

THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS IN ILLAWARRA?

More than a decade ago, the IHS received a letter dated September 30 1980 stating the following:

In 1975, Sydney writer Anne O'Grady published a novel, postulating the settlement in Australia by ancient Egyptians.

The support the premise of her story, a list of reports allegedly culled from Australian newspapers, concerning finds of ancient Egyptian artifacts in coastal areas of Australia was appended. These reports included:

- a) the finding of gold figures, pottery fragments, scarab beetles and small Egyptian figurines at Austinmer.*
- b) a handmade silver necklace and bronze armband "reported to be of ancient Egyptian origin" at Austinmer in or around 1930.*
- c) a 2,000 year old coin found in sand dunes at Towradgi.*
- d) the image of "an Egyptian Diety" cut into a cliff face near Campbelltown.*
- e) An "Ancient wooden wreck measuring about 40 feet long and 9 feet wide, built without nails . . . partially hidden under a sand dune at Wollongong . . . near the ruins of twenty stone dwellings with two paved pathways leading to a water catchment and the remains of a 50 foot stone wharf."*

I would be interested to know if you, or any members of the Illawarra Historical Society have heard of any of these 'discoveries', and whether they in fact occurred. If so, I would appreciate any further information you could give me on these, or similar finds in the area, and possible explanations for them.

*Yours sincerely,
Robert Karl
P.O. Box 137,
Warrandyte
Victoria 3113*

In her usual highly efficient and courteous manner, Margaret MacDonald replied to Mr. Karl's enquiries:

"I'm afraid I haven't been able to locate any of the reports listed by Anne O'Grady (it would have been a help if she'd given her sources!), nor have I found reports of any similar discoveries in this area. I do remember, however, that some years ago a Rex Gilroy claimed to have discovered, near Wollongong, the ruins of stone dwellings etc which he considered to be evidence of ancient Egyptian occupation. In spite of the interest shown by local anthropologists and historians he would not disclose their whereabouts, and as far as I know nothing more has been heard from him on the subject. I understand he now has a natural history museum at Echo Point, Katoomba, so you could probably contact him there for further details.

Since writing the above I have talked to Mrs. D. Sefton, who is involved in research in this district for the pre-history group of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. She knows of no discoveries which give any real ground for supposing that ancient Egyptians were here, and thinks that Rex Gilroy and others have been misled by the ceremonial headdresses on some of the pictures in Aboriginal carvings (for example, those in a cave on the water catchment area behind Wollongong), which do bear

some resemblance to those of ancient Egyptians, and by natural rock formations which to vivid imaginations suggest ruins of buildings etc.

P.S. It seems odd that no-one I have spoken to has heard of the wreck story. Do you think that Anne O'Grady could have been confusing Wollongong with Warrnambool?"

If anyone has discovered anything in the ten years since Margaret MacDonald replied to Mr. Karl, they have a great chance to make a name for themselves as a historian of international repute.