



Information About Artefacts



The Gwion Gwion paintings



The Gwion Gwion paintings are found in the north-west Kimberley region of Western Australia.

These paintings are thought to be at least 17,000, perhaps more than 25,000 years old.

These rock paintings are very different to any other Aboriginal rock art found in Australia because they depict graceful human figures engaged in hunting.

The Kongouro from New Holland



This painting was part of a set of two paintings titled, 'Kangaroo' and 'Dingo'. They were commissioned by Sir Joseph Banks after he sailed with Captain James Cook on Cook's first voyage to the Pacific (1768–71).

Both paintings were painted by George Stubbs, the most important animal painter in Britain during the 18th century.

Coolamon



<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/australian-archaeology/indigenous-wooden-container-from-new-south-wales/>

Coolamons were traditionally used by women to carry water, fruit and nuts. They were also used to cradle babies.

Coolamons were also used for winnowing grains in the traditional bread-making process, as well as being used as a general heating and cooking vessel. They were even used as an umbrella.

This is a photo of a coolamon from inland New South Wales. It is made from the outer bark of a tree trunk, possibly an acacia tree.

Wallaby-skin water carrier



This is a water carrier made from the skin of a wallaby. It was collected in the Lachlan-Darling area of western New South Wales prior to 1885.

Skin carriers of this type were made to carry water through dry areas. This water carrier could hold approximately six litres of water.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/wallaby-skin-water-carrier-pre-1885/>

Bark canoe



<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/indigenous-bark-canoe-from-new-south-wales/>

Bark canoes such as this one were used by the First Peoples for general transport, fishing and collecting birds' eggs from reed beds. When fishing in these canoes, women sat and used hooks and lines while men stood to throw spears. A small fire was kept alight in the canoe on a bed of wet clay or seaweed. This kept people warm in winter and also allowed them to cook the fish they had caught.

This canoe was made by Albert Woodlands, an Indigenous man from the northern coast of New South Wales

Shallop



Shallops are a type of boat. They were carried unassembled on European ships and put together at the fishing station. Each was equipped with a mast, a sail, fishing lines, buckets containing bait, a compass for use in foggy weather, a grapnel (small anchor), a container of water, beer or cider, and a basket of biscuits.

Tasmanian Bark Canoe



French explorers visiting Tasmania in the late 18th and early 19th centuries made frequent references to bark canoes that were paddled around southern Tasmania.

The canoes were strong enough to carry up to six men across stormy seas.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/indigenous-bark-canoe-from-new-south-wales/>

Humpy



A 19th-century engraving showing people and humpy.

A humpy is a small, temporary shelter, traditionally used by the First Peoples of Australia. They are sometimes called a lean-to, since they often rely on a standing tree for support. These shelters were made of branches and bark (particularly paperbark) and were often built prior to the construction of more permanent buildings.

The word humpy comes from the Jagera language (a Murri people from Coorparoo in Brisbane); other language groups had different names for the structure.

In South Australia, such a shelter is known as a "wurley", possibly from the Kurna language.

Rondache



The rondache or roundel was a shield carried by late Medieval and Renaissance foot soldiers (swordsman).

It was made of boards of light wood, sinews or ropes, covered with leather, plates of metal, or stuck full of nails.

Bark Shield



This bark shield was collected in 1770 on Captain James Cook's First Voyage in HMS Endeavour (1768-71) from Botany Bay. It is made from wood and bark.

<http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/botany-bay-barkshield/index.html>

Tops



Historically, 'top games' have been seen in many different parts of the world. At least five types of tops were known in 16th century England, including peg tops, whip tops and hand spun tops.

Spinning tops



This spinning top is made from a type of plant known as a gourd. The top is stuck onto a stick and is held together with beeswax and fibre twine.

The gourd is painted with red and white ochre. A hole is pierced in the side of the gourd to make it whistle when spun by twirling with flat, open hands. This was collected from the Cairns district, Cape York, Queensland.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/aboriginal-toys/spinning-topsgeneral/>

Axe



<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/indigenous-hafted-axe-from-sydney/>

This axe was made from rock with one end ground to a sharp edge. A piece of wood has been bent around the axe.

It was used to remove bark from trees to make canoes, shelters and shields and to cut wood for making clubs, containers and other tools and weapons. It was used to make notches that acted as footholds in the trunks of trees and to enlarge holes in trees to access small animals. It was also used to kill animals and as a weapon in times of conflict.

Shovel



This is a multipurpose shovel made from a red-brown wood.

It was used as a shovel and digging stick, and was helpful to use on short hunting journeys and long seasonal treks.

The end of the handle was sharpened to act as a digging stick.

<https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/cultural-objects/indigenous-shovel-pre-1885/>