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THE MT. INGLIS CACHE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ABORIGINAL MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS OF QUEENSLAND.

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a cache of Aboriginal material recovered from 'Mt. Inglis' Station in the Central Highlands of Queensland. The cache includes bones, skins and lithic materials. Rockshelter caches, particularly of organic items provide evidence for a range of Aboriginal material culture, activities and practices which were never ethnographically described. The Mt. Inglis cache of ceremonial and decorative items was probably hidden for later re-use during the final phase of traditional Aboriginal culture in the region.

INTRODUCTION

In 1901 Archibald Meston, then Protector of Aborigines for southern Queensland, visited the upper Maranoa River in the Central Queensland Highlands 'to obtain some ethnological specimens said to exist in sandstone caves' (Meston 1901). Meston well appreciated the importance of these finds, and a mere 40 years after the first European occupation of the area, he states —

> In the caves and rockshelters of our mountain ranges there are still hundreds of specimens specially valuable to ethnology, and the value is incalculable when we regard them as among the last available memorials of a primitive race rapidly vanishing from the face of the earth (Meston 1901).

This was the first published account of a cache of Aboriginal material culture from shelters in the Queensland Central Highlands, and remains one of the few.

In 1975, such an Aboriginal cache was discovered on "Mt. Inglis" Station, northeast of Carnarvon Gorge (latitude 24°46"S, longitude 148°18"E). The find became known to local residents, but fortunately much of the material was left *in situ*. The Archaeology Branch, D.A.I.A. was notified of the find, and in accordance with the Aboriginal Relics Protection Act of 1967–76, it was decided to recover the cache to prevent its unauthorised removal. In January 1976, I removed the cache, assisted by Jeff Pratt (then Aboriginal Relics Ranger for Central Queensland).

DESCRIPTION

The material was located in a small shelter on the southern slope of a rocky hillside, overlooking a black-soil flat (Pl. 1). The surrounding vegetation comprised an open woodland of ironbark (*Eucalyptus melanophloia*), round-leafed box (*E. populnea*), bloodwood (*E. terminalis*), and yellowjack, with an *Acacia* understory. Water was available at a permanent spring some 300 metres to the north.

The shelter faced north and measured 6 by 4.5 metres with a maximum dripline height of 1.5 metres. The cache was positioned on a small ledge in the roof, 50 cm back from the entrance and facing east. The ledge measured 70 by 30 cm and was 92 cm above the shelter floor. The cave was an obvious one, but to a casual observer it was 'obviously empty' as the shelf was not visible from the entrance.

Originally the cache had been concealed with three sandstone blocks (25 cm maximum dimension) placed at the front of the ledge. These had been shifted and at the time of the removal sections of marsupial skin and twine were hanging down from the ledge. The material had already been removed several times for inspection after its initial discovery, and had suffered some damage because of this. On the shelter floor beneath the ledge, lay a deposit of red ochre, necklace reels, lengths of twine, skin and feathers. As part of the recovery procedure, this area of the floor deposit was sifted through to a depth of 3 cm. The poor condition of the organic items recovered from the shelter floor would indicate that deterioration

here was rapid. All the material found on the floor had probably fallen from the ledge recently.

A photographic record was kept as each item was removed, described, numbered, then double-sealed in polythene bags. Foam chips were placed between the bags and the exterior bag partially inflated. No noticeable damage occurred to the material during transit to Brisbane, and it is now held in the collections of the Queensland Museum (S181/1–88).

The cache comprised 29 items as well as 26 incomplete lengths of twine (S181/6,10,14,27,28, 31,35,26,37,41,42,46,47,49) and 8 fragments of skin (S181/7,10,13,14,17,26). The more complete items are described below in the order of registration by the Queensland Museum.

(S181/1): A juan knife comprising a large, silcrete blade of trigonal cross-section and backed by steep, bi-directional retouch along the thick back. The distal end tapers to a point, whereas the proximal end has a haft of Whiptail wallaby (*Macropus parryi*) skin which extends for 3.5 cm. The skin is attached by a black resin which has red ochre embedded in it. This classic juan knife (Mulvaney and Joyce 1965, p. 190) is 15.5 cm in length, 4.4. cm wide and 2.5 cm thick.

(S181/2): A small, sandstone grindstone measuring 10.3 by 7.4 by 2.0 cm. Both major facets exhibit grinding and smoothing, the obverse side being slightly convex and the reverse slightly concave. A thick coating of red ochre on both ground surfaces shows that the grindstone was used as a palette.

(S181/3): A water-rolled, quartzite pebble measuring 7.8 by 7.2 by 3.1 cm. It has red ochre and kaolinite adhering to the flat, reverse side and probably functioned as an upper grinding stone.

(S181/4): A lump of kaolinite measuring 7.0 by 5.7 by 6.0 cm. It appears to have been used as a source of white pigment, and has abraded areas and striations. Six holes 8 mm in diameter and 10 mm deep, and 10 smaller holes 2 mm in diameter have also been drilled into the material.

(S181/5): A cylindrical mass of compressed, emu feathers which has been consolidated with red ochre grease and unidentified adhesives (Pl. 2a). Tests undertaken by the Pathology Division (Qld. Health Dept.), have shown that human blood was not the adhesive used. The remnants of a skin wrapping have the fur side out. The original feather mass has now disintegrated into two sections, the largest of which measures 25 by 11 by 7 cm and the smaller 13 by 7 by 4 cm. Three smaller wads of emu feathers and red ochre wash (S181/8,9,30), are almost certainly fragments of the same original item.

A section of long-bone can be seen embedded in the largest feather mass, while on one side three cylindrical objects tightly wrapped in possum fur twine, with a dense red ochre coating are partially revealed. On the upper side of this mass there are the negative impressions of two similar objects. Another impression can be seen on the second largest feather mass. It is 13 cm in length and 1 cm in diameter.

(S181/12): A length of necklace comprising 13 small reels of cut reed sections which have an outside diameter of 4.5 mm and vary in length from 4 to 6 mm. Eleven reels are threaded on 2-ply bark fibre 2 mm in diameter. The twine and reels have been coloured with red ochre (Pl. 2b). A further 31 reels of the same necklace (S181/25) were recovered from the shelter floor.

(S181/15): A lump of prepared red ochre which has fragmented into 2 sections. Each measures 3 by 3 by 1.5 cm.

(S181/16): A small section of string bag measuring 3 by 2 cm. The fabric is of 2-ply, bark fibre twine of variable diameter, which is woven in the knotted netting technique. The bag has a mesh size of 1.5 by 1.1 cm and is probably a fragment of S181/34.

(S181/18): A bag made from Brush-tailed possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) skin which has the fur facing inwards (Pl. 2c). The bag was originally cylindrical in shape with a circular base sewn across the centre, with sinew threaded through pierced holes, and measures 22 cm in length and 9 cm in diameter. The top of the bag is made from the rear portion of the animal and is open with 3 small pierced holes around the periphery for a draw string. Two holes where the limbs have been detached, the cloaca and the remains of the pouch, can still be seen.

When removed the bag contained 34 artefacts of opaline chert (S181/55–88; Fig. 2; Table 1) and a lump of yellow ochre measuring 3.8 by 3.5 by 2.3 cm. The ochre has an ovate depression in one face.

(S181/19): A pouch of Whiptail wallaby (*M. parryi*) skin. The fur faces inwards but most of the fur has been removed (Pl. 2d). Traces of red ochre occur on the interior and exterior. The pouch measures 21 by 14 by 5 cm and contains an emu feather head-dress, a bone point and a small long-bone shaft.

The head-dress has been manufactured by attaching the emu feathers to a stem of 7 lengths of bark fibre, which have been tightly bound transversely with a strand of bark fibre. A small tassle of bark fibre with a large knot at one end originates from the top of the fibre stem. The

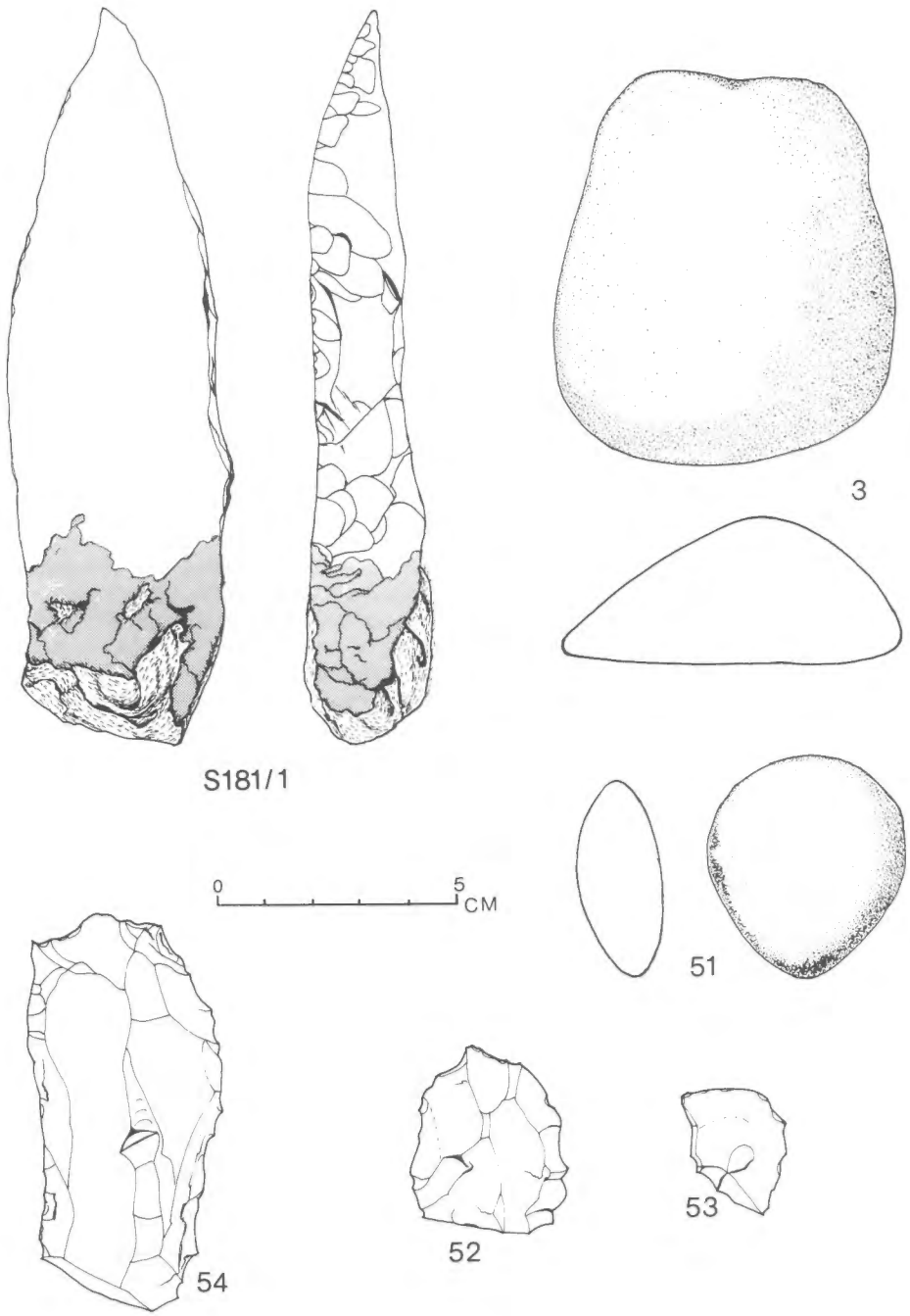

FIGURE 1. S181/1 hafted juan knife; 3 water-rolled quartzite pebble; 54 large silcrete scraper. 52 silcrete flake; 53 opaline chert flake; 51 amorphous quartz pebble.

stem is 0.7 mm in diameter. Its length was not determined as the item was not removed from the pouch.

The bone point (S181/20) is made from the proximal end of a juvenile macropod fibula. The point is polished as well as ground. It is 17 cm in length.

The long-bone shaft (S181/21) is from a bird of pelican or brolga size. It has been snapped at both ends and has traces of red ochre adhering. The shaft is 12 cm in length and 0.6 cm in diameter.

(S181/22): A section of Brush-tailed possum (*T. vulpecula*) skin. It has the fur facing out and the anterior has been coloured with red ochre wash. The base of the tail has been reversed, plugged with skin, fur and sinew, then tightly bound. This 'plug' measures 1.4 cm in length and 0.4 cm in diameter. The inverted testes are evident on the inner surface near the tail plug. The skin measures 34 by 6 by 5 cm.

(S181/23): An elongate parcel wrapped in Brush-tailed possum skin (*T. vulpecula*) with the fur facing outwards (Pl. 2e). The parcel contains a red-ochred mass of emu feathers and at least 8 strands of 2-ply, fur twine (3 mm diameter). A section of the skin wrapping has been bound with sinew. The parcel measures 29 by 10 by 5 cm.

(S181/24): A dried cloaca of a large macropod which has been compressed to form a circular pendant (Pl. 2f). Cloacal hairs form a fringe around the periphery of the disc. A hole has been pierced near the edge and threaded with a length of sinew which has been knotted at one end. The disc has a maximum diameter of 51 mm and is 4 mm in thickness.

(S181/25): Thirty-one necklace reels of cut reed sections recovered from the shelter floor. These are part of the same necklace as S181/12.

(S181/28d): A wad of Brush-tailed possum fur (*T. vulpecula*) which measures 5 by 2 by 0.5 cm.

(S181/29): A fragment of string bag manufactured from bark fibre and coloured with red ochre. It measures 10 by 7 cm. The fabric is compacted so that the original mesh size is no longer visible but it is of the loop and single twist weave (See Davidson 1933, p. 262; Roth 1901, pl. 17). The string is 1.5 mm in diameter. The remains of the original opening are still visible. This is 2.5 cm in diameter and has a draw string 0.9 mm in diameter.

(S181/32): A close-meshed armband which is woven in the loop and single twist technique. The fabric is of 2-ply, fur twine 1.5 mm in diameter and coated with red ochre (Pl. 2g). Remnants of the finishing off weave are still evident at the top and bottom of the band which is 14 cm in width, 11 cm in expanded diameter and has a circumference of about 30 cm.

(S181/33): A head-net which is woven in the knotted netting technique. The fabric is of 2-ply, bark fibre twine which is 1 mm in diameter and coloured with red ochre (Pl. 2h).

The net is bell-shaped and is 15 cm in diameter at the open end and 9 cm in depth. The body of the head-net is woven from a circular ring at the top which is 2 cm in diameter. The fabric has a mesh size of 5 mm.

(S181/34): The remains of a string bag which measures 42 by 29 cm (Pl. 3a). It is manufactured in the knotted netting technique with a mesh size of 2 cm. The fabric is of 2-ply, bark fibre twine which is 1.5 mm in diameter. A small portion of the neck remains.

A piece of macropod skin adheres to the bag (probably due to insect activity). This measures 16 by 9.5 cm.

(S181/38): A cylindrical roll of budgeroo bark (*Lysicarpus angustifolius*) which measures 28 cm in length and 8 cm in diameter (Pl. 3b). The roll contains four bundles of 'pins' bound up with bark fibre, and a packing of dry grass. One of the bundles was removed for examination and was found to contain 20 sticks, each about 9 cm in length, 3–4 mm in diameter and tapering to a point at one end. At the other, blunt end, some of the sticks are split and down and feathers of the sulphur-crested cockatoo have been inserted. These splits have then been bound up with bark fibre strands or fur twine. Other sticks remain undecorated.

The bark cylinder has been loosely bound with 2-ply, bark-fibre twine (2.5 mm diameter) which encircles the cylinder four times.

(S181/39): A quid comprising a continuous strand of coarse bark fibre. It measures 4.3 by 2.5 by 1.5 cm and appears to have been chewed.

(S181/40): A quid of bark fibre measuring 5.5 by 2.0 by 0.5 cm. It appears to have been chewed and small indented tooth marks are visible.

(S181/43): A section of tibia shaft from a small macropod of pademelon size. The shaft has been snapped at both ends and measures 6.4 cm in length and 0.9 cm in diameter. This item was recovered from the shelter floor beneath the cache shelf. It may therefore, have been deposited by a natural predator.

(S181/44): A belt made from a single strand of 2-ply, bark fibre twine (1.5–2.0 mm diameter) arranged in three parallel loops, then transversely bound with 2-ply, fur twine which is 1–2 mm diameter (Pl. 3c). Each end of the bark fibre

strand terminates in a small loop around the composite inner core of the belt.

The belt is 6 mm in diameter and 82 cm in length.

(S181/45): Four parallel lengths of ochred, 2-ply, bark fibre twine which have been knotted together at each end (Pl. 3d). The 'tassle' is 18 cm in length and each length of twine is 4 mm in diameter. The knots measure 2.7 by 1.7 cm.

(S181/48): Four parallel lengths of ochred, 2-ply, bark fibre twine of which only one remains complete. The lengths are knotted together at both ends. The 'tassle' is 18 cm in length and each length of twine is 3 mm in diameter.

(S181/50): A parcel wrapped in Rock wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*) skin with the fur facing inwards (Pl. 3e). At one end the skin has been folded in on itself, while the other has been sewn up with 2-ply, bark fibre strand.

The parcel measures 35 cm in length, 13 cm in width and 8 cm in depth. It contains 1045 gram of finely powdered, red ochre and has been bound with 2-ply, bark fibre twine around the mid-section. This twine is of variable diameter and has been knotted once.

(S181/51): A water-rolled pebble of pink, amorphous quartz measuring 4.5 by 4.0 by 1.9 cm (Fig. 1).

(S181/52): A flake of fine-grained, white silcrete measuring 4.2 by 3.5 by 1.0 cm (Fig. 1).

(S181/53): A flake of opaline chert measuring 2.9 by 2 by 0.5 cm (Fig. 1).

(S181/54): A unifacially retouched scraper of fine-grained, white silcrete. It measures 8.5 by 4.0 by 1.5 cm and has two worked edges of 63° and 72° respectively (Fig. 1).

(S181/55–88): Thirty-four stone artefacts of opaline chert found in the possum skin bag (S181/18). Details of these are given in Table 1 and Fig. 2.

TABLE 1. Attributes of thirty-four opaline chert artefacts found in the possum skin bag. (Queensland reference numbers S181/55–88).

S181	Description	Dimensions (cm) length,	width,	thickness	Edge Damage	Edge Angle
55	Utilised flake	2.5	2.1	.5	Bifacial utilisation	52°
					Unifacial utilisation	69°
56	Utilised flake	2.1	1.5	.4		
57	Utilised flake	2.0	1.2	.3	Bifacial utilisation	34°
					Bifacial utilisation	30°
58	Tula adze slug with adhering resin	1.7	.6	.4	Step fractured retouch	48°
59	Utilised flake	3.0	1.7	.5	Unifacial utilisation	46°
60	Utilised flake	2.7	1.7	.5	Bifacial utilisation	24°
61	Utilised flake	1.7	0.6	.3	Unifacial utilisation	30°
62	Tula adze slug with adhering resin	2.1	.6	.3	Step fractured retouch	56°
63	Utilised flake	2.5	1.9	.4	Bifacial utilisation	52°
					Bifacial utilisation	41°
64	Utilised flake	2.1	1.1	.2	Bifacial utilisation	32°
65	Utilised flake	2.0	1.7	.2	Bifacial utilisation	35°
66	Tula adze slug with adhering resin	1.5	.6	.3	Step fractured retouch	56°
67	Utilised flake	2.5	2.1	.4	Bifacial utilisation	45°
					Bifacial utilisation	52°
					Unifacial utilisation	69°
68	Unused fragment	1.9	1.3	.5		
69	Utilised flake	1.9	1.6	.4	Unifacial utilisation	42°
70	Utilised flake	3.0	2.1	.6	Bifacial utilisation	36°
					Unifacial utilisation	62°
71	Utilised flake	2.6	1.2	.4	Unifacial utilisation	54°
72	Utilised flake	2.7	1.5	.3	Bifacial utilisation	30°
					Bifacial utilisation	28°

73	Utilised flake with resin adhering	3.1	1.4	.5	Bifacial utilisation	45°
74	Utilised flake	2.1	2.1	.5	Unifacial utilisation	50°
75	Utilised flake	1.8	1.1	.3	Unifacial utilisation	35°
76	Utilised flake	1.7	1.0	.3	Bifacial utilisation	32°
77	Utilised flake	2.9	2.8	.9	Bifacial utilisation	50°
					Bifacial utilisation	50°
78	Utilised flake	2.5	1.9	.7	Bifacial utilisation	15°
79	Utilised flake	2.5	2.1	.6	Bifacial utilisation	32°
80	Utilised flake	2.0	1.7	.4	Bifacial utilisation	39°
					Unifacial utilisation	45°
81	Utilised blade	4.3	1.5	.8	Unifacial utilisation	61°
					Bifacial utilisation	42°
82	Utilised flake	2.3	2.1	.8	Bifacial utilisation	65°
					Bifacial utilisation	25°
83	Utilised flake	2.7	1.9	.2	Bifacial utilisation	30°
					Bifacial utilisation	28°
84	Utilised flake	1.6	1.6	.2	Bifacial utilisation	36°
					Bifacial utilisation	42°
85	Utilised flake	2.9	1.9	.7	Bifacial utilisation	32°
86	Utilised flake	3.4	2.3	1.3	Unifacial utilisation	32°
87	Utilised flake	2.5	1.6	.6	Unifacial utilisation	30°–57°
88	Unused fragment	2.1	1.4	.2		

DISCUSSION

Ethnographic context

Mt. Inglis is located within the boundary of the Kanaloo linguistic group which occupied the headwaters of the Comet River, from below Rolleston to the Carnarvon Range (Oates and Oates 1970; Quinnell 1976, p. 14). The demographic history of this population is briefly described by Josephson (1887), who states that around 1860, when Europeans first settled the area, 'the tribe' numbered 500 persons. By 1869 this was reduced to 300 and by April 1879 the numbers had fallen to 200.

More detailed information on Aboriginal groups within the area is provided by Priddle (n.d.), who lived in Rolleston. People camped near Rolleston still went on 'walk-about' and carried out 'tribal' ceremonies until about 1920. During walk-about the Rolleston group went to a series of swamps 32 km to the south. They did not go to Lake Nuga Nuga owned by the Moolayamber group — the Bemburraburra (Goddard 1940/41, p. 368), nor did they go to Fifteen Mile Swamp on 'Consuelo' Station owned by the 'Carnarvon tribe' (Priddle n.d., p. 6–7). On this evidence, it is possible to sketch in the territorial boundaries of local, land-owning Aboriginal groups, or patriclans. Mt. Inglis occurs within, or immediately adjacent to the territory of the group which utilised Carnarvon Gorge — possibly the Goon-garee (Winterbotham 1958, p. 219).

Ethnographic details on the material culture, social organisation and ceremonies of Aborigines in the upper Comet region are sparse (see Josephson 1887, p. 96–7; Winterbotham 1958). However, the range of material culture in general use throughout the Central Queensland Highlands can be partially reconstructed by synthesizing several sources of information (see Morwood 1979, p.49–80). These sources include the reports and collections of early observers (e.g. Ahern 1887; Landsborough 1862; Mitchell 1848) and the work of salvage ethnographers (e.g. Curr 1887; Donovan 1976; Howitt 1904; Kelly 1935). The recorded material culture included hand-thrown spears, clubs, boomerangs, softwood shields, axes, bags, baskets, containers, hunting and fishing nets, bone and stone tools, bark paintings, bullroarers, message sticks, bone points, pubic aprons, possum skin rugs, necklaces, pendants, head-dresses, bracelets, burial cylinders, huts, burial platforms and wells. In common with other areas of Australia, the majority of observations and collections are biased towards the hunting and fighting

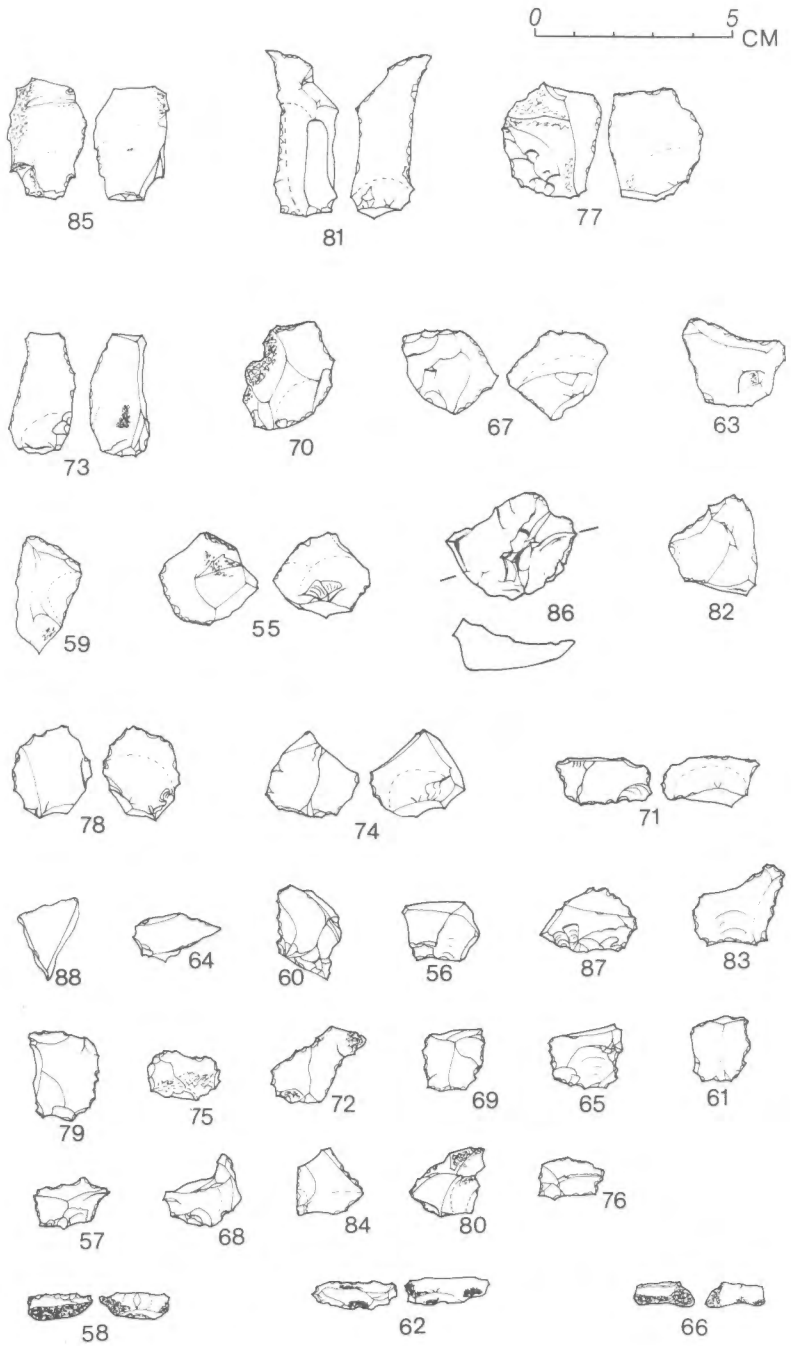

FIGURE 2. Thirty-four opaline chert artefacts found in the possum skin bag (S181/18) and described in Table 1.

implements of men (see McBryde 1978, p. 185). The list can be extended by including surviving field evidence (e.g. dams, stone arrangements, scarred trees, stone tool scatters), but this field evidence is usually biased towards the larger and less perishable elements of the culture, and often comprises the by-products rather than the end-products of manufacturing activities. Stenciled objects in the numerous rock art sites of the Central Highlands provide further evidence of Aboriginal material (e.g. Beaton and Walsh 1977). However, stencil art also tends to be biased towards men's equipment (Morwood 1979, p. 347). The range of goods recovered from Mt. Inglis and other rockshelter caches provides a complementary perspective to the more traditional sources of evidence on the material culture of this region.

Stone tools

There are no ethnographic observations of stone tool use in the region, but the Mt. Inglis assemblage compares well with the most recent assemblages recovered from archaeological excavations (e.g. Beaton 1977; Morwood 1979; Mulvaney and Joyce 1965). Most notably, blade technology is evident although the majority of tools are amorphous flakes. The last 2000 years of Central Highland stone tool use are characterised by an increase in the frequency of tula adze slugs (Morwood 1979, p. 227), and these are also well represented in the Mt. Inglis collection (S181/58, 62, 66). Similarly, juan knives are distinctive implements occurring only in the most recent industries of the area — the oldest specimen recovered is less than 600 years in age (Mulvaney and Joyce 1965, p. 192).

The principal difference between Mt. Inglis stone artefacts and excavated assemblages in the area, are the high proportion with retouch or use-wear, the small size of the specimens in the possum skin bag (S181/18), and the preservation of hafting medium on the tula adze slugs and the juan knife. Other hafted juan knives are known (e.g. Tindale 1957, p. 28; Mulvaney and Joyce 1965, p. 190), but the Mt. Inglis specimen (S181/1) appears to be the largest specimen yet recorded, as well as the only hafted example remaining in an Australian collection.

The function of the amorphous quartz pebble (S181/51) is uncertain, although similar pebbles have been found in other caches. For instance, the Keegan collection includes several quartz and quartzite pebbles. All have clear indications of percussive use, and several have vegetable mastic adhering. The cultural context of the Mt. Inglis example and three recorded from a shelter in Moolayamber Gorge (Queensland Museum Reg. QE 3171), would suggest that some specimens were also of ceremonial use. Spencer (1922, p. 105) described one such ceremonial stone collected from the adjacent Springsure area. This was carried about wrapped in possum skin and was not allowed to be seen by women or uninitiated men. Ethnographic observations throughout Queensland also state that quartz pebbles were often used as 'magic stones' for a variety of purposes, including the healing of the sick (e.g. Hamlyn-Harris 1915, p. 6).

Both the small grindstone (S181/2) and the quartzite pebble (S181/3) have adhering red ochre, testifying to their use in the preparation of pigment for art or decoration. This conclusion is supported by their association in the cache with red, yellow and white pigment.

Containers

Bags, baskets, etc. are poorly represented in Australian museum collections, and the Mt. Inglis examples add considerably to the range previously described for the region. All of the woven material is of 2-ply string. Occasionally, 3-ply is found in Central Highland caches but is rare (Peter Keegan, pers. comm.). The dilly-bags (S181/16,29,34) are all manufactured from plant fibre, most probably from the kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneum*) or from reeds, as recorded ethnographically (Donovan 1976, p. 112; Josephson 1887, p. 96; MacGlashan 1887, p. 19; Sheridan and Bay 1887, p. 252). Both the knotted netting and the loop and single twist (see Davidson 1933, p. 258) were used in the manufacture of the bags. The same techniques were employed for a range of woven items in this region including the Mt. Inglis head-net (knotted netting), the armband (loop and single twist) and a hunting net (knotted netting) recovered from a cave near Springsure and now in the Queensland Museum collections (QE 3167).

The only previous reference to the use of skin containers is by Donovan (1976, p. 112) who states that bags for carrying infants on the upper Nogoa River were made from kangaroo skin rubbed with wood ash. Each end was tied with sinew or fibre and a handle attached. The skin wallets and wrappers from Mt. Inglis (S181/5,18,19,23,50) are not unique however, as similar items are known from other caches. For instance, the Keegan collection includes an inverted, possum skin bag very similar to the Mt. Inglis example (S181/18). It has the leg openings closed by sinews. The mouth of this bag has a

'stopper' comprising a tassle of emu feathers, and it contains about a dozen stone flakes of varying materials, some of which have adhering resin. Containers made from the belly section of a goanna skin are also known, one end being finely stitched up and the other fitted with a string handle (Peter Keegan, pers. comm.).

The use of bark for manufacturing shallow dishes, buckets and cylindrical burial cylinders is ethnographically described (e.g. Josephson 1887, p. 96; Lethbridge 1885), so the use of this material for 'wallets' (S181/38) is not surprising. Skin and bark containers are not specifically mentioned by early observers, but the Mt. Inglis examples are very similar in type and content to those reported elsewhere. In Central Australia, for instance, Spencer and Gillen (1938, p. 611) described examples made from skin, or from small slabs of bark tied round with string. These contained emu feathers, tendon, stone tools, lumps of ochre, pendants, nose-bones, armlets, necklets and charms.

The function of the emu feather mass (S181/5,8,9,30) is uncertain. It is clearly not a kadaitcha shoe as described by Porter (1961, p. 50) in the Aramac region, but may have functioned to protect and conceal the length of bone and other objects contained within it (cf. Spencer 1922, p. 107, 120). The latter are very similar in appearance to several objects found in the Moolayamber cache (QE3171), as well as to the Mandu-kuya amulets described by Roth (1903, p. 37) for N.W. Queensland.

Adornments

Several of the cached adornments have specific ethnographic references. Necklaces of stong grass or reed stems cut into lengths (cf. S181/12,25), were said to have been common in the region (e.g. Sheridan and Bay 1887, p. 252). Decorative loops or reed beads also occur on one of the string bags held in the Keegan collection.

Ochre and kaolinite (S181/4,5,18,50) were used for decoration of the body, implements and rockshelter walls (e.g. Josephon 1887, p. 96–7). In fact, the practice of coating implements with ochre may be one factor in the excellent preservation of cached organic items in this region. Under normal conditions such material would be subject to attack by insects, fungi, bacteria and other micro-organisms and would deteriorate rapidly. The fact that the Mt. Inglis cache was saturated with red ochre suggested that the ochre could have played a role in preservation. X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy was undertaken on a sample of the cached ochre by Dr John Kleeman (Geology Dept., U.N.E.). This demonstrated the presence of significant concentrations of copper, zinc and lead, as well as traces of mercury. The results are detailed in Appendix 1. Such heavy metal ions are bio-toxins and are active constituents in many insecticides and fungicides (Mr Peter Gregg, Microbiology Dept., U.N.E. pers. comm.; A/Prof John Brown, Botany Dept., U.N.E. pers. comm.). In the concentrations present they could have inhibited, if not prevented, biological damage to organic material.

The feathers of the emu, white cockatoo and other birds were used for personal adornment. In 1847, for instance, Mitchell (1848, p. 160) saw Aborigines coloured with ochre, and with white cockatoo feathers in their hair and beards. The use of feathered 'pins' as found in the roll of budgeroo bark (S181/58) was not recorded for the Central Highlands, although similar examples also occur in the Keegan collection. Roth (1897, p. 108) describes their use in North West Queensland thus —

> Feather-tufts or "aigrettes" are formed with various birds feathers tied on a small sprig, which is stuck indiscriminately here and there into the hair: among birds so utilised are the emu, eagle-hawk, pelican, turkey, crow, etc. These feather-tufts are very generally used in times of rejoicing, at corroboree: they may sometimes be stuck into the waist-belt either at its side or back, or may be fixed under the armlets.

Given this documented association between the use of feather-tufts, armlets and belts, it is significant that all of these items also occurred in the Mt. Inglis cache.

The hair net (S181/32), armlet (S181/32), and belt (S181/44), are identified on the basis of their similarity to those described by Roth (1897, p. 109) in northwest Queensland, as well as on general characteristics and size: their use was not recorded in the Central Highlands. Roth states that the hair-net was a sort of netted cap used to prevent the hair dangling in the eyes. It had a circular ring at the top from which the body of the net was woven from flax fibre string, then coated thickly with red ochre grease. When manufactured by men, the body was woven using the simple loop weave. Another type was made by the women using the knotted netting technique, as used for the Mt. Inglis example.

Many different items were used as pendants in the Central Highlands, including shells, eagle-claws, and even 'a copy of last year's Nautical

Almanac' (Middleton and Noble 1887, p. 90; Mitchell 1848, p. 358). The use of a dried, compressed macropod cloaca as a pendant (S181/24), however, was never noted in this region or elsewhere.

The bone point (S181/20) and bird-bone tube (S181/21) contained in the skin pouch, can be matched both in the ethnographic and archaeological records. Beaton (1977, p. 122) found bone points during excavations at Cathedral Cave in Carnarvon Gorge, and suggested that they were utilitarian items used for piercing skins. Porter (1961, p. 50) described the ceremonial use of bone points near Aramac in Central Queensland for inducing sickness and death. He states that the ceremonial user wore appropriate make-up as well as kadaitcha shoes fashioned from emu feathers and held together with gum and dried blood (cf. Roth 1897, p. 152).

A decorative function is also possible, as it is known that Central Highland initiation ceremonies included piercing of the nasal septum of the novices (e.g. Josephson 1887, p. 97; Looker, et al. 1887, p. 273). The Mt. Inglis bone artefacts are indeed very similar to the nose-pins described by Roth (1897, p. 110) in northwest and Petrie (1904, p. 20) in southeast Queensland. These could be a sharp pointed bone of a turkey, pelican, kangaroo or emu. Other objects such as grass or reeds could also be used.

The cultural context of many cached examples suggests a decorative or ceremonial role. For instance, one bone point was illegally removed from the Goat Rock site on the upper Warrego River where it was associated with a bark, burial cylinder (Fred Cameron, pers. comm.). Another was found with 3 human skeletons and ceremonial items in Moolayamber Gorge (QE3171). The fact that the Mt. Inglis bone point and tube occurred in a pouch, with a presumed emu feather head-dress, strongly suggests that they were of decorative function.

The function of Central Highlands caches

Central Highland caches add significantly to the range of Aboriginal material culture known from the region, but just as important is the evidence that they provide for economic and social/ceremonial practices. Two types of caching behaviour were ethnographically described in the region —

1) The temporary storage of useful, valued items.
2) The permanent disposal of burial cylinders.

Examples of temporary storage include the hanging of large, hunting nets in trees or on platforms (Donovan 1976, p. 121; Landsborough 1862, p. 101; Mitchell 1848, p. 303, 367). While exploring the upper Maranoa River, Mitchell also found a club and a shield stored on a platform (British Museum of Mankind Reg. 48/2-2/1 and 48/2-2/2). Two hardwood clubs and a hunting net (QE 3617-9), found in a shelter on the Staircase Range (Springsure area), may have been deposited in this way. Elsewhere, the practice of leaving grindstones as 'appliances' at campsites where they were re-used, has been described (e.g. Gould 1977, p. 173; Peterson 1968, p. 568). Grindstones have been found on the floors of many Central Highland rockshelters where they appear to have been deliberately left as 'appliances' (e.g. the Art Gallery, Cathedral Cave). The dispositon of functional ground implements (axes, mullers) recovered in archaeological excavations, suggests that many were originally placed against shelter walls for later retrieval. In fact, caching of implements appears to have been a major depositional mechanism for ground stone artefacts in shelters (Morwood 1979, p. 219-20). Other items found cached near occupation sites include stone knives, cores and wooden implements (pers. obs.; G. Walsh, pers. comm.). There are also widespread reports from other areas, of the caching of sacred items which were periodically removed for ceremonial use (e.g. Spencer and Gillen 1912, p. 208). Archaeological excavations have shown that the (presumed) temporary caching of implements has a long history — one huge silcrete core positioned against the rear wall of Native Well 1 is approximately 6000 years old (Morwood 1979, p. 203).

The permanent caching of burial cylinders was also described by early European observers. Depending on the status of the deceased several different means of disposing of the dead were used in the Central Highlands including cremation (Looker, et al. 1887, p. 273) and burial (Lethbridge 1885). Sometimes final disposal of the remains was delayed for considerable periods (two or three years), during which time they were carried tightly bound up in a sheet of bark (see Robins and Walsh 1979). The common method for finally disposing of such burial cylinders was to drop them into a pipe of a hollow tree (Muirhead and Lowe 1887, p. 27; Looker, et al. 1887, p. 273). However, the fact that many burial cylinders have been found cached in Highland shelters and crevices, suggests that this was an

alternate means (e.g. Gaukrodger 1924; Goddard 1940/41).

It is significant that many caches of material culture have been found in direct association with human remains. The earliest report of this association was by A.S. MacLellan (1901), who wrote of Aboriginal art and burials at 'the Tombs' rockshelter on the upper Maranoa River —

> Many a skeleton I saw in the caves there, and hand and foot imprints and other impressions on the walls and roofs of the caves; and fishing nets made out of fibre or bark. These caves served as a vault for this wild race.

More recent finds include a sewn marsupial skin blanket, a bone point, and "a witch-doctor's skin-bag" associated with a painted burial cylinder at Goat Rock, on the upper Warrego River (QE 6422; Morwood 1979). Another cache found in Moolayamber Gorge comprised a bone point, three amorphous quartz pebbles (with percussion marks and adhering ochre), nine amulets tightly wrapped in ochred possum-fur string, and a small steel blade. This material was found in association with 3 human skeletons and it is now in the collections of the Queensland Museum (QE 3171). The mortuary context of these caches suggest that they were unlikely to be merely temporary storage of valued items, but were intended as 'grave goods'. Looker, et al. (1887, p. 273) reports that when deceased persons were cremated, their belongings were burnt also, so similar principles of disposal may have applied for other burial practices. However, the 'burials' associated with mortuary caches are often of children, who were too young to have used the material in life (Peter Keegan, pers. comm.). Obviously mortuary practices in the Central Highlands were far more complex and variable than those ethnographically observed. The cultural context (rock art, occupation deposits), content of caches, and age structure of associated human remains could provide valuable evidence for these undocumented activities if properly researched.

Unfortunately, the potential of this source of cultural data has never been realised as most burials and caches of material culture were, and continue to be, desecrated and dispersed without proper study. Research and management priorities for this region must include detailed recording of *in situ* cached material, plus documentation and description of finds already in private and public collections. Some of the ethical problems in dealing with mortuary evidence have already been discussed by Robins and Walsh (1979).

CONCLUSIONS

There is no evidence that the Mt. Inglis cache was ever associated with human remains. This collection of ceremonial/decorative items is, therefore, unlikely to have been a permanent, mortuary cache, but was probably hidden for later re-use.

The age of the material is unknown but such 'de facto' refuse (see Schiffer 1973, p. 60) most probably relates to the terminal phase of Aboriginal occupation. On the evidence of Priddle (n.d., p. 34), elements of traditional life in this region continued until 1920, and this provides the most recent possible date for the material. A similar cache from Moolayamber Gorge contained a metal knife with a resin haft, indicating a post-European contact date — i.e. later than 1840 for this region. The Mt. Inglis material can, therefore, be compared and contrasted with ethnographic observations of the contact period. Clearly this material provides evidence for a range of material culture and activities, many of which were never documented.

Such cached material also provides a timely reminder to researchers. Most of the evidence for 'recent' Aboriginal culture in the Central Highlands is based on superficial and biased ethnographic accounts and collections. There is therefore, a tendency to equate the simplicity of surviving evidence with a simplicity of life-style and material culture (cf. White 1977). It is a sobering thought that for a minimum of 19,000 years (see Mulvaney and Joyce 1965), successful Aboriginal occupation of the Highlands depended on a finely-honed economic and ideological adaptation. This was based on non-material, esoteric knowledge about a wide range of resources, yet both the ideological and organic components of Aboriginal culture are beyond the usual scope of archaeological investigation.

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Appendix 1 — Results of X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy of red ochre.
Dr John Kleeman, Geology Dept., U.N.E.

Item S181/50 of the Mt. Inglis cache contained 1045 grams of finely powdered, red ochre. Three grams of this was removed and prepared as a pressed sample mount. The basis of the technique used to test for heavy metal ions is fully described in Norrish and Chappel (1967). The following results were obtained —

Cu	45 ± 4 ppm
Zn	79 ± 6 ppm
Pb	66 ± 5 ppm
Hg	1–3 ppm (semi-quantitative)
As	not detected at K_α or K_β location, say less than 20 ppm
Cd	not detected at K_α location, say less than 10 ppm

Note that the lower limits of detection for As and Cd are not well known as we do not analyse them routinely. Subject to a (perhaps) imprecise "less than" figure, they are not present in the sample.

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PLATE 1

Context of the Mt. Inglis cache.

Top — general view of Mt. Inglis shelter (central background).
Middle — general view of site during cache removal.
Bottom — cache after removal of three concealing sandstone blocks.

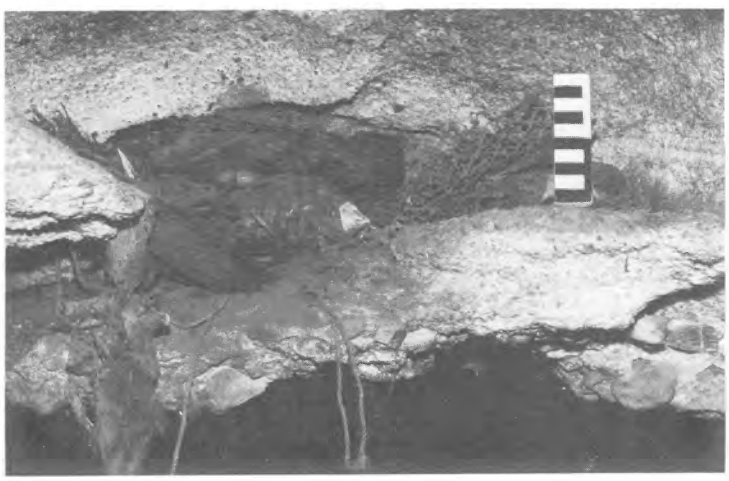

PLATE 2

Items from the Mt. Inglis cache. a consolidated emu feather mass and skin wrapping (S181/5); b length of necklace (S181/12); c possum skin bag and ball of yellow ochre (S181/18); d pouch of Whiptail wallaby skin containing bone tube, bone point and emu feather head-dress (S181/19); e possum skin parcel containing emu feathers and fur twine (S181/23); f pendant made from dried cloaca of a large macropod (S181/24); g fur twine armband (S181/32); h bark-fibre head-net (S181/33). Photos courtesy Queensland Museum.

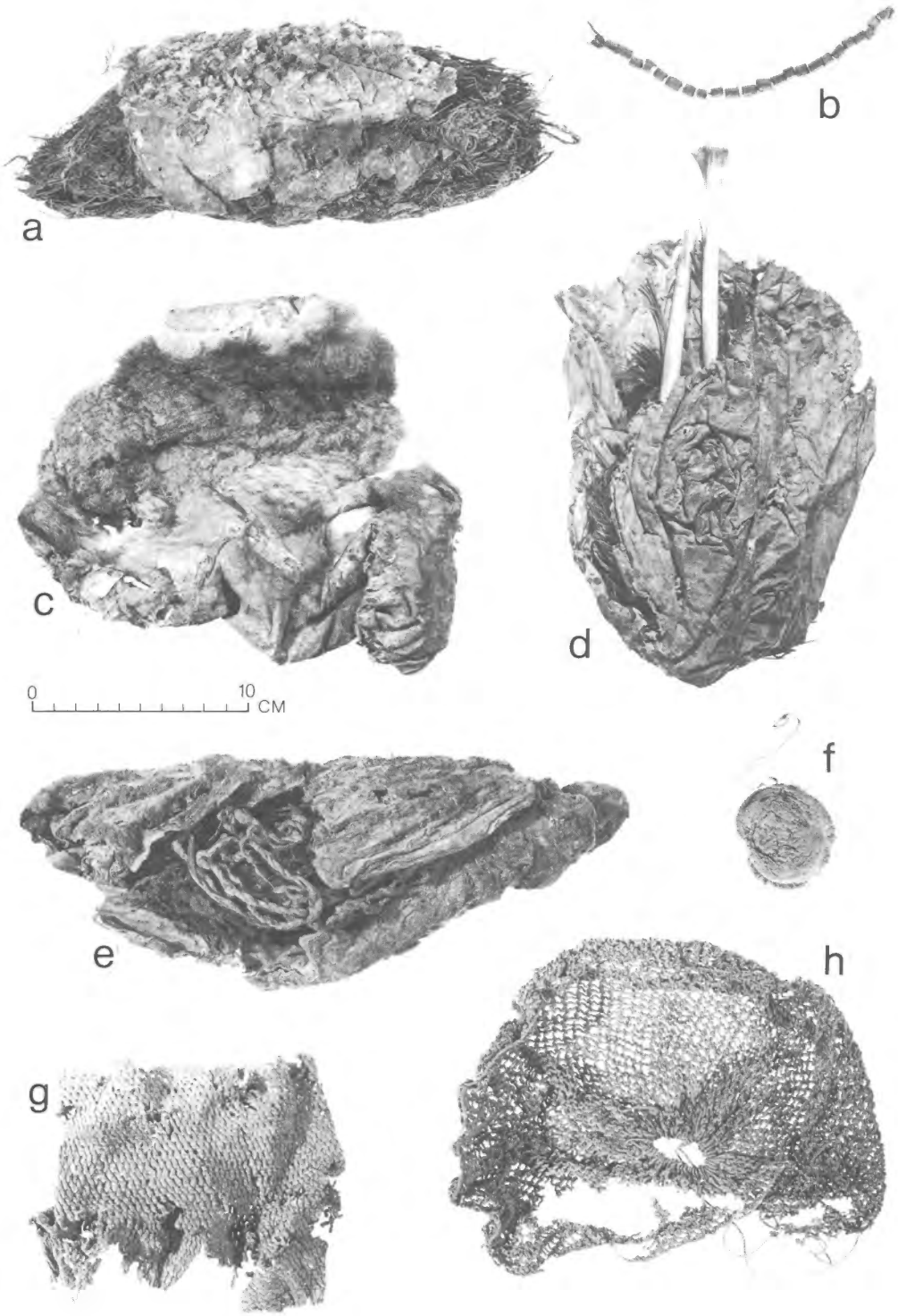
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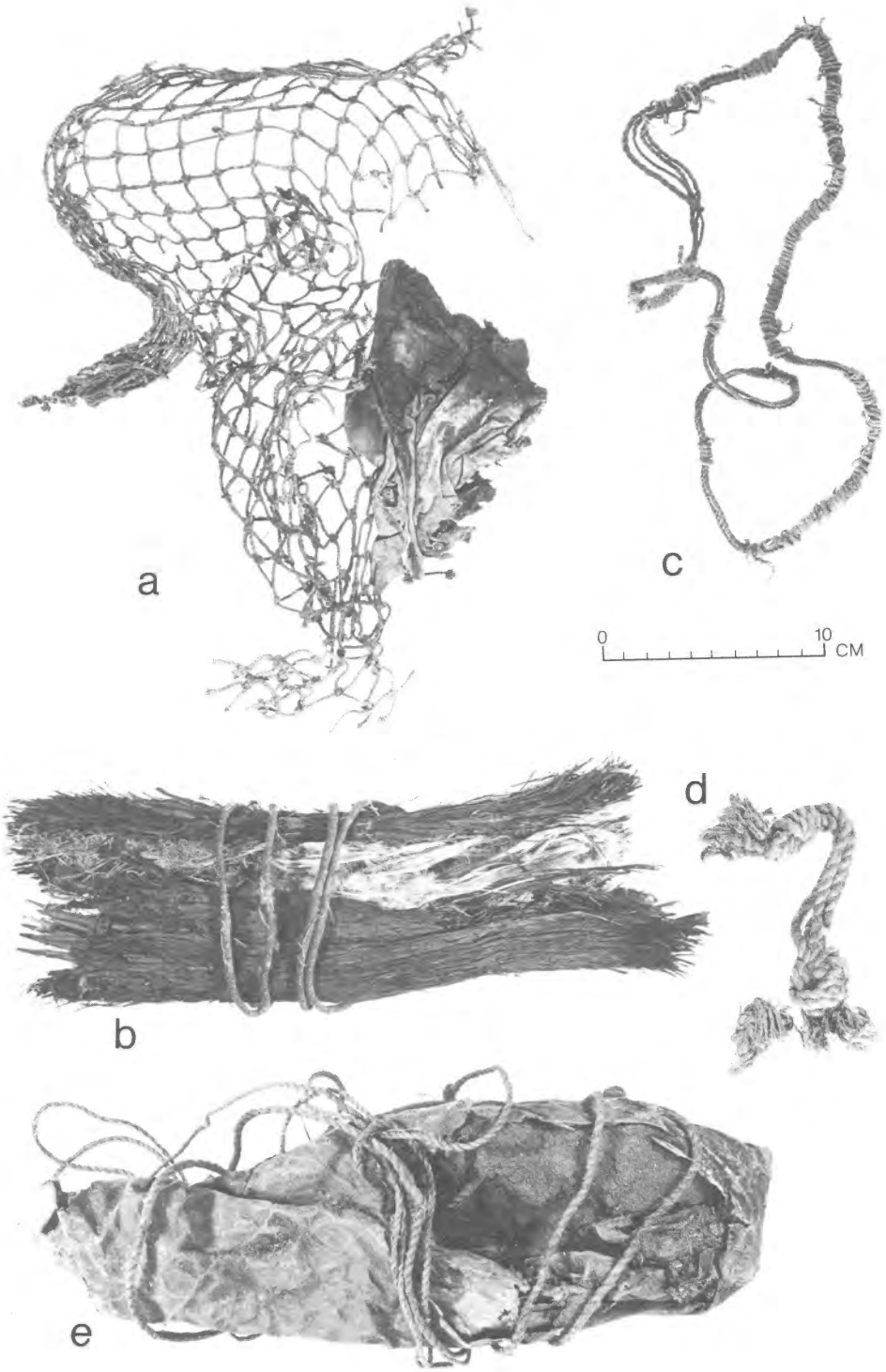
PLATE 3

Items from the Mt. Inglis cache. a remains of string bag (S181/34); b roll of budgeroo bark containing feathered 'pins' (S181/38); c waist-belt of fur and bark-fibre twine (S181/44); d tassle of bark-fibre twine (S181/45); e parcel of Rock wallaby skin containing powered red ochre (S181/50). Photos courtesy Queensland Museum.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