

Seaton High School  
South Australia  
Attn. Denis and Class

Gosse Lands Roadside Archaeology and Termite Mound Assessment  
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29 October 2020 Kangaroo Island Wildlife Rescue group project

We would like to thank all of you for the time and effort you gave helping gather material and data during our day in the Ahwans / Tin Hut Road area of Kangaroo Island. This area was developed by the Soldier Settlers during the 1950's.

Most of the material gathered during your work day was artefacts from this settlement era. Parndana township was the closest point for mail, groceries and farm supplies. All roads were dirt tracks which became mud tracks during winter and spring. Travel to town was often only once every two or three weeks. The trip to town was an opportunity to get rid of household trash. At that time there was no community Rubbish Dump or Collection Point. Rubbish and waste were dumped along the track on the way into town.

#### Some background from that time

When rural folks from the Soldier Settler era had electricity, they generated the power themselves on the farm using 32volt DC. Electricity was generated using a petrol or diesel driven generator or a wind generator. This was a pretty basic supply which was used only for a few house lights and occasionally a radio. Hot water was from the kitchen stove fueled by mallee stumps. Keeping up a ready supply of stove size stumps was a constant household job.

Government supplied 240 volt AC (what is today considered as normal supply) electricity came to this part of the island in the 1960s. This power was coal fire generated in Port Augusta, supplied Adelaide then down the Fleurieu Peninsula and across to Kangaroo Island by undersea cable. For many years it was not a reliable distribution supply system.

During the Soldier Settler era there were only "Kerosene Fridges" to keep food fresh. There were no chest freezers. Most families had a "kitchen garden" to supply vegetables, their own chooks for eggs and a house cow for milk and butter. Fresh meat came from the farm. Some vegetables and meat were preserved by bottling and stored in the kitchen pantry. Special bottling jars with pressure seal lids known as "Vacolas" were used for preserving.

#### Your work

This season's steady winter rains and recent warm weather has increased roadside daisies and grasses. These plants hid many of the sites we hoped to visit. From the sites we did visit your group recovered 4 kg of ceramic materials, 4.5 kg of plastics,

21.5 kg of metal including aluminum (which does not weight much for the amount collected) and 164.75 kg of glass. Materials collected ranged in age from the late 1940's though to the present.

One small amber glass medicine bottle and a vintage white glass Vegemite jar were from the 1940's. The tin "Esky" was from the late 1940's and was considered a "very modern item" at picnics or on a family trip to the beach.

The "half measure" Aloha Cordial bottle was a DJ Fowler product produced in Adelaide during the 50's. There were pieces of a decorative candy dish and a glass Jelly Mold. The DC Electric Kettle was from the late 1950's and sold by the Stock Agents as the latest "new electrical convenience."

The eggbeater style hand crank drill and the ratchet brace drill were for making holes to string smooth wire fences in the native timbre fence post. Smooth wire was more popular because most stock was sheep; barbed wire caught and pulled the wool. The only properties using barb wire were those with cattle. You helped secure fencing but just imagine the work involve pulling wire through long runs of wooden post.

The green Coke bottle was from the 1960's. The oldest 'flat top beer can' was a VB opened with a 'church key' puncture can opener during the 1960's. There was a "Barossa Pearl Sparkling" wine bottle from the 1960's (at the time this was a popular birthday celebration drink.) Some of the porcelain and glass electric pole insulators were from when Kangaroo Island connected to the mainland electricity system. There were broken floral pattern teacups imported from England. Most of the brown glass collected was from beer bottles which included several "pickaxe" bottles from South Australia.

There is a lot of information about South Australian bottles and bottle collecting on the net. For anyone wanting more detailed information we suggest the Hallet Schueard and David Tuckwell book *Brewers and Aerated Water Manufacturers in South Australia 1836-1936*, ISBN 0 646 14678 5. You should be able to borrow or read a copy at the State Library on North Terrace in the Adelaide CBD or order a copy through your school library / local library.

Pull top cans (soft drink and beer) became available on Kangaroo Island in the 1970's. In the late 1970's there was a sign outside of Kingscote advising people not to throw away bottles. KI was the beginning of the South Australian Roadside Awareness campaign. All South Australian Beer Bottles without the "deposit" markings were from prior to the time the Kangaroo Island Publicans demanded a deposit to help curb people discarding bottles along the roads. The fancy round copper dish was a popular style party plate which traveled well and did not break when driving on the rough dirt roads. Nickle plated brass forks were recovered along with part of a fancy wide bladed cake serving knife.

Several rusted wheel rims (casualties of the rough roads) and the wire reinforcing from tyre sidewalls were recovered. A length of stove pipe from a wood stove had been converted into a newspaper delivery box using two steel star droppers and fencing wire. 200 litre fuel drums (known as 44s) had one end cut and hinged so

they could be used as safe storage for the once a week rural mail / chemist / tobacco delivery. These sideways drums were also held in place by steel droppers. Some had drain holes cut into the drum, but most were set on a slight angle so that rain would not collect inside. Some of the families used discarded Fridges as large size mail boxes with sealed doors to keep the possums from raiding supplies before they were collected.

Some of the post 2000 artefacts included Red Bull drink cans, a car wheel cover made of plastic, plastic reflector from a car headlight, an auto shock absorber, a rubber windshield wiper blade and several melted roadside markers.

One aboriginal grinding stone for crushing seed was collected. After land clearance many properties found Kartan Culture core stones, stone choppers and grinding bowls scattered across the new paddocks. Karta is a Ramindjeri word referring to their ancestral land going back in time before this was an island.

Bone material was found on both sides of the roads. The smallest and most fragile were two skulls of Thick Tail Geckos. Skull, jaws, leg bones and vertebrae from Tammar Wallabies and Western Grey Kangaroo were listed. Two White eye Ravens were also found as roadkill. The skull of one feral cat and several skeletons of feral Koala were found along the edge of the Blue Gum Plantations.

It will take some time to assemble all your artefacts and we look forward to including any stories or comments you have with the final sculpture piece. We have talked with our local glass blower and will wait for the "end of fire season" before slumping the glass collected into a series of melted shapes to include as part of the sculpture.

We also collected vitrified or fired clay from the termite mounds. These are now technically natural pieces of ceramic which will also be incorporated into the finished piece.

Someone asked if the final piece would have a name. Because of the shape and since natural lightning strikes or wildfire occur frequently on Kangaroo Island it has been suggested the sculpture be called "Natures Reset Button." Any ideas you have would be good to hear and we will see how history records our efforts.

One person asked "what happens to the communities rubbish now?" The answer is that many years ago the community decided collected rubbish that could be recycled on the island would go to a central point. All other rubbish would be removed from the island. Today, special constructed containers are transported to the central Adelaide Plains Disposal Site for recycling.

You spent a very short time learning about Rosenberg's goanna, why Kangaroo Island is the last stronghold for this species and the significance of termite mounds. Using the penetrometer you also demonstrated how hard the mound is. Imagine the female using only her fingernails to dig to the centre of the mound! Remember that termites regulate temperature and humidity in the mound as well as gases. The young goannas hatch into a high CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere and then have to adjust to our oxygen atmosphere. Rosenberg's is providing models for how we might cope with

climate change and greenhouse atmospheres in the future. For more information about Rosenberg's we are attaching a fact sheet.

It was great sharing the day with you. Come back to Kangaroo Island when you have the opportunity.

Cheers,  
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