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BURIALS AT LANIHULI STATION, VIA ENNGONIA, NSW.

RECORD OF A VISIT IN 1985

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With the compliments of the

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Dead Man's Sandhill - Lanihuli Station, via Enngonia

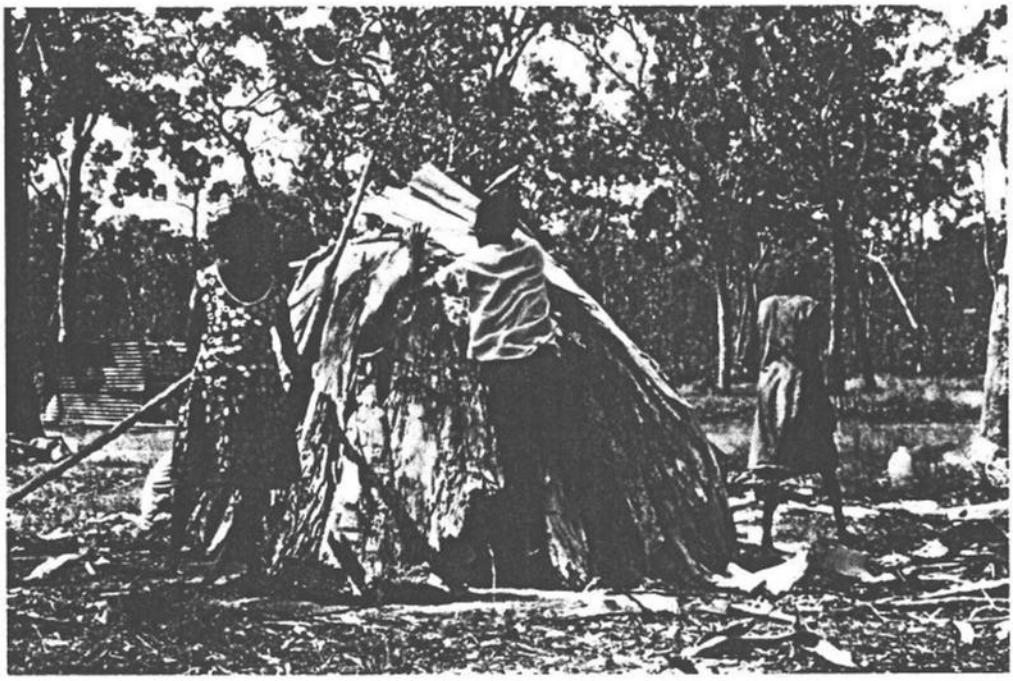
In July 1985 I visited Dead Man's Sandhill at Lanihuli Station in the company of Judy Sullivan. With me were Jeannette Hope (of the Prehistory department at the Australian National University, but who at the time was with National Parks and Wildlife Service), Dan Witter (your regional archaeologist at NPWS) and Terry Bonhomme (also of ANU).

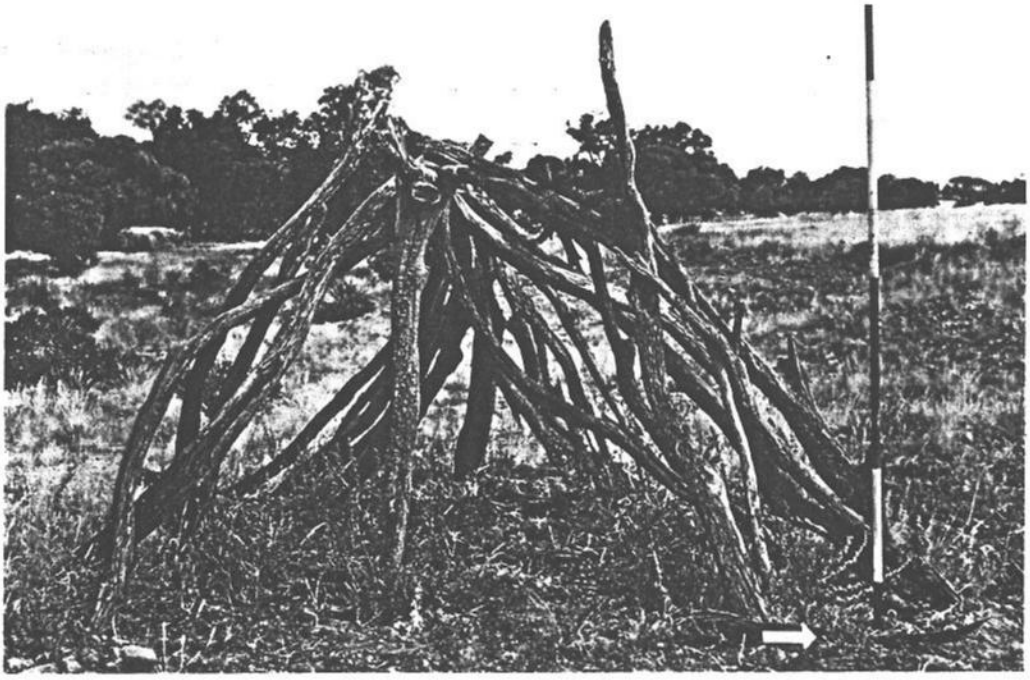
I am writing this note to put on record some of the information I was able to gather, mainly from the bones, in the brief time I was there. I'm including the pictures I took. These are archived at the Institute Of Aboriginal Studies and copies may be made at any time.

The sandhill is an isolated dune with at least three skeletons exposed on the surface. Many dunes that I have looked at have only a few skeletons buried. However, this sandhill also has the remnants of a hut (or huts). These were pointed out to me by one of the people there.

The old hut frame was made from interlocking branches. Simple but effective - it's still standing!

Judy Sullivan stands beside the hut at Lanihuli, giving an idea of its size. The picture below is of a similar sort of hut. This shows what the hut probably looked like when it was in use. This one is from Aurukun, Cape York. (Picture taken by M. Heppell.)





I've included this picture of a hut frame from Durham Downs in Queensland. The photo was taken by Richard Robins in 1976. You will probably recognise this picture as it is in the history book of your area: Matya - Mundu by Hazel McKellar.

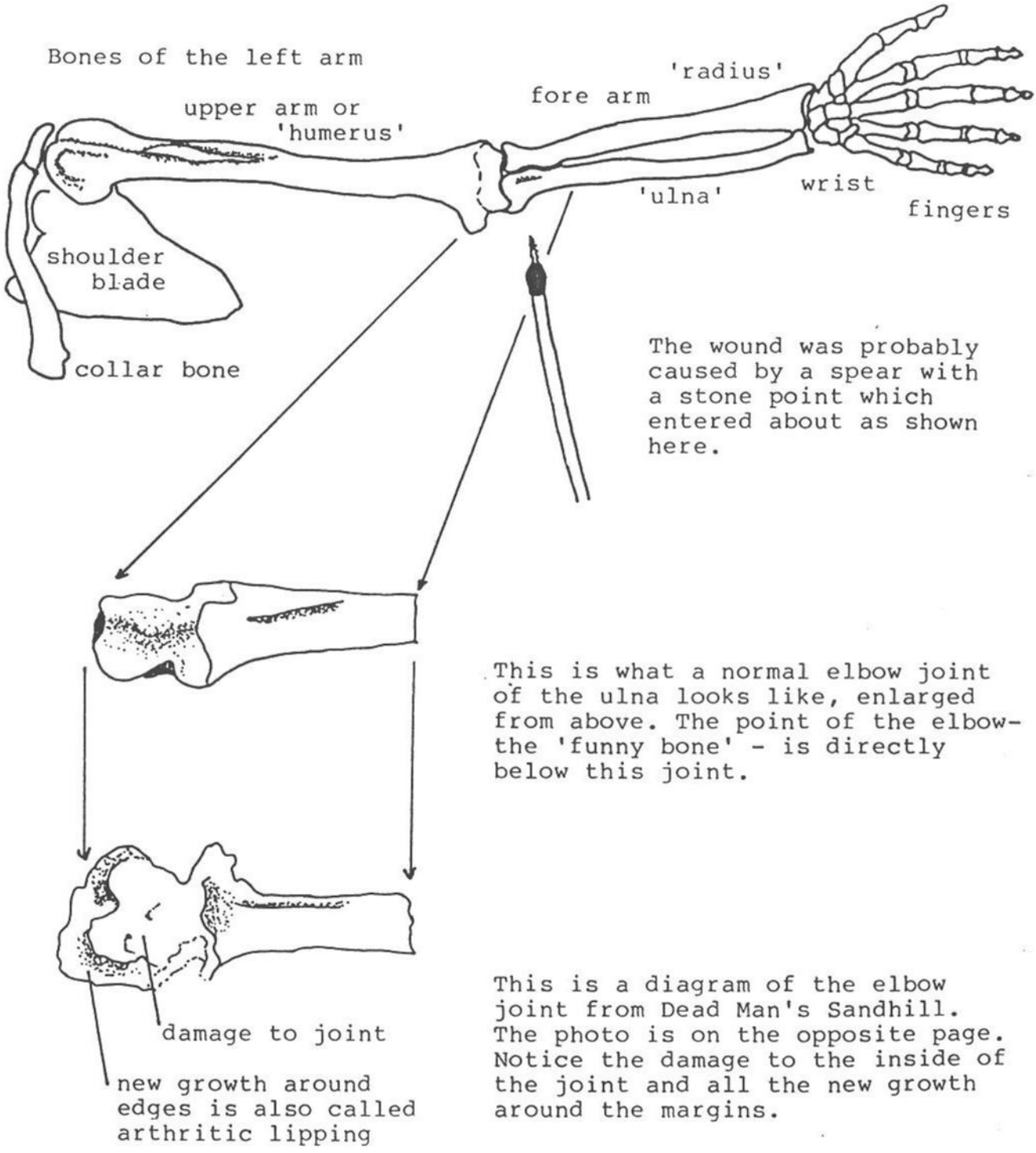
This photo and the previous one from Aurukun, plus all the ones I have taken are held in storage at the Institute Of Aboriginal Studies and copies may be made at any time.

Burial on the western slope of the sandhill. This has been exposed by wind erosion of the overlying sand and is very common all over western NSW. Some communities have had luck in preserving these by laying branches over top or upwind and letting blowing sand re-cover the burial.

The individual buried here was a man of early to mid years, say 25 to 35 years old. I can tell the age by tooth wear and fusion of the skull bones, but the sex I couldn't be sure of until I had compared the few measures I had taken of one of the bones to others taken by other researchers. The measurements are of largest and smallest diameters of the upper arm. And of course men are bigger than women. Here are the results:

Lanihuli	Tandou male	Mossgiel male	Nitchie male	South Aust. male	South Aust. female
22	21	25	24	21	17
16	16	21	20	16	13

Tandou is dated to about 15,000 years old, and Mossgeil and Nitchie are both about 7,000 years old. These are all from western NSW.



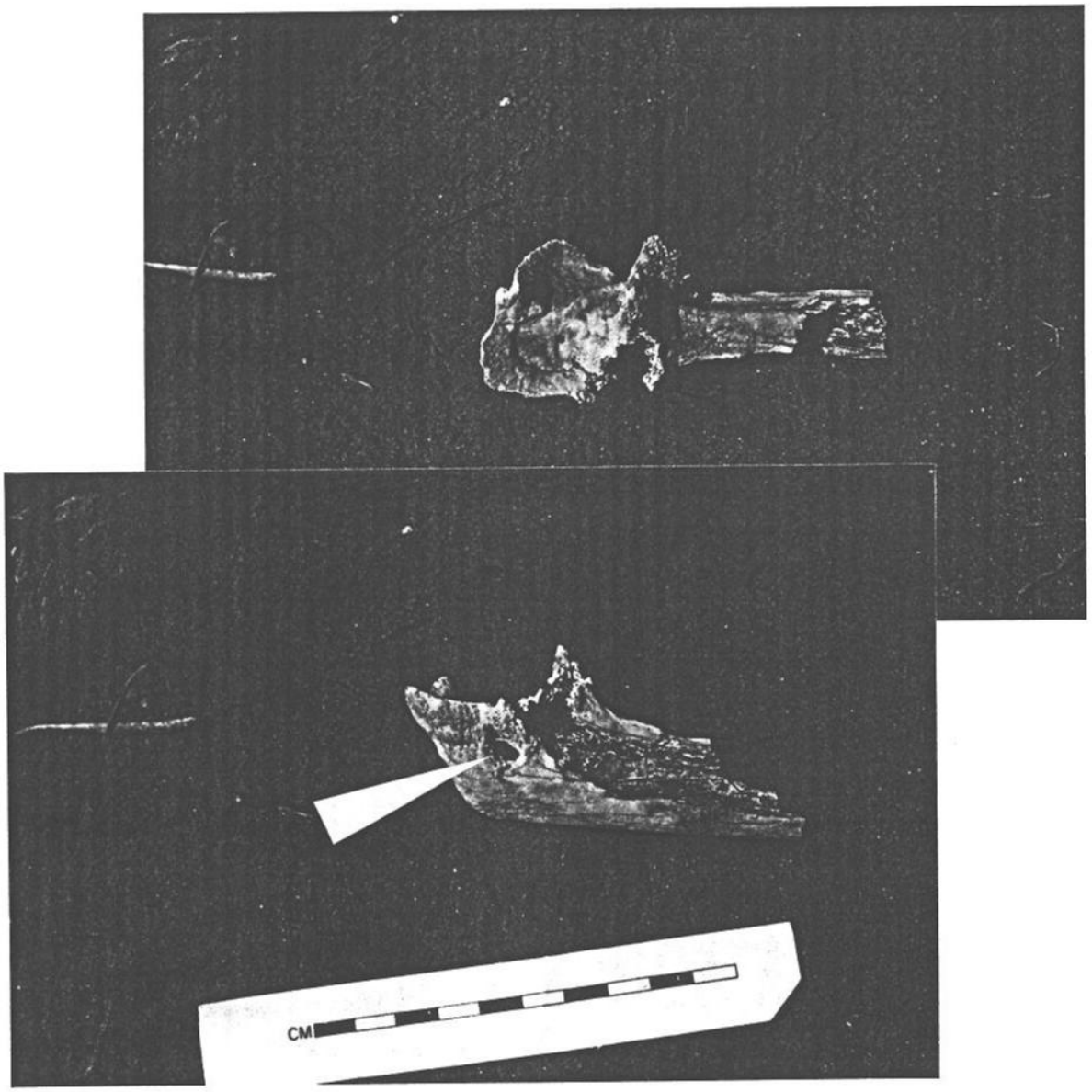
The wound was probably caused by a spear with a stone point which entered about as shown here.

This is what a normal elbow joint of the ulna looks like, enlarged from above. The point of the elbow- the 'funny bone' - is directly below this joint.

This is a diagram of the elbow joint from Dead Man's Sandhill. The photo is on the opposite page. Notice the damage to the inside of the joint and all the new growth around the margins.

This single elbow bone (called an ulna) is only a fragment of a burial exposed at the base of the large box tree just south of the sandhill burial. There is a lot to be learned from this single piece of bone, small as it is.

1. The person buried here was an adult male.
2. He suffered a bad wound to the inside of his left elbow.
3. This was probably caused by a stone point - perhaps from a spear. I think there is a small piece of the stone left inside.
4. The wound did not get infected and healed fairly well. So he probably didn't die from any after effects like blood poisoning.
5. He did, however, get arthritis from it and this probably stopped him from using his right arm to throw or to grip.



The arrow points to the hole in the elbow. It goes right through to the other side. The smooth edges show that the damage healed without infection.

It is my impression that all these burials are prehistoric and could be many hundreds of years old. My reasons for this are:

1. There are stone tools associated with the burial on the western slope of the sandhill.
2. The other burial of the man with the healed arm bone shows the result of what I think was a stone point (I think a piece of stone is still imbedded in the bone) hitting his elbow. It was not a gunshot wound.
3. It is possible that the burials and the hut are from the same time, but we don't have any archaeological evidence linking the two.
4. The preservation of the bone. Bone gets weaker with age and is more easily broken up. These don't look like they were less than 200 years old. Mind you, I'm not 100% sure and one of the best ways to check is to have a radiocarbon date made on the bone.

Of the three burials, I am able to say that two were adult men. One of these had suffered an injury to his elbow, but this had not killed him. I am sorry I did not have more time to look at the burials, but at the same time I hope the information presented here is interesting.

If you have any questions or comments about any of this, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.
Thanks once again,
Sincerely,

Colin Pardoe

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Ceremonial ground - Stone arrangement

Here are a couple of pictures of the stone arrangement which you took us up to see at the Queensland border. There has been a lot written on stone arrangements found further south. Is this one written up in your history book? In the top picture Jeannette Hope, Judy Sullivan and Dan Witter are discussing the importance of the site.