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HOWMAN'S GAP AAA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

All Friday night they drifted in, relieved after having finally arrived from as far north as Townsville and west as Adelaide. Each carload brought the buzz of welcome which rose to crescendos as the evening progressed and finished with the late night revellers 're-enacting' a corroboree after which the quiet of the mountains descended on remote Howman's Gap.

The venue was the 1979 AAA Conference. Fifty-odd prehistorians gathered to hammer out the issues of Education and Training in Archaeology. While admittedly of great importance to the discipline, initially this didn't seem intrinsically interesting. As the weekend progressed, however, the concern of participants with this issue became obvious. Involvement was raised to the point that the day lacked the hours to accommodate discussions of all the points raised by the various speakers and evening sessions had to be arranged.

Of particular concern to the Conference was the relationship of prehistorians with the people whose past they are studying, the Aboriginal communities. Guardians of Black History and the handing back of indecipherable facts were accusations made against the discipline by its members. The lack of Aboriginal involvement in all levels of prehistory was highlighted. While no conclusions were arrived at, each member has to address attention to this problem and attempt solutions to it.

New publications may have titles like the Prehistoric Sportsman's Guide to Hunting and Fishing on the Woolamai Lakes, complete with suggested camping locations. Joking aside, educating the public was seen as an important issue and while advances have been made through Adult Education classes, Summer School and Museums, which were described by speakers, there was general agreement that the discipline should attempt to reach a greater number of people through the interest of the media and popular publications.

On Saturday night Josephine Flood valiantly outlined the archaeology of the local region interrupted at times by the somewhat raucous audience. Three super-8 teaching films made by David Frankel followed, completing the first day's activities.

The Sunday session focused upon the issues of professional training within the university. Emphasis was placed on adequate practical training to ensure that professional standards remain high. Those involved in contract archaeology were particularly concerned with the skill of graduates. Representatives of several universities explained to the Conference their courses and education philosophies.

Several papers were presented on recent research. This was seen as an important part of the Conference.

The Annual General Meeting of the AAA was held and a new executive elected. It consists of S. Bowdler (President), J. Hall (Secretary), and H. Lourandos (Treasurer). This committee has undertaken to organise the next conference. The topic - Coasts and Islands. This ensures the continuity of AAA conferences.

Denise Gaughwin