



Pioneers of Australian Archaeology at Lapstone Creek - Emu Cave - 1935-1936

At the foundation of scientific discipline with shovels and picks.



Lapstone Creek Rock Shelter: Stone Axe A
Photographer: Kathryn Wren © Australian Museum

The people who excavated the Lapstone Creek Rock Shelter (Emu Cave) in 1935 and 1936 contributed to the development of archaeology in Australia. They attempted, in their own ways, sometime simplistically, to preserve material relics of the Aboriginal past, to learn about it and share their knowledge.

Bernard Hornshaw (1878–1937) is a good example. A tramway worker, he had no formal qualifications in history or anthropology. Hornshaw learnt mostly from books and from observation as a practitioner – a self-made historian and artefact collector who occasionally dug stone artefacts out of the ground. But this was a serious hobby. Known as a finder, recorder and collector to his associates and friends, Hornshaw assembled a large collection of about 8000 artefacts from all over Australia, mostly from New South Wales. He was regarded for his knowledge, study and thorough documentation of Aboriginal rock art. Hornshaw became an important contributor and active foundation member of the Anthropological Society of New South Wales.

George Bunyan (1879–1967), a butcher in Emu Plains, was another passionate collector of artefacts related to Aboriginal history. He often visited local schools to talk to children about the evidence of Aboriginal culture, and encouraged school trips to see his collection. Bunyan was generous in sharing his knowledge, but not a particularly careful caretaker of the artefacts, thus

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