

ABORIGINAL FLAKEWORK.

Sir,—The presence of aboriginal flake-work in the Newcastle district has been known to a few of your observant citizens for some time past. Collecting has been carried out by these kindred spirits, and, as usual in such cases, friendly rivalry and keen interest has resulted in the aggregation of quite a remarkable variety of these examples of aboriginal handiwork. Two zealous collectors, Messrs. C. W. Loch and D. F. Cooksey, both of Mayfield, have gone so far as to map out the district, indicating thereon the different sites where flakework occurs. Moreover, they have carefully drawn typical forms, and prepared a monograph for publication. Amongst some of the sites we find Tirrikiba Paddocks, Merewether, Bar and Redhead Beaches. The search for these stone implements is very fascinating, and while they are now found in comparative abundance, the time is not far distant when, owing to the march of civilisation and progress, some, if not all, of these flake sites will be no longer recognisable. The person of average intellect knows, and if not, it is courtesy to inform him, that all nations have gone through the stone implement age. Even our forefathers, the Celts and ancient Britons, flaked flint, and found it good in the manufacture of tools and implements. The aborigines held undisputed sway over our fair Commonwealth perhaps for thousands of years, and in many parts, especially in this State, the only evidence of their occupancy is the flaked implements, so freely scattered about their camp sites. This being admitted, thoughtful citizens will regret that your local civic authorities do not show a keener interest, and establish a museum to house these and other relics of an interesting people, who lived, loved, and died along the banks of the Hunter, and the adjacent beaches. I am sure these aforementioned enthusiasts would gladly deposit the best part of their collections if such an institution were established. At the time of writing, the trustees of the Australian Museum have been seized with the importance of the stone implements of the Newcastle district, that they have instructed me to collect a representative quota from the different sites. Under the care of Mr. Cooksey, I have made several engrossing and profitable searches. One amusing experience might be related, even if the laugh is against me, but retold with the object of fostering an interest in these matters. Thinking that the Chinese gardeners at Sandgate might have noticed these implements when turning over the ground, I took some pains to explain all about them, and displaying various examples to them. Imagine my dismay, when, pausing after a long dissertation, and fervently feeling that they thoroughly understood, I was greeted with "Whaffor!" Many white folks express themselves in the same way, and look

upon others who wish to add to the sum of human knowledge as so many cranks, but an excursion with one of the flint collectors of Newcastle would cause them to modify their opinion, and in all probability induce some to join up with those who spend their spare time in such a profitable way.

W. W. THORPE,
Ethnologist, Australian Museum.