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Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

MS 1941

Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee (Victoria)

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COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:	Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee (Victoria)
Title:	Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee (Victoria)
Collection no:	MS 1941
Date range:	1984
Extent:	1 box (0.085mt)
Repository:	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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Items from this collection should be cited as [Title or description of manuscript item], Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS [insert number], Series [insert number], Subseries [insert number], Item or Folder [insert number].

For example:

Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee (Victoria), Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, MS 1941, Series 1, Item 2.

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Scope and contents note

These papers relate to an emergency meeting of the Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee, held in Melbourne on 8 June 1984. The Committee was set up under the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972 - SECT 5. Act No.

8273/1972. The papers include correspondence and Supreme Court papers relating to the Murray Black collection of Aboriginal skeletal remains, and research articles based on the Aboriginal skeletons, held at the University of Melbourne.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The functions of the Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee, set up in 1972, were to consider and advise the Minister on all matters it considered necessary in relation to archaeological relics and the preservation of those relics. The Committee was to consist of twelve members, one of whom was to be a member of the Institute of Aboriginal studies. Warwick Dix was the AIAS member. (AIAS – Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies)

The Murray Black collection was held at the University of Melbourne. George Murray Black was an amateur collector of Aboriginal remains in the 1920's. He was commissioned by both the medical school and the Australian Institute of Anatomy (AIA), and collected prolifically during the 1940's and 1950's.

Initially, Black sent most of the remains he collected to the AIA where they were studied until notified by their Director in 1940 that they were no longer of value. Black had been sending the medical school Indigenous remains in 1937, but with the news from the AIA declaring that his collections were no longer of value his attention turned solely to the formation of the medical school collection. The Murray Black Collection was the largest collection of Indigenous Australian remains at the time of its donation, comprised of approximately 800 individuals from the Maraura, Kureinji, Tati-tati, and Wati Wati peoples across five burial sites along the New South Wales side of the Murray River.

In 1983, Jim Berg commenced work as inspector and deputy chairperson of the Advisory Committee for the Victorian Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972. (The Act stipulates that permission from the Secretary for Planning and Environment must be obtained in order to hold Indigenous artefacts and remains). In 1984 Jim Berg was the Executive Officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

While working at the Museum of Victoria, Berg learned of the Murray Black Collection and filed an injunction, which was served to the Vice Chancellor and legal advisor to the University of Melbourne. The University eventually agreed to repatriate the remains. They were transferred from the University to the Museum of Victoria by court order in 1984, for housing until they could be reburied. On 22 November 1985, the individuals in the Murray Black Collection were reburied in Kings Domain Garden, Melbourne.

References:

AIATSIS registry file no. 198_121-1 Victorian Archaeological Advisory Committee.

Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972, Act No. 8273/1972, Version incorporating amendments as at 5 April 2005, Section 5, Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee <viewed 19-5-2020>

http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/repealed_act/aaarpa1972421/

Berg, Jim, "This is My Journey," in *Power and the Passion: Our People Return Home*, eds. Shannon Faulkhead and Jim Berg (Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., 2010), pp. 3-30.

Jones, R. L., "Medical Schools and Aboriginal Bodies," in *Power and Passion: Our People Return Home*, eds. Shannon Faulkhead and Jim Berg (Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., 2010), pp. 50-55

Prince, Jordi Rivera, 'Can the Repatriation of the Murray Black Collection be considered an Apology? Colonial Institutional Culpability in the Indigenous Australian Fight for Decolonization', University of Pennsylvania, *In Situ*, vol. 14, issue 1, no. 5, 2015, <https://repository.upenn.edu/insitu/vol4/iss1/5/> <viewed 20-5-2020>

Russell, Lynette, "Reflections of Murray Black's Writings," in *Power and Passion: Our People Return Home*, eds. Shannon Faulkhead and Jim Berg (Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., 2010), pp. 56-63.

Provenance

The AIAS member on the committee was Warwick Dix, the Principal of AIAS/AIATSIS from 1985-1991. There is also a memo from Graeme Ward, also employed at AIAS, noting that the papers were provided to committee members at the emergency meeting held on 8 June 1984. He also requests that the papers be retained together.

Material separated from the collection

No material has been separated from this collection.

Related material

In the AIATSIS library collection:

Power and the passion: our ancestors return home, Shannon Faulkhead, Jim Berg and Koorie Heritage trust, Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., 2010. Recounts legal action taken against University of Melbourne and Museum of Victoria regarding their right to keep Indigenous Australian ancestral remains.

For a complete list of works about the Murray Black collection held by the Library, and for other related material consult [Mura®](#), the AIATSIS catalogue.

Important: Before clicking on the links to the catalogue entries please read our [sensitivity message](#).

Controlled access points/Subject headings

Fossil hominids - Australia –Craniology

Human remains (Archaeology) - Australia

Environment – Conservation – Law and legislation

Archaeological museums and collections - Australia

Victoria. Parliament. Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation (Amendment) Act 1972

Victoria. Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee

Cultural heritage – protection – Law and legislation

National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation (Australia)

University of Melbourne

Victoria. Supreme Court

Death – Human remains - Removal

SERIES DESCRIPTION

This series includes correspondence and administrative papers relating to: Aboriginal Relics and Skeletal Material Committee; Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation (Amendment) Act, 15 May, 1984; Murray Black Collection of Aboriginal skeletal remains; Supreme Court action; list of publications involving Murray Black Collection; research articles based on Aboriginal skeletons in the possession of Melbourne University; support letter from the NAIHO (National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation).

Series 1 Archaeological Relics Advisory Committee

Item

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|-------------|--|
| MS 1941/1/1 | Resolutions of the Aboriginal Relics and Skeletal Material Committee, 8 June 1984. Heading. |
| MS 1941/1/2 | Relating to the Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation (Amendment) Act, 15 May, 1984. 2 p. |
| MS 1941/1/3 | Papers relating to the Murray Black Collection of Aboriginal skeletal remains. Heading.

Sunderland, S. and L.J. Ray, 'A note on the Murray Black Collection of Australian aboriginal skeletons'. <i>Proc. R. Soc. Vic.</i> , 1959, vol. 7, pp. 45-48. |
| MS 1941/1/4 | Murray Black collection, University of Melbourne, Catalogue. 36 L. |

- MS 1941/1/5 Relating to the Supreme Court action. Heading.
Statement by Gary Bamblett, 22 May 1984. 1 L.
- MS 1941/1/6 Statement by James Berg, and memo, 22 May, 1984. 3 L.
- MS 1941/1/7 Statement by Jim Goff, 25 May 1984. 2 L.
- MS 1941/1/8 Letter to Registrar, University of Melbourne, from B. Kissane, 24 May, 1984.
- MS 1941/1/9 Notices impounded and detaining certain relics, 18 May, 1984, 22 May, 1984. 3 L.
- MS 1941/1/10 In the Supreme Court at Melbourne between James Rueben Berg and University of Melbourne – brief; summons; orders by Mr Justice Gobbo, 24 May, 1984, and 30 May 1984. 8 L.
- MS1941/1/11 Letter from D.E. Caro to D. Yenken, enclosing statement by P. Brown; list of publications involving Murray Black Collection; letter from R.C. Willis; affidavit by J.R. Berg. 19 L.
- MS 1941/1/12 Research articles based on Aboriginal skeletons in the possession of Melbourne University. Heading.
Berry, R.J.A. and W.D. Robertson. 'Dioptrographic tracings in four normae of fifty two Tasmanian crania', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 1909, pp. 1-11.
- MS 1941/1/13 Ray, L.J. 'The Aboriginal skeleton'. *Med. J. Aust.*, 18 Apr. 1959, pp. 544.
- MS 1941/1/14 Jones, Rhys. 'The geographical background to the arrival of man in Australia and Tasmania [extract]'. *Archaeology and Physical Anthropology in Oceania*, vol. 3, no 3, 1968, pp. 188-191, 203.
- MS 1941/1/15 Gill, E.D. 'Aboriginal antiquities of Victoria', in McCarthy, F.D., ed, *Aboriginal antiquities in Australia: their nature and preservation*, Canberra, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1970, pp. 27-31.
- MS 1941/1/16 Brown, P. 'Artificial cranial deformation: a component in the variation in Pleistocene Australian Aboriginal crania', *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol. 16, no 1, 1981, pp. 156-62.
- MS 1941/1/17 Blumer, W.F.C., Freedman, L. and M. Lofgren. 'Middle ear ossicles of Australian Aborigines', *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol. 17, no 3, 1983, pp. 127-31.
- MS 1941/1/18 Ray, L.J., 'Bilateral coraco – clavicular articulations in the Australian Aboriginal', *Journal of Bone Joint Surgery*, vol. 41-B, no 1, Feb 1959, pp.180- .

- MS 1941/1/19 Ray, L.J., 'Cranial contours in the Australian Aboriginal', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, n.s. vol. 18, no 4, 1960, pp. 313-20.
- MS 1941/1/20 Roche, A.F., 'Aural exostoses in Australian Aboriginal skulls', *The Annals of Otology, Rhinology, and Laryngology*, vol. 73, no 1, 1964, pp.82-91.
- MS 1941/1/21 Wunderly, J and F.W. Jones, 'The non-metrical morphological characters of the Tasmanian skull', *Journal of Anatomy*, vol. 67, no 4, 1933, pp. 583-95.
- MS 1941/1/22 Brace, C.L., 'Recent human tooth size reduction with special references to Australasia', 4 p.
- MS 1941/1/23 Duckworth, W.L.H., 'A critical study of a collection of crania of Aboriginal Australians in the Cambridge University Museum', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1984, vol. 23, 1894, pp. 284-98, excerpt.
- MS 1941/1/24 Wilkinson, F.C., 'A study of the incidence of dental disease in the Aborigines of Australia, from the examination of 65 skulls in the collection found in the Melbourne University', *Australian Journal of Dentistry*, vol. 33, no 4, 1929, pp.109-13.
- MS 1941/1/25 Gill, E.D., 'Palaeoecology of fossil human skeletons', *Paleogeography, Paleoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 1968, vol. 4, no 3, pp. 211-17.
- MS 1941/1/26 Support letter from N.A.I.H.O. Heading
Letter to J. Berg from N.A.I.H.O. [National Aboriginal and Islander Health Organisation].

BOX LIST

Series	Folder	Items	Box
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1	4	12-19	1
1	5	20-25	1
1	6	26	1

Finding aid updated by Cathy Zdanowicz, May 2020

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