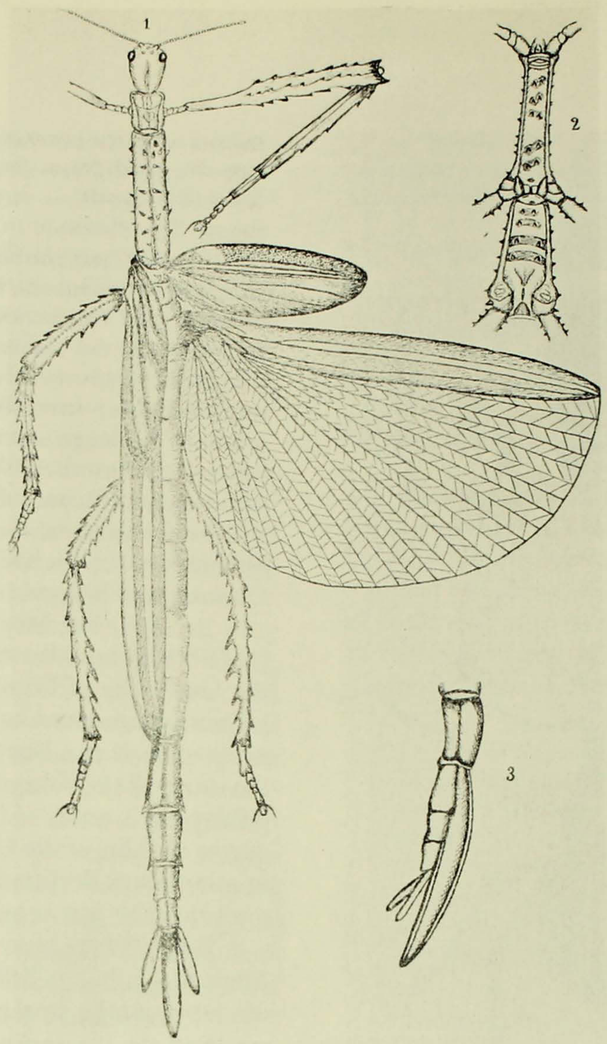
Thorpe, who had joined the staff as a labourer and served successively as night-watchman and gallery attendant, was appointed mechanical assistant in ethnology to Etheridge in 1900. In 1906 a separate Department of Ethnology was created with Thorpe as its head. Aged twenty-six, with little formal education, he had received all his training in ethnology from Etheridge, himself self-trained. Nevertheless, he achieved some eminence in his field, particularly in researches on the material cultures of Australia and Melanesia.

The Museum had been well and productively served in its first eighty years by men with little or no tertiary education. In the first half of the nineteenth century education in the natural sciences was not readily obtainable in the English-speaking world but, as evidenced by Pittard, Cooksey, Waite and Anderson, it was quite possible towards the end of the century to attract formally qualified men into the Museum's service. One may pause to wonder, then, why the board chose in 1907, to establish a system of recruitment, akin to apprenticeship, that would largely exclude the possibility of employing graduates.

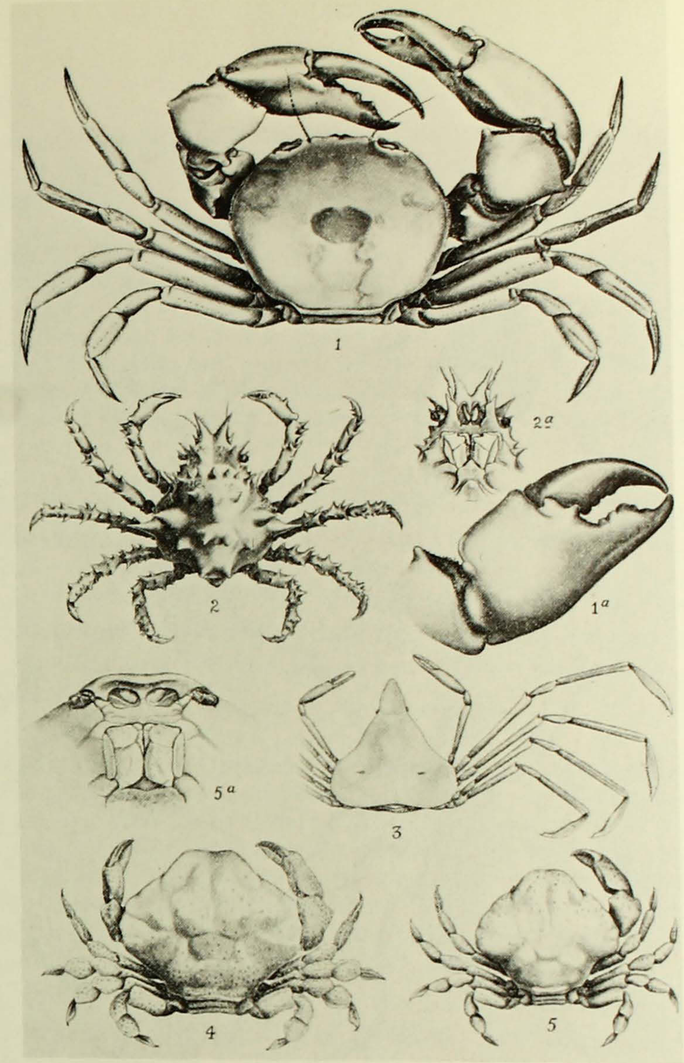
It can hardly have reflected an anti-academic attitude on the part of the trustees,



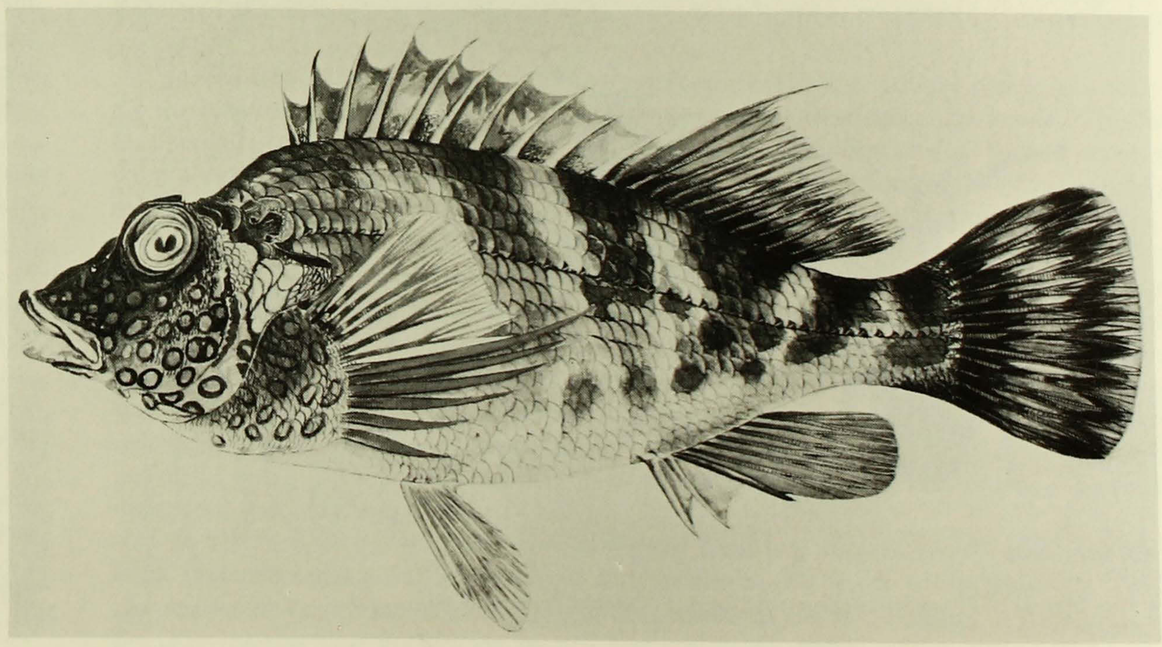
Above: Oceanic molluscs dredged from 100 fathoms off the eastern coast of Tasmania. Described by C. Hedley and W. L. May in *Records of the Australian Museum* (1908).



Above middle: A new phasmid described by W. J. Rainbow in *Records of the Australian Museum* (1897).



Above right: Crabs from Moreton Bay and Port Phillip: illustrations from a paper by A. R. McCullough in *Records of the Australian Museum,* 1908.



Opposite: *Cirrhitus splendens,* a hawkfish from Lord Howe Island, described by Ogilby in 1889. This illustration is from his watercolour sketch.

The Long Galley, looking towards the east, early twentieth century, showing the third floor (added in 1890) and a considerable reduction in clutter.

for the majority of those who attended meetings (six of the seven official trustees rarely did so) were university graduates, and three—Haswell, Edgeworth David and Wilson—were distinguished professors in the University of Sydney. Nor can it have been the belief that the study of natural history was a gentlemanly pursuit requiring no formal qualification for, while this was undoubtedly the case in the days when the Macleays dominated the board, the only survivor of that coterie was the president, and amateur conchologist Dr Cox. It could however, have been based on satisfaction with the way in which the Museum had functioned in the past and was proceeding at that time with a 'scientific' staff which included two men with no more than primary education and only one with university qualifications. But it is even more likely that the system was introduced because it was cheap. Ten youths at £26 per annum could be employed at less than the cost of one third grade scientific assistant (£275 per annum).

There is no record of the nature of the discussions leading to the establishment of cadetships but the idea arose in the course of a regrading of the staff in late 1906 whereby the trustees resolved:

> (1) That the Scientific Assistants be described officially as First Scientific Assistant, Second Scientific Assistant, etc. although they may be known colloquially as Zoologist, Ornithologist, Conchologist, etc.
> (2) That the term 'Mechanical Assistants' be discontinued and 'Cadets' substituted.[7]

The concept of cadetships was rather clumsily defined by the trustees in 1908:

> It has been decided to engage young men as assistants to the Scientific Staff with a view to training them for the future. The salary offered is small, but the training and education they receive are considered ample compensation, but it is hoped means will be found to remunerate them more highly as they become more proficient. They are to be styled 'Cadets', and six appointments have been made.[8]

Actually, eight boys had by then been appointed. H. B. Cherry, the first cadet, resigned before the end of the year. Of the seven others—R. W. Bretnall, R. Kinghorn, D. B. Fry, E. le G. Troughton, E. C. Ross, M. Aurousseau and H. Coleman—three continued long in the service of the Museum and will necessarily be mentioned later. Fry, who was killed in World War I at the age of twenty-three had, in his seven years of service, published ten papers on herpetology before resigning in 1914 to join the army. Anthony Musgrave who was to remain long on the staff, was recruited in 1910. With his promotion to junior assistant in 1915, cadetships lapsed and were not reintroduced until 1920.

Cadets were encouraged to further their formal education in natural history by attending classes but, since few could meet university matriculation requirements, they were limited to part-time courses offered by the Sydney Technical College. This institution provided excellent instruction in geology and mineralogy, but it was quite inadequately equipped or staffed to deal more than superficially with the biological sciences. Although cadets dutifully attended classes in zoology and were promoted in reward for passing the Technical College's annual examinations, such education as they received bore little relevance to their duties and, worse, was not—as in universities—of such a nature as to encourage a broadly based and critical approach to zoological problems.

Thus the young men who were to become departmental heads during the first half of the twentieth century were to a considerable extent isolated from the revolutionary new ideas that were sweeping through the biological sciences. Some advances,

as in cellular or organ physiology, may have had little direct bearing on the duties of a museum systematist, but the intellectual ferment arising from the new quantitative study of genetics and its bearing upon the mutability of species could not have been more relevant. Insulated from these studies and deriving their training from mentors who themselves were self-taught, it is not surprising that the young assistants developed into senior 'scientists' with very little knowledge of contemporary science, nor that the reputation of the Museum was low in academic circles. It was only natural, too, that in defence of their position, these men scorned the academic zoologists who did not, as they did, *know* their animals—and thus the rift was widened.

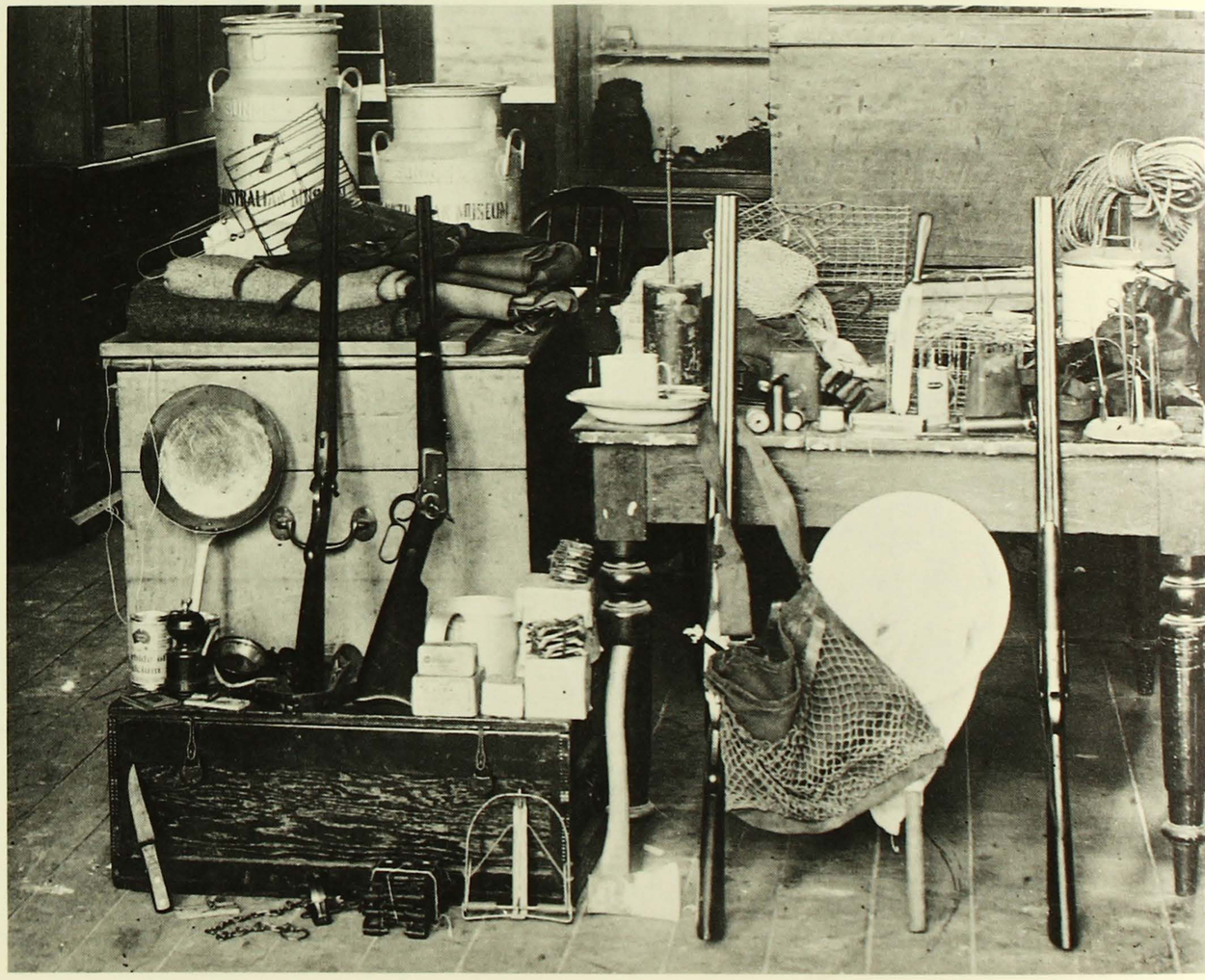
For all their idiosyncrasies and concern with the niceties of taxonomic literature, these men did know a great deal about natural history. They went into the bush, the caves, the sea, the mines, or into Aboriginal communities to obtain the raw material for their studies and they returned with much more information than could be fitted into formal publications. Thus, when the trustees decided, in 1905, that the Museum should again engage in popular educational activities—a tradition that had died with Pittard—there were great reserves upon which to draw. Etheridge, who abhorred contact with people, would not take part in the project but Sinclair was very pleased to accept responsibility for its organisation.

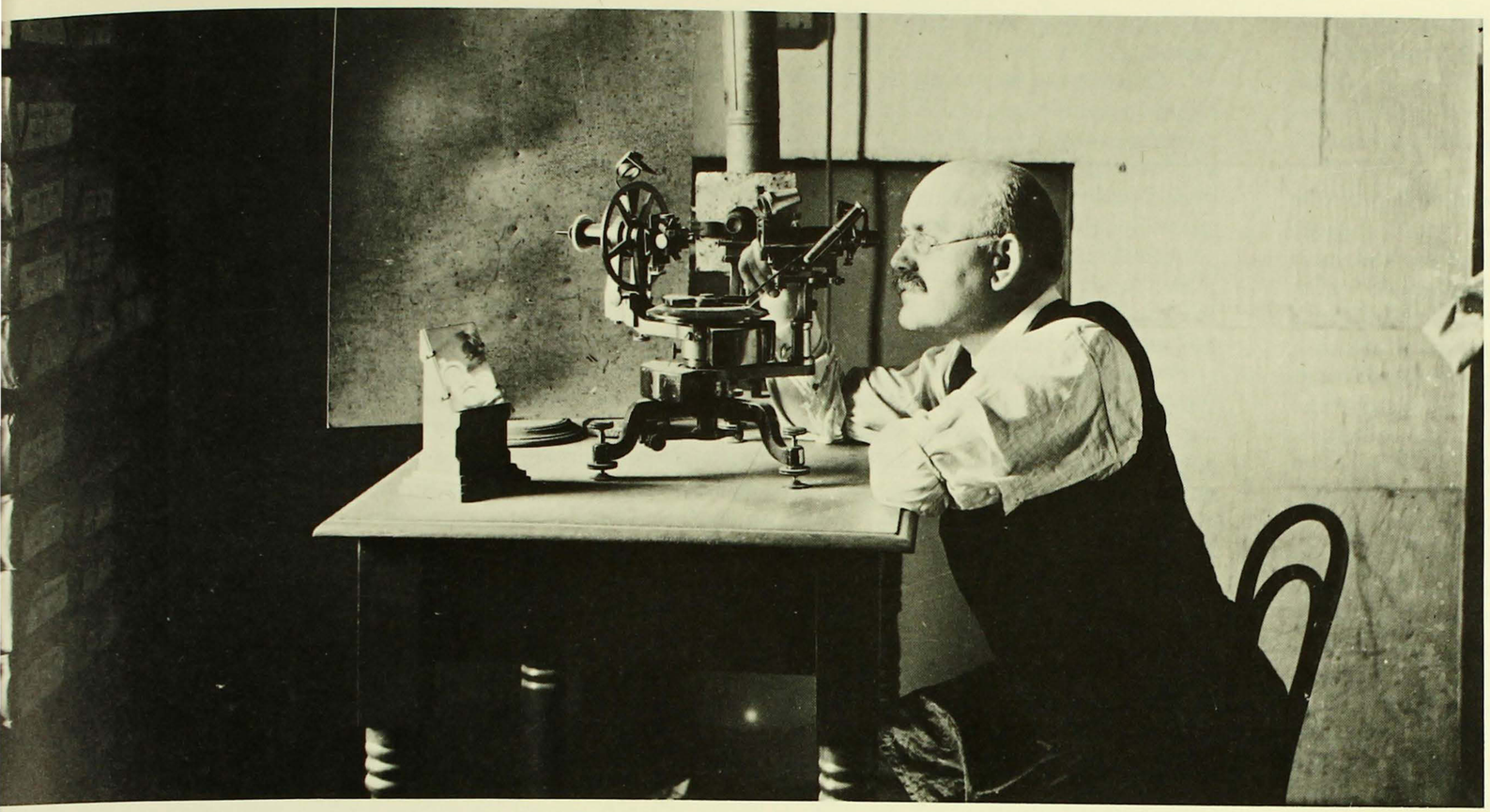
Initially, educational contact with the visitors took the form of 'gallery demonstrations' in which a member of the scientific staff would discourse on a topic related to one or more of the exhibits to a group of teachers admitted by ticket. The programme placed no great load on the staff for there were never more than twelve demonstrations in a year and these were shared between six or more lecturers. Of these, Hedley was undoubtedly the star for, while the others could attract an attendance of a dozen or so, sixty to eighty people would come to listen to his beautifully structured discourses. He was a born teacher, in the mould of T. H. Huxley. As Professor H. G. Chapman remarked in terms more appropriate to a fulsome obituary than to a man who was very much alive: 'There will be no one in this room who has not had some words from him on natural history, who has not had his attention turned to some object of interest, and who has not been led by his inspiration to look again at some natural object. No naturalist has done more for those of us of the younger generation'.[9]

Having established that the gallery demonstrations were popular, the trustees successfully pressed the government for funds to build a lecture theatre, this being formally opened together with the second half of the south wing in 1910. With this facility, the educational role of the Museum, a topic more exhaustively explored in Chapter 12, became firmly established. It is of interest that although speakers at the opening ceremony included the Governor of New South Wales, the Minister for Public Instruction, the president of the board, Professor Edgeworth David and Hedley, Etheridge is not even mentioned as being present: his aversion to public gatherings and public speaking severely diminished his effectiveness as head of the institution.

In its first eighty years of operation, the Museum had seen fit to send only one of its curators away to study the methods of other institutions—and it is unlikely that Ramsay would have travelled had his fare not been paid by the commissioners of the London Fisheries Exhibition. Suddenly, in 1910, Hedley and Anderson independently proposed to the trustees that they be permitted to take the leave due to them and to extend it to make studies of overseas museums. Their simultaneous interest was perhaps not entirely coincidental for Etheridge was in his sixty-fifth year and, in selecting a successor, the board could be expected to be impressed by an applicant with a broad knowledge of museums. After much consideration, the trustees agreed

Museum collecting and field equipment, about 1904.





Charles Anderson measuring the facets of crystals with a simple goniometer. In the seven years following his appointment in 1901 he dedicated himself to crystallographic mineralogy, gaining a D.Sc. for his researches. Thereafter, he did little work in this area.

Below left: Charles Hedley (second from left) and collecting party, Masthead Island, 1904.

Below: The Library, about 1918. Below: W. A. Rainbow, Librarian. Above: W. Cleary, Library Clerk.

that Anderson could take the three months due to him and would be paid for a further three months during which he was to compile a report on European institutions and that, on his return, Hedley was to take the six months due to him and a further two months to study nominated American museums. Since each paid for his fares and accommodation, it was not an expensive operation—the total outlay amounting to less than £100 for both men.

Anderson's 100-page report, published by the trustees in 1912, was undiscriminating and almost platitudinous. Etheridge responded immediately with a four-page pamphlet, *Notes on a Report by C. Anderson, MA, D.Sc., of a Visit to Certain European Museums in 1911,* printed in 1913 by order of the trustees 'for private circulation among Trustees and Staff'. It contained forty-three comments, of which three gave grudging approval to points made by Anderson and the remainder succinctly conveyed his view that the mineralogist had no idea how museums—even his own—were furnished or administered. This was an over-reaction and, on some points, less than fair to Anderson but it is of interest in illuminating the relationship between the two men. Did Etheridge's antipathy perhaps arise from Anderson's abandoning mineralogical studies for the pursuit of palaeontology? If so, Etheridge was hardly in a position to criticise, having himself moved from palaeontology largely into the field of ethnology.

Hedley's report on museums in the United States, published by the trustees in 1913, was not much more relevant to the situation in Sydney than Anderson's, but Etheridge did not contest it. In the event, it hardly mattered for when the board came to consider both reports it merely 'noted' the majority of observations and recommendations and reached only two hard decisions; that the Museum should print postcards for sale to visitors, and that public lecturers might be selected partly from outside the staff and paid a fee of three guineas.

On the eve of World War I, the ages of the staff had a decidedly bimodal distribution. One-third were over fifty-five years old and slightly more than half were under twenty-five, the middle range being represented only by Thorpe, thirty-four, and Anderson, thirty-eight. All of the cadets had been promoted and the scientific roll now read:

Charles Hedley, Assistant Curator
Alfred North, Ornithologist
Charles Anderson, Mineralogist
Allan McCullough, Vertebrate Zoologist
William Thorpe, Ethnologist
Edward Briggs, Invertebrate Zoologist
Rex Bretnall, Junior Assistant
Ellis Troughton, Junior Assistant
Roy Kinghorn, Zoologist's Clerk
Frank McNeill, Zoologist's Clerk
Anthony Musgrave, Cadet

Of these, only two have not been mentioned before: McNeill, whose career will be mentioned later, and Edward A. Briggs (1890-1969). Briggs was appointed in 1912 to take the place of Edward F. Hallmann (1879-1939) when the latter resigned to accept a Macleay fellowship of the Linnean Society of New South Wales. Hallmann, previously (and subsequent to his fellowship) a schoolteacher, had been the invertebrate zoologist since 1909, taking over from T. Harvey Johnston, who had briefly held the position following Whitelegge's death in 1908. Briggs resigned in 1919 to take a position in the University of Sydney where he was subsequently appointed Reader, while Harvey Johnston went on to a brilliant career in zoology, becoming an authority on trematode worms and Professor of Zoology in the University of Adelaide.

Considering the number of young men on the scientific staff, the war made surprisingly few inroads. Fry, as has been mentioned, resigned at the outbreak of hostilities and was subsequently killed in action. Kinghorn, having failed his examination in 1911 and been demoted from cadet to 'Zoologist's Clerk in Charge of Spirit House', was seconded to the research vessel *Endeavour* in November 1914 but, not being aboard when it sank in the Tasman Sea with the loss of all hands, he rejoined the staff in July 1915 and enlisted later that month. In July 1916, Troughton, then aged twenty-three, joined the army. McNeill, a library clerk who had successfully applied for Kinghorn's position when he joined the *Endeavour* team, underwent three weeks' military training during which the Armistice was signed.

Wartime economies brought a curtailment of the Museum's annual grants from the government, so much so that, in 1915, the trustees were compelled to cease purchasing specimens and books, discontinue publications, cancel the winter lectures, and cut back on other normal activities. The situation eased slightly in 1916 but it was not until 1921 that the annual grants returned to the level of 1911. In terms of purchasing power the situation was far worse, for the rate of inflation was much higher than the rate of increase in grants and the real value of the annual grant fell steadily from 1910 to 1920, when it was equivalent to that received in 1894.

In May 1917, within three days of each other, Sinclair and North died, each with more than thirty years' service in the Museum. As has been mentioned earlier, Sinclair's demise strengthened Etheridge's hand, the more so since it led to the abolition of the post of secretary and appointment of the accountant (J.A. Trimble) as secretary to the director. The vacancy left by North was not filled since, in Etheridge's opinion, the birds of Australia were so well known that any future ornithologist would have a sinecure. Instead, an amateur ornithologist, A. Bassett Hull, was appointed honorary ornithologist.

Bretnall and Kinghorn returned from war service in 1918, hardly any longer to be regarded as juniors. With Brigg's resignation to take up a demonstratorship in the University of Sydney, Bretnall was promoted to invertebrate zoologist and Kinghorn was made second class assistant with responsibility for reptiles and amphibians. On his return to duty in March 1919, Troughton was also raised to the second class and put in charge of mammals and vertebrate skeletons. The Museum had barely begun to settle into a peacetime equilibrium when, in December 1919, both Rainbow and Etheridge died. Before considering the changes set in train by these deaths, it is necessary to review some other developments.

The war temporarily depleted the board of a number of members. Colonel Roth, Colonel Burns, Surgeon-General Williams, the Hon. F. E. Winchcombe and Professor Edgeworth David were all in active service and several other trustees were engaged in associated civilian activities. Funds for the Museum were reduced and since, in any case, it was not a period conducive to innovation, the board was not particularly active. In 1914 Ernest Wunderlich, a Sydney businessman with an amateur interest in Egyptology, was elected as a trustee and, the following year Mr F. A. Coghlan was appointed auditor-general and took his seat on the board as an official trustee. Both gentlemen were destined to play significant roles over the next decade or so, particularly Coghlan, who soon established himself as a vocal member of the Board: in 1919 he proposed or seconded thirty-eight motions, the next higher score being eleven (by Wunderlich) and the average for the other trustees being four.

In 1913, the state government introduced into parliament a bill for a state super-

annuation scheme for public servants and the employees of certain state authorities. The Australian Museum was originally included among the latter but, on the second reading of the bill in 1915, it was deleted. In response to a request from the staff, the trustees agreed to seek the Museum's reinclusion but negotiations ceased in April 1917 when the Public Service Board ruled that the Museum was ineligible. An amendment to the Act in late 1918 raised the possibility that another bid could be made to include the Museum in the scheme but no action was taken by the Board. In March 1919, the entire staff (except the director, who was not consulted) signed a petition requesting inclusion in the scheme and Hedley undertook to present it to Mr P. B. Colquhoun, MLA, who had agreed to support it in parliament. Before submitting the petition, Hedley showed it, rather peremptorily, to Etheridge for his comment and advice. Etheridge was incensed at what he regarded as insubordination and Hedley also lost his temper, stalking out of the room. Etheridge immediately reported Heldey's *'unconstitutional conduct'* to the trustees, leading Coghlan, seconded by Wunderlich, to move 'That Mr Hedley be severely reprimanded for his grossly irregular action and cautioned as to his future conduct, and be informed that they [the Trustees] have largely lost confidence in him in connection with his action in the matter of superannuation of the Staff'[10].

However irregular Hedley's action, it had some beneficial effect, for the board immediately reopened negotiations for admission to the scheme, this time successfully.

Relations between the two senior scientists deteriorated further, Hedley responding to Etheridge's censure with a letter to the board claiming that the director had removed from his authority most of the responsibilities pertaining to his position as assistant curator. This was not simply a matter of pique but indicative of a division between himself and Etheridge that had begun, or worsened, with the appointment of Trimble as secretary to the curator. At that time, Hedley had requested that his duties and instructions be redefined but was curtly 'referred to Rule and Order No 62 wherein they are fully laid down'[11]. Inasmuch as the rule merely stated that, apart from deputising for the director in his absence, he should 'assist the Curator as and when directed by the Trustees or Curator'; inasmuch as Trimble's new responsibilities were undefined; and inasmuch as the *Rules and Orders* still referred to the non-existent position of secretary, Hedley had a point but it remained unanswered while Trimble gradually assumed more and more powers. After one clash with Hedley, Trimble was severely cautioned for interference with a superior officer but, when Hedley extended his complaint to include Etheridge, he found himself again in conflict with Coghlan, who had engineered the reorganisation.

Called before a committee of trustees to support his charges, Hedley took a conciliatory tone:

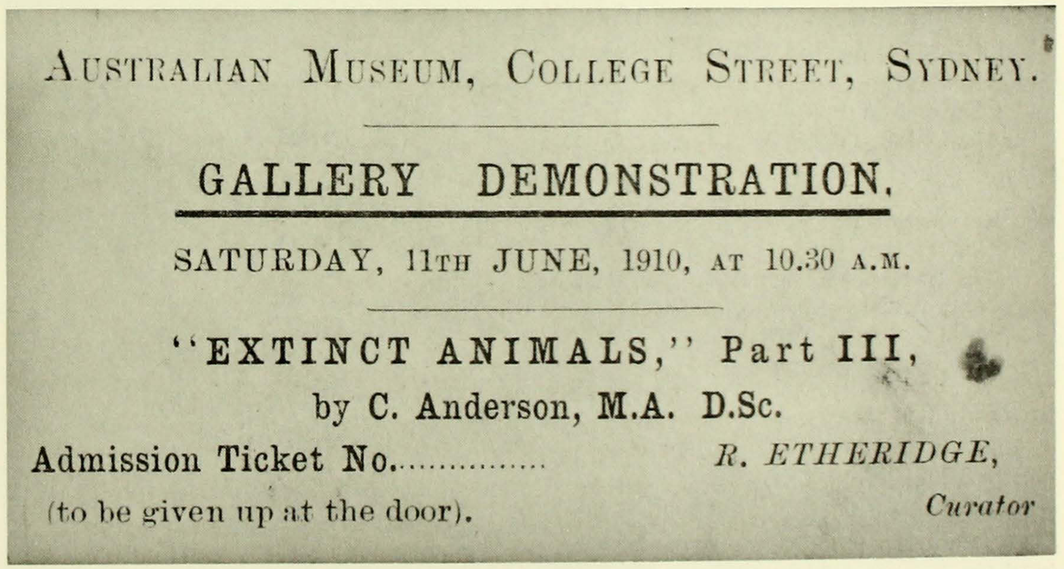
> According to this letter, you have invited me here to make charges against my friend, Mr Etheridge. But if I may be so bold, I suggest, Gentlemen, that we turn down this paper, so. Mr Etheridge and I take advantage of your presence here this afternoon to lay our difficulties before you, for I regret to say that of late we have not got on as well together as we should. Perhaps, Gentlemen, you will be able to smooth our troubles out and enable us again to co-ordinate harmoniously in your service. You have this advantage, that both Mr Etheridge and I find almost our only pleasure, our interest in life, in this Museum . . .[12]

Unmollified, the committee, chaired by Coghlan, found that the director had no case to answer and the trustees expressed their regret at Hedley's accusations. It was a strange situation for, although Etheridge denied that he had ever removed responsibilities from his deputy, he emphasised that he would not give him any, believing that if he did so, Hedley would swiftly take over the Museum, 'reducing the director to a cipher'.

Meanwhile, Trimble and most of the staff responsible to him had written a letter to Etheridge stating that, had they known that the petition was not going through the proper channels, they would never have signed it. The scientific staff were not invited to sign the counter-petition and did not become aware of it until a month later. Regarding Hedley as a scapegoat, they requested that the 'Colquhoun Episode', as it was now referred to by the board, be reopened. Anderson, McCullough and Rainbow, the three most senior members, were examined by the House Committee which recommended 'That the Trustees allow the question to drop, as the whole matter seems to have arisen through a misapprehension of the facts.'[13] Coghlan took the reverse very badly, summoning several members of the staff to his office in the Treasury to interrogate them regarding the person or persons responsible.

While all this was going on, Etheridge had set rolling a snowball that was to engulf him and his successors for many years to come. In a memorandum of 26 April 1917 to Coghlan and Wunderlich (not, it should be noted, the then president), he proposed the establishment of a house committee to be responsible for staff discipline; the investigation of suggestions from the curator for minor repairs or alterations; approval of stores requisitions; approval of special leave; preparation of the annual report; presentation of public lectures; staff promotions; and inspection of the Museum at two-monthly intervals.

Admission ticket to a Gallery Demonstration. Instituted in 1905, these were the first formal educational activities undertaken by the Museum since Pittard's course of lectures in 1860.


AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, COLLEGE STREET, SYDNEY.

GALLERY DEMONSTRATION.

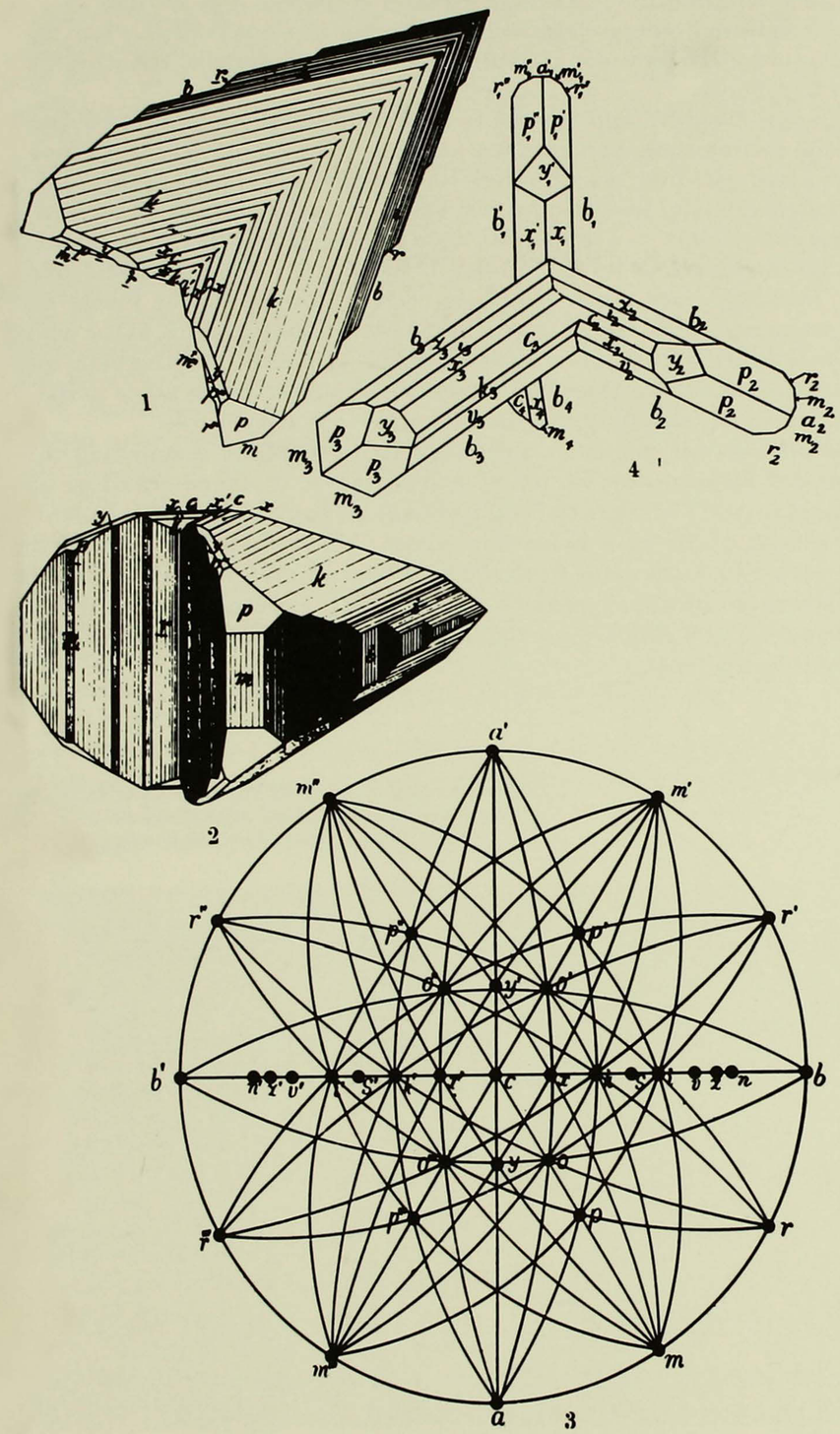
SATURDAY, 11TH JUNE, 1910, AT 10.30 A.M.

"EXTINCT ANIMALS," Part III,

by C. Anderson, M.A. D.Sc.

Admission Ticket No..... *R. ETHERIDGE,*

(to be given up at the door). *Curator*



C. ANDERSON, del.,
Austr. Mus.

Anderson's description of the crystalline structure of the mineral cerussite. Published in the *Records of the Australian Museum* (1907).

Coghlan returned the memorandum with his general approval the same day. Wunderlich took four days to reply during which time he had given it much thought. He was full of unsought solicitude for the curator who, in his opinion was 'necessarily out of sympathetic touch with his Board of Trustees. At present everything really important devolves on your own shoulders, and when you retire you will take with you a vast irreplaceable fund of knowledge that, under other conditions might still be saved for the Museum's benefit'[14].

In Wunderlich's view, the situation would be partially resolved by the establishment of a house committee, but improved by also widening the responsibilities of two existing committees. As he saw it, the Publications Committee, responsible for the contents of the *Records*, would become the Scientific Committee (composed of 'scientific men and perhaps a couple of men representing the interests of the visiting public') and be responsible for scientific publications, exchanges, acquisitions and collections; for regular inspections of the Museum and the work of its scientific staff; recommendation of improvements in classification and cataloguing; guidebooks, education, and lectures.

The Finance Committee would increase its activities to include the auditing of accounts, signing of cheques, investigation and approval of monthly accounts, annual requisition for stores, and preparation of annual estimates.

With such a structure, so Wunderlich hoped, the entire routine business of the Museum could be handled by committees which would resolve all problems between their chairmen before bringing recommendations to the board, thus freeing the trustees to devote their attention to 'fields of thought and discussion worthy of the personnel of the Board'.[15] It is difficult to believe that Wunderlich was not aware that the establishment of his scheme, covering every aspect of the Museum's activities, would effectively strip the director of all executive authority and that, far from leaving the trustees, as a whole, free to devote themselves to worthy thoughts, would reduce their function to that of a rubber stamp. Nevertheless, the troika of committees was established and none had difficulty in finding activities to occupy its time. Coghlan became chairman of the House Committee and Wunderlich of the Finance Committee (expanded in 1919 to the Finance and Publicity Committee), positions which they retained or exchanged over the next seven years. The thickness of the bound volumes of Minutes over the next quarter century bears witness not only to the industry of the committeemen but to the duplication or triplication of most items of business. It was not until 1944 that the House and Finance committees were amalgamated and only in 1959 that this body was fused with the Scientific and Publications Committee to create a single Standing Committee comprising more than half of the elective members.

Against this background, it is possible to follow the curious events following Etheridge's death at the end of 1919. As the assistant curator, Hedley automatically assumed Etheridge's duties in an acting capacity and, at a special meeting of the trustees in mid-January 1920, Edgeworth David and Haswell proposed that he be appointed director forthwith. The move was opposed by Coghlan who successfully recommended that the position be held open for six months while applications were

sought throughout the Empire and that a Special Committee consisting of the chairman of the three sectional committees (himself, Wunderlich and Haswell) be empowered to draft an advertisement. By August, with applications in hand, Coghlan moved that the President, the three chairmen, and one member from each of the three committees form a Special Committee to classify the candidates in order of suitability. The committee did so and, on the motion of Haswell, seconded by Wunderlich, unanimously recommended Hedley.

At the next meeting of the trustees, Coghlan played for time and, on his motion, the decision was deferred for a further month while copies of the committee's report 'together with any approval or dissent of the members' (a strange provision in view of their unanimous decision) be circulated. Three took advantage of this opportunity to qualify their earlier decision. Coghlan noted that

> While not in a position, at present to endorse this report, I prefer in all the circumstances of the case, not to urge any objection to Hedley's appointment but, as the Trustee who proposed the creation of the position of Director, and the fixing of the salary of £900 per annum, I proposed to move, at the next meeting of the Trustees, that—
>
> 'As no fully qualified candidate for the Directorship has offered, the position of Director be abolished . . . that the title of Curator be reverted to . . . and that the position be paid at its former salary of £750 a year'.[16]

Another trustee, Hargraves, agreed with Coghlan but felt that the salary should be £800. Wunderlich was in favour of Hedley's appointment provided that the position of Secretary was reinstated to relieve Hedley of official work. Just what Coghlan meant by 'fully qualified' is not clear, for he had been pleased to recommend Etheridge for the directorship despite the latter's lack of formal training. In the event, he did not make his foreshadowed motion but, with Edgeworth David's support, persuaded the trustees to wait yet another month while cabling for further information on an applicant from England, Tattersall. There is no record of the substance of the cables but at the next meeting of the trustees, Tattersall was appointed.

At least that was the position for a week or so. When the news leaked out, a number of the scientific staff persuaded Anderson to put in a last-minute application. By now the board was in turmoil and some trustees were openly discussing the appointment of a non-scientist. Yet another committee was set up to consider 'the whole question of management of the Museum'. It met some seven weeks later and, after receipt of a letter from Haswell, who strongly advocated the necessity for a scientifically qualified head of the institution, recommended that:

> (a) The Director should be a scientific man.
> (b) The control of the institution should be in one person.
> (c) That Dr. Anderson be appointed on probation for a period of twelve months.
> (d) That a suitable position and title be awarded Mr. Hedley, under the Director, such as Keeper in Zoology[17]

The report was adopted and on 14 February 1921 Anderson was appointed director at a salary of £900 and Hedley became principal keeper of the collections at £700. Coghlan had proved himself to be the strong man of the board, a person not to be crossed and—as Anderson was soon to discover—an individual whose bite was worse than his not inconsiderable bark.

Alan McCullough with cine camera on Lord Howe Island, 1921.

The Museum illuminated in honour of the visit to Sydney of the Prince of Wales in 1920.