

**Present:** The Vice-President, Ian Terry, in the chair and about 90 members and guests.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the June meeting were read, and approved as a true record.

**Business:** The Vice-President opened the meeting and referred to forthcoming events—CTHS conference on 10 October; launch of Jim Marwood's book on 'The Bistro', 3 September; and the Association's excursion to Westbury, 23-5 October. The Secretary drew attention to a lecture of historical interest under the aegis of Engineers Australia on 19 August. The Vice-President then introduced this evening's speaker, **Don Ranson**, who had pursued archaeological studies in Tasmania since 1970, for much of that time as an officer of the Parks and Wildlife Service. His subject tonight was:

**'Frontier of Space, Frontier of Mind:  
The 1829 Aboriginal Establishment, Bruny Island'**

**Speaker:** Mr Ranson began by remarking that as the black war intensified in 1828 Governor George Arthur became close to desperation in his search for an effective response. He decided on a conciliatory approach, and in March 1829 chose George Augustus Robinson to be its leader and Bruny Island as a testing-ground. A 'feeding-station' under James Jordon, had already been operating there. Robinson arrived at Bruny at the end of March 1829, and set to work in establishing his 'Mission'. Don had employed a range of sophisticated equipment in striving to establish its precise location; he was now ninety-five percent confident of having done so, but there remained some obstacles in the path of utter certainty. Various illustrations amplified this part of the presentation.

By invoking 'Frontier of Mind' Don signalled his intent to explore how all the people involved experienced life at the Mission in the following months. A difficulty in achieving this aim was that Robinson's accounts were the only relevant source, and even they had been mediated by Brian Plomley's editing. Yet the task was all the more important because this was the first formal 'frontier' situation in Van Diemen's Land to be documented at any depth. The great challenge would be to comprehend Aboriginal responses to the Mission. This in turn would require investigation of traditional land use on the island. Robinson's intent was to encourage, or even force, the Aborigines to adopt an agrarian and settled way of life, but from the very outset they repudiated this notion.

Notwithstanding Robinson's failure in this matter, Don avowed his own high esteem for the man. His reputation had suffered especially in Vivienne Rae Ellis's study, and even Plomley had somewhat demeaned him and had failed to use all pertinent documents. Robinson was a man of considerable learning and insight. Arthur had failed to respond to his advice and requests.

After numerous questions, the meeting closed at 9:10pm