

Unanticipated Discovery Plan

Procedure for the management of unanticipated discoveries of Aboriginal relics in Tasmania

For the management of unanticipated discoveries of Aboriginal relics in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* and the *Coroners Act 1995*. The Unanticipated Discovery Plan is in two sections.

Discovery of Aboriginal Relics other than Skeletal Material

Step 1:

Any person who believes they have uncovered Aboriginal relics should notify all employees or contractors working in the immediate area that all earth disturbance works must cease immediately.

Step 2:

A temporary 'no-go' or buffer zone of at least 10m x 10m should be implemented to protect the suspected Aboriginal relics, where practicable. No unauthorised entry or works will be allowed within this 'no-go' zone until the suspected Aboriginal relics have been assessed by a consulting archaeologist, Aboriginal Heritage Officer or Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania staff member.

Step 3:

Contact Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania on **1300 487 045** as soon as possible and inform them of the discovery. Documentation of the find should be emailed to **aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au** as soon as possible. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania will then provide further advice in accordance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975*.

Discovery of Skeletal Material

Step 1:

Call the Police immediately. Under no circumstances should the suspected skeletal material be touched or disturbed. The area should be managed as a crime scene. It is a criminal offence to interfere with a crime scene.

Step 2:

Any person who believes they have uncovered skeletal material should notify all employees or contractors working in the immediate area that all earth disturbance works cease immediately.

Step 3:

A temporary 'no-go' or buffer zone of at least 50m x 50m should be implemented to protect the suspected skeletal material, where practicable. No unauthorised entry or works will be allowed within this 'no-go' zone until the suspected skeletal remains have been assessed by the Police and/or Coroner.

Step 4:

If it is suspected that the skeletal material is Aboriginal, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania should be notified.

Step 5:

Should the skeletal material be determined to be Aboriginal, the Coroner will contact the Aboriginal organisation approved by the Attorney-General, as per the *Coroners Act 1995*.

Guide to Aboriginal site types

Stone Artefact Scatters

A stone artefact is any stone or rock fractured or modified by Aboriginal people to produce cutting, scraping or grinding implements. Stone artefacts are indicative of past Aboriginal living spaces, trade and movement throughout Tasmania. Aboriginal people used hornfels, chalcedony, spongelite, quartzite, chert and silcrete depending on stone quality and availability. Stone artefacts are typically recorded as being 'isolated' (single stone artefact) or as an 'artefact scatter' (multiple stone artefacts).

Shell Middens

Middens are distinct concentrations of discarded shell that have accumulated as a result of past Aboriginal camping and food processing activities. These sites are usually found near waterways and coastal areas, and range in size from large mounds to small scatters. Tasmanian Aboriginal middens commonly contain fragments of mature edible shellfish such as abalone, oyster, mussel, warrener and limpet, however they can also contain stone tools, animal bone and charcoal.

Rockshelters

An occupied rockshelter is a cave or overhang that contains evidence of past Aboriginal use and occupation, such as stone tools, middens and hearths, and in some cases, rock markings. Rockshelters are usually found in geological formations that are naturally prone to weathering, such as limestone, dolerite and sandstone

Quarries

An Aboriginal quarry is a place where stone or ochre has been extracted from a natural source by Aboriginal people. Quarries can be recognised by evidence of human manipulation such as battering of an outcrop, stone fracturing debris or ochre pits left behind from processing the raw material. Stone and ochre quarries can vary in terms of size, quality and the frequency of use.

Rock Marking

Rock marking is the term used in Tasmania to define markings on rocks which are the result of Aboriginal practices. Rock markings come in two forms; engraving and painting. Engravings are made by removing the surface of a rock through pecking, abrading or grinding, whilst paintings are made by adding pigment or ochre to the surface of a rock.

Burials

Aboriginal burial sites are highly sensitive and may be found in a variety of places, including sand dunes, shell middens and rock shelters. Despite few records of pre-contact practices, cremation appears to have been more common than burial. Family members carried bones or ashes of recently deceased relatives. The Aboriginal community has fought long campaigns for the return of the remains of ancestral Aboriginal people.

Further information on Aboriginal Heritage is available from:

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
Natural and Cultural Heritage Division
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
GPO Box 44 Hobart TAS 7001

Telephone: **1300 487 045**

Email: **aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au**

Web: **www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au**

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Tasmania and its employees do not accept responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the user's purpose, of the information and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from relying on any information in this publication.



Aboriginal Middens

lutruwita is the country of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and everyone has a responsibility to protect our heritage.



Aboriginal coastal midden

What are Aboriginal middens?

Aboriginal shell middens are distinct concentrations of shell that contain evidence of past Aboriginal hunting, gathering and food processing activities within a particular area. These middens consist primarily of concentrations of discarded shell and bone, botanical remains, ash and charcoal. Put simply, middens are prehistoric kitchens. Aboriginal midden material may appear on the ground surface as sparse scatters or concentrations of broken shell, and are often associated with dark, ashy soil including charcoal. Middens can also be visible in eroded or collapsed sections of dunes where they may appear as a dark, ashy band with layers of shell throughout. Midden sites can range in size from small, discrete scatters to extensive deposits that run along a coastline for hundreds of metres.

The discarded shell and other materials may be the remains of a single meal, or the result of repeated use of a particular location over thousands of years.

Where are middens found?

Aboriginal middens are one of the most prevalent site types found in Tasmania and are typically found in coastal environments and areas where rivers enter the sea. A number of smaller midden sites have been found inland along major river systems and wetlands. Coastal middens are predominantly found on elevated ground, such as within coastal dune systems in close proximity to headlands and rocky outcrops from which shellfish and molluscs were collected.

How to identify an Aboriginal midden:

Aboriginal middens are commonly identified by the following features:

- the dominant presence of specific edible mature shellfish and mollusc species such as abalone, mussel, oyster, limpet, warreners and whelks
- ash and charcoal
- bones of various species of bird, marsupial, and seal
- artefacts made from stone, bone and shell

Artefacts and animal bone are not always immediately visible on middens, however the presence of a combination of edible shellfish species and the remains of campfires (charcoal and ash) are key indicators of a midden site.



Aboriginal midden

Aboriginal midden or deposit?

Concentrations of shell washed to shore by natural processes such as strong tides or storms can sometimes create mounds of shell that appear similar to an Aboriginal midden. These natural deposits are usually found at the high tide mark, and predominantly contain smaller shellfish species.

You may be able to distinguish a natural shell deposit from an Aboriginal midden by asking yourself the following questions:

- Is there a dominant presence of edible shell species?
- If the material in a dune is exposed, can you see distinct layers of shell mixed with ash and charcoal?
- Can you see any stone artefacts or bone?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, it is potentially an Aboriginal midden.

Why are Aboriginal middens important?

The study of middens provides important information regarding past Aboriginal lifeways within a particular region. Scientific analysis of the materials found within middens (shell, bone, stone tools) helps researchers to reconstruct past environments, and to understand Aboriginal occupation and land use patterns through time. In some instances, estimations can be

made about the size of the group that used the site, how long they occupied the region, and whether it was a regular campsite or the product of a single event. Charcoal samples may be tested to determine the age of each layer of occupation, and pollen samples may provide insight into past vegetation within the region.

Middens are a valuable archaeological resource not only for what they reveal about Aboriginal dietary habits, but also the technology that was utilized

in gathering and processing food, seasonal trends of species exploitation, and also how humans adapted to environmental changes.

Aboriginal middens are protected

Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural material or sites are defined as 'relics' and therefore protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* (the Act). It is an offence to destroy, damage, deface, conceal, remove or otherwise interfere with a relic. It is also an offence not to report the finding of a relic. So if you suspect that an Aboriginal midden has been discovered during your activity, do not interfere with the site. Report the site to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT).

Provide the location of the site and images on the Aboriginal Heritage Site Reporting Form at www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au/forms and forward to aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au. AHT will provide further advice in accordance with the Act.

Aboriginal midden (eroded dune)



Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
Natural and Cultural Heritage Division
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
GPO Box 44 Hobart TAS 7001

Telephone: **1300 487 045** email: Aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au
www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Tasmania and its employees do not accept responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the user's purpose, of the information and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from relying on any information in this publication.



Aboriginal Stone Artefacts

lutruwita is the country of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and everyone has a responsibility to protect our heritage.



Aboriginal stone artefacts (not to scale)

What are Aboriginal stone artefacts?

Stone artefacts are evidence of stone modified or used by Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the past. Aboriginal people quarried particular stone outcrops or collected stones from river beds and coastal zones to create a sophisticated set of tools. Chert, quartzite, silcrete, spongolite, quartz and other types of rock were used. Aboriginal stone artefacts were made by hitting a piece of modified stone (core), with a cobble held in the hand (hammerstone) to remove a stone fragment (flake). Both cores and flakes could be used as stone tools. Flakes could be further modified into specific tools such as scrapers or blades. Tasmanian Aboriginal people traded stone resources long distances and in the recent past, quickly adopted new materials such as glass to create tools.

Features of Aboriginal stone artefacts

A flaked stone artefact is usually produced by striking a piece of siliceous rock or mineral (core) with force at an angle using a hammerstone. The flake ventral surface was originally attached to the core, while the flake dorsal surface is the outer surface of the core (see diagram). The ventral surface may show where the hammerstone struck or point of force application (PFA), a bulb of percussion that reflects the force travelling through the stone and fissures or ripple marks radiating out from the impact point. The dorsal surface may show cortex (weathering on the original surface of the core), negative flake scars showing previous flake removal and flake scar ridges. A flake could be immediately used to cut and scrape or may have been modified on the margins (retouched) as part of a process called reduction.

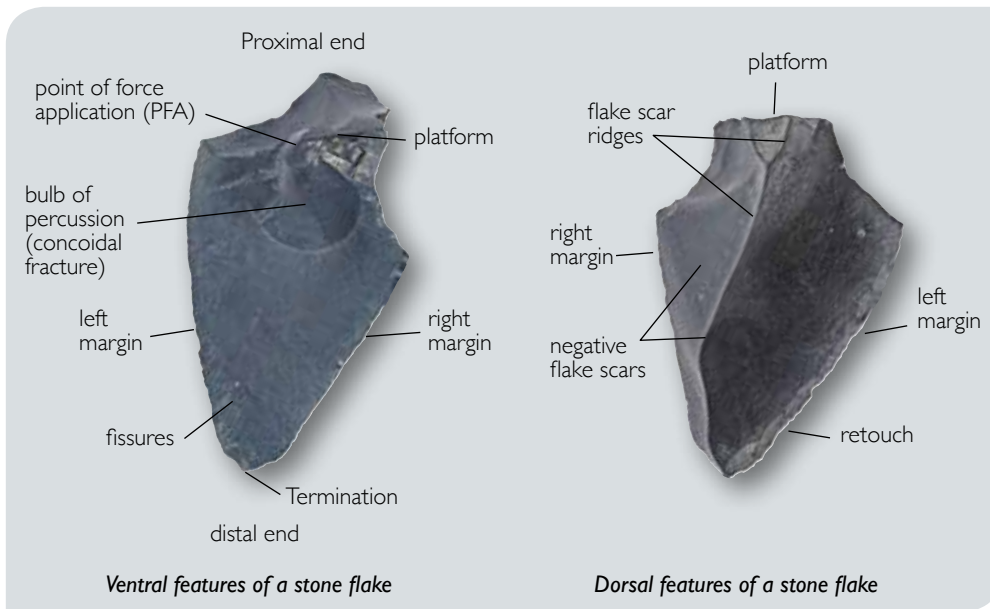
Summary of stone artefact features

Core

- Has a platform or multiple platforms from which flakes are struck
- May have one or more *negative flake scars* (flake removal)
- Cortex (weathering) may be present on the core surface

Flake

- Exhibits any of the attributes in the diagram
- May be used immediately as a tool
- May have retouch along one or both of the edges
- A 'bulb of percussion' is often present below the platform.
- Stone type may be different to the natural stone in the area.



Retouch functioned to resharpen the flake or create a particular scraping or cutting tool. Other artefacts may be hammerstones, grinding stones or anvils showing depressions or pitting and river cobbles with a chopping edge.

How to identify Aboriginal stone artefacts from natural stone fracture

Natural process or recent land-use activities can fracture stone to resemble an Aboriginal artefact. Extreme temperature change, rock fall, chemical processes, stock trampling, ploughing, river action or modern quarrying can fracture particular rock materials that Tasmanian Aboriginal people also used. The key to distinguish stone deliberately modified by Aboriginal people from stone that has been naturally or accidentally fractured is shown in the diagram. As some features (attributes) of stone artefacts also occur on naturally fractured rock, the context of the 'stone artefact' should be established. Was the quartz 'artefact' found on an upgraded track? Is more than one attribute present to indicate Aboriginal modification of the stone?

Where are Aboriginal stone artefact sites found?

Stone artefacts occur throughout Tasmania from coastal zones and elevated, dry areas near water sources through to more remote elevations. Stone (lithic) artefacts

are often recorded with other evidence of Aboriginal living areas, such as shell middens, rock shelters and at quarry sites. Within Tasmania there are thousands of artefact sites, which include single artefacts in the landscape or higher density artefact concentrations (scatters) where a number of activities including food and materials preparation, quarrying and tool making were undertaken in the past. Stone artefacts tend to be more visible in areas of lower vegetation cover, erosion or ground disturbance.

Tasmanian Aboriginal stone artefacts are important

Stone artefacts provide Tasmanian Aboriginal people today with an important link to their culture and demonstrate the diversity of the stone toolkit available in the past. Stone artefacts may represent the only physical evidence of Tasmanian Aboriginal living places in a region. Stone artefacts prove tangible evidence of where Aboriginal people lived, how they manufactured tools, obtained resources and food including

processing plants and animals or use in ceremony. Traces of wood, plants, or animal blood can survive on stone artefact edges. Edge damage can reveal how artefacts were used for different functions, such as cutting, scraping, hammering or grinding.

Comparative analysis of the source quarry and artefact located considerable distance from the source has the potential to tell us about Aboriginal systems of exchange and social relationships. Modifications to a stone artefact can provide insight into past environments, changes to diet or strategies to manage artefact use.

Aboriginal stone artefacts are protected

Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural material or sites are defined as 'relics' and therefore protected under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* (the Act). It is an offence to destroy, damage, deface, conceal, remove or otherwise interfere with a relic. It is also an offence not to report the finding of a relic. So if you suspect that an Aboriginal stone artefact has been discovered during your activity, do not interfere with the site. Report the site to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT).

Provide the location of the site and images on the Aboriginal Heritage Site Reporting Form at www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au/forms and forward to aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au. AHT will provide further advice in accordance with the Act.

Preserve Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural sites by reporting their presence to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
Natural and Cultural Heritage Division
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
GPO Box 44 Hobart TAS 7001

Telephone: **1300 487 045** email: Aboriginal@heritage.tas.gov.au
www.aboriginalheritage.tas.gov.au

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Tasmania and its employees do not accept responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the user's purpose, of the information and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from relying on any information in this publication.

