

Transcript of letter (copied by author) 8th August 1873, Morton Allport to Dr James Barnard Davis, Shelton (Staffordshire). In: Morton Allport Letter Book, Allport Library, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office

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Hobart Town
8th August 1873

My dear Sir

Your letters of April 13, May 4, May 23 and June 3 all reached me in due course and subsequently I received the beautiful book which I prize highly and shall read with great interest. You who have so many historical remains round you of various eras can scarcely imagine the utter worth of such

Sources of interesting study which we in Australia suffer under and therefore nothing you could have sent me could have given me more pleasure than the "Crania Britannica".

I must now do my best to answer your questions in the order in which I received them.

The originals of the casts sent you were the "Augustus" and "Caroline" of Flinders Island but they both died at Oyster Cove after the station at Flinders was broken up.

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You are quite right in your conjecture that our Aborigines used two sorts of rock for their implements the best were made of a rock containing a large percentage of silica due probably to the action of hot springs, the other and most numerous were made of an indurated clay rock.

In the museums of our Royal Society there is one recent skeleton (I mean one dissected and not having been buried) of a Tasmanian woman "Patty" or "Cooneana" and this specimen is perfect.

There is another nearly perfect male which was obtained from Flinders Island and which is in precisely the same condition as that sent to you. This is the skeleton of "Malabackanieneua" who was the leading chief of the tribe roaming over the Southern end of the Island, where Hobart Town now stands, when Tasmania was first colonized.

A third specimen consists of the greater part

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of the skeleton of the (so called) last male aborigine "William Lanney" of this specimen the head and two vertebrae were stolen from the general Hospital Hobart Town by one of the medical officers and the skull is now believed to be in London in the possession of one of the Students at Guy's (a Mr Bingham Crowther) where you might very possibly see it if you carefully conceal the fact that you obtained this information from me.

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from the tribe which inhabited the Lake District in the high central plateau of the Island.

There are 7 others skulls said to be of aborigines some of which are doubtful and some of which are unquestionably not Tasmanian.

There are two good casts of faces taken after death one marked "Deviah Shert" and the other marked "Bettbengie" of these

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copies could be sent you but we have no record of the originals.

We have also a good bust in plaster of "Woureddy" a copy of which you probably have.

Your specimen was obtained at Flinders Island and was buried while the station was there but no record was kept of the person. Its good condition was due to the nature of the soil, dry sandy loam.

Shouldn't I dearly like to see the result of your articulation labours ! but

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fear the probabilities are strongly against me as it is not easy to leave a solicitor's business to take care of itself and I should also find it difficult to leave my good parents who have been 40 years in this colony.

Any other questions you send me I will do my best to answer and when you next write I should be glad to hear how you treat the bones before using the

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gelatine also what proportions of gelatin you use and how.

Any memorandum from you however short about the skeleton or about any peculiarity in any part of it would be greatly valued by our Royal Society if it would not press too heavily upon your time.

One other skeleton from Flinders Island is on its way to Europe destined for the Museum at Brussels.

Again thanking you for the Book.

I remain yours faithfully
Morton Allport

Dr J. Barnard Davis
Shelton (Staffordshire)

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See also:

https://historywiki.therai.org.uk/index.php?title=Joseph_Barnard_Davis