

Appendix 4

Site Type Definitions

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Note: A copy of Appendix 4 is provided on the Project CD

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Open camp sites

Often called stone artefact scatters, these sites (for the purposes of the DEC AHIMS database) were in the past defined by the presence of two or more stone artefacts located within 50 m of one another. Current guidelines, however, delineate no hard and fast determinations on requisite artefact numbers, more loosely describing these campsites as places exhibiting evidence of past human activity. This can be, and is most frequently, in the form of stone artefacts, but may also include other evidence such as hearths or midden material. Such sites provide evidence for the range of activities that may have been undertaken at a particular place, including the production of stone tools and the preparation of food including the butchering of animals or grinding of seeds. However, the distinction between a single, isolated artefact versus a place where numerous artefacts have been recorded together provides a necessary division in terms of the possible information that a site can reveal about past activities. Further information recorded about open sites includes assessments of the sites' integrity (how intact the site is) and subsequently whether sub-surface deposits are thought to be present.

Isolated Finds

An artefact, usually of stone, but possibly of other materials, that is located but has no relationship to other identifiable archaeological features.

culturally modified trees

This site type results from the deliberate removal of bark (and sometimes wood) from trees, for the purpose of obtaining raw material for the manufacture of various items of material culture – i.e. shields, coolamons, shelters, canoes, and cradles. They may also result from foraging and hunting - for instance, toe holes cut in trees to allow access to upper branches and hollows, and axe marks around natural hollows for the extraction of small tree-living fauna (such as possums or birds) or honey.

The identification and interpretation of a scar as being Aboriginal in origin can often be difficult, as bark can be removed from trees by a variety of means e.g. animal and bird foraging, the natural breaking off of tree limbs, lightning strikes to the tree, the result of machinery damage to trunks and the removal of bark by Europeans to define land boundaries. One publication Long 2003, is very helpful and also to assist archaeologists in the accurate identification of culturally modified trees, the DEC Western region provides a set of criteria against which each scar must be assessed.

These diagnostic criteria are as follows:

The scar must not touch the ground - (scars resulting from fire, fungal attack or lightning nearly always reach the ground). Such a termination does not necessarily preclude an Aboriginal origin. Ethno-historic accounts of canoe manufacture occasionally demonstrate scarring to ground level. If the scar does run to the ground, the sides must be relatively parallel (i.e. not triangular). It must be noted that discussion with Native Title from other areas suggests that scars may indeed extend to the ground, especially when the bark is planned for use in a shelter. This information is derived from oral histories recorded in Dubbo and observations from further afield;

The ends of the scar should be squared off or evenly tapered - Different shapes at the top and bottom (e.g. pointed at top, squared at bottom; round at top, flaring at bottom) are suggestive of natural processes (e.g. branch loss);

The sides of the scar should be parallel or symmetrical - Few natural scars are likely to have these properties, with the possible exception of fire scars which may be symmetrical but are usually wider at their base. Modern surveyors' marks are typically triangular, and often adzed. These also (regardless of shape) usually have a number carved in the wood, within the scar;

The length of the scar must be on the same axis as the tree and not oblique or slanting across the tree or the branch - Scars which are natural in origin tend to have irregular outlines, sometimes have irregular regrowth and may occur against the axis of the tree.

The tree should be reasonably old – i.e. over 100 years - The tree upon which the scar is found should be old enough (i.e. of sufficient age) to have been used by Aboriginal people in (at least) a semi-traditional manner. This means the tree should be at least approximately 100 years old. The age of the scar should also be reflected in the thickness of the regrowth. Young scars (e.g. some natural scars caused by branches falling or birds or horses gnawing, have characteristically thin regrowth);

There must be no obvious natural or other artificial cause such as a branch rip, lightning strike, cockatoo chewed bark or healed bark tears from machinery damage or car impact – Any signs that the scar may not be Aboriginal should be carefully assessed; and,

The tree must not be an introduced species – For obvious reasons, the tree upon which the scar is found should be endemic to the region, i.e. this excludes historic (exotic) plantings.

Also helpful in culturally modified tree identification, but not within the DEC criteria are the following points:

Axe or adze marks - A scar with cut marks on the original wood is likely to be anthropogenic in nature (i.e. as a result of human actions). The location and shape/size may lend support to the scar's origin. For example stone axe marks would indicate an Aboriginal origin, while steel axe marks post-date the arrival of Europeans. These of course could still have been made by an Aboriginal person in the post-contact era; and,

The presence of epicormal growth – Many scars of Aboriginal origin tend to have an epicormal shoot originating at the base of the scar. This is a new branch shooting from the point of damage and is part of the trees self preservation mechanism.

As noted in the DEC criteria, any tree that does not fit these rules cannot be accepted as likely to be of Aboriginal origin. This may mean that a few authentic scars are omitted from the Aboriginal Sites register, but it is the only means to establish consistency in identification.

However, even when applied, the above criteria cannot always provide a definitive classification, and a natural origin for the scar cannot be ruled out. For this reason interpretations of Aboriginal origin are qualified by the recorders degree of certainty. The following categories are used:

- **DEFINITE ABORIGINAL SCAR**

This is a scar which conforms to all of the criteria stated above and/or has in addition a feature or characteristic that provides definitive identification, such as diagnostic axe or adze marks, or a historical identification. All conceivably natural causes of the scar can be reliably discounted.

- **ABORIGINAL SCAR**

This is a scar which conforms to most of the criteria, and where an Aboriginal origin is considered to be the most likely. Despite this, a natural origin cannot be completely ruled out.

- **POSSIBLE ABORIGINAL SCAR**

This is a scar which conforms to most of the criteria but where an Aboriginal origin would appear unlikely .

Natural Mythological or Cultural / Ceremonial sites

Natural mythological sites can be any natural feature and like a cultural / spiritual are not detectable without the traditional knowledge of specific areas.

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