



AURA Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN ROCK ART RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AURA) INC.

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Hamilton 2003 — the AURA Inter-Congress Symposium

AURA's 2003 Inter-Congress Symposium will be held in Hamilton, western Victoria, on the weekend of 4th and 5th October 2003. Monday, 6th October is a public holiday in South Australia, New South Wales and A.C.T. This event is to take place at the Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning, located in a nature reserve on the northern periphery of the town of Hamilton, at 333 North Boundary Road. Whilst this is a superb location there are no shops within easy walking distance, therefore catering services as detailed below will be available to delegates. The venue is a complex of unique mud-brick buildings originally established as an artists' co-operative, but now only used for functions (this is not, as the name implies, a school). It is set in superb gardens with lakes and a 'bandicoot walk'. The complex is uniquely suited for an AURA symposium. There are several halls and function rooms as well as three kitchens. The two-day Symposium will include formal academic paper presentations and workshop-style sessions, an exhibition of posters in a wing called Bandicoot Room, and films on rock art. It will be followed by field trips as detailed below.

Academic proceedings

In contrast to the rather hectic AURA Congresses, the Symposium will be a relaxed, much less formal affair **without rigid time limits** on presentations and debates, where discussion and consultation are fostered. Similarly, thematic sessions are intended to provide only general guidance and divisions will not be rigorously observed. The general flow of subject sessions will be as announced previously:

1. *The Dampier campaign*. This will comprise reports by organisers of the international campaign to save the petroglyphs of the Dampier Archipelago in Western Australia, including the presentation of documents and media coverage. A workshop-style discussion concerning aspects of strategy and future direction of the campaign will be held.
2. *Recent trends and developments in rock art research*. In the years since the Third AURA Congress there have been many new developments in our field and they will be the subject of a series of lectures and presentations.
3. *Oldest rock art of the world*. This short session is dedicated to the work of the EIP (Early Indian Petroglyphs) Project in

India and its latest results. It will be presented by one of the two project directors.

4. *South-eastern Australian rock art*. This session is intended to give special attention to the field trip destinations, and to introducing participants to particular issues relating to sites on the field trip itineraries. There will be introductions to the

two field trips destinations, Gariwerd (Grampians) and the Mt Gambier cave art precinct.

5. *Meeting of the Moderators of AURANET*. The participation of all symposium delegates is invited. Moderators are entitled to apply for assistance with travelling expenses and are exempt from conference registration fees.



Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning

Presenters will have the choice of using a digital projector or a traditional slide projector. AURA will have its own modern LCD projector this time, suitable for Microsoft PowerPoint presentations. There will be a whiteboard available, but no overhead projector. Presenters are encouraged to place graphs etc. on slides or use PowerPoint. We still have room for paper presentations and abstracts of 50–100 words are invited, together with proposed titles of papers. Delegates are also invited to bring posters (preferably with Velcro backing strips), films and videos for presentation, in case they can be accommodated.

Fieldtrips

The academic sessions in Hamilton will be followed by two field trips focusing on two important rock art regions of south-eastern Australia:

Gariwerd (Grampians) rock painting sites

The spectacular Gariwerd (Grampians) sandstone mountains with their numerous rock painting sites begin only a short drive from Hamilton. This field trip is to be led by Symposium Co-chair Ben Gunn. It will occupy Monday, 6th October, and good footwear is recommended, although walking distances are short. This is a self-drive excursion and AURA will bear no accident liability. The field trip will include public sites as well as non-public sites; the locations of the latter may not be divulged to non-researchers.

Mt Gambier cave art precinct

The second-largest cave art concentration in the world, between Portland and Mt Gambier, is only about an hour's drive to the west of Hamilton. The two-day excursion will be led by Geoffrey Aslin and Robert Bednarik, principal researchers of the Parietal Markings Project, which has been responsible for the study of the cave art precinct for the past twenty-three years. Good footwear and torchlight are essential, and some caves

require negotiating narrow passages, so do take suitably robust clothing. This is a self-drive excursion and AURA will bear no accident liability.

On Monday, 6th October, Paroong, Moora, Koongine and Malangine Caves will be visited, with comprehensive explanations by specialist researchers. Prung-kart Cave, Mt Burr Rockshelter and Gran Gran Cave are to be inspected on Tuesday, 7th October, and Tantanoola Cave if time permits. Participants will stay overnight in Mt Gambier, either in one of the numerous motels and hotels of this tourist town, or in the Blue Lake Holiday Park (caravan park with on-site cabins), to be contacted on (08) 8725 9856.

Complimentary rock art literature packs will be available to fieldtrip participants.

In addition to these two AURA excursions, delegates will also have the opportunity to join a tour to the stone huts of nearby Lake Condah, conducted by Gunditjmarra guides.

Logistics and catering

Hamilton is a pleasant country town in western Victoria, close to the Grampians-Gariwerd National Park with its outstanding mountain scenery and many rock painting sites, but also close to the concentration of cave petroglyph sites between Portland and Millicent. The town has approximately forty motels and other accommodation venues, well in excess of the list AURA has published previously. The list provided in the May 2003 issue of *Rock Art Research* (p. 81) includes only establishments that have offered reduced rates to AURA delegates. To book accommodation, either select and contact one of the venues listed there, or contact any of the numerous further establishments in town.

Hamilton is a substantial town with a major shopping centre and numerous restaurants. We can recommend the historic Alexandra House in 134 Brown Street, a few minutes from the conference venue and in the town's centre, a club providing very reasonably priced meals and ample parking.

During the Symposium, AURA provides morning and afternoon refreshments on Saturday and Sunday. Lunches, if required, need to be ordered at the registration desk each morning, and will be provided by a local catering firm at budget prices.

On Saturday night, immediately after the sessions end, there will be a substantial barbecue on site for those delegates wishing to participate. There are facilities at the venue and Cathrin and Michael Plunkett will organise and host this event. Cathrin is the daughter of Elfriede and Robert, a treasure they have so far managed to keep hidden, and Michael is the lucky man who married her. They will estimate the cost of food and drinks and will set a rate for us.

There has been only one expression of interest for a bus service from Melbourne to Hamilton, therefore this service will not be available. Delegates requiring transport to Hamilton can contact the Editor who may be able to put them in touch with another delegate willing to help.

Registration

To register for the AURA Inter-Congress Symposium in Hamilton, please use the registration form provided (enclosed with this issue of *AURA Newsletter*).

Registration fees are \$A75.00 for members of AURA, \$A45.00 for student and retiree members of AURA, and \$A100.00 for non-members. Membership with AURA can be obtained at the registration desk. Registration covers a substantial AURA Congress bag (black with gold imprint) and contents, light refreshments during session breaks, and field trip partici-

pation and literature, but excludes lunches, dinners, transport and accommodation. The Registration Desk will be open on Friday (3rd October) from 2 p.m. through to 7 p.m. and on Saturday morning. It will be located at the Hamilton Institute of Rural Learning, 333 North Boundary Road. Please enter through the main entrance and follow the corridor to the left. Academic sessions will commence on Saturday, 9 a.m.

Moderators and Aboriginal participants not supported by a public agency will be exempt from registration fees.

Please direct any queries to

AURA
P.O. Box 216
Caulfield South, VIC 3162
Australia,
or to auraweb@hotmail.com

All abstracts of papers will be published in the symposium program which all delegates will receive. Current and updated details about the event can always be checked on the web-site of the AURA Congress specifically dedicated to the Hamilton 2003 Symposium, at

<http://mc2.vicnet.net.au/home/congress/web/hamil.html>

We look forward to seeing you at Hamilton next month!

The AURA Executive Committee
and the Chairmen, Ben Gunn and R. G. Bednarik

Tassili-n-Ajjer rock art in peril

NANCY BECKER and LEONARD BECKER

Tassili-n-Ajjer National Park is located on a high plateau above the oasis town of Djanet in south-western Algeria.

It is a harsh environment filled with deep canyons and sandstone arches carved by wind and water throughout the ages. Famous for its nearly 15 000 rock paintings and petroglyphs, it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and a UNESCO Biosphere in 1986. Tassili-n-Ajjer means 'Plateau of many rivers' in Tamashek, the language of the Tuareg of the region. The imagery found among the rocks depicts a green Sahara filled with life from thousands of years ago and as such provides an evolutionary record of the region that has become a stark desert landscape. The vast Park is nearly twice the size of Switzerland and stretches to the borders of Libya and Niger. It was formed to protect the rock art and yet it has fallen victim to vandalism and smuggling. This article will briefly explore the rock art, the preservation challenges, and possible solutions to combat the theft and destruction of these precious images.

According to one chronology, the rock art of the region is divided into four time periods based on age, content and stylistic commonalities. The most ancient images are referred to as belonging to the 'hunters period', often thought to date from 6000–4000 B.C., depicting animals as diverse as hippos, giraffes and gazelles, and the people who hunted them. These ancient figures are shown with dynamic movement. The next period is called the 'bovidian or stockbreeder tradition' and corresponds with the arrival of cattle to north Africa around 4000–4500 B.C. This time span documents herders with sheep, goats and cattle. Next came the period referred to as that of the horse, corresponding to the emergence of horses in the archaeological record of the region around 1500 B.C. Rock art images depict horse-drawn chariots that were used along trading routes.

Finally, there is a 'camel period' around the time of Christ when camels were introduced into what had changed into the desert environment that persists today. The tradition of painting the wind-worn rocks continues and it is possible to find contemporary images of trucks and other motorised vehicles.

Preservation problems

Sacred Sites International has received reports describing vandalism in Tassili-n-Ajjer National Park. Thieves are using pneumatic drills for removing rock art from the face of rocks. This activity is reported to be particularly active in the Jabbaren region near the border with Libya. The rocks are then smuggled through Libya and shipped to Italy through connections in Sicily.

Other problems include tourists who paint the petroglyphs or wash the rock art to enliven the colours for photography. This practice, when applied to ancient paint residues, fades the image until many are hardly visible, and was initially introduced by archaeologists. Another disturbing development involves graffiti praising Mohammed and appears to have been made by Moslems who seem to find offence in pre-Historic expressions. This has been noticed in the Fadnoun plateau north of Djanet. Others prefer to scratch their names on the rocks to record their visit.

Preservation and conservation measures are suggested by rock art groups that include efforts being taken by governmental and non-governmental agencies in Algeria. There are many causes for the deterioration of petroglyphs and pictograms but the greatest and most pervasive threat comes from people. Educational programs are suggested as one of the best methods for preserving humankind's patrimony. Proposals made by individ-

ual countries need to be followed up by international groups like UNESCO and the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) so that policies are enforced.

Documentation, site monitoring, publications and media

An important aspect of preservation of rock art is its documentation. Recording images, photographing them and mapping their locations are crucial to the dissemination of educational material. The training of professionals is another key to the study and documentation of the rock art at Tassili-n-Ajjer. French archaeologists in the 1950s made records of hundreds of images and there needs to be constant updating through condition reports by Algerian archaeologists.

The importance of Tassili-n-Ajjer warrants government involvement in assigning monitoring teams that could be responsible for issuing site condition reports after making regular visits to key areas within the park. This team could also be responsible for educational efforts involving the training of local residents to become volunteer site custodians. Site monitoring programs create personal connections with the sites whose importance cannot be overestimated and they provide ongoing observation that is important for noticing changes and deterioration in rock art. The nomadic Tuareg might report on sites that fall along their grazing routes. Publicising the site steward monitoring program sends a message to vandals that rock art sites are being watched. The difficulty with the Tassili-n-Ajjer, and with many rock art sites, is the remote location that makes continuous monitoring difficult. This is why government-sponsored archaeological teams and those they train are a key in the preservation of the cultural patrimony of Tassili-n-Ajjer.

Ecotourism

The United Nations declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism, in an effort to call attention to the social and economic relevance of this activity globally. The UN General

Assembly wanted to also bring attention to both the positive and negative impacts that tourism poses for the natural environment. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO), subsequently, devoted itself to ecotourism with special attention given to its application for sustainable development and management in desert areas. The WTO acknowledges the fragility of desert eco-systems and the need to conserve water resources when developing tourist-based businesses. The WTO looked at the proceedings from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the recommendations for conserving desert areas that comprise the habitat of about one-sixth of the world's population.

Could ecotourism help preserve Tassili-n-Ajjer? Developing educational tourism with small groups of tourists being taken out into the desert to see the petroglyphs might add additional monitoring of the condition of rock art sites. In fact, making this a condition of operating a tour company in the Park should be mandatory. One key to success of ecotourism in desert areas like Tassili-n-Ajjer rests with responsible partnership between tour operators and other tourism-related industries to join in the education and preservation efforts connected with the promotion and visitation of the sites. Another key is limiting ecotourism to small-scale operations avoiding the need for large hotels, airports, restaurants and a proliferation of 4WD tour companies. There has also been success in building facsimile environments of rock art to limit the number of people actually visiting the most fragile areas. This model of controlled tourism would be advisable while still providing opportunities for the enjoyment of rock art in Algeria.

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AURA Treasurer's financial statement 2002/2003

ELFRIEDE BEDNARIK

Balance in hand on 30 June 2002: \$19 532.63

| INCOME: | | EXPENDITURES: | |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Sales of books | 909.53 | Postage | 294.10 |
| Bank interest | 504.22 | Grant expenditures | 9899.79 |
| Hamilton registrations | 725.00 | Bulk order, IGRMS | 273.50 |
| MCC grant, part 2 | 7700.00 | Business Affairs Registration | 33.00 |
| | | Telephone and Faxes | 34.45 |
| | | Stationery | 40.00 |
| | | Subscriptions | 45.00 |
| | | Bank and merchant account fees | 185.96 |
| | | Hamilton venue deposit | 106.60 |
| TOTAL | 9838.75 | TOTAL | 10 912.40 |

Balance in hand on 30 June 2003: \$18 458.98

The statement indicates no significant change in our cash reserves since last year. The only major income and expenditures relate to grants connected with AURANET. Book sales have slowed down markedly, and AURA continues to hold over \$20 000 worth of stock in books as well as congress merchan-

dise left over from the Third AURA Congress.

Elfriede Bednarik
Treasurer of AURA